

Chapter 4: Evaluation of Needs & Policy Direction

Planning for regional transit in the six-county area is vital to the movement of people within and outside the region and requires coordination beyond the Greater Bi-State Region boundaries. Planning will frame strategies to meet future mobility needs and strengthen the urban-rural interface. The Transit Accessibility Analysis found in this chapter is a data-informed examination of need, and highlights areas and populations that may face barriers to mobility. Decisions made by individual transportation providers will affect capabilities to provide mobility choices in the region as well as to neighboring areas in eastern Iowa and western Illinois. Coordination will be an important strategy to foster efficient and effective transportation options. Both policy and fiscal decisions will have ramifications on how the region performs at meeting transit demands. This chapter examines these needs, financial limitations, and policy directions that are necessary to optimize resources and provide adequate transportation services.

Review of Efforts

The following is a review of the recent transit efforts in the Greater Bi-State Region, including capital investments, management and personnel efforts, and services that have recently altered transit in the region. Priorities identified in Chapter 5 are evaluated annually for their outcomes based on the categories in this chapter of the plan and whether projects have been completed, delayed, deleted, and/or shifted in priority, either moving ahead or back in project timing.

Equipment and Facilities

Between 2013 and 2019, the City of Bettendorf contracted with MetroLINK to house its administrative and operational functions, but has subsequently taken these back in-house. Such functions included state and federal transit re-

porting, grant applications and administration, a customer call center, and dispatching services. Bettendorf Transit has also implemented a computer-aided dispatch/automatic vehicle location (CAD/AVL) system, Google Trip Planner, and mobile app in recent years, increasing the availability of on-demand information.

Since Davenport CitiBus and MetroLINK have shifted from a shared maintenance and storage facility to individual facilities, the City of Davenport consolidated administrative, operational, and maintenance functions into one facility. Construction was completed on an addition to the Davenport Public Works facility in 2015 that now houses the transit division's administrative offices and driver areas. Construction of a fleet storage facility has also been completed, as are renovations at Public Works for the bus fleet maintenance and repair area.

MetroLINK operates a 110,000 square-foot maintenance facility, which houses maintenance, administrative, and operational functions. The facility was designed to achieve LEED Silver certification to better meet current and future system needs. This state-of-the-art facility provides the maximum sustainability standards for MetroLINK's operational and maintenance functions. It incorporates the latest in energy efficiencies, including improved air quality, nature and resource conservation, pollution prevention, and modern diagnostic equipment.

The Operations and Maintenance Center further solidifies MetroLINK's commitment to sustainability in the community. Key design features of the facility include a Photovoltaic (PV) solar panel array that produces 30 percent of the facility's electricity needs, a solar thermal hot water system, a bus wash water reclamation system, bioswales to control storm

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water runoff, and white Thermoplastic Polyolefin (TPO) roofing. The facility also incorporates human factor engineering elements, such as open office spaces to encourage communication, a fitness room and access to multi-use trails to promote wellness, maximizing natural light, a counter-clockwise layout to increase service efficiency, and a radiant in-floor heating system in the maintenance area to reduce safety risks and enhance employee comfort.

Automated vehicle locator (AVL) technology has been deployed by the urban fixed-route systems for numerous years. The technology improves service efficiency and quality for riders. Riders are able to obtain arrival and departure times for their routes at any time via numerous different formats, including through apps that can be downloaded on smartphones. Smartphone apps are able to display real-time locations of buses throughout the network, and can offer real-time information on specific routes and runs. The systems have also been linked to Google Transit, allowing online users to view bus routes and estimate travel times in Google Maps.

Management, Training, and Marketing of Services

Bi-State Regional Commission hosts multiple transit summits annually throughout the region. Bi-State staff also attends human services coordination meetings to gauge need from underserved populations. Transit summits were established to gather input from the public, human and social service agencies, demand response, and urban fixed-route transit services found within the region. Region-specific questions were asked in order to identify the extent of service needs and gaps, how to increase regional coordination efforts, create awareness of unmet needs, prioritization strategies, and to address desirable future transportation investments. Notes from each of the meetings listed above may be found in Appendix C.

It is important to note that although the urban summit was held on the Illinois side, information requested and gathered was in regard to

the Quad Cities Region as a whole. Bi-State will hold an urban transit summit annually, switching between Iowa and Illinois, in an effort to gather public input continuously. Individuals invited are representatives from the human service industry and transportation field, and are listed as part of Bi-State's Regional Transit Interest and Advisory Group (RTIAG). A sample flyer that was distributed to the RTIAG is included in Appendix C.

Bi-State Regional Commission continues to maintain www.qctransit.com, a web portal that allows riders to connect to the individual websites of QC transit systems and informs the public on new services and events. The web portal also complements ongoing efforts by transit systems to promote air quality through transit use, as well as the QC Rideshare website that launched in 2017.

Bi-State Regional Commission's Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) Coordinator will continue to work with both the urban and regional transit systems on public education and outreach efforts. For more information on the HSTP Coordinator's role, refer to Chapter 3.

Services

Whiteside County Public Transportation has established several service contracts for transportation services including with the local Regional Office of Education, CGH Hospital, Northern Illinois Cancer Treatment Center, Sinnissippi Mental Health, Tri-County Foster Grandparents Program, and Sterling Township.

Since providing service to underserved peripheral areas is costly, an expansion in service must carefully weigh the costs and benefits. Because of limited resources, transit systems must take into consideration the type of planned economic growth (service and retail), the low-density versus high-density future population areas, and the transit trip generation opportunities in the projected growth area. An emerging potential solution for providing service in outlying areas, MetroLINK has operated a microtransit service in Milan since 2019. The service is supplementary to the fixed-route service in the village, and offers an

on-demand public transportation option within corporate limits. Passengers can be picked up and dropped off within the designated service area. Multiple riders may be grouped together based on demand and the location of their destinations. Both Bettendorf Transit and Davenport CitiBus have conducted operations analyses in recent years, resulting in route and service changes.

MetroLINK intends to conduct studies to determine if “grid” or “feeder” routes can become viable alternatives for connecting residential areas to transfer points. These routes could connect residential areas to commercial and industrial work areas, thereby enhancing the ability to pick up passengers from outlying areas and feed into main connection points.

Commuter and “feeder” routes could be accomplished through a variety of methods, such as Specialized Transportation Services (STS) and taxi services or through volunteer driver services. Potential trips could connect to Centre Station, East Pointe, and the Rock Island District Station via major rural-designated corridors.

The implementation of rural medical trip days to the urbanized area could improve the connection to health care facilities for populations that are geographically distant from them. Dependent upon the location, some expanded rural service could include the development of Park and Ride lots and/or new shelter placement. Dispersed medical office locations throughout the region decrease the efficiency of providing medical-specific trips.

The Iowa DOT developed a *Park and Ride System Plan* in 2014 that updated the existing inventory and identified additional suitable locations for park and ride facilities and strategies for implementation. The plan identified two candidate locations for park and ride facilities in Davenport to facilitate cross-river travel. Eventually, the DOT established a facility at Thunder Bay Grill on North Brady Street (U.S. 61).

The Iowa DOT also established the Iowa Rideshare website to match ride seekers with potential drivers. Bi-State Regional Commission hosts the local component of the Iowa Rideshare website, called QCRideshare.org. The goal of the website is to offer ride matching services to people.

Public Input

Public input for the 2023 Bi-State Region Transit Development Plan has been provided through the following activities:

- 2017 and 2022 Update of the Specialized Transportation Service Inventory
- Ongoing informational meetings in Mercer, Rock Island, and Whiteside Counties
- Monthly meetings of the Urban Transportation Technical and Policy Committees
- Quarterly meetings of the MPA Transit Managers
- Quarterly meetings of the Region 9 Transportation Technical and Policy Committees
- Quarterly meetings of the Region 2 Transit Advisory Committee
- Quarterly meetings of the RIM Rural Transit Advisory Board
- Public input meetings for the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan
- Regional Transit Summits
- June 4, 2019 – Muscatine Network Consortium
- June 26, 2019 – Council on Community Services of the Quad Cities
- January 22, 2020 - Council on Community Services of the Quad Cities
- March 12, 2020 - Augustana College
- June 15, 2022- Muscatine Network Consortium

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- June 21, 2022 - Region 2 Transit Summit - Geneseo City Hall
- June 23, 2022 - Eastern Iowa Community College, Urban Campus

The public is always invited to attend the regional and urbanized Transportation Technical and Policy Committee meetings to provide input on any agenda topics or miscellaneous items. Bi-State Regional Commission also welcomes any questions and or comments in regard to public transit in the region to be directed to their offices throughout the year.

Public transit providers and Bi-State staff also have public opportunities through daily business calls, personal contacts, and cyclical or special meetings. A full listing of public input opportunities and data collected through surveys, workshops, and service reports is included in Appendix C.

Whenever requested, staff members also meet with human service agencies offering client-based transportation services to identify particular services and gaps that may be unmet.

Common Transit Issues

The following are common transit issues identified by the various public input opportunities throughout the region:

1. Extended hours and days of service –

In Iowa, both fixed-route urban systems operate until 7:00 p.m. on weekdays. Davenport CitiBus and Bettendorf Transit implemented new schedules as a result of route analyses, and concluded that service could be extended to evenings and weekends. Currently, CitiBus operates Saturday service 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., while Bettendorf Transit provides Saturday service from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Neither service operates on Sunday.

MetroLINK extended its hours of service on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, from 10:30 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. on Route 53, which is a popular route that runs between The District (downtown Rock

Island) and Augustana College. In the future, demand for these services may justify extending hours on the regular fixed-route systems to act as feeder services to other regional routes.

In 2013, Whiteside County expanded its service hours from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday to 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. to cater to consumers occupying a traditional work day ranging from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Henry County has similar hours from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. In the rural areas, weekend service has not currently been identified as in high demand.

Providing service to those who may not work traditional work hours in both the rural and urban areas has been identified as a barrier for users. Those working in the restaurant and or/retail business as well as third shift, may begin or end work well after operating hours. Concern has risen for frequent riders who may be required to work mandatory overtime, exceeding the transit services' normal hours of operation. Suggestions of establishing contracted services with local taxi providers, guaranteeing a ride to or from work under such circumstances, has been suggested to alleviate some higher costs that are associated with taking private transportation.

- #### 2. Greater geographic coverage –
- This item directly correlates with coordination efforts made within the region. In some cases, the more the transit services can coordinate with one another, the greater geographic area will be covered. There is a gap in service between urban and rural areas where trips are often needed for medical or human service appointments, as well as service to major employment sites. Map 4.1 depicts large employers, those with greater than 100 employees, with areas of higher concentrations of households with no vehicle, low household income, and population in the labor force. Coordination efforts between the

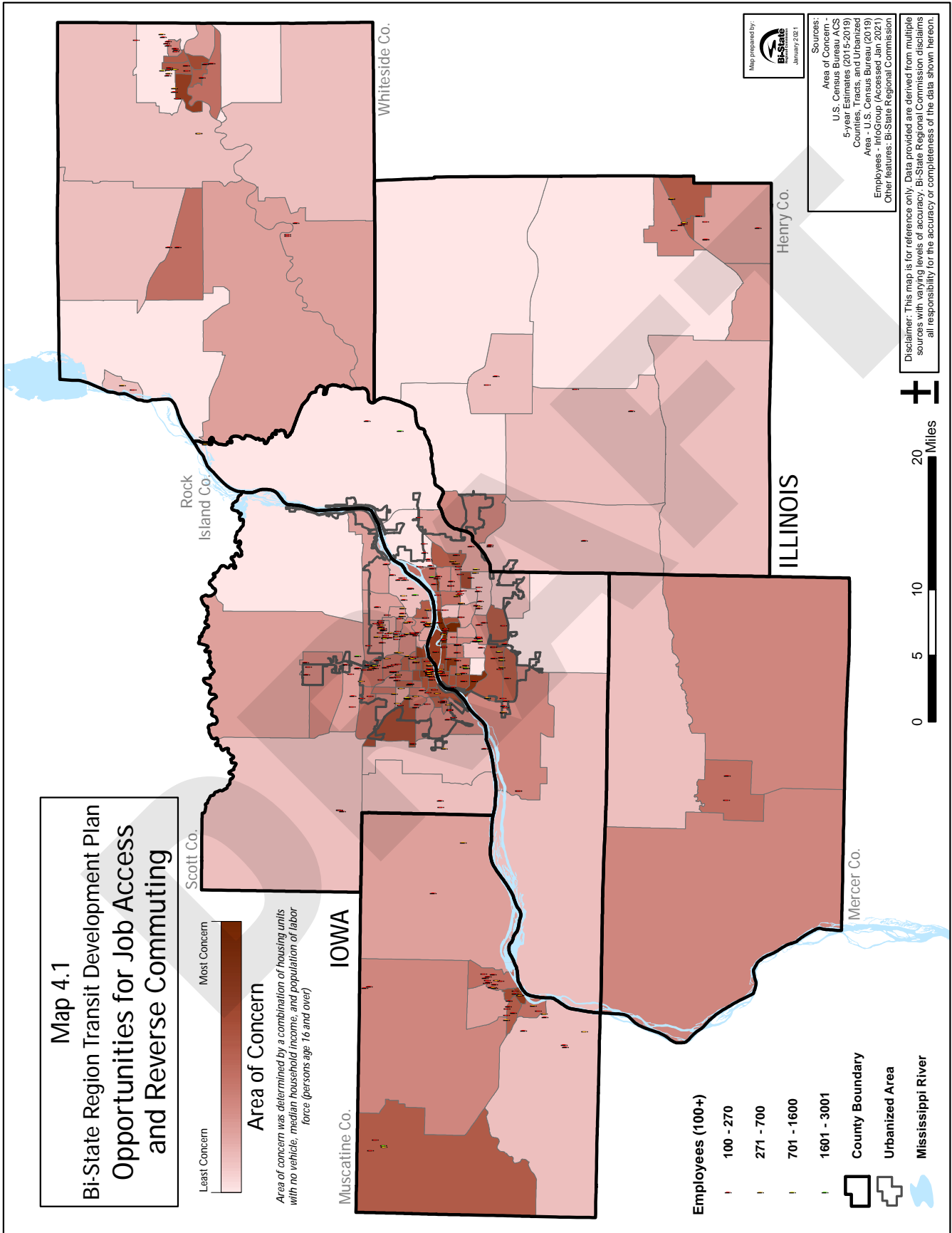
rural and urban parts of the region have significantly increased, allowing riders to commute efficiently from outlying areas into the urban area. Medical visits to larger health facilities in Iowa City, Peoria, or Rockford are difficult for riders due to the extended services areas of regional transit systems. These services are often only offered weekly or monthly.

