Four County Transit

Transit Development Plan
FY2025 – FY2034

DRPT

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL
AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Prepared by:

Michael Baker
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1.0 **Overview, Goals, Objectives, & Service Design Standards**

1.1 **Introduction**

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) requires that any public transit agency that receives state funding prepare a transit development plan (TDP). This document evaluates the agency's performance, prioritizes service improvements and modifications, and sets forth an implementation and financial plan for the next ten fiscal years. The TDP provides a framework for the agency moving forward, supporting federal and state grant funding requests and ensuring DRPT has a baseline for the agency over the next decade. The planning process behind the TDP helps transit agencies identify potential service gaps, deficiencies, or other issues, and provides a strategic foundation for mitigating those issues in the future. To that end, the TDP development process is a collaborative process involving both DRPT and transit agency staff along with input from the community, partner organizations, and other stakeholders. The last TDP for Four County Transit was completed in April of 2017 for the fiscal years (FY) of 2018 through 2027.
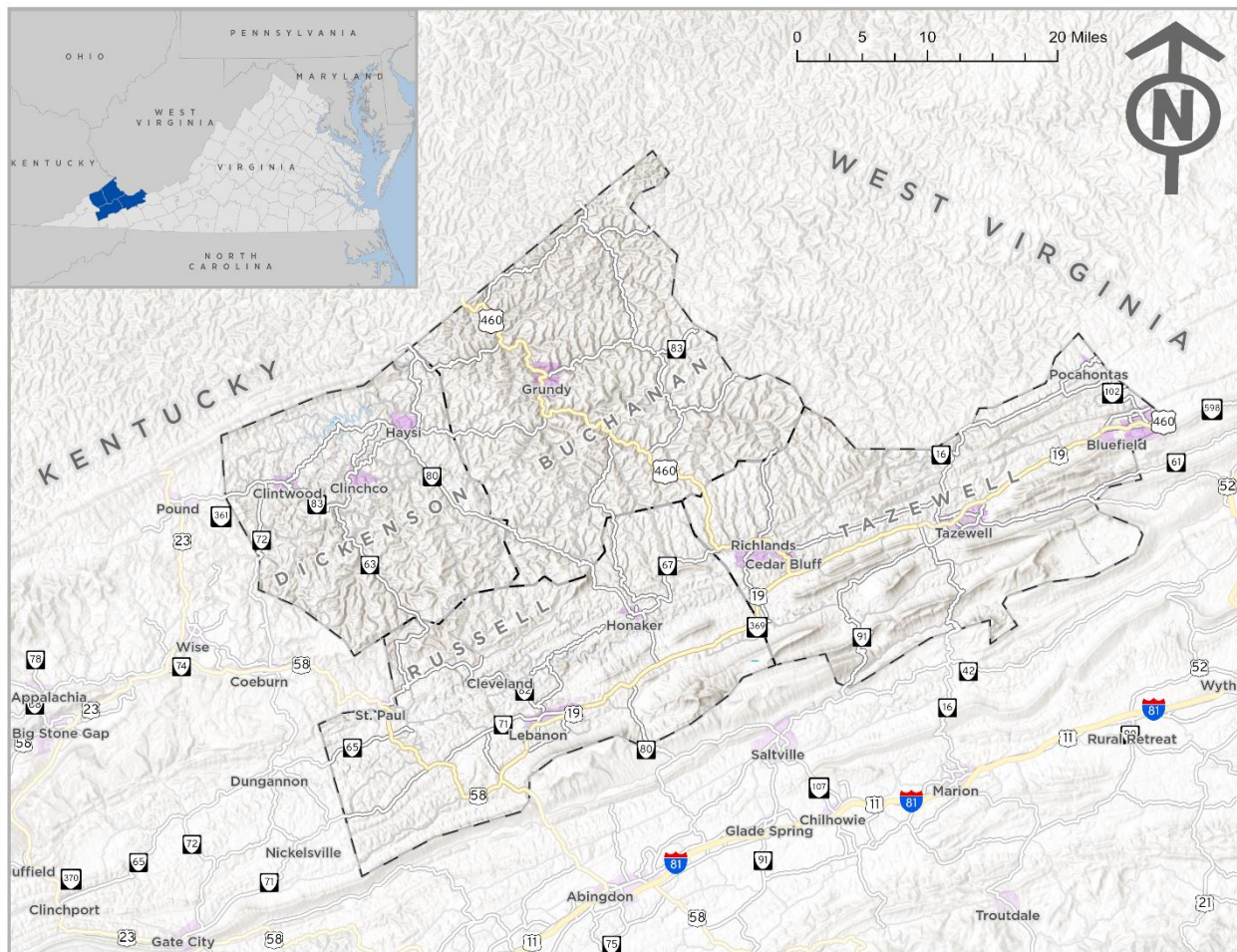
Figure 1. System Overview Map and Location in Virginia

Four County Transit is the public transportation division of the Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens (AASC). The AASC is the area agency on aging for Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell counties, located in Southwest Virginia bordering Kentucky and West Virginia. The population of these four counties was 100,689 per the 2020 Decennial Census, down nearly 12 percent from the 2010 totals (113,976). The decreasing population totals were relatively uniform across all four counties, with Buchanan County losing the largest share of its population since 2010. The four counties cover a total area of 1,835 square miles, which results in a 2020 population density of 55 residents per square mile. For the sake of comparison, Virginia's population density as of 2020 was just under 220 residents per square mile.

While AASC was itself created in 1975, Four County Transit was established in 1998. A full agency profile and system overview is provided in Appendix A.

1.2 System Overview

1.2.1 Services Provided and Areas Served
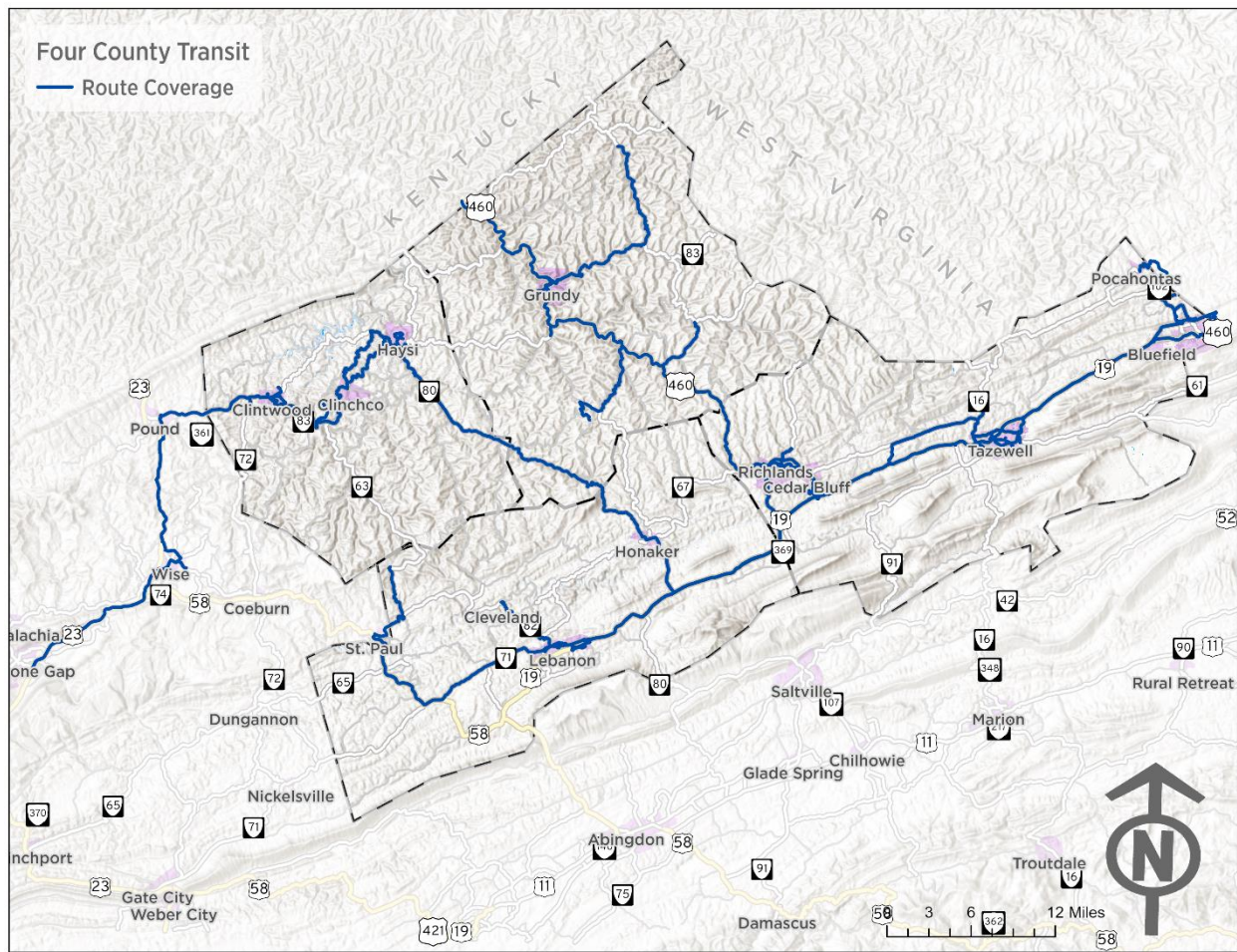
Figure 2. Four County Transit Service Coverage

Four County Transit provides deviated fixed route service throughout the four counties. This type of service is defined as local bus service that follows a predetermined route but can deviate from that route by up to three-quarters of a mile to pick up passengers. To request a deviation, Four County requires riders to call at least 48 hours in advance. While some routes do have pre-determined stops, the schedules are generally based on average bus speeds between major stops.

Currently, there are 18 routes, including the Cleveland Connector which was added in 2023 (see Figure 2). which are listed below alphabetically in

Table 1 with the counties they serve:

Table 1. List of Routes and Localities Served

Route Name	Counties Served
Cleveland Connector	Russell County
Four Seasons Richlands to Tazewell Connector	Tazewell County
Four Seasons Tazewell to Bluefield Connector	Tazewell County
Four Seasons Work Express	Tazewell County
Grundy North	Buchanan County
Grundy South	Buchanan County
MECC/UVA-Wise Express	Dickenson County, Wise County, City of Norton
Richlands to Pounding Mill Connectors	Tazewell County
Ridge Country Connector (Clinchco)	Dickenson County
Ridge Country Connector (Greater Clintwood Area)	Dickenson County
Ridge Country Connector (Greater Haysi)	Dickenson County
SwVCC Eagle Express (Buchanan County)	Buchanan County
SwVCC Eagle Express (Dickenson-Russell County)	Dickenson County, Russell County, Tazewell County
SwVCC Eagle Express (Russell County)	Russell County, Tazewell County
SwVCC Eagle Express (Tazewell County)	Tazewell County
Town of Lebanon Transit	Russell County
Town of Richlands Transit	Tazewell County
Town of Tazewell Transit	Tazewell County

These routes reach much of the Four County area. Many routes tend to feature stubs, with buses providing in-and-out service to various locations. This is related to the nature of the topography in the region and the limited number of routes connecting towns in the region. Four County provides transit service to neighboring Wise County, including the City of Norton, and the towns of Wise and Big Stone Gap as part of its MECC/UVA Wise Express.

1.2.2 Current and Recent Initiatives

The most recent expansion of service is the addition of the Cleveland Connector, a deviated fixed route service that covers the Town of Cleveland in Russell County. This service was introduced on July 14, 2023 with assistance from DRPT.

1.3 Goals, Objectives, and Service Design Standards

1.3.1 Goals and Objectives

This section discussed the specific service goals and objectives of Four County Transit and the service design standards that will be employed to meet the needs of Four County area residents. Because goals, objectives, and service design standards are not static elements, but may change over time, this section sets forth the process for updating them in the future. The goals from the prior TDP were reviewed with Four County Transit and adjusted to be more in line with current agency priorities, which were impacted by COVID-19 and agency resource limitations.

Goals and objectives, where possible, were developed in accordance with SMART principles: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timebound.

Goal 1: Maintain provision of accessible, reliable, safe, and cost-effective services in the region.

Objective 1.1: Connectivity to Service Area
Continue to provide transit service connections between residential areas and commercial areas with jobs, education, shopping, and medical services. Potential activities to accomplish this objective include:

- Use results from the rider survey to ensure services are meeting key needs and conduct future surveys to obtain continued input from customers on service needs.
- Continue to work with county planning agencies, human service agencies, and employers to obtain input on current services and on planned new developments or programs that might warrant need for modified or expanded transit services.
- Continue supporting the region's higher education facilities to promote awareness of Four County's Transit services.

Objective 1.2: Adherence to Established Performance Measures
Performance measures for evaluating route- and system-wide performance of ridership, cost efficiency, safety, and system accessibility should be monitored regularly. If results fall

below established performance standards, consider temporary modifications to service parameters such as service frequency, span of service, or route alignments.

Objective 1.3: Safety

Ensure that transit service operators maintain an accident rate of less than the established performance standard. Activities include maintaining safety training programs, reviewing established operating policies and procedures at least once a year, and updating these policies and procedures as needed.

Objective 1.4: Fleet Inventory and Maintenance

Ensure that an adequate fleet of vehicles is maintained to provide services. Activities to accomplish this objective include:

- Maintain a replacement schedule and a proper vehicle spare ratio.
- Ensure timely and accurate reporting to DRPT's Statewide Asset Management System (TransAM) for inclusion in Transit Asset Management Plan updates.

Objective 1.5: Accessible Services

Continue to provide transit services that are accessible to all population groups within the region. Continued activities include ensuring compliance with the applicable requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and providing appropriate ADA paratransit services.

Objective 1.6: Fare-Free Service

As long as it is financially viable, maintain fare-free service throughout the service area.

Goal 2: Enhance current transit services while continuing to identify potential opportunities for growth.

Objective 2.1: Enhancing Current Service

Maintain current services throughout the region while identifying opportunities to improve route efficiency, customer service, and connectivity to new commercial development, residential development, and employment centers.

Objective 2.2: Areas of Focus

Consider expansion of service between Grundy and Haysi, including service to the Poplar Gap area in Buchanan County.

Objective 2.3: Span of Service

Assess opportunities to establish Saturday and Sunday service on specific routes in Tazewell County where there is demand for weekend service.

Objective 2.4: Amenities Planning

Consider developing a systemwide plan to determine potential locations for additional bus stop amenities, including signage, shelters, benches, ADA infrastructure, and other features.

Goal 3: Increase awareness of Four County Transit among agencies and organizations in the region.

Objective 3.1: Bus Stop Signs

Where appropriate and possible, place bus stop signs with route information at all locations listed in route brochures, and at other key destinations along routes.

Objective 3.2: Social Media

Continue using appropriate social media channels to increase knowledge of Four County Transit's services in the community.

Objective 3.3: Public Awareness

Highlight popular destinations and available transit options to increase awareness of places that are directly served by Four County Transit. Monitor changes in population centers and residential developments to ensure routes serve as many residents as possible.

Objective 3.4: New Marketing Opportunities

Monitor economic development activities across the Four County service area to identify new potential partners. Continue to explore new opportunities to market Four County Transit services to local businesses and their employees.

Goal 4: Expand partnerships with key agencies and organizations in the region.

Objective 4.1: Social Service Agencies

Continue to work with county Departments of Social Services on expanded partnership opportunities.

Objective 4.2: Expanded Connections to Other Providers in Southwest Virginia

Consider service modifications to allow for direct connections to neighboring transit agencies.

Examine potential schedule and route changes to pursue a once-a-week connection to Mountain Lynx Transit's Washington County or Abingdon services.

Examine potential schedule and route changes to pursue a connection between the MECC/UVA-Wise route and Mountain Empire Older Citizen's (MEOC) MetGo! microtransit service in Wise.

1.4 Public Outreach, Engagement, and Involvement

Four County Transit uses the following methods of public outreach to educate riders and potential riders about the system:

- **Newsletters:** The AASC BEACON is produced semi-annually and highlights agency news and transit developments. It is distributed throughout the community.

- **Website:** Four County Transit maintains a transit website with information on current happenings, ride details and route schedules.
- **Social Media:** Four County maintains an active Facebook to alert the public of possible weather-related issues or service changes.
- **Phone:** Four County Transit maintains a sophisticated phone messaging system that contains verbal accounts of route schedules available to the public at the touch of a button 24 hours a day.
- **College and University Orientation:** Four County Transit actively attends orientations and vendor fairs at the Appalachian College of Pharmacy, Appalachian School of Law, UVA-Wise and Southwest Virginia Community College to welcome new students and introduce them to Four County Transit's services.
- **Area Service Agency Expos:** AASC and Four County Transit attend events throughout the region to educate the community about available transportation services and maintain a presence to evaluate service needs.
- **Print Ads:** Print advertisements are placed in four local newspapers in each county and often provide details of promotions, route information, and service changes.

1.5 Service Design Standards

Service design standards are critical planning tools to evaluate the effectiveness of existing service and to assure impartiality in service modification decisions. The previously adopted standards for Four County Transit reflect a focus on creating an efficient and effective rural transit system with additional emphasis on customer convenience and fiscal responsibility. In this update, the measures remain similar to those from the prior 2017 TDP but the framework and organization has been adjusted.

1.5.1 Service Availability and Quality

Service availability standards measure the characteristics of the service area, including coverage, route layout and design, and stop location (where relevant). Previous metrics for service availability were service coverage, frequency, and span of service. These will remain in place with the clarification that service coverage will be measured as the population within the service area (i.e., the coverage of the deviated fixed route system).

Service quality standards measure how well a service performs or its reliability. The metric for service quality was and remains on-time performance.

1.5.2 Service Effectiveness

Service effectiveness measures the productivity of the service. This is measured by two metrics, continued from the prior TDP, which are passenger trips per revenue mile and passenger trips per revenue hour.

1.5.3 Cost Effectiveness and Efficiency

Cost effectiveness and efficiency are measures of a transit service's financial performance against its operating requirements. Previously, the standards included farebox recovery, operating cost per revenue mile, operating cost per revenue hour, and operating cost per passenger trip. Considering Four County Transit's decision to go fare-free, farebox recovery has been dropped from the list of service standards for this TDP update.

1.5.4 Safety

Safety was in the past measured by the metric collisions per 100,000 revenue miles. That service standard remains in place.

2.0 **System Evaluation**

2.1 **Introduction**

This chapter of the TDP provides an overview of demographics within the Four County Transit service area, identifies performance standards, reviews system performance, and conducts an analysis of transit dependence. To support the review of system performance, stakeholder interviews were conducted to understand key partner perspectives on current and future service in the region.

2.2 **Service Area Demographics**

2.2.1 **Population**

Four County Transit serves four counties in Southwest Virginia: Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell. According to the U.S. Census American Community Survey, the total service area population of all four counties was 100,490 in 2022. This represents a decline of 7.13 percent in service area population between 2017 and 2022. Over the same period, Buchanan County experienced the greatest decline of each of the counties with 10.46 percent decline in population. Table 2 presents population for the service area.

Table 2. Service Area Population, 2017 to 2022

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2017 - 2022 Pct. Change
Buchanan County	22,611	22,138	21,788	21,374	20,615	20,246	-10.46%
Dickenson County	15,181	14,960	14,756	14,524	14,256	14,089	-7.19%
Russell County	27,725	27,408	27,141	26,937	25,932	25,763	-7.08%
Tazewell County	42,689	42,080	41,603	41,201	40,615	40,392	-5.38%
Total	**108,206**	**106,586**	**105,288**	**104,036**	**101,418**	**100,490**	**-7.13%**

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey

According to population projections from the Weldon Cooper Center, 2030 to 2050 population for the service area is expected to decline in all counties with Buchanan County projected to have the largest decline (64.57 percent). Table 3 presents population projections for the service area.

Table 3. Service Area Population History and Projections, 2000 to 2050

	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050	Projected Change 2000-2050
Buchanan County	26,978	24,098	21,374	16,374	12,870	9,558	-64.57%
Dickenson County	16,395	15,903	14,524	12,168	10,870	9,734	-40.63%
Russell County	30,308	28,897	26,937	22,340	19,781	17,517	-42.20%
Tazewell County	44,598	45,078	41,201	35,267	32,693	30,609	-31.37%
Total	**118,279**	**113,976**	**104,036**	**86,149**	**76,213**	**67,418**	**-43.00%**

Source: U.S. Census; Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia

Table 4 provides 2030 to 2050 population projections by age group for Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell counties. All four counties are projected to see a decline in total population over two decades. The percentage of people older than 65 is expected to increase in all counties by 2050 with the exception of Tazewell. Tazewell County is projected to have the largest working age share of its population (53.6 percent) by 2050.

Table 4. Service Area Population Projections by Age, 2030 to 2050

Age	2030 Population Projection		2040 Population Projection		2050 Population Projection	
	Population	Percent	Population	Percent	Population	Pct.
Buchanan County	**16,374**	-	**12,870**	-	**9,558**	-
0-19	3,005	18.4%	2,326	18.1%	1,755	18.4%
20-64	8,728	53.3%	6,663	51.8%	4,970	52.0%
65+	4,640	28.3%	3,880	30.2%	2,834	29.6%
Dickenson County	**12,168**	-	**10,870**	-	**9,734**	-
0-19	2,540	20.9%	2,271	20.9%	2,053	21.1%
20-64	6,306	51.8%	5,623	51.7%	4,974	51.1%
65+	3,322	27.3%	2,975	27.4%	2,708	27.8%
Russell County	**22,340**	-	**19,781**	-	**17,517**	-
0-19	4,619	20.7%	4,036	20.4%	3,686	21.0%
20-64	11,384	51.0%	9,831	49.7%	8,796	50.2%
65+	6,337	28.4%	5,913	29.9%	5,035	28.7%
Tazewell County	**35,267**	-	**32,693**	-	**30,609**	-
0-19	7,211	20.4%	6,802	20.8%	6,409	20.9%
20-64	18,786	53.3%	17,361	53.1%	16,419	53.6%
65+	9,269	26.3%	8,531	26.1%	7,781	25.4%
Total	**86,149**	-	**76,213**	-	**67,418**	-
0-19	17,376	20.2%	15,436	20.3%	13,902	20.6%
20-64	45,205	52.5%	39,478	51.8%	35,159	52.1%
65+	23,569	27.4%	21,300	27.9%	18,358	27.2%

Source: U.S. Census; Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia

2.2.2 **Employment**

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is the Federal standard used to identify and classify businesses by sector type. According to U.S. Census Bureau employment statistics, the counties that make up the Four County Transit service area experienced an 11.4 percent decline in total employment from 2017 to 2021 (see Table 5). The sector that experienced the greatest percent decline was the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector. Over the same period, Manufacturing experienced a 1.3 percent increase in total employment.

Table 5. Employment by NAICS Industry Sector, 2017 to 2021

Industry Sector	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2017 - 2021 Rate of Change
Manufacturing	1,781	1,811	2,081	1,879	1,804	1.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	4,618	4,565	4,473	4,576	4,556	-1.3%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	202	178	178	167	195	-3.5%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	440	461	362	413	416	-5.5%
Wholesale Trade	714	724	713	693	674	-5.6%
Educational Services	3,922	3,773	3,740	3,557	3,645	-7.1%
Public Administration	2,430	2,467	2,377	2,388	2,235	-8.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	1,917	1,785	1,780	1,842	1,757	-8.3%
Information	218	233	219	226	199	-8.7%
Retail Trade	4,993	4,662	4,407	4,178	4,476	-10.4%
Utilities	226	202	211	199	199	-11.9%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	1,395	1,384	1,305	1,267	1,187	-14.9%
Construction	1,941	1,982	1,863	1,648	1,572	-19.0%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	2,662	2,879	2,623	2,468	2,094	-21.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	134	123	124	117	105	-21.6%
Accommodation and Food Services	2,219	2,106	2,035	1,892	1,704	-23.2%
Finance and Insurance	839	771	732	685	643	-23.4%
Transportation and Warehousing	711	708	605	549	540	-24.1%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	1,279	1,100	1,149	1,154	944	-26.2%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	162	113	131	90	106	-34.6%
Total Jobs	32,803	32,027	31,108	29,988	29,051	-11.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau On The Map Data Tool

The Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement collects employment data and groups regions in the state by Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA). Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell are classified in LWDA-1 (Southwestern Virginia) which also includes Wise, Scott, and Lee Counties and the City of Norton.

According to Table 6, total employment in Southwestern Virginia is projected to decline 3.5 percent by 2030. The greatest increases in jobs are expected to be in the Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas; Wholesale Trade; Finance and Insurance; Retail Trade; and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sectors.

Table 6. Employment Projections for Southwestern Virginia by Industry, 2020 to 2030

Industry	2020 Estimated Employment	2030 Projected Employment	Percent Change
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas	177	237	33.9%
Wholesale Trade	603	787	30.5%
Finance and Insurance	1,018	1,200	17.9%
Retail Trade	7,204	7,580	5.2%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	2,372	2,465	3.9%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services	4,512	4,507	-0.1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	3,738	3,671	-1.8%
Health Care and Social Assistance	8,496	8,300	-2.3%
Educational Services	6,384	6,100	-4.4%
Manufacturing	3,094	2,912	-5.9%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	624	580	-7.1%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	205	184	-10.2%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	1,508	1,349	-10.5%
Construction	2,001	1,760	-12.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	299	262	-12.4%
Public Administration	8,951	7,838	-12.4%
Unclassified	2,397	2,077	-13.4%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	195	163	-16.4%
Information	210	141	-32.9%
Total: All Industries	53,988	52,113	-3.5%

Source: Virginia Department of Workforce Development and Advancement

2.3 **Performance Standards**

Identifying metrics for performance standards helps transit agency staff and stakeholders align service with rider needs and agency goals. The following performance standards were developed in alignment with the goals and objectives identified in Chapter 1, including standards addressing service availability, service quality, productivity, cost efficiency, and safety. Each of the service standards identified in the previous TDP still apply except for farebox recovery ratio as a measure of cost efficiency, due to the transit agency no longer collecting transit fares.

2.3.1 **Service Availability Standards**

Service availability measures the coverage, frequency, and span of the deviated fixed route system. How much service a transit agency can provide is directly related to the level of financial resources that are available.

2.3.2 **Service Quality Standards**

While there are no statewide or federal standards for measuring on-time performance, the previous TDP identified on-time performance as a metric for measuring service quality. An on-time performance rate of 95 percent on time (zero to five minutes late) will continue to be used for the system.

2.3.3 **Productivity Standards**

Measures of service productivity and efficiency include passenger trips per revenue hour and passenger trips per revenue mile. These standards help us understand and define how effectively the service is moving people relative to time and distance. A higher number of trips per hour or mile indicate a more efficient and productive transit system.

2.3.4 **Cost Efficiency Standards**

Measures of cost efficiency provide insight into financial costs of the transit system, including how sustainable service is. Cost efficiency standards assist staff with making informed decisions about route planning and the allocation of resources. This TDP will continue utilizing operating cost per revenue hour, operating cost per revenue mile, and operating cost per passenger trip as measurements for cost efficiency.

2.3.5 **Safety Standards**

Four County Transit's previous TDP included a safety standard that measured reportable incidents per 100,000 miles, which will be continued for this TDP.

Table 7. Performance Standards

Measure	Standard
Service Coverage	Coverage should include major activity centers such as large employers, medical centers, shopping centers, and government/social services
Frequency of Service	Maintain headways on current service
Span of Service	Maintain current span of service and implement Saturday service where appropriate
Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour	At least 2.5 passenger trips per revenue hour
Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile	At least 0.15 passenger trips per revenue mile
Operating Cost per Revenue Hour	$60.00 per revenue hour
Operating Cost per Revenue Mile	$4.00 per revenue mile
Operating Cost per Passenger Trip	$18.00 per passenger trip
Safety Incidents per 100,000 miles	0.10 or fewer "reportable incidents" per 100,000 miles, as defined by the National Transit Database

2.4 Performance Evaluation

Comparing performance metrics with established standards will ideally support service assessment and adjustments, as necessary. Metrics identified in this section discuss measures related to ridership, cost efficiency, safety, and system accessibility.

Pursuant to the Code of Virginia and Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) policy, the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) began allocating state operating assistance based on an established process defined in 2018. The performance-based methodology uses various sizing and performance factors, including operating costs, ridership, vehicle revenue hours, and vehicle revenue miles. The performance evaluation covered in this section addresses the metrics used in the operating formula calculation. The performance evaluation completed for this TDP illustrated the following key points:

- Although annual transit ridership decreased 22 percent from FY19 to FY23, annual ridership increased 41 percent FY21 to FY23. Ridership is continuing to recover from COVID-19 pandemic impacts.
- Annual operating expenses increased 32 percent from FY19 to FY23, which could be attributed to several factors attributed heavily to wage and labor rates, as well as the rise of fuel and maintenance material costs and the elimination of fares.
- Four County Transit operates 18 deviated fixed routes and service currently runs on weekdays. Figure 3 presents annual ridership for FY19 to FY22.
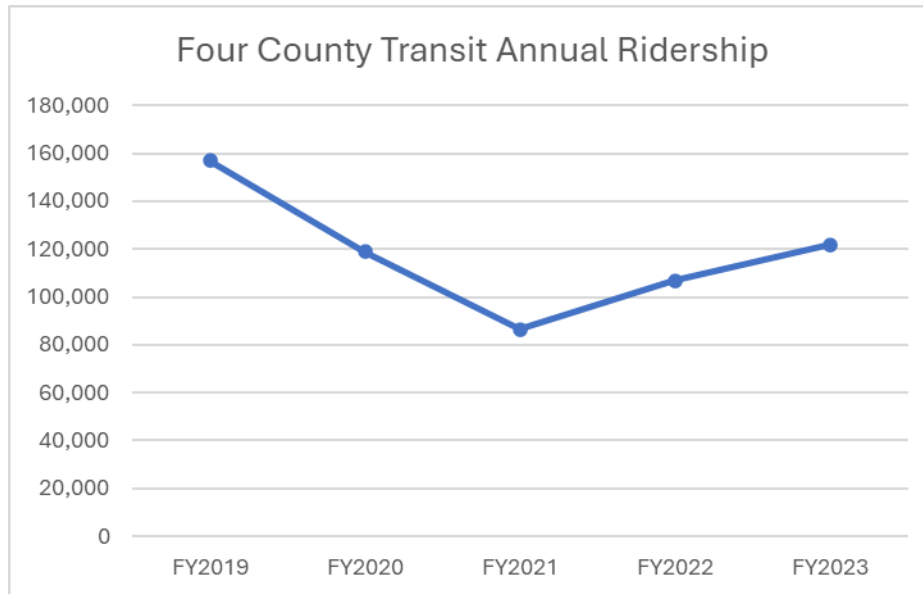
Figure 3. Four County Transit Annual Ridership, FY2019 to FY2023

Four County Transit's fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30. The first effects of the COVID-19 pandemic can be observed in the FY20 ridership decline, but system ridership levels began to increase FY21 to FY22. Many transit operators reduced service throughout the pandemic in response to case levels and lack of drivers.

Transit ridership, also known as unlinked passenger trips, is one of the most frequently measured metrics by transit agencies to identify how many people are using a service. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted both service provision and passenger ridership in 2020 and lasting effects are still being observed today.

Table 8 provides a five-year overview of Four County Transit's operating statistics for FY19 to FY23. According to the National Transit Database (NTD), Vehicle Revenue Miles are miles scheduled or traveled while in revenue service including recovery and layover time. Vehicle Revenue Hours are hours scheduled or traveled while in revenue service including recovery and layover time. Both measures exclude deadhead miles and hours.

Table 8. Four County Transit Operating Statistics by Fiscal Year

Metric	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023
Annual Transit Ridership	156,946	118,799	86,497	106,986	121,919
Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours	33,723	31,364	29,588	31,325	32,793
Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles	711,423	650,805	606,109	648,176	689,738
Annual Operating Expenses	$1,702,878	$1,784,060	$1,885,201	$2,099,902	$2,496,704
Operating Cost per Vehicle Revenue Mile	$2.39	$2.74	$3.11	$3.24	$3.62
Operating Cost per Vehicle Revenue Hour	$50.50	$56.88	$63.72	$67.04	$76.14
Operating Cost Per Passenger	$10.85	$15.02	$21.79	$19.63	$20.48
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle Mile	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2
Passengers per Revenue Vehicle Hour	4.7	3.8	2.9	3.4	3.7

When comparing operating statistics to established performance standards, operating cost per revenue mile has continued to meet the standard. Operating cost per vehicle revenue hour, however, has exceeded the established $60.00/revenue hour standard FY21 to FY23. If the costs of operations are continuing to increase yearly, this presents an opportunity to update performance standards to be more closely adjusted with present-day norms. Passenger trips per revenue hour varied between 2.9 and 4.7 FY19 to FY23 and passenger trips per revenue mile varied between 0.1 to 0.2 across the same period. Four County Transit has met or exceeded established standards for those measures since FY19.

2.5 Transit Ridership by County

This section provides an overview of route-level transit ridership by county. Across the system, community college routes saw the greatest declines in ridership due to the change in enrollment and class structures during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the community college routes overall have experienced a 140 percent increase in ridership between FY23 and FY24. Two of the town-specific routes, Richlands and Lebanon, saw small declines in ridership over the same period (losses of five percent and six percent respectively).

