

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

La Crosse Regional Transit Development Plan

SEPTEMBER 15, 2021 - FINAL



LA CROSSE AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE



SRF CONSULTING GROUP, INC.

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INTRODUCTION

This Needs Assessment is the first technical memorandum of the La Crosse 2022-2032 Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP). The following is a summary of:

- Existing conditions in the La Crosse region.
- La Crosse area transit services and their recent performance.
- Insights from transit riders, stakeholders, and the public about their experience with and priorities for transit.
- Opportunities for growth and improvement, informed by existing conditions and public engagement.

Future memoranda will focus on strategies and recommendations in response to opportunities, and implementation steps toward making the plan a reality.

PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the La Crosse 2022-2032 Regional Transit Development Plan is to update and propose transit improvements that meet the travel needs of residents and visitors in the region. The project scope includes the development of goals and objectives for City of La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU), Onalaska Shared Ride (OSR), and Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT); an evaluation of existing conditions; carrying out authentic public engagement; and developing transit service recommendations that reflect community needs and can be feasibly implemented within the 10-year period.

In addition to addressing specific service needs within the transit systems, the TDP will identify opportunities to improve coordination between these three services, human services agencies, and other transportation modes.

Next Steps

After the completion of this Needs Assessment, the project proposes the following next steps:

- Develop goals, priorities, and performance measures for service alternatives development.
- Develop transit service and product alternatives that address community needs.
 - Distinguish between regional routes, neighborhood service and frequent corridors, and identify areas of route duplication.
 - Identify corridors for enhanced/rapid bus service and where those investments have the greatest potential.
 - Determine methods to improve on-time performance and focus on on-time performance as part of the system design.
 - Explore why paratransit increased productivity per service hour as it decreased ridership.
- Develop policy and strategic recommendations.
 - Explore opportunities for increased coordination among transit providers.
- Develop operational and capital financial plans to fulfill transit service priority alternatives.
- Continue public engagement to confirm that draft transit service and product alternatives, and the policy and strategic recommendations address the identified community needs.
 - Include an educational component on best transit practices elsewhere.
 - Engage in in-person outreach in the fall, including on college campuses.

TRANSIT SYSTEM OVERVIEW

La Crosse MTU

MTU operates complementary paratransit and seven fixed routes focused on the City of La Crosse: the downtown Circulator and routes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8. The routes, except for Route 8, operate from approximately 5:30 AM to 10:30 PM on weekdays, from approximately 8:00 AM to 7:30 PM on Saturdays, and from approximately 8:00 AM to 6:30 PM on Sundays. Route 8 is a weekday service focused on the industrial park in north La Crosse. It is interlined with Route 7, which is contracted by the Town of Campbell for weekday service on French Island. There is also a fare-free, late-night, Safe Ride program Thursdays through Saturdays.

MTU also provides contracted service to other municipalities. Route 10 – La Crescent connects downtown La Crosse with the City of La Crescent, MN. It operates from 5:42 AM to 7:00 PM on weekdays and from 7:42 AM to 3:30 PM on Saturdays. Route 7 – French Island operates between 5:55 AM and 5:55 PM. It is interlined with Route 8 - Crossing Meadows, which operates between 6:25 AM and 4:55 PM. Route 9 - Onalaska has morning service between 6:55 and 10:23 AM and afternoon service between 1:25 PM and 6:23 PM.

Onalaska Shared Ride

Onalaska Shared Ride (OSR) provides shared-ride service for the City of Onalaska, Village of Holmen, and Village of West Salem. The service is administered by the City of Onalaska and service is currently provided through contract by Running Inc. Rides are available seven days a week between 6:30 AM and 7:00 PM.

SMRT

Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT) is a weekday-only commuter bus system in Crawford, Monroe, Vernon, and La Crosse Counties in Wisconsin. It is administered by La Crosse County and contracted out to Running Inc. Each route runs three or four round trips per day. The Blue and Yellow Routes serve the municipalities of Viroqua, Westby, Coon Valley and La Crosse between approximately 6:00 AM and 7:00 PM. The Red Route serves Prairie du Chien, Lynxville, Ferryville, Desoto, Genoa, Stoddard, and La Crosse between approximately 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM. The Green Route serves Tomah, Sparta, West Salem, Onalaska, and La Crosse between approximately 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Transit service in the La Crosse area is informed by preceding policies and plans. Table 1 lists plans that are relevant to this TDP update. Other guiding decisions include the Complete Streets policies adopted by the County of La Crosse (as well as the City of La Crosse, Onalaska, West Holmen, and Salem) in 2011.

Table 1. Guiding Plans that Inform the Transit Development Plan

| Policy Document | Description | Themes & Connection to Transit |
|---|---|--|
| Grand River Transit Service Enhancement & Policy Plan 2015-2025 | This plan describes the MTU system, its history, and national trends affecting transit; analyzes the system’s performance and compares it to similar transit systems; addresses stakeholder input; and outlines recommendations to improve system performance within its budgetary and other constraints. | The previous TDP provides background for the current effort, including the recent history of MTU’s fare structure, revenue sources, and service changes. It demonstrates that the cost-effectiveness of service has been declining since 2008. Some concepts have been implemented (e.g., creation of the Circulator route) while others have not (e.g., creation of an express route). Some issues raised in public engagement were echoed by stakeholders in 2021, e.g., inconvenient service hours, inconvenient transfers, and competition with free parking. |
| City of La Crosse Transportation Demand Management Plan (2018) | This plan identifies regional and statewide trends that encourage a shift from single occupancy vehicle travel to other modes; describes completed and ongoing projects that support this shift; identifies related opportunities, challenges, and issues; and sets out specific future goals. | The plan recommends both transit improvements and transit-supportive development/programming. It recommends looking for bus rapid transit, transit-oriented development, and corridor pulse-node opportunities. |
| City of La Crosse Transportation Vision (2015) | Toole Design Group hosted a four-day charrette to develop a 100-year vision for transportation in La Crosse. It included small-group table exercises by about 115 members of the public, eight stakeholder interviews, open office hours, and a final vision statement and set of conceptual designs presented to the public. | The visioning process supported goals of safety, walkability, bike friendliness, access, slower driving speeds, few vehicle miles traveled, complete streets, and beauty. The final design concepts included a transit-oriented development approach along bus routes downtown and on South Avenue, with mixed uses, high density, and parking maximums. Other proposals would improve safe access to bus stops, such as a shared streetscape design on Pearl Street, separated bicycle lanes on La Crosse Street, and a series of roundabouts along South Avenue. |
| 2021-2024 LAPC Transportation Improvement Program (October 2020) | The TIP lists all federally- and state-funded transportation projects programmed in the La Crosse and La Crescent metropolitan planning area through 2024. It also includes a financial plan with funding sources. | Transit projects in the 2021-2024 TIP include operations funding for MTU, OSR, La Crosse County Minibus, Vernon County Minibus, and SMRT; operations funding for a mobility management project and vehicle loan program; and capital funding for new vehicle purchases by MTU, City of Onalaska (OSR), City of La Crescent (Apple Express), and La Crosse County (SMRT). These projects are listed in detail on page 20 of the TIP. |
| Beyond Coulee Vision 2040: A performance-based approach to moving people and goods (2020) | This is the most recent update of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan by the La Crosse Area Planning Committee. It is a long-range, multimodal plan that integrates all jurisdictions in the planning area. | In addition to providing a comprehensive overview of area transit services, the plan sets out action strategies that include implementing improvements recommended in the last TDP, such as improved service to Amtrak and Onalaska; developing an integrated regional transit system; ingrain equity by prioritizing multimodal and transit projects; address climate change by transitioning to electric/alternative fuel vehicles. |
| City of La Crosse Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (2012) | This plan reviewed then-current conditions, established benchmarks for improvement, and made recommendations to encourage walking and biking for transportation and recreation. | The pedestrian components of the plan include adding sidewalks to streets; making more intersections ADA compliant; and switching signals to pretimed cycles that better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. These changes support access to transit stops, which were included as a factor in prioritizing improvements. |

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT DENSITY

Several factors are often correlated with and suggest the need for public transit service. Among the most important are population and employment density. Measures of daily activity, including population and employment density, suggest locations where people commonly travel. Employment maps do not only reflect potential commute sites, but also reflect commercial areas customers may travel to throughout the day.

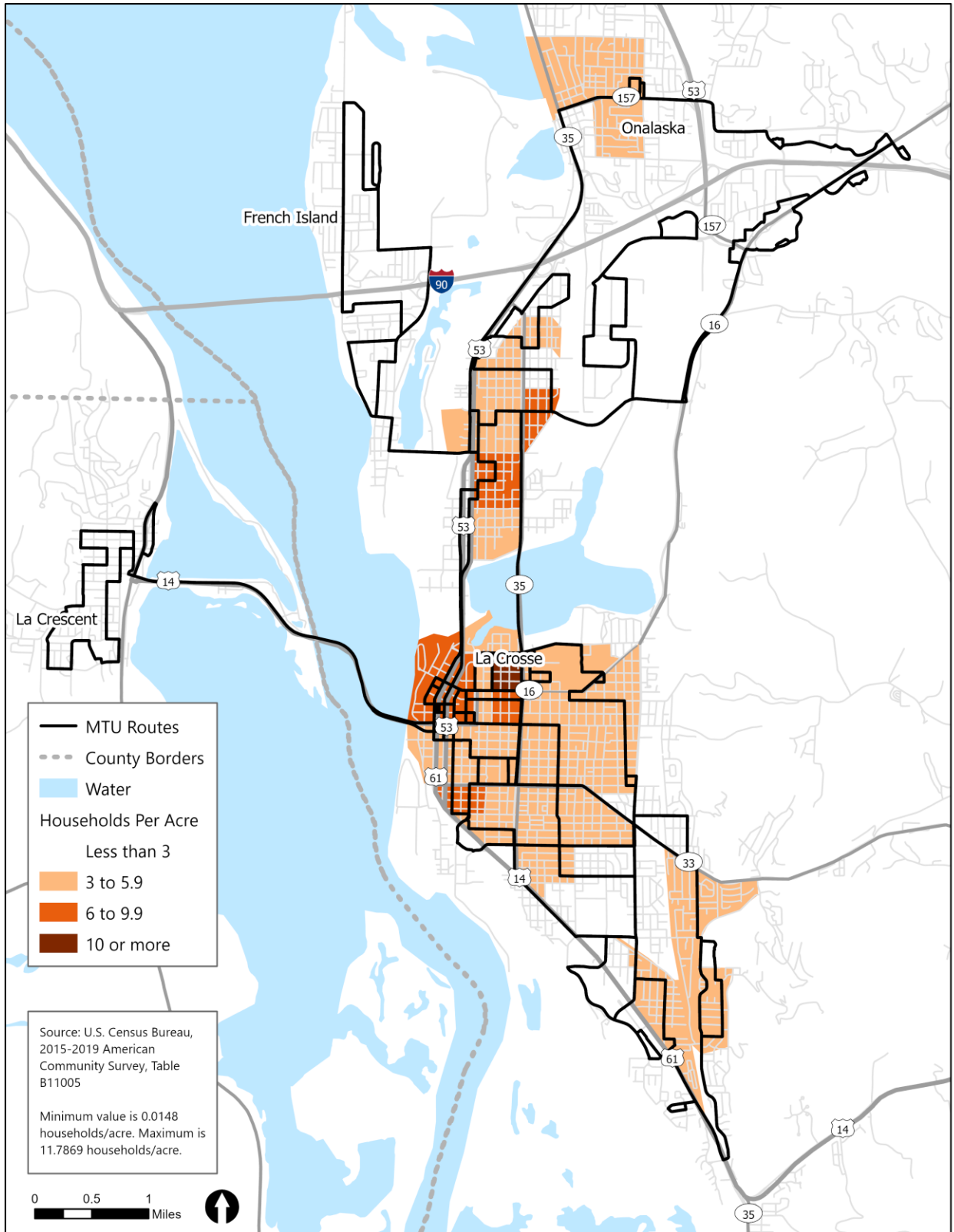
Regular fixed-route transit service can generally be supported in areas with a density of three households and/or four jobs per acre.¹ The City of La Crosse has the highest population density within the region. Looked at in more detail in Figure 1, the areas near the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse and Viterbo University stand out.

Employment density in the City of La Crosse is mostly transit-supportive along the west side of the city, near the Mississippi River (Figure 2). Most jobs per acre can be found in areas with hospitals and in downtown. Downtown also stands out in absolute terms, as seen in the jobs per block map (Figure 3).

It should be noted that American Community Survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau provide estimates, not exact counts. The job locations available through OnTheMap are based on an employer's reporting location, which can differ from the actual job site. However, these datasets provide the best information available currently and are nationally used best practice for demographics and socio-economic indicators, and the spatial information they provide is of great value, including for transit service planning. These maps are intended to document a baseline understanding of the project setting, which will be used to develop transit service recommendations.

¹ See TCRP Report 165, Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual, Third Edition, pp. 3-19 to 3-20.

Figure 1: Population Density by Block Group, MTU Service Area



The small sample size of the American Community Survey may cause some block groups to have low reliability due to a higher margin of error.

Figure 2: Employment Density by Block, MTU Service Area

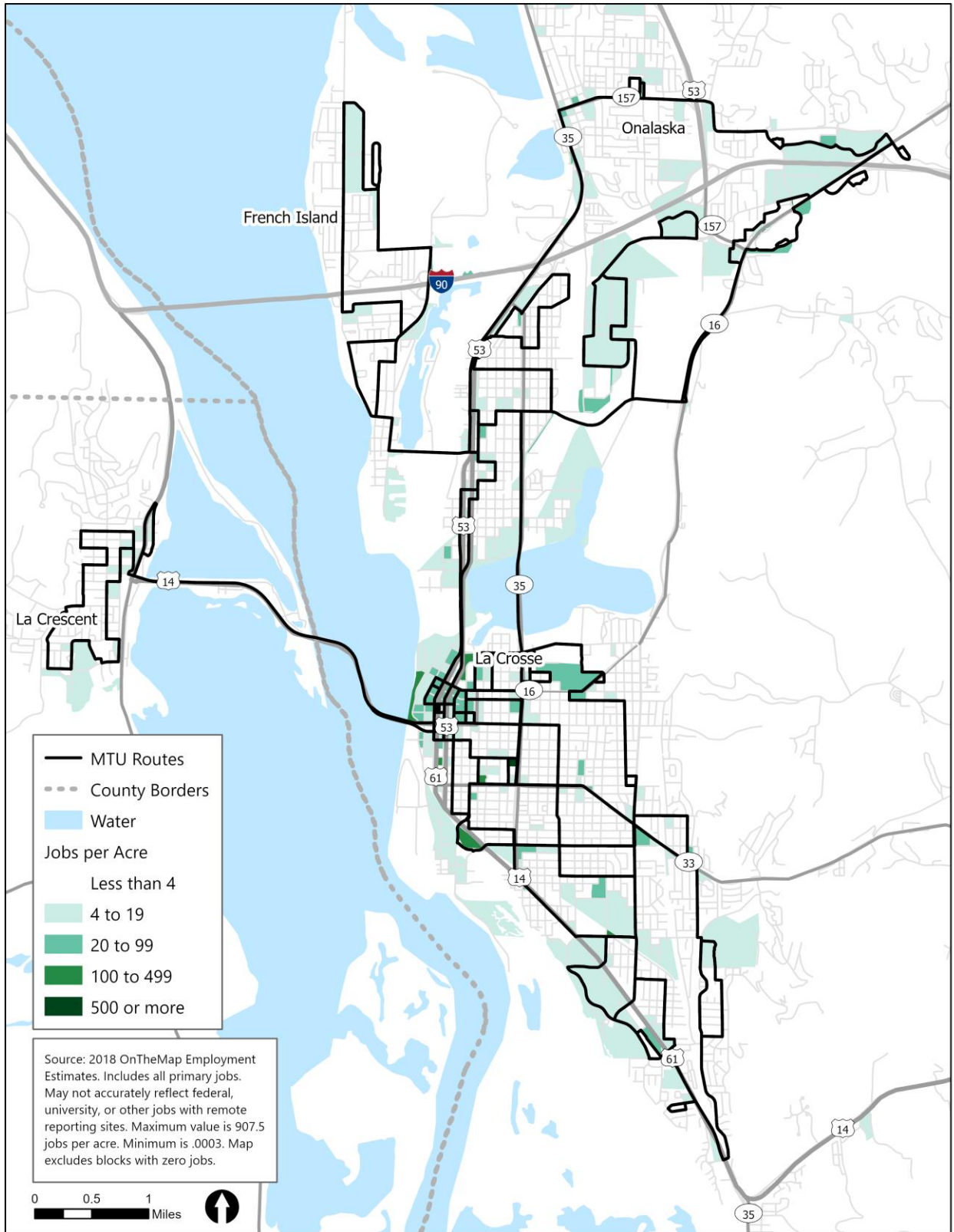
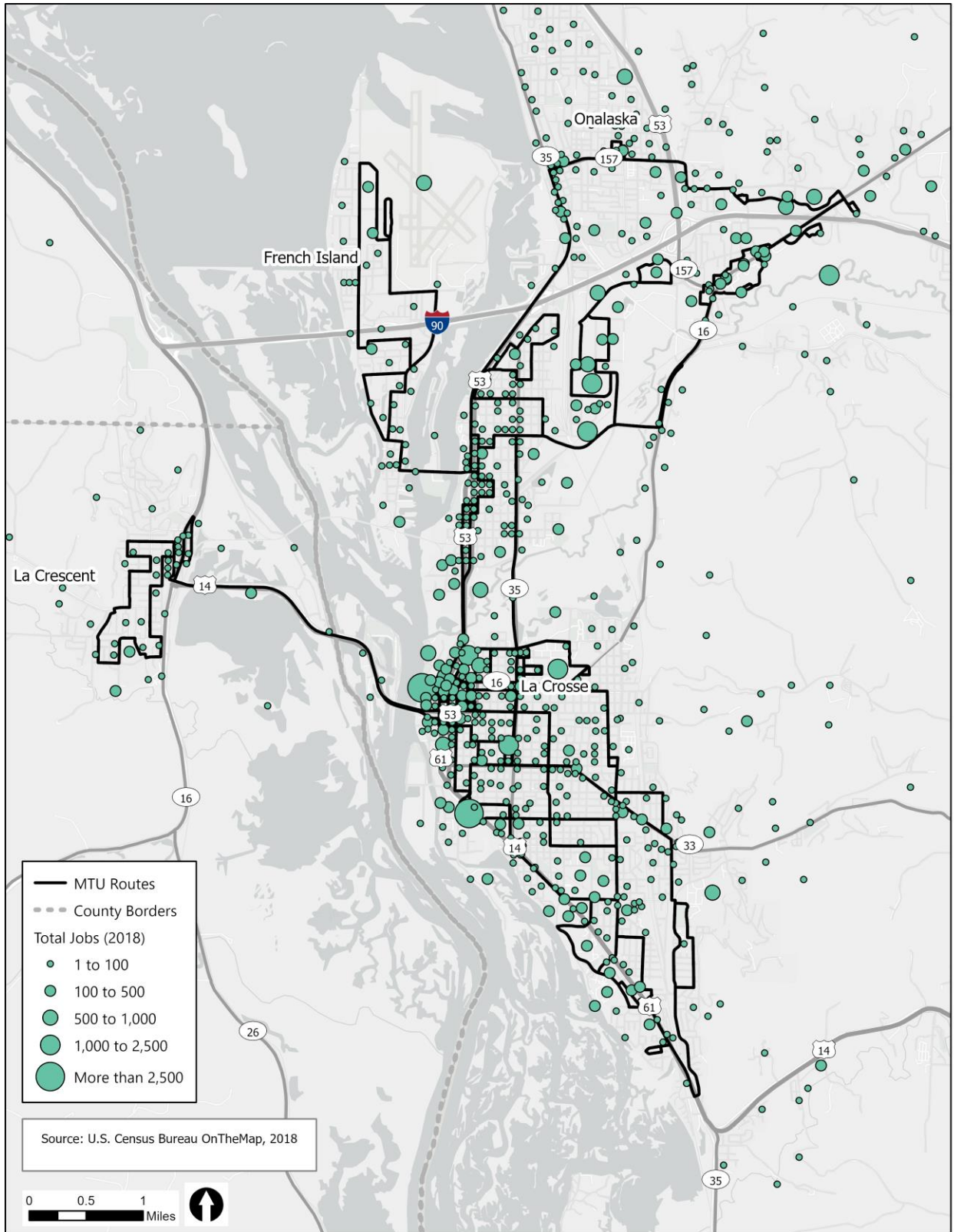


Figure 3: Number of Jobs by Census Block



EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Several demographic factors are often correlated with transit demand, including income, vehicle ownership, and age. People with lower incomes are more likely to ride public transit, as are those whose households do not own a vehicle. Single-parent households may also have a greater propensity to use transit. The age of residents can also be a predictor of transit use. Older adults may benefit from access to transit, and it is typical for young adults of student age to use transit at a higher rate than other groups.

Additionally, it is critical to consider racial equity in the allocation of transit service. Looking at the spatial distribution of populations of color in relationship to existing transit routes can identify potential equity gaps in service.²

MTU Service Area

In the La Crosse area, the MTU fixed-route service converge in the block groups where low-income households predominate.³ In downtown, for example, where 30-minute and Saturday/Sunday service are most likely to be found, 60 percent or more of households are low-income (Figure 4). Similarly, households without a vehicle available are concentrated in the central neighborhoods where most current fixed-route-service routes converge (Figure 5).

This is not the case with single-parent households. Block groups with the highest percentages of single-parent households are in neighborhoods with more limited transit service, farther away from downtown (Figure 6).

The senior population – individuals 65 or older – have fewer options to take MTU fixed-route service, given that block groups with high percentages of seniors are located on the edge of the service area or on less-frequent routes (Figure 7). However, it should be noted that seniors have options other than MTU service, including shared rides provided by the La Crosse County Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC).

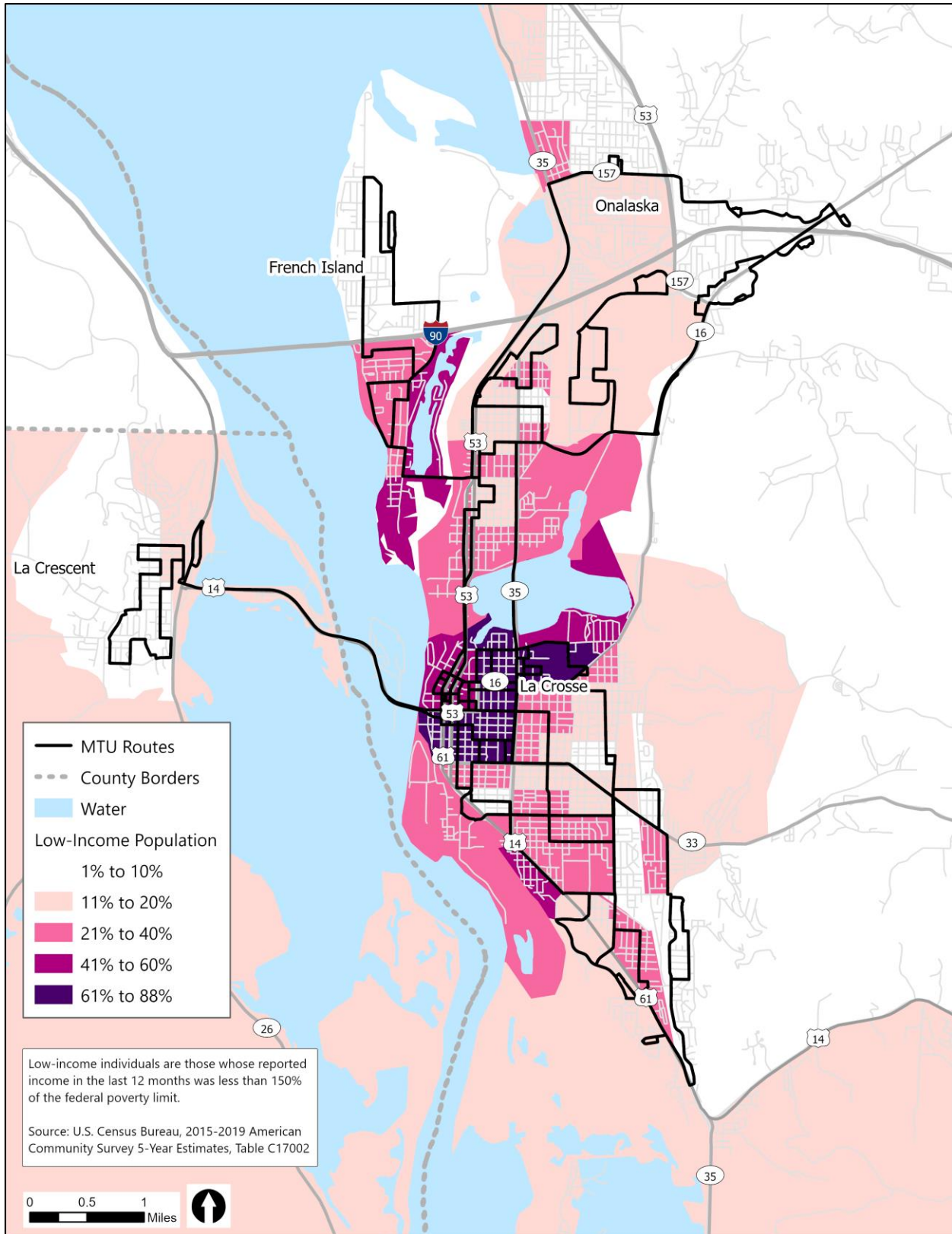
Young adults between 18 and 24 are comparatively well-served by transit, with the high-concentration block groups located in the city center (Figure 8). Some additional service on Route 5 is provided during the school year on a contract with the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.

Figure 9 suggests that the block groups where people of color compose the highest percentage of the population are served by Routes 6, 9, and 8; of these, only Route 6 has weekend or 30-minute service.

² Defined here as individuals who reported any combination of race and ethnicity other than White Alone, Non-Hispanic.

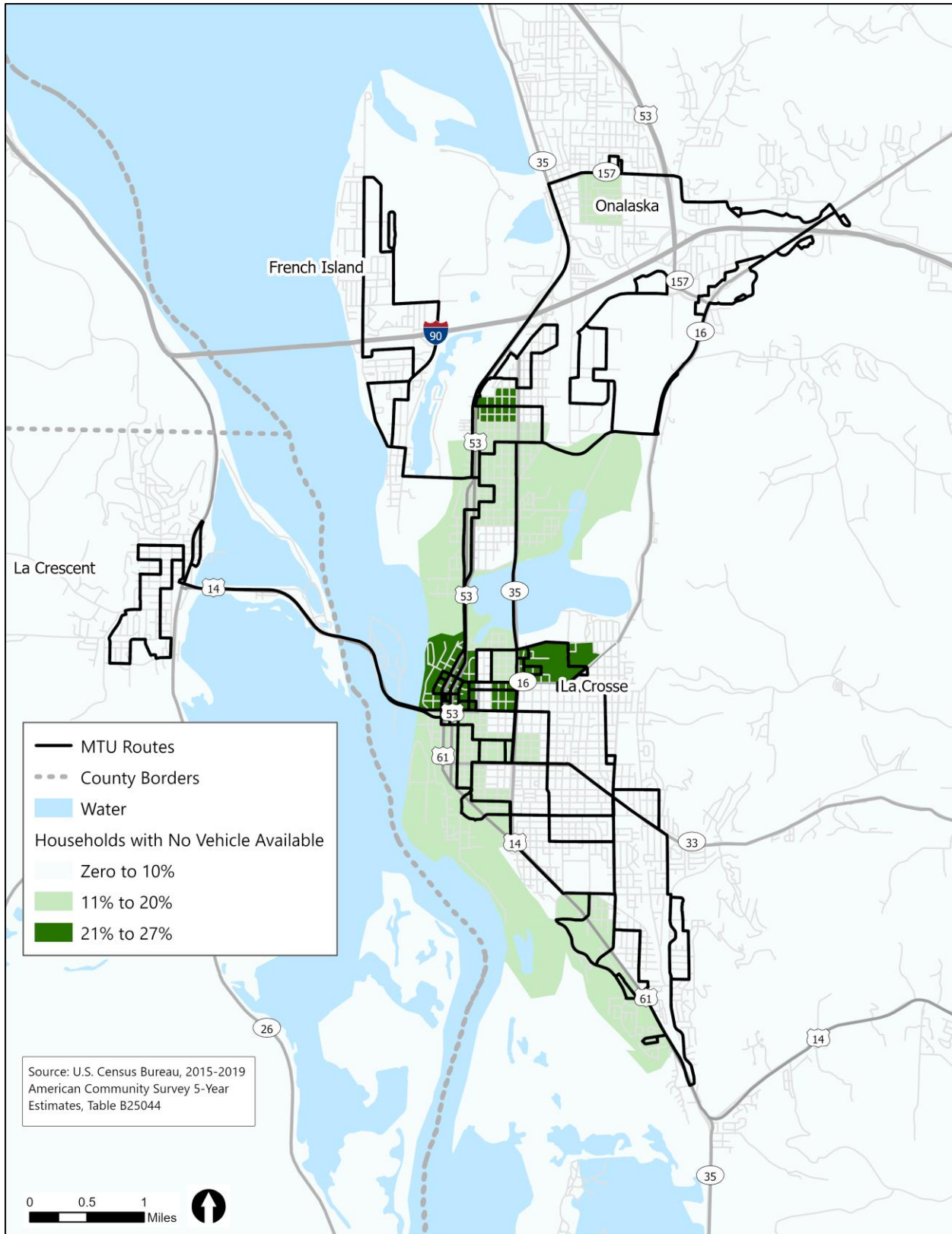
³ Low-income is here defined as less than 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

Figure 4: Low-Income Population by Block Group: MTU Service Area



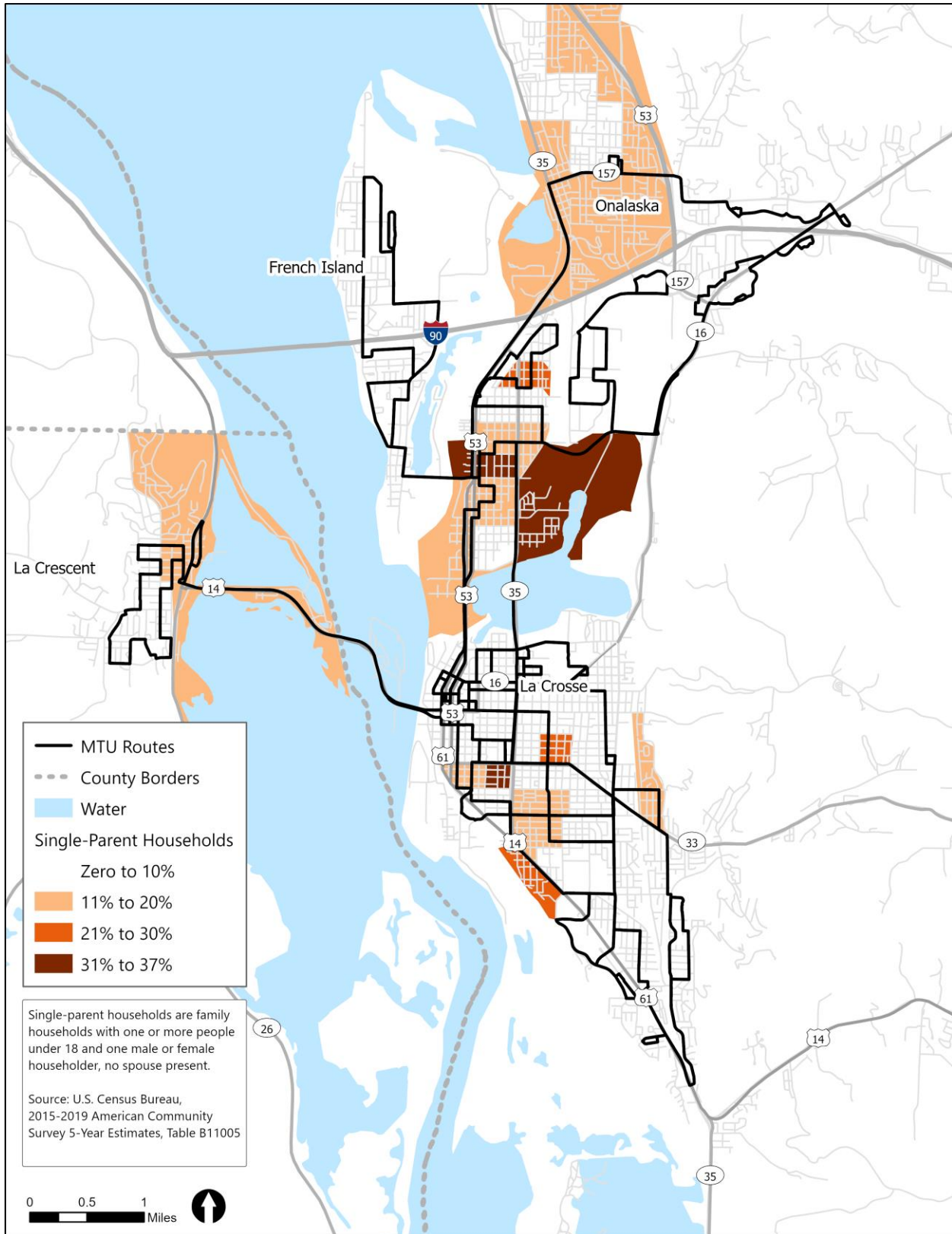
The small sample size of the American Community Survey may cause some block groups to have low reliability due to a higher margin of error.

Figure 5: Vehicle Ownership by Block Group: MTU Service Area



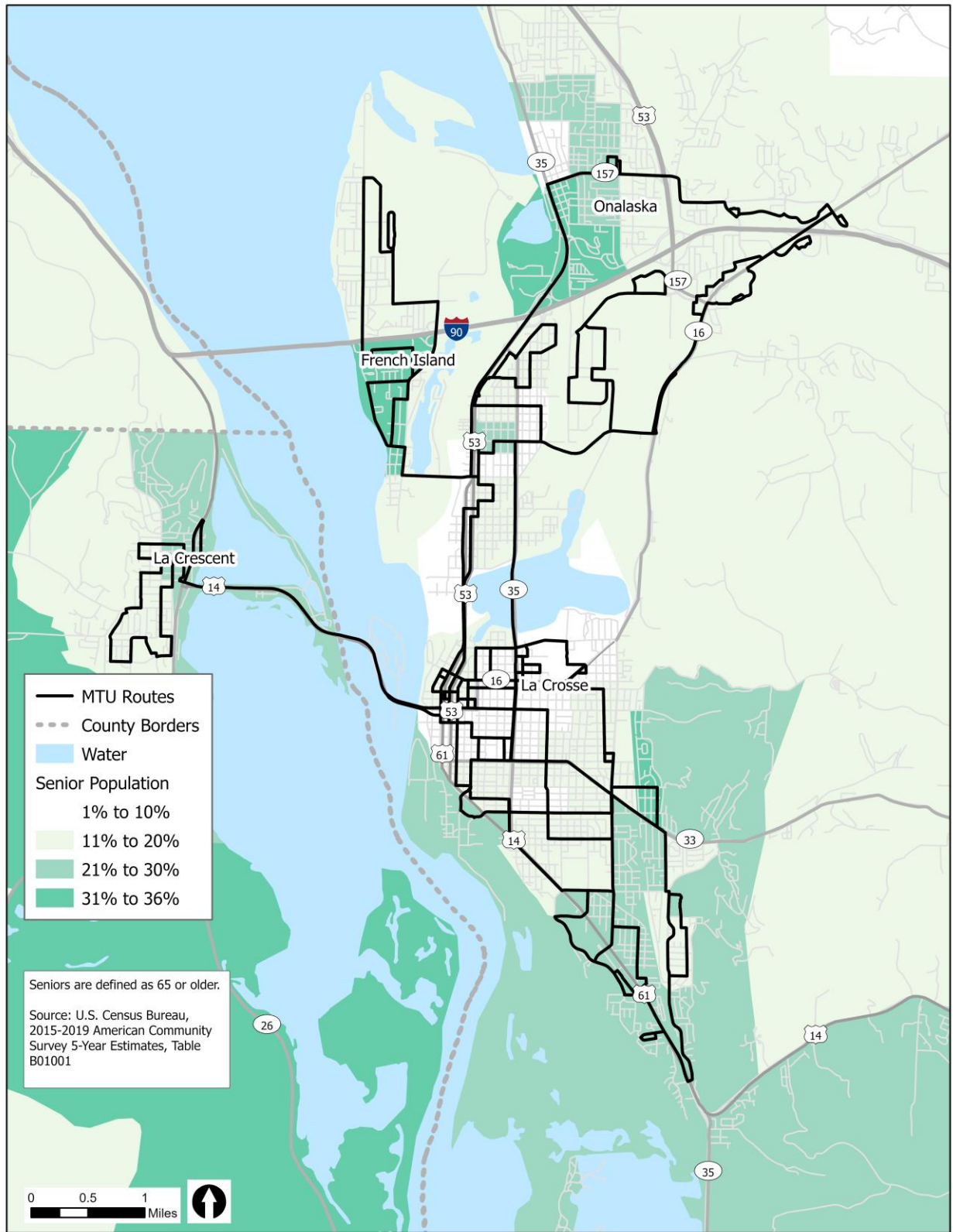
The small sample size of the American Community Survey may cause some block groups to have low reliability due to a higher margin of error.

