Five-Year Transit System Plan for 2020-2025

Prairie Five RIDES
Southwest Region

Prepared for:
Prairie Five RIDES

September 2019

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Acronyms

ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AVL	Automatic Vehicle Location
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GMTIP	Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan
GTFS	General Transit Feed Specification
LEHD	Longitudinal Employer-Households Dataset
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
M,T,W,R,F	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
MnDOT	Minnesota Department of Transportation
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MPTA	Minnesota Public Transit Association
MVLST	Motor Vehicle Lease Sales Tax
MVST	Motor Vehicle Sales Tax
NTD	National Transit Database
OTAT	Office of Transit and Active Transportation
RDO	Regional Development Organization
TAC	Transportation Advisory Committee
TCRP	Transit Cooperative Research Program
U.S.C.	United States Code
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation

Glossary

Access: The opportunity to reach a given destination within a certain timeframe or without significant physical, social, or economic barriers.

Accessible Vehicle: A public transportation vehicle that does not restrict access, is usable, and provides allocated space and/or priority seating for individuals who use mobility devices.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in July 1991, gave direction to local transit agencies to ensure full access to transportation for persons with disabilities.

Capital Cost: The cost of equipment and facilities required to support transportation systems, including vehicles, radios, shelters, software, etc.

Central Transfer Point: A central meeting place where routes or zonal demand-responsive buses intersect so that passengers may transfer. Routes are often timed to facilitate transferring and depart once passengers have had time to transfer. When all routes arrive and depart at the same time, the system is called a pulse system. The central transfer point simplifies transfers when there are many routes (particularly radial routes), several different modes, and/or paratransit zones. A downtown retail area is often an appropriate site for a central transfer point, as it is likely to be a popular destination, a place of traffic congestion and limited parking, and a place where riders are likely to feel safe waiting for the next bus. Strategic placement of the transfer point can attract riders to the system and may provide an opportunity for joint marketing promotions with local merchants.

Circulator: A bus that makes frequent trips around a small geographic area with numerous stops around the route. It is typically operated in a downtown area or area attracting tourists, where parking is limited, roads are congested, and trip generators are spread around the area. It may be operated all-day or only at times of peak demand, such as rush hour or lunchtime.

Commuter Bus Service: Transportation designed for daily, round-trip service, which accommodates a typical 8-hour, daytime work shift (e.g., an outbound trip arriving at an employment center by 8 a.m., with the return trip departing after 5 p.m.).

Coordination: Coordination means pooling the transportation resources and activities of several agencies. The owners of transportation assets talk to each other to find ways to mutually benefit their agencies and their customers. Coordination models can range in scope from sharing information, to sharing equipment and facilities, to integrated scheduling and dispatching of services, to the provision of services by only one transportation provider (with other former providers now purchasing services). Coordination may involve human service agencies working with each other or with public transit operations.

Dedicated Funding Source: A funding source that, by law, is available for use only to support a specific purpose and cannot be diverted to other uses (e.g., the federal gasoline tax can only be used for highway investments and, since 1983, for transit capital projects).

Demand-Responsive Service: Service to individuals that is activated based on passenger requests. Usually passengers call the scheduler or dispatcher and request rides for dates and times. A trip is scheduled for that passenger, which may be canceled by the passenger. Usually involves curb-to-curb or door-to-door service. Trips may be scheduled on an advanced reservation basis or in “real-time.” Usually smaller vehicles are used to provide demand responsive service. This type of service usually provides the highest level of service to the passenger but is the most expensive for the transit system to operate in terms of cost per trip. In rural areas with relatively high populations of elderly persons and persons with disabilities,

demand-responsive service is sometimes the most appropriate type of service. Sub-options within this service type are discussed in order of least structured to most structured, in terms of routing and scheduling.

- **Pure Demand-Responsive Service**: Drivers pick up and drop off passengers at any point in the service area, based on instructions from the dispatcher. In pure demand-responsive systems, the dispatcher combines immediate requests, reservations, and subscription service for the most efficient use of each driver's time.
- **Zonal Demand-Responsive Service**: The service area is divided into zones. Buses pick up and drop off passengers only within the assigned zone. When the drop off is in another zone, the dispatcher chooses a meeting point at the zone boundary for passenger transfer or a central transfer is used. This system ensures that a vehicle will always be within each zone when rides are requested.
- **Flexibly Routed and Scheduled Services**: Flexibly routed and scheduled services have some characteristics of both fixed route and demand-responsive services. In areas where demand for travel follows certain patterns routinely, but the demand for these patterns is not high enough to warrant a fixed route, service options such as checkpoint service, point deviation, route deviation, service routes, or subscription service might be the answer. These are all examples of flexible routing and schedules, and each may help the transit system make its demand-responsive services more efficient while still maintaining much of the flexibility of demand responsiveness.

Dial-A-Ride Service: A name that is commonly used for demand-responsive service. It is helpful in marketing the service to the community, as the meaning of "dial-a-ride" may be more self-explanatory than "demand-responsive" to someone unfamiliar with transportation terms.

Express Bus Service: Express bus service characteristics include direct service from a limited number of origins to a limited number of destinations with no intermediate stops. Typically, express bus service is fixed route/fixed schedule and is used for longer distance commuter trips. The term may also refer to a bus that makes a limited number of stops while a local bus makes many stops along the same route but as a result takes much longer.

Farebox Recovery Ratio: The percentage of operating costs covered by revenue from fares and contract revenue (total fare revenue and total contract revenue divided by the total operating cost).

Fares: Revenue from cash, tickets, and pass receipts given by passengers as payment for public transit rides.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA): An operating administration within the United States Department of Transportation that administers federal programs and provides financial assistance to public transit.

Feeder Service: Local transportation service that provides passengers with connections to a longer-distance transportation service. Like connector service, feeder service is service in which a transfer to or from another transit system, such as an intercity bus route, is the focal point or primary destination.

Fixed Route: Transportation service operated over a set route or network of routes on a regular time schedule.

Goal: A community's statement of values for what it wants to achieve.

Headway: The length of time between vehicles moving in the same direction on a route. Headways are called short if the time between vehicles is short and long if the time between

them is long. When headways are short, the service is said to be operating at a high frequency; if headways are long, service is operating at a low frequency.

Intercity Bus Service: Regularly scheduled bus service for the public that operates with limited stops over fixed routes connecting two or more urban areas not near, that has the capacity for transporting baggage carried by passengers, and that makes meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points, if such service is available. Intercity bus service may include local and regional feeder services, if those services are designed expressly to connect to the broader intercity bus network.

MAP-21: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, signed into law in July 2012. MAP-21 established surface transportation funding programs for federal fiscal years 2013 and 2014.

Measure: A basis for comparison, or a reference point against which other factors can be evaluated.

Motor Vehicle Sales Tax: A source of revenue for Minnesota public transit. The percentages of this revenue source designated for metropolitan area and Greater Minnesota transit are defined in Minn. Stat. 297B.09.

Operating Expenditures: The recurring costs of providing transit service (e.g., wages, salaries, fuel, oil, taxes, maintenance, insurance, marketing, etc.).

Operating Revenue: The total revenue earned by a transit agency through its transit operations. It includes passenger fares, advertising, and other revenues.

Paratransit Service: "Paratransit" means the transportation of passengers by motor vehicle or other means of conveyance by persons operating on a regular and continuing basis and the transportation or delivery of packages in conjunction with an operation having the transportation of passengers as its primary and predominant purpose and activity but excluding regular route transit. "Paratransit" includes transportation by car pool and commuter van, point deviation and route deviation services, shared-ride taxi service, dial-a-ride service, and other similar services.

Passenger Trip (Unlinked): Typically, one passenger trip is recorded any time a passenger boards a transportation vehicle or other conveyance used to provide transportation. “Unlinked” means that one trip is recorded each time a passenger boards a vehicle, no matter how many vehicles that passenger uses to travel from their origin to their destination.

Performance Indicator: An indicator is a metric that provides meaningful information about the condition or performance of the transportation system but is neither managed to nor used to evaluate the effectiveness of policies, strategies, or investments.

Performance Measure: A performance measure is a metric that measures progress toward a goal, outcome, or objective. This definition covers metrics used to make decisions or evaluate the effectiveness or adequacy of a policy, strategy, or investment.

Performance Target: A target is a specific performance level representing the achievement of a goal, outcome, or objective.

Point Deviation Service: A type of flexible route transit service in which fixed scheduled stops (points) are established but the vehicle may follow any route needed to pick up individuals along the way if the vehicle can make it to the fixed points on schedule. This type of service usually provides access to a broader geographic area than does fixed route service but is not as flexible in scheduling options as demand-responsive service. It is appropriate when riders change from day to day but the same few destinations are consistently in demand. Also sometimes called checkpoint service.

Public Transportation: Transportation service that is available to any person upon payment of the fare either directly, subsidized by public policy, or through some contractual arrangement, and that cannot be reserved for the private or exclusive use of one individual or group. “Public” in this sense refers to the access to the service, not to the ownership of the system that provides the service.

Revenue Hours: The number of transit vehicle hours when passengers are being transported. Calculated by taking the total time when a vehicle is available to the public with the expectation of carrying passengers. Excludes deadhead hours, when buses are positioning but not carrying passengers, but includes recovery/layover time.

Ridership: The total of all unlinked passenger trips including transfers.

Ridesharing: A form of transportation, other than public transit, in which more than one person shares the use of a vehicle, such as a van or car, to make a trip. Variations include carpooling or vanpooling.

Route Deviation Service: Transit buses travel along a predetermined alignment or path with scheduled time points at each terminal point and in some instances at key intermediate locations. Route deviation service is different than conventional fixed route bus service in that the vehicle may leave the route upon requests of passengers to be picked up or returned to destinations near the route. Following an off-route deviation, the vehicle typically returns to the point at which it left the route. Passengers may call in advance for route deviation or may access the system at predetermined route stops. The limited geographic area within which the vehicle may travel off the route is known as the route deviation corridor.

Section 5304 (State Transportation and Planning Program): The section of the Federal Transit Act of 1991, as amended, that provides financial assistance to the states for purposes of planning, technical studies and assistance, demonstrations, management training, and cooperative research activities.

Section 5307 (Urbanized Area Formula Program): The section of the Federal Transit Act of 1991, as amended, that authorizes grants to public transit systems in urban areas with populations of more than 50,000 for both capital and operating projects. Based on population and density figures, these funds are distributed directly to the transit agency from the FTA.

Section 5310 (Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Persons with Disability): The section of the Federal Transit Act of 1991, as amended, that provides grant funds for the purchase of accessible vehicles and related support equipment for private non-profit organizations to serve elderly and/or disabled people, public bodies that coordinate services for elderly and disabled, or any public body that certifies to the state that non-profits in the area are not readily available to carry out the services.

Section 5311 (Non-urbanized Area Formula Program): The section of the Federal Transit Act of 1991, as amended, that authorizes grants to public transit systems in non-urbanized areas (fewer than 50,000 population). The funds initially go to the governor of each state. In Minnesota, MnDOT administers these funds.

Service Area: The geographic area that coincides with a transit system’s legal operating limits (e.g., city limits, county boundary, etc.).

Service Gaps: Service gaps can occur when certain geographic segments cannot be covered by transportation services. This term can also refer to instances where service delivery is not available to a certain group of riders, or at a specific time.

Service Span: The duration of time that service is made available or operated during the service day (e.g., 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.).

Standard: A recommendation that leads or directs a course of action to achieve a certain goal. A standard is the expected outcome for the measure that will allow a service to be evaluated. There are two sets of transit standards.

- **Service design and operating standards**: Guidelines for the design of new and improved services and the operation of the transit system.
- **Service performance standards**: The evaluation of the performance of the existing transit system and of alternative service improvements using performance measures.

Total Operating Cost: The total of all operating costs incurred during the transit system calendar year, excluding expenses associated with capital grants.

Transfer: Passengers arrive on one bus and leave on another (totally separate) bus to continue their trip. The boarding of the second vehicle is counted as an unlinked passenger trip.

Transit Dependent: A description for a population or person who does not have immediate access to a private vehicle, or because of age or health reasons cannot drive and must rely on others for transportation.

Transit Subsidy: The operating costs not covered by revenue from fares or contracts.

Transit: Transportation by bus, rail, or other conveyance, either publicly or privately owned, that provides general or special service on a regular and continuing basis. The term includes fixed route and paratransit services as well as ridesharing. Also known as mass transportation, mass transit, or public transit.

Trip Denial: A trip denial occurs when a trip is requested by a passenger, but the transportation provider cannot provide the service. Trip denial may happen because capacity is not available at the requested time. For ADA paratransit, a capacity denial is specifically defined as occurring if a trip cannot be accommodated within the negotiated pick-up window. Even if a trip is provided, if it is scheduled outside the +60/-60-minute window, it is considered a denial. If the passenger refused to accept a trip offered within the +60/-60-minute pick-up window, it is considered a refusal, not a capacity denial.

Volunteers: Volunteers are persons who offer services to others but do not accept monetary or material compensation for the services that they provide. In some volunteer programs, the volunteers are reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses; for example, volunteers who drive their own cars may receive reimbursement based on miles driven for the expenses that they are assumed to have incurred, such as gasoline, repair, and insurance expenses.

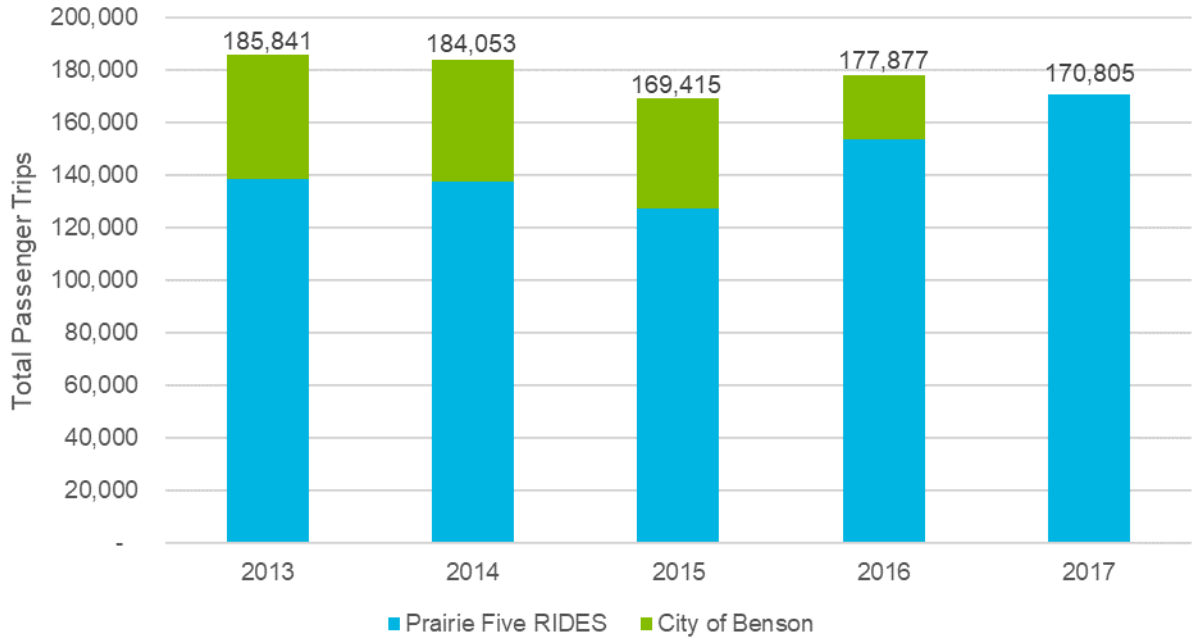
1. Executive Summary

Prairie Five RIDES operates demand response transit service throughout a five-county service area, including Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine Counties. Additionally, Prairie Five RIDES operates a regional demand response service, and demand response "City Bus" service in Appleton, Benson, Canby, Dawson, Madison, Montevideo, and Ortonville and up to 1 mile outside their city limits. Prairie Five RIDES is governed by the Community Action Council Board, which has multiple members representing the various counties served, including a County Commissioner from each county. In addition, Prairie Five RIDES receives guidance from a Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).

Prairie Five RIDES has undergone several mergers in the past, most recently with the City of Benson in 2016. Following discussions between the providers and MnDOT, Granite Falls Heartland Express will merge with Prairie Five RIDES effective April 1, 2020.

The span of service varies by service type, with demand response service throughout the five-county service area operating for 10 hours on weekdays. Regional demand response service operates spread out Monday through Friday with varying hours. Demand response City Bus service operates on weekdays for 10 to 11 hours. System-wide ridership has fluctuated since 2013, most recently decreasing by approximately 7,000 from 2016 to 2017, as shown on Figure 1. Historical ridership totals include both Prairie Five RIDES and the City of Benson's total passenger trips.

Figure 1. System-Wide Ridership (2013-2017)



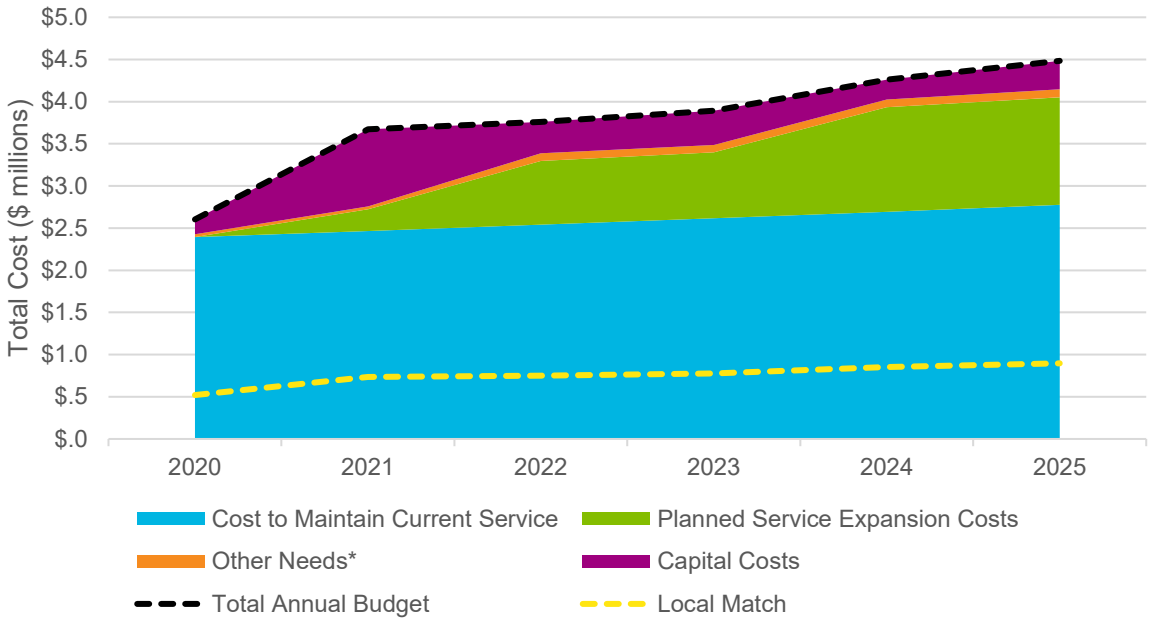
The project team for the Five-Year Transit System Plan met with staff and management from the agency and the agency Board of Directors three times in the fall and winter of 2018-2019 to discuss the agency's operating structure and environment, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. As a result of the meetings, agency needs were identified and prioritized for the five-year period, without fiscal constraints. This "unconstrained" needs list was developed to identify investments of all kinds that could enhance the agency's operational efficiency. Prairie

Five RIDES staff then prioritized needs to inform which strategic investments could be made to better meet the needs of the community. Figure 2 illustrates the needs designated as a high or medium priority by Prairie Five RIDES.

Figure 2. High and Medium Priority Unconstrained Needs List for Prairie Five RIDES

The project team developed capital and operating plans to lay out the costs of investing in improvements like service expansion, marketing and branding materials, and a new smartphone app between 2020 and 2025 to address the agency's needs. Figure 3 summarizes the costs of investing in these improvements, and the detailed plans are included as Appendix A.

Figure 3. 2020-2025 Plan, Local Revenue Requirements



**Non-Capital and Non-Service (maintenance, human resources, marketing, and safety and training staff positions)*

This five-year transit system plan is intended to inform agency decisions and investments between 2020 and 2025. It is considered a "living document" and providers are encouraged to update the plan as necessary to meet changing agency and community needs.

2. Why a Five-Year System Plan?

Transit systems in Greater Minnesota have been working in a rapidly changing environment with system mergers and increased demand for service along with new policies and funding situations. Despite significant growth in the amount of service available outside of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, transit in Greater Minnesota is not always recognized or understood by local officials and residents. To address the growing need for transit service in a way that is integrated and embraced by the community, a vision for the future of each transit system is critical. Without a plan, systems are put in the position of having to react in the moment to new circumstances and operate on a year to year basis without a longer-term vision to guide annual budgets and decision making.

Transit providers and MnDOT agree that individual five-year plans will help identify system-specific priorities based on themes from the Greater Minnesota Transit Investment Plan (GMTIP). Five-year plans will help systems better deliver service and work toward overall goals such as:

- Improving coordination of services to meet transportation needs;
- Increasing ridership/usage across the network;
- Ensuring fiscal responsibility as a transit funding agency;
- Anticipating and planning for future funding levels to achieve service expansion;
- Articulating and communicating a vision for the transit system and the benefits it provides to the community.

Plans are intended to help systems work with local government officials, local planning agencies, transit system board members, and other organizations to prepare for these changes. Transit agencies recognize the importance of involving local officials in planning activities to continue building local support for improving transit systems, including long-term commitment of local funds to leverage state and federal dollars.

The process for developing the five-year plans is guided by a consultant Project Manager, the Office of Transit and Active Transportation (OTAT) at MnDOT, and the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA). A Project Advisory Committee consisting of Transit Directors, staff from MPOs (Metropolitan Planning Organizations) and RDOs (Regional Development Organizations), local government officials, service organization representatives, and staff from MPTA and MnDOT is providing input and identifying key issues to be addressed by the plans.

Larger transit systems routinely develop and update five-year plans as do local governments when it comes to planning for future development. The Greater Minnesota Transit System five-year plans will allow all transit service to be incorporated into the larger transportation vision for communities as they plan for new economic development and a future with an aging population.

Policies established through the Olmstead Plan and Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) require communities to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. A statutory goal of meeting 90% of the need for transit service by 2025 in Greater Minnesota is also focusing more attention on exactly how to expand service around the state.

With a well-defined five-year plan, goals and ideas for improving transit service can be put into action with a clear blueprint for which routes to add or expand, specific hours of service to adjust, and how the funding can be identified to cover additional operating and capital expenses. The plans will also facilitate communication with the public and help raise awareness of how and where transit service is provided in the state, which will help encourage greater ridership.

The five-year plans are designed to be updated annually to meet changing needs and circumstances.

Transit service improves the livability and prosperity of communities across Greater Minnesota. The Five-Year Transit System Plan will bring all stakeholders together to develop a future vision that will guide the decisions that are made today.

3. Agency Overview

Prairie Five RIDES operates demand response transit service throughout a five-county service area, including Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine Counties. Additionally, Prairie Five RIDES operates demand response City Bus service in Appleton, Benson, Canby, Dawson, Madison, Montevideo, and Ortonville and up to 1 mile outside their city limits. Prairie Five RIDES also operates regional transit service, which is a demand response service for residents living in the five-county region; common destinations include the Twin Cities, Willmar, Marshall, and St. Cloud. As shown on Figure 4, the Prairie Five RIDES service area is in the southwestern area of the state on the South Dakota border. The service area is bisected by the Minnesota River and related water features, including Big Stone Lake, Marsh Lake, and Lac qui Parle.

3.1 Transit Agency Background

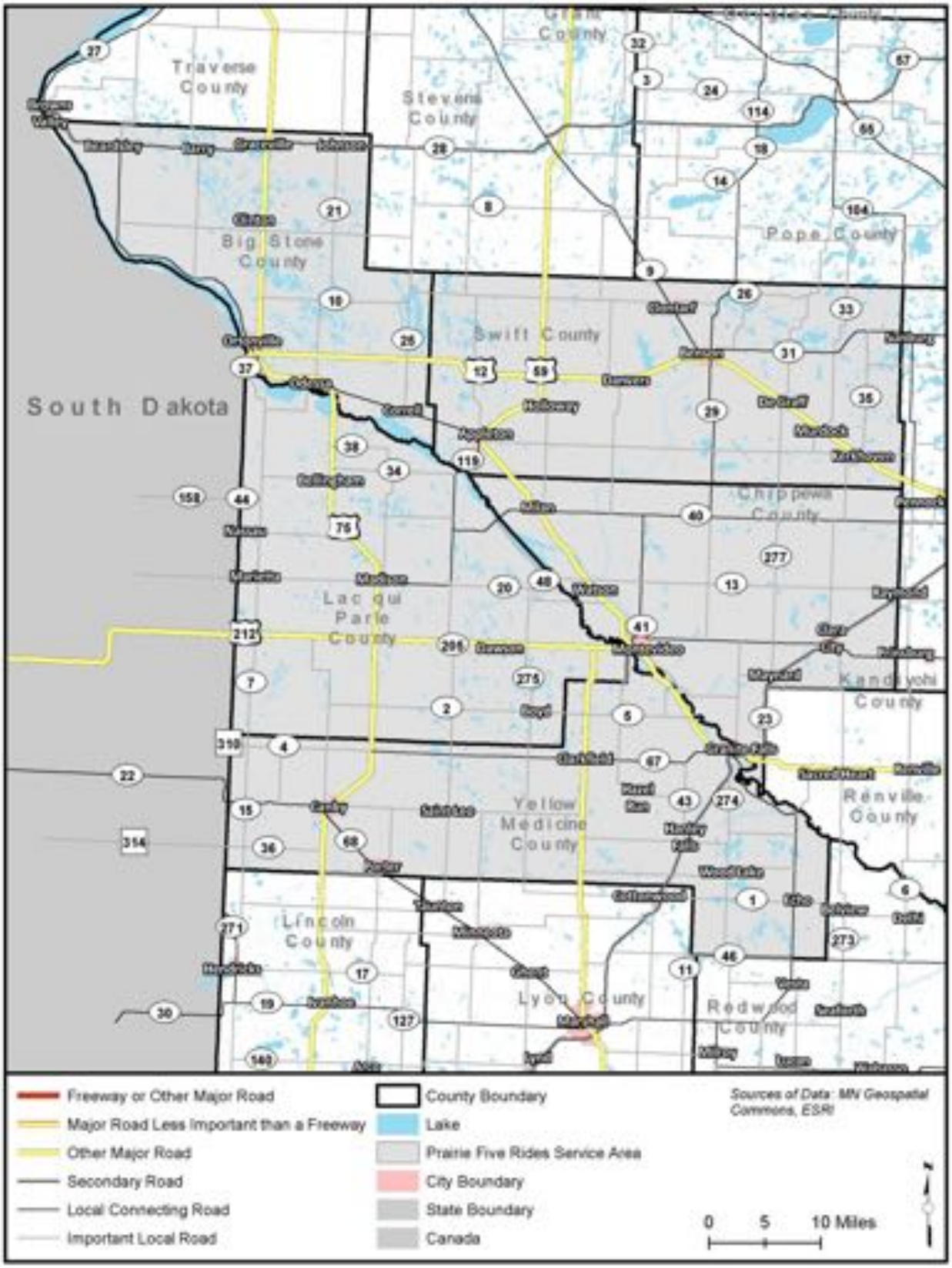
Prairie Five RIDES is part of the Prairie Five Community Action Council, Inc., non-profit organization. Prairie Five Community Action Council, Inc. was established in 1965. In 1989, Prairie Five RIDES was established as a senior volunteer driver program and has merged with several bus systems since its inception. In 1995, Prairie Five RIDES took over management of the City of Madison's bus system, followed by a merger with the City Bus systems of Appleton and Ortonville in 1999. Prairie Five RIDES merged again with the City of Canby's City Bus service in 2000, the City of Dawson's City Bus system in 2012, followed by a merger with Montevideo in 2013. The most recent merger was between Prairie Five RIDES and the City of Benson in 2016.

Following discussions between the providers and MnDOT, Granite Falls Heartland Express will merge with Prairie Five RIDES effective April 1, 2020. Prairie Five RIDES presently provides regional service to Granite Falls and coordinates with Granite Falls Heartland Express to accommodate contracted needs for city rides.

3.2 Governance

Prairie Five RIDES is governed by the Community Action Council Board, which has multiple members representing the various counties served, including a County Commissioner from each county. The TAC provides guidance to Prairie Five RIDES and meets quarterly or as needed. The TAC consists of 15 members representing each of the five counties, including providers, consumers, and agencies concerned with transit in the service area. TAC members are appointed by the Prairie Five RIDES Program Director.

