



CHAPTER 11. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION

Public Transportation is an important transportation mode within the region. Public and private transit systems and facilities make the region more accessible. This includes the young, elderly, disabled, low-income and all others without means of personal transportation, or simply those who do not wish to drive a private vehicle and desire public transportation as a choice. Transit can serve more people while causing less environmental impact and traffic congestion. Transit reduces dependence upon the automobile, reduces overall household transportation costs and increases access to job opportunities to those without automobiles and/or households with limited transportation choices. Transit options can provide safe routes to work, school, medical appointments, and shopping. Public transit is also one of the safest modes of surface transportation in the U.S.

PUBLIC TRANSIT PROVIDERS

Northwest Arkansas has two public transit providers that currently operate in the urban and rural areas of the region and include Ozark Transit Authority (ORT) and University of Arkansas Razorback Transit. Approximately 1.9 million unlinked trips were provided in 2019 between the two public transportation systems, with average daily unlinked trips of 1,000 on ORT and 8,500 unlinked trips on Razorback Transit (Table 11.1). Over the last five years, both systems have struggled to maintain and/or increase ridership year over year. Both ORT and Razorback Transit coordinate their routes to avoid duplication of service and provide key connections/transfers between the two systems within Fayetteville and University of Arkansas.

Razorback Transit						Ozark Regional Transit					
Annual Unlinked Trips Fixed Route and Demand Response						Annual Unlinked Trips Fixed Route and Demand Response					
Year	Unlinked Trips	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Fixed Route	Demand Response	Year	Unlinked Trips	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Fixed Route	Demand Response
2007	1,280,648			1,272,041	8,607	2007	153,242			127,407	25,835
2008	1,223,358	-57,290	-4.47%	1,216,284	7,074	2008	205,256	52,014	33.94%	187,839	17,417
2009	1,335,028	111,670	9.13%	1,327,673	7,355	2009	193,082	-12,174	-5.93%	177,959	15,123
2010	1,575,149	240,121	17.99%	1,567,802	7,347	2010	237,184	44,102	22.84%	212,491	24,693
2011	1,647,481	72,332	4.59%	1,639,066	8,415	2011	263,828	26,644	11.23%	238,048	25,780
2012	1,933,690	286,209	17.37%	1,924,886	8,804	2012	296,405	32,577	12.35%	269,355	27,050
2013	2,078,006	144,316	7.46%	2,069,321	8,685	2013	288,501	-7,904	-2.67%	268,302	20,199
2014	1,978,500	-99,506	-4.79%	1,969,318	9,182	2014	302,821	14,320	4.96%	274,441	28,380
2015	2,005,267	26,767	1.35%	1,996,376	8,891	2015	317,448	14,627	5.33%	287,458	29,990
2016	1,826,149	-179,118	-8.93%	1,817,664	8,485	2016	319,060	1,612	0.56%	288,602	30,458
2017	1,706,497	-119,652	-6.55%	1,697,040	9,457	2017	261,335	-57,725	-20.00%	235,277	26,058
2018	1,645,305	-61,192	-3.59%	1,635,492	9,813	2018	247,155	-14,180	-6.03%	225,971	21,184
2019	1,601,261	-44,044	-2.68%	1,591,106	10,155	2019	271,936	24,781	10.97%	252,609	19,327

Source: 2007-2019 National Transit Database, University of Arkansas Data Analysis Year July1 to June 30

Table 11.1 - Fixed Route Unlinked Trips and Demand Response

The American Public Transportation Association has provided the definition for unlinked trips as *“unlinked passenger trips is the number of times passengers board public transportation vehicles. Passengers are counted each time they board vehicles no matter how many vehicles they use to travel from their origin to their destination and regardless of whether they pay a fare, use a pass or transfer, ride for free, or pay in some other way. A person riding only one vehicle from origin to destination takes one unlinked passenger trip; a person who transfers to a second vehicle takes two unlinked passenger trips; a person who transfers to a third vehicle takes three unlinked passenger trips...”*

OZARK REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Ozark Regional Transit (ORT) began operations in Northwest Arkansas in 1979 under the direction of Community Resources Group (CRG), a local non-profit organization. In 2001, CRG announced that they would no longer provide the service. At that time, the Mayors of Bentonville, Fayetteville, Springdale, and Rogers as well as the County Judges of Benton, Carroll, Madison and Washington Counties formed a Board to manage ORT. One of their first acts as a Board was to hire a professional transit management firm, and First Transit was hired to manage the system.

Prior to 2002, ORT provided only dial-a-ride services in this area, predominately to support the health and human services agencies. ORT received rural FTA funding starting in 1980. With the tremendous growth in Northwest Arkansas, in 1990, the Fayetteville/ Springdale metropolitan area became an Urbanized Area and ORT began receiving FTA financial assistance for Urbanized Areas over 50,000 in population. In 2002, the Urbanized Area FTA funding increased from a total of \$750,000 to \$1.7 million, which is currently split between ORT and Razorback Transit, which serves the University of Arkansas students and residents of Fayetteville.



Currently, ORT receives funding from the FTA in rural and urban funding, a State rental car tax and the local match to FTA monies from the cities and counties it serves.

In 2002, ORT began its first fixed route in south Fayetteville. In 2005, it began six new fixed routes, with two in Fayetteville, Rogers and Springdale, and one in Bentonville.

ORT also provides complementary ADA paratransit service within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of a fixed route and demand response service in Benton, Washington and portions of Madison and Carroll County. ORT buses are all equipped with bike racks and wireless internet service.

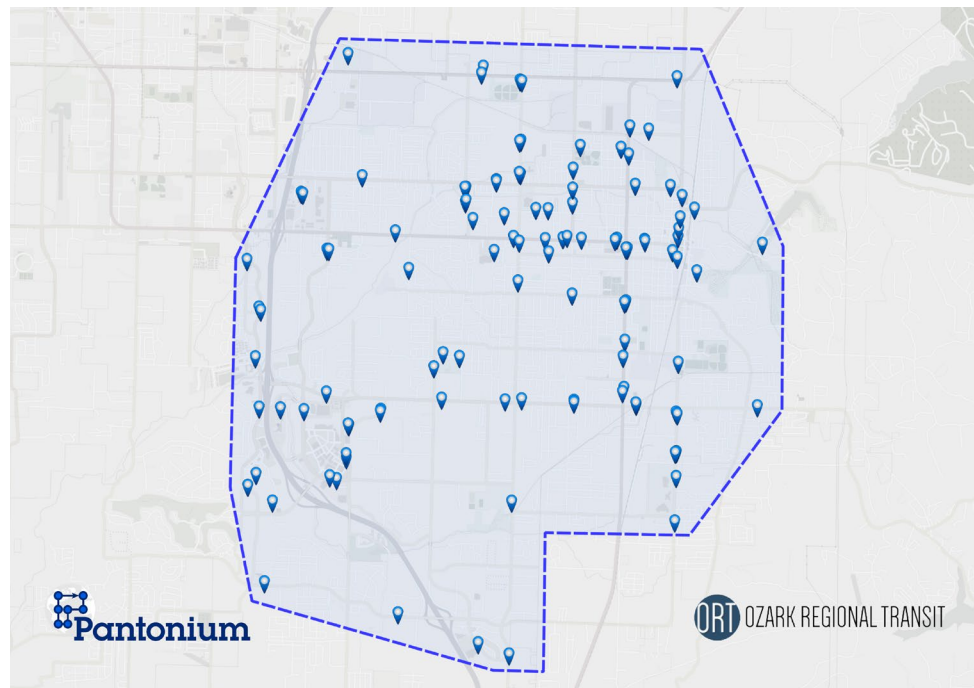
ORT continues to work with local industries to develop substantive public transit routes that serve the needs of employers and employees. ORT continues to investigate industry partnerships to fund the costs associated with regular operation of additional public transit routes. Development of these relationships with the employers is vital in securing the funding necessary to have a fully functional, vibrant and reliable transit system in Northwest Arkansas. These relationships will help ORT build a public transit network that provides meaningful connections for work, entertainment, education and medical trips.

In January 2017, 20 buses were in a devastating fire at the ORT fleet maintenance facility. ORT applied for and was awarded a \$3.6M Sec 5339(b) FTA grant to replace 12 of the buses with the remaining eight buses replaced with insurance funds.

In 2018, ORT applied for and was awarded a \$2.9M Sec. 5339(b) grant to replace their administrative offices. The building was completed in fall of 2020.



In July 2020, On Demand Transit was launched in the City of Rogers. Operating hours are Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM - 6:30 PM. On Demand Transit allows a rider to schedule trips from bus stop to bus stop using the On Demand Transit App on a smart phone, desktop computer, or simply calling ORT. Riders can also just board the bus and indicate to the driver where they wish to go.



ORT provides approximately 272,936 unlinked trips (Fixed Route, Paratransit-Demand Response, and Charter) with 252,609 unlinked trips on the fixed route bus system (2019) (Table 11.2 and Figure 11.1).

