Chapter 4
Public Transit

INTRODUCTION

Public transit is an important aspect of the transportation system. It enables people without access to vehicles or the ability to drive to travel, and provides a transportation alternative for people who choose not to drive for other reasons. Iowa has a network of urban, small urban, and rural transportation systems that provide this service throughout the state. In the RTA, public transit service is provided by the Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission (RTC), which like the RTA, is housed under the umbrella of INRCOG. The service covers the six county RTA area outside of the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area where public transit is provided by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MET Transit).

Transit Planning Background

Transit planning has long been a function of the RTA and INRCOG. RTC is represented on the RTA’s Technical Committee, and its projects and services utilizing federal funding are included in the RTA’s Transportation Improvement Program. In 2005, SAFETEA-LU mandated a joint passenger transportation-human services planning process to help increase coordination and result in improved passenger transportation options for the public. This process is now reflected in the Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP), which is a joint document for the RTA and MPO. This document provides an inventory of passenger transportation services in the region, discusses service, management, fleet, and facility needs, identifies possible strategies for meeting those needs, reviews funding sources, and recommends projects. A full update of the document is completed every five years. The most recent update can be viewed on INRCOG’s website at www.inrcog.org/pub.htm.

A standing Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) plays an integral role in the transit planning process and the development of the PTP. Since 2006, the TAC has met biannually to discuss projects and issues within the region relating to passenger transportation. The TAC consists of transit users, human service organizations, representatives of local governments, and transportation providers that work cooperatively to recognize current transportation shortfalls and identify future coordination possibilities and the potential for new services in the region.

At the state level, public transit trends and needs were quantified by the Iowa Passenger Transportation Funding Study completed in 2009. As identified on page one of the study, its aims were to:

- Quantify current revenue available to support public transit
- Determine whether current revenues are sufficient to meet future needs
- Assess how well the state’s public transit network supports the current and expanding mobility needs of the state’s senior population
- Identify the transit improvements needed to meet the state’s energy independence goals
Central themes of the study included the importance of mobility to quality of life and the ability for passenger transportation to reduce fuel consumption and air pollution emissions. Notable trends and planning factors identified by the study included Iowa’s increasing senior population, increased employment outside of traditional business hours, the transportation needs of the working poor, and an increased emphasis on security needs.

The study utilized a model to quantify passenger transportation demand by estimating the number of transit dependent people within each transit service’s area. Variables used in the rural areas of the state included the size of the senior population, the number of low-income people, and the number of people with disabilities. For RTC’s service area, the study estimated a baseline demand for these groups of almost 400,000 annual trips, which puts the current ridership to baseline demand shortfall at greater than 66 percent.

Another portion of the study utilized the statewide travel demand model to estimate daily trips between community pairs, and to identify areas where a significant number of trips could indicate the possibility for passenger transportation improvements. In the RTA, two corridors had a daily average of more than 5,000 trips. There were an estimated 10,000 person trips between Independence and Waterloo, and an estimate 7,400 between Waverly and Waterloo. With many of these likely to be commuter trips, there appears to be a potential for increased passenger transportation service in these corridors via transit, carpools, or vanpools.

