

# CHAPTER 3 – REGIONAL PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

## Existing Regional Transit Network

Transit can be provided by a variety of methods, either publicly, privately, or a combination of these efforts. The ultimate goal is to create a system that provides the greatest mobility options and choices to get people to and from their destinations.

In Region 9, there is one fixed-route public transit system and one regional not-for-profit transit provider. Table 3.1 summarizes the number of vehicles, weekday and weekend hours of service, service frequencies, and adult basic fares.

**Table 3.1 – Public Transit Systems Information**

Transit System	Type of System	# of Routes	Total # of Vehicles	Weekday Hours	Weekend Hours	Service Frequency on Routes	Adult Basic Fare
Muscatine Transit System (MuscaBus)	Fixed-Route & Paratransit	4	12	6:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Saturday only	30 or 60 minutes by route	\$1.00
River Bend Transit	Demand Response	N/A	71	5:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., Evening Service 7:00 p.m. – Midnight (MPO only), 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Rural Scott County), 6:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (Muscatine County)	5:30 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Saturday only (MPO only)	Varies	Varies

Source: Muscatine Transit System & River Bend Transit System, 2025

### Muscatine Transit System (MuscaBus)

The City of Muscatine operates a fixed-route transit system, locally known as MuscaBus, and a door-to-door paratransit service within its municipal boundaries. Services are open to the general public, and principal clients are 12% elderly and 44% individuals with disabilities. Regular operating hours are 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturday. Fares for fixed-route trips are \$1.00 with free transfers and \$2.00 for paratransit shuttle rides, which must be scheduled a day in advance. Fixed-routes are displayed in Maps 3.1 and 3.3.

In addition to its regular hours of service, MuscaBus provides a nighttime commuter service from 5:30 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. Monday through Saturday. MuscaBus also provides services beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and operates from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Although monies are no longer provided through New Freedom funding dollars, the service provided by MuscaBus maintains the same name, the New Freedom Expanded Bus Service. Both services are funded by FTA money with a municipal match. Rides are demand-response and scheduled a day in advance. Same-day rides are provided if space

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is available. All rides are open to the general public and accessible to persons with disabilities. Fares for both routes are \$2.00. MuscaBus offers an additional year-round service that operates twice daily or by appointment from Muscatine City Hall to Drake Park in Fruitland, IA, as a good point of access for passengers on the southern end of Muscatine. The service operates late August through May annually with a fare of \$1.50 per ride or \$50.00 for a monthly pass.

MuscaBus operates a fleet of eleven light-duty buses. Three of them are 14-passenger, two are 16-passenger, two are 18-passenger, and the remaining four are 20-passenger buses. MuscaBus also operates one 9-passenger conversion van. All vehicles meet ADA standards, and four are equipped with bike racks to encourage multi-modal transportation. Currently, the City of Muscatine utilizes the city's Public Works Building as both the administrative and maintenance center for the transit system. The building is ADA accessible and was constructed in 1985. A new wash bay for MuscaBus vehicles is currently under construction and is expected to be completed in 2025.

In order to protect employees and prevent vandalism, MuscaBus has built fencing around its bus garage lot. To provide safety and security while buses are in use, a coding system has been developed that allows drivers to immediately contact a dispatcher should a problem occur. In addition, drivers also receive training on safety and security measures by local law enforcement. Surveillance systems are installed in all of the 12 vehicles, including in the four new replacement vehicles.

Table 3.2 displays an overall decrease in total passengers from 2009-2014 and then a more pronounced decrease from 2015-2019. This was followed by a dramatic drop-off in ridership in FFYs 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the last 3 years (2022-2024), there has been a steady increase in ridership, although still well below pre-COVID numbers. The decline in ridership due to the COVID-19 pandemic was accompanied by a similar decrease in total revenue hours, but revenue hours have also rebounded in the years following the pandemic.



*MuscaBus operates many routes, color coordinating them for ease of use by the public.*

**Table 3.2 – MuscaBus Ridership & Revenue Hours**

Fiscal Year	Total # of Passengers	Total # of Revenue Hours	Average # of Passengers Per Revenue Hour
2009	188,303	20,273	9.29
2010	172,306	19,804	8.70
2011	172,580	20,593	8.38
2012	188,277	20,644	9.12
2013	175,548	20,787	8.45
2014	179,919	20,418	8.81
2015	180,390	20,418	8.83
2016	168,712	21,323	7.91
2017	167,689	21,926	7.65
2018	156,209	21,817	7.16
2019	149,140	21,796	6.84
2020	115,727	17,901	6.46
2021	84,282	19,846	4.25
2022	96,986	20,523	2.73
2023	109,031	20,498	5.32
2024	110,715	20,478	5.41

Source: MuscaBus Transit System, 2024

**Table 3.3 – MuscaBus Fleet Information**

Vehicle Type	# Of Vehicles
14-passenger bus	3
16-passenger bus	2
18-passenger bus	2
20-passenger bus	4
9-passenger conversion van	1

Source: MuscaBus Transit System, 2025

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### *River Bend Transit, Inc.*

River Bend Transit, Inc. (RBT), is a not-for-profit corporation that has been designated by the counties per the Iowa Code, Chapter 324A, as the regional transit provider for the Counties of Muscatine and Scott in Region 9, as well as Cedar and Clinton Counties in Region 8. Its service area covers 2,157 square miles, and also includes trips to University Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City, Iowa. Map 3.2 illustrates the service area for River Bend Transit.

River Bend Transit utilizes a contractual relationship with counties, municipalities, social service agencies, and other organizations within its service area to provide curb-to-curb paratransit service to specific clients of these organizations and to the general public for medical appointments, work, school, and education trips. Principal clients are 13% seniors and 61% individuals with disabilities. Over 20 individual contracts are administered annually. In order to fulfill the specific and/or individual needs of the contracted agencies and their clients, routes are designed to handle their requests. Examples include door-to-door service, special hours of service, destinations, etc.

