

# FLINT HILLS ATA BUS

## KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

### A LOOK AT SERVICES, DATA, AND PARTNERSHIP

Produced and Written by FHATA Staff, June 2023

Relevant data provided by FHATA and KSU Spring 2023 Plan 836 Cohort



# Executive Summary

Kansas State University has invested in public transportation for its students, faculty, and staff for nearly fifteen years. That investment has also had a significant impact on the greater Manhattan community as well and is a further example of the dynamic “town-gown” relationship that is so vital for both K-State and Manhattan. As the largest user and financial supporter of the wider Manhattan fixed route system, K-State recognizes that transportation is an important foundation that supports student success. Employment, housing, and medical care among other resources are found throughout the greater community beyond campus and providing access to those resources is an important benefit to students.

## Services, Data, Feedback

The purpose of this document is to provide detailed information and analysis regarding services, current, and historical ridership data, and feedback from students surveyed during the Spring 2023 semester. While student enrollment has been declining and this has impacted funding, service levels, and ridership; the data shows that students

continue to utilize and value public transit and in the case of the Park&Ride on campus, are riding at pre-pandemic levels. Further, students surveyed highly value public transportation, and those surveyed who ride the bus are riding it multiple times per week and are using it to go to work, school, and to purchase groceries.



# About ATA Bus

## Our History

The Agency was founded in 1976 by a group of county residents concerned about the lack of public transportation. Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency (FHATA) has been providing safe, reliable, and affordable public transportation since that time as a 501c3 private, non-profit organization.

## Company Values

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Mission</b>                | Our mission is to provide and promote the highest quality transit services to the Flint Hills communities. |
| <b>Public Service Mission</b> | Build stronger communities and promote equality and opportunity.   |
| <b>Vision</b>                 | We believe in empowering people and connecting communities.  |

## Services

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Fixed Routes</b>      | Manhattan and Junction City routes with a fixed schedule and pick-up locations.        |
| <b>Regional Services</b> | The K-18 Connector and service to additional communities.                              |
| <b>Demand Response</b>   | Curb-to-curb service for seniors, disabled, and those who live far from a bus stop.    |
| <b>Accessibility</b>     | All ATA Bus vehicles are 100% ADA Accessible. Many buses are equipped with bike racks. |



# History of the Partnership

ATA Bus and K-State have been working together for nearly 15 years to provide public transit services not only on campus but throughout the Manhattan community.

Initially, ATA Bus worked with K-State to improve transportation services for students with disabilities and international students. Since then, ATA Bus and K-State learned there is a greater need.

Currently, all students, faculty, and staff can use all Manhattan ATA Bus fixed-route services free of charge. K-Staters use this opportunity to travel throughout the community including for work, education, shopping, and recreation.