Figure 6: Single-Parent Households by Block Group: MTU Service Area



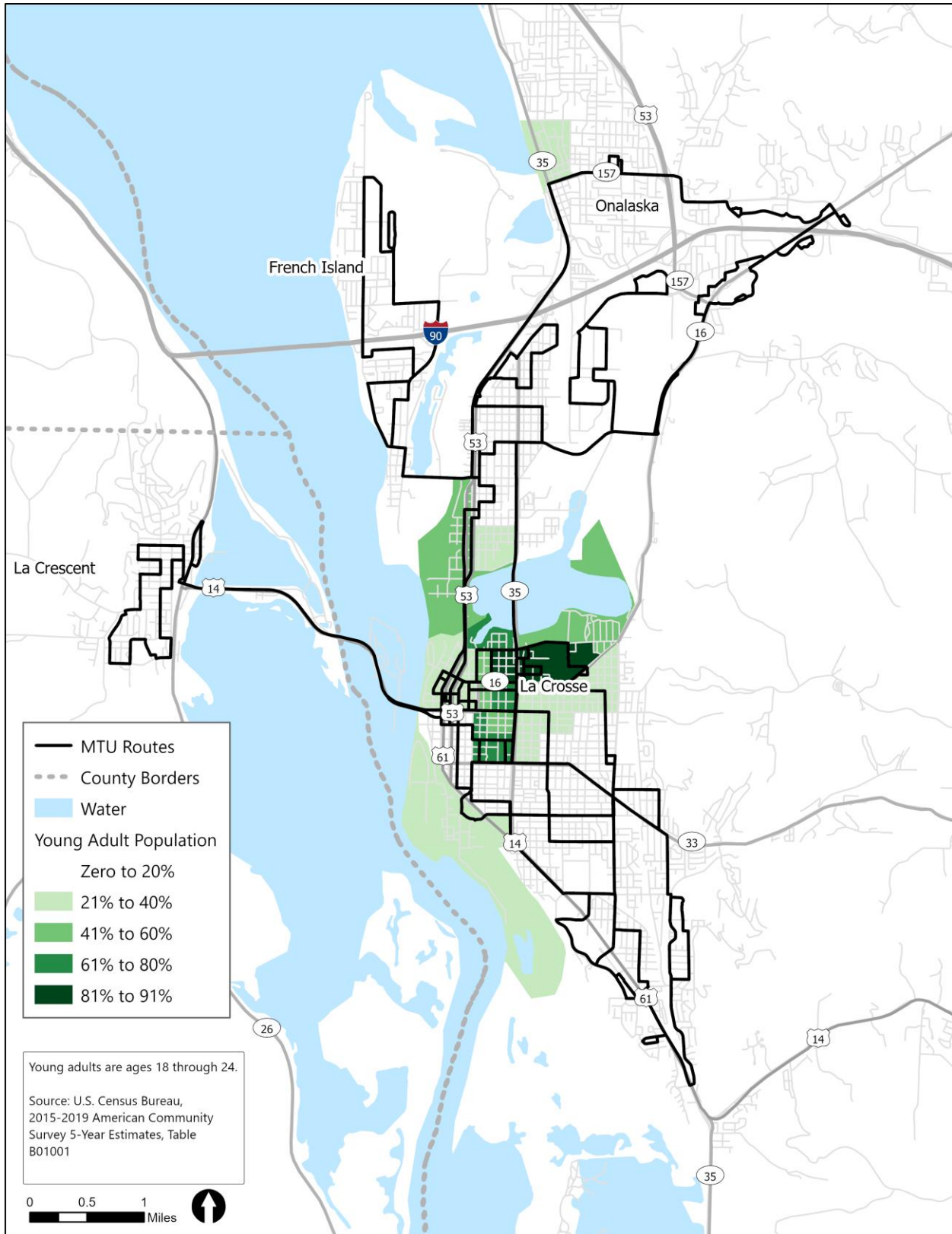
The small sample size of the American Community Survey may cause some block groups to have low reliability due to a higher margin of error.

Figure 7: Senior Population by Block Group: MTU Service Area



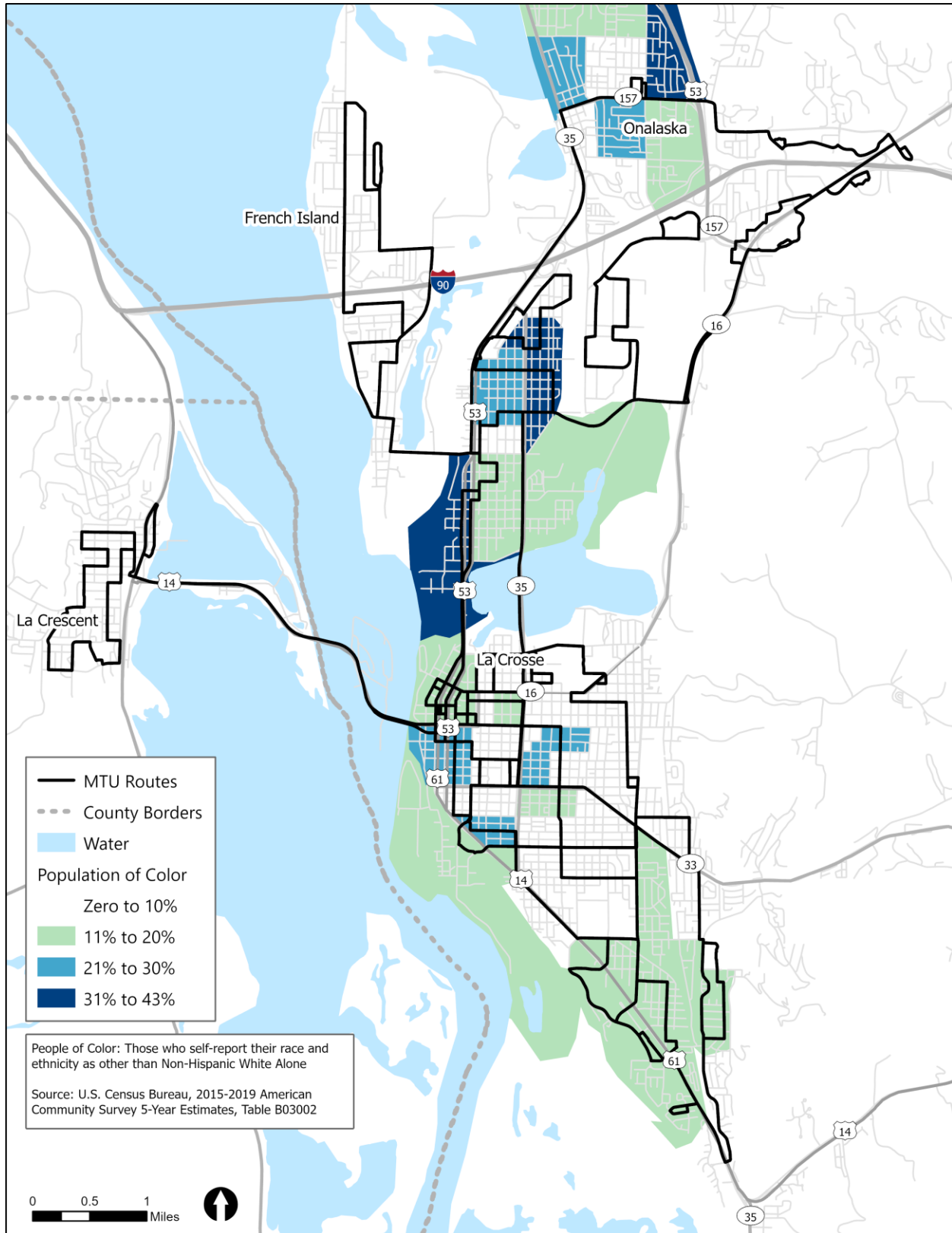
The small sample size of the American Community Survey may cause some block groups to have low reliability due to a higher margin of error.

Figure 8: Young Adult Population by Block Group: MTU Service Area



The small sample size of the American Community Survey may cause some block groups to have low reliability due to a higher margin of error.

Figure 9: Population of Color by Block Group: MTU Service Area



The small sample size of the American Community Survey may cause some block groups to have low reliability due to a higher margin of error.

OSR and SMRT Service Areas

As OSR and SMRT serve less densely populated areas than MTU, a fine-grained look at demographics by census block is less informative. Predictors of urban transit use are also less reliable in more rural settings. However, basic statistics can provide some context for service planning. Table 2 offers a snapshot of the four counties served by SMRT and the three municipalities served by OSR, with the City of La Crosse, the state of Wisconsin, and the United States for comparison.

Table 2. Population Statistics in La Crosse Region

| Geography | 2019 Population | Percent Population Change 2010-2019 | Percent Projected Population Change, 2010-2040 | Percent People of Color | Percent 65+ | Percent Experiencing Disabilities |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| La Crosse County | 118,016 | 2.9 | 15 | 10.5 | 16.9 | 7.3 |
| Monroe County | 46,253 | 3.5 | 22 | 10.1 | 17.5 | 10.2 |
| Vernon County | 30,822 | 3.5 | 23 | 3.7 | 20.0 | 7.1 |
| Crawford County | 16,131 | -3.1 | -0.5 | 6 | 24.0 | 9.4 |
| Onalaska | 18,943 | 6.5 | 15 | 13.7 | 19.7 | 6.9 |
| Holmen | 10,034 | 10.5 | 49 | 12.1 | 15.8 | 9.4 |
| West Salem | 5,015 | 4.3 | 21 | 7.8 | 20.0 | 6.1 |
| La Crosse City | 51,227 | -0.2 | 1 | 11.4 | 13.8 | 8.3 |
| State of Wisconsin | 5,822,434 | 2.4 | 14 | 19.1 | 17.5 | 8.0 |
| United States | 328 million | 6.3 | - | 39.9 | 16.5 | 8.6 |

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts; State of Wisconsin Department of Administration

EXISTING SERVICE REVIEW

MTU

The City of La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU) operates fixed-route and complementary paratransit. A map of fixed routes is shown in Figure 10 and a map of paratransit service areas is shown in Figure 11.

The ridership analysis covers operating statistics from before March 2020 to exclude the drop in ridership due to the start COVID-19 pandemic and the fluctuating ridership since. Ridership during the pandemic does show the essential services and destinations reliant on the workforce and customers using transit, and these travel patterns will be examined for future transit service planning alternatives development.

Fixed Routes

The core fixed-route system is based on a hub-and spoke structure. Six routes are focused on the City of La Crosse and meet at the downtown transit center at Grand River Station. The downtown Circulator is composed of two loops (C1 and C2) running clockwise and counterclockwise. Routes 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 operate from approximately 5:30 AM to 10:30 PM on weekdays, from approximately 8:00 AM to 7:30 PM on Saturdays, and from approximately 8:00 AM to 6:30 PM on Sundays.

The service levels on four other routes are determined by contracts with other cities.

- Route 7 – French Island and Route 8 – Crossing Meadows are interlined. The Town of Campbell, which is served by Route 7, has an agreement with La Crosse in which it covers half the combined cost of operating Routes 7 and 8. Both routes depart from the Clinton & Caledonia transfer point.
- Route 9 – Onalaska is provided through a service contract with the City of Onalaska, WI. It departs from the Clinton & Caledonia transfer point and from Valley View Mall.
- Route 10 – La Crescent is provided through a service contract with the City of La Crescent, MN and is branded as the “Apple Express” to reflect La Crescent’s best-known crop. It departs from the Grand River Station transit center.

MTU provides additional services through a service contract with the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse (UWL). During fall and spring semesters, extra trips are added to Route 5 to increase frequency. This extra service is analyzed separately as the “Valley View Extra” in service planning. MTU also provides a fare free late-night Safe Ride service between downtown and the university campus. This late-night service operates Thursday and Friday from 10:00 PM to 3:00 AM, and Saturday from 9:00 PM to 3:00 AM. Although geared towards students, the Safe Ride bus is free and open to all. The Valley View Extra and MTU Safe Ride Program are funded through agreements with two colleges in La Crosse. The agreements for this service are billed to these colleges based on the average MTU system operating costs per hour.

Complementary Paratransit and Demand-Response

Within the city of La Crosse and parts of Onalaska, MTU provides complementary paratransit service for those who are unable to use fixed-route service due to a disability. Paratransit rides are provided under the service name “Mobility Plus” and are available within three-quarters of a mile from Routes 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and the Circulator during their respective hours of operation. Reservations must be made at least 24 hours in

advance. MTU does not own or directly operate these vehicles; instead, it contracts with Abby Vans to provide service.

Within the Town of Campbell on French Island and the City of La Crescent, deviated fixed-route service is provided in lieu of the complementary paratransit. Vehicles on Route 7 deviate on request within French Island and vehicles on Route 10 deviate to most of the City of La Crescent.

Three routes (1, 5, and 7) also offer small areas of demand-response service during certain times of day. On Route 1, service is available to Sherwood Manor between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. On Route 5, service is available to Frontage Road. On Route 7, service is available to La Crosse Regional Airport.

Figure 11 shows the boundaries of paratransit service in and around La Crosse.

Figure 10. MTU Fixed Routes

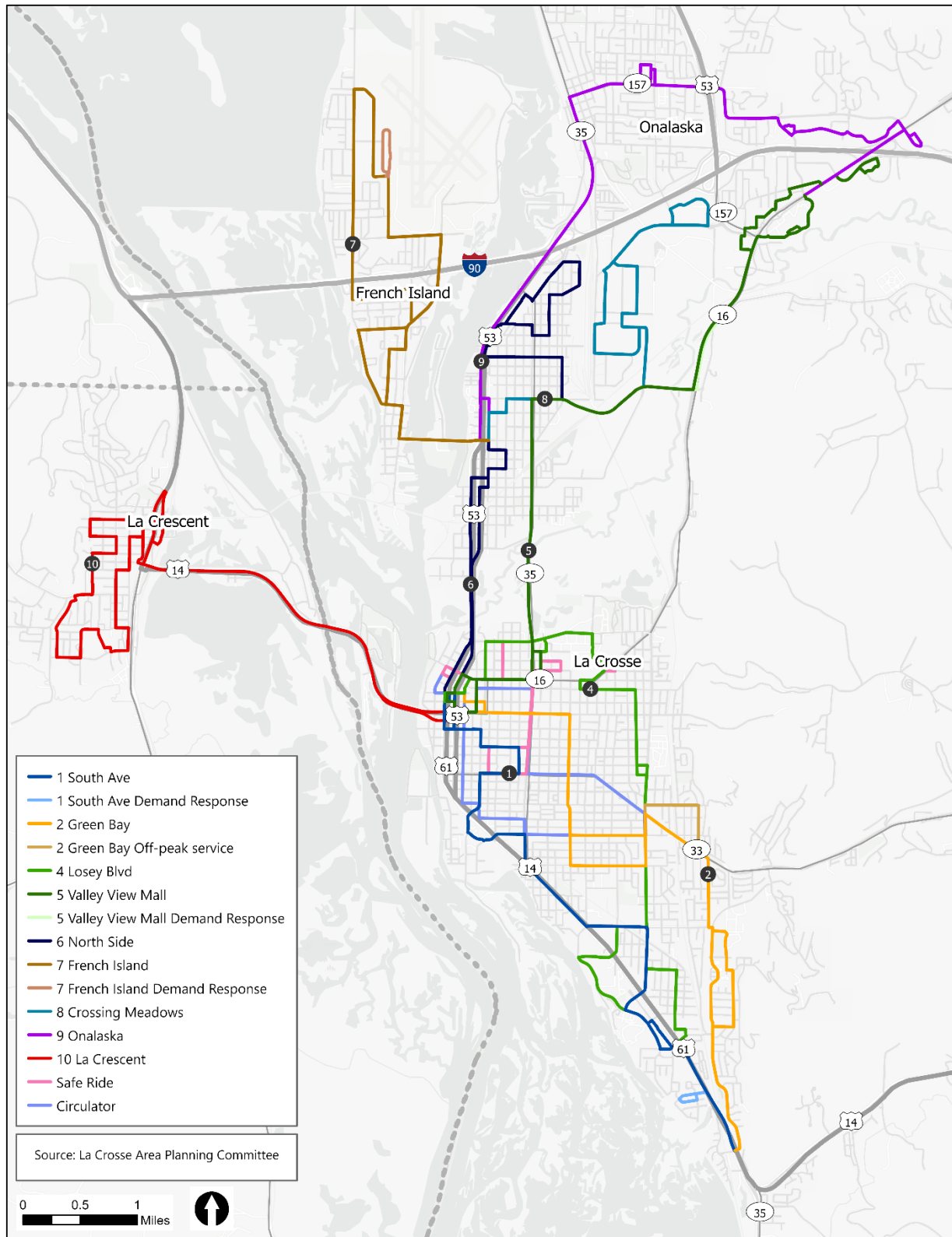
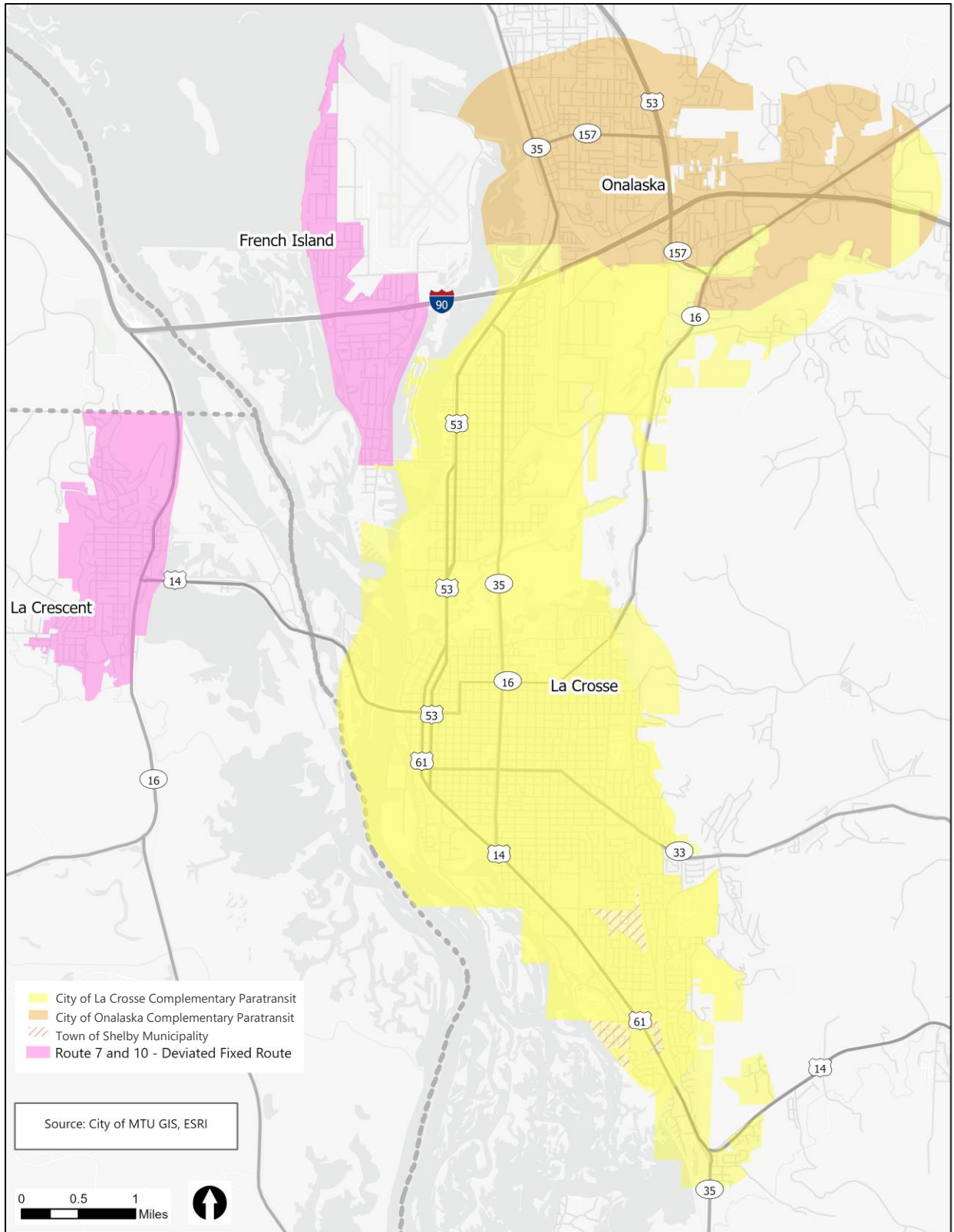


Figure 11. MTU Paratransit Service Areas



Distribution of Service

The availability of fixed-route service varies by time of day and day of week. The approximate span and frequency of regular fixed routes (excluding Safe Ride) are shown in Figure 12. Blue cells indicate a frequency of 30 minutes; yellow cells indicate a frequency of 60 minutes. During the UWL academic year, the supplemental Valley View Extra service results in 30-minute frequencies on Route 5 weekday evenings and weekend afternoons.

Figure 12: Service Hours and Frequency by Route

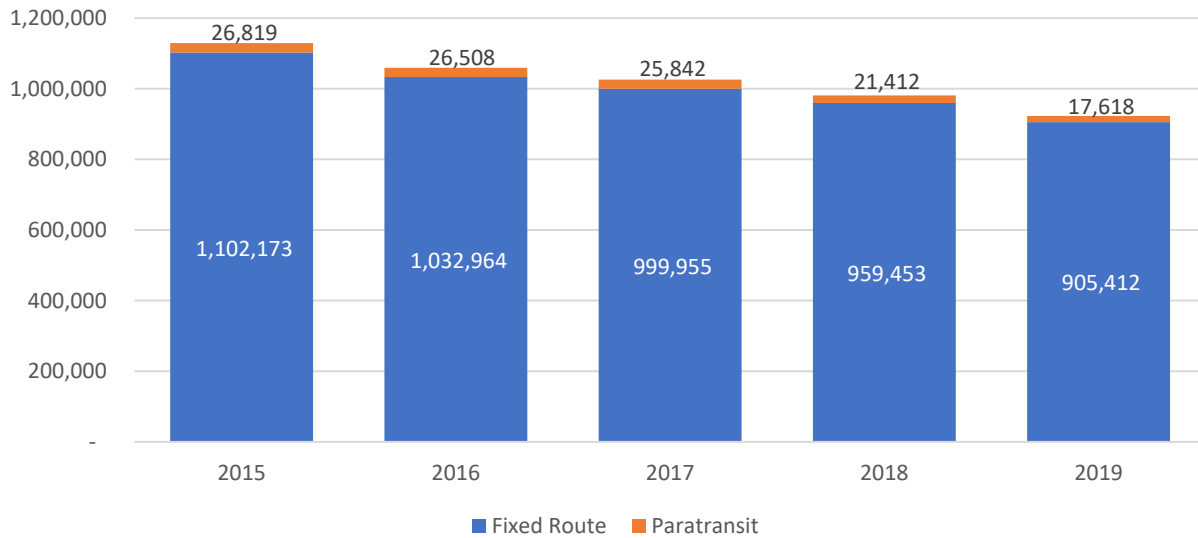
| Weekdays | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Route | 5 AM | 6 AM | 7 AM | 8 AM | 9 AM | 10 AM | 11 AM | 12 PM | 1 PM | 2 PM | 3 PM | 4 PM | 5 PM | 6 PM | 7 PM | 8 PM | 9 PM | 10 PM |
| Circulator 1 | | | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | | | | | | |
| Circulator 2 | | | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | |
| 1 South Ave | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | |
| 1 Downtown | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| 2 Downtown | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| 2 Green Bay | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | |
| 4 Losey Boulevard | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | |
| 5 Valley View Mall | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow |
| 6 Northside | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | Blue | |
| 7 French Island | | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | | | | | |
| 8 Crossing Meadows | | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | | | | | | |
| 9 Onalaska | | | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | | | | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | | | | | |
| 10 La Crescent | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | | | | |
| Saturdays | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Route | 5 AM | 6 AM | 7 AM | 8 AM | 9 AM | 10 AM | 11 AM | 12 PM | 1 PM | 2 PM | 3 PM | 4 PM | 5 PM | 6 PM | 7 PM | 8 PM | 9 PM | 10 PM |
| Circulator 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Circulator 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 South Ave | | | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | Yellow | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1 Downtown | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 Downtown | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 Green Bay | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 Losey Boulevard | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 Valley View Mall | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 Northside | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 French Island | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 Crossing Meadows | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 Onalaska | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 La Crescent | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sundays | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Route | 5 AM | 6 AM | 7 AM | 8 AM | 9 AM | 10 AM | 11 AM | 12 PM | 1 PM | 2 PM | 3 PM | 4 PM | 5 PM | 6 PM | 7 PM | 8 PM | 9 PM | 10 PM |
| Circulator 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Circulator 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 South Ave | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 Downtown | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 Downtown | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 Green Bay | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 Losey Boulevard | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 Valley View Mall | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 Northside | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 French Island | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 Crossing Meadows | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 Onalaska | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 La Crescent | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Operations

Ridership on MTU has been on a downward trend in recent years. Figure 13 shows total annual ridership from 2015 to 2019. Between those years, ridership declined 18 percent. Fixed-route ridership declined 17 percent, while the number of trips taken by paratransit customers declined 34 percent.

Figure 13. MTU Annual Ridership by Mode, 2015-2019



Fare Structure and Use

Riders can pay with cash, pre-purchased tokens, or monthly passes (Table 3). Transit is included in UWL, Western Technical College (WTC), and Viterbo University student fees. Children aged three and younger ride free. Discounted fares are available to youth under 18, senior citizens, and people with disabilities.

Table 3. MTU Fare Structure

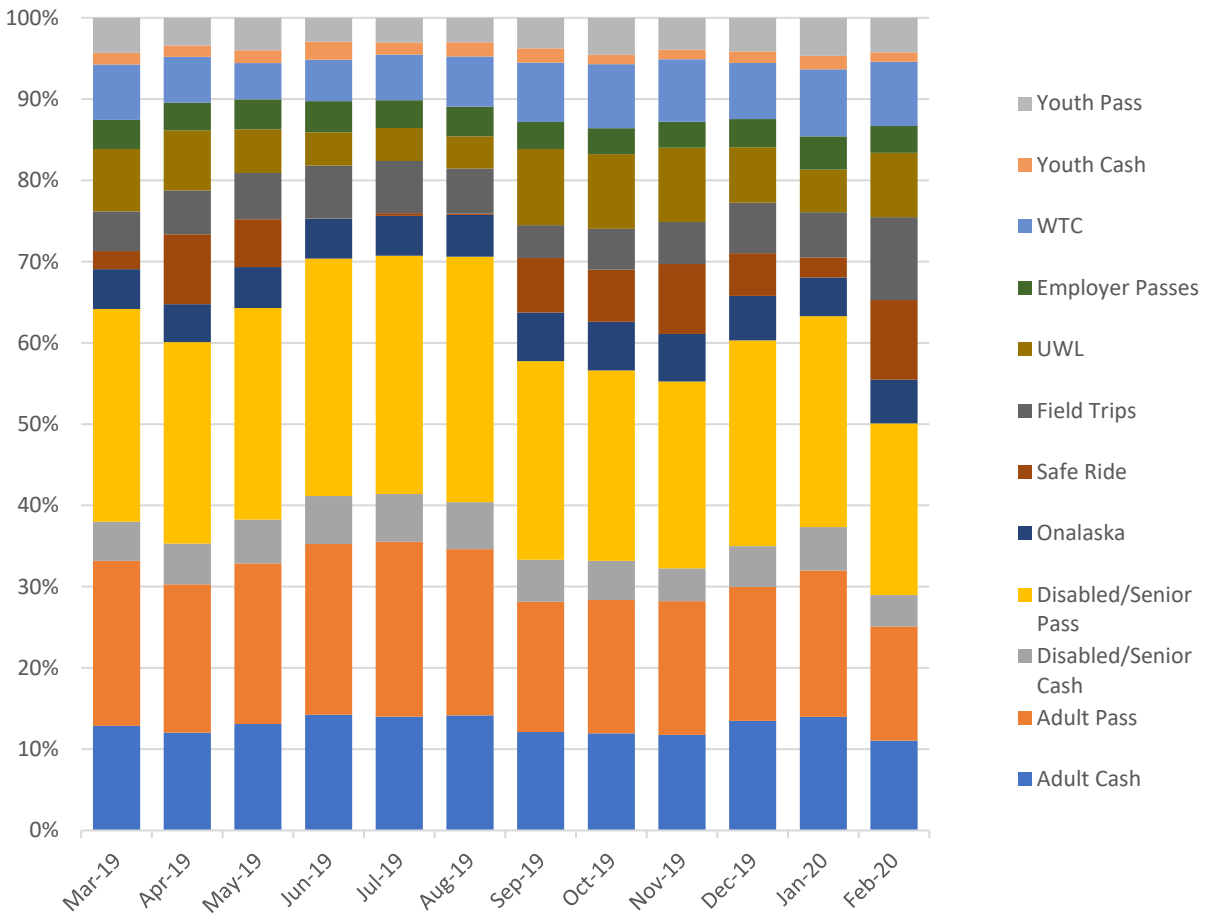
| Fares | Cash | Token | Passes |
|--|---|----------------|---------------------------|
| Adult Fare (ages 18 and older) | \$1.50 | 10 for \$14.50 | Month: \$35.00 |
| Youth Fare (ages 4- 17) | \$1.25 | 10 for \$12.00 | Month: \$23.00 |
| | | | July-August: \$30.00 |
| | | | Semester: \$45.00 |
| | | | Field trip group discount |
| Children (3 and under) | Free | | |
| Disabled Persons and Senior Citizens (ages 65 and older) | \$0.75 | - | \$25.00 |
| UWL, WTC & Viterbo students | Free with student ID | | |
| Transfers | Free on request; valid only on the next connecting bus at a designated transfer point | | |

The fare media chosen by riders provide valuable information about how different segments of the community use the transit system. From September to May, students from UWL and WTC together compose about 15 percent of fares. In the summer months, students continue to use their passes, albeit at lower rates.

Across the course of a year, disabled and senior passes compose the largest percentage of all fares (excluding transfers) at 24 percent, with regular adult passes coming second at 17 percent. Cash-paying riders represent another 15 percent.

Figure 14 shows a visual breakdown of fare use by month over one year, from March 2019 through February 2020. It excludes some fare types with counts too small to be visible (French Island special fares and Viterbo University students). Transfers are shown as a fare type. Free transfers from OSR are categorized as "Onalaska." The adult and youth pass categories also include tokens pre-purchased in sets of ten.

Figure 14. Ridership by Fare Type, March 2019-February 2020



Ridership by Route

The core routes (1, 2, 4, 5, and 6) operating Monday through Sunday have the highest ridership in the system, as Figure 15 shows. However, the gap between core and contracted service narrows when ridership is examined relative to the level of service provided. Routes 7 and 8 have more limited schedules than Routes 2 and 4, but their weekday ridership per revenue hour is higher (Figure 16).

Figure 16 includes the supplemental Valley View Extra. While this route is identical to Route 5, it has fewer riders per revenue hour.

