

REGIONAL TRANSIT PLAN FEASIBILITY STUDY

French Broad River MPO Board

June 24, 2021



Study Vision Statement

Our vision for the future of public transportation in the French Broad River region was developed collaboratively and seeks to create a regional network that connects people to opportunities and provides mobility options for all residents, employees, and visitors.

The Regional Transit Plan vision was crafted based on discussions with the Steering Committee, Work Group, Project Management Team, and public input.



Our region is collaborative and provides transportation services that are efficient and attractive to current and new riders.



Our region offers excellent quality of life through transportation services that offer frequent, convenient access to employment, healthcare, education, and leisure opportunities.



Our system is well connected, providing equitable mobility options in both the urban and rural areas of our region, and ensures equal access for people regardless of ability, age, class, race, sex, or gender.



Our system is funded sustainably and provides seamless and reliable service across boundaries.

Study Purpose

The regional plan focused on three main topics that were developed concurrently:

Regional
Connectivity

Governance

Funding

Study Goals

The regional plan was guided by the following goals:

Evaluate the provision of regional services with a focus on equity

Facilitate cross-jurisdictional public transit

Enhancement of cross-jurisdictional public transit and connectivity options

Improvement of regional coordination

Identify additional sources of funding and funding strategies

Evaluated the transit systems

Analyzed demographic data

Assessed socio-economic data

Reviewed trip patterns

Regional Connectivity

Regional Assessment Findings

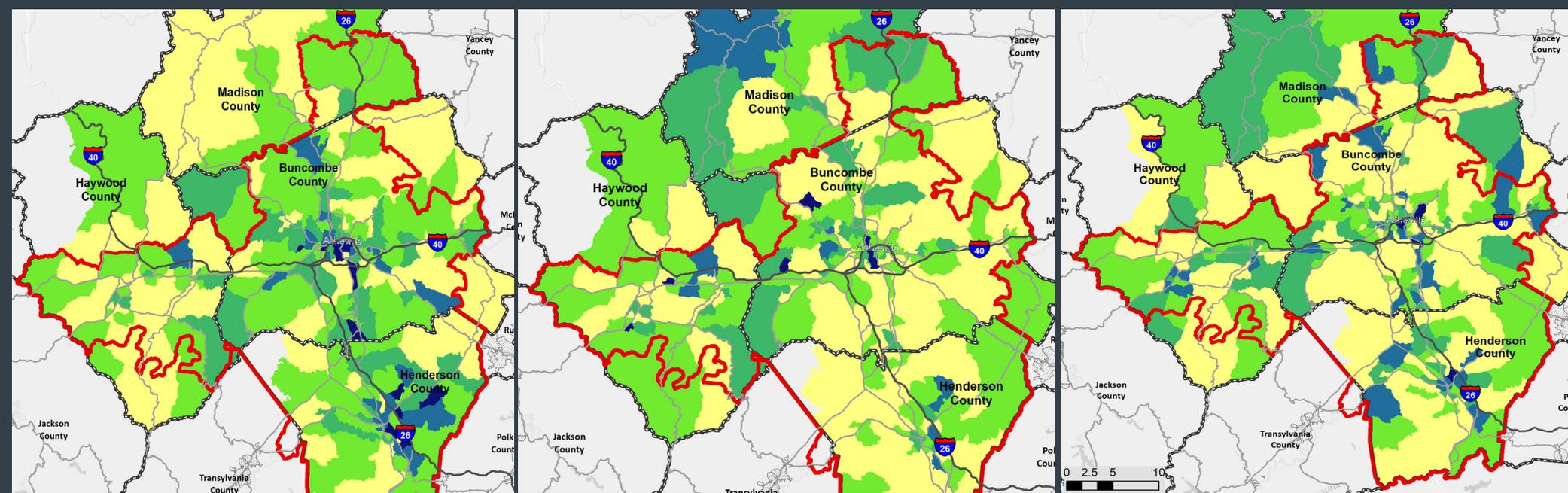
- Regional commuter patterns are increasing, and transit services don't serve that growing population
- Commuter patterns are stronger between Hendersonville, Fletcher, South Asheville and Downtown Asheville
- Four transit agencies coordinate transfers to other system, though these trips result in long travel times and multiple transfers
- Transit agencies are constrained by jurisdictional boundaries with few exceptions
- Only one system has regular weekend service
- Different fare policies across the region increase the transportation costs for individuals
- Jobs are located mostly along denser corridors and away from transit dependent population