Local and state jurisdictional boundaries also serve as a barrier to covering a larger geographic coverage for some transit services. Consumers suggested their concern and confusion about not

being able to cross state or county borders using one transit service. However, due to state funding, in most instances transit systems are unable to travel into other state's jurisdiction. Davenport Citi-Bus provides a cross-boundary service between Davenport and Bettendorf and Rock Island, allowing riders to go from the origin in one city to a destination in the other city without having to transfer at the city boundaries.

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Map 4.1
Opportunities for Job Access and Reverse Commuting with Major Employers



3. Funding and resources for providers – Historically, transit agencies noted a lack of sufficient resources to meet the needs of the public. However, federal legislation since 2020 has provided transit providers adequate financial resources to weather the significant uncertainties and drop-in ridership caused directly by the COVID-19 pandemic. Federal infusions of funding through the CARES Act (2020), CRR-SAA (2020), and ARPA (2021), on top of expanded appropriations through IIJA¹, transit agencies have experienced unprecedented support in the form of federal funding.

These funds will help address the backlog of maintenance issues, ensuring a state of good repair for years to come. However, due to supply chain issues, deliveries of new buses and other equipment can be delayed months or even years. Yet, agencies must continue utilizing ageing vehicles running up against their useful life benchmarks until the new vehicles are delivered. The effect is that the vehicle fleets are running longer and increasing maintenance cost that are imposed by the delayed deliveries.

4. Non-emergency medical transportation – Transportation to medical appointments has been a need identified at public input meetings and survey responses. As mentioned, transit providers are also receiving an increasing number of requests for medical trips outside of the Greater Bi-State Region to hospitals and specialists in Iowa City, Peoria, and Rockford. Trips can be lengthy, and there is added difficulty in coordinating trips for multiple passengers with multiple appointment times, lengths, and locations. Whiteside County Public Transportation provides service twice a month to medical facilities in Rockford, Illinois. Henry County Public Transportation also provides periodic trips to the Illinois Quad Cities, Galesburg, and Peoria based on demand.

These extended trips were paused during the COVID-19 pandemic, but have since restarted. Riders are sometimes unable to access medical specialists in these extended service areas due to scheduling conflicts between their doctors and the public transit agency.

In 2016, River Bend Transit began offering twice-daily service from Davenport to Iowa City. The route served major medical facilities in Iowa City. In addition, as time allowed, buses remain available to riders at no additional charge for other trips throughout the day. Service was introduced at \$10 per ride, but was reduced to \$5 per ride. However, service was discontinued in 2018 due to grant funds being exhausted and not enough ridership to justify the service.

Privacy rights and passenger health must also be considered when implementing new programs. In 2010, the Iowa Department of Human Services, Iowa Medicaid Enterprise (IME), contracted with TMS Management Group, now known as Access2Care. The service offers to arrange free transportation (such as to medical appointments or therapy treatments) to Medicaid recipients within the State of Iowa. Trips may be made out of the state if that is what the patient needs.

5. Affordability – Although fares have been described as reasonably priced on fixed-route systems within the urbanized area, specialized transit, or trips outside of current routes can be costly to individuals with low or fixed incomes. Affordability was a major concern in discussions with human service agency staff and on responses to the agency survey. Fare increases have a much larger impact among the vulnerable populations that the agencies serve. Some agencies offer tokens or passes to their customers that allow them to ride transit at half the cost of regular fares.

¹ Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021

Efforts have been initiated to make services more affordable for a wider range of demographics. Contracting with local schools and colleges has encouraged more students to use public transit. Whiteside County allows students attending Sauk Valley Community College to ride. Davenport CitiBus has contracted with the Davenport Community School District allowing students to utilize the public transit system year-round for free when showing a student ID. Some human service agencies have agreements with the City of Davenport to provide free bus tokens for their clients, allowing them to utilize CitiBus for medical or job training purposes. Some agencies have expressed they would like to see this kind of service expanded for vulnerable populations.

6. Transit-friendly infrastructure – As the built environment is indelibly linked to the efficacy of efficient public transportation, it is imperative that development in the Greater Quad Cities region is done with an eye toward sustainability and with infrastructure that is compatible with transit operations. Infrastructure within the region has long been built without consideration for public transit. Transit systems have expressed concern that public transportation is often not addressed until after a new development is complete. Transit drivers in these developments may be faced with limited turning radii and, in some cases, are not provided access to private properties. Having minimal sidewalk access leading up to a bus stop may also result in fewer riders due to inaccessibility and inconvenience.

7. Issues of jurisdiction when crossing city, county, or state boundaries – Attendees at public input meetings and respondents on input surveys described an invisible barrier created by state and municipal boundaries in the urbanized area and county boundaries in rural areas through-

out the region. In rural areas, residents in outlying towns bordering county boundaries are often underserved. A provider in a nearby county may have the capability to provide less expensive service, but is unable or unwilling to cross county boundaries to do so, and existing providers within the county may not be able to provide service to outlying areas of the county with less demand for services. Occasionally, issues pertaining to funding and funding sources prohibit certain vehicles from crossing state lines. Often though, rural carriers may service a trip that either begins or ends in the host county. In a two-state region, this can result in coordination issues.

8. Drivers and volunteers – A common barrier for transit providers who are looking to lower operating costs is the difficulty in using volunteer drivers. Providers are constrained by extensive training and insurance issues that may often outweigh the benefit of utilizing volunteers. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, hiring new drivers has proved to be difficult and time-consuming in a competitive labor market that is not conducive to slow-moving hiring and certification processes.

Specialized & Regional Service Needs & Strategies

Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities

With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), fixed-route transit providers are required to provide paratransit service for all persons unable to ride the fixed-route system because of a disability. The Cities of Bettendorf and Davenport contract this service with River Bend Transit. Bettendorf offers a dial-a-ride program open to the general public as well as people with disabilities. The Davenport program requires verification of disability through an application and card identification process. Trips are then requested by reservation once an application is on file. MetroLINK

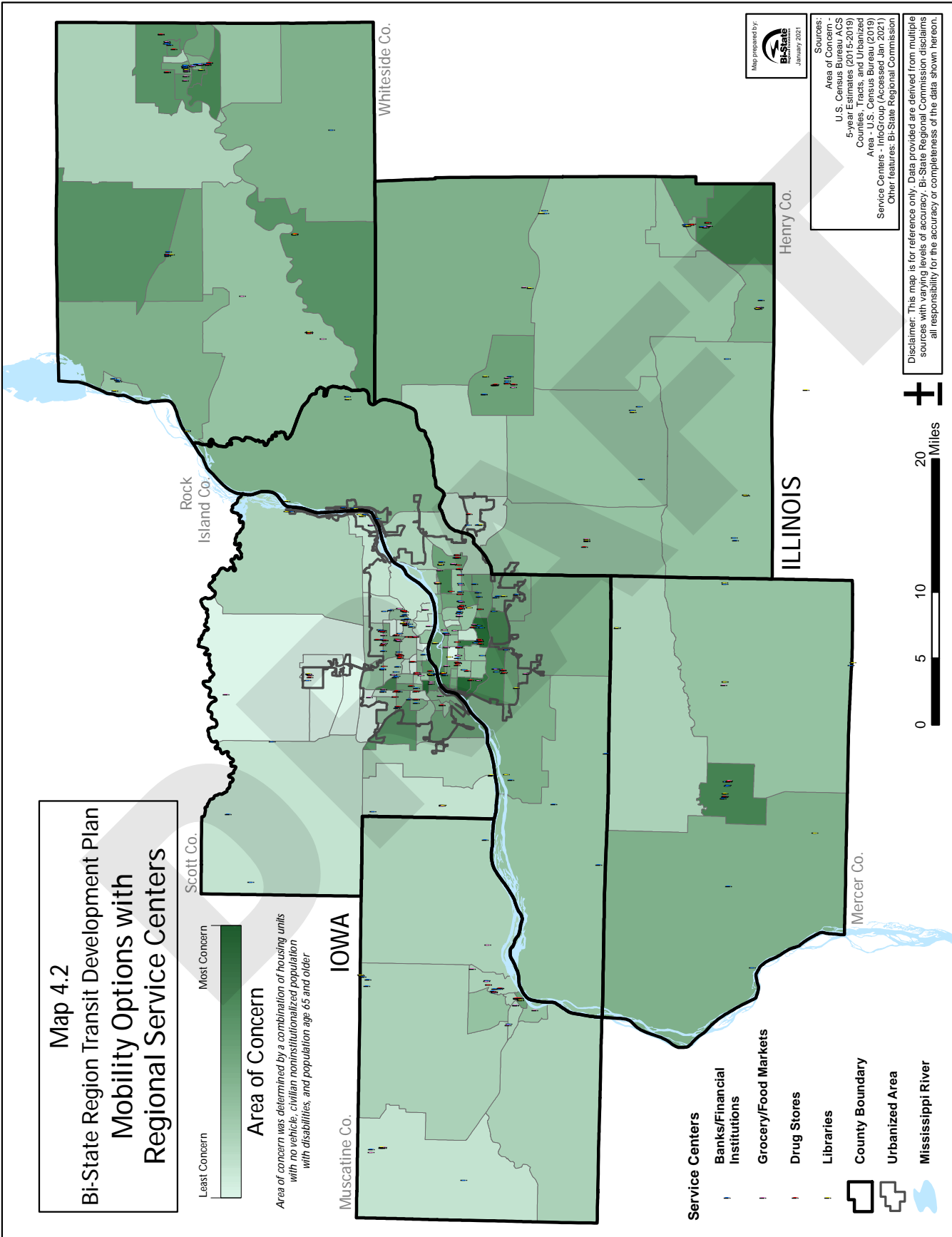
offers similar paratransit service for the Illinois side of the Quad Cities. River Bend Transit upholds the policy not to deny trip requests and will maintain an appropriate number of lift-equipped vehicles to meet the demand. This policy applies to ADA “blue card” holders only; non-ADA rides are accommodated so long as there is “time and space available.” In Muscatine, MuscaBus offers a reservation service for paratransit.

