Prepared for: TxDOT and Golden Crescent

Golden Crescent – Directions for the Future

Final Plan – December 2024

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Chapter 1
Study Goals and Objectives

Introduction

The Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission (GCRPC) encompasses a seven-county region, including Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Jackson, Lavaca, and Victoria counties. The GCRPC provides small-urban transit through Victoria Transit and operates under agreement with the City of Victoria. The GCRPC also operates and contracts for both demand response rural transit through RTRANSIT and commuter service to the Port Lavaca area (operated directly). The commuter service was reviewed and assessed in a previous study and will not be detailed here, other than assessing how the service will be coordinated with the other components of the service.

The GCRPC requested consultant assistance to conduct a review of the existing rural and urban services and develop strategies to help improve service connections and performance. This project-termed technical assistance looks at all aspects of the service. It is limited in scope to a basic plan with details to be put in place after an agreement is reached on this plan. TxDOT funding can be made available for follow-up work as needed.

Coordination within the rural system, including an assessment of service designs, as well as their connections into Victoria, are key elements addressed in this plan. A review of the urban system in Victoria identified a number of opportunities for service and ridership improvements.

KFH Group worked with GCRPC, the City of Victoria and its subcontractors to create a plan that will improve the performance of Victoria Transit, helping to build community support for the small urban transit system by making the service more user friendly, and highlighting the transit system as a tool for economic development in the community. At the same time, the consultant team analyzed the structure and services in the RTRANSIT rural services and are developing strategies to improve performance, operations and the organization of the rural transit system.

Detailed Technical Memoranda

The study team developed five technical memoranda in support of this project. They are summarized in each chapter of this plan. For those persons wishing to review the full details of the analysis and review of needs, these technical memoranda should be reviewed. They are part of the appendix to this document and include the following:

- **Technical Memorandum No. 1** – Study Goals and Objectives: Direction for the Future
- **Technical Memorandum No. 2** – Review of Existing Conditions
- **Technical Memorandum No. 3** – Stakeholder Engagement
- **Technical Memorandum No. 4** – Needs Assessment
- **Technical Memorandum No. 5** – RTransit and Victoria Transit Recommendations and Strategies for the Future

First, the *Overarching Goal* will be introduced, followed by the proposed project goals and key issues and themes.

Goals Statement

The Overarching Goal for Transit

For each of our projects we have one overarching goal which we believe is shared by all of our clients:

Help provide for more trips for more people while providing cost effective, high quality, and safe transportation for our community.

This project was kicked off at a meeting on April 23, 2024, with GCRPC staff and key stakeholders (Including Victoria MPO representatives, Members of the Economic Development Council, Victoria City Council Members, GCRPC Board members, Veterans advocates and County Commissioners), together with members of the KFH Group consultant team and TxDOT representatives. The kick-off meeting included a discussion of the transit needs and issues in Victoria and in every county in the GCRPC service area. Also discussed were project timeframes, and major deliverables. In addition, the consultant team was able to gain a recent historical perspective from GCRPC and other key stakeholders that was crucial to the discussion and identification of key issues related to the project.

GCRPC and TxDOT staff have also provided the consultant team with the necessary information to begin work as requested. The goals developed were based on kickoff meeting discussions and a review of the information supplied to date. These goals and objectives will guide the project through its various phases allowing the consultant team to target issue areas, as necessary.

Overarching Goal

The overarching goal of this effort is to provide GCRPC and its stakeholders and partners with a plan that will help improve transit performance in Victoria and the rural areas of the region and help build support for transit in the communities RTRANSIT and Victoria Transit serve.

Following are the specific goals and objectives identified at the start of the project. These goals were developed based on discussions with GCRPC staff and TxDOT representatives as well as a review of the information and data supplied by RTRANSIT and Victoria Transit. The final section, Key Themes, offers further refinement of objectives.

Project Goals and Objectives

1. **Ensuring that Key Stakeholders are Heard** – Stakeholder Engagement.
    a. Project Kick-off Meeting (April 23, 2024).
    b. Discussion of the urban and rural transit needs and issues, project timeframes, and major deliverables.
    c. Gain a recent historical perspective from GCRPC and other key stakeholders that will be crucial to the discussion and identification of key issues related to the project.
    d. Engage City and MPO management to identify other key stakeholders in Victoria.
    e. Engage appropriate County stakeholders.
    f. Ride the buses to gain a rider perspective.

2. **Creating Success and Support for Victoria Transit** – Urban Transit Service Plan
    a. Review existing services, assess unmet needs and develop strategies to improve the service and ridership.
    b. Improve the route structure of the service.
    c. Engage stakeholders and help develop support for the transit service.
    d. Coordinate service with University of Houston and Victoria College.
    e. Complete a plan that will increase ridership without additional costs.

3. **Optimizing Rural Transit Services** – Rural Operations and Organizational Plan
    a. Review contracts and meet with contractors to assess services, needs, capacity and rural transit issues.
    b. Review existing services and develop service strategies to improve service. Deploy improved service strategies that will not require additional costs.
    c. Analyze opportunities for organizational improvements.

4. **Direction for the Future** – Final GCRPC Plan
    a. Based on the comments received by GCRPC, major stakeholders and TxDOT, the plan will be completed.

Key Themes

Urban Transit: Success Breeds Success – the Victoria Transit service planning process will analyze the existing service, funding, marketing, branding, fares, and technology, and identify opportunities for improvements in each area. Of particular focus of this plan:

- Cost reductions where appropriate
- Improved performance of the routes through enhanced service design
- Route profiling and improvement recommendations
- Major stakeholder engagement
- Review of procedures related to transfers, fare collection, data collection and reporting
- Funding analysis to examine existing funding issues and potential new funding sources
- ADA and Title VI considerations and issues
- Technology and vehicle review
- Service to the colleges and university
- Economic development implications of transit service in Victoria
- Transit leadership and advocacy

The objective is to create service improvements that not only transport more people but improve Victoria Transit's image in the community. Success breeds success. By developing service recommendations that improve overall service and visibility in the community, coordination, funding and community support becomes much more straightforward and easier to cultivate.

Possibilities in Rural Transit Improvements – The rural portion of this planning effort will include the following:

- Engagement of rural contractors to assess capabilities, issues and needs.
- Rural service review examining productivity, major destinations and unmet need in the communities served.
- Short-term recommendations for service improvements (i.e., scheduled regional service, microtransit, etc.) based on need and capability.
- Longer-term organization recommendations looking at consolidation and improvement of organizational structures that lead to transit service improvements and transit customer service improvements.
- While not reviewing the commuter service in this study, we will use the analysis in our recent study to ensure that all commuter, rural, and Victoria services are coordinated.

Short term goals and objectives for both aspects of this plan are to develop service recommendations that are feasible, easily implemented, cost effective (neutral) and to improve the standing of GCRPC transit services and contracts in the region. By increasing transits success and visibility in the communities served, long term goals of organizational and funding improvements will require less effort to actualize.

Chapter 2:
Review of Existing Conditions

Introduction

The second step in this study process is the review of existing conditions that will include the following two sections:

- **Review of Demographics, Land Uses, and Travel Patterns** – This review will identify where potential transit users live and where people are going. It is essential to understand the basics of the service area – population, size, and density, as well as transit-dependent populations.
- **Review of Existing Service** – This review includes service benchmarks, ridership characteristics and performance assessments. We will assess Title VI implications (if any), and the study team will look at performance measures in pre-pandemic and post-pandemic conditions to determine the effectiveness of the current demand response service. The result will be an assessment of the existing services to determine their effectiveness in each part of the service area.

Review of Demographics, Land Uses, and Travel Patterns

This section addresses the population and where they are located, with an emphasis on identifying areas in need and comparing them to destinations. Distinct travel patterns are identified as well.

Population Profile

The following section provides a general population profile for Golden Crescent counties. It identifies and evaluates underserved population subgroups and reviews the demographic characteristics pertinent to a Title VI analysis.

As of the 2020 census, the Golden Crescent region has a total population of 229,494, with approximately 40 percent of the population residing in Victoria County. Matagorda (pop. 36,255) is the next most populous county after Victoria. The other six counties are all rural with no county possessing over 21,000 residents. The population trends in the Golden Crescent region are shown in Table 2-1.

In general, the population of the Golden Crescent region has remained relatively stable over the past two decades. Out of the eight counties, five counties have grown since 2000, with Victoria leading the way at an 8.6 percent growth. Three counties—Calhoun, DeWitt, and Matagorda—have lost population

since 2000, but none have declined by over 4.5 percent. At the regional level, Golden Crescent has experienced 1.6 and 1.8 percent growth over the previous two decades respectively, resulting in 3.4 percent growth since 2000. This growth is significantly lower than that of the State of Texas, which has seen almost 40 percent population growth over the same period of time.

Table 2-1: Historical Population Trends, Golden Crescent

Geography	2000	2010	2020	2000-2010%	2010-2020%	2000-2020%
Calhoun	20,647	21,381	20,106	3.6%	-6.0%	-2.6%
DeWitt	20,013	20,097	19,824	0.4%	-1.4%	-0.9%
Goliad	6,928	7,210	7,012	4.1%	-2.7%	1.2%
Gonzales	18,628	19,807	19,653	6.3%	-0.8%	5.5%
Jackson	14,391	14,075	14,988	-2.2%	6.5%	4.1%
Lavaca	19,210	19,263	20,337	0.3%	5.6%	5.9%
Matagorda	37,957	36,702	36,255	-3.3%	-1.2%	-4.5%
Victoria	84,088	86,793	91,319	3.2%	5.2%	8.6%
Golden Crescent	221,862	225,328	229,494	1.6%	1.8%	3.4%
Texas	20,851,820	25,145,561	29,145,505	20.6%	15.9%	39.8%

SOURCE: US CENSUS 2020

Table 2-2 illustrates the projected population trends as estimated by the Texas Demographics Center. These projections extend through 2050, and indicate that at the regional level, the population growth is anticipated to stagnate, with both growth and decline of less than one percent for each of the next three decades, resulting in negligible population changes by 2050. At the county level, population trends vary significantly. Three counties—Jackson, Lavaca, and Victoria—are projected to experience growth, with Victoria continuing its trend of minor growth at 5.8 percent and Jackson and Lavaca Counties experiencing high growth between 17 percent and 19 percent. Conversely, five counties—Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, and Matagorda—are projected to experience population decline with four of the five declining from three to 10 percent. Calhoun County is expected to experience a major decline of 25.8 percent.

Table 2-2: Future Projections, Golden Crescent

Geography	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020-2030%	2030-2040%	2040-2050%	2020-2050%
Calhoun	20,106	18,515	16,791	14,926	-7.9%	-9.3%	-11.1%	-25.8%
DeWitt	19,824	19,717	19,552	19,234	-0.5%	-0.8%	-1.6%	-3.0%
Goliad	7,012	6,803	6,648	6,559	-3.0%	-2.3%	-1.3%	-6.5%
Gonzales	19,653	19,204	18,674	17,796	-2.3%	-2.8%	-4.7%	-9.4%
Jackson	14,988	15,769	16,762	17,634	5.2%	6.3%	5.2%	17.7%
Lavaca	20,337	21,419	22,796	24,127	5.3%	6.4%	5.8%	18.6%
Matagorda	36,255	35,212	34,061	32,705	-2.9%	-3.3%	-4.0%	-9.8%
Victoria	91,319	93,954	96,082	96,608	2.9%	2.3%	0.5%	5.8%
Golden Crescent	229,494	230,593	231,366	229,589	0.5%	0.3%	-0.8%	0.0%
Texas	29,145,505	34,894,452	40,686,496	47,342,105	19.7%	16.6%	16.4%	62.4%

SOURCE: THE TEXAS DEMOGRAPHICS CENTER

Population Distribution in the Study Area

The Golden Crescent study area is primarily composed of rural areas, with a few population centers in each county. To better understand how the population is distributed and where people live, details about population centers and population density in the study area are discussed below.

Population Centers

Population centers, within the context of a county, are geographical locations where the majority of the county's residents reside. These centers include urbanized areas, cities, census designated places (CDPs), colonias, unincorporated communities, and similar settlements. They may vary in size and significance from one county to another. These centers in each county within Golden Crescent service area are shown in Figure 2-1 and are described as follows:

- **Calhoun County** is located in the southern part of Golden Crescent service area along the Matagorda and Espiritu Santo Bays. The county is home to Port Lavaca, which serves as an economic hub due to the importance of the Point Comfort port for the plastics and oil and gas industry.

  - The county seat and most populous city is ***Port Lavaca***, with a population of 11,545 as of the 2020 Census. ***Seadrift*** (pop. 1,577) is the only other place with a population of over 1,000 people.

- **DeWitt County** is located northwest of Victoria County in the Golden Crescent service area. The county is notable for having three population centers with a population over 2,000. The Guadalupe River flows through the county. As of 2020 Census, it had a population of 19,825 people.

  - The county seat is ***Cuero***, with a population of 8,138. The other major population centers are ***Yoakum*** (pop. 5,841), which spans the border of DeWitt and Lavaca County, and ***Yorktown*** (pop. 2,183).

- **Goliad County** is situated in the southwestern portion of the study area, with a population of 7,012 as of the 2020 Census, making it the least populous county in the region. It is home to the Coleto Creek Power Station, a power plant currently transitioning from coal to natural gas and a major source of both revenue and pollution for the county. The county is only home to one major population center:

  - The county seat is ***Goliad***, with a population of about 1,816.

- **Gonzales County** is located in the northwestern part of the study area and has a population of 19,653 people.

  - ***Gonzales***, with a population of approximately 7,190, serves as the county seat. ***Nixon*** (pop. 2,898) and ***Waelder*** (pop. 1,061) are the only other population centers with populations over 1,000.

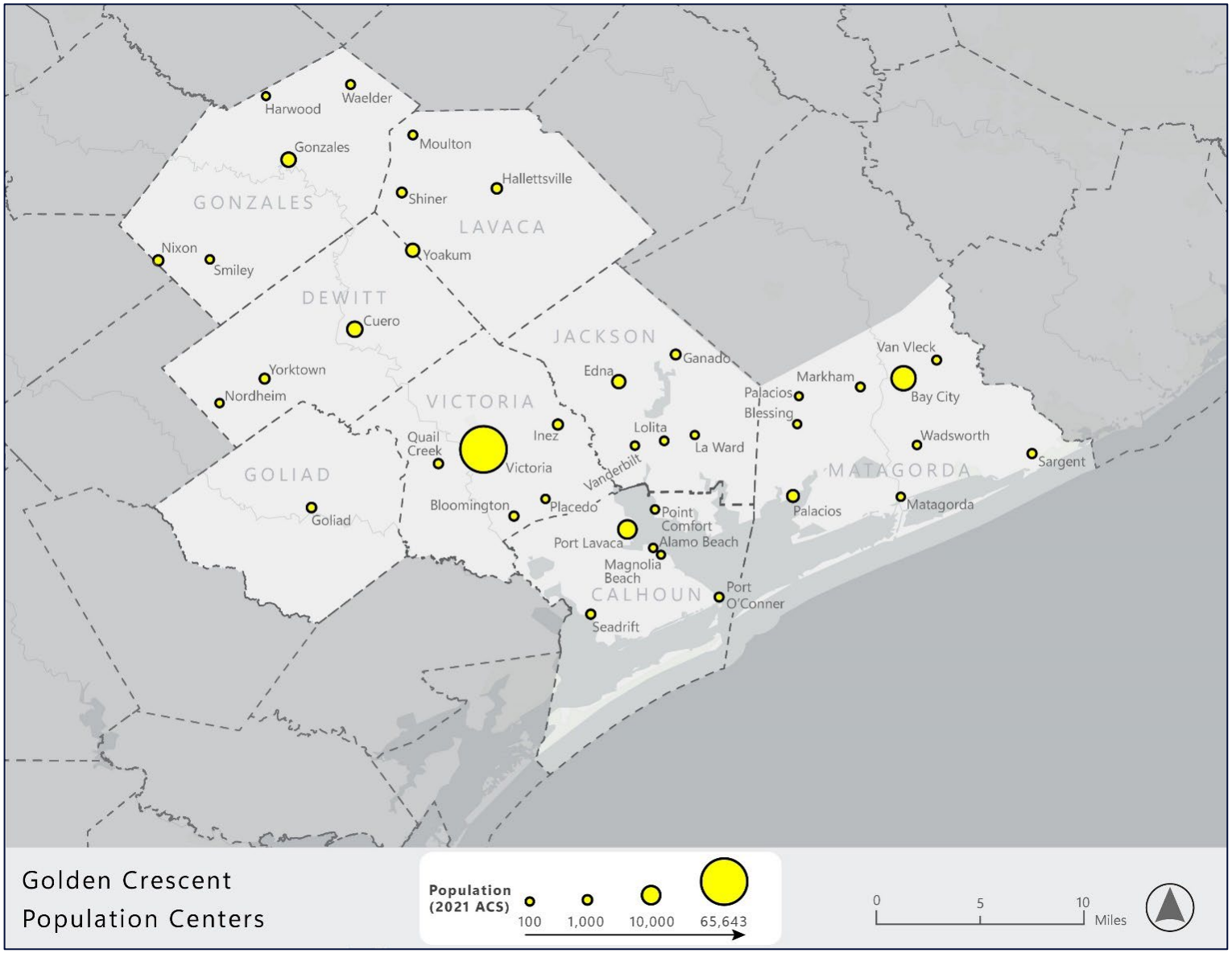
- **Jackson County** is located northeast of Victoria County and had a population of 14,988 in the 2020 Census.

  - **Edna** is the county seat and the most populous city with 5,985 residents. **Ganado** is the only other major population center, with a population of 2,318 as of the 2022 ACS.

- **Lavaca County** is located in the northern part of the study area and had a population of 20,337 as of 2020 Census.

  - ***Yoakum***, which straddles both Lavaca and DeWitt County, is the largest population center (pop. 5,841), but the county seat is ***Hallettsville*** with a 2020 population of 2,729. The other population centers in the county are ***Shiner*** (pop. 2,095) and ***Moulton*** (pop. 868).

Figure 2-1: Population Centers, Golden Crescent Study Area



- **Matagorda County** is the next most populous county after Victoria with a population of 36,255 (2020 Census). It is located in the eastern portion of the study area along Matagorda Bay. In contrast to the rest of the region's counties which typically have fewer than five CDPs, Matagorda County has nine CDPs spread throughout the area.
    - ***Bay City*** is the most populous city and county seat. It had a population of 17,869 in 2022 (ACS). It is the second-most populous city in the Golden Crescent region after Victoria. ***Palacios*** (pop.: 4,411), ***Markham*** (pop.: 1,222), ***Sargent*** (pop.: 1,240), ***and Van Vleck*** (pop.: 1,049) are the next four largest population centers and the only ones other than Bay City that have a population greater than 1,000.
- **Victoria County** is located in the central part of the study area and is the most populous county in the Golden Crescent region with a 2020 population of 91,319.
- ***Victoria*** is the county seat as well as the most populous city with 68,481 residents (2022 ACS). ***Inez*** (pop. 2,435), ***Bloomington*** (pop. 1,189), and ***Quail Creek*** (pop. 1,301) are also major population centers in the county.

Transit Dependent Populations

Public transportation needs are defined in part by identifying the relative size and location of those segments within the general population that are most likely to use transit services. These transit-dependent populations include individuals who may not have access to a personal vehicle or are unable to drive themselves due to age or income status. Identifying the location of these populations is essential for evaluating current transit services and the extent to which the services meet community needs.

The socio-economic characteristics that make up the transit dependent population include:

1. **Autoless Households**: Households without at least one personal vehicle.
2. **Senior Population**: Individuals 65 years and older.
3. **Youth Populations**: Youths and teenagers, ages 10 to 17 years.
4. **Below Poverty Populations**: Individuals who earn less than the federal poverty level.
5. **People with Disabilities**: 18 years and above (non-institutionalized population).

Figure 2-2 displays the percentage of the transit-dependent population within the study area, including the locations of places and colonias. For each census block group, there are five scores established, ranging from Very Low to Very High. These classifications are determined by evaluating the average mean of the transit-dependent population across the entire Golden Crescent area. The major highlights from this analysis include:

- **DeWitt, Gonzales, Goliad**, and **Matagorda** counties have transit-dependent populations above the study area average with Goliad and Matagorda counties standing out as possessing over five percent greater transit-dependent populations above the Golden Crescent average.

- **Goliad County** has the highest percentage of autoless households at 8.5 percent, only moderately higher than the regionwide average of 5.9 percent, highlighting that there are no significant spatial disparities of autoless households in this area.

All counties possess between 16 to 23.4 percent senior populations, between 12.1 to 17.1 percent populations of individuals with disabilities, and between 9.4 to 13.3 percent youth populations. This further highlights that transit-dependent populations are generally evenly dispersed throughout the region.

Title VI Demographic Analysis

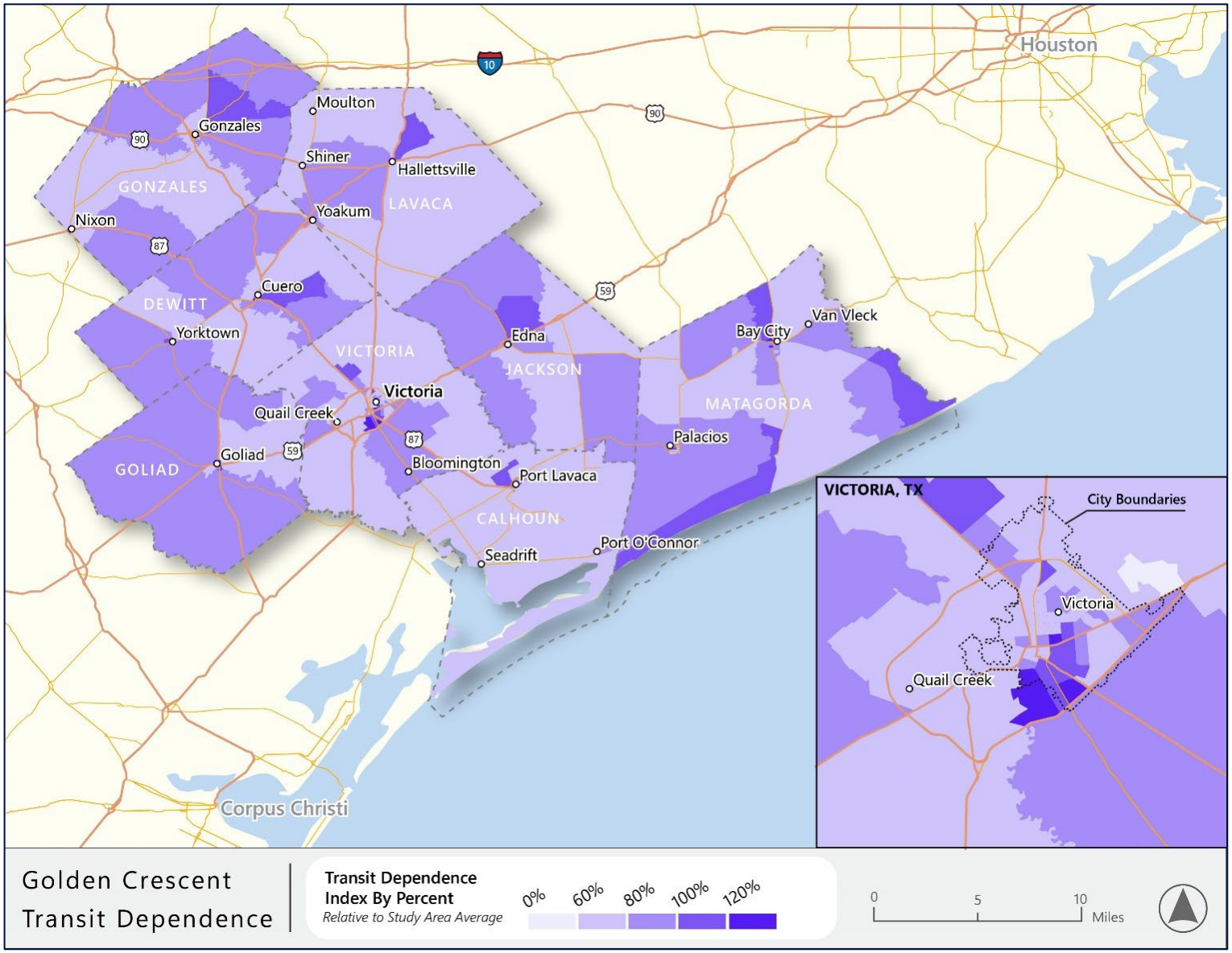
As part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal subsidies. This includes agencies providing federally-funded public transportation. The following section examines the minority and below-poverty populations within the four counties. It then summarizes the prevalence of residents with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

Minority and Low-Income Population

Individuals who earn less than the federal poverty level face financial hardships that may make the ownership and maintenance of a personal vehicle difficult. In such cases, they may be more likely to depend upon public transportation. At the same time, it is also important to ensure that areas with an above average percentage of racial and/or ethnic minorities are not disproportionately impacted by any proposed alterations to existing public transportation services. Key findings include:

- In all counties, the minority population is substantial, with all counties recording a minority population of at least 41 percent.
- Only **Calhoun County** (60.1 percent) has a higher minority percentage than that of the state of Texas (59.3 percent).
- Five of the eight counties in the Golden Crescent have low-income percentages between 11.9 to 14.6 percent.
- **DeWitt** (16.0 percent) and **Goliad** (19.5 percent) counties stand out with low-income percentages substantially higher than the region average, while **Calhoun County** has a notably lower low-income population at 9.6 percent.

Figure 2-2: Transit Dependent Population Percentage



Land Use Profile

Identifying land uses and major trip generators in the study area complements the above demographic analysis by indicating where transit services may be most needed. Trip generators are key as they attract transit demand, including commonly frequented trip origin and destination points. Employment travel patterns reveal the commuting behaviors of residents and pinpoint areas with high demand for work-related trips. The following sections delve deeper into these categories to provide a more comprehensive overview.

Major Trip Generators

This profile displays the location of major trip generators in the Golden Crescent service area, which are common origins and destinations. Figures 2-3 and 2-4 illustrate the major trip generator locations. Trip origins consist of residential communities, multi-unit housing, etc., while common trip destinations include medical and educational facilities, human services agencies, shopping centers, and major employer locations in the study area. Key findings include:

- **Victoria** in Victoria County has the highest concentration of major trip generators in the Golden Crescent region. Major destinations in Victoria include University of Houston-Victoria, Victoria College, DeTar Hospital Navarro, DeTar Hospital North, Walmart Supercenter, H-E-B plus!, Target, DaVita Victoria Dialysis Center, Caterpillar Inc., Berry Global, Citizens Medical Center, and TISD, Incorporated.

- **Port Lavaca** in Calhoun County, **Gonzales** in Gonzales County, and **Cuero** in DeWitt County also host a significant concentration of trip generators with both cities home to all categories except for institutions of higher education. These counties have big box stores, healthcare facilities and employment centers.

- **Bay City** in Matagorda County and **Edna** in Jackson County are also notable hubs of trip generators within their respective counties.

    - Some of the major destinations in Bay City include Matagorda Regional Medical Center, H-E-B, Walmart Supercenter, Bay City Regional Dialysis Center, Bay City Public Library, and Matagorda Veterans' Services.

    - Some of the major destinations in Edna include Jackson County Hospital, H-E-B, DaVita Edna Dialysis Center, and Jackson County Senior Center.

External Trip Destinations

While this analysis was constrained to within Golden Crescent, it is important to note that residents of the region travel to other Texas cities such as Houston and San Antonio in order to access major trip generators such as universities and specialized medical care.

Figure 2-3: Major Trip Generators, Golden Crescent

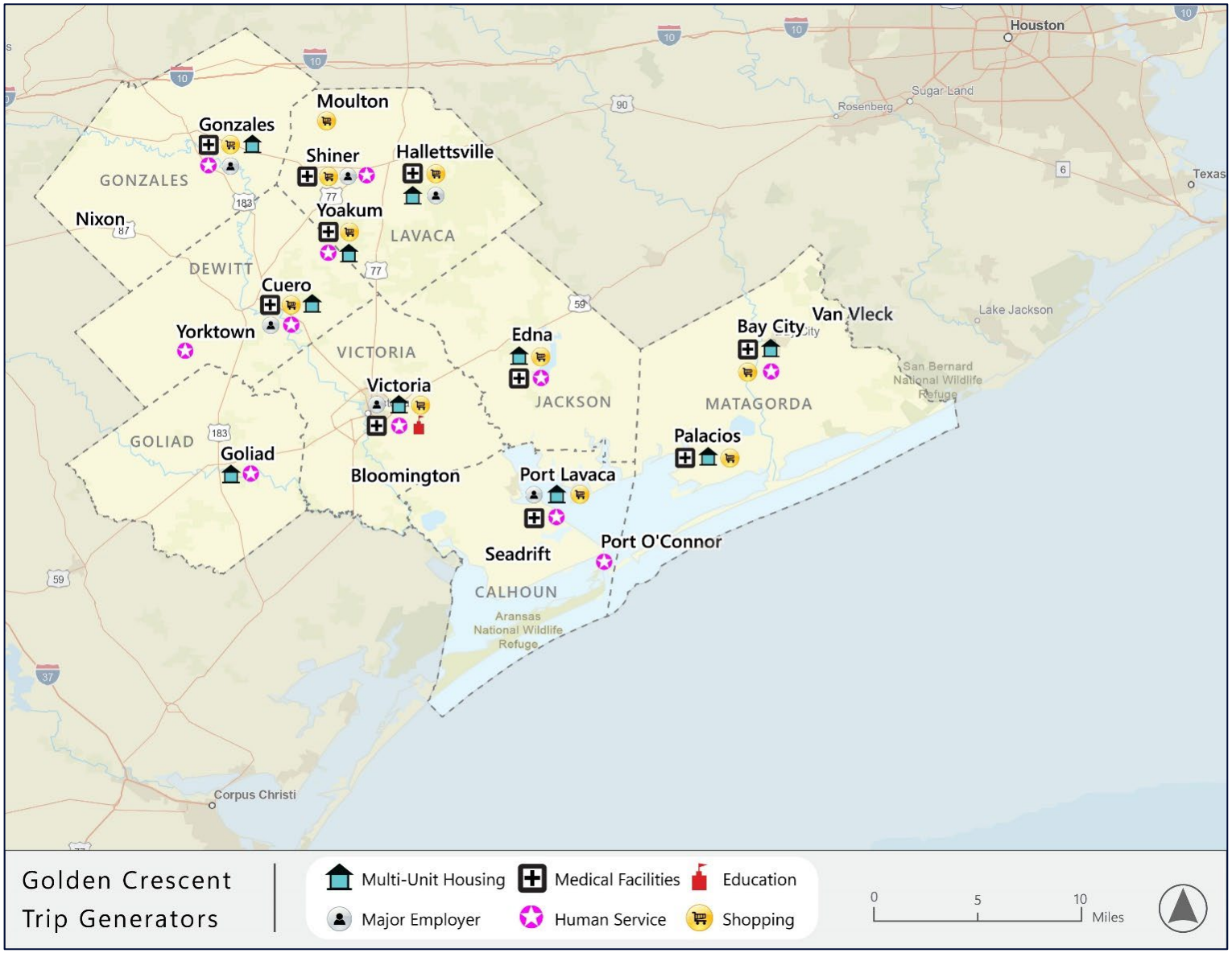
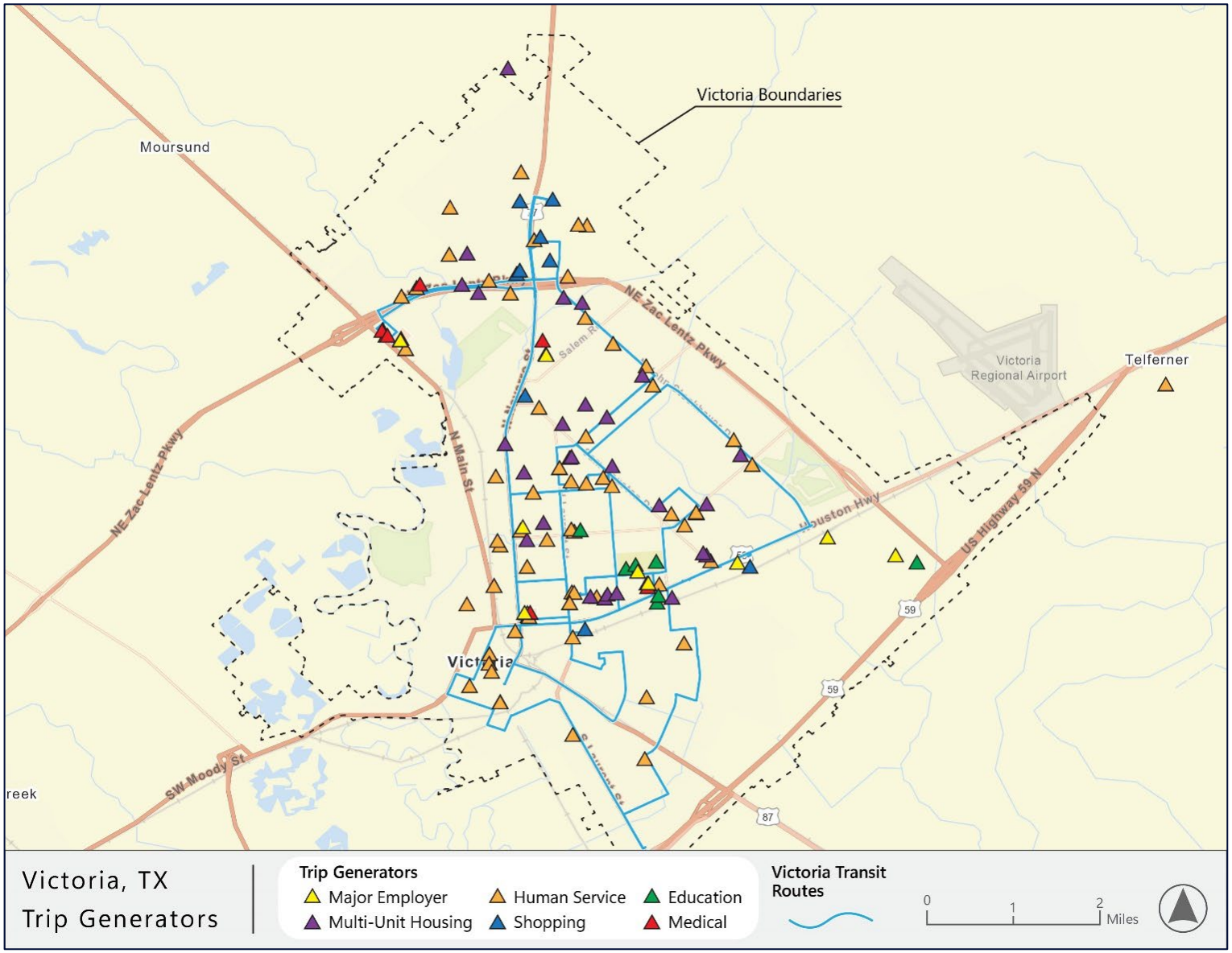


Figure 2-4: Major Trip Generators, Victoria



Employment Travel Patterns

In addition to considering the locations of major employers, it is also important to account for the commuting patterns of residents working inside and outside of the four counties in this study.

Based on the 2022 ACS five-year estimates:

- Only 25.5 percent of commuters travel outside their county of residence.
- 54.6 percent of Goliad County residents commute outside of the county, likely due to the county's proximity to Victoria. Over 80 percent of Calhoun and Victoria County residents commute within the county, as Port Lavaca is a major employment center.
- Across all counties, a significant majority of residents (80.5 percent) commute to work by driving alone, higher than the state average of 75.1 percent.
- Jackson County is notable for 19.1 percent of its residents carpooling to work, significantly higher than the region average of 11.1 percent.
- Victoria County is by far the most popular employment destination, with 20 percent of county residents commuting there for work. Houston, San Antonio, Austin, and Corpus Christi collectively, account for 17.3 percent of county residents' commuting destinations. Bay City, Port Lavaca, Cuero, Gonzales, and Yoakum all make the top 10 employment destinations, highlighting their positions as smaller employment hubs within their respective counties.

Review of Existing Services

The purpose of this section is to review and analyze the existing services in the Golden Crescent service area. Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission (GCRPC) and its subcontractors operate a rural transit program that provides RTRANSIT public transportation services in an eight-county service area including the counties of Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda, and Victoria. In addition to the rural transit program, GCRPC is the contract operator of Victoria Transit, a fixed route and complementary paratransit system for the City of Victoria. Note that for the detailed analysis of both RTRANSIT and Victoria Transit, refer to Technical Memorandum No. 2 in the Plan Appendix.

Existing Services

This section of the chapter summarizes the service provided by GCRPC. It will start with a description and analysis of Victoria Transit, followed by a county-by-county analysis of the RTRANSIT service. Details can be found in the Appendix of Technical Memorandum No. 2.

Victoria Transit

Victoria Transit operated four fixed routes (now three) using seven vehicles in the Victoria area on weekdays along with three separate weekend routes (Figure 2-5 and 2-6). The routes meet at the GCRPC headquarters in Victoria.

Victoria Transit's fixed route serves key areas to various destinations within the city limits of Victoria. The routes run approximately every half hour beginning at 7:00 a.m. and ending at 6:00 p.m., however, the service hours were recently cut to begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 5:00 p.m., which effectively excluded commuters from the service. The Gold Route was cut during the study. Fares for this service are $1.50 with a discounted rate of $0.75 for seniors, children and people with disabilities.

Most of the routes are of a loop nature requiring most riders to ride for one hour at a minimum, even if the destination is 10 minutes away. Transferring to a second vehicle increases the ride time by up to two hours for a local trip. That is the nature of loop routes – they suppress ridership as evidenced by Victoria Transit's ridership. Further, the Red Route is a linear route capturing about one-third of the system ridership. On this route – for the most part – if the initial trip is 10 minutes, the return is usually also 10 minutes—far more attractive to use than a one-hour roundtrip.

Victoria Transit suspended fares during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the system saw a dramatic increase in ridership during the months when no fare was charged. When charging a fare, the route averaged a very low three to six trips per hour. Without fares, the route saw months when the one-way trips per revenue hour went as high as 14.

Table 2-3 shows the system performance for each weekday route. Unlike most transit systems in Texas, Victoria Transit saw a significant increase in ridership during the fare-free Covid-19 pandemic. When the fares were reinstituted in 2023, ridership and system productivity dropped significantly.

Unfortunately, Table 2-3 does not reflect the current state of Victoria Transit ridership. Over the past six months, ridership has dropped precipitously to the point where none of the routes have acceptable productivity or ridership. Table 2-4 depicts each route's ridership over the past six months of data, showing productivity between 2.4 and 6.6 one-way trips per hour.

A limited version of the Green Route operates on weekends as well. The weekend Pink Route is a loop route that loops an area just to the north of the Transit Center. The Brown Route extends from the Mockingbird and Laurant stop to the Walmart on the north end of Victoria. Figure 2-5 depicts the Victoria Transit weekend route structure.

Table 2-3: Victoria Transit System Data

	Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Total Miles	Revenue Hours	Total Hours	Mileage (MPH)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
Brown	**2019-2020**	4,138	8,760	9,320	556	591	15.7	8.8
	2022-2023	5,611	8,436	9,006	545	568	15.5	10.3
	2023-2024	4,296	8,653	9,328	548	581	15.8	7.8
Pink	**2019-2020**	4,569	11,132	11,264	572	596	19.5	9.4
	2022-2023	6,516	10,649	10,774	549	567	19.4	11.9
	2023-2024	4,845	10,370	10,513	551	572	18.8	8.8
Teal	**2019-2020**	3,015	9,258	9,448	561	587	16.5	6.3
	2022-2023	3,682	8,452	8,728	549	565	15.4	6.7
	2023-2024	2,529	8,774	8,994	550	573	16.0	4.6
Blue	**2019-2020**	33,229	94,359	96,367	5,580	5,671	16.9	6.0
	2022-2023	50,142	94,015	98,194	5,570	5,728	16.9	9.0
	2023-2024	34,470	88,644	92,419	5,253	5,428	16.9	6.6
Green	**2019-2020**	48,940	89,291	91,796	5,593	5,787	16.0	8.8
	2022-2023	62,624	88,913	92,391	5,479	5,691	16.2	11.4
	2023-2024	40,252	82,595	86,622	5,233	5,462	15.8	7.7
Red	**2019-2020**	42,572	95,116	98,799	5,604	5,889	17.0	7.6
	2022-2023	61,648	91,209	95,351	5,470	5,690	16.7	11.3
	2023-2024	51,658	89,332	93,278	5,255	5,527	17.0	9.8
Gold	**2019-2020**	9,068	34,837	35,549	2,284	2,395	15.3	4.0
	2022-2023	14,101	34,362	35,285	2,253	2,343	15.3	6.3
	2023-2024	13,944	34,428	35,351	2,259	2,386	15.2	6.2
System	**2019-2020**	145,531	342,754	352,544	20,750	21,517	16.5	7.0
	2022-2023	204,324	336,036	349,729	20,415	21,151	16.5	10.0
	2023-2024	151,994	322,796	336,505	19,649	20,529	16.4	7.7

Table 2-4: Victoria Transit Recent Productivity

Route	Recent Productivity (One Way Trips Per Hour)
Red	6.6
Blue	4.8
Green	4.6
Gold	2.4
Systemwide Average	4.6

Figure 2-5: Victoria Transit Weekday Route Structure

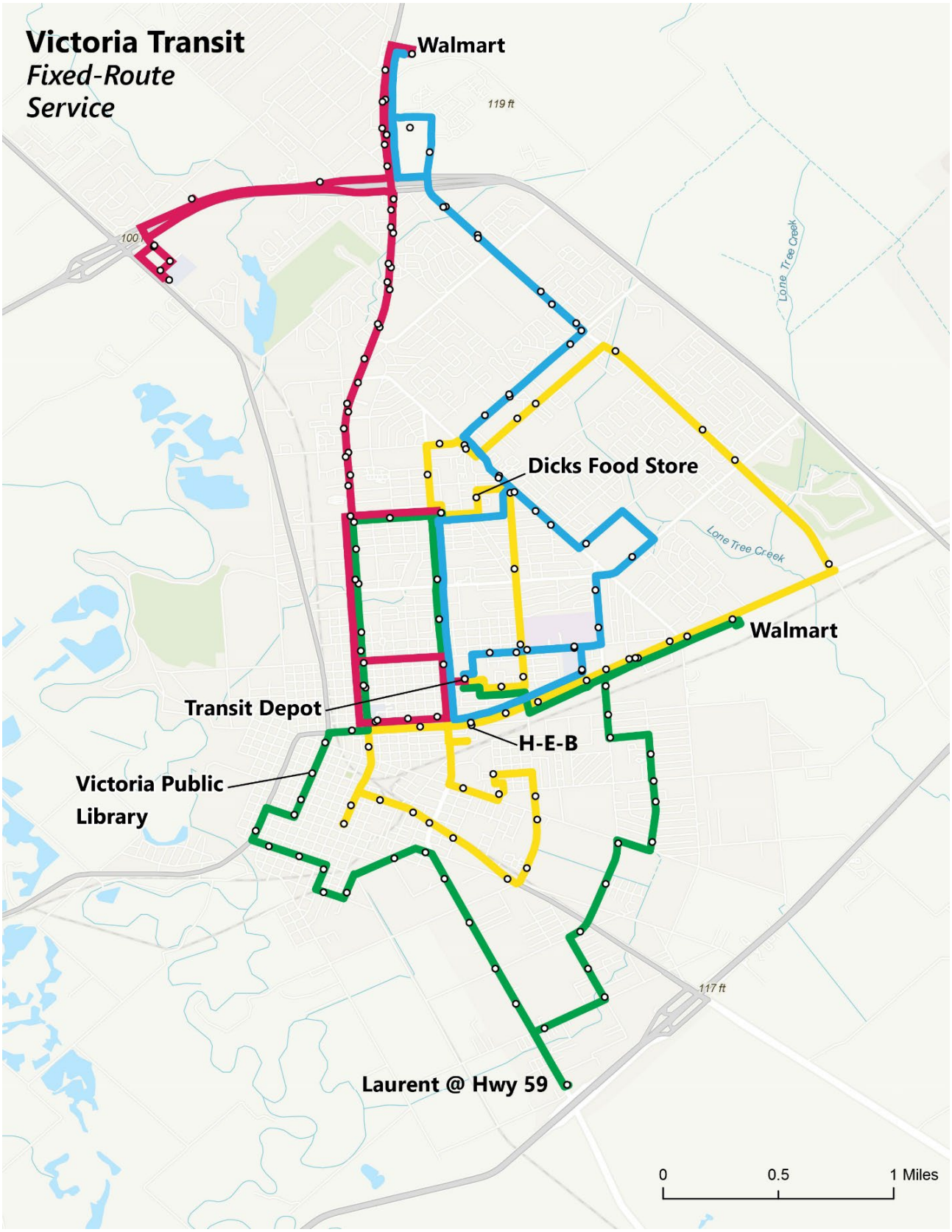
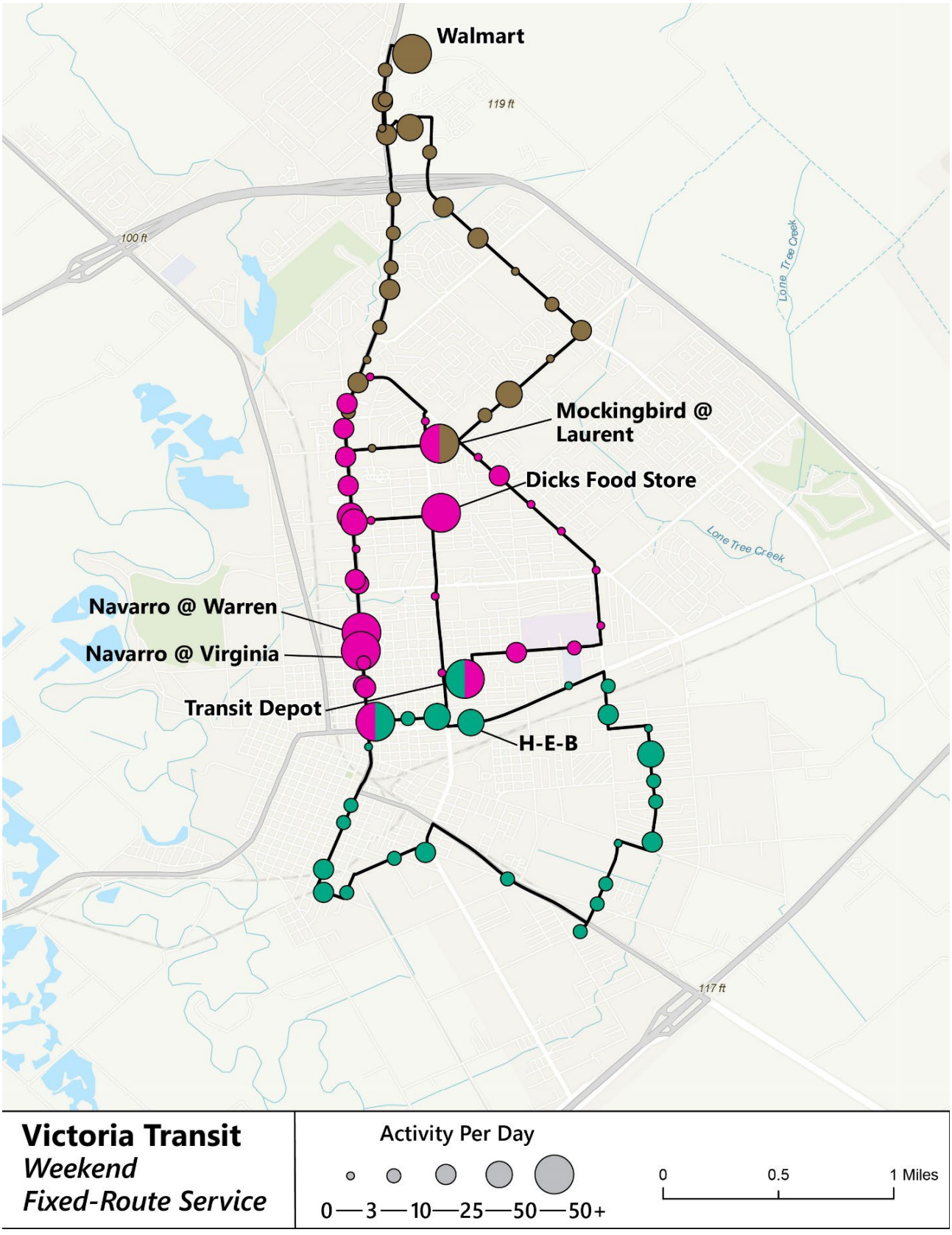


Figure 2-6: Victoria Transit Weekend Route Structure



Victoria Transit Route Profiles

Red Route

The Victoria Transit Red Route is a linear route that connects the Transit Depot at the current Golden Crescent RPC headquarters to the Walmart on the north end of town via the major commercial corridor in Victoria: Navarro Street (Figure 2-7). The route is a one-hour roundtrip route that runs on 30-minute headways as two vehicles serve the route throughout the day. This route includes a spur to the west, serving the medical complex at the north end of town. The major destinations for this route are:

- Medical Center.
- Walmart.
- HEB Plus.
- The busiest stops on the Red Route are the transfer locations at the transit depot, and Walmart.
- There are a few issues with this stop. First, the spur to the medical center takes close to 20 minutes to serve, and it is only served on the southbound portion of the route. This makes the Blue Route much more popular for passengers trying to get from the Walmart in the north end of Victoria to goods and services in the south. Additionally, there is a stop at the Medical Center on the street where vehicles are parked virtually every day, making that bus stop obsolete since the bus cannot safely stop and board or alight passengers there. The final stop at the Medical Center requires the bus to make a tight turnaround in a parking lot. This maneuver is difficult and makes the vehicle prone to low-speed incidents; it would be impossible to execute if larger vehicles were ever used.

Blue Route

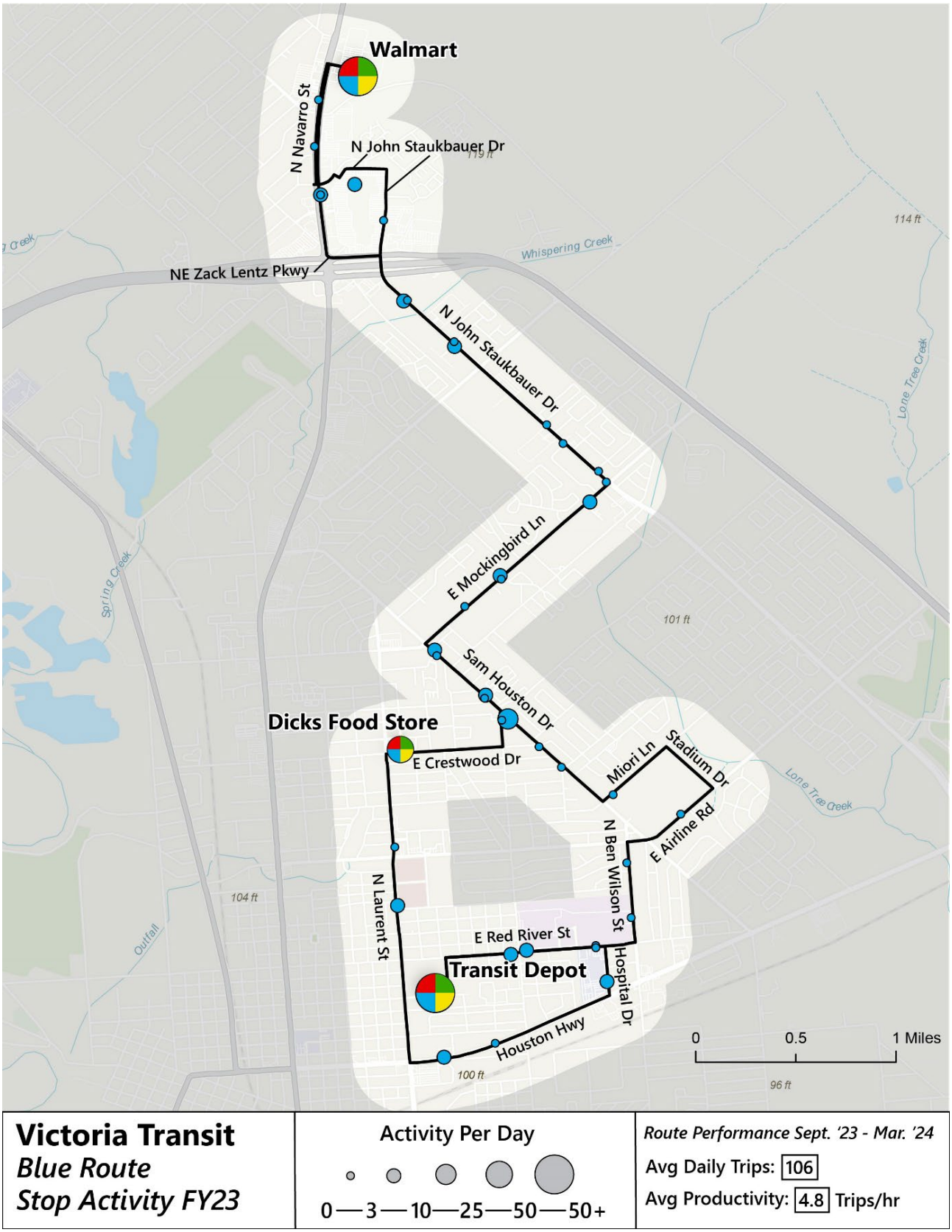
The Blue Route (much like the Red Route) connects the Transit Depot at the Golden Crescent RPC headquarters to the Walmart on the north end of town (Figure 2-8). The route is a one-hour roundtrip route that runs on 30-minute headways with two vehicles serving the route throughout the day. The route meanders along several different streets and consists of several smaller loops that can make it difficult to determine which portions of the route are served at what times. Major destinations along the route include:

- Transit Depot
- Hospital
- Victoria Mall
- University of Houston-Victoria

As shown, the route productivity is approximately five one-way trips per revenue hour. That number increased to 11 one-way trips per revenue hour when no fares were being charged.

Figure 2-7: Victoria Transit Red Route

Figure 2-8: Victoria Transit Blue Route



The most frequently used stops on the Blue Route are the two transfer points and a big box store: Transit Depot, Dick's Food Store and Walmart, with most other stops experiencing three or fewer boardings per day. The issues with the Blue Route stem from its numerous loops and meandering path, which reduce the appeal to customers. For example, the route's first loop occurs as it leaves the Transit Depot and heads north. A passenger leaving the Transit Depot will notice that seven to 10 minutes after departing the depot, the bus passes the depot again, which means that while traveling on the bus for close to 10 minutes, the customer has effectively traveled nowhere.

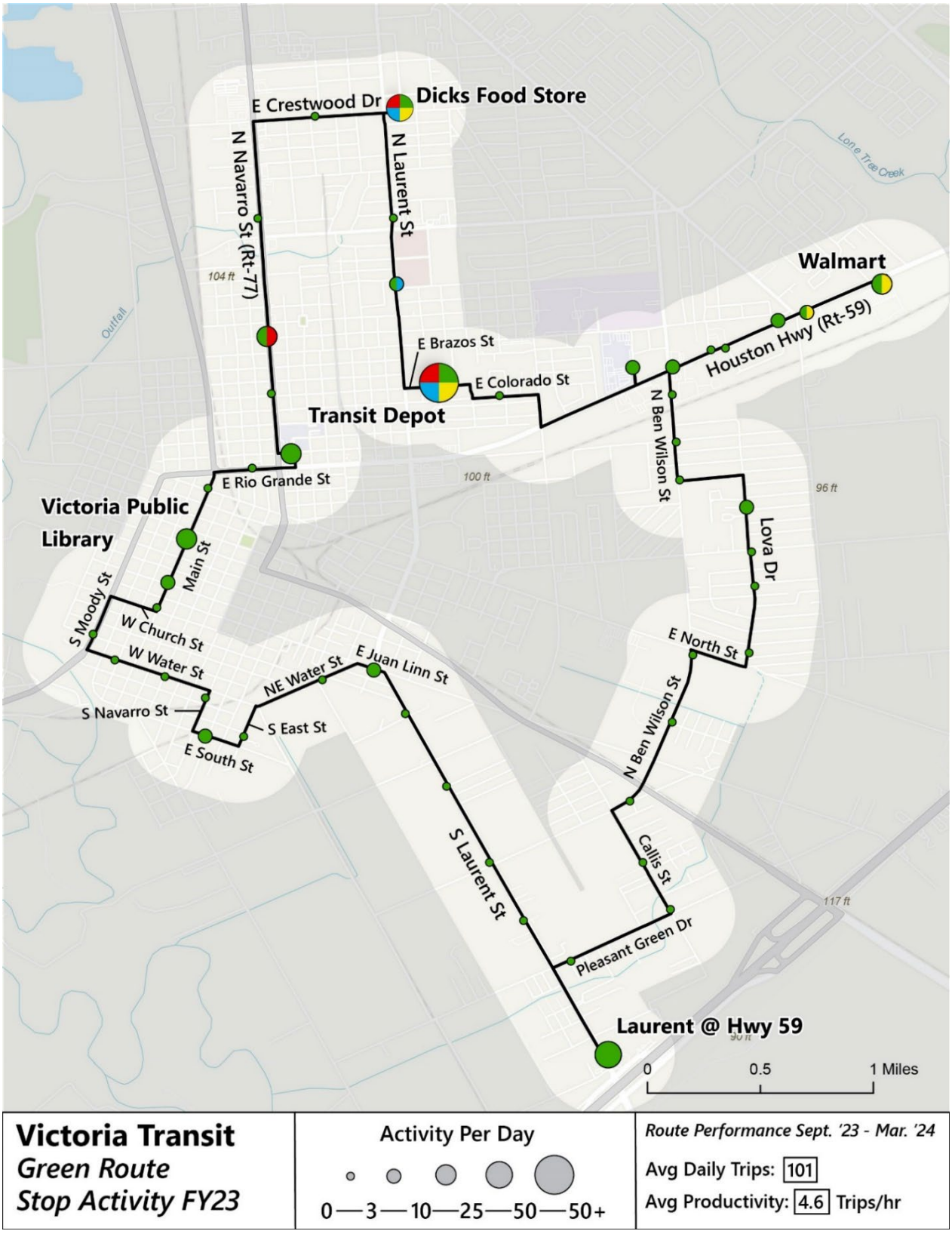
Green Route

The Victoria Transit Green Route is an hour-long loop route serving several major destinations in the southern portion of Victoria. The loop route connects the Transit Depot to downtown, lower income neighborhoods, the Greyhound Station and the Walmart on the eastern side of Victoria (Figure 2-9). The route runs on half-hour headways. Major destinations on the Green Route include:

- Downtown Victoria
- Victoria Public Library
- Subsidized Housing
- Greyhound Station
- Walmart
- Transit Depot

The Green Route is one of the most heavily used routes because it serves many of the major destinations and major trip origins in Victoria. The Green Route is the most used route in the Victoria Transit System. As with the other routes, productivity was significantly better when no fare was charged. At the peak of the fare-free portion of the service, the Green Route did up to 16 one-way trips per revenue hour. Since fares went back into place that number has dropped significantly. The Green Route now has a productivity of around four one-way trips per hour.

Figure 2-9: Victoria Transit Green Route



The most frequently-used stops on the Green Route are the Transit Depot, Walmart, the library, and the Greyhound stop. Issues with the Green Route include the long loop nature of the route. For example, if a customer wants to get from their neighborhood to the Walmart, their trip is 10 minutes. Their return trip is 50 minutes, which is not appropriate for grocery shopping. Another issue is that cars park at the downtown bus stops making some of the stops less safe for boarding and alighting, requiring the bus to block traffic to let customers on and off.

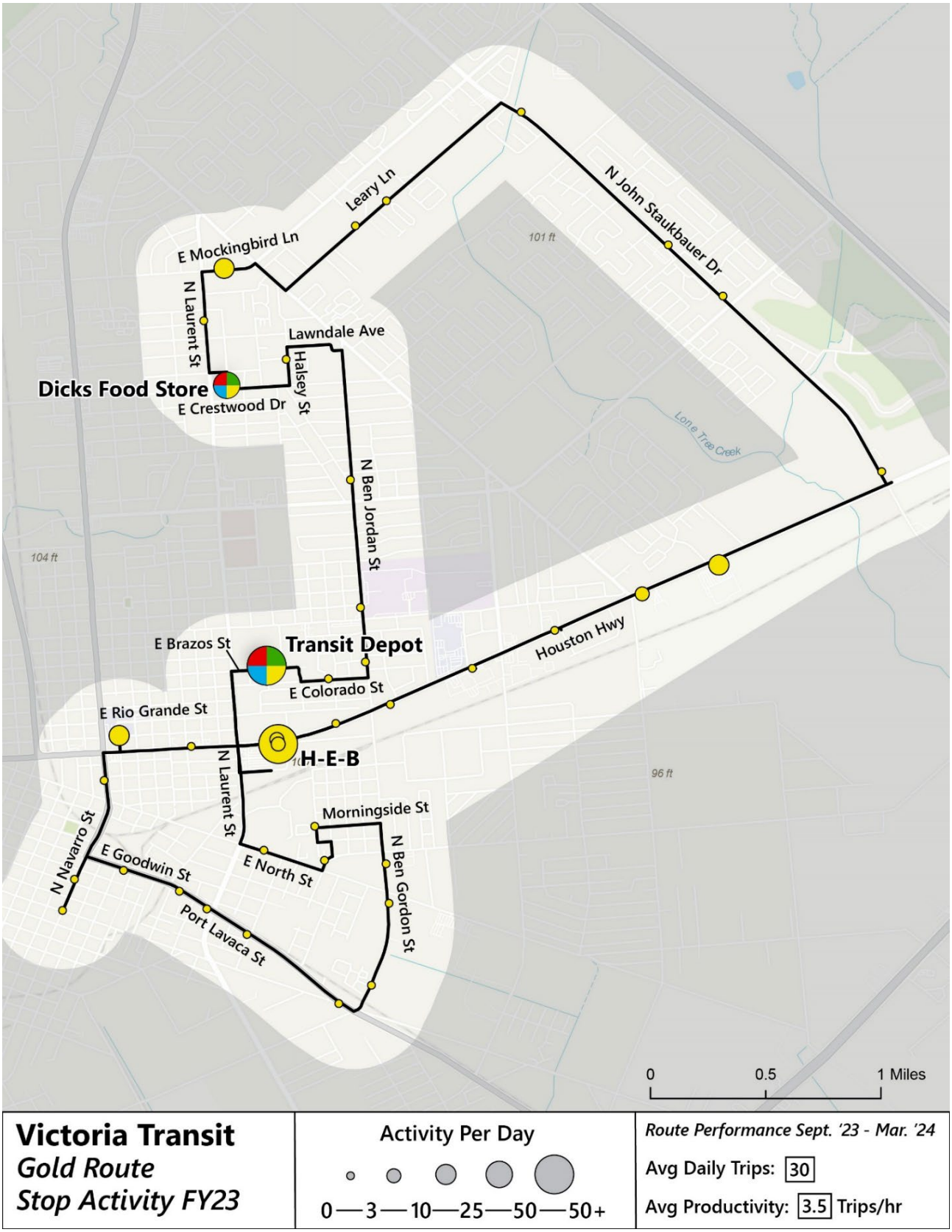
Gold Route

The Gold Route was a meandering figure eight loop route that connected the Transit Depot to the HEB, Walmart, along with some community and human services locations in the central portion of Victoria (Figure 2-10). Due to budget shortfalls and the low performance of this route, it was indefinitely discontinued by Victoria Transit in late spring 2024. The route was an hour-long loop that had one vehicle running on one-hour headways. Some of the major destinations served by the Gold Route included:

- Transit Depot
- Walmart
- HEB
- Food Stamp Office
- Community Center

As mentioned earlier, the Gold Route had the lowest ridership of any of the routes, which is why, due to the budget shortfalls, Victoria Transit selected it to be cut from service. Since reinstating fares, the ridership has shrunk to a consistent three one-way trips per revenue hour.

