Greater Peoria Mass Transit District Microtransit Study.

October 2021





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Executive summary.



This study evaluates how the Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (GPMTD) can use microtransit to improve transportation access and enhance its existing fixed route bus and demand-response paratransit and dial-a-ride systems. The study's primary goal was to assess the feasibility of GPMTD using microtransit to improve mobility for the people in Peoria that rely on public transit to access employment, healthcare, grocery stores, and other essential destinations. A secondary objective was to improve transit access in underserved areas while enhancing the existing bus system.

The report includes an evaluation of the current transit system and area demographics, followed by an overview of research and interviews conducted through stakeholder outreach and focus group discussions. Together, these informed the identification of microtransit opportunity zones for further investigation. Each opportunity zone was analyzed to determine the potential microtransit ridership and appropriate use cases. On the basis of that analysis, microstransit service alternatives - including service zone boundaries, demand scenarios, and quality of service parameters were developed. Each of these was simulated to understand performance, customer experience, and operating costs. In addition to detailing the outcomes of that analysis, this report includes a microtransit launch and implementation strategy and considerations for integrating smart mobility initiatives into the region.

In order to identify microtransit opportunity zones, the project team evaluated the existing bus network, demand-response services, and local travel patterns. In addition, mapping population density, employment density, vehicle ownership, poverty, public transit use, and other demographic factors helped to identify the areas with the greatest transit need. Overall, while most residents and businesses are located within walking distance of a bus stop during weekday hours, residents who rely solely on public transit in Greater Peoria still face several challenges. These include infrequent service on specific routes and limited service hours during evenings and weekends. Furthermore, the design of the bus network prioritizes trips to and from the downtown area, resulting in longer journey times for other trip patterns.

In order to validate these conclusions and incorporate feedback from the local community, a series of five focus groups were conducted. In addition to educating local stakeholders about microtransit, these meetings provided an opportunity for attendees to share their feedback regarding the existing conditions analysis and potential microtransit zones. The stakeholders included representatives from local nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, human service agencies, and public sector authorities.

The service recommendations section of this report includes an analysis of four potential microtransit zones. The zones were selected based on the following criteria:

- ά Alignment with GPMTD's stated goals for microtransit
- ά Coverage of key points of interest and a mix of employment, residential, and retail areas
- $\dot{\alpha}$ $\;$ Synergies with the existing bus network
- $\dot{\alpha} \quad \mbox{Creating an optimum zone size}$

The four potential microtransit zones are:

Downtown Peoria zone: This zone is designed to improve general mobility, and improve access to critical destinations for high-need populations. The zone includes the South Peoria Neighborhood, Bradley University, OSF Saint Francis Medical Center, and some retail in East Peoria. **North Peoria zone:** This zone includes Northwoods Mall and Illinois Central College (Peoria Campus) and is expected to expand mobility options and reduce travel times in an area with primarily north-south bus routes.

Farmington Rd. North Bartonville: This zone aims to improve transit access in an area with few bus connections. It also includes access to the airport and Peoria County Jail.

Citywide zone (off-peak): This zone covers most of the GPMTD service area, including part of East Peoria, and would provide off-peak service during the evenings and weekends when the existing bus network runs infrequently.



Zone	Annual ridership'	Peak fleet size²	Annual estimated cost³	Average productivity
	Passenger trips	Number of vehicles	Millions of dollars	Boardings per revenue hour
Downtown Peoria Zone	115,000	6	\$1.4M	4 - 5
Northern Peoria Zone	50,000	5	\$1.2M	2 - 3
Farmington Road / North Bartonville Zone	12,000	2	\$0.5M	1 - 2
Citywide (off-peak evenings)	65,000	11	\$1.2M	2.5 - 3.5

The study also explored the integration of mobility hubs into GPMTD's transit network and with the potential microtransit zones. Furthermore, given the region's focus on connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs), a dedicated CAV corridor in the downtown zone was analyzed between the Warehouse District and the Courthouse. While this corridor is likely to yield low ridership, it is an opportunity to build partnerships with CAV companies and test new technologies in Peoria.

One of the most significant challenges in implementing new microtransit services for public transit agencies is securing funding. Funding can come from various sources, including federal grant programs, state grants, or local ballot initiatives to raise additional tax revenue. Other ways agencies have funded microtransit services include partnerships with community organizations, educational providers, healthcare providers, or private employers.

This report is intended to assess the potential for microtransit in the Greater Peoria region. If GPTMD and local officials decide to implement a microtransit service, the next steps will be to choose the preferred microtransit zone and service design, select an operating model, secure funding, and procure the necessary software/vehicles/operations. It will be important to market the new service during the launch process and educate future passengers on how to book rides and use the service. Once the service is launched, it should be monitored and adjusted using the live service data. Key performance indicators can be used to evaluate the success of the service. These metrics may include ridership, customer satisfaction, average passenger wait times, the productivity of the service (passengers per vehicle hour), the average cost per ride, and on-time performance at pickup or dropoff. Throughout the entire process, it is recommended that GPMTD continue to engage with the local community to ensure that the service being implemented meets the community's needs.

¹Annual ridership for the medium demand scenario with recommended parameters ²Peak fleet size for the medium demand scenario with recommended parameters ³Estimated operating cost for the medium demand scenario with recommended parameters

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1. Introduction.



1.1 Project goals.

The Peoria Microtransit Planning Study evaluates how the Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (GPMTD) can use microtransit to improve first-and-last mile mobility and enhance the existing bus route system. The study aims to develop a vision for the implementation for a microtransit pilot in the Peoria region by researching best practices and lessons learned from other microtransit services. The project components include an evaluation of the existing transportation system, the identification of microtransit opportunity areas, development of a microtransit implementation plan, and recommendations around smart mobility. The study was informed by various community engagement efforts including key stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

The report is divided into six sections:

Existing conditions analysis: This section includes an analysis of GPMTD's existing transit system, including the bus network and demand-response services. Underperforming bus routes and segments by the time of day and day of the week were identified. Socioeconomic and demographic data were mapped to better understand the transit coverage and opportunities for increasing transit equity with microtransit. This analysis was used to inform the microtransit opportunity zones identified in subsequent sections. Service recommendations: This portion of the report outlines the methodology used to identify potential microtransit zones, estimate ridership, and assess alternative quality of service parameters. Each potential microtransit zone is described, including the expected use cases and major trip generators within the zone. Furthermore, various ridership and quality of service scenarios were explored within each zone. The impact of these parameters on productivity, rider experience, and operating cost was calculated and is discussed in this section.

Stakeholder outreach: This segment of the report outlines the community engagement process for the study. This includes an overview of the five focus groups, a list of the stakeholders that participated, and some of the key feedback that was received and then incorporated into the service recommendations.

Smart mobility recommendations: The smart mobility recommendations include an overview of mobility hubs and how they could be implemented in the Greater Peoria region and integrated into a future microtransit service. Furthermore, the role of connected and autonomous vehicles in a downtown zone is evaluated and potential partnerships are identified.

Funding: The report outlines the existing financing of GPMTD and the potential funding opportunities for a microtransit service. Federal, state, and local funding sources are examined. In addition, estimated annual fare revenue and a farebox recovery ratio are calculated for each potential microtransit zone evaluated in the service recommendations section.

Implementation and launch recommendations: The final section of this report outlines the next steps necessary to launch and implement a successful microtransit service. This section includes a comparison of two potential operating models (Software-as-a-Service and Transportation-as a-Service), a plan for a rider education process, considerations for ensuring an accessible service, and a list of key performance indicators that can be used to evaluate the service.

1.2 Microtransit overview.

Microtransit, also known as on-demand transit, uses technology to route a fleet of vehicles based on realtime passenger demand. Microtransit is similar to a bus in that passengers are asked to walk to meet a vehicle at a 'virtual bus stop' that may, in general, be up to ¼ of a mile from their requested location. However, it is different from a bus in that there are no schedules or route maps. Instead, trips must start and end within zones that are typically determined based on need.

Passengers can book a trip using a smartphone application ("app"), a website, or through a call center. Each microtransit service has specific operating hours and geographies that constrain where and when a passenger can travel.

To book a ride, a passenger starts by indicating the number of passengers in their party and

their desired pickup and dropoff locations. When booking using the app, passengers will clearly see the geofenced zone in which service is offered. Requesting a trip beyond this zone is not possible, so passengers always know where the microtransit service is available. Once the passenger submits a trip request, they are given a proposal that tells them when the vehicle will arrive and where to meet it. Typically, passengers must wait between 5 -20 minutes for a trip, although this may vary depending on the level of demand and the number of vehicles available. Passengers can track the vehicle in realtime using the app. The passenger is provided with vehicle information — for example: license plate, driver name, driver photo, and vehicle ID number. Passengers can usually cancel a ride at any time before pickup, but as cancellations may negatively affect other passengers, a small fee is often charged to discourage cancellations.

Once the vehicle arrives, the driver confirms the passenger's details using the driver app. Passengers can pay using credit and debit cards, transit passes, cash, vouchers, and more. It is important to include options for people without credit cards or bank accounts to ensure that the service is accessible to all.

The passenger is then taken to their destination. Along the way, the vehicle will pick up and drop off other passengers heading in the same direction, but care is taken to avoid lengthy detours for passengers already on board. The passenger can track their progress using the app. After each trip, passengers may be automatically emailed a receipt. Passengers may also be able to provide real-time and post-trip feedback through the app.



1.3 About the Greater Peoria Mass Transit District.

The Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (GPMTD), also known as CityLink, was established in 1970 by residents of the City of Peoria, Village of Peoria Heights, and West Peoria township to manage and operate the local bus services. In the same year, GPMTD's Board of Trustees approved an official partnership with the City of East Peoria to provide service east of the Illinois River. In 2001, GPMTD further expanded service to Pekin, North Pekin, and Creve Coeur. Currently, GPMTD operates 20 bus routes, CityLift, the ADA Paratransit demand-response service, and CountyLink, the rural demand-response service. The agency's mission is to "provide an environmentally friendly and customer-focused transportation service that connects people to places in an efficient and safe manner." Since 2017, Doug Roelfs has served as GPMTD's General Manager.

1.4 Study overview.

This study was funded by State Planning and Research (SP&R) Funds from the Federal Highway Administration, administered to GPMTD in 2020. The study was conducted between January and September 2021. In addition to representatives from GPMTD, the project team includes consultants from Via Mobility and Muse Community + Design.

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2. Existing conditions analysis.



The project team conducted a review of existing conditions in the Greater Peoria region in order to inform our analysis of the potential for a new microtransit service. This included investigating the quality of Greater Peoria Mass Transit District's (GPMTD's) public transit system to identify underperforming bus routes and segments by time of day and day of week. Socioeconomic data were mapped to understand transit coverage, service levels, and opportunities for increasing transit equity with microtransit. This analysis was informed by the 2019 CityLink Existing Conditions Report, a Comprehensive Operational Analysis of GPMTD's transit system. The existing conditions analysis informed the identification of potential microtransit zones within the region that will fill gaps in the existing transit network, complement the strengths of the existing GPMTD service, and improve equity and mobility for disadvantaged groups.

Key conclusions from the existing conditions analysis include:

Existing bus network: Most residents and businesses are located within walking distance of a bus stop during peak weekday hours. However, travel by bus is often significantly slower than driving due to long wait times and journey times (particularly if a transfer is required), and limited service on nights and weekends. **Demand-response network:** The CityLift and CountyLink services provide demand-response trips in Greater Peoria and Peoria County. The services are only available to eligible passengers (based on disability status and the location of the trip). Both services require that trips be booked at least 24-hours in advance and the rural service is limited to weekdays. There is a significant 'Grey Area' where neither buses nor demand-response service is available. The CityLift service has been temporarily expanded into the Grey Area within Peoria County although a long term solution for transportation in the Grey Area has not yet been finalized.

Travel patterns: While Downtown Peoria generates a significant percentage of all trips, there are several other key destinations, such as Northwoods Mall and the retail in East Peoria, that are also major trip generators. These destinations are significantly more challenging to access using the bus network, and often require a transfer resulting in long journey times.

High transit need areas: Areas with high transit need were determined based on transit propensity and equity analyses. Downtown Peoria and South Peoria have the highest need for transit, with additional pockets of high need in northwest Peoria, and surrounding Pekin. While these areas have relatively high levels of existing bus service, it is likely that residents will benefit from additional service.

2.1 Great Peoria study area.

The Greater Peoria region sits on the Illinois River in central Illinois. It includes the counties of Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford, Logan, and Mason. This study focuses on Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford counties (the tri-county area). For the purposes of this study, the "Greater Peoria region" will refer to the area that GPMTD serves and some nearby municipalities (mostly in Peoria and Tazewell counties). Figure 1 shows the cities in the region, which include Peoria, East Peoria, Pekin, and Morton, as well as the villages of Bartonville, Bellevue, Creve Coeur, and Peoria Heights. GPMTD operates the buses in the region which are mostly focused in Peoria, West Peoria, Peoria Heights, East Peoria, Bellevue, and Pekin. GPMTD service also connects to the General Wayne A. Downing Peoria International Airport in Limestone Township.

The total population for the tri-county area is 350,000. GPMTD serves approximately 200,000 residents, including the City of Peoria (100,000 residents).



2.2 Bus network analysis.

CityLink operates 20 bus routes in Greater Peoria that cover parts of Peoria and Tazewell Counties, as illustrated by Figure 2. Service to Pekin is limited to weekdays, and East Peoria and Woodford County service is limited to Monday through Saturday. Evening service is available on ten of the routes during weekdays and nine routes on Saturdays. There is no evening service on Sundays. The major transfer points are the Downtown Peoria Transit Center and the Tazewell County Courthouse in Pekin.

CityLink ridership has been in slow decline since 2015. In 2019, the system served just under 2.6 million unlinked trips⁴. Over 80% of these routes operated within the City of Peoria routes. The weekday average was about 8,800 unlinked trips. Ridership averages by route are displayed in Table 1.