Ozark Regional Transit Annual Unlinked Trips Fixed Route and Demand Response						Ozark Regional Transit Fixed Route Service Measures								
Year	Unlinked Trips	Numeric Change	Percent Change	ORT Fixed Route (Regionwide)	Demand Response	Year	ORT Annual Fixed Route Vehicle Revenue Miles (Regionwide)	Numeric Change Revenue Miles	Percent Change Revenue Miles	ORT Annual Fixed Route Vehicle Revenue Hours (Regionwide)	Numeric Change Revenue Hours	Percent Change Revenue Hours	Unlinked Fixed Route Trips per Revenue Mile	Unlinked Fixed Route Trips per Revenue Hour
2007	153,242			127,407	25,835	2007	376,130			23,175			0.3	5.5
2008	205,256	52,014	33.94%	187,839	17,417	2008	336,248	-39,882	-10.60%	23,566	391	1.69%	0.6	8.0
2009	193,082	-12,174	-5.93%	177,959	15,123	2009	378,216	41,968	12.48%	24,557	991	4.21%	0.5	7.2
2010	237,184	44,102	22.84%	212,491	24,693	2010	459,491	81,275	21.49%	26,826	2,269	9.24%	0.5	7.9
2011	263,828	26,644	11.23%	238,048	25,780	2011	460,852	1,361	0.30%	26,643	-183	-0.68%	0.5	8.9
2012	296,405	32,577	12.35%	269,355	27,050	2012	437,791	-23,061	-5.00%	26,207	-436	-1.64%	0.6	10.3
2013	288,501	-7,904	-2.67%	268,302	20,199	2013	470,968	33,177	7.58%	27,983	1,776	6.78%	0.6	9.6
2014	302,821	14,320	4.96%	274,441	28,380	2014	689,894	218,926	46.48%	39,944	11,961	42.74%	0.4	6.9
2015	317,448	14,627	4.83%	287,458	29,990	2015	864,338	174,444	25.29%	50,257	10,313	25.82%	0.3	5.7
2016	319,060	1,612	0.51%	288,602	30,458	2016	883,533	19,195	2.22%	50,606	349	0.69%	0.3	5.7
2017	261,335	-57,725	-18.09%	235,277	26,058	2017	766,668	-116,865	-13.23%	45,304	-5,302	-10.48%	0.3	5.2
2018	247,155	-14,180	-5.43%	225,971	21,184	2018	603,608	-163,060	-21.27%	38,190	-7,114	-15.70%	0.4	5.9
2019	271,936	24,781	10.03%	252,609	19,327	2019	529,070	-74,538	-12.35%	34,101	-4,089	-10.71%	0.5	7.4

Source: 2007-2019 National Transit Database, ORT Data

Table 11.2 - Fixed Route Unlinked Trips and Demand Response ORT

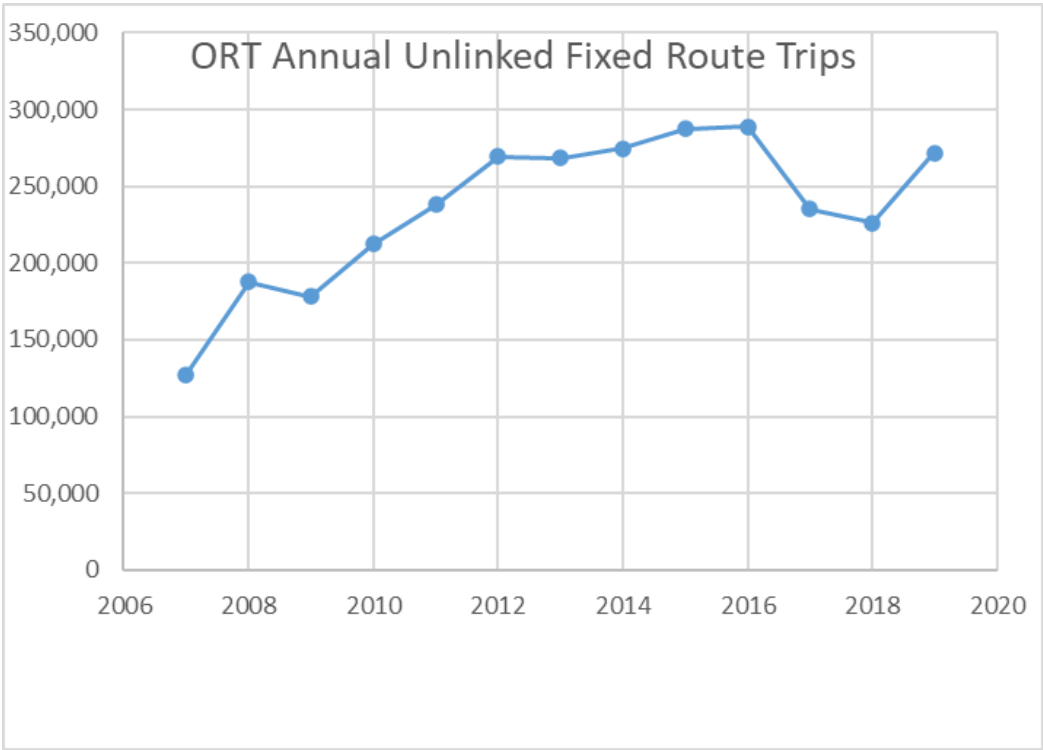


Figure 11.1 - ORT Unlinked Trips - Fixed Route 2007-2019

RAZORBACK TRANSIT

Razorback Transit originated in 1979, through the joint efforts of the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville (UA), ARDOT and the NWARPC (the MPO for Northwest Arkansas). In July 2004, Razorback Transit became a direct recipient of Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) funds.

Razorback Transit provides fare-free transportation to on-campus locations and major off-campus living and shopping areas in Fayetteville.

Razorback Transit Annual Unlinked Trips Fixed Route and Demand Response								Razorback Transit Fixed Route Service Measures				
Year	Unlinked Trips	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Razorback Fixed Route (Fayetteville)	Fixed Route Numeric Change	Fixed Route Percent Change	Demand Response	Year	Razorback Annual Fixed Route Vehicle Revenue Miles	Razorback Annual Fixed Route Vehicle Revenue Hours	Razorback Unlinked Fixed Route Trips per Revenue Mile	Razorback Unlinked Fixed Route Trips per Revenue Hour
2007	1,280,648			1,272,041			8,607	2007	279,670	27,870	4.5	45.6
2008	1,223,358	-57,290	-4.47%	1,216,284	-55,757	-4.38%	7,074	2008	281,280	29,044	4.3	41.9
2009	1,335,028	111,670	9.13%	1,327,673	111,389	9.16%	7,355	2009	281,098	29,181	4.7	45.5
2010	1,575,149	240,121	17.99%	1,567,802	240,129	18.09%	7,347	2010	302,288	29,937	5.2	52.4
2011	1,647,481	72,332	4.59%	1,639,066	71,264	4.55%	8,415	2011	320,554	32,335	5.1	50.7
2012	1,933,690	286,209	17.37%	1,924,886	285,820	17.44%	8,804	2012	365,798	36,912	5.3	52.1
2013	2,078,006	144,316	7.46%	2,069,321	144,435	7.50%	8,685	2013	413,245	39,636	5.0	52.2
2014	1,978,500	-99,506	-4.79%	1,969,318	-100,003	-4.83%	9,182	2014	415,503	40,077	4.7	49.1
2015	2,005,267	26,767	1.35%	1,996,376	27,058	1.37%	8,891	2015	464,199	43,934	4.3	45.4
2016	1,826,149	-179,118	-8.93%	1,817,664	-178,712	-8.95%	8,485	2016	484,355	44,258	3.8	41.1
2017	1,706,497	-119,652	-6.55%	1,697,040	-120,624	-6.64%	9,457	2017	547,338	49,456	3.1	34.3
2018	1,645,305	-61,192	-3.59%	1,635,492	-61,548	-3.63%	9,813	2018	557,558	50,208	2.9	32.6
2019	1,601,261	-44,044	-2.68%	1,591,106	-44,386	-2.71%	10,155	2019	596,434	51,244	2.7	31.0

**Table 11.7 - Fixed Route Unlinked Trips and Demand Response
Razorback Transit**

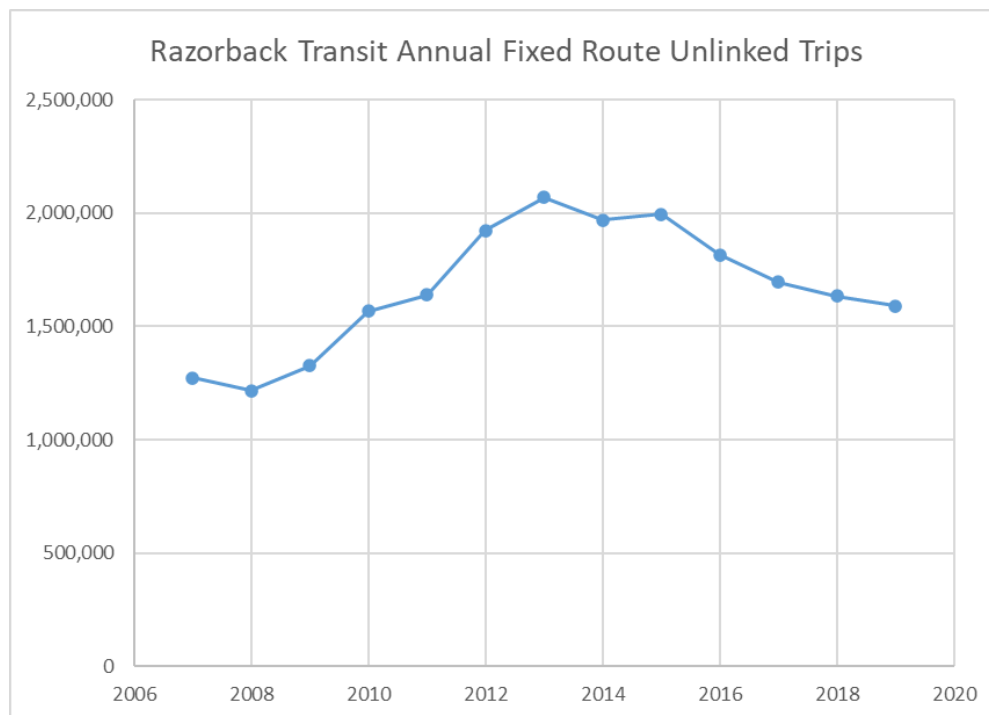


Figure 11.2 - Razorback Transit Unlinked Trips 2007-2019

TRANSIT RIDERSHIP

Trips are reported to the National Transit Database (NTD) and the term “unlinked trips” are used to track the number of trips made by system and are reported by transit agency. The American Public Transportation Association defines unlinked trips as “...the number of times passengers board public transportation vehicles. Passengers are counted each time they board vehicles no matter how many vehicles they use to travel from their origin to their destination and regardless of whether they pay a fare, use a pass or transfer, ride for free, or pay in some other way. A person riding only one vehicle from origin to destination takes one unlinked passenger trip; a person who transfers to a second vehicle takes two unlinked passenger trips; a person who transfers to a third vehicle takes three unlinked passenger trips...”.