Figure 2-10: Victoria Transit Gold Route



The most frequently used stops on the Gold Route were the Transit Depot and the HEB. Other stops were not nearly as frequently used. Even the Walmart stop was underutilized, as it was serviced more effectively by the Green Route. There were several issues with the Gold Route. Most of these issues revolved around the confusing and looping figure eight service design. While the Gold Route served many important locations (such as the food stamp office and the community center), most people did not use the route to access these locations because it was too inconvenient.

The discontinuation of the Gold Route has resulted in the removal of the HEB stop from Victoria Transit service, which presents several significant issues. First, it is the major grocery shopping destination in Victoria and now has no consistent transit service throughout the day. Second, it is the major stop of the Golden Cresent commuter service, meaning that the people using this stop for the commuter service now have no access to local public transit at the stop.

Weekend Routes

The weekend routes consist of three routes: Brown, Pink and Teal that operate from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Saturday. The Brown Route covers the northern portion of the service area, the Pink Route serves the central part of Victoria, and the Teal Route is a truncated version of the weekday Green Route serving the southern portion of the service area (Figure 2-6). The major locations served by the Saturday Service include:

- Transit Depot
- HEB Plus
- HEB
- Walmart
- UHV
- Victoria Mall

Table 2-5 depicts the weekend route performance metrics over the last several years. As shown, weekend route productivity was around 10 one-way trips per revenue hour on average when no fares were being charged. Since fares were reimplemented productivity has dropped, but not as significantly as the weekday routes.

Table 2-5: Victoria Transit Weekend Route Performance

	Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Total Miles	Revenue Hours	Total Hours	Mileage (MPH)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
Brown	**2019-2020**	4,138	8,760	9,320	556	591	15.7	8.8
	2022-2023	5,611	8,436	9,006	545	568	15.5	10.3
	2023-2024	4,296	8,653	9,328	548	581	15.8	7.8
Pink	**2019-2020**	4,569	11,132	11,264	572	596	19.5	9.4
	2022-2023	6,516	10,649	10,774	549	567	19.4	11.9
	2023-2024	4,845	10,370	10,513	551	572	18.8	8.8
Teal	**2019-2020**	3,015	9,258	9,448	561	587	16.5	6.3
	2022-2023	3,682	8,452	8,728	549	565	15.4	6.7
	2023-2024	2,529	8,774	8,994	550	573	16	4.6

The most frequently used stops on the weekend routes are the Transit Depot, Family Dollar, Walmart and Dick's Food Store. Issues with the weekend routes revolve around the looping and meandering nature of each route. The Teal and Brown routes are loops which pose problems for customers that may not be far from their destination. In this case, customers may have a five-minute ride to their destination and a 30-minute or one-hour ride back home. The Pink Route is both a loop route and a confusing service, with several spurs and off-shoots that make it difficult for the customer to figure out where and when the bus is going to arrive.

Paratransit

Victoria Transit provides Paratransit Services Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. for qualified individuals with mobility impairments who are unable to use fixed-route service. The Paratransit Service is a demand-response advance reservation, shared-ride, address-to-address, curb-to-curb service. All vehicles are accessible.

An ADA Paratransit Eligibility Certification Form is used to determine eligibility for Victoria Transit's customers. Table 2-6 shows the annual Victoria Transit performance data. As shown, the average productivity is approximately two one-way trips per hour, and annual ridership is between 25,000 to 30,000 one-way trips per year. These are very high ridership numbers for paratransit.

Table 2-6: Victoria Transit Paratransit Performance Data

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	25,702	183,909	14,176	13.0	1.8
2022/2023	24,163	120,531	10,864	11.1	2.2
2023/2024	30,539	121,267	11,839	10.2	2.6
Average	26,801	141,902	12,293	11.5	2.2

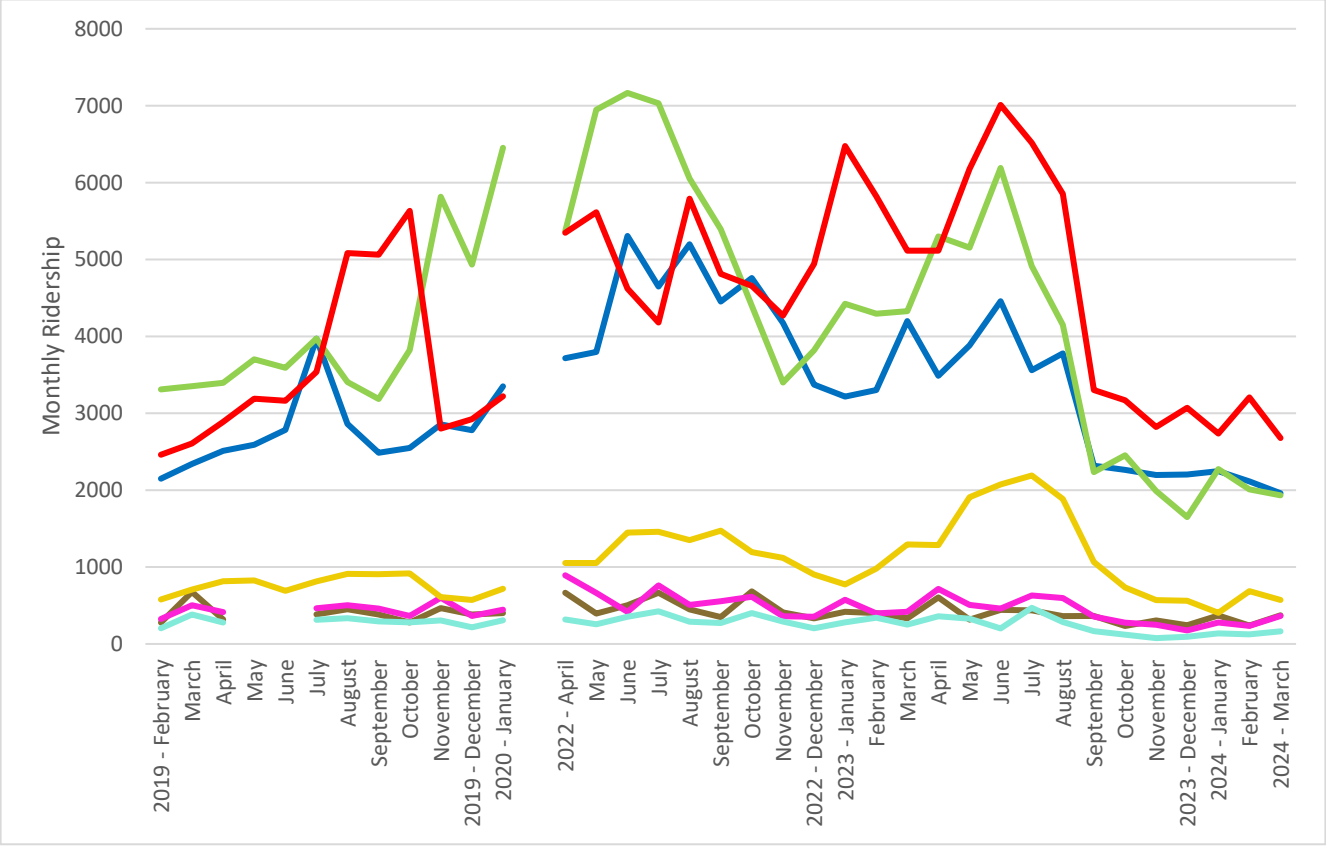
This is the equivalent of six full-time vehicles for ADA. These are very high service levels for a city the size of Victoria. The study team will look at the eligibility process to see if there are opportunities to move riders to fixed route.

Victoria Transit System Summary

Victoria Transit has had many interesting changes over the course of the last four years. The system was operating at a base level in 2019 and 2020, before the global pandemic hit. Unlike most transit systems Victoria Transit saw their ridership and productivity increase significantly. It is believed that this was due to the fact that the system went fare-free during the peak of the pandemic.

When Victoria Transit reinstituted fares in the fall of 2023, ridership dropped significantly, falling below even the pre-Covid levels. This trend is the opposite of nearly every peer system in the State of Texas. Those peer systems saw large ridership declines during the height of the pandemic and are seeing ridership return to pre-Covid levels in recent months. Ridership trends can be seen in Figure 2-11. The productivity trends have seen a steep decline since Victoria Transit reinstituted fares.

Figure 2-11: Victoria Transit System Ridership Trends



RTRANSIT

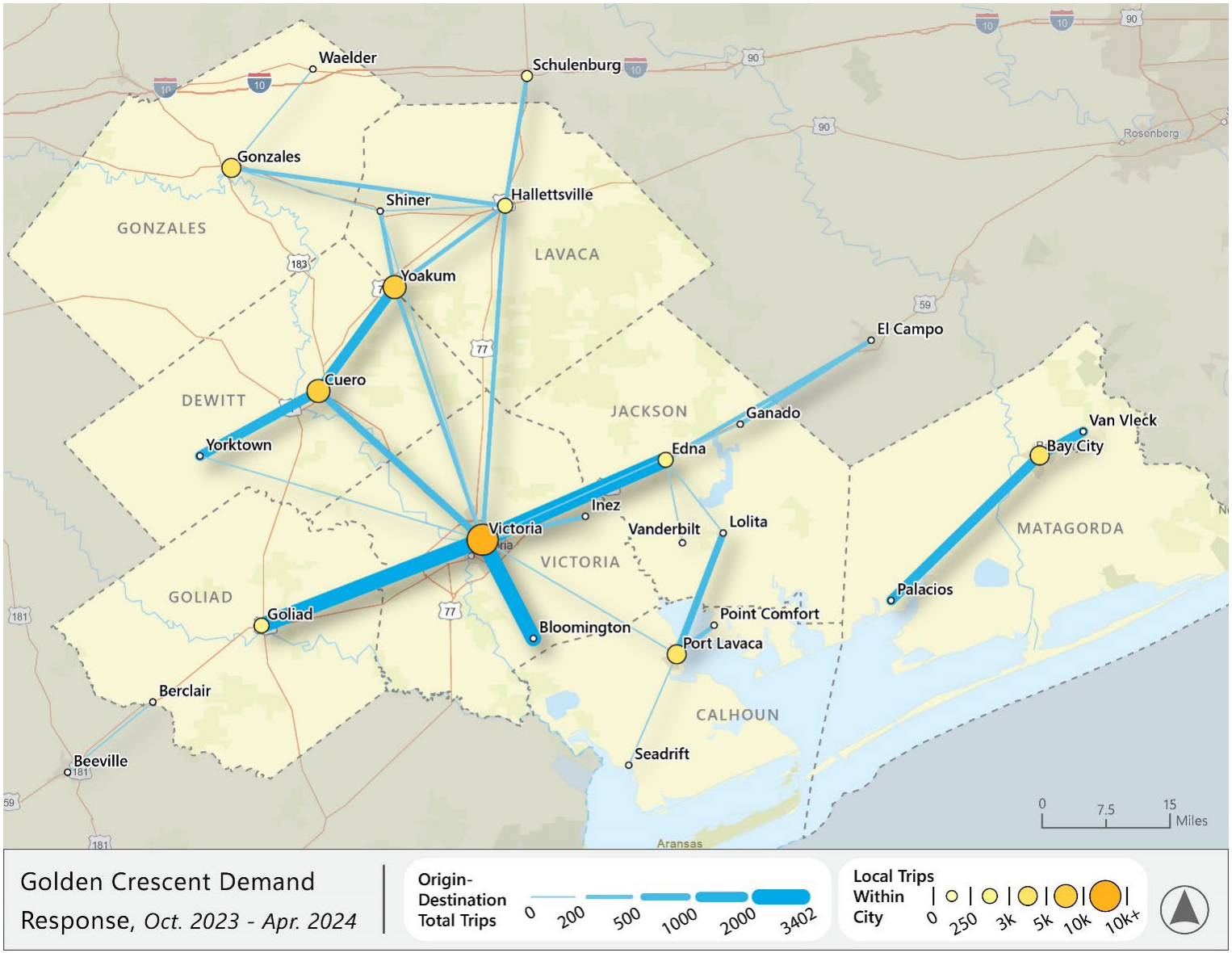
This section will examine rural transit services and operations in each county. RTRANSIT services are provided in eight counties: Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda, and Victoria. GCRPC directly operates the rural transit services in Victoria and DeWitt County. In the remaining six counties RTRANSIT uses senior citizen and other human services agencies as subcontractors to provide the service in each county. These services are collectively known as RTRANSIT. Each county operates independently without significant coordination of vehicles or services.

RTRANSIT operates curb-to-curb, day-in-advance, demand response services in the eight-county service area. Much of the rural service is focused on local transportation within the cities and counties. Figure 2-12 shows the intercounty trip patterns across the region. Victoria is the major destination in the region, with significant trips coming into the city from Goliad, Bloomington, Yoakum and Cuero.

RTRANSIT'S five subcontractors use Shah software for trip scheduling and reporting. This software was procured by GCRPC for each of the contractors. Each contractor uses other software or methods for maintenance tracking and fleet management.

There is a general desire from all rural transit providers to have increased coordination and communication with GCPRC. They would also benefit from additional training and better coordination with GCPRC on reporting and metrics. Compliance reviews are frequently the most common touchpoints that rural transit providers have with the GCPRC, and there is interest to have more regular interactions to build relationships.

Figure 2-12: Rural Transit Intercounty Trip Patterns



Calhoun County

Calhoun County rural transit is provided by Calhoun County Senior Citizens Association, Inc. in Port Lavaca, Texas. The county is the southernmost county in the GCRPC service area, and Port Lavaca is the largest city in Calhoun County. Peak ridership days include up to 45 trips, while slower days will see ridership numbers below 20 trips in a day. Standing service is offered to Victoria on Tuesdays, and they usually have about five passengers taking that trip. The majority of trips provided in Calhoun County are either within Port Lavaca, or bringing rural residents into Port Lavaca, to access shopping or medical services.

Vehicles are a pain point for this operation. There are five vehicles onsite, but only four of them are operational. The newer Dodge Promasters are working well, but the other vehicles are having regular issues with air conditioners, lift failures, and leaking doors. This frequently leads to trips being denied. Overall, they are coordinating with the community and other senior centers to help connect people when they do not have capacity.

Table 2-7 depicts the performance data for the Calhoun County rural transit service. As shown, rural transit productivity for this county is 1.6 to 1.9 one-way trips per revenue hour, with annual ridership averaging around 7,000 one-way trips annually.

Table 2-7: Calhoun County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	7,637	83,274	4,554	18.3	1.7
2022/2023	5,655	37,707	3,480	10.8	1.6
2023/2024	7,849	54,168	4,160	13.0	1.9
Average	7,047	58,383	4,064	14.4	1.7

DeWitt County

DeWitt County is to the northwest of Victoria in the RTRANSIT service area, with the largest town being Cuero located in the center of the county. DeWitt County rural transportation services are directly operated by GCRPC. According to GCRPC, approximately 60 percent of all rural transit trips originating in DeWitt County are for destinations within the county, mostly within Cuero. Ninety percent of all inter-county trips are for residents in DeWitt County going to Victoria, mostly for medical purposes.

RTRANSIT has three vehicles in DeWitt County and uses all of them in peak service. All vehicles are wheelchair accessible and require a CDL to operate. In the event that RTRANSIT needs a spare, they are able to cycle vehicles from Victoria County and Victoria Transit. Ideally RTRANSIT completes preventative maintenance on a vehicle during non-peak times so their fleet is not stretched too thin. Fleet Maintenance Pro is the software used to manage this process. There is currently a scheduled service from DeWitt County to Victoria daily, departing at 8:00 a.m. in DeWitt County and returning from Victoria at 2:00 p.m.

Dispatching for this county service is done from the GCRPC dispatch center in Victoria. GCRPC noted that finding and retaining CDL drivers has been a challenge. They also mentioned that scheduled service into Victoria from other locations such as Bloomington is desired.

Table 2-8 shows the performance metrics for the rural transit service in DeWitt County. Productivity is around two one-way trips per revenue mile for the last four years, with annual ridership just above 8,000 one-way trips per year.

Table 2-8: DeWitt County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	8,006	70,475	4,780	14.7	1.7
2022/2023	8,212	67,516	3,806	17.7	2.2
2023/2024	8,043	62,825	3,969	15.8	2.0
Average	8,087	66,939	4,185	16.0	1.9

Goliad County

Goliad County is one of the most rural and least populated counties in the RTRANSIT region. It is in the southwestern portion of the study area. The largest town and county seat is the City of Goliad. GCRPC contracts with Goliad County to operate Goliad County Rural Transit. According to the contractor approximately 85 percent of all intercounty trips go to Victoria particularly to Walmart. The others go into Beeville for medical and shopping trips. Many of the in-county trips are subscription trips to dialysis centers. If the system has capacity they allow for same day service local to the City of Goliad. Service typically runs from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Goliad County Rural Transit operates three peak vehicles, and they have no spare vehicles. Preventative maintenance is done at off peak times and scheduled with the maintenance contractor to ensure there are no trips impacted. Of the three vehicles, two are wheelchair accessible.

Issues facing Goliad County Rural Transit revolve around capacity. The agency would like to have an additional vehicle to be used as a spare and one additional driver. They would like to develop and implement more scheduled services in order to free up a vehicle to run same-day service in the City of Goliad.

Table 2-9 shows the performance data for Goliad County. Goliad County Rural Transit has had a productivity of 1.3 to 1.7 one-way trips per revenue hour over the last several years. They have averaged between 4,000 and 5,000 one-way trips annually.

Table 2-9: Goliad County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	4,757	62,755	3,646	17.2	1.3
2022/2023	3,838	55,858	2,911	19.2	1.3
2023/2024	5,131	53,808	2,944	18.3	1.7
Average	4,575	57,474	3,167	18.1	1.4

Gonzales County

Gonzales County is the most northern county on the RTRANSIT service area and the furthest away from Victoria in the region. The City of Gonzales is the largest town in the county and is the primary location served by public transit in the county. GCRPC contracts with the Gonzales County Senior Citizens Association to operate the rural transit service in Gonzales County. According to the contractor, 95 percent of all of the provider trips are within Gonzales County, with the other five percent going to Hallettsville, Seguin and Luling. The service requires a day-in advance reservation, and services are offered from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

In Gonzales, a total of four vehicles are in operation, with a peak vehicle load of three vehicles. Their newest vehicle, a 2023 Roadmaster, has had significant warranty issues, and the other two vans (2017 and 2014) are in need of replacement. This is a significant issue.

Gonzales desires more responsive coordination from GCRPC around vehicle procurements, training, and administrative requirements. Capacity is another issue in this county, and they would like to have more opportunities to provide longer-distance, out-of-county trips to places like Seguin, Luling and Bastrop.

Table 2-10 shows the performance data for Gonzales County. Gonzales County is the most productive county in the RTRANSIT rural transit service. This is in part due to the fact that most of their trips are local within Gonzales, making it easier to group trips, and the distances being traveled are not as long as in other counties.

Table 2-10: Gonzales County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	11,316	39,125	2,574	15.2	4.4
2022/2023	4,686	17,659	1,751	10.1	2.7
2023/2024	6,173	18,133	1,881	9.6	3.3
Average	7,392	24,972	2,069	12.1	3.6

Jackson County

Jackson County is directly to the east of Victoria. The largest town in the county is Edna. Jackson County rural transit service is operated by the non-profit Friends of Elder Citizens, Inc. This non-profit operates rural transit services for both Jackson and Matagorda Counties. Their Jackson County operations base is located at 501 North Wells Street in Edna, Texas. They serve the entire county with demand response service. They operate five vehicles in a mixed fleet that includes an accessible minivan, accessible Dodge Promasters, and larger cutaway vehicles. These vehicles are provided by GCPRC but are maintained by the county provider through local repair shops. The fleet is adequate to meet the needs of the current demand response service, but they could benefit from a more frequent fleet replacement program and better coordination with GCPRC on vehicle planning.

Most of their trips remain within the county of Jackson. They do have about six vehicle trips on average per month connecting into other counties. These trips typically connect passengers into Victoria for medical trips and job trips to the Lighthouse. Service operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and is scheduled and dispatched from their facility in Edna.

They operate on SHAH technology, and while they do not have issues using the software, they would benefit from additional training and better coordination with GCPRC on reporting and metrics. There is a general desire from all rural transit providers to have increased coordination and communication with GCPRC.

Table 2-11 depicts the performance data for the Jackson County rural transit service. As shown, rural transit productivity for this county is between a 0.7 low during the peak of the pandemic, to 1.3 one-way trips per revenue hour, with annual ridership averaging around 6,500 one-way trips annually in the last two years.

Table 2-11: Jackson County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	8,250	121,478	6,233	19.5	1.3
2022/2023	4,536	111,104	6,346	17.5	0.7
2023/2024	6,536	115,646	6,479	17.8	1.0
Average	6,441	116,076	6,353	18.3	1.0

Lavaca County

Lavaca County is in the northeastern portion of the study area and is home to Hallettsville, Yoakum, and Shiner, Texas. GCRPC contracts with Community Connections of Lavaca County to operate the rural transit service in Lavaca County. Lavaca County has eight vehicles in their service, however five of these vehicles are not wheelchair accessible. The five vehicles that are not accessible were purchased through local grants outside of TxDOT or FTA capital transit grants. The peak vehicle load in Lavaca County is five vehicles. Each day, three vehicles start in Hallettsville and two vehicles start in Yoakum. Lavaca County said that much of their service is within Lavaca County, and the majority of the intercounty trips are to Victoria (five or six trips a week). The service hours of operation are generally from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., for same-day and advanced-reservation rural demand-response transit.

Issues facing Lavaca County revolve around capacity. While they have eight vehicles, many of those are smaller and not accessible, making it hard to group trips. This is coupled with the fact that the larger accessible vehicles for people with disabilities are also making the grouping of trips difficult. The county would like to have more capacity to run scheduled regional service and same-day local service, but their current schedule is often booked two weeks out. Lavaca County would also like to see a more substantive coordination with GCPRC involving technical assistance, vehicle procurements and planning, which is above and beyond the relationship that today focuses mostly on compliance.

Table 2-12 shows the performance metrics for Lavaca County rural transit services. Productivity in Lavaca County remained consistent—around 1.5 one-way trips per revenue hour—through the pandemic. This, despite the fact that ridership ranged from 7,556 in 2019, to 14,365 in 2022.

Table 2-12: Lavaca County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	7,556	73,558	4,750	15.5	1.6
2022/2023	14,635	212,408	10,569	20.1	1.4
2023/2024	9,705	154,306	7,666	20.1	1.3
Average	10,632	146,757	7,661	19.2	1.4

Matagorda County

Matagorda County is the most southeastern county in the RTRANSIT service area and home to Bay City, the largest city in the county. Matagorda County rural transit service is operated by the non-profit Friends of Elder Citizens, Inc. This non-profit operates rural transit services for both Matagorda and Jackson Counties. Their Matagorda County operations base is located in Bay City, Texas, and they serve the entire county with demand response service. They operate five vehicles in a mixed fleet that includes accessible minivans, an accessible Dodge Promaster, and larger cutaway vehicles. These vehicles are provided by GCPRC, but are maintained by the county provider through local repair shops. The fleet is adequate to meet the needs of the current demand response service, but they could benefit from a more frequent fleet replacement program and better coordination with GCPRC on vehicle planning.

Most of their trips remain within the county of Matagorda, with typically less than five trips per month connecting into other counties. The service operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and is scheduled and dispatched from their facility in Bay City.

They operate on SHAH technology and while they do not have major concerns with the software, they would benefit from additional training and better coordination with GCPRC on reporting and metrics. There is a general desire from all rural transit providers to have increased coordination and communication with GCPRC.

Table 2-13 depicts the performance data for the Matagorda County rural transit service. As shown, rural transit productivity for this county is from a low peak of 1.1 during the peak of the pandemic, to 1.7 one-way trips per revenue hour. The annual ridership averaged between 7,528 and 10,000 one-way trips annually during the last four years.

Table 2-13: Matagorda County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	10,099	122,229	6,506	18.8	1.6
2022/2023	7,528	99,139	6,713	14.8	1.1
2023/2024	9,804	83,722	5,736	14.6	1.7
Average	9,144	101,697	6,319	16.1	1.4

Victoria County

Victoria County is in the center of the study area and home to the GCRPC headquarters in Victoria. Victoria County rural transit service is directly operated by GCRPC. Although the vast majority of the trips bring rural residents of the county into the City of Victoria, most of the out-of-county trips are long distance medical or Medicaid trips to San Antonio or Houston. The system averages approximately one long out-of-county trip per month, but has seen as many as six in one month.

GCRPC operates five total vehicles in the rural transit service in Victoria County, with a peak service of three vehicles. All vehicles in the county are wheelchair accessible and all require a CDL to operate.

GCRPC indicated that there is need for expanded regional scheduled service in the area. Additionally, a major issue for the rural service is the hiring and retention of drivers. Table 2-14 depicts the performance data for the rural services in Victoria County. Victoria County rural transit service has maintained a productivity around two one-way trips per hour over the last several years and has ridership of between 10,000 and 11,000 one-way trips per revenue hour annually over the same time period.

Table 2-14: Victoria County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	10,896	122,539	6,255	19.6	1.7
2022/2023	11,102	122,729	5,408	22.7	2.1
2023/2024	9,448	103,480	5,116	20.2	1.8
Average	10,482	116,249	5,593	20.8	1.9

Summary Rural Service

The analysis of the rural transit services in the Golden Crescent RPC service area highlighted several issues:

Vehicles – This is a critical safety issue. Many of the rural county contractors operate one hundred percent of their fleet during peak times. A zero percent spare ration makes it difficult to complete preventative maintenance without eliminating service or denying trips, though through effective scheduling and coordination with maintenance contractors, most of the counties seem to be accomplishing preventative maintenance without service disruptions. Subcontractors also indicated that their vehicles are old, hard to maintain, and in need of replacement. GCRPC should have a vehicle replacement plan in place as well as a maintenance manager to protect RTRANSIT'S capital investment. The lack of vehicles is clearly a safety issue and does create problems when breakdowns occur, as well as overall capacity issues in the provision of service.

Guidance and Technical Assistance – The rural contractors are in need on increased guidance and leadership from the lead agency related not only to compliance and vehicle performance, but also to increased assistance with training, funding and match, vehicle maintenance and replacement, service planning and coordination.

Operate as One Coordinated System – There is a high cost to operating separate services under the RTRANSIT umbrella. Most counties in the service area are operating as individual entities. There is a need for regional planning and coordination of services to increase efficiencies, reduce duplication and attain economies of scale. Staffing for both management and dispatchers becomes redundant (for example) when there are multiple dispatchers on duty at the same time (six or seven), when two to three are really all that should be needed in a coordinated system of RTRANSIT'S size.

Service Design – Day-in-advance demand response transit is a service design brought to prominence in the 1990s. In most cases this type of day-in-advance service is no longer necessary, as there are new designs that can provide same-day service and a higher quality ride for the same cost. Many counties have the ability to increase grouped trips through scheduled demand-response services and same-day-reservation local service.

Coordination – Many of the rural providers are providing daily or weekly service into Victoria, with some traveling through rural areas in Victoria and other counties. Coordinating service to reduce duplication can free up other vehicles to provide more service to more people.

Improve and Upgrade Technology – Golden Cresent and its rural contractors use Shah scheduling and reporting software. Effort needs to be made to be sure that contractors are up to date on all of the software capabilities and trained properly to use the technology. Integrating the software regionally will also be an advantage to all providers.

Chapter 3
Stakeholder Engagement

Introduction

This planning process had a limited stakeholder engagement aspect. This chapter summarizes some of the outreach efforts of recent transit planning projects in the region. In addition, the study team attended several meetings, rode buses, talked to transit customers, and interviewed stakeholders. This memo summarizes the findings of these events and meetings.

Coordinated Plan and Recent Transit Survey

In 2022, the GCRPC completed a regionally coordinated public transit and health and human services transportation plan. This plan consisted of several stakeholder engagement opportunities including public meetings, focus groups and surveys. GCRPC also conducted a transit rider survey. Some of the major take aways from these two efforts include:

- **Fares** - Fares are prohibitively high for many residents that need the service most. Riders would like to see the use of transfers and monthly passes. There needs to be further reduction in fares for older adults and people with disabilities. Students should ride fare free.
- **Service Times** - People would like to see hours extended later in the evening and earlier in the morning. Of note was weekend service expansion requests in the rural areas.
- **Marketing and Outreach** - Many stakeholders in the rural areas were not aware of the services that are available to the community. Better marketing and awareness are needed. Stakeholders would like to see more collaboration between transit services and local advocacy groups and human services agencies.
- **Bus Stop and Pedestrian Amenities** - While many of the stops have shelters in Victoria, some of the pedestrian infrastructure is lacking. A number of underutilized stops have full bus stop amenities, while other heavily used stops could benefit from additional amenities.
- **Service Design** – There are needs for scheduled service and increased transportation options for veterans. There is also a need for additional capacity in the rural areas to meet transit demand, and people request that Victoria Transit work harder toward providing better services for local residents (including route timing, route design, and on-time performance). Stakeholders would like to see more opportunities for on-demand and same-day services. Service does not work effectively to and from Victoria College.
- **Vehicles** - Stakeholders would like to see larger and more comfortable buses in Victoria.

Stakeholder Meetings

There were three stakeholder meetings that the project team attended as part of this project:

The Project Kick-Off Meeting – Attended by GCRPC Staff, Victoria MPO staff and board members, Gonzales County Judge, Victoria City Council members and the project team. This meeting was held in April 2024.

Victoria MPO MTP Meeting – Attended by Victoria community members, the MPO board, and members of the Victoria City Council. This meeting was held in June 2024.

GCRPC Staff Meeting - Attended by GCRPC management and staff, and the project team regarding budget shortfall. This meeting was in August 2024.

The issues raised in the project kick-off meeting revolved around the desire to see a more functional fixed-route transit service in Victoria that has more direct connections to major destinations for local residents. There was an expressed need to look at areas in town that are currently not served by the fixed route, including the Caterpillar facility and Riverside Park. There was an acknowledgement that there needs to be more substantial local funding for Victoria Transit.

Both the GCRPC staff meeting and the MPO meeting focused on the budgetary shortfall of Victoria Transit. MPO board members expressed serious concern that services were being cut due to lack of funding. GCRPC staff and management are currently engaged in trying to find ways to reduce costs that have the least negative impact on the community. This was the primary factor in discontinuing the Gold Route. This route was the least productive and most underutilized in the Victoria Transit system, despite being the lone route serving many major destinations including the southern HEB and the Community Center.

Stakeholder Interviews

As part of this planning process, the study team conducted several stakeholder interviews:

- Members of the Victoria MPO Board and City Council in June 2024
- Individual site visit interviews for each county contractor for rural transit services in June 2024
- The Director of the UHV transit program in July 2024
- Interview with GCRPC regarding rural services in DeWitt and Victoria County in July 2024

MPO and City Council Interview Summary

- Students should ride fare free.
- There is a need for additional local matching funds for Victoria Transit.
- Leaders would like to see changes at Victoria Transit that would improve service delivery and make it easier to increase local funding. It will be easier to allocate more funding for transit if services are improved.
- Leaders would like to see bus stops at Riverside Park and the low-income housing development (Enchanted Gardens) off Ben Jordan Road.
- There is significant concern regarding both the discontinuation of the Gold Route and the budget deficits at Victoria Transit.

County Operator Interview Summary

Calhoun County

- Explore opportunities for same day microtransit or dial-a-ride service.
- Additional vehicle is needed.
- Increased responsiveness to maintenance needs.
- Increased coordination and technical assistance with GCRPC.

Dewitt County

- Vehicles! DeWitt currently has a zero percent spare ratio, though coordination with Victoria Transit helps them maintain their vehicles without cutting service.
- Finding and retaining CDL drivers is a major need in DeWitt County.
- Coordinate with Gonzales County for trips into Victoria.

Goliad County

- Increased coordination and technical assistance from GCRPC.
- An additional vehicle and driver to expand capacity in the county, making same-day service in the town of Goliad available all day.
- The development of scheduled service to Victoria to assist in grouping trips and improving productivity.

Gonzales County

- Replacement of two vehicles at the end of their useful life.
- Additional vehicles and drivers to expand opportunities for out-of-county trips.
- Scheduled service to places such as Bastrop, Luling, Lockhart, Austin, Seguin, and New Braunfels to help group trips, increase productivity, and free up vehicles for other services.
- Same-day dial-a-ride or microtransit service in the City of Gonzales.

Jackson County

- Regularly scheduled service into Victoria.
- Same-day microtransit or dial-a-ride service in Edna.
- More frequent vehicle replacement.
- Coordinate with Matagorda County for trips into Victoria.

Lavaca County

- Increased coordination, guidance, technical assistance, and responsiveness from GCRPC.
- Coordination between the multiple capital grant opportunities.
- Additional accessible vehicles to meet demand for passengers with mobility devices and to increase capacity and opportunities for grouping trips.
- Same-day dial-a-ride or microtransit service in Hallettsville.
- Development of scheduled service into Victoria, Yokum, and Cuero to free up capacity and improve productivity.

Matagorda County

- Scheduled service for out-of-county trips to improve productivity through the grouping of trips.
- Explore opportunities for same-day service in Bay City.
- Marginal increase in staffing and fleet size (one vehicle and one staff).

Victoria County

- Hiring and retaining CDL drivers.
- Increased scheduled service connecting rural areas to Victoria and long distance medical trips to San Antonio and Houston.

University of Houston–Victoria Transit Interview Summary

- UHV's primary goal for their transit operation is to connect the dorms to the educational facilities on campus.
- There is a significant need to connect campus and students to essential goods and services in Victoria, particularly HEB, Target, downtown, Walmart, and medical facilities.
- There are many low income and first-generation college students without a vehicle and a high need for mobility services.
- UHV is willing to enter into discussions with Victoria Transit on coordination of services and exploring ways for students to ride the service fare free.
- There is a significant need for improved pedestrian infrastructure in Victoria.
- UHV wants to get the university and students more engaged with the community and to explore ways to foster stronger relationships with Victoria Transit.

Field Observations and Transit Customer Interviews

In June 2024, the project team conducted field observations in Victoria by riding each route and talking with transit customers and vehicle operators. Comments and observations are summarized below:

- Routes take too long and deviate too much. For example, customers leaving the transfer center on the Blue Route were frustrated that 10 minutes after departing the transfer center the bus was driving past the transfer center once again. The portion of the Red Route serving the medical center is frustrating to passengers trying to access the busiest commercial corridor in Victoria, and this route off-shoot adds several minutes to the route.
- Passengers believe the fares are too expensive. Many people stopped riding when fares were reinstituted.
- Customers would like to see larger, heavy-duty buses that have a smoother ride, with less rattling.
- The transfer policy is confusing to customers. Transfers should be available at any shared stop.

Chapter 4
Needs Assessment

Introduction

This chapter builds off the previous chapters/technical memoranda and details the public transit needs in the RTRANSIT region. The previous document outlined the concerns, issues and commendations expressed by regional transit stakeholders. The information presented in the previous chapter shows that regional transit stakeholders want to see: more capacity and coordination in the rural areas, a streamlined and more effective service in Victoria, and sustainability for the transit services in the region.

The focus of this memorandum is to detail the needs from financial, organizational, coordination, and operational standpoints.

Needs

The Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission (GCRPC) RTRANSIT service encompasses an eight-county region, including Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda and Victoria counties. GCRPC provides small-urban transit through Victoria Transit within the city. The GCRPC also operates both demand response rural transit through RTRANSIT and commuter service to the Port Lavaca area.

As detailed in Technical Memorandum No. 2, existing services in Victoria are being reduced due to budget shortfalls. Productivity of the Victoria Transit service has fluctuated considerably over the last four years with the onset of the pandemic, the system going fare-free, the subsequent reinstitution of fares, and the elimination of the Gold Route. Ridership and productivity in the last several months have hit all-time lows for Victoria Transit, particularly since fares were reinstituted. Rural services on average have a productivity of 1.5 to 2 one-way trips per revenue hour.

This section uses data from the stakeholder engagement, previous planning efforts, and *Technical Memorandum No. 2* to review the needs of the RTRANSIT Region and the City of Victoria.

Financial Needs in Victoria

Victoria Transit has seen significant budget shortfalls in 2024, and those are projected to continue into 2025. The system eliminated the Gold Route, the route with the lowest productivity, in an effort to cut costs and is considering eliminating early morning and evening weekday hours of operation to further save costs. This will likely have drastic impacts on ridership, as commuter needs will not be addressed.

The federal and state grant funding formulas take ridership into consideration in determining funding levels each agency is allocated, so this effort to reduce costs will likely result in a further loss of revenue. Table 4-1 depicts the current financial situation for Victoria Transit. It should be noted that public hearings should be held in the event of any proposed changes or cuts in service.

Table 4-1: Victoria Transit Budget Deficit

	2024	2025
Expenses (Projected for 2025)	$2,742,999	$2,587,291
Federal Revenue	$1,495,878	$1,402,684
Match Revenue	$777,980	$756,106
Total Revenue	$2,273,858	$2,158,790
Deficit	**$469,141**	**$428,501**

As shown, for the years 2024 and what is projected for 2025, Victoria Transit has a $400K deficit for each year. For 2025, Victoria Transit needs to reduce costs or increase revenue by $428,501 in order to maintain its current service levels.

Table 4-2 depicts the revenue hour deficit for Victoria Transit. As shown, the system is currently providing approximately 5,500 hours beyond the funding available to them. The largest need for Victoria Transit is to redesign the service so that the fixed-route system provides the same basic geographic coverage, improves ridership with more direct connections for passengers, and operates at approximately 5,000 fewer revenue hours annually (at $81 per revenue hour). Another accompanying need to the pursuit of new sources of revenue to support Victoria Transit service. This need can be met through a thoughtful redesign of the routes in Victoria.

Table 4-1: Victoria Transit Revenue Hour Deficit

	2024	2025
Projected Revenue Hours	21,517	19,649
Revenue Hours Funded	15,779	14,359
Revenue Hour Deficit	**5,738**	**5,290**

Additionally, Victoria Transit needs to find additional sources of revenue for operations. Establishing a well-marketed and targeted sponsorship program can help increase revenue from public, private and non-profit sources, and help close the deficit gap within the system's budget. As noted earlier, operational grants factor ridership into the formula that determines how much funding the agency receives. If drops in ridership due to the reimplementation of fares result in lower grant awards and lower fare box revenue, fare-free service may be more advantageous to the customers and agency alike.

Victoria Transit Service Needs

As noted previously, the Victoria Transit ridership has dropped significantly since reinstating the pre-pandemic fares. Fares are not the only reason for low ridership, however. Service design is exacerbating productivity issues in Victoria. Figure 4-1 shows the current Victoria Transit route structure, including the eliminated Gold Route. The current service design is negatively affected by complex routes, a transfer location that is not a major destination, and long one-way looping routes that diverge from major arterials. The design, coupled with the abrupt disruption of service due to the elimination of the Gold Line, and the potential for the elimination of commuter service hours, creates a system that is unattractive and unreliable for current and potential transit customers. Victoria Transit needs a fixed-route service design that aims—at a minimum—to do the following:

- **Avoid the Loopers** – Long (over 30 minutes) one-way loop routes kill ridership. Out and back is the normal form of fixed-route transit. If there is a stop on one side of the street, there should be a stop on the other side (in most cases). Ride time on long loop routes is almost always excessive. Loop routes do not pass the ice cream test—10 minutes to get to the store, but 50 minutes to get home.

- **Effective Service Hours** – *When* the service is provided is as important as *where* the service goes. For in town service, weekday schedules should operate between 6:30 or 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. at a minimum. Saturday service typically generates half the ridership of weekday service, and Sunday service usually only produces a third.

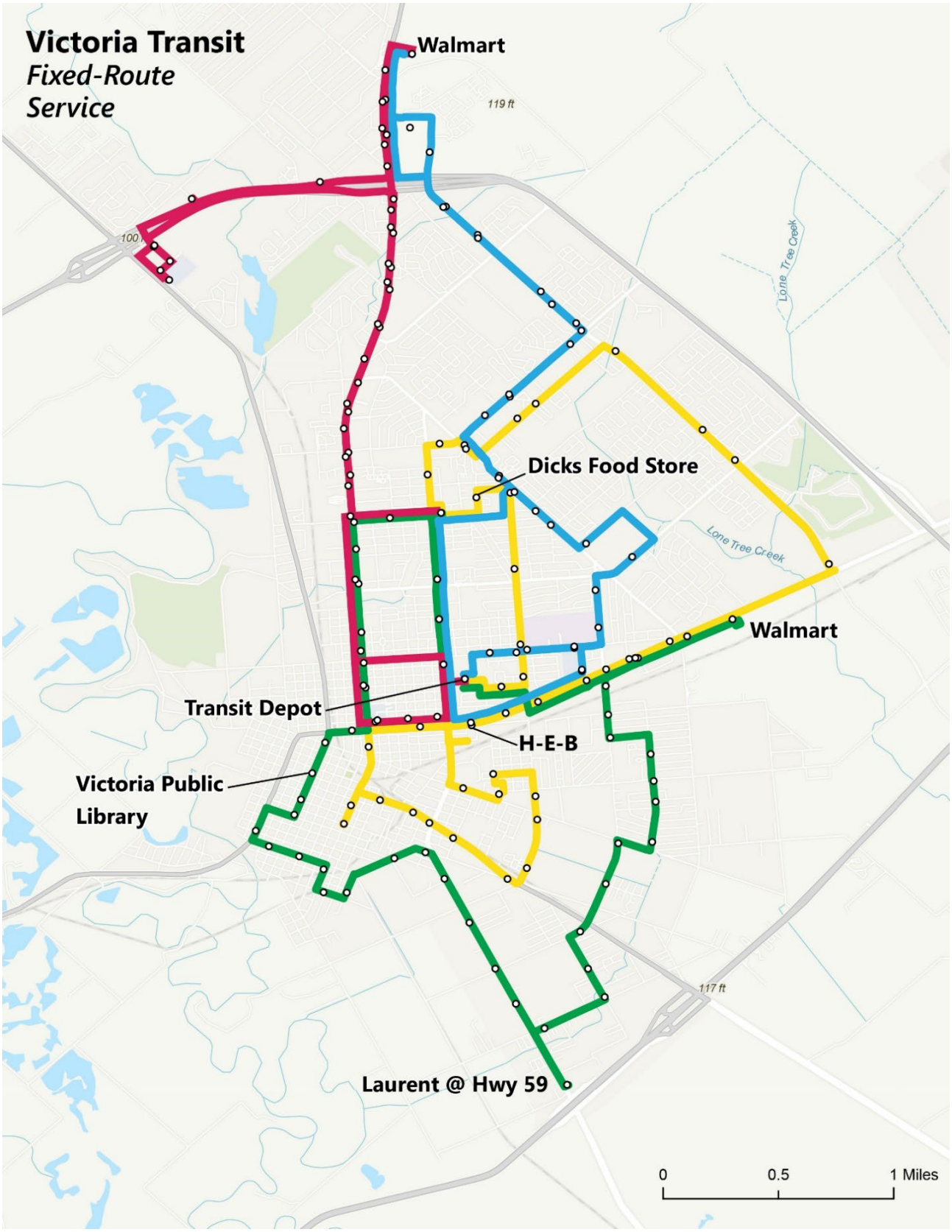
1. **Proper Transfer Locations** – Major transfer points should be at major trip generators such as: big box stores, downtown hubs, or at a mall with proper access. This will reduce the number of transfers and decrease travel time. This strategy is detailed in the next section.

- **Balance Frequency and Coverage** – Frequency is the time between buses going in the same direction on the same route. Going from a frequency of an hour to ½ hour is great, but it doubles the cost. Service elasticities tell us that when service is doubled ridership will probably increase about 50 percent. While coverage is not good for ridership, as some parts of the service area will never be productive, equity requires consideration. The key here is to put the best service design in place for each part of the service area.

- **Consistent Service** – "Every weekday without fail, every time without fail." Customers must have service every day (with exceptions for weather or other disaster). If they cannot count on the bus showing up, then they will only ride if desperate. The bus should pass by the same location, in the same direction, at the same time every hour (or half hour).

- **Adress Cost Concerns** – Victoria Transit needs a fixed-route service that can cover the same basic geographic area, operate during the normal transit operating hours (no less than 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.), and does it with about 5,000 fewer annual service hours than what is currently being provided.

Figure 4-1: Victoria Transit Route Structure



Transfer Center Needs

The current transfer center for Victoria Transit is at an administrative building for a regional government entity. This location has very little value as a destination to the typical transit rider in Victoria. Any system change in Victoria should incorporate a transfer center that is a major destination for transit riders. The proper placement of a transfer center will minimize bus mileage and travel time for the buses and customers, reduce transfers, and provide better service area coverage.

Wherever the transfer point is located, it should meet many of the critical locational elements described as follows:

- **Major Destinations** – When the transfer center is at a major destination, it reduces the number of transfers required for passengers. This reduces the time spent on the bus and in turn can improve ridership. Locations such as downtown, a large mall, or big box stores are typical, with most transfer centers being in the downtown area.

- **Excellent Bus Access** – Minimal time loss resulting from entry to the transfer facility is important to customers and the reach of the service. This is particularly important for intercity and regional routes that should stay close to major roads traveled.

1. **Safe and Inviting Location** – The transfer facility should be located in a well-lit location where people have no concerns about their safety.

- **Accessible/Safe Pathways** – Clear access that avoids inaccessible pathways and parking lots is critical. Pedestrian access should be inclusive for everyone and feature appropriately protected crosswalks to ensure safety. Bike access should also be protected with bike securement at both major stops and the transfer station.

2. **Adequate Space for Future Expansion** – The space must accommodate all buses that may be on-site at one time, now and for the next 10-20 years. This will include internal service as well as other providers - both public and private. Space should also be included for passenger auto access to drop off customers, commonly called "Kiss and Ride" access.

- **Centrally Located** – Where geographically feasible, the buses should be able to access the facility from a variety of roads and not have multiple routes traveling on the same roads.

3. **Partnership Potential** – There are other less tangible factors at play from time to time. In this case there may be opportunities for public/private partnerships and private funding at some locations, such as big box stores, the mall or a medical center. Furthermore, some locations lend themselves to leasing retail or office space

Summary Victoria Transit

Victoria Transit has these primary needs:

- **Funding and Budget** – Victoria Transit is currently operating at a deficit of approximately $450,000 a year, or approximately 5,500 revenue hours a year. The system needs to find a way to reduce costs without sacrificing service to transit customers in the community. In addition, Victoria Transit needs to find new sources of revenue.

- **Service Design** – Victoria Transit needs a fixed-route service design change to meet the mobility needs of Victoria residents more effectively and at a lower cost.

- **New Transfer Location** – Victoria Transit needs a new transfer center at a location that is suitable for transit vehicles and is also a place that customers would like to go.

- **Medium Duty Buses** – Victoria Transit operates cutaway buses that do not last long in regular service and produce an uncomfortable ride. Medium-duty buses should be the focus of future bus purchases.

Rural Transit Needs

There are a variety of rural transit needs in the RTRANSIT region. This section will assess the rural transit needs for the region as a whole, as well as each individual county, looking at both coordination and service needs.

Coordination and Technical Assistance

The RTRANSIT region serves a total of eight counties with rural transit service. DeWitt and Victoria County have rural transportation services directly operated by GCRPC. The remaining six counties have rural transit service that is provided by individual county human service providers who are contracted with GCRPC to provide rural transit service for residents within each county. During the stakeholder engagement phase of this planning effort, the project team conducted site visits to each county operator to discuss needs in their organizations and communities. Each of the six counties that contract with GCRPC to provide rural transit service noted a desire to strengthen coordination with the lead agency. The ultimate desire is to move beyond a traditional oversight relationship and foster a partnership context where each agency feels supported and capable.

Improved coordination is a need that was articulated by each agency including GCRPC. These coordination efforts should include at a minimum:

- **Technical Assistance** – GCRPC should continue to take the lead on coordinated training and vehicle procurements through state and federal capital grant programs. In addition, GCRPC can help coordinate procurements in concert with other grant opportunities that may exist for individual counties, maintenance issues and technical assistance. GCRPC should make sure that its contractors are aware of service and reporting requirements and must further host training for its providers if requirements are not met. In addition, GCRPC can help improve awareness of service and reporting requirements among each provider through transit industry informational resources readily available. Examples include TxDOT, TTA and RTAP meetings and webinars; GCRPC should especially identify such resources that directly address any specific issues affecting a particular county or the region as a whole.

- **Operate Service as One Network** – While each individual rural operator and contractor desires to be autonomous and to continue to provide excellent transportation service through their agency efforts, the region needs more service coordination to operate as one regional entity from a customer perspective. This includes coordinating with neighboring counties to group trips on a through trip to Victoria, or out of the region for medical trips.

- **Procurement** – GCRPC is the lead agency for federal and state capital grant opportunity procurements. Some of the counties in the region have local grant opportunities for vehicle procurements. These local funds have typically been used to buy vehicles for transit service that are not ADA accessible. Combining these grant efforts may result in increased capacity and more accessible vehicles on the road in the region.

- **Training** – GCRPC should look to build upon their transit training programs to assist their contractors in areas such as vehicle operations, passenger assistance and sensitivity, reporting, FTA and TxDOT compliance, and non-emergency medical transportation.

- **Maintenance and Fleet Management** – Many of the counties have vehicles that are no longer operational and need assistance in decommissioning the vehicles and replacing the buses. Opportunities to explore regional maintenance contracts or assistance in maintenance, particularly repairs, are an expressed need from rural transit contractors.

Vehicles

During the stakeholder engagement phase, vehicles were noted as an issue in the rural areas. One major issue facing Goliad and Dewitt is the lack of spare vehicles in peak service. This problem makes scheduling preventative maintenance exceedingly difficult.

Lavaca Couty has several vehicles that they were able to procure through a local grant, but all the vehicles purchased are smaller sedans or SUVs, and none of them are accessible for a mobility device. The two larger accessible vehicles procured through coordination with GCRPC often take single passenger trips with customers who require an accessible vehicle, and the other remaining vehicles are too small to effectively group trips. GCRPC should explore opportunities to combine grant efforts to increase the accessible fleet size in Lavaca County.

Goliad, Calhoun, Gonzales and Lavaca County all have vehicles at the end of their useful life, some completely out of service. These vehicles need to be officially decommissioned and replaced.

Each county provider as well as GCRPC noted that they would like to increase their capacity from a vehicle standpoint. Each county would also like to hire an additional driver to increase their ability to meet the demands for transit service in their community.

Rural Service Needs

GCRPC and its rural contractors have been creative in meeting the transit demand for county residents within the region. Understanding the financial, capacity and operational constraints of rural transit, service recommendations must be carefully thought out. The essential question is, how can we do more without increasing costs?

The rural services in the region need to find ways to improve in grouping trips and be more responsive to local transit needs. There are two primary ways to accomplish this:

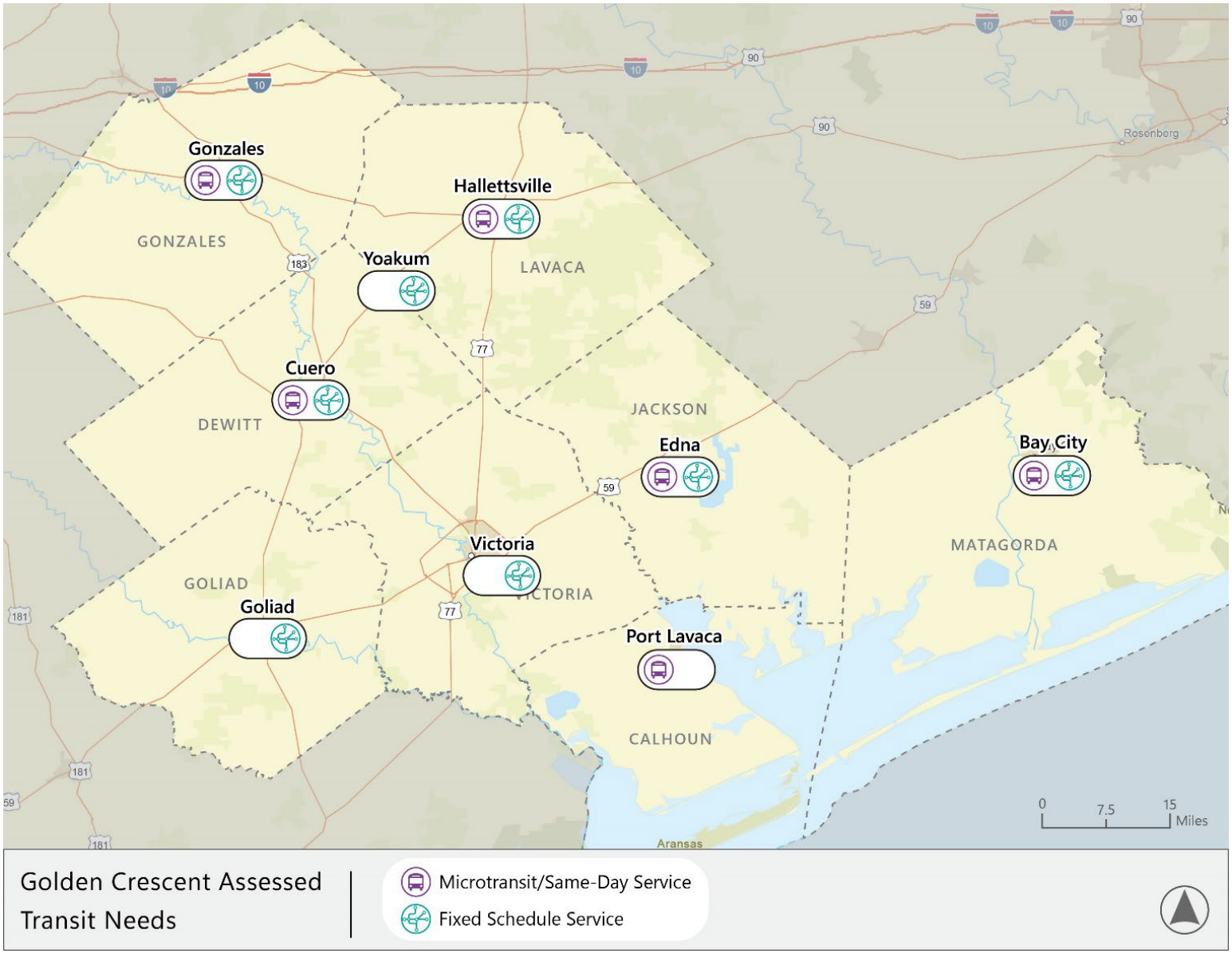
- **Scheduled Service** – or fixed-schedule service is an excellent way to provide grouped regional trips. The idea is to continue to provide curb-to-curb service for rural residents but for regional trips this happens on a scheduled basis. For example, residents of Goliad that need to go to Victoria for medical appointments or shopping can take the bus that is scheduled every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from Goliad County to Victoria. This model of service can do two things for the transit agency: first, it helps group trips to increase productivity; second, it can free up vehicles for other services such as same day service.

- **Microtransit / Same Day Service** – Every county provider in the region has the capability to schedule same-day service (microtransit). Same-day service is when a transit customer calls or uses an app for a local trip and can get the trip within 15 to 30 minutes of the request. This type of service works well in small areas, such as a major town, and only in communities that have at least one major destination (Walmart, HEB, regional hospital, etc.). Those interested in improving service to their constituents should go to Lockhart to ride the CARTS NOW service to see for themselves what they can do to improve residents' lives.

A note about fixed-schedule and same-day service: these service designs are excellent for increasing the cost effectiveness of service delivery and productivity, but require a concerted effort in marketing and disseminating the information to transit customers. People will not ride if they do not understand how the service works.

Figure 4-2 shows the scheduled service needs for each county and the potential for same-day service for each community.

Figure 4-2: GCRPC Rural Transit Operational Needs



Calhoun County

Calhoun County already has significant scheduled service due to the GCRPC commuter program and an existing scheduled service to Victoria on Tuesdays. The needs of the county are as follows:

- Explore opportunities for same-day microtransit service
- Additional vehicle is needed
- Increased responsiveness to maintenance needs
- Increased coordination and technical assistance with GCRPC

Dewitt County

DeWitt County has regional service demands for connecting Cuero to Yoakum and Victoria. The needs of DeWitt County are as follows:

- Vehicles! DeWitt currently has a zero percent spare ratio, though coordination with Victoria Transit helps them maintain their vehicles without cutting service.
- Finding and retaining CDL drivers is a major need in DeWitt County.
- Coordinate with Gonzales County for trips into Victoria.

Goliad County

Goliad County is one of the most rural counties in the RTRANSIT region. Goliad County already provides same-day service as available. The county has no spare vehicles during peak service. Their major needs are as follows:

- Increased coordination and technical assistance from GCRPC.
- An additional vehicle and driver to expand capacity in the county, making microtransit service available in the town of Goliad. Goliad currently offers same-day service as system capacity allows.
- The development of scheduled service to Victoria to assist in grouping trips and improving productivity.

Gonzales County

Gonzales County on the northern edge of the service area is the furthest to the north on the GCRPC service area and the least dependent on Victoria, preferring to travel north for regular goods and services. Gonzales County major needs are as follows:

- Replacement of two vehicles at the end of their useful life.
- Additional vehicles and drivers to expand opportunities for out-of-county trips.
- Scheduled service to places such as Bastrop, Luling, Lockhart, Austin, Seguin, and New Braunfels to help group trips, increase productivity, and free up vehicles for other services.
- Same-day microtransit service in the City of Gonzales.

Jackson County

Jackson County is directly to the east of Victoria, and a large portion of their service revolves around getting residents of Edna and rural Jackson County into Victoria for shopping and medical appointments. Needs in Jackson County include:

- Regularly-scheduled service into Victoria.
- Same-day microtransit service in Edna.
- More frequent vehicle replacement
- Coordinate with Matagorda County for trips into Victoria.

Lavaca County

Lavaca County is the county in the region that has been able to take advantage of local grant opportunities to buy SUVs and sedans for transit service in their community. Lavaca County needs to revolve around:

- Increased coordination, guidance, technical assistance and responsiveness from GCRPC.
- Coordination between the multiple capital grant opportunities.
- Additional accessible vehicles to meet demand for passengers with mobility devices and to increase capacity and opportunities for grouping trips.
- Same day microtransit service in Hallettsville.
- Development of scheduled service into Victoria, Yokum, and Cuero to free up capacity and improve productivity.

Matagorda County

Matagorda County is the most southeastern county in the RTRANSIT service area and home to Bay City, the largest city in the county. Most of their trips remain within the county of Matagorda, with typically less than five trips per month connecting into other counties. These out-of-county trips are most common for medical trips and are often very long. Matagorda County transit needs include:

- Scheduled service for out-of-county trips to improve productivity through the grouping of trips.
- Explore opportunities for same-day service in Bay City.
- Marginal increase in staffing and fleet size (one vehicle and one staff).

Victoria County

Victoria County is in the center of the study area and home to the GCRPC headquarters in Victoria. Victoria County rural transit service is directly operated by GCRPC. With the vast majority of the trips bringing rural residents of the county into the City of Victoria.

Rural transit needs in Vitoria County include:

- Hiring and retaining CDL drivers.
- Increased scheduled service connecting rural areas to Victoria and long-distance medical trips to San Antonio and Houston.

Technology Needs

Each of the county operators uses the same scheduling software. The Shah software package has an app and microtransit component available. This technology should be explored if same-day services and scheduled service are something that regional providers are going to take on.

The Bottom Line

This planning effort has highlighted several needs both locally and regionally in the RTRANSIT area:

- **Address Funding Challenges Head On** – Budgets shortfalls in Victoria are presenting challenges to the agency and community. Finding ways to improve service while simultaneously reducing costs is a major need in Victoria. Looking at fare elimination and grant funding formulas are major needs as well.

- **Reconfiguration of Victora Transit Fixed-Route System** – Victoria Transit has a fixed-route service design that is in need of a complete overhaul. This will help reduce costs and improve productivity.

- **Deploy More Effective Service Designs** – The rural operators are all operating 1990s-style service. New technology and new service designs allow rural counties to provide more service for the same amount of operating funds. Using microtransit and other same-day modes will benefit riders.

- **Reconfigure Rural Service as One Network** – Rather than operate as single-county services, the county and region would benefit from a coordinated network. This can help reduce costs by sharing regional trips and streamlining connections.

- **Vehicles and Maintenance** – Many of the rural county contractors operate 100 percent of their fleet during peak times. A zero percent spare ratio makes it difficult to complete preventative maintenance without eliminating service or denying trips. Through effective scheduling and coordination with maintenance contractors, however, most of the counties seem to be accomplishing preventative maintenance without service disruptions. The lack of vehicles does still create problems and capacity issues when breakdowns occur. There is no maintenance manager overseeing maintenance of all vehicles.

- **Guidance and Technical Assistance** – The rural contractors need increased guidance and leadership from the lead agency related not only to compliance and vehicle performance, but also to increased assistance with training, funding and match, and service planning and coordination.

- **Coordination** – Many of the rural providers are providing daily or weekly service into Victoria with some traveling through rural areas in other counties and Victoria County. Coordinating service to reduce duplication can free up other vehicles to provide better service to more people.

- **Improve and Upgrade Technology** – Golden Cresent and its rural contractors use Shah scheduling and reporting software. Effort needs to be made to ensure that contractors are up to date on all of the software capabilities and properly trained to use the technology. Integrating the software regionally will also be an advantage to all providers.

Chapter 5:
Strategies for the Future

Introduction

Based on the results of the previous tasks, the study team has assessed service, identified issue areas, and developed a number of recommendations and strategies that will help improve the service and build ridership.

This chapter will include the following:

1. **Introduction: Strategies for the Future** – The new normal and the changes in the operating environment.

2. **Key Transit Concepts** – This includes a discussion related to productivity and performance.

3. **Service Design and Provision** – Ensuring the system is operating effectively and appropriately across the region.
    a. In the rural areas the study team will look at innovative approaches to service provision and move away from one-on-one paratransit where feasible.
    b. In Victoria, the focus will be on revising the fixed routes and paratransit.
    c. **Use of Technology** – GCRPC and the rural subcontractors are looking to secure new technology. It should have microtransit capabilities.

4. **Organizational Structure and Coordination** – The organization should coordinate service across the different providers.

5. **Vehicles** – For urban and rural areas.

6. **Policies and Procedures** – Standardization of policies and procedures would help make Golden Crescent Transit one system.

7. **Marketing and Branding** – GCRPC has recently rebranded its rural service - it is now Golden Crescent Transit. Victoria Transit should look to rebranding as well.

8. **Sustainability** – Local funding is critical to success. There are private sector options as well. Victoria has a significant shortfall that will be addressed by reducing the number of buses and service hours, while increasing ridership. Efforts should be made to gain private sector support. Additional efforts should be made to secure additional federal funding for future facilities and special projects.

