

4.2 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

Public transportation provides people with mobility and access to employment, community resources, medical care, and recreation opportunities across the High Point MPO region. These services are especially important to older adults, students, persons with physical or mental impairments, and those who are economically disadvantaged or otherwise burdened by the high cost of operating an automobile. Nationally, over 90 percent of public assistance recipients do not own a car and must rely on public transportation.

The incorporation of public transportation options and considerations into broader economic and land use planning can also help a community expand business opportunities, reduce sprawl, and create a sense of community through transit-oriented development. For these reasons, areas with good public transit systems are economically thriving and offer location advantages to businesses and individuals choosing to work or live in them. Additionally, public transportation helps reduce road congestion and travel times, air pollution, and energy and oil consumption, all which benefit transit rider and non-rider alike.

RIDERSHIP TRENDS

Despite the benefits of transit mentioned above, transit ridership has been on the decline in most major metropolitan areas and was down roughly four percent nationwide between 2012 and 2017. In North Carolina, public transit ridership fell nine percent in the same period, with about 59.6 million passenger trips in 2017. The Triad fared worse, with ridership down 23 percent in Greensboro, 29 percent in Winston-Salem, and 26 percent in the City of High Point during those five years. Although ridership has declined throughout the Triad in the last few years, it grew five percent in the Greensboro and High Point metropolitan areas over the past decade. Transit advocates argue that transit demands a long-term view, as ridership fluctuates depending on the economy and local factors. Most think the recent downward trend in transit ridership can be attributed to an improved economy allowing more people to buy cars to commute, as well as increased popularity of ride-hailing services.

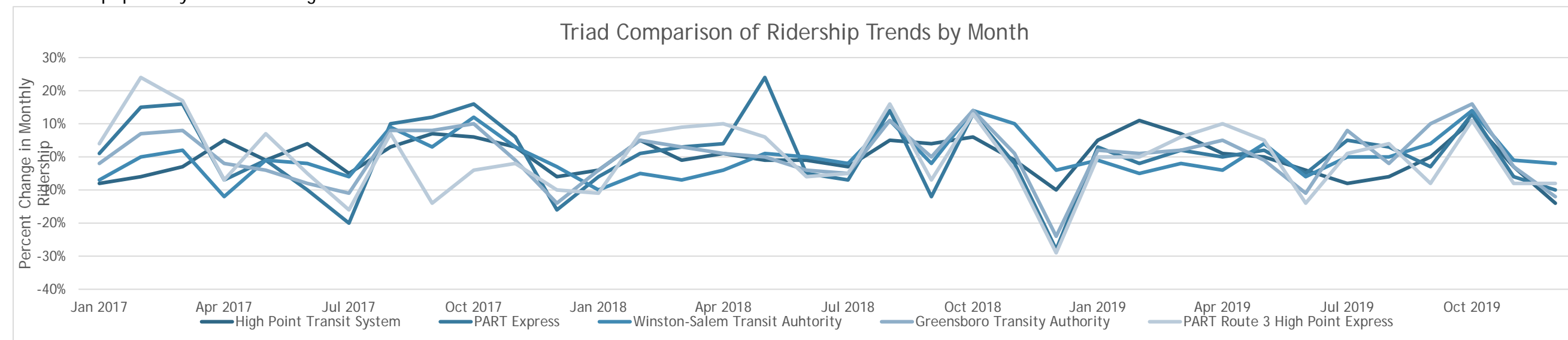


Figure 1 This chart show the change in ridership trends over a 3-year period in the Triad.

## EXISTING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

In the MPO study area, public transportation is provided by both public and private entities. High Point Transit System (HPTS), the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART), and Davidson County Transportation System (DCTS) are the publicly funded bus systems for the study area. Regional Coordinated Area Transit System (RCATS), Guilford County Transportation and Mobility Services (GC TAMS), and Davidson County Transportation System (DCTS) are the publicly funded human services transportation providers. Three transportation providers (HPTS, PART and DCTS) offer year-round fixed-route bus service in the MPO study area. Fixed route service operates under a set schedule, traveling between specific origins and destinations.

## HIGH POINT TRANSIT SYSTEM

A division of the transportation department of the City of High Point, the High Point Transit System is the city's primary public transportation system provider, offering transit service to a city with population base of approximately 112,000. The population represents a diversified community including local residents, commuters, and college students. With connections to regional transit systems including the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) and Greensboro Transit Authority (GTA), High Point Transit System serves nearly one million passenger trips annually. High Point Transit System currently operates 12 fixed route bus routes, along with ADA-compliant paratransit service for persons with disabilities, and non-ADA demand-responsive transportation services. Primary destinations currently served by High Point Transit System include major shopping centers and residential neighborhoods, High Point University, the Jamestown and High Point campuses of Guilford Technical Community College, and downtown High Point.

## GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

High Point Transit System is governed by the Mayor and City Council of High Point. The City of High Point is a charter city with a Mayor-Council form of government. The City Council is composed of one mayor, two at-large members and six ward members. Unlike some transit departments in North Carolina, High Point Transit System does not have a separate advisory board that makes operating, marketing, or other decisions regarding the provision of transit service. Thus, all decision-making rests with staff and ultimately the City Council. The City Council is responsible for approving the transit system's annual operating budget. Typically, the City Council meets twice monthly and is responsible for policy and financial oversight, as well as setting the strategic direction for the High Point Transit System. In addition to the elected officials, a City Manager is responsible for the day-to-day administration of city functions and services. The City Manager's Office reviews and approves policy and program initiatives; oversees departmental programs and budgets; and makes recommendations on all matters to the Mayor and City Council among other activities. Advising the City Manager and elected leadership are a set of departmental directors who monitor staff to ensure services are being provided in a sound, efficient and effective manner. Day-to-day management of High Point Transit System is carried out by the City's Transit Manager, who is subsequently assisted by an Assistant Transit Manager and agency staff.

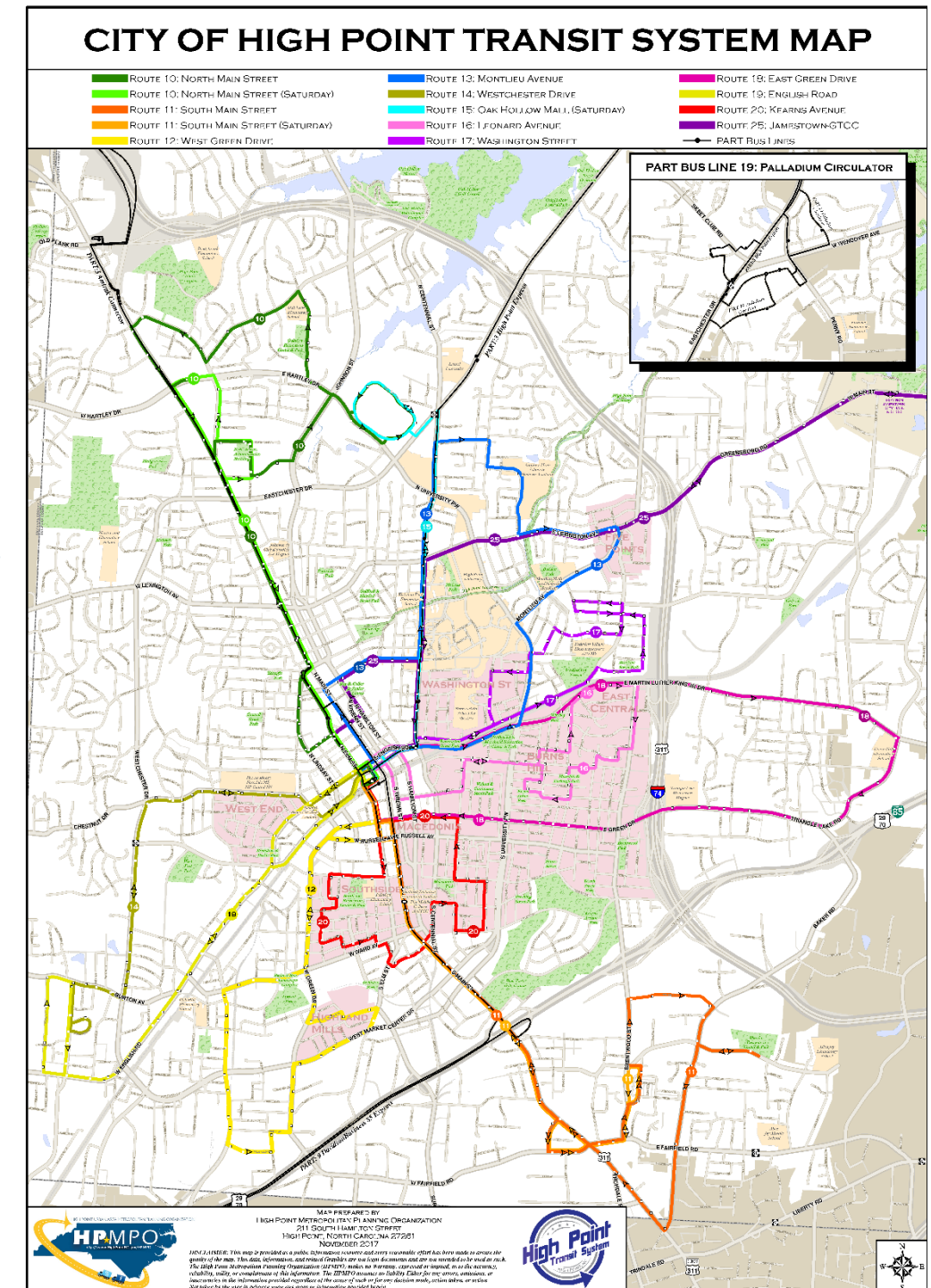
**FIXED-ROUTE SYSTEM**

Fixed-route bus service constitutes the largest element of the High Point Transit System service network. As noted, High Point Transit System operates 12 fixed routes traveling mostly within the City of High Point, with two routes providing service to select stops in the neighboring communities of Jamestown and Archdale. Collectively, these routes combine to offer over 997,000 annual unlinked passenger trips, more than 37,000 annual vehicle revenue hours, and more than 523,000 annual revenue miles. A basic route typology structure is used to classify fixed-route services as either local or limited stop service. All 12 of the routes are considered local routes meaning that they operate throughout daylight hours, providing multiple stops along the way. Limited stop service can provide service throughout a day or during specific times of day (e.g. peak travel periods) and serves stops spaced at greater distances.

The High Point Transit System fixed-route network operates as a radial timed-transfer network, meaning that all routes begin and end their service runs at a common origin. Route patterns are specifically designed to “pulse” from the origin and service return points. The nexus for all routes is the Broad Avenue Terminal in downtown High Point adjacent to the High Point Train Depot. All bus routes converge at this location twice during the hour. Routes operate in either a clockwise or counterclockwise direction, but there are no routes that provide bi-directional service.