**2009** – ATA Bus/KSU Partnership Begins



**2010** – SafeRide Begins



**2012/13** – MHK Fixed Routes Start  
– KSU adds SAC, Jardine, & Shopping Shuttle



**2015/16** – Park&Ride Begins  
– KSU Contributes to Fixed Routes



**2018** – Ride Free with KSU ID Begins



**2020/21** – Covid-19 Severely Impacts Services



**2022** – Park&Ride Only  
– KSU is largest user of ATA Bus

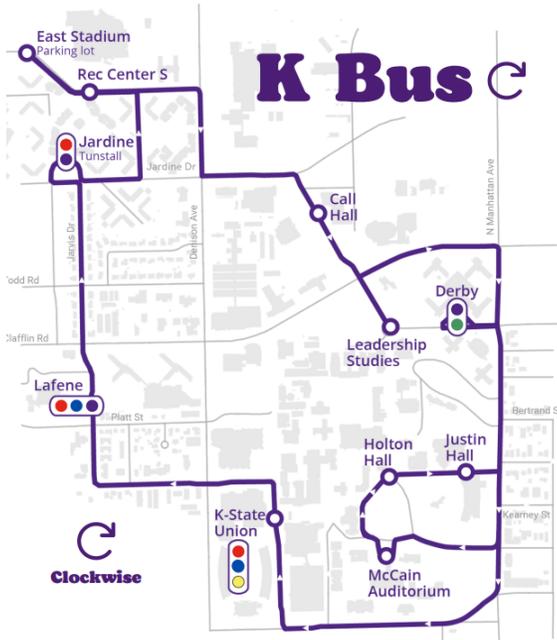
## Other Notable Events

2015/16 - KSU Buys Buses

2015/17 - APD Shuttle Offered During Construction

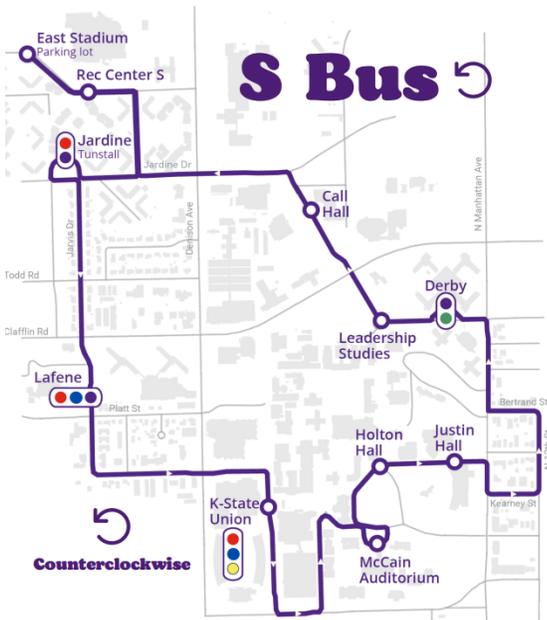


# Current Service Offerings on Campus

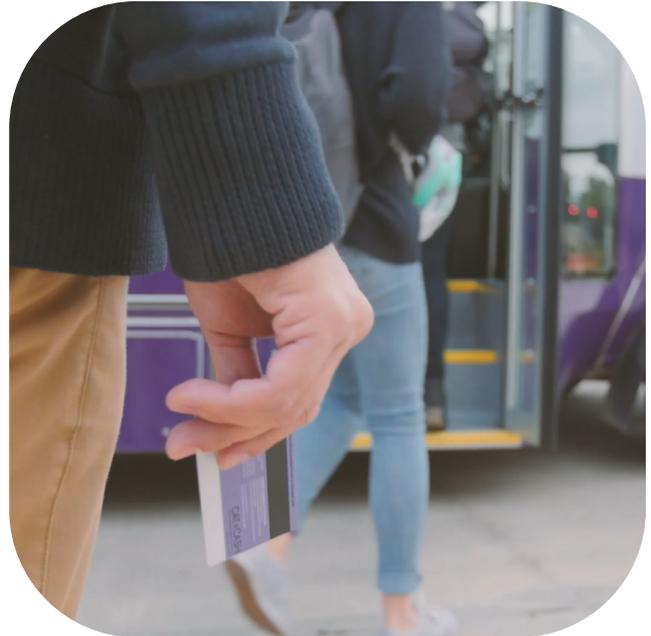


First Stop: East Stadium at 7:00 a.m.  
Last Stop: East Stadium at 7:15 p.m.

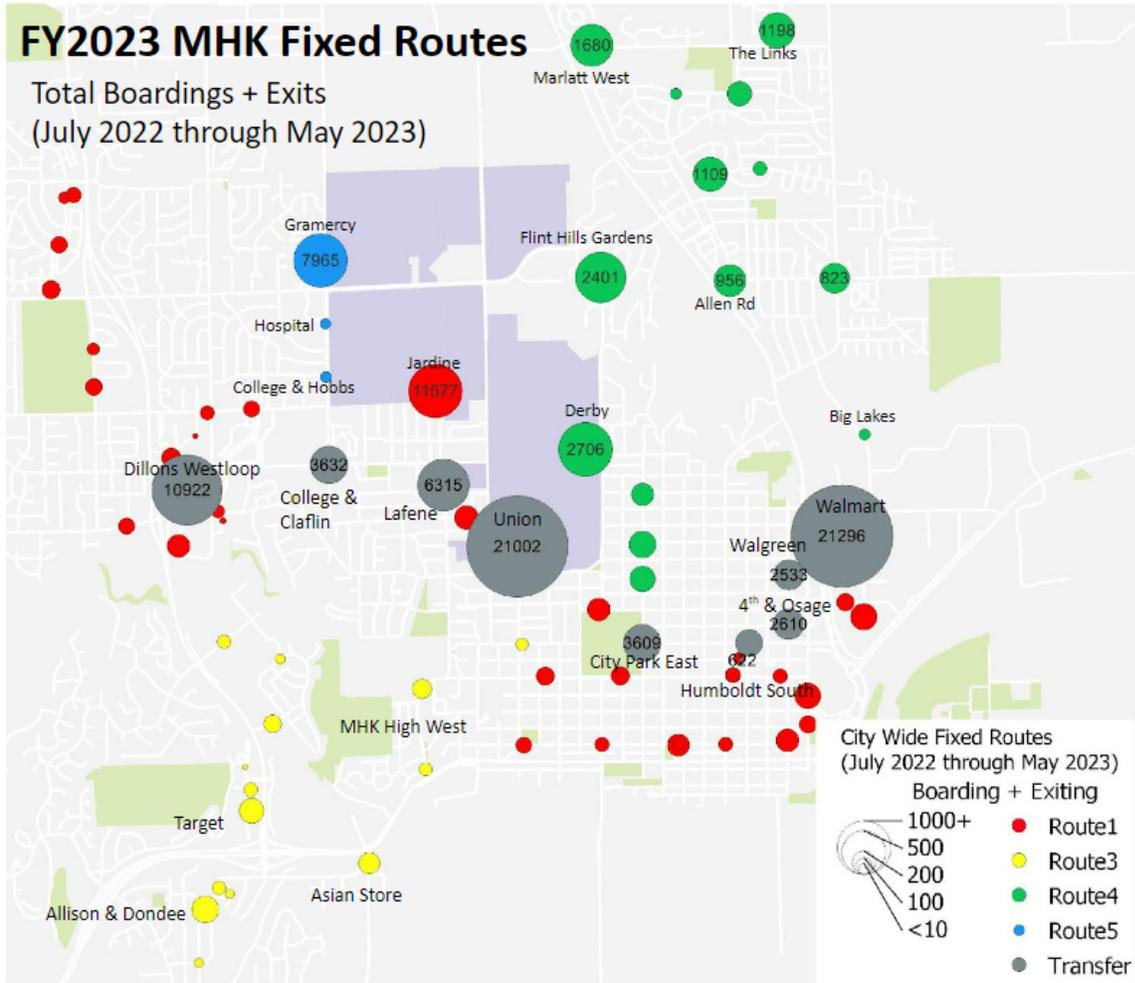
- Three buses on Park & Ride routes
- Operate Mon - Fri, 7:00am - 7:00pm while school is in session
- Students can register to ride Demand Response, "curb to curb," if qualified
- All ATA Bus vehicles are 100% ADA Accessible
- Regular Fixed Route Services are available during Game Days at KSU