Technical Assistance

This study, funded through TxDOT's Transit Technical Services Program (TTSP), is not a complete transportation development plan, as funding is limited to technical assistance. In order to complete the plan, there are a number of activities to be accomplished by Golden Crescent Transit and Victoria Transit. These include:

- **Stakeholder and general public engagement** - Where the detailed plan is vetted by the community and then adjustments are made. Engagement is a prerequisite for change.
- **Branding** - It is suggested that Victoria Transit engage in a branding effort and upgrade the website.
- **The new Victoria routes** - May need some refinement for route schedules, including bus stops and specific turn-for-turn directions for each route.
- **Specific rural route schedules –** These should be based on current and recent past travel patterns and will typically be determined by existing dialysis runs.

Guidance will be given regarding each of the above. TxDOT technical assistance consultant support may be available for these activities.

Change will be the Future – The New Normal

Victoria Transit ridership remained stable during the pandemic. In fact, of the 50 or so systems we have worked with since the pandemic, Victoria Transit is the only one that has remained stable. Golden Crescent Transit in some counties saw significant drops, and in other counties ridership remained stable. Overall, especially in Victoria Transit, ridership is currently very low, and new approaches should be taken to improve performance.

The good news is that there are a number of new approaches to providing transit in rural and small urban areas, and Victoria Transit and Golden Crescent Transit should take advantage of these new approaches for the sake of the riders and others in need.

*This is the **golden age** of rural and small city transit. With the advancements in technology, coupled with excellent new service designs, transit can **dramatically increase ridership** for little or no additional cost.*

The New Normal

Ridership has changed significantly since COVID. Travel patterns have changed perhaps most of all. For example, the new normal will include, but not be limited to the following changes in our travel patterns:

- **Tele-Medicine** – The number of people using tele-medicine is on the rise. Insurance companies are encouraging this in many cases, and it will reduce healthcare-related travel.
- **Tele-Health** – This too has seen an increase in non-medical healthcare, such as counseling or therapy for example. Again, insurance companies are encouraging this in many cases to reduce costs.
- **Tele-Monitoring** – The monitoring of health remotely is gaining traction and will reduce the need for these types of trips.
- **Delivery Services** – The delivery industry has exploded in growth. Groceries, dog food, tools, and just about anything else can be delivered to the front door, reducing shopping trips.
- **Working from Home** – Has shown us that many people can and want to work from home, and in some cases, businesses are encouraging this.
- **Microtransit, Fixed-Schedule and Other New Modes** – New modes will change the way people travel by bus. We are already seeing this in both rural and urban areas.

New approaches are needed for the 2020s. The 1990s model no longer works, and costs more than successful new approaches.

Key Transit Concepts

Before the study committee considers the service strategies directly, the consultant team presents a variety of key transit concepts that should be understood prior to selecting strategies. We will discuss the following:

1. **Understanding productivity**

2. **The service designs considered – *strengths* and *weaknesses***

3. **Guidelines for fixed-route design**

Proper service design is paramount to any transit system. Improper service typologies and designs often result in lower ridership and lower productivity (measured as one-way trips per vehicle hour), while applying the right service design can improve performance often at no extra cost.

*To understand the rationale for a particular service design, it is important to first understand the concept of system **productivity** and how it relates to cost.*

Understanding Productivity

More than anything else in the transit world, productivity drives the cost per trip. Productivity is measured as one-way trips per vehicle service hour. Productivity, which must be balanced with providing a safe, timely and comfortable service, is critical to cost control.

For example, if the service costs $50 to operate one vehicle for one hour, and the productivity is 1.5 passengers per vehicle hour, then the cost per trip is $33.33. If productivity is increased to three one-way trips per hour, then the cost per trip is $16.67. Six trips per hour would yield a cost per trip of $8.33. The more trips per hour, the lower the cost per trip. In essence, productivity drives cost per trip.

One of the best ways to lower transportation costs is through productivity improvements. The service design selected will determine, in large part, the productivity of the service. The end result will depend on the mode(s) selected.

Service Designs: The Best Fit for Victoria Transit and Golden Crescent Transit

With an understanding of the importance of productivity, the next step is to look at service design. The objective is to apply the most appropriate service design(s) for the transportation needs. In most cases, GCRPC uses the most appropriate modes for its urban and rural areas. These changes will not add to the system costs, but will increase ridership and lower per trip costs.

- **Urban Fixed Route** – Issues arise when reviewing the fixed routes in Victoria. The loop routes should be eliminated and dead space minimized.

- **Urban ADA Complementary Paratransit** – This door-to-door service is complementary to fixed-route and is required by Federal regulation, within ¾-mile of fixed routes, for persons who because of a disability can't get to or can't ride fixed-route. Passengers must be certified as eligible for this service. Victoria Transit should ensure through the eligibility process that only those needing a paratransit use this service.

- **Rural Small City Microtransit** – This app-based service (or telephone) is a general public shared-ride service designed for small cities that are very difficult to serve with fixed routes. Riders get a ride within 30 minutes of the request. **Microtransit takes the place of day-in-advance service in small cities**. **Costs are virtually the same, except that service is better for customers, and the technology can schedule more rides for the same cost**. **It works very well in cities the size of Gonzales, for example, (such as Lockhart and Bastrop) and is recommended for all of the cities that meet the criteria.**

- **Rural Fixed-Schedule** – In county and daily service into Victoria – Most counties provide daily service into Victoria for healthcare and shopping needs. These should be done on a coordinated and scheduled basis, with a well-posted schedule. Similar service can be used to transport rural riders into the county's major city.

Victoria Transit

There are two very different services reviewed in this plan. The fixed-route service in Victoria (Victoria Transit) requires a completely different set of policies and procedures than the rural service (Golden Crescent Transit).

Fixed-Route Guidelines – Victoria

Proper service design is paramount to any transit system. Improper service typologies and designs often result in lower ridership and lower productivity, while applying the right service design can improve performance — often at no extra cost.

Fixed route is generally the least expensive mode of transit on a per trip basis and also the most efficient and effective in cities. As an introduction to the service strategies, the study team presents our guidelines for fixed-route service design. The review of routes will look at these guidelines, and it is important for management and stakeholders to understand the context of our recommendations.

Following are the guidelines:

1. **Maximize Use of Fixed-Route** – Fixed-route should be the first option in many areas of Victoria, particularly in areas with higher densities and locations with significant transit attributes.

2. **Do It Right or Don't Do It** – At a minimum, small cities can use about one fixed-route bus per population of 8,000 to 12,000, and one microtransit bus for every 6,000 persons. Providing two buses when six are needed to "see how it goes" is like opening a grocery store and only stocking one-third of the aisles.

3. **Minimum Density** - Fixed-route service works best in towns with a population of at least 1,000 per square mile, as well as in areas with major destinations or tourism. Microtransit can function at much lower densities, and Victoria meets the fixed-route threshold.

4. **Minimum Productivity** – Our research indicates that fixed routes with lower than five one-way trips per hour should first look to ensure that the routes meet the guidelines, or change the routes. If that doesn't work, look at alternative service designs such as microtransit.

5. **When is Service Provided?** – When the service is provided is as important as where the buses go. For in-town service, at a minimum, 6:30 a.m. or 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Operating 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. will leave out an entire class of riders, reducing ridership even further and possibly killing service. Riders prefer later hours over earlier hours. Saturday service typically generates half the ridership of weekday service, and Sunday service usually one-third.

6. **Out and Back / Avoid the Loopers** – Long one-way loop routes (over 30 minutes) kill ridership. Out and back is the normal form of fixed-route transit. If there is a stop on one side of the street, there should be a stop on the other side (in most cases). Ride time on long loop routes is almost always excessive. Loop routes do not pass the **ice cream test**, *for example* - 10 minutes to get to the store, but 50 minutes to get home. **Eliminating the loops will generate additional ridership by significantly reducing ride time.**

7. **Simplicity in Fixed-Route Design** – Avoid connecting the dots and keep the meandering of fixed routes to a minimum.

    a. In most cases, let the riders walk to the bus stop rather than having the bus meander to the riders. Major stops, or those willing to pay for a stop are exceptions.
    b. Some routes should be origin-based, and some should be destination-based.
    c. Do not try to do too much with one route.

8. **Timed Transfers and Interlining** – Fixed routes will meet at the designated transfer point at the same time and then often become a second route (interlining). This reduces the need for transfers. Origin-based routes should be matched with destination-based routes. These services will also be timed to meet other buses.

9. **Transfer Locations** - Major transfer points should be centrally located and adjacent to major trip generators such as: big box stores, downtown, education facilities, medical complexes, and at a mall with proper access. This will reduce the number of transfers and decrease travel time. Victoria Transit's transfer facility is centrally located, but it is not adjacent to a trip generator—a major flaw. This is discussed in detail below.

10. **Frequency** – Frequency is the time between buses going in the same direction on the same route. Going from a frequency of an hour to a half hour is great, but it doubles the cost. Service elasticities tell us that when service is doubled, ridership will probably increase by about 50 percent.

11. **Coverage** - Coverage is more inclined to ensure there is a bus route nearby even in areas that may not produce fixed-route ridership. Fairness and politics tell us that sometimes coverage is important. The key here is to put the best service design in place for each part of the service area.

12. **Accessible Bus Stops and Pathways** – The bus stop is **transit's front door.** Care must be taken in selecting bus stops for location, safety and accessibility. Stops should be every quarter mile, as detailed below.

13. **Timing Points** - Timing points should be every seven to 10 minutes. For Victoria service, NEVER have every stop as a timing point—this will result in slow service and the bus sitting idle.

14. **Proper Streets and Turns** - Routing should avoid unprotected left turns on busy streets as well as any other difficult maneuvers. The bus must be able to easily traverse a narrow street without impediment. Never back up as part of a route. Test the route with the bus you will use.

15. **Vehicles** - Are your vehicles appropriate for your ridership? Size and capacity – is the bus big enough or will you need a larger bus? For fixed routes bigger is usually better (to a point) unless there are maneuverability issues on the route.

16. **Consistency of Service** – Customers want consistent service (with exceptions for unsafe conditions, of course). "Every weekday without fail, every time without fail." Customers must have service every day. If they can't count on the bus showing up, then they will only ride if desperate. Try to have the bus pass by the same location, in the same direction, at the same time every hour (or half hour).

17. **Do Not Compete with Yourself** – Do not operate a competing paratransit service covering the same service area. Microtransit should feed the fixed route, not compete with it.

18. **Looking Good/Marketing** - While services need to be professionally marketed and promoted, the best advertising is good-looking buses with an attractive paint scheme and logo, and professional drivers that the community can be proud of. Plain white vehicles will blend into the background and be invisible to the community—never good for ridership. If the bus is wrapped, make sure there are system identifiers in the front, rear and on the sides. As with any business, it is important to be noticed (in a good way). Monitor the service to ensure everything is appropriate and performance measures are being met.

19. **Leave No Rider Behind** – Fixed-route service is not for all. Persons with disabilities who can't get to the bus or ride must receive comparable ADA service. There may be other parts of the service area that need service, but not fixed-route. For these riders there are other low-cost solutions without compromising the service that, for example, can take 95 percent of the riders.

20. **Sometimes There are Exceptions** – These guidelines are not universal. Context dictates the exceptions.

Bus Stops – Victoria

Unlike most small transit systems, Victoria Transit has far more shelters spread throughout the system than any other we have ever seen at a system of this size. This is both good and bad. First, the good: shelters are expensive, and Victoria Transit will not have to buy any new shelters for many years if they can relocate the shelters. These shelters will have to be relocated extensively. **Victoria Transit should remove shelters where there is no stop or route (people will wait there for a bus**), as will be the case if they are not moved in a timely manner before a new service is implemented. Any relocation will require strict adherence to ADA requirements for improved bus stops and pathways. Placement will be critical.

The first step in changing and revising stops is to complete a full inventory of every stop, shelter, bench and other amenities, after which a plan can be developed to move shelters and place down new pads. GCRPC already has a geocoded bus stop inventory listing the amenities present at each stop, along with photos of the amenities. As long as inventory information is up-to-date, this data will be the starting place for this process.

Accessible Bus Stops with shelter, benches, and trash cans.

Transit's Front Door – Bus Stop Recommendations

Having safe, accessible and inviting bus stops are critical to the success of transit. Bus stops are typically placed every one-quarter mile unless there is no reason to have a stop. A stop with a pole and a sign, by itself does not have to be accessible, but if there are any improvements, it should be accessible – with a pad for boarding and a connection to an intersection. The accessibility features must meet ADA regulations. In cases where there is a grass verge, a pad will be required to connect the sidewalk to the curb. There may be opportunities to partner with a local business to place a shelter at specific stops. The detailed discussion regarding stops and shelters will be in the next step as the routes are determined.

Stops should be examined for pedestrian access, safety and security, with considerations for stop improvements/enhancements. Some stops will have only a pole in the ground, where others may have a pad, bench or a shelter. Review and prioritize safety, accessibility, pathways, shelters, benches, lighting and other improvements.

Basic Bus Stop Guidelines

Transit's front door requires careful consideration in the placement and condition of bus stops.

1. **All bus riders are pedestrians** – Bus stops should be placed and designed for safe and accessible pedestrian access.

2. **Transit's front door** – Accessible, inviting, safe, and unless there is dead space, stops should be placed every quarter mile.

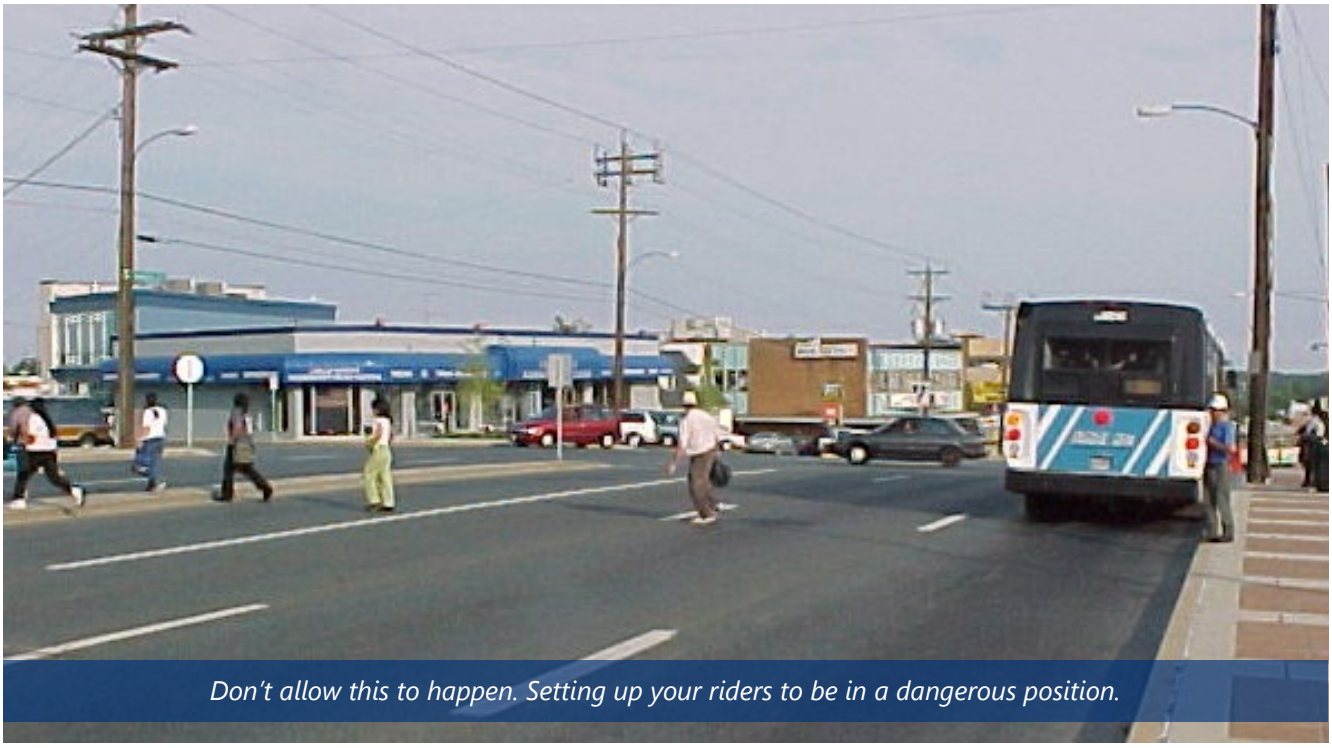
3. **Out and back service** – If there is a stop on one side of the street, in most cases there should also be a stop across the street or in close proximity.

4. **Ensuring safe access on both sides of the street** – On busy streets, place stops alongside protected crosswalks and/or traffic control devices.

    a. **Do not set up customers for danger – Stops should almost always be at a crosswalk or intersection of a busy street.** Stops that require customers to navigate a busy street without the benefit of safe access are setting up customers for danger. Work with the city and/or county to ensure safe access at key stops, and that they are not located near an intersection.

5. **Accessible Bus Stops and Pathways** – Care must be taken in selecting bus stops, both for safety and accessibility.

    a. Issues such as stops on the near side or far side of the intersection cause different sets of issues. Neither is perfect; however, transit should be guided where appropriate by the destinations at that intersection.
    b. The bottom line for customers: safety, accessibility and proximity to major trip generators.
    c. Pay attention to pathways. Set up stops alongside accessible pathways whenever possible.
    d. Never leave the placement of the stop, shelter or other amenities up to the installation crew. Be specific about exactly where the stop should be placed, down to the foot.
    e. Do not install shelters or amenities at stops where people never wait for a bus, but only get off. For example, stops near the end of the line rarely have riders waiting, since virtually all stops there will be for people to get off the bus, but the stop across the street will have riders waiting for the bus.



Don't allow this to happen. Setting up your riders to be in a dangerous position.

6. **Bus Stops and Timing Points** – For this type of service, stops should be about a quarter mile apart. Timing points should be every six to eight minutes. Never have every stop be a timing point.

7. **Amenities** – This includes poles, benches, shelters, lights and information kiosks, for example. Prioritize your amenities improvements at stops. Stops with just a pole do not have to be accessible, but if there are any improvements, the stop and pathway to a crosswalk are required to be accessible.

8. **Work with Local Governments** – Usually transit must depend on local governments to support accessible pathways.

    a. Transit can identify where pathways are needed to maximize accessibility and use of transit.
    b. The local governments can put these improvements in their Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP) for future funding, and transit can often provide funds as well.

9. **Conduct a Bus Stop Improvement Plan** – Bus stops are capital assets that should be inventoried and prioritized for improvements.

    a. Conduct a full inventory and assessment of each stop and its pathways, identifying and prioritizing needs and capital requirements.
    b. Adopt similar standards for all stops.
    c. Coordinate planning with the local governments/MPO Bicycle and pedestrian plans.
    d. Secure capital funding for improvements at the federal, state, local government, and private sector levels.

Victoria Transit Service – Strategies for the Future

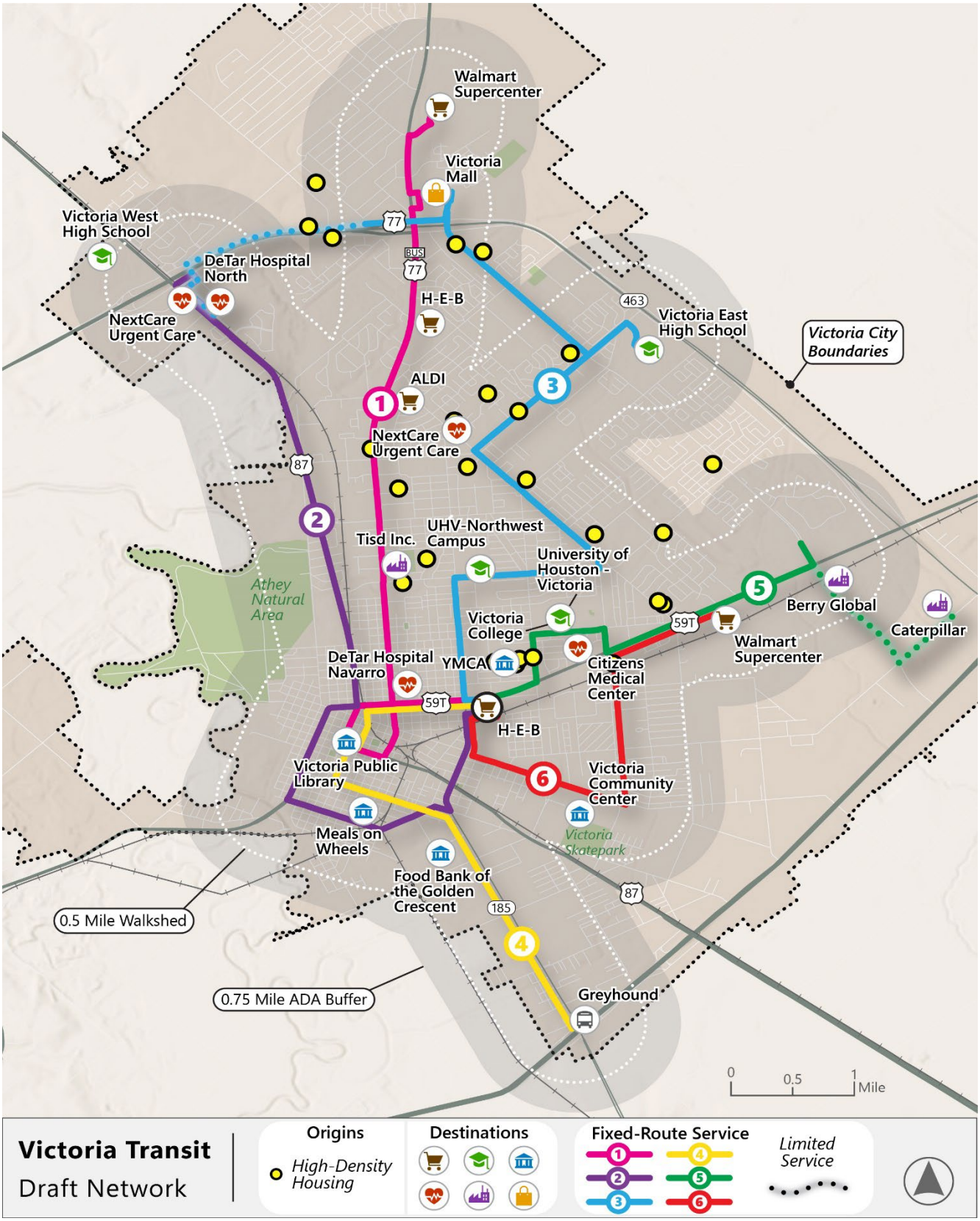
The revised services will consist of fewer buses and fewer hours than when the study was initiated (seven buses). There are two options for Victoria Transit to select from: this includes a five-bus and a six-bus option, down from the previous number of seven buses (now six). These are identified in Figures 5-1.

Two of the routes (Green and Gold) were of a one-way loop nature, taking one hour for a round trip. Due to the loops this requires most passenger round trips to take one hour, even if the destination is 10 minutes away. Worse, if a rider has to transfer to another route, the round trip becomes a two-hour commitment. That is the nature of a one-way loop route. The Gold Route was eliminated.

These "Loopers" suppress ridership (see Technical Memorandum No. 2) and are less productive than the traditional "out and back" model of the fixed-route design seen in virtually every larger city in the country.

The other two routes (Red and Blue) are also poor performers as they are meandering routes, however, the Red Route with six one-way trips per hour meets the minimum threshold for a fixed route in Victoria. The Blue Route, at about 4.5 trips per hour, is also a poor performer.

Figure 5-1: Proposed Victoria Transit Fixed Routes



Development of the Fixed-Route Strategies

While considering the above discussion, the system ridership and productivity are very low, calling for a significant restructuring of service. Of the three options available to Victoria—fixed route, microtransit or a combination—fixed route with major changes appears to be the best fit, because with a limited budget, fixed route can generate the highest productivity and lowest cost per trip.

Applying the productivity discussion above, microtransit at about three one-way trips per hour would have to deploy **at least twice the number of vehicles as fixed route** (which should produce at least six one-way trips per hour), to generate the same ridership at a significantly higher cost.

The strategies developed here are an attempt to meet the following requirements:

- Faster service and shorter ride times – The advantages of the changes are shorter travel time and higher ridership. This will be a primary marketing approach to the service changes.
- Eliminate long one-way loops – These loops guarantee long ride times and suppress ridership. In general, if there is a stop on one side of the street there should be one across the street.
- Follow the fixed-route guidelines – The fixed-route guidelines, while not absolute, should be utilized to the greatest extent possible.
- When transit is operating, service is just as important as where the buses go. It is strongly recommended that minimum service hours should be 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Starting later and ending earlier eliminates a core base of potential riders—commuters.
- Transit's front door - Appropriate bus stops at approximately every quarter mile and accessible where possible, should be inviting.
- Eliminate duplication and (where possible) dead space - There were a number of instances where two routes traveled on the same streets—where feasible, these were eliminated.
- Keep the average speed to about 18 miles per hour (with considerations for the different routes). For example, Route 4 has the greatest round-trip distance, but since about 20 percent of the route is at 55 MPH with few intersections and stops, this can be accomplished.

Transfer Center

The first step is to select the site for a transfer facility. The HEB is relatively central, a major trip generator and is already used as a transit facility for Golden Crescent Transit's commuter service. Further, there is space for buses either in the facility or on Ash Street. All buses will meet at the facility every hour for transfers.

The access for buses to the west end of the transfer facility is simple for buses coming from the south or heading north on Laurent Street. These buses can access Laurent Street on Ash Street adjacent to the transfer facility. For buses going south from the transfer facility or coming to the facility from the north will face an unprotected left turn. These buses in the latter group can access and egress the HEB on the north side of the HEB at E. Rio Grande and Azalea Streets, then travel behind the HEB to get to and from the transfer facility.

New Route Structure

There were two options for route structures presented to the study committee on October 11. The study selected the option with three hour-long routes and three one-half hour routes (Figure 5-1). The decisions to follow include:

1. The number of buses and vehicle hours.
2. Which routes to go on one-half hour headways and one-hour headways.
3. The route alignment. Note that the route alignment may or may not be an actual depiction of each turn. That will be decided by the operations staff, following the guidelines for fixed routes and bus stops as detailed above.

Level of Service

Victoria Transit has funding issues at this time, necessitating a plan that meets the requirements of the available funds ($2.2M). Table 5-1 details the funding available for weekday fixed-route service. Calculating the funding and revenue hours for fixed-route service requires the following assumptions based on the data supplied by GCRPC.

Table 5-1: Funding Available for Fixed-Route

Total Funding	**$2,200,000**
Operating Cost per Hour	**$81**
Total Revenue Hours	**27,160**
Total Paratransit Hours	**11,000**
Saturday Fixed Route (4 vehicles 10 hours)	2,080
Total Hours Available for Fixed Route	**14,080**

The 14,080 hours will allow for **five fixed-route vehicles** at 11 hours per day (2,750 hours per year). A reduction in paratransit hours (discussed in a following section) could yield another fixed-route vehicle.

The Routes

Six routes are presented for the study committee (Figure 5-1). As stated previously, these are not exact routings. These routes can operate with five or six buses, so that in the event funding is available for a sixth bus, the added bus can easily be placed into service.

- Routes 1, 2, 3 are one-hour routes. Three buses – one for each route. If the six-bus option is selected a second bus will be placed on Route 1 to give it a 30-minute headway.
- Routes 4 and 6, both 30-minute routes, will be interlined and operated with one bus.

Route 5 is a 30-minute route and will have a bus on 30-minute headways, serving a major hospital, colleges, Walmart and HEB. The route will be operated with one bus.

Route 1

This route is based on the Red Route since it primarily travels on Navarro Street. This is a major one-hour route that is destination-based, circling downtown and then traveling north to major shopping and other businesses. There are many origin-based areas on this route as well. This may be the busiest route, and in the six-bus option would have two buses and a half-hour headway. The five-bus option has this bus on an hour headway.

Major stops include:

- HEB Downtown
- Downtown
- DeTar Hospital
- Myriad businesses along Navarro St.
- HEB North
- Victoria Mall
- Walmart
- Sam's Club
- Many businesses
- Some residences nearby

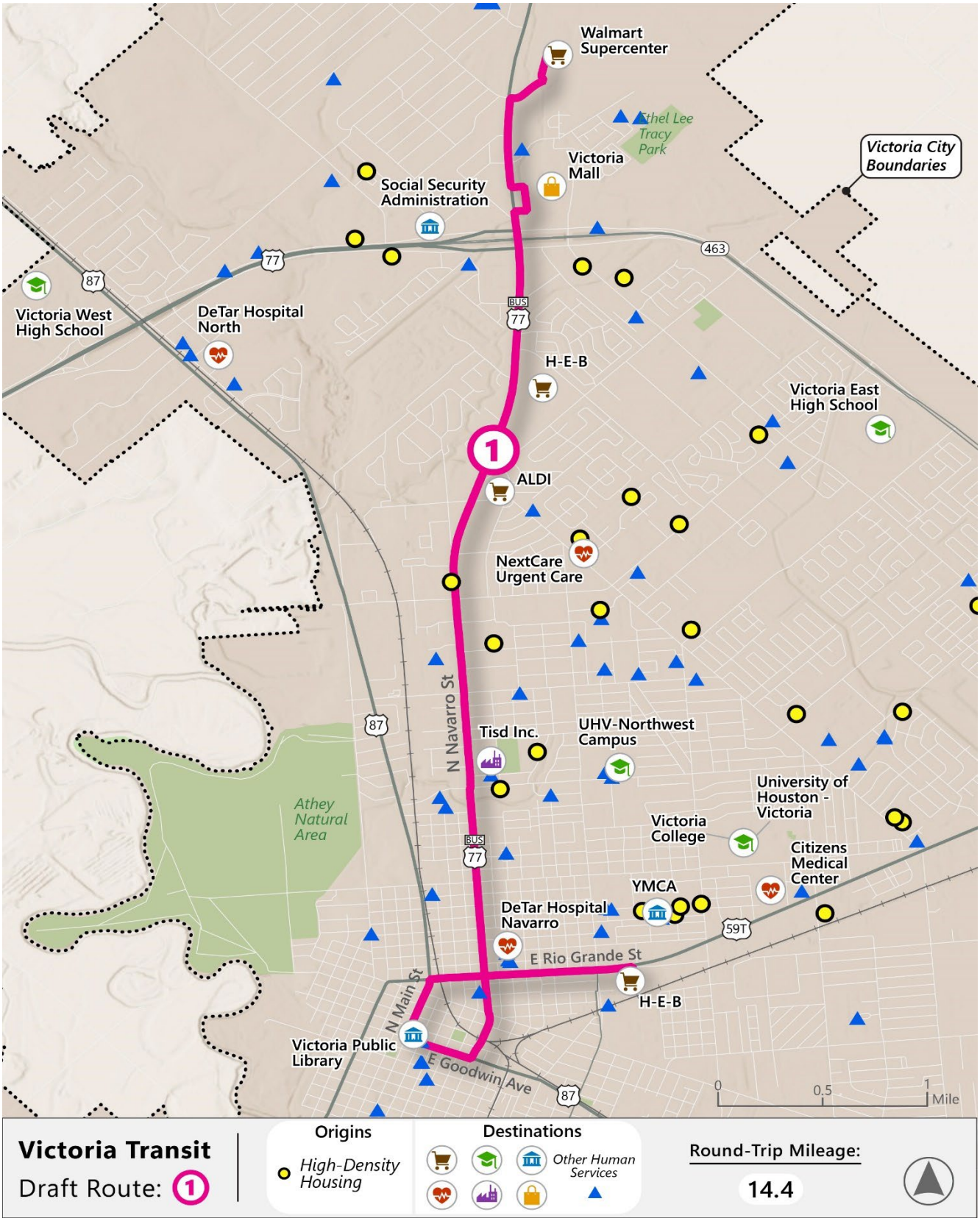
Issues

- Selecting a good stop at the mall and Walmart. It is best to get close to the store without traversing Walmart's busy parking lot (perhaps on the side). See if they will place a shelter close to or adjacent to the facility.
- The existing Red Route already has many stops on Navarro and should stay if they meet the bus stop requirements. Shelters that don't meet the criteria should be taken down and placed elsewhere.
- This may be the highest ridership route. If a sixth bus is available, then placing a second bus on this route to have a 30-minute headway would be an excellent option.

Results

This is a direct route from the transfer center to a major commercial district with many destinations along the way. Further along most of Navarro Street there are residences within a quarter-mile on both sides, allowing excellent access to major destinations for these residents without transferring. It is estimated that this route will generate between **eight and 10 one-way trips per hour** after the first year, and will be among the highest ridership routes.

Figure 5-2: Proposed Route 1



Route 2

Route 2 primarily travels on Main Street on the western edge of the city. It is a one-hour round trip that connects many major destinations (primarily healthcare, a major park, and schools) and it has residences as well. A new City of Victoria Public Safety Headquarters and municipal court is being built on North Main Street near Airline Drive. It should be noted that this route has some dead space. The route circles the downtown area (and the library), serving residents in that area and giving them access to most goods and services.

Primary stops include:

- HEB Downtown
- Downtown
- Library
- Children's Park
- DeTar Hospital North
- Other medical facilities
- Victoria West High School
- Harold Cade Middle School
- Residences
- New Public Safety Headquarters and Municipal Court (August 2025)

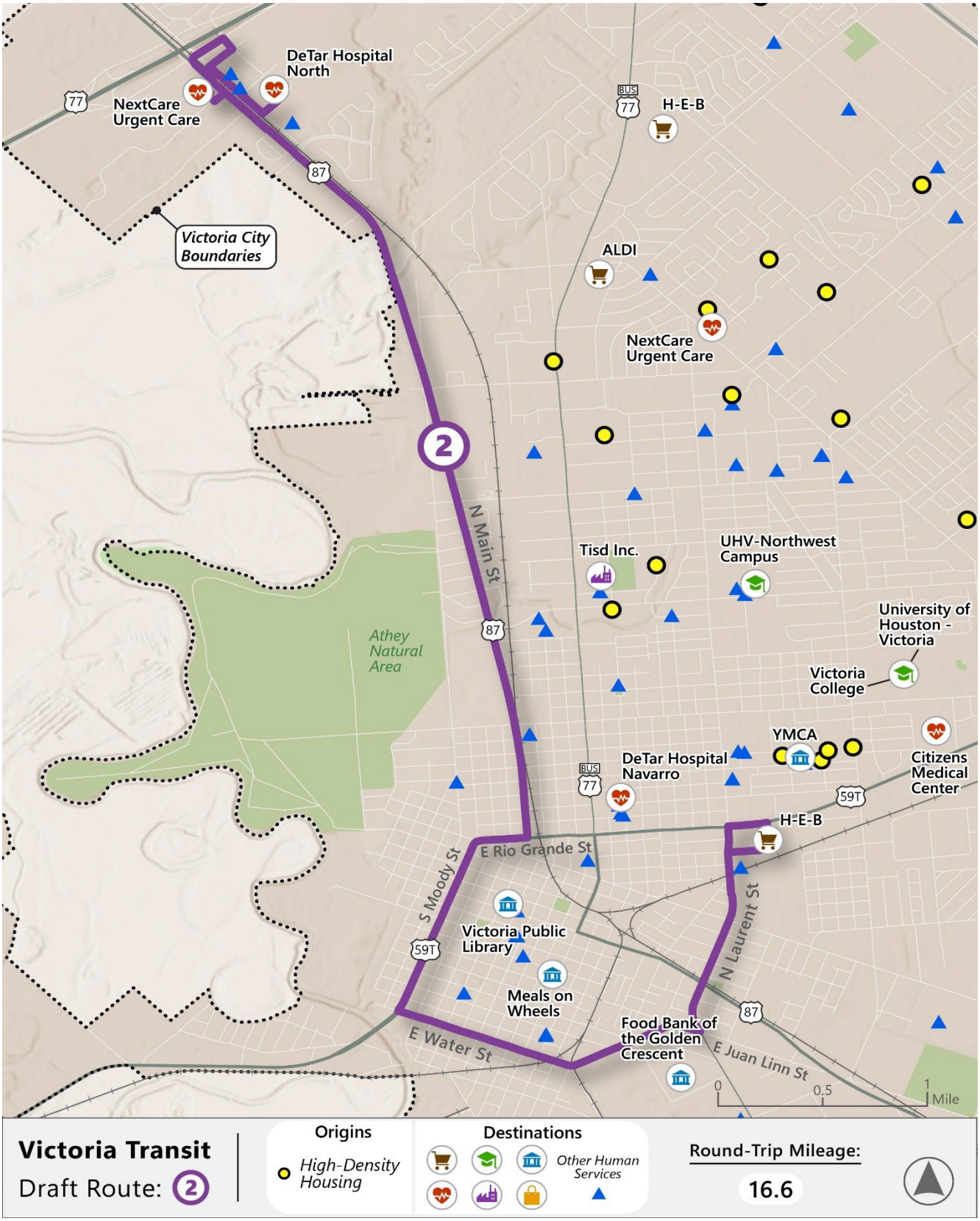
Issues

- This route provides service in a currently unserved area.
- There are a number of areas where little ridership can be generated, however, the strength of the major destinations at each end should result in reasonable ridership.
- It will change the route that serves the hospital and schools, reducing the burden on Route 1.

Results

This route should provide good ridership, perhaps **six to eight one-way trips per hour** in the first year. It has a significant number of major stops and currently serves an unserved area.

Figure 5-3: Victoria Transit Route 2



Route 3

Route 3 is primarily a neighborhood route serving the east side of the city. It also serves the mall, Social Security, and the medical facilities in the northwest corner of the city. This is a long one-hour route and could end at the Social Security office, or if there is time (based on test runs), operate all the way to the DeTar North facility or to the high school and middle school.

Primary stops include:

- Residences throughout the eastern part of the city
- HEB Downtown
- University of Houston–Victoria
- Howell Middle School
- Victoria High School (select runs)
- Victoria Mall
- Social Security

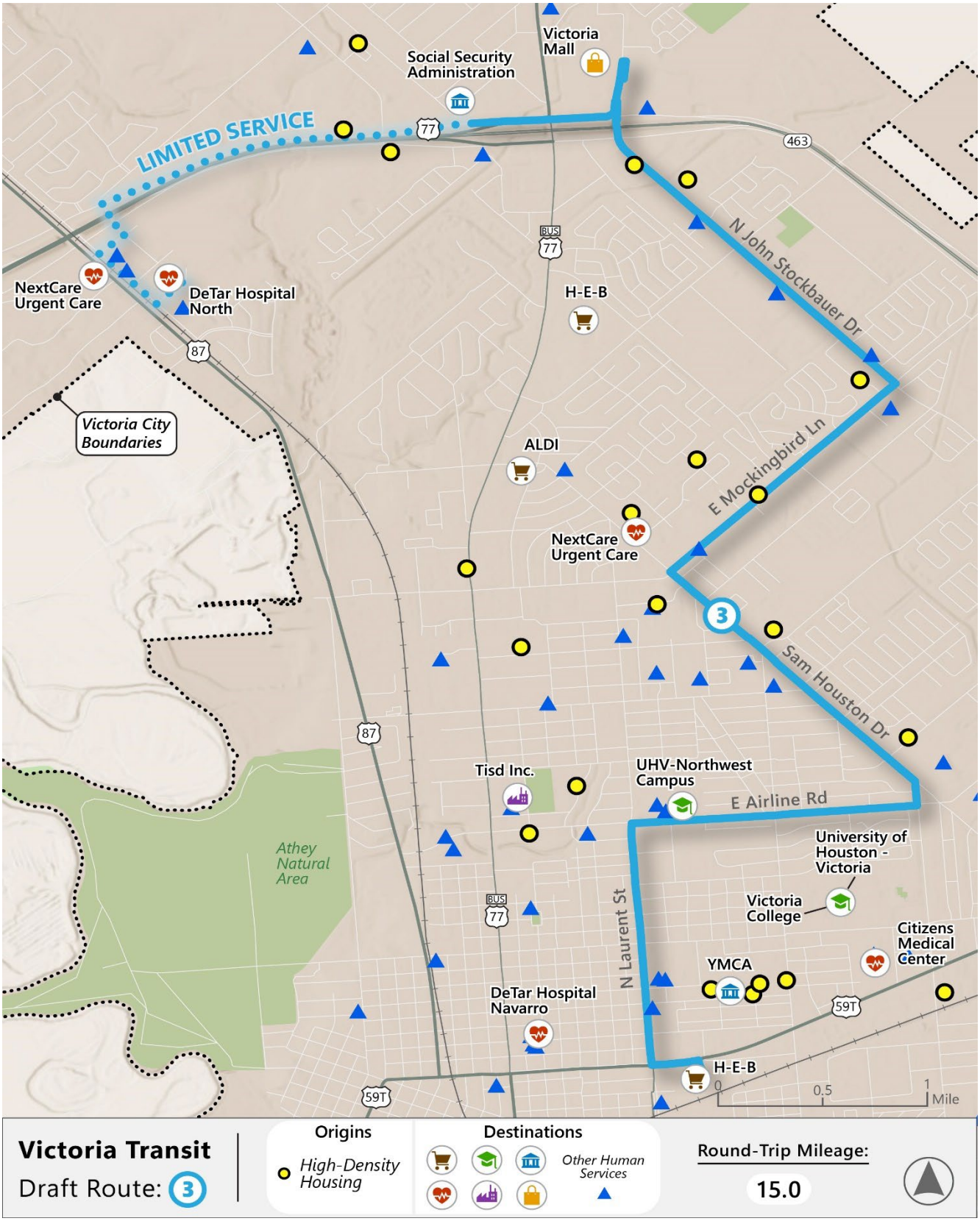
Issues

- This is a long route with a bus that must move relatively slowly through most of the route.
- Select runs (three times a day) can extend to the high school.
- If the DeTar facility is too far, the route could end at the Social Security facility.

Results

This is more of a collector route, serving residents, businesses and healthcare facilities. Ridership should be about **six one-way trips per hour**.

Figure 5-4: Victoria Transit Route 3



Route 4

Route 4 is a half-hour route that will be interlined with Route 6. This route circulates around downtown, then goes southeast to the Greyhound stop. It is primarily an origin-based route.

Major Stops include:

- HEB Downtown
- Downtown
- Library
- Food bank
- Residences south of downtown and along Rt. 185, including many mobile home and RV parks
- Greyhound stop

Issues

- Loop route turned into a normal fixed route
- Eliminated meandering in the route path

Results

This neighborhood route will generate about **six one-way trips per hour**. Interlined with Route 6, it will allow riders to receive a one-seat ride to Walmart.

Figure 5-5: Victoria Transit Route 4

Route 5

Route 5 is a half-hour route filled with major origins and destinations. Along with Route 1, Route 5 will be the most heavily-used route in the system. It is recommended that this route have one bus full time, allowing for half-hour headways. This route has some of the largest origins and destinations in the system, and can be extended during certain runs to serve the Caterpillar facility.

Major stops include:

- HEB Downtown
- Citizens Medical Center
- Victoria College
- University of Houston–Victoria
- Multiple student apartments
- Walmart

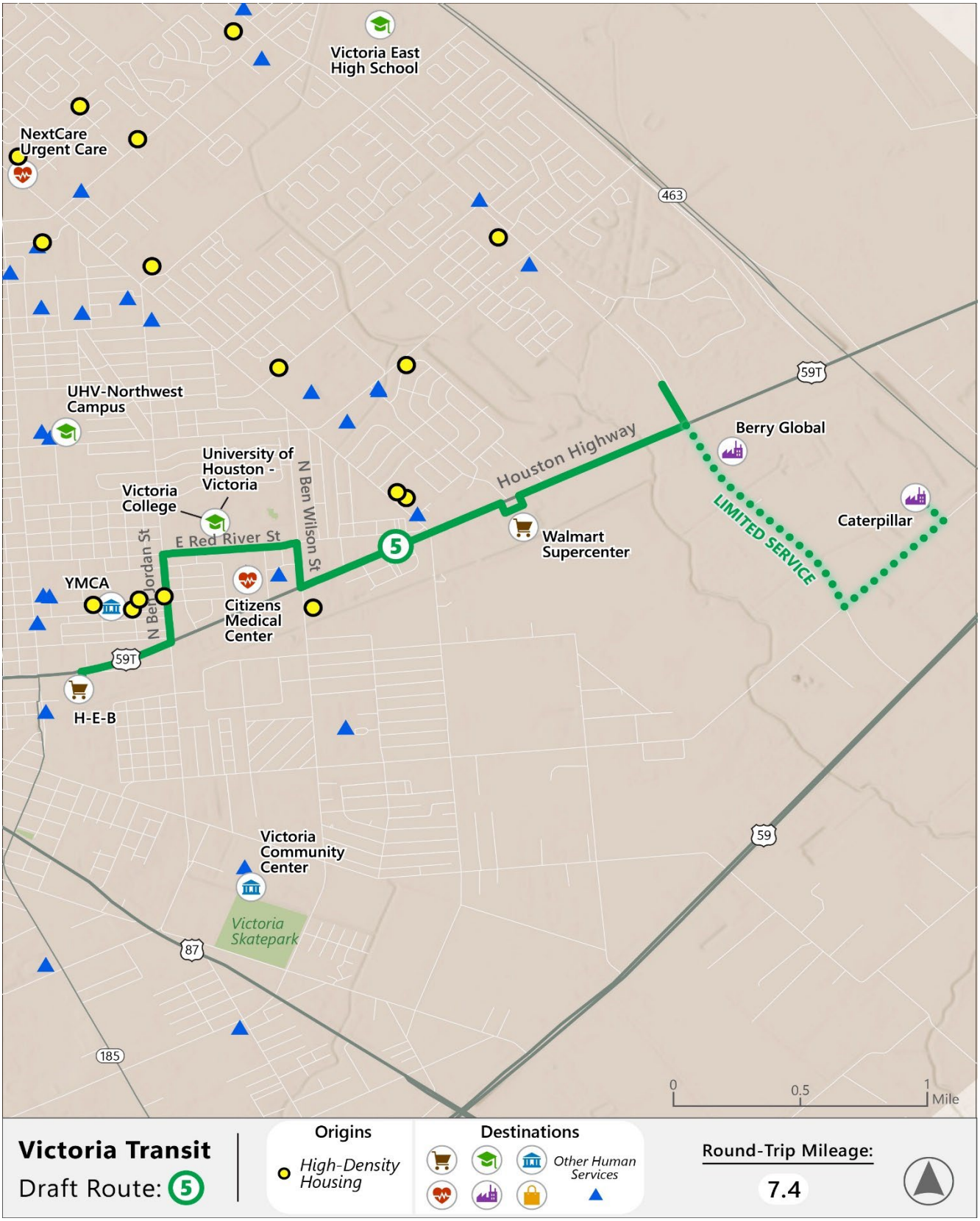
Issues

- This route will have some of the largest destinations.
- There are multiple apartments nearby.
- This route will include many transfers attracted by the destinations.

Results

With the major trip generators on the route, as well as numerous apartments with students, this route may have the highest ridership in the system. The study team estimates about **10 – 12 one-way trips** per hour on this new route.

Figure 5-6: Victoria Transit Route 5



Route 6

Route 6 is a neighborhood circulator that serves the south-central areas of the city. It connects lower-income neighborhoods with essential shopping and healthcare, and the Victoria Community Center is on this route as well. This route will be interlined with Route 4, also a half-hour route. Unlike the other routes, this is a combination of low-income housing and major destinations, including major healthcare centers and the area's two largest shopping venues. This means that most riders would not have to transfer to get to where they want to go, and few riders would transfer to this bus since all major destinations are covered by other routes (with the exception of the Community Center).

Major stops include:

- HEB Downtown
- Victoria Community Center
- Citizens Medical Center
- Walmart
- Low- and moderate-income residences

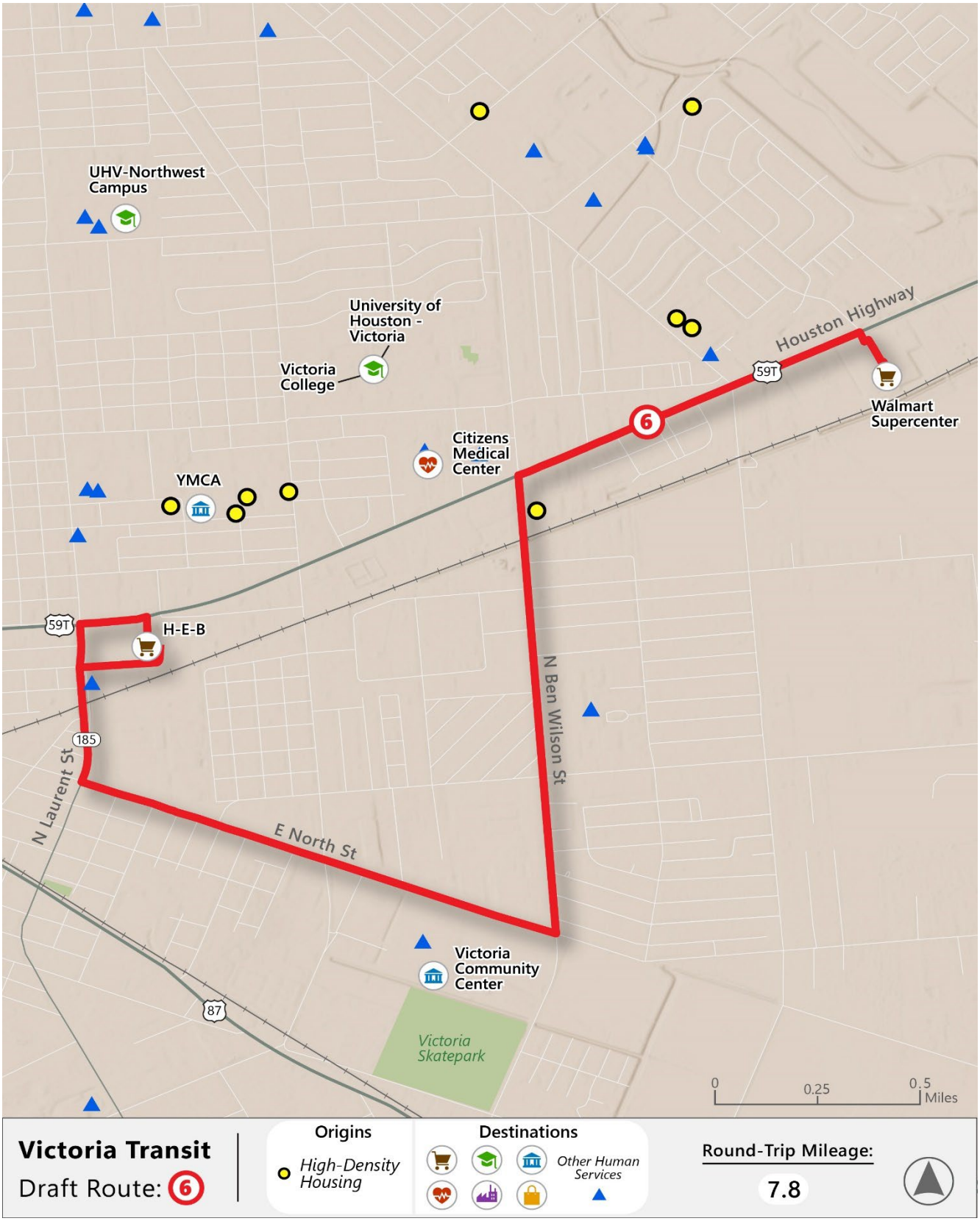
Issues

- A self-contained route with the most important destinations on this half-hour route.
- This route will see few transfers, which will reduce the unlinked ridership.

Results

Considering that this route will see few transfers, a ridership of **six one-way trips per hour** is unlike the other routes with more transfers.

Figure 5-7: Victoria Transit Route 6



Saturday Service

Saturday service typically provides about half of the ridership of weekday service. The most effective strategy here is to operate the same fixed-route service with five buses, but with shorter hours. Consideration was given to turning Saturday service into an on-demand microtransit service. However, each of the fixed routes shows higher ridership and productivity on Saturdays than could be accomplished under most, if not all, microtransit applications.

Cost constraints are evident in Victoria. Microtransit in this application would be more expensive for the same number of riders. Productivities of three to four one-way trips per hour are typical for microtransit. Each of the fixed routes should produce higher ridership and productivity than is typically accomplished with microtransit. For microtransit to provide service in place of fixed-route, Victoria Transit would need two to three times the vehicles and costs used for fixed-route, due to the low productivity of microtransit compared to fixed-route.

Rural Transit Strategies

This section of the plan provides strategies for improving Golden Crescent Transit demand-response service provided to the general public in the rural counties and areas of the GCRPC region. Golden Crescent Transit service is provided in eight counties. DeWitt and Victoria County have Golden Crescent Transit service directly operated by GCRPC, while the other six counties have Golden Crescent Transit service provided by individual county human services providers (mostly senior centers) who are contracted with GCRPC (referenced here as "subcontractors"). Previously, the Study Team assessed the transit need and ridership demand for each rural county, and spoke with staff and operators at both GCRPC and the rural county subcontractors for Golden Crescent Transit, to develop the initial concepts for service improvements.

These strategies expand upon those concepts and provide options for GCRPC to consider, with the goal of improving efficiency and effectiveness of Golden Crescent Transit service. The strategies touch upon various topic areas including service design, service spans and levels of service, policies and procedures, fleet needs, regional coordination, trip request fulfillment, new and existing technology, and other issues identified in this technical assistance project. Some strategies touch on specific counties in the Golden Crescent Transit rural service area, while others are relevant to Golden Crescent Transit service in all counties.

Same-Day Service/Microtransit

Day-in-advance paratransit in small cities is a very expensive and inefficient way to provide service to residents of small cities. In addition, it is inconvenient for customers. **Microtransit can do everything day-in-advance paratransit service does, except much better.**

See TxDOT's Microtransit Guidebook for details on how to implement this new service.
https://ftp.txdot.gov/pub/txdot/ptn/programs/2023/texas-rural-microtransit-guidebook.pdf

For the customer:

- Greater convenience
- Easier to use – app or telephone
- No need to call the day before – call when ready
- More people can ride in the same number of vehicles

For Golden Crescent Transit:

- Reduces overall costs - requires less staff as the technology handles the scheduling and dispatching – better than the humans
- Lower cost per trip
- Greater ridership for the same resources
- Easier for vehicle operators
- The vendor manages technology – no need for servers or management of the technology

Small City Microtransit Is Better for All

Same-day demand-response service was previously termed dial-a-ride. With the use of new technology, this type of immediate response service (termed microtransit) is now available for small cities. In fact, microtransit has proven itself in cities similar to those found in Golden Crescent Transit's region – Bastrop, Elgin, Lockhart, and Marble Falls have all doubled and tripled ridership with little added cost. Further, customers love the convenience.

In small cities, demand-response service that can only be reserved through an advanced reservation will have inherently low productivity. This is due to lack of convenience for the customer, along with operational factors and the level of ability to group trips together. As a result, the cost per trip for this day-in-advance demand-response service is inherently higher than other transit modes. An increase in productivity (number of trips per hour) will simultaneously decrease (improve) the cost per trip. This can make the Golden Crescent Transit service more appealing for riders to take additional trips, and should be a goal for the program.

More Riders for the Same Cost at Greater Convenience

On-demand microtransit serving trip requests for immediate/near-term fulfillment can grow ridership in the right setting. Customers are more likely to schedule transit trips if they allow for more spontaneous travel choices. For example, instead of planning a trip to the grocery store a day or two in advance, the customer can request a microtransit trip 30 minutes before they decide to go to the store. Microtransit is essentially a form of demand-response service with sophisticated scheduling technology that can continuously determine capacity of service on the road, optimal trip request matching to vehicles, and the most efficient route paths for vehicles to travel.

A strategy for GCRPC to consider with its rural subcontractors is whether to implement microtransit service zones within some of the more populous towns in the rural counties. Microtransit would replace in town in advance demand-response service, but would not replace the county-wide demand-response service with advance reservations. Instead, microtransit zones would be an additional service offered in select areas, but using the existing vehicle fleets and operators already in place for each subcontractor. The technology of the software platform and in-vehicle tablets would be another determinate of success (discussed later in this document).

The key to microtransit viability is specificity – microtransit is most appropriate for lower density, small, well-defined service zones of a few square miles (ideally around three to five square miles). Microtransit zones also need at least a few primary trip destinations of interest for residents that the service zone can reach to generate sufficient trip demand – depending on the area these can include large grocery stores and retailers, major employers for commuters, hospitals and medical complexes, or other notably-sized trip attractors. A downtown Main Street may occasionally be an activity center, but unless there is sizable retail activity throughout the day, it does not count as a main trip destination in its own right.

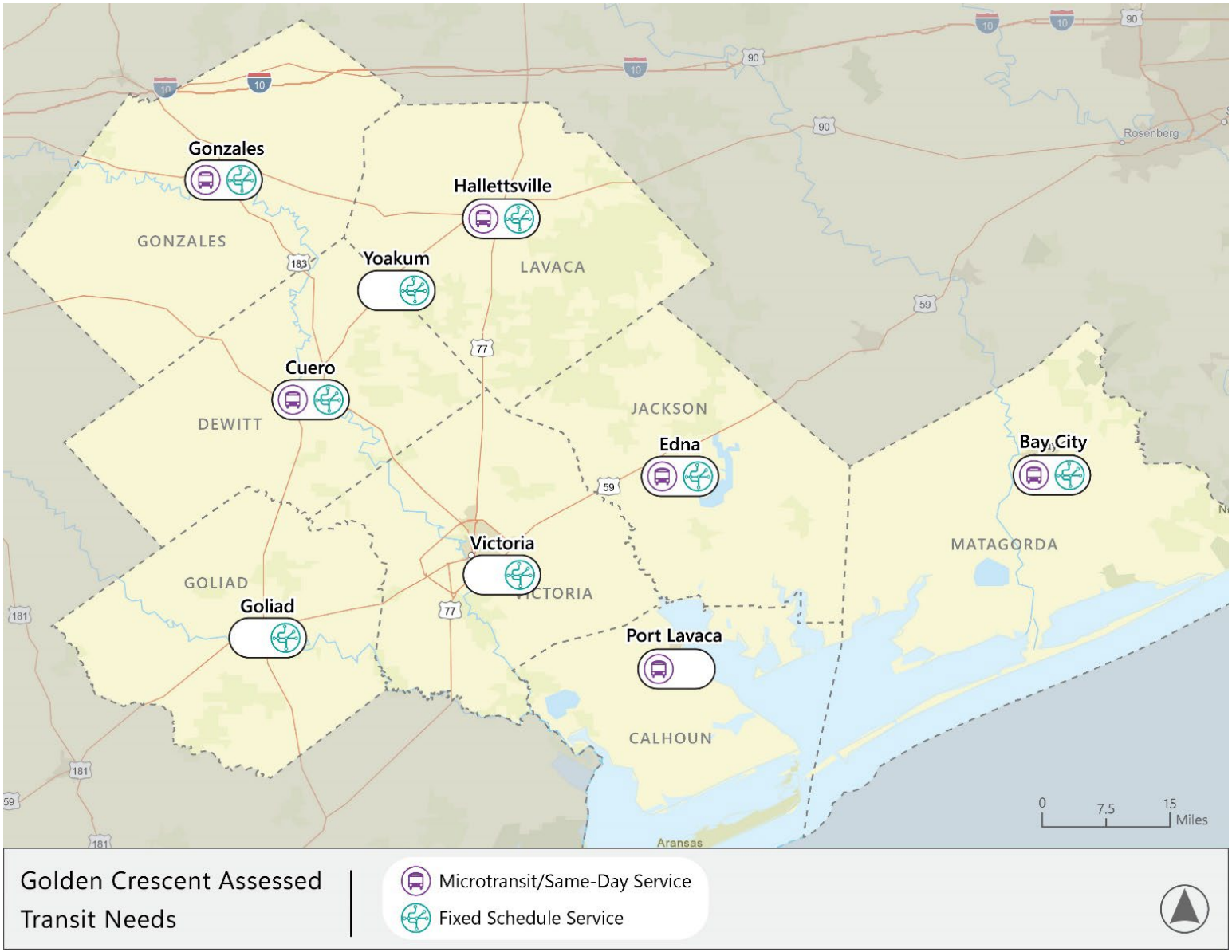
Microtransit is mature enough as a service technology that many small rural cities under 25,000 in population have been seeing success in ridership demand and cost efficiency. In many cases, a service zone in the right setting can result in two to six one-way passenger trips per hour. For example, Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) has implemented several microtransit zones in small towns within their service area. One such service zone in Bastrop (a town with 10,000 people) is seven square miles, operating with two vehicles for 10 to 12 hours per day (each). The service responds to trip requests within 15 minutes, and has a productivity of three to four trips per hour, resulting in over 100 riders per day in the zone.

To attract the greatest number of potential riders, the minimum hours for each microtransit service zone should be 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. This service span would cover peak commuting times to and from work, as well as local shopping and appointments during the middle of the day. If there were cities with a sizable amount of late-night shift work or other times with high trip-demand concentrations earlier or later in the day, then additional service span time might be considered.

Potential Microtransit City Locations

The map in Figure 5-8 on the following page shows KFH's analysis of rural transit operational needs for the larger cities within the Golden Crescent Transit counties. Many are potential candidates for same-day/microtransit service (indicated by the purple bus icons). The next section looks at the case for microtransit in each city, ranked by viability for microtransit.

Figure 5-8: Golden Crescent Transit Operational Needs



Excellent Opportunities

Bay City

Bay City has a population of 18,061 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,892 per square mile. Major trip generators include medical facilities, multi-unit housing, shopping, and human services agencies. Notably, the city has both a Walmart and an HEB location. The Matagorda Regional Medical Center is also in the city, though it is located more on the periphery of the city limits. This combination of factors makes Bay City a solid candidate for microtransit service.

Port Lavaca

The City of Port Lavaca has a population of 11,212 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,138.5 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include large employers, multi-unit housing, shopping, medical facilities, and human services agencies. Notably, the city has both a Walmart and an HEB location, and is home to the Memorial Medical Center. This combination of factors makes Port Lavaca a solid candidate for microtransit service.

Gonzales

The City of Gonzales has a population of 7,160 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,179 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include medical facilities, shopping, multi-unit housing, human services agencies, and major employers. Notably, the city has both a Walmart and an HEB, as well as the Gonzales Memorial Hospital. All three of these trip generators are located in close proximity to each other. This combination of factors makes Gonzales a solid candidate for microtransit service.

Cuero

The City of Cuero has a population of 8,128 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,255 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include medical facilities, shopping, multi-unit housing, major employers, and human services agencies. Notably, the city has both a Walmart and an HEB location. The city also has the Cuero Regional Hospital facility, though it is located at the other end of town from the major grocers/retailers. This combination of factors makes Cuero a solid candidate for microtransit service.

Future Opportunities

Yoakum

The City of Yoakum has a population of 5,904 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,290 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include medical facilities, shopping, human service agencies, and multi-unit housing. However, the only major grocery/shopping retailer is an HEB

location. Yoakum Community Hospital is a major trip attractor, but is located on the periphery of the city. The lack of additional major shopping locations, along with the distance between major attractors makes Yoakum a less desirable candidate for microtransit at this time.

Hallettsville

The City of Hallettsville has a population of 2,731 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 964 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include medical facilities, shopping, multi-unit housing, and major employers. Notably, the city has both a Walmart and a Brookshire Brothers location, and the Lavaca Medical Center. All three of these trip generators are located in close proximity to each other, though more towards the periphery of the city. This combination of factors makes Hallettsville a possible, but low priority candidate for microtransit service at this time.

Edna

The City of Edna has a population of 6,012 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,448 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include multi-unit housing, shopping, medical facilities, and human services agencies. Edna has an HEB location as well, and the Jackson County Hospital District, but no other large trip attractors in the city. This combination of factors makes Edna a possible, but low-priority candidate for microtransit service at this time.