Figure 15: Average Weekday Boardings by Route, March 2019-February 2020

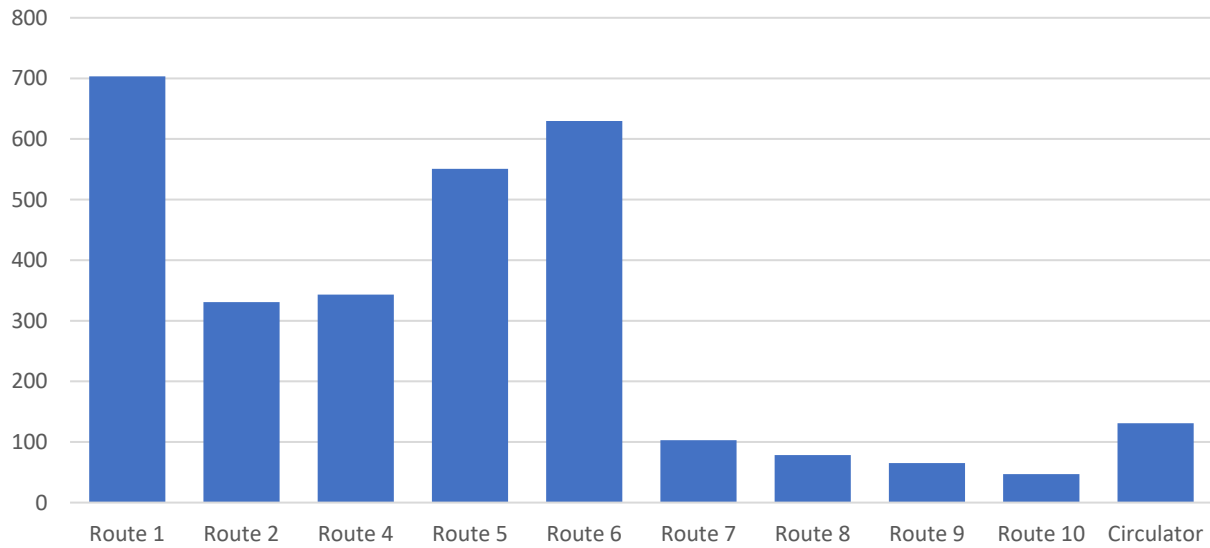
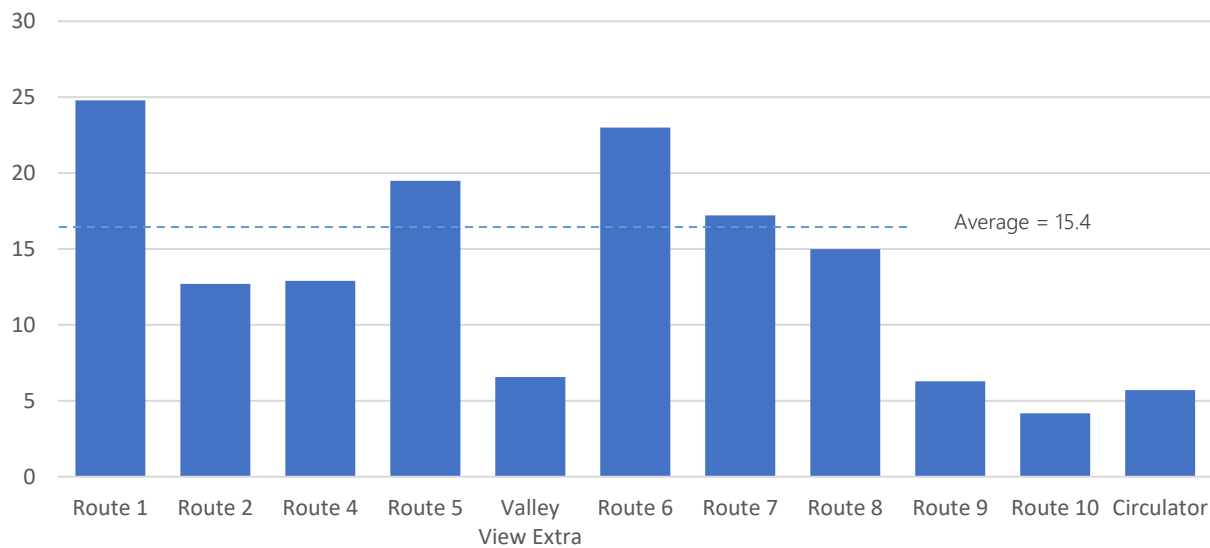


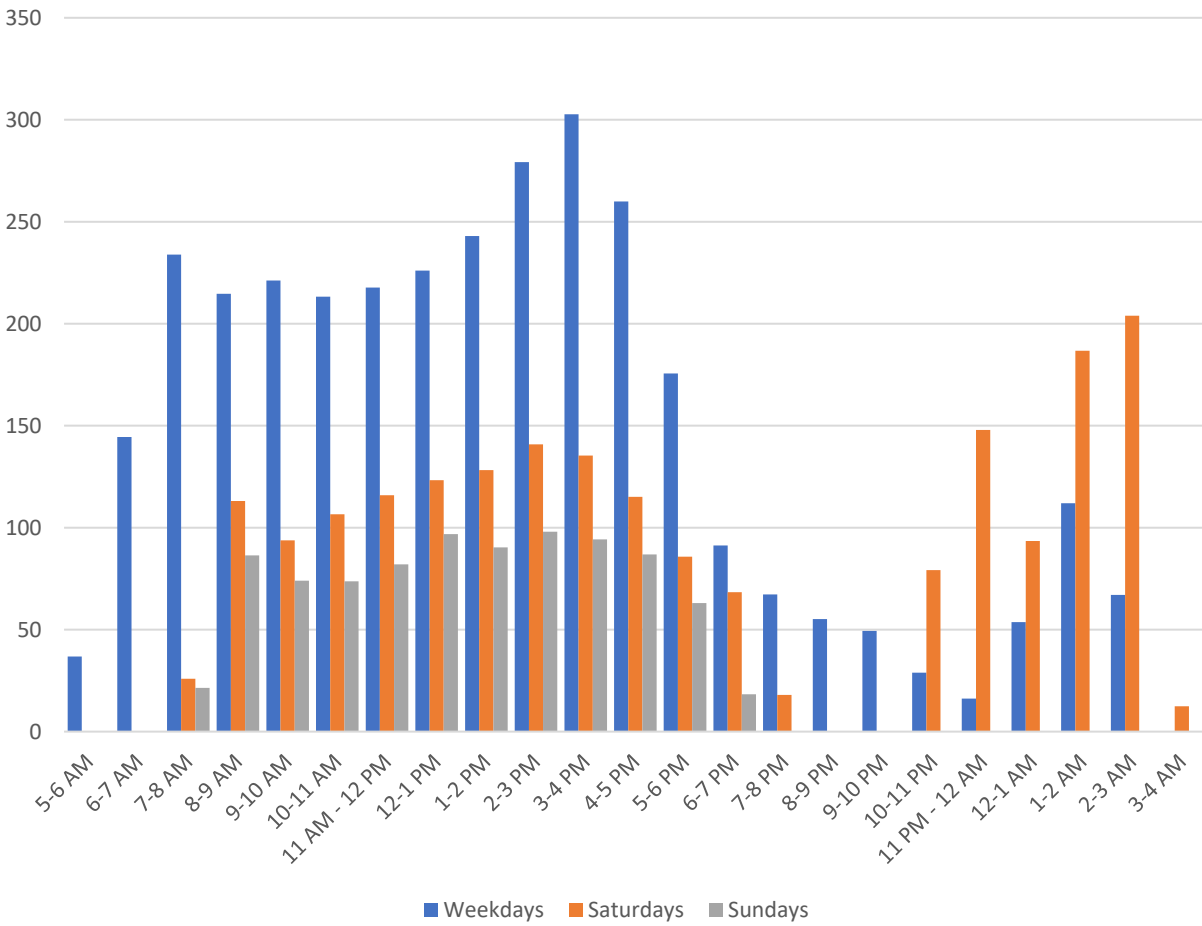
Figure 16: Average Weekday Boardings per Revenue Hour, March 2019- February 2020



Ridership by Time of Day

Weekday ridership on the MTU fixed routes reaches its peak in the afternoon (Figure 17). Daytime boardings on Sunday are more consistent over the day. Ridership after about 10:00 PM is driven by the Thursday-Saturday Safe Ride service, which is offered only during the school year.

Figure 17: Average Fixed-Route Ridership by Time of Day by Service Day, March 2019-February 2020⁴

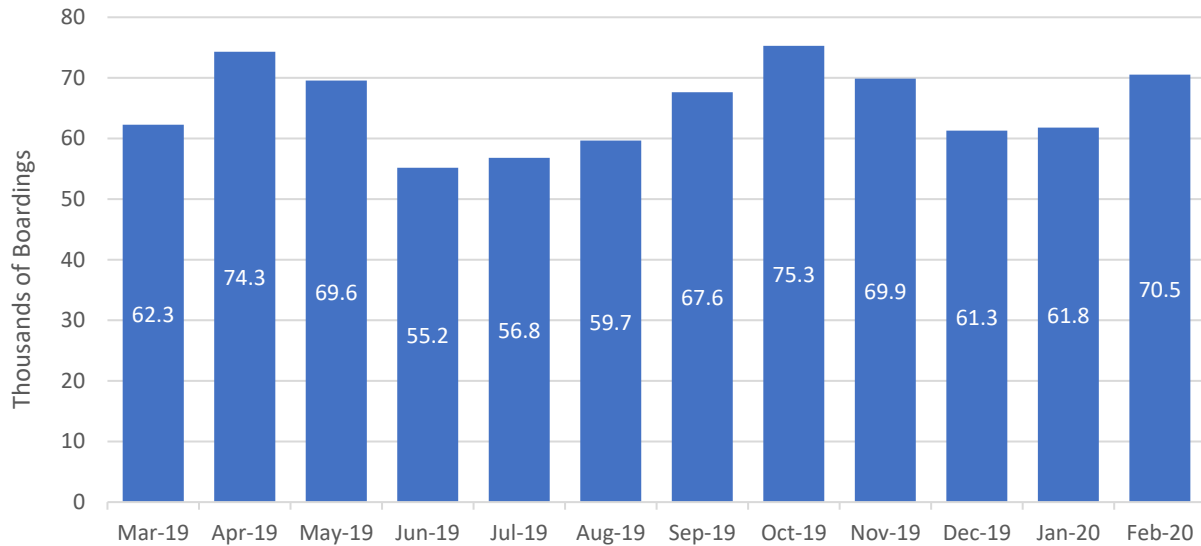


⁴ Estimates based on annual level of service. Daytime weekday average assumes 254 service days; late-night weekday assumes 60 (Thursdays and Fridays, September to May).

Ridership by Month

Ridership on MTU fixed routes changes seasonally; it is highest during the fall and spring school semesters and lowest in the summer months (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Total Ridership by Month, March 2019 – February 2020

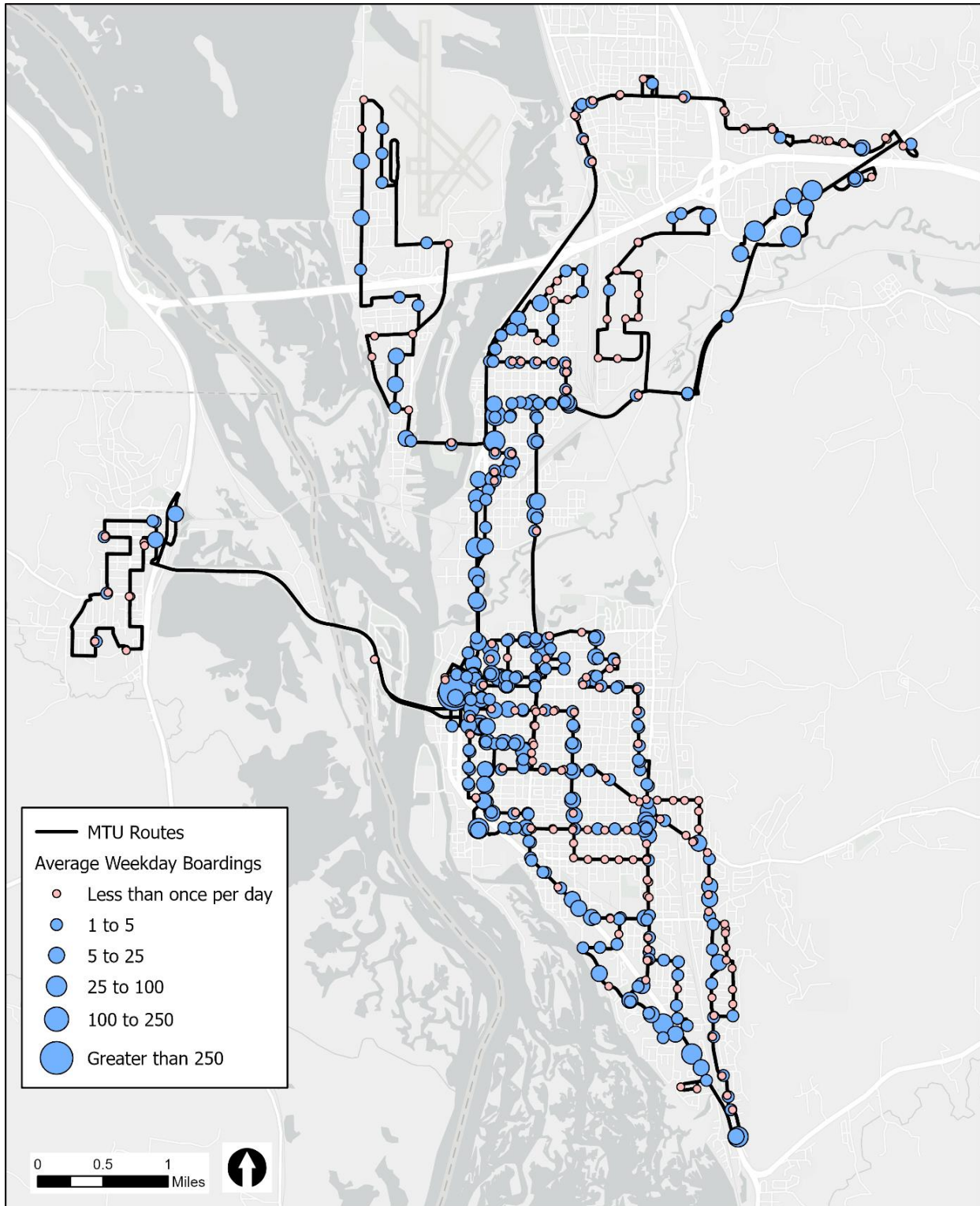


Ridership by Bus Stop

Evaluating ridership by bus stop reveals, in finer detail, where transit is most used in the community. Analysis of these data inform the allocation of scarce operating and capital resources and the placement of route alignments and bus stops.

The highest average weekday boardings are found at and near Grand River Station. The Grand River Station stop saw 343 daily weekday boardings in March 2019 to February 2020. Other high-activity stops include the Clinton & Caledonia Transfer Point, Target, Valley View Mall, 33rd & Mormon Coulee, and Gundersen Health System.

Figure 19. Average Weekday Boardings by Bus Stop, March 2019 to February 2020



On-Time Performance by Route

MTU uses third-party DoubleMap software to track the exact time that buses arrive at certain stops. There are about five of these timepoint stops on each run of each route, and adherence to schedule at these timepoints is used to measure the reliability of fixed-route service. A bus is considered “on time” if it arrives at its scheduled timepoint between one minute early and 5 minutes late.

Whereas the previous analyses looked at the year before the pandemic, this reliability analysis examines data from March 2021. Systemwide, the on-time rate that month was 82.7 percent. It was slightly higher on Monday-Friday routes at 83.2 percent, lower on Sundays at 80.7 percent, and lowest on Saturdays at 77 percent.

Taken as a whole, certain routes stand out as significantly above or below average in their on-time performance. Valley View Extra is the worst performer, with a lateness record of 41 percent. Routes 1 and 5 are the most reliable. Although Route 10 is included in the list with an overall performance close to the systemwide average, its reliability from a practical point of view is difficult to assess because it frequently deviates in downtown La Crescent, causing a run to arrive early or late at a timepoint.

On-time performance statistics for each route are shown in Table 4, with routes under 80 percent highlighted in yellow.

Table 4. On-Time Performance by Route, March 2021

| Route | Total Timepoints Analyzed | Percent On-Time | Percent Early | Percent Late |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1 | 9,177 | 88% | 9% | 2% |
| 2 | 7,645 | 81% | 16% | 2% |
| 4 | 8,853 | 83% | 14% | 3% |
| 5 | 8,893 | 88% | 10% | 2% |
| 6 | 9,676 | 87% | 11% | 1% |
| 7 | 1,741 | 67% | 24% | 8% |
| 8 | 1,517 | 72% | 26% | 3% |
| 9 | 1,390 | 59% | 20% | 21% |
| 10 | 3,328 | 82% | 14% | 4% |
| C1 | 2,191 | 75% | 24% | 1% |
| C2 | 1,390 | 88% | 11% | 1% |
| Valley View Extra | 1,182 | 46% | 13% | 41% |
| Total | 56,983 | 83% | 14% | 4% |

On-Time Performance by Stop

On-time performance issues are not limited to certain routes, certain stops, or certain parts of the system. Table 5 shows the 20 most frequently late timepoints. Table 6 shows the 20 most frequently early timepoints. Table 7 shows the locations and associated routes of all timepoints with on-time performance of 50 percent

or lower. These stops may indicate the need to adjust the schedule or route alignment in a particular segment of a route.

Table 5. Most Frequently Late Stops, Monday-Friday, March 2021

| Route | Stop | Total Trips Analyzed | On-Time (%) | Early (%) | Late (%) |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|
| Valley View Extra (M-F) | George & Saint Andrew | 112 | 17 | 0 | 83 |
| Valley View Extra (M-F) | Grand River Station – Jay St | 91 | 22 | 1 | 77 |
| 9 Onalaska (M-F) | Valley View Mall | 92 | 24 | 0 | 76 |
| Valley View Extra (M-F) | Allied Health Center (Badger & 13 th) | 88 | 24 | 0 | 76 |
| Valley View Extra (M-F) | Gundersen Health System – Onalaska Campus | 77 | 25 | 0 | 75 |
| Valley View Extra (M-F) | Valley View Mall | 88 | 25 | 0 | 75 |
| 8 Crossing Meadows (M-F) | Logan St and Caledonia St (timepoint) | 247 | 21 | 29 | 49 |
| 10 La Crescent (M-F) (PM) | Company Store Westbound | 142 | 63 | 1 | 37 |
| 9 Onalaska (M-F) | Onalaska City Hall | 264 | 22 | 47 | 31 |
| 9 Onalaska (M-F) | Clinton & Caledonia Transfer Point | 169 | 70 | 0 | 30 |
| 4 Downtown (M-F) | Broadview & Church | 655 | 75 | 0 | 25 |
| 9 Onalaska (M-F) | Woodman's | 176 | 79 | 0 | 21 |
| 6 Downtown (M-F) | Taylor & Hamilton | 16 | 69 | 13 | 19 |
| 9 Onalaska (M-F) | Onalaska City Hall | 175 | 78 | 3 | 19 |
| 10 La Crescent (M-F) (PM) | Grand River Station | 119 | 75 | 9 | 16 |
| 8 Crossing Meadows (M-F) | Gillette & Ranger | 207 | 80 | 6 | 14 |
| 2 Green Bay (Southbound) (M-F) | Hillview Healthcare Center | 413 | 86 | 0 | 14 |
| 9 Onalaska (M-F) | Walmart Supercenter | 174 | 87 | 0 | 13 |
| 1 Downtown (Northbound) (M-F) | 33 rd & Mormon Coulee | 594 | 87 | 0 | 12 |
| 10 La Crescent (M-F) (AM) | La Crescent High School – AM Stop | 147 | 91 | 0 | 9 |

Table 6. Most Frequently Early Stops, Monday-Friday, March 2021

| Route | Stop | Total Trips Analyzed | On-Time (%) | Early (%) | Late (%) |
|-------------------------------|---|----------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|
| 7 French Island (M-F) | Clinton & Nakomis | 151 | 1 | 99 | 0 |
| C1 Circulator 1 (M-F) | King & 5th | 432 | 2 | 98 | 0 |
| 8 Crossing Meadows (M-F) | Caledonia & Sill | 164 | 4 | 96 | 0 |
| 4 Downtown (M-F) | approaching grand river station rt 4 | 637 | 18 | 82 | 0 |
| 9 Onalaska (M-F) | Caledonia & Gillette | 142 | 23 | 77 | 0 |
| 6 Downtown (M-F) | approaching grand river station rt 6 | 648 | 29 | 71 | 0 |
| 1 Downtown (Northbound) (M-F) | approaching grand river station | 630 | 32 | 68 | 0 |
| 7 French Island (M-F) | Airport Industrial Park (Airport Drive & Breezy Point Road) | 284 | 33 | 67 | 0 |

| Route | Stop | Total Trips Analyzed | On-Time (%) | Early (%) | Late (%) |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|
| 4 Losey Boulevard (M-F) | Grand River Station - Jay St | 657 | 33 | 66 | 1 |
| 2 Downtown (Northbound) (M-F) | Cass & 5th | 651 | 34 | 66 | 0 |
| 2 Green Bay (Southbound) (M-F) | Grand River Station | 651 | 37 | 63 | 0 |
| 8 Crossing Meadows (M-F) | Logan High School | 300 | 37 | 63 | 0 |
| 5 Valley View Mall (M-F) | Grand River Station - Jay St | 656 | 41 | 59 | 0 |
| C2 Circulator 2 (M-F) | Main & 9th | 236 | 45 | 55 | 0 |
| 6 Downtown (M-F) | Hamilton & Salem | 615 | 45 | 54 | 0 |
| 5 Downtown (M-F) | Approaching grand river station. | 627 | 50 | 50 | 0 |
| Valley View Extra (M-F) | Grand River Station | 66 | 52 | 48 | 0 |
| 9 Onalaska (M-F) | Onalaska City Hall | 264 | 22 | 47 | 31 |
| 10 La Crescent (M-F) (PM) | Company Store Eastbound | 86 | 60 | 40 | 0 |
| 10 La Crescent (M-F) (AM) | Downtown La Crescent | 252 | 60 | 39 | 1 |

Table 7. Stops with 50% On-time Performance or Lower, March 2021

| Stop and Route(s) Served | Total Timepoints Analyzed | Total On-Time | Average On Time (%) |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 33rd & Mormon Coulee | 84 | 28 | 33.3 |
| 1 Downtown (Northbound) (Sat) | 48 | 18 | 37.5 |
| 1 Downtown (Northbound) (Sun) | 36 | 10 | 27.8 |
| 3rd & Main | 43 | 5 | 11.6 |
| 6 Downtown (SUN) | 43 | 5 | 11.6 |
| Airport Industrial Park | 284 | 94 | 33.1 |
| 7 French Island (M-F) | 284 | 94 | 33.1 |
| Allied Health Center | 116 | 26 | 22.4 |
| Valley View Extra (M-F) | 88 | 21 | 23.9 |
| Valley View Extra (Sat) | 28 | 5 | 17.9 |
| approaching grand river station | 719 | 209 | 29.1 |
| 1 Downtown (Northbound) (M-F) | 630 | 202 | 32.1 |
| 1 Downtown (Northbound) (Sat) | 46 | 1 | 2.2 |
| 1 Downtown (Northbound) (Sun) | 43 | 6 | 14 |
| approaching grand river station rt 4 | 726 | 121 | 16.7 |
| 4 Downtown (M-F) | 637 | 116 | 18.2 |
| 4 Downtown (SAT) | 47 | 3 | 6.4 |
| 4 Downtown (SUN) | 42 | 2 | 4.8 |
| approaching grand river station rt 6 | 739 | 204 | 27.6 |
| 6 Downtown (M-F) | 648 | 186 | 28.7 |
| 6 Downtown (SAT) | 48 | 13 | 27.1 |
| 6 Downtown (SUN) | 43 | 5 | 11.6 |

| Stop and Route(s) Served | Total Timepoints Analyzed | Total On-Time | Average On Time (%) |
|---|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Approaching grand river station. | 714 | 336 | 47.1 |
| 2 Downtown (Northbound) (Sat) | 46 | 17 | 37 |
| 5 Downtown (M-F) | 627 | 316 | 50.4 |
| 5 Downtown (SUN) | 41 | 3 | 7.3 |
| Caledonia & Gillette | 142 | 32 | 22.5 |
| 9 Onalaska (M-F) | 142 | 32 | 22.5 |
| Caledonia & Sill | 164 | 7 | 4.3 |
| 8 Crossing Meadows (M-F) | 164 | 7 | 4.3 |
| Cass & 5th | 699 | 234 | 33.5 |
| 2 Downtown (Northbound) (M-F) | 651 | 224 | 34.4 |
| 2 Downtown (Northbound) (Sat) | 48 | 10 | 20.8 |
| Clinton & Nakomis | 151 | 1 | 0.7 |
| 7 French Island (M-F) | 151 | 1 | 0.7 |
| George & Saint Andrew | 148 | 22 | 14.9 |
| Valley View Extra (M-F) | 112 | 19 | 17 |
| Valley View Extra (Sat) | 36 | 3 | 8.3 |
| Grand River Station | 768 | 284 | 37 |
| 2 Green Bay (Southbound) (M-F) | 651 | 243 | 37.3 |
| 2 Green Bay (Southbound) (Sat) | 48 | 10 | 20.8 |
| 2 Green Bay (Southbound) (Sun) | 44 | 21 | 47.7 |
| Valley View Extra (Sat) | 25 | 10 | 40 |
| Grand River Station - Jay St | 1,616 | 568 | 35.1 |
| 4 Losey Boulevard (M-F) | 657 | 217 | 33 |
| 4 Losey Boulevard (Sat) | 47 | 18 | 38.3 |
| 4 Losey Boulevard (Sun) | 43 | 4 | 9.3 |
| 5 Valley View Mall (M-F) | 656 | 268 | 40.9 |
| 5 Valley View Mall (Sat) | 48 | 24 | 50 |
| 5 Valley View Mall (Sun) | 44 | 16 | 36.4 |
| Valley View Extra (M-F) | 91 | 20 | 22 |
| Valley View Extra (Sat) | 28 | 1 | 3.6 |
| Valley View Extra (Sun) | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Gundersen Health System - Onalaska Campus | 104 | 24 | 23.1 |
| Valley View Extra (M-F) | 77 | 19 | 24.7 |
| Valley View Extra (Sat) | 27 | 5 | 18.5 |
| Hamilton & Salem | 615 | 278 | 45.2 |
| 6 Downtown (M-F) | 615 | 278 | 45.2 |
| Hillview Healthcare Center | 70 | 30 | 42.9 |
| 2 Green Bay (Southbound) (Sat) | 48 | 19 | 39.6 |
| 2 Green Bay (Southbound) (Sun) | 22 | 11 | 50 |

| Stop and Route(s) Served | Total Timepoints Analyzed | Total On-Time | Average On Time (%) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Invisible Logan St and Caledonia St | 247 | 53 | 21.5 |
| 7 French Island (M-F) | 247 | 53 | 21.5 |
| King & 5th | 432 | 7 | 1.6 |
| C1 Circulator 1 (M-F) | 432 | 7 | 1.6 |
| Logan High School | 300 | 110 | 36.7 |
| 8 Crossing Meadows (M-F) | 300 | 110 | 36.7 |
| Main & 9th | 236 | 106 | 44.9 |
| C2 Circulator 2 (M-F) | 236 | 106 | 44.9 |
| Onalaska City Hall | 264 | 58 | 22 |
| 9 Onalaska (M-F) | 264 | 58 | 22 |
| Valley View Mall | 207 | 49 | 23.7 |
| 9 Onalaska (M-F) | 92 | 22 | 23.9 |
| Valley View Extra (M-F) | 88 | 22 | 25 |
| Valley View Extra (Sat) | 27 | 5 | 18.5 |

Complementary Paratransit Ridership

Between 2015 and 2019, paratransit use declined by 34 percent. However, the effectiveness of service delivered, in terms of trips per revenue hour, more than doubled (Table 8).

Table 8. MTU Complementary Paratransit Operating Statistics, 2015-2019

| Year | Trips | Revenue Hours | Trips per Revenue Hour |
|------|--------|---------------|------------------------|
| 2015 | 26,819 | 24,464 | 1.1 |
| 2016 | 26,508 | 22,693 | 1.17 |
| 2017 | 25,842 | 11,705 | 2.21 |
| 2018 | 21,412 | 8,945 | 2.39 |
| 2019 | 17,618 | 7,108 | 2.48 |

Fleet and Facilities

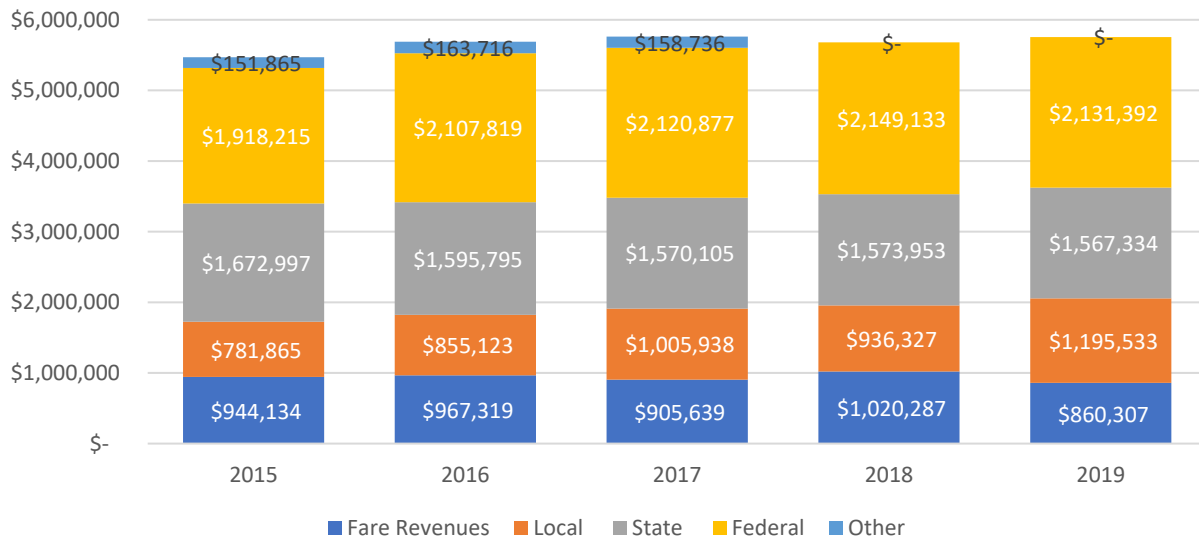
The MTU revenue fleet consists of 23 buses used for fixed-route service. Of those, up to 16 are used in maximum service, leaving a spare ratio of 30.4 percent. The average age of the fleet is 11.4 years. The fleet operates out of a garage and maintenance facility at 2000 Marco Drive.

As of 2018, 55 percent of MTU's fleet was at or beyond its useful life. MTU has prioritized cleaner diesel and hybrid buses in its replacement orders and plans to convert its fleet gradually to all-electric, beginning with the delivery of two 35-foot buses by Proterra in autumn of 2021. Two electric charging stations are under construction at the garage facility.

Operational Budget

La Crosse MTU receives federal, state and local funding to operate service. The operating budget increased from \$5,469,076 in 2015 to \$5,754,566 in 2019, which was a slower increase than the national inflation rate.

Figure 20. MTU Operating Budget, 2015-2019



Source: National Transit Database

ONALASKA SHARED RIDE

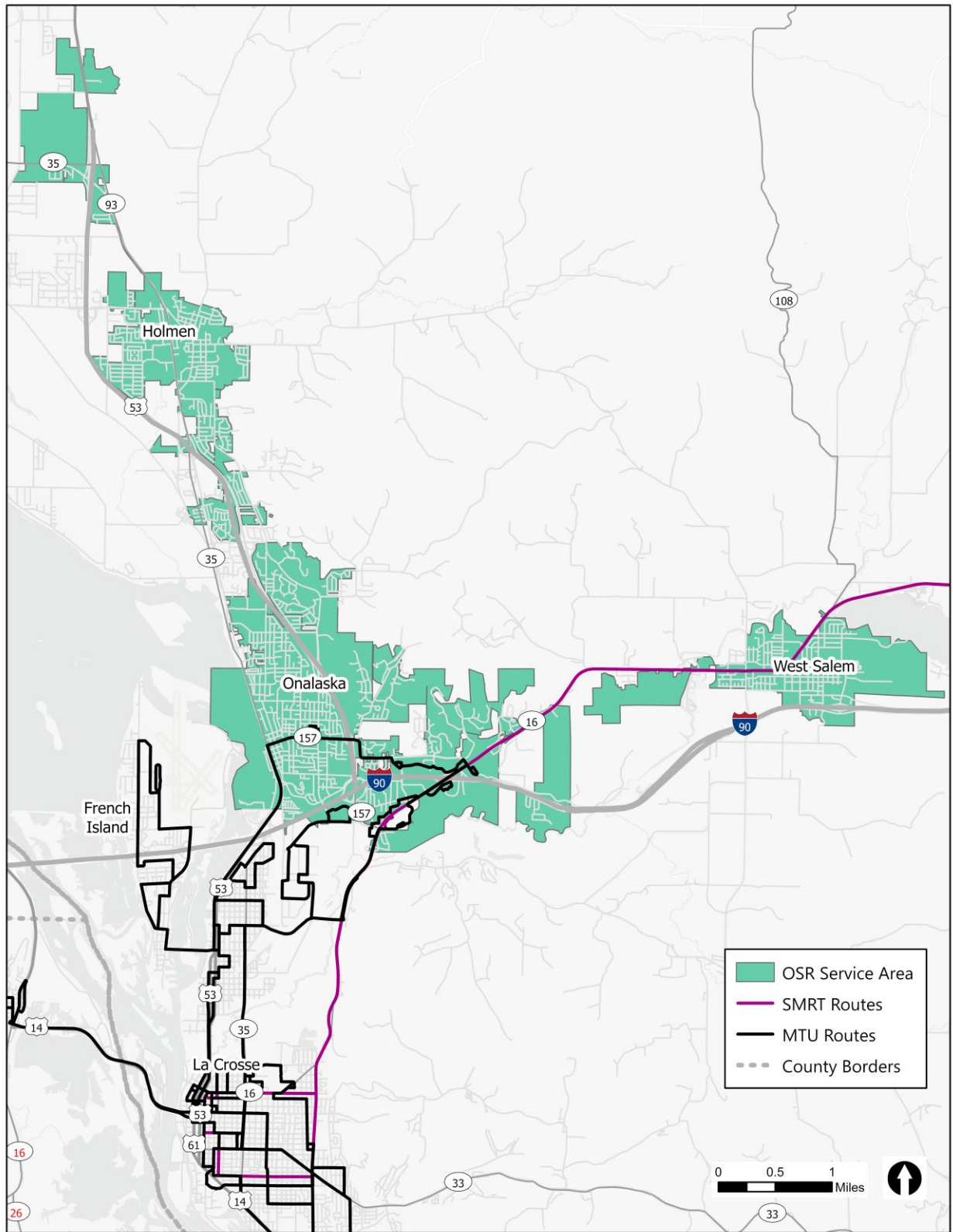
Onalaska Shared Ride (OSR) is a demand-response service operated by Running Inc. on contract with the City of Onalaska. It uses a fleet of 12 vehicles to deliver service within the limits of Onalaska, West Salem, and Holmen. Service is available every day between 6:30 AM and 7:00 PM. At present, riders who wish to transfer between this service and the MTU fixed-route system can do so fare-free by connecting either to Route 9 at Center 90 or to routes 5 or 9 at Valley View Mall.

Fares on OSR are charged by the trip and are slightly reduced for children, seniors, and people with disabilities. An additional fare reduction is available to seniors and people with disabilities if they ride during the off-peak: 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM on Monday through Friday, and 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. The full fare schedule is shown in Table 9.

Table 9. OSR Fare Structure

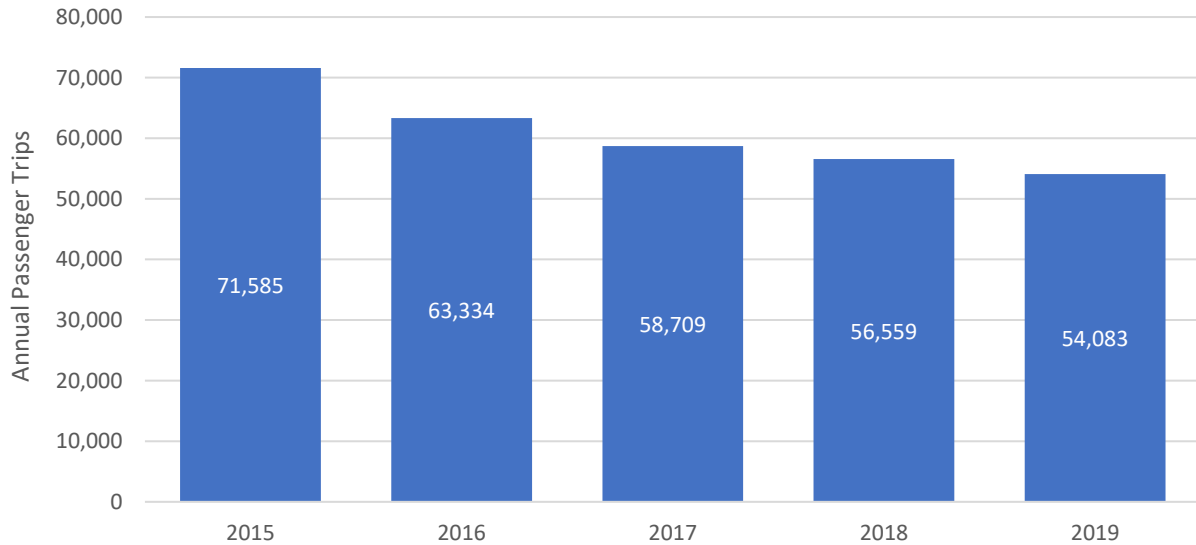
| Category | Regular Fare | Off-Peak Fare |
|---|--------------|---------------|
| Adult | \$4.50 | - |
| Student (ages 3- 18) | \$4.00 | - |
| Senior (ages 55 and older) | \$4.00 | \$3.00 |
| Disabled | \$4.00 | \$3.00 |
| Extra Rider with same pickup/drop-off as disabled passenger | \$3.00 | - |

Figure 21. OSR Service Area



In 2019, OSR provided 54,083 total trips. Like MTU, it experienced a ridership decline between 2015 and 2019 (Figure 22).