First Stop: East Stadium at 7:00 a.m.  
Last Stop: East Stadium at 7:01p.m.



# Fixed Route Ridership Data



Fixed route (Route 1, 3, 4, and 5) ridership is presented using a proportional symbol where the circle size is relative to the total number of boardings and exits at each stop from July 01, 2022 to May 31, 2023.

- 18% projected ridership increase in FY2023 from FY2022
- 44% increase in ridership from FY2021 to FY2022

Top 10 Stops in FY2023 for Fixed Route Ridership \*Stops are affiliated with KSU

1. Walmart
2. KSU Union
3. Jardine
4. Dillons Westloop
5. Gramercy
6. Lafene
7. College & Claflin
8. City Park East
9. Dillons East
10. Derby



# Fixed Route Ridership Data

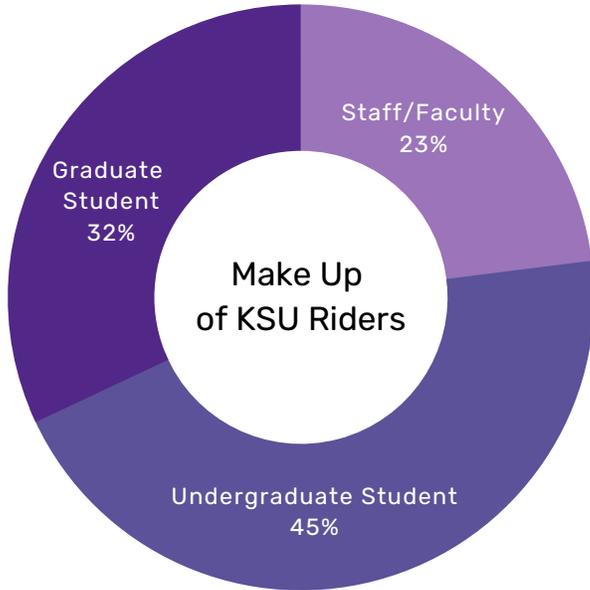
## KSU Affiliated Fixed Route Rider Demographics



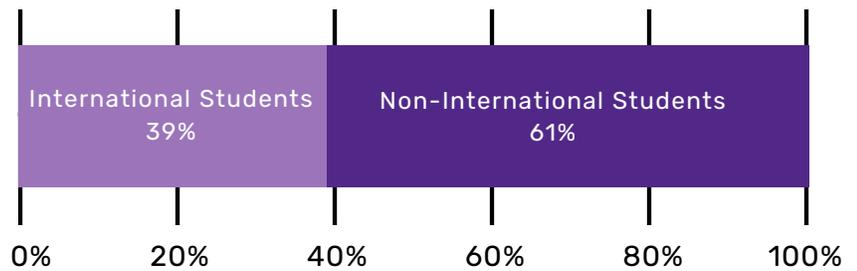
51% of Fixed Route Riders are KSU Affiliated



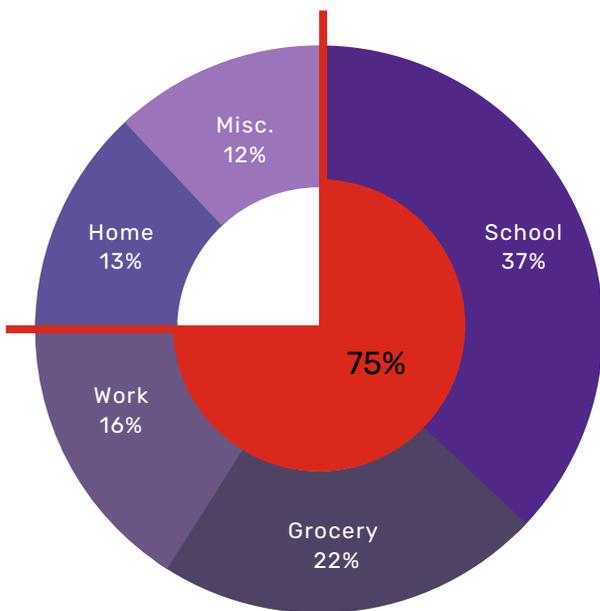
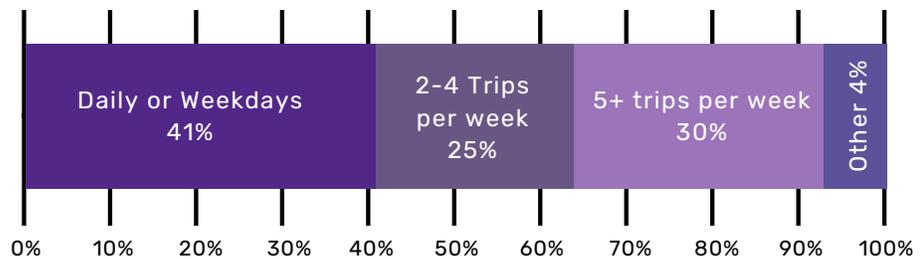
62% of KSU Fixed Route Riders have no access to a household vehicle



