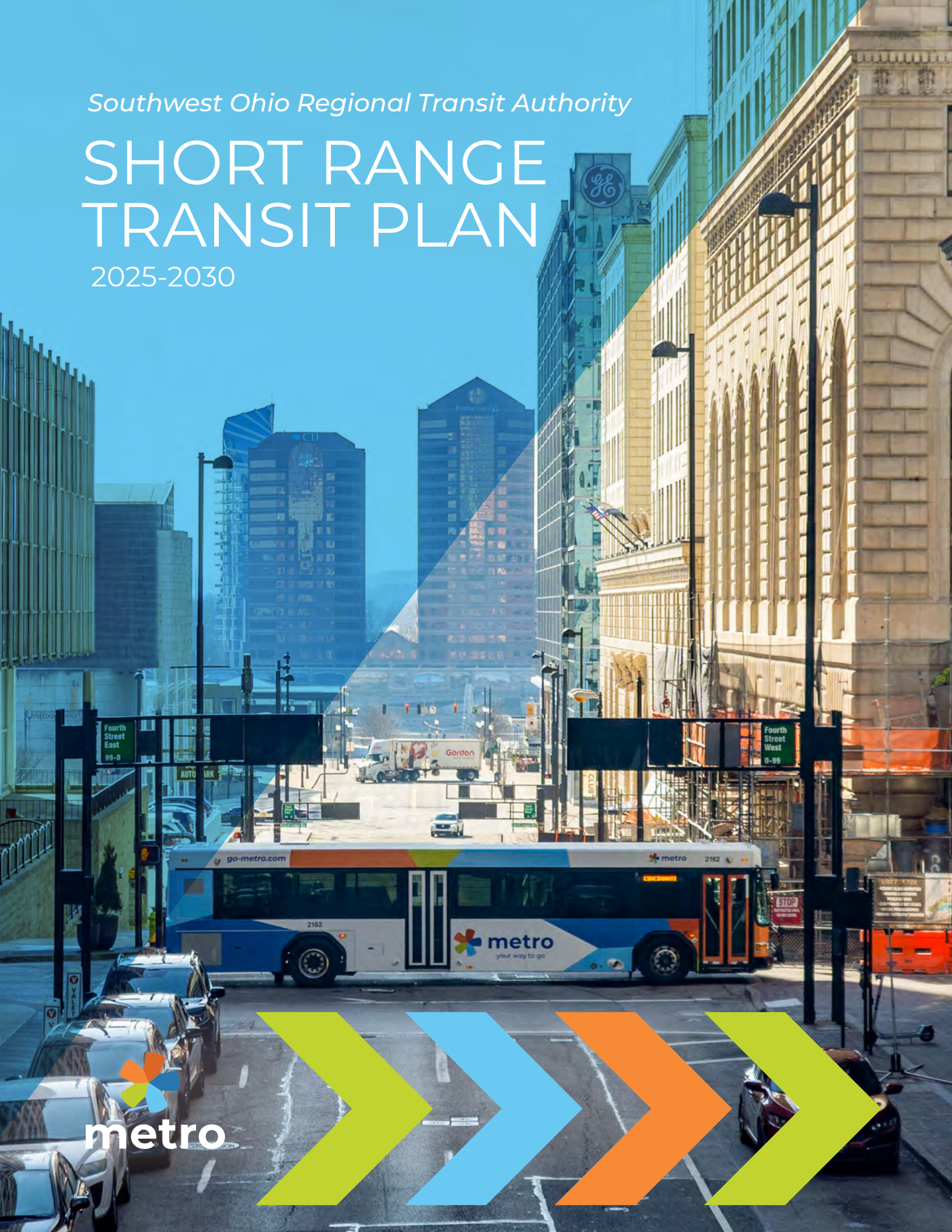
Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority

SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN

2025-2030



metro

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Acknowledgments

This plan was compiled by the Metro Strategic Planning developments & Innovation department. The people responsible for this document include:

Khaled Shammout - Deputy Innovation & Vision Officer

Steve Anderson - Senior Director of Strategic Development and Innovation

Emi Randall - Senior Manager of Transit Planning and Mobility-on-Demand

Mark Samaan - Short Range Planning Manager

Nick Keeling - Transit Planner III

Alex Osborne - Transit Planner II

Max Linder - Transit Analyst II

Matthew Dillon - Planning Intern

Kenny Smith - Planning Intern

Clarie Flanagan - Planning Intern

Al Cotte - Senior Manager of Service Planning and Scheduling

Nathan Kemphues - Scheduler II

Jacob Sheridan - Scheduler I

Tom Price - Scheduler I

Introduction

The Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA), currently operating as Metro, was formed in 1968 to provide mobility and accessibility in the City of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. Following the passage of Issue 7, "Sales Tax for Infrastructure and Transportation" in May of 2020, the expansion plan developed in 2018, called Reinventing Metro, became the guiding document for Metro's service expansion. Although the effects of COVID-19 disrupted the travel landscape for several years, the successful implementation of the Reinventing Metro plan, paired with staff-led improvements has caused Metro's ridership to rebound from and exceed pre-2020 levels of ridership with a continuing upward trend. Monthly ridership has been between 100% - 117% compared to the same month in 2019 with more improvements yet to come. **Metro's service area has grown to cover over 850,000 residents with 13.6M rides given in 2024 across all modes.**

Even though Metro has led the nation in post-COVID ridership recovery, there have been notable changes in demand. Metro, like many other transit agencies, experienced higher bus usage during off-peak periods and slightly less ridership during traditional peak periods over the past few years. Additionally, weekend ridership has increased over pre-pandemic levels and new 24/7 overnight service has yielded ridership above expectations. **As 2025 concludes, weekday ridership remains strong following improvements to the network and a general return to office trend amongst larger regional employers.** Growth in enrollment at the University of Cincinnati and other area colleges and universities has likewise driven ridership higher.

Metro is well on its way to achieving its goals. However, there is still work to be done. Metro's service area is projected to continue gaining population and employment with demand for additional housing within the Greater Cincinnati Region. **The purpose of the Metro 2030 Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) is to lay the foundation for service expansion, reorganization, and world-class mobility options through 2030 to both meet the growing need for transit and to positively impact the economy and future of the Greater Cincinnati region.** Metro must ensure a high-quality public transit service in Hamilton County, as this investment into the local public transportation system leads to more sustainable growth and helps improve the region's economy and quality of life.

Metro's Mission:

Advance regional transit that safely brings people and places together, drives our economy, and improves quality of life for all.

Metro's Vision:

Transit that transforms

Purpose, Vision & Goals

The SRTP analyzes Metro's existing services as well as the existing travel market and establishes Metro's strategy to most efficiently serve that market in the short term. The SRTP serves as a framework for annual service changes to the fixed-route network, Access, and MetroNOW! service, and identifies capital investments and system infrastructure needed to implement the plan. The plan serves as the foundation for further analysis and refinements necessary to implement new service and service changes over the next five years. The SRTP will be updated every 2-3 years via on-going monitoring and analysis.

The SRTP will serve as an important tool to assess Metro's current operations; describe future transit enhancements; and prioritize expenditures, service, and funding to serve the community's mobility needs.

SRTP Vision Statement

Metro envisions a dynamic five-year short-range plan dedicated to improving travel efficiency, enhancing user experience, and fostering substantial growth in ridership. The implementation of this plan is accomplished by the pursuit of multiple goals.

Goal 1: Expand Ridership

Metro will actively explore areas of the system that are lacking in service quality, experience redundancies in service, and evaluate how we serve rapidly changing areas in Hamilton County.

Goal 2: Improve Travel Efficiency

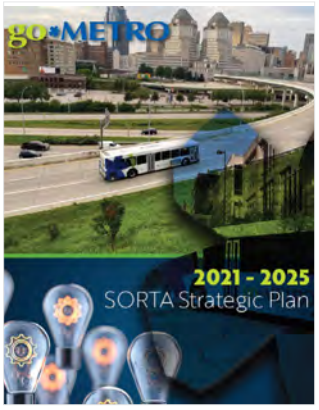
Metro will improve travel efficiency by introducing new services and solutions to decrease travel time, improve on-time performance all while connecting key destinations in our region.

Goal 3: Enhance User Experience

Metro is dedicated to making transit travel safe, comfortable and convenient. Stops will be equipped with shelters, benches and information displays. Real-time service information, trip planning tools, and fare payment options will be accessible and intuitive.

Relevant Plans

The SRTP draws from a wide range of internal and external sources, building upon Metro's previous work while setting new goals. These guiding documents outline methodologies, values, and commitments to innovation and better serving riders.



SORTA Strategic Plan (2021-2025)

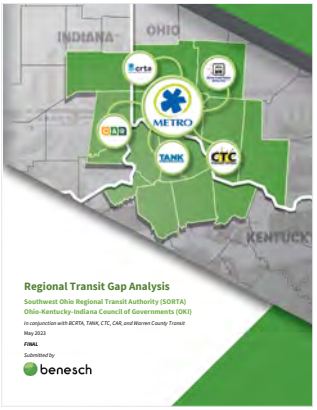
The Metro Strategic Plan provides a comprehensive year-by-year timeline for the development of the budget, staffing, training, infrastructure, and business systems, while evaluating current resources, programs, and its demographic and geographic reach for Metro. The plan details key performance indicators that link specific objectives to broader goals for Metro's growth and transformation, ensuring progress can be tracked. Importantly, it lays out a Roadmap to Success, showing the public how Metro will deliver on its commitments.

Title VI Plan Update (2025)

This document serves as Metro's latest Title VI program update. Every three years, transit agencies receiving U.S. Department of Transportation funding must update their program to ensure they avoid, minimize, or mitigate disparate impacts on minority populations and disproportionate burdens on low-income populations.

Bus Rapid Transit Study Alternatives Analysis Report (2023)

This study explored ways to expand transit service beyond fixed-route buses by introducing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). It identified priority corridors for initial BRT development and future enhancements. Focused on four major corridors—Glenway Avenue, Hamilton Avenue, Reading Road, and Montgomery Road—the study included public input, corridor analysis, and evaluation. Ultimately, Reading Road and Hamilton Avenue were selected for BRT implementation, while Glenway and Montgomery were recommended for near-term fixed-route improvements.



Regional Transit Gap Analysis (2023)

This study identified opportunities to improve transit services to better meet ridership demand, focusing on areas with high travel demand but poor connectivity to the regional network, including services from Metro, Butler County Regional Transit Authority (BCRTA), Clermont Transportation Connection (CTC), Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK), Cincinnati Connector, and Warren County Transit.

Comparison of Car vs. Bus Travel Times Efficiency Report (2023)

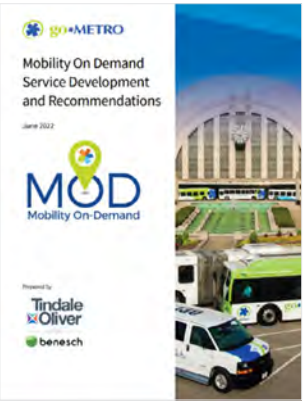
This report provides an ongoing assessment of the current transit services within Metro's service area, evaluating how the implementation of service changes from the Reinventing Metro plan have improved the transit network while identifying gaps to further enhance travel efficiency. It focuses on two key metrics: travel times and the number of transfers required to complete a trip, comparing bus and car travel times to common destinations such as grocery stores, hospitals, shopping centers, and universities.

Alternative Fuel Analysis (2023)

The Alternative Fuels Strategy Report offers research and analysis to guide the development of a transition plan toward a zero-emissions fleet. It aims to equip SORTA with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions by understanding the full scope of capital, operating, and environmental costs, the factors influencing those costs, insights from early adopters, and the risks of various transition strategies.

Mobility On Demand Service Development and Recommendations (2022)

The purpose of this study was to identify and recommend areas within Hamilton County for the development and deployment of Mobility On Demand (MOD) services. The plan highlights key zones for the launch of MOD services, aiming to connect people and places, drive economic growth, and improve the quality of life for individuals and communities. It includes a gap analysis to identify zones with high transit needs and optimizes each based on major destinations and feasible coverage. The zones are screened for inclusion in a final recommendation based on various transit scoring criteria.

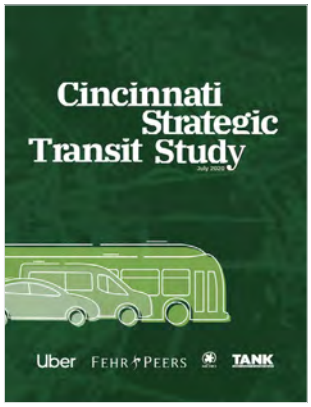


Greater Cincinnati Region Paratransit Coordination (2021)

The Greater Cincinnati Region has 6 transit agencies and 37 human service agencies providing transportation for individuals with physical, economic, or mental challenges. However, these services are often limited by eligibility criteria and geographic boundaries, leading to poor coordination. To address this, a diverse project team developed the Greater Cincinnati Region Paratransit Coordination Plan. The plan proposes cross-county and cross-state projects that unify urban, rural, and human service transit systems, aiming to prioritize the passenger experience. Success depends on agency collaboration, new technologies, and rethinking how transportation is delivered.

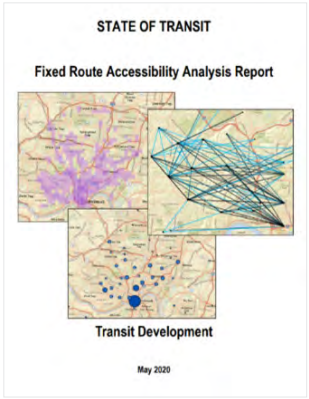
Cincinnati Strategic Transit Study (2020)

This study provides valuable insights into how on-demand transportation services fit into the broader transit system and their potential to complement fixed-route services. It addresses key regional challenges such as declining transit ridership, the mismatch between transportation options and regional needs, and the role of on-demand ride-hailing in supporting the fixed-route system.



Fixed-route Accessibility Report (2020)

The purpose of this report is to analyze fixed-route accessibility within the region, building on a previous study that focused on transit service availability. This analysis takes a more detailed approach by exploring the ability to travel from specific origin points to destination points.



Fixed-route Access Report (2020)

This report investigates access to bus services by examining various population groups, including race, age, income, poverty level, car ownership, and work commute times. The report looked at accessibility based on socioeconomic and demographic indicators, and spatial distribution.

Park & Ride Report (2020)

This report assesses Metro's park & ride transit services, evaluating the system based on factors such as size, connectivity, and level of accommodation. Metro's P&R system encourages long-distance bus ridership in lower-density suburban areas of the Greater Cincinnati area.

Reinventing Metro (2018)

Created before the passage of Issue 7, this study outlines the system improvements Metro would implement using the resulting funding. It aims to attract ridership, increase mode share, improve transit speed and reliability, enhance transportation network connectivity, and provide equitable access to frequent services.

Park & Ride Summary Report

Existing Conditions and Service

Metro operates a countywide bus network in Hamilton County and outlying areas operating forty-eight routes and carrying 13.6 million riders per year (2024). Metro operates twenty-eight local, eleven commuter, nine express routes, as well as a paratransit system alongside a mobility-on-demand service called “MetroNOW!”. In addition, Metro also owns several transit and parking facilities within the service area.

13.6 million
trips per year (2024)

48 routes INCLUDING:

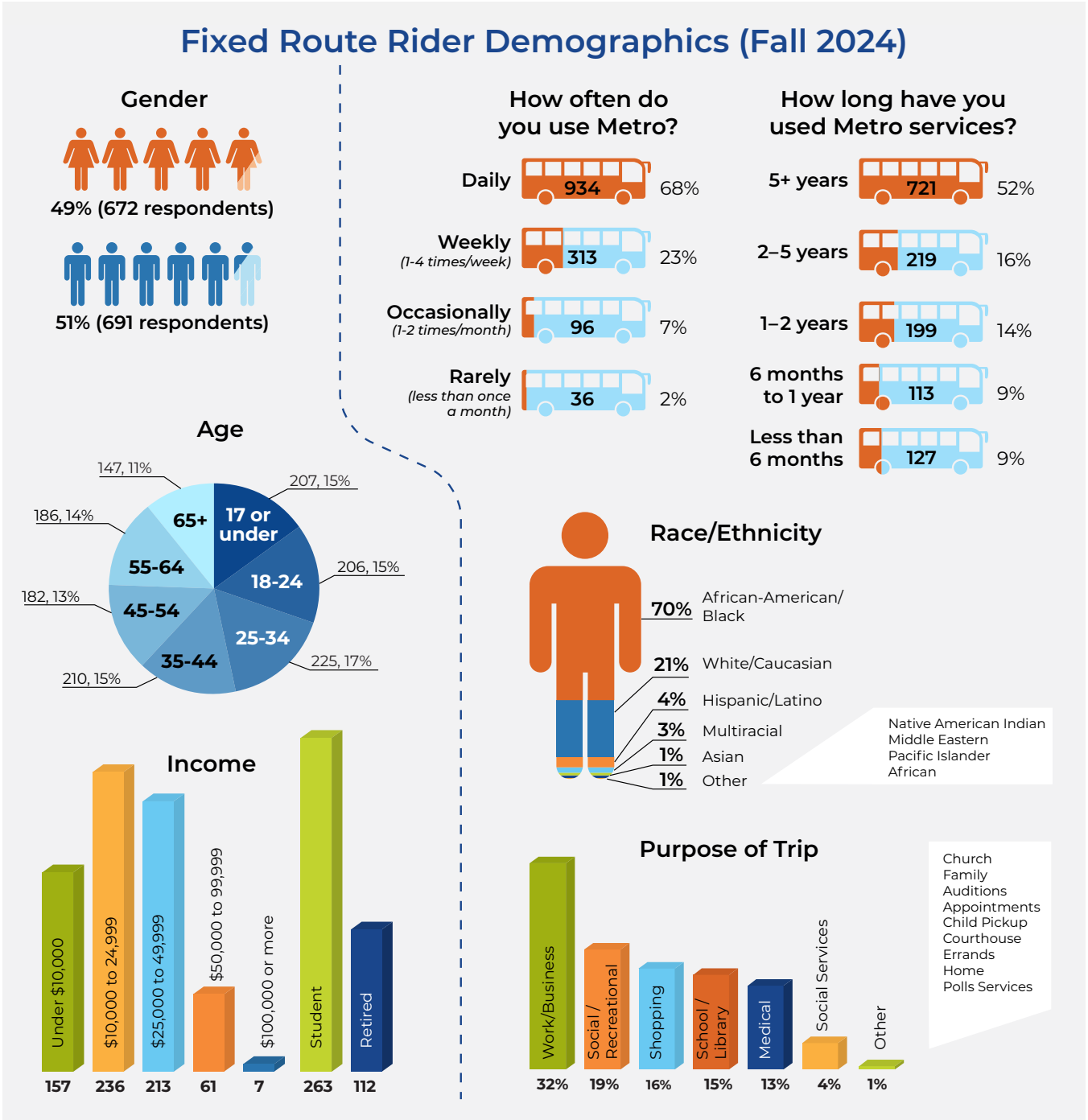
- **11** commuter routes
- **4** MetroNOW! On-Demand Zones
- **28** local routes
- **9** express routes
- **24** Hour ACCESS Paratransit Service

Rider Demographics

In the fall of 2024, Metro conducted a robust Customer Satisfaction Survey. This survey yielded a wealth of information about riders on the system, including who is riding and the trip purpose. The survey results, shown here, guide Metro's Short-Range Transit Plan, enhancing services based on riders' needs.

One important finding from the survey is that 47% of Metro riders have been riding Metro for less than five years, and 31% have been riding for less than two years. These statistics reflect the impact the Reinventing Metro service improvements have had in attracting new riders in the last five years.

Survey Participants included 1,379 Metro Fixed Route, 190 Metro Now!, and 433 Access riders.



Ridership Trends

Fixed Route Ridership

Like most transit agencies, Cincinnati Metro experienced a major drop in ridership due to the COVID-19 pandemic with ridership reaching its lowest level in 2020, shown in Figure 1. Recovery from the dramatic drop began in late 2021 with ridership fully rebounding and even surpassing pre-pandemic levels at 13.3 million annual riders by 2024. A resurgence in ridership signaled an increased public confidence in the transit system and reflected the positive impact of recent service changes and improvements.

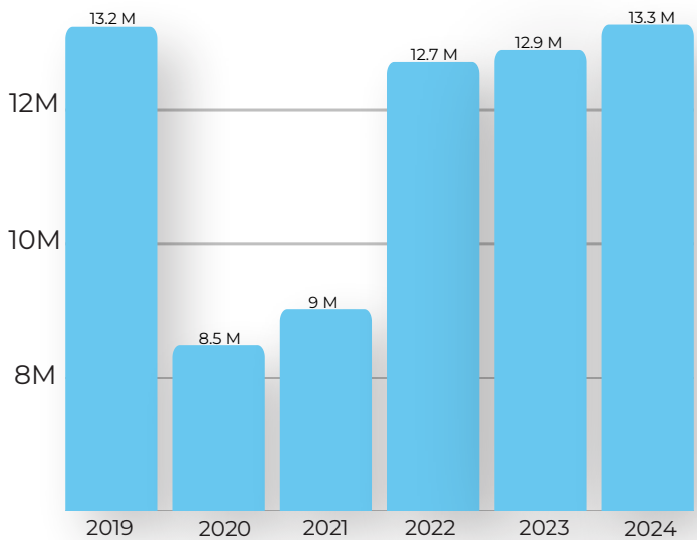


Figure 1 – Fixed Route Ridership

Access Ridership

Cincinnati Metro provides paratransit service within a ¾-mile buffer of its fixed-route network, ensuring equitable access for riders with disabilities. Mirroring the fixed-route system, Access ridership experienced a sharp decline during the COVID-19 pandemic, shown in Figure 2. While the service has rebounded from its initial decline, it has yet to fully return to pre-pandemic levels. As of 2024, Access ridership stands at approximately 179,000 annual trips.

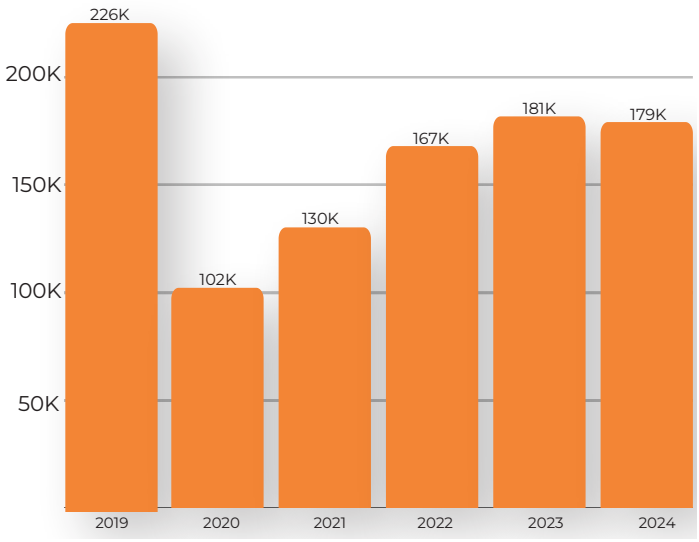


Figure 2 – Access Ridership

MetroNOW! Ridership

MetroNOW! provides flexible, on-demand transportation options that connect people to jobs, schools, healthcare appointments, and the broader fixed-route system. In May 2023, Cincinnati Metro launched its first MetroNOW! Mobility-on-demand service in the Springdale / Sharonville Zone. Building on the success of the initial zone, Metro expanded the service in July 2023 with the launch of the Northgate / Mt. Healthy Zone. The system reached a major milestone in March 2025, setting a new monthly record with 11,481 rides across both zones. Figure 3 shows MetroNOW!'s ridership by quarter.

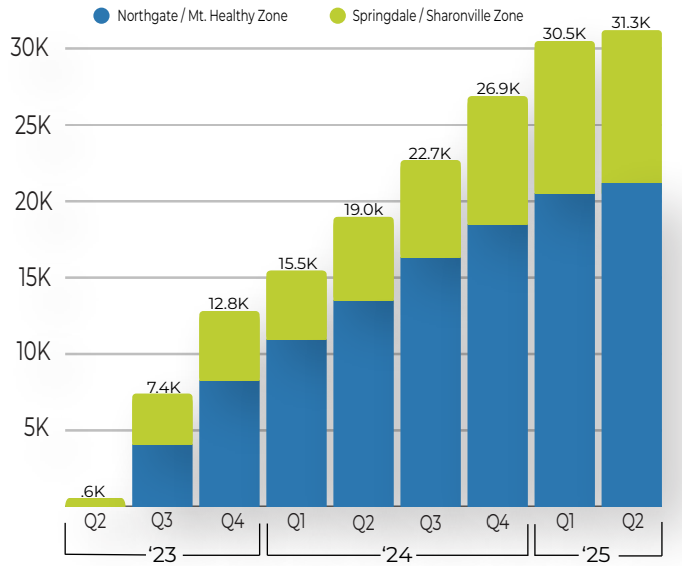


Figure 3 – MetroNOW! Ridership

Fixed Route Services

Fixed-route transit services operate along predetermined routes on a set schedule with designated stops. These routes are further categorized into local, commuter, and suburban express. In 2024, 97.5% of total fixed-route ridership utilized local service. Each of these categories operates with varying frequencies and spans of service depending on time of day, shown on Figure 4 on page 16.

Local Service

Metro operates twenty-eight local routes that connect neighborhoods throughout the region to downtown and across town with all day service. These routes are categorized based on their span and frequency of service.

MAJOR / 24 HOUR

High frequency, direct route serving multitude of major trip generators; 24-hour service.

4 11 17 33 43 51 78

MAJOR / NON-24 HOUR

Moderate-to-high frequency route serving 3-4 major trip generators.

6 16 19 20 21 31 32 46 64 90

MINOR ROUTES

Standard service, some peak service frequencies but typically lower frequencies; typically service 1-2 major trip generators.

1 5 24 27 28 36 41 49 61 67 77

Express, Commuter, and Shuttle Service

Metro operates eleven commuter routes and nine express routes that serve the Greater Cincinnati Region and surrounding municipalities and townships. Metro does not currently operate any shuttle services but may consider this service type in the future.

EXPRESS ROUTES

Peak-only, varying frequencies with varying one-way distances on primarily limited arterials, typically connecting to a park & ride; may serve suburban areas outside of Hamilton County.

3 23 29 52 71 72 74 75 82

COMMUTER ROUTES

Peak-only, varying frequency with varying one-way distances on a mix of limited and local arterials traveled; stays in Hamilton County.

2 12 22 25 30 37 38 40 50 65 81

SHUTTLE SERVICE

Short-distance route characterized by high frequency and longer span, slower travel speed and connecting one or more of major trip generators. Metro currently does not offer shuttle service.

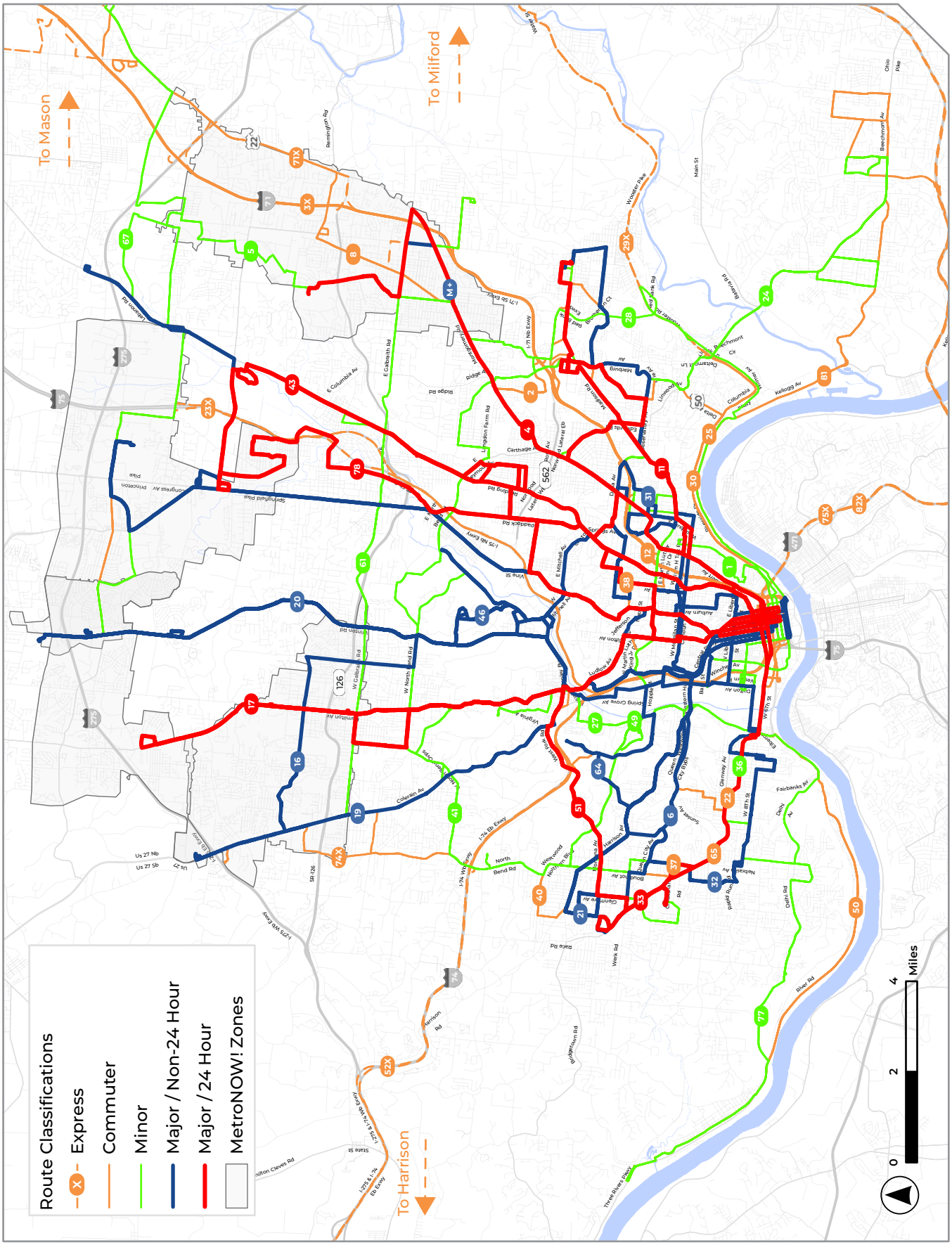


Figure 4 – 2024 Fixed Route Service

ACCESS Paratransit Service

ACCESS is Metro's Paratransit Service that is provided to persons who, because of their disabilities, are unable to independently travel on the fixed-route system. This service is a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which protects the rights of all people without regard to their physical and/or cognitive disability. Service must be provided with an equivalent, corresponding service within a ¾-mile distance from all fixed-route services during their hours of operation. The ACCESS service area can be seen in Figure 5 on page 18.