2019 Unlinked Trips

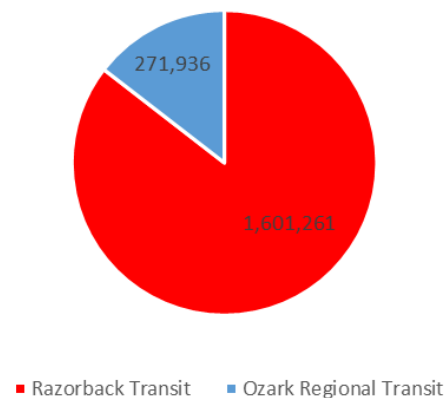


Figure 11.3 - Annual Unlinked Trips for 2019

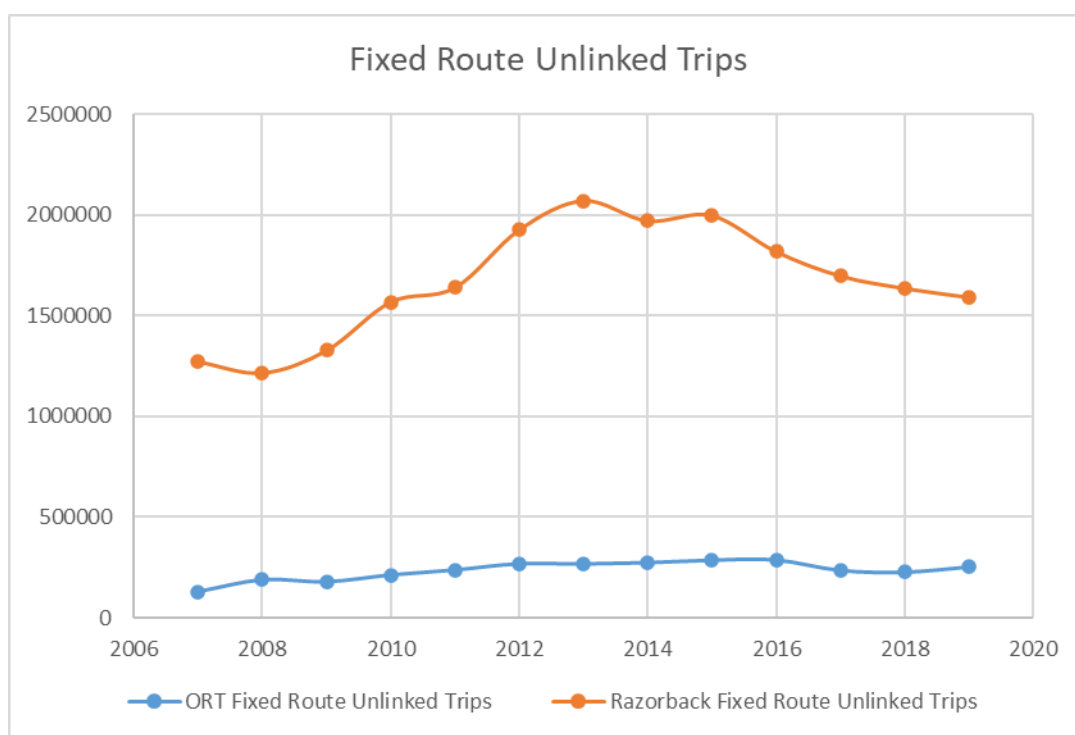


Figure 11.3 - Fixed Route Unlinked Trips

System information and performance measures may be found for all U.S. public transit providers through the [National Transit Database](#) (Figure 11.4 and Table 11.8).

NATIONAL TRANSIT DATABASE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Fixed route transit performance measures for service effectiveness are calculated for each public transit system as part of the National Transit Database (NTD) reporting requirements. Two of the performance measures for service effectiveness are based on (1) the number of fixed route unlinked trips per revenue mile and (2) the number of unlinked fixed route trips per revenue hour. These measures are reported from 2007 to 2019 for both ORT and Razorback Transit based on the NTD reports.

Year	Razorback Annual Fixed Route Vehicle Revenue Miles	Razorback Annual Fixed Route Vehicle Revenue Hours	Razorback Unlinked Fixed Route Trips per Revenue Mile	Razorback Unlinked Fixed Route Trips per Revenue Hour
2007	279,670	27,870	4.5	45.6
2008	281,280	29,044	4.3	41.9
2009	281,098	29,181	4.7	45.5
2010	302,288	29,937	5.2	52.4
2011	320,554	32,335	5.1	50.7
2012	365,798	36,912	5.3	52.1
2013	413,245	39,636	5.0	52.2
2014	415,503	40,077	4.7	49.1
2015	464,199	43,934	4.3	45.4
2016	484,355	44,258	3.8	41.1
2017	547,338	49,456	3.1	34.3
2018	557,558	50,208	2.9	32.6
2019	596,434	51,244	2.7	31.0

Year	ORT Annual Fixed Route Vehicle Revenue Miles (Regionwide)	ORT Annual Fixed Route Vehicle Revenue Hours (Regionwide)	Unlinked Fixed Route Trips per Revenue Mile	Unlinked Fixed Route Trips per Revenue Hour
2007	376,130	23,175	0.3	5.5
2008	336,248	23,566	0.6	8.0
2009	378,216	24,557	0.5	7.2
2010	459,491	26,826	0.5	7.9
2011	460,852	26,643	0.5	8.9
2012	437,791	26,207	0.6	10.3
2013	470,968	27,983	0.6	9.6
2014	689,894	39,944	0.4	6.9
2015	864,338	50,257	0.3	5.7
2016	883,533	50,606	0.3	5.7
2017	766,668	45,304	0.3	5.2
2018	603,608	38,190	0.4	5.9
2019	529,070	34,101	0.5	7.4

Table 11.8 - Fixed Transit Route Service Measures (ORT and RT)

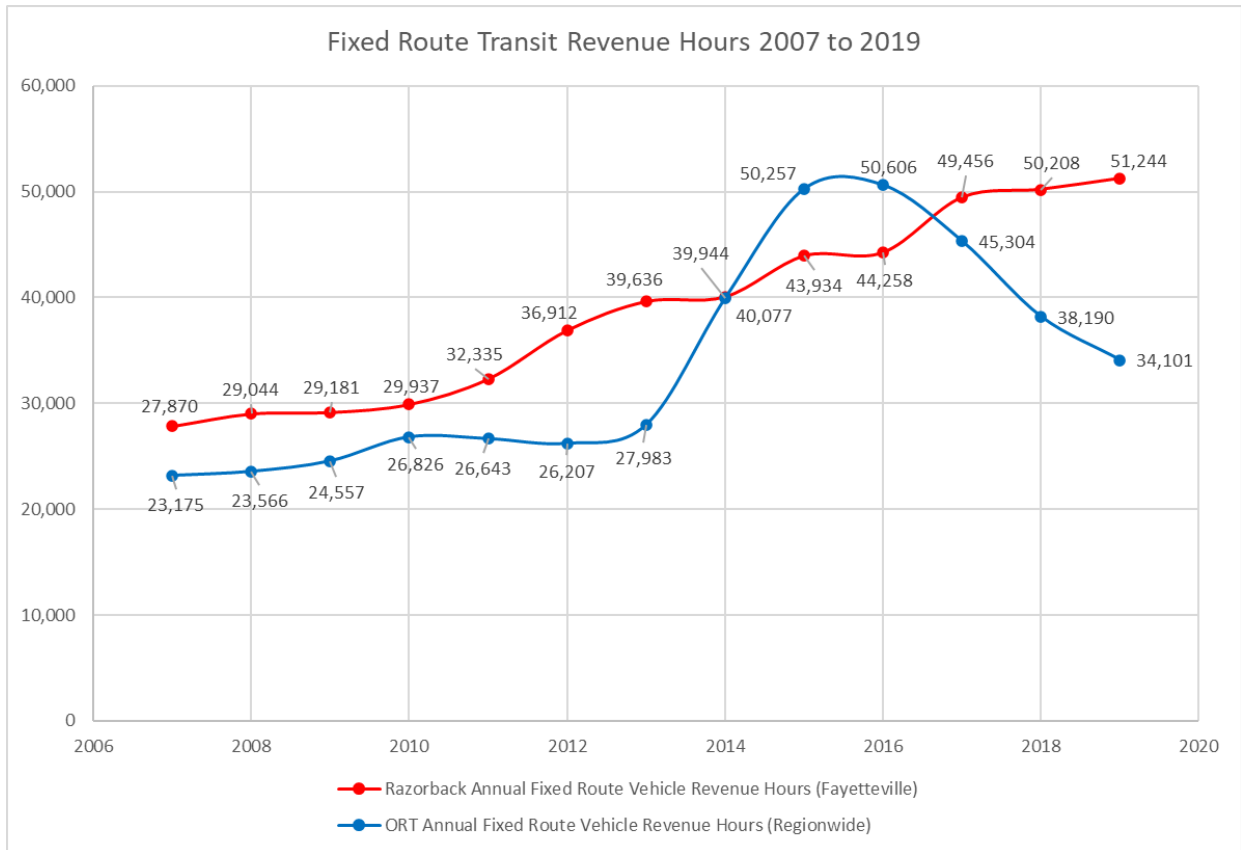


Figure 11.4 - Fixed Transit Route Revenue Hours (ORT and RT)