**CURRENT CONDITIONS**

**Service Characteristics**

RTC provides open-to-the-public, accessible transit services to the general public, the elderly, persons with disabilities, Head Start children, and low income persons as a primary means of transportation in the rural areas of the INRCOG region. In addition to providing transit, RTC is responsible for coordinating transportation in the region. RTC operates Monday-Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In response to past input from Waverly residents, RTC expanded service to 6:30 p.m. on Mondays to provide transportation to community meals. As a common rule, the service provided is from curb-to-curb, however, door-to-door service may be provided, if requested. RTC offers demand response service in Independence and Waverly and subscription service elsewhere. The current per ride average cost is $3.50 within Independence and Waverly, with rates elsewhere varying based on the cost of providing the service.
RTC operates 20 light duty buses, of which 17 are used for its services and three are contracted to regional sub-providers who provide service on its behalf. RTC switched from diesel to gasoline vehicles several years ago due to several issues with the diesel vehicles including limited availability, difficulty servicing them, and not always being able to refuel in certain areas of the region. A recent development has been the addition of surveillance camera systems on RTC’s fleet. With the aid of an Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) grant the Iowa DOT received from the FTA, RTC was able to receive funding to retrofit nine existing buses with surveillance systems. Additionally, RTC purchased a new bus utilizing State of Good Repair (SGR) funding that included the cost of a surveillance system as part of the overall programmed vehicle budget. All ten buses feature a four-camera system focused on the driver, lift and entrance door, interior of the bus from the back, and the road. The cameras should increase safety and security for the drivers and passengers and improve service efficiency. RTC anticipates utilizing video recordings for incident investigation and risk management as well as driver and management training.

Region Characteristics

**Trip Generators**

Outside of the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area and the cities of Waverly and Independence, the remainder of the RTA region is primarily rural in nature with small cities spread throughout. However, transportation destinations are not limited to the urbanized areas of the INRCOG region. *Maps 4.1 – 4.3* show the various services that are considered to be trip generators for the region. *Map 4.1* shows human services, including county care, registered daycares, head start, nutritional sites, preschools, senior centers, and work activity centers. Most services are clustered in the county seats and metropolitan areas, though daycares are located in most cities. *Map 4.2* shows health care services including dentists, hospitals, mental health institutes, physicians, and pharmacies. Again, most services are clustered in the larger cities in each county, though pharmacies are available in some of the smaller towns. *Map 4.3* shows the locations of banks, grocery stores, or libraries in the region. These are spread more evenly among the cities in the region, though some of the smallest cities lack all three.

The distribution of the various activity centers shows the centralization of services in the metropolitan area and larger cities in the region. One would anticipate that many citizens living in the rural areas and smaller towns of the region would find it easier to visit the metropolitan area for numerous services. However, many of the county seats and other cities in the region offer important services, and the demand for shorter, single-purpose trips to these areas is likely greater than the demand for trips to the more distant metropolitan area.

**Age**

The need for available transit for seniors is continually growing, with 15.4 percent of the region over the age of 65. This number is projected to increase due to the aging baby boomer generation. *Map 2.1* in Chapter 2 shows the percent of the population within the region over the age of 65. The percent of the population over 65 ranges from a high of 19.8 percent in Butler County to below 14 percent in Black Hawk County. These figures are close to or slightly higher than the state average of 14.9 percent.
**Race**

Limited access to transit can worsen racial disparities by forcing dependence on auto ownership. It is important to ensure that all persons have access to affordable transit service. Iowa has historically been predominantly white, but minority populations have grown significantly in the past few decades. Black Hawk County is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse counties in the state. Diversity is less common in the region outside the metropolitan area, though there are some significant minority populations, including a Hispanic population in the New Hampton area. *Map 2.2* shows the percent of non-white population within the region.

**Language**

As Iowa’s minority population has increased, so too, has the number of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals. It is important to consider the needs of these populations to ensure that they have access to effective and affordable transportation options. *Map 2.3* shows the percent of the population within the region that speaks English “less than very well” by census tract. The New Hampton area shows a larger percentage of LEP persons than the region as a whole, and Spanish is the predominant language among those persons. The higher percentage of LEP individuals in western Waverly is likely associated with Wartburg College. The large percentage of LEP persons in Buchanan County is mostly German and other West Germanic language speakers associated with the area’s Amish population.

**Poverty Status and Unemployment**

Families and individuals in poverty may not have the financial means to own an automobile, making it crucial to find transportation assistance to and from work, home, shopping centers, day care centers, and medical appointments. *Map 2.4* shows the percent of the population within the region whose income was below the poverty level in the past 12 months. The metropolitan area has the highest percentage of residents below the poverty level. Western Butler County and the northeast portion of Buchanan County show a larger percentage of poverty than the region as a whole.