Maps 4.2-4.4 display areas with a higher density of seniors, individuals with a disability, and households without access to a vehicle by census tract. Not surprisingly, the majority of service centers are located in the urbanized area. However, the maps provide insight to

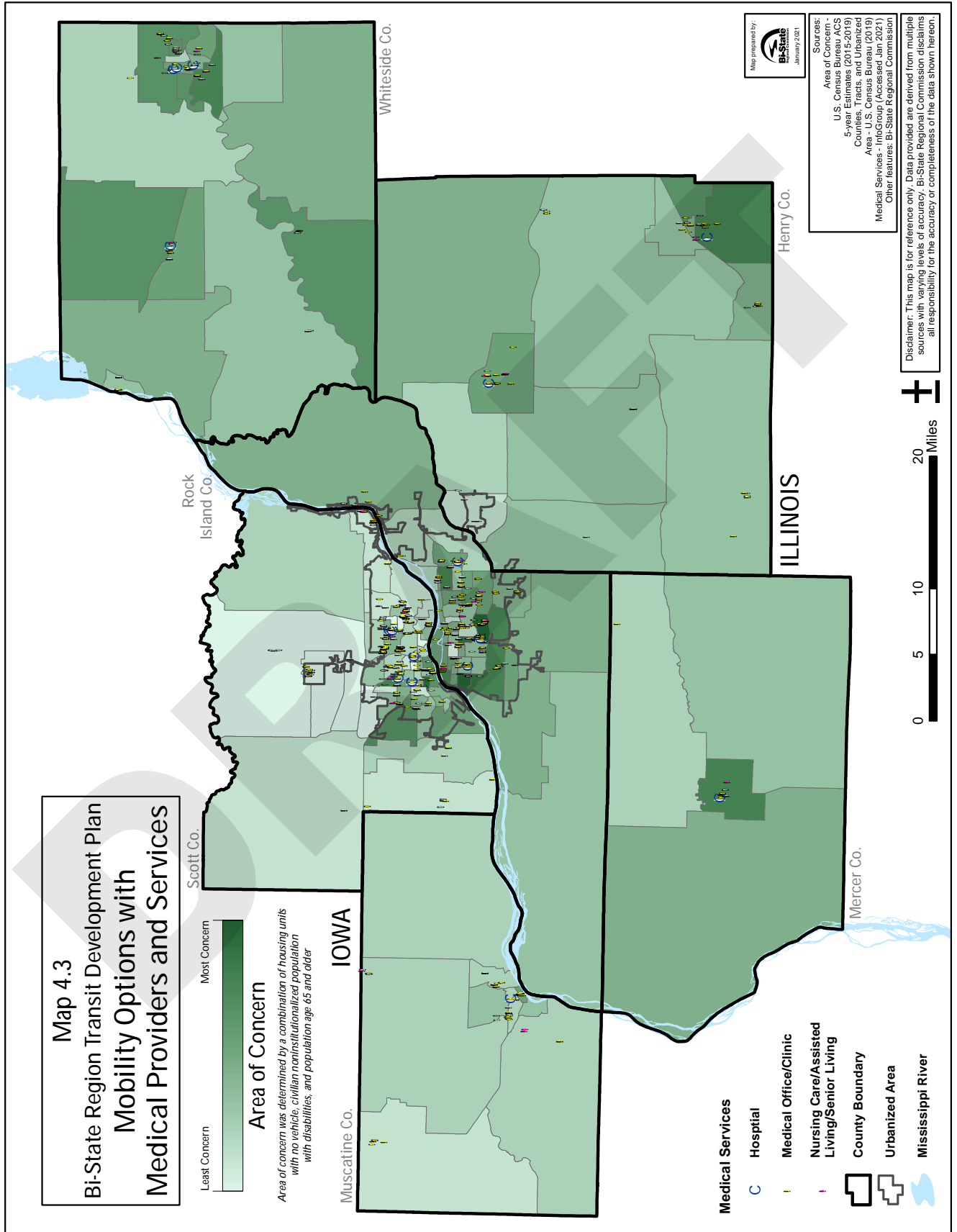
transportation needs in areas such as upper Rock Island County, southwest Muscatine and Scott Counties, and rural areas of Mercer and Whiteside Counties that may be underserved by fixed-route and/or demand-response public transportation. These areas, according to Census data, have a higher density of residents without vehicles, with disabilities, and seniors. In addition, maps included in Appendix B display the most frequently traveled trips of human service agencies and nonprofit organizations by county. Efforts are ongoing to enhance service and/or coordinated services between public transit systems and human service agencies providing client transportation.

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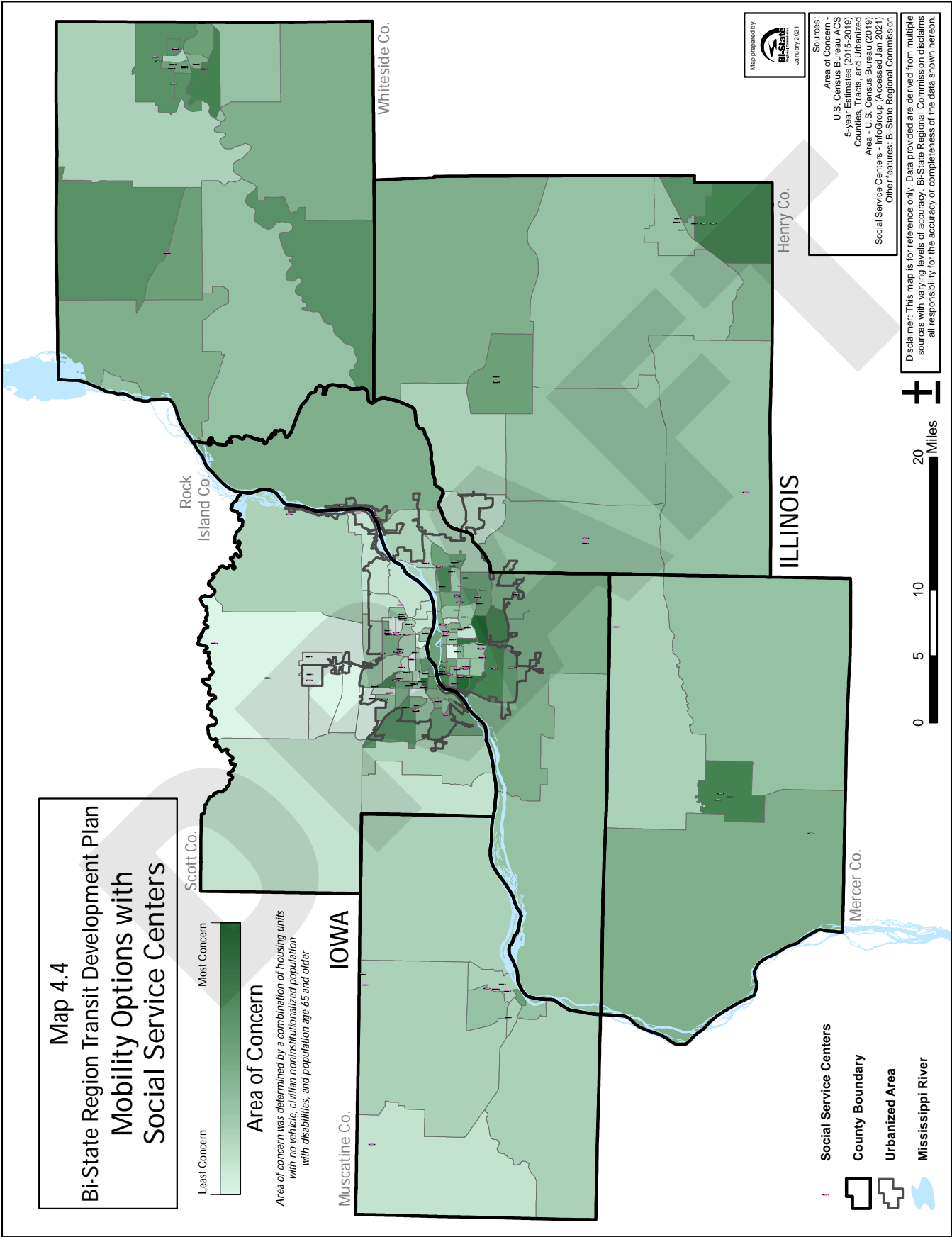
Map 4.2
Mobility Options with Regional Service Centers



Map 4.3
Mobility Options with Medical Providers and Services



Map 4.4
Mobility Options with Social Service Centers



Transit Accessibility Analysis

In 2022 and 2023, staff at Bi-State Regional Commission collected data from myriad sources detailing various transportation, demographic, and economic information on the Greater Bi-State Region for the purposes of analyzing the regional transit network. As noted elsewhere throughout this plan, mobility in the region can seem to riders like a patchwork of different systems that may not interconnect. Transfers between systems may necessitate advanced forethought and logistics to link multiple vehicles for a single, one-way trip. Education on available transit services will help alleviate some issues of familiarity and what transit service in the region does and can offer.

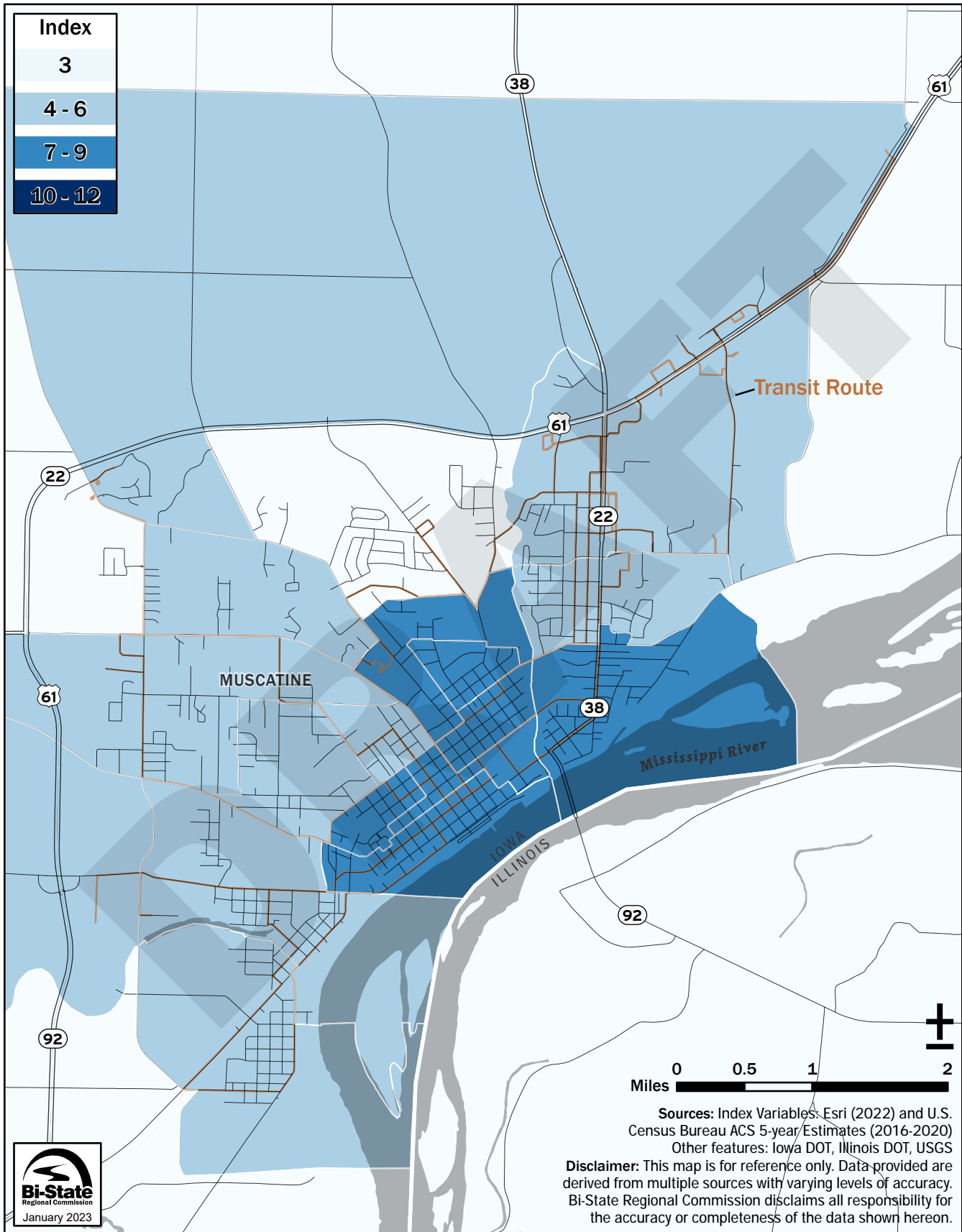
As noted elsewhere, rural, and urban public transportation look and function differently, but the purpose is the same: to get people to where they need to go. It is understood that all areas of the Greater Bi-State Region cannot be served by public transportation equally, and that practical and logistical challenges prevent some populations from benefiting from transit service more than others. However, it is the responsibility of the various systems to serve as broad a clientele as possible for the public good.

For purposes of this plan, this transit accessibility analysis provides insight into areas and populations that may or may not be served adequately by public transportation. The GIS (geographic information systems) based analysis evaluates demographic and economic data against transit network realities. Transit routes, bus arrival times, and pedestrian accessibility are included in the transit dataset. As all three fixed-route systems in the urban Quad Cities are “flag down service,” meaning that a rider can stand in a safe location anywhere along a bus route and request the bus to stop; artificial stops were added to the route data at most locations along fixed routes.

