

APRIL 2004

Rapid City Transit Development Plan 2004 – 2008

Study Working Paper #1

**Prepared by: SRF Consulting Group, Inc.
Prepared For: City of Rapid City**

1 – INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this working paper is to present the results of initial tasks completed as part of the 2004 – 2008 Rapid City Transit Development Plan. This document establishes the community's existing conditions, in terms of demographic trends, growth trends, and current transit services and performance. It also presents a comprehensive route-by-route summary of Rapid Ride's current fixed-route system, and compares Rapid Transit System performance to a select group of peer city transit systems. The characteristics of the community and analysis of transit system performance is compared against a backdrop of needs identified by Rapid City transit stakeholders at a series of preliminary listening sessions held in November 2003. This working paper concludes with preliminary Needs Statements, Goals, and Performance Standards recommended for the Rapid Transit System, which were developed from the community input sessions as well as technical analysis of system performance.

2 – COMMUNITY & TRANSIT CHARACTERISTICS

Before analyzing a transit system, it is vital to gain a thorough understanding of the study area. Therefore, this chapter presents an evaluation of the region’s geographic, economic and residential characteristics.

STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION

Nestled in the foothills of the Black Hills in South Dakota, Rapid City is the county seat of Pennington County, and serves as a regional center for a large geographic area, including portions of Wyoming, Nebraska, North Dakota, Montana and South Dakota (see Figure 2-1). It is the second largest city in the state and has a steadily growing population.

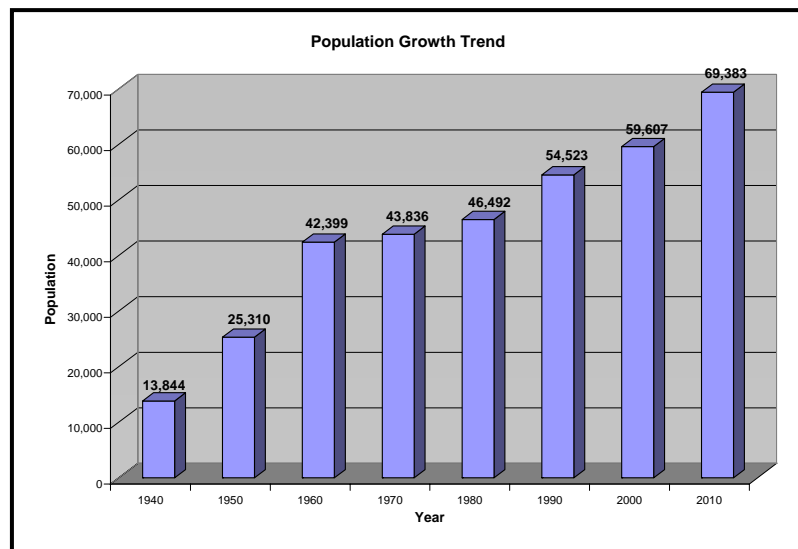
In Rapid City, the Rapid Transit System (RTS) serves the metropolitan area carrying over 240,000 passenger trips annually on a total of four fixed routes, with route deviation service available upon request. In addition, dial-a-ride service is provided for those who need curb-to-curb or door-to-door transit service.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

This section profiles the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the City of Rapid City. Several variables were examined, including population density, employment density, income, and senior and youth populations. All of these variables have been shown to influence transit ridership. All data used in the creation of the following were derived from U.S. Census, or information provided by the City of Rapid City.

Population Trends

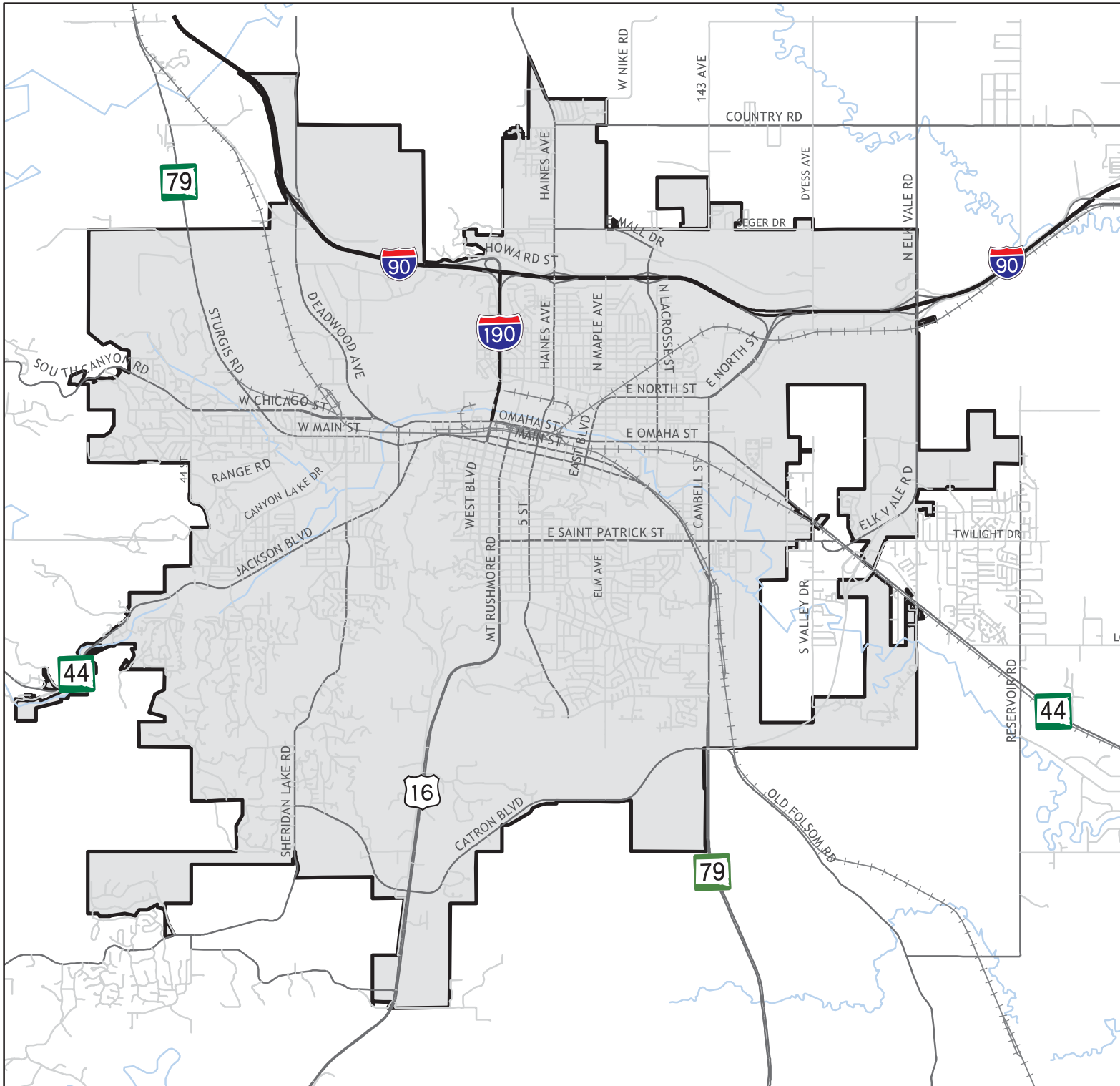
As of 2000, the population of Rapid City had grown to 59,607, up 28 percent from 1980’s population of 46,492. The City of Rapid City experienced its fastest rate of growth between 1940 and 1960. In large part, this growth can be attributed to the opening of Ellsworth Air Force Base and the military personnel and family members who were subsequently stationed in



Rapid City. From 1960 to 1980, population growth was relatively flat. In the decade

FIGURE 2-1
RAPID CITY
METROPOLITAN AREA

Rapid City Transit Development Plan



between 1980 and 1990, the City of Rapid City experienced a significant population growth spurt, with a percentage increase in population of 18.6 percent. This growth tapered off between 1990 and 2000, with a growth rate of 9.3 percent. Current (2002) population estimates for Rapid City are 61,401. Between 2000 and 2010, Rapid City is expected to grow by 9,776 people to a total population of 69,383.

The population density of Rapid City was plotted using commonly used thresholds for determining transit service provision (Less than 5.0 persons per acre, 5.0-8.9 persons per acre, 9.0-14.9 persons per acre, greater than 15.0 persons per acre). There are no block groups within Rapid City with a population density exceeding 15.0 persons per acre (see Figure 2-2). There are three general areas of Rapid City with relatively high population density (9.0-14.9 persons per acre). The first area is located south of Interstate 90, east of Interstate 190, and north of Rapid Creek. The second area, downtown Rapid City, is located south of Rapid Creek and north of Fairmont Boulevard. The third area is the least contiguous and is located along Jackson Boulevard and West Main Street in the western portion of the City.

Current Employment

According to the South Dakota Department of Labor, Labor Market Information Center, current (2002) employment in Rapid City was 48,760. The service sector represents the largest share of total non-farm employment in Rapid City, followed closely by the retail trade sector. Governmental services are the next largest employment sector, accounting for approximately 14 percent of all employment.

Income

Income levels serve as a useful indicator of potential transit use. Households with lower incomes tend to have less ability to provide reliable transportation for all members of the household using the private automobile. The median household income of Rapid City (\$35,978) is lower than the median household income of Pennington County (\$37,485) but slightly higher than the median household income for the State of South Dakota (\$35,282). There are distinct concentrations of lower income and higher income households in Rapid City (see Figure 2-3). The two highest income areas are located on the western edge of Rapid City, while the lowest income areas are primarily located in the central and northeast portions of the City. There are also corridors of lower-income households to the west of downtown along Jackson Boulevard and West Main Street.

FIGURE 2-2
POPULATION
DENSITY

Rapid City Transit Development Plan

Persons Per Acre

- Less than 5.0
- 5.0 - 8.9
- 9.0 - 14.9
- Greater than 15

2000 U.S. Census

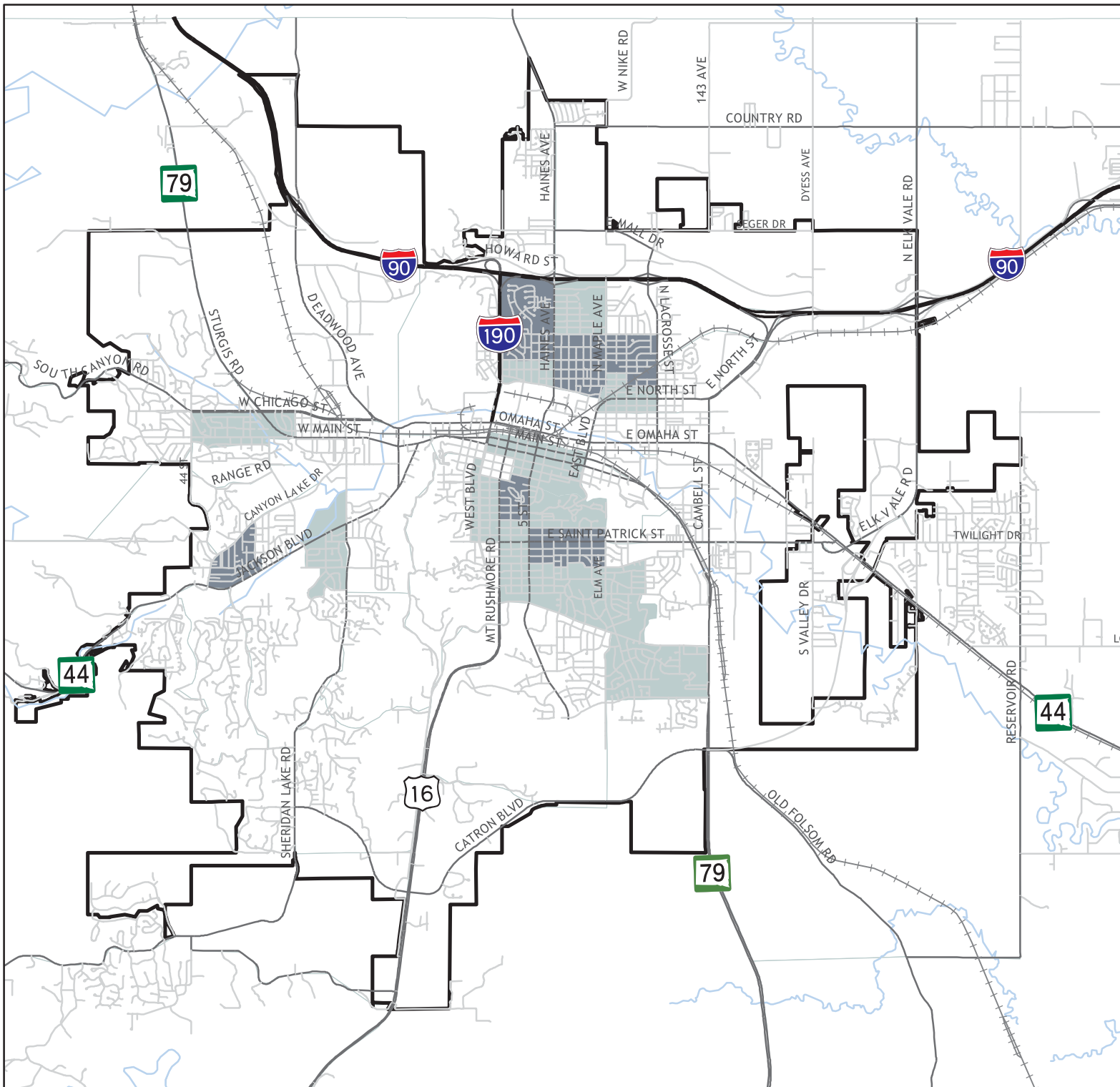


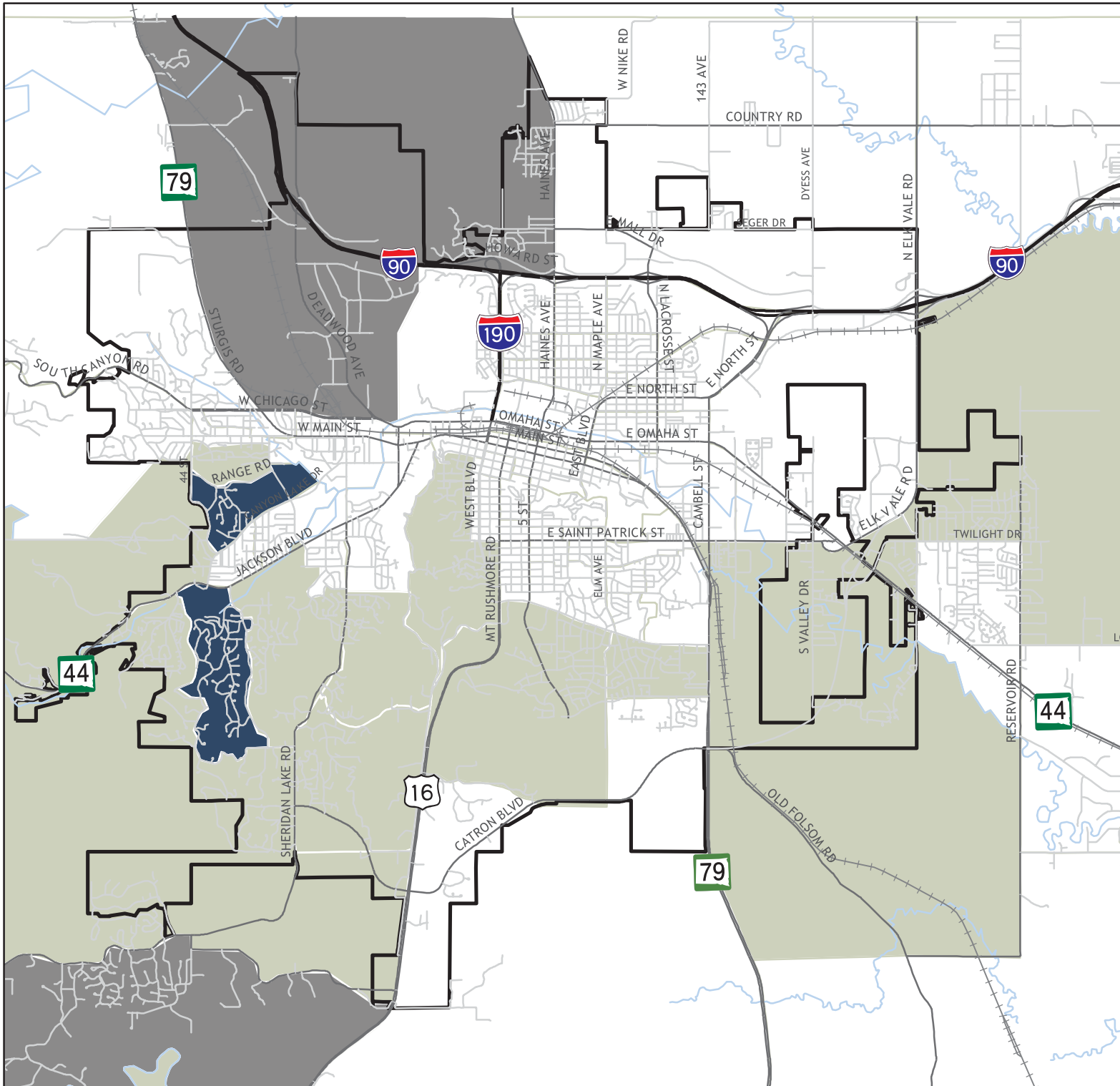
FIGURE 2-3
INCOME
DISTRIBUTION

Rapid City Transit Development Plan

Median Household Income*

- Less than \$45,000
- \$45,000 - \$60,000
- \$60,001 - \$75,000
- Greater than \$75,000

* Median Household Income refers to the reported 1999 values from the 2000 U.S. Census



Rapid City Growth

Information on city area growth over time is presented in Table 2-1 based on information provided by the Rapid City Planning Department. What can be clearly seen is that, since 1970, Rapid City is becoming a less densely populated city. This is in line with the experiences of many urbanized areas in the country. There are inherent challenges for a transit system in serving a population that is spreading over a greater and greater land area.

