**OKALOOSA COUNTY
2017-2026 Transit Development Plan**

Final Report

August 2016

Tindale Oliver
planning | design | engineering

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Okaloosa-Walton
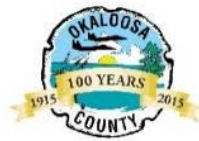Transportation Planning
Organization
OWTPO

Okaloosa County

2017–2026 Transit Development Plan

Final Report

Prepared for

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The State of Florida Public Transit Block Grant Program was enacted by the Florida Legislature to provide a stable source of funding for public transit. The Block Grant Program requires public transit service providers such as Okaloosa County to develop, adopt, and annually update a 10-Year Transit Development Plan (TDP) to ensure that the provision of public transportation is consistent with the mobility needs of the local communities. Under legislation that became effective February 20, 2007, the TDP must undergo a Major Update every five years. Each update must be submitted to the appropriate Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Office by September 1st.

Major updates involve more substantial reporting requirements than annual minor updates. Development of the TDP includes a review of planning and policy documents, a documentation of study area conditions, demographic characteristics, current transit services, creation of a financial plan, and incorporation of public input through public involvement efforts.

Okaloosa County purchases public transportation operations to run the Emerald Coast (EC) Rider (previously Okaloosa County Transit) from a private transportation provider. Through these contracted services, EC Rider provides both deviated fixed-route and paratransit services and operates in the Fort Walton Beach-Navarre-Wright Urbanized Area and in Crestview, a more rural city north of Eglin Air Force Base.

This major TDP update, branded the *Access EC Rider* TDP, was initiated by Okaloosa County in cooperation with the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) to update Okaloosa County's 10-year TDP. The *Access EC Rider* TDP represents the community's vision for public transportation in its service area over the next 10 years. This next major update of Okaloosa County's TDP is due by September 1, 2016, and will extend the 10-year planning horizon to include FYs 2017–2026.

Objectives of the Plan

State Requirements

According to Rule 14-73.001, Public Transportation, of the Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), "The TDP shall be the applicant's planning, development and operational guidance document to be used in developing the Transportation Improvement Program and the Department's Five Year Work Program."

The current TDP requirements were adopted by FDOT on February 20, 2007, and include the following:

- Major updates must be completed at least once every 5 years, covering a 10-year planning horizon.

- A public involvement plan must be developed and approved by FDOT or be consistent with the approved Metropolitan/Transportation Planning Organization's (M/TPO) public involvement plan. The Okaloosa-Walton TPO is the TPO serving both Okaloosa and Walton counties.
- FDOT, the Regional Workforce Development Board, and the TPO must be advised of all public meetings at which the TDP is presented and discussed, and these entities must be given the opportunity to review and comment on the TDP during the development of the mission, goals, objectives, alternatives, and 10-year implementation program.
- Estimation of the community's demand for transit service (10-year annual projections) using the planning tools provided by FDOT or a demand estimation technique approved by FDOT must be included.

An additional requirement for the TDP was added by the Florida Legislature in 2007 when it adopted House Bill 985. This legislation amended s. 341.071, Florida Statutes (F.S.), requiring transit agencies to "… specifically address potential enhancements to productivity and performance which would have the effect of increasing farebox recovery ratio." FDOT subsequently issued guidance requiring the TDP and each annual update to include a 1–2-page summary report on the farebox recovery ratio and strategies implemented and planned to improve it as an appendix item.

Okaloosa County Objectives

In additional to State requirements, the County's primary goals of developing and implementing the *Access EC Rider* TDP are as follows:

- Determine strategies to increase ridership and service efficiency within existing service area.
- Enhance local and regional transit service connectivity and efficiency.
- Increase operating revenue and funding opportunities.

Upon completion, the *Access EC Rider* TDP will provide a 10-year plan for transit and mobility needs that incorporate cost and revenue projections, community transit goals, objectives, and policies.

TDP Checklist

This 10-year plan meets the requirement for a major TDP update in accordance with Rule Chapter 14-73, F.A.C. Table 1-1 provides a list of TDP requirements from Rule 14-73.001. The table also indicates whether or not the item was accomplished in this 10-year plan as well as where in this document the information can be found.

Table 1-1: TDP Checklist

	Public Involvement Process	TDP Section
√	Public Involvement Plan (PIP) drafted	Section 4, Appendix A
√	PIP approved by FDOT	
√	TDP includes description of Public Involvement Process	
√	Provide notification to FDOT	
√	Provide notification to Regional Workforce Board	
Situation Appraisal		
√	Land use	Section 5
√	State and local transportation plans	Section 5, Appendix E
√	Other governmental actions and policies	Section 5 , Appendix E
√	Socioeconomic trends	Section 5
√	Organizational issues	Section 5
√	Technology	Section 5
√	10-year annual projections of transit ridership using approved model	Section 7
√	Assessment of whether land uses and urban design patterns support/hinder transit service provision	Section 5
√	Calculate farebox recovery	Section 3, Appendix C
Mission and Goals		
√	Provider's vision	Section 6
√	Provider's mission	Section 6
√	Provider's goals	Section 6
√	Provider's objectives	Section 6
Alternative Courses of Action		
√	Develop and evaluate alternative strategies and actions	Section 8
√	Benefits and costs of each alternative	Section 8
√	Financial alternatives examined	Section 8, Section 9
Implementation Program		
√	10-year implementation program	Section 9
√	Maps indicating areas to be served	Section 8
√	Maps indicating types and levels of service	Section 8
√	Monitoring program to track performance measures	Section 9, Appendix F
√	10-year financial plan listing operating and capital expenses	Section 9
√	Capital acquisition or construction schedule	Section 9
√	Anticipated revenues by source	Section 9
Relationship to Other Plans		
√	Consistent with Florida Transportation Plan	Section 5
√	Consistent with local government comprehensive plan	Section 5
√	Consistent with MPO long-range transportation plan	Section 5
√	Consistent with regional transportation goals and objectives	Section 5
Submission		
√	Adopted by Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners	NA
√	Submitted to FDOT	NA

Organization of Report

This report is organized into nine major sections (including this introduction).

Section 2 summarizes the **Baseline Conditions** for Okaloosa County. This includes a review of baseline conditions—physical description of the study area, a population profile, and demographic and journey-to-work characteristics. Land use trends, major transit trip generators and attractors, economic factors, existing roadway conditions, and major employers also are explored.

Section 3 summarizes **Existing Transit Services** in Okaloosa County. This section includes an overview of public transportation services and facilities in Okaloosa County. It discusses the results of the trend and peer review and analysis conducted for fixed-route bus services in Okaloosa County, which reviews the performance of the public transportation system over time, from fiscal years 2009 to 2013, and compares the performance of the public transportation system with other transit systems selected as having similar characteristics.

Section 4 presents the **Public Involvement** efforts undertaken as part of the *Access EC Rider* TDP and summarizes the public involvement activities undertaken. The goal of the public involvement activities is to increase the likelihood of active participation from citizens and stakeholder agencies during the development of the updated plan. Input from the public is critical since the 10-year plan provides a strategic guide for public transportation in the community over the next 10 years.

Section 5 reviews **transit policies** at the federal, local, and regional levels of government. Transit plans such as Comprehensive Plans and TDPs were reviewed, as well as various transportation planning and programming documents, with an emphasis on issues that may have implications for EC Rider. This is followed by an **evaluation of potential revenues** for EC Rider. These reviews as well are the previous efforts in the TPD process are then synthesized to develop the **situation appraisal**, a State requirement that assesses EC Rider's operating environment.

Section 6 discusses **goals and objectives**, which are an integral part of a transportation plan because they provide the policy direction to achieve the community's vision. The goals and objectives presented in this section were prepared based on the review and assessment of existing conditions, feedback received during the public involvement process, and the review of local transportation planning documents.

Section 7 discusses the technical analysis of the **demand and mobility needs assessment** of Okaloosa County. The assessment techniques are summarized, followed by the results of each analysis used to assess demand for transit services in Okaloosa County. The transit demand and mobility needs assessments were synthesized with the baseline conditions assessment, performance reviews, public involvement feedback, and situation appraisal to yield a building block for evaluating the transit needs for the next 10 years.

Section 8 discusses the development and evaluation of **transit alternatives** for the *Access EC Rider* TDP. These proposed improvements, or alternatives, for fixed-route service represent the transit needs for the

next 10 years and were developed without consideration of funding constraints. The identified service improvements were then prioritized using an evaluation process, and the prioritized list of improvements was used to develop the 10-year implementation and financial plans presented in Section 9. The evaluation process for service alternatives developed for the *Access EC Rider* TDP also is summarized in this section along with the alternatives evaluation.

Section 9 summarizes the **10-year Cost Feasible Plan** for EC Rider's fixed-route bus transit service for the next 10 years. The Plan identifies the funded service and capital improvements as well as the unfunded needs and the revenue assumptions and capital and operating costs used.

SECTION 2: BASELINE CONDITIONS

This section reviews the baseline conditions of the study area and provides context for the *Access EC Rider* TDP through the following components:

- Study area description
- General population characteristics and trends, including:
  - Population density
  - Minority populations
  - Age
- Income
- Transportation disadvantaged population
- Housing density
- Employment characteristics, including
  - Employment density
  - Labor force
- Journey-to-work characteristics and major trip generators
- Tourism
- Development patterns
- Land use
- Roadway conditions
- Existing fixed-route transit services

Discussion of the above are supported by maps and graphics throughout this section. Primary data sources include the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS), the University of Florida's Bureau of Economics and Business Research (BEBR), and socioeconomic data from the Northwest Florida Regional Planning Model (NWFRPM), Okaloosa County, and the West Florida Regional Planning Council (WFRPC). These data sources are supplemented by other local and regional sources, as needed.

Study Area Description

Okaloosa County is located in northwestern portion of Florida, also known as the Florida Panhandle. It is bordered on the north by Alabama, on the east by Santa Rosa County, on the west by the Walton County, and on the south by the Gulf of Mexico. According to the 2010 Census, the county is 1,082 square miles, 14% of which (152 square miles) is water. The area is known for its extensive beaches along the Gulf of Mexico, abundant parks and natural areas, and the presence of the Eglin Air Force Base (located in

Valparaiso) and Hurlburt Field Air Force Base (located in Mary Esther). Map 2-1 illustrates the study area for the *Access EC Rider* TDP.

Eglin Air Force Base divides the county into two sections, north and south. Most of the county has a rural characteristic. The urbanized areas generally are located on the southern side of the county near the coastline and include the municipalities of Destin, Fort Walton Beach, Mary Esther, Niceville, Cinco Bayou, and Valparaiso; the exception is Crestview, which is located in the middle of the county along the SR 85 corridor. Laurel Hill is further inland and also has a more rural character. The unincorporated communities of Okaloosa County include Baker, Blackman, Campton, Deerland, Eglin Air Force Base, Escambia Farms, Garden City, Holt, Lake Lorraine, Milligan, Ocean City, Okaloosa Island, Seminole, Svea, Wright, Whynn Haven Beach, Florosa, Villa Tasso, and Timpoochee. There is one Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) within Okaloosa County, the Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin MSA.

Population Profile

Growth

Population information from the 2010 Census was used to develop a general population profile for the study area. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Okaloosa County was 170,498 persons. As shown in Table 2-1, data from the decennial Census show that Okaloosa County's population as a whole increased nearly 6% from 2000 to 2010, from 170,498 to 180,751 persons. This averages to an annual growth rate of 0.55%. During the next four years, the population increased to an even higher average annual rate of 0.91%, resulting in a total population of 188,984 persons in 2014. Medium population projections prepared by BEBR[1] estimate the population of Okaloosa County will grow to 191,500 people by 2020 (6%) and 203,600 people by 2030 (13%).

Table 2-1: Okaloosa County General Characteristics

Characteristic	2000	2010	Percent Change 2000–2010	2013*	2014
Persons	170,498	180,751	6.01%	185,852	188,984
Households	66,269	73,253	10.54%	73,253	73,655
Number of workers (civilian)	82,148	82,822	0.82%	82,413	83,892
Land area (sq mi)	935.63	930.25	-0.58%	930.25	930.25
Person per household	2.57	2.47	-3.89%	2.54	2.68
Workers per household	1.24	1.13	-8.87%	1.13	1.18
Persons per square mile of land area	182.2	194.4	6.70%	199.8	203.2
Workers per square mile of land area	87.80	89.03	1.40%	88.59	90.18

*2009–2013 ACS Data, 2014 ACS 1-Year Estimates
Source: 2000 and 2010 Census, 2010 ACS

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[1] BEBR, "Projections of Florida Population by County, 2011-2040."

Map 2-1: Study Area
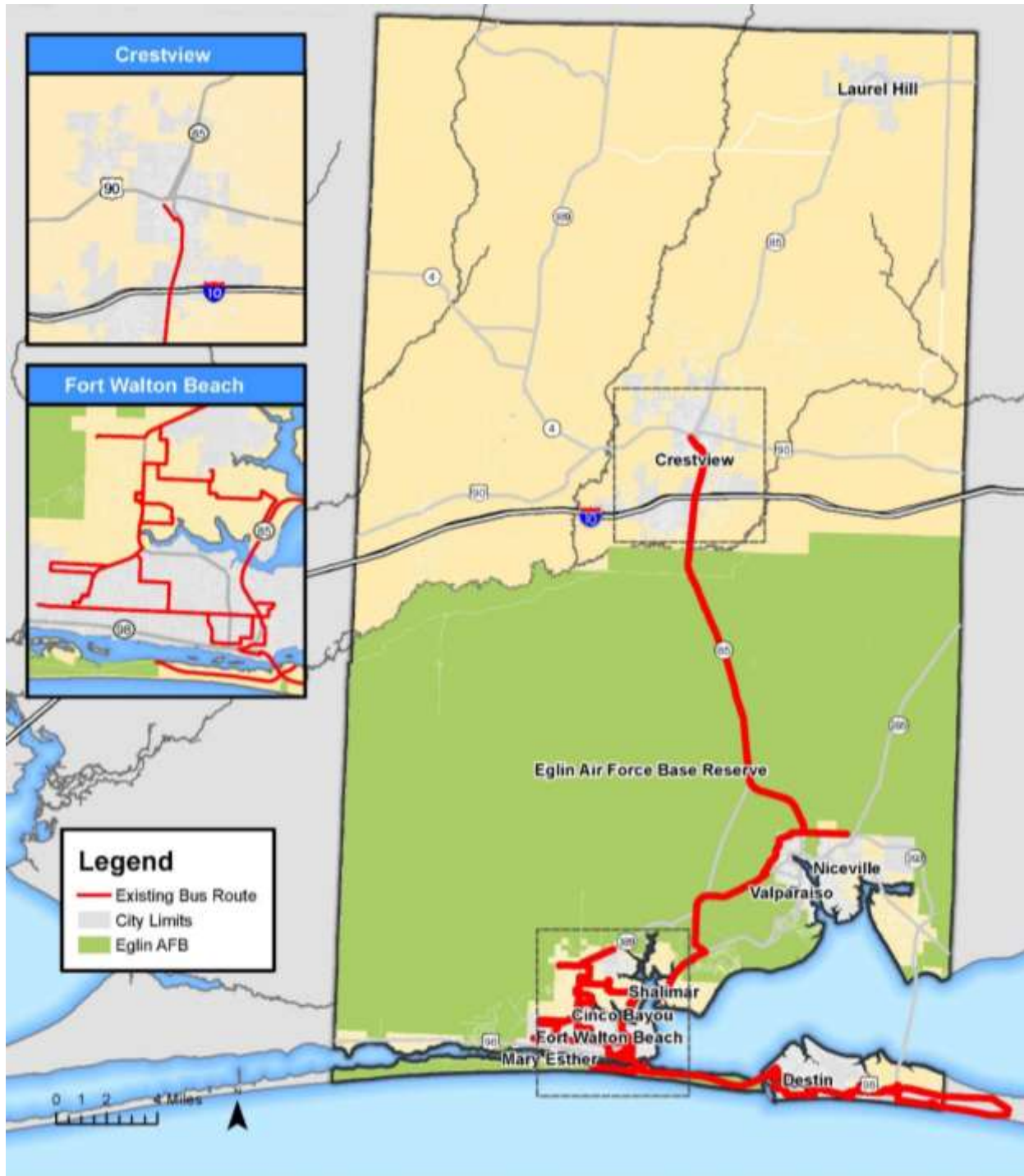
The majority of Okaloosa County residents live in unincorporated areas of the county. The most populous city is Crestview, with a population of 20,978 in 2010. Compared to Florida as a whole, Okaloosa County experienced a relatively small increase in population growth from 2000 to 2010, with an increase of only 6.1%, compared to 17.6% statewide. By contrast, between 2000 and 2010, neighboring Walton County had the 8th highest percent growth increase in the state (35.6%), a number that is small in absolute terms, with only 14,442 new residents. Since 1990, Crestview continues to be the fastest-growing city in Okaloosa County, growing by 6,212 residents between 2000 and 2010. Valparaiso, Mary Esther, Laurel Hill, and Fort Walton Beach each experienced negative growth during that same time period.

Table 2-2 provides population trends for the last few decades for the municipalities within Okaloosa, Walton, and Okaloosa counties and the Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin MSA. Between 1990 to 2000 and 2000 to 2010, the region grew 23.1% and 6.2 %, respectively; most of this growth occurred in Walton County.

Table 2-2: Population Growth for the Region and Municipalities

Area	Population			Percent Change	
	1990	2000	2010	1990–2000	2000–2010
Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin MSA	171,536	211,099	235,865	23.1%	11.7%
Okaloosa County	143,777	170,498	180,822	18.6%	6.1%
Walton County	27,759	40,601	55,043	46.3%	35.6%
Cinco Bayou	408	377	383	-7.6%	1.6%
Crestview	10,218	14,766	20,978	44.5%	42.1%
Destin	8,104	11,119	12,305	37.2%	10.7%
Fort Walton Beach	21,363	19,973	19,507	-6.5%	-2.3%
Laurel Hill	523	549	537	5.0%	-2.2%
Mary Esther	4,226	4,055	3,851	-4.0%	-5.0%
Niceville	11,159	11,684	12,749	4.7%	9.1%
Shalimar	350	718	717	105.1%	-0.1%
Valparaiso	6,123	6,408	5,036	4.7%	-21.4%
Unincorporated	55,544	100,849	104,759	88.3%	3.9%

Source: BEBR, University of Florida

Demographics

Table 2-3 lists demographical characteristics of Okaloosa County for 2000, 2010, and 2014. The percent male and female ratio has been virtually equal and unchanged since the year 2000. Although Okaloosa County has a relatively small proportion of minority population, the county has become more ethnically diverse over time. In 2010, 81% of the population was White. Black, Hispanic, Asian, and other races represented 9.2%, 6.8%, 2.9%, and 5.7% of the population in 2010, respectively. The Black or African American population has gradually increased, and the Hispanic population has almost doubled in proportion, from 4.28% in 2000 to 8.49% in 2014. This growth in minorities represents a potentially growing key market of traditionally transit-dependent populations.

Table 2-3: Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	2000	2010	2014
Gender			
Male	50.2%	50.6%	50.5%
Female	49.8%	49.4%	49.5%
Ethnic Origin			
White	83.4%	81.1%	77.9%
Black or African American	9.1%	9.3%	9.0%
Other	4.5%	5.7%	7.9%
Two or more races	3.0%	3.9%	5.2%
Hispanic Origin			
Not of Hispanic/Latino origin	95.7%	93.2%	91.5%
Hispanic or Latino origin	4.3%	6.80%	8.5%
Educational Level			
< 12th grade	12.0%	9.3%	8.9%
High school grad	27.1%	28.0%	27.0%
Some college	36.7%	25.4%	25.7%
College graduate	24.2%	26.8%	28.1%
Below Poverty Level	8.8%	10.6%	13.7%
Vehicle Available in Household			
None	4.1%	1.5%	2.0%
One	33.6%	19.4%	22.2%
Two	45.8%	47.1%	44.1%
Three or more	16.5%	32.0%	31.7%

Sources: 2000 Census, 2006 ACS, 2010 ACS, 2010; Census vehicles available in household from 2013 ACS 5-year estimate data

Map 2-2 shows the percent of minorities by Census block group in 2014; the areas with high concentrations of minorities are throughout the municipalities of Wright and Crestview and a small pocket in the southern side of Fort Walton Beach.

Households that speak limited English are another group that may have special transportation needs. The eastern side of Wright has the highest concentration (10–12%) of households with limited English capacity, as shown in Map 2-3.

Households with limited access to personal vehicles also indicates another potential transit-dependent population and the percentage of zero-vehicle households and one-car households has decreased since 2000. Within Okaloosa County, 2% of households do not own a vehicle. Correspondingly, the percentage of households with three or more cars has nearly doubled, from 16.5% to 32% since 2000. The majority of households within the county had two or more cars in 2014.

With respect to education level, the percent of college graduates has gradually increased from 24.2% in 2000 to an estimated 28.1% in 2014. The percent of the population who have attained less than the 12th grade level has decreased from 12% to 8.9% in 2000 and 2014, respectively.

Map 2-2: Minority Population
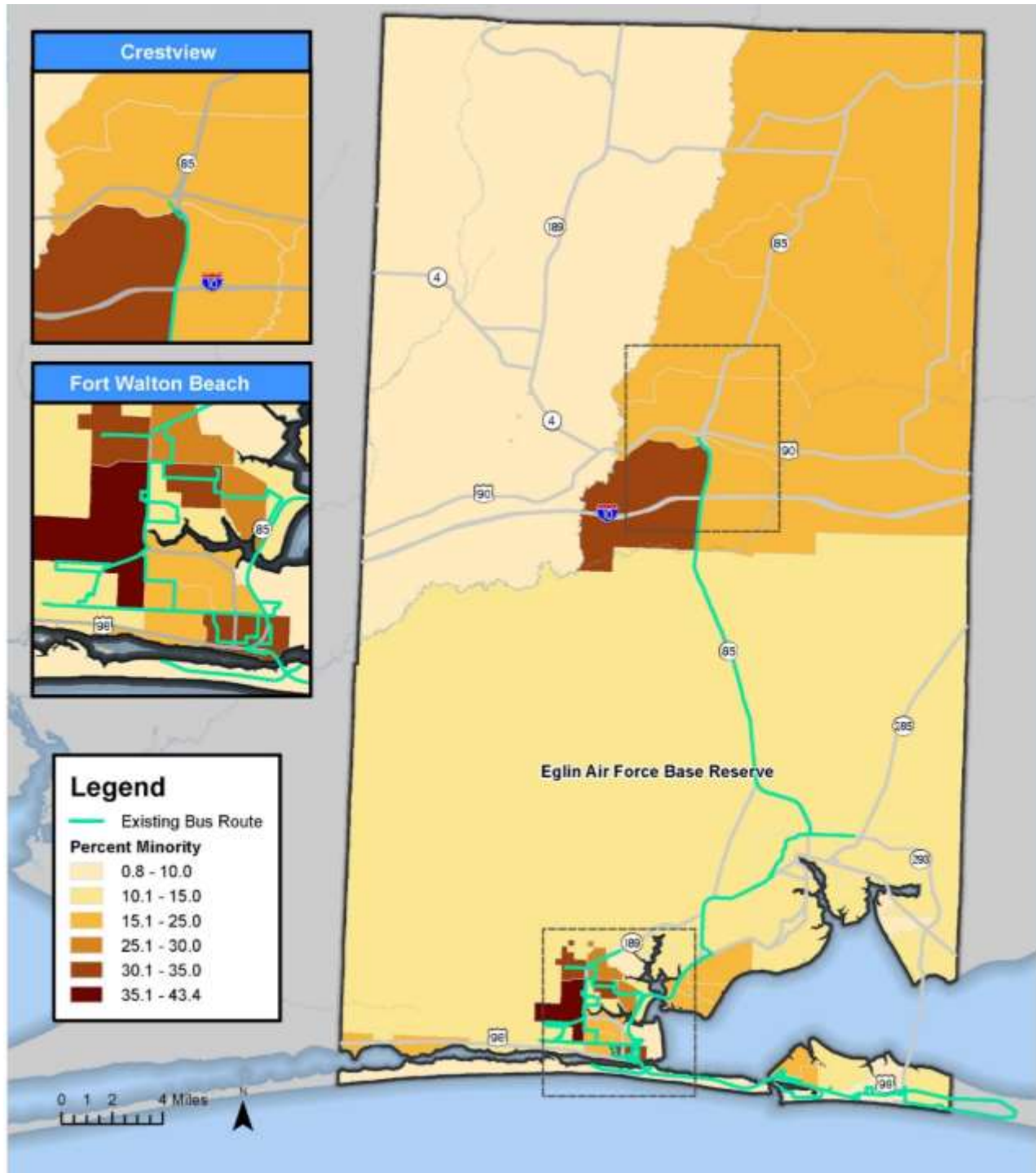
Source: 2010-2014 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Map 2-3: Percent of Households Speaking Limited English
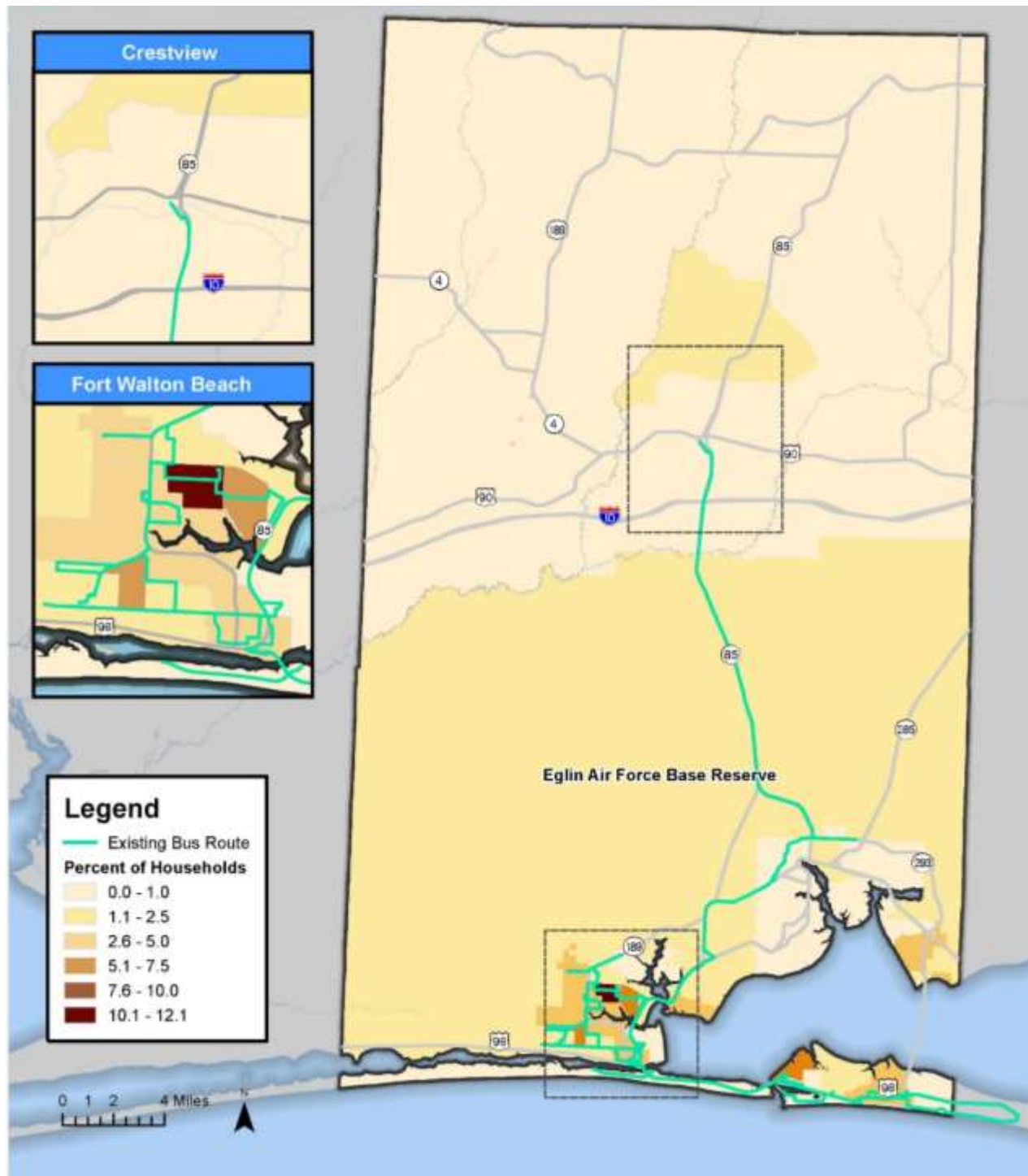
Source: 2010-2014 ACS 5 Year Estimates

Age Distribution

The current and future age distribution of the population in Okaloosa County is a major factor when considering demand for public transportation. According to the Okaloosa-Walton County 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) prepared by the Okaloosa-Walton TPO, the region's population is unique, in that there are a high number of retirees, many of which have ties to the military; however, the average age in Okaloosa County is also younger overall than that of the Florida. The age distribution has seen incremental changes since the year 2000, most notably with the decreasing percent change in those that are minors (see Table 2-4).

Table 2-4: Okaloosa County Age Distribution Trends Compared with Florida

Age	Geography	2000	2010	2014
17 and under	Okaloosa County	22.34%	18.4%	18.8%
	Florida	(22.8%)	(21.3%)	(20.9%)
18–64	Okaloosa County	63.72%	62.7%	65.9%
	Florida	(59.6%)	(61.4%)	(60.9%)
65+	Okaloosa County	13.95%	18.9%	15.3%
	Florida	(17.6%)	(17.3%)	(18.2%)

Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2014 ACS

Persons ages 15 or younger are not legally allowed or able to operate a motor vehicle. However, younger children below age 14 are unlikely to ride transit on their own, but could do so in the 10-year horizon as they become more independent. Teenagers who are between ages 14 and 18 are more likely to not have their own vehicle and, therefore, have a higher propensity for using transit or finding a ride (carpool). Within Okaloosa County, the younger population generally resides in the inland and suburban areas such as Crestview. The teenage group between ages 15–19 is projected to increase from 6.49% in 2014 to 7.65% in 2025, as shown in Table 2-5.

Table 2-5: Projections by Age Group

Age Group	Projection Year			
	2014	2015	2020	2025
0–9	13.2%	13.3%	12.6%	13.6%
10–14	6.4%	6.5%	7.1%	6.3%
15–19	6.5%	6.4%	6.9%	7.7%
15–17	3.9%	3.9%	4.2%	4.62%
18–19	2.6%	2.5%	2.7%	3.0%
20–44	34.7%	34.9%	36.4%	37.6%
45–64	28.5%	28.6%	28.3%	26.6%
65+	16.1%	16.7%	19.6%	23.1%

Source: BEBR

Older persons also may be more likely to use public transportation as the aging process begins to limit their ability to drive. As noted in the previous TDP, the retired population generally lives in the coastal areas. Table 2-6 shows the current and forecasted older adult population for Okaloosa County and Florida, based on data from BEBR's *Florida Population Studies Population Projections*. By 2025, the older-adult population is projected to increase to 20.1% of the county's total population. Furthermore, the population segment between ages 45 and 65, which will be the next wave of retirees, currently represents approximately 28.6% of the total population within the county. A growing need for public transit within Okaloosa County can be assumed, considering the growing share of age groups that are more likely to use transit.

Table 2-6: Older Adult Population Projections

Geography	Census	Estimates	BEBR Projections					
	2010	2014	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Okaloosa County	13.9%	15.3%	15.7%	17.7%	20.1%	22.6%	22.7%	22.3%
Florida	17.3%	18.6%	18.9%	21.0%	22.7%	24.9%	25.2%	25.5%

Source: Based on BEBR population projections for Florida and Its counties 2015–2040, with estimates for 2014

Figure 2-1 compares the age distribution of Okaloosa County residents to Florida residents in 2014. Okaloosa County has a smaller percentage of residents who are age 65 and older compared to the state, but has a higher percentage of youths age 24 and younger.

Figure 2-1: Age Distribution of Residents (2014)
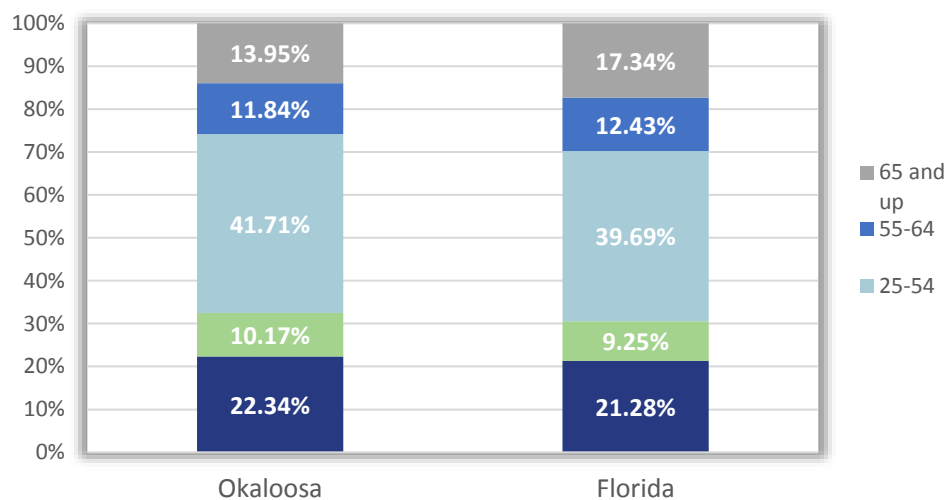
Source: BEBR Projections by Age Group, June 2015

Table 2-7 shows the means of transportation according to age group in Okaloosa County. The 2009–2013 ACS revealed that the majority of transit riders were ages 16–19. The second largest group of transit riders was young adults ages 20–24.

Table 2-7: Means of Transportation According to Age Group

Age	Total Estimate	Drove Alone Estimate	Carpooled Estimate	Public Transit Estimate*
Workers 16 and over	85,611	69,066	9,742	716
16–19	4.7%	3.8%	4.6%	61.9%
20–24	13.0%	10.5%	27.4%	28.5%
25–44	37.9%	38.9%	37.7%	9.6%
45–54	25.8%	27.7%	15.5%	0.0%
55–59	9.1%	9.3%	6.7%	0.0%
60 and over	9.4%	9.8%	8.1%	0.0%

*Contains a very high margin of error
Source: 2009–2013 ACS

Income

Income is a leading influence in travel decisions. Because there is less disposable income available, it can be inferred that low-income households are less likely to own one vehicle per licensed driver or able to make fewer discretionary trips and, therefore, may be more dependent on public transit, particularly for non-essential or recreational trips. Based on 2014 household income levels, the majority of Okaloosa County's population lies within the middle- to upper-class ranges. In general, households within the coastal areas tend to be more affluent, as is typically seen throughout Florida. The county has seen household incomes trending higher, with a 10% increase in the number of households making more than $50,000 in annual income since 2000, as shown in Table 2-8. This trend of higher incomes is consistent with the increase in the number of households with three or more vehicles, which has also increased 15% since 2000, indicating more disposable income for transportation.

Table 2-8: 2000, 2010, and 2014 Household Income

Characteristic	2000	2010	2014	% Change 2000–2014
Household Income				
Under $10,000	6.4%	7.0%	6.1%	-4.7%
$10,000–$49,999	53.5%	41.4%	37.6%	-29.7%
$50,000 or more	40.1%	51.6%	56.3%	40.4%
Poverty Status				
Above poverty level	91.16%	89.4%	86.6%	-5.0%
Below poverty level	8.84%	10.60%	13.4%	51.6%

Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, ACS 2014

In addition, areas with lower per-capita income will result in a higher reliance on transit use. Okaloosa has a lower percentage of households with income below the poverty line compared to the state. According to the 2010 Census, the population living in poverty was 13.4%, slightly below the statewide average of 16.3%.

Data from the 2009–2013 ACS confirms that low-income workers represent the largest group of those who use public transit for transportation. The majority of transit riders in the county were from low-income households, with 90.4% of transit riders having a household income of $10,000–$24,999, as shown in Table 2-9. This table also shows the means of transportation for workers according to income in Okaloosa County.

Table 2-9: Means of Transportation According to Income

Income	Total Estimate	Drove Alone Estimate	Carpooled Estimate	Public Transit Estimate*
Total workers age 16 and over with earnings	85,532	68,987	9,742	716
$1–$9,999 or loss	13.0%	11.5%	17.4%	0.0%
$10,000–$14,999	10.3%	9.6%	10.5%	61.9%
$15,000–$24,999	21.7%	20.6%	27.6%	28.5%
$25,000–$34,999	14.3%	14.1%	14.2%	0.0%
$35,000–$49,999	15.5%	16.1%	18.2%	0.0%
$50,000–$64,999	9.7%	10.9%	5.2%	0.0%
$65,000–$74,999	4.7%	5.3%	1.3%	0.0%
$75,000 or more	10.9%	11.9%	5.6%	9.6%

*Contains a very high margin of error
Source: 2009-2013 ACS

Map 2-4 illustrates the areas with the highest percentage of households that were below the poverty line in 2014. The northern area of Crestview, the western side of Wright, and a pocket in southern Fort Walton Beach had the highest percentage of households below the poverty line. These areas correspond to the areas with the highest percentage of minority populations. The highest per-capita income portions of the county are along the waterfront areas, and the lowest are found in pockets of Crestview and Fort Walton Beach. Figure 2-2 shows the distribution of income for residents in Okaloosa County. The median income during this time period was $57,640. The largest income bracket includes households with annual incomes of $50,000–$74,999, representing 17.6% of the population. In 2014, 31.6% of households had incomes of $35,000–$74,999 annually, a rough representation of the middle class.

Population and Housing Densities

Population and dwelling unit densities (measured by persons per square mile) are key factors to consider when planning for transit, as they reveal the potential in the number of transit riders within a concentrated area. Much of Okaloosa County has a relatively low population density. The average household size for Okaloosa County in 2010 was 2.96 persons. According to the 2013 Okaloosa County Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP), between 2000 and 2015 there were no significant changes in average household size within Okaloosa County. Larger families generally were found in the suburban areas of Fort

Walton Beach, and smaller families generally were found along the coast. Although the coastal areas have smaller household sizes, they are also the areas that have the highest population density, especially the Fort Walton Beach area (Okaloosa TDSP 2013).

Figure 2-2: Okaloosa County Annual Household Income

Pie chart segments:
- Less than $10,000, 6.1%
- $10,000 to $14,999, 3.6%
- $15,000 to $24,999, 9.7%
- $25,000 to $34,999, 10.3%
- $35,000 to $49,999, 14.0%
- $50,000 to $74,999, 17.6%
- $75,000 to $99,999, 16.3%
- $100,000 to $149,999, 14.4%
- $150,000 to $199,999, 4.5%
- $200,000 or more, 3.5%
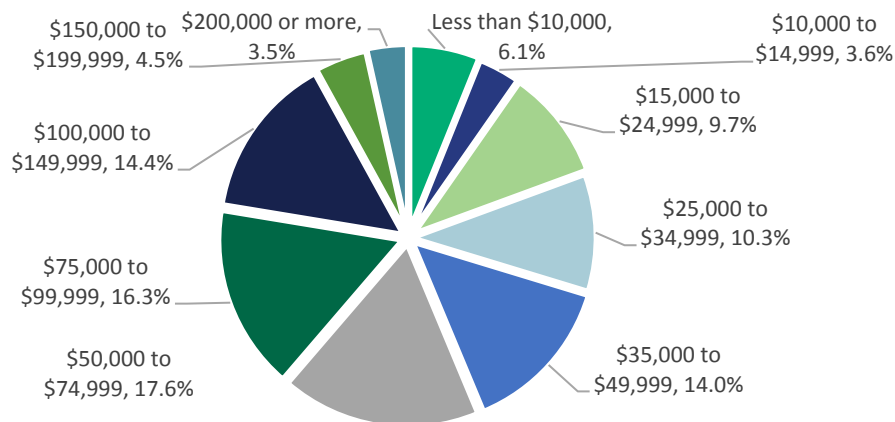
Source: 2014 ACS 1-year Estimate

Maps 2-5 through 2-8 provide selected characteristics for Okaloosa County that are particularly relevant to the *Access EC Rider* TDP based on population and housing data from the NWFRPM. Maps 2-5 and 2-6 show population densities by traffic analysis zone (TAZ) for 2015 and 2025, respectively. Based on the NWFRPM data, higher densities within the county continue to be within the coastal areas, whereas most population growth is projected to take place in the central portion of the county along I-10 and SR 85 between 2015 and 2025, as well as within the Fort Walton Beach area.

Maps 2-7 and 2-8 show the dwelling unit density by TAZ for 2015 and 2025, respectively. Like the population maps, the higher dwelling unit densities are concentrated primarily along the coastal areas of Fort Walton Beach, Crestview, Valparaiso, and Niceville. Much of the growth in dwelling units between now and 2025 is projected to occur in the Crestview area. The dwelling unit densities do not consider vacancy rates; according to the Okaloosa TDSP, there are unusually high vacancy rates in Destin and Miramar Beach, primarily due to a higher number of seasonal vacation homes. It is also worth noting that areas with more affordable housing within the county are generally considered to be within Crestview and the unincorporated areas north of Crestview.

Map 2-4: Low-Income Population
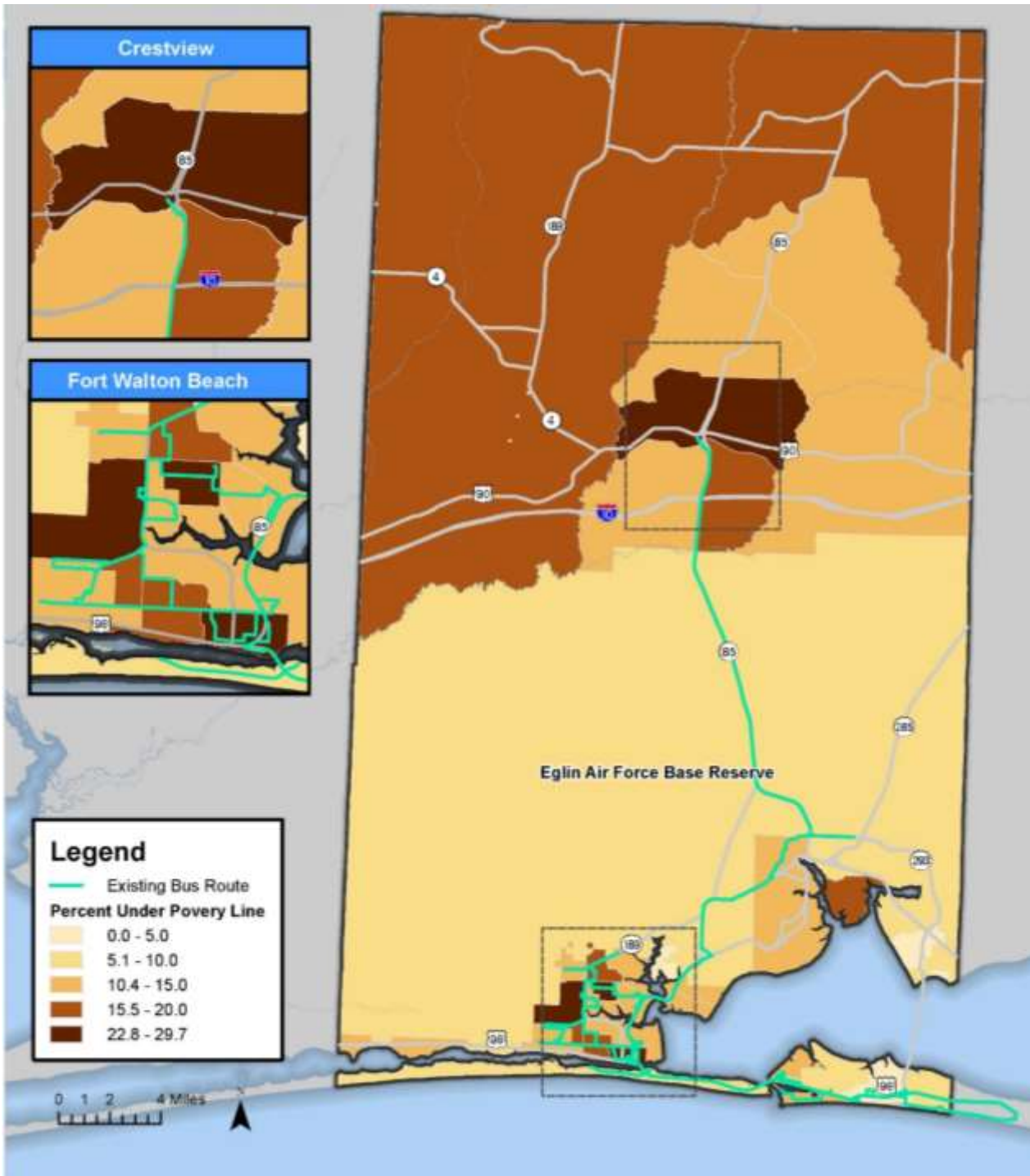
Source: 2010-2014 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Map 2-5: Existing Population Density (2015)
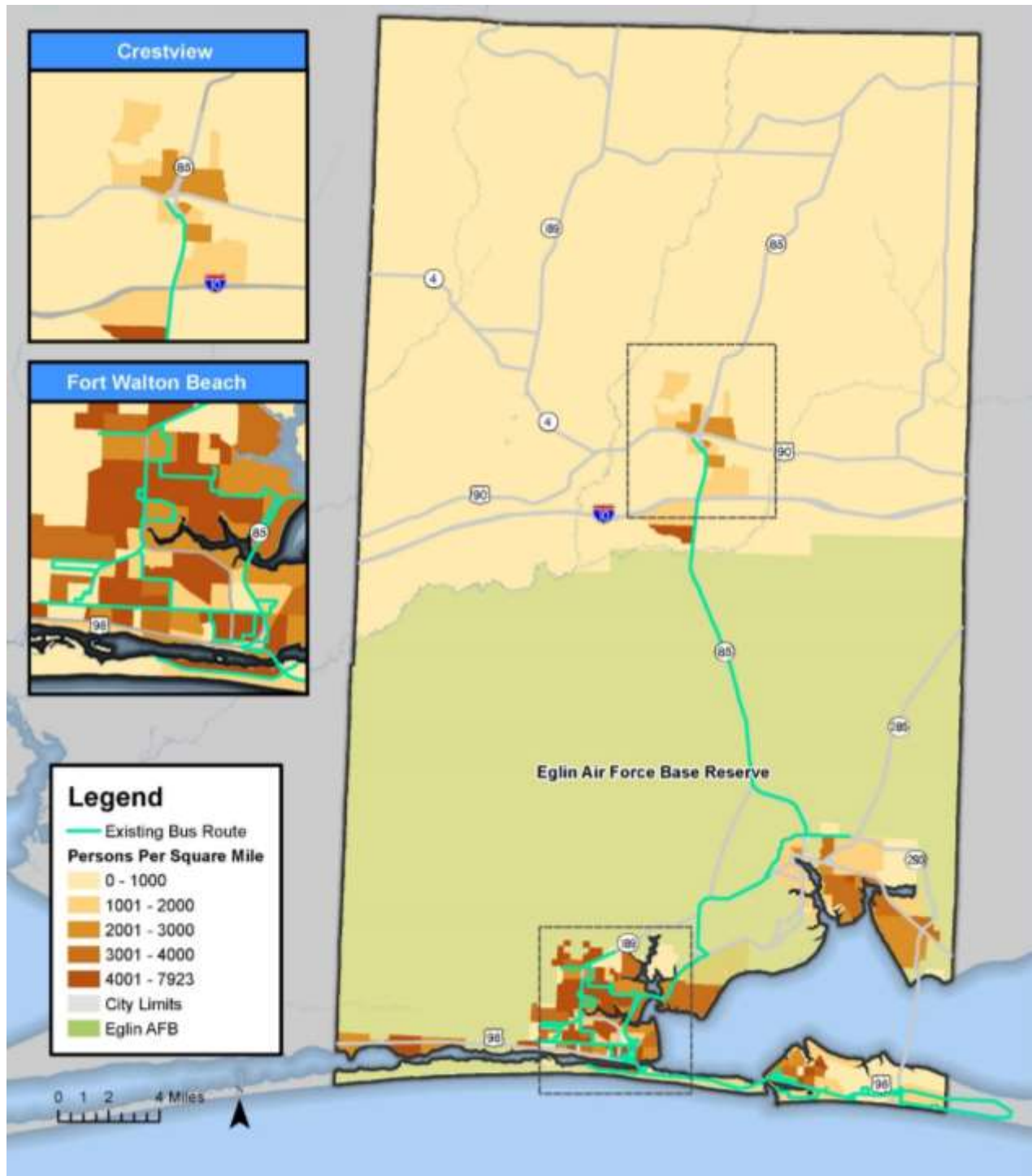
Source: NWFRPM

Map 2-6: Future Population Density (2025)
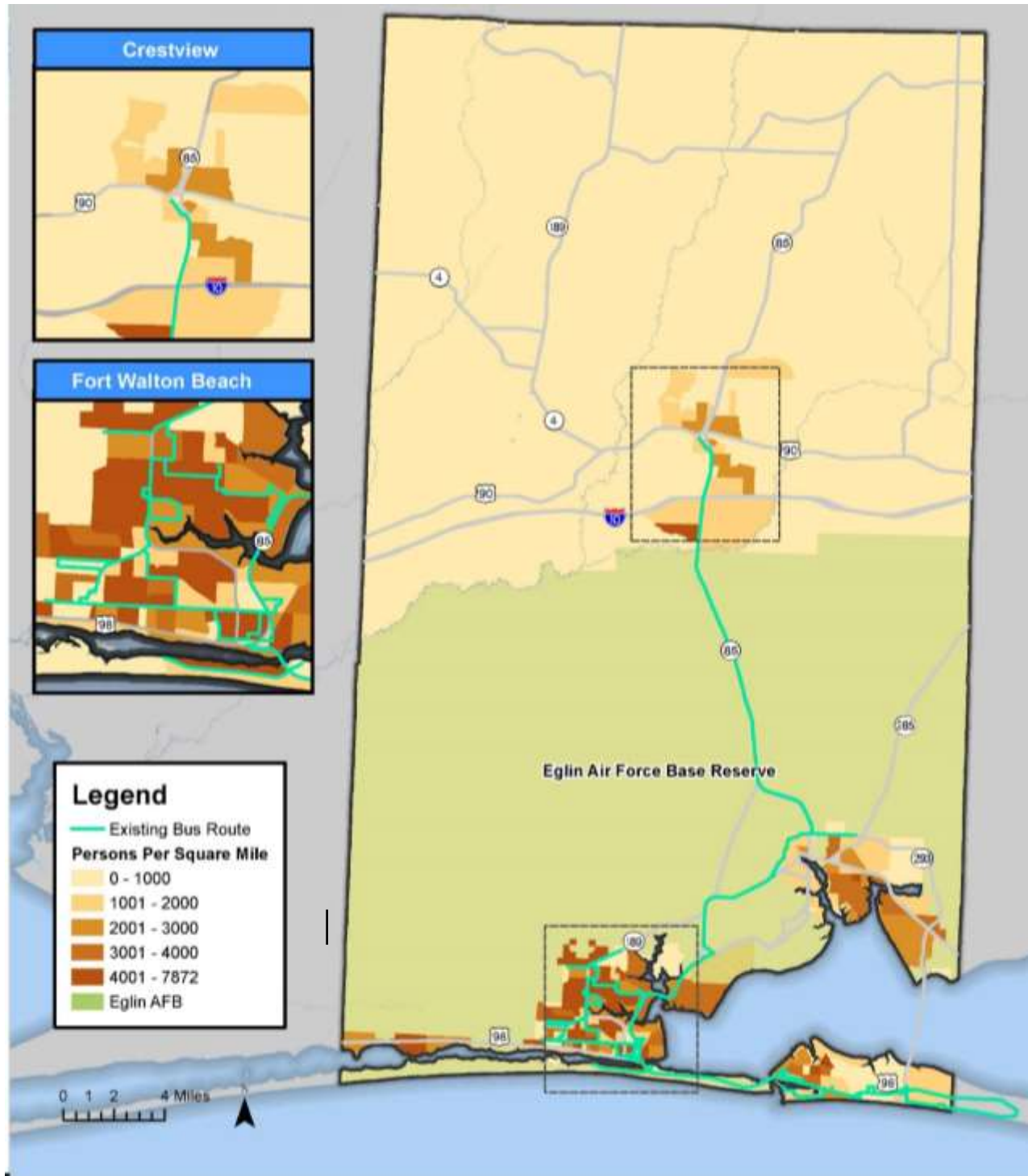
Source: NWFRPM

Map 2-7: Existing Dwelling Unit Density (2015)
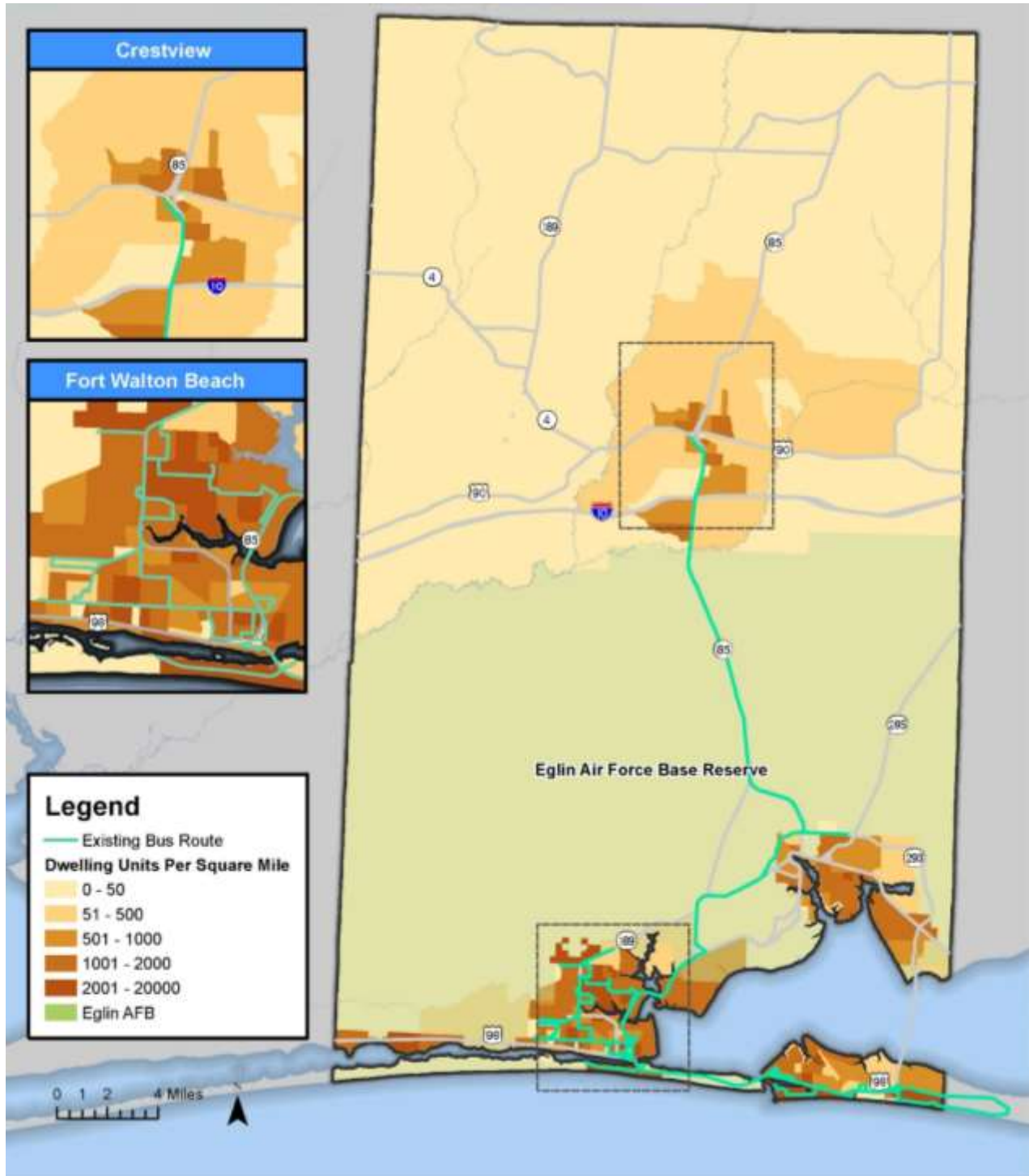
Source: NWFRPM

Map 2-8: Future Dwelling Unit Density (2025)
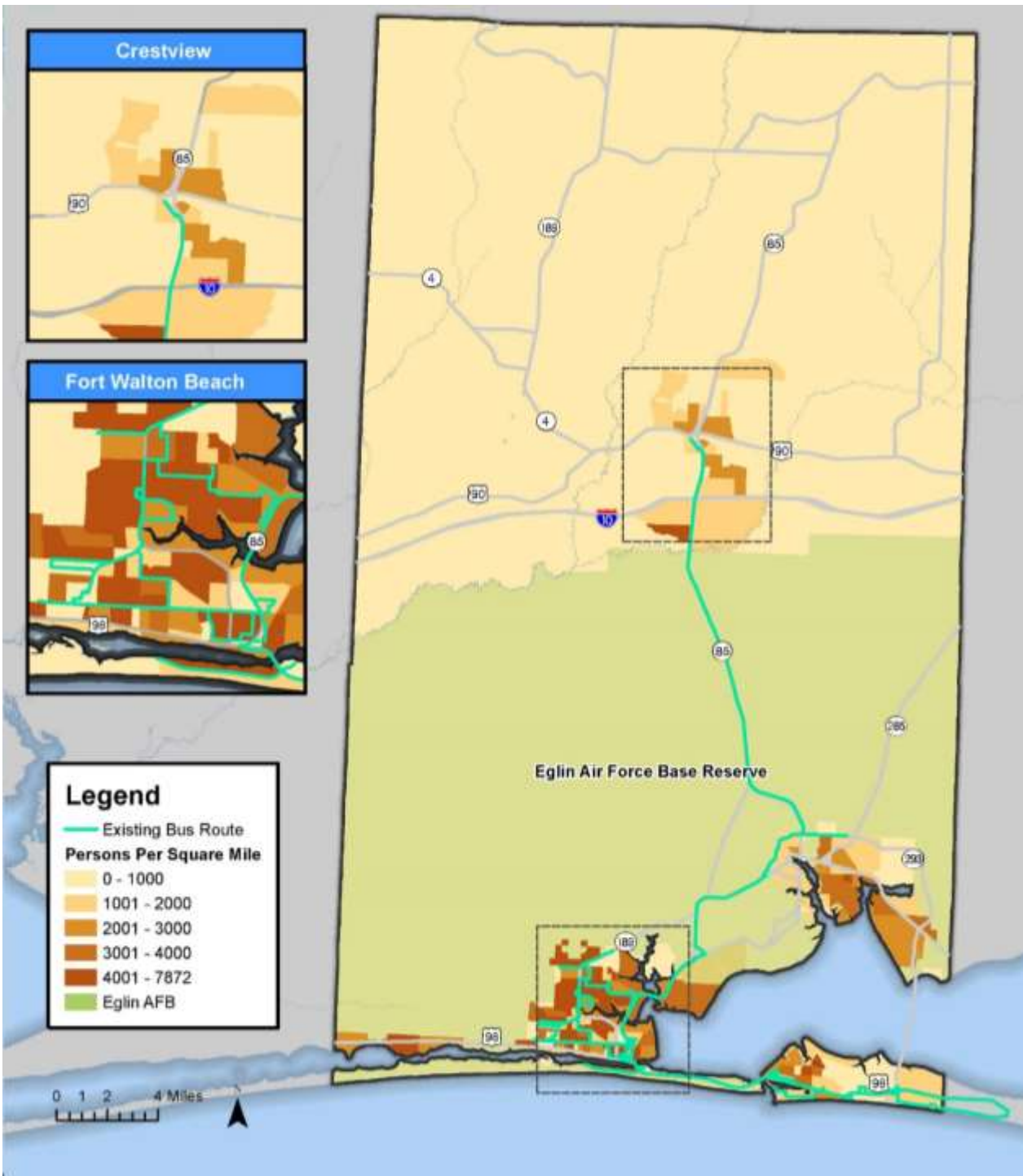
Source: NWFRPM

Transportation Disadvantaged Population

Florida Statutes, Chapter 427, §427.011(1), defines Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) persons as:

> *Those persons who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or children who are handicapped or high-risk or at risk as defined in s. 411.202.*

The Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners provides public transportation to the transportation disadvantaged (TD) population of Okaloosa County. When serving TD populations, priority is given to older adults and persons with disabilities or who are economically disadvantaged in Okaloosa County. TD service also is provided based on needs; medical needs and life-sustaining activities are given higher priority than business or recreation. Service for the TD population is funded by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), FDOT, the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD), local governments, and social service agencies.

The 2014 TD population was estimated at 62,277 persons, and the unduplicated passenger head count (UDPHC) of persons provided paratransit transportation services was 5,812 according to the Florida CTD. Table 2-10 presents the trend in the TD population and TD passengers in Okaloosa County between 2012 and 2014. The potential TD population serviced in 2013–2014 was estimated to be 9% according to the Florida CTD's 2014 Annual Operation Reports (AOR). TD passenger ridership fluctuated between 2012 and 2014. Although the county's potential TD population increased overall by 2.4% during this three-year period, there was a significant decrease in the number of TD passengers served from 2013 to 2014. This is likely due to funding shortfalls, as changes made in Medicare funding occurred statewide and Florida experienced a decrease of 19.7% in TD trips statewide.

Table 2-10: Okaloosa County TD Population and Passenger Trends

Year	2012	2013	2014	% Change (2012–2014)
Potential TD Population	60,814	60,814	62,277	2.4%
TD Passengers Served (UDPHC)	6,682	6,990	5,812	-13.0%

Source: Florida CTD 2012–2014 AOR

Table 2-11 summarizes the TD trips by purpose and passenger type that occurred between 2013 and 2014. Medical and employment are the most frequent trip purposes. As for passenger type, low-income persons (26%) and older adults (16.8%) made the most trips outside of passengers classified under "Other." Children were another large proportion of passengers, representing 12.8% of trips.

**Table 2-11: Transportation Disadvantaged Trips
by Purpose and Passenger Type (2013–2014)**

Trip Purpose	Trips	% Distribution
Medical	63,153	47.0%
Employment	48,371	36.0%
Education/training	6,718	5.0%
Nutritional	12,092	9.0%
Life-sustaining/other	4,032	3.0%
Total	134,366	100.0%
Passenger Type	**Trips**	**Percent Distribution**
Older adults	22,582	16.8%
Children	17,306	12.9%
Low-income	34,956	26.0%
With disabilities	16,062	12.0%
Low-income/with disabilities	14,172	10.6%
Other	29,288	21.8%
Total	134,366	100.0%

Source: Florida CTD 2014 AOR

Employment and Labor Characteristics

Employment and labor characteristics also help to understand land use and travel patterns that affect transit service. Like population density, Okaloosa County has a relatively low overall employment density that poses a challenge to finding transit-supportive areas. This is compounded by the fact that Eglin Air Force Base is a major land use that physically splits the county north-south. The region's major employers are the US military, the Okaloosa and Walton County school boards, and Northwest Florida State College. These large employers create an exceptional demand on the transportation system. After the military, tourism is the second largest contributor to the local economy, "employing an estimated 35,000 local residents and generating approximately 45% of the County's sales tax collections" (Okaloosa TDSP). Along the coastal areas are more service and tourist-oriented jobs than in the northern portions of the county. Other large employers include area hospitals and several military contractors.

Map 2-9 illustrates the existing (2015) employment density by TAZ. The employment data are also based on socioeconomic data from the NWFRPM. Existing employment densities are highest in the Fort Walton Beach area to the south, Destin, and along the major key corridors like Eglin Parkway, Beal Parkway, and Hollywood Boulevard. Map 2-10 shows the projected 2025 employment densities throughout the county. Employment densities are projected to increase slightly around the outskirts of Crestview and within the Fort Walton Beach, Valparaiso, and Niceville areas.

Map 2-9: Existing Employment Density (2015)
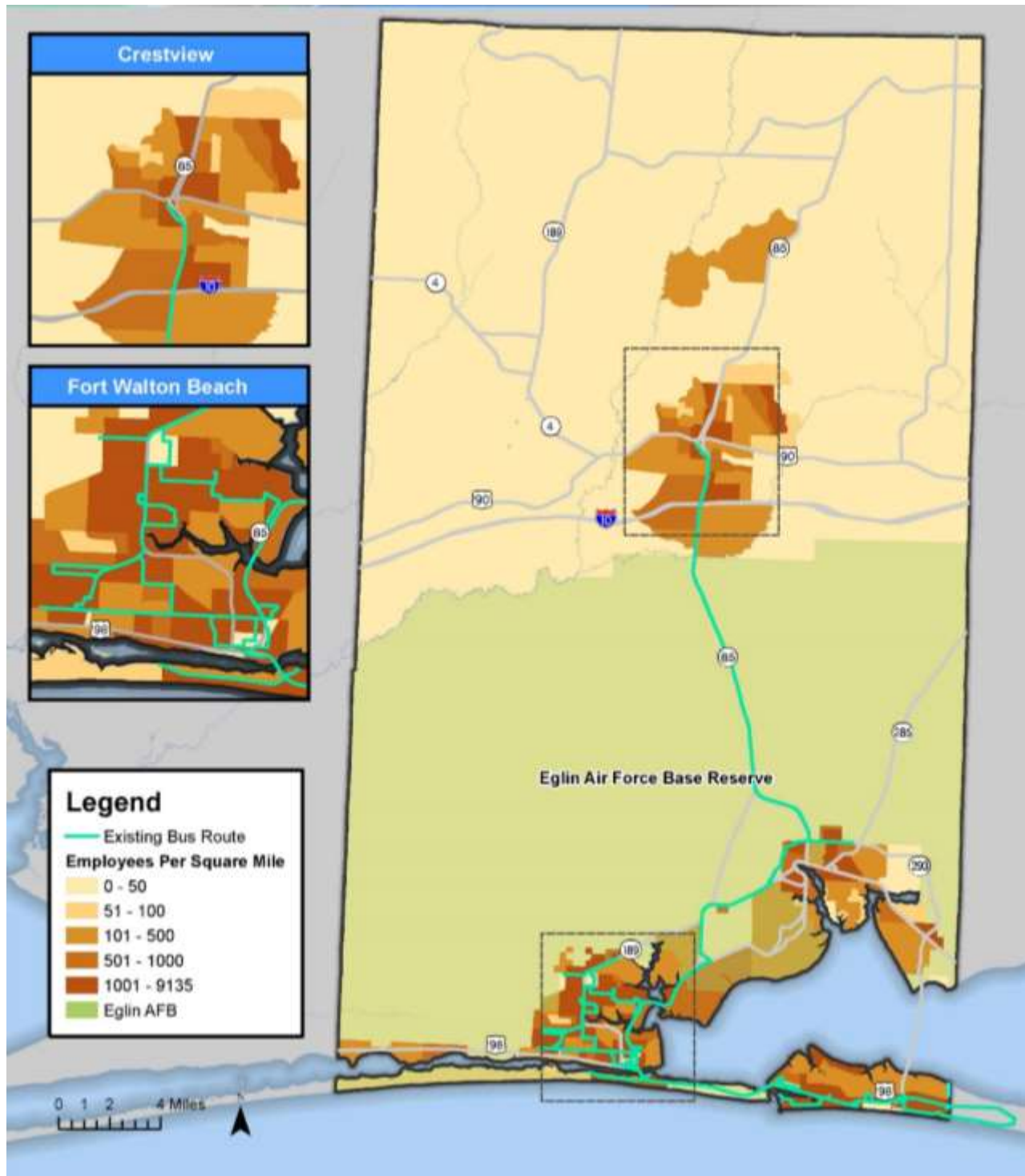
Source: NWFRPM

Map 2-10: Projected Employment Density (2025)
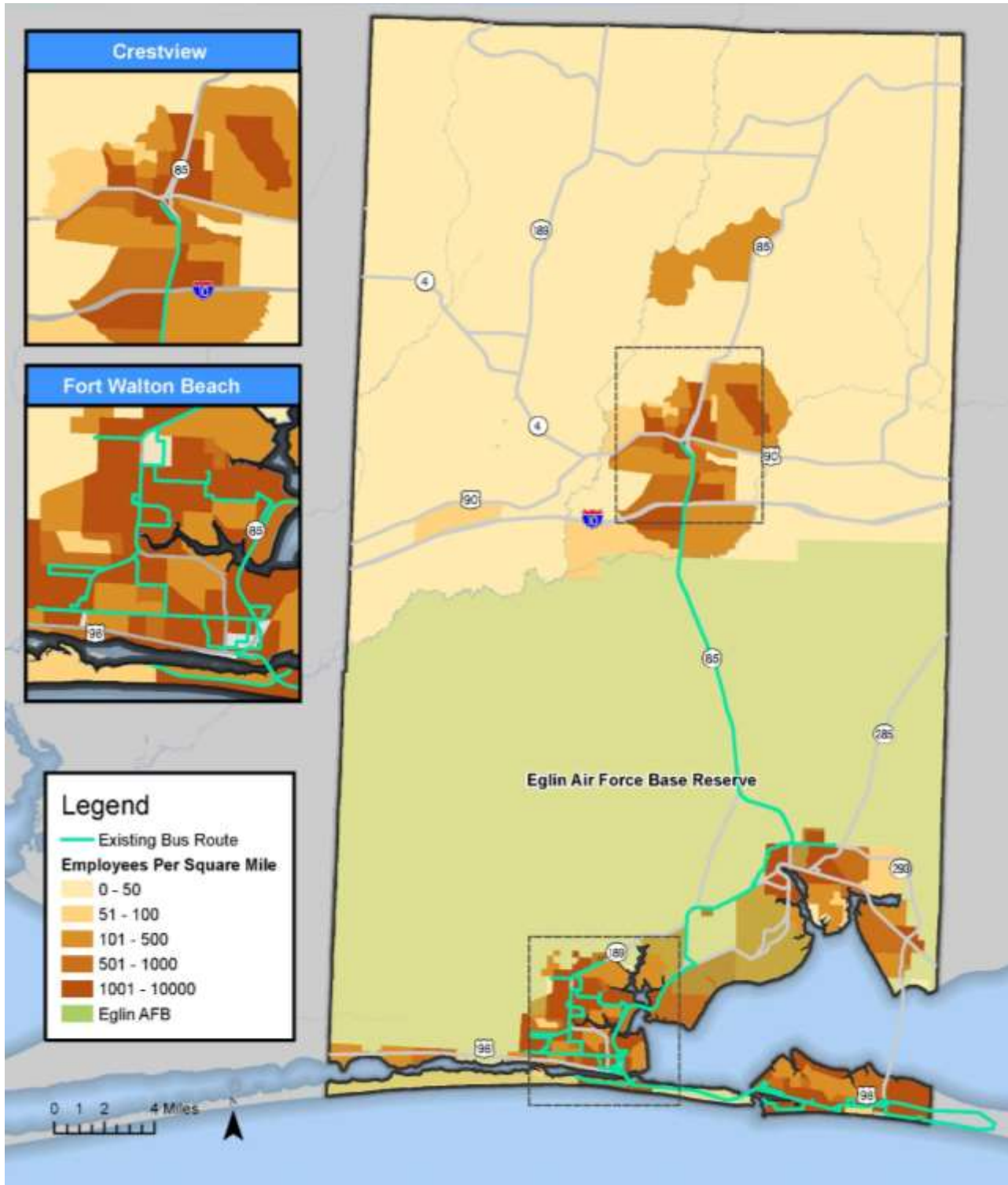
Source: NWFRPM

Journey-to-Work Characteristics

Journey-to-work characteristics for Okaloosa County were compiled from the ACS and are shown in Tables 2-12 through 2-14. These characteristics include mode of transportation to work, travel time to work, departure time to work, mode of transportation by occupation type, and destination of work trip.

As is typical in most Florida communities, the primary mode of commuting to work is by driving alone. Currently, only 0.1% of commuters travel to work using public transportation, an important consideration when determining the potential market of choice riders for transit. The mean travel time to work for workers ages 16 and older is 23.1 minutes, indicating that commuters must travel some distance between work and home.

The majority of commuters leave for work during the traditional peak hours of travel, which is consistent with the typical commuting patterns of the state.

Table 2-12: Okaloosa County
Commuting Characteristics

Characteristic	2014
Mode to Work	
Drove alone	85.1%
Carpooled	7.0%
2-person carpool	5.8%
3-person carpool	0.9%
4+-person carpool	0.3%
Workers per car, truck, or van	1.04
Public transit	0.1%
Walked	1.9%
Worked at home	3.1%
Other	–
Travel Time to Work	
< 10 min	16.9%
10–19 min	16.5%
20–29 min	19.0%
30–44 min	18.6%
45+ min	12.5%
Departure Time to Work	
6:00–8:59 AM	63.1%
Other times	36.9%

Source: 2014 ACS 1-Year Estimates

With respect to occupation, transit riders who work in sales and office occupations make up the majority of transit riders, consisting of 37% of transit riders, as shown in Table 2-13. Military-specific and service occupations make up the next highest percentage of occupation types, representing 33.7% and 20.1% of transit riders, respectively.

Table 2-13: Means of Transportation by Occupation

Occupation	Total Estimate	Drove Alone	Carpool	Public Transit*	Walk*	Taxi, Motorcycle, Bicycle, etc.
Total	88,814	74,240	7,073	796	1,269	3,173
Management, business, science, arts	31.4%	32.5%	25.2%	2.8%	27.9%	18.1%
Service	20.3%	19.4%	21.3%	20.1%	27.9%	36.1%
Sales and office	24.3%	25.0%	20.4%	37.2%	23.7%	10.2%
Natural resources, construction, maintenance	11.0%	10.7%	14.0%	4.8%	8.4%	20.1%
Production, transportation, material-moving	8.6%	8.8%	8.7%	1.5%	0.1%	12.5%
Military-specific	4.4%	3.6%	10.4%	33.7%	12.1%	3.0%

*Contains a very high margin of error
Source: 2011–2013 3-Year ACS

Table 2-14 summarizes the employment location of Okaloosa County residents. Based on 2014 ACS data, Okaloosa County had 91,611 employed residents, of which 89.5% lived and worked within the county, indicating a high demand for local employment-based trips. In addition, 8.6% of employed residents commuted to other counties, with the majority commuting to Walton County. Figure 2-3 illustrates the commuting flows within the region.