Figure 4. Location Map



3.3 Mission

The mission of Prairie Five Community Action Council, Inc. is “working together to strengthen the quality of life in our communities.” The vision specific to the Prairie Five RIDES program is to “provide a safe, reliable ride to all passengers seeking transportation in our service area. Our program strives to provide expert transportation that our customers can depend on.”

3.4 Decision-Making Process

The Prairie Five RIDES Program Director reports to both the Executive Director of the Community Action Council, as well as the TAC, both of which are overseen by the Community Action Council Board of Directors (Figure 5). Prairie Five RIDES has the following key leadership positions that answer directly to the Program Director: Maintenance Supervisor, Regional Supervisor, and Program Assistant/Volunteer Coordinator. The Dispatch Supervisor answers to the Regional Supervisor. Likewise, the Dispatch Supervisor oversees the dispatchers. The Regional Supervisor oversees the Drivers, Dispatch Supervisor, and Area Coordinators. The Maintenance Supervisor oversees the Maintenance Assistant and the Transportation Liaison. The Program Assistant/Volunteer Coordinator oversees the Volunteer Drivers.

The decision-making process of Prairie Five RIDES begins with guidance from the TAC, with official decisions made by the Prairie Five Community Action Council Board. Among their various responsibilities, the TAC advises Prairie Five RIDES staff in developing the overall transportation program and related planning documents and operation and administration policy, as well as the identification of needs, issues, concerns, and recommendations of service changes. Any actions, recommendations, or proposals from quarterly TAC meetings are then submitted to the Prairie Five Community Action Council Board at their regularly scheduled meetings to be approved, modified, or rejected.

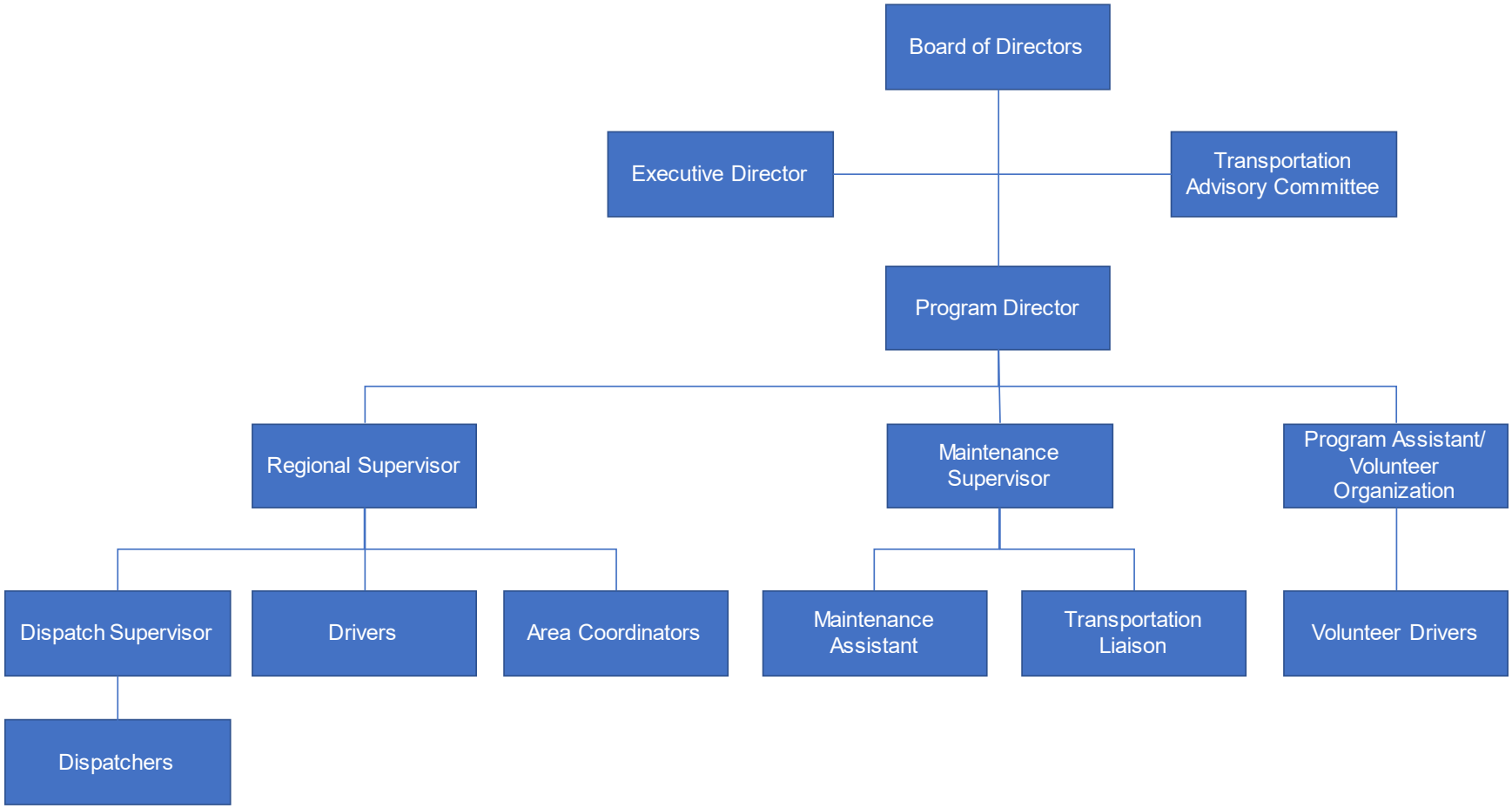
3.5 Service Area Overview

Prairie Five RIDES serves five counties in southwest Minnesota: Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine, as shown on Figure 4. Passengers within the five-county service area may travel throughout the State of Minnesota and to eastern North and South Dakota. Transportation is offered using buses, vans, and volunteer drivers within the State of Minnesota. Volunteer drivers provide transportation to eastern North and South Dakota. Prairie Five RIDES provides City Bus service within the cities of Appleton, Benson, Canby, Dawson, Madison, Montevideo, and Ortonville and up to 1 mile outside their city limits.

This section describes existing and projected socioeconomic characteristics of the area served by Prairie Five RIDES. Understanding the demographics can help explain changes in transit demand and support recommendations for changes in future transit service. Specifically, people living below the poverty level, households without vehicles, seniors, and disabled individuals typically rely on transit; changes in these demographics can provide insight into transit demand trends. The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) and Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program are the primary sources of demographic data used in this analysis and provide valuable indications of trends and projections.

As per the ACS 2016 estimates, and as shown in Table 1, the population of the Prairie Five RIDES service area is 43,661 people. Out of the five counties in the service area, Chippewa County has the highest population with 12,126, followed by Yellow Medicine County with 10,038, Swift County with 9,483, Lac qui Parle County with 6,916, and Big Stone County with 5,098. Table 2 through Table 6 list the demographics of the cities within each of the five counties.

Figure 5. Organizational Chart



Source: Prairie Five RIDES

Table 1. Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile

County	Population	Jobs	Median Household Income	% People Living Below the Poverty Level	Households without Vehicles	% Seniors	% Disabled
Service Area	43,661	16,450	$53,427	11.0%	5.2%	21.7%	13.8%
Big Stone County	5,098	1,532	$47,132	11.3%	9.1%	25.6%	16.2%
Chippewa County	12,126	5,381	$54,041	10.8%	4.0%	19.9%	13.5%
Lac qui Parle County	6,916	2,077	$49,210	8.5%	4.0%	24.8%	14.7%
Swift County	9,483	3,546	$49,956	12.4%	5.9%	21.1%	14.1%
Yellow Medicine County	10,038	3,914	$54,717	11.3%	4.6%	20.2%	12.2%
Minnesota	5,450,868	2,557,046	$63,217	10.8%	7.0%	14.3%	10.6%

Source: US Census Bureau ACS 2016, LEHD 2015 Jobs

Table 2. Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile by Community: Big Stone County

County	Community (Place)	Population	Jobs	Median Household Income	% People Living Below the Poverty Level	Households without Vehicles	% Seniors	% Disabled
Big Stone County		5,098	1,532	$47,132	11.3%	9.1%	25.6%	16.2%
	Beardsley	180	15	$29,375	11.7%	14.0%	16.1%	17.2%
	Clinton	401	160	$31,786	8.5%	16.0%	23.7%	20.4%
	Correll	40	0	$36,250	13.5%	0.0%	25.0%	20.0%
	Graceville	647	155	$57,083	4.6%	8.2%	36.3%	17.0%
	Odessa	184	0	$52,500	15.7%	16.3%	19.6%	15.8%
	Ortonville	1,930	1,038	$40,101	12.8%	12.0%	27.9%	18.0%

Source: US Census Bureau ACS 2016, LEHD 2015 Jobs

Table 3. Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile by Community: Chippewa County

County	Community (Place)	Population	Jobs	Median Household Income	% People Living Below the Poverty Level	Households without Vehicles	% Seniors	% Disabled
Chippewa County		12,126	5,381	$54,041	10.8%	4.0%	19.9%	13.5%
	Clara City	1,412	521	$53,750	9.3%	4.6%	23.4%	10.9%
	Maynard	351	117	$54,464	14.9%	5.1%	11.7%	13.7%
	Milan	362	18	$40,469	24.0%	4.8%	15.2%	15.7%
	Montevideo	5,207	3,455	$47,049	12.5%	5.0%	23.1%	17.0%
	Watson	190	6	$48,750	5.3%	1.3%	12.1%	7.9%

Source: US Census Bureau ACS 2016, LEHD 2015 Jobs

Table 4. Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile by Community: Lac qui Parle County

County	Community (Place)	Population	Jobs	Median Household Income	% People Living Below the Poverty Level	Households without Vehicles	% Seniors	% Disabled
Lac qui Parle County		6,916	2,077	$49,210	8.5%	4.0%	24.8%	14.7%
	Bellingham	171	2	$49,688	6.4%	2.4%	31.0%	22.8%
	Boyd	112	12	$36,250	14.3%	6.5%	15.2%	23.2%
	Dawson	1,627	793	$41,591	10.6%	3.2%	25.4%	18.3%
	Madison	1,567	609	$41,019	12.2%	9.5%	33.2%	18.1%
	Marietta	153	57	$28,409	19.6%	2.3%	37.9%	20.9%
	Nassau	57	14	$55,625	17.5%	0.0%	8.8%	15.8%

Source: US Census Bureau ACS 2016, LEHD 2015 Jobs

Table 5. Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile by Community: Swift County

County	Community (Place)	Population	Jobs	Median Household Income	% People Living Below the Poverty Level	Households without Vehicles	% Seniors	% Disabled
Swift County		9,483	3,546	$49,956	12.4%	5.9%	21.1%	14.1%
	Appleton	1,495	570	$34,102	20.6%	7.8%	24.9%	19.4%
	Benson	3,130	1,602	$42,875	16.9%	10.3%	22.8%	16.1%
	Clontarf	136	35	$68,750	0.7%	6.3%	15.4%	11.0%
	Danvers	141	26	$59,531	18.4%	3.8%	9.9%	12.1%
	De Graff	168	14	$46,250	22.0%	3.0%	11.3%	19.6%
	Kerkhoven	761	153	$44,779	7.1%	3.5%	18.9%	12.5%
	Murdock	308	153	$44,276	14.3%	3.1%	12.0%	8.1%

Source: US Census Bureau ACS 2016, LEHD 2015 Jobs

Table 6. Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile by Community: Yellow Medicine County

County	Community (Place)	Population	Jobs	Median Household Income	% People Living Below the Poverty Level	Households without Vehicles	% Seniors	% Disabled
Yellow Medicine County		10,038	3,914	$54,717	11.3%	4.6%	20.2%	12.2%
	Canby	1,663	997	$42,708	14.4%	7.4%	30.1%	18.9%
	Clarkfield	882	208	$44,375	13.0%	8.3%	24.9%	12.5%
	Echo	275	38	$51,458	21.1%	1.8%	13.8%	15.0%
	Granite Falls	2,557	1,790	$47,500	14.7%	7.5%	22.8%	15.4%
	Hanley Falls	410	40	$56,625	4.8%	0.7%	7.3%	12.7%
	Hazel Run	28	4	$27,500	0.0%	6.3%	60.7%	35.7%
	Porter	202	70	$50,313	11.9%	2.4%	20.8%	15.8%
	St. Leo	91	18	$53,750	8.8%	2.1%	35.2%	14.3%

Source: US Census Bureau ACS 2016, LEHD 2015 Jobs

Historically, the total population of the service area has generally decreased over time. In 1960, the population of Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine Counties was 69,063, decreasing to its current estimated level (i.e., a 37% decrease over half a century).[1] The population forecasts for the service area indicate that the future population is expected to continue to decline to 37,952 by 2050 (i.e., a 13% decrease over 34 years).[2]

The proportion of seniors in the service area is over 7% higher than the proportion of seniors statewide, which will only grow as the Baby Boomer generation ages. According to the Minnesota State Demographic Center, the senior population of the service area is expected to increase until 2030, and then slightly decrease by 2050, for a net decrease of 4%. By 2050, around 24% of the service area population will be over 65 years old.[3] The high proportion of seniors may entail an increase in demand for senior housing and healthcare needs across the service area.

As can be seen on Figure 6, the population of the service area is concentrated in and around several municipalities and along the corridors defined by U.S. Routes 12 and 212.

Figure 7 illustrates that poverty is concentrated in northwestern Big Stone County and areas in and around Montevideo and Granite Falls, with additional (but less intense) concentrations in western Chippewa County, central and southeastern Swift County, and southeastern Yellow Medicine County.

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census and Population Estimates, retrieved from Minnesota Compass demographic tool.
[2] Minnesota State Demographic Center: March 2017 Total Population Projections by County.
[3] Minnesota State Demographic Center: March 2017 Age and Sex Projections by County.

Figure 6. Population Density

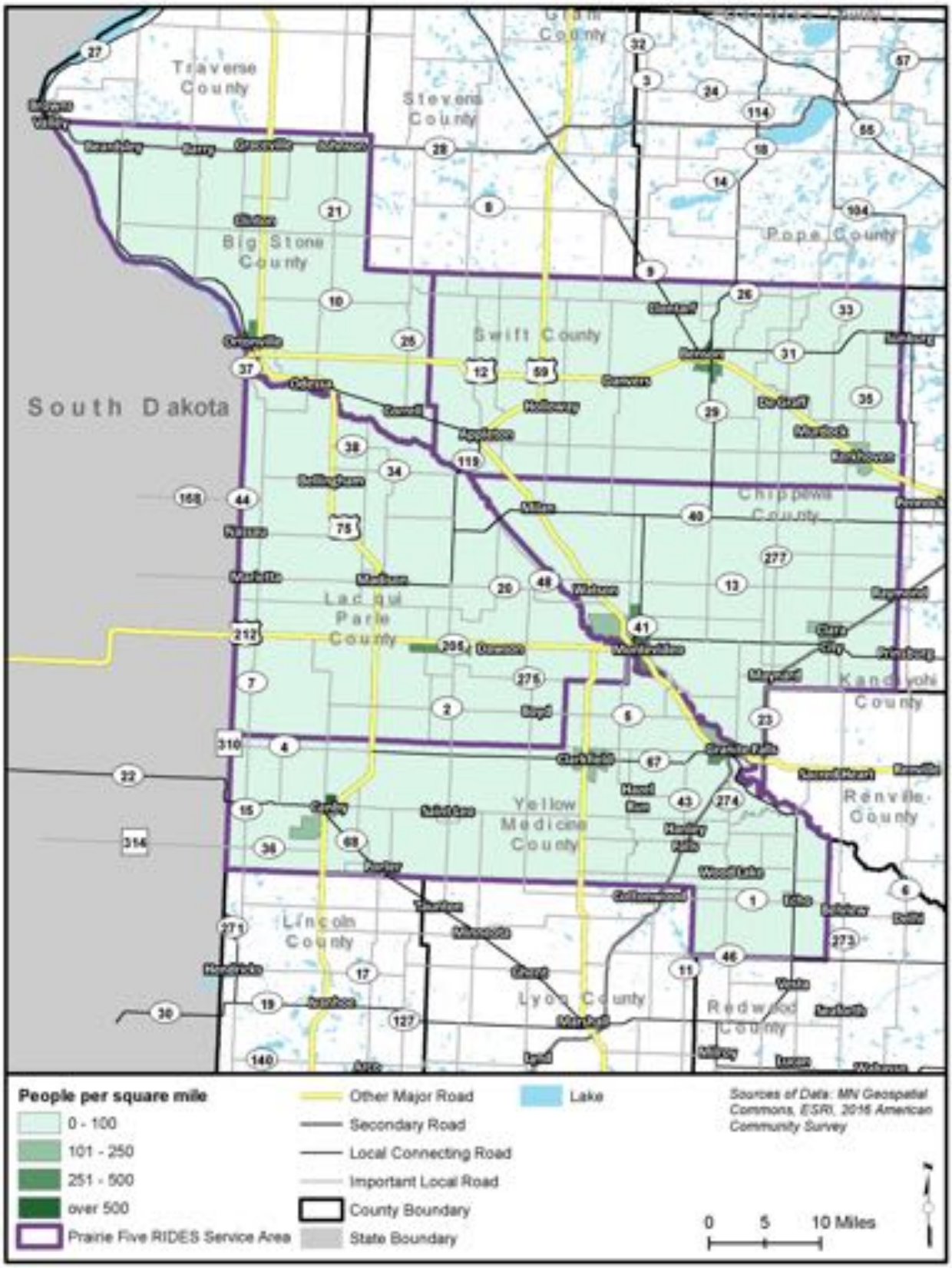


Figure 7. Persons Living Below the Poverty Level

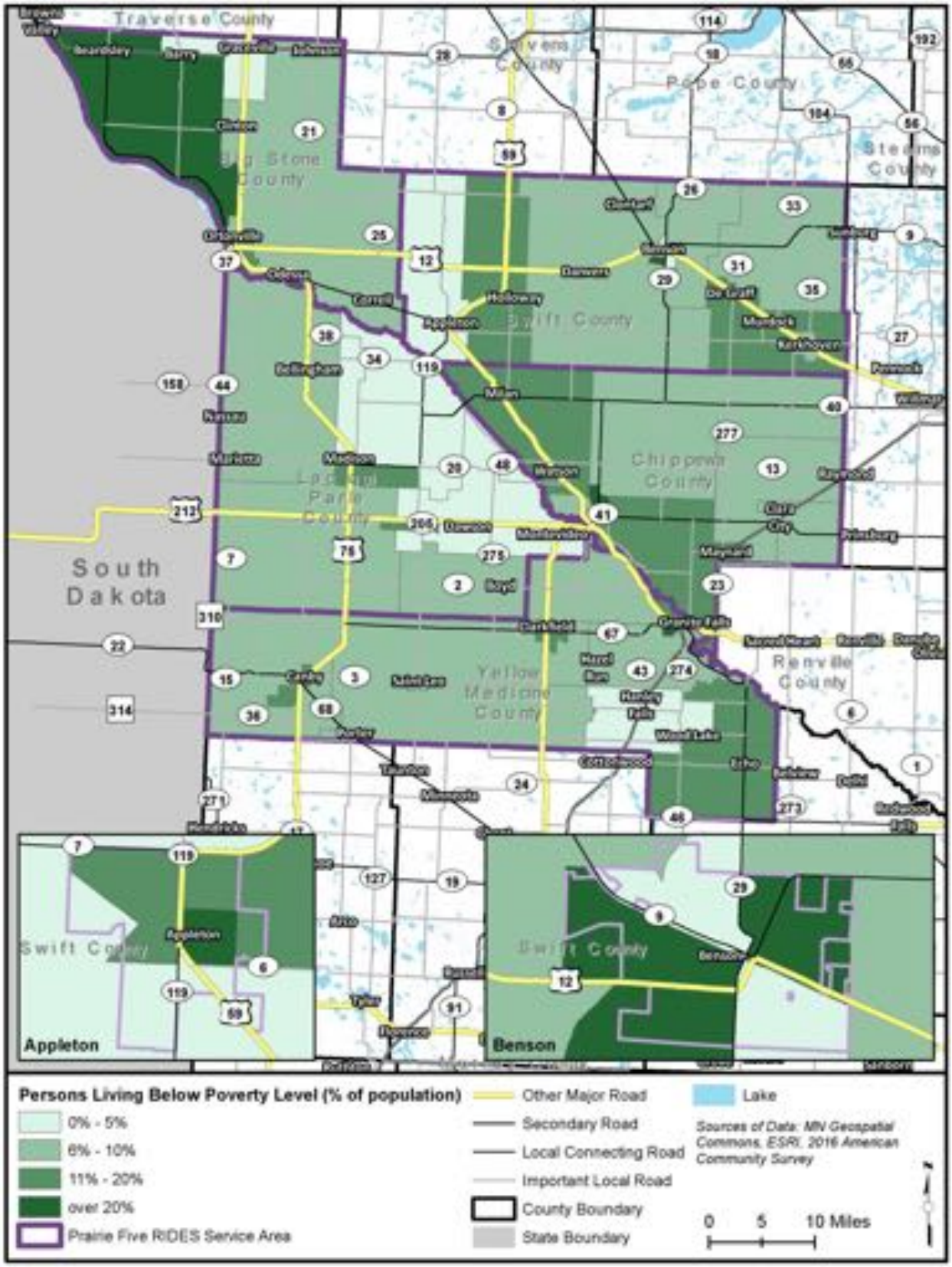


Figure 8 illustrates that households with no vehicles available are concentrated in and around Ortonville and Benson, and throughout Big Stone County.

Figure 9 illustrates the “economic health” of the various portions of the service area, an index that is based on the average number of employers, the trend in number of employers, the adult labor participation rate, and the population change from 2010 to 2016. The only portions of the service area indicating a “Very Low” economic health are located in northwestern Big Stone County and east-central Yellow Medicine County.

Figure 10 shows the “transit vulnerability” of the residents of the service area, an index that is based on the percentage of the population with a disability, a certain level of median household income, percentage of workers without access to a vehicle, and percentage of limited English speaking households. The only portions of the service area indicating a “Very High” transit vulnerability index are located in northwestern Chippewa County, specifically north of Watson.

Figure 11 illustrates that most jobs in the service area are concentrated in areas in and around the municipalities of Montevideo, Benson, Canby, Granite Falls, and Ortonville.

Figure 12 illustrates where residents of the service area travel for work, with the most significant patterns apparent within Chippewa County, followed by Yellow Medicine and Swift Counties. On a regional scale, travel patterns from the service area trend eastward toward Kandiyohi and Hennepin Counties and southward toward Lyon County. Table 7 displays the work destinations by county for each of the five counties in the service area.

Table 7. Prairie Five RIDES Service Area Travel Patterns by County

From → To ↓	Big Stone	Chippewa	Lac qui Parle	Swift	Yellow Medicine
Big Stone	955	1	79	21	7
Chippewa	41	3,084	409	184	459
Lac qui Parle	46	108	1,488	122	84
Swift	63	132	81	2,311	13
Yellow Medicine	3	553	140	18	2,077
Hennepin	55	113	54	102	88
Kandiyohi	35	641	114	365	104
Lyon	4	148	65	5	798

Source: LEHD 2015

Figure 13 shows the major trip generators spread throughout the service area, which include Chippewa County Montevideo Hospital, the Minnesota Workforce Center in Montevideo, Minnesota West Community and Technical College campuses in Granite Falls and Canby, and various clinics, nursing homes, and schools throughout the service area.

