



4: Needs Analysis

NEEDS ANALYSIS

When conducting this needs analysis, MARC staff considered the data collected from service providers and riders as well as anecdotal information provided from the in-person workshops. The sections that follow organize this data and feedback into geographic gaps, level of service gaps, capacity gaps, user satisfaction gaps, and information and accessibility gaps.

Geographic Gaps

Most of the region's transit service is concentrated in the urban cores of Kansas City, Missouri, Kansas City, Kansas, and western Jackson County. This makes sense from a productivity standpoint; fixed route transit works best in denser areas with walkable neighborhoods. However, this means the 3/4-mile complimentary paratransit buffer does not cover many of the elderly residents of our region outside of this area. It is important to note that simply having geographic coverage does not mean that the services in that area have the capacity to fully meet demand.

Jackson County

In Jackson County, many of the outlying cities have ended their contracts with KCATA, leaving them without transit service and some cities without RideKC Freedom service. The cities of Grandview, Lee's Summit, Independence, Blue Springs, and parts of Raytown all have significant senior populations that are in this category.

The smaller more rural cities of Greenwood, Grain Valley, Oak Grove, and Buckner have concentrated senior populations without transit access as well. They are reliant on eitas and OATS for transportation services.

Johnson County

The population of Johnson County is primarily located inside the I-435 loop. While there is transit service in Johnson County and Rural areas, particularly in the south and west parts of Johnson County (De Soto, Spring Hill, Edgerton) have limited service options. However, all of Johnson County has RideKC Freedom service available to residents.

Wyandotte County

As mentioned, the majority of fixed-route transit service in Wyandotte County is concentrated in the east in the core of Kansas City, Kansas. The whole county is in the RideKC Freedom service area. That said, residents south of I-70, particularly south of the Kansas River, have a significant unmet need.

Clay County

While Clay County has fixed route transit through KCATA, service is limited to the southern portion of the county, and what service does operate is infrequent. Northern Clay County is served by Clay County Senior Services, Excelsior Springs Omni Bus, and Liberty Access.

Ray County

Ray County is a very rural county and does not have any fixed route transit and is not in the RideKC Freedom service area. The only service provider in the county is Direct Transit, a private non-profit.

Leavenworth County

Leavenworth County has no fixed route services. Senior Express covers transportation service countywide.

Cass County

OATS is the only transportation service provider in Cass County, and covers the county generally, as well as the city of Pleasant Hill with a dedicated service. Other than that, Cass County has very few options for residents in need of transportation.

Miami County

Miami County has no fixed route transit service and very limited transportation options for residents. There are no dedicated service providers in the county. The Paola Senior Center provides some rides to residents with a volunteer driver pool, but they are at risk of ending their services in the summer of 2026 due to funding issues.

LEVEL OF SERVICE GAPS

One of the main limitations of paratransit service and demand response type services is largely the need to book in advance, sometimes days in advance. While this may be suitable for medical needs or regular trips to work or school, it leaves riders without the ability to be spontaneous and flexible with their time.

Additionally, lack of service during evenings and weekends is a concern for many riders and reported gap by service providers. For many riders, this lack of service significantly curtails their recreational opportunities and ability to visit family and friends, impacting their quality of life and ability to live independently.

It was also stated by many that attended the public workshops that the variety of driver training levels and service types meant that people with mobility issues sometimes could not be met at their door and helped into a vehicle. This is due to limitations in liability from service to service and driver to driver, as well as a lack of understanding on the side of the rider as to what type of service they are booking. A standardized driver pool and training levels could help with this, though a number of drivers are volunteers or unable to provide this level of service.

GAPS IN CAPACITY

While there are many non-profits and transportation providers in addition to RideKC services, many report that they do not have sufficient staffing, vehicle availability, or trained drivers to fully meet the needs of their communities. This gap is expected to grow as the Kansas City region's population continues to age and expand further outward into the suburbs. A sprawling, aging population will be difficult to serve and exacerbate the existing gaps in capacity. Increased funding levels are a key component to addressing this gap.

USER SATISFACTION GAPS

Based on feedback from riders and staff at local non-profits both in person and reflected in the public survey, the largest gaps in satisfaction were in the ability to get where they need to go any time of day, any day of the week, and being able to get where they need to go no matter where it is. This indicates that geographic gaps are top of mind, as well as service reliability generally.

GAPS IN INFORMATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Generally, people cited issues with being able to access information about what transit and transportation services were available to them, with most respondents



(58%) in the public survey saying they were not sure if they were eligible for ADA paratransit services. Even though this information may exist and be available for riders, there is a disconnect between the service providers and the riders themselves. It should be noted that many webpages where this information is stored are not kept up to date.

Additionally, transit services in the Kansas City region have been in considerable flux over the course of 2024 and 2025, and this uncertainty is expected to continue into the near future. This flux translates to a confused regional message and understanding of what services are available to regional residents.

Centralized information, enhanced regional coordination, and ensuring agency webpages are kept up to date will be key to overcoming this gap.