Dauta muchan	Doute roma	Route type	Average daily boardings		
Rouce number	Route name		Weekday	Saturday	Sunday
1	University	Local	1016	516	213
2	Monroe	Local	450	265	80
3	Parkview	Local	136	84	
4	Knoxville	Local	509	223	-
5	Main	Local	667	400	75
6	Sheridan	Local	377	263	-
7	Garden	Local	280	165	-
8	East Peoria/ Sunnyland	Local	247	119	-
9	East Peoria/ Eastside	Local	73	79	-
10	Sterling	Local	989	694	278
11	Western	Local	412	207	-
12	Heights	Local	587	355	127
13	South Adams	Local	490	304	136
14	Wisconsin	Local	600	409	171
15	Lincoln	Local	419	272	74
16	Northwest Express	Limited Stop	480	261	113
17	Pekin North	Feeder/Local Circulator	145	-	-
18	Pekin South	Feeder/Local Circulator	113	-	-
20	ICC Express	Limited Stop	598	372	_
23	Pekin Connector	Limited Stop	187	-	-

Table 1: Summary of Bus Routes and Ridership, 2019⁵

⁴Source: Federal Transit Administration National Transit Database (2019): https://cms7.fta.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/transit_agency_profile_doc/2019/50056.pdf ⁵Source: CityLink On the Move Existing Conditions Report (May 2019): https://www.ridecitylink.org/wp-content/uploads/CityLink-On-the-Move-Existing-Conditions-Report_MedRes.pdf

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS



2.2.1 Service coverage analysis.

To evaluate the accessibility and coverage of the bus network, the team examined areas that were within an eighth, quarter, and half a mile of walking distance to each GPMTD bus stop. As illustrated by Figure 3, most areas within the City of Peoria are within a half-mile (10 minute walk) of a bus stop that has weekday service. In total, there are over 90,000 jobs and 150,000 people that live within a half-mile of a GPMTD bus stop. A halfmile walk is considered the upper limit of a reasonable distance which people are willing to walk in order to get on a bus. Less than a quarter mile is considered good service. About 110,000 people in the GPMTD service area live within a quarter mile of a bus stop. Some gaps exist in northern Peoria (especially around Golden Acres, and Orange Prairie), West Peoria, and Peoria Heights. Service is also much more uneven in East Peoria, Pekin, Creve Coeur, and Tazewell County in general, as stops are much less frequent.



Figure 4 illustrates how transit coverage varies significantly depending on time of day and week. Sunday has significantly less coverage, with no stops available east of the Illinois River. Saturday service is limited to East Peoria and Washington. Weekday evening service is limited to Peoria and parts of East Peoria, including Illinois Central College's East Peoria Campus.



It is important to note that walking distance to a bus stop is just one metric to evaluate transit accessibility. It does not incorporate the ease and walkability around a stop, frequency of service, nor the number of jobs and other key destinations that can be reached using the transit network.

Areas with poor access to the current network were identified as strong potential candidates for microtransit service. Figure 5 highlights areas with high population density that are not within walking distance of a bus stop. The two main areas that stand out are Pekin and parts of northern Peoria, especially between Golden Acres and Keller.



2.2.2 Utilization.

Utilization (or productivity) measures the number of boardings per revenue hour. It is an indication of a route's cost efficiency and is used to identify lower performing routes. The average utilization for GPMTD's weekday routes is 16 boardings per revenue hour. Table 2 shows the utilization of each route. Routes with fewer than 10 boardings per revenue hour are highlighted in red. Routes with more than 10 but less than the average (16) boardings per revenue hour are highlighted in orange. Utilization also varies by time of the day and day of the week. Typically, utilization tends to be higher during peak hours when ridership is higher, and lower during off-peak hours.⁶

Douto number	Route name	Utilization			
Rouce number		Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	
1	University	25	20	16	
2	Monroe	18	6	6	
3	Parkview	12	10		
4	Knoxville	15	11		
5	Main	18	19	6	
6	Sheridan	20	28		
7	Garden	12	15		
8	East Peoria/ Sunnyland	20	16		
9	East Peoria/ Eastside	11	26		
10	Sterling	27	31	19	
11	Western	18	20		
12	Heights	16	16	10	
13	South Adams	19	21	10	
14	Wisconsin	14	14	13	
15	Lincoln	15	18	5	
16	Northwest Express	10	10	4	
17	Pekin North	12	-		
18	Pekin South	9	-		
20	ICC Express	26	27		
23	Pekin Connector	15	-		

Table 2: Route utilization table, 2019.7

⁶Hourly utilization data is not available for GPMTD routes.

⁷ Source: CityLink On the Move Existing Conditions Report (May 2019): https://www.ridecitylink.org/wp-content/uploads/CityLink-On-the-Move-Existing-Conditions-Report_MedRes.pdf

On weekdays, the best performing routes are 10 Sterling, 20 ICC Express, and 1 University. The least efficient routes on weekdays are the 18 Pekin South, 16 Northwest Express, and 9 East Peoria/Eastside. In general, the Pekin routes have relatively low efficiency. Several routes have higher efficiency on Saturdays than during weekdays, like the 20 ICC Express, 6 Sheridan, and 9 East Peoria/Eastside. This is likely due to reduced frequencies on weekends, resulting in ridership being concentrated during fewer revenue hours. Commuter oriented routes, such as 2 Monroe, perform worse on weekends than weekdays. The other routes with low utilization on Saturdays are the 3 Parkview, 4 Knoxville, and 16 Northwest Express.

In general, Sundays have the lowest utilization, with some routes having as few as four or five boardings per revenue hour. The only routes with average or above average utilization on Sundays are the University route with 16 boardings per revenue hour and the Sterling route with 19 boardings per revenue hour.

Routes with the poorest utilization throughout the day are potential candidates for replacement in full or in

part with microtransit zones. These include 3 Parkview, 14 Wisconsin, Route 16 Northwest Express, and the local Pekin circulators, 17 Pekin North, and 18 Pekin South. Furthermore, while 9 East Peoria/Eastside is very efficient on Saturdays, total daily boardings are fewer than 100 passengers, the lowest across all routes. Replacing entire underperforming routes, or segments of routes that have poor performance, may allow GPMTD to redirect resources to a potentially more efficient microtransit service.

2.2.3 Quality of service.

Two common measures of quality of service are on-time performance and headways. On-time performance measures how well a bus adheres to its stated schedule. For this analysis, a bus is considered early if it departs more than one minute before the scheduled time, and late if it departs more than 5 minutes after the scheduled time. On-time performance is important for riders to be able to plan and rely on a service, especially given the relatively long headways on certain routes. Table 3 lists the on-time performance, the worst performing routes are highlighted in red.

Deute number	Route name	Percent of on-time buses			
Route number		Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	
1	University	84%	82%	79%	
2	Monroe	79%	76%	66%	
3	Parkview	91%	72%	-	
4	Knoxville	92%	79%	-	
5	Main	85%	81%	63%	
6	Sheridan	90%	79%	-	
7	Garden	83%	74%	-	
8	East Peoria/ Sunnyland	89%	90%	-	
9	East Peoria/ Eastside	78%	67%	-	

Table 3: On-time performance, 2019.8

⁸ Source: CityLink On the Move Existing Conditions Report (May 2019): https://www.ridecitylink.org/wp-content/uploads/CityLink-On-the-Move-Existing-Conditions-Report_MedRes.pdf

10	Sterling	81%	94%	80%
11	Western	78%	88%	-
12	Heights	83%	85%	84%
13	South Adams	88%	77%	66%
14	Wisconsin	76%	64%	80%
15	Lincoln	73%	65%	76%
16	Northwest Express	76%	84%	68%
17	Pekin North	90%	-	-
18	Pekin South	91%	-	-
20	ICC Express	86%	82%	-
23	Pekin Connector	78%	-	-

Weekday on-time performance ranges from a low of 73% on 15 Lincoln to a high of 92% on 4 Knoxville. Other ontime routes include the Pekin local circulators, 3 Parkview, and 6 Sheridan, all of which have a weekday on-time performance of at least 90%. The other lower performing routes include 2 Monroe, 9 East Peoria/Eastside, and 23 Pekin Connector. The weekday average on-time performance is 84%, Saturday average is 79% and Sunday average is the worst at 74%.

The second metric, headways, looks at how often a bus arrives at a particular stop. If on-time performance is poor but buses arrive frequently, you can still have a high quality service, because passengers know that another vehicle will be arriving shortly.

Route number	Route name	Headways (minutes)		
		Weekday	Saturday	Sunday
1	University	30-75	60-75	60-75
2	Monroe	30-75	60-75-75	60-75
3	Parkview	60	60	60
4	Knoxville	30-60	60	60
5	Main	30-75	60-75	60-75
6	Sheridan	30-60	60	60
7	Garden	30-60	60	60
8	East Peoria/ Sunnyland	60	120	120

Table 4: Bus frequency.9

⁹Source: CityLink On the Move Existing Conditions Report (May 2019): https://www.ridecitylink.org/wp-content/uploads/CityLink-On-the-Move-Existing-Conditions-Report_MedRes.pdf

9	East Peoria/ Eastside	60	120	120
10	Sterling	30-60	60-75	75
11	Western	30-60	60-75	-
12	Heights	30-60	60-75	75
13	South Adams	30-60	60-75	75
14	Wisconsin	30-60	60-75	75
15	Lincoln	30-60	60-75	75
16	Northwest Express	30-60	60-75	75
17	Pekin North	60	-	-
18	Pekin South	60	-	_
20	ICC Express	30-60	60-75	-
23	Pekin Connector	60	-	-

Most CityLink routes run on 30 minute headways during the weekday peak periods. Weekday headways range from 30 minutes to 60 minutes depending on the route and time of day. GPMTD's weekday hours are between 5:15 AM and 9:30 AM and 1:30 PM - 6:30 PM. The Pekin and East Peoria routes, in addition to the 3 Parkview, all have 60 minute headways throughout the weekday. On Saturdays all routes have 60 headways during the day and 75 minute headways in the evenings. Approximately half of Saturday routes do not operate at night. On Sunday, all available routes have 75 minute headways.

2.2.4 Summary of underperforming routes.

In order to improve GPMTD's bus network, the agency is planning on implementing all of the recommendations from the 2019 Comprehensive Operational Analysis (CityLink on the Move)¹⁰. This includes the following changes to the bus network:

 An increase to midday service frequencies on the following routes: 1 University, 7 Garden, 10 Sterling, and 13 South Adams.

- An increase in service frequency between 5:00 and6:00 PM on all routes.
- ά Additional late service on 3 Parkview, 4 Knoxville, 7Garden, and 11 Western.
- ά Implementation of a maximum 60 minute headway after 6:00 PM on all routes.
- $\dot{\alpha}$ An increase in Sunday service.



¹⁰Source: CityLink On the Move Final Report (May 2019): https://www.ridecitylink.org/wp-content/uploads/CityLink-on-the-Move-Final-Report.pdf

2.3 Demand-response analysis.

The CityLink service is supplemented by the CountyLink and CityLift demand-response systems.

CityLift is GPMTD's complementary paratransit service that operates door-to-door for any person with a disability who is unable to use a fixed route bus. Per ADA regulations, CityLift is available within ³/₄ of a mile of all GPMTD bus stops. There is a temporary CityLift extension available within Peoria County for the urbanized area past the ³/₄ mile from a bus stop threshold but not yet within the rural part of the county, known as the "Grey Area".¹¹

CountyLink serves the rural Peoria County community

with demand-response door-to-door service. For both services, reservations must be made at least 24 hours in advance. While CityLift's hours mirror those of the bus system, CountyLink's hours are limited to 5:00 AM - 6:00 PM Monday through Friday. The cost of a CountyLink trip is \$6.00 and the cost of a CityLift ticket is \$2.00, compared to the \$1.00 single ride tickets for CityLink buses.

GPMTD has contracted the same third-party operator for both the CityLift and CountyLink services. In 2019, CityLink made 2.1 trips per revenue hour¹². CountyLink performed 1.5 trips per revenue hour in 2018. CountyLink's lower utilization is likely due to longer trip lengths in the rural part of the county.



ⁿSource: Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Grey Area Mobility Enhancement and Expansion Study (2021): https://tricountyrpc.org/wp-content/uploads/Grey-Area-Mobility-Enhancement-and-Expansion-Study-_-FINAL_with-appendices-Reduced.pdf

¹²Source: Federal Transit Administration National Transit Database (2019): https://cms7.fta.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/transit_agency_profile_doc/2019/50056.pdf

Some of the popular origins/destinations for CityLift and CountyLink trips include: EP!C, a center for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, senior housing complexes, dialysis centers, and other healthcare facilities. In April 2021, the services were performing about 450 trips per day (including those from the "Grey Area").

Outside of GPMTD's jurisdiction, WeCare provides a doorto-door demand response service in the rural parts of Woodford and Tazewell Counties. The service is limited to seniors and people with disabilities and is available only Monday through Friday from 5:30 AM - 5:30 PM.

2.4 Other modes.

The dominant mode of transportation in the region is the private vehicle. Aside from public transit (discussed in the previous section), other modes of transportation within the region include:

 Walking: Generally, most people are willing to walk for five to ten minutes, or approximately ¼- to ½-mile, to access goods and services¹³. In Peoria, the majority of residents do not live within walking distance of key destinations, so walking is not considered a suitable substitute for other forms of transportation. In the City of Peoria, about 3% of commuters walk to work.¹⁴

- Cycling: Less than one percent of people in Greater Peoria commute to work by bicycle. The City of Peoria previously had a privately-operated bikeshare system, but this no longer operates, meaning residents are restricted to using their private bicycles.¹⁵ The bikeshare program, operated by Zagster, had 1,800 riders between May 2017 when it launched and October of 2019.¹⁶
- Taxis and TNCs: Local taxi providers and TNCs include Uber, Lyft, and a number of locally-based, independent for-hire-vehicle operators. However, these services are typically not affordable enough for most residents to use as a regular form of transportation.

These modes are explored in more detail in Section 4. Smart Mobility Hubs.



¹³ Source: Federal Highway Administration: https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_transit/ped_transguide/ch4.cfm

¹⁴Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B08301: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

¹⁵ Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B08301: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html ¹⁶ Source: Peoria Area CVB: https://www.peoria.org/blog/post/enjoy-peoria-renews-city-cycle-for-third-year/

2.5 Travel demand patterns.

The Travel Demand Model (TDM) for the Tri-county area identifies popular origins and destinations by TAZ (Traffic Analysis Zones). The TDM is a three-step (generation, distribution, assignment) model that forecasts travel patterns 10 to 25 years into the future, thus providing insights into where people may want to travel to and from with a new microtransit service. For more information on the Travel Demand Model see the Long-Range Transportation Plan 2045.

The TDM identifies pockets with more than 50,000 daily trips originating in Downtown Peoria, Pekin, and Morton. Of these locations, only Morton is not served by GPTMD. In addition, some commercial areas generate a high volume of trips in northern Peoria including around Northwoods Mall and the shopping center at North University Street and West Glen Avenue. In Downtown Peoria, around Bradley University and the businesses



along the waterfront, including the Peoria Warehouse District, are popular generators of trips.

Drawing on stakeholder engagement and the TDM model, Figure 9 shows key destinations that may be of interest to microtransit users. These include popular

shopping centers, grocery stores, schools, healthcare facilities, public housing complexes, transportation hubs, and other civic centers. These key destinations were considered in identification of microtransit opportunities zones within Greater Peoria, discussed in Section 3. Service Recommendations.



2.6 Socioeconomic analysis.

In addition to the analysis of existing transportation services in Greater Peoria discussed above, we mapped socioeconomic characteristics to gain a better understanding of where people live and work, especially those who are likely to use public transit. Population and employment density are two of the most important factors in generating demand for a microtransit service. Transit propensity was also mapped. This is the likelihood that an individual will use public transportation based on factors like vehicle ownership, age, race/ethnicity, and disability.

