



Wichita Transit Network Redesign

Executive Summary

MARCH 2025



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Wichita Transit

Wichita Transit, established as a city department in 1962, provides city-wide fixed-route and complementary ADA paratransit services. It is dedicated to building and operating a sustainable public transit system that provides safe, reliable, customer-friendly, and efficient mobility for all people while supporting the growth, environmental, and economic development goals of the community.

The Wichita Transit fixed-route bus system consists of seventeen routes terminating at the Downtown Transit Center, two crosstown routes operating along Oliver Avenue and Rock Road that do not serve downtown, and two Wichita State University campus circulator routes.

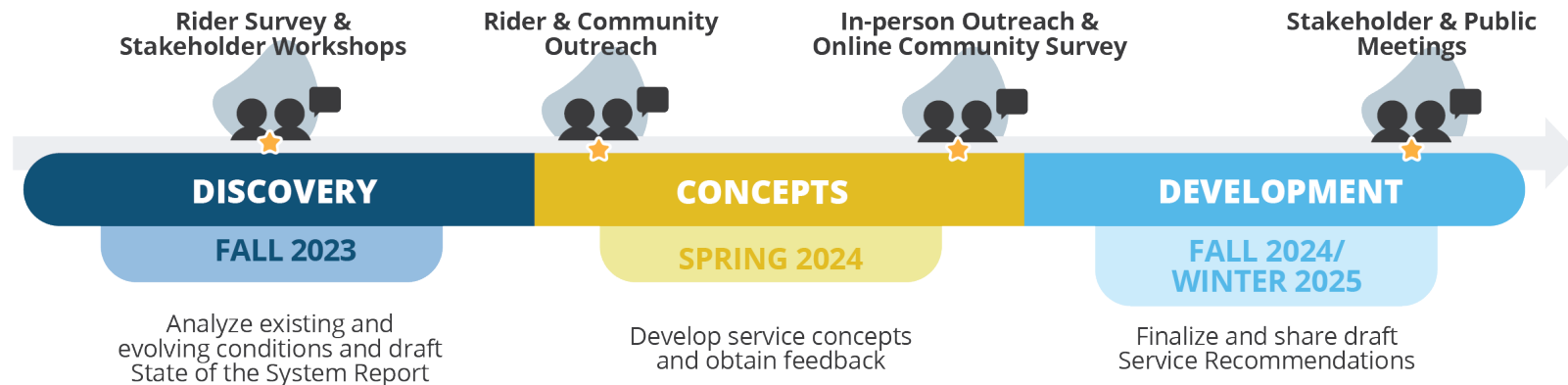
Wichita Transit paratransit is an on-demand, curb-to-curb, shared-ride service for riders with qualifying disabilities.

Wichita Transit had an operating annual budget of approximately \$13.7 million in 2023. Bus service accounts for approximately 80% of the annual operating budget, while paratransit service accounts for approximately 20%.

Network Plan

Wichita Transit periodically conducts comprehensive systemwide analyses to review existing conditions, identify unmet needs, and develop an implementation plan for optimizing and expanding its transit system. The Network Plan will guide Wichita Transit's service improvements and investments over the next decade.

PROJECT TIMELINE



The **Discovery** phase of this project included a comprehensive analysis and understanding of Wichita Transit’s current fixed-route network and complementary ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) paratransit service. This comprehensive analysis consisted of analyzing ridership trends, service availability by route, network connectivity, agency resources (e.g., service hours and peak vehicles), and supporting capital facilities. Detailed profiles for each fixed route were developed to analyze a wide range of characteristics including a description of the route alignment, ridership activity (informed by Automatic Passenger Counter (APC) data), route productivity, and on-time performance statistics.

The **Concepts** phase of this project included developing a range of short-, mid-, and long-term service concepts; capital and infrastructure requirements; and an accompanying service plan. Several service planning and design principles were considered during service concept development, including route re-alignment, schedule coordination, service span and frequency revision, service pattern variations, and service expansion (i.e., new routes). Detailed service investments and financial assumptions were also included as part of this task using Via Remix Software.