TABLE 2-1
Rapid City Growth (1950-2010)

	City Land Area (square miles)	Population	Population Density (per sq. mile)
1950	11.70	25,310	1,180
1960	14.59	42,399	1,735
1970	16.75	43,836	2,530
1980	22.08	46,492	1,985
1990	34.32	54,523	1,590
2000	41.55	59,607	1,435
2010	52.37	69,383	1,325

SOURCE: Rapid City Planning Department

Future Growth Areas

RTS's current service area is defined by the Rapid City limits. As with most communities around the United States, growth continues to occur in the fringe areas surrounding the city limits. A particularly high-growth area has been identified in Rapid Valley, just beyond the eastern edge of Rapid City. A Long-Term Annexation Plan has been prepared by the city describing the process by which developing areas will be annexed. As annexation occurs, transit service extension, along with other urban services, will become available to urban growth areas. (See Figure 2-4 for a depiction of urban growth areas.)

Senior & Youth Populations

Age can directly impact mobility, and thus positively influence transit usage. Senior citizens may not be able to afford an automobile, may be physically unable to drive, or may prefer not to drive. The youth population can also contribute to transit ridership. Along with their limited incomes, a majority of the youth age bracket have to cope with age restrictions and competency testing before they may obtain a driver's license. This results in a significant percentage of youths who are mobility-limited and who can consider transit as a valid transportation option.

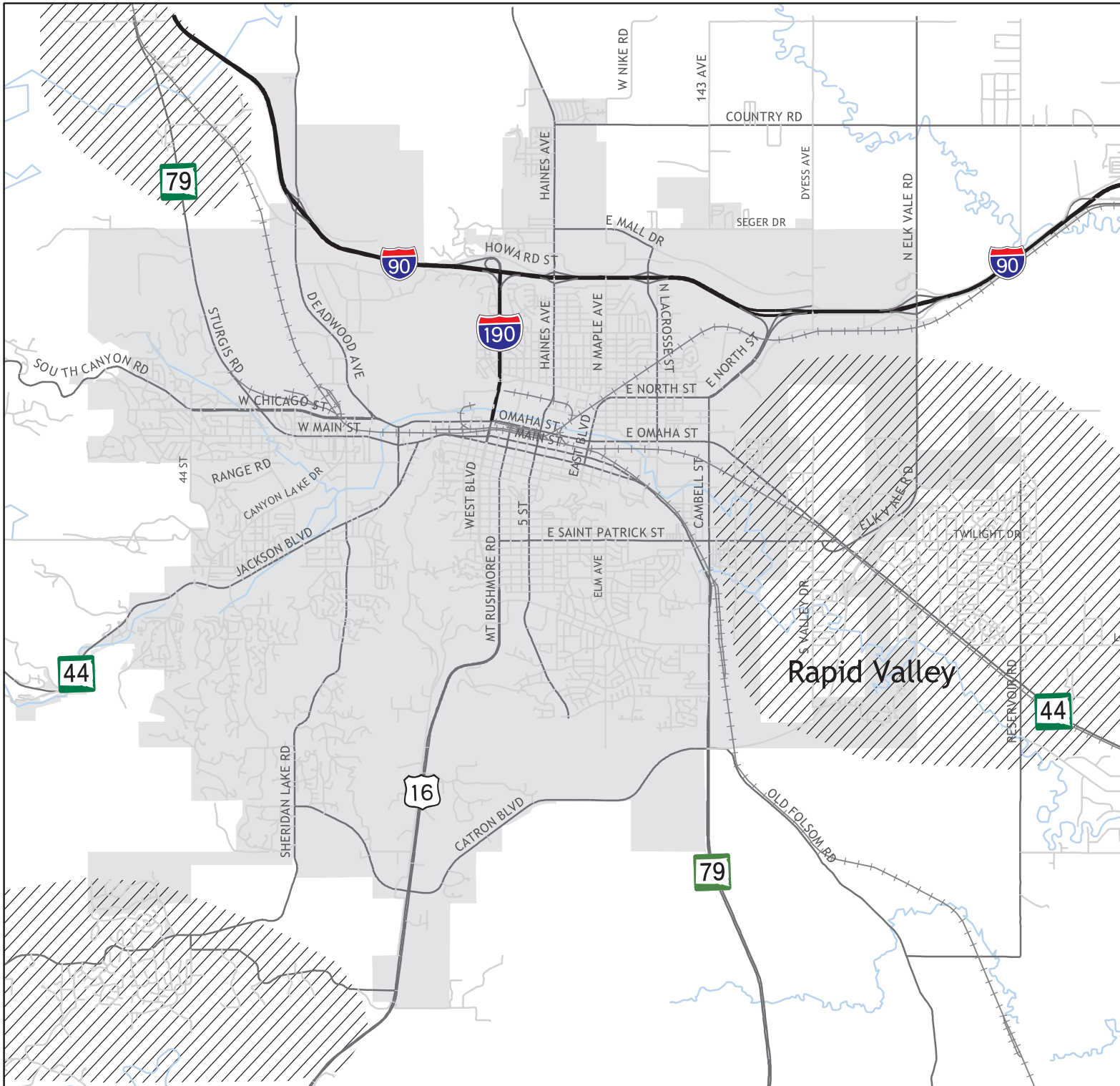
Of the 59,607 residents in Rapid City, there are approximately 7,888 seniors (persons age 65 years and older). Approximately 17,105 youth (persons age 19 and younger) live in the city.

FIGURE 2-4

GROWTH AREAS

Rapid City Transit Development Plan

- City Limits
- Growth Areas



MAJOR TRIP GENERATORS

In serving transit markets, important geographic points of interest typically include shopping centers, office and commerce concentrations, schools and learning institutions, health care facilities, and major employment centers. All of these generators should be considered when evaluating the adequacy of a region's transit service.

Major trip generators in Rapid City are summarized below, and depicted, along with current fixed-route transit routes, in Figure 2-5.

Major Employers

Many people rely on public transportation to commute to and from work on a daily basis. Major employers in Rapid City are summarized below in Table 2-2. Some of these employers have multiple worksites, such as the Rapid City School District, Rapid City Regional Hospital, and various government entities. Most major employers have single locations, however. The locations of these and other major regional employers are depicted in Figure 2-5.

Table 2-2: Major Employers in Rapid City

Business Name	Employment Range
Rapid City Regional Hospital	1,000+
Rapid City School District	1,000+
Federal Government	1,000+
State of South Dakota	500-999
Conseco	500-999
Walmart/Sam's Club	500-999
Black Hills Corporation	500-999
South Dakota Army National Guard ⁽¹⁾	500-999
SCI	500-999
City of Rapid City	500-999
Spiegel	500-999
Pennington County	500-999
Douglas School System	250-499
Ellsworth Air Force Base ⁽²⁾	250-499
Black Hills Workshop	250-499
ASI, Inc.	250-499
Beverly Healthcare	250-499
Merillat Industries	250-499
South Dakota School of Mines and Technology	250-499

⁽¹⁾ Approximately of 290 non-civilians are employed

⁽²⁾ Approximately 3,250 non-civilians are employed

Major Commuter Routes

A major a.m. peak commuter route is from growth areas south of the city, on Sheridan Lake Road to Jackson Boulevard and then east to downtown and other central employment locations. While congestion exists along this route, it may not be of a sufficient scale to encourage drivers to switch to transit. However, this commuter route merits monitoring to see if transit service may be warranted in the future, should the demand arise.

Shopping and Retail Centers

Major shopping and retail areas in Rapid City tend to be located along major transportation corridors and include the Rushmore Mall, the East Family Thrift Center, the Midland Shopping Center, Baken Park, and the city's central business district.

Hospitals and Health Centers

Hospitals and health centers represent important destinations for the community. For this reason, it is of critical importance that these facilities are well served by the transit network. Major health care facilities in Rapid City are:

- Rapid City Regional Hospital
- Rapid City Regional West – Center for Behavioral Health
- Rapid City Indian Hospital (Sioux San)
- Rapid City Community Health Center
- Black Hills Rehabilitation Hospital

Schools and Training Centers

Schools and training centers are also important destinations often with large transit-dependent clientele. In addition to the elementary and high schools, Rapid City is the home of the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, a 4-year-degree college specializing in engineering and related fields. National American University provides 2- and 4-year degrees in business. Western Dakota Technical Institute provides vocational training in areas such as drafting and computers, and the University of South Dakota's School of Nursing offers a training program for nursing students. Black Hills State University offers a variety of courses offered at four locations around Rapid City: Ellsworth Air Force Base, Western Dakota Technical Institute, Rapid City Regional Hospital Health Sciences Building, and the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

3 – Existing Transit Service & Facilities

This chapter presents an overview of the fixed route transit service and demand response service operated by Rapid Transit System (RTS). It presents data on the current fixed route system in terms of service levels, fare structure and ridership, as well as operating statistics and regional service coverage. The chapter also analyzes trends in the operating and financial data for all RTS services. These descriptions provide a baseline for understanding the current RTS from which further evaluations and recommendations can be made.

RAPID CITY TRANSIT SERVICES

RTS is responsible for providing safe, convenient and affordable local bus service within the city limits of Rapid City. In Rapid City, RTS serves the metropolitan area carrying over 240,000 passenger trips annually on a total of four fixed routes, with route deviation service available on request on Routes 3A, 3B, and 4B. In addition, dial-a-ride service, providing over 71,000 passenger trips annually, is provided for those whose needs are not met by fixed route services.

FIXED ROUTE SERVICE DESCRIPTION

The City of Rapid City, through RTS, operates a fixed-route system, known as RapidRide, which consists of four routes that serve the north, south, and west parts of the community (see Figure 3-1). This service was initiated in 1992, well after the city's Dial-a-Ride service began (1982).

Days & Hours of Operation

RTS operates Rapid Ride Monday-Friday 6:25 AM through 5:55 PM. Rapid Ride does not operate on weekends or holidays.

Service Frequency

Each of the four Rapid Ride routes operates on a 35-minute headway during regular weekday service. Each of the four Rapid Ride routes has an "A" and a "B" loop (see Figure 3-1). The two loops for each route differ by direction (clockwise or counter-clockwise). On three of the four routes (Routes 1-3) slight modifications are made between the A and B routing. For each route, buses depart from the Milo Barber Transportation Center (MBTC), travel the loop route in one direction and arrive back at the MBTC 25 minutes later. Then the buses have a 10-minute layover before they depart from the MBTC on the same route but in the opposite direction. The buses arrive back at the MBTC 25 minutes later, completing the trip. Thus, a full round trip, including both "A" and "B" loops takes 70 minutes. There are 10 round trips (A and B loops completed) daily on each route. Table 3-1 summarizes currently scheduled service.

Table 3-1: Rapid Ride Route Length & Running Times

A Route		MBTC Layover	B Route		MBTC Layover
Begin	End		Begin	End	
6:25 a.m.	6:50 a.m.	10 minutes	7:00 a.m.	7:25 a.m.	10 minutes
7:35 a.m.	8:00 a.m.	10 minutes	8:10 a.m.	8:35 a.m.	10 minutes
8:45 a.m.	9:10 a.m.	10 minutes	9:20 a.m.	9:45 a.m.	10 minutes
9:55 a.m.	10:20 a.m.	10 minutes	10:30 a.m.	10:55 a.m.	10 minutes
11:05 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	10 minutes	11:40 a.m.	12:05 p.m.	10 minutes
12:15 p.m.	12:40 p.m.	10 minutes	12:50 p.m.	1:15 p.m.	10 minutes
1:25 p.m.	1:50 p.m.	10 minutes	2:00 p.m.	2:25 p.m.	10 minutes
2:35 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	10 minutes	3:10 p.m.	3:35 p.m.	10 minutes
3:45 p.m.	4:10 p.m.	10 minutes	4:20 p.m.	4:45 p.m.	10 minutes
4:55 p.m.	5:20 p.m.	10 minutes	5:30 p.m.	5:55 p.m.	NA

Route Length/Running Times

For ease of transfer at the Milo Barber Transportation Center, all routes have 25-minute one-way running times (see Table 3-2). However, each of the four routes has a slightly different route length (see Table 3-2).

Table 3-2: Rapid Ride Route Length & Running Times

Route	Route Length	Running Time	Average Speed
1	6.9 miles	25 minutes	16.6 mph
2	7.7 miles	25 minutes	18.5 mph
3	8.5 miles	25 minutes	20.4 mph
4	8.9 miles	25 minutes	21.4 mph

Source: City of Rapid City.

Transfer Policies

Rapid Ride allows transfers to another bus, but does not allow transfers for stopovers or return trips. All transfers must be made at the Milo Barber Transportation Center. Based on a two-week sample, approximately 28 percent of average daily ridership is generated by transfers. The number of transfers between routes varies (see Table 3-3 below). The highest amount of transferring involves Routes 1 and 2 passengers transferring to Route 3 to complete their journey.