2.6.1 Population density.

Areas with a high population density are mostly within walking distance of GPMTD's bus network. The highest densities are in Downtown Peoria around Bradley University and north of the OSF Medical Center. Areas with moderate population density include South Peoria, parts of north Peoria, and Pekin. In 2019, the population of the City of Peoria was 104,300 and the population of East Peoria was 18,600. In the same year, 182,700 people lived in Peoria County and 133,200 lived in Tazewell County.¹⁷



¹⁷ Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B01001: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

2.6.2 Employment density.

In comparison to population density, employment density is more dispersed in the region. While there is a concentration of jobs in Downtown Peoria, there are also significant clusters in northern Peoria, East Peoria, Pekin, and Bartonville. Some of the major employers in the area include Caterpillar, OSF Saint Francis Medical Center, Bradley University, Illinois Central College, and Northwoods Mall. OSF HealthCare headquarters will be moving downtown, bringing 750 employees to the area. The total number of jobs in the City of Peoria is 75,500. Across both Peoria County and Tazewell County, the total number of jobs is double that (150,100).¹⁸



¹⁸ Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, Table il_wac_S000_JT00_2018: https://lehd.ces.census. gov/data/

2.6.3 Transit propensity.

Transit propensity is a measure of an individual's likelihood of using public transit. The transit propensity analysis was based on data from the American Community Survey 5-year estimate (2015-2019).¹⁹ This dataset only includes the commuting population and was used to determine which characteristics correlated most with transit ridership. We considered the following population characteristics:

- ά Vehicle ownership by household: no vehicle, one vehicle, two or more vehicles
- ά Race: white alone, Black/African American, Asian, other race
- ά Hispanic/Latino
- ά Persons with a disability
- ά Household income
- ά Age

The results are shown in Table 5. The factors can be compared to the average transit propensity for the area (defined as Peoria County and Tazewell County combined). The results indicated that zero-vehicle households are 17 times more likely to use transit for commuting than the average household in the region. Black/African American commuters are more than five times as likely to use transit. Having a disability, a household income of less than \$25,000, or being between the ages of 20 and 24 are also positively correlated with commuting by transit. Because the analysis is based on working populations, people 65 and over are less likely to use transit for commuting but are among the population groups more likely to rely on public transit in general. In addition, having a household with two or more vehicles, being non-Hispanic white, having a household income of more than \$50,000, and being between the age of 45 and 59 are all population characteristics that would indicate a lower likelihood to commute by transit.



¹⁹ Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table S0802: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

 Table 5: Relative transit propensity.

Vehicle ownership	
No car	17.0
One car	1.4
Two or more	0.3
Race	
White Alone	0.7
Black/African American	4.4
Asian	1.0
Other race	0.9
Hispanic/Latino	
Not Hispanic/Latino	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	0.9
Disability	
Disability	2.5
No disability	0.9
Household income	
Less than \$10,000	2.5
\$10,000 to \$24,999	1.7
\$25,000 to \$49,999	1.0
\$50,000 to \$74,999	0.1
More than \$75,000	0.1
Age	
Ages 16-19	1.1
Ages 20-24	1.5
Ages 25-44	1.1
Ages 45-59	0.8
Ages 60-64	1.1
Ages 65+	0.2

Figure 12 shows the transit propensity for each block group in Greater Peoria. This represents the likelihood of each block group's population to use public transportation for commuting based on the characteristics listed above. For example, a block group that was mostly made up of two-vehicle households with incomes above \$50,000 would have a lower transit propensity than a block group with mostly Black/African American residents aged 20 to 24.



Adjusted population density.

Figure 13 shows the potential fixed route service frequencies that are supported by the population density. Given the importance of population density in determining successful transportation services, this analysis highlights concentrations of populations that are likely to use public transit for commuting.



In comparison, Figure 14 shows the population density adjusted by transit propensity, which is calculated as described above and the potential fixed route service frequencies that would be supported. Darker areas indicate a population density and/or concentration of enough likely transit users to support a fixed route bus with a frequency of 10 minutes or better. Lighter blue areas suggest a population that would support fixed route frequencies of 30 minutes or longer. Alternatively, these lighter blue areas would be well supported by a microtransit service; they include Downtown Peoria, South Peoria, north Peoria, and Pekin.



2.7 Equity analysis.

The following section looks at a variety of additional socioeconomic and demographic characteristics for the Greater Peoria region that are related to equity and inequity and were not captured in the transit propensity analysis. The purpose of this analysis is to ensure that the microtransit opportunity zones identified in this study improve mobility options and access to jobs and services for those that need it most. Furthermore, this analysis identifies where transit-dependent riders may live. Transit-dependent riders, also known as captive riders, rely on public transportation to get from place to place. Typically this includes people who do not have a driver's license or cannot afford a private vehicle or regular usage of other modes such as TNCs. Data from the Census and the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates were mapped to visually indicate where transit-dependent riders may live.²⁰ In general, these maps show that areas near the river in Downtown Peoria and the South Peoria neighborhood have the highest concentrations of people who may be transit-dependent. To improve equitable access to transportation services in Greater Peoria, we used this data to identify microtransit opportunity areas within Greater Peoria.

2.7.1 Vehicle ownership.

Households without access to a private vehicle are often dependent on transit to access jobs, grocery stores, schools, and other essential services. In Greater Peoria, car-free households are 17 times more likely to use transit to commute. Across the entire city, 15% of households are car free, and of the population that uses public transit for commuting, about a third have no access to a private vehicle.²¹

The areas with the highest concentration of zero-vehicle households are in South Peoria and Downtown Peoria. There tend to be fewer zero-vehicle households further from the existing bus network. Some exceptions include the neighborhoods around Norwood and El Vista. People with neither access to the transit system nor access to a private vehicle may rely on friends/family for rides, use alternative transportation such as cycling or taxis, or may just travel less frequently due to their limited options.



²⁰Source: U.S. Census Bureau: https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/about.html

²¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B08006: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html


2.7.2 Poverty.

The ACS measure for poverty status varies by the structure and size of the family unit. For example, in 2019, the poverty threshold for a four-person household with two adults and two children was an annual household income of \$25,926. For a one-person household over the age of 65, the threshold was

\$12,261.²² In 2019, 21% of Peoria was living below the poverty line.²³ The map below shows the percentage of households within each census tract that are below their poverty threshold. In Peoria, the highest concentration of households in poverty is in Downtown Peoria, and the density gets lower further out of the center of the city.



²² Source: U.S. Census Bureau: https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html

²³ Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B17001: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

2.7.3 Public transportation use.

The American Commuter Survey reports the share of workers over 16 whose primary means of traveling to work is public transportation (including taxicabs). As expected, public transportation mode-share mirrors the availability of and density of bus routes in Peoria. The areas with higher proportions of transit users are in the Downtown and South Peoria neighborhoods. Across Peoria, 3% of commuters use public transportation to get to work.²⁴



²⁴ Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B08006: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

2.7.4 Age.

Seniors.

Older adults are also more likely to be transit-dependent. The highest density pockets of seniors (over the age of 65) are outside of Downtown Peoria, especially in northern Peoria and East Peoria. They make up 16% of the population in Peoria and Peoria County and 18% of Tazewell County.²⁵



25 Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B01001: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

Youth.

Youth ages 15 to 24 also are common users of public transportation. People between the ages of 20 and 24 year are 150% more likely to use transit for daily commutes in Peoria than the average commuter. Moreover, teens and young adults are less likely to own a vehicle. The highest concentration of youths is around Bradley University, however, the youth population is generally dispersed around the entire region. Youth make up about 12% of the working population in Peoria County.²⁶



28 Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B01001: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

2.7.5 Disability.

People with disabilities typically use public transportation more often than those without a disability. Disabled commuters in Greater Peoria are nearly three times more likely to travel to work on public transportation than the average commuter. Some people with disabilities may be unable to use CityLink's bus service and thus rely on the ADA paratransit service (CityLift). Alternatively, people with disabilities may rely on friends and family or TNCs/ private taxis, which can be costly, or limit the places they travel to thus restricting the services, jobs, or educational opportunities they have access to. The areas of Greater Peoria with the highest percentage of people with disabilities are Downtown Peoria and El Vista. However, there is also a relatively high proportion of people with disabilities in northern Peoria and East Peoria, Creve Coeur, and Pekin where the bus service is more limited. Overall, people with disabilities make up 13% of the total population of the City of Peoria, and 12% of the total Tazewell County and Peoria County populations.²⁷



²⁷ Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B18101: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

2.7.6 Minorities.

Figure 20 maps the percent of each census tract that identifies as a minority. This includes the following ACS data classifications: Black or African American alone, American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Asian alone, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone, "some other race alone", two or more races, and Hispanic or Latino – white alone. People identifying as Black/African American in Greater Peoria, are nearly five times more likely to commute by public transit than the average commuter. Forty-three percent of people in the City of Peoria identify as non-white or of Hispanic/ Latino Origin (compared to 30% of Peoria County and 6% of Tazewell County).²⁸ The census tracts in the city that have the highest percentage of people who identify as a minority are located in Downtown Peoria. In general, areas located further away from the center of the city have a lower percentage of minority populations.



28 Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B03002: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

2.7.7 Food stamps/SNAP.

Figure 22 below shows the percent of total households by census tract that received Food Stamps/SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)²⁹ benefits in the last 12 months. Usage of Food Stamps/SNAP may be an indication of limited financial resources within a household. Twenty percent of households in the City of Peoria received Food Stamps/SNAP in the last 12 months. At the regional level, fewer households received Food Stamps/SNAP in the last 12 months, 15% in Peoria County and 11% for Tazewell.³⁰ The areas with the highest concentration of these households are Downtown Peoria and South Peoria, with the exception of a small pocket near Bradley University. There is also a significant population of Food Stamps/SNAP recipients in East Peoria, Creve Coeur, Pekin, and some parts of north and central Peoria including the Golden Acres and El Vista neighborhoods.



²⁹ Source: U.S. Census Bureau: https://www.census.gov/acs/www/about/why-we-ask-each-question/food-stamps/

³⁰ Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B22001: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

2.7.8 Educational attainment.

People with lower educational attainment may be limited in both financial resources and employment opportunities. Having access to affordable and broad-reaching public transportation may mitigate some of those challenges. The highest concentration of people with lower educational attainment in Greater Peoria is in South Peoria and northern parts of Downtown Peoria. Northern Peoria and around Bradley University are the areas with the lowest concentration of people with less than a high school diploma. On average, 11% of Peoria residents over the age of 25 lack a high school diploma, 9% of Peoria County residents over 25, and 7% of Tazewell County residents over 25.³¹



³¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates, Table B15003: https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html

SECTION 3

Service recommendations.

3.1	Microtransit zone selections
3.2	Determining quality of service
3.3	Ridership estimates
3.4	Zone-by-zone simulation
3.5	Prioritization of zones



3. Service recommendations.

The project team identified four potential microtransit service alternatives in the region using the information presented in the Existing Conditions Analysis, the stakeholder input gathered through stakeholder outreach, and the team's expertise from planning microtransit services in locations similar to Greater Peoria.

These alternatives were selected and evaluated using the following methodology:

- Identify high potential zones by selecting geographic areas with transit-dependent populations, key destinations, and/or an absence of sufficient public transit services. These areas are then edited and refined with input from GPMTD and the relevant stakeholder groups. These delineated areas are the microtransit zones that were simulated and further evaluated in subsequent tasks.
- 2. Determine service hours and quality of service targets that will best achieve the goals, as determined by GPMTD and other stakeholders, for each microtransit zone.
- 3. **Estimate demand** by assessing the population, employment, and demographic attributes of

each zone. A low, medium, and high estimate for daily and annual ridership were developed.

- 4. **Run simulations** to determine the number of necessary vehicles and assess the tradeoffs between service parameters.
- 5. **Compare each zone** based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that measure the expected performance of the zone against the goals of the service. This matrix helps to facilitate the prioritization of the zones for implementation.

3.1 Microtransit zone selection.

Microtransit services operate within a pre-defined zone, meaning passengers can only book trips that have both their origin and destination within the same zone. For passengers ultimately traveling beyond the zone boundaries, microtransit can provide a first-andlast mile connection to a longer-distance fixed route bus, however, they will not be able to complete their entire journey using microtransit.

The project team identified potential microtransit zones based on the following criteria:

- á GPMTD goals: GPMTD's primary goal for this study is to improve mobility for the people in Peoria that rely on public transit to access employment, healthcare, grocery stores, and other essential destinations. Secondary goals are to improve transit access in underserved areas and to use microtransit to enhance the existing bus system.
- A Points of interest: These include major employment centers, educational institutions, grocery stores, and hospitals (many of these destinations are shown in Figure 9 of Section 2. Existing Conditions Analysis). Points of interest are considered when drawing zone boundaries to ensure that there are attractive destinations within each zone in addition to demand.
- A mix of employment, residential, and retail: Zones with a mix of residential and commercial areas are more likely to provide trips that are useful to passengers. Different types of destinations and use cases help spread the demand for trips throughout the day and contribute to the success of a microtransit service.
- á Complements the bus network: Zones that include areas with limited bus service can help fill gaps in the existing transit network. Zones that provide connections to transit hubs allow passengers to easily transfer to a bus and travel to or from destinations outside the zone are also more likely to succeed.
- Zone size: Zones that are too small limit the attractiveness of a service and offer fewer destinations for users. However, very large zones are more expensive to operate and may not be suitable for the initial launch given the funding limitations that most transit agencies face.

None of the Grey Area (the urbanized area just outside of GPMTD's jurisdiction) was selected as a potential microtransit zone for this study. While these areas meet several of the above criteria and were repeatedly mentioned during our conversations with the community, the project team excluded the Grey Area from consideration, given the parallel study that was published in August 2021 by Lochmueller Group entirely focusing on solutions for the Grey Area. The report recommends serving these areas with either microtransit or demand-response services.

Six zones were initially identified based on these factors, including two variations of a downtown zone, a northern zone, a western zone, and two citywide zones. After engaging with various stakeholders through focus groups (see Section 4. Stakeholder Outreach), these zones were edited and refined into four zone options shown in the maps below (Figure 23). The four zones are:

- Downtown Peoria zone: The focus of this zone 1. is on improving general mobility, enhancing the existing bus network, and improving access to critical destinations for high-need populations. Initially, two versions of this zone were analyzed: both included South Peoria, downtown Peoria, and the OSF Saint Francis Medical Center. However, one version extended into West Peoria and the area around Bradley University, and the other stretched into East Peoria to cover some significant retail locations. Based on input from the community, it was decided that this zone would include both the area around Bradley University and East Peoria, essentially combining the two options into one.
- 2. Northern Peoria zone: This zone includes Northwoods Mall and extends from Lake Avenue in Peoria north to Alta and the southern edge of Dunlap. This zone is expected to improve east-west travel and includes the area between the Shoppes at Grand Prairie and Knoxville Avenue. This area is mainly served by bus routes traveling north-south.
- 3. Farmington Rd./North Bartonville: This zone aims to improve transit access in an area with few bus connections. This zone also includes access to the airport.
- 4. Citywide zone (off-peak): This zone would provide off-peak service during the evenings "and weekends when the existing bus network runs infrequently. At first, two versions of this zone were assessed, one including East Peoria and one without East Peoria. Based on input from the stakeholders, the project team decided to only proceed with the version that included the retail centers in East Peoria.