Table 2-14: **Okaloosa County Employment by Location (2014)**

Place of Work	Estimate	Margin of Error (+/-)
Total	91,611	2,772
Worked in state of residence	98.1%	0.7
Worked in county of residence	89.5%	1.9
Worked outside county of residence	8.6%	1.9
Worked outside state of residence	1.9%	0.7

Source: 2014 ACS 1-Year Estimates

Major Activity Centers

Major trip generators in Okaloosa County include Eglin Air Force Base, technology and defense contractors affiliated with the Base, retail sites, several medical facilities (such as Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, Twin Cities Hospital, North Okaloosa Medical Center, White-Wilson Medical Center, and Sacred Heart Hospital on the Emerald Coast), Emerald Coast Convention Center, tourist attractions, and government facilities. Examples of major activity centers are shown in Figure 2-4. Major employers in Okaloosa County are listed in Table 2-15, and major manufacturers are listed in Table 2-16.

Figure 2-3: West Panhandle Commuting Flows
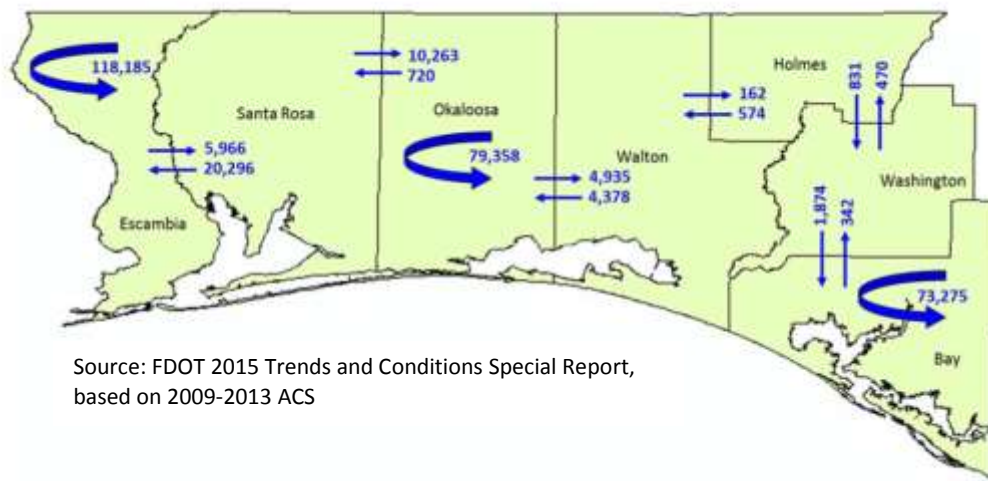
Source: FDOT 2015 Trends and Conditions Special Report, based on 2009-2013 ACS

Figure 2-4: Major Activity Centers

Destin Commons Retail Establishment
Photo source: http://www.destincommons.com

Emerald Grande Resort

Fort Walton Beach Medical Center

Uptown Station Retail Establishment
Photo source: http://uptownstation.com

Table 2-15: Okaloosa County Largest EDC Employers

Manufacturer	Employee Range
Fort Walton Beach Medical Center	1,000+
Jacobs Technology	1,000+
Lockheed Martin Corporation	800+
InDyne Inc.	800+
North Okaloosa Medical Center	700+
L-3 Crestview Aerospace	600+
NEW (an Asurion Company)	500+
The Boeing Company	450
White Wilson Medical Center	400+
BAE	380

Source: As cited by Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County

Table 2-16: Okaloosa County Top 10 Manufacturers

Name	Number of Employees
L-3 Crestview Aerospace	600+
Boeing	450
BAE	380
DRS Training and Control Systems	325
Crane Electronics	200
Fort Walton Machining	199
MicroSystems	135
Bay State Cable Ties	100
G.S. Gelato	90
Magna Manufacturing	35

Source: As cited by Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County

Several retail establishments in the county serve as major trip generators, including Destin Commons, Crystal Beach Plaza, the arts and entertainment district in Fort Walton Beach, Santa Rosa Mall, the Shoppes at Paradise Isle, Silver Sands Premium Outlet, Sunsations Plaza, and Uptown Station, which is considered the town center of Fort Walton Beach. The two biggest contributors to the economy, Eglin Air Force Base and tourism, are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Eglin Air Force Base

Eglin Air Force Base is a major driver of economic activity in the region. According to the Okaloosa-Walton 2035 LRTP, the military accounts for approximately 50% of the total goods and services produced in Okaloosa County. The Base consists of 10 air fields, the largest of which are Hurlburt Field, located off US 98, and Duke Field, located on SR 85, which is the new home of the 919th Special Operation Wing.

The 2005 Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) relocated the Army 7th Special Forces Group and the Joint Strike Fighter Initial Joint Training Site to Eglin Air Force Base, thus increasing the number of residents to the region. A total net growth of 9,854 new military and civilian personnel (including families) in 2015 in Okaloosa County alone was estimated as a result of the realignment, according to the Tri-County Growth Management Plan for Santa Rosa-Okaloosa-Walton (2010). Realignment activities began in 2011 and were forecasted to create more than 10,000 jobs in the professional technical services, construction, healthcare, and social assistance sectors in the tri-county region by 2015. The 2035 Okaloosa-Walton LRTP Update (October 2012) cites that since the BRAC recommendations have been implemented, Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, and Duke Field are transitioning to accommodate an additional 4,000 new military and civilian personnel moving to the area.

The increase in population and employment resulting from the realignment will create additional demand on the local transportation system, especially along the SR 85 and SR 123 corridors, providing access between Eglin Air Force Base and the Crestview and Fort Walton Beach/Niceville areas. This increased population and targeted service areas create additional opportunities for delivering more efficient transit service in Okaloosa County.

F-35 Lightning II Aircraft arrive at Eglin Air Force Base
Image Source: www.eglin.af.mil

Tourism

Okaloosa County is known for its attractive beaches, and the region attracts millions of visitors each year. Recreational opportunities include the beaches, waterparks, camping, canoeing, golf, fishing, snorkeling, diving, shopping, dining, and boating. The additional population brought to the county during the peak tourist season places additional demand on the transportation system and increases traffic congestion, particularly in the coastal areas.

Land Uses

As a part of the baseline conditions assessment, a review of current and emerging land uses also was conducted. Future land use maps from the 2009 Okaloosa County Comprehensive Plan for the cities of Fort Walton Beach, Crestview, and Destin were reviewed. From this review, the following key trends were observed:

- A substantial concentration of commercial land use surrounded by mixed use is zoned along the corridors of SR 189, SR 393, and SR 188 in the Fort Walton Beach area.
- The middle portion of the county is recognized as the Eglin Air Force Base encroachment zone.
- Mixed land use and some pockets of commercial land use surround US 90 and SR 85 in the Crestview area. Surrounding these areas are largely low-density residential and rural residential land uses.
- The northern section of the county is largely zoned for agricultural land use and conservation, with the exception of the area surrounding Crestview.
- Destin contains mostly Mixed Use 1 Development of Regional Impact (DRI), Mixed Use 2 Master Plan Communities, Mixed Use, and Commercial future land use classifications.
- Adjacent to US 98 along the coastal areas are significant strips of commercial and mixed land uses that are surrounded by low- and medium-density residential.

Roadway Conditions

Existing roadway conditions were considered for the assessment of baseline conditions. According to the Okaloosa-Walton County TPO's Transportation Outlook 2035 LRTP, several segments of major roadways, including SR 85, Highway 90, PJ Adams Parkway, Highway 4, SR 123, SR 293, SR 20, Highway 98, Lewis Turner Boulevard, and Eglin Parkway, are projected to operate at a level of service (LOS) E or F by 2035. Roadways operating at LOS F are considered failing and typically are congested during peak travel periods. Roads approaching or at LOS F by 2035, if no additional mobility projects are scheduled for construction, are illustrated in Figure 2-5.

The SR 85 and SR 123 corridors are vital connections between I-10 near Crestview to Niceville and Fort Walton Beach, carrying thousands of commuters to Eglin Air Force Base, Duke Field, Hurlburt Field, Northwest Florida Regional Airport, and other destinations in the region. The 2035 LRTP anticipates the BRAC actions to impact the SR 85 and SR 123 corridors between Crestview and Fort Walton Beach/Niceville. SR 85 is the vital link that supports national defense missions at Eglin Air Force Base, serves as a critical hurricane and emergency evacuation route for the region, and connects jobs to more affordable housing found north of I-10 and Crestview.

SR 85 is part of the Florida Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), a network of high-priority transportation facilities throughout the state and part of the Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET), a designation given

by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to roads that are critical to the U.S. Department of Defense's domestic operations.

Figure 2-5: Okaloosa County 2035 Roadway Deficiencies
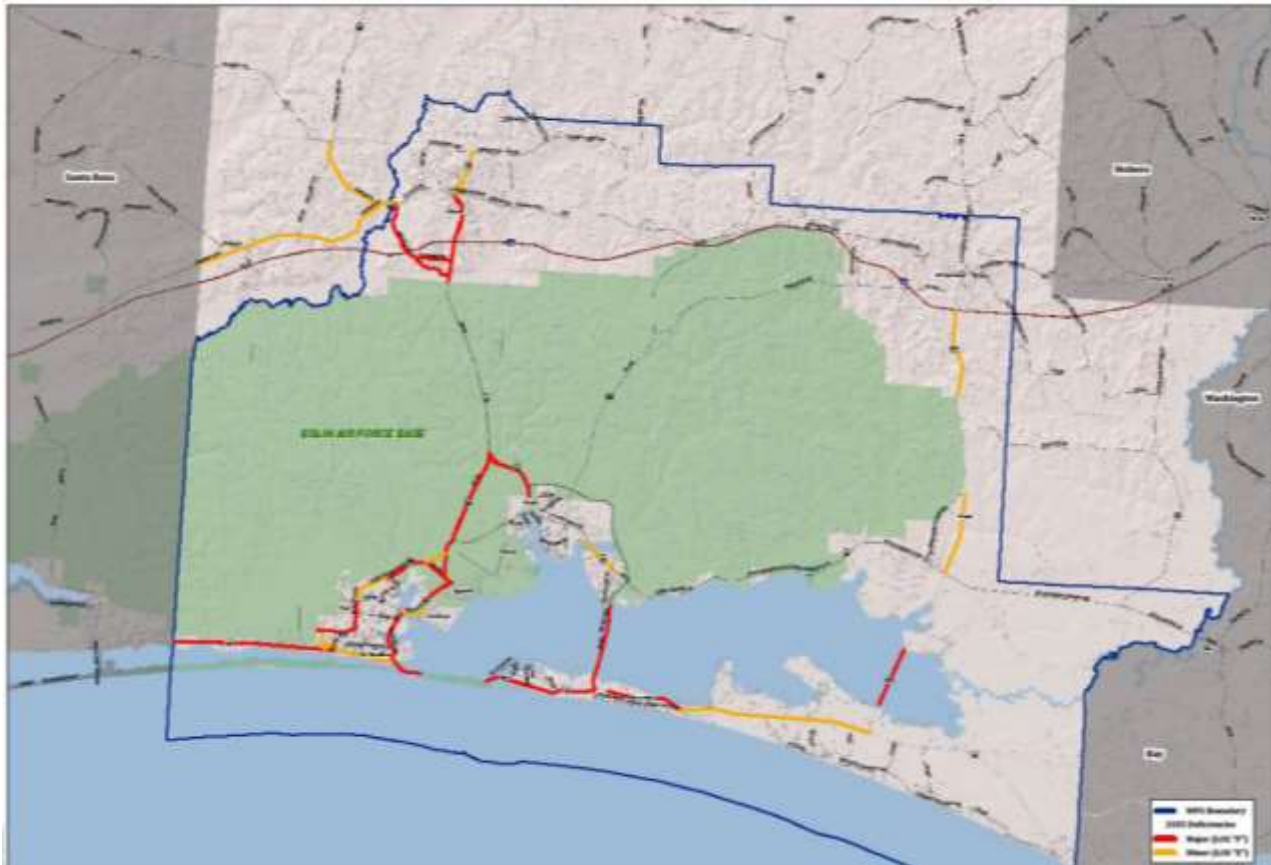
Source: Transportation Outlook 2035: Okaloosa-Walton TPO 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (May 2012)
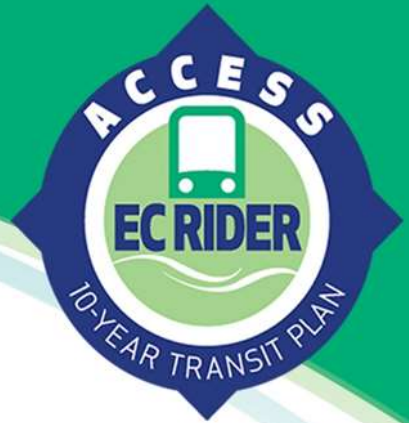
SECTION 3: EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICE

Transit Service Overview

Transit services in Okaloosa County have been provided by Okaloosa County since 1987. Okaloosa County Transit, formerly branded as "Ride the WAVE," rebranded its transit services in 2015 to "Emerald Coast Rider," called EC Rider. EC Rider offers fixed-route bus service and limited paratransit service countywide to Crestview, Niceville, Fort Walton Beach, and Destin as well as an express bus route called the Wave Express, which runs north-south between Crestview and Fort Walton Beach. The hub of the fixed-route services is located in the Uptown Station, an outdoor mall considered to be the town center of Fort Walton Beach (see Figure 3-1). EC Rider also offers paratransit service to Okaloosa County residents who are unable to access fixed-route bus service, with cost based on distance traveled and reservations required to schedule a ride.

Figure 3-1: Uptown Station

Source: http://uptownstation.com/store-directory/

Currently, EC Rider provides 10 fixed routes in Okaloosa County—5 that serve Fort Walton Beach, 1 that serves Okaloosa Island, 3 that serve Destin/South Walton, and 1 that connects Crestview to Fort Walton Beach. The routes in Fort Walton Beach have headways that range from one to four hours, and most

operate between 7:00 AM and no later than 7:45 PM on weekdays only; no weekend service currently is provided.

The routes in Destin/South Walton and Okaloosa Island typically have 60-minute headways, although Route 30 increases its headways to 30 minutes in the summer. The Wave Express (Route 14) has 10- to 30-minute headways during the peak hour. The regular one-way fare for EC Rider is $1.50, and the regular one-way fare for the Wave Express is $2.00, or $45.00 for a monthly pass. A 50% discount for the regular fare or monthly pass on both the Wave and the Wave Express is given to older adults and persons with disabilities. Table 3-1 shows characteristics of routes currently operated by the Emerald Coast Rider.

Table 3-1: EC Rider Route Inventory and Characteristics

Route No.	Key Location/Corridors Served	No. of Stops	Freq.	Hours
1	Fort Walton Beach – connects NW Florida State College to Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, Uptown Station; stops at Green Acres, YMCA Choctaw Village, Teresa Village, Falcon Ridge Apartments, Mariner Plaza	47	75 mins	7:00 AM–7:30 PM
2	Fort Walton Beach – connects Mary Esther Post Office to Uptown Station along Hollywood Blvd; stops at Mary Esther Library, Santa Rosa Mall, Fort Walton High School	26	60 mins	7:10 AM–6:46 PM
3	Fort Walton Beach – connects NW Florida State College to White-Wilson Medical Center, Walmart, Santa Rosa Mall; stops at Pier 1, Walgreen's, YMCA, Green Acres	41	60–180 mins	6:30 AM–7:42 PM
4	Fort Walton Beach – connects Walmart transfer station to Uptown Station; stops at Florida Dept. of Health and Sun Plaza	44	70 mins	6:50 AM–7:28 PM
5	Fort Walton Beach – runs primarily along SR 85, connects Santa Rosa Mall to Walmart transfer station, YMCA, White-Wilson Medical Center, CHOICE High School and Technical Center	13	4 hrs	7:50 AM–4:55 PM
14 WAVE Express	Connects Crestview City Hall to Uptown Station; limited stops at NW Florida State College (Niceville), Niceville City Hall, VA Clinic, and Shalimar Court House Annex	11	4 hrs	6:20 AM–5:55 PM
20	Okaloosa Island – runs along Santa Rosa Blvd, US 98, Eglin Parkway; stops at Uptown Station, Fort Walton Beach Landing, area hotels, Gulfarium, Tourist Development Council Visitor's Center, Emerald Coast Convention Center, Shoppes at Paradise Point	33	Summer– 30 mins Winter– 60 mins	Not Available
30	Destin/South Walton – runs primarily along US 98/Miracle Strip Parkway, connects Wayside Park to Destin Community Center; stops at Destin Library, Holiday Surf and Racquet Club, Waterview Towers, East Pass Towers, Lucky Snapper	15	Summer– 30 mins Winter– 60 mins	Not Available
32	Destin – runs along US 98 and Emerald Coast Parkways, connects 98 Palms Plaza to Wingate by Wyndham; stops at Sunsation Plaza, several hotels, Destin Commons, Shoppes at Paradise Key, Marshall's, Fuddruckers, Track, Big Kahunas	25	Summer– 30 mins Winter– 60 mins	Not Available
33	East Destin – circular loop along US 98 and Emerald Coast Parkway; stops at Destin Commons, Shoppes at Paradise Key, Crystal Beach Plaza, Holiday Inn Express, James Lee Park, Silver Sands Premium Outlet	8	60 mins	Not Available

The Uptown Station plaza is the hub of public transit through Fort Walton Beach and through Okaloosa County, as it is a major transfer point for many EC Rider routes. Transfers between EC Rider routes are provided free of charge, with the exception of Wave Express, for which transfers are not accepted.

The Emerald Coast Rider has 11 transfer locations as part of its service:

- Uptown Station
- Walmart Supercenter (Fort Walton Beach)
- OWC/UWF (Fort Walton Beach)
- White-Wilson Medical Center (Fort Walton Beach)
- Santa Rosa Mall
- Boardwalk/Wayside Park
- 98 Palms Shopping Center
- Crystal Beach Plaza
- Holiday Inn Express
- Destin Commons
- Shoppes at Paradise Key

Park-and-ride facilities are provided at the following locations (additional parking requirements at some of these lots):

- Uptown Station, Fort Walton Beach
- Boardwalk, Okaloosa Island
- Destin Commons
- All other public parking lots unless otherwise noted

The EC Rider fixed-route network is illustrated in Map 3-1. Also included on the map are the ¼- and ¾-mile buffer service areas. The ¼-mile buffer represents the maximum distance riders typically are willing to walk to get to the bus. The ¾-mile buffer indicates the service area in which complementary ADA paratransit service must be provided.

Map 3-1: Existing Transit Service Area

Ridership Trends

Ridership on the EC Rider routes (shown in Figure 3-2) increased considerably between 2005 and 2008 and, although ridership decreased some in 2009 and 2010, there has been overall growth since 2010. Ridership peaked in 2008 with 211,330 riders, when many transit agencies throughout Florida and the U.S. saw a peak in ridership due to high gas prices and the Great Recession. Seasonally, ridership tends to peak during the summer, especially during August with the peak in tourism. In examining ridership data from December 2014 to November 2015, Route 1 had the highest annual ridership, followed by Routes 20 and 30, respectively (see Table 3-2).

Figure 3-2: Emerald Coast Rider Passenger Trips, 2008–2013
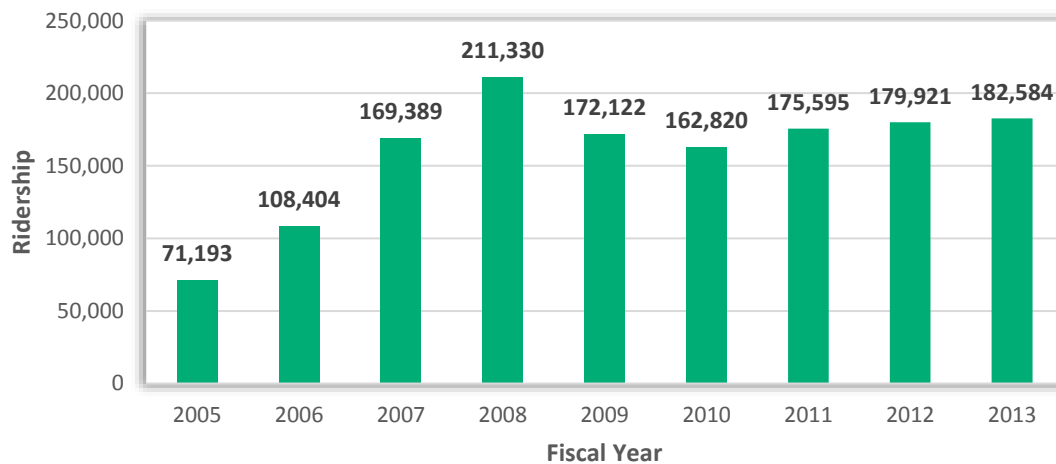
Source: Florida Transit Information System (FTIS) and Okaloosa County TDP Major Update September 2011

Table 3-2: **EC Rider Annual Ridership by Route**

Route	Annual Ridership
1	27,406
2	14,045
3	5,962
4	17,598
5	1,870
14	9,044
20	21,449
30	17,678
32	13,362
33	9,322

Source: Emerald Coast Rider Automatic
Passenger Count Data; data 12/14–11/15

Future Passenger Rail

A report for the Southern Rail Commission (SRC), "Potential Gulf Coast Service Restoration Options" (December 2015), evaluated scenarios for restoring passenger rail services along the Gulf Coast, including the Florida Panhandle. From 1993 through 2005, Amtrak also operated an extension of the Sunset Limited Train through the region as part of a transcontinental Los Angeles–Florida run, but struggled with on-time performance for various reasons including route length and carrier operating conditions. Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Sunset Limited was suspended east of New Orleans.

Rail service options for the Gulf Coast west of New Orleans include:

- *Alternatives A and A1* – Extend Amtrak's City of New Orleans passenger train service from New Orleans to Orlando, with (Alternative A) or without (Alternative A1) a single daily State-supported train. Alternative A provides the highest total ridership of any analyzed alternative. Alternative A1 provides the second highest ridership but the lowest level of identified operating need.
- *Alternatives B and B1* – Two daily State-supported round trips between New Orleans and Mobile, priced and funded by state partners without (Alternative B) or with (Alternative B1) a thruway bus connection from Mobile to Amtrak service at Jacksonville.
- *Alternative C* – One daily long-distance round-trip between New Orleans and Orlando.

Alternatives A and A1 yield superior ridership demand and cost efficiency over Alternatives B, B1, and C.

Other Transportation Service Providers

Other private and public agencies also offer transportation services for specific client groups. Table 3-3 lists other privately-operated/contracted transportation providers that serve the general public. All private transportation providers listed were contacted for general information about their services; the information provided is summarized in the table.

Social service providers that offer transportation services to older adults or persons with disabilities were contacted for specific information about their services. Table 3-4 lists various social service provider contact and the information provided.

Table 3-3: Privately-Operated/Contracted Service Providers

Organization	Address	Phone	Type	County Agreement	Service Area	Service Frequency	Vehicle Type and Fleet Size	Seating Capacity	Daily Ridership	Wheelchair Equipped	Coordinate with EC Rider?
Destin Water Taxi	620 Harbor Blvd, Destin, FL 32541	850-499-6679	Water Taxi	No	Destin area	11 AM–12 PM weekdays	1 boat	16 persons	varies	No	No
Emerald Grande	10 Harbor Blvd, Destin, FL 32541	850-337-8100	Boat shuttle for guests only	No	Destin Beach	10 AM–4 PM	1 boat			No	No
Greyhound	101 Perry Ave SE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548	850-243-1940	Bus		Local stop in Fort Walton Beach		Bus			No	No
Island Time Shuttle	23 E Strong St, #4, Pensacola, FL 32501	850-346-4460	Shuttle	No	Escambia, Okaloosa	24 hrs with reservation	Cars	6 persons	1–3 trips	No	No
Miramar Beach Shuttle	Sandestin, FL 32550	850-502-9094	Taxi/Airport Shuttle	No	Okaloosa, Walton	24/7	3 vans	7–8 persons	100+	No	No
Sunshine Shuttle	323 Lynn Drive, Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459	850-650-6333	Shuttle, limo, motorcoach for public	No	Florida	24/7, contract with Sandestin Resort, Sea Side	80 vehicles–limos, buses, motorcoaches, cars, SUVs, minivans	2–55 persons	10–600 persons	Yes	No
T-Mac Shuttle Service	Niceville, FL	850-217-9141	Shuttle for public	No	Florida	24/7	1 van	7 persons	1–2	No	No
Uber	301 Vermont St, San Francisco, CA		Taxi/ Ridesharing	No	Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa		Personal cars				

Source: Survey of individual providers/organizations listed in above table.

Table 3-4: **Social Service Transportation Providers**

Organization	Address	Phone	Type	County Agreement	Service Area	Service Frequency	Vehicle Type and Fleet Size	Seating Capacity	Daily Ridership	Wheel Chair Equipped	Coordinate with EC Rider?
Alternative Living	Twin Cities Pavilion: 1053 John Sims Pkwy, Niceville, FL; Crestview Manor: 603 N Pearl St, Crestview, FL	850-833-9165	Depend on public transit		Okaloosa						
Carington Manor	3215 E James Lee Blvd, Crestview FL 32539	850-423-1228	Car shuttle, medical trips for residents only	No	Okaloosa	24/7	Personal vehicles	4	Varies	No	No
Comfort Keepers	772 E John Sims Pkwy, Niceville, FL 32578	850-279-6310	Medical car shuttle	No	Okaloosa, Walton	24/7	40 cars, Caregiver personal car used	4	Varies	No	No
Crescent Park Village	551 Redstone Ave W, Crestview, FL 32536	850-683-3997	Private, for residents only	No	Within 10-mile radius		Personal vehicles	4		No	No
Granny Nannies Home Health Care	5669 Gulf Breeze Pkwy, Suite B-12, Gulf Breeze, FL 32563	850-995-0599	Medical CNA car shuttle for older adults	No	Santa Rosa, Escambia, Okaloosa, Walton		Personal vehicles	4		No	No
Home Care Solutions LLC	25 E Wright St, #2512, Pensacola, FL 32501	850-433-0733	Medical shuttle/car for clients only	No	Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton		Personal vehicle	4		No	No
Home Instead Senior Care of Walton & Okaloosa Counties	722 Beal Pkwy NE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547	850-243-6464	Multipurpose shuttle/car for clients only	No	Florida		Personal vehicle of caregiver/ client	4		No	No

Organization	Address	Phone	Type	County Agreement	Service Area	Service Frequency	Vehicle Type and Fleet Size	Seating Capacity	Daily Ridership	Wheel Chair Equipped	Coordinate with EC Rider?
Northwest Florida Area Agency on Aging, Inc.	5090 Commerce Park Cir, Pensacola, FL 32505	850-494-7101	Sub-contracted to another company, clients only								
Okaloosa County Paratransit Service	600 Transit Way, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547	Crestview: 850-689-7809 Fort Walton: 850-833-9168	Minibus, wheelchair van		Okaloosa						
Okaloosa County School District	554 Anderson St, Crestview, FL 32536	850-833-3555	Commuter bus for students	No	Okaloosa	5AM–5PM	~300 buses	65–71 persons	unknown	Yes	No
Okaloosa County Veterans Services		850-689-5923	Ambulatory van		Okaloosa						
Okaloosa Emergency Medical Services	6 11th Ave #G1, Shalimar, FL 32579	850-651-7150	Ambulance	Dept. of Okaloosa County	Okaloosa	8AM–5PM unless emergency	Buses	30		Yes	Yes
The Meridian at Westwood	1001 Mar Walt Dr, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547	877-797-6067	Shuttle for residents only	No	Okaloosa	Daily	1 car, 2 buses	4–14 persons	Varies	Yes	No

Source: Survey of individual providers/organizations listed in above table.

Uber

Uber is an international ridesourcing service headquartered in San Francisco and is a service similar to taxi except it connects drivers to consumers using a mobile app. Consumers use their smartphone to make a trip request, which is then routed to the nearest Uber driver. The drivers then use their personal car to transport consumers to their destination. Uber and other similar ridesourcing services are growing in popularity, especially among young adults, and in many locations complement gaps in transit services by helping riders complete the last leg of their trip or by providing late service when transit is not operating. Uber drivers currently provide service in Okaloosa County; Figures 3-3 through 3-5 illustrate the demand hotspots for Uber in the northwest Florida region. The service demand peaks in the late evening hours in the coastal areas of Fort Walton Beach and Destin.

Figure 3-3: Uber Demand Hot Spots by Time of Day

Source: http://uberflpartners.com/pensacola-demand/
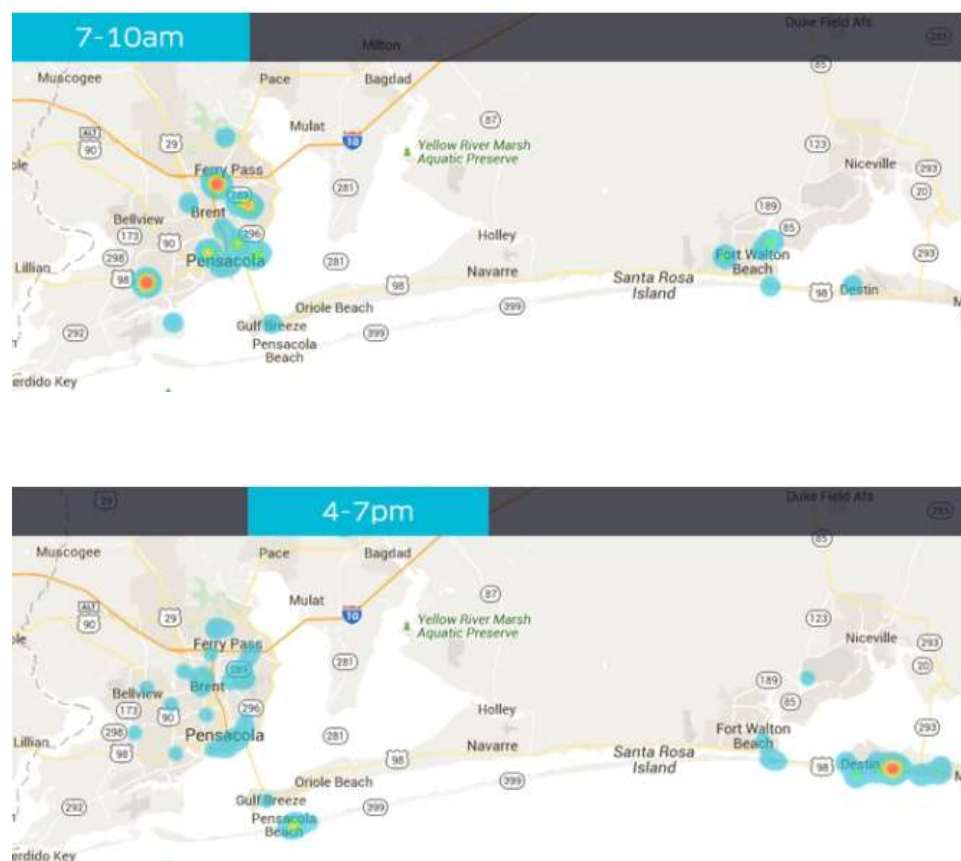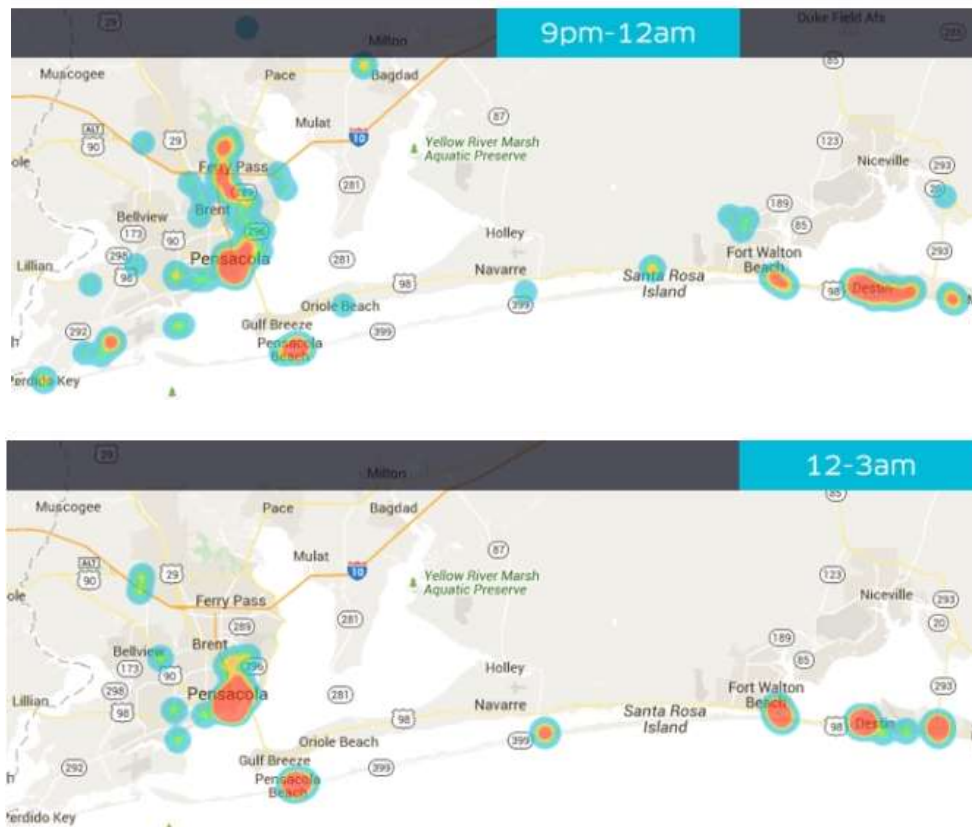
Figure 3-4: Uber Demand Hotspots for Weekend Evening

Source: http://uberflpartners.com/pensacola-demand/

Figure 3-5: Uber Driver Demand Hotspots for Weekend after Midnight

Source: http://uberflpartners.com/pensacola-demand/

Trend and Peer Review and Analysis

To assess how efficiently EC Rider supplies fixed-route transit service and how effective those services meet the needs of the area, a trend analysis of critical performance indicators was conducted to examine the performance of it fixed-route services over a five-year period. To complete this peer and trend analysis, data from the Florida Transit Information System (FTIS) were used, which includes validated National Transit Database (NTD) data for fiscal years 2009 through 2013. The performance measures are used to present the data that relate to overall system performance. Three categories of performance measures were analyzed for the trend analysis of the existing transit service:

- *General performance measures* – indicate the quantity of service supply, passenger and fare revenue generation, and resource input.
- *Effectiveness measures* – indicate the extent to which the service is effectively provided; these measures can be used to implement goals towards improving the quality of service and customer satisfaction, and increasing the market share of transit.
- *Efficiency measures* – indicate the extent to which cost efficiency is achieved, i.e. costs in relation to benefit; these measures can be used to implement goals towards long-term viability and stability of the service.

In conjunction with the trend analysis, a peer review analysis was conducted to compare various EC Rider fixed-route performance characteristics to a group of transit peers. The trend and peer review analyses are organized by the type of measure or indicator and include statistics, figures, and tables to illustrate EC Rider's performance over the past five years and how EC Rider compares to selected peers. The selection process for the peer review is described first, followed by a presentation of highlights from the trend and peer review analyses. Summary results are provided at the conclusion of this section with more detail provided in Appendix A.

Peer Selection

The fixed-route peer selection was conducted using the validated 2013 NTD data. The methodology used to conduct the peer selection is based on the established standard methodology documented in Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 141, "A Methodology for Performance Measurement and Peer Comparison in the Public Transportation Industry." The methodology involves two steps—screening and peer-grouping. The goal is to identify transit agencies that are similar to EC Rider by comparing a number of characteristics that affect transit performance. Through this process, a "likeness score" is developed to determine the level of similarity between a potential peer agency and EC Rider with respect to individual factors and for the agencies overall. Three screen factors are used in the first screening step to ensure that potential peers operate a similar mix of modes as EC Rider: Rail Operator (yes/no), Rail-Only Operator (yes/no), and Heavy-Rail Operator (yes/no).

The aforementioned screening step scores each potential peer for each factor. This score is used when calculating the total likeness for potential peers. After the initial screening process, 14 peer-grouping factors are used to identify transit agencies similar to EC Rider, including 5 service characteristics and 9 urban area characteristics. All of these factors are based on nationally-available measures that are consistently defined and reported. Complete definitions and scoring descriptions for each of the noted factors are documented in TCRP Report 141. The factors include:

1. Total Vehicle Miles Operated
2. Total Operating Budget
3. Percent Demand Response
4. Percent Service Purchased
5. Service Area Type
6. Urban Area Population
7. Population Growth Rate
8. Population Density
9. State Capital
10. Percent Population with College Degree
11. Percent Poverty
12. Annual Delay (hours) per Traveler
13. Freeway Lane-Miles per Capita
14. Distance to Peer System

Likeness scores are calculated for each individual factor based on the percentage difference between the potential peer's value and EC Rider's value. A score of 0 indicates that the peer and EC Rider values are exactly alike, and a score of 1 indicates that the potential peer's value is twice that of EC Rider. For the factors that cannot be compared by a percentage difference (e.g., state capital or distance), likeness scores are based on formulas that are designed to produce similar types of results; a score of 0 indicates identical characteristics, a score of 1 indicates a difference, and a score of 2 or more indicates a substantial difference.

After the screen factor scores and peer-grouping factor scores are determined, the total likeness score for an individual potential peer agency is calculated using a sum of all likeness scores divided by a count of the peer-grouping factors. The total likeness score is interpreted as follows:

- Less than 0.50 – good match
- 0.50–0.74 – satisfactory match
- 0.75–0.99 – poor match
- greater than 0.99 – unmatched

Based on the TCRP methodology, 11 peer agencies with total likeness scores of less than 0.75 were selected for further consideration. For each peer, 8 operating variables were extracted and analyzed simultaneously, including:

- Average speed
- Passenger trips
- Revenue hours
- Revenue miles

- Service area population
- Service area population density
- Vehicles operated in maximum service

Points for each potential peer were summed to obtain a total score by which the potential peers were ranked in descending order. In examining each potential peer more closely, some peers exhibiting an outlier for a particular variable or more than one variable specified above were eliminated. For example, Eau Claire Transit had passenger trips of 1.02 million in 2011, which was 483% more than that of EC Rider. Therefore, Eau Claire Transit was removed from the potential peer list. A further examination of each peer finally resulted in the elimination of several more peers. The final five peers are presented in Table 3-5. The final peers include two Florida transit agencies and three out-of-state transit agencies. Two of the peers selected also were included in the previous TDP: Michiana Area Council of Governments and Bay County Transportation Planning Organization. Once the peers were selected, 2013 NTD data were collected for the peer review analyses.

Table 3-5: Selected Peer Systems, EC Rider Transit Peer Review Analysis

Agency Name	Location
Lake County Board of County Commissioners	Tavares, FL
Terrebonne Parish	Houma, LA
Macatawa Area	Holland, MI
Michiana Area Council of Governments	South Bend, IN
Bay County Transportation Planning Organization	Pensacola, FL

Selected Performance Measures

Table 3-6 lists the performance measures by category used in the peer and trend analysis. A review of EC Rider trends and how it compares to its peers is presented next, by performance measure type, beginning with General Performance Measures, followed by Efficiency Performance Measures and Effectiveness Performance Measures, respectively.

Table 3-6: Performance Measures by Category

General Performance	Effectiveness	Efficiency
Service Area Population	Vehicle Miles per Capita	Operating Exp. per Capita
Service Area Population Density	Passenger Trips per Capita	Operating Exp. Per Passenger Trip
Passenger Trips	Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile	Operating Exp. Per Passenger Mile
Passenger Miles	Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour	Operating Exp. Per Revenue Mile
Vehicle Miles	Average Age of Fleet	Operating Exp. Per Revenue Hour
Revenue Miles	Average Headway (in minutes)	Farebox Recovery (%)
Total Operating Expense	Number of Vehicle System Failures	Revenue Miles per Vehicle Mile
Vehicles Operating in Max. Service	Revenue Miles Between Failures	Revenue Hours per Employee (FTE)
Passenger Fare Revenue	Weekday Span of Service (in hours)	Vehicle Miles per Gallon
		Average Fare

Trend and Peer Review Analysis

As previously discussed, an analysis of EC Rider's fixed-route bus service from 2009 through 2013 was conducted using the most recent five-year NTD data available. Although the trend analysis is only one aspect of an overall transit performance evaluation, when combined with the peer review analysis, the results provide a starting point for understanding the efficiency and effectiveness of a transit system.

Trend Analysis Summary

- *Service Consumption* – Passenger trips per capita, per revenue mile, and per revenue hour have shown an increase over the five-year period. This trend indicates that the EC Rider has been improving in system effectiveness over the last five years.
- *Service Supply* – Vehicle miles per capita (service supply) decreased by 6.4% by 2013, indicating that EC Rider's services decreased during the analysis period. However, the decrease of service supply resulted in increased ridership productivity, as manifested in service consumption.
- *Quality of Service* – The average age of fleet, average headway, and number of vehicle system failures experienced an increase of 183%, 29.5%, and 26.7%, respectively, over the five-year period. This indicates that the system's service quality experienced a decline during this period.
- *Cost Efficiency* – When taking inflation into consideration, the operating expense per capita, operating expense per passenger trip, operating expense per revenue mile, and operating expense per revenue hour variables each experienced different levels of decrease between 2009 and 2013. This indicates that EC Rider achieved better overall cost efficiency by the end of the five-year period.

Table 3-7 summarizes the trend analysis of EC Rider's existing fixed-route system in terms of the percent that each performance measure changed between 2009 and 2013.

Table 3-7: Summary of EC Rider Trend Analysis

Measure	% Change (2009–2013)	Indicator*
General Performance		
Service Area Population	6.1%	+
Passenger Trips	6.1%	+
Vehicle Miles	-0.8%	-
Revenue Miles	-0.9%	-
Total Operating Expense	4.3%	-
Passenger Fare Revenue	20.2%	+
Revenue Hours	-2.4%	-
Route Miles	31.4%	+
Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service	0.0%	o
Gallons of Fuel Consumed	-21.6%	+
Service Supply		
Vehicle Miles per Capita	-6.4%	-
Service Consumption		
Passenger Trips per Capita	0.0%	o
Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile	7.1%	+
Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour	8.7%	+
Quality of Service		
Average Age of Fleet	183.0%	-
Average Headway (min)	29.5%	-
Number of Vehicle System Failures	26.7%	-
Revenue Miles Between Failures	-21.8%	-
Availability		
Weekday Span of Service (in hours)	0.0%	o
Cost Efficiency		
Operating Expense per Capita	-1.7%	+
Operating Expense per Passenger Trip	-1.7%	+
Operating Expense per Revenue Mile	5.3%	-
Operating Expense per Revenue Hour	6.9%	-
Operating Ratios		
Farebox Recovery (%)	15.2%	+
Vehicle Utilization		
Revenue Miles per Vehicle Mile	-0.2%	o
Revenue Miles per Vehicle	-6.5%	-
Energy Utilization		
Vehicle Miles per Gallon	40.0%	+
Fare		
Average Fare	13.3%	+

*Indicates a positive (+), negative (-), or neutral (o) trend

Peer System Analysis Summary

The following summarizes the peer review analysis of performance indicators prepared for EC Rider.

General Performance Measures
- EC Rider's total service area population is nearly 60% above the peer group mean, whereas population density is 39% below the mean. This may be indicative of a much geographic larger service area for EC Rider compared to the peer agencies. A less-dense service area provides additional challenges for EC Rider to achieve the same service productivity as areas that have higher population densities.
- Passenger trips for EC Rider fall below the mean for the selected peer group. Service productivity is likely affected by the lower-density of EC Rider's service area relative to the rest of the peer group.
- Revenue miles and revenue hours are used to measure the supply of service. EC Rider falls approximately 6% below the peer group average in terms of revenue miles but exceeds the peer group average by approximately 15% for to revenue hours.
- Total operating expense and passenger fare revenues for EC Rider are less than the peer group mean by approximately 41% and 46%, respectively.
- EC Rider's vehicles operated in maximum service rank highest within the peer group, at 50% higher than the peer group average.

Effectiveness Measures
- Vehicle miles per capita for EC Rider are approximately 46% below the peer group mean, indicating that the supply of service is less than typically experienced in other similar areas.
- Passenger trips per revenue mile and passenger trips per revenue hour are below the peer group mean, by 46% and 56%, respectively, indicating that the may be room for improvement for ridership levels.
- The average age of EC Rider's fixed-route fleet is 35.5% above the per group mean, or approximately 1.6 years older than the average of the peer group agencies.

Efficiency Measures
- EC Rider's operating expense per service area capita is the lowest among the peer group; its operating expense per revenue mile is 38.1% below the peer group mean.
- EC Rider's farebox recovery is approximately 3% below the peer group mean; the average fare charged is 13% above the peer group mean.
- Revenue miles per vehicle mile for EC Rider is 3.4% above the peer group mean, which indicates a better utilization of fixed-route bus vehicles.

Table 3-8 summarizes the peer system analysis prepared for EC Rider's fixed-route system and indicates the percent that EC rider is away from the peer group mean for each performance measure.

Table 3-8: **Summary of Peer System Comparison**

Performance Indicator/Measure	% from Peer Group Mean	Indication*
Service Area Population	59.40%	o
Service Area Population Density	-38.60%	-
Passenger Trips	-50.40%	-
Revenue Miles	-5.60%	-
Revenue Hours	14.50%	+
Total Operating Expense	-40.80%	-
Passenger Fare Revenue	-45.60%	-
Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service	50.00%	+
Service Supply		
Vehicle Miles per Capita	-46.50%	-
Service Consumption		
Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile	-45.50%	-
Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour	-55.70%	-
Quality of Service		
Average Age of Fleet	35.50%	+
Cost Efficiency		
Operating Expense per Service Area Capita	-67.20%	+
Operating Expense per Passenger Trip	4.20%	-
Operating Expense per Revenue Mile	-38.10%	+
Vehicle Utilization		
Revenue Miles per Vehicle Mile	3.40%	+
Operating Ratio		
Farebox Recovery Ratio	-2.80%	-
Fare		
Average Fare	13.00%	+

*Indicates a positive (+), negative (-), or neutral (o) trend

Farebox Recovery Monitoring

FDOT requires 10-year transit plans to include a one- to two-page summary report on the farebox recovery ratio and strategies implemented and planned to improve it. This analysis is presented in Appendix C of this report to fulfill this requirement.

Fixed-Route and Paratransit Efficiency Assessment

As part of the *Access EC Rider* TDP, an efficiency review also was conducted to evaluate the existing fixed-route and paratransit services in Okaloosa County. Appendix D documents this assessment, which includes a route- and segment-level performance and the system-wide performance standards, including service effectiveness (e.g., trips per hour) and service efficiency measures (e.g., cost per trip and hour). A review of paratransit services was conducted and documented in AppendixD.

SECTION 4: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This section summarizes the public involvement activities planned during the development of the *Access EC Rider* TDP as well as those activities undertaken to-date. The goal of these public involvement activities is to increase the likelihood of active participation from citizens and stakeholder agencies during the development of the updated plan. Input from the public is critical since the TDP provides a strategic guide for public transportation in the community over the next 10 years.

Current State law effective February 20, 2007, requires that Okaloosa County document its public involvement plan to be used in the TDP development process. Pertinent language from the TDP rule is as follows:

> *The TDP preparation process shall include opportunities for public involvement as outlined in a TDP public involvement plan, approved by the Department, or the local Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Public Involvement Plan, approved by both the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Highway Administration.*
> —Florida Rule 14-73.001

Public involvement is an ongoing process that includes continuously receiving and accumulating feedback about transit in Okaloosa County. One of the first activities in this process was to prepare a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) to plan out all of the public outreach activities to be undertaken during the development of the *Access EC Rider* TDP. The PIP provides numerous opportunities for involvement by the general public and representatives of local agencies and organizations. A copy of the PIP developed for the *Access EC Rider* TDP is included in Appendix B along with various supporting materials used as part of the public outreach process.

In accordance with current Florida Rule 14-73.001, the PIP developed for the *Access EC Rider* TDP is consistent with the Okaloosa-Walton TPO's Public Participation Plan (PPP). The remainder of this section outlines the public involvement activities planned for the *Access EC Rider* TDP and summarizes the input received from the activities that have occurred to-date. Table 4-1 summarizes the number of participants reached in each of the public involvement activities undertaken as part of the *Access EC Rider* TDP development process. The results of all public involvement activities will be used to develop and evaluate the 10-year strategic transit plan for Okaloosa County presented in the *Access EC Rider* TDP.

Table 4-1: Public Involvement Activities Summary

Outreach Activity	Date **(2016)**	Participants
Discussion Groups		
Riders	February 17	6
General Public (Non-Riders)	February 18	9
Operators	January 6	6
Stakeholders	February	10
Public Workshops/Open House Events		
Public Workshop. Niceville City Hall	February 17	0
Home Show	February 24 & 27	53
Concert on the Landing	June 24	13
Okaloosa County Farmers Market	July 1	13
July 4th activities at Fort Walton Beach Landing	July 4	23
Christmas in July Craft Fair	July 9	9
Committees*/Meetings		
Steering Committee/Visioning Workshop	January 7	19
Escambia Local Coordinating Board	February 23	5
Santa Rosa Local Coordinating Board	February 23	5
Steering Committee	June 20	11
Surveys/Website		
On-board	February	118
General Public (Non-rider)	February–June	275
General Public	June	81
Operator surveys	January 6	5
Access EC Rider Website	February 17–ongoing	438 unique visits, 637 page views
Total Participants		**1,298**

Numerous types of public involvement techniques that directly and indirectly engaged the community included:

- Branding of the TDP
- Visioning workshop with Steering Committee
- Steering Committee meetings
- Stakeholder interviews
- Discussion group workshops (one for riders and one for non-riders)
- Bus operator discussion group workshop/survey
- Public workshops/open houses
- On-board survey
- Non-rider/public survey
- Presentations to Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners
- Project website, which was continuously updated to provide all information and materials during the development of the *Access EC Rider* TDP

These public involvement activities are described in detail below.

Summary of Completed Public Involvement Activities

Steering Committee Meeting/Visioning Workshop

A Steering Committee was established to help guide the overall TDP update effort. To meet FDOT requirements, this committee includes representation from Okaloosa County, the Okaloosa-Walton TPO, FDOT District 3, and the local Workforce Development Board (CareerSource Okaloosa Walton), as well as municipalities, area chambers of commerce, and Emerald Grande.

The Steering Committee held its first meeting on January 7, 2016. This meeting consisted of a presentation followed by a discussion and interactive polling exercise. The following summarizes the input provided by Steering Committee members and the results of the polling exercise.

Visioning Workshop—Identified Needs

From the discussion and exercises completed at the Visioning Workshop, the major needs of consideration when developing the *Access EC Rider* TDP include:

- *Community Needs* – Transit service is needed to better connect the transit-dependent population from Crestview and the northern half of Okaloosa County to the County Courthouse in Fort Walton Beach and to jobs in the beach area. In the past, the need for a most robust transit service was especially apparent when temporary workers for the Emerald Grande construction project were housed in an off-site apartment facility, but had no means to commute to work.

- *Private Sector Coordination* – Sunshine Shuttle & Limousine is a private company that provides transportation services in northwest Florida. Specifically, the company caters to convention centers, private schools, weddings, and provides taxi services in the Destin area. In the past, employers have hired the Sunshine Shuttle to transport their employees. The Emerald Grande at the HarborWalk Village (see Figure 4-1), a vacation rental complex in Destin, is in need of a park-and-ride facility for their employees to park off-site and take transit to work to make available more on-site parking spaces for its customers. It was mentioned that the HarborWalk Village phone application, which can access 140,000 emails, could be used to inform users of transit route changes.

- *Future Demand* – Two new airlines will be coming to the regional airports and will bring more tourist traffic to this area, highlighting the need for a more robust transit system.

- *Service and Infrastructure Improvements* – There is a need for bicycle facilities in the beach areas, more express bus services, improved transit technologies, weekend services for workers, service for Eglin Air Force Base workers and Special OPS personnel on Hurlburt Field, and additional services for the different types of riders in both northern and southern Okaloosa County.

- *Major Origins and Destinations* – Steering Committee members were asked to complete a map exercise in which they identified transit trip origins and destinations. From this exercise, Crestview and Destin were among the most commonly-identified trip origins and destinations.

Map 4-1 illustrates the results of the origin and destinations exercise completed by the Steering Committee members.

Figure 4-1: Emerald Grande at HarborWalk Village, Destin

Image source: Google Earth

Visioning Workshop Polling Exercise

A multiple choice format electronic polling exercise was also conducted with the Steering Committee, the results of which are presented in Figures 4-2 through 4-8. Highlights from this exercise include:

- The overwhelming majority (84%) of respondents believed that more public transportation is needed in Okaloosa County, with the majority believing that ridership should increase by 100% or 200%.
- A total of 83% of respondents felt that Okaloosa County's transit role has been primarily to serve low-income riders.
- The committee unanimously agreed that transit services should be expanded to include additional activity centers and employers.
- The polling results for the most improvement needed in transit services varied. Adding weekend service and adding service to new areas tied as the top choices, with 24% of the votes. Extending weekend service followed, with 18% of respondents ranking it as the most important improvement.
- When asked what should be the primary role of transit in Okaloosa County, managing congestion and providing service for workers were the two most frequently-noted choices.

Map 4-1: Steering Committee Origin-Destination Exercise Results

Figure 4-2: Is more public transportation needed in Okaloosa County?
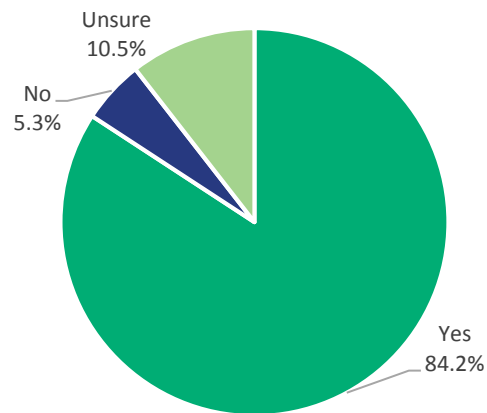
Figure 4-3: If yes [to previous question], how much growth should there be in the next 10 years?
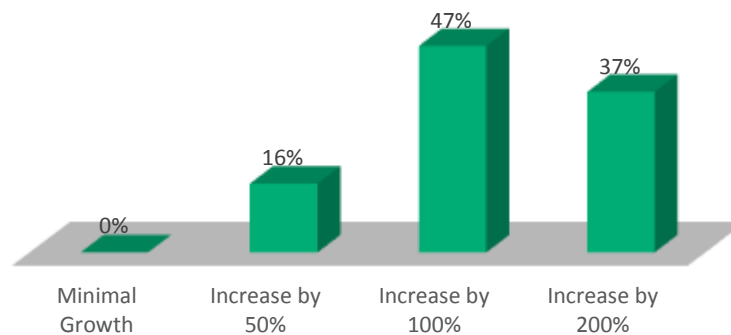
Figure 4-4: In your opinion, what has been the role of Okaloosa's public transit services?
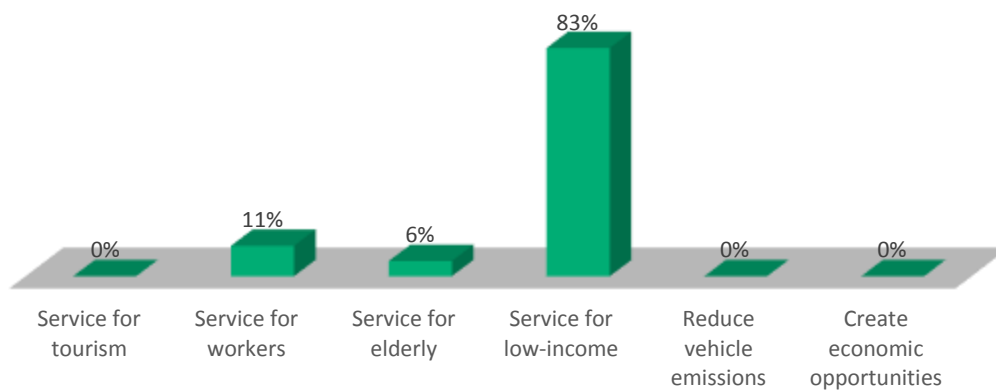
Figure 4-5: Do you think transit services can be a viable alternative to access jobs/services on and off military bases?
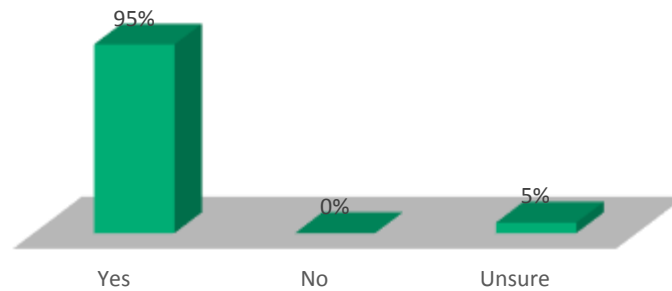
Figure 4-6: Do you think the current fixed-route system should serves additional major employers and activity centers?
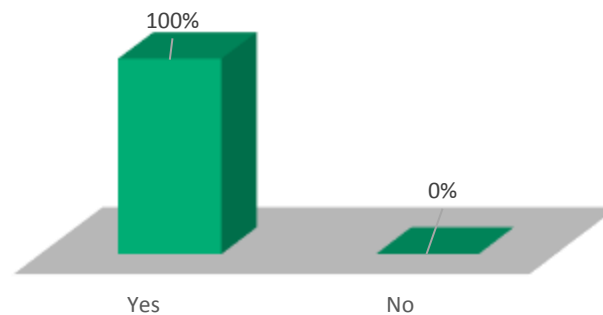
Figure 4-7: What improvement do you believe is most important to attract more riders?
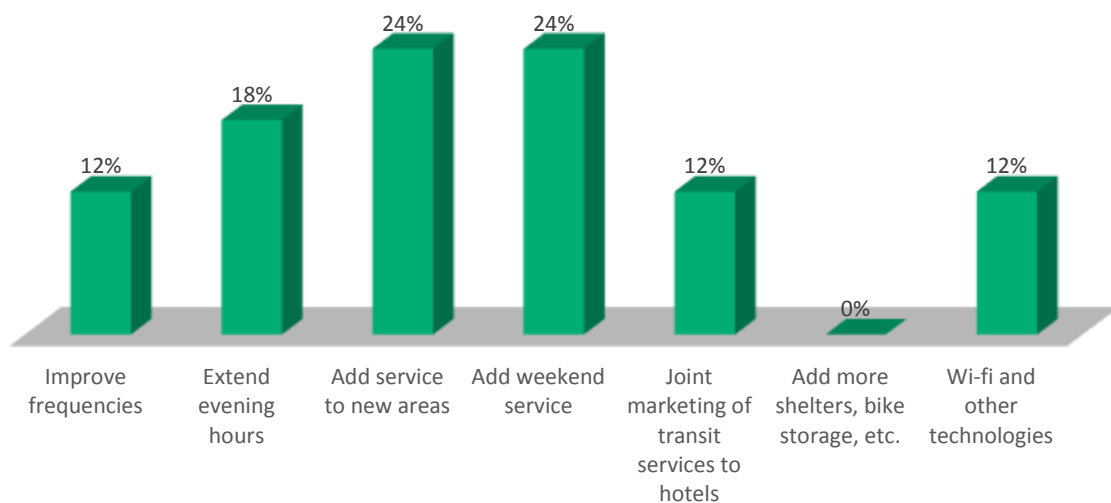
Figure 4-8: In the future, what should be the primary role of public transit in Okaloosa?
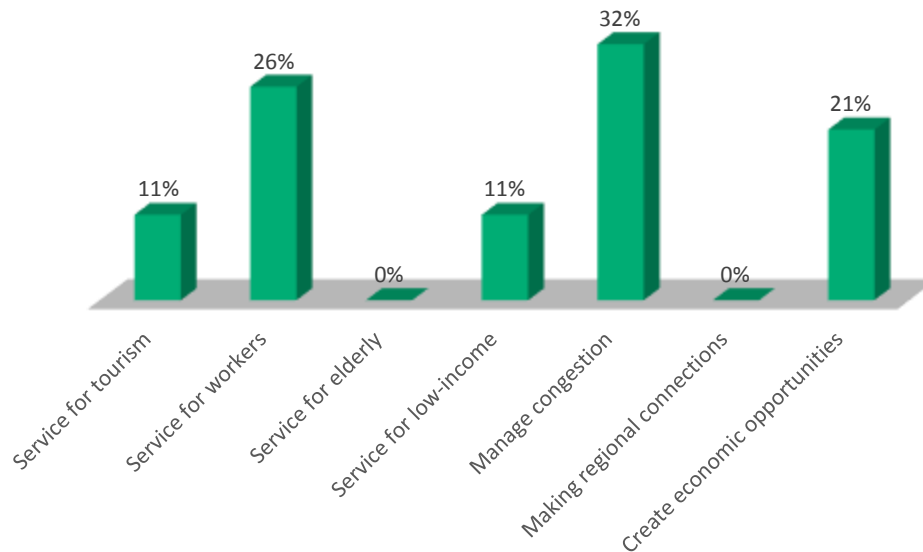
Steering Committee Meeting #2

The second Steering Committee meeting took place on June 20, 2016. Representatives from the Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners, City of Destin, City of Fort Walton Beach, City of Crestview, Town of Bayou, City of Niceville, City of Mary Esther, and the WFRPC attended. A presentation on the status of the TDP process as well as the identified needs was presented, followed by a discussion and a survey. Participants responded favorably to the new transit services proposed. Participants also responded favorably to the proposed expansions of transit service such as doubling frequency on select routes, adding one additional evening trip, and adding Saturday service, but were neutral to the proposed realignment of Routes 2, 3, 4, and 5. Crestview, Destin, and US 98 were generally noted as the top three major roads/areas in which transit services or improvements are needed.

Steering Committee Meeting #3

The draft TDP was presented to the Okaloosa Transit Coop/TDP Steering Committee on August 4, 2016. The TDP implementation and finance plans were of most interest, as it assumes some minor local match as well as an innovative approach to addressing the most critical need, the tourist season traffic on Okaloosa Island and the City of Destin. The 10-year plan suggests a new self-imposed special assessment or fee just for the island area. Members were adamant that no new local taxes or funding from municipalities should be used to fund new services. A recommendation from the Steering Committee is that the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners (BCC) to go through an education and visioning exercise to help solidify the future development and ensure all understand the value or potential value transit can have on the tourist
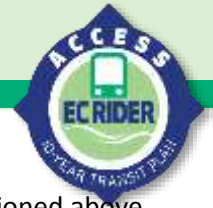
industry, job access, economic development, and community livability. Given the issues mentioned above, while there was reservation about approving or endorsing the plan, the Steering Committee approved the motion to forward the TDP to the BCC for discussion and consideration.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews provide a one-on-one form to gather input from policy and agency or community leaders concerning the vision for public transportation in their community. Interviews were conducted in February 2016 with the following individuals:

- Destin City Councilman Jim Foreman
- Eglin Community Planner Jeff Fanto
- Emerald Grande COO Bruce Craul
- Fort Walton Beach Mayor Michael Anderson
- Okaloosa Commissioner Nathan Boyles
- Director Ed Schroeder

- Okaloosa Commissioner Trey Goodwin
- Okaloosa Commissioner Wayne Harris
- Okaloosa Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel
- Okaloosa Commissioner Kelly Windes
- Tourist Development Council

A list of 18 questions was developed for the interviews, and each stakeholder was asked the same questions. The input received during these interviews was reviewed and major themes identified as summarized below:

- *Perception of transit* **–** The existing transit service does not meet the community's needs, especially for those who must rely on the service to meet their needs. It is recognized there are challenges with providing public transportation in Okaloosa County because of the geography and lower-density, more suburban development patterns. However, there are areas, including high-tourism locations and areas with more concentrated development that would benefit greatly from more transit service.

- *Future role of transit* –Transit is needed to provide options to those who need transportation, including lower-income employees, older/disabled persons, and tourists. The role of service will also depend on future transportation technologies available and used, but overall the service needs to be more user-friendly. In the future, additional public-private partnership opportunities should be sought.

- *Transition to more multi-modal transportation system* –This is good in theory but more difficult to implement; however, a good transit system must be accessible by all modes of travel. The costs for additional right-of-way and land needed must also be considered in addition to infrastructure costs.

- *Economic development* – Access to transportation for employment is a basic component of economic development. The County needs to consider how to provide cost-effective transportation for low-income workers. Effective transit will not only attract businesses but also tourists.

- *Areas with high traffic congestion* – The US 98 corridor, SR 85 south of Crestview, and Eglin bypass between Brooks Bridge and Beal Parkway were noted as areas of high traffic congestion.

- *Important passenger amenities* – Safe shelters, benches, park-and-ride lots, and technologies such as GPS and real-time bus tracking are important.
- *Potential rider markets* – Markets include major lodging, shopping, and entertainment areas/downtowns, the more urbanized areas, and employment centers. Key residential areas include Crestview and Destin and areas in which lower-income persons live, though it was commonly noted that service to residential areas should be secondary to commercial areas.
- *Funding* – Transit should be funded by users/tourists (explore possible TDC charge/tax), municipal funding, grants and advertising revenue, and public-private partnerships. General taxes (property taxes, sales tax, etc.) were not noted as optimal funding sources. There was caution about charging people for transit who do not use the system. A breakdown of the stakeholder responses of how to fund transit is shown in Figure 4-9.
- *Innovative strategies to consider* – It was suggested to look at Europe and other areas with successful systems to see how they work, though it was noted that many of these more successful systems are in larger cities. Public-private partnerships are an important strategy.
- *Level of public support for transit* – Mixed views were given. The stakeholders would like to support transit, but, at the same time, they do not want to overwhelm taxpayers. There needs to be a better understand the community's feelings about transit to assess political support.
- *Community goals* – These include decreasing traffic congestion, particularly in high-tourism areas; better attracting major employers/spurring economic development; improving overall quality of life; better return on public investment.

Figure 4-9: Stakeholder Responses on Transit Funding

How to Fund Transit?

General Fund 9%

TDC Taxes 18%

Partnerships 27%

Self-supporting 46%
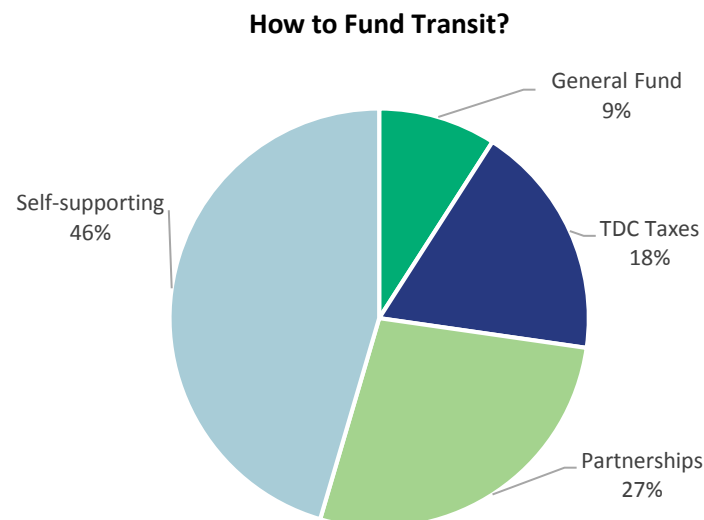
Operator Discussion Group Workshop and Survey

An in-person discussion group workshop was held with five EC Rider operators on January 6, 2016, and six operators provided comments via a written surveys. This input was important, as it provided a perspective on transit needs and frequent challenges based on bus operator experiences. Key findings from the collective feedback provided by the operators include the following:

- *More frequent service* – The need for more overall frequent service was noted by several operators.
- *Issues with dispatch* – One driver noted the need for better communication. Dispatch is difficult to contact, and voice communications often are broken.
- *Issues with on-time performance* – It was noted in several surveys and during the discussion that customers often complain about on-time arrivals. One operator noted that it is difficult to complete Route 1, which links the College to the Uptown Station, in the scheduled 30 minutes. School buses and school zones also impact the on-time performance for Route 1. Route 5, which serves the Okaloosa County Court House in Fort Walton Beach, which has long waits that effect on-time performance.
- *Understanding of bus schedule* – One operator noted that customers often complain that the bus schedule is too difficult to understand. Riders do not understand terms such as "inbound" or "outbound."
- *Need for weekend and later service* – Providing service on Saturdays as well as later service to 8:00 PM, 10:00 PM, and 12:00 midnight were suggested.
- *Safety* – Lighting at bus stops is insufficient, which poses safety and security issues. The Mariner Plaza stop on Eglin Parkway is dangerous, as vehicles do not anticipate the bus stopping.
- *Regional connectivity* – Transit connections between Okaloosa, Walton, and Santa Rosa counties were suggested.
- *New express service* – The need for express service from Silver Sands to Harborwalk was noted.
- *Expanded service area* – The service area needs to include the Heather Glen Apartment Complex, a Section 8 housing complex; routes 2 or 3 possibly could be extended to service this area. Routes 11 and 12 ceased operations due to funding cuts, but citizens are calling for these routes to be reinstated. Route 14 provides limited service to Crestview, thereby limiting the Shalimar area to Route 14. Local service that stops here is needed, particularly near the intersection of Eglin Parkway and Erwin Fleet Road, the location of the Okaloosa County Tax Collector's office, Meigs Middle School, a shopping center, Fairfield Inn and Suites hotel, and several banks and restaurants. One driver noted that more direct routes are needed from the Uptown Station to various places.
- *Redundant route* – Route 30 should be revised, as not enough riders use it in the coastal Destin area (Destin Point). The route could loop around the commercial area near Main Street/Legion Drive/ and Beach Drive. The redundancy on Silbert Avenue should be eliminated while still serving the Destin Community Center.
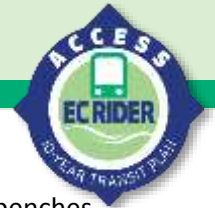
- *Bus stop improvements* – One operator survey noted the need for more shelters and benches. During the discussion session, an operator noted that the bus stop bench at Walmart (748 Beal Pkwy NE, Fort Walton Beach) needs a shelter (see Figure 4-10). The first run for Route 2 is at 7:10 AM, which is a problem for the property owner. The stop could be relocated to the Post Office. Route 2 needs a stop on Hollywood Boulevard and Memorials Parkway in Fort Walton Beach. Route 4 currently stops there, as shown in Figure 4-11.

Figure 4-10: Bus Stop Location at Walmart in Fort Walton Beach

Image Source: Google Earth

Figure 4-11: Bus Stop on Hollywood Boulevard and Memorial Parkway, Fort Walton Beach

Image source: Google Streetview

- *Interlined routes* – A Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food stamp office is located at 450-G Racetrack Rd NW in Fort Walton Beach across the street from a Walgreen's Pharmacy. Routes 2, 3, and 5 service this area, but the timing and the stops are not on the same interlined portions. This creates issues for riders who are transferring routes. For example, if a rider uses Route 3 and gets off at Walgreen's, he/she has to wait on Route 3 to be picked up from that
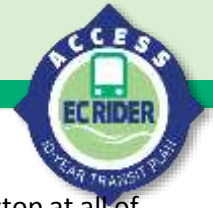
same stop. The Route 5 bus runs along the same route configuration, but it does not stop at all of the same stops as Route 3. It is a timing issue as to which stops are used as time points on the routes. The issue is that people see the same bus system on the same segment without getting the same services.

- *Rider satisfaction* – The operator's perception is that riders enjoy the safety of the buses, the fare structure, the drivers, and the comfort of the bus.
- *Marketing needs* – Crestview could benefit from marketing, as there is a lack of awareness of the transit system in this area.

Discussion Group Workshops

To gather input on EC Rider's services in a more intimate setting, separate discussion groups were held with current transit riders versus non-riders to obtain input from both perspectives.

Rider Discussion Group Workshop

A discussion group workshop was held with long-term users of the EC Rider system on February 17, 2016, at the Fort Walton Chamber of Commerce Office. Participants were recruited by EC Rider staff. An introduction of the TDP process was provided, as was an overview of the discussion group agenda. After introductions of attendees, the discussion guide was used to obtain input from the participants. The following is a summary of the major themes identified from the input received during this discussion group workshop.

General Experience Using EC Rider Services
- Positive comments included that most drivers know their routes and try to help, the service provided is usually good, and there is a need for more service (frequency and area).
- Noted challenges included that some drivers drive too fast, some speak rudely about passengers after they depart, and dispatchers need a better understanding of connections riders need. Regarding Route 33, the first run to Destin is good, but after that it takes too long (express on first run, broken into three routes and requires transfers thereafter).

Areas with Traffic Congestion

- Congestion is a problem for Routes 1 and 2, causing delays and making riders wait for connections or miss the bus entirely.
- Returning from Destin can be delayed, sometimes by quite a bit, especially in the summer.
- System does not adapt well to rerouting if available.
- Dispatcher helpfulness can be questionable. For example, for a Route 2 deviation, the driver can call in a deviation and wait for a connection, but the dispatcher does not relay this to other drivers.
- There is a need for a regional connection to Panama City, Santa Rosa Beaches, and Escambia County; this will help draw riders and have been a topic on the buses somewhat regularly.

Community Awareness of and Support for Transit

- Non-riders do not know about the service, and there have been few new riders over the last few years. There is some seasonal ridership on the island, but no long-term growth. There seems to be little or no external marketing, which means that current riders and drivers are the main marketing targets; this is not very effective in attracting new riders.

Perception of Transit's Role in the Community

- The service is just a small local service that, while good, is very limited.
- Most riders seem to be going to work or medical appointments.
- There are a lot of construction workers using the system, which could be due to limited parking at sites or the prohibitive cost of driving. Longer service hours and more direct routes could help workers. There was suggestion to consider taxi registration to help raise money.
- Transit should be marketed to tourists, but this does not seem to be happening.

New/Different Areas of Service to Explore

- High priority improvements include increased frequency, adding Saturday and (perhaps limited) Sunday service, providing more express bus routes, and better bus stop locations and amenities.
- Medium priority improvements included providing service later in the evening.
- There is a need to improve/increase service to the County Courthouse, County Fairgrounds, and in Niceville and Destin.
- More connections should be provided between Niceville and Destin.
- More express routes and trolleys (seasonal and for high-tourism areas) should be provided
- Different services should include more bikes and safety strategies, as some bikers avoid certain areas, and vanpools.
- There should be a more multimodal approach (walking, biking, etc.) to transportation.
- A water taxi should be considered.