In the Quad Cities MPO, RBT operates from 5:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, as well as running an evening service taking riders to work from 7:00 p.m. to midnight. For rural Scott County, offers on-demand rides to Iowa City on Mondays, and rides from various towns in Region 9 to Davenport on Monday through Thursday (McCausland on Tuesday, Maysville, Donahue, and Long Grove on Wednesday, and Big Rock, Dixon, New Liberty, Plainview, and Walcott on Thursday). These rides are available from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. In Muscatine County, on-demand rides are offered to Iowa City on Monday and Wednesday through Friday, while rides are offered to Davenport on Tuesday and Friday. These rides are offered from 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Like all FTA Section 5311 rural public transportation funding recipients, the system must provide equal access to the general



*River Bend Transit is especially designed for ADA handicap purposes.*

public. However, services can be designated around the needs of specific population subgroups. The system's fares vary based on trip mileage and fees per contract. Most routes are suggested donation only for riders over 60 years old and disabled riders, which make up a significant majority of RBT's ridership. Same-day service is possible, but RBT recommends clients schedule trips at least one day in advance.

In addition to its regular hours of service, RBT began receiving supplemental funding from FTA for the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) in 1999. This program allowed RBT to offer extended evening and Saturday service through its JARC program. Designed to aid the transition from welfare-to-work, the service coordinates with fixed-routes in Bettendorf and Davenport for rides to work, job training, and related activities, such as childcare. Priority for rides is given to persons referred by social service agencies that participate in the planning and implementation of this service.

RBT's JARC funds were officially ceased in July 2014. For FY2015, the City of Davenport provided all of the funding for RBT's JARC service for Davenport residents. Effective in FY2016, the City of Davenport, took over RBT's JARC service contract with RBT to provide the service. This service operates from

7:00 p.m. to midnight Monday through Friday. Employment-related trips are also funded through the Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP) with the purpose of reducing the number of single-occupant vehicle trips between the urbanized Quad Cities and Muscatine.

A New Freedom program was implemented beginning in spring 2007 and offered services that went beyond ADA requirements. The service is no longer funded using New Freedom dollars, but still operates from 5:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The service accommodates Quad City Kidney Dialysis Center patients and also offers extended driver-assisted service, same day service, routine booking that exceeds 50% of scheduled trips, trips beyond the ¾-mile rider corridor, and flexibility to provide modification when necessary.

In FY2014, RBT was awarded an ICAAP grant for partial operation and partial capital (bus) funding with the goal of expanding RBT's Iowa City services. Initially, the service utilized three buses and provided trips Monday through Friday. After the grant was expended, operation has been reduced to a single trip on Monday where one bus travels to Iowa City in the morning and returns in the evening. This service assists in lowering the single-occupant trips traveling to and from Iowa City.

RBT has a 10-year replacement goal of its entire fleet. However, discretionary capital funding appropriated to Iowa is inadequate to meet this replacement schedule. The federal threshold for useful life of the types of vehicles RBT uses is four years or 100,000 miles. Typically, RBT cannot replace its vehicles until they are approximately 10-12 years of age and have accumulated 190,000+ miles. The extended use of vehicles results in higher maintenance and repair costs as the wear and tear on vehicles is magnified by the rural conditions of the service area. Table 3.5 provides current fleet information by vehicle type.

RBT uses state-of-the-art scheduling and mapping systems, allowing all vehicles to be in constant communication. Each vehicle is radio-equipped, and a global positioning system makes it possible to track each vehicle at all times. RBT has 24/7 video surveillance of its facility and grounds; security card access to parking lot gates; restricted/video surveillance buzz-to-open access to administration part of the facility. In addition, 7-foot barbwire fencing surrounds the RBT bus garage lot. Upon hire, drivers receive training on suspicious packages and behaviors that may indicate problems while in-route.

Table 3.4 displays River Bend's total annual ridership, revenue hours, and average passengers per revenue hour over a 15-year period. From 2009, to 2014, RBT's ridership fluctuated by increasing one year and decreasing the next. In 2014, RBT experienced a decrease in ridership by approximately 25 percent. The decline in ridership is attributed to RBT's contract ending with the Davenport Community Schools District in FY 2014. This steady decrease in ridership ended in 2017 when RBT saw a 13 percent increase, but because this increase coincided with a 27 percent increase in revenue hours, RBT still saw a decline in passengers per revenue hours. The decline in ridership continued steadily in 2018 and 2019 before being dramatically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020. Fiscal Year 2021 saw 58 percent fewer riders than 2019. Ridership numbers have since recovered, with FY 2023's total ridership exceeding that of 2019 and 2024's ridership being just below that pre-COVID mark. Ridership has also fluctuated over the 15 years in part due to changes in statewide Medicaid access. Because a significant amount RBT's users are Medicaid recipients whose coverage includes non-emergency medical transportation, changes to Medicaid benefits or eligibility requirements can have a noticeable impact on RBT's total ridership.

**Table 3.4 – River Bend Transit Ridership & Revenue Hours (MPO included)**

Fiscal Year	Total Passengers	Total Revenue Hours	Average Passengers Per Revenue Hour
2009	243,849	85,859	2.84
2010	208,389	70,616	2.95
2011	222,378	55,914	3.98
2012	206,602	63,024	3.28
2013	221,516	55,367	4.00
2014	194,121	46,408	4.18
2015	192,179	47,989	4.00
2016	188,061	49,619	3.79
2017	212,076	57,910	3.66
2018	195,621	64,058	3.05
2019	182,188	57,751	3.15
2020	149,631	50,189	2.98
2021	105,782	43,117	2.45
2022	164,524	55,525	2.96
2023	189,826	64,394	2.95
2024	179,348	61,405	2.92

Source: River Bend Transit, 2025

**Table 3.5 – River Bend Transit Ridership & Revenue Hours in Muscatine County**

Fiscal Year	Total Passengers	Total Revenue Hours	Average Passengers Per Revenue Hour
2009	4,270	2,105	2.03
2010	4,386	2,049	2.14
2011	3,812	1,942	1.96
2012	3,853	1,305	2.95
2013	3,822	1,605	2.38
2014	3,368	1,640	2.05
2015	3,766	1,746	2.16
2016	3,333	1,531	2.18
2017	2,782	1,172	2.37
2018	2,592	1,094	2.37
2019	2,316	1,053	2.20
2020	700	456	1.54
2021	443	505	0.88
2022	541	571	0.95
2023	950	926	1.03
2024	1,357	1,117	1.21

Source: River Bend Transit, 2025

**Table 3.6 – River Bend Transit Ridership & Revenue Hours in Rural Scott County**

Fiscal Year	Total Passengers	Total Revenue Hours	Average Passengers Per Revenue Hour
2009	1,821	1,076	1.69
2010	1,557	883	1.76
2011	1,158	676	1.71
2012	600	341	1.76
2013	1,618	778	2.08
2014	1,911	1,034	1.85
2015	5,434	2,869	1.89
2016	3,305	1,722	1.92
2017	937	660	1.42
2018	905	624	1.45
2019	1,146	718	1.60
2020	398	299	1.33
2021	978	669	1.46
2022	1,183	796	1.49
2023	890	736	1.21
2024	1,280	1,133	1.13

Source: River Bend Transit, 2025

**Table 3.7 – River Bend Transit Fleet Information**

Vehicle Type	# Of Vehicles
Buses with Lifts	69
ADA Minivans with ramps	2

Source: River Bend Transit, 2025

### *Other Providers*

In addition to River Bend Transit, there are hospitals, nursing homes, social service agencies, and for-profit providers in both Scott and Muscatine Counties providing specialized transit.