3.2 Determining quality of service parameters.

In order to simulate the performance of each zone, there are several quality of service decisions that need to be made. In setting service quality targets, we balance the costs of providing the best service (i.e., short wait times, minimal walking, and few detours) with the costs of running a service. Typically, improving the quality of service requires additional vehicles and/or drivers and thus increases the cost of operating a microtransit service. The parameters selected aim to either match or improve upon the existing quality of services provided by the GPMTD bus service. The main parameters that were adjusted for these simulations are:

- á Service hours: The hours when a customer can request a ride are typically set to either match the existing transit service hours or provide a service during a time when there are no other transit options.
- Stop types: A corner-to-corner service typically requires a short walk to a nearby intersection. This is similar to a bus stop service that also requires a short walk but offers significantly more stopping locations by allowing vehicles to stop near most intersections in addition to the existing fixed route bus stops. Corner-to-corner service also improves the overall efficiency of a microtransit service, directing people to walk to a pickup location that is closest to the vehicle's existing route. Even with a corner-tocorner service, riders with accessibility needs may request a door-to-door service, similar to CityLift.
- Maximum walking distance: The distance a passenger must walk from their origin to their vehicle and from their vehicle to their destination. Longer walking distances will increase the efficiency of the service but result in lower ridership.
- Maximum wait times: The time a passenger must wait for a vehicle to arrive at their pickup location from when they request a ride. 30-minute maximum wait times are considered 'average', but wait times can range from 20 - 40 minutes. Longer wait times are common in rural areas, while shorter wait times are common in denser areas.

Maximum detours: The allowable detour a passenger can experience (measured in both time and distance) compared to the base route (quickest route) between a rider's pickup and dropoff. Detours allow the algorithm flexibility to aggregate rides. The standard detour setting is that trips are not allowed to exceed 50% additional time or distance compared to a direct vehicle journey between the origin and destination.

The above parameters and the average walking distance, wait time, and trip duration for each zone are outlined in 3.4 Zone-by-Zone Simulation Results. While the project team simulated multiple quality of service levels, the parameters chosen for each zone and shown below reflect a balance between costs and quality of service that the project group thinks is optimal for Greater Peoria.

3.3 Ridership estimates.

The demand estimates for a service zone represent the expected ridership that an area will have when a new service is launched. These estimates impact important decisions regarding the size of the fleet and the level of funding required for each zone.

3.3.1 Methodology.

In order to understand how each zone will perform, the project team created a ridership demand estimate. The demand estimates are based on three factors:

- $\dot{\alpha}$ The number of residents living in each zone,
- $\dot{\alpha}$ The number of jobs located in each zone, and
- ά The expected microtransit mode share (the percentage of individuals who live or work in a zone that are likely to use the microtransit service).

Mode share varies between zones and some areas are likely to have a higher microtransit mode share than others. A mode share score represents the percentage of travelers using a particular type of transportation. Thus, microtransit zones with a higher mode share score will capture a larger percentage of trips. We developed a mode share for each zone based on the method described below. In practice, many factors can influence ridership, such as the marketing budget and fare structure. The factors that were decided to have the most significant impact on the mode share for this study were:

- á Existing transit ridership: In areas that already have significant transit ridership, people are more likely to continue using alternative transportation modes. In areas where car ownership and use are dominant, attracting people to try a new service is typically more challenging.
- Zero-vehicle households: People without access to private vehicles are more likely to rely on alternative modes to move around the city, including public transit.
- A Relative poverty rate: Lower-income households are more likely to use public transit as it tends to be more affordable than owning and driving a private vehicle.
- A People living with a disability: Many people with disabilities who cannot drive themselves or afford a private vehicle are more likely to rely on alternative forms of transportation, including public transit.
- Youth (ages 15 24): High school students who may not be old enough to drive or students who may not be able to afford to own a vehicle also tend to use public transit at a higher rate.
- ά Seniors (ages 65+): Older adults also have a

higher tendency to rely on public transit for many reasons, including lower incomes and a lower likelihood of being able to operate a vehicle.

3.3.2 Demand estimates by zone.

For each zone, we developed a low, medium, and high ridership estimate.

- Low: This scenario assumes the service does not perform as well as comparable peer services. While there are several potential reasons for this, the most common reasons for low ridership include poor marketing, a lack of community support, or unforeseen technical or operational challenges that affect the reliability of the service.
- Medium: The medium scenario is the project team's best estimate for the ridership within the first 6 12 months of operation. This estimate assumes that ridership is similar to peer services.
- A High: This scenario assumes the service is more successful than most peers. Common reasons for a highly successful service include strong community support and viral marketing campaigns (often through refer-a-friend campaigns). If the decision is made to offer a free service, this will also increase ridership.

The average weekday and annual ridership estimates for each scenario are shown in Table 6.

Miayakyanaik sana	Estimated weekday ridership			Estimated annual ridership		
MICrotransit zone	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Downtown Peoria	240	390	620	72,000	115,000	185,000
Northern Peoria	100	165	260	30,000	50,000	78,000
Farmington Rd./ North Bartonville	25	40	60	7,000	12,000	18,000
Citywide (evening demand)	130	210	340	40,000	65,000	100,000

Table 6: Ridership Estimates by Zone

3.4 Zone-by-zone simulation results.

To ensure a sufficient number of vehicles and a consistently high quality of service for passengers, we simulated the performance of each zone. A microtransit simulation tool was used to predict how different service parameters, zones, and fleet configurations will perform as real microtransit services. Simulations also enable us to predict various performance indicators such as service productivity (passengers per vehicle hour), average wait times, and average trip duration. The results of these simulations are included on the following pages along with the estimated cost to operate each service based on the costs to provide similar services in Illinois (see 7.1.X Costs for more information on how these estimates were calculated).

Downtown Peoria zone.

Key zone statistics.

Zone size	Population	Pop. density	Employment
13	32k	2.5k	40k
sq.mi	people	people per sq. mi	jobs

Zone design rationale.

- Invest in a high-need area by complementing existing bus routes, reducing the need for transfers, and cutting overall trip lengths for public transit users.
- Address the food desert in South Peoria by increasing access to grocery stores in East Peoria, including the Walmart Supercenter.
- A Provide improved access to jobs, retail, and healthcare resources for residents of South Peoria and Bradley University students.

Expected use case.

- ά General trips (employment, grocery, healthcare, education, etc)
- $\dot{\alpha}$ Off-peak and late-night service
- ά 7% of CityLift paratransit trips could be served by this option

Major trip generators.

ά	OSF Saint Francis	ά	Walmart Supercenter
	Medical Center		(East Peorla)
ά	CityLinkTransit Center	ά	Bradley University
ά	Downtown Peoria	ά	East Peoria Town
	businesses		Centre II (retail)

Recommended parameters.

Service type	Corner-to-corner
Maximum walking distance	Max: 400m Average: 200 - 250m
Maximum wait time	Max: 30 min Average: 13 - 15 min
Maximum detour	Standard detours with average trip durations: 13 - 15 min
Service hours	Monday - Sunday: 6:00 AM - 10:00 PM
Vehicle size	6+ seats

Estimated demand scenario.

Travel patterns are based on the locations of households, employment, and major trip generators. A heatmap of expected origins and destinations is shown (top right). Areas shown in red are expected to have a higher density of demand, while yellow areas are expected to have a lower density of demand. A high number of trips are expected to/from Downtown Peoria and to/from the retail in East Peoria.

Fixed route recommendations.

This zone could enable CityLink to replace or redesign route 13 South Adams that starts and ends within the zone.

Demand drivers.

Transit ridership	5%
Zero-Vehicle Households	25%
Poverty Rate	37%
Seniors	13%
Youth	20%
People with Disabilities	15%

Estimated demand.

Demand scenario	Low	Medium	High	Units
Daily ridership	240	390	620	Passengers per day
Weekly ridership	1,400	2,200	3,600	Passengers per week
Annual ridership	72,000	115,000	185,00	Passengers per year

Estimated fleet requirements.

Demand scenario	Low	Medium	High	Units
Fleet size	4	6	9	Vehicles
Annual vehicle hours	17,500	26,000	40,000	Vehicle hours per year
Vehicle productivity	3.9 - 4.3	4.2 - 4.6	4.5 - 4.9	Passengers per vehicle hour
Estimated cost	\$0.9	\$1.4	\$2.1	Millions of dollars

Reduced quality of service.

(average wait time: +6 mins; average trip durations: +3 mins)

Fleet size	5	Vehicles
Annual vehicle hours	22,000	Vehicle hours per year
Vehicle productivity	5.0 - 5.5	Passengers per vehicle hour
Estimated cost	\$1.2	Millions of dollars

Northern Peoria zone.

Key zone statistics.

Zone size	Population	Pop. density	Employment
25	36k	1.4k	27k
sq.mi	people	people per sg. mi	jobs

Zone design rationale.

- ά Improve mobility in an area with limited bus routes, significantly improving east-west mobility.
- A Provide improved access to grocery stores and retail.
- ά Improve access to the ICC North campus for residents of northern Peoria.
- Create additional transit options for people accessing resources at EPIC (a center for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families).

Expected use case.

- ά General trips (employment, grocery, healthcare, education, etc...)
- $\dot{\alpha} \quad \text{Off-peak and late-night service}$
- ά Coverage service
- ά Commuters
- lpha 11% of CityLift trips could be served by this option

Major trip generators.

- ά Northwoods Mall ά Ep!c
- ά ICC North campus

ά

- The Shoppes at ά Grand Prairie
- ά Walmart Supercenter
 - ά East Peoria Town Centre II (retail)

Recommended parameters:

Service type	Corner-to-corner
Maximum walking distance	Max: 400m Average: 200 - 250m
Maximum wait time	Max: 30 min Average: 13 - 17min
Maximum detour	Standard detours with average trip durations: 16 - 23 min
Service hours	Monday - Sunday: 6:00 AM - 10:00 PM
Vehicle size	5+ seats

Estimated demand scenario.

Travel patterns are based on the locations of households, employment, and major trip generators. A heatmap of expected origins and destinations is shown (top right). Areas shown in red are expected to have a higher density of demand, while yellow areas are expected to have a lower density of demand. A high number of trips are expected to/ from the major retailers and grocery stores in the zone, including Northwoods Mall.

Fixed route recommendations.

This zone could enable CityLink to redesign the northern segment of 16 Northwest Express that is partially within the zone and has low productivity.

Demand drivers.

Transit ridership	1%
Zero-Vehicle Households	7%
Poverty Rate	8%
Seniors	19%
Youth	11%
People with Disabilities	11%

Estimated demand.

Demand scenario	Low.	Medium.	High.	Units.
Daily ridership	100	165	260	Passengers per day
Weekly ridership	600	950	1,500	Passengers per week
Annual ridership	30,000	50,000	78,000	Passengers per year

Estimated fleet requirements.

Demand Scenario.	Low.	Medium.	High.	Units.
Fleet size	4	5	6	Vehicles
Annual vehicle hours	17,000	22,000	26,000	Vehicle hours per year
Vehicle productivity	1.5 - 2.0	2.0 - 2.5	2.8 - 3.2	Passengers per vehicle hour
Estimated Cost	\$0.9	\$1.2	\$1.4	Millions of dollars

Reduced quality of service.

(average wait time: +6 mins; average trip durations: +3 mins)

Fleet size	4	Vehicles
Annual vehicle hours	17,000	Vehicle hours per year
Vehicle productivity	2.6 - 3.1	Passengers per vehicle hour
Estimated Cost	\$0.9	Millions of dollars

Farmington Road and North Bartonville Zone.

Key zone statistics.

Zone size	Population	Pop. density	Employment
12	11k	0.9k	3k
sq.mi	people	people per sq. mi	jobs

Zone design rationale.

- $\dot{\alpha}$ Improve mobility in an area with limited bus service.
- ά Improve access to jobs that are not currently accessible by buses.

Expected use case.

- ά Coverage service
- ά Commuters

Major trip generators.

- ά General Wayne A. Downing Peoria International Airport
- ά Peoria County Jail
- ά Kroger grocery store (Bartonville)

Recommended parameters.

Service type	Corner-to-corner
Maximum walking distance	Max: 400m Average: 250 - 300m
Maximum wait time	Max: 30 min Average: 15 - 19min
Maximum detour	Standard detours with average trip durations: 15 - 20 min
Service hours	Monday - Sunday: 6:00 AM - 10:00 PM
Vehicle size	5+ seats

Estimated demand scenario.

Travel patterns are based on the locations of households, employment, and major trip generators. A heatmap of expected origins and destinations is shown (top right). Areas shown in red are expected to have a higher density of demand, while yellow areas are expected to have a lower density of demand.

Fixed route recommendations.

No recommended changes to bus routes or schedules.

Demand drivers.

Transit Ridership	1%
Zero-Vehicle Households	8%
Poverty Rate	10%
Seniors	19%
Youth	12%
People with Disabilities	12%

Estimated demand.

Demand scenario	Low	Medium	High	Units
Daily ridership	25	40	60	Passengers per day
Weekly ridership	140	230	350	Passengers per week
Annual ridership	7,000	12,000	18,000	Passengers per year

Estimated fleet requirements.

Demand scenario	Low	Medium	High	Units
Fleet size	1	2	2	Vehicles
Annual vehicle hours	4,000	9,000	9,000	Vehicle hours per year
Vehicle productivity	1.3 - 1.8	1.1 - 1.6	1.9 - 2.3	Passengers per vehicle hour
Estimated cost	\$0.2	\$0.5	\$0.5	Millions of dollars

Reduced quality of service.

(average wait time: +6 mins; average trip durations: +3 mins)

Fleet size	1	Vehicles
Annual vehicle hours	4,000	Vehicle hours per year
Vehicle productivity	2.3 - 2.8	Passengers per vehicle hour
Estimated cost	\$0.2	Millions of dollars

Citywide (off-peak).

Key zone statistics.

Zone size	Population	Pop. density	Employment
64	120k	1.9k	84k
sq.mi	people	people per sq. mi	jobs

Zone design rationale.

- Provide additional transportation options during offpeak hours (evenings and weekends) when buses run more infrequently.
- Reduce the need for transfers and long trips across the city between areas without a direct bus connection.
- Provide transportation for shift workers whose schedules do not align with the existing bus schedules.

Expected use case.

- Coverage service
- Commuters

Major trip generators.

- OSF Saint Francis Medical Center
- CityLinkTransit Center
- Northwoods Mall
- Walmart Supercenters
- General Wayne A. Downing Peoria International Airport

Recommended parameters.

Service type	Corner-to-corner
Maximum walking distance	Max: 400m Average: 225 - 275 m
Maximum wait time	Max: 40 min Average: 18 - 22min
Maximum detour	Standard detours with average trip durations: 17 - 22 min
Service hours	Monday - Sunday: 6:00 PM - 12:00 AM
Vehicle size	5+ seats

Estimated demand scenario.

Travel patterns are based on the locations of households, employment, and major trip generators. A heatmap of expected origins and destinations is shown (top right). Areas shown in red are expected to have a higher density of demand, while yellow areas are expected to have a lower density of demand.

Fixed route recommendations.