**DEMAND RESPONSIVE SERVICE**

In addition to the fixed route service, High Point Transit System provides federally required ADA paratransit service for riders who are mentally or physically unable to use the regular fixed-route bus service provided. Under ADA, High Point Transit System is required to offer complementary paratransit services for eligible individuals who begin and end their trip within a three-quarter mile distance of a fixed-route during the normal operating hours of the fixed-route system. ADA regulations also limit the fares for complementary paratransit service at not more than twice the adult cash fare for fixed-route service. Additionally, High Point Transit System also provides non-ADA demand-responsive service for age-eligible individuals. Non-ADA demand-responsive service is not restricted to the three-quarter mile distance and is offered city-wide. Both demand-responsive services offer curb-to-curb transportation for eligible High Point residents (visitors must demonstrate proof of eligibility for service). High Point Transit System’s demand responsive service is an origin-to-destination advanced reservation transportation service, with an operating schedule that mirrors that of the fixed-route service. There are six cut-away bus vehicles in the fleet. The service must begin and end in the defined service area. If a trip starts or ends outside the High Point Transit System service area, passengers must find a safe place within the service area to be picked up or dropped off to be eligible for the service. The provision of demand responsive service is a challenge as service requests continue to increase and the number of ADA-eligible riders continues to grow in High Point. Additionally, demand responsive service is provided at nearly three times the equivalent cost of local fixed route bus service in the High Point Transit System service area.



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## FACILITIES CHARACTERISTICS

From the perspective of the passenger, the single most important facility in the High Point Transit System is the Broad Avenue Terminal. This facility is located near Main Street just across from the Amtrak station on land owned by the North Carolina Railroad. Renovated in 2013, the Broad Avenue Terminal features indoor, climate-controlled waiting areas, enhanced customer information and signage, comfortable seating, restrooms, and vending concessions. A first-class facility such as the Broad Avenue Terminal makes a huge difference in the public perception of the transit and makes the system more attractive to choice riders. From the operator's perspective, the facility features ten bus bays beneath an attractive wooden canopy structure with outdoor seating and trash receptacles. A separate lay-by area is located alongside West Broad Avenue. This auxiliary facility is uncovered, can hold up to five 30-foot buses, and can be used for temporary drop-off parking. The Amtrak station is located directly across the tracks from the Broad Avenue Terminal and is connected via an overhead pedestrian walkway. Despite the facility's renovation, future challenges face the facility's usefulness. This facility is currently at capacity. Only 10 buses can be under the canopy at one time. Should more routes be added to the system, the only way they could match up with the pulse would be to use the uncovered lay-by bays on West Broad Avenue.