Figure 8. Zero-Vehicle Households

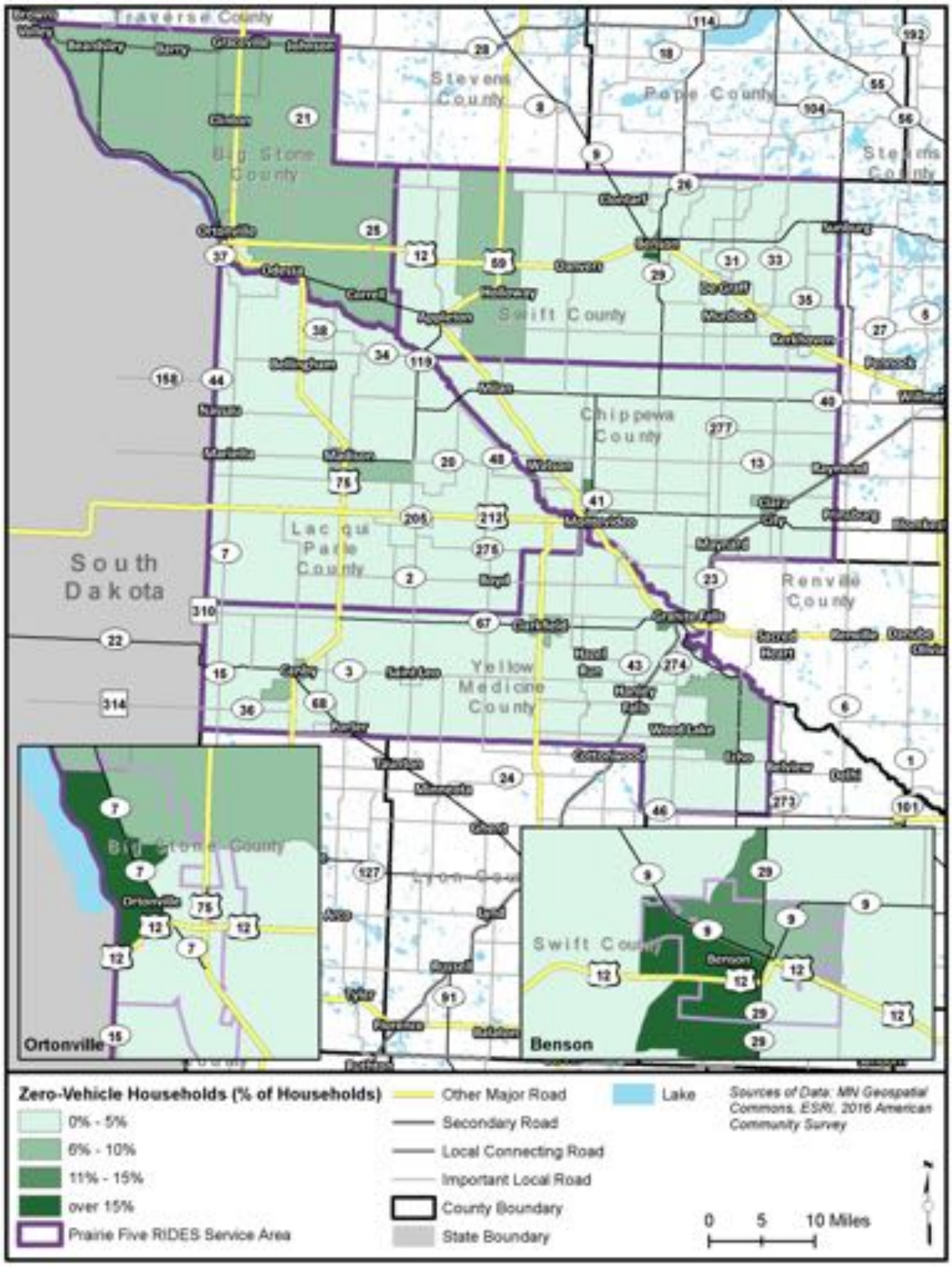


Figure 9. Economic Health Index

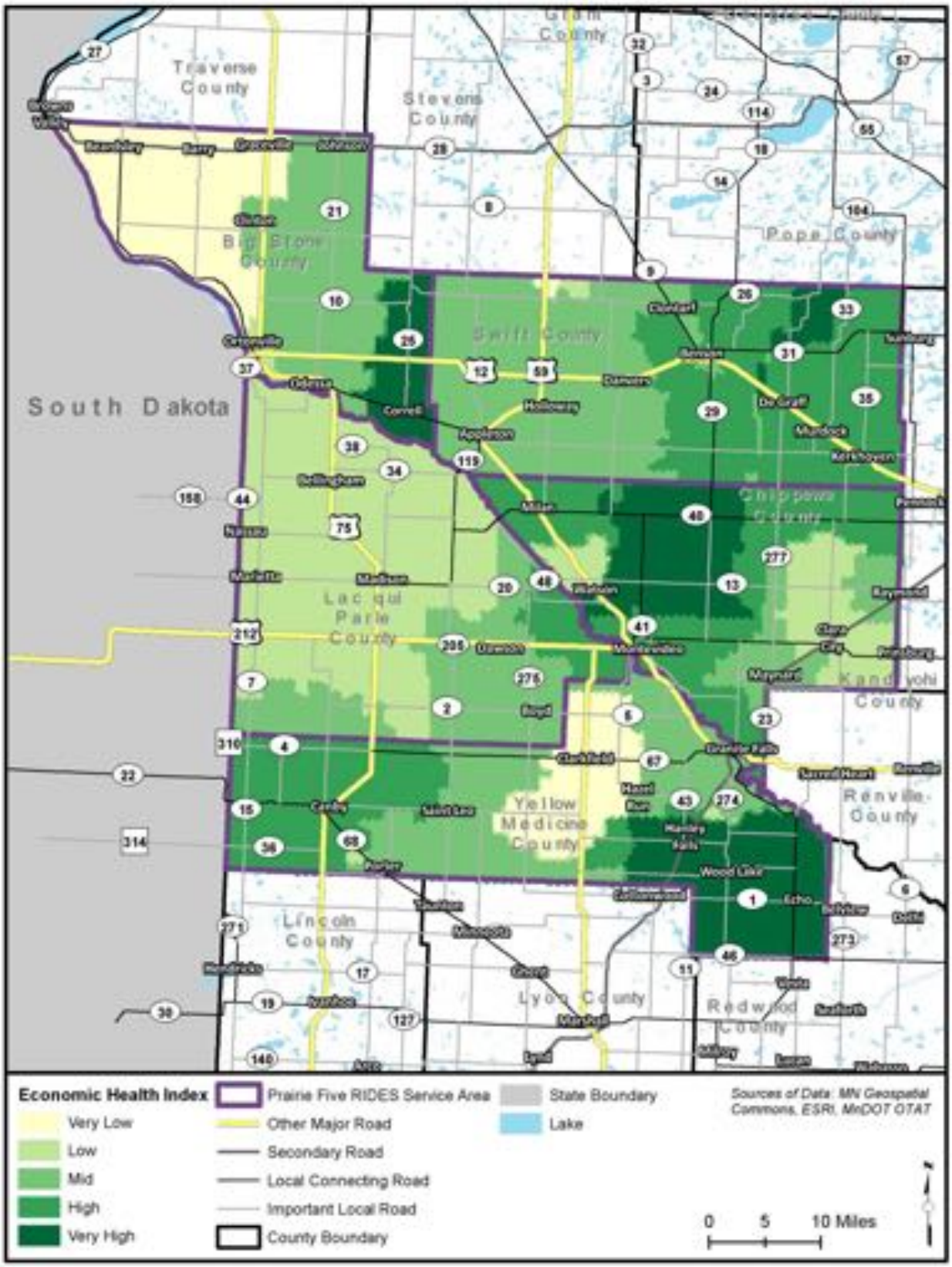


Figure 10. Transit Vulnerability Index

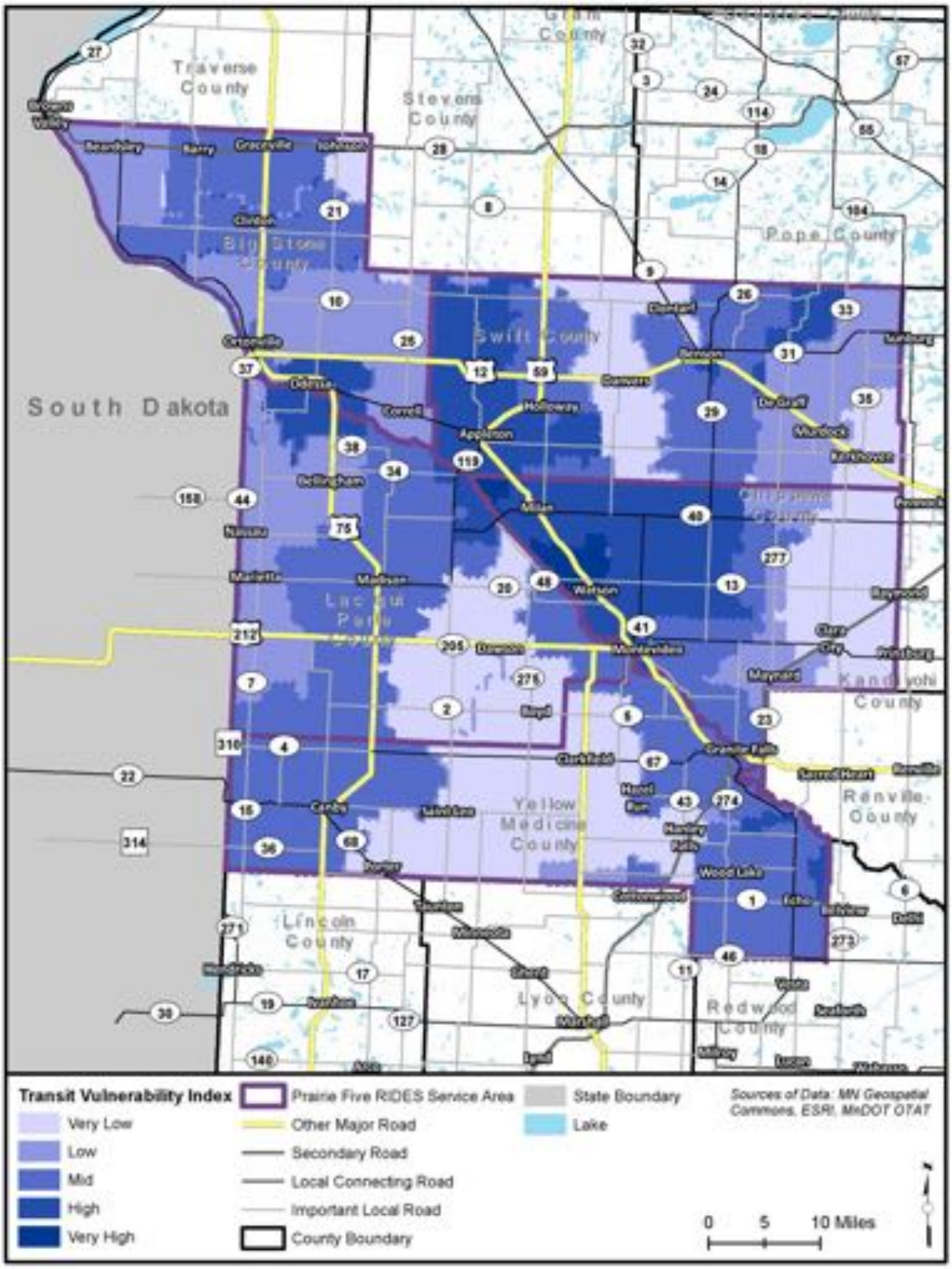


Figure 11. Job Density

Figure 12. Primary Work Destinations for Employees Residing in the Prairie Five RIDES Service Area

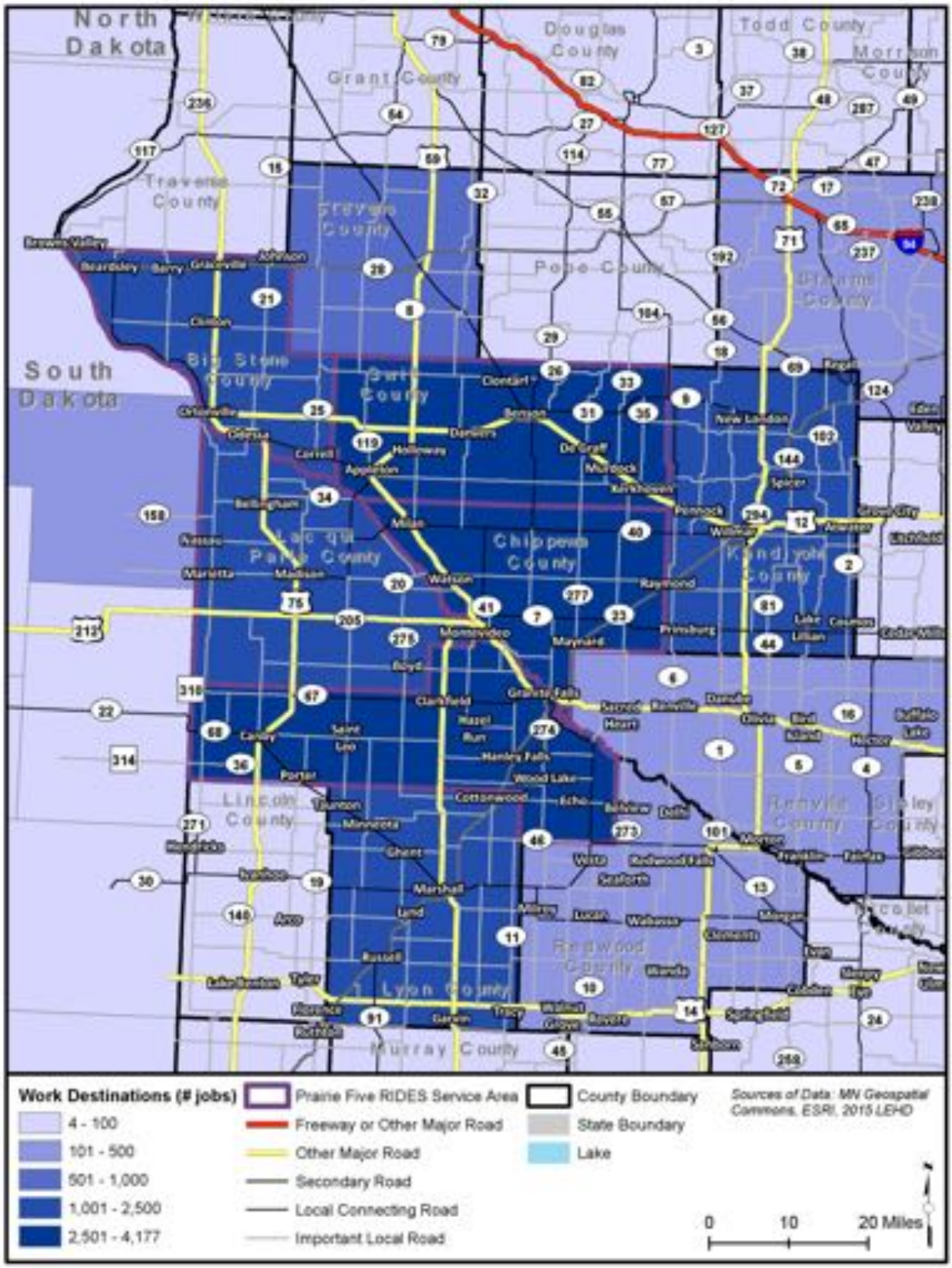
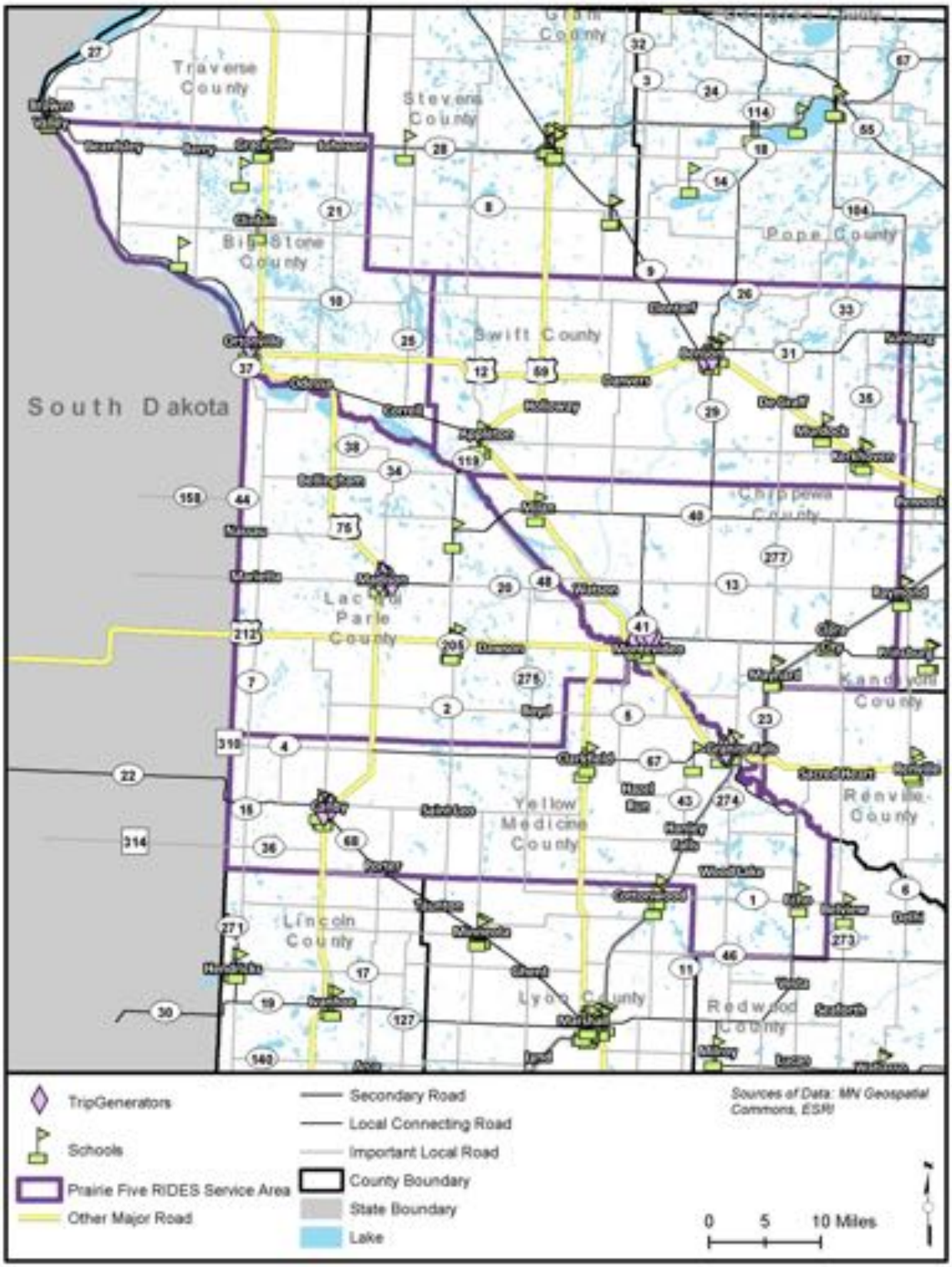


Figure 13. Major Trip Generators



3.6 Regional Connections

In addition to the Prairie Five RIDES regional service previously described, Prairie Five RIDES makes regional connections to allow passengers access to transportation across the state. Regional connections can be made with Executive Express in Willmar and Jefferson Lines in Clara City and Granite Falls.

4. Agency Transit Services

Prairie Five RIDES provides demand response transit service for residents throughout the five-county service area, including Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine Counties (Figure 14). Following is a summary of the types of service Prairie Five RIDES provides:

- Regional service is provided throughout the state using buses, vans, and volunteer drivers. A scheduled service to the Twin Cities on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays is provided on demand.
- Each of the cities in the service area use dedicated buses for demand response City Bus service, as follows:
  - Appleton = 1 bus
  - Benson = 2 buses
  - Canby = 1.5 buses
  - Dawson = 1 bus
  - Madison = 1 bus
  - Montevideo = 3 buses
  - Ortonville = 2.5 buses
- In addition, the county-wide demand response service is provided with buses based in the following municipalities:
  - Appleton = 1 bus
  - Benson = 1 bus
  - Canby = 1 bus
  - Dawson = 1 bus
  - Madison = 1 bus
  - Montevideo = 4 buses
  - Ortonville = 1 bus
- Other demand response services throughout the service area are provided with vans.

Additionally, a volunteer driver program provides transit service throughout the State of Minnesota and to eastern North Dakota or South Dakota.

Figure 14. Prairie Five RIDES Transit Services

The span of service for Prairie Five RIDES varies by service type and route (Table 8). Except for demand response service operating in Montevideo, all demand response service operates between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. In the City of Montevideo, demand response service operates between 6 a.m. and 5 p.m. The span of service for regional service is 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Regional service to the Twin Cities operates Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, with stops at Knollwood Mall at 10:30 a.m. and Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport at 11 a.m.

Table 8. Level of Service

Route/Service	Days of the Week	Span of Service	Frequency of Service
Regional Service: Twin Cities	M,W,F	6 a.m. – 10 p.m.	On Demand
Regional Service: Willmar	On Demand	6 a.m. – 10 p.m.	On Demand
Regional Service: Marshall	On Demand	6 a.m. – 10 p.m.	On Demand
Regional Service: St. Cloud	On Demand	6 a.m. – 10 p.m.	On Demand
Demand Response City Bus Service: Benson	M,T,W,R,F	7 a.m. – 5 p.m.	On Demand
Demand Response City Bus Service: Montevideo	M,T,W,R,F	6 a.m. – 5 p.m.	On Demand
Demand Response City Bus Service: Appleton	M,T,W,R,F	7 a.m. – 5 p.m.	On Demand
Demand Response City Bus Service: Canby	M,T,W,R,F	7 a.m. – 5 p.m.	On Demand
Demand Response City Bus Service: Dawson	M,T,W,R,F	7 a.m. – 5 p.m.	On Demand
Demand Response City Bus Service: Madison	M,T,W,R,F	7 a.m. – 5 p.m.	On Demand
Demand Response City Bus Service: Ortonville	M,T,W,R,F	7 a.m. – 5 p.m.	On Demand
Demand Response Service: County-Wide	M,T,W,R,F	7 a.m. – 5 p.m.	On Demand
Demand Response Service: Five-County Service Area	M,T,W,R,F	7 a.m. – 5 p.m.	On Demand
Regional Service: Volunteer Driver	-	-	On Demand

Source: Prairie Five RIDES

Source: Prairie Five RIDES

The operating statistics for each route/service are shown in Table 9. The regional vans, buses, and volunteer drivers tend to have higher service hours and service miles than demand response service due to the greater travel times and distances associated with regional trips. Compared to other demand response City Bus service, Montevideo has relatively high service hours and service miles due to having a longer span of service and higher population.

Table 9. 2017 Operating Statistics

Route/Service	2017 Annual Hours of Service	2017 Annual Miles of Service
Appleton City Bus	2,406	13,247
Benson City Bus	4,654	29,660
Canby City Bus	2,241	9,543
Dawson City Bus	2,075	8,606
Madison City Bus	2,478	13,050
Montevideo City Bus	7,125	64,376
Ortonville City Bus	2,636	18,849
Regional Van	4,826	120,811
Regional Volunteer Driver	8,691	272,055
Regional Bus	4,225	45,536

Source: Prairie Five RIDES

4.1 Ridership

Overall, total passenger trips, comprised of both public and contract passenger trips, have increased by over 35,000 since 2013, as shown in Table 10. While total passenger trips declined from 2013 to 2015, total passenger trips have significantly increased since 2015.

Similarly, public passenger trips declined from 2013 to 2015, but have increased since 2015 to a record high of 137,989 in 2017. Conversely, contract trips have significantly increased since 2013, decreasing only slightly from 2016 to 2017. Although both the public and contract passenger trips have generally increased since 2013, the proportion of contract passenger trips has generally decreased.

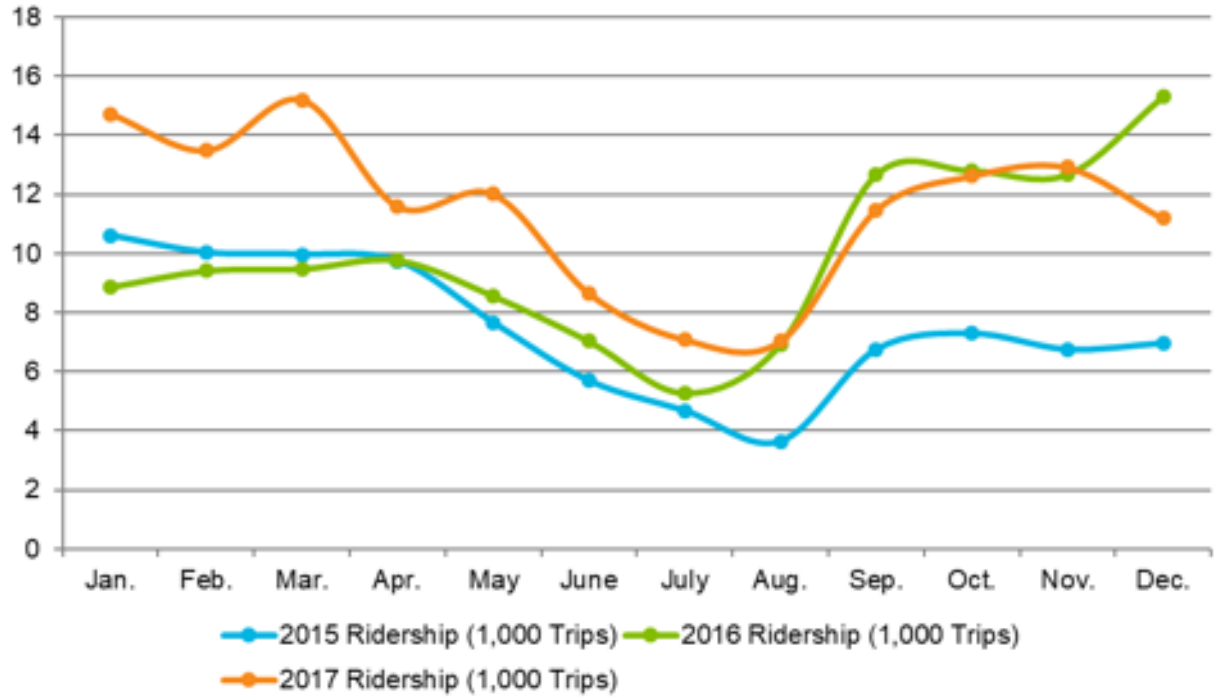
Each year, ridership peaks in the winter, drops off in the summer, and rises again in the fall, as shown on Figure 15. Since 2016, the month with the lowest number of riders has either been July or August, while the month with the highest ridership has been January, March, or December.

Table 10. 2013-2017 Ridership by Public/Contract Service

Public/Contract Service	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Public Passenger Trips	132,524	119,530	89,761	116,364	137,989
Contract Passenger Trips	3,845	16,271	37,556	37,514	33,936
Total Passenger Trips	136,369	135,801	127,317	153,878	171,925

Source: Prairie Five RIDES

Figure 15. Ridership by Month (2015-2017)



Source: Prairie Five RIDES, AECOM 2018

Based on total riders, City Bus service is used more than regional route service (Table 11). The most heavily used Prairie Five RIDES demand response routes are City Bus service routes for Montevideo, Benson, and Ortonville. However, Ortonville has more riders per hour than Montevideo, due to having fewer annual service hours. In terms of riders per mile, Canby City Bus service performs the best, followed by Dawson and Madison.

Generally, regional ridership does not perform as well as City Bus ridership due to the greater travel times and distances associated with regional trips, which in turn reduces the riders per hour and riders per mile values.

Table 11. 2017 Ridership Performance

Route/Service	Total Riders 2017[a]	Riders/Month[b]	Riders/Hour[c]	Riders/Mile
Regional Service: Twin Cities	104	17	0.03	N/A
Regional Service: Willmar	784	131	0.27	N/A
Regional Service: Marshall	283	47	0.10	N/A
Regional Service: St. Cloud	155	26	0.05	N/A
Appleton City Bus	11,594	966	4.82	0.88
Benson City Bus	29,899	2,492	6.42	1.01
Canby City Bus	14,291	1,191	6.38	1.50
Dawson City Bus	12,498	1,042	6.02	1.45
Madison City Bus	14,597	1,216	5.89	1.12
Montevideo City Bus	50,653	4,221	7.11	0.79
Ortonville City Bus	20,582	1,715	7.81	1.09

Source: Prairie Five RIDES

[a]Annual service hour and service mile data for regional service routes were collected by vehicle, not by regional service route. Total riders for regional service routes were provided by Prairie Five RIDES as one-way trips and have been doubled to assume "trip symmetry."

[b]Riders/month is calculated by dividing the total riders by 12.

[c]Riders/hour is calculated by dividing the total riders by the annual service hours. For regional service, riders/hour has been calculated using total hours in a year (based on the regional routes' span of service), rather than total service hours (per note a).

4.2 Service Delivery

Prairie Five RIDES has contracts with Blueride, Ucare, Heartland Industries, Chippewa Enterprises, Mainstreet Industries, the workforce development-oriented Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council, and all five counties' Family Services agencies, who are billed monthly.

Service into either North Dakota or South Dakota is done with volunteer drivers only; there are 22 volunteer drivers, and they typically only provide rides to groups of two or fewer people.

4.3 Users

Prairie Five RIDES serves passengers of all ages and abilities. Prairie Five RIDES tracks passenger demographics through its dispatch software. Table 12 displays the demographic breakdown of passengers served between 2014 and 2018. The specific ages and disability status of passengers in 2017 are illustrated on Figure 16. Prairie Five RIDES defines disabled passengers as any individuals with known physical or mental disabilities. In terms of age, Prairie Five RIDES defines elderly passengers as individuals that are 60 years old or older, adults as individuals between 18 and 59 years old, youth as individuals between 5 and 17 years old, and children as individuals that are 4 years old or younger.

About a quarter of all passenger trips are made by disabled passengers. While the number of disabled passengers declined from 2014 to 2015, the number of disabled passengers has risen since 2015 to a projected 43,780 in 2018.

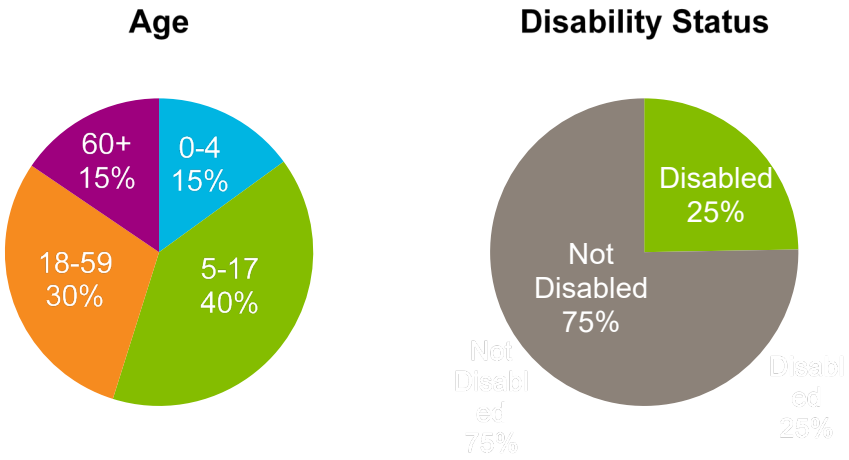
By age group, most passengers are youth, making up about 40% of all passenger trips, followed by adults, elderly passengers, and children. Except for elderly passengers, the number of passengers in all age groups has increased over time. While the number of elderly passengers grew between 2014 and 2016, this number has generally declined since 2016.

Table 12. Passenger Demographics (2014-2018)

Year	Disabled	Elderly	Adult	Youth	Children	Total Passenger Trips
2014	44,092	19,556	23,433	37,648	11,072	135,801
2015	29,859	22,020	32,135	37,487	5,814	127,315
2016	40,184	23,399	32,972	48,994	8,329	153,878
2017	42,504	20,054	38,380	51,592	19,395	171,925
2018 projections	43,780	20,655	39,532	53,139	19,976	177,082

Source: Prairie Five RIDES

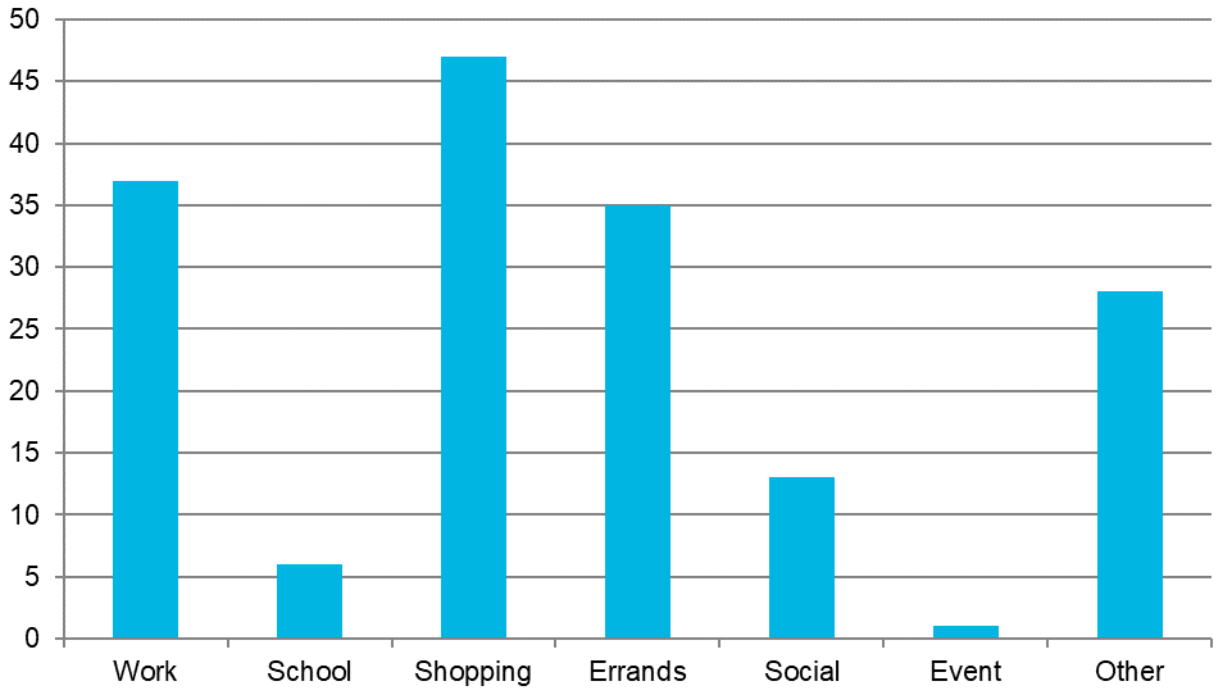
Figure 16. 2017 Community Transit Selected Demographic Characteristics



Source: Prairie Five RIDES

Prairie Five RIDES passengers use transit service for a variety of purposes (Figure 17). In 2016, an on-board survey of 121 passengers was conducted. Although the sample size is not large enough to be representative of all Prairie Five RIDES passengers, it provides a high level summary of trip purposes. While the survey allowed respondents to choose more than one purpose for a single trip, most survey respondents reported shopping as their primary purpose for riding the bus. Many respondents coupled shopping and errands as a trip purpose, which together made up over two-thirds of the trips documented through the survey. Other trip purposes included work, social (friends, family) gatherings, and medical purposes.

