



Johnson County Transit Peer Exchange

A TPCB Peer Exchange Event

Location: Lenexa, Kansas
Date: March 19 – 20, 2024
Host Agency: Johnson County Transit, Kansas
National Peers: Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Maryland
Gwinnett County Transit, Georgia

Sponsoring Agencies: Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)



U.S. Department of Transportation
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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE June 2024		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Final Report (March 19-20, 2024)
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Johnson County Transit Peer Exchange: A TPCB Peer Exchange Event			5. FUNDING NUMBERS 51HW2LA621/AAR752 51TF57A123/AAS123	
6. AUTHOR(S) Liz Biskar				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Department of Transportation John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center 220 Binney Street Cambridge, MA 02142			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER DOT-VNTSC-FTA-24-04	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Federal Highway Administration Office of Planning 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE Washington, DC 20590 Federal Transit Administration Office of Planning, Oversight, and Capacity Building 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE Washington, DC 20590			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER FHWA-HEP-24-049	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT This report is publicly available on the TPCB website at: www.planning.dot.gov			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) This report summarizes noteworthy practices and key recommendations shared during a Transit Development Plan peer exchange, hosted by Johnson County Transit, on March 19-20, in Lenexa, Kansas. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) co-sponsored this event as part of the Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Keywords: transit development planning, network redesign, strategic planning, micro transit, county transit agencies			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 24	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unlimited	

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Executive Summary

This report highlights the presentations, discussions, and key takeaways from a “Transit Development Plan” peer exchange held on March 19-20, 2024, in Lenexa, Kansas. The peer exchange was hosted by Johnson County Transit and sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) through the Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB) program. The event brought together representatives from peer transit agencies, Johnson County Transit staff and leadership, as well as local, regional, and State partners, to introduce the concept and application of transit development planning, build awareness about transit network redesign among Johnson County Transit stakeholders, highlight effective practices from peer transit agencies, and initiate Johnson County Transit’s strategic planning project.

Johnson County Transit is a public transportation provider in Johnson County, providing a combination of fixed commuter and express routes, micro transit, and scheduled and on-demand paratransit in Johnson County and the greater Kansas City metropolitan region. Johnson County Transit operates alongside regional partners such as the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA), Unified Government Transit, IndeBus, and others in the Kansas City metropolitan area. A total of 51 participants attended the in-person peer exchange, including representatives from cities, local transit authorities, and other regional planning partners; the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT); FTA Region 7; the FTA Office of Planning; the FHWA Office of Planning; and the U.S. DOT Volpe Center.

The peer exchange featured presentations from:

- Eva Steinman, Senior Community Planner, FTA Office of Planning
- Josh Powers, Director, Johnson County Transit
- Lisa Womack, Senior Manager of Mobility & Innovation, Johnson County Transit
- Deanna Archey, Acting Chief of Planning, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Maryland
- China Thomas, Director of Transit Capital Projects, Gwinnett County Transit, Georgia
- Tonya Holland-Buckley, Community Planner, FTA Office of Planning

Key takeaways from the peer exchange included:

- Transit Development Plans (also referred to as Strategic Plans) are beneficial mid-range planning documents that can help transit agencies to explore transit options, provide recommendations based on current conditions and capacity, and inform long-range plans.
- Stakeholder engagement is critical to the transit development planning process and is most effective when a range of outreach techniques are used.
- Micro transit can be an effective transit option for first/last mile connections and as a gap filler in lower density areas with infrequent fixed route service. It is recommended that micro transit complement, rather than duplicate, fixed route or rail transit services.

The appendices in this report include:

- [Appendix A: Event Participants](#)

- [Appendix B: Peer Exchange Agendas](#)
- [Appendix C: Additional Resources](#)

Overview of the Peer Exchange

Goals of the Peer Exchange

Johnson County Transit hosted the peer exchange to build awareness and encourage information-sharing about transit planning among Johnson County Transit leadership, partners, stakeholders and two peer agencies. Specifically, Johnson County Transit was interested in learning from county transit agencies that had recently completed Transit Development Plans (TDPs) and successfully piloted micro transit services. By doing so, Johnson County Transit aimed to inspire discussion from its local and regional partners and stakeholders about the future of transit in Johnson County and initiate the process of scoping a TDP for Johnson County. The event was sponsored by the TPCB program, which is jointly managed by FHWA and FTA. More information about the TPCB program, including past peer exchange topics, is available on the [TPCB website](#).

Selecting the Peers

Peer agencies were selected based on a variety of factors including their previous experience with transit development planning, similarities to Johnson County Transit in terms of size and location, and previous experience with transit network redesign and implementing micro transit services. The planning team extended invitations to two peer agencies based on these criteria. These peers were:

- Deanna Archey, Acting Chief of Planning, Montgomery County Department, Maryland; and
- China Thomas, Director of Transit Capital Projects, Gwinnett County Transit, Georgia.

Format of the Event

Johnson County Transit hosted the 1.5-day peer exchange at the Thompson Barn Event Space in Lenexa, Kansas on March 19-20, 2024. A total of 51 participants attended the first day of the event, including Johnson County Transit staff and leadership, representatives from municipalities in Johnson County and local transit authorities, KDOT, regional partners, peer presenters, FTA, FHWA, and U.S. DOT Volpe Center staff. The second day of the peer exchange brought peers, and a smaller cohort of Johnson County Transit staff, local and regional partners together to provide input on transit access priorities and services in Johnson County. Approximately 35 participants attended the second day of the peer exchange. A full list of attendees is available in [Appendix A](#) of this report.

On Day One of the peer exchange, FTA provided a brief overview of TDPs and strategies for involving stakeholders in the TDP development process. Johnson County Transit shared information about the agency's transit operations and provided an overview of current ridership trends and challenges. An interactive exercise was used throughout the day using flipcharts and dot stickers to gather input from participants on the desired role, strengths, and challenges of transit in Johnson County. Representatives from the two invited peer agencies each shared their experiences with transit development planning through individual peer presentations, followed by a facilitated question-and-answer discussion. In the afternoon, participants were asked to continue to walk around the room and place dot stickers next to

the ideas written on flipcharts that resonated most with them. A facilitated panel discussion with peers was held to understand how peers initiated their TDP planning processes, and to highlight the major takeaways and lessons learned through their experiences. Day One concluded with a brief session reflecting on the day's key takeaways and the agenda for Day Two.

On Day Two of the peer exchange, participants broke into small discussion groups. Over the course of three, 45-minute facilitated sessions, participants were asked to provide input on their priorities regarding transit access, transit service, and opportunities for public engagement in Johnson County. Day Two concluded with report outs from each of the breakout groups, and a short wrap-up highlighting the major takeaways from the 1.5-day event.

Agendas for each day of the peer exchange are provided in [Appendix B](#) of this report.

