LAWRENCE TRANSIT STUDY

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS
CITY OF LAWRENCE

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

January, 2017

NELSON NYGAARD

Mobility | Accessibility | Sustainability

Project Background

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- Transit has evolved very quickly in Lawrence
  - City-wide fixed-route service began in 2000
  - City and KU began coordinating service in 2009
  - Routes have been tweaked incrementally over the years
- Coordination efforts and restructuring of routes have led to ridership growth
  - 157% growth between 2008-2014
  - Ridership growth has helped demonstrate the value of transit to the community
- Time is right to take a comprehensive look at transit in Lawrence for the first time in 15 years
  - 10-year funding authorization expires in 2018

Study Goals

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- Identify strengths and weaknesses of existing system
  - Review travel patterns
  - Assess system efficiency
  - Identify unmet transit needs

- Recommend service improvements
  - Serve existing riders better
  - Attract new riders
  - Improve over-all system productivity

Market Analysis

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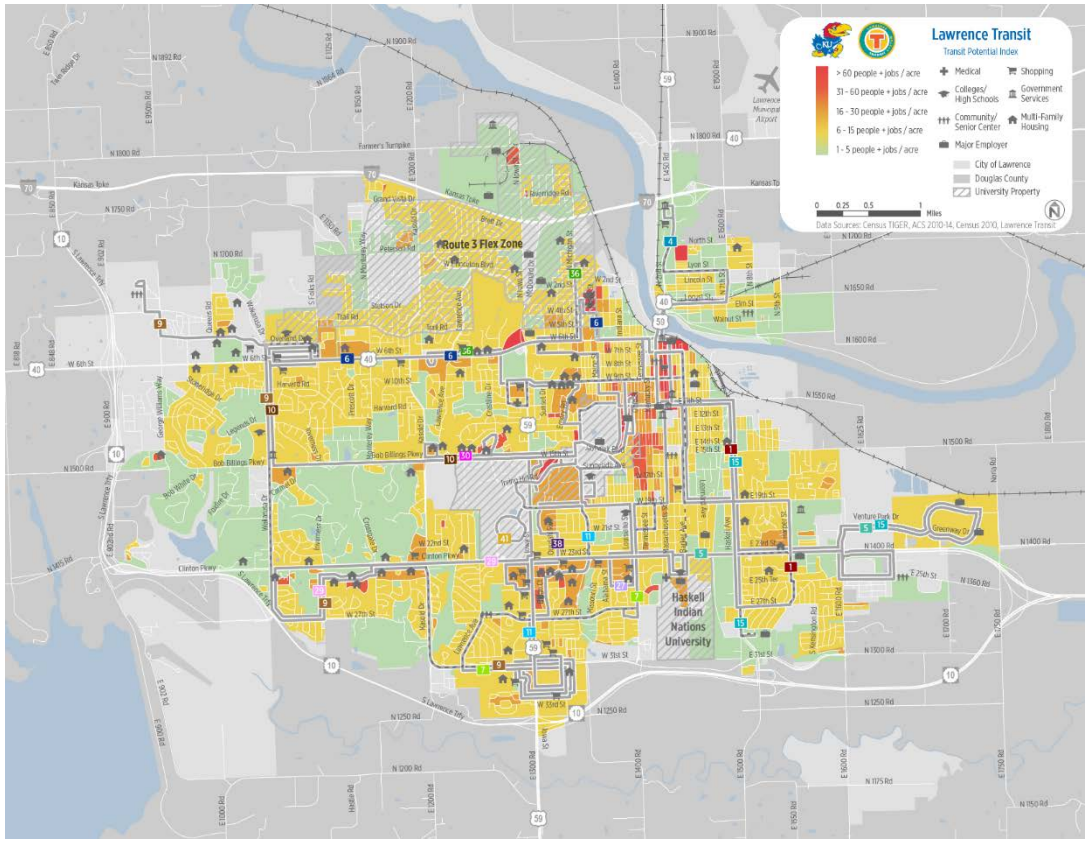
- Population and employment density
- Population characteristics
- Land-use and the built environment
- Regional travel patterns



