

# **DRAFT 2025 COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

## **Columbia Area Transportation Study Organization**

CATSO  
City of Columbia – Community Development Department  
PO Box 6015  
Columbia, MO 65205-6015  
Tel.: 573-874-7243

Disclaimer: The opinions, findings and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission, the Federal Highway Administration or the Federal Transit Administration.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
PURPOSE OF THE PLAN.....	3
CONTENTS OF THE PLAN.....	4
SECTION I.....	4
A. Identification/Assessment of Existing Transportation System.....	4
B. Agencies Providing Public Transportation Services.....	5
<i>Go COMO</i>	
<i>OATS, Inc.</i>	
C. Human Service Agencies Providing Transportation .....	10
SECTION II.....	17
A. Assessment of Community Transportation Need .....	17
B. Identification of Unmet Transportation Needs for Population of Consideration.....	24
<i>Ridership Identified Unmet Transportation Needs, Gaps, and Overlaps</i>	
<i>Provider Assessment of Transportation Needs/Gaps in Service</i>	
SECTION III.....	30
A. Strategies and/or Activities to Address Identified Gaps and Achieve Efficiencies in Service Delivery.....	30
SECTION IV.....	36
A. Prioritization of Strategies for Implementation.....	36
FEDERAL REGULATIONS ON COORDINATION.....	38
CONCLUSION.....	38
APPENDICES.....	39
Appendix A, 2018 OATS Tri-State County Transit.....	39
Appendix B, 2014 Public Transit Survey Findings.....	41
Appendix C, 2017 GoCOMO Bus Service Evaluation Final Report.....	199
Appendix D, 2018 PTCHSTP Transportation Provider Survey.....	443
Appendix E, 2012 Implementation and Outcomes of Fare-Free Transit Systems.....	453

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The purpose of this Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan is to document the existing resources and current needs for the provision of transit services within the Columbia Metropolitan Area. Through agency coordination, the existing transportation system may be enhanced through the identification of unmet needs, service overlap, and leverage of resources. This plan describes the existing conditions in the Columbia Metro Area related to transportation services, discusses coordination of service and other alternatives for meeting needs into the future, identifies the barriers- both perceived and real- for successfully coordinating resources, and identifies areas of overlap and gaps to be addressed.

For many years public policy makers and residents of Boone County have recognized the need for increased public transportation in the Metro Area. Several studies have recognized and documented the significant unmet need for transit services. For some area residents, the need for public transportation service is a major concern as it enables them to travel from home to work, shopping, health care facilities, and other necessary services. For these residents, the public transportation system is their link to the community.

The rural character of much of Boone County makes transportation services crucial for those members of the area who are dependent upon forms of transportation other than the private automobile. The City of Columbia acts as both a local and regional hub for shopping, health care, social services, and other services. Several agencies have been identified as providing transportation services in the greater Boone County area; however, many of these “providers” are not transportation providers in the typical sense of the word. Many of the providers are social service agencies who provide some form of transportation to their clients, such as a medical trip in a personal automobile of a caseworker or vouchers for the local taxi service. Providers such as Go COMO and Para-transit, operating within the City of Columbia; OATS, which provides service in the rural areas of the county as well as in Columbia; and Services for Independent Living (SIL) provide the greatest portion of the trips in the county; however, other agencies complete a significant number of trips as well. This Coordination Plan seeks to address ways these agencies can work together to address who will meet the needs of underserved users and geographies and how they will do it, and ways in which to address services more efficiently in areas of overlap.

## **PURPOSE OF THE PLAN:**

Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plans are maintained by Metropolitan Planning Organizations in accordance with Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). The Columbia Area Transportation Study Organization (CATSO) last adopted the CATSO Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan in May, 2018. This plan asks new

and prior stakeholders to evaluate updates, changes, and needs from the last plan in order to have a plan in place, and for use, in 2025 and the following four years.

Coordinated Plans need to be in place before agencies can apply for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Sections 5310, 5316, or 5317 funding.<sup>1</sup> According to federal legislation in the FAST Act, , projects selected for funding under the *5310 Program for Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities*, the *Job Access and Reverse Commute*, and the *New Freedom programs* must be “derived from a locally developed Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan” and that the plan must be “developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and participation by the public.”

## **CONTENTS OF THE PLAN:**

This Coordinated Plan contains four components:

1. An assessment of available services that identifies current providers (public, private and nonprofit) including an inventory and evaluation;
2. An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes and identification of unmet needs;
3. Strategies and/or activities to address the identified gaps and achieve efficiencies in service delivery; and
4. Relative priorities for implementation based on resources, time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies/activities identified.

The four components listed above were developed through a combination of meetings, surveys, written recommendations, and discussions with human services agencies that have an interest in transportation, the clients and users of the transportation services, and with transportation agencies such as the CATSO, the State (Missouri Department of Transportation), and Federal surface transportation agencies (Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration).

## **SECTION I:**

### **A. Identification/Assessment of Existing Transportation System:**

For the purpose of this plan update, with the goal of producing meaningful analysis of strategies and implementation priorities to address identified gaps and potential efficiency improvements, a number of social service agencies that provide transportation as a primary service to meet the needs of its clients were contacted. Additionally, agencies that previously indicated a desire to

---

<sup>1</sup> These Programs are for elderly and disabled populations (FTA Section 5310), low-income individuals for transportation to and from work (FTA Section 5316) and transportation programs that go above and beyond the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (FTA Section 5317 programs).

work together and the recipients/potential recipients of federal transit funding were surveyed. Daycare providers, private airport shuttles and taxi services, and other such agencies were not included in the plan update.

Those social service agencies providing transportation were asked via email and personal phone calls to provide information about their about their fleet, mission, territory, clients, and other pertinent data. This was done by providing the existing plan's narrative pertaining to their agency and asking them to provide updates/revisions to that information.

Additionally, these agencies were asked 1) to identify ways in which they were coordinating with other agencies on transportation service delivery, 2) if increased coordination among providers would provide benefits, and 3) future agency needs related to transportation. The next two sections describe gaps and overlay among two public transit providers and the 16 human service agencies that responded to the survey.

#### **B. Agencies Providing Public Transportation Services:**

There are two agencies providing public transportation services within the CATSO Metro Area/Central Boone County region: Go COMO and OATS. These agencies contract and coordinate with many human services organizations to best meet the transportation needs in their respective areas. Funding constraints are typically a concern for these agencies in meeting or expanding their service territory or client needs. These agencies are described below.

##### GO COMO

Go COMO is the general public transit provider for the City of Columbia. Service began nearly 50 years ago in 1965. Under the umbrella of Go COMO, several services are offered: fixed-route, Para-transit, and MU shuttle services. In the most recent calendar year, Go COMO provided more than 524,000 passenger-trips. There are 35 full-time employees involved in transit and 6 part-time employees (including seasonal employees). Go COMO is under the administration of the Columbia City Manager and Public Works Department.

##### *Coordination with Other Agencies*

Other than the provision of contracted service for MU students, Go COMO does not coordinate with any other transportation providers, and it does not currently see the need for increased coordination.

##### *Services:*

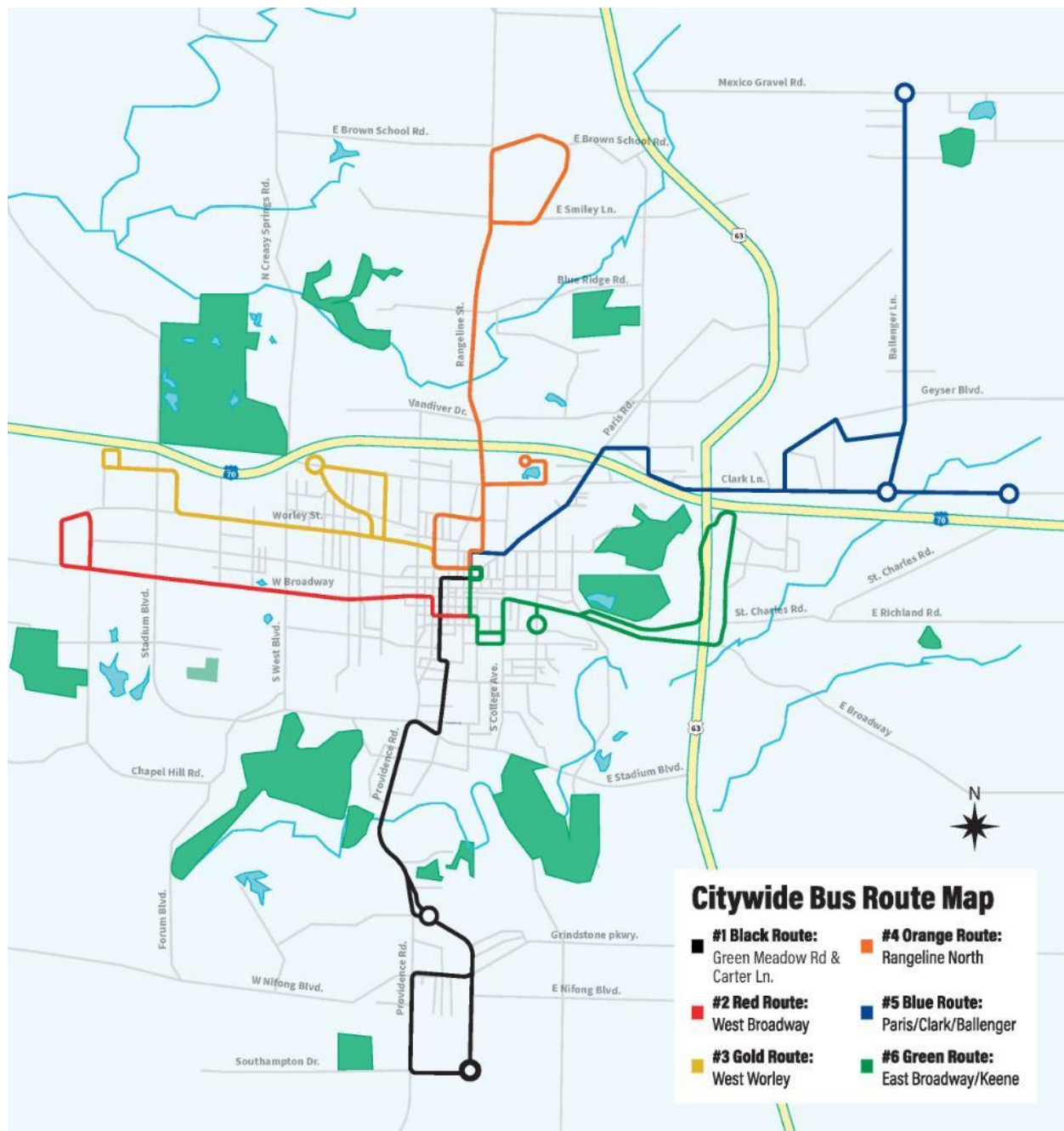
**Fixed-Route:** Columbia has six (6) bus routes that follow a fixed course and schedule. Each fixed route is named with both a color and a number that can be used interchangeably. There are two core fixed routes, north/south and east/west, and four smaller routes that circulate into more residential areas to connect neighborhoods into the core connector routes. All fixed route buses are wheelchair accessible. Anyone can board a bus on a fixed route at any marked bus stop sign. The routes operate Monday through Friday, 6:25 a.m. – 6:40 pm, and Saturday 10:00 am – 6:40

pm. There is no Sunday fixed-route service. Fixed-route service provided 348,000 rides in FY 2024.

