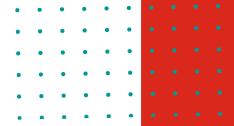




Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency



# Transit Study Executive Summary



## MISSION

Our mission is to provide and promote the highest quality transit services to the Flint Hills communities

RIDE THE *Flint Hills*



**DECEMBER 2025**

PROPOSAL BY:



WARNER  
TRANSPORTATION  
CONSULTING

ROUTESPROUT

## → Purpose & Context

This system-wide transit services study was initiated to evaluate existing transit service performance, respond to evolving community needs, and proactively plan for future mobility across the Flint Hills region. Changing travel patterns, population shifts, operational constraints, and ongoing community feedback highlighted the need for a comprehensive review of current services and potential service improvements.

The study was designed as a multi-phase planning effort that combined technical analysis, stakeholder engagement, and robust public participation. Early phases focused on understanding existing conditions, identifying service gaps, and developing preliminary service concepts. These concepts were then refined through direct input from riders, community members, and frontline transit staff to ensure that proposed changes were grounded in real-world experience.

Public engagement was a central component of the study process. FHATA intentionally sought feedback not only from current riders, but also from individuals who may benefit from transit in the future, including residents facing mobility barriers or limited transportation options. This approach reflects FHATA's commitment to equity, transparency, and data-informed decision-making.

The purpose of the study is to inform near- and long-term service recommendations that improve accessibility, reliability, and connectivity while making responsible use of available resources. By aligning technical analysis with community priorities, the study provides a clear framework for implementing service changes that are responsive to public needs and competitive for state and federal funding opportunities.

This executive summary synthesizes key findings from the survey responses and public engagement activities. All personal and identifying information about individual respondents has been removed, and this document focuses on high-level themes and actionable insights rather than individual comments.

## Outreach

Public participation for this study was intentionally designed to exceed minimum requirements and align closely with FHATA's adopted Public Participation Process. Outreach activities emphasized early and continuous engagement, broad access to information, and multiple opportunities for public input, consistent with FHATA policy goals related to transparency, equity, and meaningful involvement.

Engagement efforts included four formal public information meetings held across Junction City and Manhattan at accessible, transit-served locations. Meetings were scheduled at varied times, including during the traditional workday and in the late afternoon, to accommodate diverse schedules. In addition to these formal meetings, informal outreach conversations were conducted with transit operators and dispatch staff at bus stops and agency facilities, ensuring frontline operational perspectives were included.

To supplement in-person engagement, FHATA implemented a preference survey available both online and in paper format. The survey was offered in English and Spanish to reduce language barriers and remained open for an extended comment period to allow broad participation. Paper surveys were made available at public meetings to ensure access for individuals without reliable internet or digital devices.

Consistent with FHATA's Public Participation Process, visual materials such as system maps and service concepts were used to support public understanding of proposed changes. Participants were encouraged to comment on both individual routes and overall system concepts, and all comments were documented and summarized for consideration as part of the planning process.

Together, these efforts reflect FHATA's commitment to proactive, inclusive, and well-documented public engagement. The combination of public meetings, surveys, multilingual materials, accessible locations, and varied participation formats aligns with agency policy requirements for outreach related to service changes and provides a strong foundation for transparent decision-making and grant-supported implementation.



# Perceptions of Respondents

## Respondent Profile

Survey respondents interacted with the transit system in the following primary ways:

- Community members who do not currently use the bus service represented the largest share of respondents.
- Current riders accounted for approximately one-third of responses.
- A smaller portion of responses came from transit staff.

Among riders, the most frequently used services were fixed routes in Junction City and express service in Manhattan.



## Overall Perception

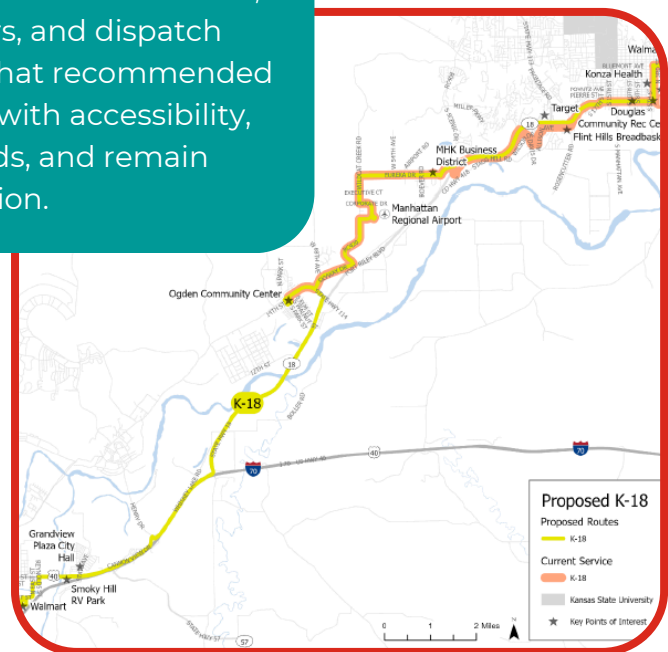
When asked to compare the proposed system redesign with current service:

- Approximately one-third of respondents preferred the proposed redesign.
- A similar share expressed no strong preference between current and proposed service.
- About one-fifth preferred the existing system.
- A smaller segment expressed dissatisfaction with both current and proposed networks.

These results suggest cautious openness to change, with a meaningful portion of respondents seeking clearer benefits or refinements before fully supporting the proposed redesign.

# → Routes and Services Feedback

Proposed route and service recommendations were developed through an iterative process that combined data-driven analysis with stakeholder and public input. Existing ridership patterns, service performance metrics, operational constraints, and geographic coverage were evaluated to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities within the current system. Preliminary concepts were then shaped and refined based on feedback from riders, community members, transit operators, and dispatch staff. This iterative approach ensured that recommended routes and services balance efficiency with accessibility, reflect demonstrated community needs, and remain operationally feasible for implementation.



## Respondent Value

While fewer respondents provided detailed feedback on individual routes or services compared to overall system preferences, the route- and service-specific comments offer valuable insight into how proposed changes may affect real-world usability. Respondents tended to focus on service reliability, physical accessibility, and the practicality of navigating the system under everyday conditions. Collectively, this feedback highlights the importance of balancing efficiency with inclusivity across both fixed-route and demand-responsive services.

# → Routes and Services Feedback

## K-18 Connector Service

The proposed K-18 Connector emerged as one of the most strongly supported service concepts. Common themes included:

- Clear demand for regional connectivity: Respondents consistently identified a fixed, reliable connection between Junction City and Manhattan as a major unmet need.
- Broad applicability: The connector was viewed as beneficial for commuting, education, healthcare, and access to essential services.
- Efficiency and reliability: Respondents favored a direct, limited-stop design that minimizes travel time and avoids unnecessary deviation.

Overall, feedback indicates that the K-18 Connector closely aligns with community priorities and represents a high-impact opportunity to improve regional mobility.

## Fixed-Route Service Feedback (General)

Across multiple comments, respondents provided broader feedback on fixed-route service design beyond specific routes:

- Frequency and wait times: Many respondents expressed frustration with long waits between buses and a desire for more evenly spaced service throughout the day.
- Operating hours: There was strong interest in earlier morning, evening, and weekend service to better support work, school, and family obligations.
- Route coverage: Respondents emphasized the importance of maintaining service to key destinations such as grocery stores, schools, medical facilities, and employment centers.
- Wayfinding and usability: Clear route naming, consistent numbering or color systems, readable maps, and physical timetables at stops were identified as important tools for rider confidence—particularly for those without access to mobile technology.