Metro in coordination with the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK) and Butler County Regional Transit Authority (BCRTA) launched a regional paratransit service "EZ Connect" in May 2025. EZ Connect is the nation's first pilot program to provide ADA-certified individuals with truly regional, one-seat paratransit trips that cross county and even state lines, eliminating transfers at jurisdictional boundaries. This initiative represents a critical advancement in cross-jurisdictional mobility and accessible transit integration. The regional program is designed to enhance and coordinate public transportation services across multiple transit agencies and to test the technology and feasibility of coordinating regional paratransit trips across agency boundaries. By improving convenience for riders while maintaining each agency's local services, EZConnect seeks to create a more efficient and integrated regional transit experience.

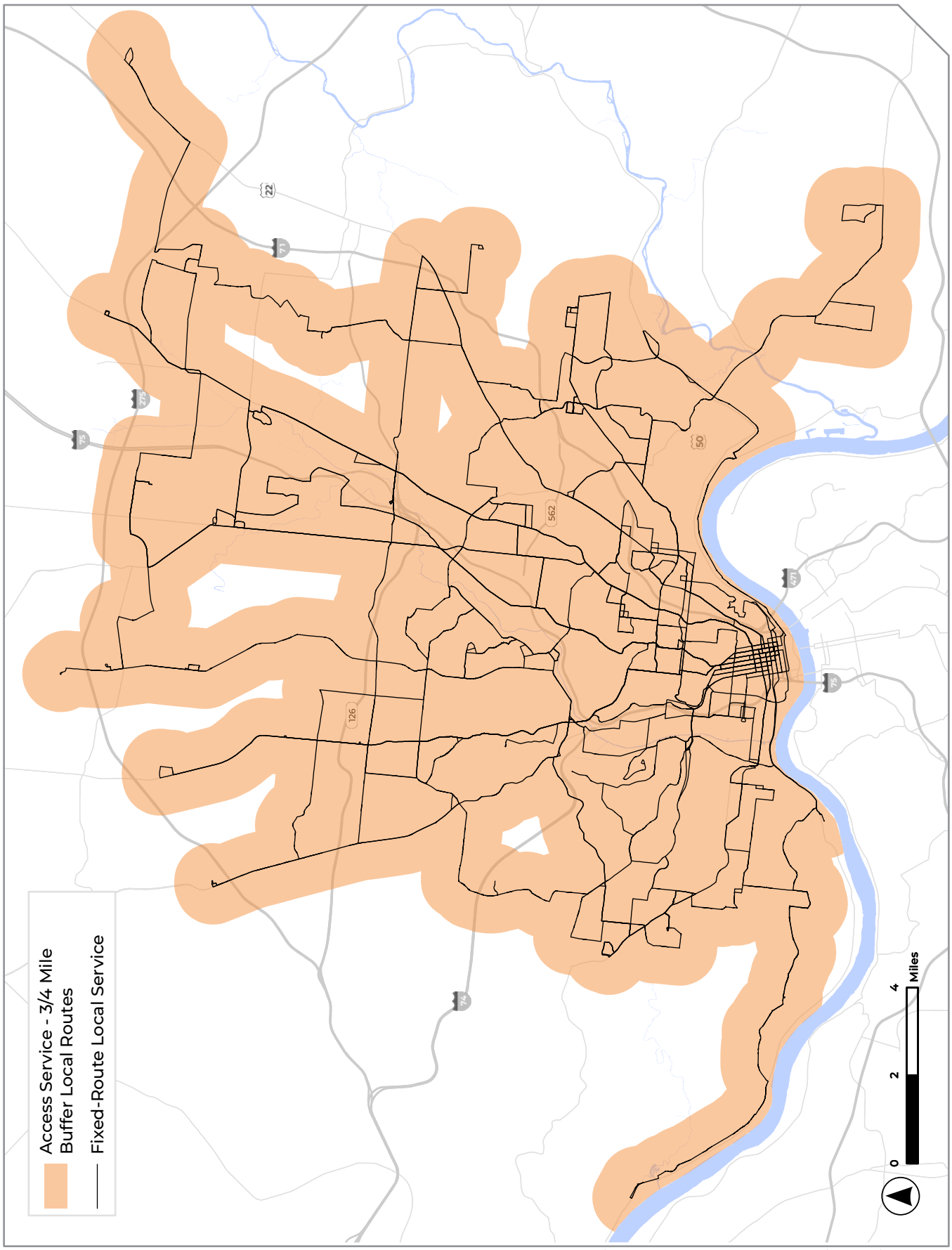


Figure 5 – Access Paratransit Service Area

MetroNOW! Mobility on Demand Service

MetroNOW! is Metro's innovative on-demand transit service, the first in the Greater Cincinnati Region, designed to serve areas with limited public transportation. Using the MetroNOW! app, or by calling our Access Dispatch Center, passengers can book rides within specific zones, connecting them quickly and easily to the broader Metro network. Costing only $2.50 per trip, passengers in the existing zones can request a ride weekdays: 6 am - 9 pm and weekends: 8 am - 9 pm.

Since launching in May of 2023, MetroNOW! has seen over 104,000 passengers as of December 31st, 2024. Ridership has grown exponentially with the expectation to surpass 125,000 rides in 2025. Metro plans to see 30,000 riders a month when all seven zones are launched. The seven zones will be discussed in further detail later on within this document.

Existing Mobility on Demand Zones

Metro operates a Mobility on Demand service, MetroNow! in four geographic zones, Springdale/ Sharonville, Northgate/Mt. Healthy, Forest Park/Pleasant Run, and Blue Ash/Montgomery neighborhoods. This on-demand service utilizes vans to provide service in communities and neighborhoods that do not have the population density and/or the street infrastructure to support regular fixed-route service. This service is on-demand, accessible through app-based technology or by calling the Access Dispatch Center. The current four zones can be seen below in Figure 6.

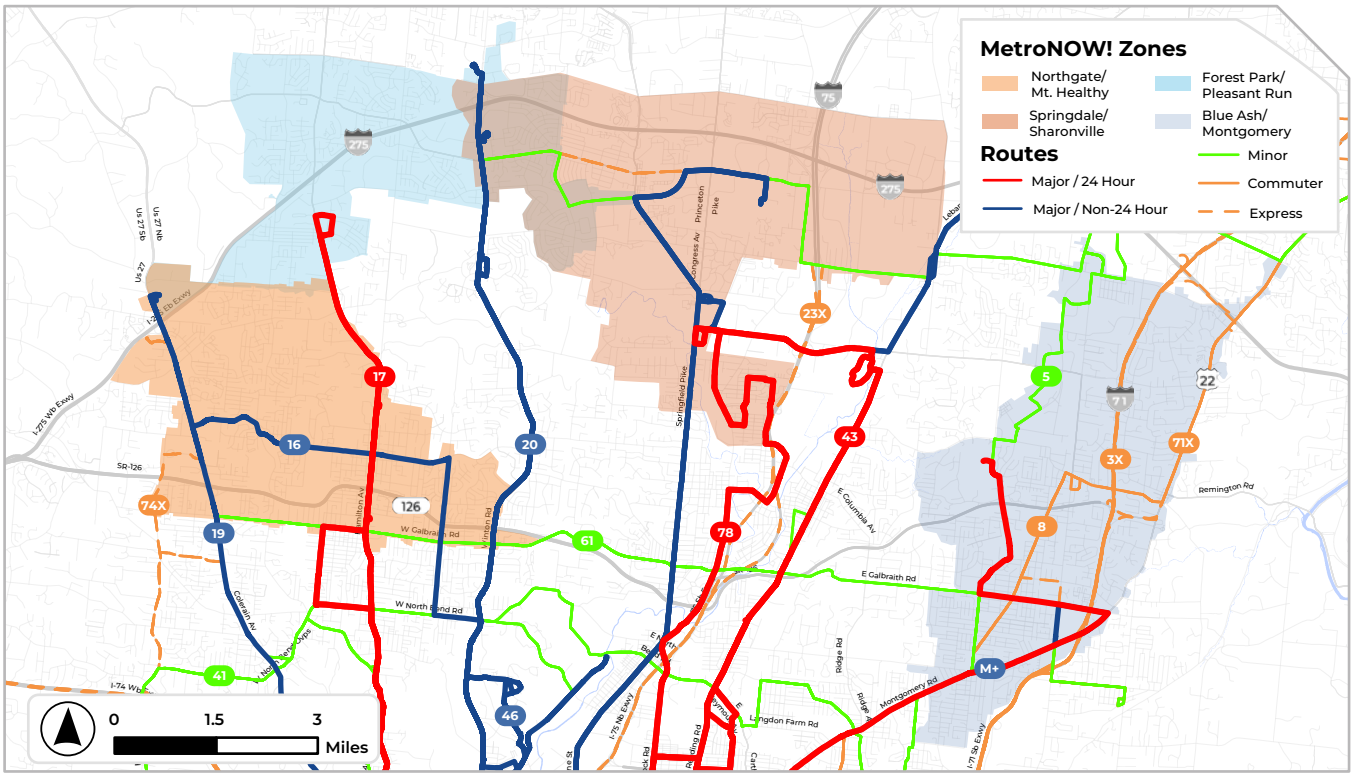


Figure 6 – Current MetroNOW! Zones

Sharonville/ Springdale

Launched in May of 2023, this zone covers five neighborhoods: Sharonville, Glendale, Springdale, Lincoln Heights, and Woodlawn, connecting 34,000 people to 42,000 jobs. Expansion of the zone boundary to include Lincoln Heights and Forest Park was initiated in March of 2024. This increased monthly ridership by 20% . Ridership peaked in March 2025 with 3,584 riders. Figure 7 shows the zone boundary.

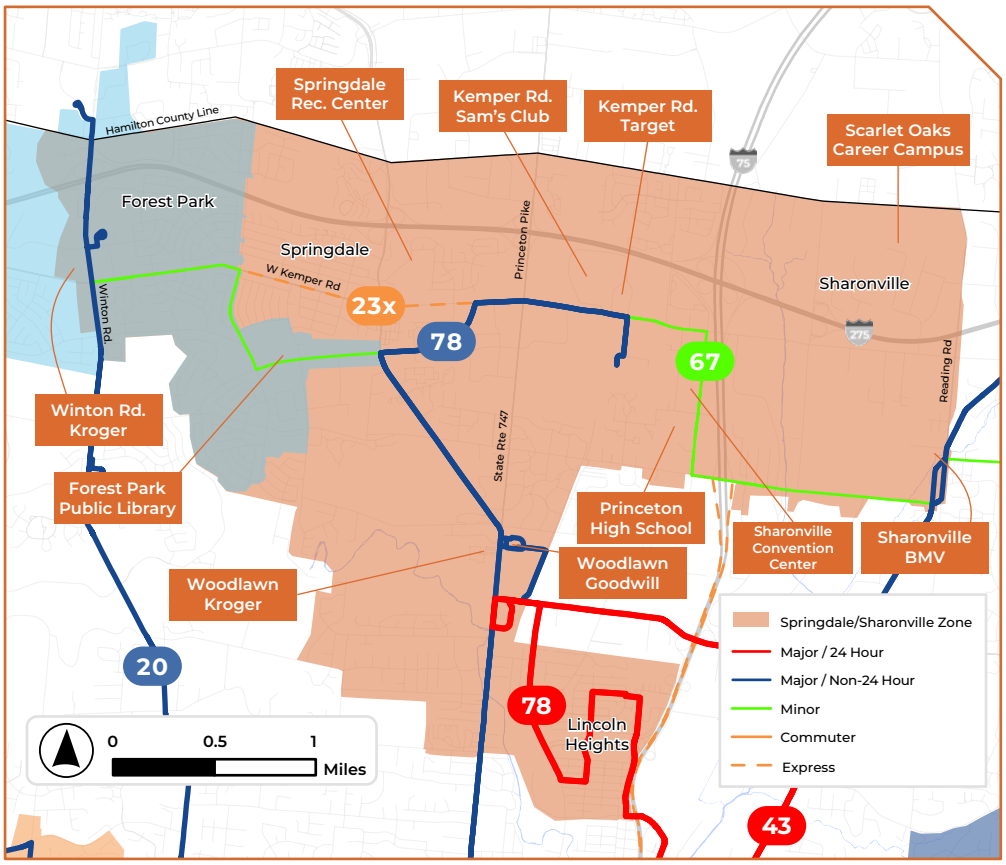


Figure 7 – Springdale/Sharonville MetroNOW! Zone

Northgate/ Mt. Healthy

Launched in July of 2023, the Northgate/Mt. Healthy zone covers five neighborhoods, Groesbeck, North College Hill, Mt. Healthy, Northgate, and Colerain Township. Ridership in this zone grew rapidly and saw 2,500 monthly riders four months after launch. The Northgate/Mt. Healthy zone has accounted for 68% of MetroNOW! rides and saw a peak of 7,897 riders in March of 2025. Figure 8 shows the zone boundary.

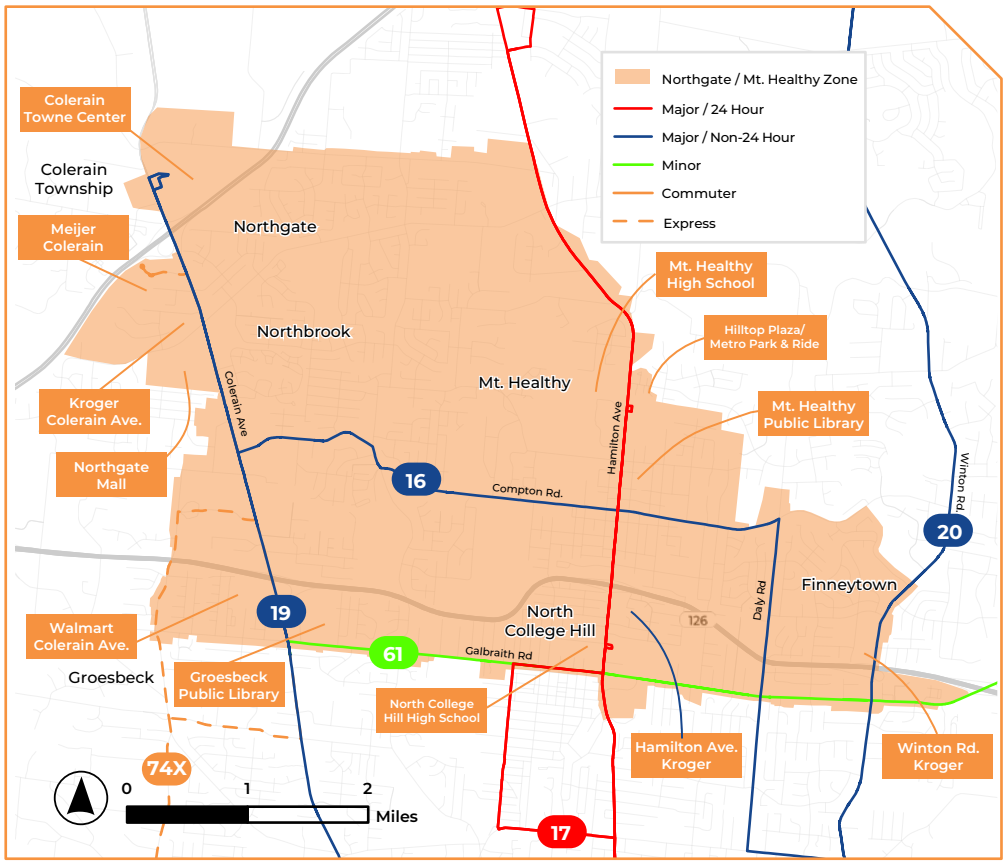


Figure 8 – Northgate/Mt. Healthy MetroNOW! Zone

Forest Park/ Pleasant Run

Launched in June of 2025, this zone covers four neighborhoods: Forest Park, Northgate, Pleasant Run, and Springdale, connecting 31,600 people to 12,500 jobs. This zone provides door to door service to a regional hospital, Mercy Health Fairfield. In the first 3 months of service, this zone saw over 1,000 passengers. Figure 9 shows the zone boundary.

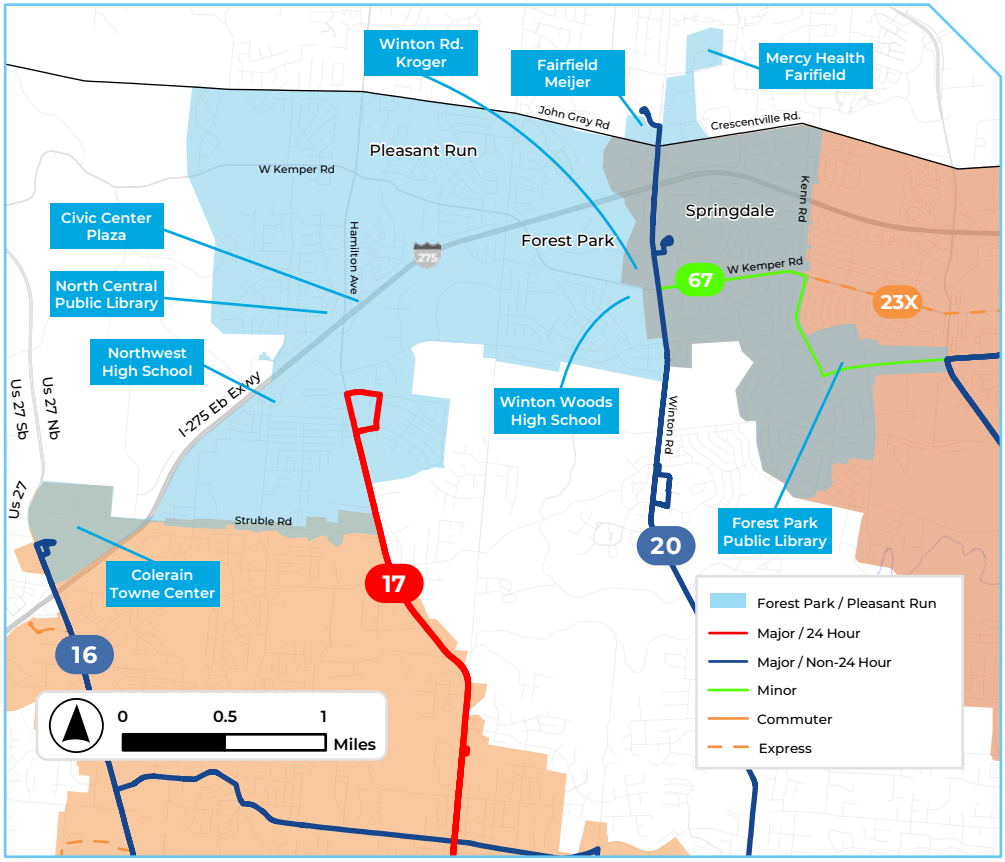


Figure 9 – Forest Park/Pleasant Run MetroNOW! Zone

Blue Ash/ Montgomery

Launched in October of 2025, this zone covers 10 neighborhoods: Blue Ash North, Blue Ash South, Deer Park, Kennedy Heights, Kenwood, Madeira, Montgomery, Silverton, Sycamore Township, and Symmes Township, connecting 44,500 people to 48,600 jobs. This zone provides door to door service to a regional hospital, Bethesda North, and a regional shopping center, the Kenwood Mall. Figure 10 shows the zone boundary.

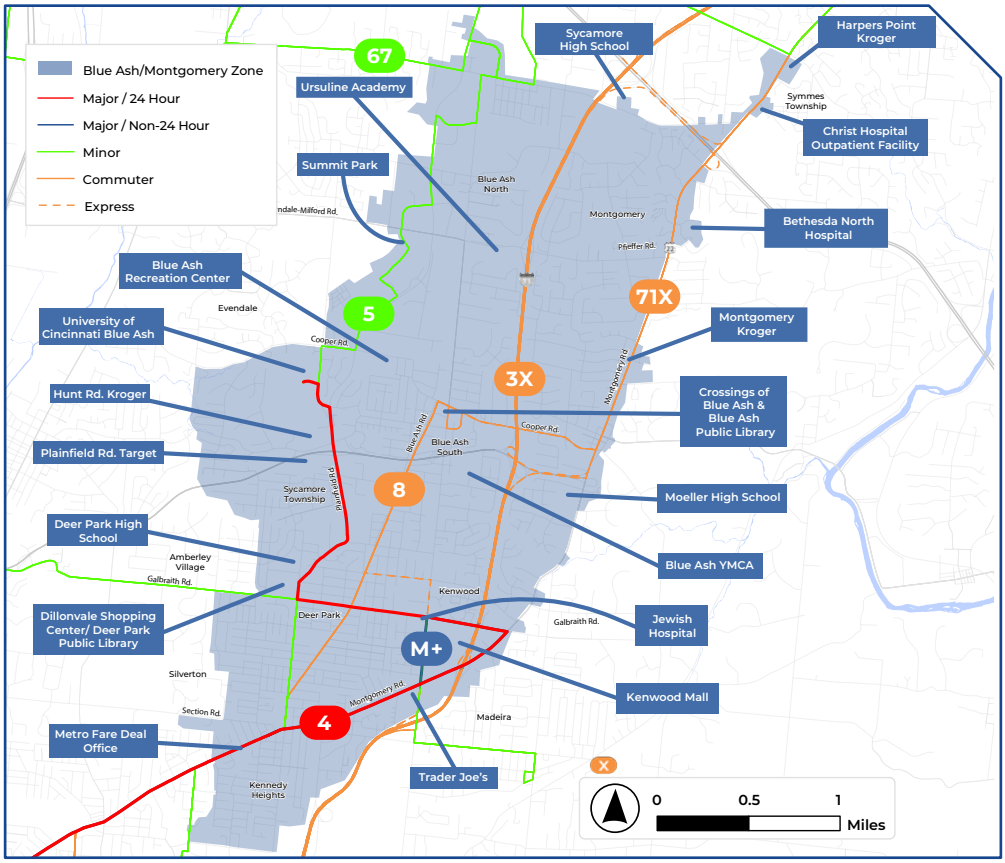


Figure 10 – Forest Park/Pleasant Run MetroNOW! Zone

Service Infrastructure

Metro maintains service infrastructure facilities to operate the robust bus network. This includes five transit centers, nineteen park & ride facilities, and nearly 4,000 bus stops.

Transit Centers

Metro utilizes five transit centers that serve as major transfer points. These transit centers are located throughout the urban core of Cincinnati and most also serve as park & rides.

GOVERNMENT SQUARE

Metro's primary transit hub located in Downtown Cincinnati serves thirty-seven routes while providing real-time arrival information, bikeshare, a customer care kiosk, and connections to other regional transit services.

GLENWAY CROSSING

Located in Westwood, Cincinnati, this transit center serves as the main connection and transfer point for the western region of Cincinnati. Nine routes with a park & ride and electric car charging stations are found here.

NORTHSIDE TRANSIT CENTER

Metro's newest transit center, opened in 2021, serves eight routes. This facility has several amenities, including ticket vending machines, park & ride services, and electric car charging stations.

OAKLEY TRANSIT CENTER

Located in Oakley, this transit center provides sheltered boardings while serving seven routes. The center also includes a park & ride service with an electric vehicle charging stations.

UPTOWN TRANSIT DISTRICT

Although Uptown does not have a central transit facility, four key bus stops within the area provide enhanced shelters and accommodate twelve routes.

> Metro is currently pursuing additional transit centers to create seamless transfers for customers.

Park & Ride (P&R) Facilities

Metro's bus network is supported by the P&R system. Metro owns eleven parking facilities and leases another eight throughout Hamilton, Warren, and Clermont counties. All 19 P&R facilities provide approximately 1,700 free parking spaces to connect passengers to safe, reliable, and affordable parking services, while connecting to multiple fixed-route and express route options. Each facility differs in amenities and capacity, from providing shelters, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks, and signage. The P&R system will see new facility signs and wayfinding signage in 2026 & 2027. The locations of these facilities can be found in Figure 11 while 5 of the 19 are highlighted below.
For more information regarding Metro's P&R facilities please visit our website
https://www.go-metro.com/riding-metro/transit-centers/

BLUE ASH ROAD
Located in the city of Blue Ash, this park & ride facility consist of two parking lot positioned along Blue Ash Road. Serving the Route 3x this facility provides 38 parking spots and two bus shelter. Route 8 will serve this facility

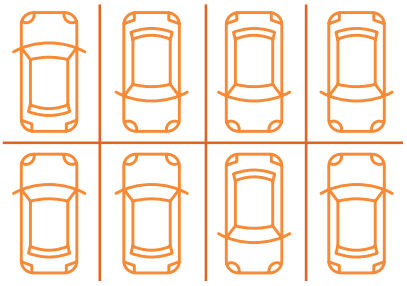
FOREST PARK
Located in Forest Park, this park & ride facility serves routes 20, 23X, and 67 while providing 120 parking spaces. MetroNOW! passengers use this facility to connect to fixed route providing first-and-last mile travel.

GLENWAY CROSSING TRANSIT CENTER
Serving 10 routes, this 70 space park & ride facility will see an upgrade in 2026 that will provide newly paved spaces, landscaping, real time display, and a bathroom for operators to use. More about this upgrade is on page 82.

OAKLEY TRANSIT CENTER (OTC)
The OTC park & ride facility provides 10 spaces while serving seven routes. More express routes will utilize the OTC P&R and are shown throughout the SRTP

KINGS ISLAND
Located within Warren County, this park & ride facility is home to 160 parking spots. This facility sees the highest ridership amongst P&R. The 71x serves this facility.

Free parking spaces provided by Metro P&R system:



approximately 1,700

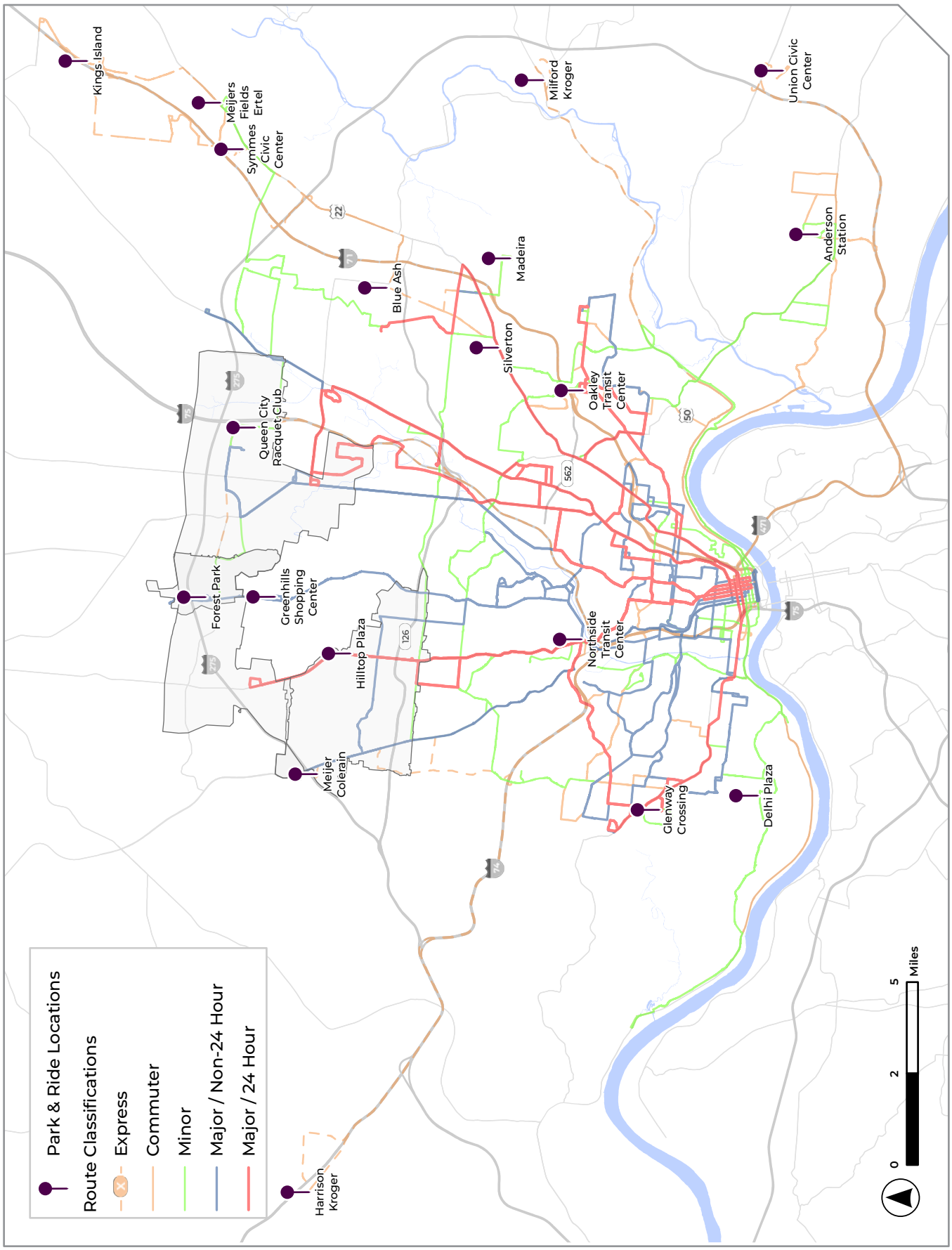


Figure 11 – Park & Ride Locations

Bus Stop Infrastructure

Cincinnati Metro serves nearly 4,000 bus stops across its service area and is working to enhance stop-level amenities as part of a five-year service expansion plan to improve customer comfort while waiting for transit. These enhancements are guided by the SORTA Bus Stop Design Principles, which recommends benches for stops with at least 20 daily boardings and shelters for those with 40 or more.

As of May 2025, 110 of the 288 identified bench-eligible stops have received benches, while 102 of the 290 shelter-eligible stops have received shelters. The analysis assumes that stops with over 40 boardings qualify solely for shelters, while benches are allocated to stops with 20–40 boardings. Additional factors, such as customer feedback and community needs, help determine placement. Some stops fall outside these guidelines but may still receive amenities based on local considerations or condition of existing infrastructure.

Implementing these improvements poses challenges, including coordination with local jurisdictions, right-of-way issues, and construction timelines. Not all stops can accommodate shelters, and some may receive benches instead. Since the original criteria identify only 288 bench-eligible stops—212 short of the target—Metro plans to expand eligibility to include lower-ridership stops, community hubs, and replacements for worn infrastructure, potentially identifying 150 more locations by lowering the ridership threshold and addressing 62 deteriorating benches.

Metro Rapid – Bus Rapid Transit Service

Bus Rapid Transit, or BRT, is a high-quality, bus-based travel option that combines the fast and efficient characteristics of rail transit with the flexibility of traditional bus service. BRT will bring a faster-than-ever public transportation option to Metro riders.

BRT uses frequent service, limited stops, smart traffic signals, dedicated bus lanes (where possible), and streamlined boarding and exiting processes to significantly reduce travel times and provide riders with convenient and reliable service.

Metro adopted its Reinventing Metro Plan in 2020, which recommended a network of Bus Rapid Transit lines serving major travel and activity corridors. Taking the next step, Metro conducted an Alternatives Analysis, completed in 2023, that identified the first two corridors for BRT development, Reading Road and Hamilton Avenue. Both of these corridors see high levels of ridership and happen to be two of the most trafficked roads within Cincinnati and Hamilton County.