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## OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE FACILITY

High Point Transit System's operations and maintenance facility (O&M facility) is located at 716 Martin Luther King Jr Drive, approximately one half-mile from the Broad Avenue Terminal in downtown High Point. Entrances to the O&M facility are located off Martin Luther King Jr Drive and Chestnut Drive. There are four bays at this facility: two in-ground lifts, one above ground lift, and one tire bay. All vehicle refueling is conducted at the O&M facility, and transit vehicle maintenance and washing are also performed at this facility. Immediately adjacent to the maintenance facility is the administrative and operations control building. This building houses administrative office spaces, dispatch and security monitoring center, operator break room space, restrooms, conference room facilities, and the operations and call center for demand-responsive services. There is additional room available to expand the O&M facility as needed.

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## VEHICLE FLEET CHARACTERISTICS

High Point Transit System's fleet consists of 15 buses measuring 35 feet, one 32-foot bus, one 40-foot bus, six cut-away vans, and seven support vehicles. Buses are diesel fueled and vans are gasoline powered. Each bus is equipped with a bicycle rack that holds two bicycles apiece. The average fleet age is 4.8 years for the buses and 4.7 years for the vans. One bus will be replaced in 2021, one bus will be replaced in 2023, and four support vans will be replaced in 2021. High Point Transit System's vehicles are generally purchased through a combination of funding from federal Section 5309 earmarks or Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula funding, along with state and local funds typically accounting for the required 20% match.

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## FUNDING

The High Point Transit System operates on an annual budget of approximately \$4-\$5 million (after fares and other revenues are accounted for). Most operating funds cover expenses including driver wages, fuel costs, routine vehicle maintenance, and agency administration costs. Funds for capital improvements are used for the purchase of new transit fleet vehicles, stop infrastructure, or building improvements to High Point Transit System facilities. Funding for High Point Transit System comes from a combination of federal, state, and local sources. Federal funds are provided by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), distributed on a formula basis, and account for approximately 40% of all operating costs. In addition to federal funds, State of North Carolina contributions are made to the city for the ongoing operation of High Point Transit System, accounting for approximately 22%. Funds appropriated from the City of High Point general fund also contribute approximately 22% to the operating cost of High Point Transit System services. Collectively, federal, state, and local funds contribute approximately 84% of the service operating costs. The remaining 16% of operating costs are covered through a combination of passenger fares and advertising revenues. The City of High Point funds High Point Transit System through the City's general fund, and as such High Point Transit System has no dedicated funding source other than fares, contracts, and advertisement revenues. Regarding capital funding, nearly 80% of capital expenditures are made using federal funds, either directly appropriated or passed through various state or local agencies. Approximately 12% of High Point Transit System's capital funds are made possible by appropriations from the City of High Point, with the remaining 8% coming from state funds.

**PLANNED SERVICE CHANGES**

High Point Transit System is in the process of implementing new service changes in 2020 or 2021. These changes include two new routes (Route 22: WestLex Connector and Route 26 Northern Circulator), the elimination of three existing routes (Route 12: W Green Drive, Route 15: Oak Hollow Mall, and Route 21: Industrial Flyer), and the adjustment of five existing routes. The proposed changes also include extending service hours, adjusting fare structure, and adjusting fare passes.