### **Non-Emergency Transport Inc. (NET)**

NET provides transportation services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for non-emergency trips. The service primarily frequents destinations, such as doctor and dentist appointments, hospitals and clinics, nursing homes, physical therapy centers, dialysis centers, and family or special events. Transportation for Medicaid patients is available as well as for non-emergency medical transportation. Medicaid covers rides to and from approved care visits. NET offers service to Muscatine and surrounding areas, including Iowa City, Davenport, and the Quad Cities for individuals in the community who are elderly and/or disabled. NET now has 14 wheelchair vans and nine non-wheelchair accessible vans. The company also has a 12-passenger limo bus, commonly used for wedding parties, large family transport, and local corporate gatherings. The limo service primarily offers rides for more local trips, such as entertainment purposes or visiting friends and family in the Muscatine area.

### *Other Regional Passenger Transportation Options*

#### **Commercial Aviation**

Residents in Region 9 have several air service options. Table 4.3 identifies the public airports in Region 9. For commercial freight air service businesses can use either the Eastern Iowa Airport in Cedar Rapids, Iowa or the Quad Cities International Airport in Moline, Illinois. The Eastern Iowa Airport offers five passenger carriers, including Allegiant Air, American Airlines, Delta Airlines, Frontier Airlines, and United Airlines.

The Quad Cities International Airport offers four passenger carriers, including Allegiant Air, American Airlines, Delta Airlines, and United Airlines. Quad Cities International Airport handled 326,888 enplanements in 2024, which was nearly a 20% increase from 2023, while Eastern Iowa Airport handled 759,978 enplanements in 2024, an approximate increase from 2023 of 10%.

#### **General Aviation**

For other general aviation needs, there are three general aviation airports in and near Region 9 located in Davenport, Iowa City, and Muscatine. The Iowa City airport is based outside of Region 9, but serves business interests in the region. General aviation airports are important to businesses, as they provide vital connections and access to their customers. These airports offer excellent opportunities for business flights for companies that own and operate their own aircraft. Both commercial airports in Cedar Rapids and Moline also offer general aviation services.

The Davenport Municipal Airport, a general aviation airport, is located in northern Davenport, Iowa providing basic transport with a full instrument landing system (ILS). The ILS runway is 5,511 ft. long, while the secondary runway is 4,001 ft. As of 2019, there were approximately 112 aircraft housed at the Davenport Municipal Airport and approximately 28,000 flights per year. The Muscatine Municipal Airport has runway lengths of 4,000 and 5,500 feet. There is an average of 14,850 flights per year with 31 aircraft based on the field. The Iowa City Municipal Airport has runway lengths of 5,002 ft. and 4,200 ft., with an average of 36,000 flights per year and 84 aircraft based on the field.

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*Muscatine Municipal Airport*

*Source: City of Muscatine*

**Table 3.8 – Public Airports in Region 9**

Airport	Location	F.A.A. Category	Highway Access	Runway Lengths
Eastern Iowa Airport	Cedar Rapids, IA	Commercial (Small Hub)	I-380	8,600 ft. 6,200 ft.
Quad Cities International Airport	Moline, IL	Commercial (Non-Hub)	I-74, I-280 U.S. 6 U.S. 150	10,002 ft. 7,301 ft. 3514 ft.
Davenport Municipal	Davenport, IA	General Aviation	U.S. 61 I-80	5,511 ft. 4,001 ft.
Muscatine Municipal	Muscatine, IA	General Aviation	U.S. 61	5,500 ft. 4,000 ft.

Source: Bi-State Regional Commission, Federal Aviation Administration, 2025

### **Passenger Rail**

Region 9 currently does not have passenger rail service. However, passenger rail can be accessed by Region 9 residents via stations in Kewanee or Galesburg, Illinois or Burlington, Iowa. Amtrak passengers use intercity bus service to make connections to the Quad Cities, which is not currently served by passenger rail, on Amtrak Thruway service.

In January 2008, Amtrak completed feasibility studies for passenger rail service between Chicago and the Quad Cities and for service between the Quad Cities and Iowa City. Both service initiatives were found to be most feasible along the Chicago-Naperville-Quad Cities route via Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Iowa Interstate railroad lines. Optimal service would be at 79 mph and take less than 3.5 hours from the Quad Cities to Chicago with two daily roundtrip departures from the Quad Cities and Chicago. Ridership is projected at 110,800 annual passenger trips. To initiate this service, a connection at Wyanet, Illinois was needed as well as decisions on stations, rolling stock availability, and service subsidies. In 2016, work was begun to reestablish passenger rail service between Moline, Illinois and Chicago. A passenger station has been constructed in Moline called “The Q” and is awaiting service to be established. Currently, Illinois Department of Transportation is completing the environmental work and engineering, and the ILDOT is seeking funds to complete the project. In 2025, the State of Illinois amended legislation to allow transit and passenger rail funding that will aid efforts to reduce the funding shortfall. The ILDOT is also looking at alternatives to the existing route if negotiations with the preferred route does not move forward.