Presentation and Discussion Highlights

Opening Remarks

Representatives from FHWA Office of Planning (Mike Barry), FTA Region 7 (Mark Bechtel), FTA Office of Planning (Tonya Holland-Buckley and Eva Steinman), and Johnson County Transit (Josh Powers and Lisa Womack) each provided opening remarks and welcomed peers and participants to the peer exchange. The opening comments recognized the purpose and benefit of the peer exchange and the larger FHWA-FTA TPCB Program in supporting State, local, regional, and Tribal governments on a range of transportation planning topics. Tonya Holland-Buckley and Eva Steinman from FTA facilitated the 1.5-day event.

Overview of Transit Development Plans

Eva Steinman from the FTA Office of Planning delivered a session providing an overview of TDPs; the purpose and benefits of TDPs and how they differ from other transit planning efforts; and a variety of techniques to identify and engage stakeholders in the transit development planning process.

The presentation began with an introduction to the purpose of TDPs. TDPs can also be referred to as Strategic Plans and in some States, there are requirements for TDPs to be updated annually or in conjunction with service changes. The State of Kansas, where Johnson County Transit is located, does not require TDPs but recommends them. TDPs are developed on a 5-to-10-year cycle, and they help agencies to explore transit options and provide recommendations based on current conditions and capacity. TDPs also inform long-range plans (see [Figure 1](#)). Finally, TDPs typically contain eight main sections including:

- 1) TDP Context
- 2) Stakeholder Involvement
- 3) Vision and Goals
- 4) Baseline Conditions
- 5) Needs Assessment
- 6) Potential Improvements
- 7) Financials Assessment
- 8) Recommendations and Implementation



Figure 1: Overview of Transit Plans. Source: Johnson County Transit

Some of the key benefits of a TDP in Johnson County include:

- Defining transit's role in the Johnson County community.
- Supporting Johnson County Transit with strategic planning for service and capital investments that meet operational and community goals.
- Strengthening coordination between Johnson County Transit and partners through their respective planning processes.
- Providing an opportunity to evaluate the impacts of growth and land use changes on the transit system and using the process to explore alternative futures.
- Increasing the ability of Johnson County Transit and communities to obtain funding and public support for needed transit and intermodal improvements.

The session concluded with a review of stakeholder involvement techniques that can be used during the transit development planning process. Techniques include setting up an advisory committee with representatives from the transit agency, technical staff, and public stakeholders. One advisory committee may be used, or agencies may choose to have several committees with different focus areas (e.g., technical advisory committee, public advisory committee). Committees should meet throughout the planning process at key project milestones to provide feedback and direction. Membership requires regular commitment, and some agencies may opt to provide stipends, travel, or meal reimbursement to members of the public who participate.

Other techniques include conducting key stakeholder interviews or focus groups to allow for in-depth conversations with individuals or groups who share similar characteristics (e.g., elected officials, third shift workers). Work sessions with the transit provider's staff, partner agencies, or Board of Trustees, may also be helpful to gather input, and strategies such as design charrettes may be used to solicit feedback at different design phases. Finally, creating a project website, using social media, holding larger public

fora and public meetings, as well as rider/operator surveys, are all additional strategies that may be used to obtain input during the TDP planning process.

Connecting Communities: Transit in Johnson County

Josh Powers, Director of Transit for Johnson County Transit gave a presentation about the agency's current transit service, ridership, and transportation challenges in the region. The presentation concluded with an interactive question-and-answer discussion with peer exchange participants.

Johnson County Transit is a public transit provider operating in Johnson County within the greater Kansas City metropolitan region. Johnson County Transit provides fixed route and commuter bus services, paratransit, and micro transit. Johnson County is located in northeast Kansas. The County's population has steadily grown over the past 60 years, and 25% of Kansans now work in Johnson County. Johnson County covers 474 square miles with a population of 609,863 as of the 2020 US Census, and with a Gross Domestic Product of nearly \$44 billion (see [Figure 2](#)). Like many regions in the United States, Johnson County has an aging population and aspires to plan today for the future transit needs of this population.

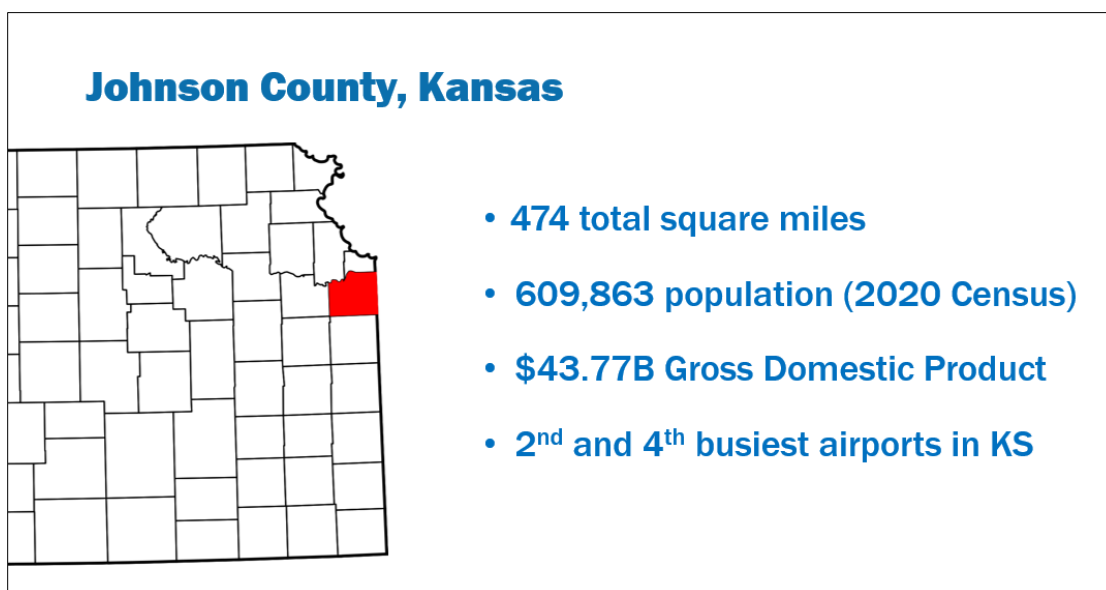


Figure 2: Overview of Johnson County, Kansas. Source: Johnson County Transit

Johnson County Transit provided an overview of their current challenges and gaps in service. For instance, Johnson County Transit currently offers 11 bus routes (fixed local and express routes) which operate on weekdays only and are all fare-free. Although the agency's micro transit service operates seven days a week, it runs from 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM, and therefore does not serve the needs of riders in the evenings, including third shift workers commuting to work. Johnson County Transit has a total annual passenger ridership of approximately 611,909 passengers (2023).