**DAVIDSON COUNTY TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

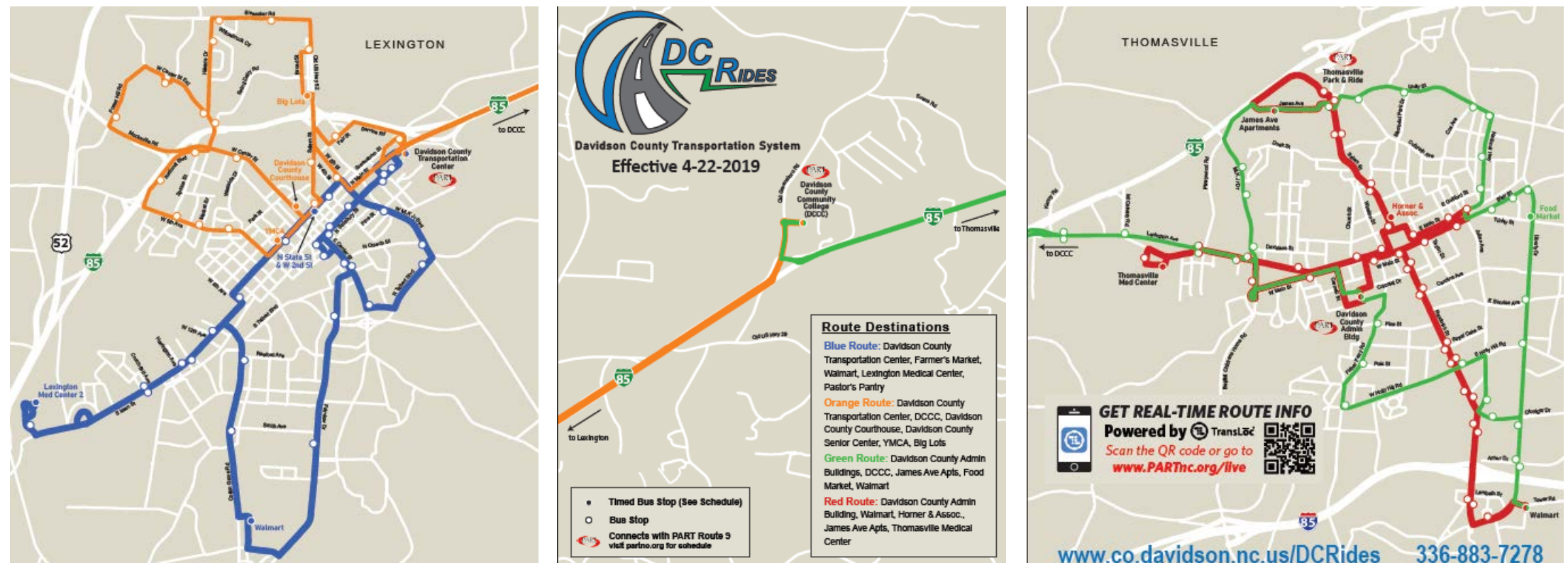
Davidson County Transportation System (DCTS) has four routes serving Lexington, Thomasville, and Davidson County Community College. DCTS connects with PART at the Lexington Hub and Davidson Community College. PART then continues to High Point and connects with the rest of the Triad.

Davidson County Transportation Service is governed by the Davidson County commissioners. A special advisory board makes operating, marketing, or other decisions regarding the provision of transit service that are then forwarded to the County Commissioners for final approval.

DCTS operates seven cut-away buses and collectively combined to offer over 51,000 annual unlinked passenger trips, 123,000 revenue miles, and 5,000 annual vehicle hours in fiscal year 2019.

DCTS service runs Monday to Friday from 6 AM to 6 PM and in Thomasville on Saturday from 6 AM to 6 PM. There is no cost to ride DCTS.

DCTS has one additional proposed route along I-285 and I-85 serving Egger Wood Product employees, Atrium, and other business parks along the corridor.



**PIEDMONT AUTHORITY FOR REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION**

Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation is discussed separately in the PART section.

### OTHER PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

In addition to the transportation providers listed above, there are other transportation services available to residents of the High Point MPO communities. These can most easily be differentiated by type of service provided. There are two companies that offer local taxi service and one company that offers shuttle service to and from the Piedmont Triad International Airport. In Guilford, Randolph, and Forsyth Counties, two public transportation providers provide curb-to-curb demand response transportation services to health and human service agencies as well as the general public, elderly and disabled. Guilford County Transportation and Mobility Services and Regional Coordinated Area Transportation System. The health and human service agencies provide transportation to their specific clientele directly or through the local transportation provider.

### TRANSPORTATION SERVICES RELATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL HOME FURNISHINGS MARKET

Market transportation services are discussed separately in the congestion management section.

### INTRERMODAL TRANSFER POINTS

Intermodal connections are shown in the table below. Park and Rides, which also serve as intermodal transfer points, are described in detail in Chapter 8. The High Point UZA has several major transfer points at which passengers can transfer from the automobile to public transit routes, to intra- and intercity bus routes, and to passenger rail service. It is important to make all intermodal connection sites accessible to both bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as to cars and buses.

Town	Location	Connects To
High Point	Broad Avenue Terminal	HPTS, PART, and Amtrak
	N Main St Park & Ride Lot at Old Plank Road	PART
Thomasville	Hwy 109 & W Cooksey Drive Park & Ride Lot	PART and DCTS
Archdale	Bus 311 & I-85 Park & Ride Lot	PART and RCATS

### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

Several major issues affect the quantity and quality of transit service in the High Point Urbanized Area. The most significant of these are funding related.