GoCOMO's fixed route system is now fare free and all those wishing to ride may do so at no charge.

**Para-transit:** Columbia Para-transit provides specialized van service for persons with disabilities and elderly who are unable to use the fixed-route bus system. Service is provided curb-to-curb within the City limits of Columbia. Riders must meet eligibility requirements and become certified riders. Para-transit service is currently fare-free. Para-transit service is offered during the same hours as the fixed-route service. The service provides approximately 61,500 trips in FY 2024. annual trips.

**MU Tigerline Service:** The final service Go COMO provides is contract shuttle service with the University of Missouri. Three day and three evening routes covering the main campus and commuter parking lots are provided to MU students and the general public for free. This service is operated seven days a week during the fall and spring semesters only, and is free to both MU students and the general public. MU funds the service through student fees. Service routes are offered at various times from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm. Nearly 400,000 riders used the service. Map 1.1 shows the main GoCOMO and MU shuttle routes, as well as the City of Columbia and CATSO Metro area boundaries.



Map 1.1 2025 GoCOMO Bus Routes – Columbia Metro Area

### Financial

Go COMO is funded through a combination of FTA 5307 (urbanized) funds, FTA 5309 (discretionary) funds, a state of Missouri annual grant, a local (City of Columbia) dedicated transportation sales tax, fares, advertising and contract revenue. Additionally, Consolidated Planning Grant funds go towards portions of staff salaries and fund planning efforts, such as the

recent 2017 Bus Service Evaluation Project. Total operating costs are approximately \$7,752,292 dollars annually.

### *Facilities*

Go COMO operates out of two facilities. The first is the *Wabash Station* located at 126 North 10<sup>th</sup> Street in Columbia. This facility is the main transfer hub for both fixed-route and Paratransit routes. It serves as the bus dispatch center and is the main administrative office of Go COMO. Formally the Wabash Train Station, the building celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010. With the help of an FTA Capital grant, the facility was completely refurbished in 2007 and became the City's first LEED certified building.

The second facility is the *Grissum Building*, located at 1313 Lakeview. This is a shared maintenance and storage facility for the Public Works Department, of which Go COMO is a division. This facility is used to store, fuel, maintain, and clean all Go COMO vehicles that are maintained through the Fleet Operations Division of the Public Works Department.

### *Performance Measures*

Go COMO's baseline performance measures are shown below in Table 1.1 The performance measures reflect the ridership, vehicle miles and hours, and cost breakdown/allocation provided by Go COMO.

Go COMO Service Summary					
Route/Service	Annual Passenger Trips	Annual Vehicle Miles	Annual Vehicle Hours	Service Cost	Cost per Trip
<b>Fixed Route</b>	524,625	217,358	15,165	\$4,385,928.00	\$8.36
<b>Para-Transit</b>	55,654	262,456	21,054	\$1,993,670.00	\$35.82
<b>MU Shuttle</b>	399,673	108,679	12,407	\$1,279,370.00	\$3.20
<b>Total Service</b>	979,952	588,493	48,626	\$7,658,968.00	

Table 1.1 Go 2024 COMO Service Data and Cost Allocation

### *Metro Area Population Density*

Areas with more people often will have a greater number of riders, although this correlation is affected by other factors, as discussed below in "Transit-Dependent Population Characteristics." Providers must consider ridership needs and density when developing service territories. Lower rider density and longer trips reduce the efficiency of transportation providers as fuel costs and travel time/miles are typically inversely related to ridership density.

Table 1.1: GoCOMO Service Data and Cost Allocation (above) demonstrates the relationship between cost of service and the size and density of the service area. It shows that the most efficient trips (cost per trip), are within the MU Campus Shuttle service area; conversely, the shuttle service represents the highest cost per mile. This demonstrates both the benefits and

challenges of operating in a small geography with a high density of riders, as well as the potential opportunity of increasing the service mileage efficiency by expanding the MU Shuttle service area. On the other hand, Columbia's Para-transit, which has the largest service territory (at a minimum, it serves out to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from points on the fixed routes), has the higher cost per trip and the lowest cost per mile out of all the Columbia transit services. GoCOMO's fixed route service, which has higher service density than para-transit and serves a larger geographic area than the MU shuttle, has a mid-range cost-per-trip and cost-per-mile that falls between its two other services. Transit route/service areas and population density are shown in Map 2.1 below. Areas with high density outside of service territories may indicate an unmet need for transportation services.

### *Capital (Vehicles)*

Go COMO has a fleet of 48 passenger vehicles. Table 1.2, as presented below, provides a listing of those vehicles including make and year.

Go COMO Vehicle Inventory		
Type	Year	Number of Units
Ford V10 van	2011	2
Ford V10 van	2012	2
Ford V10 van	2014	3
Ford V10 van	2019	6
Ford E450 van	2022	4
<b>Total Para-Transit Vans: 17</b>		
NewFlyer 30' Bus	2001	1
Gillig 40' Bus	2010	4
Gillig 35' Bus	2011	1
Gillig 40' Bus	2011	2
Gillig 35' Bus	2012	4
Gillig 40' Bus	2012	2
Gillig 40' Bus	2015	2
Gillig 40' Bus	2020	1
BYD K7 30' Bus	2020	4
Gillig 35' Bus	2021	2
Gillig 35' Bus	2023	2
BYD K9 35' Electric Bus	2024	6
<b>Total Buses: 31</b>		
<b>Total Units: 48</b>		

Table 1.2: 2025 Go COMO Vehicle Inventory

## OATS

OATS is a private, nonprofit specialized transit provider that operates in 87 Missouri counties. Its mission is to enhance quality of life by providing safe, caring & reliable transportation services. OATS has been in operation since 1971 and provides door-to-door transportation services to individuals with little or no alternative form of transportation. In urban areas, it provides service to those 60 years and older and the disabled. In rural areas, routine service is also open to the general public.

### *Coordination with Other Agencies*

Through coordination efforts, OATS provides both service information and service when other area providers are unable to meet their clients' needs. OATS does see a need for increased coordination among local area service providers. In addition, during an OATS presentation, hosted by the Mid-MO Regional Planning Commission (RPC), and attended by CATSO staff, on April 11, 2018, the agency discussed their innovative employment based project in Camden County. It has been able to collaborate with area employers to provide regular, fixed route service to employees in a tri-county area. The model has increased OATS service efficiencies within a broad geographic area, serving more clients for a lower cost (see Appendix A, 2018 OATS Tri-State County Transit for meeting handout).

### *Current funding and future needs*

For Columbia area service, OATS is funded by a combination of federal, state, and local funds, including fares/donations, FTA 5310, Medicaid, the Missouri Department of Mental Health and service contracts. Rides are \$2 per round trip.

OATS provides direct response service Monday through Friday 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in Columbia and service to other parts of central Boone County is provided on Mondays. Within the Columbia area OATS' provides rides to approximately 6 clients per day, 15 per week, 60 per month and 720 per year. Peak hours are from 7:00 am to 9:00 am, and 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. The local area program costs approximately \$133,000 annually to operate. Within the next five years 6 buses used for local service will need to be replaced at a cost of \$330,000, and \$50,000 will be needed to extend local service hours to weekends.

### *Facilities*

OATS has its main Mid-Missouri Regional Office in Columbia. There is covered parking for the Boone County fleet, including wash bays and a fueling station. Its central statewide office is also located in Columbia on the same site.

### *Capital (Vehicles)*

OATS has a fleet of 10 wide-body cut away buses, averaging 9 years in age, for the Columbia area. Most vehicles are wheelchair-equipped.

### C. Human Service Agencies Providing Transportation:

According to survey responses, the following agencies provide transportation related services to a variety of clients. Due to program and funding restrictions, these agencies provide services only for their specific client base.

#### 1. Job Point

Job Point provides youth services, vocational assessment, job training, and placement services to people with disabilities and individuals who are economically disadvantaged in Central Missouri. Job Point is a comprehensive employment center, fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

Transportation services are provided for students with agency-owned vehicles. Trips are limited to those that are directly related to vocational needs. The agency owns four vehicle and leases one. Three are 15 passenger vans (years 2007, 2019 and 2021), one 7 passenger van (year 2017) and one compact passenger car (year 2015). Job Point's regular hours of operation for programming are 8:00 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday with extended hours for transportation services. Some programs are offered in the evening, but transportation is only provided for daytime programming. Ridership is at its peak on Monday through Thursday from 6:15 am - 7:45 am, and from 3:45 pm- 5:00 pm. Rides are rarely offered outside the traditional weekday schedule. Job Point provides rides to an average of 300 people annually. Table 1.3 shows a breakdown of Job Point ridership by user type, daily, weekly and monthly averages, as well as ridership peaks and lows:

	Average Daily	Average Weekly	Average Monthly	Peak	Low
<b>Elderly (60+) Non-Disabled</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Elderly Disabled</b>	0	0	1	1	0
<b>Non-Elderly Disabled (mental/physical)</b>	2	4	10	1	1
<b>Low Income</b>	2	2	5	5	0
<b>Youth</b>	7	9	12	18	2
<b>Total</b>	11	15	28	26	4

Table 1.3: Job Point Ridership

Job Point spent approximately \$18,196 on transportation costs in 2023, with funding from the Department of Labor's Youth Build Program and AmeriCorps. Overall funding for the organization comes through a variety of sources, including federal and state grants, contracts for services and donations. Job Point anticipates future funding needs related to replacing their aging fleet. The agency also expects to continue its transportation services as long as its YouthBuild clients need transportation to and from job sites and job seekers without vehicles

need assistance in the employment procurement process. Job Point indicated an interest in coordination activities, particularly in providing reduced or free transportation vouchers.

## **2. Impact Support Services (formerly Alternative Community Training, Inc.)**

Impact Support Services provides an array of programs and services throughout Mid-Missouri to approximately 250 persons with disabilities annually, in the areas of employment, residential services, youth services and day services programs. Impact Support Services was founded in 1975 and has evolved over the years as an established, nationally accredited (by CARF) organization, previously known as ACT or Alternative Community Training, effectively meeting the needs of persons with disabilities and their families.

Impact Support Services currently drives an average of 19,200 miles weekly to provide transportation services to individuals with disabilities. This annualizes to 998,400 miles with a fleet of 51 vehicles. Impact Support Services operates 6 accessible lift minivans and one 15-passenger van that have been purchased through the FTA 5310 program. Impact Support Services plans to continue to request 5310 funding to purchase one additional van per year. All of Impact Support Services' vehicles are leased or owned by the agency. These vehicles provide transportation for activities including community integration, career related services and residential support services. In 2023, the agency spent approximately \$504,895 on transportation costs. Funding sources include both federal and state sources, such as the Missouri Department of Mental Health and Vocational Rehabilitation. Impact Support Services did indicate an interest in coordinating with other agencies for the provision of individual transportation services.