The first of the two corridors to be completed will be the Reading Road Corridor. **The Reading Road BRT project is a $167 million, 9.2-mile investment connecting the Downtown Cincinnati area to the outermost Cincinnati neighborhood of Roselawn.** The northern half of the corridor, from the Avondale neighborhood to Roselawn, runs along Reading Road itself. The southern half of the alignment, between Downtown and Avondale, is along several streets, including Main, Walnut, and Vine Streets, Jefferson Avenue, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, Burnet Avenue, and Forest Avenue. This portion of the alignment provides a direct connection between the region's two largest employment and activity centers, Downtown and Uptown (see Figure 12).

The Reading Road BRT alignment is largely located within the existing public right-of-way. Most of it is along exclusive and priority bus lanes, including center-running bus-only lanes and curbside Business Access-Transit (BAT) lanes. There is also a relatively small amount of mixed traffic operation. The Reading Road corridor will feature 13 stations, including the seven stations it will share with the Hamilton Corridor through Downtown.

The second corridor to be completed will be the Hamilton Avenue BRT corridor. **The Hamilton Avenue Corridor BRT project is a $172 million, 8.8-mile investment connecting Uptown Cincinnati to the cities of North College Hill and Mount Healthy. Most of the corridor runs along Hamilton Avenue, from The Heights and Clifton neighborhoods to Mt. Healthy.** The southern half of the alignment, between Downtown and Clifton, is along several streets, including Main, Walnut, and Vine streets, Jefferson Avenue, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, and Ludlow Avenue. This southern portion will mimic the Reading Road BRT to further connect Downtown and Uptown.

The two lines will diverge at the University of Cincinnati with the Hamilton Avenue corridor extending to the northwest and the Reading Road corridor heading northeast.

Most of the alignment is along exclusive and priority bus lanes, including center-running bus-only lanes and curbside Business Access-Transit (BAT) lanes. There is also a relatively small amount of mixed traffic operation. **The Hamilton Avenue BRT will feature 11 stations in addition to the 7 stations it will share with the Reading Road Corridor between Uptown and Downtown.**

The map, Figure 12 on page 27, shows the Reading Road and Hamilton Avenue Bus Rapid Transit corridors and the planned BRT stations.

Metro has been accepted into the Project Development phase of the Federal Transit Administration's CIG (Capital Investment Grant) Program for the Reading Road and Hamilton Avenue BRT projects. As of 2025, Metro is working to complete 30% of the design of these projects. It is anticipated that the Reading Road BRT will open for operation in early 2028 and the Hamilton Avenue BRT will open for operation in late 2028.

The implementation of Metro Rapid into Metro's system will result in improved travel times and efficiency along the two most heavily used transit corridors. In addition, transit between the region's two main employment hubs, Uptown and Downtown, will be greatly improved. To take full advantage of this investment, the overall fixed route system will be modified to feed into the BRT corridors. This Short Range Transit Service Plan includes service changes to the fixed-route system to accommodate the introduction of these BRT projects into the system.

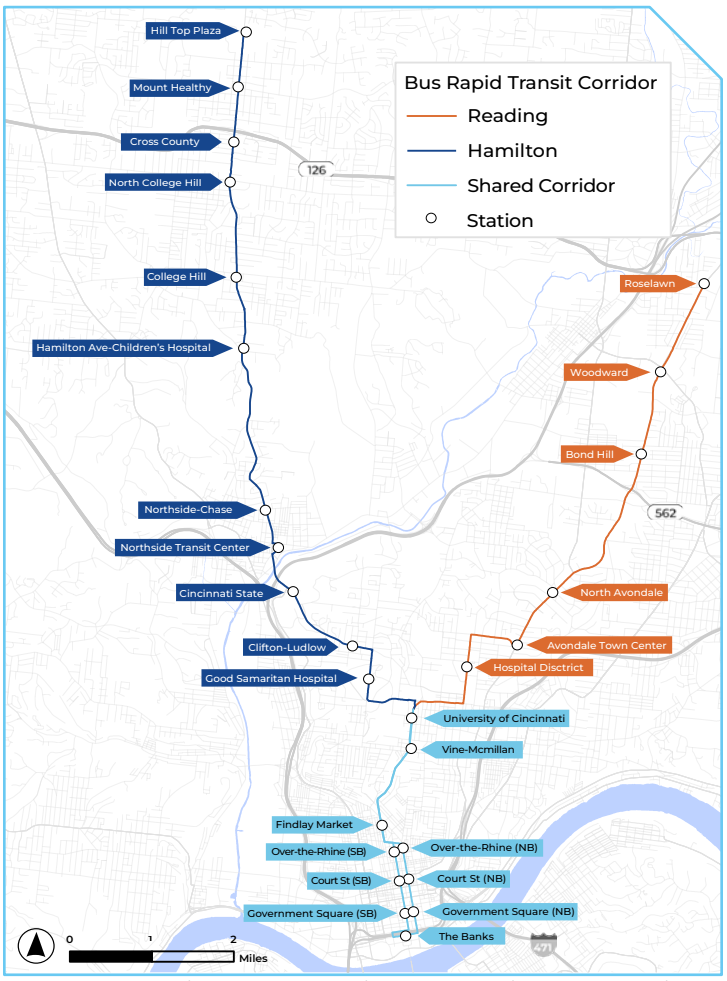


Figure 12 – Hamilton & Reading BRT Corridors

System Evaluation

This section provides an in-depth evaluation of Metro's current transit system. Transit service in Cincinnati has changed drastically over the years. Metro is committed to redesigning its services to meet the needs of Hamilton County and the Greater Cincinnati region today.

System-Wide Performance

Since 2021, Metro has been implementing the Reinventing Metro Plan which significantly enhanced the bus network. **Over 30 routes have seen increased frequency, extended service hours, and expanded coverage with 7 major routes receiving 24-hour service.** For example, before 2021 Saturday service operated approximately half the trips of weekday service, and Sunday service operated about half the trips of Saturday. Sunday service has more than doubled since 2020, reflecting the severe lack of needed bus service on Sundays. Revenue hours and miles have seen an increase every year since 2021 with more new service planned for future years. **Additionally, seven new routes have been introduced, and the network is being redesigned around non-downtown transit hubs to provide more direct service.** Listed below in Table 1 are some statistics that showcase improvements in our network.

Productivity and On-Time Performance

Existing route performance is also measured by productivity and on-time performance (OTP).

Productivity is measured by total passengers divided by total vehicle revenue hours. Metro's benchmark is 15.9 passengers per hour or better, which has been identified in orange within Table 1. Based on this metric, eighteen local routes meet the productivity benchmark, including major / 24 hour, major / non-24 hour, minor, and commuter.

OTP is measured by how often the transportation vehicle arrives at the scheduled time. If the bus arrives five minutes and thirty seconds past its scheduled time, it is considered late. If the bus arrives 60 seconds before its scheduled time, it is considered early. Routes meeting Metro's performance benchmark of 85% or better have been identified in orange in Table 1.

Table 1 - Route Productivity and On-Time Performance, April 2025

Route	Type	Monthly Ridership	Productivity	On-Time Performance
1	Minor	1,685	6.9	**90.0%**
2	Commuter	1,152	7.5	75.2%
3X	Express	3,062	8.7	62.2%
4	Major / 24 Hour	68,229	**17.8**	78.4%
5	Minor	9,839	6.1	84.9%
6	Major / Non-24 Hour	32,251	**21.3**	83.5%
11	Major / 24 Hour	61,455	**19.7**	77.9%
12	Commuter	613	7	69.2%
16	Major / Non-24 Hour	41,798	**17.2**	77.8%
17	Major / 24 Hour	106,506	**23.8**	73.2%
19	Major / Non-24 Hour	63,981	**24.7**	71.9%
20	Major / Non-24 Hour	32,513	14.7	81.7%
21	Major / Non-24 Hour	50,732	**22.5**	79.4%
22	Commuter	3,720	**16.9**	66.8%
23X	Express	1,911	5.8	57.2%
24	Minor	21,580	13.1	72.2%
25	Commuter	586	6.7	72.1%
27	Minor	23,662	**20.3**	78.1%
28	Minor	6,538	9.4	84.2%
29X	Express	2,001	7	80.6%
30	Commuter	2,726	7.3	76.0%
31	Major / Non-24 Hour	40,155	**18.7**	79.8%
32	Major / Non-24 Hour	28,518	**17.9**	82.5%
33	Major / 24 Hour	94,898	**29.8**	75.1%
36	Minor	19,001	10.8	75.6%
37	Commuter	20,719	**25.3**	72.8%
38	Commuter	1,968	11.2	70.2%
40	Commuter	1,581	8	77.8%
41	Minor	40,804	**20.5**	73.4%
43	Major / 24 Hour	108,639	**23.9**	71.3%
46	Major / Non-24 Hour	43,712	**18.7**	65.2%
49	Minor	10,300	12.7	83.4%
50	Commuter	1,613	9.6	81.1%
51	Major / 24 Hour	56,480	**17.8**	77.1%
52X	Express	716	5.4	75.7%
61	Minor	10,594	5.8	79.9%
64	Major / Non-24 Hour	38,178	**20.1**	77.9%
65	Commuter	5,682	14.4	72.5%
67	Minor	7,428	4.7	80.3%
71X	Express	3,743	13.1	58.4%
74X	Express	2,103	8.7	73.4%
75X	Express	769	5.8	**86.5%**
77	Minor	1,733	6.6	77.9%
78	Major / 24 Hour	59,795	**15.6**	71.2%
81	Commuter	576	6.5	78.7%
82X	Express	977	6.3	**86.8%**
90	Major / Non-24 Hour	19,146	11.6	74.9%

Frequency and Span of Service

Metro routes are categorized based on frequency, span, and service type. Table 2 shows Metro's service standards for weekday frequency and span by category. Metro staff analyzed the existing routes to see where they fall short or meet these standards. Table 3 below shows which routes do not meet the performance metrics. This plan recommends bringing these service levels up to meet Metro's service standards.

Table 2 - Frequency and Span of Service Performance Metrics

	Frequency (min)	Span of Service
Route Type	**Monday - Friday**	**Monday - Friday**
Major / 24 Hour	5-15	24 hours
Major / Non-24 Hour	15-30	4 am–12 am
Minor	30-60	5 am–9 pm
Shuttle	20	N/A
Commuter	20-60	6–8 am / 4–6 pm
Express	30-60	6–8 am / 4–6 pm

Table 3 - Route Performance Metrics

	Frequency		Span of Service
Route Type	**Peak Not Met**	**Off-Peak Not Met**	**Not Met**
Major / 24 Hour	4, 11, 33, 51, 78	4, 11, 51, 78	N/A
Major / Non-24 Hour	N/A	21, 31, 32, 46, 64	16, 20, 32 & 64
Minor	49	28, 49	50
Shuttle	N/A	N/A	N/A
Commuter	N/A	N/A	2, 12, 22, 25, 37, 38,
Express	N/A	N/A	3X, 23X, 29X, 52X, 71X, 74X, 82X

Passenger Load

Passenger Load is defined as the total number of passengers on the bus from stop to stop. Looking at the average load of each route by segment gives insight into the busiest parts of the system. The map in Figure 13 shows the average load on all routes in April 2025, with yellow being the lightest load and red being the heaviest. The map shows the areas with the highest average loads are around Uptown, Avondale, and Evanston.

In addition, average max load was evaluated. Average max load provides insights into the specific routes, segments and trips that may be experiencing “high loads”, where the bus is at or exceeding seated capacity. Max capacity of a bus is defined as 40 passengers. Any trips with 40 passengers or more will fall into the “high loads”. Table 4 shows the trips that have high loads and the segments where high loads are occurring. These identified with “high load” issues will be addressed through the service change recommendations of this plan.

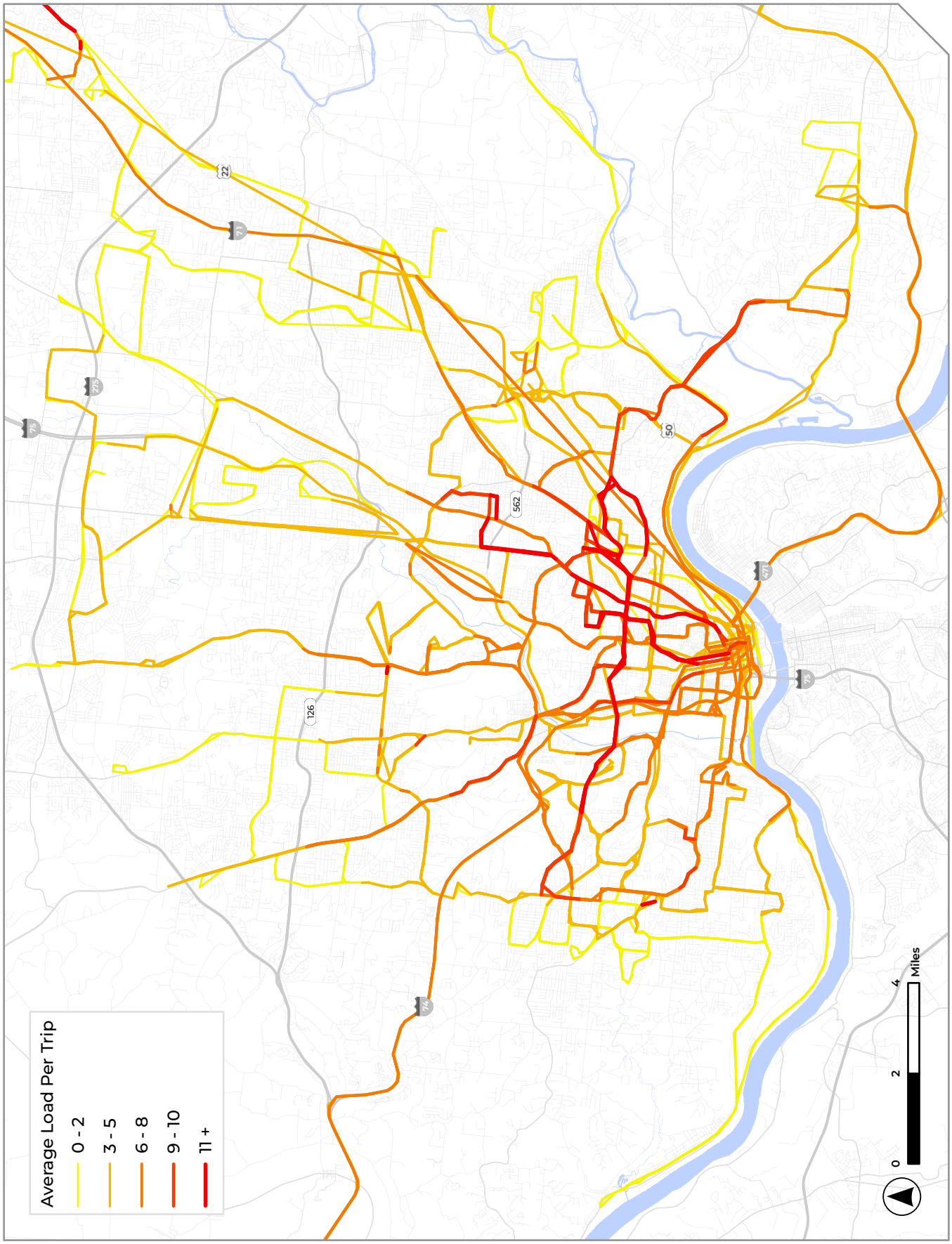


Figure 13 – Load Factor

Table 4 - Trips with High Loads (April 2025 Ridership)

Route	Trip Type	Segment Description
4	Afternoon Peak	Outbound: Between Walnut Hills HS and Norwood
11	Afternoon Peak	Westbound: Between Shroder HS and Walnut Hills
17	Morning and Afternoon Peak	Outbound: Between NTC and Hughes HS
19	Afternoon and Evening Peak	Outbound: Between Corryville and Northside
24	Afternoon Peak	Westbound: Between Walnut Hills HS and Mt Lookout
33	Afternoon and Evening Peak	Outbound: Between Glenway Crossing and Lower Price Hill
37	Morning and Evening Peak	Westbound: Between Clark HS and Camp Washington
43	Afternoon Peak	Outbound: Between Gov. Square and North Avondale
51	Afternoon Peak	Westbound: Between Walnut Hills HS and NTC
64	Afternoon Peak	Eastbound: Between Western Hills HS and Roll Hill
65	Afternoon Peak	Eastbound: Between Western Hills HS and Roll Hill

Service Coverage

Fixed-route transit provides varying levels of service throughout Hamilton County depending on density and walkability. To determine time-of-day service coverage in this analysis, routes were evaluated based on the weekday service hours at the bus stop level and a quarter-mile walkshed, or about a five-minute walk, around each stop to identify which areas are the most accessible. The walkshed was created around the street network instead of a simple round buffer to take into account the built environment. Although many people will choose to walk farther to or from a bus stop, a quarter-mile from a bus stop is considered to be "walkable" to transit following national standards. Within that five minute walkshed, Metro provides service to 88% of the city of Cincinnati's population and 53% of Hamilton County's population.

Areas within a quarter-mile of a 24/7 bus route are considered to have the highest level of service as at any time a person can access a bus route that is operating. From there the service coverage becomes more limited around bus stops that are served by routes that only operate during most or part of the day. At the lower end are bus stops served only by express routes which operate during peak times on weekdays. Weekend service hours typically match weekday service hours, although a few routes do not operate as early or as late as they do on weekdays.

The greatest span of service is concentrated along arterial roads and the Downtown and Uptown areas with service operating 18 – 24 hours a day. Those areas are shown in the darker orange in Figure 14. As routes spread to more suburban areas, these areas have more minor and commuter routes with reduced service.

Another element of service coverage is providing service to major destinations such as grocery stores, libraries, shopping centers, job hubs, hospitals, universities, and high schools. These destinations can indicate a higher fixed route ridership based on demand. Figure 15 overlays Metro transit services, including MetroNOW! with these destinations. The recommendations of the SRTP will address "gaps in" bus service to high demand destinations.

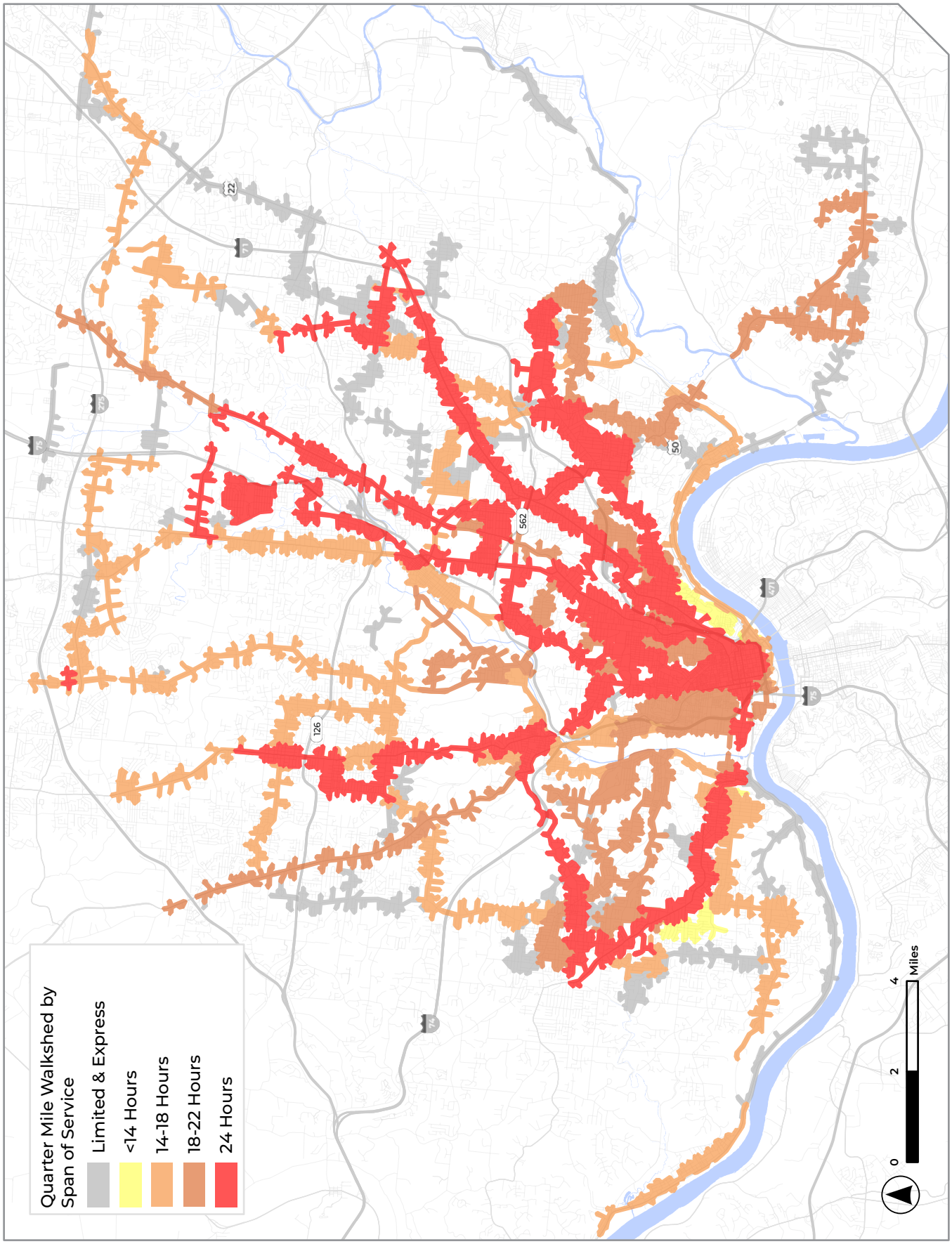


Figure 14 – Service Coverage

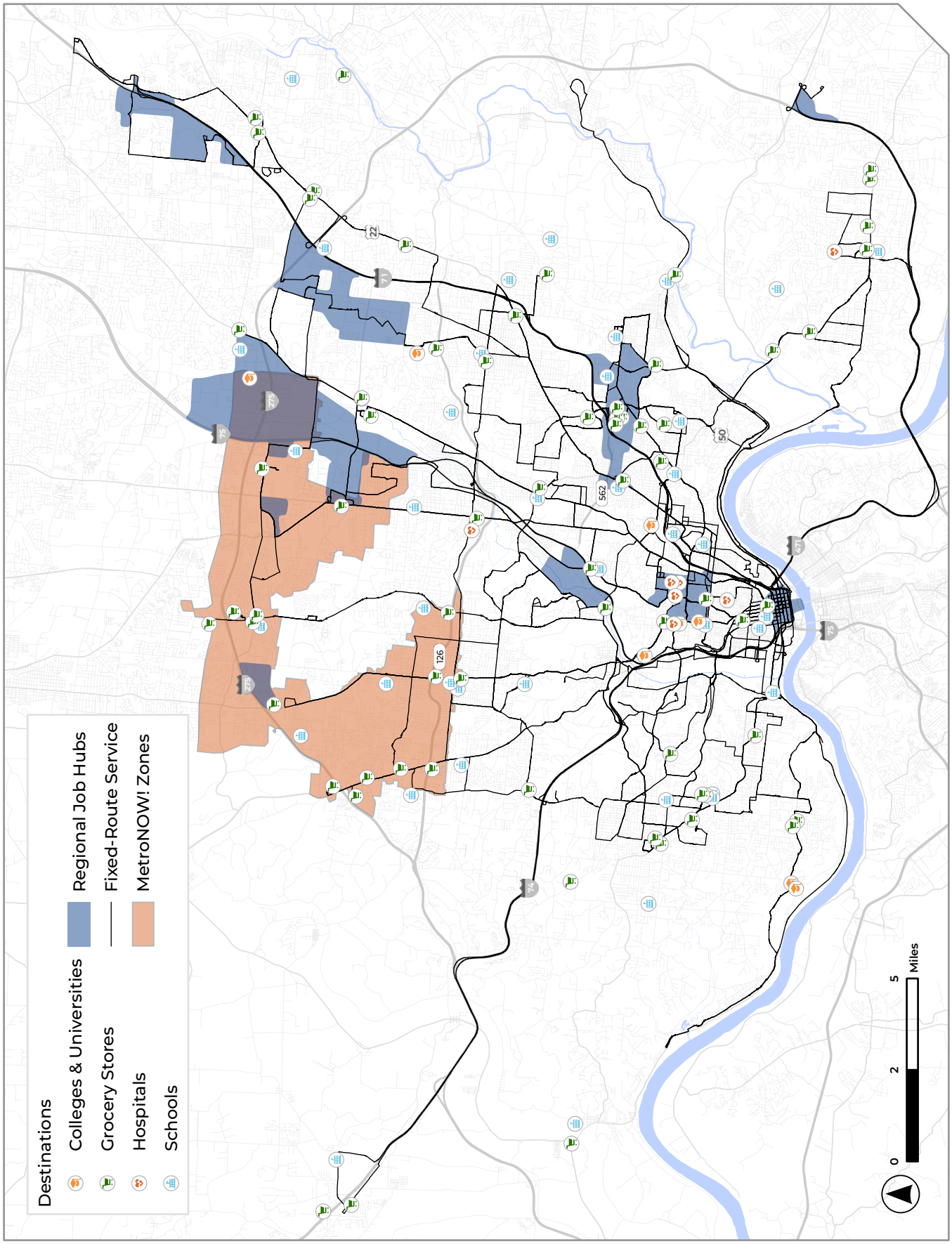


Figure 15 – Major Destinations

Nodal Analysis

Nodes are areas where fixed routes converge. Government Square Transit Center is the main node of the Metro system. However, major routes create additional nodes between other bus routes outside of Downtown Cincinnati, providing greater access to destinations for customers. Metro has constructed four transit centers, that act like nodes, to provide a safer, more efficient transfer outside of Downtown Cincinnati.

As a part of this plan, a transfer and nodal analysis of the existing network was completed. This analysis determined the routes where passengers are transferring to/from the most (shown below in Table 5) as well as the locations where significant numbers of riders are transferring.

Table 5 - Metro Route with Most Transfer Activity (Top 10)

Route	% of Boardings with a Transfer
5	60%
50	54%
2	53%
40	52%
31	51%
28	50%
49	49%
27	47%
11	46%
77	45%

Transfers are occurring almost everywhere across the system between nearly every route. Most transfer activity occurs Downtown (61%). However, outside of Downtown Cincinnati, the Northside Transit Center accounts for over 14% of all transfer activity. Given Northside Transit Center's central location at the intersection of eight different bus routes, multiple crosstown routes, and two 24/7 routes, this makes sense. The other two main transit centers, Oakley and Glenway Crossing on the far east and west of the service area, account for 4% and 3% of transfers, respectively. The Uptown Transit District, comprised of the intersections of Vine/Taft/McMillan, Jefferson/University, Clifton/Calhoun/McMillan, Burnet/Goodman, and Burnet/Catherine, account for an additional 8% of transfers. These transit centers and district combined account for 29% of all non-Downtown based transfers.

TRANSFERS ARE OCCURRING ACROSS THE SYSTEM

Percent of transfers by location.

Glenway Crossing Transit Center	Oakley Transit Center	Uptown Transit District	Northside Transit Center	Government Square
3%	4%	8%	14%	28%

A dense network of efficient, well-placed transfer points ensures effective transit service.

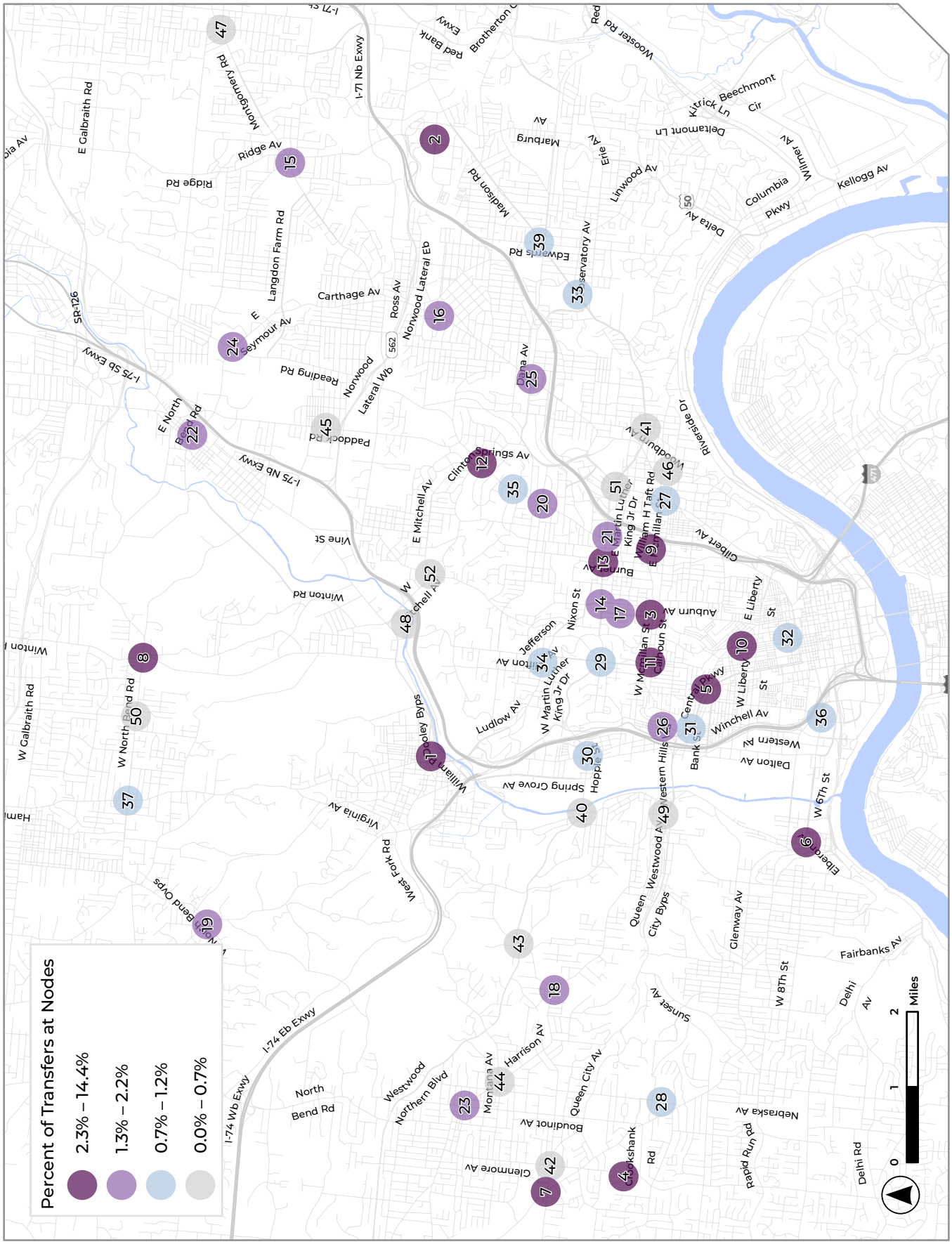


Figure 16 – Nodal Transfers

Table 6 - Node Ranks

Rank	Node	5 Day Transfer Count
1	Northside Transit Center	14 .4%
2	Oakley Transit Center	4.3%
3	Vine/Taft/McMillan/Corry	3.9%
4	Glenway Crossing Transit Center	3.4%
5	Mohawk Corner	2.4%
6	8th/State	2.1%
7	Glenway/Werk	2.0%
8	Winton/North Bend	2.0%
9	Reading/Taft/McMillan	1.9%
10	OTR Liberty and North	1.9%
11	Clifton/Calhoun/McMillan	1.9%
12	Reading/Dana	1.8%
13	MLK/Burnet/Highland	1.8%
14	Jefferson/MLK/Vine	1.7%
15	Montgomery/Ridge/Woodford	1.6%
16	Surrey Square	1.6%
17	Jefferson/University	1.5%
18	Harrison/McHenry	1.5%
19	Colerain/North Bend	1.3%
20	Reading/Forest/Rockdale	1.3%
21	MLK/Reading	1.2%
22	Vine/Paddock/North Bend	1.2%
23	Harrison/Boudinot	1.2%
24	Reading/Seymour	1.2%
25	Montgomery/Dana	0.9%
26	McMillan/McMicken	0.9%
27	Peebles Corner	0.9%
28	Ferguson/Shirley	0.9%
29	Clifton/MLK	0.9%
30	Hopple/Colerain	0.9%

Other nodes that are not formal transit centers stand out such as Mohawk Corner at the intersection of Central Pkwy, Mohawk Pl, and Linn St, which handles 2% of non-Downtown transfers. 8th & State in Lower Price Hill handles an additional 2% of transfers. Many intersections between major streets are also major transfer points, such as Reading & Forest, Glenway & Werk, Winton & North Bend, and many others.