Make Up of KSU Student Riders



Frequency of Use for KSU Riders

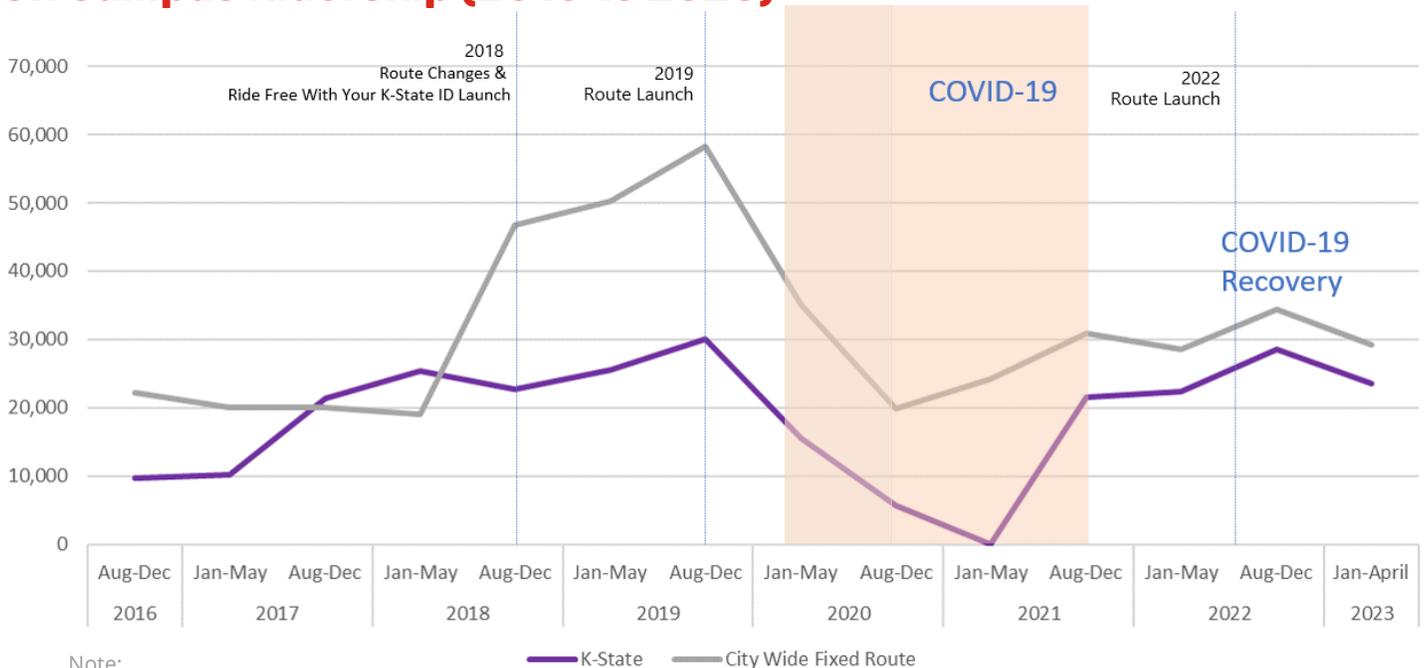


75% of surveyed KSU riders are using ATA Bus to go to and from school, work and to get groceries.



# KSU Route Ridership Data

## On Campus Ridership (2016 to 2023)



Note:

Manhattan Fixed Route Ridership does not include the K-18 Connector

K-State Fixed Route Ridership only includes Jardine, Union Express, and Park n' Ride data (excluding the APDesign Shuttle, University Crossing/Gramercy, & SafeRide)

## Manhattan Fixed Routes

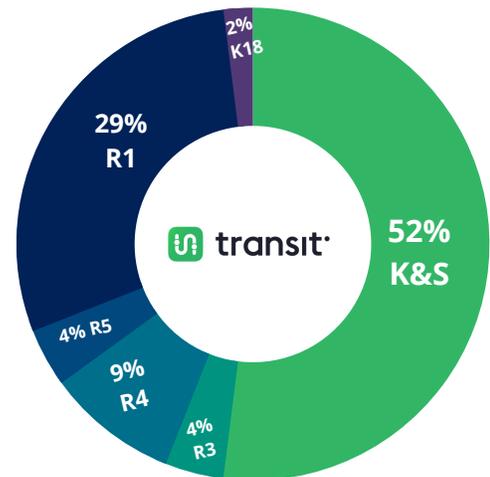
Manhattan has seen a significant increase in ridership since AUG 2018 when Ride Free With Your K-State ID launched. This is in part due to K-Staters using the Manhattan Fixed Routes.