Funding

- There is a need to better leverage current funding and consider a mix of sources so it is more capable of providing needed services. The community would be more willing to fund transit if they saw a better future system.
- A Regional Transit Authority (RTA) discussion may make some sense to meet certain needs.

Non-Rider Discussion Group Workshop

A discussion group workshop consisting of non-riders was held on February 18, 2016, at the EC Rider offices. Attendees from local government, workforce, economic development, and military organizations were invited to participate in the discussion. Similar to the rider discussion group workshop, an introduction of the TDP process was provided, as was an overview of the discussion group agenda. After introductions of attendees, the guide was used to facilitate a discussion on existing and future transit service in Okaloosa County. The following is a summary of the major themes identified from the input received during this discussion group workshop.

Perception of Current Role of Transit in the Community

- Transit is visible at the military base gate, but many think it is paratransit for citizen employees and retiree medical appointments.
- It seems to be a "stealth" system, mostly invisible to the residents.
- One participant used it once and was 1.5 hours late to work and found the system difficult to navigate as a first-time rider.
- The services do not run late enough to consider using them.
- Transit could be used from Miramar Beach to Destin, if feasible.
- The system seems to lack adequate funding and is doing the best it can.

Community's Use of Transit

- Transit is too difficult to use; most people would rather opt for something easier and less frustrating.
- Some might use it with free passes.
- Cost does not seem to be a big factor for those who need it.
- Military personnel hardly can use the system; however, some might use it if really available. Of note is that Eglin Air Force Base is not walkable once you get there, so internal issues may limit external use of transit to the base. Tourists continually ask about bus services/stops, so there is a market there if the service was designed to meet their travel needs.

New/Different Areas of Service to Explore

- Express lanes are needed, and maybe even monorail on US 98. There is too much traffic for the bus stay in traffic lanes to make a difference in travel time. Perhaps shoulders could be used for transit.
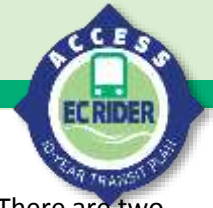
- Perhaps the County should think out of the box and design a good water taxi service. There are two or three private water taxis now (each carrying 6–12 passengers), but regularly-scheduled service with safe stops, more capacity, and higher speeds would help. The current water taxis take mostly residents to bars/restaurants and return them home. Tourists would use them if they went where they want to go and served hotels and locations where tourists typically stay.
- Better-looking buses are needed.
- There is a lack of pedestrian connections except inside major destinations (resorts, centers, etc.).
- As parking garages are being developed in Destin and elsewhere, there should be better partnerships to co-locate transit stops and services, park-and-ride facilities, etc. Also, overall, better locations for stops should be considered as well as an amenities improvement plan. With capital funding, it should be easier than expanding service operations.
- Service is needed to Walton County and the route along SR 85 to/from Crestview should be improved.
- Better bus wraps are needed.
- Improving the image of and using trolleys in more communities should be considered.
- Maps should be available at libraries and other public locations.
- Technology improvements are desirable, such as with GPS and other applications for smart phones and real-time arrival information.

Funding
- Ideally, use of a gas tax makes sense, but it may be appropriate to consider other taxing options.
- Improving service means thinking of various sources such as a tourism development tax, advertising, and private businesses.

Additional Comments
- Although seasonal employees and tourists have the biggest impact on congestion, it was noted that the snowbird winter visitors are coming to the area more frequently and also impact congestion.
- Tourism growth is becoming more limited due to congestion, but the economic impact of the tourists that do come is being limited due to existing congestion.
- Okaloosa County has "big city issues with small county philosophies and solutions." The community needs to be more realistic. There are 85,000 people on only 8 major roads. It is important to start thinking about high-speed options in both north-south and east-west options, as well as new types of transit services such as monorail and ferries.
- Military representatives provided the following thoughts:
  - Retirees come to the base daily and typically drive themselves mostly.
  - One-third of airmen have no car.
  - There are limited interior transportation options, although the 33rd flight wing has a shuttle for students with limited and stops. They may allow a survey on the bus, if desired.
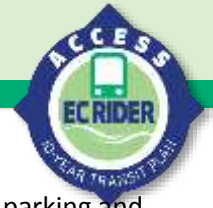
- o   Daily commuters to/from the base was 20,000 in 2010, and continues to rise; parking and access issues continue to grow in severity.
- o   Park-and-ride locations may be beneficial, if planned well.
- o   The VA hospital is just outside the base and the base hospital, with a back door biometric gate access.
- o   Department of Defense truck deliveries and other routine visitors can get escorted and unescorted status, but it requires full back ground reviews and clearance. This is really helpful and may be able to extend to bus operators.
- o   There is a shared-use path from the east to west gates that may be a useful link for bikes on buses.

Public Workshops/Open Houses

Two public workshops/open houses were scheduled during the initial months of the *Access EC Rider* TDP development process. The first event was a public workshop held on February 17, 2016, at the Niceville City Council chambers at Niceville City Hall, and the second was an open house at the Building Industry Association of the Okaloosa & Walton Counties Home Show at the Emerald Coast Convention Center on Okaloosa Island on February 27 and 28, 2016. At both events, several display boards demonstrating population and employment density for Okaloosa County and an overview of existing transit services were provided. A hard copy of the online non-rider/public survey also was distributed. The input received via these surveys was combined with the online survey input and is summarized in the Public (Non-Rider) Survey subsection that follows.

Once the transit needs were identified, additional public events were held to gather input on the proposed needs and assist in the evaluation and prioritization process. Four open-house style events were held during this second round of public outreach:

- Concerts at the Landing at the Fort Walton Beach Landing on June 24, 2016
- Okaloosa County Farmers Market at the Fort Walton Beach Fairgrounds on July 1, 2016

- Fort Walton Bash at the Fort Walton Beach Landing on July 4, 2016
- Christmas in July Craft Fair at the Hedrick Recreation Center in Fort Walton Beach on July 9, 2016

At each event, a map display board presenting the transit alternatives and surveys were provided at the table. The surveys collected at these events were combined with the online needs survey summarized later in this section.

Public (Non-Rider) Surveys

Two surveys were administered during the public involvement process. The first survey aimed at the general public, including persons who do not currently use the EC Rider system, was administered via the project website and at public workshops/open houses to gather information on the public's perceptions on transit issues and needs in Okaloosa County. A total of 275 surveys were completed between February and June 2016, including 1 survey in Spanish. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix B.

The second survey was formulated to help prioritize the transit needs. A copy of the survey instrument is also provided in Appendix B. A total of 81 surveys were completed and it was made available online via the following websites and in paper format throughout various public outreach activities during June and July:

- Access EC Rider website
- WFRPC Facebook page
- Okaloosa BCC Facebook page
- Destin Facebook page
- EC Rider website
- Santa Rosa County Twitter and Facebook page.

Summary of Public (Non-Rider) Survey Results

In total, 16 questions were used to determine non-riders' willingness to use public transit and the community's transit needs, gauge public awareness of transit issues in Okaloosa County, and gather socio-demographic information. Participants were allowed to provide additional comments they would like to be considered. The survey was administered in both English and Spanish.

Most survey respondents felt that awareness of public transportation services in Okaloosa County was minimal, with 83% believing that there was moderate-to-no awareness of public transportation in the community (Figure 4-12). However, when asked what they thought about EC Rider's transit service, more than half (57%) indicated that it must be provided or might be useful (Figure 4-13).

Figure 4-12: How much awareness is there in the community about transit/public transportation?

Do Not Know, 12.1%
High, 5.1%
Moderate, 45.5%
None at All, 37.4%
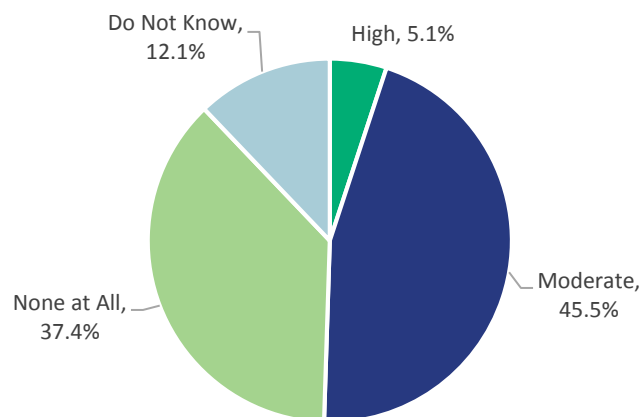
Figure 4-13: What do you think of EC Rider transit service?

I am not familiar with it at all, 13.1%
We do not need it, 14.1%
Not sure it is useful, 10.1%
It does not matter to me, 6.1%
It must be provided, 29.3%
It might be useful, 27.3%
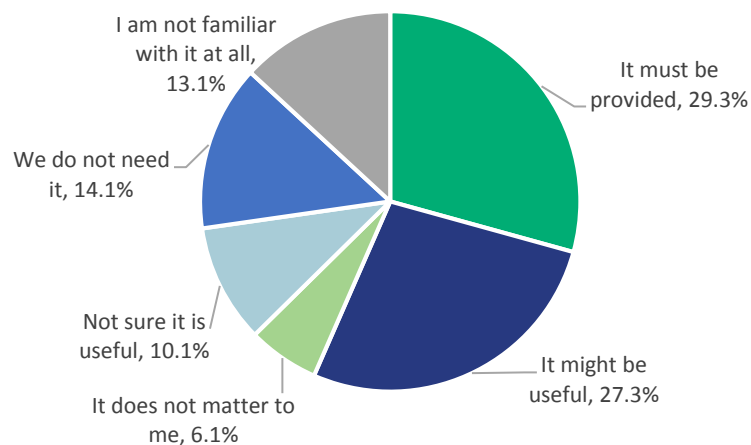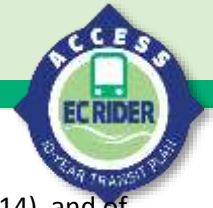
Most respondents (93%) agreed that congestion was a problem in Okaloosa County (Figure 4-14), and of those who indicated traffic congestion was an issue, more than two-thirds (68%) indicated that transit would relieve or may provide some help in relieving congestion (Figure 4-15).

Figure 4-14: Is traffic congestion a problem in Okaloosa County?

No, 7.1%

Yes, 92.9%
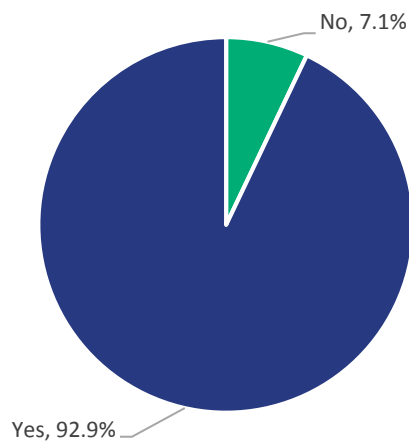
Figure 4-15: What role do you see transit playing in alleviating traffic congestion?

It may create some additional traffic issues, 5.3%

It will make congestion worse, 0.0%

It will relieve congestion, 13.7%

It will have no effect, 27.4%

It may provide some help, 53.7%
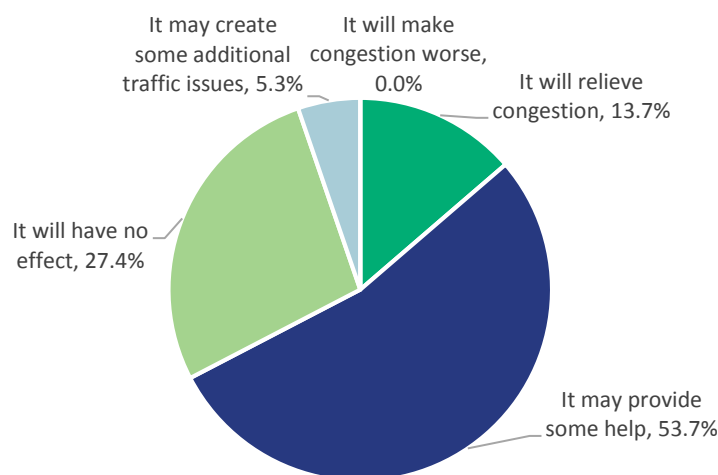
Although nearly 88% of participants had not used EC Rider's transit services (Figure 4-16), the majority (70%) believed that there was a need for additional transit service throughout the county (Figure 4-17). Allowing better commuting options/accessibility to employment, providing a more dependable source of transportation, and enhancing tourism and other industries were the top three benefits that participants believed would result from additional transit service in Okaloosa County (Figure 4-18).

Figure 4-16: Have you used EC Rider transit service?

Yes, 12.4%

No, 87.6%
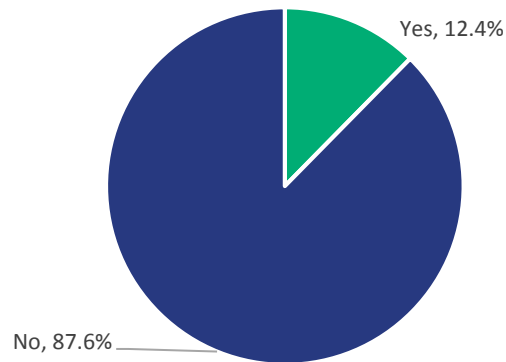
Figure 4-17: Do you think there is a need for additional transit service in Okaloosa County?

No, 30.6%

Yes, 69.4%
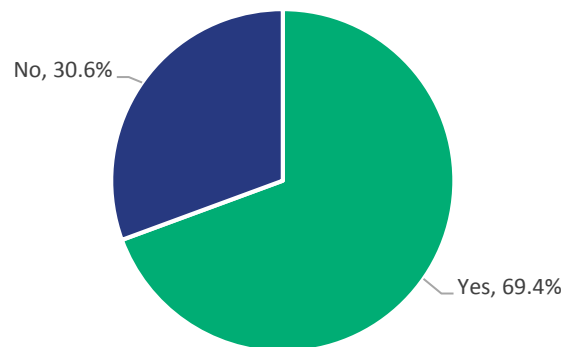
Figure 4-18: What benefits of transit do you believe could occur as a result of additional service?

Enhance connectivity to military establishments, 9.1%

Enhance tourism and other industries, 19.7%

Be better for the environment, 3.0%

Provide a more dependable source of transportation for me, 30.3%

Allow better commuting options/access to job opportunities, 37.9%
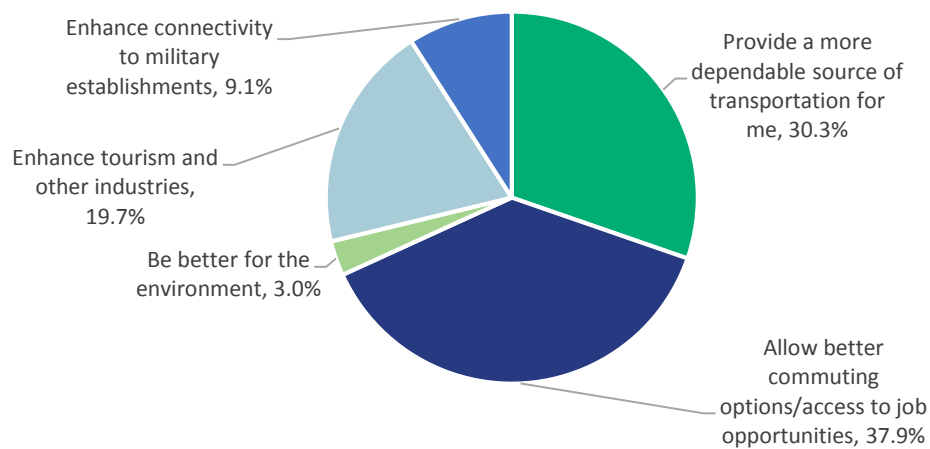
When asked which services should be added to the transit network, nearly half of respondents chose increased coverage area, most notably citing areas along US 98, Destin, Shalimar, Fort Walton, shopping/tourism areas (Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Island), Eglin Air Force Base, and Hurlburt Field. Another one-third of respondents chose more frequent service, and approximately 15% indicated that express bus service was a priority (Figure 4-19), most notably between Crestview to Destin and along the beaches, the US 98 corridor, Crestview to Fort Walton Beach, and Crestview to Eglin Air Force Base.

Figure 4-19: **What type of additional transit service you would most like to see?**
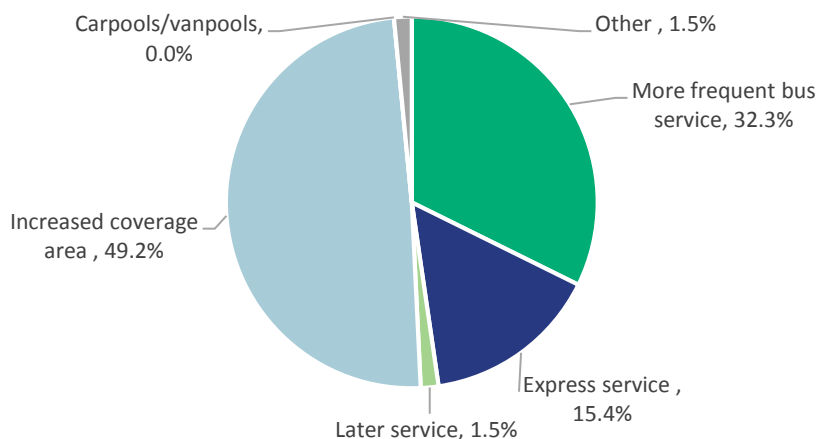
Survey respondent's opinions on the reasonable amount for a one-way fare for transit varied. As shown in Figure 4-20, 34% of respondents thought that a one-way fare of $1.01–$1.50 was reasonable, 22% said $0.51–$1.00 was reasonable, and 23% said more than $2.00 was reasonable. Only 5% indicated $0.50 or less was a reasonable one-way fare.

Figure 4-20: **What do you think is a reasonable one-way fare to pay for transit service?**
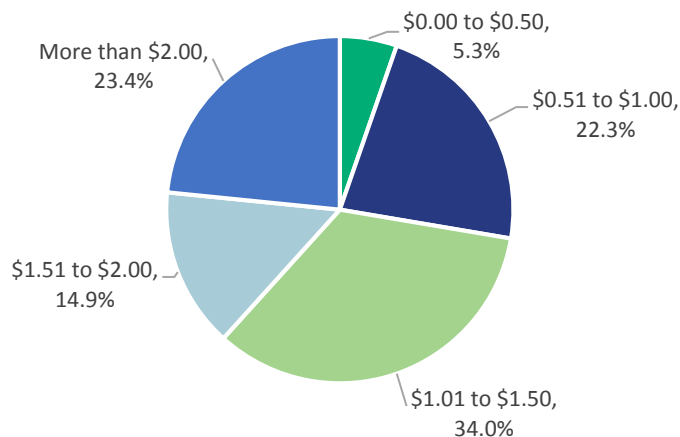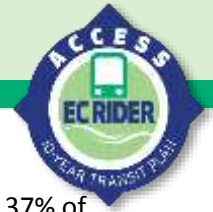
There was weak support for financing transit through local taxes (Figure 4-21). Approximately 37% of respondents believed that the community was not willing to pay for transit services, and only 6% believed the community was willing, with the rest being unsure of the willingness (35%) or believing the community was somewhat willing (22%). This sentiment is closely mirrored by the respondents' own willingness to fund public transit through local taxes (Figure 4-22), although the answers were slightly more definitive, with 47% of respondents unwilling, 8% willing, and 33% somewhat willing. The remaining 16% were unsure if they were willing to fund public transit through local taxes.

Figure 4-21: **Do you believe there is a willingness in the community to consider additional local funding for transit?**
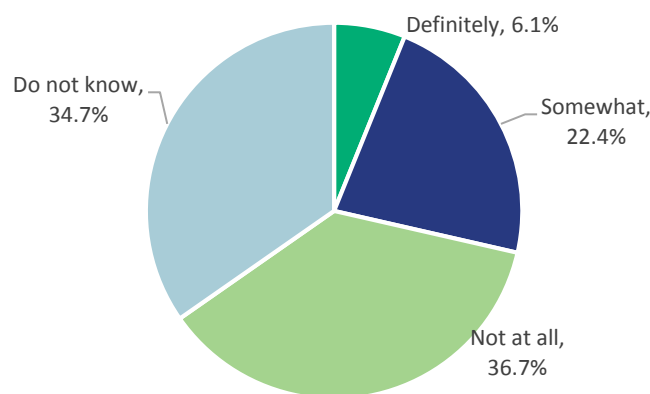
Figure 4-22: **Are you willing to pay additional local taxes for an expanded transit system?**
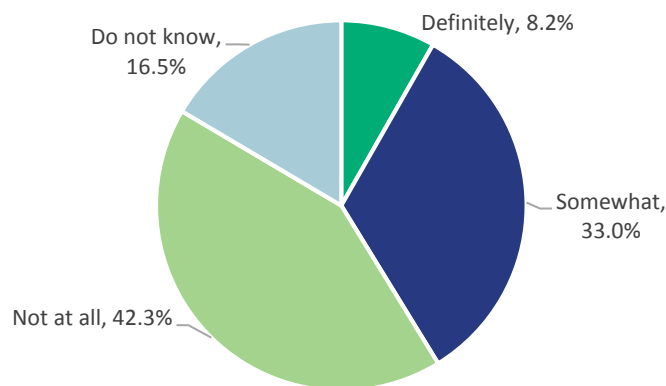
Socio-demographic information of participants is shown in Figures 4-23 through 4-26. As shown in Figure 4-23, approximately one-third of respondents lived in the Fort Walton Beach, Santa Rosa Island, and Okaloosa Island areas (ZIP codes 32547 and 32548), and one-third lived in the Niceville, Lake Lorraine, and areas surrounding Eglin Air Force Base and near Hurlburt Field (ZIP codes 32569, 32578, and 32579). Approximately half of survey respondents worked in the Fort Walton Beach, Santa Rosa Island, and
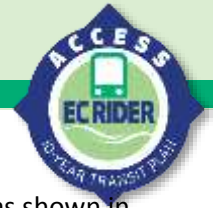
Okaloosa Island areas, Eglin Air Force Base, and Destin (ZIP codes 32541, 32542, and 32548), as shown in Figure 4-24.

Figure 4-23: **What is your home ZIP code?**
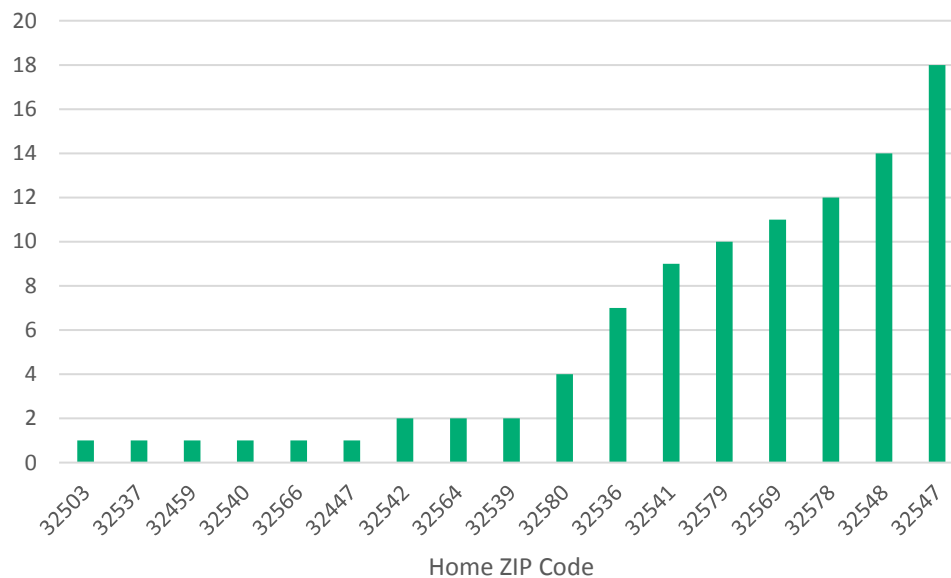
Figure 4-24: **What is your work ZIP code?**

As shown in Figure 4-25, there is a good mix of the age of survey respondents. Although the majority of respondents (nearly 48%) were age 45–64, 21% were ages 65 and older and 25–44. Approximately 10% of respondents were ages 18–24. More than half (59%) had a total household annual income of more than $50,000, and nearly 13% had a household income of $10,000–$29,999. The remaining 28% had an annual household income of $30,000–$49,999 (Figure 4-26).

Figure 4-25: What is your age?

Under 18, 0.0%
18-24 years, 10.1%
Over 65 years, 21.2%
25-44 years, 21.2%
45-64 years, 47.5%
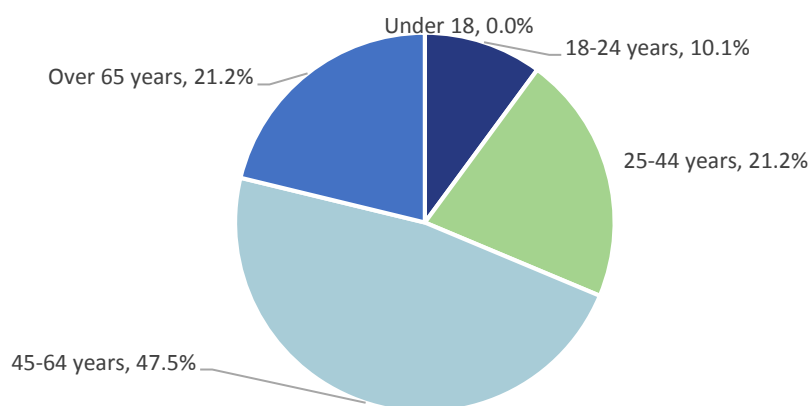
Figure 4-26: What is the range of your total household income for 2015?

Less than $10,000, 0.0%
$10,000 - $19,999, 5.8%
$20,00 - $29,999, 7.0%
$75,000 or greater, 29.1%
$30,000 - $39,999, 10.5%
$40,000 - $49,999, 17.4%
$50,000 - $74,999, 30.2%
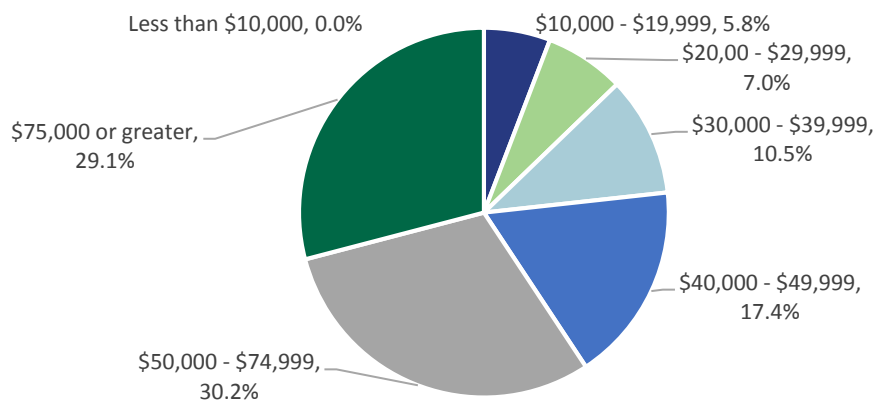
Participants were asked to rank which aspects of transit are most important to them. Based on the percentage of responses summarized in Table 4-2, dependability of the buses (on-time performance) and safety/security were the most important, receiving the highest percentage of those who responded "very important" (91.6% and 91.5%, respectively). Other service options that received the highest percentage of respondents who consider them "very important" included days of service (89.4%), frequency of service (89.5%), and convenience of the bus routes (89.5%). Accessibility of bus passes and cost of riding the bus
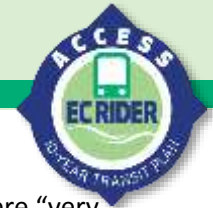
and each received the lowest percentage of respondents who indicated these two options were "very important," at 44.6% and 48.9%, respectively.

Table 4-2: **Ranking of Transit Characteristics**

Transit Service Option	Very important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Not very important	Not important at all
Days of service	89.4%	6.4%	2.1%	1.1%	1.1%
Frequency (how often buses run)	89.5%	7.4%	1.1%	2.1%	0.0%
Hours of service	84.2%	12.6%	1.1%	2.1%	0.0%
Convenience of routes (where buses go)	89.5%	8.4%	1.1%	1.1%	0.0%
Dependability of buses (on time)	91.6%	5.3%	1.1%	2.1%	0.0%
Travel time on bus	66.0%	27.7%	5.3%	0.0%	1.1%
Cost of riding the bus	48.9%	34.8%	14.1%	2.2%	0.0%
Location of bus stops	54.8%	37.6%	6.5%	0.0%	1.1%
Accessibility of bus passes (ease of purchase)	44.6%	33.7%	18.5%	3.3%	0.0%
Availability of bus route information	62.0%	31.5%	5.4%	0.0%	1.1%
User-friendliness of bus information	62.4%	21.5%	15.1%	1.1%	0.0%
Vehicle cleanliness and comfort	83.0%	14.9%	1.1%	0.0%	1.1%
Bus stop cleanliness and comfort	68.8%	25.8%	4.3%	1.1%	0.0%
Bus driver courtesy	74.2%	18.3%	6.5%	0.0%	1.1%
Safety/security on bus	91.5%	7.4%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%
Safety/security at bus stops	87.2%	11.7%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%

Following all the questions, survey respondents were asked to provide any other comments or input related to EC Rider services for consideration in the development of the *Access EC Rider* TDP. The following is a summary of the major categories/themes of comments received:

- *Funding* – Concern was expressed about using local funds to pay for transit service; transit can be viewed as an inefficient use of taxpayer money when buses always seem to be empty, and money could be better spent fixing roads, signal timing, etc.
- *Relieving congestion* – Transit can relieve traffic congestion, particularly during peak tourism seasons.
- *Supplement school bus service* – Several respondents noted more local transit routes are needed after school.
- *Ease of access to transit information* – It can be difficult to access transit schedules and other information.
- *Attract all riders* – Transit service should be provided for people who have no other option (low income, older adults, etc.); however, the system should also service workers and tourists.
- *Transit technologies* – Use technologies such as phone apps, etc., to increase access to information and enhance the rider experience.
- *Economic development* – Tourists will use transit if goes where they need it to at the time they need it to. Transit is needed to access jobs, particularly in Destin. Transit along the beach corridor

between Destin and Santa Rosa Island is needed, and some kind of connection to transit in Walton County and those tourist areas that would be beneficial.

- *Geographic challenges* – The geography of the county and lower density/rural areas make it difficult for transit to be efficient.
- *Need to take action* – There is a need to think towards the future and implement transit plans rather than just talking about it.
- *Convenience of service* – Buses need to go to where people need them the most. The system needs fewer transfers so people can get to where they need to go faster.
- *Transit branding/advertising* – Better advertising is needed to let people know where transit goes and to expand knowledge of the system; get creative and have a theme/look to go with the coastal area.

Summary of Needs Plan Survey

The second survey focused on gathering input on the proposed improvements to existing services and new transit services being considered for the *Access Rider* TDP, which were developed based on earlier public input and data analysis. The proposed improvements were illustrated for survey participants in two maps. In the first question, survey respondents were asked to rate the favorableness of each proposed improvement to expand/improve existing services. As show in Figure 4-27, adding Saturday service to all routes was given the highest rating followed by doubling frequency on the top performing routes.

Figure 4-27: Favorability of each proposed improvement to expand/improve existing services
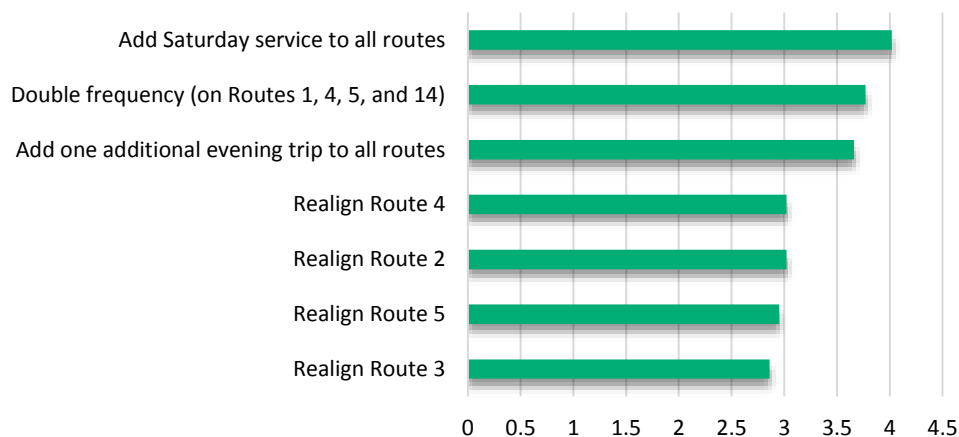
In the second question, survey respondents were asked to rate the favorableness of each proposed improvement to expand the EC Rider system. As shown in Figure 4-28, the Destin Circulator was rated the most favorable, followed by the Niceville-Destin Commons Limited Express, and the Crestview Flex service. The internal circulators for Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field were given the lowest ratings with neutral favorability.

Figure 4-28: Favorability of each proposed improvement to expand transit system
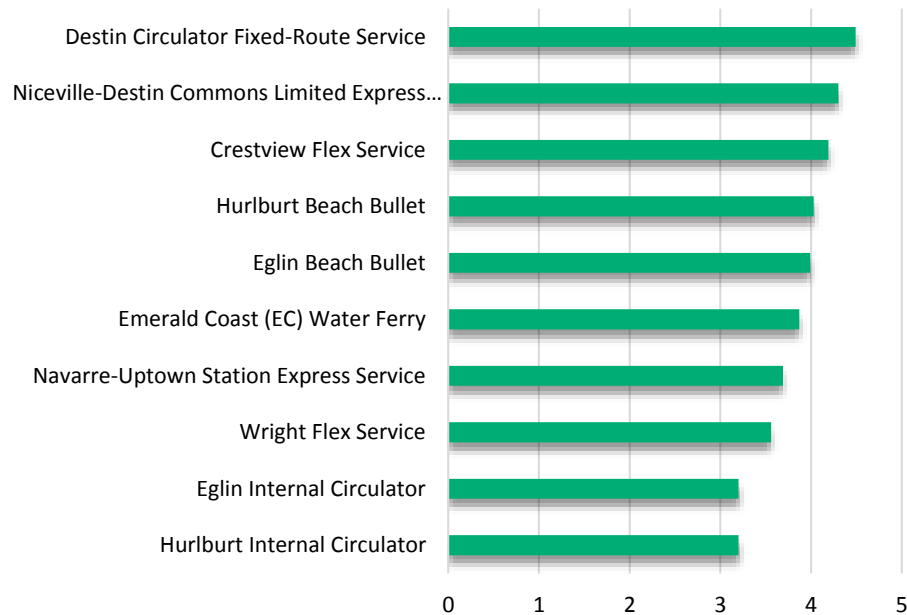
In the third question, respondents were asked to indicate the top three areas/corridors that need more transit services or improvements. As shown in Figure 4-29, the top three areas and roadways identified were US 98, Destin, and SR 85 south of Crestview and Crestview.

Figure 4-29: Top three major roads/areas where more transit service or improvements needed
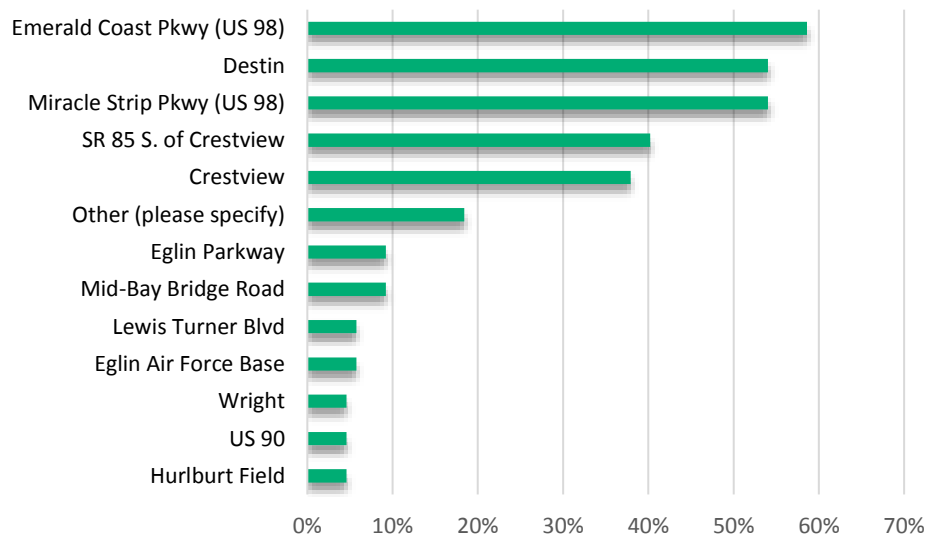
Respondents also provided additional written comments concerning the need for improved transit service to other locations within Okaloosa and to neighboring counties. Some of those concerns/suggestions include the following:

- Establish internal circulation and connector to system outside Eglin Air Force Base.
- Restore fixed-route service in Crestview and connection between Crestview and tourism areas and Eglin/Hurlburt bases.
- Improve timing and stops in Destin to serve peak hours for workers and tourists.
- Employment routes to Destin very important; cut down on traffic on US 98 during rush hour.
- US 98 is overly-congested; a more efficient transit system could cut down on this issue. Weekly shuttles to and from the bases from Navarre is a great idea.
- Provide better frequency.
- Traffic to Destin, Crestview, and downtown Fort Walton Beach is an issue.
- Transit is too expensive for taxpayers. Okaloosa County is to spread out for it to be practical. The only area that makes sense for transit is the Destin/Island Beach Areas. Need a fun trolley.
- There are many older adults that could use the transit to come and go shopping.
- Crestview is a high traffic, large population area. Destin is impassable in the tourist seasons. Transportation is critical. The bases and tourism industry create transportation needs.

On-Board (Rider) Survey

An on-board survey was conducted in February 2016 to collect socio-demographic information and travel behavior of EC Rider passengers. The surveys were distributed on 60% of EC Rider bus runs for two full weekdays. The survey was distributed as a self-administered, 22-question instrument to all passengers aboard EC Rider bus routes, all of whom received identical surveys. The survey was translated into Spanish for distribution to Spanish-speaking passengers who were not able to complete the English version. The survey was distributed by a team of trained survey personnel; prior to the distribution, an orientation session was conducted to instruct them on duties and responsibilities and to discuss possible issues or concerns they might have while conducting the survey. In total, 118 surveys were completed. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix B.

Survey Characteristics

The survey consisted of questions to identify passenger travel characteristics, rider socio-demographics, and customer service satisfaction. Passenger travel characteristics and behaviors were identified by questions that included:

- Common reasons for riding the bus
- Usual method for reaching the bus
- If a wheelchair was used to board the bus
- List of bus routes used when taking a one-way trip

- Number of one-way bus trips typically made per week
- Most important reason for riding the bus
- Length of time using EC Rider services
- Fare type used
- Access to other modes of transportation

Socio-demographic information was identified by questions that included:

- Possession of driver's license
- Age
- Race
- Ethnic origin

- Primary language
- Household income
- ZIP code of primary residence
- Ownership of smartphone/tablet

Customer service information was identified by questions that included:

- Bus service experience
- Recommendations for service improvements
- Recommendations for technology improvements
- Satisfaction with overall EC Rider bus service

Passenger Travel Characteristics and Behaviors

Passengers were asked to indicate the type of place had just come from prior to starting their trip on the bus (Figure 4-30). A total of 56% responded that they were coming from home, and 20% responded that they were coming from work. As shown in Figure 4-31, two-thirds of passengers indicated they were coming from ZIP codes 32547 (north Fort Walton Beach/Eglin Air Force Base) and 32548 (south Fort Walton Beach/Okaloosa Island/Santa Rosa Island).

Figure 4-30: What type of place are you coming from now?
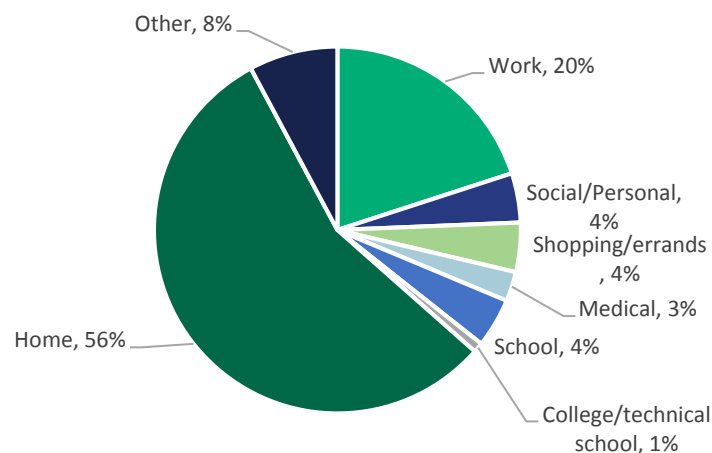
Figure 4-31: What is the ZIP code of the place are you coming from now?

Passengers were asked what mode of transportation they used get to the bus stop (Figure 4-32). The majority (68%) said they walked or used wheelchairs to reach the bus stop, 15% used their bicycles, and fewer than 1% rode with someone. This question also asked passengers to describe how far they had to travel to reach the stop. Of those who walked or used a wheelchair, approximately 90% traveled three blocks or less, 7.5% traveled 4–7 blocks, and 2.5% traveled 8 blocks or more to reach the bus stop. Of those who bicycled, 94% traveled 3 blocks or less, 4% traveled 4–7 blocks, and 2% bicycled 8 blocks or more.

Figure 4-32: How do you get to the first bus stop for this one-way trip?
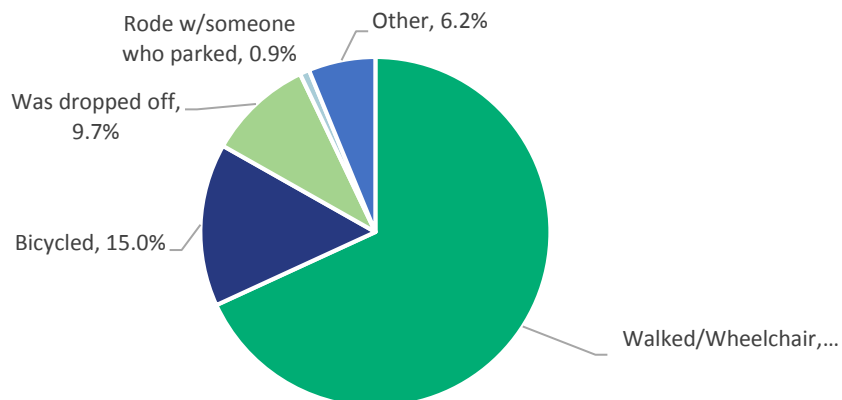
Passengers were asked to list the order of bus routes they used to make the one-way trip the day the survey was taken (Figure 4-33). Most passengers started their one-way journey on Route 20 (22%), 21% began on Route 1, and 16% began on Route 4. These three routes were consistently the top three most frequently-traveled routes on each component of the one-way trip.

Figure 4-33: **List all the bus routes in the exact order you will use to make this one-way trip.**
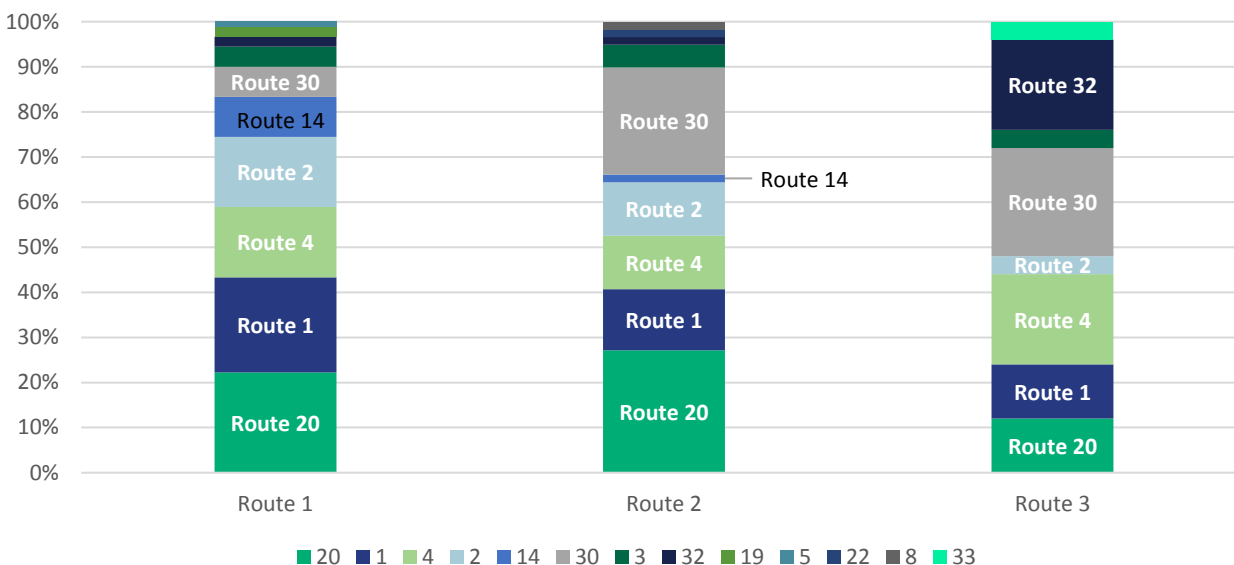
Passengers were asked to indicate the type of place they would be going to after riding the bus (Figure 4-34). The majority indicated they were either going to work (32%) or shopping (errands), indicating that most trips are either home-work or home-shopping/errand-related trips. As shown in Figure 4-35, nearly three-fourths of passengers indicated they were coming from ZIP codes 32547 (north Fort Walton Beach/Eglin Air Force Base) and 32548 (south Fort Walton Beach/Okaloosa Island/Santa Rosa Island).

Figure 4-34: **What type of place are you going to now?**
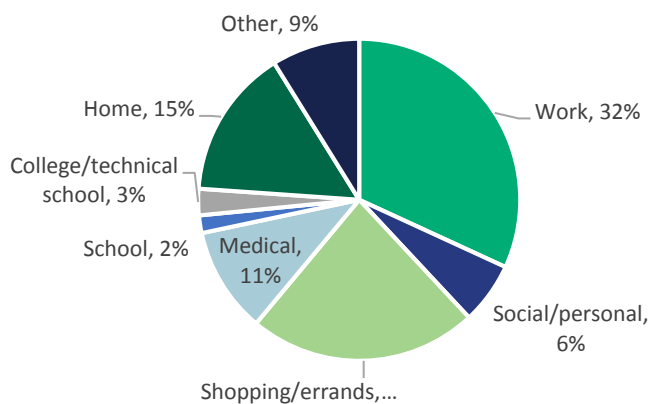
Figure 4-35: **What is the ZIP code of the place are you going to now?**
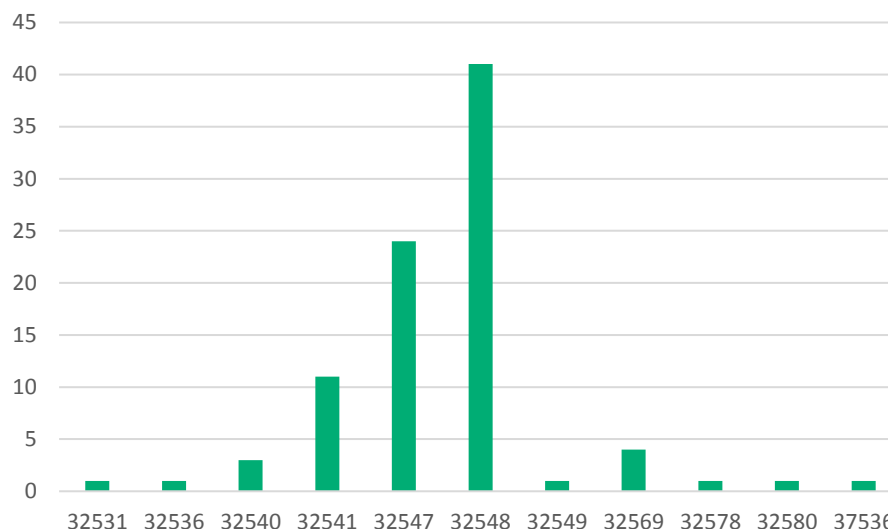
Passengers were asked what mode of transportation they would use to reach their final destination after taking the bus (Figure 4-36). The majority (73%) indicated they would walk or use a wheelchair; 13% would use a bicycle, and 11% would use a car, either by being picked up by someone or riding with someone who parked. This question also asked passengers to describe how long it took them to reach the stop. Of those passengers who walked, used a wheelchair or biked, and approximately 97% traveled three blocks or less. Passengers were asked which type of fare they paid for this one-way trip (Figure 4-37). Most (62%) paid the regular cash-fare and 12% paid used a 31-day regular-fare pass. The reduced cash fare was paid by 12%, and 5% paid using a 31-day reduced-fare pass.

Figure 4-36: **How did you get to the first bus stop for this one-way trip?**
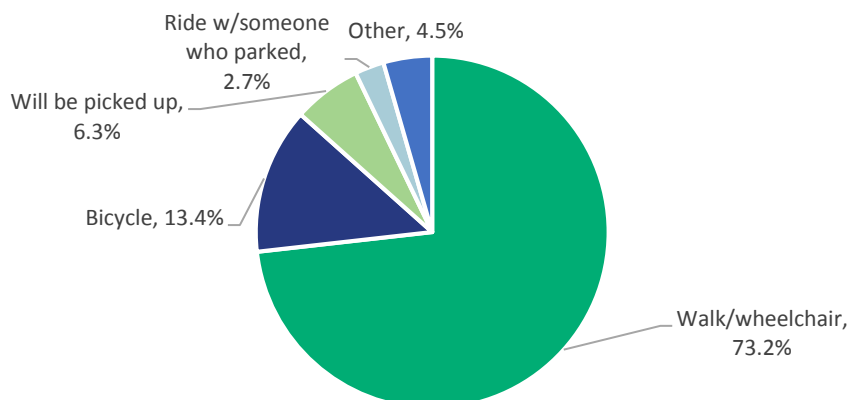
Figure 4-37: What type of fare did you pay for this one-way trip?

Other, 9%

31-day pass (reduced fare), 5%

31-day pass (regular fare), 12%

Reduced full fare, 12%

Regular fare, 61%
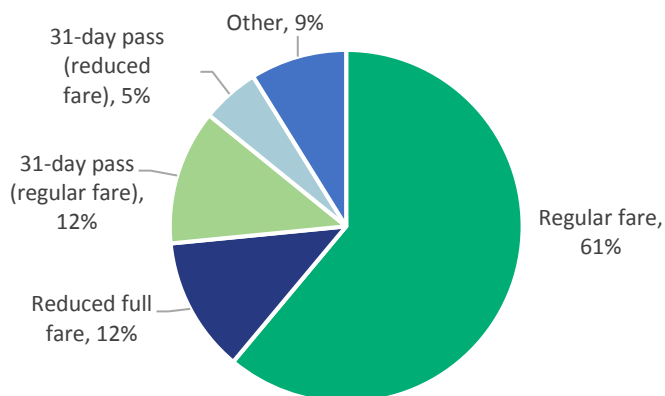
Passengers were asked how many one-way trips they made per week using EC Rider buses (Figure 4-38). Responses indicated that passengers used the bus on a regular basis, with 50% indicating that they used the bus four or more days per week. Only 5% of passengers indicated that this was their first time using EC Rider. This is corroborated by Figure 4-39, which indicates that 42% of passengers had been using EC Rider for at least two years, with half of those passengers indicating they had been using it for longer than five years. Another 32% of passengers indicated they had been using it for a short period of time (less than six months), and the remaining 26% of passengers had been using it between six months and two years.

Figure 4-38: How many days a week do you usually take buses?

First time riding, 5%

Less than once a week, 13%

One day, 5%

Two days, 17%

Three days, 10%

Four days, 20%

Five or more days, 30%
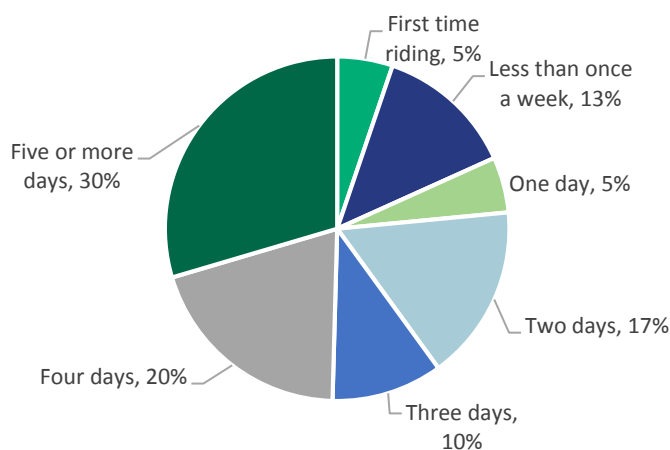
Figure 4-39: How long have you been using EC Rider?
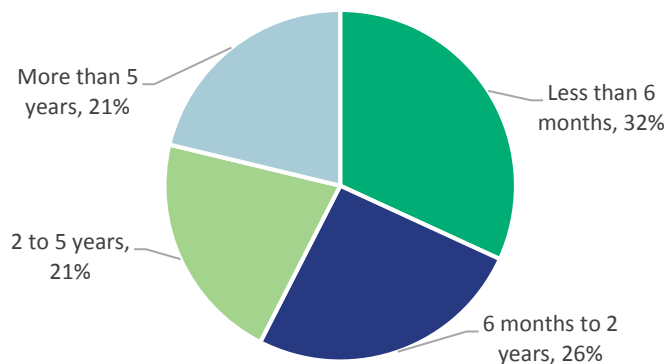
Passengers were asked to indicate their most important is reason for riding the bus (Figure 4-40). The majority of responses were vehicle-related. The primary reason given was no access to a car (38%), followed by do not drive/do not have a driver's license (46% combined). In total, 11% of passengers indicated that the bus was a more convenient way to travel, and only 2% of passengers responded that traffic congestion or the EC Rider being more economical was the most important reason.

Figure 4-40: What is the most important reason you ride the bus?
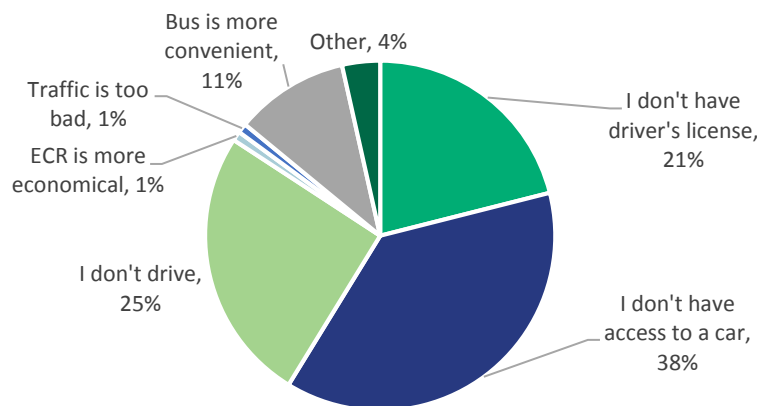
Passengers were asked how they would make their one-way trip if the bus were not available (Figure 4-41). There was a fairly even rate among the responses of ride with someone (26%), bike (23%), or walk (23%). Another 15% of passengers indicated they would not make the trip if the bus was not available, and only 4% of respondents indicated they would drive as an alternative, which is consistent with passengers responding to the previous question that vehicle/license availability was a primary reason for using the bus.

Figure 4-41: How would you make this trip if bus service was not available?
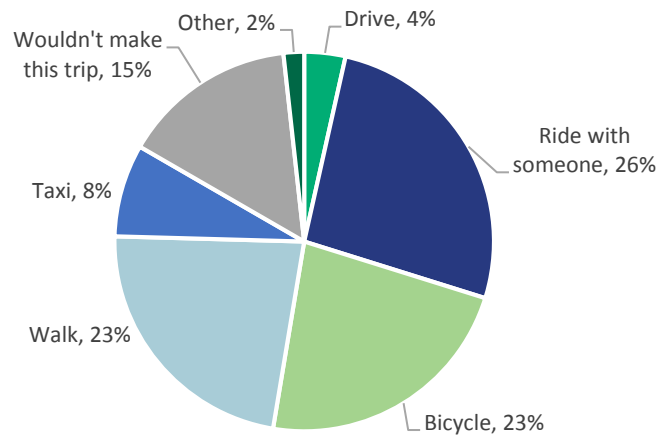
Passengers were asked to identify the three service improvements that would improve their experience using EC Rider. As shown in Figure 4-42, the most frequent responses related to service improvements; new weekend service was the most popular response at 27%, followed by more frequent service and later service on existing routes, both noted by approximately 15% of respondents. Improved security at stops and on buses as well as better sidewalk connections to bus stops received the lowest percentage of responses (1.7% each).

Figure 4-42: Which three service improvements would make EC Rider better for you to use?
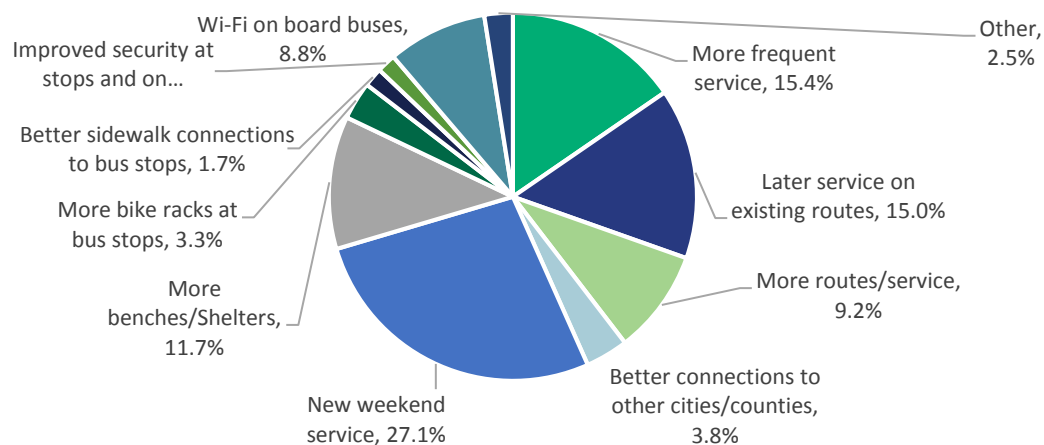
Passenger Socio-Demographic Information

This section identifies socio-demographic characteristics of passengers that use EC Rider services, including ethnicity, household income, ZIP code of primary residence, and possession of a driver's license.

As more transit agencies are considering technology enhancements to better the customer experience (i.e., phone applications, Wi-Fi, etc.), it is important to understand what percentage of the customer base owns smart phones or tablets necessary to use these technological improvements. According to this on-board survey, just under two-thirds (63%) of EC Rider passengers own a smart phone or tablet (Figure 4-43).

The majority of passengers (97%) spoke English (Figure 4-44) and identified as White (Caucasian) (58%), Black (African-American) (26%) (Figure 4-45), or not of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (92%) (Figure 4-46).

The passenger responses illustrated in Figure 4-47 further confirm a primary use of EC Rider by passengers that do not have access to a vehicle or who are unable to drive, as 64% of respondents indicated that they did not have a driver's license.

As illustrated in Figure 4-48, approximately half of respondents to the survey were ages 20–49, 25% were 50–59, 17% were 60 and older, and only 11% were under 20.

Figure 4-43: Do you own a smart phone or tablet?
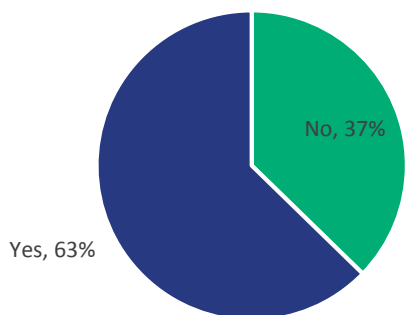
Figure 4-44: What is your primary language?
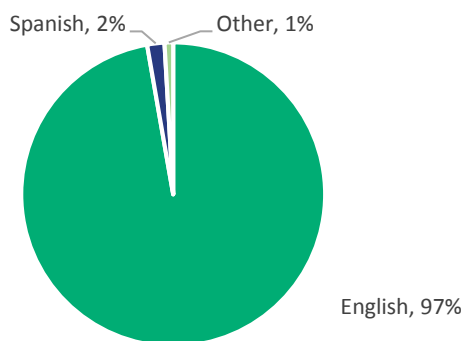
Figure 4-45: How would you describe yourself?
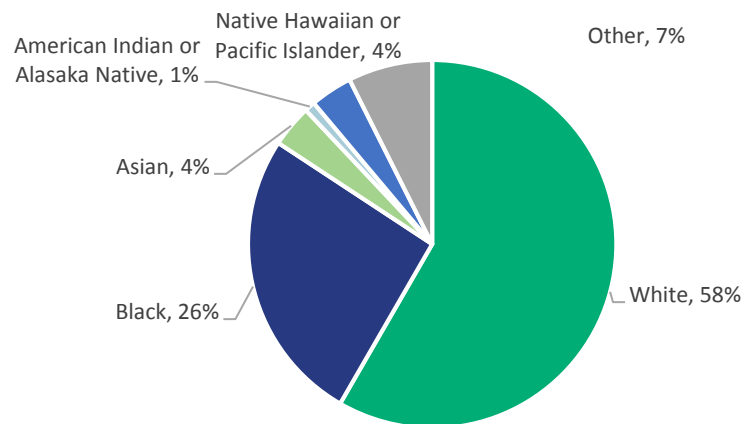
Figure 4-46: Are you of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity?
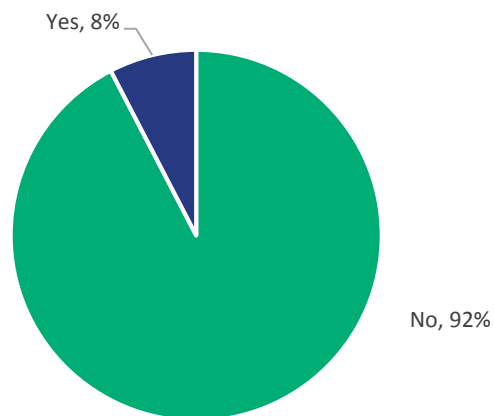
Figure 4-47: Do you have a driver's license?
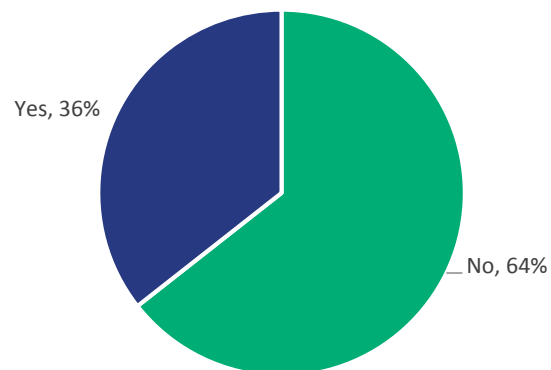
Figure 4-48: What is your age?
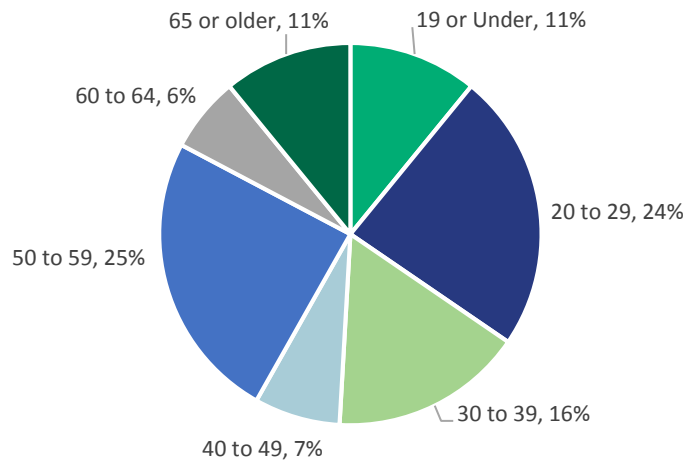
Approximately half of passengers responded that their 2015 total household income was less than $10,000 or they did not work (Figure 4-49), and only 5% of passengers indicated they had a total annual household income of $40,000 or greater. In addition, more than half of passengers (57%) indicated that they did not have a working vehicle at their home (Figure 4-50).

Figure 4-49: What was the range of your total household income for 2015?
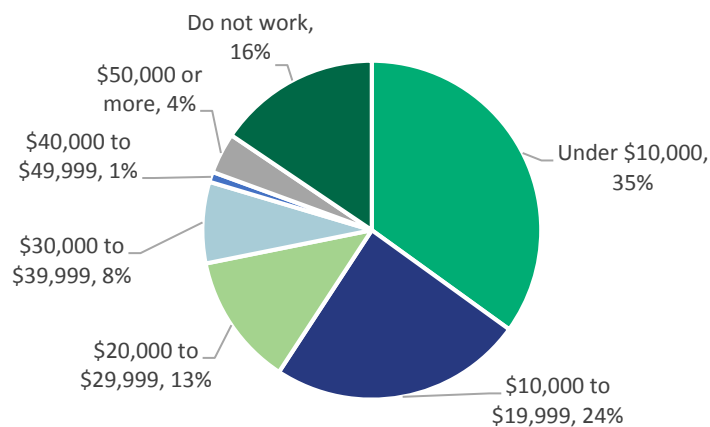
Figure 4-50: How many working vehicles are at your home?

Pie chart:
- None, 57%
- One, 24%
- Two, 12%
- Three or…
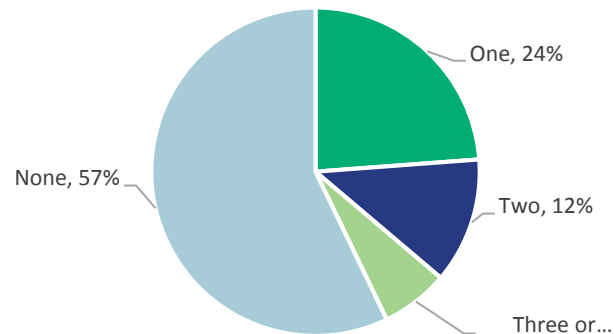
Customer Satisfaction

Customer service and general satisfaction questions identified passenger satisfaction levels, recommendations for service improvements, and overall perception of EC Rider bus services.

Passengers were asked to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of EC Rider's services (see Table 4-3 and Figure 4-51). Passengers indicated they were the least satisfied with the frequency of service and convenience of the existing bus routes, and they were most satisfied with bus driver courtesy and safety/security of the bus.

Table 4-3: How satisfied are you with each of the following?

Question	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Unsatisfied
Bus driver courtesy	67.31%	15.38%	12.50%	4.81%
Safety/security on bus	66.99%	21.36%	9.71%	0.97%
Availability of seats on the bus	61.17%	21.36%	13.59%	1.94%
User-friendliness of bus schedule/information	59.62%	15.38%	16.35%	4.81%
Vehicle cleanliness and comfort	59.62%	27.88%	10.58%	0.96%
Value of bus fare (service you get for you paid for)	55.34%	21.36%	14.56%	5.83%
How on-time the bus is running (punctuality)	54.37%	25.24%	16.50%	1.94%
Accessibility of bus passes (ease of purchase)	53.40%	16.50%	22.33%	3.88%
Bus stop cleanliness and comfort	53.40%	23.30%	19.42%	3.88%
Safety/security at bus stops	53.40%	19.42%	20.39%	4.85%
Ease of transfers between buses	52.94%	22.55%	16.67%	3.92%
How directly the route goes to your final destination	50.00%	15.38%	25.00%	5.77%
Length of time your trip takes	45.19%	20.19%	23.08%	8.65%
Availability of bus schedule/information	40.00%	20.00%	20.00%	11.43%
Convenience of route (where buses go)	39.42%	23.08%	25.00%	6.73%
How often the buses run (frequency)	34.29%	17.14%	33.33%	9.52%

Figure 4-51: How satisfied are you with each of the following?

| | Very Satisfied | Somewhat Satisfied | Neutral | Somewhat Unsatisfied | Very Unsatisfied |
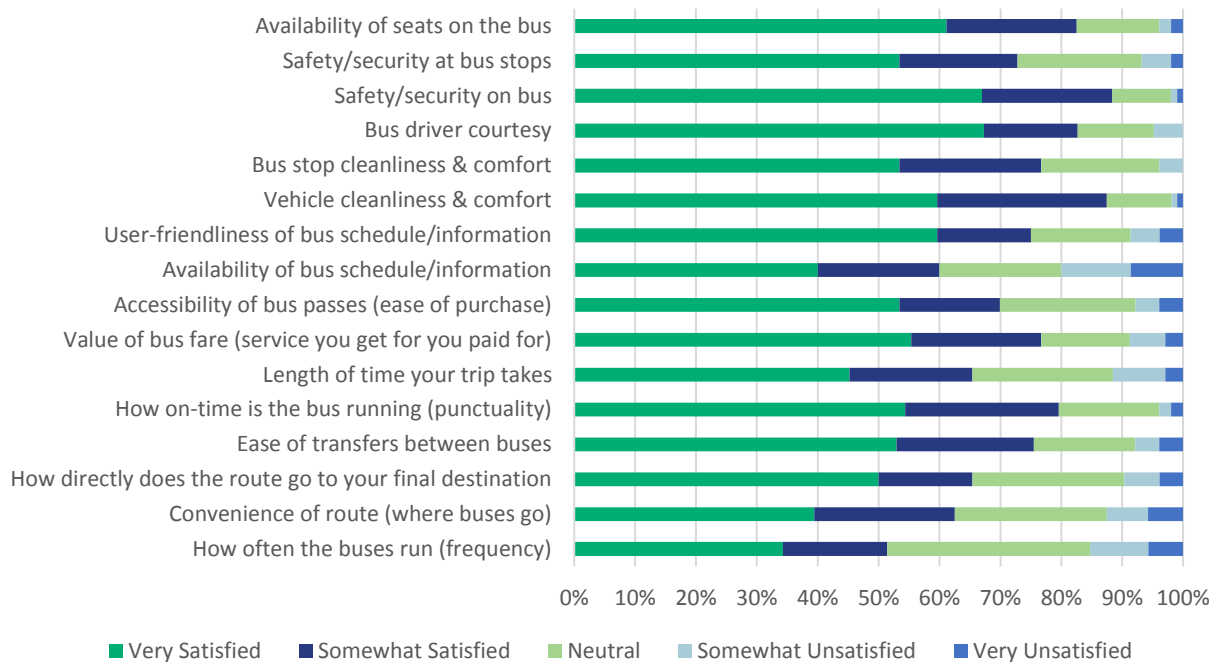
On-Board Survey General Conclusions

Results from the on-board survey provided insight into various aspects of EC Rider bus service. Conclusions drawn from the on-board survey analysis are summarized as follows:

- Overall, most EC Rider passengers were "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with various aspects of the transit service being provided. However, they believed focus should be placed on offering more convenient routes, increasing frequency, and shortening overall trip lengths.

- Approximately 60% of passengers used the bus three or more days per week, and more than 40% had been using EC Rider for two years or longer.

- A lack of access to a working vehicle or valid driver's license were noted as primary reasons why many passengers used EC Rider for their transportation needs.

- Weekend service, more frequent service, and later service on existing routes were indicated as the most desirable service improvements for EC Rider.

- Approximately 15% of passengers indicated they were transit-dependent in that they would not be able to make this trip if not for the bus.

- Full-fare single trip payment was used by approximately 61% of respondents, and 12% used reduced-fare single-trip payment; only 18% used passes, including full and reduced monthly passes, as their fare payment type.

Access EC Rider TDP Website

A website for *Access EC Rider* TDP (www.accessecridertdp.com) was developed early in the project and launched on February 17, 2016, to serve as a principal information portal for citizens and stakeholder agencies. In addition to hosting project-related information and documents, visitors to the website could access the online survey (in either English or Spanish), send comment/questions to the Project Team, or connect to the WFRPC's Facebook and Twitter pages. In the first month of the website being live, there were 117 total visits to the website, 82% of which were unique visits. By July 2016, there were 637 total visits, 438 of which were unique visits. Figure 4-52 is a screenshot of the *Access EC Rider* TDP website's homepage.

Figure 4-52: Screenshot of *Access EC Rider* TDP Website
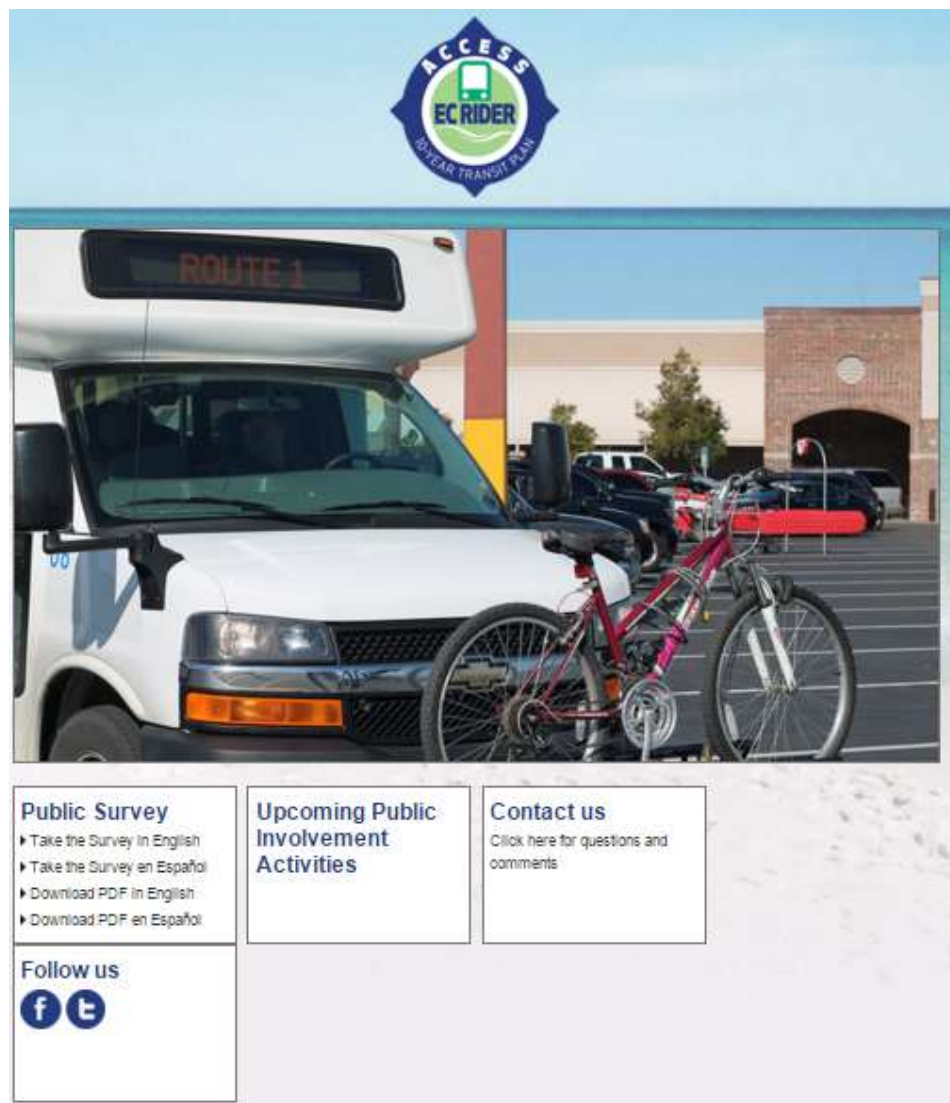
SECTION 5: SITUATION APPRAISAL

This section reviews transit policies at the federal, regional, and local levels, followed by a review of potential revenue sources. These are then synthesized to develop the situation appraisal. The situation appraisal assesses the operating environment for EC Rider with respect to land use, state and local transportation plans, socioeconomic trends, organization issues, technology, and 10-year transit projections. The situation appraisal serves as the basis for the formulation of EC Rider's service needs and future goals and objectives.