Major nodes see a large amount of transfers with the number varying intersection to intersection. These locations will be studied for future improvements for bus stop amenities, the implementation of super stops, or transfer hubs, or the possibility of a full transit center. These identified transfer nodes are shown in on Figure 16 and labeled by their corresponding rank on Table 6.

Customer Engagement

Community engagement does not just occur at scheduled public hearings, but in every staff encounter with the public. Metro proactively collects comments, concerns, requests, feedback, and more from riders and the public on an ongoing basis. This is in addition to large scale customer surveys and collecting feedback at community events and meetings, along with social media, and feedback from passengers and Metro operators. All feedback is continuously reviewed and aggregated with all previous rider and community input. This collective public engagement effort informs the development and prioritization of transit improvements over the next five years.

Surveys Collected

Metro regularly conducts numerous larger-scale surveys of its riders, stakeholders, and the public to get statistically valid representative samples of public opinion on what Metro does right and where it needs improvement. These surveys contain thousands of comments, concerns, suggestions, and specific route and travel requests.

Larger scale Customer Satisfaction surveys were conducted in Fall of 2024 and the Fall of 2023. Additional recent surveys include the annual Metro Employee Survey, the Regional Gap Analysis Surveys from 2022, and OKI's Public Transportation Origin-Destination Survey from 2024.

Each of these surveys were reviewed to ensure feedback was considered within the recommendations of the SRTP.

Public Engagement

Metro staff regularly attends community council or municipal meetings to present service information and take feedback on proposed changes in those communities. Planning staff also makes a concerted effort to be present at larger community meetings and events to not only help answer questions on the bus system in communities but also to collect input from attendees who are typically non-riders but very in tune with their community's needs. Metro staff has incorporated many of these comments and suggestions into this plan.

Inreach

Metro staff conducted inreach, engagement of internal staff, which is crucial in understanding operations and how to improve service. The bus operators, clerks, dispatchers, and maintenance staff have deep operational understanding of the bus network, its shortcomings, and what can be done to solve issues. Metro planning staff collected feedback from frontline employees in January of 2025. Staff set up large poster boards detailing the SRTP proposed 2025 and 2026 service changes and reasonings for changes in each garage division. Staff answered questions and gathered feedback from drivers and operations employees. This feedback was instrumental in refining the proposed service changes for the SRTP.

STEER Committee

The Strategic Transit Engagement to Expand Ridership (STEER) Committee is an advisory group made up of regular bus riders who use their expertise from riding the system and relying on transit to give meaningful feedback on proposed changes to the system. Their knowledge is critical to staff making fully informed decisions and refining network change proposals around rider needs. Metro staff presented to the STEER Committee on the SRTP analysis process and service change proposals and collected feedback to incorporate into the plan.

Improving Customer Service Experience

Metro is working to improve the way we provide information and interact with our customers. Most importantly, in 2025, Metro launched a completely new website (https://www.go-metro.com/) that is easy to navigate and provides added functionality. The site includes a new interactive web-based system map with route schedules and allows customers to plan their trips online. In addition, there is a new customer portal to submit complaints, comments or inquiries online 24/7. These customer interactions go directly into Metro's new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software where they are tracked, from intake to response, ensuring customers receive a quick response.

EZ Connect

In 2025, Metro partnered with Butler County Regional Transit Authority (BCRTA) and Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK) to launch the EZConnect One Call Center. All paratransit customers in the region have one phone number to call for transit information and ride scheduling, 1-855-499-RIDE (7433). Call Center associates are able to look up information about the caller in real time including whether or not they have any trips scheduled on EZConnect or MetroNOW! and provide real time information on the status of their trip. Additionally, paratransit customers can now apply for eligibility through an online document submittal platform.

Top General Concerns

Over the thousands of comments and pieces of feedback, riders and the public stated that their top concerns were matters of on-time performance, bus stop amenities, cleanliness, frequencies, and bus drivers courteousness.

More frequent service on more bus routes would increase potential usage as people would not have to plan their life around an infrequent bus schedule and will have more freedom to go whenever they choose. Improving the on-time performance is important as riders need to be able to rely on their bus to get them to their destination on time to become more regular users of the system. More and higher quality bus stop amenities such as benches, shelters, lighting, and real-time bus schedule information would not just make existing riders more comfortable at their stop but attract new riders as well. Shorter, more direct trips would also improve ridership and save existing riders a significant amount of time in their day. While new crosstown routes have helped, there is a need for more.

SOURCES FOR CUSTOMER COMMENTS

- City of Cincinnati Connected Communities Initiative (2024)
- SORTA Employee Survey (2023)
- 2024 Customer Satisfaction Survey
- 2023 Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Access Customer Survey (2023)
- Regional Gap/Intercept Survey (2022)
- Regional Gap/Non-Rider Survey (2022)

TOP FOUR CUSTOMER CONCERNS *

On-time performance

Bus stop and bus cleanliness

Frequency

Bus Drivers

**Based on the 2024 SORTA Rider Survey*

Transit Needs and Opportunities

Transit Need

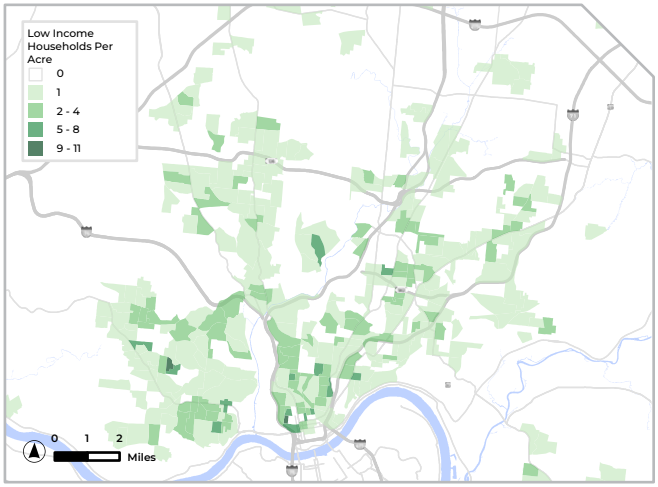
Many factors influence the need for transportation in a region, such as employment centers, shopping areas, schools and universities, parks and recreation, medical facilities, and other destinations. Time of day and day of week heavily influence the amount of travel to/from these destinations with significantly different travel demand during traditional peak periods, midday times, and evening/night times. The type of destination can also draw from surrounding areas and regions.

Transit need analyzes six key demographic characteristics that potentially indicate the need for public transit to meet daily needs. These characteristics include those who are considered low income, minority, disability, zero-car households, populations over sixty-five, and youth populations. This data comes from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2018-2022 5-Year Estimates by Block Group. These six key demographics are constantly analyzed throughout the public transit field and are known as the components that create Transit Propensity. The Short Range Transit Plan covers Transit Propensity in the following section.

Low-Income

Figure 17 shows the density of low-income households per acre using data from the 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates. Many low-income households are located in the neighborhoods of East Price Hill, Westwood, Evanston, and Avondale. Poverty is concentrated in the inner core and the western side of Cincinnati.

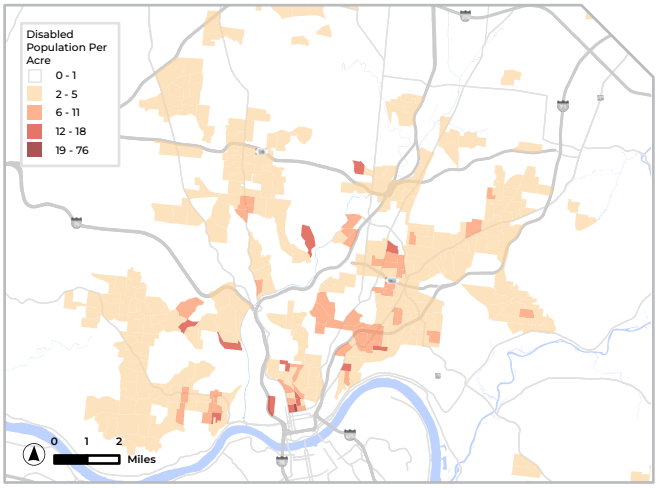
Figure 17 – Low-Income



Disabled Population

Figure 18 shows the density of people with disabilities per acre using data from the 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates. Many disabled people are located in the neighborhoods of OTR, Winton Hills and North Fairmount. However, there are concentrations scattered throughout the region.

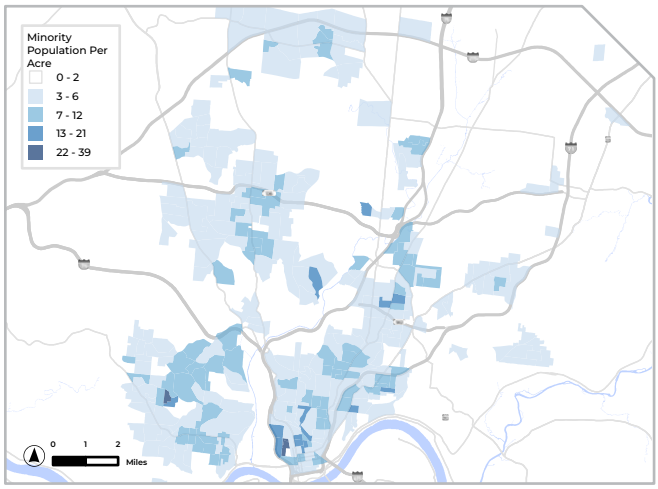
Figure 18 – Disabled Population



Minority Population

Figure 19 shows the density of minority households per acre using data from the 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates. Many minority people are located in the neighborhoods of Westwood, West End, Bond Hill, and Forest Park. Minority populations are dispersed, with communities in the northern suburbs as well as the inner core.

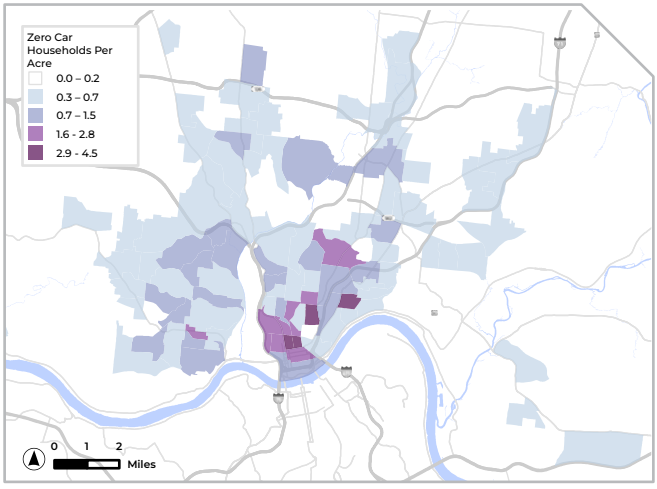
Figure 19 – Minority Population



Zero-Car Households

Figure 20 shows the density of zero-car households per acre using data from the 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates. The neighborhoods with the most zero-car households are OTR, Walnut Hills, Mt. Auburn, Avondale and East Price Hill. Zero-car households are mainly in Cincinnati's urban neighborhoods.

Figure 20 – Zero-Car Households



Populations 65 Years and Older

Figure 21 shows the density of the population aged 65 or older per acre using data from the 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates. Older adults are notably present in the neighborhoods of East Price Hill and Roselawn. The elderly population tends to be more widely distributed in rural and suburban areas than other demographic indicators.

Youth Population

Figure 22 shows the density of the youth population (under 18) per acre using data from the 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates. The neighborhoods of West End, Westwood, and East Price Hill have a high youth population. This demographic is scattered throughout the area.

Figure 21 – Elderly Population

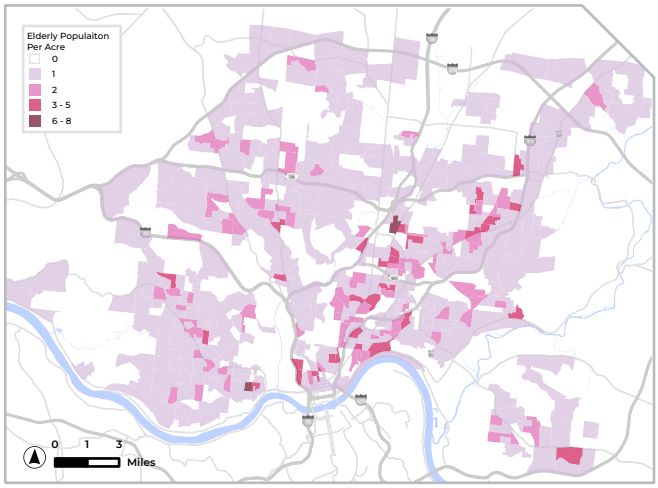
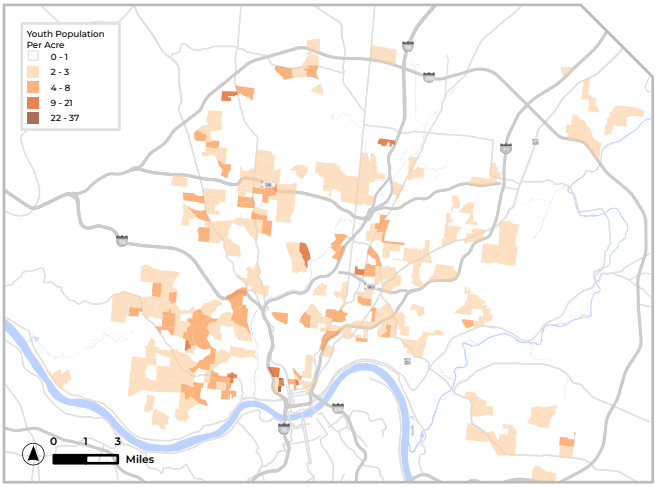


Figure 22 – Youth Population



Transit Propensity

Transit Propensity Analysis is a tool used by transit planners to identify areas where there is a high likelihood of people needing or using public transportation. It helps prioritize service improvements and ensure equitable access to transit.

The Transit Propensity Rank Map, Figure 23, combines the six preceding demographic-density maps into one composite. With density ranges differing for each demographic analysis, the maps utilize a Jenks Natural Breaks classification method to assign each block group to one of five density categories. Jenks Natural Breaks classes are based on natural groupings inherent in the data. Class breaks are created in a way that best groups similar values together and maximizes the differences between classes. For each analysis, depending on the natural break category into which it falls, a score from 1 (lowest density) to 5 (highest density) is assigned to each block group. Following the analysis of each individual factor, the ranks were then averaged to produce the overall transit propensity of each census block group, to create the transit propensity rank score.

Transit Propensity Rank

Darker areas on the map indicate higher transit propensity ranking, highlighting where transit services may be most needed. Therefore, the map (Figure 23) reveals the locations within Metro's service area with populations most likely to need transit services. These identified areas within Hamilton County will be further evaluated in this study to determine if any have gaps in transit service or need better transit service. The neighborhoods of OTR / West End, the West Side, Uptown, Carthage, Roselawn, and Bond Hill show strong propensity toward public transit.

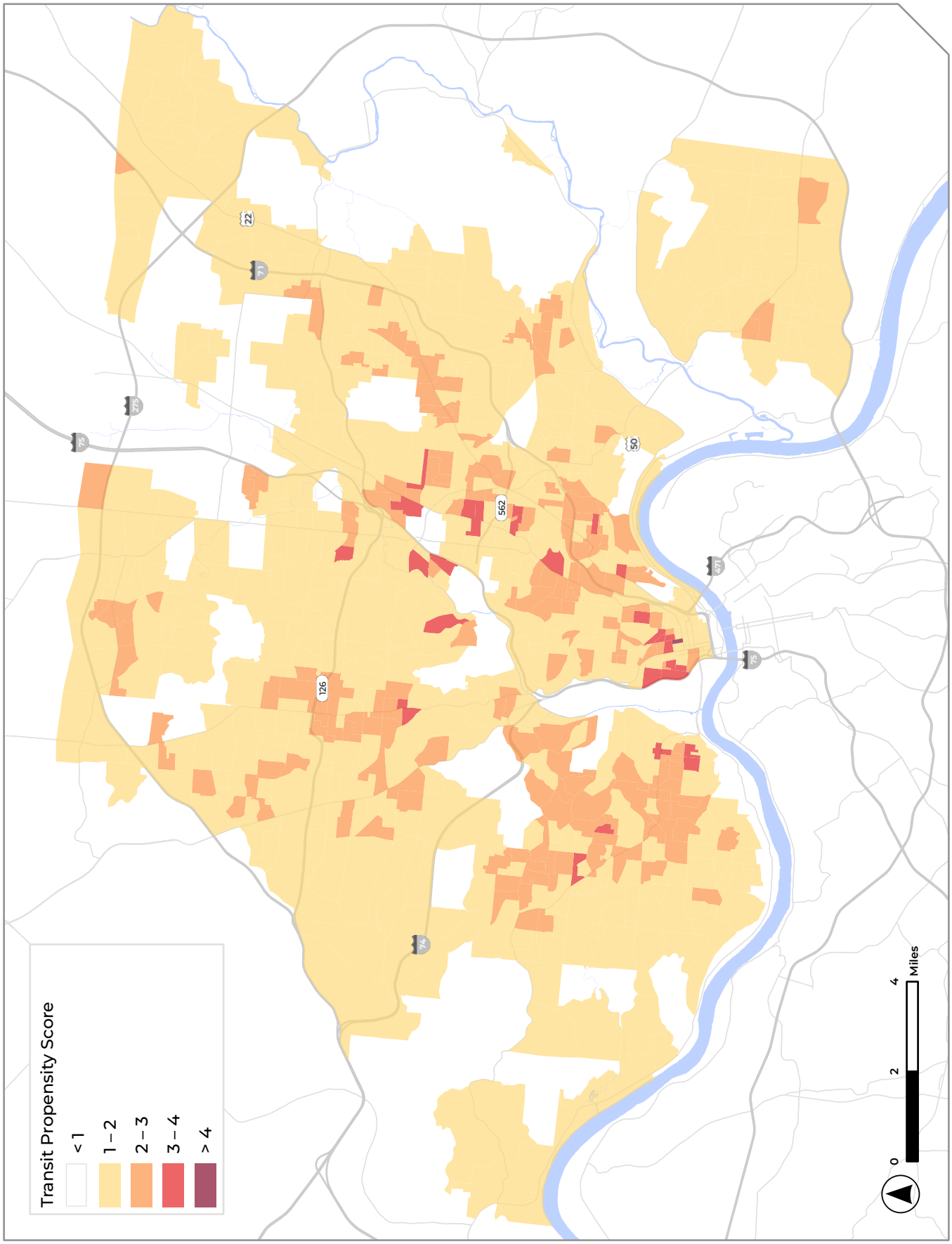


Figure 23 – Transit Propensity Rank

Transit Potential

Transit Potential looks at the density of jobs and residents within Hamilton County. This is important to consider with fixed route transit as the concentration of people and jobs are the largest factors contributing to ridership in most transit markets.

Population Density

The size of the transit travel market is directly related to population density. Typically, a population density greater than five people per acre is needed to support base-level (hourly) transit service. Figure 24 shows the population density by acre at the census block group level. The densest areas are within the Cincinnati City limits, with some density in Northgate, Mt. Healthy, and Anderson Township according to the 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year estimates.

Employment Density

Traveling to and from work accounts for the largest single segment of transit trips, indicating that the location and number of jobs in a region suggest transit demand and provide key connections to occupations. Employment density of greater than five jobs per acre can typically support base-level (hourly) fixed-route service. Figure 25 shows the highest concentrations of job areas according to the 2021 Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages.

Figure 24 – Population Density

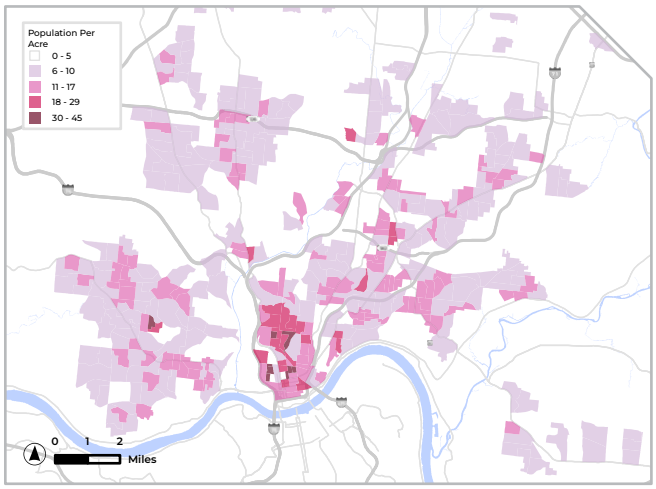


Figure 25 – Employment Density

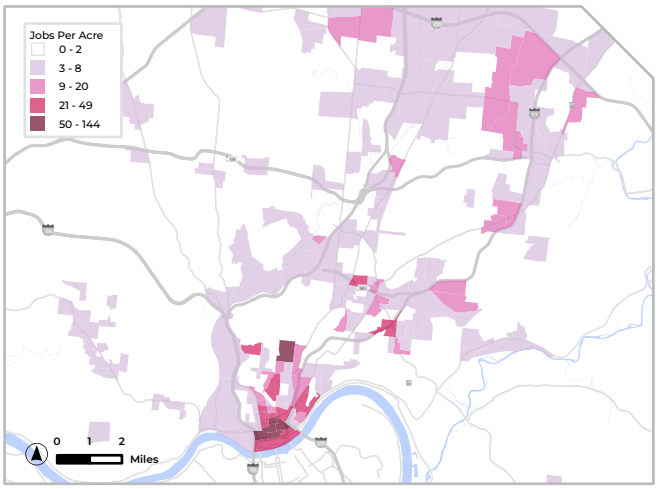


Figure 26 shows the areas with the highest transit potential are Downtown Cincinnati, Uptown District, and along major arterials, Glenway Avenue, Montgomery Road, and Reading Road.

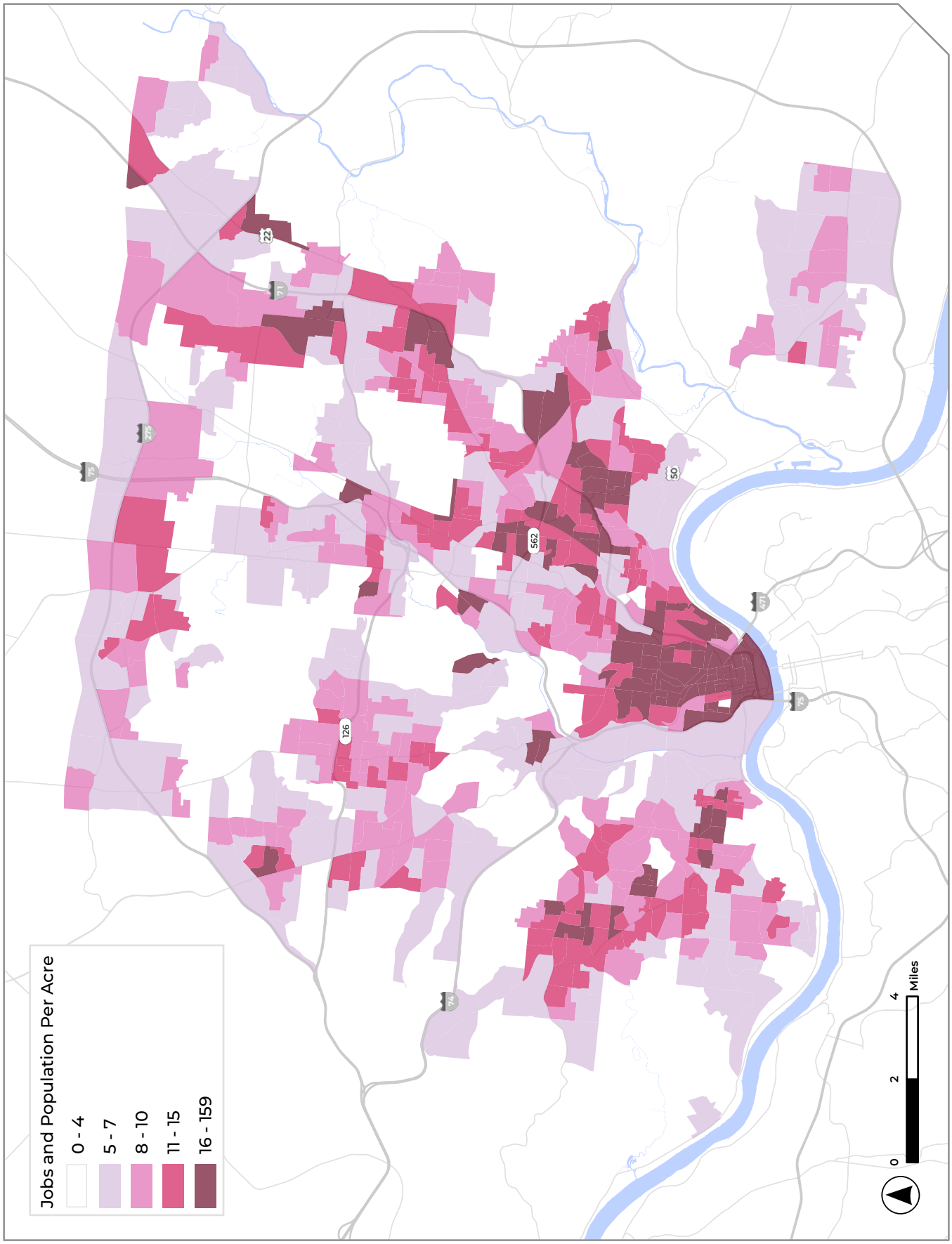


Figure 26 – Transit Potential

Transit Gap

Gap areas are defined as places that receive an unbalanced level of service in comparison to the demand forecasted by demographics. Overlaying bus route span of service levels with transit need and transit propensity helps determine where service may not match the transit need. Areas that were identified as high transit potential or high transit propensity were examined for the current bus service. Areas with high need and no or low service were identified as Gaps.

The gap areas identified in Figure 27 can provide a guide to focus improvements, such as increased span of service or alternative transit modes. Based on this analysis, areas where a transit gap may be occurring include Bridgetown, Blue Ash, Drake Center in Hartwell, and portions of Norwood, Anderson Township, and Colerain Township.

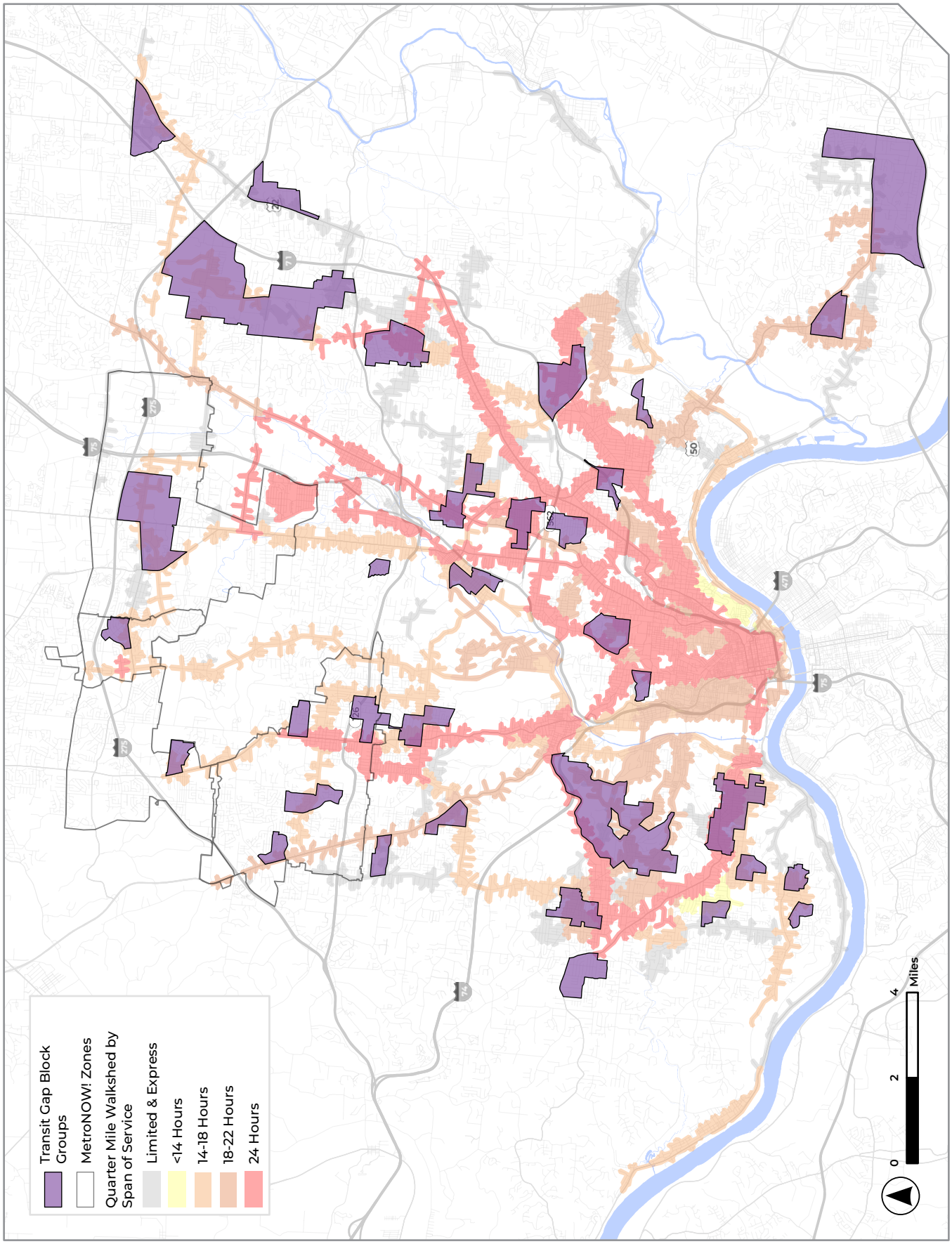
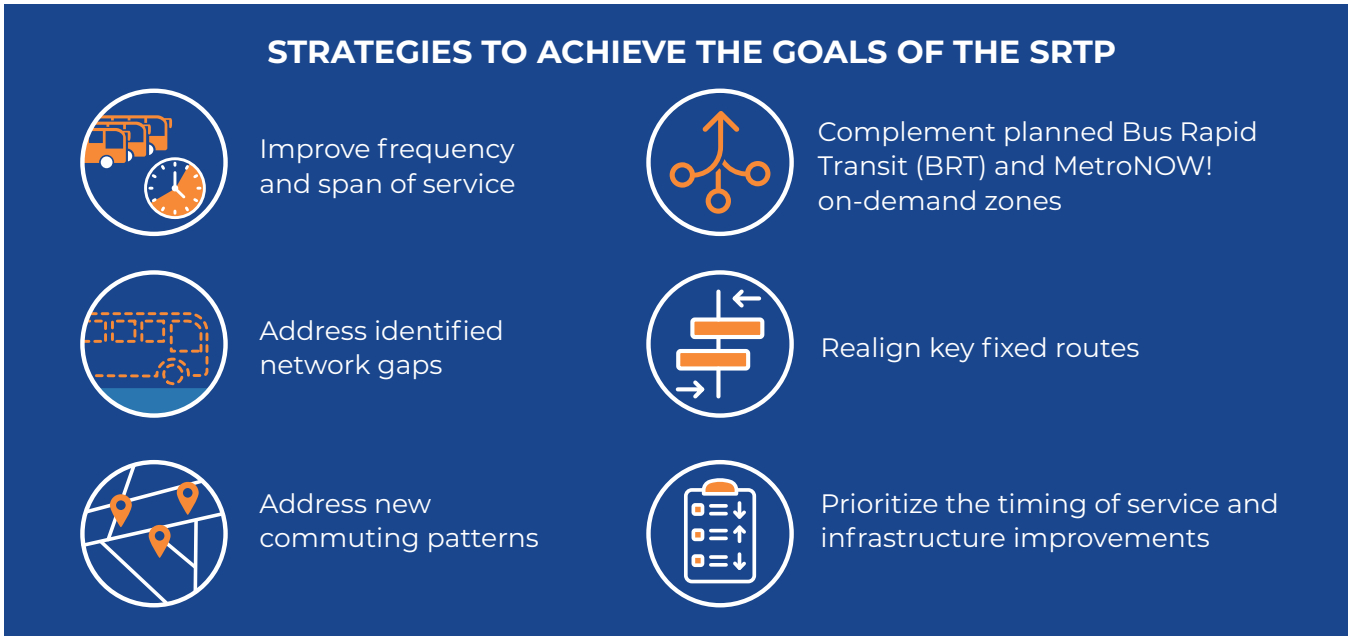


Figure 27 – Transit Gap Areas

Year-by-Year Recommendations

By understanding the existing conditions of Metro services and analyzing the system based on transit needs and propensity, the proposed recommendations aim to create optimal public transit in Hamilton County within anticipated resource constraints. As stated on page 7, this document provides a snapshot of the recommended future service changes for the Metro system. Metro staff is conducting a deep analysis of ridership trends and this analysis will be used for further updates of the proposed service changes in this SRTP. The implementation of the proposed recommendations will be based on additional analysis, budget considerations, resource availability and new data.