Redesign or eliminate underperforming routes during off-peak hours. Maintain and increase frequency on key routes; redirect microtransit requests to buses whenever possible.

Demand drivers.

Transit ridership	2%
Zero-Vehicle Households	14%
Poverty Rate	19%
Seniors	16%
Youth	15%
People with Disabilities	13%

Estimated demand.

Demand Scenario	Low	Medium	High	Units
Daily ridership	130	210	340	Passengers per day
Weekly ridership	750	1,200	1,900	Passengers per week
Annual ridership	40,000	65,000	100,000	Passengers per year

Estimated fleet requirements.

Demand scenario	Low	Medium	High	Units
Fleet size	7	11	15	Vehicles
Annual vehicle hours	14,000	22,000	30,000	Vehicle hours per year
Vehicle productivity	2.5 - 3.0	2.7 - 3.2	3.2 - 3.7	Passengers per vehicle hour
Estimated cost	\$0.7	\$1.2	\$1.6	Millions of dollars

Reduced quality of service.

(average wait time: +6 mins; average trip durations: +3 mins)

Fleet size	12	Vehicles
Annual vehicle hours	24,000	Vehicle hours per year
Vehicle productivity	2.5 - 3.0	Passengers per vehicle hour
Estimated cost	\$1.3	Millions of dollars

3.5 Prioritization of zones.

Given GPMTD's limited budget and competing funding priorities, this next section compares the different service zones in order to facilitate prioritization for implementation. Guided by GPMTD's goal to serve populations with the greatest need for increased transit access, the matrix in Table 7 compares each zone across eight different metrics:

- ά Annual ridership
- ά Annual estimated operating cost
- ά Average productivity
- ά Zero-vehicle households
- $\dot{\alpha}$ People living with disabilities
- ά Households in poverty
- ά Prevalence of seniors (ages 65 and older)
- ά Prevalence of youths (ages 15 -24)

In the table below, darker blue signifies a zone that's more in line with GPMTD's goals of serving high need populations and creating a useful and productive service. Based on this table, the Downtown Peoria Zone ranks highest across most metrics. The estimated annual ridership is a measure of how popular a service will be and how many individuals will find it useful based on existing travel patterns. The Downtown Peoria Zone is expected to serve the most Peoria residents. The second metric is the estimated cost to operate the service for one year. While costs are somewhat related to ridership, the two measures are not directly proportional. The Farmington Rd./North Bartonville Zone is predicted to have both the lowest ridership and lowest cost. However, the estimated cost for the other three zones are quite similar. Average productivity represents the number of passenger boardings per vehicle hour. Average productivity, alongside ridership, are two ways to measure the success of a microtransit service. The Downtown Peoria Zone is projected to be the most efficient across all zones, followed by an evening citywide service and then the Northern Peoria Zone.

The final five metrics in the table are related to the populations that each zone would serve. As previously mentioned, each of these groups tends to rely heavily on public transit. The Downtown Peoria Zone has the highest prevalence of zero-vehicle households, people living with a disability, people living below the poverty line, and youths. However, the Downtown Peoria Zone also has the lowest percentage of seniors. The Northern Zone and the Farmington Rd./ North Bartonville Zone have the highest prevalence of seniors, 19%. Across all five metrics, the Citywide Zone ranked in the middle. This is as expected since the citywide zone includes all three other zones.
 Table 7: Zone comparison matrix.

Zone	Annual ridership ³²	Annual estimated cost ³³	Average productivity	Zero- vehicle households	People living with a disability	Poverty	Seniors	Youth
Unit	Passenger trips	Millions of dollars	Boardings per revenue hour	Percent of zone households	Percent of to	tal zone po	opulation	
Downtown Peoria Zone	115,000	\$1.4M	4 - 5	25%	15%	37%	13%	20%
Northern Peoria Zone	50,000	\$1.2M	2 - 3	7%	11%	8%	19%	11%
Farmington Road / North Bartonville Zone	12,000	\$0.5M	1 - 2	8%	12%	10%	19%	12%
Citywide (off-peak evenings)	65,000	\$1.2M	2.5 - 3.5	14%	13%	19%	16%	15%

 $[\]overline{^{\rm 32}}\mbox{Annual ridership for the medium demand scenario with recommended parameters}$

³³ Estimated operating cost for the medium demand scenario with recommended parameters

SECTION 4 Stakeholder outreach.

4.1	
4.2	
4.3	
4.4	

Overview of focus groups Focus group attendees Focus group feedback Survey feedback

4. Stakeholder outreach.

As part of this study, the project team conducted stakeholder outreach through a series of virtual focus group meetings and follow-up surveys. This section incorporates high-level takeaways and notable stakeholder feedback meant to enrich the overarching narratives we gathered. Participants were generally receptive of microtransit as an opportunity for Greater Peoria. Reviews of initial zones were mixed and a few participants expressed the need for transit options outside of City boundaries as their highest priority. Of the zones that were presented, the Downtown Peoria zone received the most support. However, participants were excited for the possibility of a future microtransit service.

4.1 Overview of focus groups.

The project team conducted five, 90-minute focus groups in mid-July 2021 to educate stakeholders about the study and receive feedback regarding the proposed microtransit zones. All focus group meetings were held via Zoom (the COVID-19 pandemic meant that in-person engagement was not possible at the time). Meetings were held:

- ά Thursday, July 8th
- ά Friday, July 9th
- ά Tuesday, July 13th
- ά Wednesday, July 14th
- ά Thursday, July 15th

Each session followed an agenda tailored to address the stakeholder engagement goals described above. All participants were provided with a link to a survey, with the goal of anonymously supplementing verbal feedback from the focus group.

The focus group agenda items included:

- ά Introduction to microtransit as a service
- ά Microtransit study overview and goals
- ά Discussion of current transit system and the transit needs and gaps
- ά Stakeholder feedback on CityLink's current service
- ά Proposed microtransit zones and use cases
- ά Stakeholder feedback on proposed zones

After the session concluded, participants were emailed the survey link, and encouraged to provide any questions, or feedback not shared during the session. The team collected 15 total responses from the anonymous survey.

Survey questions included:

- ά Name one aspect of microtransit service you are excited about after today's discussion.
- ά Do you have any unanswered questions or concerns about microtransit service after today's discussion?
- ά Which zones do you think show promise? Why?
- ά Anything else you didn't have the opportunity to share during our discussion?

4.2 Focus group attendees.

Fifty-seven representatives of local institutions, non-profits, and government were invited to join a focus group session. In total, 24 participants (42% participation) attended one of the focus group sessions.

Name	Organization
Dennis Koch	Bradley University
Norm Griffin	Career Link
Frances Reyes	Center for Prevention of Abuse
Betty Porter	Center for Youth and Family Solutions (CYFS)
Megan Smith	Center for Youth and Family Solutions (CYFS)
Patti Polk	CityLink, Board Member
Don Rulis	Community Workshop and Training Center (CWTC)
Dawn Harper	Empowering People, Inspiring Capabilities (EPIC)
Ann Lading-Ferguson	FamilyCore
Andrew Ngui	Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC)
Anthony Corso	Hanson Professional Services
Philip Lockwood	Hanson Professional Services
Sarah Larson	Illinois Department of Children and Family Services
Sergio Talavera	Illinois Department of Employment Security
Doretha Jamison	METEC Resource Center
Joshua Gunn	Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce
Robin Grantham	Peoria Citizen's Committee for Economic Opportunity (PCCEO)
LaTrina Leary	Peoria Township
Molly Pilgreen	Phoenix Community Development Services
Karen Gayles	Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC)
Eric Miller	Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
Ray Lees	Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
Reema Abi-Akar	Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
Robin Gathers	Upgrade, Non-Profit Housing Corporation

4.3 Focus group feedback. Key feedback.

- Participants commented positively on CityLink's geographic coverage of Peoria and the customer service of bus operators, especially during the pandemic.
- Many employment opportunities, particularly in manufacturing and other entry-level jobs, are located outside of Peoria, and therefore outside of transit's reach.
- ά This issue is especially prominent for employment in the third shift (and sometimes second shift) time frame when the buses stop running after 5PM.
- ά After job sites, the largest gaps in CityLink's service create barriers to access grocery stores and higher education institutions.
- Many residents of South Peoria (including Bradley University students) are forced to shop for groceries north on University Avenue or across the river in East Peoria. South Peoria is largely food insecure.
- d Illinois Central College (with 3 campuses in the Greater Peoria region) is difficult to access via transit, especially for the workforce development training offered by the institution.
- The zones that encompass a portion of Downtown Peoria and some parts beyond it – were the most well received zones, though there were strong opinions to include both Bradley University and East Peoria.
- á Citywide off-peak zones were also favored, though less so than the Downtown Zone. The Northern and Farmington Road/North Bartonville Zones were the least favored for similar reasons of low population or low user density; however, one group expressed interest in launching two zones, with at least one of those zones servicing North Peoria.

Notable quotations.

Downtown Peoria is a great start for microtransit in the region.

 ά "The Downtown Zone has high potential in the south because it's a bit – a lot of a bit – of a food desert in the south." – Group 1 participant.

- ά "The Downtown Zone covering South Peoria makes more sense. People usually get food across the river into East Peoria." – Group 3 participant
- ά "The future of the region depends on a targeted reinvestment in the urban core, so [the Downtown Zone] matches well with that." – Group 4 participant
- á "The Downtown Peoria/South Peoria and Bradley would really encompass a great deal of where most of our clients go for medical appointments, grocery shopping, etc." – Group 5 participant

Microtransit solutions for workforce mobility.

- My biggest concern is there are businesses outside of Peoria that did not accept the bus services and residents in Peoria were spending half of their paycheck to get to work...Or we have low-income workers and they're taking their bike with a motor attached on the highway to get to work. It's that serious." – Group 1 participant
- á "Perhaps employers can provide some funding because employers need employees....These zones aren't big enough. It's not solving a lot of the issues we have." – Group 2 participant
- ά "There are a lot of employers in Morton. We have a large elephant [Rivian] in Bloomington, which is a solid 45-minute drive from Peoria....
 Some companies have done van-share to transport employees. Maybe some of these larger companies can pool their resources." Group 5 participant
- á "[Zone 4] will help North Peoria get to ICC North. It will help a lot of young people get to training programs they need access to... I think there still needs to be a way for youth to get from North Peoria to East Peoria." – Group 4 participant.

Transit-reliant riders are constrained by the current service area and frequency.

- "Sometimes the routes would stop short. For students in job training, the route would stop a mile short of the job site. That's one reason why they would refuse to get on that bus." – Group 1 participant
- $\acute{\alpha}$ "Mainly for my clientele, most of them use CityLink

fixed routes. A lot of them have really long wait times. Clients wait at the doctor's office for hours.... With CityLift, you have to plan three days in advance, so for my clients they would appreciate another alternative." – Group 2 participant

 a "It is easier for folks in Peoria to use our public services. [Our clients] need to access resources after work and they cannot access the location because the buses stop at 5 PM. Remove the [Illinois] River as a barrier." – Group 3 participant.

Figure 25. Which zones do you think show promise? Please check all that apply. (13 responses)

4.4 Survey feedback.

Survey responses echoed similar sentiments shared during the focus groups: communities in South Peoria, Downtown, and the Bradley University area are typically more transit reliant, live in denser neighborhoods, and often low-income. Therefore, the service should seek to service those locations. This is reflected in the highest-voted zones, which include not only Downtown, South Peoria, and Bradley, but East Peoria as well (Figure 24).

Name one aspect of microtransit service you are excited about after today's discussion.

- ά "Potential to help employees who have a hard time getting to work in rural areas."
- ά "The ability to provide cost efficient transportation to more individuals, in more areas, at unpopular times."
- ά "Gives the district the ability to test new areas and potentially serve more customers."
- $\dot{\alpha}$ "Reduced wait times and transfers."

Why did you pick the zones you did?

- á "The bulk of services for individuals who are low income sit within the downtown zone, as do many of the low-income housing complexes."
- á "The zones I selected seem to hold the most promise for microtransit based on both population density and rider base. North Peoria would not have enough need to justify this, however it could easily

be incorporated in the future."

- ά "Those are areas that have employment opportunities but lack public transit."
- ά "This is where most of our clients live and depend on public transportation."

Miscellaneous feedback.

- á "I really appreciated the discussion, and I was so glad to see a diverse mix of organizations represented.
 I hope we can continue to work together to ensure more inclusive transportation for everyone."
- á "I would like more details of the regional smart city/smart mobility activities and initiatives which should, ideally, mesh with what your research is focused on."
- ά "My concern is for citizens who reside in food desert areas."

Mobility hubs are locations where a variety of different modes of private and public transportation overlap,

SECTION 5 Smart mobility recommendations.

5.1	Mobility hubs
5 .2	Connected and autonomous
	vehicles (CAVs)

where several different modes of transportation connect.

5. Smart mobility recommendations.

facilitating easier connections between modes for passengers. The coexistence of various modes in one place allows passengers to choose the method that is best suited for their journey. This section of the report examines the potential for mobility hubs to integrate into the transportation ecosystem in Peoria, specifically in relation to the potential microtransit zones identified in Section 3. Service Recommendations.

5.1 Mobility hubs.

Mobility hubs typically include several different modes of transportation, as well as amenities and infrastructure to support these modes. Common transportation options that are available at mobility hubs include:

- Local transit services (e.g., CityLink bus service) ά
- Intercity bus services (e.g., Greyhound buses) ά
- Rail (e.g., Amtrak) ά
- ά Microtransit (no current service in Peoria)
- Bike and scooter sharing services (e.g., ά bikeshare, Bird, Lime)
- Car sharing platforms (e.g., ZipCar) ά

Typically mobility hubs are located at key transit stations served by at least one high frequency route. This focal point could be a local train station or a bus stop with fifteen-minute headways. A successful mobility hub will connect people between multiple high frequency routes in addition to first-and-last-mile transportation options. Mobility hubs often are located within walking distance of employment, recreation, retail, and housing. Infrastructure surrounding the hub should be walkable and bikeable, and the hub should have ample seating and other features that make for a comfortable and safe public realm.

In addition to providing more mobility options for residents and visitors, mobility hubs can enhance transit-oriented development, encourage people to use fewer single-occupancy vehicles, and further a city's sustainability goals by increasing the utility of transit and shared mobility options by creating functional and convenient links between them. They are also intended to improve the overall customer experience for transit users.

Mobility hubs range in size depending on their location and expected passenger numbers. Some smaller hubs look like a high frequency bus stop with ample covered seating, bike racks, and a few electric charging stations for private vehicles. On the larger end, a mobility hub can take up an entire city block near a high frequency train station, and provide connections to multiple local buses, be adjacent to a large housing complex, have restaurants, outdoor seating, car sharing, lockers, and public restrooms.