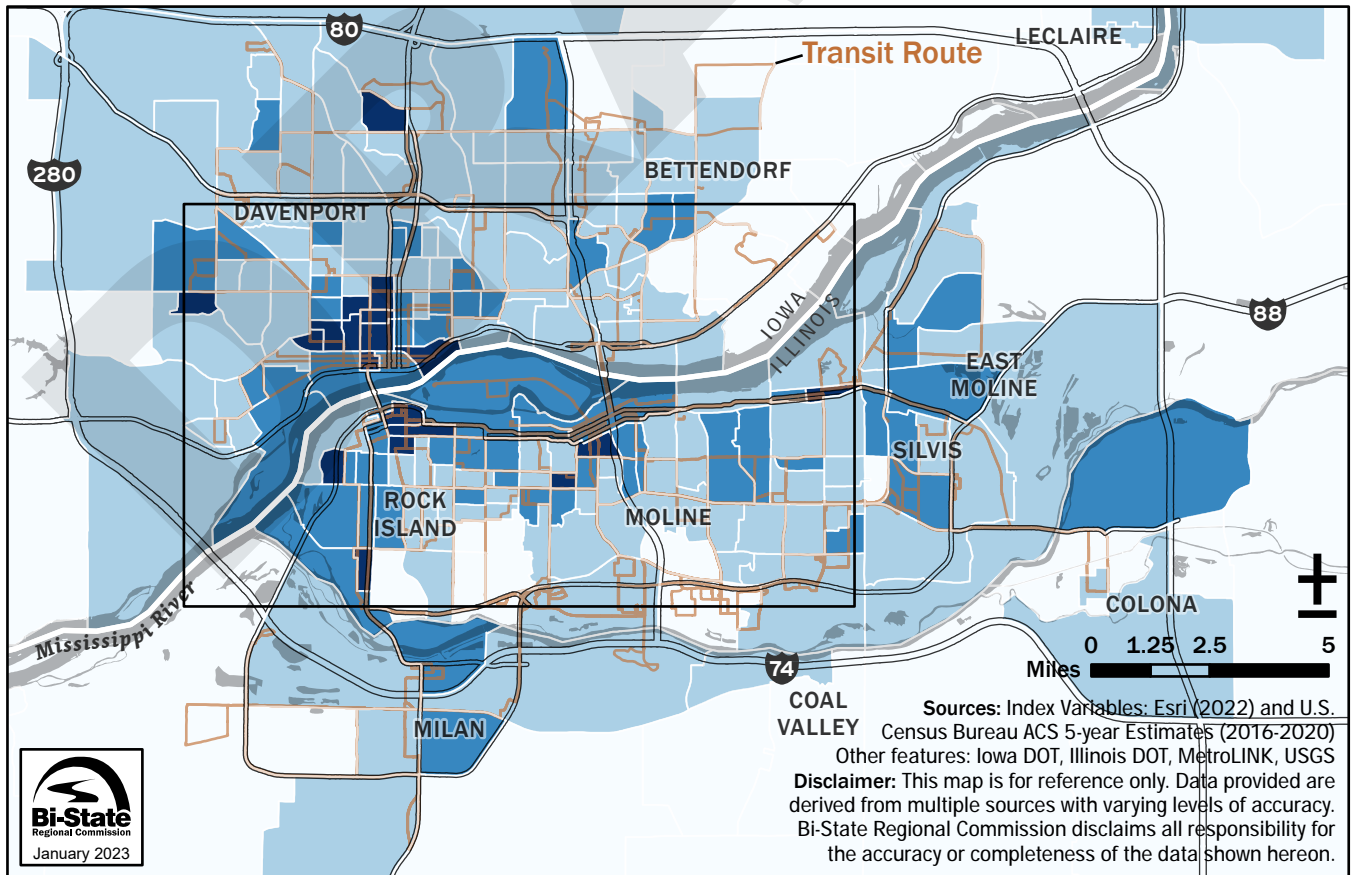
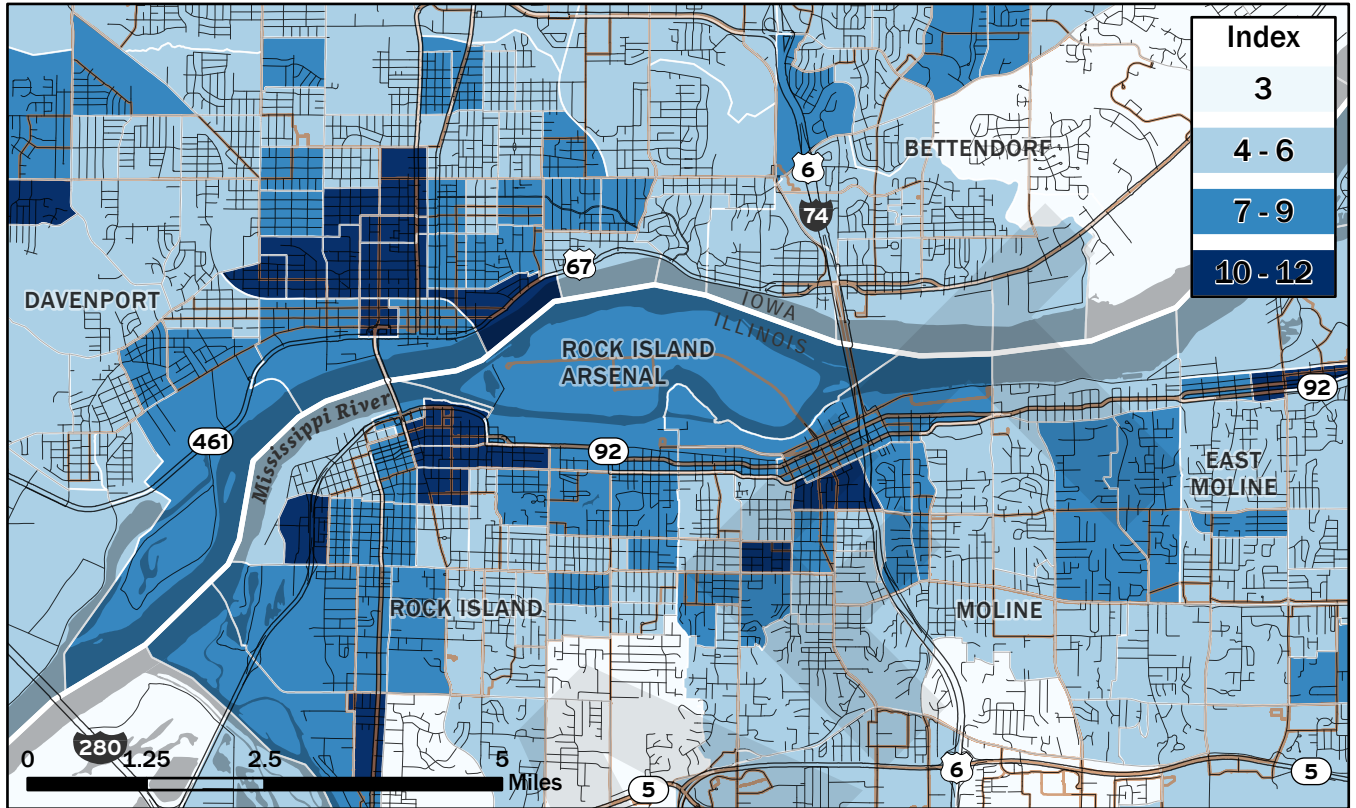
Demographic data were largely retrieved from the 2020 U.S. Census and American Community Survey. Demographic analysis was conducted on overall population estimates, along with racial and household income estimates at the census block group level to highlight populations that may depend on public transportation more than the rest of the general public. Three demographic variables—households below the poverty level, households without access to a vehicle, and population density—are weighted to create the composite index, which provides an indication of areas of higher need. Maps 4.5 – 4.12 show the composite index and the results of the three individual variables for the Muscatine and Quad Cities areas.

This index reveals areas throughout the urban Quad Cities that have populations that may be dependent on transit. Locations include in and near downtown areas in Davenport, Rock Island, Moline, and East Moline. In addition, numerous census block groups in Davenport south of approximately Central Park Avenue and Locust Street are among the group with the highest index scores. These areas are characterized by traditional pre-war style development of small lot sizes and an in-tact street grid network. On the Illinois side, a couple areas with high index scores outside the downtowns can be seen on the west side of Rock Island and in Moline on top of the hill. The physical characteristics of these neighborhoods are largely similar to those described in Davenport. In Muscatine, no block group was included among groups with the highest index scores. However, much of the urban core fell under the next-highest group. In general, the areas noted with the highest index scores are served by adequate transit service for the region.