# → Routes and Services Recommendation

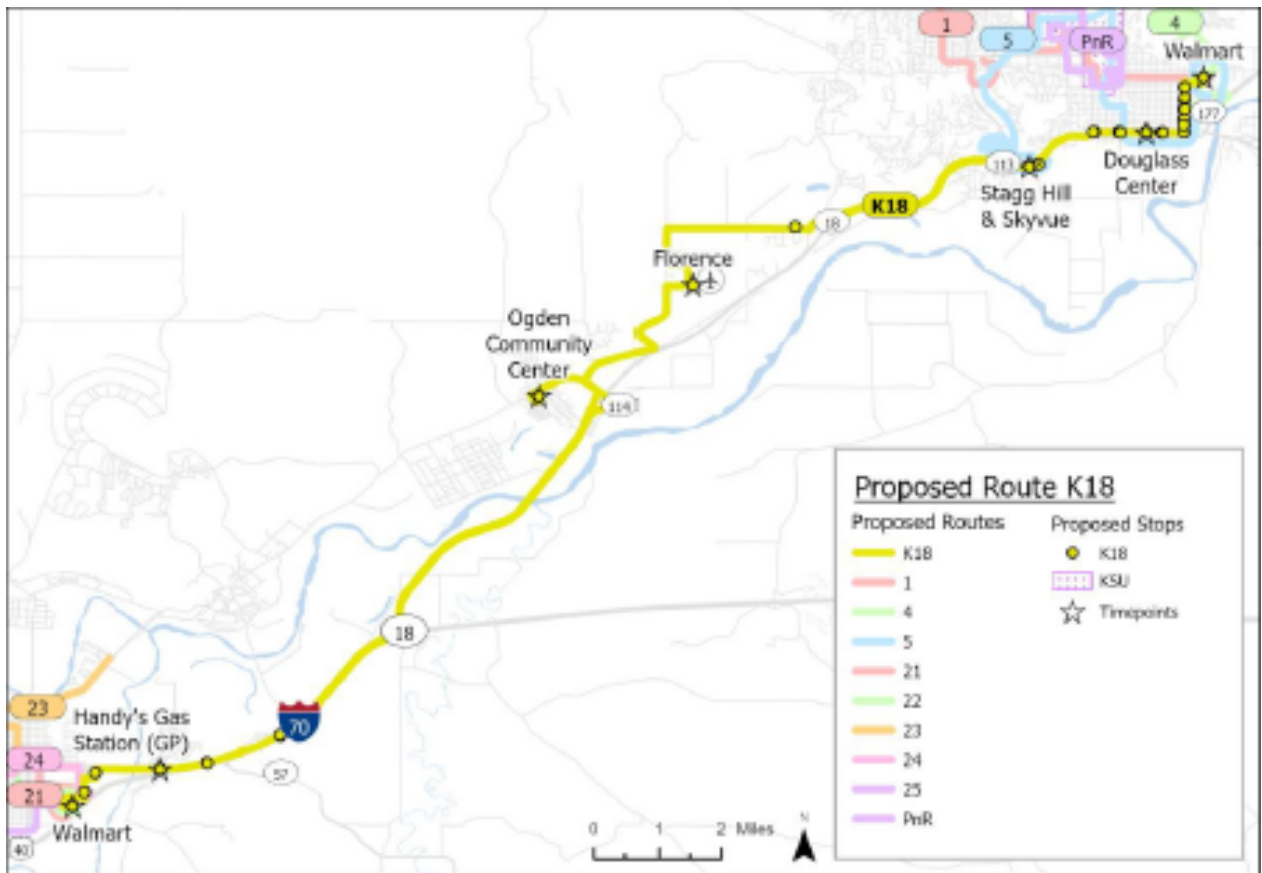
## K-18 Connector Service

Manhattan / Ogden / Junction City

The recommended K-18 Route would connect Manhattan and Junction City via Ogden. The route would operate approximately 10 round-trips per day, on weekdays only, departing the Walmart Supercenter in each city every 75 minutes.

The recommended K-18 route would facilitate one-seat-rides along the KS-18 corridor, between the region's primary hubs, and would connect to local services in both Manhattan and Junction City (see Figure 19). The recommended schedule for the route includes a time buffer to allow for local circulation in Ogden by request only.

Key points of interest that would be served by the recommended K-18 Route include the following: • Manhattan Walmart • MESI • Flint Hills Breadbasket • Florence Corporation • Ogden Community Center • Grandview Plaza • Junction City Walmart



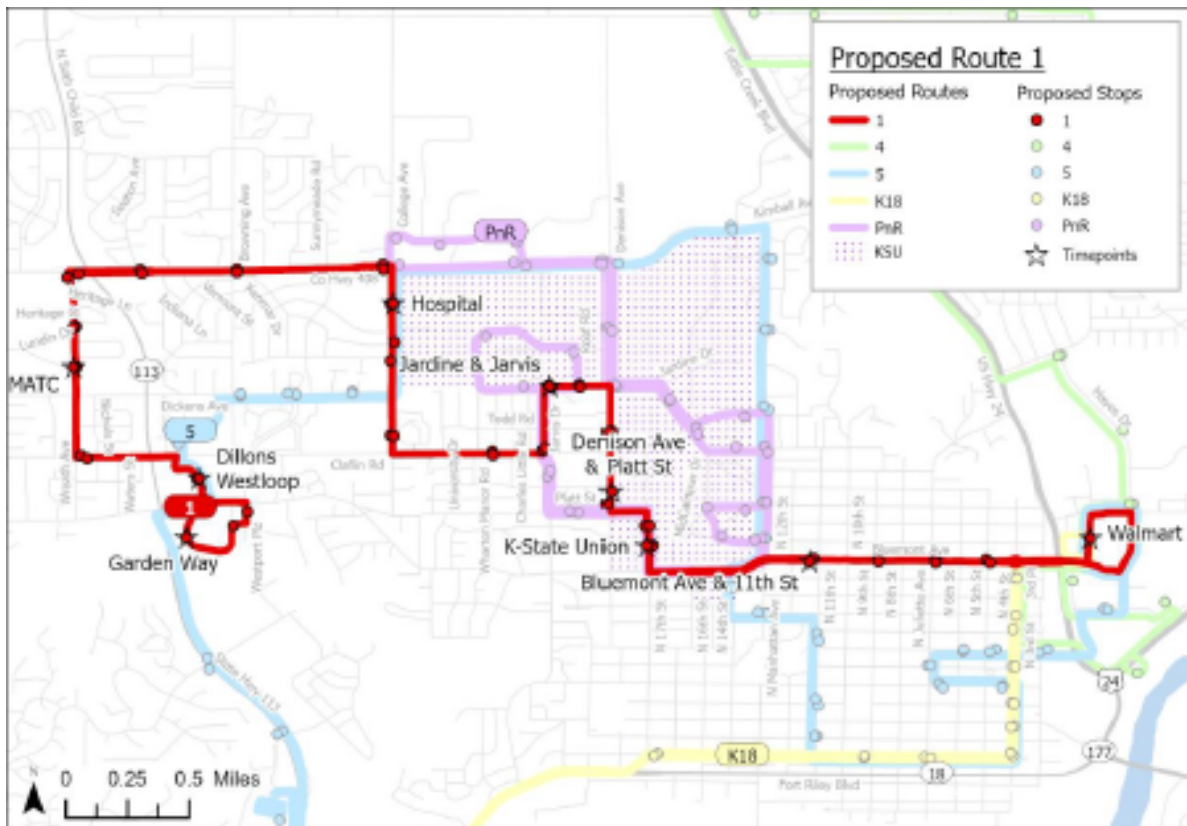
# → Routes and Services Recommendation

## Route 1

Manhattan

The recommended Route 1 would provide hourly service between the Manhattan Walmart Supercenter and Garden Way, via Belmont Avenue, Denison Avenue, Claflin Road, College Avenue, Kimball Avenue, and Wreath Avenue (see Figure 16). The route would operate weekdays, between 7:00 am and 7:15 pm, and Saturdays between 9:00 am and 7:18 pm.

