

6 | Transit Plan

6.1 OVERVIEW

Transit service, whether fixed-route or demand-responsive, is intricately linked to many other governmental and planning actions. Providing fixed-route transit service relies upon and reacts to the density of development within the region, the locations of transportation corridors and activity centers, and the design of developments it serves. Travel corridors and activity centers with a mix of uses and a large number of travelers provide the demand that can effectively support higher levels of transit service.

A balanced, multi-modal transportation system sometimes requires shifts in public investment given the historical emphasis on roadways and automobiles. To facilitate a higher level of transit service in the region, new developments and land use patterns should be planned in such a way as to support the non-automobile modes.

Red Apple Transit, the region's fixed-route service, has grown from a loop route system within Farmington with approximately 32,000 riders in 2003 to a linear route system with routes to Aztec, Bloomfield and Kirtland and ridership of approximately 131,000 in 2014. The system has grown in ridership, and also in the number of buses, shelters, and its ability to serve the community.

6.2 PUBLIC INPUT ON TRANSIT

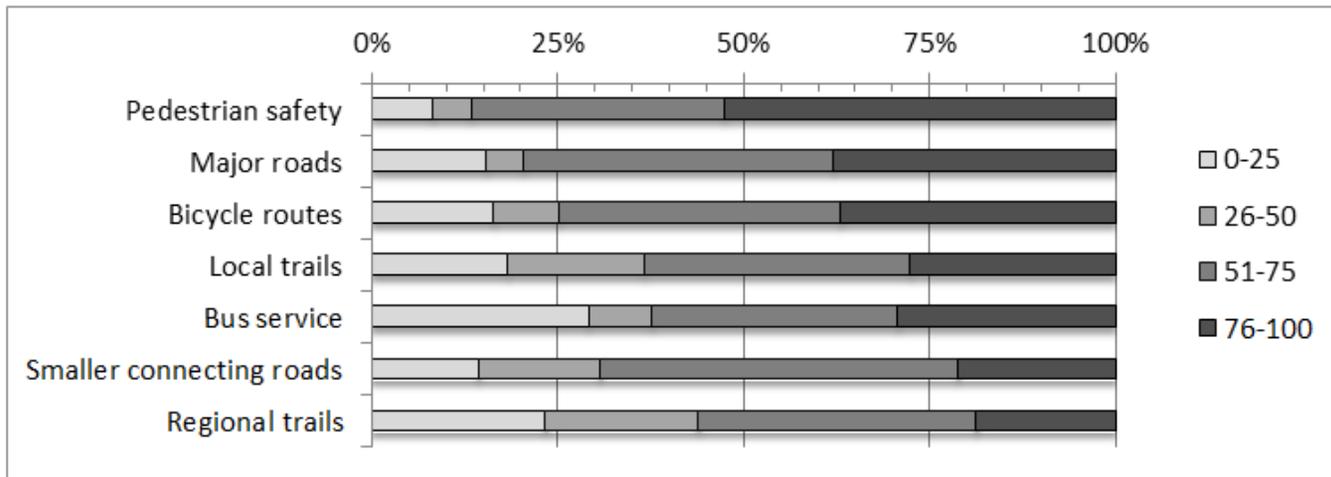
Public outreach provided the following data and comments regarding transit:

- Addressing transit needs was one of the top three priority topics during public meetings and stakeholder interviews, along with improving walkability and pedestrian safety.



- When asked to score transit as a priority compared with other parts of the transportation system by respondents to the online survey, bus service had the most variability (see Figure 6-1). Approximately 30 percent of respondents scored bus service as a high priority and approximately 30 percent scored it as a low priority. Seven percent of respondents to the online survey said they had ridden the bus in the past year.
- Stakeholder groups pointed out the following areas of need and ideas for improved transit:
 - Evening service and improved frequency to San Juan College could improve student ridership and allow bus riding students to take evening classes
 - Dial-a-Ride is often entirely booked
 - For those who cannot drive, there are limited options aside from the bus
 - There is a need for a transit connection between Aztec & Bloomfield
 - Several respondents during meetings expressed that the transit system is “better than what we had, but could be better.”
 - Where specific businesses or organizations serve populations which rely upon transit, Red Apple Transit could create partnerships with those group to address particular transportation needs and share costs

Figure 6-1: Scoring priorities on the online survey. Shown are the percentages of respondents who ranked these transportation elements from a low of 0 to a high of 100.