Figure 17. 2016 Trip Purposes



Source: Prairie Five RIDES

5. Capital

Prairie Five RIDES has a fleet of buses and vans, as well as five facilities where vehicles are stored and maintained. Prairie Five RIDES uses RouteMatch software to dispatch its services. The software collects and shares data with the buses and vans, which have on-board tablets that the drivers use to respond to ride requests.

5.1 Background

Today, Prairie Five RIDES has 29 vehicles in its fleet: 21 buses and 8 vans (Table 13). Out of the 29 vehicles, 28 are “active” meaning they are regularly used to provide public transit, revenue generating service. Many vehicles have cameras, both back-up cameras and on-board security cameras, which has been identified as one of the system’s strengths. Seating capacity ranges from 2 to 20 seats and from 1 to 3 wheelchair positions, with only one vehicle not having any wheelchair tiedowns. The average vehicle mileage and age are approximately 85,989 miles and 8 years, respectively. Prairie Five RIDES does not currently have signed bus stops, shelters, or benches, but the agency plans to add signs and benches at bus stops in the future.

Table 13. Vehicle Fleet

Vehicle Type	Vehicle ID	Year	Class	Count in Fleet	Fuel	Seats	Wheelchair Capacity	Amenities	Mileage (as of 1/1/19)	Disposed of	Backup	Active
Chevrolet	80	2005	200	1	Gasoline	3	1	—	129,253	N	N	Y
Chevrolet – GMC Entervan	34	2005	200	1	Gasoline	3	1	—	80,552	N	N	Y
El Dorado Aerotech	607	2005	400	1	Gasoline	18	2	Cameras, AVL	129,527	N	N	Y
El Dorado Aerotech 240	608	2005	400	1	Gasoline	18	2	Cameras, AVL	145,518	N	N	Y
Goshen GC II	362	2006	400	1	Gasoline	16	2	Cameras, AVL	111,037	N	N	Y
Chevrolet Uplander	38; 81	2007	200	2	Gasoline	3	1	—	283,759; 202,410	N	N	Y
Buick – Terraza	65	2007	200	1	Gasoline	3	1	—	57,558	N	N	Y
Chevrolet Uplander	27	2008	200	1	Gasoline	3	1	—	N/A	N	N	N
Elkhart EC II	139	2009	400	1	Gasoline	13	3	Cameras, AVL	156,316	N	N	Y
Elkhart EC II	319	2009	400	1	Gasoline	17	2	Cameras, AVL	129,514	N	N	Y
El Dorado	853	2009	400	1	Gasoline	17	2	Cameras, AVL	130,319	N	N	Y

Vehicle Type	Vehicle ID	Year	Class	Count in Fleet	Fuel	Seats	Wheelchair Capacity	Amenities	Mileage (as of 1/1/19)	Disposed of	Backup	Active
Chrysler Grand Caravan	2	2011	200	1	Gasoline	3	1	—	42,645	N	N	Y
Goshen GC II	675	2011	400	1	Gasoline	20	2	Cameras, AVL	114,668	N	N	Y
Elkhart EC II	834	2012	400	1	Gasoline	16	2	Cameras, AVL	84,479	N	N	Y
Goshen GC II	813; 814; 815	2013	400	3	Gasoline	17	2	Cameras, AVL	52,125; 77,118; 80,081	N	N	Y
Elkhart EC II	488; 489	2013	400	2	Gasoline	17	2	Cameras, AVL	62,889; 84,699	N	N	Y
El Dorado Aerotech	715	2015	400	1	Gasoline	19	3	Cameras, AVL	74,361	N	N	Y
Goshen GC II	173	2015	400	1	Gasoline	20	2	Cameras, AVL	45,246	N	N	Y
Elkhart EC II	521	2016	400	1	Gasoline	19	3	Cameras, AVL	38,419	N	N	Y
Ford E-250	16	2017	200	1	Gasoline	2	0	—	23,283	N	N	Y
Elkhart EC II	370; 215; 763; 764; 765	2017	400	5	Gasoline	19	3	Cameras, AVL	19,902; 35,095; 8,919; 16,141; 14,389	N	N	Y

Sources: Prairie Five RIDES 4/19/19 correspondence, MnDOT Master Fleet Warehouse

The bus fleet is stored indoors in various locations. Table 14 lists the Prairie Five RIDES' facilities and their vehicle storage capacity. None of the facilities have maintenance capabilities. Prairie Five RIDES dispatches its services from its dispatch office in Montevideo. Buses are equipped with mobile data terminals that use RouteMatch software, which collects ridership information.

Table 14. Facilities

Facility Type	Facility Location	Facility Age	Storage Capacity
Ortonville Garage	Ortonville	Unknown	3 buses, 1 van
Montevideo Garage 1	Montevideo	Unknown	8 buses, 5 vans
Montevideo Garage 2	Montevideo	Unknown	4 buses
Prairie Five Community Action Council Office	719 N. 7th St #302 Montevideo, MN 56265	Unknown	N/A
Madison Facility	Madison	Unknown	2 buses, 1 van
Dawson Facility	Dawson	Unknown	2 buses
Canby Facility	Canby	Unknown	2 buses
Benson Facility	Benson	Unknown	2 buses
Appleton Facility	Appleton	Unknown	2 buses

Source: Prairie Five RIDES 4/16/19 correspondence

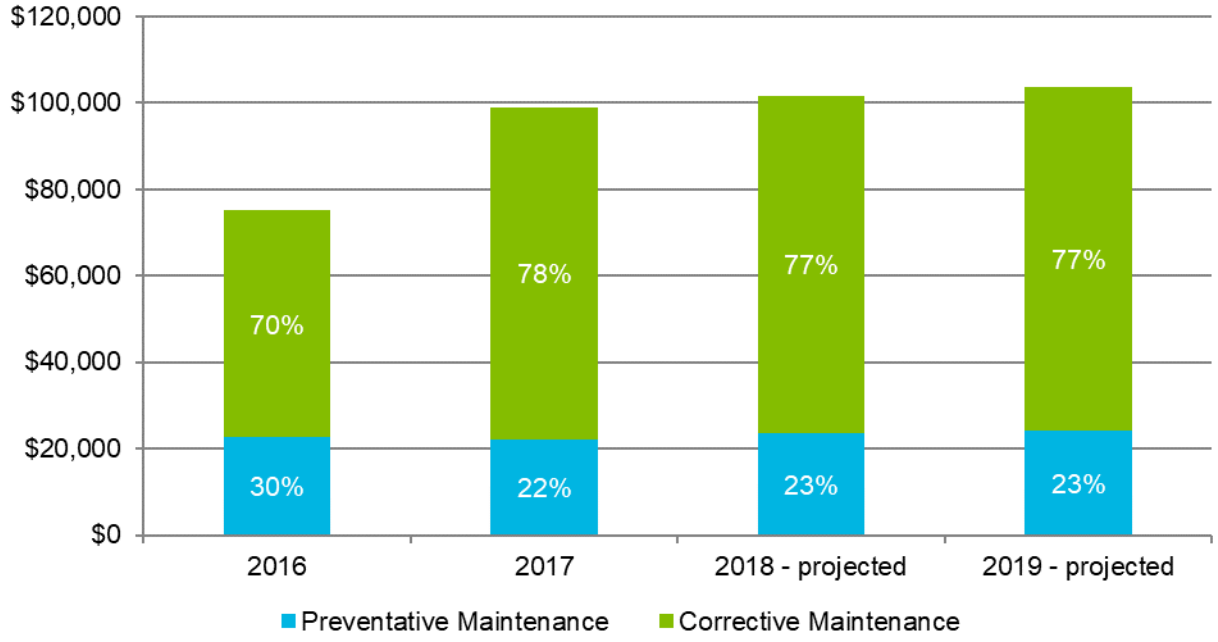
With 29 vehicles in the Prairie Five RIDES fleet, the cost of maintenance can make up a substantial portion of the Prairie Five RIDES budget. Prairie Five RIDES has one full-time maintenance staff member who handles minor maintenance issues. Other maintenance issues are handled by dealers under warranty or by vendors in Montevideo as well as by some vendors around the service area. Prairie Five RIDES also has a service crew who can do road calls. As shown in Table 15, annual maintenance costs increased by 32% from 2016 to 2017. Prairie Five RIDES anticipates budgeting only slightly more toward preventative and corrective maintenance in 2018 and 2019 (Figure 18).

Table 15. Maintenance Costs (2016-2019)

	2016	2017	2018 - projected	2019 - projected
Annual Cost of Preventative Maintenance	$22,777	$22,126	$23,728	$24,203
Annual Cost of Corrective Maintenance	$52,328	$76,851	$77,970	$79,529
Total Annual Maintenance Costs	**$75,105**	**$98,978**	**$101,698**	**$103,732**

Source: Prairie Five RIDES Capital Template

Figure 18. Actual and Projected Vehicle Maintenance Costs (2016-2019)



Source: Prairie Five RIDES Capital Template

5.2 History

Agencies that receive federal financial assistance and own, operate, or manage capital assets used in the provision of public transportation are required under 49 U.S.C. 625 to create a transit asset management plan. This plan facilitates decision-making that balances needs and demands for rolling stock, facilities, and equipment. MnDOT OTAT personnel make annual visits to each federal- or state-funded facility to inspect facility and fleet conditions and understand how assets have been maintained.

In 2017, MnDOT added a Transit Asset Management module to the BlackCat Grants Management System that facilitates streamlined communication between MnDOT and transportation providers regarding the maintenance and depreciation of assets. Additionally, MnDOT's updated 2018 *Transit Asset Management Plan* includes:

- Inventory of the number and type of capital assets
- Condition assessment of those inventoried assets for which a provider has direct capital responsibility
- Description of analytical processes or decision support tools that a provider uses to estimate capital investment needs over time and develop its investment prioritization
- Discussion of prioritization investment direction
- Plan implementation strategies and recommendations

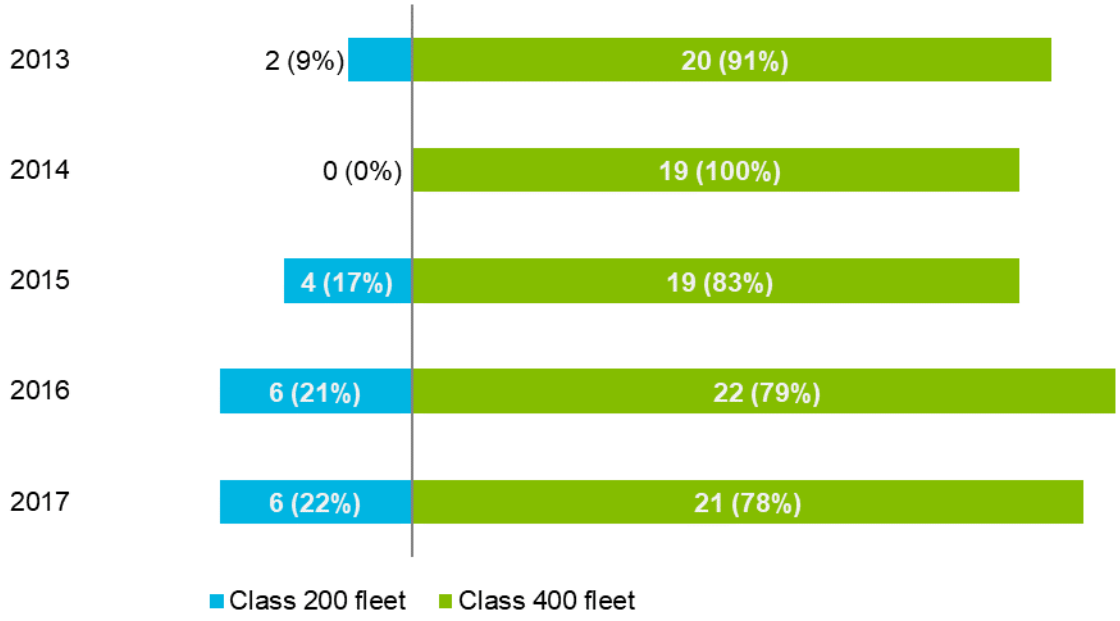
Prior to 2020, fleet assets were prioritized based on life expectancy. For this five-year transit system plan, the assets are identified for replacement based on the *Transit Asset Management Plan* submitted to FTA on October 1, 2018.

As Prairie Five RIDES has grown as a transit provider, the agency has made strategic capital investments in its vehicle fleet, facilities, technology, and marketing. Following is a summary of some of the major improvements Prairie Five RIDES has made over time:[4]

- In 2013, Prairie Five RIDES expanded use of tablets in its bus fleet and installed cameras on all buses.
- In 2014, Prairie Five RIDES expanded use of its software system to all 16 buses and 4 vans and updated its website. Additionally, Benson Heartland Express prepared plans and specifications for a new bus garage.
- In 2015, Prairie Five RIDES partnered with local communities and individuals to improve storage locations and conditions of all bus garages.
- In 2016 and 2017, with the help of the MnDOT Commuter Challenge grant, Prairie Five RIDES increased advertising and educated audiences across the region on the services it provides.

Additionally, Prairie Five RIDES has expanded its fleet over time. The total vehicle fleet grew from 22 vehicles in 2013 to 27 vehicles in 2017, as shown in Figure 19.

Figure 19. Fleet Vehicles (2013-2017)[a]



Sources: 2014 MnDOT Transit Report, 2015 MnDOT Transit Report, 2016 MnDOT Transit Report, 2017 MnDOT Transit Report, 2018 MnDOT Transit Report

[a] Values summed from Prairie Five RIDES and Benson Heartland Express.

Prairie Five RIDES' Capital Plan through 2025 includes replacement of 17 buses over seven years. The replacement vehicles are Class 200 and Class 400 vehicles, maintaining the composition of vehicles in the Prairie Five RIDES fleet. Prairie Five RIDES' Capital Plan is summarized in Table 16. Total capital costs vary between $176,000 and $340,000 per year.

[4] Sources: 2014 MnDOT Transit Report, 2015 MnDOT Transit Report, 2016 MnDOT Transit Report, 2017 MnDOT Transit Report, 2018 MnDOT Transit Report.

Table 16. Capital Plan (2019-2025)

Capital Plan	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Replacement Vehicles	4	2	2	2	3	2	2
Replacement Cost	$340,000	$176,000	$182,000	$188,000	$219,000	$200,000	$206,000

Sources: Prairie Five RIDES 4/16/19 correspondence, MnDOT Estimated Costs Each Year for Bus Type

In 2019, the MnDOT OTAT administered a second solicitation for 2019 capital funding for Greater Minnesota public transit systems. Providers were encouraged to submit requests for "shovel ready" capital projects, such as facility repairs or improvements, vehicle replacements (not including expansions), technology upgrades, bus shelters, and other passenger amenities and service equipment. MnDOT was able to award several additional capital grants, with the understanding that 80% of the requested funds would be provided by the state, and 20% would be locally-sourced funds.

On January 28, 2019, Prairie Five RIDES was notified that MnDOT awarded the agency an additional $136,000 in state capital funding to purchase two replacement buses. The award details and funding amounts are listed in Table 17. Because of this unique additional capital grant, Prairie Five RIDES has been able to get a head start on its capital plan by funding its projected vehicle replacements.

Table 17. Prairie Five RIDES Special Solicitation Capital Vehicle Grant Award Projects

Project Description	Budget Amount	State Funds Awarded	Local Share
Purchase Replacement Standard 30-foot Bus	$85,000	$68,000	$17,000
Purchase Replacement Standard 30-foot Bus	$85,000	$68,000	$17,000
Total	**$170,000**	**$136,000**	**$34,000**

Sources: Prairie Five RIDES 2019 Special Solicitation Vehicle Award Letter

6. 2020-2025 Annual Needs

6.1 Needs Identification Process

Prairie Five RIDES' annual needs were developed through a review of the agency's existing capital items and the use of those items, and through a series of in-person visits with the Prairie Five RIDES team to discuss the agency's operating structure and environment, agency challenges, and opportunities for improvement. The initial meeting provided a chance to gather information and begin to consider strategies and opportunities for the agency, as well as to use analyses and metrics to assess the agency's baseline conditions and performance. The following meeting allowed the consultant team a chance to develop a comprehensive list of agency needs for the five-year study period with Prairie Five RIDES administration and staff, and the agency's Board of Directors. A discussion was then held to prioritize these agency needs according to the perception of their relative importance for the agency; this exercise was not conducted with fiscal constraints in mind. The unconstrained list of needs is displayed in Table 18.

Toward the end of the five-year transit system plan process, an online community survey was conducted to gather input on agency strategies and priorities, and to collect information on community opinion or community habits that may help to inform transit service decisions. Detailed survey information, including results, can be found in Appendix B.

6.2 List of 2020–2025 Needs

Needs identified during the needs prioritization workshop are listed in Table 18, in order of priority. For new or extended service, operational costs were based on anticipated hours and an hourly rate provided by Prairie Five RIDES, as were vehicle unit costs.

Table 18. Unconstrained Needs List

Need	Priority Level	Purchase Year	Description of Need	Rationale	Estimated Cost (in 2019 dollars)
Dispatcher position	High	2020	Additional dispatcher staff position	Extra dispatch capacity needed for Granite Falls Heartland Express merger	$32,000 annually (based on $16/hour)[a]
Montevideo service	High	2020	New deviated or fixed service in Montevideo	High demand for service Three buses currently provide demand response service in Montevideo	No additional cost if current on-demand service is fully or partially converted to fixed route
Additional service to outlying areas	High	2021	Increased service in smaller towns (one vehicle, 10-hour span)	Increased capacity for demand response service requests	$141,723 annual operating cost plus the cost of an additional vehicle
Marketing and branding	High	2021	Additional marketing events and new branding	Increased visibility and familiarity to reach more potential transit riders	$100,000[b]
New transit vehicles	High	2021	To be used on new fixed route and demand response services	Three potential additions to the service area require new vehicles	$85,000 per vehicle $255,000 total

Need	Priority Level	Purchase Year	Description of Need	Rationale	Estimated Cost (in 2019 dollars)
Electronic fareboxes (with smart card reader)	Medium	2021	To be used on fixed route services	Improved data collection	$9,570 per unit[c]
Benson service	High	2021	New deviated or fixed service in Benson	High demand for service Two buses currently provide demand response service in Benson	No additional cost if current on-demand service is fully or partially converted to fixed route
Maintenance staff position	Medium	2022	Additional maintenance staff position	Extra maintenance capacity needed for Granite Falls Heartland Express merger	$48,000 annually (based on $24/hour)[a]
Regional corridor service on US 12	Medium	2022	New “Down 12” fixed route based in Benson (one vehicle, 16-hour span)	High demand area that could succeed with a fixed route	$226,756 annual operating cost plus an additional vehicle
Software	Medium	2023	New dispatch software	Current software is outdated	$45,000 capital, $5,000 year in fees/ maintenance [d]
Regional corridor service on MN 23	Medium	2022	New “Down 23” fixed route based in Granite Falls (one vehicle, 16-hour span)	High demand area that could succeed with a fixed route	$226,756 annual operating cost plus an additional vehicle
Smartphone app	Medium	2023	Application for ride reservations and real-time arrival information	Rides are currently reserved via phone, with no real-time arrival information	$90,000 for development, $25,000 annual fee[e]

Need	Priority Level	Purchase Year	Description of Need	Rationale	Estimated Cost (in 2019 dollars)
Lengthening of span of existing service	Low	2024	Increasing the overall operating hours on all services	Increase access and scheduling flexibility for customers	$373,856 annual operating coast (including standard operations rate and increased dispatcher pay)
“Mini-hubs” for regional service integration	Low	2025	Small covered transit shelter enclosed with two entrances	Structure for people making transfers between agencies	$80,000 (four “mini-hubs” at $20,000)[f]
Regional fare integration	Low	2025	Shared or integrated fare system with neighboring providers	Easier to use transit for regional travel	Policy decision and no cost unless farebox procured
Regional service integration	Low	2025	Transit centers for connections to service from neighboring providers	More options for regional travel Leveraging service from other providers would reduce demand for long-distance trips	Data not available at this time

[a] *Based on current going rates in Minnesota for similar positions.*

[b] *Based on estimated cost for a similar request from other regional providers.*

[c] *https://www.itscosts.its.dot.gov/ITS/benecost.nsf/ID/00EF4D74141F93C685257A600058B6D5?OpenDocument.*

[d] *Cost based on 2 user accounts and 35 vehicle licenses, http://www.gowata.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/476?fileID=975.*

[e] *Cost estimate provided by another transit provider for a similar request.*

[f] *Cost estimate based on AECOM work with other systems.*

6.3 Historical and Projected Annual Summary

Prairie Five RIDES’ priorities begin with the need for a new marketing strategy to reach potential transit users. Outreach efforts are currently limited to local fairs, parades, and senior centers, without a significant presence on social media or elsewhere. Additionally, Prairie Five RIDES aims to meet increasing demand with higher capacity focused on areas of key importance. To

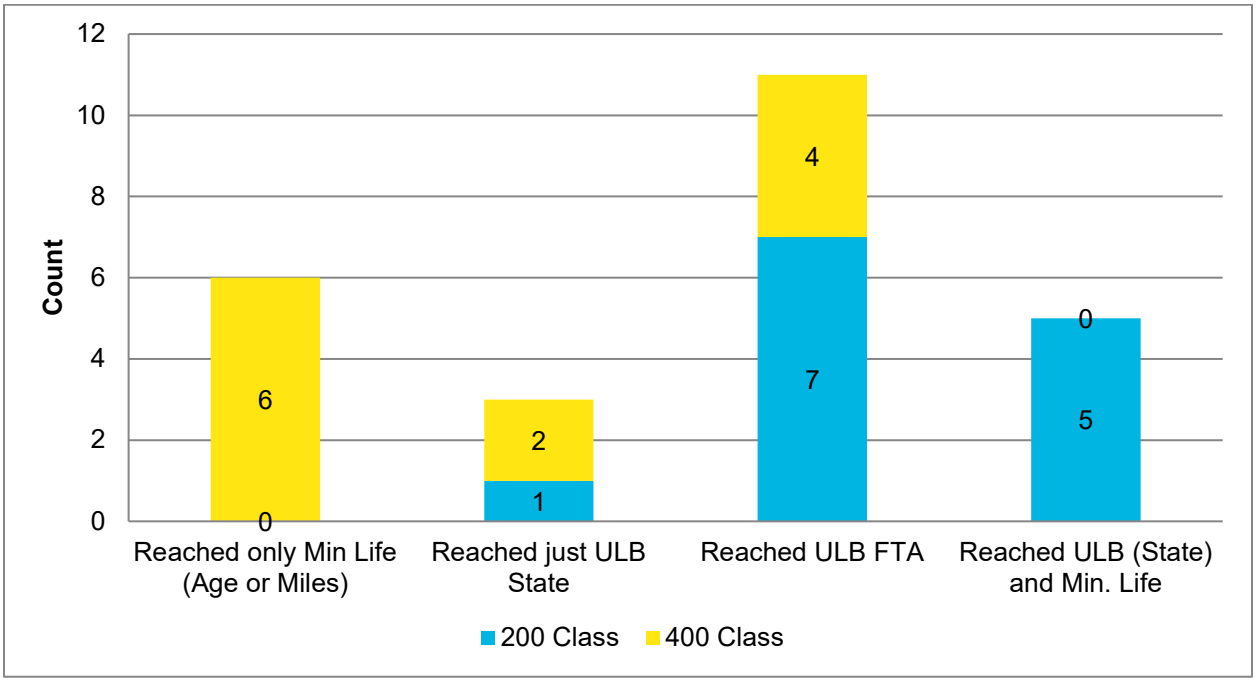
reduce the number of ride requests that are rejected, improved routes and new technology need to be implemented along with the necessary capital investments.

6.3.1 Fleet

The minimum life, outlined in the *Transit Asset Management Plan*, for a light-duty mid-sized (class 400) vehicle is five years and 150,000 miles with a useful life benchmark of 7 years for the state and 10 years for FTA. The minimum life for a van (class 200) is 4 years and 100,000 miles with a state useful life bench mark of 7 years and 10 years for FTA. MnDOT has set the useful life benchmark in the *Transit Asset Management Plan* as 10 years for all cutaway buses and vans with a performance measure of no more than 10% exceeding this useful life benchmark.

As shown in Table 13, the Prairie Five RIDES' fleet currently includes 28 active vehicles of various makes, models, and years spanning 2005 to 2017. Prairie Five RIDES is not meeting this benchmark, as 39% are exceeding the 10 year useful life benchmark. Seven vehicles have reached just their minimum life, an additional three have also reached the state useful life benchmark, and 11 the FTA useful life benchmark. Of those that have met the FTA useful life benchmark (10 years), about half have also reached their minimum life in regards to miles.

Figure 20. Vehicle Minimum Life and Useful Life Benchmark 2019



An increasing ridership trend requires expanded levels of service and an expanded fleet. Prairie Five RIDES' current asset management plan addresses the replacement of aging vehicles, but new vehicles are needed to introduce regional corridor routes and increased demand response service in outlying areas. During the prioritization workshop, Prairie Five RIDES staff also discussed the use of minivans instead of buses for longer trips, which Prairie Five RIDES has done in the past, in part to compensate for the shortage of volunteer drivers.

6.3.2 Facility

Prairie Five RIDES' owns or rents a total of 9 facilities and 8 have the capacity to store buses. A need was identified for regional mini-hubs to create connections between neighboring providers and reduce long trip length. It is anticipated that up to four mini-hubs would be installed complete with an enclosed shelter and seating.

6.3.3 Technology

As a medium priority, fare collection system and an updated dispatch software are needed. Customer-facing technology, such as smartphone or web-based applications, would provide a more convenient system for reserving rides and offer real-time arrival information.

6.3.4 Other

Prairie Five RIDES' greatest need is to improve marketing to increase visibility and familiarity among potential transit riders in the area. Expanded efforts may include rebranding the transit service alone, or rebranding Prairie Five RIDES as a whole. As a lower priority, Prairie Five RIDES is also interested in coordinating with neighboring transit agencies to introduce fare integration throughout the region and use of transit "mini-hubs" where riders could make connections between services of different providers.

7. System Performance

Performance measurement tracking establishes a consistent way to evaluate a route or service type, provides a regular opportunity to reflect on future needs and service improvements, and ensures compliance with the ADA, MnDOT's Olmstead Plan, and any other local performance expectations. For state-funded transit services, MnDOT requires performance tracking of annual ridership, baseline span of service, on-time performance, and asset management. Additionally, each provider is required to track denials based on the ADA trip denial definitions and process documentation in FTA Circular 4710.1 as well as service and performance indicators.

Due to the constraints of handling dispatch using RouteMatch software, certain system-level performance metrics, such as wait times, have not been tracked in an easily quantifiable way. Consistent data collection practices for these measures can be incorporated into future technology improvements, such as improved dispatching software.

Cost efficiency relates to the financial performance of the system; that is, how well each dollar of investment has translated into additional service, ridership, or revenue. The cost efficiency metrics tracked by Prairie Five RIDES for the system include cost per hour, cost per rider, cost per mile, and farebox recovery, shown in Table 19. These metrics are based on estimated system costs calculated from an average system-wide cost per revenue hour; MnDOT has set a target cost of $60 per hour or less; Prairie Five RIDES is currently meeting this target.

The total system-wide ridership has been growing since 2016, following a period of decline. In 2016 alone, Prairie Five RIDES experienced a 21% increase in ridership from 2015 levels (over 26,500 passenger trips) due in large part to the merger with the City of Benson. Cost per rider is the overall cost to operate a service divided by the number of one-way trips generated, the system-wide cost per rider is $12.02, which is less than the national average for rural systems.

