



1: Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

Anyone can become disabled at any time, and mobility becomes more challenging as we age. Access to transportation and mobility services is essential for socializing, attending a place of worship, participating in community activities, and accessing healthcare, employment, recreation and groceries. Without these services, quality of life is severely limited.

This underscores the importance of the Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan (referred to as the Coordinated Plan or CPT-HSTP). The plan identifies transportation issues, service overlaps, and gaps for vulnerable populations including older adults, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals. It also outlines goals and strategies to address these issues.

BACKGROUND

The Coordinated Plan is developed by the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) in accordance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 9070.1(G). MARC is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Kansas City region. This federally mandated plan serves two primary purposes: to direct the allocation of FTA Section 5310 funding and to provide a strategic framework for transit and mobility providers to improve service for the region's priority populations — older adults, individuals with disabilities, people with low incomes, and veterans. The plan is structured around four core objectives:

- Inventory current transportation resources across all sectors.
- Analyze unmet needs through robust community assessment.
- Formulate strategies to fill identified service gaps.
- Prioritize projects for funding and implementation.

This process ensures that investments in public transit and human services transportation encompassing fixed-route, paratransit, and other mobility services, are coordinated, strategic, and responsive to needs identified by the community.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Kansas City region is divided by state, county and city boundaries, making regional coordination essential. The nine county MARC region includes the states of Kansas and Missouri, and the counties of Leavenworth, Wyandotte, Johnson, Miami, Platte, Cass, Clay, Ray, and Jackson. Most of the region's population lives within the Kansas City, Missouri city limits. The region's population centers range from small rural communities to dense urban areas. The Large Urban Area includes Kansas City, Missouri; Kansas City, Kansas; and many suburban communities in Johnson County. The Kansas and Missouri rivers are the region's two major waterways, with Kansas City, Missouri bisected by the Missouri River.

FUNDING

Service providers cite funding as a primary challenge. At the federal level, FTA Section 5310 funding provides most financial support for ADA and enhanced mobility services in the Kansas City region. Local funding, Medicaid, Medicare (Medicare Advantage Part C, limited use cases), and Affordable Care Act mechanisms also contribute, but at lower levels. Section 5310 funds are competitive, and regional needs are growing as the senior population increases.

DEMOGRAPHICS

According to 2019-2023 ACS 5-year estimate data, the MARC nine-county area is home to more than 2.1 million people. About 12% of the population over age 5 report having a disability. Ambulatory disabilities are most prevalent among adults over 35, highlighting a widespread need for accessible transportation. As the 35-64 age group with high ambulatory disability rates ages, pressure on specialized transportation services will intensify.

Currently, 15% of the population is 65 or older, and an additional 19% is between 50 and 64, signaling a demographic shift. Counties like Ray and Miami anticipate particularly high growth, demanding scalable transportation solutions for older adults.

More than a quarter of the region's veteran population lives with a disability, and nearly half of veterans in poverty also have a disability. This intersection creates a distinct need for reliable, accessible transportation tailored to this community.

Transportation barriers are concentrated in specific areas. Wyandotte and Jackson Counties have higher-than-average poverty rates and a higher percentage of households with no vehicle available. This "transportation insecurity" severely limits access to jobs, healthcare, and essential services for tens of thousands of residents.

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

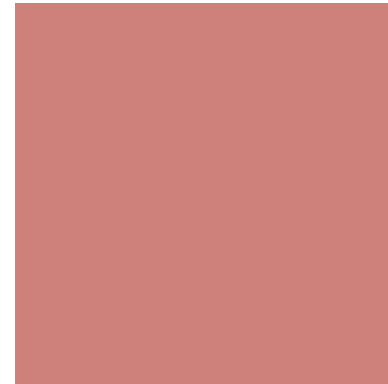
The Kansas City region has the most freeway lane miles per-capita in the United States. Combined with its sprawling suburbs, the region lends itself to transportation by car.

However, under the Coordinated Plan, many individuals with disabilities, older adults and low-income residents may not own or be unable to operate a personal vehicle. Public transportation in the region is served by a fixed-route system operated under RideKC, along with various rideshare services such as zTrip and IRIS. Additional specialized and ADA-compliant mobility services are also available.

Like many U.S. cities, these services are more present in the urban core and denser areas of the region but become more sparse or difficult to access in the rural areas. Service availability also varies by time of day, with notable gaps primarily on weekends.

TRIP ORIGINS AND DESTINATIONS

Origin and destination data helps identify where key populations live and where they need to go. For this plan, origin/destination data was collected using Replica, a third-party web-based platform. The tool integrates sources such as U.S. Census data and anonymized cell phone data to create accurate travel demand maps and datasets. These insights help assess the travel needs of older adults and individuals with disabilities.



PUBLIC OUTREACH

Public outreach is an essential part of the Coordinated Plan. Input from residents and stakeholders helped identify regional needs and informed the plan's goals and strategies.

Throughout the planning process, MARC staff collaborated with regional transportation committees, transit providers, public organizations and non-profits that work with individuals with disabilities and older adults, and transit and riders. Feedback from related efforts such as the Natural Hazard Transportation Risk Assessment and Connected KC 2050, was also incorporated.