Much of Johnson County Transit's local fixed route service is concentrated in the northeast portion of the county because that is where the population and land density is located, and these routes have traditionally served connections to downtown Kansas City. Fixed route services are generally low frequency, with limited hours, and the majority of Johnson County Transit's ridership are transit dependent riders. Like many transit agencies in the country, Johnson County Transit saw a significant

decline in ridership due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Ridership has mostly rebounded to pre-Covid ridership levels, except for the fixed route express service which has not yet recovered.

Micro transit was introduced in Johnson County in 2019 and took off very quickly. It has grown and continues to see increases in ridership. The intended purpose of micro transit was to incentivize First and Last Mile connections to fixed route bus services, however riders tend to use it instead as a curb-to-curb service. Johnson County made some changes to the service, including eliminating zones, and changing the fare structure to help cut down on longer trips and manage trip volume. Even with these changes, micro transit continues to grow and now Johnson County Transit is grappling with how to redesign the service so that it is more cost effective and less duplicative of the agency's fixed route bus services.

Johnson County Transit's presentation concluded with an interactive Q&A session responding to the following prompts:

1. What is public transportation for?
2. What should be the priority: geographic access or attracting riders (i.e., coverage vs frequency)?
3. What level of paratransit is the right level?
4. Are we providing micro transit or a taxi service?

Participant responses are summarized below:

- A local representative said residents largely do not feel that public transit is “for them”, and not considered a viable mobility option. One recent example is that Johnson County Transit provided free bus service to the Kansas City Chiefs Super Bowl Parade, and participants commented that the bus service was not fully utilized.
- Josh Powers from Johnson County Transit said that if there is public support from the region to increase the frequency of bus service, it would require additional financial resources and increased partnerships with local businesses, employers, etc. Several participants voiced a desire to see greater partnership from local employers to invest in public transit, especially rail service.
- Reducing emissions was a central topic of discussion, with about half of participants indicating that regional air quality is one of the reasons they are passionate about transit. However, participants expressed that the current transit services in Johnson County are not convenient and do not provide a competitive alternative to driving. Kansas City was highlighted as an example of a city that has successfully improved transit service by upgrading traditional fixed routes to bus rapid transit (BRT), which connects to other modes including the streetcar.
- Elected officials would like to understand what the financial return is for each dollar invested in public transit. This statistic is not currently available in Johnson County and would be helpful to get elected officials on board with greater investments in public transit.
- One participant recommended that Johnson County Transit take the approach of “less is more” when considering how to invest in public transit. The participant commented that Johnson County Transit is trying to do too much, and if investments were more strategically focused, they could lay the groundwork for future investments.
- Land use policies, and the relatively sprawling geography of Johnson County, was a recurring theme. Certain jurisdictions in Johnson County have focused on enhancing density, which is more conducive to transit, however Johnson County Transit noted that land use policy decisions are made at the local, not County, level.

Breakout Activity

Throughout Day One of the peer exchange, participants were invited to go around the room and write answers to the following questions: 1) What is transit's role in the community? 2) What is Johnson County Transit doing well? 3) What is the biggest challenge for transit in Johnson County?

Participants were encouraged to place dot stickers next to the responses that most resonated.

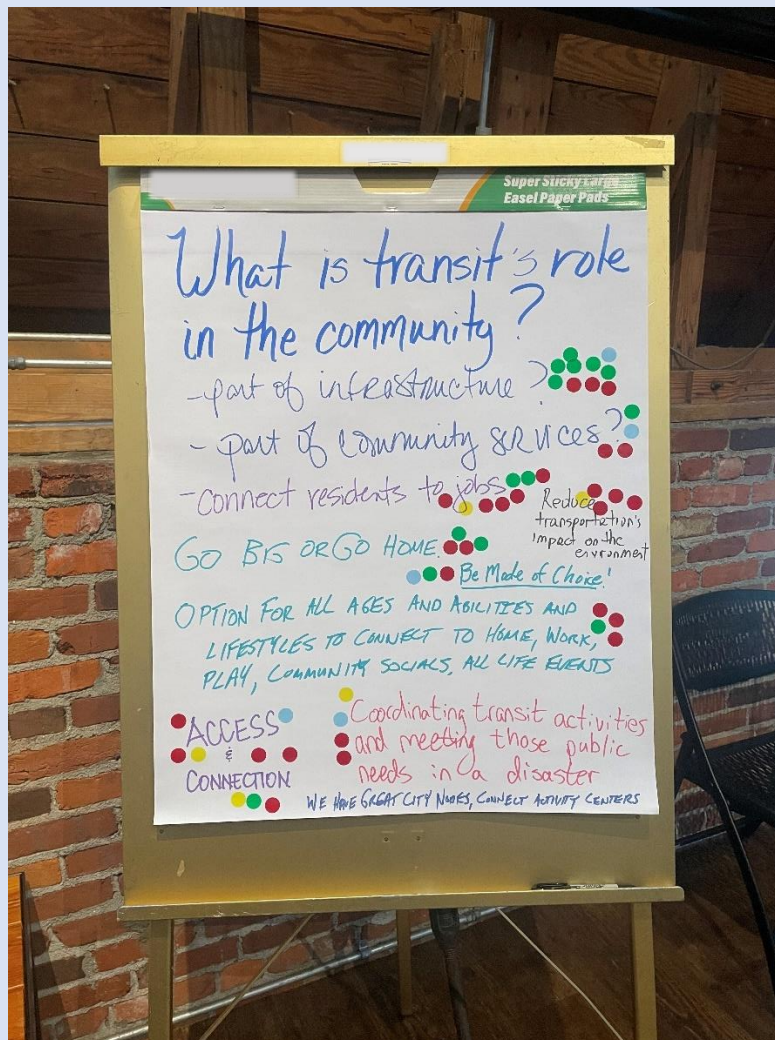


Figure 3: Participant responses to "What is transit's role in the community?" Photo credit: Liz Biskar, U.S. DOT Volpe Center