## **3. Boone County Family Resources (BCFR)**

Boone County Family Resources is a public agency of Boone County that serves individuals with developmental disabilities. BCFR provides purchased or reimbursed transportation to eligible clients of the agency in Columbia and some adjacent areas in Boone County. (Purchased transportation includes state and federal match funds.) Last Fiscal Year (July 2016 – June 2017) BCFR purchased or reimbursed transportation for persons with developmental disabilities totaling \$404,086. This transportation was for work or other activities reflected in their individual plan. BCFR coordinates with other social service agencies (e.g. SIL), public transportation (Go COMO) and transportation providers (e.g. OATS) for both transportation purchased or reimbursed by BCFR and referrals to transportation programs funded by other sources. BCFR also provides training on using public transportation. BCFR connects eligible persons served to transportation resources including Medicaid Non-Emergency transportation for covered medical appointments. Additionally, BCFR provides transportation for residential clients to go to work and doctor appointments. BCFR has 16 total vehicles, which primarily provide support to these 42 individuals in residential services. In the past, BCFR has shown interest in transportation coordination activities if found to be applicable.

#### **4. Burrell Behavioral Health**

Burrell Behavioral Health is a private, not-for-profit, Community Mental Health Center serving 18 counties in Missouri. Columbia is included within Burrell's Central Region. There are four clinic locations in Columbia including a Behavioral Health Crisis Center (BCC).

Burrell has four 15-passenger vans and two 8-passenger minivans used to transport adult clients on group outings throughout the community, as well as to and from clinics for therapy and doctor appointments. The vans are also used to transport youth clients to and from school or home to the clinics for visits.

#### **5. Central Missouri Area Agency on Aging (CMAAA)**

CMAAA recognizes the individual capabilities and needs of each older person. Therefore, CMAAA's mission is to assist 19 counties in mid-Missouri to establish a full range of services, which allow older persons to live in the most independent manner possible. In addition to Boone County, CMAAA serves Howard, Cooper, Audrain, Callaway, Cole, Morgan, Moniteau, Camden, Miller, Maries, Osage, Gasconade, Washington, Phelps, Dent, Pulaski and Laclede counties. The agency assists more than 250 elderly clients with transportation on a daily basis. Rides are provided Monday through Friday. Half of the rides it provides are contracted out directly to service providers, and the other half are consumer directed through the provision of funds to clients to choose their own transit service provider. CMAAA utilizes consumer directed transportation for its Boone County clients, providing them the funds to choose among the three main local transit service providers: OATS, SIL or Columbia Para-Transit. During its 2017 fiscal year (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017) CMAAA spent a total of \$169,156 for transportation costs in its 19 county coverage area. Of that, \$66,735 was consumer directed and \$102,421 was contracted. The agency spent \$21,880 on transportation services in Boone County. CMAAA did not indicate an interest in coordination of transportation opportunities at this time.

#### **5. Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA)**

Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA) is a private, non-profit human services agency that provides a myriad of services and program oversight. The agency provides the following services, as well as numerous others: Head Start; Section 8 Rental Assistance; Employment and Training; Housing Development Activities and Family Support. CMCA's main clientele includes elderly, disabled and low-income populations.

CMCA helps its clients access bus passes through the Voluntary Action Center, coordinate rides through their Medicaid providers, and explains to clients how to navigate the public bus system. It also provides funding for clients to access direct service through ABC Taxi Service, OATS, SIL and Columbia Para-transit. It serves more than one hundred and forty (140) clients annually through these transportation services. To qualify for these services, clients must demonstrate low-income status, which is defined as 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, and live in Boone County. Transportation services are provided for clients to access the Food Pantry, Human and Social Services and Mental Health/Medical/Dental providers. These services are provided

through CMCA year-round, Monday through Saturday, and qualified clients are able to access ABC taxi services 24/7.

CMCA does anticipate future funding needs of \$10,400 to hire a part-time person to administer the current direct-service transportation program. The agency currently receives funding to cover direct costs, but it does not have funding to pay for staff time to coordinate services. CMCA does have an interest in inter-agency coordination if it can help better serve the individuals that need transportation assistance. The agency understands that coordination and collaboration with other agencies can make a greater impact in the community.

#### **6. Central Missouri Subcontracting Enterprises**

Central Missouri Subcontracting Enterprises (CMSE) provides meaningful, dignified employment to persons with disabilities in Missouri through the production of goods and services for the private sector. CMSE also provides advocacy and support to persons with disabilities. CMSE owns two agency vans and two cars to provide transportation to 15 of their 124 employees to and from work sites. The remainder of employees use Go COMO or private or residential agency transportation. CMSE provides approximately 3,750 round trips annually, which costs an estimated \$48,000. CMSE is currently planning to expand its day program and it will need to purchase approximately two more vans in the future. CMSE reported being slightly interested in some coordination opportunities.

#### **7. Columbia Housing Authority (CHA)**

The CHA seeks to improve the quality of life, to insure fair housing, support the commitment, and to encourage affordable housing for persons of low and moderate income within the boundaries of Boone County. The CHA owns and operates 747 units of subsidized affordable housing. Income eligible families and individuals pay 30% of their adjusted household income for rent. In addition, it also administers 1,062 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers that allow families and individuals to choose housing from the available rental housing stock in Columbia and Boone County. The agency also operates the Moving Ahead After School and Summer Program for 100 of its youth residents.

CHA contracts with Services for Independent Living (SIL) to provide free transportation to its senior and disabled residents of Oak and Paquin Towers. Additionally, portions of disabled residents use the GoCOMO para-transit service. The agency also partners with the Columbia Public Schools to transport approximately 20 children a day from school to its after school program at Columbia's Blind Boone Center. In addition, CHA provides bus passes to its low-income residents. The agency also owns three 12-passenger vans that are an average of 2 years old.

CHA transportation services are provided to clients Monday through Friday all year long. The afterschool program transportation is provided from 3:00 pm- 6:30 pm, with peak hours from 3:00 pm-4:00 pm during school pick-up and from 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm during home drop off. Transportation is provided to Oak and Paquin Tower residents throughout the day, with peak hours from 8:00 am – noon. CHA provides rides to an average of more than 28,000 rides annually,

at an approximate cost of \$24,800. Table 1.4 shows a breakdown of CHA ridership by user type, daily, weekly and monthly averages, as well as ridership peaks and lows:

Columbia Housing Authority (CHA)					
	Average Daily	Average Weekly	Average Monthly	Peak	Low
<b>Elderly (60+) Non-Disabled</b>	*	10	40	10	5
<b>Elderly Disabled</b>	*	20	80	20	10
<b>Non-Elderly Disabled (mental/physical)</b>	*	20	80	20	10
<b>Youth</b>	20	100	2200	20 daily	20 daily
<b>Total</b>		150	2400		

Table 1.4: CHA Ridership

Most of CHA's transportation services are paid for with property operations costs and it does expect to continue to need to fund these services into the future. CHA did indicate a willingness to participate in inter-agency coordination, but it does not have the capacity to provide transportation to outside agency clients.

## 8. Great Circle

Great Circle was formed in 2009 by the merger of Boys & Girls Town of Missouri and Edgewood Children's Center. It is a private non-profit human services agency that provides behavioral health services for children and their families in the Central Region of Missouri. Great Circle operates the following programs: foster care that serves 230 children and more than 100 parents; intensive in home services that serve 20 children and 30 parents; intensive reunification services that serve 20 children and 30 parents; and a home visitation program that serves 75 children and 100 parents.

Great Circle utilizes a company named YouthTrans to provide rides to children for family visits, court and medical appointments. It pays an hourly rate for this service, plus mileage. Rides are provided 24/7, but primarily Monday through Friday, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm all year long. Great Circle also provides gas cards to parents to help fund trips to visit their children. The agency provides rides to an average of 3600 children annually, and fuel assistance to approximately 300 parents annually. Great Circle also owns 10 cars that are an average of 2 to 3 years old to provide for additional transportation needs.

All transportation services are provided for free to Great Circle clients. Although Great Circle did not provide specific transportation cost numbers, it did indicate that transportation makes up a large portion of its programming budget. The agency also explained that unmet client transportation needs create a large time barrier for front line case managers and can prevent children from being able to see their parents consistently and for longer periods of time. It

indicated that lack of dependable transportation serves as a barrier to client families to maintain consistent employment and, in turn, stable housing, which often prevents family reunification. Great Circle expressed a strong desire to collaborate with other agencies to try to solve these transportation challenges.

Great Circle is now part of KVC Missouri, a non-profit organization that has a regional campus in Columbia. KVC Missouri is part of KVC Health Systems. The two organizations finalized an agreement for Great Circle to be merged into KVC and this became effective on April 1, 2023.

#### **9. New Horizons**

New Horizons is a non-for-profit mental health provider in Cole and Boone County. While the agency does have a 15-passenger van to transport clients to and from the day program, most transportation is provided by staff in personal vehicles. Staff is reimbursed for mileage. As a part of their mission, New Horizons works to help clients integrate within the community. Thus, their life skills training efforts teach clients how to use public transit. New Horizons is interested in supporting increased public transit options and may be interested in any applicable coordination efforts.

#### **10. Phoenix Programs**

Phoenix Programs is a non-profit outpatient substance abuse program that provides counseling for individuals, families, and groups in Columbia. The agency owns two vans and one car for the purpose of providing transportation to clients. It also provides bus passes to clients. The agency provides approximately 1,000 annual trips for the homeless. They have approximately 50 clients in need of transportation at any one time. Phoenix Programs has a reported annual transportation budget of approximately \$44,000, which is federally funded. The agency did show some level of interest in future coordination opportunities for clients.

#### **11. Compass Health/Navig8 Adolescent Treatment Program**

Navig8 helps adolescents and families in the Boone County Region whose lives have been impacted by the use of alcohol and/or other substances. The program serves adolescents ages 12 through 17 and is structured to meet the specific needs of each person and his or her family. The program is currently only providing outpatient services but it plans to start a new day program in the next 3 to 4 months. Navig8 currently provides more than 1,000 rides to its clients annually. It owns one 15 passenger van and one car, both are approximately 15 years old. Transportation is provided to clients every day of the week, with peak hours from 3:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Navig8 indicated that it would most likely have an interest in collaborative opportunities focused on client transportation.

#### **12. Rainbow House**

Rainbow House is a non-profit child advocate agency serving mid-Missouri, whose mission is to keep children safe and support families in crisis through prevention, assessment, and intervention in child abuse and neglect. The agency operates an emergency children's shelter that serves 100 children annually. The shelter primarily serves Boone County, but it will accept children from anywhere in the state. It also manages a Homeless Youth Program that can serve

4 residents at a time, from anywhere in Missouri, for up to 18 months. Rainbow house is funded by a combination of contracts, grants, United Way, Community Donations, special events, fees for service and federal funding.

The agency has 3-year leases for two 9-passenger vans for transportation. It pays \$750 a month for each lease (\$1500 total), and it expects to continue to need to make this annual \$18,000 investment to serve its clients with transportation. It provides more than 5,000 annual trips to its clients for school, medical appointments, outings and activities. Peak hours for its clients' transportation needs are 7:30 am to 9:00 am and 2:45 pm – 4:00 pm. The agency also occasionally provides GoCOMO bus passes to its clients and gas cards to its clients' families who need to visit its facilities from surrounding counties. Rainbow House did not indicate an interest in coordination for transportation services at this time.