The final phase of the project, the **Development** phase, consists of drafting a compilation of the analyses conducted throughout the project and presenting final service recommendations which are presented within this report. While this report summarizes recommendations made in other tasks, there is a specific focus on fiscal implications of the proposed service recommendations that include developing funding strategies and summarizing available resources and funding expenditures.

KEY PROJECT GOALS



Analyze the physical and social elements of Wichita's urban environment.

Before examining transit conditions, the project team will review existing land use, infrastructure, demographics, socioeconomic characteristics, neighborhoods, activity centers, development trends, and travel patterns.



Gain a comprehensive understanding of Wichita Transit.

A thorough examination of route alignments and schedules; the inventory of existing fleet and facilities; and the funding structure will provide a strong foundation for evaluating system performance.



Evaluate ridership, utilization, efficiency, and reliability.

Ridership and utilization metrics will provide insight into how transit demand varies by time and location. Analysis of route schedules and on-time performance will identify opportunities to increase service efficiency and reliability.



Engage riders, non-riders, staff, and stakeholders.

The Wichita Transit Network Plan will include robust community engagement to ensure input and direction from transit riders, non-riders, stakeholders, front-line staff, management, and elected officials.



Develop a plan to improve and expand transit service.

The project team will synthesize analysis findings, community input, and best practices to develop a plan to optimize the transit network to meet current and future needs.

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths

Wichita Transit provides extensive coverage across the city, serving most major corridors and destinations. Most bus routes connect at the Downtown Transit Center and several routes serve Wichita State University campuses, most notably the main campus.



Coverage throughout Wichita



Most routes serve downtown



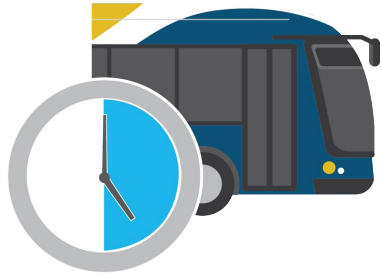
Robust service to Wichita State University



High ridership to major activity centers

Opportunities

Wichita Transit routes run infrequently, end early in the evening, and do not operate on Sunday. The hub-and-spoke design of the route network forces many riders to detour through a central hub to transfer, significantly increasing their travel times.



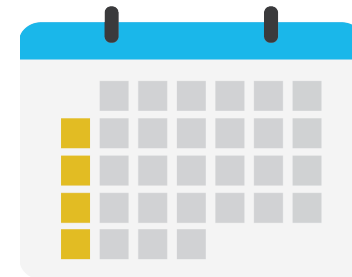
More frequent service



Later service



More crosstown routes



Sunday service

Rider Characteristics

More than 40% of Wichita Transit riders transfer routes to arrive at their destination, with over half using the Downtown Transit Center to transfer during their trips. Trips primarily serve work and home, each accounting for about 25% of ridership. While riders generally express satisfaction with bus safety and cleanliness, they are least satisfied with service frequency, hours of operation, and comfort at bus stops.

One-quarter of bus trips are to work



9% of riders take the bus to high school or college



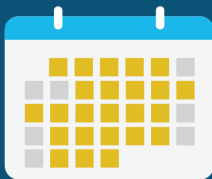
20% of riders take the bus for shopping and medical appointments



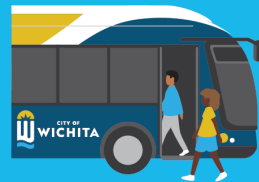
More than one-third of riders transfer between routes