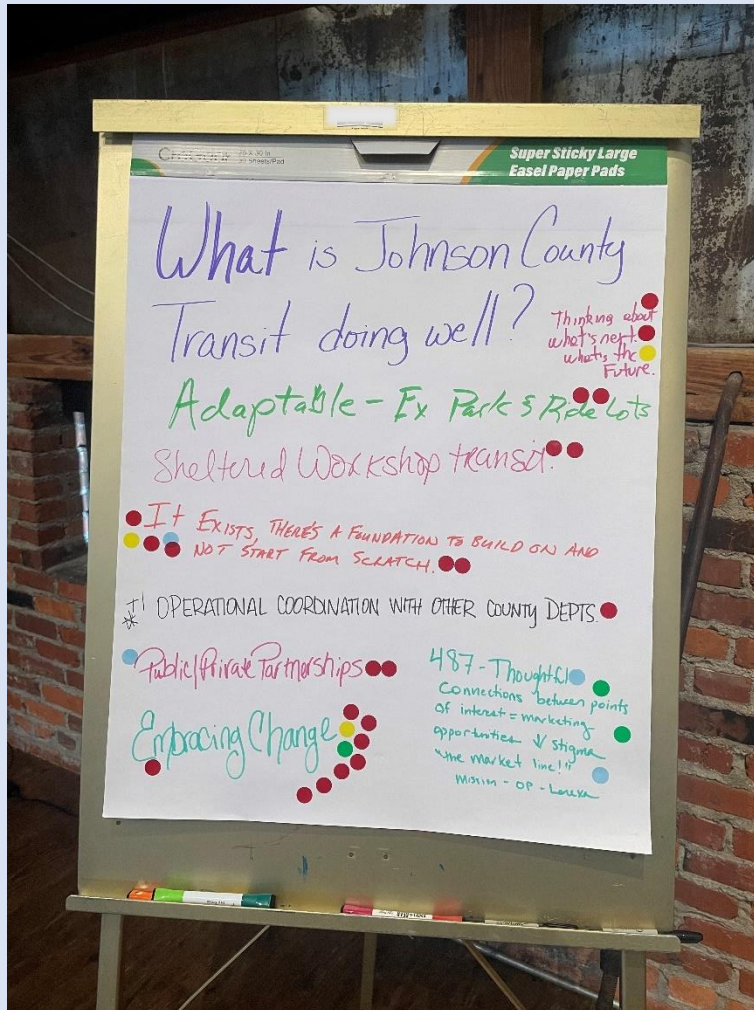


Figure 4: Participant responses to "What is Johnson County Transit doing well?" Photo credit: Liz Biskar, U.S. DOT Volpe Center

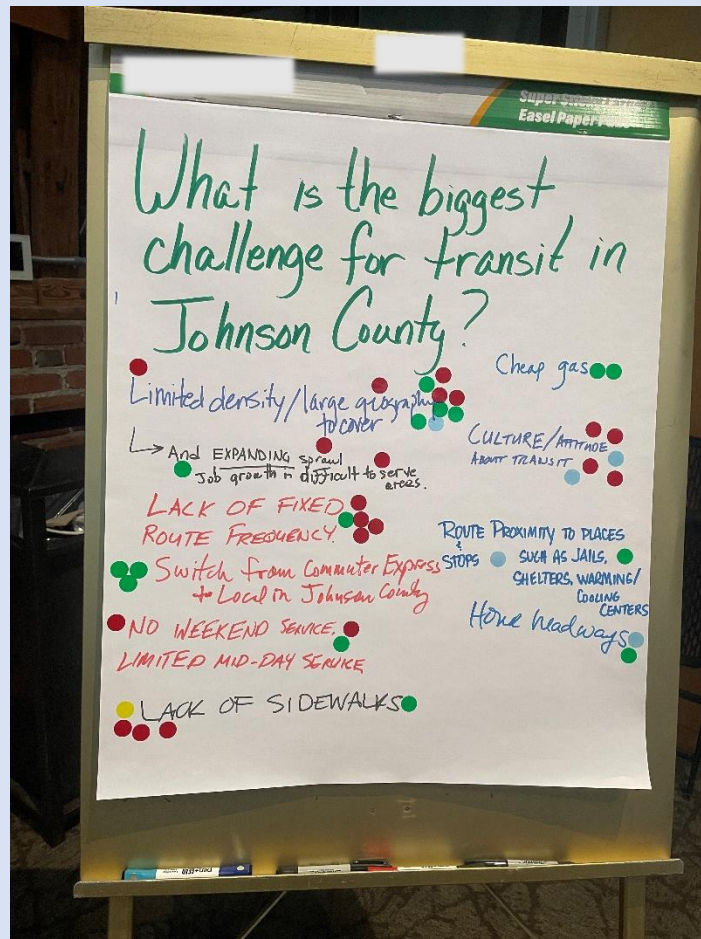


Figure 5: "What is the biggest challenge for transit in Johnson County? Photo credit: Liz Biskar, U.S. DOT Volpe Center

Peer Approaches to Transit Development Planning

Following Johnson County Transit's presentation, representatives from two peer agencies – Montgomery County Department of Transportation (Maryland) and Gwinnett County Transit (Georgia) – each gave individual peer presentations sharing their agency's approaches to transit development planning. Montgomery County Department of Transportation's presentation focused on the agency's 2023 Ride On Reimagined comprehensive network study, as well as its Ride On Flex micro transit pilot program. Gwinnett County Transit's presentation discussed their recent Transit Plan in addition to a proposed network redesign. The summary below provides highlights of the themes discussed during these presentations.

Peer Presentation 1: Ride On: Moving People and Connecting Places

Deanna Archey, Acting Chief of Planning, Montgomery County Department of Transportation

Montgomery County, Maryland is the second most populous suburb in the Washington D.C. region, with more than one million residents as of 2021. The region is served by multiple transit agencies, including Montgomery County Department of Transportation. Montgomery County Department of Transportation has five major departments including the Division of Transportation Engineering, the Division of Traffic Engineering and Operations, the Highways Division, and the Division of Transit Services.

Montgomery County Department of Transportation operates four major services:

1. Ride On – the neighborhood bus system;
2. Ride On Extra – offers limited stops, with faster service on certain routes;
3. Ride On Flex – the County’s on-demand micro transit service; and
4. FLASH – the County’s BRT service.

The Montgomery County Department of Transportation bus system operates 81 fixed routes, two BRT lines, and averages 61,000 daily passenger trips. As of Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, Montgomery County Department of Transportation has an operating budget of \$179.7 million, and employs over 890 full-time equivalent employees, which includes approximately 600 bus operators. The majority of Montgomery County Department of Transportation funding comes from the County’s Mass Transit Fund, in addition to State and Federal grants. In the past few years, Montgomery County Department of Transportation has restored all routes that were eliminated during the pandemic; implemented the FLASH BRT service along one of the County’s busiest commuter corridors; expanded its micro transit service, Ride On Flex; and reduced fares by 50% following a fare evaluation study.