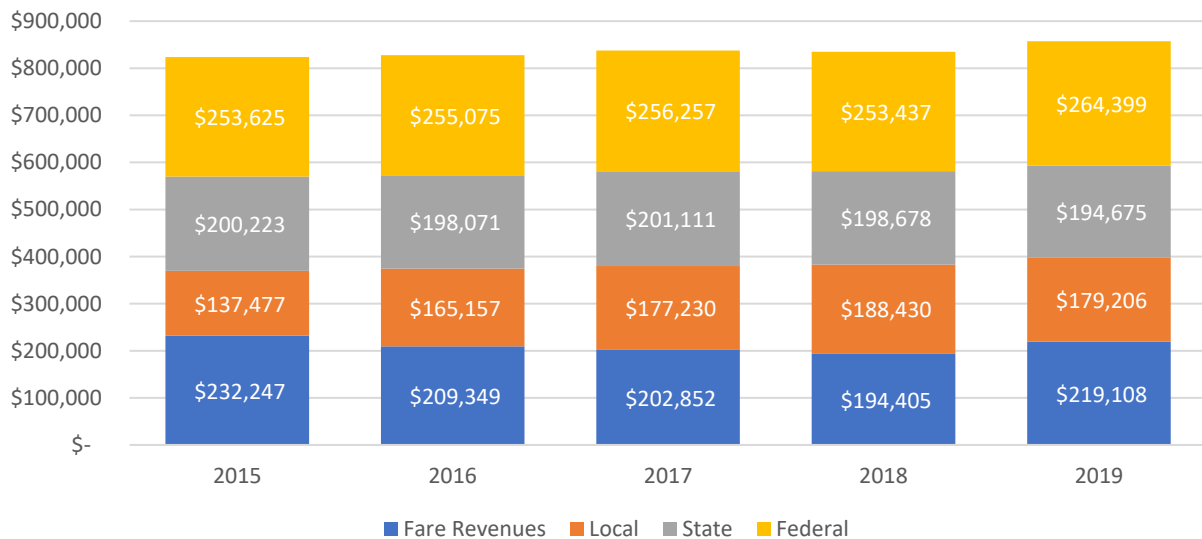
Figure 22. Annual Trips on OSR, 2015-2019



Source: National Transit Database

In the same period, the OSR operating costs increased at a pace below the national inflation rate, from \$823,527 in 2015 to \$857,388 in 2019. The share of those costs covered by local funds increased slightly (Figure 23).

Figure 23. OSR Operating Budget, 2015-2019



Source: National Transit Database

SMRT

Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT) is a weekday-only commuter bus system in Crawford, Vernon, and La Crosse counties in Wisconsin.

- The Blue and Yellow routes serve the municipalities of Viroqua, Westby, Coon Valley and La Crosse between approximately 6:00 AM and 7:00 PM. Collectively, they provide seven daily round trips.
- The Red route serves Prairie du Chien, Lynxville, Ferryville, Desoto, Genoa, Stoddard, and La Crosse between approximately 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM. It runs three round trips a day.
- The Green route serves Tomah, Sparta, West Salem, Onalaska, and La Crosse between approximately 6:00 AM and 6:00 PM. It runs three round trips a day.

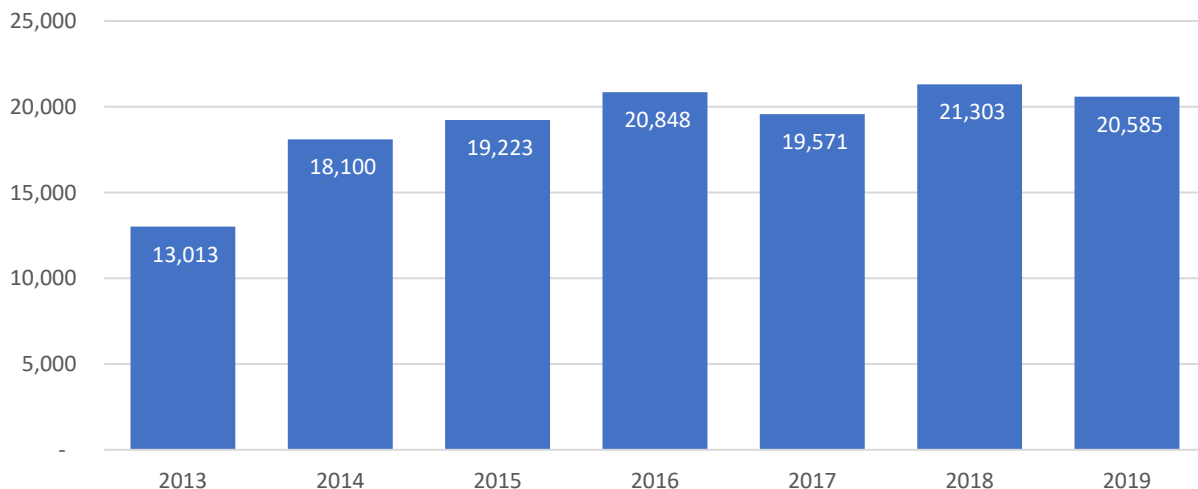
SMRT was originally administered by City of Prairie du Chien, but La Crosse County took over in 2019 based on its position as the central hub of the service. Operations are contracted out to Running Inc. All SMRT buses are wheelchair accessible. Like MTU, SMRT will be piloting two battery electric buses in the near future.

A standard fare on SMRT is \$3.00 per one-way trip. However, the SMRT Works! pass program allows employers to pay a lump sum to SMRT in exchange for zero-dollar fares for employees with valid ID badges. Western Technical College, Mayo Clinic Health System, and Gundersen Health System are among the participating employers.

SMRT operates on a deviated fixed-route basis. It has set stop locations in each community it serves, usually at major employers. In the city of La Crosse, it uses MTU bus stops but does not serve Grand River Station. Along rural parts of the route, flag stops are allowed – meaning that passengers can flag down an approaching bus even if they are not at one of the designated stops.

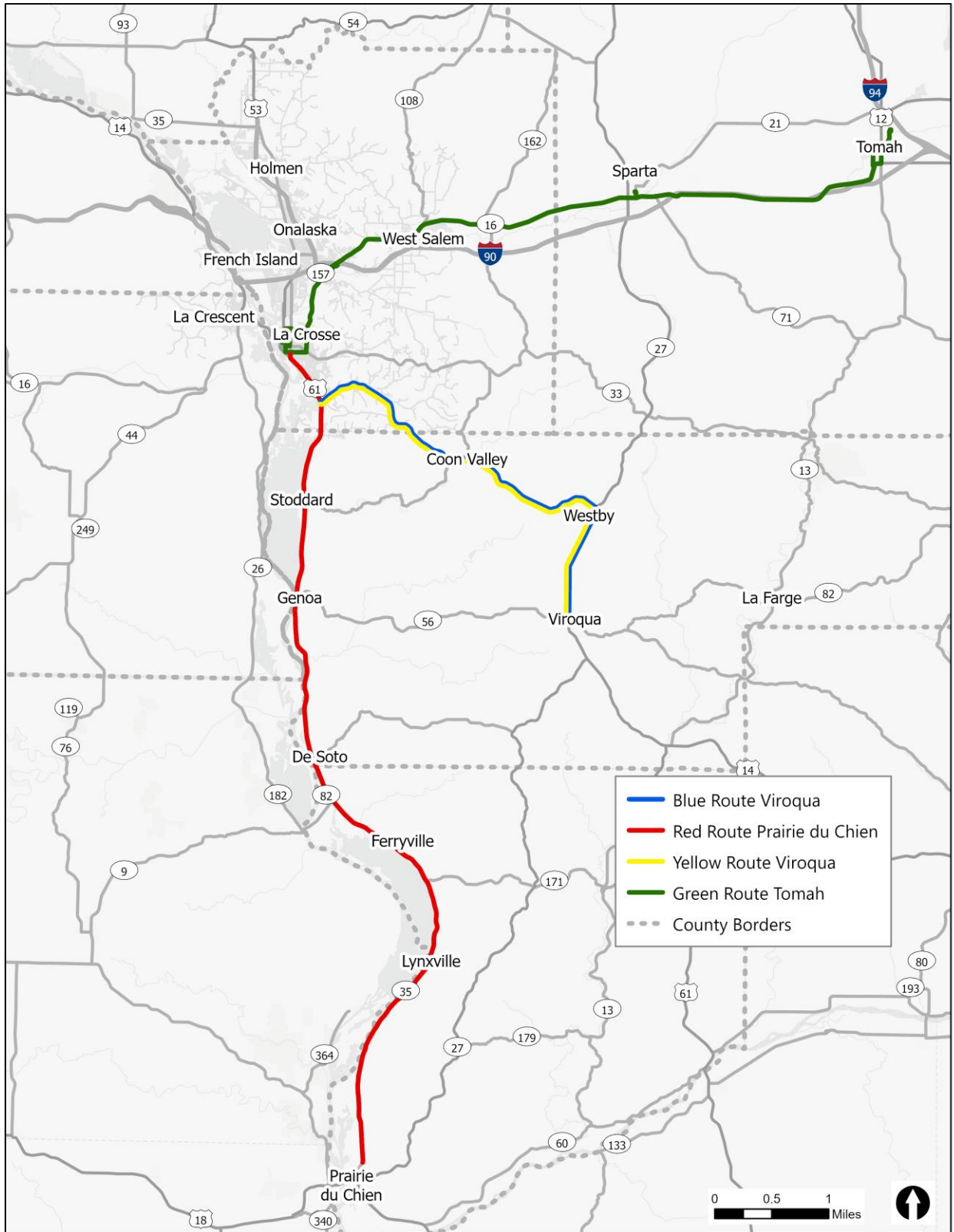
SMRT commenced service in December 2012. Its ridership in the last several years has hovered around 20,000 trips per year (Figure 24).

Figure 24. SMRT Annual Ridership 2013-2019



Sources: La Crosse County (2019 statistics); Beyond Coulee Vision 2040 (2013-2018 statistics)

Figure 25. SMRT System



In 2019 and 2020, SMRT provided between 500 and 900 hours of service each month, carrying between 700 and 1,800 passengers (Table 10). The total cost of providing this service was approximately \$400,000 each year. As the highlighted row in Table 10 shows, demand for the service and service hours dipped in spring of 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While service almost immediately raised back to pre-pandemic levels, ridership did not recover fully.

Table 10. SMRT Operating Statistics 2019-2020

| | Riders | Miles | Service Hours | Fare Revenue | Fare Revenue per Rider | Riders per Mile | Riders per Service Hour |
|--------|--------|--------|---------------|--------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Jan-19 | 1,639 | 19,318 | 638.72 | \$3,803.00 | \$2.32 | 0.08 | 2.57 |
| Feb-19 | 1,426 | 21,431 | 577.04 | \$3,045.50 | \$2.14 | 0.07 | 2.47 |
| Mar-19 | 1,739 | 23,824 | 706.02 | \$3,829.25 | \$2.20 | 0.07 | 2.46 |
| Apr-19 | 1,649 | 24,502 | 739.57 | \$3,700.00 | \$2.24 | 0.07 | 2.23 |
| May-19 | 1,492 | 26,031 | 785.4 | \$3,142.00 | \$2.11 | 0.06 | 1.90 |
| Jun-19 | 1,366 | 24,407 | 737.8 | \$3,237.00 | \$2.37 | 0.06 | 1.85 |
| Jul-19 | 1,499 | 26,943 | 811.58 | \$3,572.00 | \$2.38 | 0.06 | 1.85 |
| Aug-19 | 1,668 | 27,089 | 811.58 | \$3,880.00 | \$2.33 | 0.06 | 2.06 |
| Sep-19 | 1,920 | 24,504 | 737.8 | \$3,558.00 | \$1.85 | 0.08 | 2.60 |
| Oct-19 | 2,163 | 27,981 | 829.84 | \$2,599.00 | \$1.20 | 0.08 | 2.61 |
| Nov-19 | 2,091 | 24,457 | 721.6 | \$2,321.00 | \$1.11 | 0.09 | 2.90 |
| Dec-19 | 1,933 | 24,859 | 720.05 | \$2,457.00 | \$1.27 | 0.08 | 2.68 |
| Jan-20 | 2,021 | 26,233 | 793.76 | \$2,080.00 | \$1.03 | 0.08 | 2.55 |
| Feb-20 | 1,945 | 24,102 | 721.6 | \$2,085.00 | \$1.07 | 0.08 | 2.70 |
| Mar-20 | 1,649 | 26,530 | 793.76 | \$1,579.00 | \$0.96 | 0.06 | 2.08 |
| Apr-20 | 785 | 25,807 | 793.76 | \$665.00 | \$0.85 | 0.03 | 0.99 |
| May-20 | 1,004 | 23,349 | 721.6 | \$714.00 | \$0.71 | 0.04 | 1.39 |
| Jun-20 | 1,218 | 25,355 | 793.76 | \$1,190.00 | \$0.98 | 0.05 | 1.53 |
| Jul-20 | 1,175 | 26,556 | 793.76 | \$1,275.00 | \$1.09 | 0.04 | 1.48 |
| Aug-20 | 1,141 | 25,531 | 757.68 | \$1,308.00 | \$1.15 | 0.04 | 1.51 |
| Sep-20 | 1,201 | 25,197 | 757.68 | \$1,618.00 | \$1.35 | 0.05 | 1.59 |
| Oct-20 | 1,171 | 26,533 | 793.76 | \$1,443.00 | \$1.23 | 0.04 | 1.48 |
| Nov-20 | 1,191 | 23,330 | 721.6 | \$1,574.00 | \$1.32 | 0.05 | 1.65 |
| Dec-20 | 1,179 | 24,562 | 445.28 | \$1,190.00 | \$1.01 | 0.05 | 2.65 |

AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTERS (ADRCS)

In addition to these three transit services, the ADRCS of La Crosse, Crawford, Monroe, and Vernon counties also provide important transportation options.

The exact parameters of service vary by county. In La Crosse County, the Minibus program provides door-to-door service using a contracted provider, Abby Vans Inc. To be eligible for this service, a rider must be a La Crosse County resident, 60 years of age or older, and/or a person with a disability. Rides must be booked 24-48 hours ahead of time and cost between \$3.50 and \$4.50 for a one-way trip, depending on zone. Rides are available Monday-Friday from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM and Saturdays from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The program is funded by a combination of state grant and local match funds.

JEFFERSON LINES

Jefferson Lines, a long-distance intercity bus company that serves 14 states, has three stops within the project area: the Amish Cheese House in Sparta; UWL in La Crosse; and the Grand River Station in La Crosse, where it staffs a ticket counter from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Saturday. Its eastbound trip provides regional connections to Madison and Milwaukee; its westbound trip serves Minneapolis via Winona and Rochester, Minnesota.

AMTRAK

Amtrak provides service on the Empire Builder to Milwaukee and Chicago to the east, and the Twin Cities, Fargo, Glacier National Park, Seattle, and Portland to the west. The eastbound train departs at 10:47 AM daily, while the westbound train departs at 7:11 PM daily.

Amtrak is slated to add a second daily train between Chicago and the Twin Cities in 2024, which will stop in La Crosse in both directions. The second eastbound train will likely depart early to mid-afternoon, and the westbound train will likely depart mid- to late-afternoon.

Route 6 stops a quarter mile away from the Amtrak station, but there is not an accessible path between stop and station. The SMRT Yellow Route serves the Amtrak station on demand during its second morning run into La Crosse.

PEER PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

This peer analysis examines MTU's performance relative to peer systems. Since there are no recognized industry standards for most measures of transit system performance, widespread practice is to compare the performance of a system with the average values of a peer group of systems.

Based on a review of NTD operating statistics, MTU's closest peers include transit agencies in Appleton, Green Bay, Eau Claire, and Wausau, Wisconsin; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and South Bend, Indiana. They are similarly sized in terms of ridership and service area population and/or operate in similar cold-weather Midwestern environments.

For this analysis, three systemwide performance metrics were chosen: Service effectiveness in terms of boardings per revenue hour, cost efficient in terms of operating expenses per boarding, and cost efficiency in terms of operating expenses per revenue hour. The analysis period covers the most recent five years for which NTD data is available, 2015 to 2019.

SYSTEMWIDE PERFORMANCE

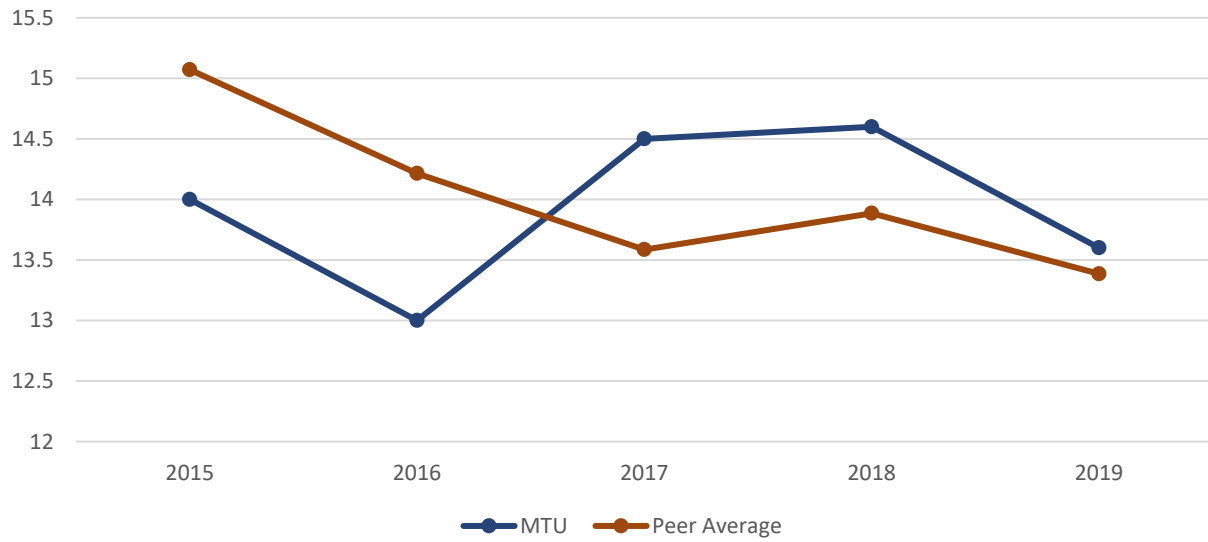
The first set of analyses looks at the combined performance of fixed-route and paratransit. Since these analyses are based on NTD data, the results represent all operating days in a given year, including weekends and holidays.

As Figure 26 shows, MTU's service effectiveness is close to the peer average. In 2019, it reported 13.6 passengers per revenue hour, compared to a group average of 13.4. Although this has fluctuated over the five-year period, the pattern in which it fluctuated is broadly similar to peers.

In terms of cost per boarding, MTU is more efficient than the peer average – in 2019, \$6.17 compared to an average of \$6.57. As Figure 27 shows, this performance metric has risen more or less steadily. The peer average increased by 22 percent between 2015 and 2019. MTU's cost per boarding increased 27 percent in the same time frame.

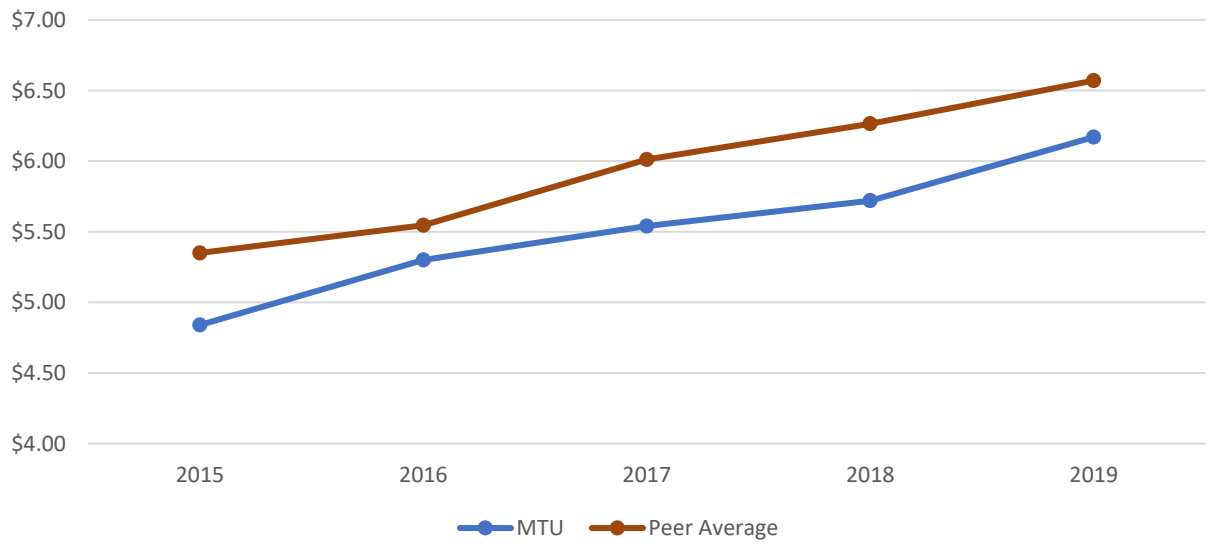
MTU is more efficient in cost per revenue hour than the peer average (Figure 28). Its operating expenses per revenue hour in 2019 were \$84.11, compared to a peer average of \$87.89. Cost per hour rose 19 percent over the five-year period, compared to the average of nine percent.

Figure 26. Service Effectiveness: MTU and Peer Average Systemwide Boardings per Revenue Hour



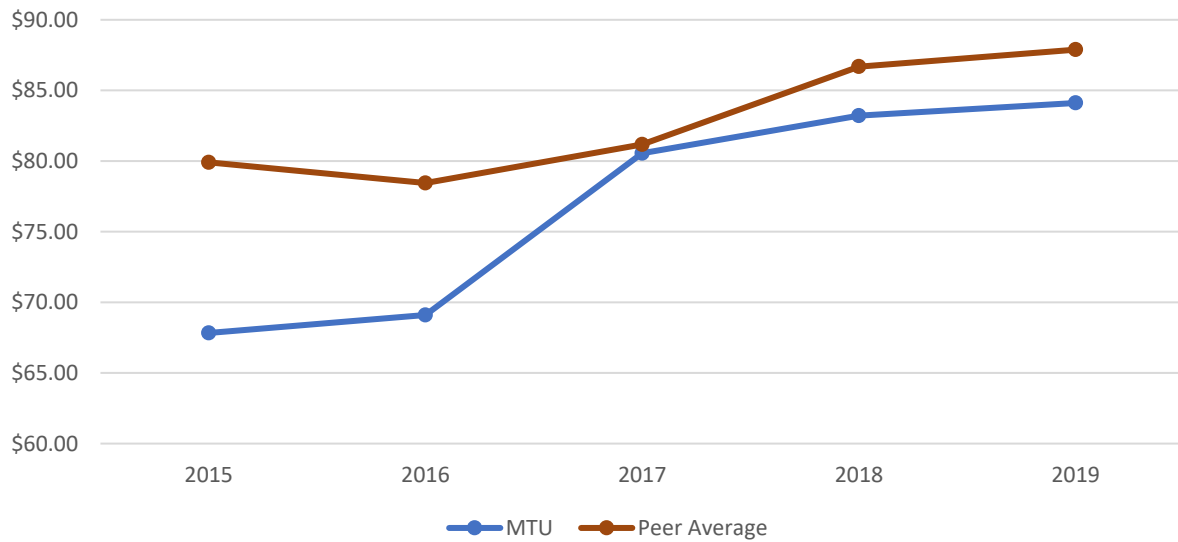
Source: National Transit Database

Figure 27. Service Efficiency: MTU and Peer Average Systemwide Operating Expenses per Boarding



Source: National Transit Database

Figure 28. Service Efficiency: MTU and Peer Average Systemwide Operating Expenses per Revenue Hour

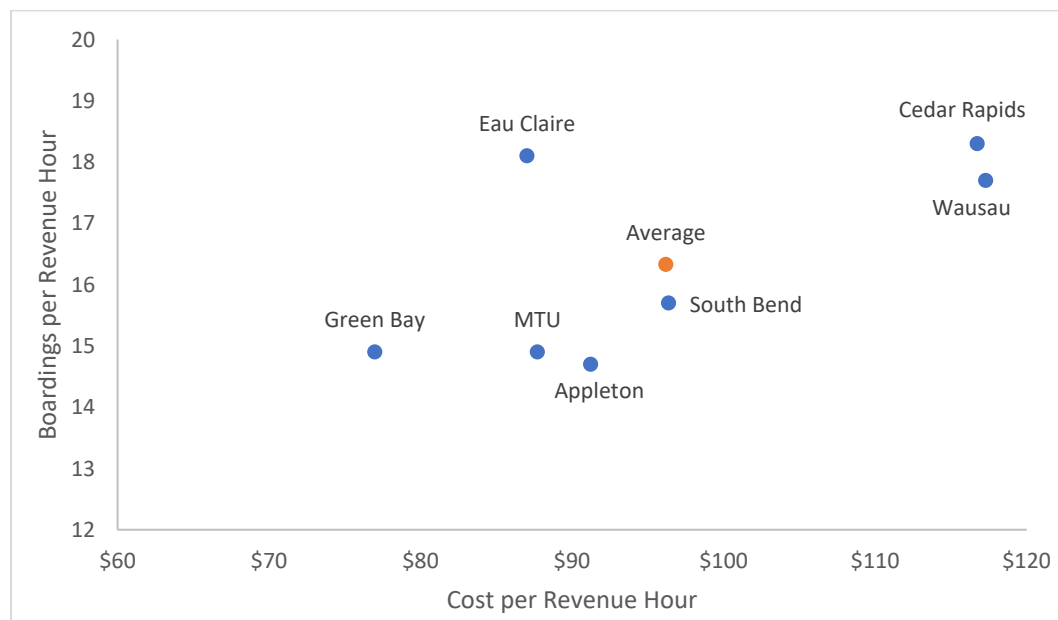


Source: National Transit Database

FIXED-ROUTE PERFORMANCE

The previous analysis examined systemwide performance metrics for fixed-route and paratransit service combined. Similar patterns apply to fixed-route service alone. Figure 29 shows a combined measurement of effectiveness in terms of ridership and efficiency in terms of cost per revenue hour. The peer average is 16.3 boardings and \$96.19 per revenue hour. At 14.9 boardings and \$87.71 per revenue hour, MTU performs better than average on cost efficiency but more poorly than average on service effectiveness.

Figure 29. MTU and Peer Fixed-Route Cost vs. Boardings per Revenue Hour, 2019



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Engagement efforts conducted in May and June of 2021 provided input on current conditions and generated ideas for service improvements from current riders and community members through a community survey, a virtual open house, presentations, and discussions with stakeholder groups, and through pop-up events at active destinations in the city, like the Grand River Station and the La Crosse Public Library. In addition, some results from a spring 2021 UWL Student Government transit survey among college students are included.

KEY FINDINGS

The key takeaways from the community survey, stakeholder meetings, virtual open house, wikimap, TDP boards, and additional outreach are summarized below.

General

- Policies – explore a guaranteed ride home program, fare capping, annual pass, low-income pass.
- Goals – transit helps support a car-light lifestyle, reduces costs for families as well as business, and benefits the environment.
 - Robust transit and active transportation can reduce the cost of car ownership for middle class families.
 - Develop a list of operational and capital projects if funding becomes available. This could be for additional federal, state, or local funding.
 - Ensure new services are financially sustainable.
- Serving growth areas in Onalaska and Holmen, commercial and residential development.
- Industrial Park second and third shift workers.
 - Consider on-demand services, vanpool or carpool, aligning shift hours of employers.
 - Regional workforce destinations – Cashton, Winona, Arcadia.
- Electric buses, expand bike racks, reduce car use/parking needs.
- Fostering a transit culture, consider a mobility manager for coordination and marketing?
- Consider transit in new development projects and street design.
 - Connection to land use, site design, setbacks, and parking policies.
- First/last mile connections.
 - Consider if on-demand services would be feasible in some areas, or during certain times.
 - Connections with strong and safe sidewalk and bike networks, bikeshare availability.
- Explore a transit hub at the mall, especially with additional Onalaska service?

MTU

- System is downtown focused, desire to reduce travel times and increase frequencies, potentially add express services.
 - Frustrations with transfers and missed connections.
 - Long travel times from one end of the city to another.
- Desire for a higher quality service product – potential for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) light?
 - Identify priority corridors
- Transit is seen as key to address climate change, reduce the carbon emissions, and to achieve the environmental goals of the community.
- Transit is seen as a tool to improve equity goals in the community.
- Service to Woodman's is very desirable.

- Other destinations – Onalaska, northside circulator, Amtrak and airport, all abilities park, Forest Hill Park and Hixon Forrest, city/social services, DMV.
- Improve pedestrian safety near stops and add/improve shelters, wayfinding, and amenities. Majority of current shelters are over a decade old and in need of replacement or upgrades.
- Event transportation – provide transit passes instead of detours.
- Partner with large employers for pass programs.
- Marketing – need to reach a new cohort of students every year.
- Limited space on bike racks on the bus, and a desire to add bike storage/racks at major stops.
- No strong preference for frequency or coverage, or for front door access vs. walking further to better service. Span of service is ok, except for businesses.
- Consider breaking up the multiple buses that run on Gillette Street – overlap of service.
- Some feel unsafe on the bus due to the behaviors of other riders on board.
- La Crescent – consider changes to the loop for better in-town transport and serving the event center.
- Develop an “adopt-a-stop” program for cleanliness at bus stops?

OSR

- City and service area are experiencing strong commercial and residential growth.
- Interest in direct service from Holmen and Onalaska to La Crosse, either by MTU or a new OSR shuttle service.
- Improve marketing and awareness of OSR service.

SMRT

- Desire for service to Cashton, possibly along Highway 33 or from Westby.
- Desire for service on Saturdays.
- Improve marketing of the SMRT Works! pass program among employees of current participants and expand the number of businesses and organizations participating.
- Make the last run of the Green Route depart La Crosse at a later time or add a fourth run.
 - Examine departure and arrival times of all runs.
- SMRT does not serve the La Crosse Grand River Station, consider a King Street bus stop?
- Study legibility and usefulness of loops through La Crosse, including whether the current operation in opposite directions is still desired and serves all relevant destinations.
- Improve marketing and awareness of service.
 - Rename the different runs of each route “runs” instead of “route”.
- Establish formal local operating agreements between the municipalities, provide sample draft language.
- Need to plan for rolling stock replacement, consider including wayfinding/signage and shelters in a capital plan.
- Rural medical/special needs transportation – coordinate with ADRCs.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Thirty-four transportation-needs stakeholders in the La Crosse region were invited to participate in one of three stakeholder meetings. Stakeholders could join one of the three meetings in an “office hour” setting through Zoom videoconferencing calls, scheduled for various timeslots on Thursday, May 13, Friday, May 14, and Monday, May 17. Stakeholders of the following groups and industries were invited:

- Higher Education Students, Faculty, and Staff
- K-12 Administrators
- Workforce & Economic Development, and Business Community
- Community and Advocacy Groups
- Newly Arrived Immigrant Communities and LEP Populations
- Groups and Advocates Representing People with Disabilities and Older Adults
- Social Service Providers
- Health and Human Service Providers and Resources
- Housing Organizations

Attendance records are located in the appendix, as well as a list of desired service improvements and destinations to serve.

Project Overview

There were four attendees during the first meeting, six attendees for the second meeting, and seven attendees for the third meeting. The initial project overview and initial performance findings sparked the following comments from meeting participants during the first meeting:

- One participant wanted to know if this effort would include the county minibuss service for people with disabilities and the elderly.
 - Response: human service providers will be noted for future coordination, but service recommendations will be limited to the three transit agencies. MTU partners with ADRC paratransit.
- One participant wanted to know why there was no route 3 in the MTU system.
 - Response: it got eliminated after a previous round of route alignment and service changes.

In the second meeting, the following comments were provided:

- One participant would like this effort to reach out to ADRC staff for all counties served by SMRT.
 - ADRC staff was supportive, their recent aging plan survey showed transportation options were a high priority.

In the third meeting, the following comments were provided:

- One participant wanted to know if the planning process would include an educational component to show people what is possible with transit in other communities and countries.
 - Response: while there are funding constraints, the process will give examples of what could be accomplished within a 5-10 year timespan.
- One participant wanted to know how students could get involved in the process, as school just completed the spring semester.
 - Response: student participation is very important, and the planning team hopes to involve them in the community survey. There will be more opportunities for input in the fall when more developed alternatives will be shared for feedback. Fall engagement is yet to be determined.

Transportation Needs Discussion

The consultant team led the stakeholder discussions on transportation needs and tradeoffs. Developing a better transit system requires the planning team to consider tradeoffs, balance needs, and prioritize

improvements. Providing an overview of the current system and initial study results set the stage for a discussion on future transit improvements.

Questions asked to participants included:

- Does existing transit service meet the needs of your customers/clients/constituents? If not, what could be improved?
- Why do employees, customers, etc. use, or do not use, transit?
- What are the most important current/future transit destinations?
 - Are they served by transit well, or at all?
 - During what times of the day and days of the week are transportation to these places most critical?
 - How will COVID affect future/long-term travel patterns?
- What outcomes of good transit would you like to see?

During the first meeting, stakeholders provided the following responses to the questions:

- One participant asked if it would be feasible to have light rail or streetcar service instead of buses. Especially now that the Biden administration is looking to pass a major infrastructure package.
 - Response: it is a significant capital investment, but there are similar smaller cities with rail systems. First strong transit corridors would need to be established with frequent service over a long service span that could lead to a higher quality service product, such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). There are some underlying conditions that favor transit in La Crosse, such as its topography and water, higher institutions of education, and large health care providers.
- One participant mentioned there was only bus service during the daytime to the crossing meadows industrial area, they would like to see service for shift workers before or after current transit service hours. The service is limited due to the route being interlined with the French Island service.
- Some people do not ride due to the long travel times, especially from the far southside of town. It is hard to choose transit when a trip takes an hour versus 15 minutes by car.
 - The system is currently a hub-and-spoke model, with all service routed through downtown. Desire for direct service to Onalaska.
- One participant mentioned dangerous street crossings as a barrier to riding the bus, especially difficult for people with special needs. There need to be safer crosswalks and better signal timing.
 - Opportunity with the South Avenue project, including roundabouts.
- Fares have recently been implemented again after MTU offered fare-free trips during COVID, using CARES Act funding.
- La Crescent service recently expanded to Saturday.
- Participants hope to see better transit to essential services like groceries, social and government services, and parks.

During the second meeting, stakeholders provided the following responses to the questions:

- There is a great need for medical transportation in the rural counties, the ADRCs are experiencing a driver and vehicle shortage and struggle to meet the demand. Dialysis patients need many rides to Tomah, while also offering rides to specialists in La Crosse and Madison.
 - The ADRCs offer door-to-door service on demand, while SMRT is on a schedule. Many clients use wheelchairs. Difficult to get clients to and from bus stop locations.
 - The ADRCs try to coordinate rides to the grocery store, but medical trips have priority. They also try to keep social distancing by not mixing households on trips.

- MTU paratransit mimics the fixed-route service area, see map: https://gis.cityoflacrosse.org/maps/MTU_Specialized_Transport/
 - Demand response routes of La Crescent and French island fulfill paratransit.
- SMRT hopes this planning effort will improve first and last mile connections.
 - They would like to consider a guaranteed ride home program and improve marketing across transit agencies.
 - Viroqua Cab has significant ridership from nursing homes in the area.
- Participants hope transit will increase frequency to improve its perception, decrease congestion and allow for car free or car-light living, and more active transportation. Hope people will see transit as a tool, not an inconvenience.
 - Participants hope the plan will show elected officials what is possible with additional investments.
- There is a desire to explore special event transportation or transit passes.
- There will need to be continued marketing and engagement with the universities and colleges.