FIGURE 3-1

RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM
FIXED ROUTES

Rapid City Transit Development Plan

- Fixed Routes**
- Route 1A
 - Route 1B
 - Route 2A
 - Route 2B
 - Route 3A
 - Route 3B
 - Deviation to West Acres
 - Routes 4A & 4B

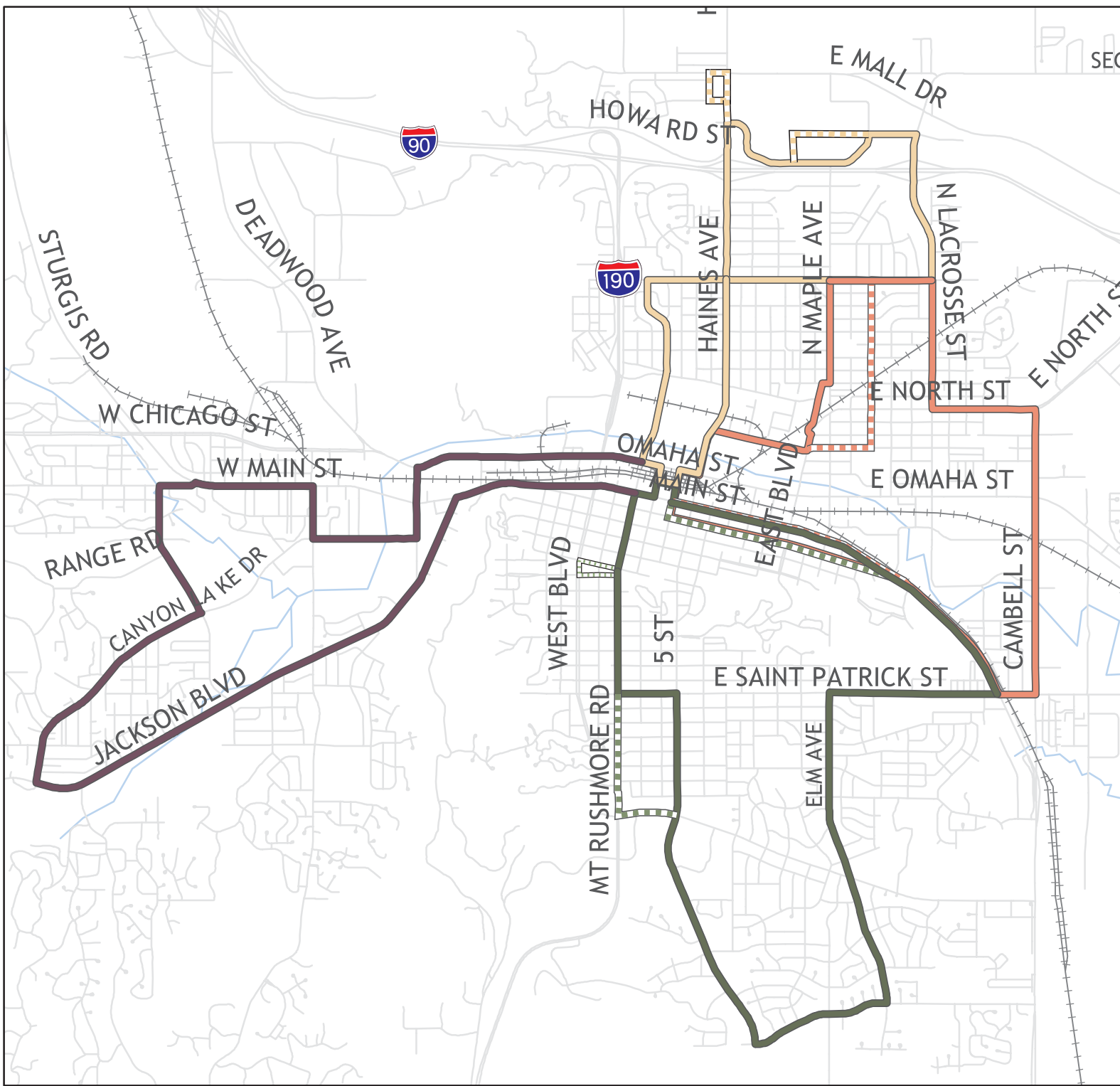
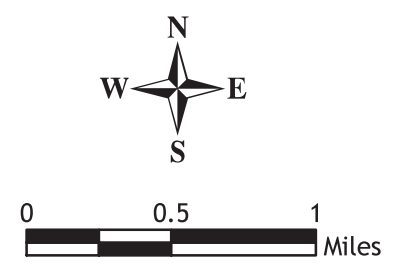


Table 3-3: Average Transfers per Day

		To Route:			
		1	2	3	4
From Route:	1		9.3	17.5	6.3
	2	10.0		17.8	7.8
	3	17.5	14.5		7.5
	4	11.3	10.5	9.3	

Fare Structure

Rapid Ride accepts cash fares and coupons for individual trips and also sells unlimited ride monthly passes. The standard adult/student (5-59 yrs) fare is \$1 per ride. The elderly, disabled and Medicare passengers ride for \$0.50 per trip. Children (4 years and under) ride for free. Books of coupon (10 coupons) can be purchased, for convenience purposes, at rates of \$10 for adult/student passengers and \$5 for elderly, disabled and Medicare passengers. Monthly passes can be purchased, for potential savings depending upon use, at rates of \$25 for adults and \$15 for students (K-12).

DIAL-A-RIDE SERVICE DESCRIPTION

This service is a curb-to-curb or door-to-door service for Americans with Disabilities (ADA) certified passengers. An individual with a disability must complete an application form and be approved prior to using this service. Upon determination and approval, riders receive a laminated card to document their eligibility. (No similar card system is currently in use for elderly and handicapped discount riders on Rapid Ride.) Individuals whose disabilities are so significant that they are unable to use regular, lift-equipped, fixed-route, bus service are approved for use of this service regardless. In addition, members of the general public are eligible to use this service, provided they live more than 3/4-mile from regularly-scheduled, fixed-route transit. Riders must schedule rides up to 14 days in advance of their trip, and a significant subscription service exists for Dial-a-Ride. A qualified rider must contact the dispatcher in order to schedule service. This is a shared ride service, and as such the length of a trip depends on the number of stops the bus will make for other passengers. However, every effort is made to ensure the shortest trip possible for the passenger. The City has a no-show policy that is in effect if a rider is more than three minutes late from the scheduled pick-up time. Dial-a-Ride on-time performance is judged by the vehicle arriving within 15 minutes of the scheduled pick-up time.

This service is available Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and Saturdays 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Paratransit service is not available on holidays. Currently all passenger scheduling and vehicle dispatching is done manually, using trip sheets and passenger manifests. Software solutions exist that would accomplish all passenger

scheduling and vehicle dispatching automatically. These solutions may improve productivity and operations of RTS's Dial-a-Ride operations.

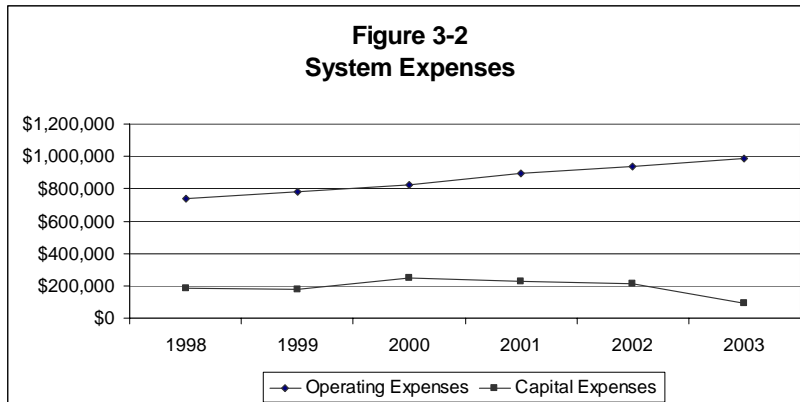
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Currently, the Transit Director is an employee of the Black Hills Council of Governments (BHCOG) and serves under an annual contract between the BHCOG and the City; however, this may change based on re-organization plans by Rapid City. Dispatchers, supervisors, and drivers are unionized municipal employees. All vehicle maintenance is sub-contracted out.

FINANCIAL & OPERATING DATA

System Expenses

RTS annual operating expenses have been increasing since 1998, climbing from \$741,499 in 1998 to \$990,160 in 2003 (see Figure 3-2). This is an average annual increase of approximately 5.6 percent. Annual capital costs have been holding relatively steady since 1998 at around \$200,000 per year, with the exception of 2003 when annual capital costs were below \$100,000.

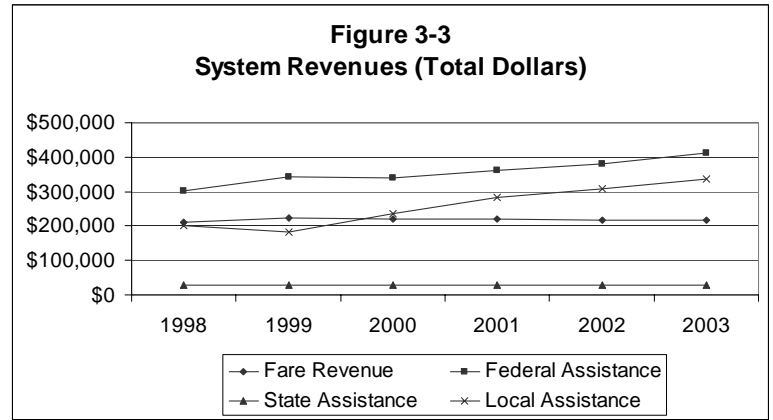


System Revenues (By Source)

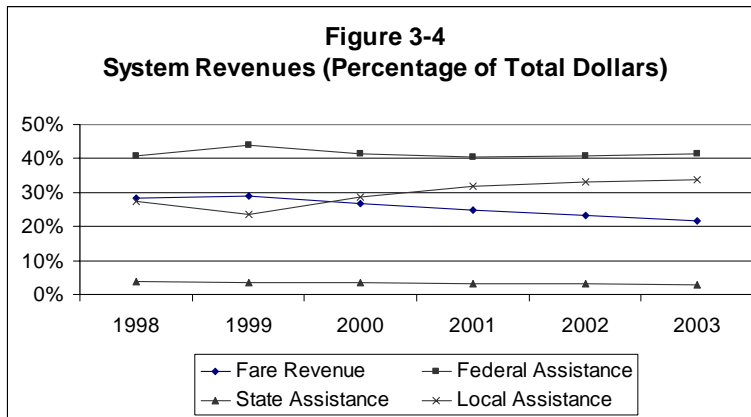
Like most transit systems, the services operated by RTS are far from being self-sufficient and rely heavily on a variety of funding sources to cover annual operating expenses. In addition to farebox revenue, RTS receives local, state, and federal assistance. Advertising is also a revenue source for RTS, albeit a small one.

Farebox revenue, in terms of total dollars, experienced a slight overall increase between 1998 and 2003, climbing from \$209,450 in 1998 to \$215,469 in 2003 (see Figure 3-3). Passenger funds as a percentage of total revenues exhibited a noticeable decrease between 1998 and 2003, falling from 28 percent in 1998 to 22 percent in 2003 (see Figure 3-4).

Local assistance, in terms of total dollars, experienced a substantial increase between 1998 and 2003, climbing from \$202,484 in 1998 to \$334,921 in 2003. Similarly, as a percentage of total revenues, local funds exhibited an increase between 1998 and 2003, climbing from 27 percent in 1992 to 34 percent in 2003.



State assistance, in terms of total dollars, remained constant at \$28,425 between 1998 and 2003. State assistance, as a percentage of total revenues, exhibited a slight decrease between 1998 and 2003, falling from 4 percent in 1998 to 3 percent in 2003.



Federal assistance experienced an overall increase between 1998 and 2003, climbing from \$301,140 in 1998 to \$411,345 in 2003 (see Figure 3-2). As a percentage of total revenues, federal assistance remained nearly constant at

around 41 percent between 1998 and 2003.

In 2002, RTS generated approximately \$12,400 from advertising, representing 1.2 percent of the system's total revenues.

System Performance (Fixed-Route Only)

The ridership of RapidRide, the fixed routes of the RTS system, has been in a decline since at least 1998, falling from 181,676 in 1998 to 145,915 in 2003. The discontinuation of school tripper service in 2000 accounts for approximately 23,000 fewer rides a year, according to the Transit Manager.

The revenue miles of RapidRide has been in a decline since at least 1998, falling from 184,674 in 1998 to 161,532 in 2003.

The revenue hours of RapidRide have been in a decline since at least 1998, falling from 13,303 in 1998 to 11,844 in 2003.

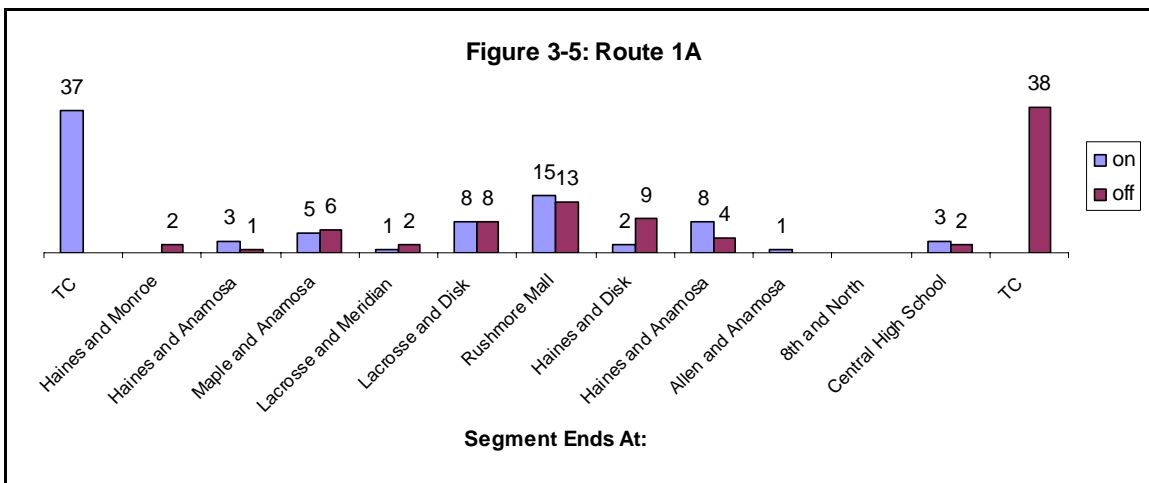
Based on a sample of daily boardings and alightings from December 2003, the top 10 Rider Destinations can be identified (see Table 3-4).

Table 3-4: Top 10 Most Active Bus Stops

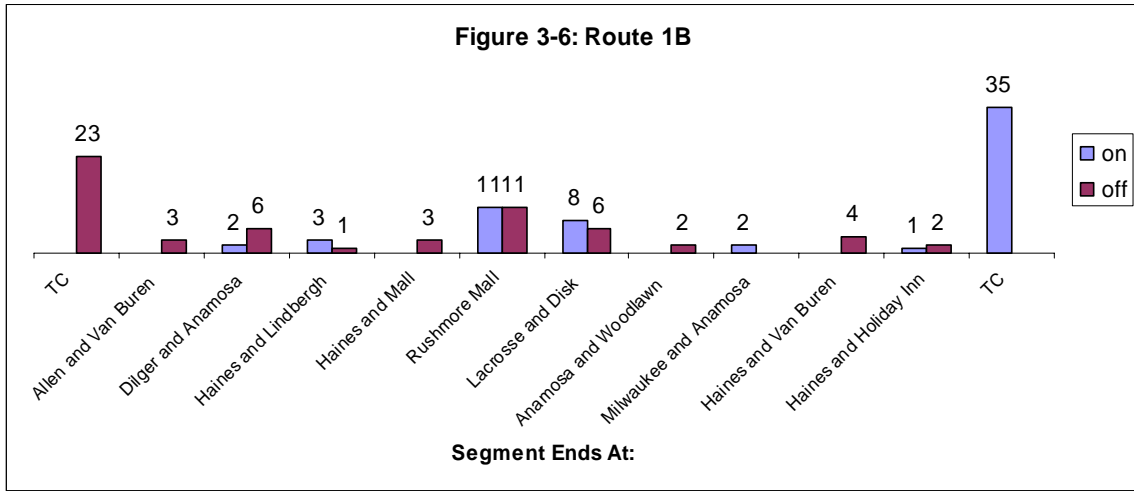
Rank	Route	Segment		On	Off	Total
		From:	To:			
1	1A	Rushmore Mall		15	13	28
2	2A	Wal Mart		13	13	26
3	2B	Wal Mart		6	20	26
4	1B	Rushmore Mall	Haines and Mall	11	11	22
5	2A	East and New York	End	9	11	20
6	3B	Mt. Rushmore and St. Patrick	Mt. Rushmore and Fairmont	6	12	18
7	4A	Soo San and Canyon Lake	Soo San and Range	6	11	17
8	4B	Soo San and Canyon Lake	Soo San and Range	10	6	16
9	1A	Lacrosse and Meridian	Lacrosse and Disk	8	8	16
10	3B	Elm and Minnesota	Elm and Fairmont	13	3	16

Passenger boarding and alighting data is portrayed in the following charts from a sample conducted in December 2003. The on and off activity for a full day's schedule is shown by route segments, with each segment about ½ mile in length. With transit routes beginning and ending at the Milo Barber Transportation Center, this stop (shown as end points in the graphs that follow) are the transit stops with the highest passenger boarding and alighting activity. Other noteworthy origins and destinations are discussed, by route, as follows.