## K-State

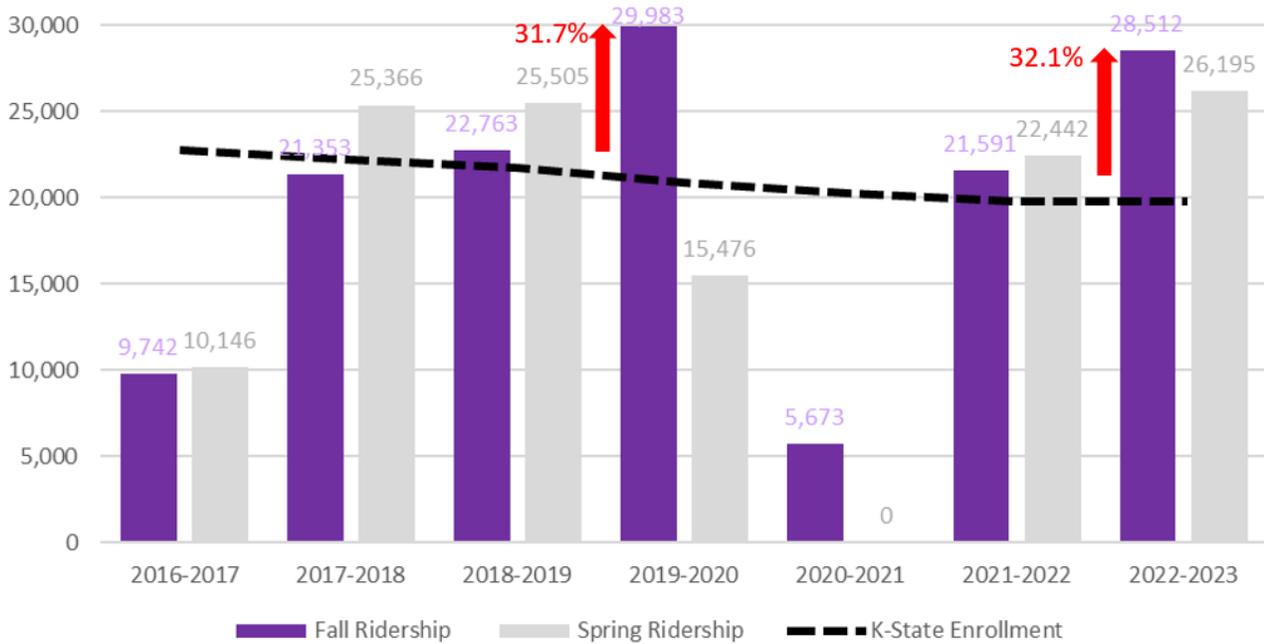
K-State ridership has fluctuated throughout the years but ridership is steadily increasing after COVID.