Montgomery County Department of Transportation initiated the Ride On Reimagined comprehensive network study in 2022. Despite numerous incremental service additions over the years, this marked Montgomery County Department of Transportation’s first complete, comprehensive study of its transit system. With Ride On Reimagined, Montgomery County Department of Transportation aspired to be transparent with the public and engage them in the process from the outset. Montgomery County Department of Transportation published the scope of work for the study on its website and requested public feedback. During the initial stages of the study, Montgomery County Department of Transportation also developed various project stakeholder groups including a project management team that met weekly; a project coordination team comprised of representatives from Montgomery County Department of Transportation’s different divisions, as well as local and regional providers; and a public stakeholder group that met quarterly and included leaders from the business community, members from advocacy groups, and others. Working together with these groups, Montgomery County Department of Transportation established a vision and goals for transportation in Montgomery County, each with a set of key performance indicators:

1. Safety and Vision Zero
 - a. Enhance Pedestrian and Rider Safety
 - b. Improve Bus Operations Safety
2. Environment and Resiliency
 - a. Shift Mode Share from Auto to Bus
 - b. Position Transit as the First Choice in Montgomery County
 - c. Plan Network to Meet Environmental Goals

- d. Promote an Ongoing Evaluation of the Network
- 3. Economic Development
 - a. Increase Access and Connections for All Users
 - b. Implement Targeted Actions
 - c. Connect Transit with Economic Development
 - d. Improve Passenger Experience

The Ride On Reimagined network study was divided into two phases. In Phase 1, Montgomery County Department of Transportation evaluated the existing conditions of its services and conducted an assessment of the agency's service standards, policies, guidelines, marketing and branding, and bus shelters and amenities. Phase 2 involved developing service concepts and recommendations, as well as a service and implementation plan. Project groups were consulted and engaged throughout both phases of the study.

Montgomery County Department of Transportation also conducted significant public outreach as part of the Ride On Reimagined study. To do so, the agency divided Montgomery County into five groups, each with a dedicated focus group comprised of riders and non-riders. Workshops, community outreach, pop up events, and surveys were used in addition to the area focus groups to solicit public input on improvements to Montgomery County Department of Transportation's bus service. Focus groups met twice and during the first meeting, Montgomery County Department of Transportation presented a set of maps and asked focus groups to indicate on the map where they would like to see bus service. During the second meeting, the agency asked focus groups to prioritize service based on the amount of funding and number of vehicles available, as well as the preferred level of frequency. Using the feedback provided via surveys, focus groups, and other public engagement methods, Montgomery County Department of Transportation developed an interactive transit network conceptual map that was made available on agency's website for public comment (see [Figure 6](#)). As of March 2024, Montgomery County Department of Transportation is in a refinement phase and adjusting its proposed service map based on public comments.

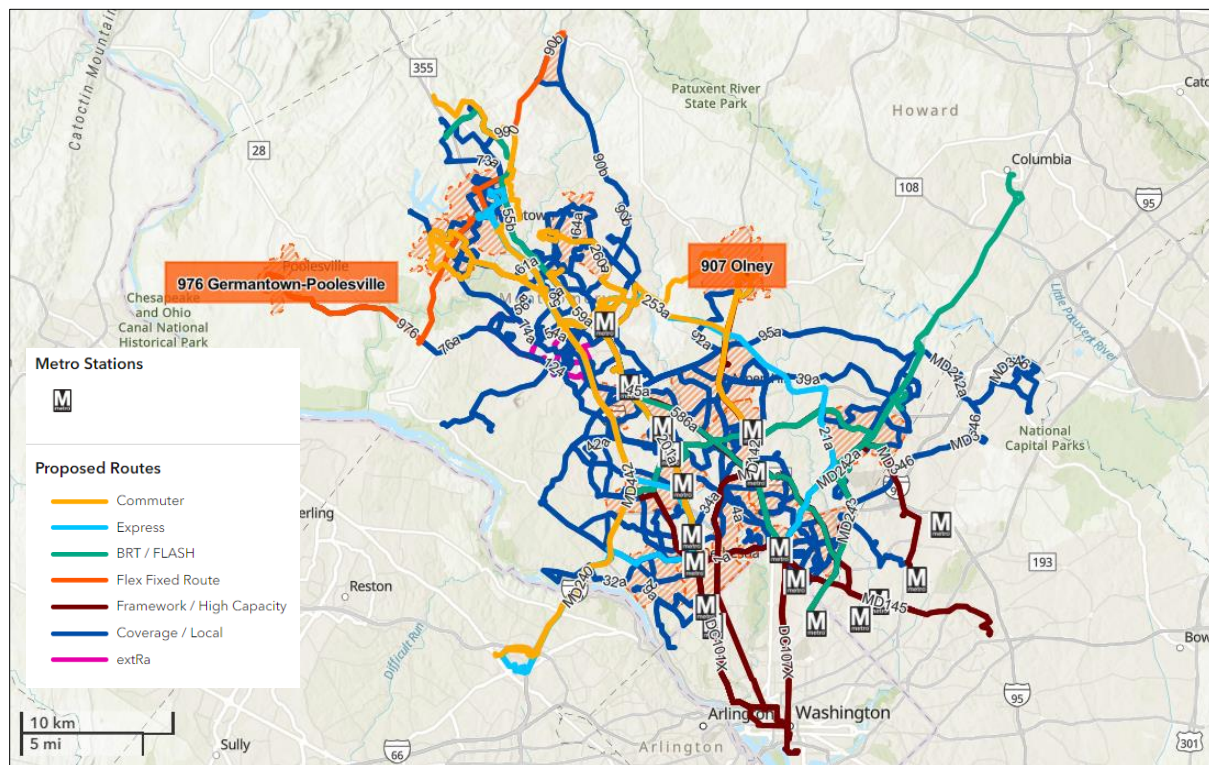


Figure 6: Montgomery County Department of Transportation's Redesigned Network Map. Source: Montgomery County Department of Transportation.

Ride On Flex was launched as a one-year pilot program in two service areas. Montgomery County Department of Transportation wanted to test micro transit services as a First and Last Mile connection, as well as a gap filler in areas which only operated peak service. Montgomery County Department of Transportation developed two micro transit service zones and partnered with Via to develop an app – the Flex App – that customers could download to book their rides (see [Figure 7](#)). Rather than providing door-to-door service, Montgomery County Department of Transportation piloted corner-to-corner services that pick-up customers at the closest, designated pick-up location. The micro transit service adopted the same fare structure as its fixed route services, with students and seniors riding free all day. Since the micro transit services were piloted in areas that had no or less frequent bus service, Montgomery County Department of Transportation aimed for micro transit to complement rather than compete with its fixed route services.