The region has not been immune to the economic recession that has affected the nation over the past six years. *Figure 4.1* shows the unemployment rate for each county over the past decade. Following the recent unemployment level low in 2007, the rate rose sharply in 2008 and 2009, to 20-year highs for some counties. However, the rate began to decline in 2010, with further declines in 2011, 2012, and 2013. At the county level, Chickasaw County has traditionally had the highest unemployment rate in the region. Bremer County has the lowest employment rate in the region.
**VEHICLE OWNERSHIP**

Persons who do not own or have access to a personal vehicle may rely on public transit services to get to and from destinations. *Map 4.4* shows the percent of households without vehicles. While approximately half the region’s census tracts show less than 2.5 percent of households as having no vehicles, each county has census tracts that have higher rates. The highest rate in the region outside of the Waterloo-Cedar Falls metropolitan area is seen in northwest Buchanan County, which is likely due to the large Amish population in that area.
Map 4.1  
Cities with Human Services  
Iowa Northland Region

C = County Care  
D = Registered Daycare  
H = Head Start  
N = Nutritional Sites  
P = Pre School  
S = Senior Centers  
W = Work Activity Center
Map 4.2

Cities with Health Care Services
Iowa Northland Region

D=Dentist
H=Hospital
M=Mental Health Institute
P=Physician
Map 4.3
Cities with Banks, Grocery Stores, or Libraries
Iowa Northland Region

P=Pharmacy
B=Bank
G=Grocery
L=Library
The percent of households without vehicles data was obtained from the U.S. Census bureau’s 2008-2012 American Community Survey. This data analyzes households who have workers over 16 years of age who do not work at home.
Ridership and Revenue Miles

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 show the annual ridership and revenue miles for RTC from FY 1993 to 2015. Direct service rides are provided by drivers employed by RTC in RTC owned vehicles, while indirect rides are provided through service contracts and contracts for bus leases. From 2003 to 2015, the trend has been relatively steady with a trend upward overall since 2007. The large drop in the early 2000s, which is reflected in the charts below, was mainly due to a change in restrictions that affected the indirect service statistics. Several subcontractors at the time utilized yellow school buses for their service which were deemed not open to the public and therefore not eligible to be subsidized. Eventually this particular issue led to a coordination project between RTC and one of its subcontractors, Exceptional Persons, Inc. (EPI), which is discussed later.

Figure 4.2 – Annual Ridership Data for RTC, Fiscal Years 1993-2015

Source: Iowa DOT Annual Reports

Figure 4.3 – Revenue Miles for RTC, Fiscal Years 1993-2015

Source: Iowa DOT Annual Reports
Operating Costs and Funding

As shown on Figure 4.4, operating costs show a similar pattern to ridership and revenue miles. After fluctuating through the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a drop in 2003 with the reduction of indirect service. However, since that time costs have been rising at a steady rate due largely to the rising cost of maintenance and fuel. As shown on Figure 4.5, the majority of the funding used to cover the operating costs comes from local sources and contracts. The percentage of FTA and STA funding has stayed relatively constant over the years, though in the last few years the percentage of operating funds coming from FTA has risen while STA has dropped.
PUBLIC INPUT AND COORDINATION EFFORTS

The FY 2015-2019 Passenger Transportation Plan discusses public input efforts that have been part of the transit planning process. Some of these efforts have included public meetings and TAC meetings, a Passenger Transportation Provider Survey, a study conducted in Waverly by Wartburg College students, and a survey done in Waverly as part of its Comprehensive Plan update.

