

Chapter 1: Introduction

This regional Transit Development Plan represents a coordinated effort by the Bi-State Region to provide information and guidance on future transportation mobility options and choices within a six-county area, which includes Muscatine and Scott Counties in Iowa and Henry, Mercer, Rock Island, and Whiteside Counties in Illinois. The purpose of the document is to provide a basis for efficient and effective passenger transportation services within the region related to resource allocation, service development, coordination of services, and addressing gaps or service needs. As the document is updated and its content evolves, efforts will continue to broaden the collection and analysis of passenger transportation options in addition to public transit.

This regional Transit Development Plan includes:

- Profile of the Greater Bi-State Region
- Assessment of passenger transportation providers
- Identification of the extent of services, needs, and gaps
- Summary of coordination
- Evaluation of needs and policy direction
- Prioritization strategies for meeting the mobility needs of the Greater Bi-State Region

Planning Area Description

The Greater Bi-State Region, including Henry, Mercer, Rock Island, and Whiteside Counties in Illinois and Scott and Muscatine Counties in Iowa, covers 3,393 square miles. It is located along the Mississippi River as part of eastern Iowa and western Illinois. Map 1.1 represents the region geographically and outlines the

Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) urban planning boundary as well as the Iowa Region 9 and Illinois Region 2 rural planning boundaries.

The Bi-State Regional Commission serves the Greater Bi-State Region for most transportation planning purposes. However, the boundaries of this region do not curtail the desire to travel to destinations within a wider region or between states. For transportation mobility needs, it may be necessary to coordinate transit between regions for optimal service delivery. This subject will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

Transit Development Plan Approach and Programming Purpose

Both the Iowa and the Illinois Departments of Transportation require the development of a locally derived, coordinated, human services transportation plan. The Bi-State Region Transit Development Plan (TDP) is expected to complement each state's planning effort to improve transit mobility for the region and statewide in Illinois and Iowa. It is required that the TDP include a strong effort to involve the participation and input of regional human and social service agencies, private transportation providers, transit systems, and the general public. Figure 1.2 displays the various committees involved in the document's development and adoption.

What is transit?

Transit is simply defined as moving or conveying passengers from one place to another. A transit system can take many forms and use a variety of vehicles, such as buses, vans, car-pools, or trains. Transit can be provided by a variety of methods—public, private, or a combination of efforts. Ideally, a transit system provides the greatest mobility option for people to get to their destinations of choice or need.

Why should we coordinate transit services?

Beginning in 2004 through Executive Order #13330 (“United We Ride”), the USDOT has endeavored to improve human services transportation and streamline the federal assistance dedicated to transportation services. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report in 2003 had identified 62 federal funding streams providing assistance to state, regional, and local human services transportation. Figure 1.1 displays some of the 62 funding streams identified in the report. Coordinating these services was expected to reduce duplication, improve cost efficiency, and simplify customer access to transportation for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and those with lower incomes. The directive was carried forth into subsequent federal transportation bills, namely SAFETEA-LU, MAP-21, the FAST Act, and the IIJA.

When SAFETEA-LU was enacted in 2005, this initiated the incorporation of human services transportation planning for the receipt of several Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding programs. Certain programs required that applicants certify that their project had been derived from the needs and the goals of a locally-developed, coordinated, public transit-human services plan. Within this wider effort toward passenger transportation coordination, the TDP is envisioned to be a unified, comprehensive strategy for public transportation service delivery that will assess needs, outline strategies for service delivery, and prioritize service delivery based on needs.