Farebox recovery generally measures the percentage of operating cost covered by fares and is an outcome heavily influenced by the ridership productivity of a route against its total operating cost, as well as the fare policy of the system. It is generally calculated by dividing passenger fare revenue by operating cost. In Minnesota farebox revenue includes contract revenue and any local contributions. Prairie Five RIDES had a farebox recovery of 15.5%.

The 2017 service and cost data for Prairie Five RIDES at the route level is not available at this time.

Two service effectiveness indicators, passengers per mile and passengers per hour, are also summarized in Table 19. The system-wide passengers per hour are higher than the national rural transit average, but lower than the Minnesota rural transit average. The system-wide passengers per mile is twice that of the national rural average and in line with the Minnesota

rural transit average. However, City Bus demand response services have higher riders per hour and riders per mile rates than both the national and Minnesota rural transit averages.

Table 19. Cost Efficiency by Route/Service (2017)

Route/Service	Riders/Hour	Riders/Mile	Cost/Hour	Cost/Rider	Cost/Mile	Farebox Recovery
Regional Service: Twin Cities	0.02	Data not available at this time	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Regional Service: Willmar	0.13	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Regional Service: Marshall	0.05	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Regional Service: St. Cloud	0.03	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Appleton City Bus	4.82	0.88	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Benson City Bus	6.42	1.01	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Canby City Bus	6.38	1.50	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Dawson City Bus	6.02	1.45	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Madison City Bus	5.89	1.12	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Montevideo City Bus	7.11	0.79	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Ortonville City Bus	7.81	1.09	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
System-Wide[a]	**4.2**	**0.3**	$49.99	$12.02	$3.46	15.5%[b]
National Rural Average	**2.6**	**0.15**	**$38.83**	**$14.68**	**$2.22**	**12.0%**
Minnesota Rural Average	**4.57**	**0.31**	**$60.00**	**$13.30**	**-**	**-**

Source: 2017 National Transit Database, Prairie Five RIDES Service Data Template, Prairie Five RIDES 9/21/18 correspondence, MnDOT Chapter 7 Requirements, 2017 Rural Transit Fact Book

[a]*System-wide data as reported to the National Transit Database for Prairie Five RIDES.*

[b]*Includes contract revenue and local shares and is from the 2018 MnDOT Transit Report.*

7.1 Historical Performance

As the Prairie Five RIDES' system has grown, operating costs, revenue hours, and ridership have also increased. As shown in Table 20, the system-wide cost per rider has consistently increased over time, with a net increase of $4.13 from 2013 to 2017. The cost per hour has fluctuated from year to year, with a net increase of $15.54 from 2013 to 2017. The riders per hour have remained relatively steady from 2013 to 2017.

In 2017, 684 trips were denied, or about 0.04% of total passenger trips. Prairie Five RIDES does not track the reason for denial. However, staff acknowledges that most trips are denied based on a lack of capacity.

Table 20. Prairie Five RIDES System Historical Performance (2013-2017)[a]

Year	Riders/Hour	Riders/Mile	Cost/Hour	Cost/Rider	Cost/Mile	Farebox Recovery[b]
2013	4.39	0.26	$36.00	$8.20	$2.17	27.9%
2014	4.51	0.29	$40.13	$8.89	$2.62	17.0%
2015	5.12	0.43	$45.85	$8.95	$3.82	17.2%
2016	4.17	0.29	$43.85	$10.51	$3.04	15.0%
2017	4.18	0.29	$51.54	$12.33	$3.58	15.5%

Sources: 2013-2017 National Transit Database data; Farebox Recovery: 2014 MnDOT Transit Report, 2015 MnDOT Transit Report, 2016 MnDOT Transit Report, 2017 MnDOT Transit Report, 2018 MnDOT Transit Report

[a] Values summed from Prairie Five RIDES and Benson Heartland Express.

[b] Includes contract revenue and local shares.

7.2 Projected Performance

Moving forward, Prairie Five RIDES must develop a plan for collecting the data needed to track the performance metrics required by MnDOT and the additional measures that it selects to measure progress toward local goals and priorities. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, MnDOT requires providers to track on-time performance, trip denials, and the percentage of communities with a baseline span of service, and MnDOT has set the targets for these performance metrics. MnDOT also requires providers to track passengers per hour, cost per service hour, and cost per trip, but providers define the targets for these performance metrics. Additionally, MnDOT requires providers to select three performance metrics of their choice, for which providers define the targets. A complete list of these performance metrics and their targets is provided in Table 21.

The definitions of the performance measures that Prairie Five RIDES will track are as follows:

- **On-time performance**: the percentage of trips that arrive within a specified pick-up window.
- **Trip denials**: occurs when a trip is requested by a passenger, but the transportation provider cannot provide the service. Trip denial may happen because capacity is not available at the requested time. For ADA paratransit, a capacity denial is specifically defined as occurring if a trip cannot be accommodated within the negotiated pick-up window. Even if a trip is provided, if it is scheduled outside the +60/-60-minute window, it is considered a

denial. If the passenger refused to accept a trip offered within the +60/-60-minute pick-up window, it is considered a refusal, not a capacity denial.

- **Percentage of communities with a baseline span of service**: the percentage of public transportation service areas meeting the baseline number of hours during the day when transit service is available in an area.
- **Passengers per hour**: unlinked passenger trips per revenue hour. This does not include volunteer trips.
- **Cost per service hour**: fully loaded operating cost per revenue hour. This does not include volunteer trips.
- **Cost per trip:** fully loaded operating cost per unlinked passenger trip. This does not include volunteer trips.
- **Service area**: the percentage of population covered by a service area (demand response service) or the percentage of a service area within a given distance of a transit route (flex route).
- **Service hours per capita**: the revenue hours per total population within the service area. The population of the area is defined by what is reported by the most recent census data in the ACS.
- **Farebox recovery**: the percentage of operating costs covered by revenue from fares and contract revenue (total fare revenue and total contract revenue divided by the total operating cost).
- **Advance reservation time**: the amount of time passengers have to request a ride in advance and receive a guaranteed ride in return.
- **Passenger complaints**: includes valid complaints made by passengers either in writing, by email, or over the phone. All complaints are considered valid until investigated.
- **Road calls:** any mechanical event (not related to an accident) that results in the loss of service or the vehicle being removed from revenue service and replaced with another vehicle.
- **Accidents**: anything that meets the National Transit Database (NTD) reporting threshold for collision and a reportable event per the most recent *Safety and Security Policy Manual* or per the FTA Post-Accident Drug and Alcohol testing regulations testing was required. The 2018 *Safety and Security Policy Manual* defines a collision as one that includes a fatality, an injury that required immediate transport from the scene for medical attention, property damage exceeding $25,000, involve transit revenue roadway vehicles and the towing away of any vehicles (transit or non-transit) from the scene, or a suicide or attempted suicide that involved contact with a transit vehicle. The FTA Post-Accident Drug and Alcohol testing regulations require a test when the accident involves a fatality, any individual suffered a bodily injury and immediately received medical treatment away from the scene of the accident, any disabling damage to any vehicle involved in the accident requiring the vehicle to be towed away from the scene, or the vehicle was removed from operation.

Table 21. Prairie Five RIDES Performance Metrics

Performance Measure	Current Baseline	Goal/Target	Frequency of Measurement
On-time performance	Not known - baseline must be established	90% on time within published pick-up window (before published time point for deviated route, 45/45 minute window for demand response	Monthly
Trip denials	Not known - baseline must be established	Transit systems must follow the ADA trip denial definitions and process	Monthly
Percentage of communities with a baseline span of service	Not known – baseline must be established	75% of population covered by demand response service area	Annually
Passengers per hour	Demand response system-wide is 6.2 (not including regional), no single route was below 4.82	6 passengers per hour system-wide, 4 for any single route	Monthly
Cost per service hour	$51.54 system-wide	$60 system-wide	Monthly
Cost per trip	$12.33 system-wide	$12 or less system-wide	Monthly
Service area	100% of population covered by service area	75% of population covered by service area	Annually
Service hours per capita	City buses are 1.27 hours or higher; system-wide 0.63 hours	1.25 hours for city buses, 0.65 hours system-wide	Annually
Farebox recovery	15.5%	15% system-wide	Monthly
Advance reservation time	24 hours in advance minimum	24 hours in advance minimum	Monthly
Passenger complaints	10 or less	6 complaints per 100,000 boardings	Annually
Road calls	20 or less	1 per 10,000 miles	Annually
Accidents	2 or less	1 accident per 100,000 miles	Annually
Annual ridership	171,925	175,000-180,000 [a]	Annually

Source: Prairie Five RIDES Service Data Template, Prairie Five RIDES 9/21/18 correspondence

[a] Given national trends of declining ridership, maintaining or increasing current ridership is a reasonable goal for Prairie Five RIDES. Prairie Five RIDES increased its ridership from 2016 to

2017, indicating that increasing its ridership, especially given the extended service hours, is a reasonable goal, despite national trends.

[b] *Prairie Five RIDES' riders per revenue hour metrics for the City Bus greatly exceed the national average, while the regional demand response is at the lowest end of the national average. Given extended service options in the next five years, a modest increase is a reasonable goal. For more information, see https://humantransit.org/2018/02/is-microtransit-a-sensible-transit-investment.html.*

8. Operations

Prairie Five RIDES operates demand response transit service throughout a five-county service area, with additional "City Bus" service in seven cities. Regional service is provided throughout the state using buses, vans, and volunteer drivers. The agency has 42 full-time and part-time employees on staff, including managers, drivers, dispatch operators, an administrative assistant, and a maintenance worker. Out-of-service area trips are also provided primarily by a team of about 15 volunteer drivers.

8.1 Background

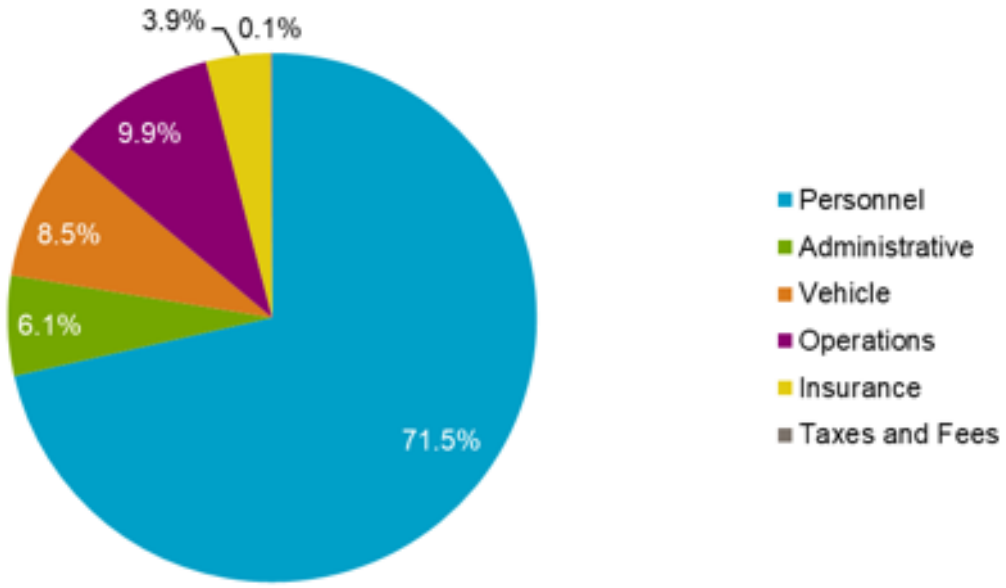
Prairie Five RIDES requests operational funding from MnDOT on an annual basis. In 2018, Prairie Five RIDES had an operating budget of $2.3 million, after fuel tax reimbursement, as shown in Table 22. These projected costs were projected to be offset by $340,000 in anticipated operating revenue and system revenues. As shown on Figure 21, the majority of the Prairie Five RIDES budget is used toward personnel, including expenses such as salaries, wages, and fringe benefits, followed by operations and vehicle expenses such as fuel, tires, and maintenance costs.

Table 22. 2018 Operating Budget Request

Line Item	Amount Budgeted
Personnel	$1,617,775
Administrative	$138,500
Vehicle	$193,000
Operations	$223,500
Insurance	$89,000
Taxes and Fees	$2,300
Expense Sub-Total (does not include operating revenue or refunds)	**$2,264,075**
Operating Revenue	$340,000
Total Revenue Amount	**$340,000**
Refund Amount	**($7,000)**
Total Expense	**$1,931,075**

Source: Prairie Five RIDES Operating Budget 2018

Figure 21. 2018 Budgeted Operational Expenses



Source: Prairie Five RIDES Operating Budget 2018

8.2 Historical and Projected Annual Summary

Historically, Prairie Five RIDES has grown from a small senior volunteer driver program to a demand response transit service provider spanning five counties. Below is a summary of some of the agency's operating highlights over the past several years:[5]

- In 2013, Montevideo Transit merged with Prairie Five RIDES.
- In 2014, Prairie Five RIDES expanded its service hours to provide transit rides to and from work.
- In 2015, Prairie Five RIDES restructured its dispatch office to allow for a better customer experience when calling to schedule a ride.
- In 2016, Prairie Five RIDES began providing City Bus service to the City of Benson.

As the Prairie Five RIDES transit system has expanded, operating expenditures have increased, but have consistently remained below its peer group average documented in the MnDOT 2014-2017 Transit Reports. Documented and projected changes in system-wide service hours, miles, and operating costs are highlighted in Table 23 and on Figure 22. Prairie Five RIDES experienced the largest increase in operating cost in 2016 due to the merger with the City of Benson.

[5] Sources: 2014 MnDOT Transit Report, 2015 MnDOT Transit Report, 2016 MnDOT Transit Report, 2017 MnDOT Transit Report.

Table 23. System Cost Efficiency by Year (2013-2020)

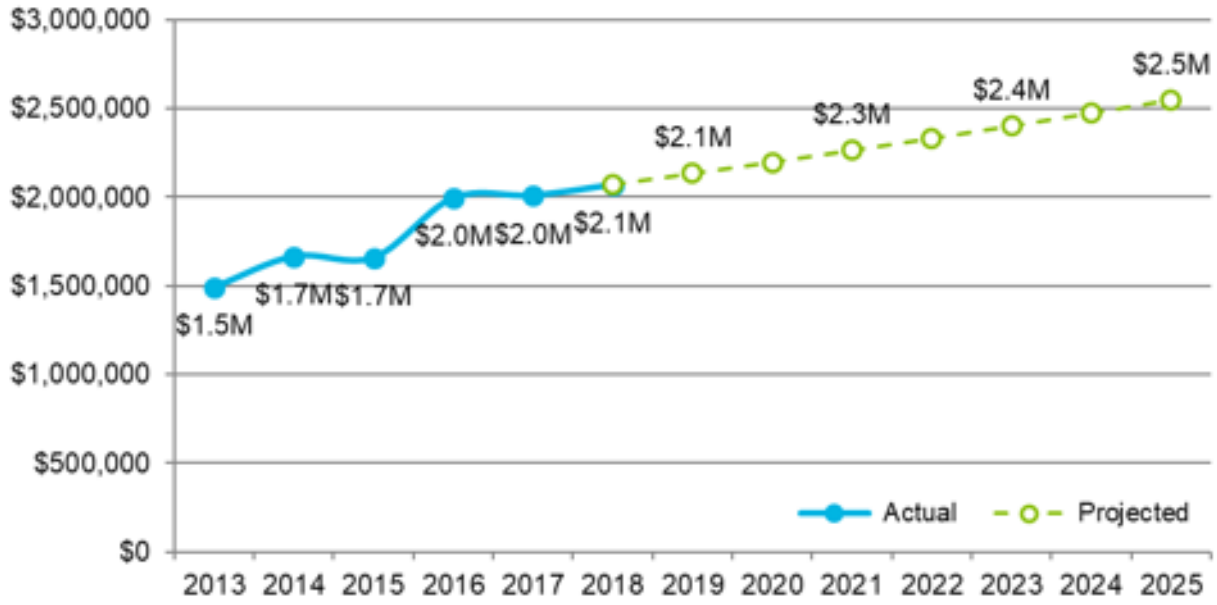
Year	Revenue Hours	Percent Change Revenue Hours	Revenue Miles	Percent Change Revenue Miles	Operating Cost	Percent Change Operating Cost
2013[a]	30,231	—	—	—	$1,493,185	—
2014 [a]	29,343	−2.9%	—	—	$1,667,582	11.7%
2015 [a]	39,468	34.5%	—	—	$1,660,325	−0.4%
2016 [a]	41,601	5.4%	—	—	$1,997,704	20.3%
2017	41,949	0.8%	595,733	—	$2,011,670	0.7%
2018	43,207	3.0%	613,605	3.0%	$2,072,000 [b]	3.0%
2019	44,504	3.0%	632,013	3.0%	$2,134,000 [b]	3.0%
2020	45,839	3.0%	650,974	3.0%	$2,198,000 [b]	3.0%

Sources: Prairie Five RIDES Service Data Template, 2014 MnDOT Transit Report, 2015 MnDOT Transit Report, 2016 MnDOT Transit Report, 2017 MnDOT Transit Report, 2018 MnDOT Transit Report, AECOM 2019

[a] Values summed from Prairie Five RIDES and Benson Heartland Express.

[b] Values projected based on 3% inflation rate.

Figure 22. Actual and Projected Operating Costs by Year (2013-2025)



Sources: 2014 MnDOT Transit Report, 2015 MnDOT Transit Report, 2016 MnDOT Transit Report, 2017 MnDOT Transit Report, 2018 MnDOT Transit Report, AECOM 2019

8.3 Staffing

There are 42 total staff working for Prairie Five RIDES, of which 40% are full-time and 60% are part-time (Table 24). Most employees, 76%, are drivers. One of the identified strengths of the Prairie Five RIDES system is its driver testing. Prairie Five RIDES staff members provide training to drivers before their tests, which has proven to be very successful in gaining more drivers on staff.

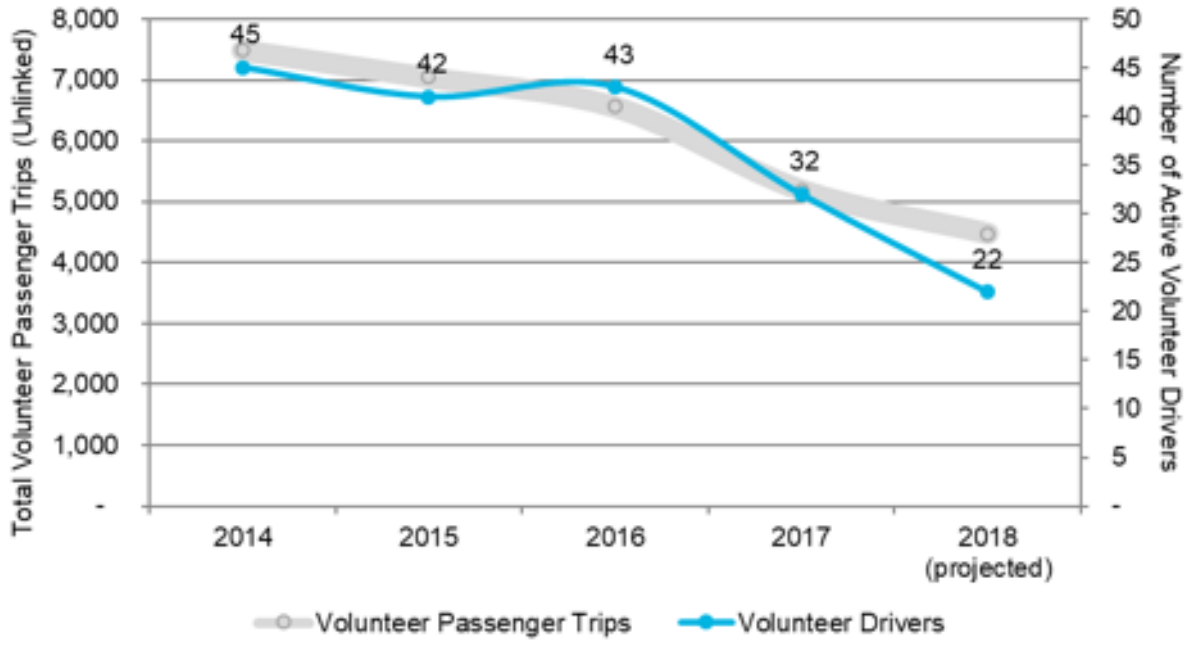
Table 24. Prairie Five RIDES Staffing

Type of Staff	Management/ Supervising	Drivers	Dispatch/ Scheduling	Administrative/ Support	Maintenance	Total
Full Time	3	8	4	1	1	17
Part Time	0	24	0	0	1	25
Total	3	32	4	1	2	42

Source: Prairie Five RIDES Operations Template, Prairie Five RIDES 4/16/19 correspondence

Additionally, 15 volunteer drivers (as of 2019) currently provide regional rides to Prairie Five RIDES customers. The number of volunteer drivers has rapidly declined over the past several years, as shown on Figure 23.

Figure 23. Prairie Five RIDES Volunteer Drivers (2014-2018)



Source: Prairie Five RIDES Service Data Template

8.4 2020-2025 Annual Needs

The Transportation Research Board's Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 161 outlines methods for quantifying need and forecasting demand for rural passenger

transportation.[6] Appendix C contains the detailed data and worksheets used to quantify the transit need and demand for this Five-Year Transit System Plan. Transportation need, summarized in Table 25, is defined as the total number of households without a vehicle times the mobility gap, which is the difference between the daily trip rate for rural households having one personal vehicle and rural households having no personal vehicle. Within the five counties that comprise the Prairie Five RIDES service area, there is an annual need for 640,800 one-way trips, or 729,000 if Granite Falls is included. Transportation needs can be met through a variety of options, including taxi service, volunteer drivers, community partners, or transit providers such as Prairie Five RIDES.

In 2010, the state legislature asked MnDOT to determine the level of funding required to meet at least 80% of public transit need in Greater Minnesota by 2015, and 90% of need by 2025. The legislature set the goal but did not provide additional funding or mandate that the need must be met. The transit providers participated in developing the strategies to increase ridership in Greater Minnesota. However, the GMTIP does not include detailed direction for the transit providers as transit service is based on local needs and resources.

Table 25. Transit Need/Mobility by County

County	Annual Number of One-Way Trips Needed
Big Stone	112,800
Chippewa	131,700
Lac qui Parle	85,100
Swift	164,400
Yellow Medicine	146,800
Granite Falls (city)	88,200
Total	729,000

Source: Prairie Five RIDES, 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates, AECOM

This five-year transit system plan for Prairie Five RIDES complements the GMTIP by identifying the need for public transit and priorities unique to the transit provider. Recommendations and investments listed in this plan were developed with input from the community, stakeholders, and transit provider staff and are opportunities to improve current transit service and expand service.

TCRP-161 provides several methods for estimating categories of transit demand, provided in Table 26. General purpose rural non-program demand is based entirely on demographic factors indicating decreased mobility, including population over age 60, mobility limited population between ages 16 and 64, and population without access to a vehicle. Demand for General public rural passenger transportation is calculated based on the estimated trip need and passenger miles of service in operation. Both estimates of demand are significantly below Prairie Five RIDES' 2017 ridership of 171,925 (see Section 4.1), indicating that current services in the Prairie Five RIDES service area are performing better than demographic factors and service levels would predict. Accordingly, ridership targets and revenue estimation for future service expansions should be based on demonstrated performance of the system rather than national indicators.

[6] Transportation Research Board, TCRP Report 161, *Methods for Forecasting Demand and Quantifying Need for Rural Passenger Transportation: Final Workbook*, http://www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/168758.aspx.

Table 26. Transit Demand by Service Area

Transit Demand Method	Annual Number of One-Way Trips In Demand
General Purpose Rural Non-Program Demand	36,600
General Public Rural Passenger Transportation	47,700

Source: Prairie Five RIDES, 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates, LEHD 2015, AECOM

8.4.1 Staffing Needs

Prairie Five RIDES anticipates needing an additional dispatcher position

To account for service increases (both internal and from the merger with Granite Falls Heartland Express), Prairie Five RIDES anticipates needing to hire an additional dispatcher. This position would assist in dispatching demand response service to calls throughout the service area and would start in 2020

Prairie Five RIDES would benefit from an additional maintenance staff position

To account for vehicle fleet growth (both internal and from the merger with Granite Falls Heartland Express), Prairie Five RIDES anticipates needing to hire an additional maintenance/mechanical worker. This position would assist in repairing vehicles and ensuring they remain in a state of good repair and would start in 2022.

8.4.2 Operations Funding Needs

This plan includes several recommended service improvements, detailed below, that will require an annual increase in operating funds for Prairie Five RIDES over the period of 2020 to 2025.

Additional Service to Outlying Areas

The addition of an extra vehicle to cover outlying areas (e.g., Clara City and Clarkfield) from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., 5 days a week. The additional amount of operating funds needed to provide this service ranges from approximately $150,000 in 2021 to $169,000 in 2025.

Improve Service in Montevideo

Converting one or more of Montevideo's city demand response routes to fixed route would be a cost and service hours neutral option. The next fixed route service would operate on First Street and MN 7 to the Walmart Supercenter at 28th Street.

Improve Service in Benson

Converting one of Benson's two city demand response buses to fixed route service would be a cost and service hours neutral option. The fixed route service would connect Northside Elementary, Benson High School, South Side School, with Hoban Avenue to the south, while also serving portions of MN 9 and US 12. This fixed route service would function as a Benson Loop.

Regional Corridor Service on US 12

Prairie Five RIDES believes that a new fixed route service connecting Benson, De Graff, Murdock, and Kerkhoven along US 12 has the potential for strong ridership, connecting several major communities in Swift County. This route would start with one vehicle and run from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., adding an additional 4,176 service hours per year. The additional operating funds

required to provide this service range from approximately $248,000 in 2022 to $271,000 in 2025.

Regional Corridor Service on State Route 23

Prairie Five RIDES believes that a new fixed route service connecting Clara City, Maynard, Granite Falls, and Hanley across Chippewa and Yellow Medicine Counties would provide key connections and generate ridership. This route would start with one vehicle and run from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., adding an additional 4,176 service hours per year. The additional operating funds required to for this service range from approximately $248,000 in 2022 to $271,000 in 2025.

Extending Span of Existing Service

Prairie Five RIDES aims to increase its overall span of service in smaller towns. Increasing one bus on each demand response route by one hour creates a service span of 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. This adds an additional 6,630 service hours annually. The additional operating funds required to provide this service range from approximately $433,000 in 2024 to $446,000 in 2025

Mini Hubs for Regional Service Integration

Prairie Five RIDES would like to offer better connections for its customers to other transit providers in the region (outside of its service hours). To accommodate these riders, Prairie Five Rides would like to establish miniature transfer hubs for routes to intersect with. For the transfer hubs, four sheltered bus stops are to be constructed at around $24,000 each in 2025, for a grand capital total of $96,000.

9. Financial

The Prairie Five RIDES 2017 operating costs and revenue sources are shown in Table 27 and on Figure 24. In 2017, the agency's total operating costs were about $2,012,000, with about $386,000 in farebox revenue (approximately 19% farebox recovery rate). Federal and state revenue sources provide 85% of rural transit agencies' annual operating expenses. The remaining 15% of the annual operating expenses come from local revenue sources. Prairie Five RIDES' local share is comprised of fare revenue. In 2017, the local revenue streams were able to provide the local operating share and contribute to Prairie Five RIDES' reserve account.

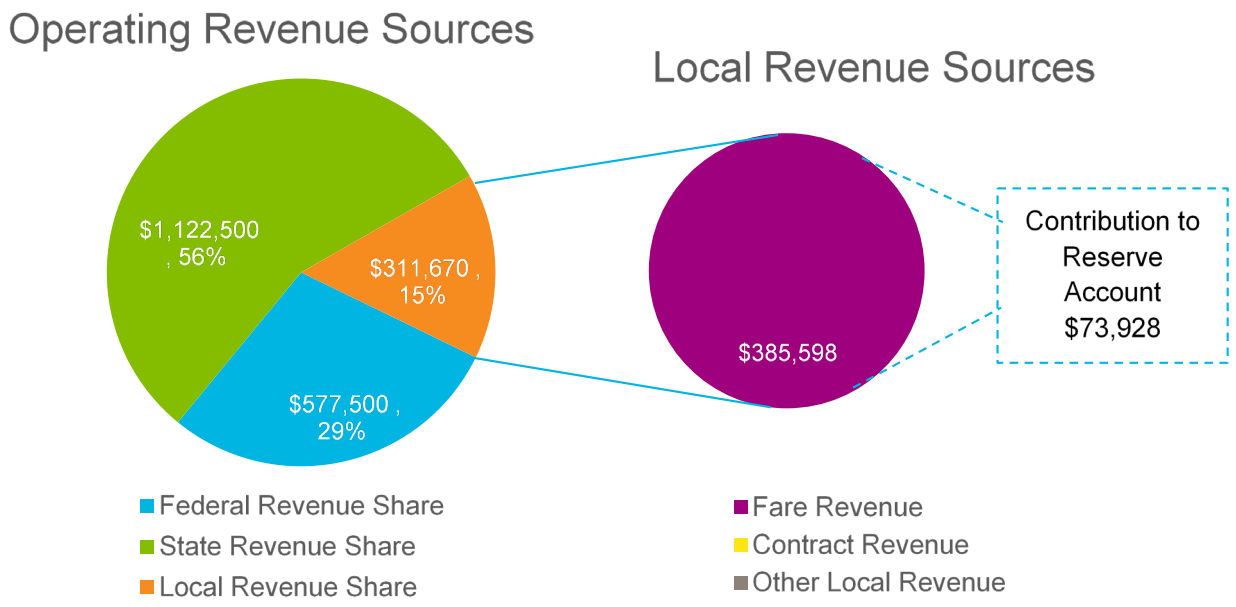
Table 27. 2017 Operating Financial Profile

Expense/Revenue Category	Amount
Operating Costs	($2,011,670)
Federal Revenue Share	$577,500
State Revenue Share	$1,122,500
Local Revenue Share	$311,670
Fare Revenue	$385,598
Contract Revenue	$0
Other Local Revenue	$0
Reserve Account[a]	($73,928)

Source: Prairie Five RIDES Fiscal Obligation Reserve Account Form 2017

[a] A negative value associated with the reserve account represents a contribution rather than a withdrawal.