During the third meeting, stakeholders provided the following responses to the questions:

- One participant hoped SMRT services will be considered to the north of La Crosse to serve Ashley Furniture in Arcadia, food processing plants, and the growth areas of Brice Prairie, and Holmen.
 - The LAPC considered Arcadia service previously, but it was difficult due to being in a different planning area.
- Service at the start and end of shift times is a great need in the business parks.
 - Food manufacturing needs transportation access.
 - Office staff at most businesses will mostly return this summer.
- One participant hopes to reduce fossil fuel use by increased transit ridership. They also hope electric transit vehicles will be considered.
- University representatives hope there would be more of a focus on all-day service, with fewer transfers. The wait times between buses are too long now when connections are missed.
- There is also a desire for more express service/non-stop service to major employers, especially between north and south.
- Adding a transit hub at the mall and increased bike storage on MTU buses was also mentioned.
- Some would like to see a transit spine on Losey Boulevard, service later in the evening, and increased frequencies. Fortunate that Sunday service is offered and offered a desire for service to all public facilities.
- Most stakeholders hope transit to become a real alternative to driving. Current riders do not have many other options. The circulator is a good approach to connect destinations.
 - Nice to have the smart phone app with bus tracking, easy to use.
- Participants hope transit can reduce congestion and cars parked on the streets, create a walkable and bikeable community and more foot traffic. Cleaner air and reduced emissions are important.
- A desire for better options for low-income residents through special fare programs or free fares. There is a high cost to owning, operating, and maintaining a personal vehicle.
- As an economic outcome, participants hope to no longer provide expensive parking for everyone. It is both expensive to build and takes up space that could be used for housing or commercial developments.
- The city and county have zero-emissions climate goals, transit will help address the climate crisis.

Tradeoff Polls

Following the discussion, the stakeholders had a better understanding of the transportation needs in the community. To help prioritize addressing the needs, participants were asked a series of tradeoff questions. The results of these tradeoff polls are shown below.

Table 11. Stakeholder Tradeoff Poll Results

| Given the opportunity for new investment, which of the following outcomes would you select? | |
|--|---|
| Response | Tradeoff Statements |
| 8 | Wait for the bus for half the time you do today |
| 5 | Take the bus to places you cannot today |
| 9 | Walk or roll a longer distance to better transit service |
| 4 | Have a longer transit trip that takes you to the front door of your destination |
| 4 | Catch the bus later in the evening |
| 9 | Take the bus to places you cannot today |
| 11 | Wait for the bus for half the time you do today |
| 2 | Catch the bus later in the evening |
| 8 | Invest in better weekday service |
| 5 | Invest in better Saturday service |
| 9 | Invest in better weekday service |
| 3 | Invest in better Sunday service |
| 11 | Invest in better Saturday service |
| 1 | Invest in better Sunday service |

After the poll questions, participants of the second meeting had the following comments when asked if the poll questions inspired any further thoughts:

- A lot of people do not know what is available to them.
- Hope to improve SMRT ridership with university/college students.
- Hope to coordinate this effort with the La Crosse County Comprehensive Plan.
- Increased sprawl and development lead to longer commutes.

Participants of the third meeting had the following comments after the poll questions:

- Will first-last mile connections be considered, such as integrated bikeshare?
 - Response: Sidewalk access, bike share and scooters are all part of making sure people can get to their destinations and will be considered in bus service alternatives planning.
- One participant noted that she hoped all alternatives will be evaluated on whether they would get more people to ride, or if they would better serve low-income workers, or if they which would connect to Amtrak or the airport.
- Could bus schedules and routes be changed for events?
 - There are examples of event transportation and passes, but they cannot be chartered service and have an open-door policy. Agencies do want to be consistent in their schedule.

- One participant gave the example of a big UWL track meet where the bus was detoured, instead visitors should have been encouraged to ride the bus.

OPEN HOUSE

The project team hosted a virtual open house on Thursday, May 27 at 5pm through a Zoom webinar. The virtual open house covered the same topics as the stakeholder meetings, plus added some educational slides on transit planning considerations.

Advertising

Advertising for the open house included social media, email blasts on listservs, and free radio and tv news briefs. News8000.com ran a segment on the open house on May 26, and they and WXOW ran news articles on their websites. On social media, the event was shared on the Facebook pages of La Crosse MTU and La Crosse County. Emails distributed the open house information to the LAPC listserv and the La Crosse Regional TDP stakeholder list, with the ask to share it among their clients, customers, colleagues, and friends.

Figure 30. Open House Promotions

La Crosse MTU
May 14 at 12:48 PM · 🌐

MTU wants your input

VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE
REGIONAL TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

We Need Your Input!
You are invited to a virtual open house to tell us how you'd like transit to serve you and our region!

The goal is to develop a regional plan that

- Improves access to and convenience of transit
- Coordinates services among:
 - La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility
 - Onalaska Shared Ride
 - Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit

Because of COVID-19, the open house will take place through Zoom. You can register at:
<https://www.lacrossecounty.org/metropolis-an-planning-organization/lapc>
[Home/regional-transit-development-plan/public-meetings-and-materials](https://www.lacrossecounty.org/mmpq)

May 27, 2021 5:00 p.m.
Visit the *Public Meetings and Materials* page under the *Regional Transit Development Plan* drop-down at <https://www.lacrossecounty.org/mmpq> to register.
If you need assistance, please call Jackie at 608-785-6141.

👍 2 2 Shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

news8000.com/public-input-meeting-to-help-steer-future-of-transit-in-la-crosse-area/

Gmail Maps Citrix ADP SRF Zoom CenterPoint MPLS Utilities Xcel

NEWS8000.COM NEWS WEATHER SPORTS OBITS MORE ▾

Public input meeting to help steer future of transit in La Crosse area
The virtual meeting is hosted by the La Crosse Area Planning Committee

Posted: May 26, 2021 4:59 PM
Updated: May 26, 2021 6:44 PM by Greg White

8 **TRANSIT PLANNING PUBLIC INPUT** **HAPPENING TOMORROW**

LA CROSSE COUNTY, Wis. (WKBT) – Community members can help steer the future of the La Crosse area's new Regional Transit Development Plan.

Happening Thursday, La Crosse Area Planning Committee will host an open house to help to improve services and coordination between the La Crosse's MTU, Onalaska Shared Ride and Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit.

The virtual open house will start at 5 p.m

Presentation

The open house started with the introduction of the presenters and an overview on how to use Zoom. Attendees could post questions in the chat or Q&A function or use the "raise your hand" function to indicate they would like to speak on a topic. Attendees would then be unmuted and allowed to speak.

Twenty-two members of the public attended the virtual open house, as well as five staff members of LAPC and SRF.

Project Overview

Consultant staff provided an overview of the project and transit planning educational slides, as well as the public engagement activities. The initial project overview, transit planning slides, and public engagement strategy slides sparked the following comments from meeting participants:

- One participant wanted to know if low-use bus stops are due to previous route changes.
 - Lower ridership stops can be due to low service levels at the stop, a built environment with little residential or commercial density, or an unfriendly pedestrian network.
- One participant wanted to know if the La Crosse Regional Transit Development Plan wants to see the roads widened through the marsh.
 - The project will not look at new road projects.
- One participant noted that 2020 ridership data is not very representative and wanted to know the year used to show ridership data.
 - Ridership data from 2019 is shown on the ridership by stop map. The project will also look at pandemic travel patterns to identify essential services destinations in the network.

Discussion

Consultant staff led the open house discussion on transportation needs and tradeoffs. Developing a better transit system requires the planning team to consider tradeoffs, balance needs, and prioritize improvements. Providing an overview of the current system and initial study results set the stage for a discussion on future transit improvements.

During the discussion, participants provided the following responses:

- One participant wanted to know what the cut-off is for the number of riders before a change in the route or service hours is made.
 - While ridership is important, it is just one factor in route alignment and service change decisions. Need to make sure the route connects important or essential community destinations, which the project team wants to learn about through these meetings.
- One participant noted that buses on Losey look mostly empty and wanted to know how the transit system justifies using large buses.
 - Buses need to be ready for peak capacity, which may be in the middle of the route near downtown or other destinations instead of the ends, or at certain times of the day. It is inefficient to switch vehicles and operators multiple times per day. The operator constitutes the highest share of operating costs, not running the bus itself. It is more efficient to have just one or two types of buses in the fleet for maintenance purposes.
- One participant asked if the effort involves talking to businesses that might want to partner with transit services for their employees or patrons (theaters, concerts, etc.).
 - Yes, transit systems in other cities partner with large event organizers for event transit passes. There are also transit passes for employees. Transit systems will need to establish the partnerships.
- One participant asked if OSR serves Woodman's.
 - LAPC staff confirmed OSR serves Woodman's but noted that transfers only occur at Valley View and Center 90.

- This planning effort hopes to improve the coordination among the three providers to improve connections for the customer.
- One participant would like to see added bike storage capacity on buses and at bus stops.
- One participant asked about on-demand services on French island.
 - The current bus route on French island will deviate to pick up riders by request.
- One participant asked if the aspirations of previous transit plans were achieved or not.
 - The needs assessment will include a review of previous transit and transportation planning efforts and see what is still applicable.
- One participant asked if a specific amount of money is set aside for this process, or if future/different funding scenarios will be considered.
 - Both existing budget alternatives as well as priorities for service expansion will be developed through this plan, in case more operational or capital funds become available in the future. Every metropolitan region needs to go through a transit development plan every 5-10 years. This plan is slightly different by covering three transit providers instead of one. Goals for this plan are still in development as the project team is conducting the needs assessment.
- One participant asked if case studies from other cities or regions will be considered.
 - Yes, the consultant experience throughout the region and country will be brought in to consider what might be applicable in the community.

Tradeoff Polls

Following the discussion, open house attendees could help prioritize addressing the needs through answering a series of tradeoff questions. The results of these tradeoff polls are shown below.

Table 12. Open House Tradeoff Poll Results

| Given the opportunity for new investment, which of the following outcomes would you select? | |
|--|---|
| Response | Tradeoff Statements |
| 10 | Wait for the bus for half the time you do today |
| 10 | Take the bus to places you cannot today |
| 10 | Walk or roll a longer distance to better transit service |
| 10 | Have a longer transit trip that takes you to the front door of your destination |
| 12 | Catch the bus earlier in the morning or later in the evening |
| 7 | Take the bus to places you cannot today |
| 5 | Wait for the bus for half the time you do today |
| 11 | Catch the bus earlier in the morning or later in the evening |
| 5 | Invest in better weekday service |
| 13 | Invest in better Saturday service |
| 11 | Invest in better Sunday service |
| 8 | Invest in better weekday service |
| 4 | Invest in better Sunday service |
| 12 | Invest in better Saturday service |

After the poll questions, participants of the open house had the following comments when asked if the poll questions inspired any further thoughts:

- One participant noted that they did not have enough information to make a preference known for some of the poll questions.
 - Consultant staff clarified that it is a thought exercise to understand what priorities might be, but that any alternatives would be context sensitive and would be brought to the public for feedback before implementation.
- One participant asked about the walking distance to bus stops, noting that most people are willing to walk up to two blocks.
 - Consultant staff noted that two blocks can be pleasant in one setting and difficult in others depending on the sidewalk network and the quality of service one is walking to. It varies by community and climate, that is why the project team looks beyond the numbers to meet with people to understand what works in their community.

DISPLAY BOARDS

Five interactive boards were placed at the Grand River Station in La Crosse and the La Crosse Public Library from Wednesday, June 9 through Monday, June 14. The boards provided information on the TDP planning process and asked visitors to place stickers on the boards in response to various questions and tradeoffs proposed. Visitors could also provide more elaborate comments on a form.

The boards were placed in the lobby of the transit center and library but were not staffed continuously to minimize exposure to COVID-19. It allowed participants to provide input for the TDP without the need to have access to an internet-connected device.

Based on the number of comments provided and dots placed, participation was higher at the library than at the transit center.

Responses

Participants provided the following preferences and comments at the Grand River Station:

- A preference for more evening service and more weekend service.
- A general satisfaction with the MTU services provided.

Participants provided the following preferences and comments at the La Crosse Public Library:

- For the trade-offs, preferences included:
 - Coverage over frequency.
 - Coverage over evening service.
 - Even support for frequency vs. evening service.
 - Saturday improvements over weekday.
 - Sunday improvements over weekday.
 - Even support for Saturday vs. Sunday.
- Generally, people agreed with the customer satisfaction statements, but some disagreed with MTU operating during times that work with their schedule.
- A strong preference for more service in the evening and on Saturdays.

- Some showed support for better frequency, improved travel times, and more Sunday service.
- Destinations to improve service to: La Crescent, French Island, Onalaska, Woodman's.
 - Difficulty returning from the bottom of the hill at Hillview Health Care Center.
- Other comments included:
 - "Smaller buses, less cost for fuel."
 - "Buses are frequently almost empty – smaller buses more economical."

Full results of the TDP boards are shown in the appendix.

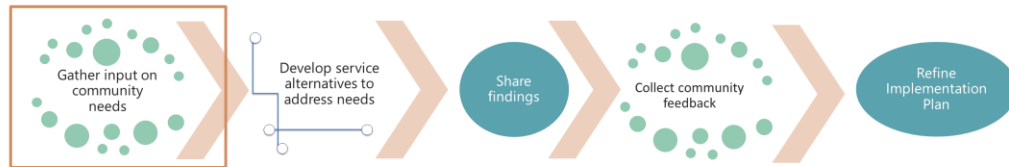
Figure 31. TDP Board #1

La Crosse Regional Transit Development Plan

Purpose Help us shape the future of La Crosse Regional Transit Services!

- A plan to guide the transit systems over the next ten years
- Understand community transportation needs and opportunities for improvement
- Review and evaluate the existing route networks
- Develop priorities and recommendations that address community goals and needs

Process



Stay Involved

Project website:

www.lacrossecounty.org/metropolitan-planning-organization/LAPC-Home/regional-transit-development-plan

Community survey:

www.surveymonkey.com/r/LaCrosseRegionalTransit

Provide comments on route improvements:

www.wikimapping.com/La-Crosse-Regional-Transit-Development-Plan-TDP.html



Link to Community Survey

Want More Info?

Peter Fletcher

La Crosse Area Planning Committee

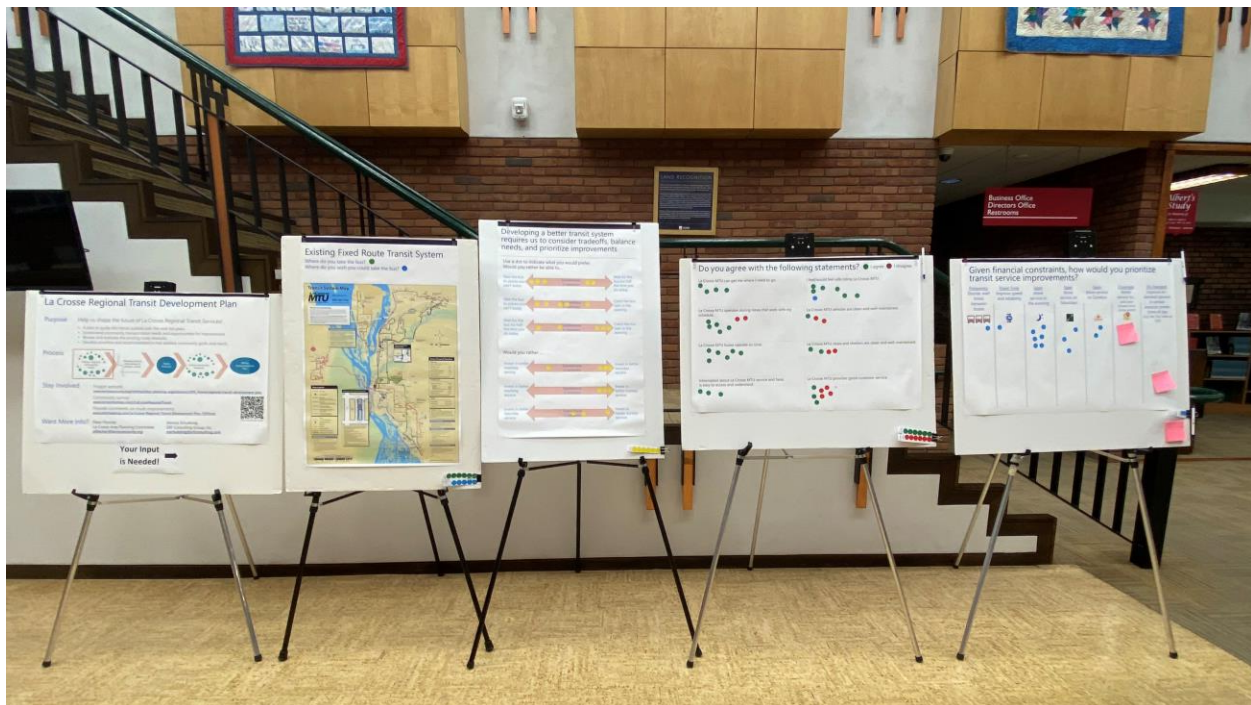
pfletcher@lacrossecounty.org

Menno Schukking

SRF Consulting Group, Inc.

mschukking@srfconsulting.com

Figure 32. Library Set-up of TDP Boards



COMMUNITY SURVEY

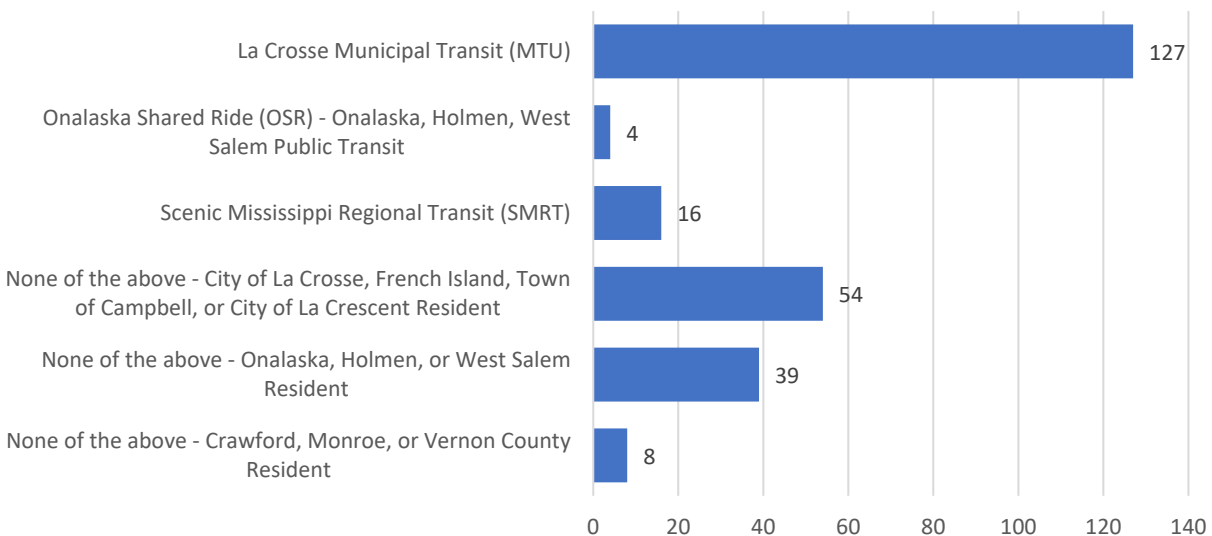
The TDP community survey was conducted from May 27, 2021, through June 23, 2021 among residents of the La Crosse MTU, Onalaska Shared Ride, and SMRT service areas through both an online and three paper instruments. The survey had separate paths based on the most used service or service area of the respondent. The survey collected 248 valid responses and provides the transit agencies with information on rider and non-rider preferences, satisfaction, and priorities for improvement.

The survey consisted of 47 questions in simple, easy to understand language. Depending on the answer to the first question, respondents were sorted into the appropriate path of their most common used transit service or service area. Respondents would typically need answer between 15 and 20 of the 47 questions to complete the survey, unless they indicated that they wanted to answer questions for more than one transit agency.

The survey collected information on a respondent's transit use, trip purpose, travel time, passenger experience, and preferences for improvements. Demographic questions asked respondents about the respondents' vehicles in their household, income, age, race/ethnicity, disability status, internet connected device availability, and higher education affiliation. The survey methodology is located in the appendix.

- Question 1: Which of the following transit services have you used the most in the past two years? (before and/or during COVID). Select the service most used/option most applicable

Figure 33. Survey Participants by Transit Agency or Service Area



Respondent Demographics

This section contains narrative and figures to summarize the overall sample make-up of the survey's respondents, based on questions 42 through 47 covering the demographic and socioeconomic background of participants. All percentages displayed in figures in this section represent the proportion of valid survey responses to a particular response for a question.

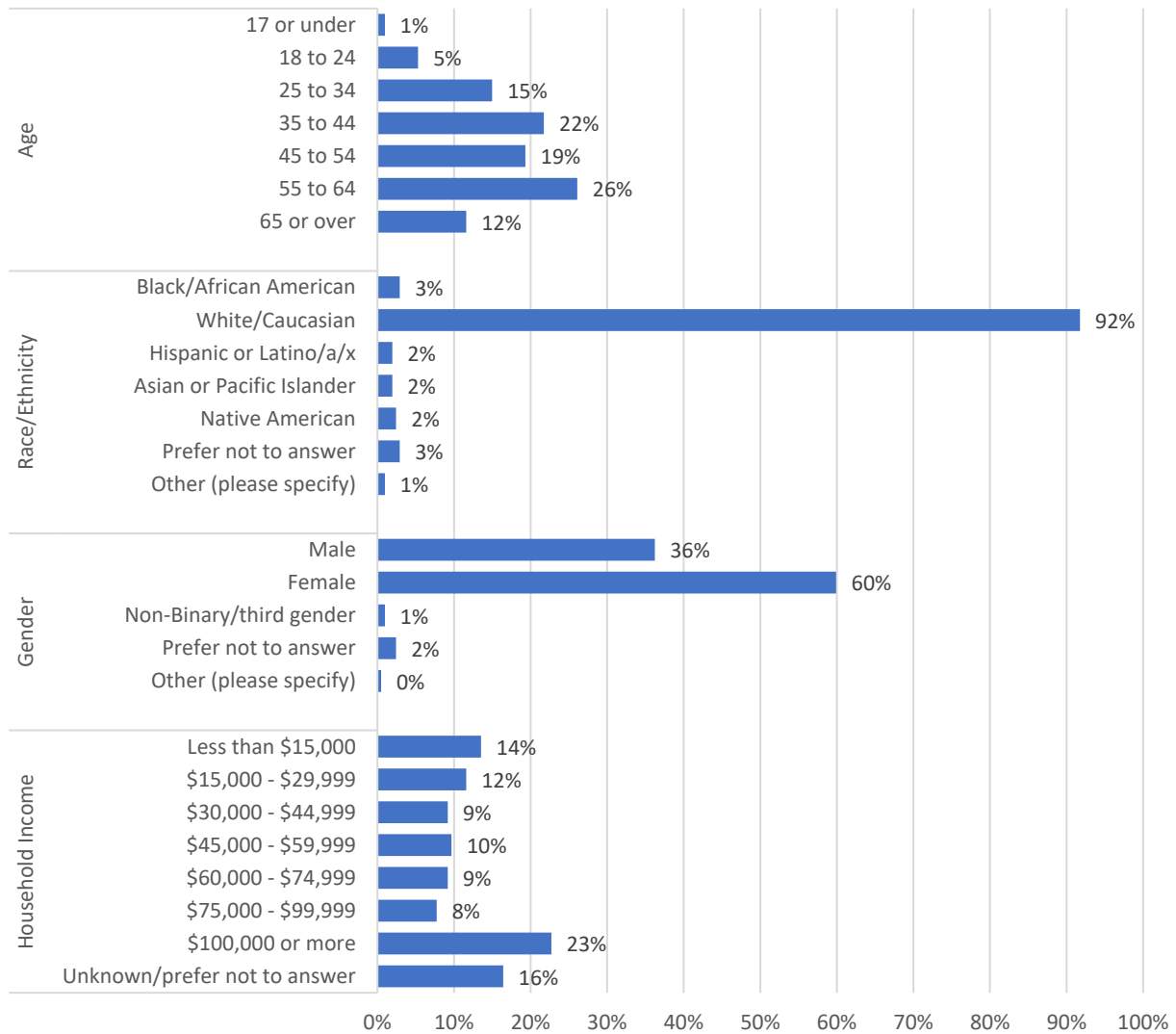
All survey participants were asked the following questions:

- Question 42: What is your age?
- Question 43: What is your race and/or ethnicity? (Select all that apply)
- Question 44: What is your gender?
- Question 46: What is the primary language spoken in your household?
- Question 47: What is the combined annual income for your household?

Twenty-six percent of the survey participants are aged 55 to 64, representing the largest age cohort of respondents. There were only six percent of respondents under the age of 25. A majority of the respondents identify as female (60 percent), while the majority of respondents (92 percent) identify as white/Caucasian.

Over 26 percent of the survey respondents report a household income below \$30,000, while 23 percent report an income above \$100,000. Note that 16 percent of survey participants preferred not to answer the income question. A vast majority of 98 percent of survey participants speak English at home as their primary language.

Figure 34. Demographic and Socioeconomic Background



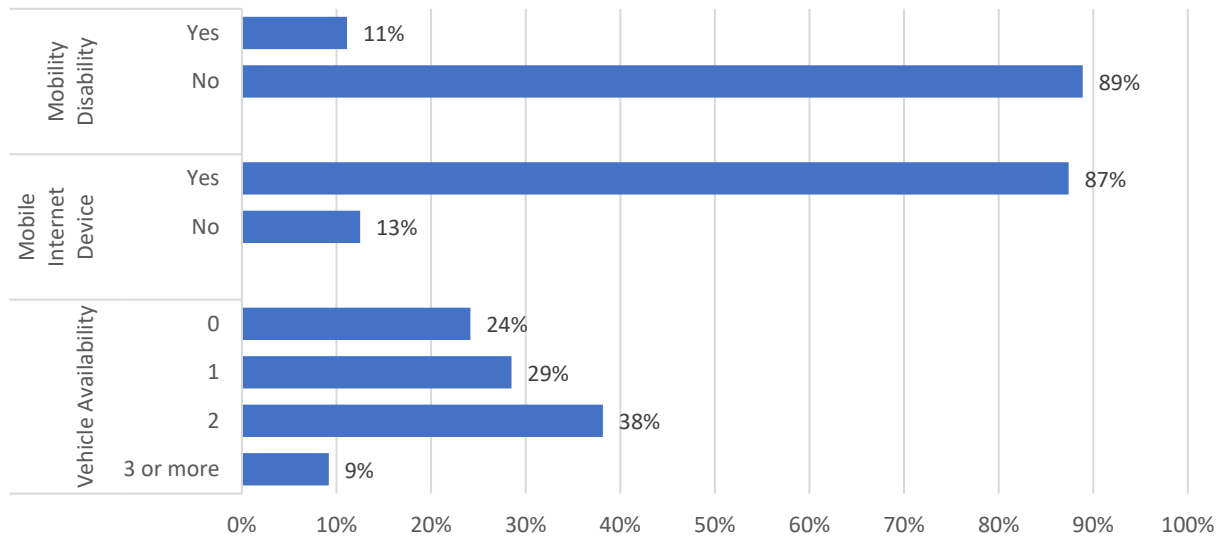
Personal Accessibility

All survey participants were asked the following questions:

- Question 40: Do you consider yourself to have a disability that limits your mobility?
- Question 41: Do you own a smart phone or other internet-connected mobile device?
- Question 45: How many working vehicles are available in your household?

Eleven percent of survey participants indicate having a disability that limits their mobility. A vast majority of 87 percent of survey participants own a smart phone or other internet-connected mobile device. Twenty-four percent of respondents do not have a working vehicle available in their household. An additional 29 percent only have a single car available.

Figure 35. Personal Accessibility



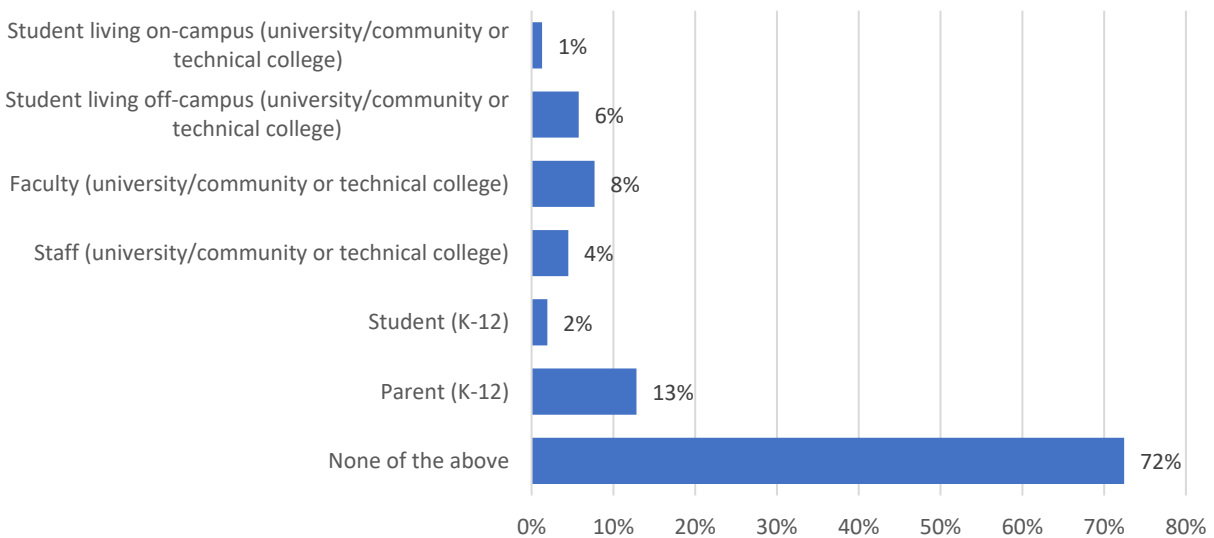
MTU Riders and La Crosse Residents

Below are the overall findings of the survey’s transit related questions as they pertain to MTU riders and residents of the City of La Crosse, French Island, Town of Campbell or the City of La Crescent (referred to as La Crosse residents). All percentages displayed in figures in this section represent the proportion of valid survey responses corresponding to a particular response for a question.

All MTU riders and La Crosse residents were asked about their relationship to schools and institutes of higher learning in the following question:

- Question 15: Which of the following, if any, do you identify with? (Select all that apply).

Figure 36. Educational Affiliation



The 127 respondents who indicated using MTU services in the past two years in Question 1 were asked the following survey questions about their transit experience:

- Question 2: How often do you ride La Crosse MTU?
- Question 3: Which routes or services do you use most often? (Select all that apply)
- Question 4: Do you regularly use more than one route to get to your destination?
- Question 5: When using La Crosse MTU, what is your usual trip purpose? (Select all that apply)
- Question 6: From the time you get on the bus to the time you get off, how long does your bus trip usually last?
- Question 7: How do you usually get to/from the bus stop?
- Question 8: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about La Crosse MTU?

Of the regular MTU riders who responded to Question 2, 38 percent indicated riding MTU five or more days per week. Respondents could indicate the routes they used most frequently and select more than one route. The most used routes by survey participants are routes 5 and 1, and the least used are routes 7 and 8. This corresponds with the average daily ridership in the system.

Question 4 asked whether participants regularly need to use more than one bus (transfer) to reach their destination. Forty-three percent of regular transit users indicate that they use a transfer regularly.

Regular transit user participants mostly use MTU for work trips (60 percent) or for shopping and errands (56 percent). Other trip purposes are listed in the appendix. Only two percent of participants indicate using MATBUS for K-12 school trips. Over half of regular transit users (58 percent) spend between 10 and 30 minutes on the bus to reach their destination. Ten percent of participants spend less than 10 minutes on the bus, while four percent spend over an hour on their bus trip.

The vast majority of MTU users walk to and from the bus stop (90 percent), but some do bike (3 percent) or use a wheelchair or mobility device to access the bus stop (2 percent).

The customer satisfaction question shows large majorities (strongly) agreeing that drivers are helpful and friendly (87 percent), that it's easy to get to bus stops and board the bus (82 percent), and that passengers feel safe riding the bus (85 percent). While majorities agree with the statements, a substantial number of regular transit users disagree that the buses run on time (14 percent) and that buses are clean (17 percent).