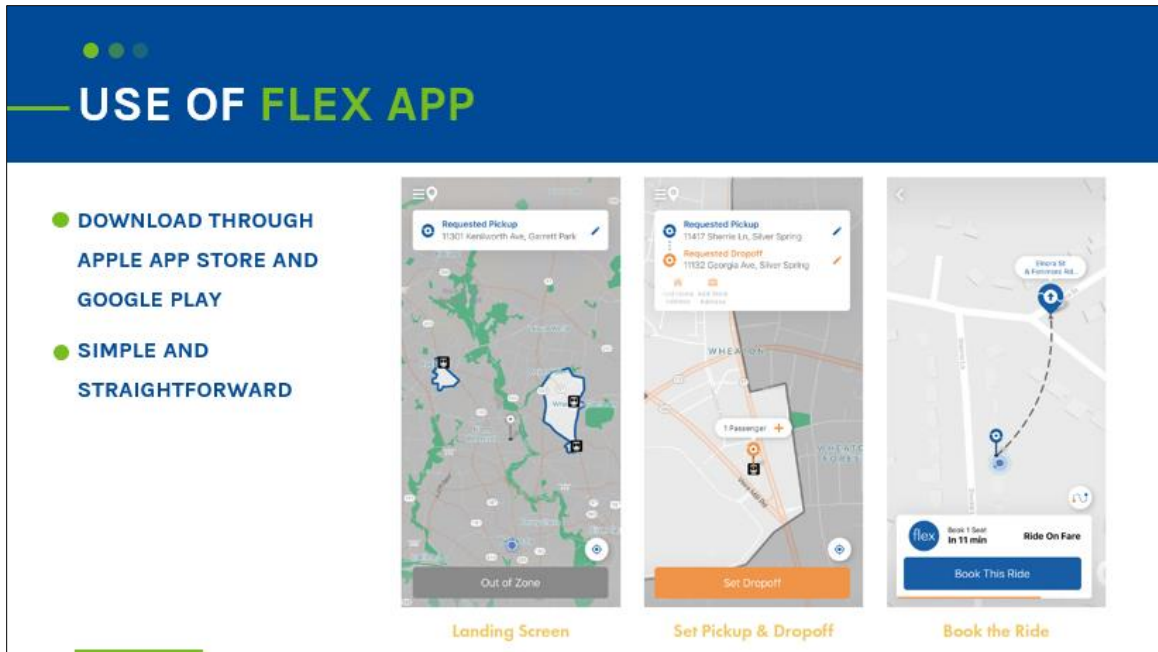


Figure 7: Overview of Montgomery County Department of Transportation Flex App for Micro transit Services. Source: Montgomery County Department of Transportation

In terms of marketing and outreach, Montgomery County Department of Transportation met with groups of seniors and community leaders to introduce the pilot program and utilized Metrorail stations and local malls to advertise. In response to public feedback, Montgomery County Department of Transportation provided a call center option for seniors and others without smart phones to book rides. Montgomery County Department of Transportation partnered with their Council of Governments and Metropolitan Planning Organization to apply for grants to evaluate the micro transit service. Initial results showed that ridership tripled over the first six months of the pilot, with same day round-trip customers comprising about 29% of Flex ridership; 70% of Flex customers used their SmarTrip cards (the transit card used to pay for fares on WMATA and Montgomery County Department of Transportation transit services); and 32% of trips were linked to Metrorail. The evaluation results also identified a group of “super users” – dedicated, daily customers, who took nearly 34% of total trips provided.

In terms of lessons learned, Montgomery County Department of Transportation found that generally the micro transit program was well-received by a variety of age groups, with word-of-mouth reviews contributing to the program’s success. Montgomery County Department of Transportation found that operating costs of micro transit services can be cost neutral and will not necessarily result in savings if used to replace existing fixed routes, and compared to typical performance measures, service productivity (e.g. trips per mile, per hour) may be low. In order to be successful, micro transit programs should be designed in close proximity to major high-frequency public transit hubs.

Peer Presentation 2: Gwinnett County Transit Plan

China Thomas, Director of Transit Capital Projects, Gwinnett County Transit

Gwinnett County is part of the Atlanta metropolitan region and is the second most populous County in the State of Georgia. Gwinnett County Transit was formed in 2001, is governed by a Board of Commissioners, and has an annual operating budget of \$29 million. The transit agency sits within the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation (DOT).

In 2022, Gwinnett County Transit initiated its transit planning process in order to understand its current services and to develop a roadmap for future enhancements over the next 30 years. As part of its TDP, Gwinnett County Transit conducted data analysis and modeling. The analysis showed that by 2050, the County expects to see 500,000 more residents, leading to a 31% increase in vehicle trips. With a no-build option, County residents would experience worsened congestion. Gwinnett County Transit is hoping to make significant investments in transit through a special referendum which would allow the agency to use a special purposes tax fund to invest in transit projects. One of the agency's current challenges is that transit funding is derived from the County's general funds. With the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead based on the County's growing population, the agency is working internally to get a special referendum on the ballot in November 2024 asking the public to vote on a special purposes sales tax that can be invested in transit projects.

Gwinnett County Transit conducted community engagement in each of its districts during the TDP process, and translated materials in several different languages including Korean, Mandarin, and Spanish. Through community engagement sessions, members of the public expressed a desire for:

- Comfortable and safe transit stops. This included ensuring adequate street lighting around transit stops, in areas that felt safe at night and were ADA accessible.
- High-capacity corridors and better connectivity and access to destinations.
- Transit improvements in the short term while the agency works on some of its aspirational, longer-term goals over the course of the 30-year plan.

Based on the feedback provided by community members, Gwinnett County Transit incorporated five service types into its Transit Plan. These include:

1. Shared Ride – a flexible on-demand, zone-based transit service
2. County Ride – regular bus service with set routes and schedules
3. Quick Ride – a high-frequency service with bus priority improvements and enhanced stops
4. Rapid Ride – a high-capacity service with dedicated right-of-way and stations
5. Airport Ride – limited stop service to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport

Gwinnett County Transit's Shared Ride micro transit service is the foundation of the agency's Transit Plan. It was important for the agency to provide a transit option for everyone in the County, and micro transit is an option that can meet the needs of all County residents. As of March 2024, there are two micro transit zones in service in Gwinnett County, and the agency is working towards the goal of providing coverage for the entire county by 2033 (see [Figure 8](#)). Like Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Gwinnett County Transit's micro transit service was designed to complement their fixed routes and rapid rides. Gwinnett County Transit believes that micro transit can help to improve the public's perception of transit, and it also brings independence to seniors, students, and other riders to be

able to book trips and get to their destinations. With the agency's current system, 11% of residents have access to 28% of jobs in Gwinnett County. With the expansions proposed in the County's TDP, 32% of residents will have access to 60% of jobs, and with even more increases expected with the roll-out of the micro transit service.