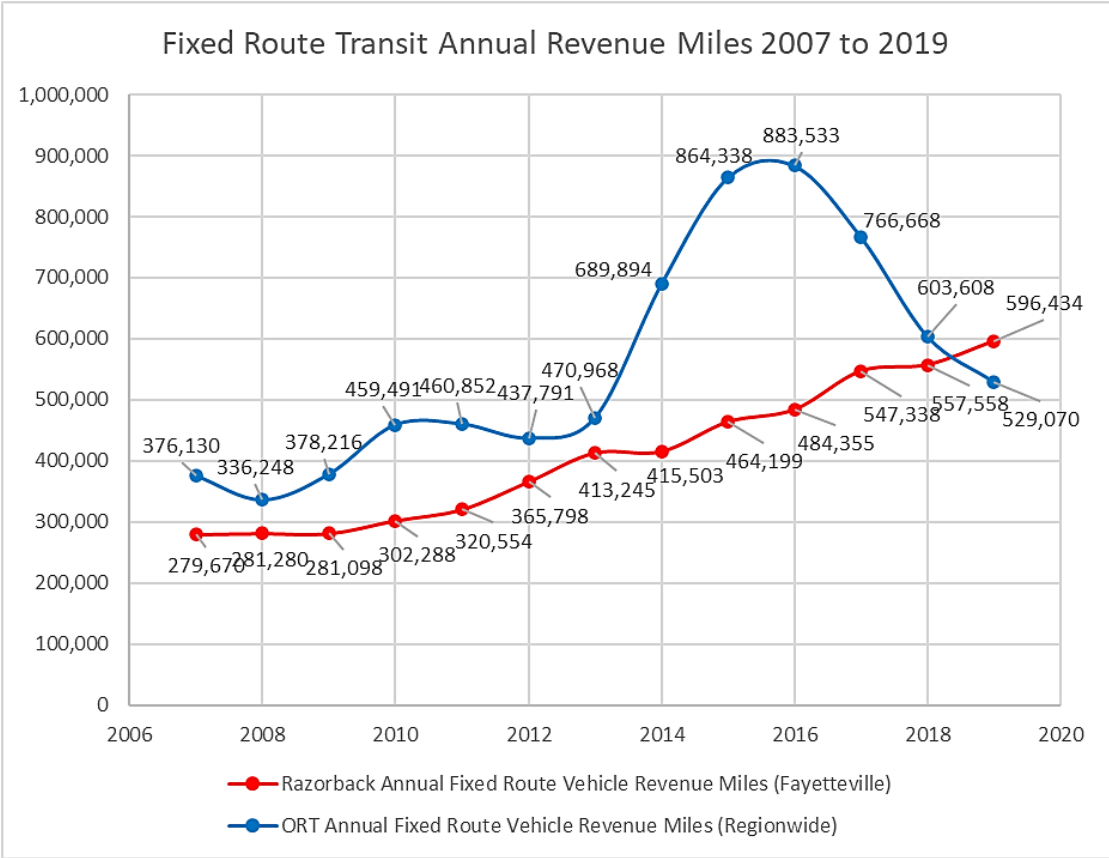


Table 11.8 - Fixed Transit Route Revenue Miles (ORT and RT)

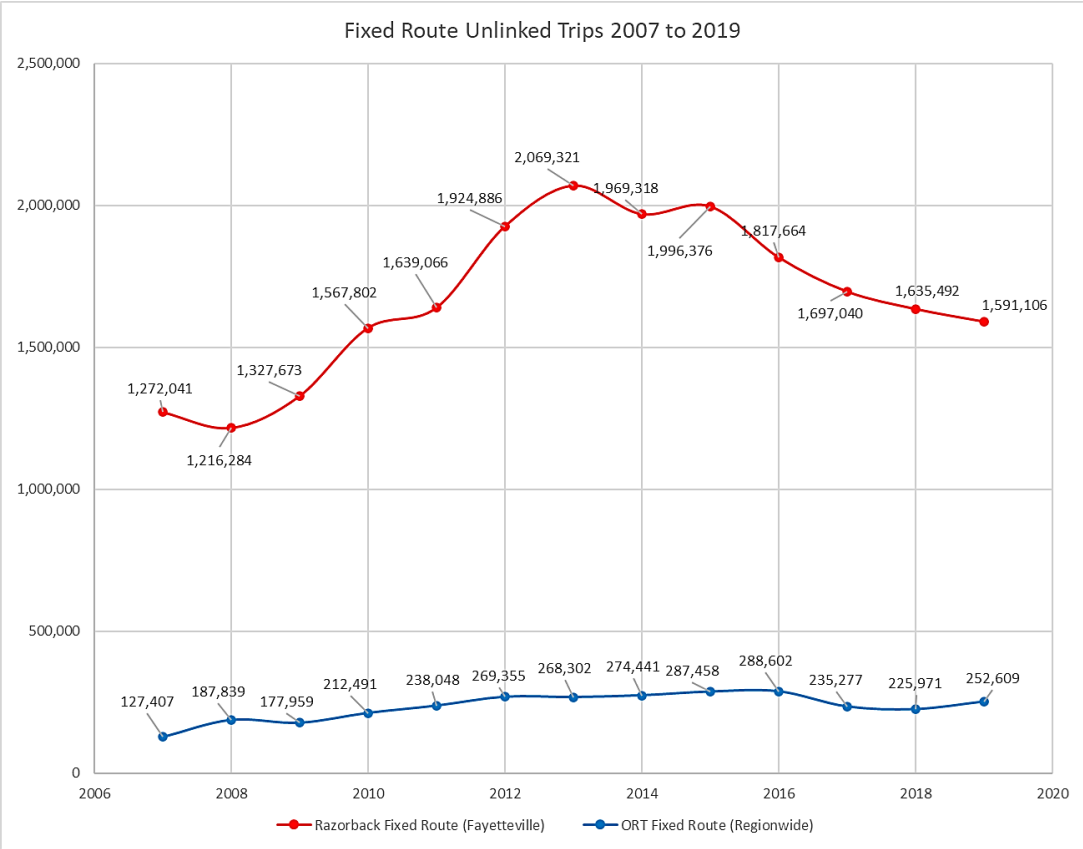


Figure 11.5 - Fixed Transit Route Unlinked Trips (ORT and RT)

The unlinked fixed route trips per revenue hour have increased for ORT to 7.4 trips per hour in 2019. Razorback Transit unlinked fixed route trips has decreased to 31 trips per hour in 2019.



Figure 11.6 - Unlinked Fixed Route Trips per Revenue Hour and Revenue Hour (ORT and RT)

Unlinked trips per revenue mile for ORT has fluctuated between 0.30 and 0.60 trips per revenue mile. Razorback Transit unlinked trips per revenue mile was 2.7 trips in 2019.

FEDERAL TRANSIT FUNDING

The Urbanized Area Formula Program funds are apportioned to designated recipients within urbanized areas with populations of 200,000 or more. NWARPC is the designated recipient for the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers AR-MO Urbanized Area. The Urbanized Area is apportioned FTA funding annually with approximately \$283,926 in Section 5339 funds and \$2.7 million in Section 5307 FTA Urbanized Area Formula Program funds. These funds are programmed by the NWARPC and are utilized by both ORT and Razorback Transit for capital, operating assistance, preventative maintenance, ADA Paratransit Service, and Enhancements. The regional also receives FTA 5310 enhanced mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities funds and this program is currently administered by ARDOT.

The rural area is also apportioned Section 5311 funds, and these are used by ORT to provide demand response service. MAP-21/FAST Act expanded the use of Section 5307 funds for operating expenses. Under current regulations, each transit system that operates 100 or fewer buses may use these funds for operating expenses.

FTA 5307 FFY 2021	\$2,697,096	Fayetteville--Springdale--Rogers, AR—MO Apportionment
FTA 5339 FFY 2021	\$ 283,926	Fayetteville--Springdale--Rogers, AR—MO Apportionment
FTA 5310 FFY 2021	\$ 230,988	Fayetteville--Springdale--Rogers, AR—MO Apportionment
FTA 5311 FFY 2021	\$ 192,859	Rural Area Formula Program (Award to Ozark Regional Transit)

The table below shows available FTA programed and local match funds for the next 25 years, including the inflation rate.

2045 MTP Transit Projects 2025 to 2045 (2021 to 2024 projects shown in TIP) Available FTA Federal Funding + Required Local Match + Local Overmatch Inflated at 2% per year Note: The region currently spends approximately \$8M per year on transit	2025 to 2030	2031 to 2045	Total
FTA Section 5339 Capital -ORT and Razorback Transit -Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Urbanized Area	\$ 2,600,000	\$ 8,000,000	\$ 10,600,000
FTA Section 5307 Capital and Operations - ORT and Razorback Transit - Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Urbanized Area	\$47,800,000	\$ 147,500,000	\$195,300,000
FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities - Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Urbanized Area	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 4,800,000	\$ 6,300,000
FTA Section 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas - Demand Response Transit - Benton County and Washington County	\$ 875,000	\$ 2,672,000	\$ 3,547,000
Total	\$ 52,775,000	\$ 162,972,000	\$ 215,747,000

Bus and Bus Facilities Program (49 U.S.C. §5339) – Transit

MAP-21/FAST Act created a new formula grant program for bus and bus facilities that replaced the Section 5309 discretionary program. The program provides funding for replacing, rehabilitating, and purchasing new buses and bus-related equipment and facilities. The Urbanized Area receives approximately \$241,527 annually in Federal funds matched by \$60,382 in local funds for the replacement of vehicles and related capital projects. Funding is utilized by both Razorback and Ozark Regional Transit for replacing buses.

Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (49 U.S.C. §5310)

Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program is a formula assistance program to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Public transportation projects may be implemented in areas where public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable; public transportation projects that exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); projects that improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance on complementary paratransit; and alternatives to public transportation projects that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Rural Area Formula Program (49 U.S.C. §5311)

The Rural Area Formula Program is a formula grant program that provides capital, planning, and operating assistance to states to support public transportation in rural areas with populations less than 50,000. Currently, Ozark Regional Transit receives approximately \$140,000 per year in Federal funds and requires a 20 percent to 50 percent local match depending on the type of project. ORT provides demand response service to the rural areas within the MPA.

TRANSIT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLANS (TAMP)

A Transit Asset Management Plan (TAMP) is a business model that uses the condition of assets to guide the optimal prioritization of funding at transit agencies in order to keep transit systems in a State of Good Repair (SGR). By implementing a TAMP, the benefits include:

- Improved transparency and accountability for safety, maintenance, asset use, and funding investments;
- Optimized capital investment and maintenance decisions;
- Data-driven maintenance decisions; and
- System safety and performance outcomes.