Review of Plans and Studies

A review of selected federal, regional, and local plans, programs, land development codes, and studies that influence transit operations, infrastructure, and policy was conducted to understand the potential implications for EC Rider service. Findings from this review help to ensure that development of the *Access EC Rider* TDP is consistent with other local planning efforts and help Okaloosa County to better understand its transit operating environment. Table 5-1 summarizes the plans and studies that were reviewed for this effort and provides an overview of the relevant goals and policies and key considerations for the *Access EC Rider* TDP Situation Appraisal. A more in depth discussion of the plans review can be found in Appendix E.

Potential Funding Sources

As the *Access EC Rider* TDP explores alternatives to expanding transit services in Okaloosa County, it is important to understand what potential revenue sources may be available to support such expansion. This section summarizes the potential funding sources for EC Rider and evaluates the opportunity for Okaloosa County to improve operating revenues, documenting those sources that have a greater potential for increasing the available revenue to operate expanded transit services based on the input and analysis completed previously.

This section discusses funding sources that currently are not used by Okaloosa County for EC Rider's fixed-route transit service, but that have potential to become a source of funding in the future. Whereas maintaining the existing funding sources for transit services is important, the ability to expand service coverage relies heavily on identifying new funding sources. The addition of more routes and/or the enhancement of existing service by leveraging more federal and State funds typically requires local matching funds. Therefore, multiple funding sources often must be considered in tandem.

Table 5-1: **Summary of Reviewed Plans, Studies, and Policies**

Plan/Program/ Study Reviewed	Most Recent Update	Geography & Responsible/ Partner Agencies	Overview	Key Consideration for the Situation Appraisal
Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) ACT	October 2015	Federal USDOT	Five-year funding for nation's surface transportation infrastructure, including transit systems and rail transportation network. Provides long-term certainty and more flexibility for states and local governments, streamlines project approval processes, and maintains a strong commitment to safety.	• Increases dedicated bus funding by 89% over the life of the bill. • Provides both stable formula funding and a competitive grant program to address bus and bus facility needs. • Reforms public transportation procurement to make federal investment more cost effective and competitive. • Consolidates and refocuses transit research activities to increase efficiency and accountability. • Establishes a pilot program for communities to expand transit through the use of public-private partnerships. • Provides flexibility for recipients to use federal funds to meet their state of good repair needs. • Provides for the coordination of public transportation services with other federally-assisted transportation services to aid in the mobility of older adults and individuals with disabilities.
State of Florida Transportation Disadvantaged 5-Year/20-Year Plan	November 2007	State Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD)	The purpose is to accomplish cost-effective, efficient, unduplicated and cohesive transportation disadvantaged services within its respective service area.	Develop and field-test a model community transportation system for persons who are transportation disadvantaged; create a strategy for the Florida CTD to support the development of a universal transportation system.
Florida Transportation Plan: Horizon 2060 (FTP)	2005	State FDOT	Plan, required under Florida Statutes, to make Florida's economy more competitive, communities more livable. Looks at a 50-year transportation planning horizon, calls for a fundamental change in how and where State investments in transportation are made.	The FTP supports the development of state, regional, and local transit services through a series of related goals and objectives, emphasizing new and innovative approaches by all modes to meet the needs today and in the future
2035 Okaloosa-Walton Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	March 2012; 2040 LRTP, currently	Regional Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization (TPO)	20-year guide for transportation improvements within urbanized area, updated every 5 years. Provides year-by-year methods to reach goals; must be consistent with State and federal requirements to maintain funding.	With respect to transit, identifies need for 8 park-and-ride lots, multimodal corridors, and several express transit and water transit routes within the region. The following identifies the cost feasible plans for transit: *Express Transit Service* –Niceville to Destin, Fort Walton Beach to Destin, DeFuniak Springs to south Walton County; *Park-and-Ride Locations* – SR 285 and US 90 (SR 10) at Mossy Head; SR 85 and Commerce Drive (Okaloosa); SR 85 at Rattlesnake Bluff Road (Okaloosa); SR 20 and East Bay Loop Road (Freeport); US 331 (SR 83) and Rockhill Road.

Plan/Program/ Study Reviewed	Most Recent Update	Geography & Responsible/ Partner Agencies	Overview	Key Consideration for the Situation Appraisal
	being developed			
Okaloosa-Walton TPO FY 2016–2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	Drafted April 2015	Regional Okaloosa-Walton TPO	Provides listing of multimodal projects that reflect needs and desires of within the TPO's Urbanized Area.	Priority projects listed include highway widening projects, intersection improvements, and sidewalk and bicycle lane improvements.
Tri-County Growth Management Plan	April 2010	Regional Okaloosa County Okaloosa-Walton TPO	Determine regional impacts of Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) realignment.	Among transportation impacts and concerns identified were: • Traffic along SR 85 and SR 123, as these routes provide access to two major BRAC actions at Eglin AFB. US 90 and SR 189 also expected to be negatively impacted. • Needs to coordinate with EC Rider, Eglin Air Force Base, other local governments on planned transit routes and potential express routes to 7 SFG(A) area and main base from residential areas with higher concentrations of Base personnel.
Okaloosa Comprehensive Plan 2009	2009	County Okaloosa County	Guides development, land use decisions, preservation of existing transportation infrastructure, and transportation improvements.	• Coordinate plans for transportation-disadvantaged services, roadway and transit service improvements with Okaloosa County Airport Master Plan, the Okaloosa-Walton TPO, FDOT 5-Year Transportation Plan, and Continuing Florida Aviation System Plan (CFAST). • Evaluate existing park-and-ride lot usage and review recommendations in WFRPC's West Florida Park & Ride Lot Planning Guide determine how to promote existing usage and where to establish new park-and-ride lots if analysis warrants need for such facilities.
Okaloosa County Land Development Regulations (LDR)	March 2015	County Okaloosa County	Adopted and enforced development regulations that must be consistent with the County's adopted comprehensive plan. The LDRs contain specific and detailed provisions necessary or desirable to implement the adopted comprehensive plan.	The following development requirements support the provision and coordination of transit: • The County has developed quantitative methods for determining and complying with the adopted LOS standards that exist and which may be impacted by any particular development application. • Public transit facilities, amenities and other improvements that support alternative modes of transportation may be required for developments based on the intensity of the development. • Consultation with EC Rider is required for developments located along transit routes. • Developments with 50+ multi-family residential units may be required to provide transit shelters compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Non-residential developments greater than 200,000 sf, non-residential developments of 50,000–200,000 sf, and non-residential developments or single- or multi-tenant office buildings of less than 50,000 sf may be required to provide the following:

Plan/Program/ Study Reviewed	Most Recent Update	Geography & Responsible/ Partner Agencies	Overview	Key Consideration for the Situation Appraisal
				o Pedestrian/bicycle improvements; bus stop w/ curb cut; transit shelter w/ seating; bike racks o Connectivity to the adjacent non-residential developments will be encouraged.
Okaloosa County Transit Development Plan Major Update 2012–2021	September 2011	County Okaloosa County	Provides direction and input to County's transit service and TPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), LRTP, and TIP.	Focused on four areas of service for the 10-year planning horizon: • Maintain existing system. • Improvements to existing services in terms of later evening trips on non-express routes if external grant funding sources become available. • One new route operating between Niceville/Bluewater Bay and Destin via the Mid-Bay Bridge if external grant funding sources become available. • Bring all stops to ADA compliance.
Okaloosa County Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP) SFY 2013–2017 Annual Update	June 2013	County Okaloosa County	Federally-required program, annually updated tactical plan jointly developed by designated Planning Agency (WFRPC) and local Community Transportation Coordinator; contains development, service, and quality assurance components to address the needs of the transportation disadvantaged.	The needs in service and capital purchase include the purchase of replacement paratransit vehicles, providing transportation for the TD population, capital to provide rural transportation, and addressing the needs of welfare recipients and low-income persons to employment. The following were identified as barriers to effective coordination and service: • Lack of commitment with scarce tax dollars. • Not enough local funding to cover demand and other specific issues directly related to funding sources. • Reluctance of some medical providers to cooperate with transportation coordinator. • No Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) providers in local area. • Eglin Air Force Base provides a barrier between northern (Crestview) southern parts of Okaloosa County.
Okaloosa County Strategic Plan: Fiscal Year 2013–2014	2013	County Okaloosa County	Addresses mission, vision, goals, objectives, strategies for Okaloosa County, with respect to airports, court services, facility maintenance, growth management, public safety, public works, tourist development council, water and sewer, among other aspects .	Among the goals, objectives, and strategies developed are: • Developing partnerships with municipalities to increase funding options. • Increase 2014 advertising revenue by 10%. • Encouraging paratransit riders to shift to fixed-route service via marketing. • Using WFRPC to assist with transit development and update them on evolving opportunities, challenges.
City of Crestview Comprehensive Plan: 2020.	Amended May 2010	Municipality Crestview	Primary policy document concerning land use, transportation, and other planning matters for Crestview.	• Lacks transit-specific provisions other than addressing importance of coordinating and supporting County's public transit system, WFRPC's park-and-ride program, and TPO. • In cooperation with FDOT, Okaloosa-Walton TPO, and Okaloosa County, City will establish a multimodal transportation district (MMTD) and will be included in Future Land Use Maps and

Plan/Program/ Study Reviewed	Most Recent Update	Geography & Responsible/ Partner Agencies	Overview	Key Consideration for the Situation Appraisal
				Future Traffic Circulation Maps. This will include improvements such as placing transit facilities near residential development.
City of Crestview Community Redevelopment Plan	May 1998	Municipality Crestview	Proposes projects and plans such as streetscapes in redevelopment area of city to eliminate blight.	• Strategies to revitalize downtown include streetscape plan, converting an undeveloped CSX railroad in downtown redevelopment area into a road to relieve congestion, marketing, a main street program, purchasing parking lots to expand free parking, developing an amphitheater, and single family infill housing. • No provisions regarding transit included in the Community Redevelopment Agency's (CRA) plan.
City of Fort Walton Beach 2011–2021 Comprehensive Plan	April 2011	Municipality Fort Walton Beach	Primary policy document concerning land use, transportation, and other planning matters for Fort Walton Beach.	• City has implemented a Transportation Concurrency Exception Area (TCEA) in Fort Walton Community Redevelopment Area that promotes construction of transit in certain districts as optional. • CRA's service area encompasses downtown, uptown, and midtown Fort Walton Beach.
City of Fort Walton Beach Development Standards	February 2014	Municipality Fort Walton Beach	Adopted and enforced development regulations that must be consistent with City's Comprehensive Plan. Contain specific and detailed provisions necessary or desirable to implement Comprehensive Plan policies.	• City has implemented a point system for its mobility requirements where developers can obtain points by providing transit passes to building occupants, constructing transit stops, or making certain types of mix uses within one building. • Density and intensity bonuses of up to 1.5 times the maximum are allowed in certain zoning districts and could potentially create a more transit supportive environment.
City of Valparaiso Comprehensive Plan	April 2000	Municipality Valparaiso	Primary policy document concerning land use, transportation, and other planning matters for the Valparaiso.	• Does not contain goals, objectives or policies that relate to transit as "there is no mass transit systems within the city nor is one planned." • City will support TPO plans to encourage alternative modes of transportation. • City uses a traditional concurrency requirement for transportation.
City of Destin Comprehensive Plan 2020	2014	Municipality Destin	Primary policy document concerning land use, transportation, and other planning matters for Destin.	• First municipality in the state to adopt a multimodal district. • Future Land Use Element designates transit-supportive development patterns with high densities, intensities and mix use in Calhoun, Harbor CRA, North and South Harbor, East Harbor, Holiday Isle, Town Center CRA, Gulf Resort, Bay Resort, and Crystal Beach. • Height, intensity, and density bonus provisions are provided in the HDR, CMU, SHMU, NHMU, TCMU, GRMU, BRMU, HIMU, and CBR Land Use Designations through a tiered system. Tier 3 requires a demonstration of public benefit such as by including "transit stops with dedicated area for safe and convenient off-street transit access and passenger shelters equipped with appropriate furnishings, architecturally design lighting and streetscape."

Plan/Program/ Study Reviewed	Most Recent Update	Geography & Responsible/ Partner Agencies	Overview	Key Consideration for the Situation Appraisal
				• Land use and transportation planning coordinated to assure that affordable housing, higher-density housing, and housing for special groups are accessible to current and future public transportation programs or transit systems • Emphasizes pedestrian connectivity and walkability. • Has established locations and bus stop types for future bus stops along major corridors.
City of Destin Land Development Code LDC	March 2015	<u>Municipality</u> Destin	Includes adopted and enforced development regulations that must be consistent with City's Comprehensive Plan; contains specific and detailed provisions necessary or desirable to implement the Comprehensive Plan policies.	• Adopted design standards pertaining to building mass, open space, setbacks, landscaping, pedestrian amenities and other design initiatives that accommodate transit needs and that promote walkability. • City has adopted a multimodal LOS standard for collector roads and for the Harbor Boulevard/US Highway 98 East/Emerald Coast Parkway.
City of Niceville Comprehensive Plan: 2035	October 2010	<u>Municipality</u> Niceville	Primary policy document concerning land use, transportation, and other planning matters for Niceville	• Currently contains no transit-specific policies, aside from coordinating with the appropriate agencies to plan for transit. No mass transit within city, nor is any planned during the planning period. • Objective 8.A.1 is to develop a long-range plan that identifies multimodal and intermodal transportation facilities that will function as an integrated system and address the mobility needs of the area.

The sources analyzed herein include sources that are federal, state, or local in nature that potentially can fund EC Rider's fixed-route service. It should be noted that the specified sources of transit funding currently being used by EC Rider are not included, as they were discussed in the previous section and additional revenue under these existing sources is not anticipated.

A review of funding sources was conducted to identify new and existing but currently not used or underused federal, state, and local funding sources for EC Rider fixed-route service. Some of the sources reviewed and summarized may not seem applicable to EC Rider services currently, but they represent potential future funding options within the next five-year planning period.

Federal and State Funding Sources

To identify additional non-local sources for funding EC Rider operations, several potential new federal and State funding sources were reviewed. These include relatively new sources of funding in the transportation industry, as well as a number of well-established and stable sources that currently are used by other transit providers in Florida. These funding sources include the following:

- Federal Programs
  - o Environmental and Energy
  - o Transit Clean Fuels
  - o Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316, now part of Section 5311)
- State Programs
  - o Transit Corridor
  - o Transit Service Development
  - o Commuter Assistance Program

Local and Regional Funding Sources

A review of various local and regional funding sources also was conducted. A number of local and regional funding sources, some already used and others new to EC Rider funding, are identified and categorized. The funding categories and a majority of the sources summarized are based on the information from the 2009 Transportation Cooperative Research Program Report 129, *"Local and Regional Funding Mechanisms for Public Transportation,"* which categorizes the local and regional sources into a number of categories as follows.

Traditional Tax- and Fee-based Sources

Traditional sources of broadly based, tax- and fee-based and related revenue-raising mechanisms typically used to support transit operating costs include:

- Regional Transit Authority
- County/City General Revenue

- Special Assessment Fees
- Tourist Development Council
- Student Fees
- Fare Revenue
- Advertising
- Concessions

Common Business, Activity, and Related Sources

Less frequently-used tax- and revenue-raising mechanisms, such as private contributions and donations, to support transit reflect the recognition that funding public transit is a responsibility shared broadly and that meeting this responsibility requires contributions of funds from sources whose yield is significant and whose participation is acceptable in a political sense.

Revenue Streams from Projects

This includes sources that capture funding from various private business/development activities that benefit from proximity to specific transit facilities and services. Revenue streams from transit-oriented development (TOD) and/or join development projects are examples of this revenue source.

Evaluation of Potential Funding Sources

Table 5-2 presents a matrix to evaluate the potential future funding sources for EC Rider services based on the following criteria:

- *Revenue stability* – evaluates whether the source can provide and maintain a stable revenue stream given the level of expenditures required and whether there are uncertain revenue fluctuations that can impact EC Rider's ability to operate transit services.
- *Equity* – the fairness of implementing a source that should be commensurate with the ability to pay or with the benefits received.
- *Political admissibility* – the political palatability of a source, i.e., whether the source can garner sufficient popular or legislative support to be implemented.
- *Rider acceptability* – evaluates whether the source is acceptable to the riders of EC Rider fixed-route services.

These four criteria, applicable to local/regional, state, and federal levels, will be used to evaluate the previously identified funding sources. The criteria for reviewing the funding sources are based on the recommendations from TCRP Report 129, which identifies a number of suitable criteria for evaluating potential local and regional funding sources. The evaluation was intended to provide a general overview of how each source is rated under each criterion as well as provide initial guidance on the set of funding sources considered for EC Rider to further focus its attention and efforts.

Table 5-2: Potential Future Funding Strategy Matrix

Source	Type	Stable	Equitable	Politically Admissible	Rider Accepted	Suggested Potential Funding Strategy
Environmental and Energy Funding	Federal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FTA Job Access Reverse Commute	Federal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FTA Transit Clean Fuels	Federal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FDOT Transit Corridor	State	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FDOT Transit Service Development	State	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Maybe
FDOT Commuter Assistance	State	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes
Independent/Regional Transit Authority	Regional	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	Maybe
County/City General Revenue	Local	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Maybe
Special Assessment	Local	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	Maybe
Tourist Development Council	Local	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes
Student Fees	Local	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	Maybe
Fare Revenue	Local	Yes	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Yes
Advertising	Local	Maybe	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes
Private Contributions/Donations	Local	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
TOD/Joint Development	Local	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Maybe

Combined, the identified sources provide additional funding needed to fill any funding gaps and expand existing fixed-route services in terms of coverage area and/or frequency. Consideration of any potential new funding sources in developing the *Access EC Rider* TDP will be based on discussions with agency staff, the Steering Committee, and community stakeholders and input from public outreach efforts.

Summary of Potential Funding Sources

The following funding sources/programs evaluated in the previous table are summarized below:

- Federal
    - o Environmental and Energy Funding
    - o Job Access and Reverse Commute
    - o Transit Clean Fuels
- State
    - o State Block Grants
    - o Transit Corridor
    - o Transit Service Development
    - o Commuter Assistance
- Regional/Local
    - o Independent/Regional Transit Authority
    - o County/City General Revenue
    - o Special Assessment

- o   Tourist Development Council
- o   Student Fees
- o   Fare Revenue
- o   Advertising
- o   Private Contributions/Donations
- o   TOD/Joint Development

Federal Funding Programs

Federal Environmental and Energy Funding

Another emerging potential federal funding resource for technology and programs for transit is through either or both the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) office. Both agencies implement programs that potentially could be a resource for transit clean fuels and other strategies to improve energy conservation or fuel emissions. With the cost of capital leasing options available, a cost/benefit assessment should be completed for each potential project and application.

Section 5316 Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) Program Funds

The JARC program was established to address the unique transportation challenges faced by welfare recipients and low-income persons seeking to obtain and maintain employment. Many new entry-level jobs are located in suburban areas, and low-income individuals have difficulty accessing these jobs from their inner city, urban, or rural neighborhoods.

FTA Transit Clean Fuels Program Funds

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) places some annual appropriations into a Transit Clean Fuels program and accepts applications for these funds. With attempts to move to cleaner-burning fuels, all transit systems should consider the potential to apply for and use funds from this source. Although these funds are for capital purchases and facility infrastructure, with the capital cost of leasing allowances, some level of benefit to operational expenses could be realized. This is a program that should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

State Funding Programs

State Block Grants

The State Block Grant Program was established by the Florida Legislature to provide a stable source of funding for public transit. These funds may be used for eligible capital and operating costs of providing public transit service and for transit service development and transit corridor projects. Public Transit Block Grant projects must be consistent with applicable approved local government comprehensive plans. State

participation is limited to 50% of the non-federal share of capital projects. Program funds may be used to pay up to 50% of eligible operating costs, or an amount equal to the total revenue (excluding farebox, charter, and advertising revenue) and federal funds received by the provider for operating costs, whichever amount is less.

FDOT Transit Corridor Program

This program supports new services within specific corridors when the services are designed and expected to help reduce or alleviate congestion or other mobility issues within the corridor. Transit Corridor funds are discretionary and are distributed based on documented need; projects that have regional or statewide significance may receive funding at up to 100%.

FDOT Transit Service Development Grant

Transit Service Development Grant funding is available for no more than three years and typically is used for providing improved or expanded public transit services. If awarded to EC Rider to improve/expand transit services and if successful in meeting project goals, the route must be continued thereafter by EC Rider without additional Public Transit Service Development Program funds. In addition, projects submitted for funding must be justified in the *Access EC Rider* TDP or other appropriate plan and then compete statewide for funding from FDOT.

FDOT Commuter Assistance Program

Commuter Assistance funding is allocated for various ridesharing, vanpooling, and other commuter services that fall under transportation demand management (TDM) strategies. Included in this is supporting local employers to develop new vanpool programs in Okaloosa County. Creating transportation alternatives for commuters potentially could be an eligible service under this program. Commuter routes that are initiated with the intent to connect commuters directly to work sites through shuttles or other means may be eligible. Under this program, capital and operating expenses could both be eligible expenses. Competing with other priorities for funding could be an issue, but guidance from FDOT District 3 staff should help guide the decision on whether to pursue funding under this program.

Regional/Local Funding Programs

Independent/Regional Transit Authority

Chapter 189 of the Florida Statutes (F.S.) allows for the creation of independent districts as an alternative method to manage and finance basic capital infrastructure and services. Alternatively, Chapter 343, F.S., allows for the establishment of a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) by the Florida Legislature. The purpose of both bodies is to prove mobility and expand multimodal transportation options throughout a designated region; however, an independent transit authority provides more flexibility in terms of local revenue

sources and board composition than an RTA. Prior discussions concerning some form of regional transit agency indicate that this would likely be a future consideration rather than an immediate discussion.

County/City General Revenue

Funding from local City and County general funds is often cumbersome to get allocated and receive; however, this revenue source is often the backbone of being able to expand and increase services in local areas. Finding the mechanism to encourage local contributions must be fair and equitable in areas with multiple jurisdictions if more than one jurisdiction is expected or desired to contribute.

Special Assessments

Special assessments are established to fund the construction and maintenance of capital facilities and to fund certain services, including public transportation. A special assessment differs from a general tax in that the assessed property should receive some special benefit from the improvement or service and reasonably apportioned among the properties receiving the special benefit. Under State law, special assessments could include Municipal Service Benefit Units (MSBU) or Municipal Service Tax Units (MSTU), where the source of revenue used to pay for the services is the difference between the two. An MSBU is funded by non-ad-valorem assessments and, therefore, the amount assessed is not dependent on the value of the property, whereas an MSTU is funded through ad valorem taxes and the amount assessed is dependent on the value of the property.

Tourist Development Council Revenue

The Okaloosa County Tourist Development Council (TDC) is solely-funded by the lodging tax known as the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) paid by visitors staying overnight in southern Okaloosa County, including the cities of Destin, Fort Walton Beach, Okaloosa Island, Mary Esther and Cinco Bayou. TDT revenues are used to promote tourism and fund various programs, such as beach safety, Protection and improvements to the natural environment, and operation of the Emerald Coast Convention Center. If available, TDT revenue potentially could be used to fund transit service serving tourists and high-volume tourist areas.

Student Fees

Transportation fees assessed to college/university students can help offset the cost of providing or enhancing transit services internal to the campus or between the campus and major destinations, such as other routes, transfer centers, park-and-ride facilities, and student housing. Student transportation fees can be assessed to all students or target a subset of the student population (such as full-time students, students that live on campus, etc.) to ensure more equity between fee payment and benefit received.

Private Contributions/Donations

There are a number of innovative mechanisms for funding transit services. Some of these strategies do so by eliciting private contributions to transit agencies with the expectation that net benefits will accrue over

time as the value of the private development appreciates. In addition to maintaining existing developer contributions, Okaloosa County could explore opportunities to encourage developer funding of future and existing transit operations. Other private contributions could be from developments receiving expanded and coordinated services, such as Emerald Grande or Eglin Air Force Base, for example.

Fare Revenue

EC Rider charges both a regular and reduced fare for older adult/disabled passengers on a per-ride basis. Monthly (31-day) passes also are available for purchase. EC Rider has implemented a policy to offer free transfers between routes, which can lower the amount of fare revenue ultimately collected. Based on a comparison of the system's average fare completed previously as part of the Peer and Trend Analysis, EC Rider's average fare increased 13.3% between 2009 and 2013. This places EC Rider's average fare of $0.68 slightly above the peer system mean of $0.60, indicating there is potential room for a fare increase, although other political and socioeconomic factors will also contribute to the decision to increase fares. In addition, a fare elasticity analysis may to be performed to ensure that any proposed fare changes to not have any unfair or discriminatory impacts under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Advertising Revenue

Advertising both inside and outside of buses and at bus stops can provide a stream of income for transit agencies to improve or expand services. The amount of revenue to be generated greatly depends on the extent of the program's reach (i.e., advertisements limited to bus stops versus advertisements placed on the inside and/or outside of buses) and the market in which the service is operating. However, prior to implementing an advertising program, an internal policy should be developed to guide the extent and type of advertising appropriate for the transit environment. Such policies may address:

- Maximizing advertising revenue
- Preventing the appearance of favoritism
- Preventing the risk of imposing demeaning or disparaging views on a captive audience
- Maintaining a position of neutrality on controversial issues
- Preserving the marketing potential of the advertising space by avoiding content that the community could view as demeaning, disparaging, objectionable, inappropriate, or harmful to members of the public generally or to minors, in particular
- Maximizing ridership
- Avoiding claims of discrimination and maintaining a non-discriminatory environment for riders
- Preventing any harm or abuse that may result from running demeaning, disparaging or objectionable advertisements
- Reducing the diversion of resources from transit operations that are caused by demeaning, disparaging, objectionable, inappropriate or harmful advertisements

Situation Appraisal

Requirements for a 10-year TDP in Florida include the need for a situation appraisal of the environment in which the transit agency operates. The purpose of this appraisal is to help develop an understanding of the transit operating environment in Okaloosa County in the context of the following elements:

- Socioeconomic trends
- Travel behavior
- Land use
- Public involvement
- transit issues

- Organizational attributes
- Technology
- Regional

The assessment and resulting implications are drawn from the following sources:

- Results of technical evaluation performed as part of the *Access EC Rider* TDP planning process.
- Review of relevant plans, studies, and programs prepared at all levels of government.
- Outcomes of discussions with the Okaloosa-Walton County TPO and Okaloosa County staffs.
- Outcomes of public outreach activities.

Issues, trends, and implications are summarized for each of the major elements in the remainder of this section.

Socioeconomic Trends

To better assess the impact of the growth in population on public transportation needs, it is important to understand the trends and markets that could be impacted or may benefit from public transportation services. Key findings from an assessment of socioeconomic trends are summarized as follows:

- The average age of Okaloosa County residents is younger than the state average. Higher concentrations of younger persons live in areas of Crestview, and higher concentrations of retired persons live in areas along the coastline.
- BEBR's *Florida Statistical Abstract* indicates a county population projection of 191,500 people by the year 2020 (6% increase) and 203,600 people by the year 2030 (13% increase).
- Based on socioeconomic data obtained from the NWFRPM, the higher population densities in the county continue to be in the coastal areas, especially in the Fort Walton Beach and Destin areas. Crestview is the fastest-growing city, where most of the rapid growth in population in the county is projected to occur between 2015 and 2025.
- The older adult population is projected to increase from 15.7% in 2015 to 22.7% in 2025.
- Although the county population remains a predominantly white, it is becoming more ethnically diverse. The Hispanic population has almost doubled to 8.5% of the population from 2000 to 2014. This growth in minority populations may represent a potentially growing market of traditionally

transit-oriented populations. Minority populations are concentrated in the Wright area and in the southwest quadrant of Crestview.

- The percentage of households that do not own a vehicle decreased from 4.1% to 2.0% in 2014. This is correlated with an overall increase in household incomes throughout the county, although the percent of households below the poverty line has increased from 8.8% to 13.4% in 2014.

- Major areas of employment are in the Fort Walton Beach area, especially along the coastal areas and the Eglin Air Force Base. Many low-income earners live in Crestview and commute south to their employment in the coastal areas.

- Employment in Okaloosa County is and will continue to be the densest in the several areas within Crestview, Fort Walton Beach, and Destin. The key growth areas on employment from 2017 to 2026 include the Crestview area, west of Niceville, and the western half of Destin.

- The Crestview and Fort Walton Beach areas have the highest Transit Orientation Index (TOI) (see Section 7). The existing bus routes align fairly well with the highest transit orientation areas in Fort Walton Beach, and there are areas of higher transit orientation in Crestview that are currently not directly served by the existing transit network.

- The discretionary transit market is principally employment-based, with "high" and "very high" employment density thresholds primarily in Fort Walton Beach, Destin and, to some extent, Crestview. In reviewing the 2025 Density Threshold Analysis (DTA) (see Section 7), the locations of the discretionary market are not anticipated to change, but a shift towards residential-driven ridership could occur as "high" dwelling unit densities are anticipated in Fort Walton Beach by 2025.

- According to CareerSource Okaloosa Walton, there are 3,000 foreign employees on J-1 visas working for various companies and all will be without personal transportation.

Implications – Okaloosa County should continue to maintain its current services by targeting traditional markets such as those without vehicles and continue efforts to increase its share of discretionary and regional riders, particularly young adults. Growing traditional rider markets such as older adults, Hispanic populations, and transportation-disadvantaged segments may indicate that the county is becoming more transit-supportive. EC Rider already captures major TOI and DTA areas in the Fort Walton Beach area; the exception is in Crestview, where the core areas with a high TOI have a high potential to benefit from a circulator service. The TOI and DTA analyses both reflect a substantial need to for a more robust local bus circulation in the county.

In addition, the discretionary market in areas such as high-density population and employment areas in the Fort Walton Beach area and Crestview are anticipated to grow, especially in areas with a moderate level of employment and employment density. Transit service could incrementally expand as population and employment increases. Connecting workers living areas such as Crestview, Shalimar, and Niceville to their

jobs in places like the Eglin Air Force Base and the coastal areas should continue to be prioritized through express services like the Wave Express.

With more enhanced service to travel between cities and opportunities to connect with other transit systems regionally, public transit may provide a more attractive travel option to potential riders in "captive" markets (older adult, low-income, and minority populations without access to an automobile or who are unable to drive).

Travel Behavior

An assessment of trends in travel behavior for Okaloosa County indicated the following:

- According to the 2009–2013 ACS, the majority of commuters who took transit were ages 16–19 (61.9%). The next largest age group was ages 20–24, representing 9.6% of commuters taking transit. The survey also confirms that low-income households represent the largest group of commuters taking transit, with approximately 90% of commuters making between $10,000 and $24,000 annually.
- The majority of commuters taking transit worked in the sales and office occupations (37.2%) followed by military-specific occupations (33.7%).
- One-third of military airmen have no car. Retirees come to Eglin Air Force Base daily and typically drive themselves. Military bases typically have limited interior transportation options, although the 33rd Flight Wing has a shuttle for students with limited service and stops. Daily military commuters to/from Eglin was 20,000 in 2010 and continues to rise; parking and access issues continue to grow in severity. Eglin Air Force Base is not a very walkable environment due to its size and layout.
- Almost 90% of commuters live and work in Okaloosa County.
- Peak transit ridership occurs during the peak summer months of tourism.
- Major trip generator and attractors include the Eglin Air Force Base, Destin Commons, Emerald Grande, Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, the Santa Rosa Mall, and the Uptown Station retail establishment.
- Other transportation providers include Island Time Shuttle, Sunshine Shuttle, and Uber, which concentrate their service to the core areas of Fort Walton Beach and Destin.
- Most tourists travel using their personal vehicle, primarily using one vehicle per household.
- Many workers must commute to work on Saturdays, but there is currently no weekend bus service.
- Eglin Air Force Base is interested in reducing traffic at the gate and is asking the county for support.
- Eglin Air Force Base has an informal ridesharing system on the base, where persons needing rides can press a button and wait for a "good Samaritan" to give them a ride.
- The airport is interested in a transit route, and EC Rider is also in the process of identifying a park-and-ride location between the airport and Eglin Air Force Base.

Implications – *EC Rider services major trip generators and attractors but could consider expanding services to include generators such as Eglin Air Force Base and areas that are not currently serviced like Niceville. Important transit markets in Okaloosa County include young adults and those working in sales, office and military occupations. As economic development gradually grows, Okaloosa County should continue to modify its services in order to capture new riders and new transit markets. Additionally, EC Rider could expand its services to assist workers needing to commute on Saturdays. Depending the needs of a commuters, a vanpooling/carpooling program for commuters traveling from Valparaiso and Niceville to Fort Walton Beach or the coastal areas such as Destin may b an attractive alternative.*

The economic and traffic impacts generated by the tourism industry point to the need to maintain or improve the more frequent bus service during the summer months when the tourism industry peaks. Because most households visiting the county typically bring one vehicle, they may be limited to traveling to only one destination at a time. For instance, a member of the group may want to attend an attraction while the rest of the household may want to shop. A robust transit service could make the choice to take transit more attractive in the event a visiting household or group needs to make two separate trips simultaneously or for visitors who do not wish to or cannot bring their own car.

Regional Transit Issues

A review of regional travel behavior indicates the need for more regionally-connected transit services. A total of more than 14,600 daily commutes to Okaloosa County come from Santa Rosa County and Walton County. The Okaloosa-Walton County TPO Long Range Transportation Plan proposes a regional water taxi and express transit service to facilitate regional trips from neighboring counties. Other characteristics include the following:

- A substantial number of commuters from outside of the county originate from Santa Rosa County.
- SR 85 and SR 123 corridors are vital connections between I-10 near Crestview to Niceville and Fort Walton Beach, carrying thousands of commuters to Eglin Air Force Base, Duke Field, Hurlburt Field, Northwest Florida Regional Airport, and other destinations in the region.
- US 98 is the main link for regional travel from Santa Rosa County and is highly congested during peak hours.
- The roadway network is constrained by the presence of the Eglin Air Force Base.
- SR 85, US 90, PJ Adams Parkway, Highway 4, SR 123, SR 293, SR 20, US 98, Lewis Turner Boulevard, and Eglin Parkway are the most congested roadways projected to operate at LOS E or F by 2035.
- Amtrak ceased operations in 2005. A study on returning passenger rail to the Panhandle region highlights the continuing need for transit to serve regional markets that extend to major cities such as New Orleans, Mobile, and Orlando.
- Greyhound bus service provides regional transportation for travelers. The bus terminal/stop is located in Fort Walton Beach (Figure 5-1).

Figure 5-1: Greyhound Bus Shelter in Fort Walton Beach

Image source: Google Streetview.

Implications – The possible return of Amtrak service has the potential to complement the existing transit network in Okaloosa County if adequate connections between EC Rider and the Amtrak station are provided.

EC Rider Route 14 provides a vital connection from Crestview to Fort Walton Beach, with opportunities to extend its service span for workers who work later hours. Express bus routes connecting important regional markets through park-and-ride facilities is a potential way to capture regional travel going to Okaloosa County. Waterborne taxis that connect Fort Walton Beach, Destin, Niceville, Pensacola, and Walton County are another alternative mode of transportation that can aid regional travel while providing congestion relief to major roadways. Providing express transit service along congested roadways such as US 98, SR 85, and SR 293 may capture choice riders wishing to be productive on transit vehicles rather than driving in traffic.

As the Crestview-Fort Walton Beach-Destin area expands to neighboring counties, the County should consider expanding its travel options regionally in the future with more connections to neighboring counties such as Santa Rosa and Walton counties. Express lanes could further enhance regional travel objectives.

Land Use

Effective land use planning can significantly support public transit with strategies reshaping land use to increase mobility and quality of life for residents, creating an efficient, effective, and balanced intermodal and multimodal transportation system. Although Eglin Air Force Base separates the county north-south, the restriction in growth can create future opportunities to create more compact development surrounding the base. Other constraints, such large residential areas in Wright, provide limited road connectivity to neighboring developments and hinder the ability for people to walk acceptable distances to transit stops.

Some local governments have begun to adopt alternatives to concurrency and implement other strategies that support transit. For example, the City of Destin has adopted strong multimodal modal polices in its comprehensive plan, including mixed-use land use designations (see Figure 5-2), which are implemented through the City's land development regulations. Destin has adopted land-use densities in its multimodal

district, minimum levels of service for transit, design guidelines for transit stops, locations for future transit stops, and other guidelines that promote walking and biking, all of which will create a transit-supportive environment. The following adopted land uses throughout Okaloosa County will create more transit supportive land uses:

- Mixed land use and commercial zones throughout Destin
- SR 85 corridor and segments of US 90 in Crestview
- Commercial and mixed land uses along SR 189, SR 393, SR 188, SR 85 in Fort Walton Beach

Most of the corridors are already served by transit. Figure 5-2 also shows the concentration of commercial developments (in red) and mixed use (in brown) in Destin.

Figure 5-2: Future Land Use Map of Destin
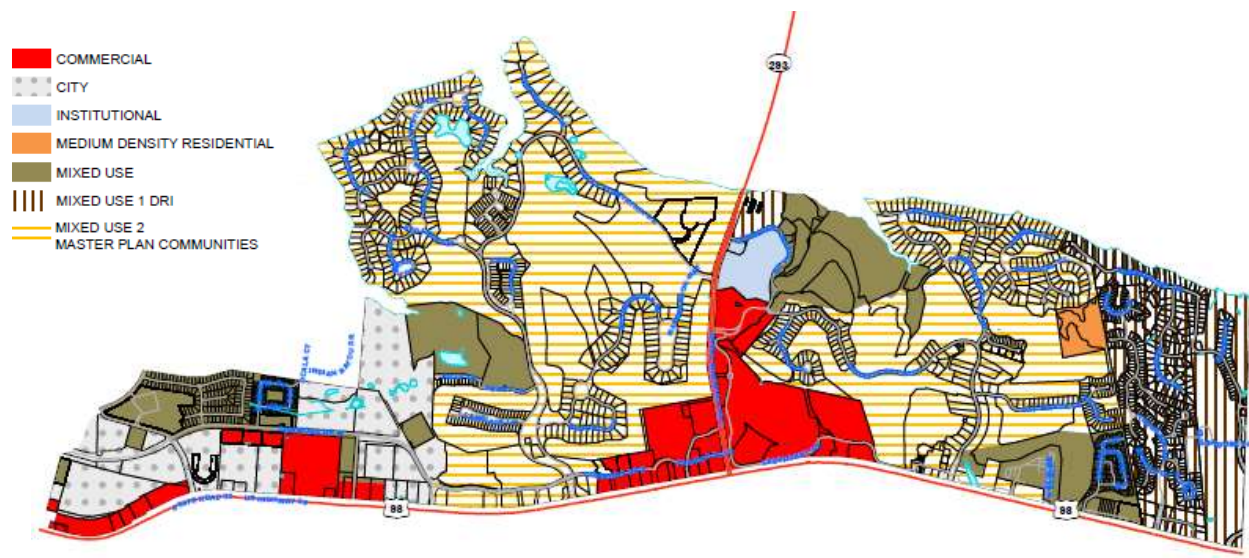
Source: Okaloosa County Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Maps (January 2013)

Local land use policy is being reshaped, and the land use policy environment at the State level also has changed in recent years. By passing HB 7207, the State of Florida placed responsibility for transportation planning and growth management in the hands of local planners. This allows various agencies in Okaloosa County to work together to leverage local resources and funding to best suit local conditions.

***Implications** – Land use and transportation, when planned concurrently, lead to more efficient land use and transportation networks. As development continues to grow and densify along the US 90, SR 189, SR 393, SR 188, and SR 85 corridors, Okaloosa County should consider focusing its future resources on providing more frequent headways and other enhancements in these areas. The County should encourage and possibly guide other local governments in modifying their policies and regulations by adopting more multimodal-supportive land uses and land development regulations to enhance the overall transportation network and connectivity within the county. Local governments agreeing to participate in a transit-*

supportive framework, such as Destin has demonstrated, will help Okaloosa County make rapid and significant progress in integrating transit into such major developments. Therefore, Okaloosa County should engage in planning ongoing and potential major developments to ensure that land development policies and land development codes require transit infrastructure to support existing and potential and foster transit services that will benefit the residents and tourists by increasing their choices for transportation.

Although the City of Destin has strong transit-supportive policies, local funding is not provided to support transit. In spite of—and because of—these challenges, it is important for EC Rider to continue to reach out to local government agencies and partners by communicating their needs and touting their accomplishments as they strive to better provide transit services. Okaloosa County should also engage in planning ongoing and potential major developments and ensure that land development policies and land development codes contain provisions enhancing roadway connectivity and other transit-supportive approaches.

Public Involvement

Feedback from current users and non-users of transit services provided valuable input for deciding how to enhance the current service delivery in Okaloosa County. In coordination with the Okaloosa-Walton TPO, EC Rider has undertaken a comprehensive outreach process to garner public input for the *Access EC Rider* TDP. An initial round of public workshops and discussion groups was held to discuss existing transit services and needs, and an online public survey and on-board survey were administered to provide a forum for the public to express concerns and generate ideas regarding the most important transit needs for the county and the region. A visioning workshop with the Steering Committee and interviews with bus operators and local policy leaders were conducted to discuss existing and future service needs. General conclusions drawn from public involvement efforts conducted for the *Access EC Rider* TDP include the following:

- There is a lack of awareness about public transportation in the community.
- Bus service does not run late enough or frequent enough and does not run on Saturdays. High-priority improvements include increased frequency, adding Saturday and (perhaps limited) Sunday service and providing more express bus routes and better bus stop locations and amenities. Medium-priority improvements included providing service later in the evening.
- There is a need to improve/increase service to the new County Courthouse, County Fairgrounds, and in Niceville and Destin.
- More connections should be provided between Niceville and Destin.
- More express routes and trolleys (seasonal and for high-tourism areas) should be provided.
- Different services should include more bicycles and safety strategies, as some bicyclists avoid certain areas, and vanpools.
- Park-and-ride facilities were proposed in Seaside, Fort Walton Beach City Hall, Marler Park, and Brooks on Okaloosa Island.
- There should be a more multimodal approach (walking, biking, etc.) to transportation.

- A water taxi might be useful in serving the locality and the region because the population centers are divided by water.
- Transit service is needed to better connect the transit-dependent population from Crestview and the northern half of Okaloosa County to the new County Courthouse in Fort Walton Beach and to jobs in the beach/tourism areas. In the past, the need for a most robust transit service was especially apparent when temporary workers for the Emerald Grande construction project were housed in an off-site apartment facility, but had no means to commute to work.
- Need for more community partnerships—Sunshine Shuttle & Limousine is a private company that provides transportation services in northwest Florida. Specifically, the company caters to convention centers, private schools, and weddings and provides taxi services in the Destin area. In the past, employers have hired the Sunshine Shuttle to transport their employees. The Emerald Grande at the HarborWalk Village, a vacation rental complex in Destin, is in need of a park-and-ride facility for its employees to park off-site and take transit to work in order to make available more on-site parking spaces for their customers.
- Future demand—two new airlines will be coming to the regional airports and will bring more tourist traffic to this area, highlighting the need for a more robust transit system.
- Service and infrastructure improvements—there is a need for bicycle facilities in the beach areas, more express bus services, improved transit technologies, weekend services for workers, service for Eglin Air Force Base workers and Special OPS personnel on Hurlburt Field, as well as additional services for the different types of riders in both northern and southern Okaloosa County.

Implications – Several potential improvements were identified across all public involvement efforts, including more frequent service and adding weekend and more night service and regional connections. Important to Okaloosa County will be the need to balance the allocation of limited resources if and when these improvements are implemented. A major strategic planning consideration for Okaloosa County is whether to enhance public transportation by implementing new local and regional connections or maintain the existing deviated fixed-route system with improvement to its service delivery in the existing service areas.

Organizational Issues

The EC Rider services operate as part of the Okaloosa County Growth Management Administration, which oversees a number of other services, including planning, inspections, and administration. The Growth Management Department manages the contracts and oversees transit operations in terms of services operated and grants.

The Okaloosa County Commission serves as the EC Rider Board of Directors. Under the County Commission is the Growth Management Administration. Okaloosa County previously contracted its public transit services to a not-for-profit corporation. As of October 1, 2015, Maruti Fleet Management, LCC, a private-

for-profit company, operates the County's transit fixed-route and paratransit services, as well as emergency evacuation services for the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners.

Implications – While continuing the current organizational structure as part of a County department, EC Rider should continue to explore opportunities in its effort to increase service and manage efficiencies. Periodic efforts such as a more detailed COA or an internal assessment will identify whether any operations or management efficiencies can be gained.

Technology

Okaloosa County has implemented some key technology components/improvements to its bus fleet, including the following:

- FDOT has engaged the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) and Trillium Solutions to produce General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data for selected transit agencies in Florida. The benefit of GTFS data is for online trip planners. Google Maps will enable transit riders to more easily understand transit options and plan their travel routes. Okaloosa County unanimously adopted a motion on July 7, 2015, regarding a request from Growth Management that the Board authorize the Transit Coordinator/Grants Manager to accept and execute the Google Online Agreement for GTFS data which would be incorporated into Google Maps. There is no cost to participate in this service.
- All vehicles used for transit services in Okaloosa County are equipped with two-way radios, allowing immediate communication with bus operators, administrative staff, and emergency personnel. However, operators indicated there are ongoing issues with dispatch, which can be difficult to contact, and voice communications are often broken.
- Other technology upgrades include a GPS Intelligent Transportation upgrade, an Import Tool update that allows trips from LogistiCare to be auto-loaded into Trapeze, and an auto-generated Trapeze funding source, which can increase detail and enable the County to allocate transit expense across grants to maximize "match" and use funds available from other grants.
- Technology upgrades also include EC Rider installing Trapeze and GPS on buses to track data and send information to cities and counties. This includes applications that allow people to physically track bus locations and the agency to track client calls. It also identifies sequences, routes, and where clients reside. EC Ride currently uses Logisticare, but data have been found to be inaccurate.

Implications – As EC Rider service grows incrementally, it should implement technologies such as Automatic Passenger Counters (APCs), voice announcement systems, and other technology upgrades to enhance its quality of service. Such technologies generally are funded by federal capital grants and their deployment can contribute to ridership data collection/performance monitoring efforts, thus improving system efficiency and revenues.
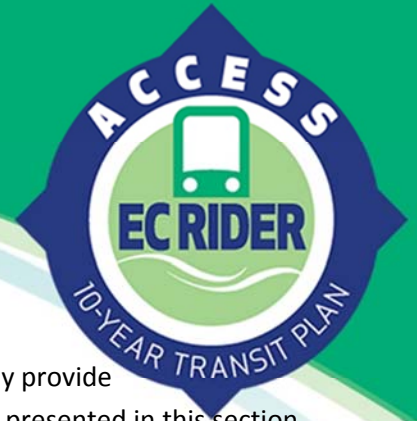
SECTION 6: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and objectives are an integral part of any transportation plan because they provide the policy direction to achieve the community's vision. The goals and objectives presented in this section were prepared based on the review and assessment of existing conditions, feedback received during the public involvement process, and the review of local transportation planning documents. This section presents the draft goals and objectives to support the community's vision for transit services over the next 10 years as documented in the *Access EC Rider* TDP.

EC Rider Vision

Okaloosa County and EC Rider will be recognized as the best small transit system in Florida by delivering a well-balanced multimodal transportation system that promotes community embrace, economic development, accessibility to alternative modes, and environmental sensitivity and supports customer demand.

EC Rider Mission

Okaloosa County and Okaloosa County Transit will operate and coordinate a safe and reliable public transportation system that effectively and efficiently meets the community's existing and future mobility needs as identified through on-going outreach to Okaloosa County's residents, visitors, and businesses.

Goals and Objectives

Based on the situation appraisal, the draft goals and objectives recommended for the 10-year planning horizon are presented in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1: EC Rider Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: **Maintain service delivery for existing and potential customers to meet demand for transit services in Okaloosa County.**	
Objective 1.1	**Maintain existing levels of fixed-route service.**
Strategy 1.1.1	**Continue maximization of federal and State grants to maintain adequate funding for the existing system**
Strategy 1.1.2	Apply for additional federal grant funding as new transportation authorization bill allows.
Objective 1.2	**Pursue improvements that are the most efficient in terms of garnering ridership and cost-effective to implement.**
Strategy 1.2.1	Annually monitor ridership on individual routes and identify route modifications that could increase ridership.
Strategy 1.2.2	Focus service within or connecting to the Urban Development Area Boundary.
Strategy 1.2.3	Proactively develop partnerships with municipalities and large public/private entities within service areas.
Objective 1.3	**Enhance connectivity and transfer opportunities.**
Strategy 1.3.1	Ensure that schedules are prepared to maximize timed-transfers at major and minor transfer locations.
Strategy 1.3.2	Pursue timed transfers at on-street locations where routes intersect.
Objective 1.4	**Enhance service reliability and on-time performance to secure customer loyalty.**
Strategy 1.4.1	Compile customer complaints to determine if specific routes have chronic on-time performance problems.
Strategy 1.4.2	Conduct running time checks on routes with on-time performance problems.
Strategy 1.4.3	Conduct periodic field checks to ensure if routes are running within their allocated running times.
Objective 1.5	**Establish guidelines for increasing frequency on high-demand routes to improve service capacity.**
Strategy 1.5.1	Establish standards for weekday frequencies.
Strategy 1.5.2	Consider future frequency improvements only as demand warrants.
Objective 1.6	**Design all fixed-routes to optimize direct routing and minimize customer travel time.**
Strategy 1.6.1	Coordinate and partner with Destin to develop stops and amenities and adjust service from U.S. 98 to parallel corridors with stop improvements.
Objective 1.7	**Establish guidelines and a prioritization process for extending hours of service based on customer demand and community support.**
Strategy 1.7.1	Prioritize expansion of evening hours of service ~~only~~ on higher demand routes.
Objective 1.8	**Focus all new services on connecting residential areas to critical activity centers, employment centers and military installations within Okaloosa County.**
Strategy 1.8.1	Investigate express transit service from residential areas to employment areas such as the Eglin Main Base, Hurlburt Field, Fort Walton Beach and Destin, including consideration of park-and-ride areas and vanpool programs.
Strategy 1.8.2	Address connections to all major attractors in Okaloosa County including intermodal terminals and access to aviation and rail facilities as funding resources warrant.
Strategy 1.8.3	Use the Ride-On Commuter Services park-and-ride map and the Okaloosa-Walton TPO LRTP needs plan to supplement locating new park-and-ride lots.
Objective 1.9	**Establish performance benchmarks for all service improvements and monitor performance to ensure minimum performance levels are met.**
Strategy 1.9.1	Establish measureable indicators against which the achievement of mobility goals of the community can be evaluated.

Strategy 1.9.2	Use the system average for passenger trips, revenue miles, revenue hours, passenger trips per revenue mile, passenger trips per revenue hour as benchmarks for service performance.
Goal 2: Maintain and expand adequate capital infrastructure to ensure vehicles, facilities, customer amenities, and bus stops achieve the highest standard of accessibility and comfort.	
Objective 2.1	**Develop and maintain a comprehensive Capital Improvement Program (CIP).**
Strategy 2.1.1	Use this major TDP update as a basis for developing and maintaining a Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
Strategy 2.1.2	Expend Section 5307 funds to replace vehicles as needed.
Objective 2.2:	**Expand fleet as needed for future service improvements.**
Strategy 2.2.1	Purchase coaches for future service improvements when grant funding sources are available for operations.
Objective 2.5	**Create a passenger amenities program to place shelters and amenities throughout the service area.**
Strategy 2.5.1	Continue to coordinate improvements with Destin to implement the Transit Stop Design and Location Study.
Strategy 2.5.2	When possible, apply design standards for shelters in Destin to other system stops.
Section 2.5.3	Program Section 5307 or other funding to procure passenger amenities.
Objective 2.6	**Create a bus stop improvement program to bring all bus stops into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.**
Strategy 2.6.1	Prepare and maintain a comprehensive inventory of the available infrastructure and accessibility of all bus stops and develop an ADA transition plan to implement needed infrastructure and accessibility improvements.
Strategy 2.6.2	Procure firm capable of design, engineering, construction and permitting to bring bus stops into ADA compliance.
Strategy 2.6. 3	Program Section 5307 or other funding to complete this program of bus stop improvements.
Objective 2.7	**Pursue technology improvements to enhance operational efficiency, effectiveness, and customer satisfaction.**
Strategy 2.7.1	Consider automatic passenger counters and stop announcement system for fixed-route buses.
Strategy 2.7.2:	Pursue technology enhancements as organizational capabilities warrant.
Objective 2.8	**Coordinate with municipalities, business interests, community associations, etc. to leverage resources for capital and operating improvements.**
Strategy 2.8.1	Assess high demand areas for potential new funding sources, such as special assessments.
Strategy 2.8.2	Coordinate with private property owners as part of their own ADA requirements for accessible pathways to make ADA bus stop accessibility improvements when right-of-way is insufficient.
Goal 3: Develop a comprehensive marketing, communications and media relations program to effectively promote transit's image, awareness, public embrace and information materials.	
Objective 3.1	**Develop a comprehensive marketing program to market services to existing and potential customer bases, including employees, employers, traditional transit markets, persons with disabilities, military personnel and their dependents, tourists, primary school students and college students.**
Strategy 3.1.1	Identify and communicate the need for a marketing program and estimate annual cost of a marketing program.
Strategy 3.1.2	Pursue federal and state grants to pay for the annual marketing program identified in Strategy 3.1.1 and identify local funds that can be used to supplement these other non-local sources.
Strategy 3.1.3	When possible, conduct marketing activities that can be completed within existing staff resources.
Strategy 3.1.4	Create an attractive and clear brand for Emerald Coast Rider that is easily and universally recognized by users and non-users of the system.
Objective 3.2:	**Improve information and marketing for riders.**

Strategy 3.2.1	Update the website and bus schedule to provide clear and concise information to existing and potential riders.
Strategy 3.2.2	Monitor information materials and web activity over time to determine if enhancements to existing information materials are warranted.
Strategy 3.2.3	Make information available at all county offices on commuter assistance programs, public transit, the coordinated transportation system program, and bicycle/pedestrian programs.
Objective 3.3	**Enhance communications between EC Rider and its riders using social media.**
Strategy 3.3.1	Use Facebook™, Twitter™, Bing™ and other forms of social media to establish communications with customers and the community.
Objective 3.4	**Develop a comprehensive media-relations program to communicate successes and appropriately deal with incidents.**
Strategy 3.4.1	Proactively seek positive press coverage for EC Rider's initiatives and improvements.
Objective 3.5	**Increase advertising revenue by 25% through implementation of a targeted marketing program.**
Strategy 3.5.1	Maintain a bus advertising program to promote interior and exterior advertisements to local businesses.
Objective 3.6	**Encourage paratransit rider shift to fixed-route service.**
Strategy 3.6.1	Increase public awareness/education of fixed-route system through advertising, public service announcements and other appropriate, cost-effective media.
Strategy 3.6.2	Identify service strategies that can assist/support shifting riders from paratransit to fixed-route services.
Goal 4: Support community efforts and initiatives to provide a transit-supportive environment.	
Objective 4.1	**Support and promote collaborative land and use and transportation planning efforts ~~that~~ to ensure efficient and sustainable ~~way~~ development.**
Strategy 4.1.1	Coordinate with FDOT, County and municipal engineers to incorporate transit amenities and ADA stop improvements on any road construction projects.
Objective 4.2:	**Coordinate with bicycle and pedestrian plans to ensure that transit routes are a consideration in the prioritization process for projects.**
Strategy 4.2.1	Coordinate with the Okaloosa-Walton TPO in bicycle and pedestrian planning activities to ensure that transit has a place in the overall priority mix for improvements.
Objective 4.3:	**Coordinate with local development comprehensive planning and zoning code efforts to encourage transit-oriented development policies.**
Strategy 4.3.1	Coordinate with Okaloosa County Growth Management to ensure that new developments incorporate transit amenities within the service area.
Objective 4.4	**Support efforts of the City of Destin to implement transit stops and shelters within the city.**
Strategy 4.4.1	Program Section 5307 or other funding for stop and shelter improvements.
Objective 4.5	**Ensure transit improvements are included in the Okaloosa-Walton TPO's LRTP.**
Strategy 4.5.1	Evaluate the 10-Year TDP for inclusion into the long range transportation plan cost affordable plan.
Objective 4.6	**Promote linkages between transit services and education and training facilities.**
Strategy 4.6.1	Pursue student fees for transportation from colleges/universities where service improvements enhance student mobility.
Goal 5: Maximize safety and security for all transit services and facilities.	
Objective 5.1	**Maintain a comprehensive System Safety Program Plan (SSPP).**
Strategy 5.1.1	Update the SSPP in accordance with FDOT requirements.
Objective 5.2	**Maintain and implement safety and security systems throughout facilities, fleet and public stops and stations.**
Strategy 5.2.1	Implement security cameras on buses.
Strategy 5.2.2	Identify safety and security issues at Uptown Station and other transfer locations or bus stops.

Objective 5.3	**Establish design guidelines and priority system improvements.**
Strategy 5.3.1:	Prioritize improvements for office facilities, passenger waiting areas, transfer centers, and on-street transfer locations.
Goal 6: Ensure prudent public stewardship of financial resources and secure additional funding for system maintenance and improvements.	
Objective 6.1:	**Maintain an equitable fare policy and establish a farebox recovery standard.**
Strategy 6.1.1	Consider daily and weekly passes that can be sold on buses as additional fare media.
Strategy 6.1.2	Maintain or improve the farebox recovery ratio through an annual evaluation process to generate revenues consistent with those forecasted in this TDP.
Objective 6.2	**Develop a long range financial plan that maximizes grant funding sources for TDP strategic improvements and long range transportation improvements.**
Strategy 6.2.1	Continue to coordinate with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and FDOT to identify grant funding sources that can fund eligible projects identified in this TDP.
Objective 6.3	**Ensure that TDP needs are included in the Long Range Transportation Plan efforts.**
Strategy 6.3.1	Coordinate with TPO staff to ensure that transportation facilities accommodate users of all ages and abilities, including the young, persons with disabilities, the economically challenged, and the elderly.
Objective 6.4	**Seek to additional local funds when such funds can leverage federal and state grant funding opportunities.**
Strategy 6.4.1	When projects are eligible for FDOT service development funds, seek local funds to match at 50% levels.
Goal 7: Pursue regional transportation needs with surrounding counties and the overall Fort Walton Beach Urbanized Area.	
Objective 7.1	**Proactively seek partnerships with Walton County and Beaches of South Walton business interests to develop transit services linking Walton and Okaloosa Counties.**
Strategy 7.1.1	As regional local governments match aspirations for public transportation with local funds to operate service, coordinate transit linkages.
Objective 7.2	**Proactively seek partnerships with Santa Rosa County government and business interests to develop transit services linking Santa Rosa and Okaloosa Counties.**
Strategy 7.2.1	Coordinate regional transit linkages as regional local governments match aspirations for public transportation with local funds to operate additional regional service.
Objective 7.3	**Support the Okaloosa-Fort Walton TPO in implementing Express Transit Services identified in the LRTP.**
Strategy 7.3.1	Coordinate with the Okaloosa-Fort Walton TPO to implement transit service that addresses regional needs, including express transit services connecting Crestview, Fort Walton Beach, Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, Destin and South Walton County.
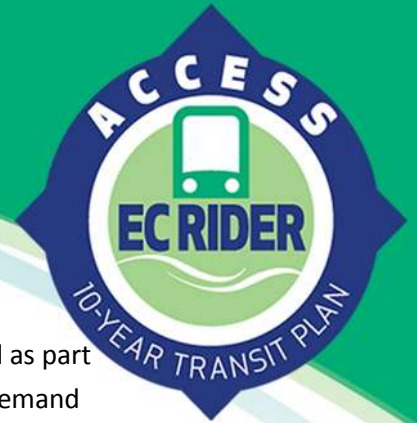
SECTION 7: DEMAND AND MOBILITY ASSESSMENT

This section summarizes the demand and mobility needs assessment conducted as part of the *Access EC Rider* TDP. Three assessment techniques were used to assess demand for transit services in Okaloosa County:

- Discretionary Market Assessment
- Traditional Market Assessment
- Forecast Ridership Analysis using transit planning modeling

The summary of the assessment techniques are presented and followed by the results of each analysis. When combined with the situation appraisal, performance reviews, and public involvement feedback, the demand assessment yields the building blocks for evaluation the transit needs for the next 10 years.

Market Assessment

The baseline conditions assessment for developing the *Access EC Rider* TDP includes an evaluation from two perspectives—the discretionary market and the traditional market, the two predominant rider markets for bus transit service. Analytical tools for conducting each market analysis include a Density Threshold Assessment (DTA) and a Transit Orientation Index (TOI). These tools can be used to determine whether existing transit routes are serving areas of the county considered to be transit-supportive for the corresponding transit market. The transit markets and the corresponding market assessment tool used to measure each are described below.

Discretionary Market Assessment

The discretionary market refers to potential riders living in higher-density areas of the county that may choose to use transit as a commuting or transportation alternative. A DTA was conducted based on industry-standard relationships to identify the areas of Okaloosa County that experience transit-supportive residential and employee density levels today as well as in the future. Dwelling unit and employment data developed as part of the Fort Walton-Okaloosa County TPO's adopted 2040 LRTP were used to conduct the DTA.

Three levels of density thresholds were developed to indicate whether or not an area contains sufficient densities to sustain some level of fixed-route transit operations:

- *Minimum* – reflects minimum dwelling unit or employment densities to consider basic fixed-route transit services (i.e., fixed-route bus service).

- *High* – reflects relatively higher dwelling unit or employment densities that may be able to support higher levels of transit investment than areas that meet only the minimum density threshold (i.e., increased frequencies, express bus).
- *Very High* – reflects very high population or employment densities that may be able to support higher levels of transit investment than areas that meet the minimum or high density thresholds (i.e., premium transit services, etc.).

Table 7-1 presents the density thresholds for each of the noted categories.

Table 7-1: Transit Service Density Thresholds

Transit Investment	Population Density Threshold	Employment Density Threshold
Minimum	≤5 dwelling units/acre	≤4 employees/acre
High	6–7 dwelling units per acre	5–6 employees/acre
Very High	≥ 7 dwelling units/acre	≥ 7 employees/acre

Maps 7-1 and 7-2 illustrate the 2015 and 2025 DTAs, respectively, and show the existing EC Rider transit route network to indicate how well EC Rider covers the areas of the county that are considered transit-supportive, i.e., areas supporting at least a minimum investment in transit.

The 2015 DTA analysis indicates that the discretionary transit market is principally employment-based, with "high" and "very high" employment density thresholds primarily in Fort Walton Beach, Destin and, to some extent, Crestview. In reviewing the 2025 DTA, the locations of the discretionary market are not anticipated to change, but a shift towards residential-driven ridership could occur as "high" dwelling unit densities are anticipated in Fort Walton Beach by 2025. As shown in these two maps, both the existing "high" and very high" employment-based thresholds and projected "high" residential thresholds align well with the existing route structure.

Map 7-1: 2015 Density Threshold Assessment

Map 7-2: 2025 Density Threshold Assessment

Crestview

Fort Walton Beach

Legend

Existing Bus Route

Employment Density Threshold
- Minimum
- High
- Very High

Dwelling Unit Density Threshold
- Minimum
- High
- Very High

0 1 2 4 Miles

Source: 2010 - 2040 socioeconomic data input from Northwest Floirda Regional Planning Model
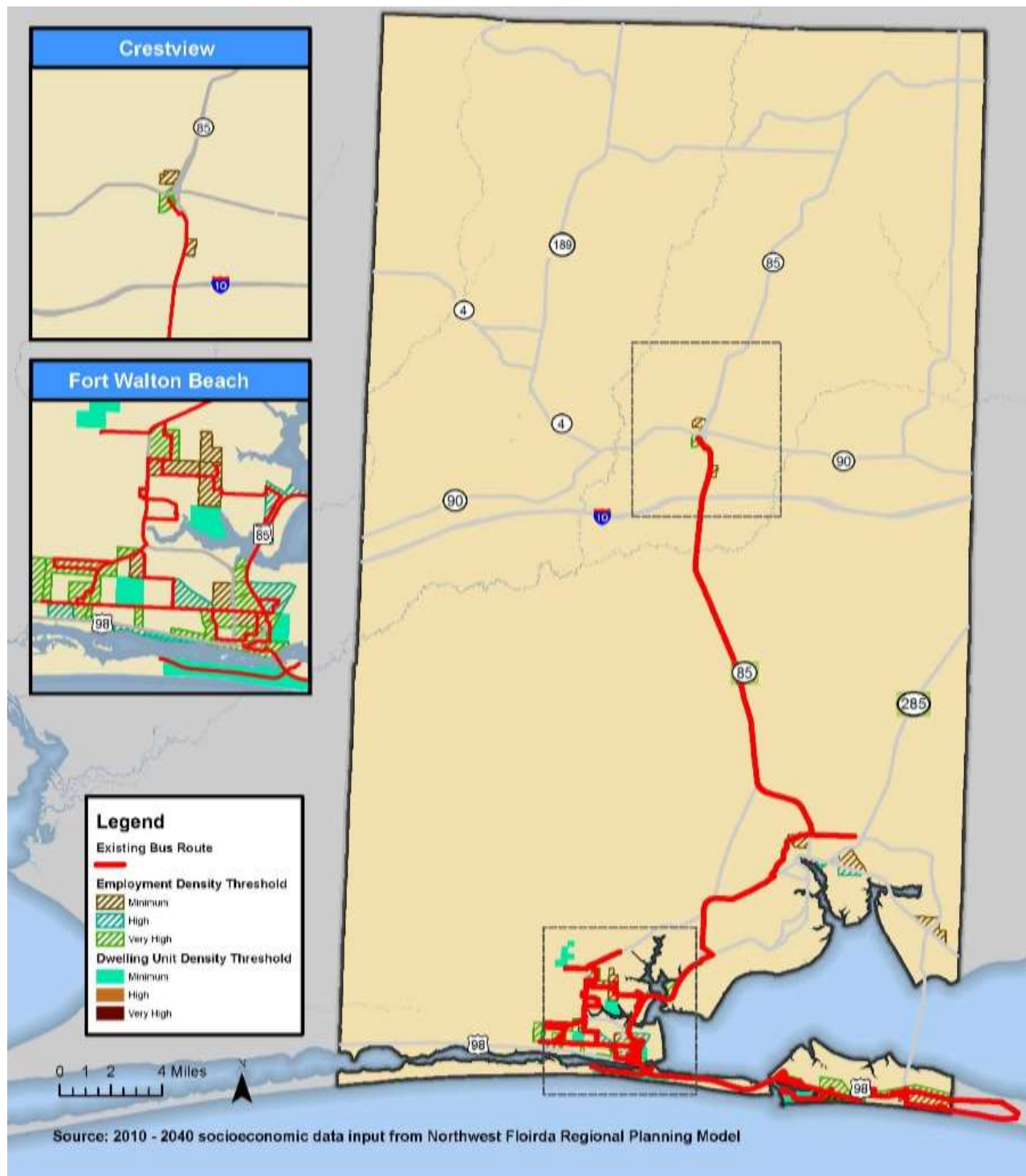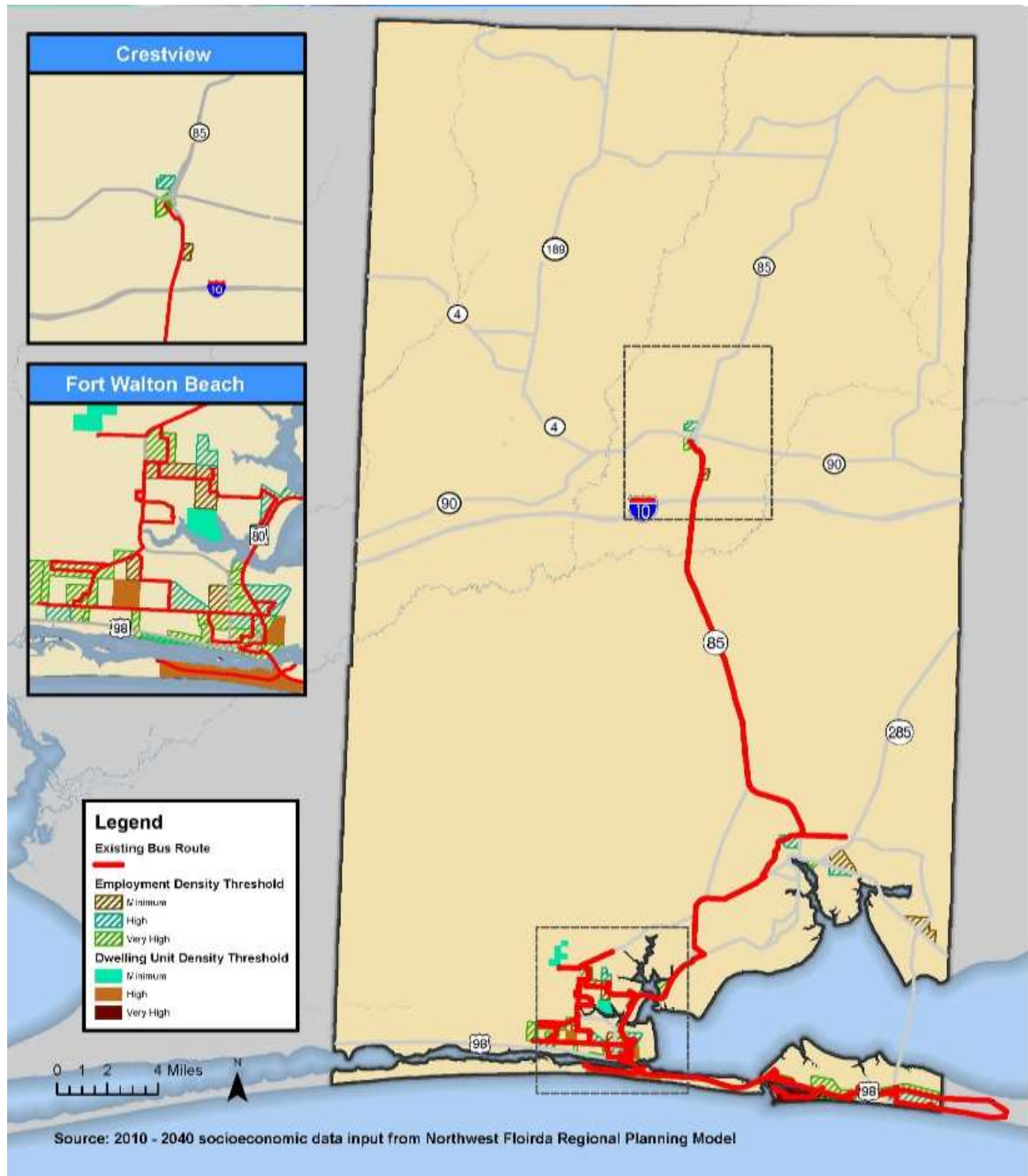
Traditional Market Assessment

A traditional transit market refers to population segments that historically have had a higher propensity to use transit and are dependent on public transit for their transportation needs. Traditional transit users include older adults, youth, and households that are low-income and/or have no vehicles.

A TOI assists in identifying areas of the county where a traditional transit market exists. To create the TOI for this analysis, five-year demographic data estimates from the 2008–2013 Five-Year ACS estimates were compiled at the census tract level (the most detailed level of data available from ACS) and categorized according to each tract's relative ability to support transit based on the prevalence of specific demographic characteristics. Five population and demographic characteristics that are traditionally associated with the propensity to use transit were used to develop the TOI:

- Population density (persons per square mile)
- Proportion of the population age 60 and over (older adults)
- Proportion of the population under age 15 (youth)
- Proportion of the population below the poverty level ($25,000 for a family of 4)
- Proportion of households with no vehicles (zero-vehicle households)

Using data for these characteristics and developing a composite ranking for each census tract, each area was ranked as "very high," "high," "medium," "low," or "very low" in their respective levels of transit orientation.

Map 7-3 illustrates the 2013 TOI, reflecting areas throughout the county with varying traditional market potential. Also shown is the existing transit route network to show how well EC Rider covers those areas. Based on this analysis, the Crestview and Fort Walton Beach areas have the highest transit orientation. The existing bus routes align fairly well with the highest transit orientation areas in Fort Walton Beach, and there are areas of higher transit orientation in Crestview that are currently not directly served by the existing transit network.