In Iowa, a statewide advisory committee was formed in 2008 to further passenger rail service development in the state. The report on the route through Region 9 predicted 76,100 passengers annually from Quad Cities to Iowa City at 79 mph service speed. The Iowa

State Rail Plan includes an extended service to Iowa City, with the route running through Region 9, as a planned intercity passenger rail line. In the short-term when service is established to the Quad Cities, intercity bus may be an option to Iowa City from the Quad Cities

As passenger rail service is implemented, there will be a need for track and crossing improvements, which will benefit efficient freight movement by rail as well. As indicated in the passenger rail feasibility study by Amtrak between Quad Cities and Iowa City, significant improvements need to be made. “As is typical for any Midwest rail operations, there are numerous public at-grade street and highway crossings along the entire corridor and, in the more rural areas, private crossings as well. Although many are equipped with train activated devices, i.e., gates and/or flashers, there are still numerous crossings with only cross-buck signs. It is recommended discussions be initiated with the State of Iowa about any additional grade crossing warning devices or closures that may be deemed appropriate for the route.”

### **Regional Mobility**

#### ***Transit Development Plan***

A directive was given to coordinate transportation under President Bush’s 2004 Executive Order 13330 that established the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM). This group continues to actively update a strategic plan to that end. The plan serves to reduce duplication, improve cost efficiency, and simplify customer access to transportation for individuals with disabilities, seniors, and those with lower incomes. More information on CCAM can be found at: <https://www.transit.dot.gov/coordinating-council-access-and-mobility>.

To comply with federal requirements, Iowa Department of Transportation requires that Iowa’s 9 Metro-

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politan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and 18 Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs) develop Passenger Transportation Plans (PTPs). The process is designed to promote joint, coordinated passenger transportation planning programs that further the development of the local and regional public transportation systems. Public transportation systems in Iowa include the 35 public transit systems plus a wide array of human service and private transportation providers.

As a result, a passenger transportation plan was established locally. The *Bi-State Region Transit Development Plan* represents a coordinated effort by the region to provide information, guidance, and priorities for passenger transportation. The purpose of the plan is to provide a framework for efficient and effective transit services related to resource allocation, service development, coordination of services, and addressing gaps or service needs. Updated annually, the plan is based on input from local governments, human service agencies, transit operators, and the public.

### Transit Needs

A series of public input opportunities was used to identify the common transit issues faced by both users and providers in the region. The most common issues identified in these sessions were the need for extended hours and days of service, greater geographic coverage, availability of funding, affordability for the customers, access to medical services, and the need for education on services available. Barriers to effective transit service include fragmented systems, issues of complexity and lack of convenience, disconnections between needed destinations faced by commuters, lack of personal vehicles, and non-standard work hours.

Bi-State Regional Commission surveyed human service agencies in the Bi-State region for feedback on transit needs. These agencies provide resources to local residents, many of whom rely heavily on

transit. The survey asked human service professionals to describe some of the barriers their clients/patrons experience when utilizing transit options and to identify ways that they felt that transit could be improved in the region. Eight human service agencies responded to the survey, and it was found that clients of these agencies struggle with the following public transit related issues:

1. Limited/inflexible hours of operation
2. Limited routes, especially in rural areas
3. Cost and frequency of non-emergency medical transportation
4. Cost of bus fares/passes
5. Lack of awareness and understanding of transit options
6. Lack of coordination between service providers

Among accessing public transit, survey responses also alluded to more general barriers clients of human service agencies experience. These included issues related to low-income/financial barriers, lack of access to a personal vehicle, and lack of a driver's license for getting around.

Bi-State Regional Commission also sent out two public input surveys – one created by Bi-State independently and the other created by Bi-State in cooperation with the Muscatine Department of Public Health – in early 2025 to solicit feedback specifically from the public in Region 9 regarding issues in transportation in the region and ways that the public felt the system could be improved. The top issues in Region 9 identified by the public were:

1. Low frequency of buses and limited hours of operation
2. Need for buses and greater transit accessibility
3. Lack of rural buses and routes

4. Cost is prohibitive for some riders
5. Lack of transit options to industrial areas for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> shift workers

Agencies within Region 9 and the Bi-State Region as a whole are working to alleviate these common barriers by providing public transportation services outside of the regular business hours and extending further out from the inner-city areas, as evidenced by MuscaBus' continued JARC and New Freedom Expanded Bus Services described elsewhere in the chapter, as well as service to Drake Park in Fruitland. The transit systems aspire to improve the public's knowledge of their services through better mapping of service areas, the translation of existing materials into other languages, and improved websites. In addition, the systems work closely with human service providers who can help inform their clients of transit options.

### *Ridership Projections*

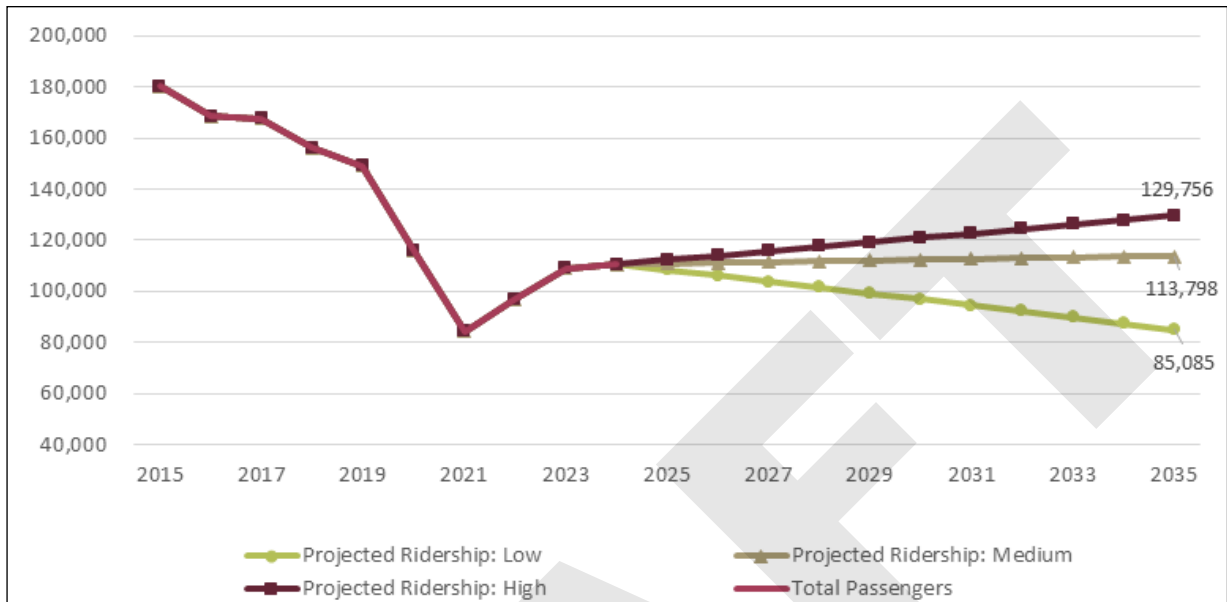
In past plans, Bi-State staff have used a yearly average increase within a linear regression formula to determine the projected outcomes for the next ten years. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic and the subsequent recovery, there were multiple outlier years for transit ridership that made this method unsuitable for projecting future ridership. Three methods of projecting ridership were used to project three possible trends for transit use in 2035 for MuscaBus. The first method calculated what a potential decrease in