Regional Assessment Findings

Minority

Poverty

Zero Car Households



Evaluated transit systems
governance

Performed a peer analysis

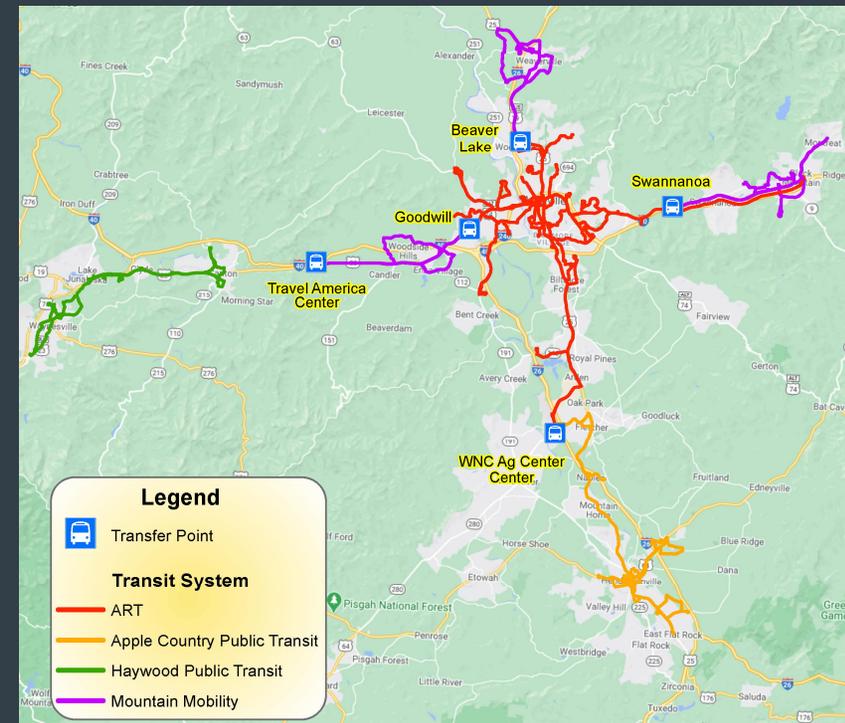
Assessed current funding
sources

Identified untapped funding
sources

Governance and Funding

Governance Assessment Findings

- Transit agencies coordinate service and funding effectively
- Common activities could be housed by a single agency to avoid redundancies and to better utilize resources
- Only one agency has personnel dedicated to transit planning, funding, and procurement
- One of five agencies provides service in house, all the other contract with a third-party provider
- Federal and state operating funds are maximized in most cases
- The region lacks dedicated funding sources to fund transit at local or regional level



Ambassador Program

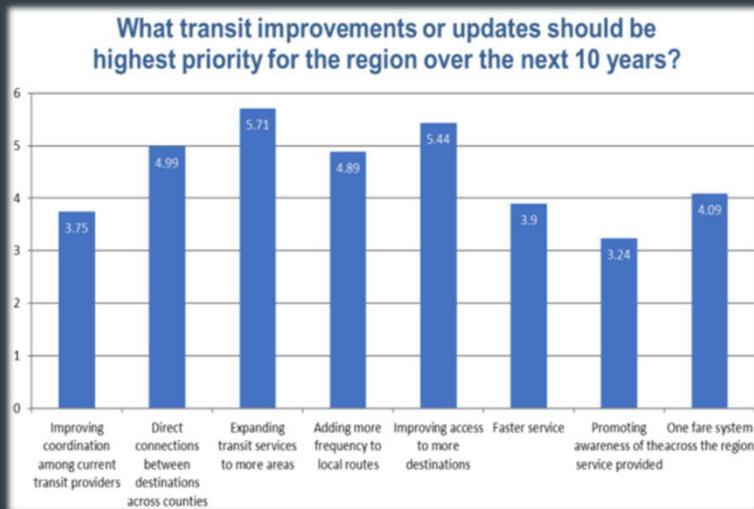
Focus Groups

Interviews

Public Meetings

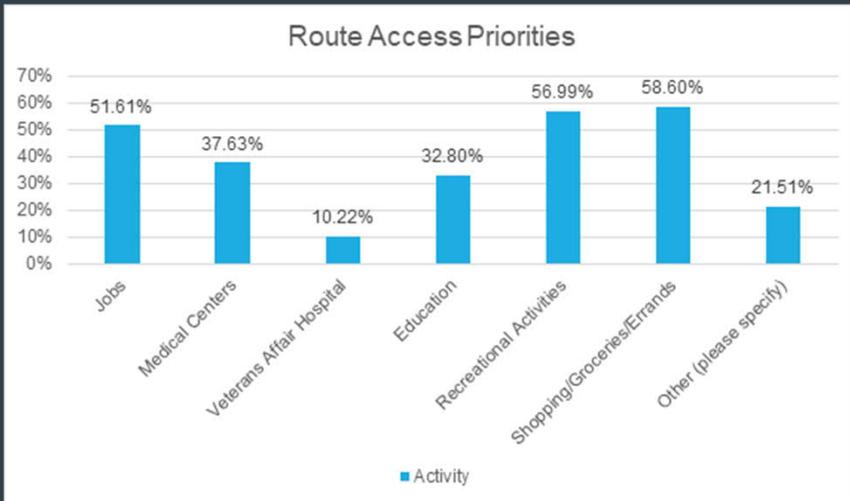
Public Engagement

Public Input findings



- There is overall support for regional service:
- More coverage through the region and access to transit is desired
- Direct connections between destinations across counties are seen as favorable
- Community also would like to see more frequency to local routes
- They also indicated they want to have access to more places and improve connections to nearby towns and cities
- Almost 60% prefer more direct connections to jobs
- Almost 60% would prefer faster service