Map 7-3: Transit Orientation Index

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-2013 5-Year Estimate
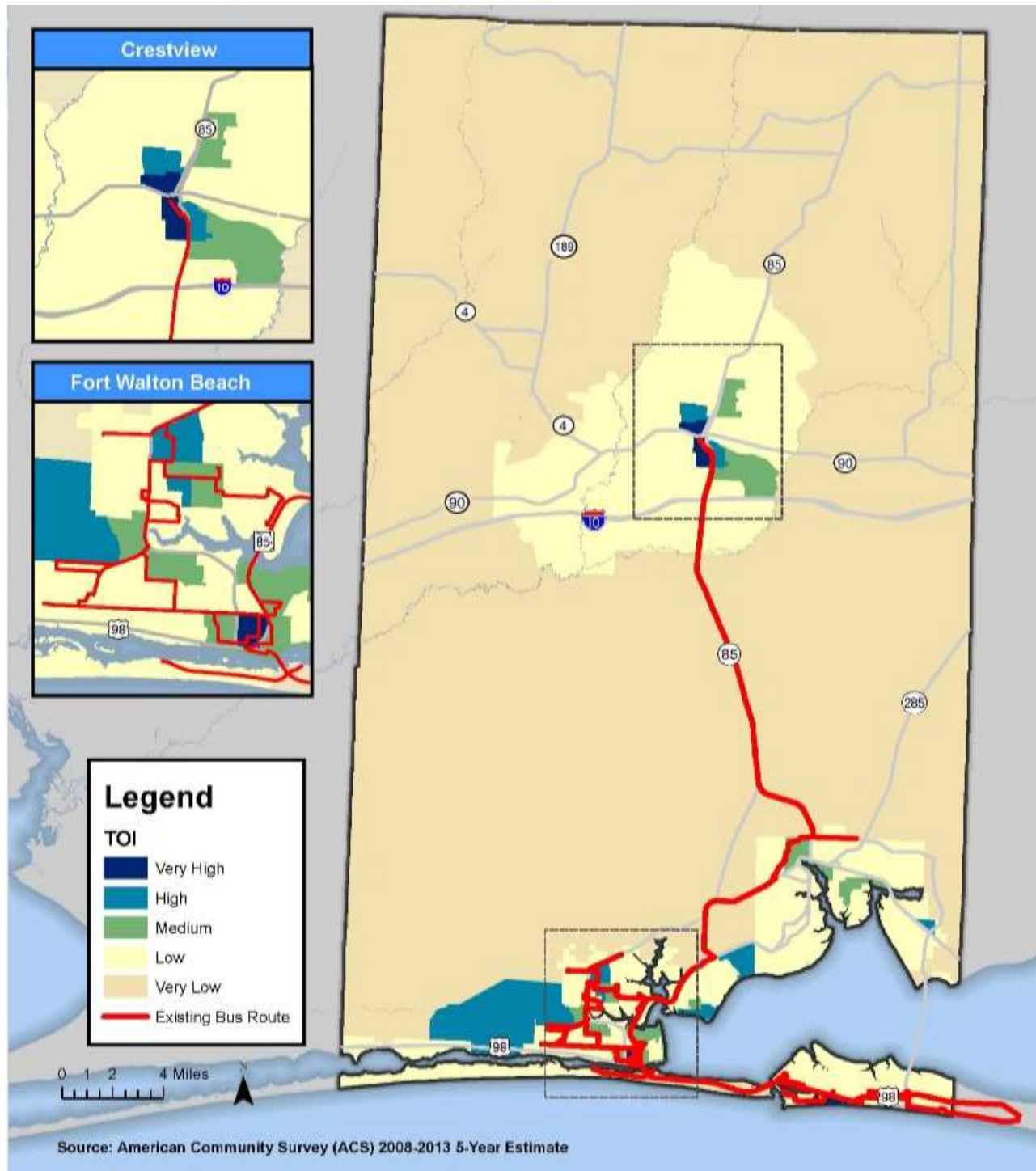
Forecast Ridership Analysis

The Transit Boardings Estimation and Simulation Tools (T-BEST) is a comprehensive transit analysis and ridership-forecasting model that can simulate travel demand at the individual route level. The software was designed to provide near- and mid-term forecasts of transit ridership consistent with the needs of transit operational planning and TDP development. In producing model outputs, T-BEST also considers the following:

- *Transit network connectivity* – The level of connectivity between routes within a bus network—the greater the connectivity between bus routes, the more efficient the bus service becomes.
- *Spatial and temporal accessibility* – Service frequency and distance between stops—the larger the physical distance between potential bus riders and bus stops, the lower the level of service utilization. Similarly, less frequent service is perceived as less reliable and, in turn, utilization decreases.
- *Time-of-day variations* – Peak-period travel patterns are accommodated by rewarding peak service periods with greater service utilization forecasts.
- *Route competition and route complementarities* – Competition between routes is considered. Routes connecting to the same destinations or anchor points or that travel on common corridors experience decreases in service utilization. Conversely, routes that are synchronized and support each other in terms of service to major destinations or transfer locations and schedule benefit from that complementary relationship.

The following section outlines the model input and assumptions, includes a description of the TBEST scenario performed using the model, and summarizes the ridership forecasts produced by TBEST.

Model Inputs/Assumptions and Limitations

TBEST uses various demographic and transit network data as model inputs. The inputs and the assumptions made in modeling the EC Rider system in TBEST are presented below. The EC Rider model used the recently-released TBEST Land Use Model structure (TBEST Land Use Model 2016), which is supported by parcel-level data developed from the Florida Department of Revenue (DOR) statewide tax database. The DOR parcel data contains land use designations and supporting attributes that allow the application of Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)-based trip generation rates at the parcel level as an indicator of travel activity.

It should be noted, however, that the model is not interactive with roadway network conditions. Therefore, ridership forecasts will not show direct sensitivity to changes in roadway traffic conditions or speeds.

Transit Network

The transit route network for all existing EC Rider routes was created to reflect 2015 conditions, the validation year for the model. The transit network for Okaloosa County was available in TBEST; however, the system was not current, so data received from the transit agency were used to update the model. Data include:

- Current service span
- Existing headways during off-peak season (frequency at which a bus arrives at a stop—e.g., 1 bus every 60 minutes)
- Passenger travel times on board a bus
- Special generators
- Observed average daily ridership

Demographic Data

The demographics used as the base input for the TBEST model were derived from Census 2010 geography and population characteristics, ACS Five-Year Estimates (2009–2013), 2015 InfoUSA employment data, and 2015 parcel-level land use data from the Florida DOR. Using the data inputs listed above, the model captures market demand (population, demographics, employment, and land use characteristics) within ¼ mile of each stop.

Population and Employment Growth Rates

TBEST uses a socio-economic data growth function to project population and employment data. A population growth rate and an employment growth rate were calculated using the socio-economic data forecasts developed for the latest NWFRPM. As indicated previously, population and employment data are hard-coded into the model and cannot be modified by end-users. As applied, the growth rates do not reflect fluctuating economic conditions as experienced in real time.

Special Generators

Special generators were identified to evaluate the opportunity for generating high ridership. Okaloosa County special generators include the following:

- Boardwalk Wayside Park (transfer station)
- Uptown Station (transfer station)
- Walmart in Fort Walton Beach (transfer station)
- Santa Rosa Mall (shopping mall, transfer station)
- Destin Commons (shopping mall, transfer station)
- Northwest Florida State College (university)
- Fort Walton Beach Medical Center (hospital, transfer station)
- White Wilson (transfer station)

TBEST Model Limitations

It has long been a desire of FDOT to have a standard modeling tool for transit demand that could be standardized across the state, similar to the Florida Standard Urban Transportation Model Structure (FSUTMS) model used by metropolitan planning organizations in developing long range transportation plans. However, whereas TBEST is an important tool for evaluating improvements to existing and future transit services, model outputs do not account for latent demand for transit that could yield significantly higher ridership, and, correspondingly, model outputs may over-estimate demand in isolated cases. In addition, TBEST cannot display sensitivities to external factors such as an improved marketing and advertising program, changes in pricing service for customers, and other local conditions.

Although TBEST provides ridership projections at the route and bus stop levels, its strength lies more in its ability to facilitate relative comparisons of ridership productivity. As a result, model outputs are not absolute ridership projections, but rather are comparative for evaluation in actual service implementation decisions. TBEST has generated interest from departments of transportation in other states and continues to be a work in progress that will become more useful as its capabilities are enhanced in future updates to the model. Consequently, it is important for EC Rider to integrate sound planning judgment and experience when interpreting TBEST results.

Ridership Forecast

Using these inputs, assumptions, and actual ridership data, the TBEST model was validated. Using the validation model as the base model, TBEST ridership forecasts for this TDP major update planning starting year (2017) and horizon year (2026) were developed. The generated annual ridership forecasts reflect the estimated level of service utilization if no changes were to be made to any of the fixed-route services.

Tables 7-2 shows the projected number of annual riders by route in 2017 and 2026 as well as average annual ridership growth rates from 2017 to 2026 derived from T-BEST.

Table 7-2: EC Rider Average Annual Ridership and Growth Rates with No Improvements, 2017–2026*

Route	Average Annual Ridership, 2017	Average Annual Ridership, 2026	Absolute Change, 2017–2026	Average Annual Growth Rate, 2017–2026
1	27,874	30,263	2,389	0.86%
2	14,488	15,927	1,439	0.99%
3	6,223	6,835	612	0.98%
4	18,161	20,208	2,047	1.13%
5	1,825	2,047	222	1.22%
14	9,304	10,245	941	1.01%
20	22,125	27,796	5,671	2.56%
30	18,220	25,200	6,980	3.83%
32	13,795	18,372	4,577	3.32%
33	9,629	10,765	1,136	1.18%
Total All Routes	141,644	167,658	26,014	1.84%

*Based on TBEST model

Forecast Ridership Analysis Summary

Based on the TBEST model results shown in Table 7-2, maintaining the status quo will result in a gradual increase in EC Rider ridership over time. According to the projections, average annualized ridership is expected to increase by 18.4% (from 141,644 to 167,658 riders) by 2026, or an annual growth rate of about 1.84%.

The model results show that the most significant ridership growth in the existing EC Rider network will occur on the following routes within the next 10 years:

- Route 20
- Route 30
- Route 32

However, for EC Rider to increase its market share for transit, service expansion will need to occur, and service improvements identified in this plan, other transit planning efforts, and from the public feedback received will need to be implemented.

SECTION 8: ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION

This section identifies the potential transit improvements developed for the *Access EC Rider* TDP. Those proposed improvements, or alternatives, for fixed-route service represent the transit needs for the next 10 years without consideration of funding constraints.

The identified service improvements were then ranked using an evaluation process. This prioritized list of potential improvements was used to guide the 10-year implementation and cost feasible financial plans. As Okaloosa County continues to grow, and if the demand for transit follows that same overall growth, the prioritized transit needs will assist Okaloosa County in selecting and implementing service improvements as funding becomes available.

Development of 10-Year Transit Needs

The *Access EC Rider* TDP transit alternatives consist of improvements to enhance existing EC Rider services and expand transit services to new areas. The alternatives reflect the transit needs of the community and have been developed based on information gathered through the following methods:

- *Public Workshops and Discussion Groups* – Several public workshops and discussion groups were held to gather input from the public, stakeholders, and bus operators regarding what alternatives should be considered for the next 10 years.
- *Transit Surveys* – An on-board survey targeting bus passengers was conducted as part of the *Access EC Rider* TDP planning process to obtain input from riders. Surveys from the transit users and non-users during two discussion group workshops provided additional input. In addition, EC Rider bus operators were surveyed to gather input on rider and operator comments/concerns.
- *Interviews* – Ten interviews were conducted with community leaders from different organizations including the Okaloosa County Commission, Eglin Air Force Base, municipal councils, and the Okaloosa Tourism Development Council.
- *Transit Demand Assessment* – An assessment of transit demand and needs was conducted for Okaloosa County. Three types of technical analyses, together with the baseline conditions assessment, performance reviews and situation appraisal conducted previously, were also used in developing the list of transit alternatives by identifying areas that have characteristics shown to be supportive of transit.

Several improvement alternatives were developed and grouped into the following three main categories, each of which are summarized in more detail below:

- Service Improvements
- Capital/Infrastructure
- Policy/Other

Service Improvements

Service improvements include enhancements to existing routes related to frequency, extended service hours, and/or providing more days of service. This also includes service expansion, including new routes for operating in areas not currently served by EC Rider.

Improvements to Existing Routes

Expanding hours and increasing frequencies on existing bus routes are significant needs identified through the public involvement efforts performed as part of the development of the *Access EC Rider* TDP. Identified improvements to existing fixed routes include the following:

- **Increase frequency on selected routes** – Enhance service on the routes with high demand and low frequency—Routes 1, 4, 5, and 14. Current headways for Routes 1 and 4, which are approximately 70 minutes each, would be reduced to 35 minutes. Service for Routes 5 and 14, which operate on 4-hour headways, would be improved to 1-hour and 2-hour headways, respectively.
- **Add one additional evening trip to all routes** – Extended service by one evening trip on all routes. This would extend the nightly service span by one hour for most routes.
- **Add Saturday service to all existing routes** – From the on-board surveys, bus operator surveys, and public workshops, EC Rider users identified the need for Saturday service on several EC Rider routes as another high priority. Saturday service would be added on all improved routes.
- **Realign Route 2** – Revise Route 2 to service the Fort Walton Beach City Hall located on SW 1st Street and return to Hollywood Blvd/SR 189 via SE Windham Ave. This would allow transfers to the proposed Hurlburt Beach Bullet and the Navarre Uptown Express (discussed later in this section).
- **Enhance Route 3** – To reduce the redundancy and overlap of Routes 3 and 5, a revised Route 3 can service the same alignment of Route 3 and Route 5, north of the Walmart Transfer center. The enhancement includes increasing the span of service to 12 hours with 60-minute headways.
- **Realign Route 4** – To allow a more direct route to the Uptown Station, eliminate the southern extension to SW 1st Street and, instead, continue the route along NE Hollywood Boulevard. The realignment of Route 3 will service the eliminated area.
- **Enhance Route 5** – To reduce the redundancy and overlap of Routes 3 and 5, a revised Route 3 can service the same alignment of Route 3 and Route 5, south of the Walmart Transfer center. The enhancement includes increasing the span of service to 12 hours with 60-minute headways.
- **Change Route 30 and 32 to Destin Fixed Route Circulator** – with the introduction of the proposed Eglin Beach Bullet, service for Routes 30 and 32 can be modified to become the Destin Circulator.
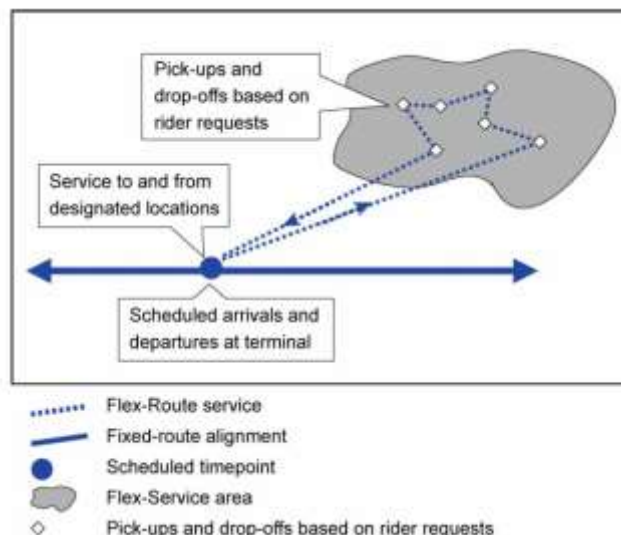
This route combines eliminates Routes 30 and 32 and eliminates service to Okaloosa Island to improve travel times and reduce transfers for riders traveling within Destin.

New Service Expansions

- **Crestview Circulator Flex Service** – Flex-route service is a hybrid service that combines the predictability of fixed-route bus service with the flexibility of demand response service. This service generally operates in suburban areas where the street and pedestrian networks are not conducive to fixed-route bus service. As shown in Figure 8-1, flex-route service originates from a fixed point such as a major stop or transit center where it connects with local or express fixed-route bus service. The service areas of flex-route services are usually about seven square miles, in which one vehicle can offer service once per hour. Smaller, wheelchair-accessible buses are typically used for flex services.

Passengers transferring from a fixed-route bus to flex-route service simply board the vehicle and tell the driver their destination within the designated flex service area. Passengers traveling from the designated flex service area to connect to a fixed-route bus must call and make a reservation for the trip they desire based on its arrival time at the fixed transfer point. The need for a flex service is evidenced by the high employment density thresholds (through the DTAs) and TOI thresholds. The potential reintroduction of passenger rail to the Gulf Coast region will also increase the need for this type of transit service. The previous Crestview circulator serviced the area but was terminated due to lack of funding. This circulator would make up to four deviations to comply with FTA requirements for ADA service. The route travels primarily on SR 85, a key commercial corridor, with key stops along US 90, the Crestview Community Center, the courthouse, the Okaloosa County Jail, Walmart, and Publix.

Figure 8-1: Flex Route Transit Service

.... Flex-Route service
——— Fixed-route alignment
● Scheduled timepoint
⬭ Flex-Service area
◇ Pick-ups and drop-offs based on rider requests

- **Navarre-Uptown Station Express Service** – An express route connecting Navarre to the Uptown transfer station with park-and-ride stops in Navarre (proposed at US 98 and SR 87), the Fort Walton Beach City Hall, and the Uptown Station.
- **Niceville-Destin Commons Limited Express Service** – This limited express route could provide an affordable transportation alternative for workers living north who cannot afford to pay for the toll on the Mid Bay Bridge. This limited express route also would provide another path on the eastern side of the urbanized area, as there currently is no transit that services Niceville or the SR 20 and SR 293 corridors. The route would connect major residential areas, which are currently underserved, to major employment areas in Destin. The route would start at proposed park-and-ride located at the Niceville City Hall.
- **Hurlburt Connector** – This route will connect the workers in the Hurlburt Base to Fort Walton Beach along US 98 ending at SW Perry Avenue. This route connects to Route 20 and the Eglin Beach Bullet.
- **Eglin Beach Bullet Express Service** – This route will connect the Eglin Air Force Base to major destinations like the Uptown Station, museums, the beaches, the Destin circulator, and Walton County.
- **Wright Flex Service** – The Wright area is characterized by a higher proportion of households who do not own a vehicle and who live under the poverty line. The limited road connectivity in the Wright area constrains the ability to plan an effective route. A flexible route that operates on demand could assist residents in accessing existing transit routes, such as the transfer stop at Walmart in Fort Walton Beach.
- **Hurlburt Internal Circulator** – The lack of a walkable environment and process for security clearance in the Hurlburt Field highlight the need for an internal circulator, which would serve the Hurlburt Field. The conceptual route remains to be defined.
- **Eglin Internal Circulator** – This route could circulate internally within the Eglin Air Force Base. The route could begin at the east gate inside of the Eglin Air Force Base to provide a connection to the proposed Eglin Beach Bullet Express. The conceptual route remains to be defined.
- **Emerald Coast (EC) Ferry** – Input from the public involvement workshops and a review of the Okaloosa-Walton TPO 2040 LRTP indicated a need for a water ferry system. The EC Ferry could help mitigate congestion while providing an attraction for visitors. The EC Ferry can connect Fort Walton Beach to Destin, Niceville, Pensacola and Miramar Beach in the Choctawhatchee Bay.

Map 8-1 illustrates the needs plan for service improvements and new service expansions identified for the 10-year period.

Map 8-1: 10-Year Needs Plan

Capital Improvements

Potential capital improvements include the following:

- **New transfer facility** – A need for a new transfer facility with restrooms was identified. The location for this transfer facility is to be determined.
- **Expand and improve bus stop infrastructure** – Okaloosa County and EC Rider should continue to improve infrastructure at bus stops, including benches, shelters, bicycle storage facilities, and other infrastructure. This will not only improve the existing rider's experience at bus stops, but also be attractive to potential riders.
- **Improve bus stop safety and ADA accessibility** – Improvements can be implemented to improve safety, ADA accessibility, connectivity to the pedestrian network, and use of the EC Rider bus system.
- **Establish park-and-ride lots** – Park-and-ride facilities provide collection points for travelers to transfer from auto to transit or between autos (from a single-occupant vehicle to a carpool or vanpool). When conveniently located and carefully planned and implemented, park-and-ride facilities are integrated into the overall transportation network and can encourage a shift from single-occupant vehicles to transit or other alternative modes. Based on public input and a review of the recently developed 2040 LRTP, potential locations were identified for developing park-and-ride facilities and are shown on Map 8-1.
- **Shared parking agreements** – EC Rider has established informal shared parking agreements at the Uptown Station in Fort Walton Beach, the Boardwalk in Okaloosa Island, and the Destin Commons in Destin. EC Rider can explore new shared parking agreements in areas of the county where new transit service might be established, such as Niceville, in conjunction with the proposed regional express services.
- **Facilities and connections to water ferry** – Contingent on the proposed water ferry, new marinas could be constructed or existing facilities could be expanded.
- **Technology improvements** – Efficient and effective transit service delivery depends on accurate information collected about transit ridership and overall transit system operations. To meet this objective, EC Rider should consider the deployment of necessary technological devices to better understand ridership patterns. Such capital improvements can assist collecting data on boardings and alightings by bus stop and result in improved service performance. In addition, they also can help identify non-productive stops and/or route segments. The following technology improvements were identified for EC Rider for the next 10 years:
  - Fixed-route management software
  - Automatic Vehicle Location System (APTS)
  - Real Time Traveler Information at proposed transfer center or water ferry terminal as expansions are implemented.

- **Continue vehicle replacement and acquisition** – Vehicle replacement and acquisition is the most important component of transit capital for EC Rider. With the proposed increase in service frequency on selected routes and new route service, Okaloosa County should evaluate its vehicle replacement and acquisition plan and plan accordingly to continue its bus replacement/acquisition program. Pending financial feasibility, it is also recommended that alternative-fuel buses be purchased as part of vehicle replacement and service expansion recommended for the next 10 years. It is important to note that vehicle technologies are evolving rapidly and technologies should be reassessed prior to making the investment decision at that point in the future.

- **Enhance sidewalk connectivity to Crestview train station** – Contingent on the return of passenger rail, a sidewalk improvement program should be implemented to ensure safe and attractive connectivity from the Crestview train station to the proposed Crestview Flex service and Route 14. Figure 8-2 shows a sidewalk gap between the Crestview train station and the path needed for a pedestrian to access the Crestview Flex service and Route 14.

Figure 8-2: Crestview Train Station

Image source: Google Streetview

Policy/Other Improvements

Other potential improvements include various general improvements that are not necessarily route-specific or capital-related. These improvements are drawn primarily from input on public involvement efforts performed as part of the development of the *Access EC Rider* TDP. The improvements include the following:

- **Enhance EC Rider bus schedule** – Input from bus operators indicate that a major complaint is the difficulty in understanding the bus schedule. EC Rider should consider hiring a firm that specializes in creating easy-to-read bus schedules and maps.

- **Rebrand EC Rider** – The Okaloosa-Walton TPO has initiated an effort to hire a public outreach consultant for a rebranding effort. A County decision on a phased effort to rebrand EC Rider is expected soon. A rebranding effort backed by marketing will create a distinct identity from the former Okaloosa County Transit brand. Input from the *Access EC Rider* TDP public outreach process indicated that a rebranding of EC Rider services is needed, as current branding and marketing seem to reinforce EC Rider as an unknown service. Rebranding would help EC Rider to conduct more targeted marketing to attract new, discretionary transit riders with a more user-friendly and appealing image and advertising.

- **Expand EC Rider's transit marketing program** – Marketing and public education are perhaps the most difficult tasks for public transportation systems, primarily due to the lack of available resources. It is recommended that EC Rider continue to expand its marketing program for residents and visitors in Okaloosa County, including enhancing current activities such as summer bus promotion programs, patron mailing lists, and presentations. Contingent to the return of passenger rail in the Gulf Coast, EC Rider should ensure the bus schedule information is available at the Crestview train station. In addition, EC Rider should improve Internet-related marketing and develop social media channels such as Facebook. These activities are critical investments in the long-term development of the public transportation system. Another part of the expanded marketing program would be to engage members of the business community to encourage them to become more proactive in providing travel choices for their employees. Employers like the Emerald Grande have expressed an interested in establishing a partnership with EC Rider to provide access for employees to the jobsite due to transportation costs and parking shortage. By providing employees with free bus passes, these strategies also could increase demand for establishing park-and-ride lots in Okaloosa County.

- **Promote/expand transportation demand strategies**:
  - *Vanpooling* – WFRPC operates and manages the rideOn program for FDOT District 3. rideOn currently serves as FDOT's District 3 Commuter Assistance Program (CAP) in the 10 western counties of the District, including Okaloosa. According to the Florida-Alabama TPO Congestion Management Process Plan, businesses in the

western Florida gulf coast resort communities of Destin and South Walton have had difficulty attracting and retaining service employees, especially during the busy tourist season. Restaurants, hotels, and stores along the coast needed workers, but potential employees can't afford the area's increasingly high housing costs. Many workers who do accept positions have commutes of an hour or more and often work hours outside of the traditional work week when transit service is provided. The difficulties increase for workers who lack reliable transportation. Turnover and absenteeism have been high.

o **Modify land development regulations** – Land use and transportation, when planned for concurrently, lead to more efficient land use and transportation networks. The County should encourage and possibly guide other local governments in modifying their policies and regulations by adopting more multimodal supportive land uses and land development regulations to enhance the overall transportation network and connectivity within the county. If local governments are on board to participate in a transit-supportive framework, such as Destin has demonstrated (see example in Figure 8-3), this will help Okaloosa County make rapid and significant progress in integrating transit into such major developments. Therefore, Okaloosa County should engage in planning ongoing and potential major developments to ensure that land development policies and land development codes require transit infrastructure to support existing and potential and foster transit services that will benefit the residents and tourists by increasing their choices for transportation.

Figure 8-3: City of Destin Building Orientation Regulations Promoting Walkability
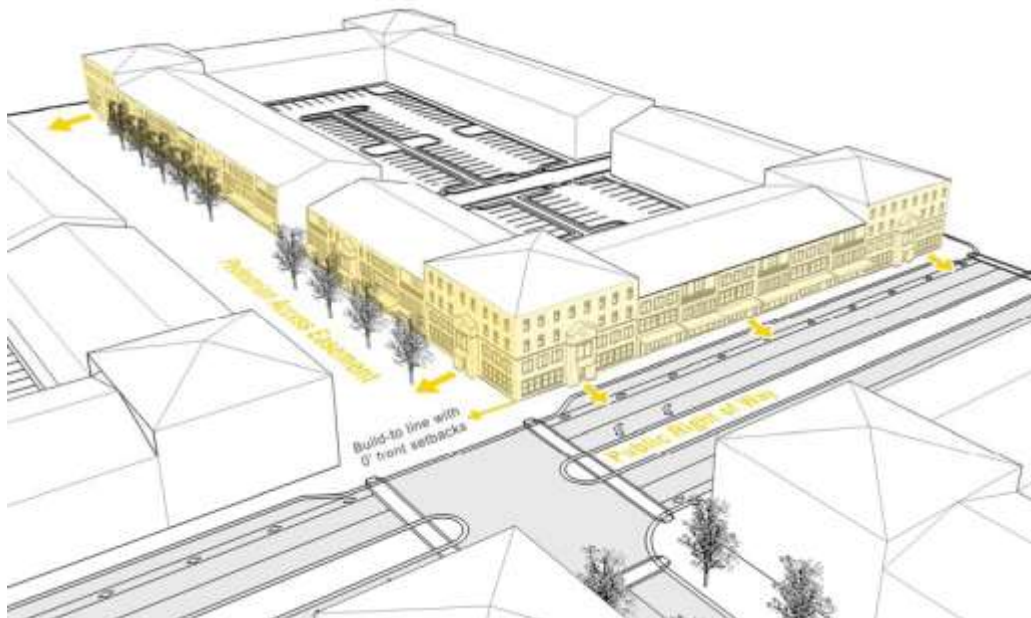
- **Voucher program and app for ridesourcing** – The Emerald Grande is currently exploring the option of partnering with a ridesourcing company to help their employees access their workplace. Several transit agencies nationwide have partnered with ridesourcing companies, such as Uber, for first- and last-mile connections to benefit transit riders. These transit agencies implemented programs which cover a portion of the rider's trip. A ridesourcing application can be developed in conjunction with a ridesourcing subsidy to assist riders using transit for these first-and last-mile connections
- **Planning recommendations**:
    - *Explore funding mechanisms to fund transit on military bases* – Okaloosa County could evaluate different local revenue funding sources such as a local option gas tax, local option sales tax, or transit impact fees to fund the proposed internal circulators and routes connecting to the military bases.
    - *Explore expansion of tourist development taxes to fund water ferry* – Okaloosa County could explore the expansion of the existing bed tax on hotels or create a special assessment district in the tourist areas to fund transit that is catered to the visitors.
    - *Explore potential locations for Transit Signal Priority (TSP)* – This study should be tied to the proposed APTS and expanded services. This could be implemented in a 5–10 year timeframe. Corridors that could especially be looked into and were noted as congested during the public involvement process are US 98 in Fort Walton Beach and Destin, SR 85 south of Crestview, and the Eglin bypass between Brooks Bridge and Beal Parkway.
    - *Conduct a Fixed-Route and Paratransit Route Efficiency Review* –
    - *Conduct a Comprehensive Operation Analysis (COA)* – Upon implementation of the TDP alternatives, a COA study should be used to evaluate more in-depths the EC Rider system to optimize system/route efficiency and use of resources.

Alternatives Evaluation Process

This section summarizes the methodology/criteria used to evaluate the service alternatives developed for the *Access EC Rider* TDP. Because a number of alternatives are identified that serve different geographic areas and varying service levels, a uniform methodology was created to evaluate the alternatives. The resulting rankings are intended to be used as a guide for planning and implementing the cost feasible plan using existing and/or new funding sources. Three evaluation categories were developed for determining criteria for the evaluation public outreach, transit markets, and productivity and efficiency. Table 8-1 lists these evaluation categories, their corresponding criteria, the associated measure of effectiveness, and the assigned weighting for each criterion. A description of all the elements in the table follows.

Table 8-1: Alternatives Evaluation Measures

Category	Criteria	Measure of Effectiveness	Relative Weighting	Overall Category Weight
Public Outreach	Public Input	Level of interest in specific alternatives (Very High, High, Moderate, Low)	30%	30%
Transit Markets	Traditional Market	Percent of corridor in "High" or "Very High" TOI	15%	40%
	Discretionary Market	Percent of corridor in areas that meet "minimum" DTA tier for employment or dwelling unit density	15%	
	Urban/Regional Market	Connectivity to urban markets adjacent counties	10%	
Productivity & Efficiency	Productivity	Trips per hour (T-BEST-generated trips and revenue hours of service)	15%	30%
	Cost Efficiency	Cost per trip (including new trips)	15%	
Total			**100%**	**100%**

Public Outreach

An extensive public outreach process was conducted for the *Access EC Rid*er TDP planning effort that resulted in numerous opinions and suggestions on transit services from transit users, non-users, and various stakeholders. In addition, the public outreach process included discussions with political leaders and planning advisory committees to gauge their views on transit services. Based on an in depth review of input from these public outreach efforts, a particular route or type of service was categorized as "Low Interest," "Moderate Interest," or "High Interest" in the alternatives evaluation process.

Transit Markets

For the evaluation of alternatives, three transit markets were identified:
- *Traditional Market* – For the existing population segments that historically have had a higher propensity to use transit and/or are dependent on public transit for their transportation needs, the proportion of each corridor operating within a "High" or "Very High" TOI area was calculated.
- *Discretionary Market* – For potential riders living in higher-density areas of the county that may choose to use transit as a commuting or transportation alternative, the proportion of each corridor meeting at least the "Minimum" dwelling unit or employment density threshold in the 2015 DTA was calculated and used for the alternatives evaluation.
- *Regional Market* – Each potential route was assessed for potential regional connectivity. Routes serving key areas outside of Okaloosa County were considered. Inter-county routes having connections to adjacent counties were scored higher than those limited to serving just Okaloosa County. Based on conclusions drawn from public involvement input, regional service to adjacent counties such as Walton County is a much-desired attribute for Okaloosa County routes.

Productivity and Efficiency

Productivity is generally measured in terms of ridership. Service efficiency is used by transit agencies to gauge how well they are using their existing resources. Each measure is critical to the success of the agency, and services performing well in terms of their productivity and efficiency should receive a higher priority. Forecast ridership, revenue hours, and operating cost figures for each individual alternative are used in this measure.

- *Ridership Productivity* – This is measured in terms of annual passenger trips per revenue hour of service. To provide for an equal comparison between alternatives, passenger trips and revenue hours of service were generated using output from TBEST 2026 ridership data.
- *Cost Efficiency* – This is evaluated for each alternative using a standard transit industry efficiency measure, operating cost per passenger trip. Operating costs used are calculated using operating cost per trip based on Okaloosa County performance data and TBEST 2026 ridership data.

Figure 8-4 shows the *Access EC Rider* TDP 10-year transit service alternatives evaluation process. A summary of various criteria and thresholds used in each tier and the evaluation results are presented in the remainder of this section.

Figure 8-4: Transit Service Alternatives Evaluation Process
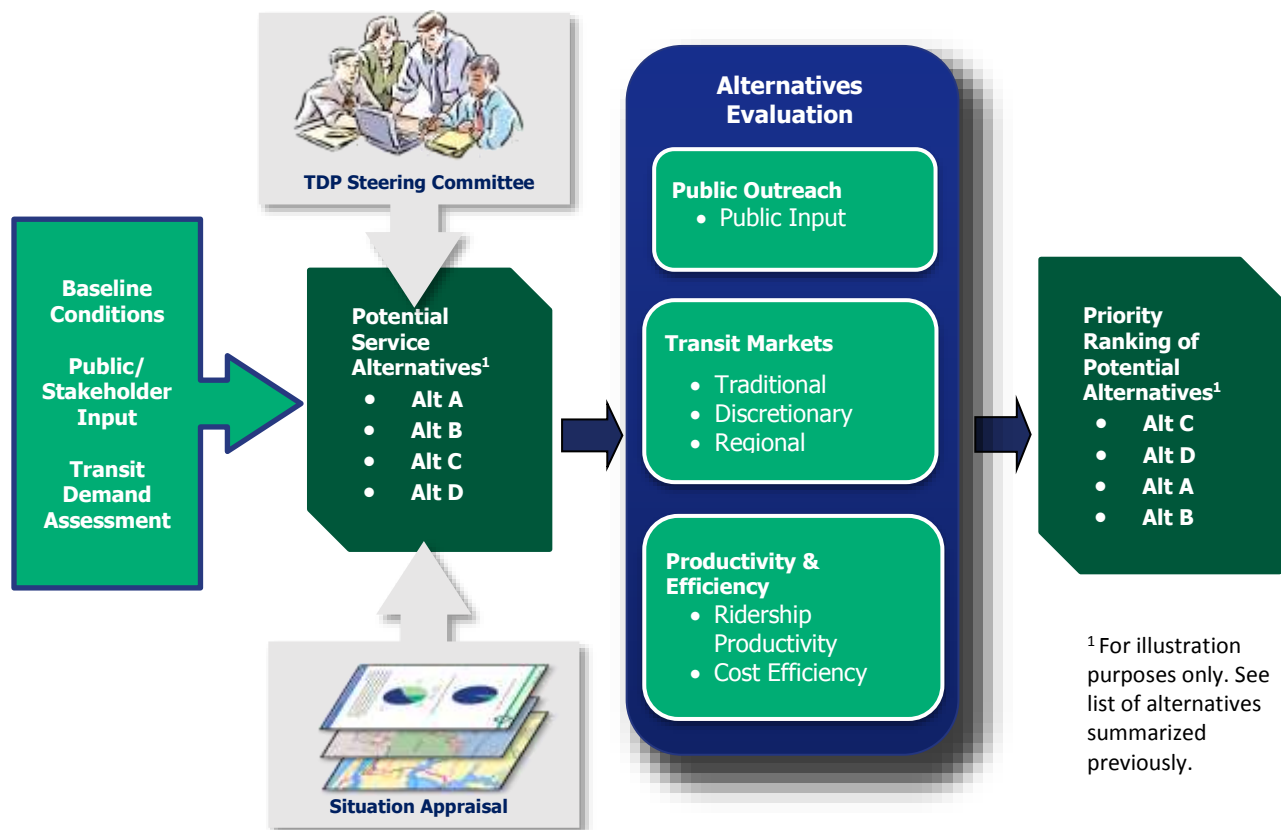
Alternatives Scoring Thresholds

Each criterion is assigned a weight; weighting affords the opportunity to measure the relative importance of each criterion among the group of criteria to be applied. For each transit alternative, a score was determined either through the computation of the selected measure of effectiveness or through the expert judgment of the analyst. Potential scores were assigned depending on the relative comparison of a given transit alternative with other transit alternatives as it relates to a given criterion. A higher score is consistent with a higher ranking for a given alternative for the criterion being evaluated.

The thresholds for computation-based criteria (traditional market, choice market, trips per hour, operating cost per trip) were determined using the average of the entire data set and one standard deviation above or below the average. Table 8-2 shows the thresholds and scoring for each criterion used in the alternatives evaluation.

Table 8-2: **Alternatives Evaluation – Scoring Thresholds**

Criterion	Range	Score
Public Input – Interest in Improvement	None	1
	Moderate	3
	High	5
	Very High	7
Traditional Market Potential (% Serving Traditional Market)	Less than (Average – 1 STDEV)	1
	Between (Average – 1 STDEV) to Average	3
	More than Average to (Average + 1 STDEV)	5
	More than (Average + 1 STDEV)	7
Discretionary Market Potential (% Serving Discretionary Market)	Less than (Average – 1 STDEV)	1
	Between (Average – 1 STDEV) to Average	3
	More than Average to (Average + 1 STDEV)	5
	More than (Average + 1 STDEV)	7
Regional Market Connectivity	No	0
	Yes	5
Trips per Hour	Less than (Average – 1 STDEV)	1
	Between (Average – 1 STDEV) to Average	3
	More than Average to (Average + 1 STDEV)	5
	More than (Average + 1 STDEV)	7
Operating Cost per Trip	More than (Average + 1 STDEV)	1
	More than Average to (Average + 1 STDEV)	3
	Between (Average – 1 STDEV) to Average	5
	Less than (Average – 1 STDEV)	7

Note: STDEV = statistical standard deviation.

Alternatives Evaluation

Once the alternatives were reviewed and finalized by the Steering Committee, each alternative was evaluated using the process summarized above. The detailed results of the evaluation are presented in Table 8-3.

Evaluation Results

Each service alternative was scored based on the criteria and thresholds identified previously and then ranked based on the score. Table 8-4 shows the rankings of each TDP service alternative for the *Access EC Rider* TDP. These rankings identify the priorities based on the evaluation methodology used and will be used to assist in development of the implementation plan for the TDP alternatives.

Table 8-3: **Rankings of 10-Year Transit Service Alternatives**

Rank	Proposed Improvement Reordered by Rank	Score
1	Eglin Beach Bullet Express	5.60
2	Add one additional evening trip to existing routes	5.40
	Add Saturday service to existing routes	5.40
4	Increase Frequency on Routes 1, 3, 4, 5, 14 with realignments	4.80
5	Navarre-Uptown Station Express	4.70
6	Destin Circulator – (replaces Routes 30 and 32)	4.50
	Crestview Circulator	4.50
	Niceville-Destin Commons Express	4.50
9	Hurlburt Connector	3.60
10	Hurlburt Internal Circulator	3.00
	Wright Flex	3.00
12	Eglin Internal Circulator	2.40

Table 8-4: **Results of Alternatives Evaluation**

Evaluation Criteria		Increase Frequency on Routes 1, 3, 4, 5, 14 with realignments	Add one additional evening trip to existing routes	Add Saturday service to existing routes	Destin Circulator - Replace Route 30 and 32	Crestview Circulator	Eglin Beach Bullet Express	Eglin Internal Circulator	Hurlburt Connector	Hurlburt Internal Circulator	Navarre-Uptown Station Express	Niceville-Destin Commons Limited Express	Wright Flex
Public Involvement	Interest	Very High	Very High	Very High	Very High	Very High	Very High	Moderate	High	Moderate	High	Very High	Moderate
	Score	7	7	7	7	7	7	3	5	3	5	7	3
	weight	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%
Traditional Market	% in Trad. Market	0.919%	1.232%	1.232%	0.091%	0.592%	0.241%	0.294%	0.368%	0.697%	0.901%	0.075%	0.306%
	Score	5	7	7	1	5	3	3	3	5	5	1	3
	weight	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
Choice Market	% in Choice Market	1.660%	2.861%	2.861%	0.860%	0.143%	1.057%	0.000%	0.000%	0.000%	0.861%	0.669%	0.012%
	Score	5	7	7	3	3	5	3	3	3	3	3	3
	weight	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
Urban/Regional Market	Regional Yes/No?	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
	Score	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	3	0
	weight	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Boardings per Hour	Trip/Hr	6.09	10.34	8.36	25.17	10.83	53.83	0.17	5.67	5.67	5.92	14.00	5.92
	Score	3	3	3	5	3	7	3	3	3	3	5	3
	weight	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
Operating Cost per Trip	Cost /Trip	$22.88	$5.00	$4.29	$0.00	$880.85	$354.52	$57,254.99	$1,683.97	$5,452.86	$1,612.82	$1,363.21	$1,612.82
	Score	5	5	5	5	5	5	1	5	5	5	5	5
	weight	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
Total Score		4.80	5.40	5.40	4.20	4.50	5.60	2.40	3.60	3.30	4.70	4.50	3.00
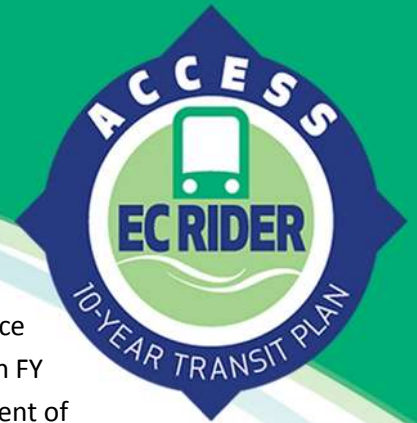
SECTION 9: 10-YEAR TRANSIT PLAN

The purpose of the *Access EC Rider* TDP is to provide a direction for transit service improvements in Okaloosa County over the next 10 years, from FY 2017 through FY 2026. This direction was developed through extensive public outreach, assessment of existing services, consideration of growth projections, and past performance of transit in Okaloosa County.

The *Access EC Rider* TDP will be used to continue to focus improvements on transit service to make progress towards achieving Okaloosa's vision of "… being the best small transit system in Florida by delivering a well-balanced multimodal transportation system…" (refer to Section 6 for full Vision Statement). To accomplish this, a 10-year Cost Feasible Plan was created for the *Access EC Rider* TDP to implement the top priorities previously identified over a 10-year planning horizon.

This section outlines the recommended 10-year Cost Feasible Implementation Plan developed for the *Access EC Rider* TDP. First, the recommended cost feasible services and capital plan to support the funded service plan for the next 10 years are summarized. Thereafter, a summary of the assumptions for capital and operating costs used in developing the 10-year costs and revenues for the recommended plan are presented. Finally, the financial and implementation plans for the recommended 10-year period are presented. In addition to the service and capital improvements identified in the Cost Feasible Plan, the unfunded needs are also identified as part of the implementation plan.

Access EC Rider TDP Cost Feasible Priorities

The funded improvements included in the *Access EC Rider* TDP were determined after an extensive public outreach program. Improvements fall into three major categories:
- Service Improvements
- Capital Improvements
- Policy/Other Improvements

Each category and the prioritized improvements are described below.

Cost Feasible Service Improvements
- **Add One Additional Evening Trip to All Routes** – Current transit riders identified later service on existing routes as a key need. This service improvement proposes to extend service by one evening trip on all routes, which would extend the nightly service span by one hour for most routes. Under the alternatives evaluation process, this improvement tied with adding Saturday service to all existing routes as the second highest priority.

- **Add Saturday Service to All Existing Routes** – From the on-board surveys, bus operator surveys, and public workshops, EC Rider users identified the need for Saturday service on several EC Rider routes as another high priority. Therefore, it is proposed to add Saturday service to all existing routes.
- **Eglin-Destin-Niceville Service Improvements** – To provide better efficiency, Routes 30 and 32 are recommended to be realigned and combined to create a new **Destin Circulator**. This eliminates transfers within Destin and increases frequencies by eliminating the Okaloosa Island segment. The proposed **Eglin Beach Bullet Express** service complements the Destin Circulator by providing a seamless connection from Fort Walton Beach to Destin, Route 20 in Okaloosa Island, and Miramar Beach in Walton County. The proposed **Niceville-Destin Commons Limited Express** fills a transportation gap for commuters who live in the Niceville area and work in Destin. The route could start at a proposed park-and-ride facility located at the Niceville City Hall and stop at a second park-and-ride facility before the Mid-Bay Bridge and end at the Destin Commons, where commuters can then connect to the proposed Eglin Beach Bullet Express, existing Route 33, and the proposed Destin Circulator.
  - The Destin Circulator service is proposed to operate 12 hours per day Monday through Friday, with 20-minute headways during the peak season.
  - The Eglin Beach Bullet Express service is proposed to operate 12 hours per day Monday through Friday with 60-minute headways.
  - The Niceville-Destin Commons Limited Express is proposed as a commuter express, operating two AM and two PM trips, Monday through Friday.
- **Crestview Circulator Flex Route** – Reintroducing a flex route in Crestview was a highly-favorable improvement noted during the transit alternatives survey, and transit service in Crestview was noted frequently throughout the public involvement process as a critical mobility need in this more-rural area of Okaloosa County. Therefore, it is proposed to add a flex route to circulate in Crestview along major commercial arterials and downtown, providing connections to the Courthouse, Crestview Community Center, Okaloosa County Jail, and Walmart. This route would operate hourly using two buses weekdays for 12 hours per day, with up to 4 deviations per bus. The flex route would then connect to existing Route 14 at Crestview City Hall to provide connecting service to Fort Walton Beach.
- **Eglin Internal Circulator** – Discussions with stakeholders and policy leaders, coupled with input from riders and non-riders, let to the determination of a need to provide more widely-available transit service within Eglin Air Force Base. To minimize security clearance issues, a circulator is proposed to operate internally within the Base, allowing passengers to connect to the proposed Eglin Beach Bullet. The Eglin Internal Circulator is proposed to operate hourly for nine hours per day on weekdays.

Table 9-1 summarizes the characteristics for the new service improvements recommended for the 10-year *Access EC Rider* TDP implementation plan. The new frequencies and service spans resulting

from improving the existing routes will vary by route and are therefore not included in the table. It should be noted that extending service by one trip in the evening and adding Saturday service to existing routes will not require any additional buses.

Table 9-1: New Service Improvement Characteristics

Service Improvement	Operating Characteristics			
	Frequency	**Service Span (hours)**	**Day of Service**	**# of New Buses Needed**
Eglin-Destin-Niceville Service Improvements				
Destin Circulator	20 min (summer)	12	5	1
Eglin Beach Bullet Express	60 min	12	5	2
Niceville-Destin Commons Limited Express	2 AM trips 2 PM trips	3	5	2
Circulator Flex				
Crestview Circulator Flex	60 min	12	5	2
Internal Circulator				
Eglin Internal Circulator	60 min	9	5	1

Cost Feasible Capital Improvements

The capital improvements to support the service plan presented previously to enhance EC Rider operations are summarized below; these improvements are based on needs identified through the TDP development process as well as input from Okaloosa County staff:

- **Vehicle Replacement/New Vehicle Program** – The 10-year capital plan includes the replacement of transit and support vehicles that have reached the end of their useful life during the 10-year period, as well as new vehicles needed to provide new services included in the 10-Year Cost Feasible Plan.
- **Bus Stop Infrastructure Program** – Bus stop infrastructure (including shelters, benches, and signage) and safety/access improvements are needed to ensure that the rider's experience accessing the stop and waiting for the bus is pleasant, safe, and comfortable.
- **Establish park-and-ride lots/shared-use locations** – To support services provided by the proposed Eglin Beach Bullet and Niceville-Destin Commons Express, it is proposed that two park-and-ride/shared-lot facilities be provided at the following locations:
  - SR 20/SR 293 before Mid-Bay Bridge
  - Entrance of Eglin Air Force Base West Gate

The Cost Feasible Plan includes funding for signage or other minor improvements that are likely needed to establish these facilities.

- **Bicycle Access/Infrastructure** – Improvements to ensure that bicyclists have safe access to transit stops and buses as well as the necessary infrastructure, such as bicycle racks, at bus stops and on buses are identified for funding in the 10-year plan.

- **Building Improvements** – Miscellaneous building improvements and a new equipment storage building were identified by Okaloosa County staff as a capital need.
- **Other Miscellaneous Capital Improvements** – Okaloosa County staff identified a number of other miscellaneous capital needs, including hardware, communications/software, ITS needs, security technologies, and equipment to be funded in the 10-year plan.

Other Improvements

Other improvements not necessarily route-specific or capital-related are summarized below. These improvements would support service needs and were indicated from input from public involvement efforts. These improvements are not specifically included as cost line items in the 10-year plan, but could be prioritized for funding within the 10 years as desired.

- **Shared-use park-and-ride agreements** – The recommended plan assumes establishing shared-use lot agreements in areas of the county where new transit service might be established, such as Niceville, in conjunction with the proposed regional express services.
- **EC Rider rebranding** – Consider rebranding EC Rider for a uniform theme and logo throughout the EC Rider website, buses, bus stops, and bus schedule.
- **Improve EC Rider schedule** – Consider overhauling the EC Rider schedule with easy-to-read timetables for all routes, a system map with correct route alignments and hours of service for all routes.
- **Expand EC Rider's marketing program** – Continue to expand marketing program, particularly for new service areas.
- **Promote/expand TDM strategies** – Continue to coordinate outreach with WFRPC's rideOn program.
- **Establish a route-level performance monitoring program** – Performance monitoring programs track the performance and efficiency of routes and the system as a whole and are a tool used by transit agencies for ensuring the provision of the most efficient and effective transit service. Appendix F provides the recommended program for Okaloosa County to track performance of the new fixed and flex routes. The methodology uses specific route-level data and identifies three levels of performance thresholds for tracking routes for potential ongoing monitoring as well as potential modifications and/or discontinuations.

10-Year Financial Plan

This section presents the capital and operating cost assumptions as well as the costs and revenues associated with the 10-year Cost Feasible Plan. The summary shows the service, capital, and other improvements that can be programmed and funded within the next 10 years using the revenues already programmed annually for the current service as well as new revenues to fund the proposed service expansion.

Cost Assumptions

Numerous cost assumptions were made to forecast transit costs for the 10-year period. These operating costs assumptions are based on a variety of factors, including service performance data from the current fixed-route transit service, information from other recent Florida TDPs, and data obtained from Okaloosa County. These assumptions are summarized as follows:

Operating Cost Assumptions

- Based on inflation rates used in transit plans throughout Florida and standard FDOT budgeting practices, an average annual inflation rate of 3% was used for all operating cost projections.
- Annual operating cost for existing services is based on the proposed FY 2017 EC Rider operating budget.
- The proposed fixed-route service improvements is based on the total proposed revenue hours and operating cost per hour.
- The operating cost per revenue hour for existing services and future operating enhancements is assumed at $37.87 (in 2016$). The rate was derived using historical and current cost per revenue hour data from the National Transit Database (NTD) and annual inflation factor of 3%.

Capital Cost Assumptions

- Vehicles are assumed to cost $100,000 based on information provided by Okaloosa County staff.
- No additional vehicle purchases are assumed for improvements to the existing services. It is assumed that new vehicles will be purchased to support the expanded services and replacement vehicles will be purchased based on the system's vehicle replacement program.
- Based on the data available from recent transit plans in Florida as well as data published by FDOT, an annual growth rate of 3% was used for capital cost projections.

Revenue Assumptions

- Existing operating revenues will fund the existing services as well as proposed improvements to existing services, including the additional evening trip and Saturday service.
- Section 5311 program funds, which are specific to rural areas, will be used to partially fund (50%) the Crestview Circulator Flex Route with local contribution from Crestview used to fund the remainder. It is assumed that fare revenue collected from this new service will be used to offset the required federal and local contributions.
- The Eglin-Destin-Niceville Service Improvements package is assumed to be funded with a special assessment and fare revenue generated by the new services.

- FDOT Service Development funds will be used to partially fund (50%) the Eglin Internal Circulator for the first three years, with Okaloosa County contributing the reminder (less fare revenue). After three years, this service is no longer eligible for Service Development Funds; therefore, it is assumed that Okaloosa County will fund the route in its entirety or another local revenue source will need to be identified. It is assumed that fare revenue collected from this new service will be used to offset the required state and local contributions.

- The capital costs will be funded entirely with anticipated Section 5307 funds projected to be available by Okaloosa County. All capital needs, with the exception of the new transfer facility, will be funded within the first 7 years of the 10-year plan, providing a fund balance of approximately $4.03 million over the 10-year period. This fund balance could then be applied towards the estimated $5 million cost of the transfer facility that is currently unfunded.

10-Year Cost/Revenues

Using the above operating and capital cost and revenue assumptions, the *Access EC Rider* TDP Cost Feasible Plan was developed. Figure 9-1 show the operating and capital costs for the plan, and Figure 9-2 shows the total costs and revenues for the next 10 years. The detailed 10-year financial plan is presented in Table 9-2.

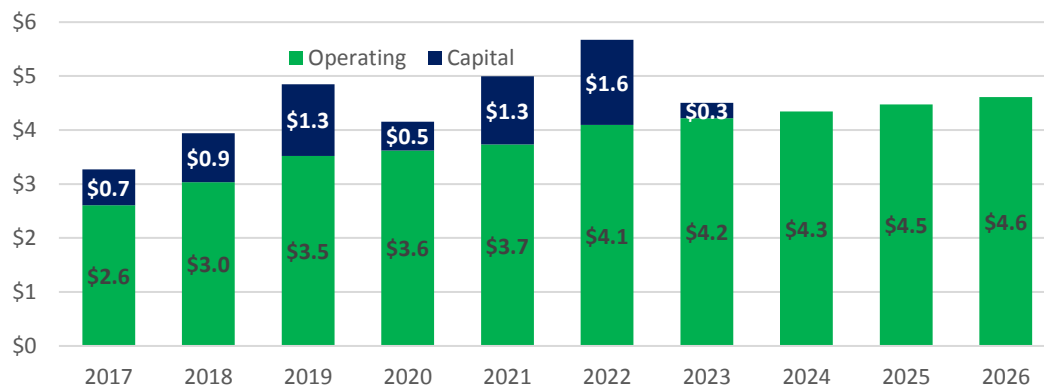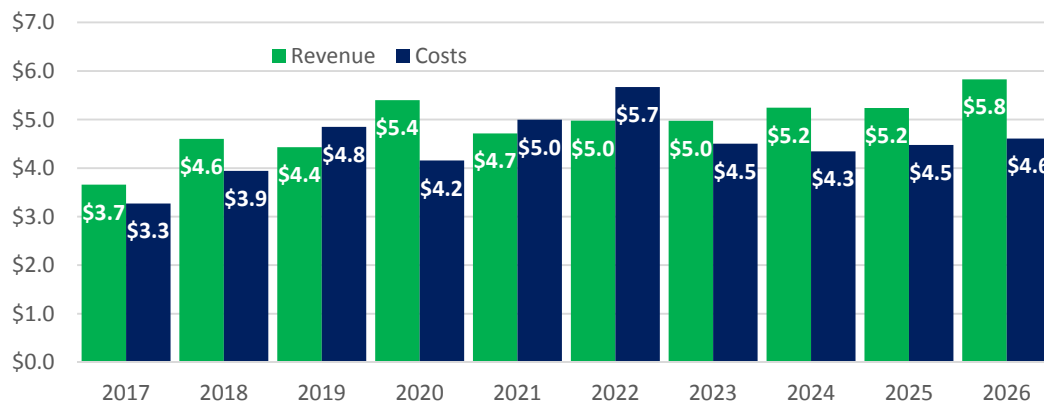**Figure 9-1: Annual Operating and Capital Costs (millions)**

Figure 9-2: Annual Costs and Revenues (millions)

10-Year Implementation Plan and Unfunded Needs

The implementation plan in Table 9-3 outlines improvements that are included in the Cost Feasible Plan from 2017 through 2026, as well as unfunded needs for FDOT's transportation deficiency assessments. The table also shows the implementation years, the operating and capital costs associated with each improvements, and whether existing or new revenues are anticipated to fund the improvement. It is important to emphasize that the schedule shown in the table does not preclude the opportunity to delay or advance any projects. As priorities change, funding assumptions do not materialize, or more funding becomes available, this project implementation schedule should be adjusted.

Table 9-2: 10-Year Costs and Revenues

Cost/Revenue	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	10-Year Total
Operating Costs											
Maintain Existing Fixed-Route	$1,305,744	$1,344,916	$1,385,264	$1,426,822	$1,469,626	$1,513,715	$1,559,127	$1,605,900	$1,654,077	$1,703,700	$14,968,892
Maintain Paratransit	$1,300,352	$1,339,363	$1,379,543	$1,420,930	$1,463,558	$1,507,464	$1,552,688	$1,599,269	$1,647,247	$1,696,664	$14,907,078
Service/Frequency Improvements to Existing Services	$0	$112,146	$115,511	$118,976	$122,545	$377,891	$389,227	$400,904	$412,931	$425,319	$2,475,451
New/Local Express Service	$0	$235,891	$637,789	$656,923	$676,630	$696,929	$717,837	$739,372	$761,554	$784,400	$5,907,326
Total Operating Cost	**$2,606,096**	**$3,032,316**	**$3,518,107**	**$3,623,650**	**$3,732,360**	**$4,095,999**	**$4,218,879**	**$4,345,446**	**$4,475,809**	**$4,610,084**	**$38,258,746**
Capital Costs											
Vehicles											
Replacement Buses (Existing Service)	$500,000	$618,000	$530,450	$218,545	$1,125,509	$1,043,347	$0	$0	$0	$0	$4,035,851
Replacement Paratransit Vehicles (Existing Service)	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Replacement of Support Vehicles	$25,000	$25,750	$26,523	$27,318	$28,138	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$132,728
Vehicles for New Transit Service	$0	$103,000	$636,540	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$739,540
Other Capital/Infrastructure											
Park-and-Ride Lots Signage/Improvements	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$133,748	$0	$0	$0	$133,748
Bicycle Access/Infrastructure	$0	$20,600	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$20,600
Building Improvements	$0	$0	$0	$7,649	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$7,649
Hardware	$0	$30,900	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$30,900
Communications/Software	$138,749	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$138,749
Security	$0	$111,461	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$111,461
Shelters, Benches, Signage	$0	$0	$137,081	$141,193	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$278,274
Misc. Equipment	$0	$0	$0	$137,274	$0	$0	$150,003	$0	$0	$0	$287,277
Equipment Storage Building	$0	$0	$0	$0	$112,551	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$112,551
ITS	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$530,948	$0	$0	$0	$0	$530,948
Total Capital Cost	**$663,749**	**$909,711**	**$1,330,594**	**$531,980**	**$1,266,197**	**$1,574,294**	**$283,751**	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**	**$6,560,277**
Revenues											
Federal Grants	$2,116,465	$2,895,569	$2,278,936	$3,183,604	$2,429,612	$2,627,001	$2,550,811	$2,751,085	$2,667,867	$3,181,203	$26,682,153
State Grants	$948,465	$976,919	$1,051,783	$1,083,336	$1,115,836	$1,099,531	$1,132,518	$1,166,494	$1,201,490	$1,237,536	$11,013,908
County Contribution	$93,465	$96,269	$141,856	$144,935	$148,070	$201,044	$205,789	$210,638	$215,593	$220,655	$1,678,315
Fare Revenue	$500,000	$515,000	$542,831	$564,217	$586,397	$609,401	$633,257	$657,996	$683,649	$710,249	$6,002,997
Other Local Sources	$0	$117,945	$415,669	$424,215	$432,900	$441,724	$450,688	$459,793	$469,038	$478,424	$3,690,397
Total Revenue	**$3,658,395**	**$4,601,702**	**$4,431,075**	**$5,400,307**	**$4,712,816**	**$4,978,701**	**$4,973,063**	**$5,246,006**	**$5,237,637**	**$5,828,067**	**$49,067,770**
10-Year Cost Feasible Plan											
Total Revenue	$3,658,395	$4,601,702	$4,431,075	$5,400,307	$4,712,816	$4,978,701	$4,973,063	$5,246,006	$5,237,637	$5,828,067	**$49,067,770**
Total Cost	$3,269,845	$3,942,027	$4,848,701	$4,155,630	$4,998,557	$5,670,294	$4,502,630	$4,345,446	$4,475,809	$4,610,084	**$44,819,023**
Rollover from Prev. Year	$0	$388,550	$1,048,225	$630,599	$1,875,276	$1,589,536	$897,943	$1,368,376	$2,268,936	$3,030,763	
Surplus/(Shortfall)	**$388,550**	**$1,048,225**	**$630,599**	**$1,875,276**	**$1,589,536**	**$897,943**	**$1,368,376**	**$2,268,936**	**$3,030,763**	**$4,248,747**	**$4,248,747**

Table 9-3: 10-Year Implementation Plan and Unfunded Needs

Improvement	Implementation Year	Annual Operating Cost (2016$)	Total Capital Cost (2016$)	Existing or New Revenues
Maintain Existing Service				
Maintain Existing Fixed-Route Service	2017-2026	$1,305,744	$3,700,000	Existing
Maintain Existing Paratransit Service	2017-2026	$1,300,352		Existing
Improvements to Existing Routes				
Add one additional evening trip all routes	2018	$108,880	$0	Existing
Destin Circulator - Realignment - no change in resources	2019	$0	$0	N/A
Add Saturday service on all routes	2022	$217,092	$0	Existing
Increase Frequency on Routes 1, 3, 4, 5, 14 with realignments	Unfunded	$343,530	$0	N/A
New Service Expansion				
Crestview Circulator Flex	2018	$229,020	$100,000	New (operating); Existing (capital)
Eglin Beach Bullet Express	2019	$229,020	$200,000	
Niceville-Destin Commons Limited Express	2019	$57,255	$200,000	
Eglin Internal Circulator	2019	$85,882	$100,000	
Navarre-Uptown Station Express	Unfunded	$114,510	$0	N/A
Hurlburt Connector	Unfunded	$114,510	$0	N/A
Hurlburt Internal Circulator	Unfunded	$114,510	$0	N/A
Wright Flex	Unfunded	$114,510	$0	N/A
ADA Paratransit for New Services	Unfunded	$172,134	$0	N/A
Emerald Coast (EC) Ferry	Unfunded	$1,500,000	$1,000,000	N/A
Capital/Infrastructure Improvements				
Park-and-Ride Lots Signage/Improvements	2018	N/A	$20,000	Existing
Bicycle Access/Infrastructure	2020	TBD	$7,000	Existing
Building Improvements	2018	N/A	$30,000	Existing
Hardware	2023	TBD	$112,012	Existing
Communications/Software	2017	TBD	$138,749	Existing
Security	2018	N/A	$108,215	Existing
Shelters, Benches, Signage	2019-2020	N/A	$258,424	Existing
Misc. Equipment	2020	N/A	$251,250	Existing
Equipment Storage Building	2021	N/A	$100,000	Existing
ITS	2022	N/A	$458,000	Existing
New Transfer Facility	Unfunded	TBD	$5,000,000	Existing (fund balance) New (remainder)
Other Improvements				
Shared Park-and-Ride Lot Agreements	2017-2026	TBD	$0	Existing
Enhance Bus Rider Schedule	2017-2026	TBD		TBD
EC Rider Rebranding	2017-2026	TBD		TBD
Expand EC Rider's Transit Marketing Program	2017-2026	TBD		TBD
Promote/expand transportation demand strategies:	2017-2026	TBD		TBD
Explore funding mechanisms to fund transit on military bases	2017-2026	TBD		TBD
Explore expansion of tourist development taxes to fund water ferry	2017-2026	TBD		TBD
Explore potential locations for Transit Signal Priority (TSP)	2017-2026	TBD		TBD
Comprehensive Operation Analysis (COA)	2017-2027	N/A	TBD	TBD

APPENDIX A: TREND AND PEER ANALYSIS

General Performance Measures

General performance indicators are used to gauge the overall system operating performance. Figure A-1 through Figure A-9 present the performance indicators of EC Rider from FY 2009 through FY 2012 (trend analysis) as well its performance relative to the selected peer systems (peer analysis).

Service Area Population and Population Density

Service area population and density are a measure of potential demand for service. Service area population and population density is determined using a ¾-mile buffer from the service. Most agencies do not update this figure on an annual basis and, therefore, it remains unchanged in Okaloosa County for certain fiscal years. It is also important to note that Okaloosa County reported the service area population as the population of the entire county instead of the population that is within the ¾-mile buffer from the service. This variance in reporting will make Okaloosa County's service area population appear substantially larger than its peer systems. This must be considered when looking at other variables that are derived using the service area population, such as vehicle miles per capita, as it may negatively skew EC Rider's performance measures in comparison to its peer system.

Based on the NTD data, the Okaloosa County service area population increased from 170,498 in 2009 to 180,822 in 2013, representing a 6.1% increase. The population density also increased 6.1% from 2009 to 2013. While the service area population for Okaloosa County service is nearly 60% above the peer group mean, the service area population density is 39% below the peer group mean. EC Rider is the highest in the peer group for total service area population, but the lowest for population density. This may be indicative of a much larger service area as compared to the peer agencies. A less-dense service area means that the expectation for service productivity should be less for EC Rider. The service area population for EC Rider increased only since 2009, from approximately 170,498 to 180,822 in 2013, an increase of 6.1%, or an average increase of 1.2% per year.

Figure A-1: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Service Area Population

Okaloosa County Service Area Population Trend (000)
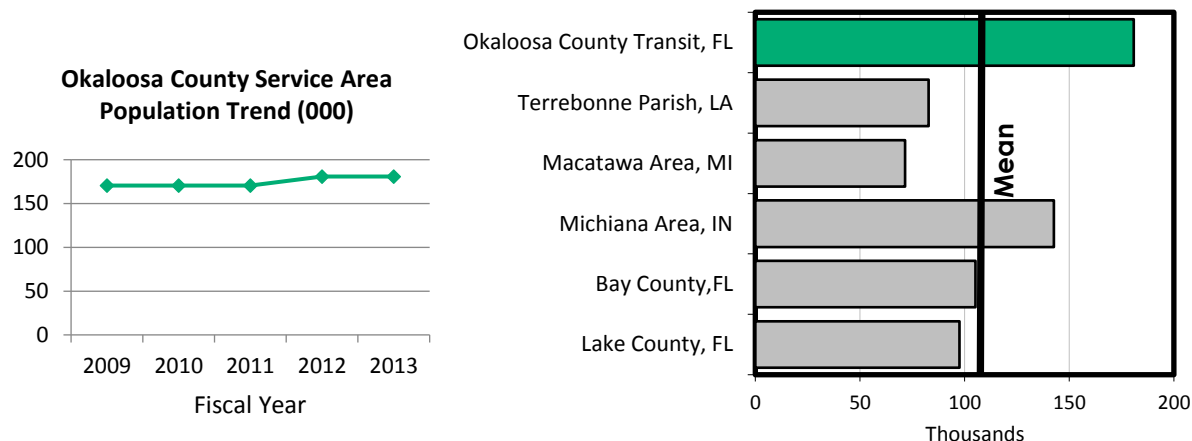
Figure A-2: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Service Area Population Density

Okaloosa County Service Area Population Density (persons per square mile)
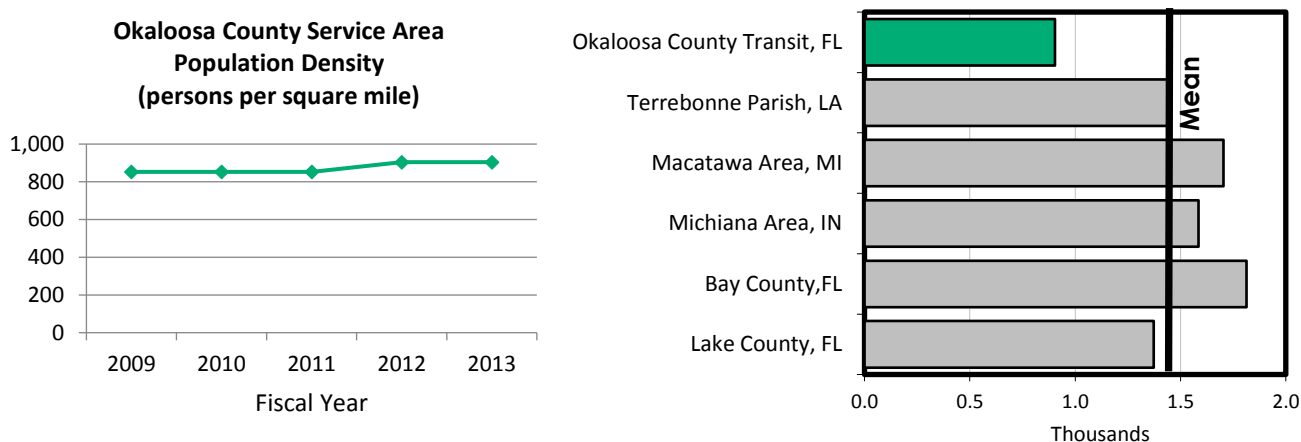
Vehicle Miles

Vehicle miles are the miles that the transit vehicles travel while in revenue service plus deadhead miles. This is a measure of how much service coverage is provided or the supply of service. EC Rider's total vehicle miles of service decreased slightly, from 461,913 miles in 2009 to 458,358 miles in 2013, a -0.8% decrease. A peer comparison was excluded for vehicle miles because not all of the peer systems reported the data for this performance measure.

Figure A-3: EC Rider Trend for Vehicle Miles

Okaloosa County Vehicle Miles (000)
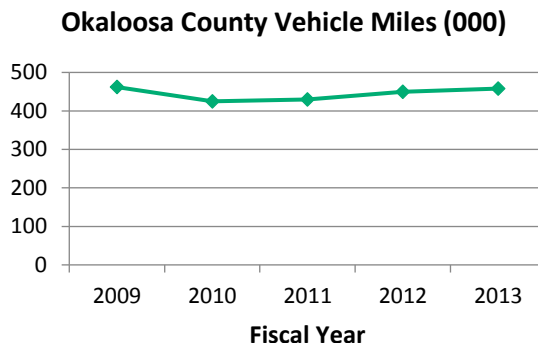
Passenger Trips (Ridership)

Passenger trips, also known as ridership, is the number of passengers who board the public transit vehicles. Passengers are counted each time they board the vehicles no matter how many vehicles they transfer to. It is a measure of the market demands for the service. The total number of passenger trips in Okaloosa County increased from approximately 172,122 in 2009 to 182,584 in 2013, or 6.1%, in line with the population growth during the same time period.

When compared to its peers, EC Rider's passenger trips are 44.5% below the mean for the selected peer group, a value that is highly influenced by the high ridership levels experienced in Bay County, Florida. Service productivity is likely affected by a low-density service area relative to the rest of the peer group.

Figure A-4: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Passenger Trips

Okaloosa County Passenger Trips (000)
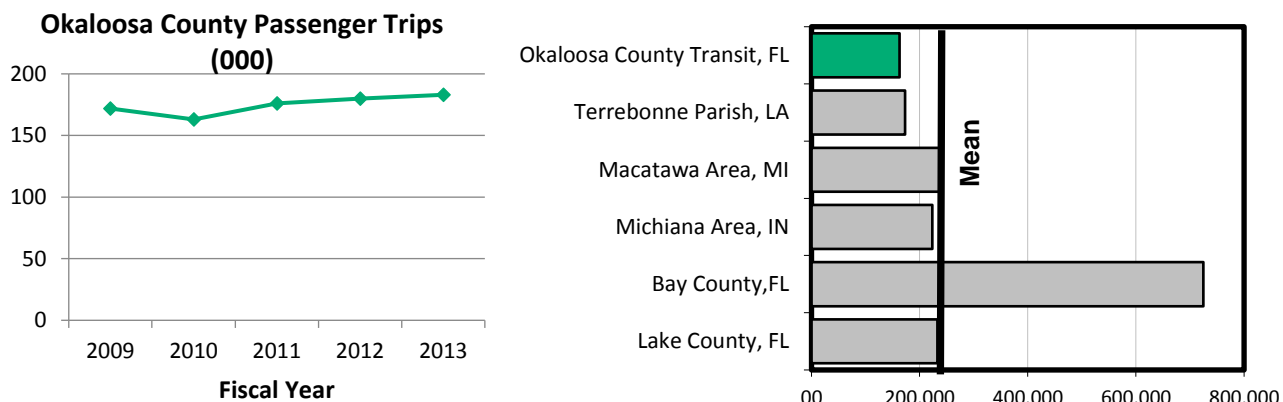
Note: Only 2011 data for Terrebonne Parish system available

Passenger Miles

Passenger miles are a measured that multiplies the number of passenger trips by the average passenger trip length to estimate the total number of miles passengers travel. The average passenger trip length is usually determined by survey sampling. For EC Rider, passenger miles peaked in 2010 at 977,000 miles, then reached a low point in 2011 at 743,000 miles. Afterwards, passenger miles gradually increased to 772,000 miles in 2013. A peer comparison was excluded for passenger miles because not all of the peer systems reported the data for this performance measure.

Figure A-5: EC Rider Trend Passenger Miles
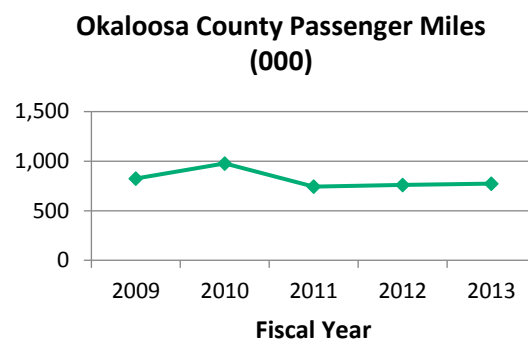
Note: No passenger mile data available for Terrebonne Parish, LA

Revenue Miles and Revenue Hours

Revenue hours are another measure of the amount of service provided by a transit agency. Revenue miles are the total number of miles that the public transit service is scheduled for or actually operated while in revenue service. They exclude miles traveled when passengers are not on board (deadhead travel), training operations, and charter services. Revenue miles increasing faster than total vehicle miles generally indicates a positive operational trend and points to a decreasing proportion of deadhead miles over time relative to total miles. EC Rider experienced a slight decrease of revenue miles by approximately 1% between 2009 and 2013. However, revenue miles had their largest drop in the year 2010 and have increased gradually since then. A peer comparison was excluded for revenue miles and revenue hours because not all of the peer systems reported the data for this performance measure.