### **13. Services for Independent Living**

Services for Independent Living (SIL) is a non-profit that promotes independence for persons with disabilities. Many individuals with disabilities cannot utilize traditional transportation. SIL offers accessible transportation with door-to-door service Sunday through Friday, 8:00a.m. to 5:00 p.m. SIL has eligibility requirements for clients and charges according to the following fee schedule: \$2.00 per stop City; \$3.00 per stop Outside City Limits; \$5.00 per stop from County to County. Within the past decade, SIL has applied for Section 5310 funding. The agency did not indicate an interest in coordination of transportation opportunities at this time.

### **14. Columbia Vocational Rehabilitation**

The Columbia Vocational Rehabilitation Office assists individuals with physical or mental disabilities with obtaining employment in Boone, Cooper, Howard, and Randolph Counties. Services include vocational counseling/exploration, vocational training, medical restorative services and job placement services. Vocational Rehabilitation may provide transportation to and from these services in the form of bus passes, travel reimbursement and taxi fares for those who financially qualify. In 2017, the Columbia Vocational Rehabilitation office spent approximately \$24,000 to provide transportation for 70 individuals. 18 of these individuals received bus passes for the Columbia Area Transit System and 52 received reimbursement for taxi fares or other travel expenses. Vocational Rehabilitation is required by Federal Law to access all comparable benefits and to coordinate with other transportation service providers.

### **15. Voluntary Action Center**

Voluntary Action Center (VAC) is a nonprofit organization that responds to the immediate basic needs of individuals and families, from birth to any given age, currently housed or experiencing homelessness, within our Boone County, Missouri community. VAC provides meaningful basic needs services and seasonal programs primarily in the areas of education, employment, health, and housing. For the provision of services, funding sources include Heart of Missouri United Way, Boone County, City of Columbia, Boone Electric Trust, and local faith congregations.

Minimal eligibility requirements remove barriers to accessing services and promote the same fair chance to all experiencing economic hardship with a gross income at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. VAC does not discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, address size, or employment status.

VAC offers walk-in lobby hours and no-contact appointments to receive services. Transportation assistance includes gasoline vouchers (for licensed drivers) and minor car repair assistance (for licensed and employed individuals). Additional services include new work uniforms/tools, hygiene and household cleaning items, car and booster seats, diapers and baby wipes, rental assistance, Missouri birth certificate and government-issued photo ID assistance, and health copays/cash price fees including prescription (Rx) assistance. Additionally, VAC provides information and referral services, by phone or in person, to guide clients to community resources. All services are based on item and funding availability and limits.

In 2023, VAC provided 2,826 gasoline vouchers for education, health, or housing purposes. In addition, the agency provided minor car repair assistance on 128 occasions. In 2023, VAC spent \$53,799 for gasoline and \$11,239 for minor car repairs. For the purchase of these services, funding sources included Faith in Service to Humanity (FISH), which is funded by local faith congregations, Boone Electric Trust (BET), Kermack-Parker (KP) Trust for households including females 60 and over, and fundraising efforts. VAC previously distributed Go COMO bus tickets to eligible individuals until free bus fare was offered beginning in March 2020.

## **16. Woodhaven**

Woodhaven is a private non-profit human services agency that advocates for Boone County residents with disabilities by enhancing of their lives, respecting their individuality, providing quality opportunities for choice and promoting community membership. The agency provides community living programs for individuals with disabilities, as well as volunteer and skill building opportunities.

Woodhaven provides transportation to more than 100 of their clients on a daily basis. For this purpose, Woodhaven owns 38 vehicles: 37 vans and 1 sedan. It occasionally uses OATS for group trips outside of Columbia. Approximately 10 of Woodhaven's 107 clients utilize the Columbia Para-transit system. The agency spends \$390,000 annually on transportation. Woodhaven did indicate an interest in future inter-agency collaboration focused on client transportation.

## **SECTION II:**

### **A. Assessment of Community Transportation Needs**

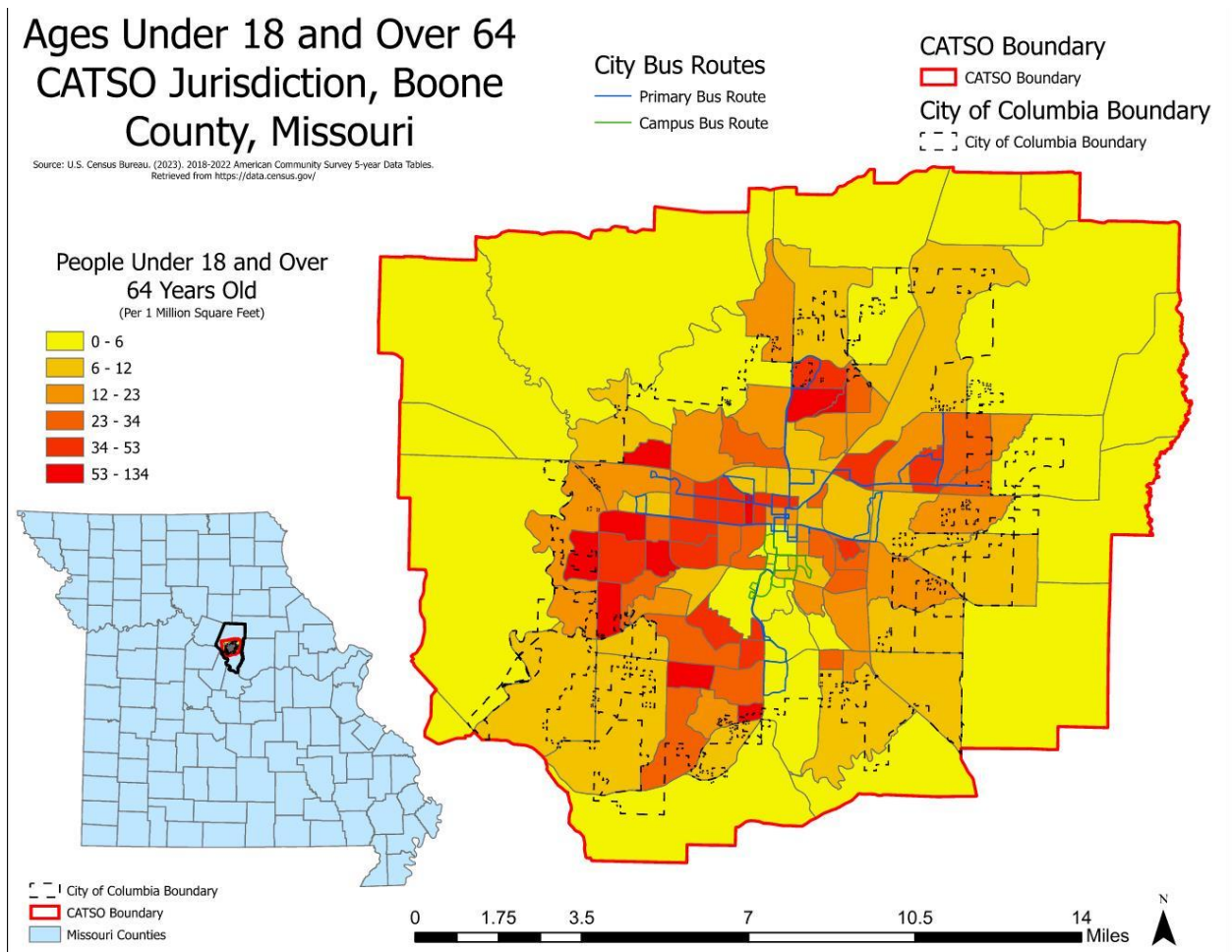
Baseline population data is required to model transit needs both now and into the future. Currently, there are several population factors that aid in the assessment and anticipation of transportation needs, including total population, density and growth areas, age, income, travel to work data and disability status.

The 2020 U.S. Census reported populations as follows: Boone County with 183,610 residents, City of Columbia with 126,254, and the CATSO metropolitan planning area (MPA) with 134,592.

Updated population estimates from the 2023 American Community Survey (ACS) are illustrated in Table 2.1 below. While all three geographies have experienced a high level of growth over the last decade plus, more population growth occurred in the City than in the County and surrounding Metro area. Public transit needs are typically higher in areas of higher population, population growth, and density.

	2020	2023 (ACS)	% Increase
<b>County</b>	183,610	189,463	3.2%
<b>City</b>	126,254	129,328	2.4%
<b>CATSO Metro Area</b>	151,157	155,975	3.2%

Table 2.1: Population of Boone County and Columbia, Missouri – US Census Bureau



### *Transit-Dependent Population Characteristics*

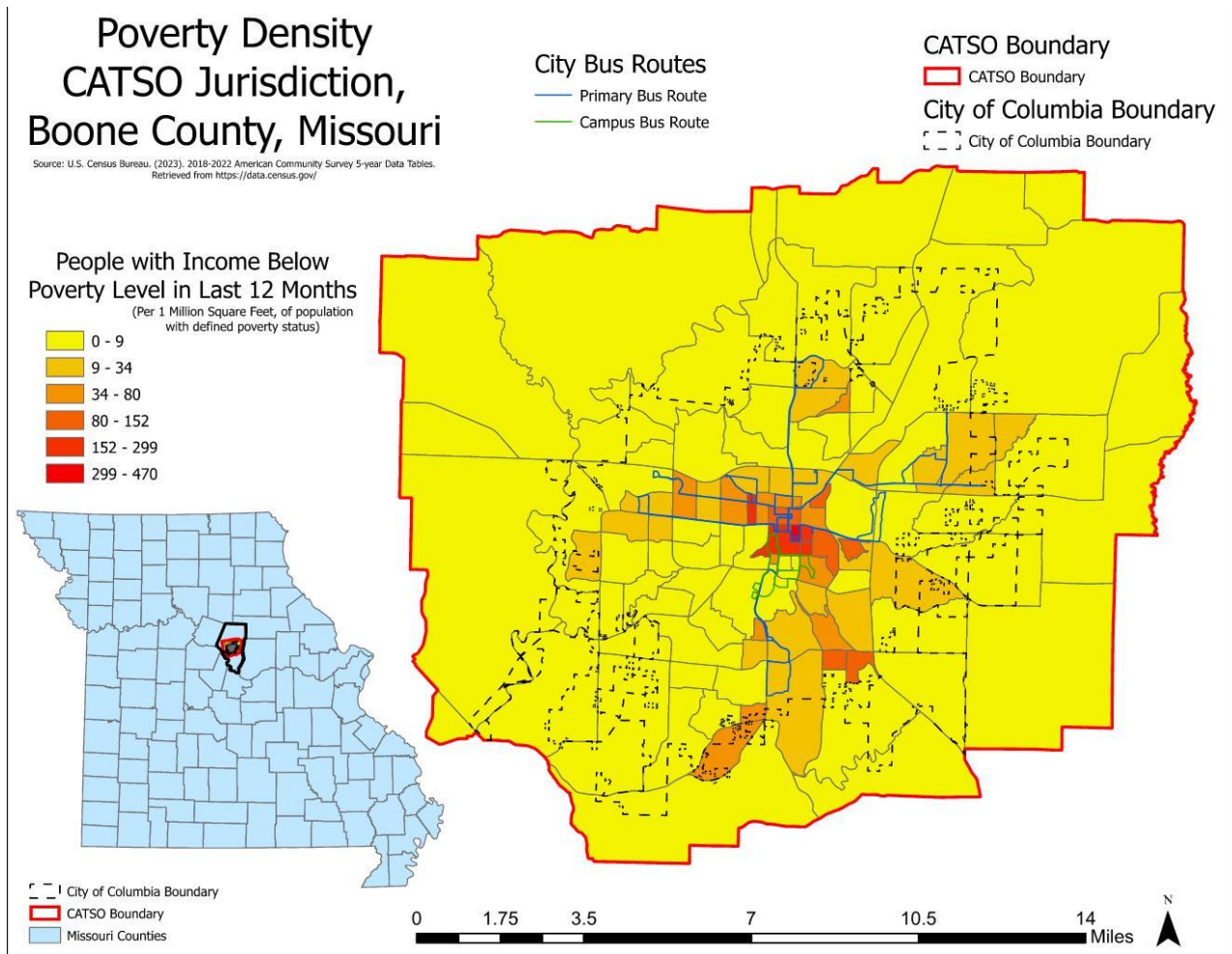
Certain census data attributes indicate a population will be limited from driving or owning a vehicle, thus making it more dependent upon public transit. The four types of census-identified limitations that preclude persons from driving or vehicle ownership are: (1) physical limitations, (2) financial limitations, (3) age limitations and (4) non-car ownership (either by choice or because of financial limitations).