The consequences of an asset not being in an SGR include:

- Safety risks (crashes per 100,000 revenue miles);
- Decreased system reliability (on-time performance);
- Higher maintenance costs; and/or
- Lower system performance (missed runs due to breakdown).



TRANSIT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN (TAMP) POLICY

Both Ozark Regional Transit and Razorback Transit have adopted Transit Asset Management Plans to aid in: (1) assessment of the current condition of capital assets; (2) determine what condition and performance of its assets should be (if they are not currently in a State of Good Repair); (3) identify the unacceptable risks, including safety risks, in continuing to use an asset that is not in a State of Good Repair; and (4) deciding how to best balance and prioritize reasonably anticipated funds (revenues from all sources) towards improving asset condition and achieving a sufficient level of performance within those means.

As Tier II public transportation providers, both providers have developed and implemented Transit Asset Management Plans containing the following elements:

1. Asset Inventory Portfolio: An inventory of the number and type of capital assets to include: Rolling Stock, Facilities, and Equipment.
2. Asset Condition Assessment: A condition assessment of those inventoried assets for which the provider has direct ownership and capital responsibility.
3. Decision Support Tools and Management Approach: A description of the analytical processes and decision-support tools that the provider uses to estimate capital investment needs over time, and develop its investment prioritization.
4. Investment Prioritization: The provider project-based prioritization of investments, developed in accordance with §625.33.

The three components of the asset inventory required as part of the TAMP are:

- Rolling Stock: All owned and operated revenue service vehicles used in the provision of providing public transportation, and includes vehicles used to primarily transport passengers.
- Equipment: Equipment evaluated per FTA requirements in this TAMP, is all non-revenue service vehicles regardless of value, and any owned equipment with a cost of over \$50,000 in acquisition value.
- Facilities: Facilities are any structure used in providing public transportation where a provider owns and has a direct capital responsibility.

FTA DESIGNATED RECIPIENT

The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission is the designated recipient for FTA Urban Programs – FTA Section 5307, Section 5339, and Section 5310. As the Designated Recipient, NWARPC Policy Committee allocates funding between the two urban providers for Section 5307 and Section 5339. ARDOT currently administers the Section 5310 funding for NWARPC.

NWARPC develops, in coordination with providers, and approves an annual Transit Program of Projects (POP) for each transit agency and funding for associated transit planning. The Program of Projects includes bus procurement, operating assistance, preventative maintenance, and ADA paratransit service for each agency.

The individual bus fleets at each agency are evaluated annually by each provider based on the adopted TAMP targets for condition, age, useful life, and overall condition rating. The type of equipment and bus fleets deployed and maintained in the region is determined by each provider and replacement is evaluated by providers and FTA based on FTA Useful Life Benchmarks.

Ozark Regional Transit recently replaced their entire fleet with ARBOC buses in 2017 and 2019. Ozark Regional Transit has eight (2017) cutaway buses and 12 (2019) buses. The FTA Useful Life Benchmark is 10 years for both types of buses and 300,000 miles for a larger bus and 250,000 miles for cutaway bus.

Both transit providers make rolling stock selections that enable the most effective use of the currently available funding streams. The goal is to meet the minimum regional service standards. The technology for alternatively powered rolling stock is continually evolving and the capital expense and associated required infrastructure is considerably higher than current funding can support in addition to trying to meet the minimum regional service standards, frequency, hours of service, and areas served.

To maintain the lowest possible average fleet age Razorback Transit replaces vehicles regularly. This contributes to lower average maintenance costs and allows more service to be provided to the public. Both transit providers will continue to monitor evolving alternatively fueled technologies, and available funding levels to provide the best public transit services for the region.

HUMAN SERVICE PROVIDERS

While ORT and Razorback Transit provide fixed route transit service throughout the region, there are many other transit providers in the area. Human service agencies provide a vital role in the overall transportation needs of the region. They provide access to agency services and/or to meet the basic, day-to-day mobility needs of transportation-disadvantaged populations, especially individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes.

There are four human service agencies in the Northwest Arkansas region actively participating in ARDOT-administered transit programs Section 5310. Most of these agencies provide service to specific clientele for shopping, medical appointments, social, work, or education activities.

TRANSIT COORDINATION PLANNING

Within the MPA area there are two public transit systems, Razorback Transit and ORT, as well as a number of human service agencies that provide transit options for specific populations.

In January 2013, ARDOT published the Arkansas Statewide Transit Coordination Plan: 2012 (TCP). The TCP replaced the sixteen separate local transit coordination plans that were developed in 2007 and 2008 as a result of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). In Northwest Arkansas, the TCP replaced the NWA Public Transit-Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan (Coordination Plan). In June 2018, ARDOT published the updated Arkansas Statewide Transit Coordination Plan.

The Federal transportation legislation under Moving Ahead for Progress in the Twenty-First Century (MAP-21) and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), requires that projects for certain FTA programs be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. ARDOT's updated plan is intended to satisfy the federal requirements of Section 5310: Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program, which is a consolidation of the old Section 5310 and Section 5317 programs, and includes the New Freedom program. These requirements are aimed at improving transit services for persons with disabilities, older adults and individuals with low incomes and ensuring that communities are coordinating transit resources provided through multiple federal programs.

Transportation service coordination is the ongoing process of transportation providers and human service agencies communication and working together to more efficiently manage limited transportation resources. The overall objective of the Arkansas Statewide Transit Coordination Plan is to determine where there are gaps in public transit and human services transportation service in Arkansas and develop coordination strategies and identify projects to address identified gaps. For more information go to [ARDOT's Publications Page](#).

For guidance on the administration and preparation of grant applications for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities under 49 U.S.C. 5310, FTA has issued Circular 9070.1G. This revision of an earlier circular incorporated provisions of MAP-21/FAST Act and includes the most current available guidance as of the date of publication (7-7-14).

Inter-City Bus Transportation

The Jefferson Lines Bus Service travels through Northwest Arkansas. A Jefferson Lines depot is located in Fayetteville at 3075 Wedington Drive with the hours of Monday through Saturday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Another stop is located in Rogers at 4601 W. Walnut Street. The Jefferson Lines operates in thirteen states including the Arkansas contiguous states of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Missouri. Other Arkansas stops include Clarksville, Conway, Fort Smith, Harrison, Little Rock, Ozark, Pine Bluff, and Russellville. Out-of-state nearby connections include Tulsa, Oklahoma, Joplin and Springfield in Missouri, and Coffeerville, Kansas.



CONNECT NORTHWEST ARKANSAS - 10-YEAR TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Connect Northwest Arkansas (NWA) is a 10-Year Transit Development Plan (TDP) that will serve as a “Blueprint” for improving and expanding transit in the NWA region. The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPC), Ozark Regional Transit (ORT) and Razorback Transit (RT) are committed to ensuring that this plan improves transit by connecting NWA at the regional and local levels, saves people time and ultimately provides the community with greater mobility and freedom.

Transportation opportunities and challenges are regional and cannot be defined by one jurisdiction. NWA is a massive region and spans over 40 miles from south to north with transit needs that vary throughout the linear corridor. Connect NWA focuses on how to improve fixed route transit and builds upon the recent and ongoing success both ORT and RT have had coordinating and expanding service in the four main urban areas and surrounding communities that include (from south to north) Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers and Bentonville.

Connect NWA establishes a shared understanding of what successful transit looks like, how to design effective service and ultimately how to implement it regionally and locally. Transit may not seem like the optimal or most popular mode of travel in the NWA region since the 420,455 people who live in the area only average 8,000 transit boardings per day. However, something is missing from this statistic and the conversation in general: the potential for transit in the region is great and these numbers reflect a transit system that is underfunded and not designed to meet the transit potential of the region. It is critical that the NWA Community understands the following about transit:

- The benefits of transit (why does transit matter)?
- What makes transit effective?
- What supports transit?
- How do you design transit?

Before proceeding it is important to establish a shared understanding about what a transit network is and its most basic components. A transit network is a set of routes that follow specific alignments with stops along the way that operates during certain days and times of the day and at various service levels.

From the time it starts in the morning to the time it stops in the evening is known as its span. How often a bus or train arrives at a given stop or departs from a terminal is known as its frequency.



Why does transit matter?



Save Money
A household can save \$10k by living with one less car.



Environment Friendly
Public transit saves the country 4.16 billion gallons of fuel per year.

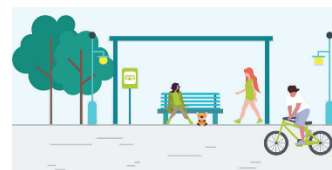


Reduce Congestion
Congestion costs Northwest Arkansas residents \$103M per year. Transit helps reduce the number of vehicles on roadways.



Travel Safely
Transit is 10x safer than traveling by automobile.

What is effective transit?



Effective Transit...

TAKES ME WHERE I WANT TO GO

...WHEN I WANT TO GO THERE

IT IS RELIABLE

IT SAVES ME TIME

IT GIVES ME FREEDOM

What supports transit?

Density



Transit works best when stops are located near a variety of destinations where people want to go such as job centers, schools, medical facilities, & housing complexes.

Connectivity



Transit should provide seamless transitions to other routes, park & rides, sidewalks, and bicycle routes. This ensures ease and comfort for passengers navigating the system.

Ease of Use



Transit should be easy to navigate and convenient to use. Great transit is integrated with technology to make taking transit an easy choice for travel.

Community Support



Whether you advocate for transit at city hall or simply choose to ride the bus, support from the community encourages local leaders to invest in great transit.

How do you design transit?

Improving transit is often a balancing act of deciding where the bus picks you up, how often the bus comes, and when service runs. In other words, frequency, span of service, and route design are all important aspects of delivering effective transit service.