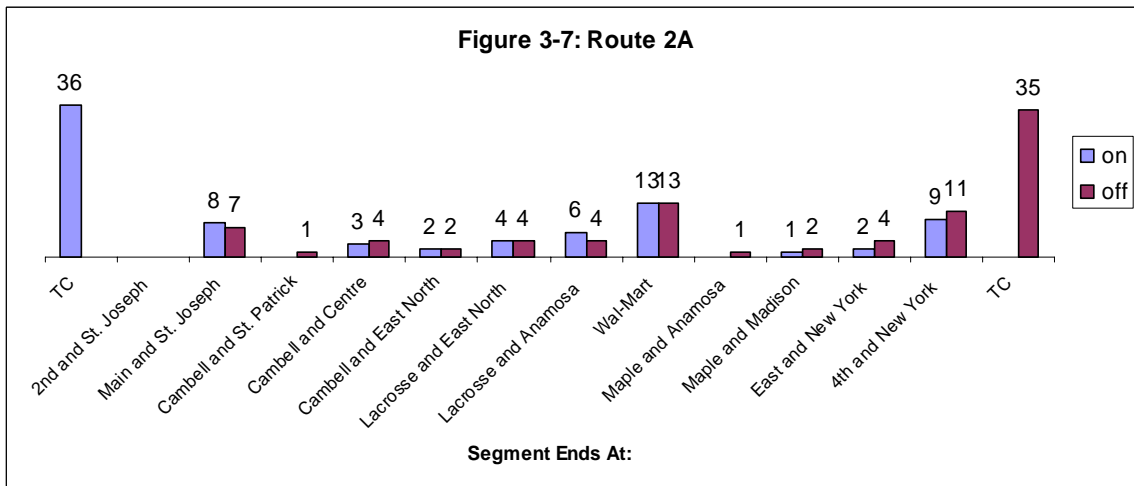
Besides the Transportation Center, the main origin and destination for riders on Rapid Ride Route 1A is the Rushmore Mall and nearby stops. This route shows good ridership along most of its way.



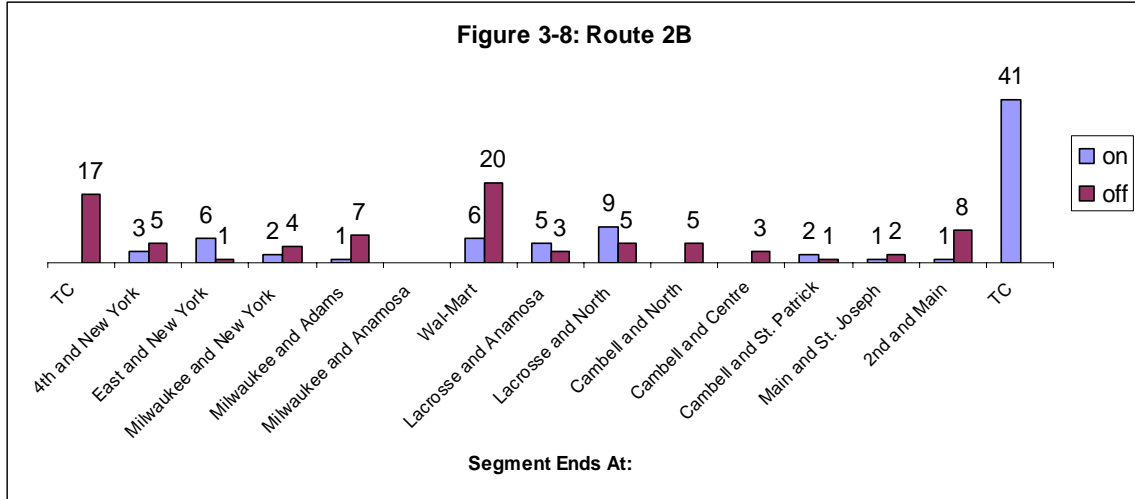
The main origin and destination for riders on Rapid Ride Route 1B is also the Rushmore Mall area.



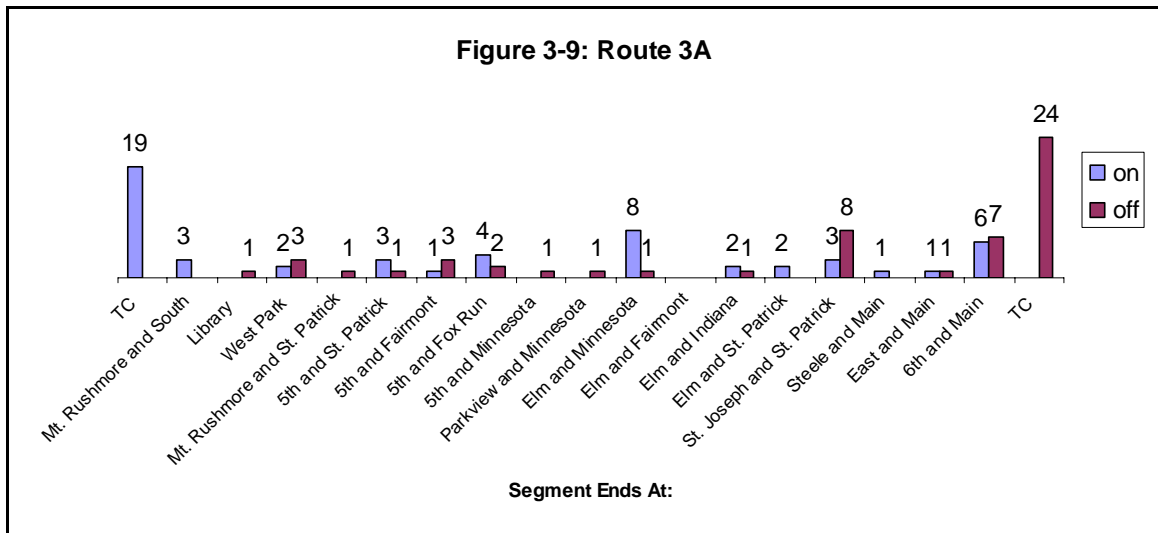
On Rapid Ride Route 2A, the main origin and destination for riders is the Walmart and the River Ridge High Rise / Boys Club near 4th and York.



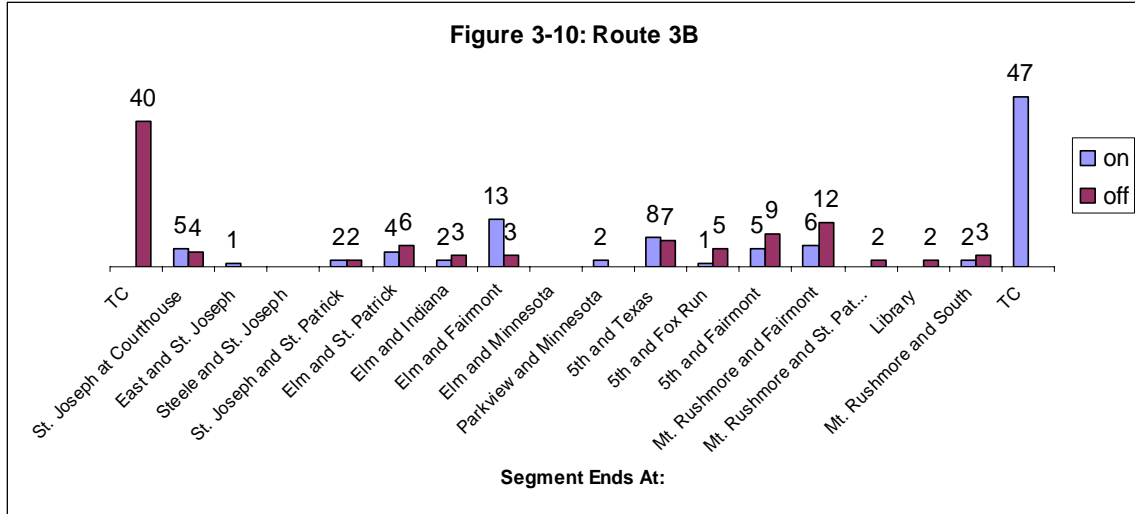
The main origin and destination for riders on Rapid Ride Route 2B is the Walmart. Another peak boarding and alighting location for this route occurs at an area of housing for temporary workers and primarily represents students riding to school. This route has reasonable ridership along most of its length.



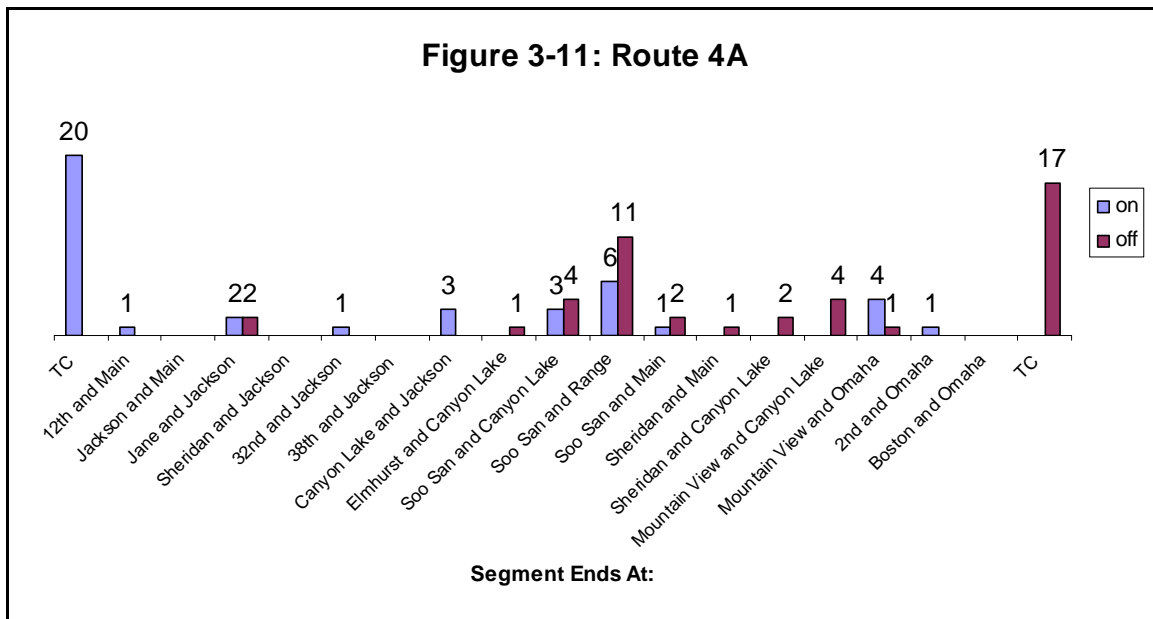
Two main places of passenger boarding and alighting on Route 3A occur at a senior housing facility and adult training center, with another high point occurring near downtown, representing use by shoppers and service workers.



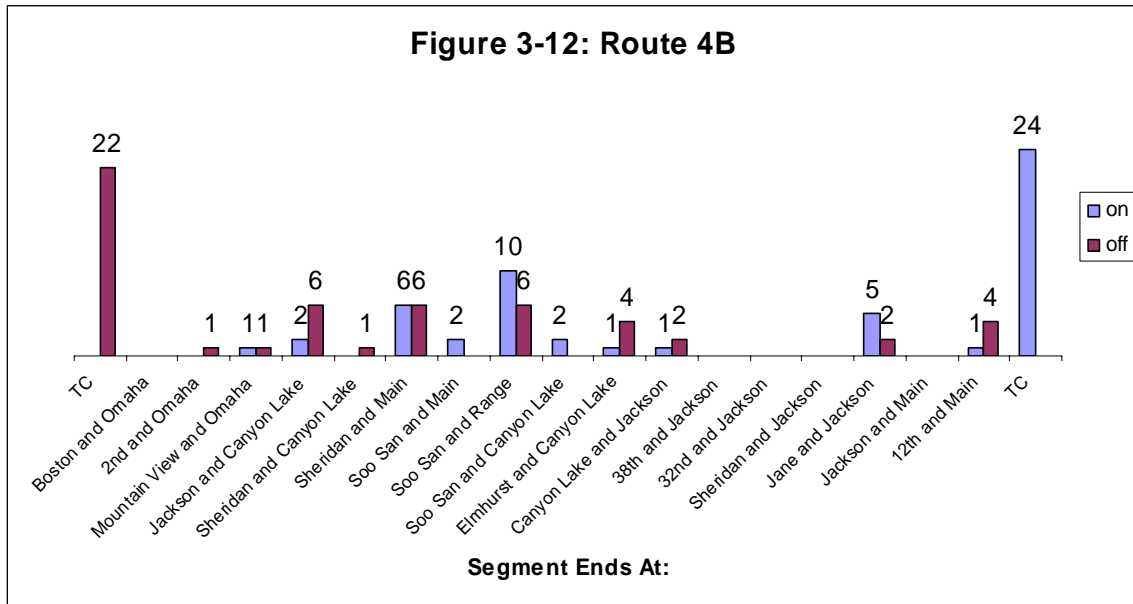
Besides the Transportation Center, the main origin and destination for riders on Rapid Ride Route 3B is the Valleyview High Rise and medical facilities, the Black Hills Workshop, and a multi-family housing complex at Elm and Fairmont.



High points of passenger boarding and alighting activity on Rapid Ride Route 4A occur at transit stops located near schools along the route. The ridership pattern for both Routes 4A and 4B indicate limited use along most of this route.



The main origin and destination for riders on Rapid Ride Route 4B is elderly housing located at the Jackson Boulevard and West Fulton and the Baken Park Shopping Center.



System Trends

This section examines the operating and financial indicators of efficiency over a five-year time period, from FY 1999 to FY 2003. This historical evaluation is useful to identify trends in system performance, as well as determining the causes of performance fluctuations.

Table 3-5 displays the total expenses and revenue for RTS for the years 1999 through 2003. Local assistance increased by 52.6 percent during this five year period, while state assistance remained constant and federal assistance increased by only 26.2 percent.

Table 3-5: RTS Transit Operating Expense & Revenue Trends, 1999 – 2003

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent Change
Fare Revenue	\$209,450	\$224,699	\$219,771	\$221,481	\$217,858	4.0%
Total Expenses	\$741,499	\$777,680	\$826,267	\$896,229	\$935,380	26.1%
Federal Assistance	\$301,140	\$342,054	\$339,823	\$361,755	\$380,061	26.2%
State Assistance	\$28,425	\$28,425	\$28,425	\$28,425	\$28,425	0.0%
Local Assistance	\$202,484	\$182,499	\$235,127	\$284,568	\$309,036	52.6%

Source: City of Rapid City.

Table 3-6 presents a summary of the core operating data for RTS transit services between 1998 and 2002. RTS provided 1 percent fewer revenue miles in 2002 than in 1998,

indicating little increase in service during these five years. Correspondingly, unlinked passenger trips decreased by 7 percent during the same period, having peaked at 250,808 in 1999.