2.5.1 Buchanan County Transit Routes

Four County Transit operates three routes in Buchanan County: Grundy North, Grundy South, and the Southwest Virginia Community College Eagle Express. All routes experienced a decrease in transit ridership FY19 to FY23 except the Grundy South, which experienced a nine percent increase.
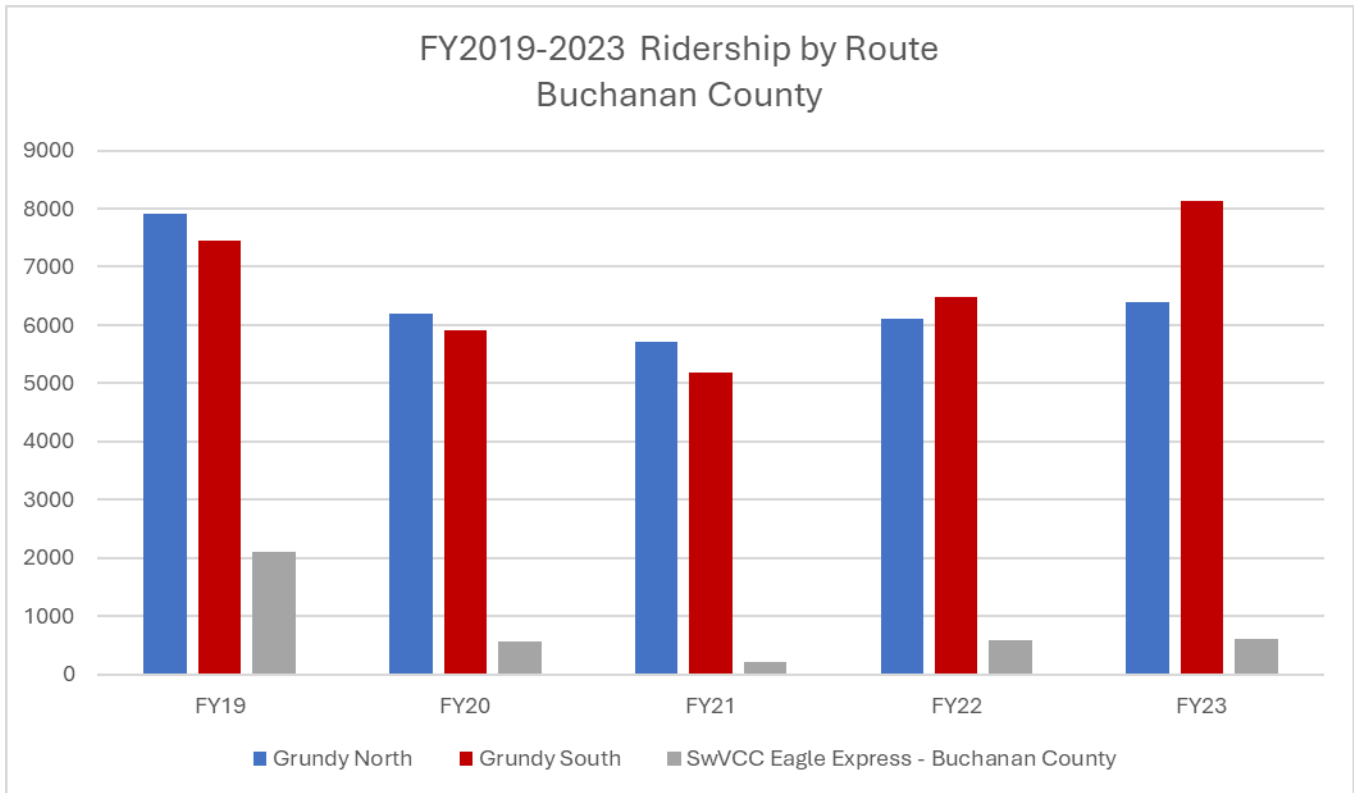
Figure 4. Buchanan County Ridership by Route

2.5.2 **Dickenson County Transit Routes**

Five routes are operated by Four County Transit in Dickenson County: Ridge Country Connector – Clinchco, Ridge Country Connector – Greater Haysi, Ridge Country Connector – Greater Clintwood, UVA-Wise Express, and Southwest Virginia Community College Eagle Express. From FY19 to FY23, all routes in Dickenson County experienced a decline in transit ridership. The Ridge Country Connector – Greater Haysi route experienced the smallest ridership decline (10 percent).
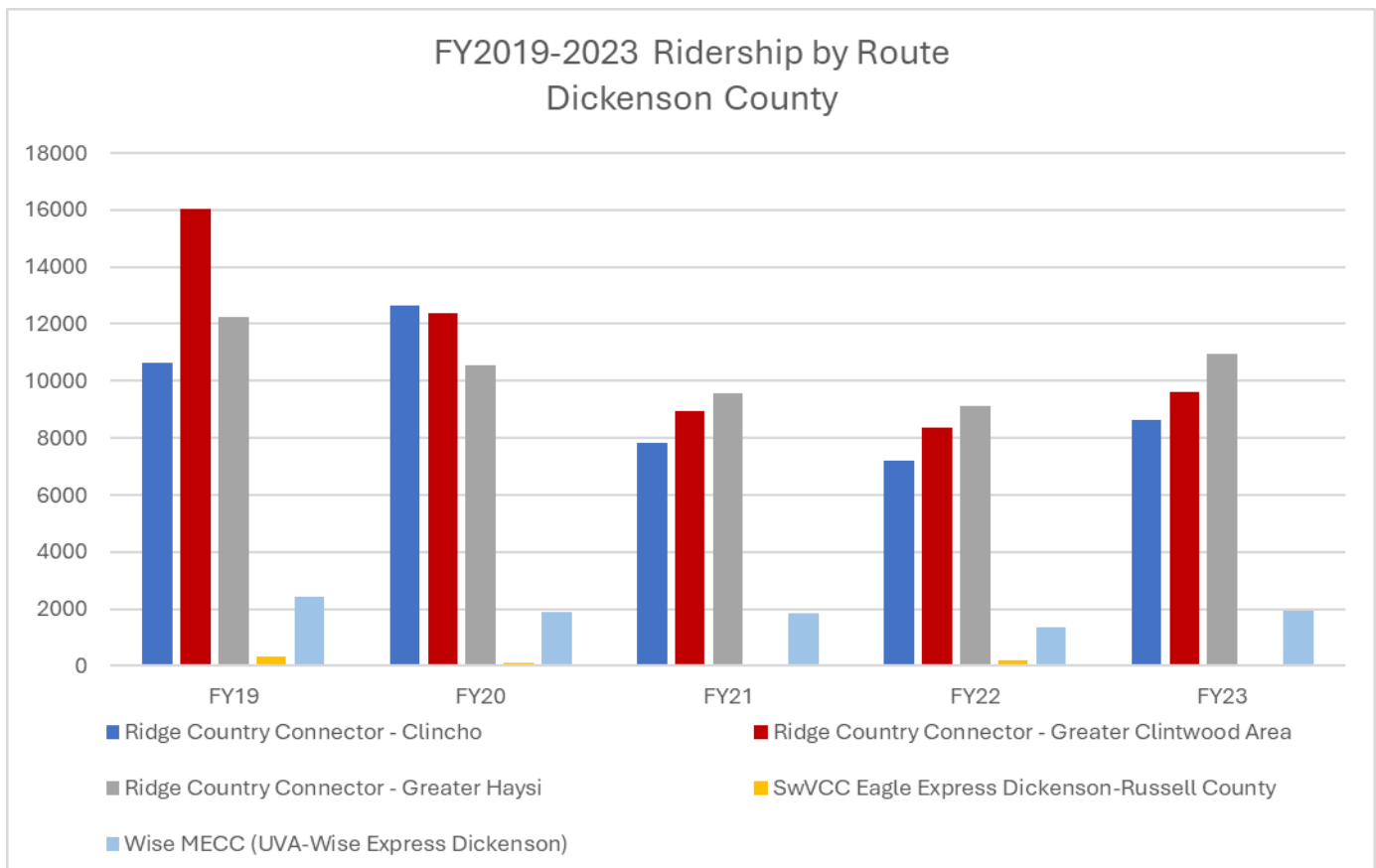
Figure 5. Dickenson County Ridership by Route

2.5.3 Russell County Transit Routes

Four County Transit operates three routes in Russell County: Southwest Virginia Eagle Express, Town of Lebanon, and Cleveland Connector. The community college route saw the greatest decline in ridership (87 percent). The Cleveland Connector route was launched in FY23.
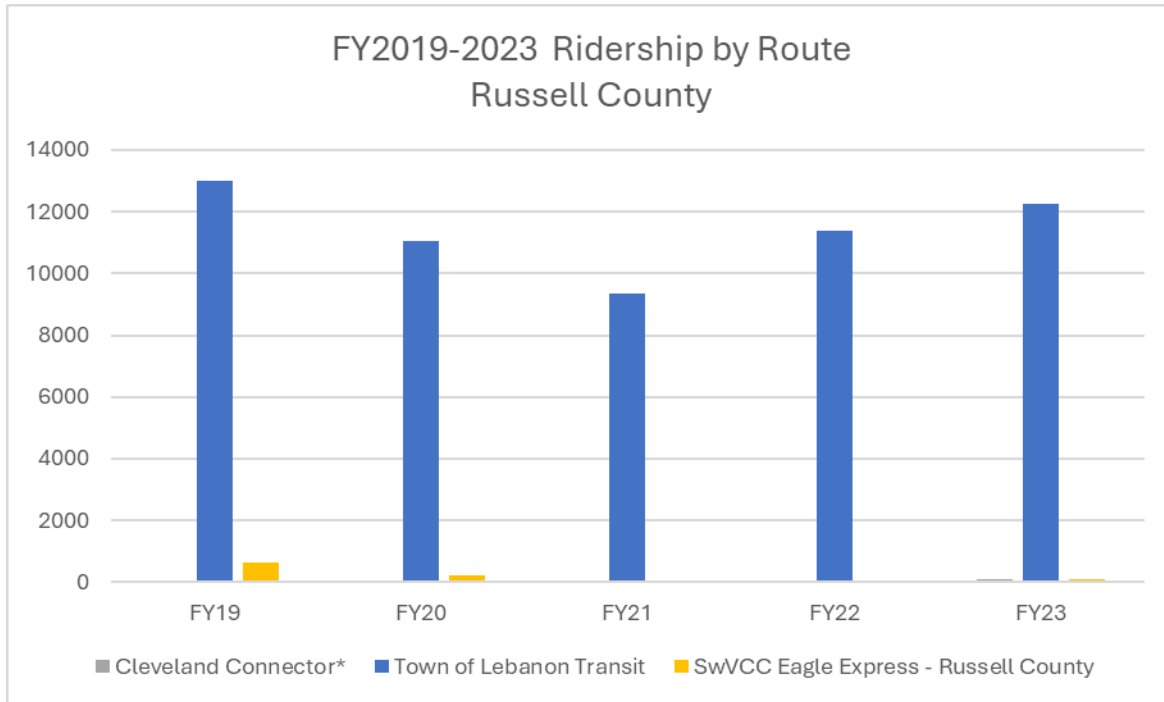
Figure 6. Russell County Ridership by Route

2.5.4 Tazewell County Transit Routes

Six routes are operated in Tazewell County, as presented in Figure 7. All routes in Tazewell saw a decline in ridership, with the Four Seasons Work Express and Richlands Town route seeing the smallest declines (losses of four percent and five percent).
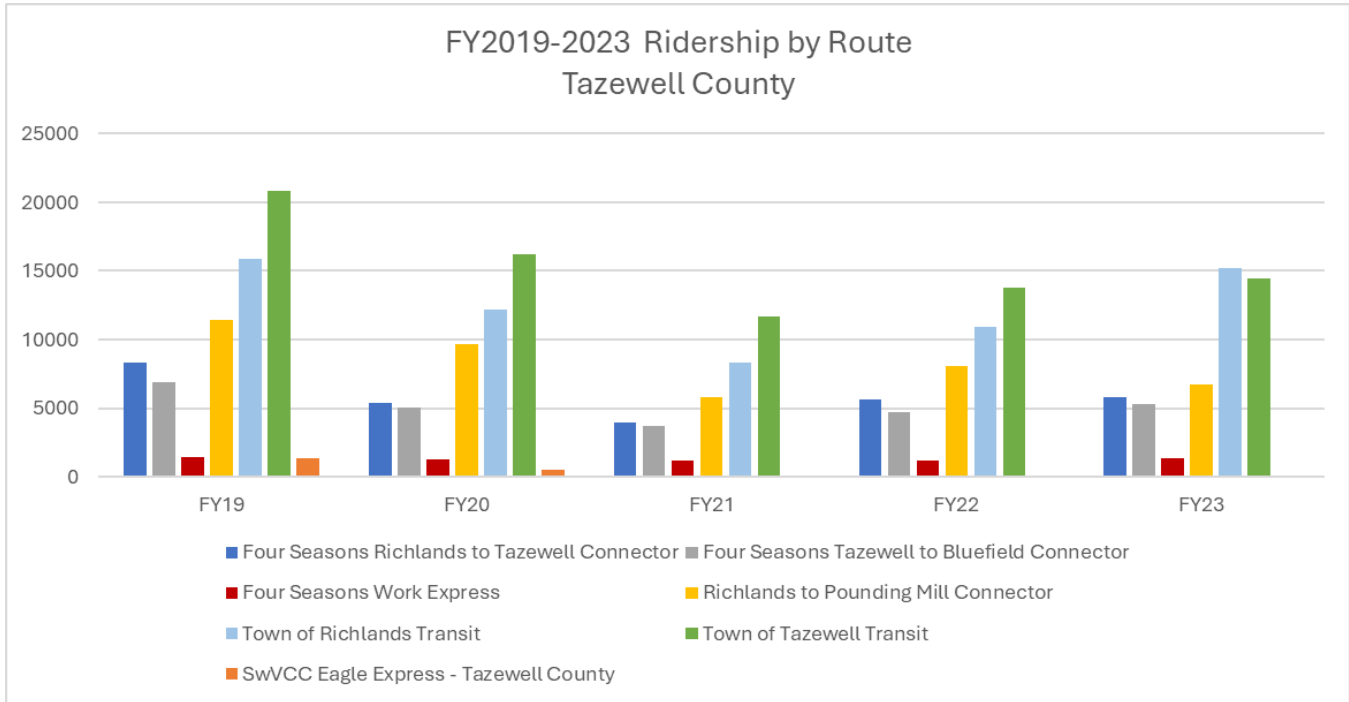
Figure 7. Tazewell County Ridership by Route

2.6 Performance-Based Opportunities for Improvement

2.6.1 Community Colleges – Realignment of Services

The Southwest Virginia Community College routes have some of the system's lowest passenger trips, which highlights a potential area for improvement. Access to transit is important for college-aged individuals as many students typically do not have access to vehicles. Better coordination and advertisement of services could help attract students back to the service that may not have known about its availability after the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic also changed the structure of many college courses with virtual and hybrid options being offered more frequently.

2.6.2 Enhanced Partnerships with Localities and Regional Employers

Strengthening partnerships with the counties in the service area could support identifying and addressing changing transportation needs. As major regional employers locate in the area, knowledge of the placement and nature of workforce characteristics could streamline the coordination of transportation services and boost future ridership of the system.

2.6.3 Weekend Service on Local Routes

Adding weekend service on local routes was a potential opportunity identified in the TDP completed in 2017. It is still an opportunity for the TDP update, especially since the local routes are some of the highest ridership routes in the system. Adding Saturday and Sunday service to the popular routes would expand access to key grocery, shopping, and faith-based destinations. Based on FY23 ridership, top priorities for weekend service would include:

- Town of Tazewell Transit (Tazewell County)
- Town of Richlands Transit (Tazewell County)
- Grundy North (Buchanan County)
- Grundy South (Buchanan County)

2.7 Evaluation of Transit Market Demand and Underserved Areas

A transit demand analysis intends to measure which populations are more likely to use public transportation and identify the geographic distribution of these groups. This helps plan and improve transit services for diverse communities and supports determining the kind of service to provide.

2.7.1 Transit Dependency Index

To evaluate Four County Transit's service, a Transit Dependency Index (TDI) was created. The Transit Dependency Index (TDI) used to evaluate Four County Transit's service is a composite score based on an equally weighted set of demographic variables reported by the most recent Five-Year American Community Survey publication as part of the U.S. Census between 2017 and 2022. For purposes of the Transit Development Plan, this composite score as been projected on the map of Four County Transit's service area. The set of demographic variables comprising the TDI includes measures of Zero-Car Households, People under Age 18, People over Age 65, and People with Disabilities. The mapped breakdown of these variables individually is shown in Figures 9 through 17, and the composite TDI score is shown in Figure 8.
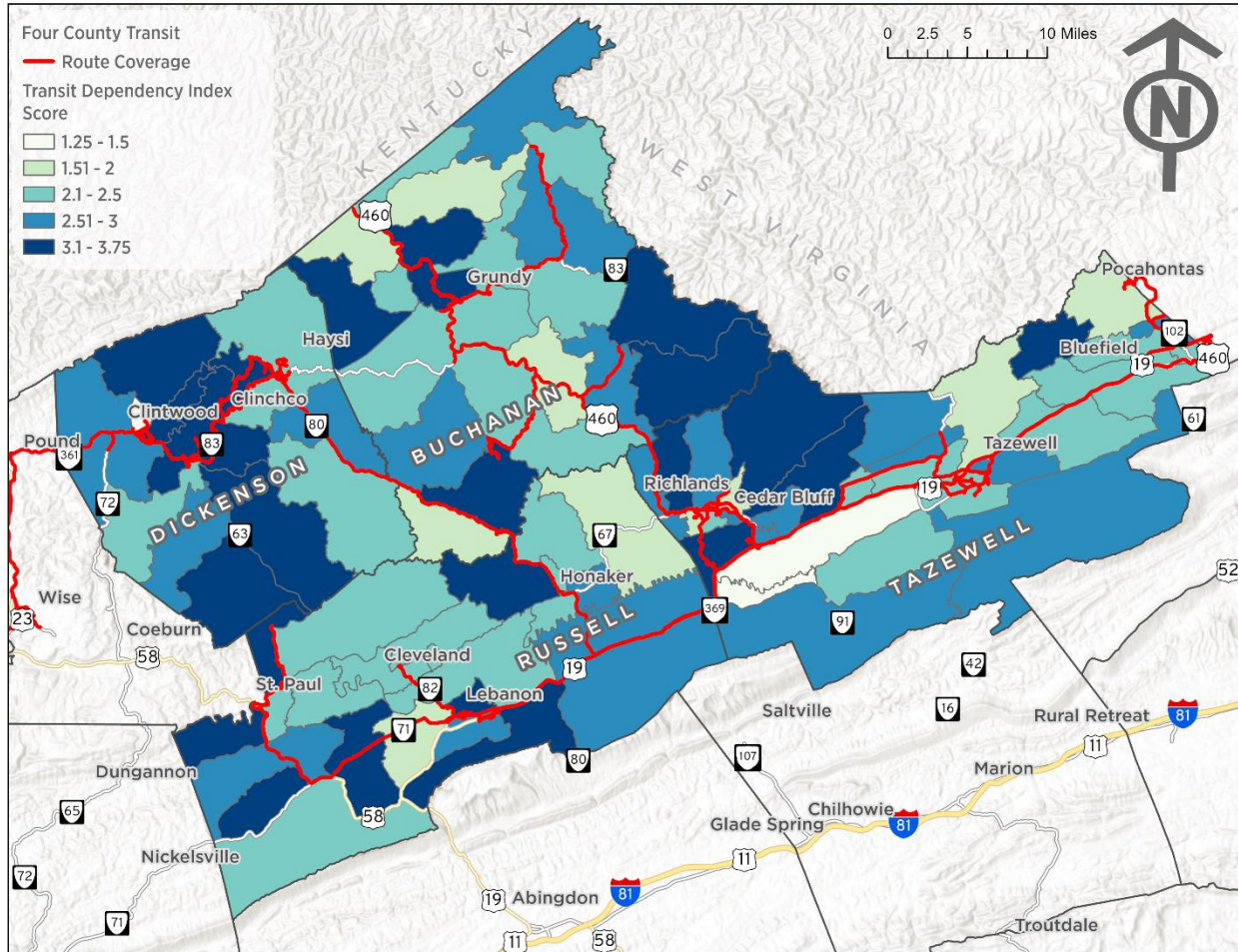
Figure 8. Transit Dependency Index by Census Block Group

The variables (Zero-Car Households, People under Age 18, People over Age 65, and People with Disabilities) are calculated at the Block Group level and normalized based on the total value of each demographic within the overall service area. This calculation presents a clearer idea of where concentrations of each demographic category fall and substantiates a TDI that accurately reflects Block Group-level clustering of transit-dependent demographic groups. To simplify, the Block Groups that appear darker and have a higher TDI score reflect areas of higher potential transit dependency based on the demographic information provided by the American Community Survey.

2.7.2 **Total Population**

In Four County Transit's service area, the highest population block groups are in northeastern Buchanan County, eastern Tazewell County, and the southern portion of Russell County. While lower population block groups may not be ideal for high-frequency, high-capacity transit service, deviated fixed route transit is an appropriate option that allows Four County Transit to serve a geographically large service area.
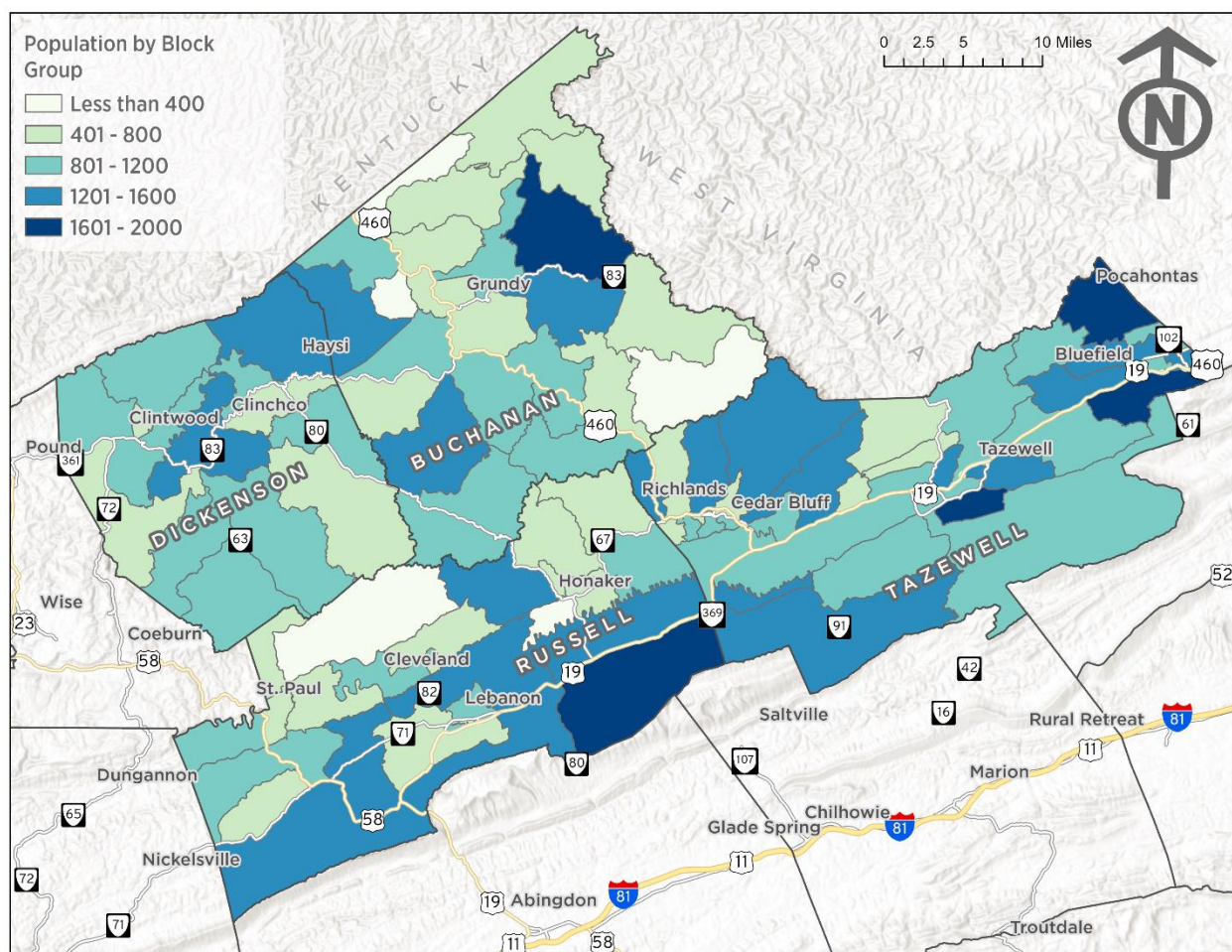
Figure 9. Total Population by Census Block Group

2.7.3 **Population Density**

Population density is one of the most common factors considered when evaluating the demand for public transportation service. The range of density determines which type of service may be deployed, from demand response to high-capacity services such as bus rapid transit and heavy rail. A higher density indicates an area of high population concentration that could support more frequent or additional transit service, while lower density areas are more suitable for demand response or deviated fixed route. Further evaluation of high-density areas can help understand the demand for specific times of travel, such as if the areas are primarily made up of one demographic or another (students, workforce-aged individuals, etc.). Population density was measured by calculating population per kilometer squared. Although the highest density areas relative to the rest of the study area are located in Tazewell County, the overall characteristic of Four County Transit's service area is low density.
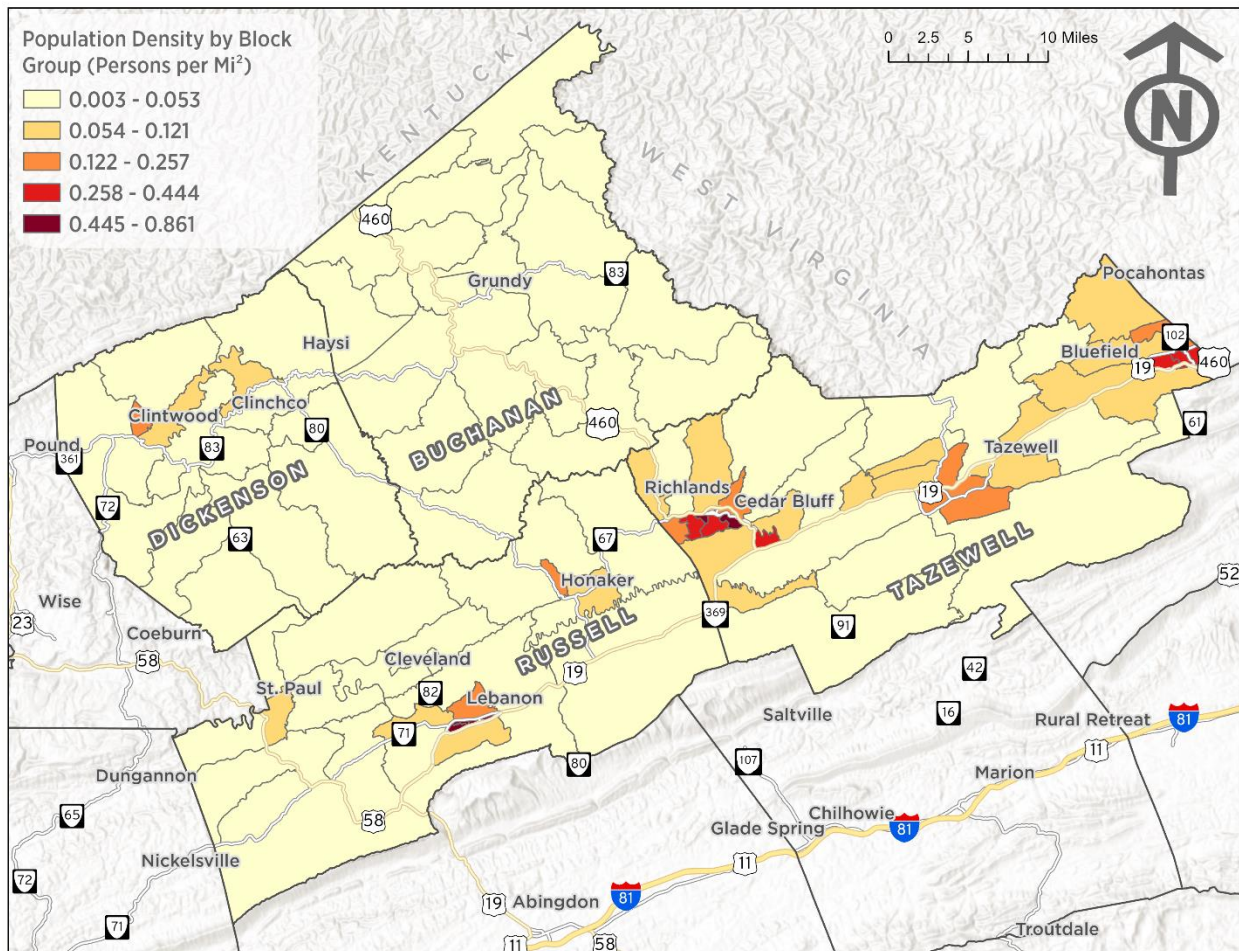
Figure 10. Population Density by Block Group

2.7.4 **Median Household Income**

Income levels also provide insight into whether someone is more or less likely to use transit. Households with lower incomes are more likely to use public transportation due to the cost burden associated with car ownership, especially considering Four County Transit's services are currently free for all riders. According to 2022 ACS data, the average household size was 2.48 individuals across the study area. Poverty guidelines for 2024 established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services identifies a yearly income less than $25,820 as the threshold for poverty.

Concentrations of census block groups where median household income is less than $30,000 yearly are primarily located in northeastern, southeastern, and southwestern Buchanan County. Each of the other counties in the service area have one or two block groups within them where median household income is below the federal poverty threshold.
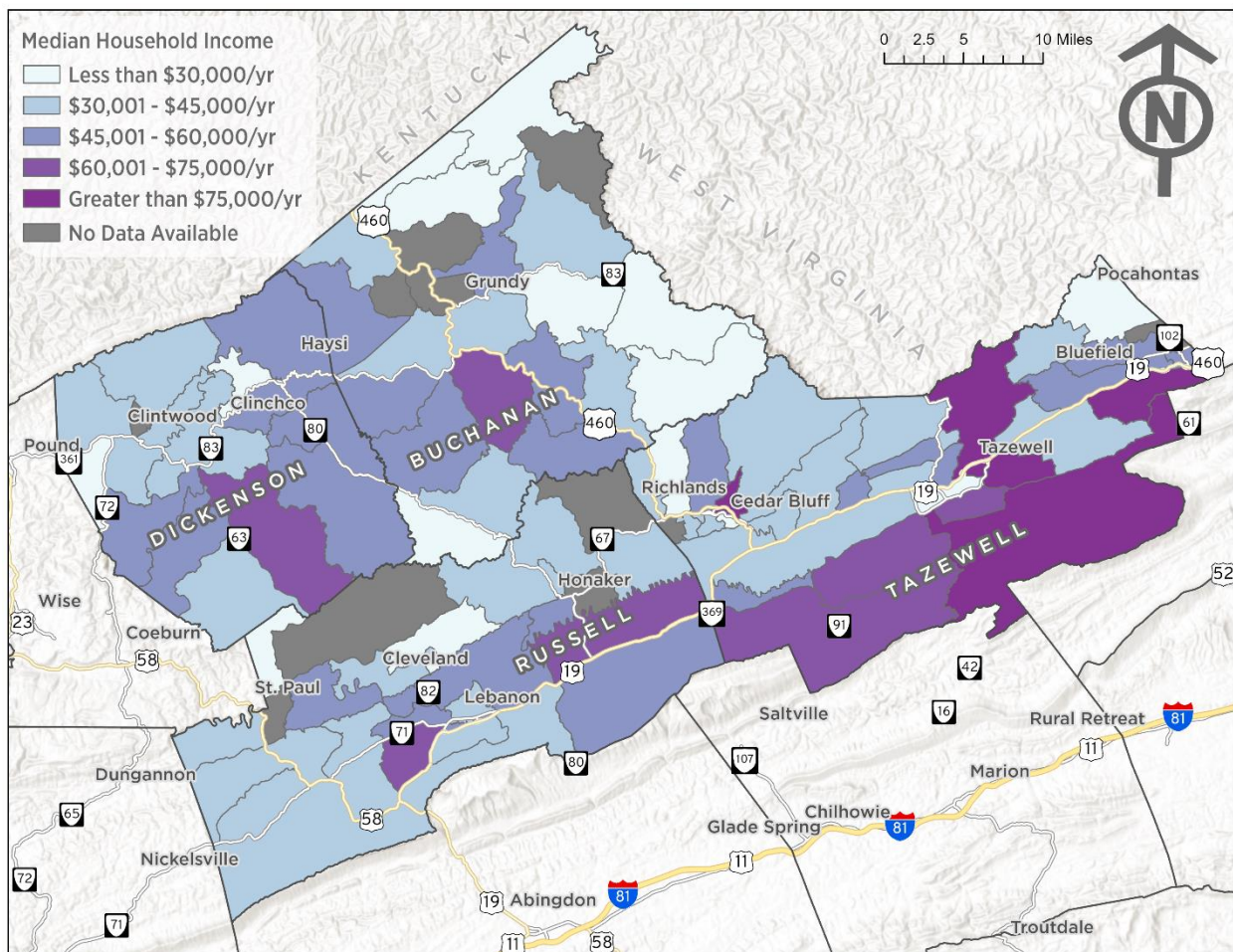
Figure 11. Median Household Income by Block Group

2.7.5 **Zero-Car Households**

Households without access to a personal vehicle are more likely to use transit, especially for routine trips such as work and errands. Each of the four counties are very rural, low-density areas where taxis and transportation network companies such as Uber or Lyft aren't available. Public transportation provides access to these critical opportunities that otherwise would not be available if an individual did not have access to a vehicle.

Very high concentrations of zero car household block groups are scattered throughout all four counties in the service area. Russell County has the most block groups with high concentrations of zero car households.
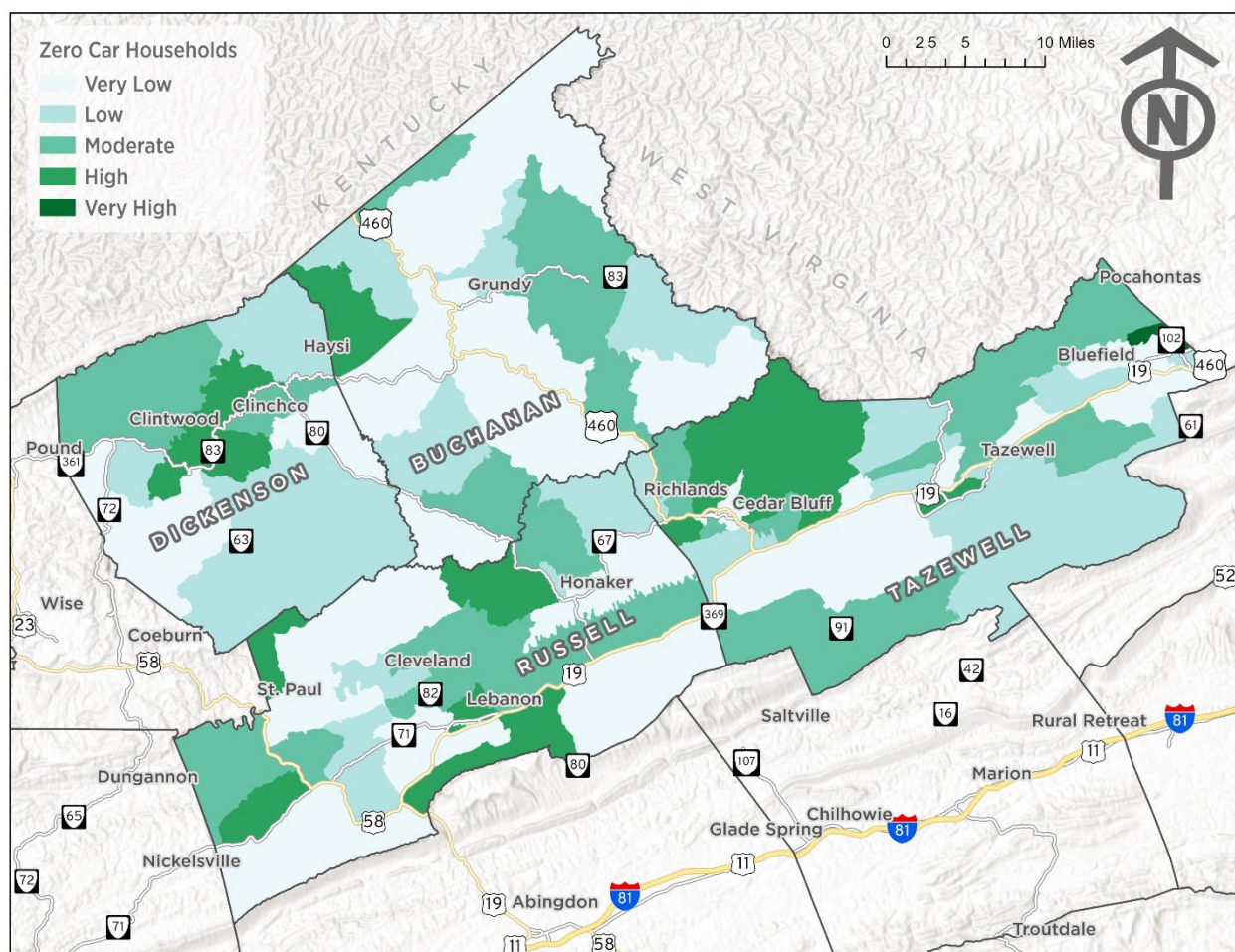
Figure 12. Zero-Car Households by Block Group

2.7.6 Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

Including minority populations when assessing transit access can help identify and address community inequities. As a recipient of federal funds, Four County Transit must comply with Title VI requirements to ensure communities are not discriminated against on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Understanding where concentrations of these groups are located can assist with Title VI analysis and future service changes.