To ensure sufficient recovery time and reliable on-time performance, the recommended Route 1 would be interlined with the recommended Route 5. While operating along different alignments, both routes would serve Walmart, the K-State campus, and the West Loop Dillons, providing riders with twice-an-hour service between these key destinations. The recommended Route 1 would also offer connection opportunities to the recommended Route 4, PnR Route, and K-18 Route, and would serve the following points of interest: Walmart, Walgreens, McDonalds, K-State Main Campus, Jardine Apartments, The District / The Point, Ascension Via Christi, The Quarters, MATC, Westloop Dillons

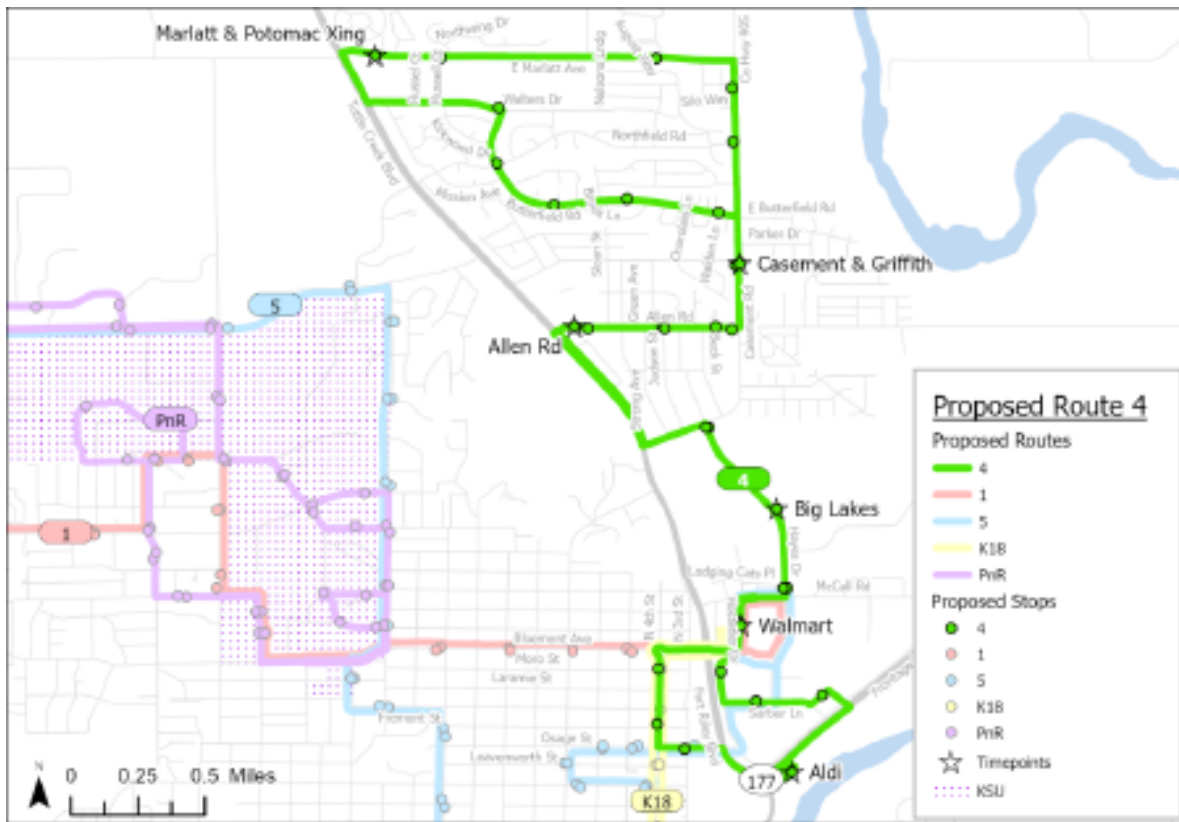


# → Routes and Services Recommendation

## Route 4 Manhattan

The recommended Route 4 would provide hourly service between ALDI and Marlatt Avenue, via Walmart Supercenter, Hayes Drive, Allen Road, Casement Road, and Butterfield Road (see Figure 17). The route would operate weekdays, between 6:41 am and 6:41 pm, and Saturdays between 8:41 am and 6:41 pm.

To minimize out-of-direction travel, the recommended route would operate bi-directionally, except for two end-of-line loops. The northern loop would serve residential areas near Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School, while the southern loop would serve retail destinations on both sides of Tuttle Creek Boulevard, between McCall Road and Poyntz Avenue. The recommended Route 4 would offer connection opportunities to the recommended Route 1, Route 5, and K-18 Route, as shown in, and would serve the following points of interest: ALD, Dillons, Walmart, Big Lakes Developmental Center, Blue Valley, Prairie Glen Co-Op, Colonial Gardens, Eisenhower Middle School, The Links, Hy-Vee