No Real Opportunities at This Time

Goliad

The City of Goliad has a population of 1,620 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,000 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include multi-unit housing and human services agencies. However, there are no major grocers or healthcare centers in the city. On paper, the low population and lack of major shopping attractors indicates that Goliad is not a good candidate for microtransit.

That said, Goliad County is already providing same-day service for some trip requests in the county; Goliad County is the only Golden Crescent Transit operator who routinely does so. The county's ability to meet same-day service requests can continue and not be confined to certain boundaries as long as they continue to avoid trip denials of advanced-reservation requests and also meet other service benchmarks. Goliad does not need an additional microtransit-enhanced service focused in the city limits.

Victoria

The City of Victoria has a population of 65,534 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,791 per square mile. Victoria has several major trip generators and is already served by the fixed-route system operated by Victoria Transit. Fixed-route service is the most efficient and cost-effective way to meet transit needs of residents in Victoria. The first step is to redesign the fixed route. It is

anticipated that productivity of a fixed route will be at least double microtransit. Microtransit service costs would be far higher than fixed route if it were to match ridership, due to fixed route's greater productivity levels.

Microtransit Software Considerations

If GCRPC and its subcontractors decide to pursue some of these targeted microtransit implementations, Golden Crescent Transit will need a software scheduling platform that can handle additional microtransit zone parameters and balance trip requests with available capacity. The Shah software package has an app and microtransit component available. First, GCRPC should check whether Shah can handle the microtransit service parameters through this available component. If so, the parameters for microtransit need to be examined further to see whether they meet the needs for specific zone boundaries, stop types, customer reservations, and scheduling prioritization.

If not, there are many off-the-shelf software products that can handle same-day service optimization functions. GCRPC and the county subcontractors can coordinate together on an RFP for a microtransit software solution. This would increase bidding power with the entities joined together, implementing a software product that could handle local and regional travel, and help build consistency in policies and procedures in scheduling and dispatching between the different Golden Crescent Transit providers.

Regional Service

Rather than operate as single county services, the region would benefit from a coordinated network of Golden Crescent Transit service; this would help reduce costs by sharing regional trips and streamlining transfer connections. Presently, each Golden Crescent Transit operator that provides demand-response trips traveling outside of their own county serves inter-county trips directly and without transfers. For example, Lavaca County serves trips going to/from Victoria, Gonzales County, and Jackson County. Some Golden Crescent Transit operators handle inter-regional trips with longer travel distances going outside the Golden Crescent Transit service area.

Each Golden Crescent Transit organization handles trip reservations and scheduling separately without coordination with GCRPC or the other counties. As a result, it is likely that there is duplication of service between the different Golden Crescent Transit providers, and probable as well as inefficient scheduling of trips traveling outside of counties. A better approach would be to implement fixed-schedule service for inter-regional trips, thereby only providing trips out of the county on planned days of the week and at set times. Fixed-schedule service works well in larger rural areas when there are not enough resources to cover all parts of the service area at all times. The service is set for different areas according to a schedule that is clearly posted and well-marketed. Often, the schedule is driven by the needs of riders traveling to and from dialysis appointments.

For example, trips from Hallettsville to Victoria could be set for two days per week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) with one morning run and one evening run. The morning run could leave in time to arrive at Victoria before 8:00 a.m., then the evening run from Victoria would leave after 5:00 p.m. Additionally, local coordination could then enable transfers to the local Golden Crescent Transit operator to complete the final trip leg. This would accommodate any commuters traveling between counties to major destinations.

Morning and evening runs could accommodate travel connections with more efficiency and curtail duplication of service. However, only two runs per day would not be as convenient for riders going to school, shopping, medical appointments, or conducting personal business; they do not want to spend nine to 10 hours in town. If there are enough of these riders, operators could also implement midday runs for some out-of-county connections. Midday service gives riders an opportunity to spend a few hours at a destination without having to spend all day at the destination city for school, shopping or doctor visit.

Our experience indicates that passengers generally accept this approach, and hospitals/medical facilities can assist by providing their cooperation with the coordination of scheduling. Each Golden Crescent Transit operator could also work with their customers to determine their regional travel needs and help set an optimal schedule for traveling to different city destinations. Starting with recurring dialysis appointments, for example, could be an initial base of ridership, with the ability to add on other travel needs. With better grouping of trips in fixed-scheduled service, Golden Crescent Transit will realize improved productivity and can achieve anywhere from six to 12 one-way trips per hour on these runs.

Golden Crescent Transit Organizational Issues and Needs: One Coordinated System

Golden Crescent Transit service is made up of five separate subcontractors and GCRPC (operating service in two counties). Based on observations, meetings, site visits and interviews, it is clear that these five subcontractors operate the services independently and in an uncoordinated manner. While a decision related to organization structures is well beyond the scope of this study, the study team's recommendation is that GCRPC and its providers operate as one network, working together to improve regional connectivity. This will ensure that local service is provided and that each county is connected to Victoria and other destinations beyond the county.

Coordination Needs

The whole is more effective for customers than the sum of its parts. To operate as one system with five subcontractors, there should be a number of changes that will help the subcontractors improve their service:

- **Services** – Each subcontractor operates their own service with little connection to others. Some even pass through other counties without stopping for customers. Most primarily serve their clients (most are senior centers).

- **Vehicles/Maintenance** – Each subcontractor handles their own maintenance and has many older vehicles. In some cases, additional accessible buses are needed. GCRPC should consider managing/coordinating maintenance of FTA funded vehicles, taking some of that burden from the providers.

- **Technology** – There are a number of proven technology products for rural and microtransit. If GCRPC wishes to conduct a procurement, management and key staff should observe the technology at a transit system in regular operation as part of the process.

- **Training** – GCRPC should conduct and/or contract the training of all vehicle operators.

- **Fares** – Fares are uncoordinated and are different in each area.

- **Website** – There is no real online presence for Golden Crescent Transit with the exception of a 35-page attachment. Information for whom to contact for a ride is on pages 7 and 8. GCRPC should consider having a separate identity for Golden Crescent Transit and a webpage with all pertinent information.

Consistent Golden Crescent Transit Policies

Golden Crescent Transit service has different policies depending on the operator and the county where the trip is taking place. Generally, Golden Crescent Transit service is available on weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., though the operating service spans can vary between providers. There is no standard pickup window policy for Golden Crescent Transit trips that is shared between different Golden Crescent Transit providers (even though they are not ADA paratransit trips, it would be a good consideration for service delivery and performance). Consistent policies for scheduling and dispatching practices between providers would help with monitoring the service quality of delivery between different providers.

Fare Policies

Fare policies and rates charged vary between different counties/providers. The project team's understanding is that GCRPC, Goliad County, and Gonzales County suspended the fares for Golden Crescent Transit trips during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this fare suspension continues. Calhoun County has fare rates based on trip mileage and rider type (Figure 5-9). Friends of Elder Citizens, Inc. has different sets of fare rates for Jackson County (Figure 5-10) versus Matagorda County (Figure 5-11), both based on travel destination and rider type. Lavaca County's fare rates are based on trip mileage and number of stops (for trips up to three miles) (Figure 5-12).

Figure 5-9: Calhoun County Golden Crescent Transit Fare Rates

Fare Miles	Youth/Adult	Elderly/Disabled
0 - 5 Miles	$2.00	$1.50
6 - 15 Miles	$6.00	$4.00
16 - 45 Miles	$7.00	$5.00

Figure 5-10: Friends of Elder Citizens – Jackson County Golden Crescent Transit Fare Rates

JACKSON COUNTY BUS FARES	
Local Fares:	
In Town: General Public	$3.00
Jackson County:	$5.00
County to County:	$10.00
(Victoria)	
Region: Houston	$65.00
Corpus Christi	$75.00
San Antonio	$80.00
Elderly, Disabled, Children:	
In Town:	$1.50
Jackson County:	$2.50
County to County:	$5.00

OUT OF COUNTY BUS FARES	
Regional Fares:	
General Public:	
Houston	$65.00
San Antonio	$80.00
Corpus Christi	$75.00
Elderly, Disabled & Children:	
Houston	$32.50
San Antonio	$40.00
Corpus Christi	$37.50

**Call 361-782-5511 to find out more information on how to schedule a ride.

*All listed fares are one way

**Children under 5 ride free with a paying adult

Figure 5-11: Friends of Elder Citizens – Matagorda County Golden Crescent Transit Fare Rates

General Public	Elderly, Disabled, Children	Regional Trips Outside of Matagorda County
PALACIOS 361-972-2715	**PALACIOS** 361-972-2715	**PALACIOS** 361-972-2715
$3.00 Palacios (In Town)	$1.50 Palacios (In Town)	$1.50 Palacios (In Town)
BAY CITY 979-245-6800	**BAY CITY** 979-245-6800	**BAY CITY** 979-245-6800
$3 Bay City (In Town)	$1.50 Bay City (In Town)	$1.50 Bay City (In Town)
$5 In Matagorda County	$2.50 In Matagorda County	$2.50 In Matagorda County
$30 County to County (Lake Jackson, Wharton, El Campo,& Angleton)	$15.00 County to County (Lake Jackson, Wharton, El Campo,& Angleton)	$15.00 County to County (Lake Jackson, Wharton, El Campo,& Angleton)

Figure 5-12: Lavaca County Golden Crescent Transit Fare Rates

From Pick-Up Location:
Up to 3 miles - $1.00 per stop
4 - 20 miles - $5.00 one way
21 - 50 miles - $10.00 one way
51 - 70 miles - $25.00 one way
71 plus miles - $50.00 one way

Fare rates that differ for intra-county trips may be okay as they are for GCRPC and its subcontractors. However, further regional coordination and implementation of fixed schedules for out-of-county trips would benefit from consistent fare policy development for communication with customers.

Technology Consistency

Each of the county operators uses the same Shah scheduling software. Currently, scheduling for Golden Crescent Transit trips in different counties is handled by each agency's own Transportation Service Representatives (TSRs) staff. This makes sense, given that each operator is responsible for their own vehicle fleets, operators, and communication with customers. However, TSRs between different agencies appear to not use the Shah software platform in a consistent manner with respect to negotiating and scheduling trip times, nor for the monitoring day-of-service issues.

There does not appear to be a training manual or standard process for training new TSR staff across the Golden Crescent Transit program. County subcontractors have expressed the need for training to help with functions like using the Shah software. Training and documentation on using the software in a consistent manner would help to ensure that each Golden Crescent Transit operator uses the software to its full potential, in a way that creates realistic and efficient vehicle run schedules.

Vehicle and Maintenance Needs

GCRPC already provides some assistance to the Golden Crescent Transit subcontractors with respect to new vehicle procurements. Some subcontractors will also procure additional vehicles with their own local funds. During discussion with staff from the rural subcontractors, many expressed a need for additional vehicles because those vehicles need repair and are operating with low/non-existent spare ratios. All Golden Crescent Transit program operators would benefit from additional coordination of vehicle procurement needs. Combining grant efforts between the counties would help leverage higher buying power of the group and increase the number of accessible vehicles in the subcontractor fleets.

Maintenance of vehicles is an additional issue for subcontractors who rely on maintenance services from local repair shops (which can take a long time to complete major repairs and get vehicles back to revenue service ready). A joint maintenance service procurement or initiative for a shared maintenance facility would benefit Golden Crescent Transit subcontractors by increasing responsiveness to the maintenance needs of their fleets.

Sponsorships

The Golden Crescent Transit program has not explored sponsorship opportunities to help provide local funds to support service. Separately, subcontractors have past and current local sponsor agreements for service in their own county. For example, Friends of Elder Citizens, Inc. has an agreement with an area workforce agency for seasonal summer school trips. New Horizons at Yoakum Community Hospital has third-party billing arrangements, separately with GCRPC and Lavaca County, to pay for transportation of clients using Golden Crescent Transit.

First, additional sponsorship opportunities working with organizations for medical appointments, job training, and education programs could be explored by GCRPC and subcontractors. These opportunities may help increase ridership to these destinations, thereby improving service productivity. If properly priced in the agreement, they would pay for themselves. Secondly, GCRPC and subcontractors could coordinate to negotiate service sponsorships, particularly for destinations where multiple operators serve; this sponsorship coordination would also be tied into the regional service efforts for service scheduling and policies. These are discussed in detail in the following section.

Coordination and Technical Assistance

As mentioned in the previous examples of rural service strategies, Golden Crescent Transit service would benefit from increased coordination between GCRPC and the subcontractors on a variety of operations and administrative levels. During the project outreach to stakeholders, improved coordination was articulated as a need by all subcontractors as well as GCRPC staff. The rural subcontractors are in need of increased guidance and leadership related to compliance, vehicle performance, training assistance, funding opportunities, local match, procurement, technology usage, and service planning.

Procurement, Maintenance, and Reporting

GCRPC should continue to take the lead on coordinated training and vehicle procurements through state and federal capital grant programs. In addition, GCRPC can help coordinate procurements in concert with other grant opportunities that may exist for individual counties' maintenance issues and technical assistance. GCRPC should make sure that each of its contractors are aware of service and reporting requirements and host training for its providers if requirements are not met.

Informational Resources

GCRPC can help disseminate and spread awareness to the subcontractors on available informational resources such as conferences and meetings (e.g., TxDOT, TTA, NRTAP), training workshops, and webinars. Any such resources that directly address specific issues, affecting either a particular county or the whole region, would benefit by the further development of transit knowledge at each of the Golden Crescent Transit operator agencies. Coordinated visits to particular meetings or training events, encouragement of attendance, and scholarship funding for staff travel can also be considered.

Driver Training

GCRPC can help implement consistent driver training practices and materials between all agencies in the Golden Crescent Transit program. Presently, there are no driving training standards across the entire Golden Crescent Transit program; driver training between the subcontractors varies with respect to the materials used to train new hires and whether GCRPC provides support to the subcontractor for new hires. Some subcontractors train new hires for themselves with another driver.

The driver training materials and procedures should first be standardized and implemented across the Golden Crescent Transit program. Operations and training staff from all Golden Crescent Transit providers would meet together to determine and review the materials to ensure they both meet the needs of all agencies and that each agency has the capacity to implement them in ongoing practice. Training materials for drivers should include both new hire training, retraining for drivers following road incidents, and refresher material on an annual/bi-annual basis.

An additional strategy would be joint driver training between agencies facilitated by GCRPC. This would coincide with the standardization of training materials as well as refinement of consistent Golden Crescent Transit service policies and regional service coordination. GRCPC (or a subcontractor agency) would host driver training on a recurring basis that would efficiently group multiple new hires together to learn about common safety and procedural training information across providers. Specifics on rules and procedures within a specific county/human service agency provider would still be handled inhouse. This strategy would help improve consistency of training for drivers in the Golden Crescent Transit system, which would improve system performance as well as customer satisfaction.

Software Improvements and Training

GCRPC can also help implement training on scheduling software used by TSR staff at the Golden Crescent Transit providers. Presently, there is no formal training for using Shah software at any of the agencies. This could present problems both with respect to efficient service scheduling and delivery, as well as in instances of staff turnover. It is in the interest of all agencies involved with Golden Crescent Transit that the scheduling software relied upon for service delivery is being used to the best of its capabilities.

Training materials and procedures for TSRs to use the software platform should be standardized. Golden Crescent Transit can start with available materials from Shah (or if applicable in the future, the other software company), then add information related to Golden Crescent Transit service policies on negotiation windows, grouping trips, dispatch monitoring, etc. As new TSRs are hired at any agency, they can be trained on the software by the most experienced and capable GCRPC staff. Existing TSRs would also go through a quality assurance check to ensure their proper use of the software at the point of standardization.

As new service implementations (i.e., same-day microtransit) and/or software systems are implemented, GCRPC would need to update technology implementation and training materials across all Golden Crescent Transit providers. Again, this would be to the advantage of all providers and improve the service delivery quality across the program.

Service Connections

If GCPRC and the subcontractors choose to implement fixed-schedule service for regional travel, coordination on service days between various city pairs, along with service stops and times, benefit both Golden Crescent Transit operations and communication with customers. Ideally, the pick-up and drop-off points for fixed-schedule service would occur at either major trip destinations (e.g., medical facilities, employers) or transit hubs (e.g., transfer hub in Victoria).

Golden Crescent Transit providers could also work together to facilitate timed transfers from the fixed-schedule stop to a local in-county provider for customers traveling to a different destination. Consistent use of the scheduling software platform and communication between TSRs at different Golden Crescent Transit providers would facilitate this process. The result would be better efficiency for vehicles traveling on inter-county regional service, and a reduction in duplication of service between Golden Crescent Transit providers on the whole.

Vehicles – Golden Crescent Transit and Victoria Transit

Golden Crescent Transit and Victoria Transit have differing vehicle needs. The primary difference is capacity. Victoria Transit will need 30-foot buses for optimal fixed-route service, while Golden Crescent Transit and Victoria Transit's ADA service require cutaway vehicles of various sizes, as well as some smaller vehicles for specialized service.

The Right Vehicle for the Need

Different transit conditions require different transit vehicles. Service area characteristics may require smaller, more nimble vehicles or larger vehicles with more capacity. Generally, transit systems prefer vehicles that are a little larger rather than smaller, and that was before social distancing was necessitated. Further, Victoria Transit will only pay 20 percent (or less) of the cost of vehicles. There have been grants offering zero local match for alternative-powered vehicles. When it is time to procure vehicles, this should be a consideration, because now, bigger is better. All vehicles should be accessible to persons with disabilities. **There should also be a 20 percent spare vehicle requirement in each county.**

Many of the rural county contractors operate 100 percent of their fleet during peak times. A zero percent spare ratio makes it difficult to complete preventative/safety maintenance without eliminating service or denying trips. However, through effective scheduling and coordination with maintenance contractors, most of the counties seem to be accomplishing preventative maintenance without service disruptions. The lack of vehicles does create problems when breakdowns occur, as well as overall capacity issues in the provision of service. **This is a safety issue that should be addressed immediately. The Study Team recommends that GCRPC and subcontractor staff track and report all vehicle breakdowns and missed trips due to breakdowns.**

Size and Type

The two basic services all require specific vehicles. Urban fixed-route vehicles should be the largest and at least medium-duty rated. Urban paratransit and rural transit can use smaller vehicles since there are typically no more than two to three people onboard at a time. The urban paratransit vehicles can be light-duty cutaways and should be small. Rural service also calls for cutaway vehicles of different sizes as well as vans, minivans or even sedans. While all vehicles don't have to be accessible, each county must be able to provide the same level of service to a person needing an accessible vehicle as well one that can ride in a sedan.

Bus Typologies

There are a number of fixed-route bus types to consider. The three below are the general types available. A cost range is introduced here, and it should be understood that with an 80 percent federal match, the cost to Victoria for a medium-duty bus is only about $20,000 to $30,000 more per bus than a light-duty cutaway.

For the additional cost, Victoria would get vehicles that:

- Could last twice as long
- Provide a more comfortable ride
- Have a low floor and a ramp instead of a lift
- Have greater capacity

Cut-away – Small Bus

Cut-away chassis are smaller than buses and usually have a high floor (Figure 5-13). These vehicles customarily have a seating capacity of between eight and 25 seats and their size can vary significantly from 15 to 25 feet long. These vehicles have a five- to seven-year life as a front-line vehicle—less if used in heavy duty service.

The cut-aways are used in a wide variety of applications, most often used as feeder buses, dial-a-ride and ADA paratransit service, and the less-traveled rural routes. All should have lifts or a low floor with ramp. These vehicles range from $150,000 to $200,000, depending on size and configuration.

Figure 5-13: Cutaway Bus

Medium-Duty Transit Coach

Medium-duty low-floor buses (Figure 5-14), typically 30 feet in length are practical in systems similar to Victoria. These buses are designed to last up to 10 years and allow for a standard bus configuration without the cost of a heavy-duty bus. The buses seat 20 – 25 passengers and can typically transport two to six people using wheelchairs. These vehicles typically cost between $300,000 to $400,000 each.

Figure 5-14: Medium Duty Low Floor Bus

Fuels

Consideration should be given to alternative fuels, as some of the new vehicles may last for 10 years. Keep in mind that **some fuel types such as hybrids and electric may be available for little or no match, making the economics work.**

Potential bus fuel types include:

- **Electric Buses** – At this time, these vehicles would not be appropriate for rural areas due to a lack of infrastructure. Urban areas are starting to use electric buses. These vehicles will require an investment in new maintenance infrastructure and technicians.
- **Hybrid Buses** – The diesel/hybrid buses work best in urban areas with significant stop-and-go traffic. These buses are common in larger cities and should be considered for Victoria if there is little or no match required. These buses require additional maintenance tools and expertise.
- **CNG Buses** – These buses have been available for many years and will reduce the carbon footprint. CNG combustion produces fewer undesirable gases. If a fueling facility is available to transit, this is a viable alternative. Santa Fe, New Mexico is an example of an all CNG fleet.
- **Diesel** – It is still the dominant form of propulsion in buses, but that is rapidly changing. Fossil fuels are subject to market volatility.
- **Gasoline** – Gasoline engines are not recommended. **These are among the most expensive to operate and produce the most greenhouse gases.** Further, the volatility of fossil fuel costs should be considered as the nation weans itself from gas.

Fuel typologies have benefits and come with costs. Compressed natural gas and electric vehicles require significant facility investment if those facilities are not available and can require additional spare vehicles. However, it should be understood that capital expenses are typically limited to a 20 percent or lower match for local systems, making the tradeoff of vehicles even less expensive.

Alternative Fuel Considerations

There are now a variety of fuel and battery choices for transit vehicles. Decisions on the type of fuel chosen are based on a number of factors that decision makers should consider:

- **Environmental Policy** – Alternative fuels and batteries can make a difference in the local environment. Decisions are often made on this basis alone.
- **Various benefits** –
    - Electric vehicles are coming of age and have lower operating costs.
    - Hybrid buses are best in stop-and-go traffic.
    - CNG is viable.
    - Gas buses are the most expensive to operate.
- **Operational** – There are a number of operational issues and costs associated with alternative fuels that make the use of alternatives difficult at this time, including but not limited to:
    - Infrastructure – Fueling/charging facilities, maintenance equipment, and skills making use of alternatives are still problematic at this time. That will change.
    - Expertise – Maintenance staff with specialties in electric and hybrid technologies would need to be hired, and that won't happen until the local governments make the switch.
    - Availability of specialty repair vendors.

- **Financial** – Vehicle and on-going costs vary and are a major consideration to the type of vehicle used:
    - Often the FTA will offer alternative-fueled vehicles at a 90 percent or even 100 percent federal match.
    - Electric vehicles have the lowest operating costs and do not need gasoline or diesel.

Marketing and Branding

Like any other customer-driven business, marketing and appropriate branding are critical to transit and are simple and not costly to implement. The current service has no real name, no system identifiers, and no brand.

The best advertising is good-looking buses with an attractive paint scheme, logos, and professional drivers that make the community proud. Plain "institutional" white vehicles will blend into the background and be invisible to the community, which is never good for ridership. As with any business it is important to be noticed (in a good way). Vehicles should be ordered from the factory with the specified paint scheme—first, to ensure professionalism and second, to pay for painting with the capital grant.

1. Monitor the service to ensure everything is appropriate and performance measures are being met.

2. Initiate marketing efforts two to three months prior to the changes, culminating in a significant promotional effort.

Recommendations – Marketing

The most effective rural transit marketing is grassroots or low-cost in nature. As of the writing of this plan, GCRPC developed a new brand for the rural service – Golden Crescent Transit – with a new logo and paint scheme. This was an excellent move that meets all of the requirements for branding below. Victoria Transit is clearly in need of a full branding effort to develop their image as public transit and not just the senior bus in the community. The branding and marketing effort should be treated as a business decision, designed to help promote the system and ultimately encourage and increase ridership and service levels.

Continuing to Develop the Brand

In parallel with the development of the new services, a branding effort should begin. It is here that the brand should be determined. This can be done professionally or in-house, but must look and sound professional in every way. It may be possible to take advantage of local resources such as colleges and high schools for naming or branding ideas (college).

The following steps should be taken:

- **Victoria system name or nickname** – This is the name most will use. Perhaps a contest among students, combined with a full rebranding celebration.
    - **Recognizable** - Like VIA in San Antonio, the HOP, CARTS, Santa Fe Trails or any number of different systems that are recognized by their names. Sometimes a simple name like Paris Metro says it all.
    - **Identifies with the area** – Alamo Transit (good) but often called ART (it has no meaning). What colors are emblematic of Victoria?
    - **Catchy** – The Blue Bus is the system's nickname and is an instant identifier as all of their vehicles are bright blue.
    - **Avoid acronyms in most cases** – Names like SCAT (the absolute worst), CUATS, and ETHRA, for example, have little to no meaning and sound terrible.

- **Vehicle colors and paint scheme** – This requires something eye-catching on the vehicles that will be noticed and can instill pride. Is there a local color that symbolizes the area (green for example)? This scheme should be developed.

- **Bring in system sponsors** – Having sponsor names on the sides of the vehicles perhaps in a corner, can lend credibility to the system.
- **Establish a website and Facebook/social media presence** – GCRPC should establish a presence with a website that can stand alone or be accessed on the Golden Crescent Transit and City of Victoria websites with one click. GCRPC should also update and monitor any online presence on a regular basis. GoBus, part of East Texas Council of Governments, has an excellent stand-alone website. https://www.gobustransit.com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Sustainability for the Future – Golden Crescent Transit and Victoria Transit

Future service will require continued sustainability, as available local funding outside Victoria is minimal. The one area where Golden Crescent Transit can generate additional revenue is through the private sector.

- **Private sector sponsorship programs** – This is a good way to secure funding. Companies such as Walmart, HEB and others have provided support in other communities in the past. The healthcare community has often stepped up as well. Often these types of organizations have charitable foundations and other sources of funding available for community engagement in small cities and rural counties.

Sponsorship Programs: More Than Advertising

Transit has a long history of providing advertising on and in buses for additional revenue. Many systems have engaged in advertising over the years, but a sponsorship program is more than simply advertising. Instead of the usual selling of just one form of advertising, Golden Crescent Transit should sell sponsorship packages. Since sponsorship and advertising funds are an important source of local funding, this program can help expand the service. Walmart and HEB, for example, have been known to support transit to their stores, creating a win-win for GCRPC and the retailers.

This is a potential source of revenue for GCRPC in the future. Large corporations have been known to participate in sponsorship programs, and typically these companies (such as Walmart) have far more money than all the cities and counties in the service area combined.

This activity should be implemented at the end of the rebranding, with new vehicles in the new paint scheme and the new name. Potential sponsors want to be associated with a first-class service in which the community can take pride.

Identifying the Service

As discussed above, the program is designed to sell a service to both public and private sponsors. Possible services for sale can include (but should not be limited to):

1. Sponsorship services at any level
    a. Recognized as a sponsor on Golden Crescent Transit or Victoria Transit how to ride guide (system map and schedule).
    b. Sponsored by… on all system literature and advertising.
    c. Decal on the side or back of the bus.
    d. Dedicated shuttle.
    e. Special promotions sponsorship.

2. Higher level sponsorship services
    a. Company logo on GCRPC maps and brochures.
    b. Placing a shelter for customers and/or employees.
    c. Placing a stop that is conducive to customers and/or employees - this could include going into a parking lot and stopping next to the facility.
    d. Route named for sponsor.
    e. Bus wrap.

If properly packaged, these services have considerable value to businesses such as:

1. **Large retailers** – Walmart, Target, HEB and others: supermarkets are excellent examples, malls and big box stores are others.

2. **Hospitals** – And other healthcare facilities.

3. **Large locally-based corporations** – Are there any large corporations based in the area?

4. **Small locally-based companies** – Any local company can participate at a number of levels.

5. **Fast food restaurants** – Wrapped buses are popular with some of the largest chains.

6. **Television, radio stations, and local newspapers** – There are opportunities with these organizations. They can give GCRPC valuable advertising.

Develop Sponsorship Levels and Packages

After determining what will be for sale, the following activities should be accomplished:

1. **Price the items** – Attach value to each item for sale. Check with firms that wrap buses to determine the cost of a wrap. Items should be priced competitively with similar types of advertisements, such as billboards, and television and radio advertising. Think big! Both large and small firms should have opportunities. Set up multi-year packages for semi-permanent advertising such as bus wraps, shelter and bench signs.

2. **Develop sponsorship packages** – After pricing the various services to be provided, GCRPC should put them in sponsorship packages to maximize revenue. Each level of sponsorship should have a name to it. For example, gold, silver, and bronze. Examples can include:

    - ***High-End Sponsor (Five-Star, Platinum, etc.)*** – The value of these services is significant. High-end services should only go to those sponsors willing to pay over, for example, $10,000 per year (with three-year contracts). Packages can be combined based on the customer or sponsor's need. These high-end services include bus wraps, a shelter in front of facility (with advertising), an intercounty route named after the sponsor (e.g., Mall Route, Hospital Route or College Route) and logo on Victoria Transit map. Each of these services should be worth up to $10,000 per year, and more if they are combined.

- ***Mid-Level Sponsors*** – These sponsors should have access to a variety of packages that include advertising on a shelter(s), bench(s), and internal advertising. A decal on the back of the bus, and a name in the riders' guide are also available. Other opportunities can include sponsoring special promotions.

- ***Entry-Level Sponsors*** – Small local sponsors have a place in sponsorship as well. Packages can include advertising on benches, and internal advertising. Certain special promotions should be priced for the entry-level sponsor, and recognition as a sponsor should be on promotional material.

Sponsorship Implementation Tasks

- **Create promotional material** – Develop materials to sell the sponsorships. The material should be of high quality.

- **Recruit supporters** – Community and political leaders as well can be recruited to help sell the packages. Attempt to get local media outlets to assist.

- **Sell sponsorships** – After all of the preparation has been completed, sales can be initiated. Both large and small sponsors should be sought. For larger firms, the first attempts should be with local contacts. If attempts with large firms fail at the local level - contact regional or corporate offices.

Limits on Advertising

GCRPC should set standards for advertising on GCRPC transit vehicles. Advertising should be tasteful, within the normal bounds of advertising accepted in the community. It is recommended that GCRPC refuse any advertising of political, religious, or adult oriented content or intent. This will only cause controversy where none is wanted.

Advertising should be of a quality design and application. All advertising should meet quality standards developed through GCRPC. It should be professionally designed and installed - it must look good.

Funding Potential

With an aggressive, professional sales approach this program has the potential to generate significant unencumbered cash for the organization. The vehicles serving as rolling billboards can generate more than $500 per month per vehicle (after expenses). Assuming 10 vehicles are wrapped, this approach can generate $60,000 per year in revenue. Additional sponsorships can generate approximately $10,000 annually for a net revenue of $70,000 annually.

Implementation

These strategies and ideas are presented to GCRPC and the City of Victoria to improve service in the future. They can be accepted as is, with modifications, or they can be rejected. GCRPC should carefully follow this chapter, knowing that additional support can be made available.

Golden Cresent Transit – Initial Activities

These are the initial steps to initiate change and improvements for customers:

1. Vehicle inventory, assessment and a 10-year replacement plan – A key issue, especially in the rural areas, and should be one of the first steps.
    - Follow up and secure funding for new vehicles.
2. Develop policies and procedures systemwide.
3. Secure appropriate technology – either existing technology or a new product.
4. Conduct round of public meetings – seeking input into current and future service.
5. Establish a pilot microtransit service in one of the top-rated small cities. Follow the guidance from TxDOT: https://ftp.txdot.gov/pub/txdot/ptn/programs/2023/texas-rural-microtransit-guidebook.pdf
6. Work with providers to develop a comprehensive set of regional schedules.
7. Reduce redundancies – there is significant duplication of management and dispatching. These positions can be put into direct operation of additional service in each county.
8. Separate website for Golden Crescent Transit – as stated earlier, a separate website is preferable, similar to the one established by GoBus (https://www.gobustransit.com).
9. Celebrate the grand reopening – new faster service, direct, greater convenience for customers.

Victoria Transit

These are the recommended first steps in implementing change.

1. Conduct public meetings to inform public of changes and to receive input from the public and stakeholders.
2. Vehicle inventory, assessment, and a 10-year replacement plan – A key issue, this should be one of the first steps.
    - Follow up and secure funding for new vehicles.
3. Finalize new route structure – no loop routes.
    - Document all turns for each route.
    - Plan for movement of shelters – many current shelters will now be off-route.
        - They should be moved to new locations based on usage.
4. Branding – Victoria Transit may want to consider a full branding effort with a colorful nickname.
5. Separate website for Victoria Transit with all information at one place.
6. Implementation planning – do not implement new service until fully ready.
7. Celebrate the grand reopening – new, faster service, direct, greater convenience for customers.

Appendix A

Study Goals and Objectives: Golden Crescent RPC Transit – Direction for the Future

Technical Memorandum No. 1
Study Goals and Objectives: Golden Crescent RPC Transit – Direction for the Future

Introduction

The Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission (GCRPC) encompasses a 7 county region including Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Jackson, Lavaca, and Victoria counties. The GCRPC provides small-urban transit through Victoria Transit and operates under agreement with the City of Victoria. The GCRPC also operates and contracts for both demand response rural transit through RTRANSIT and commuter service to the Port Lavaca area (operated directly). The commuter service was reviewed and assessed in a previous study and will not be detailed here, other than assessing how the service will be coordinated with the other components of the service.

The GCRPC requested consultant assistance to conduct a review of the existing rural and urban services and then develop strategies to help improve service connections and performance. Coordination within the rural system, including an assessment of service designs, as well as their connections into Victoria are key elements to this review. A review of the urban system in Victoria will also be included to identify opportunities for service and ridership improvements.

KFH Group will work with GCRPC to create a plan that will improve the performance of Victoria Transit and help build community support for the small urban transit system by making the service more user friendly and highlighting the transit system as a tool for economic development in the community. At the same time, the consultant team will analyze the structure and services in the RTRANSIT rural services looking a potential strategies to improve performance, operations and the organization of the rural transit system

First, the Overarching Goal will be introduced, followed by the proposed project goals and Key Issues and Themes.

Goals Statement

This project was kicked off through a meeting on April 23, 2024, with GCRPC staff and key stakeholders (Including Victoria MPO representatives, Members of the Economic Development Council, Victoria City Council Members, GCRPC Board members, Veterans advocates and County Commissioners) together

with members of the KFH Group consultant team and TxDOT representatives. The kick-off meeting included a discussion of the transit needs and issues in Victoria and in every county in the GCRPC service area. Also discussed were project timeframes, and major deliverables. In addition, the consultant team was able to gain a recent historical perspective from GCRPC and other key stakeholders that was crucial to the discussion and identification of key issues related to the project.

GCRPC and TxDOT staff have also provided the consultant team with the necessary information to begin work as requested. Based on kickoff meeting discussions and a review of the information supplied to date, the goals that follow were developed. These goals and objectives will guide the project through its various phases allowing the consultant team to target issue areas, as necessary.

Overarching Goal

The Overarching Goal for Transit

For each of our projects we have one overarching goal which we believe is shared by all of our clients:

Help provide for more trips for more people while providing cost effective, high quality, and safe transportation for our community.

The overarching goal of this effort is to provide GCRPC and its stakeholders and partners with a plan that will help improve transit performance in Victoria and the rural areas of the region and help build support for transit in the communities RTRANSIT and Victoria Transit serves.

Following are the specific goals and objectives identified at the start of the project. These goals were developed based on discussions with GCRPC staff and TxDOT representatives as well as a review of the information and data supplied by RTRANSIT and Victoria Transit. The final section, Key Themes, offers further refinement of objectives.

Project Goals and Objectives

1. **Ensuring that Key Stakeholders are Heard –** Stakeholder Engagement.
    a. Project Kick-off Meeting (April 23, 2024)
    b. Discussion of the urban and rural transit needs and issues, project timeframes, and major deliverables.
    c. Gain a recent historical perspective from GCRPC and other key stakeholders that will be crucial to the discussion and identification of key issues related to the project.

d. Engage City and MPO management to identify other key stakeholders in Victoria.
e. Engage appropriate County's stakeholders.
f. Ride the buses to gain a rider perspective.

2. **Creating Success and Support for Victoria Transit -** Urban Transit Service Plan
   a. Review existing services, assess unmet needs and develop strategies to improve the service and ridership.
   b. Improve the route structure of the service
   c. Engage stakeholders and help develop support for the transit service.
   d. Coordinate service with University of Houston and Victoria College.
   e. Complete a plan that will increase ridership without additional costs.

3. **Optimizing Rural Transit Services -** Rural Operations and Organizational Plan
   a. Review contracts and meet with contractors to assess services, needs, capacity and rural transit issues.
   b. Review existing services and develop service strategies to improve service. Deploy improved service strategies that will not require additional costs.
   c. Analyze opportunities for organizational improvements.

4. **Direction for the Future -** Final GCRPC Plan
   a. Based on the comments received by GCRPC, major stakeholders and TxDOT, the plan will be completed.

Key Themes

Urban Transit: Success Breeds Success – the Victoria Transit service planning process will analyze the existing service, funding, marketing, branding, fares and technology and identify opportunities for improvements in each area. Of particular focus of this plan:

- Cost reduction where appropriate
- Improved performance of the routes through enhanced service design
- Route profiling and improvement recommendations
- Major stakeholder engagement
- Review of procedures related to transfers, fare collection, data collection and reporting
- Funding analysis examining existing funding issues and potential new funding sources
- ADA and Title VI considerations and issues
- Technology and vehicle review
- Service to the colleges and university
- Economic development implications of transit service in Victoria
- Transit leadership and advocacy

The objective is to create service improvements that not only transport more people but improve

Victoria Transit's image in the community. Success breeds success. By developing service recommendations that improve overall service and visibility in the community, coordination, funding and community support becomes much more straightforward and easier to cultivate.

Possibilities in Rural Transit Improvements – The rural portion of this planning effort will include the following:

- Engagement of rural contractors to assess capabilities, issues and needs
- Rural service review examining productivity, major destinations and unmet need in the communities served.
- Short term recommendations for service improvements (i.e. scheduled regional service, microtransit, etc.) based on need and capability.
- Longer term organization recommendations looking at consolidation and improvement of organizational structures that lead to transit service improvements and transit customer service improvements.
- While not reviewing the commuter service in this study, we will use the analysis in our recent study to ensure that all commuter, rural and Victoria services are coordinated.

Short term goals and objectives for both aspects of this plan are to develop service recommendations that are feasible, easily implemented, cost effective (neutral) and improve the standing of GCRPC transit services and contracts in the region. By increasing transits success and visibility in the communities served, long term goals of organizational and funding improvements will require less effort to actualize.

Appendix B
Existing Conditions

Golden Crescent-Directions for the Future

Technical Memorandum 2:

Existing Conditions

August 2024

Prepared for:
TxDOT and Golden Crescent

KFH GROUP

Rockville, MD | Austin, TX

GCRPC
GOLDEN CRESCENT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Technical Memorandum No. 2: Existing Conditions

Introduction

The assessment of existing conditions will include the following two sections:

1. **Review of Demographics, Land Uses, and Travel Patterns** – This review will identify where potential transit users live and where people are going. Importantly, this review will also provide an understanding of the transit dependent makeup of the city.

2. **Review of Existing Service** – This review includes service benchmarks, ridership characteristics and performance assessments.

In this task we will first conduct an analysis to identify the demographic makeup of the eight individual counties (focus of the study) that include Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda, and Victoria in the Golden Crescent service area and its land uses. It is important to understand the basics of the service area – population, size, and density, as well as transit dependent populations.

This will be followed by a review of the existing service and its performance measures. We will assess Title VI implications (if any), and the study team will look at performance measures in pre-pandemic and post-pandemic conditions to determine the effectiveness of the current demand response service. The result will be an assessment of the existing services to determine their effectiveness in each part of the service area.

Review of Demographics, Land Uses, and Travel Patterns

This section addresses the population and where they are located, with an emphasis of identifying areas in need and comparing them to destinations. Distinct travel patterns are identified as well.

Population Profile

The following section provides a general population profile for Golden Crescent counties. It identifies and evaluates underserved population subgroups and reviews the demographic characteristics pertinent to a Title VI analysis.

Population Trends and Future Population Projection

As of the 2020 census, the Golden Crescent region has a total population of 229,494, with approximately 40% of the population residing in Victoria County. Matagorda (pop. 36,255) is the next most populous county after Victoria. The other six counties are all highly rural with no county possessing over 21,000 residents. The population trends in the Golden Crescent region are shown in Table 2-1.

In general, the population of the Golden Crescent region has remained relatively stable over the past two decades, with no individual county experiencing population growth or decline over 10% within either decade or over the full twenty years. Out of the eight counties, five counties have grown since 2000, with Victoria leading the way at 8.6% growth. Three counties Calhoun, DeWitt, and Matagorda have lost population since 2000, but none have declined by over 4.5%. At the regional level, Golden Crescent has experienced 1.6% and 1.8% growth over the previous two decades respectively, resulting in 3.4% growth since 2000. This growth is significantly lower than that of the State of Texas, which has seen almost 40% population growth over the same time period.

Table 2-1: Historical Population Trends, Golden Crescent

Geography	2000	2010	2020	2000-2010%	2010-2020%	2000-2020%
Calhoun	20,647	21,381	20,106	3.6%	-6.0%	-2.6%
DeWitt	20,013	20,097	19,824	0.4%	-1.4%	-0.9%
Goliad	6,928	7,210	7,012	4.1%	-2.7%	1.2%
Gonzales	18,628	19,807	19,653	6.3%	-0.8%	5.5%
Jackson	14,391	14,075	14,988	-2.2%	6.5%	4.1%
Lavaca	19,210	19,263	20,337	0.3%	5.6%	5.9%
Matagorda	37,957	36,702	36,255	-3.3%	-1.2%	-4.5%
Victoria	84,088	86,793	91,319	3.2%	5.2%	8.6%
Golden Crescent	221,862	225,328	229,494	1.6%	1.8%	3.4%
Texas	20,851,820	25,145,561	29,145,505	20.6%	15.9%	39.8%

SOURCE: US CENSUS 2020

Table 2-2 illustrates the projected population trends as estimated by the Texas Demographics Center. These projections extend through 2050 and indicate that, at the regional level, the population growth is anticipated to stagnate with both growth and decline of less than one percent for each of the next three decades, resulting negligible population changes by 2050. At the county level, population trends vary significantly. Three counties Jackson, Lavaca, and Victoria are projected to experience growth, with Victoria continuing its trend of minor growth at 5.8% and Jackson and Lavaca Counties experiencing high growth between 17% and 19%. Conversely, five counties Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, and Matagorda are projected to experience population decline with four of the five between 3-10% decline, and Calhoun County anticipated to experience a major decline of 25.8%.

Table 2-2: Future Projections, Golden Crescent

Geography	2020	2030	2040	2050	2020-2030%	2030-2040%	2040-2050%	2020-2050%
Calhoun	20,106	18,515	16,791	14,926	-7.9%	-9.3%	-11.1%	-25.8%
DeWitt	19,824	19,717	19,552	19,234	-0.5%	-0.8%	-1.6%	-3.0%
Goliad	7,012	6,803	6,648	6,559	-3.0%	-2.3%	-1.3%	-6.5%
Gonzales	19,653	19,204	18,674	17,796	-2.3%	-2.8%	-4.7%	-9.4%
Jackson	14,988	15,769	16,762	17,634	5.2%	6.3%	5.2%	17.7%
Lavaca	20,337	21,419	22,796	24,127	5.3%	6.4%	5.8%	18.6%
Matagorda	36,255	35,212	34,061	32,705	-2.9%	-3.3%	-4.0%	-9.8%
Victoria	91,319	93,954	96,082	96,608	2.9%	2.3%	0.5%	5.8%
Golden Crescent	229,494	230,593	231,366	229,589	0.5%	0.3%	-0.8%	0.0%
Texas	29,145,505	34,894,452	40,686,496	47,342,105	19.7%	16.6%	16.4%	62.4%

SOURCE: THE TEXAS DEMOGRAPHICS CENTER

Population Distribution in the Study Area

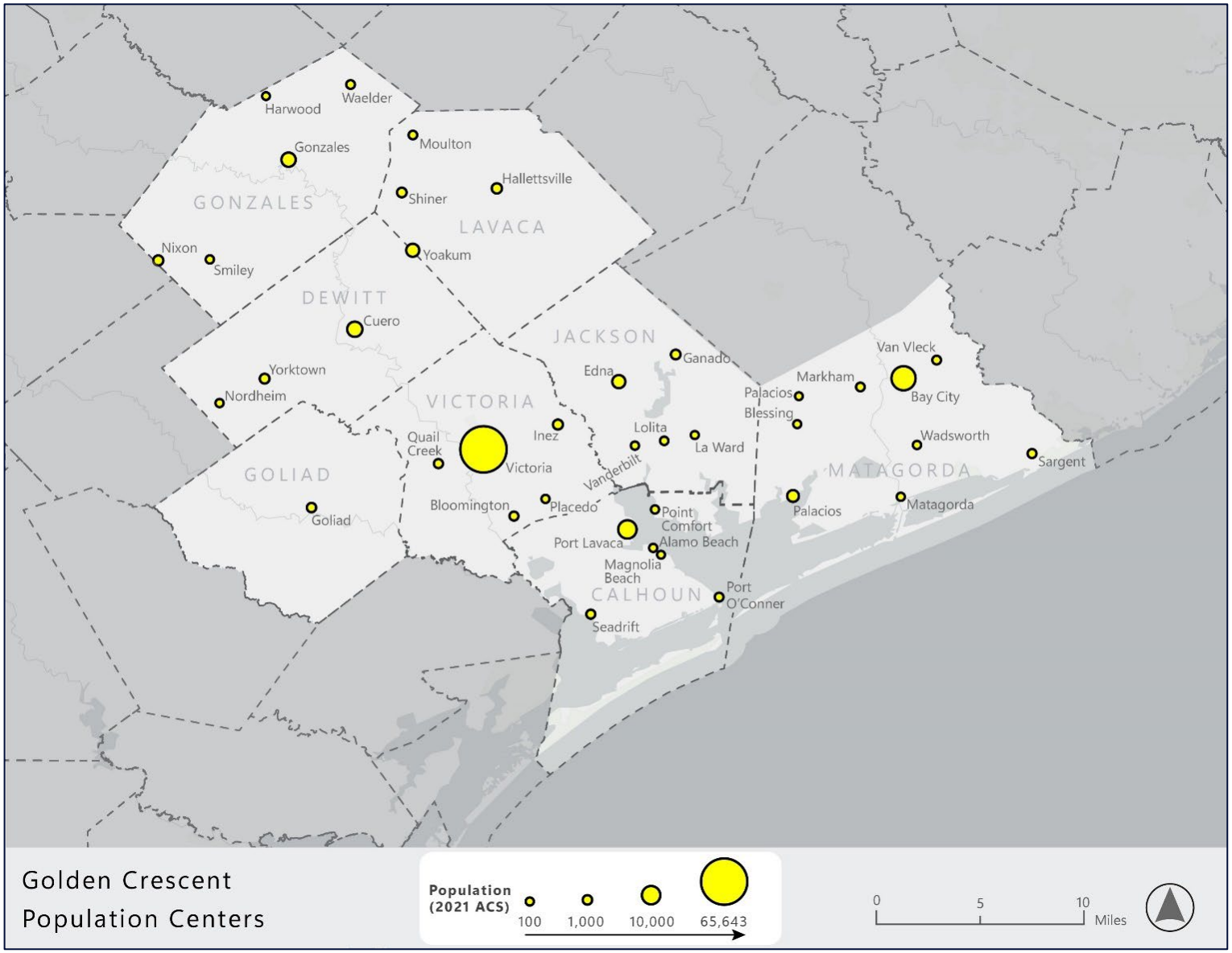
The Golden Crescent study area is primarily composed of vast rural areas, with a few population centers in each county. To better understand how the population is distributed and where people live, details about population centers and population density in the study area are discussed below.

Population Centers

Population centers, within the context of a county, are geographical locations where the majority of the county's residents reside. These centers include urbanized areas, cities, census designated places (CDPs), colonias, unincorporated communities, and similar settlements. They may vary in size and significance from one county to another. These centers in each county within Golden Crescent service area are shown in Figure 2-1 and are described as follows:

- **Calhoun County** is located in the southern part of Golden Crescent service area along the Matagorda and Espiritu Santo Bays. The county is home to Port Lavaca, which serves as an economic hub due to the importance of the Point Comfort port for the plastics and oil and gas industry.
    - The county seat and most populous city is ***Port Lavaca***, with a population of 11,545 as of the 2020 Census.
    - ***Seadrift*** (pop.: 1,577) is the only other place with a population over 1000 people.
    - Other centers with population below 1000 include Alamo Beach CDP, Magnolia Beach CDP, Point Comfort, and Port O'Conner.
- **DeWitt County** is located northwest of Victoria County in the Golden Crescent service area. The county is notable for having three population centers with a population over 2,000. The Guadalupe River flows through the county. As of 2020 Census, it had a population of 19,825 people.
    - The count seat is ***Cuero***, with a population of 8,138.
    - The other major population centers are ***Yoakum*** (pop.: 5,841), which spans the border of DeWitt and Lavaca County, and ***Yorktown*** (pop.: 2,183).
    - Nordheim is a CDP with a population below 500.

Figure 2-1: Population Centers, Golden Crescent Study Area



- **Goliad County** is situated in the southwestern portion of the study area and had a population of 7,012 as of the 2020 Census, making it the least populous county in the region. It is home to the Coleto Creek Power Station, a power plant currently transitioning from coal to natural gas and a major source of both revenue and pollution for the county. The county is only home to one major population center:
    - The county seat is ***Goliad***, with a population of about 1,816.
- **Gonzales County** is located in the northwestern part of the study area and has a population of 19,653 people.
    - ***Gonzales***, with a population of approximately 7,190, serves as the county seat.
    - ***Nixon*** (pop.: 2,898) and ***Waelder*** (pop.: 1,061) are the only other population centers with populations over 1,000.
    - Smiley and Harwood have populations below 750.
- **Jackson County** is located northeast of Victoria County and had a population of 14,988 in the 2020 Census.
    - ***Edna*** is the county seat as well as the most populus city with 5,985 residents.
    - ***Ganado*** is the only other major population center. It has a population of 2,318 as of the 2022 ACS.
    - Other CDPs include La Ward, Lolita, and Vanderbilt, each with a population under 600.
- **Lavaca County** is located in the northern part of the study area and had a population of 20,337 as of 2020 Census.
    - ***Yoakum***, which straddles both Lavaca and DeWitt County, is the largest population center with a population of 5,841, but the county seat is ***Hallettsville*** with a 2020 population of 2,729.
    - ***Ganado*** are also major populations centers with a population of 1,879 and 1,364, respectively.
    - The other population centers in the county are ***Shiner*** (pop.: 2,095) and ***Moulton*** (pop.: 868).
- **Matagorda County** is the next most populous county after Victoria with a population of 36,255 (2020 Census). It is located in the eastern portion of the study area along Matagorda Bay. In contrast to the rest of the region's counties which typically have fewer than five CDPs, Matagorda County has nine CDPs spread throughout the area.
    - ***Bay City*** is the most populous city and county seat. It had a population of 17,869 in 2022 (ACS). It is the second-most populous city in the Golden Crescent region after Victoria.

  - ***Palacios*** (pop.: 4,411), ***Markham*** (pop.: 1,222), ***Sargent*** (pop.: 1,240), ***and Van Vleck*** (pop.: 1,049) are the next four largest population centers and the only ones other than Bay City that have a population greater than 1,000.
  - Other CDPs include Blessing, Matagorda, Midfield, and Wadsworth.

- **Victoria County** is located in the central part of the study area and is the most populous county in the Golden Crescent region with a 2020 population of 91,319.
  - ***Victoria*** is the county seat as well as the most populus city with 68,481 residents (2022 ACS).
  - ***Inez*** (pop.: 2,435), ***Bloomington*** (pop.: 1,189), and ***Quail Creek*** (pop.: 1,301) are also major populations centers in the county.
  - The only other CDP in the county is Placedo.

Population Density

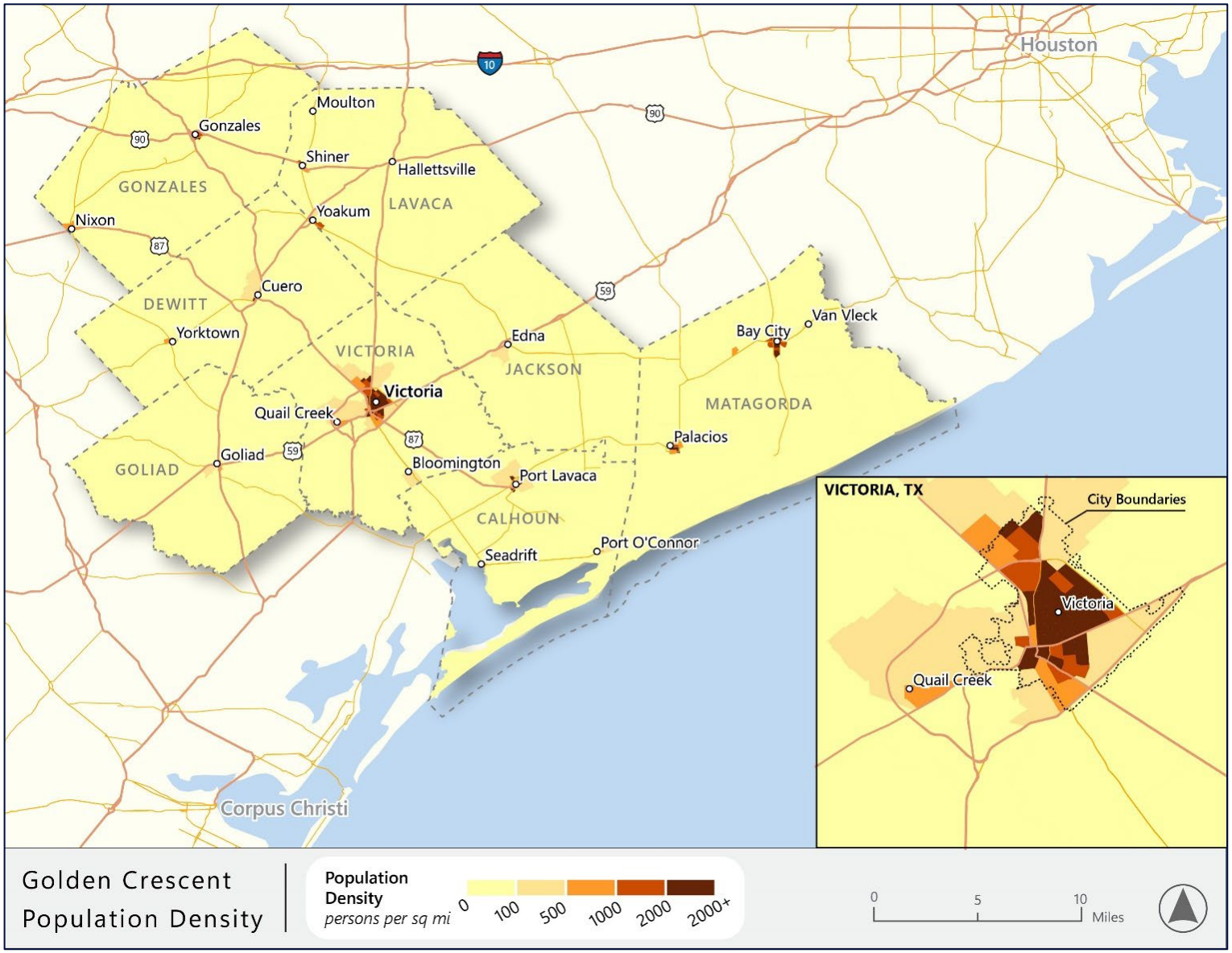
Population density is often an effective indicator of the types of public transit services that are most feasible within a service area. While exceptions always exist, an area with a density of 2,000 persons per square mile will generally be able to sustain frequent, daily fixed-route transit service. Conversely, an area with a population density below this threshold may be better suited for flex route or microtransit services.

As shown in Figure 2-2, census block groups with a population density of:

- **Small Urban with Destinations** – 2000 people per square mile or more are located in – ***Victoria, Bay City, Palacios, Port Lavaca, Cuero, Yoakum, and Gonzales.***
- **Small Urban with Few Destinations** - Between 1000-2000 people per square mile are found in - ***Shiner*** (in addition to the cities mentioned above).
- **Very Low Population** – Less than 500 people per square mile are found in the entirety of Jackson County.

These different types of service areas will each require specific solutions that will follow in the development of strategies.

Figure 2-2: Population Density, Golden Crescent Study Area



Transit Dependent Populations

Public transportation needs are defined in part by identifying the relative size and location of those segments within the general population that are most likely to use transit services. These transit dependent populations include individuals who may not have access to a personal vehicle or are unable to drive themselves due to age or income status. Identifying the location of these populations is essential for evaluating current transit services and the extent to which the services meet community needs.

The socio-economic characteristics that make up the transit dependent population include:

1. **Autoless Households**: Households without at least one personal vehicle.
2. **Senior Population**: Individuals 65 years and older.
3. **Youth Populations**: Youths and teenagers, ages 10 to 17 years.
4. **Below Poverty Populations**: Individuals who earn less than the federal poverty level.
5. **Individuals with Disabilities**: Individuals who are 18 years and above and are members of households (non-institutionalized population).

The total transit-dependent population is calculated by combining the five socio-economic characteristics mentioned above. Occasionally, an individual may meet multiple socio-economic criteria, leading to multiple counts in the transit-dependent categories. Consequently, this can result in percentages exceeding 100%, emphasizing a higher demand for transit service in that area.

Figure 2-3 displays the percentage of the transit-dependent population within the study area, including the locations of places and colonias. Five scores are established, ranging from Very Low to Very High, for each census block group. These classifications are determined by evaluating the average mean of the transit-dependent population across the entire Golden Crescent area. To clarify, areas with transit-dependent populations below the average are categorized as "Very Low," while areas with populations double the average are labeled as "Very High." The classifications of "Low, Moderate, and High" all sit between the average and double the average, and they are divided into thirds accordingly. Table 2-3 and Figure 2-4 compare transit-dependent populations among counties in the Golden Crescent region to the average study area mean. Figure 2-4 illustrates the percentage of the total transit dependent population (TDIP) in the study area. The major highlights from this analysis include:

- DeWitt, Gonzales, Goliad, and Matagorda counties have transit-dependent populations above the study area average with Goliad and Matagorda counties standing out as possessing over 5% greater transit-dependent populations above the Golden Crescent average.

- Goliad County has the highest percentage of autoless households at 8.5%, only moderately higher than the regionwide average of 5.9%, highlighting that there are not significant spatial disparities of autoless households in this area.

- All counties possess between 16-23.4% senior populations, between 12.1-17.1% populations of individuals with disabilities, and between 9.4-13.3% youth populations, further highlighting that transit-dependent populations are relatively evenly dispersed throughout the region.