Service Analysis

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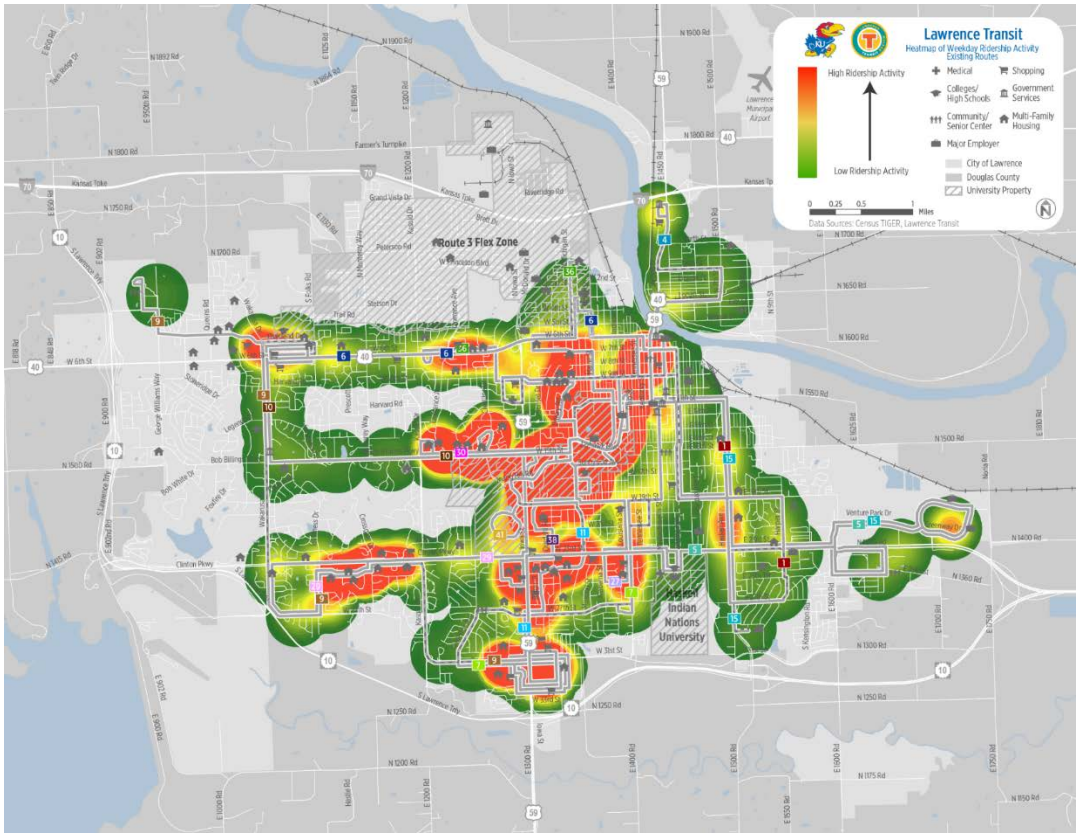
- Ridership
- Productivity
- On-time Performance



Stakeholder Input

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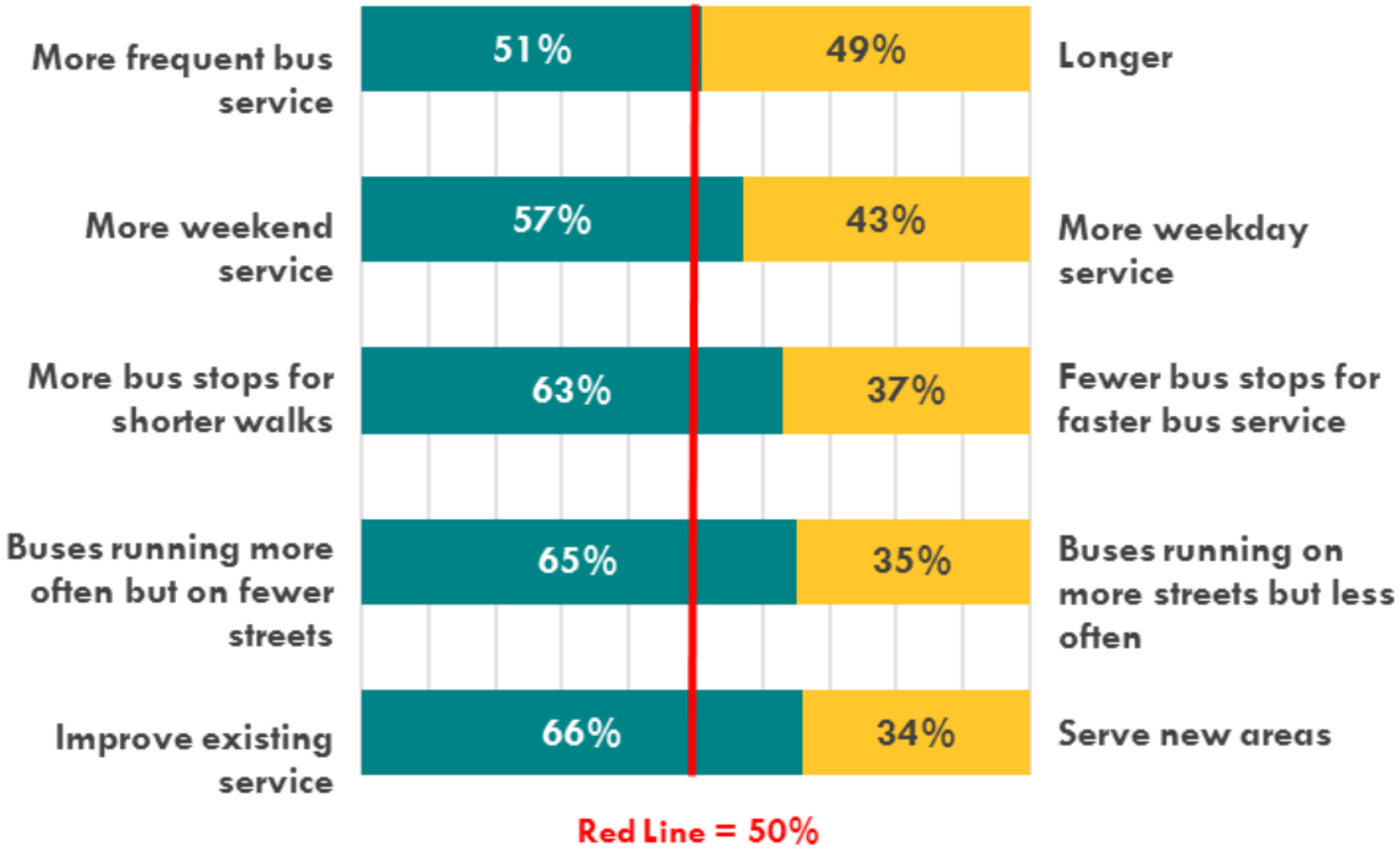