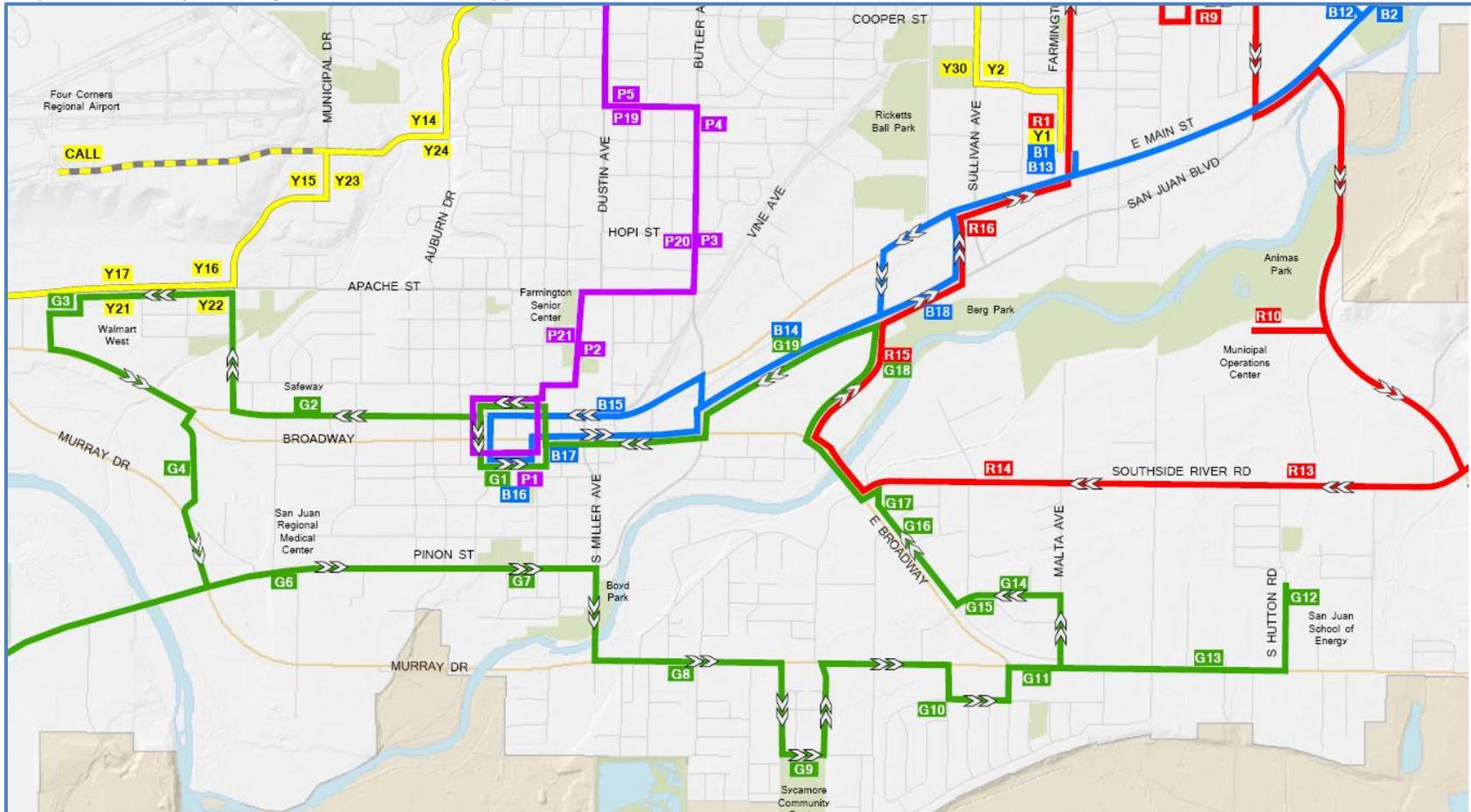


6.3 EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICES

During 2015, Red Apple Transit undertook a study of its routes with the purpose of eliminating non-revenue miles within routes, allowing students to reach San Juan College before 8 a.m., and adding stops along 20th Street in Farmington. The process included a group of stakeholders including transit riders, community service organizations, San Juan College staff, bus drivers, and professional staff of Red Apple Transit. Map 6-1 shows an inset of the Farmington routes to be effective August 2015. The system still will operate five routes within Farmington, plus regional routes to Aztec, Bloomfield and Kirtland.

Other transit operators in the vicinity of the MPO make connections to the Red Apple Transit system with overlapping stops. Navajo Transit serves the Farmington area with two routes and provides connections to Shiprock and other places on the Navajo Nation. Navajo Transit has stops in Farmington and the Kirtland area, with a transfer to Red Apple Transit at US 64 and CR 6400 in Kirtland. Southern Ute Community Action Programs operates a transit service in southwest Colorado, with a connection to the Aztec route at the Aztec City offices.

Map 6-1 – Inset of Farmington Routes on Red Apple Transit



6.4 CURRENT RED APPLE RIDERSHIP

Annual ridership for Red Apple has steadily increased since 2003 (Figure 5-1), with a high year for ridership in 2011 at approximately 150,000 and ridership in 2014 at just over 131,000. Figures 5-2 and 5-3 show the monthly ridership for 2014 for the Farmington and regional routes, respectively. Ridership has been calculated based on fares and from counts by interns hired by the MPO during summer months. As the Red Apple Transit develops, improving the method for counting ridership will be an important part of planning for needs and allocating resources. Management of Red Apple Transit has budgeted to purchase tablet computers to be on buses to assist with ridership counting.