A public survey was conducted from late summer through early fall 2025 received 265 responses. The survey was available online and in print, and was advertised and promoted by MARC, Mobility Advisory Committee member agencies, and regional partners. It was available in both English and Spanish.

In conjunction with local non-profits, MARC held three public workshops to engage the plan's subject populations directly affected by regional transit planning. Approximately 50 to 60 individuals attended the sessions, and each workshop was well received by both staff and riders.

The workshops were held at the service locations of the following organizations:

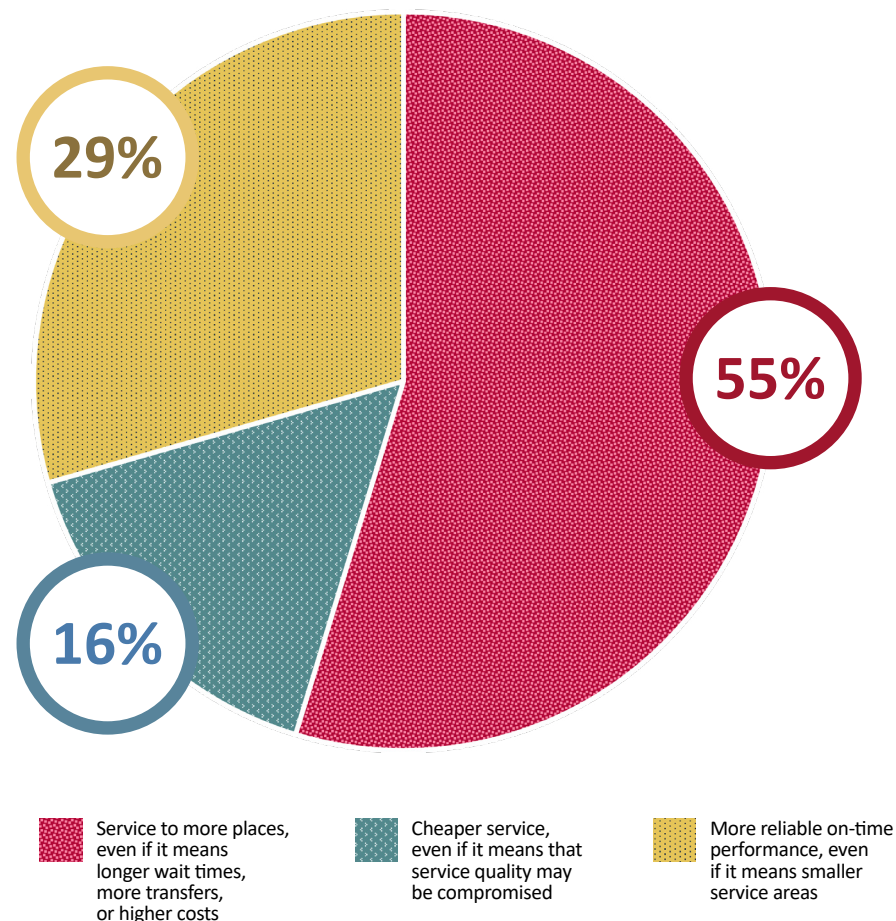
- **Ability KC:** A comprehensive outpatient medical rehabilitation facility that serves people with a wide range of disabilities. Reliable transportation is essential for getting patients to and from their appointments.
- **The Whole Person:** An organization that aims to help individuals with disabilities to live independently by supporting their ability to secure housing, transportation, and employment opportunities.
- **Alphapointe:** One of the Kansas City region's largest organizations dedicated to serving people with vision loss and low vision individuals. They help provide employment, job training and rehabilitation services. Transportation remains a significant challenge for people with vision loss.

Feedback from riders and staff revealed the three primary concerns:

- Riders don't have access to easy-to-understand information, especially visually impaired users.
- Changes to the system can come as a surprise and leave transit dependent people stuck if they purchased or leased a home or apartment based on transit access.
- Riders with disabilities feel deprioritized by changes to paratransit service being combined with on-demand service.

Figure 1 – Desired Improvements Sentiment

Consider each of the following possible improvements and select the one that is most important to you.



DESIRED IMPROVEMENTS

Acknowledging limited regional resources, the public survey asked respondents to identify their top priority among three options:

- a. **Service to more places**, even if it means longer wait times, more transfers, or higher costs
- b. **Cheaper service**, even if it means that service quality may be compromised
- c. **More reliable on-time performance**, even if it means smaller service areas

As indicated in Figure 1, the results showed that 55% of respondents preferred service to more places, 29% preferred more reliable on-time performance, and 16% favored cheaper service.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

MARC staff conducted a comprehensive needs analysis to identify gaps in the Kansas City region's public transportation system. The findings, drawn from service provider data, rider feedback, and public workshops, are organized into five key areas: geographic coverage, level of service, system capacity, user satisfaction, and information accessibility.

The findings underscore the complexity of the region's transit challenges and the need for a coordinated, well-funded response to improve mobility, support an aging population, and enhance the quality of life for all residents.