52% of Total Route Clicks over the last 12 months in Transit App are KSU Routes



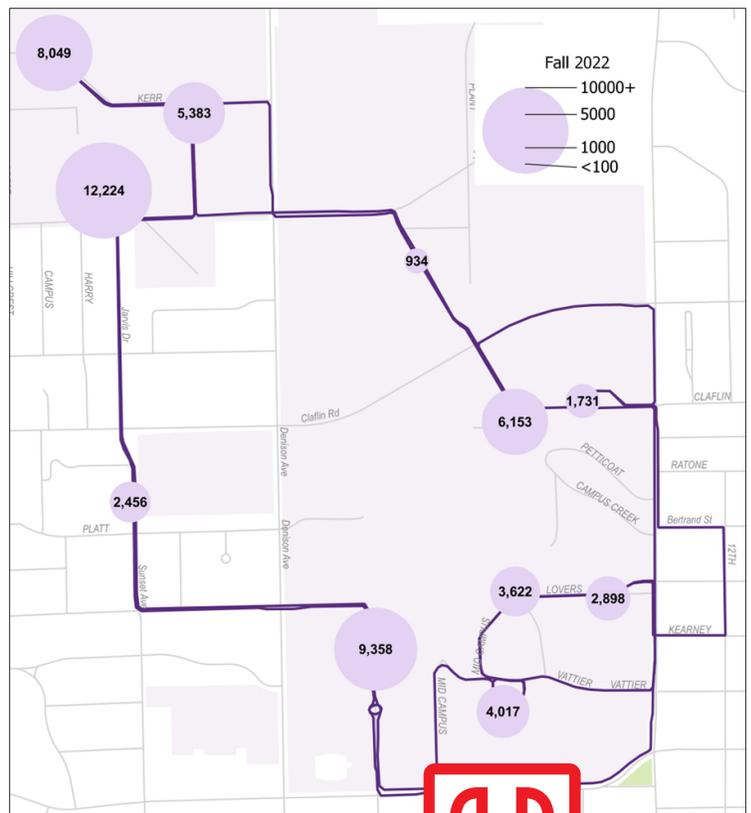
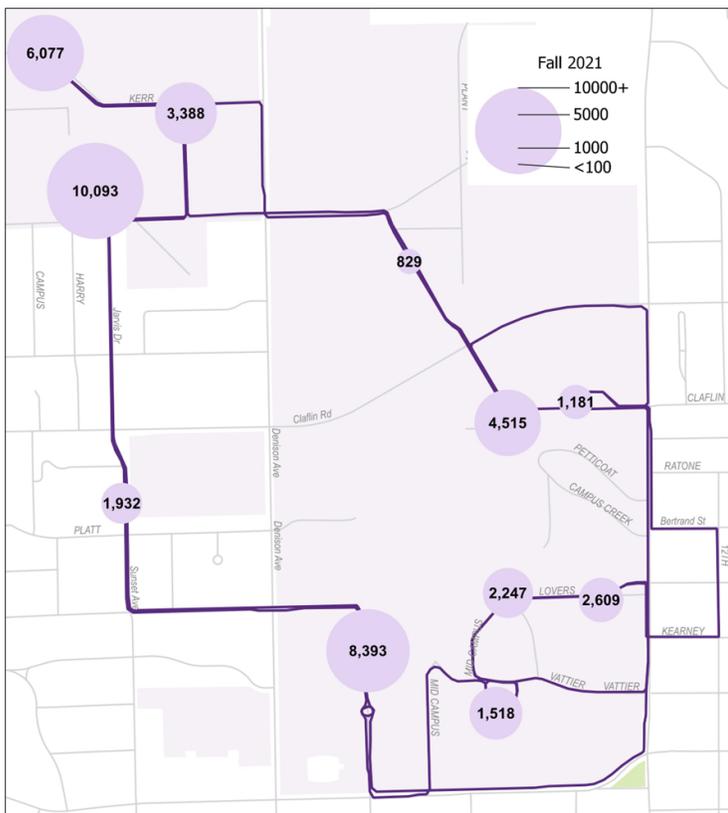
# KSU Route Ridership Data

## Park&Ride Fall and Spring Boarding Data



**31.7%** increase in ridership after going Fare Free in August 2018  
**32.1%** increase in Fall 2022 compared to Fall 2021

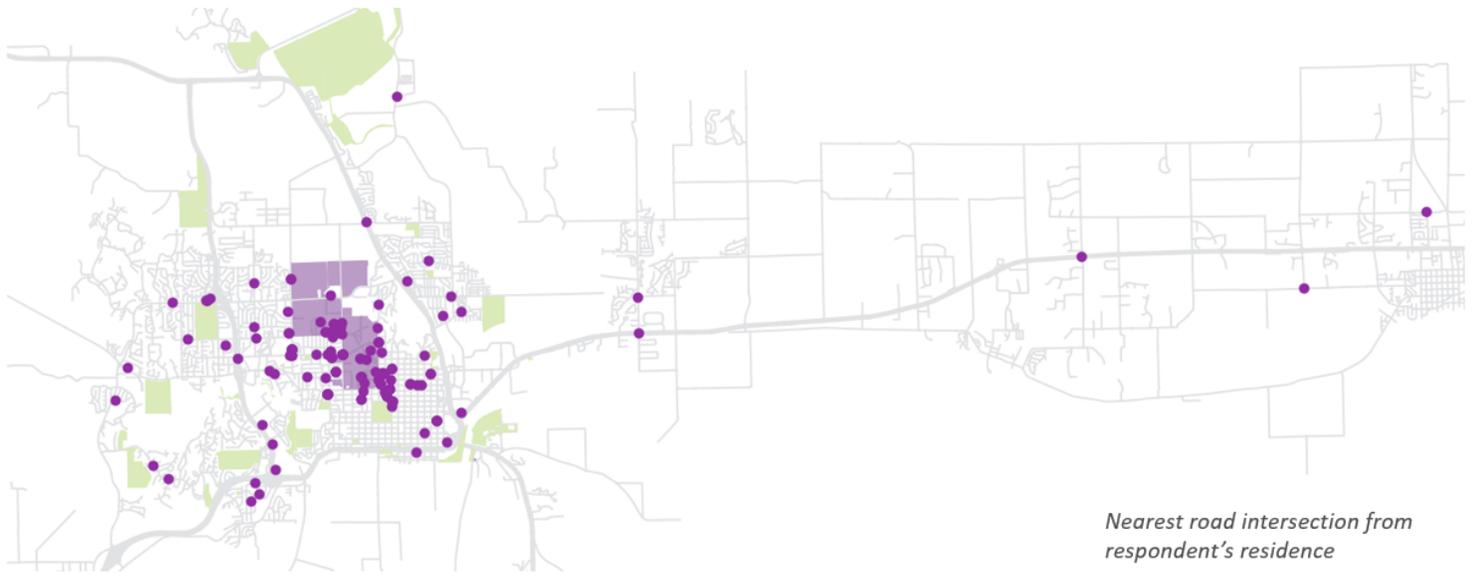
## Park&Ride Fall and Spring Boarding Data per Stop