Figure 5-1 – Annual Ridership on Red Apple Transit

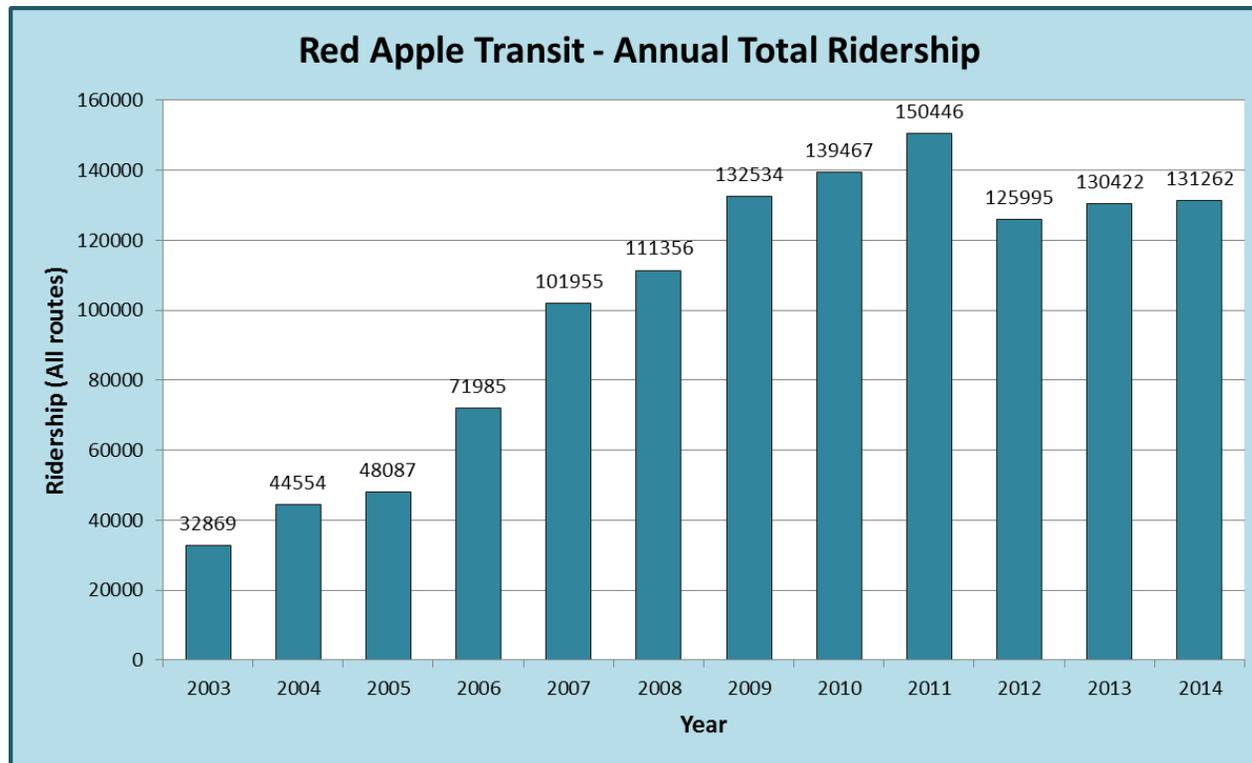


Figure 5-2 – 2014 Monthly Ridership on Farmington Routes for Red Apple Transit

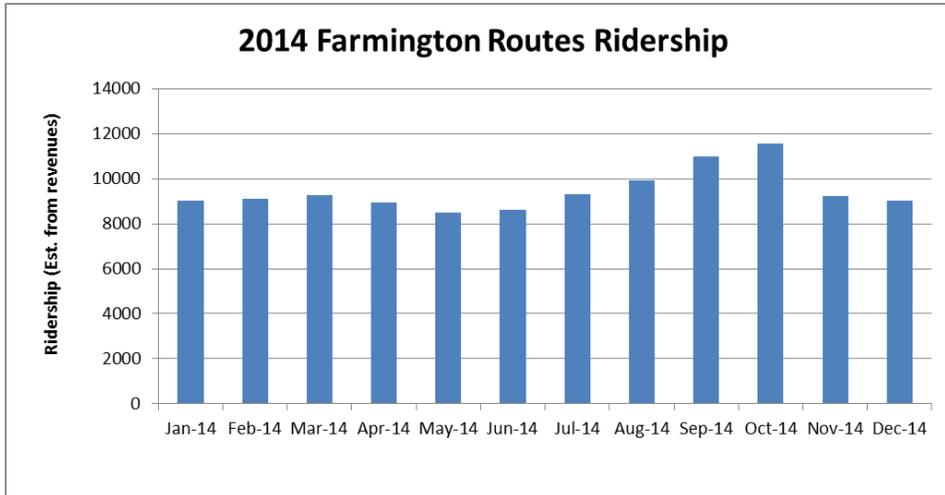
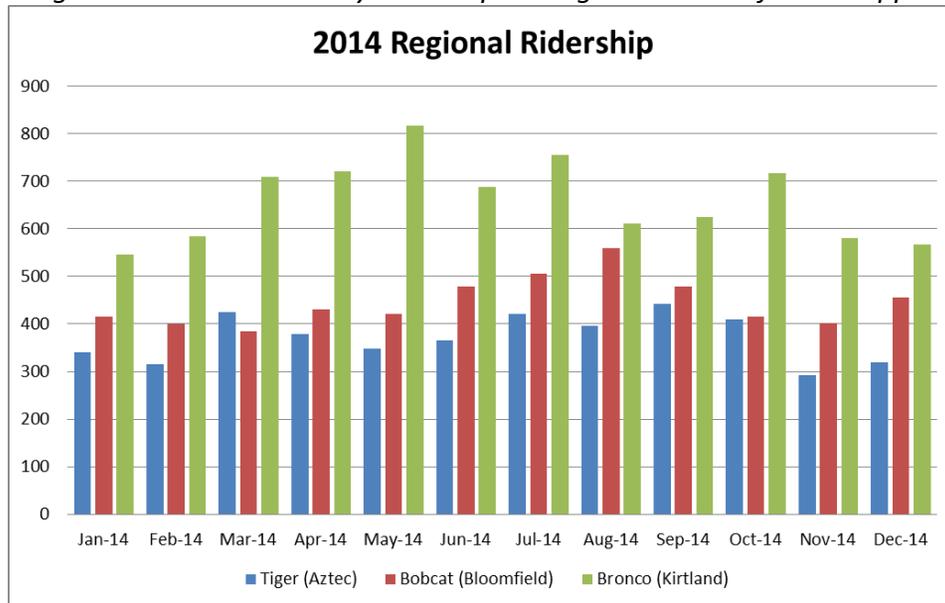


Figure 5-3 – 2014 Monthly Ridership on Regional Routes for Red Apple Transit



6.5 GREATEST TRANSIT NEED

Some people ride transit for lack of a reliable alternative. These often include youth under the age of 18, the elderly, those with a disability, members of households who do not own a vehicle, and low-income households. In 2010, Red Apple Transit contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants on a study of the transit system. One key element of the study is an analysis of the areas of greatest need based on these factors.

During development of the transit study, this information was collected for analysis to better understand where the focus of transit service should be. The study used 2000 Census data. The data for these population types was compared to total population of these census tracts to determine a percentage of the total population. These percentages were then ranked within each type. The ranks from all of the populations were scored to establish an overall rank. The highest score indicates the greatest transit need. Greatest transit need was developed for 2010, 2020 and 2035 (Maps 6-2 through 6-4). When comparing the three years of data, certain census tracts began to rise to the top because they had large numbers of these population types:

- Areas in central and south Farmington
- The north and west areas of Crouch Mesa
- The northwest and southwest areas of Bloomfield