Table 2.2 shows the U.S. Census data for people with physical limitations that may prevent them from driving, also defined as disabilities, in Boone County and the City of Columbia. The percentage of City of Columbia residents with disabilities is 1.1% more than Boone County residents overall, with the rural Boone County population having the lowest percentage of persons with disabilities, 3.6% less than the City population. The rural county areas are lower in population density than the City and further from services, and consequently this population has less access to transit. Nonetheless, people with disabilities often need reliable transportation to medical facilities, in addition to services for basic living, such as groceries, banking, and other needs.

Area	With a Disability	No Disability	Percent Disabled
<b>Boone County</b>	23,842	164,198	12.7%
<b>Columbia City</b>	17,688	110,383	13.8%
<b>Boone County not including Columbia</b>	6,154	53,815	10.2%

Table 2.2: Citizens with disabilities in Boone County and Columbia, Missouri.  
Source: American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates (2023), US Census Bureau

Financial limitations that may preclude a population from car ownership are demonstrated in Map 2.2 below, which shows where the highest numbers of residents living in poverty are located within in the City of Columbia and the CATSO Metro area. The low-income population is most concentrated in the central part of the City of Columbia. Fortunately, the City’s public transit lines are accessible in these areas, but as “Section 2.B, Identification of Unmet Transportation Needs for Population of Consideration” demonstrates, the public transit system is not currently able to provide service frequency that can meet all of the needs (jobs, education and other opportunities) for its ridership in a timely manner.



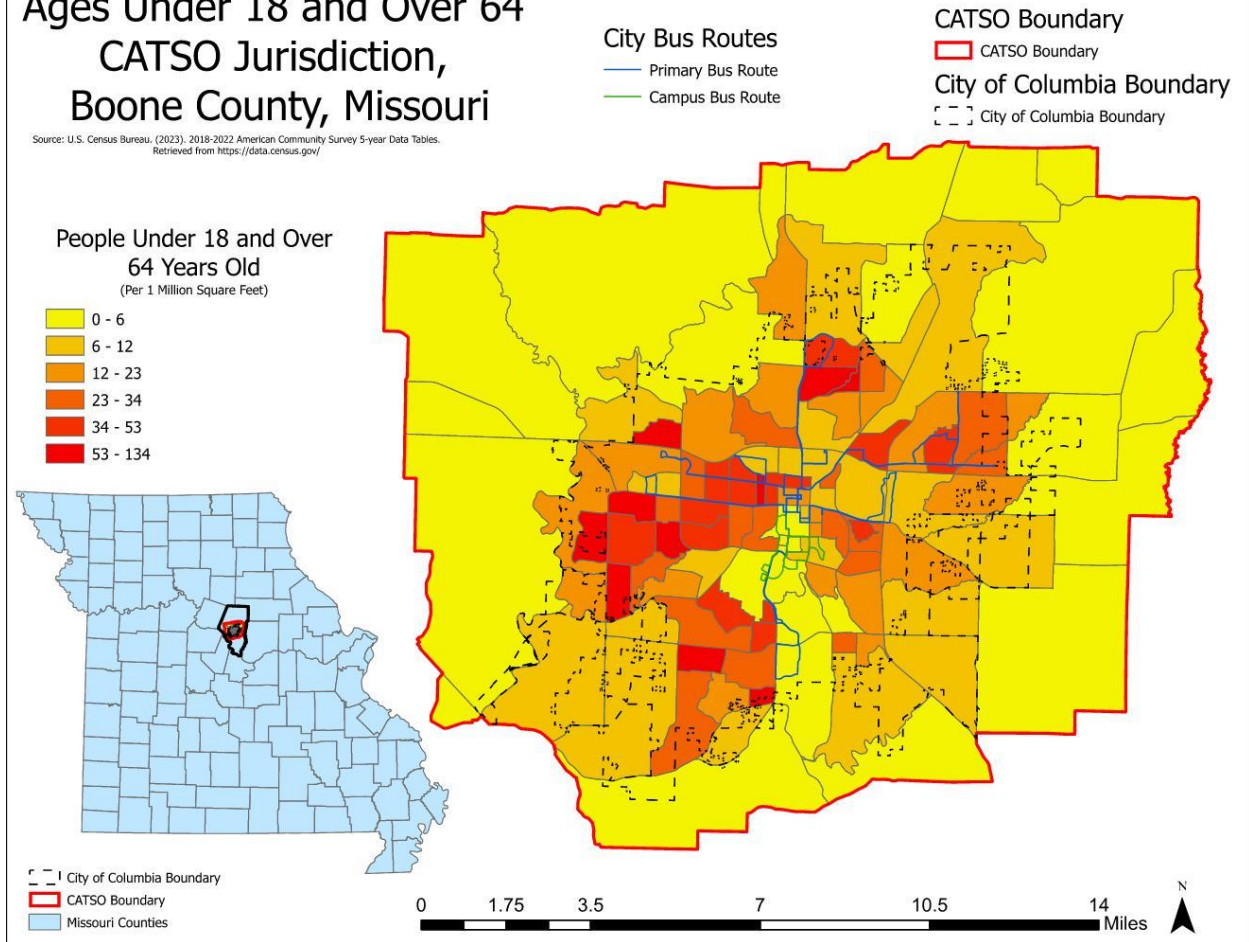
Map 2.2: Poverty in Columbia, Missouri and the CATSO Metropolitan Planning Area.  
Source: US Census Bureau (2023) 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Data Tables.

Age is the third factor that can prevent a population from driving and, in turn, lead it to rely more heavily on public transit. Most persons under the age of 16 are not legally able to drive, and the elderly have a higher probability of losing their ability to drive.

Map 2.3 below demonstrates the density of the populations more likely to depend on public transit (below 16 and over 65), within the City of Columbia and the CATSO metro area. The City's public transit lines are accessible in these areas, but the map does show a potential need for more coverage.

## Ages Under 18 and Over 64 CATSO Jurisdiction, Boone County, Missouri

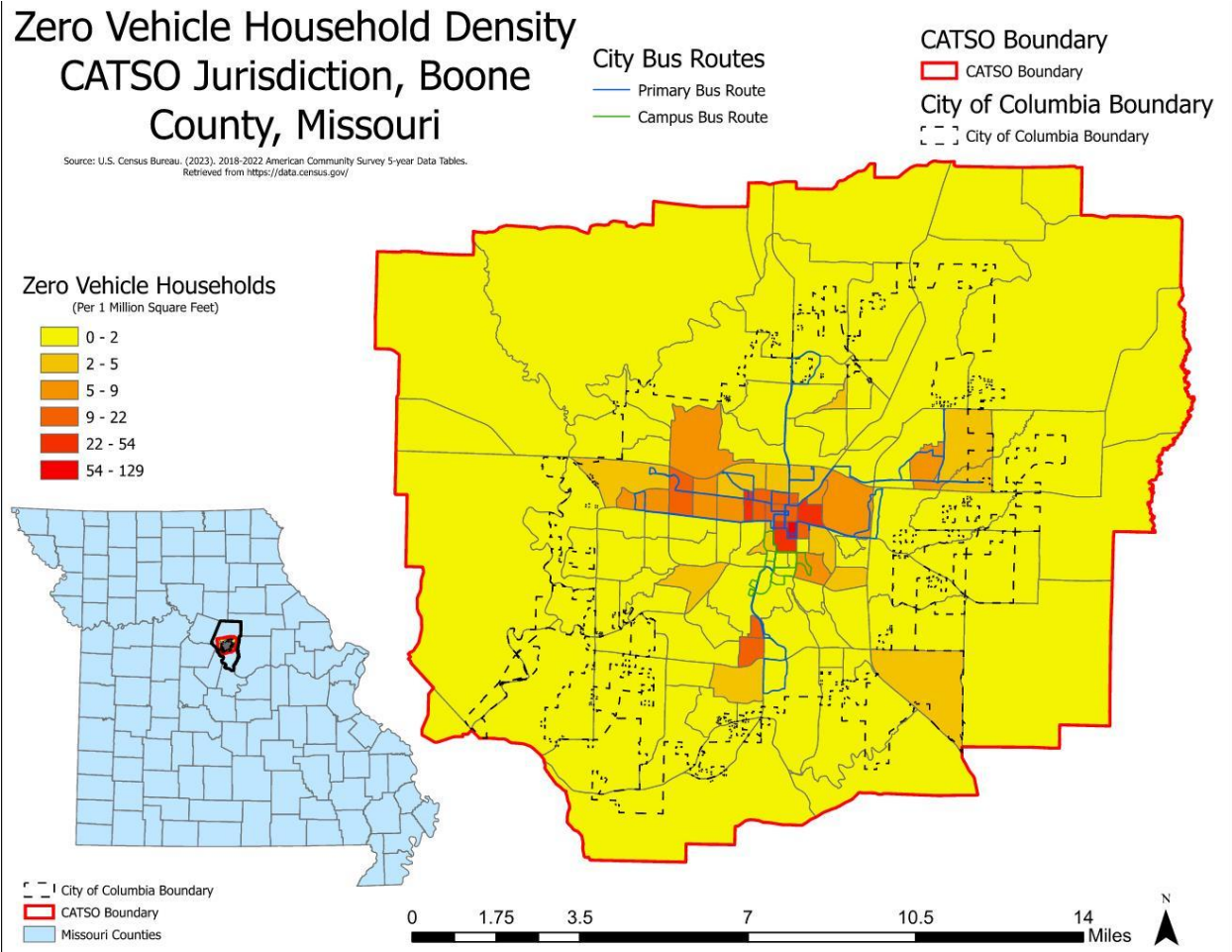
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). 2018-2022 American Community Survey 5-year Data Tables.  
Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/>



Map 2.3: Transit dependent (below 18, over 64) age density in Columbia, Missouri and the CATSO Metropolitan Planning Area.

Source: US Census Bureau (2023), American Community Survey 2018-2022 5-year Data Tables.