Prioritizations by Year

All proposed service improvements in the SRTP were prioritized based on the following factors: estimated population impact by change, the impact of the change on addressing identified transit gaps (Figure 27), the productivity of the route (if existing), and the cost effectiveness of the proposed change. The purpose of this is to prioritize improvements that have the highest potential to increase ridership while minimizing overall costs. These prioritizations reflect current decision-making processes for service changes and yield a larger return on investment in route improvements.

2025 Service Changes

Metro is strengthening and expanding its transit network through strategic service improvements. Service changes in 2025 focus on eleven routes, along with the expansion of the MetroNOW! on-demand service into two new zones. These adjustments aim to enhance connectivity, reduce travel times, and provide more responsive service for communities. Since the publishing of this document all 2025 recommendations except those indicated with an asterisk on Table 7 below have been implemented as of Aug. 2025.

Table 7 - 2025 Service Changes (* indicates service changes not yet implemented)

Route/ Service	Recommended Change
MetroNOW!	Introduced Forest Park / Pleasant Run Zone
MetroNOW!	Introduce Blue Ash / Silverton Zone
16	Span increase for weekdays / weekends *
19 *	Introduce 24/7 service to Mt. Airy, increase frequency week-long *
20	Increased span for weekdays / weekends *
28	Remove alignment to serving Amazon
33 *	Increase frequency for weekdays to Glenway Crossing Transit Center
37	Introduce all-day service, and increase span on weekdays / weekends
2	Realigning route to provide express service to Madeira
3x	Realign route to provide express service to Montgomery
8	New route with weekday peak-only service in both directions
71X	Realign route, introduce all-day service on weekdays, will run on weekends during Kings Island operational season
72X	Eliminate route, combine with 71x

Service Changes Description

Fixed-route service changes include changes to local and express routes, with many changes implemented in August. Local Routes 16, 20, and 37 saw an improved frequency and span of service in August 2025, with Route 19 also seeing additional peak service on weekdays. Local Routes 19 and 33 will see additional alignment, frequency, and span changes to allow for increased frequency from Downtown Cincinnati to Mt. Airy (Route 19) and to Glenway Crossing Transit Center (Route 33). Increasing frequency on the main trunk portion of each route and alleviating overcrowding is a major focus for Metro. Alignment changes are shown in Figure 28.

Additionally, Metro Express and Commuter services received service improvements in 2025 with newly timed trips and additional service to manage overcrowding. These changes improved express service with new routes and streamlined connections. There were realignments of existing services and the introduction of the new Route 8 to serve the I-71 corridor. With these changes, existing express riders had minimal negative impacts to service.

The Hamilton County Region and Greater Cincinnati area have requested more express routes and weekend service hours. Metro has heard our passengers and answered their demands. Of the many service changes in 2025, six of them are centered around the expansion of express routes and weekend service hours. The service changes for 2025 help achieve the plan's goals of increasing ridership and improving travel efficiency by offering more frequent and faster service.

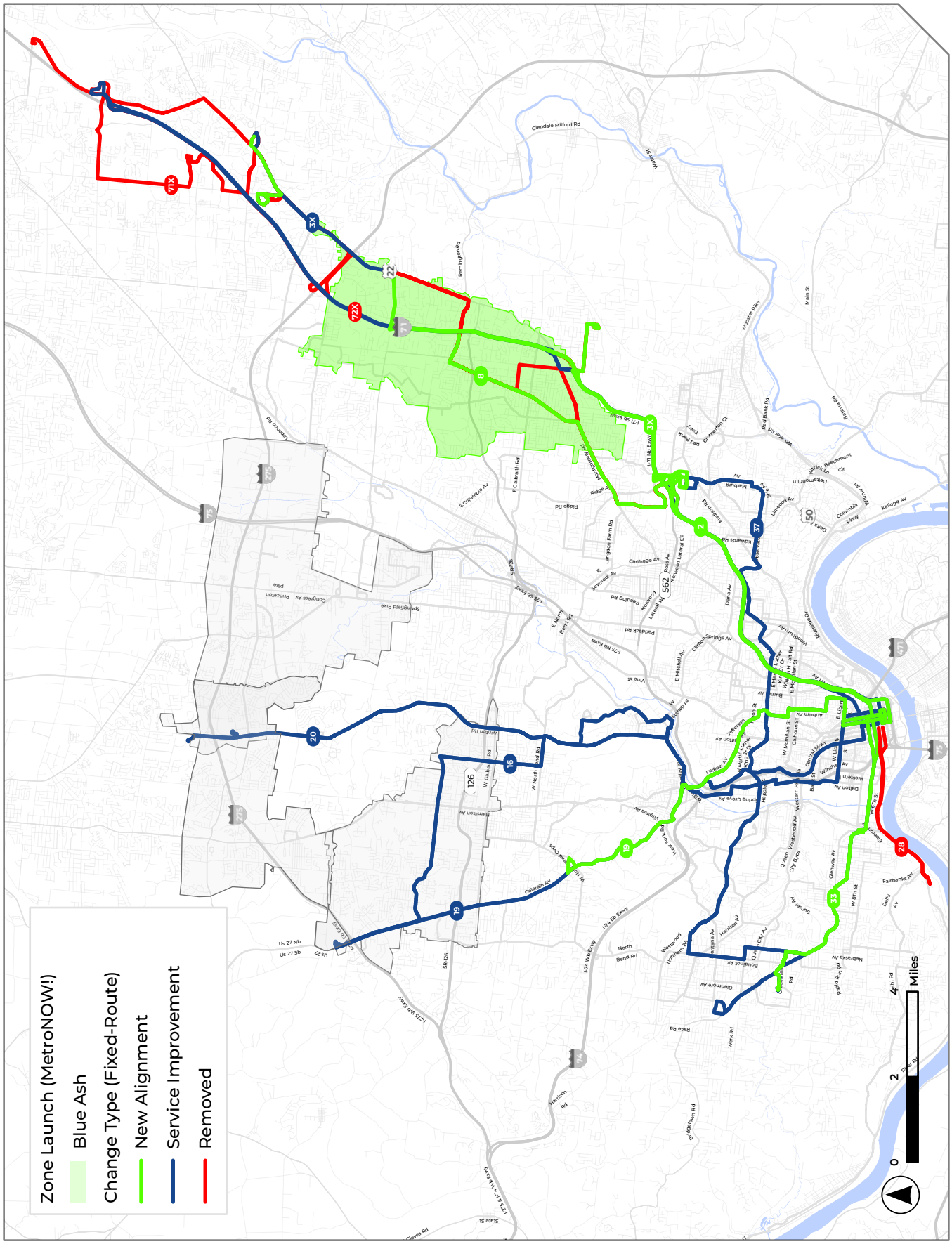


Figure 28 – 2025 Service Changes

Route 3X now runs express on I-71 from Montgomery and the Cross-County Highway instead of also serving Blue Ash, and was extended north to the Fields Ertel Meijer Park & Ride. Route 71X no longer serves Fields Ertel or Columbia Road but will run express from Kings Island to Downtown, with some trips stopping at the Kenwood Mall. Reverse commute service to Symmes Township and Mason ended due to low ridership, but Route 3X now provides coverage in Symmes Township. Route 71X now operates all day in both directions with new midday and evening service and will run on weekends starting in 2026. Additionally, Route 72X will be consolidated into Route 71X at the end of 2025, simplifying express service to Kings Island.

Tables 8 and 9 below show the current frequencies and spans, categorized by day type, as well as their proposed frequencies and spans after the implementation of the service change. These changes brought Routes 16, 20, and 37 up to the service standard for span of service and will bring Route 33 up to service standard for peak frequency. Blue cells in each table indicate a service improvement.

Table 8 - 2025 Weekday (WD) Frequency and Span of Service

Route	Current WD Frequency (min)	Proposed WD Frequency (min)	Current WD Span	Proposed WD Span
16	30	30	4:30 am–10:30 pm	**4 am–11 pm**
19	20-30	**15**	5 am–12:50 am	**24h**
20	30	30	5:30 am–11 pm	**5 am–12 am**
33	15-20	**12-20**	24h	24h
37	8-30	8-30	Peak Only	**6 am–7 pm**

Table 9 - 2025 Weekend (WE) Frequency and Span of Service

Route	Current WE Frequency (min)	Proposed WE Frequency (min)	Current WE Span	Proposed WE Span
16	40-45	40-45	6 am–10 pm	**5 am–11 pm**
19	35	**30**	5 am–12:15 am	**24h**
20	30	30	5:30 am–11 pm	**5 am–12 am**
37	N/A	**60**	N/A	**6 am–7 pm**

Metro's mobility-on-demand service, MetroNOW!, expanded in 2025 with the launch of the zone, Forest Park Zone and the Blue Ash Zone. Both zones offer convenient transfers and connections to several fixed-route bus lines, including the following:

- Forest Park Zone serves four communities: Forest Park, Northgate, Pleaseant Run, and Springdale connecting riders to key destinations such as high schools, middle schools, shopping plazas, grocery stores, and libraries. Riders are able to transfer to the existing MetroNOW! zones as well as six bus routes: 16, 17, 19, 20, 23X, and 67.
- Blue Ash Zone serves ten communities: Blue Ash North, Blue Ash South, Deer Park, Kennedy Heights, Kenwood, Madeira, Montgomery, Silverton, Sycamore Township, and Symmes Township providing access to major destinations including parks, universities, public schools, grocery stores, libraries, and the Kenwood Mall. Riders are able to transfer to eight bus routes: 3X, 4, 5, 8, 61, 67, 71X, and 90. This zone offers connections to bus routes and transfers within the broader Metro transit system.

2026 Proposed Service Changes

Metro continues to enhance its system through thoughtful service planning and rider-focused improvements. Service changes in 2026 affect eleven routes, with modifications to route alignments, frequency, and service spans. Three new crosstown routes are proposed to significantly shorten travel times across the region. These changes are designed to improve access to key destinations, reduce wait times, and support growing travel demand. The 2026 proposed service changes can be seen in Table 10 below.

Table 10 - 2026 Proposed Service Changes

Route / Service	Proposed Change
MetroNOW!	Introduce Monfort Heights / Groesbeck Zone
MetroNOW!	Introduce Bond Hill Zone
4	Increase frequency from Silverton to Downtown on weekdays
10	New route on former Route 11 Erie branch, increase frequency / span to 7-days
11	Increase frequency all 7 days, remove Erie branch, reduce overnight service
27	Realign route, increase frequency and span to 7-days
46	Realign route, increase weekday frequency
47	New route with 30-minute frequency and 5–12am span, 7 days a week
51	Realign route, increase weekend frequency
53	New route with week long 30-minute frequency and 5am–11pm span
75X	Realign route with additional trips, extend to Eastgate
81	Eliminate Route
82X	Eliminate Route, combine with 75X

Service Changes Description

Figure 29 illustrates all routes included in this service change, which feature redesigned or entirely new alignments, along with updated service spans and enhanced frequency on most routes.

Fixed-route service changes include changes to local and express routes. Local Route 4 will provide fifteen-minute service on its busiest section from Downtown Cincinnati to Silverton. New local Route 10 will replace the existing local Route 11 Erie branch and feature expanded weekend service. Local Route 27 will realign from the Northside Transit Center to the Este Avenue layover via Kenard. The new Route 27 alignment will provide access to the Kenard Kroger grocery store for the transit-dependent neighborhoods of South Cumminsville and South Fairmount. Local Routes 46 and 51 will see major alignment changes, while new crosstown Routes 47 and 53 will improve travel times and connections for crosstown travelers in the core of the region. The new route 47 will run crosstown service from the Casey Apartments in Northside to the Oakley Transit Center via Spring Grove Ave, Mitchell Ave, Dana Ave, Norwood, and Hyde Park. The new Route 53 will run crosstown service from the Northside Transit Center to the Oakley Transit Center via Spring Grove Ave, Ross/Tennessee Ave, Sherman Ave, and Robertson Ave. These adjustments will also ensure continued coverage in areas impacted by other route modifications.

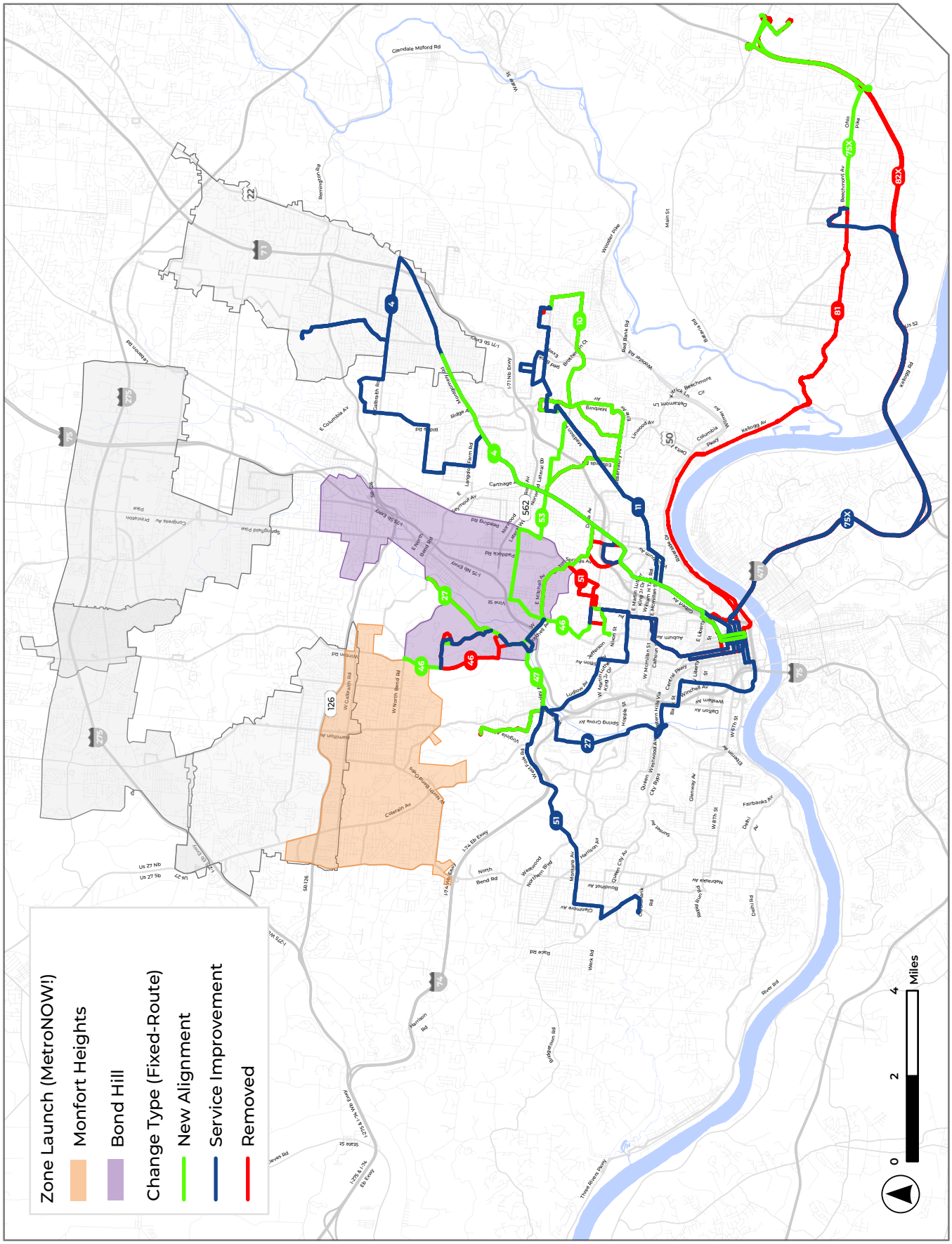


Figure 29 – 2026 Service Changes

Moving into 2026, Metro will continue to strengthen its express network with express routes serving the southeast corridor experiencing improvements in schedule and frequency. Existing routes 75X and 82X will be consolidated into a new Route 75X to improve efficiencies and provide new express service to eastern Anderson Township along Beechmont Avenue with connections to Eastgate. The service changes for 2026 will help achieve the plan's goals of increasing ridership and enhancing the user experience by significantly reducing crosstown travel times and untangling long, circuitous routes.

The 2026 service changes will bring Routes 4, 10, 11, and 51 up to the service standard for peak and non-peak frequency. Newly created routes will meet the service standards for frequency and span for their route type. The proposed frequency and span adjustments can be seen below in Table 11 and Table 12.

Table 1 1 - 2026 Weekday (WD) Frequency and Span of Service

Route	Current WD Frequency (min)	Proposed WD Frequency (min)	Current WD Span	Proposed WD Span
4	15-25	**15m/30***	24h	24h
10	N/A	**30**	N/A	**5:30 am–11:30 pm**
11	15-20	**30**	24h	**4:30 am–1:30 am**
27	30-45	**30**	4:30 am–12:30 am	**5 am-12:30 am**
46	30	**20**	4:30 am–1 am	4:30 am–1 am
47	N/A	**30**	N/A	**5am–12 am**
53	N/A	**30**	N/A	**5 am–11 pm**

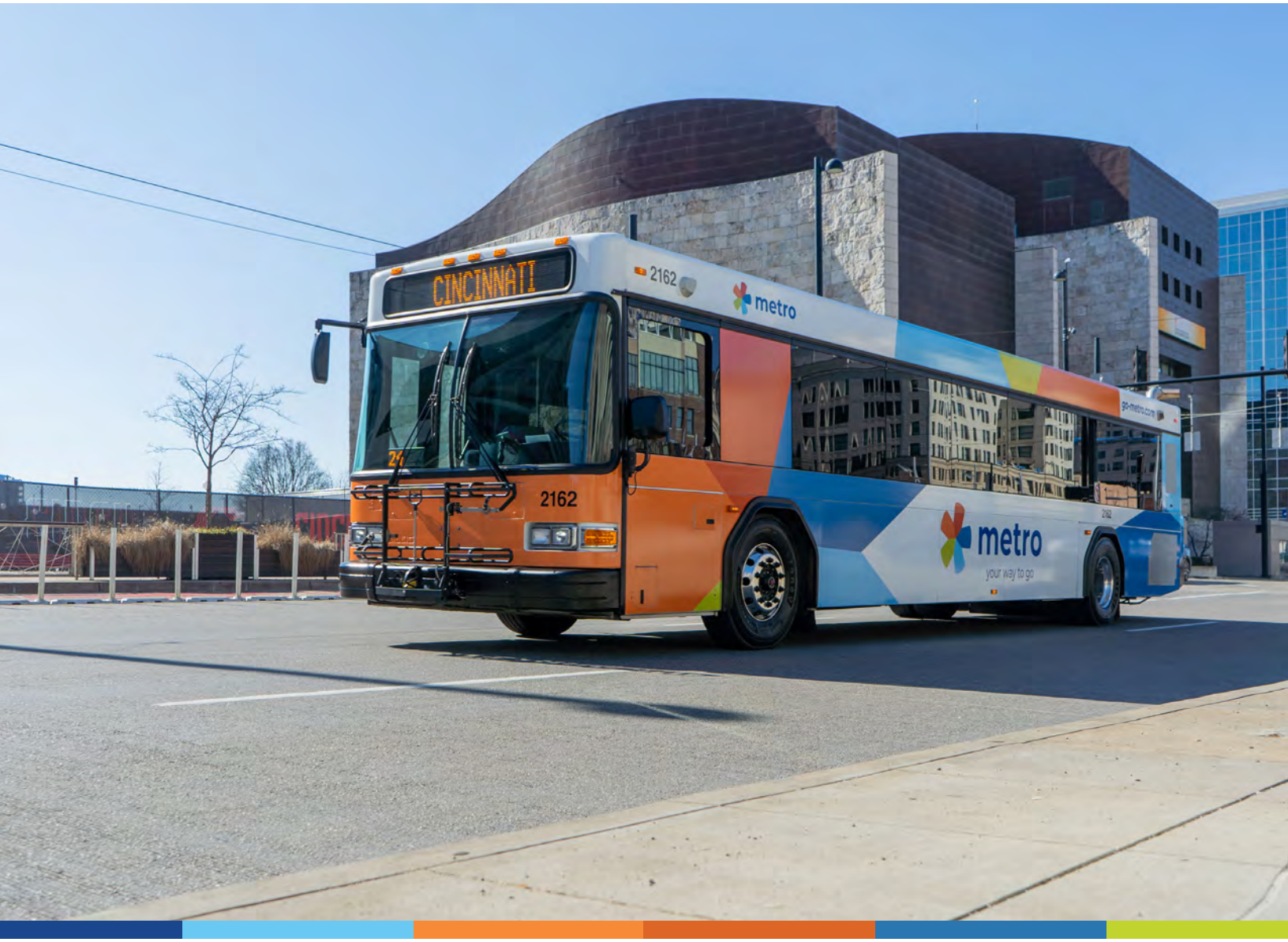
*****15m service limited to a short turn run from Downtown to Silverton*

Table 12 - 2026 Weekend (WE) Frequency and Span of Service

Route	Current WE Frequency (min)	Proposed WE Frequency (min)	Current WE Span	Proposed WE Span
4	25	**20**	24h	24h
10	N/A	**30-45**	N/A	**5:30 am–11:30 pm**
11	15-20	**30**	24h	**4:30 am–1:30 am**
27	45	**30**	4 am–12:30 am	**5 am–12:30 am**
47	N/A	**30**	N/A	**5 am–12 am**
51	60	**30**	24h	24h
53	N/A	**30**	N/A	**5 am–11 pm**

MetroNOW! will continue to expand in 2026 by launching the fifth and sixth zones, Monfort Heights and Bond Hill. These two zones will be the first zones to traverse the City of Cincinnati's jurisdiction covering more dense neighborhoods that see a large amount of local bus service but have limited access to first and last mile transportation options.

- Monfort Heights zone will serve five communities, including Monfort Heights, Groesbeck, Mt. Airy, College Hill, and North College Hill. The Monfort Heights zone will have connection to seven different transit routes; 16, 17, 19, 20, 41, 61, and 74X. This zone will also have access to the Hamilton Avenue BRT in 2028.
- Bond Hill zone will serve nine communities which include; Arlington Heights, Bond Hill, Carthage, Elmwood Place, Lockland, North Avondale, Roselawn, Saint Bernard, and Winton Hills. The Bond Hill zone will have connection to ten different bus routes; 14X, 16, 27, 41, 43, 46, 47, 53, 61, and 78. This zone will also connect to the Reading Road BRT in 2028.



2027 Proposed Service Changes

Service changes in 2027 focus on eleven routes, with adjustments to frequency, span of service, and route alignments. These changes focus heavily on the west side of Cincinnati, by providing more frequent service to neighborhoods with high transit propensity scores and transit gaps. The 2027 proposed service changes can be seen in Table 13 below.

Table 13 - 2027 Proposed Service Changes

Route / Service	Proposed Change
1	Extend route to Union Terminal, increase weekday frequency and span
6	Increase weekday frequency / span, increase weekend frequency
23X	Realign route with frequency and span improvements
31	Realign route in West End, increase frequency and span for weekdays / weekends
36	Increase frequency and span for weekdays / weekends
42X	New route in Sharonville with weekday peak-only one-way service
49	Eliminate route
64	Realign route, increase frequency for weekdays / weekends
65	Introduce all-day service and increase span for weekdays / weekends
66	New route with week-long 60-minute frequency and 5:30–12:30am span
76X	New route with weekday peak-only one-way service

Service Changes Description

The 2027 service changes build on previous improvements by revising alignments and enhancing frequency and span across nearly all affected routes (see Figure 30). Routes 1 and 31 will see alignment changes to better serve areas of the West End with improved frequencies and span. Routes 6 and 36 will see frequency and span increases to match service levels and demand to alleviate overcrowding. Route 49 will be eliminated but service will be maintained through route improvements of Routes 1 and 64. Routes 64 and 65 will see major alignment changes and new alignments for improved travel times and better crosstown connections. The new Route 66 will have a terminus at both Glenway Transit Center and Northside Transit Center while serving the west side of Cincinnati via Ferguson Rd, Queen City Ave., Lafeuille Ave., Harrison Ave., Montana Ave., Baltimore Ave., and W Fork Rd. The portion of the Route 66 on Queen City Avenue will satisfy a large gap area in service that stretches from East Westwood to the Aspen Village Apartments.

Express service along the I-75 corridor will be enhanced to reduce travel times to and from Downtown Cincinnati significantly. As part of this improvement, two new Routes—42X and 76X—will launch to serve outlying communities, including Woodlawn, Wyoming, Hartwell, Carthage, Springdale, Sharonville, and Evendale. The service changes for 2027 will help achieve the plan's goals of increasing ridership and improving travel efficiency by offering more frequent and faster service as well as new crosstown options.

These changes will bring Routes 6, 31, 36, and 64 up to the service standard for peak and off-peak frequency. Newly launched routes will meet the service standard for their route type. The proposed frequency and span changes can be seen on page 63 in Table 14 and Table 15.

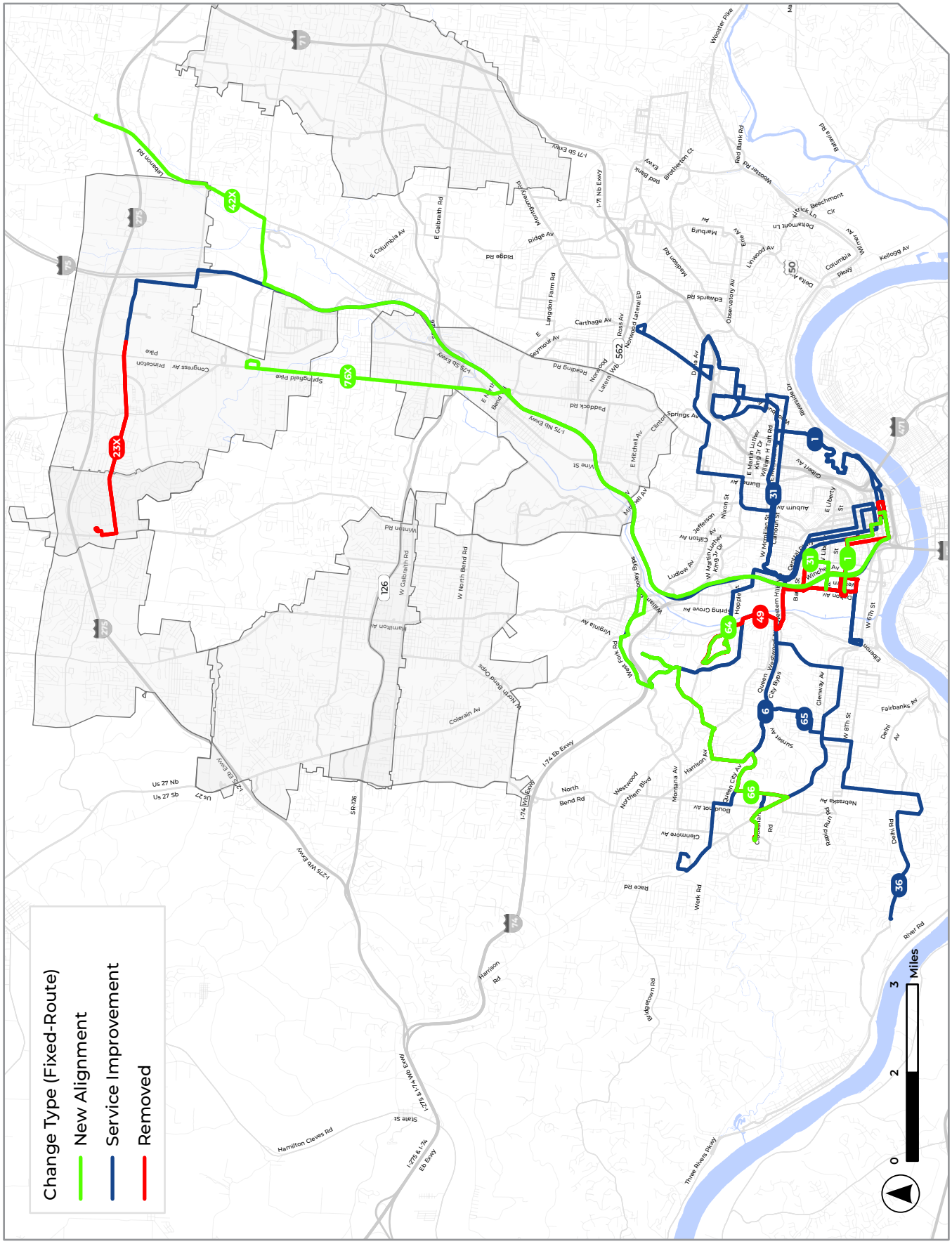


Figure 30 – 2027 Service Change

Table 14 - 2027 Weekday (WD) Frequency and Span of Service

Route	Current WD Frequency (min)	Proposed WD Frequency (min)	Current WD Span	Proposed WD Span
1	45	**30**	6 am–7:30 pm	**6 am–10 pm**
6	18-30	**15-20**	4:45 am–12:30 am	**4:30–1 am**
31	20	**15-20**	4 am–1 am	**4 am–12:15 am**
36	40-50	**30**	5:30 am–9:30 pm	**5 am–11 pm**
64	25-40	**30**	4 am–12:30 am	4 am–12:30 am
65	35	**60**	Peak Only	**5 am–12 am**
66	N/A	**60**	N/A	**5:30 am–12:30 am**
76X	N/A	**15-20**	N/A	**Peak Only**

Table 15 - 2027 Weekend (WE) Frequency and Span of Service

Route	Current WE Frequency (min)	Proposed WE Frequency (min)	Current WE Span	Proposed WE Span
6	41	**30**	5:50 am–12:10 am	5 am–12:10 am
31	35	**20-30**	5:30 am–12:15 am	**5 am–12:15 am**
36	40-50	**30**	6:30 am–9:15 pm	**5 am–11 pm**
64	45-50	**30**	4 am–12:30 am	4 am–12:30 am
65	N/A	**60**	N/A	5 am–12 am
66	N/A	**60**	N/A	**5:30 am–12:30 am**
76X	N/A	**N/A**	N/A	**N/A**

2028 Proposed Service Changes

The Reading Road and Hamilton Avenue BRT Lines will open in 2028. Other service changes in 2028 focuses on eleven routes, with updates to frequency, span of service, and route alignments. These improvements support the launch of Metro Rapid BRT and are designed to enhance system efficiency, improve travel times, and strengthen connections throughout the network. The 2028 proposed service changes can be seen below in Table 16.