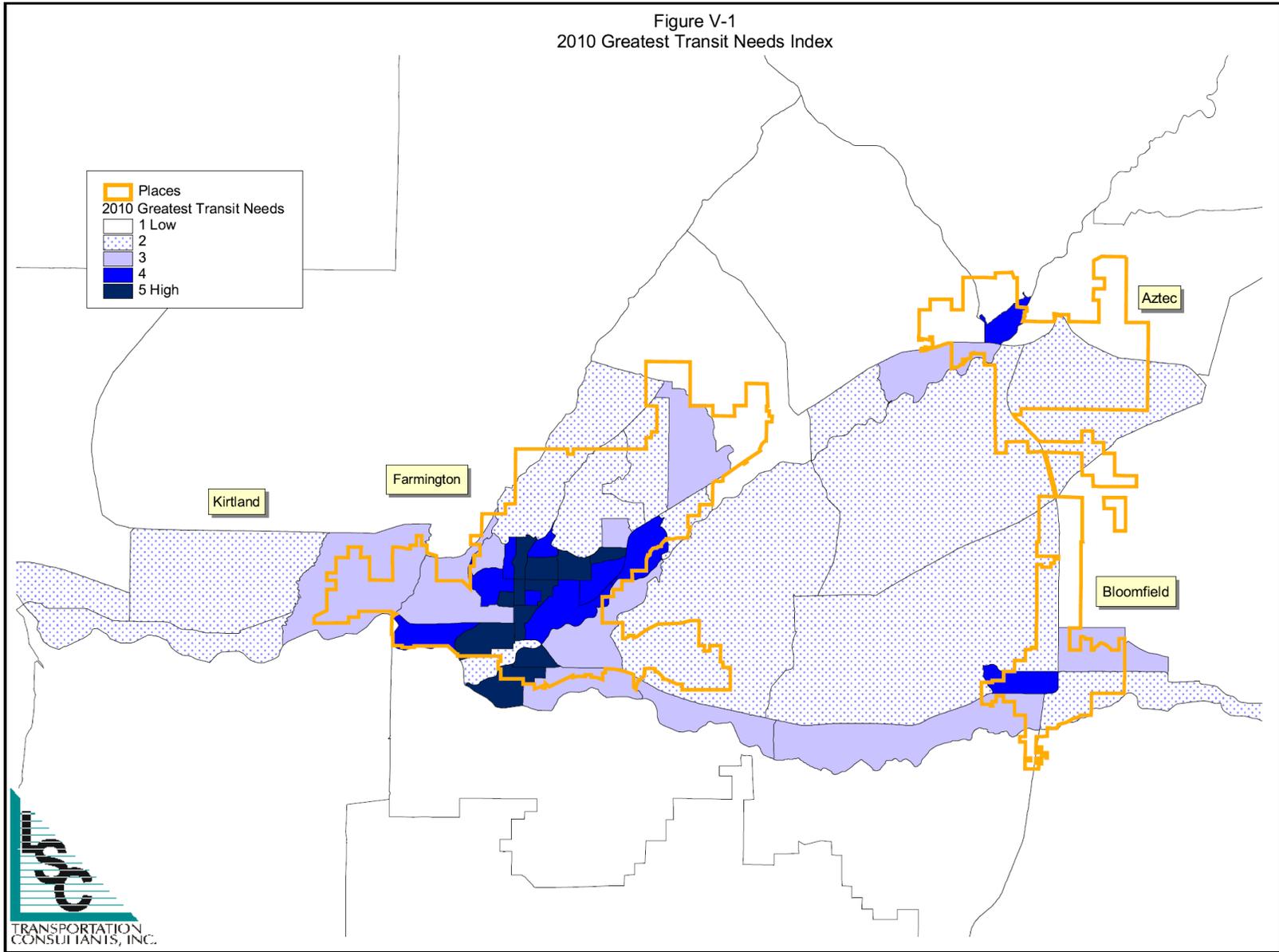
Using data by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ), MPO staff grouped population and employment data to project where the largest areas of growth are expected to occur. The data were developed as a way to gauge locations of high concentrations of population and employment. Besides further growth within the three cities, Crouch Mesa and Kirtland will become the fastest growing areas within the MPO.

In addition to the 2010 study, Map 6-5 shows detail on locations of jobs as of 2010 relative to bus stops, with quarter-mile and half-mile catchment areas to emphasize the coverage of transit service for commuting to work. Bus stops provide coverage in most areas of 490 jobs per square mile or greater. Map 6-6 shows the locations of college students as of 2012 relative to bus stops, again with catchment areas displayed. The routes provide service where many students reside, but could improve its coverage in the densest neighborhoods in Farmington and may investigate the needs in the Cedar Hill area northeast of Aztec. Even still, most population is within one half-mile of a bus stop. The system continues to target the areas and populations of greatest need.