Public Input findings



- Almost 60% would access grocery stores
- 52% would access jobs
- 57% would access recreational activities
- There are three periods during the day people would like to ride: early morning, midday and end of the day
- 70% of respondents would ride vanpools to their job sites
- 28 zip codes were represented in the survey, the highest ones 28806, 28803, 28801, 28804, 28805, 28787

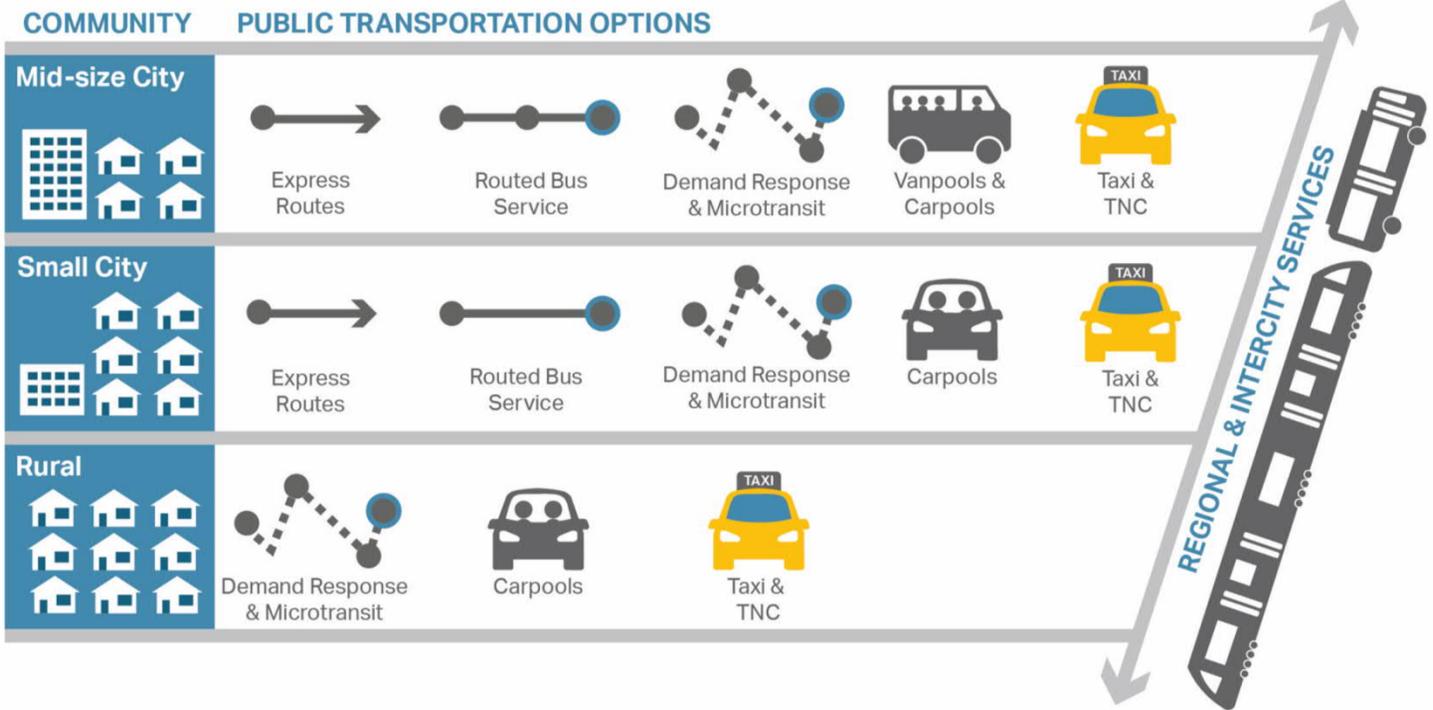
Recommendations

Transit
Service

Governance

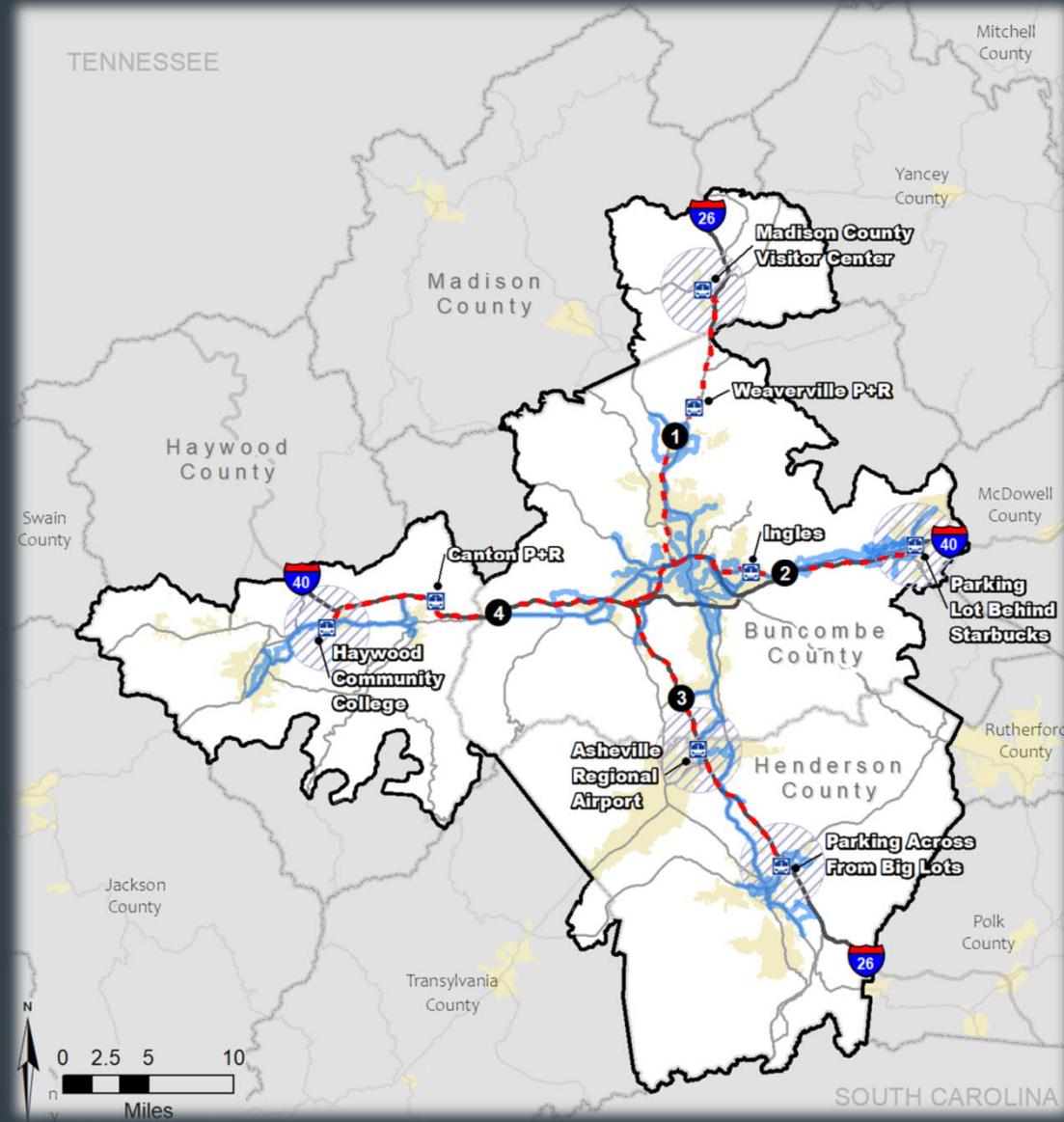
Funding

Transit Service Recommendations



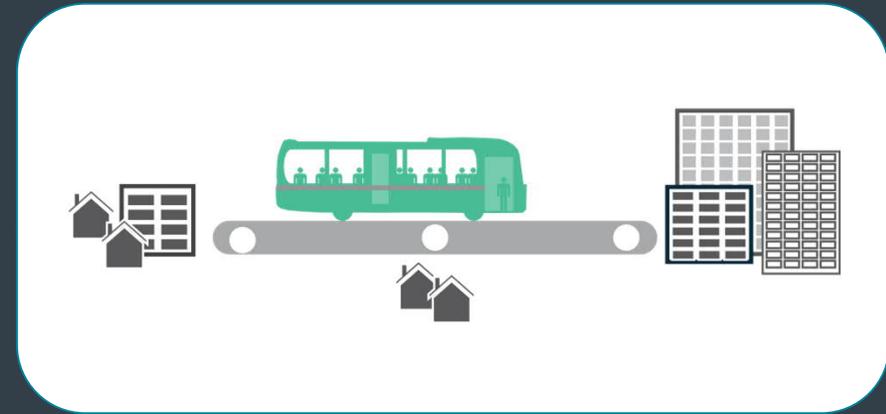
Proposed Regional Connections

-  Proposed Regional Routes
-  Existing Local System Routes



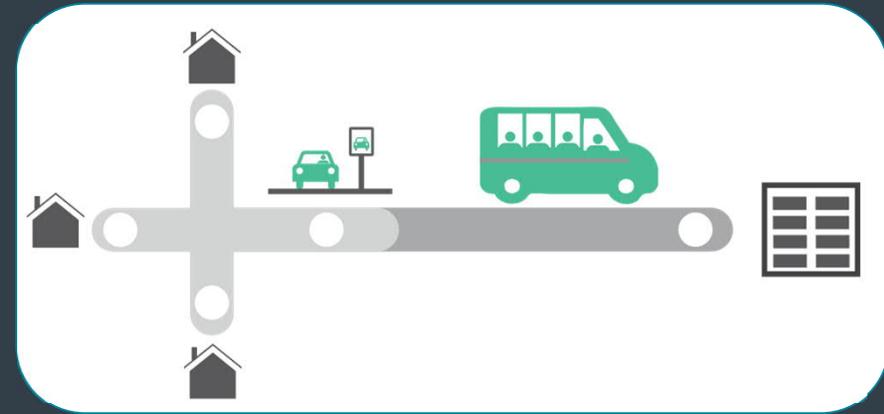
Proposed Regional Connections – Express Routes

- Phase I - North and South Express routes
- Phase II - East and West Express routes
- Hours of operation are weekdays from 6:00a-8:30a, 11:00a-2:00p and 4:30p-7:00p
- Smaller transit vehicles - to reduce capital costs, accelerate vehicle delivery time and allow the ridership to grow over time into larger vehicles
- Cost – Operations \$1.5M Phase I and \$1.35M Phase II approximately
- Capital: \$1M



Proposed Regional Connections - Vanpool

- The regional agency will take the lead promoting, educating and implementing the vanpool program
- Accommodate these target markets:
 - Employees that don't have access to employment outside of their residential areas
 - Employees that have long commutes
- Increases alternative transportation options
- Routes are designed according to demand
- Vans have capacity to transport 5 – 14 passengers