Public Input Survey

In April 2012, an online survey was conducted to gather public opinion for the LRTP. There were questions on several transportation topics, as well as opportunities to submit written comments. A total of 194 surveys were submitted. Some transit-related findings include:

- The response to the question of the quality of public transit in the respondent’s home city or county (outside of the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan) was:
  - 36.1% – Very Poor
  - 28.8% – Poor
  - 17.5% – Fair
  - 16.5% – Good
  - 1.0% – Excellent
- During the previous year, 94.2% of respondents had never used an RTC bus, and 95.3% of respondents had never used a city-to-city bus.
- With regard to the respondent’s awareness level of RTC, the breakdown of responses was:
  - 63% – I am aware of what RTC is, but have not utilized it.
  - 6% – I have used RTC for transportation.
  - 31% – I do not know what RTC is.
- Comments on passenger transportation included:
  - Issues with getting to work in Waterloo, including having to use cabs at times which can be very expensive.
  - Need for more in-town transit.
  - Need for easily accessible and affordable transportation to and from Waterloo, especially hospitals.
  - Need for more marketing of RTC.
  - Desire for bus or vanpool from Waverly to Waterloo/Cedar Falls and Independence to Waterloo/Cedar Falls.
  - Need for more transportation for medically-needy residents.
- With regard to how important the planning area of expanding passenger transportation service is over the next 25-30 years, the breakdown of answers was:
  - 34.0% – Very Important
  - 25.5% – Moderately Important
  - 30.3% – Somewhat Important
  - 10.6% – Not Important
On a question asking how the respondent would spend $100 among eight different categories, improving public transportation was the second highest response with an average of $19.71.

Transit Advisory Committee

As discussed earlier, the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) consists of transit users, human service organizations, and transportation providers that work cooperatively to recognize current passenger transportation shortfalls, and identify future coordination possibilities and the potential for new services. The TAC is the main sounding board for passenger transportation planning issues. Some of the needs identified by the TAC over the past several years have included:

- The increase in the elderly population in the years to come needs to be planned for and accommodated with additional transit services. New ideas and possible solutions need to be considered to accommodate shifting demographics. This could include a shift toward taxi-like services or a multi-tiered system based on ability/willingness to pay.
- There is a lack of transportation services for the disabled and limited financial resources for those who need a ride.
- Seniors in small towns often struggle with finding transportation to the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area. Coordination among community organizations or between other communities is a need.
- Rural areas of counties have a large need for increased service.
- There is a need for increased marketing of available transit service.
- Recruitment and retention of drivers is consistently an issue.

Bremer County Accessible Transportation Coalition

A coordination effort has developed involving the Bremer County Accessible Transportation Coalition (BCATC) over the past few years. This group includes community members and entities such as RTC, the City of Waverly, Bremer County, the Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging (NEI3A), and the United Way. The vision statement for this initiative is “to develop and promote an affordable, flexible, reliable, inclusive transportation system that meets the needs of Bremer County residents.” The focus areas for the coalition have included conducting a needs assessment for the county, looking for funding sources, and increasing the accessibility and affordability of transportation options. RTC has participated in the BCATC meetings, and one result of the coordination has been expanded service to 6:30 p.m. on Mondays to provide transportation to community meals. RTC has advertised this service in the newspaper and on the Community Access Channel. RTC also participated in Waverly’s Christmas on Main in December 2011 to advertise service. The group’s recent efforts focused on developing a brochure highlighting transportation options, and marketing those options.
Passenger Transportation Provider Survey

In December 2013, a Passenger Transportation Provider Survey was distributed to transportation providers within the region. The purpose of the survey was to develop basic information on transportation services provided within the region and to measure interest in coordinating transportation services. The online survey consisted of 19 questions. The survey was sent to human service agencies, transportation providers, childcare centers, and religious organizations in the region. The survey was available for a one month period, and a total of 57 surveys were submitted. A summary of the online survey can be found in the FY 2015-2019 Passenger Transportation Plan.