Figure 37. Transit Use

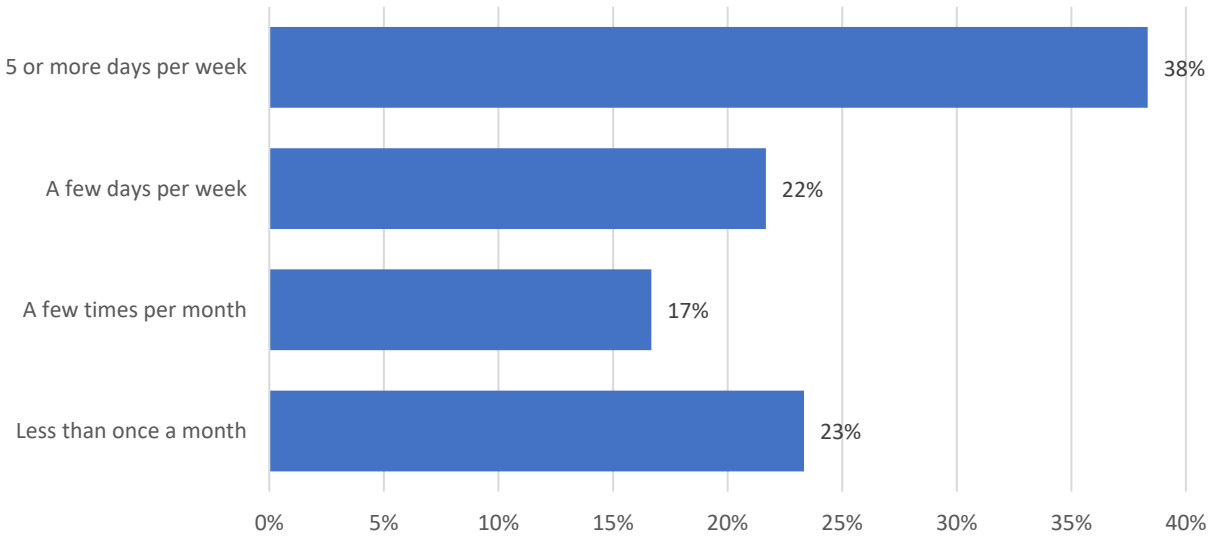


Figure 38. Frequently Used Routes

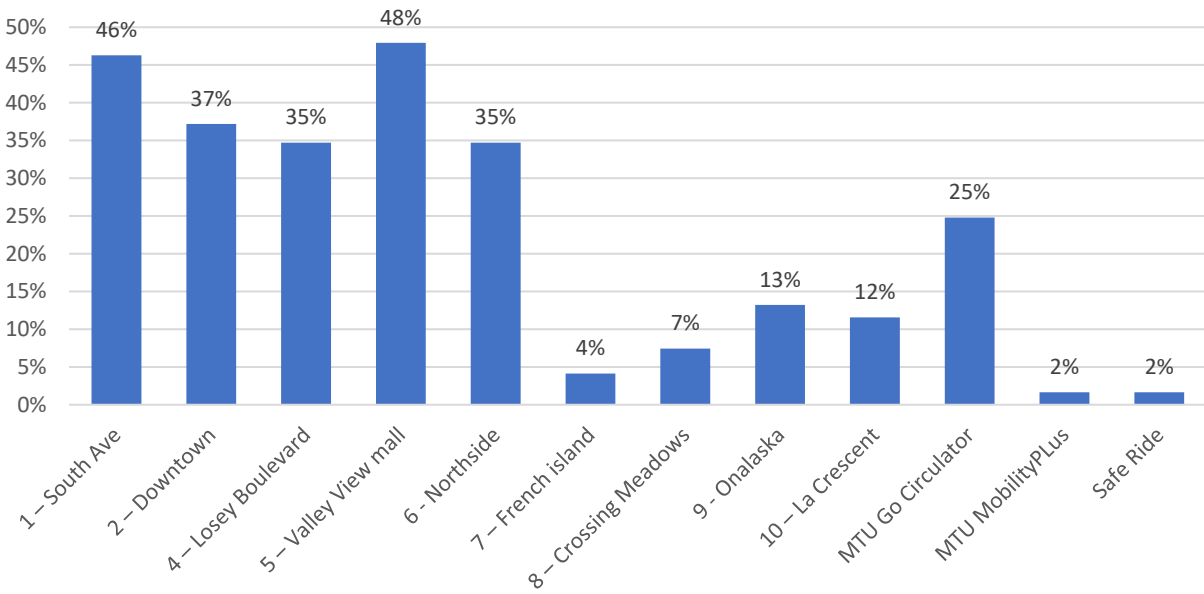


Figure 39. Trip Purpose

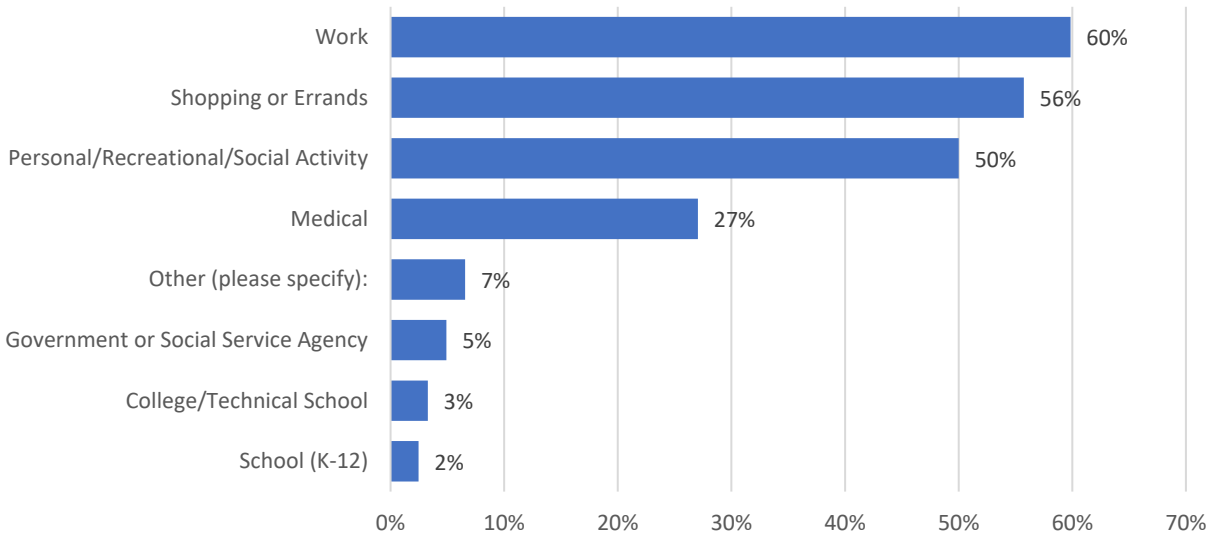


Figure 40. Travel Time

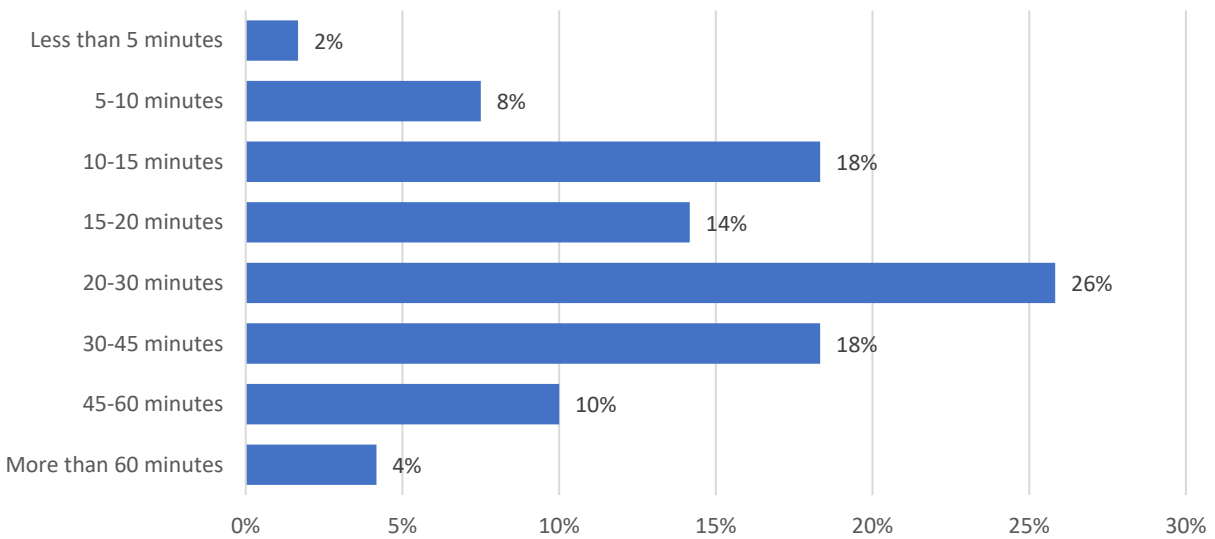


Figure 41. Bus Stop Access

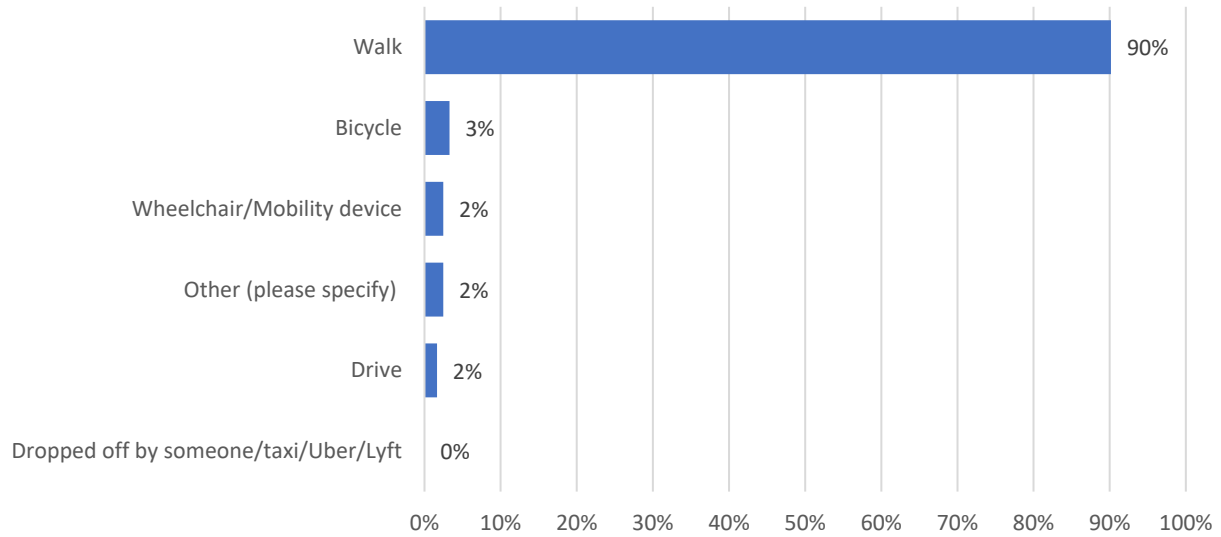
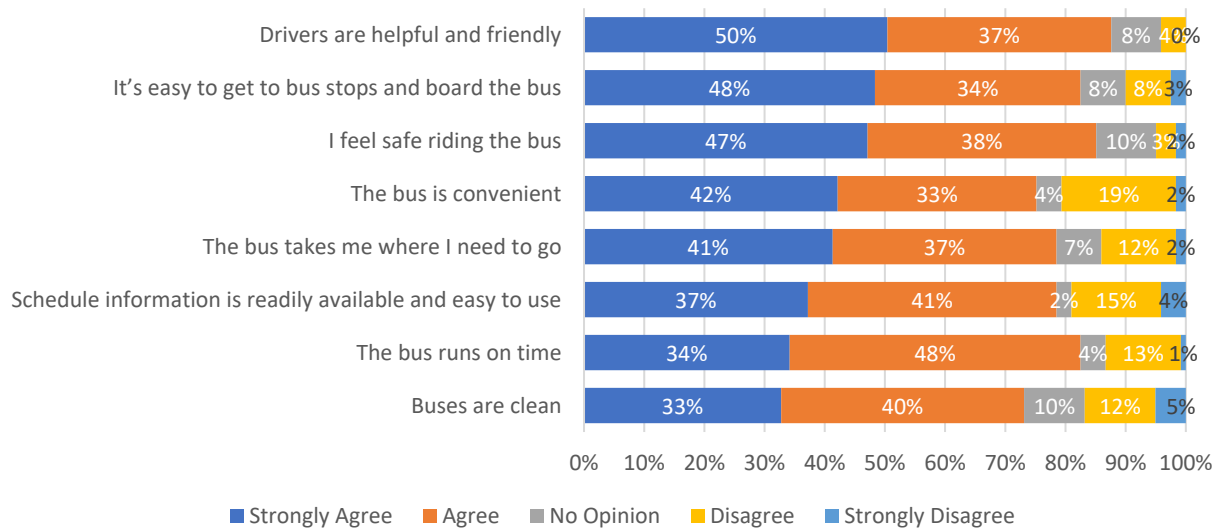


Figure 42. Customer Satisfaction



The 54 respondents who indicated in Question 1 to live in City of La Crosse, French Island, Town of Campbell or the City of La Crescent (referred to as La Crosse residents) were asked the following questions:

- Question 9: If you do not use La Crosse MTU regularly, what are the reasons discouraging you from doing so? (Select all that apply)
- Question 10: What condition(s) might make you reconsider using transit in the future? (Select all that apply)

A majority of survey participants who do not use MTU regularly indicate that they prefer to use other modes of transportation (56 percent). Other reasons include the long travel time (29 percent), the bus not running often enough (18 percent), the bus not being available early or late enough (13 percent), and not being available within a five-minute walk (11 percent). Open-ended comments are listed in the appendix, but generally listed unfamiliarity with the system or having a car.

Reconsidering factors that may cause non-users to reconsider MTU bus service in the future include service improvements (47 percent) and better information (29 percent). It must be noted that 24 percent of non-users indicate that nothing could change their mind to consider riding the bus. Other possible reconsidering factors are listed in the appendix.

Figure 43. MTU Non-Users: Discouraging Factors

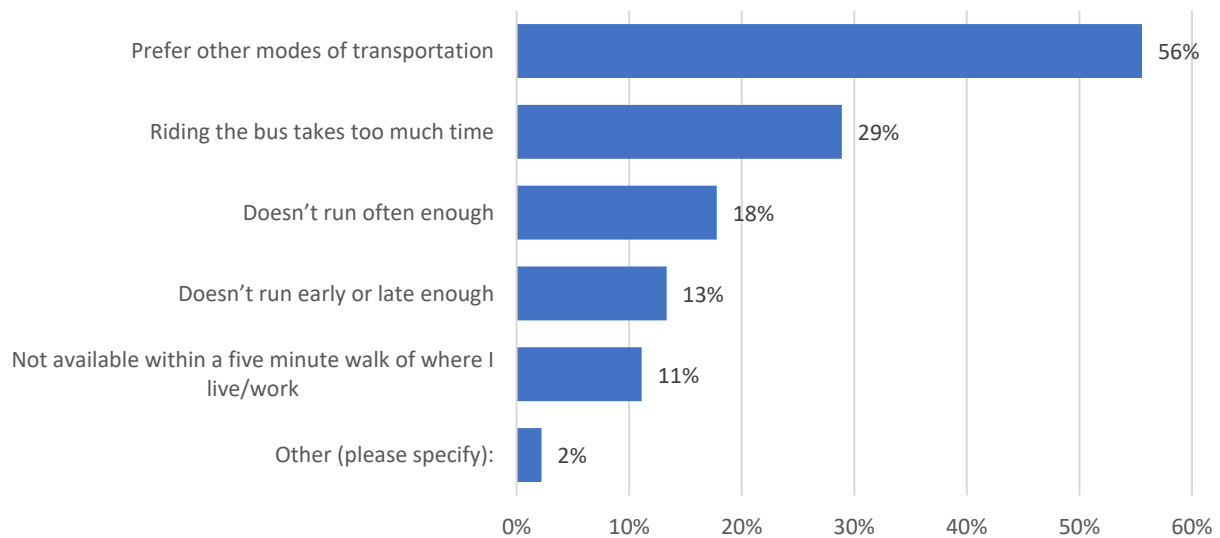
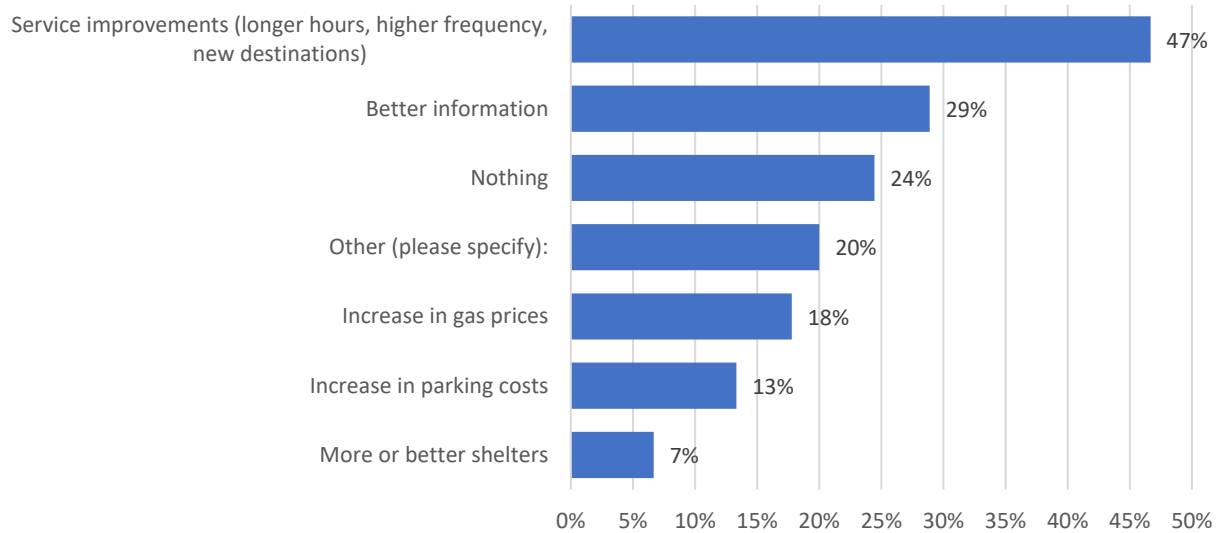


Figure 44. MTU Non-Users: Reconsidering Factors



Both the 127 MTU users and the 54 La Crosse residents were asked the following questions.

- Question 11: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about La Crosse MTU service?
- Question 12: What would cause you to use La Crosse transit services more often? Please rank these potential service improvements, from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important).
- Question 13: Please list any specific locations where transit service should be improved or added
- Question 14: What other changes to La Crosse MTU service would you like to see, if any? Please provide any additional comments here, including those specific to a certain bus route, area in the community, or policy.

MTU service does not just impact those riding the bus regularly; 89 percent of survey participants strongly agree that it is an important community service. Large majorities also strongly agree or agree that MTU contributes to the quality of life, economic health, and environmental sustainability of the La Crosse area.

All survey participants could indicate their preference for service improvements by ranking them. A plurality of 28 percent rank shorter wait times between buses as their most important improvement. Additional service in the early morning and late at night is also desirable. Participants appear content with the levels of service offered on the weekend.

Figure 45. Transit and the La Crosse Community

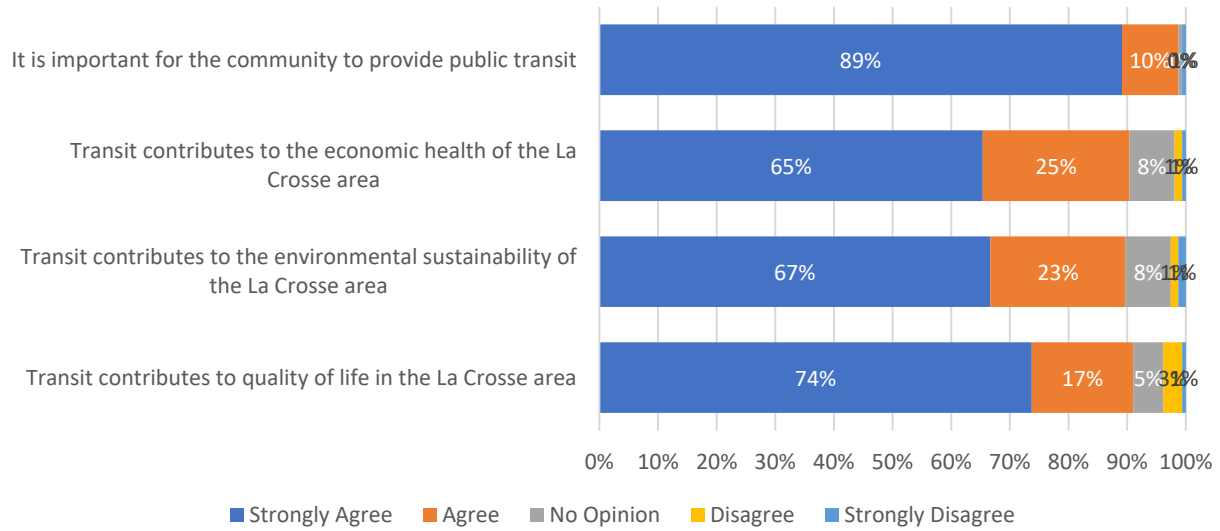
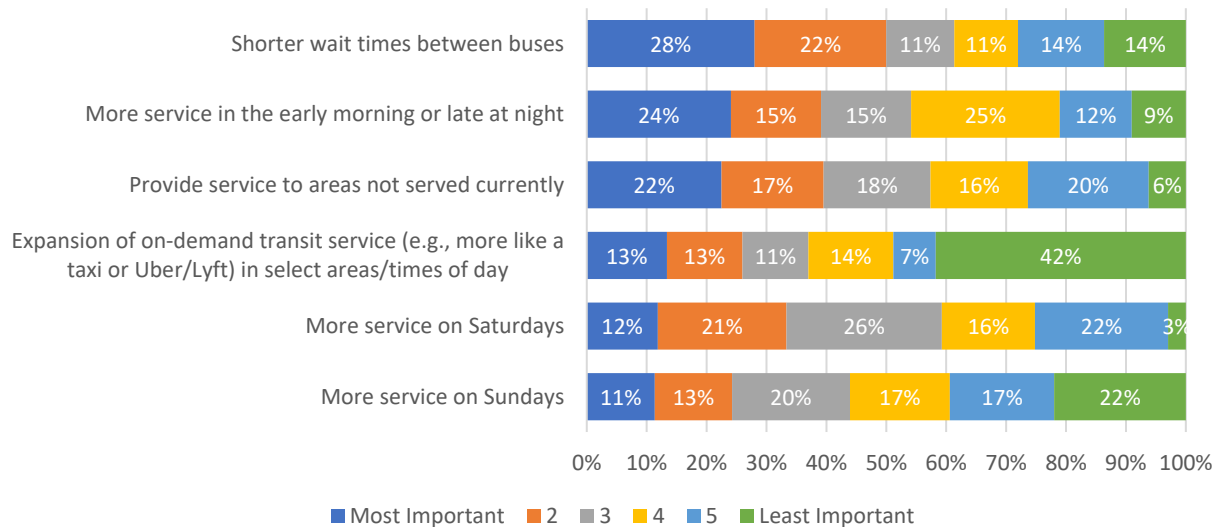


Figure 46. Desired Transit Improvements



The final two transit service questions asked respondents to provide open-ended comments on destinations they would like to see served and any other changes they would like to see to MTU service. Frequently named locations where respondents would like to see new or improved service include (Question 13):

- Onalaska: more routes, more service - starting with mid-day service
- Woodman’s and DMV: direct access from downtown
- French Island: improve (weekend) service hours
- Direct service from the south Walmart to the Mall
- Weekend service for Crossing Meadows
- Keep school semester service all-year

OSR Riders and Onalaska Residents

Unfortunately, only four current Onalaska Shared Ride (OSR) riders completed the community survey. Thus, the results from the rider portion are insufficient to reflect the general ridership of the service. However, the four participants indicated that:

- They are generally satisfied with the OSR service, but would like to see improved on-time performance (Question 19).
- Three of the four rider participants do not consider the fare price to be a barrier for more frequent use of the service (Question 20).

Fifty-four residents of Onalaska, Homen, and West Salem who do not regularly use OSR completed the community survey. They were asked the following questions:

- Question 21: If you do not use transit services regularly, what are the reasons discouraging you from doing so? (Select all that apply)
- Question 22: What condition(s) might make you reconsider using transit in the future? (Select all that apply)

Figure 48. OSR Non-Users: Discouraging Factors

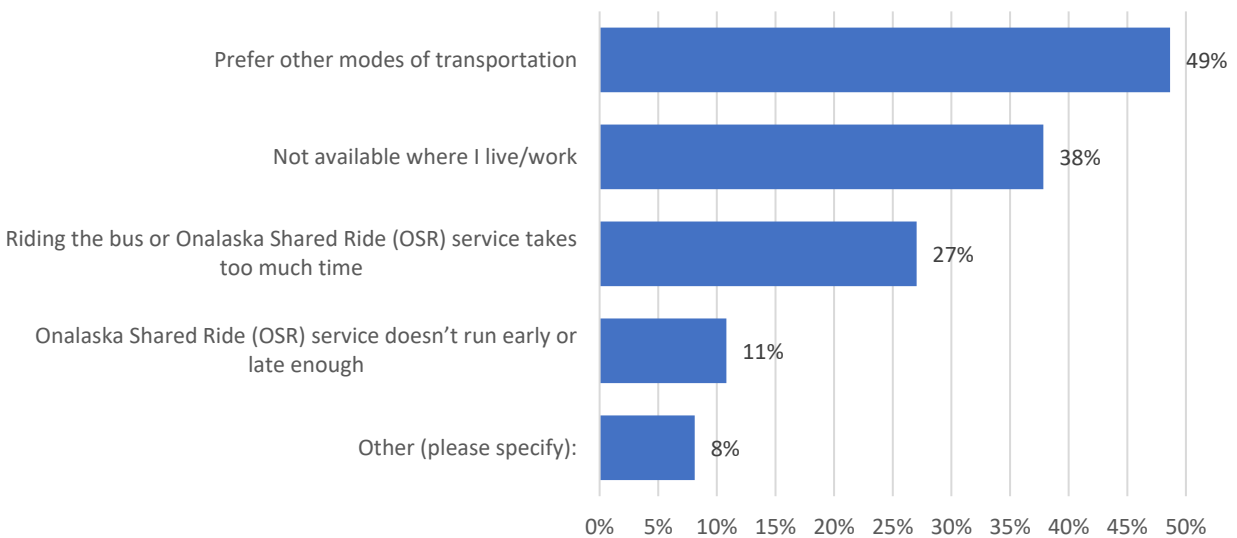
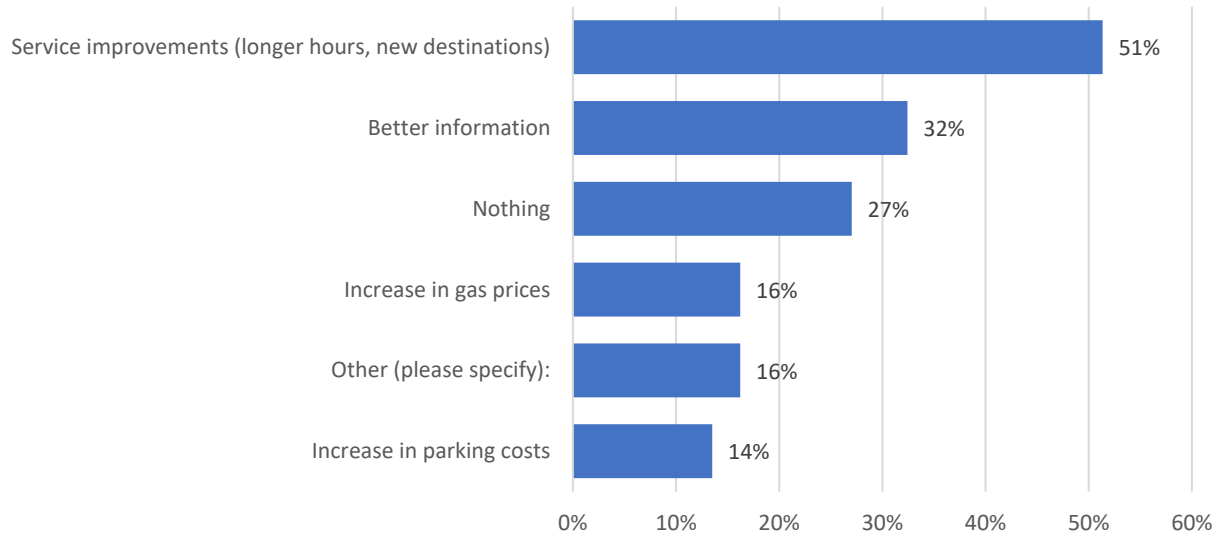


Figure 49. OSR Non-Users: Reconsidering Factors



Combining the four regular OSR riders with the Onalaska residents who participated in the survey, the following questions were asked to these 58 respondents:

- Question 23: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about transit service in Onalaska?
- Question 24: What would cause you to use transit services more often? Please rank these potential service improvements, from 1 (most important) to 4 (least important)
- Question 25: What other changes to Onalaska Shared Ride service or general transit service in the Onalaska-Holmen-West Salem area would you like to see, if any? Please provide any additional comments here, including those to specific areas in the community, or policies.

Results are shown below, with strong majorities supporting the need for transit in the Onalaska, Holmen, West Salem area.

Figure 50. Transit and the Onalaska Community

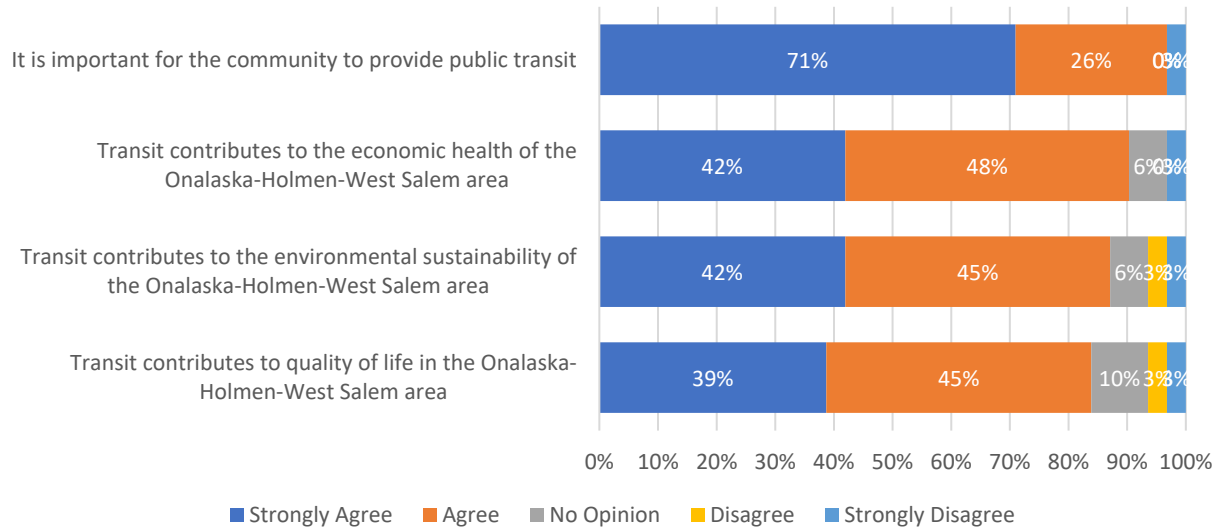
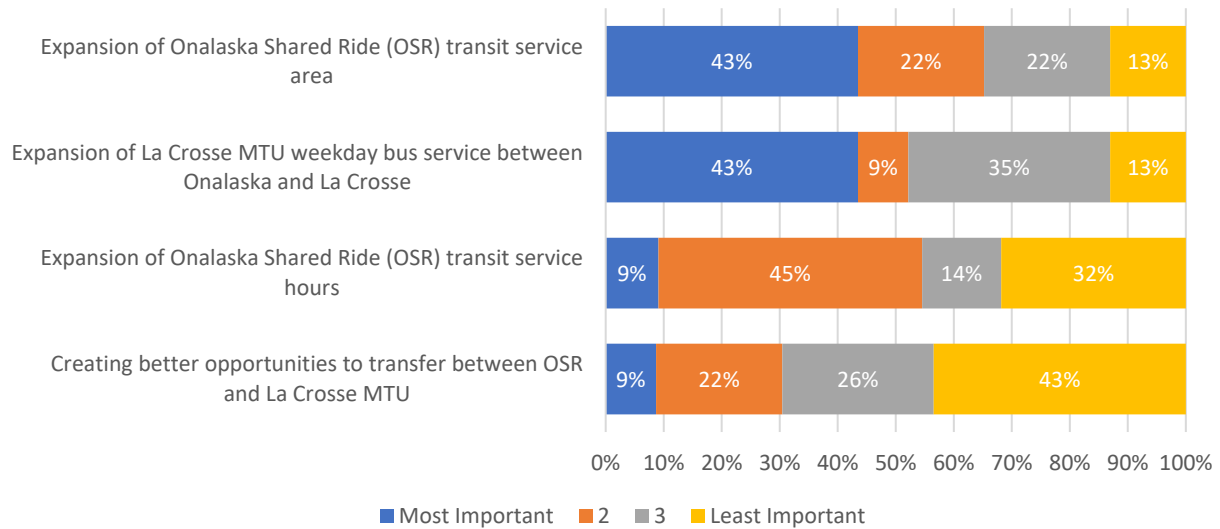


Figure 51. Desired Transit Improvements



The final transit service question asked respondents to provide open-ended comments any other changes they would like to see to OSR service (Question 24). Respondents were asked to specific areas in the community, or policies. Common themes in the open-ended comments include:

- Addition of circulator routes from Holmen to La Crosse
- Improved information and marketing of the OSR service
- Service later in the evening
- Park and ride for service to downtown La Crosse

All responses to this question are listed in the appendix.

SMRT Riders and County Residents

Sixteen current SMRT riders and eight residents of Crawford, Monroe, or Vernon counties responded to the survey. Thus, the results from both the rider and resident portions of the survey are insufficient to reflect the general ridership of the service, or the opinions of residents of Crawford, Monroe, or Vernon counties. However, the twenty-four participants indicated that:

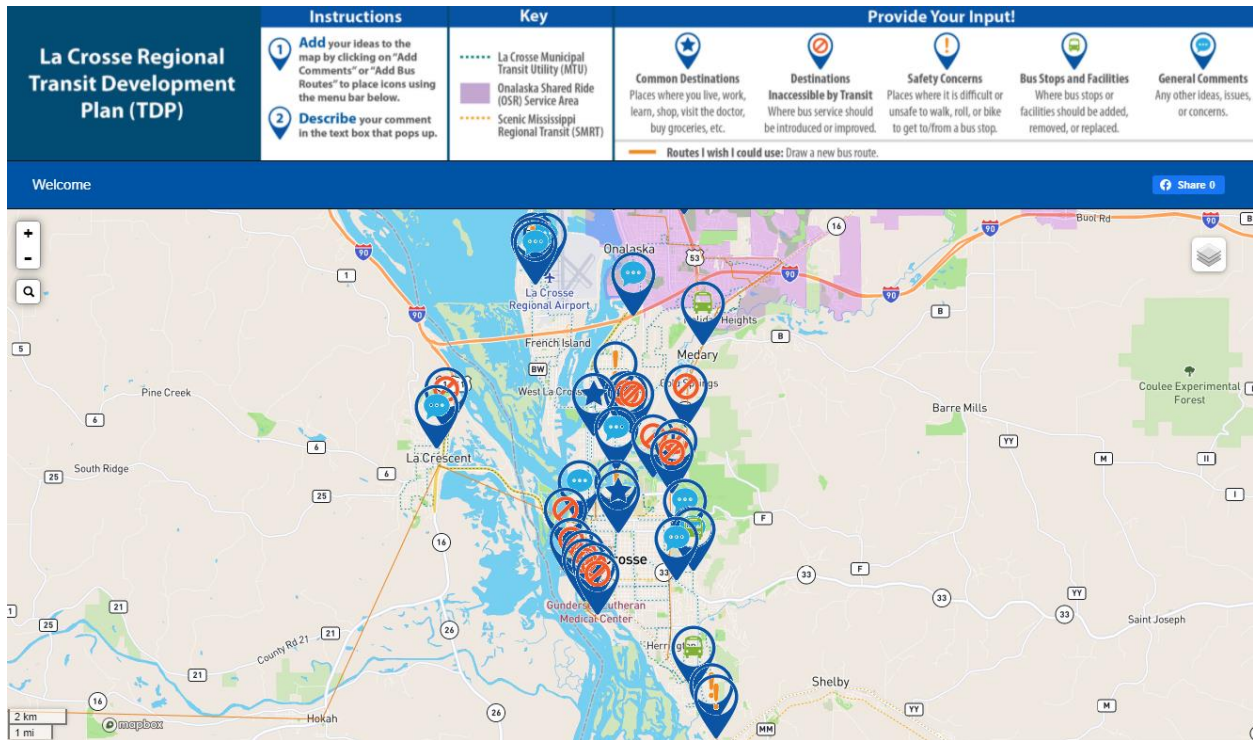
- Regular SMRT rider survey participants mainly use SMRT to get to work or to take personal/recreational/social activity trips
- Trips usually last 40-60 minutes
- Most regular SMRT rider survey participants drive to catch the SMRT bus.
- Regular SMRT rider survey participants appreciate the drivers
- Regular SMRT rider survey participants are mostly satisfied with SMRT service, but would like it to be easier to find schedule information.
- Non-users report difficulty with the pick-up and drop-off times of the current SMRT schedule. They would also like to see service improvements and better information.
- For the combined user and non-user questions, respondents:
 - Strongly support and value transit service.
 - Would like to see more trips to and from La Crosse and serve new destinations, especially Cashton.
 - Desire to explore electric buses

Open-ended comments are listed in the appendix.

WIKIMAP ONLINE TOOL

An interactive wikimap provided the opportunity to leave specific comments on a map of the La Crosse region. People could leave comments or draw routes on the map and had the ability to zoom in or out on the map to place points or draw routes in specific locations in their community. The wikimap was advertised along with the community survey and open house, promoted on one of the TDP display boards, and promoted during these events as well as during stakeholder and SRC meetings.

Figure 52: Wikimap Tool



Location Specific Responses

There were 38 location specific (point) comments placed on the map. All full responses are listed in the appendix.