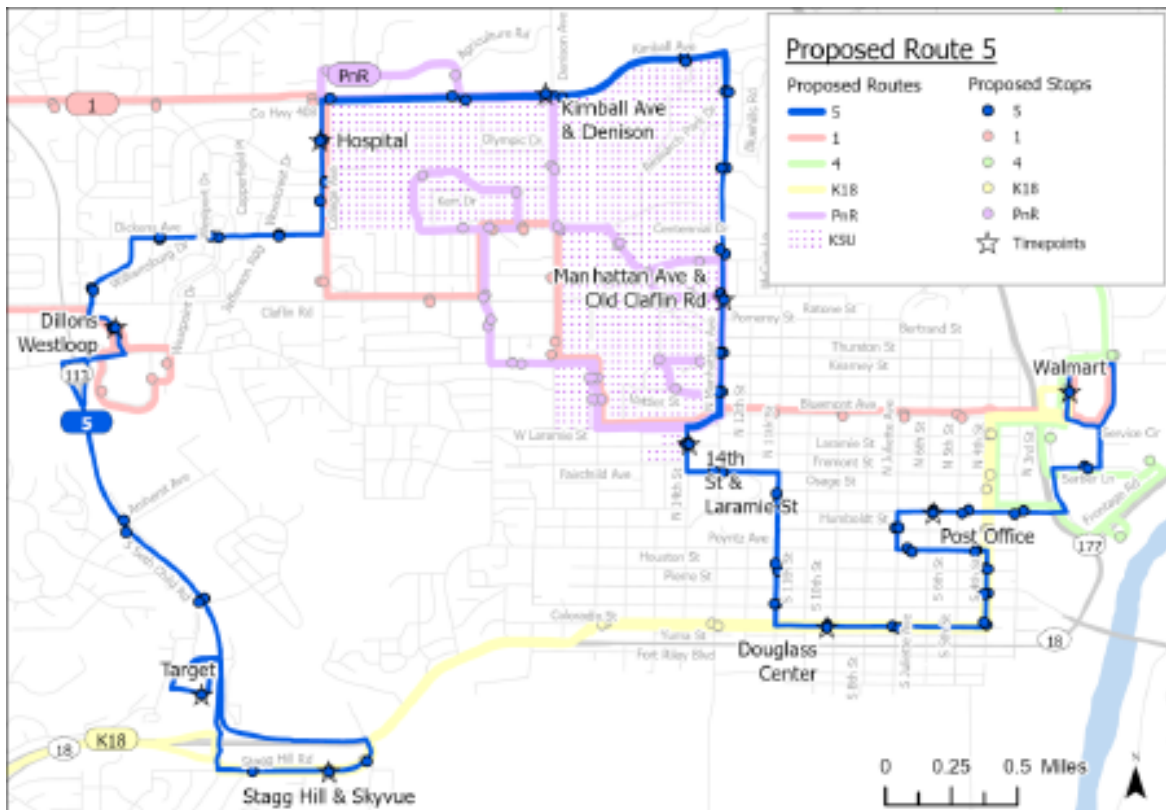
# → Routes and Services Recommendation

## Route 5

Manhattan

The recommended Route 5 would provide hourly service between the Manhattan Walmart Supercenter and Target, via downtown Manhattan, Manhattan Avenue, Kimball Avenue, Waterford Place, Seth Child Road, and Stagg Hill Road (see Figure 18). The route would operate weekdays, between 7:09 am and 7:09 pm, and Saturdays between 9:09 am and 7:09 pm.

To ensure sufficient recovery time and reliable on-time performance, the recommended Route 5 would be interlined with the recommended Route 1. While operating along different alignments, both routes would serve Walmart, the K-State campus, and the West Loop Dillons, providing riders with twice-an-hour service between these key destinations. The recommended Route 5 would also offer connection opportunities to the recommended Route 4, K-18 Route, and PnR Route, and would serve the following points of interest: Walmart, Konza Health, MESI, Manhattan City Hall, K-State Main Campus, The Quarters, Ascension Via Christi, Westoop Dillons, Flint Hills Breadbasket, Target

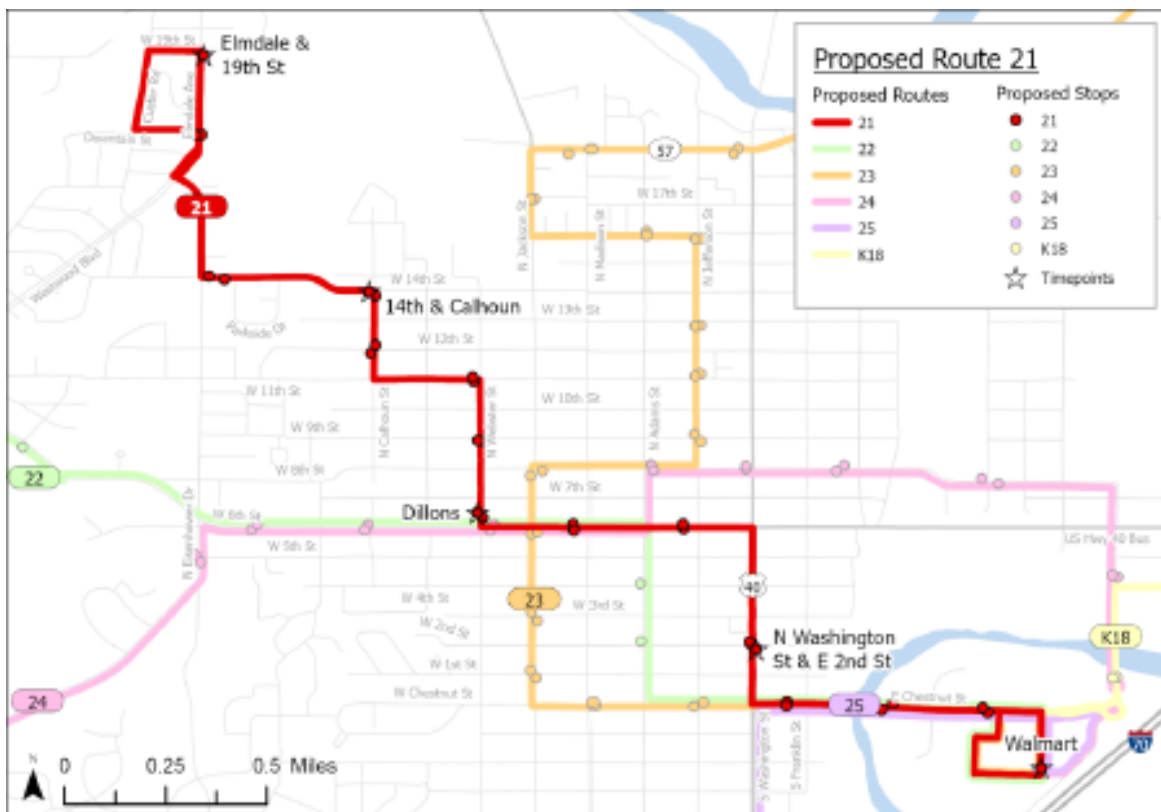


# → Routes and Services Recommendation

## Route 21 Junction City

The recommended Route 21 would provide hourly service between the Junction City Walmart Supercenter and Elmdale Avenue, via Chestnut Street, Washington Street, 6th Street, Webster Street, 14th Street, and 17th Street (see Figure 20). The route would operate on weekdays only, between 6:30 am and 6:00 pm.

To ensure sufficient recovery time and reliable on-time performance, the recommended Route 21 would be interlined with the recommended Route 22 and Route 23. Although serving different final destinations, all three routes would link the Walmart Supercenter to downtown Junction City. With staggered schedules, the three routes would facilitate frequent service between the two key hubs. Connection opportunities would be available between the three recommended routes in downtown Junction City and at the Walmart Supercenter, where connections could also be made to the K-18 Route, Route 24, and Route 25. Route 21 would serve the following points of interest: Walmart, McDonald's, Dillons, Green Park Apartments, Northwind and Elmdale Mobile Home Park, USD 475 Early Childhood Center