Table 3-6: RTS Operating Statistics Trends, 1998 – 2002

Annual Operating Statistics	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Percent Change
Unlinked Passenger Trips	245,248	250,808	241,471	234,720	227,122	-7%
Vehicle Revenue Miles	338,362	349,375	347,066	335,250	334,891	-1%
Passenger Trips/Revenue Mile	0.72	0.72	0.70	0.70	0.68	-6%

Source: City of Rapid City

Note: Includes RapidRide & Dial-a-Ride

Over 70 percent of RTS's operating expenses are associated with labor costs. The maintenance and operation (fuel and supplies) of the fleet represent approximately 15 percent of the annual operating costs.

Table 3-7: RTS Operating Expenses, 2003

Operating Expense Item	Total Expense	% of Total
Salaries & Wages & Fringe Benefits	\$701,712	70.9%
Professional Services	\$65,005	6.6%
Insurance	\$39,448	4.0%
Maintenance	\$82,304	8.3%
Fuel & Supplies	\$64,176	6.5%
Rentals	\$33,206	3.4%
Other ¹	\$4,309	0.3%
Total Expenses	\$990,160	100.0%

Source : City of Rapid City, 2003 Operation Statistics.

¹ Includes advertising, travel, utilities, interdepartment charges, and miscellaneous items.

Table 3-8 displays the core operating and revenue data for RTS Dial-a-Ride transit service between 1999 and 2003. Both ridership and farebox revenue have increased by approximately 11 percent over this period.

Table 3-8: RTS Dial-a-Ride Fare Revenue Trends, 1999 – 2003

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Percent Change
Unlinked Passenger Trips	63,572	70,234	69,607	67,931	71,166	11.9%
Fare Revenue	\$103,113	\$124,685	\$120,132	\$113,843	\$114,805	11.3%

Source: City of Rapid City.

Facility Inventory

This section describes the capital program for RTS's transit services. It presents an inventory of the current RTS vehicle fleet, primary operating facilities, bus shelters and benches.

Fleet Inventory

The current RTS vehicle fleet consists of 17 vehicles (see Table 3-9 below).

Table 3-9 RTS Current Active Fleet

Make & Model	Year	Number	Seating Capacity	ADA	Propulsion
RapidRide					
Blue Bird	1997	1	24 + 2 WC	Y	Diesel
Blue Bird	1998	1	24 + 2 WC	Y	Diesel
Blue Bird	1999	2	24 + 2 WC	Y	Diesel
Blue Bird	2000	1	24 + 2 WC	Y	Diesel
Blue Bird	2002	1	24 + 2 WC	Y	Diesel
Dial-a-Ride					
Ford E-350	1996	2	8-10 + 0-2 WC	Y	Diesel
Ford E-450	1999	2	8-16 + 1-4 WC	Y	Diesel
Ford E-450	2000	1	8-20 + 1-4 WC	Y	Diesel
Ford E-450	2001	1	8-20 + 1-4 WC	Y	Diesel
Ford E-450	2002	2	8-20 + 1-4 WC	Y	Diesel
Ford E-450	2003	2	10-20 + 0-4 WC	Y	Diesel
Other					
Dodge Caravan	1995	1	Paratransit Use	Y	Regular Gas
Dodge Durango	2001	1	Supervisor Vehicle	N	Regular Gas

Source: City of Rapid City.

RTS experienced a total of 19 revenue service interruptions, or mechanical failures (9 for Rapid Ride and 10 for Dial-a-Ride) in 2002 (2002 NTD). During 2002, a service interruption occurs on average every 17,626 revenue miles.

Bus Shelters/Signs/Benches

Within the RTS System, there are a total of 94 transit benches and 33 transit shelters (see Table 3-10 below). Standard shelter designs used by RTS call for shelter dimensions of approximately 50 square feet in area.

Table 3-10 RTS Benches & Shelters by Route

Route	Benches	Shelters
1A	10	4
1B	8	1
2A	9	8
2B	8	4
3A	13	6
3B	14	4
4A	17	5
4B	15	1

Source: City of Rapid City.

Other Facilities

RTS currently does not have a maintenance facility. Because of this, many maintenance functions must be completed outdoors, unprotected from the elements. This adds a level of difficulty to even the most routine maintenance activities, with drivers washing buses in the street. RTS does, however, have an approximately 9,100 square-foot cold storage facility, known as the 3rd Street Alley Garage, located in the alley between 3rd Street and 4th Street. RTS can store all six Blue Bird buses and up to seven Ford buses in the facility as well as their supervisor vehicle. The remaining buses are stored in a surface lot adjacent to the Milo Barber Transportation Center.

The crown jewel of the RTS System is the Milo Barber Transportation Center, which was built in 1982. The facility is the primary transfer point and hub for transit service in the City of Rapid City. The facility contains offices for the RTS Management, Supervisors, Dispatching and Ticketing as well as other office space, a barbershop, and common area for passengers. In addition to RTS, Bus System's Inc. operates nationwide intercity bus service out of the facility.

4 – RELEVANT POLICIES, PROGRAMS, REGULATIONS, PRACTICES AND RIDERSHIP TRENDS

Federal and State Policies

The City's transit system is affected by various federal and state policies. These policies include regulatory measures, new program initiatives and funding-level impacts. City compliance with these wide-ranging policies is necessary if RTS is to maintain its federal and state funding eligibility.

Regulatory Measures

Every three years, the FTA completes a triennial review of the RTS. The last review was prepared in summer 2001. Although less exacting than a performance audit, the triennial review is the FTA's assessment of grantee compliance with numerous federal requirements. The review examines the grantees' management practices and program implementation activities.

The 2001 triennial review analyzed RTS's compliance with 22 different federal rules/programs. These 22 compliance areas included the following:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Legal | 12. Title VI |
| 2. Financial | 13. Public Comment Process for Fare and Service Changes |
| 3. Technical | 14. Half Fare |
| 4. Satisfactory Continuing Control | 15. ADA |
| 5. Maintenance | 16. Charter Bus |
| 6. Procurements | 17. School Bus |
| 7. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise | 18. National Transit Database |
| 8. Buy America | 19. Safety and Security |
| 9. Suspension/Debarment | 20. Drug-Free Workplace |
| 10. Lobbying | 21. Drug and Alcohol Program |
| 11. Planning/Programming of Projects | 22. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) |

The review found that RTS was in compliance with 19 of the 22 review areas. The three areas of minor deficiencies (Maintenance, Procurement, and Drug and Alcohol Programs) were remedied shortly after the customary exit conference held with the Transit Manager in July 2001, according to FTA Region 8 Officials (December 2003).

Based on FTA's three-year review cycle, RTS will again be evaluated during summer 2004. The City's Transit Manager has already been forwarded the desk audit material for this review. The only significant change since 2001 in the triennial requirements has been the addition of a new review factor, ITS implementation activities. In 2003, Rapid City completed a metropolitan ITS plan, which provided special deployment strategies to maximize transit system operational efficiencies. Therefore, RTS is well positioned during the upcoming triennial review to address

this factor. Also, although it is not a new compliance factor, FTA will be giving more emphasis to evaluating RTS's security and safety provisions, in light of the new national priority for such issues. FTA will review RTS's compliance with current federal requirements that state at least one percent of the system's federal allocation must be dedicated specifically toward enhanced transit security and safety. Further, while compliance findings are not anticipated to be made, FTA will be urging all public transit systems to implement various measures listed on FTA's Top 20 Security Action Items Self Assessment Checklist. It is possible that in future triennial reviews, a public transit system's progress on the checklist items will become a part of the formal review process, according to Region 8 FTA Officials.

Regarding state activities, the SDDOT has no formal transit system evaluation process and does not participate in the FTA triennial process. Further, after consultation with the State Transit Program Manager, it appears that the state will not be issuing any rules or regulations during the planning horizon of this TDP.

Emerging and New Programs and Initiatives

The first long-term commitment of federal support for public transit came with the passage of the Urban Mass Transit Act of 1970 by Congress. Since then, numerous congressional transit reauthorizations have occurred in 1974, 1982, 1991 and 1998. Each reauthorization, in addition to providing federal funding assistance to public transit systems, has promoted new programs or initiatives, such as: services for elderly and disabled persons, congestion and public transportation management system plans, and flexible capital funding transfers between highway and transit grant programs. Further ancillary federal legislation, such as the American Disabilities Act (ADA) or Drug-free Work Place laws have affected public transit operations, services and budgets.

It is anticipated that the next six year national transportation law reauthorization legislation which was carried over to 2004 by Congress will also generate new programs of opportunity. Specific programs of interest to RTS expected to be debated by Congress and possibly incorporated into the final reauthorization law include the following:

- **New Freedom Initiative:** An \$820 million formula program that reaches beyond existing transit programs to provide public transportation for people with disabilities, especially to get to work.
- **Transit Intensive Program:** A \$255 million formula program that recognizes public transit systems in small cities that are exceeding industry averages in providing transit service to their communities.
- **Intermodal Passenger Facilities Program:** An \$85 million discretionary grant program to accelerate intermodal integration among passenger modes, assuring inter-city public transportation access to intermodal passenger facilities.

- Job Access and Reverse Commute Program: A \$50 million increase in the current program, with a switch in management from the federal level to direct state allocations so that local projects, which assist low-income individuals resolve access problems to employment, can be competitively awarded at the local level and non-DOT federal funds can be used as the local match.

Apart from new reauthorization programs, another important initiative being launched by the US DOT, US HHS, US DOL, US DOE, is the “United We Ride” program. The goal of this new five-part initiative is to break down the barriers among the 62 existing federal programs meant to fund transportation services, and set the stage for local partnerships that generate common sense solutions for those needing public transportation assistance.

Another FTA initiative which is gaining great significance and will in the future undoubtedly have a greater impact on grantees, is FTA’s Security and Safety Emergency Preparedness program (as cited earlier). FTA is urging its grantees to evaluate and enhance their level of readiness. The goal of the program is to ensure that public transportation systems:

- Are prepared for and well-protected against attacks;
- Respond rapidly and effectively to natural and human-caused threats and disasters;
- Appropriately support the needs of emergency management and public safety agencies; and
- Can be quickly and efficiently restored to full capacity

To foster this increased readiness, FTA is encouraging transit agencies to incorporate certain practices into their ongoing operations and planned infrastructure improvements. Twenty specific actions are recommended covering such divergent transit activities as management/accountability, security problem identification, employee selection, training, audits and drills, document control and facility access. While many of the items on FTA’s Self Assessment Checklist may not be pertinent to RTS, it is expected that over time FTA field reviews will evaluate public systems performance on these measures.

A final focus of new FTA and FHWA initiatives pertains to Planning Emphasis Areas (PEA), which are annually identified to promote priority themes for consideration, as appropriate in planning efforts funded by these agencies. Both the Rapid City MPO and the RTS receive such

federal transportation funds. For FY 2004, five key planning themes have been identified. These include:

- a. Safety and Security
- b. Planning and Environmental Processes
- c. Management and Operations
- d. State DOT Consultation
- e. Enhancing Technical Capacity

Regarding activities at the state level, the SDDOT Transit Office indicates they anticipate no new state programs or initiatives in the foreseeable future, other than state administration of any new federal transit programs.

Funding Levels

Historically, federal funds have constituted the largest share of RTS's capital and operational funding stream. State assistance, while at significantly lower levels of participation, are also important to RTS, especially since these funds can be used to supplement local matching funds. RTS's federal funding levels have fluctuated over the past two decades based on federal budget priorities. Prior to 2003, RTS received approximately \$500,000 in federal assistance. Currently (2004), RTS receives approximately \$745,800 in FTA Section 5309 Transit Assistance. Future federal transit funding trends appear bright based on an analysis of the three six-year reauthorization bills under consideration by Congress. For example, the House reauthorization (TEA-LU) would increase 2009 transit funding to South Dakota to \$11.7 million, or \$7.2 million more than the FY 2003 levels of \$4.5 million. This authorization represents a 260 percent increase over present funding levels. If this same rate held for the RTS, by FY 2009 the City's federal transit funding could increase to \$1.96 million. However, it should be cautioned that actual Congressional appropriations seldom are as high as future year authorizations. Nonetheless, there is strong evidence to support the premise that over the life of this TDP (2004 – 2009), RTS can expect to see increasing federal assistance. Such a situation will require a sufficient increase in local match sources, if all federal resources are to be maximized.

As noted above, the SDDOT does provide RTS with a small amount of state funding. In 2004, this equated to \$28,425. No increases in State funding over the next few years are now anticipated, unless the State Legislature determines that expanded transit funding is necessary.

Factors Affecting Ridership

Transit provision in a small urbanized area like Rapid City is often characterized as a “safety-net” service, one whose primary focus is on providing mobility to those who cannot or choose not to drive an automobile. There are several factors that encourage this focus, many of which are beyond the scope of a transit development plan. These factors range from personal decisions based on consumer preferences to policy decisions made by many different levels of government. In Rapid City, the abundance of free parking, an absence of traffic congestion, and development characterized as relatively low density encourage automobile use. Other factors affecting transit ridership are more directly connected to transit service provision. These factors include a relatively limited source of local funding to cover both capital and operating costs, a route structure (with A and B loops) that may be confusing to riders, and other customer service and facility issues.

Comparison of RTS System Performance to Other Similar Systems

This portion of the Transit Development Plan is intended to compare the services currently offered by RTS to services offered by its peers around the nation, and to national trends representing an aggregation of all small urbanized areas. In doing so, a baseline can be provided for comparison to evaluate the current range of transportation services offered in Rapid City. This baseline, in combination with transit service needs identified through the public outreach process (documented in the following section of the Transit Development Plan), will provide the framework for developing system goals and objectives, and future service alternatives meeting the transit travel needs of Rapid City.

Peer Review

The performance of the RTS system was compared and contrasted with the performance of a group of selected transit systems from around the region. The intent of the analysis was to see how RTS performs relative to some comparable cities and transit systems operating in similar environments with similar characteristics. As part of this study, RTS is compared with peers from around the region. Each peer comparison employs a variety of performance indicators, including cost efficiency, productivity and measures of cost effectiveness. The peer group for this review consists of six systems that were selected based on a variety of factors, including population, system size, service area, and climate. Operating and financial data for this comparison are taken from the most recent National Transit Database (NTD), 2002.