According to a report published by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA), communities of color make up most transit riders (60 percent) nationally. This indicates a higher likelihood of transit use among these populations. High concentrations of BIPOC populations are present in Buchanan, Russell, and Tazewell counties.
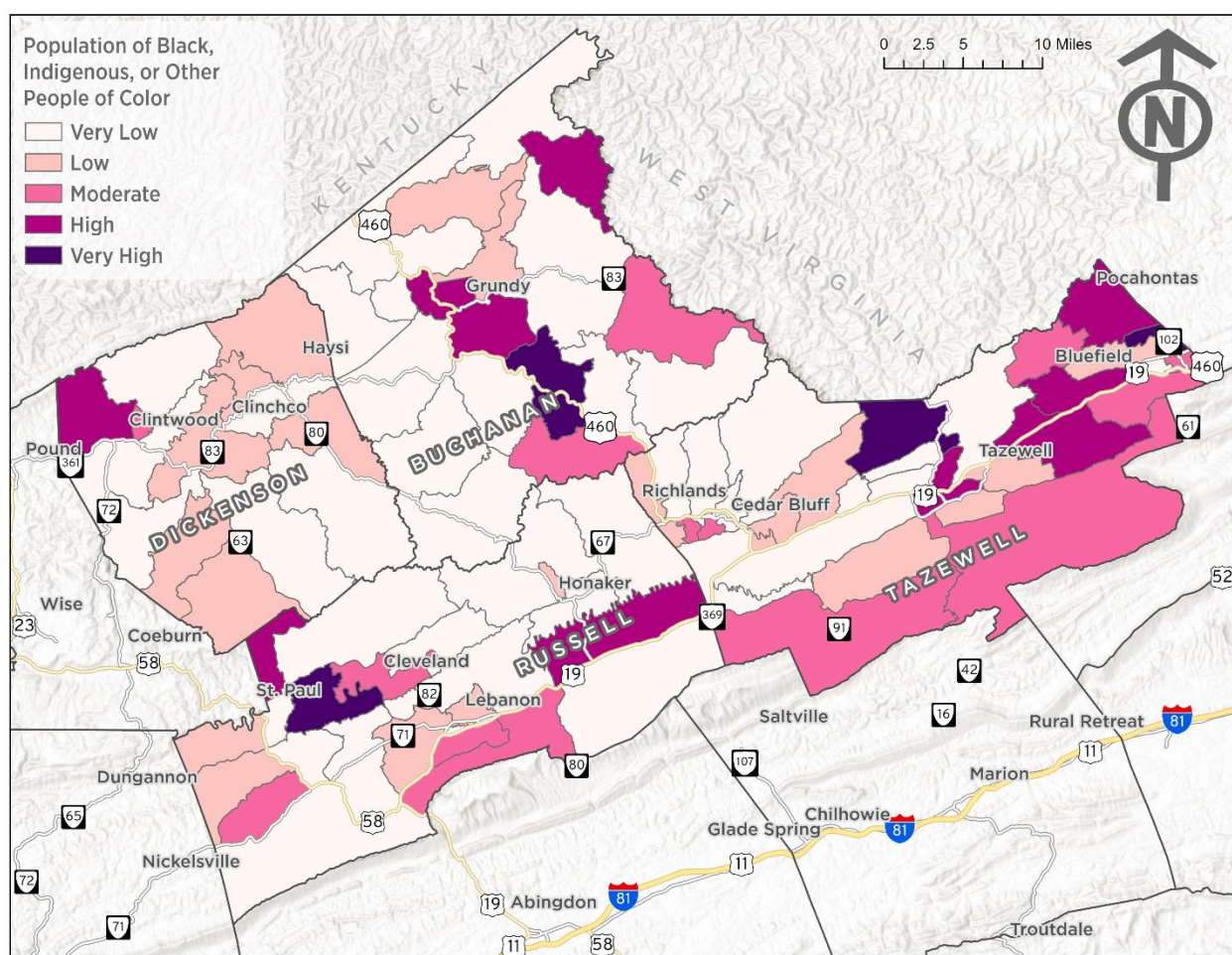
Figure 13. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) by Census Block Group

2.7.7 **Population with Disabilities**

Disabilities captured by the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community survey include difficulties related to vision, cognition, walking, self-care, or independent living. Individuals with disabilities are more likely to use transit because of difficulties with or reluctance to operating a vehicle. North and southeastern Buchanan, northwestern Dickenson, and northern Russell counties have high concentrations of individuals with disabilities.
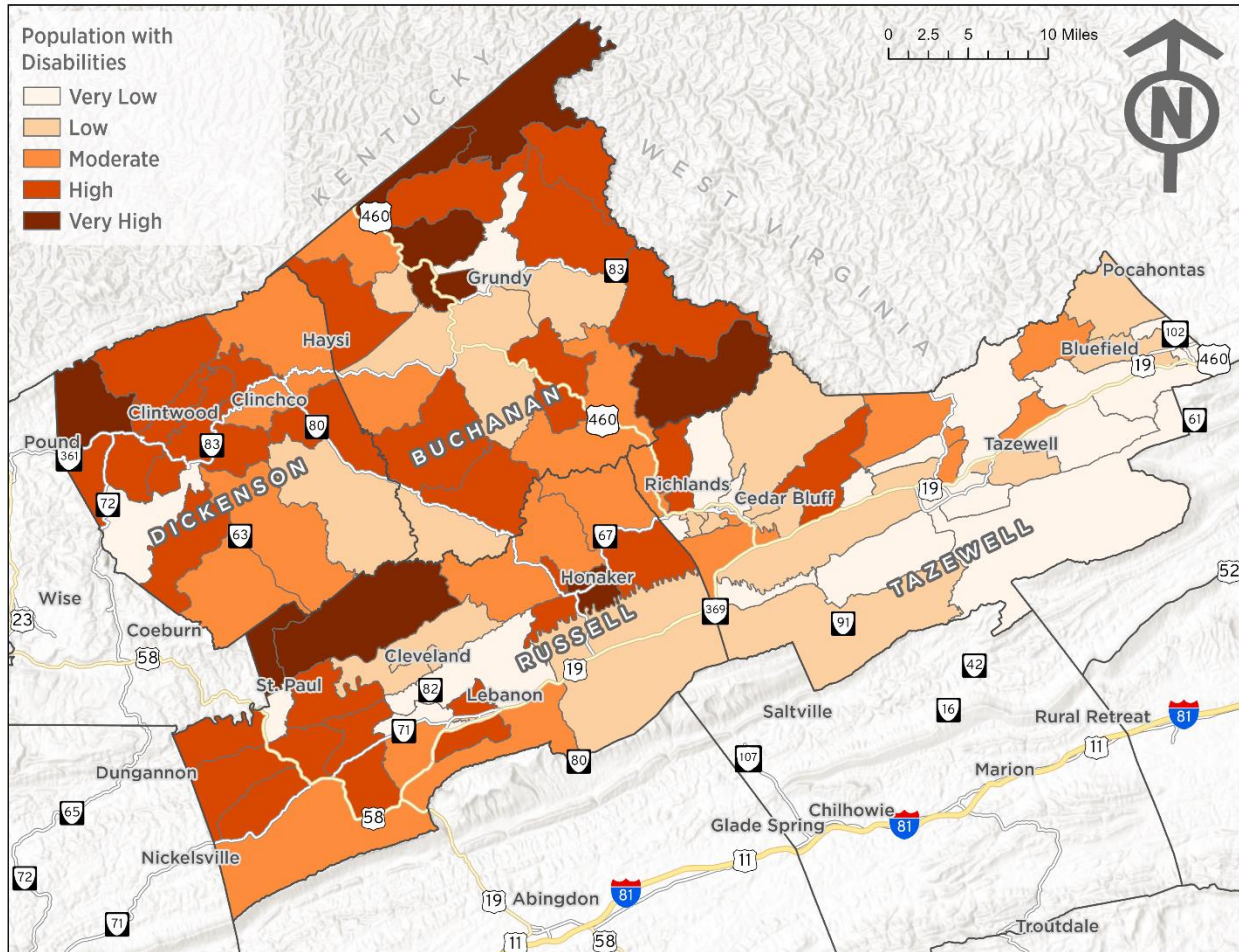
Figure 14. Population with Disabilities by Census Block Group

2.7.8 **Population older than 65**

People older than 65 are another population likely to use transit. Though vehicle use could dwindle as an individual ages, the need to attend medical appointments and other routine trips will remain. Public transportation provides the opportunity to retain independence and access to critical destinations for aging populations. Concentrations of individuals older than 65 are present throughout the study area.
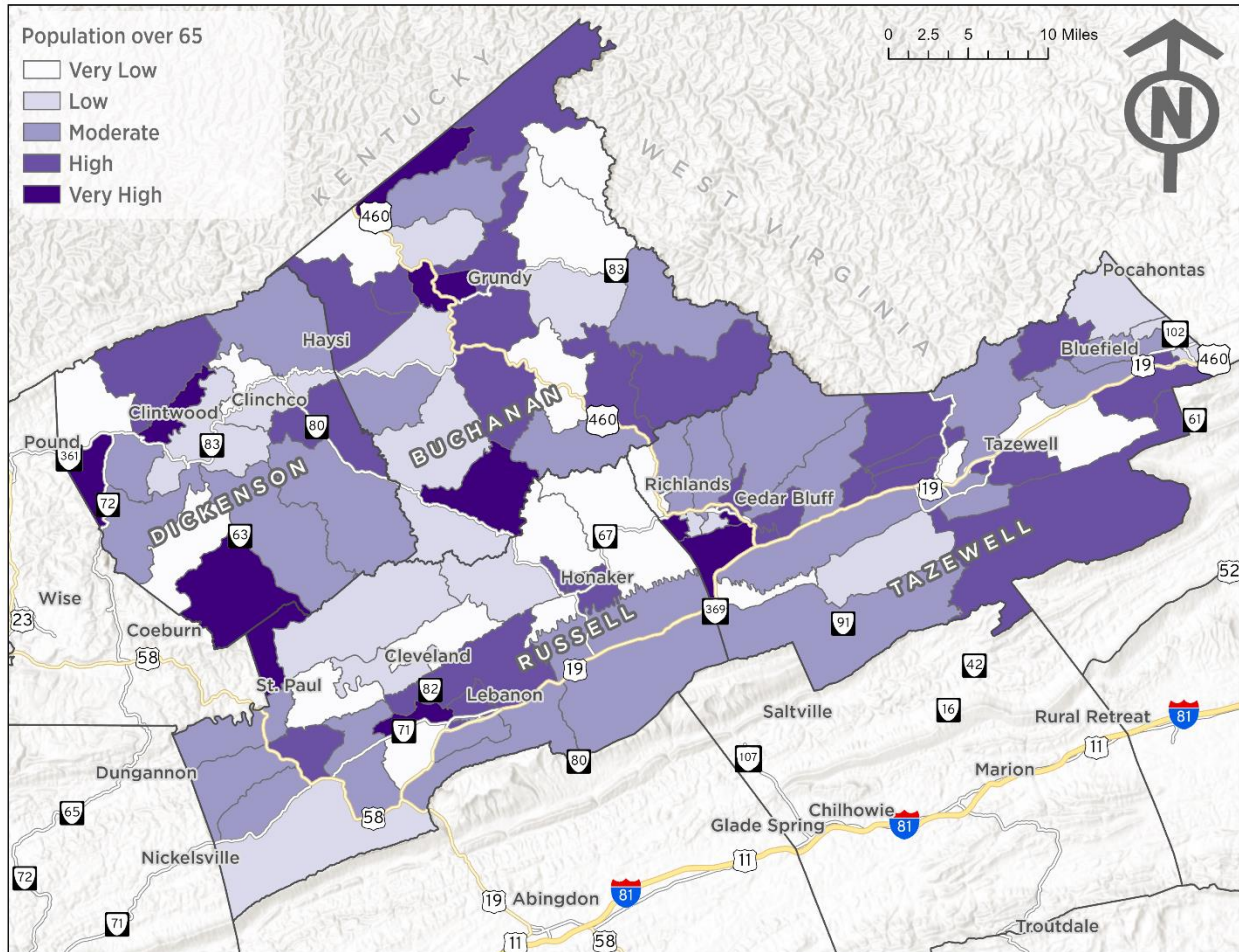
Figure 15. Population Older Than 65 by Census Block Group

2.7.9 Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a Limited English Proficient individual is a person over five years of age that reported speaking English less than "very well". LEP populations could be more likely to use transit for several reasons, including perhaps being less likely to obtain a driver's license due to language barriers. LEP populations are a key demographic and knowing geographic locations can help transit agencies improve their services by providing information in multiple languages if population size warrants it. Only two block groups in the entire service area have an LEP population percentage greater than 2.5 percent: one in Buchanan County near Davenport and the other in Tazewell County near Pounding Mill.
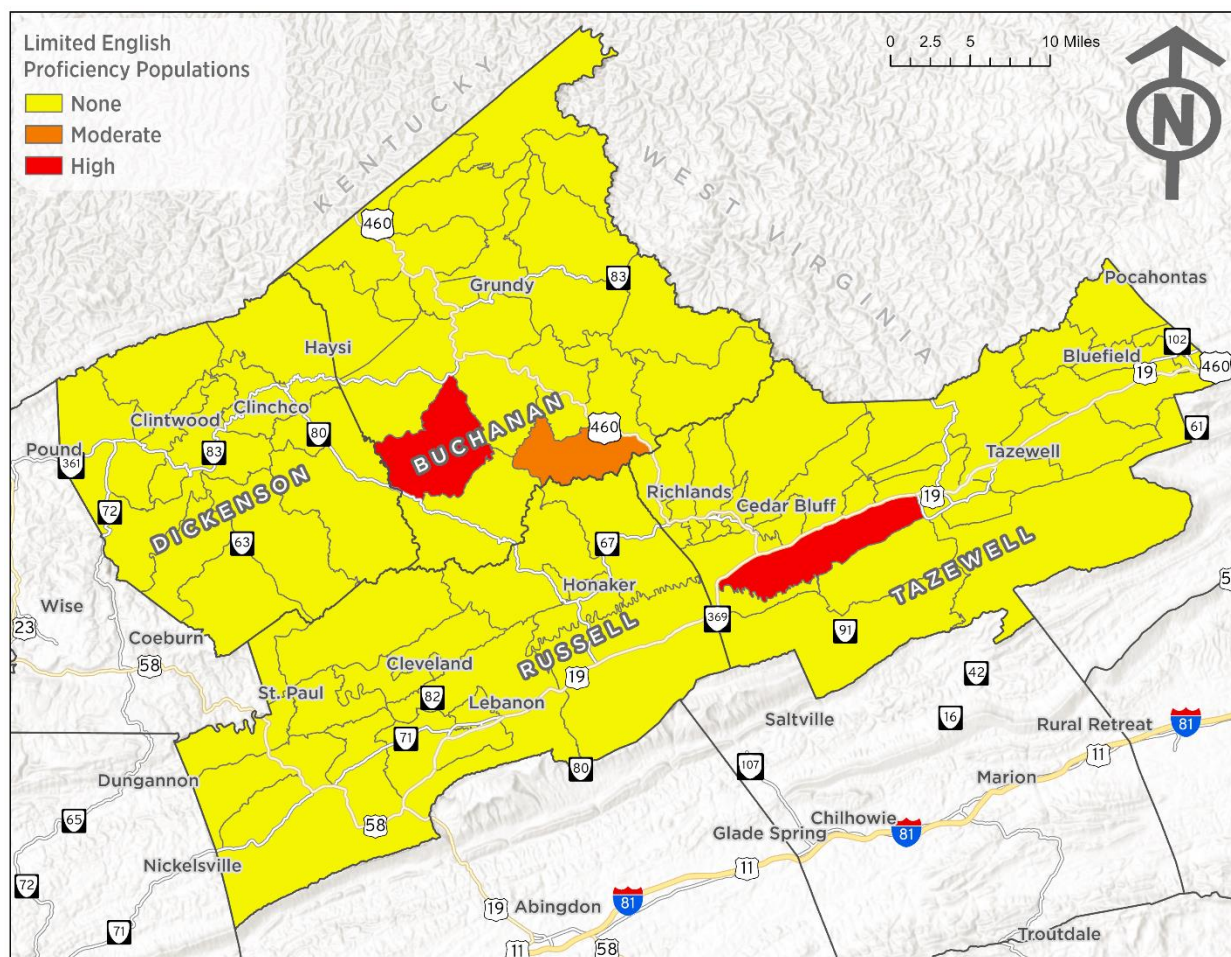
Figure 16. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) by Census Block Group

2.7.10 **Youth Population**

Individuals under 18 years old are more likely to use transit for trips related to schooling, social activities, or part-time employment. This population is less likely to have a driver's license and own a vehicle. Concentrations of youth populations are present in all four counties of the service area.
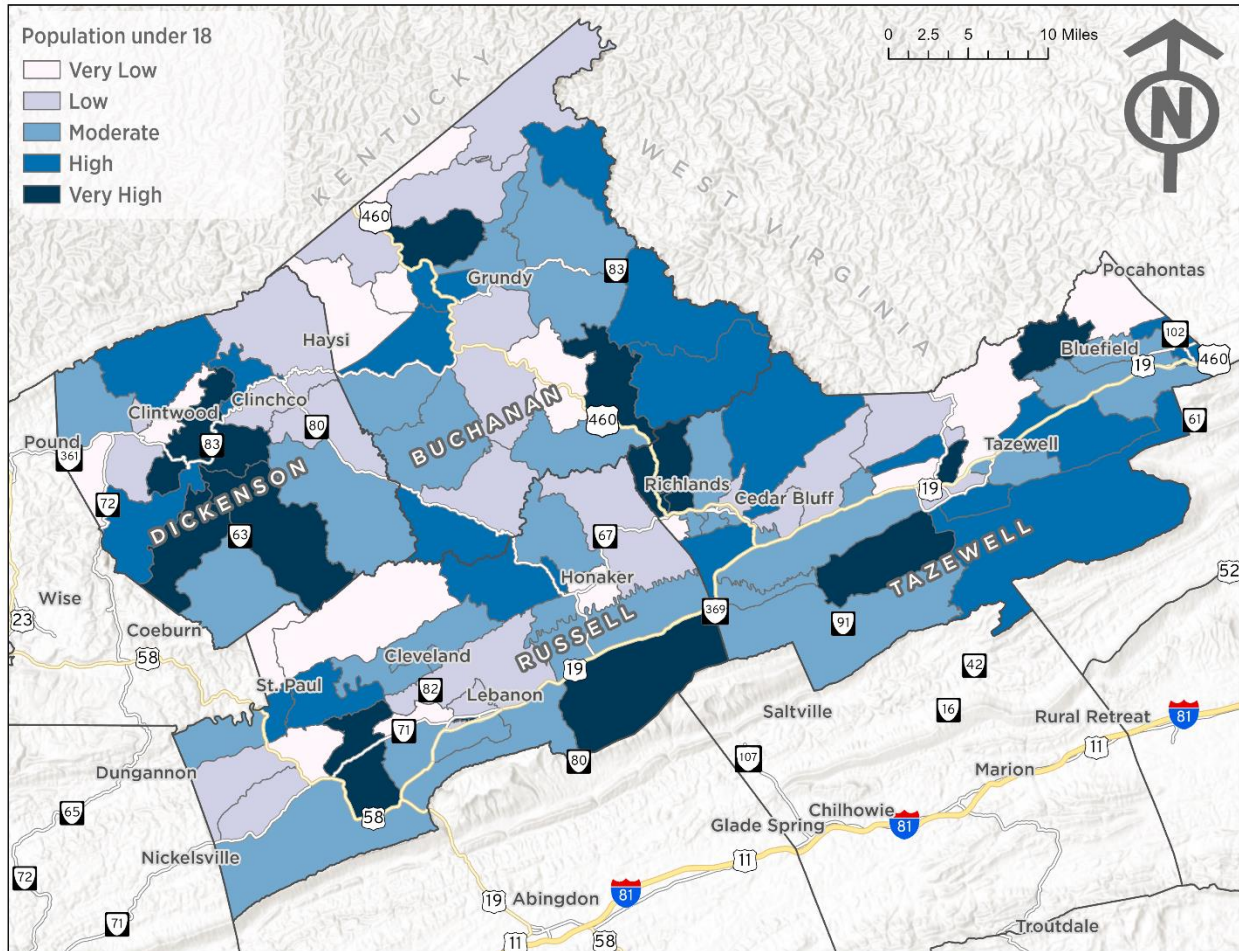
Figure 17. Youth Population under 18 by Census Block Group

2.8 Transit Demand and Underserved Area Opportunities for Improvement

While some areas on the map in Figure 8 may appear to be underserved, it is critical to note the following reasons why transit service may not be provided:

- The Four County Transit service area is in Southwest Virginia and intersects with portions of Appalachian and Blue Ridge mountains. Some sections of the service area are geographically unsuitable for transit service due to the inability of a bus to access certain terrains.
- The level of transit service Four County Transit can provide is directly related to the level of financial support they receive from localities.

Opportunities for improvement based on transit demand and other opportunities for improvement are covered in forthcoming sections.

2.8.1 Specialized Transportation Needs

As will be discussed further in the Stakeholder Input section, some rider populations require specialized medical attention. This includes traveling outside of service area boundaries to access medical appointments or requiring additional help using the deviated fixed route transit that Four County Transit operates. An opportunity is present to partner with other agencies for intercity travel that would help meet the needs of this population, which could include people who are older than 65 or have disabilities.

2.8.2 Stakeholder Input

At the beginning of the TDP update, 20 invitations were sent to external partners and ten stakeholder interviews were conducted. The organizations represented in responses include:

- Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)
- Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens (AASC)
- Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRA)
- Tazewell County
- UVA-Wise
- Tazewell Chamber of Commerce
- Mountain Lynx Transit
- Poplar Gap Park
- Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority

The interviews provided additional context and understanding of the region's transportation needs, service challenges, and opportunities for the system to improve.

2.8.3 System Strengths

Many interview responses indicated that primary destinations of riders were everyday life necessities, including work, grocery shopping, and medical appointments. Respondents often described the service as "lifeline" transportation access for residents who otherwise would not have readily available means of travel, since taxis and Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) such as Uber and Lyft aren't present in the area. The benefits of the service are seen regardless of age, as adults and community college students alike rely on it.

2.9 Opportunities for Improvement

2.9.1 Marketing

Similarly to the previous TDP, many opportunities for improvement highlighted by stakeholders focused on marketing. The community college student populations represent high potential for future ridership, but many students at Southwest Virginia Community College and UVA-Wise are unaware of Four County Transit's services. Four County Transit and AASC are already partnering on marketing efforts thanks to a recent national grant that will help produce marketing materials. Additionally, the agency is working on an updated website that will be more interactive and including a Google mapping component. Other options to support marketing could include increasing signage and infrastructure at bus stops.

2.9.2 Service Span

One respondent spoke about limited service hours of routes operated by Four County Transit. Specific comments are:

- In terms of limitations, not having a vehicle – and limited Four County Transit service hours. There are no taxis or Ubers in this area. The distance from home to destination is significant.
- Extending the service hours would especially help workers.

2.9.3 Service Gaps

Multiple stakeholders indicated that some riders have needs for specialized medical services at hospitals and doctor's offices located outside the Four County Transit service area. While there is some Medicaid transportation, the quality of the service does not meet the population's needs. For student populations, transportation home for the holidays represents a major gap in access. There aren't easy, convenient ways for students to travel home and many don't have cars. Specific stakeholder comments about gaps in service are:

- People in our area who need specialized medical attention must travel to Tennessee, West Virginia, and Bristol to see a specialist for medical care.

- People need to go to the medical clinics and hospitals that border on West Virginia. And people want to travel down there to a nursing home in West Virginia. For people to visit, it's about 40 to 45 minutes away.
- One of the gaps equals trips home for the holidays. We have about 550 to 600 students on campus [at UVA-Wise] and during break times, there's no good way to get them home. We need to get them to Bristol and tri-cities too.

2.10 Opportunities for Collaboration and Service Expansion

Local community colleges present opportunities for continued partnership with Four County Transit. Southwest Virginia Community College recently launched a diesel mechanic program and built a sports complex center, which could support ridership growth and expanding services. As noted in the performance evaluation section, additional coordination between SWVCC and UVA-Wise to better advertise and align services with students would be beneficial.

Representatives from Tazewell County highlighted upcoming developments that would be supported by service expansion, including a recreation area, a salmon farm (Project Jonah), and a new medical facility.

Due to constrained financial resources, Four County Transit will focus on maintaining existing service levels and consider expansion in the future as additional resources are available. Specific comments highlighting other opportunities for collaboration or expanding service are:

- Mountain Lynx would be interested in coordinating service.
- Connecting service in Marion and Abingdon with our sister organization, Mountain Lynx, to support senior services.
- The "satellite office" does not have Four County Transit service and yes, it could potentially use Four County Transit service. It is located about three miles off VA Route 83 and it is close. Adding FCT service to the satellite location would be beneficial – it offers training and better job opportunities. It all works together – Four County Transit, training, and new jobs.
- Possibly Amtrak connector service – in ten years
- We are focusing on future growth and service opportunities in Grundy and the surrounding area. In Buchanan County, there is a new economic development complex that has factories.
- As stated by a DRPT staff member, there are no immediate plans on the horizon for expansion of Virginia Breeze within Four County Transit's service area.

2.11 Customer Survey Results

Between February and April 2024, Four County Transit distributed and collected results from a rider survey that sought to capture how the transit system was being used, provide a general idea of who is using it, and where its riders are going and their level of satisfaction with the service. Results from this survey were primarily collected on paper surveys distributed on Four County Transit vehicles. The surveys were anonymized and, to examine overall trends, the comments were generalized into broader categories of feedback that attempt to capture the responder's intent. Each question from the survey is detailed under the following headings.

What Bus Route Are You Currently Riding?

The survey results indicate that a total of 238 responses were received. The most frequently ridden bus route is the Grundy North, with 45 riders. This is followed by the Town of Lebanon Transit and the Town of Tazewell Transit, with 29 and 23 riders respectively. The Ridge Country Connector – Haysi and the Four Seasons Tazewell to Bluefield Connector both have 19 and 17 riders respectively. The least used routes are the SwVCC Eagle Express in Tazewell County and the SwVCC Eagle Express in Russell County, with three riders or less each. Respondents frequently were riding more than one route, but this data reflects one response per respondent and instances where there was no response at all despite survey submission.
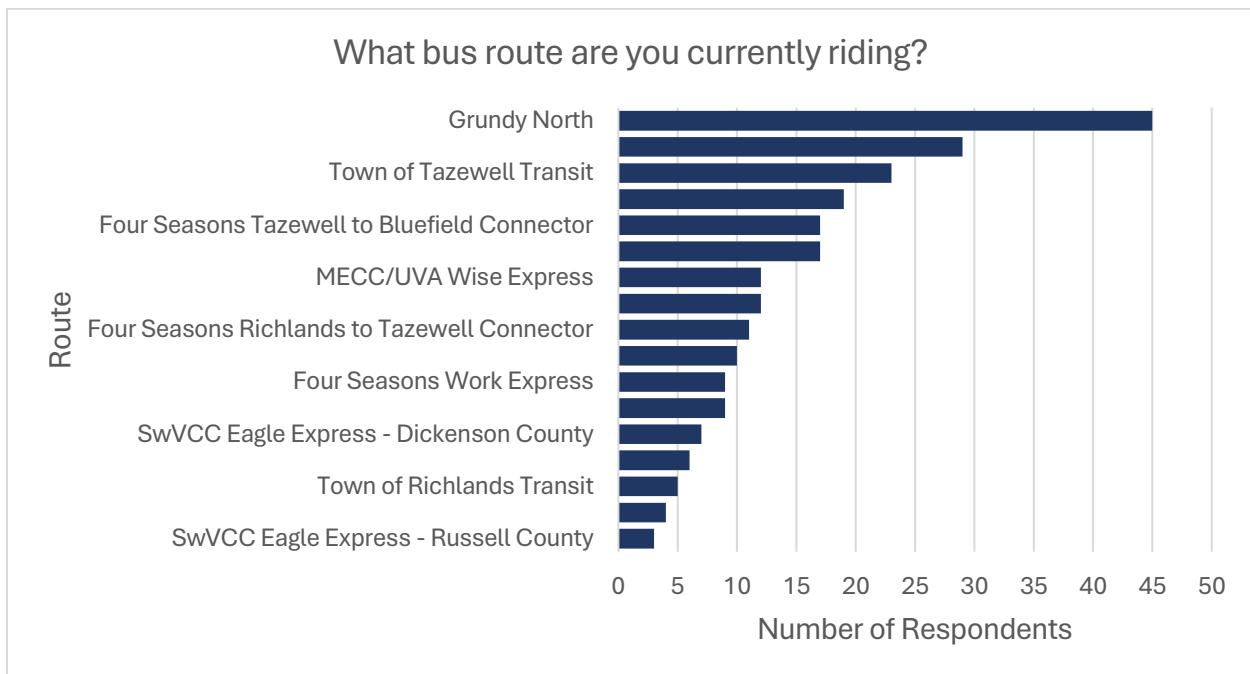
Figure 18. Responses to "What bus route are you currently riding?"

Trip Start?

Figure 19 show the multitude of starting locations of various trips, presented here in a word cloud where words are sized in proportion to how many times they are mentioned in the data input. The locations are diverse, ranging from specific stores like E & S Grocery, Clintwood Food City, and Grundy Walmart, to broader areas like Centennial Heights, Dickenson County, and Buchanan County. Some trips also start from specific institutions such as Southwest Virginia Community College and Clinch Valley Community Action. This data provides a comprehensive overview of where people are beginning their journeys, which can be useful for understanding travel patterns and planning transit service.
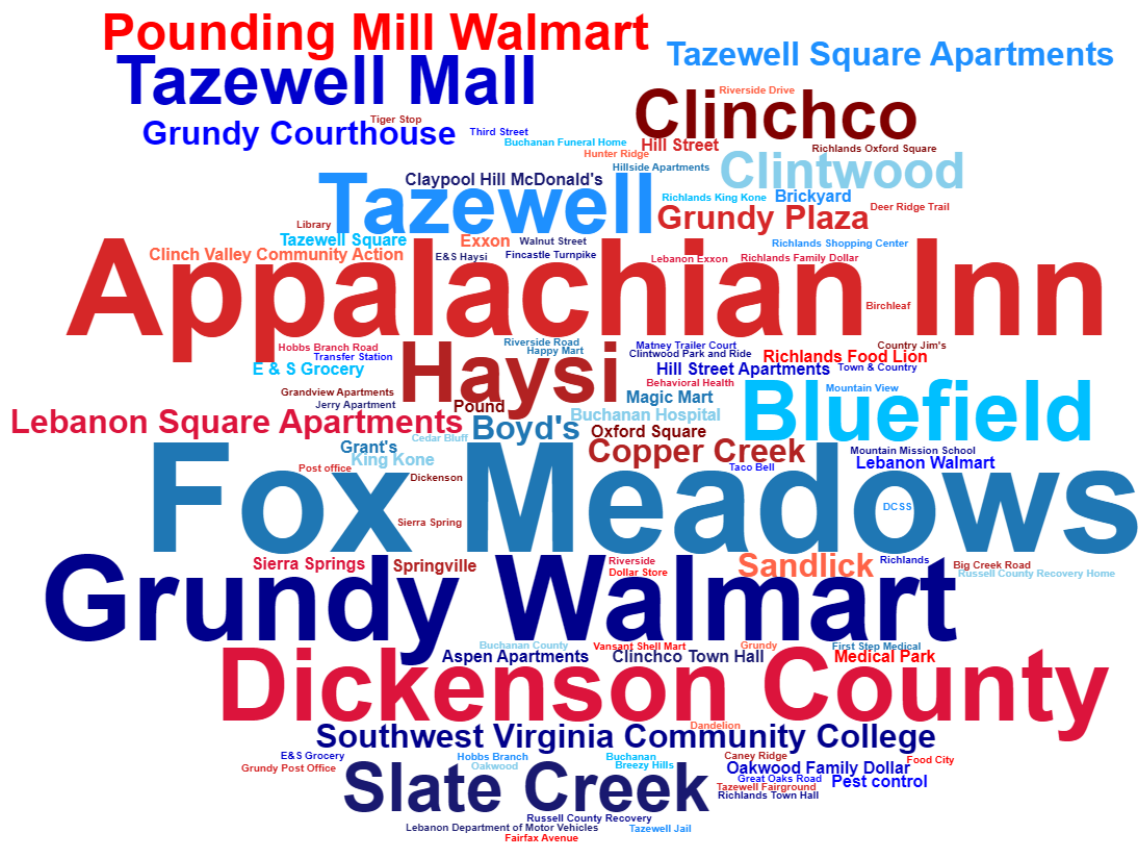
Figure 19. Word cloud of responses to "Trip start?"

Trip End?

Figure 20 shows a word cloud of the end locations of various trips; words are sized in proportion to how many times they are mentioned in the data input. The destinations are diverse, ranging from specific stores like Walmart, Clintwood Food City, and Grundy Walmart, to broader areas like Centennial Heights, Dickenson County, and Buchanan County. Some trips also end at specific institutions such as Southwest Virginia Community College and Clinch Valley Community Action. This data provides a comprehensive overview of where people are ending their journeys, which can be useful for understanding travel patterns and planning transit routes.
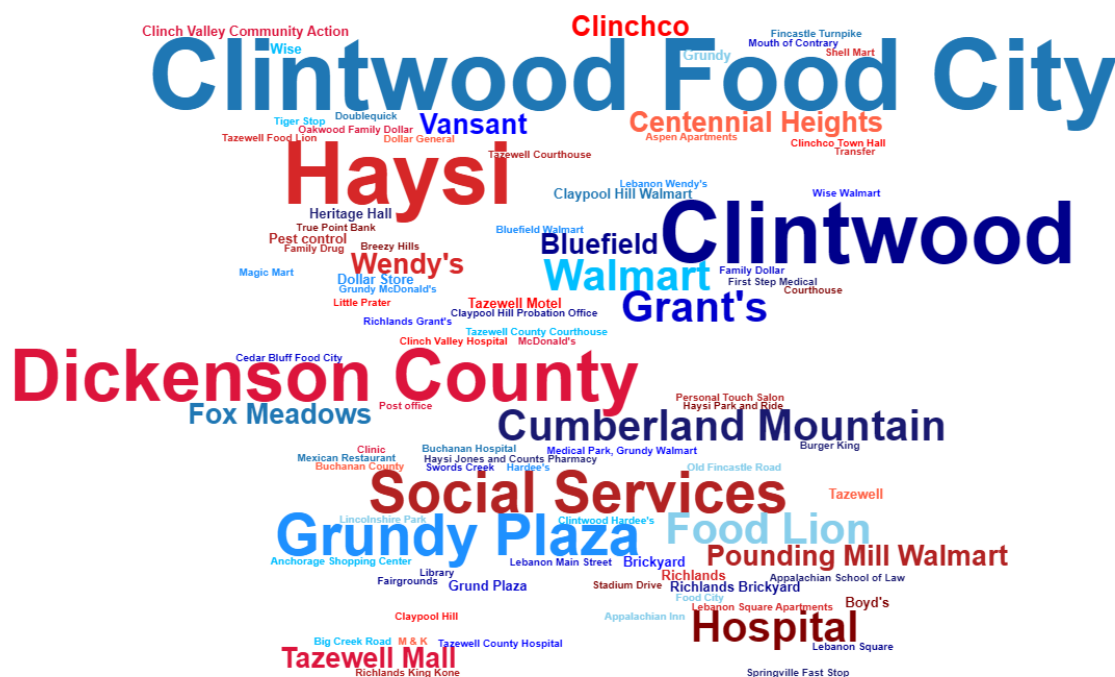
Figure 20. Word cloud of responses to "Trip end?"

What Is Your Typical Trip Purpose?

The survey results show the various purposes for which respondents use the transit services. The most common purpose is Shopping, with 83 respondents using the transit system for this reason. This is followed by Work and Medical purposes, with 46 and 39 respondents respectively. Services are the next most common purpose, with 25 respondents. Social/Recreational, School, and Other purposes each have 14 respondents. The least common purpose is Dining, with only three respondents using the transit system for this reason. These results provide insights into the primary needs and priorities of transit riders.
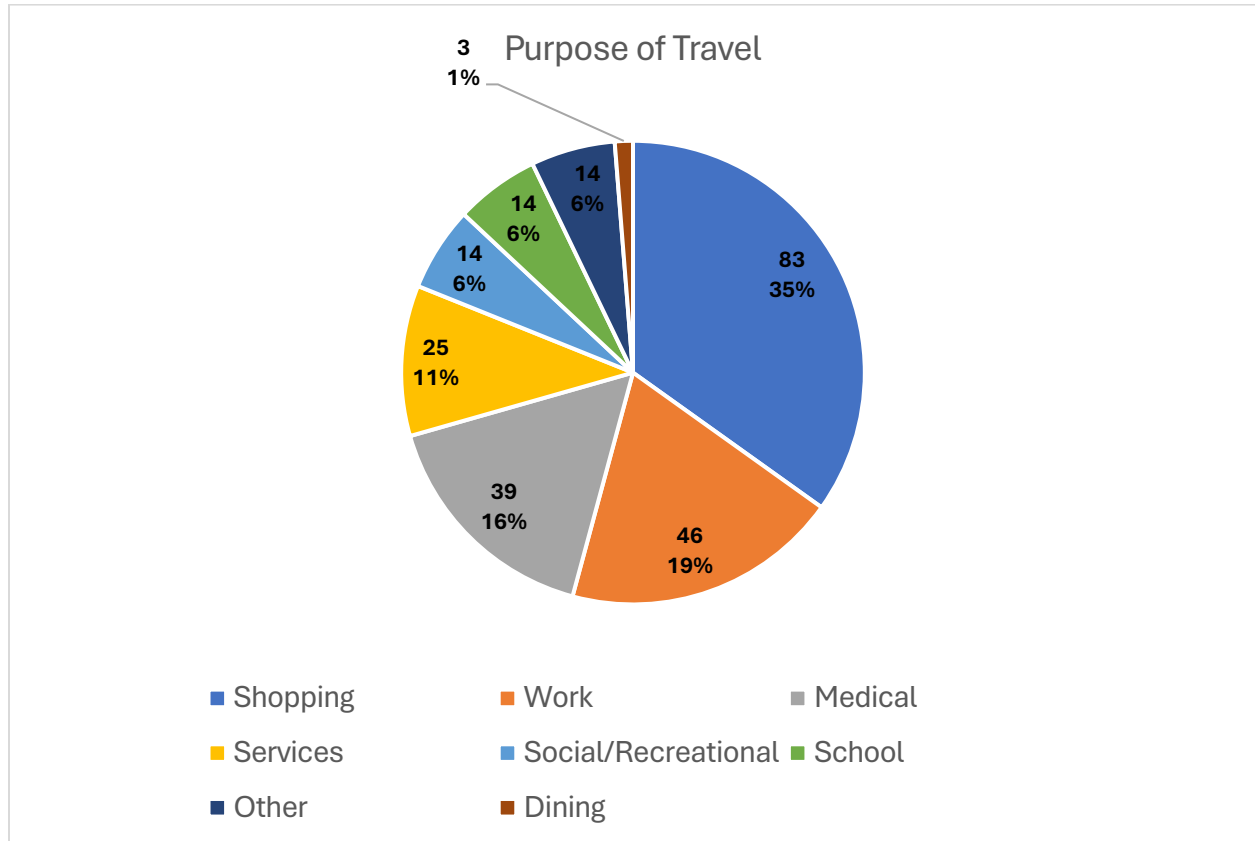
Figure 21. Responses to "What is your typical trip purpose?"