# KSU Route Ridership Data

## Park&Ride Survey Data

Note: Survey conducted over two weeks by Plan 836 Students  
181 Total Responses were collected so the data sample represents small percentage of student population



4% of survey respondents said they take the bus to campus

850  
↑↑↑↑↑↑↑↑

If this percentage is applied to the current population of those able to ride the bus for free using their ID (student, staff, faculty) at the Manhattan campus, it would mean roughly 850 people a year use the service to get to campus



# The Impact of Access to Public Transportation on KSU Students

**KSU is a walkable campus, Manhattan is NOT a walkable community**

Low-income census tract where more than 100 housing units do not have a vehicle and are more than ½ mile from the nearest supermarket, or a significant number or share of residents are more than 20 miles from the nearest supermarket.

**40%** of surveyed participants at K-State report **food insecurity**

NCHA-KSU, Cats' Cupboard, 2022

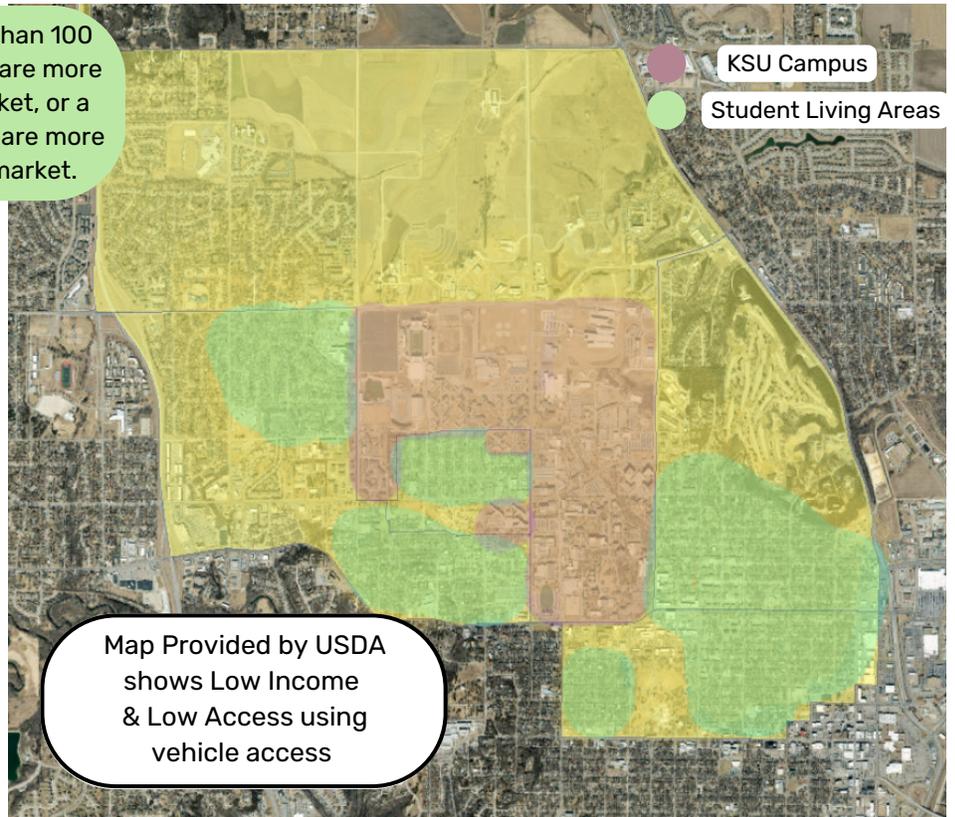


**100%** of Campus Housing is located at least **1.5 miles** from the nearest grocery store in Manhattan



**3.6 million** people in the U.S. **do not** obtain medical care due to transportation barriers.

MedHaul, 2020



Transportation barriers also disproportionately affect low-income students along with Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, and Asian students. (Elengold, et al. 2022)



## The Student Perspective



“The ATA Bus program makes my higher education accessible. I use ATA Monday through Friday to get on campus for classes and extracurriculars. I can’t imagine how difficult my college life would be without ATA. Thank you for all that you do to provide access to this community.”