Frequency
How often the bus comes



Route Design
Where the bus goes and how it gets there



Span of Service
How early service starts & how late service runs



The study began in January 2019 with a technical analysis that looked at ridership, travel patterns, travel time and on-time performance for the entire NWA study area. The first major milestone of the project was to develop a Public Engagement Plan that would ensure the entire study area had an opportunity to learn about transit and provide input to directly inform the recommendations of the Connect NWA TDP.

Parallel to the public engagement effort was the existing conditions analysis that consists of the following technical analyses:

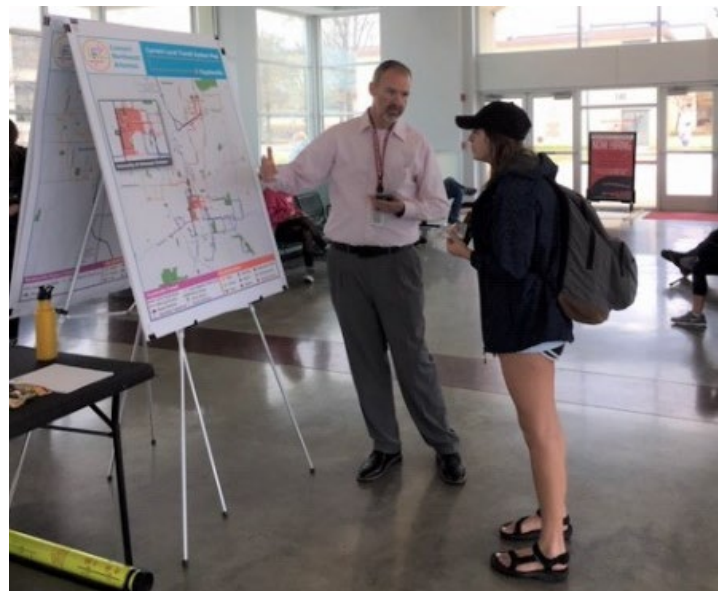
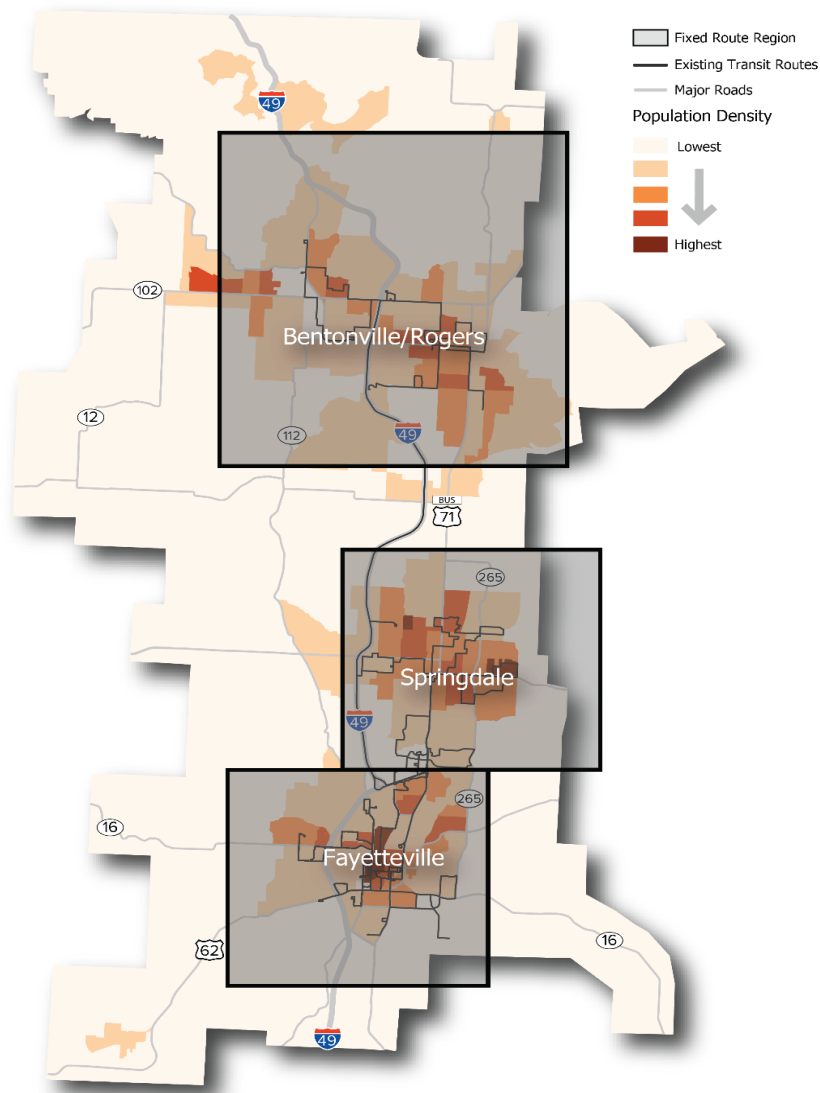
- Benchmarking Review
- Market Analysis
- Fixed Route Transit Operational Analysis

The next steps in the process involved the development of a Regional Transit Framework that included recommendations for regional and local transit solutions with service level and route alignment modifications and additions. The project team organized and hosted two major events in each of the counties in the study area that provided an opportunity for the community to give input on the recommendations. The project team used this input to develop a Preferred Alternative (PA) for both the region and each individual community. The final steps of the TDP included the development of three critical elements to help guide and implement Connect NWA:


- Regional Service Standards
- Detailed implementation plan with prioritized routes and phasing
- Funding recommendations on allocating Federal and Local funds.

Connect NWA represents a complete 10-Year TDP for region and is made up of many individual components that can stand on their own and serve as tools to help advance and implement the plan.









NWA Transit Service Region & Population Density



The Regional Transit Framework takes the shape of customized route and network recommendations built upon the technical analysis and informed by the public engagement process. The project team identified key transit corridors that provided enhanced connectivity and direct routing focused on moving NWA residents in an intuitive, time efficient manner that was not restricted by political boundaries. The draft recommendations were provided to the public for comment through both a series of community events and online and paper surveys to obtain public feedback about the proposed changes. Following the public outreach phase of the alternatives development, feedback was incorporated back into the draft recommendations to create a locally preferred alternative (LPA) truly supported by the community. The results shown in below are a product of the final recommendations comprised of level of services, route modifications, new routes, new mobility zones and proposed mobility hub locations.



REGIONAL TRANSIT BENEFITS OF CONNECT NWA

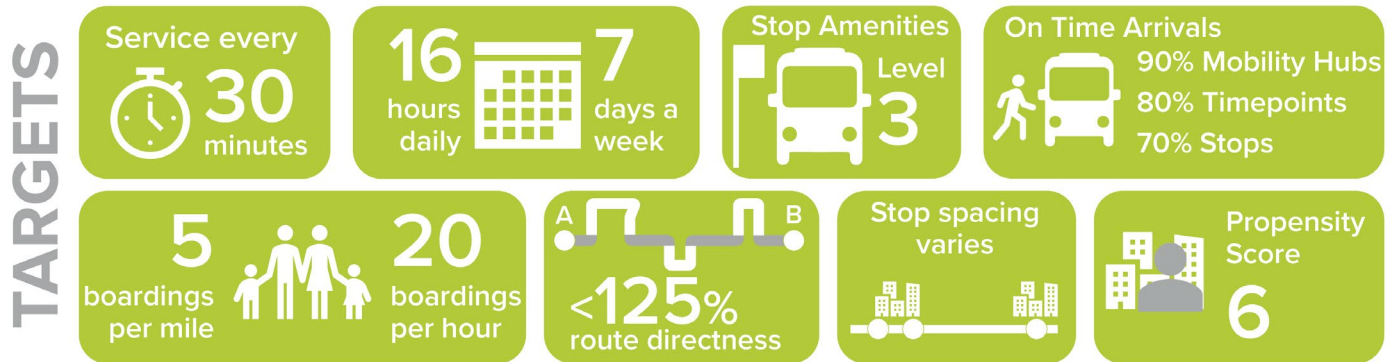
	Bentonville		Fayetteville		Rogers		Springdale		Region	
	Existing	Future	Existing	Future	Existing	Future	Existing	Future	Existing	Future
System Characteristics										
 Transit Routes 	1	6	15	15	3	9	4	6	19	29
 Peak Buses 	1	12	27	39	4	21	5	15	32	75
Service Coverage										
	31,823	51,328	73,230	81,553	27,082	43,687	47,454	59,007	179,589	235,575
Frequent Service Coverage (30 minutes or better)										
	0	36,466	59,459	67,439	0	23,450	0	37,038	59,459	164,393
Travel Time to Mobility Hubs										
 Travel Time Zone <div> <div>60</div> <div>45</div> <div>30</div> <div>15</div> </div> 	61,000	125,827	80,646	129,189	23,859	113,578	68,727	155,710	234,233	524,305
	44,247	81,604	47,290	76,793	14,787	45,767	45,507	98,931	151,831	303,094
	33,580	41,908	24,886	37,189	8,042	12,860	23,562	38,614	90,069	130,571
	13,009	14,739	6,408	6,474	2,533	2,583	8,686	9,916	30,636	33,712

REGIONAL SERVICE STANDARDS

As the NWA area continues to grow, it is important that transit providers understand how to allocate resources effectively, and which markets will utilize the provided services. The regional service standards offer a unique set of service provision types, technology standards, and system designs for the NWA region to use for ongoing operation, expansion and the implementation of transit services. They are intended to serve as a living tool that both compliments Connect NWA and stands on its own. Regional Service Standards will serve as both an internal and external resource that will explain how and why transit is delivered in NWA.