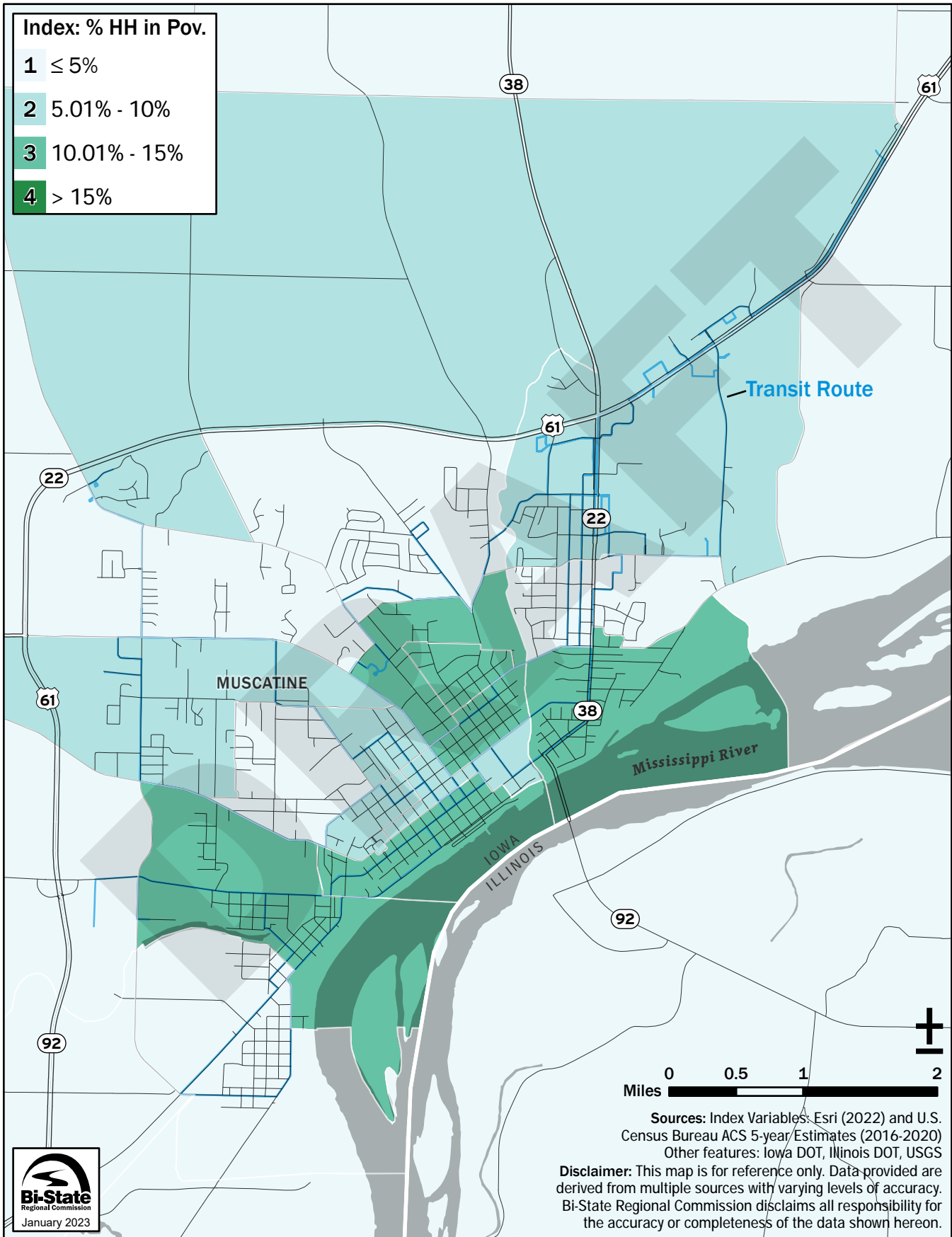
Map 4.5
Composite index – Muscatine



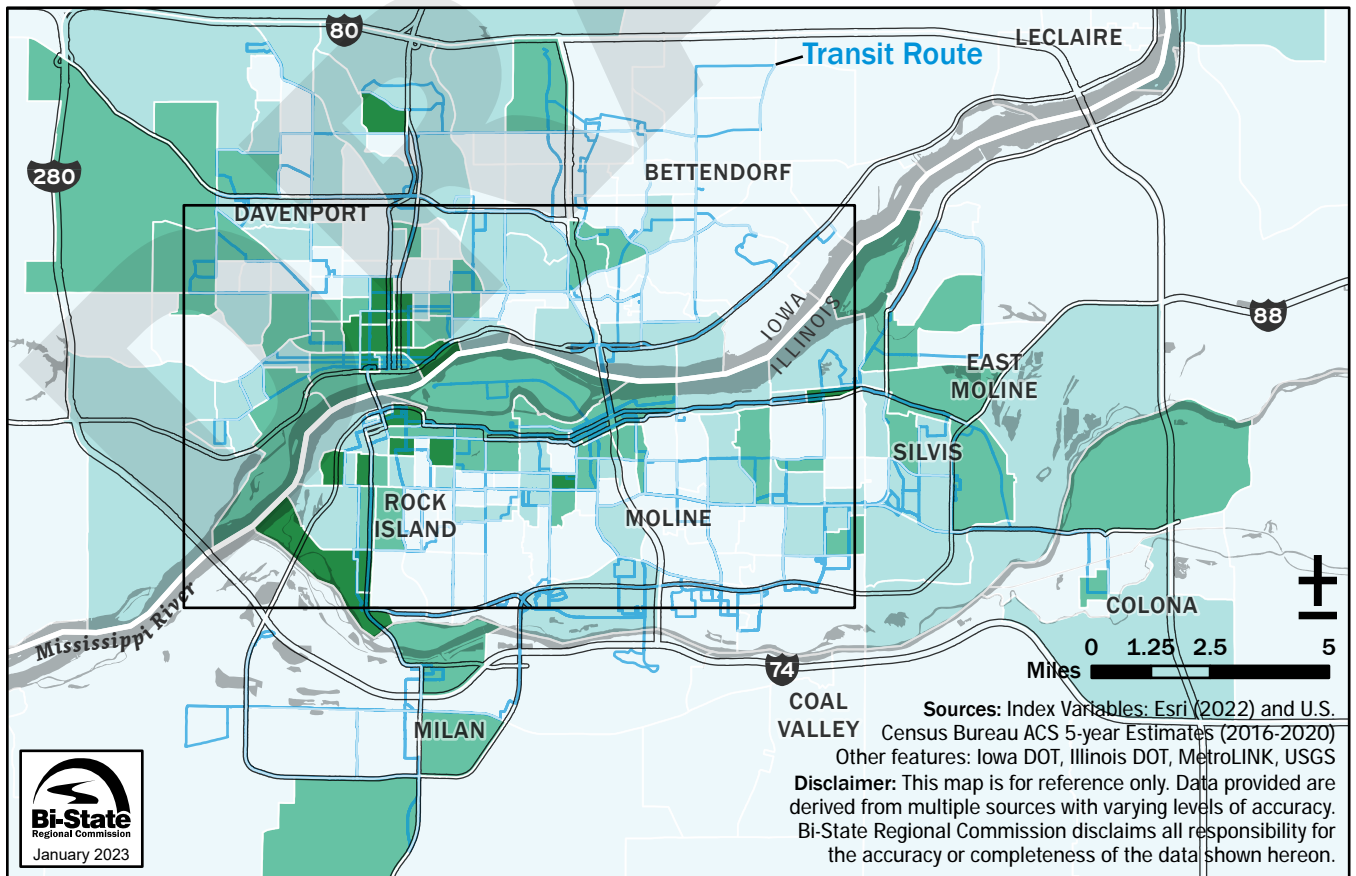
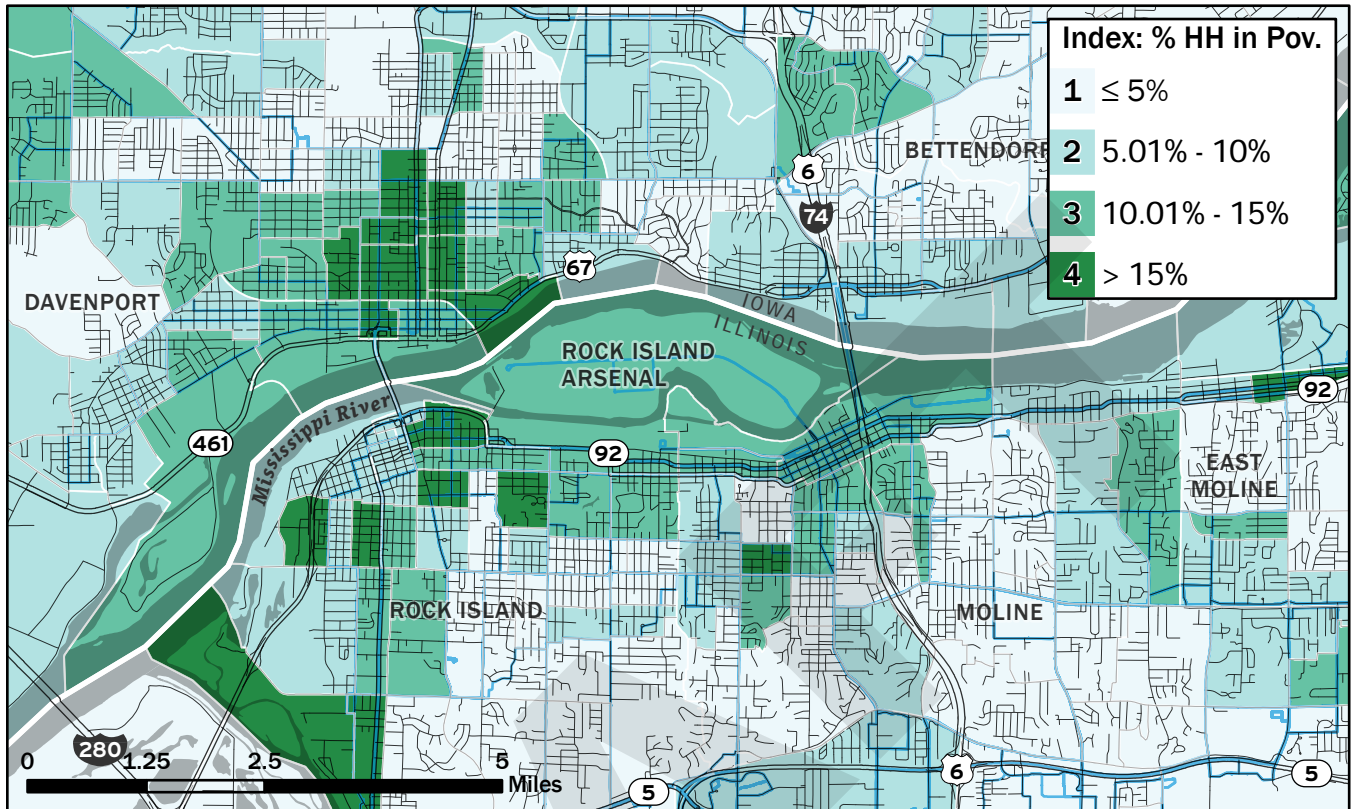
Map 4.6
Composite index – QCA



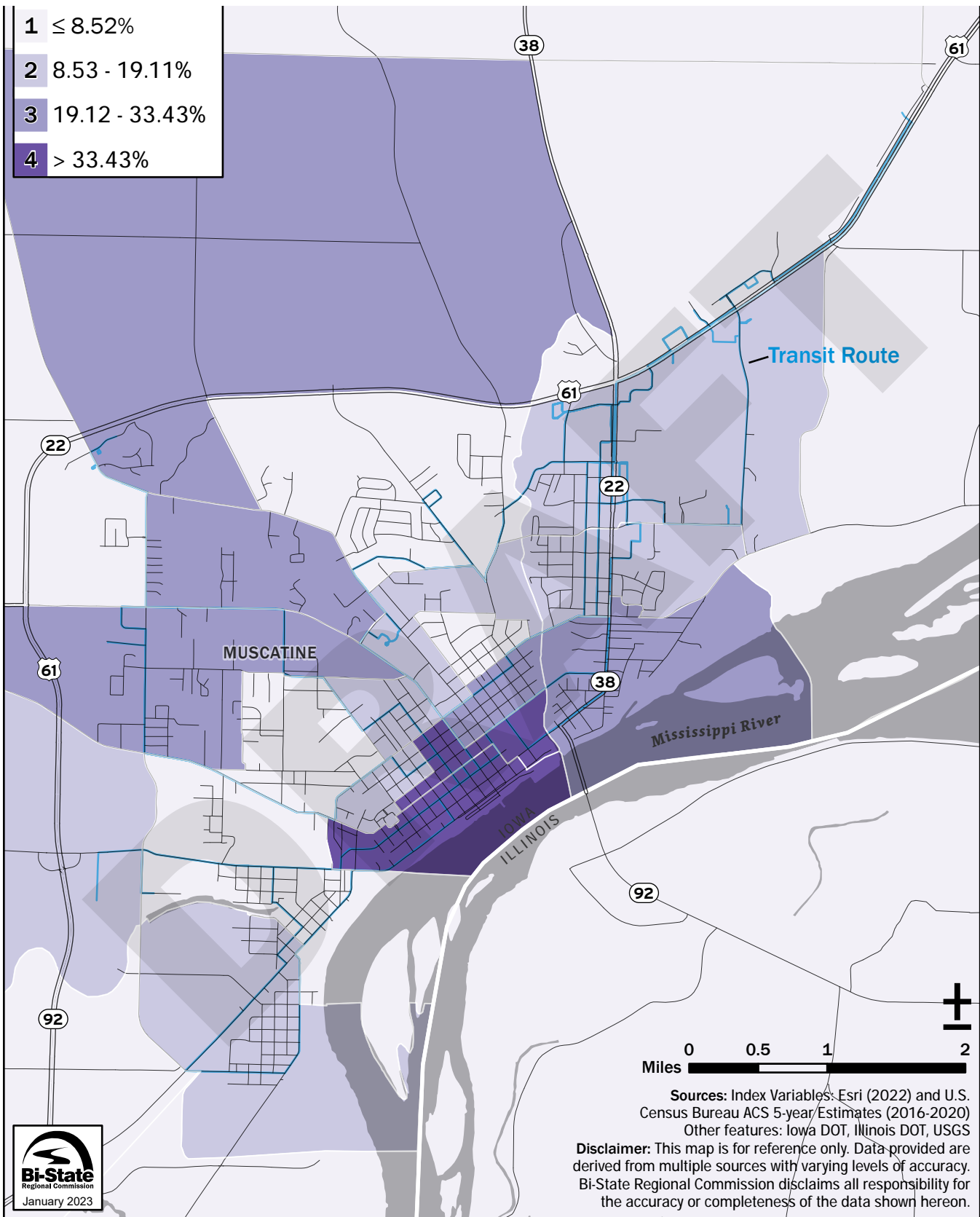
Map 4.7
Poverty – Muscatine



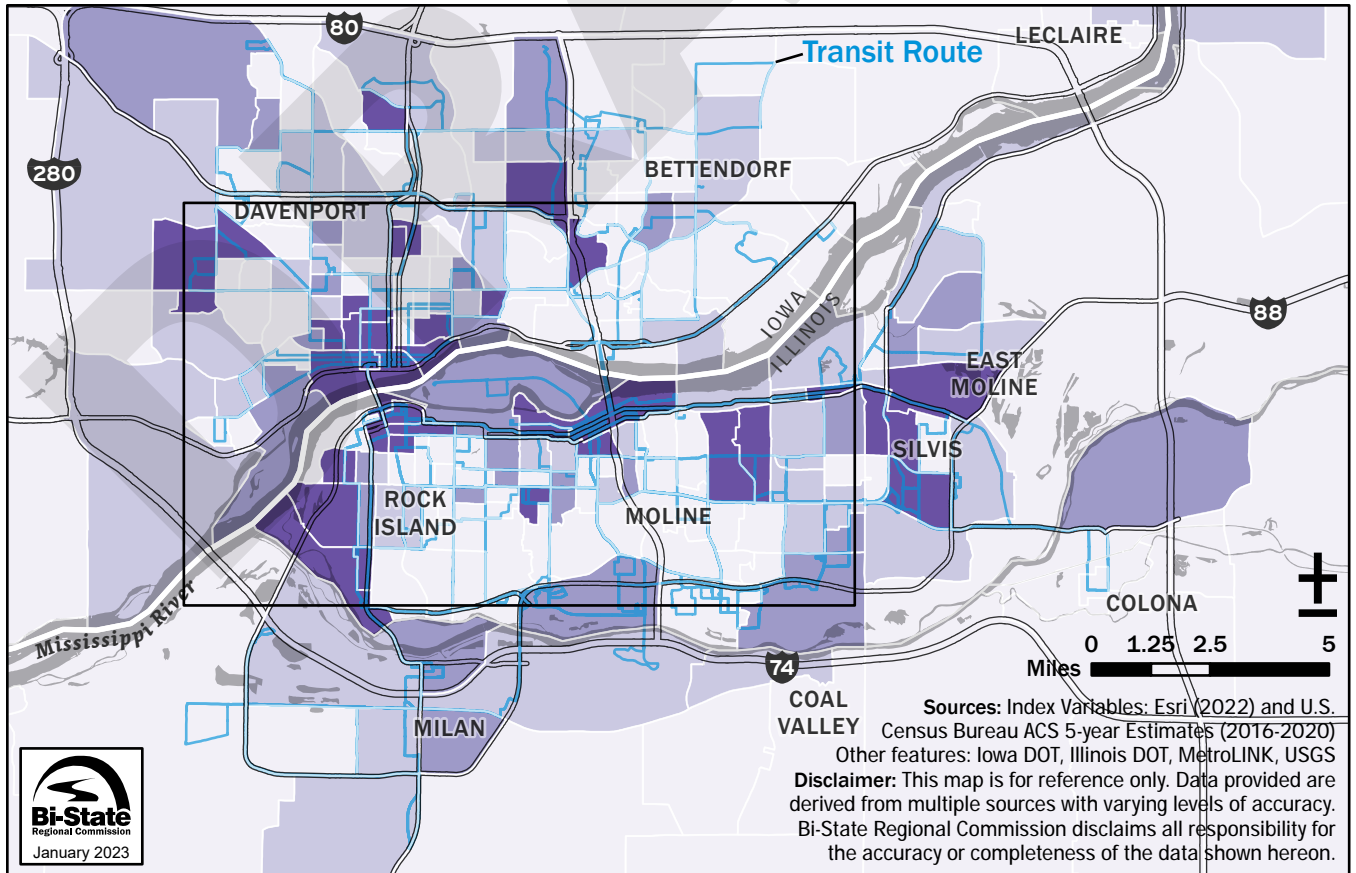
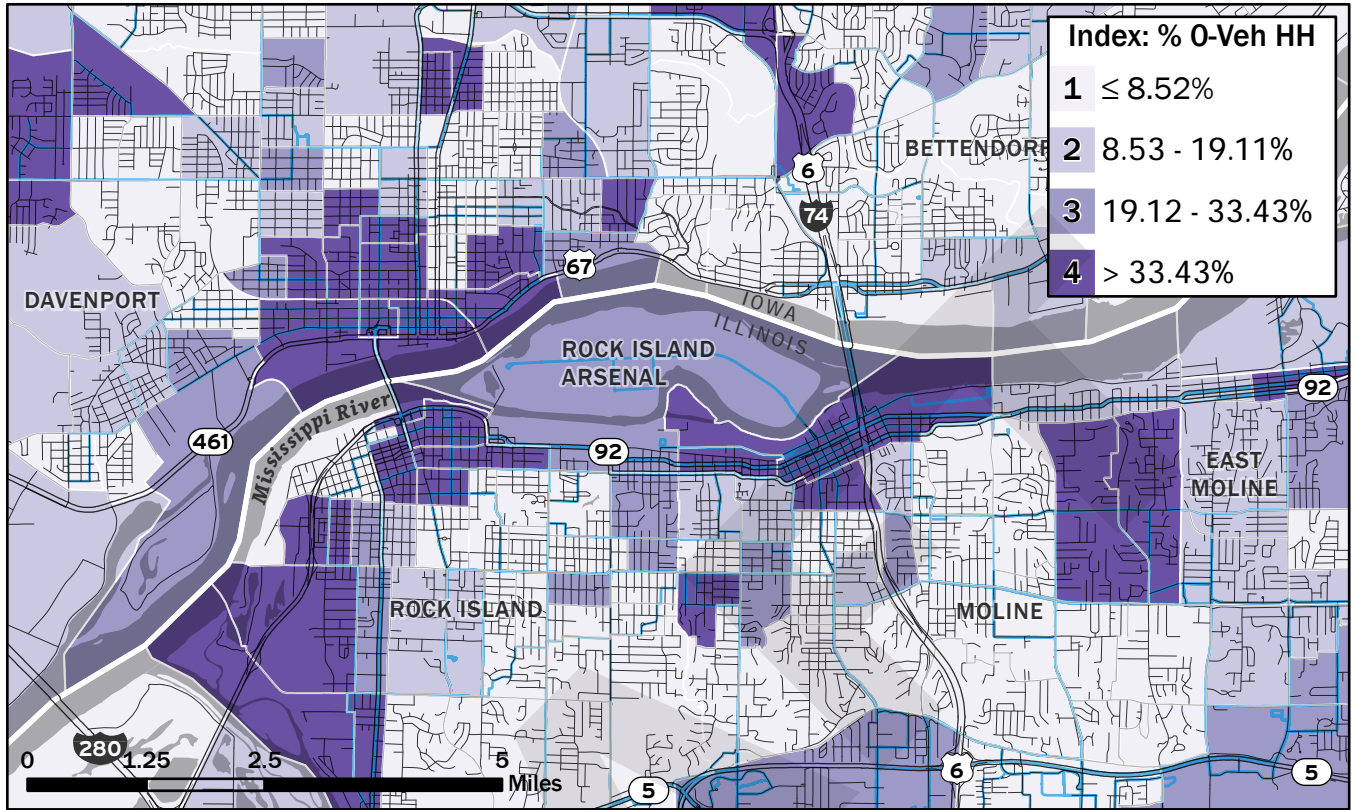
Map 4.8
Poverty – QCA