transit ridership would look like by first calculating the change in per capita ridership from 2010 to 2019 (-0.1075 per year), and then projecting that the next decade would have the same rate of decrease, starting in 2024 (4.6862 rides per capita). The projected per capita ridership in 2035 (3.5037 rides per capita) was multiplied by the projected population of the city of Muscatine of 24,284 (the city currently projects an annual population growth rate of .25%) to give a final projected 2035 ridership of 85,085.

The second method projected what 2035 ridership would look like if the ridership per capita remained stable by projecting that the 2024 ridership per capita (4.6862) would remain constant until 2035. Accounting for the projected population growth, this gives a projected 2035 ridership of 113,798.

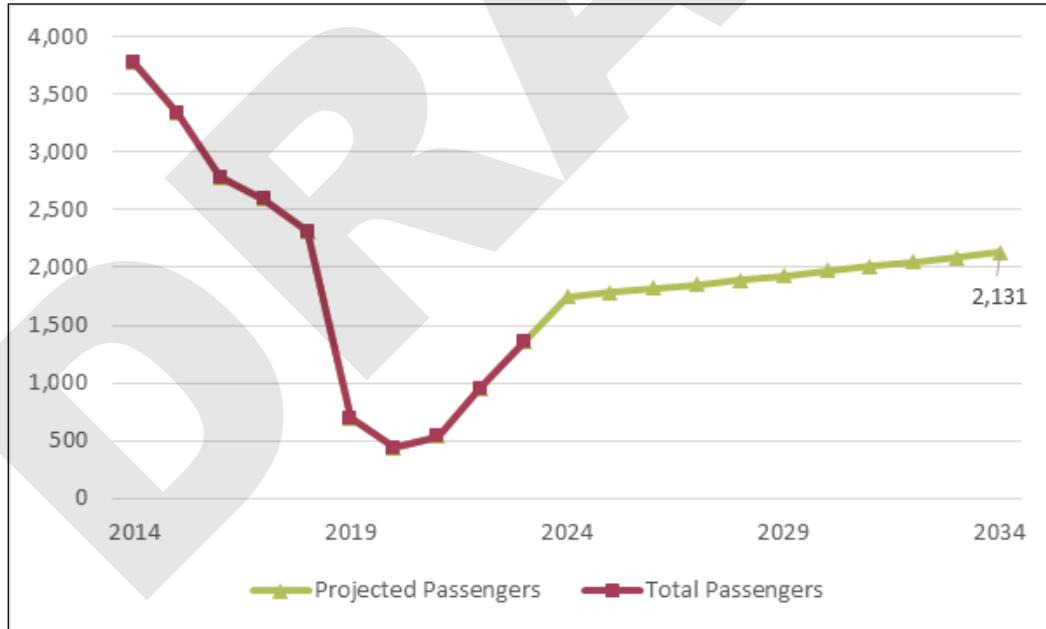
The third method projected a modest increase in ridership over the next decade by taking the increase in per capita ridership between 2023 and 2024 (0.0597 rides per capita) and projecting that increase over the next 10 years. That method gave a projected 2035 ridership of 129,756. Figure 3.1 the projected ridership for MuscaBus through 2035 according to these three methods. River Bend uses its own internal methods for ridership projections. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 show these projections for Muscatine County and rural Scott County, respectively.

**Figure 3.1 – 10-Year MuscaBus Ridership Projections**

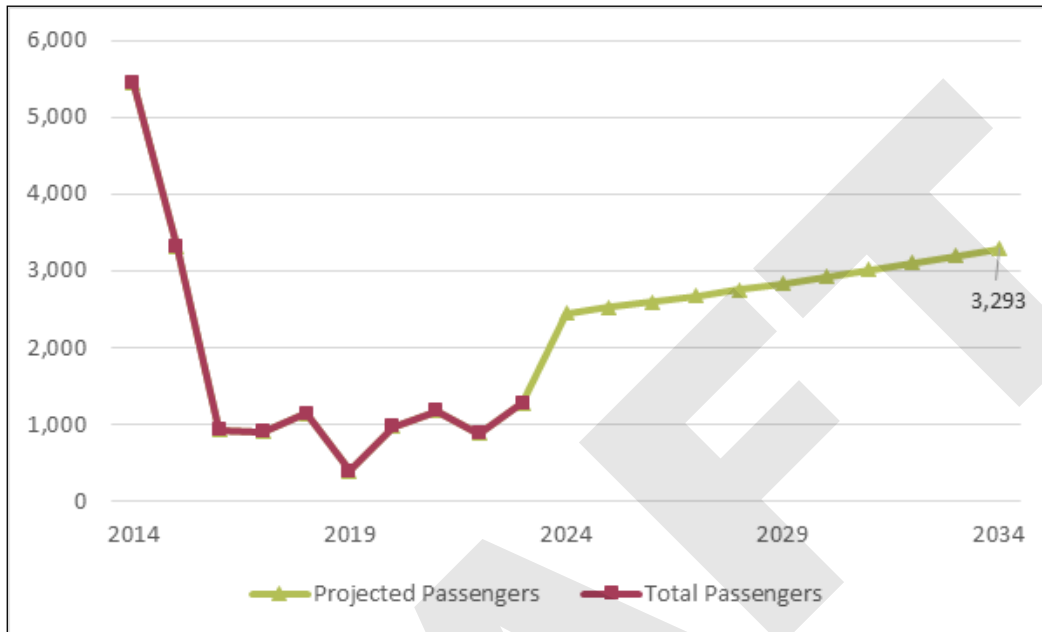


Source: Muscatine Transit System and Bi-State Regional Commission, 2025

**Figure 3.2 – 10-Year River Bend Transit Ridership Projections (Muscatine County)**



**Figure 3.3 – 10-Year River Bend Transit Ridership Projections (Rural Scott County)**



Source: River Bend Transit System, 2025

Many variables can impact transit ridership and revenues. The privatization of Medicaid and funding limitations for Medicaid waiver individuals in 2018 led to a significant drop off in ridership statewide. Public transit agencies across the state reported reductions in the number of trips by Medicaid waiver riders, leading to a reduction in revenue. This drop off in ridership was greatly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Ridership in Region 9 has been increasing since the pandemic, but has yet to recover to pre-COVID levels.