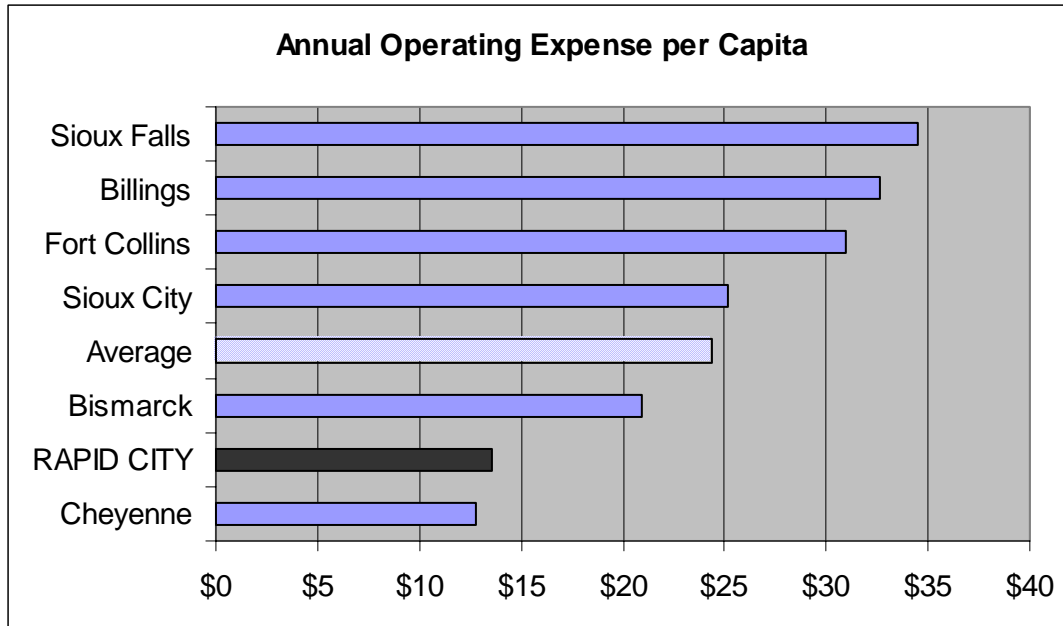
The peer review cities chosen were comprised of the following:

- Cheyenne, Wyoming
- Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- Fort Collins, Colorado
- Bismarck, North Dakota
- Sioux City, Iowa
- Billings, Montana

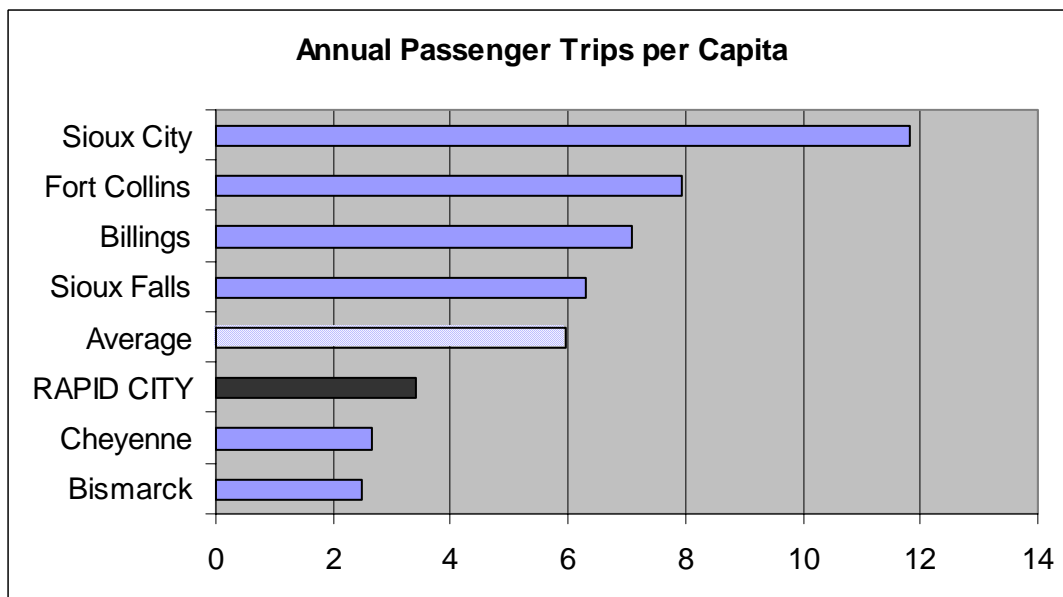
For each performance measure, with exception of operating expense per capita and passenger trips per capita, RTS’s Rapid Ride and Dial-a-Ride services were compared to their respective peer system counterparts rather than as a system total.

System Characteristics Peer Review & Trend Analysis

RTS has a low system-wide operating cost per capita compared to its peers (see below) and is providing service at a relatively low cost for the population size that it is serving.

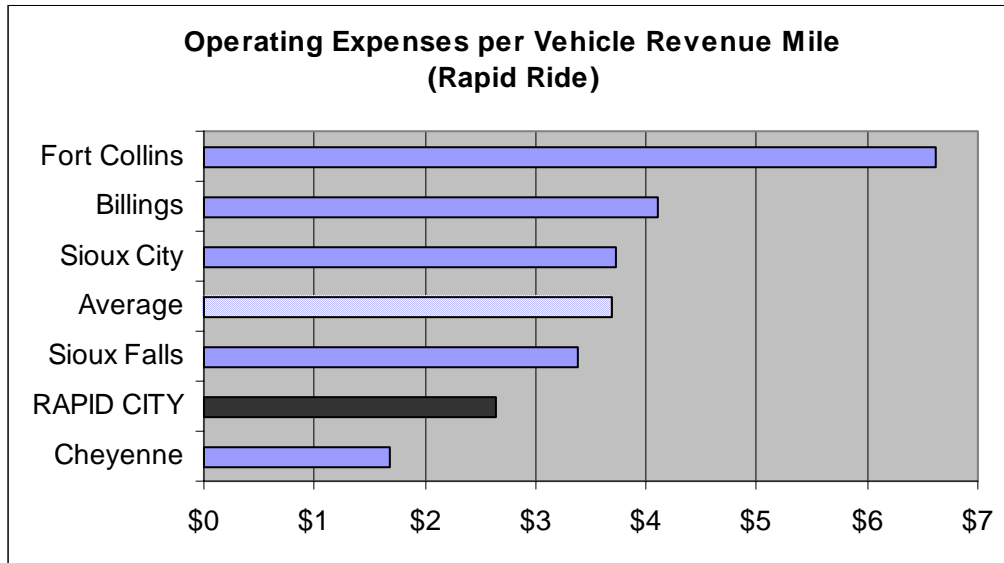


Conversely, RTS is serving a low number of passengers per capita in comparison to its peers. Although RTS is doing a good job at keeping operating costs per capita low, the net result is that service use is also low as measured by annual passenger trips per capita.

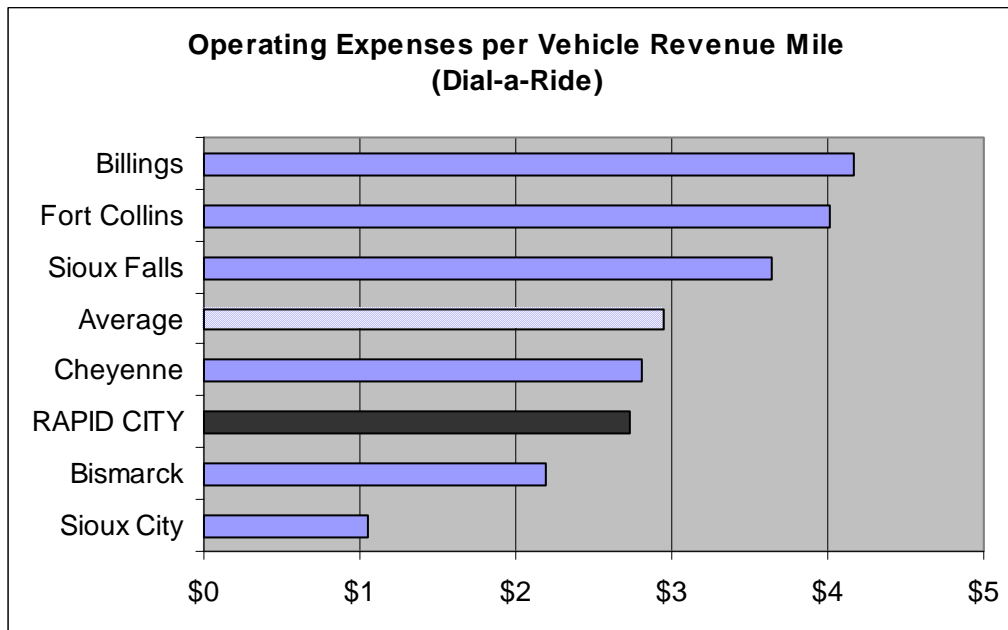


Financial Efficiency

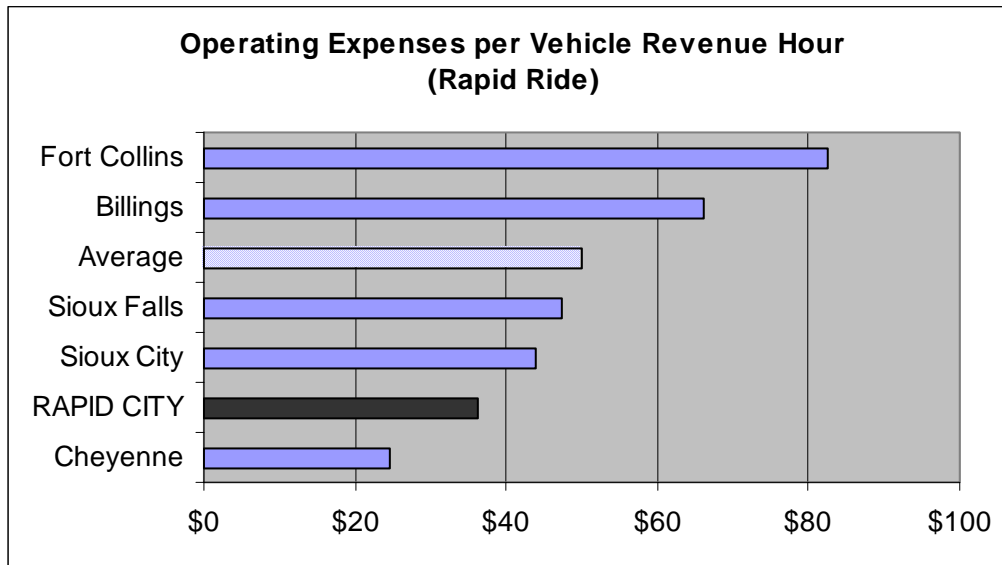
RTS's Rapid Ride cost per mile is relatively low and better than the peer average (see below).



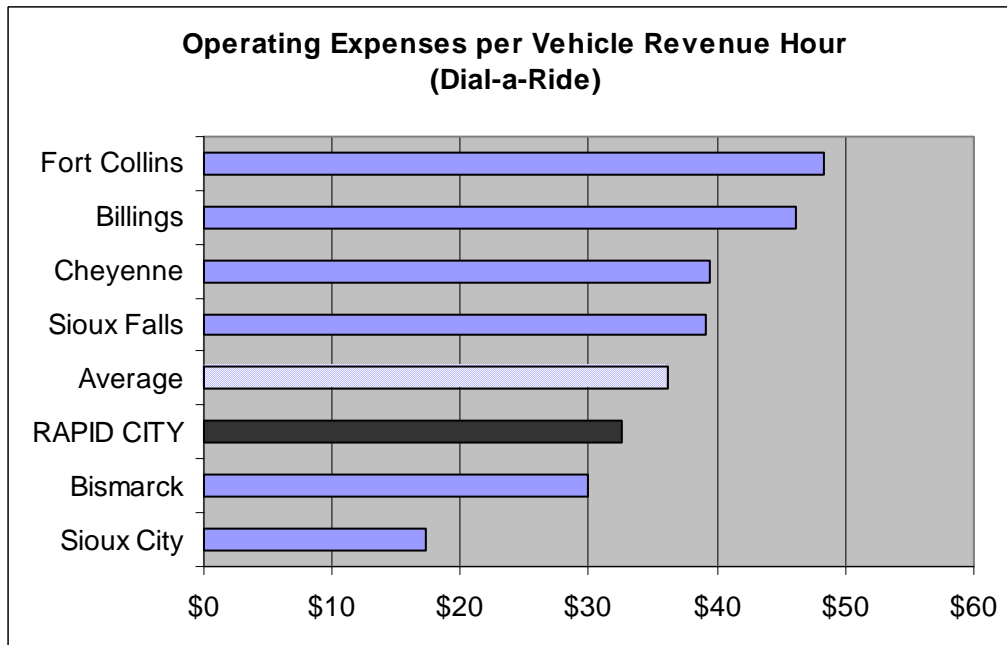
Dial-a-Ride cost per mile is also relatively low, and better than average when compared to RTS's peer group (see below).



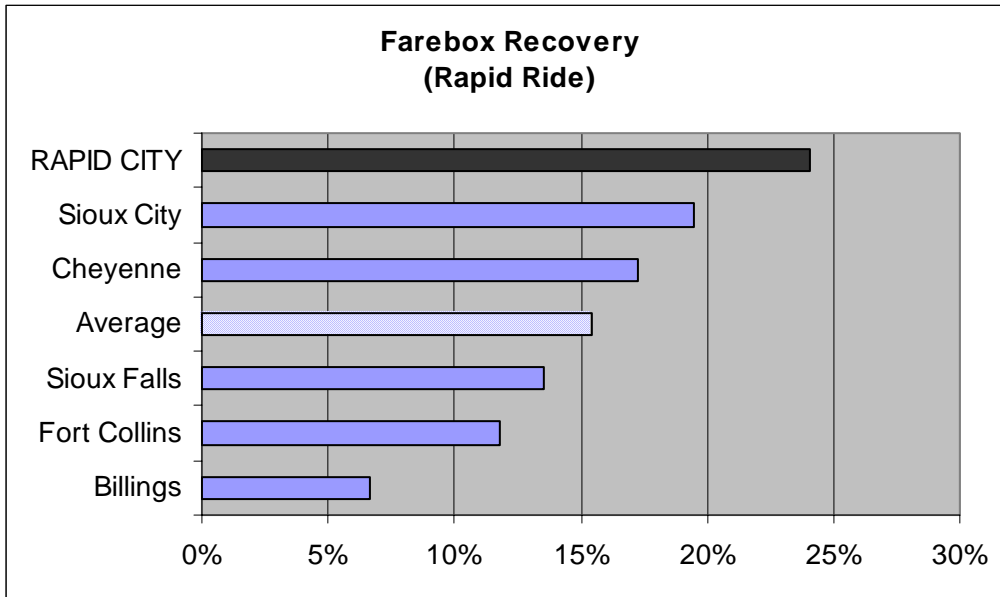
RTS's Rapid Ride cost per hour is relatively low and better than the peer average (see below).



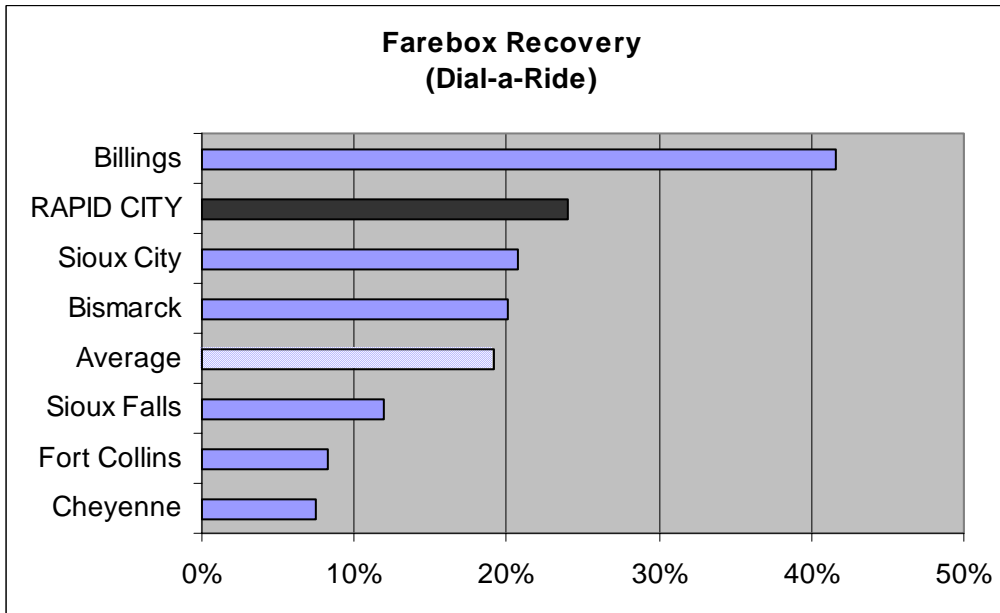
RTS's Dial-a-Ride cost per hour is better than the peer average but not substantially better as compared to some of the other peer systems (see below).



Rapid City has the highest farebox recovery rate of any of its peer fixed-route systems (see below).

