

# Executive Summary

FBRMPO Regional Transit Plan | August 2021

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# Regional Transit Plan



**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.**

## Vision

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

The 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.

## Study Goals

The study was guided by the following goals:

**1.**

Evaluate the provision of regional services with a focus on equity

**2.**

Facilitate cross-jurisdictional public transit

**3.**

Enhancement of cross-jurisdictional public transit and connectivity options

**4.**

Improvement of regional coordination

**5.**

Identify additional sources of funding and funding strategies

**6.**

Identify a governance model adequate for the region

# Existing Conditions

## Regional Service Providers

There are five service providers in the urbanized area:

- Asheville Rides Transit
- Mountain Mobility
- Apple Country Public Transit
- Haywood Public Transit
- Madison County Transportation Authority

## Service Hours

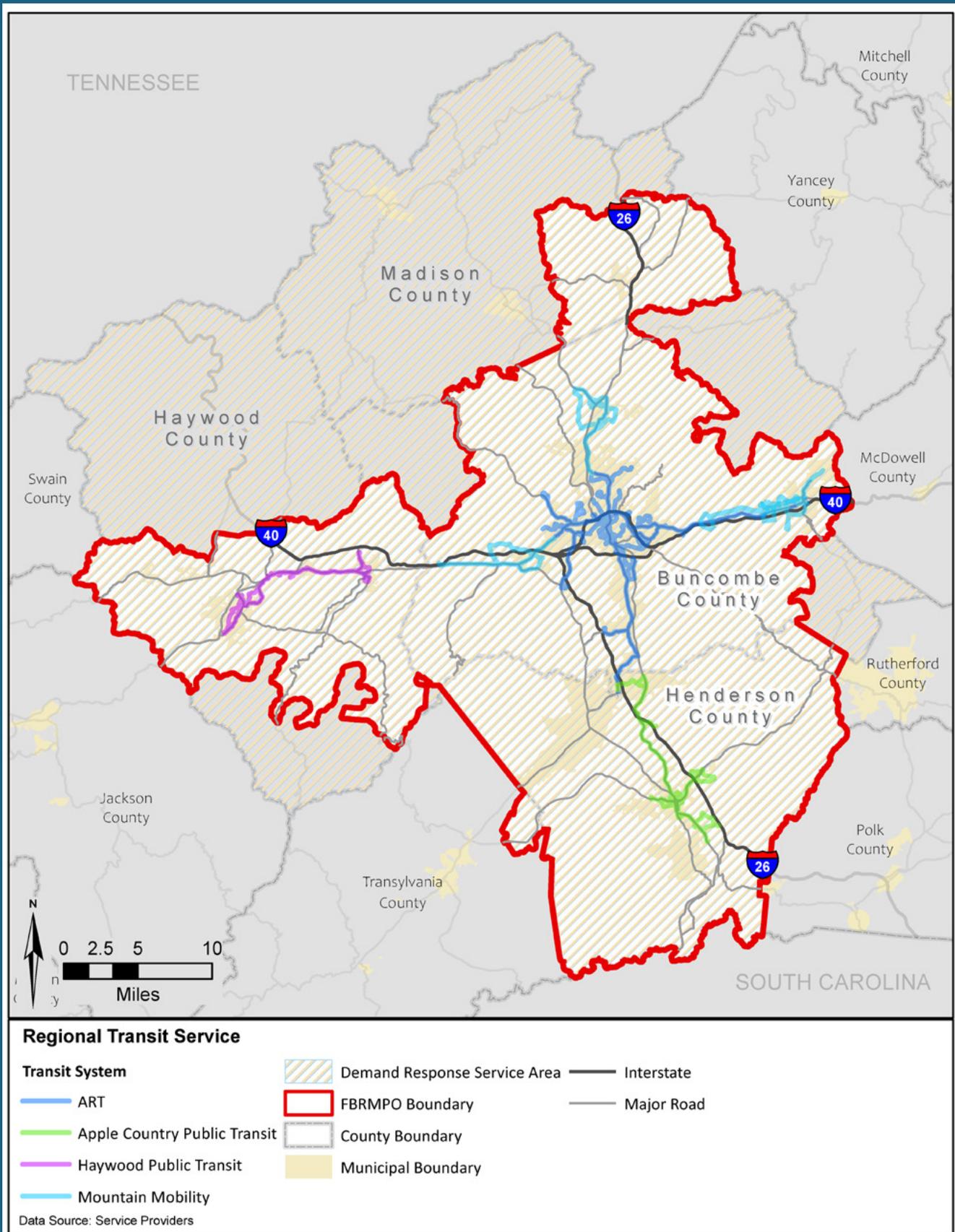
Table ES-1 shows the service hours for each of the service providers by type of service offered. Mountain Mobility, which offers both deviated fixed route and on-demand services, has service hours six days a week including on-demand services on Saturday. ART offers service seven days a week. The three other providers do not offer weekend or evening service.

**Table ES-1. Service Hours by Provider**

	Weekday Fixed Route Service	Weekend Fixed Route Service	Weekday On-demand Service	Weekend On-demand Service
Asheville Rides Transit	5:30 AM - 10:30 PM	6:30 AM - 1:00 AM (Sa) 7:30 AM - 6:30 PM (Su)	N/A	N/A
*Mountain Mobility - Buncombe County	5:50 AM - 7:45 PM	5:50 AM - 7:45 PM (Saturday only)	5:30 AM - 7:30 PM	5:30 AM - 7:30 PM (Saturday only)
Apple Country Public Transit - Henderson County	6:30 AM - 6:30 PM	N/A	6:30 AM - 6:30 PM	N/A
Haywood Public Transit - Mountain Projects	N/A	N/A	6:00 AM - 5:30 PM	N/A
Madison County Transportation Authority	N/A	N/A	8:00 AM - 4:30 PM	N/A

\* Mountain Mobility provides a deviated fixed route

The figure below illustrates the current regional transit services:



# Regional Connectivity Assessment Findings

## Assessment Findings:

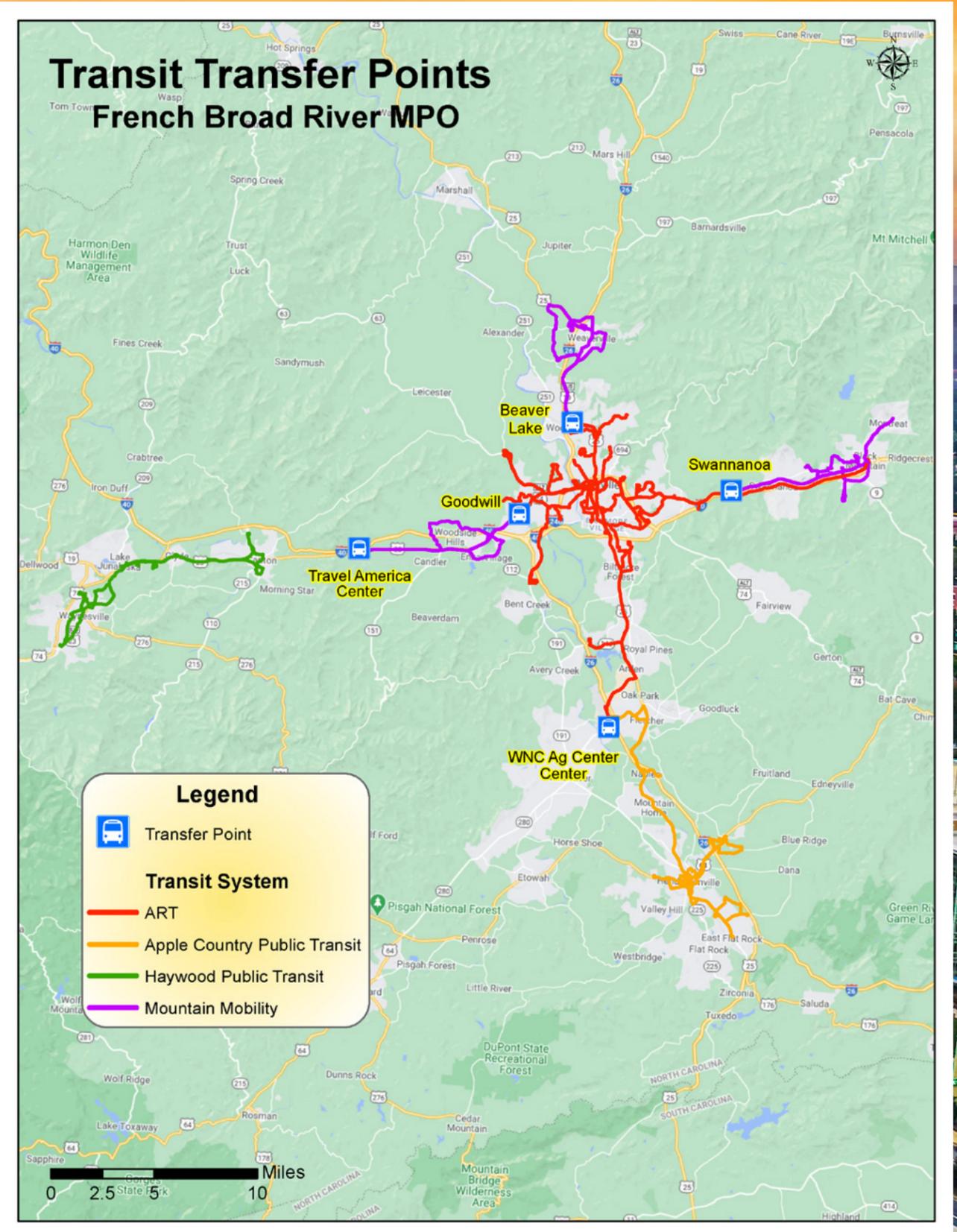
- Commuter patterns are stronger between Hendersonville, Fletcher, south Asheville and, Downtown Asheville
- Four transit agencies coordinate transfers to other system, though these trips result in long travel times and multiple transfers
- Transit agencies are constrained by jurisdictional boundaries with few exceptions
- Only one system has regular weekend service
- Different fare policies across the region increase the transportation costs for individuals that must travel across multijurisdictional boundaries
- Jobs are located mostly along denser corridors and away from transit dependent population
- The region transit providers carried 2.3 Million trips in 2019
- Ridership has declined since 2016
- Ridership has been substantially disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic

## Coordination:

- Transit transfer points are displayed in the figure to the right.
- ART: Route 170, provides regional service east to the Town of Black Mountain.
- Haywood Public Transit provides transportation services to residents who go to Asheville for dialysis.
- Madison County Transportation Authority provides on-demand service to destinations in not only Madison County, but in the surrounding counties of Buncombe, Mitchell, Avery, and Yancey counties. Madison County also provides medical trips to Asheville for dialysis.

## Inter-agency Transfers:

- Transportation Services for Haywood County residents are available through coordination between Haywood Public Transit and Mountain Mobility. Haywood Public Transit provides connections to/ from the Enka-Candler Trailblazer Route operated by Mountain Mobility.
- Transfers are available between ART fixed routes and Mountain Mobility deviated fixed-route services and between ART and Apple Country, near the airport.