More than half of all riders ride the bus 5-6 days a week



Nearly half of all riders have been using Wichita Transit for 2 or more years



Most riders are satisfied with bus safety and cleanliness

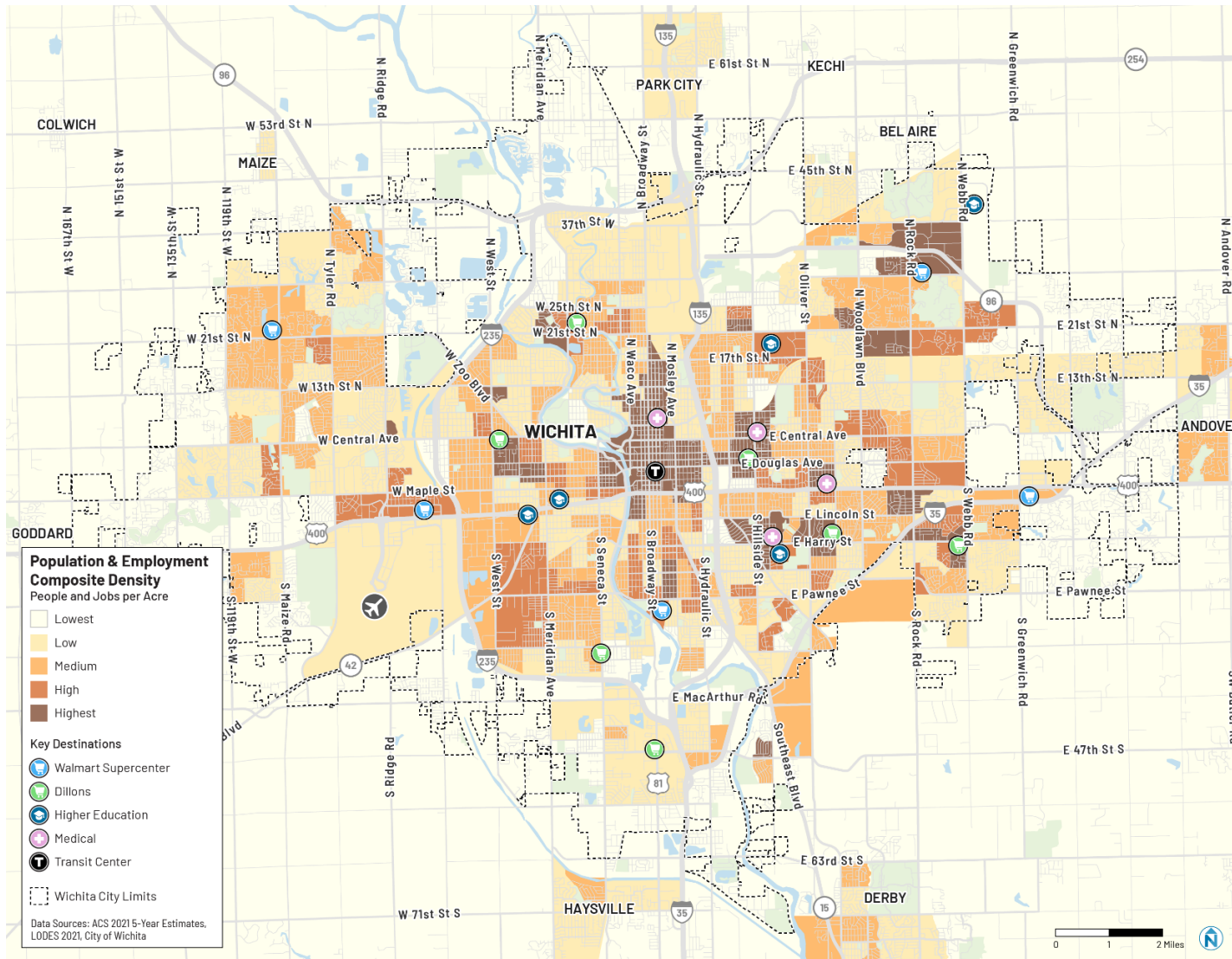


Riders are least satisfied with the hours of service and comfort of bus stops



Strongest Markets

Transit ridership reflects both the demand for transit and the appeal of the service. Areas with the strongest transit markets include South Central and Downtown Wichita, as well as sectors near Wichita State University, Hillside & Lincoln Street, and Webb Road & Harry Street.