The Tri-County Emerging Mobility Strategy 2020 Report identifies mobility hubs as a key tool to improving firstand-last mile connections and expanding transit options in the Greater Peoria Region.³⁴

5.1.1 Sites for mobility hubs.

Mobility hubs are typically located at major transportation connection points that individuals are likely to pass through or near when making trips. These locations may include:

- ά Transit centers
- ά High daily transfer activity bus stops
- ά Park and rides

- ά Route terminal
- ά Major institutions: stadiums, airports, university campuses, employment campuses

When selecting a location for a mobility hub, it is important to consider the current and future landuse patterns in the surrounding areas. Dense areas with a mix of residential, retail, and commercial destinations are likely to deliver the greatest benefits to the largest number of people.

In Greater Peoria, the following locations (shown in Figure 25) have been identified as having the potential to act as a mobility hubs:³⁵

- ά Downtown Peoria (for example, the CityLinkTransit Center)
- ά Northwoods Mall
- ά Washington Plaza
- ά Downtown Pekin
- ά Illinois Central College (ICC) Peoria, East Peoria, and Pekin Campuses, Bradley University

³⁴ Tri-County Emerging Mobility Strategy 2020 Report: https://tricountyrpc.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL_Tri-County-Emerging-Mobility-Strategy.pdf ³⁵ Based on the Tri-County Emerging Mobility Strategy 2020 Report and Via analysis Several of these locations are located within the microtransit zones identified in Section 3, and could significantly increase the utility of these microtransit zones by more easily enabling connections to other modes of transport for those travelling beyond the zone.

Table 8. Potential mobility hub locations

Microtransit zone	Mobility hub location	Comments	
Downtown	CityLink Transit Center	This is one of the most promising locations for a mobility hub due to the density of development in this area. Within walking distance of the transit center is a large number of jobs, on-site daycare center, and bus connections to almost all routes.	
Northern Zone	Northwoods Mall	This mall is likely to be a key destination within the northern microtransit zone. There are a number of major retailers in the mall and it is served by bus routes 3, 5, 10, 12, 14, 16.	
Farmington Road and North Bartonville Zone	No high potential mobility hubs in this zone		
Citywide Offpeak Zone	CityLink Transit Center; Northwoods Mall; Illinois Central College (ICC) Peoria Campus	There are three potential mobility hubs in the Citywide Offpeak Zone. While the microtransit will only operate during evenings and weekends, it is recommended that the mobility hubs are designed to facilitate connections throughout the day (for example, between bus routes).	

5.1.2 Elements at hubs.

A variety of different infrastructure is typically included at mobility hubs to support the use of multiple modes of transportation. This infrastructure includes:

- ά Electric vehicle charging stations
- ά Parking for private vehicles and for car shares
- Bike or scooter share, private bike parking, and other bicycle and micromobility supportive facilities such as repair stations
- ά Seating, tables, and other types of public spaces
- ά Information and wayfinding / signage, including realtime transit information
- ά Wifi and smartphone connectivity
- $\dot{\alpha}$ Bus and rail stops
- ά Kiosks for trip-planning and ticket purchasing
- ά Vehicle pickup and drop-off zones
- ά Bathrooms
- ά Lockers
- ά Retail (e.g., convenience stores, grocery stores, casual dining)

These additional amenities make mobility hubs more than just a place for transfering between modes but an actual destination. The co-location of businesses and transportation options is complementary, attracting people to the businesses and to the alternative mobility modes.

5.1.3 Implementation recommendations.

The process of implementing mobility hubs is outlined below, but varies depending on the different modes and amenities that are incorporated. The recommendations in this section are specifically for mobility hubs that are intended to support microtransit services. The implementation steps are as follows:

Location: Determine the location of the mobility hub. In order to incorporate microtransit, only mobility hubs that are within the microtransit zone should be selected. For hubs that are located at larger facilities such as a university campus, select a location that is easily accessible for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists. Existing infrastructure such as restrooms, safe vehicle stopping points, and bicycle racks can help to reduce initial capital costs. This location should be shown prominently on the microtransit marketing materials and booking tools to illustrate its function as a transfer point and key destination for passengers.

Stakeholder approval: Mobility hubs are often located on or near private business such as shopping malls and universities. Without the support and approval of these stakeholders, it may not be possible to proceed.

Infrastructure: Additional infrastructure may be required based on a review of the Elements at Hubs checklist. Mobility hubs should be well lit and provide shelter from the elements for people waiting. It is important that mobility hubs create an atmosphere where people feel safe and welcome.

Wayfinding and signage: Not only does the installation of signage help passengers to locate their microtransit vehicle and reduce pickup times, it can also help to generate new ridership by marketing the service to potential customers. Wayfinding is also important to direct people to the other modes of transportation and nearby destinations.

Technology: In order to facilitate seamless connections, a technology platform should be designed to enable passengers to plan, book, and pay for multiple modes of transportation available at the mobility hub. A common way to achieve this is to expand one of the modespecific apps (such as the microtransit or bus planning app) to allow additional options such as bikeshare and EV charging access.This app can therefore become the de-facto Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) app for the city.

5.2 Connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs).

According to the Tri-County Emerging Mobility Study, local leaders wish to create a test market for Connected and Automated Vehicles (CAVs) in the Greater Peoria area. By investing in CAV technologies and pilots, the region seeks to attract leaders in a variety of technology industries such as digital mapping, coding and annotation of data. Peoria has a natural advantage as it lies along the "central corridor" of Illinois, a region that includes Caterpillar and Komatsu in Peoria, companies that are leaders in producing autonomous machinery. Implementing CAVs as part of a microtransit service could provide an excellent opportunity to implement CAVs in a useful and meaningful way.

In preparing for a CAV public transit service, it is important to develop plans that factor in the realities of autonomous technological development over the coming years. Despite significant advances in recent vears. CAV technology remains limited in significant ways. Level 5 autonomy - in which a vehicle can operate autonomously anywhere and in all conditions without human intervention — remains, in all likelihood, a decade or more away. Level 4 autonomy - in which a vehicle can operate autonomously under limited conditions without human intervention — is just now reaching infancy, with Alphabet's AV subsidiary Waymo removing safety drivers from certain vehicles in its ridehailing fleet in Chandler, Arizona, in late 2019. State-ofthe-art AV technology today enables Level 3 autonomy, in which a vehicle can operate autonomously in limited conditions so long as a safety driver is present to take control when necessary. Any implementation of CAV technology in the near future will likely take this form.

Though it may be tempting for governments and public transit agencies to wait for more consistent Level 4 autonomy or even Level 5 autonomy before preparing CAV deployments, such an approach could substantially delay the benefits of CAVs to the Greater Peoria region. That's because deploying CAVs at scale will require an ecosystem approach, bringing together partners from the transportation, utilities, land management, and policy realms to craft an environment that fosters CAV development. Moreover, as there are only a small handful of companies developing state-ofthe-art autonomous driving technology, competition for the time, attention, and limited resources of those companies will be fierce. Consequently, CAV services will take root soonest—and deliver benefits soonest—in those communities in which public officials take a proactive approach to building a supporting ecosystem. Doing so will require significant funding and subsidies, regulatory innovation, and support for infrastructure upgrades.

5.2.1 CAV goals.

For CAVs to be successful in Peoria, they need to address real customer needs. While it is likely that there will be an implementation period when the service is of limited use to passengers, the CAV shuttle must eventually provide a safe, reliable, and cost-effective shared transportation service in a location where passengers are traveling. Based on the project team's modeling, the number of microtransit passengers travelling along the route between the Warehouse District and Courthouse is likely to be very low (less than 30 passengers per day). This is because that route is just a very small area within a much larger zone and a very limited number of passengers will be traveling between an origin and destination that are located close to this route.


However, while ridership of the service may be relatively low initially, there are two potential reasons why a CAV shuttle in this area could make sense.

First, investment in this area can play a role in attracting new companies and individuals to the region. Second, as technology improves and the route is expanded over time, the service may become more useful and complete a larger number of microtransit trips.

5.2.2 Potential partners.

One of the most important steps for local authorities is selecting a CAV provider to partner with. There are dozens of potential partners, including:³⁶

- ά 2getthere
- ά Aurrigo
- ά Auro Robotics
- ά AEV Robotics
- ά AutoX
- ά Baro Vehicles

- ά e.GO Moove
- ά EasyMile
- ά ISFM
- ά LM Industries
- ά Lohr
- ά May Mobility
- ά Navya Technology
- ά NexMobi (Peoria-based)
- ά NEXT Future Transportation
- ά Optimus Ride
- ά Open Motors
- ά Softcar
- ά Waymo
- ά Zooz
- ά Ziiko Robotics
- ά Coast Autonomous

Given the highly technical nature of CAVs and the inherent safety challenges associated with operating

³⁶ Autonomous Vehicle Landscape, Marc Amblard, Medium

these vehicles, it is recommended that GPMTD and other local stakeholders invest a significant amount of time and resources into selecting a partner who has the technical expertise and willingness to implement a solution that will deliver the most benefit for the region.

5.2.3 Vehicle type.

While higher-capacity CAVs, including modified vans that can accommodate six to eight passengers, are on the horizon, the leading CAV technology companies are primarily using sedans and small shuttles that seat three passengers. Consequently, the safest assumption for any CAV microtransit service that launches in the near future is that it will be composed of small- or mid-size vehicles that accommodate no more than three passengers. Because of the need to build a deployment plan that is environmentally sustainable, we also recommend selecting a vendor who can provide battery-electric CAVs.



SECTION 6 Funding.

6.1	GP
6.2	Fur

GPMTD current funding Funding a microtransit service



<mark>6.</mark> Funding.

A common challenge when launching a microtransit service is identifying and securing sustainable funding for capital and operating costs. In many cases, microtransit is implemented as an improvement to the existing transit network, meaning it requires additional investment. As many agencies do not have unallocated funds available, one of the first steps is to determine how the new service will be funded. GPMTD's current and potential funding sources are outlined below.

6.1 GPMTD current funding.

GPMTD receives approximately \$35M in annual operating funding to provide all existing public transit services. About 82% of the operating budget is dedicated to fixed route services and the remaining 18% fund demand-responsive paratransit service. Sources for these funds include local operating revenue, local tax revenue, and federal and state funds, as described below:

- d Illinois State Operating Assistance: The majority of GPMTD's funding is from state operating assistance which covers about 65% of the agency's operating expenses (~\$23M per year).
- ά **FTA 5307 Urbanized Area Grants:** The 5307 program provides transit capital and operating

assistance to urbanized areas, defined as an incorporated area with a population of 50,000 or more. GPMTD currently receives about \$3.5M per year in operating assistance from the FTA's 5307 program, which requires a 50% local match. GPMTD also receives capital assistance (e.g., replacement vehicles, replacement radios), which require a 20% local match.³⁷

- á FTA 5311 Rural Area Grants: The 5311 program provides transit capital and operating assistance to rural areas, defined as an incorporated area with a population of less than 50,000. GPMTD currently receives about \$110k per year in operating and capital assistance from the FTA's 5311 program.
- á Taxes: GPMTD has several local funding sources including property taxes (\$2.5M per year), Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) taxes (\$1.2M per year), Social Security taxes (\$0.8M). In total, GPMTD expects to receive approximately \$6M in local funding in FY2022.
- ά Fares: Passenger fares are expected to provide \$1.5M in funding in FY2022.
- Other: Other funding sources include contributions from Peoria County, the City of Pekin, and the City of East Peoria.

³⁷ FTA FY 2019 Section 5307 and 5340 Urbanized Area Formula Appropriations (https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/apportionments/table-3-fy-2019-section-5307-and-5340urbanized-area-formula-appropriations)

6.2 Funding a microtransit service.

Transit agencies can use a variety of different funding sources to launch and operate microtransit services. These sources include local, state, and federal formula funding (similar to what GPMTD already relies on to operate existing transit services) and other federal grant programs, fare revenue, and alternative funding through channels such as t private partnerships and advertising. The sections below describe each of these potential funding sources in detail.

6.2.1 Federal funding programs.

Despite federal resources accounting for only 17% of overall public transit funding in the United States, it can be an important component for launching microtransit services. Federal funding mainly comes in two forms:

- 1. Formula funds that are typically distributed through the states and then distributed to transit agencies based on area population, existing transit service, and other factors.
- 2. Competitive grant programs that are open to transit agencies, as well as cities and states.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) began recognizing microtransit as public transportation in 2016, allowing formula funds to be used towards microtransit projects. Depending on a transit agency's preferred approach, federal funding can be used in different ways and requires different levels of local match. Approximately 50% of 5307 formula funding is allocated based on the number of revenue miles a transit agency provides each year. By launching a microtransit service, GPMTD can quickly scale up the number of revenue miles provided and therefore increase the amount of 5307 formula funding the agency receives.

 Capital expenses: Transit agencies typically need to license the technology to power a microtransit service. Licensing software is considered a capital cost and is covered at up to an 80% match with federal formula funds. In addition, transit agencies may purchase new vehicles to operate the service, which is also a capital expense.

Capital cost of contracting expenses: Some ά transit agencies deploy microtransit by contracting with a private provider to operate the whole service — what some call a "turnkey" solution or "transportation as a service (TaaS)." In this arrangement, agencies could apply the FTA's "capital cost of contracting" policy and receive up to 80% match for half of a turnkey contract's cost — in other words, 40% of the overall contract. In small urban and rural communities (defined as any community under 200,000 in population), the remaining half of the contract can be treated as an operational cost and can receive up to 50% in federal match - or 65% of the overall contract.

Any community receiving federal funds will need to find local match funding to fully support their project. While most communities find their local match in their local budgets, there are some federal programs that provide funding that can serve as a local match or source of additional funding. They include transportation assistance programs from the Older Americans Act and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).³⁸

The FTA 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities program provides formulabased funding for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meet these needs. Both private nonprofit organizations and public entities that coordinate services for the elderly and disabled are eligible for funding. 5310 funding is often directed through a local or regional Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission manages 5310 funding for the Greater Peoria region and distributes this funding among GPMTD and other transit providers.

The **FTA 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas** program provides formula-based funding for capital, planning, and operating expenses for public transportation in rural areas. Other states have used this funding to support microtransit services. Since GPMTD signed an intergovernmental agreement with Peoria County in 2019, the agency receives 5311 funding and is able to use this funding toward microtransit services.

³⁸ FTA local funding match sources: https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/procurement/third-party-procurement/local-matching-funds

In addition to federal formula funding, many federal grants are also available to fund both operating and capital expenses. Below is a list of some of these federal grants opportunities:

- á The Rebuilding America's Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Discretionary Grant: Administered by the Department of Transportation, this federal program provides funding for transportation planning and capital projects (formerly known as the BUILD Grant or TIGER Grant programs).³⁹
- Accelerating Innovative Mobility (AIM) Program: Funded by the Federal Transit Administration, this grant program promotes forward-thinking approaches that improve transit financing, planning, system design and service.⁴⁰
- á Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ): Managed by the Federal Highway Administration for projects and programs that work to improve air quality and maintain or attain the requirements set forth in the Clean Air Act⁴¹. This program is typically administered locally through municipal planning organizations such as the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission.
- Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment Program (ATCMTD): Administered by the Federal Highway Administration for transportation technology including ridesharing and advanced public transportation systems.⁴²

Some of these programs may change with the expiration of the FAST Act at the end of FY2021. In addition to the FTA, federal funding may also be available through the Department of Education, Department of Labor, Department of Veteran Affairs, Department of Housing and Urban Development (Office of Community Planning and Development and Federal Housing Administration), and the Department of Health and Human Services.