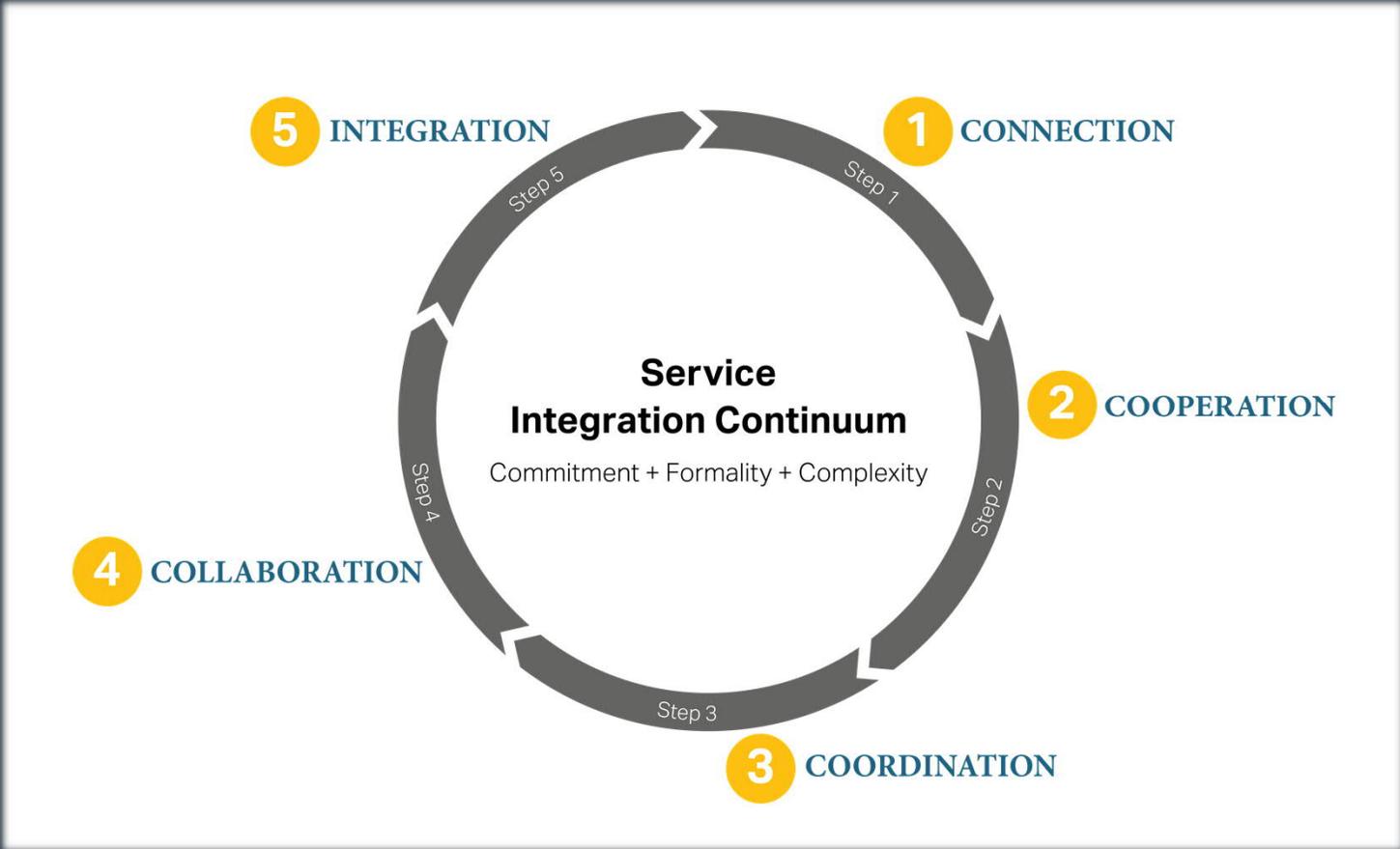
Funding Options

Traditional Sources: Federal, State, Local