### LAND USE

The High Point Urbanized Area includes rural areas to moderately dense residential areas. Currently land uses are segregated creating more need for travel. However, these development patterns make it difficult to serve these areas with fixed route transit.

#### COORDINATING SERVICES

Coordinating transit services improves the performance of individual transportation providers as well as overall mobility within a region. Coordination strategies range from simple sharing of information, to shared route planning, to brokerage systems, to consolidated systems where one agency provides all public transit services in a region. In a brokerage system, one agency serves as a central contact point for scheduling trips on vans run by other agencies. These agencies provide the trips, and then bill the brokerage for the service provided. The brokerage in turn bills funding agencies or funding pools, such as Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF or welfare), FTA funds, etc.

The transit systems operating in the High Point Urbanized Area have been coordinating services to extend mobility, increase efficiency and reduce redundancy of services. The PART Express bus service connects the largest city in the urbanized area with neighboring cities and provides a needed service along the NC68 corridor allowing High Point residents access to an area that were unreachable by fixed route bus service.

The Community Transportation Systems, Davidson County Transportation, Regional Coordinated Area Transit System, and Guilford County Transportation and Mobility Services, all coordinate trips with PART to transport those needing services to destinations outside the urbanized area for primarily medical reasons, but also employment.

The transit systems have also been coordinating services with transit systems in the neighboring urbanized areas. The systems have been working together since 2000 on a shared technology project where they all use the same software for scheduling and dispatching paratransit trips, and route and itinerary planning for fixed route services. The public is able to access information on all possible public transportation options in the urbanized area and the Piedmont Triad region by calling any transportation provider or by accessing the shared itinerary planner on the web. Additionally, Triad systems are beginning to

#### MARKETING AND EDUCATION

Marketing and education activities targeted at promoting public transportation can help increase ridership and should be viewed as integral to creating a successful public transportation system. Public and private transit operators need to promote and advertise their services just as other businesses. In the past, marketing and education of transit has not played a large role in the urbanized area. However, effective marketing of transit can affect the entire future of the service. Transit should be marketed just like any other product, but the task will be more difficult.

#### KEY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

The 2045 HPMPO does not specifically list all public transportation projects in horizon years as identified needs surpass available funds and due to the unique funding structure for transit operating and capital. However, the 2045 HPMPO MTP identifies key projects from local planning documents and capital requests. Local municipalities, counties, and agencies have identified these projects and have coordinated their interactions at the jurisdiction boundary areas.

Project Name	Description	Estimated Cost	Agency
Bus shelters	Install more shelters at bus stops	\$6,000 per shelter	HPTS
Bus stop pads	Install 5' x 8' x 4" concrete pads with ramps for ADA access at stops	\$2,500 per pad	HPTS
Higher weekday frequency	Increase weekday frequency so routes run 30-minutes all day	\$350,000 annually	HPTS
Extend bus service during the week	Add hourly evening service from 6:30 PM until 10:45 PM to include ADA paratransit service	\$380,000 annually	HPTS
Add more frequency on Saturdays	Increase Saturday frequency so routes run 30-minutes from 8:45 AM to 5:15 PM	\$102,000 annually	HPTS
Extend service on Saturdays	Extend service to run hourly with Dial-A-Lift operations from 6:45 AM to 6:15 PM	\$40,000 annually	HPTS
Extend service and add frequency on Saturdays	Extend service and increase frequency so that the bus runs every 30 minutes from 6:45 AM to 6:15 PM	\$132,000 annually	HPTS
Add Sunday service	Bus service runs hourly with Dial-AOLife operations from 6:45 AM to 6:15 PM	\$146,000 annually	HPTS
Replace bus	Purchase replacement bus in FY23 for an aging fleet with high mileage.	\$500,000	HPTS
Bus stop benches	Install passenger seating and mini shelters for low-volume bus stops or bus stops with limited right-of-way where standard benches and shelters are impossible	\$200,000	HPTS
Five Point Transfer Hub	Acquire property and build a transfer facility with passenger waiting area and bathrooms for a convergence of 2 current routes, one forthcoming route, and one planned route away from downtown.	\$1,000,000	HPTS
Operator's Training Lot	Acquire property and build a lot where operators can be trained and practice skills safely	\$1,500,000	HPTS
Transit Maintenance Facility Renovation	Build a 50' x 54' space onto the Operations and Maintenance Facility to include a dedicated parts room, general storage space for large items, and two offices for personnel.	\$750,000	HPTS