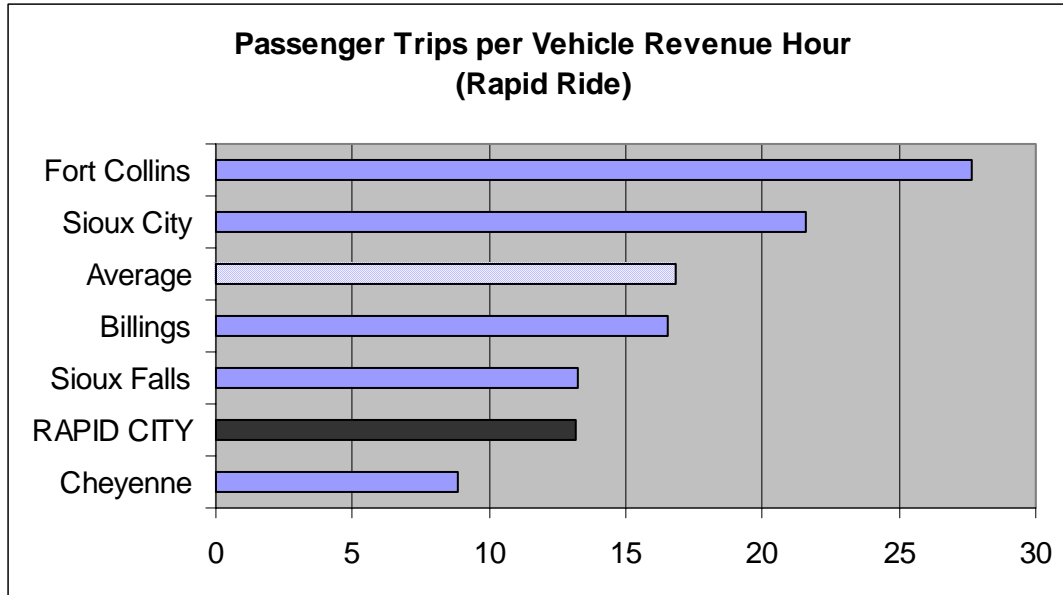


RTS's Dial-a-Ride farebox recovery rate is relatively high and is above the peer average (see below).

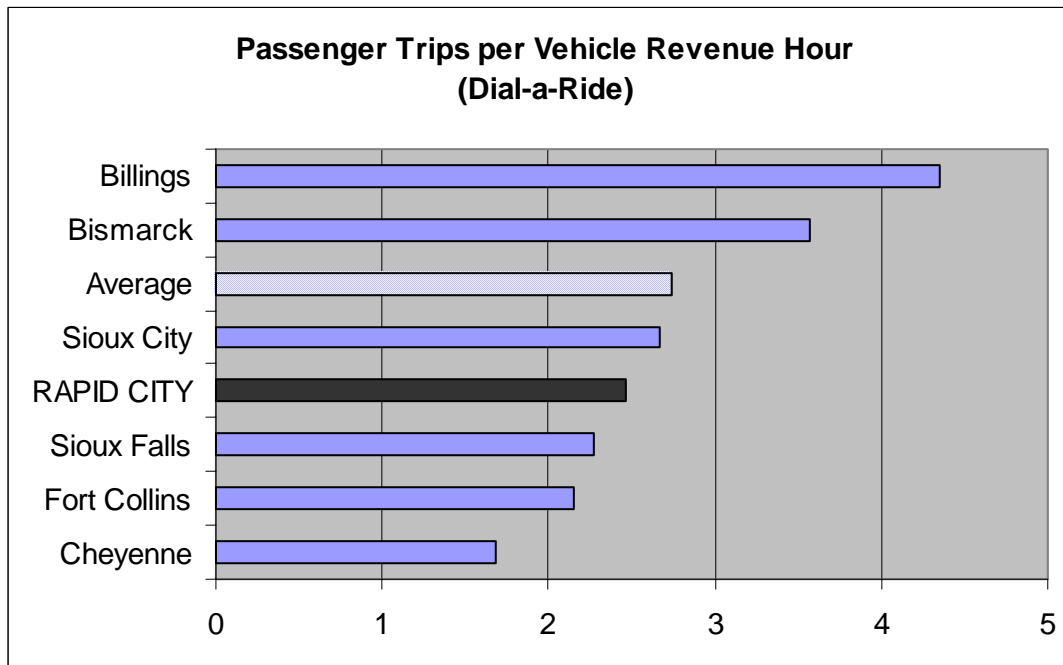


Service Effectiveness

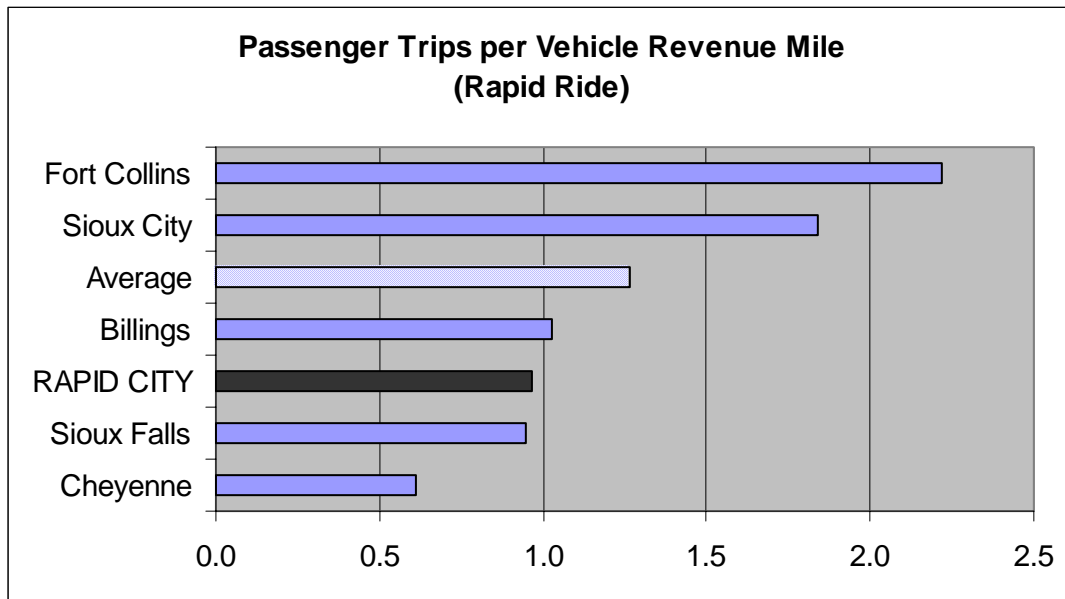
The total number of Rapid Ride trips per hour is relatively low and below the peer average (see below).



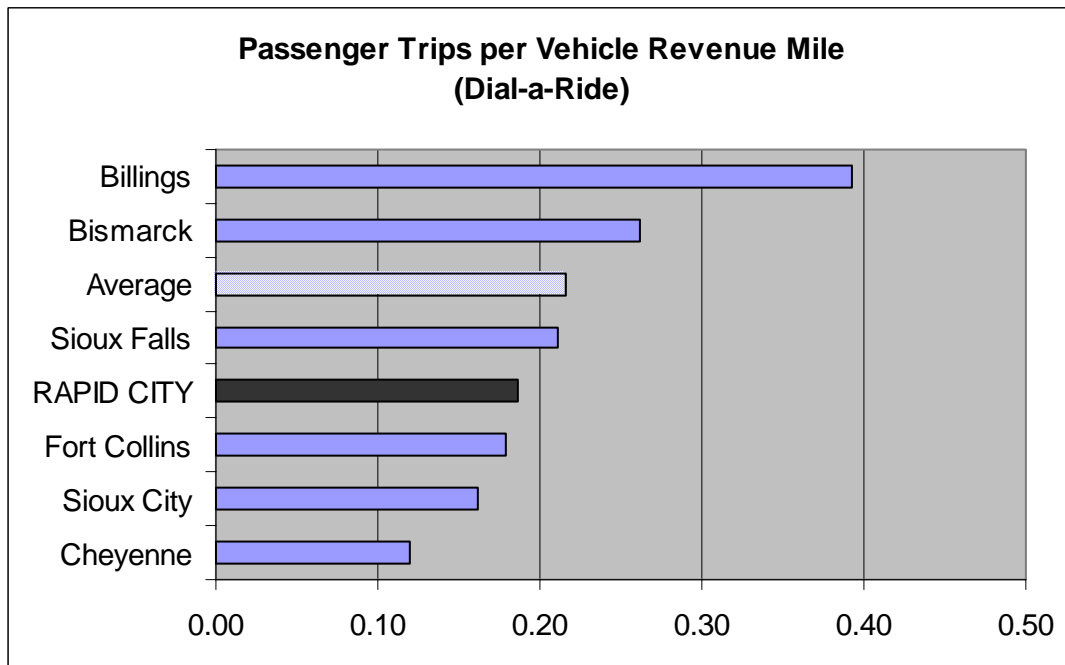
The number of Dial-a-Ride trips per hour is also relatively low and below the peer average (see below).



The number of trips per mile made by Rapid Ride is below the peer average (see below).

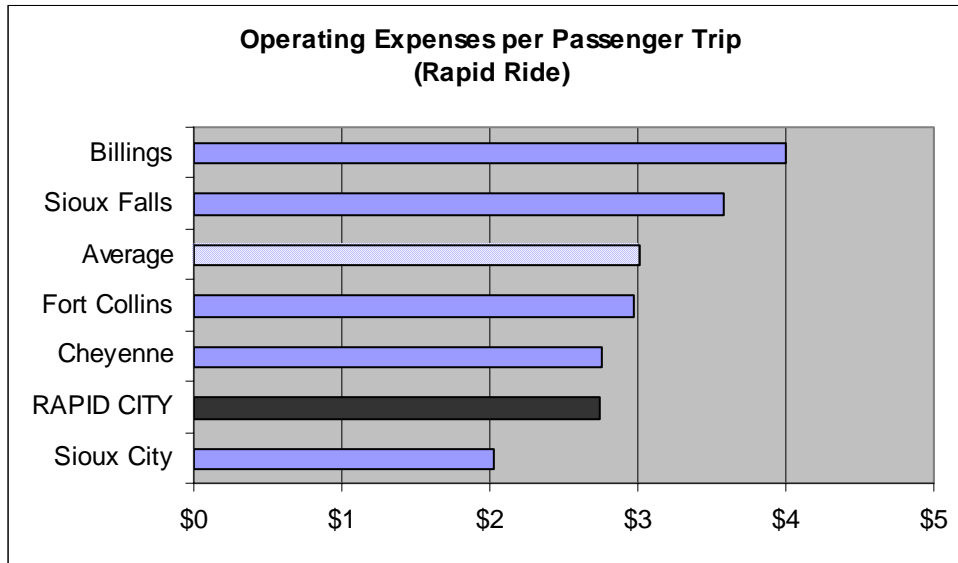


Dial-a-Ride trips per mile is also below the peer average (see below).

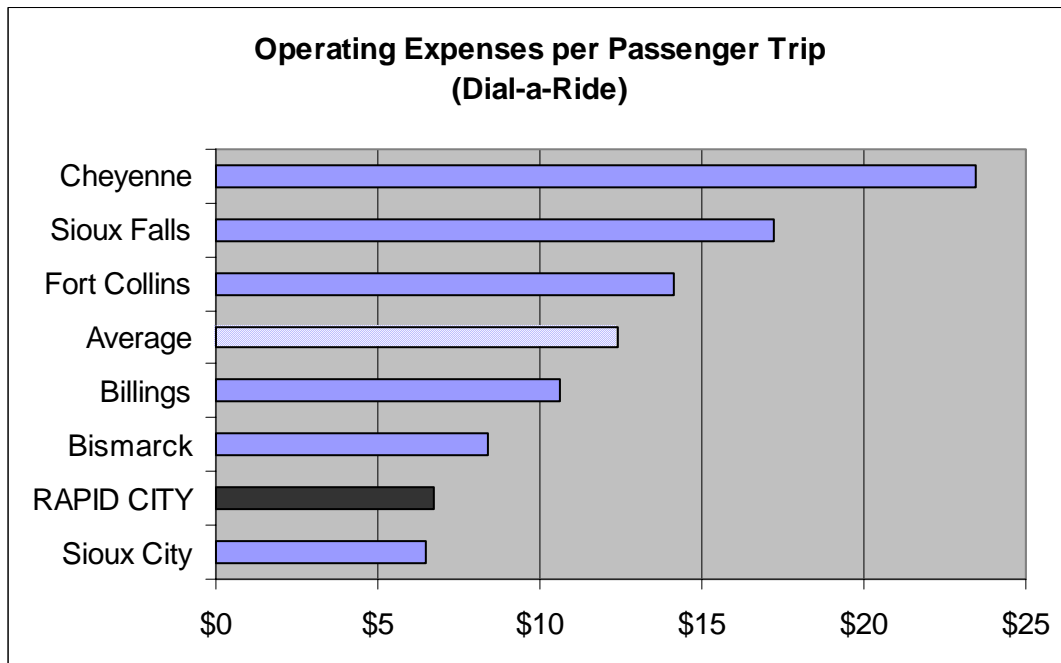


Cost Effectiveness

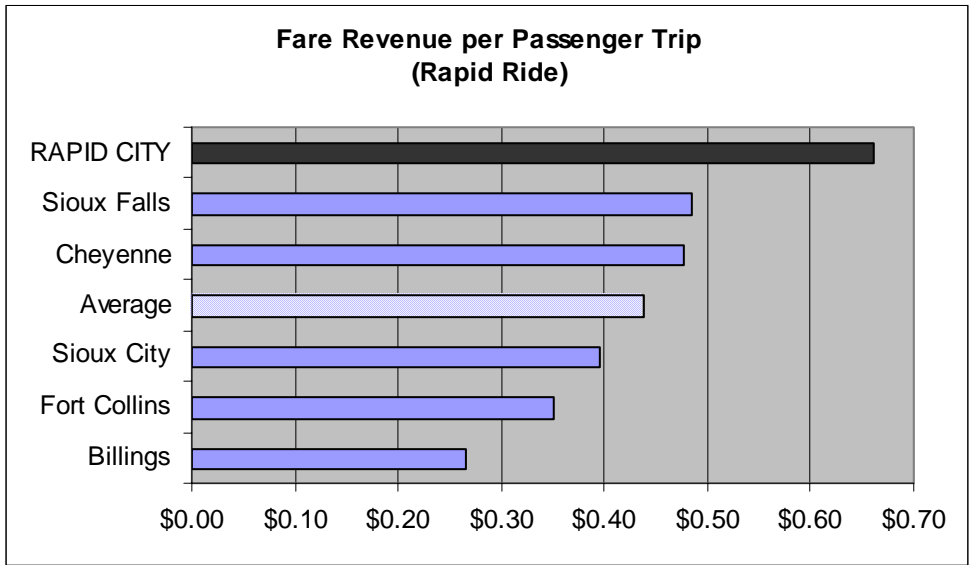
RTS's Rapid Ride cost per trip is relatively low and better than the peer average (see below).