It is also important to note that RBT is under contract with other service providers, resulting in a number of rides provided by RBT to be counted as a passenger ride under another service. For example, all para-transit rides provided by RBT are under contract with either Davenport CitiBus or Bettendorf Transit, and are calculated under their respective city's ridership.

### *Programs for Mobility*

The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO-20-205, January 7, 2020) found factors adversely affecting rural transit coordination include availability of resources, availability of formal coordinating mechanisms, alignment of program requirements, and long distances. Under SAFETEA-LU, state-level human services coordination groups were established, and human services coordination plans (Bi-State Region Transit Development Plan) were created to assess and identify better ways to coordinate resources and ultimately improve mobility. The GAO study found that while FTA has provided technical assistance and funding for mobility, there is still more work needed with federal interagency coordination, and with methods to coordinate trips.

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### Job Access

Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) was a program of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) initiated in 1998 to address transportation barriers identified by the welfare reform movement, and was repealed in 2012 under MAP-21. Projects formerly eligible under the program remain eligible for FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307) and the Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) under the FAST Act. These funds can be utilized to address a geographic gap between concentrations of low-income persons and new jobs where access to work is difficult for those without reliable transportation. In an effort to make the best use of existing public transit systems, a human services passenger transportation plan was developed, and efforts were made to review how individuals supported by human services funding could direct funds to include transit as an option for mobility.

Lack of transportation is a major barrier for job access. Public transit can assist persons who find jobs near the regular stops; however, the complication of also getting children to childcare often prohibits its use. Currently, public transit has difficulty mobilizing quickly to meet changing work force demands and nontraditional hours. Transportation subsidies to recipients from social service agencies cover a portion of operational expenses and do not cover repairs needed to make their cars reliable.

River Bend Transit and MuscaBus continue to offer extended hours of service to cater to those working nontraditional work hours. MuscaBus continues to operate a nighttime commuter service Monday through Saturday from 5:30 p.m. to midnight. River Bend Transit provides extended hours of service to low-income persons referred by partnering social service agencies for work-related activities. This service coordinates with existing fixed-route services in Davenport and Bettendorf whenever possible. Since FY2016, Davenport has acted as lead agency for

RBT's JARC service, but contracts with RBT to provide the service. The dial-a-ride service fills the gaps in fixed-route service by addressing the nontraditional hours and extra trips for child care. MuscaBus has a curb-to-curb service that uses FTA funds matched with municipal funds to provide extended hours of service. The nighttime commuter service operates Monday through Saturday from 5:30 p.m. until 12:00 a.m.

### Access for All

The New Freedom program was legislated under SAFETEA-LU to help Americans with disabilities overcome existing mobility barriers. The program was later repealed under MAP-21. Today there is a shift to utilize existing funding sources and provide access to all persons. The New Freedom program was initiated to reduce barriers to transportation services and expand the transportation mobility options available to people with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The U.S. State Department launched an Access for All program in 2020 to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Efforts continue in Region 9 to provide a quality transit experience for all riders.

FTA's current Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility focuses on maintaining and improving mobility for individuals with disabilities and for seniors. MuscaBus operates an evening service that operates Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. called New Freedom. Although Enhanced Mobility funds for this service have expired (formerly 5317), the service's name remains the same, but is now funded under FTA money with a municipal match. As ridership increases, it may be necessary to hire an additional driver and purchase an additional vehicle to meet service demands. River Bend Transit continues its Enhanced Mobility program, providing transportation beyond ADA requirements for seniors and individuals with disabilities. The service operates Monday

through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and crosses seamlessly between Davenport and Bettendorf with door-to-door pick-ups. The route offers additional services, including extended driver assisted service, same day service, routine booking that exceeds 50% of scheduled trips (no special application to qualify), bus travel beyond ¾-mile rider corridor, and flexibility to modify when necessary.

### **United We Ride**

In 2004, President George W. Bush signed Executive Order 13330 requiring coordination of human services transportation service across more than 60 federally-funded programs. Today, the program coordinates with more than 80 federal funding programs to support transportation. United We Ride is a federal initiative with a mission *“to improve the availability, quality, and efficient delivery of transportation services for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes.”* The Executive Order specifically calls for federal agencies to simplify access for consumers, enhance efficiencies, and reduce duplications in federal rules and regulations. To accomplish this task, United We Ride builds opportunities for federal, state, and local partners to work together to accomplish these objectives.

Through the United We Ride Program, state-coordination grants, technical assistance for states and local communities, policy analysis, and other key initiatives have sought to address transportation gaps for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with lower incomes. The legacy of United We Ride is FTA’s Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility and its 2019 strategic plan for equal access for all Americans. FTA offered funding in 2020 for Mobility for All Pilot Program Grants to improve mobility and access to public transportation for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals of low income.

### ***Regional Coordination***

#### **From JARC to Human Services Coordination**

In the Quad Cities Area between 1995 and 1998, human service and transportation service providers had identified the same barriers, as were later identified federally with the initiation of the Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) Program in 1998. Bi-State Regional Commission used the information supplied in this collaboration to prepare an area-wide JARC plan. River Bend Transit submitted an application for JARC funding subsequent to the plan development process. The resulting JARC program began service in late November 1999. Starting with one van providing after hours and weekend service, the program has continued to grow.

MuscaBus has also continued to utilize a JARC-like program, targeting low-income individuals, public assistance recipients, and persons with disabilities who have transportation needs. MuscaBus continues to transport persons to child-care destinations and job-readiness classes. The objective is to provide transportation to as many individuals as possible in order to help them become more independent and self-sufficient. All of the services are ADA-accessible. The only gaps in service are between midnight and 6 a.m. and major holidays. Requests for trips on Sundays are limited; therefore, implementing the extension of JARC-like services to include Sunday service would not be cost-effective at this time.