# Commuter Flows

## Commuter Trips

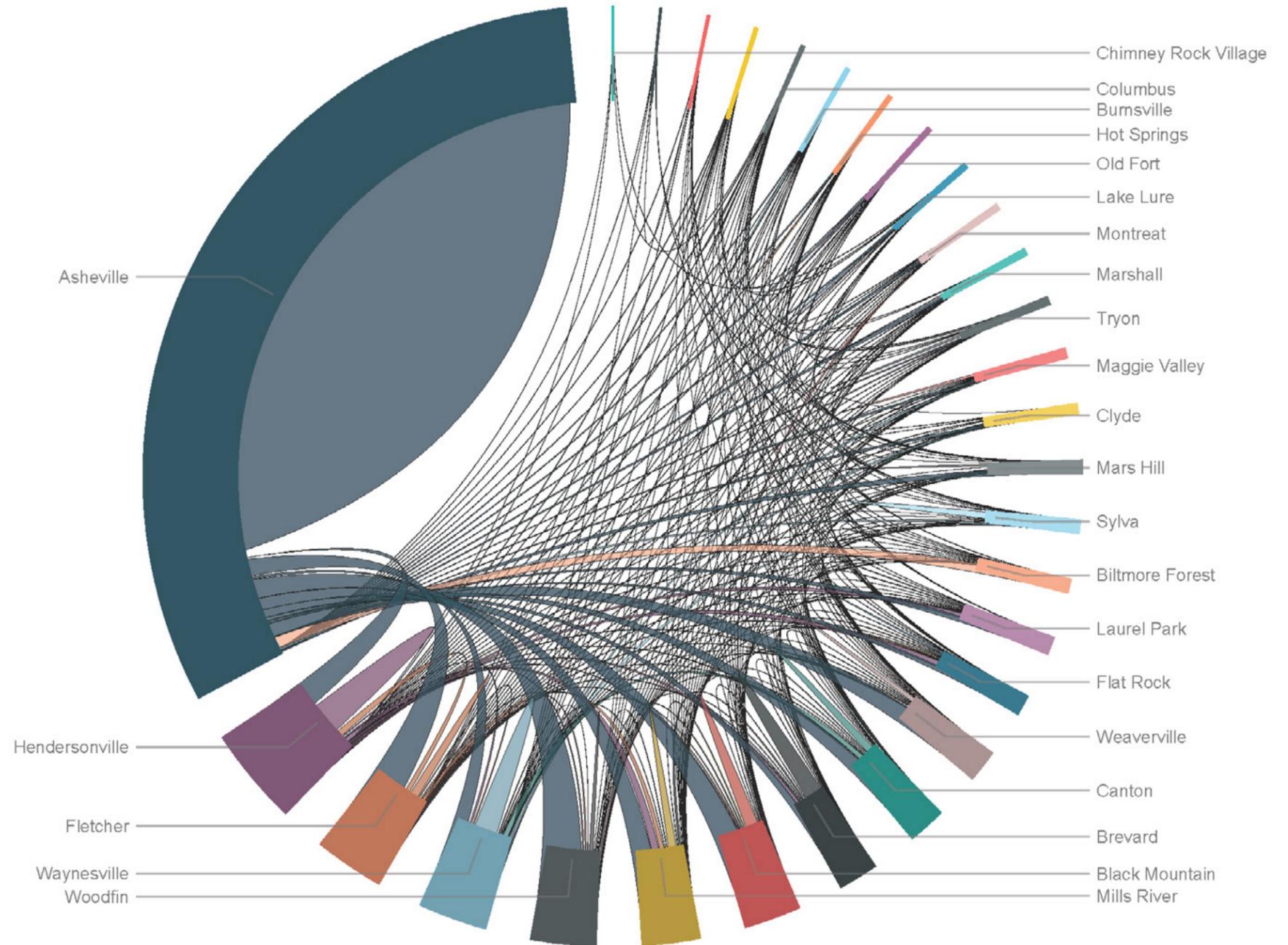
Within the boundary of the FBRMPO, the majority of commuters are traveling from their homes to jobs in Asheville, Hendersonville, and Fletcher.

The figure to the right shows the commuter flows for residents within and between municipalities within a 10-mile buffer of the FBRMPO footprint. The width of the shape is indicative of the number of residents in the municipality who are commuting to work, and the width of the connection indicates the proportion of commuters going to other municipalities to work.

The majority of residents in Asheville commute to jobs in Asheville, with a smaller number commuting to Woodfin, Fletcher and Hendersonville for work. Hendersonville also has a larger percentage of the residents who commute to jobs within Hendersonville. Only one community, Biltmore Forest, has more Asheville residents commuting to it than residents commuting to Asheville.



Amount by Home and Work



# Governance & Funding

## Assessment Findings:



### OPERATING FUNDING

comes from federal, state and local sources. The local contribution is the largest for all systems and included not only local revenues but also non-DOT grants.



### CAPITAL FUNDING

is typically through 80% federal funding and 20% local contribution. For some special projects, state funds could be available.



### TRANSIT AGENCIES

coordinate service and funding effectively



### ALL AGENCIES

have common activities (planning, training, procurement, etc.) that could be housed by a single agency to avoid redundancies and for better use of resources



### ONE OF FIVE AGENCIES

provides service in house, all the other contract with a third-party provider



### ONLY ONE AGENCY

has personnel dedicated to transit planning, funding, and procurement

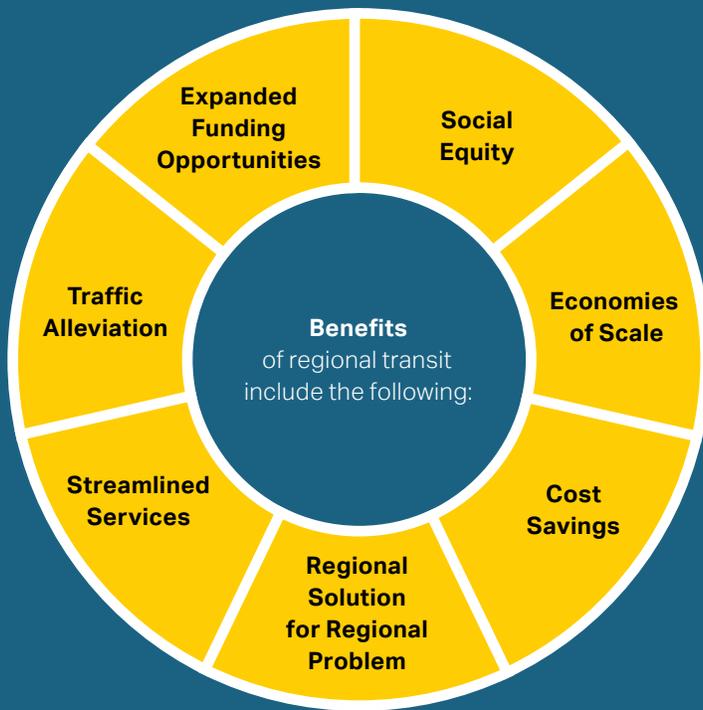
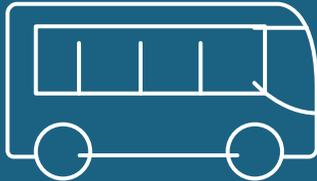
# Opportunities and Constraints

This section analyses the different possibilities available to the region and the potential issues the region would face in its efforts to create regional transportation connections and a regional transit system.