Figure A-6: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Revenue Miles
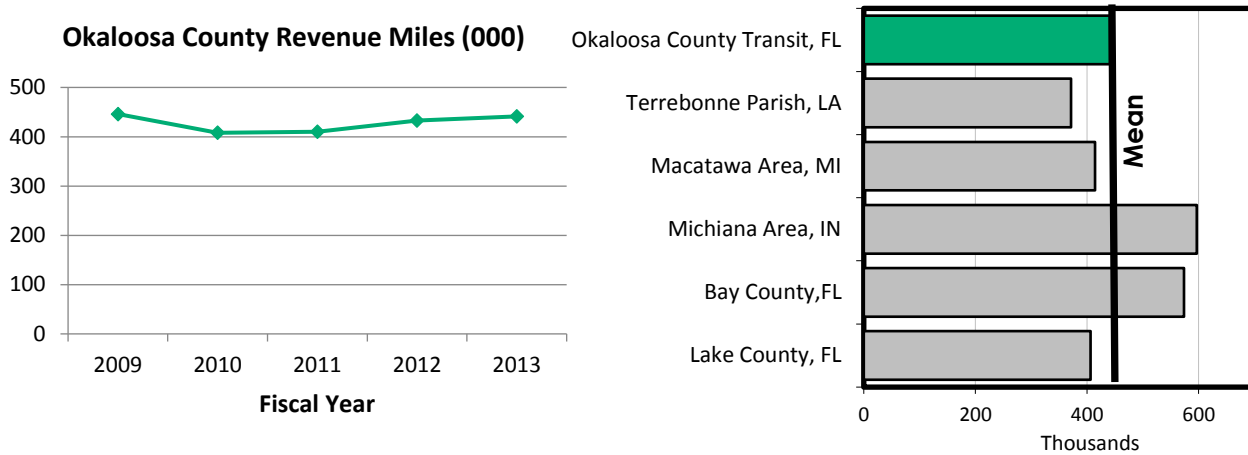
Figure A-7: Peer Comparison for Revenue Hours (000)
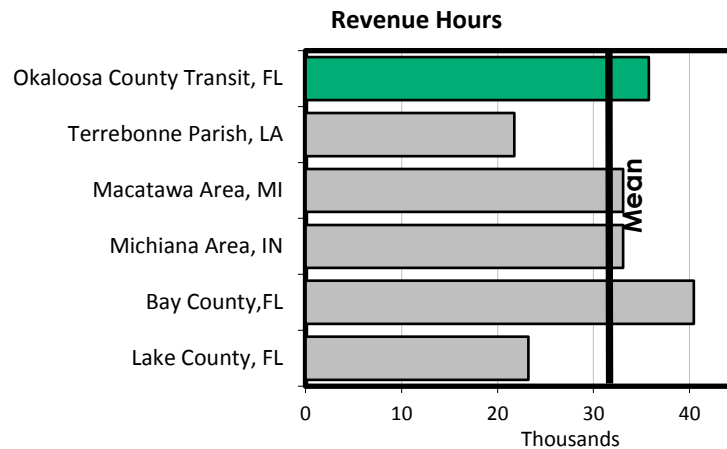
Total Operation Expense

Total operation expense includes all operating costs associated the transit agency (i.e., vehicle operations, maintenance and administration costs). EC Rider's total operating expense increased from $1.10 million in 2009 to $1.15 million in 2013, or 4.3%. However, when taking into consideration inflation, the actual total operating expense measured in 2009 dollars decreased by 4.1% during this five-year period. This indicates that overall operating expenses were effectively held constant and even reduced. The total operating expense for EC Rider is less approximately 41% less than the peer group mean.

Figure A-8: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Total Operating Expense (000)
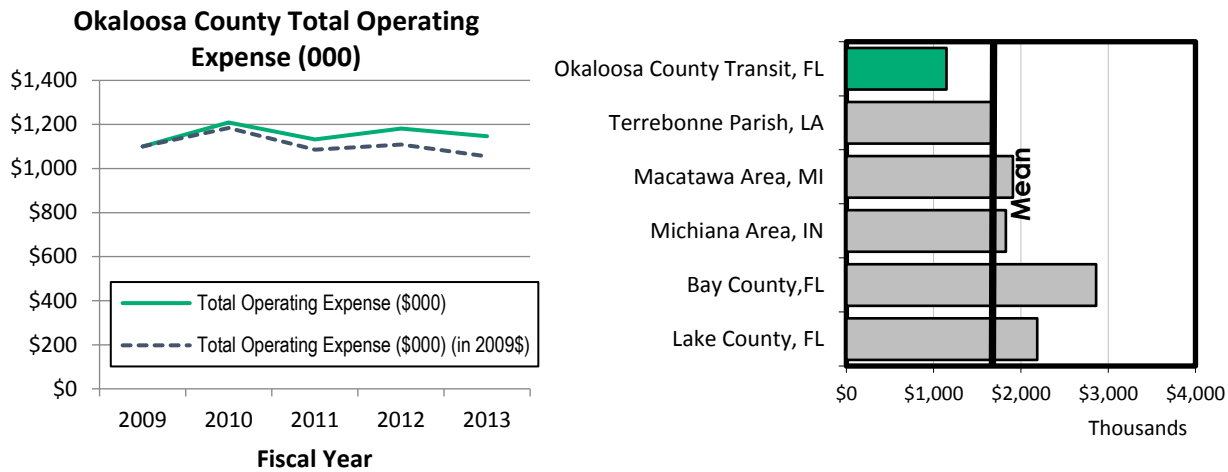
Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service

The trend analysis reveals that the performance measure for vehicles operated in maximum service remained constant at 14 years for each of the five years, from 2009 to 2013. With respect to its peers, EC Rider ranks at the top in the peer group for vehicles operated in maximum service, with 50% higher than the peer group mean of seven years. It is interesting to note that EC Rider also has the oldest fleet of vehicles compared to its peer systems (see Average Age of Fleet indicator in the next section, Effectiveness Measures).

Figure A-9: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service
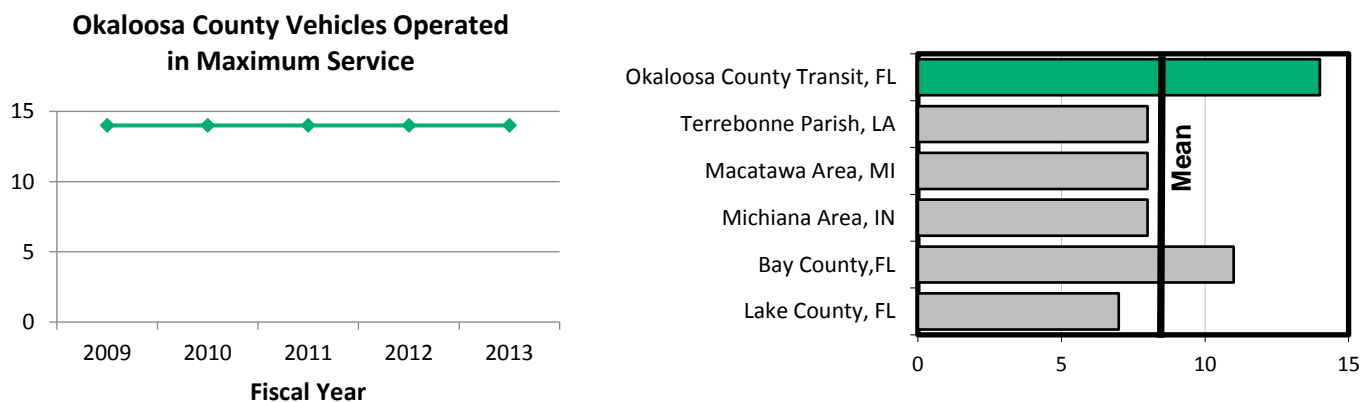
Passenger Fare Revenue

Passenger fare revenue is the total amount of funds generated from passenger fares. EC Rider's passenger fare revenue increased from $103,149 in 2009 to $123,991 in 2013, or 20% in total. This is attributed to the fare increases implemented in 2012 and subsequent ridership increases in both 2012 and 2013.

Figure A-10: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Passenger Fare Revenue
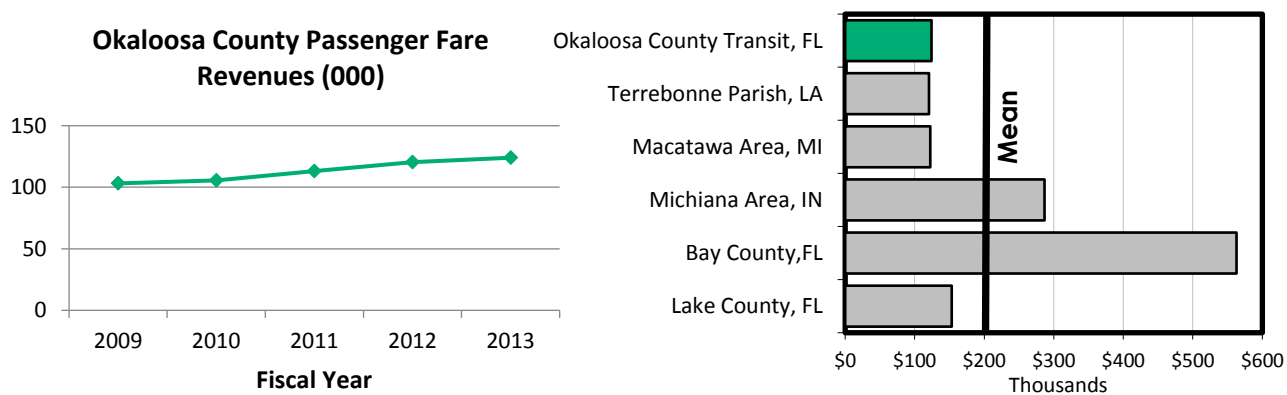
Effectiveness Measures

Effectiveness measures indicate the extent to which service-related goals are being met. Effectiveness measures include service supply, service consumption and quality of service, and are represented by variables such as vehicle miles per capita, passenger trips per revenue hour, and average age of fleet. Figures A-11 through A-19 present the trend and peer analysis for these effectiveness performance indicators.

Vehicles Miles per Capita

Vehicle miles per capita is derived from the total system vehicle miles and service area population within a ¾-mile distance of service provided. It measures the supply of service provided based on the demand within the service area. For EC Rider, vehicle miles per capita decreased by 6.4%, from 2.71 miles per capita in 2009 to 2.53 miles per capita in 2013. The decrease has been gradual, suggesting a corresponding increase in effectiveness.

Vehicle miles per capita for EC Rider are below the peer group mean. This is an indication that the supply of service is less than what is typically experienced by peer agencies. It also may result from the fact that EC Rider's service area population is highest among its peer group.

Figure A-11: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Vehicle Miles per Capita
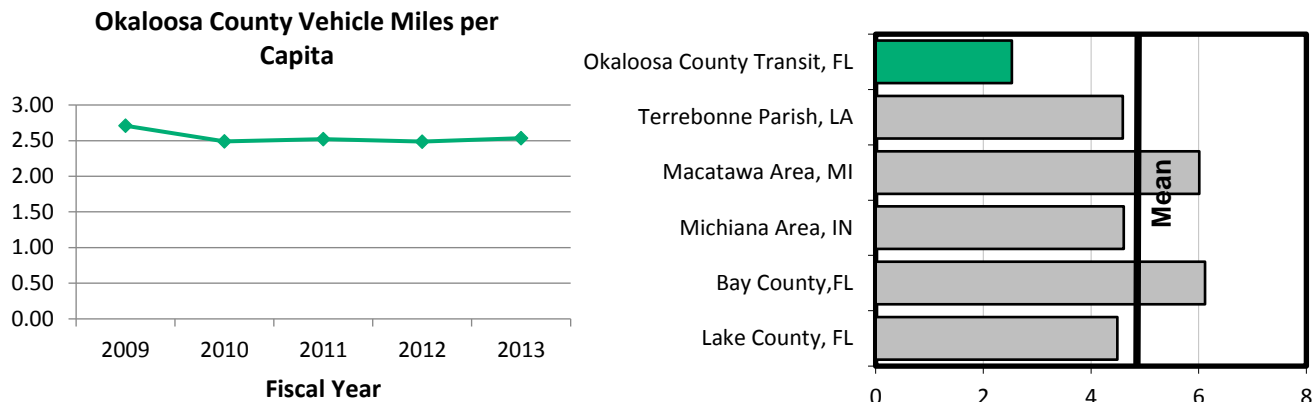
Passenger Trips per Capita

Passenger trips per capita is calculated by dividing the total transit boardings by service area population. This measure of service effectiveness quantifies transit utilization within the service area. Passenger trips per capita in Okaloosa County experienced little variation between 2010 and 2013. However, EC Rider ranks at the bottom when compared to its peer systems, at 72% below the peer mean. This is likely due to the different reporting method for service area population that was previously mentioned.

Figure A-12: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Passenger Trips per Capita
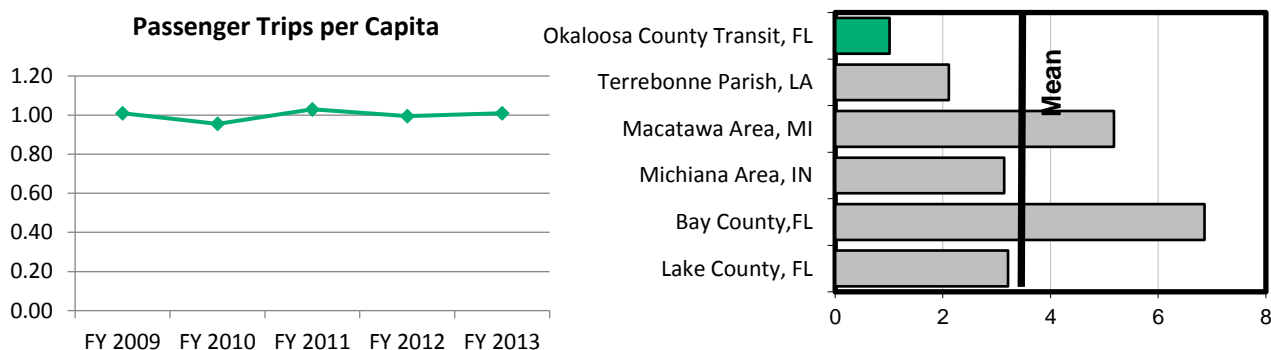
Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile

Passenger trips revenue hour is calculated by dividing transit boardings by revenue miles. It is a measure for the supply of revenue service provided based on the level of demand. In Okaloosa County, passenger trips per revenue mile experienced an increase of 7.1%. This indicates the system was achieving better ridership productivity between 2009 and 2013. However, when compared to its peer systems, EC Rider places at the

bottom at almost 47% below the peer mean, indicating that there is room for improvement in this effectiveness measure.

Figure A-13: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour

Okaloosa County Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile
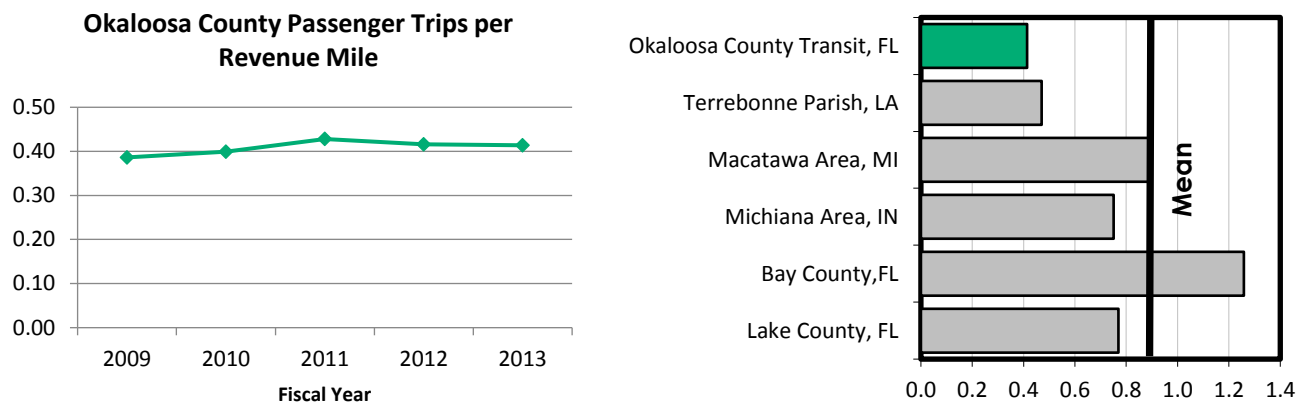
Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour

Passenger trips per revenue hour is a measure used to quantify service consumption. It can help evaluate the amount of resources consumed in providing service. From 2009 to 2013, EC Rider's passenger trips per revenue hour increased 8.7% overall. This indicates the system was gradually achieving improved ridership productivity during this five-year period. Despite this improvement, EC Rider ranks at the bottom compared to its peer systems, at nearly 56% below the peer mean.

Figure A-14: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour

Okaloosa County Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour
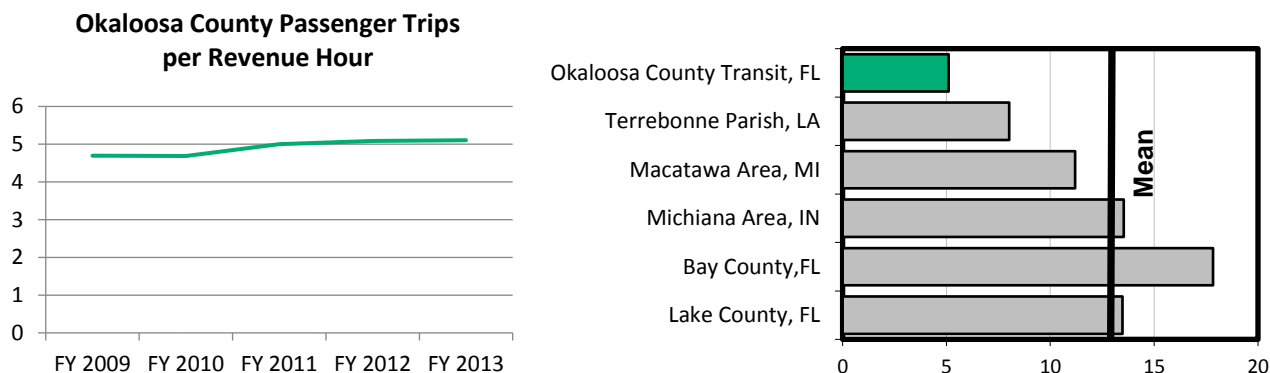
Average Age of Fleet

The average age of fleet is a measure of the quality of service being provided as it is indicative of the reliability or condition of the vehicles providing transit services. The average age of EC Rider's fleet consistently increased one year annually from 2009 to 2013. The average age of EC Rider's fixed-route fleet is 35.5% above the per group mean, or approximately 1.6 years older than the peer group mean of 4.55 years.

Figure A-15: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Average Age of Fleet
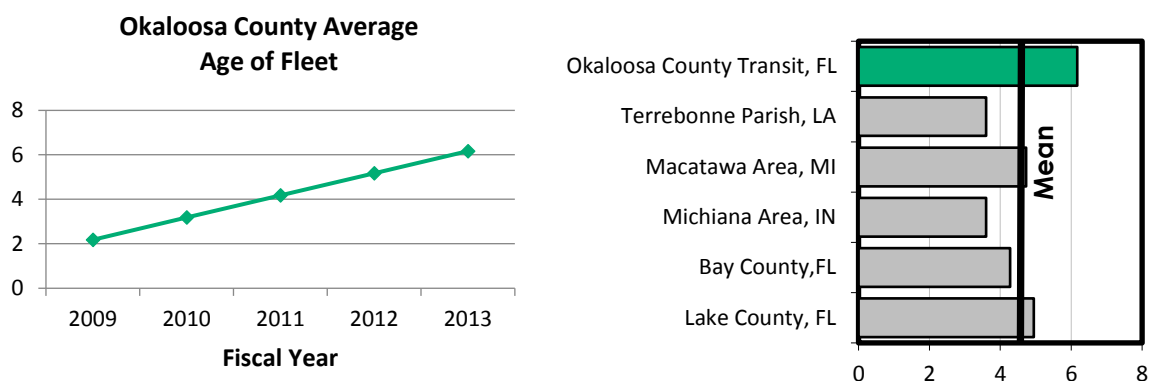
Average Headway

Average headway indicates how frequently transit service is provided. In Okaloosa County, the average headway for all routes increased from 57.41 minutes in 2009 to 74.32 minutes in 2013, indicating a decrease in the frequency of service being provided. A peer comparison was excluded for average headway because not all of the peer systems reported data for this performance measure.

Figure A-16: EC Rider Trends for Average Headway
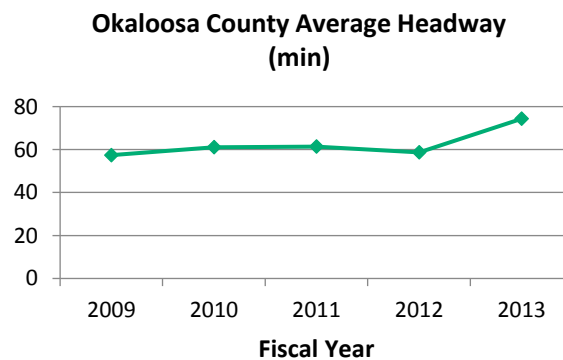
Number of Vehicle System Failures

The number of vehicle system failures reflect immediate maintenance needs. A low number of vehicle system failures helps to ensure the long-term viability and stability of the service and reduces overall cost in terms of both maintenance and the number of spare vehicles required. Changes in the system failure rate may be related to changes in the service levels and/or the average age of the fleet. The number of system failures increased from 15 in 2009 to 19 in 2013, with a low point of 10 failures in 2011. A peer comparison was excluded for total number of system failures because not all of the peer systems reported data for this performance measure.

Figure A-17: EC Rider Trend for Number of Vehicle System Failures

Okaloosa County Number of Vehicle System Failures
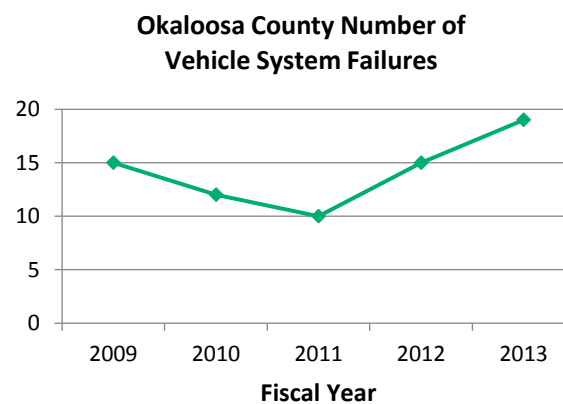
Revenue Miles between Failures

Revenue miles between failures reflects quality of maintenance as well as loss in revenue due to operational failures and service shortages. A higher number of revenue miles between system failures can indicate a higher quality of passenger experience. For EC Rider, this effectiveness measure peaked to a value of 41,030 revenue miles per road call in 2011 and significantly declined afterwards to 23,229 miles per road call in 2013, suggesting a recent decline in effective service per person for transit services in Okaloosa County.

Figure A-18: EC Rider Trends for Revenue Miles between Failures

**Okaloosa County Revenue Miles
Between Failures**
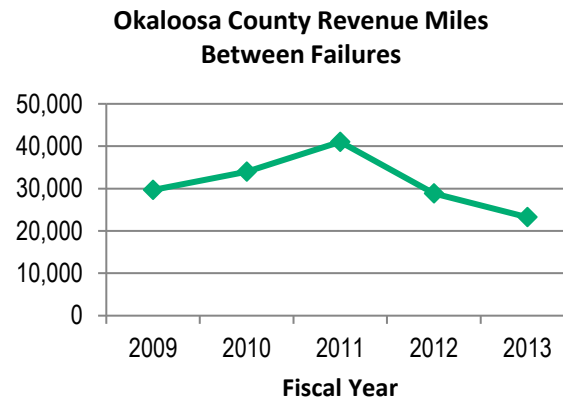
Weekday Span of Service

The weekday span of service remained the same, at 13.0 hours per day, for Okaloosa County, indicating that the supply of service has remained constant since 2009.

Figure A-19: EC Rider Trends for Weekday Span of Service Trends

**Okaloosa County Weekday
Span of Service**
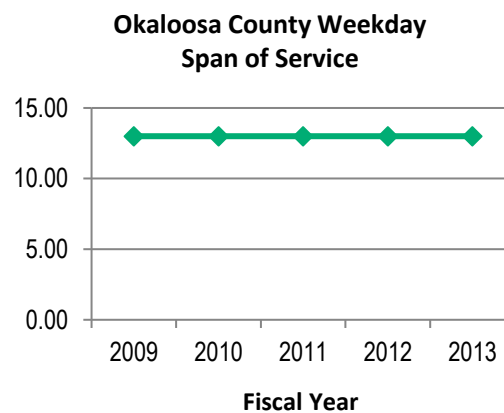
Efficiency Measures

Categories of efficiency measures include cost efficiency and operating ratios. Figures A-20 through A-28 present the efficiency measures for EC Rider's peer review and trend analysis. Similarities between EC Rider and the peers in this category may be related to the peer selection process, which is largely based on transit service characteristics. The following is a summary summarizes the trend and peer analysis by efficiency measure type.

Operating Expense per Capital

Over the five-year period, EC Rider's operating expense per capita decreased by approximately 2%, from $6.45 per person in 2009 to $6.34 per person in 2013. EC Rider's operating expense per capita is the lowest among the peer group.

**Figure A-20: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Operating Expense per Capita**
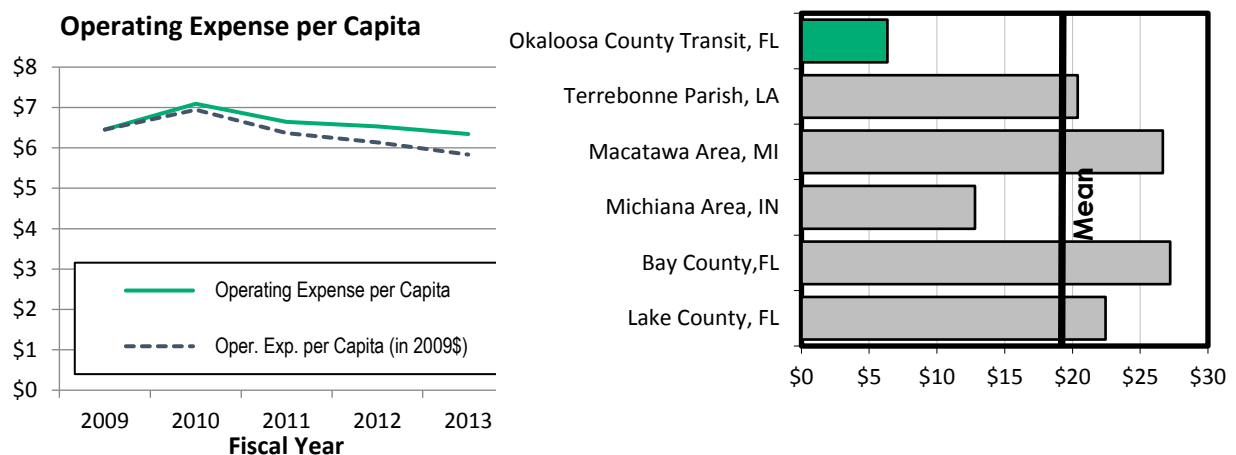
Operating Expense per Passenger Trip

Operating expense per passenger trip measures the efficiency of transporting riders, both on how service is delivered and the market demands for the service. When excluding inflation, the operating expense per passenger trip in Okaloosa County decreased from $6.39 in 2009 to $6.28 in 2013, or 1.7% overall. The operating expense per passenger trip has declined since peaking in 2010, suggesting efficiency improvements during this period. EC Rider ranked close to the peer mean for this measure.

Figure A-21: EC Rider Trends and Peer Comparison for Operating Expense per Passenger Trip
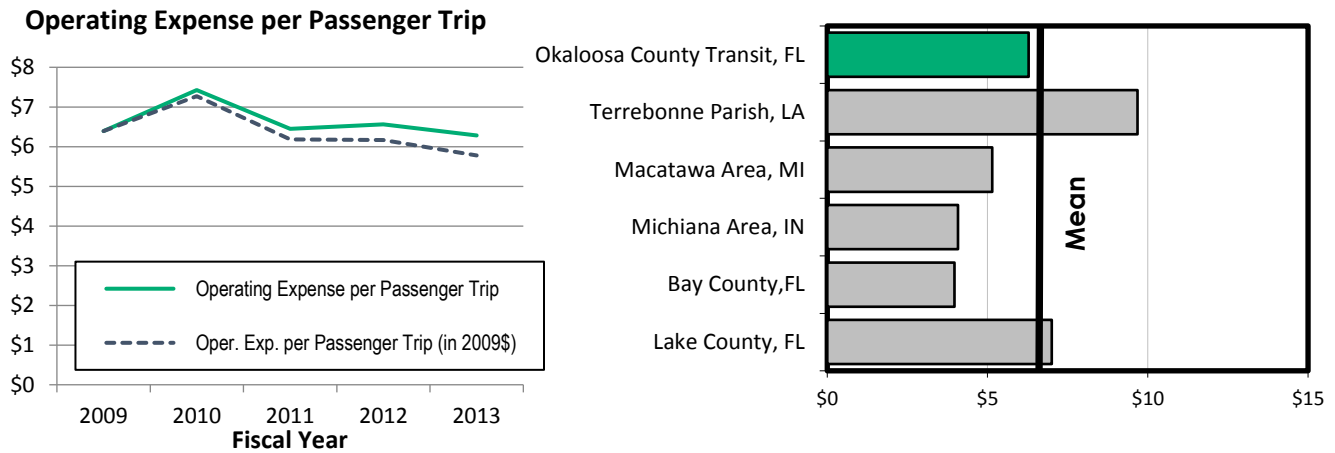
Operating Expense per Passenger Mile

Operating expense per passenger mile measures the impact of trip length on the system's performance. EC Rider's operating expense per passenger mile experienced a recent slight decline, but there was an overall increase of 2.5% between 2009 and 2013. A peer comparison was excluded for operating expense per passenger mile because not all of the peer systems reported data for this performance measure.

Figure A-22: EC Rider Trend for Operating Expense per Passenger Mile
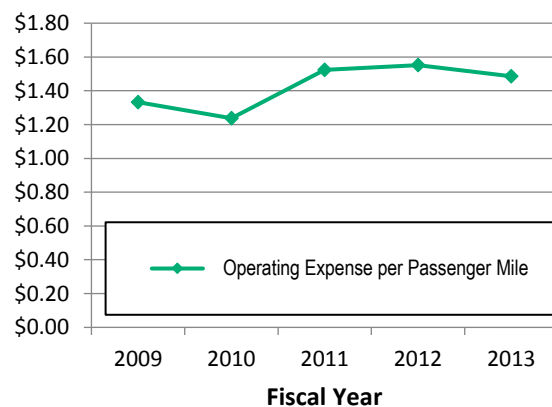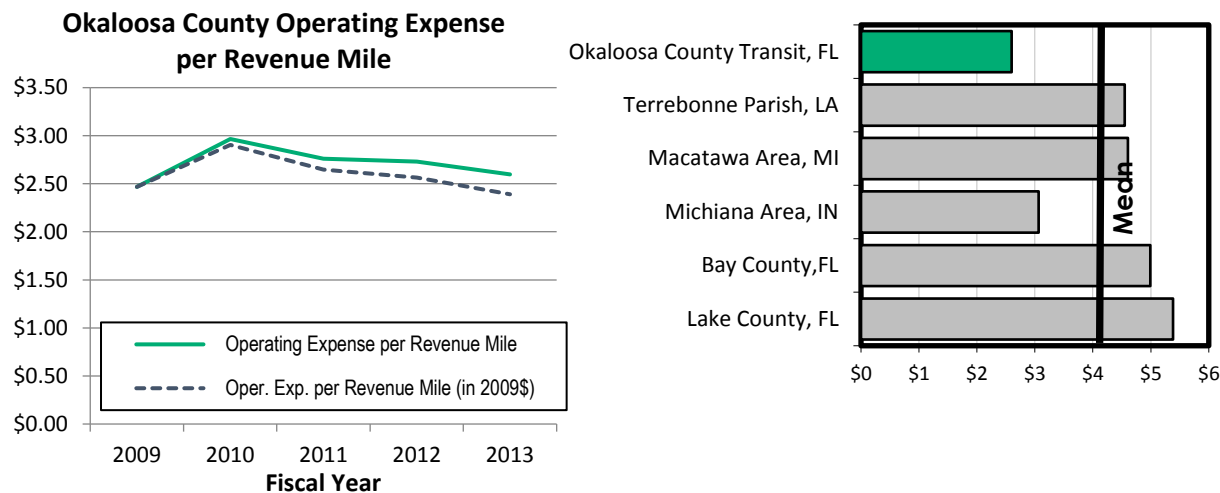

Operating Expense per Revenue Mile

Operating expense per revenue mile can indicate how efficiently a transit service is delivered. EC Rider's operating expense per revenue peaked in 2010 and has decreased since. Taking into account inflation, this measure of service efficiency decreased overall by 3.2% between 2009 and 2013. In comparison to the peer systems, the operating expense per revenue mile for EC Rider is 38.1% below the peer group mean.

Figure A-23: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Operating Expense per Revenue Mile

Operating Expense per Revenue Hour

The operating expense per revenue hour measures the efficiency of transporting riders when, factoring in vehicle speed. In Okaloosa County, the operating expense per revenue hour increased 6.9% between 2009 and 2013. Taking inflation into consideration, the operating expense per revenue hour decreased overall by 1.7% during this five-year period. EC Rider's operating expense per revenue mile is 50.4% below the peer group average, indicating that EC Rider's service is operating less efficiency, on average, than its peer group.

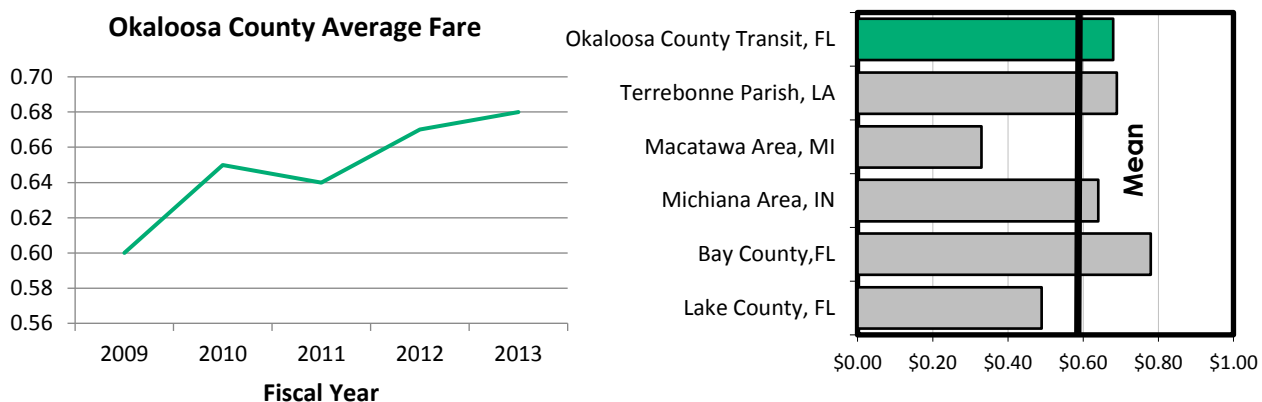**Figure A-24: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Operating Expense per Revenue Hour**
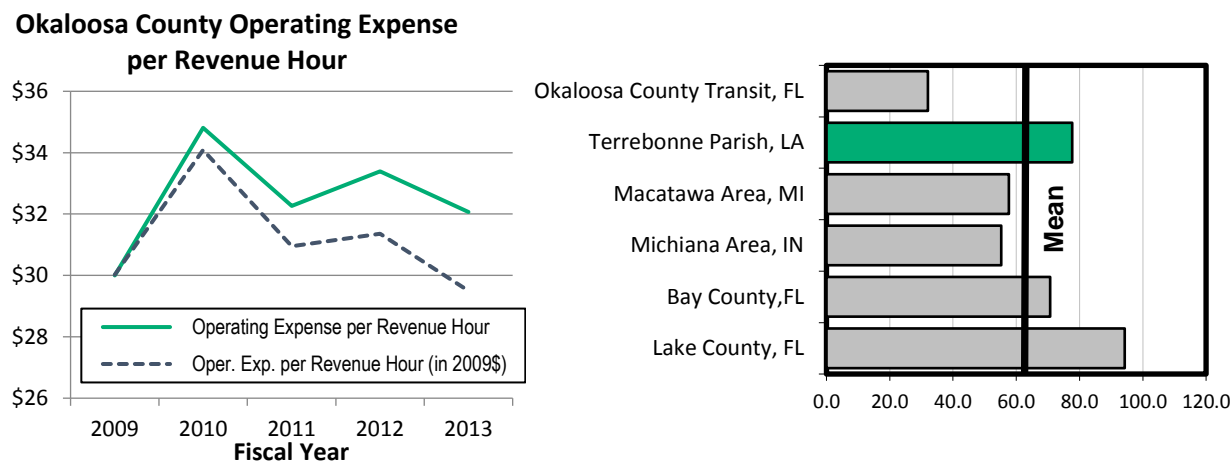
Average Fare

The average fare is calculated by dividing the total passenger fare revenue collected by the total number of passengers. The average can be lowered by systems like EC Rider that offer free transfers. EC Rider's average fare increased from $0.60 in 2009 to $0.68 in 2013, or 13.3% overall. This places EC Rider's average fare slightly above the peer system mean of $0.60.

**Figure A-25: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Average Fare**

Farebox Recovery

Farebox recovery refers to the percent of the transit system's total operating expenses that are funded with fares paid by passengers and is calculated by dividing the total fare revenue collected by the total operating expenses. EC Rider's farebox recovery increased from 9.38% in 2009 to 10.81% in 2013, or 15.2% over the five-year period representing an improvement in financial efficiency. This is due to increases in fares in 2012 and subsequent increases in ridership in 2012 and 2013. The farebox recovery for EC Rider is approximately 3% below the peer group mean.

Figure A-26: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Farebox Recovery
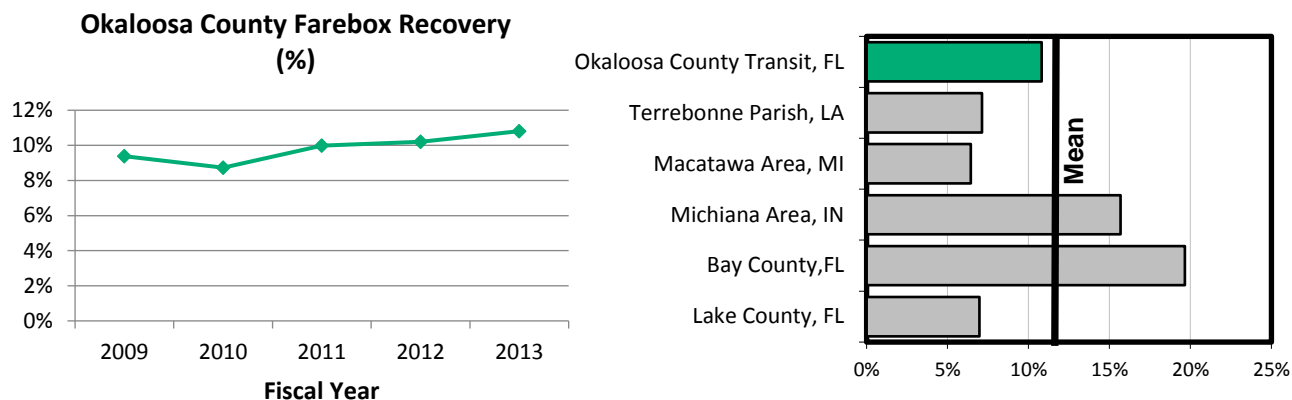
Revenue Miles per Vehicle Mile

A higher ratio of revenue miles traveled to total vehicle mile generally indicates higher system productivity. For EC Rider, the revenue mile per vehicle mile remained relatively stable at 0.96 over the five-year period. Revenue miles per vehicle decreased by 6.5%, from 26,211 in 2009 to 24,520 in 2013. Revenue miles per vehicle mile for EC Rider is 3.4% above the peer group mean, which indicates a slightly better use of fixed-route bus vehicles than the peer group mean.

Figure A-27: EC Rider Trend and Peer Comparison for Revenue Miles per Vehicle Mile
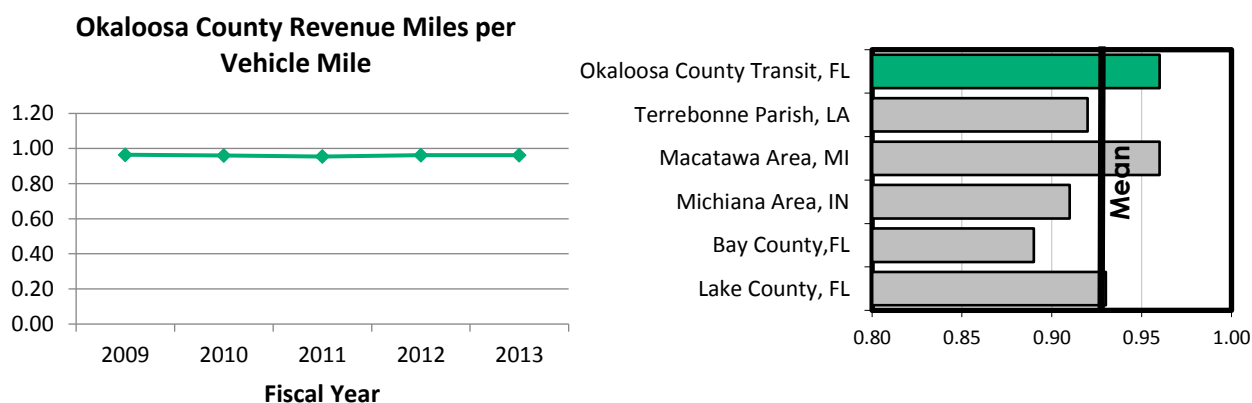

Vehicle Miles per Gallon

Vehicle miles per gallon, or the ratio between fuel consumed and distance traveled, is an indication of fuel efficiency and applies only to diesel and gasoline powered vehicles. For EC Rider, vehicle miles per gallon (or fuel efficiency) increased significantly during the five-year period, from 8.09 in 2009 to 10.24 in 2013, or

40% overall. A peer comparison was excluded for vehicle miles per gallon because not all of the peer systems reported data for this performance measure.

Figure A-28: EC Rider Trend for Vehicle Miles per Gallon

Okaloosa County Vehicle Miles per Gallon
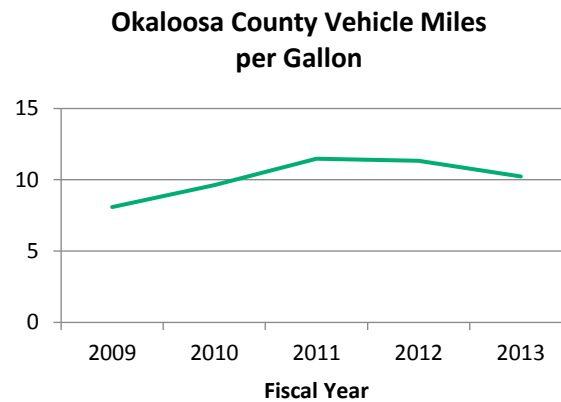
APPENDIX B: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Okaloosa County
Transit Development Plan
Public Involvement Plan

Emerald Coast Rider

600 Transit Way
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547
(850 833-9168

December 2015

Prepared by

**Tindale
Oliver**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) currently provides the county's fixed route and ADA paratransit program through its newly hired public transit provider, Maruti Fleet and Management LLC. The services, which were formerly provided by Okaloosa County Transit (OCT) and operated under the name "The Wave" have been renamed to Emerald Coast Rider (EC Rider) by the County based on the recommendation of the recently formed Okaloosa County Transit Cooperative which is comprised of representatives from the county and the cities of Crestview, Fort Walton Beach, Niceville, and Destin as well as the Town of Cinco Bayou. Service includes fixed-route bus service and door-to-door paratransit service for the ADA-eligible riders.

Under current legislation that became effective February 20, 2007, Okaloosa County must submit a Transit Development Plan (TDP) Major Update every five years. Okaloosa County is currently undertaking this process. The 10-year TDP is a strategic guide for public transportation in the community over the next 10 years and represents Okaloosa County's vision for public transportation during the 10-year time period.

Current legislation requires that Okaloosa County document its public involvement plan to be used in the transit development planning process. Pertinent language from the TDP rule is as follows:

> *The TDP preparation process shall include opportunities for public involvement as outlined in a TDP public involvement plan, approved by the Department, or the local Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) Public Involvement Plan, approved by both the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Highway Administration.*
>
> —Florida Rule 14-73.001

Public involvement is an ongoing process that involves continuously receiving and accumulating feedback about service. The Okaloosa County has developed this Public Involvement Plan (PIP) to be used during the FY 2016–2025 TDP update process to formally document all planned public outreach activities. This plan provides numerous opportunities for public involvement as well as involvement on the part of local agencies and organizations.

Activities proposed within this PIP include review team meetings, stakeholder interviews, bus on-board and operator surveys, discussion group workshops, and public workshops. In accordance with current Florida Rule 14-73.001, this plan was developed to be consistent with the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization's Public Participation Plan (PPP). The results of the public involvement activities will be used in the development of the Okaloosa County FY 2014–2023 TDP Major Update.

2. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Numerous public involvement techniques were selected for inclusion in the PIP to ensure the active participation of citizens in the community. Table 2-1 presents the types of public involvement activities that will be completed for the TDP and the techniques associated with each type of activity. The public involvement activities and techniques presented in Table 2-1 are consistent with the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) PPP.

Table 2-1
Okaloosa TDP Public involvement Activities

Public Participation Activity		TDP PIP
Steering Committee Meetings		☑
Engaging the Community	Bus Rider Surveys	☑
	Public Workshops	☑
	Discussion Group Workshops	☑
	Stakeholder Interviews	☑
Agency Coordination	Regional Coordination	☑
	State & Local Officials	☑
Bus Operator Survey		☑
Website		☑
Social Media Networking (Facebook/Twitter)		☑
Media Relations		☑
BOCC Meetings/Presentations		☑

TDP PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUES

The public involvement techniques to be used for the Okaloosa County TDP update have been placed into two major categories: direct involvement techniques and information distribution techniques. Direct involvement techniques refer to activities that engage the public in "hands-on" workshops and/or discussion about the project. Information distribution techniques refer to public information materials that are used to inform the general public of issues regarding the project.

Direct Involvement Techniques

Direct involvement techniques for the Okaloosa County TDP are described below. The number of times each activity is programmed to be performed is noted where appropriate.

- *Project Kickoff Meeting* – A project kickoff meeting was scheduled and conducted to discuss the objectives, scope, and milestones of the project.

- *Steering Committee Meetings* – A Steering Committee will be established at the outset of the project to monitor and provide input throughout the study and to evaluate the deliverables. The Steering Committee may include, but not limited to representatives from Okaloosa County and its municipalities, the Okaloosa-Walton TPO, FDOT District 3, the local Workforce Development Board, and other stakeholders to be identified. Key project deliverables will be distributed to the Steering Committee for review and comment. Most of the communication with the Steering Committee will be via e-mail and telephone; however, in addition to the kickoff meeting, three meetings will be scheduled and conducted during the course of the update effort.

- *On-Board Survey* – A bus on-board survey of fixed-route bus patrons will be conducted to capture demographic, travel behavior, and rider satisfaction data from EC Rider fixed-route bus riders. To allow for sufficient valid survey responses that will support statistical rigor of the results, the survey effort will cover at least 50% of the County's scheduled fixed-route bus trips. This information will enable Okaloosa County to focus on relevant transit needs and issues such as modifying bus schedules, locating bus stops, modifying the fare structure, planning for future service, focusing on marketing campaigns, and identifying historical trends in rider satisfaction. The survey will be available in both English and Spanish.

- *Public Workshops* – Public workshops have proven to be an effective technique for obtaining substantive public participation in the planning process. A total of two public workshops will be conducted to obtain input from the general public about the TDP update process; one will be held early in the process to collect input on needs, and the other held later in the project to collect input on potential alternative improvements. To maximize opportunities for citizen participation, locations will be selected to ensure geographic

coverage and, to the extent possible, piggyback on other community events. All meetings will be held in accordance with Title VI requirements, and notices will include instructions for special accommodations and language assistance. The project team will prepare appropriate notices and flyers for advertisement of public meetings and workshops, and Okaloosa County staff will post the actual notice in a newspaper of general circulation, online, and on-board buses, as required.

- *Stakeholder Interviews* - Since the understanding of local conditions should include knowledge of the perceptions and attitudes of community decision-makers and leaders towards transit and its role in the community, 10 stakeholder interviews will be conducted as part of the public involvement process. The TDP will also be presented and briefed to the Okaloosa County Transit Cooperative.

- *Discussion Group Workshops* – Two discussion group workshops will be held to identify and assess perceptions of transit to help identify issues and opportunities for the transit agency. Although there are several methodologies for collecting such information, one of the more cost-effective methods of obtaining public input on transit is through the use of discussion group workshops. Although not intended to provide a statistically-valid sample, a discussion group is an excellent tool for revealing the attitudes of a particular group because of the open-ended nature of group discussions. The two workshops will be held in areas that coincide with Okaloosa County's existing service area. For one workshop, potential participants would include members from the business, health, social service, and education communities, as well as local chambers of commerce, the local visitor's bureau, and active stakeholder groups. This group would serve to represent "non-user" views. The second workshop would be conducted with current Okaloosa County Transit patrons so the "user" perspective is represented.

- *Bus Operator Survey* – As ambassadors of the transit agency, bus operators have the most opportunity for and the greatest depth of contact with Okaloosa County's public transportation existing patrons on a day-to-day basis. This fact makes them a valuable asset both for vetting rider input and for providing important insights into route-level and system network issues related to operations, safety, scheduling, etc. An operator survey will be developed and distributed to all EC Rider bus operators to collect static responses.

- *Comments and Suggestions Collected by Maruti/EC Rider* – Over time, Maruti/EC Rider accumulates comments and suggestions from citizens (users and non-users) regarding existing and future transit services. This information will be obtained from the transit provider and reviewed for consideration in the TDP.

- **Project Presentations** – As part of the public outreach process, a user-friendly, graphical presentation will be incrementally developed to support the communication and adoption of the TDP. The presentation will also be available for use by Okaloosa County staff beyond the adoption of the TDP.

Information Distribution Techniques

The information distribution techniques used for the TDP Major Update are described below.

- **Notification of General Public** – The general public will be notified about public meetings through legal advertisements, Okaloosa County website, flyers, and social media.

- **Notification of State and Local Agencies** – The Regional Workforce Development Board, the TPO, and FDOT will be advised of all public meetings via email. In addition, applicable project deliverables will be submitted to them to solicit feedback and comments.

- **Reports and Information for Okaloosa County Website** – Technical reports, community workshop and meeting schedules, surveys or questionnaires, and other appropriate items will be provided to Okaloosa County staff for posting on their websites.

- **Mailing/Contact List** – Email contacts from email distribution lists provided the PMT and Steering Committee members will be used for e-mail blasts, including the following:
    - Email Blast #1 – Sent early at project initiation stage to increase awareness.
    - Email Blast #2 and #3 - Sent prior to the information workshops to encourage participation.

    As necessary, the content for these e-mail blasts will be distributed two additional times each as reminders to the distribution list.

- **Social Media Outreach** – Social networking opportunities for the project will be provided using Facebook and Twitter. Social media links will be integrated into the TPO and EC Rider websites.

- **Project Business Cards** – Business cards with the brand and TDP information will be printed and distributed through bus operators, pass outlets, agency partners, and other locations as identified and made available.

3. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCHEDULE

A tentative project schedule has been developed for the public participation portions of the Okaloosa County TDP Major Update, as shown in Figure 3-1. Please note that the dates for specific meetings and public involvement activities are approximate and subject to change pending guidance from the TDP Steering Committee and/or Okaloosa County.

Figure 3-1
Public Involvement Activities & Tentative Schedule - 2015/2016

Outreach Activity	Time Frame
Steering Committee Meetings	December – June
Public Workshops	
Community Needs Focus	January/February
Alternative Feedback Focus	March/April
Stakeholder Interviews	January
Discussion Group Workshops	February
Surveys	
On-Board	January/February
Workshop	January - April
Operator	December
E-Mail Blasts	December - April
Social Media	
Website	December – August
Facebook	December - August
Twitter	December - August
BOCC Presentations	
Initial	May/June
Adoption	July

Bus Operator Survey

Please take a few moments to answer the following questions. This survey is part of an effort to improve EC Rider services. Please do NOT put your name or other identifying mark on the survey. When complete, please return the survey to the Operations Manager's mailbox.

1. The following is a list of possible complaints riders may voice to bus operators. Please read the list of common complaints below carefully and <u>mark the **3 complaints** that you hear most frequently from riders</u>.

    ___ need more frequent service   ___ need more later service. Until what time?____

    ___ bus doesn't go where I want   ___ need better sidewalk connections to bus stops

    ___ bus is late   ___ need express service. Where?_____

    ___ bus leaves stop too early   ___ need better connections to other counties. Where?___

    ___ bus is not clean   ___ need more bus shelters/benches

    ___ bus is not comfortable   ___ bus schedule too hard to understand

    ___ safety/security at bus stop   ___ fare is too high

    ___ safety/security onboard bus   ___ other (please specify)_____

2. Do you think these complaints are valid? Please explain.

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

3. What do riders like about EC Rider? Please <u>list the **3 compliments** that you hear most frequently from riders.</u>

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

4. Do you know of any safety problems on any routes? Please explain.

    _____

    _____

    _____

_____

_____

_____

5. Provide specific service improvements to EC Rider bus routes. Include information for routes that you drive and that you don't drive. Examples of service improvements include improving bus running times, adding new destinations, improving service frequency, combining services with other EC Rider routes, etc.

Route	Service Improvement/Comment

6. Use the space below to provide any other comments that could help improve EC Rider service.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!

Emerald Coast Rider (ECR) On-Board Survey

Emerald Coast Rider would like your input to help improve its transit service. Please help us serve you better by completing this survey. Thank you.

1. What type of place are you **coming from** now? (Please ✓ only one)

__ Work	__ School (K-12)
__ Social/Personal/Church	__ College/Tech
__ Shopping/Errands	__ Home
__ Medical	__ Other (specify)_____

2. What is the **zip code** of the place you are **coming from** now? _____

3. How do you get to the first bus stop for this **one-way trip**? (Please ✓ only one)

__ Walked/Wheelchair ➡ # blocks? ____	__ Was dropped off
__ Bicycled ➡ # blocks? ____	__ Rode with someone who parked
__ Drove & parked ➡ # miles? ____	__ Other (specify)_____

4. List all of the Bus Routes in the **exact order** you will use to make this **one-way trip**:

FIRST Bus Route	➡	**SECOND** Bus Route	➡	**THIRD** Bus Route

5. What type of place are you **going to** now? (Please ✓ only one)

__ Work	__ School (K-12)
__ Social/Personal/Church	__ College/Tech
__ Shopping/Errands	__ Home
__ Medical	__ Other (specify)_____

6. What is the **zip code** of the place you are **going to** now? _____

7. After getting off the last bus for this trip, how will you get to your **final destination**? (Please ✓ only one)

__ Walk/Wheelchair ➡ # blocks? ____	__ Will be picked up
__ Bicycle ➡ # blocks? ____	__ Ride with someone who parked
__ Drive ➡ # miles? ____	__ Other (specify)_____

8. What type of fare did you pay for this **one-way trip**?

__ Regular Fare ($1.50)
__ Reduced Full Fare (75¢)
__ 31-Day Pass Regular ($30.00)
__ 31-Day Pass Reduced ($15.00)
__ 31-Day Express Super Pass ($45.00)
__ 31-Day Express Super Pass Reduced ($22.50)
__ Other (specify) _____

9. How many days a week do you usually take buses?

__ First time riding	__ 3
__ Less than once a week	__ 4
__ 1	__ 5
__ 2	

10. How long have you been using ECR service by now?

__ Less than 6 months
__ 6 months to 2 years
__ 2 to 5 years
__ More than 5 years

11. What is the **most important** reason you ride the bus? (Please ✓ only one)

__ I do not have a valid driver's license	__ OCT is more economical
__ I do not have access to a car/vehicle	__ Traffic is too bad
__ Parking is too expensive/difficult	__ Bus is more convenient
__ I don't drive	__ Other (specify)_____

12. How would you complete the bus trip if not by bus (Please ✓ only one)

__ Drive	__ Taxi
__ Ride with someone	__ Wouldn't make this trip
__ Bicycle	__ Other (specify)_____
__ Walk	

PLEASE CONTINUE ON BACK OF SURVEY ➡

13. Which three of the following **service improvements** would make ECR better for you to use? (Please ✓ **three**)

___ More frequent service on existing routes_____(specify route #)
___ Later service on existing routes_____ (specify until what time)
___ More routes/service. Where? _____
___ Better Connections to other counties/cities. Where?_____
___ New weekend services
___ More benches and shelters at bus stops
___ More bike racks at bus stops
___ Better sidewalk connections to bus stops
___ Improved security at stops and on buses
___ Wi-Fi on board buses
___ Other (Specify) _____

14. Do you own a smart phone and/or tablet?

___ Yes   ___ No

15. Do you have a driver's license ?

___ Yes   ___ No

16. Your age is?

___ 19 or under   ___ 30 to 39   ___ 50 to 59   ___ 65 or older
___ 20 to 29   ___ 40 to 49   ___ 60 to 64

17. Are you Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?   ___ Yes   ___ No

18. What is your race or ethnic heritage? (Please ✓ only **one**)

___ White   ___ Black/African American   ___ Asian
___ American Indian or Alaska Native   ___ Other_____

19. What was the range of your total household income for 2015?

___ Under $10,000   ___ $30,000 to $39,999
___ $10,000 to $19,999   ___ $40,000 to $49,999
___ $20,000 to $29,999   ___ $50,000 or more

20. How many working vehicles (cars, motorcycles, trucks, vans) are at your home? (✓only **one**)

___ 1   ___ 2   ___ 3 or more   ___ None

21. How satisfied are you with each of the following? Circle a score for each characteristic.

Please indicate . . . .

	Very Satisfied		Neutral		Very Unsatisfied
a. How often the buses run (frequency)	5	4	3	2	1
b. Convenience of route (where the bus go)	5	4	3	2	1
c. How directly does the route go to your final destination	5	4	3	2	1
d. Ease of transfers between buses	5	4	3	2	1
e. Dependability of buses (on-time performance)	5	4	3	2	1
f. Travel time on bus	5	4	3	2	1
g. Value of bus fare (service you get for you paid for)	5	4	3	2	1
h. Accessibility of bus passes (ease of purchase)	5	4	3	2	1
i. Availability of bus information	5	4	3	2	1
j. User-friendliness of bus information	5	4	3	2	1
k. Vehicle cleanliness & comfort	5	4	3	2	1
l. Bus stop cleanliness & comfort	5	4	3	2	1
m. Bus driver courtesy	5	4	3	2	1
n. Safety/security on bus	5	4	3	2	1
o. Safety/security at bus stops	5	4	3	2	1
q. Availability of seats on the bus	5	4	3	2	1

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY!

Encuesta al Usuario del Emerald Coast Rider (ECR)

Emerald Coast Rider quisiera su opinión para ayudar a mejorar su servicio de tránsito. Por favor ayúdenos a servirle mejor completando esta encuesta. Gracias.

1. ¿Donde INICIO este viaje? (Marque solo **una** respuesta)

___ Trabajo
___ Social/Personal/Iglesia
___ Compras
___ Medico

___ Escuela (K-12)
___ College/Universidad
___ Casa
___ Otro _____

2. ¿Cual es el código postal **donde comenzó este viaje**? _____

3. ¿Cómo llegó usted a la primera parada de este **viaje de ida**? (Marque solo **una respuesta**)

___ Camino/Silla de ruedas ➡ # cuadras? ____ ___ Alguien me trajo en vehiculo
___ Bicicleta ➡ # cuadras? ____ ___ Alguien me trajo y estaciono su carro
___ Manejó y estacionó ➡ # millas? ____ ___ Otro _____

4. ANOTE TODAS las **RUTAS** en el **ORDEN EXACTO** que usted usará para completar **ESTE VIAJE**.

PRIMERA Ruta	➡	SEGUNDA Ruta	➡	TERCERA Ruta

5. ¿Cual es su **DESTINO FINAL** para este viaje? (Marque solo **una** respuesta)

___ Trabajo
___ Social/Personal/Iglesia
___ Compras
___ Medico

___ Escuela (K-12)
___ College/Universidad
___ Casa
___ Otro _____

6. Cual es el **código postal** donde **TERMINARÁ** este viaje? _____

7. ¿Cómo piensa llegar a su **DESTINO FINAL** después de bajarse de el autobús? (Marque solo **una** respuesta)

___ Caminando/silla de ruedas ➡ # cuadras? ____
___ Bicicleta ➡ # cuadras?
___ Manejó y estacionó ➡ # millas? ____
___ Alguien me recoje en un vehiculo ___
___ Alguien estaciono su carro y me trajerá ___ Otro _____

8. ¿Qué tipo de tarifa pagó o usó Ud. por este **viaje de ida**?

___ Tarifa Regular ($1.50)
___ Tarifa Reducida (75¢)
___ Tarifa Regular de 31 Dias ($30.00)
___ Tarifa Reducida de 31 Dias ($15.00)
___ Tarifa "Express Super Pass" de 31 Dias ($45.00)
___ Tarifa Reducida "Express Super Pass" de 31 Dias ($22.50)
___ Otro (especifique) _____

9. ¿Cuantas veces a la semana viaja usted en autobús?

___ Es la primera vez que uso el autobus
___ Menos de una vez a la semana   ___ Tres días
___ Un dia   ___ Cuatro días
___ Dos días   ___ Cinco o más días

10. ¿Cuanto tiempo lleva usted usando los servicios de ECR (anteriormente Okaloosa County Transit)?

___ Menos de 6 meses
___ De 6 meses a dos años
___ Entre 2 y 5 años
___ Mas de 5 años

11. Cual es la razón **más importante** por la cual usa el autobús? (Marque solo **una respuesta**)

___ No tengo licencia para conducir   ___ El autobús es más económico
___ No tengo carro   ___ El tráfico es pesado
___ Estacionar es muy caro/dificil   ___ El autobús es más conveniente
___ Yo no conduzco   ___ Otro (especifique) _____

12. ¿Cómo harias este viaje si no fuera en autobús? (Marque solo **una** respuesta)

___ Manejando   ___ Taxi
___ Montar con alguien   ___ No haria el viaje
___ Bicicleta   ___ Otro _____
___ Caminando

POR FAVOR CONTINUE EN LA PARTE DE ATRÁS DE LA ENCUESTA ➡

13. ¿Cuáles de las siguientes **mejoras al servicio** haría ECR mejor para su uso? (Por favor, **MARQUE TRES**)

___ Un servicio más frecuente en las rutas existentes
(¿Cuáles rutas?) # _____

___ Extension del Servicio en las rutas existentes
(Especifique hasta qué hora)_____

___ Más rutas/servicio en nuevos lugares. ¿A donde? _____

___ Mejores conexiones a otros condados/ciudades. ¿A donde?_____

___ Nuevo servicio de fin de semana

___ Más bancos y marquesinas/casetas en las paradas de autobús

___ Más bastidores de bicicletas en las paradas de autobús

___ Mejores conexiones de acera a las paradas de autobús

___ Mejor seguridad en las paradas y en los autobuses

___ Wi-Fi a bordo del autobús

___ Otro (Especifique) _____

14. ¿Es dueño de un smartphone y / o una tableta?   ___ SI   ___ No

15. ¿Cuál es su primer idioma?

___ Inglés   ___ Español   ___ Otro_____

16. ¿Tiene Ud. licencia para conducir? ___ SI   ___ No

17. ¿Que edad tiene Ud.?

___ 19 o menos   ___ 30 a 39   ___ 50 a 59   ___ 65 y mayor
___ 20 a 29   ___ 40 a 49   ___ 60 a 64

18. ¿Cual es su raza o herencia étnica? (Marque solo una respuesta)

___ Anglo   ___ Negro   ___ Asiático
___ Nativo de América del Norte
___ Nativo de Hawaii o de las Islas Pacificos
___ Other_____

19. ¿Es usted hispano, latino o español?

___ No, no soy Hispano o Latino
___ Si, soy Hispano o Latino

20. ¿Cual fue el ingreso total de su hogar en el año 2015?

___ Menos de $10,000   ___ $30,000 a $39,999   ___ No trabajo
___ $10,000 a $19,999   ___ $40,000 a $49,999
___ $20,000 a $29,999   ___ $50,000 o mas

21. ¿Cuántos carros, camionetas, y/o camiones se encuentran disponibles en su casa?

___ Uno   ___ Dos   ___ Tres o mas   ___ Ninguna

22. ¿Que tan satisfecho esta Ud. con cada una de las siguientes preguntas?

	Muy Satisfecho		Neutral		Muy Insatisfecho
a. Frecuencia del servicio de autobuses en esta ruta	5	4	3	2	1
b. Conveniencia de la ruta (destinos que cubre la ruta)	5	4	3	2	1
c. La ruta directa de esta linea de bus. O lo directo que va esta ruta a su Destino (Pocas paradas)	5	4	3	2	1
d. Facilidad de transferencia entre autobuses	5	4	3	2	1
e. La puntualidad del autobús	5	4	3	2	1
f. El tiempo que se demora en hacer su viaje usando el autobús	5	4	3	2	1
g. El valor de la tarifa de autobús (el servicio que usted recibe en comparacion con el precio que pagó)	5	4	3	2	1
h. Facilidad de comprar un ticket de autobús	5	4	3	2	1
i. La disponibilidad de información de las rutas del autobus	5	4	3	2	1
j. La facilidad de comprender los horarios del autobús?	5	4	3	2	1
k. La limpieza y comodidad del autobús	5	4	3	2	1
l. La limpieza y comodidad en las paradas del autobús	5	4	3	2	1
m. La cortesia del conductor del autobus	5	4	3	2	1
n. La seguridad en el autobus	5	4	3	2	1
o. La seguridad en las paradas de autobus	5	4	3	2	1
p. Disponibilidad de asientos	5	4	3	2	1

GRACIAS POR COMPLETAR ESTA ENCUESTA!

PUBLIC TRANSIT WORKSHOP
FOR *ACCESS EC RIDER*
OKALOOSA COUNTY'S 10-YEAR TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Okaloosa County is preparing a 10-year transit plan to guide the future of public transportation services in the county. We want your input! Please join us for a public workshop and let us know what you think the future of transit looks like in your community. At the public workshop you can:

- View transit information at your own pace
- Voice your public transportation needs and opinions
- Ask questions as needed

Public Workshop Details

- When: **Wednesday, February 17th**
- Where: **Niceville City Hall—Council Chambers**
  208 N Partin Drive, Niceville, FL 32578
  Located in the Civic Center Complex.
  (EC Rider Bus Route 14)
- Time: **5pm - 7pm***

A brief presentation will begin around 5:30 pm, but feel free to come anytime during the noted time and let us know what you think!

For more information please contact Mr. Elliot Kampert, Okaloosa County's Growth Management Director at (850) 651-7180 or ekampert@co.okaloosa.fl.us.

If you are unable to attend the workshop written comments will be accepted through **March 4, 2016**, and may be sent to:

Okaloosa County
Attn: Elliot Kampert
1250 N. Eglin Pkwy, Suite 301
Shalimar, FL 32579
(850) 651-7180

For disability accommodations, within 7 business days before the meeting, please contact EC Rider between 7:30 AM and 4:30 PM at:

- South Okaloosa County, 850-833-9168
- North Okaloosa County, 850-689-7809
- TDD, 850-833-9283

OWTPO

TALLER DE TRANSPORTE PÚBLICO
Para ACCESS EC RIDER
PLAN DE 10 AÑOS PARA EL DESARROLLO DE TRÁNSITO DEL CONDADO DE OKALOOSA

El Condado de Okaloosa está preparando un plan de tránsito de 10 años para guiar el futuro de los servicios de transporte público en el condado. Queremos que su opinión! Por favor, acompáñenos en un taller público y háganos saber lo que usted cree deberá ser el futuro de tránsito en su comunidad.

En el taller público usted puede:
- Ver información de tránsito a su propio ritmo
- Expresar sus necesidades y opiniones acerca del transporte público
- Hacer todas las preguntas necesarias

Detalles del Taller

- Cuando: **Miércoles 17 de Febrero del 2016**
- Donde: **Niceville City Hall—Council Chambers**
  208 N Partin Drive, Niceville, FL 32578
  Ubicado en el Civic Center Complex.
  (Ruta de autobús de EC Rider 14)
- Hora: **5pm - 7pm***

* Una breve presentación comenzará a las 5:30 PM, pero no dude en venir en cualquier momento durante el tiempo señalado y hacernos saber lo que piensa!

Para obtener más información, por favor póngase en contacto con **Sr. Elliot Kampert, Director de Administración de Crecimiento del condado de Okaloosa, al (850) 651-7180 o ekampert@co.okaloosa.fl.us**

Si usted no puede asistir al taller, puede enviarnos sus comentarios por escrito antes del **4 de Marzo del 2016** a la siguiente dirección:

Okaloosa County
Attn: Elliot Kampert
1250 N. Eglin Pkwy, Suite 301
Shalimar, FL 32579
(850) 651-7180

Para alojamientos especiales, por favor contactar EC Rider entre las 7:30 AM y las 4:30 PM 7 días hábiles antes de la reunión:

- South Okaloosa County, 850-833-9168
- North Okaloosa County, 850-689-7809
- TDD, 850-833-9283

De acuerdo con el Título VI de la Ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964 y otras leyes no discriminatorias, la participación pública es solicitada sin distinción de raza, color, nacionalidad, edad, sexo, religión, discapacidades, familiares, o nivel económico. Es una prioridad para EC Rider que todos los ciudadanos del condado de Okaloosa se les da la oportunidad de participar en el proceso de planificación de transporte incluyendo a las personas de bajos ingresos, las personas de la tercera edad, personas discapacitadas y personas con conocimientos de Inglés limitados. Puede ponerse en contacto con EC Rider al (850) 833-9168 si tiene alguna queja de discriminación.

OKALOOSA
TRANSIT DEVELOPENT PLAN

Fact Sheet

What is EC Rider?

The Emerald Coast Rider (EC Rider) provides bus services in Okaloosa County. There are 5 routes that service the Fort Walton Beach area, 1 route in Okaloosa Island, and 3 routes that service the Destin/South Walton area. The Wave Express connects Crestview to Fort Walton Beach. Services are also available for persons unable to access transit because of a disability or distance from a route. Most routes operate from 7AM–7:30 PM on weekdays. The Express Wave has three roundtrips per day (AM, noon and PM). The regular cash fare is $1.50, with discounts offered for seniors and individuals with disabilities, and Medicare card holders. EC Rider's ridership has grown steadily from 162,800 passenger trips in 2010 to 182,600 in 2013. Route 1 is the most used route.

What is *Access EC Rider*?

Access EC Rider is being developed by Okaloosa County in coordination with the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization (OWTPO) to serve as a guide for the future of public transportation in Okaloosa County from 2017 to 2026. It will represent the transit agency's vision to promote transit growth and improvement over the next decade.

Why Do We Need Your Input?

Public participation is an important part of developing *Access EC Rider*. We are conducting numerous public outreach activities to support the plan, including discussion groups, a bus on-board survey, interviews, and open house public workshops. Your participation and input are needed so we can learn more about the public transportation needs and issues of the people and organizations you represent in Okaloosa County and the region.

For more information, visit http://ecrider.org/ or contact EC Rider at 850-833-9168.

Emerald Coast Rider (EC RIDER) Public Transit Surcey
Please take a minute to help us plan for transit needs in Okaloosa County!

(1) How much awareness is there in the community about transit/public transportation?

☐ High ☐ None at all
☐ Moderate ☐ Do not know

(2) What do you think of EC Rider transit service?

☐ It must be provided
☐ It might be useful
☐ It does not matter to me
☐ Not sure it is useful
☐ We do not need it
☐ I am not at all familiar with it at all

(3) Is traffic congestion a problem in Okaloosa County?

☐ No
☐ Yes
If yes, please indicate any specific locations below:

_____

(4) If you answered yes to Question 3, what role do you see transit playing in alleviating the situation?

☐ It will relieve congestion
☐ It may provide some help
☐ It will have no effect
☐ It may create some additional traffic issues
☐ It will make congestion worse

(5) Have you used EC Rider transit service?

☐ Yes
☐ No

(6) What is the zip code of your residence?

_____

(7) What is the zip code of your work (if applicable)?

_____

(8) Do you think there is a need for additional transit service in Okaloosa County?

☐ Yes
☐ No

(9) If you answered yes to Question 8, what benefits of transit do you believe could occur as a result of additional service.

☐ Provide a more dependable source of transportation for me
☐ Allow better commuting options/access to job opportunities
☐ Be better for the environment
☐ Enhance tourism and other industries
☐ Enhance connectivity to military establishments

(10) If you answered yes to Question 8, select the type of service you would most like to see?

☐ More Frequent Bus Service
☐ Express Service, where?_____
☐ Later Service
☐ Increased Coverage Area
where? _____
☐ Carpools/Vanpools
☐ Other, specify_____

(11) What do you think is a reasonable one-way fare to pay for transit service?

☐ $0.00 to $0.50 ☐ $1.51 to $2.00
☐ $0.51 to $1.00 ☐ More than $2.00
☐ $1.01 to $1.50

(12) Do you believe there is a willingness in the community to consider additional local funding for transit?

☐ Definitely ☐ Not at all
☐ Somewhat ☐ Do not know

(13) Are you willing to pay additional local taxes for an expanded transit system?

☐ Definitely ☐ Not at all
☐ Somewhat ☐ Do not know

(14) Your age is...

☐ Under 18 ☐ 45 to 64 years
☐ 18 to 24 years ☐ Over 65 years
☐ 25 to 44 years

(15) What is the range of your total household income for 2015?