Community Feedback

Rider and stakeholder engagement conducted between January 2024 and January 2025 provides insight into the community's needs and preferences, including the following:

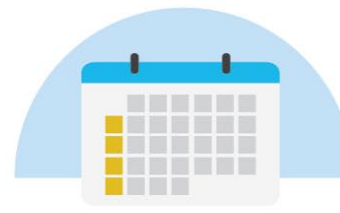
- Need for **extended service hours**, frequency, and more service days; making it easier for the community to use public transit and increasing the attractiveness of the service.
- Desire for additional **crosstown routes**; increasing connectivity across the city, making it easier for passengers to reach their destinations without the need for lengthy transfers.
- Support for **shuttles serving employment centers** and the airport; facilitating access to jobs and travel.
- Improve **rider information and technology**; increasing user friendliness, accessibility, and helping riders navigate the system with ease and confidence.
- Prioritize **retaining younger passengers**; providing a key mobility option for a group that often lacks vehicle access.
- Maintaining **affordable transit options**; ensuring that public transportation remains accessible to all.
- Enhancing **multimodal connections**; helping create a seamless travel experience.
- Including local artwork in transit facilities and buses; enriching the community's **cultural identity** while making transit spaces more inviting and reflective of local heritage.
- Taking **regional growth** into account in future planning; ensuring that the transit system remains relevant and efficient.