**Table ES-2. Opportunities and Constraints**

	Opportunities	Constraints
Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing fixed route service is provided in denser areas and corridors with high employment</li> <li>Demand response serves a big swath in rural areas and extends service beyond fixed route coverage</li> <li>Dependent riders are already familiar with fixed route and demand response services</li> <li>Some of the transit systems already have processes in place to provide service across their boundaries</li> <li>Deviated routes already in place may serve both fixed route trips and more suburban/rural trips</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each agency has individual systems to create schedules and provide service</li> <li>In general, transit agencies currently only provide service within jurisdictional boundaries, with the exception of medical trips and the Black Mountain route operated by ART</li> <li>Different hours of operation and lack of service during weekends may affect some communities accessing jobs that have different shifts</li> <li>Currently transfers result in long travel times</li> </ul>
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The agencies have demonstrated they work well together when they seek to improve transportation conditions for the community</li> <li>Formal coordination and/or consolidation of functions, policies and processes could produce efficiencies for the agencies</li> <li>Better coordination could improve travel times</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informal coordination may result in fewer benefits to the region, as the agencies focus more on local issues</li> </ul>
Fares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systems could use integrated fare collection systems, or establish policies across agencies to reduce financial burden on the riders and to improve the customer experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each agency has different fare policies, and establishing fare collection systems and policies across the region will require intense collaboration among the agencies</li> </ul>
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four of five agencies already contract service out to third parties</li> <li>There are common activities that could be housed under one organization to achieve efficiencies and make a better use of resources.</li> <li>Agencies would be able to focus on improving local service planning if a regional agency is responsible for select common tasks</li> <li>New governance models could use different funding mechanisms currently not available to the agencies in the region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing a regional agency will require a local champion to spearhead the efforts</li> <li>Agencies may need to give some control away if common activities are performed by a regional entity</li> </ul>
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are funding mechanisms that are untapped:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Vehicle registration fee</li> <li>– Rental car fee</li> <li>– Municipal Business Districts (MSD)</li> <li>– Sales taxes</li> <li>– Property taxes</li> </ul> </li> <li>If a regional entity is considered, reallocation of resources and a dedicated funding source will be needed to make regional service sustainable over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The use of federal and state funding sources is maximized</li> <li>The region lacks dedicated funding sources to fund transit at local or regional level</li> <li>If an umbrella agency is created, the need for funding could affect local service</li> </ul>
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are opportunities to develop partnerships with employers, social service agencies, health and educational institutions and other organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships require a dedicated effort (stakeholder engagement and coordination)</li> </ul>

# Benefits of Regional Transit



## Economies of Scale

In general terms, when agencies consolidate functions or merge under a regional umbrella, the costs associated with the function remain the same, as well as the resources needed to perform the functions. At first this does not generally produce any savings, but over time it can produce economies if certain redundancies are eliminated.

The discussion should shift towards a better use of the funding available in the region. Currently there are many functions that are common to several of the providers that could benefit from cost sharing, for instance:

- Procurement
- Grant administration and compliance, including federal and state funds
- Scheduling, call centers, and customer service for demand response service.

## Partnerships

A regional approach could attract partners and secure additional funding sources. This is particularly important for vanpool programs where employer participation is necessary to ensure the success of the program.

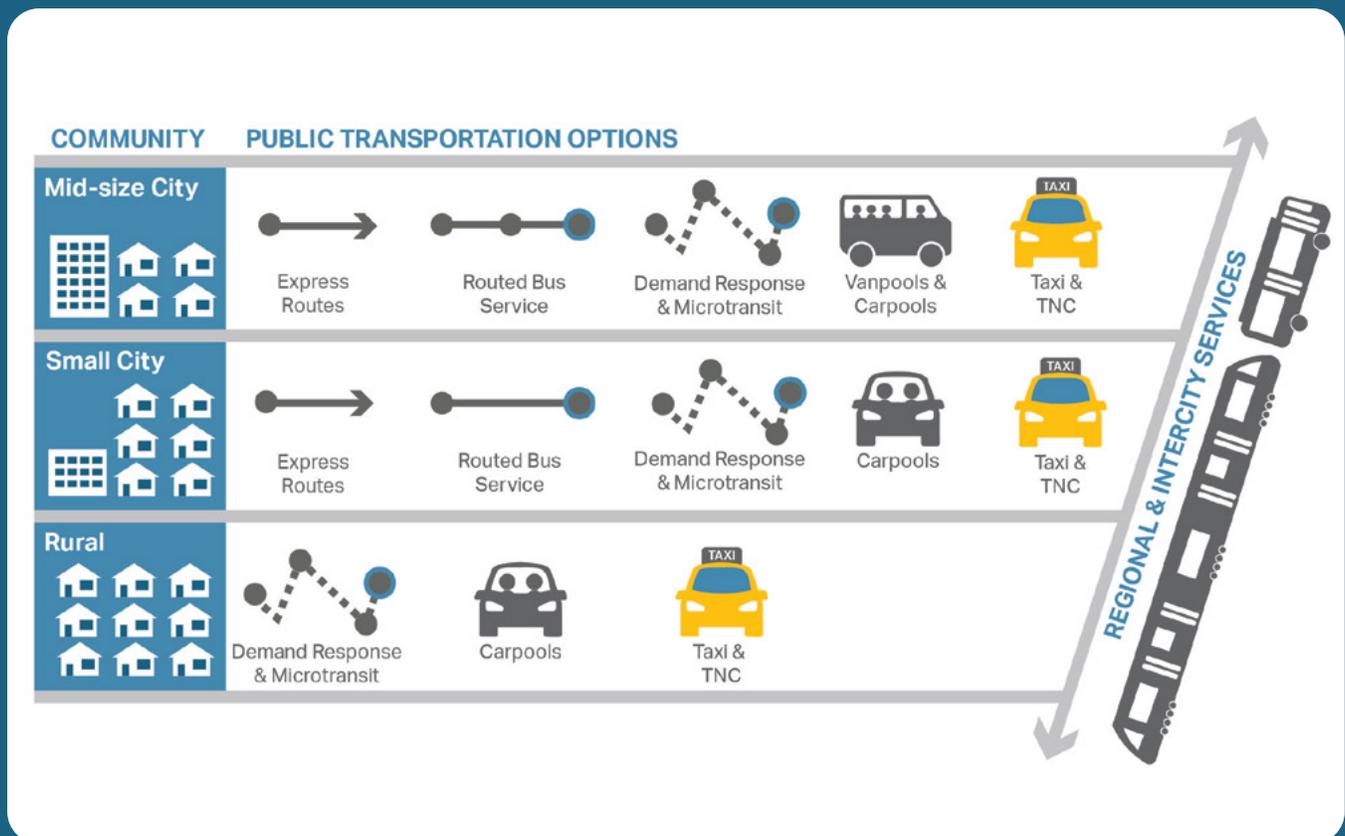
The Passport Program, by the City of Asheville, is an example of a successful partnership in this region. The passport program provides free rides to passport passholders and the employers paid for the rides. Three agencies, in addition to the City of Asheville, provide free rides to passport passholders and the employers/agencies pay for the rides. This type of program helps promote transit use because people are not required to acquire passes or similar to ride the bus.