Table 16 - 2028 Proposed Service Changes

Route / Service	Proposed Change
Bus Rapid Transit	Introduce Reading & Hamilton MetroRapid lines
MetroNOW!	Introduce Anderson/Mt. Washington Zone
14X	New route with weekday peak-only one-way service
17	Realign route, adjust frequency for weekdays / weekends around new MetroRapid line
18	New route with week-long 30-minute frequency and 5–12am span
19X	New route with weekday peak-only one-way service
21	Introduce 24/7 span
24	Increase frequency week-long, decrease span week-long
41	Realign route, increase span for weekends, shift certain peak time trips to new Route 45
43	Eliminate Bond Hill branch, adjust frequency for weekdays / weekends around new MetroRapid line
45	New route with weekday peak-only high frequency span
50	Extend route, introduce all-day service on weekdays
61	Realign route to serve the Reading Rd end of the line / Roselawn BRT Station
90	Realign route to funnel into the shared BRT corridor

Service Changes Description

The 2028 service changes introduce a comprehensive set of adjustments, with many updated alignments, expanded service spans, and improved frequency. As shown in Figure 31, local Route 17 and Route 43 will see service adjustments due to the anticipated opening of the Reading Road and Hamilton Avenue MetroRapid line. As shown in Table 16, new local Route 18 will provide coverage on the removed Route 17 alignments. Local Routes 21 and 24 will see span changes with improvements to frequencies on Route 24 and new 24/7 service on Route 21. Local Route 41 will see an increase in span of service, with new commuter Route 45 premiering to complement Route 41 with additional peak service on weekdays. The new Route 45 will run from Glenway Crossing Transit Center to Oakley Transit Center via North Bend Rd and Seymour Ave. Lastly, due to community requests, local Route 50 will be extended to Cleves, and midday service will be added. The Route 61 will be rerouted south on Reading Rd to serve the Reading Rd. BRT Corridor end of the line / Roselawn Station.

Express service in the northwest areas of the region will be improved through the introduction of new express Routes 14X and 19X, reducing travel times between Downtown Cincinnati and key communities including Colerain Township, Mt. Airy, Forest Park, Greenhills, Finneytown, Spring Grove Village, and Northside. These communities have high transit dependency and strong downtown peak travel demand.

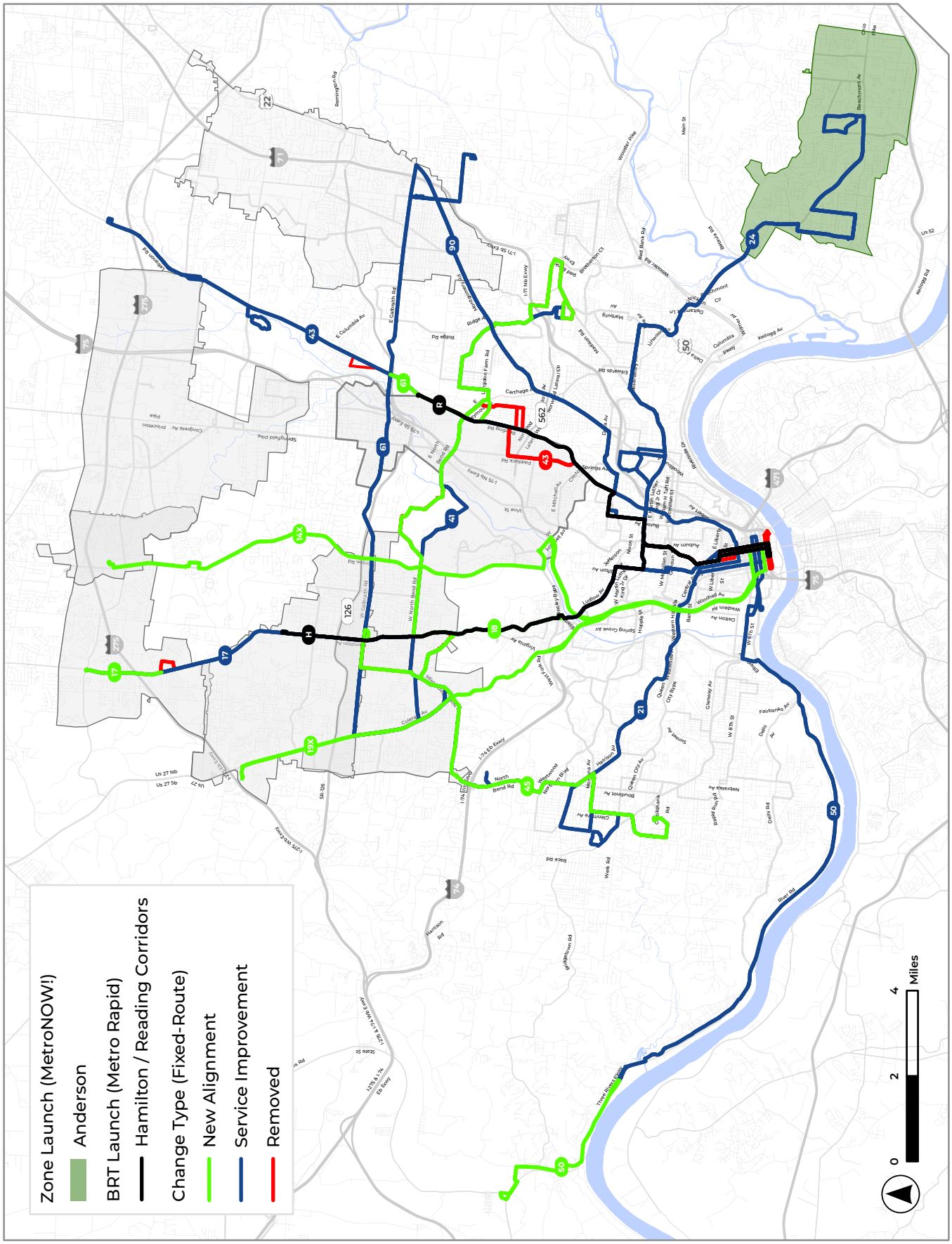


Figure 31 – 2028 Service Changes

The proposed frequency and span changes for 2028 can be seen below in Table 17 and Table 18.

Table 17 - 2028 Weekday (WD) Frequency and Span of Service

Route	Current WD Frequency (min)	Proposed WD Frequency (min)	Current WD Span	Proposed WD Span
17	15-20	**30**	24h	24h
18	N/A	**30**	N/A	**5 am–12 am**
21	15-20	15-20	4 am–1 am	**24h**
24	45m	**30**	4 am–1 am	**5 am–12 am**
41	25-40	**60**	5 am–11 pm	5 am-11 pm
43	15	**20-30**	24/7	**24/7**
45	N/A	**7-12**	N/A	**Peak Only**
50	45-50	45-50	Peak Only	**6 am–7 pm**

Table 18 - 2028 Weekend (WE) Frequency and Span of Service

Route	Current WE Frequency (min)	Proposed WE Frequency (min)	Current WE Span	Proposed WE Span
17	15-20	**30**	24h	24h
18	N/A	**30**	N/A	**5 am–12 am**
21	30	30	4 am–12 am	**24h**
24	45	**30**	4:30 am–12 am	**5 am–12 am**
41	60	60	6 am–9 pm	**5 am–11 pm**
43	15	20-30	24/7	24/7
45	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

MetroNOW! will launch the seventh and final zone which will encompass the Mt. Washington neighborhood of Cincinnati and Anderson Township. This mobility-on-demand zone was added on to Metro's initial six zone study due to the transit propensity rank and travel demand patterns. The Anderson Township and Mt. Washington communities have large populations of elderly, low-income, and zero-car households, which are three of the six statistical metrics identified in Metro's Transit Propensity Ranking. As well as the transit propensity ranking, Anderson Township and Mt. Washington showcased a large amount of travel demand between the two with an average 4,000 daily trips, which was identified in OKI's Origin-Destination study completed in February 2024. With three of the six transit propensity rankings emerging and the travel demand being high, Metro has decided to bring a much needed door to door service to the southeast corner of Hamilton County.

The service changes for 2028 will help achieve the plan's goals of increasing ridership, improving travel efficiency, and enhancing the user experience by introducing MetroRapid service and faster travel modes.

2029 Proposed Service Changes

Service changes in 2029 focus on ten routes with changes to frequency, span of service, and alignment.

All routes illustrated in Figure 32 will have modified span and frequency, and some will also include modified or new alignments. Local Routes 5 and 67 will see alignment changes to better serve crosstown demand along Kemper Rd. to the east and west. Local Route 28 will be extended and see improved frequency and span of service. Commuter Route 30 will become a local route with improved frequency, seven days a week service, and minor alignment changes to better serve Mt. Lookout. Local Route 77 will see improved frequency and span of service. Route 78, which currently consists of two branches, Springdale branch and Lincoln Heights-Evendale branch, will be split into their own routes. The Route 78 will continue to serve Springdale to Downtown while the existing Lincoln Heights-Evendale branch will become the new Route 79. The new Route 79 will continue to use the Evendale Walmart as the outbound end of the line while the inbound end of the line will layover at the new Walnut Hills Transit Center.

Express services along the I-74 corridor will improve the services in the communities of Colerain Township, White Oak, Monfort Heights, Harrison, Cheviot, and Westwood. These changes will see frequency and span of service changes to improve connections into Downtown Cincinnati.

The service changes for 2029 will help achieve the plan's goals of increasing ridership and improving travel efficiency by offering more frequent and faster service. The proposed service changes can be seen below in Table 19, and on page 69 in Table 20, and Table 21.

Table 19 - 2029 Proposed Service Changes

Route / Service	Proposed Change
5	Realign route
28	Extend route to Kenwood, improve weekend frequency
30	Express to local conversion, realign route in Mt. Lookout, improve span and frequency
40	Improve span
52X	Improve span
67	Realign route
74X	Loss of Banning branch to be covered by Route 19X, improved span
77	Increase frequency and span
78	Realign route, Lincoln Heights branch becomes 79
79	New route, takes place of existing Route 78 Lincoln Heights-Evendale branch

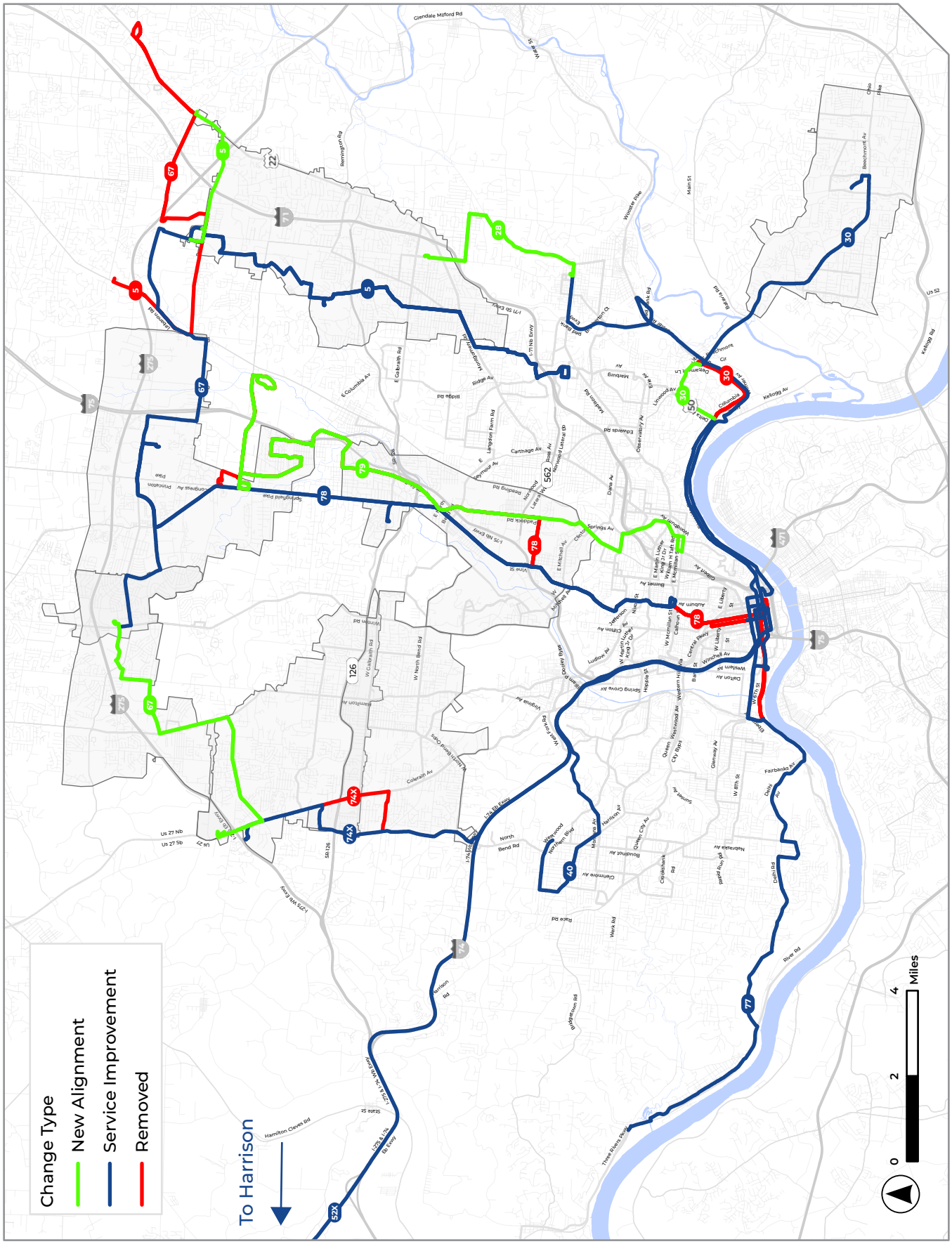


Figure 32 – 2029 Service Changes

Table 20 - 2029 Weekday (WD) Frequency and Span of Service

Route	Current WD Frequency (min)	Proposed WD Frequency (min)	Current WD Span	Proposed WD Span
28	30-90	**30-60**	6:30 am–12:30 am	**6:30 am–11 pm**
30	35-55	30-45	Peak Only	**6 am–10 pm**
77	45-55	**30**	4:30 am–10:30 pm	**4:30 am–10:30 pm**
78	15-20	**20-30**	24h	24h
79	N/A	**40**	N/A	**5am–12 am**

Table 21 - 2029 Weekend (WE) Frequency and Span of Service

Route	Current WE Frequency (min)	Proposed WE Frequency (min)	Current WE Span	Proposed WE Span
28	90	**60**	6:30 am–12:30 am	**6:30 am–11 pm**
30	N/A	45	N/A	**6 am–10 pm**
77	60	**30**	5:15 am–10 pm	**5:15 am–10:30 pm**
78	30	**30**	24h	24h
79	N/A	**40**	N/A	**5 am–12 am**

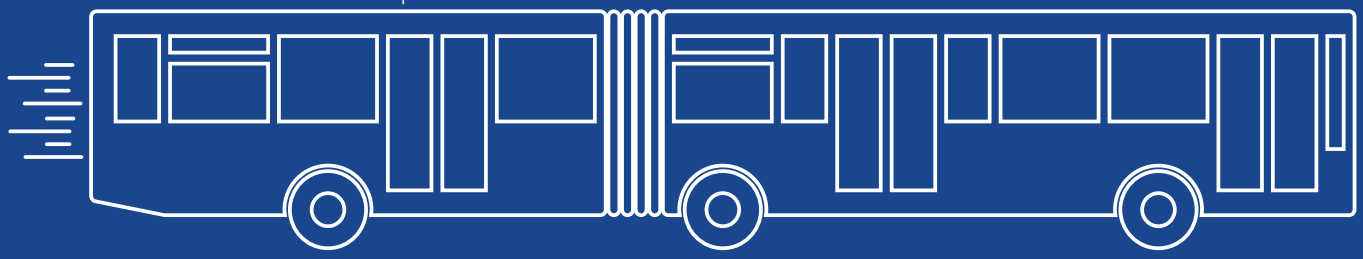
Summary of Recommendations and Impacts

The changes over the next four years will drastically improve Metro transit services. BRT, fixed routes, express bus services, and mobility on demand zones will improve transit options for residents of Hamilton County. Table 23, 24, and 25 provide a detailed listing of the proposed service improvements by year.

By the year 2030, Metro will have fifty-seven bus routes, seven MetroNOW! Zones, and two BRT Routes as shown in Figure 33. Metro will provide an additional 207,089 hours of bus service over the next four years, as shown in Table 22. A summary by service type are shown throughout Table 23, Table 24, and Table 25.

Grow
ridership

INCLUDING: 2 Bus Rapid Transit Corridors



6 Commuter Routes

7 MetroNOW! On-Demand Zones

40 Local Routes

11 Express Routes

24 Hour ACCESS Regional Paratransit Service

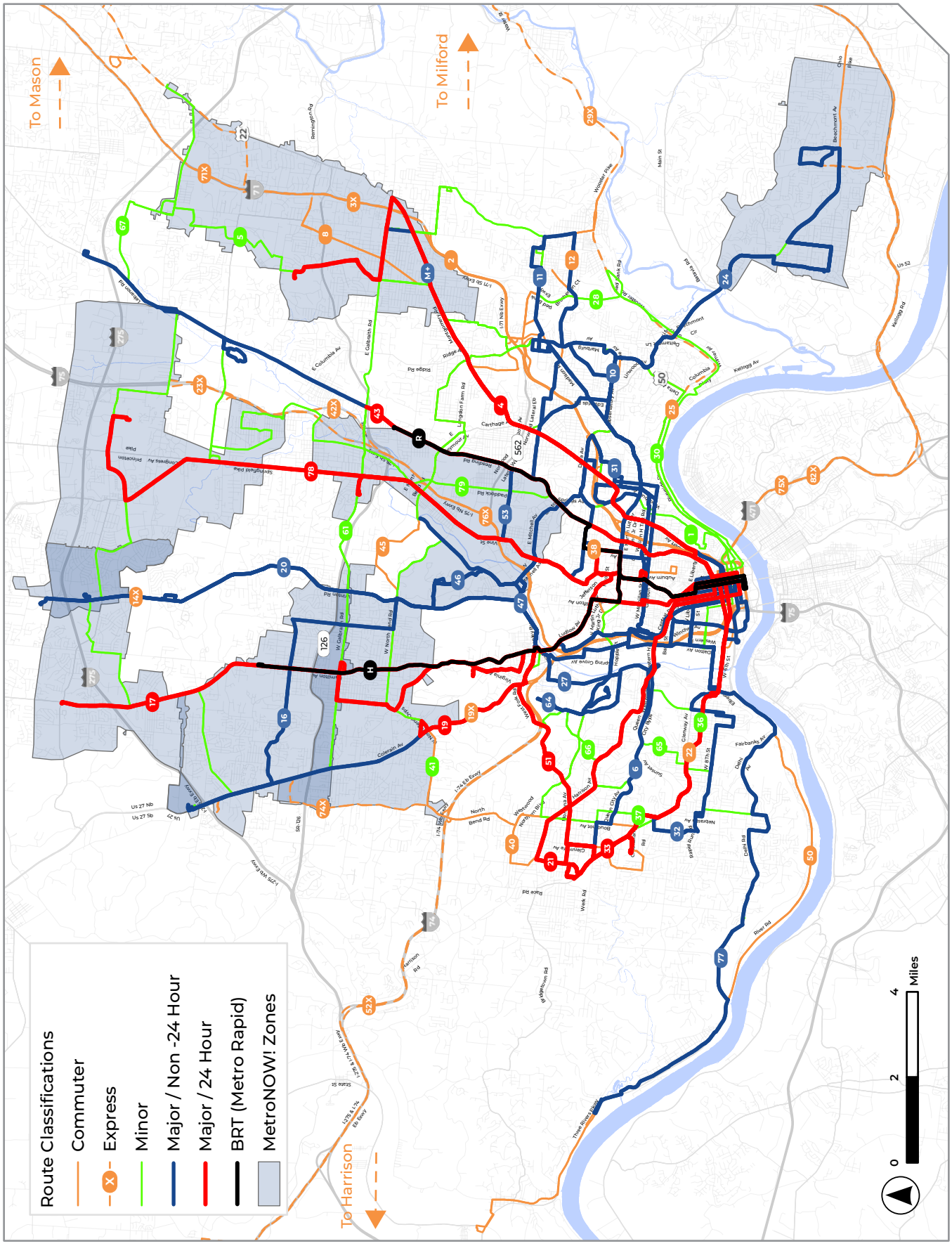


Figure 33 – 2030 System Map

Table 22 - Metro Fixed Route Service by Year Proposed Changes

Route	Year of Change	Weekday Revenue Hours Change	Weekend Revenue Hours Change	Annualized Revenue Hour Change	Additional Drivers for Service	Additional Peak Buses for Service
	Total 2025	**89**	**62**	**32,431**	**15**	**3**
	Total 2026	**70**	**142**	**33,596**	**17**	**8**
Total 2027		**57**	**100**	**25,529**	**15**	**9**
Fixed-Route	2028	-25	14	-4,606	-3	7
Reading BRT	2028	133	81	42,740	22	8
Hamilton BRT	2028	190	116	60,880	28	10
	Total 2028	**298**	**211**	**99,051**	**47**	**25**
	Total 2029	**37**	**63**	**16,482**	**8**	**4**
Fixed-Route	All Years	219	368	102,761	52	31
BRT	All Years	323	197	103,620	50	18
	Total All Years	**551**	**577**	**207,089**	**102**	**49**

To achieve the implementation of the SRTP and the proposed service changes, Metro will need to staff an additional 102 operators by the year 2029. Metro understands the challenges and hardships that riddle the workforce today, including the nation wide driver shortage that has impacted most, if not all transit agencies. Metro combats these challenges and hardships with competitive wages, excellent benefits, work-life balance, career growth opportunities, and a workforce culture that recognizes and appreciates its staff. These perks have paid dividends with a steady increase in operator retention for every month in 2025. Metro will continue to be a desired place of work for decades to come. Table 22 provides a summary of the changes by year along with anticipated revenue hours, vehicles, and driver. This document provides a snapshot of the recommended future services changes for the Metro system. The implementation of the proposed recommendations will be based on additional analysis, budget considerations, resource availability and new data.

Route	Year of Changes					Change Type				
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	New Service	Alignment Change	Frequency Change	Span Change	Remove Route
1			X				X	X	X	
2	X						X			
3X	X						X			
4		X					X	X		
5					X		X			
6			X					X	X	
8	X					X				
10		X				X				
11		X					X	X	X	
12										
14X				X		X				
16	X								X	
17				X			X	X		
18				X		X				
19	X						X	X	X	
19X				X		X				
20	X								X	
21				X					X	
22										
23X			X				X	X	X	
24				X				X	X	
25										
27		X					X	X	X	
28					X		X	X		
29X										
30					X		X	X	X	
31			X				X	X	X	
32										
33	X						X	X		
36			X					X	X	
37	X							X	X	
38										
40					X				X	
41				X			X	X	X	
42X			X			X				
43				X			X	X		
45				X		X				
46		X					X	X		
47		X				X				

Table 23 - Summary of Proposed Fixed Route & Express Service Changes by Year

Route	Year of Changes					Change Type				
	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	New Service	Alignment Change	Frequency Change	Span Change	Remove Route
49			X							X
51		X					X	X		
52X					X				X	
53		X				X				
61				X			X			
64			X				X	X		
65			X					X	X	
66			X			X				
67					X		X			
71X	X						X	X	X	
72X	X									X
74X					X		X	X	X	
75X		X					X	X		
76X			X			X				
77					X			X	X	
78					X		X			
79					X	X				
81		X								X
82X		X								X
90				X			X			

Table 23 - Summary of Proposed Fixed Route & Express Service Changes by Year (Continued)

MetroNOW! Zone	Year of Service Launch			
	2025	2026	2027	2028
Forest Park	X			
Blue Ash	X			
Monfort Heights		X		
Bond Hill		X		
Anderson				X

Table 24 - Summary of Proposed MetroNOW! Changes by Year

Metro Rapid	Year of Service Launch			
	2025	2026	2027	2028
Reading Rd				X
Hamilton Ave				X

Table 25 - Summary of Proposed Metro Rapid Lines by Year

Capital Investment Strategy

Metro's 2025-2029 Short-Range Transit Plan (SRTP) outlines a five-year strategy to enhance public transit across the region. This plan builds upon the foundation established in Metro's Reinventing Metro initiative, focusing on service improvements, capital investments, and innovative mobility solutions to meet the evolving transportation needs of Greater Cincinnati. The following is a summary of capital expenses in the five-year plan.

Key Operating and Capital Investment Areas (2025-2030)

Expansion of fixed-route and paratransit services to meet new travel demand and regional needs

Development and implementation of BRT corridors to provide faster, more reliable transit service

MetroNOW! expansion to enhance on-demand transit options

Innovation and technology advancements such as autonomous and connected vehicles

Land acquisitions to support future transit centers and garage expansion

Renovations and enhancements to Metro facilities for rider and employee benefits

Development of new and upgraded bus stop amenities

Exploration and investment in alternative fuels

To accomplish Metro's ridership goals, the following capital projects are recommended to support transit service improvements. This list represents the desired projects and may evolve along with the financial plans for the organization. The capital projects listed here constitute a subset of the more expansive project list in Metro's Strategic Plan. See Strategic Plan for additional information.

Table 26 - Projects Scheduled for Investment

Project	Project Start
Bus Stop Improvements	2025
Anderson Township Transit Center (Funded by Anderson Township)	2025
Customer Fulfillment Center in Central Business District	2025
Government Square Transit Center Refresh	2026
Walnut Hills Transit Center	2026
Evendale Transit Hub (Funded by Evendale)	2026
North College Hill Transit Center	2027
Glenway Crossing Upgrade Transit Center	2027
Silverton Facility Redevelopment	2027
ACCESS Garage Expansion	2027
Bond Hill and Queensgate Garage Renovations and Expansions for BRT	2027
End of Line Facilities at Reading Road & Hamilton Avenue Bus Rapid Transit	2027
Glenway Avenue and Montgomery Road Corridor Enhancements	Ongoing
Transit Center Updates	Ongoing
Transit Hubs / Super Stops	Ongoing
Layover Improvements	Ongoing
Park & Ride Enhancements	Ongoing

2025 Capital Projects

Bus Stop Improvements

Metro is undertaking a system-wide upgrade of bus stops to improve the rider experience and overall accessibility of the transit network. This initiative includes the installation of 500 new benches, 200 shelters, enhanced signage, and ADA-compliant boarding areas to ensure safer and more comfortable access for all passengers. Metro has also began to install Simme-Seat benches when space is limited at a bus stop. These Simme-Seats, shown in Figure 34, will continue to be installed throughout Hamilton County. New Metro-owned poles will standardize bus stop signage across the region, providing consistent route information, unique stop identification numbers, and QR codes linking to current schedules. In addition, up to 500 stops will be equipped with E-paper real-time displays to show bus arrival times and important system alerts.

To successfully implement these improvements, Metro is working in close partnership with numerous jurisdictions across Hamilton County. These collaborations are essential for relocating bus stops to safer, more accessible locations and coordinating stop consolidations that enhance efficiency without sacrificing coverage. Local governments are also playing a key role in safety upgrades such as improved lighting, pedestrian access, and traffic calming measures near bus stops. As part of this process, Metro is identifying and pursuing bus stop improvement opportunities that can coincide with local street improvement and streetscape projects. Below are detailed renderings of both panels, Braille & QR Code (Figure 35) and Route Information (Figure 36), that the new bus stop signs will feature along with an example of the proposed bus stop sign pole (Figure 37) seen to the right.

Figure 34 – Simme-Seat

Figure 35 – Braille & QR Code Panel, Front (left) & Back (right)

Figure 36 – Bus Stop Panel, Route Information

Figure 37 – Bus Stop Pole, Full Section

Anderson Township Transit Center

Metro is partnering with Anderson Township to develop a key transit center on the ground floor of a new parking garage at the Vantage at Anderson Towne Center (as seen in Figure 38 below), a private luxury apartment development at 1445 Towne Center Way. Formerly the site of a Metro Park & Ride surface lot, this modern facility will include end-of-line amenities and dedicated park & ride spaces, serving as a vital hub for transit riders in the eastern suburbs. Designed with accessibility, safety, and comfort in mind, the center will feature security cameras, bike storage and lockers, delivery and drop-off lockers, a convenience kiosk, Metro driver restrooms, and a climate-controlled indoor waiting area. Seamless connections to pedestrian paths, bike routes, e-scooter options, and car-share networks will support a wide range of first-and last-mile travel needs.