How Often Do You Ride the Bus?

The survey results provide insights into how frequently individuals ride the bus. The majority of respondents, 89 in total, ride the bus two to three times a week. This is followed by 53 respondents who use the bus service four to six times a week. A smaller group of 30 respondents ride the bus two to three times a month, while 24 respondents use the bus service more than once a day. The frequency of once a week and once a day was reported by 17 and 13 respondents respectively. The least common frequency is once a month, reported by 12 respondents. These results are important in understanding the usage patterns of the bus service among the respondents.
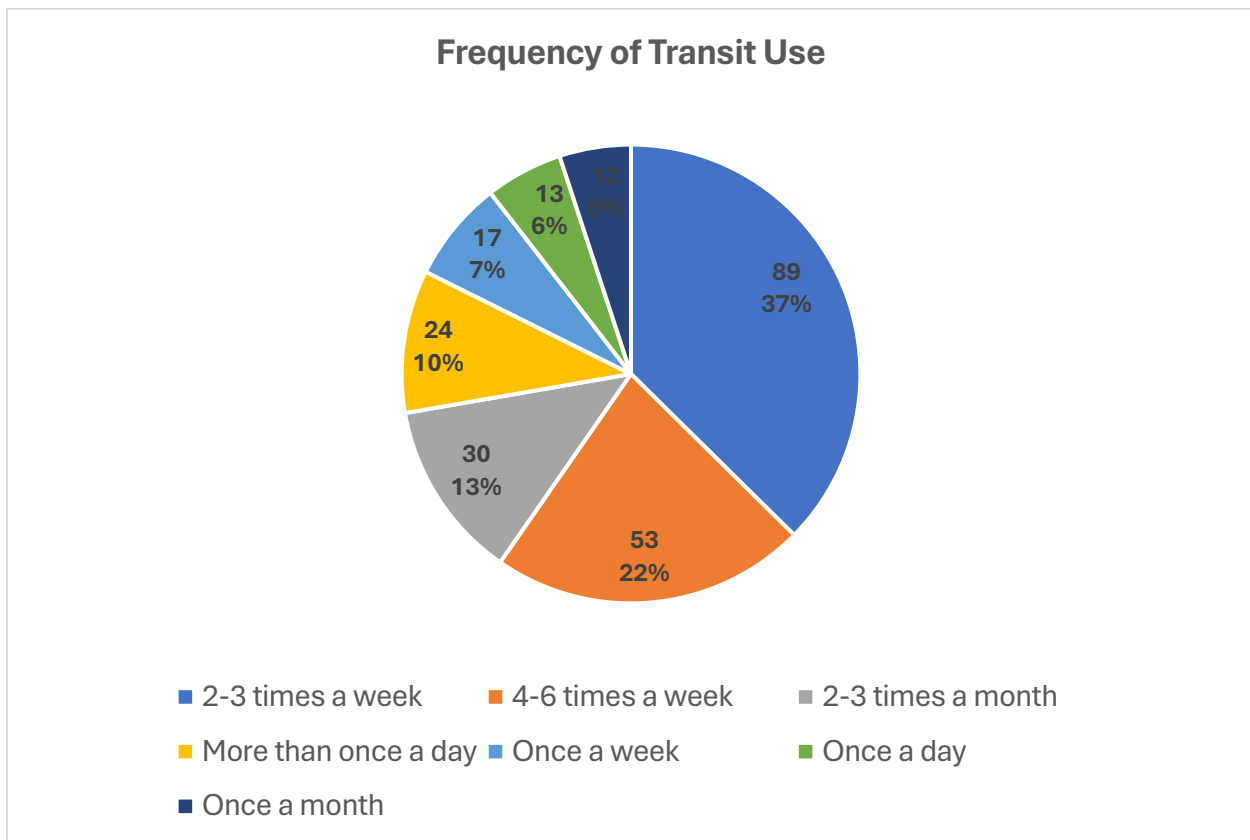
Figure 22. Responses to "How often do you ride the bus?"

What Service Improvements Would You Be Interested In?

The survey results identify desired improvements suggested by respondents from a list of five popular options (weekend service, bus stop features, additional destinations, on-time performance, and cleaner or safer buses) and an opportunity to respond "Other" with opportunity for written input. Other responses were sorted into categories based on the nature or intent of the comment. Predictably, the most common responses came from the popular suggested improvements, but other responders also specified longer hours, more frequency, increase deviation range from fixed route, and a way to track the bus location. These results help identify popular service improvement items for the next chapter of this Transit Development Plan.
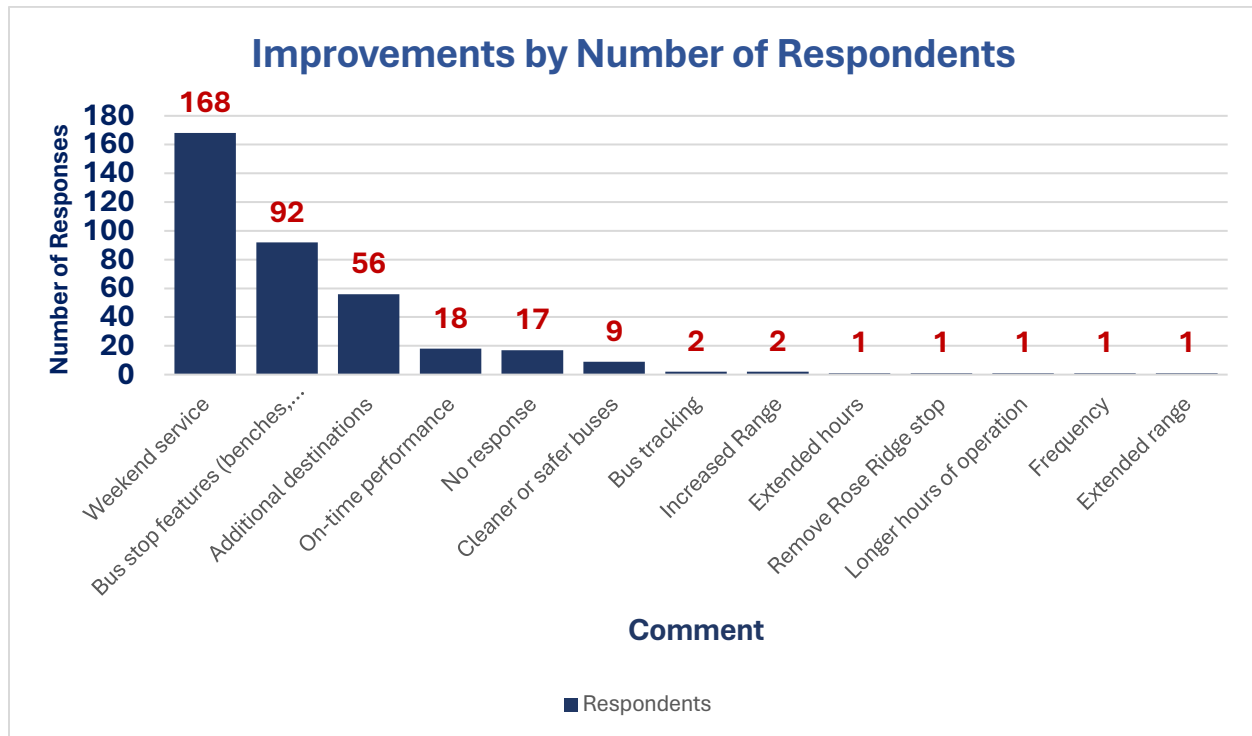
Figure 23. Responses to "What service improvements would you be interested in?"

Additional Destinations

This survey question was contingent on a response of "Additional Destinations" in the previous question. For those who responded, they were able to freely suggest additional destinations. The chart shows results that had more than one response, with the most prevalent response being a general desire for more destinations rather than a specific destination. This gives the transit system an idea of destinations that are not specifically being considered for expansion, but where riders might like to go.
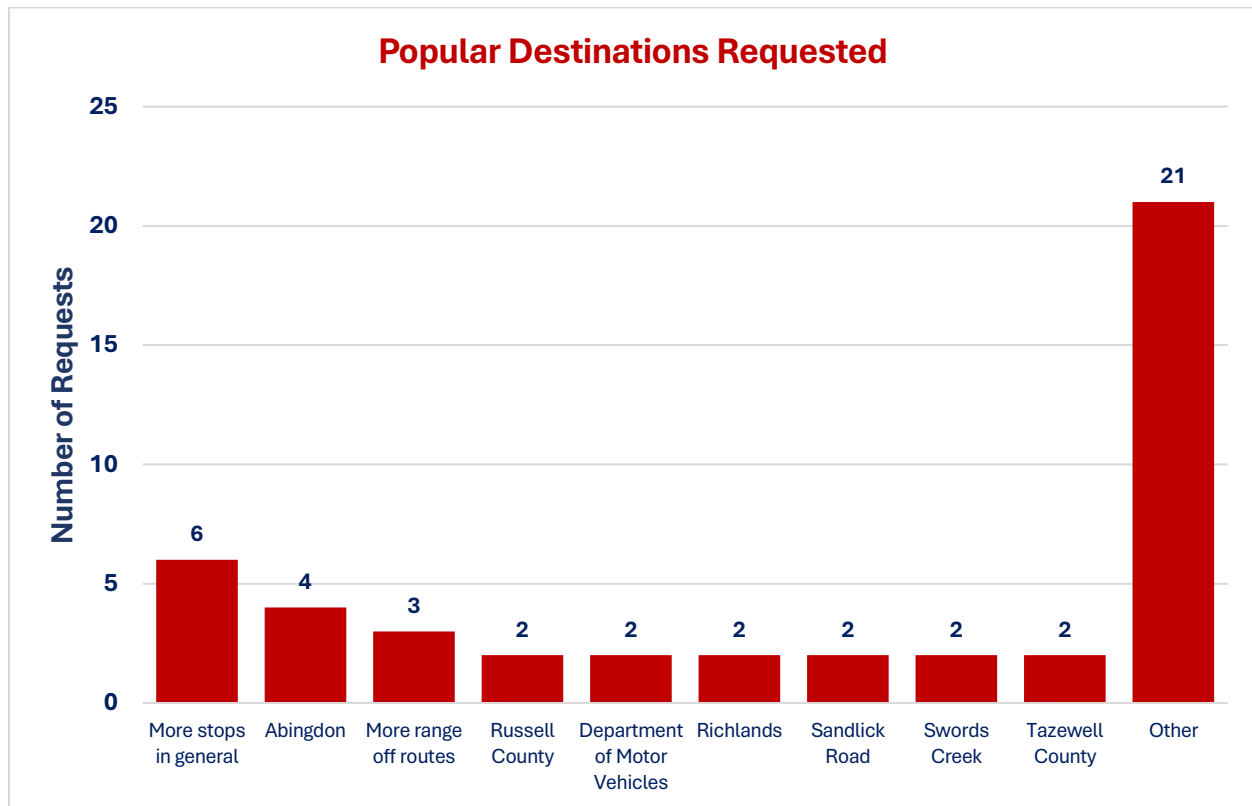
Figure 24. Popular additional destinations requested

Rider Satisfaction

This survey question is a direct qualitative rating of riders' satisfaction with Four County Transit's services from a choice of five options (very unsatisfied, unsatisfied, neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, satisfied, very satisfied). This information gives Four County Transit a better idea of how well their service is meeting the needs of its riders. Responses were anonymous and respondents were not instructed to provide a direct reason for their response.
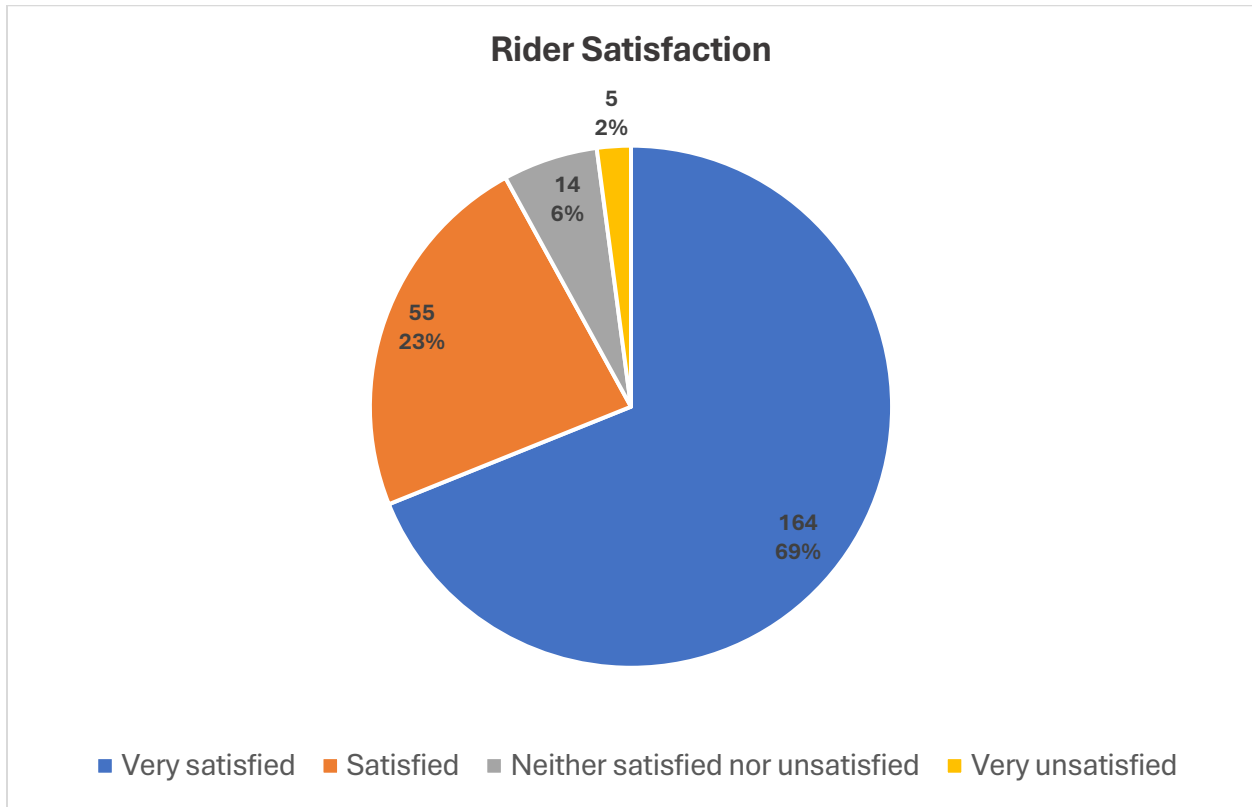
Figure 25. Rider satisfaction with Four County Transit

What Do You Like Best About the Service?

This survey data shows the strengths of Four County Transit's service from the perspective of survey respondents, presented here in a word cloud where words are sized in proportion to how many times they are mentioned in the data input. The word cloud shows that riders most often noted the customer service of Four County Transit drivers and staff, which helps create a positive atmosphere around transit service in the area. Other beneficial aspects of the service noted by riders include on-time buses and destinations offered.

Figure 26. Word cloud of responses to "What do you like best about the service?"

What Do You Like Least About the Service?

This survey data shows grouped comments on the weaknesses of Four County Transit's service from the perspective of survey respondents. This data is presented in a bar chart that clusters comments into categories based on their subject matter, like complaints about service hours/days, personnel, or safety. The most common low points for survey respondents are the service hours/days coverage, primarily focused on weekend and evening service, and personnel complaints. Comments that fell into the "other" category were most often not directed at the service provided itself. On the whole, the survey data reflects that not many respondents had criticisms of the service and when they did, it most often centered around service hours, personal disputes with driving staff, or service availability and destinations.

What do you like least about Four County Transit service?

Category	Count
Service hours/days complaints	17
Other complaints	7
Personnel complaints	7
Service availability complaints	5
Communication complaints	3
Comfort complaints	2
Safety complaints	1
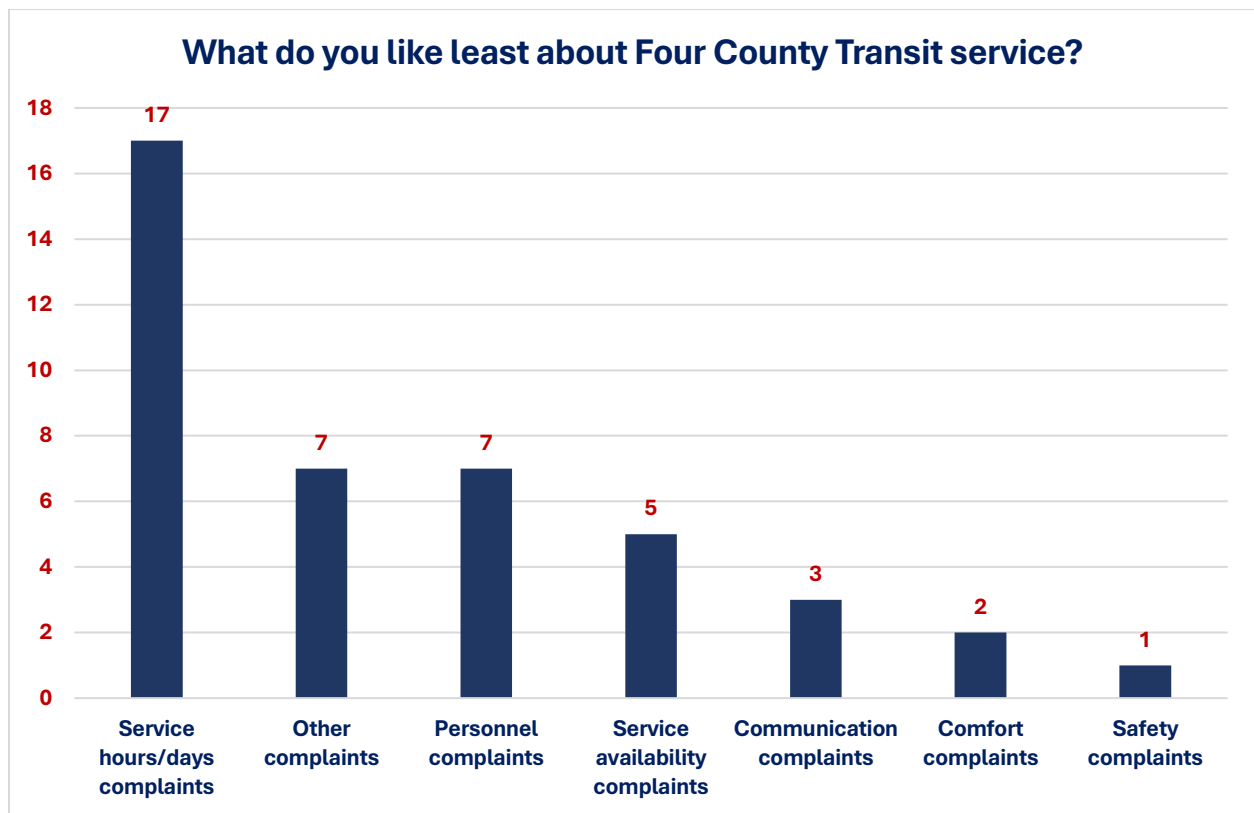
Figure 27. Responses to "What do you like least about the service?"

Are You: Female, Male, Prefer Not to Answer?

Figure 28 reflects the gender distribution of Four County Transit survey respondents. Respondents are asked this question to determine any significant gender skew in responses or ridership itself. Four County Transit serves male and female survey respondents at roughly equal rates, which would suggest that the ridership is similarly distributed among the two larger gender groups.
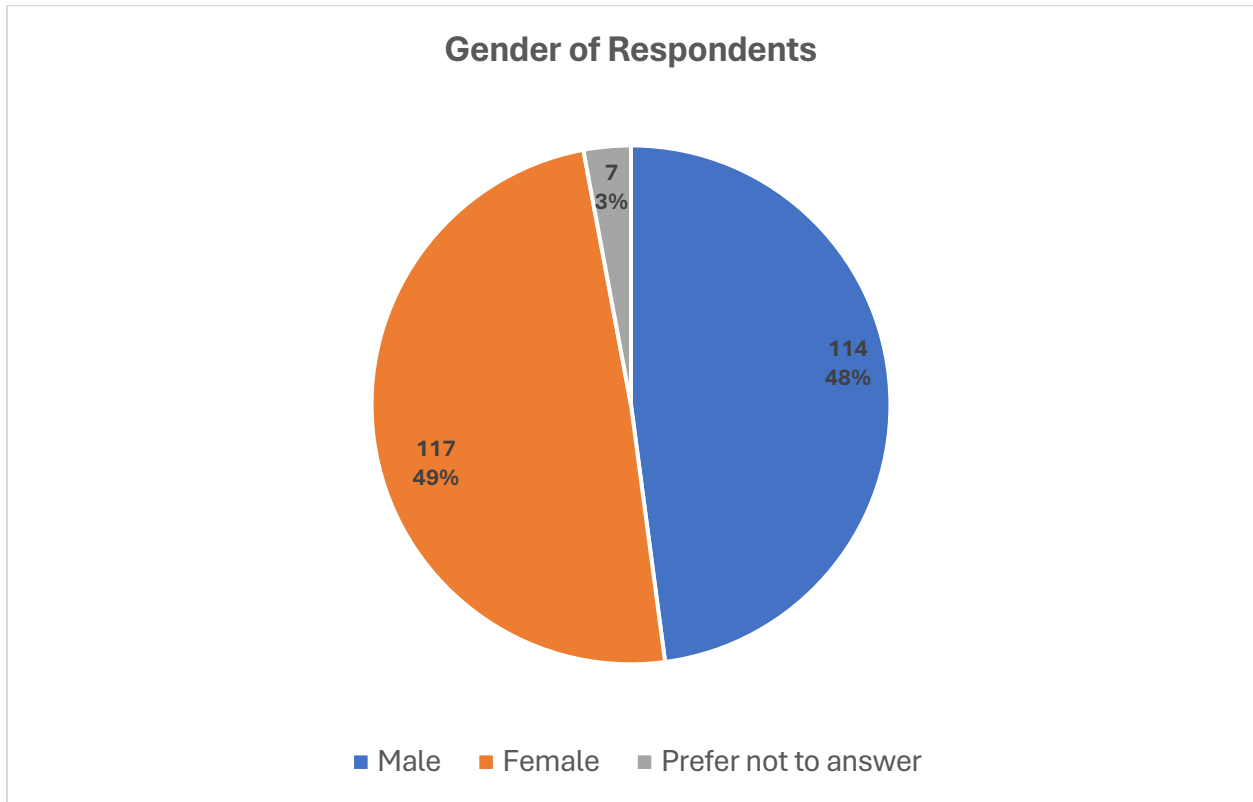
Figure 28. Responses to "Are you: Female, Male, Prefer not to answer?"

Do You Own or Have Access to a Car in Your Household?
The next survey question asked respondents whether they owned or had access to a car in their respective households. The data from these responses helps determine whether respondents are riding the bus because of personal choices or schedule versus lack of other options. Based on the responses, as seen in Figure 29, a majority of respondents do not have cars or car access, with 79 percent not having access to a car.
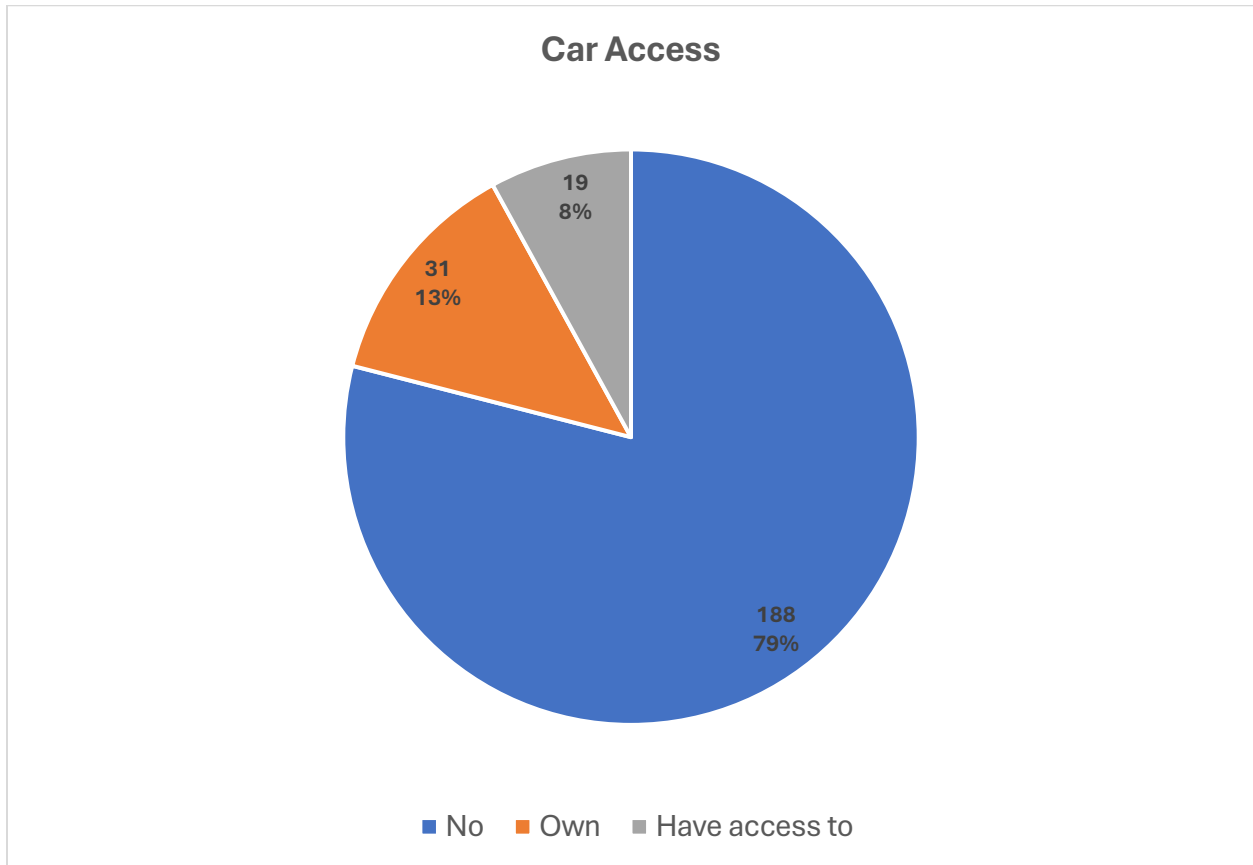
Figure 29. Responses to "Do you own or have access to a car in your household?"

What Is Your County of Residence?

This chart reflects the survey respondent distribution in different service area counties. The largest share of riders responding to the survey reside in Tazewell County, followed by Buchanan County residents. Mercer County, West Virginia and Wise County, Virginia were the two least frequent responses, but Four County Transit is still able to serve some residents of these counties outside the service area due to regional transit connections in Bluefield and Wise County.

County of Residence
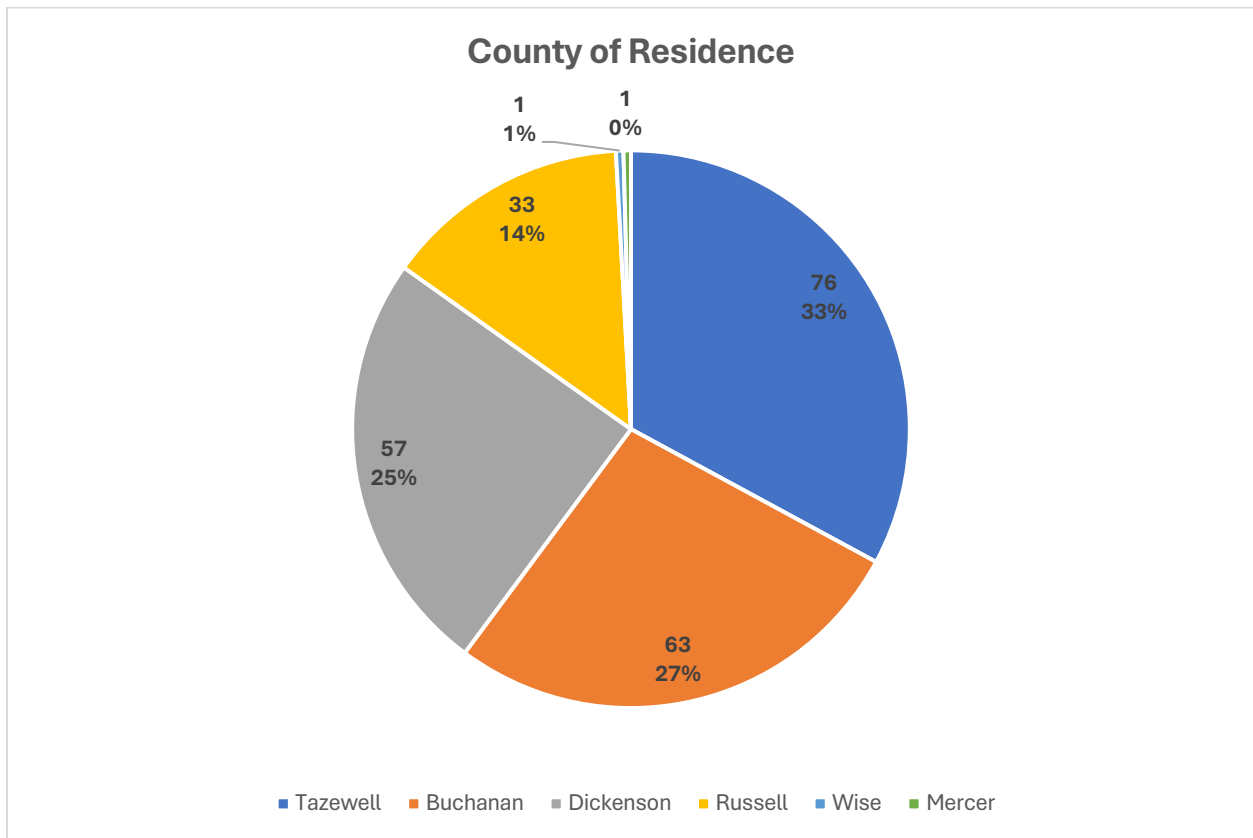
Figure 30. Responses to "What is your county of residence?"

What Is Your Age Group?

This question asked survey respondents which broad age group they fall into. As a component service of Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens (AASC), Four County Transit's service tend to target older age groups in addition to people with disabilities. Ages 45 to 64 were the most common among survey respondents followed by ages 35 to 44, which indicates that the survey respondents were slightly younger than expected, although the 65 or older age group still makes up a significant proportion of survey respondents.

Age Group of Respondents

Value	Percent	Category
84	35%	45-64
51	22%	35-44
46	19%	65 or older
40	17%	25-34
12	5%	18-24
3	1%	Prefer not to answer
2	1%	Under 18

Legend: ■ 45-64 ■ 35-44 ■ 65 or older ■ 25-34 ■ 18-24 ■ Prefer not to answer ■ Under 18
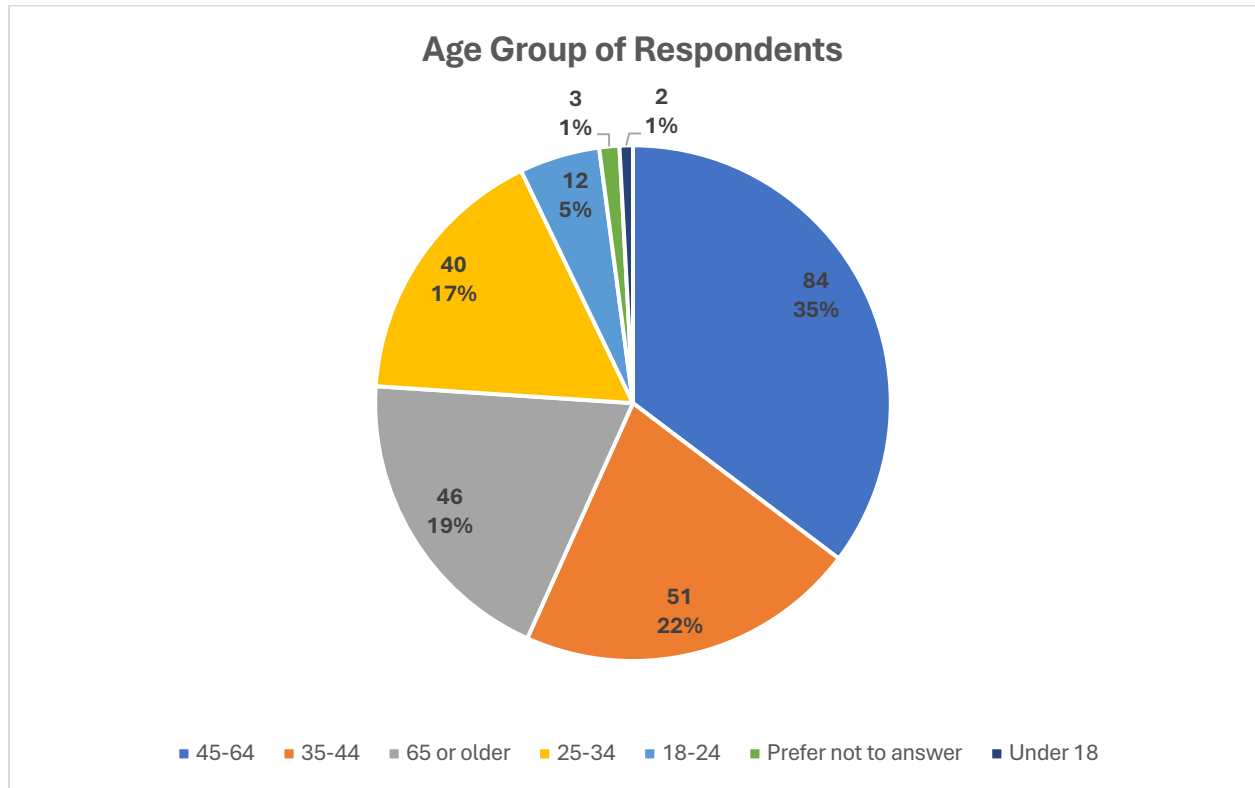
Figure 31. Responses to "What is your age group?"

What Is Your Employment Status?