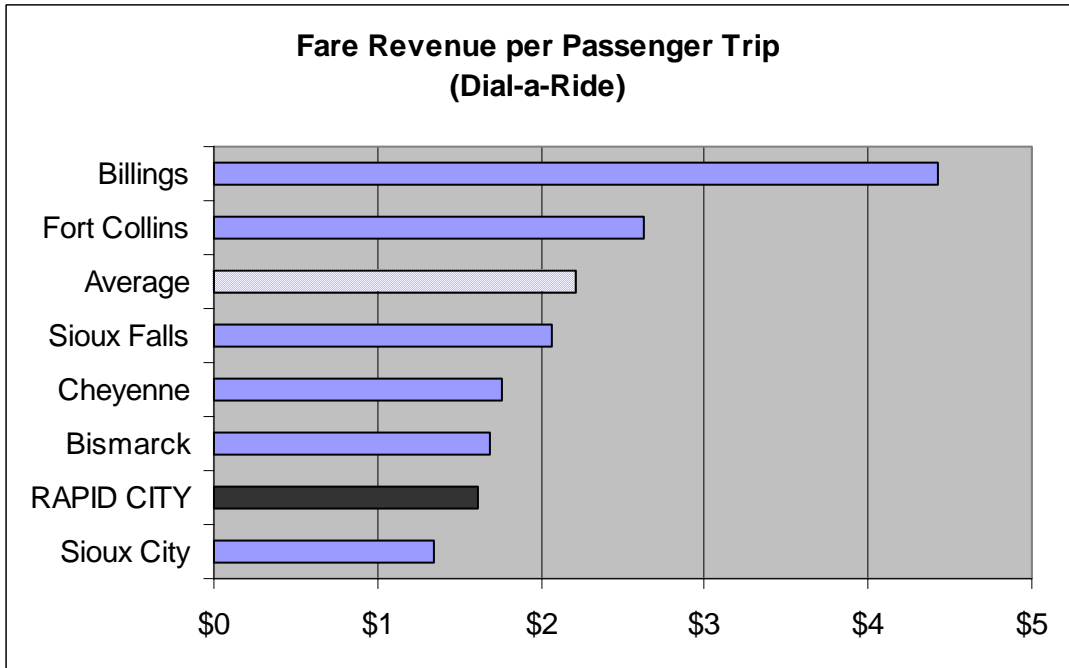
RTS's Dial-a-Ride cost per trip is better than the peer average and is substantially lower than most of its peers (see below).



RTS's Rapid Ride revenue per trip is far better than the peer average and the highest among its peer group (see below).



RTS's Dial-a-Ride revenue per trip is relatively low and below the peer average (see below).



Peer Review Summary

- RTS (Rapid Ride and Dial-a-Ride services) operates at a low per capita cost; however, it also generates a low number of per capita trips in comparison to its peers. The conclusion to be drawn is that RTS is a financially efficient system, but that the amount of service provided may not be high enough to generate the expected level of ridership.
- Both RTS's Rapid Ride and Dial-a-Ride services score high for financial efficiency when compared to other peer systems. For cost per mile, cost per hour and farebox recovery, both RTS's Rapid Ride and Dial-a-Ride services are above the peer average, and in some instances are either the best performing or second best performing system.
- RTS's Rapid Ride and Dial-a-Ride services score low on service effectiveness as compared to the other peer systems. For trips per hour and trips per mile, both Rapid Ride and Dial-a-Ride services are below the peer average.
- Rapid Ride fixed-route service scores high for cost effectiveness when compared to other peer systems. For cost per trip and revenue per trip, RTS's Rapid Ride service is above the peer average.
- RTS's Dial-a-Ride service scores high for cost effectiveness on one performance measure (cost per trip) but scores low on the other performance measure (revenue per trip).
- Overall, RTS's Rapid Ride service is above the peer average, and is the best performing system for one performance measure (revenue per trip) and second best performing system for the other performance measure (cost per trip). Comparatively, RTS's Dial-a-Ride service is below the peer average.

National Ridership Trends

In addition to the Peer Group analysis, a review of national transit ridership trends was conducted, using information from the 2000 National Transit Database (NTD). These findings are presented here.

- Small urbanized transit systems (between 50,000 and 200,000 population), make up 43.3 percent of all agencies reporting to the NTD.
- Over the last 10 years, small decreases in the farebox recovery ratio have occurred in small urbanized areas. This is consistent with Rapid City's experience.
- Small urbanized areas had a rate of increase for subsidy per passenger greater than for large urbanized areas. This was due in part to the expansion of fixed-route service in low-density areas combined with the expansion of demand-response services. Demand response accounts for a substantial portion of the service provided in small urbanized areas.

- From 1991 to 2000, there was no substantial change in fare revenues in small urbanized areas. Small urbanized areas are more dependent on operating subsidies than large urbanized areas. Nationwide, fare revenues account for less than 21 percent of operating funds for small urbanized areas.
- In general, there was a sharp increase in Federal capital assistance per passenger from 1995 – 2000.
- In small urbanized areas, fare revenues typically comprise 21 percent of funding sources, with local assistance accounting for 24 percent, state assistance for 23 percent, Federal assistance for 17 percent, and other assistance of 15 percent. The most startling difference between national trends and Rapid City is in state support, with Rapid City state assistance at only 3 percent of total revenues in 2002. Fare revenues account for approximately 23 percent of RTS funding (consistent with national trends), with local assistance at 33 percent, and Federal assistance at 41 percent (both greater than national trends).
- Federal fund account for more than 50 percent of all capital invested in small urbanized areas.

5 – Transit System Needs Assessment

Believing that transit system needs are identified not only by analyzing system performance data, but, just as importantly, from understanding the customer perspective, RTS held a series of listening sessions early in the study process to receive stakeholder input. A variety of outreach techniques were used, including an evening drop-in session held at the Rushmore Mall and focus group sessions held with bus drivers, policymakers, and riders. The general format for the sessions was to begin with an overview of the purpose and objectives for the Transit Development Plan, and then to discuss any concerns regarding current service coverage, time of service, type of service available, facilities and other needs. Approximately 40 persons attended these sessions over the course of two days.

After compiling a comprehensive list of identified issues resulting from the listening sessions, the input was organized into nine general “needs categories” in order to better track and address them. The needs categories that resulted are as follows:

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 1. Equipment and Facilities | 6. Marketing |
| 2. Elderly and Persons with Disabilities | 7. Funding |
| 3. Operational and Maintenance | 8. Fares |
| 4. Routes and Service | 9. Other Needs |
| 5. State and Federal Mandates | |

The following represents the list of identified RTS transit system needs.

1. Operations and Maintenance

- Dispatch Center:
 - A staff person should be present to answer phones whenever buses are running;
 - Call center is not TTY set up; anyone with a rotary phone is left out; and,
 - ITS transit applications should be implemented (as described in the recently-completed *Rapid City ITS Master Plan for Integration Strategies*) including dispatch software automating the scheduling process. This would make operations more efficient and service more customer-friendly. Currently 275-300 trips per day need to be schedules and over 200 calls are received. Managing this workload manually can be difficult and has led to some errors in scheduling, with drivers noting instances of double-booking on dial-a-ride services (drivers are supposed to be in two places at the same time) and passengers noting instances where they were given wrong information regarding service.
- Transit Administration:
 - Distrusted by some users;
 - Attitude is considered unprofessional by some; and,
 - Transit manager is not a City employee.

- Overall system is considered safe and reliable by riders.
- Bus schedules could be better designed and include information for new users to help understand how to use the system.
- Drivers:
 - Need more Dial-A-Ride drivers; volunteer drivers could be used to serve the increased number of retired people moving to Rapid City; and,
 - Could do a better job announcing stops;
- Sioux Falls does training on how to use bus.
- Buses are timely, even with road construction.
- During summer, extra traffic in town slows routes.

2. Equipment and Facilities

- Terminal (Milo Barber Center):
 - ADA improvements are needed;
 - Doors locked at 5:00 pm, but someone should man the phone until the last bus makes its full tour; and,
 - Maintenance Needs (exterior, roof).
- Pedestrian Issues:
 - Pedestrian signal timing at cross walks must be adequate to cross wider streets, e.g., North Street; NY; 5th & Omaha; 6th & Omaha; and,
 - Curb ramps at are critical at key intersections.
- Shelters:
 - Clocks at shelters are not maintained.
- Benches:
 - There is a general need to install and maintain bus benches.
- Vehicles:
 - Consider low floor, medium-size buses during replacement process over next few years;
 - Lifts are OK (but rear-end lifts may be better);
 - Amenities on buses are important from the customer perspective, e.g., ensuring that air conditioning is functioning, placing bike racks on buses, Air conditioning does not work well;

- Drivers were interested in having input in the decision to make capital purchases; and,
- Radio system should be improved and upgraded.
- Traffic Signals:
 - Traffic signals needed at the intersection of Range Road and Soo San Drive (particularly during school hours on mornings and afternoons) and Columbus and Mount Rushmore Road; and,
 - Left turn phases are short, citywide.
- Need Park and Ride lots.
- Maintenance of streets is critical to transit operations.
- Proper identification of vehicles and the routes they are running is very important for riders.
- Seek more involvement in State and City roadway/pedestrian design to assure transit friendly design.
- A maintenance facility adequate to serve the whole RTS fleet is critical.

3. Routes and Service

- A and B routes are confusing to passengers.
- In general, expand Rapid Ride and paratransit services to better meet customer needs.
- Road construction has affected routes, ridership, and access to the Milo Barber terminal; construction will continue in 2004 and 2005.
- There are not a lot of service options to areas outside Rapid City.
- Paratransit is more expensive to operate; so expansion of fixed-route service to meet needs would be cost-effective.
- A Rushmore Civic Center Circulator would be used during major events.
- Service Hours:
 - Need extra early morning or later evening service; evening service is preferred;
 - Service should be 5 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. – 7 days a week;
 - No time for errands after work (M-F), so Saturday Dial-A-Ride is needed;
 - Service industry, food service workers require off-hours service; and,
 - M-F, Rapid Ride service to 8 pm would be a good idea.
- Route Frequency
 - 35 minutes is acceptable, but 30 minutes is preferred;

- 20 minute recovery time (out of 70-minute round trip) may be excessive.
- Potential Expansion of Service (RapidRide)
 - Rapid Valley
 - Hill City
 - Somerset City and Piedmont
 - Box Elder
 - Dakota Ridge – Kids to Grantview Elementary School
 - Hermosa
 - Grocery Stores
 - Mall (service to front door)
 - Airport
 - Doctors and medical places south on 5th Street and 8th Street
 - Assisted living places along Sheridan Lake Road
 - Hospital (drop at front door)
 - Deadwood Avenue
 - Sturgis Road Development
 - Community center
 - Piedmont area (expand to serve fringe development)
 - Blackhawk – Fire hall
 - Surfwood Apartment Complex
 - West Hills Village
 - Hockey Rinks
 - Western Dakota Technical Institute – used to be a bus there; appears to be renewed interest in getting there.
 - Social Services
 - Job Services
 - Hotels (service for workers)
 - Sheridan Lake Road (housing area)
 - Civic Center (nights and weekends)
 - route service to Library (or ability to easily get deviation service)
 - Pull out on Omaha for new pool

- Wesley Health Care Center; Nursery; Apartments; (some high income though); assisted living (elderly)
- Routes to Drop:
 - Lakota Homes
- Routes Dropped from service over the years:
 - South Canyon
 - Hospital
 - Jackson high-rise
- Route Deviation
 - willing to pay a little extra for it;
 - Deviation to West Park (Rt. 3)– this is a special need that cannot be cut; and,
 - Used to have route deviation serving elderly housing on Jackson Boulevard;
- Use smaller buses on fixed routes; more like the DIAL-A-RIDE buses
- Should allow Dial-a-ride buses to travel on the Interstate
- Uncertainty of taxi service as a legitimate provider (insurance and billing concerns)
- Coordinate City Service with rural providers (ex. buy one ticket in outlying area and be able to use in town for free)
- Four (4) buses serve workshop clients – dispatcher has to deny trips (on Range Road portion) for Dial-a-Ride
- City growth in all directions requires transit expansion, but no funding for transit to serve all areas
- Review site development plans when they come up to look for opportunities to make them more transit friendly
- Routes are well planned to access maximum number of potential ridership sites, but they may be too large

4. Elderly and Persons with Disabilities

- Ensuring adequate levels of mobility for persons in Rapid City with disabilities is a mission critical part of RTS's services.
- People with disabilities need service later at night to be able to get to work and back home.
- Communication of Dial-A-Ride eligibility criteria and services is very important. Currently there appears to be a disconnect between the services, products, and other

components of RTS's paratransit service and the understanding of these services by paratransit customers:

- It is important that drivers are sensitive to the special needs of paratransit customers.

5. Fares

- Friday – free rides for seniors
- Some organizations buy blocks of passes
- Limited capacity to increase fares, may be acceptable for special services
- Student passes \$15
- Monthly passes \$25
- Summer Pool –Free (reimbursed by Parks District)
- Not much elasticity in increasing fares for Dial-A-Ride

5. State and Federal Mandates and Rules

- Ever-expanding federal requirements can be difficult to meet and requires a substantial effort that burdens RTS's small administrative staff
- RTS has historically had very good triennial reviews by the FTA.
- RTS has had a prompt response to changes in FTA rules.
- There is little State financial support for transit; however, there area also few State rules.

6. Marketing

- Marketing budget is very low.
- Need to identify list of agencies that can be contacted to help with transit marketing
 - Agencies should identify what marketing ideas and goals that might work to help promote the system (such as phone number, pamphlets, etc.)
- Media outlets
 - Try to have a new media event once a quarter or so (story on the users or drivers, etc)
- No employers provide transit incentives to employees
- Marketing options:
 - Free ride days (like in Boulder)

- Use transit service for special community events such as Holiday light tours
- Promote accessibility of fixed routes
- Food stamp people, department on aging, etc., are good candidates to help market
- Disability awareness day at Mall
- Use “sales” people to promote transit
- Provide a bus usage guide
- Transit awareness day at the Mall
- Transit awareness day at schools
- Transit awareness day at City Hall, major employers, downtown street
- Use current riders to promote usage within their local neighborhood.
- Transit staff can “train the trainer” to help agencies spread the word
- Promoting the image of Rapid Ride service:
 - Image is currently poor for disabled
 - Share positive driver stories
- In future – notices should list city e-mail and encourage e-mail comments

7. Funding

- New sources of funding
 - Bill State Medicaid for difference between full cost and user fee (like in Sioux Falls)
 - Medicare waiver revenue enhancement
 - Another potential funder is the Veterans Administration
 - 50 cent add-on to Driver license tab fee (like North Dakota)
 - JARC – federal \$\$ for employment issues
 - STP Flex Funds
 - CMAQ Funds
 - New federal funding programs resulting from reauthorization
 - Mall helps fund Saturday Dial-a-Ride service
 - Use welfare transportation money to fund transit (e.g., Moorhead)
 - Outlying businesses (medical clinics, etc) help pay for transit to their facilities

- Use money saved by not having to provide service to the YMCA/nursing homes (they provide their own service) to fund other service.
- Seek new local funding sources for use as federal match (explore social service agency purchase of passes, non-profit agency contributions for special transit needs, etc.)
- Ways to decrease current spending
 - Use volunteer drivers
 - Bid out driver/specialized services
 - Competition with privates on charter service
- New Spending needed
 - Subsidize taxis to make them accessible
 - Pay a little more to keep Saturday Service
- Seek alternative sources to replace loss of federal match
- Increase in federal funds has occurred but local match is the issue
- Once efficiency is proved, there is a chance to get new public investment
- Partner with different agencies/state
- Agency funding, Health and Human Services Revenue:
 - Department of Labor;
 - Health and Human Services;
 - Voc - Rehab Council;
 - Black Hills Workshop and Training Center – purchase passes; tickets
 - County could supplement City funding
- Transit susceptible to local budget cutting pressures, (ex., loss of Saturday Dial-a-ride service- later restored through grassroots rider input)

9. Other Needs

- Need transit alternative
- Dial-A-Ride users should be on the Advisory Board
- Quantify public benefits of public transit
 - Employment
 - Reduced accidents

- Reduced congestion
- List of agencies – FMCOG booklet Spec. Service
- Build coalition of user groups and public transit
- Food stamp people – pamphlet on how to ride bus
- Department of Social Services
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Black Hills Regional Hospital
- Black Hill Rehab

Next Steps

After organizing the identified needs into nine needs categories, the next step was to develop need statements, goals, and performance measures that would help RTS address the identified issues over the next five years. These goals and performance standards are described in the following section of the Rapid City Transit Development Plan.