La Crosse

North of Marsh:

- Desire for direct service to Woodman's.
- Desire for more accessible shelters, especially along major highways.
- Desire for expanded service hours as well as weekend service to the La Crosse industrial park. Service should start earlier for first shift and run late enough for second shift.
- Service to the Amtrak Station.
- Service to Myrick Park, Forest Hill Park and Hixon Forrest.
- Service to the Viterbo Sports Complex on Highway 16.
- Service to the Canvas Footwear building and Red Cloud Park.
- Desire to close Lang Drive to cars and make it for buses and active transportation only.
- Bike improvements on Clinton Street from Rose Street to Ranger Drive.

Downtown and Near South:

- Desire for a direct north-south route that does not go into downtown.
- Pedestrian crossing challenges at King Street & West Avenue.
- Desire for service to apartments and parks south and southwest of Gundersen Medical Center.

- Desire for service to Houska Park and Carroll Field.

East La Crosse:

- Frequent service to the Festival Foods and Central High School area.
- Desire for service to start earlier in the morning to get to work on time (in the “off-peak” loop segment of route 2).

South La Crosse:

- Add a northbound bus stop and shelter across the street from the Walmart southbound bus stop and shelter on route 1.
- Difficulty to cross Highway 14 at 33rd Street South to access the bus stops; no pedestrian facilities along Highway 14.

French Island

- Improved marketing of the airport connection and the on-demand deviated service.
- Desire for accessible shelters at all stops, with snow clearance and lighting.
- Desire for a direct connection between French Island and Onalaska without a transfer.

La Crescent

- The circular structure of the route makes it difficult to access places within La Crescent and return without going to La Crosse first.
- Difficulty accessing the event center and Veteran’s Park on the north side of the city.

Onalaska/Holmen OSR Service Area

- Desire for fixed-route service to Festival Foods and the Aquatic Center in Holmen.
- Desire for bike and bus priority improvements along the US 53 corridor.

SMRT Service Area

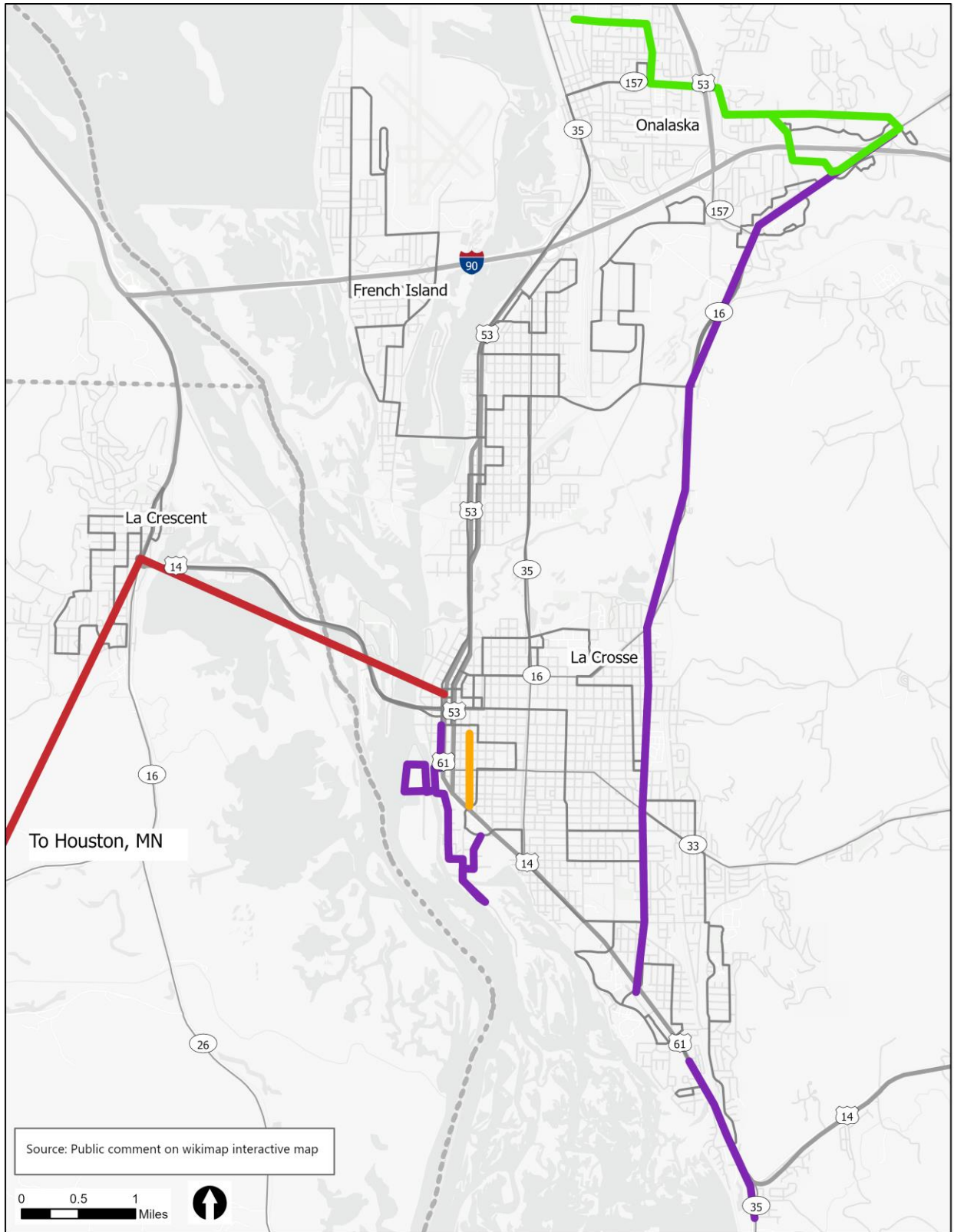
- Desire for the SMRT bus to stop at the Grand River Station.
- Desire to depart the third run of the Green Line at a later time from La Crosse or adding a fourth run to serve Western Technical College students or employees from La Crosse headed back to Sparta who end work past 4:15pm.
- Desire for SMRT service to Arcadia, Winona, Caledonia, and additional frequency.

Routes Drawn

There were six desired routes (lines) drawn on the map by the public. All comments are listed in the appendix.

- Desire to access businesses in Onalaska.
- Desire for a direct north-south express route.
- Connections between the Gunderson Medical Center and the neighborhoods to the north.
- Desire to connect neighborhoods and recreational areas west and south of the Gunderson Medical Center.
- Desire to serve the area near Southern Bluffs elementary school.
- Desire for a regional route to southwest Minnesota and the Root River Trail in Houston, MN.

Figure 53: Wikimap Desired Routes Drawn



ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

The project team met individually with the following groups and organizations:

- LAPC Board Meetings PAC (May 19, 2021)
- LAPC Committee on Transit and Active Transportation (May 20, 2021)
- Transit Provider Administrators (MTU, SMRT, OSR – Mid-May 2021)
- La Crosse Area Transit Advocates Meeting (May 18, 2021)
- La Crosse Area HR Professionals (LASHRM) Coffee Chat (June 30, 2021)

Notes for these meetings are located in the appendix.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Additional comments on the transit development plan were provided via email, letter, or phone call directly to LAPC or consultant staff. These comments included:

- Providing late night service for shift workers.
- A night loop serving the northside and employment areas.
- The need for zoning reform to increase residential densities, mixed uses, and reduced setback and height requirements.
- The need for service to Onalaska and Woodman's.
- Service to Hixon Forrest and bluffs.
- Service to Holmen.

Records are provided in the appendix.

UWL STUDENT GOVERNMENT SURVEY

The UWL Student Government held a transit ridership survey, led by Amy Webster, who gave the study team permission to share the results from the survey for this TDP. The survey was distributed to all students at UWL on April 21, 2021, and was open for one week. The survey received 430 responses. Results from some of the survey questions are listed in the appendix.

APPENDIX

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Staff present during the meetings included Peter Fletcher and Jackie Eastwood (LAPC), and Joe Kapper, Menno Schukking, and Eavan Moore (SRF).

Table 13. Stakeholder Meetings Attendees

| Meeting #1 | Meeting #2 | Meeting #3 |
|--|---|--|
| Thursday, May 13, 5-6:30pm | Friday, May 14, 11am-12:30pm | Monday, May 17, 10-11:30am |
| Terry Bauer, Downtown Mainstreet | Bridget Brown, La Crosse Transit Advocates | Sam Bachmeier, La Crosse Area Development Corporation |
| Noreen Holmes, AARP Wisconsin Aging Advocate | Julie Leis, Transportation Coordinator ADRC Monroe County | Brian Fukuda, Community Development Specialist for La Crosse County |
| Ben Wilson, Citizen Action Wisconsin | Pamela Weber, ADRC Monroe County | Kirsten Gabriel, Assistant VP of Student Affairs, Viterbo University |
| Tim Koterwski, MTU | Bob Gollnick, MRRCP and SMRT | Tim Kabat, La Crosse Area Development Corporation |
| | Charlie Handy, La Crosse County and SMRT | Troy Richter, University of Wisconsin La Crosse |
| | Tim Koterwski, MTU | Cathy Van Maren, La Crosse Transit Advocates |
| | | Patrick Wilson, Coulee Region Sierra Club |

Project Overview

The stakeholder meetings started with the introduction of the presenters, LAPC staff, and all attendees. Joe Kapper or Menno Schukking (SRF) then provided an overview of the project, the three transit systems, and the public engagement activities.

Table 14. Locations for New/Improved Service

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Crossing Meadows Industrial Area | Woodman's | Onalaska – further north than route 9 | Holmen |
| Festival Foods North of DT – dangerous crossing | 33rd and Mormon Coulee Road - mobile home park | Old Rubber Mills Senior Center | DMV |
| Amtrak and Airport | Parks and Social Services | Eagle Crest north senior apartment complex Onalaska | Ashley Furniture in Arcadia, food processing plants |
| Brice Prairie | Holmen TIF – Seven Bridges Area | West Salem – Lakeview Business Park (east side) | Tennis court at Green Island Ice Arena |
| Gunderson Health | Myrick Park | Hixon Forest Nature Center and Trails | Forest Hills |
| Dynamic Recycling | Black River Beach | Southern Bluffs Elementary School | Carroll Fields ballfields near MTU office |

Table 15. Desired Service Improvements

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Saturday service for SMRT | Guaranteed ride home program SMRT | Transit spine on Losey Boulevard | Transit hub at the mall |
| Express service to downtown | Event passes/transport | North-south express bus | Northside Circulator |
| Express bus for hospital | | | |

LAPC POLICY BOARD AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS

PAC, May 19 & CTAT, May 20

The planning team met with the LAPC Policy Board (PAC) on May 19 and with the LAPC Committee on Transit and Active Transportation (CTAT) on May 20 to introduce the project and to ask initial thoughts on areas of improvement for regional transit services.

The following items were brought up at the Policy Board meeting:

- La Crosse recently had a controversy regarding the expansion of parking at a major employer, transit could be a solution to parking costs.
- Growth in the Holmen area; consider a circulator there. City established a corridor near Festival Foods.
- Growth in apartment complexes in Holmen and Onalaska in the last three years, some in La Crosse as well. Need to consider aligning routes near new developments.
- Include college students and staff, as they use the transit system frequently.

The following items were brought up at the Committee on Transit and Active Transportation meeting:

- A request to reach out to area business and human resource managers that interact with riders and know employee transportation needs.
- Consider electric vehicles for capital planning to reduce carbon emissions.
- Education and marketing need to be constant, students come from rural communities to the area colleges and are not familiar with public transit services.
- It is easy to drive to destinations for middle- and upper-income families.
- Request to add bike storage on buses and bike racks at transit stops.
- Transit can help reduce congestion and stop highway expansions.
- Transit can promote equity in the community, promoting a strong and diverse workforce.

MEETINGS WITH TRANSIT PROVIDERS

The planning team met individually with the three transit provider administrators to introduce the consultant team, give a project overview, and ask for the agency's desires for the project and recent developments at the agencies. Below are some highlights from those meetings.

La Crosse MTU, May 18

- Changed the circulator route after the last TDP away from UWL, as it was underutilized in that segment.
- Added Saturday service to La Crescent in 2017
 - Want to make sure that as new services get introduced, they are financially sustainable, so service will not have to be cut within a few years.

- Heard requests for third shift in the industrial parks, airport service on the weekend, and a northside – Bridgeview Plaza circulator. Further requests for city parks, the DMV, northside community center on Rose Street, Indian hills area.
- Consider breaking up the multiple buses that run on Gillette Street – overlap of service.
- SMRT does not pay the fee to use the downtown transit center, Jefferson Lines does pay.
- Touchless mobile pay to be introduced later this year, pay via an app on the smartphone.
- There are about 60 shelters currently, placed in high volume areas but there is no written policy on siting, placement thresholds or a replacement schedule.
 - Majority are old, from the 1980s and 1990s.

SMRT, May 18

- Service transferred to La Crosse County ownership in 2019 when service expanded into Monroe County.
- Regularly in contact with MTU staff and Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC).
- Would like formal local operating agreements between the municipalities and hope that this effort can provide some sample draft language.
- Currently working on a marketing plan to improve the perception of the service and encourage more people to ride.
- About 60 percent of the ridership is workforce, with approximately 40 percent working at Gunderson Health.
- Try to keep routes under an hour. Routes are flag stops, after two days riders establish relationship with the drivers.
 - La Farge service discontinued in 2019, low ridership to Organic Valley.
- Will need to plan for rolling stock replacement, consider including wayfinding/signage and shelters in a capital plan.
- Try to work with the ADRCs, but their clients have additional needs that we cannot provide.
- Overlap in outreach for the marketing plan, LA Crosse County Comprehensive Plan, and this transit development plan. Some local towns updating their comprehensive plans as well.

OSR, May 24

- Shared ride service offered since 1994, added Holmen in 2001, and West Salem in 2007.
- There will be an RFP out this year for another 5-year service contract.
- Ridership plunge during the pandemic
- City is growing on the northside, multiple large apartment buildings. New FedEx facility.
- Considered a MTU route further north 10 years ago, local elected officials decided against funding it.
- Current MTU route does not hit the high-density population centers.
- Unofficial park and ride lots: mall parking lot and Center 90.
- City is car centric but hopes to promote active transportation and bicycling.
 - Difficult to walk in the big box areas.
- There is a free transfer incentive between MTU and OSR.
- Modify the fare every two years, looking at reasonable levels compared to other Wisconsin communities.
- Current Lyft and Uber riders would save a lot if they knew about the service, OSR is much cheaper.
- Some issues in the past setting agency fares for medical providers.

LA CROSSE AREA TRANSIT ADVOCATES MEETING

On May 18, the planning team attended a meeting of the La Crosse Area Transit Advocates. Below are some highlights from the meeting.

- Desire for overnight service.
- Establish a transit culture in the community.
- Have multimodal infrastructure, consider land use and parking policies. Reduce need for new, expensive parking structures.
- Push for fully electric fleet, reduce fossil fuel consumption.
- Park and ride for Onalaska residents to get to La Crosse.
- Study feasibility of free fares in the long term, as well as fare capping.
- Connections to the Amtrak station, SMRT bus at the downtown transit center.

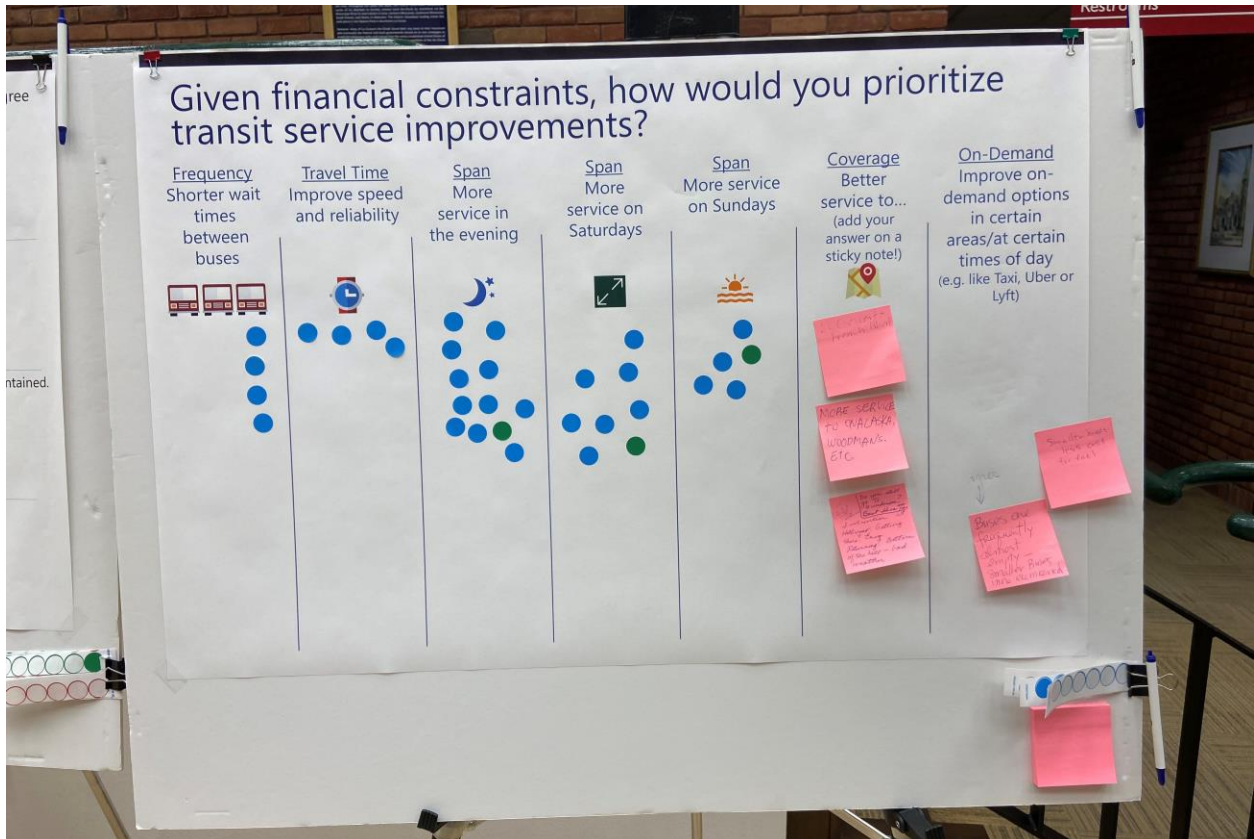
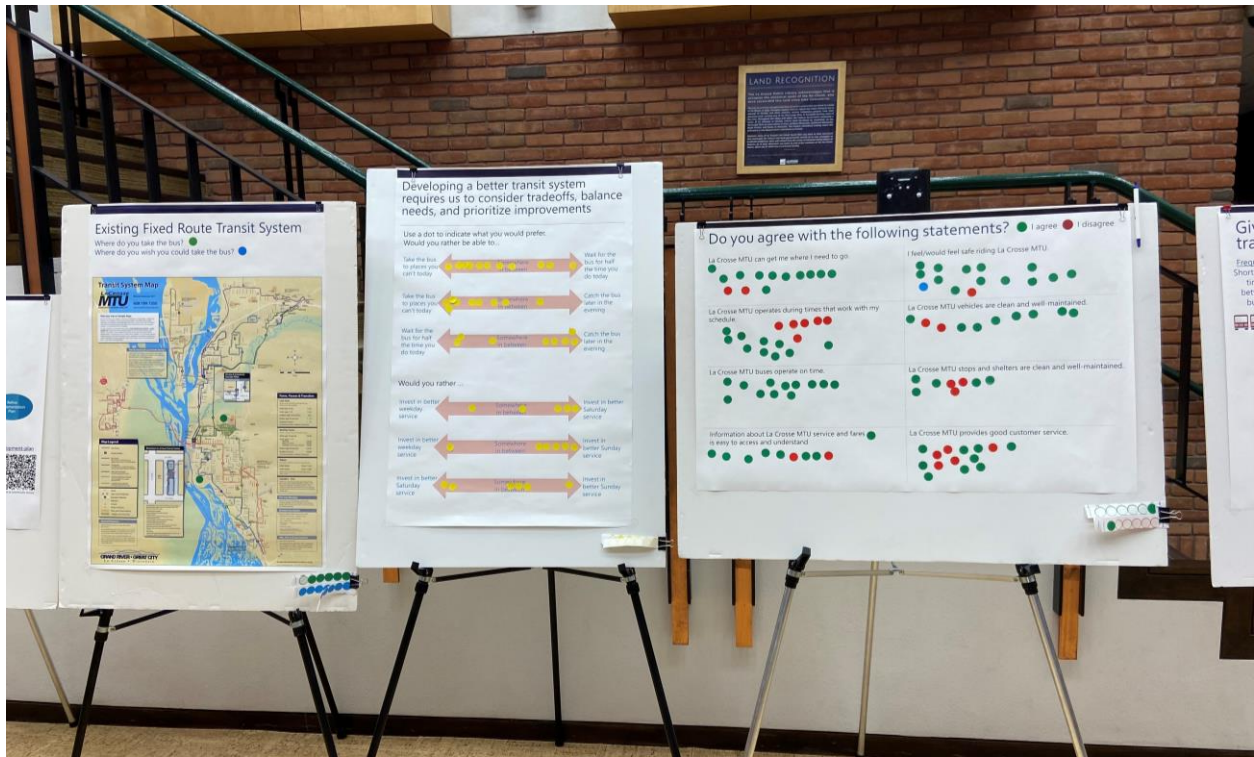
HR COFFEE CHAT

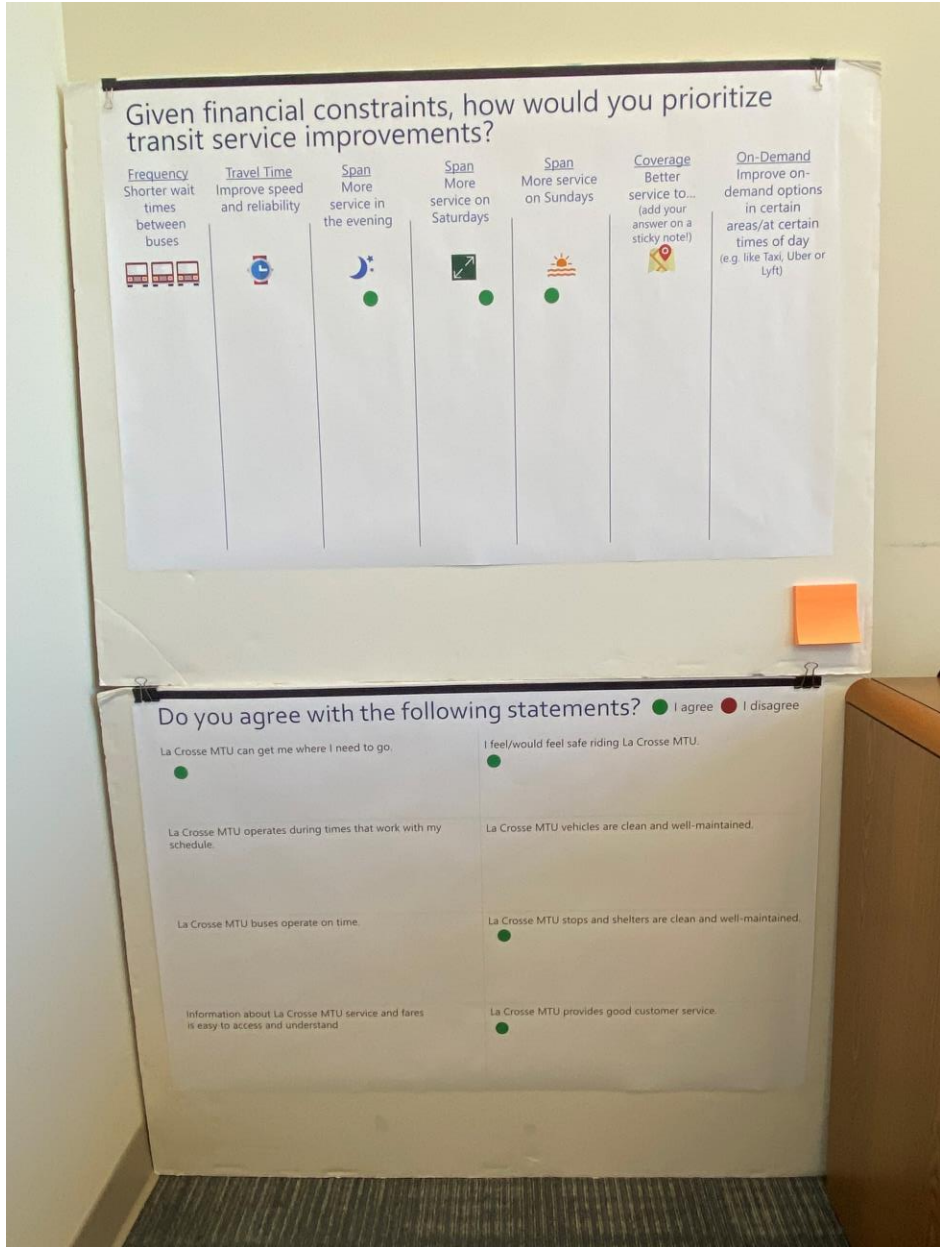
On June 30, the project team attended a La Crosse Area Society for Human Resource Management (LASHRM) coffee chat meeting over the lunch hour to give a project overview and ask participants about workforce transportation issues in the La Crosse region. Below are some highlights from the meeting.

- Desire for service between Holmen and downtown La Crosse.
- Desire for service between Cashton and La Crosse on SMRT.
 - Even Tuesday through Thursday service to start would be a good beginning.
- Improve shift time coordination among industrial park employers to match service, could be fixed-route, on-demand, carpool, vanpool.
- Need service earlier in the morning and later at night to serve all start and end times of shifts at businesses with 24-hour operations.
 - Even one shuttle per hour would be sufficient, employers would be flexible allowing some to start earlier/later and end earlier/later to catch the bus.
- Grocery stores are noticing an increase in weekly bigger grocery hauls instead of people purchasing fewer items multiple times per week.
- Spike in leisure travel over business travel requires more intense cleaning of hotel rooms.
- Participants would like to see more services that are easier to use and better information.
 - A car should not be a necessity for opportunity.
- Consider an adopt-a-shelter or sponsorship program for cleaning and upkeep.
- More coverage and 24-hour service were deemed more important than frequency.

DISPLAY TDP BOARDS

Boards stationed at the library and the Grand River Station, pictures show the response and set-up at the end of the comment period.





COMMUNITY SURVEY

Methodology

Depending on the answer to the first question, respondents were sorted into the appropriate path of their most common used transit service or service area. Respondents would typically need answer between 15 and 20 of the 47 questions to complete the survey, unless they indicated that they wanted to answer questions for more than one transit agency.

The survey was designed in both online and paper formats. The online survey instrument user interface is shown in Figure 54 and was accessible through both web browsers and mobile devices via a www.surveymonkey.com link.

The paper survey instrument, shown in Figure 55, was available upon request at the Grand River Station, as well as on the MTU and SMRT buses themselves. The paper survey showed questions on a single, double-sided 8.5x11 sheet of paper. The survey was available from May 27, 2021, through June 23, 2021. The survey was posted on the TDP project website and shared through the Facebook social media feeds of MTU, La Crosse County, and the city of Onalaska. Community partners were encouraged to share the survey through their social media and email channels.

As surveys were distributed on the buses, it was assumed the respondents were regular users. Paper survey questions were also shown in a slightly different order than the online instrument to save on space.

Figure 54. Online Survey Instrument User Interface

La Crosse Regional Transit Development Plan - Community Survey

Transit Usage - All

* 1. Which of the following transit services have you used the most in the past two years? (before and/or during COVID). Select the service most used/option most applicable:

- La Crosse Municipal Transit (MTU)
- Onalaska Shared Ride (OSR) – Onalaska, Holmen, West Salem Public Transit
- Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT)
- None of the above – City of La Crosse, French Island, Town of Campbell or City of La Crescent Resident
- None of the above – Onalaska, Holmen, West Salem Resident
- None of the above – Crawford, Monroe, or Vernon County Resident

Prev

Next

Figure 55. Paper Survey Instrument – MTU

Community Survey – La Crosse MTU

This survey can be completed online at:
www.surveymonkey.com/r/LaCrosseRegionalTransit



Help us shape the future of the La Crosse regional public transit services! The La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) is developing a plan to guide the region's three public transit systems – La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU), Onalaska Shared Ride (OSR), and Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT) – over the next ten years. Your responses will remain confidential and will not be shared or used for any other purposes. Thank you!

1. How often do you ride La Crosse MTU?

- 5 or more days per week
- A few days per week
- A few times per month
- Less than once a month

2. Which routes or services do you use most often? (Select all that apply)

- 1 – South Ave
- 2 – Downtown
- 4 – Losey Boulevard
- 5 – Valley View Mall
- 6 – Northside
- 7 – French Island
- 8 – Crossing Meadows
- 9 – Onalaska
- 10 – La Crescent
- MTU Go Circulator
- MTU ~~MobilityPlus~~
- Safe Ride

3. Do you regularly use more than one route to get to your destination?

- No
- Yes, I take routes: _____

4. When using La Crosse MTU, what is your usual trip purpose? (Select all that apply)

- Work
- Medical
- School (K-12)
- College/Technical School
- Other: _____
- Personal/~~Recrea-~~
~~tional~~/Social Activity
- Shopping or errands
- Government or Social Service Agency

5. From the time you get on the bus to the time you get off, how long does your bus trip usually last?

- Less than 5 minutes
- 5-10 minutes
- 10-15 minutes
- 15-20 minutes
- 20-30 minutes
- 30-45 minutes
- 45-60 minutes
- More than 60 minutes

6. How do you usually get to/from the bus stop?

- Walk
- Bicycle
- Wheelchair/mobility device
- Other: _____
- Drive
- Dropped off by someone/taxi/uber/~~lyft~~

7. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about La Crosse MTU?

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | No Opinion | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> The bus takes me where I need to go | | | | | |
| <input type="radio"/> The bus is convenient | | | | | |
| <input type="radio"/> The bus runs on time | | | | | |
| <input type="radio"/> Schedule information is readily available | | | | | |
| <input type="radio"/> I feel safe riding the bus | | | | | |
| <input type="radio"/> Buses are clean | | | | | |
| <input type="radio"/> Drivers are helpful and friendly | | | | | |
| <input type="radio"/> It's easy to get to bus stops and board | | | | | |

8. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about La Crosse MTU?

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | No Opinion | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> It is important for the community to provide public transit | | | | | |
| <input type="radio"/> Transit contributes to the economic health of the La Crosse area | | | | | |
| <input type="radio"/> Transit contributes to the environmental sustainability of the La Crosse area | | | | | |
| <input type="radio"/> Transit contributes to quality of life in the La Crosse area | | | | | |

Data Processing

A total of 253 survey responses were submitted. With 202 responses, the online survey instrument constituted the vast majority of the responses, while 36 paper surveys were submitted to MTU and 15 through SMRT. All 253 responses were subjected to data processing, which refers to converting the raw survey responses into an electronic database useful for analysis. The steps necessary for data processing were data entry, cleaning survey responses, and creating a database.

The 51 paper surveys were entered into the online survey tool following the conclusion of the survey effort. Some respondents to the paper surveys showed results incompatible with the survey question intent, i.e. using a rank of "1" for all possible options when asked to rank a top three. The incompatible responses to these questions were not entered into the online survey instrument, while the remainder of the survey was entered.

Additionally, five SMRT paper survey responses had to be removed completely, as there were no transit related answers provided. This was due to OSR paper surveys being distributed on the SMRT buses, resulting in participants indicating the questions did not apply to them

After data-entry was complete, all responses were extracted from the online survey instrument. A final database with 248 valid responses was used for data analysis.