#### **Iowa Transit Coordinator Position**

From 2002 to 2004, River Bend Transit along with the two other transit systems in the Iowa Quad Cities evaluated the feasibility of creating consolidated transit operations. The report determined that incremental steps toward consolidation would include separating coordination of planning and marketing from coordination of operations and management. Coordinated planning and marketing activities for the

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Iowa Quad Cities would provide a more seamless service structure, promote area transit without the need to restructure, foster cooperation, and interline bus services between jurisdictions. As part of the implementation, the three systems supported a transit coordinator position jointly to facilitate planning efforts, marketing, and progress toward consolidation until the contract concluded in July 2017. Bi-State Regional Commission initiated quarterly transit manager meetings between the urban systems and River Bend Transit to facilitate coordination in lieu of a dedicated coordinator position.

### Future Regional Transit Network Priorities

The *Bi-State Region Transit Development Plan (TDP)* is a document that evaluates transit needs and policy direction. Common transit issues identified in the 2018 TDP update continue to include the following needs: better education and marketing of services; extended hours and days of service; geographic coverage; funding and resources for service providers; non-emergency medical transportation; transit-friendly infrastructure; cross-boundary territorial issues; and need for drivers and volunteers. There will be continued progress on access for all and access to jobs as part of the region's transit priorities.

#### *Network and System Preservation*

##### Management

Management needs include those related to staffing levels, office equipment, and policy board arrangements. Both MuscaBus and River Bend Transit propose continued funding for administrative and maintenance equipment in order to meet client demands.

##### Operating

Existing fixed-route transit and regional transit providers will require on-going funding for operations. In 2020, additional operational assistance under the

global pandemic helped sustain the systems and retrofit buses to improve protections of the driver and passengers from spreading the COVID-19 virus. In Region 9, the systems receive both state and local assistance to support transit operations. Both MuscaBus and River Bend Transit propose the continuation of their late-night commuter services as funds are available. These efforts will accomplish this goal by reducing the number of single occupant vehicle trips in the region, providing transportation to and from work or work-related locations, and providing transportation beyond ADA requirements.

##### Capital needs

There are a number of capital needs in Region 9 for maintaining existing fleets and also for replacement and/or the expansion of fleets to meet service demands. A large majority of the expected capital needs will be to maintain existing fleets. Both systems participate in the Iowa DOT's transit asset management plan. In the future, it may be necessary to expand current parking, maintenance, and/or administrative facilities based on ridership growth and an increase in vehicle size.

##### Fleet Utilization and Replacement

Replacement of accessory equipment (cameras, fare-boxes, wheelchair lifts, etc.) is included under this category. Fleet utilization is based on a vehicle utilization analysis to indicate whether the need is currently being met by each transit provider. Fleet replacement cycles for Region 9 range from 5 to 15 years, depending on the system. RBT has a 10-year replacement goal of its entire fleet. However, discretionary capital funding appropriated to Iowa is inadequate to meet this replacement schedule. The extended use of the vehicles results in higher maintenance and repair costs as the wear and tear on vehicles is magnified by rural conditions of the service area.

## **Safety & Security**

Since SAFETEA-LU, transportation acts have emphasized the need to include improved security of those individuals who choose to use public transportation in the planning process. National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 525 distinguishes between safety and security. Safety is defined as the protection of persons or property from unintentional damage or destruction caused by accidental or natural events. Security is the protection of persons or property from intentional damage or destruction caused by vandalism, criminal activity, or terrorist events. In Region 9, transit safety and security have been and will be addressed on an ongoing basis.

## **Education/Marketing**

No education or marketing needs have been reported at this time.

## ***Network and System Expansion***

## **Management**

Management needs include those related to staffing levels, office equipment, policy board arrangements, and marketing. Education, communication, and marketing of available services were identified as priorities.

## **Operations**

In the past, MuscaBus has proposed the expansion of its services to include Sunday service, but at this time it does not feel that the demand is high enough to offer a cost-efficient service. River Bend Transit is experiencing a greater demand to provide employee shuttle services from employment sites located away from the Iowa Quad Cities Area and hopes to form additional contracts with employers throughout its four-county service area to meet this demand. The request for services to travel to medical facilities, such as the University of Iowa, Mercy, and VA Hospitals and Clinics, has also increased. Currently, RBT

provides service to Iowa City on Mondays only.

## **Facilities**

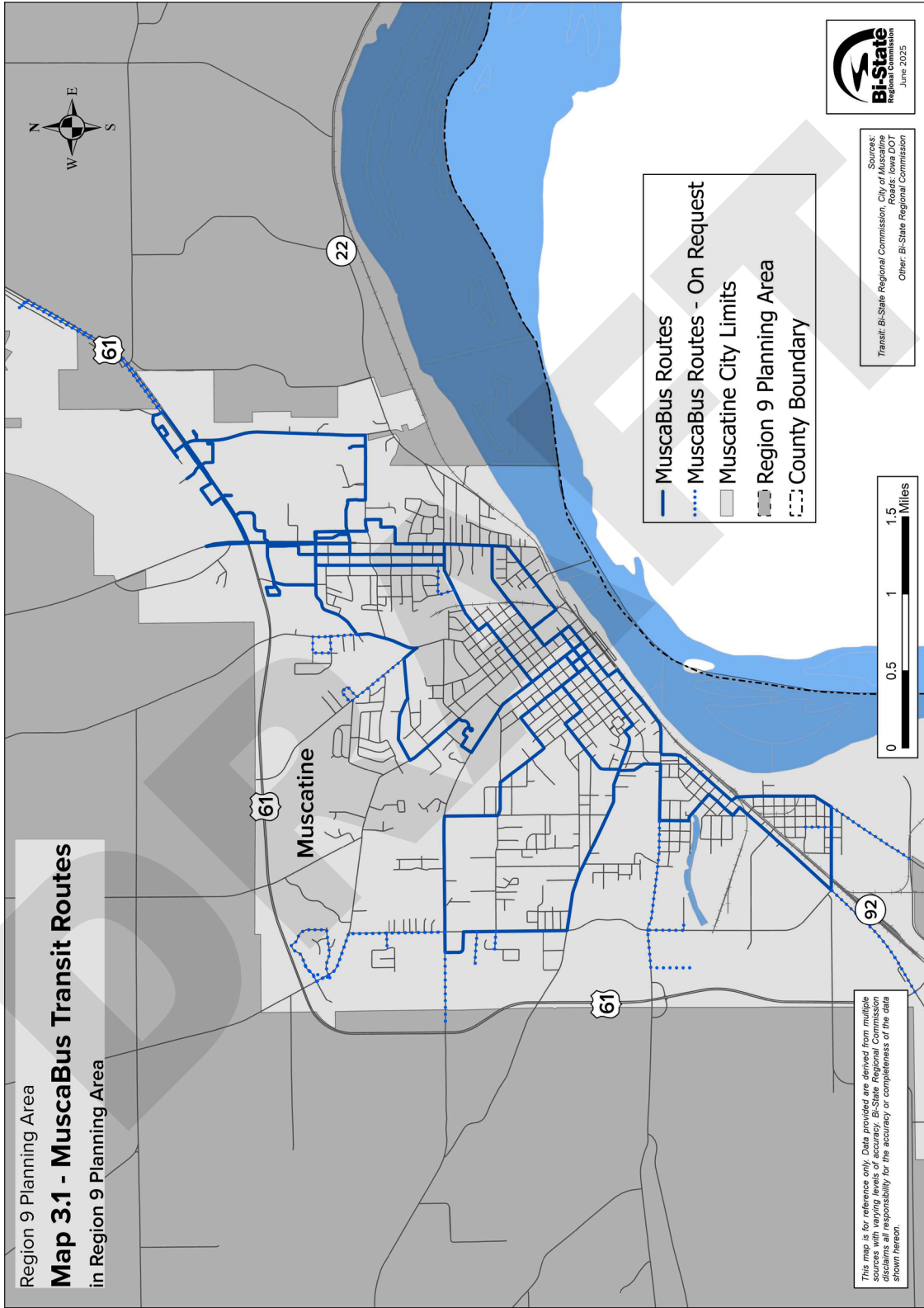
MuscaBus is expected to complete its new bus washing station in 2025. A new bus storage facility for River Bend is expected to be completed in 2026.