More frequent
service



Later service



Sunday service

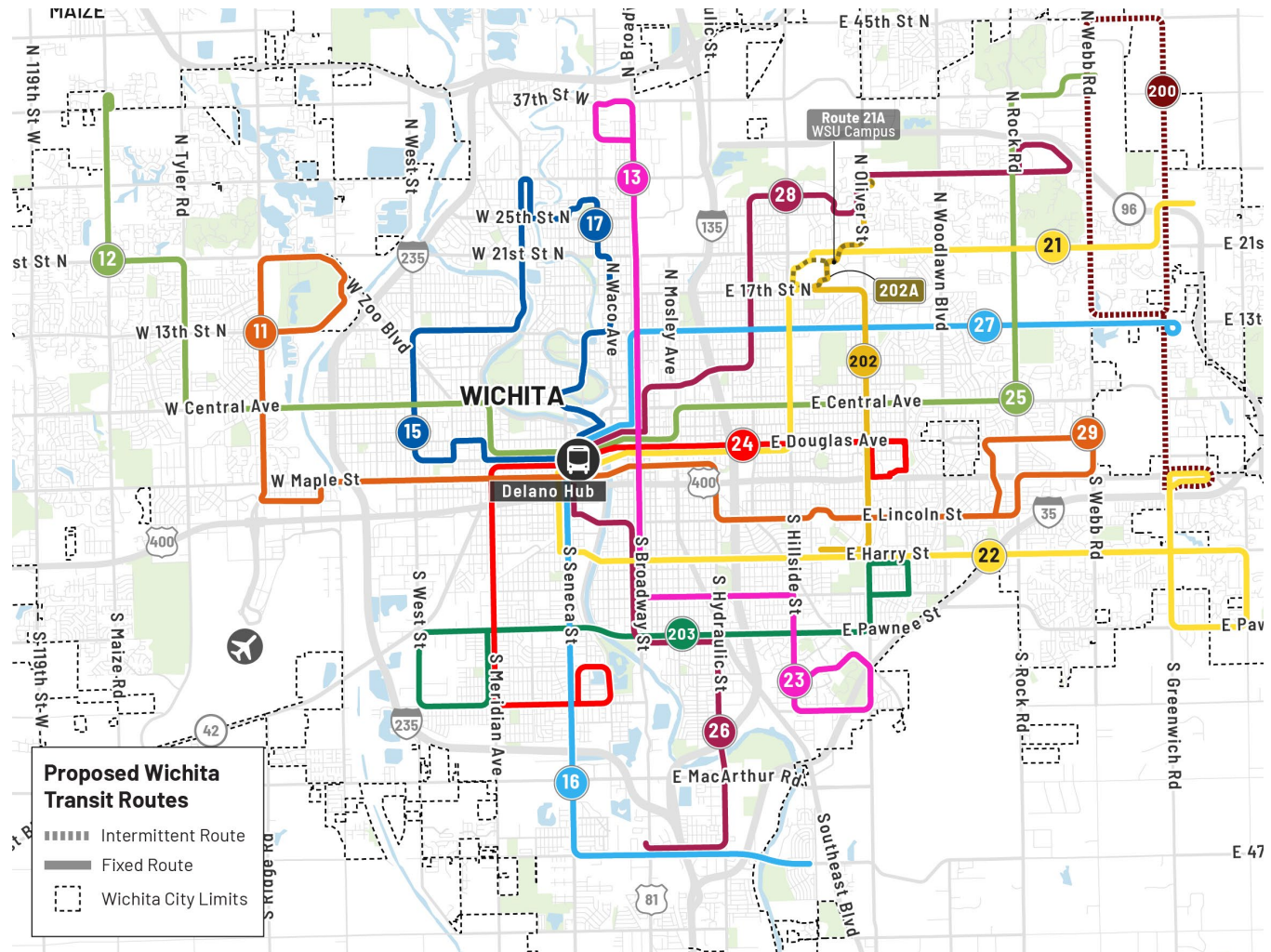


Crosstown service

PROPOSED SERVICE RECOMMENDATIONS

After several rounds of service and market analysis and public engagement, key recommendations were devised to improve transit service. This chapter provides a detailed service plan for transit in the City of Wichita.

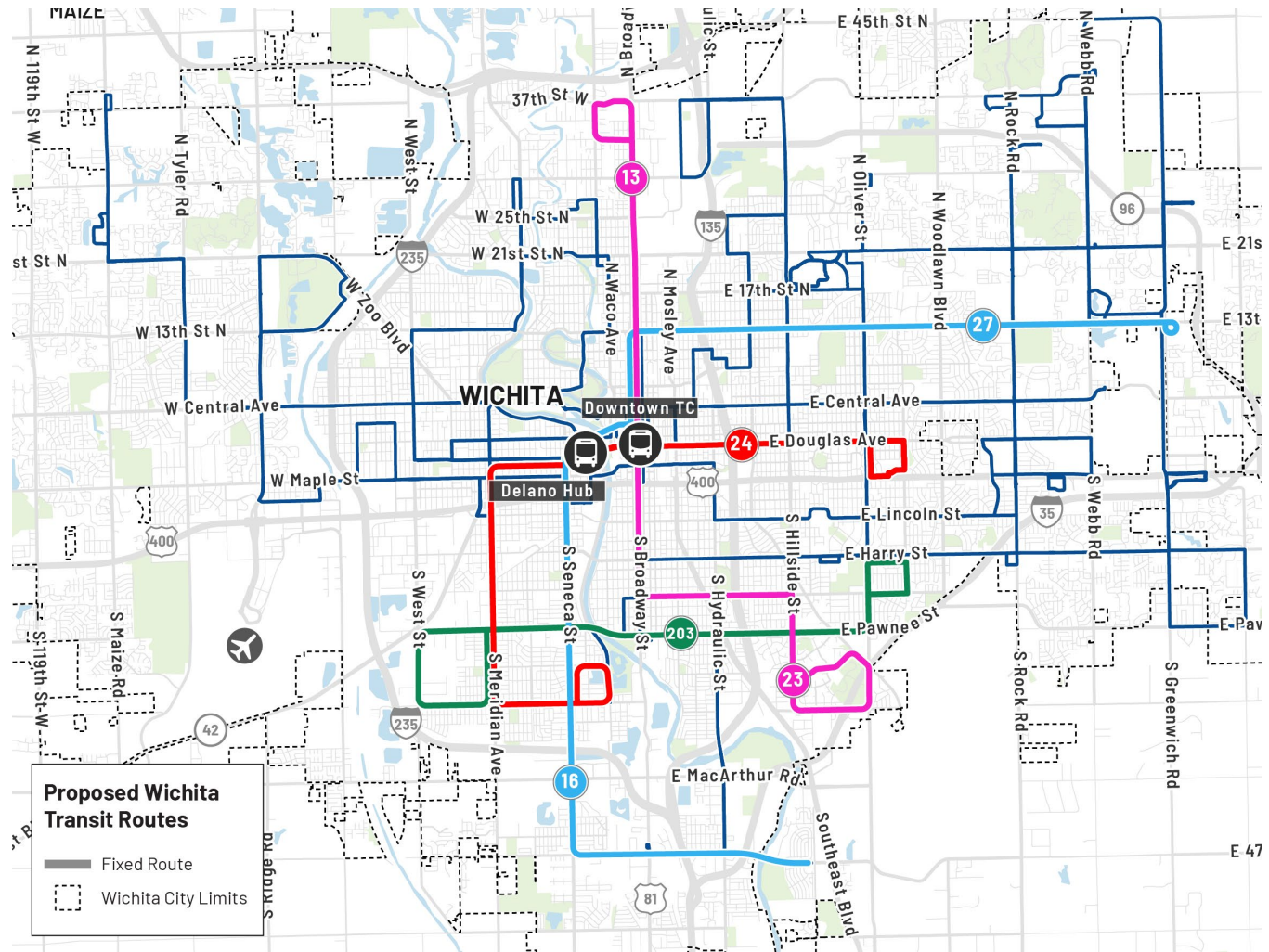
The service recommendations outlined in this chapter reflect an approach to implementing a revised fixed-route network in Wichita. As additional funding and dedicated resources become available, the recommendation is that Wichita Transit implement the full revised network within 2-3 years of adopting this transit plan and consider implementing service expansion options within 3-7 years.