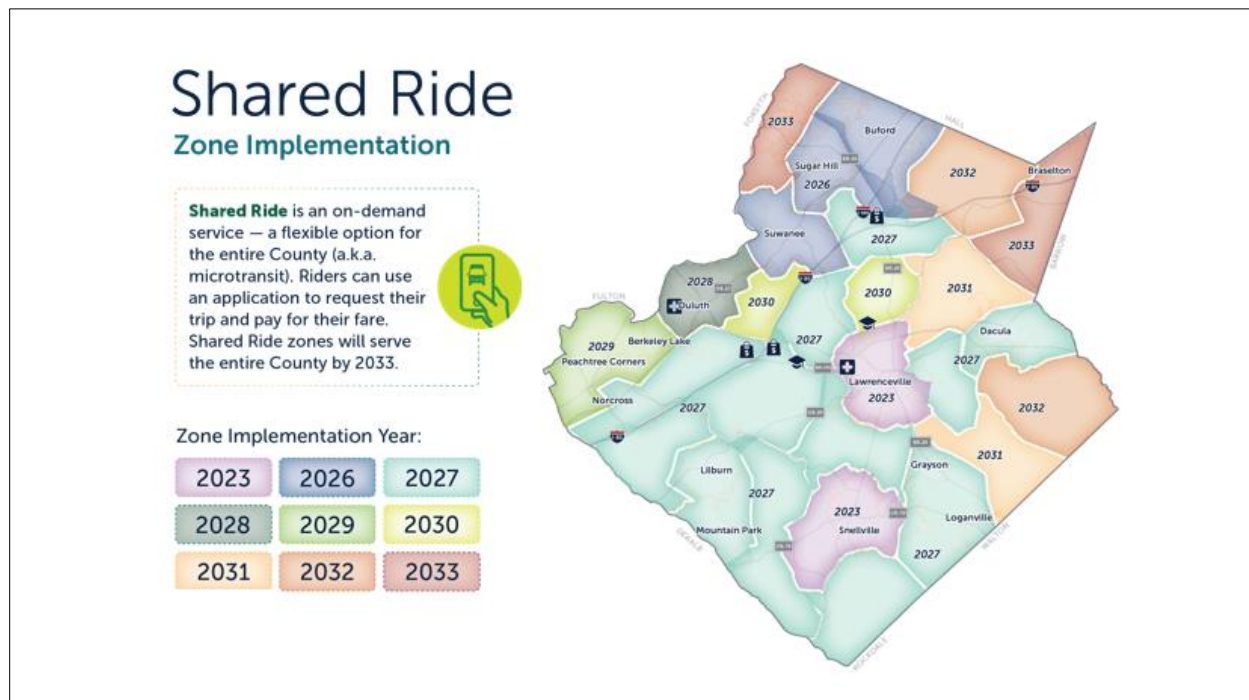


Figure 8: Gwinnett County Transit's Shared Ride Micro transit Zone Implementation Plan. Source: Gwinnett County Transit

As part of its transit planning, Gwinnett County Transit also hopes to upgrade its payment systems to make payment as seamless as possible across the five services, in addition to developing transit transfer facilities. These transfer facilities would be built in different sizes and designs based on community needs and input (see [Figure 9](#)). The agency recently secured Federal funding to construct one of their transit transfer facilities.



Figure 9: Gwinnett County Transit's Planned Transit Transfer Facilities (TTF). Source: Gwinnett County Transit

Some of the agency's key takeaways from their transit development planning process were:

- Stay flexible and be open to the process; don't be afraid to have ideas challenged.
- The full cost of implementing the agency's Transit Plan is \$17.5 billion, which is a scaled-down version compared to the full-scale transit network improvements the agency had envisioned. The agency acknowledged that transit is expensive and is one of the reasons why it is moving forward with the referendum in November.
- Gwinnett County Transit's Transit Plan is ambitious, but the agency feels it must start "planting the seeds" today to plan for the future, especially given the time and investment needed to address the challenges of a growing population.

Peer Panel Session / Open Q&A

Day One of the peer exchange concluded with a peer panel session, followed by an open Q&A facilitated by Tonya Holland-Buckley (FTA). Peers were asked to respond to the questions below:

1. Who did you reach out to first when initiating your TDP?
2. How did you communicate the value of being involved in the planning process?
3. Do you have any tips for explaining transit terms, programs, or tradeoffs to people who don't work in this sector?

The summary below provides highlights of the themes discussed:

- **Initiating TDPs:** Montgomery County Department of Transportation and Gwinnett County Transit both reached out to internal stakeholders first, including legislators, County Council and Executive members, to initiate the TDP process. After speaking with internal stakeholders, Gwinnett County Transit hired a consultant to assist the agency with outreach. This peer exchange is the first step for Johnson County Transit in initiating their TDP.

- **Proximity to transit:** Gwinnett County Transit has found that younger generations want to live, work, and play in the same area and live near transit that provides access to activity centers. Although Montgomery County is more suburban, there are urban areas and landmarks that the younger generations also would like access to, and as a result, Montgomery County Department of Transportation incorporated this feedback into their network redesign to provide access to major attractions, schools, and activity centers.
- **Marketing campaigns:** The panel discussed the different methods used to market transit to make it more attractive. Gwinnett County Transit hired a marketing consultant. Montgomery County Department of Transportation evaluated bus stop advertising as part of its Ride On Reimagined study and worked to develop the “Ride On” logo and brand. The group also discussed emphasizing the independence and opportunity that public transit affords, and the importance of providing different transit options (e.g., BRT, micro transit) that can appeal to a wide range of customers.
- **Explaining transit tradeoffs:** The agencies discussed the challenge of providing the best service possible to customers with a wide range of mobility needs. Montgomery County Department of Transportation emphasized the importance of looking for grant opportunities to help offset the cost of transit improvements.

Breakout Group Discussions

Day Two of the peer exchange included three, 45-minute discussions in small breakout groups. Discussion topics included: 1) Transit Access, 2) Transit Service, and 3) Opportunities for Public Engagement. Participants in the Day Two discussions included representatives from Johnson County Transit, local and regional partners, peer presenters, FHWA, FTA, and the U.S. DOT Volpe Center. Key themes from the discussions are provided below.

- **Transit access priorities.** Among the list of priorities, healthcare, employment, and higher education were some of the top destination priorities for transit in Johnson County. County services, libraries, and multi-family/low-income housing were additionally discussed as important destinations. The group suggested that Johnson County should try to define place typologies and make it clear what destinations are included in each. In addition, providing transit to large events is important to Johnson County and the County could improve the marketing of those services to help increase ridership.
- **Transit service priorities.** Breakout groups were asked to discuss priorities for new or expanded transit service in Johnson County (e.g. BRT, or fast and frequent service in key corridors, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to transit, expanded micro transit, etc). Participants suggested that Johnson County Transit’s micro transit be redesigned to connect riders to fixed routes. Additional priorities discussed during breakout groups were to restore and add more express route services and develop new BRT lines. Participants emphasized transit-oriented development principles; that it is important to supplement any new or redesigned transit services with effective land use policies to ensure that new development are focused along high-frequency corridors.
- **Opportunities for public engagement.** Participants were asked to discuss the groups/organizations, opportunities, and techniques that should be used to engage community members in the development of Johnson County Transit’s TDP. Participants said that representatives from city government, KDOT, consultants, those typically opposed to new

housing/transit developments, students, recent college graduates, riders, operators, transit advocacy groups, and elected officials were some of the groups they felt should be targeted and engaged in developing the TDP. Pop-up events at grocery stores, public meetings, outreach through local employers, and outreach through existing events (e.g., festivals, etc.) are some of the methods Johnson County Transit can use to engage the public in transit planning.