Additional funding will free local funding that is currently used to match federal dollars. These funds could either be reinvested or allocated to a different program.

# Transit Service Options

## Options

In the FBRMPO region, there is a variety of densities, ranging from higher densities in urban areas, to suburban and rural areas with low density. The figure below shows the different types of service available according to location/operating environment. The communities in the FBRMPO region fall into one of three categories: mid-size city, small city and suburban/rural. Several of these modes already operate in the region: fixed route, demand response, carpool, TNCs, and Intercity Services.





# Service Recommendations

The regional transit recommendations were designed with a focus on the importance of enhancing the existing local service and providing improved connectivity to the local services and regional activity centers. An important consideration was to integrate the new services into the existing transit network at key access points throughout the region.

The following recommendations were made for the service and are described to the right:

- Four regional express routes
- Microtransit service at five key transit system access points
- Vanpools

## Cross Jurisdictional Regional Express Routes

Fixed route service operated only during peak commuting times in the morning and evening connecting major residential areas with major employment areas. Commuter service is generally an 'express' service in that it makes limited stops along its route to keep the trip time as close as possible to automobile trip times. Commuter service does not require the operation of complementary ADA paratransit service.

The top 15 commuter flows identified show that there are four natural routes that are candidates for express service:

- Mars Hill and Weaverville in the northern quadrant
- Black Mountain and Swannanoa in the eastern quadrant
- Hendersonville and the Asheville Regional Airport Park and Ride in the southern quadrant
- Waynesville and Evergreen Packaging/Asheville Buncombe Technical (ABTech)College in the western quadrant

## Microtransit

Microtransit is a privately owned and operated shared transportation system that can offer fixed routes and schedules, as well as flexible routes and on-demand scheduling. The vehicles generally include vans and buses. In the United States, public transportation agencies are experimenting with on-demand, shared, and dynamic models to augment traditional fixed-route bus and train services. These services, referred to as microtransit, are enabled by technology similar to ride sharing apps. The private sector provides the service, but with the help of taxpayer subsidy in most cases. Trips are typically scheduled using an app, but riders will also have an option to call a dedicated telephone number to schedule a trip. The services are available to everyone within the service area and vehicles are usually ADA accessible.

To accommodate first and last mile trips to connect with the regional routes and the Asheville Regional

Airport, microtransit service is recommended for a five-mile radius around the end of the regional routes and the airport.