In 2021, President Biden signed into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also called the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). The IIJA is the largest investment in transportation infrastructure in the nation’s history, authorizing over \$567 billion over FFY2022-2026. Likewise, the nation’s largest federal investment in public transit up to \$108 billion over those five fiscal years authorizes increased spending through apportionment programs and competitive discretionary pro-

Recent Federal Transportation Legislation

SAFETEA-LU (2005): Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users

MAP-21 (2012): Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act

FAST Act (2015): Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act

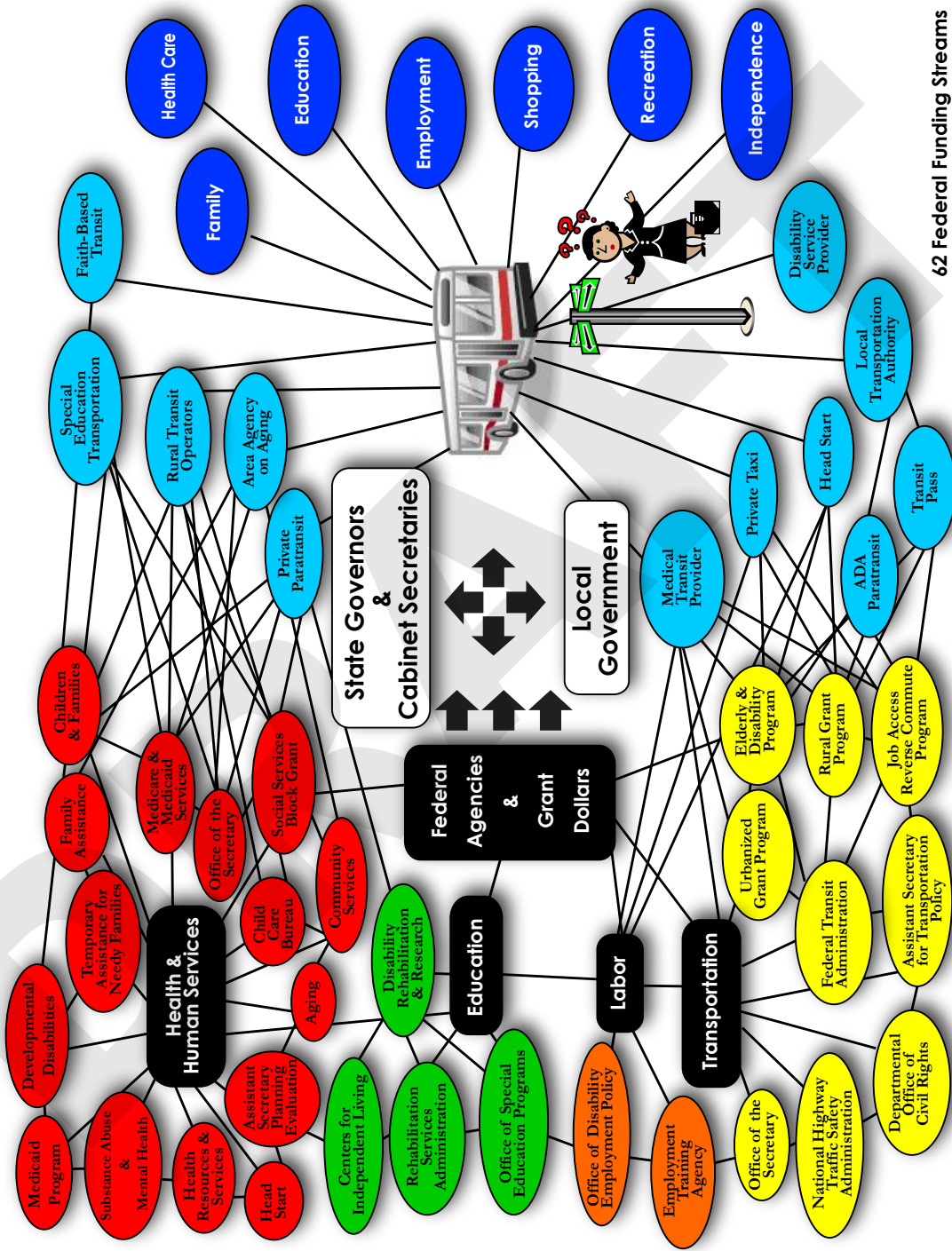
IIJA (2021): Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

grams. The law will advance FTA’s ability to improve passenger transportation through four key priorities: safety, modernization, climate, and equity. The four key priorities will be furthered through expanded funding for existing FTA and FHWA programs in addition to several new federal programs, such as Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A), Electric or Low Emitting Ferry Pilot Program, and Reconnecting Communities.