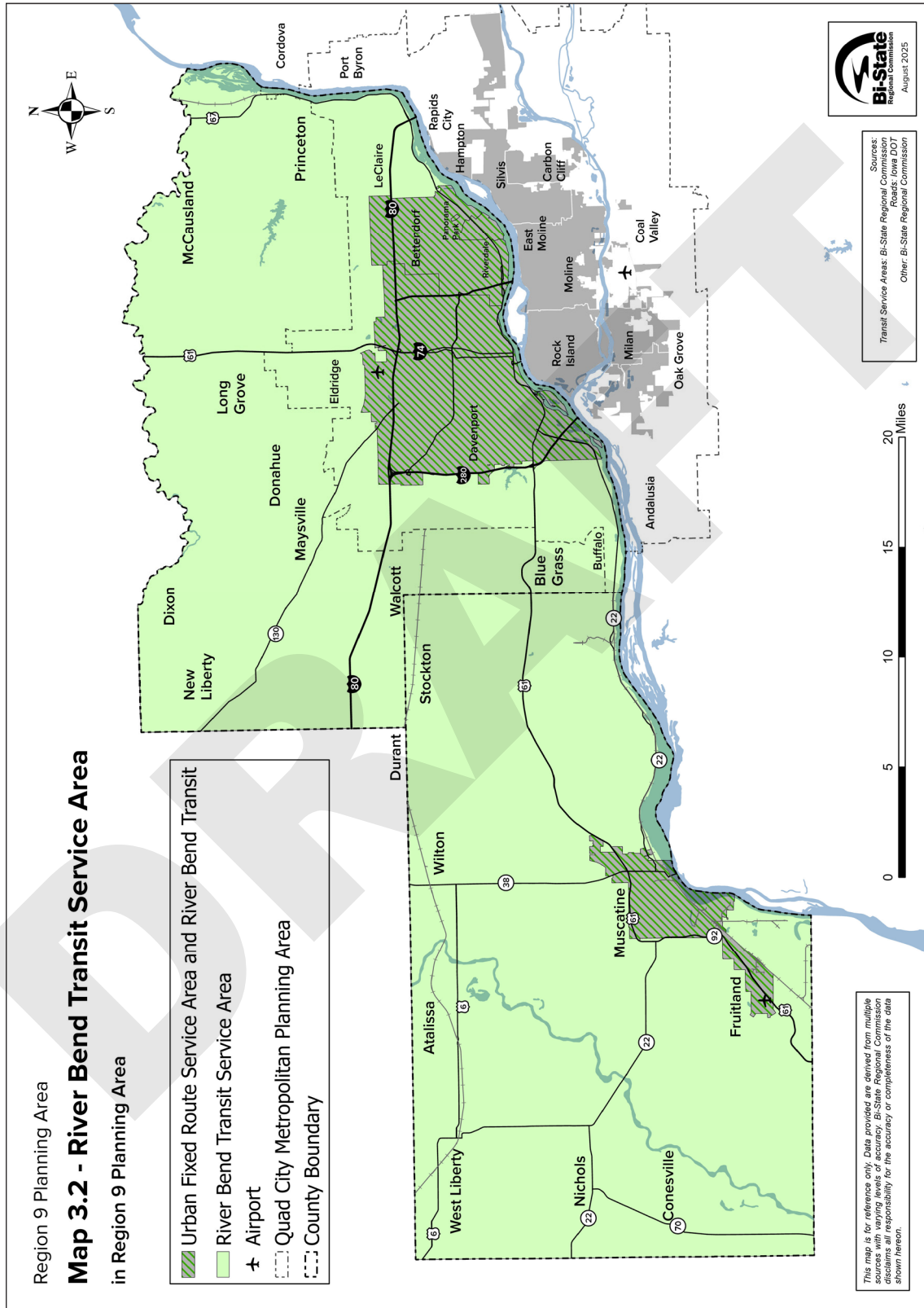
## **Capital**

There are capital needs in Region 9 for replacement and/or the expansion of fleets to meet service demands. With the increase in evening ridership, MuscaBus may have to expand its fleet to meet future ridership demand. As River Bend Transit continues to pursue employee shuttles throughout the four-county region, there is a likelihood that the system will need to expand its fleet to include vehicles with a higher capacity of 25-45 passengers.

## **Safety & Security**

All of River Bend Transit and MuscaBus' revenue vehicles are equipped with surveillance systems. Future needs may be tied to cybersecurity and increased dependence on technology and communications support transit operations.





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