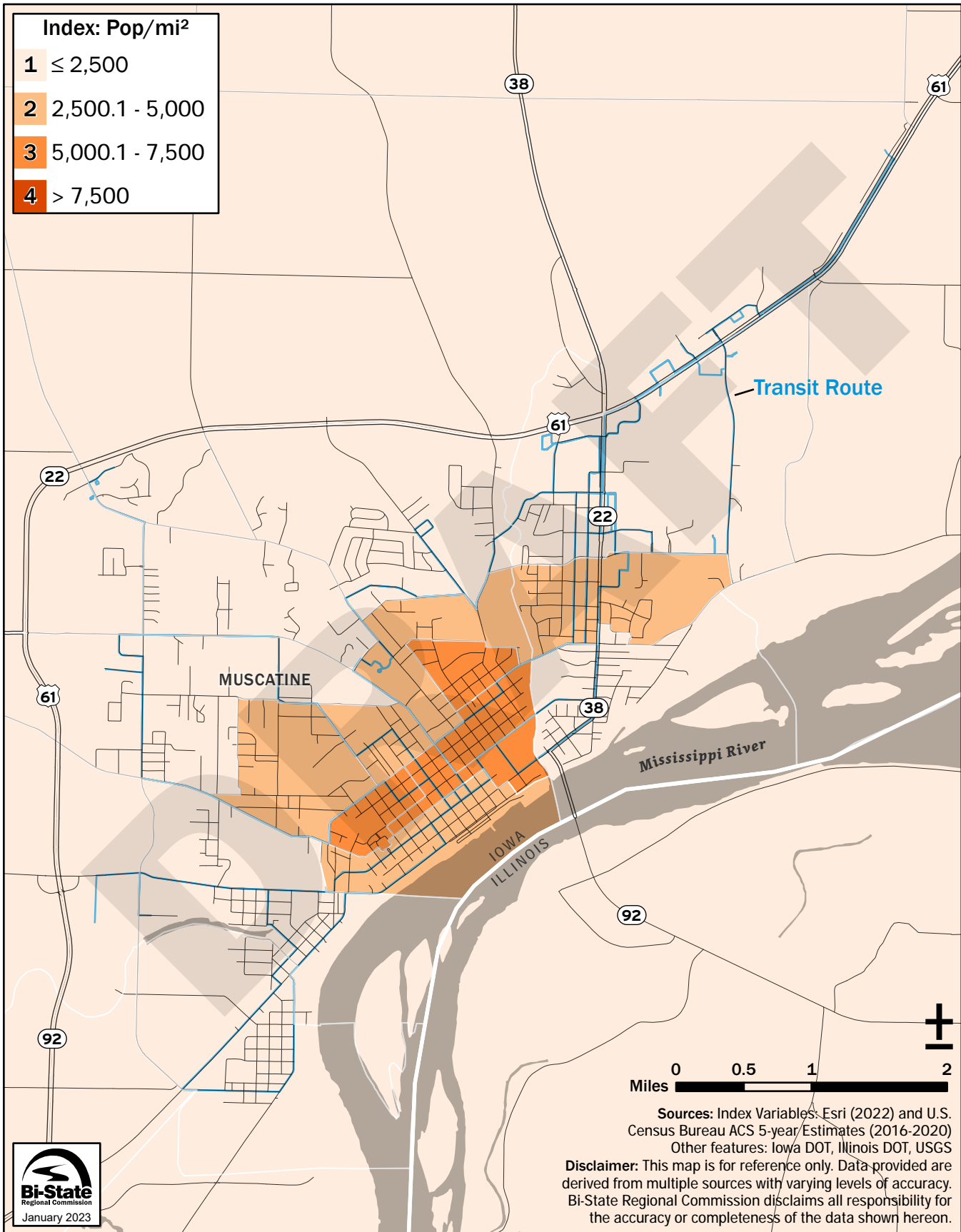
Map 4.9
0 Vehicles – Muscatine



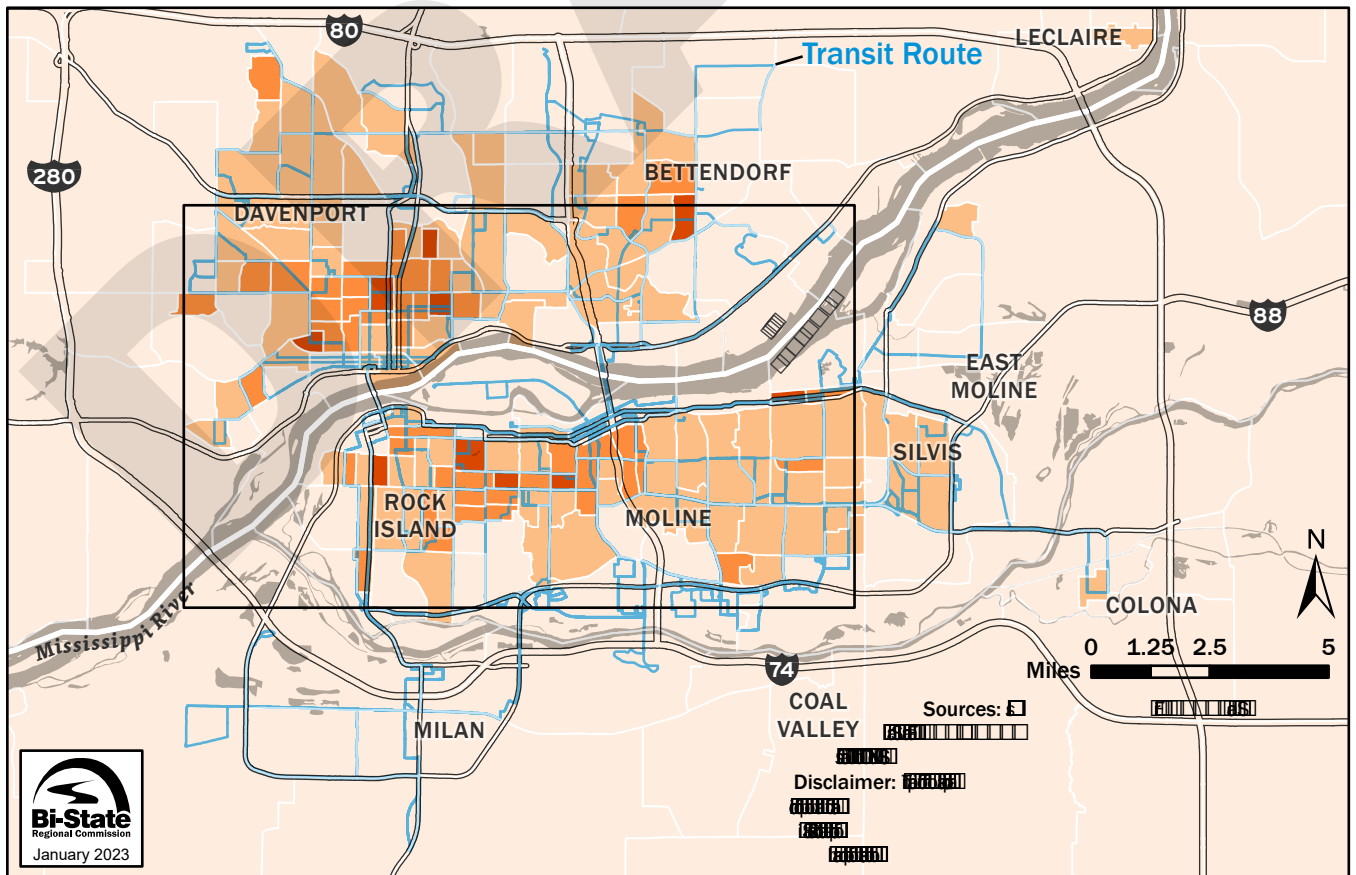
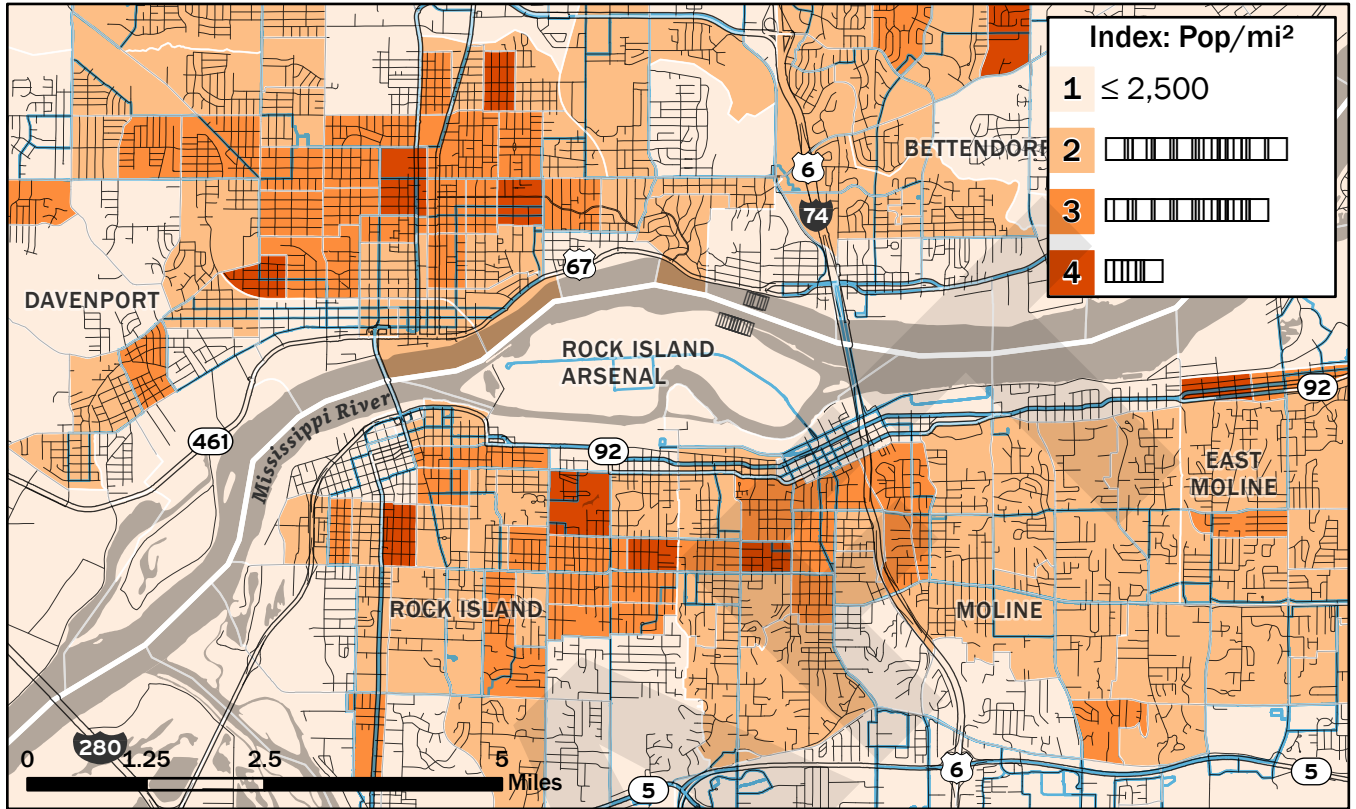
Map 4.10
0 Vehicles – QCA