Figure 2-3: Transit Dependent Population Percentage

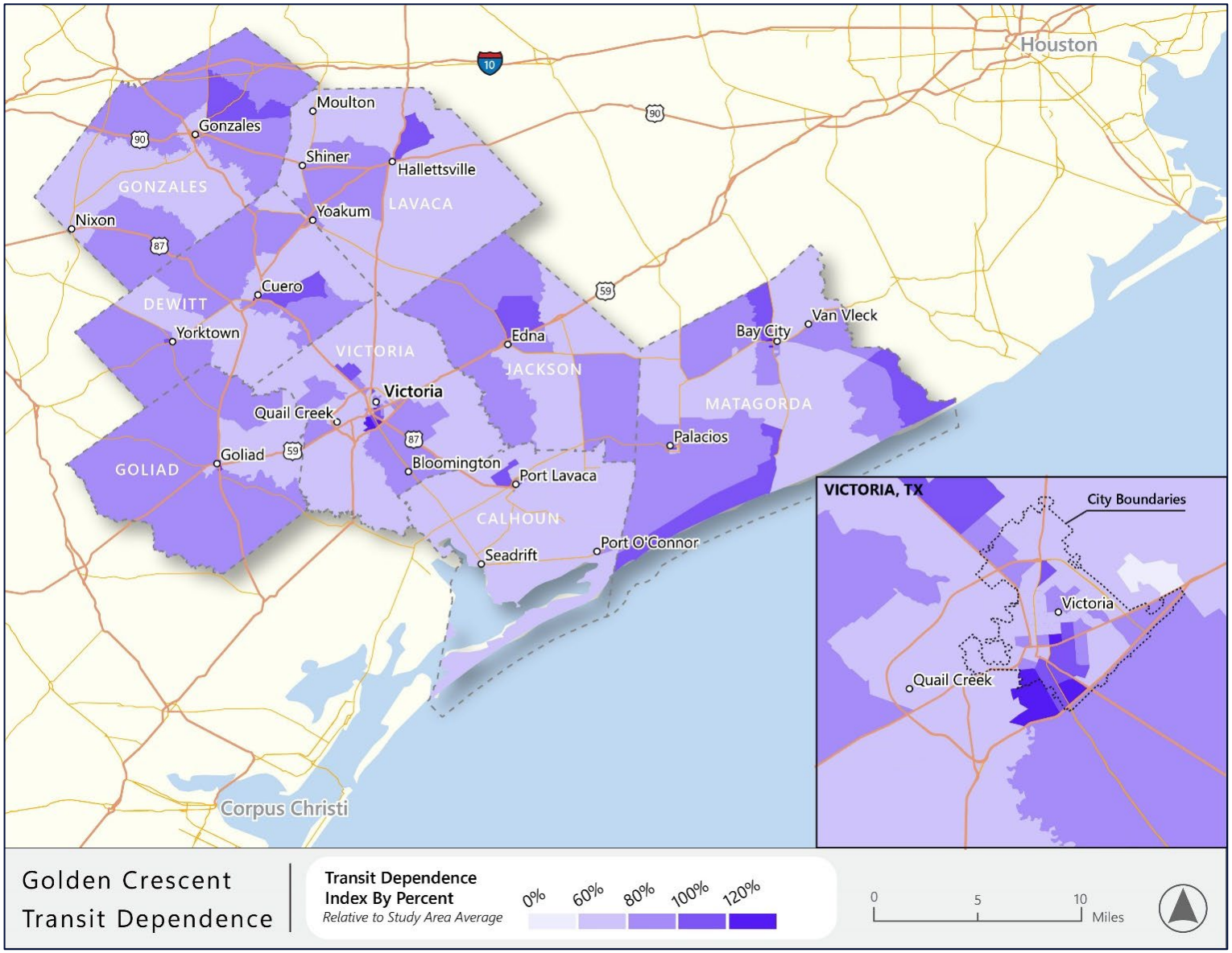


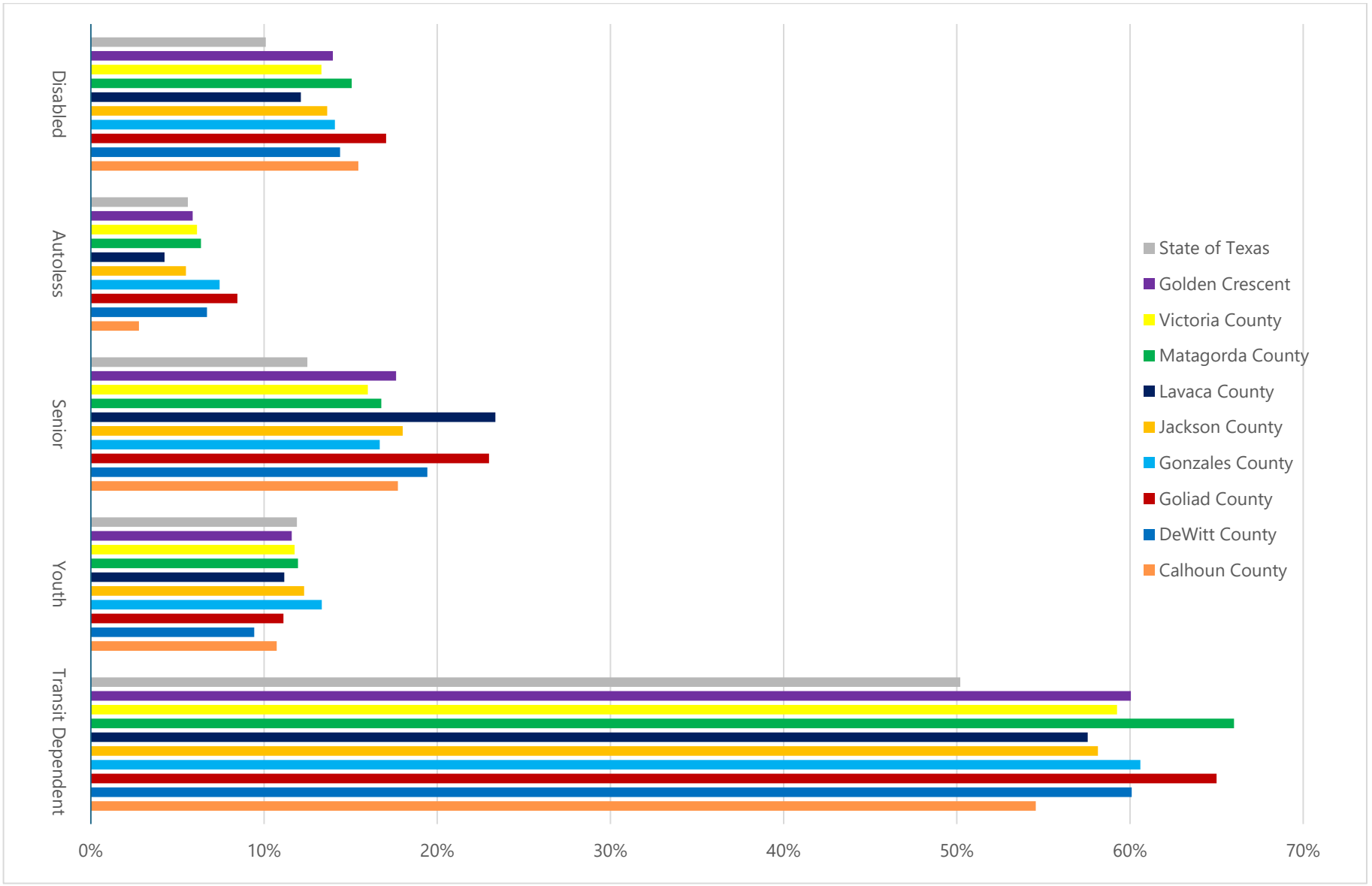
Table 2-3: Transit Dependent Populations by County

Transit Dependence Metric	Calhoun		DeWitt		Goliad		Gonzales	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Population	20,367		19,834		7,085		19,720	
Youth below 17	2,186	10.7%	1,871	9.4%	788	11.1%	2,629	13.3%
Senior 65+	3,611	17.7%	3,854	19.4%	1,629	23.0%	3,289	16.7%
Autoless households	215	2.8%	443	6.7%	226	8.5%	557	7.4%
Individuals with Disabilities	3,146	15.4%	2,854	14.4%	1,208	17.1%	2,778	14.1%
Total Transit Dependent	11,112	54.6%	11,920	60.1%	4,605	65.0%	11,950	60.6%

Transit Dependence Metric	Jackson		Lavaca		Matagorda		Victoria	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Population	14,971		20,287		36,323		91,280	
Youth below 17	1,843	12.3%	2,265	11.2%	4,344	12.0%	10,738	11.8%
Senior 65+	2,696	18.0%	4,739	23.4%	6,091	16.8%	14,599	16.0%
Autoless households	283	5.5%	341	4.3%	870	6.4%	2,098	6.1%
Individuals with Disabilities	2,043	13.6%	2,460	12.1%	5,470	15.1%	12,153	13.3%
Total Transit Dependent	8,705	58.1%	11,677	57.6%	23,974	66.0%	54,085	59.3%

Transit Dependence Metric	Golden Crescent		State of Texas	
	#	%	#	%
Total Population	229,867		28,862,581	
Youth below 17	26,664	11.6%	3,445,262	11.9%
Senior 65+	40,508	17.6%	3,620,798	12.5%
Autoless households	5,033	5.9%	533,515	5.6%
Individuals with Disabilities	32,112	14.0%	2,920,525	10.1%
Total Transit Dependent	138,028	60.0%	14,485,217	50.2%

Figure 2-4: Transit Dependent Populations by County



Title VI Demographic Analysis

As part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal subsidies. This includes agencies providing federally funded public transportation. The following section examines the minority and below poverty populations within the four counties. It then summarizes the prevalence of residents with Limited-English Proficiency (LEP).

Minority and Low-Income Population

Individuals who earn less than the federal poverty level face financial hardships that may make the ownership and maintenance of a personal vehicle difficult. In such cases, they may be more likely to depend on public transportation. At the same time, it is also important to ensure that areas with an above average percentage of racial and/or ethnic minorities are not disproportionately impacted by any proposed alterations to existing public transportation services. Table 2-4 and Figure 2-5 display the minority and low-income populations in the Golden Crescent service area. Key findings include:

- In all counties, the minority population is substantial, with all counties recording a minority percentage of at least 41%.
- Only Calhoun County (60.1%) has a higher minority percentage than that of the state of Texas (59.3%).
- Five of the eight counties in the Golden Crescent have low-income percentages between 11.9-14.6%.
- DeWitt (16.0%) and Goliad (19.5%) counties stand out with low-income percentages substantially higher than the region average, while Calhoun County has a notably lower low-income population at 9.6%.

Table 2-4: Percent of Minority and Low-Income Population by County

	Total Population	Low Income	Minority	% Low Income	% Minority
Calhoun County	20,367	1,954	12,237	9.6%	60.1%
DeWitt County	20,931	3,356	9,554	16.0%	45.6%
Goliad County	7,395	1,442	3,938	19.5%	53.3%
Gonzales County	14,705	1,981	6,903	13.5%	46.9%
Jackson County	12,187	1,778	6,051	14.6%	49.7%
Lavaca County	21,432	2,554	8,884	11.9%	41.5%
Matagorda County	33,856	4,402	19,188	13.0%	56.7%
Victoria County	88,816	11,471	40,230	12.9%	45.3%
Golden Crescent	219,689	28,938	106,985	13.2%	48.7%
State of Texas	28,862,581	3,965,117	17,117,549	13.7%	59.3%

SOURCE: US CENSUS ACS 2021 5-YEAR ESTIMATES

Figure 2-5: Percent of Minority and Low-Income Population by County

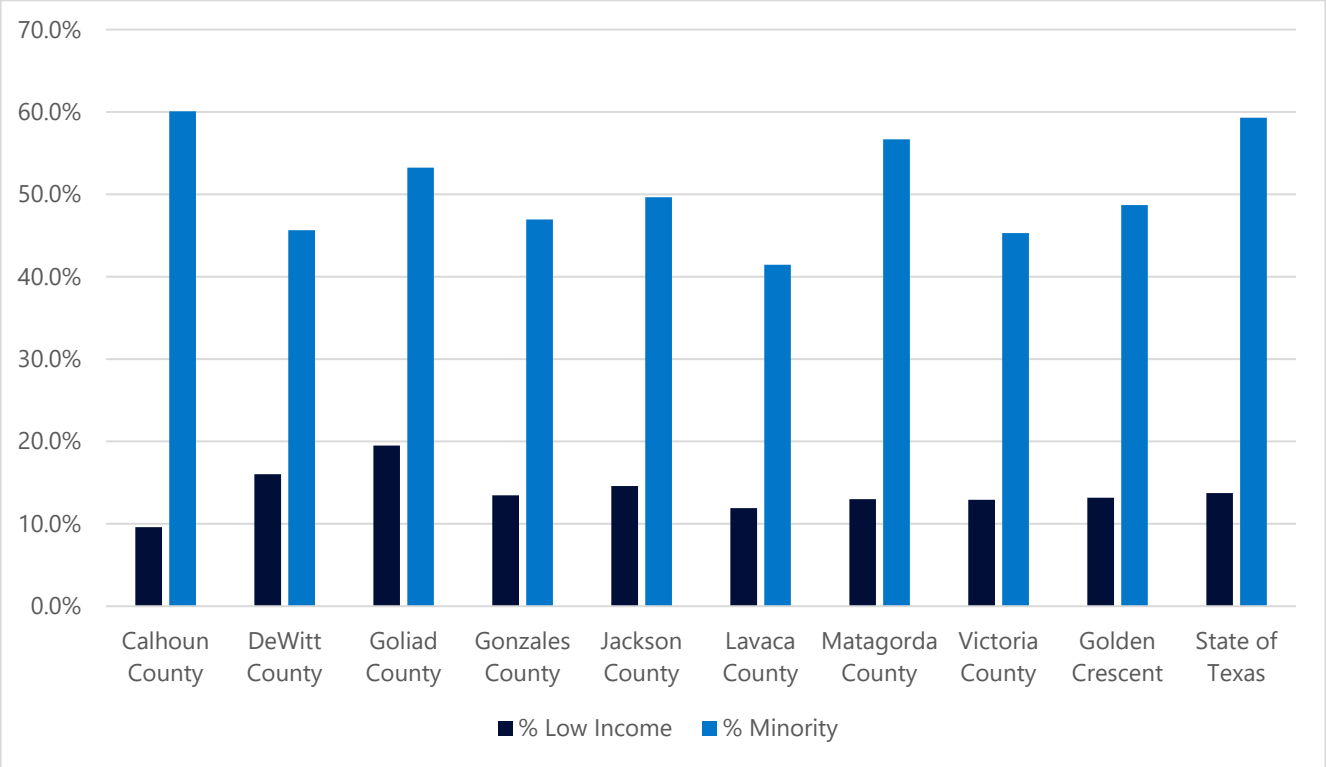


Figure 2-6: Low Income Population, Golden Crescent

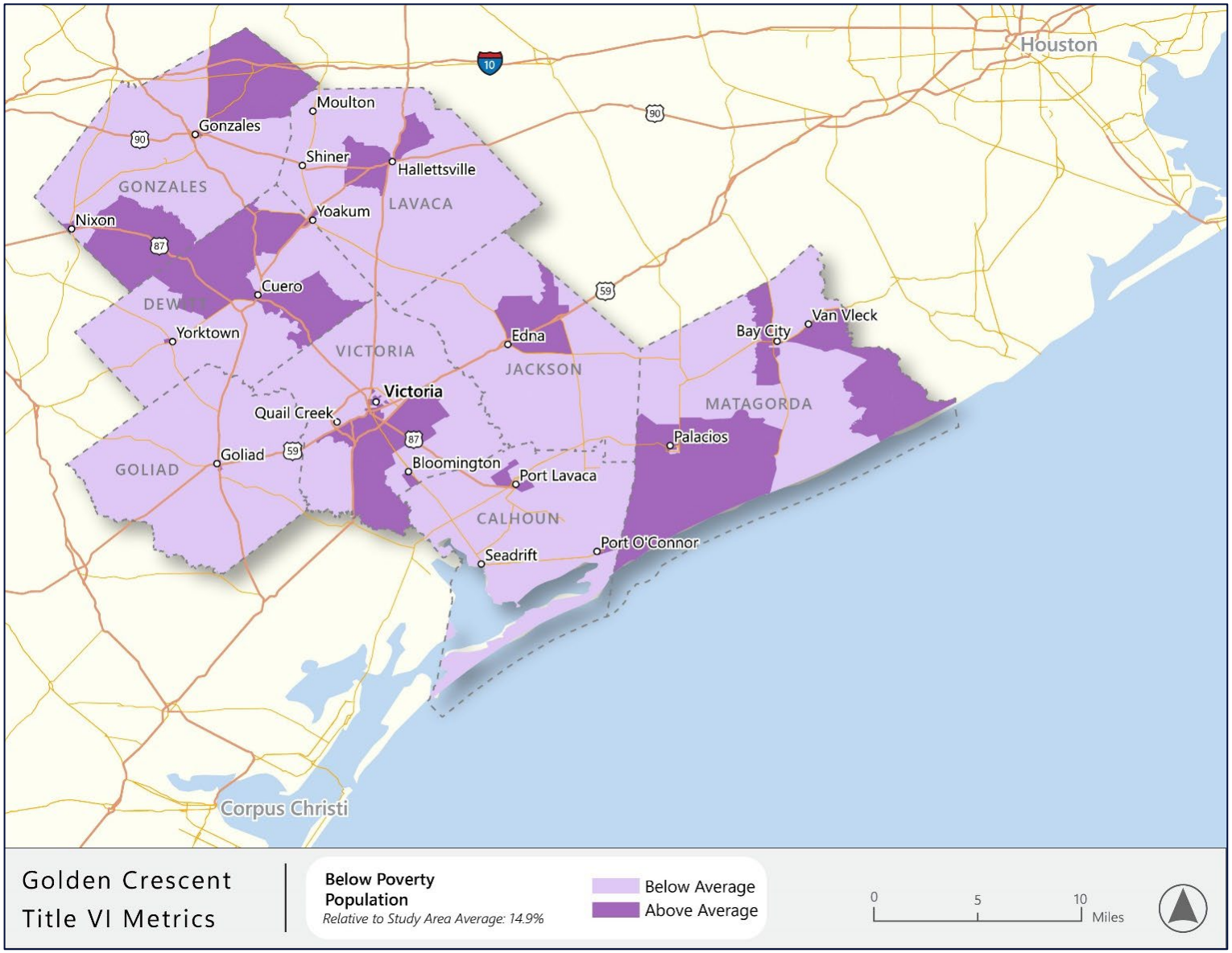
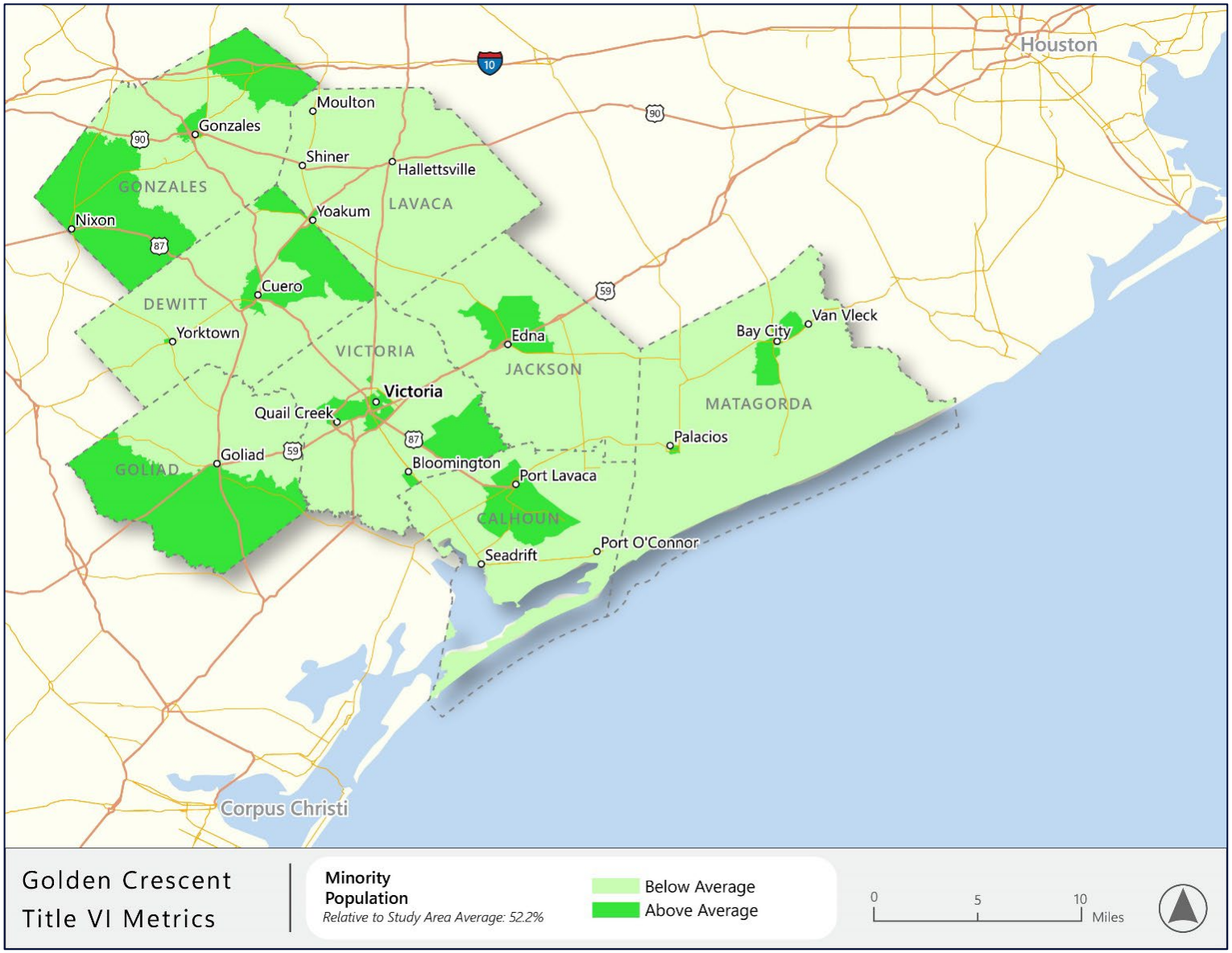


Figure 2-7: Minority Population, Golden Crescent



Limited-English Proficiency

In addition to providing public transportation for a diversity of socioeconomic groups, it is also important to serve and disseminate information to those of different linguistic backgrounds. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population is a count of people who do not speak English as their primary language and their ability to speak English is less than "Very Well." Title VI's Safe Harbor Provision stipulates that recipients of federal funding must provide written translations of all "vital documents" for each language group with an LEP population that makes up 5% or 1,000 persons (whichever is less) of the total population of the service area. Limited English proficiency by county in Golden Crescent service area is given in Table 2-5. Key findings include:

- **All counties exceed the Safe Harbor threshold except DeWitt and Lavaca counties.**
- Spanish is the most prevalent language in the study area with over 20% of the population speaking Spanish in addition to English with about 6% of the population speaking Spanish "less than very well."
- Gonzales County has the highest LEP percentage of any county at 12.7%.
- Goliad, DeWitt, and Lavaca counties stand out as having the highest percentage of English-only speakers at 80.4, 83.1, and 85.9%, respectively.

Table 2-5: Limited English Proficiency by County

County	Total Population (5 yrs. and over)	Speak only English		Speak Spanish			
	Est.	***Est.***	***%***	***Est. Pop.***	***% Pop*** *(of county pop.)*	***Est. LEP***	***%LEP*** *(of county pop.)*
Calhoun	18,873	13,678	72.5%	4,367	23.1%	1,392	7.4%
DeWitt	18,584	15,451	83.1%	2,932	15.8%	827	4.5%
Goliad	6,842	5,498	80.4%	1,224	17.9%	353	5.2%
Gonzales	18,342	12,903	70.3%	5,248	28.6%	2,325	12.7%
Jackson	14,019	11,128	79.4%	2,724	19.4%	1,083	7.7%
Lavaca	19,204	16,499	85.9%	2,129	11.1%	675	3.5%
Matagorda	33,585	23,901	71.2%	8,933	26.6%	2,604	7.8%
Victoria	85,214	64,651	75.9%	19,156	22.5%	4,250	5.0%
Golden Crescent	**214,663**	**163,709**	**76.3%**	**46,713**	**21.8%**	**13,509**	**6.3%**

EST. =ESTIMATED POPULATION

% =% OF COUNTY POPULATION

SOURCE: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY, FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATES (2022), TABLE C16001

Land Use Profile

Identifying land uses and major trip generators in the study area complements the above demographic analysis by indicating where transit services may be most needed. Trip generators are key as they attract transit demand, including commonly frequented trip origin and destination points. Employment travel patterns reveal the commuting behaviors of residents and pinpoint areas with high demand for work-related trips. The following sections delve deeper into these categories to provide a more comprehensive overview.

Major Trip Generators

This profile displays the location of major trip generators in the Golden Crescent service area, which are common origins and destinations. Trip origins consist of residential communities, multi-unit housing, etc. while common trip destinations include medical and educational facilities, human service agencies, shopping centers, and major employer locations in the study area.

Trip generators were documented through a search on Google Maps and Open Street Maps or the region's economic development website's list of major employers. Usually, major trip generators were only found in the major population centers per county and generally were limited to one medical facility (if any) and at least one grocery or market. Trip generators are shown in Figure 2-8 and a full list of trip generators is provided in Appendix A. Key findings include:

Major Trip Generators

- **Victoria** in Victoria County has the highest concentration of major trip generators in the Golden Crescent region. Major destinations in Victoria include University of Houston - Victoria, Victoria College, DeTar Hospital Navarro, DeTar Hospital North, Walmart Supercenter, H-E-B plus!, Target, DaVita Victoria Dialysis Center, Caterpillar Inc, Berry Global, Citizens Medical Center, and TISD, Incorporated.

- **Port Lavaca** in Calhoun County, **Gonzales** in Gonzales County, and **Cuero** in DeWitt County also host a significant concentration of trip generators with both cities home to all categories except for institutions of higher education.

    - Some of the major destinations in Port Lavaca include Orion Marine Group, Walmart Supercenter, Memorial Medical Center, H-E-B, Calhoun County YMCA, and DaVita Port Lavaca Dialysis.

    - Some of the major destinations in Gonzales include Gonzales Healthcare Systems, Walmart Supercenter, H-E-B, DaVita Gonzales Dialysis Center, Gonzales Community Health Center, and the Gonzales County Veterans Office.

    - Some of the major destinations in Cuero include the Clarence N. Stevenson Unit Prison, Cuero Regional Hospital, H-E-B, Walmart, DaVita Cuero Lakeview Dialysis Center, and Arneckeville Community Center.

- **Bay City** in Matagorda County and **Edna** in Jackson County are also notable hubs of trip generators within their respective counties.
    - Some of the major destinations in Bay City include Matagorda Regional Medical Center, H-E-B, Walmart Supercenter, Bay City Regional Dialysis Center, Bay City Public Library, and Matagorda Veterans' Services.
    - Some of the major destinations in Edna include Jackson County Hospital, H-E-B, DaVita Edna Dialysis Center, and Jackson County Senior Center.

External Trip Destinations

While this analysis was constrained to within Golden Crescent, it is important to note that residents of the region travel to other Texas cities such as Houston and San Antonio in order to access major trip generators such as universities and specialized medical care.

Figure 2-8: Major Trip Generators, Golden Crescent

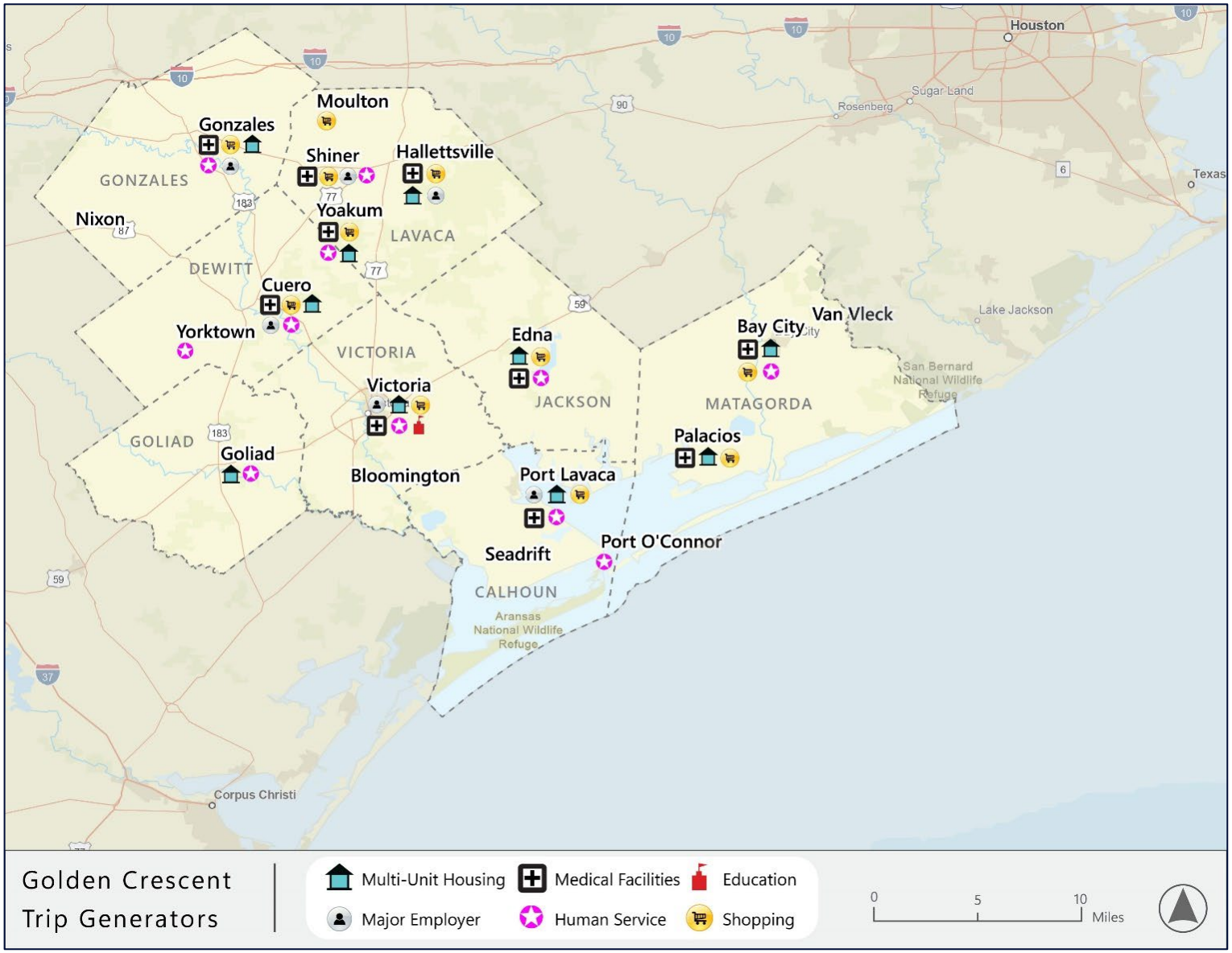
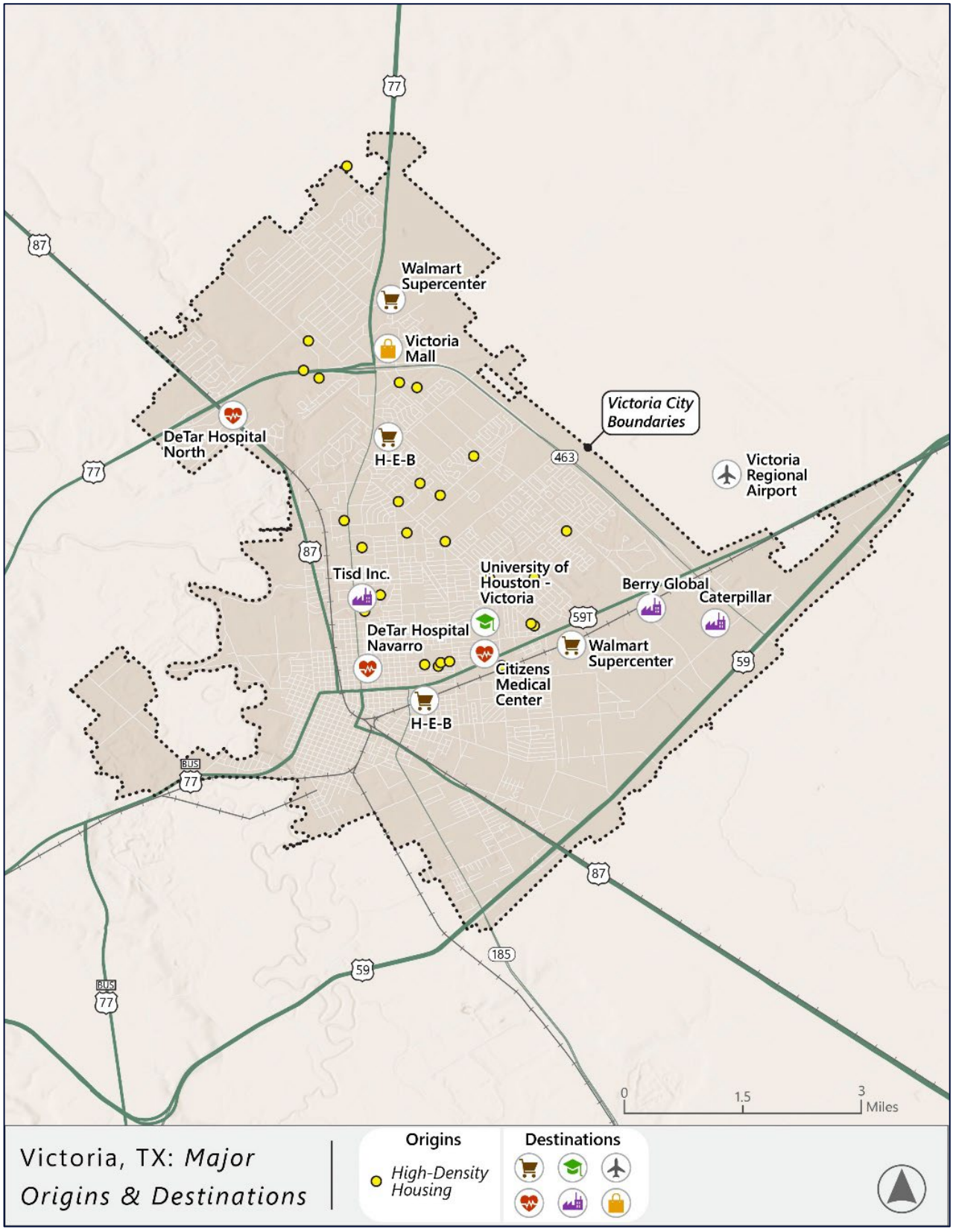


Figure 2-9: Major Trip Generators, Victoria



Employment Travel Patterns

In addition to considering the locations of major employers, it is also important to account for the commuting patterns of residents working inside and outside of the four counties in this study.

Based on the 2022 ACS five-year estimates:

- Nearly all residents (99.8%) work within their state of residence and only 25.5% commute outside their county of residence.
- 54.6% of Goliad County residents commute outside of the county, likely due to the county's proximity to Victoria.
- Over 80% of Calhoun and Victoria County residents commute within the county, highlighting that while Victoria is the main employment hub in the region, Port Lavaca is a strong pull for employment in spite of its relative proximity to Victoria.
- Across all counties, a significant majority of residents (80.5%) commute to work by driving alone, higher than the state average of 75.1%.
- Jackson County is notable for 19.1% of its residents carpooling to work, significantly higher than the region average of 11.1%.

Detailed journey-to-work patterns can be found in Table 2-6.

Another valuable source of data shedding light on employee travel patterns is the Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) dataset. As of 2021, Table 2-7 presents the top ten employment destinations for primary jobs for residents in the Golden Crescent region.

Main commuter findings include:

- Victoria is by far the most popular employment destination, with 20.0% of county residents commuting there for work.
- Houston, San Antonio, Austin, and Corpus Christi collectively account for 17.3% of county residents' commuting destinations.
- Bay City, Port Lavaca, Cuero, Gonzales, and Yoakum all make the top ten of employment destinations, highlighting their position as smaller employment hubs within their respective counties.

Table 2-6: Journey to Work Patterns for Golden Crescent Region

	Calhoun		DeWitt		Goliad		Gonzales	
Workers 16 Years and Older	9,608		7,490		2,875		8,636	
Location of Employment	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
In State of Residence	9,592	99.8%	7,486	99.9%	2,875	100.0%	8,628	99.9%
In County of Residence	7,983	83.1%	4,652	62.1%	1,305	45.4%	5,805	67.2%
Outside County of Residence	1,609	16.7%	2,834	37.8%	1,570	54.6%	2,823	32.7%
Outside State of Residence	16	0.2%	4	0.1%	0	0.0%	8	0.1%
Means of Transportation to Work	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Car, truck, or van - drove alone:	8,210	85.4%	6,107	81.5%	2,248	78.2%	6,786	78.6%
Car, truck, or van - carpooled:	1,063	11.1%	723	9.7%	350	12.2%	742	8.6%
Public Transportation	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Walked:	159	1.7%	144	1.9%	7	0.2%	530	6.1%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, other	0	0.0%	211	2.8%	0	0.0%	241	2.8%
Worked at Home	176	1.8%	305	4.1%	270	9.4%	337	3.9%

	Jackson		Lavaca		Matagorda		Victoria	
Workers 16 Years and Older	5,890		9,147		14,742		41,154	
Location of Employment	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
In State of Residence	5,890	100.0%	9,133	99.8%	14,730	99.9%	41,041	99.7%
In County of Residence	3,427	58.2%	5,830	63.7%	11,269	76.4%	33,903	82.4%
Outside County of Residence	2,463	41.8%	3,303	36.1%	3,461	23.5%	7,138	17.3%
Outside State of Residence	0	0.0%	14	0.2%	12	0.1%	113	0.3%
Means of Transportation to Work	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Car, truck, or van - drove alone:	4,423	75.1%	7,079	77.4%	12,414	84.2%	32,850	79.8%
Car, truck, or van - carpooled:	1,157	19.6%	1,089	11.9%	1,518	10.3%	4,380	10.6%
Public Transportation	10	0.2%	0	0.0%	57	0.4%	351	0.9%
Walked:	67	1.1%	82	0.9%	101	0.7%	729	1.8%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, other	47	0.8%	75	0.8%	218	1.5%	451	1.1%
Worked at Home	186	3.2%	822	9.0%	434	2.9%	2,393	5.8%

	Golden Crescent		State of Texas	
Workers 16 Years and Older	99,542		13,755,352	
Location of Employment	#	%	#	%
In State of Residence	99,375	99.8%	13,617,903	99.0%
In County of Residence	74,174	74.5%	10,699,383	77.8%
Outside County of Residence	25,201	25.3%	2,918,520	21.2%
Outside State of Residence	167	0.2%	137,449	1.0%
Means of Transportation to Work	#	%	#	%
Car, truck, or van - drove alone:	80,117	80.5%	10,327,933	75.1%
Car, truck, or van - carpooled:	11,022	11.1%	1,337,464	9.7%
Public Transportation	418	0.4%	142,353	1.0%
Walked:	1,819	1.8%	201,384	1.5%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, other	1,243	1.2%	233,706	1.7%
Worked at Home	4,923	4.9%	1,512,512	11.0%

SOURCE: ACS, FIVE-YEAR ESTIMATES (2018 2022), TABLE B08130

Table 2-7: Top 10 Places of Work for the Residents within Golden Crescent

Place	#	%
Victoria, TX	18,307	20.0%
Houston, TX	8,395	9.2%
San Antonio, TX	3,488	3.8%
Bay City, TX	3,216	3.5%
Port Lavaca, TX	2,545	2.8%
Austin, TX	2,359	2.6%
Cuero, TX	2,146	2.3%
Gonzales, TX	2,130	2.3%
Yoakum, TX	1,935	2.1%
Corpus Christi, TX	1,584	1.7%

NOTE: CITIES IN **BOLD** ARE IN GOLDEN CRESCENT
SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU, ONTHEMAP APPLICATION AND LEHD ORIGIN-DESTINATION EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS, 2021.

Review of Existing Services

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to review and analyze the existing services in the Golden Crescent service area. Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission (GCRPC) operates a rural transit program that provides public transportation services in an eight count service area including the counties of Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda, and Victoria. In addition to the rural transit program, GCRPC is the contract operator of Victoria Transit, a fixed route and complementary paratransit system for the City of Victoria.

Golden Crescent operates curb-to-curb, demand response services in the eight-county service area. The service operates primarily on an advanced reservation basis within each county, though the service parameters in each county are slightly different. This section will examine the rural services individually at the county level. It is available to all the residents areas and riders can travel locally, intra-county or inter-county.

Victoria Transit's Fixed Route service consists of four routes which operate North and South bound with over 160 scheduled bus stops. These routes serve key areas to various destinations within the city limits of Victoria. The routes run approximately every half hour (30 minutes) beginning at 7:00 a.m. and ending at 6:00 p.m., except for the Gold Route which runs every one hour and operates from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Fares for this service are $1.50 with a discounted rate of $0.75 for seniors, children and people with disabilities. The Gold Route has been indefinitely suspended due to budget shortfalls.

Existing Services

This section of the report details the service provided by GCRPC. It will start with a description and analysis of the urban system in Victoria, followed by a county-by-county analysis of the rural transit service in the GCRPC region.

Victoria Transit operates three fixed transit routes in the Victoria area on weekdays and three separate weekend routes. The routes originate at the GCRPC headquarters in Victoria. The weekday Red and Blue routes extend to the Walmart transfer stop to the north. The Green Route is a loop route that covers the southern portion of Victoria. The analysis in this report will also cover the Gold Route, a loop route that covered the central portion of Victoria that has been indefinitely discontinued due to budget shortfalls. This route was cancelled due to its low ridership and low performance. Figure 2-10 depicts the weekday routes, including the suspended Gold route.

Table 2-8 shows the system performance for each weekday route. Unlike most transit systems in Texas Victoria Transit saw a significant increase in ridership during the Covid 19 pandemic due to going fare free. Fares were reinstituted in 2023, and ridership and system productivity dropped significantly.

Table 2-8: Victoria Transit System Data

	Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Total Miles	Revenue Hours	Total Hours	Mileage (MPH)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
Brown	**2019-2020**	4,138	8,760	9,320	556	591	15.7	8.8
	2022-2023	5,611	8,436	9,006	545	568	15.5	10.3
	2023-2024	4,296	8,653	9,328	548	581	15.8	7.8
Pink	**2019-2020**	4,569	11,132	11,264	572	596	19.5	9.4
	2022-2023	6,516	10,649	10,774	549	567	19.4	11.9
	2023-2024	4,845	10,370	10,513	551	572	18.8	8.8
Teal	**2019-2020**	3,015	9,258	9,448	561	587	16.5	6.3
	2022-2023	3,682	8,452	8,728	549	565	15.4	6.7
	2023-2024	2,529	8,774	8,994	550	573	16	4.6
Blue	**2019-2020**	33,229	94,359	96,367	5,580	5,671	16.9	6
	2022-2023	50,142	94,015	98,194	5,570	5,728	16.9	9
	2023-2024	34,470	88,644	92,419	5,253	5,428	16.9	6.6
Green	**2019-2020**	48,940	89,291	91,796	5,593	5,787	16	8.8
	2022-2023	62,624	88,913	92,391	5,479	5,691	16.2	11.4
	2023-2024	40,252	82,595	86,622	5,233	5,462	15.8	7.7
Red	**2019-2020**	42,572	95,116	98,799	5,604	5,889	17	7.6
	2022-2023	61,648	91,209	95,351	5,470	5,690	16.7	11.3
	2023-2024	51,658	89,332	93,278	5,255	5,527	17	9.8
Gold	**2019-2020**	9,068	34,837	35,549	2,284	2,395	15.3	4
	2022-2023	14,101	34,362	35,285	2,253	2,343	15.3	6.3
	2023-2024	13,944	34,428	35,351	2,259	2,386	15.2	6.2
System	**2019-2020**	145,531	342,753	352,543	20,750	21,516	16.5	7.0
	2022-2023	204,324	336,036	349,729	20,415	21,152	16.5	10.0
	2023-2024	151,994	322,796	336,505	19,649	20,529	16.4	7.7

A limited version of Green route operates on the weekends as well. The weekend Pink route is a loop route that loops an area just to the north of the Transit Center. The Brown route extends from the Mockingbird and Laurant stop to the Walmart on the north end of Victoria. Figure 2-11 depicts the Victoria Transit weekend route structure.

Figure 2-10: Victoria Transit Weekday Route Structure

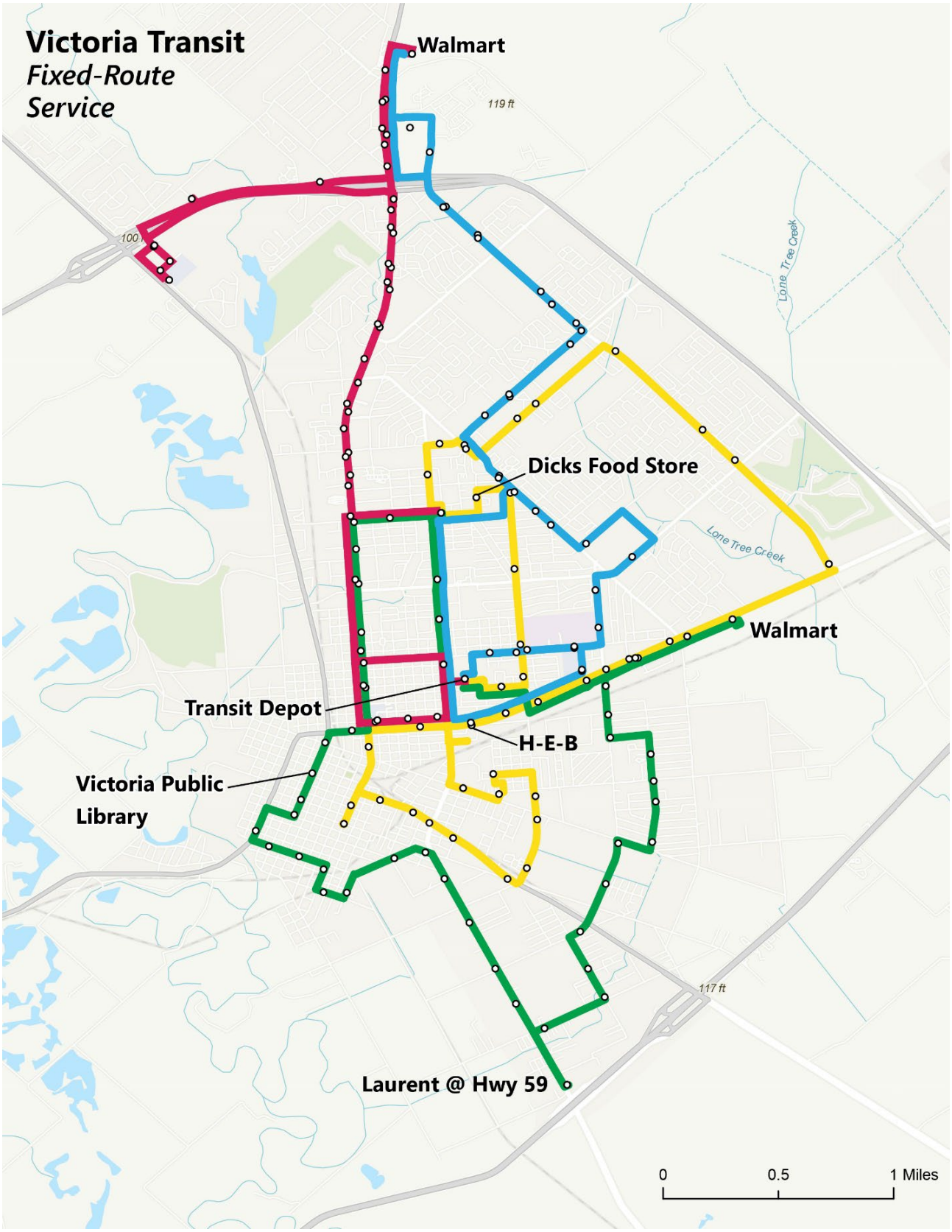
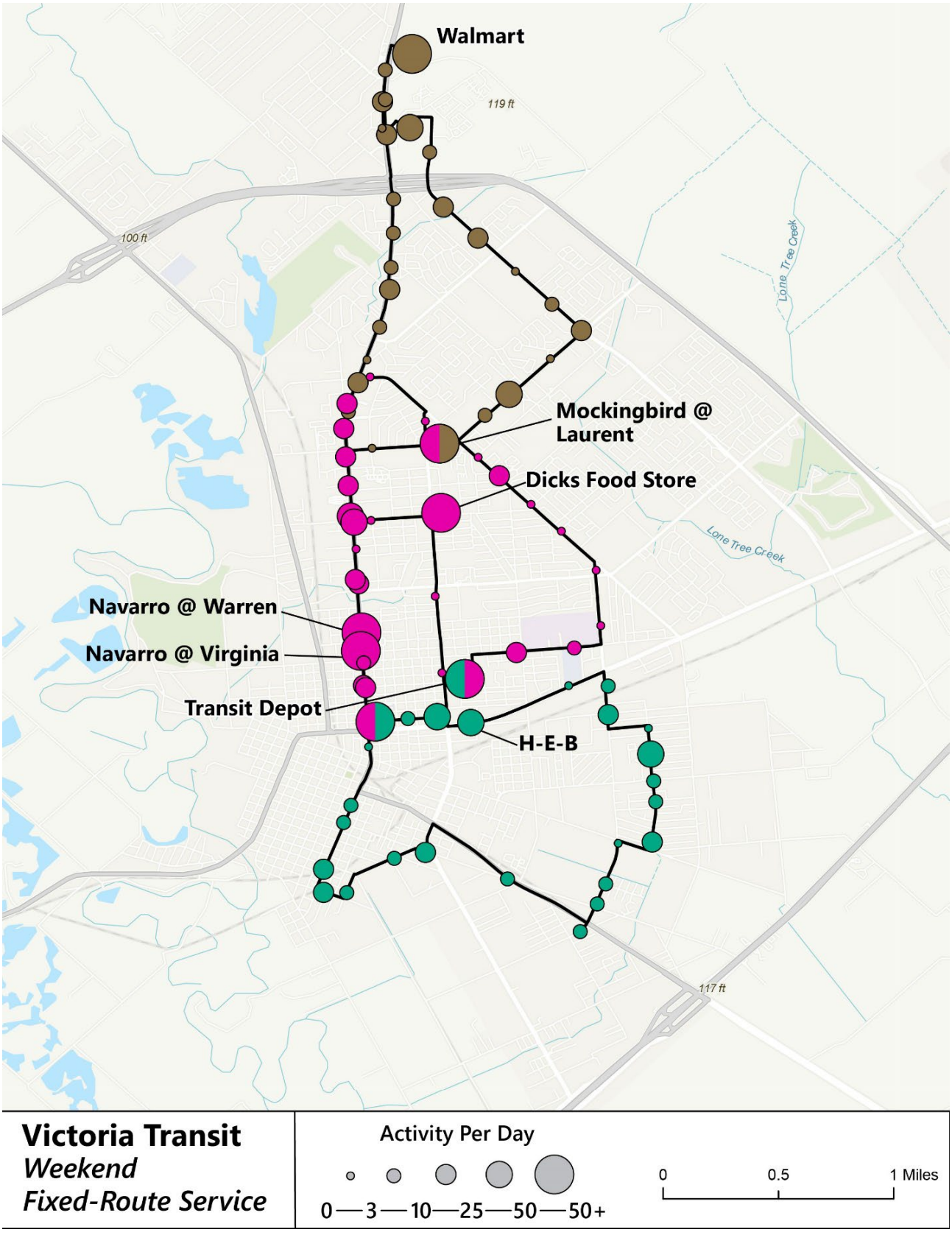


Figure 2-11: Victoria Transit Weekend Route Structure



Victoria Transit Route Profiles

Red Route

The Victoria Transit Red Route is a linear route that connects the Transit Depot at the current Golden Crescent RPC headquarters to the Walmart on the north end of town via the major commercial corridor in Victoria: Navarro St. (Figure 2-12). The route is a one hour-long round-trip route that runs on 30-minute headways as two vehicles serve the route throughout the day. This route includes a spur to the west serving the medical complex on the north end of town. The major destinations for this route include:

- Medical Center
- Walmart
- HEB Plus

Table 2-9 depicts the Red Route performance over the last several years. Victoria Transit suspended fares during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, the system saw a dramatic increase in ridership during the months when no fare was charged. This is a trend that will be seen with other routes and throughout the system. With fares the route averaged approximately 6 one-way trips per hour. Without fares the route saw months where the one-way trips per revenue hour went as high as 14.

Table 2-9: Victoria Transit Red Route Performance

	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (MPH)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
February (2019)	2461	7475	439	17.0	5.6
March	2608	7713	461	16.7	5.7
April	2888	8186	482	17.0	6.0
May	3191	8129	481	16.9	6.6
June	3162	7452	439	17.0	7.2
July	3538	8214	485	16.9	7.3
August	5083	8211	484	17.0	10.5
September	5063	7864	462	17.0	11.0
October	5633	8637	506	17.1	11.1
November	2801	7153	418	17.1	6.7
December	2923	7911	462	17.1	6.3
January (2020)	3221	8170	484	16.9	6.7

	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (MPH)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	**42572**	**95116**	**5604**	**17.0**	**7.6**
April (2022)	5348	7191	462	15.6	11.6
May	5614	7844	462	17.0	12.2
June	4622	7830	472	16.6	9.8
July	4181	6630	390	17.0	10.7
August	5790	8332	494	16.9	11.7
September	4814	8107	481	16.9	10.0
October	4657	7620	460	16.6	10.1
November	4269	7588	440	17.3	9.7
December	4941	7522	449	16.8	11.0
January (2023)	6475	7802	463	16.9	14.0
February	5823	7335	435	16.8	13.4
March	5114	7408	464	16.0	11.0
2022/2023	**61648**	**91209**	**5470**	**16.7**	**11.3**
April	5114	7320	439	16.7	11.6
May	6178	8081	485	16.7	12.7
June	7010	7935	473	16.8	14.8
July	6517	6159	374	16.5	17.4
August	5853	5181	319	16.2	18.3
September	3302	7749	462	16.8	7.1
October	3169	8923	485	18.4	6.5
November	2822	7008	440	15.9	6.4
December	3071	6681	396	16.9	7.8
January (2024)	2737	8161	480	17.0	5.7
February	3207	8441	462	18.3	6.9
March	2678	7692	440	17.5	6.1
2023/2024	**51658**	**89332**	**5255**	**17.0**	**9.8**

Figure 2-12: Victoria Transit Red Route

The most used stops on the Red Route are the transfer locations are the transit depot, Dick's Food Store and Walmart.

There are a few issues with this stop. First, the spur to the medical center takes close to 20 minutes to serve and it is only served on the southbound portion of the route. This make the Blue Route much more popular for passengers trying to get from the Walmart in the north end of Victoria to goods and services to the south. Additionally, there is a stop at the Medical Center on the street that vehicles are parked in front of virtually every day making that bus stop obsolete as the bus cannot safely stop and board or alight passengers there. The final stop at the Medical Center requires the bus to make a tight turn around in a parking lot. This maneuver is difficult and makes the vehicle prone to low speed incidents and would be impossible to execute if larger vehicles were ever to be used.

Blue Route

The Blue Route (much like the Red Route) connects the Transit Depot at the Golden Crescent RPC headquarters to the Walmart on the north end of town. (Figure 2-13). The route is a one hour-long round-trip route that runs on 30-minute headways as two vehicles serve the route throughout the day. The route meanders along several different streets and consists of several smaller loops that can make it difficult to determine which portions of the route is served at what times. Major destinations along the route include:

- Transit Depot
- Hospital
- Victoria Mall
- University of Houston Victoria

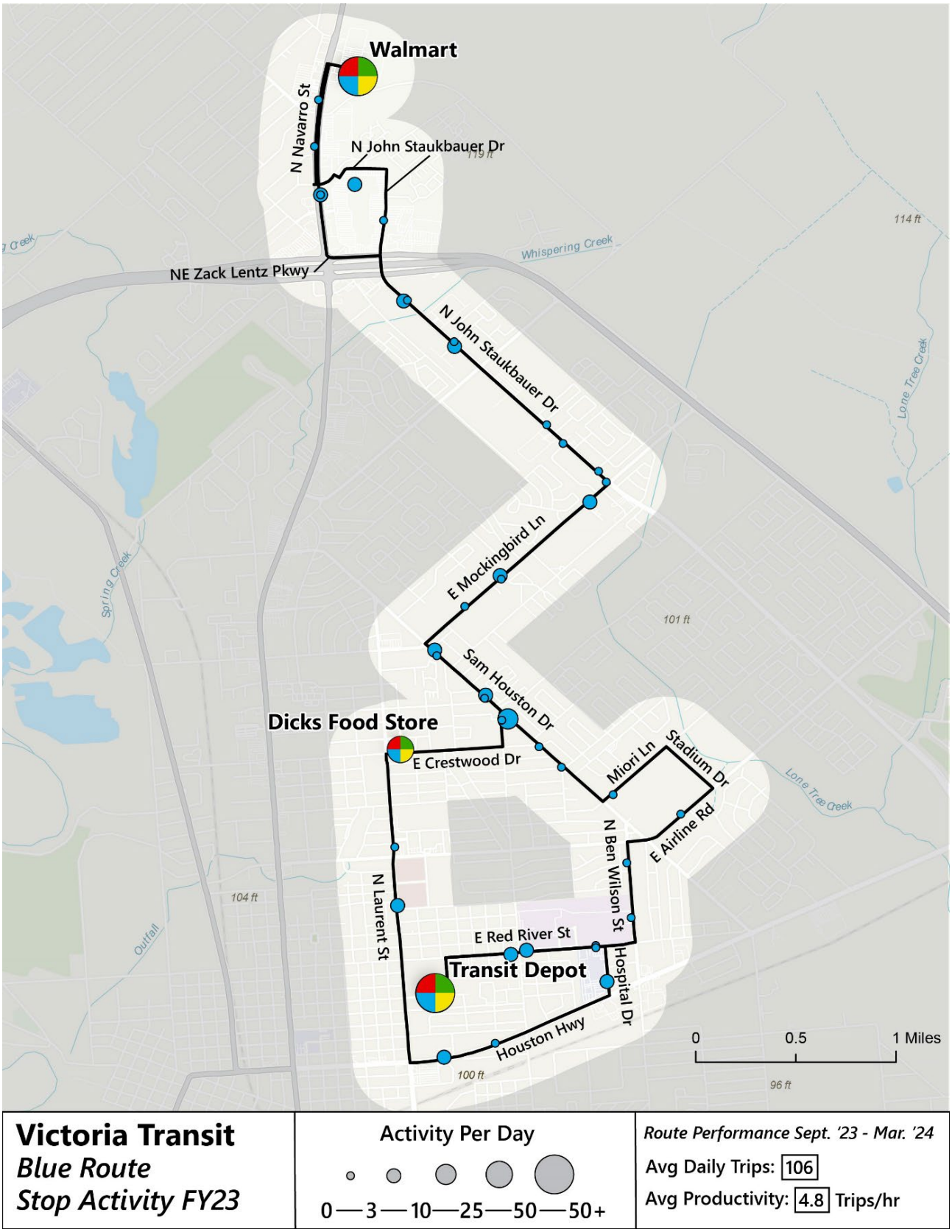
Table 2-10 depicts the Blue Route performance over the last several years. As shown the route productivity is approximately 5 one-war trips per revenue hour. That number increased to 11 one-way trips per revenue hour when no fares were being charged.

Table 2-10: Victoria Transit Blue Route Performance

	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (MPH)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
February (2019)	2149	7174	439	16.4	4.9
March	2342	7676	448	17.1	5.2
April	2512	8216	480	17.1	5.2
May	2590	8216	481	17.1	5.4
June	2784	7347	438	16.8	6.4
July	3970	8137	483	16.9	8.2
August	2861	8191	483	17.0	5.9

	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (MPH)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
September	2487	7829	461	17.0	5.4
October	2550	8596	505	17.0	5.0
November	2854	6957	417	16.7	6.8
December	2780	7849	461	17.0	6.0
January (2020)	3350	8171	483	16.9	6.9
2019/2020	**33229**	**94359**	**5580**	**16.9**	**6.0**
April (2022)	3716	7747	461	16.8	8.1
May	3797	7818	462	16.9	8.2
June	5306	8227	484	17.0	11.0
July	4649	7415	441	16.8	10.5
August	5198	8555	507	16.9	10.3
September	4452	8057	479	16.8	9.3
October	4758	7855	460	17.1	10.3
November	4175	7471	429	17.4	9.7
December	3373	7307	449	16.3	7.5
January (2023)	3217	7629	462	16.5	7.0
February	3302	7412	435	17.0	7.6
March	4199	8523	501	17.0	8.4
2022/2023	**50142**	**94015**	**5570**	**16.9**	**9.0**
April	3487	7411	440	16.9	7.9
May	3883	7852	473	16.6	8.2
June	4458	8177	484	16.9	9.2
July	3560	6316	374	16.9	9.5
August	3778	5322	319	16.7	11.8
September	2318	7668	462	16.6	5.0
October	2263	8226	486	16.9	4.7
November	2197	7562	438	17.3	5.0
December	2204	6743	396	17.0	5.6
January (2024)	2248	8215	480	17.1	4.7
February	2114	7907	462	17.1	4.6
March	1960	7245	440	16.5	4.5
2023/2024	**34470**	**88644**	**5253**	**16.9**	**6.6**

Figure 2-13: Victoria Transit Red Route



The most frequently used stops on the Blue Route are the Transit Depot, Dick's Food Store and Walmart, with most other stops experiencing three or fewer boardings per day. The issues with the Blue Route stem from its numerous loops and meandering path, which reduce the appeal to customers. For example, the route's first loop occurs as it leaves the Transit Depot and heads north. A passenger leaving the Transit Depot will notice that seven to ten minutes after departing the depot, the bus passes the depot again, which means that while traveling on the bus for close to ten minutes, the customer has effectively traveled nowhere.

The small loop at the north end of the route is also an issue. A passenger wanting to go to the mall has to have the wherewithal to exit the vehicle on the stop adjacent to the mall and walk across a large parking lot to reach their destination, or go to the Walmart, wait for several minutes at the transfer point before the vehicle makes the return trip serving the stop at the mall. The meandering portion of the route at Miori Ln., Stadium Dr. and Airline Rd. adds at least five minutes to the route to serve two stops that are directly adjacent to the arterial road (Sam Houston Dr.). Those two stops go virtually unused throughout the year. The south bound portion of the loop from Crestwood Dr. and Sam Houston Dr. to Red River St. and Hospital Dr. keeps the route from being an efficient out-and-back route to serve stops that are heavily underutilized. This is the portion of the routes that serves the University of Houston and Victoria College, but this route does not directly connect to destinations that are important to college and university students.

Green Route

The Victoria Transit Green Route is an hour-long loop route serving several major destinations in the southern portion of Victoria. The loop route connects the Transit Depot to downtown, lower income neighborhoods, the Greyhound Station and the Walmart in the eastern side of Victoria (Figure 2-14). The route runs on half hour headways. Major destinations on the Green Route include:

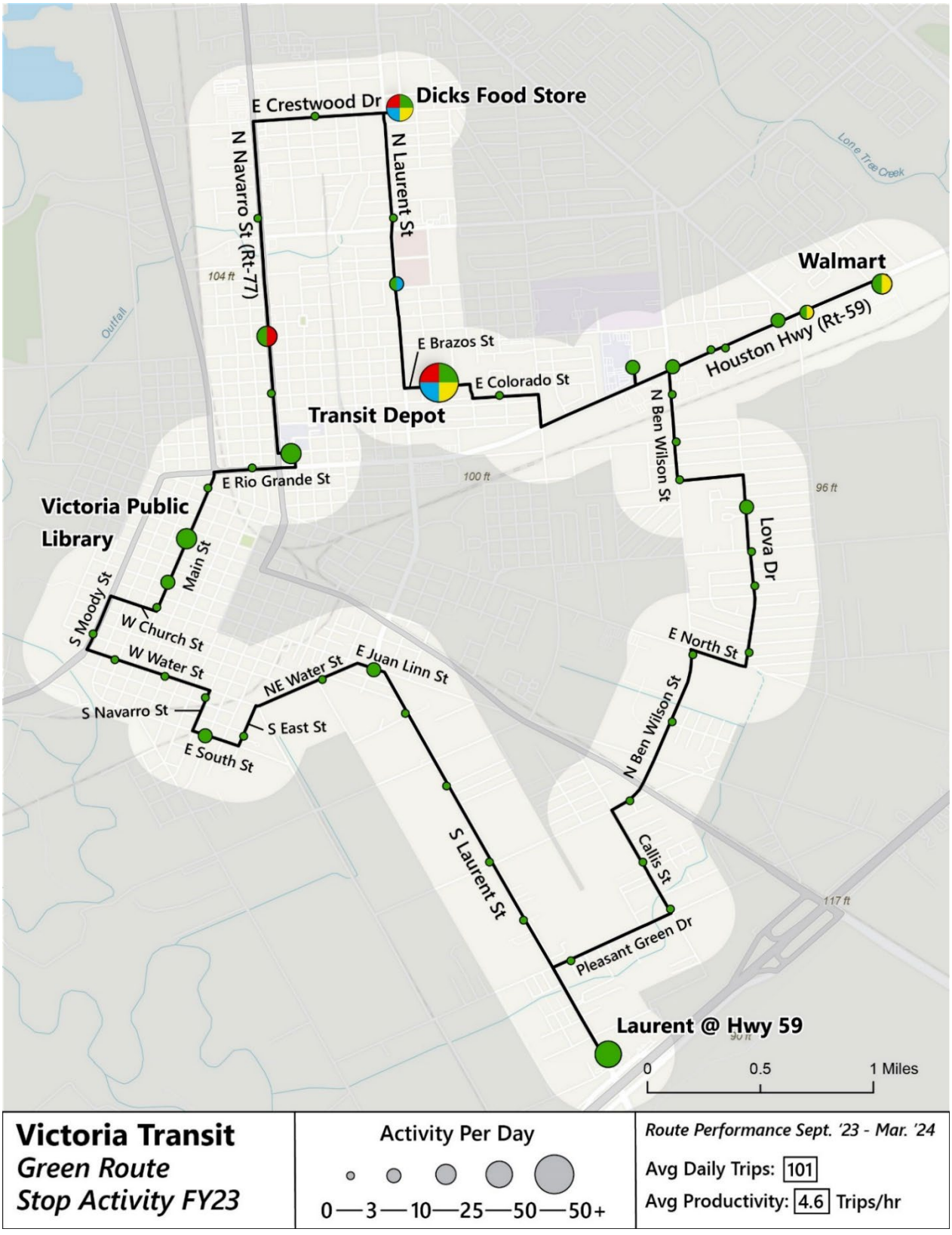
- Downtown Victoria
- Victoria Public Library
- Subsidized Housing
- Greyhound Station
- Walmart
- Transit Depot

The Green Route is one of the most heavily used routes because it serves many of the major destinations and major trip origins in Victoria. Table 2-11 depicts the route performance of the Green Route. The Green Route is the most used route in the Victoria Transit System. Like the other routes productivity was significantly better when no fare was being charged. At the peak of the fare free portion of the service the Green Route did up to 16 one-way trips per revenue hour. Since fares went back into place that number has dropped precipitously. The Green Route now has a productivity of around four one-way trips per hour.