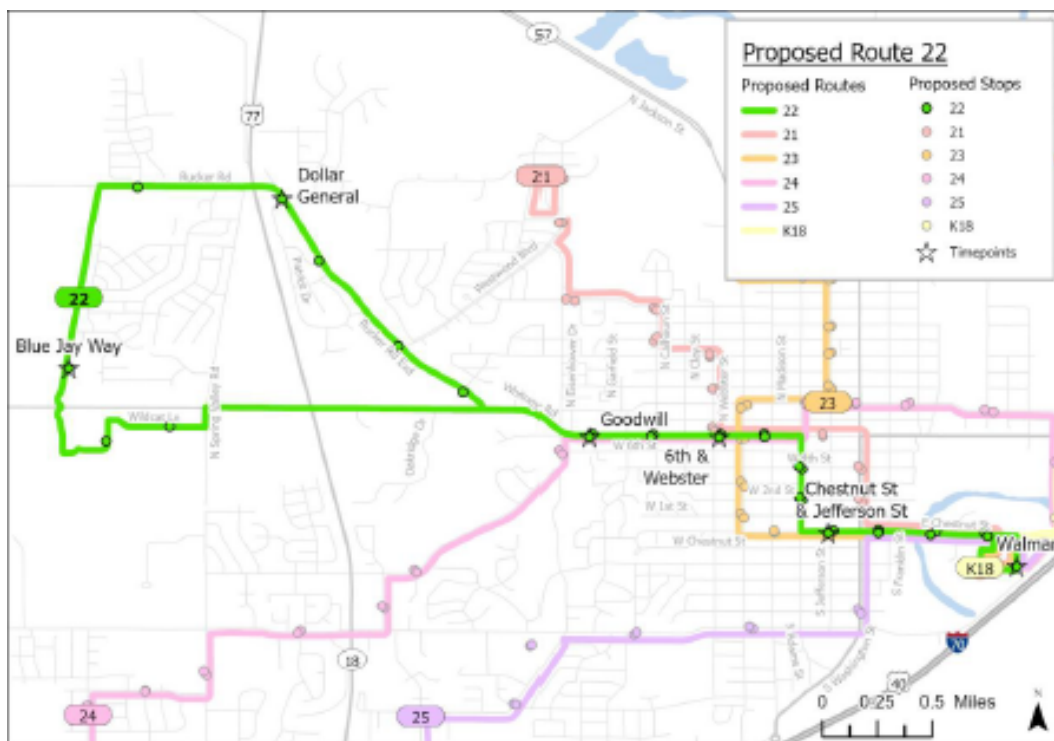
# → Routes and Services Recommendation

## Route 22 Junction City

The recommended Route 22 would provide hourly service between the Junction City Walmart Supercenter and Blue Jay Way, via Chestnut Street, Adams Street, 6th Street, 8th Street and Rucker Road (see Figure 21). The route would operate on weekdays only, between 7:00 am and 6:45 pm.

To ensure sufficient recovery time and reliable on-time performance, the recommended Route 22 would be interlined with the recommended Route 21 and Route 23. In addition to contributing to frequent service between the Walmart Supercenter to downtown Junction City, the recommended route would expand service coverage to neighborhoods near Junction City High School, and service frequency to the high school itself.

Connections between Route 22 and recommended routes 21, 23, and 24 could be made in either downtown Junction City or at that Walmart Supercenter, where connections could also be made to Route 25 and the K-18 Route. Route 22 would serve the following points of interest: Walmart, McDonald's, Dillons, Goodwill, Junction City Housing Authority, Junction City Middle School, Junction City High School, Patriot Point Apartments



# → Routes and Services Recommendation

## Route 23 Junction City

The recommended Route 21 would provide hourly service between the Junction City Walmart Supercenter and Grant Avenue, via Chestnut Street, Jackson Street, 8th Street, Jefferson Street, 16th Street, and 18th Street (see Figure 22). The route would operate on weekdays only, between 6:45 am and 6:30 pm.

To ensure sufficient recovery time and reliable on-time performance, the recommended Route 23 would be interlined with the recommended Route 21 and Route 22. Although serving different final destinations, all three routes would link the Walmart Supercenter to downtown Junction City. With staggered schedules, the three routes would facilitate frequent service between the two key hubs. Connection opportunities would be available between the three recommended routes in downtown Junction City and at the Walmart Supercenter, where connections could also be made to the K-18 Route, Route 24, and Route 25. Route 23 would serve the following points of interest: Walmart, McDonald's, Public Library, Washington Court Apartments, Eagle Landing, Konza Health, Village at Freedom Place, El Coqui Latino Market



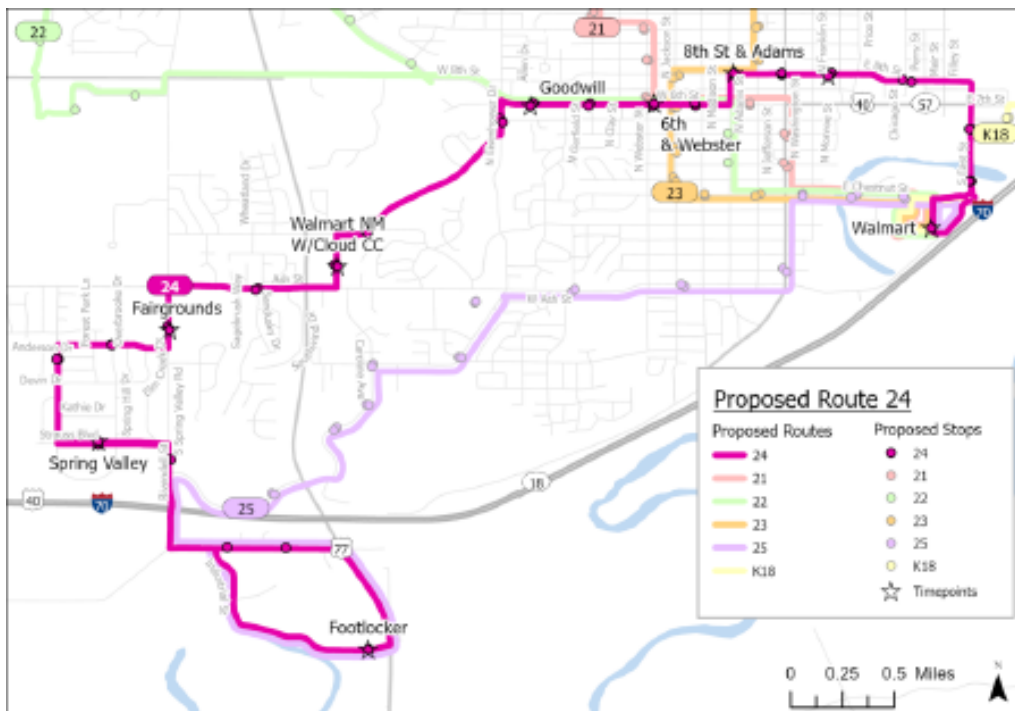
# → Routes and Services Recommendation

## Route 24 Junction City

The recommended Route 24 would provide service every two hours between the Junction City Walmart Supercenter and Foot Locker Corporate Service Center, via East Street, 8th Street, Adams Street, 6th Street, McFarland Road, Ash Street, Spring Valley Road, Strauss Boulevard, and Industrial Street (see Figure 23). The route would operate on weekdays only, between 6:15 am and 6:15 pm.

Although Route 24 would operate with a two-hour frequency, passengers would be able to access destinations along the route hourly through an interline with the recommended Route 25 at Foot Locker. For example, a rider traveling from Walmart Supercenter to the Hickory Hill Apartments could do so directly on the Route 24, or by riding through the end of the line of Route 25 until it transitions to Route 24 at Foot Locker.

In addition to the interline with Route 25 at Foot Locker, transfers between the two routes could also be made at the Walmart Supercenter, where connection opportunities would also be available to recommended routes 21, 22, 23, and K-18. Route 24 would serve the following points of interest: Walmart, Department of Motor Vehicles, Public Library, Dillons, Goodwill, Walmart Neighborhood Market, Hickory Hills, Foot Locker