Map 4.11
Pop density – Muscatine



Map 4.12
Pop density - QCA



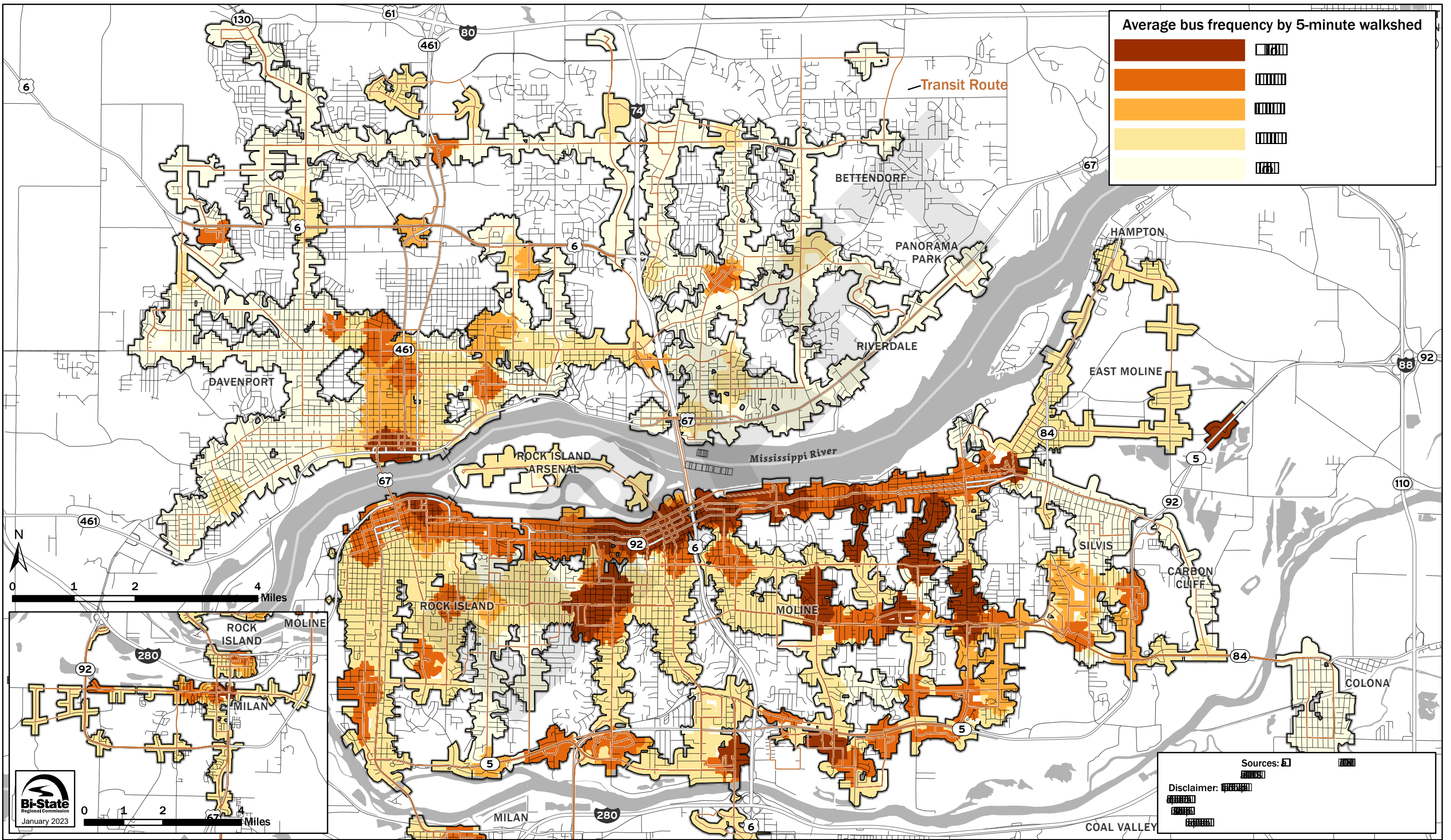
Evaluation of Needs & Policy Direction

Transit service for this analysis is expressed through five-minute walksheds. Walksheds indicate areas where a bus stop is within a quarter-mile, or a five-minute walk, of a given point. Walksheds are shaded according to the average number of buses that can be boarded at a given stop during a typical 12-hour period on a weekday. The result (Map 4.13 and 4.14) shows areas where residents can catch numerous buses from a given point and areas where residents do not have direct access or infrequent access to transit.

The walkshed analysis indicates numerous areas that are highly served by transit service. The most highly served areas include most downtown areas in the core Quad Cities and

Muscatine. In addition, there are numerous outlying areas in both the urban Quad Cities and Muscatine that are served by frequent bus service. Locations include uptown Moline, SouthPark Mall, and a shopping center in East Moline. In Muscatine, the Muscatine Mall area is served by all three routes, resulting in frequent service. Conversely, there are areas of the Iowa Quad Cities that are served by comparatively few buses per hour, typically one per hour or none at all. These areas include large portions in Davenport north of Central Park Avenue and in Bettendorf north of Spruce Hills Drive. These areas are characterized by post-war era suburban-style development, which is often difficult to serve efficiently by transit.

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Map 4.14
Walksheds - QCA

Approximately 8.75% of the urban area population, representing approximately 11,702 residents, is identified in the class with the highest frequency transit service with an average of 5.4 or more buses per hour at a given stop. Another 14.0%, approximately 18,730 residents, are included in the next-highest class with between 3.2 and 5.4 buses per hour. Table 4.1 shows the number of people living in each

zone reflecting the degree of accessibility to transit service. High frequency service across multiple routes provides residents with the ability to transfer between them more quickly and conveniently, expanding the number of possible destinations within a certain time-frame. Increased transit frequency is noted under the “Convenience” strategy listed later in this chapter.

**Table 4.1
Population by Transit Accessibility Zones**

Geography	Zone	Route Frequency	Buses per Hour	2022 Total Population	2022 Total Population: Proportion
Quad Cities	1	10 minutes or less	5.43 - 18.25 (max)	11,702	8.75%
Quad Cities	2	11 minutes - 16 minutes	3.18 - 5.42	18,730	14.01%
Quad Cities	3	17 minutes - 24 minutes	2.34 - 3.17	9,214	6.89%
Quad Cities	4	25 minutes - 43 minutes	1.18 - 2.33	46,053	34.45%
Quad Cities	5	44 minutes or more	0.08 (min) - 1.17	47,984	35.89%
Total				133,683	100.00%
Geography	Zone	Route Frequency	Buses per Hour	2022 Total Population	2022 Total Population: Proportion
Muscatine	1	10 minutes or less	5.43 - 18.25 (max)	647	4.51%
Muscatine	2	11 minutes - 16 minutes	3.18 - 5.42	0	0.00%
Muscatine	3	17 minutes - 24 minutes	2.34 - 3.17	420	2.93%
Muscatine	4	25 minutes - 43 minutes	1.18 - 2.33	8,721	60.80%
Muscatine	5	44 minutes or more	0.08 (min) - 1.17	4,556	31.76%
Total				14,344	100.00%

Needs & Strategies within the Urbanized Area

In 2022, Bi-State Regional Commission facilitated two surveys seeking input on transportation mobility issues from human service agencies and the general public. The surveys were disseminated between June 2022 and January 2023. The agency survey received 34 responses, while the public survey received 85. The surveys were created by the Rural Transit Assistance Center at the Institute of Rural Affairs. Links to the online survey website were shared through established mailing lists, in addition to direct outreach to human service groups and consortia in the urban area and in Region 9.

In previous updates to the TDP, input was received from the public that service times should be extended for a multitude of reasons, especially on the Iowa side of the Quad Cities. In 2016, as a result of a comprehensive route analysis, Davenport CitiBus extended service

hours later in the evening and on weekends. Service was introduced on Sundays, but was discontinued in response to the sharp decline in ridership caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Bettendorf, likewise, runs buses on its three routes until 7:00 p.m. on weekdays and 5:30 p.m. on weekends.

Another barrier identified by the fixed-route systems is infrastructure and ongoing development that is inaccessible by public transportation. Fixed-route transit operators face business owners who have restricted public transit access and newly constructed infrastructure without adequate turning radii. Partnerships between the economic development community and transit providers to eliminate accessibility issues prior to construction are a possible strategy in preventing future barriers.

In 2008, the Transportation Policy Committee of the Bi-State Regional Commission approved a *Quad City Area Complete Streets Policy*. In the future, priority access and mobility options

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will continue to be addressed at a community level, in coordination with this region-wide policy. In 2017, Bi-State facilitated a Complete Streets Technical Workshop to discuss thoroughfares that are designed or reconstructed to better accommodate pedestrians, transit, and bicyclists. Further work has been facilitated to bring Complete Streets ideas to communities in the Quad Cities. Also, in 2017, another workshop was held for local planners and engineers to explore new roadway treatments to increase safety and quality of life.

Regional Needs & Strategies

Illinois Region 2 – Henry, Mercer, Rural Rock Island, and Whiteside Counties

Barriers in Region 2 include service availability (hours of service), vehicle and driver availability, and funding and capacity for service expansion. As noted in previous chapters, all counties in Region 2—Henry, Mercer, Rock Island, and Whiteside—have implemented rural public transit operations. However, system operators in these counties are challenged to acquire additional vehicles and hire transit staff. Unlike Iowa Region 9, FTA Section 5310 vehicles in Illinois Region 2 are open to public and specialized transit providers. It is important that specialized providers wishing to acquire vehicles maintain participation in the coordinated planning process and ensure capital funding is being used as efficiently as possible. Further developing coordination activities such as resource sharing and service contracts are priorities for the region.

As noted in Chapter 3, Henry County Public Transportation (Abilities Plus) is the longest running public transportation operator in Region 2, but continues to face challenges in educating the public on its services. Past input has indicated a lack of understanding among the general public that transportation services are available for more than just seniors or people with disabilities. In response to this, the websites of Abilities Plus and Henry County Public Transportation were linked and contain complementary information. In order to allow better affordability for customers, one sug-

gested strategy would be to educate assisted living and senior living facilities on the ability to organize group trips where the higher cost of demand-response service would be split among multiple passengers.

An additional substantial need in Region 2 is for transportation to local community colleges. Henry, Rock Island, and Whiteside Counties have colleges that are seen as essential in helping individuals with low incomes, and transportation is often needed either from rural residences to urban schools, or vice versa. To cover a larger service area, possible solutions could include a partnership between RIM Rural Transit and Black Hawk College, and the continuation or expansion of the partnership between Whiteside County Public Transportation and Sauk Valley Community College. Multiple funding sources among these agencies could help provide more efficient trips to an increased number of low-income students within the region. Currently, Whiteside County Public Transportation has a voucher program with Sauk Valley Community College where “Punch Pass” cards can be purchased. Students are allowed to purchase passes with their financial aid packages.

Iowa Region 9 – Muscatine and Rural Scott Counties

Rural Scott and Muscatine Counties are home to many of the industrial and large employment centers within the Greater Bi-State Region. Therefore, transportation to and from jobs has long been a need within the region. The need to have access to a greater number of employees is expected to increase in the long term as Baby Boomers leave the workforce and employers continue to compete for the same pool of employees throughout the region. An increase in employment shuttles to rural employment centers as well as trips from outlying areas such as Walcott, LeClaire, and Eldridge into the metropolitan Quad Cities will help increase geographic coverage and provide employment trips for individuals with low or fixed incomes. Employment-based transportation was cited during the public input process for the City of West Liberty, which is

home to a number of significant manufacturing facilities and must draw employees from the surrounding region.

Non-emergency medical transportation within Muscatine County was also cited as a significant need, which was a common theme across the Greater Bi-State Region. One human service agency expressed a need for transportation to Iowa City hospitals for its clients needing mental health services. A lack of available mental health providers in rural areas requires trips to Iowa City for their low-income clients, and current privacy laws prevent rides with multiple passengers. The result is very costly for individual trips. Coordination with existing and future Iowa City trips through River Bend Transit may be a possible strategy for lowering costs and maintaining customer privacy. Communication among the transit and human services agencies will help to alleviate some of the issues.

Another barrier within the City of Muscatine is a lack of “transit-friendly” infrastructure for route expansion. MuscaBus expressed difficulties with some of its routes that require turning in areas that aren’t easily accessible by its buses. Similar to the urbanized area, communication between transit providers and the economic development community may resolve some of these issues with future development.