Geographic Gaps

Transit services are concentrated in urban cores, leaving suburban and rural areas with limited or no access. Counties like Ray, Leavenworth, Cass, and Miami have service shortages. Additionally, many cities in Jackson County have lost fixed-route service, resulting in transportation challenges for their senior populations.

Level of Service Gaps

Paratransit and demand-response services require advance booking, limiting rider spontaneity. A lack of evening and weekend service restricts access to recreational and social activities. Inconsistent driver training also affects the quality of assistance for riders with mobility needs, especially those who need door-to-door support.

Capacity Gaps

Many service providers report being under-resourced, citing a lack of staff, vehicles, and trained drivers to meet current demand. This challenge is expected to grow as the region's population continues to age and expand into suburban areas farther from urban centers.

User Satisfaction Gaps

Riders expressed dissatisfaction with their inability to travel freely, at any time, to any destination, from any location. These concerns underscore the widespread limitations in geographic coverage and service hours.

Information and Accessibility Gaps

A disconnect exists between available services and public awareness. Over half of survey respondents were unsure of their eligibility for ADA paratransit, and outdated or unclear information confuses residents, a problem exacerbated by recent and ongoing service changes.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The goals and strategies in this plan build on those from the previous version. MARC staff developed the updated framework through public surveys and workshops, and by reviewing coordinated plans from peer and aspirational regions identified in MARC's Peer Regions Transit Report¹. Additional guidance came from other relevant MARC plans.

The Mobility Advisory Committee went through a series of revisions to the goals and their accompanying implementation strategies. The following six goals and their strategies were adopted by the committee and are listed in Table 1 on the following page.

1. [Peer Regions Transit Report, MARC, 2024](#)

Table 1 – Coordinated Plan Goals and Strategies



Maintain existing regional mobility service levels

Ensure that existing service levels are maintained by replacing vehicles past their useful life

Ensure that existing service levels are maintained by sustaining funding levels for subsidized fare programs

Secure sustainable funding partnerships. Eligible project examples: Vehicle replacement, subsidized program continuation



Expand regional mobility service levels

Expand service hours into nights, early mornings, or increase service frequency and/or responsiveness, including weekends

Expand level of service from curb-to-curb to door-to-door, door-through-door, or beyond

Expand the types of trips that are eligible for service populations (e.g. work-based trips, recreational trips, utilitarian trips such as grocery stores and pharmacies, etc.)

Leverage partnerships to reduce duplication

Expand days of service, including weekends

Improve administrative efficiency through mobility management and coordination to improve cross-jurisdictional transportation. Eligible Project Examples: Expanding hours, days, or geographic coverage; improving inter-regional travel; enhancing levels of service



Improve the quality and accessibility of information to the public

Continue to improve the region's One-Call/One-Click capabilities

Ensure and regularly test ADA accessibility and intuitiveness of mobile apps and web information

Improve administrative efficiency through mobility management to reduce the complexity of information being conveyed to the public

Publicize and market changes to existing services, service expansions, and/or the introduction of new services

Engage transportation-disadvantaged populations directly to improve our knowledge of what they need

Utilize data to make informed decisions about enhanced mobility services

Establish regional service standards

Ensure that all service providers are equipped with data tracking capabilities

Ensure that service providers are coordinating with MARC staff to map, analyze, and publicize service areas, trends, and network gaps. Eligible Project Examples: Marketing materials, mobility management, one-call/one-click functionality, data resources

Table 1 – Coordinated Plan Goals and Strategies (cont...)



Bridge gaps in the built environment to improve network accessibility

Construct ADA-accessible infrastructure to improve safety and accessibility of transit facilities

As on-demand services propagate, it will be important to consider how destinations beyond transit facilities are made accessible, including integrating universal design principles into local development policies across the region

Support the implementation of Smart Moves 3.0 recommendations, including mobility hubs and active transportation infrastructure. Eligible project examples: ADA sidewalks, curb cuts, crosswalk signals, other built environment improvements



Integrate and coordinate related planning efforts, communications, initiatives and programs

Ensure accessibility needs of older adults and people with disabilities are considered through other transportation planning efforts and initiatives, such as the Smart Moves regional transit plan, local land use development regulations, ADA implementation programs, universal design principles in the development of application-based solutions, etc.

Support efforts to secure new sources of funding to support investment in capital and operating costs of the transportation system, including fixed- route services, ADA paratransit and non-ADA special transportation services

Leverage and strengthen partnerships to improve cross-jurisdictional, cross-sector collaboration and coordination amongst public, private and non-profit sectors



Support regional transportation goals

Support programs which allow for purchase of low and no-emission vehicles for public and private fleets

Encourage transportation providers to offer charging facilities for low and no-emissions vehicles

Provide educational programs on the benefits and convenience of fleet electrification

Support new and innovative transportation services, facilities and technologies to ensure safe and efficient travel for people and goods

Collaborate with local governments to create mobility hubs in key areas where transportation options come together. Make it easy to access and switch between bikes, buses, micro transit, rental cars, ride-hailing services and other modes and services

Support digital applications to enhance safety, accessibility and real-time information about the regional transportation system