Non-car ownership is the final factor that can lead a population to be more transit dependent. Map 2.4 shows the density of the non-car ownership population in the CATSO metro area. Not surprisingly, the areas of non-car ownership greatly correlate with the areas of low-income (as demonstrated in Map 2.2).



Map 2.4: Non-car ownership density in Columbia, Missouri and the CATSO Metropolitan Planning Area.  
Source: US Census Bureau (2023), American Community Survey 2018-2022 5-year Data Tables.

### **B. Identification of Unmet Transportation Needs for Population of Consideration:**

Unmet transportation needs, gaps, and overlaps were identified through surveys of riders, agencies, and data analysis comparing transit needs with service territories as described in the preceding section. The results are described below.

#### ***Ridership Identified Unmet Transportation Needs, Gaps, and Overlaps***

In 2014, the City of Columbia completed a citywide public transit survey. One in four resident respondents indicated that they have used the public transit system; however, more than 76% did not report frequent use. Shopping and work were the top two reasons respondents reported for using transit. 39% of users were satisfied or very satisfied with the service, while 61% were somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied with service. The top four options for improvement of service, chosen from a list of 15, were: 1) need for more bus stop destinations; 2) faster service; 3) more bus stops needed near residences; and 4) more frequent bus service. Similar choices that focused

on expansion of service and increased coverage were the top picks for reasons respondents would increase transit use.

A majority of respondents supported a 10% increase in transit funding to meet these preferences. The two top choices for how to increase transit funding were a 3% increase on local hotel taxes, or a 1/20 of a cent annual increase to the general city sales tax for three years. Unfortunately, the City did not pursue either of these measures to increase transit funding. A hotel tax increase was passed in 2016, but all increased revenue is devoted to renovations at the Columbia Regional Airport (see Appendix B, 2014 Public Transit Survey Findings for a full discussion of the survey results and recommendations).

Notwithstanding, a Columbia Bus Service Evaluation Project was completed in 2016-2017 to find ways to deliver more effective, efficient transit service. A number of public input surveys were distributed and stakeholder meetings, a Community Visioning session, a Public Open House, and six smaller community conversations were held to assess the community's perspective and needs relating to local public transit.

Eleven small group stakeholder meetings were held on March 17, 2016 to discuss potential improvements to Columbia's future transit system. Meeting attendees included: municipal staff/officials; downtown Community Improvement District, employers, economic development groups; GoCOMO drivers; transit providers (transit and para-transit); universities and colleges; neighborhood associations and apartment complex owners/occupants; the Columbia Public Transit Advisory Commission (PTAC); transit and para-transit riders; and public transit advocates.

Stakeholders responded to questions that related to: familiarity of the transit system; the refined GoCOMO vision; perceptions of support for transit; priority service; potential improvements; priority challenges and opportunities; funding transit improvements; and other related topics. The stakeholder input fell into the four main categories of current Columbia Public Transit deficiencies; the need for partnerships/support of transit culture; ideas to increase service delivery and ease of use; and the intersection of parking, transit and land-use, summarized as follows in Table 2.5:

<b>Current Columbia Public Transit deficiencies</b>
<b>1.) Need to increase frequency of the Columbia Transit Service</b>
<b>2.) Need to increase coverage for Columbia Transit Service</b>
<b>3.) Need for Sunday and evening/late hours transit service</b>
<b>4.) Need to increase service efficiency for para-transit</b>
<b>5.) Low state funding for transit, only \$20,000 annually</b>
<b>6.) Fast ACT provides match funding for local funding; Need to increase local dollars to access more federal dollars</b>

### **Need for Partnerships/Support of Transit Culture**

- 1.) Both the need for, and the perceived impossibility of, a comprehensive transit partnership between the City of Columbia and the University of Missouri (past MU partnerships have failed)
- 2.) Professional student shuttle services compete with Columbia Public Transit, how to integrate service delivery?
- 3.) Could partner with top employers: University, Medical Centers and downtown
- 4.) Need for development and support of transit culture (like Lawrence, Champagne or Ames) in Columbia

### **Ideas to increase service delivery efficiency and ease of use**

- 1.) Need for bi-directional loops, less confusing
- 2.) Schedules need to be coordinated so transfers are easier
- 3.) Need for route usage analysis to more efficiently target service where it is most needed
- 4.) Need to use GIS to layer inputs and identify high priority areas
- 5.) Concentrate on rider rich areas of town and find low-cost opportunities for less dense areas
- 6.) Need for more intermodal/creative connections like Uber
- 7.) Could put resources towards high priority routes and subsidize other service delivery modes like taxis and ubers, like other communities have done
- 8.) Flex service
- 9.) Potential of a fare-free transit system

### **Parking, Transit and Land-Use**

- 1.) No real community need for transit, as parking is cheap and plentiful; could increase parking fees and/or tickets to pay for transit
- 2.) Transit buy-ins in lieu of parking minimums, fee in lieu for transit
- 3.) Parking fee, transportation fee to help pay for transit
- 4.) Transit should be considered in land use planning decisions
- 5.) Park and ride integrated into transit oriented development

Table 2.5: 2016 Transit Stakeholder Input

A Community Visioning Session related to public transit was then held on October 11, 2016. The goal of the meeting was to share the results of the stakeholder feedback and gather community

input on the refined vision for improved transit in Columbia; priority community transit needs and desires; and goals for improved bus service. A total of forty-eight (48) people attended the meeting. An additional three hundred ninety-two (392) members of the public provided input through an opinion survey distributed digitally and in hard copy from October 4, 2016 to January 13, 2017. A majority of survey respondents felt that it was very important to:

- Ensure that bus and para-transit service is fully accessible to all members of the population;
- Provide effective transportation service for all bus and para-transit riders;
- Provide sufficient resources for bus and para-transit service in the community;
- Make bus transportation an attractive and viable option for everyone;
- Integrate the transit system into Columbia's overall transportation network, including sidewalks and bike connections between destinations and bus stops;
- Partner with stakeholders to promote and market the bus system.

Respondents also placed high importance on coverage, accessibility and performance for Columbia's Public Transit service, as can be seen in figures 2.3 and 2.4 below.

**In the future, which type of coverage and accessibility do you envision? Select one opinion.**

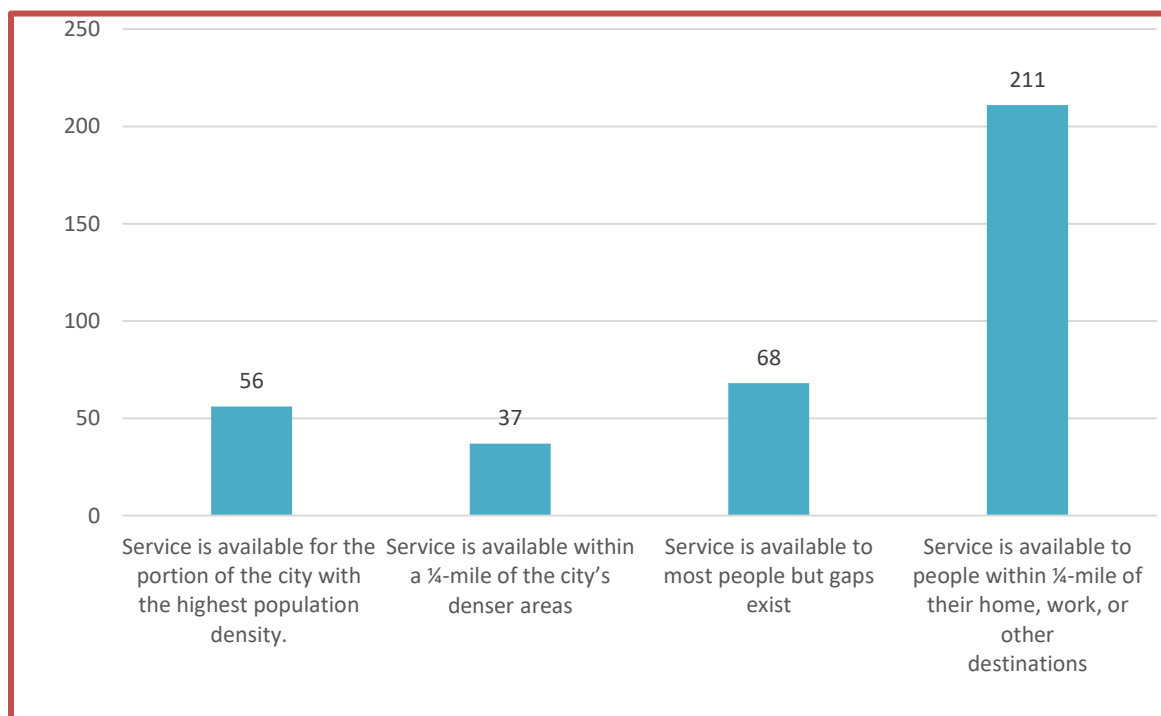


Figure 2.3: 2017 Transit Coverage & Accessibility Survey of Columbia Public

**In the future, which type of performance do you envision? Select one opinion.**

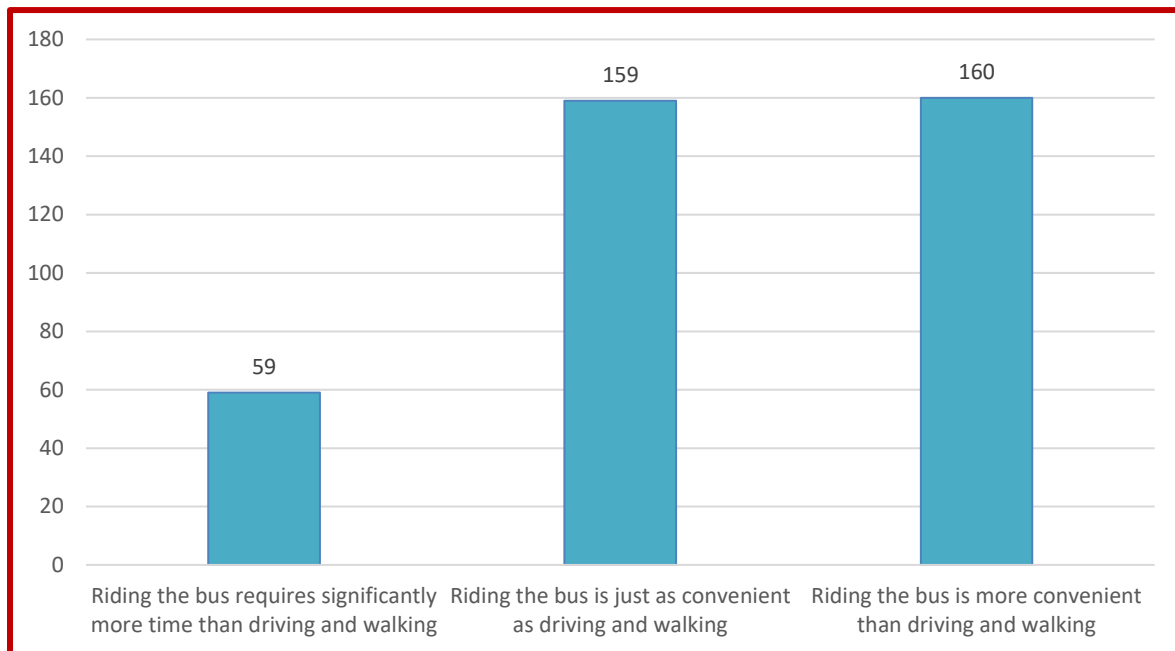


Figure 2.4: 2017 Transit Performance Survey of Columbia Public

These survey results, as well as input from the initial meetings, were used to develop alternative transit scenarios to create more effective, efficient Columbia transit delivery. A Public Open House and six Bus Stop Meetings were held from April 20 – May 5, 2017 to gather feedback on the scenarios, and digital and hard copy surveys related to the scenarios were also distributed during this time. Ninety-four (94) responses were collected during this period. The alternative scenarios presented to the public, both through the meetings and the surveys, are as follows:

1. **Flex Routes:** These provide curb-to-curb service in areas with lower transit ridership (flex zones). Riders would call COMO Connect 24 hours in advance for rides within a zone and could transfer to fixed routes. Fares would cost more than fixed route service.
2. **Route through MU Campus:** The new route would allow buses to bypass heavy pedestrian traffic on Rollins Streets. It would also help buses avoid construction projects that impact Hitt Street.
3. **Modified Loops Scenario:** This scenario costs about as much as today's system but simplifies it by adding flex routes, changing the alignment of Gold Route #2, and dividing Black Route #1 into two separate routes. It responds to congestion issues and provides 30-minute service.
4. **Trunk Routes Scenario:** This costs about as much as today's system but changes it from 1-way loops to 2-way, straighter routes that use the Wabash Station at 10th and Ash Streets, connect to MU Campus, and include flex routes. It provides 30-minute service, improves transfers between routes, and helps with bus driver shift changes.
5. **High Frequency Scenario:** This costs about \$800,000 more than today's system. It has some of the same features as the Trunk Route Scenario, e.g. 2-way routes, but it also provides 20-minute service. No flex routes are included.

- 6. High Frequency (with Flex Routes) Scenario:** This costs about \$1.3 million more than today's system but it changes the system into 2-way routes with 20-minute service. It also includes flex routes.

Eighteen (18) respondents loved the idea of flex routes; twenty-three (23) liked it; twenty-two (22) felt okay about it; and an additional twenty-two (22) were unsure about the idea of flex routes. Conversely, twenty-five (25) respondents loved the idea of the MU route change; twenty-four (24) liked it; seventeen (17) felt okay about it; and an additional eighteen (18) were unsure about the MU route change.

The graphed results of the survey responses to the alternate transit scenarios are demonstrated in Figure 2.5 below:

**Which transit scenario is most important for the community?**

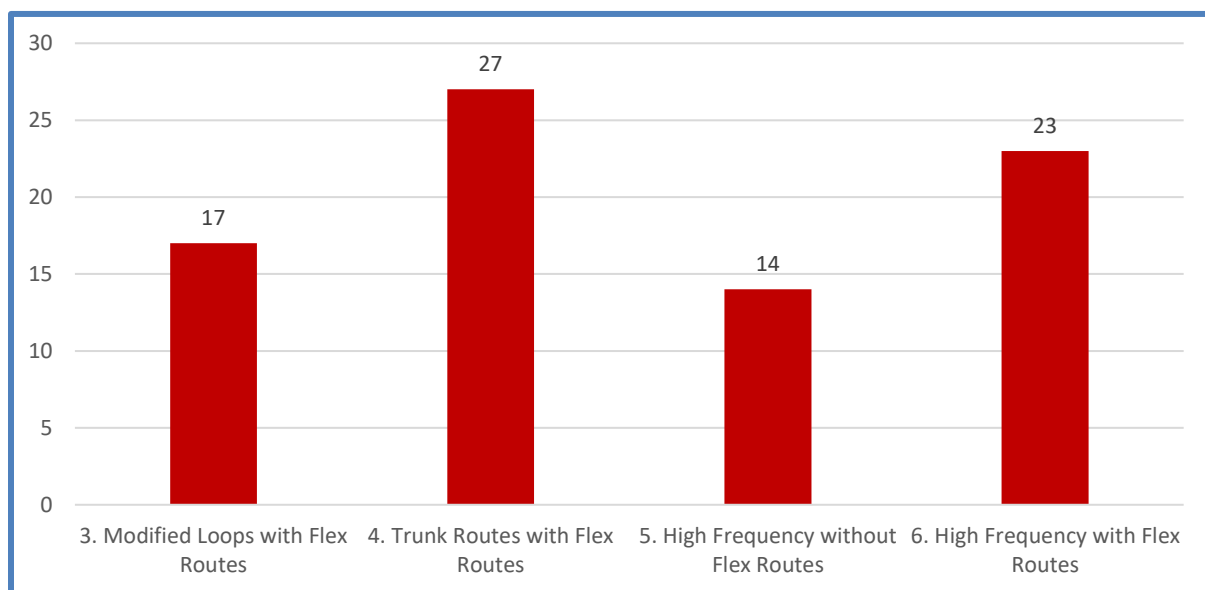


Figure 2.5: 2017 Transit Scenario Survey of the Columbia Public

This graph shows that the survey respondents had the highest interest in the trunk routes scenario, which allows costs to remain the same while creating 2-way loops and including flex routes. However, nearly as many survey respondents showed an interest in the highest cost scenario (an increased annual investment of 1.3 million) to create 2-way routes with 20-minute service and flex route options. Both choices demonstrate the respondents' interest in 2-way and flex routes. The similar question, "Which transit scenario is most important for stakeholders like you?" received similar responses, with 26 preferences for the trunk routes and 25 preferences for the increased investment for higher frequency service with flex routes.

The Bus Service Evaluation Project, including all of the possible scenarios and public input, was presented to the Columbia City Council on March 20, 2017, and during a Community Engagement meeting on April 20, 2017. The project recommendations have not yet been adopted for

implementation by the City Council (see Appendix C: GoCOMO Bus Service Evaluation Final Report for a full discussion of the project process and final recommendations).

### ***Provider Assessment of Transportation Needs/Gaps in Service***

Through online and phone surveys in April and May of 2018, the public transportation providers and social service agencies providing transportation services in the CATSO metro were asked to identify current and future needs through a description of their ridership characteristics; transportation demand and service provision; funding requirements and desires for expansion/continuation of transportation services; and interest in coordinating with other agencies for delivery of client transportation services (for entire survey, See Appendix D: 2018 CPTHSTP Transportation Provider Survey).

The results of the surveys are discussed on an individual agency basis in Sections 1. A, B and C (pgs. 4-17) of this plan. Cumulative survey results show that most transit dependent populations can find transportation services within the City of Columbia for a free or reduced cost, Monday through Friday, during regular business hours. Service is lacking on Saturdays, and with the exception of SIL, none of the transit service agencies surveyed provide rides on Sunday. There are also very few evening transportation services. The surveys also revealed that there is a dearth of public transit service outside of the City limits.

Agency survey responses also demonstrated a need for additional funding to provide public transportation rides to clients at a free or reduced cost. There were also a number of agencies that indicated a need for additional funding for capital investments or expanded transportation service delivery. 13 of the 16 agencies that responded to surveys indicated an interest in inter-agency coordination to expand and improve client transportation service delivery.

UPDATE: The City of Columbia hired consultant Olsson and Associates to do a comprehensive transit plan/survey in 2023. While the initial work was completed in 2024, the City Council believed there was a need for even more information, and the consultant agreed to provide this additional work to help the Council in their future decisions regarding transit. The additional work is expected to be completed in 2025. A further revision to this Plan will be possible once that additional GoCOMO data is made available for analysis.

## **SECTION III:**

### **A. Strategies and/or Activities to Address Identified Gaps and Achieve Efficiencies in Service Delivery:**

The third required component of the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation plan is to identify strategies for addressing the needs, gaps, and overlaps in existing services identified through Census and other data analysis, ridership surveys, and provider surveys. As the issues and deficiencies identified through these three sources are not mutually exclusive, they are addressed comprehensively through the strategies and related tactics described below. Many have been carried forward from the 2018 Plan, and several have been revised or newly proposed.

*Strategies (numbered) and related tactics (lettered) identified to address the needs within the CATSO boundary:*

## **1. Streamline GoCOMO's service delivery**

The 2014 Columbia ridership survey, the 2017 stakeholder and public participant feedback into the Bus Service Evaluation Project and the 2018 provider surveys all indicated a need for increased public transit service delivery. Although the current public transit budget does not allow for increased service, the following options could increase the efficiency of service delivery, meeting a greater number of user needs with current resources:

### **a. Targeted Service Delivery with Flex Routes for GoCOMO's Current Fixed Route System:**

The Bus Service Evaluation Project demonstrated that stakeholders and members of the public see a need to put more resources towards high priority routes, while providing service to lower need areas through alternative options. This could be done by implementing the Trunk Routes Scenario proposed through the project, which costs about as much as today's system (see pg. 28) and includes flex routes. Flex routes are described as curb-to-curb service in areas with lower transit ridership (flex zones). Riders would call COMO Connect 24 hours in advance for rides within a zone and could transfer to fixed routes. Fares would cost more than fixed route service.

Flex routes could also be provided through contracts with Uber or taxis; other communities have implemented similar systems. Moreover, additional targeted service delivery options could be implemented through analysis of maps 2.1- 2.5, which depict populations of higher transit ridership needs within the community, on pgs. 18-24.

### **b. Implementation of bi-directional loops and coordinated schedules for seamless transfers**

Feedback from the Bus Service Evaluation Project also revealed that a number of users would benefit from both a bi-directional loop system and bus schedules coordinated for little time between bus transfers. The Trunk Route referenced above would provide a bi-directional loop, and there are certainly other options to implement a bi-directional loop system. A review and evaluation of the GoCOMO route schedules could demonstrate opportunities for bus transfer synchronization.