PLANNING ISSUES

Driver Recruitment and Retention

The largest management need for RTC relates to hiring and maintaining quality drivers. Recruiting and retaining drivers is a common issue for transit agencies. RTC has had problems with recruitment and new drivers passing all necessary tests and licensing, and thus has had difficulty staying fully-staffed. One hurdle for RTC to overcome is that its service area is spread out geographically, which can result in drivers having to drive quite a distance to get to the bus, or buses needing to be parked at the driver’s home. RTC has added utility driver positions with the aim of using these drivers to fill in for other drivers or help provide expanded service. However, these positions have often been vacant, putting a strain on the system’s ability to meet current demand. The lack of drivers is also a limiting factor for expanding service in the region.

Fleet

Bus replacement is an ongoing concern for RTC and transit systems across the state. RTC’s bus fleet is in much better shape than a few years ago, due largely to vehicle replacements through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) and State of Good Repair (SGR) funding. Nonetheless, with the current federal funding picture looking less optimistic, RTC will likely face significant challenges with funding new vehicles in the coming years as an increasing percentage of the fleet will be beyond its useful life. MAP-21 greatly reduced the amount of funding available to Iowa for bus replacement. While the Iowa DOT Commission offset this funding shortage somewhat by allocating a portion of Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP) funding to bus replacements, RTC may have to look to STP or other funding sources to help fund replacement buses in the future.
Aging Population

One of the largest challenges facing transportation planning, particularly in the public transit sector, is Iowa’s aging population. How to meet the needs of a population that may no longer be able to drive, but is otherwise capable of and desires to live independently, will be a major challenge for public transit agencies. This is particularly acute for rural transit providers such as RTC, where the distance to cover and the time that it takes can quickly make it difficult to provide needed service.

Increasing Costs

As shown previously on Figure 4.4, operating costs have increased significantly over the past decade. Likewise, the cost to replace buses has continued to escalate. Without increased funding from the state or federal government, either local funding or fares will have to increase or service will have to decrease. In addition to requests for service to particular areas, common requests for RTC include extending evening service, adding weekend service, and expanding service coverage. Adding routes requires additional buses and drivers. Extending service hours does not necessarily require new capital, but requires a significant increase in operating funding. Since fares make up a relatively small portion of RTC’s operating budget, funding must be provided from other sources in order to add service.

Culture of Transit

Marketing is a significant challenge faced by RTC. There is still a stigma associated with public transit in the region, with the perception that it is primarily for the elderly, people with disabilities, and people without access to personal vehicles. While all of RTC’s service is open to the public, this perception likely hampers the number of general public riders that it is able to attract. This is a widespread issue, and ways of trying to combat it may include increased marketing and focusing on transit’s benefits. In particular, if livability and sustainability trends continue, there may be an increasing number of people who would utilize public transit because they want to, not because they need to. Transit systems could work to capitalize on this by marketing their service as a ‘greener’ alternative to single occupant vehicles. This may be difficult at the regional level, but perhaps could be initiated in cities and spread from there. RTC would like to increase its marketing efforts and activities to ensure that the general public is aware of and has convenient access to information about available services.
Regulations

While state and federal funding are critical to the operation of public transit, the regulations that accompany the funding can make coordination and improving service challenging at times. Rules involving items such as drug/alcohol testing, statistical reporting, and insurance requirements are some of the examples of regulations that have deterred potential coordination partners. Another issue that has unfavorably impacted public transit in the region is charter regulations, which limit service options for persons and organizations wishing to utilize a charter for any type of purpose such as a large event, a wedding party, or a preschool field trip. For example, if an out-of-state company offers to run a charter for an excessive fee, the local public transit provider cannot provide the service, even though it is not feasible for the consumer to pay for the out-of-state provider. Situations like these have occurred locally, and the end result is that consumers are often unable to obtain the service they desire or must pay much more for it. Achieving a balance between the intent of the regulations and their real-word implications is an ongoing challenge for state and federal governments and public transit providers.

Mental Health Services Restructuring

Like many other states, Iowa has passed recent reform legislation related to restructuring mental health services. Specifically, this new legislation mandates regionalization of mental service provision and management, which is a departure from the county-by-county management systems that were established approximately 15 years ago. The efforts required under the mental health reform legislation took effect beginning in Fiscal Year 2014. Within the constructs of the new legislation, RTC will now offer services to a regional intergovernmental entity that serves persons regardless of their county of residence.