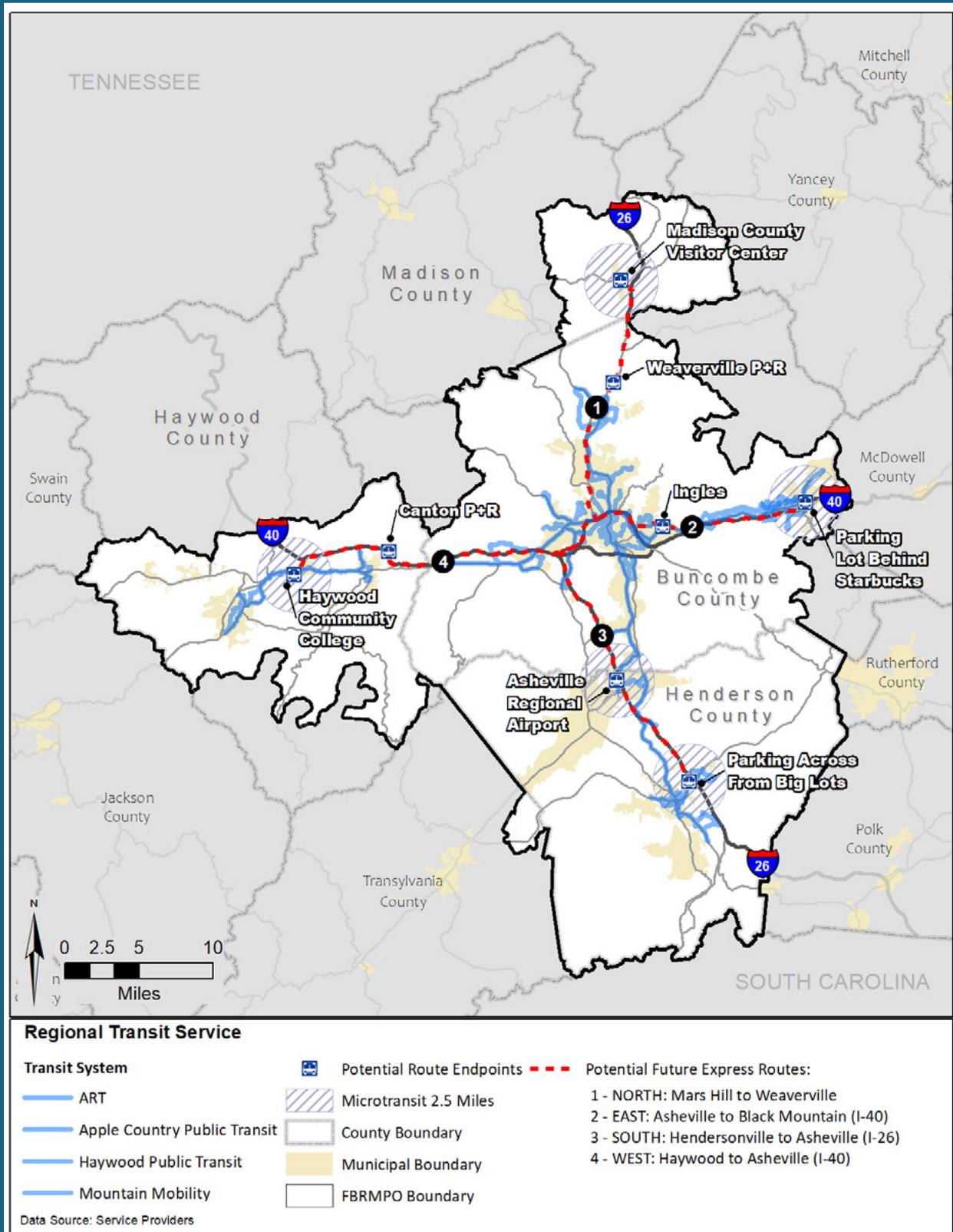
## Vanpool

Recognizing that fixed-route service is not always the most appropriate transit mode for the transit need, a vanpool program is recommended to serve employees and employers throughout the FBRMPO region. This would be one of the services the Regional Agency would offer, taking the lead role in promoting and implementing a vanpool program that would strive to achieve the initiatives of energy conservation, reducing congestion, improving air quality, reducing vehicle miles, and provide an enhanced regional connectivity. The vanpool program would be more flexible and would allow for more long-distance work commute travel that regional express route services cannot efficiently accommodate.

**Table ES-3. Proposed Regional Express Routes**

	Primary Access Point	Mid-Route Access Point	Connectivity To Existing Services
North	S. Main Street in Mars Hill	Weaverville Park and Ride	ART Station, Mountain Mobility
East	Starbucks Parking Lot in Black Mountain	Ingles in Swannanoa	ART Station, Mountain Mobility
South	Parking lot near Big Lots development off I-26 Exit 49 in Hendersonville	Asheville Regional Airport Park and Ride	ART Station, Apple Country Transit
West	First Baptist Church in Waynesville	Evergreen Packaging/AB Technical College	ART Station, Haywood Transit

The figure below illustrates the current services and the access points for the new services:



# Regional Governance Model

This section documents the recommendations of a regional governance model with details for major administrative and operating functions. The recommendations were developed based on discussions with the Project Management Team and the Steering Committee's input.

**Table ES-4. Integration Opportunities for Each Function**

	Integration Opportunities
Service Planning	New regional entity will be responsible for service planning for regional routes. Region to establish a forum and process for service planning coordination. New regional entity could have input from local operators on planning for connections with local services.
Regional Service Operation	New regional entity to operate all regional routes.
Local Service Operation	Existing local transit operators will remain independent. A local jurisdiction can contract with the new regional entity to operate local service through an intergovernmental agreement.
Regional Fare Pass	New regional entity will implement a regional fare pass and manage fare revenue collected through the fare pass. Local jurisdictions can choose to accept the regional fare pass or opt out. The regional fare pass would be beneficial for the riders if implemented across the region.
Demand-Response Trip Reservation	New regional entity will coordinate with local transit operators to help demand-response riders access regional routes. A local jurisdiction can contract with the new regional entity to operate demand-response service through an intergovernmental agreement.
Customer Service	New regional entity and local transit operators will coordinate to provide riders with information about connection between regional and local services.
Mobility Management	1) New regional entity can take on mobility management for the region by hiring a mobility manager to coordinate rides for the region and hosting a new software system. OR 2) New regional entity and local transit operators can establish a forum to coordinate mobility management.
Employee Training	New regional entity will retain an on-call training consultant who will establish and carry out training modules. Local transit operators may send employees to receive training as needed. Consultants will provide training programs, and carry out training modules.
Branding & Marketing	The region can coordinate marketing efforts to increase transit ridership, e.g. develop consistent design and format for service information and other rider communication materials and launch joint advertising campaign.
Funding Administration	New regional entity will administer future regional funding or transit tax, if the region decides to levy such new tax. City of Asheville will continue to be the designated recipient of FTA 5307 funds. New regional entity and local transit operators can establish a forum and process to meet for funding discussion.
Procurement	New regional entity and local transit operators can find opportunities to share procurement contracts for services and goods.
Vehicle Maintenance	In the longer term, the Region may consider a shared vehicle maintenance facility and maintenance contractor. New regional entity can manage the vehicle maintenance facility and contract. Local transit operators can opt in as their current operating contracts expire and if they find this arrangement attractive.
Other Functions	Region can identify integration opportunities for other functions.

# Funding

## Options

1

### **Traditional**

Federal, State, and Local Sources

2

### **Local Funding Alternatives**

Rental Car and Vehicle Registration Fees

3

### **County/Regional Authority Alternatives**

Sales Taxes

## Strategies

Three scenarios of proposed funding packages are presented as part of this study, along with advantages and disadvantages. In addition, a pathway for implementation is presented for each funding package. The funding packages are meant to be iterative in nature. Specifically, funding package 2 includes all funding options cited in funding package 1, plus some additional revenue sources. Similarly, funding package 3 includes all options from both funding packages 1 and 2, plus some additional sources.

# Funding Package 1

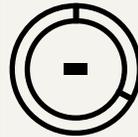
## Description

Funding Package 1 is made up of traditional transit funding sources that each of the transit agencies in Asheville are currently utilizing for their transit operations. This funding package utilizes existing state and federal sources of funding. Funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the most common federal source of funding utilized in transit operations. In addition, North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) funding may also be used by transit agencies. This funding package presents several advantages and disadvantages and those are outlined below.



### Advantages

- Well vetted familiar funding sources
- Reliable sources with consistent funding amounts annually
- Some sources have broad ranges of eligibility



### Disadvantages

- Currently maximized in the region
- Further dividing the funding amounts to allow addition of a regional entity may cause reductions in transit service
- Discretionary funding is not reliable on an annual basis

## Pathway to Implementation

The pathway to implementation for this funding package presents some challenges. Currently, in the FBRMPO region, the traditional federal and state funding sources are obligated. Discretionary funding from the FTA may be an option to be used for capital purchases, but this type of funding is not reliable funding that may be utilized year after year.