Table 2-11: Victoria Transit Green Route Performance

	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (MPH)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
February (2019)	3310	7054	438	16.1	7.6
March	3352	7134	458	15.6	7.3
April	3397	7692	481	16.0	7.1
May	3701	7784	481	16.2	7.7
June	3591	7240	440	16.5	8.2
July	3972	7700	484	15.9	8.2
August	3406	7597	482	15.8	7.1
September	3186	7230	462	15.7	6.9
October	3823	7911	506	15.6	7.6
November	5816	6882	418	16.5	13.9
December	4934	7341	462	15.9	10.7
January (2020)	6452	7726	483	16.0	13.4
2019/2020	**48940**	**89291**	**5593**	**15.9**	**8.8**
April (2022)	5369	7773	461	16.8	11.6
May	6947	7663	460	16.7	15.1
June	7166	8068	484	16.7	14.8
July	7032	7183	422	17.0	16.6
August	6053	7805	489	16.0	12.4
September	5393	7708	480	16.1	11.2
October	4399	7072	433	16.3	10.2
November	3400	6458	413	15.6	8.2
December	3819	7332	448	16.4	8.5
January (2023)	4423	7126	451	15.8	9.8
February	4295	7092	434	16.3	9.9
March	4328	7634	503	15.2	8.6
2022/2023	**62624**	**88913**	**5479**	**16.2**	**11.4**
April	5300	6773	429	15.8	12.4
May	5155	7164	474	15.1	10.9
June	6190	7515	484	15.5	12.8
July	4913	5692	363	15.7	13.5
August	4149	4952	317	15.6	13.1
September	2234	7470	461	16.2	4.8
October	2453	7685	483	15.9	5.1
November	1990	6987	439	15.9	4.5
December	1650	5921	396	15.0	4.2
January (2024)	2274	8154	480	17.0	4.7
February	2010	7229	468	15.4	4.3
March	1934	7054	440	16.0	4.4
2023/2024	**40252**	**82595**	**5233**	**15.8**	**7.7**

Figure 2-14: Victoria Transit Green Route



The most frequently used stops on the Green Route are the Transit Depot, Walmart, the library, and the

Greyhound stop. Some issues with the Green Route include the long loop nature of the route. For example, if a customer wants to get from their neighborhood to the Walmart, their trip is 10 minutes. Their return trip is 50 minutes, not appropriate for grocery shopping. Another issue is that cars park at the downtown bus stops making some of the stops less safe for boarding and alighting and requiring the bus to block traffic to let customers on and off.

Gold Route

The Gold Route was a meandering figure eight loop route that connected the Transit Depot to the HEB, Walmart, and some community and human service locations in the central portion of Victoria (Figure 2-15). Due to budget shortfalls and the low performance of this route it was indefinitely discontinued by Victoria Transit in the late spring of 2024. The route was an hour long loop that had one vehicle running on one hour headways. Some of the major destinations served by the Gold Route included:

- Transit Depot
- Walmart
- HEB
- Food Stamp Office
- Community Center

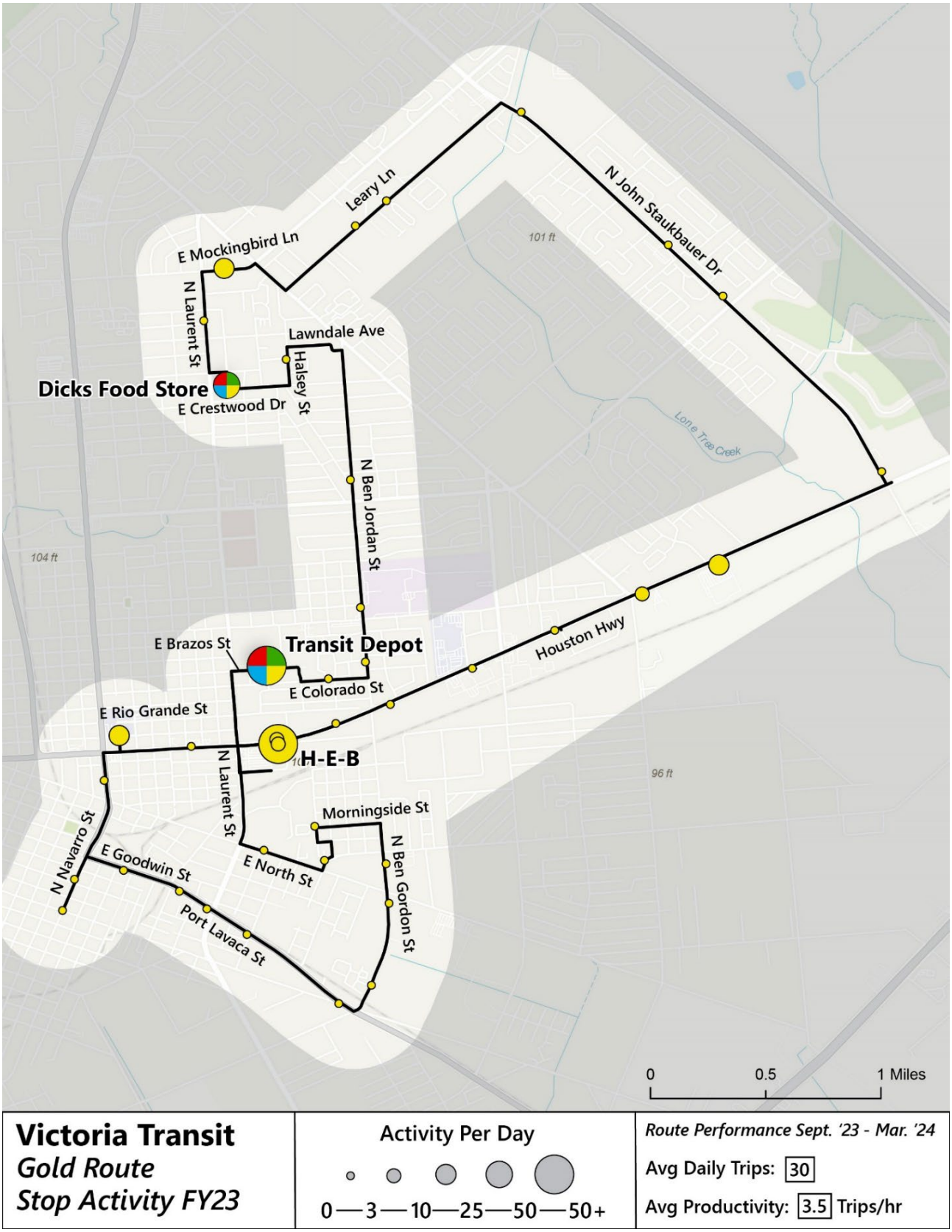
Table 2-12 shows the performance metrics for the Gold Route. As mentioned earlier the Gold Route had the lowest ridership of any of the routes which is why it was selected by Victoria Transit to be cut from service due to the budget shortfalls. During the peak of the fare free portion of the service the Gold Route got up to 12 one-way trips per revenue hour. Since reinstating fares that number shrunk to a consistent three one-way trips per revenue hour.

Table 2-12: Victoria Transit Gold Route Performance

	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (MPH)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
February (2019)	579	2809	180	15.6	3.2
March	707	2759	180	15.3	3.9
April	816	3037	198	15.3	4.1
May	827	3037	198	15.3	4.2
June	690	2646	179	14.8	3.9
July	813	3043	198	15.4	4.1
August	912	3030	198	15.3	4.6
September	907	2883	189	15.3	4.8
October	917	3084	208	14.8	4.4
November	610	2619	171	15.3	3.6

	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (MPH)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
December	572	2978	189	15.8	3.0
January (2020)	718	2912	197	14.8	3.6
2019/2020	**9068**	**34837**	**2284**	**15.3**	**4.0**
April (2022)	1052	2863	189	15.1	5.6
May	1052	2818	189	14.9	5.6
June	1449	3055	198	15.4	7.3
July	1458	2738	180	15.2	8.1
August	1350	3086	209	14.8	6.5
September	1473	3043	197	15.5	7.5
October	1194	2556	169	15.1	7.1
November	1120	2839	171	16.6	6.6
December	904	2749	185	14.9	4.9
January (2023)	775	2758	178	15.5	4.4
February	980	2724	180	15.2	5.5
March	1294	3133	208	15.0	6.2
2022/2023	**14101**	**34362**	**2253**	**15.3**	**6.3**
April	1287	2716	180	15.1	7.2
May	1908	3061	199	15.3	9.6
June	2075	2971	198	15.0	10.5
July	2191	2692	180	15.0	12.2
August	1886	3181	207	15.4	9.1
September	1066	2894	188	15.4	5.7
October	735	3015	198	15.2	3.7
November	570	2853	180	15.8	3.2
December	562	2493	162	15.4	3.5
January (2024)	405	3027	198	15.3	2.0
February	687	2809	189	14.9	3.6
March	572	2716	180	15.1	3.2
2023/2024	**13944**	**34428**	**2259**	**15.2**	**6.2**

Figure 2-15: Victoria Transit Gold Route



The most frequently used stops on the Gold Route were the Transit Depot and the HEB. Other stops were not used frequently at all. Even the Walmart stop was underutilized, as it was service more effectively by the Green Route. There were several issues with the Gold Route. Most of these issues revolved around the confusing and looping figure eight service design. While the Gold Route served many important locations such as the food stamp office and the community center, most people did not use the route to access these locations because it was too inconvenient.

The discontinuation of the Gold Route has resulted in the removal of the HEB stop from Victoria Transit service, which presents several significant issues. First, it is the major grocery shopping destination in Victoria and now has no consistent transit service throughout the day. Second, it is the major stop of the Golden Cresent commuter service, meaning that the people that use this stop for the commuter service now have no access to local public transit at the stop.

Weekend Routes

The weekend routes consist of three routes: Brown, Pink and Teal that operate from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Saturday. The Brown route covers the northern portion of the service area, the Pink Route serves the central part of Victoria, and the Teal Route is a truncated version of the weekday Green Route serving the southern portion of the service area (Figure 2-16). The major locations served by the Saturday Service include:

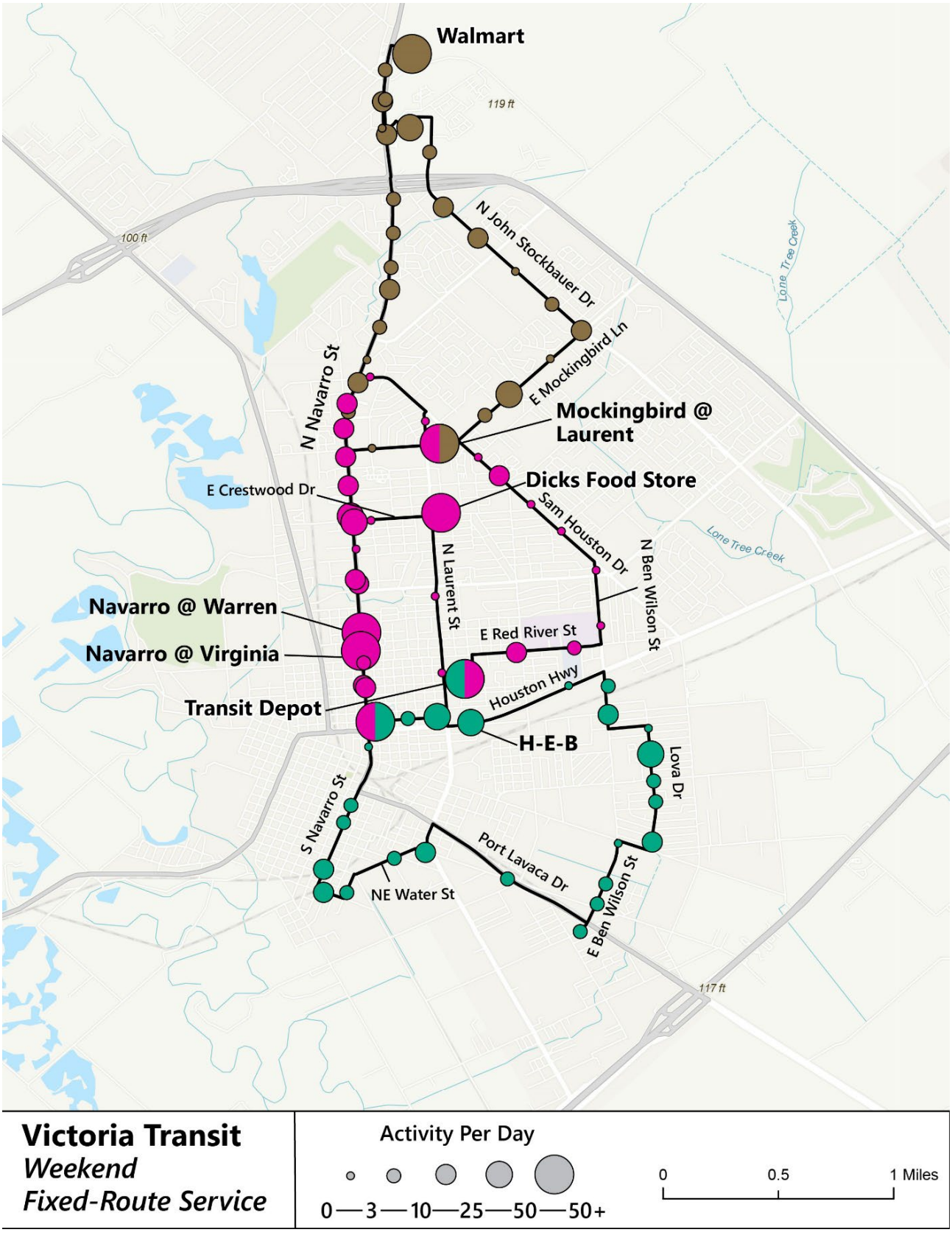
- Transit Depot
- HEB Plus
- HEB
- Walmart
- UHV
- Victoria Mall

Table 2-13 depicts the weekend route performance metrics over the last several years. As shown, weekend route productivity was around 10 one-way trips per revenue hour on average while no fares were being charged. Since fares were re implemented productivity has dropped but not as significantly as the weekday routes.

Table 2-13: Victoria Transit Weekend Route Performance

	Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Total Miles	Revenue Hours	Total Hours	Mileage (MPH)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
Brown	**2019-2020**	4,138	8,760	9,320	556	591	15.7	8.8
	2022-2023	5,611	8,436	9,006	545	568	15.5	10.3
	2023-2024	4,296	8,653	9,328	548	581	15.8	7.8
Pink	**2019-2020**	4,569	11,132	11,264	572	596	19.5	9.4
	2022-2023	6,516	10,649	10,774	549	567	19.4	11.9
	2023-2024	4,845	10,370	10,513	551	572	18.8	8.8
Teal	**2019-2020**	3,015	9,258	9,448	561	587	16.5	6.3
	2022-2023	3,682	8,452	8,728	549	565	15.4	6.7
	2023-2024	2,529	8,774	8,994	550	573	16	4.6

Figure 2-16: Victoria Transit Weekend Route Performance



The most frequently used stops on the weekend routes are the Transit Depot, Family Dollar, Walmart and Dick's Food Store. Issues with the weekend routes revolve around the looping and meandering nature of each route. The Teal and Brown routes are loops which pose problems for customers that may not be far from their destination. In this case, customers may have a five minute ride to their destination and a 30-minute or one-hour ride back home. The Pink Route is both a loop route and a confusing service with several spurs and off shoots that make it difficult for the customer to figure out where and when the bus is going to arrive.

Paratransit

Victoria Transit provides Paratransit Services Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. for qualified individuals with mobility impairments who are unable to use Fixed Route Service. The paratransit Service is a demand-response advance reservation, shared-ride, address-to-address, curb-to-curb service. All vehicles are accessible.

An ADA Paratransit Eligibility Certification Form is used to determine eligibility for Victoria Transit's customers. Table 2-14 shows the annual Victoria Transit performance data. As shown the average productivity is approximately two, one-way trips per hour and annual ridership is between approximately 25,000 and 30,000 one-way trips a year. These are very high ridership numbers for paratransit.

Table 2-14: Victoria Transit Paratransit Performance Data

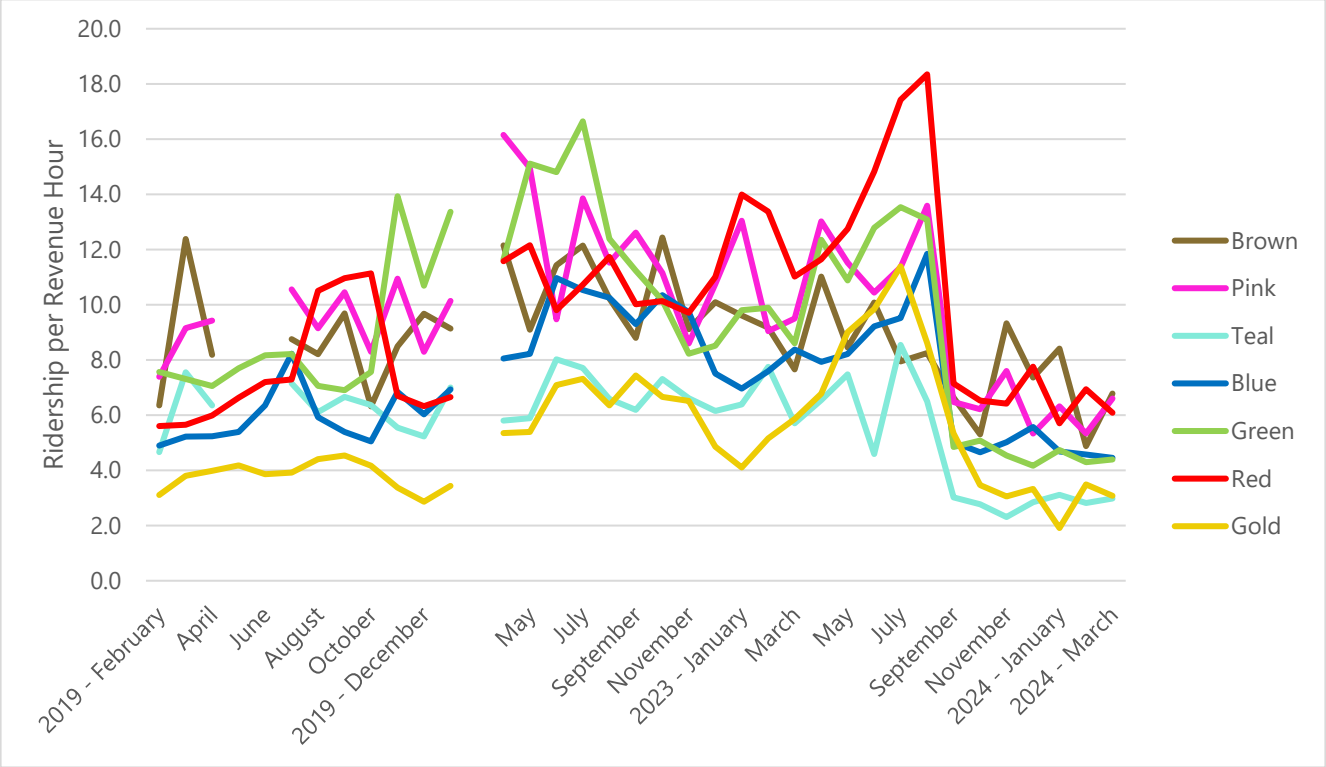
Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	25,702	183,909	14,176	13.0	1.8
2022/2023	24,163	120,531	10,864	11.1	2.2
2023/2024	30,539	121,267	11,839	10.2	2.6
Average	26,801	141,902	12,293	11.5	2.2

This is the equivalent of six full time vehicles for ADA. These are very high service levels for a city the size of Victoria. The study team will look at the eligibility process to see if there are opportunities to move riders to fixed route.

Victoria Transit System Summary

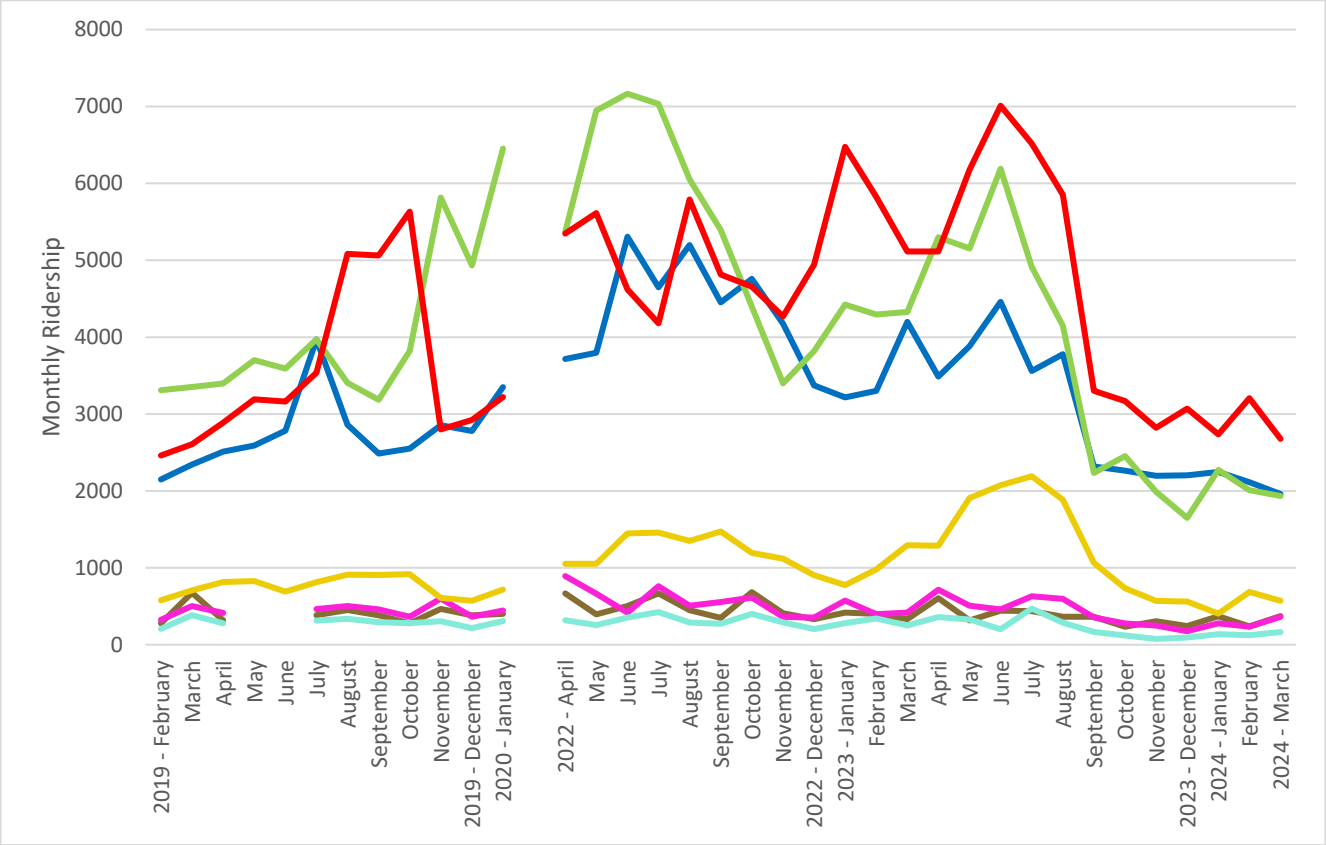
Victoria Transit has had many interesting changes over the course of the last four years. The system was operating at a base level in 2019 and 2020 before the global pandemic hit. Unlike most transit systems Victoria Transit saw their ridership and productivity increase significantly. This was due to the fact that the system went fare free for the duration of the peak of the pandemic. Figure 2-17 shows the system wide productivity over the last several years. As shown, productivity reach all-time highs in the fall of 2022 and summer of 2023.

Figure 2-17: Victoria Transit System Productivity



In the fall of 2023, Victoria Transit reinstituted fare and ridership dropped precipitously, falling even below the pre Covid levels. This trend is the opposite of most every peer system in the State of Texas. Those peer systems saw large ridership declines during the height of the pandemic and are seeing ridership return to pre Covid levels in recent months. Ridership trends can be seen in Figure 2-18 on the following page. The productivity trends have seen a steep decline since Victoria Transit reinstituted fares.

Figure 2-18: Victoria Transit System Ridership Trends



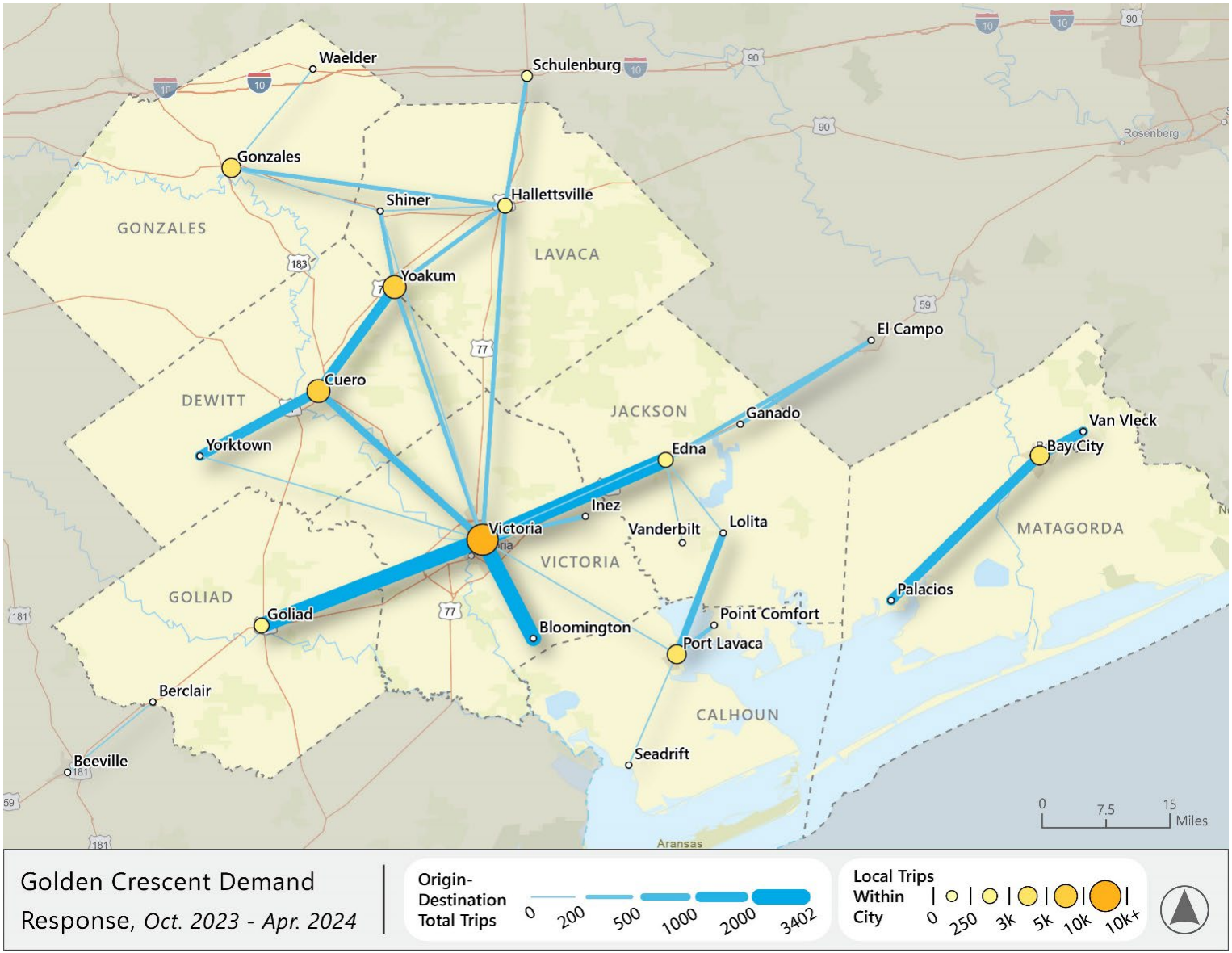
Golden Crescent Rural Transit

Golden Cresent rural transit service are provided in eight counties: Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda, and Victoria. Golden Crescent RPC directly operates the rural transit services in Victoria and DeWitt County. In the remaining six counties GCRPC uses contractors to provide the service in each county.

Much of the rural service is focused on getting people in the rural areas into the major towns for medical appointments and shopping. Figure 2-19 shows the intercounty trip patterns across the region. Victoria is the major destination in the region with significant trips coming into the city from Goliad, Bloomington, Yoakum and Cuero. Rural resident in Matagorda County use the service to access Bay City. Other important connections include Lolita to Port Lavaca; Yorktown to Cuero; and Yoakum to Cuero.

This section will examine rural transit services and operations in each county. Each county uses Shah software for trip scheduling and reporting. This software was procured by GCRPC for each of the contractors. Each contractor uses other software or methods for maintenance tracking and fleet management.

Figure 2-19: Rural Transit Intercounty Trip Patterns



Calhoun County

Calhoun County rural transit is provided by Calhoun County Senior Citizens Association Inc. in Port Lavaca, Texas. The county is the southernmost county in the GCRPC service area and Port Lavaca is the largest city in Calhoun County. Calhoun County Senior Citizens Association Inc operate service with peak ridership days of 45 passengers while slower days will see ridership numbers below 20 passengers in a day. Standing service is offered to Victoria on Tuesdays and they usually have about five passengers taking that trip, but otherwise out of county trips are very rare (about two a month) often to Jackson County. The majority of the trips provided in Calhoun County are either within Port Lavaca or bringing rural residents into Port Lavaca to access shopping or medical services.

Vehicles are a pain point for this operation. They have five vehicles onsite but only four of them are operational. The newer Dodge Promasters are working well, but the other vehicles are having regular issues with air conditioners, lift failures, and leaking doors. This frequently leads to them denying trips. Overall, they are coordinating with the community and senior centers to help connect people when they do not have capacity. This is an efficient operation with a dedicated staff that uses their resources well.

They use SHAH technology provided by GCPRC and while they do not have issues using the software, they would benefit from additional training and better coordination with GCPRC on reporting and metrics. There is a general desire from all rural transit providers to have increased coordination and communication with GCPRC. Compliance reviews are frequently the most common touchpoints that rural transit providers have with the GCPRC, and there is interest to have more regular interactions to build relationships.

Table 2-15 depicts the performance data for the Calhoun County rural transit service. As shown, rural transit productivity for this county is between 1.6 and 1.9 one-way trips per revenue hour with annual ridership averaging around 7,000 one-way trips annually.

Table 2-15: Calhoun County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	7,637	83,274	4,554	18.3	1.7
2022/2023	5,655	37,707	3,480	10.8	1.6
2023/2024	7,849	54,168	4,160	13.0	1.9
Average	7,047	58,383	4,064	14.4	1.7

DeWitt County

DeWitt County is to the northwest of Victoria in the GCRPC service area, and the largest town is Cuero in the center of the county. DeWitt County rural transportation services are directly operated by GCRPC. According to GCRPC approximately 60% of all rural transit trip originating in DeWitt County are for destinations within the county, mostly with Cuero. Ninety percent of all intra county trips are for residents in DeWitt County into Victoria, mostly for medical purposes.

GCRPC has three vehicles in DeWitt County and uses all of them in peak service. All vehicles are wheelchair accessible and require a CDL to operate. In the case that GCRPC needs a spare they are able to cycle vehicles from Victoria County and Victoria Transit. Ideally GCRPC completes preventative maintenance on a vehicle during non-peak times so their fleet is not stretched too thin. Fleet Maintenance Pro is the software used to manage this process. There is currently a scheduled service from DeWitt County to Victoria daily departing at 8:00 a.m. in DeWitt County and returning from Victoria at 2:00 p.m.

Dispatching for this county service is done from the GCRPC dispatch center in Victoria. GCRPC noted that finding and retaining CDL drivers has been a challenge. They also mentioned that scheduled service into Victoria from other locations such as Bloomington is desired.

Table 2-16 shows the performance metrics for the rural transit service in DeWitt County. Productivity is around two, one-way trips per revenue mile for the last four years, with annual ridership just above 8,000 one-way trips per year.

Table 2-16: DeWitt County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	8,006	70,475	4,780	14.7	1.7
2022/2023	8,212	67,516	3,806	17.7	2.2
2023/2024	8,043	62,825	3,969	15.8	2.0
Average	8,087	66,939	4,185	16.0	1.9

Goliad County

Goliad County is one of the most rural and least populated counties in the GCRPC region. It is in the southwestern portion of the study area. The largest town and county seat is the City of Goliad. GCRPC contracts with Goliad County to operate Goliad County Rural Transit. According to the contractor approximately 85% of all intercounty trips go to Victoria particularly to Walmart. The others go into Beeville for medical and shopping trips. Many of the in-county trips are subscription trips to dialysis centers. If the system has capacity they allow for same day service local to the City of Goliad. Service typically runs from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Goliad County Rural Transit operates three peak vehicles, and they have no spare vehicles. Preventative maintenance is done at off peak times and scheduled with the maintenance contractor to ensure there are no trips impacted. Of the three vehicles, two are wheelchair accessible.

Issues facing Goliad County Rural Transit revolve around capacity. The agency would like to have an additional vehicle for a spare and one additional driver. They would like to develop and implement more scheduled services so that they can free up a vehicle to run same day service in the City of Goliad.

Table 2-17 shows the performance data for Goliad County. Goliad County Rural Transit has had a productivity between 1.3 and 1.7 one-way trips per revenue hour over the last several years. They have averaged between 4,000 and 5,000 one-way trips annually.

Table 2-17: Goliad County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	4,757	62,755	3,646	17.2	1.3
2022/2023	3,838	55,858	2,911	19.2	1.3
2023/2024	5,131	53,808	2,944	18.3	1.7
Average	4,575	57,474	3,167	18.1	1.4

Gonzales County

Gonzales County is the county furthest to the north on the GCRPC service area and the furthest away from Victoria in the region. The City of Gonzales is the largest town in the county and is the primary location served by public transit in the county. GCRPC contracts with Gonzales County Senior Citizens Association to operate the rural transit service in Gonzales County. According to the contractor 95% of all trips provided by the county are within Gonzales County, with the other five percent going to Hallettsville, Seguin and Luling. The service requires day in advance reservation and services are offered between 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

In Gonzales, a total of four vehicles are in operation with a peak vehicle load of three vehicles. Their newest vehicle, a 2023 Roadmaster has had significant warranty issues, and their two vans (2017 and 2014) are in need of replacement.

The main issues facing Gonzales County is the need for coordination and technical assistance from GCRPC. Gonzales desires more responsive coordination from GCRPC around vehicle procurements, training and administrative requirements. Capacity is another issue in this county, and they would like to have more opportunities to provide longer distance out-of-county trips to places like Seguin, Luling and Bastrop and residents in Gonzales need access to these places more often than they do Victoria.

Table 2-18 show the performance data for Gonzales County. Gonzales County is the most productive county in the GCRPC rural transit service. This is in part due to the fact most of their trips are local within Gonzales, making it easier to group trips and they are not traveling as long distances as other counties. Productivity over the last four years has ranged from 2.7 to 4.4 one-way trips per hour, which is high for day in advanced reservation, rural demand response service. Ridership has declined since the pandemic from over 11,000 one-way trips in 2019 to a low of 4,686 during the peak of the pandemic.

Table 2-18: Gonzales County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	11,316	39,125	2,574	15.2	4.4
2022/2023	4,686	17,659	1,751	10.1	2.7
2023/2024	6,173	18,133	1,881	9.6	3.3
Average	7,392	24,972	2,069	12.1	3.6

Jackson County

Jackson County is directly to the east of Victoria. The largest town in the county is Edna. Jackson County rural transit service is operated by the non-profit Friends of Elder Citizens, Inc. This non-profit operates rural transit services for both Jackson and Matagorda Counties. Their Jackson County operations base is located at 501 North Wells St. Edna, Texas. They serve the entire county with demand response service. They operate 5 vehicles in a mixed fleet that includes an accessible minivan, accessible Dodge Promasters, and larger cutaway vehicles. These vehicles are provided by GCPRC but are maintained by the county provider through local repair shops. The fleet is adequate to meet the needs of the current demand response service, but they could benefit from a more frequent fleet replacement program and better coordination with GCPRC on vehicle planning.

Most of their trips remain within the county of Jackson. They do have about six vehicle trips on average per month connecting into other counties. These trips typically connect passengers into Victoria for medical trips and job trips to the Lighthouse. Service operates Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and is scheduled and dispatched from their facility in Edna. Their facility is a good size for their operation, and they are even able to operate a thrift store onsite. They are centrally located in the town and run a very efficient operation. If the county were to expand service hours or introduce a microtransit style service their facility could accommodate a small increase of vehicles and staffing.

They operate on SHAH technology and while they do not have issues using the software, they would benefit from additional training and better coordination with GCPRC on reporting and metrics. There is a general desire from all rural transit providers to have increased coordination and communication with GCPRC.

Table 2-19 depicts the performance data for the Jackson County rural transit service. As shown, rural transit productivity for this county is between 0.7 a low during the peak of the pandemic to 1.3 one-way trips per revenue hour with annual ridership averaging around 6,500 one-way trips annually in the last two years.

Table 2-19: Jackson County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	8,250	121,478	6,233	19.5	1.3
2022/2023	4,536	111,104	6,346	17.5	0.7
2023/2024	6,536	115,646	6,479	17.8	1.0
Average	6,441	116,076	6,353	18.3	1.0

Lavaca County

Lavaca County is in the northeastern portion of the study area and is home to Hallettsville, Yoakum and Shiner Texas. GCRPC contracts with Community Connections of Lavaca County to operate the rural transit service in Lavaca County. Lavaca County has eight vehicles in their service, however five of these vehicles are not wheelchair accessible. The five vehicles that are not accessible were purchased through local grants outside of TxDOT or FTA capital transit grants. The peak vehicle load in Lavaca County is five vehicles. Each day three vehicles start in Hallettsville and two vehicles start in Yoakum. Lavaca County expressed that much of their service is within Lavaca County and the majority of the intercounty trips are to Victoria (five or six trips a week). The service in day and advanced reservation rural demand-response transit and hours of operation are generally between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Issues facing Lavaca County revolve around capacity. While they have eight vehicles, many of those are smaller and not accessible so it is hard to group trips. This is coupled with the fact that the larger accessible vehicles are often in service for people with disabilities also making grouping trips difficult. The county would like to have more capacity to run scheduled regional service and same day local service, but their current schedule is often booked two weeks out. Lavaca County would also like to see more substantive coordination with GCPRC around technical assistance, vehicle procurements and planning above a beyond the relationship today that mostly focuses on compliance.

Table 2-20 shows the performance metrics for Lavaca County rural transit services. Productivity in Lavaca County remained consistent, around 1.5 one-way trips per revenue hour, through the pandemic. This despite the fact that ridership ranges from 7,556 in 2019 to 14,365 in 2022.

Table 2-20: Lavaca County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	7,556	73,558	4,750	15.5	1.6
2022/2023	14,635	212,408	10,569	20.1	1.4
2023/2024	9,705	154,306	7,666	20.1	1.3
Average	10,632	146,757	7,661	19.2	1.4

Matagorda County

Matagorda County is the most southeastern county in the GCRPC service area and home to Bay City, the largest city in the county. Matagorda County rural transit service is operated by the non-profit Friends of Elder Citizens, Inc. This non-profit operates rural transit services for both Matagorda and Jackson Counties. Their Matagorda County operations base is located in Bay City, Texas and they serve the entire county with demand response service. They operate 5 vehicles in a mixed fleet that includes accessible minivans, an accessible Dodge Promaster, and larger cutaway vehicles. These vehicles are provided by GCPRC but are maintained by the county provider through local repair shops. The fleet is adequate to meet the needs of the current demand response service, but they could benefit from a more frequent fleet replacement program and better coordination with GCPRC on vehicle planning.

Most of their trips remain within the county of Matagorda, with typically less than five trips per month connecting into other counties. These out of county trips are most commonly for medical trips and they often are very long. Service operates Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and is scheduled and dispatched from their facility in Bay City. Their operations manager and vehicle operators are all longtime employees and run a very efficient operation. If the county were to expand service hours or introduce a microtransit style service their facility could accommodate a small increase of vehicles and staffing.

They operate on SHAH technology and while they do not have major concerns with the software, they would benefit from additional training and better coordination with GCPRC on reporting and metrics. There is a general desire from all rural transit providers to have increased coordination and communication with GCPRC.

Table 2-21 depicts the performance data for the Matagorda County rural transit service. As shown, rural transit productivity for this county is between 1.1 a low during the peak of the pandemic to 1.7 one-way trips per revenue hour with annual ridership averaging between 7,528 and 10,000 one-way trips annually in the last four years.

Table 2-21: Matagorda County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	10,099	122,229	6,506	18.8	1.6
2022/2023	7,528	99,139	6,713	14.8	1.1
2023/2024	9,804	83,722	5,736	14.6	1.7
Average	9,144	101,697	6,319	16.1	1.4

Victoria County

Victoria County is in the center of the study area and home to the GCRPC headquarters in Victoria. Victoria County rural transit service is directly operated by GCRPC. With the vast majority of the trips bringing rural residents of the county into the City of Victoria. Most of the out of county trips are long distance medical or Medicaid trips to San Antonio or Houston. The system averages approximately one long out of county trips a month but has seen as many as six in one month.

GCRPC operates five total vehicles in the rural transit service in Victoria County with a peak service of three vehicles. All vehicle in the county are wheelchair accessible and all require a CDL to operate.

GCRPC indicated that there is a need for expanded regional scheduled service in the area. Additionally, a major issue in for the rural service is the hiring and retention of drivers. Table 2-22 depicts the performance data for the rural services in Victoria County. Victoria County rural transit service have maintained a productivity around 2 one-way trips per hour over the last several years and have ridership between 10,000 and 11,000 one way trips per revenue hour annually over the same time period.

Table 2-22: Victoria County Rural Transit Performance Metrics

Year	Ridership	Revenue Miles	Revenue Hours	Mileage (Miles per Hour)	Productivity (Riders per Rev Hour)
2019/2020	10,896	122,539	6,255	19.6	1.7
2022/2023	11,102	122,729	5,408	22.7	2.1
2023/2024	9,448	103,480	5,116	20.2	1.8
Average	10,482	116,249	5,593	20.8	1.9

Summary Rural Service

The analysis of the rural transit services in the Golden Crescent RPC service area highlighted several issues:

Spare Vehicles – Many of the rural county contractors operate one hundred percent of their fleet during peak times. A zero percent spare ration makes it difficult to complete preventative maintenance without eliminating service or denying trips, though through effective scheduling and coordination with maintenance contractors most of the counties seem to be accomplishing preventative maintenance without service disruptions. The lack of vehicles does create problems when breakdowns occur as well as overall capacity issues in the provision of service.

Guidance and Technical Assistance – The rural contractors are in need on increased guidance and leadership from the lead agency related not only to compliance and vehicle performance but increased assistance with training, funding and match, and service planning and coordination.

Operate as One Coordinated System – Most counties in the service area are operating as individual entities. There is a need for regional planning and coordination of services to increase efficiencies, reduce duplication and attain economies of scale.

Service Design – Day in advance demand response transit is a service design brought to prominence in the 1990's. Many counties have the ability to increase grouped trips through scheduled demand response services and same day reservation local service.

Coordination – Many of the rural providers are providing daily or weekly service into Victoria some traveling through rural areas in other counties and Victoria County. Coordinating service to reduce duplication can free up other vehicles to provide more service to more people.

Improve and Upgrade Technology – Golden Cresent and its rural contractors use Shah scheduling and reporting software. Effort needs to be made to be sure that contractors are up to date on all of the software capabilities and trained properly to use the technology. Integrating the software regionally will also be an advantage to all providers.

Appendix A:
Trip Generators

Educational Facilities

Trip Generator	Address	City
Victoria College	2200 East Red River Street, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
UHV Northwest	1604 East Airline Road, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Victoria College Emerging Technology Complex	7403 Lone Tree Road, Victoria, TX 77905	Victoria
University of Houston-Victoria	3007 North Ben Wilson Street, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria

Human Service Agencies

Trip Generator	Address	City
Affectionate Arms Adult Care	3802 John Stockbauer Dr, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Alexander Adult Activity Center	111 E Alexander St, Cuero, TX 7795	Cuero
Alzcare of DeWitt County	131 Industrial Blvd, Cuero, TX 7795	Cuero
American Renal Associates - Bay City Regional Dialysis Center	200 Medical Ctr Ct Suite 200, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Amour Adult Day Care	114 Sam Houston Dr, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Area Agency On Aging	1908 N Laurent St suite 600a, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Arneckeville Community Center	650-57-100, Cuero, TX 7795	Cuero
Barbara Bauer Briggs Family YMCA	1806 N Nimitz St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Bauer Community Center	2300 TX-35, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Bay City Civic Center	201 7th St, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Bay City Community Development	1112 7th St, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Bay City Counseling Center	1707 5th St, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Bay City Health & Rehabilitation - Chiropractic	1201 6th St, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Bay City Public Library	1100 7th St, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Bay City Service Center (USO)	2105 Avenue M, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Bethany Senior Living	118 Trinity Shores Dr, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Billy T. Cattan Recovery Outreach, Inc.	802 E Crestwood Dr, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Blessing Community Center	560 FM 616, Blessing, TX 77419	Blessing
C.A.M.A.L., INC. - Food Distribution Center	118 W Main St, Cuero, TX 7795	Cuero
Calhoun County Community Ministries	331 Alcoa Dr, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Calhoun County Library	200 W Mahan St, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Calhoun County Senior Citizens	2104 W Austin St, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca

Trip Generator	Address	City
Calhoun County Veteran's Services	201 W Austin St, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Calhoun County YMCA	713 TX-35 South, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Calhoun Group Home	102 Burnet St, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Carancahua Community Center	829 Co Rd 477, Palacios, TX 77465	Palacios
Christ's Kitchen Soup Kitchen - Food Distribution Center	611 E Warren Ave, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
City Hall	202 N Virginia St, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Colonial Assisted and Independent Living of Bay City	720 12th St, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Colonial Living and Rehabilitation of Bay City	700 12th St, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Community Action Committee	106 S Commerce St # D, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Country Village Square	1800 Waelder Rd, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Cuero Municipal Library	207 E Main St, Cuero, TX 7795	Cuero
Cuero Nursing Home	1310 East Broadway Street, Cuero, TX 77954	Cuero
DaVita Cuero Lakeview Dialysis	1105 E Broadway St, Cuero, TX 7795	Cuero
DaVita Edna Dialysis Center	1008 N Wells St, Edna, TX 7795	Edna
DaVita Gonzales Dialysis Center	1406 N Sarah Dewitt Dr, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
DaVita Port Lavaca Dialysis	1300 N Virginia St Ste 102, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
DaVita Spring Creek Dialysis	301 E Airline Rd, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
DaVita Victoria Dialysis Center	1405 Victoria Station Rd, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
DaVita Victoria Home Dialysis	8206 N Navarro St Ste 100, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
DeWitt County Courthouse	307 N Gonzales St, Cuero, TX 7795	Cuero
DeWitt County Tax Office	102 N Clinton St Suite 130, Cuero, TX 7795	Cuero
Dewitt County Veterans Center	901 TX-72, Yorktown, TX 7816	Yorktown
Dewitt County Veterans Services Office	307 N Gonzales St, Cuero, TX 7795	Cuero
Edward's Community Center	1427 Fly St, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Faith Family Church - Food Distribution Center	2002 E Mockingbird Ln, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
FBGC Mobile Pantry	104 Shelby Park Road, Edna, TX 7795	Edna
FBGC Mobile Pantry Distribution - Food Distribution Center	3101 Callis St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
FBGC Mobile Pantry Distribution - Food Distribution Center	107 E Austin St, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
FBGC Mobile Pantry Distribution - Food Distribution Center	1093 M L King Dr, Edna, TX 7795	Edna
First Methodist Food Pantry - Food Distribution Center	2300 Avenue H, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Food Bank of the Golden Crescent	801 S Laurent St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Ganado Nursing & Rehab Center	107 Rogers St E, Ganado, TX 7796	Ganado
Goliad County Senior Citizens	601 W Pearl St, Goliad, TX 7796	Goliad
Gonzales Christian Assistance Ministry	708 St Louis St, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Gonzales City Hall	820 St Joseph St, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Gonzales Community Health Center	228 St George St, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales

Trip Generator	Address	City
Gonzales County Courthouse	414 N St Joseph St, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Gonzales County Probation	1709 E Sarah DeWitt Dr, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Gonzales County Veterans Office	414 N St Joseph St #105, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Harry Hafernick Recreation Center	891 Brackenridge Pkwy, Edna, TX 7795	Edna
Helping Hands Of Jackson Co. - Food Distribution Center	324 E Main St, Edna, TX 7795	Edna
Inez Community Center	2511 Garcitas Creek Rd, Inez, TX 7796	Inez
Infusion Clinic at Memorial Medical Center	815 N Virginia St 2nd floor, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Jackson County Home Health	918 S Wells St, Edna, TX 7795	Edna
Jackson County Hospital District	1013 S Wells St, Edna, TX 7795	Edna
Jackson County Memorial Library	411 N Wells St #121, Edna, TX 7795	Edna
Jackson County Senior Citizen	1010 S Wells St, Edna, TX 7795	Edna
Legacy Retirement Community	700 12th St, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Liberty Dialysis Victoria	606 Locust Ave, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Matagorda Veterans' Services	1700 7th St #101, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Mercy House Victoria	4409 John Stockbauer Dr, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Morada Victoria	9606 Zac Lentz Pkwy, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Morada Victoria East	501 E Larkspur St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
North Twin Pines Nursing Home	1301 Mallette Dr, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Northcrest Group Home	902 Bellevue St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Shiner City Hall	802 Avenue E, Shiner, TX 77984	Shiner
Olivia Community Center	50 Co Rd 304, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Our Lady of Guadalupe Saint Vincent de Paul Ministry	1617 Avenue D, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Our Lady of Victory Church Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry	1309 E Mesquite Ln, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Our Savior's Lutheran Church - Food Distribution Center	4102 N Ben Jordan St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
PAM Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Victoria	101 James Coleman Dr, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
PAM Health Specialty Hospital of Victoria North	102 Medical Dr, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
PAM Health Specialty Hospital of Victoria Southeast	2701 Hospital Dr 6th Floor, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Pilgrim Texas Community Center	12809 FM1116, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Port Lavaca Clinic Associates	1200 N Virginia St, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Port Lavaca Nursing and Rehabilitation Center	524 Village Rd, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Port O'Connor Community Center	3674 Adams Ave, Port O'Connor, TX 7798	Port O'Connor
Pregnancy Help Center of the Crossroads Area	615 N Virginia St, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Riverside Community Center	200 St Lawrence St, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Robert Lee Brothers, Jr. Memorial Library	301 St Joseph St, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Romberg House Assisted Living	210 Qualls St, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Rushing Winds Food Pantry	1008 N Laurent St suite d, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria

Trip Generator	Address	City
Rushing Winds Ministries - Food Distribution Center	1104 N Wheeler St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Saint Mary's Church, Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry	103 W Convent St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Saint Paul's Methodist Church - Food Distribution Center	3102 5th St, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Senior Center	501 N Wells St, Edna, TX 7795	Edna
Senior Citizen Center	49019, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
Silver Serenity Assisted Living Victoria	3414 Old Goliad Rd, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Social Security Administration	8208 Northeast Zac Lentz Parkway, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Sodalis Victoria Assisted Living	411 E Larkspur St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Southbrooke Manor Nursing and Rehabilitation Center	1401 W Main St, Edna, TX 7795	Edna
Telferner United Methodist Church - Food Distribution Center	100 East St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Texas Department of Public Safety	201 W Austin St, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Texas Elks Children's Services	1963 FM 1586, Gonzales, 78629	Gonzales
Saint Vincent de Paul Food Pantry Center	1508 E Airline Rd, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
The Harvest House	2204 Nichols Ave, Bay City, TX 7741	Bay City
The Heights of Gonzales	701 Sarah DeWitt Dr, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Thomas Ninke Senior Village Apartments	1907 Lova Dr, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Thrive Healthplex	1300 Capt Albert Martin Trl, Gonzales, TX 7862	Gonzales
Transportation For the Elderly	603 E Murray St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Treatment Associates Medical	107 Cozzi Cir, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Treatment Associates-Victoria	304 Chama Dr, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Trinity Advanced Learning Center	2005 Lawndale Ave Suite A, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Trinity Shores of Port Lavaca	201 Trinity Shores Dr, Port Lavaca, TX 7797	Port Lavaca
Twin Pines Nursing & Rehab Center	3301 E Mockingbird Ln, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
United Way of the Crossroads	104 S William St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Food Distribution Center	108 N Liberty St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Victoria Community Center	2905 E North St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Victoria Kidney & Dialysis Associate	605 E San Antonio St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Victoria Public Library	302 N Main St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Victoria VA Clinic	1908 N Laurent St, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
VISD Aquatic Center	1006 Sam Houston Dr, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Vitality Court	1303n John Stockbauer Dr, Victoria, TX 7790	Victoria
Wadsworth Community Center	20674 FM521, Wadsworth, TX 77483	Wadsworth
Waelder Community Center	311 US-90 W, Waelder, TX 78959	Waelder
Whispering Oaks Rehab & Nursing	105 Hospital Dr, Cuero, TX 7795	Cuero
Yoakum Nursing and Rehabilitation Center	1300 Carl Ramert Dr, Yoakum, TX 7799	Yoakum
Yorktown Public Library	103 W Main St, Yorktown, TX 7816	Yorktown

Medical Facilities

Trip Generator	Address	City
Gonzales Healthcare Systems	1110 North Sarah Dewitt Drive, Gonzales, TX 78629	Gonzales
Palacios Community Medical Center	311 Green Avenue, Palacios, TX 77465	Palacios
Jackson County Hospital	1013 South Wells Street, Edna, TX 77957	Edna
Citizens Medical Center	2701 Hospital Drive, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Lavaca Medical Center	1400 North Texana Street, Hallettsville, TX 77964	Hallettsville
Yoakum Community Hospital	1200 Carl Ramert Drive, Yoakum, TX 77995	Yoakum
Cuero Regional Hospital	2550 North Esplanade Street, Cuero, TX 77954	Cuero
PAM Rehabilitation Hospital of Victoria	101 James Coleman Drive, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
PAM Specialty Hospital of Victoria North	102 Medical Drive, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
DeTar Hospital North	101 Medical Drive, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
DeTar Hospital Navarro	506 East San Antonio Street, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Memorial Medical Center	815 North Virginia Street, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Matagorda Regional Medical Center	104 7th Street, Bay City, TX 77465	Bay City
Citizens HealthPlex	9406 Northeast Zac Lentz Parkway, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria

Multi-Unit Housing

Trip Generator	Address	City
Central Park Apartments	1603 E Brazos St, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Midtown Apartments	1810 E Colorado St, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Summerstone Apartments	2107 N Ben Jordan St, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Vista Del Sol Apartments	212 Sam Houston Dr, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
The Oaks Apartments	307 Westwood St, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Parkwood Apartments	3001 Arroyo Dr, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Victoria Place Apartments	701 E Airline Rd, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Villa Chateau Apartments	2904 Miori Ln, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Latigo Crossing Apartments	1601 John Stockbauer Dr, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Mosswood Apartments	1906 Sam Houston Dr, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Victoria Station Apartments	1701 Victoria Station Rd, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Treemont Apartments	3104 Sam Houston Dr, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Deerwood Apartments	101 Deerwood Dr, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Regency Studio Apartments	108 Regency Ave # D, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Oak Forest	5312 John Stockbauer Dr, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Victoria Trails Apartments	5609 John Stockbauer Dr, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria

Trip Generator	Address	City
The Reserve Apartments	8602 Zac Lentz Pkwy, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
The Landing Apartments	1202 Mallette Dr, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Victoria Villas Apartments	210 Northcross Dr, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
The Pointe at Victoria	2402 N Ben Wilson St, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Autumn Park	4405 N Navarro St, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Aria Victoria	8311 Zac Lentz Pkwy, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Tanglewood Apartments	306 Sam Houston Dr, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Enchanted Gardens Apartments	4601 N Ben Jordan St, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
StoneBrook Apartments	2406 E Mockingbird Ln, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Sage Creek Apartments	607 Fillmore Ave, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Vanderbilt Apartments	704 W Division St, Edna, TX 77957	Edna
Cottonwood Apartments	1400 N Wells St, Edna, TX 77957	Edna
Lakeview Apartments	1611 S 3rd St, Ganado, TX 77962	Ganado
Colonial Manor Apartments	150 Industrial Blvd, Cuero, TX 77954	Cuero
Bailey Square Apartments	1501 N Valley St, Cuero, TX 77954	Cuero
Golden Plaza Apartments	1306 E Broadway St, Cuero, TX 77954	Cuero
Leatherwood Terrace Apartments	105 Ellen May Rd, Yoakum, TX 77995	Yoakum
Cedar Villa Apartments	201 Pecan St, Yoakum, TX 77995	Yoakum
Golden Oaks Apartments	449 Fink St #3005, Yoakum, TX 77995	Yoakum
Lavaca Landing Apartments	1134 Donna Dr, Hallettsville, TX 77964	Hallettsville
Pecan Chase Apartments	106 Walnut St, Hallettsville, TX 77964	Hallettsville
Hyatt Manor Apartments	1701 Waco St, Gonzales, TX 78629	Gonzales
Harmony Villages	1725 Seydler St, Gonzales, TX 78629	Gonzales
Country Village Square	1800 Waelder Rd, Gonzales, TX 78629	Gonzales
The Oaks at Winding Way	2631 Winding Way Dr, Gonzales, TX 78629	Gonzales
Fenner Square Apartments	555 S Burke St, Goliad, TX 77963	Goliad
Pryor Square	210 S Chilton St, Goliad, TX 77963	Goliad
Lighthouse Beach Apartments	1904 Lighthouse Beach Rd, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Village Apartments	600 Village Rd, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Oakglen Apartments	115 Oakglen Dr, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Creekside Apartments	1210 N Virginia St, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Bordeaux Apartments	1701 N Virginia St, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Bay Breeze Apartments	720 S Guadalupe St, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Sea Greens Apartment Homes	209 Sand Dollar Dr, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Crane House Apartments	1200 Alcoa Dr, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Regency Apartments	1100 Alcoa Dr Apt 44, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Shell Rose Apartments	608 Alcoa Dr, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Bayshore Manor Apartments	138 Sandpiper Cir, Palacios, TX 77465	Palacios
Nichols Square Apartment	2901 Hamman Rd, Bay City, TX 77414	Bay City
Riverway Apartments	1909 Hamman Rd, Bay City, TX 77414	Bay City
Shadowbay Apartments	1700 Baywood Dr, Bay City, TX 77414	Bay City
Lantana Apartments	4408 Hiram Brandon Dr, Bay City, TX 77414	Bay City
Raystone Apartment Homes	2604 Avenue K, Bay City, TX 77414	Bay City

Shopping Centers

Trip Generator	Address	City
H-E-B	2700 7th Street, Bay City, TX 77414	Bay City
H-E-B	301 North Wells Street, Edna, TX 77957	Edna
H-E-B plus!	6106 North Navarro Street, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
H-E-B	101 Calhoun Plaza, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
H-E-B	1505 East Rio Grande Street, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
H-E-B	201 West Gonzales Street, Yoakum, TX 77995	Yoakum
Victoria Mall	7800 North Navarro Street, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Walmart Supercenter	9002 North Navarro Street, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Patek Grocery & Market	224 S Avenue E, Shiner, TX 77984	Shiner
Walmart Supercenter	1114 East Sarah Dewitt Drive, Gonzales, TX 78629	Gonzales
H-E-B	1841 Church Street, Gonzales, TX 78629	Gonzales
Brookshire's	305 W York St, Ganado, TX 77962	Ganado
Walmart Supercenter	4600 7th Street, Bay City, TX 77414	Bay City
Walmart	1506 North Texana Street, Hallettsville, TX 77964	Hallettsville
Brookshire Brothers	1514 North Texana Street, Hallettsville, 77964	Hallettsville
H-E-B	909 East Broadway Street, Cuero, TX 77954	Cuero
Walmart Supercenter	400 Tiney Browning Boulevard, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Walmart Supercenter	4001 Houston Highway, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Ross	7804 Northeast Zac Lentz Parkway, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Target	7608 Northeast Zac Lentz Parkway, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Walmart	1202 E. Broadway St, Cuero, TX 77954	Cuero
Kohl's	8905 N Navarro St, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Moulton Grocery	100 S Lavaca Dr, Moulton, TX 77975	Moulton
Big Lots	8402 N Navarro St, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
ALDI	5312 North Navarro Street, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria

Major Employers

Trip Generator	Address	City
Gonzales Healthcare Systems	1110 N Sarah Dewitt Dr, Gonzales, TX 78629	Gonzales
Gonzales Independent School District	1615 St Louis St, Gonzales, TX 78629	Gonzales
J Bar B Foods	515 W, US-90, Waelder, TX 78959	Waelder
Kaspar Wire Works	959 State Hwy 95 N, Shiner, TX 77984	Shiner
Pioneer Natural Resources	1612 US-77, Hallettsville, TX 77964	Hallettsville
Clarence N Stevenson Unit	1525 F-M 766, Cuero, TX 77954	Cuero
Cuero Regional Hospital	2550 N Esplanade St, Cuero, TX 77954	Cuero
Devereux Victoria Texas Treatment	120 David Wade Dr, Victoria, TX 77905	Victoria
Orion Marine Group	1112 Broadway St, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Walmart Supercenter	400 Tiney Browning Blvd, Port Lavaca, TX 77979	Port Lavaca
Walmart Supercenter	4001 Houston Hwy, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
DeTar Hospital North	101 Medical Dr, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria

Trip Generator	Address	City
H-E-B Plus!	6106 N Navarro St, Victoria, TX 77904	Victoria
Tisd Incorporated	3001 N Cameron St, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
DeTar Hospital Navarro	506 E San Antonio St, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Victoria College	2200 E Red River St, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Citizens Medical Center	2701 Hospital Dr, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Berry Global	202 John Stockbauer Dr, Victoria, TX 77901	Victoria
Caterpillar Inc.	7300 Lone Tree Rd, Victoria, TX 77905	Victoria
Gonzales Healthcare Systems	1110 N Sarah Dewitt Dr, Gonzales, TX 78629	Gonzales
Gonzales Independent School District	1615 St Louis St, Gonzales, TX 78629	Gonzales
J Bar B Foods	515 W, US-90, Waelder, TX 78959	Waelder

SOURCE: VICTORIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Appendix C

Stakeholder Engagement

Golden Crescent-Directions for the Future

Technical Memorandum 3:

Stakeholder Outreach

September 2024

Prepared for:
TxDOT and Golden Crescent

KFH GROUP

Rockville, MD | Austin, TX

GCRPC
GOLDEN CRESCENT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Technical Memorandum No. 3
Stakeholder Engagement

Introduction

This planning process had a limited stakeholder engagement aspect. This technical memorandum summarizes some of the outreach efforts of recent transit planning projects in the region. In addition, the study team attended several meetings, rode buses, talked to transit customers, and interviewed stakeholders. This memo will summarize the findings of these events and meetings.

Coordinated Plan and Recent Transit Survey

In 2022 the GCRPC completed a regionally coordinated public transit and health and human service transportation plan. This plan consisted of several stakeholder engagement opportunities including public meetings, focus groups and surveys. GCRPC also conducted a transit rider survey. Some of the major take aways from these two efforts include:

- **Fares** - Fares are prohibitively high for many residents that need the service most. Riders would like to see the use of transfers and monthly passes. There needs to be further reduction in fares for older adults and people with disabilities. Students should ride fare free.

- **Service Times** - People would like to see hours extended later in the evening and earlier in the morning. Weekend service expansion was of note in the rural areas.

- **Marketing and Outreach** - Many stakeholders in the rural areas were not aware of the services that are available to the community. Better marketing and awareness are needed. Stakeholders would like to see more collaboration between transit services and local advocacy groups and human service agencies.