This survey question asks respondents the status of their employment with a variety of options. This question is primarily aimed at creating a demographic profile of riders, but also helps to know when considering people who use Four County Transit's service to access work. The largest categories of respondents were either employed full- or part-time, followed by retired respondents.
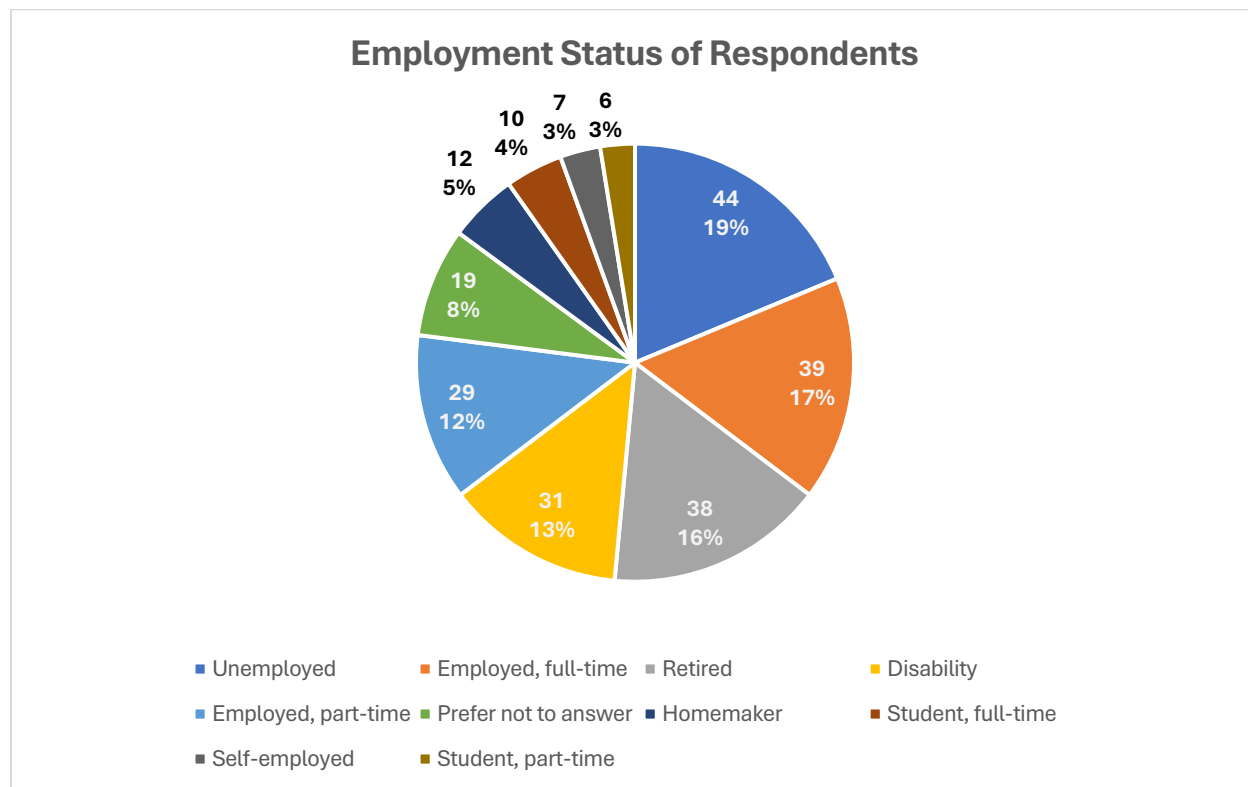
Figure 32. Responses to "What is your employment status?"

3.0 **Improvements and Modifications**

3.1 **Introduction**

Chapter 3 focuses on the planned improvements and modifications for Four County Transit. This chapter outlines the strategic initiatives and projects that Four County Transit could reasonably undertake over the next year to ten years to enhance its services and meet the evolving needs of the community. In considering these improvements, Four County Transit aims to provide and maintain efficient, reliable, and accessible transportation options for its riders in southwest Virginia.

The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the specific improvements and modifications that Four County Transit intends to implement, considering the agency's goals, regulatory requirements, and available funding. It discusses opportunities for improvement of its deviated fixed-route service, as well as the integration of level of service improvements regarding hours of operation and service days. The prioritization of these improvements is outlined, with desired timeframes for implementation and estimated costs.

Throughout the chapter, Four County Transit's commitment to meeting regulatory requirements, addressing service deficiencies, and considering the impact on affected communities is evident. The agency aims to align its improvements with existing funding structures while exploring additional funding sources where appropriate. The ultimate goal is to enhance services, improve operational efficiency, and provide a reliable and convenient transportation option for the communities served by Four County Transit.

3.2 **Opportunities for Service Improvement**

The service alternatives discussed here were formulated by analyzing specific route performance data and identifying gaps in current services, both related to geographic route coverage and service hours of operation coverage. This was achieved through feedback from riders, Four County staff, and other stakeholders (as detailed in the preceding three chapters). Each service alternative is thoroughly explained in this section, including a summary, potential pros and cons, operating and capital cost estimates, and ridership projections.

The cost details for these alternatives are presented as total costs, implying that all systematized service costs are considered when looking at service expansions, including vehicle use, staffing expenses, and other costs. This technique can overstate scaled costs of minor service expansions, as some administrative expenses may not increase with the addition of a few service hours. These cost estimates were derived from FY23 operating expenses and data from the Remix platform.

The implementation timeline for these service alternatives will be decided in the future. However, they are to be interpreted as opportunities for service expansion rather than directives or a unified plan of growth trajectory. The alternatives are listed in order of importance as identified by rider surveying, public engagement, and discussions between Four County Transit and DRPT.

3.2.1 Service Hours of Operation Opportunities

Weekend Service

The most requested service expansion identified by riders completing the engagement survey was weekend service, particularly Saturday service, for several key routes. The most viable routes for weekend service according to Four County Transit staff and previous planning efforts are the Town of Richlands and Town of Tazewell routes in each respective town. This section presents these opportunities and weighs their relative pros and cons while providing information about ridership and expenses incurred in providing the service.

Needs Fulfilled

- Goal 2: Enhance current transit services while continuing to identify potential opportunities for growth.
  - Objective 2.3: Span of Service: Assess opportunities to establish Saturday and Sunday service on specific routes in Tazewell County where there is demand for weekend service.

Town of Richlands

Advantages

- Addresses a leading need identified by surveyed riders.
- Expands range of potential transit uses for both choice and necessity ridership.
- Uses existing route and facilities including vehicles.

Disadvantages

- Higher costs associated with more days of service.
- More wear on vehicles and other facilities.
- Anticipated lower ridership than weekday route.
- Potentially more Four County Transit personnel needed including drivers and dispatchers.

Expenses and Ridership

Service would operate on both Saturdays and Sundays between 8:00 a.m. and 4:15 p.m. with a one-hour break for operator lunch between noon and 1:00 p.m. The service would run hourly and follow the same route as the Town of Richlands service currently does on weekdays. Daily cost of operation on both Saturday and Sunday would be $658 each day. Adding weekend service on this route would cost approximately $72,400 annually with 851 annual service hours at an operating cost of $85.15 per hour. One vehicle would be required

to operate this route daily. This assumes that the route would make eight (8) trips per day with hourly frequency.

Town of Tazewell

Advantages

- Addresses a leading need identified by surveyed riders.
- Expands range of potential transit uses for both choice and necessity ridership.
- Uses existing route and facilities including vehicles.

Disadvantages

- Higher costs associated with more days of service.
- More wear on vehicles and other facilities.
- Anticipated lower ridership than weekday route.
- More personnel needed including drivers and dispatchers.

Expenses and Ridership

Service would operate on both Saturdays and Sundays between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. with a one-hour break for operator lunch between noon and 1:00 p.m. The service would run hourly and follow the same route as the Town of Tazewell service currently does. Daily cost of operation on both Saturday and Sunday would be $636 each day. Adding weekend service on this route would cost approximately $69,900 annually with 821 annual service hours at an operating cost of $85.15 per hour. One vehicle would be required to operate this route daily. This assumes that the route would make eight trips per day with hourly frequency.

3.2.2 Opportunities for Coverage Expansion

To enhance route coverage, we have considered a service development pattern offering expanded route destinations. This was achieved through discussions with Four County Transit and DRPT, as well as feedback from surveyed riders in the area. The suggested routes in this review aim to address the concerns of these stakeholders and align with the budget and community needs assessed by Four County Transit and are not bound to a current timeline. This section outlines these opportunities, evaluates their advantages and disadvantages, and provides information on ridership and the costs associated with providing the service in order to provide Four County Transit and community stakeholders with a framework for growth and development.

Needs Fulfilled

- Goal 2: Enhance current transit services while continuing to identify potential opportunities for growth.
  - Objective 2.1: Enhancing Current Service: Maintain current services throughout the region while identifying opportunities to improve route efficiency, customer service, and connectivity to new commercial development, residential development, and employment centers.

Tazewell Trolley

This route was discussed between the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Department of Housing and Community Development, and DRPT as a trolley transit line celebrating Tazewell's historic trolley lines from the early 20th century. The town recently completed a restoration of the Tazewell Train Station, which served as an early transit hub in the town's history.
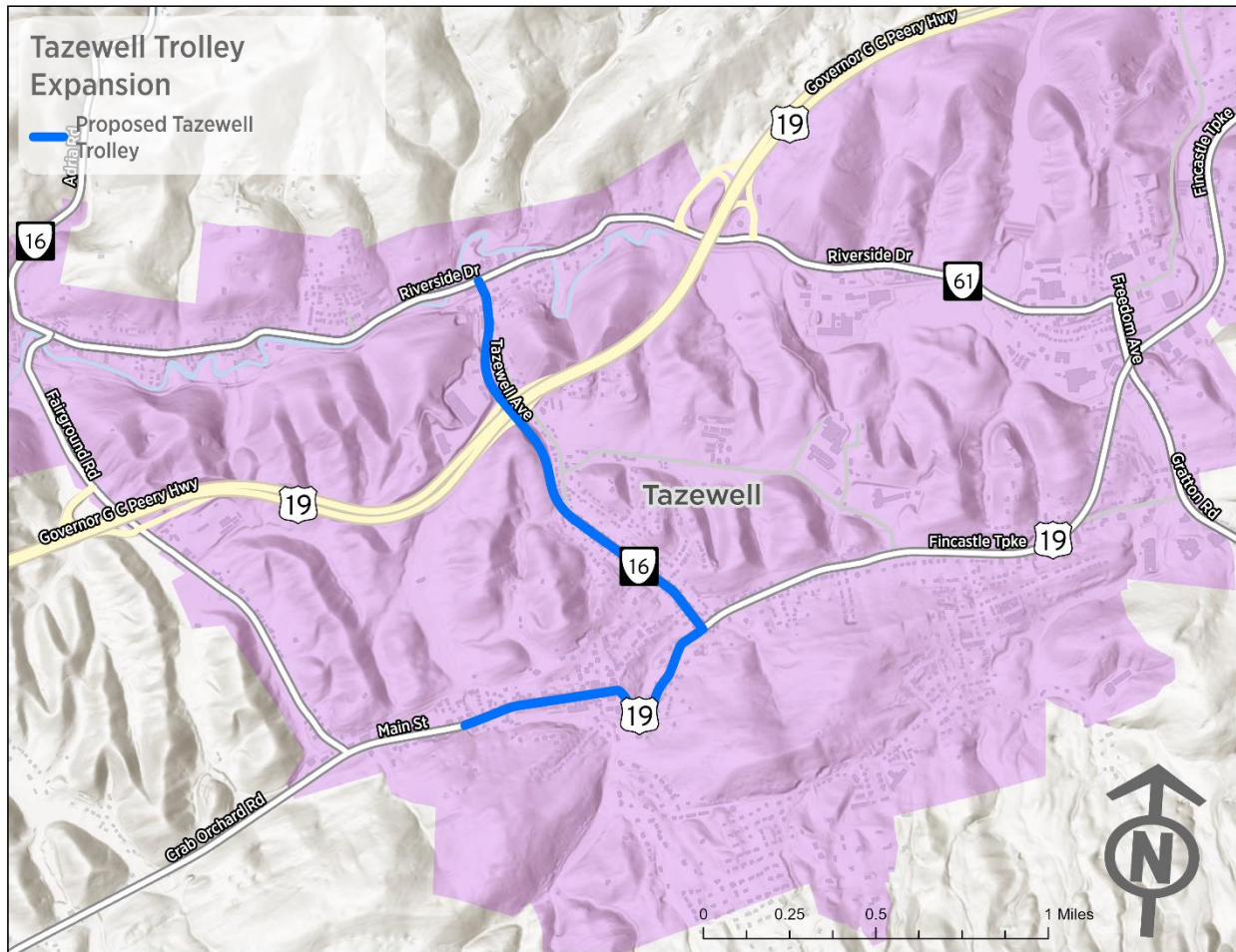
Figure 33. Map of Proposed Tazewell Trolley Route

Advantages

- Historical significance and placemaking features for Town of Tazewell.
- Increased level of service in the Town of Tazewell.
- Puts existing rolling stock to use (trolley).
- High potential ridership per mile.

Disadvantages

- Low geographic coverage expansion for the operation cost.
- Trolley vehicle difficult to operate in rural areas and with limited repair parts available.

- Serves an already-existing service area.
- Potentially more Four County Transit personnel needed, including drivers with commercial driver's licenses.

Expenses and Ridership

Service would operate seven days a week between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. every day of the week with a one-hour break for lunch between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. The service is modeled to run every 30 minutes on both weekdays and weekends. It would follow a route between the Tazewell Depot to the western edge of town on Main Street, following both Tazewell Avenue and Main Street. Because the trolley vehicle requires additional costs in the form of fuel, maintenance, and operator license requirements, the costs of service is estimated to be five (5) percent higher than Four County Transit's traditional operating service. Daily cost of operation would be approximately $604 on both weekdays and weekends. Operating this trolley service on this route would cost approximately $204,400 annually with 2,287 annual service hours. One vehicle would be required to operate this route daily. This assumes that the route would make 36 trips per day with thirty-minute frequency.

Vansant to Poplar Gap (Southern Gap) Connector

This route was discussed by Four County and DRPT as a connection between the growing Southern Gap/Poplar Gap area and other transit service in Buchanan County. The route would extend from an existing stop in Vansant to the Southern Gap area.
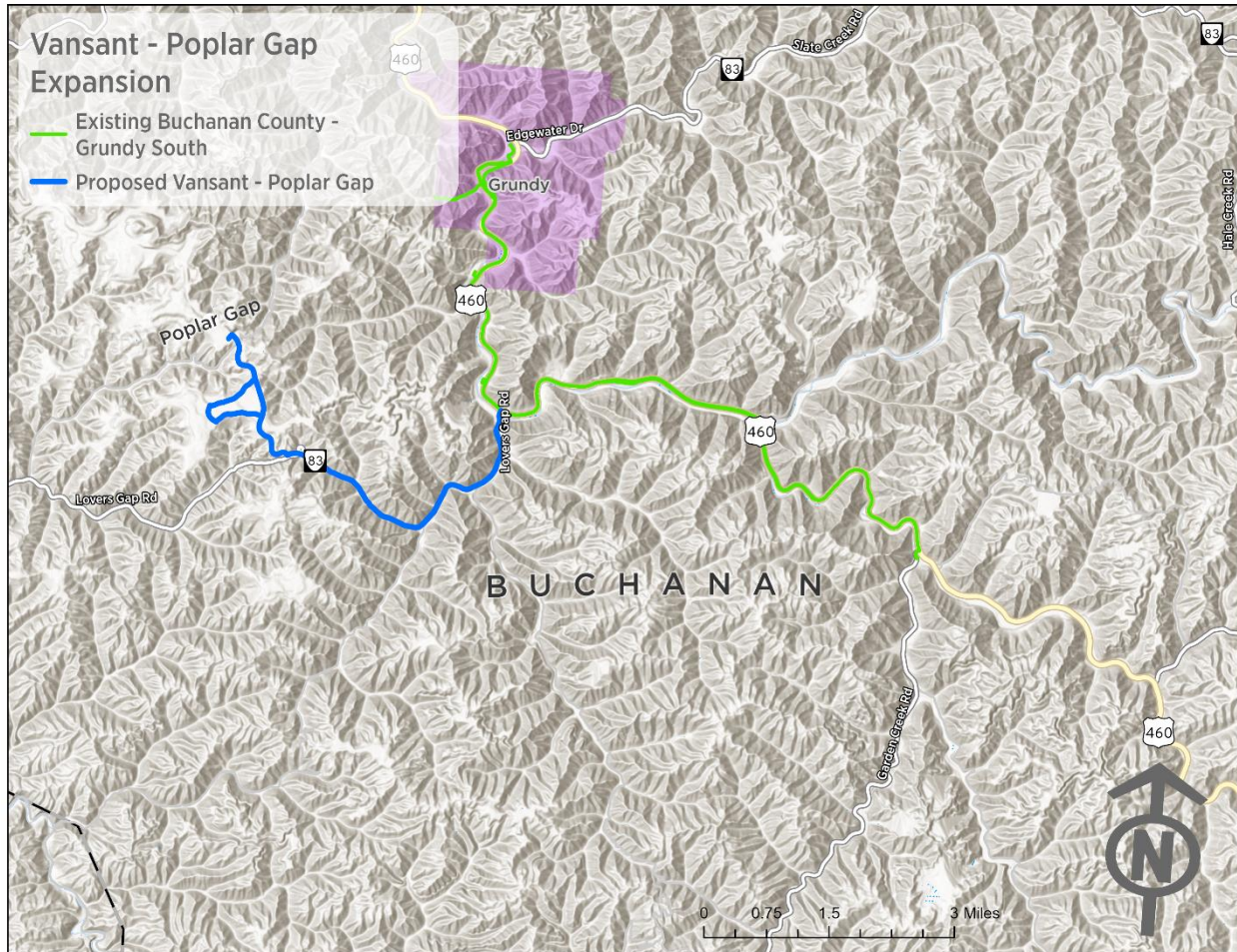
Figure 34. Map of Proposed Vansant to Southern Gap Connector

Advantages

- Relatively lower service miles and wait time.
- Connection between existing Grundy route and Southern Gap/Poplar Gap area.

Disadvantages

- No connection to Haysi.
- The route is expensive compared to other routes in system.
- Most riders will require transfer.

Expenses and Ridership

Service would operate on weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. with a one-hour break for lunch between 11:45 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. The service is expected to run hourly and follow

a new route between Vansant and the Southern Gap area along Lovers Gap Road and Southern Gap Road to the Fairgrounds. Daily cost of operation on weekdays would be $420 each day. Adding this new service would cost approximately $107,100 annually with 1,258 annual service hours at an operating cost of $85.15 per hour. One vehicle would be required to operate this route daily. This assumes that the route would make eight (8) roundtrips per day with hourly frequency and short layover stops at each end of the route.

Vansant to Haysi Connector

This route was discussed by Four County and DRPT as a more direct way to connect Buchanan and Dickenson counties to one another. Several of the riders surveyed requested this connection between Grundy and Haysi as well. This route would serve Prater and Oakwood communities. This would extend the Vansant to Southern Gap Connector.
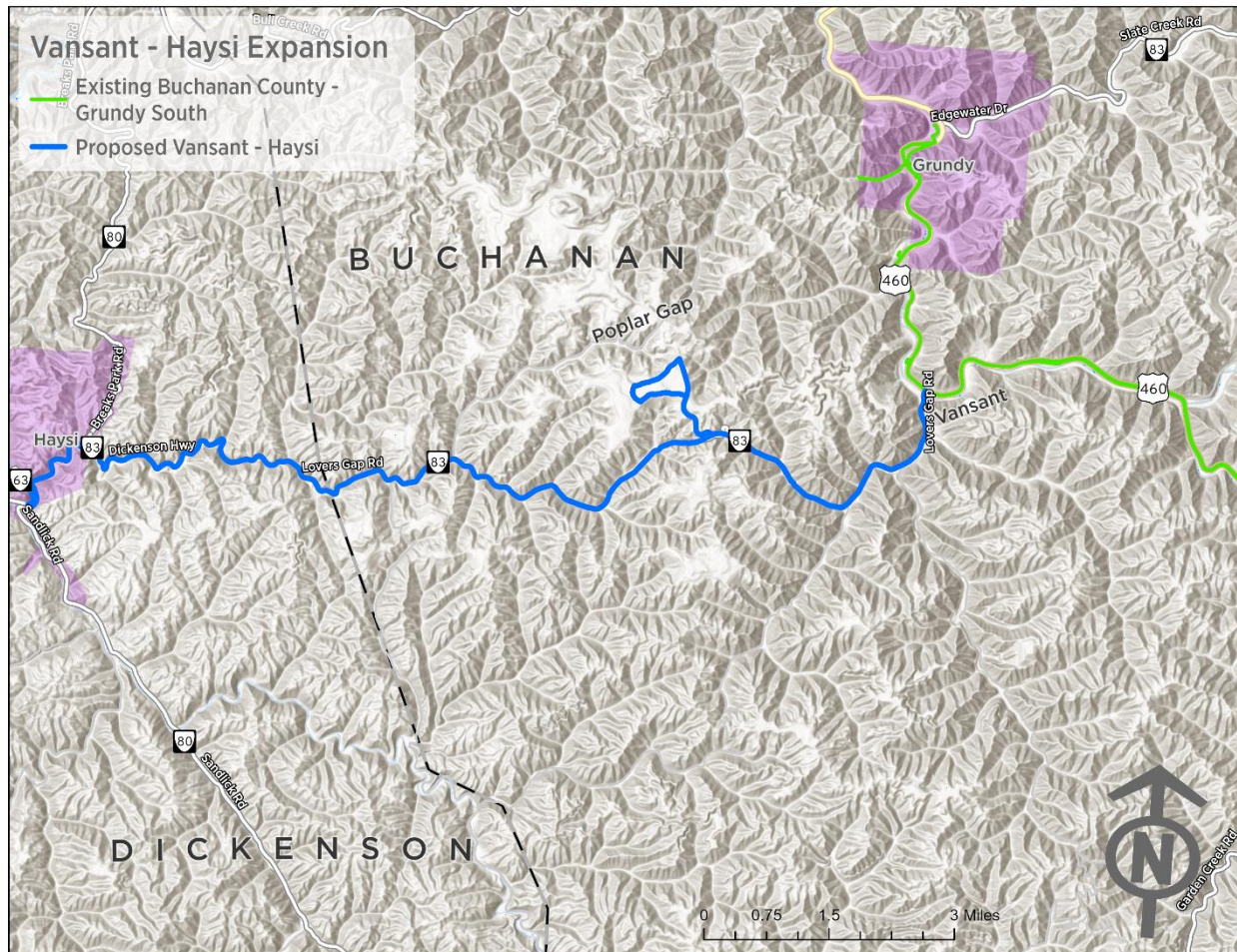
Figure 35. Map of Proposed Vansant to Haysi Connector

Advantages

- Direct, regional-scale connection between Buchanan and Dickenson counties.
- High geographic coverage expansion for operation cost.
- Requested by riders surveyed.

Disadvantages

- Expensive.
- Substantial service miles and wait time.
- Lower potential ridership per mile than other options.
- Most riders require transfer.

Expenses and Ridership

Service would operate on weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. with two one-hour breaks for lunch between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. (one break per driver). The service is expected to run hourly and follow a new route between Vansant and Haysi with a stop in the Southern Gap area. The route would run along Lovers Gap Road/Dickenson Highway and Southern Gap Road to the Fairgrounds. Daily cost of operation on both Saturday and Sunday would be $1,510 each day. Adding this new service would cost approximately $385,000 annually with 4,522 annual service hours at an operating cost of $85.15 per hour. Two vehicles would be required to operate this route daily to meet hourly frequency. This assumes that the route would make ten roundtrips per day with hourly frequency and short layover times at each end of the route.

Proposed Service Improvements Parameters and Costs

Table 9 and Table 10 break down the proposed service improvements and the estimated service parameters, costs, and hours of each.

Table 9. Proposed Service Improvement Scenarios and Ridership Estimates

Service	Type of Improvement	Vehicles Required	Route Length (miles)	Trips per Day	Daily Miles	Annual Total Miles	Annual Unlinked Passenger Trips
Town of Richlands Weekend Service	Service Span Expansion	1	14.6	8	116	12,805	770
Town of Tazewell Weekend Service	Service Span Expansion	1	14.1	8	113	12,393	990
Tazewell Trolley	Coverage Expansion	1	4.3	36	78	28,434	5,610
Vansant to Southern Gap Connector	Coverage Expansion	1	12.7	16	101	25,848	2,040
Vansant to Haysi Connector	Coverage Expansion	2	36.1	10	360	91,915	2,040

Table 10. Proposed Service Improvement Costs and Service Hours

Service	Type of Improvement	Annual Operational Cost	Annual Service Hours	Daily Operational Cost	Daily Service Hours
Town of Richlands Weekend Service	Service Span Expansion	$72,400	851	$658	8
Town of Tazewell Weekend Service	Service Span Expansion	$69,900	821	$636	8
Tazewell Trolley	Coverage Expansion	$204,400	2,287	$604	7
Vansant to Southern Gap Connector	Coverage Expansion	$107,100	1,258	$420	8
Vansant to Haysi Connector	Coverage Expansion	$385,000	4,522	$1,510	18

3.2.3 **Other Opportunities**

Transit Infrastructure Improvements

Riders surveyed as part of the public engagement process strongly spoke in favor of stop-level improvements of infrastructure. Infrastructure improvements would include, as needed, benches, signage (including stop signage and route map signage), and/or bus shelters. As a primarily deviated fixed-route service, stop locations are generally understood by both riders and driver to be somewhat flexible, offering coverage up to ¾ mile off the route. If implemented, additional analysis would be required to determine the best locations for infrastructure placement based on where it would receive substantial use by riders.

Needs Fulfilled
- Goal 2: Enhance current transit services while continuing to identify potential opportunities for growth.
  - Objective 2.4: Amenities Planning: Consider developing a systemwide plan to determine potential locations for additional bus stop amenities, including signage, shelters, benches, ADA infrastructure, and other features.
- Goal 3: Increase awareness of agencies and organizations in the region.
  - Objective 3.1: Bus Stop Signs: Where appropriate and possible, place bus stop signs with route information at all locations listed in route brochures, and at other key destinations along routes.

Advantages
- Requested by riders surveyed.
- Accessible and dignified place to wait.
- Route information and system marketing.

Disadvantages
- Cost and maintenance can be high.
- Less use, due to deviated fixed-route format.

Expenses and Rider Use
Costs will vary based on the number of stop locations with additional facilities and the level of improvements implemented. All engineering and installations must comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. Improvement locations would take rider use into account to ensure that any facilities are being used to the maximum benefit of riders and the transit system.

Connection to Abingdon (Washington County)
Another service improvement that came up often in rider surveying is connection of Four County Transit to Abingdon, Virginia in Washington County. Abingdon is currently served by Mountain Lynx Transit, which does not have an existing connection to Four County Transit. Rather than listing this improvement as an expansion route, this improvement is listed under Other Opportunities because it requires regional coordination between the two transit systems. Four County Transit already has connections outside the four counties of service (Russell, Tazewell, Dickenson, and Buchanan) to both Big Stone Gap and Bluefield, West Virginia. This improvement will be considered for long-term implementation.

Needs Fulfilled
- Goal 4: Expand partnerships with key agencies and organizations in the region.
  - Objective 5.2: Expanded Connections to Other Providers in Southwest Virginia: Consider service modifications to allow for direct connections to neighboring transit agencies.

Advantages
- Regional-scale connection between the Four County Transit service area and Abingdon.
- High ridership potential.
- Requested by riders surveyed.

Disadvantages
- Expensive.
- Requires regional coordination with Mountain Lynx Transit in Washington County.
- Few daily trips.

Expenses and Ridership

Less detailed analysis was conducted on potential alignments for this route as they would require coordination with Mountain Lynx Transit to fully estimate. However, it is reasonable to assume this route would be two round trips daily with stops in Richlands, Lebanon, and Abingdon in the morning and in the afternoon on weekdays. This would cost roughly $119,465 using estimated the $85.15 per hour service costs for the Four County Transit system running 1,403 hours annually. The daily cost of operation for each weekday would be approximately $468.33 for 5.5 hours of service. One vehicle would be required to operate this route daily. This assumes that the route would make two round trips per day with AM/PM frequency and cover around 192.54 miles each day of service. This change would facilitate around 1,020 rider trips a year covering 49,098 total miles. The estimated length of the route in one direction is 96.27 miles, but this could vary widely based on actual service terms and consultation with Mountain Lynx.

3.3 **Prioritization of Service Improvements**

This section offers a prioritization of the improvements listed in previous sections in this chapter. The prioritization is qualitatively categorized, informed by both rider demand based on surveying and the goals and objectives of Four County Transit and DRPT. DRPT has set guidelines for planning horizons, which include short-term (one to three years), mid-term (three to seven years), and long-term (greater than 10 years). Table 11 shows how the projects were organized.

Table 11. Improvements by Priority

Improvement Term	Improvement
Short-Term **(1 to 3 years)** **FY2025 – FY2027**	• Implementation of weekend service in Tazewell. • Transit infrastructure improvements (benches, signage, shelters, ADA structures/engineering, etc.). • Implementation of weekend service in Richlands.
Mid-Term **(3 to 6 years)** **FY2028 – FY2031**	• Implementation of Tazewell Trolley. • Implementation of Vansant to Southern Gap route.
Long-Term **(7 to 10 years)** **FY2031 – FY2034**	• Implementation of extended Vansant to Haysi route. • Connection to Abingdon, VA (Coordinated with Mountain Lynx).

4.0 **Implementation Plan**

The Implementation Plan provides an outline of the steps and actions needed to implement the service changes detailed in Planned Improvements and Modifications of Chapter 3. This will include a review of Four County Transit's transit asset management activities and the impact the proposed services will have on their capital implementation planning.

4.1 **Transit Asset Management**

Any provider that receives federal assistance is required to develop an individual transit asset management (TAM) plan or be a part of a sponsored TAM group plan per 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53. A TAM Plan must contain the following elements:

- An inventory of assets, including vehicles, facilities, and equipment;
- Condition assessments of inventories assets;
- A decision support tool or process that assists in capital asset investment prioritization and/or estimates capital needs over time; and
- A systematic prioritization of investments with a schedule of applicable capital investment activity.

As a rural public transportation service provider and subrecipient of FTA 5311 funds, Four County Transit is eligible to participate in the DRPT-sponsored Tier II TAM Plan. This plan, last updated in FY 2022, includes the participation of 33 rural and small urban transit providers, and is managed by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Per the last Tier II TAM Plan, Four County Transit had one bus, 43 cutaways, three minivans, and one van for a total of 48 assets. At the time, none of these vehicles were in service beyond their useful life benchmark. Additionally, Four County Transit had five non-service automobiles (equipment), none of which were beyond their useful life benchmark. Finally, Four County Transit had one facility (an administration facility) with a Transit Economic Requirements Model (TERM) rating of 4 (Good) or 5 (Excellent).

4.2 **Implementation Plan**

The Capital Implementation Plan is a detailed outline of the steps needed to implement the potential service improvements and modifications listed in Chapter 3. The service improvements and modifications included:

1. Implementation of weekend service in the Town of Tazewell and the Town of Richlands;
2. Implementation of a trolley service in the Town of Tazewell;
3. Implementation of a fixed route connector between Vansant and Southern Gap

4. Implementation of a fixed route connector between Vansant and Haysi, as an extension of the Southern Gap connector.
5. Connection of services to Abingdon, Virginia via coordination between Four County Transit and Mountain Lynx.

The weekend service expansions in Richlands and in Tazewell were considered the highest priority projects with the Tazewell-specific service being an immediate/short-term priority. Each planning year with a proposed service enhancement over the lifetime of this TDP is listed below in Table 12 with its corresponding service enhancement. Additional resources or changes to priorities may provide opportunities to change this schedule; Four County Transit can address this through the annual TDP update process.

Table 12. Phased Implementation Plan by Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year	Implementation Plan
FY2025 – 2026	No service enhancements recommended or scheduled.
FY2026 – 2027	Implementation of weekend service in the Town of Tazewell.
FY2027 – 2028	Implementation of weekend service in the Town of Richlands.
FY2028 – 2029	Implementation of new trolley service in Tazewell in coordination with the Virginia DHCD.
FY2029 – 2030	Implementation of the first phase of a fixed route connector service between Vansant and Haysi. The first phase of the service would terminate at Southern Gap.
FY2030 – 2031	No service enhancements recommended or scheduled.
FY2031 – 2032	Implementation of the second phase of a fixed route connector service between Vansant and Haysi. The second phase would provide the additional service between Southern Gap and Haysi. The implementation of this second phase would depend on the performance of the first phase after two years.
FY2032 – 2033	No service enhancements recommended or scheduled.
FY2033 – 2034	No service enhancements recommended or scheduled.
FY2034 - 2035	Implementation of long-term improvements, including connectivity to Abingdon through coordinated services with Mountain Lynx.

4.3 **Capital Needs**

Based on the service expansion outlined in this TDP, the need for new additions (as opposed to replacement vehicles) to Four County Transit's revenue service fleet is minimal. The weekend service recommendations in Richlands and Tazewell would not require new vehicles to implement because both services would occur when vehicles are available and would follow an existing route. The proposed trolley service, while itself a new route, would utilize an existing trolley vehicle that is currently underutilized.

The only service enhancements proposed that would require new vehicles are the two phases of the Vansant to Haysi connector service which is proposed to begin its phased implementation in FY 2029. The first phase of the service (the route to Southern Gap) would require one new light-duty vehicle while the second phase (the full service) would require a second vehicle for a total of two vehicles.

The implementation of service connections with Mountain Lynx to provide Four County residents service to Abingdon and the Bristol metropolitan area will require additional analysis before determining the exact nature of the capital needs.

Other opportunities for improvements that would require capital expenditures are transit infrastructure improvements, including benches, signage, or bus shelters. While these improvements were requested by members of the public, the exact nature of improvements would require additional analysis and research due to the nature of Four County Transit's deviated fixed route service.

5.0 **Financial Plan**

Chapter 5 comprises a financial plan covering the current fiscal year, FY 2024-2025, through FY 2034-2035 supporting implementation of the planned service improvements, which is a phased ten-year transition to supplement existing transit services. The initial targeted service plan enhancements during the first four years of the TDP are designed to provide weekend service followed by additional weekend, trolley and regional services during subsequent years. In addition, the financial plan incorporates the Four County Transit's five-year (FY 2025-2026 through FY 2029-2030) capital budget, which identifies funding for revenue and support vehicle procurement, vehicle support and shop equipment, as well as for office equipment.

The purpose of developing a financial plan is twofold: it allows Four County Transit to determine how much service and how many of the TDP recommendations can be funded in a constrained manner, and it provides Four County with a forecast of the operating and capital funding needs necessary to support those transit services and improvements.

This financial plan represents the adjustment of projected annual operating and capital costs into alignment with identified financial resources. Consequently, it is through the development of the TDP financial plan would allow Four County Transit to determine which service improvements can be realistically achieved and when those service improvements should be implemented. Revenue assumed is further categorized by federal, state, and local funding sources to further assess necessary project commitments, match percentages, and capital reserves.

Table 15 in Appendix C presents Four County Transit's operations financial plan to FY 2034-2035 including revenues and expenditures. The financial plan for transit operations is prepared to ensure that there is sufficient funding for the proposed service, development, maintenance, and service plan enhancements. The operating expenditures reflect an annualized growth rate of 3.2 percent. TDP service enhancement costs are added to the baseline operations costs to reflect the full cost of implementation.

Table 16 in Appendix C presents Four County Transit's proposed capital project plan. Presented are a listing and description of capital projects and reference to funding source, presented by fiscal year. As presented, projects include revenue and support vehicle procurement, vehicle support and shop equipment, as well as for office equipment.

Following are summary descriptions of the funding sources and assumptions for the financial plan. The assumptions are conservative in recognition of shifts in general economic conditions that impact actual revenue generation and the competitiveness of discretionary transit grant programs.

5.1 **Methodology**

The financial plan was developed with data derived from the Appalachian Agency for Senior Citizens (AASC), the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP), and from the Planned Improvements and Modifications chapter of this TDP. All cost and revenue projections are provided in year of expenditure dollars. Supplemental spreadsheets (Table 15 and Table 16) are available in Appendix C.

5.2 **TDP Revenue Summary**

5.2.1 **Local Support**

The projected local revenues are derived from contributions to the transit service from local county general funds. The counties of Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell provide regular support Four County Transit. The local revenues presented in the financial plan cover 20 percent of operating expenditures as well as provide the 20 percent match for capital expenditures. Another local revenue source has been farebox collection. The transit system started operating fare-free in 2020. This change was initially made to reduce interactions between passengers and employees to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The Financial Plan assumes that Four County Transit will continue to operate fare-free over the ten-year horizon of the TDP. Therefore, farebox revenues are not accounted for in this forecast.