**Ethan H. Brown**

Third-year Marketing and Leadership Student  
2023 K-State Student Ambassador



# The Impact of Access to Public Transportation on KSU Students

**ATA Bus maintains access for students who would otherwise suffer due to lack of transportation.**

## Community Locations Within a 5-Minute Walk of a Bus Stop



**81%** of Apartments/Dorms



**63%** of Medical Centers



**100%** of Grocery Stores

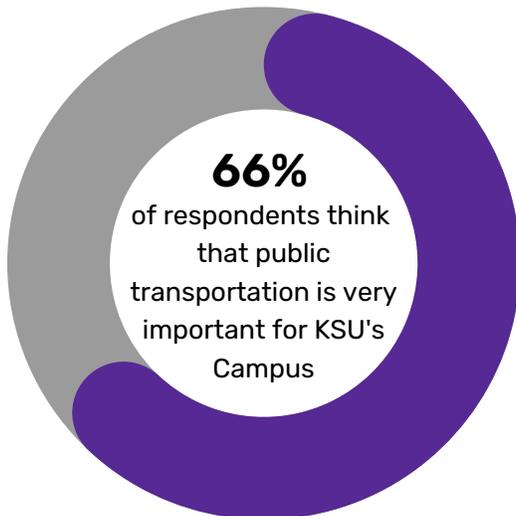


**76%** of Businesses

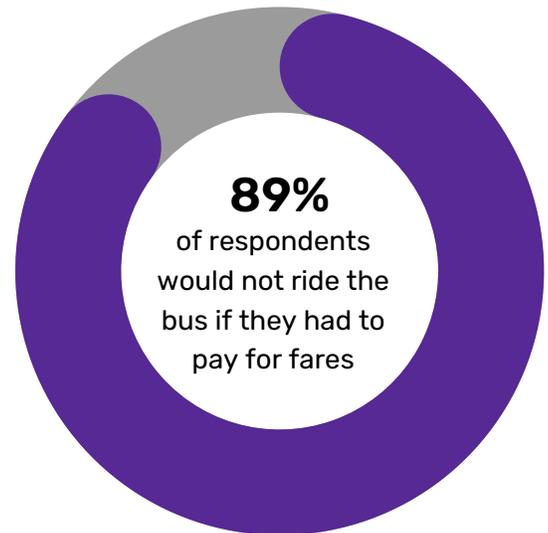


**100%** of Social Services

## The Cost of Transportation Has An Impact



however



If students needing the service have to pay for bus fare, they would have to spend **\$300+** on bus fare for a year on average, potentially causing significant impact to their quality of life

Transportation can account for almost 20% percent of the cost of college for commuters according to the College Board.



# The Impact of Access to Public Transportation on KSU Students

## Valuing Transportation for Students

| University   | City Population | Enrollment | Size of Campus | Student Cost  | Ride Fee             | Bus Driver Pay   |
|--|-----------------|------------|----------------|---|----------------------|------------------|
|   | 66,424          | 27,800     | 1,813 acres    | \$105.10 per Semester                                     | Free with Student ID | \$20.14 per Hour |
|   | 49,134          | 25,954     | 1,489 acres    | \$2.50 per Credit Hour<br><small>avg cost \$30.00</small> | Free with Student ID | \$14.77 per Hour |
|  | 54,736          | 19,753     | 664 acres      | Covered by Housing/<br>Dining &<br>Parking Services       | Free with Student ID | \$16.50 per Hour |

Comparing Kansas State’s campus service to Oklahoma State and Iowa State’s services allowed us to see where Kansas State was similar and different than other comparable Midwest cities and universities.

## Public Engagement Feedback

"It is great to have this option and reduce our car dependence here in Manhattan. Also, as a college town, there are many international students who do not have vehicles and they depend on the system to get around and it seems to be working well enough for them."

Personally, the biggest issues I see with the system are the extended headways, no evening services, and few bus shelters."

"A major limitation I see is the long wait time for buses, I would suggest decreasing these by adding more buses to the lines if possible; I think this would really help increase ridership on the system."

While the feedback brings to attention the same common themes for improvement, such as increasing the service offerings and infrastructure, it is evident that the true issue lies in the ability for ATA Bus to grow, which can only happen with increased funding.



# The Impact of Access to Public Transportation on KSU Students

## The Equation for Success

Through the data provided from local surveys, the growth of ridership despite dropping enrollment, the supported evidence from various US studies, and the overall evidence that access to transportation directly affects student well-being at Kansas State University, we find that it is imperative that the service is funded at a minimum level each year, with the potential for greater funding to allow for growth and needed improvements desired by the students.

As of spring 2023, the current funding entities at Kansas State University (Parking Services and Housing and Dining) have reduced funding to no longer contribute to the Fixed Route system. This ultimately means that Fixed Routes will no longer be free for K-State riders.

**In order to restore free rides for eligible riders (students, staff, and faculty) a minimum of \$150,000 in funding is needed.**

Without the funding contribution from K-State, the impact is great. Not only do eligible riders lose the ability to ride for free, but the ability to leverage Federal Funding is lost.

| Impact Comparison           | At \$150,000 in KSU Funding | With \$150,000 in Fare Revenue | Impact  |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Cost per Rider per Year     | \$5.91                      | \$300-360                      | KSU would only have to pay ~\$6 per person per year, while individual riders would pay \$300-360 per year                     |
| # of Eligible Riders Served | All Student, Staff, Faculty | 500                            | \$150,000 is enough to buy bus fare for 500 riders for the year, yet if it is funded through KSU, there is no limit of riders |
| Federal Leverage            | \$650,000                   | \$0                            | KSU Funding allows for ATA to leverage federal dollars while fares do not, limiting growth and services                       |