Explanation of Federal, State, and Local Transit Funding Sources

Funding sources dedicated to supporting transit activities include federal, state, and local sources. The national Highway Trust Fund, founded by the 1956 Highway Revenue Act, is the primary source of federal funds for public transit programs based on tax receipts on motor fuels. The future of the Highway Trust Fund is uncertain, as it faces potential insolvency in the future without transfers from the General Fund. This is an evolving issue to be aware of in drafting future proposals. The fund is separated into three accounts, one of which is a Mass Transit Account to support national transit activities. Currently, the Mass Transit Account receives 2.86 cents per gallon of gasoline and diesel. This account funds the federal transit grant programs authorized under the IIJA.

Figure 1.1
Transportation Service Chart



Source: "IICT Clearinghouse Coordination Primer," Interagency Coordinating Committee on Transportation, 2008.

Introduction

Federal transit grant programs are administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The following list outlines FTA grant programs supporting transit services. Some variations in program administration may be seen between the States of Illinois and Iowa.

Metropolitan Planning Program (5303) –

These funds are distributed to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to assist with transit and multimodal planning activities. They provide financial assistance to MPOs to support the cost of preparing long-range transportation plans and financially feasible transit improvement projects. Modifications that have been implemented to the Section 5303 program are the inclusion of performance-based planning in decision making and development of transportation plans. An MPO will select a set of performance targets that address IJA surface transportation performance measures and that directly link to the relevant state. Matching requirements: 80% Federal and 20% Local

Statewide Planning Program (5304) –

These funds are distributed to states to assist with transit and multimodal planning activities. Matching requirements: 80% Federal and 20% State

Urbanized Area Formula Program (5307) –

These funds are distributed to urbanized areas by a formula to designated transit operators for capital, planning job access and reverse commute projects, and operating expenses in certain circumstances. This program plays a role as a core investor of public transportation systems in urbanized areas. Matching requirements: 80% Federal and 20% Local for capital projects; 50% Federal and 50% Local for operating costs

Also under Section 5307, The Passenger Ferry Grant program (49 U.S.C. 5307(h)) provides competitive funding for projects that support passenger ferry systems in urbanized areas. These funds constitute a core investment in the enhancement and revitalization of public

ferry systems in the nation's urbanized areas. Funds are awarded based on factors such as the age and condition of existing ferry boats, terminals, and related infrastructure; benefits to riders, such as increased reliability; project readiness; and connectivity to other modes of transportation. Eligible activities include: support existing ferry service; establishing new ferry service; and repairing and modernizing ferry boats, terminals, and related facilities and equipment. Funds may not be used for operating expenses, planning, or preventive maintenance.

Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (5310) –

These funds are distributed by state for capital transit services to support purchase of vehicles to provide transportation services for persons who are elderly or with a disability. At least 55% of the funds must be used toward capital projects, and the remaining 45% is eligible for transportation projects that exceed the requirements of the ADA. The goal is to make improvements to fixed-route services and to suggest alternatives to public transportation that are easily accessible and operable for seniors and individuals with disabilities. Matching requirements: 80% Federal and 20% State or Local

Formula Grants for Rural Areas (5311) –

These funds are distributed to non-urbanized or rural areas for planning, capital, operating, and acquisition of public transportation services to support public transportation in rural areas. Eligible recipients include populations with less than 50,000 residents. Matching requirements: 50% Federal and 50% Local for operating expenses; and 80% Federal and 20% Local for capital expenses.

State of Good Repair (5337) – This program provides capital assistance for maintenance, replacement and rehabilitation projects of high-intensity fixed guideway and bus systems, including water taxis such as the Channel Cat Water Taxi, to help transit agencies maintain assets in a state of good repairs. Funds are apportioned by formula to desig-

nated recipients. Matching requirements: 80% federal and 20% local, unless the grant recipient requests a lower percentage.

Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Grants

(5339(a)) – These are distributed primarily to capital projects in urbanized areas, with some funds available to rural areas. Funding is primarily dedicated to capital projects to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses, vans, and related equipment; and to construct bus-related facilities, including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities.

Low or No Emission Vehicle Program

(5339(c)) – The Low or No Emission competitive program provides funding to state and local governmental authorities for the purchase or lease of zero-emission and low-emission transit buses as well as acquisition, construction, and leasing of required supporting facilities.

Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP)

– This program is one of the five core funding programs of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that can be flexed among highway, transit, or bicycle/pedestrian uses. Nationally, the Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) program is intended to fund transportation projects to assist metropolitan areas in violation of Clean Air Act standards. In those states with areas in violation, much or all of the CMAQ monies must be spent in the affected areas for projects conforming to a state air quality implementation plan. At the present time, the City of Muscatine remains in nonattainment status for sulfur dioxide. Allocation of CMAQ funding in Iowa will be used anywhere in the state that is included in currently approved MPO or RPA transportation improvement programs (TIPS) and for any purpose that surface transportation block grant (STBG) funds can be used. Funds are programmed for highway or transit projects through a statewide application process based on the project's anticipated air quality or congestion

relief benefits. Bi-State Regional Commission continues to observe the status of air quality in the region and will continue efforts to reduce emissions.

Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) –

The STBG program is another of FHWA's core programs. A new approach initiated under MAP-21 in 2013 and continuing through the FAST Act and IIJA is authorizing a lump sum total for each program. Each state's share of the funds is calculated and then divided amongst programs found within the state. Its funds go to states based on a number of factors including vehicle miles of travel, highway lane miles, and the number and size of bridges. In addition to roads, STBG monies provide flexible funding that may be used for transit capital projects, pedestrian/bikeway projects, environmental restoration and pollution abatement, or intermodal planning projects on an 80% Federal, 20% Local basis.

National Highway System (NHS) – The program provides funding for improvements to rural and urban roads that are part of the NHS, including the interstate system and designated connections to major intermodal terminals.

Each state also offers funding assistance. In Illinois, there is the Downstate Operating Assistance Program distributed to local governments to support administrative and operating costs of public transportation systems. To be eligible, local governments in Illinois must complete steps to be designated, and then appropriations must be secured and approved by the General Assembly. After securing an appropriation, an application is submitted to the Illinois Department of Transportation (ILDOT), and a contract must be executed and signed by the governor and secretary of ILDOT.

In Iowa, there are State Transit Assistance (STA) and the Public Transit Infrastructure Grant (PTIG) Programs. STA funds are derived from four percent of the fees for new registration collected on sales of motor vehicles and

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accessory equipment. STA funds can be used for transit capital improvements, operating assistance, planning, and to support coordination activities. STA funds are distributed by a formula based on performance regarding rides, miles, and local funding support. PTIG is a program in Iowa that includes new construction projects, reconstruction/major renovation, and relocation of facilities. Projects may include, but are not limited to, facilities for the administration of public transit operations; facilities for servicing, maintenance, or storage of public transit vehicles; transit vehicle fueling facilities; passenger waiting facilities; and reconstruction/major renovations or relocation of existing administrative or maintenance facilities to correct violations of safety or design standards.

Projects may include all associated design, land acquisition, grading, and foundation work. No single transit agency may receive more than 40% of PTIG funds in a given year.

Locally, transit funding is obtained in several ways. For example, the City of Bettendorf matches FTA operating funds with revenue from the city's general fund, the City of Davenport has imposed a \$0.91 levy rate per \$1,000 of taxable value for property taxes to generate operating revenues, and MetroLINK serves as a taxing district for eight communities in the Illinois Quad Cities. Local match funding for human service agencies and non-profit organizations is often obtained from non-DOT federal and state programs.

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Figure 1.2
Bi-State Region Groups Involved in Transit Planning

Bi-State Region Groups Involved in Transit Planning