Figure 24. 2017 Operating Revenue by Source



Source: Prairie Five RIDES Fiscal Obligation Reserve Account Form 2017

Fares are an important source of revenue that offset the cost of operating transit services. The Prairie Five RIDES fare structure varies by service type and distance and can be paid using cash (Table 28). Fares for the demand response service that covers the five-county service area and regional trips outside of the service area are calculated on a mileage basis. City Bus service is charged a flat fare, which can be paid for using cash, a punch card, or a monthly or summer pass.

Table 28. Fare Structure

Route/Service	Adult Fare	Reduced Fare	Passes
County/Regional Service (round trip)	$0.40 per mile[a]	$0.35 per mile (youth/child)	$0.25 per mile (age 60+)
County/Regional Service (one-way)	$0.60 per mile	$0.53 per mile (youth/child)	—
City Bus Service	$2.00		Youth Punch Card (25 punches): $25 General Punch Card (20 punches): $25 Senior Punch Card (16 punches): $15 Unlimited Monthly Pass: $35.00 Kids Unlimited Summer Pass: $40 Youth Unlimited School Year Pass: $220 – 1 child $50 – each additional child $400 – Maximum per family

Source: Prairie Five RIDES

[a] $5 minimum per trip.

9.1 Background

Transit providers serving Greater Minnesota receive funding from several sources at the federal, state, and local levels. Specifically, transit funding is comprised of:

- Federal Transit Funding, USDOT (FTA)
- State General Fund appropriations
- State Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST)
- State Motor Vehicle Lease Sales Tax (MVLST)
- Local Share: farebox recovery, local tax levies, local contracts for service

Transit providers in Greater Minnesota generally receive federal funding through the Section 5311 Non-urbanized Area Formula Program, which provides capital and operating funding for small urban and rural areas, including intercity bus transportation. MnDOT is responsible for distributing federal funds to transit providers in Greater Minnesota.

MnDOT also distributes state funding from the General Fund and Transit Assistance Fund to Greater Minnesota transit providers. Transit services have received funding from the state's General Fund every year for decades. However, most of the state funding for Greater Minnesota transit providers comes from the Transit Assistance Fund, which receives revenue through the MVST and MVLST.

Minnesota State law requires local participation in funding public transit services in Greater Minnesota. A statutory fixed-share funding formula sets a local share of operating costs by system classification as noted in Table 29. Local revenue sources that can provide the local match include farebox revenues, local property taxes, local sales taxes, contracted route revenues, advertising revenue, or program revenue.

Table 29. Operating Transit Programs Required Local Match

Program (Recipient Classifications)	Percentage of Required Local Match
Elderly and Disabled	15%
Rural (population <2,500)	15%
Small Urban (population >2,500 and <50,000)	20%
Urbanized (population >50,000)	20%

Source: MnDOT Greater Transit Funding in Minnesota

State and federal funding for public transit should cover the remaining 80% or 85% of operating costs. The percentage of total funds spent on transit that are provided locally are higher than the mandated local share. Transit systems in Greater Minnesota often provide additional service that is not recognized in the funding formula, thus the total percentage of local funding for transit service in Greater Minnesota is more than 20%.

Refer to MnDOT's OTAT website for up to date information regarding funding.[7]

[7] http://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/.

9.2 History

Historical operating expenditures for Prairie Five RIDES are detailed in Table 30, and the breakdown of funding sources is illustrated on Figure 25. Total operating expenditures increased by 35% from 2013 to 2017. This is likely due to the merger with Montevideo Transit in 2013 and the City of Benson in 2016. The state and federal share has generally increased over time, dropping slightly from 2014 to 2015, but peaking in 2017 for a net increase of 58%. The local share percentage has decreased over time, dropping to 15.4% in 2016, and 15.5% in 2017.

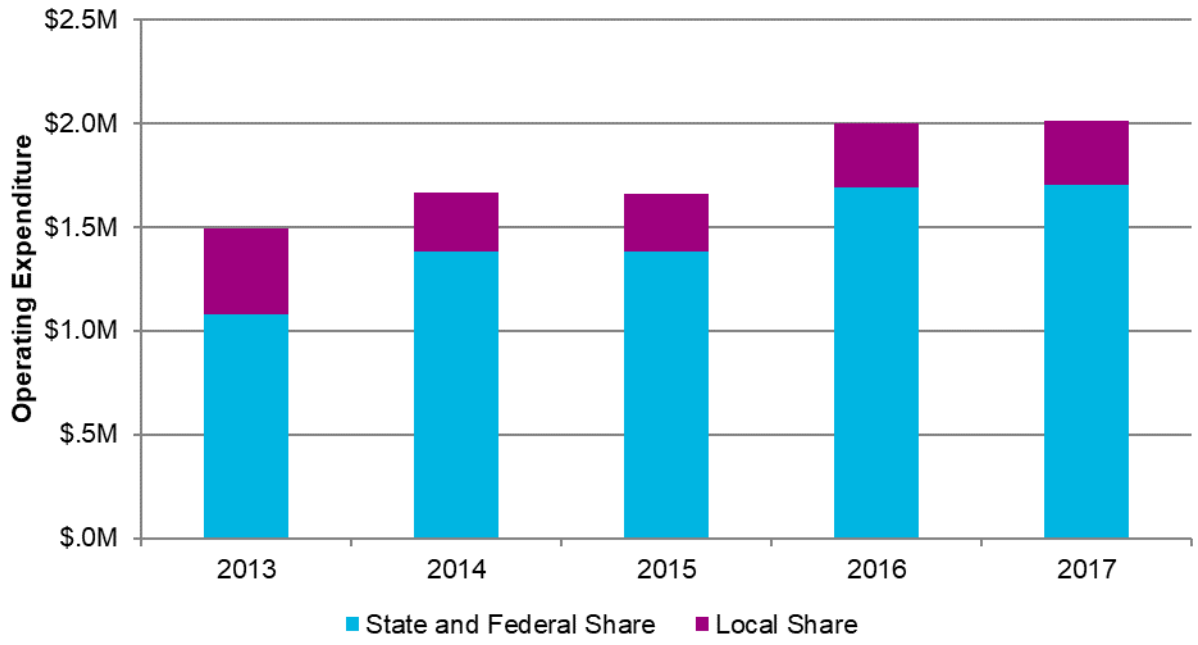
Table 30. Prairie Five RIDES Operating Expenditures (2013-2017)

Year	Total Expenditures	State and Federal Share	Local Share	% Local Share
2013[a]	$1,493,185	$1,076,950	$416,235	27.9%
2014 [a]	$1,667,582	$1,384,068	$283,514	17.0%
2015 [a]	$1,660,325	$1,380,357	$279,968	16.9%
2016 [a]	$1,997,704	$1,689,110	$308,594	15.4%
2017	$2,011,670	$1,700,000	$311,670	15.5%

Sources: 2014 MnDOT Transit Report, 2015 MnDOT Transit Report, 2016 MnDOT Transit Report, 2017 MnDOT Transit Report, 2018 MnDOT Transit Report

[a] Values summed from Prairie Five RIDES and Benson Heartland Express.

Figure 25. Prairie Five RIDES Operating Expenditure Funding Sources (2013-2017)[a]



Sources: 2014 MnDOT Transit Report, 2015 MnDOT Transit Report, 2016 MnDOT Transit Report, 2017 MnDOT Transit Report, 2018 MnDOT Transit Report

[a] Values for 2013-2016 summed from Prairie Five RIDES and Benson Heartland Express.

Historical capital expenditures are detailed in Table 31, and the breakdown of funding sources is illustrated on Figure 26. The major capital purchases for Prairie Five RIDES include buses and technology improvements. In 2013, capital expenditures totaled $226,748, by far the highest amount used for capital purchases in the past several years. The agency invested in five bus replacements in 2013, installed cameras on all its buses, and expanded use of tablets on many of its buses. Additionally, Prairie Five RIDES invested in buses in 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017 with the City of Benson also investing in a bus in 2015. The local share for each purchase was 20% with state and federal funds used for the remaining 80%, except for 2014, which had a 24% local share.

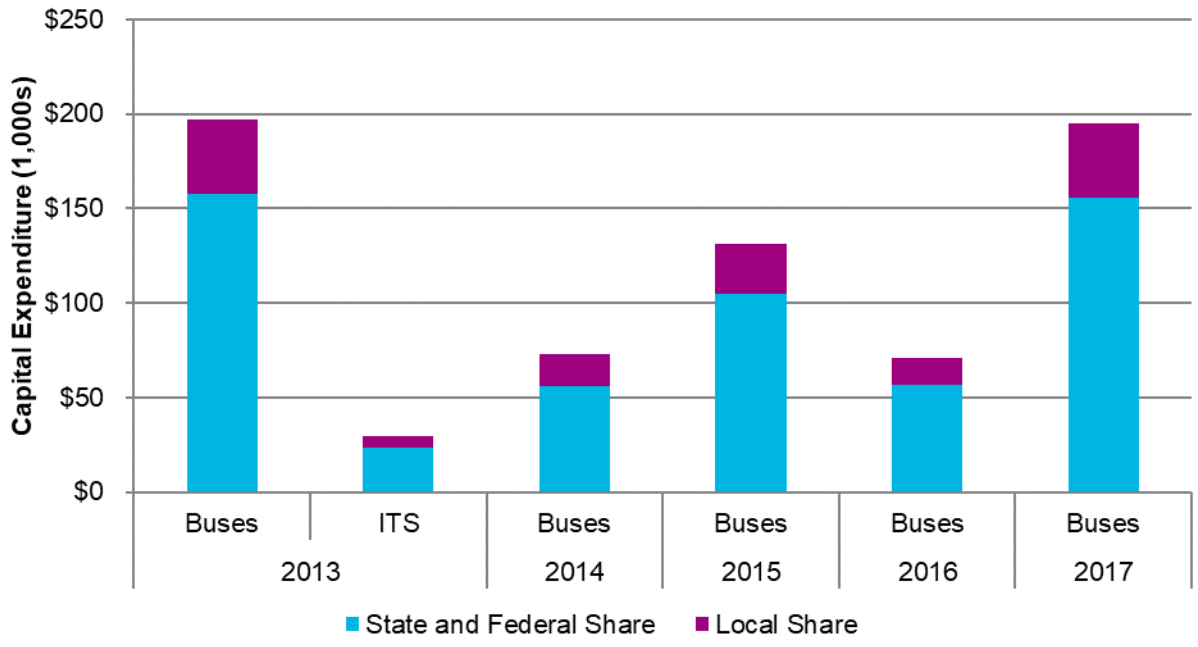
Table 31. Prairie Five RIDES Capital Expenditures (2013-2017)

Year	Asset Category	Total Expenditures	State and Federal Share	Local Share
2013 [a]	Buses	$197,124	$157,699	$39,425
2013 [a]	ITS	$29,624	$23,699	$5,925
2014 [a]	Buses	$73,294	$56,000	$17,294
2015 [a]	Buses	$131,162	$104,930	$26,232
2016 [a]	Buses	$70,844	$56,675	$14,169
2017	Bus and Service Vehicle	$194,716	$155,515	$39,201

Sources: 2014 MnDOT Transit Report, 2015 MnDOT Transit Report, 2016 MnDOT Transit Report, 2017 MnDOT Transit Report, 2018 MnDOT Transit Report

[a] Values summed from Prairie Five RIDES and Benson Heartland Express.

Figure 26. Prairie Five RIDES Capital Expenditure Funding Sources (2013-2017)[a]

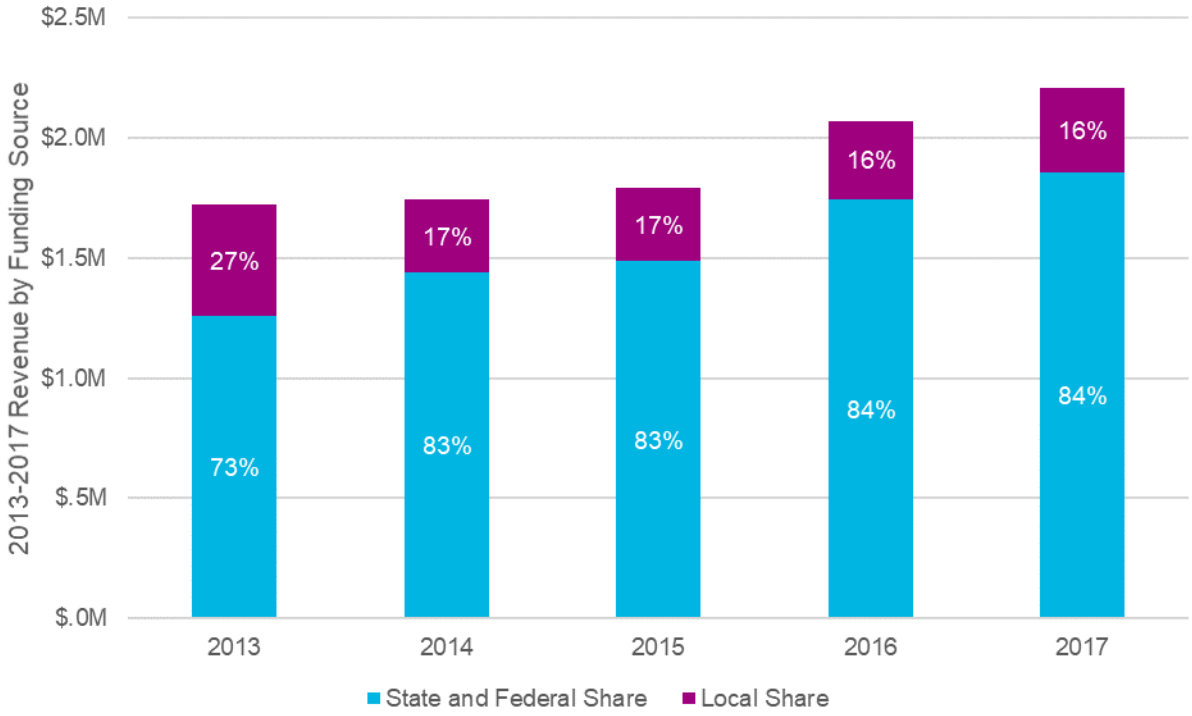


Sources: 2014 MnDOT Transit Report, 2015 MnDOT Transit Report, 2016 MnDOT Transit Report, 2017 MnDOT Transit Report, 2018 MnDOT Transit Report

[a] Values for 2013-2016 were summed from Prairie Five RIDES and Benson Heartland Express.

Figure 27 illustrates annual changes to the total available capital and operating revenue by revenue source. As shown, total funding increased from approximately $1.7 million in 2013 to approximately $2.2 million in 2017. Federal and state revenue was approximately $1.3 million in 2013, increasing to about $1.9 million 2017. The local share has generally decreased over time, from about $462,000 in 2013, remaining somewhat consistent in 2014 and 2015 at around $300,000, and increasing to approximately $323,000 in 2016 and $351,000 in 2017.

Figure 27. Change in Total Available Capital and Operating Revenue by Source (2013-2017)[a]



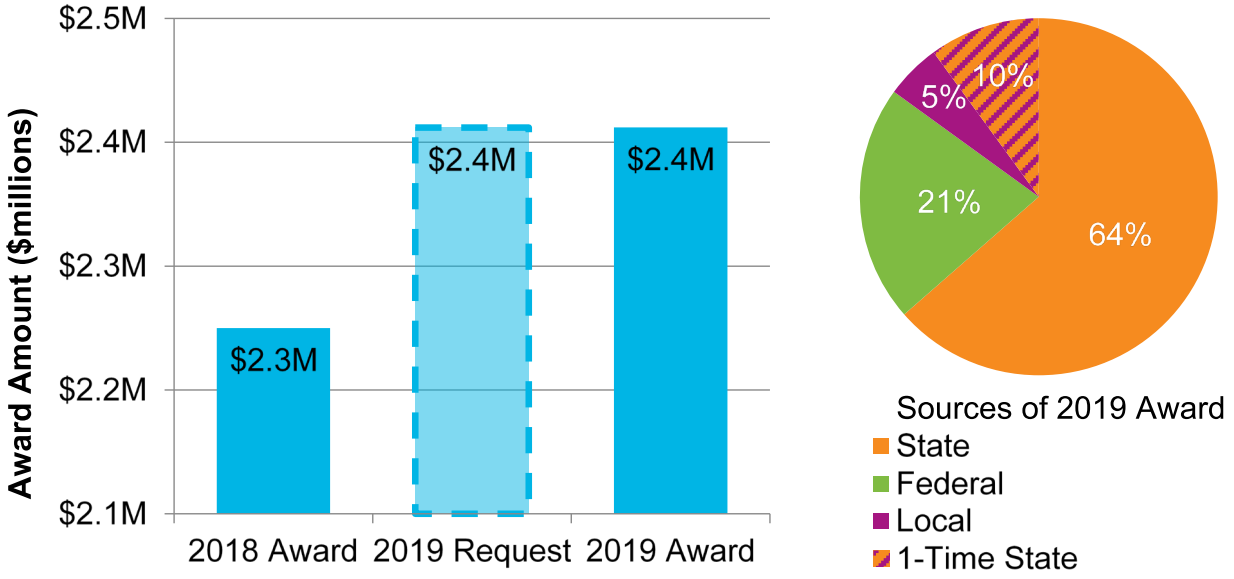
Sources: 2014 MnDOT Transit Report, 2015 MnDOT Transit Report, 2016 MnDOT Transit Report, 2017 MnDOT Transit Report, 2018 MnDOT Transit Report

[a] *Values summed from Prairie Five RIDES and Benson Heartland Express.*

9.3 Budgeted Revenue

Prairie Five RIDES has historically relied upon grants from federal, state, and local sources to operate. Figure 28 illustrates requested and granted funds from 2018 to 2019. The 2019 grant award is marginally larger (by about $135) than the amount requested by Prairie Five RIDES and represents a 7% increase from the 2018 award. Additionally, MnDOT has approved a one-time across-the-board 10% reduction in the local share required for Greater Minnesota transit providers' 2019 Public Transit Operating Grant. This means that the local share for Prairie Five RIDES has been reduced from 15% to 5% for 2019 only.

Figure 28. Grant Requests and Awards (2018-2019)

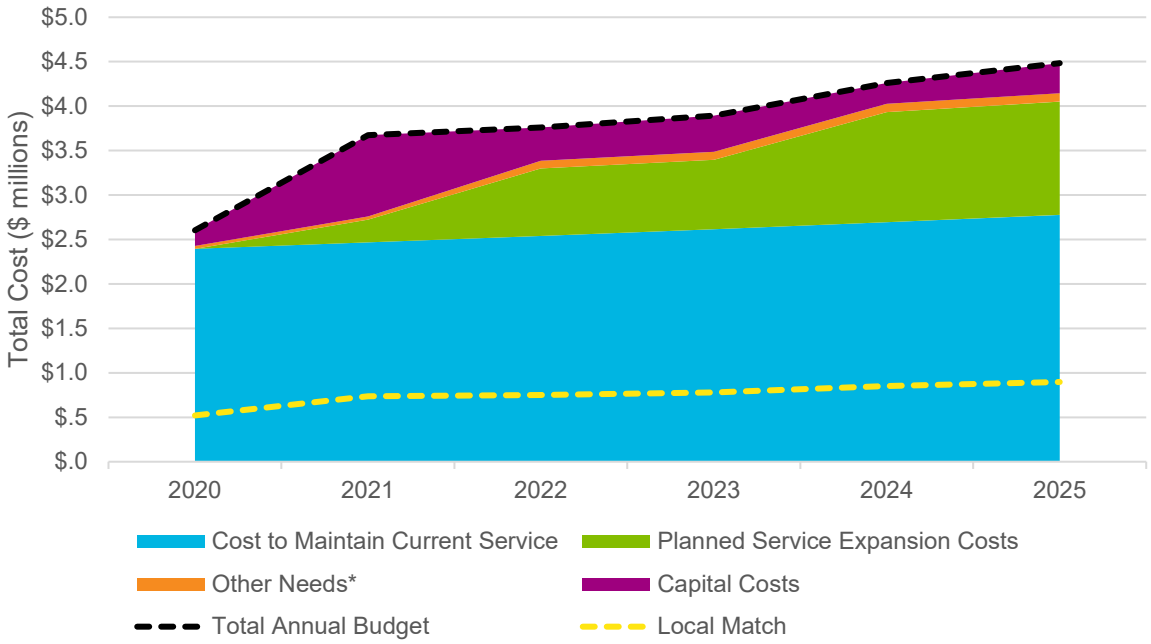


Source: MnDOT 2019 Transit Grant Requests and Awards Compared to 2018 Grant Awards

9.4 2020-2025 Needs vs. Projected Revenue

Capital and operating plans for 2020 through 2025 are included in Appendix A. The combined capital and operating expenses are summarized on Figure 29. As shown, costs to maintain current service, planned service expansion costs, and other needs are expected to increase steadily each year. Additional service to outlying areas of the service area will be implemented in 2021,new fixed routes on US 12 and MN 23 will be implemented in 2022, and expanded span of service will be implemented in 2024. There will be two new positions (dispatcher and maintenance person) created to support the service changes. Vehicle expansion and technology improvements in 2021, 2023, 2024, and 2025 will increase capital costs relative to other years. Local match would increase from approximately $521,000 in 2020 to approximately $897,000 in 2025.

Figure 29. 2020-2025 Plan, Local Revenue Requirements



Source: Capital and Operating Templates for 2020-2025 (Appendix A)

**Other needs are non-capital and non-service costs, which include the annually recurring costs for maintenance, human resources, marketing, and safety and training staff positions.*

10. Agency Strategic Direction

The five-year planning process for all the rural transit service providers (FTA Section 5311) in Greater Minnesota, the first of its kind, has identified and quantified the transit services being operated around the state, which vary greatly in size and scope, and identified potential areas for improvement, expansion, and regional coordination. The provision of transit service is subject to many federal and state guidelines, which may impact how improvement, expansion, and coordination recommendations are implemented. This section describes both overarching areas of potential improvement and opportunities identified across the state as well as those specific to Prairie Five RIDES in addition to local, state, and federal requirements.

10.1 Requirements

The provision of transit service is subject to many local, state, and federal guidelines.

10.1.1 Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

FTA Section 5311 provides formula-based grants to support rural areas for transit capital, planning, and operating assistance.[8] Guidance on the grant, requirements, compliance, and application process is available online[9] and through the MnDOT OTAT.[10]

[8] https://www.transit.dot.gov/rural-formula-grants-5311.
[9] https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circulars/formula-grants-rural-areas-program-guidance-and-application.

FTA is a major funder of rural transit service in Greater Minnesota. MnDOT operates as the primary recipient of FTA Section 5311 funds. As such, all Greater Minnesota transit service providers (sub-recipients) receiving FTA Section 5311 funds, through MnDOT as the recipient, must comply with FTA regulations. FTA regulations pertain, but are not limited to, major topic areas, including training, safety, maintenance, service, procurement, and asset management. Any contracted service by transit agencies, including taxi services, must also comply with FTA requirements.

Prairie Five RIDES is not aware of any issues related to FTA compliance in the delivery of its service.

FTA also requires compliance with the ADA, Olmstead Plan, and Title VI, described in more detail below.

10.1.2 Olmstead Plan

In 1999, the Supreme Court affirmed that mental illness is a type of disability, that individuals with disabilities, including those with mental illness, have a right to live in their communities as opposed to forcing institutionalization, and are covered by the ADA in *Olmstead vs. L.C and E.W.*[11] The State of Minnesota is one of the more progressive states in instituting a specific Olmstead Plan. Minnesota's Olmstead Plan was updated most recently in March 2018.[12]

For transit providers in Greater Minnesota, the Olmstead Plan requires that people with disabilities, including those with mental illness, are covered by the same requirements of the ADA (discussed in Section 10.1.4). It means that the level of transit service available to the general public (the span of service, frequency of service, and service area coverage) is also available to people with disabilities, including mental illness. It also means that social and human service agencies and public transit agencies should coordinate as much as possible to provide service to individuals with disabilities.

Prairie Five RIDES' demand response and deviated route services are available to all persons with disabilities, including mental illness, at no additional fee. Continued and enhanced coordination with local human services agencies is a recommended component of the marketing and public education action plan discussed in Section 11.2.

10.1.3 Title VI

FTA requires recipients and sub-recipients to comply with USDOT Title VI regulations, based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI requirements for transit services are generally related to supplying language access to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP).[13] In Greater Minnesota, MnDOT is the primary recipient of FTA funds, so all the Section 5311 transit service providers are sub-recipients. Thus, MnDOT has the primary responsibility for Title VI compliance. MnDOT may request information related to Title VI compliance, including language assistance plans or activities, public participation plans or activities including language access, etc., from the transit service providers as needed.

In Greater Minnesota, with primarily deviated fixed route and demand response service, Title VI responsibilities pertain to identifying communities with LEP and providing materials and outreach in appropriate languages.

[10] https://www.dot.state.mn.us/transit/.
[11] https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/527/581/.
[12] https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/olmstead/.
[13] https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/FTA_Title_VI_FINAL.pdf.

Prairie Five RIDES has not noted a demand for materials in other languages. Based on 2017 ACS data, less than 2% of the population in the service area reports LEP compared to approximately 5% statewide. The majority of the LEP population in the service are fluent in Spanish or Asian and/or Pacific Island language groups, but some of the LEP population speak other languages as well. Developing targeted outreach and marketing materials for these language groups is included in the marketing and public education action plan discussed in Section 11.2.

10.1.4 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA is designed to prohibit discrimination based on disability. In terms of FTA and the provision of transit service, the ADA is structured to ensure equal opportunity and access for persons with disabilities.[14] ADA requirements apply to facilities, vehicles, equipment, bus stops, level of service, fares, and provision of service.

In Greater Minnesota, with most service provided via deviated fixed route or demand response, most service-related requirements (i.e., complementary paratransit service associated with fixed route service) are inherently met by mode. Any contracted service by transit agencies, including taxi services, must also comply with FTA and ADA requirements.

MnDOT defines the types of vehicles that are available for service provision in Greater Minnesota. All the vehicles on the list are ADA compliant. Any new facilities or bus stops must be constructed to be ADA compliant. All transit service providers must complete required training.

Service provision-related equivalencies include the following for demand response service:

- The response time, fares, geographic area of service, hours and days of service, trip purpose restrictions, and availability of information and reservations capability must be the same for all riders, including those with disabilities.
- With regard to capacity denials (denials within the existing service parameters in the above bullet), denials are allowed for demand response service, as long as the frequency of denials is the same as the frequency for riders without disabilities.
- Any priority given to persons with disabilities or higher levels of service is a local decision.
- Requirements for demand response service are different than those required for ADA complementary paratransit associated with fixed route service.

Service provision-related practices include the following for deviated fixed route service:

- Advertise route deviation policies, including distance and availability.
- Establish a reasonable service area in which deviations are permitted (e.g., ¾ mile).
- Establish reasonable limits on the number of deviations per trip to ensure that the fixed route portion of the service is able to operate on time.
- Apply reasonable surcharges for deviations (e.g., deviation surcharges no more than twice the base fare).

All Prairie Five RIDES vehicles are ADA compliant. Any future investments in capital items such as bus shelters, additional vehicles, and new or remodeled facilities will be inclusive of ADA requirements. Investments in new dispatch software and other technology will provide Prairie

[14] https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/Final_FTA_ADA_Circular_C_4710.1.pdf.

Five RIDES with the data needed to demonstrate that capacity denials are not disproportionately impacting individuals with disabilities.