Service Recommendations

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- Long-term recommendations:
  - Consider subsidize Uber/Lyft service for low-density areas and/or low-ridership time periods
    - Growing trend nationwide
  - Expand campus circulator service to include weekends (daytime and evening)
  - Expand service to growing areas
    - Central District
    - Lawrence Venture Park
    - Overland Drive
  - Formalize in-fill service
    - Standardize and publicize schedule
    - Peak-periods only

Service Recommendations

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- Long-term recommendations (continued):
  - Expand Lawrence Transit service frequency and span of service
    - Nearly all peer systems have some “city” service past 9:00 PM
    - At least 30-minute service frequency on all routes
  - Improve passenger amenities
    - Higher service frequency makes mid-route transfers more appealing
    - Passenger amenities further improve user-experience, and should be prioritized for high ridership (including transfers) stops
  - Improve pedestrian treatments at existing hubs
    - Raised crosswalks
    - Motion-activated warning lights embedded in crosswalk
  - Continue to pursue goal of building a dedicated transit hub
    - Ensure sufficient layover space
    - Improve passenger safety

Service Recommendations

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- Long-term recommendations (continued):
  - Update real-time information app
    - Current app is poorly-rated by users
    - Experiences network failures
    - Difficult to navigate
  - Conduct comprehensive branding and marketing study
    - Typically involves focus groups and substantial community outreach
    - Could result in brand integration, or more effective marketing strategies for each individual brand

Service Recommendations

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- Demand-response service recommendations:
  - Transform JayLift into a campus-only paratransit service
    - Most off-campus trips taken by University employees, who do not pay for service with student fees
  - Update Trapeze PASS software settings
    - Using street routing as basis for travel time estimation should provide more accurate scheduling than current triangulation method
    - Several scheduling parameters were set in 2002 but never tested and fine-tuned based on results
    - Batch scheduling and single trip scheduling currently rely on same set of parameters, rather then parameters optimized for each case
    - Some PASS features including “Schedule Agent” and “Waitlist” are not currently being used, but could improve service productivity

Service Recommendations

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- Demand-response service recommendations (continued):
  - Ensure proper performance monitoring
    - Prompt for arrival and departure times at all stops on manifests
    - Clarify definition of on-time and late trips, trip denials, missed trips, and excessively long trips
    - Inconsistent data recording and interpretation results in questionable performance measures
  - Reduce Night Line costs
    - Currently $32 per trip (compared to $25 per trip for T Lift)
    - Another possible application for subsidized Uber/Lyft service
  - Coordinate more closely with Human Services Providers
    - Focus on travel training
    - Potential to co-mingle trips with Senior Resource Center for Douglas County, Inc. (SRC)

Other Recommendations

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- Fares and Funding
  - Continue with existing fare collection policies until funding situation become more clear
    - Local sales tax needs to be approved by voters in 2018
    - Student fees need to be renewed annually
  - KU should set floor on student fees to ensure more certainty and predictability
    - Funding uncertainty limits multi-year capital and service planning
    - Consider transitioning from student senate-controlled fee to administration-controlled fee to provide more funding stability
    - Include automatic escalator in fee to account for inflation
  - Make compelling case to voters for sales tax extension by showing service improvements that could be funded, as well as service cuts that would be necessary without funding

Other Recommendations

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- Procedures and Technology
  - Strengthen revenue control and audit procedures
    - Contract with a specialized cash management vendor
    - Increase staff time devoted to auditing
  - Introduce smartphone fare payment option
    - Requires visual inspection by bus driver upon boarding
  - Institute in-person assessment for T Lift eligibility
    - Industry best-practice
    - Ensures that ADA paratransit service and fixed-route discounts are reserved for those who truly need it

Other Recommendations

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- Governance
  - State of Kansas currently permits regional transit authority (RTA) model in Wichita and Topeka, or in communities with existing transit providers that posses the ability to tax or issue bonds
    - Forming an RTA in Lawrence would require action by the State Legislature
  - Rather than pursuing full consolidation, Lawrence Transit and KUOW should secure long-term funding commitments and update MOUs
    - Update to reflect any new funding sources, including sales tax extension and/or changes to University fees; and any new major capital investments such as a new transit center
    - Separate MOUs for fare/operational agreements, and capital agreements; add buy-out terms to capital agreement to ensure equitable terms of separation (if necessary)

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