# Funding Package 2

## Description

Funding Package 2 includes all traditional federal and state funding sources. In addition, this package adds two added revenue sources – a vehicle registration fee and a rental vehicle fee. Both the vehicle registration fee and the rental vehicle fee options were analyzed for project their funding potential. Two options were analyzed for the vehicle registration fee – a \$5 fee option and a \$10 fee option. Projected annual revenues for the vehicle registration fee are shown below per county.



### Advantages

- Introduces new funding into the region not currently being utilized
- Introduction of locally controlled funding
- All four counties may benefit from the vehicle registration fee



### Disadvantages

- New funding often means unfamiliar

**Table ES-5. Vehicle Registration Fee Revenue Potential**

	\$5 Fee	\$10 Fee
Buncombe	\$1,045,000	\$2,090,000
Haywood	\$249,000	\$498,000
Henderson	\$470,000	\$940,000
Madison	\$87,000	\$174,000
Total	\$1,851,000	\$3,702,000

Source: FHWA Highway Statistics 2019 and Census 1-Year Estimates.

The projected rental vehicle revenues are much more modest when compared with the vehicle registration fee. Currently, Buncombe County already assesses a fee on rental vehicles. North Carolina assesses an 8% tax on rental vehicles. This study projected potential additional revenue should an additional ¼ cent, ½ cent or 1 cent were added to the rental vehicle fee.

**Table ES-6. Vehicle Registration Fee Revenue Potential for Buncombe County**

	1/4 Cent	1/2 Cent	1 Cent
Buncombe	\$188,500	\$377,000	\$754,000

Source: Buncombe County Annual Financial Audit

## Pathway to Implementation

The pathway to implementation for Funding Package 2 presents more opportunity for consistent funding to be utilized for the implementation of the proposed new transit recommendations. The vehicle registration fee could fund operations of all four new proposed regional routes. The rental vehicle fee could fund administration of the proposed new regional entity. Vehicle registration and rental vehicle could fund additional integration tasks such as mobility management, employee training, regional fare pass and others. It should be noted that it is projected that funding package 2 will not produce sufficient funding to satisfy all required capital and operational needs.



# Funding Package 3

## Description

The final funding package presented is Funding Package 3. Similar to funding package 2, this funding package contains all revenue options presented in the first two funding packages, along with one final funding source. The final revenue source analyzed for this study was the inclusion of funding from a local sales tax option. Two options for the sales tax were analyzed to determine the funding potential from this source – a ¼ cent option and a ½ cent option.

In North Carolina, creating a dedicated local sales tax option requires, at minimum, a successful voter referendum with a defined project listing outlining the uses of the sales tax. The ¼ cent sales tax option may be instituted with a successful voter referendum. The ½ cent option requires North Carolina legislative approval.

In North Carolina, there are several other transit agencies that have utilized this funding source to fund significant new transit projects, including new transit mode additions. For instance, the Charlotte, North Carolina metro area has a dedicated transit tax that permits that area to simultaneously leverage additional federal revenue with the infusion of revenue from a sales tax.

The revenue-generating potential for a ¼ cent and ½ cent sales tax were evaluated as part of this study. The potential funding gains from the annual local sales tax is significant and are shown in the table below.

**Table ES-7. Sales Tax Revenue Potential**

	1/4 Cent	1/2 Cent
Buncombe	\$7,541,000	\$15,081,000
Haywood	\$3,098,000	\$6,196,000
Henderson	\$5,844,000	\$11,687,000
Madison	\$918,000	\$1,835,000
Total	\$17,401,000	\$34,799,000

Source: State of NC Annual Audit 2019.



## Advantages

- Introduces new funding into the region not currently being utilized
- Potential source of significant funding
- Introduction of locally controlled funding
- All four counties may benefit from the additional revenues



## Disadvantages

- Possible negative public perception for new taxes
- ½ cent option requires legislative approval

## Pathway to Implementation

Finally, the pathway to implementation for this funding package offers the most revenue and, therefore, all required recommendations from this study may be funded. The local sales tax (even ¼ cent option) could fund all operational and capital needs required for the new recommendations. Other suggested integrative tasks suggested could be funded with either local sales tax or vehicle registration or rental car fees. The regional entity could offer a strong leadership role in the region in advancing transit and expand regional routes, as needed. Also, new transit modes may be studied for future implementation. The addition of the sales tax revenue offers much more flexibility in the recommendations that may be funded and allows Asheville to lead Western North Carolina in the growth and expansion of transit services.



# Implementation Plan

## Options for Establish a New Regional Transit Operating Entity

Establishing a new, independent entity is the French Broad River region's preferred governance model for regional transit, according to the polling result and feedback from the Steering Committee. There are several options to establish such new entity, which are explained in this section. Each option has its pros and cons, but among them, establishing a Regional Transit Authority under Article 25 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes is recommended as the most suitable option for the region.

Though all these options are different, there is a common feature to all of them: the need for a local champion to help moving the process forward, negotiating terms of the new authority, bringing key stakeholders to the table and moving through the administrative and regulatory environments.

### Option 1: Article 25 Regional Public Transportation Authority

Article 25 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes authorizes several municipalities, including counties, cities, towns, etc., to establish a Regional Public Transportation Authority. This is a common statutory option in the State of North Carolina for establishing regional transit agencies, for example, West Piedmont Regional Transit Authority, Inter-County Public Transportation Authority, Kerr Area Transportation Authority, to name a few.

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 at a later time, 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.

Article 25 allows for an effective regional governance model that a typical regional transit authority needs. However, if the region determines that any limitations of Article 25 will be a hurdle, the next option—establishing an authority with new enabling legislation—can be considered.

## **Option 2: New Enabling Legislation**

Article 25 has certain limitations on the powers of a public transportation authority that may be deemed unsuitable or too restrictive if the envisioned new authority requires certain special powers or governance structure. With a new legislation that enables a regional authority, the region can define the powers and limitations of the new authority based on its unique needs and desires. The new legislation can be drafted to incorporate additional authorities that Article 25 does not grant, 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

Examples of regional authorities established through a new legislation include Piedmont Authority of Regional Transportation and Go Triangle.

