

4 Where do we go from here?

Let's Start A Public Conversation

This Draft Plan is intended to start a public conversation about the future of the RideKC network in Kansas City, MO. We would like the community to help us decide on the highest and best use of KCMO transit funds.

KCATA will take a number of outreach actions in February and March 2020 to assess the community's reaction to this proposal, and determine next steps.

The goal is to hear from as many people as possible. Let us know what you think by taking the survey at RideKCNext.org by March 16, 2020!

In late March, KCATA will summarize the results of the public's answers to these questions, and request direction from its Board of Directors on the steps to take to achieve a Final Plan. Depending on public reaction and policy direction, KCATA may adjust the Final Plan. Assuming that there are no major roadblocks, **KCATA would implement the Final Plan in the fall of 2020.**

Question no. 1

Does this Draft Plan achieve the right balance between the goal of maximizing ridership (most service in areas where many people are likely to use it often) **and coverage** (a little service in as many places as possible)?

- **No.** Pursue even more frequent service in the urban core, even if more areas would lose service.
- **Yes.** The plan strikes about the right balance between these two competing goals.
- **No.** Keep the existing balance.
- **No.** Increase coverage to more outlying areas, even if transit would be less frequent useful for fewer trips.

Key Choice no. 1: Ridership vs. Coverage.

The most basic choice in redesigning the transit network is the degree to which the transit system should be pursuing ridership or coverage.

- Maximizing ridership means providing more service in the areas where many people are likely to use transit often.
- Maximizing coverage means spreading out a little service to as many places as possible.

How are our resources spent today?

About half of existing transit service in KCMO is oriented toward ridership, and half is oriented toward coverage. There's nothing technically wrong or right about this balance. Rather, it's a question of values: what is more important to you?

In a fixed budget, the transit network can't change much if the balance doesn't shift. Any decision to invest more in ridership is a decision to invest less in coverage, and vice versa.

Does the plan shift resources in the right direction?

Based on public and stakeholder input, this Draft Plan proposes a limited shift toward serving the ridership goal, and away from extensive coverage. **This Draft Plan proposes 60% of resources for ridership, and 40% for coverage.** As presented in Chapter 2:

- There would be more frequent East-West routes, south of the Missouri River between Downtown and 47th Street/Blue Parkway.
- There would be more frequent weekend service on Main Street, Troost Ave, Prospect Ave, Independence Ave, 12th Street, 31st Street, 39th Street and 47th Street/Blue Parkway.
- Some lower-frequency routes in the urban core would disappear, including on 9th Street, the Troost Local, Woodland-Brooklyn and SW Trafficway. These routes mostly duplicate service that would be provided more frequently less than 1/4-mile away.
- Some outlying areas with low ridership would be served at lower frequencies, or with Flex service, or not at all, such as:
 - ▶ Lower frequencies: Wornall Road south of 75th Street, Highway 40 to Blue Ridge Crossing.

- ▶ Flex service only: Crestview, Winnwood/Maple Park/Gracemor, East Gladstone.
- ▶ No service: Truman Medical Center-Lakewood, Lake Waukomis/N Green Hills Drive.
- There would be fewer trips on some peak-only routes, particularly Routes 29 (Blue Ridge Limited) and 571 (Hwy 71)

In other words, **this Draft Plan would make transit more useful to the people likely to use it most often, but slightly fewer people would be able to use transit at all.** As presented in Chapter 3:

- +19% more KCMO residents and +8% more KCMO jobs would be near frequent service, coming every 15 minutes or better.
- In an hour or less door-to-door, the average KCMO resident could access +7% more jobs on weekdays, and +22% more jobs on Saturdays using transit.
- Conversely, -1.5% fewer KCMO residents and -1% fewer KCMO jobs would be near any transit service at all.

What if the plan had gone in the opposite direction?