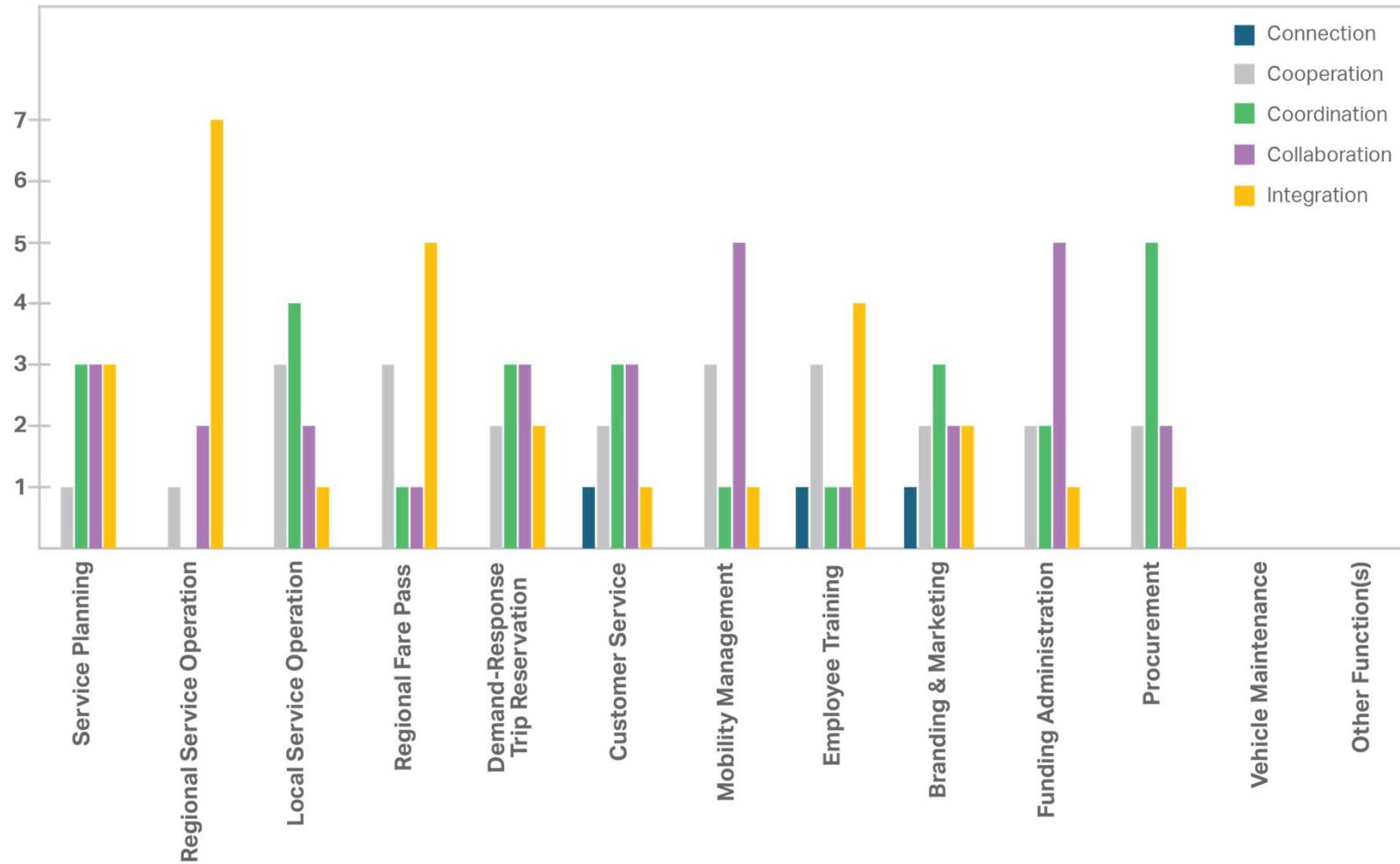
Local Funding Alternatives: Rental Car, Vehicle Registration fee