Short-term Service Recommendations

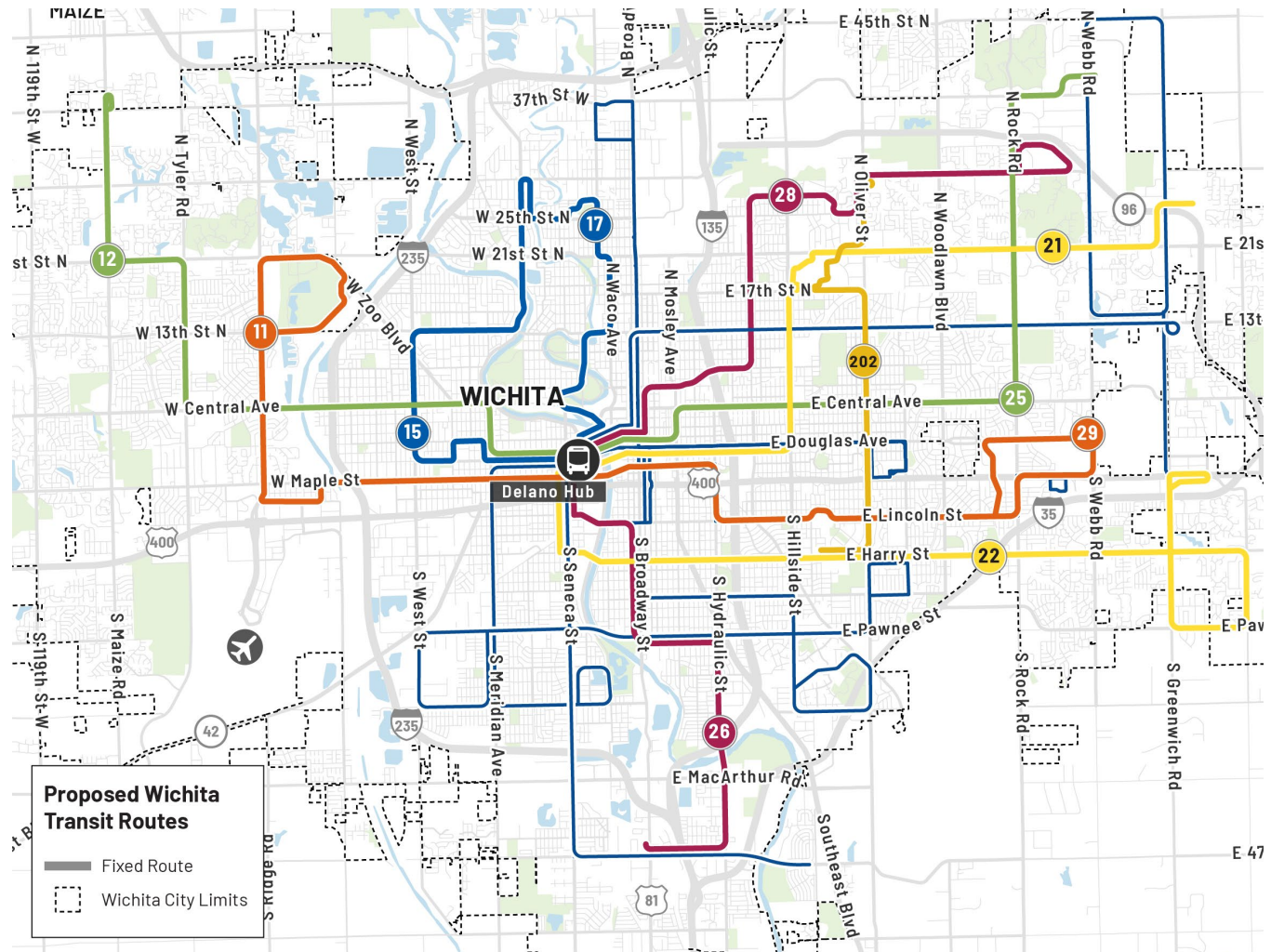
The proposed Wichita Transit short-term recommendations aim to optimize service by streamlining routes, improving access to destinations, upgrading frequencies on select routes, and establishing a foundation for future growth. The short-term recommendations assume the same level of resources currently utilized by Wichita Transit. These cost-neutral recommendations could be implemented as early as 2025.