10.1.5 Agency

MnDOT is responsible for making sure each provider (sub-recipient) complies with FTA Section 5311 requirements. MnDOT also has additional requirements for the transit service providers, including:

- Service data for National Transit Database (NTD)
  - Monthly and annually
  - By mode
- Grant management
- Fleet inventory
- Denials
  - Capacity
  - Unmet Need
- On-time performance (pickup window)
- Percentage of communities with baseline span of service
- Performance metrics
  - Passengers per hour
  - Cost per service hour
  - Cost per trip
  - Service area
  - Service hours per capita
  - Farebox recovery
  - Advance reservation time
  - Passenger complaints
  - Road calls per 10,000 miles
  - Accidents per 100,000 miles

MnDOT reports annual NTD statistics and created and maintains the *Transit Asset Management Plan* for all FTA Section 5311 transit service providers.

10.2 Opportunities

In discussing opportunities with transit service providers throughout Greater Minnesota, several overarching opportunities were identified. They are discussed in Section 10.2.1. Opportunities specific to Prairie Five RIDES are discussed in Section 10.2.2.

10.2.1 Southwest Region

The Southwest Region encompasses 22 counties in southwestern Minnesota, between the Twin Cities Metropolitan area, the border with Iowa to the south, and with South Dakota to the west

(Figure 30). Across the Southwest Region, several themes emerged related to the following opportunities:

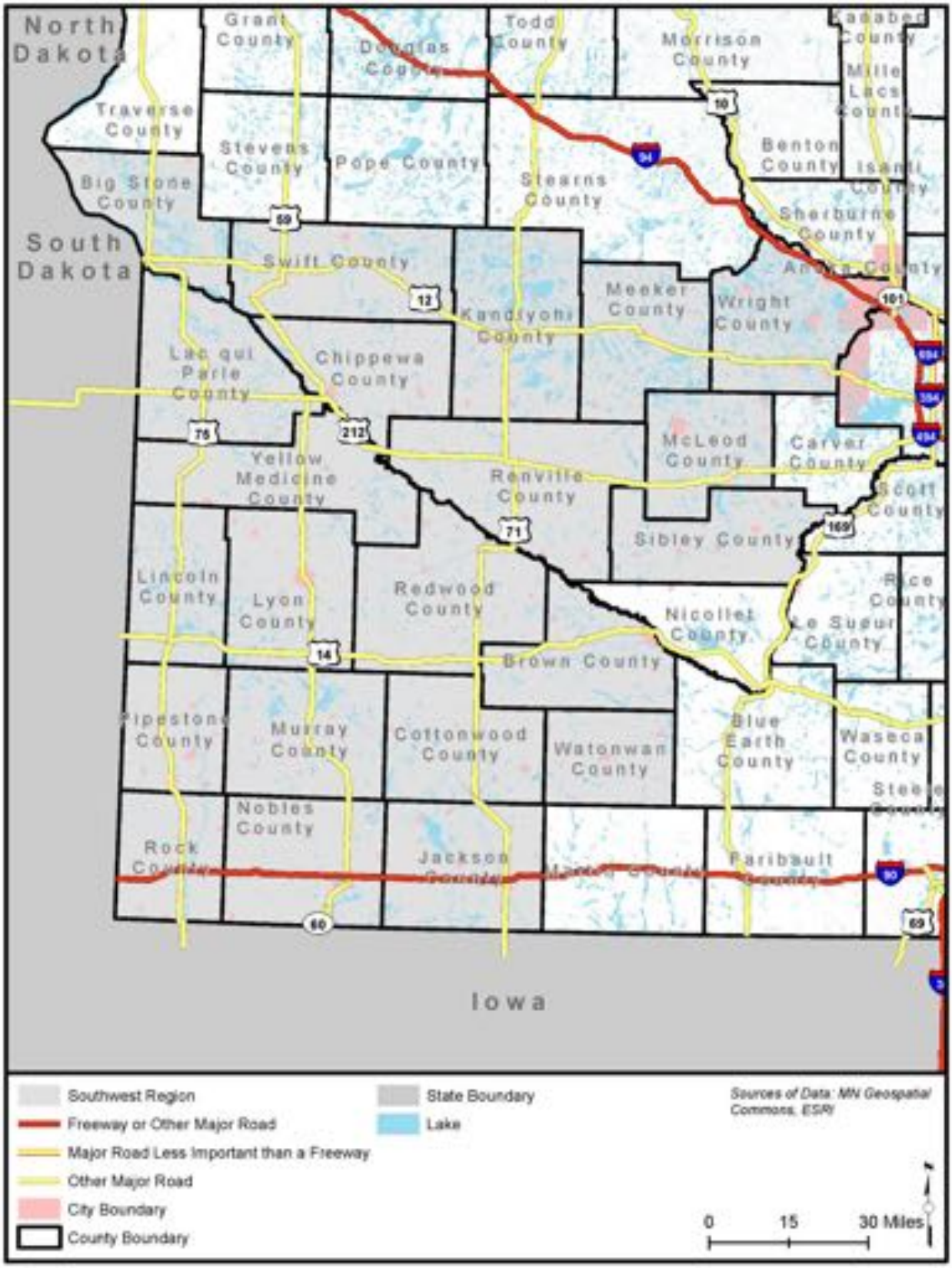
- Regional coordination
- Marketing
- Mobility management
- Data standardization and tracking
- Transit manager handbook
- Succession planning
- Technology
- Online trip planner/apps/GTFS
- Bulk procurement

Regional connections for employment, medical appointments, socialization, and other trip purposes have been identified by many transit service providers as both a need and a challenge to operate. Many of the longer distance trips are not being completed by public transit but rather by volunteer drivers. Some providers do provide regional services into metropolitan areas or into neighboring counties. As the volunteer driver pools decrease over time, identifying a public transit solution to regional connectivity will be vital. One effort to fill regional transportation gaps is already underway. The Minnesota Departments of Transportation and Human Services, in collaboration with other state agencies, are working with the Metropolitan Council, and other local governments and organizations, to create regional transportation coordinating councils as appropriate throughout Minnesota. Coordination between transportation providers and service agencies has been a goal and strategy to fill transportation gaps, provide more service with the same or fewer resources, streamline access to transportation, and provide customers more options of where and when to travel.

Getting the word out about the services that are available and how to use the transit service are themes that emerged from every transit service provider in Greater Minnesota. Developing marketing plans and getting out into the community is very time-consuming. Many providers could use additional staff for marketing activities, either a full-time staff position, or a shared regional staff position. Another solution may be to hire individuals in a mobility management role or train schedulers to all serve a mobility management role. Mobility managers are well versed in all types of transportation services in a community and work with customers to identify the best program for that customer. Mobility managers also work with community organizations, human service agencies, major employers, and others to get the word out about transit services and how to use them, including providing travel training for potential riders in some cases.

Data collection, organization, and reporting varies greatly from transit service provider to transit service provider. This inconsistency comes from different modes, different operating models, different types and level of technology, among other reasons. MnDOT has the opportunity through this five-year transit system planning process to identify and incorporate data standards, definitions, and tracking procedures. These could be documented in a Transit Manager’s Handbook, something that would be helpful to guide transit managers in planning, operating, and reporting transit services. Staff turnover and the need for succession were mentioned by several transit agencies, both from the perspective of new staff and older staff nearing retirement age. A Transit Manager’s Handbook would be helpful in both cases.

Figure 30. Southwest Region



Technology also varies greatly from provider to provider; sometimes because of the size of the organization, sometimes because of technical support, sometimes because of staff size. New technology is becoming available and more affordable by the day. Transit service providers and MnDOT have many opportunities to increase the efficiency of service provision and improve customer service through investment in technology. Two primary opportunities came up regarding technology with many providers:

- Increase awareness of the service and ability to understand how the service works by developing and publishing general transit feed specifications for flexible service (GTFS-Flex) for each transit service provider. This would enable anyone using Google Maps or Apple Maps or other mainstream online trip planners to see a transit service provider's service area or routes, hours of operation, and trip reservation procedure when they enter in an origin and a destination. It would automatically show whether transit service was available and how to use it.
- Save money, connect adjacent systems, and build regional connectivity and collaboration through bulk procurement of technology, especially scheduling/dispatching software.

10.2.2 Prairie Five RIDES

Opportunities identified specific to Prairie Five RIDES included:

- New mode – potential for fixed route "regional corridor" service
- New mode – potential for fixed routes (or deviated routes) in Montevideo and Benson
- New buses for service expansions
- Potential to use more minivans in place of buses
- Expansion of span of service in smaller/outlying areas
- Development of a better marketing/branding strategy
- Development of an app that allows users to plan their rides
- Investment in new dispatch software
- Improved data collection with improved technology
- Development of targeted outreach strategies and marketing materials to reach more potential transit riders
- Improved coordination with stakeholders and neighboring rural transit service providers

10.3 Risks/Challenges

As with opportunities, risks and challenges were also identified. Risks and challenges are summarized in this section in terms of themes throughout Greater Minnesota (Section 10.3.1) and specific to Prairie Five RIDES (Section 10.3.2).

10.3.1 Southwest Region

Potential risk and challenge themes identified across the Southwest Region (Figure 30) included:

- Funding
  - Longevity and dependability
  - Local match

  - Contracts
  - Performance-based
- Staffing
  - Drivers
  - Professional staff
- Fleet
  - Vehicles, number of wheelchair positions
  - Expansion
  - Replacement
  - Fleet classification/spare ratio
- Data collection/data tracking
- Performance tracking

Funding is a frequently cited concern in Greater Minnesota. Concerns are related to the longevity and dependability of state and federal funding; use of tax revenue for local match vs. fare and contract revenue; contracts, including multi-year contracts; and any future performance-based requirements for funding. Historically, some transit service providers have been conservative about instituting new services because of perceived performance pitfalls and longevity of funding. Moving forward focusing on improvement and expansion of service and the opportunities identified in the previous section, funding dependability, diversification, and documentation will be important.

Several providers mentioned difficulty in finding, hiring, and retaining drivers – both professional drivers and volunteer drivers. Training drivers and supporting drivers while working towards a commercial driver's license is also a challenge and can be costly. Additionally, finding qualified staff to fill roles associated with operations, management, dispatching/scheduling, marketing, technology, etc., can be challenging in rural areas. Generally, people with higher technical skills live and work in metropolitan areas, where there are generally more opportunities for high skilled labor than in rural areas. [15] The labor pool is much smaller in a rural area.

Other potential challenges focus on fleet. Some transit service providers operate in rural areas with high proportions of disabled riders. As such, some require vehicles with more than two wheelchair positions. Diversifying vehicles available for use in Greater Minnesota may be required to implement some of the solutions identified in the five-year transit system plans and to realize the opportunities described in the previous section. Other areas for concern regarding fleet include being able to expand the fleet based on unmet needs; replacing vehicles that have higher-than average maintenance costs even if they have not exceeded their useful life; policies for classifying fleet and using retired fleet in service or as spares; and maintaining an appropriate spare ratio. Several transit service providers reported service reductions due to an ineffective spare ratio or the inability to expand the fleet.

Finally, potential challenges exist regarding data collection, data tracking, and performance tracking. As mentioned in the previous section, an opportunity exists to standardize data collection, reporting and tracking. This is an ambitious goal due to the variety of scheduling software that is being used, the lack of any software in some cases, and the variety of operating

[15] "Workforce Skills across the Urban-Rural Hierarchy." Federal Reserve Bank of New York Staff Report. February 2012. https://www.newyorkfed.org/medialibrary/media/research/staff_reports/sr552.pdf.

models that exist. To realize some of the opportunities, some level of standardization would be required.

10.3.2 Prairie Five RIDES

Potential risks and challenges identified by Prairie Five RIDES included:

- Local match
- Staffing
- Projected volunteer driver shortage
- Policies
- Performance
- Data tracking

11. Increasing Transit Use for Agency

As the goal set forth by state legislature is to understand what level of funding it would take to meet 90% of the transportation needs in Greater Minnesota by 2025, the primary assumption in the development of the five-year transit system plans is that transit agencies need to expand and grow ridership. Strategies to improve transit services and increase ridership were described in detail in previous chapters. Another crucial element to increasing ridership and growing transit mode share in an area is a comprehensive marketing and education strategy. Ridership will not increase if the community does not know that the service exists or how to use it.

Section 11.1 describes the elements of a comprehensive marketing and education program that could help Prairie Five RIDES grow ridership and community awareness. Section 11.2 describes an action plan for growing ridership and community awareness.

11.1 Marketing

Complementing the recommendations previously described in this five-year transit system plan, continuous marketing and education on the transit services available and how they work are crucial to the success of the transit program and to entwining the service into the fabric of the community. Some goals for ongoing marketing and education could include:

- Increase awareness, understanding, and utilization of the transit service by residents, employees, and visitors
- Promote transit service as both a fiscally responsible and green choice
- Position Prairie Five RIDES as *the* bus service in the region

Possible strategies to achieve these goals include:

- Update website
  - Include concise, clear instructions on how to use the service and who is eligible (everyone!)
  - Include easy-to-understand schedules and maps of services
  - Link to website from other town/city/county/partner websites
  - Provide downloadable brochures
  - Embed an online trip planner or link to an online trip planner

  - Add a ‘Where’s my Bus’ option to the website
- Develop a social media presence
  - Post/update regularly
  - Advertise changes
  - Profile riders
  - Introduce new programs
  - Announce weather delays or cancellations
  - Promote the benefits of transit service
- Consider smartphone apps
  - Develop general transit feed specification (GTFS) so that provider services show up as an option in common mapping apps (e.g., Google Maps, Apple Maps) and/or online trip planners. GTFS-Flex is the appropriate specification for deviated fixed route or demand response service
  - Add a ‘Where’s my Bus’ option to the website or a separate app so that customers can track their rides
  - Allow customers to request trips/negotiate trips with schedulers
- Embrace the mobility management role in the community
  - Add a mobility manager to staff or share a regional mobility manager with partner transit service providers (as appropriate by provider based on plan)
  - Train schedulers and dispatchers to function as mobility managers
    - Educate on all services/programs available in the service area and beyond
    - Train to negotiate and make connections until the customer has a viable option to meet their request/need
- Brand, re-brand or continue re-branding the Prairie Five RIDES service
- Others that would be beneficial to provider or all providers, as appropriate

11.2 Action Plan

A marketing and education strategy for Prairie Five RIDES should be based on input from existing riders and the larger community. Based on discussions with Prairie Five RIDES, stakeholder outreach, and survey results, the following ideas were identified:

- Present workshops at senior centers, human service providers, and youth groups to educate on how the service works
- Develop better marketing/branding strategy
- Develop an app that allows people to plan a trip, uses GTFS Flex feed, and is integrated with improved dispatching software and new fare payment technology
- Enhance coordination with local human service agencies on marketing campaigns
- Target outreach efforts and marketing materials for Spanish and Asian-Pacific Island language groups

Other possible strategies include:

- Put together a marketing campaign that 'speaks' to potential customers – identify local advocates who have positive stories to share about their use of Prairie Five RIDES bus service. Some examples may include:
  - Provide an example of a rider who used to spend X on commuting costs, but riding the bus to commute only costs Y, a savings of % percent annually
  - Work with local senior groups to identify benefits to seniors in longevity and quality of life when mobility options are available that allow them to get out of their homes and attend events, run errands, and make it to medical appointments
- Include a 'Benefits of Transit Service' section on the website and brochures
  - Use national research statistics on the benefits of transit service
  - Identify different themes to capture the attention of different audiences and strategically utilize the themes in materials publicized with community partners and on Prairie Five RIDES materials
  - For mainstream materials, periodically focus on different themes to capture different audiences and re-engage others
  - Benefit themes may include: economic development, aging in place, reduction in air pollution, technology, community building, access to education and employment opportunities, quality of life for seniors and disabled persons, reduction in dependence on personal vehicles, mobility options for people living in rural areas, attraction of international tourists who will only visit destinations that do not require the use of personal vehicles, etc.

Based on the marketing and education priorities identified for provider, the following are steps towards implementing a new or improved marketing strategy:

1. Develop a better marketing/branding strategy.
2. Develop an app that allows people to plan a trip.
3. Present workshops at senior centers, human service providers, and youth groups to educate on how the service works.

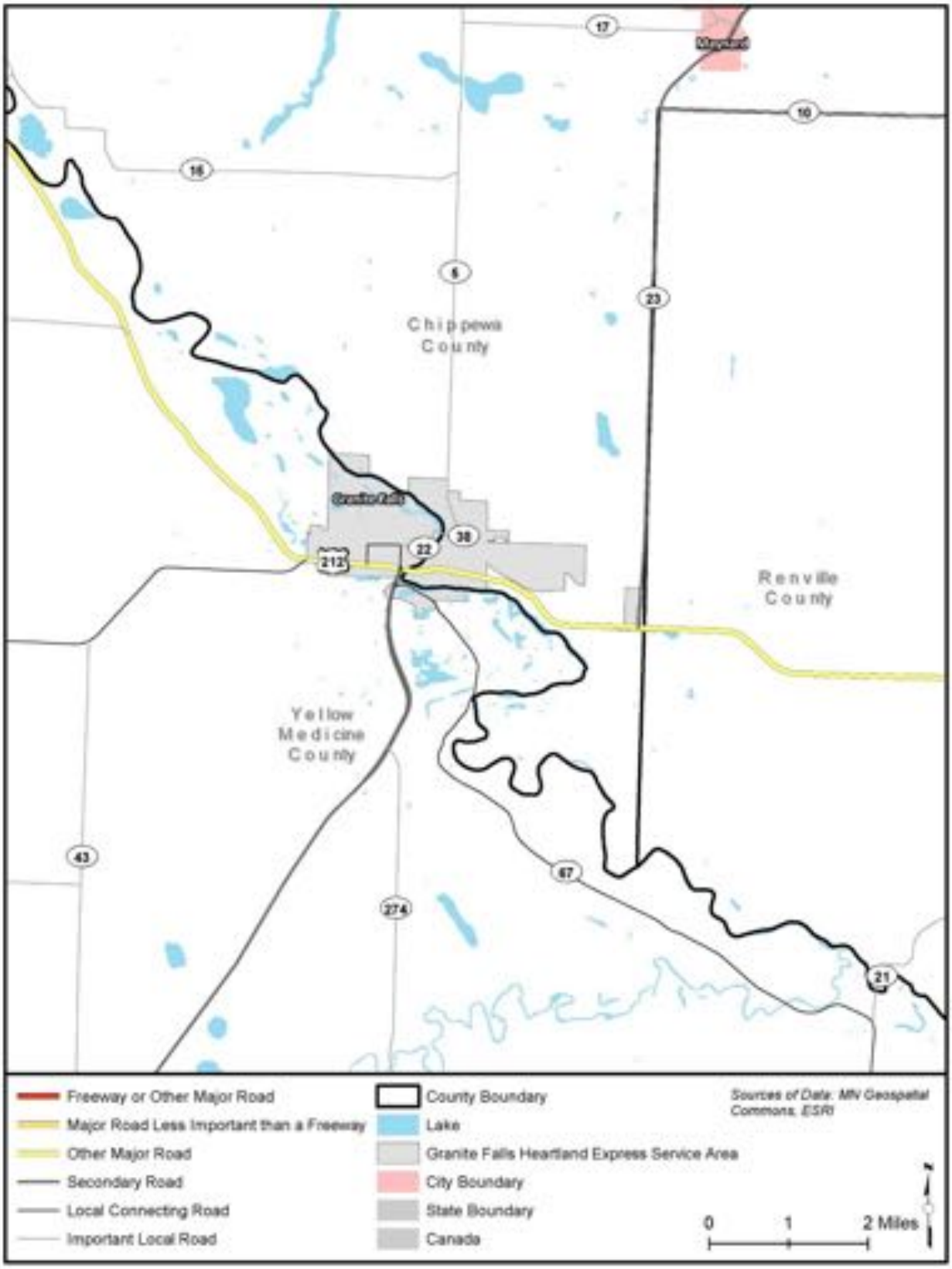
12. Technical Memoranda

12.1 Merger with Granite Falls Heartland Express

Following discussions between the providers and MnDOT, Granite Falls Heartland Express will merge with Prairie Five RIDES effective April 1, 2020. The merger will increase the agency's fleet and facility assets and will necessitate a consolidation of administrative functions. Prairie Five RIDES has undergone several mergers in the past, most recently with the City of Benson in 2016. The agency is familiar with the procedures required to ensure a successful transition of operations. Additionally, because Prairie Five RIDES already provides transit service within the City of Granite Falls, the transition of operations is anticipated to go relatively smoothly.

The Granite Falls Heartland Express existing service that Prairie Five RIDES will be taking over includes demand response within the city limits of Granite Falls (Figure 31). Service operates Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., as well as Sunday mornings from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Granite Falls Heartland Express has two vehicles, currently stored in a city-owned facility. Only one vehicle is operated at a time. Granite Falls Heartland Express staff includes an administrator and four part-time drivers. Dispatch is done manually using a mobile phone.

Figure 31. Granite Falls Location Map



Appendix A Capital and Operating Plans for 2020-2025

Five Year Capital Plan

Prairie Five RIDES

Line Number	Line Item Name	2019 Budget	Inflation Factor (3% / year)	2020	2020 (local match)	2021	2021 (local match)	2022	2022 (local match)	2023	2023 (local match)	2024	2024 (local match)	2025	2025 (local match)
1711	Vehicle Cost	$ -		$ 176,000	$ 35,200	$ 542,706	$ 108,541	$ 373,764	$ 74,753	$ 219,000	$ 43,800	$ 200,000	$ 40,000	$ 206,000	$ 41,200
1712	Farebox(es)	$ -				$ 355,348	$ 71,070								
1713	AVL/MDT	$ -													
1714	Camera(s)	$ -													
1715	Logos	$ -													
1716	Radio (Communication Equipment)	$ -													
1717	Other Bus Related Equipment	$ -													
1720	Lift, Ramp Expenses, etc.	$ -													
1730	Radio Equipment Expenses	$ -													
1740	Fare Box Expenses	$ -													
1750	Other Capital Expenses	$ -				$ 106,090	$ 21,218		$ -	$ 185,709	$ 37,142	$ 34,778	$ 6,956	$ 35,822	$ 7,164
1760	Facility Purchase and/or Construction Cost	$ -												$ 95,524	$ 19,105
	Total Capital Budget	**$ -**		**$ 176,000**	**$ 35,200**	**$ 1,004,144**	**$ 200,829**	**$ 373,764**	**$ 74,753**	**$ 404,709**	**$ 80,942**	**$ 234,778**	**$ 46,956**	**$ 337,346**	**$ 67,469**
Capital	Total 1711 - 1740 (only)	$ -	$ -	$ 176,000	$ 35,200	$ 898,054	$ 179,611	$ 373,764	$ 74,753	$ 219,000	$ 43,800	$ 200,000	$ 40,000	$ 206,000	$ 41,200

Operations PLANNING - Prairie Five RIDES summary table

		2018	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	2023	2023	2024	2024	2025	2025
			total cost	local share	total cost	local share	total cost	local share	total cost	local share	total cost	local share	total cost	local share
		$	plus 3%	20%	plus 3%	20%	plus 3%	20%	plus 3%	20%	plus 3%	20%	plus 3%	20%
Status Quo (Maintain)		$ 2,257,075.00	$ 2,394,530.87	$ 478,906.17	$ 2,466,366.79	$ 493,273.36	$ 2,540,357.80	$ 508,071.56	$ 2,616,568.53	$ 523,313.71	$ 2,695,065.59	$ 539,013.12	$ 2,775,917.55	$ 555,183.51

		2019	2020	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	2023	2023	2024	2024	2025	2025
			total cost	local share	total cost	local share	total cost	local share	total cost	local share	total cost	local share	total cost	local share
		$	plus 3%	20%	plus 3%	20%	plus 3%	20%	plus 3%	20%	plus 3%	20%	plus 3%	20%
Expand/Grow				$ -		$ -		$ -		$ -		$ -		$ -
Additional Service to Outlying Areas	2021	$ 141,723.00	$ 145,974.69	$ 29,194.94	$ 150,353.93	$ 30,070.79	$ 154,864.55	$ 30,972.91	$ 159,510.49	$ 31,902.10	$ 164,295.80	$ 32,859.16	$ 169,224.67	$ 33,844.93
Dispatcher position	2020	$ 32,000.00	$ 32,960.00	$ 6,592.00	$ 33,948.80	$ 6,789.76	$ 34,967.26	$ 6,993.45	$ 36,016.28	$ 7,203.26	$ 37,096.77	$ 7,419.35	$ 38,209.67	$ 7,641.93
Montevideo Fixed Route Service	2020	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Benson Fixed Route Service	2021	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Maintenance Position	2022	$ 48,000.00	$ 49,440.00	$ 9,888.00	$ 50,923.20	$ 10,184.64	$ 52,450.90	$ 10,490.18	$ 54,024.42	$ 10,804.88	$ 55,645.16	$ 11,129.03	$ 57,314.51	$ 11,462.90
US-12 Fixed Route (1 vehicle)	2022	$ 226,756.00	$ 233,558.68	$ 46,711.74	$ 240,565.44	$ 48,113.09	$ 247,782.40	$ 49,556.48	$ 255,215.88	$ 51,043.18	$ 262,872.35	$ 52,574.47	$ 270,758.52	$ 54,151.70
MN-23 Fixed Route (1 vehicle)	2022	$ 226,756.00	$ 233,558.68	$ 46,711.74	$ 240,565.44	$ 48,113.09	$ 247,782.40	$ 49,556.48	$ 255,215.88	$ 51,043.18	$ 262,872.35	$ 52,574.47	$ 270,758.52	$ 54,151.70
Increased operating hours	2024	$ 373,856.00	$ 385,071.68	$ 77,014.34	$ 396,623.83	$ 79,324.77	$ 408,522.55	$ 81,704.51	$ 420,778.22	$ 84,155.64	$ 433,401.57	$ 86,680.31	$ 446,403.62	$ 89,280.72
			$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
			$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
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			$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
			$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Expansion/Growth Cost		**$ 1,049,091.00**	**$ 32,960.00**	**$ 6,592.00**	**$ 184,302.73**	**$ 36,860.55**	**$ 737,847.52**	**$ 147,569.50**	**$ 759,982.94**	**$ 151,996.59**	**$ 1,216,184.00**	**$ 243,236.80**	**$ 1,252,669.52**	**$ 250,533.90**
NEW TOTAL BUDGET	**-**	**-**	**$ 2,427,490.87**	**$ 485,498.17**	**$ 2,650,669.52**	**$ 530,133.90**	**$ 3,278,205.31**	**$ 655,641.06**	**$ 3,376,551.47**	**$ 675,310.29**	**$ 3,911,249.59**	**$ 782,249.92**	**$ 4,028,587.07**	**$ 805,717.41**