5.2.2 **State Operating Assistance**

Four County Transit is a recipient of state operating assistance from the DRPT. The DRPT Operating Assistance program provides funding for operating expenses for many types of transit services, including fixed route and commuter bus service, demand response, bus rapid transit, ferry, commuter and light rail service. Operating Assistance supports transit operations, maintenance, repairs and administrative costs.

DRPT offers two overarching state programs for transit and commuter assistance funding: MERIT (Making Efficient and Responsible Investments in Transit) and CAP (Commuter Assistance Program). The MERIT program includes five individually administered grant programs that provide funding for transit capital purchases, operations, planning studies, new and innovative transit services, and workforce development. The CAP includes two individually administered grant programs that provide funding for commuter assistance program operations, projects that increase vanpooling, employer services, marketing, and other transportation demand management projects. Four County Transit receives operating assistance under the MERIT program. State operating assistance grants presented in the financial plan constitute 30 percent of operating expenditures.

5.2.3 Federal Funding

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides financial and technical assistance to local public transit systems. Since 1964, FTA has partnered with state and local governments to create and enhance public transportation systems, investing more than $11 billion annually to support and expand public transit services. The FTA provides annual formula grants to transit agencies nationwide as well as discretionary funding in competitive processes. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, enacted as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was signed into law in November 2021. The IIJA continues the FTA Section 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas Program with an allocation of approximately $4.58 billion over five years (FY 2022 to FY2026) to support rural transit.

The financial plan shows funding from the FTA Section 5311 program applied towards operating and capital expenditures. The DRPT administers the FTA Section 5311 program, which provides financial assistance for public transportation in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000. The AASC utilizes FTA Section 5311 funding to operate all transit routes in the Four County Transit service area. The Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program has been merged into the Section 5311 program. Projects formerly eligible under the JARC program are eligible under the Section 5311 program. The DRPT has utilized FTA Section 5311 funds to expand rural transit service, particularly in underserved areas. This expansion has improved access to healthcare, education, and employment for residents in rural communities. The funding has enabled the purchase of new buses and the establishment of additional routes, significantly enhancing mobility for rural residents.

Revenue from the sale of advertising and concessions may be used as local match. Recipients may now use up to 20 percent of their FTA Section 5311 allocation (previously ten percent) for the operation of paratransit services, provided certain conditions are met. AASC submits an annual Program of Projects for its FTA Section 5311 allocation, which it uses for operations and capital procurement. The FTA Section 5311 grants presented in the financial plan constitute 50 percent of operating expenditures and 80 percent of capital expenditures.

5.3 Operating Expenditures

The financial plan provides a breakdown of Four County Transit's operating expenditures and TDP service enhancement costs (Exhibit 5.1). Operating expenditures are inclusive of administration, employee salaries and benefits, training, maintenance, utilities and insurance. The financial plan uses data derived from AASC/Four County Transit's FY 2025 FTA Section 5311 Operating Budget as a baseline. Expenditures are forecasted to increase at 3.2 percent annually indexed to inflation and cost-of-living adjustments (COLA).

The TDP service enhancements are derived from the Chapter 3 are included in the operations expenditure projections. The phased service enhancements forecasted to grow from $69,000 annually during the first four years of the TDP increasing to $838,800 annually

starting in FY 2028-2029. The service enhancements include providing weekend service to the Towns of Tazewell and Richlands, Virginia, a bus trolley extension service in Tazewell as well as the Vansant Southern Gap Connector and Vansant - Haysi Connector.

5.4 Capital Plan

DRPT's MERIT Capital Assistance program has implemented a prioritization process that allows DRPT to allocate based on the most critical needs. Capital is now classified, scored, and prioritized into the following categories:

- State of Good Repair (SGR): Capital projects or programs to replace or rehabilitate an existing asset, excluding major capital construction projects with a total cost over $3 million.
- Minor Enhancement (MIN): Capital projects or programs that add capacity or include the purchase of new assets with a total project cost less than $3 million. This category also includes vehicle expansion projects of no more than five vehicles or five percent of the existing fleet size, whichever is greater, and all projects for engineering and design.
- Major Expansion (MAJ): Capital projects or programs to add, expand, or improve transit services or facilities, with a total cost exceeding $3 million. This category also includes vehicle expansion projects with an increase of greater than five vehicles or five percent of fleet size, whichever is greater, and all projects that include the replacement of an entire existing facility.

Projects in this TDP for Four County Transit that would fall under SGR include replacement revenue vehicles and rolling stock, customer amenities, and other special equipment not otherwise included as MIN Minor Enhancements.

Any fleet expansion included as part of the service expansion outlined in this TDP would fall under the MIN Minor Enhancement category. Because three of the service enhancements recommended in the first five years would not require new vehicles (the two weekend service expansions would utilize existing stock and the Tazewell trolley service would utilize an existing vehicle), only the potential expansion of service to Southern Gap would require a new vehicle. This would be categorized as a MIN Minor Enhancement.

Additionally, all assets, new and replacement, which qualify as "special asset categories," including tools, maintenance equipment, spare vehicle parts, building fixtures, and grouped assets. Shop equipment specified in the Capital Plan (e.g., a tire changer/mounter, wheel balancing equipment, and lifts) would qualify for the MIN category under MERIT.

5.5 **Conclusion**

This financial plan ensures sustainable growth and service enhancements for Four County Transit over the next decade. Through the phased expansion of weekend service followed by the addition of the bus trolley extension service in Tazewell as well as the Vansant Southern Gap Connector and Vansant - Haysi Connector expansion. All service expansions will be associated with changes to the funding sources that will support such sustained growth.

For capital expenditures, Four County Transit will remain focused on keeping its fleet right sized and in a state of good repair. Major capital investments will focus on vehicle procurement for both the revenue and support fleet as well as vehicle shop equipment and IT operations hardware. Reliance on Federal revenue will remain for capital investment in the short-term, along with Federal participation at the current rates at a minimum.

Appendix A: **Four County Transit Profile and Overview**

A1. **History**

The AASC was formed in 1975 with the goal of improving the lives of seniors "through charitable, educational, social services and other appropriate means." It is a private non-profit that is designated by contract with the Commonwealth of Virginia's Department of Aging to develop and administer a comprehensive and coordinated system of services for people who are older than 65 or have disabilities in the Four County area.

Four County Transit was created in 1998 through a demonstration grant from DRPT. The service was successful but remains a transportation agency under the umbrella of AASC. Four County's transportation services began in response to the needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities, but soon expanded to include routes catering specifically to students in the Southwest Virginia Community College (SVCC) system in 2000 and students at Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) and University of Virginia Wise (UVA Wise) in 2006.

During that period, additional deviated fixed route services were added in major towns within the counties, including Richlands, Cedar Bluff, Lebanon, Tazewell, Grundy, Clintwood, and Haysi. Routes have been slowly modified or extended over the years, but the only new route added since the last TDP is the Cleveland Connector, which provides deviated fixed route service in and around the Town of Cleveland in Russell County. This was established in the summer of 2023 using a demonstration grant from DRPT.
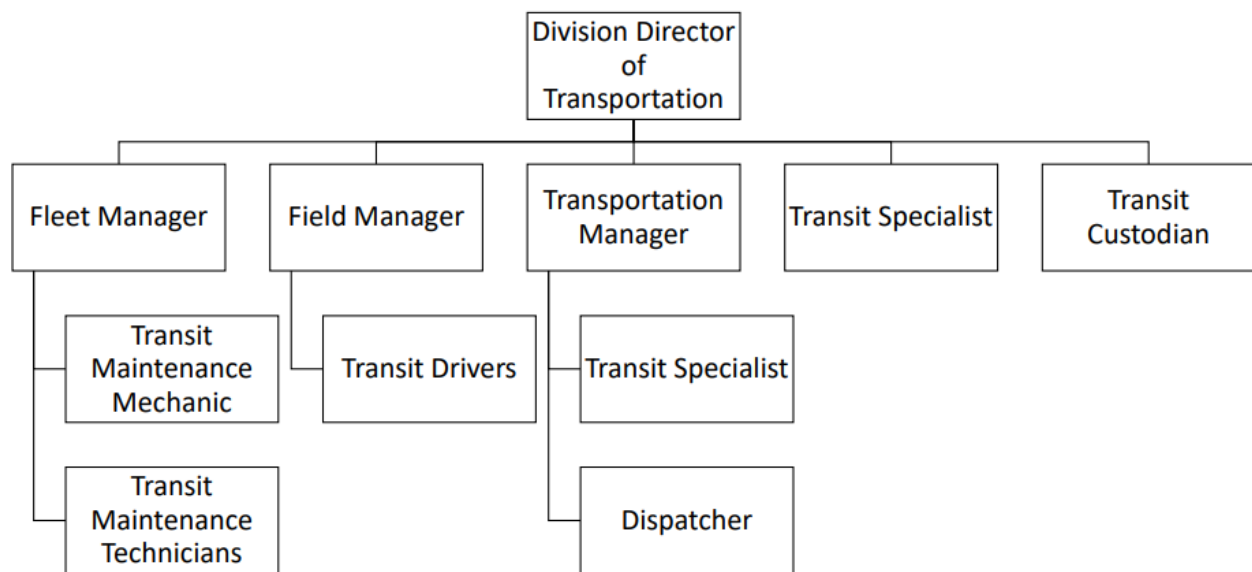
Figure 36. Four County Transit Internal Governance Structure

A2. **Governance and Organizational Structure**

Four County Transit is operated by AASC. The latter agency is led by a Board of Directors who appoint a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The Board of Directors is supported by an Advisory Council, which provides feedback on the entirety of AASC's program. In addition to its public transportation, AASC offers some other transportation services, such as the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) which offers transportation to seniors between their homes and the PACE Center. However, Four County Transit is a specific department under the CEO. The Board of Directors for the AASC is made up of two residents from each of the four counties, appointed by the jurisdiction's Board of Supervisors, the AASC Advisory Council chairperson, and the PACE Advisory Council chairperson. Additional members to the Board are appointed by voting members of the Board of the Directors.

Table 13. Four County Transit Board of Directors

Name	Organization	Office Held
Louis Ball	Buchanan County	
Brian Beck	AASC	Secretary (non-voting)
Ginger Branton	At-Large	Treasurer
Rev. Larry Burton	Russell County	Vice Chair
Emalene Cook	PACE PAC Council	
Paul Crawford	AASC Advisory Council	
Pat Gray	At-Large	
Janet Gunn	Tazewell County	
Marshall Hughes	Dickenson County	
Alice Meade	Russell County	
Irma Mitchell	At-Large	Chairperson
Ralph Mullins	At-Large	
Grace Ratliff	Buchanan County	
Mike Ratliff	Dickenson County	
Delano Sykes	At-Large	

A3. **Services Provided and Areas Served**

A3.1 **Buchanan County**

Grundy North

The Buchanan County – Grundy North Route provides deviated fixed route service in northern Buchanan County. The route begins at 8:00 a.m. at Grundy Plaza and ends at 4:30 p.m. at Grundy Plaza. The route frequency is hourly, shifting 30 minutes later at noon. Every other run, starting with the first run, provides service to the Appalachian Inn as the last stop. The other stops on the route are Grundy Plaza, Royal City, Courthouse, Mountain Mission School, Buchanan General Hospital, Buchanan Social Services, Issues & Answers, Heritage Hall, Medical Park, Buchanan Health Department, Appalachian School of Law, Grundy Community Center, Buchanan County Library, Walmart, and Comfort Inn.
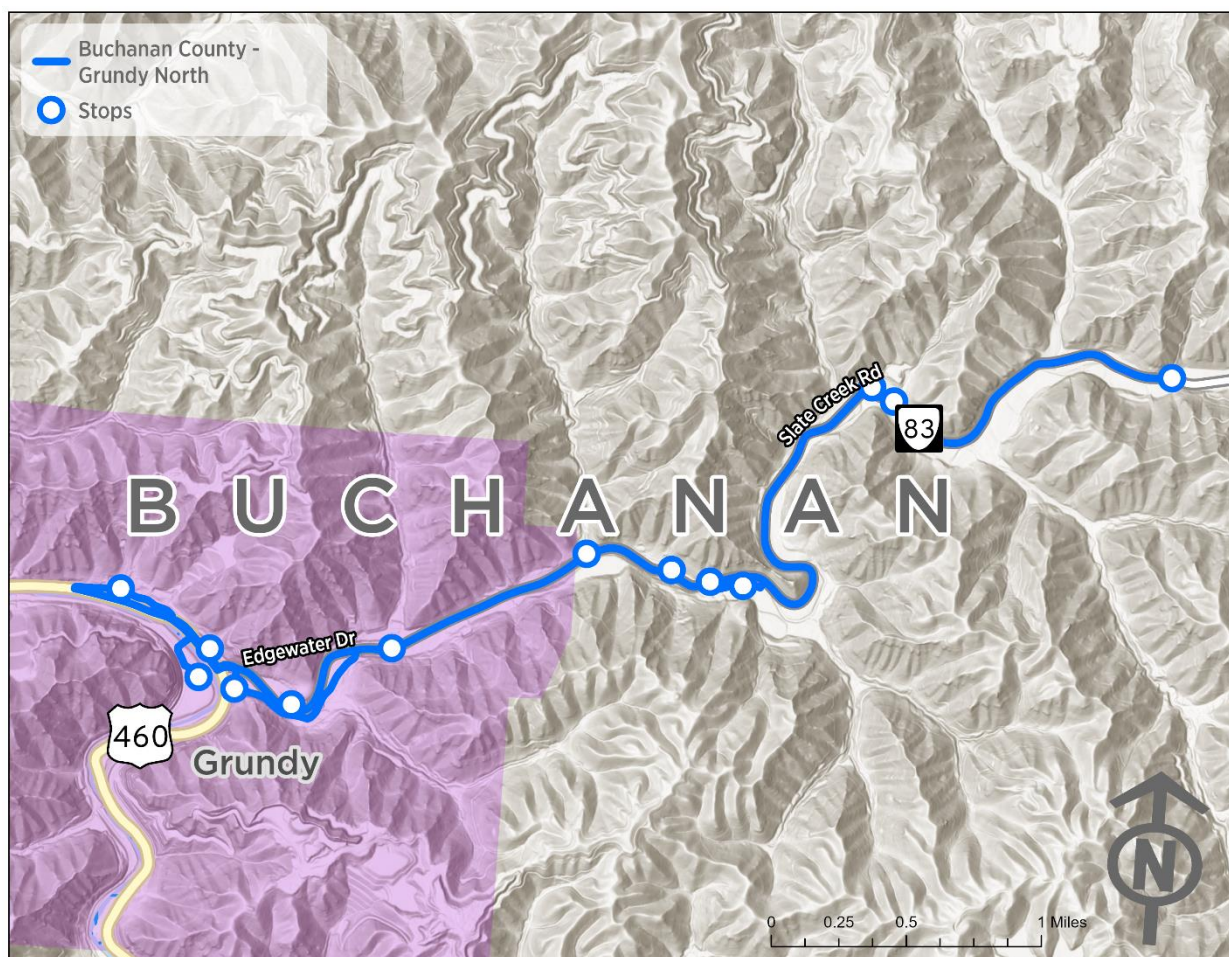
Figure 37. Map of Buchanan County – Grundy North Route

Grundy South

The Grundy South Route provides deviated fixed route service in southern Buchanan County. The route begins at 8:00 a.m. at Grundy Plaza and ends at 4:20 p.m. at Dairy Queen. The route frequency is hourly, shifting 30 minutes later at noon. This route serves stops at Grundy Plaza, Cowboy Jim's Flea Market, Food City, DMV, Shell Mart, Anchorage Shopping Center, Family Dollar, Appalachian College of Pharmacy, and Dairy Queen.
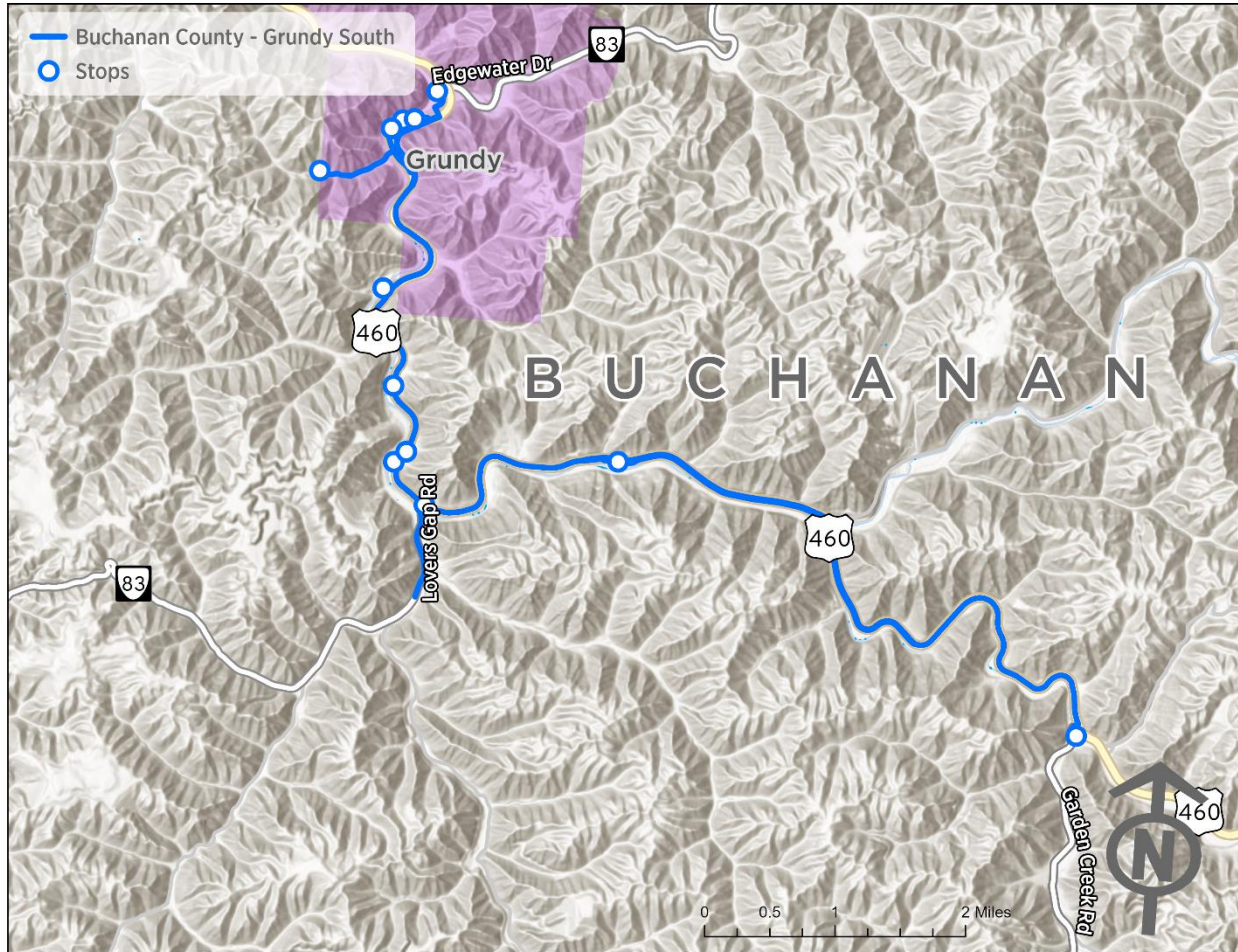
Figure 38. Map of Buchanan County – Grundy South Route

SwVCC Eagle Express Buchanan County

The SwVCC Eagle Express Buchanan County Route provides deviated fixed route service between Hurley and Southwest Virginia Community College (SwVCC). This route involves four smaller routes operating simultaneously and using Buchanan Funeral Home as a transfer point. The routes operate in the morning between 5:30 a.m. and 7:45 a.m. and in the evening between 4:30 p.m. and 6:45 p.m. The smaller routes connect areas of Big Rock, Garden/Whitewood, and Hurley to the main route that leaves from Buchanan Funeral Home toward SwVCC's Tazewell Hall. Stops in Big Rock and Garden/Whitewood are served by direct request, while Hurley and the main route follow fixed stop points.
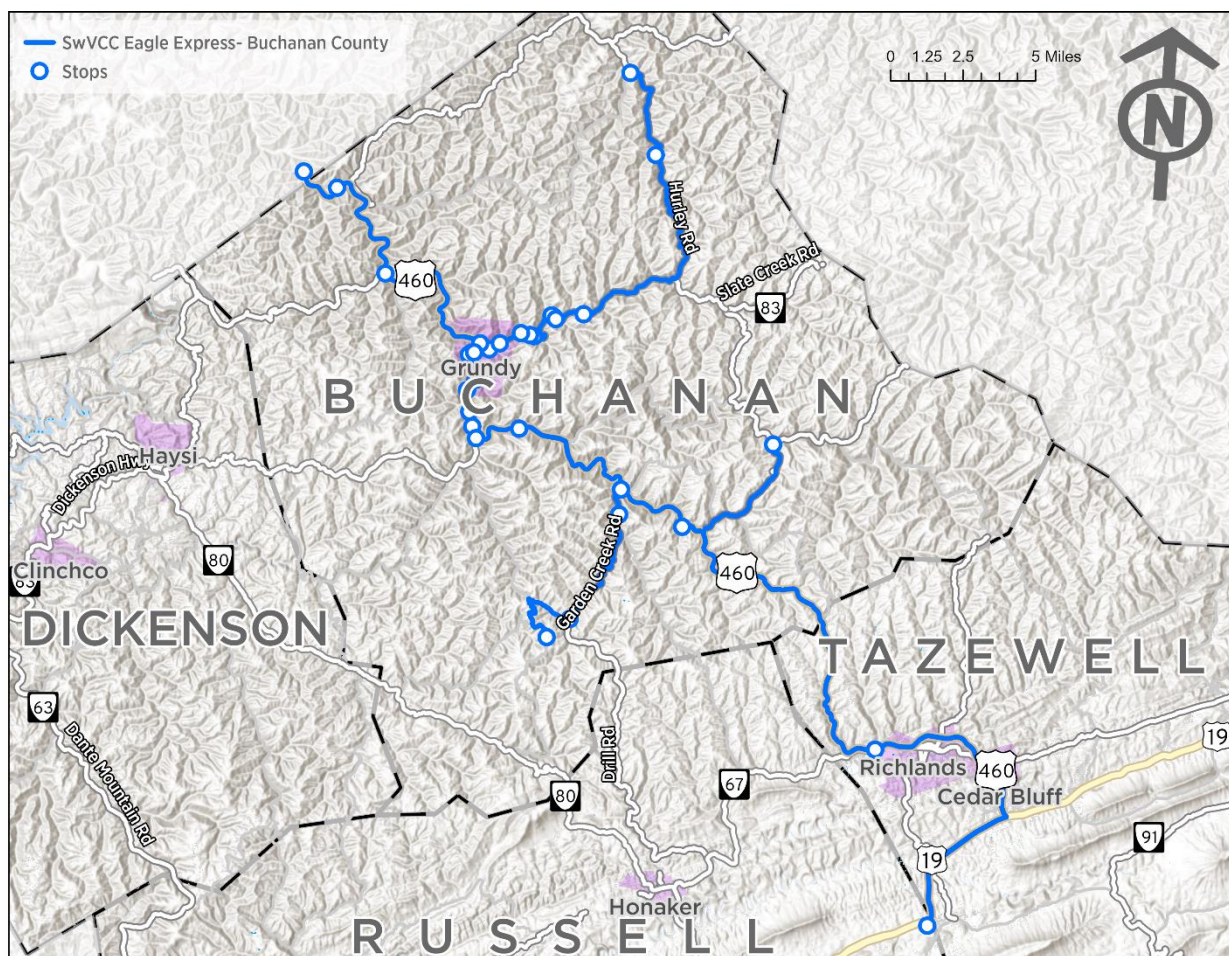
Figure 39. Map of SwVCC Eagle Express Buchanan County Route

A3.2 **Dickenson County**

Ridge Country Connector – Clinchco

The Ridge Country Connector – Clinchco Route provides deviated fixed route service between Clinchco, Haysi, and Clintwood. The route begins at 8:00 a.m. at the Centennial Heights Apartments in Haysi and ends at 4:20 p.m. at the Haysi Medical Center. The route frequency is every two hours, with the last run starting at 2:30 p.m. The route serves stops at the Centennial Heights Apartments, Big Ridge, White Ridge Marathon Station, Clinchco Senior Center, Along Route 83 to Clintwood, Rose Ridge, Ridgeview Deli Mart, and Haysi Medical Center.
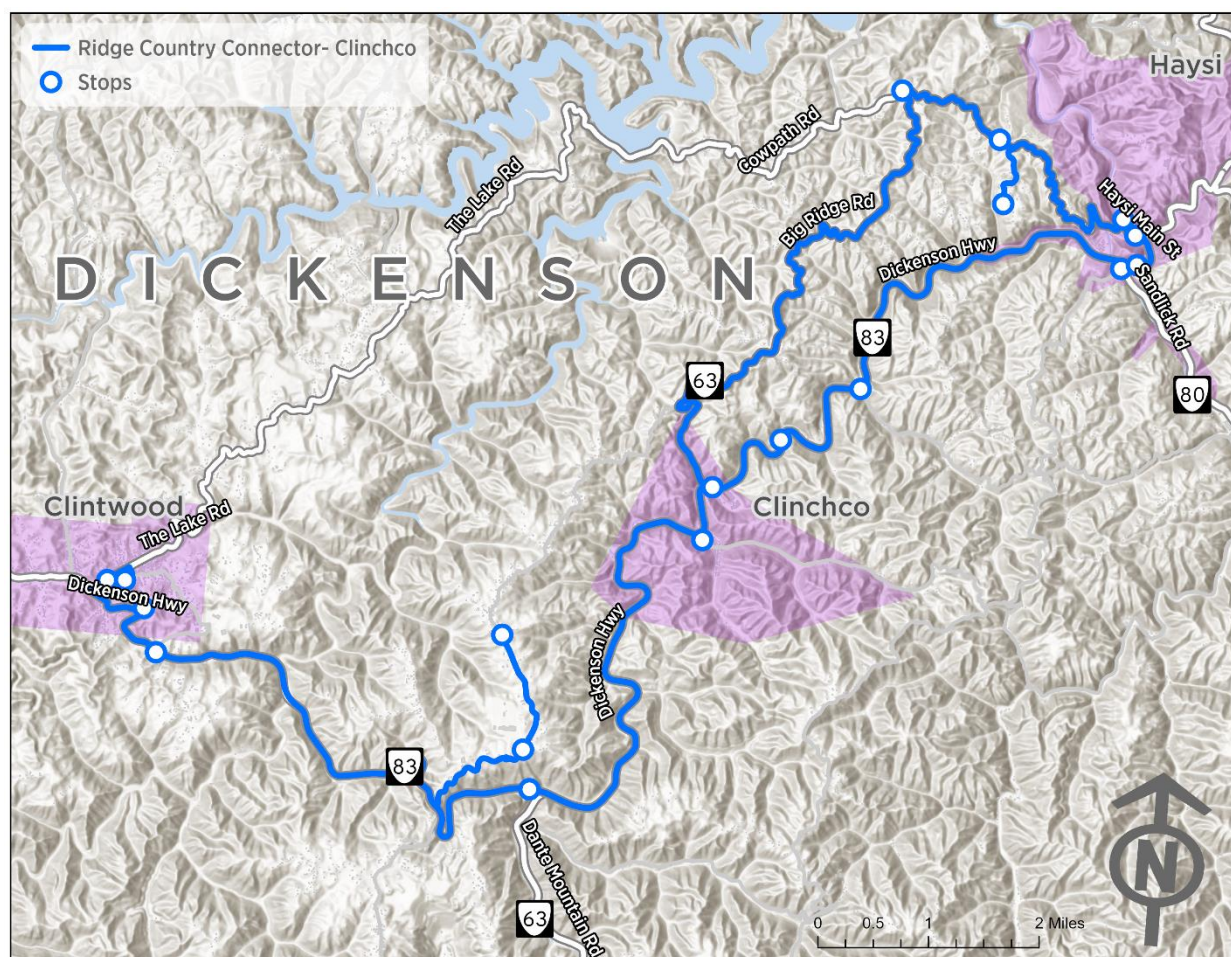
Figure 40. Map of Ridge Country Connector – Clinchco Route

Ridge Country Connector – Haysi

The Ridge Country Connector – Haysi provides deviated fixed route service in the greater Haysi area. The route begins at 8:00 a.m. at the Centennial Heights Apartments and ends at 4:10 p.m. at the Haysi Medical Center. The route frequency is hourly, shifting 30 minutes later at noon. Stops served by this route are the Centennial Heights Apartments, Haysi Town Hall, Dollar General, Haysi Drug, Haysi Library, Sandlick, Edwards Ridge, Haysi Medical Center, and the Regional Jail.
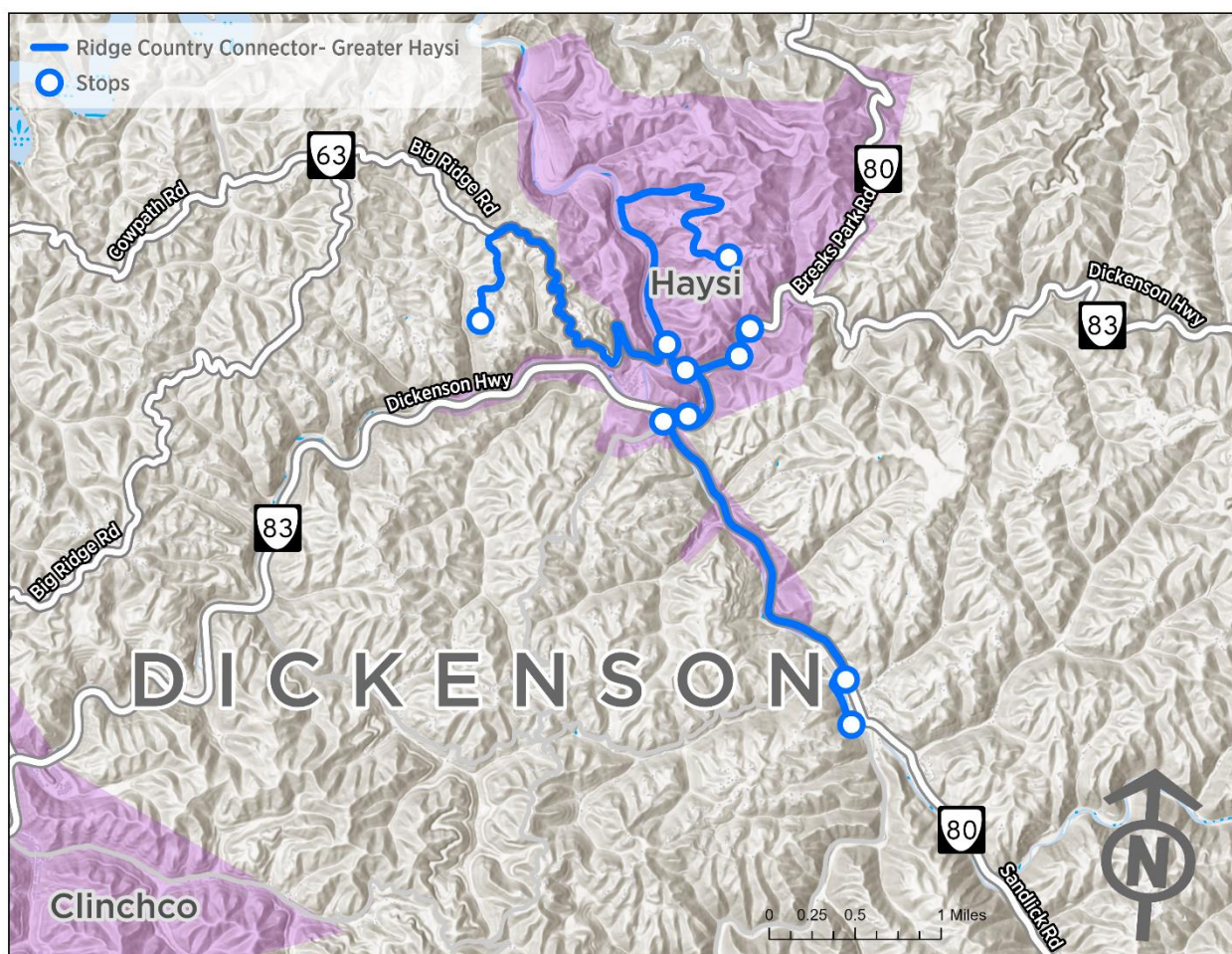
Figure 41. Map of Ridge Country Connector – Haysi Route

Ridge Country Connector – Clintwood

The Ridge Country Connector – Clintwood provides deviated fixed route service in the greater Clintwood area. The route begins at 8:00 a.m. at the Food City Shopping Center in Clintwood and ends at 4:21 p.m. at the Clintwood Hardee's. The route frequency is hourly, shifting 30 minutes later at noon. The route serves stops at the Food City Shopping Center, Factory Drive, Technology Drive, Happy Valley Drive, Manor Court, Main Street, Dickenson Community Hospital, Town View Apartments, Health Department, CCC Circle, Walgreens, McDonald's, West End Pharmacy, Social Services/Food Bank, Clintwood Park-n-Ride, and Hardee's.
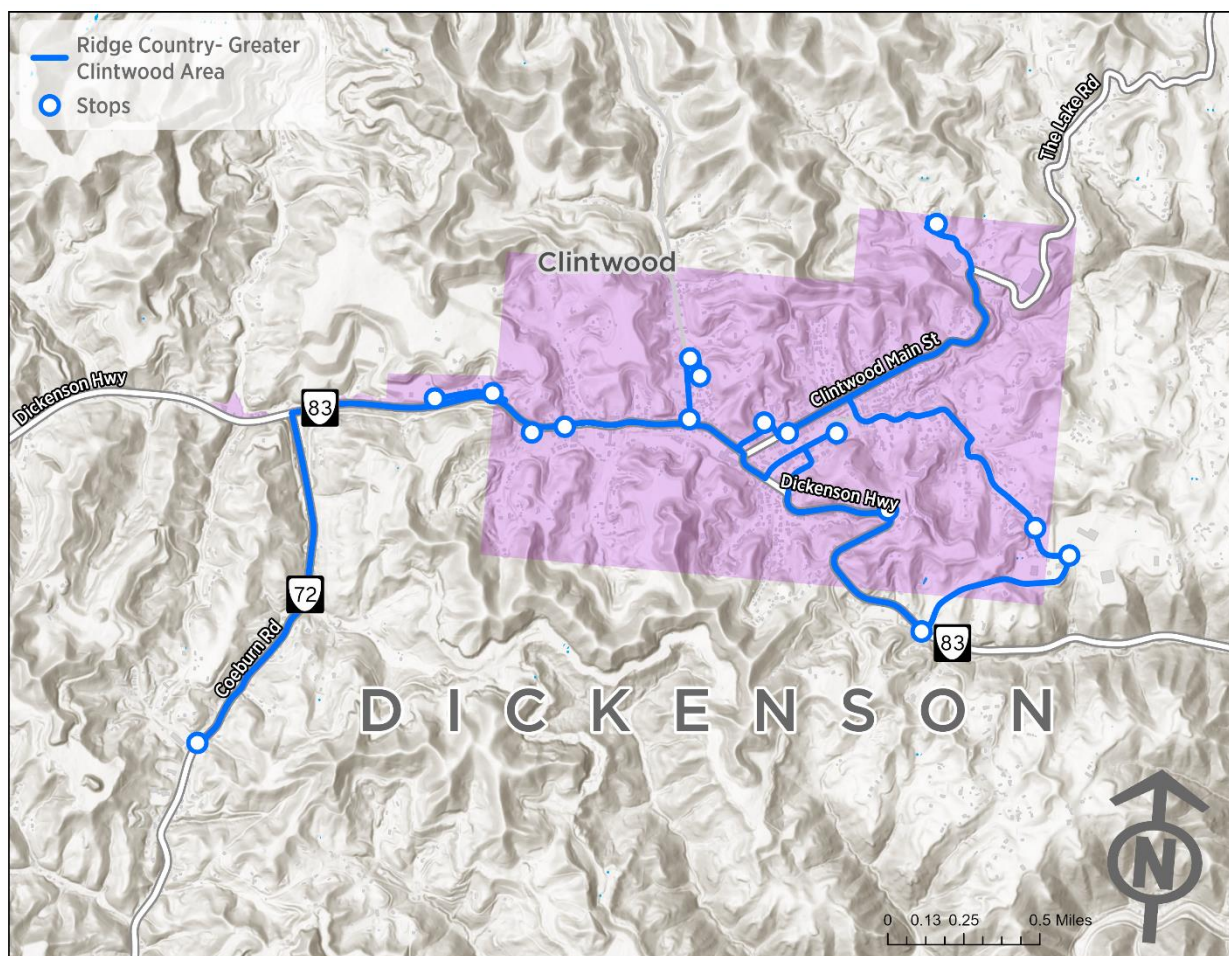
Figure 42. Map of Ridge Country Connector – Clintwood Route