Sales Tax

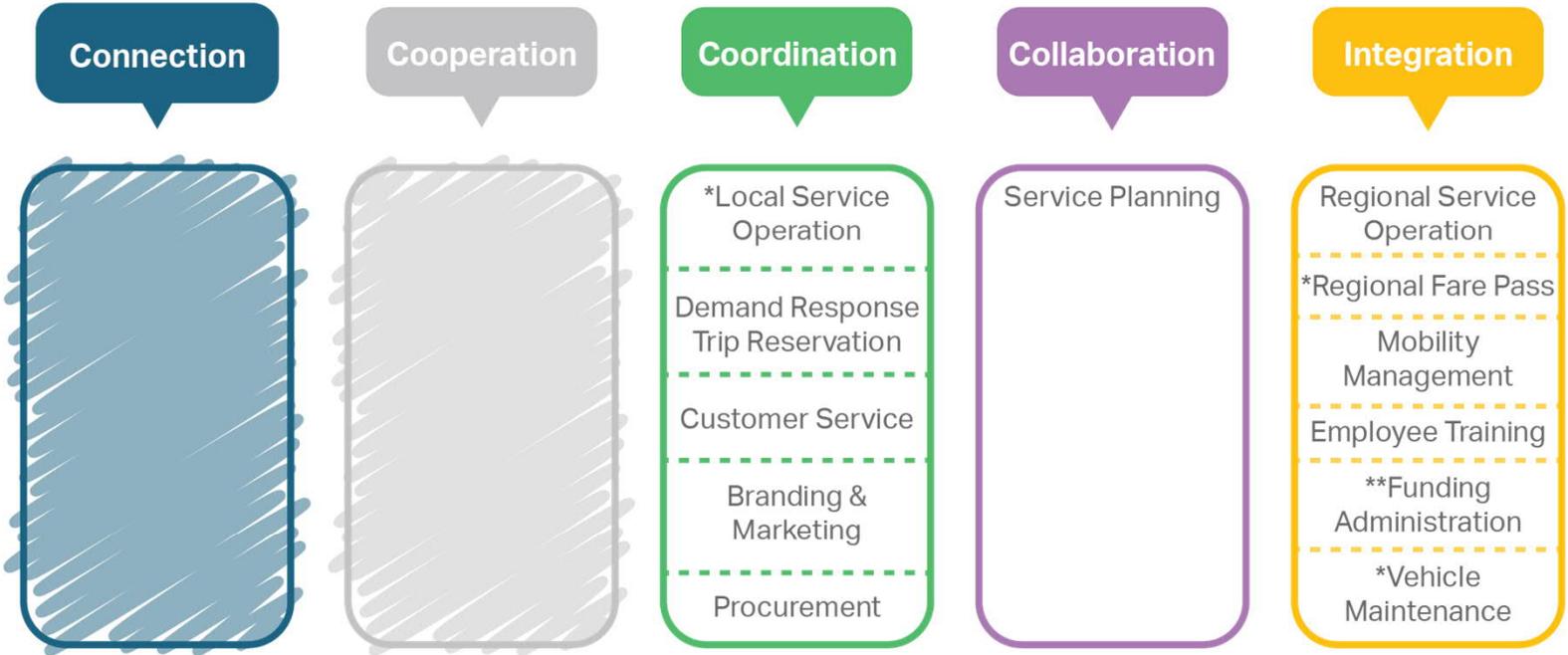
Governance – Levels of Integration



Steering Committee Feedback



Governance Model Recommendation: Independent Regional Agency



* Agencies can opt-in.
** Identify the designated recipient.