Table 16. Response Rate by Question

| Question Number | Question Topic | Valid Responses | Max n Possible | Response Rate |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1 | Transit service/area | 248 | 248 | 100% |
| 2 | MTU: transit use | 120 | 127 | 94% |
| 3 | MTU: which route? | 121 | 127 | 95% |
| 4 | MTU: transfers? | 122 | 127 | 96% |
| 5 | MTU: purpose | 122 | 127 | 96% |
| 6 | MTU: travel time | 120 | 127 | 94% |
| 7 | MTU: to/from bus stop | 122 | 127 | 96% |
| 8 | MTU: customer satisfaction | 121 | 127 | 95% |
| 9 | La Crosse resident: non-user discouraging factors | 45 | 54 | 83% |
| 10 | La Crosse resident: reconsider factors | 45 | 54 | 83% |
| 11 | MTU+La Crosse: transit importance | 156 | 181 | 86% |
| 12 | MTU+La Crosse: service improvements | 148 | 181 | 82% |
| 13 | MTU+La Crosse: locations, open-ended | 62 | 181 | 34% |
| 14 | MTU+La Crosse: comments, open-ended | 78 | 181 | 43% |
| 15 | MTU+La Crosse: education status | 156 | 181 | 86% |
| 16 | OSR: transit use | 4 | 4 | 100% |
| 17 | OSR: purpose | 4 | 4 | 100% |
| 18 | OSR: travel time | 4 | 4 | 100% |
| 19 | OSR: customer satisfaction | 4 | 4 | 100% |
| 20 | OSR: fare price | 4 | 4 | 100% |

| Question Number | Question Topic | Valid Responses | Max n Possible | Response Rate |
|-----------------|--|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| 21 | Onalaska resident: non-user discouraging factors | 37 | 54 | 69% |
| 22 | Onalaska resident: reconsider factors | 37 | 54 | 69% |
| 23 | OSR+Onalaska: transit importance | 31 | 58 | 53% |
| 24 | OSR+Onalaska: service improvements | 25 | 58 | 43% |
| 25 | OSR+Onalaska: comments, open-ended | 11 | 58 | 19% |
| 26 | OSR+Onalaska: MTU use? | 32 | 58 | 55% |
| 27 | SMRT: transit use | 16 | 16 | 100% |
| 28 | SMRT: which route? | 6 | 16 | 38% |
| 29 | SMRT: purpose | 15 | 16 | 94% |
| 30 | SMRT: travel time | 15 | 16 | 94% |
| 31 | SMRT: to/from bus stop | 6 | 16 | 38% |
| 32 | SMRT: customer satisfaction | 15 | 16 | 94% |
| 33 | SMRT: other shared ride services | 15 | 16 | 94% |
| 34 | County residents: non-user discouraging factors | 7 | 8 | 88% |
| 35 | County residents: reconsider factors | 7 | 8 | 88% |
| 36 | SMRT+County residents: transit importance | 19 | 24 | 79% |
| 37 | SMRT+County residents: service improvements | 17 | 24 | 71% |
| 38 | SMRT+County residents: comments, open-ended | 8 | 24 | 33% |
| 39 | SMRT+County residents: MTU use? | 21 | 24 | 88% |
| 40 | Disability status | 207 | 248 | 83% |
| 41 | Mobile internet device | 208 | 248 | 84% |
| 42 | Age | 207 | 248 | 83% |
| 43 | Race/ethnicity | 206 | 248 | 83% |
| 44 | Gender | 207 | 248 | 83% |
| 45 | Vehicle availability | 207 | 248 | 83% |
| 46 | Primary language | 206 | 248 | 83% |
| 47 | Household income | 207 | 248 | 83% |

Open-Ended Responses

Table 17. MTU Trip Purpose – Other (Question 5)

| |
|---|
| Volunteer |
| Church |
| Home |
| site seeing |
| - |
| Safe ride |
| Was for work |
| Volunteer at public library, shop at co-op,visit Mayo to see doctor or get monthly massage, shop downtown, have lunch or coffee |

Table 18. MTU Non-Users Discouraging Factors – Other (Question 9)

| |
|--|
| Don't know anything about routes, etc |
| I have a car. |
| I don't know where to get info on routes, times, and costs |
| Don't understand the bus schedule system |
| I often need to haul things, like groceries, which isn't convenient on a bus. |
| I have not ridden the bus before and unfamiliar with routes/stops/fares/etc. |
| I have a car now, but when I did take public transit, the busses didn't run late enough or often enough. In bigger cities the busses run more frequently, about every 10-15 minutes or so. Every half our or 45 minutes on weekends. the busses also run until 2AM. Around here, if there is a bus stop within 5 blocks of you, you're lucky. And then they only run until 9 or 10 and only 6-7 on weekends and some routes don't run at all. It's really inconvenient. Even though it's more expensive, taking a taxi or uber is more efficient if you can afford to do so. |
| No need. Have not even needed my car much this past year. I also utilize my bicycle a lot. |
| I live too close to where I need to go. |
| I live in Shelby and there's no service out here into La Crosse. |

Table 19. MTU Non-Users Reconsidering Factors – Other (Question 10)

| |
|--|
| Inclement weather (I bicycle), not wanting to pay for parking in a ramp if I drive. |
| If I wasn't able to drive my car or ride my bicycle. |
| Closer proximity to my home. It is about 7 blocks away. |
| Seat belts for littles |
| If I got a different job at a place that was on a bus route. |
| All would help to some degree, but service hours and frequency are far and away the most important |
| If needs arise |
| If it was a bigger city and made more sense to take a bus, I would. I do utilize them when in bigger cities. |
| Light rail |

Table 20. MTU Service Improvement Locations (Question 13)

| |
|--|
| French Island, weekend or Saturday service, please |
| Woodmans |
| YMCA Onalaska and the airport |
| Holmen |
| Direct route from Walmart to mall area, you need another bus stop closer to anytime fitness, just before chileda |
| French island runs on the weekend, especially Saturday |
| Farm 'n Fleet |
| Riverside - aesthetic beauty is calming |
| Brice pra |
| Crossing meadows on saturday and sunday |
| There should be more routes going to the neighbourhoods of Onalaska. |
| More routes for the La Crosse Airport. |
| Onalaska |
| 1 bus from Crossing Meadows to Downtown and on weekends. |

| |
|---|
| The new neighborhood center in Lacrosse rubber mills |
| Closer bus stop to Sam's Club |
| Connector bus from North LaCrosse down West Avenue |
| none |
| Pettibone Riverside Park, esp. on concert nights (LCCB, LJO, Moon Tunes); partnership would be good |
| Town of Campbell (not the airport), north of I-90 on Lakeshore. |
| Let the MTU Director decide based on data analysis |
| No comment. I don't know enough about it. |
| Connecting employers to the workforce |
| When the extra half hour bus is cut twice a year I am affected, please run it all year so I can get to and from work |
| Throughout onalaska |
| Around the mall area. |
| Near high schools and middle schools. |
| Have the #2 bus loop or changed around so it still serves the 31st and Farnam area during all hours, have it run both ways, and most importantly, have buses start running at least a half hour than they currently do, it is very hard to get to work early in the morning! |
| Holmen, west Salem, all surrounding areas |
| La Crescent - Gundersen clinic |
| Later hours on Sundays and holidays for my daughter. She must take an Uber or taxi home from her job at 7:30 pm. Her employer is not willing to adjust her hours to the bus schedule. Her costs are an hour's pay and she is able to fund only part time work. |
| Help desk available more hrs |
| It would be nice to have a stop at the main library and one closer to the YMCA. |
| Hospital Corridor. a bus line into the neighborhoods that doesn't take an hour. |
| The industrial park |
| Holman |
| Onalaska Downtown, Green Coulee, Elmwood Hills |
| Onalaska area |
| Onalaska Route 9 Needs To Have An All Day Bus Schedule |
| French Island |
| So side to Down town or Kmart lot to downtown |
| Hospitals/clinics (Mayo) |
| Onalaska- more than just by the mall and shopping areas. There aren't even bus stops anywhere that isn't near all the shopping centers. Residential neighborhoods. In bigger cities, the busses don't just go along main roads. They have more busses so that more areas can be reached. French Island on the weekends. La crosse and onalaska on the weekends. In low income neighborhoods/complexes that are sandwiched in with "nicer" neighborhoods. Up around the Bluff areas- no busses go there currently. |
| More transportation on French Island. |
| walmart, woodmans, festival foods, industrial parks |
| Direct route to woodmans and other business in the area, direct and frequent routes to the airport. These routes need to be frequent on Saturdays and Sundays. Maybe the airport bus can align with the flight schedules. |
| French Island, Onalaska |
| Between La Crosse and Onalaska. To get from central lacrosse to downtown onalaska takes 3 or 4 buses and about an hour. |
| Northside, airport, AmTrak closer stop to Amtrak station |
| Why oh why isn't there bus service to the Black River Beach or the Myrick Park neighborhood centers? The Parks Dept. has a number of activities of interest directed to seniors at these locations. |

| |
|--|
| State rd elementary |
| NE Industrial Park |
| French island, onalaska and holmen |
| Shelby, Holmen. Viterbo University, UWL (easy commuter routes to major employers). |
| Town of Shelby. And the service needs to be more often than is currently offered. Light rail? |
| All housing in far south La Crosse (near Southern Bluffs Elementary School). Elder housing and public recreation facilities behind Gundersen Clinic including ice area, tennis & pickleball courts. MTU office and ballfields in area. Forest Hills/Myrick Park Center/Hixon Forest Nature Center and neighborhood north of Main St. and east of Losey Blvd. Amtrak (limited schedule around train arrivals/departures). Airport (not demand-response). Woodmans area all day and weekends. Onalaska High Schools, Library, Omni Center, YMCA, and other points in Onalaska NOT the OHWS which can't take bikes and is too expensive and cumbersome. |
| n/a |
| Direct route from ss La Crosse to mall/Woodman area. |
| Woodman's |
| Getting to Woodman's from grand river station. Would like to see a extension from valley view mall. |
| Lacrescent |
| Westby, Madison or anywhere else in Wisconsin... |

Table 21. MTU Policy Changes and Comments (Question 14)

| |
|--|
| To me it is just fine. |
| Some drivers need to be trained to get the bus closer to the curb |
| None, you all rock |
| Longer hours for all routes, more service on Saturday and Sunday for all routes, including the Onalaska, French Island, and the circulator both ways. |
| electronic bus cards |
| At least one bus doing some type of 24 hour service. Run longer on Saturdays. |
| have a crossing meadow on the weekends. People that work at Sam's, etc. |
| Onalaska route running between 10am to 1pm what they don't do now |
| On the whole, the MTU service is great for La Crosse, there is always room for improvement |
| Get more new buses |
| An earlier bus on Saturday would be great |
| service to onalaska on the weekends |
| Riding the bus should remain a free service like it was during the pandemic. Additionally, if it was open later it may discourage drunk driving. |
| There should be more routes running towards south, north and Onalaska, especially on Saturdays and Sundays. The bus runs every hour in Non UWL season, which is inconvenient for people who do not drive. The frequency should be every 15-30 minutes with more routes which will push people to use more public transportation. I feel the tickets and passes should be available to purchase through the app via credit cards. Also, the frequency should be better on weekends compared to weekdays as it'll help people to take a bus and not pay 10-15\$ average for uber or lyfts. |
| Update the times when busses arrive early or late. Add it to the MTU app somehow. |
| Schedule changes should be notified by all social media sites and posted on Every bus stop! |
| Free bus fare year round |
| I have to walk ant 30 min to get to my bus. Crossing Meadows only has very limited services. I'd rather walk to TJMaxx than take so many buses to get home (3) taking the current Crossing Meadows bus. |
| I see a trend toward free bus rides in some cities. This might be worth investigating? |
| Provide free service for those who qualify for disability bus passes. if it can be done for college students it should be in place for |

| |
|---|
| those who qualify with a disability. |
| More covered bus stops & more with benches |
| I don't ride often enough to know! |
| It would be convenient to be able to purchase tokens via a sort of vending machine at the transit station rather than having to get there during the limited hours the counter is serviced. |
| At the very least, the valley view business sector bus should run later, with all there jobs |
| none |
| Busses should be available from Downtown La Crosse at bartime, esp on the weekends |
| Easier accessibility for those with disabilities |
| Information campaign about where you could take the bus. |
| I am no familiar enough with La Crosse MTU to provide any input about the service or what I would what to see in the service. I currently use my personal vehicle for transportation but I can see using MTU in the future as I age. |
| People who do not take mass transit; are not inclined to change unless portal to portal and as fast as a uber or taxi. |
| I live near Central High, and would take the bus downtown or to the Northside but don't know the routes. |
| Again the extra Valley View mall bus being cut twice a year impacts me, if the buses started earlier I would have more job opportunities |
| I would like to see a more fully funded system, so as to make it free at point of use. Another big thing would be to give the circulator busses smaller busses as they're not as busy. |
| Longer service time during week and on sundays. |
| La Crescent route: take the route the same direction morning and afternoon. |
| I wish that the signs that were not at a shelter showed what bus stopes there. Perhaps color code them. For example I was taking route 1 route which I do not take very often so I am unsure where the bus stops. I saw a bus stop sign so I thought it would stop there so I rang the bell bit the driver did not stop. I also thought that the #2 bus stopes at the corner by Cameron park but I have been told that they do not. If the signs were colored with which bus stops there it would be very easy for people to know. I also wish the app had a list of what times they bus stops. So if you click on a bus stop.omstead.of just saying the next comming arriving time it would say that the bus stops on the 02 and 32 of the hour (or whatever the times hour). This would be helpful to plan trips especially since the rider guide only gives a few stops. |
| Run buses at same times as weekdays for saturday and sunday |
| express connector routes to Holmen, Onalaska maybe with central pick up points like a park and ride program |
| Please run the buses earlier in the mornings so people that work at 6 am or first shift can get to work on time. |
| Bus frequency is the key to driving ridership. Bus use must be convenient enough for riders to make the choice to ride the bus without planning the day ahead. Setting up key 'lifeline' routes that run every 10 minutes would give all residents the ability to use public transit around town without digging into scheduling and working out timing ahead of schedule. |
| La Crescent - I can't run errands within La Crescent without riding to La Crosse and back. |
| Need a bus stop closer to my home! |
| More bus stop shelters. More printed schedules at those shelters. I commute to and from downtown for work. If I miss the 5:42 bus from downtown I have to wait an hour for the 6:42. It would be good to have a 6:12 bus leaving downtown. |
| I think the circulators should be "truer" circulators, run every 15 minutes or less. The current situation is too confusing. Should. I don't understand the brochure and I'm an experienced transit user, have used in a variety of cities. |
| Mask mandate lifted for vaccinated people |
| See above comment |
| I think it would be cool to be able to track the bus with the QR code so you know whether or not you missed it or it's running behind. Besides that and more times during the weekend and morning/night, I think it runs well |
| 20-minute schedule |
| Reduce or eliminate fares. More frequency. Regular routes to all the major employers to facilitate commuters. |
| More Onalaska and Holmen routes |

| |
|---|
| Consolidate stops, add off board fare payment, add a card similar to the ToGo card in the Twin Cities. Increase the frequency and directness of routes to make them more like BRT |
| None |
| As a social worker, I hear often from clients living on French Island that it is difficult to go to work / run errands due to long wait times between buses and limited nighttime services. There are few businesses or grocery stores on the island to be accessed by walking. An example is that a client in the food service industry has limited employment options off the island if their work hours run later than the bus schedule and they don't have transportation home. |
| Are monthly passes available rather than single fare rates? |
| Ability to purchase passes (either monthly or tokens) online. |
| hard to get to work in industrial areas with current drop off/pick up schedule. |
| Continued hygiene practices, keeping it clean. |
| There needs to be more frequent buses to serve the community. The wait times are too long. Also, the circulator would be great on Saturdays and Sundays especially to areas where there are businesses. |
| More direct routes, maybe ones that skip many of the stops. |
| It would be great if there was a a special bus stop for the St. Andrews St. center. There is a bus stop a block away but in winter it will seem a lot farther away. |
| Keep the buses cleaned. I've sat on a very wrt chair, several times in the past year! Gross! |
| More services in the 400 and 500 blocks on Jackson street |
| Update google maps of current bus stops... very inaccurate. |
| More service to the city of Onalaska |
| Consider a spine-based grid system (Losey/16, West/Lang, 3rd/4th/Rose) |
| Abandon the hub and spoke system for one that runs along major corridors with faster travel and shorter wait time for transfers. |
| More busses and routes to onalaska and holmen and la crosse |
| Reduce or eliminate fares. Stronger marketing push to encourage people to use the system. Anything that can be done to show how to get the bus to major employers. |
| Light rail. |
| (Covered) bike racks by many stops (or could be vertical racks on sidewalk side of shelter). (Solar, motion-detecting) lights in (more) shelters. Parity between cost of parking (mostly free) and cost of riding bus (not free). Sidewalks to all stops. Annual pass at rate equal to cost for students (about 10x less than for regular people) if not free fares. Bi-directional N-S express with limited stops to connect with local routes from Woodmans lot (park & ride) to Goodwill lot on Mormon Coulee Rd & Losey (park and ride lot). Few stops in between make the N-S trip shorter and would encourage commuters. No left turns at unsignaled intersections. Rush hour BRT-on-shoulder on Hwy 16 or some other way to prioritize bus over sov traffic. More partnerships with events and entertainment/dining venues and MTU to encourage using bus for events and entertainment. On-bus stops list showing next stop, and announcing stops BEFORE bus goes past them. Buses must stick to schedule! No EARLY buses!! No free parking. Charge much higher and use extra \$ to fund enhancements. Tax parking lots at highest rate possible. Require parking cash out for all downtown employers. Use consultant to ID which employees could easily take bus to/from work (live on bus line and straight shot to employment) and give free bus passes for those. ID commuter influencers to encourage and support park & ride commuters. Catchy, funny ads on social and local media about riding public transportation. Bus shelter design competition for hs/college students with hs/tech college construction students building winners. Solar on all bus stops. Next bus comes at xx signs at all shelters. When I worked I took the bus almost daily. Now, retired, I hardly go anyplace but take the bus when I can. OK - Q=how many working vehicles (do you mean CARS or do you mean VEHICLES? I have one car and 7 bikes, but I put one.) |
| yearly passes. more locations to buy passes |
| n/a |
| Discounted passes for low income people |
| Would like to see lower cost monthly passes for low income people |
| Cleaner buses |
| Light rail down 3rd/south Ave/Mormon coulee |
| Masks... Some people are just gross or sneeze without coving there mouth... |

| |
|--|
| Better connection between La Crosse - Onalaska- Holmen |
|--|

Table 22. OSR Non-Users Discouraging Factors – Other (Question 21)

| |
|--|
| Don't want to use public transit. |
| i have my own car |
| When I worked in La Crosse, the pick up time was prior to me being able to leave work. |

Table 23. OSR Non-Users Reconsidering Factors – Other (Question 22)

| |
|---|
| When I can no longer drive |
| If I lost the ability to drive myself |
| A direct Express route to/from Downtown and The Mall. Personally believe this would be a key to reducing car traffic from Northern communities. |
| When I lived in La Crosse, I mostly used MTU when my car was in the shop. I did try to get my child to use it in the summer and after school without success. |
| shorter commute time, maybe have an express bus to downtown from Woodmans or the mall |
| I have a lot of stops with children for daycare and school before and after work, not a viable option for me presently. |

Table 24. OSR Policy Changes and Comments (Question 25)

| |
|---|
| Circulation routes at frequent times n the Holmen to la crosse corridor. |
| More bus stops in la crosse county areas. Also expansion of the share ride services. |
| Better information distribution ABOUT the transit system |
| Public transportation available in these areas would be great for anyone needing it. |
| Longer operating hours to do more things and have a public transit option. Expanded and higher frequency holiday service (MTU) |
| Since I don't drive and use a cane or walker, OSR is perfect for me! I can easily get to most of my clinic appts, get my prescriptions & other necessities at Walmart, my credit union, and do my grocery shopping. I use Abby Vans for my La Crosse appts. |
| For folks without a car, answers would be different. But, for many potential riders from Onalaska/Holmen/W.S. the use of MTU comes down to a tradeoff of time. Drive time + parking + walking to destination(s) and return trip. When you look at an MTU route and consider all the stops it will make between Onalaska and Downtown (Which would be likely destination for more northern suburb riders) it doesn't pay to ride the bus. However, if there was express service to downtown without any stops, that could be completely different. Going downtown to work, or spend an afternoon or evening, go to the theater, the L.C., or a festival it would absolutely be worth it. Park at the mall, jump on the bus, avoid finding parking and get dropped off at the MTU center, or maybe have special stops at the ballfield or fest grounds on the way in/out if there were events that day. This is similar to the Freeway Flyer concept in major cities. Park out in the suburb and take a bus straight to downtown, or major event. |
| I live in Barre Mills. Public transportation is not a viable option unless I can bike most of the way to a bus stop. |
| I don't know much about it. |
| an express service to downtown |
| Not sure? |

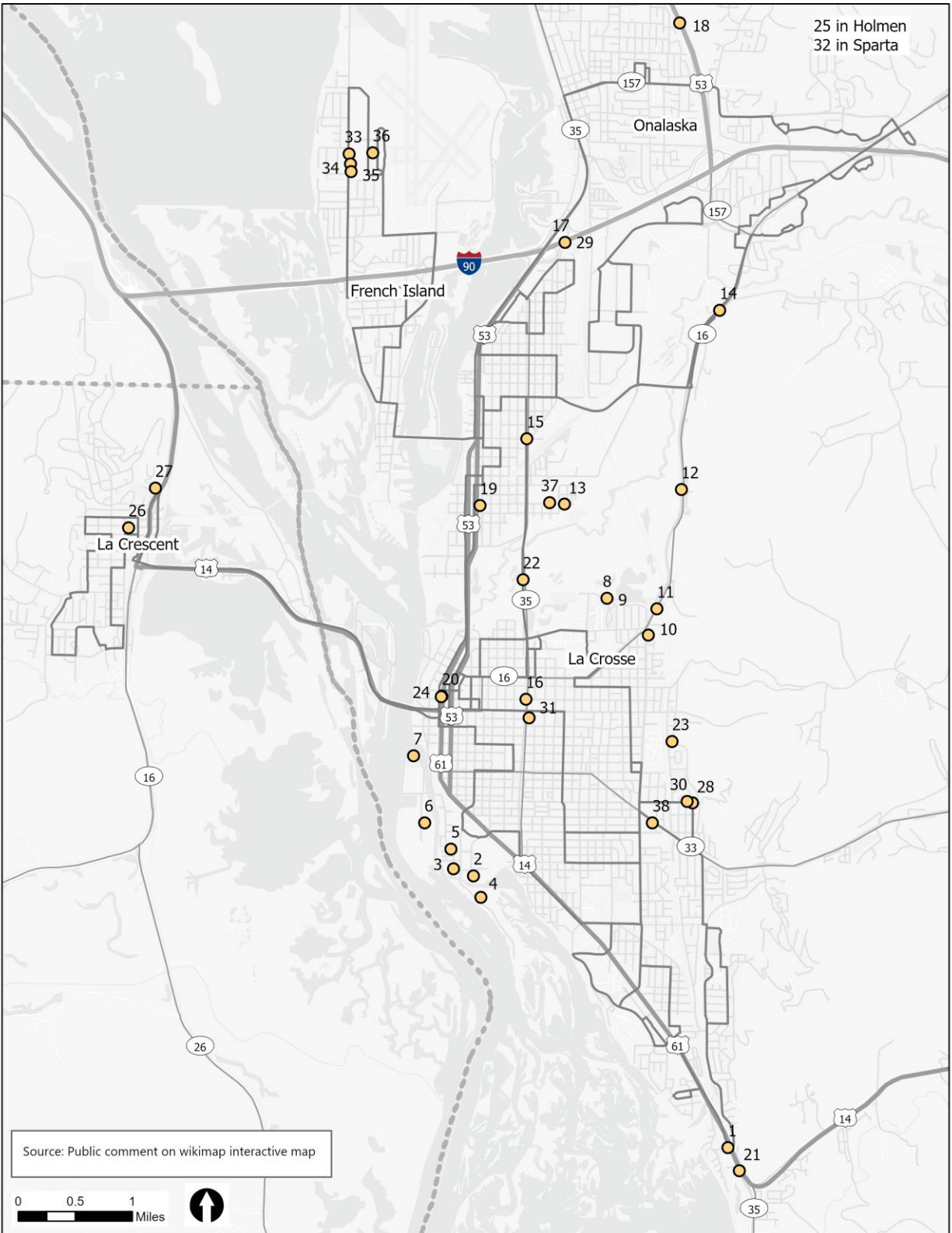
Table 25. SMRT Policy Changes and Comments (Question 25)

| |
|--|
| The addition of Saturday runs |
| Drivers are very helpful. I have no car and these buses are a life saver. |
| I ride the bus from Coon Valley to Viroqua. Exceptional service and wonderful drivers. |
| Direct route to downtown. The primary reason I don't take the bus is the extra time it takes to drive. |
| I am an employee of Organic Valley in Cashton, as are many people living in La Crosse. I would love for there to be a bus that went directly to and from the Cashton Campus' from La Crosse. |

| |
|---|
| I would like to see a route from La Crosse to Cashton. There are many employees from Organic Valley that would utilize this. |
| Switching the buses' diesel fuel to a cleaner energy source, if financially possible. |
| It feels like the focus of the red route is focused on the needs of gunderson employees and not on retirees or other people getting to work. Need to have more convenient times. Later morning, early evening and most importantly weekend service. |

WIKIMAP COMMENTS

Points



| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | To get to the bus stop on the east side (only) of this four way highway with cars feeding in from Hwy 14/61, there is no crosswalk, signal or anything. VERY DANGEROUS. |
| 2 | A big elder housing |
| 3 | Public recreation facilities |
| 4 | Large elder care facilities complex (workers and families) |
| 5 | Lots of large apartment complexes with low-income families. |
| 6 | Public ball fields |
| 7 | Public park |
| 8 | Myrick Park Center which is a polling place |
| 9 | Myrick Park Center which is a polling place |
| 10 | Public park with golf but also sledding, skiing, hiking |
| 11 | Public hiking trails, plus nature centers |
| 12 | Sports fields and housing area |
| 13 | This whole area - no bus. Lots of housing including low-income housing plus public park. |
| 14 | Need bus SHELTERS on all highway stops. Need these to be accessible for wheelchair users, too. |
| 15 | Bike route from Ranger Drive across George to Avon . An important linkage made difficult by a very wide and bike unfriendly intersection. May be a good spot for bike boxes. |
| 16 | King Street Greenway is very challenging to cross West Ave. |
| 17 | In the long term, create a transitway under I90 at the end of George St where buses could connect from Downtown to Onalaska. This would better serve the far north side than the current circuitous route. |
| 18 | Turn the entire US53 Freeway from Onalaska to Holmen into a bike trail and guided busway. It would be significantly better for the local economy and better for the environment than the current situation. |
| 19 | Better service is needed to the Amtrak station |
| 20 | Would like to see SMRT service extend to Arcadia, or Winona, or Caledonia for example. Also needs more frequency on all routes. |
| 21 | Take away the easternmost lane to add a sidewalk where none currently exists |
| 22 | Close Lang Drive to cars and open it to buses and people walking and cycling |
| 23 | Expand the hours of the bus routes through the La Crosse industrial park. The bus routes through there do not start early enough for 1st shift or run late enough for 2nd shift to utilize. Also, expanding the weekend hours. |
| 24 | SMRT Bus should stop at the Transit Center |
| 25 | I wish there was a route into Holmen that linked up with the main lines. Festival foods would be a good stop, the Aquatic Center as well. |
| 26 | La Crescent service at one direction at a time makes it very difficult to go somewhere within La Crescent and return. |
| 27 | Event Center |
| 28 | Please have buses cover this area during all hours and please start running the buses EARLIER so those of us that work at 6 am or first shift can actually get to work on time by bus. |
| 29 | Have a bus that goes straight to French Island and Onalaska so that you don't need to transfer again on the north side, it's too complicated |
| 30 | Create a route that goes to downtown in this area and not just the from downtown bus |
| 31 | Create a bus route in the heart of the city that just goes up and down a main street constantly (think light rail type situation) so people can get to and from north to south and easily walk to other main areas |
| 32 | Start the third route of SMRT Bus Green Route at a later time, or add a later fourth route, if possible. Some college classes end later than the third route departure from WTC at 4:24 pm, so I would miss some or most of my later class session this upcoming fall and spring. Having a route that runs an hour later or more would be very beneficial in that situation and for people working past 4:15 pm in La Crosse. |
| 33 | Need wheelchair accessible shelters at all stops, better instructions on how to use on demand service. |

| | |
|----|--|
| 34 | In times of inclement weather (ice, snow), bus stops are hard to access. No lighting. |
| 35 | Information on using the "on demand" service on this route is very confusing and hard to find. It is also very small, as I overlooked it a few times when searching for it. The printed out version of the MTU route map is very overwhelming and hard to read. I was in an accident in Oct 2017 where I suffered a bad brain injury. It took a few months for me to fully recover my speech and my walk. My wife and I specifically searched for disability friendly transportation services and couldn't find anything, so it pains me now to see that this service has always been available, we just couldn't find it. |
| 36 | There needs to be a direct route to the Airport from Downtown La Crosse. Or at least advertise it clear if it exists. |
| 37 | This is the new neighborhood center and there is no bus stop, Really!! Come on city government agencies, lets get our ducks in a row! One hand does not seem to know what the other is doing. No wonder why this new center cannot get people to come to the building. There is also a large number of employees who now work and play in the old footware building. |
| 38 | Please provide high frequency bus service to this location so I can access shopping options |

Routes Drawn

| |
|--|
| Bi-directional North-South express. |
| Need to serve developing area near Southern Bluffs school. |
| This is too round about, but some bus that hits all those missing spots on the islands where MANY people live, including many low-income, people of color, and elderly. Plus where they are moving many public recreation facilities from the ice arena to tennis courts, and ball fields. |
| Would be useful for accessing the Root River trail (to Houston) |
| New route closer to other businesses |
| While the hospital is encouraging people to move into the neighborhood, walking is great, but not so much on days when its storming or 30 below. a bus line to the core neighborhoods would be a great idea. |

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Emails

From: Beth Hartung (Contact information – removed)
 Sent: Tuesday, May 25, 2021 1:23 PM
 To: Jackie Eastwood (LAPC)
 Subject: MTU - needs for Northside of La Crosse

Hello.

I am the community school coordinator at Northside Elementary School. A big part of my job is to identify needs and solutions for our students and their families.

Transportation is an ongoing need (which I am sure you must already know).

Many of the better paying jobs are 2nd and 3rd shift work - located on the south side of our city.

Many families do not have reliable transportation.

Story: *One dad I know works in a kitchen at a nice restaurant in downtown La Crosse. He takes the city bus to work, but walks home at midnight or 1 in the morning (all year round) because the bus has stopped and taking a taxi would eat into the money he just earned.*

I believe that we need a bus that runs over-night in a loop (from downtown along Rose Street to Walgreens on to George Street and along West Ave to Market Street and then back downtown). If this

route could loop every 30 minutes - it would allow Northside families to pursue jobs at both hospitals as well as at the restaurants and hotels.

Additionally, while not an ideal solution, the bus could also serve as a safe haven for people who have no place to go. Riding the loop one time could get them out of the weather and warmed up or cooled off in inclement weather.

This route could make the difference in the everyday lives in our families in La Crosse.

Please advocate for such a route. I am happy to share more details/insight if needed.

Beth

(Contact information – removed)

City Planning Comment

Municipalities being served by transit must reduce their minimum lot size and increase their zoning intensity. Transit-Supportive Densities and Land Uses - A PSRC Guidance Paper (February 2015) states: Extensive national research has shown that residential densities exceeding 7 or 8 homes per gross acre support efficient and reliable local transit service. Household densities should reach, at minimum, 10 to 20 dwelling units per gross acre close to transit stations. Residential densities exceeding 15 to 20 homes per acre, as well as employment areas with densities of 50 jobs per acre and higher, are preferred targets for the higher frequency and high-volume service provided by high-capacity transit." I can't imagine any other served community can reach these densities. The City of La Crosse's minimum lot size is 1/6th of an acre and would be impossible with single-family zoning to accomplish the density necessary to support transit. Between 1938-1966, the minimum lot size was 5,000 sq. ft., about 1/9th of an acre. La Crosse should be about 5,400 sq. ft. to reach 8 homes per acre for new development. Then, La Crosse should pursue a comprehensive rezoning to align with the recommendations above. This would allow for more housing units without extensive replatting.

Phone Calls

Phone call, May 28, 2021, 4:10pm

Degaz Camille, lives in central La Crosse

- Need service in and to Onalaska.
- Limited service to Woodman's - affordable grocery.
- MTU does a great job, Adam got creative.
- America needs more transit, don't have coordination of services.
- Wants to visit Onalaska more.
- Transit needed for employment and housing.
- Bus drivers are good for the disabled - treat them well, they take their time and have patience.

Facebook Comments

On June 15, 2021, the MTU Facebook page asked: "What is the favorite destination that MTU takes you to?" Responses included the following:

- I wish there was a route to the area where the trailheads are to Hixon Forest and the bluff.
- Valley View Mall
- Wishing you had a shuttle bus for Holmen.
- Walmart
- On any smooth streets. Those poor buses are being beaten up.

UWL STUDENT GOVERNMENT SURVEY

Table 26. What is your approximate address?

| Answer | % | Count |
|--|--------|-------|
| On-Campus | 38.20% | 157 |
| Off-campus, west of campus (on the downtown side of campus, past Eagle Hall) | 35.28% | 145 |
| Off-campus, south of campus (past WINGS, Cartwright, and Mitchell Hall) | 16.30% | 67 |
| Off-campus, north/east of campus (by the marsh and/or Emerson Elementary school) | 10.22% | 42 |
| Total | 100% | 411 |

Table 27. Do you have a parking space on campus?

| Answer | % | Count |
|--|--------|-------|
| Yes, a resident pass | 20.96% | 87 |
| Yes, a commuter pass | 10.36% | 43 |
| No, but I drive to campus and park somewhere a pass isn't needed | 10.12% | 42 |
| No, but I have a car available to use | 32.53% | 135 |
| No, I don't have a car in town | 26.02% | 108 |
| Total | 100% | 415 |

Table 28. Q6 - How often do you ride the MTU bus?

| Answer | % | Count |
|------------------|--------|-------|
| Daily | 1.01% | 4 |
| 2-3 times a week | 2.52% | 10 |
| Once a week | 5.54% | 22 |
| Monthly | 13.60% | 54 |
| Never | 77.33% | 307 |
| Total | 100% | 397 |

Table 29. Q7 - Why did/do you take the bus?

| Answer | % | Count |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Don't have a car | 25.38% | 116 |
| Don't want to deal with parking | 10.07% | 46 |

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------|-----|
| Environmental reasons | 9.41% | 43 |
| Other | 11.38% | 52 |
| I have never taken the bus | 43.76% | 200 |
| Total | 100% | 457 |

Table 30. Q8 - If you don't ride the bus, what are your reasons for not doing do? (select all that apply)

| Answer | % | Count |
|--|--------|-------|
| Unsafe | 8.04% | 69 |
| Unclean | 8.97% | 77 |
| Not quick | 19.46% | 167 |
| Confusing routes | 21.33% | 183 |
| Doesn't go where I need it to | 11.31% | 97 |
| Takes too many transfers to get where I want | 10.72% | 92 |
| Doesn't come frequently enough | 10.84% | 93 |
| Not accessible | 2.10% | 18 |
| Other | 7.23% | 62 |

Table 31. Q15 - If you do ride the bus, which routes do you use most often (select all that apply)

| Answer | % | Count |
|----------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 (South Ave) | 5.39% | 13 |
| 2 (Green Bay) | 4.98% | 12 |
| 4 (Losey Boulevard) | 22.82% | 55 |
| 5 (Valley View Mall) | 39.00% | 94 |
| 6 (Northside) | 3.73% | 9 |
| 7 (French Island) | 0.83% | 2 |
| 8 (Crossing Meadows) | 1.24% | 3 |
| 9 (Onalaska) | 17.43% | 42 |
| 10 (La Crescent) | 0.83% | 2 |
| Circulator 1 | 2.49% | 6 |

Table 32. Q23 - If you travel to another city, how do you get there?

| Answer | % | Count |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Personal car | 64.11% | 318 |
| Rideshare | 20.77% | 103 |
| Bus (Greyhound, Badger bus, etc.) | 7.06% | 35 |
| Amtrak (train) | 4.64% | 23 |
| other | 3.43% | 17 |
| Total | 100% | 496 |

Table 33. What do you use the bus for?

| Answer | % | Count |
|----------|--------|-------|
| Campus | 17.53% | 34 |
| Work | 12.89% | 25 |
| Shopping | 54.64% | 106 |
| Other | 14.95% | 29 |
| Total | 100% | 194 |

Table 34. Q17 - If you could have a bus stop added, where would you like it to be?

| |
|---|
| Walmart/Woodmans |
| Central Hagar St, it is like 12 blocks between the two sides of town with bus routes. South side of campus in the neighborhood area |
| Closer to the CFA |
| Walmart area, to the bluffs, Dollar tree area |
| Close by the Target and the mall more. Close to other Walmarts. Maybe one close to Eagle and Coate. |
| at the mall in Onalaska and outside the goodwill |
| plaza 16 on the way to Onalaska |
| Village Shopping Center |
| Maybe near the main branch public library |
| I think if a bus stop were added to the WEST part of campus (heading towards downtown/ the river) that would probably be the most useful for all students - as students get older and shift to off-campus housing. |
| Kwik trip |
| Holmen |
| State trail going into Onalaska |
| More stops/safer walking conditions in Onalaska |
| Near the Onalaska YMCA or closer to the main st. |
| if the 5 route could go to the woodmans and walmart in onalaska that would be awesome. i know the onalaska line goes there, but the it takes me an hour and a half to get there by that way, or i have to walk from gunderson or the target and cross 90 with no sidewalk which takes half the time but is a lot more dangerous |
| I would love a bus stop that goes directly into campus that will go past the festive foods |
| Culvers |
| Gillette & Rose St. |
| Pettibone park |
| Lincoln middle school |
| Near Festival Foods in Onalaska |
| I'm not sure if I'd want another stop. The bus is an amazing option for transportation, but it would be nice for uwl to offer more independent options. It's more expensive to get a bike from the REC than ride the bus. I don't understand that because that option is so much more sustainable. |
| I don't know. I feel like there are lots of bus stops available. |
| YMCA |
| Walmart, Home Depot, Dollar Store area in Onalaska |
| West Salem. |
| A bus stop by the union on campus that goes to valley view mall |

| |
|---|
| go to town of shelby |
| The #5 bus (going from the bus station to the mall) should have a stop somewhere on 6th street. Maybe by 6th and King by all those apartments |
| It would be nice to have another bus come through campus besides the #4 |
| At Target in Onalaska |
| BioLife Plasma |

Some general comments in open-ended questions:

- A desire for higher frequencies (less than 30 minutes), and frustrations with long travel times.
- Some feel unsafe on the bus due to the behaviors of other riders on board, especially some respondents who identified as women.
- A desire for better bus stop shelters, amenities, and information.
- A desire for service to Onalaska for shopping.
- A desire to align bus time points on campus with class starting times.
- Some would like to see improved communication when the bus is on detour.
- Many students indicated having their own car for transportation, noting the convenience of driving or the long travel times of transit.
- Some find the schedule and route information confusing/difficult to access. The maps are too confusing for some.
- Some would like the app to search by location instead of stop, and display time of arrival instead of estimated minutes until arrival.
- Some students with a car occasionally have reliability issues with their cars or try to save on gas by using the bus.
- Some students indicated having a disability that prevents them from being able to drive a car.