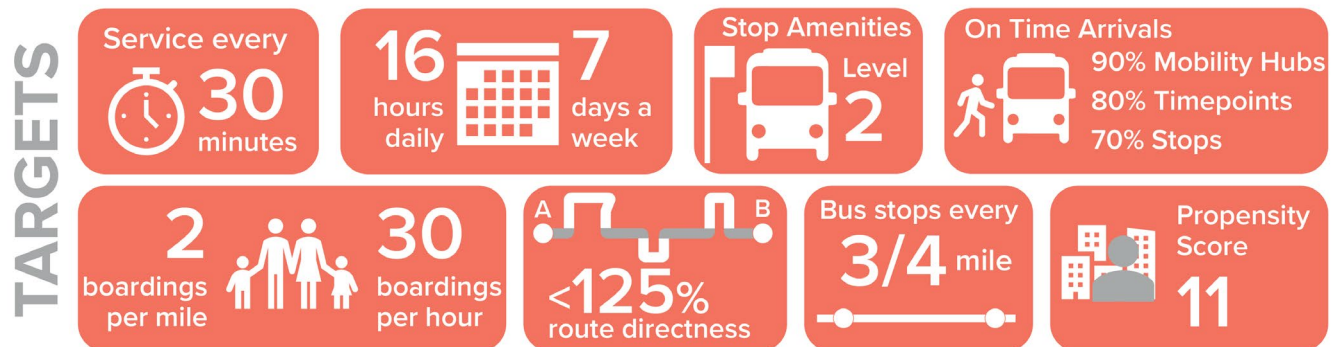
Regional Service Standards

Regional Connectors are a fixed route transit service that provide service from city to city along a major arterial at high frequencies with limited stops. These routes cover key areas and give users increased accessibility and connectivity to multiple urban areas in a region.



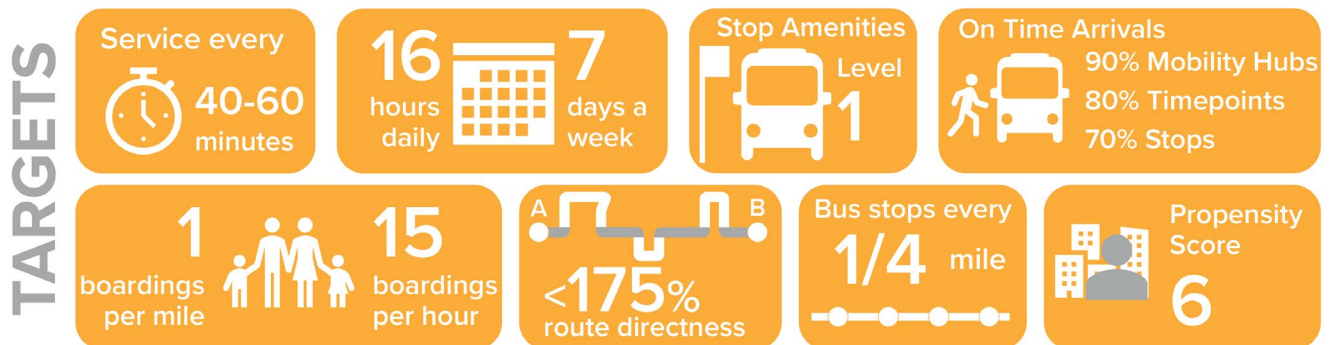
Frequent Service

Fixed route service that has demand for more frequent service due to destinations and/or ridership. Accordingly, frequent fixed route service refers to transit that stays within denser, more urban areas where transit demand tends to be concentrated.



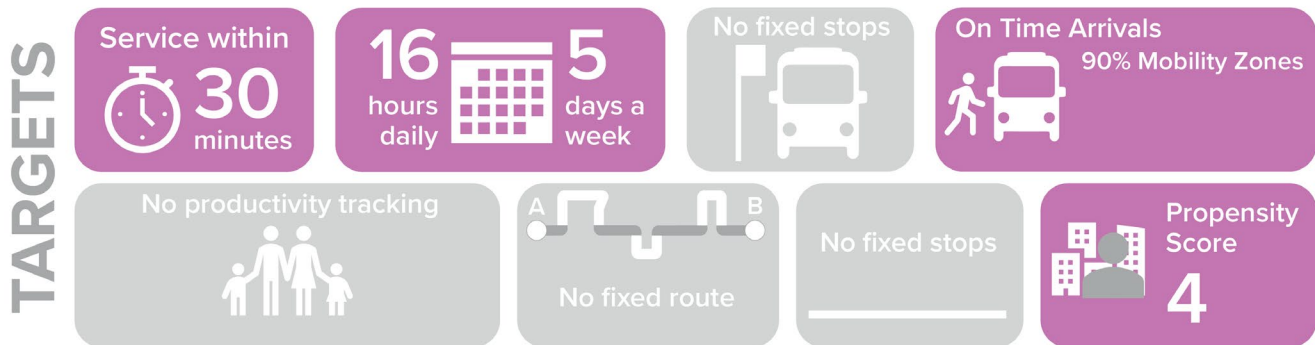
Coverage Service

Coverage service refers to transit with a set route alignment, designated stops, and a fixed operating schedule.



Mobility Zones

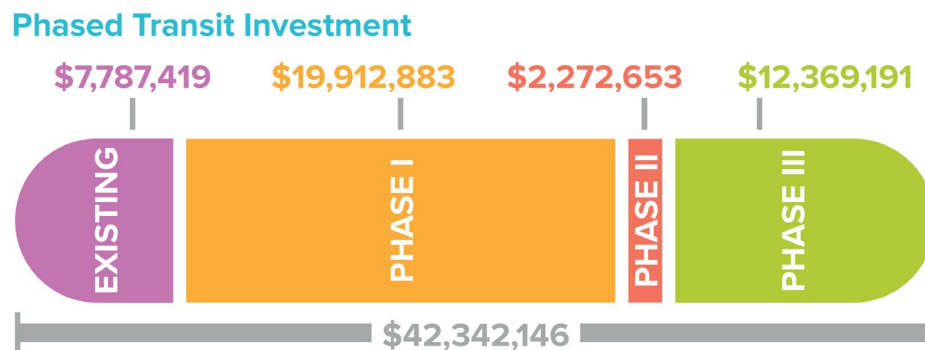
Mobility zones are designated areas with demand response service available to help provide first-last mile solutions for system users. Mobility zones are coverage areas set in the place of unproductive fixed routes/deviations. This allows for the provider to maintain market coverage in an efficient, cost effective way.



IMPLEMENTATION & FUNDING

Connect NWA recommendations take the shape of a phased implementation plan derived from previous technical analyses, proven transit concepts, and public and staff input. This implementation plan will work in tandem with the Regional Service Standards to successfully and sustainably implement the recommendations that will create high quality transit throughout the entire NWA region. The implementation plan is separated into three phases:

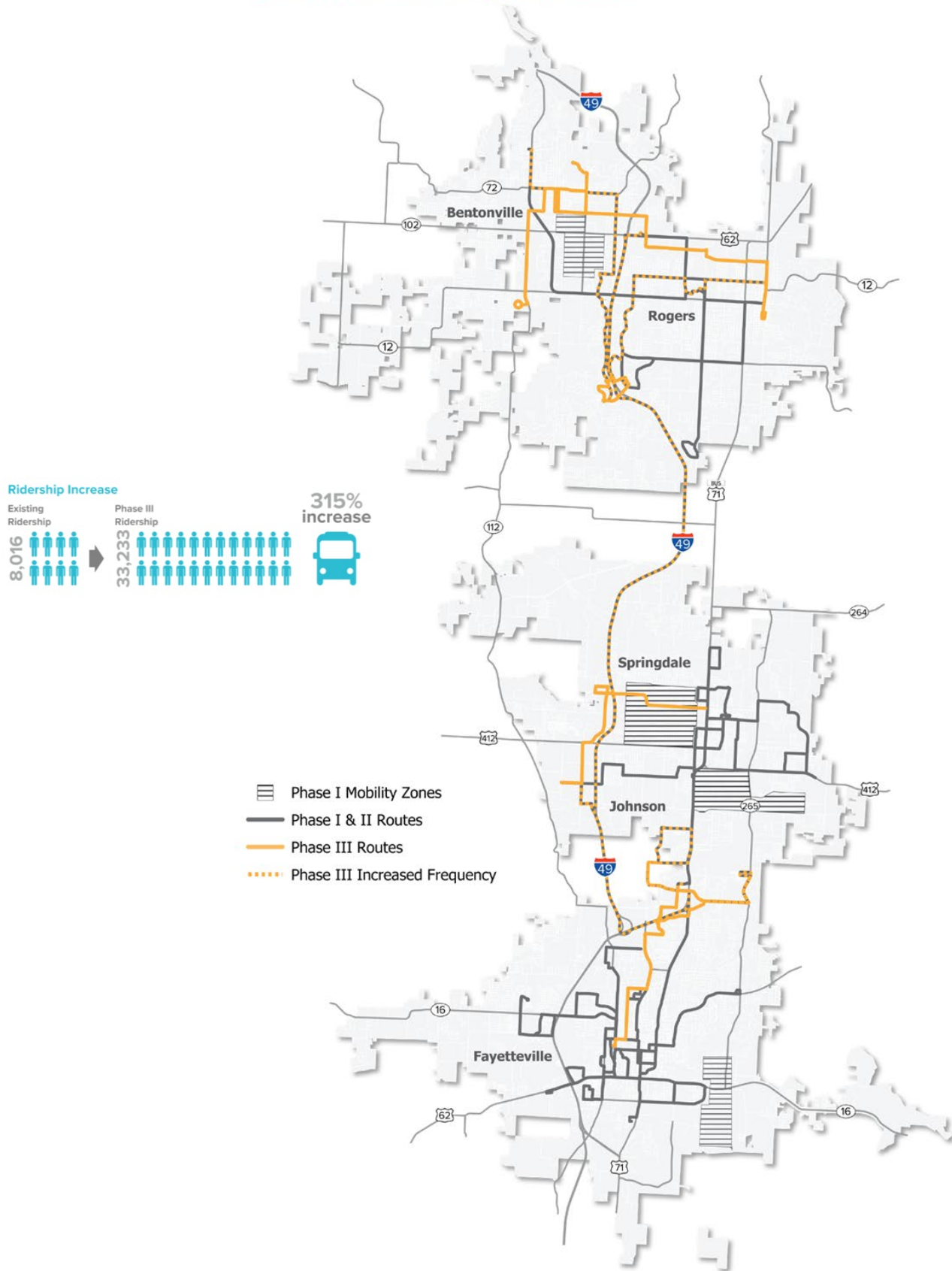
- › Phase I: 1 to 2 years
- › Phase II: 2 to 5 years
- › Phase III: 5 to 10 years



Each phase is further prioritized to provide a more detailed structure for future implementation. Three main components informed the prioritization and ensured that the process supports the vision of this plan by connecting people and saving them time.