SwVCC Eagle Express Dickenson County

The SwVCC Eagle Express Dickenson County provides deviated fixed route service between Dickenson County and Southwest Virginia Community College. The morning route begins at 6:10 a.m. at the Clinchco Triple T and ends at 8:55 a.m. at Haysi Medical Center after providing service on the way back from SwVCC. The evening route begins at 4:30 p.m. at SwVCC's Tazewell Hall and ends at 6:15 p.m. at the Clinchco Triple T. The route frequency is twice daily. Stops served by the morning route are the Clinchco Triple T, Edwards Texaco, Haysi Bridge area, Centennial Heights Apartments, E&S Grocery in Sandlick, Rt. 600 & 80 in Davenport, Council High School, Honaker Sunoco, Blackford VDOT, Tazewell Hall, and Stone Mountain Clinic in Davenport.
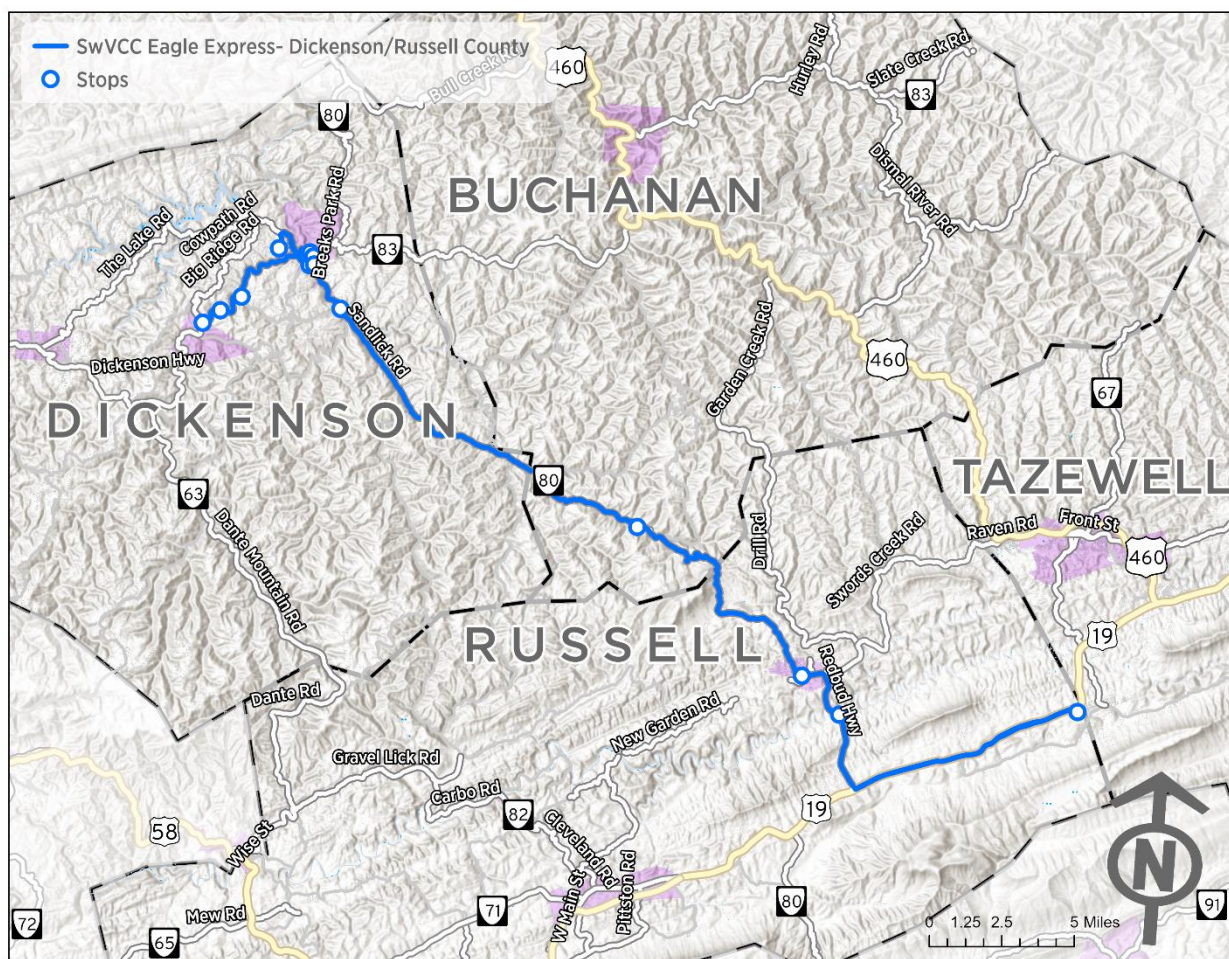
Figure 43. Map of SwVCC Eagle Express Dickenson County Route

MECC/UVA-Wise Express

The MECC/UVA-Wise Express provides deviated fixed route service connecting Dickenson County to Mountain Empire Community College, UVA-Wise, and Big Stone Gap in Wise County. The first morning route begins at 6:05 a.m. at the Centennial Heights Apartments and ends at 7:50 a.m. MECC's Robb Hall. The second morning route begins at 8:00 a.m. at Robb Hall and ends at the Clinchco Triple T with optional extension to Centennial Heights Apartments by request. The first evening route begins at 1:10 p.m. at the Centennial Heights Apartments and ends at 3:15 p.m. at Robb Hall. The second evening route begins at 3:30 p.m. at Robb Hall and ends at the Clinchco Triple T with optional extension to Clinchco Triple T by request. The stops served in the morning and the evening are the same: Centennial Heights Apartments, Haysi Bridge area, Clinchco Triple T, Clintwood Park-N-Ride, Pound IGA/Dollar General, UVA-Wise Smiddy Hall, and MECC's Robb Hall.
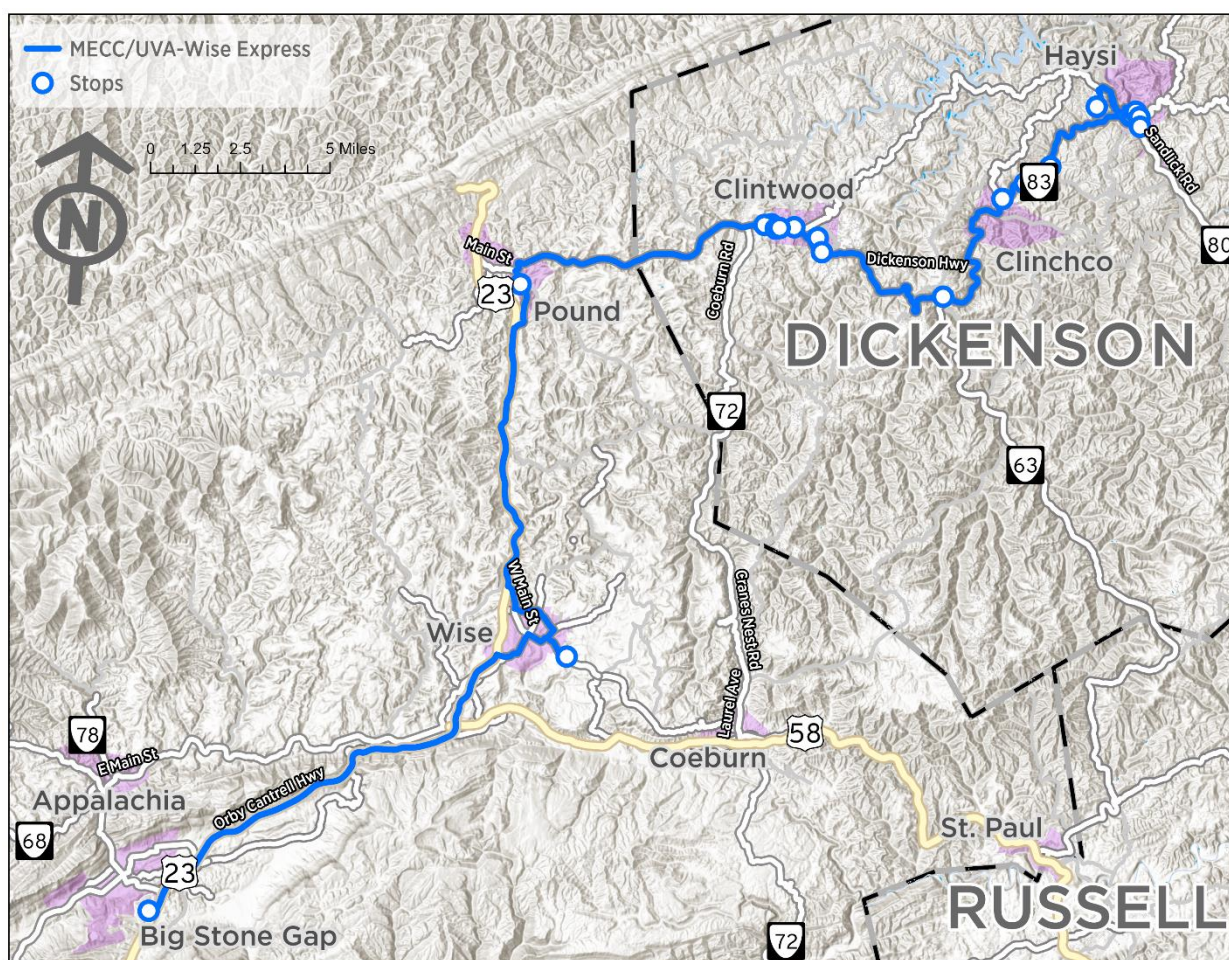
Figure 44. Map of MECC/UVA-Wise Express Route, showing part of Wise County

A3.3 **Russell County**

Town of Lebanon Transit

The Town of Lebanon Transit Route provides deviated fixed route service within the Town of Lebanon. The route begins at 8:00 a.m. at the Fox Meadows Apartments, the last run of the day ends at 4:20 p.m. at Lebanon Walmart. The frequency is hourly, shifted 30 minutes later at noon to accommodate driver lunch. All eight runs in the day visit the same stops: Fox Meadows Apartments, Hillcrest Trailer Park, Hardee's, Pittston Place Apartments, Copper Creek Apartments, Community Corrections Center, Social Services/Health Department Building, Grand View Village Apartments, Downtown Apartments, Post Office, Lebanon Exxon, Road Runner Shell Mart, Corner Grocery, Town Hall, School House Apartments, Russell Co Medical Center, Food City, Burger King, and Walmart.
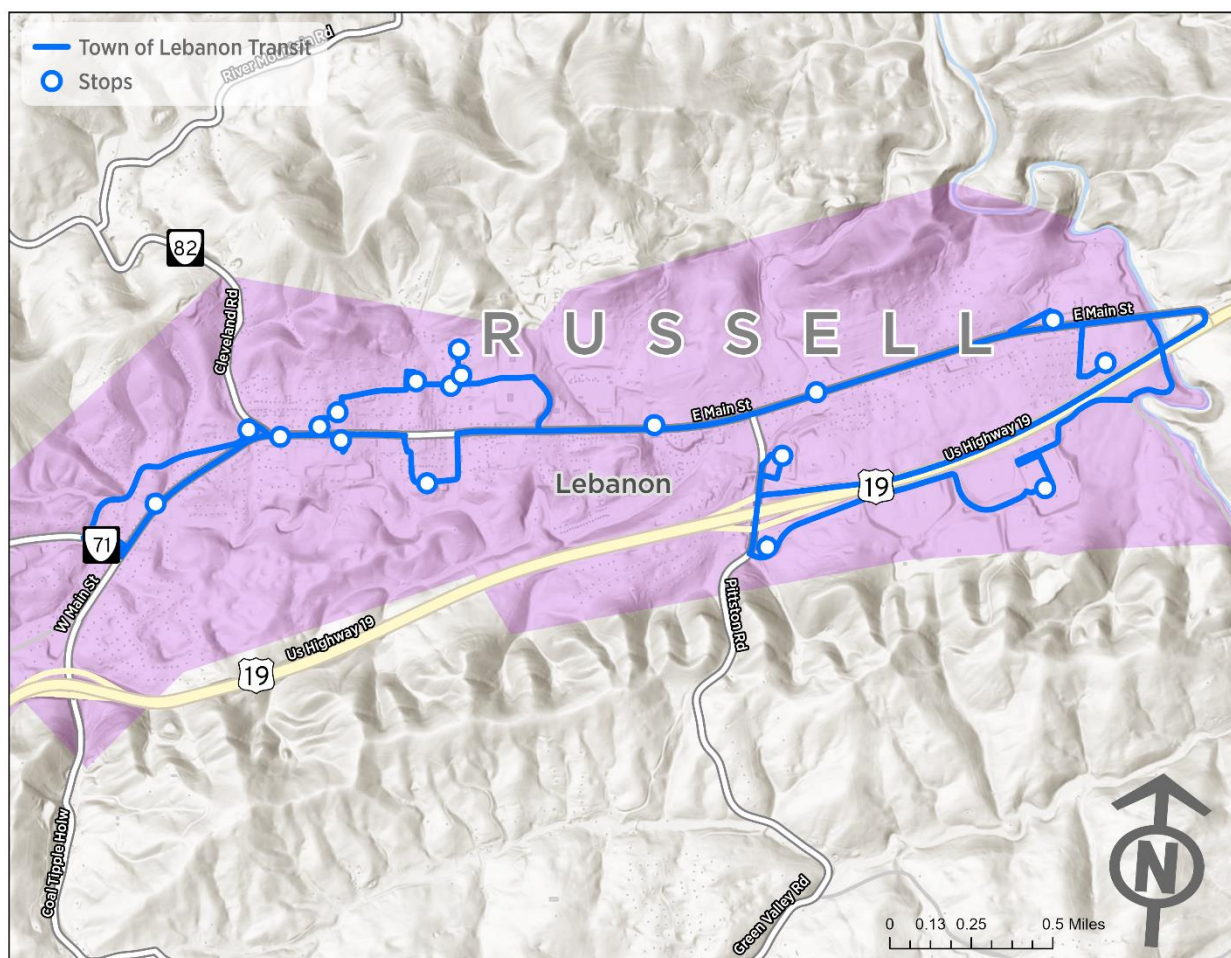
Figure 45. Map of the Town of Lebanon Route

SwVCC Eagle Express Russell County

The SwVCC Eagle Express Russell County Route provides deviated fixed route service between Dante and SwVCC's Tazewell Hall. This route runs in the morning in evening, making the frequency twice daily. The morning route begins at 6:10 a.m. at the Dante Post Office and ends at 7:50 a.m. at Tazewell Hall. The evening route begins at 4:30 p.m. at Tazewell Hall and ends at 6:10 a.m. at the Dante Post Office. Both routes share the same stops: Dante Post Office, St. Paul Park-n-Ride, Castlewood Post Office, Copper Creek Elementary School, Road Runner Shell Mart, Russell County Government Center, Lebanon Walmart, SwVCC Tazewell Hall.
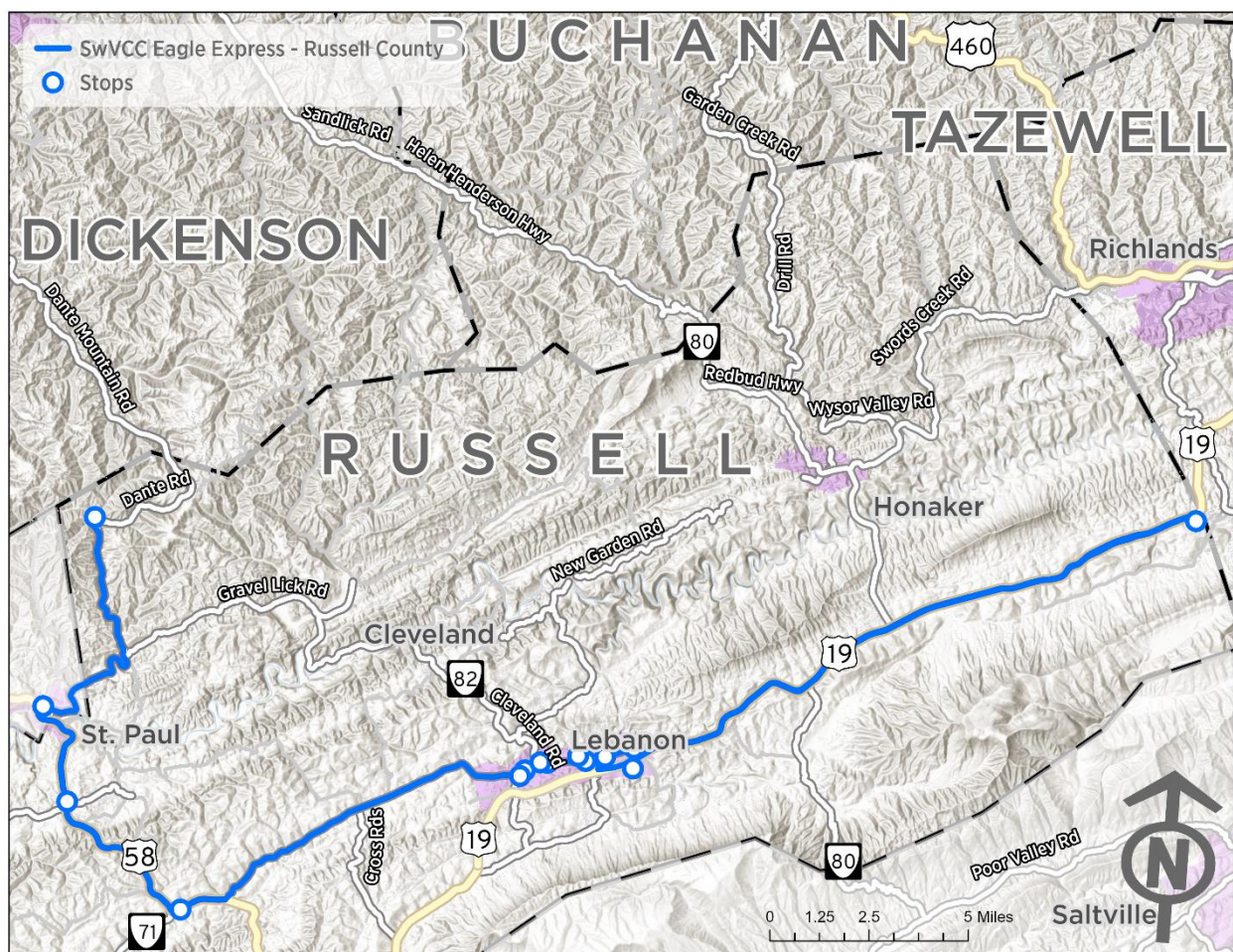
Figure 46. Map of the SwVCC Eagle Express Russell County Route

Cleveland Connector

The Cleveland Connector Route provides deviated fixed route service between the towns of Cleveland and Lebanon. The route begins at 9:15 a.m. at Riverview Terrace Apartments and ends at 3:56 p.m. at the Cleveland Post Office. The route frequency is hourly. This route includes stops at the Riverview Terrace Apartments, Cleveland Town Hall, Cleveland Town Park, Cleveland Post Office, Lebanon Walmart, Lebanon Food City, Lebanon Government Center, and Handy's Market Store. The third run does not continue after the Lebanon Walmart. The fourth run skips the first four stops and begins at the Lebanon Walmart where the third run left off. The eighth run ends at the Cleveland Post Office.
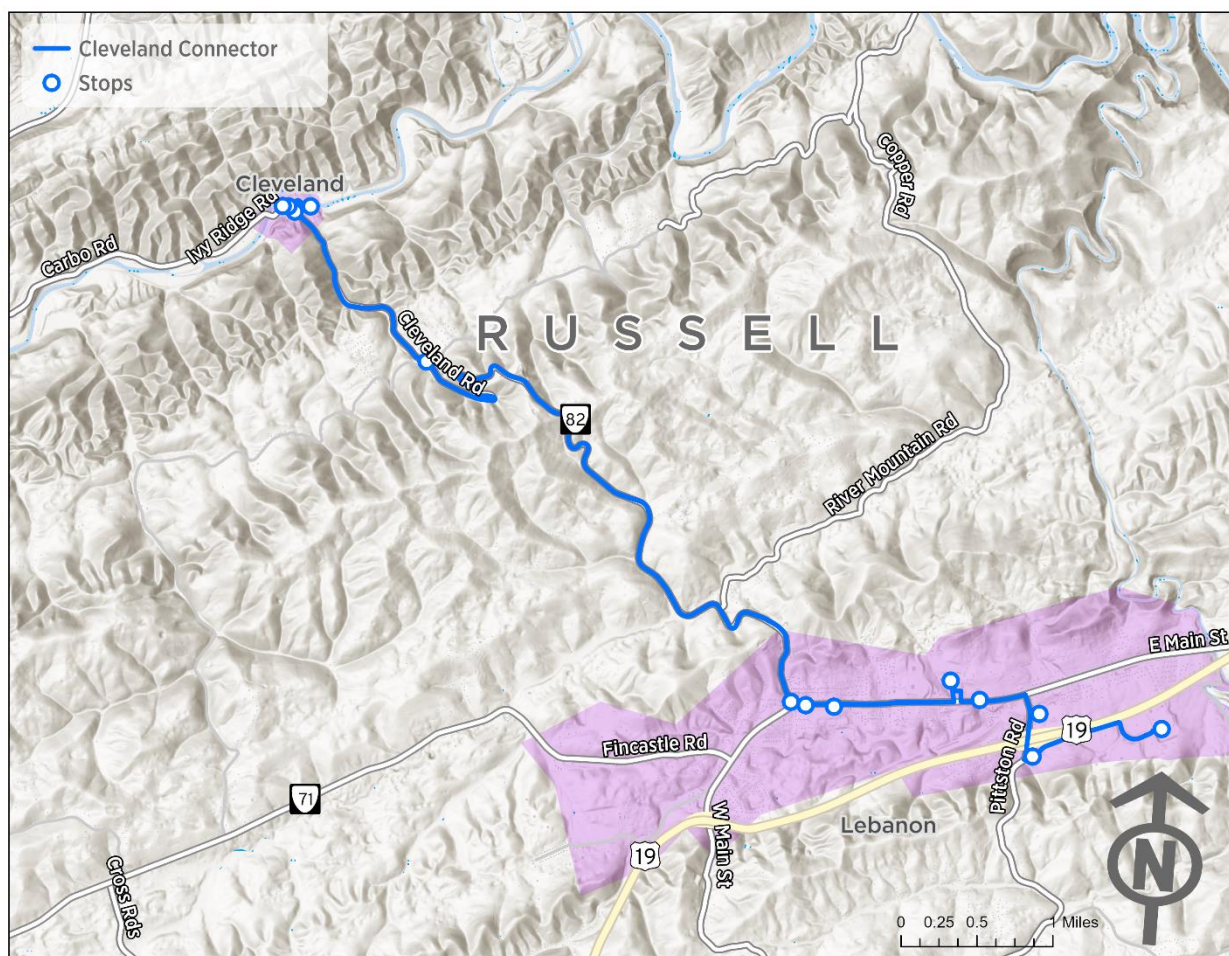
Figure 47. Map of the Cleveland Connector Route

A3.4 **Tazewell County**

Richlands to Pounding Mill Connector

The Richlands to Pounding Mill Connector Route provides deviated fixed route service along U.S. Highway 460 and U.S. Highway 19. Service begins at 8:18 a.m. at the Brickyard Shopping Center, and the last stop of the day is at 4:53 p.m. at The Clinic. The route runs at an hourly frequency.

Figure 48. Map of the Richlands to Pounding Mill Connector Route

Four Seasons Richlands to Tazewell Connector

The Four Seasons Richlands to Tazewell Connector Route provides deviated fixed route service between Richlands and the Town of Tazewell. Service begins at 8:35am at the Pounding Mill Walmart, and the last stop of the day is at 4:00 p.m. at Southwest Virginia Community College. The route runs at two-hour frequency. The first and third runs cover fixed stops at Pounding Mill Walmart, Baptist Valley, Rose Lumber/Dailey's Chapel, Bud's Market, Love of Jesus Tabernacle, Old Big Daddy's Restaurant, Tazewell Mall, back to Pounding Mill Walmart, then to District 43 Probation Office, SwVCC Housing Complex, SwVCC, Lowes, the Pounding Mill Post Office, and Pounding Mill Dollar Tree. The second run ends early for driver lunch at noon at the Probation Office.
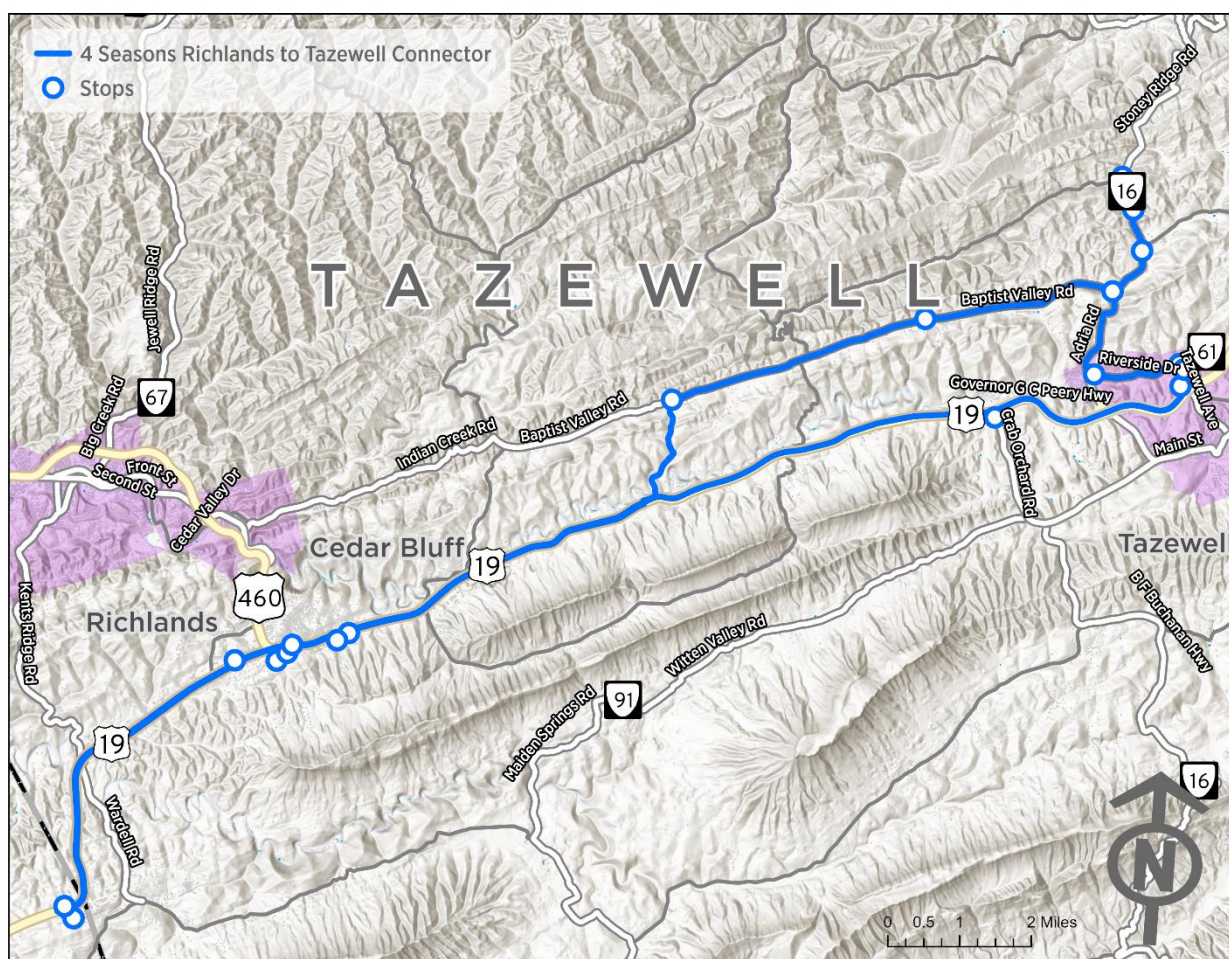
Figure 49. Map of the Four Seasons Richlands to Tazewell Connector Route

Four Seasons Tazewell to Bluefield Connector

The Four Seasons Tazewell to Bluefield Connector Route provides deviated fixed route service between Tazewell and Bluefield. Service begins at 9:10 a.m. at Sierra Springs/Aspen Square Apartments in Tazewell, and the last stop of the day is at 4:38 p.m. at the Tazewell Mall. The route runs at two-hour frequency. The first, second, and fourth runs cover fixed stops at Sierra Springs/Aspen Square Apartments, Maplewood Village Apartments, Tazewell Social Services, Tazewell Mall, Bluefield Walmart, Bluefield College Plaza Bus Shelter (VA), Bluefield Ave. Shelter (WV), Springville Valero, Pop Shop, Tazewell Career & Tech Center before returning to Tazewell Mall. The third route of the day accommodates driver lunch and begins at 1:20 p.m. at Tazewell Mall.
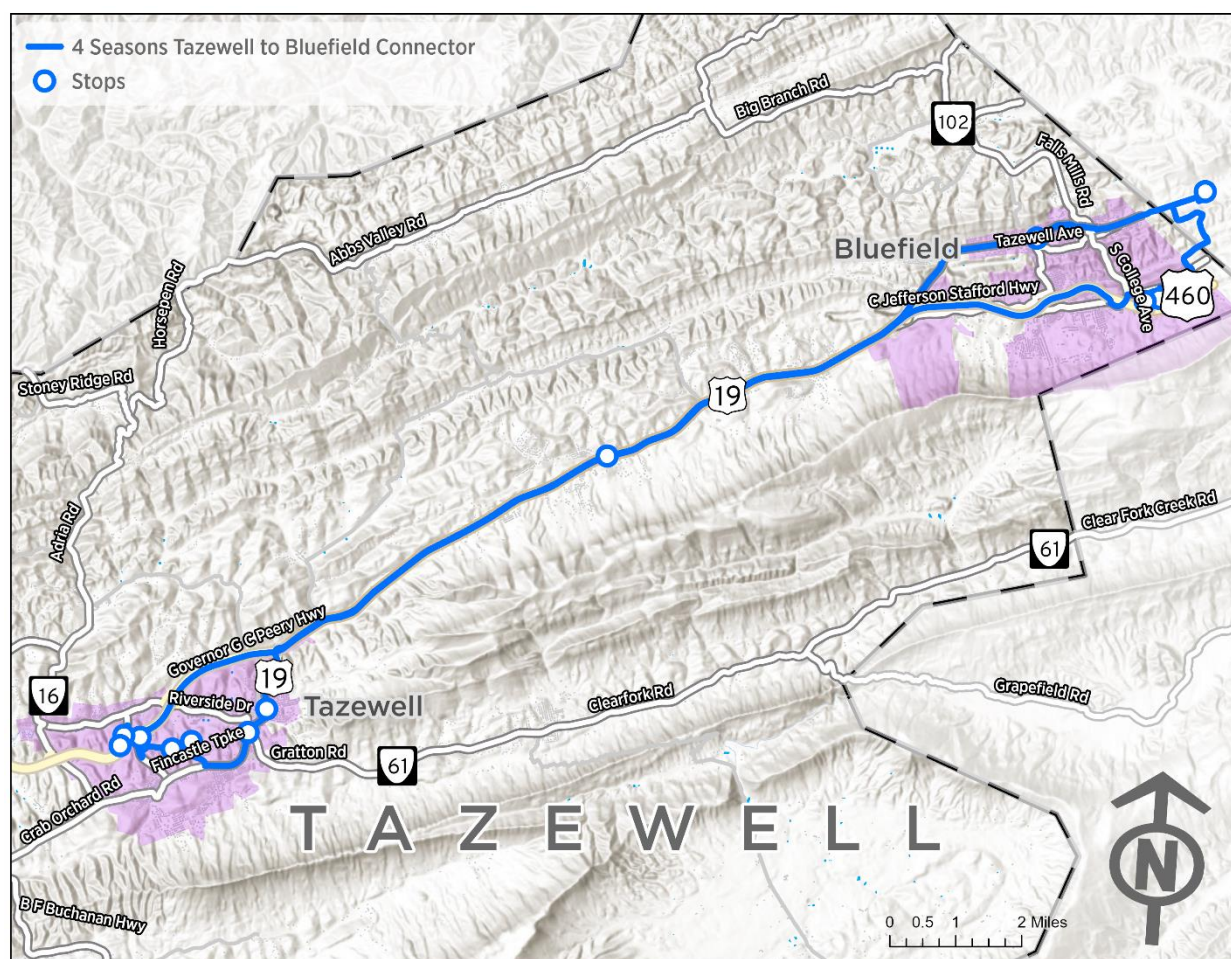
Figure 50. Map of Four Seasons Tazewell to Bluefield Connector Route

Town of Tazewell Transit

The Town of Tazewell Transit Route provides deviated fixed route service within the Town of Tazewell. Service begins at 8:00 a.m. at the Hillside/Tazewell Square Apartments, and the last stop is at 4:55 p.m. at Tazewell Community Hospital. The route runs at hourly frequency. The first, third, sixth, seventh, and ninth runs cover fixed stops at Hillside/Tazewell Square Apartments, Steeles Lane Apartments, Sierra Spring/Aspen Square Apartments, Maplewood Village Apartments, Tazewell Social Services, Tazewell Mall, Downtown, West End Plaza, Riverjack, CV Community Action, Lincolnshire Park, Grants Store, Food Lion, and Tazewell Community Hospital. The second, fourth, and eighth runs skip stops at Sierra Spring/Aspen Square, Maplewood Village, and Tazewell Social Services. The fifth run skips Maplewood Village, Tazewell Social Services, Downtown Tazewell, West End Plaza, Riverjack, CV Community Action, and Lincolnshire Park before continuing.
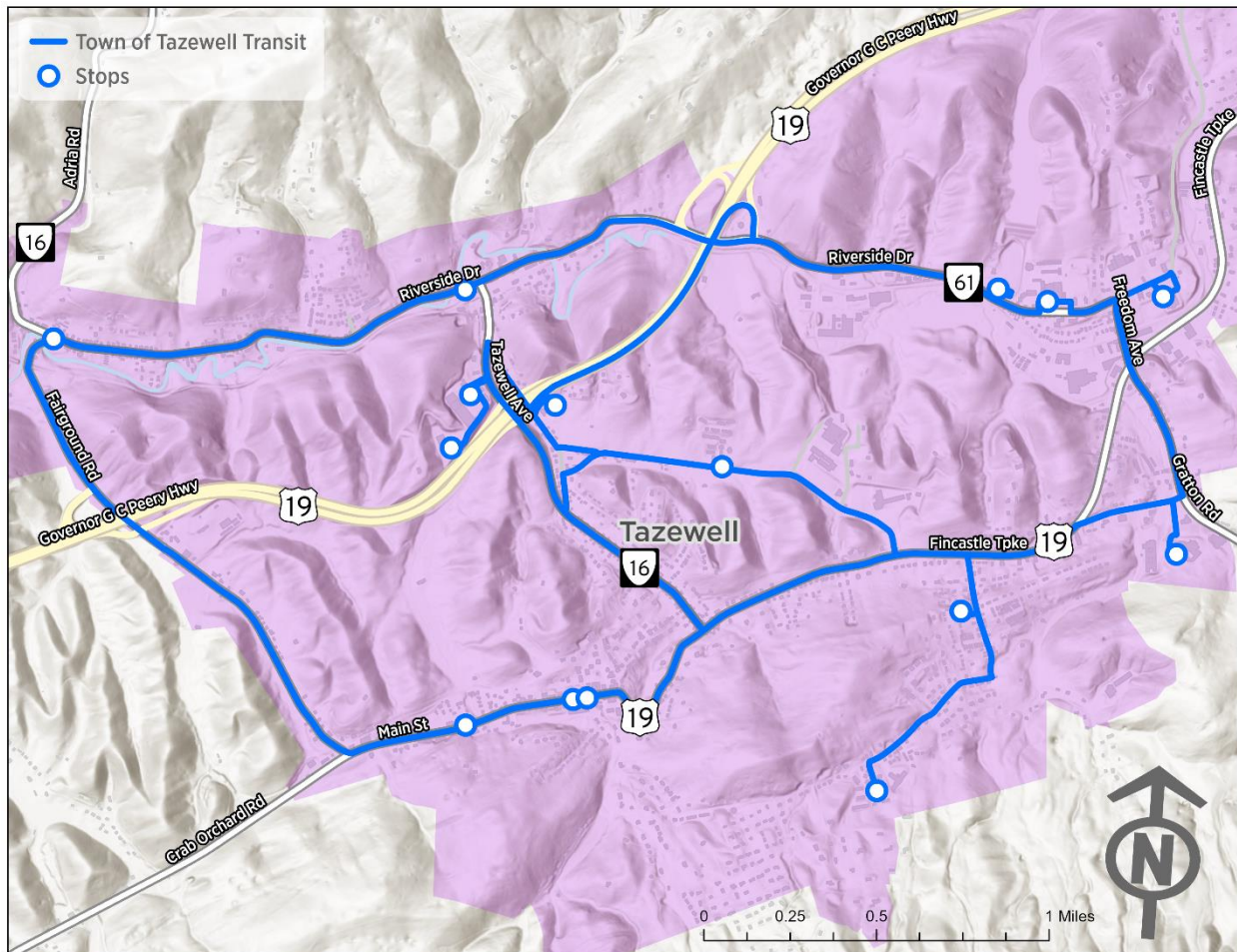
Figure 51. Map of the Town of Tazewell Route