Next Steps

Following the peer exchange, participants were asked to complete an evaluation form intended to gather participant views on the overall quality of the event, the most valuable aspects of the peer exchange, important takeaways and usefulness of information learned, and suggestions for future improvements to the TPCB program. Participant feedback indicated that peer presentations and breakout group discussions were the most valuable aspects of the peer exchange. For next steps, Johnson County Transit issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) just before the peer exchange and intends to hire a consultant to assist with developing their Transit Development Plan and network redesign.

Appendices

A. Event Participants

First Name	Last Name	Agency
Aaron	Otto	Johnson County Transit
AJ	Farris	Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
Alvaro	Villagran	Shared-Use Mobility Center
Amanda	Graor	Mid-America Regional Council
Amber	Taylor	Commute with Enterprise
Anna	Collins	Johnson County Aging and Human Services
Arlando	Young	Unified Government of Wyandotte County Kansas City
Brian	Dyer	City of Merriam
Brian	Hageman	RideCo
Cathy	Monroe	Federal Transit Administration Region 7
China	Thomas	Gwinnett County Transit
Claire	Canaan	Johnson County Emergency Management
Colin	Duffy	City of Shawnee
David	Johnson	TransPro Consulting
Deanna	Archev	Montgomery County Department of Transportation
Deasiray	Bush	Unified Government of Wyandotte County Kansas City
Richard	Jarrold	Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
Emily	Randel	Self-Employed
Enjoli	Dixon	National Center for Mobility Management - Easterseals
Eva	Steinman	Federal Transit Administration Office of Planning and Environment
Gerri	Doyle	Federal Transit Administration Region 7
Heidi	Thummel	Johnson County Transit Council
Jack	Messer	City of Overland Park
James	Oltman	Johnson County Transit Council
Janeé	Hanzlick	Johnson County Transit
Jen	Jordan-Spence	City of Gardner
John	Randle	Transdev

First Name	Last Name	Agency
Josh	Powers	Johnson County Transit
Josh	Thede	Johnson County Transit Council
Julie	Lorenz	Kansas City Area Transportation Authority Board of Commissioners
Justus	Welker	Johnson County Transit
Keely	Schneider	Workforce Partnership
Keith	Moody	Roeland Park
LaNeece	Jardon	Independence, Inc.
Laura	Smith	City of Mission
Leslie	Herring	City of Westwood
Lisa	Womack	Johnson County Transit
Liz	Biskar	US DOT Volpe Center
Lori	La Bounty	Transdev
Margaret	Brown	Johnson County Transit
Mark	Bechtel	Federal Transit Administration Region 7
Martin	Rivarola	Mid-America Regional Council
Megan	Goodpaster	Johnson County Transit
Michael	Ashcraft	Johnson County Government
Michelle	Coats	North Central Kansas Coordinated Transit District
Mick	Letcher	Johnson County Transit
Mike	Barry	FHWA Office of Planning
Morgan	Hunter	Johnson County Emergency Management
Pete	Comer	Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
Rene	Hart	Kansas Department of Transportation
Richard	Cowart	Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
Ron	Achepohl	Mid-America Regional Council
Scott	Germann	Transdev
Steve	Schooley	City of Lenexa
Teresa	Wolken	WHC / zTrip
Terry	O'Toole	WHC / zTrip
Tonya	Holland-Buckley	FTA Office of Planning and Environment
Tyler	Means	Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
Vincent	Bruce	Johnson County Developmental Supports
Virgil	Gleason	Johnson County Transit Council

B. Peer Exchange Agendas



Johnson County Transit

Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB) Peer Exchange

Sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

March 19-20, 2024

Thompson Barn
11184 Lackman Road
Lenexa, KS 66219

Overview: This 1.5-day peer exchange, hosted by Johnson County Transit, will build awareness and encourage information-sharing about transit planning among Johnson County Transit, its regional partners and stakeholders, and two peer agencies. Peer experts Deanna Archey, Acting Chief of Planning from Montgomery County Department of Transportation, and China Thomas, Director of Transit Capital Improvements from Gwinnett County Transit, will provide presentations on their agencies' post-COVID strategic transit planning efforts and will cover topics such as implementing microtransit and fixed route transit services to provide efficient and holistic regional transportation coverage, and how to leverage regional coordination.

Day 1

Time (CT)	Session	Speaker(s)
8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Registration and Check-in	
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	Welcome and Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mark Bechtel, FTA Region 7 Office• Mike Barry, FHWA Office of Planning• Josh Powers, Johnson County Transit• Tonya Holland-Buckley, FTA Office of Planning and Environment• Eva Steinman, FTA Office of Planning
9:45 AM – 10:15 AM	Getting Started: An Overview of Transit Development Plans (TDP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eva Steinman, FTA Office of Planning
10:15 AM – 10:45 AM	Johnson County Transit – Connecting Communities: Transit in Johnson County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Josh Powers, Johnson County Transit

Time (CT)	Session	Speaker(s)
10:45 AM – 11:00 AM	Break	
11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	Peer Presentation 1: Montgomery County DOT – Ride On: Moving People & Connecting Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deanna Archey, Montgomery County DOT
12:00 PM – 1:00 PM	Lunch	
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM	Peer Presentation 2: Gwinnett County Transit Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China Thomas, Gwinnett County Transit
2:00 PM – 2:30 PM	Breakout Activity	Peer Exchange Participants
2:30 PM – 3:30 PM	Peer Panel Discussion / Open Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China Thomas, Gwinnett County Transit • Deanna Archey, Montgomery County DOT • Q&A facilitated by Tonya Holland-Buckley, FTA Office of Planning and Environment
3:30 PM – 4:00 PM	Recap / Wrap-up	



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Day 2

Time (CT)	Session	Speaker(s)
9:00 AM – 9:30 AM	Welcome and Goals of Day 2	Tonya Holland-Buckley , FTA Office of Planning and Environment
9:30 AM – 10:15 AM	Breakout Group Discussion Topic 1: Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This session will focus on identifying transit system access priorities in Johnson County. 	Peer Exchange Participants
10:15 AM – 11:00 AM	Breakout Group Discussion Topic 2: Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This session will focus on identifying and prioritizing transit services in Johnson County. 	Peer Exchange Participants
11:00 AM – 11:45 AM	Breakout Group Discussion Topic 3: Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This session will focus on stakeholder engagement techniques and opportunities in Johnson County. 	Peer Exchange Participants
11:45 AM – 12:00 PM	Wrap-up	

C. Additional Resources

- FHWA-FTA TPCB Website: https://www.planning.dot.gov/peer_program.aspx
- Montgomery County Department of Transportation Ride On Reimagined Study: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-transit/reimagined/>
- Gwinnett County Transit TDP: <https://www.gwinnettcounty.com/web/gwinnett/departments/transportation/gwinnettcountytransit/transitdevelopmentplan>