☐ Less than $10,000 ☐ $40,000 - $49,999
☐ $10,000 - $19,999 ☐ $50,000 - $74,999
☐ $20,000 - $29,999 ☐ $75,000 or greater
☐ $30,000 - $39,999

Please continue survey on the other side of this page.

(16) If you were going to consider using EC Rider transit services, please rate how important each of the following aspects of transit service would be in your decision-making process.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Not Very Important	Not Important At All
a. Days of service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Frequency (how often buses run)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Hours of service	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Convenience of routes (where buses go)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Dependability of buses (on time)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Travel time on bus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Cost of riding the bus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Location of bus stops	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Accessibility of bus passes (ease of purchase)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Availability of bus route information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. User-friendliness of bus information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Vehicle cleanliness and comfort	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Bus stop cleanliness and comfort	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n. Bus driver courtesy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
o. Safety/security on bus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
p. Safety/security at bus stops	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other Comments and Suggestions

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION
Please return your survey to your survey taker

OWTPO

TEN-YEAR TRANSIT NEEDS SURVEY
EC Rider Transit Development Plan
June 2016 - Public Survey

Please take a minute to help us plan for transit needs in Okaloosa County!

1) Please tell us how you rate each of the following potential service improvements.

	Very Favorable		Neutral		Not Very Favorable
Expand Existing Transit Service					
Double frequency (on Routes 1, 4, 5, and 14)	5	4	3	2	1
Add one additional evening trip to all routes	5	4	3	2	1
Add Saturday service to all routes	5	4	3	2	1
Realign Route 2	5	4	3	2	1
Realign Route 3	5	4	3	2	1
Realign Route 4	5	4	3	2	1
Realign Route 5	5	4	3	2	1
Add New Transit Services					
Destin Circulator Fix-Route Service	5	4	3	2	1
Crestview Flex Service	5	4	3	2	1
Navarre-Uptown Station Express Service	5	4	3	2	1
Niceville-Destin Commons Limited Express Service	5	4	3	2	1
Hurlburt Beach Bullet	5	4	3	2	1
Eglin Beach Bullet	5	4	3	2	1
Wright Flex Service	5	4	3	2	1
Hurlburt Internal Circulator	5	4	3	2	1
Eglin Internal Circulator	5	4	3	2	1
Emerald Coast (EC) Water Ferry	5	4	3	2	1

2) Please circle the top three (3) major roads or areas where you believe more transit service or improvements are needed.

Miracle Strip Pkwy (US 98)	SR 85 S. of Crestview	US 90	Lewis Turner Blvd
Emerald Coast Pkwy (US 98)	Mid-Bay Bridge Road	Eglin Parkway	Crestview
Hurlburt Field	Eglin Air Force Base	Wright	Destin
Other (please identify)			

Please explain what improvements are needed to the roads/areas you identified above.

_____

_____

_____

General Comments and Suggestions

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!
PLEASE RETURN YOUR SURVEY TO THE PUBLIC WORKSHOP ATTENDANTS.

Okaloosa-Walton
Transportation Planning
Organization
OWTPO

APPENDIX C: ANNUAL FAREBOX RECOVERY RATIO REPORT (AUGUST 2016)

Current Farebox Recovery Ratio

The farebox recovery ratio for EC Rider, the public transportation provider for Okaloosa County, was 25.67 percent in FY 2012. The background with regards to the farebox recovery ratio includes the following.

PRIOR YEAR FARE STUDIES AND CHANGES

Okaloosa County's last fare increase occurred January 1, 2009 to bring Okaloosa County closer in line with nearby and peer systems and to offset increased operating costs and decreased funds. Additionally, Routes 11 and 12 in Crestview and Route 33 in Destin (Crystal Beach) were eliminated due to the lack of appropriate funding levels and the lower ridership numbers. Other fare changes included the requirement for riders must show an OCT Reduced Fair ID Card in order to qualify for a reduced fare. Medicare (not Medicaid) cards are accepted as the proof of eligibility for seniors. In addition military personnel no longer receive free rides beginning January 1, 2009. Electronic fareboxes were installed March 2009.

EC Rider has not conducted any fare studies or changes since then.

PROPOSED FARE CHANGES FOR THE UPCOMING YEARS

EC Rider is not planning to implement a fare increase at this time.

STRATEGIES THAT WILL AFFECT THE FAREBOX RECOVERY RATIO

The following is a list of strategies EC Rider will employ to improve the farebox recovery ratio:

1. Determine most cost-effective service type on all major corridors, given demand, routings, and coverage areas.
2. Increase ridership by increasing average frequency and improving fare collection options and fare media accessibility for riders.
3. Increase ridership by transitioning paratransit service patrons to fixed-route service.
4. Minimize costs required to operate and administer transportation services.
5. Continuously monitor performance to determine if adjustments need to be made.
6. Conducted bus on-board surveys to gather valuable information on how to make services more convenient and useful to patrons.
7. Strive to increase ridership by enhancing marketing activities.

Appendix D: Fixed-Route and Paratransit Route Efficiency Review

Fixed-Route and Paratransit Efficiency Assessment

As part of the *Access EC Rider* TDP, an efficiency review also was conducted for the existing fixed-route and paratransit services in Okaloosa County. This report summarizes this effort, which was conducted using data collected specifically for this effort as well as data and analysis performed as part of the TDP to evaluate fixed-route services operated by Okaloosa County. The project team analyzed route and segment level performance and the system-wide performance standards, including service effectiveness (e.g., trips per hour) and service efficiency measures (e.g., cost per trip and hour). In addition, a review of paratransit services was conducted, as summarized later in this report.

Fixed-Route Service Overview

Transit services in Okaloosa County have been provided by Okaloosa County since 1987. Okaloosa County Transit, formerly branded as "Ride the WAVE," rebranded its transit services in 2015 to "Emerald Coast Rider," also known as *EC Rider*. EC Rider offers fixed-route bus service countywide to Crestview, Niceville, Fort Walton Beach, and Destin as well as an express bus route called the Wave Express, which runs north-south between Crestview and Fort Walton Beach. The hub of the fixed-route services is located in the Uptown Station, an outdoor mall considered to be the town center of Fort Walton Beach (see Section 3, Figure 3-1). EC Rider also offers limited paratransit service to Okaloosa County residents who are unable to access fixed-route bus service, with cost based on distance traveled. Reservations are required to schedule a ride through paratransit service.

Currently, EC Rider provides 10 fixed routes in Okaloosa County—5 that serve Fort Walton Beach, 1 that serves Okaloosa Island, 3 that serve Destin/South Walton, and 1 that connects Crestview to Fort Walton Beach. The routes in Fort Walton Beach have headways that range from one to four hours, and most operate between 7:00 AM and no later than 7:45 PM on weekdays; no weekend service is currently provided.

The routes in Destin/South Walton and Okaloosa Island typically have 60-minute headways, although Route 30 increases its headways to 30-minutes in the summer. The Wave Express (Route 14) operates one trip during the AM peak, noon, and PM peak hour (3 trips total). The regular one-way fare for EC Rider is $1.50, and the regular one-way fare for the Wave Express is $2.00, or $30.00 for a regular monthly pass and $45.00 for an Express monthly pass. A 50% discount for the regular fare or monthly pass on both the Wave and the Wave Express is given to seniors and persons with disabilities. Table D-1 shows characteristics of routes currently operated by the Emerald Coast Rider.

**Table D-1: EC Rider Route Inventory and Characteristics**

Route No.	Key Location/Corridors Served	Freq.	Hours
1	Fort Walton Beach–connects NW Florida State College to Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, Uptown Station. Stops at Green Acres, YMCA Choctaw Village, Teresa Village, Falcon Ridge Apartments, Mariner Plaza.	75 mins	7:00 AM–7:30 PM
2	Fort Walton Beach–connects Mary Esther Post Office to Uptown Station along Hollywood Blvd. Stops at Mary Esther Library, Santa Rosa Mall, Fort Walton High School.	60 mins	7:10 AM–6:46 PM
3	Fort Walton Beach–connects NW Florida State College to White-Wilson Medical Center, Walmart, Santa Rosa Mall. Stops at Pier 1, Walgreens, YMCA, Green Acres.	60–180 mins	6:30 AM–7:42 PM
4	Fort Walton Beach–connects Walmart transfer station to Uptown Station. Stops Florida Dept. of Health and Sun Plaza.	70 mins	6:50 AM–7:28 PM
5	Fort Walton Beach–runs primarily along SR 85, connects Santa Rosa Mall to Walmart transfer station, YMCA, White-Wilson Medical Center, CHOICE High School and Technical Center	4 hrs	7:50 AM–4:55 PM
14 WAVE Express	Connects Crestview City Hall to Uptown Station, limited stops at NW Florida State College (Niceville), Niceville City Hall, VA Clinic, Shalimar Court House Annex.	4 hrs	6:20 AM–5:55 PM
20	Okaloosa Island–runs along Santa Rosa Blvd, US Highway 98, and Eglin Parkway. Stops at Uptown Station, Fort Walton Beach Landing, area hotels, Gulfarium, Tourist Development Council Visitor's Center, Emerald Coast Convention Center, Shoppes at Paradise Point.	Summer–30 mins Winter–60 mins	Not Available
30	Destin/South Walton–runs primarily along US 98/Miracle Strip Parkway. Connects Wayside Park to Destin Community Center. Stops at Destin Library, Holiday Surf and Racquet Club, Waterview Towers, East Pass Towers, Lucky Snapper.	Summer–30 mins Winter–60 mins	Not Available
32	Destin–runs along US 98 and Emerald Coast Parkways. Connects 98 Palms Plaza to Wingate by Wyndham. Stops at Sunsation Plaza, several hotels, Destin Commons, Shoppes at Paradise Key, Marshall's, Fudruckers, Track, Big Kahunas.	Summer–30 mins Winter–60 mins	Not Available
33	East Destin–circular loop along Scenic US 98 and Emerald Coast Parkway. Stops at Destin Commons, Shoppes at Paradise Key, Crystal Beach Plaza, Holiday Inn Express, James Lee Park, Silver Sands Premium Outlet.	60 mins	Not Available

Route Level Ridership

Ridership on the EC Rider routes increased considerably between 2005 and 2008 and, although ridership decreased some in 2009 and 2010, there has been overall growth since 2010. Ridership peaked in 2008 with 211,330 riders, when many transit agencies throughout Florida and the U.S. saw a peak in ridership due to high gas prices and the Great Recession. Seasonally, ridership tends to peak during the summer, especially during August with the peak in tourism. In examining ridership data for 2015, Route 1 had the highest annual ridership, followed by Routes 20 and 30, respectively (see Figure D-1).

Figure D-1: EC Rider Annual Ridership by Route – 2015
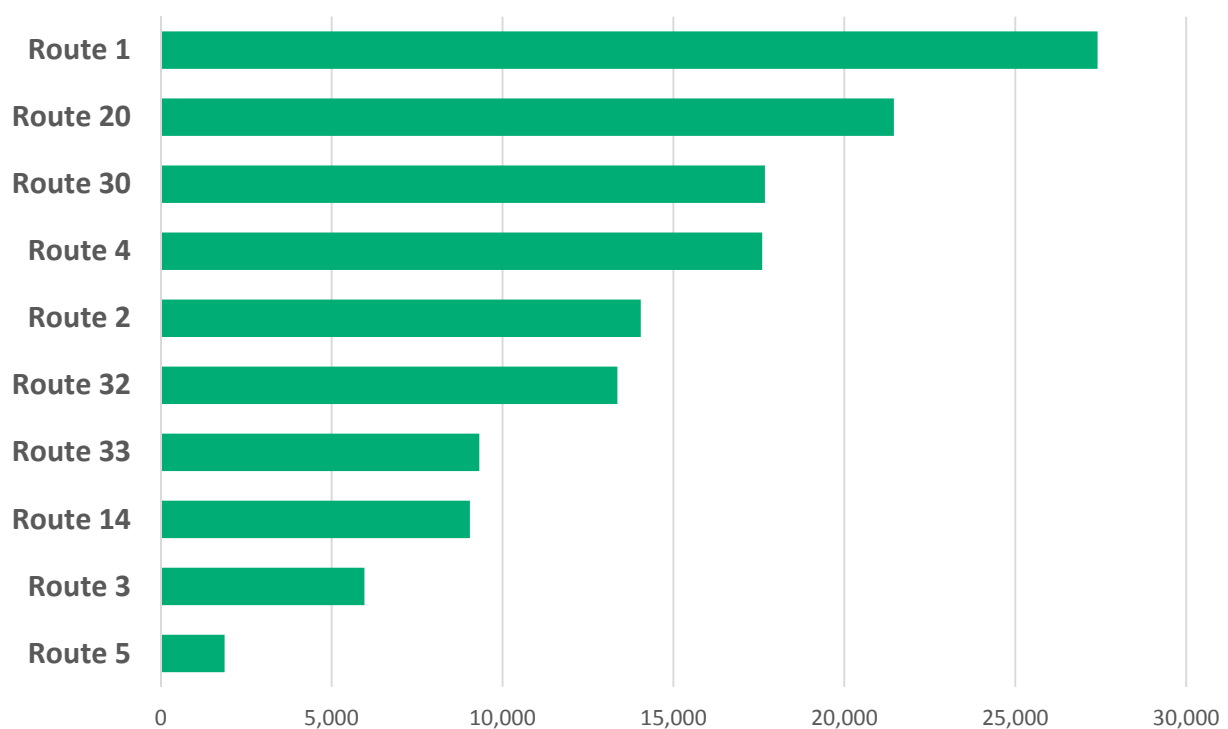
Fixed-Route Efficiency Assessment

An operational efficiency assessment was performed for each fixed route of the EC Rider bus system. The purpose of this efficiency assessment was to identify any issues related to the existing service and develop recommendations to address the issues. Following data collection process have been taken in order to perform this efficiency assessment, including:

- Field observation
- Ride check and bus on-board survey data
- Discussion with operators
- Latent Demand Assessment (TOI and DTA analysis)

Field observation provides a general idea of the environment in which the bus routes operate, while ridecheck/on-board survey efforts help identify the stops and segments with major boarding and/or alighting activities. Discussion with operators is also an essential part of the data collection process on route efficiency as it provides the first-hand operational/ground information about the existing service.

Based on the data collected and reviewed as part of this effort, opportunities/strengths as well as issues/weaknesses were identified and documented for each route. A route profile, including traditional and discretionary markets for each route, was also prepared. The detailed efficiency assessment was elaborated in the remainder of this section, with an overall efficiency assessment summary presented at the end of this section.

Route 1

Route 1, shown in Figure D-2, is the most productive route of the Emerald Coast Rider fixed-route system. It operates from Northwest Florida State College (NWF State College) to Uptown Station primarily along Greens Acres Road, Mar Walt Drive, Bob Sikes Boulevard, Newcastle Drive, and Eglin Parkway. Route 1 passes several key areas that meet the minimum to very high employment density threshold and transit oriented index. As shown in Map D-1, neighborhoods along Mar Walt Drive and Bob Sikes Boulevard segments were characterized by zero-vehicle household, households below or at poverty level, and medium-to-high employment density. According to the ridecheck effort and discussions with the Route 1 operator, stops that experience major stop boarding and/or alighting activities include:

- NWF State College
- FWB Medical Center
- Uptown Station

Some stops that experience low passenger boarding and/or alighting activities (less than 1 passengers per week in average) include:

- Green Acres (Shell Stations)
- 922 Mar Walt Dr.
- Mariner Plaza
- Eglin Parkway/Highway Ave
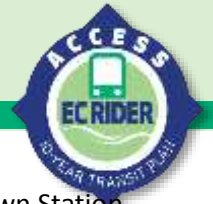
One operator noted that it is difficult to complete Route 1, which links the College to the Uptown Station, within the scheduled 30 minutes. School buses and school zones also impact the on-time performance for Route 1. According to another bus operator, Route 1 is operating in an efficient manner that most passengers are satisfied with the service it provides. The most frequent suggestions received from passengers include addition of Saturday service and the addition of pulling ropes (used to signify the stop request).

Figure D-2: EC Rider Route 1
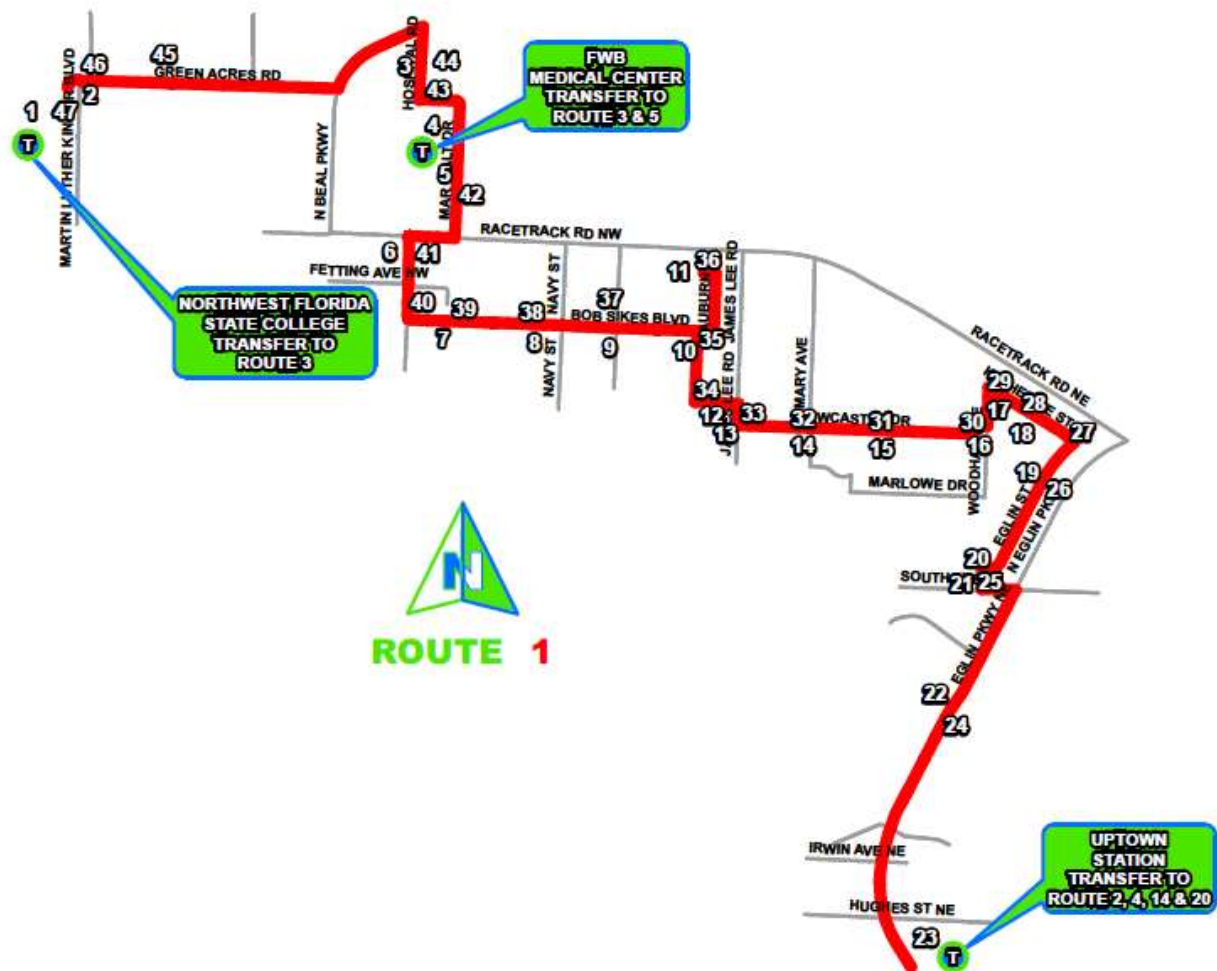
Map D-1: Route 1 Profile
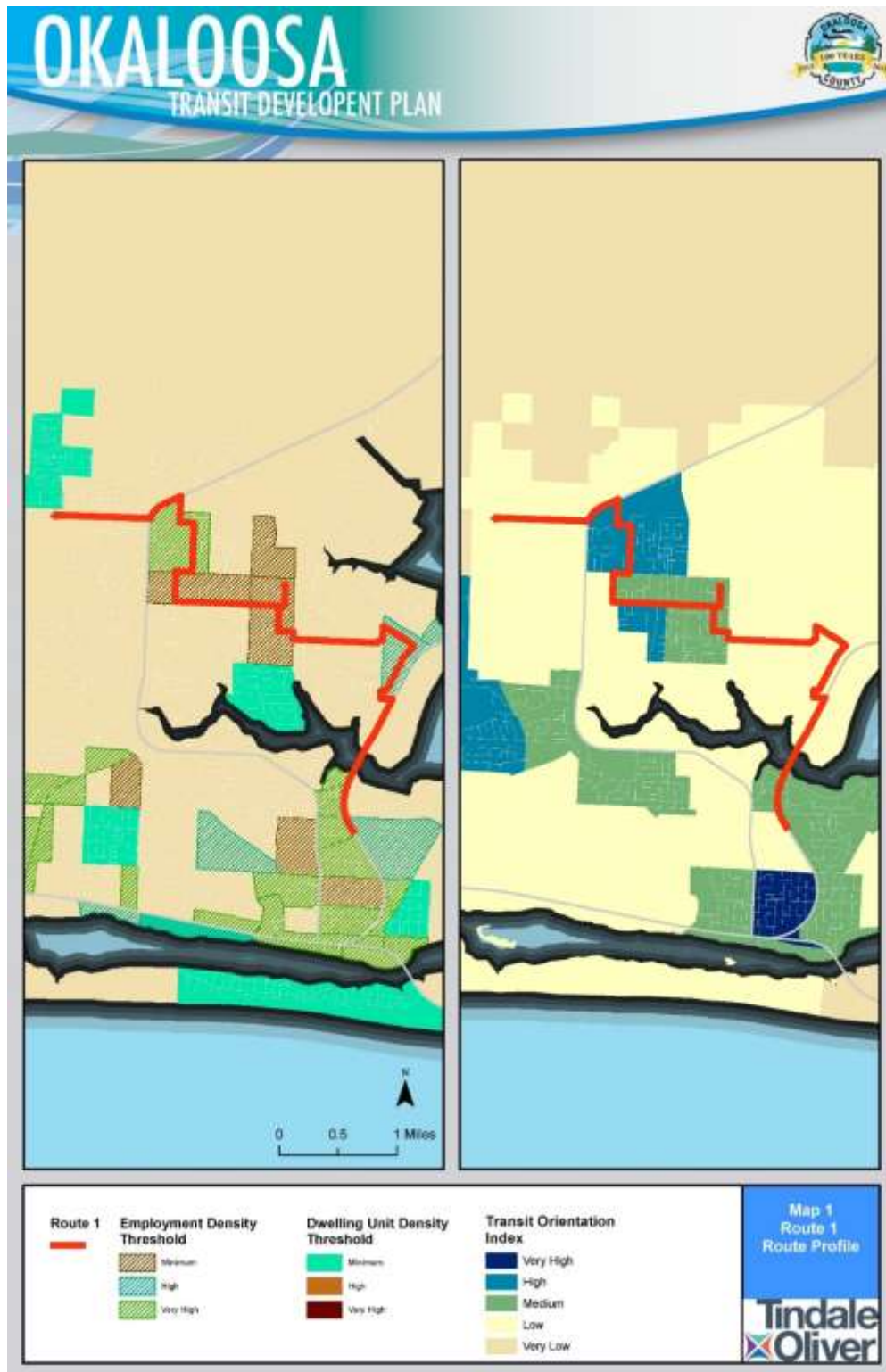
Route 2

Route 2, illustrated in Figure D-3, provides west-east transportation service on Hollywood Boulevard between Mary Esther Post Office and Uptown Station. In addition to the transfer opportunities offered at the Uptown Station, passengers of Route 2 can be transferred to Route 3 at the Santa Rosa Mall. Map D-2 illustrates the route profile for Route 2. Medium to Very High employment density areas can be found along the majority of the route alignment. The neighborhoods south of the Hollywood Boulevard NE near Eglin Parkway SE exhibits the prevalence of zero-vehicle household and households below or at poverty level. According to the ridecheck effort and discussions with Route 2 operator, stops that experience major passenger boarding and alighting activities include:

- Uptown Station
- Santa Rosa Mall

Except for the two major stops mentioned above, passenger activities tend to spread out along the entire route. There is neither major service improvement nor service issues frequently referred by Route 2 riders, according to the Route 2 bus operator.

Figure D-3: EC Rider Route 2

Map D-2: Route 2 Profile
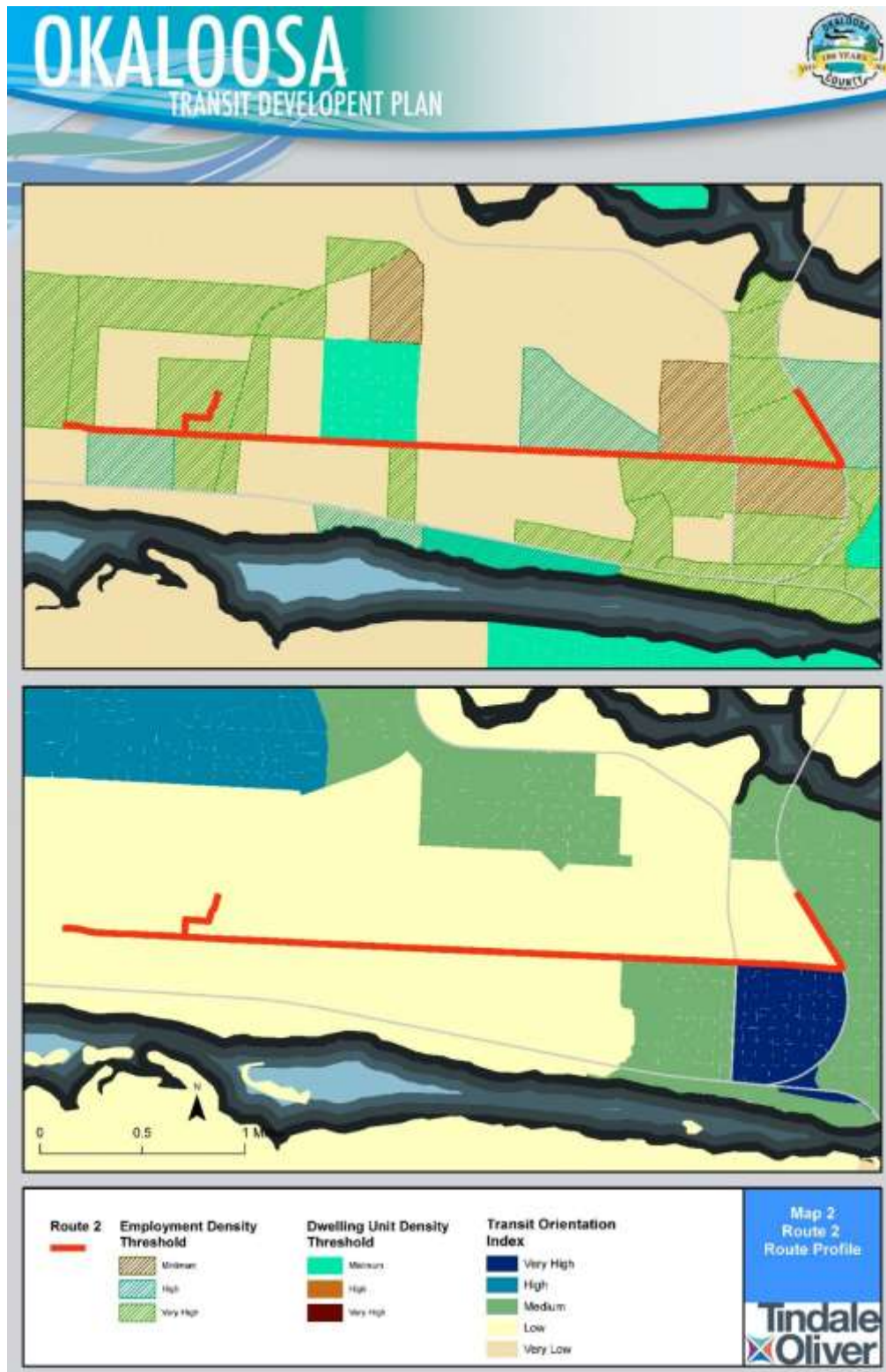
Route 3

Route 3 starts from Santa Rosa Mall and travels primarily along Mary Esther Boulevard and N Beal Parkway, with several deviations into neighborhoods along the route (see Figure D-4). Route segment along Lovejoy Road NW is very productive as it serves the neighborhoods characterized by low-income and/or zero-vehicle households, and very high employment density, as shown in Map D-3. According to the ridecheck effort and discussions with the Route 3 bus operator, stops that experience major passenger boarding and alighting activities include:

- Santa Rosa Mall
- Wal-Mart Super Center
- Fort Walton Beach Medical Center
- NWF State College

According to the Route 3 bus operator, the major issue of operating Route 3 is the low on-time performance caused by route deviation for ADA passengers, especially the deviation made for non-eligible ADA passengers.

Figure D-4: EC Rider Route 3
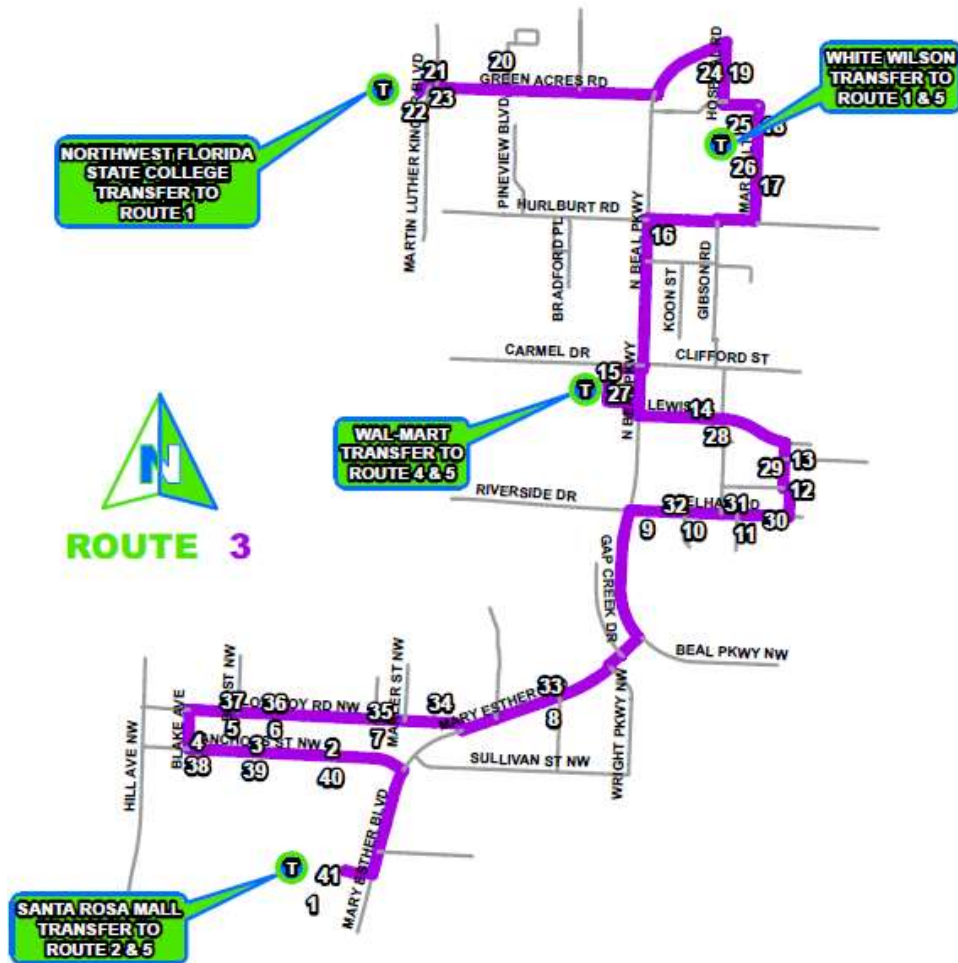
Map D-3: Route 3 Profile

Route 4

Route 4, shown in Figure D-5, operates between Uptown Station and Walmart Super Center primarily along Windham Avenue NE, 1st St, Robinwood Drive SW, Hollywood Boulevard SW, Memorial Parkway NW, Holmes Boulevard NW, and Beal Parkway NE. As reflected in Map D-4, neighborhoods south of the Hollywood Boulevard NE near Eglin Parkway SE exhibits the prevalence of zero-vehicle household and households below or at poverty level. In addition, route segments east of Robinwood Drive SW serve areas with medium-to-high employment density. These route segments also reflect the major passenger boarding and alighting activities. These major activity points include:

- Uptown Station
- Windham/Hollywood
- 1st St/Shell
- 1st St/Robinwood
- Hollywood/Gulf Power
- Walmart Super Center

According to the Route 4 operators, the most frequent comment received from riders includes the addition of Saturday service. Riders are very satisfied with the timely transfers between Route 4 and other EC Rider routes at Uptown Station and existing service frequency.

Figure D-5: EC Rider Route 4

Map D-4: Route 4 Profile
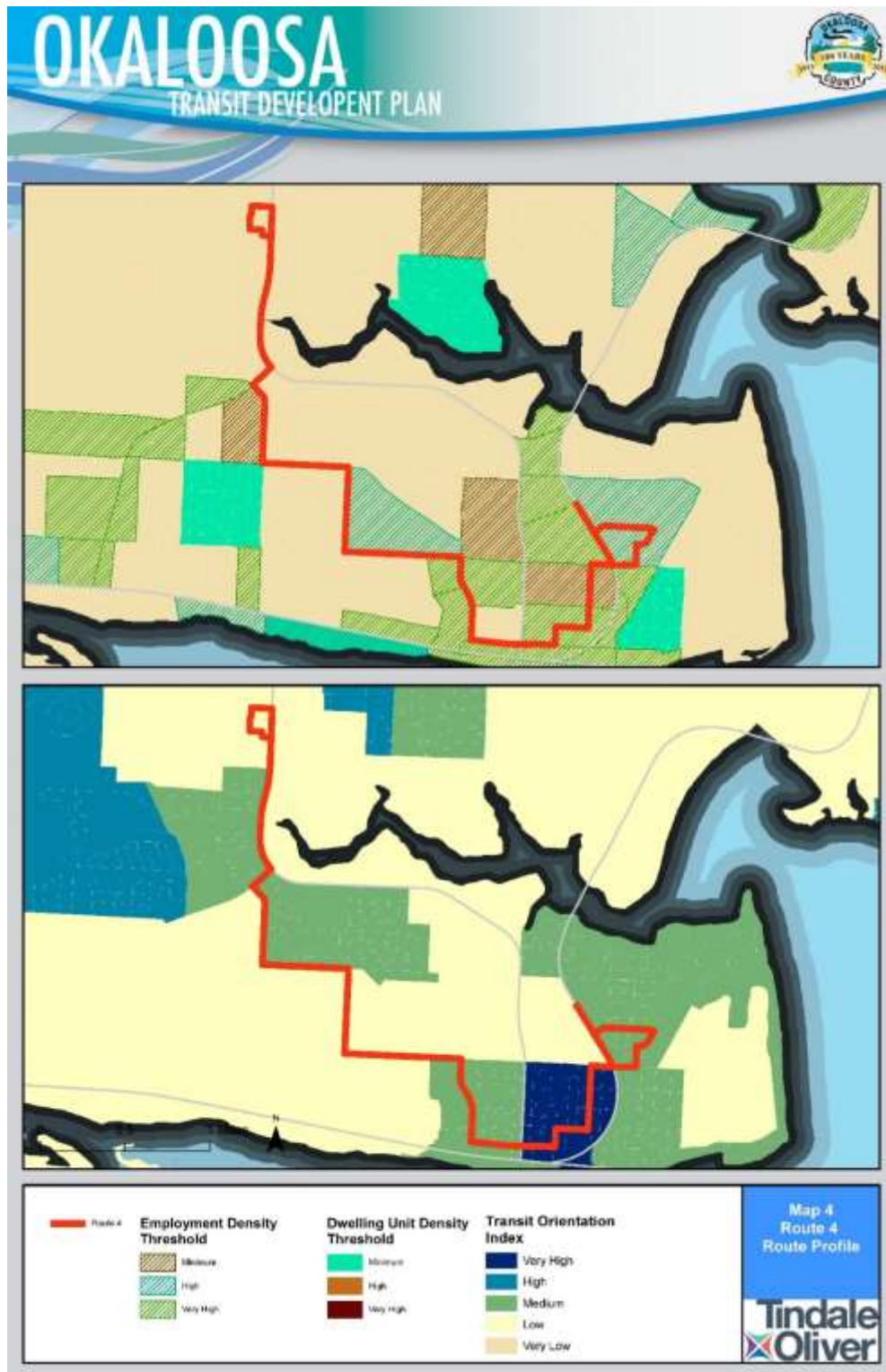
Route 5

Route 5, illustrated in Figure D-6, operates three round trips per day during the AM peak, mid-day, and PM peak time periods. It has the similar route alignment with Route 3, with more direct access (no deviations to neighborhoods along the major roads) to Santa Rosa Mall, Walmart Super Center, and FWB Medical Center. Map D-5 illustrates the Route 5 route profile. According to the ridecheck effort and discussions with the Route 5 operator, several stops with high passenger boarding and alighting activities include:

- Santa Rosa Mall
- Publix at Sun Plaza
- Wal-Mart Super Center
- FWB Medical Center

One driver noted that Route 5 has long waits at the Okaloosa County Court House in Fort Walton Beach that effect on-time performance. According to another Route 5 operator, the CHOICE high school and Technical Center (Vo-Tech) stop experiences nearly average zero passenger activity per day and may be eliminated. The time saved by eliminating the stop can be used for achieving consistent on-time performance during AM and PM peak hours.

Figure D-6: EC Rider Route 5

Map D-5: Route 5 Profile
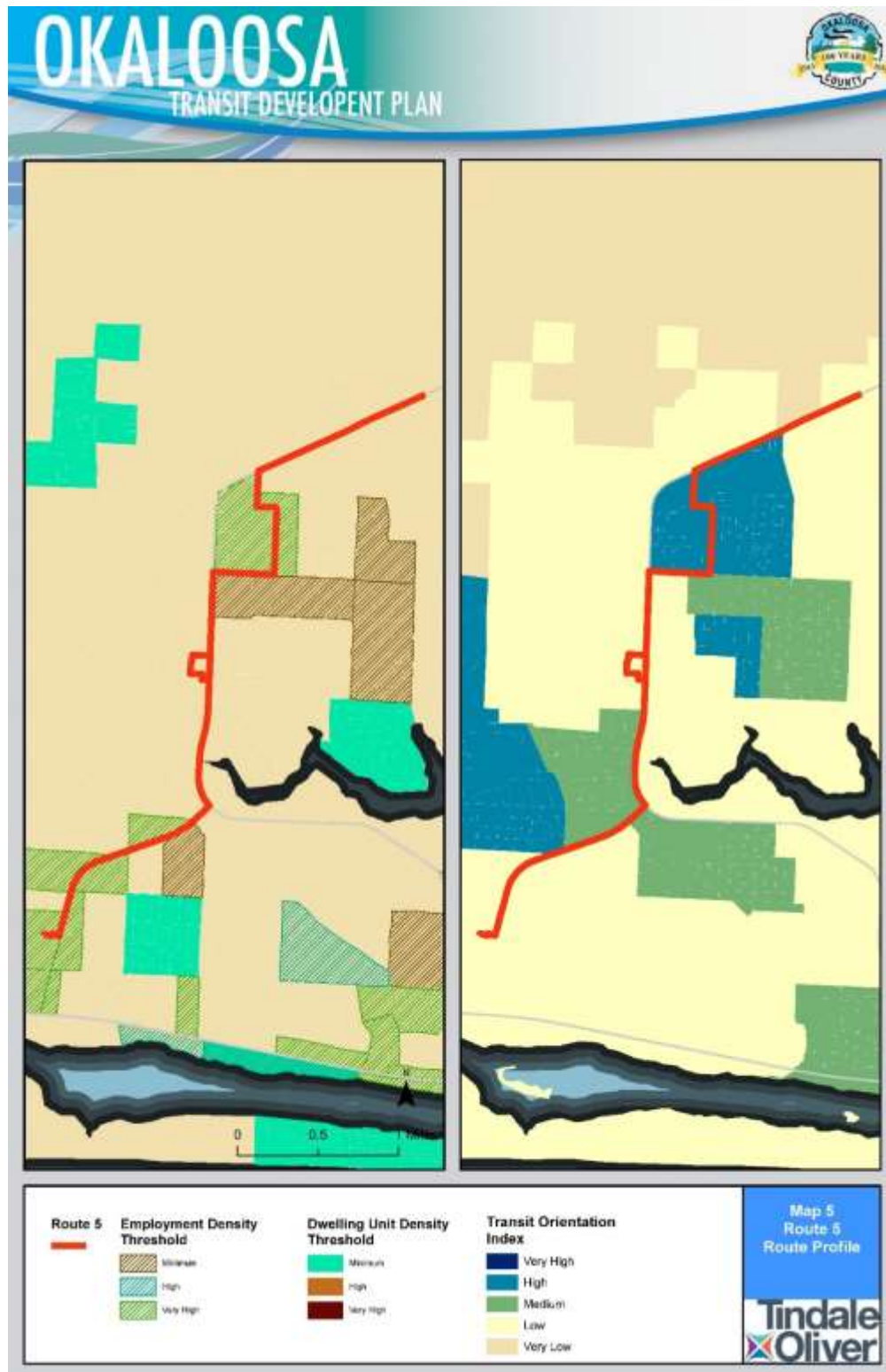
Route 14

Route 14, shown in Figure D-7, is the express service offering direct connection between Fort Walton Beach and Crestview. It provides three round trips during the AM Peak, Mid-Day, and PM peak time periods. As shown in Map D-6, high employment density and/or medium-to-very high transit orientation areas can be found in Fort Walton Beach, Niceville, and Crestview. According to the ridecheck effort and discussions with the operator, stops experiencing high boarding and alighting activities include:

- Uptown Station
- VA Clinic
- Niceville City Hall
- Northwest Florida State College (Niceville)
- Crestview City Hall

Since Route 14 is not providing access to the neighborhoods along its alignment, ADA-eligible passengers are allowed to make a phone appointment in 2-hour advance for the route deviation. However, similar to Route 3, too many route deviations negatively impact the on-time performance of Route 14, considering some of the ADA non-eligible passengers abuse the route deviation advantage exclusively to ADA-eligible passengers. Another operating issue is the timely transfer at 7:30 AM at Uptown Station between Route 14 and Route 33 early morning trip. According to the Route 14 operator, VA clinic stop requires vehicle getting off the main road and entering the VA clinic access road, which may take an extra 3 to 5 minutes. However, there is normally no passenger at VA clinic stop for the early morning trip of Route 14. Consequently, if the extra 3 to 5 minutes could be saved by bypassing the VA clinic stop for the morning trip, the operator would not need to operate the vehicle over the speed limit to make the timely transfer happen.

Figure D-7: EC Rider Route 14
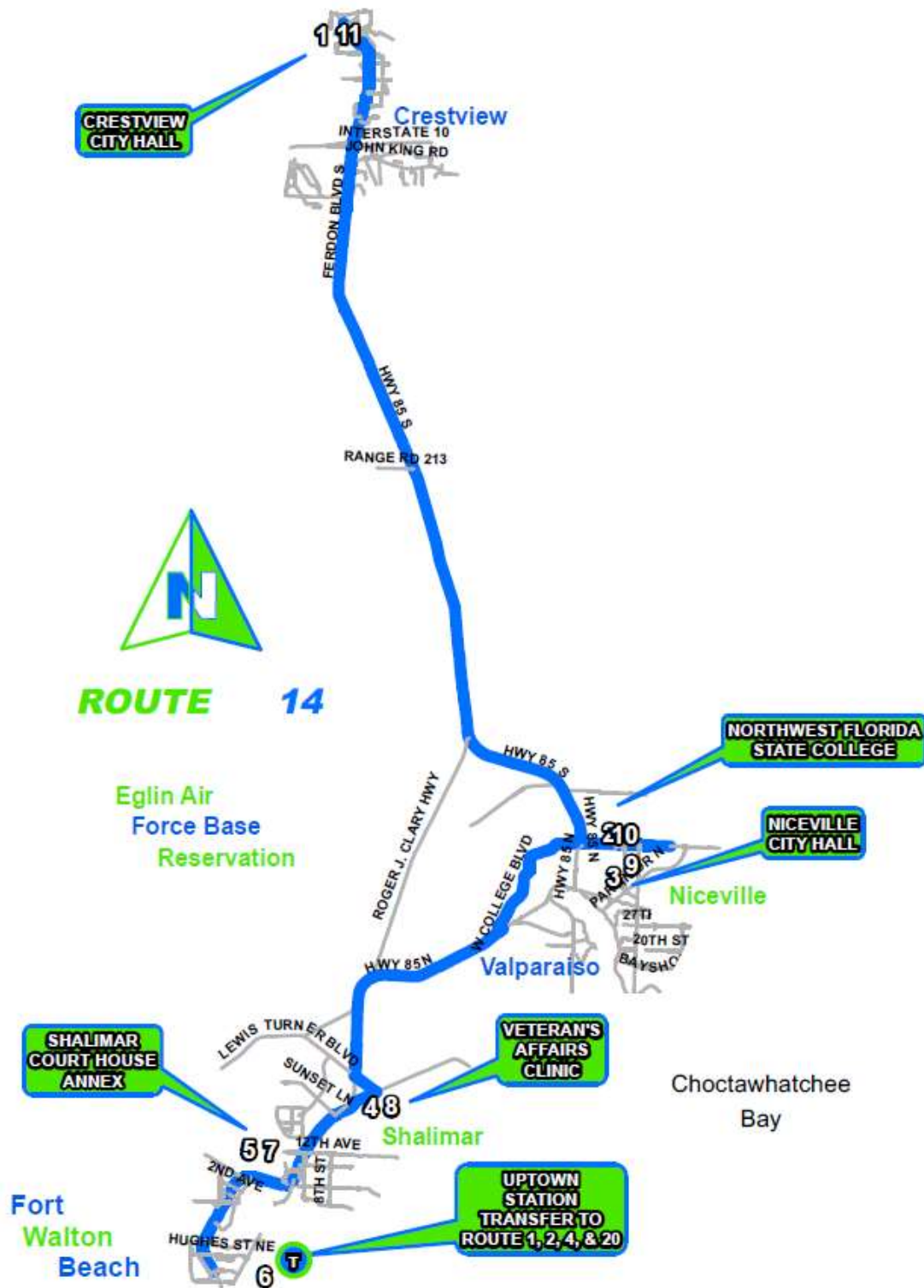
Map D-6: Route 14 Profile
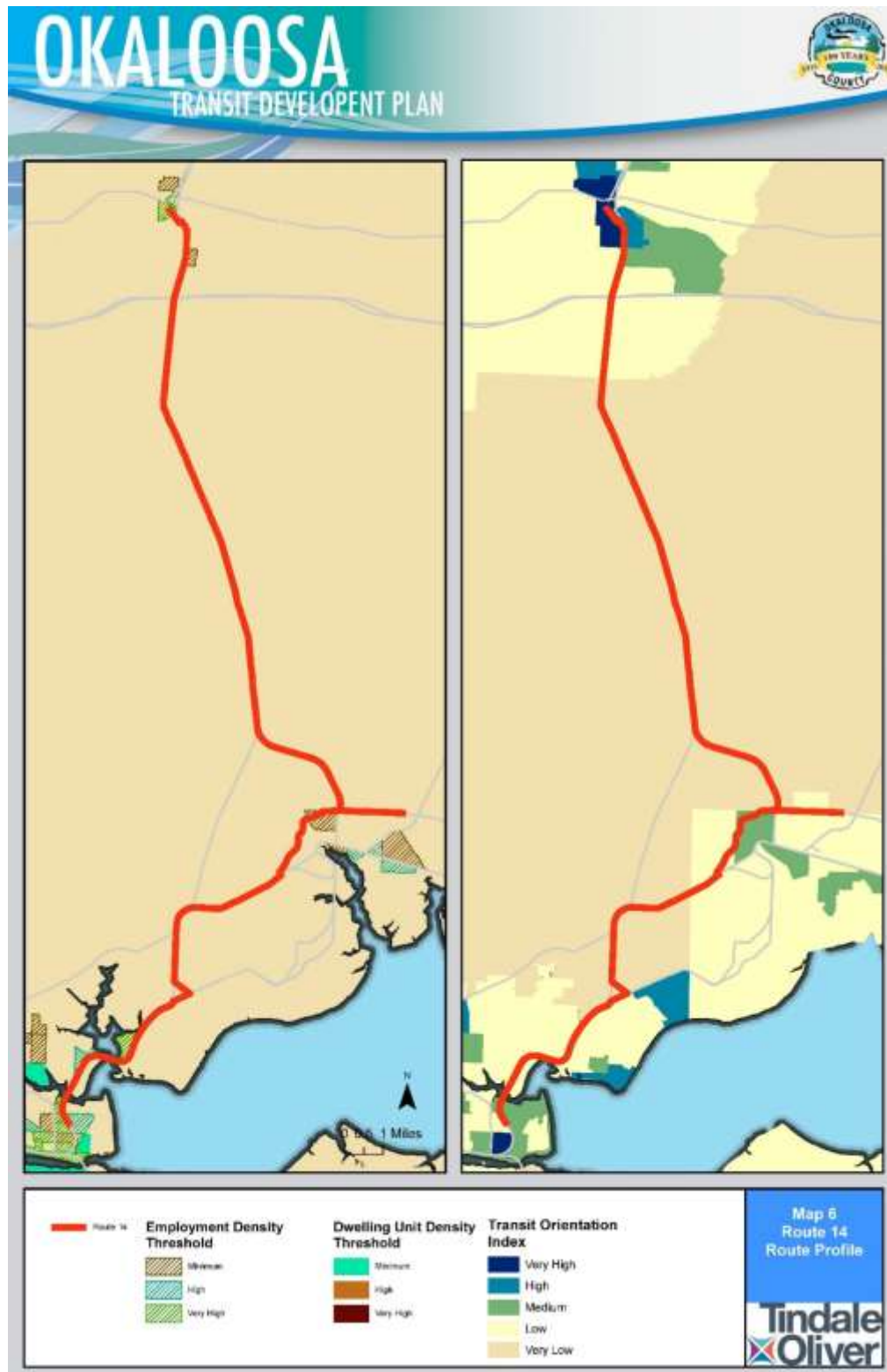
Route 20

Route 20, shown in Figure D-8, is one of the most productive routes in ECR fixed-route system. This route links the Uptown Station with Okaloosa Island via Eglin Parkway SE, Miracle Strip Parkway SE, and Santa Rosa Boulevard. The route primarily serves hotels, condominiums, and multifamily dwelling units along the Santa Rosa Boulevard segment. Map D-7 shows the Route 20 profile. The majority of the route serves minimum-to-very high employment density area or minimum dwelling unit density areas. According to the ridecheck effort and discussions with the Route 20 operator, stops with high passenger boarding and/or alighting activities include:

- Uptown Station
- Boardwalk Wayside park (Transfer to Route 30)
- Old Bay Steamer
- Shoppes at Paradise Point
- Sheraton

According to the bus operator, the lack of marketing and branding prevents the bus from attracting more potential users, especially the marketing strategy targeting seniors. Route 20 does not enter the hotel plazas along Santa Rosa Boulevard currently, which requires the tourists to walk to the main road sidewalk to wait for the bus. Entering the hotel plazas for reduction of passenger walking distance may be another incentive for potential passengers to use the transit service. In addition, a more detailed time schedule with specific timetable by stop would also help the passengers to be more informed when taking the bus.

Figure D-8: EC Rider Route 20
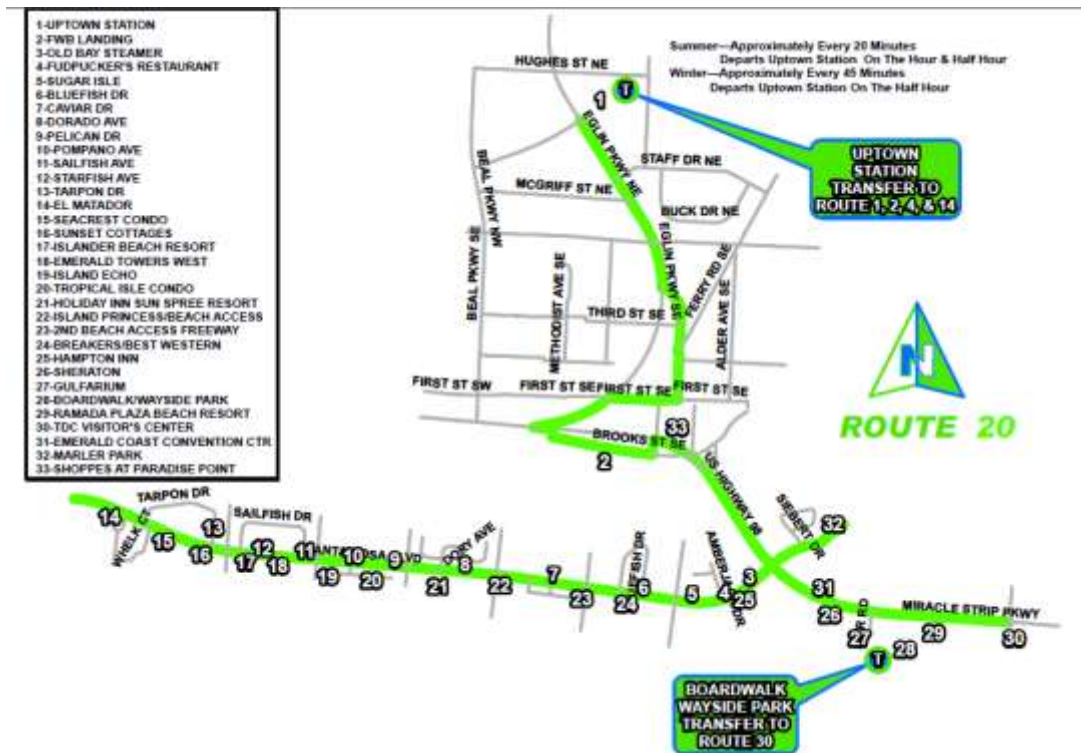
Map D-7: Route 20 Profile
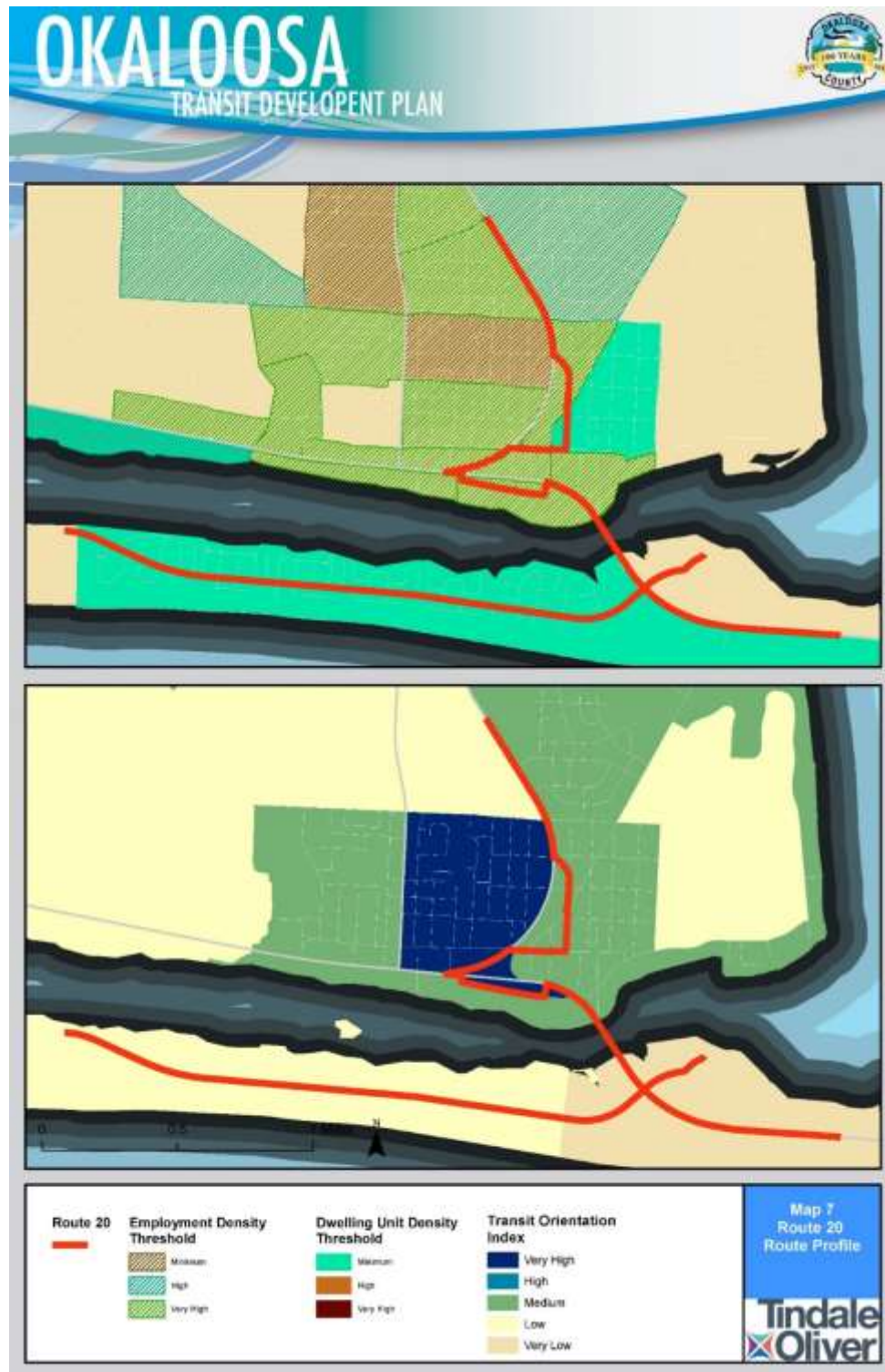
Route 30

Route 30, illustrated in Figure D-9, is also one of the productive routes in ECR fixed-route system. This route provides service along Highway 98 and Gulf Shore Drive, with transferring opportunity to Routes 20 and 32. The majority of the land uses along the route are single-family houses, medium-rise condominiums, and hotels. Map D-8 illustrates the Route 30 route profile. The ridecheck effort and discussions with the Route 30 operators indicate that following stops experience high passenger boarding and/or alighting activities:

- Boardwalk Wayside Park
- Harbor Walk/Lucky Snapper (During evening trips)
- 98 Palms Plaza (Transfer to Route 32)

The segment along Gulf Shore Drive from Sandpiper Cove South to East Pass Towers in Destin Point is unproductive compared with the rest of route, with 4 to 5 passengers per day in winter time. One driver suggested that the route could instead loop around the commercial area near Main Street/Legion Drive/ and Beach Drive and that the redundancy on Silbert Avenues should be eliminated while still serving the Destin Community Center. A further examination of this segment is necessary to find out the ways to improve the productivity in winter time. Another top comment received from passengers indicates there is a need to implement a daily pass for passengers who need to use the transit service multiple times over the course of a day. The existing transfer ticket is only valid for 2-hour window to make a connection, which is not useful for passengers who make multiple trips a day.

Figure D-9: EC Rider Route 30

1-BOARDWALK/WAYSIDE PARK
2-HARBOR WALK/LUCKY SNAPPER
3-SANDPIPER COVE NORTH
4-MORENO POINT RD
5-WATERVIEW TOWERS
6-EAST PASS TOWERS
7-GULF BREEZE CT
8-DESTIN POINTE/JETTY EAST
9-HOLIDAY SURF & RACQUET CLUB
10-DESTIN ON THE GULF
11-SANDPIPER COVE SOUTH
12-98 PALMS PLAZA
13-BENNING DR
14-DESTIN LIBRARY
15-DESTIN COMMUNITY CENTER

Summer– Departs Boardwalk On The Hour & Half Hour
Departs Community Center Every 15 minutes &
45 Minutes Past the Hour
Approximately Every 20 Minutes

Winter– Departs Boardwalk On The Hour
Departs Community Center Every 45 Minutes Past
the Hour
Approximately Every 45 Minutes

Map D-8: Route 30 Profile
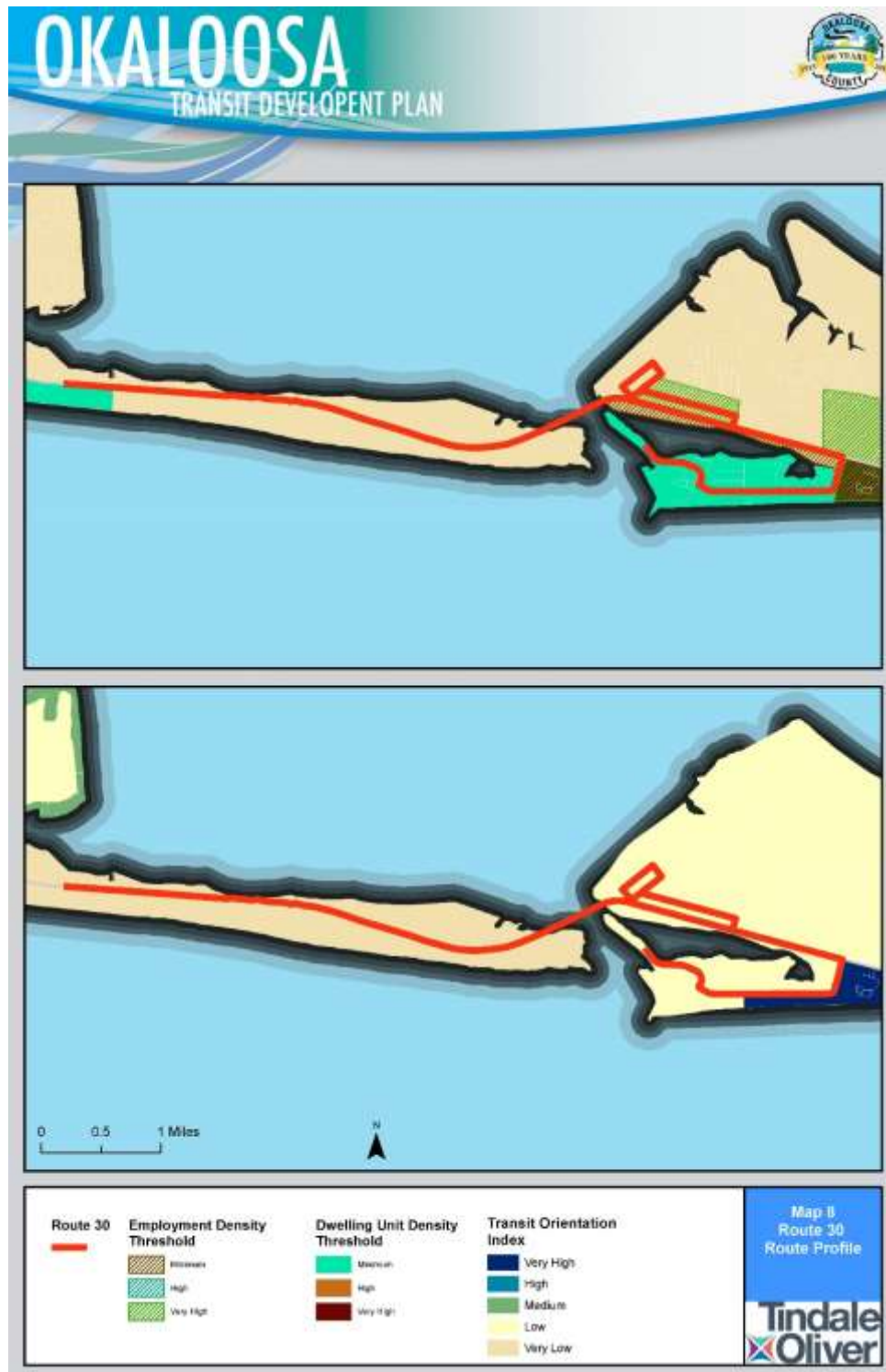
Route 32

Route 32, illustrated in Figure D-10, runs along Highway 98 between 98 Palms Plaza and Destin Commons, providing transfer opportunity to Route 30 and Route 33, respectively. The majority of the land uses along this route are hotels, condominiums, and commercial plazas. As shown in Map D-9, minimum-to-very high employment density areas and high to very-high dwelling unit density areas can be found west of Goldsby Road. The route segment west of Scenic Gulf Drive serves areas that show a prevalence of elderly population and household below poverty level. Based on the ridecheck effort and discussions with the Route 32 operator, the following bus stops experience high passenger boarding and alighting activities:

- 98 Palms
- Sundestin Beach Resort
- Crystal Beach Plaza
- The Shoppes at Paradise Key
- Wal-Mart Super Center

Some stops that experience zero to one passengers per day may be considered for removal, including:

- Sunsations Plaza
- Fudpuckers

Some stops may need consideration of relocation, including:

- Pelican Beach Resort – it is recommended to move the bus stop to the right turn lane on Highway 98.
- Big Kahuna's – This bus stop is located in the parking lot, close to the main gate for visitor access. In the summer the parking lot is congested with vehicles and visitors, making it unsafe and with long delays to travel through the parking lot. It is recommended to relocate the bus stop along Highway 98 in order to keep consistent on-time performance and avoid potential safety issues.

Two hotspots were identified by the operator for potential addition of bus stop/sign, which include:

- Grand Mariner Condominium
- Commons Dr. W & Diamond Cove (Doctor's office Plaza)

In summer time, Highway 98 is very congested with vehicles moving bumper-to-bumper. Under this circumstance, it is nearly impossible for Route 32 to stay on time with the published schedule. Marketing and branding are also issues as visitors are seldom aware of the existence of the public transportation available for them to use.

Figure D-10: EC Rider Route 32
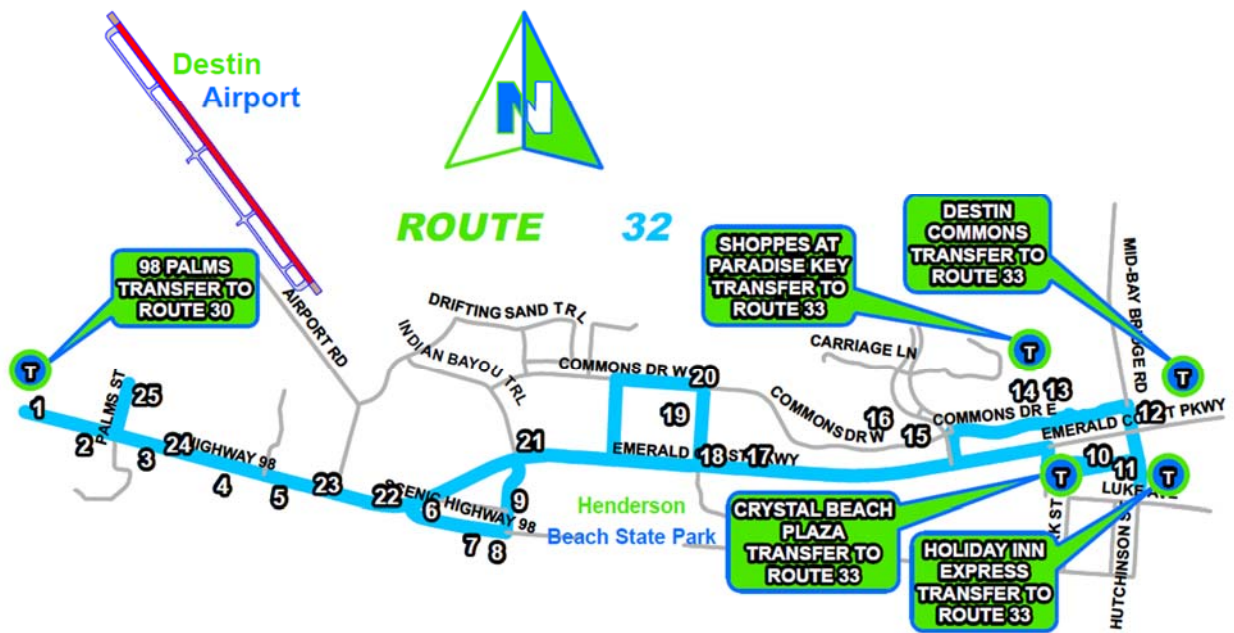
Map D-9: Route 32 Profile
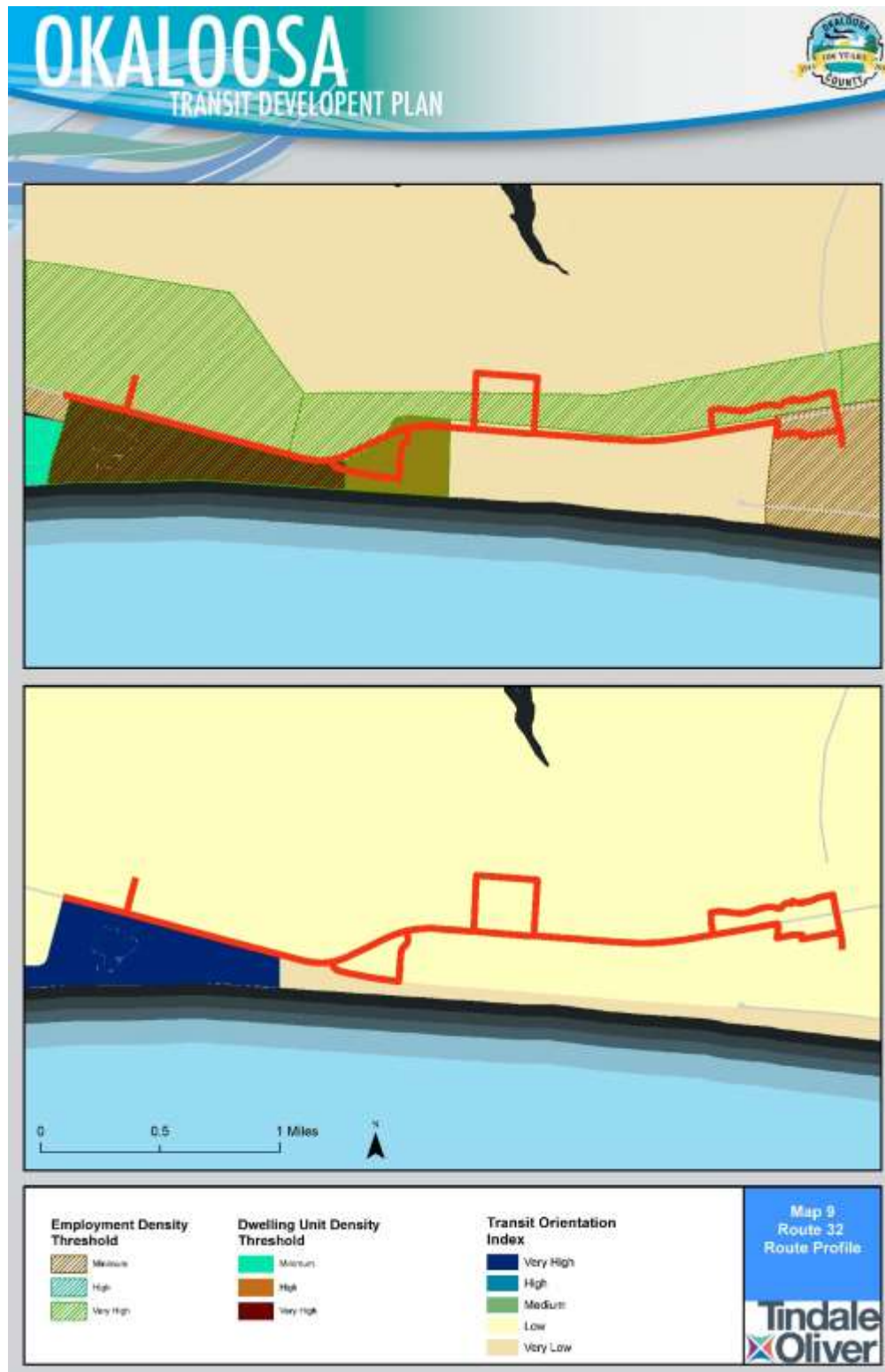
Route 33

Route 33, illustrated in Figure D-11, provides a looping service along Hutchinson Street, Scenic Highway 98, Emerald Coast Parkway, and Poinciana Boulevard. It is the least productive route in the ECR fixed-route system. Map D-10 shows the Route 33 route profile. Passengers for this route are mainly visitors and employees of the commercial establishments along the route. Based on the ridecheck effort and discussions with the Route 33 operator, stops experiencing high boarding and alighting activities include:

- Holiday Inn Express
- Silver Sands Premium Outlets
- Low's

According to the bus operator, the major issue of this route is the lack of awareness of public transportation by the general public. An awareness of public transit could especially service; for example, one adult takes the family car for an activity during a summer vacation, but the other adult would like to use the car for shopping. Transit could help provide transportation for both parties in this scenario.