In the short term, Pilot Route 203 will test bidirectional service between West Street and Edgemoor Street via Pawnee Street. During the pilot program and upon its completion, the route will be evaluated for ridership, operational performance, customer experience, and financial analysis.



Mid-term Service Recommendations

The proposed Wichita Transit mid-term recommendations aim to integrate all existing and proposed routes with the new Delano HUB and invest in these routes to improve service spans and frequencies. To better accommodate the new Delano HUB, routes will be realigned in 2026 and 2027 to facilitate new connections between routes and different regions of the city. This hub, coupled with the new route alignments, will foster better north-south access in Wichita. These mid-term changes would require increased funding, vehicles, and operators to deliver more efficient and consistent service.



Service Expansion Options

Transit growth beyond current service levels requires additional operating and capital resources. These service expansions can take many different forms, focusing on higher frequency transit, expanded service hours and days, new routes, capital improvements, or new service types.



30-Minute Service

Frequency improvements typically generate the highest ridership increases. In the proposed network, peak service frequencies are every 45 minutes or better. An additional bus is needed to increase the frequency from 45 to 30 minutes during peak hours. Since many of the routes are interlined (paired), it is recommended to increase the frequency of routes in groups of two.



Later Service

Providing later service does not require additional vehicles and is therefore cost-effective to implement. Fixed-route service currently ends at 7:00 PM or 7:30 PM on weekdays and 6:00 PM or 6:30 PM on Saturdays.



Sunday Service

Adding Sunday service would increase access to jobs and shopping for existing and potential riders. Like later service, it does not require additional vehicles.



Earlier Service

Providing earlier service can be less resource-intensive as it does not require additional vehicles. Fixed-route service currently begins at 5:00 AM or 5:30 AM on weekdays and 6:00 AM or 6:30 AM on Saturdays, which is sufficient for most riders. However, earlier service would benefit employees with early work shifts.



Route Extension

Strategic route extensions would improve network connectivity and increase transit access. Potential extensions include Route 16 to Wichita State University (WSU) South, Route 29 to Social Security, and Route 201 to WSU Tech.