6.2.2 Illinois State transit funding.

State funding accounts for 21.2% of transit funding in the United States. However, the state of Illinois

provides the largest percentage of GPMTD's funding, 65%, from the State/Downstate Operating Assistance Program (DOAP) administered by IDOT's Office of Intermodal Project Implementation (OIPI). The amount of funding received through DOAP is relative to each agency's expenses. If GPMTD introduced a new service and increased its operating expenses, it may be eligible for additional funding.⁴³ The state receives transportation funding from a variety of sources including IMRF taxes.

Several states offer transportation grants specifically for innovative transit services, while other grant programs focus on policy objectives, like reducing greenhouse gas emissions or increasing access to jobs. In Illinois:

- A Rebuild Illinois Grant: Capital funding grants for downstate public transit agencies. A total of over 350 million will be distributed over three separate calls for projects. In 2020, GPMTD received over \$16,747,000 from the first call for projects to fund the construction of a new facility for maintenance and operational activities, as well as equipment to improve dayto-day operations. The Rebuild Illinois Grant Program can be used to fund rolling stock, facilities, equipment, and systems.
- Transit Illinois Jobs Now for Downstate Illinois:
 A grant program for the acquisition, construction, extension, reconstruction, and improvement of mass transit facilities which may also be applicable to fund microtransit.

6.2.3 Local funding.

Local and regional funding accounts for the majority of transportation funding in the United States. Local sources include transit fares, local government budgets, sales tax revenues, other tax revenues raised through ballot measures and other mechanisms, and local partnerships. GPMTD receives about \$5.7M annually from local sources for its operating budget. These funds are mainly property taxes. In addition to these existing funds, GPMTD can raise additional revenue from ballot measures and local partnerships.

³⁹Source: https://www.transportation.gov/RAISEgrants

⁴⁰ https://www.transit.dot.gov/AIM

⁴¹ https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/factsheets/cmaqfs.cfm

⁴² https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/factsheets/advtranscongmgmtfs.cfm

⁴³ Source: Illinois Department of Transportation: https://idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/local-transportation-partners/public-transportation-providers/index

Ballot measures.

Transit ballot initiatives provide opportunities for local communities to raise dedicated funding for transportation through voter-approved sales or property tax increases. In 2019, over \$8B in new transit funding was approved in elections across 80 ballot measures, and in 2020 voters approved 13 out of 15 transit initiatives providing \$38B in transit funding. Local funding can also take the form of fees, such as for parking, vehicle registration, utilities, vehicle leasing, rental and mortgage recording fees.

Local partnerships.

GPMTD could partner with key stakeholders in Greater Peoria — from corporations to foundations to universities — to fund a microtransit service.

For example, the City of Birmingham, Alabama partnered with the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham to fund and launch a microtransit program to provide affordable transit in low-income communities. In other communities that have launched microtransit services, employers that benefit the most from the service may support the service financially. Local partnerships can also be helpful in promoting a service or educating the public at the launch of a new service.

Some potential partners for microtransit in Peoria include:

- á Community organizations and nonprofits: Local organizations and nonprofits in Peoria may be willing to help fund microtransit services if they believe it will further their mission and help the communities they work with.
- á Educational providers: Schools and universities may be willing to contribute funding to a new transportation service if it increases access for students and employees. In Peoria, such a partnership could be with Bradley University or Illinois Central College, both of which are located in at least one of the proposed microtransit zones.
- Healthcare providers: Like educational providers, healthcare providers may be interested in funding a new transportation

service if it helps get patients and employees to their facilities. Microtransit services have been used to provide both non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) trips and general ondemand trips on a single platform.

- A Private employers: Private employers may be inclined to support a microtransit service if it improves accessibility for their current employees or helps them attract new employees.
- Technology companies: Distillery Labs and the Central Illinois Living Laboratory, both located in Peoria, support startups working on connected, autonomous, shared and electric (CASE) mobility. As Peoria grows into a CASE hub, these innovators may be interested in partnering with GPMTD in exchange for a testing environment for their new technology or a way to promote what they are working on.

These partners can contribute funding in various ways including lump-sum annual contributions, direct reimbursements for specific trips, or the purchase of transportation passes for particular groups. For example, a community organization may be willing to contribute to a service annually because improving transportation access aligns with their mission. But a university may prefer to support a service by purchasing a set number of passes to distribute to their students and faculty.

6.2.4 Fares.

Fare recovery ratio, or the percentage of operating costs recouped by fare revenue, is a function of ridership, fare price, and operating costs. GPMTD recoups about 7% of operating costs across the existing bus and paratransit network.⁴⁴ Fares for CityLink trips are \$1.00 per trip, \$3.00 for a day pass, and 50% off for people eligible for discounted fares (seniors, students, veterans, etc.). On average, GPMTD collects \$0.59 per passenger trip. For a microtransit service, fares need to strike a balance between being affordable and ensuring the service is financially viable.

The table below shows each zone's estimated annual fare revenue based on a flat fare structure that matches GPMTD's existing fares. The FTA strongly advises public participation in any process that considers increasing

⁴⁴NTD Transit Agency Profiles 2019 (Link)

fare prices to ensure customers are not adversely affected.

Consumption of transit reacts to cost, like other goods and services. This means that if GPMTD launches the microtransit service with high fare prices, ridership could be lower than the demand predictions outlined in this study. However, transit customers tend to be less sensitive to price changes, especially certain demographic groups such as commuters, as they may not have any alternative options available.

Table 9: Estimated fares by zone.

Zone	Expected ridership (trips/ year)	Fare structure	Estimated annual fare revenue	Farebox recovery ratio ⁴⁵
Downtown Peoria Zone	72,000 - 185,000	\$1 per trip	\$72,000 - \$185,000	8%
Northern Peoria Zone	30,000 - 78,000	\$1 per trip	\$30,000 - \$78,000	4%
Farmington Road / North Bartonville Zone	7,000 - 18,000	\$1 per trip	\$7,000 - \$18,000	6%
Citywide (evening)	40,000 - 100,000	\$1 per trip	\$40,000 - \$100,000	5%

6.2.5 Additional potential funding sources.

Below, we outline potential new funding sources for microtransit in Peoria, as well as discuss possible limitations:

Funding source	Description of funding
NEMT trips reimbursed by Medicaid	GPMTD customers that are insured by Medicaid can be reimbursed for medical transportation (e.g., trips for doctors' appointments). Public transportation providers can contract with the state agency responsible for Medicaid administration for reimbursement for eligible medical trips taken by their customers.
Advertising	Additional revenue can be obtained by selling advertising space. These ads can be on the outside of vehicles, either as wraps or rooftop digital screens, on in-vehicle screens, or in the microtransit app itself. Other services have generated funding through naming rights and sponsorships. The contribution of advertising will depend on the type of branding and the number of interested companies.

¹⁶ Assumes the medium demand scenario with the recommended parameters as stated in 3.4 Zone-by-Zone Simulation Results

Greater Peoria Mass Transit District Microtransit Study

SECTION 6

Implementation and launch recommendations.

7.1	Launch process and
	timeline
7.2	Operating models.
7.3	Rider education
7.4	Accessibility
7.5	Service evaluation and key
	performance indicators



7.

Implementation and launch recommendations.

In order to launch a microtransit service GPMTD will need to take several steps to ensure the service is successful. These include choosing an operating model, acquiring vehicles and drivers, selecting a technology provider, and marketing the new service to potential riders. After the service is launched, GPMTD should monitor the service to ensure it meets or exceeds the targets. This section provides GPMTD with a high-level overview of each of these steps and also includes a timeline for implementation.

7.1 Launch process and timeline.

The pre-launch phase typically takes six to twelve months for most transit agencies. Once a service is launched, it should be constantly monitored and improved based on customer feedback.

7.5.1 Pre-launch.

These steps must be completed prior to the service completing its first trip.

ά **Finalize service design:** GPMTD will first need to finalize the service zone(s) it would like to

implement, fleet size, vehicle type, service hours, quality of service parameters, and fare structure.

- Choose an operating model: The two most common operating models are Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) and Transportation-as-a-Service (TaaS); these are described in 7.2 Operating Models.
- á Secure funding: Once the service design and operating model have been chosen, GPMTD can estimate the costs of launching a new microtransit service. Funding can be garnered through a variety of means including federal grants, local ballot initiatives, or partnerships with local companies (see 6. Funding for more details).
- ά Procurement: Depending on the operating model selected, GPMTD will need to procure a microtransit software platform or a bundled software/vehicles/drivers/operations package. If a SaaS model is chosen, GPMTD may also need to purchase new vehicles if none are currently available for the service.
- Marketing and rider education: Marketing is an important step to inform the public about a new service. Furthermore, many potential riders will be unfamiliar with this type of public transit and need to learn how to book rides and

use the service. GPMTD can do this in various ways, including creating a dedicated website for the service, developing informational videos, sharing information on social media channels, and meeting with local community organizations (more information in 7.3 Rider Education).

á Driver training: If GPMTD selects a SaaS operating model, the agency will be responsible for hiring and training drivers. Drivers will need a strong understanding of the on-demand technology, drive safely, and engage with customers.

7.5.2 Post-launch

Once the microtransit service has launched, GPMTD should complete the following steps.

- Monitor and calibrate service: After the service is launched, GPTMD can use the data from the live service to identify opportunities for improvement and adjust the service accordingly. This can include adjusting the quality of service parameters, zone boundaries, or virtual bus stops.
- á Continue to market: In order to sustain growth in ridership, the service should be continually marketed. Fare promotions such as free first rides, referral discounts, and subscription models can also be implemented to attract new riders.
- á Service evaluation: It is also recommended that GPMTD monitor the service over a more extended period of time against a set of key performance indicators set by the agency before launch. A list of suggested indicators can be found in 7.5 Service Evaluation and Key Performance Indicators.
- á Expand service: If the microtransit service is proven successful, it is likely to gain the support of the community and local leaders. With additional support, it may be easier to raise new funds to expand microtransit in Greater Peoria. This can include service in new areas, expanded service hours, or improvements to the existing quality of service with additional vehicles.

7.2 Operating models.

GPMTD must decide what operating model best suits the agency's budget, capabilities, fleet availability, and other requirements. Two common service model alternatives are:

1. Software-as-a-Service (SaaS): In this model,

GPMTD procures a microtransit technology platform from a third-party vendor but provides the services using GPMTD resources, including the fleet, drivers, and operations team. Depending on the solution the GPMTD selects, ongoing service design and optimization, operational support, and customer service may be included in the contract with the technology platform vendor. The advantages of this approach are that GPMTD can leverage resources such as vehicles and drivers that provide other services such as the CountyLink service. The primary disadvantage of this approach is the level of oversight and GPMTD resources needed to implement a new and unfamiliar service, which may (at least in the short-term) lead to some inefficiencies and a higher cost-per-trip than the Transportation-as-a-Service model described below. GPMTD would need to hire or retrain drivers to operate a microtransit service. For the procurement of a technology platform under the SaaS model, at a minimum, the following platform components are recommended:

- ς Dynamic vehicle routing
- ς Passenger aggregation (shared-rides)
- Rider and driver mobile apps, with realtime vehicle tracking and live updated ETAs
- c Support for booking by phone, as well as some form of cash payment for unbanked individuals, etc.
- c Backend administrative tools, such as data dashboards to monitor performance
- c Ongoing technical, operational, and marketing support
- 2. Transportation-as-a-Service (TaaS): In this model, a microtransit vendor provides a turnkey solution for GPMTD that includes a microtransit technology platform, plus drivers, vehicles, and operations management. The advantages of a TaaS solution include potentially lower hourly per-vehicle costs than current operations, as well as scalability, as third-party vendors can typically incrementally increase fleet size and/or extend operating hours more easily than a transit agency. A turnkey approach also ensures the operator and technology platform are configured to work interoperably and efficiently. The primary disadvantage of this approach is the need to rely upon a vendor to

operate and maintain the service. Another potential drawback to TaaS is that GPMTD may have less direct control over specific operational decisions, such as the vehicle make/model, driver recruitment and wages/benefits, and vehicle maintenance processes provided the vendor meets the terms of its service level agreement with GPMTD. However, a well-designed contract may address many of these concerns.

7.2.1 Costs.

A variety of local factors influence the cost of microtransit service, but in most cases, the majority of the costs can be attributed to the drivers and vehicles. The table below breaks down the cost of a typical microtransit service and roughly applies to both TaaS and SaaS operating models.

Table 10: Microtransit cost breakdown:

Cost category	Inclusions	Percent of total cost
Driver	Wages, hiring, training, benefits	30 - 50%
Vehicle	Leasing, insurance, maintenance, fuel, cleaning	20 - 40%
Technology	Software development, maintenance, hosting costs	5 - 10%
Other	Administrative tasks, overhead, dispatching, marketing, customer support	15 - 25%

Depending on the software vendor, there may also be one-time upfront costs to launch the service.

In order to provide cost estimates for each of the scenarios investigated, FTA National Transit Database (NTD) demand-response data was used to provide three estimates of the total cost per vehicle hour to provide a microtransit service. While NTD demand-response data is largely based on paratransit services, these estimates are typically good indicators of microtransit costs, even if the vehicle and driver types vary slightly.

- GPTMD benchmark: GPMTD has a current hourly operating cost for demand-response services of \$53 per vehicle hour.
- Illinois benchmark: The median hourly operating cost for demand-response services in Illinois is \$53 per vehicle hour. Figure 28 illustrates that most demand-response services in Illinois range from \$40 - \$70 per vehicle hour.
- USA benchmark: The median hourly operating cost for demand response services in the US is \$52 per vehicle hour. Figure 28 illustrates that most demand response services in the US range from \$37 - \$74 per vehicle hour.



Figure 28: State and national hourly operating costs for demand-response services, the solid blue box indicates the 25th to 75th percentiles, while the narrow blue line indicates the 5th to 95th percentiles based on 2019 NTD data.

This data suggests that \$53 per vehicle hour is a suitable hourly cost estimate for microtransit in Peoria. This estimate was used to calculate the annual cost estimates for each zone and scenario in Section 3. Service Recommendations.

7.3 Rider education.

The ability to move conveniently and affordably between our homes, work, school, childcare, and healthcare determines our ability to thrive. The transportation systems that enable this movement play such a crucial role in a person's everyday life that any changes to these systems — even positive ones — can naturally be a source of apprehension.

Service changes can be particularly fear-inducing for vulnerable populations, for whom public transit serves as a vital lifeline with no easy replacement. These fears are only exacerbated when there's a lack of information (or misinformation) as to what this new form of public transit really means for the community. Concerns about cost, access for those with accessibility needs and/or lack of technology, service coverage, and more, routinely create opposition to projects before they even get off the ground.

Taking a high-touch and proactive approach to community engagement can not only help to mitigate concerns, but can actively turn those in the community who could potentially be opponents of change into advocates. If GPMTD decides to launch a microtransit service, support from the community is essential, both to ensure a smooth launch but also to set the scene for the continued success, funding, and growth of the service. Community engagement should be a critical component of every stage of the project — from planning, to implementation and beyond.