Figure D-11: EC Rider Route 33
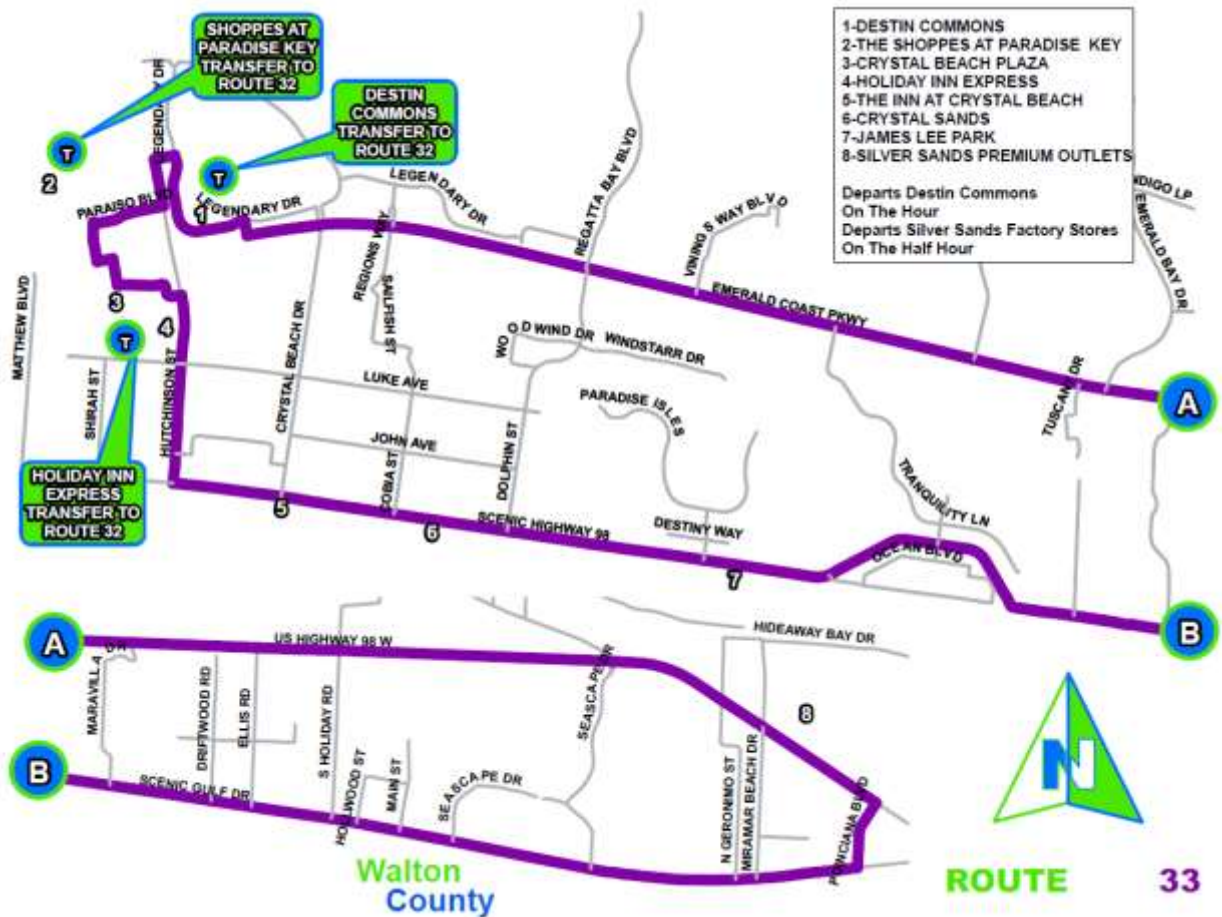
Map D-10: Route 33 Profile
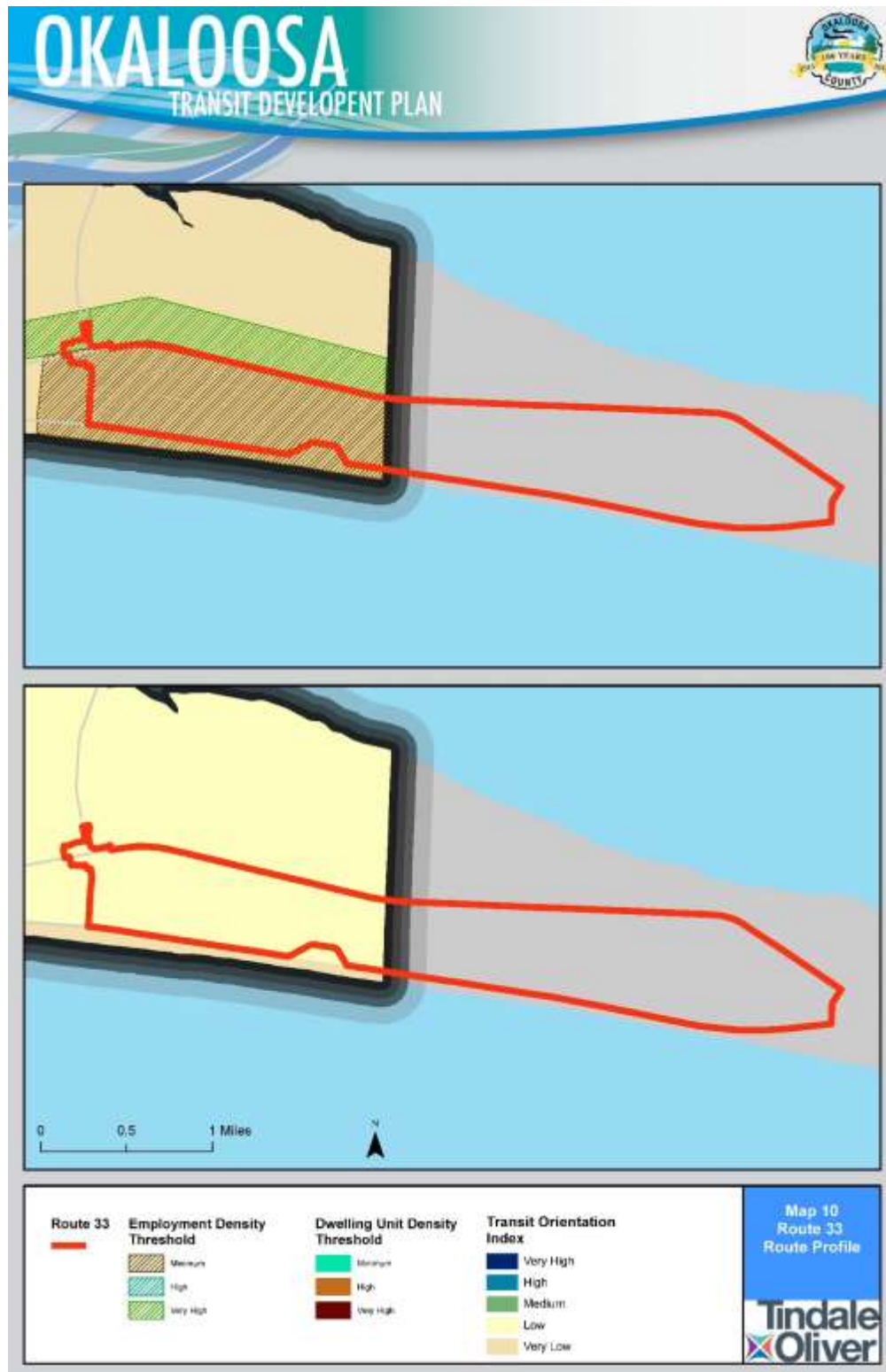
Route Efficiency Analysis Summary

The following is a summary of facts and recommendations that apply to the entire EC Rider system.

Route Deviations Issue

EC Rider allows ADA-eligible passengers to request a route deviation for pick-up 2 hours in advance of the passenger's actual pick-up time. However, this ADA-eligible passengers' advantage has been abused by the normal riders, which causes the low on-time performance for some routes (e.g. Routes 3 and 14). Based on this fact, it is recommended that EC Rider requires proof of ADA eligibility when receiving a call for route deviation requests. A report of the ADA card number when calling for deviation requests should suffice this requirement.

Marketing and Branding

This is the most frequently referenced issue by the majority of bus operators. The low awareness of the public transportation service in Okaloosa County is a major hindrance in attracting new transit users. EC Rider needs to further examine this topic and implement continuous marketing campaigns to promote the awareness of EC Rider service.

Branding is another issue that should be noted. A successful branding, including the new system name, logos, color, and etc., is an essential component of all the marketing strategies for achieving better awareness from general public. Before the transfer of ownership in October, 2015, Okaloosa County Transit system logos and unique color schemes were painted on the body of the bus vehicles. However, due to the ownership change of transit system, the original system name, logo, and colors were no longer allowed to be used, and logo and color scheme painting was removed from the exterior of bus vehicles. It is imperative for EC Rider to come up with branding strategies so a new logo and colors can be used and painted on the bus vehicle to distinguish EC Rider bus vehicles with other personal vehicles. The successful branding, combined with other marketing strategies, can be a very important stimulus to achieve higher route-by-route productivity.

Fares and Passes

The lack of a daily pass option makes it inconvenient for passengers who make multiple trips per day. This issue was mentioned by several bus operators. It is recommended that a daily pass be introduced. This could potentially eliminate the need for transfer tickets.

New Express Service

Route 33 currently provides an early morning trip from Uptown Station to Destin for commuters. This bus operates at capacity, thus demonstrating the success and need for this trip. However, those workers for the early morning trip need to make three transfers to return to Uptown Station (Routes 33, 32, 30, and 20) in the evening. An express service that eliminates transfers for the late evening trip from Destine to Uptown Station would help those commuters.

System-wide Route Efficiency Summary

Operating Cost per Trip

Operating expense per passenger trip measures the efficiency of transporting riders, both on how service is delivered and the market demands for the service. When excluding inflation, the operating expense per passenger trip in Okaloosa County decreased from $6.39 in 2009 to $6.28 in 2013, or 1.7% overall. The operating expense per passenger trip has declined since peaking in 2010, suggesting efficiency improvements during this period.

Figure D-12: Operating Expense per Passenger Trip
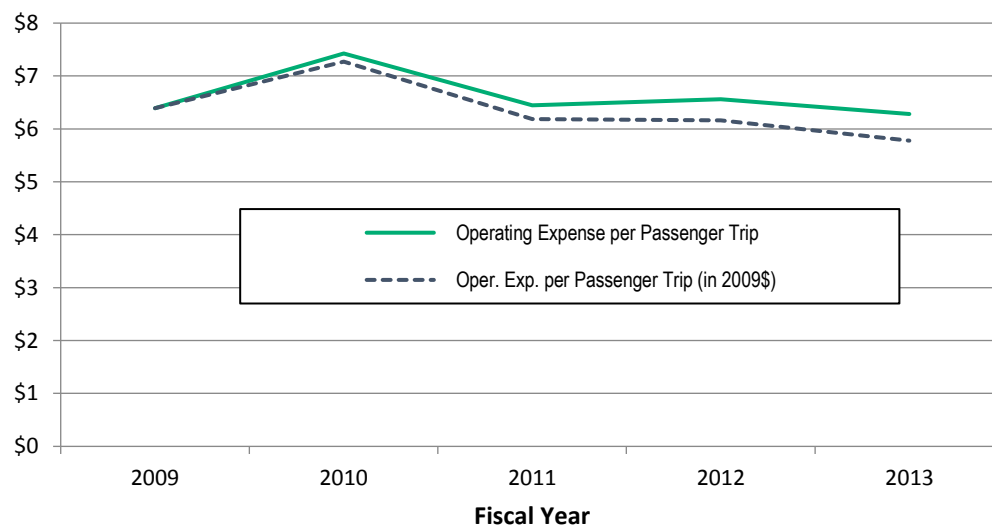
Operating Expense per Revenue Hour

The operating expense per revenue hour measures the efficiency of transporting riders when factoring vehicle speed. In Okaloosa County, the operating expense per revenue hour increased 6.9% between 2009 and 2013. While taking inflation into consideration, the operating expense per revenue hour decreased overall by 1.7% during this five-year period. EC Rider's operating expense per revenue mile is 50.4% below

the peer group average, indicating that EC Rider's service is operating less efficient, on average, than its peer group.

Figure D-13: Okaloosa County Operating Expense per Revenue Hour
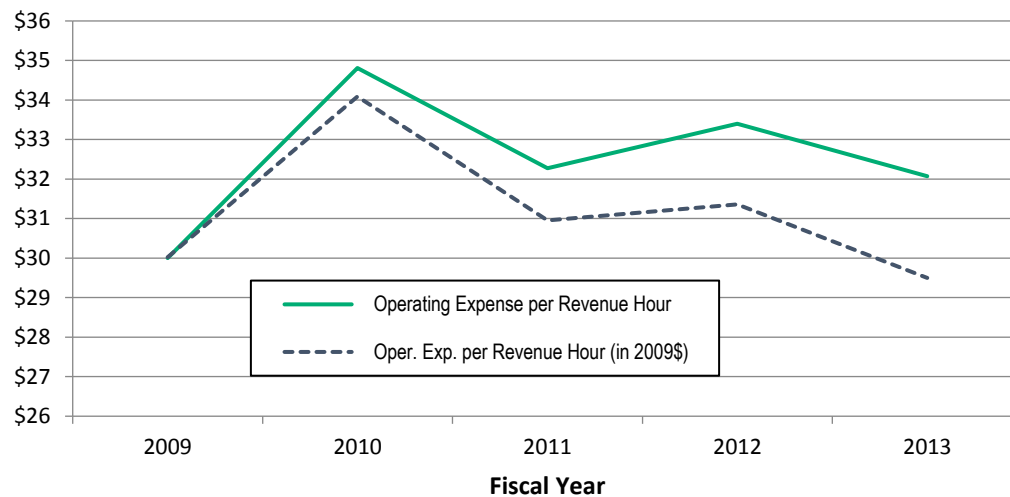
Paratransit Efficiency Assessment

Okaloosa Paratransit Services Overview

The Okaloosa County BOCC provides public transportation to the County's TD population. When serving TD populations, priority is given to older adults and persons with disabilities or who are economically disadvantaged in Okaloosa County.

TD service also is provided based on needs; medical needs and life-sustaining activities are given higher priority than business or recreation. Service for the TD population is funded by the FTA, FDOT, Florida CTD, local governments, and social service agencies. The remainder of this section reviews the efficiency of this service.

Paratransit Efficiency Review

In addition to the fixed-route efficiency analysis, an assessment of current paratransit services operated in Okaloosa County also was conducted. The emphasis in this effort was to assess the transit market to identify opportunities to transition demand response riders to fixed-route bus services. The project team worked with EC Rider staff for their input and also gathered existing paratransit demand data for Okaloosa County. Current transit performance and operations and operating policies related to paratransit were also reviewed to identify any issues/opportunities. In addition, the on-board rider surveys completed under the TDP effort as well as data from the annual TD rider survey conducted by the Okaloosa-Walton TPO was also

reviewed for demographic trends and travel behavioral patterns. The efficiency analysis conducted as part of this effort is summarized in the remainder of this report.

It should be noted that paratransit data is only reported at the system level as no designated fixed-routes/schedules are used for providing door-to-door type paratransit services.

According to the Florida CTD, the 2014 TD population in Okaloosa County was estimated at 62,277 persons, and the unduplicated passenger head count or individual persons provided paratransit transportation services was 5,812.

Table D-2 below presents the trend in the TD population and TD passengers in Okaloosa County between 2012 and 2014. As shown, although the County's potential TD population increased overall by 2.4% during this three-year period, there was a significant decrease in the number of TD passengers served from 2012 to 2014. While this is primarily due to funding shortfalls due to the Medicare funding cuts that occurred statewide, as Florida experienced a decrease of 19.7% in TD trips statewide, some of the reductions may be attributed to potential shifts to fixed-route services.

Table D-2: Okaloosa County TD Population and Passenger Trends

Year	2012	2014	% Change (2012–2014)
Potential TD Population	60,814	62,277	2.4%
TD Passengers Served	6,682	5,812	-13.0%

Source: Florida CTD 2012-2014 AOR

Table D-3 summarizes the TD trips by purpose and passenger type that occurred between 2013 and 2014. Medical and employment are the most frequent trip purposes.

Table D-3: Okaloosa TD Trips by Purpose (2013–2014)

Trip Purpose	Trips	% Distribution
Medical	63,153	47.0%
Employment	48,371	36.0%
Education/training	6,718	5.0%
Nutritional	12,092	9.0%
Life-sustaining/other	4,032	3.0%
Total	134,366	100.0%

Source: Florida CTD 2014 AOR

Table D-4 below shows trips by passenger type and as shown, low-income persons (26%) and older adults (16.8%) made the most trips outside of passengers classified under "Other." Children were another large proportion of passengers, representing 12.8% of trips.

Table D-4: Okaloosa TD Trips by Trip Type (2013–2014)

Trip Purpose	Trips	% Distribution
Older adults	22,582	16.8%
Children	17,306	12.9%
Low-income	34,956	26.0%
With disabilities	16,062	12.0%
Low-income/with disabilities	14,172	10.6%
Other	29,288	21.8%
Total	134,366	100.0%

Source: Florida CTD 2014 AOR

Paratransit Rider Survey

In an effort to monitor the services and quality assurance provided to the transportation disadvantaged by the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC), a survey of TD riders is conducted annually by the Okaloosa-Walton TPO in collaboration with WFRPC, CTC, and LCB.

According to the 2016 survey, the majority of TD trips (42%) were for medical purposes, as shown in the Figure D-14. This is expected as typically, majority of TD trips tend to be for medical purposes. However, it is noteworthy that 36% of trips were for work purpose, indicating that some of these trip may be served instead by EC Rider fixed-route transit service, which typically serves most of the major employment areas/corridors in Okaloosa County.

Figure D-14: Paratransit Trip Purpose (Where are you going?) - 2016
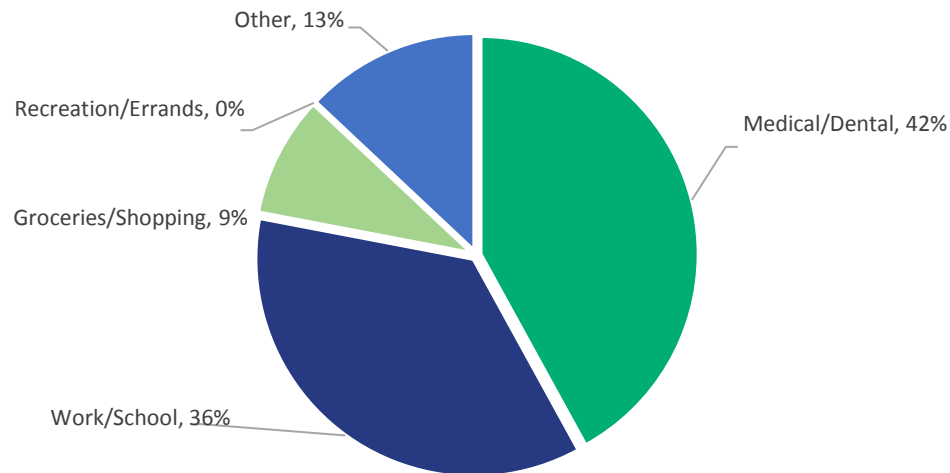
Source: WFRPC/OWTPO/Okaloosa County 2016 Paratransit Rider Survey

System-wide Trends in Paratransit Efficiency

A number of other key performance indicators on efficiency was also reviewed as part of the efficiency assessment of paratransit services provided in Okaloosa. This review was done using the most recent demand response (DR) mode data in the NTD as provided by Okaloosa County as part of their NTD annual reporting. Two key efficiency indicators are revised and summarized below.

Figure D-15 shows the operating expense per passenger trip. A lower operating expense per passenger trip generally indicates a better cost efficiency. Operating expenses increased steadily from 2009 to 2012, but began decreasing in 2013, suggesting a recent improvement in efficiency.

Figure D-15: Operating Expense per Passenger Trip

Source: National Transit Database

Figure D-16 shows the operating expense per revenue hour. A lower operating expense per revenue hour generally indicates a better cost efficiency. The operating expense per revenue hour jumped from $34.62 per hour in 2010 to $47.77 per hour in 2011 and peaked in 2012 at $48.07 per hour. The operating expense per revenue hour in 2014 has since decreased to almost 2010 levels at $32.51, suggesting efficiency improvements.

Figure D-16: Operating Expense per Revenue Hour
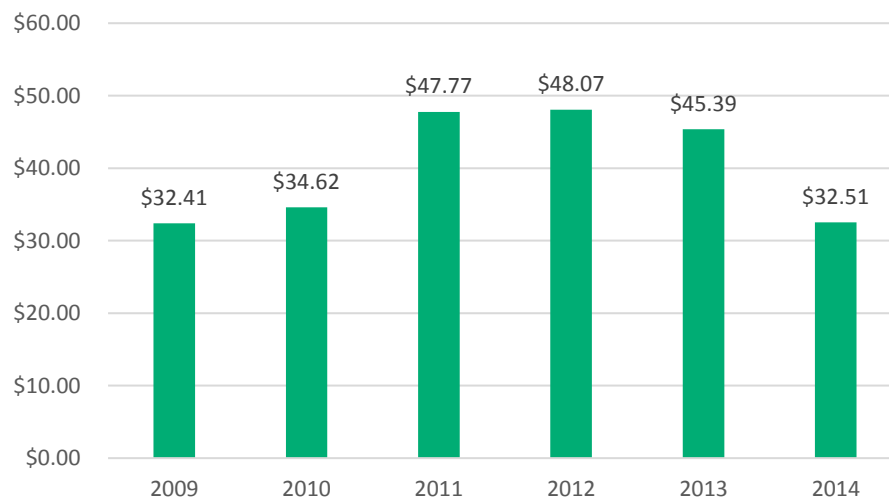
Efficiency Issues and Opportunities

The strengths and weaknesses of Okaloosa paratransit services are presented below in eight categories: customer satisfaction, driver courtesy, provision of a needed service, scheduling, on-time performance, roadcalls, cost, and converting paratransit trips to fix-route service. Data for this review was based on the ananlysis presented previously in this report and data obtained from the 2016 Okaloosa County paratransit survey.

Customer Satisfaction

The major strength of Okaloosa paratransit services is in the most important area of performance—customer satisfaction. The vast majority of riders (93%) rated the comfort and cleanliness of the vehicles as "very good" to "good". Similarly, 95% of riders marked "very good" or "good" when asked to rate if the driver provides a safe and comfortable ride. The overall courtesy of the employees was given the same response, with 93% responding with "very good" to "good". This positive response rate has been increasing since 2014. No negative responses were received from any of the riders surveyed. The overall satisfaction of the services were given high ratings, with 91% of riders responding "very good" or "good". Only one rider responded "poor", indicating that Okaloosa paratransit service is providing good service overall.

Driver Courtesy

Driver courtesy is a reflection of operator willingness to provide excellent customer service. The positive interaction between the riders and the drivers is another strong point of the paratransit performance and a reflection of the high customer satisfaction. The positive response rate has increased since 2014, and has not had a negative response since the single complaint in 2014. One rider noted, "All drivers are dependable and respectful. I don't know what I would do without them."

Scheduling

Scheduling is a common issue in the paratransit industry and has the greatest potential for impacting system efficiency. 20% of people not happy. Most riders find it dependable, as no negative responses were received for rating the dependability. This indicates that trips arrangements are consistent. One rider noted that "Often the pickup times are an hour before schedule." Most riders (93%) believe it is easy to arrange trips, with the exception of one rider who expressed dissatisfaction. Most riders (80%) also responded that it is convenient to change scheduled trips when necessary, with the exception of two riders who gave poor ratings.

On-Time Performance

There is some dissatisfaction in the rating of the on-time performance, but most riders (76%) indicated that the vehicles picked them up within 30 minutes of the scheduled time. The on-time performance has

generally improved since 2014. Most riders (84%) indicated that they arrived to their destination at the scheduled time.

Roadcalls

Any in-service interruption of paratransit service is reported as a roadcall. According to the Florida CTD's 2015 Annual Operating Report, the number of roadcalls went from 9 in 2013 to 19 in 2015, suggesting a decline in efficiency, possible due to fleet age or problems with maintenance. This is an area that needs to be investigated for efficiency.

Cost

As discussed previously, the cost to operate the TD service, including the cost per revenue hours and cost per trip has decreased based on the most recent data available. Okaloosa County should review more recent cost data once available to identify if these reductions show a trend, indicating a more cost efficient TD service. In addition, the cost to ride the current TD service was also reviewed. As part of the 2016 TD survey, riders were asked if the amount they pay for their trip is reasonable. Most of the passengers (98%) found that the cost is reasonable, indication some flexibility for TD fare increases. The low cost to riders may be incentivizing them to use paratransit instead of fixed-route service. The current fare structure for paratransit services should be reviewed for potential adjustments as part of improving the overall transit service provision in Okaloosa County.

Converting Paratransit Trips to Fixed-Route

One of the most important efficiency goals of paratransit system is converting a portion of its trips to fixed-route bus service as that allows for saving its resources to serve more eligible passengers. When paratransit riders in Okaloosa were asked if not by community transportation, how would they make this trip, 11% of riders indicated that they would use bus service, showing that there are passengers who are willing to use bus service but may not be serviced by fixed-route service or have other issues to access that service. With expanded coverage of EC Rider fixed-route service and better awareness of its services, Okaloosa County may be able to transfer at least a portion of this willing 11% of TD riders from paratransit service to fixed-route service, making overall transit services more efficient.

APPENDIX E: PLANS AND STUDIES REVIEW

Federal Documents

FAST Act

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) federal transportation legislation expired on May 31, 2015; the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act passed on December 4, 2015. It is the first federal law in more than a decade to provide long-term funding certainty for surface transportation infrastructure planning and investment. FAST authorizes $305 billion over fiscal years 2016 through 2020 for highway, highway and motor vehicle safety, public transportation, motor carrier safety, hazardous materials safety, rail, and research, technology, and statistics programs. FAST maintains the US focus on safety, keeps intact the established structure of the various highway-related programs managed, continues efforts to streamline project delivery, and, for the first time, provides a dedicated source of federal dollars for freight projects.

Among the impacts to transit are the FTA's Bus and Bus Facilities program, which received an increase in funding of $268 million over FY 2015 levels, for a total of $696 million for FY 2016. This program helps transit agencies fund new buses and replace aging fleets and facilities and adds a new eligibility to deploy low- or no-emission vehicles. FAST also re-established a Bus Discretionary Program that allows states to apply for project-specific funding via a competitive process. Many of the grants are expected to fund replacements for aging fleets or facilities. In FY 2016, $268 million in funding will be available. Of that amount, $55 million has been designated for low- or no- emission bus deployment projects. Other impacts include the following:

- The Bus and Bus Facilities Program Pilot Program for Cost-Effective Capital Investment encourages states to share bus funding resources among a partnership of recipients.
- Increases dedicated bus funding by 89% over the life of the bill.
- Provides both stable formula funding and a competitive grant program to address bus and bus facility needs.
- Reforms public transportation procurement to make federal investment more cost-effective and competitive.
- Consolidates and refocuses on transit research activities to increase efficiency and accountability.
- Establishes a pilot program for communities to expand transit through the use of public-private partnerships.
- Provides flexibility for recipients to use federal funds to meet their State of Good Repair needs.
- Provides for the coordination of public transportation services with other federally-assisted transportation services to aid in the mobility of older adults and individuals with disabilities.

State Plans/Programs

2060 Florida Transportation Plan

The 2060 Florida Transportation Plan (FTP) is a fundamental transportation plan for all of Florida, including local, regional, and state partners who make decisions about future transportation investments. It creates a shared vision for the future of transportation in Florida and the goals, objectives, and strategies to achieve this vision over the next 50 years. The latest FTP was finalized in December 2010. The latest FTP version calls for a profoundly different transportation system from today's system, including the following:

- A statewide, multimodal transportation system that supports Florida's economic and livability goals by providing better connectivity to both urban and rural areas.
- Greater reliance on public transportation systems for moving people, including statewide passenger rail network and enhanced transit systems in Florida major urban areas.
- A statewide, multimodal system of trade gateways, logistics centers, and transportation corridors to position Florida as a global hub for commerce and investment.
- An evolving air and space transportation system enabling Florida to remain a global leader for moving people and cargo between Florida and destinations in other states, nations, and orbit.
- A new generation of infrastructure, vehicles, fuels, and technologies to enable travel with fewer crashes, reduced delay, and fewer emissions.

Based on these core values of the 2060 FTP, public transportation plays an important role in shaping the Florida's transportation systems in the future. This implicates the necessities for Citrus County to comply with the 2060 FTP by implementing more rigorous public transportation development approach.

State of Florida TD 5-Year/20-Year Plan

Developed by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD), this plan is required under Florida Statutes and includes the following elements:

- Explanation of the Florida Coordinated Transportation System
- Five-Year Report Card
- Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability Review
- Strategic Vision and Goals, Objectives, and Measures

The long-range and five-year strategic visions were reviewed and used for guidance and are indicated below.

Long-Range Strategic Vision

Create a strategy for the Florida CTD to support the development of a universal transportation system with the following features:

- Coordinated, cost-effective multimodal transportation system delivered through public-private partnerships.
- Single, uniform funding system with a single eligibility determination process.
- Sliding scale of fare payment based on a person's ability to pay.
- Use of electronic fare media for all passengers.
- Services designed and implemented regionally (both inter-county and inter-city) throughout the state.

Five-Year Strategic Vision

Develop and field-test a model community transportation system for persons who are transportation disadvantaged by incorporating the following features:

- Statewide coordination of community transportation services using Advanced Public Transportation Systems (APTS) including Smart Traveler Technology, Smart Vehicle Technology, and Smart Intermodal Systems.
- Statewide coordination and consolidation of community transportation funding sources.
- Statewide information management system for tracking passenger eligibility determination.
- Integration of Smart Vehicle Technology on a statewide multimodal basis to improve vehicle and fleet planning, scheduling, and operations. This effort includes vehicle and ridership data collection, electronic fare media, and geographic information system (GIS) applications.
- Development of a multimodal transportation network to optimize the transportation system as a whole, using Smart Intermodal Systems. This feature would be available in all areas of the state via electronic access.

Florida TDP Requirements (updated August 2009)

A TDP is an FDOT-required, 10-year horizon plan intended to support the development of an effective multimodal transportation system for Florida. Public transit means the transporting of people by conveyances, or systems of conveyances, traveling on land or water, local or regional in nature and available for use by the public. TDPs serve a number of purposes for transit agencies; however, the State's interest in TDPs is governed by Sections 339.135, and 339.155, F.S., as described in Chapter 14-73 (See Florida Administrative Code: Rule 14-73.001 or https://www.flrules.org/gateway/RuleNo.asp?id=14-73.001). The TDP serves as the basis for defining public transit needs, which is a prerequisite to receipt of State funds. The rule requires that the TDP be the provider's planning, development, and operational guidance document.

Beyond these administrative motivations, TDPs are intended to serve as strategic planning documents. They define public transportation needs; solicit broad input by coordinating with other plans, involve substantial public participation, and explore community goals with decision makers and other stakeholders; define alternative courses of action, and develop a systematic plan and monitoring program. Although

required by FDOT, the greatest value from the TDP planning effort, gathered data, and resultant documents occurs when an agency uses the TDP to serve the local area and the traveling public by providing a logical, comprehensive basis for exploring near and mid-term public transit needs and opportunities.

A TDP can lead to a clear identification of transit needs in a community-wide context, a prioritized listing of recommended actions, a more favorable attitude toward transit by residents, riders, and decision-makers, and a stronger competitive position for the transit agency in obtaining additional funding. The ultimate success of the TDP process will not be decided for several years, but it is possible to suggest measures of success now. These might include increased ridership (as latent mobility needs are met), improved customer satisfaction, additional funding for the transit system, and a better overall image for transit.

Chapter 341, F.S., Public Transit Block Grants

Chapter 341 creates Public Transit Block Grants (PTBG) to be administered by FDOT. Block grant funds are provided only to urban and rural providers designated by the U.S. Department of Transportation and Community Transportation Coordinators, as defined in Chapter 427, F.S. Eligible providers must establish public transportation development plans consistent, to the maximum extent feasible, with approved local government comprehensive plans of the units of local government in which the provider is located. In developing public transportation development plans, eligible providers must solicit comments from regional workforce boards established under Chapter 445. The development plans must address how the public transit provider will work with the appropriate regional workforce board to provide services to participants in the welfare transition program. Eligible providers must provide information to the regional workforce board serving the county in which the provider is located regarding the availability of transportation services to assist program participants. Costs for which PTBG program funds may be expended include:

- Costs of public bus transit and local public fixed guideway capital projects
- Costs of public bus transit service development and transit corridor projects
- Costs of public bus transit operations

All projects must be consistent, to the maximum extent feasible, with the approved local government comprehensive plans of the units of local government in which the project is located. Chapter 341 also requires each public transit provider to establish public transportation development plans consistent with approved local government comprehensive plans where there is an approved local government comprehensive plan in the political subdivision or political subdivisions in which the public transportation system is located. In particular, each public transit provider must establish productivity and performance measures, which must be approved by FDOT and which must be selected from measures developed pursuant to Section 341.041(3). Each provider must report annually to FDOT relative to these measures. In approving these measures, FDOT will give consideration to the goals and objectives of each system, the needs of the local area, and the role for public transit in the local area. In addition, each public transit

provider must publish the productivity and performance measures established for the year in the local newspaper of its area and a report that provides quantitative data relative to the attainment of established productivity and performance measures.

Regional Documents

Okaloosa-Walton TPO 2035 LRTP

Whereas the Comprehensive Plan provides a vision of where the County wants to go, the LRTP is a 20-year guide for transportation goals and needs that provides the year-by-year methods to reach those transportation-related goals. Development of a needs plan gives the community an opportunity to visualize and evaluate possible transportation solutions along with anticipated travel demand. The possible solutions can be later selected for implementation based on available funding. Although these needs are determined at the local level, they must be consistent with federal and State requirements to maintain funding. The Okaloosa-Walton TPO is responsible for updating the LRTP for the urbanized areas of Okaloosa and Walton counties. The LRTP lists transportation related improvements for roads, public transportation, and bicycle/pedestrian facilities. The current plan, which includes a planning timeframe through 2035, was adopted in 2012. The LRTP is updated every five years. It is anticipated that the 2040 LRTP update will be completed in spring 2017.

With respect to transit, the plan identifies the need for eight park-and-ride lots, multimodal corridors, several express transit routes, and water transit routes within the region. Table E-1 lists the adopted needs for express transit service and park-and-ride lots. Note that these needs do not factor the available financial resources required to fund them, as only 4% of the $6 billion (in 2010 dollars) in estimated needs can be funded by the TPO.

The Cost Feasible Plan is a plan that factors financial constraints. This plan lists transit improvements including building five park-and-ride lots, at SR 285 and U S90 (SR 10) at Mossy Head, SR 85 and Commerce Drive, SR 85 at Rattlesnake Bluff Road, SR 20 and East Bay Loop Road (Freeport), US 331 (SR 83) and Rockhill Road (CST/CEI FY 16-20), and providing two express transit service from Niceville to Destin and from Fort Walton Beach to Destin, as summarized in Table E-2. The 2035 Cost Feasible Plan includes transit funding for operations and maintenance of existing transit services and routes.

Table E-1: Adopted Needs Plan Table

Project ID	Roadway	From	To	Improvement
High-Capacity Transit Projects				
69	Express Transit Service	Crestview	Eglin Air Force Base	Provide express transit service
70	Express Transit Service	Crestview	Fort Walton Beach	Provide express transit service
71	Express Transit Service	Navarre (Santa Rosa County)	Hurlburt Field	Provide express transit service
72	Express Transit Service	Fort Walton Beach	Destin	Provide express transit service
73	Express Transit Service	Destin	South Walton County via CR30A	Provide express transit service
Park-and-Ride Lots				
85	US90 (SR10) and Highway 4			Build park-and-ride lot
86	SR285 and US90 (SR10) at Mossy Head			Build park-and-ride lot
87	SR85/Commerce Drive, Crestview Community Center parking lot			Build park-and-ride lot
88	Shoal River Bowling Center and SR85			Build park-and-ride lot
89	Rattlesnake Bluff Road and SR85			Build park-and-ride lot
90	US98 (SR30) at the Fort Walton Beach Civic Auditorium			Build park-and-ride lot
91	SR20 and East Bay Loop Road (Freeport)			Build park-and-ride lot
92	US331 (SR83) and Rockhill Road			Build park-and-ride lot

Source: 2035 Vision Okaloosa-Walton County LRTP

Table E-2: Long Range Cost Feasible Plans for Transit

Location	Improvement	Feasibility/ Route Study	Capital Purchases
Express Transit Service – Niceville to Destin	Provide express transit service	FY16–20	FY31–35
Express Transit Service – Fort Walton Beach to Destin	Provide express transit service	FY16–20	FY31–35
Express Transit Service – DeFuniak Springs to S Walton County	Provide express transit service	FY16–20	FY31–35
SR285 and US90 (SR10) at Mossy Head	Build park-and-ride lot	NA	FY16–20
SR85 and Commerce Drive (OKA)	Build park-and-ride lot	NA	FY16–20
SR85 @ Rattlesnake Bluff Road (OKA)	Build park-and-ride lot	NA	FY16–20
SR20 and East Bay Loop Road (Freeport, Walton County)	Build park-and-ride lot	NA	FY16–20
US331 (SR83) and Rockhill Road	Build park-and-ride lot	NA	FY16–20

Red text = outside of Okaloosa County.
Source: 2035 Vision Okaloosa-Walton County LRTP

Figures E-1 and E-2 illustrate the Adopted Needs Plan for the Fort Walton Beach area and the northern half of Okaloosa County. The park-and-ride lots, represented by the symbol "P," are located in the southern areas of Fort Walton Beach and in the outskirts of Crestview. The yellow lines represent new transit routes and the purple dotted lines represent multimodal corridors.

Figure E-1: 2035 Adopted Needs Plan (Fort Walton Beach Area)

Figure E-2: 2035 Adopted Needs Plan
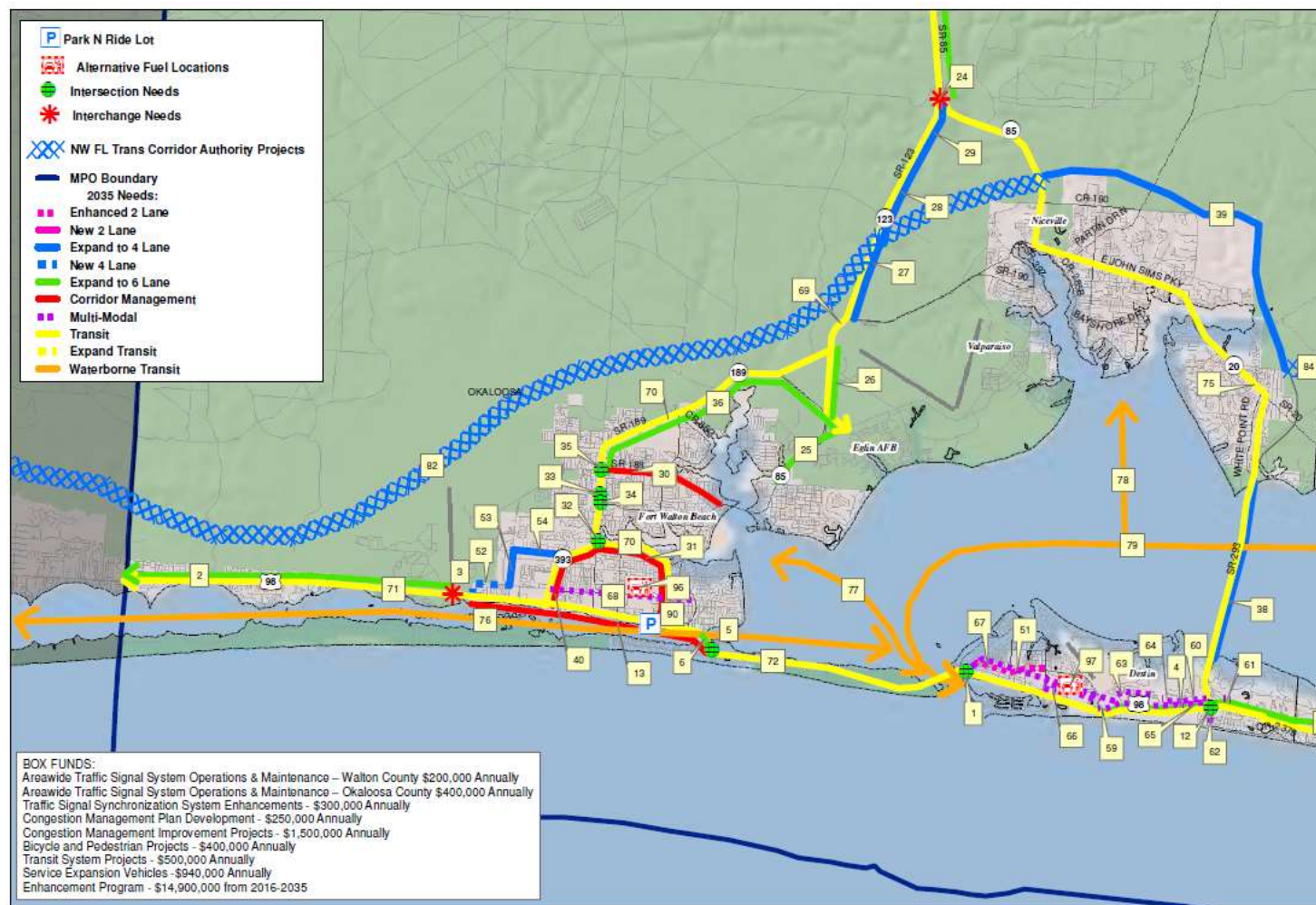
Okaloosa-Walton TIP FY 2016–2020 TIP (drafted April 2015)

The Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is developed and updated annually as part of the Okaloosa-Walton Area Transportation Study Certification Process. Preparation and maintenance of the TIP is one of several prerequisites to continued receipt of federal assistance for transportation improvements. The purpose of the TIP is to provide a listing of multimodal projects that reflects the needs and desires of the TPO Study Area as well as to reflect the financial restraints within the various funding sources and programs. The TIP, which is based on recommendations from the transportation systems management and long range elements of the Transportation Plan, is developed through a continuing comprehensive and coordinated effort involving FDOT and local governments in the TPO region.

FDOT's Five-Year Construction Plan is the basic input source for the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), National Highway System (NHS), non-NHS, and Mass Transit portions of the TIP. Data required for the balance of the TIP are assembled from input provided through the Technical Advisory Committee, the Transportation Systems Operations Committee, the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and the Citizens Advisory Committee. The current draft version of the TIP was drafted April 9, 2015, for FY 2016 to 2020. Priority projects listed in this TIP for Okaloosa County include highway widening projects, intersection improvements, and sidewalk and bicycle lane improvements.

Tri-County Growth Management Plan Santa Rosa-Okaloosa-Walton (drafted April 2010)

A growth management plan led by the Eglin Installation Growth Committee, which is composed of 10 separate subcommittees with Okaloosa County Board of Commissioners as the lead agency, was formed to evaluate the impacts of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) realignment. The plan includes Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton counties. Transportation impacts, as well as impacts to schools, law enforcement, housing, health services, public utilities, etc., were estimated using models. The majority of the new residents resulting from the BRAC realignment were anticipated to reside in Crestview or the surrounding area north of Eglin Air Force Base. Traffic along Highway 85 and SR 123 was the biggest concern, as these routes provide access to two major BRAC actions at Eglin Air Force Base. US 90 and SR 189 also were expected to be negatively impacted. One of the immediate priorities found in the study was the need to establish a uniform concurrency system with the various local governments. Also identified was the need to coordinate with Okaloosa County Transit, Eglin Air Force Base, and other local governments on planned transit routes and potential express routes that connect the 7 Special Forces Group (Airborne) area and main base to the residential areas with higher concentrations of Eglin Air Force Base personnel.

Key Local Documents

A Comprehensive Plan is the primary planning policy document that guides development by establishing goals in land use, transportation, and other planning categories for municipalities and counties. The Comprehensive Plan is mandated by Florida Legislature to be used as the basis for which local government

officials to carry out their comprehensive planning and their land development regulations powers, duties and responsibilities. The Comprehensive Plan also incorporates goals, objectives, and policies to guide future development and requires elements such as public participation, housing, future land use, transportation, infrastructure, conservation, recreation, intergovernmental coordination, capital improvements, economic development, and public school facilities. Land Development Regulations (LDR), also known as Land Development Codes (LDC) or code of ordinances, are the local documents that implement a jurisdiction's comprehensive plan and regulatory objectives. LDRs are important because without good land development regulations, there cannot be good implementation of planning. The following is a summary of the Comprehensive Plans, LDCs, and LDRs of local governments in Okaloosa County.

Okaloosa County 2009 Comprehensive Plan and Code of Ordinances

The Okaloosa County Comprehensive Plan is the primary policy document concerning land use, transportation, and other planning categories for the County. The Department of Community Affairs issued its notice of intent to find the amendments, adopted on March 6, 2007, in compliance. The Plan consists of 14 Elements, including Future Land Use and Transportation, and has one chapter that specifically addresses the concurrency management system. The transportation goals of Okaloosa County are to:

- Provide an efficient, safe, affordable, and efficient transportation system that maximizes the mobility of people and goods.
- Provide an energy efficient transportation system.
- Provide a transportation system in harmony with environmental, social, economic, and aesthetic features of the area.
- Provide a transportation system that optimizes preservation and efficiency of existing transportation facilities.
- Provide measures to relieve financial constraints on improvements to the transportation system.
- Provide a cooperative, continuing, and comprehensive transportation process.

Okaloosa County comprehensive plan policies highlight the importance of its participatory role and coordination with various agencies in the development of the Okaloosa County Airport Master Plan, the Fort Walton Beach Urbanized Area MPO 2020 Plan, and the Five-Year Transit Development Plans. Other transit related policies include:

- Reducing energy consumption by promoting ridesharing, mass transit, and high occupancy vehicles.
- Evaluating existing park-and-ride lot usage to establish new lots.
- Coordinating plans for transportation disadvantaged services with the development of the Five-Year Transit Development Plan.
- Establishing numerical indicators to measure the achievement of mobility goals, such as modal split, annual transit trips per capita, and automobile occupancy rates.

Okaloosa County Land Development Code

Although the Okaloosa County Comprehensive plan policies are generally broad as they pertain to transit, the County has implemented several land development regulations that can support transit. All developments located on transit routes must consult with Okaloosa County Transit.; if they meet a certain thresholds in intensity, they may be required to provide a public transit facility or provide amenities and improvements that support alternative modes of transportation. For instance, the County could require developments located on transit routes to provide pedestrian and bicycle improvements and/or a circulation pattern with a minimum turning radii of 40 ft for transit buses.

In addition to those requirements, developments of 50 or more multi-family residential units may be required to provide ADA-compliant transit shelter for transit patrons. Non-residential developments greater than 200,000 sf, non-residential developments of 50,000 to 200,000 sf, and non-residential developments or single- or multi-tenant office buildings of less than 50,000 sf may be required to provide the following:

- Pedestrian and bicycle improvements
- A circulation pattern with turning radii of 40 ft
- Bus stop with curb cut
- Transit shelter with seating to accommodate a minimum of four persons and a wheelchair
- Bike rack
- Connectivity to adjacent non-residential developments will be encouraged

Public transit stops are permitted uses in all R-1, R-2, MU, and MHP districts. The LDC also includes quantitative methods for determining LOS that exist and which may be impacted by any particular development application. In addition, the LDC defines the process for finding of compliance with LOS standards based on standardized quantitative data.

Okaloosa County 2012–2021 TDP Major Update (September 2011)

The Okaloosa County 2012–2021 TDP Major Update was completed in September 2011 and provides direction and input to the MPO's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), LRTP, and TIP. In interviews, the County expressed the need for realistic expectations for its TDP, as funding for transit has become a greater challenge. The Public Transit Vision for Okaloosa County and Okaloosa County Transit recognized Okaloosa County Transit as the best small transit system in Florida by delivering a well-balanced multimodal transportation system that promotes community embrace, economic development, community accessibility, environmental sensitivity, and customer demand. The TDP focused on four areas of service for the ten year planning horizon:

- Maintain the existing system.
- Improve existing services in terms of later evening trips on non-express routes if external grant funding sources become available.

- Develop one new route between Niceville/Bluewater Bay and Destin via the Mid-Bay Bridge if external grant funding sources become available.
- Bring all stops to ADA compliance.

In addition to the focus areas, a candidate list of service improvements were compiled to be considered outside of the 10-year timeframe:

- Additional new routes as tested for ridership demand in T-BEST (including Navarre to Hurlburt Field–Santa Rosa).
- Additional evening departures on weekdays.
- New routes from previous TDP updates that were not implemented.
- Addition of Saturday service.
- Addition of Sunday service.
- Express services to Eglin Air Force Base from park-and-ride lots.

Okaloosa County Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP)
SFY 2013–2017 Annual Update (June 2013)

Okaloosa County Transit administers services for the TDSP, providing paratransit service to those in need, including persons who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation. The legislation also includes children who are "high-risk" or "at-risk" of developmental disabilities. The TDSP identifies needs in service and capital purchase; the needs include purchase of replacement paratransit vehicles, providing transportation for the TD population, capital to provide rural transportation, and addressing the needs of welfare recipients and low-income persons needing transportation to their employment. The following were identified as barriers to effective coordination and service:

- Lack of commitment with scarce tax dollars.
- Not enough funding to cover demand.
- Securing local funding.
- Specific issues directly related to funding sources.
- Reluctance of some medical providers to cooperate with transportation coordinator.
- No AHCA providers in local area.
- Eglin Air Force Base's geographical location is a barrier separating the north part (Crestview) from the south part of Okaloosa County.

One of the strategies for ensuring a cost-effective service is to offer incentives such as free passes for transitioning paratransit users to fixed route service. Through the efforts of the WFRPC, discussions have recently begun with Escambia, Santa Rosa, and Okaloosa counties to study the feasibility of coordinating transportation through the three counties. These discussions will continue as census data are updated and new urbanized area boundaries are determined.

Okaloosa County Strategic Plan: Fiscal Year 2013–2014

The Okaloosa County Strategic Plan addresses the mission, vision, goals, objective and strategies for Okaloosa County with respect to airports, court services, facility maintenance, growth management, public safety, public works, Tourist Development Council, water and sewer, among other aspects of the government. The goals, objectives, and strategies for Transit and Grants Division, include the following:

Goal 1: Provide the greatest level of fixed-route transit service possible in Fiscal Year 2014 with available local, state and federal funds as identified in the locally adopted Transit Development Plan**.**
    Objective: To identify dedicated funding source for fixed route operations.
    Action/Strategies:
        a. In conjunction with County's contract transit service provider, propose and develop partnerships with municipalities.
        b. Increase 2014 advertising revenue by 10% over 2013.
        c. Examine existing routes to identify efficiencies to reduce operating costs and examine existing fixed-route service for improvements that would encourage increased ridership.

Goal 2: Keep operating costs of paratransit and fixed-route transit service at lowest possible level.
    Objective: To continue to encourage paratransit rider shift to fixed-route service.
    Action/Strategies:
        a. Increase public awareness/education of fixed-route system through advertising, public service announcements and other appropriate avenues as funding permits.

Goal 3: Maintain compliance with all rules and regulations as applicable to state and federal grant programs.
    Objective: To continually review, revise and update all plans and policies to ensure compliance with FTA/FDOT requirements.
    Action/Strategies:
        a. Continue to use the WFRPC to assist with transit development.
        b. Update the Board as necessary regarding any evolving opportunities and challenges.

Okaloosa County Planning Profiles

In 2013, the Okaloosa County Department of Growth Management Planning and Zoning Division developed planning profiles for 10 "planning areas" in the county. The profiles contain a series of maps and tables with information like general demographics, existing and future land use, land characteristics, subdivisions, transportation, community facilities, public schools, and capital facilities needs assessment. The transportation facilities section summarize the AADT volumes at FDOT counting stations, as well as past and future LOS levels at those stations. The County road system is also briefly summarized.

City of Crestview 2020 Comprehensive Plan (Amended September 2012)

The City of Crestview's Comprehensive Plan outlines the importance of coordinating and planning with the WFRPC, FDOT, the MPO, and the County to improve the transportation system. Coordination efforts include the identification of potential transit stops and park-and-ride lots. Crestview has implemented an MMTD in the downtown. The comprehensive plan identifies the need to place public transit facilities within an appropriate radius from residential development in the MMTD, especially medium-density and high-density areas, to enhance the public transit system.

To mitigate the impacts of new development, the City uses impact fees to help fund system improvements, including transportation. Alternately, the City can require developments to construct road improvements during the development review process. Although the City does not operate transit services, nor does it have plans to, the importance of coordinating with transit are outlined in several policies, including Section 6.08: Impact fees, where "the City council may impose impact fees on development to assist in covering the costs of needed improvements to all systems, including roads improvements … and implementation of an express transit service between Crestview and Eglin Air Force Base, or other military installations in the area." The City recognizes that SR 85 has the most congested road.

City of Crestview Code of Ordinances

The Crestview LDC has no specific provisions for transit or multimodal districts. However, the City reserves the right to use the proportionate share program for transportation improvements such as transit in the MMTD. In July 2012, the Crestview City Council voted to begin amending the City's comprehensive plan to drop transportation concurrency, thereby eliminating the proportionate fair share that would generate funds from permitted developments. The City's traffic impact fee for development are used only for the purchase of capital improvements consisting of land, design costs, and construction costs for public roadways per all applicable standards in effect.

City of Fort Walton Beach Comprehensive Plan (February 2011)

The goals for the City of Fort Walton Beach's transportation system include providing for a safe, energy-efficient, cost-effective, and uncongested multimodal transportation system. The City has implemented a TCEA that is coterminous with the Fort Walton Beach Community Redevelopment Area and will provide transit stops and sidewalk access within the CRA when a fixed-route transit service is implemented. The City's policy is to continuously access the multimodal needs and to coordinating with Okaloosa County in the provision of transit services.

Fort Walton Beach Land Development Code

Although the Fort Walton Beach LDC does not have specific transit provisions for certain types of development, it has implemented a TCEA with rules that could enhance transit services. As a part of the

TCEA mobility requirements, developments must obtain a minimum number of points, depending on the site's net average daily trip generation. For example, the City allows developers to obtain 20 points for the construction of an Okaloosa County transit bus shelter. Developers also can optionally add transit stops if their development is outside of the TCEA. Other transit-supportive policies include the allowance of accessory uses in certain land uses; residential multi-family (low- to medium-density) zoning districts, mixed business and manufacturing districts, mixed-use districts, commercial zoning districts, commerce and technology park districts may have onsite amenities such as recreation facilities, carports, parking garages, parking lots, and transit stops. The LDC also allows for density and intensity bonuses of up to 1.5 times the maximum density and density of a land use in the R-2, MX-1, MX-2, CG, and MB zoning districts. Table E-4 highlights some of the bonuses points available as they relate to multimodal development. Bonus points can be gained if developers provide annual transit passes to building occupants.

Table E-4: Development Features Available and Corresponding Bonus Points

Category	Points			
	R-2	MX-1	MX-2	CG/MB
Provision of annual transit passes to 25% or more of building occupants beyond the requirements of this LDC	20	15	15	15
Provision of annual transit passes to 50% or more of building occupants beyond the requirements of this LDC	25	20	20	20
Mix of uses within one building AND	NA	20	20	NA
Mix of uses within one building provides retail and/or office on ground floor AND offices and/or residential units on upper floor(s)	NA	10	10	NA

Source: Fort Walton Beach Land Development Code: Development Standards

City of Valparaiso Comprehensive Plan and Code of Ordinances

Like the City of Crestview, the City of Valparaiso does not have goals, objectives, or policies relating to mass transit, as there is no mass transit system within the city, nor is one planned during the planning period. The Transportation Element of the comprehensive plan outlines the City's objectives in maintaining consistency with the Future Land Use Map and the Future Traffic Circulation Maps. The plan highlights its supporting role in the participation in the county's Five-Year Transit Development Plan, "especially in the numerical indicators against which the achievement of the mobility goals of the community can be measured." The City also establishes participatory role in the development of the MPO 2020 plan "as they address establishment of transportation demand management programs to modify peak hour travel demand and reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled per capita within the community and region."

City of Valparaiso Land Development Code

The LDC does not contain provisions for transit. The municipality uses a traditional roadway concurrency method established in FDOT's *Florida Highway Systems Plan Level-of-Service Standards and Guidelines*

Manual. Where capacity is shown to be deficient, developers may use the following methods to maintain adopted levels of service:

- The developer may agree to provide necessary capacity improvements to maintain levels of service. In such case, the planned activity must be modified to guarantee no degradation of existing capacity in accordance with subsection (2) of this section.
- The planned activity may be reduced in scope so that demand does not exceed capacity.
- The developer may petition the City to provide required infrastructure to maintain LOS using the processes outlined in Chapter 90 for such a request. This is to provide only an option for consideration by the planning and advisory board and city commission. Such a request, which must be financed from the general fund, can be granted only under the following conditions:
    - o Planned activity will result in multiple benefits for the community whether economic, cultural, recreational, or social.
    - o If such an expenditure is authorized, the resulting capacity improvement must be available to any other developer who may have been previously denied a development order for an identical capacity deficiency

City of Destin Comprehensive Plan 2020 and Land Development Code

As the first city in the state to adopt an MMTD, the City of Destin is a leader when it comes to promoting transit. The majority of the city is within the Old Destin MMTD or the Crystal Beach MMTD, as illustrated in Figure E-3.

Figure E-3: City of Destin Multimodal Transportation Districts
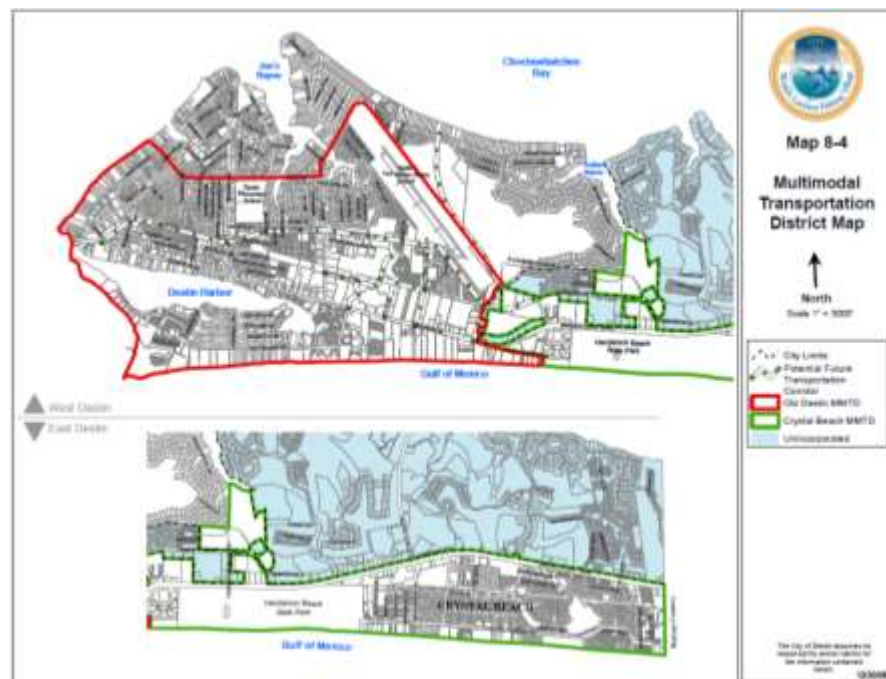
The Comprehensive Plan extensively outline policies to promote higher densities, walkability, transit and redevelopment. For example, the Future Land Use Element has designated the special planning areas to enhance the Multimodal Transportation Districts with high density and intensity development thresholds that are transit supportive: Calhoun, Harbor CRA, North and South Harbor, East Harbor, Holiday Isle, Town Center CRA, Gulf Resort, Bay Resort, and Crystal Beach. The Future Land Use Element includes the framework for its incentive program for height, intensity, and density bonuses. The incentive program works in a three tiered system of regulatory measures to promote public-private partnerships and the comprehensive plan objectives for quality developments, particularly for major activity centers contributing to potential transit ridership. Tier 3 allows the highest building height and density thresholds for developments that provide a "public benefit". Specific examples of "public benefit" promoted by the Tier 3 thresholds include "Creating and/or Reinforcing a Pedestrian Friendly Transit System." The program establishes design standards for buildings, entryways, ground floor elevations, off-street parking locations, pedestrian walkways and linkages, bikeways, and street furniture that explicitly promote walking, bicycling, and transit.

Like most municipalities, the City of Destin adopted LOS standards for its roadways, but has also adopted current and future LOS standards for bicycle, pedestrians, and transit within their MMTD boundary. The City plans to increase its transit LOS from a level E to C in 2020 in the MMTD, as listed in the Table E-5. The adopted LOS for transit in the Harbor Boulevard/US Highway 98 East/Emerald Coast Parkway is also set to increase from LOS C to B in 2020, as shown in Table E-6. The City also uses multimodal performance measures to evaluate the progress towards implementing the goals of the MMTD, including transit ridership on all transit services within the city, LOS as applied through ARTPLAN multimodal LOS analysis, and connectivity of transit based on the proportion of major activity centers served by fixed-route bus service.

Table E-5: Adopted Multimodal Level of Service Standards for Collector Roads

Year of Adoption	Bicycle LOS	Pedestrian LOS	Transit LOS
2006	C	E	F
2011	B	C	E
2020	B	B	C

Source: Destin Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Element, Objective 2-1.2

Table E-6: Adopted Multimodal Level of Service Standards for Harbor Boulevard/US Highway 98 East/Emerald Coast Parkway

Year of Adoption	Bicycle LOS	Pedestrian LOS	Transit LOS
2006	E	F	E
2011	D	D	C
2020	C	D	B

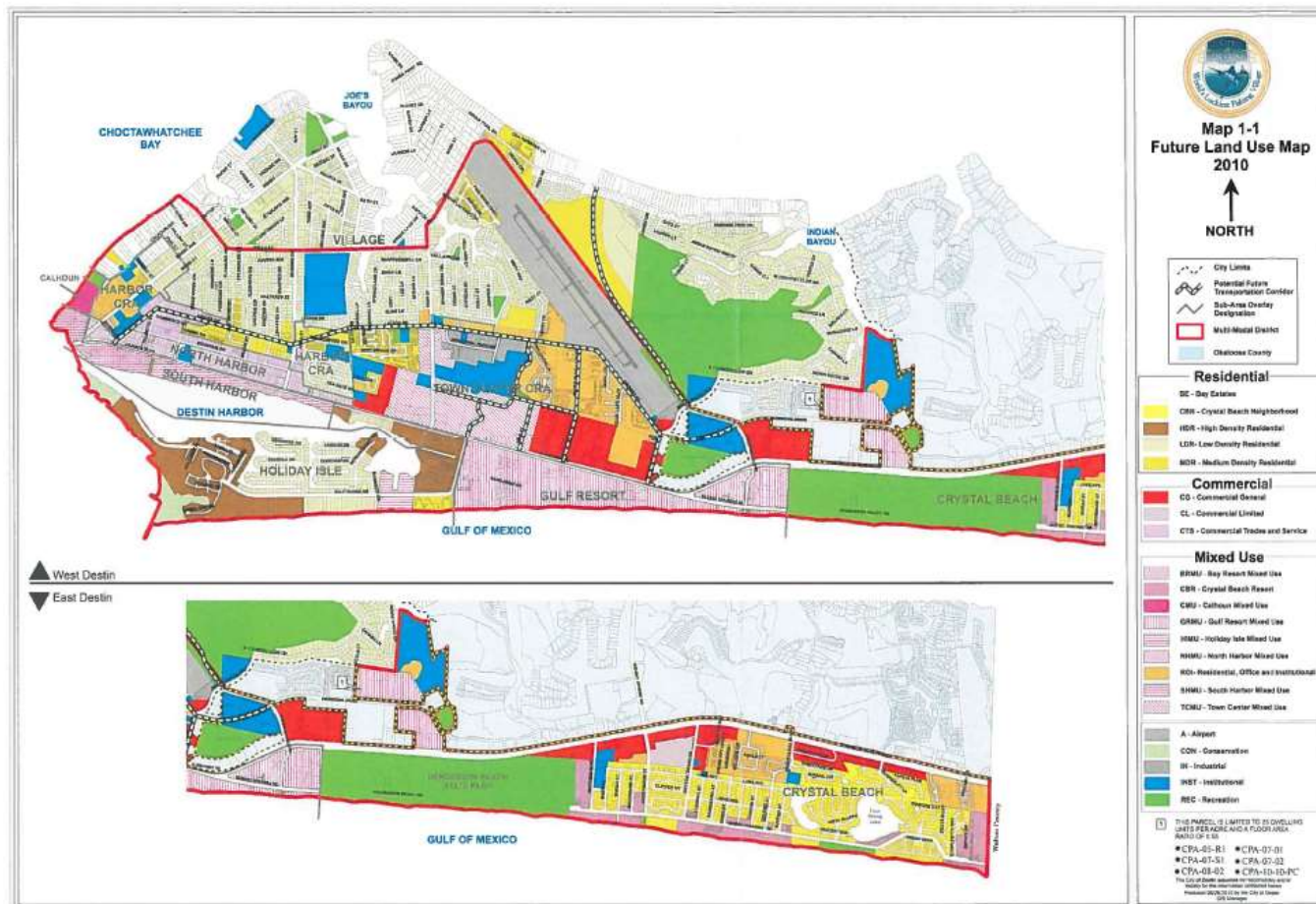Source: Destin Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Element, Objective 2-1.2

The Transportation Element requires developers to improve the roadway and provide transit stops as a way to support redevelopment objectives. Other objectives that promote and enhance transit performance include:

- Reducing of automobile mobility and vehicle miles traveled per person in the MMTD.
- Improving pedestrian and transit networks, increasing investments in sidewalks, cycling facilities and transit service.
- Coordinating with Okaloosa County to increase transit service, and development of the TDP.
- Continuing to dedicate or provide right-of-way or the provision of access to transit facilities.
- Potentially providing financial contributions towards the costs of expanding transit service coverage.
- Encouraging the implementation of private shuttle services as a component of planned development.
- Working with the School Board to find opportunities to collaborate on transit and bus routes for citizens and students, including providing bus stops near proposed school sites during the final approval process.
- Encouraging affordable housing, housing for special groups, and higher-density residential development along or near arterial and collector roads where future transit systems can more efficiently provide service.
- Identifying where and when visitors, workers, and residents are more likely to use transit services.

Destin's Future Land Use map, illustrated in Figure E-4, shows the different zones. The pink areas represent mixed use and are located primarily along major arterials and along the beach. The area surround Holiday Isle is zoned for high-density residential. Figure E-5 shows the existing and planned transit services in the city. The purple route would parallel the existing service to the south of it. Figure E-6 shows an example of Destin Transit Stop Locations from the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Figure E-4: City of Destin, Future Land Use Map

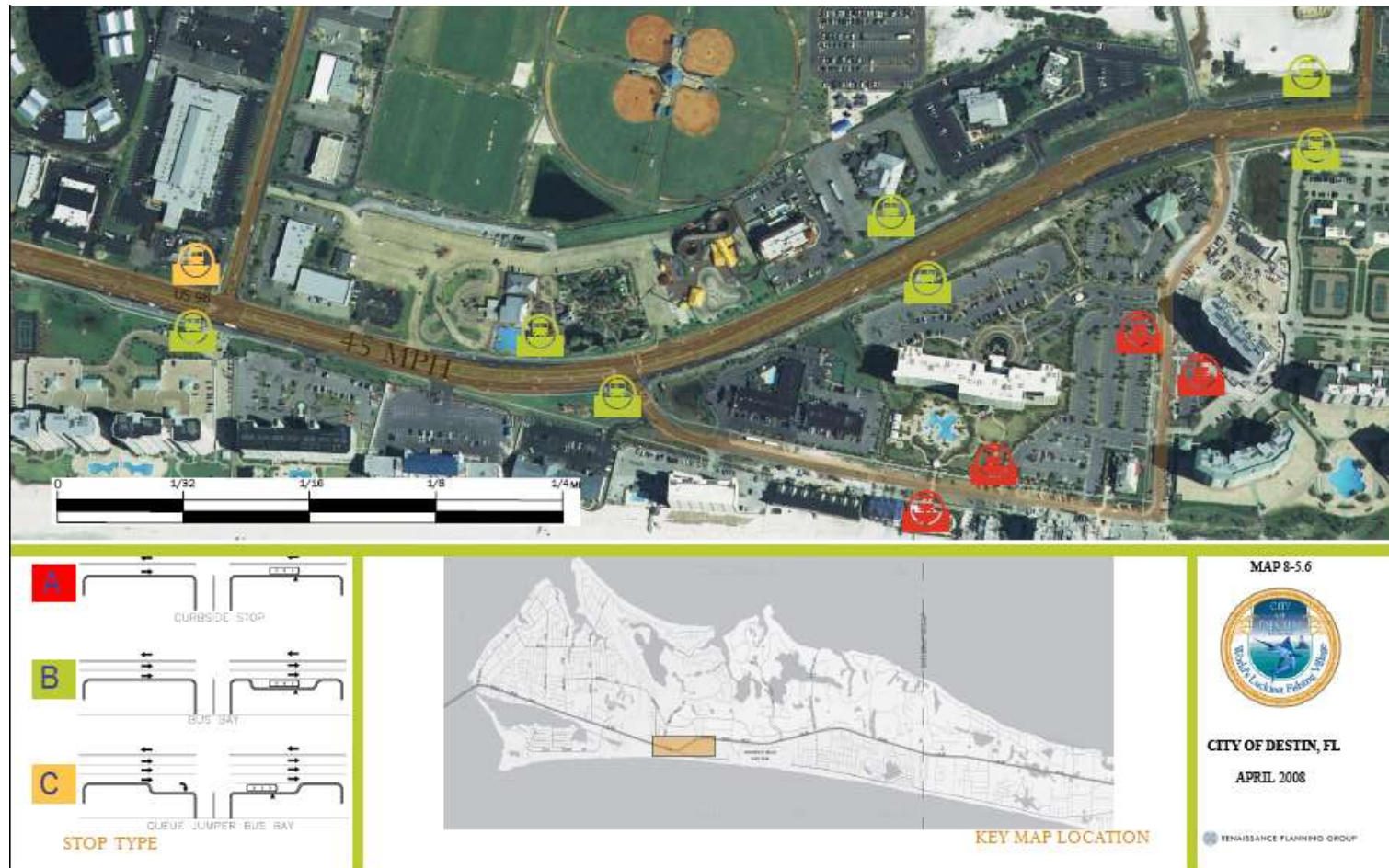Source: City of Destin Comprehensive Plan

Figure E-5: City of Destin, Existing and Proposed Transit Service

Source: City of Destin Comprehensive Plan

Figure E-6: Example of City of Destin Transit Stop Locations from Comprehensive Plan

Source: City of Destin Comprehensive Plan

City of Destin Land Development Regulations

The City adopted MMTD design standards for the pedestrian network and the transit network. The transit design standards include:

- Future transit stop locations.
- Providing a sidewalk connection for all developments located within one-quarter-mile radius of an existing or proposed transit stop.
- Requirements for a public ingress and egress easement for sites that have been identified as a transit stop.
- Transit stop amenities.
- Transit stop design that are one of three types: 1) curbside stops; 2) bus bay stops; and 3) queue jumper bus bay stops.
- Minimum waiting area dimensions.

Open space incentive program rules are specified in the LDC. Developments within the North Harbor, South Harbor, and Town Center Mixed Use districts, using the previously-mentioned Tiered Land Use System, can reduce their open space requirements from 25% to not less than 12% if they provide amenities such as a pedestrian information kiosk in conjunction with a mass transit pull off. Also, the total area provided for a transit stop will be given 100% credit for areas dedicated to the transit stop for developments on-site or adjacent to Harbor Boulevard/Emerald Coast Parkway. However, the reduction cannot be greater than the maximum allowed for the tier that the applicant is applying for approval of (Tier 2 = 12% or Tier 3 = 18%).

City of Niceville 2035 Comprehensive Plan (October 2010)

According to the Transportation Element of the City of Niceville's Comprehensive Plan, there is no mass transit within the city, nor is one planned during the planning period; thus, there are no provisions for transit. The City's policies for transit are limited to:

- Evaluating the lot usage for the existing park-and-ride lots.
- Reviewing the recommendations in the WFRPC West Florida Park & Ride Lot Planning Guide to determine how to promote existing usage and where to establish new park--and-ride lots if analysis warrants the need for such facilities.
- Participating in the Five-Year Transit Development Plan and ensuring that it addresses motorized and non-motorized access to all major attractors in Niceville, including intermodal terminals and access to aviation and rail facilities.
- Participating in the Okaloosa-Walton TPO LRTP.
- Encouraging "Master Planned Development" that following energy-efficient town planning principles to reduce VMT and vehicle emissions by encouraging other modes of transportation.
- Investigating the feasibility of implementing alternatives to roadway capacity, such as multimodal systems.

Appendix F: Recommended Performance Monitoring Program

Performance Measures and Indicators

Once the recommended transit services are implemented, the following fixed- and flex-route performance indicators and measures should be monitored by Okaloosa County on a quarterly basis as part of the recommended performance monitoring program.

- *Passenger Trips* – annual number of passenger boardings on the transit vehicles.
- *Revenue Miles* – number of annual miles of vehicle operation while in active service (available to pick up revenue passengers).
- *Revenue Hours* – total hours of operation by revenue service in active revenue service.
- *Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile* – the ratio of passenger trips to revenue miles of service. This is the key indicator of service effectiveness that is influenced by the levels of demand and the supply of service provided.
- *Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour* – the ratio of passenger trips to revenue hours of operation.

However, as a fixed-route type services typically take up to three years to become established and productive, the performance data up to that point should be reviewed and interpreted cautiously. While adjustments/modifications may occur, outright discontinuations based on performance monitoring data alone are discouraged.

Evaluation Methodology and Process

This process is based on two measures, trips per mile and trips per hour, which are weighted equally to derive an overall route score. A route's score for a particular measure is based on a comparison of the measure as a percentage of the system average for that particular measure. These individual measure scores are added together and divided by 2 to get a final aggregate score. This final composite performance score is an indication of a route's performance for all three measures when compared to the system average for those measures. A higher score represents better overall performance when compared to other routes.

The noted comparative performance evaluation can be beneficial, but care should be taken when using the final scores and rankings, because these figures are comparing routes to one another and may not reflect the specific goals established for a particular route (i.e., geographic coverage vs. ridership performance). The process is particularly useful, however, in highlighting those routes that may have performance-related issues. These routes can then be singled out for closer observation in future years to determine specific changes that may help mitigate any performance issues.

Once a route score is determined, routes can be ranked to show the highest performing and lowest performing routes. The rankings are a useful proxy for determining the comparative performance of any

route, as well as highlighting changes in performance over time. To track the performance variation over time, three performance levels have been developed:

- *Level I – Good (≥ 75%)* – Routes in this category are performing efficiently compared with the average level of all the agency's routes.
- *Level II – Monitor (30–74%)* – Routes in this category exhibit varying levels of performance problems and need more detailed analysis (e.g., ridechecks, on-board surveys, increased marketing efforts, etc.) to aid in identifying specific changes that can be made to help improve the route's performance.
- *Level III – Route Modification or Discontinuation (≤ 29%)* – Routes in this category exhibit poor performance and low efficiency. Recommendations for these routes may include truncation of the route, reduction in the route's number of revenue hours, or discontinuation of the route.

Figure F-1 illustrates the three evaluation levels and notes the recommended thresholds for each level.

Figure F-1: Evaluation Levels