## **2. Expand GoCOMO's service frequency, schedule and coverage**

The need for increased public transit service frequency, expanded schedule (into evenings and weekends) and increased service area coverage (more routes) were all indicated by the 2014 Columbia ridership survey, the 2017 stakeholder and public participant feedback into the Bus Service Evaluation Project and the 2018 provider surveys. However, this level of increased service for GoCOMO will not be possible without increased funding, ridership and community support for transit. The following measures could assist in these three areas:

- a. Advance New or Increased funding sources:** To increase funding for Columbia's transit service, the City could re-visit the funding ideas that were presented to the public through the 2014 Public Transit Survey. A majority of respondents supported a 10% increase in transit funding to increase GoCOMO's service capacity. The two top choices for how to increase transit funding were a 3% increase on local hotel taxes, or a 1/20 of a cent annual increase to the general city sales tax for three years. As stakeholders during the 2017 Bus Service Evaluation Project noted, per the Fast ACT, the federal government does provide a funding match for local dollars devoted to transit, making any effort to increase local transit dollars more valuable.
- b. Focus on Expanding Partnership with University of Missouri:** GoCOMO Service Data and Cost Allocation (page 8) shows that the most efficient trips (cost per trip) that it offers are within the MU Campus Shuttle service area (\$1.93 per trip). This is most likely because of the density of student riders. However, because of the small geography that the shuttle serves it has the highest cost per mile (\$24.91). Expanding the MU shuttle service area would increase this service mileage efficiency. However, as stakeholders noted during the 2017 Bus Service Evaluation Project, there are a number of challenges related to increasing a partnership with MU, and its related service area. Columbia transit is competing with private shuttles that provide rides to and from campus, but GoCOMO sustained losses when it extended this service in the past. Unlike similar Universities and towns across the nation, the University of Missouri did not invest in transit historically; it instead focused on parking infrastructure, which has led to a car-centric campus culture. That is changing to some extent, but the University has also experienced deep financial cuts and decreased student enrollment over the last couple of years, making it difficult to focus on increasing the current low \$18 student transit fee, or investing in additional transit capital or operating costs. Stakeholders also discussed the requisite for a student understanding of the need to raise transit fees and student support for switching to a transit culture. Despite this host of challenges, a continued effort to boost the partnership between Columbia Transit and MU could prove beneficial, as college towns like Ames, Iowa, and Lawrence, Kansas demonstrate.
- c. Focus on Additional Partnerships for Columbia Transit:** During the 2017 Bus Service Evaluation Project, stakeholders and members of the public discussed a potential partnership between Columbia transit and major employers as a way to increase transit ridership. In addition, the 2012 Community Conversation about Transit, which was discussed thoroughly in CATSO's 2013 CPTHSTP, recommended the launch of a high-level, multi-jurisdictional transit planning process that includes the City of Columbia, University of Missouri, Columbia Public Schools, Chamber of Commerce, and major employers. Findings from this plan also support furthering these types of transit community partnerships, as well as focusing on collaboration with senior centers and the human services providers discussed in this plan (also see Strategy # 5 on pg. 34)

**d. Support a Transit Culture through Changes in Land-Use and Parking Policies:** During the stakeholder conversations that were part of the 2017 Bus Service Evaluation Project, participants discussed the fact that in Columbia there is no real community need for transit, as parking is cheap and plentiful. Certainly, as has been discussed in this plan, there are members of the population who rely on public transit, but for most middle-class residents, as the stakeholders observed, there are no real community incentives to utilize transit, or disincentives to drive single-occupancy vehicles. As Donald Shoup discusses in *The High Cost of Free Parking*<sup>2</sup>, there are a number of ways to decrease parking demand through the support of Public Transit, including: employer provision of transit passes in lieu of free parking spaces; provision of transit passes instead of parking spaces for various land uses; developer fees in lieu of parking spaces that go towards funding transit. A number of these ideas were also proffered by participants in the transit stakeholder meetings, who offered these ideas in addition: increase parking fees and/or tickets to pay for transit; integrate park and ride into transit oriented development; and consider transit (walkability in relation to transit stops, housing density to support high levels of transit use) in land use planning decisions. Shoup's research, as well as the principles of Smart Growth, support the economic efficiency of supporting transit in lieu of expensive parking infrastructure, and requiring dense development to support transit use. However, past efforts to change parking policy in Columbia reveal a lack of community support for limiting parking supply. Any effort to make such policy changes should be completed in unison with larger, integrated efforts and/or implemented slowly and incrementally to account for community resistance.

**3. Expand and streamline Boone County services, namely OATS**

The completed 2018 provider surveys reveal a need for increased transit in rural Boone County, especially on evenings and weekends. The County's main transit provider, OATS, currently only provides service Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Considering that it could be cost prohibitive for OATS to increase its service to nights and weekends when there are less users, it could first focus on increasing the efficiency of its Boone County service delivery through an expanded fixed route system, similar to the innovative employment project OATS has started in the Camden County area (first referenced on pg. 9). Based on the provider surveys, the Boone County area is in need of a similar project that would include collaboration with area employers and/or human service agencies to provide regular, fixed route service to employees and clients. The model has increased OATS service efficiencies within a broad geographic area, serving more clients for a lower price. This cost savings could potentially allow OATs to also expand its service hours in the Boone County area.

**4. Create a One-Stop Information Webpage to Match Transportation Needs with Providers**

The development and maintenance of a directory of human service agencies and transportation providers, including federal, state, and local government contacts that

incorporates transportation into their activities, will assist those with transportation needs to find an applicable agency. It will also allow agencies to refer clients with unmet needs. The website could include information about services, transportation capabilities and resources. It should recognize Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and be compatible with assistive technology and other ADA needs. This will be a first step towards addressing the need to match needs with potential service providers.

#### 5. **Promote Education and Information Sharing Between Agencies and Providers**

Another strategy is to improve the understanding or “awareness” of what the transportation service providers do for their clients by health and human service agencies, clients and the

##### The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) on Mobility Management:

- Many transit agencies are embracing the concept of ‘**mobility management**’, which is a strategic approach to service coordination and customer service that is becoming a worldwide trend in the public transportation sector.
- When implemented, mobility management will move transit agencies away from their roles as fixed-route service operators, and toward collaboration with other transportation providers. The idea behind this approach is to create a full range of well synchronized mobility services within a community.
- Mobility management starts with the creation of partnerships among transportation providers in a particular region, so as to expand the range of viable options that communities have for transportation. Communication is also a critical component of mobility management, as the general public must be made aware of these options.
- With the mobility management approach, transit resources are efficiently coordinated, enabling customers to make better decisions, as well as improved customer service.

[www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com)

public. The idea could be an educational effort that would include identification of the agencies and their services, giving a more detailed summary of transportation options available. This may be done in conjunction with strategy #4 (strategy #4 focuses on assisting and educating persons with transportation needs and strategy #5 focuses on providers) as a website may dually provide information to users and providers.

#### 6. **Improve Coordination among Transportation Providers and Social Service Agencies**

Coordination of services may reduce costs and redundant services, leverage resources (financial, human, technological, facilities and fleet), and allow for efficiency through critical mass. The final strategy to address unmet needs is to develop better coordination among transportation providers and social service agencies through a mobility management concept. This goal of this strategy is to optimize all transportation resources in the community to improve specialized transportation for the elderly, disabled, low-income and others

through a range of activities. Coordination, communication and expanded partnerships form the basis of the mobility management concept, as described below.

Figure 3.1: The American Public Transportation Association Definition of Mobility Management

## **SECTION IV:**

### **A. Prioritization of Strategies for Implementation:**

The fourth component of a coordinated plan is to prioritize the strategies for funding and implementation. By organizing the six strategies identified to meet the CATSO Metro Area's unmet needs around short-term, medium-term and long-term priorities, the strategies can be approached through a workable time frame. As described in Section III of this plan, the six strategies are:

1. Streamline GoCOMO's service delivery
2. Expand GoCOMO's service frequency, schedule and coverage
3. Expand and streamline Boone County services, namely OATS
4. Create a One-Stop Information Webpage to Match Transportation Needs with Providers
5. Promote Education and Information Sharing Between Agencies and Providers
6. Improve Coordination among Transportation Providers and Social Service Agencies

This initial prioritized list analyses the six strategies listed above by time frame. This prioritization should be considered a starting point for future discussions on service coordination in the CATSO area. A final prioritization of strategies should be based on input from local agencies, City and County representatives, and the general public including individuals with disabilities, older adults and persons with limited incomes.

#### **1. Short Term**

##### ***Create a One-Stop Information Webpage to Match Transportation Needs with Providers Promote Education and Information Sharing Between Agencies and Providers***

- A shared educational/one-stop website to match users with services and to provide information about agencies providing transportation services, in support of inter-agency understanding of over-all service capacity. This website may be created or maintained by CATSO or a collection of transportation providers or social service agencies. It may also include shared schedules/maps and an interactive service directory to guide users or agencies through question to match needs with providers. Information on "how to ride" transit (i.e. how to read bus routes, how and if you need to arrange for a ride, how to pay, how to clarify disability-related needs, etc.) will also be provided through pictures, videos, text and other tools. This information may also be provided in brochure (including Braille and languages mandated by Title VI) format as well.

- A joint email listserv whereby agencies can communicate with one another regarding funding opportunities, events, agency changes and other important news items.
- Scheduled transportation provider “town hall” style meetings where agencies can meet and greet, share information, and establish relationships whereby additional coordination opportunities may be identified.
- Public participation in regional transportation planning and evaluation of transit service routes and times will be encouraged by providers and policy makers.

## **2. Medium-Term**

### ***Improve Coordination among Transportation Providers and Social Service Agencies Streamline GoCOMO’s service delivery***

- Agencies and providers will seek options to procure equipment with federal funding so as to leverage local funding and keep costs as low as possible to citizens; operation and maintenance funding will also be pursued as appropriate.
- Agencies and providers will seek grants and other funding for reduced and free fares.
- CATSO will encourage analysis of the transit impacts and opportunities related to transportation projects funded at the local, state and federal level.
- Agencies will work together to leverage resources and reduce redundancies.
- All parties will encourage strong community support of transit funding, services and transit supportive development and encourage participation by the local chamber of commerce and major employers in the development and implementation of public transportation plans and programs.
- Providers, agencies and CATSO will encourage regional-level transit planning.
- Agencies and providers will develop fare/transfer/pass agreements between one another to maximize the accessibility and affordability to users.
- CATSO may establish routine reviews of progress toward achieving implementation of this Coordination Plan through the Unified Planning Work Program, Transportation Improvement Program, and Long-Range Transportation Plan development and update cycles.
- Opportunities for greater coordination will be explored, particularly in the areas of joint dispatch, route planning, marketing and technology, customer service, grant writing, fleet/facility/employee sharing and other administrative, technical, and practical needs.

## **3. Long-term**

### ***Expand GoCOMO’s service frequency, schedule and coverage Expand and streamline Boone County services, namely OATS***

- Advance New or Increased funding sources for GoCOMO
- Focus on Expanding GoCOMO Partnership with University of Missouri
- Focus on Additional GoCOMO Partnerships
- Explore the Option of Switching to a Fare-Free GoCOMO Transit System

- Support a Columbia Transit Culture through Changes in Land-Use and Parking Policies
- OATS may consider expanded service delivery in Boone County through a collaborative, expanded fixed-route system
- OATs may explore expanding service to nights and weekends

#### **FEDERAL REGULATIONS ON COORDINATION:**

The federal transportation bill SAFETEA-LU included a requirement that any funding for projects under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 program, the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program, and the New Freedom program must be based on a local coordinated transportation plan. Some of the human services transportation providers in Boone County may be eligible for funding under the Section 5310 program while some of the enhanced services discussed in this chapter may be eligible for funding under the JARC or New Freedom program. Without support of a local coordinated transportation plan, these activities will not be eligible for funding under these specific federal programs.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The 2025 CATSO Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan reveals a number of opportunities for increased coordination and improved transit service delivery. As communities across the country continue to grow, technological changes proceed to advance and generational priorities change, new opportunities appear for innovative transit service delivery approaches. Through analysis of recent projects, community surveys and assessment of transit and transportation service providers, some of these opportunities are identified locally in this plan.

From increasing inter-agency communication through online platforms, to exploring flex routes transit options and fare-free systems, creative approaches to solving transit funding and ridership challenges, as well as human service agency client transportation needs, are available in the CATSO Metro area. Our aim is for this evaluation and the related ideas to improve transit service delivery in Boone County to be considered by local leadership, decision and policy makers. CATSO will make all efforts that time allows to support the implementation of these recommendations.

As noted earlier in the Plan, further and more updated analysis will be possible once additional research by consultant Olsson and Associates is completed at some point during calendar year 2025.