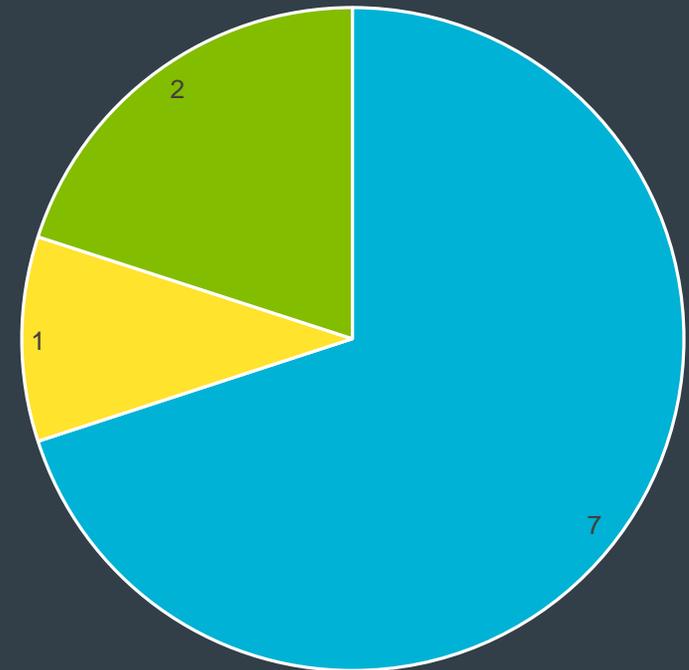
Options for a New Regional Transit Entity

Inter-governmental Agreements

New Enabling Legislation

Article 25 Regional Public Transportation Authority

Participants



■ Article 25 ■ New Legislation ■ IGAs

Intergovernmental Agreements

The IGAs could designate one operator to operate the regional service for multiple counties and cities. Interested municipalities can negotiate the terms with the designated operator, which define the roles, responsibilities, and powers of each participating municipality.

The IGAs typically specify the funding obligation of each participating municipality.

Intergovernmental Agreements

Steps:

Build regional support and form consensus

Define Roles and Responsibilities, including Funding Obligations

Negotiate and execute agreements

Hiring Staff and Operation Begins

New Enabling Legislation

A new legislation can be drafted to incorporate additional authorities that are currently not granted in Article 25, which is the existing article that allows the creation of regional transit authorities, such as:

- Define broader territorial jurisdiction of the authority
- Allow for broader membership of the authority's governing board
- Expand the authority's taxation power and borrowing authority

* The region will need a **champion** to move forward the implementation of the new authority

New Enabling Legislation

Steps:

Secure start-up funding for implementation planning

Build regional support and form consensus

Form consensus on the powers and limitations of the new authority and draft legislation

Launch a legislative campaign and pass the legislation in the General Assembly

Determine immediate funding sources and obtain required approvals

Negotiate and execute agreements to form the authority

Form the Board of Trustees

Hiring Staff and Operation Begins

Article 25 Regional Public Transportation Authority

Article 25 provides reasonable flexibility needed for a typical regional transit authority. Key provisions of Article 25 include:

- Allows for a regional authority that serves multiple municipalities and up to five miles outside the municipal boundaries
- Additional municipalities may join an existing authority later, subject to existing member municipalities' agreement
- The Board of Trustees of the authority may include up to eleven (11) members appointed by the governing bodies of the municipalities
- A broad range of funding sources are authorized, including appropriation from member municipalities, license and regulatory fees (e.g., motor vehicle registration fee and vehicle rental tax), and sales tax or bonds.



* The region will need a **champion** to move forward the implementation of the new authority

Article 25 Regional Public Transportation Authority



Recommended

Steps:

Secure start-up funding for implementation planning

Build regional support and form consensus

Determine funding sources and obtain required approvals

Negotiate and execute agreements to form the authority

Form the Board of Trustees

Hiring Staff and Operation Begins

Pros and Cons of IGAs vs Formation of an Authority

Options	Pros	Cons
Intergovernmental Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rely on existing operator• Relatively quick process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lacks independence and autonomy• Funding availability and stability depends on each participating municipality
New legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater flexibility in customizing powers and structure of the new authority• Autonomy with joint decision-making and funding alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires drafting new legislation and legislative actions• Resource intensive and time consuming
Article 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides reasonable flexibility needed for a typical regional transit authority• Relatively quick process without legislative actions• Autonomy with joint decision-making and funding alternatives• Common for establishing regional transit authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Must be established within the statutory confines, e.g., governing board structure, allowable funding sources

Recommended New Agency Implementation Process under Article 25



Conclusions

There is support in the region for regional transit service.

There are numerous benefits to regional transit:

- Effective use of resources
 - Cost savings and shared costs
 - Streamlined services
- Formal coordination efforts
- Branding
- Maximize and leverage participation for grants and additional funding
- Partnerships
- Regional transit will increase mobility options to disadvantaged populations that currently have no access to jobs outside or their areas
- Promotes alternative transportation



AECOM Imagine it.
Delivered.

The image features the AECOM logo and tagline centered on a dark blue background. The logo 'AECOM' is in a bold, white, sans-serif font. To its right, the tagline 'Imagine it. Delivered.' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. At the bottom of the image, there are several horizontal, wavy lines of light blue and white, creating a sense of motion or energy.