- **Transit Propensity:** Where will transit work? Transit propensity represents the sum of population and employment within a quarter mile route buffer of each route.
- **Transit Needs:** Who depends on Transit? Transit needs population represents the sum of Transit-Dependent Population and Target Transit Rider Population totals (refer to Chapter 2) found within the same quarter mile route buffer used to capture transit propensity.
- **Ridership:** How many people will be using the service on an average weekday? Ridership estimates were generated through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Simplified Trips On Project Software (STOPS) modeling, which compares ridership generated for base (existing routes) and future (implemented route recommendations) scenarios.

Connect NWA Full Implementation



TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

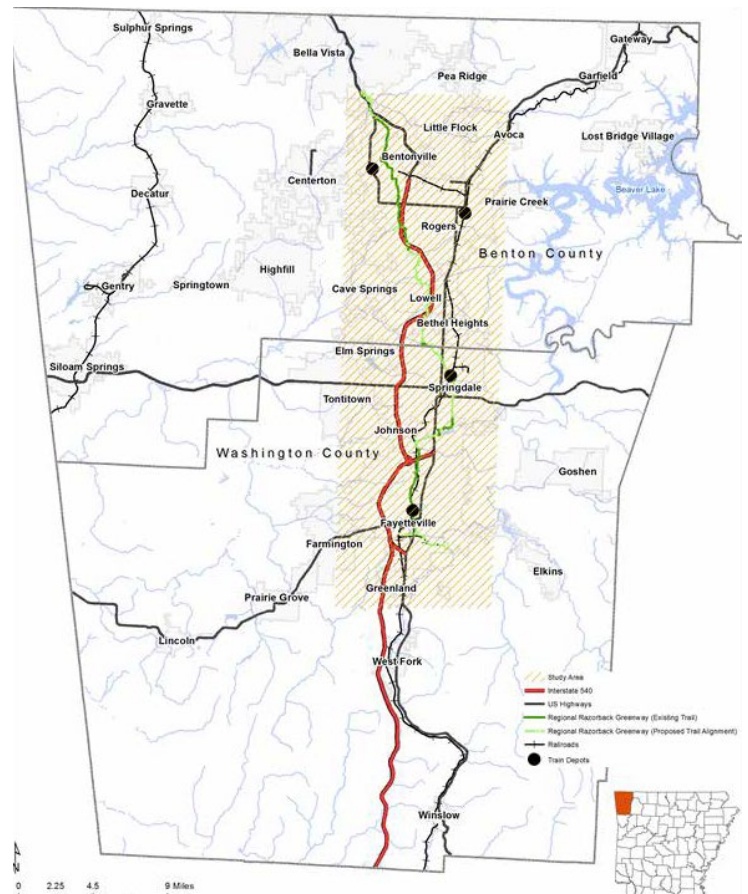
For more than a decade, various groups have promoted interest in a rail transit project that would serve the north-south corridor in Washington and Benton Counties in Northwest Arkansas. The advocacy efforts captured the interest of public officials and private individuals and interests. The concept has been studied or addressed in no fewer than seven planning studies and reports since 2004. These are:

1. The Potential for a NWA Regional Light Rail System. Beta Rubicon, 2004
2. Interstate 540 Improvement Study. Parsons Transportation Group, 2006
3. NWA Rail: Visioning Rail Transit in Northwest Arkansas. UA Community Design Center, 2007
4. Northwest Arkansas Razorback Regional Greenway TIGER II Grant Application. NWARPC, 2010
5. Northwest Arkansas Transit Development Plan. Connetics, 2010
6. Northwest Arkansas Western Beltway Feasibility Study. Parsons Brinkerhoff, 2011
7. Northwest Arkansas Regional Development Strategy. Market Street, 2011

NWARPC responded to the widespread interest by obtaining special Federal funding to conduct an Alternatives Analysis Study in the 40-mile north-south urban corridor. To the greatest extent possible, the Study approach followed the planning guidelines of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), especially those that apply to New Starts and Major Capital Investment funding.

A significant difference between the Federal planning guidelines and previous studies is that the Alternatives Analysis Study approach required a location-neutral and mode-neutral examination of the options within the broad category of fixed-guideway transit. The selection of alternative locations and the modal (vehicle) technologies were studied and included a review and discussion regarding a common misconception that light rail vehicles can operate on freight rail lines. In the current regulatory environment in the U.S. this alternative is not permitted.

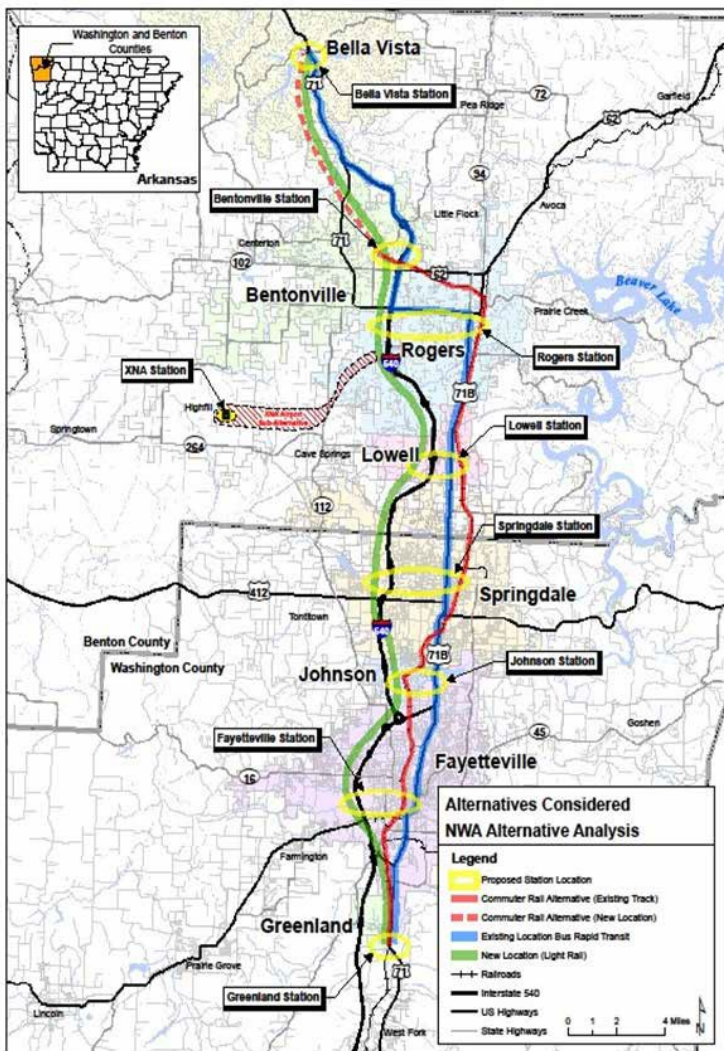
The Study was completed in fall 2014 and NWARPC accepted the final Alternatives Analysis Study (Map 11.1). The NWARPC members accepted the Alternatives Analysis Study with the understanding that none of the alternatives considered are financially feasible at this time based on low ridership forecasts, high capital costs, and not meeting the FTA threshold to receive Federal funding. The NWARPC also considered the “Path Forward” to focus on a potential future commuter rail corridor following the Arkansas and Missouri (A&M) Railroad as having the most potential for a future fixed-guideway system. The alternatives studied were Light Rail (new location in I-49 corridor), Commuter Rail (in A&M Railroad Corridor), and Bus Rapid Transit on Hwy. 71B.



Map 11.1 – Alternatives Analysis Study Area

Key Findings:

- Alternatives studied are not financially feasible. None of the alternatives considered are financially feasible at this time based on low ridership forecasts, high capital costs, and not meeting the FTA threshold to receive Federal funding.
- High Capital Costs. New location Light Rail: \$2.286 billion; Commuter Rail: \$664.0 million; Bus Rapid Transit: \$97.8 million.
- Low Ridership Forecast. New location Light Rail: 356 daily riders; Commuter Rail: 1,368 daily riders; Bus Rapid Transit: 378 daily riders.
- New “double track” is recommended for Commuter Rail within the A&M Corridor. Light rail vehicles cannot operate on active freight rail lines. However, more modern, higher performing, and quieter commuter vehicles such as diesel multiple units (DMU’s) are a possible alternative adjacent to freight rail lines on new track (double track).
- The Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) is the Commuter Rail on the right-of-way of the A&M Railroad, along with a new location segment from Bentonville to Bella Vista.



Map 11.2 - Alternatives Considered in the Alternatives Analysis Study

The Study pointed out that without a transit component included in the NWARPC Travel Demand Model, the Study was restricted in modeling transit ridership. NWARPC worked throughout the 2015 year to update the travel demand model to include the transit component into the model in order to meet recommendations of incorporating new transit modes (Map 11.2).

The Path Forward:

- Enhance and support existing and emerging transit markets. Northwest Arkansas communities should work with NWARPC to improve the region’s existing public transit service and to get “Transit Ready.”
 - Plan for complete, comprehensive, and coordinated transit service (existing and potential new modes). Whether Federal funding is sought or not, a successful fixed guideway project must be developed side by side with a sound bus service expansion plan.
 - Promote transit-supportive development policies. Transit-supportive development policies may go a long way toward making a project eligible for Federal funding for New Starts projects. Even if Federal funds are not received or not sought, the affected municipalities in NWA should work to enhance and develop a comprehensive set of zoning and public finance policies to promote walkable, sustainable neighborhoods in the corridor.
- The complete report including the technical memorandum may be found [at this link](#).