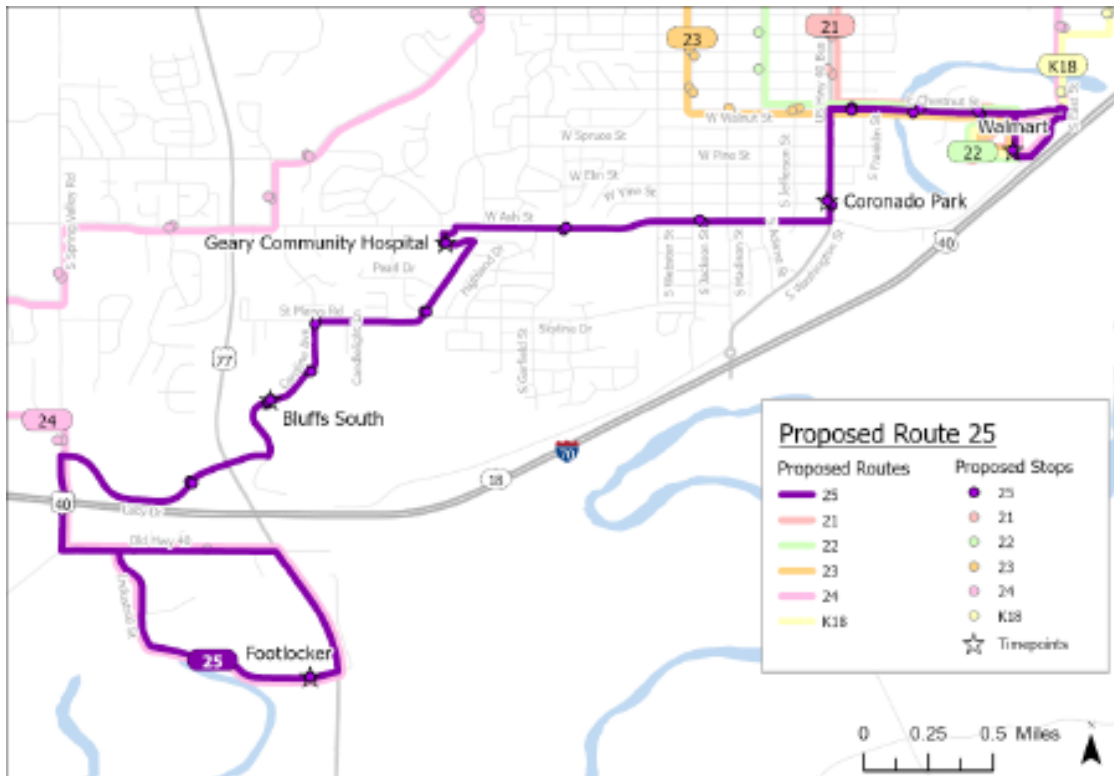
# → Routes and Services Recommendation

## Route 25 Junction City

The recommended Route 25 would provide service every two hours between the Junction City Walmart Supercenter and Foot Locker Corporate Service Center, via Chestnut Street, Washington Street, Ash Street, St. Mary's Road, Caroline Avenue, Lacy Drive, and Industrial Street (see Figure 24). The route would operate on weekdays only, between 6:49 am and 5:42 pm.

Although Route 25 would operate with a two-hour frequency, passengers would be able to access destinations along the route hourly through an interline with the recommended Route 24 at Foot Locker. For example, a rider traveling from Walmart Supercenter to Stormont Vail Hospital could do so directly on the Route 25, or by riding through the end of the line of Route 24 until it transitions to Route 25 at Foot Locker.

In addition to the interline with Route 24 at Foot Locker, transfers between the two routes could also be made at the Walmart Supercenter, where connection opportunities would also be available to recommended routes 21, 22, 23, and K-18. Route 25 would serve the following points of interest: Walmart, CVS, Stormont Vail Hospital, The Bluffs, Smithfield Meats, Foot Locker



# → Routes and Services Feedback

## Junction City Microtransit Zone

The proposed Junction City microtransit service received generally positive feedback, particularly related to flexibility and coverage. Key themes included:

- Reduced travel time and increased convenience: Respondents valued faster pickups and more direct trips compared to fixed-route service.
- Coverage of underserved areas: Microtransit was viewed as a way to improve access in neighborhoods not easily served by fixed routes.
- Concerns around cost and eligibility: Some respondents expressed uncertainty about fares, rider eligibility, and access for individuals without smartphones.

Respondents also noted that microtransit should function as a complement to fixed routes, rather than a full replacement, to avoid creating service gaps.

## Curb-to-Curb and Demand-Responsive Service Considerations

In addition to microtransit feedback, respondents offered broader observations on curb-to-curb and demand-responsive services:

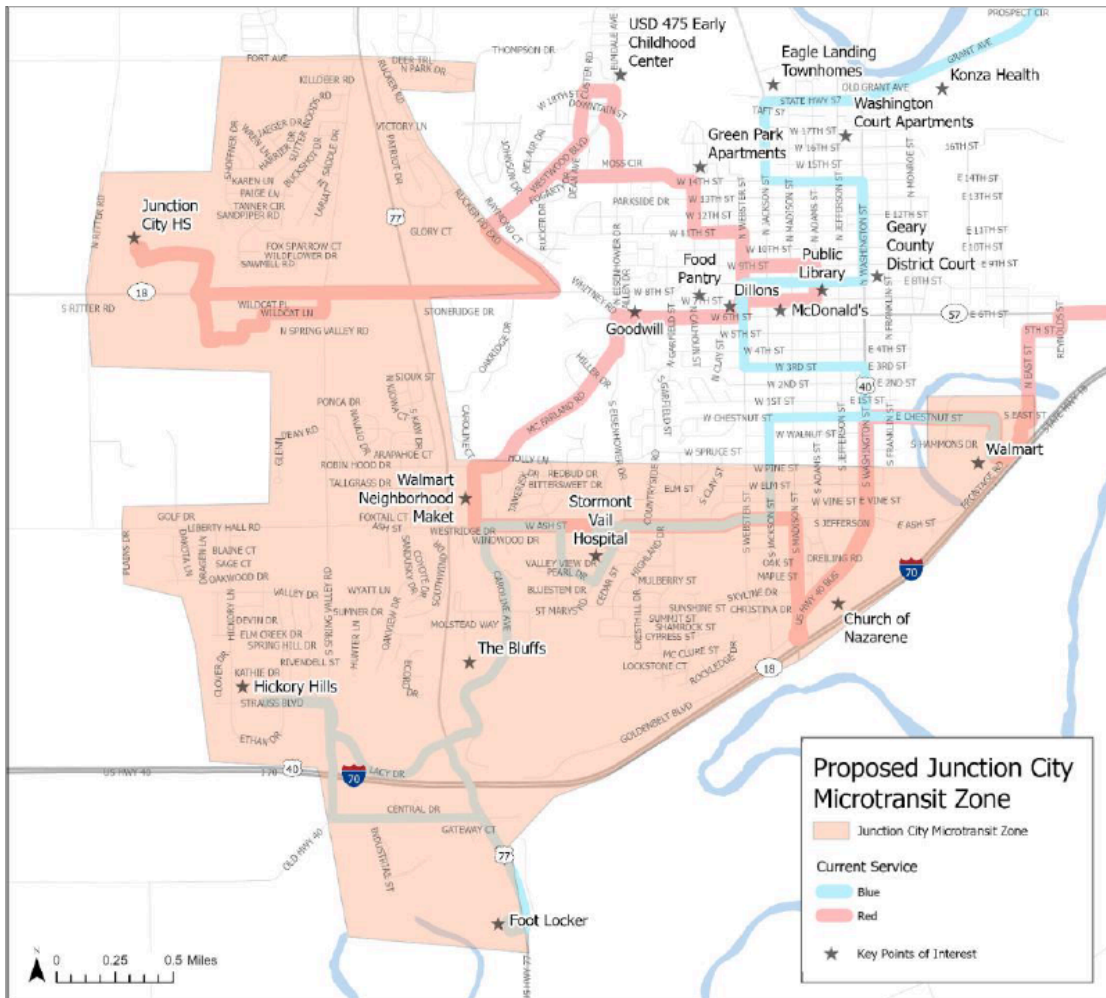
- Equity and access: Respondents emphasized that curb-to-curb services should remain accessible to riders without smartphones, credit cards, or advanced digital literacy.
- Reliability and predictability: While flexibility was valued, respondents noted the importance of reasonable wait times, clear booking rules, and reliable arrival windows.
- Complementary role: Many comments suggested that curb-to-curb service works best when paired with a strong fixed-route backbone, allowing riders to complete longer trips efficiently while still receiving localized access.