- **Bus Stop and Pedestrian Amenities** - While many of the stops have shelters in Victoria, some of the pedestrian infrastructure is lacking. Some underutilized stops have full bus stop amenities while other heavily used stops could benefit from additional amenities.

- **Service Design** – There are needs for scheduled service and increased transportation options for veterans. There is a need for additional capacity in the rural areas to meet transit demand and people would like Victoria Transit to work better for local residents (including route timing, route design, and on-time performance). Stakeholders would like to see more opportunities for on-demand and same-day services. Service does not work effectively to and from Victoria College.

- **Vehicles** - Stakeholders would like to see larger and more comfortable buses in Victoria.

Stakeholder Meetings

There were three stakeholder meetings that the project team attended as part of this project:

The Project Kick-Off Meeting – Attended by GCRPC Staff, Victoria MPO staff and board members, Gonzales County Judge, Victoria City Council members and the project team. This meeting was held in April of 2024.

Victoria MPO MTP Meeting – Attended by Victoria community members the MPO board and members of the Victoria City Council. This meeting was held in June of 2024.

GCRPC Staff Meeting - Attended by GCRPC management and staff and the project team regarding budget shortfall. This meeting was in August of 2024.

The issues raised in the project kick off meeting revolved around the desire to see a more functional fixed route transit service in Victoria that has more direct connections to major destinations for local residents. There was an expressed need to look at areas in town that are currently not served by the fixed route including the Caterpillar facility and Riverside Park. There was an acknowledgement that local funding for Victoria Transit is not substantial enough.

Both the GCRPC staff meeting and the MPO meeting focused on the budgetary shortfall of Victoria Transit. MPO board members expressed serious concern that services were being cut due to lack of funding. GCRPC staff and management are currently engaged in trying to find ways to reduce costs that with the least negative impact on the community. This was the primary factor in discontinuing the Gold Route. This route was the least productive and underutilized in the Victoria Transit system despite being the lone route serving many major destinations including the southern HEB and the Community Center.

Stakeholder Interviews

As part of this planning process the study team conducted several stakeholder interviews:

- Members of the Victoria MPO Board and City Council in June of 2024
- Individual site visit interviews for each county contractor for rural transit services in June of 2024
- The Director of the UHV transit program in July of 2024
- Interview with GCRPC regarding rural services in DeWitt and Victoria County in July of 2024

MPO and City Council Interview Summary

- Students should ride fare free
- There is a need for additional local matching funds for Victoria Transit
- Leaders would like to see changes at Victoria Transit that would improve service delivery and would make it easier to increase local funding. It will be easier to allocate more funding for transit if services are improved.
- Leaders would like to see bus stops at Riverside Park and the low-income housing development (Enchanted Gardens) off Ben Jordan Rd.
- There is significant concern related to the discontinuation of the Gold Route and budget deficits at Victoria Transit.

County Operator Interview Summary

Calhoun County

- Explore opportunities for same day microtransit or dial-a-ride service
- Additional vehicle is needed
- Increased responsiveness to maintenance needs
- Increased coordination and technical assistance with GCRPC

Dewitt County

- Vehicles! DeWitt currently has a zero percent spare ratio, though coordination with Victoria Transit helps them maintain their vehicles without cutting service.
- Finding and retaining CDL drivers is a major need in DeWitt County
- Coordinate with Gonzales County for trips into Victoria.

Goliad County

- Increased coordination and technical assistance from GCRPC.
- An additional vehicle and driver to expand capacity in the county making same day service in the town of Goliad available all day.
- The development of scheduled service to Victoria to assist in grouping trips and improving productivity.

Gonzales County

- Replacement of two vehicles at the end of their useful life.
- Additional vehicles and drivers to expand opportunities for out-of-county trips
- Scheduled service to places such as Bastrop, Luling, Lockhart, Austin, Seguin, and New Braunfels to help group trips, increase productivity and free up vehicles for other services.
- Same day dial-a-ride or microtransit service in the City of Gonzales.

Jackson County

- Regularly scheduled service into Victoria.
- Same day microtransit or dial-a-ride service in Edna.
- More frequent vehicle replacement
- Coordinate with Matagorda County for trips into Victoria.

Lavaca County

- Increased coordination, guidance, technical assistance and responsiveness from GCRPC.
- Coordination between the multiple capital grant opportunities.
- Additional accessible vehicles to meet demand for passengers with mobility devices and to increase capacity and opportunities for grouping trips.
- Same day dial-a-ride or microtransit service in Hallettsville.
- Development of scheduled service into Victoria, Yokum, and Cuero to free up capacity and improve productivity.

Matagorda County

- Scheduled service for out of county trips to improve productivity through the grouping of trips.
- Explore opportunities for same day service in Bay City.
- Marginal increase in staffing and fleet size (one vehicle and one staff).

Victoria County

- Hiring and retaining CDL drivers
- Increased scheduled service connecting rural areas to Victoria and long distance medical trips to San Antonio and Houston.

University of Houston - Victoria Transit Interview Summary

- UHV's primary goal for their transit operation is to connect the dorms to the educational facilities on campus.
- There is a significant need to connect campus and students to essential goods and services in Victoria, particularly HEB, Target, downtown, Walmart, and medical facilities.
- There are a lot of low income and first-generation college students without a vehicle and a high need for mobility services.
- UHV is willing to enter into discussions with Victoria Transit on coordination of services and exploring ways for students to ride the service fare free.
- There is a significant need for improved pedestrian infrastructure in Victoria.
- UHV wants to get the university and students more engaged with the community and to explore ways to foster stronger relationships with Victoria Transit.

Field Observations and Transit Customer Interviews

In June of 2024 the project team conducted field observations in Victoria by riding each route and talking with transit customers and vehicle operators. Comments and observations are summarized below:

- Routes take too long and deviate too much. For example, customers leaving the transfer center on the Blue route were frustrated that ten minutes after departing the transfer center the bus was driving past the transfer center once again. The portion of the red route serving the medical center is frustrating to passengers trying to access the busiest commercial corridor in Victoria and this route off-shoot adds several minutes to the route.
- Passengers believe the fares are too expensive. Many people stopped riding when fares were reinstituted.
- Customers would like to see larger, heavy-duty buses that have a smoother ride and do not rattle as much.
- The transfer policy is confusing to customers. Transfers should be available at any shared stop.

Appendix D

Needs Assessment

Golden Crescent-Directions for the Future

Technical Memorandum No. 4:

Needs Assessment

September 2024

Prepared for:
TxDOT and Golden Crescent

KFH GROUP

Rockville, MD | Austin, TX

GCRPC
GOLDEN CRESCENT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Technical Memorandum No. 4
Needs Assessment

Introduction

This technical memorandum builds off the previous technical memoranda and details the public transit needs in the GCRC region. The previous document outlined the concerns, issues and commendations expressed by regional transit stakeholders. The information presented in the previous technical memorandum shows that regional transit stakeholders want to see: more capacity and coordination in the rural areas, a streamlined and more effective service in Victoria, and sustainability for the transit services in the region.

The focus of this memorandum is to detail the needs from a financial, organizational, coordination and operational standpoint.

Needs

The Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission (GCRPC) encompasses an eight county region including Calhoun, DeWitt, Goliad, Gonzales, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda and Victoria counties. The GCRPC provides small-urban transit through Victoria Transit within the city. The GCRPC also operates both demand response rural transit through RTRANSIT and commuter service to the Port Lavaca area.

As detailed in Technical Memorandum No. 2, existing services in Victoria are being reduced due to budget shortfalls. Productivity of the Victoria Transit service has fluctuated considerably over the last four years with the onset of the pandemic, the system going fare-free, the reinstituting of fares, and the elimination of the Gold Route. Ridership and productivity in the last several months have hit all-time lows for Victoria Transit, particularly since fares were reinstituted. Rural services on average have a productivity of 1.5 to 2 one-way trips per revenue hour.

This section uses data from the stakeholder engagement, previous planning efforts and *Technical Memorandum No. 2* to review the needs of the GCRPC Region and the City of Victoria.

Financial Needs in Victoria

Victoria Transit has seen significant budget shortfalls in 2024 and those are projected to continue into 2025. The system eliminated the Gold Route, the route with the lowest productivity, in an effort to cut costs and is considering eliminating early morning and evening weekday hours of operation to further

save costs. This will likely have drastic impacts on ridership as they are eliminating commuter service from the system. The federal and state grant funding formulas take ridership into consideration in determining how much each agency is allocated, so this effort to reduce costs will likely result in a further loss of revenue. Table 4-1 depicts the current financial situation for Victoria Transit. It should be noted that FTA requires public hearings in the event of any proposed cuts in service.

Table 4-1: Victoria Transit Budget Deficit

	2024	2025
Expenses (Projected for 2025)	$2,742,999	$2,587,291
Federal Revenue	$1,495,878	$1,402,684
Match Revenue	$777,980	$756,106
Total Revenue	$2,273,858	$2,158,790
Deficit	**$469,141**	**$428,501**

As shown, for the years 2024 and what is projected for 2025, Victoria Transit is at over a $400,000 deficit for each year. For 2025, Victoria Transit needs to reduce costs or increase revenue by $428,501 to maintain its current service levels.

Table 4-2 depicts the revenue hour deficit for Victoria Transit. As shown, the system is currently providing approximately 5,500 hours beyond the funding available to them. The largest need for Victoria transit is to redesign their services so that the fixed route system provides the same basic geographic coverage, improves ridership with more direct connections for passengers and operates at approximately 5,000 fewer revenue hours annually (at $81 per revenue hour) along with the pursuit of new sources of revenue. This need can be met through a thoughtful redesign of the routes in Victoria.

Table 4-1: Victoria Transit Revenue Hour Deficit

	2024	2025
Projected Revenue Hours	21,517	19,649
Revenue Hours Funded	15,779	14,359
Revenue Hour Deficit	**5,738**	**5,290**

Additionally, Victoria Transit needs to find additional sources of revenue for operations. Establishing a well marketed and targeted sponsorship program can help increase revenue from public, private and non-profit sources and help close the deficit gap within the system's budget. As noted earlier, operational grants factor in ridership into the formula that determines how much funding the agency receives. If drops in ridership due to the reimplementation of fares result in lower grant awards and lower fare box revenue, fare free service may be more advantageous to the customers and agency alike.

Victoria Transit Service Needs

As noted previously the Victoria Transit ridership has dropped significantly since the reinstituting of fares post-pandemic. Fares are not the only reason for low ridership, however. Service design is exacerbating productivity issues in Victoria. Figure 4-1 shows the current Victoria Transit route structure including the eliminated Gold Route. The current service design is negatively affected by complex routes, a transfer location that is not a major destination, and long one-way looping routes that diverge from major arterials. The design, coupled with the abrupt disruption of service due to the elimination of the Gold Line and the potential for the elimination of commuter service hours, creates a system that is unattractive and unreliable for current and potential transit customers. Victoria Transit needs a fixed route service design that aims—at a minimum—to do the following:

1. **Avoid the Loopers** – Long (over 30 minutes) one-way loop routes kill ridership. Out and back is the normal form of fixed-route transit. If there is a stop on one side of the street, there should be a stop on the other side (in most cases). Ride time on long loop routes is almost always excessive. Loop routes do not pass the ice cream test, 10 minutes to get to the store, but 50 minutes to get home.

2. **Effective Service Hours** – When the service is provided is as important as where the service goes. For in town service, weekday schedules should operate between 6:30 or 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 or 7:00 p.m. at a minimum. Saturday service typically generates half the ridership of weekday service and Sunday service usually only produces a third.

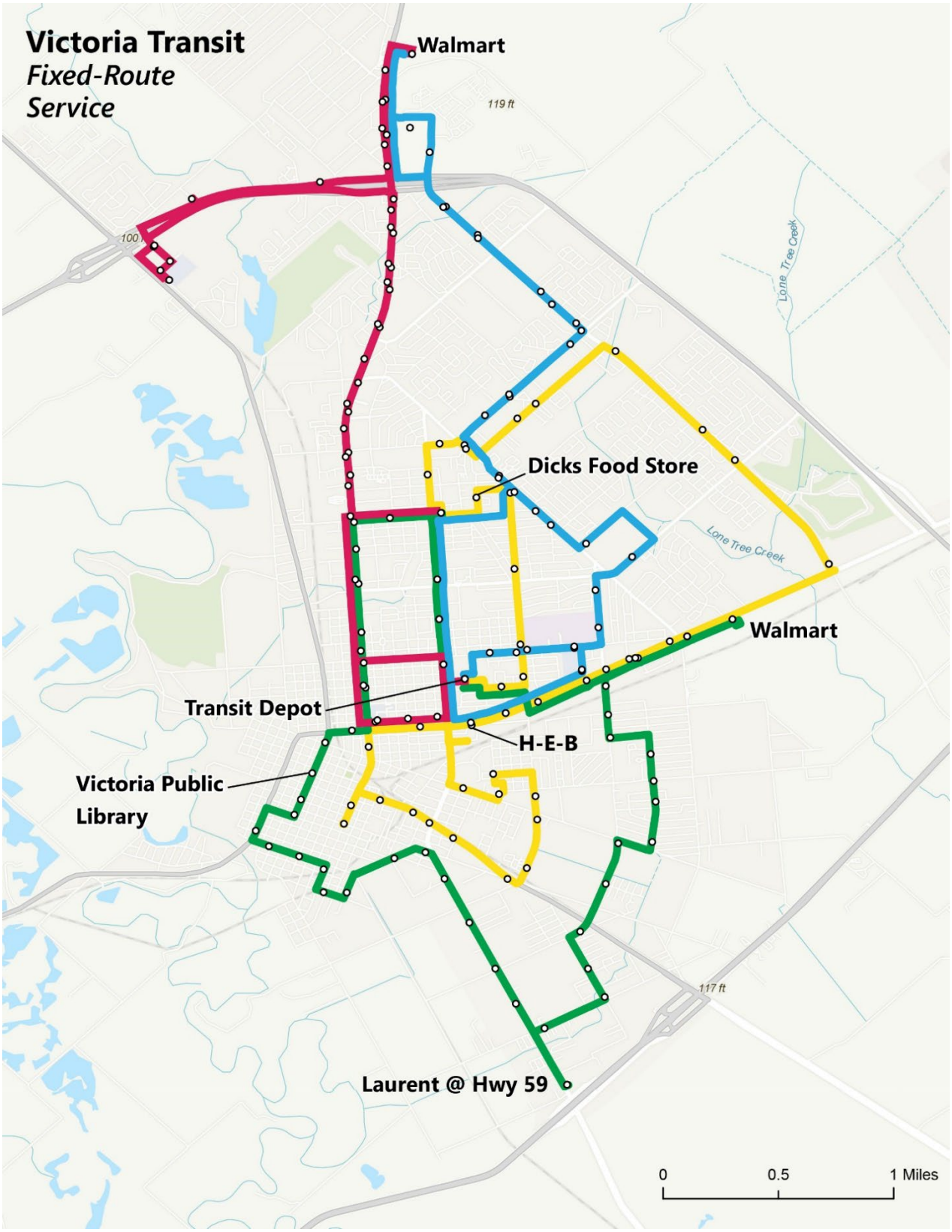
3. **Proper Transfer Locations** – Major transfer points should be at major trip generators such as: big box stores, downtown hubs, or at a mall with proper access. This will reduce the number of transfers and decrease travel time. This strategy is detailed in the next section.

4. **Balance Frequency and Coverage** – Frequency is the time between buses going in the same direction on the same route. Going from a frequency of an hour to ½ hour is great, but it doubles the cost. Service elasticities tell us that when service is doubled ridership will probably increase about 50 percent. While coverage is not good for ridership, as some parts of the service area will never be productive, equity requires its consideration. The key here is putting the best service design in place for each part of the service area.

5. **Consistent Service** – "Every weekday without fail, every time without fail." Customers must have service every day (with exceptions for weather or other disaster). If they cannot count on the bus showing up, then they will only ride if desperate. Try to have the bus come by the same location, in the same direction at the same time every hour (or half hour).

6. **Adress Cost Concerns** – Victoria Transit needs a fixed route service that can cover the same basic geographic area, operate during the normal transit operating hours (no less than 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.), and does it with about 5,000 fewer annual service hours than is currently being provided.

Figure 4-1: Victoria Transit Route Structure



Transfer Center Needs

The current transfer center for Victoria Transit is at an administrative building for a regional government entity. This location has very little value as a destination to the typical transit rider in Victoria. Any system change in Victoria should incorporate a transfer center that is a major destination for transit riders. The proper placement of a transfer center will minimize bus mileage and travel time for the buses and customers, reduce transfers, and provide better service area coverage.

Wherever the transfer point is located, it should meet many of the critical locational elements described as follows:

1. **Major Destinations** – When the transfer center is at a major destination, it reduces the number of transfers required for passengers. This reduces the time on the bus and in turn can improve ridership. Locations such as downtown, a large mall, or big box stores are typical with most transfer centers being in the downtown area.

2. **Excellent Bus Access** – Minimal time loss related to entry to the facility is important to customers and the reach of the service. This is particularly important for intercity and regional routes that should stay close to major roads traveled.

3. **Safe and Inviting Location** – The transfer facility should be located in a well-lit location where people have no concerns about their safety.

4. **Accessible/Safe Pathways** – Clear access that avoids inaccessible pathways and parking lots is critical. Pedestrian access should be inclusive for everyone and feature appropriately protected crosswalks to ensure safety. Bike access should also be protected with bike securement at both major stops and the transfer station.

5. **Adequate Space for Future Expansion** – The space must accommodate all buses that may be on-site at one time, now and for the next 10-20 years. This will include internal service as well as other providers - both public and private. Space should also be included for passenger auto access to drop off customers, commonly called "Kiss and Ride" access.

6. **Centrally Located** – Where geographically feasible, the buses should be able to access the facility from a variety of roads and not have multiple routes travelling on the same roads.

7. **Partnership Potential** – There are other less tangible factors at play from time to time. In this case there may be opportunities for public/private partnerships and private funding at some locations, such as big box stores, the mall or a medical center. Furthermore, some locations lend themselves to leasing retail or office space

Summary Victoria Transit

Victoria Transit has these primary needs:

- **Funding and Budget** – Victoria Transit is currently operating at a deficit of approximately $450,000 a year or approximately 5,500 revenue hours a year. The system needs to find a way to reduce costs without sacrificing service to transit customers in the community. In addition, Victoria Transit needs to find new sources of revenue.

- **Service Design** – Victoria Transit needs a fixed route service design change to more effectively meet the mobility needs of Victoria residents at a lower cost.

- **New Transfer Location** – Victoria Transit needs a new transfer center at a location that is suitable for transit vehicles and is also a place that customers would like to go.

Rural Transit Needs

There are a variety of rural transit needs in the GCRPC region. This section will assess the rural transit needs for the region as a whole, as well as each individual county, looking at both coordination needs and service needs.

Coordination and Technical Assistance

The GCRPC region serves a total of eight counties with rural transit service. DeWitt and Victoria County have rural transportation services directly operated by GCRPC. The remaining six counties have rural transit service that is provided by individual county human service providers contracted with GCRPC to provide rural transit service for residents withing each county. During the stakeholder engagement phase of this planning effort, the project team conducted site visits to each county operator to discuss needs in their organization and their community. Each of the six counties that contract with GCRPC to provide rural transit service noted a desire to strengthen coordination with the lead agency. The ultimate desire is to move beyond a traditional oversight relationship and foster a partnership context where each agency feels supported and capable.

Improved coordination is a need that was articulated by each agency including GCRPC. These coordination efforts should include at a minimum:

1. **Technical Assistance** – GCRPC should continue to take the lead on coordinated training and vehicle procurements through state and federal capital grant programs. In addition, GCRPC can help coordinate procurements in concert with other grant opportunities that may exist for individual counties, maintenance issues and technical assistance. GCRPC should make sure that each of its contractors are aware of service and reporting requirements and host training for its providers if

requirements are not being met. In addition, GCRPC can help the awareness of each provider of informational resources such as TxDOT, TTA and RTAP meetings and webinars, especially resources that directly address any specific issues that are affecting a particular county or the region as a whole.

2. **Operate Service as One Network –** While each individual rural operator and contractor desires to be autonomous and to continue to provide excellent transportation service through their agency efforts, the region needs more service coordination to operate as one regional entity from a customer perspective. This includes coordinating with neighboring counties to group trips on through trip to Victoria or out of the region for medical trips.

3. **Procurement** – GCRPC is the lead agency for federal and state capital grant opportunity procurements. Some of the counties in the region have local grant opportunities for vehicle procurements. These local funds have typically been used to buy vehicles for transit service that are not ADA accessible. Combining these grant efforts may result in increased capacity and more accessible vehicles on the road in the region.

4. **Training** – GCRPC should look to build upon their transit training programs assisting their contractors in vehicle operations, passenger assistance and sensitivity, reporting, FTA and TxDOT compliance and non-emergency medical transportation.

5. **Maintenance and Fleet Management** – Many of the counties have vehicles that are no longer operational and need assistance in decommissioning the vehicles and replacing the buses. Opportunities to explore regional maintenance contracts or assistance in maintenance, particularly repairs, are an expressed need from rural transit contractors.

Vehicles

During the stakeholder engagement phase, vehicles were noted as an issue in the rural areas. One major issue facing Goliad and Dewitt is the lack of spare vehicles in peak service. This problem makes scheduling preventative maintenance exceedingly difficult.

Lavaca Couty has several vehicles that they were able to procure through a local grant, but all the vehicles purchased are smaller sedans or SUVs, and none of them are accessible for a mobility device. The two larger accessible vehicles they have procured through coordination with GCRPC often take single passenger trips with customers who require an accessible vehicle, and the other remaining vehicles are too small to effectively group trips. GCRPC should explore opportunities to combine grant efforts to increase the accessible fleet size in Lavaca County.

Goliad, Calhoun, Gonzales and Lavaca County all have vehicles at the end of their useful life, some completely out of service. These vehicles need to be officially decommissioned and replaced.

Each county provider as well as GCRPC noted that they would like to increase their capacity from a

vehicle standpoint. Each county would also like to hire an additional driver to increase their ability to meet the demands for transit service in their community.

Rural Service Needs

GCRPC and its rural contractors have been creative in meeting the transit demand for county residents within the region. Understanding the financial, capacity and operational constraints of rural transit, service recommendations must be carefully thought out. The essential question is, how can we do more without increasing costs?

The rural services in the region need to find ways to improve in grouping trips and be more responsive to local transit needs. There are two primary ways to accomplish this:

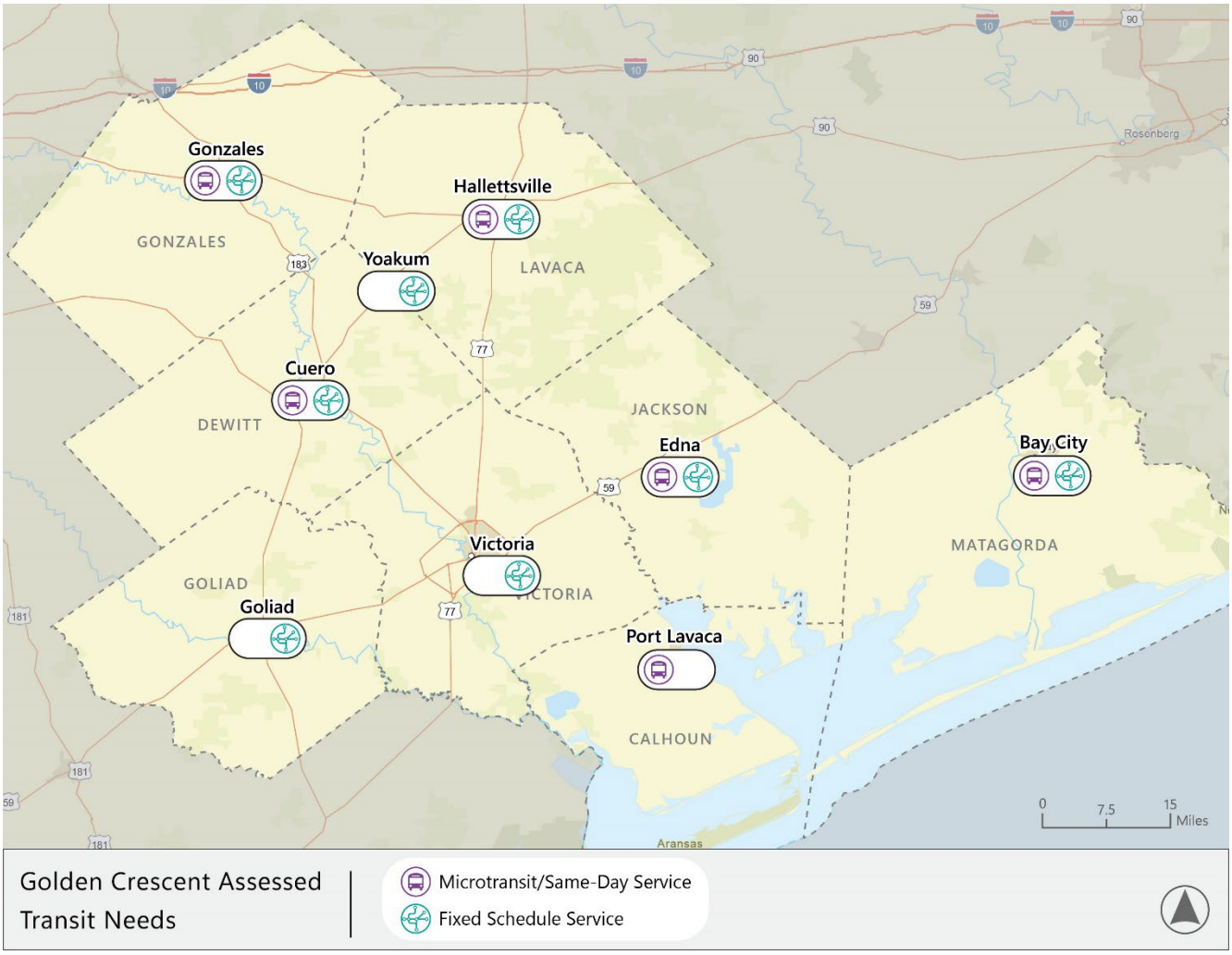
1. **Scheduled Service** – or fixed schedule service is an excellent way to provide grouped regional trips. The idea is to continue to provide curb-to-curb service for rural residents but for regional trips this happens on a scheduled basis. For example, residents of Goliad that need to go to Victoria for medical appointments or shopping can take the bus that is scheduled every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from Goliad County to Victoria. This model of service can do two things for the transit agency. First, it helps group trips to increase productivity. Second, it can free up vehicles for other services such as same day service.

2. **Microtransit / Same Day Service** – Every county provider in the region has the capability to schedule same day service (microtransit). Same day service is when a transit customer calls or uses an app for a local trip and can get the trip with fifteen to thirty minutes of the request. This type of service only works in small areas, such as a major town, and only in communities that have at least one major destination (Walmart, HEB, regional hospital, etc.)

A note about fixed schedule and same day service: these service designs are excellent for increasing the cost effectiveness of service delivery and productivity but require a concerted effort in marketing and disseminating the information to transit customers. People will not ride if they do not understand how the service works.

Figure 4-2 shows the scheduled service needs for each county and the potential for same day service for each community.

Figure 4-2: GCRPC Rural Transit Operational Needs



Calhoun County

Calhoun County already has significant scheduled service due to the GCRPC commuter program and an existing scheduled service to Victoria on Tuesdays. The needs of the county are as follows:

- Explore opportunities for same day microtransit service
- Additional vehicle is needed
- Increased responsiveness to maintenance needs
- Increased coordination and technical assistance with GCRPC

Dewitt County

DeWitt County has regional service demands in connecting Cuero to Yoakum and Victoria. The needs of DeWitt County are as follows:

- Vehicles! DeWitt currently has a zero percent spare ratio, though coordination with Victoria Transit helps them maintain their vehicles without cutting service.
- Finding and retaining CDL drivers is a major need in DeWitt County
- Coordinate with Gonzales County for trips into Victoria.

Goliad County

Goliad County is one of the most rural counties in the GCRPC region. Goliad County already provides same day service as available. The county has no spare vehicles during peak service. Their major needs are as follows:

- Increased coordination and technical assistance from GCRPC.
- An additional vehicle and driver to expand capacity in the county making microtransit service available in the town of Goliad. Goliad currently offers same-day service as system capacity allows.
- The development of scheduled service to Victoria to assist in grouping trips and improving productivity.

Gonzales County

Gonzales County is the county furthest to the north on the GCRPC service area and the least dependent/furthest away from Victoria in the region. Gonzales County major needs are as follows:

- Replacement of two vehicles at the end of their useful life.
- Additional vehicles and drivers to expand opportunities for out-of-county trips
- Scheduled service to places such as Bastrop, Luling, Lockhart, Austin, Seguin, and New Braunfels to help group trips, increase productivity and free up vehicles for other services.
- Same day microtransit service in the City of Gonzales.

Jackson County

Jackson County is directly to the east of Victoria and a large portion of their service revolves around getting residents of Edna and rural Jackson County into Victoria for shopping and medical appointments. Needs in Jackson County include:

- Regularly scheduled service into Victoria.
- Same day microtransit service in Edna.
- More frequent vehicle replacement
- Coordinate with Matagorda County for trips into Victoria.

Lavaca County

Lavaca County is the county in the region that has been able to take advantage of local grant opportunities to buy SUVs and sedans for transit service in their community. Lavaca County needs revolve around:

- Increased coordination, guidance, technical assistance and responsiveness from GCRPC.
- Coordination between the multiple capital grant opportunities.
- Additional accessible vehicles to meet demand for passengers with mobility devices and to increase capacity and opportunities for grouping trips.
- Same day microtransit service in Hallettsville.
- Development of scheduled service into Victoria, Yokum, and Cuero to free up capacity and improve productivity.

Matagorda County

Matagorda County is the most southeastern county in the GCRPC service area and home to Bay City, the largest city in the county. Most of their trips remain within the county of Matagorda, with typically less than five trips per month connecting into other counties. These out of county trips are most commonly for medical trips and they often are very long. Matagorda County transit needs include:

- Scheduled service for out of county trips to improve productivity through the grouping of trips.
- Explore opportunities for same day service in Bay City.
- Marginal increase in staffing and fleet size (one vehicle and one staff).

Victoria County

Victoria County is in the center of the study area and home to the GCRPC headquarters in Victoria. Victoria County rural transit service is directly operated by GCRPC. With the vast majority of the trips bringing rural residents of the county into the City of Victoria. Rural transit needs in Vitoria County include:

- Hiring and retaining CDL drivers
- Increased scheduled service connecting rural areas to Victoria and long distance medical trips to San Antonio and Houston.

Technology Needs

Each of the county operators uses the same scheduling software. The Shah software package has an app and microtransit component available. This technology should be explored if same day services and scheduled service are something that regional providers are going to take on.

The Bottom Line

This planning effort has highlighted several needs both locally and regionally in the GCRPC area:

Address Funding Challenges Head On – Budgets shortfalls in Victoria are presenting challenges to the agency and community. Finding ways to improve service what simultaneously reducing cost is a major need in Victoria. Ideas to look at fare elimination and grant funding formulas are major needs as well.

Reconfiguration of Victora Transit Fixed Route System – Victoria Transit has a fixed route service design in need of a complete overhaul. This will help reduce costs and improve productivity.

Reconfigure Rural Service as One Network – Rather than operate as single county services, the county and region would benefit from a coordinated network. This can help reduce costs by sharing regional trips and help streamline connections.

Spare Vehicles – Many of the rural county contractors operate one hundred percent of their fleet during peak times. A zero percent spare ratio makes it difficult to complete preventative maintenance without eliminating service or denying trips. Through effective scheduling and coordination with maintenance contractors, however, most of the counties seem to be accomplishing preventative maintenance without service disruptions. The lack of vehicles does still create problems and capacity issues when breakdowns occur.

Guidance and Technical Assistance – The rural contractors need increased guidance and leadership from the lead agency related not only to compliance and vehicle performance but also increased assistance with training, funding and match, and service planning and coordination.

Coordination – Many of the rural providers are providing daily or weekly service into Victoria with some traveling through rural areas in other counties and Victoria County. Coordinating service to reduce duplication can free up other vehicles to provide more service to more people.

Improve and Upgrade Technology – Golden Cresent and its rural contractors use Shah scheduling and reporting software. Effort needs to be made to be sure that contractors are up to date on all of the software capabilities and trained properly to use the technology. Integrating the software regionally will also be an advantage to all providers.

Appendix E

RTransit and Victoria Transit Recommendations and Strategies for the Future

Technical Memorandum No. 5:
RTransit and Victoria Transit Recommendations and Strategies for the Future

Introduction

Based on the results of the previous tasks, the study team has assessed service, identified issue areas and developed a number of recommendations and strategies that will help improve the service and build ridership.

This memorandum will include the following:

1. **Introduction: Strategies for the Future** – The new normal and the changes in the operating environment.

2. **Key Transit Concepts** – This includes a discussion related to productivity and performance.

3. **Service Design and Provision** – Ensuring the system is operating effectively and appropriately across the region.
    a. In the rural areas the study team will look at innovative approaches to service provision and moving away from one-on-one paratransit where feasible.
    b. In Victoria, the focus will be on revising the fixed routes and paratransit.

4. **Use of Technology** – GCRPC and the rural subcontractors use Shah technology. Shah may support microtransit, a key element for future service.

5. **Performance Measurement** – Ensuring that the service is moving forward. Every system should monitor these numbers.

5. **Marketing and Branding** – GCRPC should look to rebranding for both the urban and the rural service.

6. **Financial Alternatives and Funding Sources** – Local funding is critical to success. There are private sector options as well. Victoria has a significant shortfall that will be addressed by reducing the number of buses and service hours, while increasing ridership. Efforts should be made to gain private sector support.

Technical Assistance

This study, funded through TxDOT's Transit Technical Services Program (TTSP), is not a complete transportation development plan as funding is limited to technical assistance. In order to complete the plan, there are a number of activities to be accomplished by RTransit and Victoria Transit. These include:

- **Stakeholder and general public engagement** - Where the detailed plan is vetted by the community and then adjustments are made. Engagement is a prerequisite for change.
- **Branding** - It is suggested that Victoria Transit engage in a branding effort and upgrade the website.
- **The new Victoria routes** - May need some refinement, including bus stops and specific turn-for-turn directions for each route.
- **Specific rural route schedules** – These should be based on current and recent past travel patterns, and typically will be determined by existing dialysis runs.

Guidance will be given regarding each of the above.

Change will be the Future – The New Normal

Victoria Transit ridership remained stable during the pandemic. In fact, of the 50 or so systems we have worked with since the pandemic, Victoria Transit is the only one that remained stable. RTransit in some counties saw significant drops and in other counties ridership remained stable. Overall, especially in Victoria Transit, ridership is currently very low, and new approaches should be taken to improve performance.

The good news is that there are a number of new approaches to providing transit in rural and small urban areas, and Victoria Transit and RTransit should take advantage of these new approaches for the sake of the riders and others in need.

*This is the **golden age** of rural and small city transit. With the advancements in technology, coupled with excellent new service designs, transit can **dramatically increase ridership** for little or no additional cost.*

The New Normal

Ridership has changed significantly since COVID. Travel patterns have changed perhaps most of all. For example, the new normal will include, but not be limited to the following changes in our travel patterns:

- **Tele-Medicine** – The number of people using tele-medicine is on the rise. Insurance companies are encouraging this in many cases, and it will reduce healthcare-related travel.
- **Tele-Health** – This too has seen an increase in non-medical healthcare, such as counseling or therapy for example. Again, insurance companies are encouraging this in many cases to reduce costs.
- **Tele-Monitoring** – The monitoring of health remotely is gaining traction and will reduce the need for these types of trips.
- **Delivery Services** – The delivery industry has exploded in growth. Groceries, dog food, tools, and just about anything else can be delivered to the front door, reducing shopping trips.
- **Working from Home** – Has shown us that many people can and want to work from home, and in some cases businesses are encouraging this.
- **Microtransit, Fixed schedule and Other New Modes** – New modes will change the way people travel by bus. We are already seeing this in both rural and urban areas.

New approaches are needed for the 2020s. The 1990s model does not work anymore and costs more than successful new approaches.

Key Transit Concepts

Before the study committee considers the service strategies directly, the consultant team presents a variety of key transit concepts that should be understood prior to selecting strategies. We will discuss the following:

1. **Understanding productivity**

2. **The service designs considered – *strengths* and *weaknesses***

3. **Guidelines for fixed-route design**

Proper service design is paramount to any transit system. Improper service typologies and designs often result in lower ridership and lower productivity (measured as one-way trips per vehicle hour) while applying the right service design can improve performance often at no extra cost.

*To understand the rationale for a particular service design, it is important to first understand the concept of system **productivity** and how it relates to cost.*

Understanding Productivity

More than anything else in the transit world, productivity drives the cost per trip. Productivity is measured as one-way trips per vehicle service hour. Productivity, which must be balanced with providing a safe (social distancing is critical at the time of this report), timely and comfortable service, is critical to cost control.

For example, if the service costs $50 to operate one vehicle for one hour, and the productivity is 1.5 passengers per vehicle hour, then the cost per trip is $33.33. If productivity is increased to three one-way trips per hour, then the cost per trip is $16.67. Six trips per hour would yield a cost per trip of $8.33. The more trips per hour, the lower the cost per trip. In essence, productivity drives cost per trip.

One of the best ways to lower transportation costs is through productivity improvements. The service design selected will determine, in large part, the productivity of the service. The end result will depend on the mode(s) selected.

Service Designs: The Best Fit for Victoria Transit and RTransit – Urban and Rural

With an understanding of the importance of productivity, the next step is to look at service design. The objective is to apply the most appropriate service design(s) for the transportation needs. GCRPC is using the most appropriate modes for its urban and rural areas in most cases. These changes will not add to the system costs, but will increase ridership and lower per trip costs.

- **Urban Fixed-Route –** Issues arise when reviewing the fixed routes in Victoria. The loop routes should be eliminated and dead space minimized.

- **Urban ADA Complementary Paratransit –** This door-to-door service is complementary to fixed-route and is required by Federal regulation, within ¾ mile of fixed routes, for persons who because of a disability can't get to or can't ride fixed-route. Passengers must be certified as eligible for this service. This service can be part of a microtransit service as long as it meets the requirements for ADA complementary paratransit.

- **Rural Small City Microtransit** – This app-based service (or telephone) is a general public shared-ride service designed for lower-density areas that are very difficult to serve, especially for fixed-route. Where microtransit is implemented at the same cost as day-in-advance service, it can transport more riders than demand-response. It works very well in cities the size of Gonzales, for example, and is recommended for all of the cities that meet the criteria.

- **Rural Fixed Schedule –** In county and daily service into Victoria – Most counties provide service on a daily basis into Victoria for healthcare and shopping needs. These should be done on a coordinated and scheduled basis, with the schedule well posted. Similar service can be used to transport rural riders into the county's major city.

In order to best understand the nuances of fixed-route service, the consultants first review the key concepts of fixed-route in Victoria.

Fixed-Route Guidelines

Proper service design is paramount to any transit system. Improper service typologies and designs often result in lower ridership and lower productivity, while applying the right service design can improve performance — often at no extra cost.

Fixed-route is generally the least expensive mode of transit on a per trip basis and also the most efficient and effective in cities. As an introduction to the service strategies, the study team presents our guidelines for fixed-route service design. The review of routes will look at these guidelines, and it is important for management and stakeholders to understand the context of our recommendations.

Following are the guidelines:

1. **Maximize Use of Fixed-Route** – Fixed-route should be the first option in many areas of Victoria, particularly in areas with higher densities and locations with significant transit attributes.

2. **Do it Right or Don't Do It** - Small cities can use at a minimum, about one fixed-route bus per population of 8,000 to 12,000, and one microtransit bus for every 6,000 persons. Providing two buses when six are needed to "see how it goes" is like opening a grocery store and only stocking one-third of the aisles.

3. **Minimum Density** - Fixed-route service works best in towns with a population of at least 1,000 per square mile, as well as areas with major destinations or tourism. Microtransit can function at much lower densities, and Victoria meets this threshold.

4. **Minimum Productivity** – Our research indicates that fixed routes with lower than five one-way trips per hour should first look to ensure the routes meet the guidelines or change the routes. If that doesn't work, look at alternative service designs such as microtransit.

5. **When is Service Provided?** – When the service is provided is as important as where the buses go. For in-town service, at a minimum, 6:30 a.m. or 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Operating 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. will leave out an entire class of riders, reducing ridership even further and possibly killing service. Riders prefer later hours over earlier hours. Saturday service typically generates half the ridership of weekday service, and Sunday service usually one-third.

6. **Out and Back / Avoid the Loopers** – Long one-way loop routes (over 30 minutes) kill ridership. Out and back is the normal form of fixed-route transit. If there is a stop on one side of the street, there should be a stop on the other side (in most cases). Ride time on long loop routes is almost always excessive. Loop routes do not pass the **ice cream test**, for example - 10 minutes to get to the store, but 50 minutes to get home. **Eliminating the loops will generate additional ridership by significantly reducing ride time.**

7. **Simplicity in Fixed-Route Design** – Avoid connecting the dots and keep the meandering of fixed routes to a minimum.

    a. In most cases, let the riders walk to the bus stop rather than having the bus meander to the riders. Major stops are an exception or those willing to pay for a stop.
    b. Some routes should be origin based and some should be destination based.
    c. Do not try to do too much with one route.
    d. Rather than having a one and a half hour looper, have three half-hour routes.

8. **Timed Transfers and Interlining** – Fixed routes will meet at the designated transfer point at the same time and then often become a second route (interlining). This reduces the need for transfers. Origin-based routes should be matched with destination-based routes. These services will also be timed to meet other buses.

9. **Transfer Locations** - Major transfer points should be centrally located and adjacent to major trip generators such as: big box stores, downtown, education facilities, medical complexes, and at a mall with proper access. This will reduce the number of transfers and decrease travel time. Victoria Transit's transfer facility is centrally located, but it is not adjacent to a trip generator—a major flaw. This is discussed in detail below.

10. **Frequency** – Frequency is the time between buses going in the same direction on the same route. Going from a frequency of an hour to a half hour is great, but it doubles the cost. Service elasticities tell us that when service is doubled, ridership will probably increase about 50 percent.

11. **Coverage** - Coverage is more inclined to ensure there is a bus route nearby even in areas that may not produce fixed-route ridership. Fairness and politics tell us that sometimes coverage is important. The key here is to put the best service design in place for each part of the service area.

12. **Accessible Bus Stops and Pathways** – The bus stop is **transit's front door.** Care must be taken in selecting bus stops for location, safety and accessibility. Stops should be every quarter mile, as detailed below.

13. **Timing Points** - Timing points should be every seven to 10 minutes. For Victoria service, NEVER have every stop as a timing point as this will result in slow service and the bus sitting around.

14. **Proper Streets and Turns** - Routing should avoid unprotected left turns on busy streets as well as any other difficult maneuvers. The bus must be able to easily traverse a narrow street without impediment. Never back up as part of a route. Test the route with the bus you will use.

15. **Vehicles** - Are your vehicles appropriate for your ridership? Size/capacity – is the bus big enough or will you "need a larger bus?" For fixed-route bigger is usually better (to a point) unless there are maneuverability issues on the route.

16. **Consistency of Service** – Customers want consistent service (with exceptions for unsafe conditions, of course). "Every weekday without fail, every time without fail." Customers must have service every day. If they can't count on the bus showing up, then they will only ride if desperate. Try to have the bus come by the same location, in the same direction, at the same time every hour (or half hour).

17. **Do Not Compete with Yourself –** Do not operate a competing paratransit service covering the same service area. Microtransit should *feed* the fixed-route, not compete with it.

18. **Looking Good/Marketing** - While services need to be professionally marketed and promoted, the best advertising is good-looking buses with an attractive paint scheme and logo, and professional drivers that the community can be proud of. Plain white vehicles will blend into the background and be invisible to the community—never good for ridership. If the bus is wrapped make sure there are system identifiers in the front, rear and sides. As with any business it is important to be noticed (in a good way). Monitor the service to ensure everything is appropriate and performance measures are being met.

19. **Leave No Rider Behind** – Fixed-route is not for all. Persons with disabilities who can't get to the bus or can't ride must receive comparable ADA service. There may be other parts of the service area that may need some service, but not fixed-route. For these riders there are other low-cost solutions without compromising the service that can take 95 percent (for example) of the riders.

20. **Sometimes There are Exceptions** – These guidelines are not universal. Context dictates the exceptions.

Bus Stops

Unlike most small transit systems, Victoria Transit has far more shelters spread throughout the system than any other we have ever seen at a system of this size. This is both good and bad. First, the good. Shelters are expensive, and Victoria Transit will not have to buy any new shelters for many years. These shelters will have to be relocated extensively. Victoria Transit should remove shelters where there is no stop or route (people will wait there for a bus), as will be the case if they are not moved in a timely manner before new service is implemented. Any relocation will require strict adherence to ADA requirements for improved bus stops and pathways. Placement will be critical.

Unfortunately, at this time there is no data telling us how many shelters exist or where they are located. The first step in changing and revising stops will be to complete a full inventory of every stop, shelter, bench and other amenities, after which a plan can be developed to move shelters and place down new pads.

Accessible Bus Stops with shelter, benches, and trash cans.

Transit's Front Door – Bus Stop Recommendations

Having safe, accessible and inviting bus stops are critical to the success of transit. Bus stops are typically placed every one-quarter mile unless there is no reason to have a stop. A stop with a pole and a sign, by itself does not have to be accessible, but if there are any improvements, it should be accessible – with a pad for boarding and a connection to an intersection. In some cases where there is a grass verge, a pad will be required to connect the sidewalk to the curb. There may be opportunities to partner with a local business to place a shelter at specific stops. The detailed discussion regarding stops and shelters will be in the next step as the routes are determined.

Stops should be examined for pedestrian access, safety and security, with considerations for stop improvements/enhancements. Some stops will have only a pole in the ground, where others may have a pad, bench or a shelter. Review and prioritize safety, accessibility, pathways, shelters, benches, lighting and other improvements.

Basic Bus Stop Guidelines

Transit's front door requires careful consideration in the placement and condition of bus stops.

1. **All bus riders are pedestrians –** Bus stops should be placed and designed for safe and accessible pedestrian access.

2. **Transit's front door** – Accessible, inviting, safe and unless dead space, stops should be placed every quarter mile.

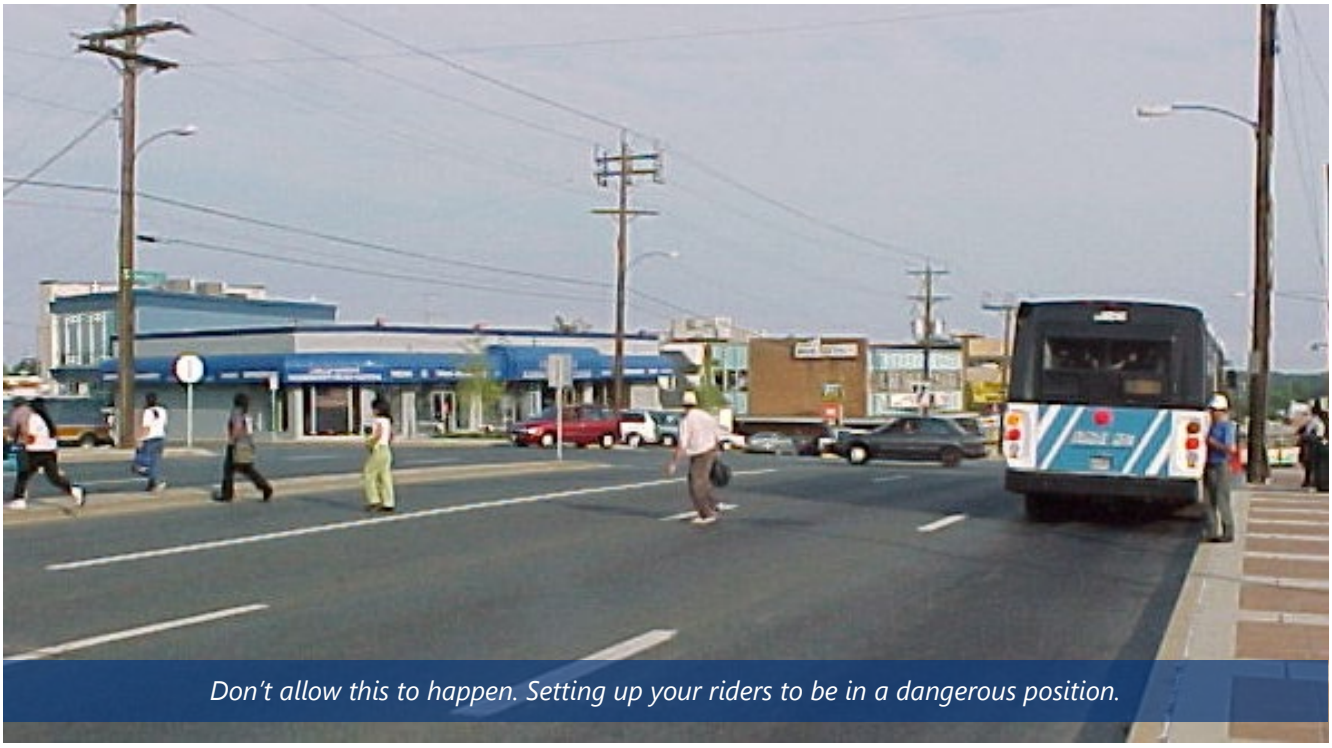
3. **Out and back service** – If there is a stop on one side of the street there should also be a stop across the street or in close proximity, in most cases.

4. **Ensuring safe access on both sides of the street** – On busy streets, place stops alongside protected crosswalks and/or traffic control devices.

    a. **Do not set up customers for danger – Stops should be virtually always at a crosswalk or intersection of a busy street.** Stops that require customers to navigate a busy street without the benefit of safe access are setting up customers for danger. Work with the city and/or county to ensure safe access at key stops and that they are not near an intersection.

5. **Accessible Bus Stops and Pathways** – Care must be taken in selecting bus stops, both for safety and accessibility.

    a. Issues such as stops on the near side or far side of the intersection cause different sets of issues. Neither is perfect, however, transit should be guided where appropriate by the destinations at that intersection.
    b. The bottom line for customers: safety, accessibility and proximity to major trip generators.
    c. Pay attention to pathways. Set up stops alongside accessible pathways whenever possible.
    d. Never leave the placement of the stop, shelter or other amenities up to the installation crew. Be specific about exactly where the stop should be placed, down to the foot.
    e. Do not install shelters or amenities at stops where people never wait for a bus and only get off. For example, stops near the end of the line rarely have riders waiting since virtually all stops there will be for people to get off the bus, but the stop across the street will have riders waiting for the bus.



Don't allow this to happen. Setting up your riders to be in a dangerous position.

6. **Bus Stops and Timing Points** – For this type of service, stops should be about a quarter mile apart. Timing points should be every six to eight minutes.

7. **Amenities** – This includes poles, benches, shelters, lights and information kiosks for example. Prioritize. Stops with just a pole do not have to be accessible, but if there are any improvements, the stop and pathway to a crosswalk should be accessible.

8. **Work with local governments** – Usually transit must depend on local governments to support accessible pathways.

    a. Transit can identify where pathways are needed to maximize accessibility and use of transit.
    b. The local governments can put these improvements in their Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP) for future funding and transit can often provide funds as well.

9. **Conduct a Bus Stop Improvement Plan** – Bus stops are capital assets that should be inventoried and prioritized for improvements.
    a. Conduct a full inventory and assessment of each stop and pathways, identifying and prioritizing needs and capital requirements.
    b. Adopt similar standards for all stops.
    c. Coordinate planning with the local governments/MPO Bicycle and pedestrian plans.
    d. Secure capital funding for improvements at the federal, state, local government, and private sector levels.

Victoria Transit Service – Strategies for the Future

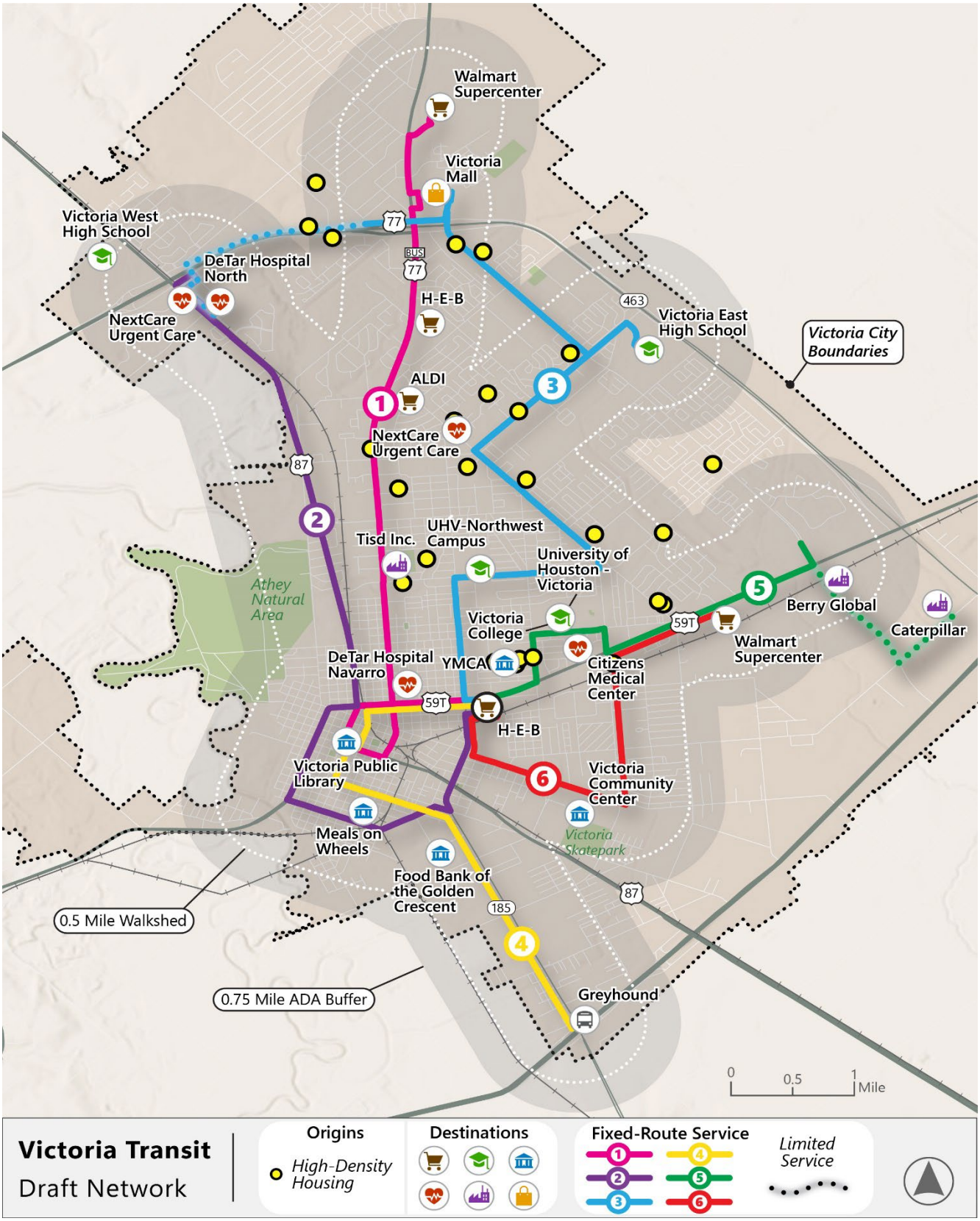
The revised services will consist of fewer buses and fewer hours than when the study was initiated (seven buses). There are two options for Victoria Transit to select from. This includes a five-bus and a six-bus option, down from the previous number of seven buses (now six). These are identified in Figures 5-1.

Two of the routes (Green and Gold) were of a one-way loop nature, taking one hour for a round trip. Due to the loops this requires most passenger round trips to take one hour, even if the destination is 10 minutes away. Worse, if a rider has to transfer to another route, the round trip becomes a two-hour commitment. That is the nature of a one-way loop route. The Gold Route was eliminated.

These "Loopers" suppress ridership (see Technical Memorandum No. 2) and are less productive than the traditional "out and back" model of fixed-route design seen in virtually every larger city in the country.

The other two routes (Red and Blue) are also poor performers as they are meandering routes, however, the Red route with six one-way trips per hour, meets the minimum threshold for a fixed route in Victoria. The Blue Route, at about 4.5 trips per hour, is also a poor performer.

Figure 5-1: Proposed Victoria Transit Fixed Routes



Development of the Fixed-Route Strategies

While considering the above discussion, the system ridership and productivity are very low, calling for a significant restructuring of service. Of the three options available to Victoria: fixed-route, microtransit or a combination, fixed-route with major changes appears to be the best fit, because with a limited budget, fixed-route can generate the highest productivity and lowest cost per trip.

Applying the productivity discussion above, microtransit at about three one-way trips per hour, would have to deploy **at least twice the number of vehicles as fixed route**, (which should produce at least six one-way trips per hour) to generate the same ridership at a significantly higher cost.

The strategies developed here are an attempt to meet the following requirements:

- Faster service and shorter ride times – The advantages of the changes are shorter travel time and higher ridership. **This will be a primary marketing approach to the changes.**

- Eliminate long one-way loops – These loops guarantee long ride times and suppress ridership. In general, if there is a stop on one side of the street there should be one across the street.

- Follow the fixed-route guidelines – The fixed-route guidelines, while not absolute, should be utilized to the greatest extent possible.

- When transit is operating, service is just as important as where the buses go. It is strongly recommended that minimum service hours should be 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Starting later and ending earlier eliminates a core base of potential riders—commuters.

- Transit's front door - Appropriate bus stops at approximately every quarter mile and accessible where possible, should be inviting.

- Eliminate duplication and (where possible) dead space - There were a number of instances where two routes traveled on the same streets—where feasible, these were eliminated.

- Keep average speed to about 18 miles per hour - With considerations for the different routes. For example, Route 4 has the greatest round-trip distance, but since about 20 percent of the route is at 55 MPH with few intersections and stops, this can be accomplished.

Transfer Center

The first step is to select a site for a transfer facility. The HEB is relatively central, is a major trip generator and is already used as a transit facility for RTransit's commuter service. Further, there is space for buses either in the facility or on Ash Street. All buses will meet at the facility every hour for transfers.

The access for buses to the west end of the transfer facility is simple for buses coming from the south or heading north on Laurent Street. These buses can access Laurent Street on Ash Street adjacent to the transfer facility. For buses going south from the transfer facility or coming to the facility from the north

will face an unprotected left turn. These buses in the latter group can access and egress the HEB on the north side of the HEB at E. Rio Grande and Azalea Streets, then travel behind the HEB to get to and from the transfer facility.

New Route Structure

There were two options for route structures presented to the study committee on October 11. The study selected the option with three hour-long routes and three one-half hour routes (Figure 5-1). The decisions to follow include:

1. The number of buses and vehicle hours.

2. Which routes to go on one-half hour headways and one-hour headways.

3. The route alignment. Please note that the route alignment may or may not be an actual depiction of each turn. That is to be decided by the operations staff, following the guidelines for fixed-route and bus stops as detailed above.

Level of Service

Victoria Transit has funding issues at this time, necessitating a plan that meets the requirements of the available funds ($2,200,000). Table 5-1 details the funding available for weekday fixed-route service. Calculating the funding and revenue hours for fixed-route requires the following assumptions based on the data supplied by GCRPC.

Table 5-1: Funding Available for Fixed-Route

Total Funding	**$2,200,000**
Operating Cost per Hour	**$81**
Total Revenue Hours	**27,160**
Total Paratransit Hours	**11,000**
Saturday Fixed-Route (4 vehicles 10 hours)	**2,080**
Total Hours Available for Fixed-Route	**14,080**

The 14,080 hours will allow for **five fixed-route vehicles** at 11 hours per day (2,750 hours per year). A reduction in paratransit hours (discussed in a following section) could yield another fixed-route vehicle.

The Routes

Six routes are presented for the study committee (Figure 5-1). As stated previously, these are not exact routings. These routes can operate with five or six buses, so that in the event funding is available for a sixth bus, the added bus can easily be placed into service.

- Routes 1, 2, 3 are one-hour routes. Three buses – one for each route. If the six-bus option is selected a second bus will be placed on Route 1 giving it a 30-minute headway.
- Routes 4 and 6, both 30-minute routes, will be interlined and operated with one bus.
- All five of these routes will operate on a one-hour headway.
- Route 5 is a 30-minute route and will have a bus on 30-minute headways, serving a major hospital, colleges, Walmart and HEB. One bus.

Route 1

This route is based on the Red Route since it primarily travels on Navarro Street. This is a major one-hour route that is destination based, circling downtown and then traveling north to major shopping and other businesses. There are also many origin-based areas on this route as well. This may be the busiest route, and in the six-bus option would have two buses and a half-hour headway. The five-bus option has this bus on an hour headway.

Major stops include:

- HEB Downtown
- Downtown
- DelTar Hospital
- Myriad businesses along Navarro St.
- HEB North
- Victoria Mall
- Walmart
- Sam's Club
- Many businesses
- Some residences nearby

Issues

- Selecting a good stop at the mall and Walmart. It is best to get close to the store without traversing Walmart's busy parking lot (perhaps on the side). See if they will place a shelter close to or adjacent to the facility.

- The existing Red route already has many stops on Navarro and should stay if they meet the bus stop requirements. Shelters that don't meet the criteria, should be taken down and placed elsewhere.

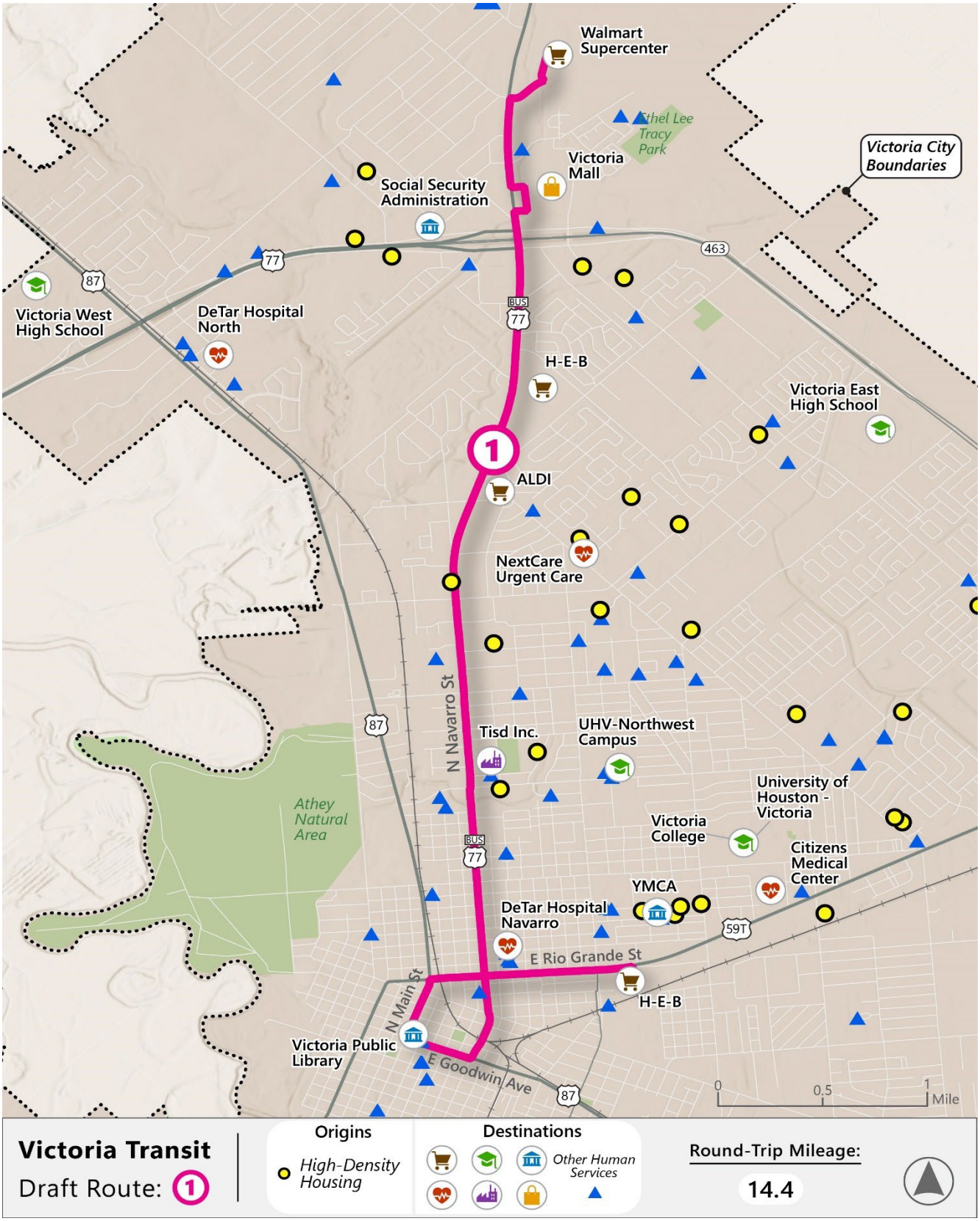
- This may be the highest ridership route. If a sixth bus is available, then placing a second bus on this route to have a 30-minute headway would be an excellent option.