The transit center will support enhanced Metro Routes 24, 30, 75X, and 81, offering faster, more frequent service across key corridors, as well as a MetroNOW! zone in 2028. Located within one of the largest residential developments in Anderson Township, the facility anchors the surrounding community with convenient access to shopping, grocery stores, restaurants, and other walkable amenities at Anderson Towne Center. It will serve as a key eastern gateway for the regional transit network, helping to reduce traffic congestion, expand mobility options, and strengthen the area's appeal for both residents and visitors.

Figure 38 – Anderson Township Transit Center

Downtown Customer Fulfillment and Mobility Center

Metro is leasing the storefront at 115 E 5th Street, fronting the Government Square Transit Center site with the goal of creating the region's first one-stop mobility hub. This strategic move will significantly improve access to customer service and real-time information at the region's busiest transit hub, placing support resources exactly where riders need them most. The new location will allow for streamlined fare purchases, faster issue resolution, improved communication between Metro staff and the public while providing information on various mobility options.

The Customer Fulfillment and Mobility Center will potentially serve to streamline and improve customer access to Metro's menu of services and support resources including the following: local/express fixed-route schedules and services, resolving customer fare issues, ticket sales, fare payment, Fare Deal Eligibility and services, ACCESS program services, MetroNOW! program services, paratransit services/EZ Connect, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Park & Ride, and Rider Rewards Program. Together with the Government Square Refresh project, the Customer Fulfillment and Mobility Center project is central to Metro's expansion and modernization efforts to build a more customer-centric efficient, sustainable, and future-ready transit system. A floor plan of the proposed Customer Fulfillment and Mobility Center can be seen below in Figure 39.

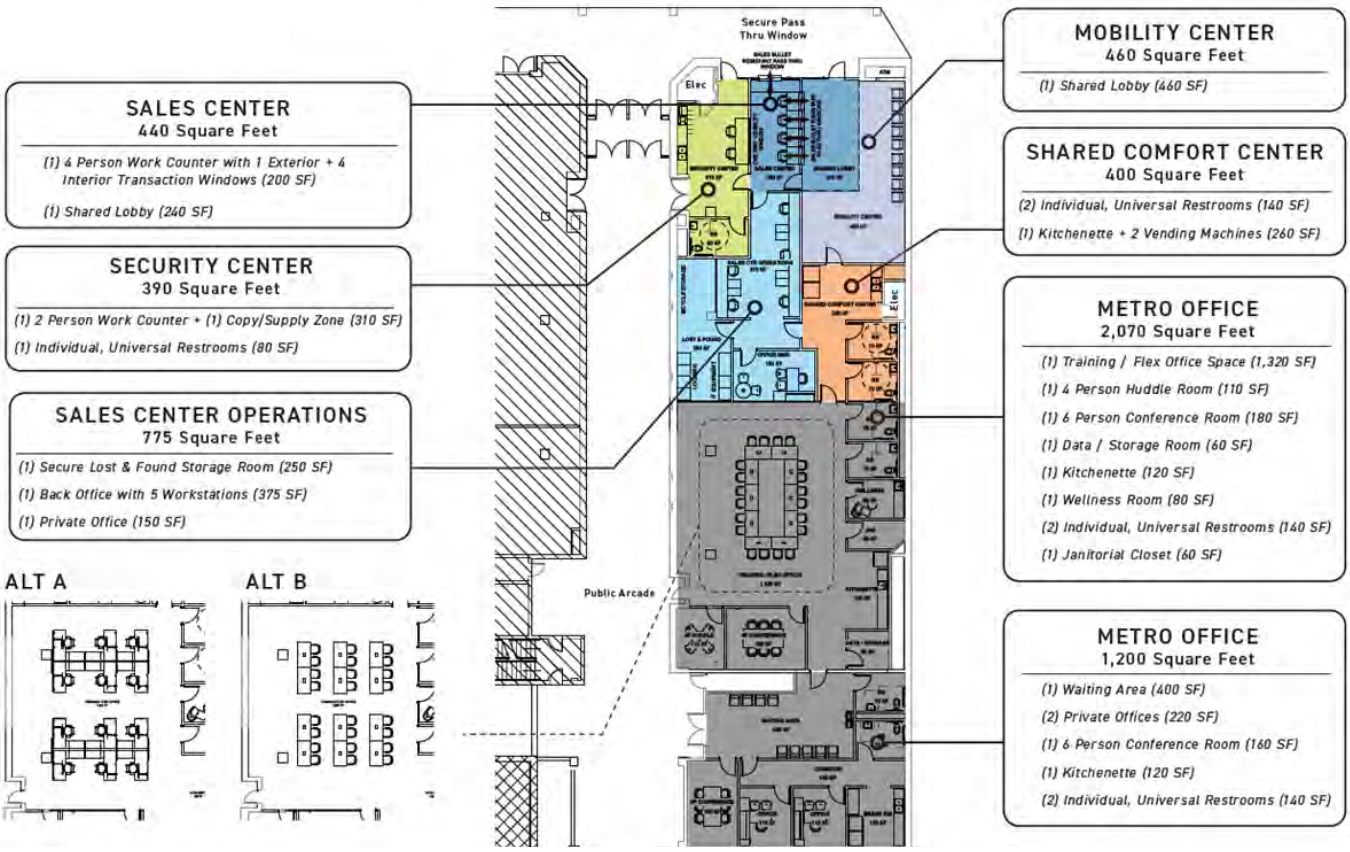


Figure 39 – Customer Fulfillment and Mobility Center Floor Plan

2026 Capital Projects

Government Square Transit Center Refresh

The Government Square Transit Center Refresh project at East 5th Street and Walnut Street in downtown Cincinnati will transform the region's busiest transit hub into a safer, more comfortable, and more efficient space for riders. This project will benefit Metro customers, visitors to Cincinnati as well as downtown residents and employees.

Core elements of the center include universal accessibility, protected and comfortable passenger shelter areas, a sense of safety utilizing Metro's vision zero initiative, enhanced lighting and security services, real-time info and digital ticketing upgrades, and dedicated Metro driver restrooms. Route alignments will be adjusted to streamline transfers and reduce travel times at this transit hub, which also will support both the Reading Road and Hamilton Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines. The project will introduce new architectural elements and branding elements to reflect the evolving identity of a modern Cincinnati Metro system.

Directly adjacent to the transit center, the storefront at 115 E 5th Street will be Metro's Customer Fulfillment and Mobility Center. Together, these two centers provide the regional transit network a one-stop-mobility hub with seamless user centric universal accessibility to current and future modes, services, and support: including immediate assistance, faster ticketing solutions, and real time service information. All which reinforces Government Square's role as the cornerstone of Metro's growing network. Renderings of this project can be seen below in Figure 40 and Figure 41.

Figure 40 – Government Square Refresh. Looking Northeast down 5th Street

Figure 41 – Government Square Refresh. Looking Southeast down 5th Street

Walnut Hill Transit Center

The new Walnut Hills Transit Center, in the Walnut Hills Neighborhood Business District at the intersection of Taft Road and Gilbert Avenue, will feature a 6-bay off-street, multi-modal facility on a 1-acre site with high visibility. It will provide high quality amenities that add transformative value and benefit to both the Metro customer and the local Walnut Hills community. See Figure 40: proposed transit center site plan/elevation.

Core elements of the center include universal accessibility, protected passenger shelter areas, a sense of safety utilizing Metro's vision zero initiative, real-time info, ability for drop off and pick up secure storage, and dedicated Metro driver restrooms. The development site plan accommodates local buses, park & ride services, EV charging stations, micro mobility hub support for both scooters and bike share programs, and future alternative fuel vehicle infrastructure.

The Center will serve as a key node for the future planned Montgomery Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line, further expanding access and improving travel efficiency. Currently serving Metro routes 1, 4, 11, and 31, the center will also be a hub for the forthcoming Route 10 in 2026 and Route 79 in 2028. Once operational, Walnut Hills Transit Center will become the fifth major transit center in Metro's expanding regional mobility network. A site plan and rendering of the Walnut Hill Transit Center can be seen below in Figure 42 and Figure 43.

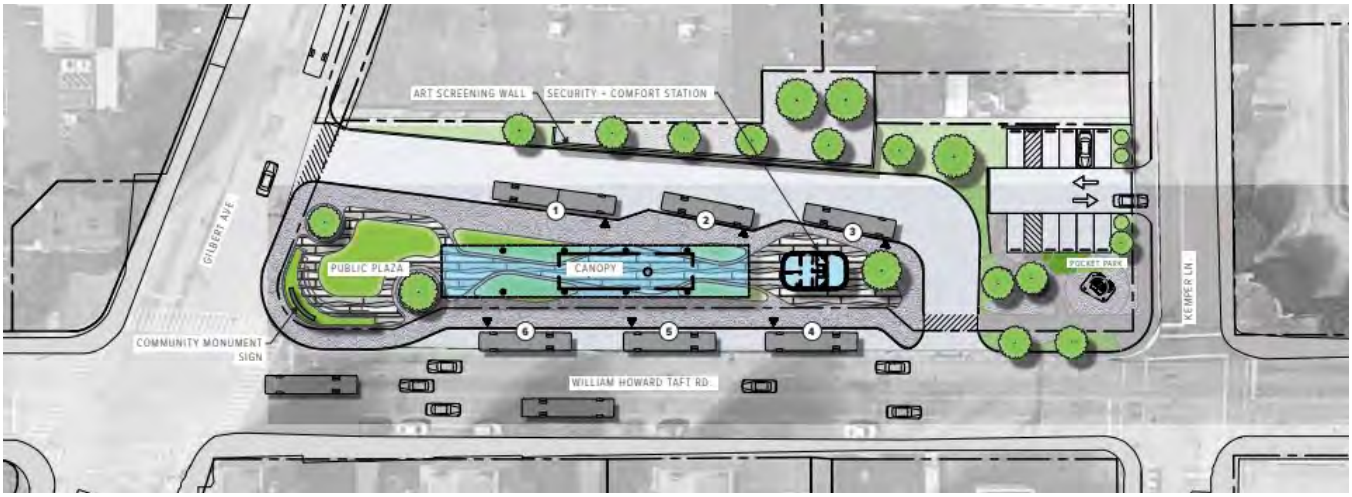


Figure 42 – Walnut Hills Transit Center Site Plan

Figure 43 – Walnut Hills Transit Rendering

Evendale Transit Hub

Metro plans to build a multi-modal transit hub on Cunningham Drive at Evendale Commons, location seen below in Figure 44, which is a key location served by 24/7 bus Routes 43 and 78. Situated in a major shopping area, the site supports continuous service and connects communities like Reading, Evendale, and Lincoln Heights. The hub will include features such as near-level boarding, sheltered waiting areas, bike racks, real-time e-paper displays, and improved pedestrian infrastructure. The goal is to enhance transfer efficiency, accessibility, and regional connectivity across Metro's network.

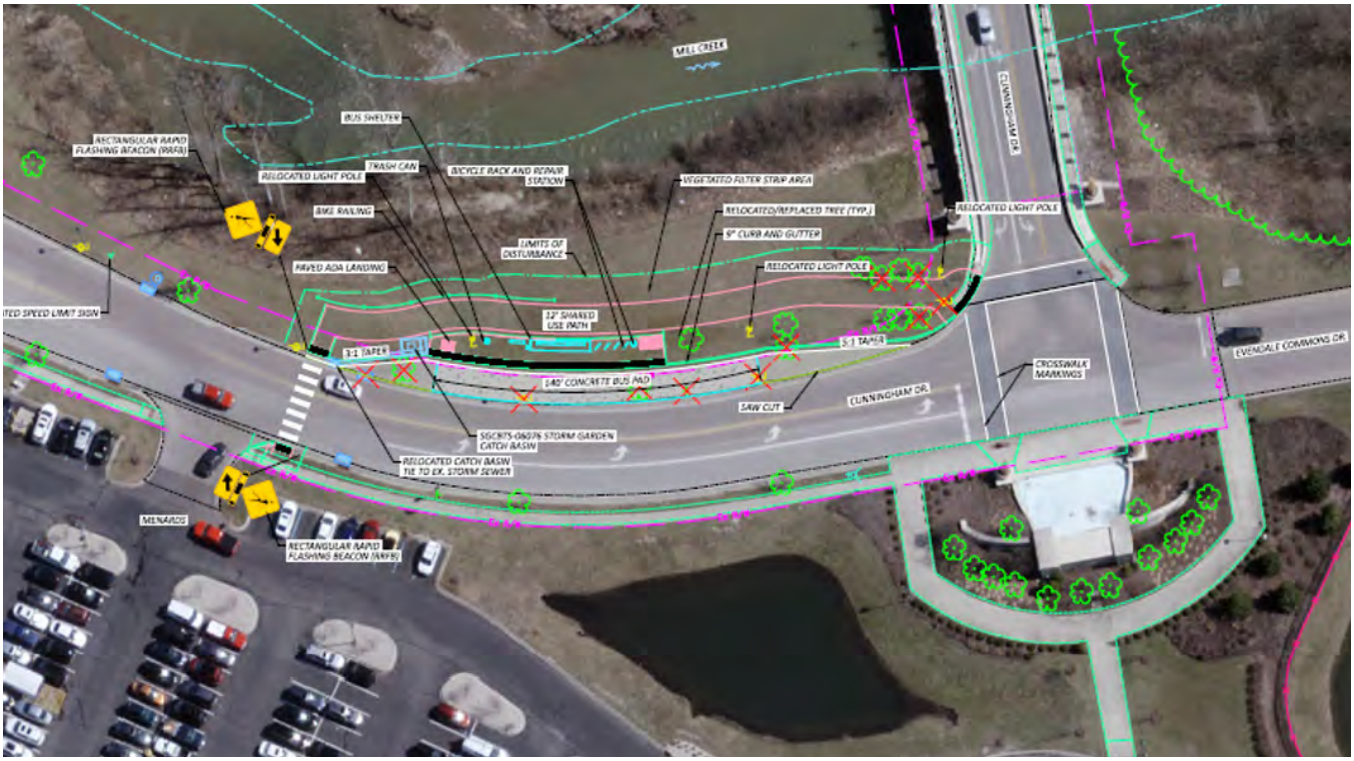


Figure 44 – Evendale Transit Hub Location

2027 Capital Projects

North College Hill Transit Center

The new North College Hill Transit Center, located at Goodman Avenue and Galbraith Road in the Village of North College Hill, will feature a 6 to 9-bay contemporary off-street multi-modal mobility facility on a 1.4-acre site, seen to the right in Figure 45. It will provide high quality amenities that add transformative value and benefit both the Metro customer and this first ring suburban community.

Figure 45 – North College Hill Transit Center Site

The core objectives for the transit center include the following: access for all, high quality amenities, safety and security, multi-modal opportunities, sense of placemaking, a catalyst for connecting, and adding transformative value and benefit. Core elements of the center include universal accessibility, protected passenger shelter areas, a sense of safety utilizing Metro's vision zero initiative, IT connectivity, ability for drop off and pick up secure storage, and dedicated Metro driver restrooms. The development plan focuses on establishing the center as a major regional mobility hub that will accommodate local buses, MetroNOW! service, park & ride services, EV charging stations, micro mobility hub support for both scooters and bike share programs and support future alternative fuel vehicle infrastructure. It will also serve as a key node within a five-minute walk to support the Hamilton Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Line and expanding cross-town bus route services. Once operational, the North College Hill Transit Center will become the sixth major transit center in Metro's expanding regional mobility network. These amenities and BRT Corridor location can be seen within the site analysis graphic in Figure 46 below.

In addition to its transportation benefits, the North College Hill Transit Center will establish itself as the focal point of the framework for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities. By serving as a multi-nodal anchor, this transit center can facilitate the expansion and implementation of more cross-county service in Hamilton County.

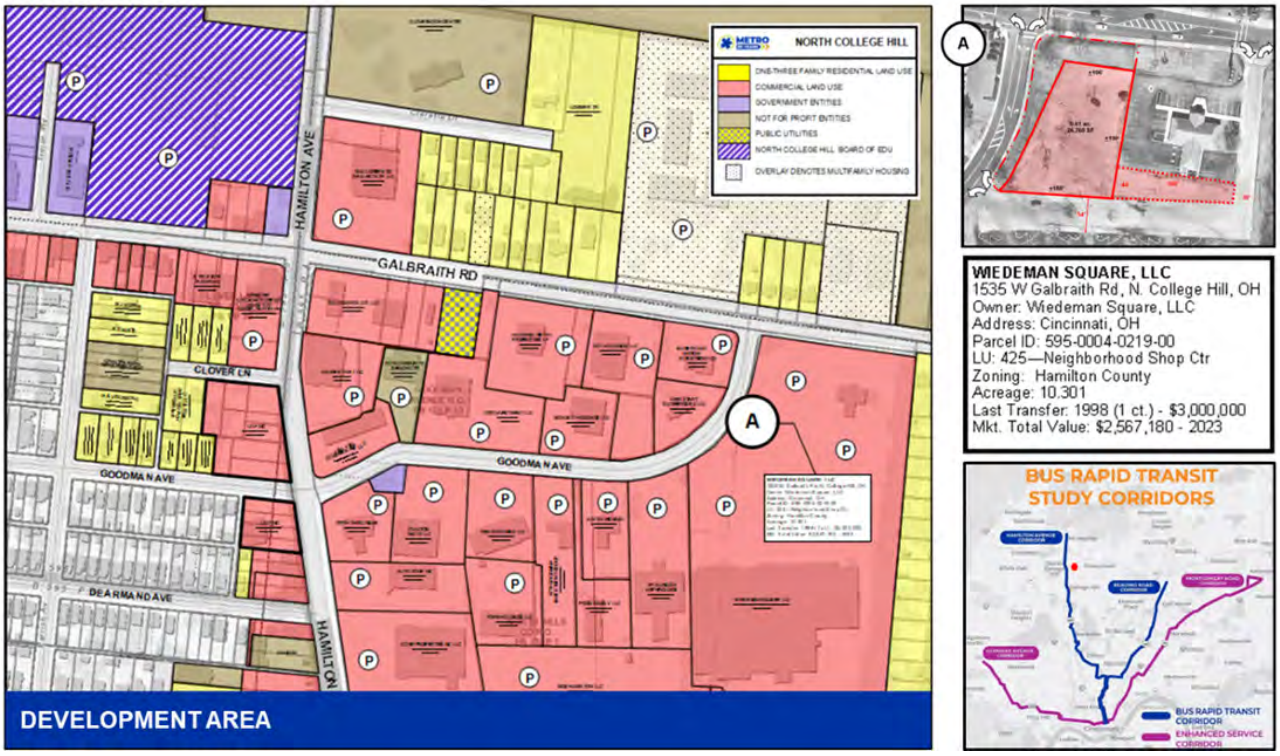


Figure 46 – North College Hill Transit Center Site Analysis

Glenway Crossing Transit Center Upgrade

The Glenway Crossing Transit Center Upgrade will add six new off-street bus bays and a new and expanded drivers service building to the existing 5-bus bay 1.3-acre transit center. The upgrade will provide high quality amenities that add transformative value to the neighborhood and benefit both Metro customers and coach operators. A site plan of Glenway Transit Center and the proposed upgrades can be seen below in Figure 47.

The core objectives for the transit center include the following: access for all, high quality amenities, safety and security, multi-modal opportunities, sense of placemaking/destination, a catalyst for connecting, and adding transformative value and benefit for future Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities. Core elements of the center continue to build upon providing universal accessibility, protected passenger shelter areas, a sense of safety utilizing Metro's vision zero initiative, IT connectivity, ability for drop off and pick up secure storage, and new Metro driver restrooms. The upgrade will accommodate local buses, private car share pickup and drop off, existing park & ride services and EV charging stations, micro mobility hub support for both scooters and bike share programs and infrastructure support for future alternative fuel vehicle service. The center will also serve as a key end-of-the-line node for the future Glenway Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Line and support Metro's goal of expanding cross-county bus route services.

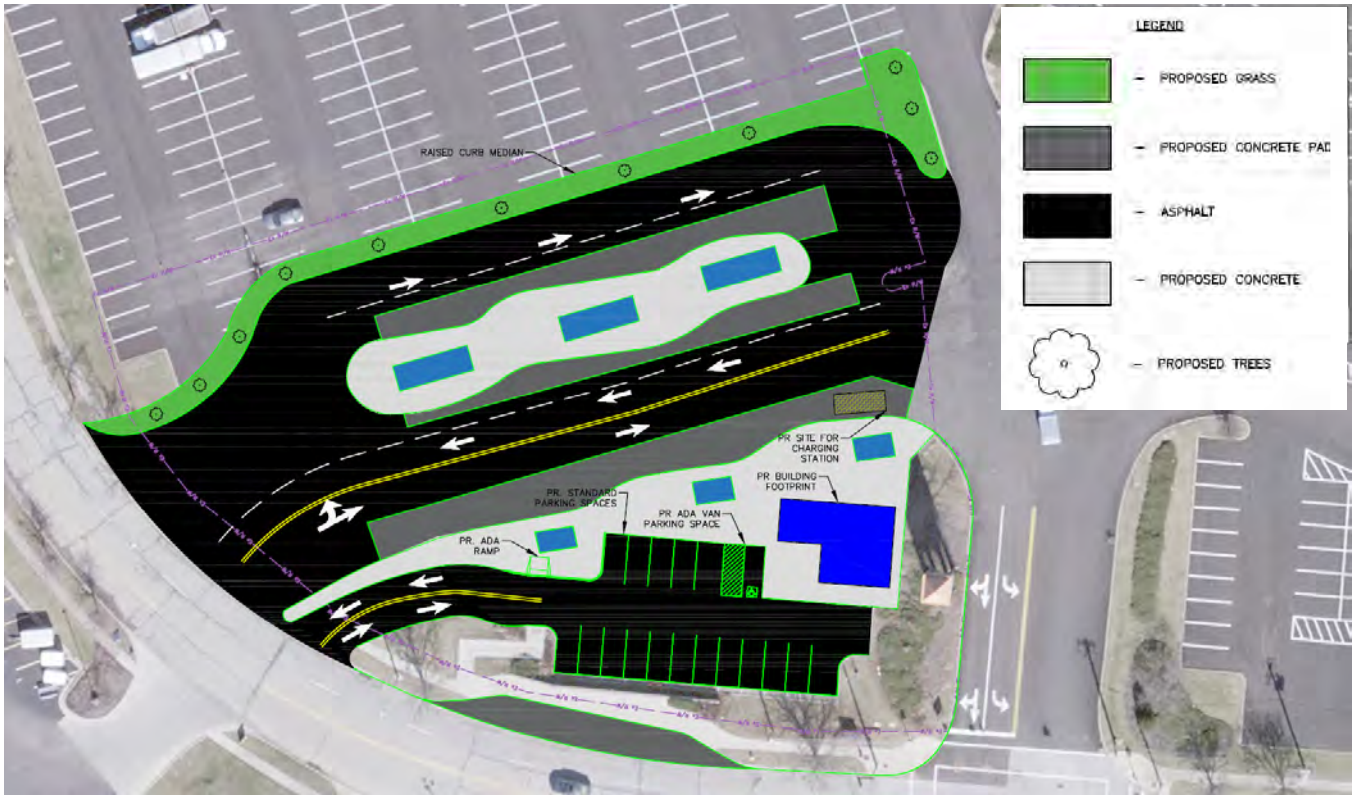


Figure 47 – Glenway Transit Center Upgrade Site Plan

Silverton Facility Redevelopment Opportunity

Metro is collaborating with the Village of Silverton to explore redevelopment opportunities for its 1.67-acre real estate asset at 7000 Montgomery Road, circled in Figure 48, currently supporting the ACCESS Eligibility and Training Center and the Silverton Park & Ride facility.

Figure 48 – Silverton Facility Site

This high visibility, underdeveloped property is located along one of the highest traveled regional transportation corridors connecting downtown Cincinnati to northern Hamilton County's regional commercial retail destinations as well as established suburban residential communities. Montgomery Road is also one of Metro's future BRT line that will bring faster transit service with reduced travel times for riders. The Village of Silverton has a goal to provide more housing opportunities and unit choice within its village. Metro's role is to explore new catalytic partnership opportunities to guide development towards Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) - more compact, mixed-use urban form, pedestrian-friendly development organized around a transit center/station.

Access and MetroNOW! Expansion

Metro has expansion needs at its 5.65-acre Transpark Drive campus. Both Access and MetroNOW! services continue to accommodate growing service areas, fleet demands, and potential alternative fuel needs. This includes the need to add vehicle storage, increasing maintenance capacity, and upgrading driver amenities to support a more efficient and sustainable operation.

Figure 49 – Access and MetroNOW! Expansion Site

With service areas expanding and ridership increasing, these Access and MetroNOW! fleets require more space, more maintenance resources, and more operator support to ensure high performance and reliability. The planned facility enhancements will help Metro scale these services effectively.

Metro currently leases a portion of the 3.01-acre adjacent property at 1799 Tennessee Avenue, circled in yellow in Figure 49 above, for the sole purpose of providing additional vehicle parking for Access and MetroNOW!.

Bond Hill Campus and Garage Renovation and Expansion

Metro plans to renovate and expand the Bond Hill Garage, originally built in the 1920s and updated in the 1980s, to support a growing and modernizing fleet. This includes accommodating 60-foot Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) coaches and battery electric or fuel cell buses. The facility will be modernized and expanded by 17,000 square feet (a 12.75% increase) to support storage, maintenance, and repair needs. Additionally, SORTA aims to acquire an adjacent 6.01-acre property to build a new service drive connecting to Reading Road and add overflow parking, with no new structures planned on the added land. The upgrades are part of a broader effort to build a more efficient, sustainable transit system. The Bond Hill garage site and expansion can be seen below in Figure 50.

Figure 50 – Aerial of Proposed Land Acquisition and Bond Hill Garage Building Addition

Queensgate Campus and Garage Renovation and Expansion

The Queensgate Garage, constructed in 1974, is located on a 22.05-acre land-locked campus at 1401 Bank Street, east of the CSX Queensgate Railway Yard and north of the Cincinnati (Main) US Post Office, near Interstate 75 and the Central Business District. As a part of Metro's operations/fleet expansion, the agency will add two new types of coaches to the fleet, 60-foot articulated coaches for BRT and Battery Electric Bus coaches for local service. These new coach types will necessitate additional facilities and technologies to store, repair, and maintain the fleet. Metro plans to renovate, and modernize existing building, as well as expand the building "footprint" up to 25,000 sf., or an 8.9% increase to the existing 280,849-sf. This expansion and modernization effort is a crucial step toward building a more efficient, sustainable, and future-ready transit system. A site plan of the renovations can be seen below in Figure 51.

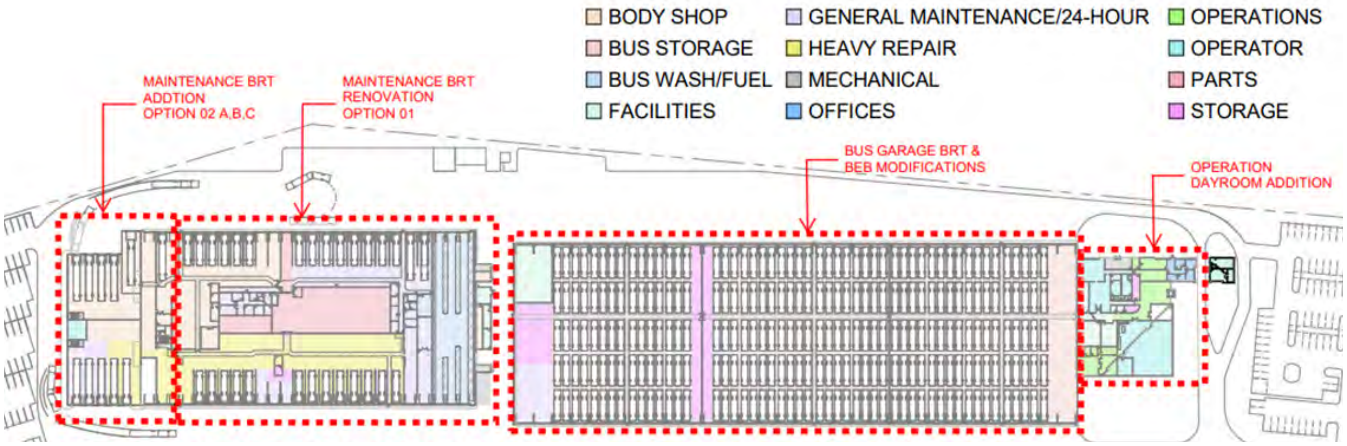


Figure 51 - Queensgate Site Renovation and Expansion Site Plan

Reading Road BRT

Metro is advancing a high-priority Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project to deliver faster, more reliable service along the Reading Road corridor, connecting Roselawn, Bond Hill, Paddock Hills, North Avondale, Avondale, Uptown, and Downtown Cincinnati. As part of the broader "Metro Rapid" BRT program, this line—launching in 2027—will feature dedicated bus-only, mixed-flow, and BAT lanes, along with enhanced curbside and center-running stations offering near-level boarding and modern amenities to improve comfort, safety, and accessibility.

Articulated buses carrying over sixty seated passengers will run every 10 minutes, with combined service near the University of Cincinnati providing 5-minute frequencies. The project is designed to shorten travel times, reduce congestion, support neighborhood economic growth, and enhance safety and walkability along the corridor. A rendering of the proposed Avondale Station is shown in Figure 51.

Figure 51 – Avondale BRT Station, Located at 3559 Reading Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45229

Hamilton Avenue BRT

Metro is currently planning a high-priority transit project aimed at providing faster, more efficient service along the Hamilton Avenue corridor, connecting the Villages of Mt. Healthy and North College Hill with the Cincinnati neighborhoods of College Hill, Northside, Clifton, and Uptown (Corryville, CUF and Mt. Auburn), ultimately linking riders to the region's core. The project is part of Metro's "Metro Rapid" initiative, designed to improve speed, frequency, and reliability across key corridors.

The Hamilton Avenue BRT line will feature a combination of dedicated bus only lanes, mixed flow lanes, and BAT (Business Access and Transit) lanes utilizing transit signal priority. Additionally, it will utilize curbside, center, and neighborhood business district station designs with near level boarding platforms, and modern amenities to improve comfort, safety, accessibility, and connectivity for riders.

The BRT system, branded as "Metro Rapid," will utilize articulated buses capable of carrying over sixty seated passengers, with additional standing room. These buses will operate every 10 minutes, with combined routes near the University of Cincinnati, reducing waiting times to just 5 minutes. The project will reduce travel times, ease traffic congestion, encourage economic growth, support neighborhoods, and improve safety and walkability along the corridor.

A rendering of the proposed Northside Neighborhood Business District BRT station can be seen below in Figure 52. Figure 53 through 55 are renderings of the University of Cincinnati BRT Station.

Figure 52 – Northside Neighborhood Business District BRT Station

BRT Station at the University of Cincinnati

Figure 53 – University of Cincinnati BRT Station, Located at the Jefferson Ave and University Ave intersection. Looking northwest along Jefferson Ave.

Figure 54 – University of Cincinnati BRT Station, Located at the Jefferson Ave and University Ave intersection. Looking southwest along Jefferson Ave.

Figure 55 – Aerial of the UC BRT Station, Located at the Jefferson Ave and University Ave intersection.