Town of Richlands Transit

The Town of Richlands Transit Route provides deviated fixed route service within the Town of Richlands. The route begins at 8:10 a.m. at the Hunters Ridge Apartments, and the last stop of the day is at 5:00 p.m. at Richlands Mall. The route runs at hourly frequency. All runs are the same other than the fourth run that accommodates driver lunch. The route covers fixed stops at Hunters Ridge Apartments, Oxford Square Apartments, Good Samaritan Food Pantry, Brickyard Shopping Center, Downtown Richlands-Front Street, William Fields Park, Town Hall Miner Memorial, Magic City Shopping Center, Fairfax Apartments, Carter Shopping Center, Clinch Valley Medical Center, Doran Grocery, and Richlands Mall.
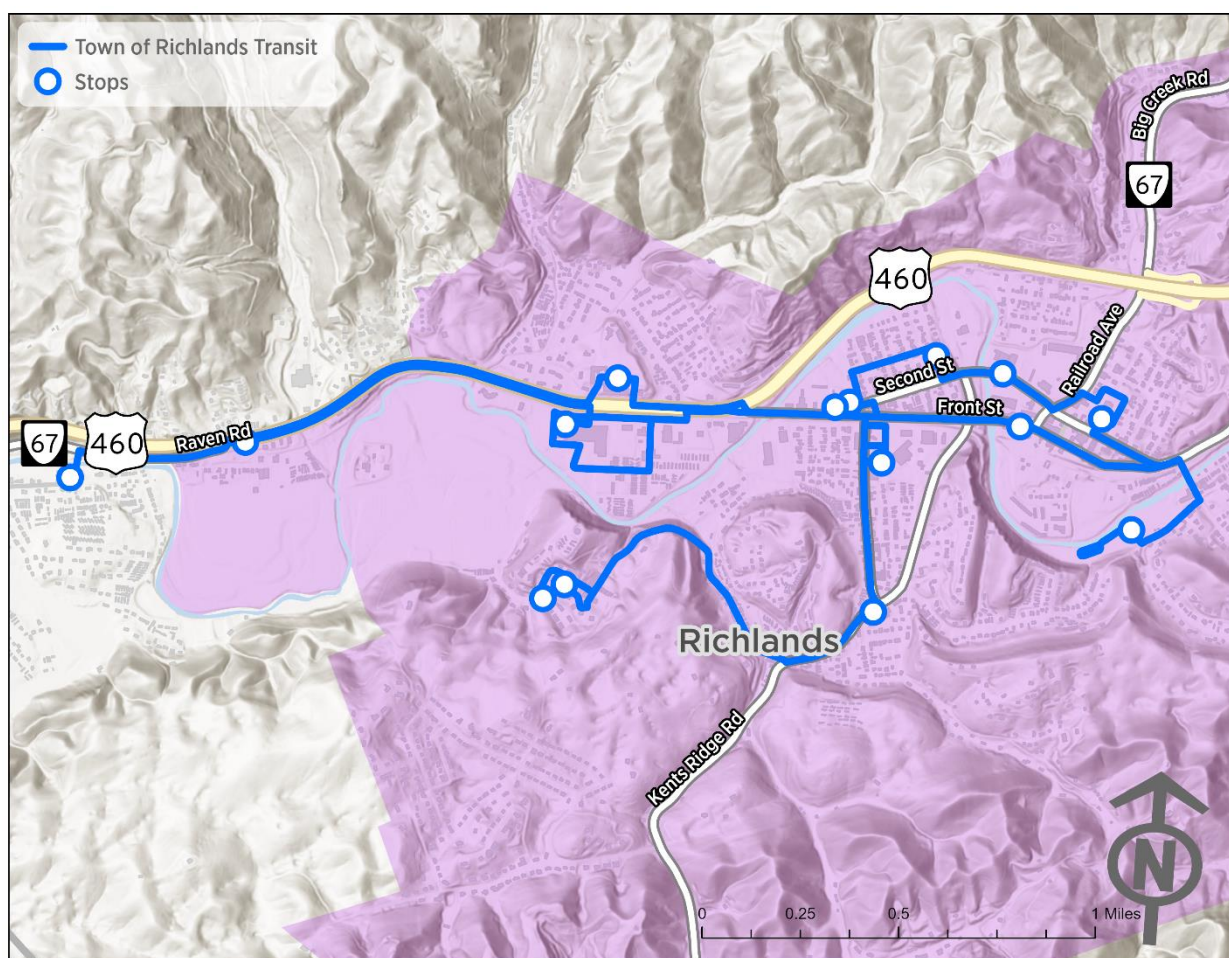
Figure 52. Map of the Town of Richlands Route

SwVCC Eagle Express Tazewell County

The SwVCC Eagle Express Tazewell Route provides deviated fixed route service connecting locations throughout Tazewell County to Southwest Virginia Community College. There is an a.m. route and p.m. route with different stop times, making the frequency twice daily. The morning route begins at 5:30 a.m. at Pocahontas/Indian Princess Apartments and ends at 7:45 a.m. at SwVCC's Tazewell Hall. The evening route begins at 4:30 p.m. at Tazewell Hall and ends at 6:45 p.m. at Pocahontas/Indian Princess Apartments. Both routes cover the same fixed stops: Pocahontas/Indian Princess Apartments, Crescentview Apartments, Graham Mart, Ron's Kwik Stop, Springville Valero, Tazewell Hardee's, Bluegrass Mart, North Tazewell Dollar General, Claypool Hill McDonald's, Richlands 67 Grocery, Richlands Big Lots, Richlands Food Bank, SwVCC Student Housing, and Tazewell Hall.
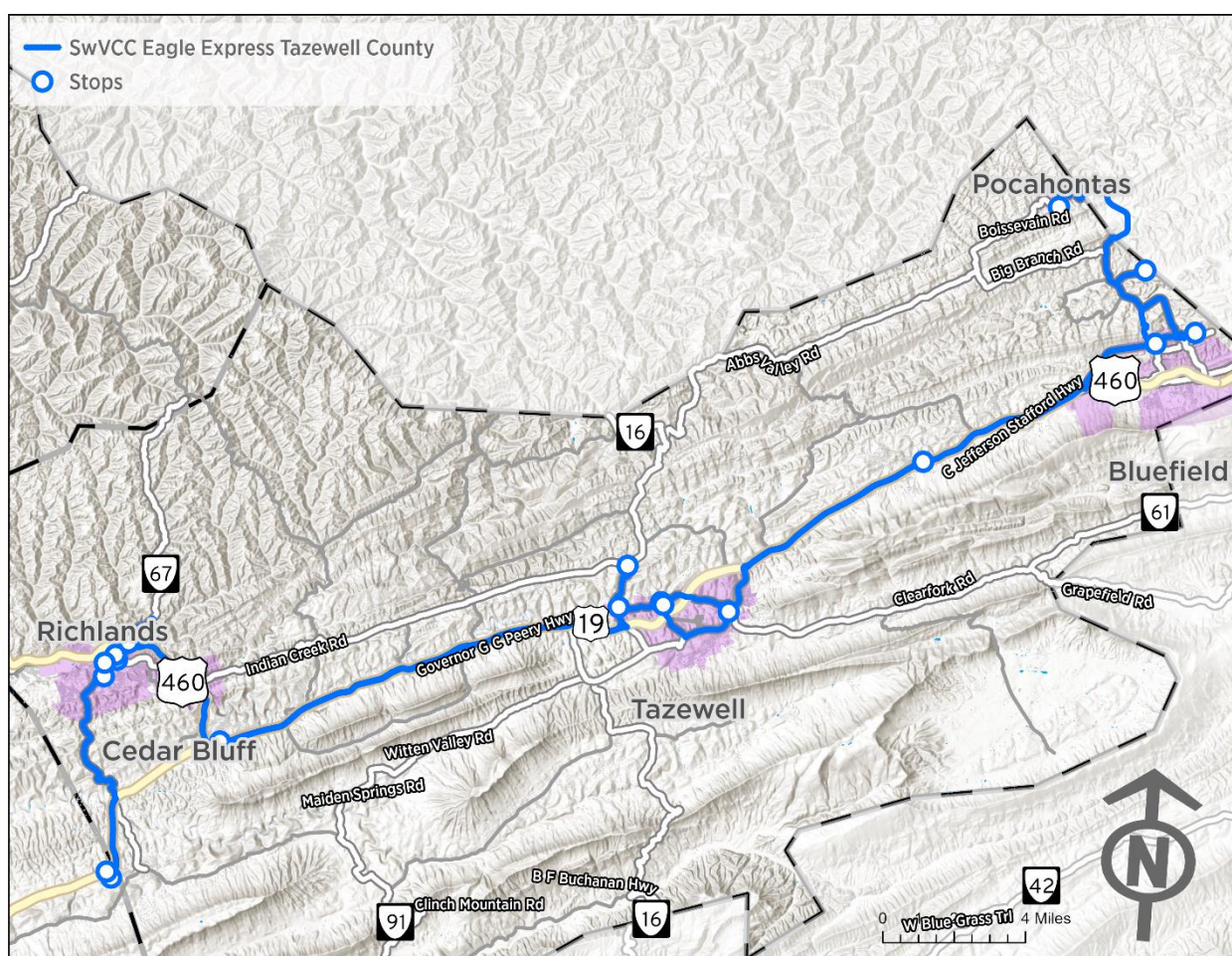
Figure 53. Map of the SwVCC Eagle Express Tazewell County Route

Four Seasons Work Express

The Four Seasons Work Express Route provides deviated fixed route service between the Town of Tazewell and Richlands. There is an a.m. and p.m. route with different stop times, making the frequency twice daily. The morning route begins at 6:55am at the King Kone in Richlands and ends at 7:35 a.m. at the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors Building. The evening route serves the same stops in reverse, starting at 4:30 p.m. at the Department of Social Services and ending at King Kone at 5:30. Fixed stops served by this route are the Richlands King Kone, Claypool Hill Walmart, Department of Social Services, and the Tazewell County Board of Supervisors Building.
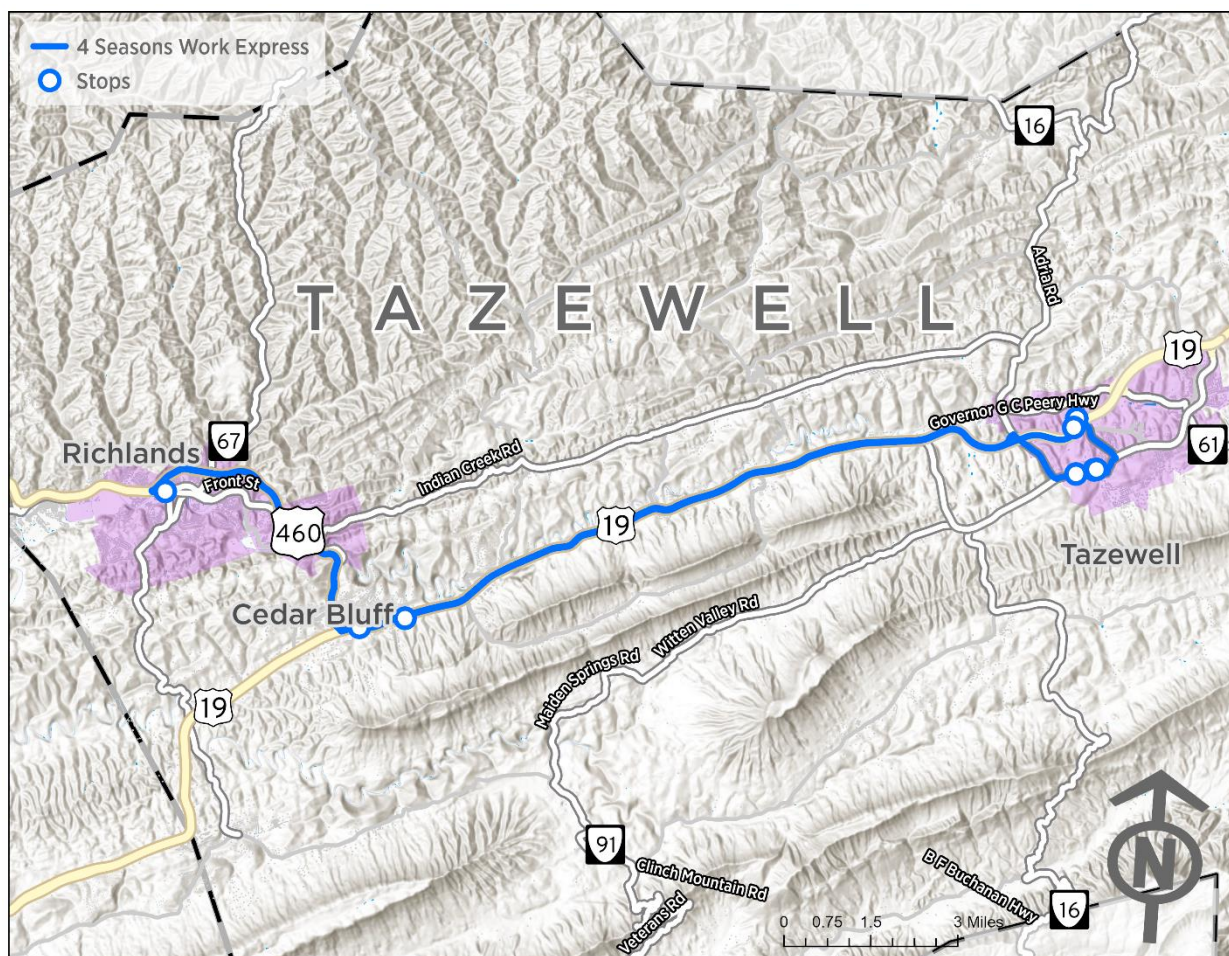
Figure 54. Map of the Four Seasons Work Express Route

A4. **Fare Structures, Payments, and Purchasing**

Four County Transit has been operating fare-free service since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Previously, route fares contributed to approximately $12,000 per year in revenue and the transit system has preference for finding additional funding sources to continue operating without fares into the future.

A5. **Transit Asset Management**

Four County Transit's fleet consists of 52 vehicles, 46 of which are used in revenue service. Table 14 provides a detailed fleet inventory that includes vehicle fleet number, year, make, model, and mileage as of January 3, 2024.

Table 14. Four County Transit Rolling Stock Inventory

Fleet Number	Model Year	Make/Model	Mileage	Vehicle Type
115	2009	Ford Classic Trolley	14,968	Revenue
159	2016	Ford Senator 1 BOC	71,672	Revenue
165	2017	Ford Starcraft BOC	119,437	Revenue
166	2017	Ford Starcraft BOC	155,897	Revenue
167	2017	Ford Starcraft BOC	158,970	Revenue
168	2017	Ford Starcraft BOC	151,981	Revenue
169	2017	Ford Starcraft BOC	124,703	Revenue
172	2017	Dodge Mini-Van with ramp	12,600	Revenue
173	2017	Dodge Mini-Van with ramp	11,876	Revenue
176	2018	Ford Starcraft BOC	124,483	Revenue
177	2018	Ford Starcraft BOC	140,749	Revenue
178	2018	Ford Starcraft BOC	99,035	Revenue
179	2018	Ford Starcraft BOC	125,739	Revenue
180	2018	Ford Starcraft BOC	151,161	Revenue
181	2018	Ford Starcraft BOC	138,885	Revenue
184	2019	Ford Starcraft BOC	94,544	Revenue
185	2019	Ford Starcraft BOC	114,231	Revenue
186	2019	Ford Starcraft BOC	87,008	Revenue

Fleet Number	Model Year	Make/Model	Mileage	Vehicle Type
187	2019	Ford Starcraft BOC	104,697	Revenue
188	2019	Ford Starcraft BOC	95,955	Revenue
189	2019	Ford Starcraft BOC	89,537	Revenue
190	2019	Ford Starcraft BOC	93,514	Revenue
191	2019	Ford Transit Raised Roof Van	6,652	Revenue
192	2019	Braun Mini Van W/Ramp	7,209	Revenue
194	2020	Ford Starcraft BOC	57,327	Revenue
195	2020	Ford Starcraft BOC	76,683	Revenue
196	2020	Ford Starcraft BOC	87,947	Revenue
197	2020	Ford Starcraft BOC	79,501	Revenue
198	2020	Ford Starcraft BOC	101,645	Revenue
199	2020	Ford Starcraft BOC	55,883	Revenue
200	2020	Ford Starcraft BOC	114,373	Revenue
201	2020	Ford Starcraft BOC	88,842	Revenue
204	2021	Ford Starcraft BOC	48,650	Revenue
205	2021	Ford Starcraft BOC	74,912	Revenue
206	2021	Ford Starcraft BOC	41,418	Revenue
207	2021	Ford Starcraft BOC	42,113	Revenue
208	2021	Ford Starcraft BOC	33,806	Revenue
209	2021	Ford Starcraft BOC	24,686	Revenue
210	2021	Ford Starcraft BOC	36,634	Revenue
211	2021	Ford Starcraft BOC	36,673	Revenue
212	2021	Ford Starcraft BOC	16,472	Revenue
213	2024	Ford Starcraft Allstar BOC	10,862	Revenue
214	2024	Ford Starcraft Allstar BOC	4,971	Revenue
215	2024	Ford Starcraft Allstar BOC	7,134	Revenue
216	2024	Ford Starcraft Allstar BOC	3,718	Revenue

Fleet Number	Model Year	Make/Model	Mileage	Vehicle Type
217	2024	Ford Starcraft Allstar BOC	1,522	Revenue
160	2016	Ford F250	98,305	Support
161	2016	Dodge MiniVan	25,820	Support
170	2017	Ford Explorer	82,090	Support
175	2018	Ford Explorer	85,873	Support
193	2019	Ford F250	70,919	Support
218	2023	Ford F150	5,434	Support

A6. Transit Security Program

The Four County Transit security program includes utilization of AngelTrax HD quality cameras. There are eight cameras per bus that provide audio and video data by employing infrared technology, IP68 certified waterproof lenses, and noise-gated microphones. Buses equipped with cameras include multipoint camera locations within the bus as well as outside views.

Four County Transit uses AngelTrax technology for event history tracking. MotoTrax organizes individual events by date/time, vehicle ID, event type and location for research and reporting. Reporting allows for collection and customizing comprehensive reports on their entire fleet, one vehicle, driver, or event type. Data such as speed, GPS location, stops made, braking applied, G-force and speed at impact can be determined using this research and development tool.

Drivers are trained on security protocol at initial hire and retrained every six months. According to the Four County Transit Emergency Contingency Plan, the agency maintains: an administrative call list of all employees; an up-to-date list of vehicles; sources of fuel; and designated staging areas in each county for drivers. In cases of emergency, stage one instructs the department to establish an operations center at the Four County Transit office building and the Division Director of Transportation will coordinate the response. After retrieving a list of office staff and their locations, the Fleet Manager will secure the facility and verify that all vehicles are in working order. The Field Manager will prepare of list of all vehicles, their locations, and assigned drivers and instruct drivers to secure a full tank of fuel if the emergency warrants. The Transportation Manager will additionally prepare a list of drivers, their current locations, and identify all supplies in the facility. Employee lists will be compared to validate and account for all working staff. Stage two instructs drivers to meet at the staging area in their respective counties and wait for further instructions from

management staff. Finally, the transit system will provide support to the agency based on the context of the emergency.

A7. **Intelligent Transportation Systems Programs**

Four County Transit uses an in-house transportation management tool known as TRACI for route scheduling and maintenance planning. Data collected via manifest is utilized to track scheduled maintenance on a weekly and monthly basis. Once complete, the maintenance entry section of TRACI allows maintenance performed on any vehicle to be tracked. Vehicles with excessive maintenance costs may be identified and flagged for retirement and/or replacement.

TRACI also produces daily manifest printouts for drivers to manually track information, including:

- The driver's timesheet
- Passenger counts by stop
- Revenue miles
- Revenue hours
- Pre-trip inspection checklist for the vehicle
- Informational messaging options
- For passenger counts, off-route pickups are captured in the next stop's total.

Since the previous TDP was completed in 2017, Four County Transit now uses radio communication for drivers and dispatch rather than wireless. The buses are not tracked live through any on-board technology, but their trips are recorded through tracking software through the bus camera system and can be tracked after-the-fact. The agency would be open to trying other intelligent transportation systems in the future with better telecommunications infrastructure in place, but as of now, radio communication is the most efficient and most reliable means of communication between dispatch and drivers.

A8. **Data Collection and Ridership/Revenue Reporting Method**

Paper manifests completed by the route drivers are turned in daily to the dispatch office for processing. Since fares aren't currently being charged, there are no driver procedures for collecting, storing, or turning in cash.

The National Transit Database (NTD) is a federal repository of data that requires an annual report submission from transit agencies receiving federal funds. As an FTA Section 5311 funding recipient, Four County Transit submits financial, operations, and asset data yearly for inclusion in the NTD.

A9. Coordination with Other Transportation Service Providers

Four County Transit operates service within four counties and coordinates with a variety of other service providers in the region to the extent possible. There are public, private, and nonprofit operators in the area that provide a range of transportation-related services.

A9.1 Public Transportation

Graham Transit
Provided by the Town of Bluefield, Graham Transit operates three deviated fixed routes in Bluefield and the surrounding area.

The Main Route provides service from downtown Bluefield to Crescent View and Graham Manor (housing areas), connecting to Bluefield Area Transit, and serving the downtown area, Twin City Plaza, Ridgeview Plaza (Walmart), West Gate Shopping Center, West Wood Medical Park, and Bluefield Regional Hospital. The Main Route operates Monday through Friday and the first Saturday of each month, hourly, from 7:25 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The Gold Route operates Monday through Friday and the first Saturday of each month, hourly from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gold Route provides service through several residential neighborhoods, connecting them to the public library and Municipal Building, Food City, College Plaza, Ridgeview Plaza (Walmart), Twin City Plaza, and downtown.

The Pocahontas Route operates hourly on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, from 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. It connects the community of Pocahontas to Bluefield, with stops at Indian Princess apartments, Pocahontas Mine, Pick and Save, Nemours Grocery (WV), Falls Mills, Wood Tech, Ridgeview Plaza (Walmart), and downtown.

Mountain Lynx Transit
Mountain Lynx Transit, formerly District Three Public Transit, is a neighboring public transportation provider that operates service in the following counties: Abingdon, Galax, Marion, Wytheville, Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe. The system offers fixed routes and demand-response services Monday through Friday with limited Saturday service.

Mountain Empire Transit (MEOC Transit)
MEOC Transit provides curb-to-curb demand response service to Lee, Scott, and Wise Counties and to the City of Norton. MEOC Transit's hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Requests for a ride should be made at least 24 hours in advance.

MEOC Transit recently launched METGo!, which is the first ever rideshare service in the town of Wise and City of Norton. Riders can call or use a smartphone app to book pickup and drop off locations.

A9.2 Taxi and Private Transportation

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are currently no taxi services available in the area.

A9.3 Human Service Transportation

Human Service Transportation in the region is provided primarily by Four County Transit through agreements to provide service to area congregate nutrition sites and adult day care. The Commission on Aging program operated by Community Action Southeastern West Virginia (CASEWV) provides transportation to healthcare, shopping, exercises, and activities to adults 60 years and older living in Mercer County, West Virginia.

A9.4 Medicaid Transportation

Though Four County Transit does not directly provide Medicaid transportation services, the region is well served by other providers.

A9.5 Intercity Bus

Greyhound provides intercity bus service to Bluefield, West Virginia. The Greyhound station is located at 1152 Bland St. in Bluefield, and is served by the Detroit to Jacksonville route, with southbound trips from Bluefield traveling to Wytheville; Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Charlotte, North Carolina; and stops in South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Northbound trips leave Bluefield with service to Beckley and Charleston, West Virginia where transfers to the broader intercity bus network are available.

A9.6 Amtrak

The closest Amtrak service to Bluefield is along the Cardinal Route, which travels from New York to Chicago traveling through Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington D.C. with multiple stops in West Virginia. The closest station is in Hinton, West Virginia.

Appendix B: **Passenger Survey**

FOUR COUNTY TRANSIT – 2024 CUSTOMER SURVEY

Four County Transit is updating its Transit Development Plan, which is a document that helps the agency establish and prioritize goals and objectives over the next decade. We want to get a better idea of riders' travel patterns. Please complete this survey for your <u>current bus trip</u>. When you are finished with the survey, please give it to the bus driver when the bus is at a stop. If you need additional time to fill out the survey, you may photograph both sides with your phone and text it to: *nick.britton@mbakerintl.com*.

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1. What bus route are you *currently* riding? (check one)

Buchanan County
- ⭘ Grundy North
- ⭘ Grundy South
- ⭘ SwVCC Eagle Express – Buchanan Co.

Dickenson County
- ⭘ Ridge Country Connector – Clinchco
- ⭘ Ridge Country Connector – Haysi
- ⭘ Ridge Country Connector – Clintwood
- ⭘ SwVCC Eagle Express – Dickenson Co.
- ⭘ MECC/UVA Wise Express

Russell County
- ⭘ Town of Lebanon Transit
- ⭘ SwVCC Eagle Express – Russell Co.
- ⭘ Cleveland Connector

Tazewell County
- ⭘ Richlands to Pounding Mill Connector
- ⭘ Four Seasons Richlands to Tazewell Connector
- ⭘ Four Seasons Tazewell to Bluefield Connector
- ⭘ Town of Tazewell Transit
- ⭘ Town of Richlands Transit
- ⭘ SwVCC Eagle Express – Tazewell Co.
- ⭘ Four Seasons Work Express

2. Where did you start your trip and where are you headed? (please provide specific location [e.g., "Grundy Walmart"], address, or nearest intersection)

Start: _____   End: _____

_____   _____

3. What is the purpose of your trip? (check one)

⭘ Work   ⭘ Shopping   ⭘ School   ⭘ Social/Recreational   ⭘ Medical

⭘ Dining   ⭘ Services   ⭘ Other: _____

4. How often do you ride the bus? (check one)

⭘ Once a month   ⭘ 2 – 3 times a month   ⭘ Once a week   ⭘ 2 – 3 times a week

⭘ 4 – 6 times a week   ⭘ Once a day   ⭘ More than once a day

5. What service improvements would you be interested in? (check all that apply)

○ Weekend Service ○ Additional destinations ○ Bus stop features (benches, signs)

○ On-time performance ○ Cleaner or safer buses ○ Other: _____

6. If you said "Additional Destinations" for #5, please specify below.

_____

_____

7. How satisfied are you with Four County Transit's services?

○ Very Satisfied ○ Satisfied ○ Neither ○ Unsatisfied ○ Very Unsatisfied

8. What do you like best about the service? _____

_____

9. What do you like least about the service? _____

_____

Please tell us a little about yourself.

10. Are you: ○ Male ○ Female

○ Prefer not to answer

11. Do you own or have access to a car in your household?

○ Own ○ Have access ○ No

Please provide any additional thoughts you may have regarding Four County Transit or public transportation in the region.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. What is your county of residence?

○ Buchanan ○ Dickenson ○ Russell ○ Tazewell ○ Other: _____

13. What is your age group?

○ Under 18 ○ 18 – 24 ○ 25 – 34 ○ 35 - 44

○ 45 – 64 ○ 65 or older ○ Prefer not to answer

14. What is your employment status?

○ Employed, full-time ○ Employed, part-time ○ Unemployed ○ Retired

○ Homemaker ○ Student, full-time ○ Student, part-time

○ Self-employed ○ Prefer not to answer ○ Other: _____

Appendix C: **Supplemental Financial Spreadsheet**

Table 15. Transit Development Plan Operations Financial Plan

Revenue	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27	FY 2027-28	FY 2028-29	FY 2029-30	FY 2030-31	FY 2031-32	FY 2032-33	FY 2033-34	FY 2034-35
Local Funds: General Fund Contributions/Federal Matches	$558,261	$764,317	$816,653	$877,002	$1,024,205	$1,017,882	$825,268	$846,309	$868,024	$890,432	$893,458
State Funds: State Operating Assistance	$837,392	$863,518	$890,479	$918,303	$1,177,688	$1,207,322	$1,237,903	$1,269,464	$1,302,034	$1,335,647	$1,370,335
Federal Funds: FTA Section 5311 (Operations)	$1,395,654	$1,439,196	$1,484,132	$1,530,506	$1,962,813	$2,012,203	$2,063,172	$2,115,773	$2,170,057	$2,226,078	$2,303,991
Federal Funds: FTA Section 5311 (Capital)	$667,076	$754,555	$892,000	$1,059,200	$956,320	$985,600	$818,240	$856,600	$1,209,600	$867,000	$946,400
Total Revenues	$3,458,383	$3,821,586	$4,083,264	$4,385,011	$5,121,026	$5,223,007	$4,944,583	$5,088,146	$5,549,715	$5,319,157	$5,514,184
Expenditures	**FY 2024-25**	**FY 2025-26**	**FY 2026-27**	**FY 2027-28**	**FY 2028-29**	**FY 2029-30**	**FY 2030-31**	**FY 2031-32**	**FY 2032-33**	**FY 2033-34**	**FY 2034-35**
Salaries & Wages	$1,684,892	$1,738,809	$1,794,450	$1,851,873	$1,911,133	$1,972,289	$2,035,402	$2,100,535	$2,167,752	$2,237,120	$2,308,708
Fringe Benefits	$283,692	$292,770	$302,139	$311,807	$321,785	$332,082	$342,709	$353,675	$364,993	$376,673	$388,726
Education & Training	$1,224	$1,263	$1,304	$1,345	$1,388	$1,433	$1,479	$1,526	$1,575	$1,625	$1,677
Vehicle Supplies & Material	$19,836	$20,471	$21,126	$21,802	$22,500	$23,219	$23,963	$24,729	$25,521	$26,337	$27,180
Motor Fuels & Lubricants	$374,918	$386,915	$399,297	$412,074	$425,261	$438,869	$452,913	$467,406	$482,363	$497,798	$513,728
Tires & Tubes	$51,370	$53,014	$54,710	$56,461	$58,268	$60,132	$62,057	$64,042	$66,092	$68,207	$70,389
Parts	$66,777	$68,914	$71,119	$73,395	$75,744	$78,167	$80,669	$83,250	$85,914	$88,663	$91,501
Supplies & Materials (Other)	$17,807	$18,377	$18,965	$19,572	$20,198	$20,844	$21,511	$22,200	$22,910	$23,643	$24,400
Tools & Machinery	$1,890	$1,950	$2,013	$2,077	$2,144	$2,212	$2,283	$2,356	$2,432	$2,509	$2,590
Travel	$67	$69	$71	$74	$76	$78	$81	$84	$86	$89	$92
Communication Services	$2,569	$2,651	$2,736	$2,824	$2,914	$3,007	$3,103	$3,203	$3,305	$3,411	$3,520
Utilities	$30,668	$31,649	$32,662	$33,707	$34,786	$35,899	$37,048	$38,233	$39,457	$40,720	$42,023
Contract Repairs & Maintenance	$13,798	$14,240	$14,695	$15,165	$15,651	$16,152	$16,668	$17,202	$17,752	$18,320	$18,907
Advertising & Promotional Media	$251	$259	$267	$276	$285	$294	$303	$313	$323	$333	$344
Other Obligations & Services	$13,804	$14,246	$14,702	$15,172	$15,658	$16,159	$16,676	$17,209	$17,760	$18,328	$18,915
Insurance & Bonding	$107,000	$110,424	$113,958	$117,604	$121,368	$125,251	$129,259	$133,396	$137,664	$142,070	$146,616
Indirect Costs	$44,490	$45,914	$47,383	$48,899	$50,464	$52,079	$53,745	$55,465	$57,240	$59,072	$60,962
Professional Services	$1,320	$1,362	$1,406	$1,451	$1,497	$1,545	$1,595	$1,646	$1,698	$1,753	$1,809
Other Fixed Charges	$5,034	$5,195	$5,361	$5,533	$5,710	$5,893	$6,081	$6,276	$6,477	$6,684	$6,898
Annual Operating Budgets	$2,721,407	$2,808,492	$2,898,364	$2,991,111	$3,086,827	$3,185,605	$3,287,545	$3,392,746	$3,501,314	$3,613,356	$3,728,984
TDP Service Enhancements:											
Town of Richlands - Weekend Service	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$72,400*	*$72,400*	*$72,400*	*$72,400*	*$72,400*	*$72,400*	*$72,400*	*$72,400*
Town of Tazewell - Weekend Service	*$0*	*$0*	*$69,900*	*$69,900*	*$69,900*	*$69,900*	*$69,900*	*$69,900*	*$69,900*	*$69,900*	*$69,900*
Tazewell Trolley - Expansion Route	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$204,400*	*$204,400*	*$204,400*	*$204,400*	*$204,400*	*$204,400*	*$204,400*
Vansant - Haysi Service (Phase 1 - Southern Gap)	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$107,100*	*$107,100*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*
Vansant - Haysi Service (Phase 2 - Full)	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$0*	*$385,000*	*$385,000*	*$385,000*	*$385,000*
Total Service Enhancements	*$0*	*$0*	*$69,900*	*$142,300*	*$346,700*	*$453,800*	*$453,800*	*$731,700*	*$731,700*	*$731,700*	*$731,700*
Total Operating Expenses/Service Enhancements	**$2,721,407**	**$2,808,492**	**$2,968,264**	**$3,133,411**	**$3,433,527**	**$3,639,405**	**$3,741,345**	**$4,124,446**	**$4,233,014**	**$4,345,056**	**$4,460,684**

Table 16. Transit Development Plan Capital Financial Plan

Capital Expenditures	FY 2024-25	FY 2025-26	FY 2026-27	FY 2027-28	FY 2028-29	FY 2029-30	FY 2030-31	FY 2031-32	FY 2032-33	FY 2033-34	FY 2034-35
Vehicle Replacement - 30 Medium Size/Light-Duty Transit Buses	$833,845	$835,000	$835,000	$1,169,000	$1,169,000	$990,000	$947,800	$989,000	$1,240,000	$989,500	$1,095,000
Vehicle Replacement - Three Light-Duty Minivans with Ramps	$0	$0	$160,000	$80,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	$190,000	$95,000	$0
Support Vehicle Replacement - Five Van, SUV, Pickup Truck, etc.	$0	$60,000	$120,000	$75,000	$0	$75,000	$75,000	$82,000	$82,000	$0	$88,000
Vehicle Support/Shop Equipment - Drive-On Lift	$0	$14,750	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Vehicle Support/Shop Equipment - Tire Changer/Mounter	$0	$12,844	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Vehicle Support/Shop Equipment - Wheel Balancer machine	$0	$11,800	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Vehicle Support/Shop Equipment - Air Compressor with Dryer	$0	$8,800	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
IT-Office Operations Equipment/ADP Hardware	$0	$0	$0	$0	$26,400	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
New Vehicles (TDP Service Enhancements)	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$167,000	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Total Capital Budget	**$833,845**	**$943,194**	**$1,115,000**	**$1,324,000**	**$1,195,400**	**$1,232,000**	**$1,022,800**	**$1,071,000**	**$1,512,000**	**$1,084,500**	**$1,183,000**