Results

This is a direct route from the transfer center to a major commercial district with many destinations along the way. Further along most of Navarro Street there are residences within a quarter-mile on both sides, allowing excellent access to major destinations for these residents without transferring.

It is estimated that this route will generate between **eight and 10 one-way trips per hour** after the first year, and will be among the highest ridership routes.

Figure 5-2: Proposed Route 1



Route 2

Route 2 primarily travels on Main Street on the western edge of the city. It is a one-hour round trip and connects many major destinations (primarily healthcare, a major park and schools) and it has residences as well. A new City of Victoria Public Safety Headquarters and municipal court is being built on North Main Street near Airline Drive. It should be noted that this route has some dead space. The route circles the downtown area (and the library), serving residents in that area and giving them access to most goods and services.

Primary stops include:

- HEB Downtown
- Downtown
- Library
- Children's Park
- DelTar North
- Other Medical facilities
- Victoria West High School
- Harold Cade Middle School
- Residences
- New Public Safety Headquarters and municipal court (August 2025)

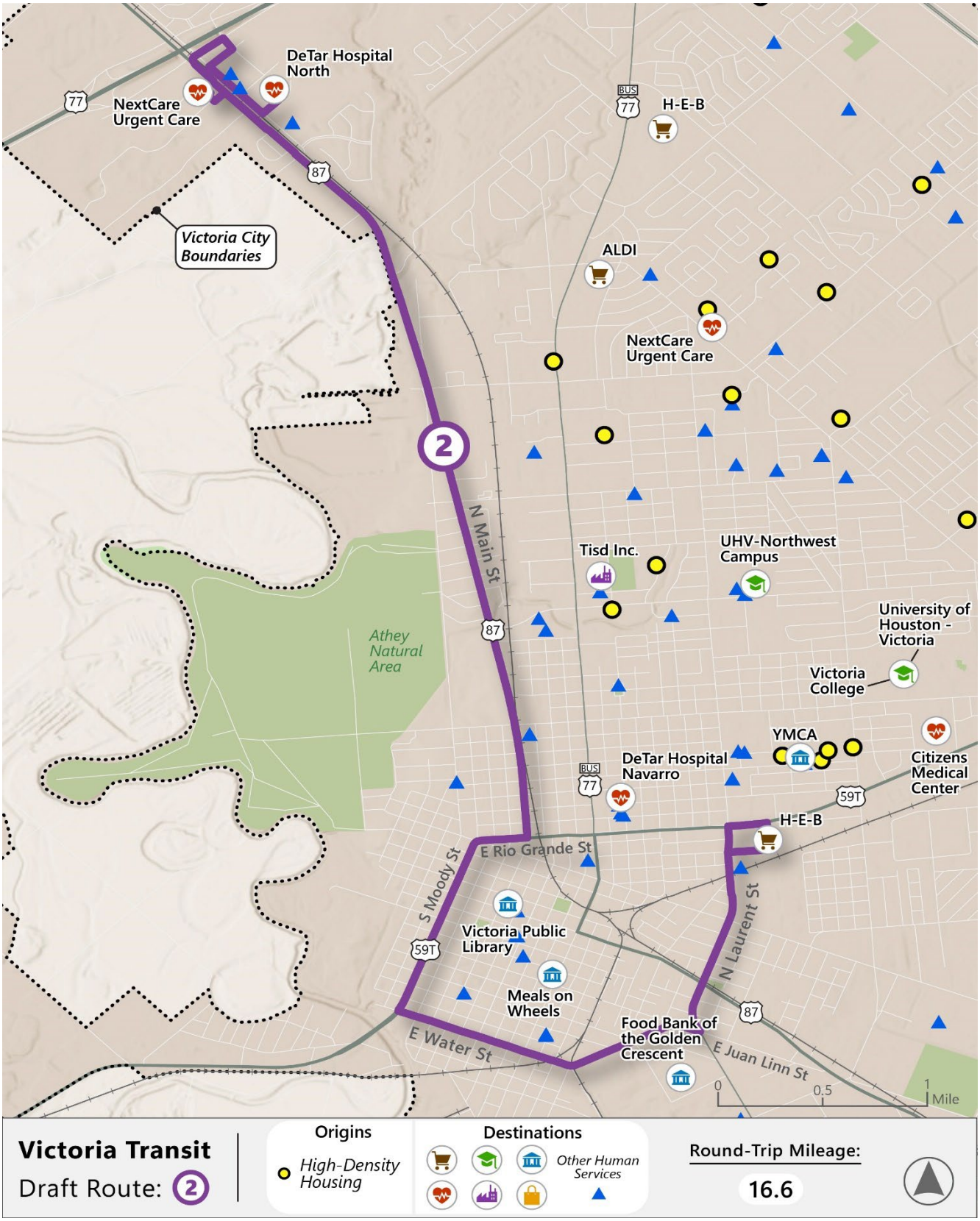
Issues

- This route provides service in a currently unserved area.
- There are a number of areas where little ridership can be generated, however the strength of the major destinations at each end should result in reasonable ridership.
- It will change the route that serves the hospital and schools, reducing the burden on Route 1.

Results

This route should provide good ridership, perhaps **six to eight one-way trips per hour** in the first year. It has a significant number of major stops and serves a currently unserved area.

Figure 5-3: Victoria Transit Route 2



Route 3

Route 3 is primarily a neighborhood route serving the east side of the city. It also serves the mall, Social Security, and the medical facilities in the northwest corner of the city. This is a long one-hour route and could end at the Social Security office, or if there is time (based on test runs), operate all the way to the DelTar North facility or the high school and middle school.

Primary stops include:

- Residences throughout the eastern part of the city
- HEB Downtown
- University of Houston – Victoria
- Howell Middle School
- Victoria High School (select runs)
- Victoria Mall
- Social Security

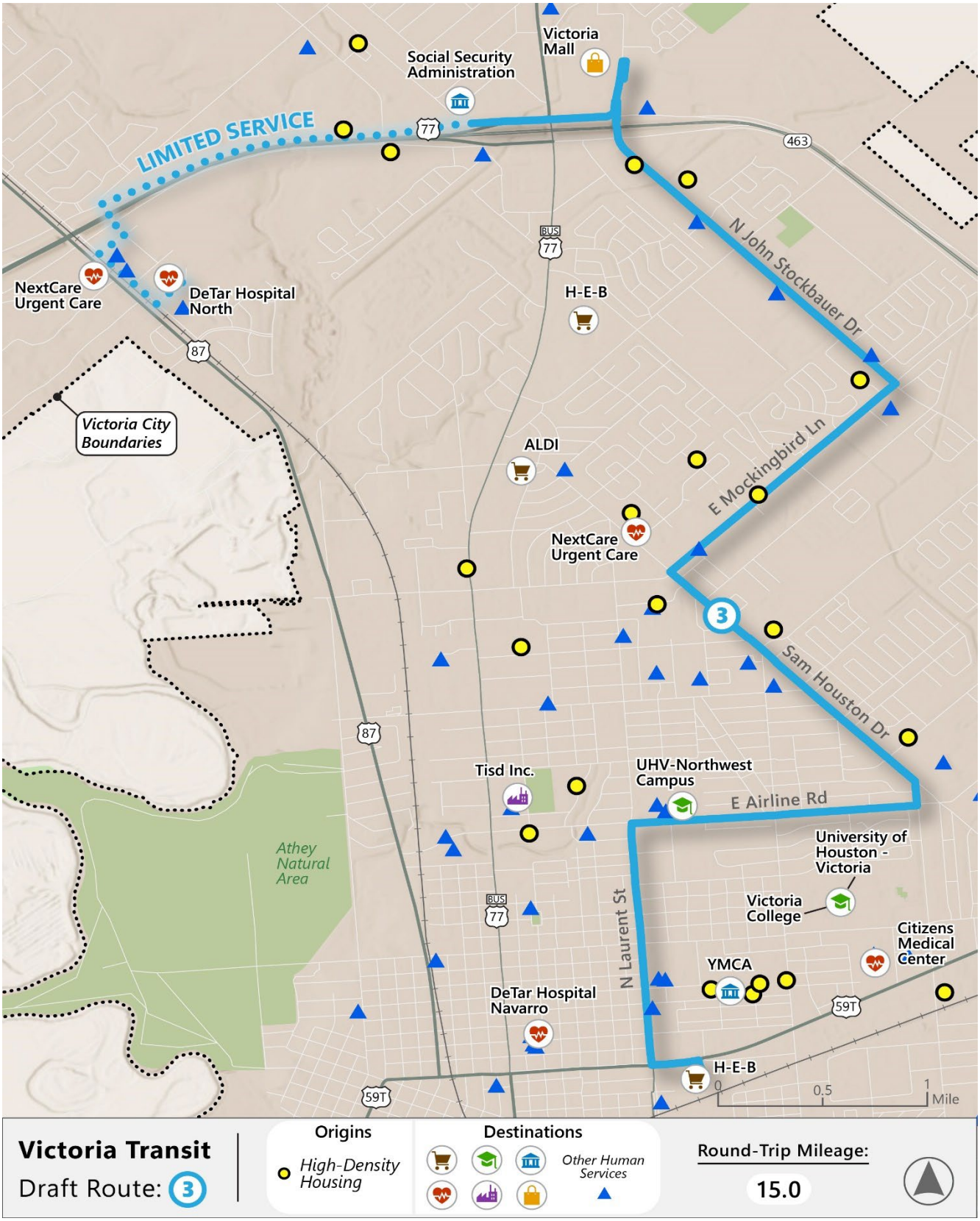
Issues

- This is a long route with a bus that must move relatively slowly through most of the route.
- Select runs (three times a day) can extend to the high school.
- If the Del Tar facility is too far, the route could end at the Social Security facility.

Results

This is more of a collector route, serving residents, businesses and healthcare facilities. Ridership should be about **six one-way trips per hour**.

Figure 5-4: Victoria Transit Route 3



Route 4

Route 4 is a half-hour route that will be interlined with Route 6. This route circulates around downtown, then goes southeast to the Greyhound stop. It is primarily an origin-based route.

Major Stops include:

- HEB Downtown
- Downtown
- Library
- Food bank
- Residences south of downtown and along Rt. 185, including many mobile home and RV parks
- Greyhound stop

Issues

- Loop route turned into a normal fixed route
- Eliminated meandering

Results

This neighborhood route will generate about **six one-way trips per hour**. Interlined with Route 6, it will allow for riders to receive a one-seat ride to Walmart.

Figure 5-5: Victoria Transit Route 4

Route 5

Route 5 is a half-hour route that is filled with major origins and destinations. Along with Route 1, Route 5 will be the most heavily used route in the system. It is recommended that this route have one bus, full time, allowing for half-hour headways. This route has some of the largest origins and destinations in the system, and can be extended during certain runs to serve the Caterpillar facility.

Major stops include:

- HEB Downtown
- Citizens Medical Center
- Victoria College
- University of Houston – Victoria
- Multiple student apartments
- Walmart

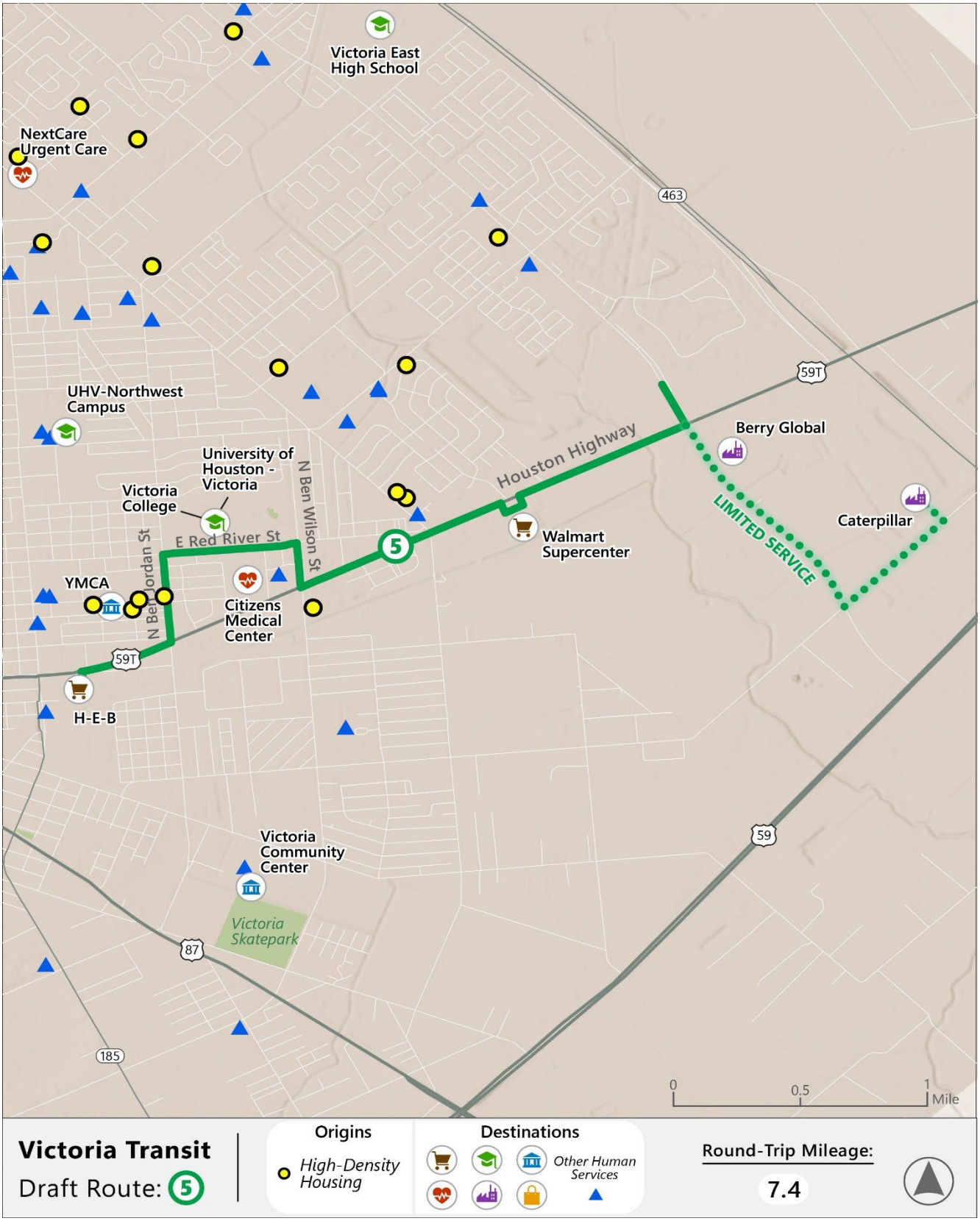
Issues

- This route will have some of the largest destinations.
- There are multiple apartments nearby.
- This route will include many transfers attracted by the destinations.

Results

With the major trip generators on the route, as well as numerous apartments with students, this route may have the highest ridership in the system. The study team estimates about **10 – 12 one-way trips** per hour on this new route.

Figure 5-6: Victoria Transit Route 5



Route 6

Route 6 is a neighborhood circulator that serves the south-central areas of the city. It connects lower-income neighborhoods with essential shopping and healthcare, and the Victoria Community Center is on this route as well. This route will be interlined with Route 4, also a half-hour route. Unlike the other routes, this is a combination of low-income housing and major destinations, including major healthcare centers and the area's two largest shopping venues. This means that most riders would not have to transfer to get to where they want to go, and few riders would transfer to this bus since all major destinations are covered by other routes (with the exception of the Community Center).

Major stops include:

- HEB Downtown
- Victoria Community Center
- Citizens Medical Center
- Walmart
- Low- and moderate-income residences

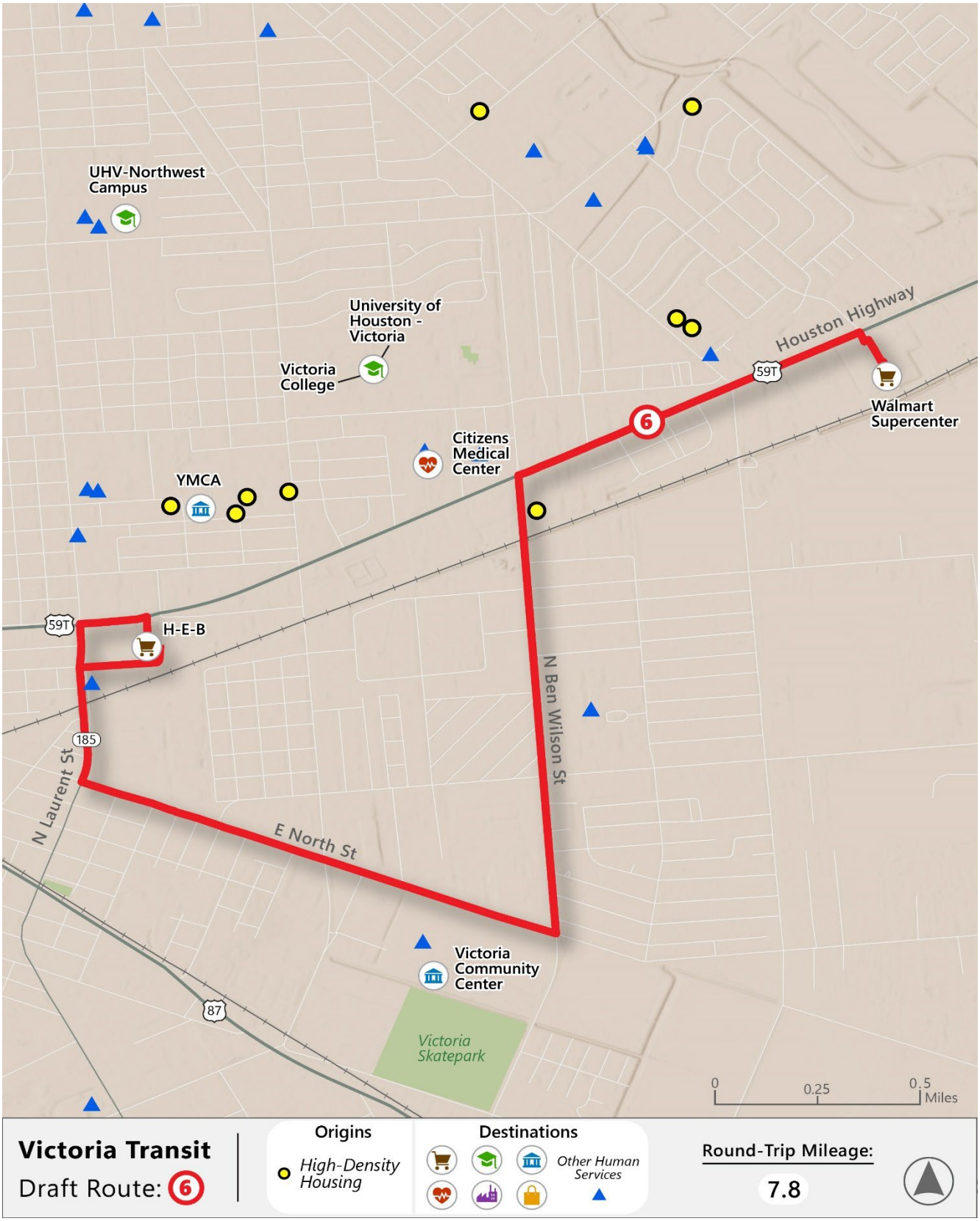
Issues

- A self-contained route with the most important destinations on this half-hour route.
- This route will see few transfers, which will reduce the unlinked ridership.

Results

Considering that this route will see few transfers, a ridership of **six one-way trips per hour** is unlike the other routes with more transfers.

Figure 5-7: Victoria Transit Route 6



Saturday Service

Saturday service typically provides about one-half the ridership of weekday service. The most effective strategy here is to operate the same fixed-route service with five buses, but shorter hours. Consideration was given to turning Saturday service into an on-demand microtransit service. However, each of the fixed routes show higher ridership and productivity on Saturdays than could be accomplished under most, if not all microtransit applications.

Cost constraints are evident in Victoria. Microtransit in this application would be more expensive for the same number of riders. Productivities of three to four one-way trips per hour are typical for microtransit. Each of the fixed routes should produce higher ridership and productivity than can typically be accomplished with microtransit. For microtransit to provide service in place of fixed-route, Victoria Transit would need two to three times the vehicles and costs used for fixed-route, due to the low productivity of microtransit compared to fixed-route.

Rural Transit Strategies

This section provides strategies for improving RTransit demand response service provided to the general public in the rural counties and areas of the GCRPC region. RTransit service is provided in all eight counties under GCRPC; DeWitt and Victoria County have RTransit service directly operated by GCRPC, while the other six counties have RTransit service provided by individual county human services providers contracted with GCRPC (referenced here as "subcontractors"). Previously, KFH assessed the transit need and ridership demand for each rural county, spoke with staff and operators at GCRPC and the rural county subcontractors for RTransit, and developed initial concepts for service improvements.

These strategies expand upon those concepts and provide options for GCRPC to consider, with the goal of improving efficiency and effectiveness of RTransit service. The strategies touch on various topic areas including service design, service spans and levels of service, policies and procedures, fleet needs, regional coordination, trip request fulfillment, new and existing technology, and other issues identified in this technical assistance project. Some strategies touch on specific counties in the GCRPC rural service area, while others are relevant to RTransit service on the whole.

Same-Day Service/Microtransit

Demand-response service that can only be reserved through an advanced reservation before the day of the trip will have inherently low productivity. This is due to lack of convenience for the customer along with operational factors and the level of ability to group trips together. As a result, the cost per trip for this day in advance demand response service is inherently higher than other transit modes. An increase in productivity (number of trips per hour) will simultaneously decrease (improve) the cost per trip. This can make the RTransit service more appealing for riders to take additional trips should be a goal for the program on the whole.

On-demand microtransit serving trip requests for immediate/near-term fulfillment can grow ridership in the right setting. Customers are more likely to schedule transit trips if they allow for more spontaneous travel choices. For example, instead of planning a trip to the grocery store a day or two in advance, the customer can request a microtransit trip 30 minutes before they decide to go to the store. Microtransit is essentially a form of demand-response service with sophisticated scheduling technology that can continuously determine capacity of service on the road, optimal trip request matching to vehicles, and the most efficient route paths for vehicles to travel.

A strategy for GCRPC to consider with its rural subcontractors is whether to implement microtransit service zones within some of the more populous towns in the rural counties. Microtransit would replace in town in advance demand response service, but not replace county-wide demand-response service with advance reservations. Instead, microtransit zones would be an additional service offered in select areas, but using the existing vehicle fleets and operators already in place for each subcontractor. The technology of the software platform and in-vehicle tablets would be another determinate of success (discussed later in this document).

The key to microtransit viability is specificity – microtransit is most appropriate for lower density, small, well-defined service zones of a few square miles (ideally around three to five square miles). Microtransit zones also need at least a few primary trip destinations of interest for residents that the service zone can reach to generate sufficient trip demand – depending on the area these can include large grocery stores and retailers, major employers for commuters, hospitals and medical complexes, or other notably-sized trip attractors. A downtown Main Street may occasionally be an activity center, but unless there is sizable retail activity throughout the day it does not count as a main trip destination in its own right.

Microtransit is mature enough as a service technology that many small rural cities under 25,000 in population have been seeing success in ridership demand and cost efficiency. In many cases, a service zone in the right setting can result in two to six one-way passenger trips per hour. For example, Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS) has implemented several microtransit zones in small towns within their service area. One such service zone in Bastrop (a town with 10,000 people) is seven square miles, operating with two vehicles for 10 to 12 hours per day (each). The service responds to trip requests within 15 minutes, and has a productivity of three to four trips per hour, resulting in over 100 riders per day in the zone.

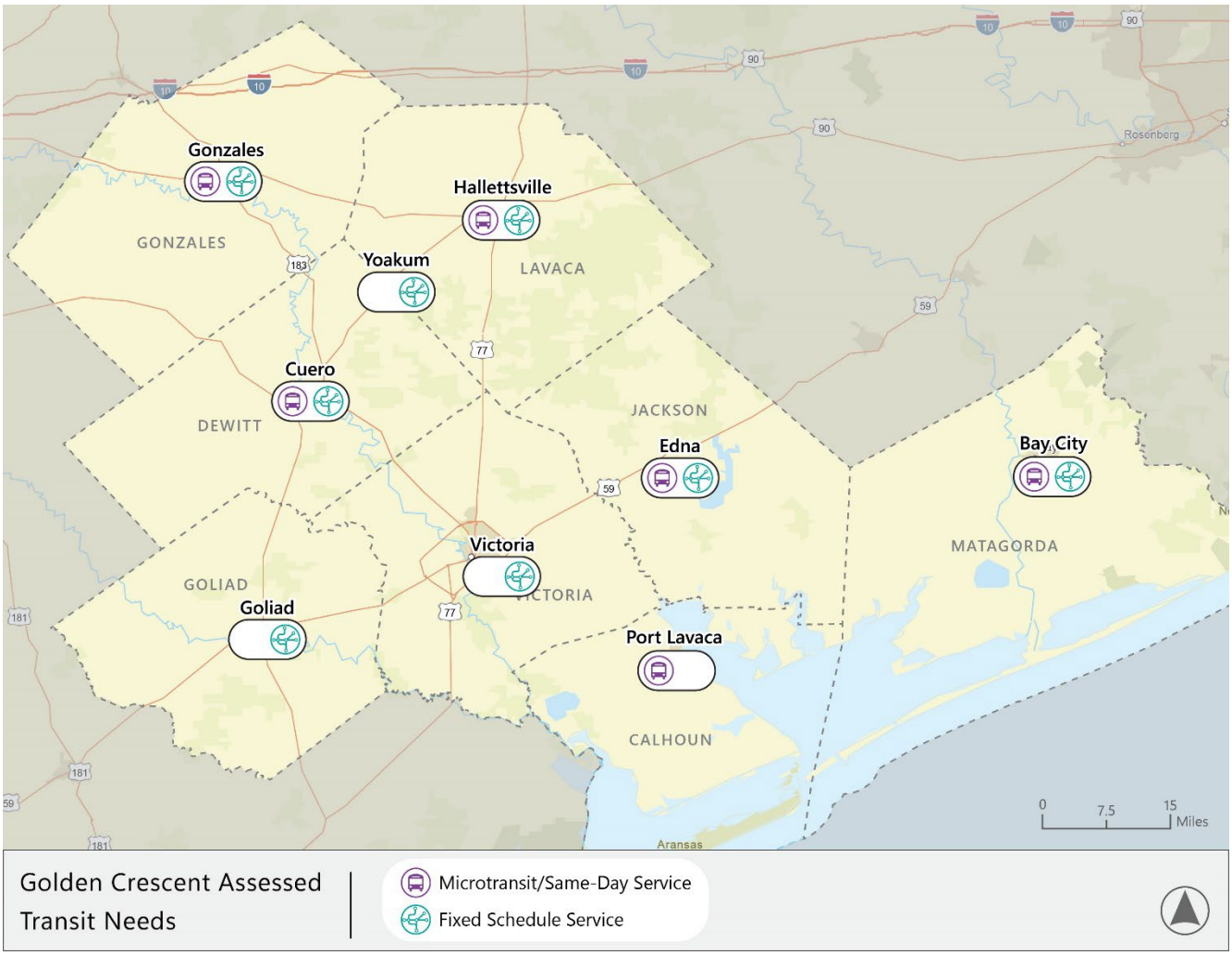
To attract the greatest number of potential riders, the minimum hours for each microtransit service zone should be 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. This service span would cover peak commuting times to and from work, as well as local shopping and appointments during the middle of the day. If there were cities with a sizable amount of late-night shift work or other times with high trip-demand concentrations earlier or later in the day, then additional service span time might be considered.

Potential Microtransit City Locations

The map in Figure 5-8 on the following page shows KFH's analysis of rural transit operational needs for the larger cities within the GCRPC rural counties. Many are potential candidates for same-day/microtransit service (indicated by the purple bus icons). The next section looks at the case for

microtransit in each city, ranked by viability for microtransit.

Figure 5-8: GCRPC RTransit Operational Needs



Excellent Opportunities

Bay City

Bay City has a population of 18,061 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,892 per square mile. Major trip generators include medical facilities, multi-unit housing, shopping, and human services agencies. Notably, the city has both a Walmart and an HEB location. The Matagorda Regional Medical Center is also in the city, though it is located more on the periphery of the city limits. This combination of factors makes Bay City a solid candidate for microtransit service.

Port Lavaca

The City of Port Lavaca has a population of 11,212 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,138.5 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include major employers, multi-unit housing, shopping, medical facilities, and human services agencies. Notably, the city has both a Walmart and an HEB location, and is home to the Memorial Medical Center. This combination of factors makes Port Lavaca a solid candidate for microtransit service.

Gonzales

The City of Gonzales has a population of 7,160 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,179 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include medical facilities, shopping, multi-unit housing, human services agencies, and major employers. Notably, the city has both a Walmart and an HEB, as well as the Gonzales Memorial Hospital. All three of these trip generators are located in close proximity to each other. This combination of factors makes Gonzales a solid candidate for microtransit service.

Cuero

The City of Cuero has a population of 8,128 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,255 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include medical facilities, shopping, multi-unit housing, major employers, and human services agencies. Notably, the city has both a Walmart and an HEB location. The city also has the Cuero Regional Hospital facility, though it is located at the other end of town from the major grocers/retailers. This combination of factors makes Cuero a solid candidate for microtransit service.

Future Opportunities

Yoakum

The City of Yoakum has a population of 5,904 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,290 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include medical facilities, shopping, human service agencies, and multi-unit housing. However, the only major grocery/shopping retailer is an HEB location. Yoakum Community Hospital is a major trip attractor, but is located on the periphery of the city. The lack of additional major shopping locations and the distance between major attractors makes Yoakum a less desirable candidate for microtransit at this time.

Hallettsville

The City of Hallettsville has a population of 2,731 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 964 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include medical facilities, shopping, multi-unit housing, and major employers. Notably, the city has both a Walmart and a Brookshire Brothers location, as well as the Lavaca Medical Center. All three of these trip generators are located in close proximity to each other, though more towards the periphery of the city. This combination of factors makes

Hallettsville a possible, but low priority candidate for microtransit service at this time.

Edna

The City of Edna has a population of 6,012 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,448 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include multi-unit housing, shopping, medical facilities, and human services agencies. Edna has an HEB location as well, and the Jackson County Hospital District, but no other large trip attractors in the city. This combination of factors makes Edna a possible, but low-priority candidate for microtransit service at this time.

No Real Opportunities at this Time

Goliad

The City of Goliad has a population of 1,620 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,000 per square mile. Major trip generators in the city include multi-unit housing and human services agencies. However, there are no major grocers or healthcare centers in the city. On paper, the low population total and lack of major shopping attractors makes Goliad not a good candidate for microtransit.

That said, Goliad County is already providing same-day service for some trip requests in the county; Goliad County is the only RTransit operator who routinely does so. The county's ability to meet same-day service requests can continue and not be confined to certain boundaries as long as they continue avoiding trip denials of advanced reservation requests and meet other service benchmarks. Goliad does not need an additional microtransit-enhanced service focused in the city limits.

Victoria

The City of Victoria has a population of 65,534 as of the 2020 Census, resulting in a population density of 1,791 per square mile. Victoria has several major trip generators and is already served by the fixed-route system operated by GCRPC. Fixed-route service is the most efficient and cost-effective way to meet transit needs of residents in Victoria. Microtransit service should not be implemented in Victoria, as it would duplicate the fixed-route service already provided.

Microtransit Software Considerations

If GCRPC and its subcontractors decide to pursue some of these targeted microtransit implementations in the RTransit service area, the GCRPC will need a software scheduling platform that can additionally handle microtransit zone parameters and balance trip requests with available capacity. The Shah software package has an app and microtransit component available. First, GCRPC should check whether Shah can additionally handle the microtransit service parameters through this available component. If

so, the parameters for microtransit need to be examined further to see whether they meet the needs for specific zone boundaries, stop types, customer reservations, and scheduling prioritization.

If not, there are many off-the-shelf software products that can handle same-day service optimization functions. GCRPC and the county subcontractors can coordinate together on an RFP for a microtransit software solution. This would increase bidding power with the entities joined together, implementing a software product that could handle local and regional travel, and help build consistency in policies and procedures in scheduling and dispatch between the different RTransit providers.
KFH Group cautions against the development of an in-house scheduling solution as an alternative to the current Shah platform or another off-the-shelf software product. There are multiple reasons why an in-house solution is not recommended:

1. The **upfront development cost and time** for an in-house scheduling solution, including the alpha and beta testing periods in different service scenarios will likely be higher than anticipated. This effort would be better spent on determining Shah's further capabilities or pursuing another software option.

2. An in-house solution will inevitably require **maintenance over time** when issues in the software pop up. Furthermore, even the development of a scheduling solution using open-source language will require learning by multiple staff members to cover for employee sick days and eventual turnover.

3. The scheduling capabilities of a new in-house solution would **likely not be an improvement** over the existing Shah software platform. Shah is designed for demand-response service, and there is reason to believe that the parameters in the software are not being utilized to their full potential.

4. There are several **off-the-shelf software products already available**. Even as these would pose a higher up-front cost, the technical capabilities of these products combined with the product management provided by the software companies would be a smoother experience for RTransit after initial implementation and training.

    a. Many modern software products can handle **multiple demand-response service zones and parameters simultaneously**. For RTransit service, an off-the-shelf software could handle smaller in-town microtransit zones, county-wide demand-response service, and intercounty regional services for the eight counties.

    b. Another advantage of an off-the-shelf product is that the software companies have other transit agency customers in small cities and rural areas. When rural service troubleshooting issues are resolved for a transit system elsewhere, the company integrates those parameter resolutions and additional features into their software product, making them available to be implemented elsewhere. RTransit using an off-the-shelf software product thereby **benefits from the experience of other transit systems**.

Whichever option is used for microtransit service implementations in concert with existing advanced reservation RTransit service, implementing the software platform changes regionally and with consistent

usage guidelines will benefit all providers in the RTransit program.

Regional Service

Rather than operate as single county services, the region would benefit from a coordinated network of RTransit service; this would help reduce costs by sharing regional trips and streamlining transfer connections. Presently, each RTransit operator (GCRPC and subcontractors) that provides demand response trips traveling outside of their own county serves inter-county trips directly and without transfers. For example, Lavaca County serves trips going to/from Victoria, Gonzales Count, and Jackson County. Some RTransit operators handle inter-regional trips with longer travel distances going outside the GCRPC service area; both GCRPC and Lavaca County provide trips to hospitals in Austin, Houston, and San Antonio (some being Medicaid trips and others general public).

Each RTransit organization is handling trip reservations and scheduling separately without coordination with GCRPC or the other counties. As a result, it is likely that there is duplication of service between the different RTransit providers as well as inefficient scheduling of trips travelling outside of counties. A better approach would be implementing fixed-schedule service for inter-regional trips, thereby providing trips out of the county only on planned days of the week and at set times. Fixed-schedule service works well in larger rural areas when there are not enough resources to cover all parts of the service area at all times. The service is set for different areas according to a schedule that is clearly posted and well marketed. Often times, the schedule is driven by the needs of riders traveling to and from dialysis appointments.

For example, trips from Hallettsville to Victoria could be set for two days per week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) with one morning run and one evening run. The morning run could leave in time to arrive at Victoria before 8:00 a.m., then the evening run from Victoria would leave after 5:00 p.m. Additionally, local coordination could then enable transfers to the local RTransit operator to complete the final trip leg. This would accommodate any commuters traveling between counties to major destinations.

Morning and evening runs could accommodate travel connections with more efficiency and curtail duplication of service. However, only two runs per day would not be as convenient for riders going to school, shopping, medical appointments, or conducting personal business—they do not want to spend nine to 10 hours in town. If there are enough of these riders, operators could also implement midday runs for some out-of-county connections. Midday service gives riders an opportunity to spend a few hours at a destination without having to spend all day at the destination city for school, shopping or doctor visit.

Our experience indicates that passengers generally accept this approach, and hospitals/medical facilities can help in cooperation and coordination of scheduling. Each RTransit operator could also work with their customers to determine their regional travel needs and help set an optimal schedule for travel to different city destinations. Starting with recurring dialysis appointments, for example, could be an initial base of ridership with the ability to add on other travel needs. With better grouping of trips in fixed-scheduled service, RTransit will realize improved productivity and could achieve anywhere from six to

12 one-way trips per hour on these runs.

Consistent RTransit Policies

RTransit service has different policies depending on the operator and the county where the trip is occurring. Generally, RTransit service is available on weekdays from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., though the operating service spans can vary between providers. There is also not a standard pickup window policy for RTransit trips (even though they are not ADA paratransit trips, it would be a good consideration for service delivery and performance) that is shared between different RTransit providers. Consistent policies for scheduling and dispatching practices between providers would help with monitoring the service quality of delivery between different providers.

Fare Policies

Fare policies and rates charged are different between different counties/providers. The project team's understanding is that GCRPC, Goliad County, and Gonzales County have suspended fares for RTransit trips since the COVID-19 pandemic. Calhoun County has fare rates based on trip mileage and rider type (Figure 5-9). Friends of Elder Citizens, Inc. has different sets of fare rates for Jackson County (Figure 5-10) versus Matagorda County (Figure 5-11), both based on travel destination and rider type. Lavaca County's fare rates are based on trip mileage and number of stops (for trips up to three miles) (Figure 5-12).

Figure 5-9: Calhoun County RTransit Fare Rates

Fare Miles	Youth/Adult	Elderly/Disabled
0 - 5 Miles	$2.00	$1.50
6 - 15 Miles	$6.00	$4.00
16 - 45 Miles	$7.00	$5.00

Figure 5-10: Friends of Elder Citizens – Jackson County RTransit Fare Rates

JACKSON COUNTY BUS FARES	
Local Fares:	
In Town: General Public	$3.00
Jackson County:	$5.00
County to County:	$10.00
(Victoria)	
Region: Houston	$65.00
Corpus Christi	$75.00
San Antonio	$80.00
Elderly, Disabled, Children:	
In Town:	$1.50
Jackson County:	$2.50
County to County:	$5.00

OUT OF COUNTY BUS FARES	
Regional Fares:	
General Public:	
Houston	$65.00
San Antonio	$80.00
Corpus Christi	$75.00
Elderly, Disabled & Children:	
Houston	$32.50
San Antonio	$40.00
Corpus Christi	$37.50

**Call 361-782-5511 to find out more information on how to schedule a ride.

*All listed fares are one way

**Children under 5 ride free with a paying adult

Figure 5-11: Friends of Elder Citizens – Matagorda County RTransit Fare Rates

General Public	Elderly, Disabled, Children	Regional Trips Outside of Matagorda County
PALACIOS 361-972-2715	**PALACIOS** 361-972-2715	**PALACIOS** 361-972-2715
$3.00 Palacios (In Town)	$1.50 Palacios (In Town)	$1.50 Palacios (In Town)
BAY CITY 979-245-6800	**BAY CITY** 979-245-6800	**BAY CITY** 979-245-6800
$3 Bay City (In Town)	$1.50 Bay City (In Town)	$1.50 Bay City (In Town)
$5 In Matagorda County	$2.50 In Matagorda County	$2.50 In Matagorda County
$30 County to County (Lake Jackson, Wharton, El Campo,& Angleton)	$15.00 County to County (Lake Jackson, Wharton, El Campo,& Angleton)	$15.00 County to County (Lake Jackson, Wharton, El Campo,& Angleton)

Figure 5-12: Lavaca County RTransit Fare Rates

From Pick-Up Location:
Up to 3 miles - $1.00 per stop
4 - 20 miles - $5.00 one way
21 - 50 miles - $10.00 one way
51 - 70 miles - $25.00 one way
71 plus miles - $50.00 one way

Fare rates that differ for intra-county trips may be okay as it is for GCRPC and its subcontractors. However, further regional coordination and implementation of fixed schedules for out-of-county trips

would benefit from consistent fare policy development for communication with customers.

Software Consistency

Each of the county operators uses the same Shah scheduling software. Currently, scheduling for RTransit trips in different counties is handled by each agency's own Transportation Service Representatives (TSRs) staff. This makes sense, given that each operator is responsible for their own vehicle fleets, operators, and communication with customers. However, TSRs between different agencies appear to not use the Shah software platform in a consistent manner with respect to negotiating and scheduling trip times, as well as monitoring day-of-service issues.

There does not appear to be a training manual or standard process for training new TSR staff across the RTransit program. County subcontractors have expressed the need for training to help with functions like using the Shah software. Training and documentation on using the software in a consistent manner would help ensure that each RTransit operator uses the software to its full potential and in a way that creates realistic, efficient vehicle run schedules.

Vehicle and Maintenance Needs

GCRPC already provides some assistance to the RTransit subcontractors with respect to new vehicle procurements. Some subcontractors will also procure additional vehicles with their own local funds. During discussion with staff from the rural subcontractors, many expressed a need for additional vehicles due to both low state of good repair and operating with low/non-existent spare ratios. Additional coordination in vehicle procurement needs would benefit all operators in the RTransit program. Combining grant efforts between the counties would help leverage higher buying power of the group and increase the number of accessible vehicles in the subcontractor fleets.

Maintenance of vehicles is an additional issue for subcontractors who rely on maintenance services from local repair shops, which can take a long time to complete major repairs and get vehicles back to revenue service ready. A joint maintenance service procurement or initiative for a shared maintenance facility would benefit RTransit subcontractors with increased responsiveness to maintenance needs of their fleets.

Sponsorships

The RTransit program on the whole has not explored sponsorship opportunities to help provide local funds to support service. Separately, subcontractors have past and current local sponsor agreements for service in their own county. For example, Friends of Elder Citizens, Inc. has an agreement with an area workforce agency for seasonal summer school trips. New Horizons at Yoakum Community Hospital has third-party billing arrangements separately with GCRPC and Lavaca County to pay for transportation of clients using RTransit.

First, additional sponsorship opportunities working with organizations for medical appointments, job

training, and education programs could be explored by GCRPC and subcontractors. These opportunities may help increase ridership to these destinations, thereby improving service productivity. If these are properly priced in the agreement, they would pay for themselves. Secondly, GCRPC and subcontractors could coordinate to negotiate service sponsorships together, particularly for destinations where multiple operators serve; this sponsorship coordination would also tie into the regional service coordination for service scheduling and policies.

Coordination and Technical Assistance

As mentioned in the previous examples of rural service strategies, RTransit service would benefit from increased coordination between GCRPC and the subcontractors on a variety of operations and administrative levels. During the project outreach to stakeholders, improved coordination was articulated as a need by all subcontractors as well as GCRPC staff. The rural subcontractors are in need of increased guidance and leadership related to compliance, vehicle performance, training assistance, funding opportunities, local match, procurement, technology usage, and service planning.

Procurement, Maintenance, and Reporting

GCRPC should continue to take the lead on coordinated training and vehicle procurements through state and federal capital grant programs. In addition, GCRPC can help coordinate procurements in concert with other grant opportunities that may exist for individual counties, maintenance issues and technical assistance. GCRPC should make sure that each of its contractors are aware of service and reporting requirements and host training for its providers if requirements are not being met.

Informational Resources

GCRPC can help disseminate and spread awareness to the subcontractors on available informational resources such as conferences and meetings (e.g., TxDOT, TTA, NRTAP), training workshops, and webinars. Any such resources that directly address specific issues affecting either a particular county or the whole region would help provide benefit in further developing transit knowledge at each of the RTransit operator agencies. Coordinated visits to particular meetings or training events, encouragement of attendance, and scholarship funding for staff travel can also be considered.

Driver Training

GCRPC can help implement consistent driver training practices and materials between all agencies in the RTransit program. Presently, there are no driving training standards across the entire RTransit program; driver training between the subcontractors varies with respect to the materials used to train new hires and whether GCRPC provides support to the subcontractor for new hires. Some subcontractors train new hires for themselves with another driver.

The driver training materials and procedures should first be standardized and implemented across the RTransit program. Operations and training staff from all RTransit agencies would meet together to determine and review the materials to ensure they both meet the needs of all agencies and that each agency has the capacity to implement them in ongoing practice. Training materials for drivers should include both new hire training, retraining for drivers following road incidents, and refresher material on an annual/bi-annual basis.

An additional strategy would be joint driver training between agencies facilitated by GCRPC. This would coincide with the standardization of training materials as well as refinement of consistent RTransit service policies and regional service coordination. GRCPC (or a subcontractor agency) would host driver training on a recurring basis that would efficiently group multiple new hires together to learn about common safety and procedural training information across providers. Specifics on rules and procedures within a specific county/human service agency provider would still be handled in house. This strategy would help improve consistency of training for drivers in the RTransit system, which would improve system performance as well as customer satisfaction.

Software Improvements and Training

GCRPC can also help implement training on scheduling software use by TSR staff at the RTransit agencies. Presently, there is no formal training for using Shah software at any of the agencies. This could present problems both with respect to efficient service scheduling and delivery, as well as in instances of staff turnover. It is in the interest of all agencies involved with RTransit that the scheduling software relied upon for service delivery is used to the best capability available.

Training materials and procedures for TSRs to use the software platform should be standardized. GCRPC can start with available materials from Shah (or if applicable in the future, the other software company), then add information related to RTransit service policies on negotiation windows, grouping trips, dispatch monitoring, etc. As new TSRs are hired at any agency, they can be trained by the GCRPC staff with the most experience with the software. Existing TSRs would also need to go through a quality assurance check to ensure their proper use of the software at the point of standardization.

As new service implementations (i.e., same-day microtransit) and/or software systems are implemented, GCRPC would need to update technology implementation and training materials across all RTransit providers. Again, this would be to the advantage of all providers and improve the service delivery quality across the program.

Service Connections

If GCPRC and the subcontractors choose to implement fixed-schedule service for regional travel, coordination on service days between various city pairs along with service stops and times, benefit both RTransit operations as well as communication with customers. Ideally, the pick-up and drop-off points for fixed-schedule service would occur at either major trip destinations (e.g., medical facilities, employers) or transit hubs (e.g., transfer hub in Victoria).

RTransit agencies could also work together to facilitate timed transfers from the fixed-schedule stop to a local in-county provider for customers traveling to a different destination. Consistent use of the scheduling software platform and communication between TSRs at different RTransit agencies would facilitate this process. The result would be better efficiency for vehicles traveling on inter-county regional service, and a reduction in duplication of service between RTransit providers on the whole.

Rural Service Vehicles

Many of the rural county contractors operate 100 percent of their fleet during peak times. A zero percent spare ratio makes it difficult to complete preventative/safety maintenance without eliminating service or denying trips, however, through effective scheduling and coordination with maintenance contractors, most of the counties seem to be accomplishing preventative maintenance without service disruptions. The lack of vehicles does create problems when breakdowns occur as well as overall capacity issues in the provision of service. This is a safety issue that should be addressed immediately.

The Right Vehicle for the Need

Different transit conditions require different transit vehicles. Service area characteristics may require smaller, more nimble vehicles or larger vehicles with more capacity. Generally, transit systems prefer vehicles that are a little larger rather than smaller, and that was before social distancing was necessitated. Further, Victoria Transit will only pay 20 percent (or less) of the cost of vehicles. There have been grants offering zero local match for alternative-powered vehicles. When it is time to procure vehicles, this should be a consideration, because now, bigger is better. All vehicles should be accessible to persons with disabilities. There should also be a 20 percent spare vehicle requirement.

Size and Type

The two basic services all require specific vehicles. Urban fixed-route vehicles should be the largest and at least medium-duty rated. Urban paratransit and rural transit can use smaller vehicles since there are typically no more than two to three people on board at a time. The urban paratransit vehicles can be light duty cutaways and should be small. Rural service also calls for cutaway vehicles of different sizes as well as minivans or even sedans. While all vehicles don't have to be accessible, each county must be able to provide the same level of service to a person needing an accessible vehicle as one that can ride in a sedan.

Bus Typologies

There are a number of fixed-route bus types to consider. These three are the general categories. A cost range is introduced here and it should be understood that with an 80 percent federal match, the cost to Victoria for a medium-duty bus is only about $20,000 to $30,000 more per bus than a light-duty

cutaway. For the additional cost, Victoria would get vehicles that:

- Could last twice as long
- Provide a more comfortable ride
- Have a low floor and a ramp instead of a lift
- Have greater capacity

Cutaway – Small Bus

Cut-away chassis are smaller than buses and usually have a high floor (Figure 5-13). These vehicles customarily have a seating capacity of between eight and 30 seats and their size can vary significantly from 15 to 30 feet long. These vehicles have a 5–7-year life as a front-line vehicle, less if used in heavy duty service.

They are used in a wide variety of applications. They are most often used as feeder buses, dial-a-ride and ADA paratransit service, as well as lightly-traveled rural routes. All must have lifts or low floor with ramp. These vehicles range from $150,000 to $200,000 in cost depending on size and configuration.

Figure 5-13: Cutaway Bus

Medium Duty Transit Coach

Medium duty low floor buses (Figure 5-14), typically 30 feet in length are practical in systems similar to Victoria. These buses are designed to last up to 10 years and allow for a standard bus configuration without the cost of a heavy-duty bus. These buses seat 20 – 25 passengers and can typically transport two to six people using wheelchairs. These vehicles typically cost between $300,000 to $400,000 each.

Figure 5-14: Medium Duty Low Floor Bus

Low Floor Heavy Duty Bus

Most larger transit systems use heavy duty low floor buses for their regular fixed-route service (Figure 5-15). These buses are generally 30 to 40 feet in length and are designed to last 12 years in heavy duty service. The low floor and wide door allow for rapid boarding and alighting. These vehicles seat 30 to 40 with additional room for standing. This vehicle typology is useful for systems needing large capacity vehicles to meet demand. They can range from $700,000 to $1,000,000 per vehicle.

Figure 5-15: Low Floor Bus

Summary – Urban Transit Vehicles

To a large degree, the choice of vehicles will be determined by funding availability. For example, a medium-duty bus would be appropriate for the Victoria area, but if funding is available at a 100 percent match for a heavy-duty alternative-fueled vehicle (for example), then the heavy-duty bus may be the better option if it can be maintained in GCRPC.

Fuels

Consideration should be given to alternative fuels, as some of the new vehicles may last for 10 years. Keep in mind that some fuel types such as hybrids and electric may be available for little or no match, making the economics work.

Potential bus fuel types include:

- **Electric Buses** – At this time, these vehicles would not be appropriate for rural areas due to a lack of infrastructure. Urban areas are starting to use electric with mostly good reviews. These vehicles will require an investment in new maintenance infrastructure and technicians. In the next five years many believe that electricity will be the least expensive solution as well as reducing carbon emissions. Electric battery technology has been improving over the last few years to the point where heavy duty fully electric buses are viable transit vehicles under certain conditions. As charging times decrease and battery ranges increase these vehicles are becoming more attractive. The fuel and preventative maintenance cost are much lower on these vehicles, but the initial capital costs are often greater depending on vehicle size and battery configuration. Denver is an excellent example of the use of this technology. Electric battery bus prices vary greatly depending on the size and battery configuration. Buses can range from $400,000 to $2 million.

- **Hybrid Buses** – These diesel/hybrid buses work best in urban areas with significant stop and go traffic. These buses are common in larger cities and should be considered for Victoria if there is little or no match required. These buses require additional maintenance tools and expertise. A

heavy-duty hybrid electric bus combines a conventional diesel internal combustion engine propulsion system with an electric propulsion system. Bus batteries store energy and recharge when the bus decelerates. When demand for power exceeds battery capacity, the diesel engine provides extra energy. Hybrid buses have lower emissions than other propulsion types. A typical hybrid 40-foot low-floor vehicle should cost between $800,000 and $1,000,000. This technology would require a major investment in infrastructure.

- **CNG Buses** – These buses have been available for many years and will reduce the carbon footprint. CNG combustion produces fewer undesirable gases. It is safer than other fuels in the event of a spill because natural gas is lighter than air and disperses quickly when released. The cost and placement of fuel facilities is the major barrier to adoption of CNG as a fuel. It is also the reason why municipal government and public transportation vehicles were the most visible early adopters of it, as they can more quickly amortize money invested in new (and usually cheaper) fuel. If a fueling facility is available to transit, this is a viable alternative. Santa Fe, New Mexico is an example of an all CNG fleet.

- **Diesel** – Still the dominant form of propulsion in buses, but that is rapidly changing. Fossil fuels are subject to market volatility.

- **Gasoline** – Gasoline engines are not recommended. These are among the most expensive to operate and produce the most greenhouse gases. Further, the volatility of fossil fuel costs should be considered as the nation weans itself from gas.

A study by the Carnegie Mellon University found that among the choices available to transit agencies, battery electric buses are the best option due to low life-cycle agency costs and improved environmental and health impacts from greenhouse and air pollutant emissions.

Fuel typologies have benefits and come with costs. Compressed natural gas and electric vehicles require significant facility investment if facilities are not available and can require additional spare vehicles. However, understand that capital expenses are typically limited to a 20 percent or lower match for local systems, making the tradeoff of vehicles even less expensive.

Alternative Fuel Considerations

There are now a variety of fuel and battery choices for transit vehicles. Decisions on the type of fuel chosen are based on a number of factors that decision makers should consider:

- **Environmental Policy** – Alternative fuels and batteries can make a difference in the local environment. Decisions are often made on this basis alone.

- **Various benefits** –
    - Electric vehicles are coming of age and have lower operating costs
    - Hybrid buses are best in stop and go traffic
    - CNG is viable
    - Gas buses are the most expensive to operate

- **Operational** – There are a number of operational issues and costs associated with alternative fuels, including but not limited to:
    - Infrastructure – Fueling/charging facilities, maintenance equipment and skills
    - Expertise – Maintenance staff with specialties in electric and hybrid technologies would need to be hired
    - Availability of specialty repair vendors

- **Financial** – Vehicle and on-going costs vary and are a major consideration to the type of vehicle used.
    - Often the FTA will offer alternative fueled vehicles at a 90 percent or even 100 percent federal match
    - Electric vehicles have the lowest operating costs and do not need gasoline or diesel

Marketing and Branding

Like any other customer driven business, marketing and appropriate branding are critical to transit and are simple and low cost to implement. The current service has no real name, no system identifiers, and no or a brand.

The best advertising is good-looking buses with an attractive paint scheme, logo and professional drivers that make the community proud. Plain "institutional" white vehicles will blend into the background and be invisible to the community, which is never good for ridership. As with any business it is important to be noticed (in a good way). Vehicles should be ordered from the factory with the specified paint scheme first, to ensure professionalism and second, to pay for the painting with the capital grant.

1. Monitor the service to ensure everything is appropriate and performance measures are being met.
2. Initiate marketing efforts two to three months prior to the changes, culminating in a significant promotional effort.

Recommendations - Marketing

Most effective rural transit marketing is grassroots or low cost in nature. Victoria Transit is clearly in need of a full branding effort to develop an image as public transit and not just the senior bus in the community. The branding and marketing effort should be treated as a business decision, designed to help promote the system and ultimately encourage and increase ridership and service levels.

Developing the Brand

In parallel with the development of the new services, a branding effort should begin. It is here that the brand should be determined. This can be done professionally or in-house, but must look and sound professional in every way. It may be possible to take advantage of local resources such as colleges and high schools for naming or branding ideas (college). The following steps should be taken:

- **System name or nickname** – This is the name most will use. Perhaps a contest among students, combined with a full rebranding celebration.
    - **Recognizable** - Like VIA in San Antonio, the HOP, CARTS, Santa Fe Trails or any number of different systems that are recognized by their names. Sometimes a simple name like Paris Metro says it all.
    - **Identifies with the area** – Alamo Transit (good) but often called ART (it has no meaning). What colors are emblematic of Victoria and the Golden Crescent area?
    - **Catchy** – The Blue Bus is the system's nickname and is an instant identifier as all of their vehicles are bright blue.
    - **Avoid acronyms in most cases** – Names like SCAT (the absolute worst), CUATS, and ETHRA, for example, have little to no meaning and sound terrible.

- **Vehicle colors and paint scheme** – This requires something eye-catching vehicles that will be noticed and can instill pride. Is there a local color that symbolizes the area (green for example)? This scheme should be developed.
- **Bring in system sponsors** – Having sponsor names on the sides of the vehicles perhaps in a corner, can lend credibility to the system.
- **Establish a website and Facebook/social media presence** – GCRPC should establish a presence with a website that can stand alone or be accessed on the GCRPC and City of Victoria websites with one click.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Sustainability for the Future

Future service will require continued sustainability as available local funding outside Victoria is minimal. The one area where GCRPC can generate additional revenue is through the private sector.

- **Private sector sponsorship programs** – This is a good way to secure funding. Companies such as Walmart, HEB and others have provided support in other communities in the past. The healthcare community has often stepped up as well. Often these types of organizations have charitable foundations as well. These organizations typically have more funding available for community engagement than small cities and rural counties.

Sponsorship Programs: More than Advertising

Transit has a long history of providing advertising on and in buses for additional revenue. Many systems have engaged in advertising over the years, but a sponsorship program is more than simply advertising. Instead of the usual selling of just one form of advertising, GCRPC should sell sponsorship packages. Since sponsorship and advertising funds are an important source of local funding, this program can help expand the service. Walmart and HEB, for example, have been known to support transit to their stores, creating a win-win for GCRPC and the retailers.

This is a potential source of revenue for GCRPC in the future. Large corporations have been known to participate in sponsorship programs and typically these companies (such as Walmart) have far more money than all the cities and counties in the service area combined.

This activity should be implemented at the end of the rebranding with new vehicles in the new paint scheme and the new name. Potential sponsors want to be associated with a first-class service in which the community can take pride.

Identifying the Service

As discussed above, the program is designed to sell a service to both public and private sponsors. Possible services for sale can include (but should not be limited to):

1. Sponsorship services at any level
    a. Recognized as a sponsor on GCRPC how to ride guide (system map and schedule).
    b. Sponsored by... on all system literature and advertising.
    c. Decal on side or back of the bus.
    d. Dedicated shuttle.
    e. Special promotions sponsorship.

2. Higher level sponsorship services
    a. Company logo on GCRPC maps and brochures.
    b. Placing a shelter for customers and/or employees.
    c. Placing a stop conducive to customers and/or employees - this could include going into a parking lot and stopping next to the facility.

d. Route named for sponsor.
e. Bus wrap.

If properly packaged, these services have considerable value to businesses such as:

1. **Large retailers** – Walmart, Target, HEB and others: supermarkets are excellent examples, malls and big box stores are others.

2. **Hospitals** – And other healthcare facilities.

3. **Large locally- based corporations** – Are there any large corporations based in the area?

4. **Small locally-based companies** – Any local company can participate at a number of levels.

5. **Fast food restaurants** – Wrapped buses are popular with some of the largest chains.

6. **Television, radio stations, and local newspapers** – There are opportunities with these organizations. They can give GCRPC valuable advertising.

Develop Sponsorship Levels and Packages

After determining what will be for sale, the following activities should be accomplished:

1. **Price the items** – Attach value to each item for sale. Check with firms that wrap buses to determine the cost of a wrap. Items should be priced competitively with similar types of advertisements, such as billboards, and television and radio advertising. Think big! Both large and small firms should have opportunities. Set up multi-year packages for semi-permanent advertising such as bus wraps, shelter and bench signs.

2. **Develop sponsorship packages** – After pricing the various services to be provided, GCRPC should put them in sponsorship packages to maximize revenue. Each level of sponsorship should have a name to it. For example, gold, silver, and bronze. Examples can include:

    - ***High-End Sponsor (Five-Star, Platinum, etc.)*** – The value of these services is significant. High-end services should only go to those sponsors willing to pay over, for example, $10,000 per year (with three-year contracts). Packages can be combined based on the customer or sponsor's need. These high-end services include bus wraps, a shelter in front of facility, with advertising, an intercounty route named after sponsor (e.g., mall route, Hospital route or College route) and logo on Victoria Transit map. Each of these services should be worth up to $10,000 per year and more if they are combined.

    - ***Mid-Level Sponsors*** – These sponsors should have access to a variety of packages that include advertising on a shelter(s), bench(s), and internal advertising. A decal on the back of the bus, and a name in the riders' guide are also available. Other opportunities can include sponsoring special promotions.

- ***Entry-Level Sponsor*** – Small local sponsors have a place in sponsorship as well. Packages can include advertising on benches, and internal advertising. Certain special promotions should be priced for the entry-level sponsor, and recognition as a sponsor should be on promotional material.

Sponsorship Implementation Tasks

- **Create promotional material** – Develop materials to sell the sponsorships. The material should be of high quality.

- **Recruit supporters** – Community and political leaders as well can be recruited to help sell the packages. Attempt to get local media outlets to assist.

- **Sell sponsorships** – After all of the preparation has been completed, sales can be initiated. Both large and small sponsors should be sought. For larger firms, the first attempts should be with local contacts. If attempts with large firms fail at the local level - contact regional or corporate offices.

Limits on Advertising

GCRPC should set up standards for advertising on GCRPC transit vehicles. Advertising should be tasteful, within the normal bounds of advertising accepted in the community. It is recommended that GCRPC refuse any advertising of political, religious, or adult oriented content or intent. This will only cause controversy where none is wanted.

Advertising should be of a quality design and application. All advertising should meet quality standards developed through GCRPC. It should be professionally designed and installed - it must look good.

Funding Potential

With an aggressive, professional sales approach this program has the potential to generate significant unencumbered cash for the organization. The vehicles serving as rolling billboards can generate more than $500 per month per vehicle (after expenses). Assuming 10 vehicles are wrapped, this approach can generate $60,000 per year in revenue. Additional sponsorships can generate approximately $10,000 annually for a net revenue of $70,000 annually.

Next Steps

These strategies and ideas are presented to GCRPC and the City of Victoria for their consideration. They can be accepted as is, with modifications, or they can be rejected. GCRPC should carefully review this technical memorandum. This should be followed by a final meeting with the consultant to select the strategies for the future. Once the strategies have been selected, the consultant team will develop a draft plan reflecting GCRPC's desires.