Area Agency on Aging Restructuring

The Iowa Legislature has also passed a statute calling for a reduction in the recognized number of existing regional area agencies on aging, which serve senior citizens in the state. The state encouraged this process by empowering the existing agencies with the ability to voluntarily merge or consolidate, and/or define themselves prior to the fiscal year 2014 deadline, advising existing areas that if they did not redefine themselves, the state may do so for them. The Northland Area Agency on Aging in Decorah, Scenic Valley Area Agency on Aging in Dubuque, and Hawkeye Valley Area Agency on Aging in Waterloo merged together to form the Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging (NEI3A). Effective July 1, 2013, the newly formed agency serves 18 counties in Northeast Iowa including Winneshiek, Black Hawk, Bremer, Butler, Buchanan, Chickasaw, Hardin, Grundy, Marshall, Tama, Poweshiek, Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Allamakee Counties.

Medicaid Brokerage

The current Medicaid Brokerage, operated by TMS/Access2Care (A2C), continues to affect transit within the region. TMS/A2C provides transportation coordination services for individuals with Medicaid insurance, and RTC contracts with TMS/A2C for the rides they are able to provide. Public and private providers across the state work with the brokerage system, with varying degrees of success. MET
Transit in the Waterloo/Cedar Falls metropolitan area has reported having good success with coordinating trips through the broker. Conversely, RTC’s lack of driver availability has greatly impacted its ability to provide trips offered through this system. Beginning January 1, 2016, the state of Iowa will begin a risk-based managed care approach for Iowa’s Medicaid program. Four managed care organizations (MCOs) have contracted to manage the program: Amerigroup Iowa, AmeriHealth Caritas Iowa, UnitedHealthCare Plan of the River Valley, and WellCare of Iowa. The MCOs have in turn contracted with three organizations to broker the non-emergency medical transportation service. The companies are Access2Care, LogistiCare, and MTM.

**CURRENT AND FUTURE PROJECTS/INITIATIVES**

RTC’s projects are programmed annually in the RTA’s Transportation Improvement Program. Projects are also updated in the Passenger Transportation Plan. A copy of the current TIP and PTP can be found on INRCOG’s website at [www.inrcog.org/pub.htm](http://www.inrcog.org/pub.htm). Recent initiatives, current projects, and possible future endeavors for RTC are discussed below.

**Coordination**

Continuing coordination efforts are undertaken by RTC, MET, EPI, and various agencies in the INRCOG region. Joint contracts between RTC, MET, and EPI demonstrate the dedication of these organizations to find efficient use of the public transit systems. RTC has subsidized EPI services to buy down the cost for the governmental entities involved in each contract. Given constrained budgets, cost and time efficiency are always important considerations. RTC continues to coordinate all reports and accounts receivable under Medicaid Waiver programs for RTC, MET, and EPI.

A recent coordination issue which had a successful outcome involved the painting of EPI buses to match RTC’s color scheme. RTC and EPI have a history of coordinating service with EPI contracting through RTC and RTC handling the waivers and billings for EPI. The issue was that some of EPI’s buses were yellow school buses. The Iowa DOT requires that RTC signage be on all contracted buses. The Iowa Department of Education (DOE) does not allow such signage on yellow school buses. To resolve this issue, RTC asked for and received a Special Project grant from the Iowa DOT for the painting of EPI’s buses to match RTC’s color scheme. The grant provided 80 percent of the cost, with RTC and EPI splitting the local match. Twelve buses were painted, which has enabled RTC and EPI to continue their coordination.