Ongoing Capital Projects

Glenway Avenue and Montgomery Road Corridor Enhancements

In addition to implementing bus rapid transit (BRT) along the Hamilton Avenue and Reading Road corridors, Cincinnati Metro is committed to enhancing two other high-ridership corridors: Glenway Avenue and Montgomery Road. These corridors currently experience high 24/7 ridership and are served by multiple routes. While the Hamilton and Reading corridors will be upgraded to BRT-level service, Glenway and Montgomery will receive both capital and planning investments with the long-term goal of preparing them for future BRT development. A map of the Glenway Avenue and Montgomery Road Enhanced Corridors can be seen below in Figure 56.

Capital Improvements

Capital upgrades along these enhanced corridors will be made to accommodate route service improvements. Capital improvements include:

- Construction of transit centers and "super-stops" at key transfer and boarding locations
- Improved pedestrian infrastructure and enhanced accessibility at bus stop locations
- Bus stop consolidation to improve route speed and efficiency
- Installation of additional benches, shelters and other amenities
- Installation of bus stops to better reflect community identity and foster local investment
- Introduction of Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and /or queue-jump locations to improve speed and reliability for our bus service. Additionally, TSP will also be available for emergency services for faster respond time
- Walnut Hills Transit Center and Glenway Transit Center improvements

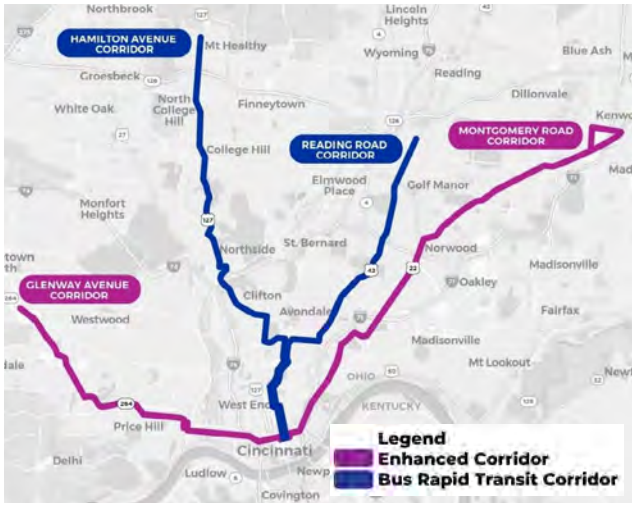


Figure 56 – Enhanced Corridors

Route Improvements

Planning efforts will focus on:

- Enhancing route frequency and service span along the corridors
- Strengthening connectivity between these corridors and other parts of the network
- Establishing key connection points, such as super-stops, as anchors for community development
- Coordination with City of Cincinnati and other partners on corridor improvement projects

Route Improvement Timeline

2025

- Route 33 frequency improvements

2026

- Route 4 frequency and alignment improvements
- Launch of Route 10 (new route)
- Route 11 alignment improvement
- Launch of Route 47 (new route)
- Launch of Route 53 (new route)
- Construction of Walnut Hills Transit Center

2027

- Route 31: span, frequency, and alignment improvements
- Route 36: span and frequency improvements
- Route 64: frequency and alignment improvements
- Route 65: frequency and alignment improvements
- Launch of Route 66 (new route)

2029

- Route 77: span and frequency improvements

Transit Center Updates

Metro plans to continuously upgrade its existing Transit Center facilities to align with the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and newer transit centers across the system. As Metro invests in building new, modern transit hubs, such as the upcoming North College Hill Transit Center and Silverton Park & Ride TOD, equal attention is being given to updating existing facilities to ensure a consistent rider experience across the network.

Upgrades will include improved lighting, real-time arrival information, enhanced safety features, ADA-compliant infrastructure, and amenities similar to those found at new super-stops and BRT stations. These investments reflect Metro's commitment to continuous improvement of all existing facilities. By modernizing older facilities in parallel with building new ones, Metro is creating a unified modern transit system.

Transit Hubs / Super Stops

Transit Hubs are smaller facilities where multiple bus routes converge, allowing for convenient transfers and boardings without the larger footprint of Transit Centers. These hubs will offer amenities such as ADA-compliant pull-offs, benches, shelters, real-time information, bike racks, and enhanced safety features like improved lighting. All hubs will be integrated into the Metro network and located along frequent transit corridors. Two examples of a Super Stop, On-Street Transit Center and Major Stop, can be seen below in Figure 57 and 58.

Planned Transit Hub locations include Dana & Montgomery, Mohawk Corner, Spring Grove/Kenard Kroger, Kenwood Towne Center, Dana & Reading, 8th and State (Lower Price Hill), Pleasant Ridge, Winton Road & North Bend, Westwood Business District, South Fairmount, and Mt. Airy Business District. Additionally, the last stop (end of the line) for the Reading Road and Hamilton Avenue BRT will function as a Super Stops with connections to fixed route and MetroNOW! services. The location of the proposed Super Stops can be seen in Figure 59 on page 93.

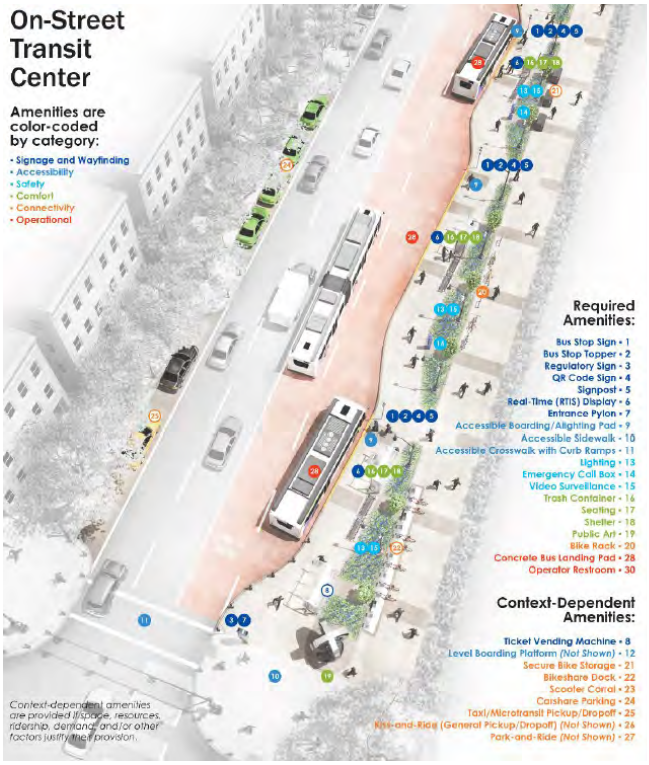


Figure 57 – On-Street Transit Center Super Stop

Figure 58 – Major Stop Super Stop

Layovers

Layovers are the designated location for a coach to park upon completion of a trip, allowing for driver breaks, passenger transfers, and schedule adjustments. Layovers are typically located at or near the terminus of the route. Metro will improve layover facilities by adding pull-off locations, restrooms, enhanced lighting, safety upgrades, and amenities such as benches and shelters. In pursuit of better layover sites, Metro is actively collaborating with private property owners to secure convenient locations for bus drivers to have layover opportunities.

Additionally, Metro is engaging with local jurisdictions to explore opportunities for integrating layover facilities into larger developments or future transit hubs and centers. Recognizing that development is continuously evolving, Metro remains flexible in the siting of these facilities to adapt to changing community needs and maximize operational efficiency while supporting broader transit-oriented growth.

Park & Rides

Metro plans to enhance its 19 park & ride facilities with upgrades such as improved signage, expanded agreements, increased promotion, and new amenities like benches, shelters, and trash cans to accommodate growing demand and environmental benefits. Metro has also identified new potential park & ride areas that will improve the efficiency of commuter routes (see Figure 59). These areas considered include:

- BRT End of Line
- Tri-County Mall
- Kenwood Area
- Westwood
- Dent/Green Township – I-74

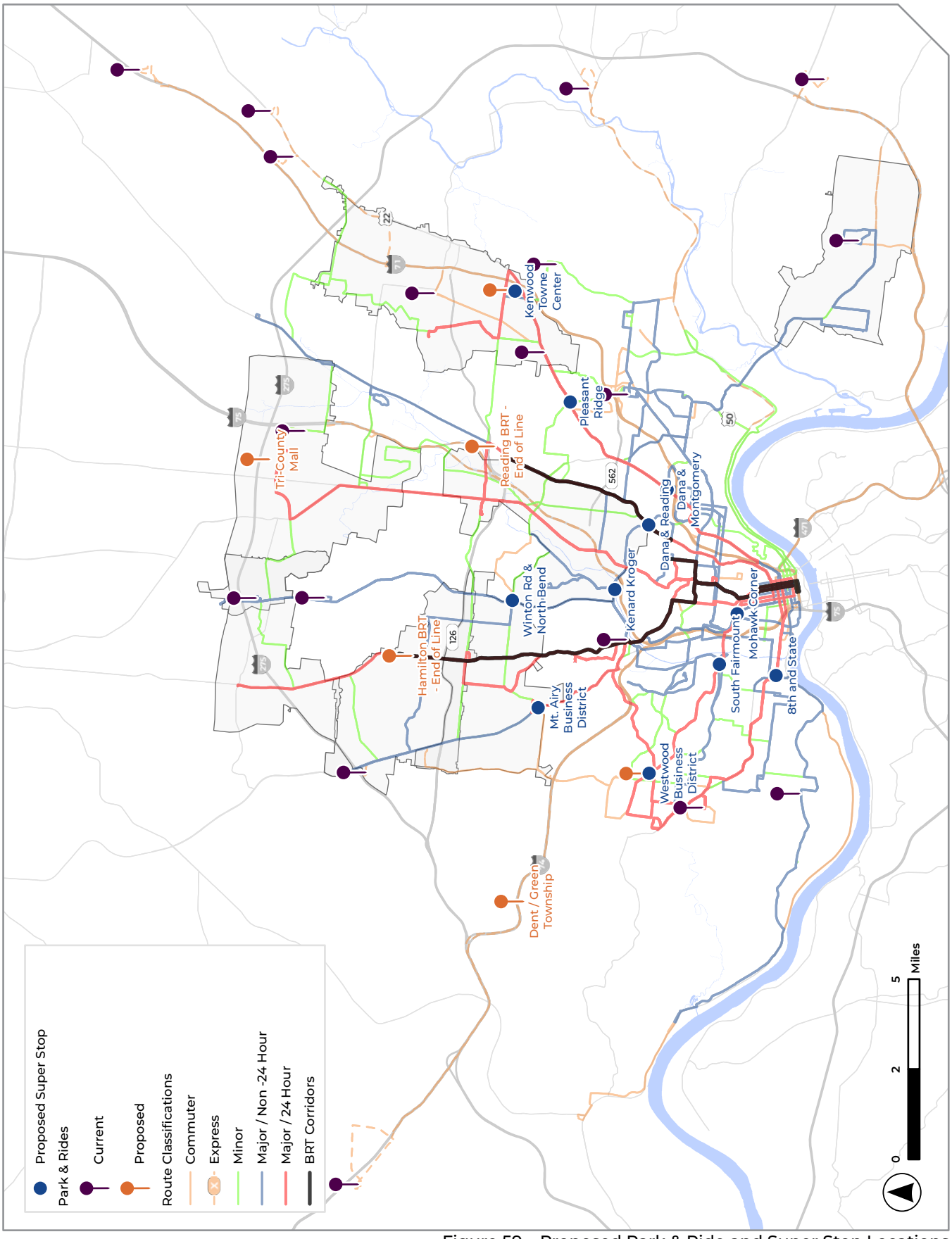


Figure 59 – Proposed Park & Ride and Super Stop Locations

Innovation and Technology

Innovation and Technology

Cincinnati Metro is committed to transforming how people experience public transit by investing in cutting-edge technology, sustainable transportation, and smarter infrastructure. Metro's innovation strategy aims to create a modern, efficient, and equitable transit system aligned with "Smart City" principles and regional collaboration goals.

Account-Based Ticketing & Fare Capping

In 2025, Metro introduced Account-Based Ticketing (ABT) and fare capping to improve fare equity and simplify the rider experience:

- Fare capping ensures customers never pay more than the equivalent of a daily or monthly pass, even with multiple single rides. A cap is enforced on both a daily (1-day) and monthly (30-day) basis. A graphic on how Fare Capping works can be seen to the right.
- Customers will load funds to a stored-value balance, and fares will be deducted automatically.
- This system is deployed via the EZfare app or a forthcoming EZfare smart card.
- While stored-value payment is already available for Access and Metro, full ABT with fare capping will expand to TANK and other NeoRide (Northeast Ohio) agencies by the end of 2025.

Open Payments

In 2026, Metro plans to introduce open payments, allowing customers to pay fares using credit, debit cards, and virtual wallets directly at the point of boarding.

To support unbanked riders, Metro will partner with local retail and grocery locations to offer off-board cash loading options, reducing reliance on cash transactions onboard and improving bus boarding efficiency. Metro will brand these ticket purchasing and loading kiosk to match the ones that already exist within the system, like the one found in Figure 60.

Figure 60 – Government Square Ticket Purchasing and Loading Kiosk

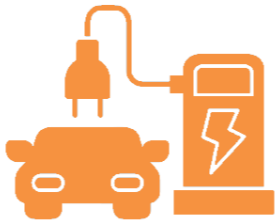
Smart Mobility Infrastructure

Metro is building toward a future of smarter, greener, and more connected infrastructure, integrating multiple innovations into transit facilities and service delivery with Smart Mobility Hubs. These facilities go beyond the usefulness of a traditional transit center as they integrate other mobility options and services to transit riders.

Future transit centers will become Smart Mobility Hubs, offering:

- Bike racks and bike-sharing services
- Scooter sharing, EV charging, and car-share parking
- Park & Rides
- Commercial services such as , daycare, laundry drop-off/ pick-up, and package services (depending on specific neighborhood needs)
- Designated pick-up/drop-off for rideshare (e.g., Uber, Lyft)
- Seamless connections to other modes (train, plane, intercity bus)

In addition to serving as vibrant centers for urban mobility, these facilities Metro will explore the potential for in-person mobility support and 'Mobility Stores.' These Mobility Stores would provide personalized assistance with trip planning, ticketing, and other services for people unfamiliar with the network and those who need extra help to purchase fare and plan trips. Located strategically, Mobility Stores will ensure a seamless experience for both residents and visitors.



Emerging Transit Technologies

Metro is actively exploring and investing in a suite of emerging technologies:

- Autonomous Vehicles (AVs): Targeted for short, high-density trips in areas like Downtown Cincinnati, the University of Cincinnati/Uptown, and Blue Ash. AVs will complement Metro's fixed-route system and allow for a broader transit reach.
- Battery-Electric and Hybrid Buses: Metro continues to invest in zero-emission vehicles, helping achieve sustainability goals and reducing operating costs. Areas with high air and particulate matter pollution are targeted for clean fuel buses first.
- Garage Automation: Deployment of automated systems for bus parking and maintenance will improve fleet efficiency, increase staff productivity, and reduce downtime.
- Connected Vehicles (CV): Vehicles will share data to enhance safety and traffic efficiency across the transit network.
- Digital Twins: Simulated digital environments will be used for scenario-based planning and real-time system response.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Planning Software

Metro is harnessing investigating deployment of AI across multiple operational domains:

- Route Optimization: AI and machine learning programs will provide insights and monitor real-time changing ridership trends so staff can tailor services based on travel demand and customer preferences
- Predictive Maintenance: AI will analyze fleet data to proactively address maintenance needs and reduce service disruptions
- Customer Experience: AI will drive personalized service alerts, trip suggestions, and feedback loops to improve rider satisfaction
- Security and Safety: AI-powered incident detection systems will strengthen passenger safety and allow resources to be deployed efficiently

Additionally, Metro is upgrading its scheduling and service planning capabilities through advanced software such as Hastus/NetPlan, allowing for more accurate, efficient, and responsive transit design.

Regional Collaboration & Innovation Oversight

Metro will monitor and scale innovations through its Regional Innovation & Smart Mobility Program, working in partnership with surrounding transit agencies, municipalities, and regional planning bodies to:

- Achieve Smart City integration
- Align funding and infrastructure improvements
- Share data, tools, and insights for system-wide benefit
- Remove barriers to regional travel

Transit Signal Priority

Buses operating on the same streets and roads as other vehicles can be slowed by traffic congestion and get repeatedly caught at traffic lights, delaying both passengers on board and passengers waiting at stops farther along the route. Operational delays result in increasing operational costs, and the magnitude of operational delays may vary from hour to hour and day to day, adding unreliability to a bus's schedule and further deteriorating customers' experiences riding transit. Transit signal priority (TSP) is one tool available to transit agencies and their local partners to help improve bus speeds and reliability and enhance the quality of service. TSP is a technology that allows transit vehicles to modify traffic signal timing or phasing to increase transit vehicle speeds, improve transit vehicle reliability (i.e., reduce travel time variability), or both.

Bus transit signal priority (TSP) is an important tool that improves transit system efficiency and effectiveness. Transit agencies can implement a wide variety of TSP strategies and parameters, and in various traffic conditions and right-of-way treatments (e.g., mixed versus dedicated guideway). TSP deployments are becoming increasingly common and notably more complex—allowing for more nuanced and specialized business rules and parameters that can be applied to specific bus routes, directions, intersections, days of the week, and times of the day.

Metro's BRT Lines will provide this region's introduction to TSP technology. However, Metro will study the feasibility of TSP implementation along other major corridors and system wide. TSP is an important tool to achieve the desired SRTP goals of improving travel efficiency and enhancing the user experience—especially in reducing intersection delay, reducing travel times, and improving schedule adherence.

Financial Plan

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Cincinnati Metro's primary source of local funding comes from the sales and use tax receipts levied across Hamilton County, Ohio. Voters in the county approved the Issue 7 tax levy, which includes a 0.6% sales tax dedicated to supporting public transportation. This tax enables Cincinnati Metro to provide reliable and expanded services, ensuring sustainable improvements through at least 2029. Table 27 and Figure 60 provide details on Metro's revenue sources and amounts in 2025, over 70% of Metro's revenue will be funded by the county-wide sales tax, as shown in dark blue within Figure 61. Fare collection is projected to account for approximately 11% of revenue and the remaining 18% will come from other federal, state and local subsidies and other non-operating revenue.

Many capital projects identified within this plan are fully or partially funded by grant funds and/or Metro local funds. Some projects do not have identified funding sources. Metro will need to seek grants and partnership opportunities to achieve all the projects identified to strengthen the transit system. Grants should be identified and pursued for transit center upgrades, super stops/transit hubs and ongoing bus stop improvements. In addition, Metro will also need to aggressively pursue grants for fleet vehicles for fixed route, Access and Metro Now to ensure the fleet remains strong and productive.

Table 27 - Metro Funding Source 2021-2025

SOURCES	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Operating Revenues	$13,945,000	$14,707,000	$15,558,000	$18,104,000	$18,807,000
County Sales Tax Receipts	$83,779,000	$109,844,000	$117,487,000	$119,332,000	$124,062,000
Federal Subsidies	$36,648,000	$59,389,000	$67,038,000	$10,112,000	$18,155,000
State and Local Subsidies	$3,709,000	$4,739,000	$4,768,000	$4,480,000	$4,836,000
Non-Operating Revenues	$674,000	$2,769,000	$8,522,000	$9,471,000	$7,708,000
TOTAL REVENUE	$138,755,000	$191,488,000	$213,373,000	$161,499,000	$173,568,000

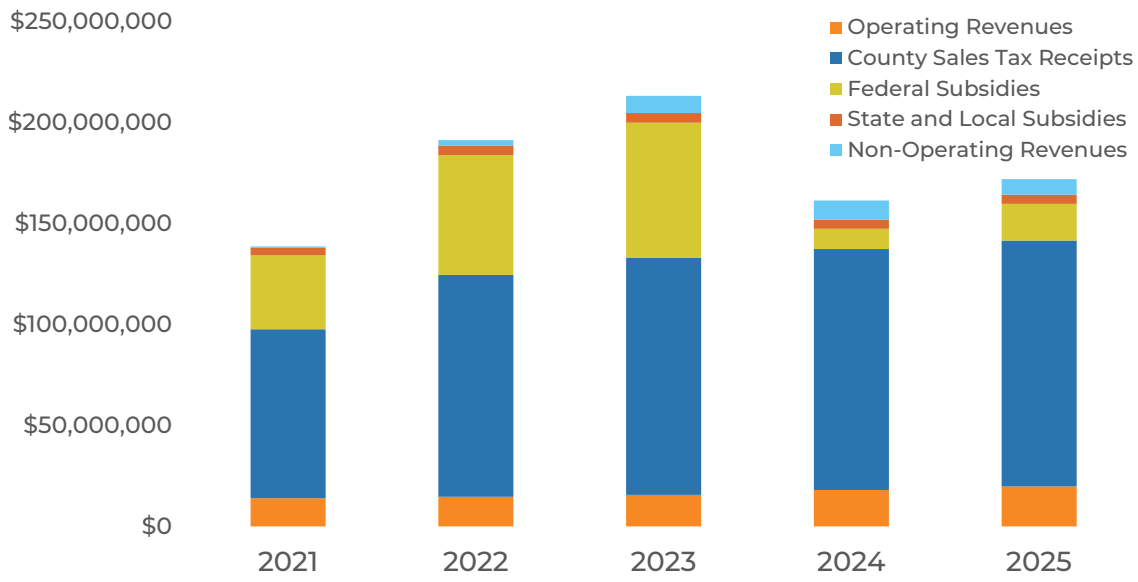


Figure 61 – Annual Financial Summary

Table 28 - Financial Summary of the System Operations Through 2029

Five Year Operating Plan	2025 Annual Budget	2026 Projected Annual Budget	2027 Projected Annual Budget	2028 Projected Annual Budget	2029 Projected Annual Budget
Total Miles	$16,320,234	$15,742,978	$16,557,093	$17,414,885	$18,206,640
Total Ridership	$13,494,838	$14,648,475	$15,405,989	$16,204,145	$16,940,854
REVENUES					
Operating Revenues	$18,540,220	$20,565,080	$23,244,768	$24,485,858	$28,131,647
County Sales Tax Receipts	$124,062,000	$127,948,560	$132,976,938	$138,335,909	$144,069,932
Federal Subsidies	$18,155,418	$17,429,201	$17,795,215	$18,186,709	$18,623,190
State and Local Subsidies	$4,836,379	$5,159,629	$5,321,848	$5,493,424	$5,675,586
Non-Operating Revenues	$7,973,663	$6,249,069	$4,149,614	$2,614,750	$2,647,736
TOTAL REVENUES	**$173,567,680**	**$177,351,540**	**$183,488,383**	**$189,116,650**	**$199,148,093**
EXPENSES					
Employee Wages & Benefits	$122,052,070	$125,454,630	$130,421,620	$138,044,803	$148,531,019
Fuel & Lubricants	$8,335,484	$7,833,194	$8,569,286	$9,061,497	$9,763,556
Parts & Supplies	$11,912,813	$11,997,314	$11,921,787	$12,514,776	$13,180,062
Everybody Rides Metro (ERM) Fund	$321,268	$328,591	$328,591	$328,591	$328,591
Other	$24,465,772	$24,756,765	$24,885,075	$25,783,467	$26,789,135
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$167,087,407**	**$170,370,493**	**$176,126,358**	**$185,733,134**	**$198,592,363**
OPERATING CAPITAL CONTRIBUTION	**$6,480,273**	**$6,981,046**	**$7,362,025**	**$3,383,516**	**$555,730**

Table 28 presents a financial summary of the system operations, which displays Metro's projected annual fixed-route service levels, sources of revenue, operating expenses, net capital outlays and resulting cash balances through 2029. Federal subsidies to transit agencies were elevated during 2021-2023 when additional stimulus funds were distributed. Those funds have since returned to pre-pandemic levels. When looking at overall projected expenses versus revenues, by the year 2028, there will be no excess funds from the operating budget to contribute to capital projects. Figure 62 shows the projected total revenues versus the total expenses for 2025-2029. By 2029 total expenses will be near total revenues, leaving very little excess funds. By the year 2029, excess funds from the operating budget to contribute to capital projects will be reduced to approximately $500,000.

These projections underscore the need to seek grants and partnership opportunities to level the playing field of the infinite game. Grants will play an important role in the implementation of the recommendations of this plan, especially when it comes to capital projects. It is important for Metro to seek grants for fleet replacement, new vans for expanding MetroNow! services and new buses for the role out of expanding fixed-route transit. In addition, grants will play an important role in the implementation of transit center updates, super stops/transit hubs and bus stop improvements.

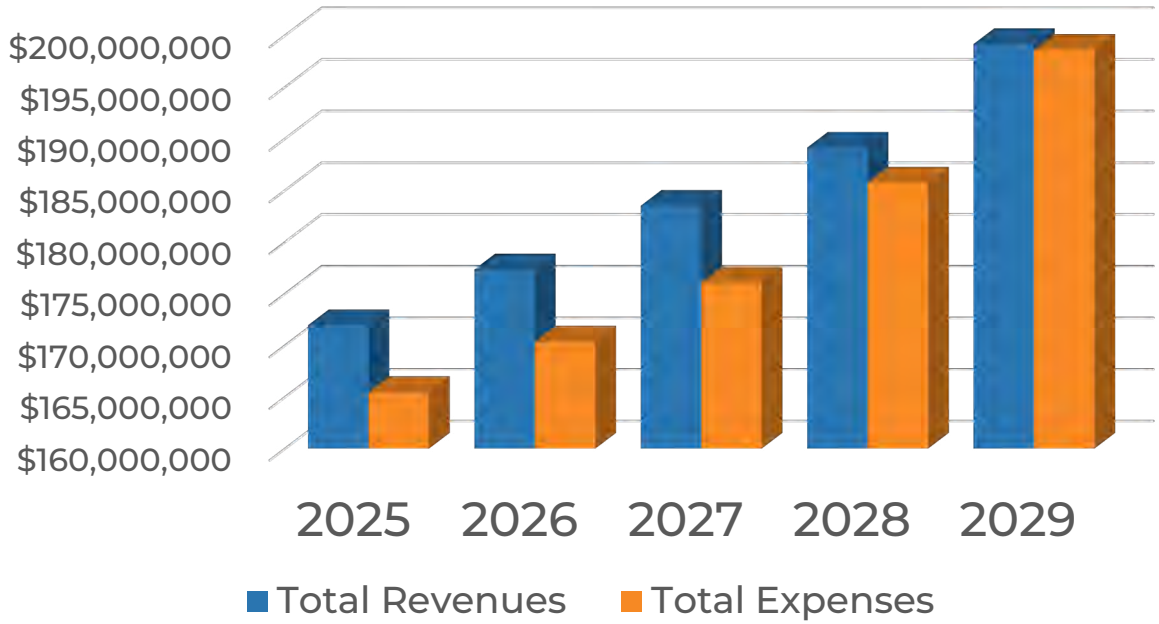


Figure 62 – Shows the Projected Revenue vs Expenses

CAPITAL PLAN

Major capital items include buses, facilities improvements, and strategic investments needed to accommodate the addition of BRT and MetroNOW! services in the system. These key initiatives are described in the Capital Projects section of this plan. Major capital items may be funded primarily with Federal Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula program grants and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. Metro must continue to proactively seek competitive grant funding to accomplish these initiatives.

The BRT project reflects a substantial capital investment on behalf of Metro. The funds to support the development of the two BRT corridors have been set aside and allocated to these projects through the year 2029, with anticipation of FTA CIG Small Starts Grant funding.

Table 29 - Anticipated Capital Expenses Through 2029

ANTICIPATED CAPITAL EXPENSES	2026	2027	2028	2029
Total Approved Local Capital	$50,193,413	$24,420,320	$31,290,475	$20,775,000
BRT	$19,300,000	$4,065,320	$24,440,475	$14,025,000
Total Excluding BRT	$30,893,413	$20,355,000	$6,850,000	$6,750,000
Rolling Stock	$13,524,760	$6,750,000	$6,750,000	$6,750,000
Remaining Capital for Facilities	**$17,368,653**	**$13,605,000**	**$100,000**	**$0**

* Anticipated grant reimbursements for up-front design costs

For 2026, several capital projects are included in Metro's budget to be funded including; project development for the Walnut Hills Transit Center, the North College Hill Transit Center, Government Square Refresh, Access Garage Expansions and some upgrades to the Bond Hill and Queensgate Garages.

The Capital Projects section of this plan identifies a number of capital projects to achieve Metro's ridership and customer service goals. These projects costs have been roughly estimated in Table 30 with costs allocated to the anticipated year of completion assigned to the project. Some of these projects are partially funded through design or environmental assessment phases while others are more fully funded through construction. Some projects have been awarded grant funding for all or portions of the project, as indicated in the table. When planning transit projects with anticipated federal funds, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to assess the environmental impacts of proposed actions, ensuring public involvement and consideration of alternatives before making decisions. Therefore, environmental planning and assessments and documentation are required for all projects that include federal funding. Most federal and state grants provide 70% to 75% of funding support (via reimbursement in the case of BRT) to a project along with the remaining 25-30% funded through local (Metro) funds.

Table 30 - Capital Project Costs and Grant Funding through 2027

	Projected 2026	Projected 2027
Total Costs All Facilities/ Infrastructure Capital Projects	**$12,950,000**	**$47,983,000**
Anticipated Grant Funding	$2,870,000	$11,944,800
Metro Funding Secured	$10,080,000	$25,428,653
Unsourced (Funding Not Yet Secured)	-	$10,609,547

It is imperative that Metro seek grant funding to support these important projects slated for 2027 and beyond. In addition, Metro should seek every opportunity to partner with local jurisdictions and private sector partners to share financial burden when projects can provide mutual benefit.

Conclusion

Metro takes pride in the significant progress that's been made in reinventing the region's transit network. From the successful expansion of bus routes to the introduction of mobility on demand service, these improvements have been a testament to the collaborative efforts of the elected officials, community members, riders, and stakeholders. These accomplishments establish a solid foundation for the future, ensuring that Greater Cincinnati's public transit system continues to meet the needs of residents, workers, and visitors alike.

While ridership exceeds pre-pandemic numbers, more growth opportunities lay ahead. Metro cannot pause and must continue making improvements to meet the evolving travel needs of the region. Metro must continue to invest in new technologies, expand services to more people, and explore innovative transportation models to build on the momentum already recognized.

This plan provides an important tool for accomplishing Metro's ridership goals by establishing the framework and priorities for system-wide service improvements in the short term. By the year 2030, Metro will have two Bus Rapid Transit corridors, 12 new fixed bus routes, seven MetroNOW! Zones and expanded Access Paratransit Services. These new and additional services have been carefully planned to address existing gaps in transit service, areas currently under-served and to meet the needs of those who are most likely to ride transit.

However, the success of Metro over the next five years depends not only on the actions taken to implement this plan, but also on the commitment to remain adaptable and responsive to the evolving needs of our community. Metro must continue to engage with riders and the public and incorporate their insights to create a transportation system that reflects the diverse needs of the region and its people.

From its founding, Metro has been an essential part of Greater Cincinnati's journey and the region's economy and growth. This Short-Range Transit Plan positions Metro to continue as the driving force to our region's success.

Thank you for riding Metro!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