7.3.1 Pre-launch.

Community engagement should begin several months before launch to allow for the maximum time to incorporate feedback from key stakeholders into the final service design and ensure the community's needs are being met. As part of this study, several key stakeholders were consulted and helped to shape the design of the microtransit alternatives. Starting community engagement early in the process also allows ample time to preempt passenger and stakeholder concerns through thorough education about the service offerings.

To start this process:

 Map out any subcommunities of passengers that may be highly sensitive to changing dynamics or might require a higher-touch approach in order to drive adoption of the new service. Examples of communities to keep in mind:

Higher barriers to entry	Sensitive to changing dynamics
Seniors	Unions (driver unions, call center unions, etc)
Unbanked/Cash preferred passengers	Advocacy groups
Passengers with accessibility needs	Elected officials (City Council, Mayor)
Passengers without access to smartphones	Civic and business leaders
Homeless populations	Major local employers
Non-native English speakers	-

Once key stakeholders have been identified, steps can be taken to preemptively address their concerns. For example, if accessibility is an expected concern, educate customers about the wheelchair-accessible vehicles in the fleet and the ability to book door-todoor trips for mobility-impaired passengers.

- Develop materials that engage with the dialogue around the new service by proactively addressing likely questions. These materials can include pamphlets, mailers, videos, or physical or digital advertisements. The materials should explain the mechanics of the service, how passengers will book, proposed service zone, and proposed cost. Be sure to address how passengers in high-barrier groups will be able to access the service such as including information around phone booking, voucher payment, and accessibility features.
- Speak with advocacy groups, elected officials, civic and business leaders, and major local employers as part of the broader community outreach. While many of these groups were engaged as part of this planning study, it will be important to continue these conversations as

launch approaches. With unions, it's important to map out any contractual disclosure and grievance processes. We strongly recommend maintaining open and transparent dialogue with union representatives and getting them involved as early as possible. Where feasible, incorporate their feedback into service considerations. For example, if drivers are concerned about the cannibalization of existing fixed route services, consider including multimodal offerings in the app to drive first-andlast mile connections.

7.3.2 Launch.

As launch approaches, leverage previously engaged stakeholders to help distribute key information about the service and build a list of other organizations that can be helpful in getting the word out.

These can include:

- ά Libraries
- ά Health centers
- ά Care facilities
- ά Civic groups
- ά Social services

Asking organizations to use their connections can quickly expand awareness of the services. At this stage, GPMTD can:

- Work with these groups to understand which service offerings are most impactful to their unique membership.
- á Offer to conduct training sessions or create training videos for staff of these organizations to get them up to speed, as they often serve as the first line of assistance for vulnerable passengers and can provide an extra layer of on-the-ground assistance.
- á Make it simple for these groups to amplify the message. Organizing materials into a "digital packet" for quick access to all multi-channel marketing assets is a highly effective way to make sure these organizations can easily and effectively disseminate service information.

For passengers who may require additional assistance, first build a list of these users and conduct phone calls to help users to create an account and alleviate any concerns they may have. This will be their first interaction with the service and can impact how much they promote the service to their peers, so it's important to keep the communication open and keep a detailed record of their feedback, both positive and negative.

Post information about the service change as early as possible and in as many places as possible (existing bus stops, on local websites and Facebook groups, etc.) Create an email address, feedback form, or phone line where concerned passengers can call for more information and get help setting up their new account.

The primary goal for the pre-launch phase should be to have as many passengers as possible set up with a new account before day one of operations to ensure that no one is left behind.

7.3.3 Post-launch.

Once the microtransit service is live, the main focus should be to drive growth and continuous improvement.

- A few weeks after launch, hold a retrospective with the organizations and passengers to check in on how things are going. Analyze this feedback to adjust service design or marketing and outreach materials if it's needed. Engaging in regular dialogue with the community can help preempt small issues and prevent them from turning into big ones, understand public sentiment regarding the service, and prioritize new improvements and initiatives.
- 2. Equally as important is continuing to keep advocacy groups and elected officials informed of the success and progress of the service. Share key performance metrics to help drive support for the service. The most effective materials are those that are tailored to the specific interests of each group, so consider breaking out ridership information by the voting district of a particular official, or by demographic data of a particular community an advocacy group works with. The best materials for these ongoing efforts include info sheets, presentations to the city council, and video testimonials.

GPMTD should consider other local stakeholders who may be strong candidates to invest in the service. Civic associations, business groups, major employers, and local colleges and universities in nearby areas might consider buying into the service to help fund expansion or utilizing the service for their own advertising.

A thoughtful and proactive approach to community engagement is well worth the effort to ensure the microtransit service meets the needs of the public, garners broad and vocal support, and even finds new avenues for funding.

7.4 Accessibility.

Any proposed microtransit system must support the needs of all passengers, providing a fully accessible form of public transit. GPMTD should ensure the microtransit service is accessible to everyone, including passengers with disabilities and passengers without smartphones or credit cards. The following recommendations should be considered:

- A For customers with limited mobility: The service should include at least 20% wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAV). This will provide equivalent wait times for all passengers, including those requiring a WAV. To make the booking process simple for passengers with disabilities, the software platform should remember a passenger's need for a WAV, and ensure that a WAV request is the default for future bookings. When a new ride request is received, the system will only assign passengers to vehicles with an available wheelchair position.
- ά For customers with hearing, vision, or cognitive

impairments: Either directly through the app or through notifying the customer service agent at the time of booking, passengers should be able to indicate their disability status. This information can be used to modify the service to better adapt for their needs, whether it's through enabling pointto-point pick-up and drop-offs, concessionary pricing, or notification to the driver to provide additional assistance.

- á For customers without smartphones: In addition to the smartphone app for booking trips, a web portal and phone booking option should be provided for passengers without smartphones or for those who are unable or choose not to use an app. Administrators should be able to easily book on-demand rides on behalf of customers who phone in. For customers booking a trip outside the home, without smartphones or internet access, low-cost kiosks could be set up at central locations, such as the downtown transit center, where passengers can request rides. Finally, GPMTD should partner with community organizations to train workers on how to book trips on behalf of passengers.
- ά For customers without credit cards: Unbanked or underbanked passengers should be able to pay for services with several different options: digital vouchers (purchased in cash at community centers, transit hubs, or other key locations), prepaid debit cards, and — to the extent feasible — cash onboard the vehicle.

7.5 service evaluation and key performance indicators.

In order to assess the performance of a microtransit service, GPMTD should set several targets prior to the launch of the service. Potential targets are outlined in the table below:

Metric	Rationale	Targets
Ridership	A successful microtransit service must attract riders. If ridership is high, this indicates that the service is providing a useful form of mobility for residents.	Depending on the zone selected, potential ridership targets are shown in the ridership estimate table in Section 3. Service Recommendations. It is important to note that ridership will grow over time, so it is recommended that GPMTD allows 6-12 months or longer to build awareness and ridership to these levels.
Efficiency	 In order to ensure the microtransit service is delivering value-for-money relative to other forms of public transit, GPMTD should set targets for the efficiency of the service. Several potential metrics can be used including: a Passengers per vehicle hour (often called utilization or productivity) a Cost per passenger 	Estimated efficiency (passengers per vehicle hour) is provided for each scenario in 3. Service Recommendations. This can easily be converted into cost per trip once the hourly operating costs are finalized. As with ridership, GPMTD should allow 6-12 months for ridership to grow, as the service will become more efficient as the density of trips increases.
Quality of service	 Quality of service can impact ridership. Several possible measures can be collected to measure the quality of a microtransit service: á Average passenger wait time á Average passenger walking distance á Average customer satisfaction rating á Percent of seat-unavailable trip requests á On-time performance at pickup or dropoff 	Estimated passenger wait times and walking distances are listed for each scenario in 3. Service Recommendations. For customer satisfaction, an average trip rating of 4.6 or higher is generally considered good. On-time performance targets should be similar to the targets set for fixed route services. Seat availability should exceed 95%, ensuring passengers can get a vehicle when required.

		1
Accessibility	 Microtransit services are often popular for individuals with a disability. In order to track whether the microtransit service is meeting these individual's needs, there are several possible KPIs: d Customer satisfaction of disabled riders d Average wait times for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) vs standard vehicles d Number of trips made by riders with a disability 	One challenge with tracking these metrics is that GPMTD may not know which passengers have a disability. While it can be assumed that all passengers requesting a WAV have a disability, there may be disabled passengers who are comfortable using a standard vehicle. Therefore, this metric may be best tracked through a survey emailed to passengers, where individuals may self-identify if they have a disability.
Equity	Like other forms of public transit, microtransit can be an essential service for many people. It is important to track whether or not disadvantaged communities have equal access to a service. One way to measure this is to see if the demographics of riders are proportional to the demographics of the community.	Similar to tracking accessibility, GPMTD may not know the demographics of each passenger. It may be best to collect this information instead through a survey sent to passengers, where individuals can self-report their race/ethnicity, income, and age. The trip origin and destination locations can also be mapped and compared to the demographics of the area to determine if trips are originating and/or ending in census tracts with higher than average rates of low-income residents, minority populations, or other demographic metrics.

Provided by

Project: GPMTD Microtransit Study



Listening Session and Champions of Microtransit Meeting

Appendix: Transit Listening Sessions

The Greater Mass Transit Distract (GPMTD) Microtransit study was completed in October 2021. During the study, several stakeholders suggested that it would be valuable to speak directly to transit users in Peoria. This additional task was completed after the final report was prepared, and this memorandum captures the key findings from those conversations. The recommendations from these conversations are not reflected in the final report but GPMTD intends to incorporate the suggestions if a microtransit service is launched.

Engagement Overview

The purpose of the listening sessions was to educate transit-reliant Peorians about the microtransit study and receive feedback regarding a pilot and the proposed zones from the most likely users of microtransit. Muse and Via conducted two, 90-minute listening sessions in October, all via Zoom:

- Tuesday, October 19th
- Wednesday, October 20th

Agenda items included:

- 1. Staff & participant introductions
- 2. Introduction to Microtransit as a service
- 3. Q&A
- 4. Microtransit feedback
- 5. Closing

Key takeaways

- The CityLink bus schedule is too limited both before and after the First Shift as well as on the weekends, especially Sunday.
- The proposed Downtown zone would not enable users to access grocery stores that are inside of Peoria's boundaries. A northward extension of the zone could enable access to Kroger and Schnucks, two popular grocery stores.

- Most regular transit-riders walk long distances (20-40 minutes) to reach either their bus stop at the beginning of their trip or their destination after alighting the bus. Sometimes there are large complexes (such as malls or campuses) with service at only one bus stop that is inconveniently far from interior destinations.
- Many seniors who regularly use the bus are interested in using a microtransit service in Peoria.
- Most participants are interested in a microtransit service and would call for rides using the callcenter option first and the app option second.

Notable Quotations

Getting to work/school using CityLink requires a lot of walking

- "I take the bus to work every day by Bradley Park... it's a long walk."
- "The problem with ICC is the bus stops at University and [passengers] have to walk all the way to campus."
- "As a homemaker, we have to go to different clients' homes, so this would be great for my occupation."

Running errands using CityLink is challenging during nights and weekends

- "The south zones need to extend a little further [north], so that we can get to the Kroger and the grocery store."
- "We still have to go shopping like everybody else. The transportation in [North Valley] should be better than what it is. I'm 67 years old next month and my legs aren't as good as they used to be."
- "If I want to go to the Kroger on Lake Street, [the zone] is limiting me to get there. We used to have grocery stores down here in this area.... Down here in the Valley, it sucks because they took away stores that we used to go to."
- "People need to go to East Peoria on Sunday, to Walmart and things like that."
- "A lot of buses don't get you where you need to go. Buses should be running for 18 hours. Here buses aren't starting until a quarter 'til 6 AM."

Microtransit would serve many seniors reliant on buses

- "Senior homes are in South Peoria. A lot of them would be going to East Peoria but a lot of them have to go to Schuck's and Prescott and Kroeger's."
- "I would like to call and talk to someone," Session 2 participant, on how they would prefer to use

the service.

• "CityLink should make an attempt to get microtransit. It would be very advantageous for senior citizens. This would reduce how far to walk."

Attendees

Muse partnered with the Peoria Citizens Committee for Economic Opportunity (PCCEO) to recruit and register transit reliant Peorians who were willing to share their feedback. Each participant was given a \$50 stipend in the form of a Walmart gift card to compensate for their time with us. Additionally, we sent an organizational stipend (cash donation) of \$200 to PCCEO for their work in recruiting and registering each participant. 16 total guests attended our two listening sessions either via Zoom or via phone.

Session 1	Session 2
1 Archie W.	1 Danny N.
2 Carolyn C.	2 Darlene G.
3 Delores H.	3 Joyce G.
4 Ivy M.	4 Lisa M.
5 Jacole H.	5 Nick S.
6 Michael K.	6 Thelma N.
7 Monica M.	7 Tremaine H.
8 Robin S.	
9 Sincere W.	

Champions Meeting Highlights

Agenda Overview

The purpose of the final 'Champions of Microtransit' meeting was to reveal the final microtransit study results to CityLink stakeholders and board members, engage participants one last time, and share any next steps for championing a microtransit service. GPMTD, Via, and MUSE facilitated this final presentation via Zoom for 1 hour at 4:00 PM on November 4th, 2021.

Agenda items included:

- Staff introductions
- Study methods & processes
- Study results
- Q & A
 - o Audience participation via Mentimeter
- Closing

Session Participants

Arjun Balasingam	Andrew Ngui
Don Rulis	Cindy Loos
Eric Miller	Doretha Jamison
Karthik Gopalakrishnan	Jodi Scott
Reema Abi-Akar	Megan Smith
Ty Livingston	Robin Grantham
	Arjun Balasingam Don Rulis Eric Miller Karthik Gopalakrishnan Reema Abi-Akar Ty Livingston

22 total guests; up to 11 more guests registered but not present or identified *

* MUSE used Eventbrite as the registration host, Zoom as the meeting platform, and Mentimeter as the engagement activity platform. The event link and invitation were emailed out to GPMTD stakeholder contacts and CityLink board members.

Mentimeter results

What's most exciting about microtransit coming to Peoria?



🔰 Mentimeter

We used Mentimeter to gauge audience members' excitement for the recommended pilot. Participants were in favor of the service, especially regarding microtransit's ability to give more mobility options for seniors and people with disabilities.

Audience Q+A

The final portion of the presentation gave the audience the opportunity to ask final questions about the study and the study recommendations. Participants were mainly concerned with service logistics, asking questions such as which organization would handle van dispatch, what percentage of the microtransit fleet would be ADA accessible, and when would a microtransit pilot start. Most questions were too specific to be answered at this point in the study process, but participants seemed eager to hear more about implementation. Overall, there are many local and regional partners, including academic institutions, major employers, social service agencies, and government bodies, that are excited about the addition of microtransit to CityLink's current service offerings and ultimately improving accessibility and mobility for transit-reliant Peorians.