A service that is not operated by RTC, but complements RTC’s service by providing a way for residents to reach medical appointments outside of the region, is the Saints Shuttle. This service is offered by the North Iowa Area Council of Governments and provides transportation from Mason City to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City. As a result of coordination efforts involving the Bremer County Accessible Transportation Coalition (BCATC), Saints Shuttle stops were added on Wednesdays and Thursdays in Waverly and Waterloo in June, 2012. Enrollees in Iowa Care had been able to ride at a reduced cost. However, this funding source has since been depleted. Service is still available and
continues to be subsidized by the United Way of North Central Iowa. The cost per person is currently $10.00 one-way or $20.00 per round trip per person. Future projects for RTC could include spearheading or partnering on initiatives such as this one to transport people to important destinations outside of the region.

**Expanded Service**

In the region, Waverly and Independence are RTC’s largest service areas, and expanded service in these cities is always considered a need. Expanding service in Waverly has been hampered by a lack of drivers for an additional bus. A third bus was added to Independence a couple of years ago to focus on dialysis patients, but was dropped due to lack of ridership and available drivers. A consistent issue when additional buses are added to an area of existing service seems to be that the existing ridership gets spread out among the buses rather than the additional service attracting many new riders. Over the years RTC has continued to work to respond to public input and needs by trying to implement a variety of initiatives. For example, RTC expanded service in Waverly to 6:30 p.m. on Mondays to provide transportation to community meals. This has been a successful addition to RTC’s service.

While the entire region could likely benefit from increased service, areas RTC has identified in particular for potential future expansion include western Butler County, Grundy County, and Chickasaw County. Issues with both existing service and potential service expansion include timing, as many facilities do not allow clients to be dropped off early or stay late, and duplication of service, as private organizations or individuals may already be providing some services and may not want RTC to begin offering the same service. Recently, RTC met with Chickasaw County regarding service and will continue to look for ways to expand service there.

**Service to Waterloo/Cedar Falls**

The desire for additional service into the metropolitan area is often expressed by small towns in the region. An example of this service was attempted in 2009 with Hudson by providing regular RTC service to transport people from Hudson into Waterloo to destinations such as hospitals or shopping centers, or to access MET’s system. Despite the initial public interest and advertising the service, it had few riders and was discontinued as a regular service. This example shows the difficulty of translating a general and valid desire for transit service to the reality of what a public transit agency can provide given the limitations of buses, schedules, and funding. However, when the desire for additional transit service is communicated, RTC will work with the community to evaluate the need and is willing to try to provide the service if the demand is there.

Another method of adding service between outlying areas and the metropolitan area could be through the creation of formal carpool or vanpool programs. These types of initiatives have been successful in larger metropolitan areas, but translating them to the regional setting may be more of a challenge. In 2015, the Iowa DOT procured bids for a ride matching system. The system will include carpool and vanpool matching, work-trip ride matching, emergency ride home services, and special event ride matching. In 2014, the Iowa DOT completed a Park and Ride System Plan which provides an update of
the existing inventory, an identification of additional locations suitable for park and ride facilities, and strategies for implementation. The primary objective of the plan is to provide a location-specific, priority-based park and ride system that allows for coordinated planning and implementation of park and ride facilities. There are three existing park and ride locations within the region, and the plan identifies two candidate locations: on US-218 near the south city limits of Waverly, and on US-20/IA-150 in Independence.

www.iowadot.gov/iowainmotion/files/StatewideParkandRideSystemPlanFINAL.pdf

Mobility Manager/Marketing Person

This has been an issue discussed at previous Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings. MET and RTC have discussed jointly hiring a mobility manager to market both transit services and to work with agencies, groups, and interested citizens to provide education and information about transit services. However, the most recent federal transportation bill eliminated funding the Iowa DOT was using to provide grants for these types of positions. This type of position is still considered a major need and could go a long way towards educating the public about MET and RTC. It is unlikely that MET and RTC would be able to fully fund a position at this time. There is currently a state-level mobility manager to help facilitate relationships between agencies at that level. Both MET and RTC plan to continue to work closely with the mobility manager to help coordinate transit services in the region.