If this plan had been oriented toward shifting resources more toward coverage, the following outcomes would likely have resulted:

- Fewer frequent routes, and reduced frequency even on MAX.
- More infrequent service. More bus routes would run once every hour or less. Proposed evening and weekend service reduced from current levels.
- More service to outlying, low-density and isolated areas, especially in the Northland, south of 85th Street and east of I-435. This would likely be a mix of new infrequent bus routes and more Flex service.
- In other words, if this Draft Plan had gone in the opposite direction, the proposed network would be less useful to the people likely to use transit often, but more people would be near a minimum level of transit service.

Key Choice no. 2: What Should The Main Purpose of Coverage Service Be?

When people ask for coverage service, it tends to be for two main reasons:

- **Service to areas where people need it more.** Coverage-oriented transit provides a transportation option to people with few choices, when they are located in places where high-ridership service would not go.
- **Service to as many areas as possible.** Everyone in KCMO pays sales taxes dedicated to transit service, so one can argue that every neighborhood in KCMO deserves some service in proportion to its population, regardless of the level of need.

How are our resources spent today?

The existing network reflects the historic need to balance generally higher levels of need south of the Missouri River, with the continued development and growing population in the Northland.

Generally speaking, most coverage services are being provided in areas where a relatively high number of households are low-income or do not own a car. But KCATA has also sought to provide some service as far as possible into relatively prosperous suburban areas, such as the I-29 corridor to the Airport, Shoal Creek Parkway going toward Liberty, or Wornall Road south of I-435 to Martin City.

Does the plan shift resources in the right direction?

Based on public and stakeholder input, this Draft Plan proposes to continue focusing coverage service mostly toward high need areas.

Because the overall resources for Coverage would decline (see page 43), this means **the plan focuses on avoiding coverage cuts to areas with many low-income and zero-vehicle households.**

As a result, there would be essentially no change in the number of low-income people located near transit, despite a -1.5% change in the total number of KCMO residents near transit.

What if the plan had gone in the opposite direction?

If the plan had been oriented toward spreading coverage service out to as many places as possible, regardless of need, the following outcomes would have resulted:

- More infrequent service. Most bus routes planned to run every 30 minutes in higher-need areas would run every 45 to 60 minutes, to free up the resources to reach more places.
- More service to far outlying areas, especially where there is significant population, though it may be spread out at very low density and with relatively low levels of need (e.g. north of Hwy 152). This would likely be a mix of new infrequent bus routes and more Flex service.

Key Choice no. 3: What's the Next Most Important Improvement?

Because this plan is operating in the short term and with a fixed budget, it leaves many desired and justifiable improvements to Kansas City's transit system on the table. But what if more resources were available? Page 34 describes which service improvements would be "next in line", if KCMO decided to dedicate more revenue to transit service.

- **On-Demand Service on Flex Routes.** Instead of requiring reservations to be called in a day ahead, people served by a Flex route could reserve a ride on the same day, with a phone call or smartphone app. This would serve low-density suburban areas where Flex routes operate.
- **Better service to Downtown.** This would extend the benefits of frequent service to areas that currently are on a bus route that comes every 30 to 60 minutes.
- **More frequent East-West routes,** in areas where they can connect with frequent North-South routes, such as on 18th, 63rd or 75th Streets. This would extend the area where transit can provide reasonably convenient travel in all directions.

Question no. 2

In the Draft Plan, most resources dedicated to coverage are spent on serving areas with higher needs, and fewer resources are spent to reach far outlying neighborhoods. Is that the correct balance?

- **No.** All coverage service should be oriented toward high-need areas.
- **Yes.** The plan strikes about the right balance.
- **No.** Spread coverage to a more areas of KCMO, regardless of need.

Question no. 3

If more resources became available, which of these improvements should come first?

- **On-Demand service on Flex routes** serving low-density suburban neighborhoods.
- **Better service to Downtown** in areas where the bus only runs every 30 to 60 minutes.
- **More frequent East-West routes** in areas where they can connect to frequent North-South routes.