While this Option provides greater flexibility, it will be more costly, time consuming, and politically challenging than Option 1. It requires state legislative actions, which could take up to several years longer than following an existing statute like Article 25.

## **Option 3: Providing Regional Transit through Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs)**

Yet another option is to provide regional transit service through executing intergovernmental agreements among existing operators. The IGAs could designate one or more operators 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. As an example, City of Charlotte executed IGAs with neighboring municipalities to provide regional transit services operated by Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS).

This option may be a relatively quicker process compared to Options 1 and 2, as it relies on an existing operator and does not involve establishing a new authority. However, without a separate authority and an independent governing body, the regional service may lack independence and autonomy. The region will need to make separate efforts to involve municipalities in the governance of the regional service in order to ensure that the region will be served equitably and efficiently.

# Recommended Implementation Plan

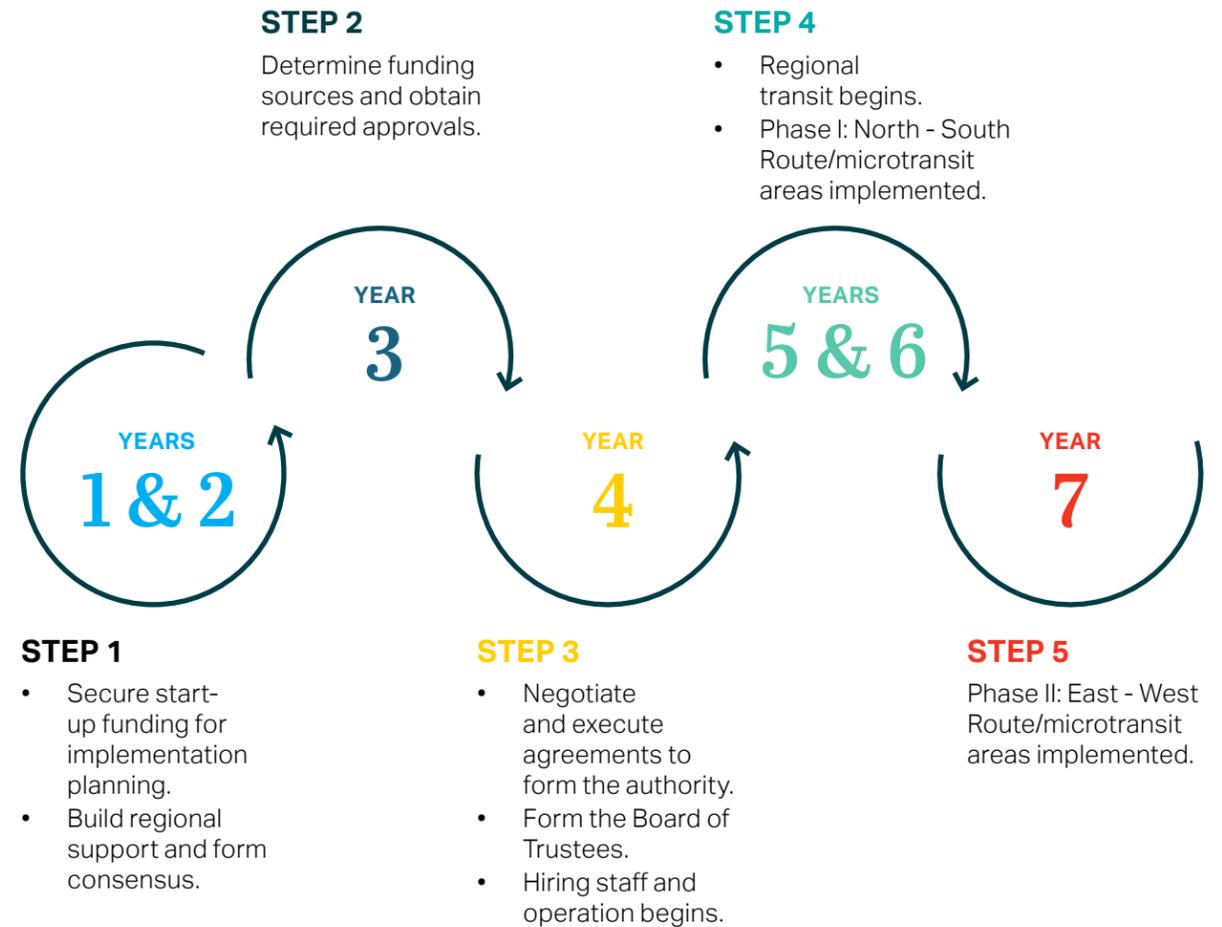
## Overview

Based on the findings of this study, the consulting team recommends that the Region considers Option 1, i.e. establishing a new, independent authority based on Article 25 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes. It became apparent during the course of the study that the French Broad Region values the autonomy and independence of a new agency and that additional funding would be required to support regional services. This option meets those key considerations. It provides a relatively broad range of powers that a typical regional transit operator would need, including an independent governing body with regional representation and common sources of funding for transit. It is reasonably flexible for new agencies to join at a later time. And historically, this option is a proven feasible and effective method in other regions within the state.

A transitional step would be available to the region while it works towards establishing an Article 25 authority, where municipalities could execute IGAs as needed to provide regional service during the transition period. With such IGAs, the Region could begin smaller scale cooperation in the near future and citizens can benefit from new regional service sooner.



## Implementation Process



### OPTIONAL STEP

- Provide regional service during the transitional period based on IGAs.
- Identify opportunities for implementation of regional service based on IGAs.
  - Negotiate and execute IGAs for regional service.
  - Operation begins.

## About AECOM

AECOM is the world's trusted infrastructure consulting firm, delivering professional services throughout the project lifecycle — from planning, design and engineering to program and construction management. On projects spanning transportation, buildings, water, new energy and the environment, our public- and private-sector clients trust us to solve their most complex challenges. Our teams are driven by a common purpose to deliver a better world through our unrivaled technical expertise and innovation, a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion, and a commitment to environmental, social and governance priorities. AECOM is a *Fortune 500* firm and its Professional Services business had revenue of \$13.2 billion in fiscal year 2020. See how we are delivering sustainable legacies for generations to come at [aecom.com](http://aecom.com) and [@AECOM](https://twitter.com/AECOM).