Together, these themes underscore the need for a balanced service model that integrates fixed routes and demand-responsive options in a way that is reliable, accessible, and easy to understand.

# → Routes and Services Recommendation

## Junction City Microtransit Zone

The preliminary service redesign scenario suggested replacing fixed-route service in parts of Junction City that are lower-density and more automobile-oriented with app-based on-demand service for more frequent and direct trips within a designated zone than the current Red and Blue routes allow. The proposed microtransit service would operate on weekdays only, offering same-day reservations with typical wait-times of 30 minutes or less. The service would offer local circulation within the zone, as well as connections to routes 21, 22, 23 and the K-18 for cross-town or regional service (Figure 13). Key points of interest that would be served by the proposed microtransit service include the following: Walmart, Stormont Vail Hospital, Walmart Neighborhood Market, The Bluffs, Hickory Hills, Foot Locker, Junction City HS/MS, Patriot Point, Hunters Ridge Apartments



# → Routes and Services Feedback

Kansas State University

## Junction City Microtransit Zone

Feedback on the proposed Park-and-Ride service was mixed and, in many cases, highly detailed. Key themes included:

- **Accessibility and mobility needs:** Respondents emphasized the importance of minimizing walking distances and accounting for terrain, slopes, and weather exposure, particularly for riders with disabilities or temporary mobility challenges.
- **Stop location and proximity:** There was strong interest in maintaining stops near residential housing, healthcare facilities, and high-activity destinations. Respondents expressed concern that relocating or consolidating stops could disproportionately affect riders who rely on close access.
- **Pedestrian-oriented environments:** Several comments raised concerns about routing buses through areas primarily designed for pedestrian use, noting potential safety risks, congestion, and operational delays.
- **Preference for incremental improvements:** Some respondents suggested that operational adjustments—such as converting one-directional loops to two-directional service—may address many issues without requiring a full route redesign.

Overall, feedback suggests that while the Park-and-Ride concept is valued, its success depends on careful stop placement, strong coordination with pedestrian infrastructure, and adherence to accessibility best practices.