Management Needs

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 a priority in the Greater Bi-State Region. Education of policy makers on transit needs was another aspect of marketing. In numerous Regional and Urbanized Transit Mobility Summits over the past decade, participants singled out public awareness of transit service and public relations as opportunities for improvement. Transit providers, local government officials, and local residents have all mentioned that marketing and education of existing services was a need throughout the region. Attendees of transit summits felt

that a large number of those needing public transportation were unaware or uninformed on the availability of services within their communities. Other consumers may be aware of the services offered, but may feel uncomfortable never having used the service. On-going operating support of existing programs is also important to the existing public transit providers. The results of the service reports for both the Urbanized and Regional Mobility Summits can be found in Appendix C.

As the economy recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic, the labor market became much more competitive. As a result, transit agencies nationwide have had great difficulty filling open positions including drivers. Local agencies experienced the same strain on staffing levels. Davenport Transit will soon be able to provide direct paid on-the-job training for prospective drivers to earn their commercial driver’s license (CDL). The intent is to reduce the time required for drivers to earn their CDLs and streamline the entire training and application process.

Fleet Needs – Utilization & Replacement

Fleet needs include the rehabilitation and replacement of vehicles tentatively scheduled for the coming year. Replacement of accessory equipment (cameras, wheelchair lifts, etc.) is included under this category as well. 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 the fixed-route and regional providers range from 5 to 15 years, depending on the system. Since 2020, deliveries of regularly scheduled vehicle replacements have been delayed due to numerous issues, such as supply chain problems and high demand nationwide.

Davenport CitiBus intends to reduce the size of its fleet in coming years. Currently, CitiBus has 25 buses total, and will be downsizing to 21 buses in FY23 and FY24. In 2018, the city expanded its fleet to accommodate the Stretch service, which sought to alleviate congestion during construction of the new I-74 Bridge.

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Now that the construction is largely complete, the extra buses are no longer needed. The city will dispose of its four oldest buses, which were not purchased with federal funds.

Bi-State maintains a Specialized Transportation Service Inventory, which is updated regularly. It does not address fleet needs, but is a simple assessment of whether or not organizations provided transportation services. An inventory of vehicles was also requested and updated by all identified providers receiving FTA funds. An attempt was made to obtain information from state or privately-funded providers, but in many cases, responses were not received. As the document evolves, Bi-State will continue to encourage additional participation from these agencies.

River Bend Transit has reported a need for additional funding in order to meet a 15-year replacement cycle for its entire fleet. Discretionary capital funding appropriated to Iowa is inadequate to meet this replacement schedule. The recent influx of federal funds has alleviated some of the financial issues; however, the delivery of the new vehicles has been significantly delayed, as noted above. The federal threshold for useful life of its types of vehicles is 4 years or 100,000 miles. Typically, RBT is not getting its vehicles replaced until they are averaging 10-12 years of age and have accumulated upwards of 170,000 miles. This results in higher maintenance and repair costs over the years as the wear and tear on vehicles is magnified by the rural conditions in which it operates. In addition to a need for additional funding for fleet replacement, an increased demand for employment shuttles throughout RBT's four-county service area may create a need for larger vehicles with higher seating capacities.

In addition to the fixed-route and regional transit systems, several private and county-operated not-for-profit agencies have expressed a need for replacement vehicles for their current fleets. Henry County Public Transportation, Arc of Rock Island County, RIM Rural Transit, Self-Help Enterprises, and Whiteside County Public Transportation have each expressed a need to

replace one or more vehicles in order to continue meeting service demands of individuals with disabilities, seniors, or the general public. It is important that these agencies maintain involvement in the coordinated planning process and utilize existing transit services when possible.

Facility Needs

It was noted in Chapter 3 that in 2014, CitiBus and Metro shifted from a shared maintenance and storage facility to individual facilities. The City of Davenport consolidated its administrative, operational, and maintenance functions into one facility at the Davenport Public Works building. MetroLINK completed construction of the Transit Maintenance Center in 2014 that provides maintenance, administrative, and operational functions. On-site fueling options, both natural gas and electric bus charging stations, along with vehicle cleaning and separate lubrication stations for preventative maintenance, will provide added cost savings over the life of the facility. The facility incorporates energy efficiencies, including LEED Certification, improved air quality, resource conservation, pollution prevention, and modern diagnostic equipment for the maintenance of digital video recording security systems, automated vehicle locator systems, and multiplex electrical systems that are now standard on MetroLINK vehicles.

In the Illinois Quad Cities MPA, MetroLINK completed work on the Rock Island District Station in 2013. The station is located at the corner of 2nd Avenue and 20th Street in downtown Rock Island. The site had been an underutilized parking lot just west of a 199-unit residential tower. To the north of the facility are Schwiebert Park, the Mississippi River, and access to the 62-mile-long Great River Trail. The facility offers patrons a heated lobby, restrooms, and the potential for retail space. The facility accommodates up to ten coaches at a time. MetroLINK worked with the City of Rock Island and Rock Island Economic Growth Corporation (or GROWTH) to promote transit-oriented development in the area surrounding the Transfer Station. The new development,

called The Locks, provides 34 units of rental housing, some of which is targeted to short-term corporate rentals.

MetroLINK was the grantee for funding for the Moline Multi-Modal Station (MMS), dubbed The Q. The facility was constructed to serve as a functional station for passenger rail service from Chicago, Illinois to the Quad Cities and proposed service ultimately to Iowa City, Iowa and Omaha, Nebraska. The MMS was completed in 2018 and includes a 95-room hotel as well as retail space. Once passenger rail service is reestablished, it will also complete the vision of using MetroLINK's existing Centre Station to provide intermodal access to all forms of transportation – including buses, personal vehicles, bicycles, passenger rail, taxis, passenger ferryboats, pedestrian traffic, and access to the Quad Cities International Airport. The site of the MMS is located south of the railroad tracks and east of 12th Street along 4th Avenue in Moline, Illinois. The facility is connected to Centre Station via a skywalk over the railroad tracks. The renovation and adaptive reuse of the historic O'Rourke Building will allow the structure to accommodate passenger amenities such as ticketing, information kiosks, and other related retail or commercial space. Surrounding development using Transit Oriented Development (TOD) principles will create a unique community focal point in Downtown Moline. A Downtown Connector Service to Western Illinois University Riverfront Campus has also been established with Centre Station as one terminus of the route.

MetroLINK also maintains two Mega Stop locations at SouthPark Mall and the Quad Cities International Airport. Mega Stops feature lighting, seating, and passenger amenities, but don't typically have an indoor space maintained by Metro. The airport location is served by Route 20, while the mall location is served by Routes 20 and 60.

In Davenport, the Ground Transportation Center (GTC) is ageing, and the city must conduct

further study to determine the best solution to determine if the facility requires rehabilitation or replacement. The Iowa DOT developed its Park and Ride System Plan in 2014 to address facilities to promote carpooling, vanpooling, or taking public transit. Scott-to-Rock Island County was among the top 25 county pairs in regard to residence-to-workplace commuter flows in Iowa. The DOT recommended two possible candidate locations for park and ride facilities in Davenport, namely U.S. 61 and Kimberly Road near North Park Mall, and U.S. 61 and Iowa 22 near Interstate 280. In 2017, a Park and Ride facility was established near Thunder Bay Grille restaurant near U.S. 61/Brady Street and Veterans Memorial Parkway. The facility is signed with approximately 60 parking spaces and easy access to Interstate 80.

In 2016, Bettendorf shifted its focus away from a central hub to a service that offers numerous transfer points throughout the network. There are multiple hubs throughout the city where riders may transfer from one route to another, or to another transit provider, namely CitiBus and MetroLINK. Vehicle maintenance is performed at the Bettendorf Public Works facility.

RIM Rural Transit intends to construct a secure location to perform numerous maintenance activities for its buses. The bus hub will include indoor vehicle storage, offices, and a bus washing station. Currently, RIM buses are stored outside in a fenced area. In the past, buses have been significantly damaged by wildlife.

Transit Security/Safety Needs

Beginning with provisions under ISTEA² and continuing through the most recent transportation bill, the IIJA, the need to improve safety and security for individuals who use public transportation is to be included in the planning process.

In an effort to provide a safe and secure environment for their passengers and employees, each of the fixed-route systems has installed

² Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991

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video surveillance equipment on their revenue vehicles. River Bend Transit has also equipped all of its vehicles with video surveillance. Davenport provides security personnel to monitor the GTC transfer facility during evening hours, and MetroLINK works with the Rock Island County Sheriff's department and has assigned two officers under a Community Oriented Policing Services (C.O.P.S.) program.

Policy Direction & Strategies

Based on the public input and discussions with existing transit providers, there will be challenges in meeting the future mobility needs in the Greater Bi-State Region. Finite resources require prioritization, which may mean that some residents will not be able to get rides on public transportation. However, the solutions suggested relate to the need for greater cooperation through agreements, partnerships, resource sharing, and improved public relations and education to change the face of transit for the better.

As noted in the Executive Summary, the plan sets forth a policy direction through a vision statement of:

“Transit service in the region is envisioned to be convenient, adequately financed to maximize coverage and diversity of customers, affordable, geographically distributed, considered as part of land use decisions, and safe.”

The following proposed strategies frame the future direction for transit in the Greater Bi-State Region. It is important to note that some strategies may be more focused toward an urban issue rather than a rural issue, and vice versa. Furthermore, all strategies proposed for urban systems may not be necessary for all of the urban systems. The same idea is prevalent for the rural transit systems.

Convenience: Transit service delivery that addresses customer convenience will be given priority in the Greater Bi-State Region. Service can be enhanced by strategies such as:

1. Expanding rural and paratransit service with programs that would allow door-to-door service for customers who are unable to utilize existing curbside service to create more “first mile-last mile” connections
2. Extending hours, days, and frequency of service to meet basic travel needs, either for essential services, medical appointments, work or school trips, or other needs identified by existing or future customers
3. Increasing marketing efforts through sources such as fact sheets, websites and/or website links, and maps
4. Broadening educational programs such as Senior Ambassador activities within assisted-living facilities and nursing homes to increase awareness of services
5. Exploring the formation of a centralized dispatching service to provide service information for multiple transit operators in the region
6. Improving rider experience through new technology to attract new customers

*This strategy can be recognized as one for both urban and rural transit services. Extending hours of service in both areas has been identified as an issue.

Investment: Greater consideration will be given to investing in projects that are adequately financed and sustainable. Sustainable investment can be strengthened by strategies such as:

1. Informing legislative leaders of funding solutions to resolve inadequacies, gaps, silos, and liability
2. Advocating long-term funding streams when implementing service
3. Increasing coordination between human service agencies that may have available local match dollars from other non-DOT federal or state funding streams

*This strategy can be recognized as one for both urban and rural transit systems.

Affordability: Fares for transit service need to be affordable for all customers, particularly for those with fixed or low incomes. Possible strategies include:

1. Developing partnerships and coordination between public and private transit service providers to reduce trip costs
2. Creating voucher systems for service provided after hours, eliminating the need for low-income individuals to pay a higher price for private service

*This strategy would be identified as primarily a rural transit issue. The urban systems have set fares at \$1.00 per ride. Also, the QC Monthly Pass allows unlimited rides for the calendar month on all QC fixed transit systems for only \$30.00.

Land Use: Land use patterns that support mobility choices and encourage proximity to services are preferred. Land use patterns may be improved by:

1. Incorporating transit operators in economic development discussions prior to construction
2. Strengthening relationships between private developers and transit operators
3. Increasing public input opportunities throughout the economic development process
4. Communicating changes in location of human services transportation agencies to transit systems

Geographic Coverage: Broad geographic coverage to serve travel needs and enhance mobility within the Greater Bi-State Region remains a priority. Geographic coverage needs to examine both regional and inter-regional travel needs. Possible strategies include:

1. Implementing and expanding connections between existing urban and rural transit systems
2. Creating satellite locations for medical and human service agency appointments in rural areas, eliminating the need for distant travel

3. Analyzing and understanding the travel patterns of individuals within the region and how current and future commuting patterns affect travel
4. *Issues of connectivity seem to be more prevalent in the urban areas because the geographic area is much broader. However, with the aging population, the need for transportation to specialized medical appointments in locations such as Iowa City and Peoria continues to increase.

Safety: Importance will be given to passenger and vehicle safety to transport customers comfortably and without injury. Possible strategies include:

1. Continuing training on suspicious behaviors and emergency procedures
2. Increasing projects that fund specialized transportation service with rider escorts and door-to-door and/or door-through-door service
3. Coordinating between local law enforcement officials and transit operators
4. Training drivers on how to interact with elderly riders and those who may suffer from mental health issues

Performance Measures

Beginning with MAP-21 and continuing through subsequent federal transportation legislation, performance measurement of transportation facilities and project delivery has become an increasingly important focal point for state and federal transportation agencies. Agencies are required to adopt measurable targets, set to benchmark their performance and progress toward stated targets. Bi-State Regional Commission will continue to work in collaboration with the area's transit managers and systems to support each other's respective performance targets for transit assets, safety, facilities state of good repair, and rolling stock state of good repair. As part of this cooperation among Bi-State Regional Commission, the respective transit systems, and the Illinois and Iowa Departments of Transportation, Bi-State will retain the systems' performance targets on file for official record.