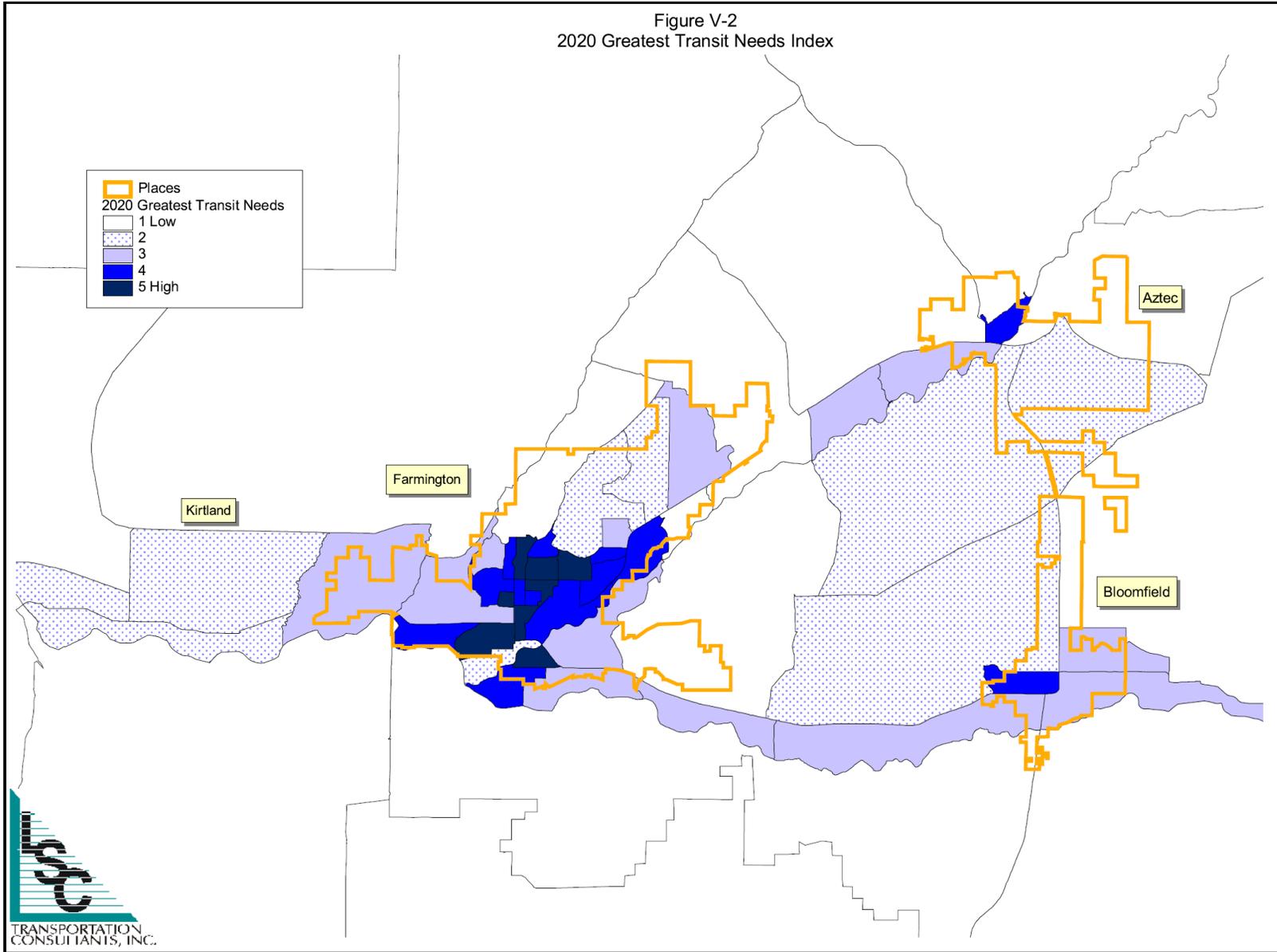
Map 6-2 – 2010 Greatest Transit Need

Figure V-1
2010 Greatest Transit Needs Index



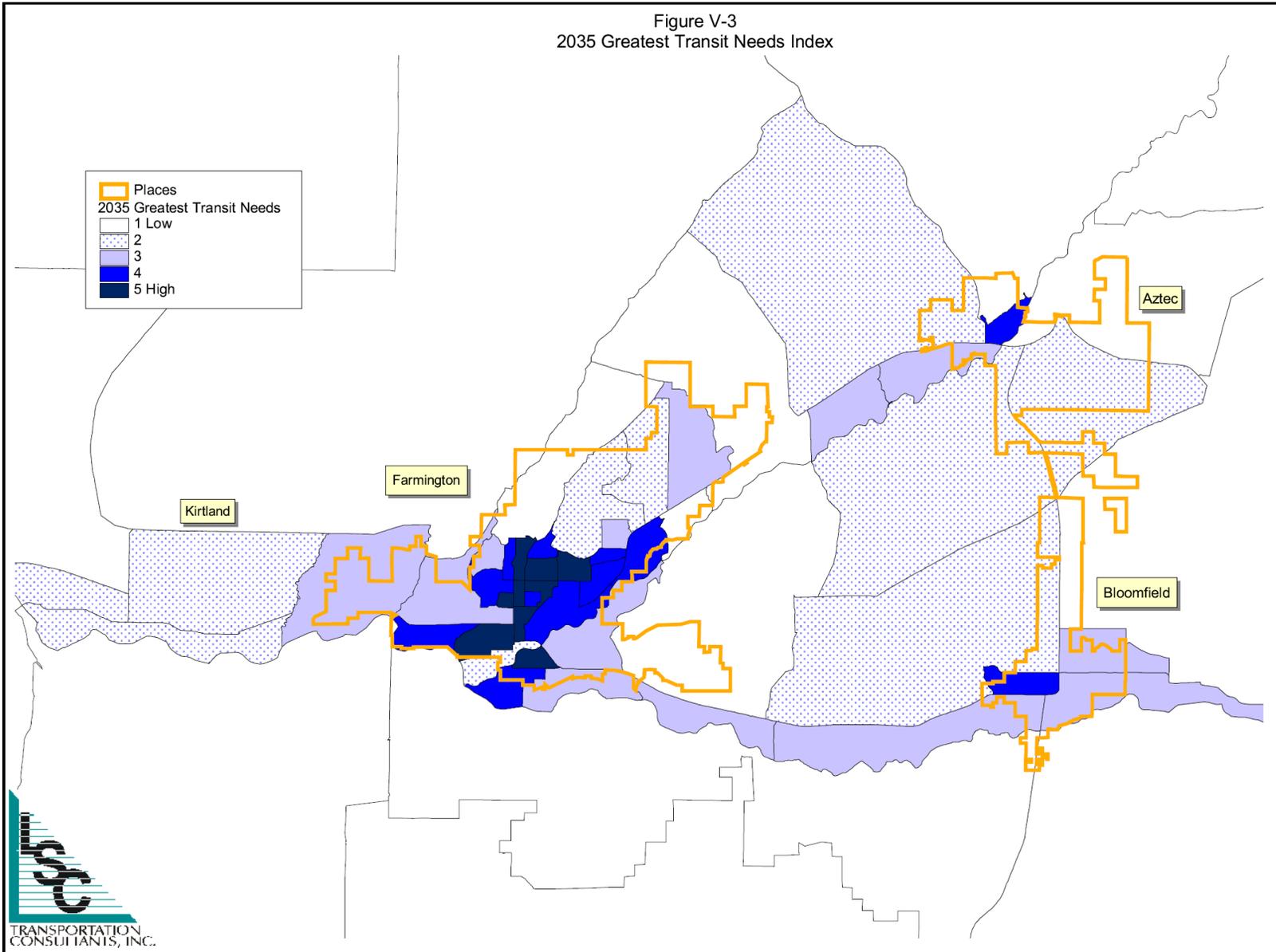
Map 6-3 – 2020 Greatest Transit Need

Figure V-2
2020 Greatest Transit Needs Index

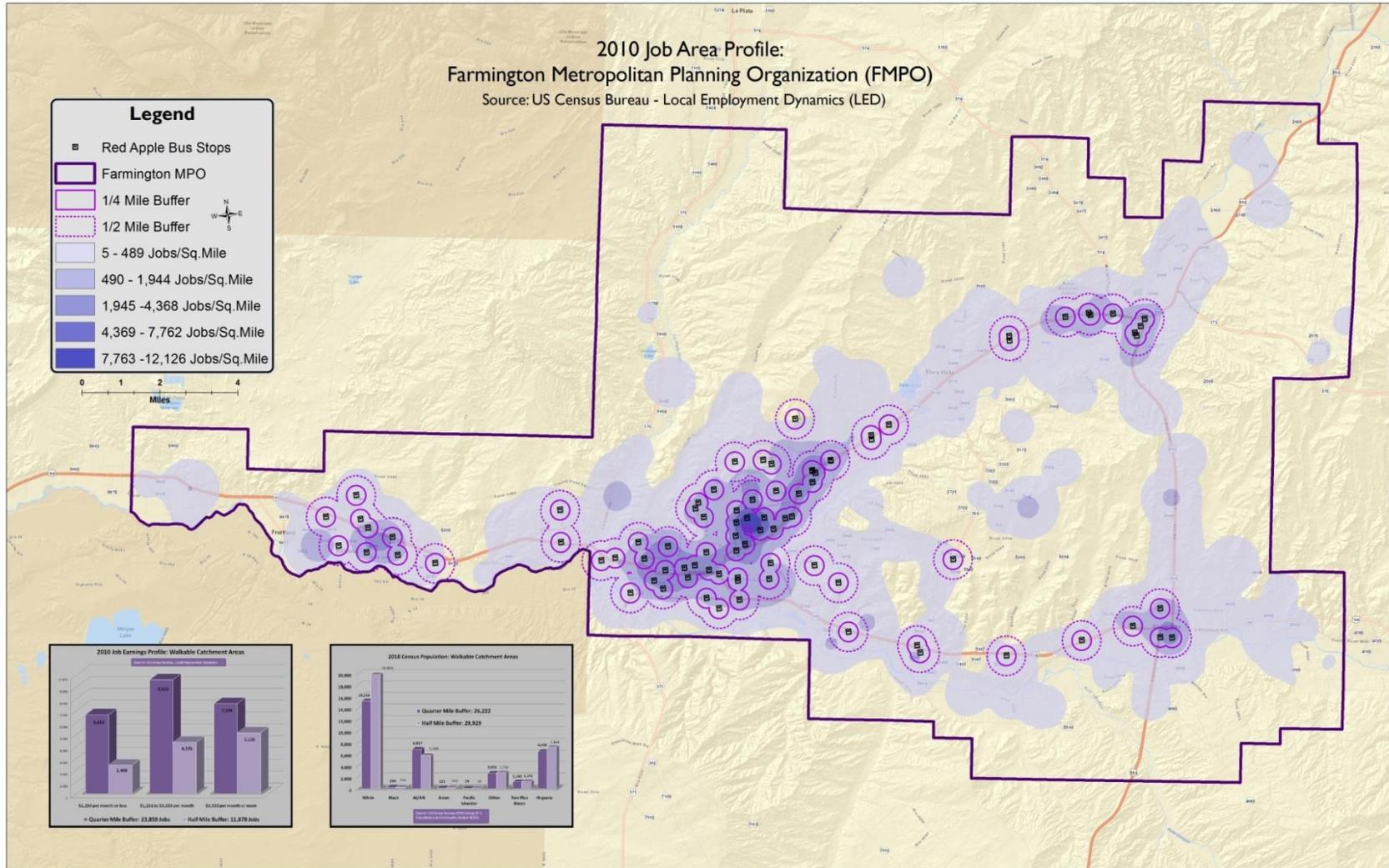


Map 6-4 – 2035 Greatest Transit Need

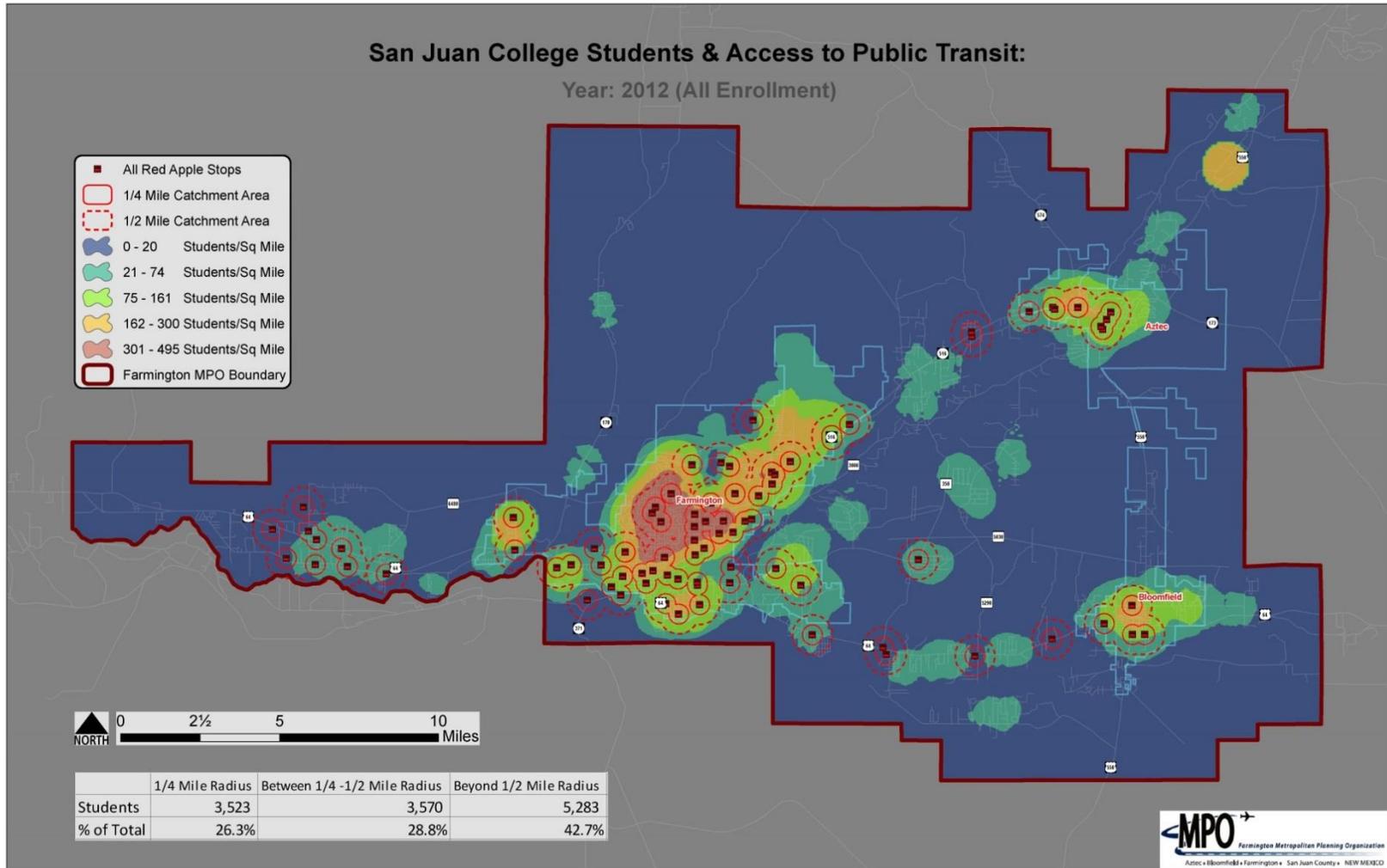
Figure V-3
2035 Greatest Transit Needs Index



Map 6-5, Jobs in MPO Area Relative to Bus Stop Locations, 2010



Map 6-6, Bus Stop Locations Relative to San Juan College Student Place of Residence, 2012



6.6 TRANSIT POLICIES

To support the growth of the transit system and to promote efficiency, Red Apple Transit may use the following policies as guidance:

- Ensure all bus stops are ADA accessible and that sidewalks are constructed to provide direct access to the stops
- Install equipment for buses to gain priority at traffic signals to avoid idling and improve travel times
- Install hardware for electronic ridership counting
- Provide bus shelters at main public destinations
- Encourage land use patterns with mixed uses and higher density areas that support transit
- Study the need and potential locations for a transit hub facility
- Identify activity and retail centers that serve as transfer hubs for transit routes
- Supply route information to Google transit to improve riders' ability to plan trips
- Seek additional local matching funds and increased fare receipts to leverage federal operations grants
- Expand transit service for evenings and weekends, especially to serve more commuters
- Study future optimal configurations and priorities of future routes in the case of increased operations funding
- Continue public outreach on updates to route and bus stop locations
- Update the study of areas of greatest need