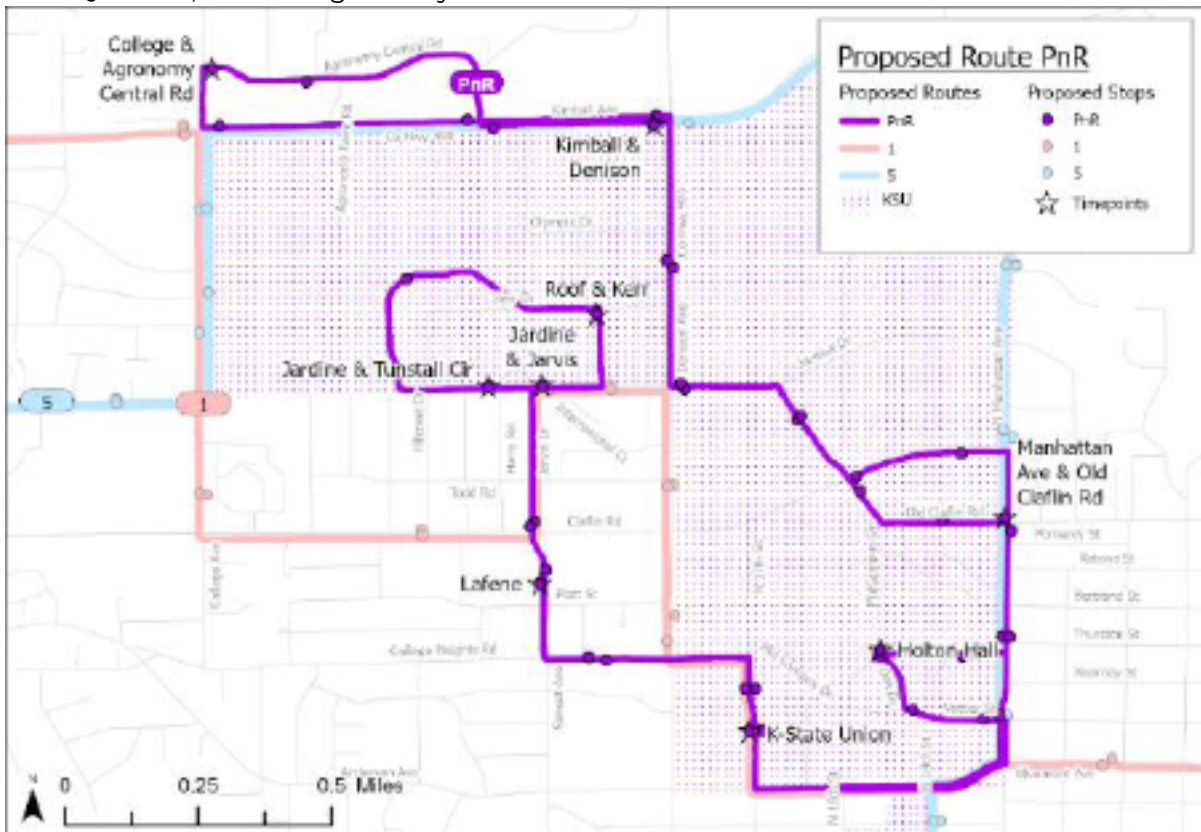
# → Routes and Services Recommendation

Kansas State University

## Park 'n Ride

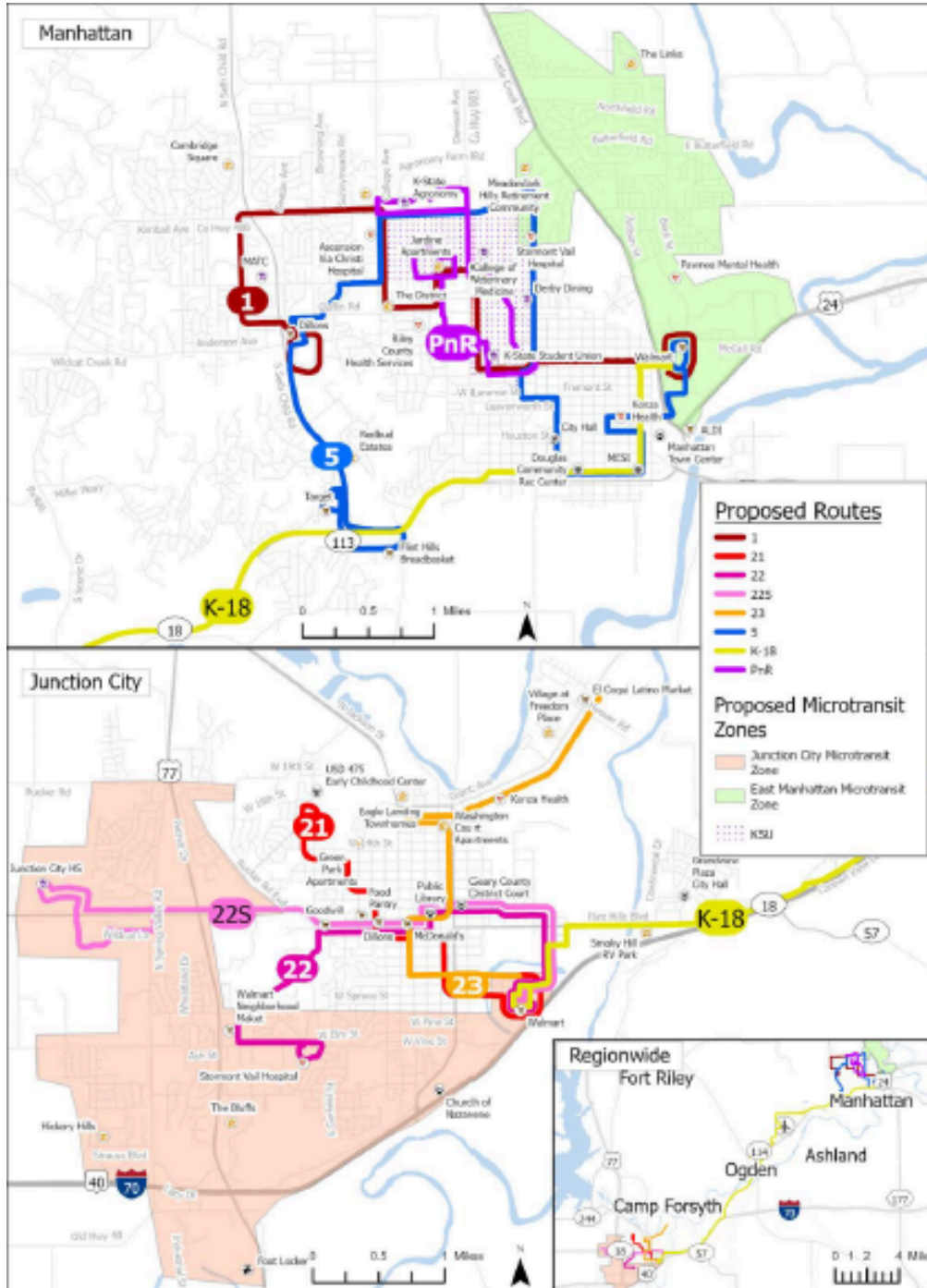
The recommended PnR Route would operate bi-directionally along a U-shaped route, between College Avenue / Agronomy Central Road, and the Jardine Terrace Apartments. The route would operate on weekdays only, between 7:00 am and 7:00 pm, with 30-minute frequency until 2:00 pm and hourly frequency after that.

The route's bi-directional design would allow for more direct travel between key destinations on and around the K-State campus, and would reduce the likelihood of overcrowding and out-of-direction travel, which are common for one-way loops. The recommended PnR Route would offer connection opportunities to the recommended Route 1 and Route 5, as shown in Figure 15, and would serve the following points of interest: Jardine Apartments, Peters Rec Center, K-State Counseling Services, Marlatt Hall, Engineering Hall, K-State Union, Avenue M Apartments, College of Business, Hale Library, Derby Dining / West Hall, Dole Hall / Call Hall, College of Veterinary Medicine, The Quarters, K-State Agronomy



# → Routes and Services Recommendation

## System Wide Network



# → Common Themes & Priorities

Across all comments and feedback, several consistent themes emerged:

## Accessibility and Equity

Respondents repeatedly emphasized the need for services that accommodate individuals with disabilities, limited mobility, and those without access to smartphones or digital tools.

## Service Frequency and Span

There is strong interest in more frequent service, longer operating hours (including evenings and weekends), and schedules that better align with work and school needs.

## Regional Connectivity

Many respondents view direct connections between communities as a top priority and a core value of the transit system.

## Clarity and Communication

Participants requested clearer maps, better comparisons between current and proposed routes, and more detailed information on stops, timing, and fares.

## Infrastructure and Rider Experience

Suggestions included improved shelters, benches, signage, and safer stop locations.

## Affordability

Respondents expressed the importance of keeping transit affordable and maintaining simple, flexible fare payment options, including cash acceptance.

## → Alignment with Funding Priorities

The themes identified through this outreach effort closely align with common state and federal transit funding priorities. In particular, public feedback reinforces the importance of investments that:

**Advance equity and accessibility** by improving mobility options for individuals with disabilities, low-income households, older adults, and riders without access to personal vehicles or digital tools.

**Support regional connectivity and economic opportunity** by linking communities to employment centers, education, healthcare, and essential services.

**Improve efficiency and system performance** through a balanced mix of fixed-route and demand-responsive services tailored to community context and density.

**Enhance resilience and sustainability** by increasing ridership potential, reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, and making better use of existing infrastructure.

By grounding proposed service changes in demonstrated community need and clearly articulated outcomes, final recommendations can be positioned to compete effectively for discretionary and formula-based funding while maintaining transparency and accountability to the public.

# → Key Takeaways



## Strong Support for Regional Connectivity and Flexible Service Models

Regional connectivity and flexible service models, particularly the K-18 Connector and microtransit, are widely supported.

## Accessibility as a Central Decision-Making Priority

Accessibility considerations should be central to final service decisions, especially for campus-adjacent routes and high-use destinations.



## Overall Support with Measured Caution

The proposed system redesign is viewed favorably by a substantial portion of respondents, though many remain neutral or cautious.



## Continued Engagement and Communication as Keys to Implementation Success

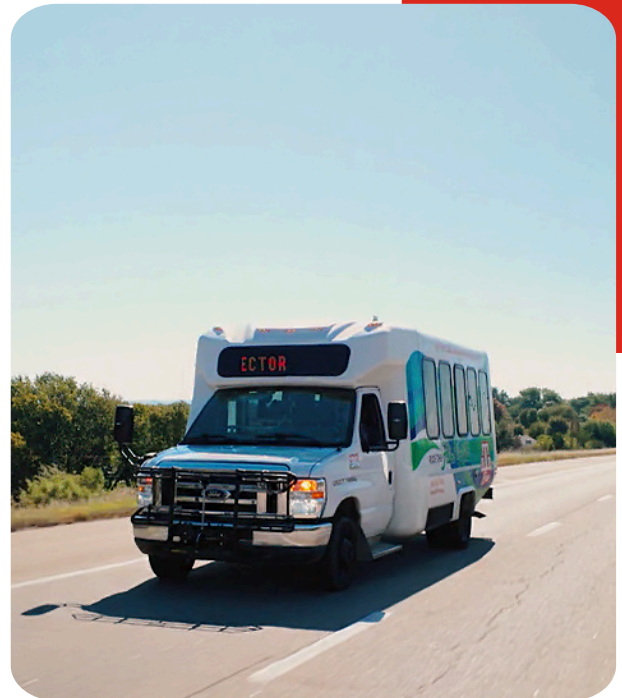
Continued public engagement and clear communication will be critical to building trust and support as recommendations move toward implementation.



## → Conclusion

### Onward & Upward

The survey results and public feedback demonstrate strong community interest in improving transit service across the Flint Hills region. While no single solution meets all needs, the feedback provides clear direction on priorities: connectivity, accessibility, reliability, and clarity. Incorporating these themes into final recommendations will help ensure that future transit investments deliver meaningful, equitable benefits to the communities they serve.



Importantly, this study is intended to serve as a foundational planning document that will guide FHATA's strategic direction in the coming years. The findings and recommendations will inform future service planning, capital investment decisions, and funding strategies, providing a clear, community-informed framework for aligning transit services with long-term goals, available resources, and evolving regional needs.

**THANK YOU**

**For inquiries,  
contact us.**

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