Five Year Transit Sytem Plan -- Operating Budget																					
Provider	**Prairie Five RIDES**																				
Line Item	**Operating Expenses**	**2018 Budget**	**2018 (local match)**	**2019 Projected**	**Cost Factor**	**Inflation Factor (3% / year)**	**2020**	**2020 (local match)**	**2021**	**2021 (local match)**	**2022**	**2022 (local match)**	**2023**	**2023 (local match)**	**2024**	**2024 (local match)**	**2025**	**2025 (local match)**
1010	Admin, Management & Supervisory Salaries	$91,900.00	$ 18,380.00	$ 94,657.00	Fixed	3%	$ 97,496.71	$ 19,499.34	$ 100,421.61	$ 20,084.32	$ 103,434.26	$ 20,686.85	$ 106,537.29	$ 21,307.46	$ 109,733.41	$ 21,946.68	$ 113,025.41	$ 22,605.08
1020	Operator's Wages	$640,000.00	$ 128,000.00	$ 659,200.00	$ / Hour	3%	$ 678,976.00	$ 135,795.20	$ 699,345.28	$ 139,869.06	$ 720,325.64	$ 144,065.13	$ 741,935.41	$ 148,387.08	$ 764,193.47	$ 152,838.69	$ 787,119.27	$ 157,423.85
1030	Vehicle Maintenance and Repair Wages	$83,900.00	$ 16,780.00	$ 86,417.00	$ / Mile	3%	$ 89,009.51	$ 17,801.90	$ 91,679.80	$ 18,335.96	$ 94,430.19	$ 18,886.04	$ 97,263.09	$ 19,452.62	$ 100,180.99	$ 20,036.20	$ 103,186.42	$ 20,637.28
1040	General Office Support Wages	$30,600.00	$ 6,120.00	$ 31,518.00	Fixed	3%	$ 32,463.54	$ 6,492.71	$ 33,437.45	$ 6,687.49	$ 34,440.57	$ 6,888.11	$ 35,473.79	$ 7,094.76	$ 36,538.00	$ 7,307.60	$ 37,634.14	$ 7,526.83
1050	Operations Support Wages	$242,550.00	$ 48,510.00	$ 249,826.50	Fixed	3%	$ 257,321.30	$ 51,464.26	$ 265,040.93	$ 53,008.19	$ 272,992.16	$ 54,598.43	$ 281,181.93	$ 56,236.39	$ 289,617.38	$ 57,923.48	$ 298,305.91	$ 59,661.18
1060	Fringe Benefits	$528,825.00	$ 105,765.00	$ 544,689.75	variable	3%	$ 561,030.44	$ 112,206.09	$ 577,861.36	$ 115,572.27	$ 595,197.20	$ 119,039.44	$ 613,053.11	$ 122,610.62	$ 631,444.71	$ 126,288.94	$ 650,388.05	$ 130,077.61
Personnel Services	Total 1000 (1010 - 1060)	$ 1,617,775.00	$ 323,555.00	$ 1,666,308.25			$ 1,716,297.50	$ 343,259.50	$ 1,767,786.42	$ 353,557.28	$ 1,820,820.02	$ 364,164.00	$ 1,875,444.62	$ 375,088.92	$ 1,931,707.95	$ 386,341.59	$ 1,989,659.19	$ 397,931.84
1110	Management Fees	$0.00	$ -	$ -	Variable	3%	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
1120	Drug and Alcohol Testing and Administration Fee Expenses	$12,300.00	$ 2,460.00	$ 12,669.00	Variable	3%	$ 13,049.07	$ 2,609.81	$ 13,440.54	$ 2,688.11	$ 13,843.76	$ 2,768.75	$ 14,259.07	$ 2,851.81	$ 14,686.84	$ 2,937.37	$ 15,127.45	$ 3,025.49
1130	Advertising, Marketing and Promotional Charges	$22,500.00	$ 4,500.00	$ 23,175.00	Variable	3%	$ 23,870.25	$ 4,774.05	$ 24,586.36	$ 4,917.27	$ 25,323.95	$ 5,064.79	$ 26,083.67	$ 5,216.73	$ 26,866.18	$ 5,373.24	$ 27,672.16	$ 5,534.43
1140	Legal, Auditing, and Other Professional Fees	$8,450.00	$ 1,690.00	$ 8,703.50	Variable	3%	$ 8,964.61	$ 1,792.92	$ 9,233.54	$ 1,846.71	$ 9,510.55	$ 1,902.11	$ 9,795.87	$ 1,959.17	$ 10,089.74	$ 2,017.95	$ 10,392.43	$ 2,078.49
1150	Staff Development Costs	$25,000.00	$ 5,000.00	$ 25,750.00	Variable	3%	$ 26,522.50	$ 5,304.50	$ 27,318.18	$ 5,463.64	$ 28,137.72	$ 5,627.54	$ 28,981.85	$ 5,796.37	$ 29,851.31	$ 5,970.26	$ 30,746.85	$ 6,149.37
1160	Office Supplies	$27,250.00	$ 5,450.00	$ 28,067.50	Variable	3%	$ 28,909.53	$ 5,781.91	$ 29,776.81	$ 5,955.36	$ 30,670.12	$ 6,134.02	$ 31,590.22	$ 6,318.04	$ 32,537.93	$ 6,507.59	$ 33,514.06	$ 6,702.81
1170	Leases and Rentals - Administrative Facilities	$5,000.00	$ 1,000.00	$ 5,150.00	Variable	3%	$ 5,304.50	$ 1,060.90	$ 5,463.64	$ 1,092.73	$ 5,627.54	$ 1,125.51	$ 5,796.37	$ 1,159.27	$ 5,970.26	$ 1,194.05	$ 6,149.37	$ 1,229.87
1180	Utilities	$23,000.00	$ 4,600.00	$ 23,690.00	Variable	3%	$ 24,400.70	$ 4,880.14	$ 25,132.72	$ 5,026.54	$ 25,886.70	$ 5,177.34	$ 26,663.30	$ 5,332.66	$ 27,463.20	$ 5,492.64	$ 28,287.10	$ 5,657.42
1190	Other Direct Administrative Charges	$15,000.00	$ 3,000.00	$ 15,450.00	Variable	3%	$ 15,913.50	$ 3,182.70	$ 16,390.91	$ 3,278.18	$ 16,882.63	$ 3,376.53	$ 17,389.11	$ 3,477.82	$ 17,910.78	$ 3,582.16	$ 18,448.11	$ 3,689.62
Administrative Charges	Total 1100 (1110 - 1190)	$ 138,500.00	$ 27,700.00	$ 142,655.00	Variable		$ 146,934.65	$ 29,386.93	$ 151,342.69	$ 30,268.54	$ 155,882.97	$ 31,176.59	$ 160,559.46	$ 32,111.89	$ 165,376.24	$ 33,075.25	$ 170,337.53	$ 34,067.51
1210	Fuel	$110,000.00	$ 22,000.00	$ 113,300.00	$/mile	3%	$ 116,699.00	$ 23,339.80	$ 120,199.97	$ 24,039.99	$ 123,805.97	$ 24,761.19	$ 127,520.15	$ 25,504.03	$ 131,345.75	$ 26,269.15	$ 135,286.13	$ 27,057.23
1220	Preventive Maintenance (PM) Labor, Parts and Material Expenses (Vehicles)	$43,800.00	$ 8,760.00	$ 45,114.00	$ / Mile	3%	$ 46,467.42	$ 9,293.48	$ 47,861.44	$ 9,572.29	$ 49,297.29	$ 9,859.46	$ 50,776.20	$ 10,155.24	$ 52,299.49	$ 10,459.90	$ 53,868.48	$ 10,773.70
1230	Corrective Maintenance (CM) Labor, Parts and Materials Expense (Vehicles)	$20,200.00	$ 4,040.00	$ 20,806.00	$ / Mile	3%	$ 21,430.18	$ 4,286.04	$ 22,073.09	$ 4,414.62	$ 22,735.28	$ 4,547.06	$ 23,417.34	$ 4,683.47	$ 24,119.86	$ 4,823.97	$ 24,843.45	$ 4,968.69
1240	Tires	$9,500.00	$ 1,900.00	$ 9,785.00	$ / Mile	3%	$ 10,078.55	$ 2,015.71	$ 10,380.91	$ 2,076.18	$ 10,692.33	$ 2,138.47	$ 11,013.10	$ 2,202.62	$ 11,343.50	$ 2,268.70	$ 11,683.80	$ 2,336.76
1250	Other Vehicle Charges	$9,500.00	$ 1,900.00	$ 9,785.00	$ / Mile	3%	$ 10,078.55	$ 2,015.71	$ 10,380.91	$ 2,076.18	$ 10,692.33	$ 2,138.47	$ 11,013.10	$ 2,202.62	$ 11,343.50	$ 2,268.70	$ 11,683.80	$ 2,336.76
Vehicle Charges	Total 1200 (1210 - 1250)	$ 193,000.00	$ 38,600.00	$ 198,790.00			$ 204,753.70	$ 40,950.74	$ 210,896.31	$ 42,179.26	$ 217,223.20	$ 43,444.64	$ 223,739.90	$ 44,747.98	$ 230,452.09	$ 46,090.42	$ 237,365.66	$ 47,473.13
1310	Purchase of Service	$0.00	$ -	$ -	$ / Hour	3%	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
1330	Mileage Reimbursement for Public Transit Service	$170,500.00	$ 34,100.00	$ 175,615.00	Fixed	3%	$ 180,883.45	$ 36,176.69	$ 186,309.95	$ 37,261.99	$ 191,899.25	$ 38,379.85	$ 197,656.23	$ 39,531.25	$ 203,585.92	$ 40,717.18	$ 209,693.49	$ 41,938.70
1340	Repair and Maintenance of Other Property	$0.00	$ -	$ -	Variable	3%	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
1350	Leases and Rentals of Facilities or Equipment	$38,000.00	$ 7,600.00	$ 39,140.00	Variable	3%	$ 40,314.20	$ 8,062.84	$ 41,523.63	$ 8,304.73	$ 42,769.33	$ 8,553.87	$ 44,052.41	$ 8,810.48	$ 45,373.99	$ 9,074.80	$ 46,735.21	$ 9,347.04
1360	Other Operations Charges	$15,000.00	$ 3,000.00	$ 15,450.00	$ / Hour	3%	$ 15,913.50	$ 3,182.70	$ 16,390.91	$ 3,278.18	$ 16,882.63	$ 3,376.53	$ 17,389.11	$ 3,477.82	$ 17,910.78	$ 3,582.16	$ 18,448.11	$ 3,689.62
Operation Charges	Total 1300 (1310 - 1360)	$ 223,500.00	$ 44,700.00	$ 230,205.00		3%	$ 237,111.15	$ 47,422.23	$ 244,224.48	$ 48,844.90	$ 251,551.22	$ 50,310.24	$ 259,097.76	$ 51,819.55	$ 266,870.69	$ 53,374.14	$ 274,876.81	$ 54,975.36
1410	Public Liability and Property Damage on Vehicles	$86,000.00	$ 17,200.00	$ 88,580.00	Fixed	3%	$ 91,237.40	$ 18,247.48	$ 93,974.52	$ 18,794.90	$ 96,793.76	$ 19,358.75	$ 99,697.57	$ 19,939.51	$ 102,688.50	$ 20,537.70	$ 105,769.15	$ 21,153.83
1420	Public Liability and Property Damage - Other than on Vehicles	$3,000.00	$ 600.00	$ 3,090.00	Fixed	3%	$ 3,182.70	$ 636.54	$ 3,278.18	$ 655.64	$ 3,376.53	$ 675.31	$ 3,477.82	$ 695.56	$ 3,582.16	$ 716.43	$ 3,689.62	$ 737.92
Operation Charges	Total 1400 (1410 - 1420)	$ 89,000.00	$ 17,800.00	$ 91,670.00			$ 94,420.10	$ 18,884.02	$ 97,252.70	$ 19,450.54	$ 100,170.28	$ 20,034.06	$ 103,175.39	$ 20,635.08	$ 106,270.65	$ 21,254.13	$ 109,458.77	$ 21,891.75
1510	Vehicle Registration and Permit Fees	$2,300.00	$ 460.00	$ 2,369.00	Fixed	3%	$ 2,440.07	$ 488.01	$ 2,513.27	$ 502.65	$ 2,588.67	$ 517.73	$ 2,666.33	$ 533.27	$ 2,746.32	$ 549.26	$ 2,828.71	$ 565.74
1520	Federal Fuel and Lubricant Taxes and Excise Taxes on Tires	$0.00	$ -	$ -	Fixed	3%	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
1540	Other Taxes and Fees	$0.00	$ -	$ -	Fixed	3%	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Taxes and Fees	Total 1500 (1510 - 1540)	$ 2,300.00	$ 460.00	$ 2,369.00			$ 2,440.07	$ 488.01	$ 2,513.27	$ 502.65	$ 2,588.67	$ 517.73	$ 2,666.33	$ 533.27	$ 2,746.32	$ 549.26	$ 2,828.71	$ 565.74
1594	Fuel Tax Refunds	($7,000.00)	$ (1,400.00)	$ (7,210.00)	Fixed	3%	$ (7,426.30)	$ (1,485.26)	$ (7,649.09)	$ (1,529.82)	$ (7,878.56)	$ (1,575.71)	$ (8,114.92)	$ (1,622.98)	$ (8,358.37)	$ (1,671.67)	$ (8,609.12)	$ (1,721.82)
1596	Insurance Reimbursement	$0.00	$ -	$ -	Fixed	3%	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
	TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET	$ 2,257,075.00	$ 451,415.00	$ 2,324,787.25			$ 2,394,530.87	$ 478,906.17	$ 2,466,366.79	$ 493,273.36	$ 2,540,357.80	$ 508,071.56	$ 2,616,568.53	$ 523,313.71	$ 2,695,065.59	$ 539,013.12	$ 2,775,917.55	$ 555,183.51

Appendix B Community Survey Results

Survey questions were prepared in consultation with Prairie Five RIDES. The online survey opened on June 3, 2019 and was available through June 21, 2019. The survey was open to all individuals who live, work, or visit the Prairie Five RIDES service area regardless of current bus usage. Individuals were asked about their knowledge of and usage of the system and, based on the response, were directed to the appropriate set of questions. All were then asked to provide any additional comments. Responses were received from 36 individuals.

1. Have you heard about Prairie Five RIDES or Granite Falls Heartland Express?

Question was asked of all survey takers; there were 36 respondents.

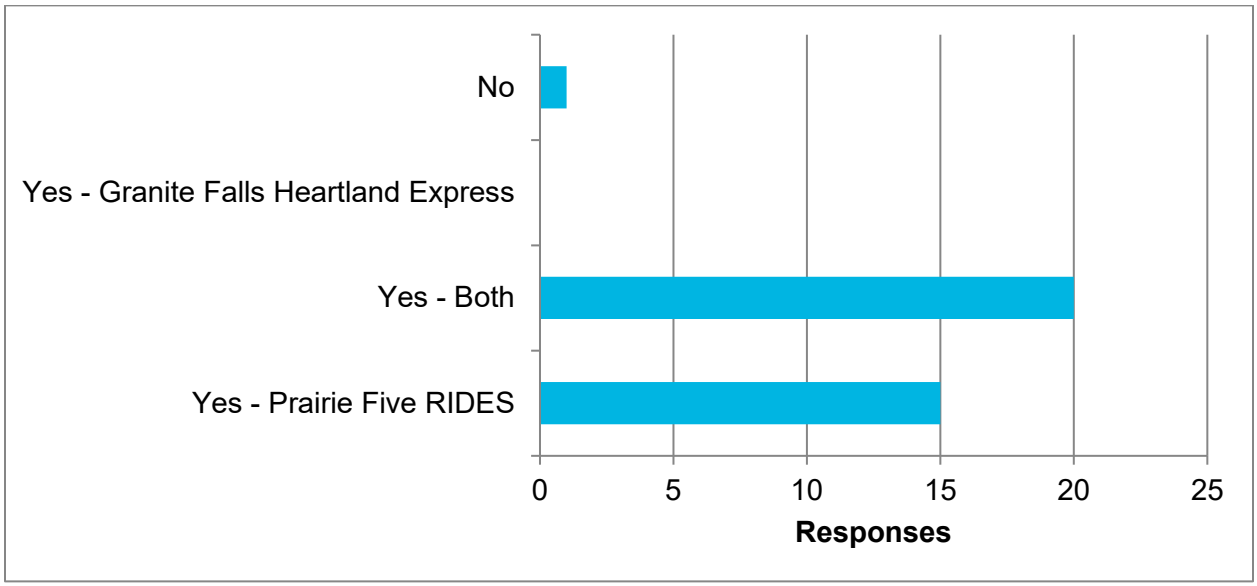

Figure 32. Survey Question 1 Responses

2. Do you have any concerns regarding Prairie Five RIDES and Granite Falls Heartland Express merging with each other?

Question was asked of all survey takers, there were 34 respondents.

- No – 31 (91%)
- Yes – 3 (9%)

Of those that said *yes*, the following were their concerns verbatim:

- Do not feel the Granite Falls will get the same level of service if it is taken over by P5
- Being in Swift County makes me not in one of the most traveled places in the Area
- I do not know anything about Granite Falls and would need to better understand their mission, vision, and purpose.

3. How did you hear about Prairie Five RIDES?

Question was asked of only those who responded yes in question 1; there were 17 respondents and multiple responses were allowed.

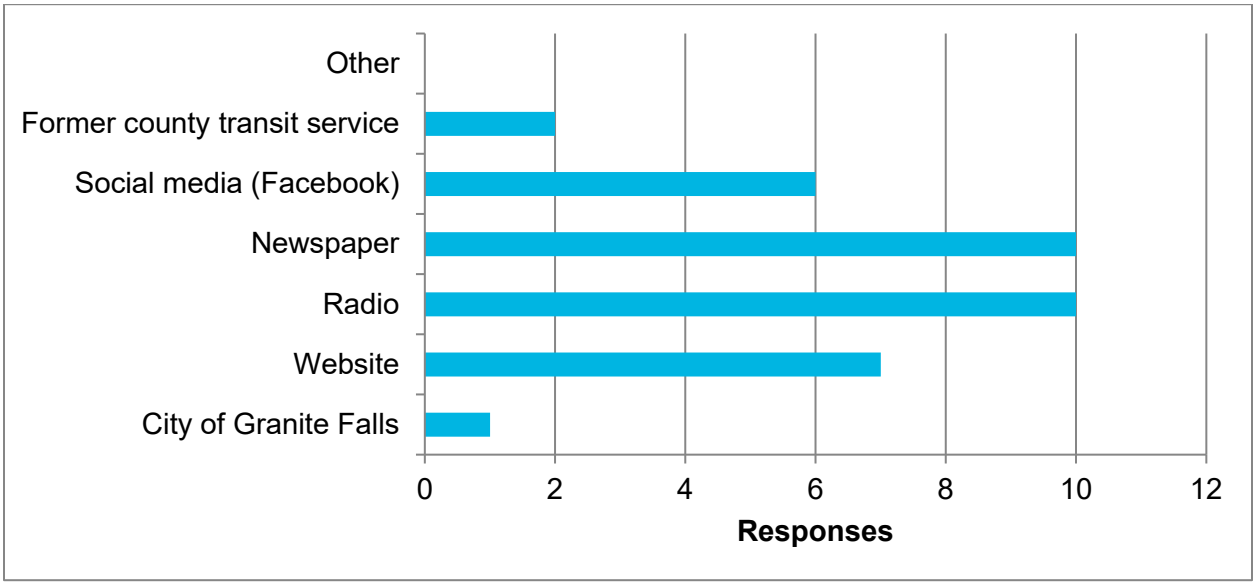

Figure 33. How Individuals Heard about Prairie Five RIDES

4. Do you use Prairie Five RIDES or Granite Falls Heartland Express?

Question was asked of only those who responded yes in question 1; there were 32 respondents.

		Heard of			
		Both	Prairie Five Rides	Granite Falls Heartland Express	**TOTAL**
Usage	Both	2	0	0	**2**
	Prairie Five Rides	9	6	0	**115**
	Granite Falls Heartland Express	0	0	0	**0**
	No	9	6	0	**15**
	Did not Answer	0	3	0	**3**
	TOTAL	**20**	**15**	**0**	**35**

For those that indicated that they do not use either transit service, the following are the verbatim reasons why:

- Don't live in area but have family that do live on dawson
- Not needed, however the hospital/clinic where I work has many patients who utilize this service to attend appointments etc.
- I drive my vehicle, ride, or walk to work. I know from patient experiences I feel that Prairie Five is overwhelmed. There is no schedule and patients wait for long periods for rides.
- Do not live in the city limits or YMC
- Have own transportation
- Have my own vehicle
- Do not need them at this time...but there may be a day I will need them

- I have a car. If I needed to I would use it. I just know about Paris five because of working in nursing homes around the area
- To expensive especially when right in town.
- Have my own transportation
- Own my own car
- I have not needed them yet at this point in my life.
- I have not had to yet
- I refer my clients to use their rides, but havent used them myself.

5. Would you use a Smartphone app to schedule rides if one were available?

Question was asked of only those who responded *yes* in question 1 and have used either Prairie Five RIDES or Granite Falls Heartland Express; there were 17 respondents.

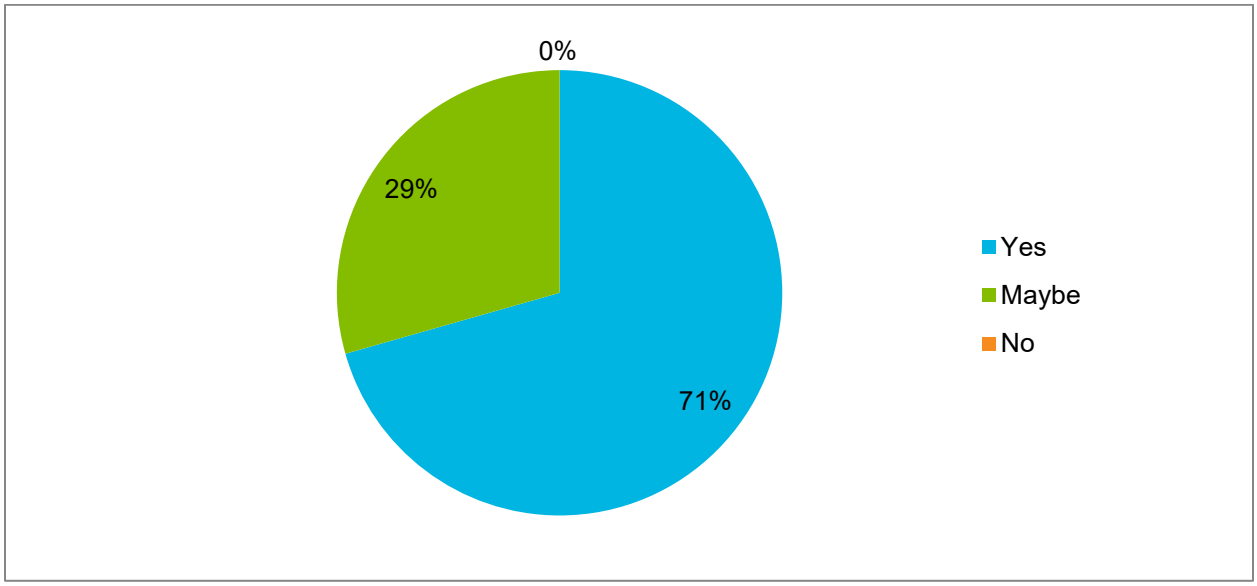

Figure 34. Potential Use of Smartphone app for Scheduling

6. Do you feel coordination between Prairie Five RIDES and other transit providers is:

Question was asked of only those who responded *yes* in question 1 and have used either Prairie Five RIDES or Granite Falls Heartland Express; there were 17 respondents.

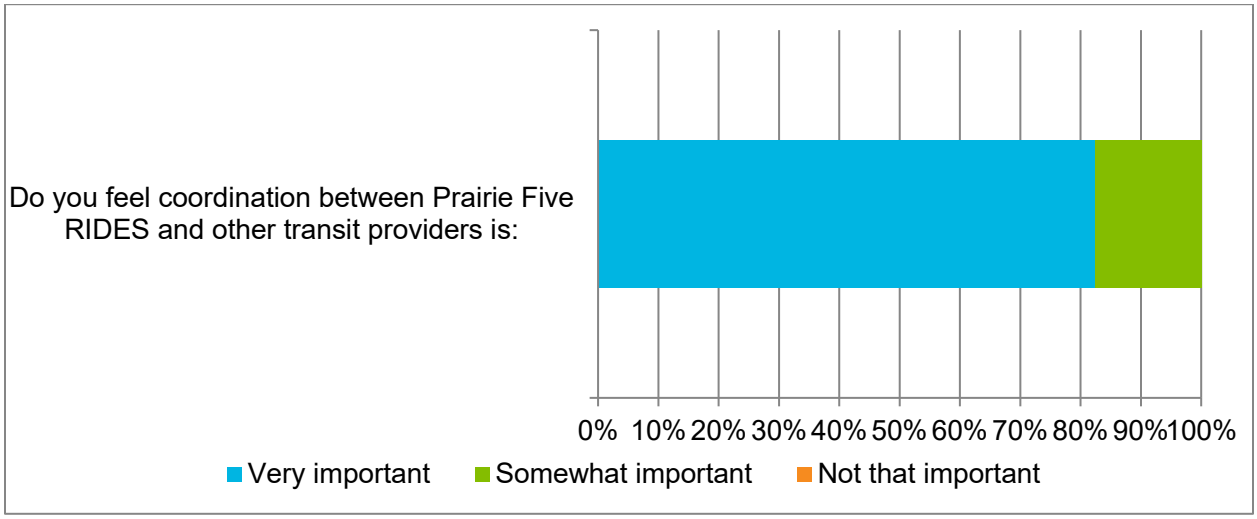

Figure 35. Coordination between Transit Providers Level of Importance

7. Do you use public transit to travel outside of the five counties of Big Stone, Swift, Lac qui Parle, Chippewa, and Yellow Medicine Counties?

Question was asked of only those who responded *yes* in question 1 and have used either Prairie Five RIDES or Granite Falls Heartland Express; there were 17 respondents.

- No – 11 (65%)
- Yes – 6 (35%)

For those that indicated they would like to travel outside the current service area, the following are the verbatim locations listed:

- Willmar, St. Cloud, and the metro area
- clients utilize for trips to Medical appts throughout the state.
- the MSP, Fargo and Sioux Falls airports Rochester Mayo Various medical facilities in the twin cities metro area
- Saint Cloud, Minneapolis, Sioux Falls

For those that indicated they would not like to travel outside the current service area, the following are the verbatim reasons listed:

- I do not need the service.
- I drive myself.
- drive myself
- no needs
- Dont have a need at this time.

8. Did you know that Prairie Five RIDES offers transportation throughout the State of Minnesota and into the eastern portions of North Dakota and South Dakota?

Question was asked of only those who responded *yes* in question 1 and have used either Prairie Five RIDES or Granite Falls Heartland Express; there were 17 respondents.

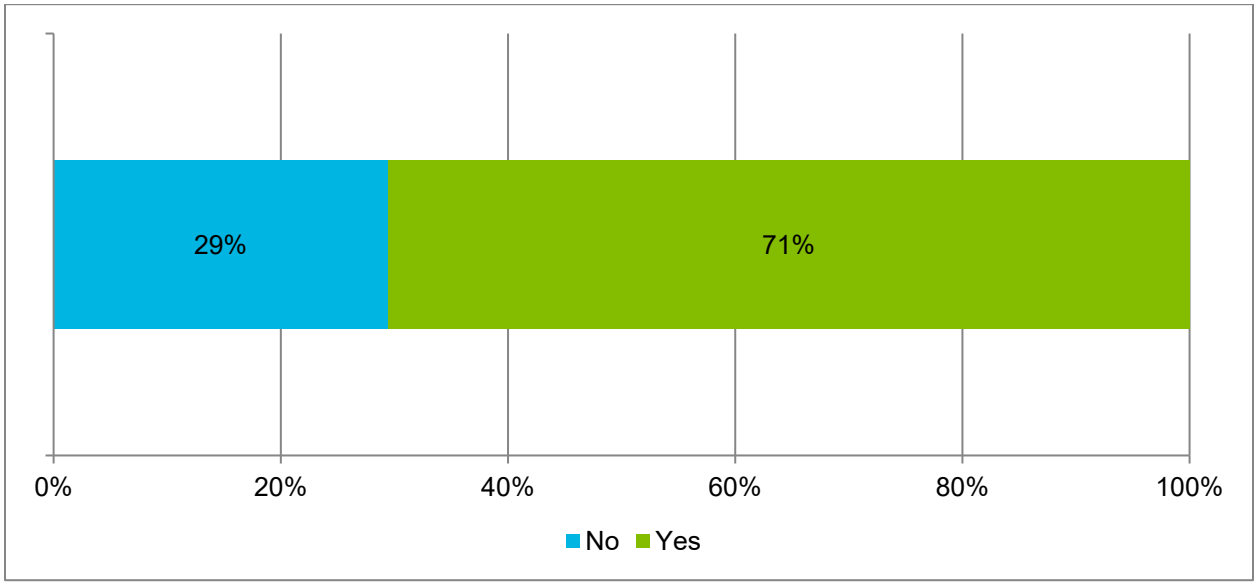

Figure 36. Level of Knowledge of Service Throughout the State of Minnesota and into the Eastern Portions of North Dakota and South Dakota

9. Do you have any suggestions for improved public transportation in Big Stone, Swift, Lac qui Parle, Chippewa, and Yellow Medicine Counties?

Question was asked of all survey takers and was open-ended. There were 10 respondents; comments are listed below verbatim:

- This is a great need and there is no quick fix. I think that more staffing and vehicles will be necessary. I think that partnering is a great idea.
- We need evening and weekend service
- More busses
- Stop over charging everyday writers.
- Make it more reliable. The school uses it to transport kids before and after school so I cant get to work on time. If I have an appointment outside of Benson I cant depend on Prairie 5 to get me there even if Ive gi ven plenty of notice.
- continue to advertise the service and multiple transport options.
- Promotion of regional ride options and cost associated to utilize
- evening and weekend hours
- Keep up the good work.
- Keep doing an AWESOME job!!

Appendix C Transit Need and Demand Analysis (TCRP 161)

Transportation need/ Mobility Gap in each County	the annual number of trips (1-way) needed because no access to a vehicle.
Big Stone	112,800
Chippewa	131,700
Lac qui Parle	85,100
Swift	164,400
Yellow Medicine	146,800
Granite Falls (city)	88,200
Total Need for service area	**729,000**

Demand for Public Transit (tab "3. Demand)	Demand only occurs in places where public transit service already exists.
Big Stone	4,600
Chippewa	8,800
Lac qui Parle	6,000
Swift	7,200
Yellow Medicine	7,400
Granite Falls (city)	2,600
Total Demand for public transit in service area	**36,600**
Total Demand for public transit in service area	**47,700**

Target Ridership = ½ mobility gap * 90%	MnDOT Ridership Projections
2020 ridership target	193,175
2021 ridership target	216,356
2022 ridership target	242,319
2023 ridership target	256,858
2024 ridership target	287,681
2025 ridership target	328,050