



Metro Transit Advisory Committee

March 2024 meeting minutes

Location: Metro Administrative Offices - Board room
2222 Cuming Street, Omaha, NE 68102

Date: March 13, 2024

Time: 6:30-8

Meeting called to order at 6:34 p.m.

Attendance:

TAC Voting Members Present: Alex Mendoza, Cedric Ludlow, Clyde Anderson, Dayton Headlee, Joichiro Yamada, Maria Brady, Tamara Dwyer, David Baker, Isabelle Dunning-Ward, Jeff Spiehs

Absent: Clarice Dombeck

Meeting Facilitator: Cedric Ludlow

Staff Facilitators: Nicole Ebat, Evan Schweitz, Lauren Cencic

Members of the public: Roger Zenank, Grant Olson (online), John Sullivan (online)

Meeting Minutes:

Opening: Public comment period

No public comment

- Paratransit Appeals – None
- Determine one versus two-year terms:
 - One-year terms: Clyde Anderson, Maria Brady, Tamara Dwyer, David Baker, Jeff Spiehs
- Meet the CEO – Lauren Cencic
 - Overview of transit presentation
 - Question from David Baker on how much Metro's budget breakdown compares to other cities
 - C. Anderson- asks how much pass programs contribute to Metro's budget, Lauren clarifies that it's the 1% part of the pie chart
 - D. Headlee—asks if there are any municipalities looking to join

- T. Dwyer- Asks how this affects Council Bluffs, LC talks about how it would require Iowa to pass legislation
 - D. Baker- What do ridership increase initiatives look like? LC- Working on increasing frequency, working to improve rider alerts, options for paying and how, really proud of fare capping program for ridership, outreach team is working to provide education to the public, particularly children. We hear most frequently that if someone isn't taking the bus, it's because they never thought of it or don't know how
 - C. Anderson- Concerned that we're not getting much income from the schools, specifically talking about how they went down drastically in school buses and all the kids are using Metro buses. LC= It's in Metro's benefit to carry more people, OPS does provide some funding for the K-12 program, Pass programs= not the cost of delivering the service, but cost of not collecting fares
 - C. Anderson- Big increase in property value, is levy allowed to go up? LC= Never allowed for your budget to be more than 3.5% of the prior year D. Headlee= Is the new elected board allowed to change that? LC= State legislature, there are some things we can do though, philanthropic contribution, some options through the state
 - D. Baker= with your vision of Metro, where do you see Metro headed? LC= Key was transitioning to the elected board to help implement MetroNEXT, looking to become a stronger strategic partner in the region, looking at doing things to improve the customer experience, etc.
 - D. Headlee: Is there any benefit to enticing farther out municipalities ie: Gretna, etc? LC= One of the things that is so so important about transit planning is that it doesn't exist in a vacuum, where and what we build is always going to play a huge impact in how effective transit is. We don't go into simple math
 - Evan's turn: looking mostly at ridership and how we decide on routes
 - LC=AT the end of the day, what we do is about people's lives, how does that impact people's lives, I like to remind myself and my staff that at the end of the day we have to come back to that
 - C. Anderson- When we went down along the lines, it lost a lot of connections, thinks we lost a lot of "female" passengers, it's really not desirable to stand on a corner at night. ES= Transit center model tends to ensure customers make their connections, but you tend to hold more routes in one place, it makes it less efficient to run lines, it's a trade off and one thing we wanted to do to address those customer service issues is audit our stops to help ID the safety and improvement issues for our riders, LC= we've been going after federal funds to improve that area. Benson Park was outside of our control because there were some street level issues that was killing our buses
 - J. Spiehs= part of role is to advocate for changes, city is updating master plan, what are we doing to help places advocate for that and what can the committee do? Metro did add a community development coordinator who is working with developers about adding sidewalks, bus shelters, etc. During the development phase. Having success with catching things early on
 - A. Mendoza= When a property owner builds, is it their responsibility to build the concrete slab, shelter, bench, etc. ES= sometimes it's more a conversation or back and forth
 - J. Yamada= how will the streetcar affect Metro's planning LC= Streetcar separate legal entity, we're always re-assessing routes, etc. A. Mendoza= will there be attention given to accessibility of stops during streetcar construction?
- Metro Updates
 - Sustainability project- received three bids
 - Federally funded project
 - Upgrade parking lot
 - upgrade water storage underground
 - Add conditioned air to maintenance facility, which has been a hamper to hiring mechanics
 - Fire deluge system
 - Add solar panels

- Spring Route Changes
 - Plan is to reduce frequency on Routes 13 and 15 during the daytime from every 15 minutes to every 30, evenings and weekends will not change
 - LC= our ability to hire the number of operators we've been able to is "gargantuan" and well above industry standard
 - D. Baker= How does size of bus factor into decisions like this? Short term=not really at all LC= vast majority of cost is mechanic and driver salaries C. Anderson= Putting the van on the 90's series express routes, is that permanent?
 - LC= it's better to do what you say you're going to do
 - D. Headlee= Rides the 15, not a fan of this, but appreciates the sentiment as it's frustrating for him to not have buses show up, is this permanent? LC= we're hoping not, but it's not guaranteed, we evaluate ES= a few months of hiring up should help us work on this, but I don't want to promise or speak for HR
 - Lauren pulling up numbers, we are doing pretty well in terms of retention, industry standards=20% of new hires by end of probation and 30% by end of year per APTA, Metro retaining 85% of hires
 - C. Anderson= is it allowed to have part time retired people per union contract? LC= It was never allowed before, for the first time we are allowed limited number of PT, we do not have any PT operators right now because there are a lot of logistics to think through
 - J. Yamada= You have budget to keep services but no personnel, is there any good news that you can use this budget for? LC= Not much flexibility in these funds, hope is really to take a few months, regroup, hire up. ES= could the funds go to reserve funds if they're not spent? LC= maybe, we have very specific reserve policies

- Set April Agenda

- Speakers: Nicole Ebat & Annie Pigaga

Next meeting:

- April 10, 2024, 6:30 p.m. Metro administrative offices

Meeting adjourned: 8:16 p.m.

Please call Nicole Ebat at 402-341-7560, EXT 2310 if you are not able to attend

Omaha Transit Overview



Lauren Cencic
Chief Executive Officer

Evan Schweitz
Senior Manager of
Planning & Scheduling

1

Metro's Mission, Vision & Values

MISSION

Metro connects people, places, and opportunities through quality transit services.

VISION

Metro strives to be a valued transportation choice for all members of our community and a vital partner for Omaha's future.

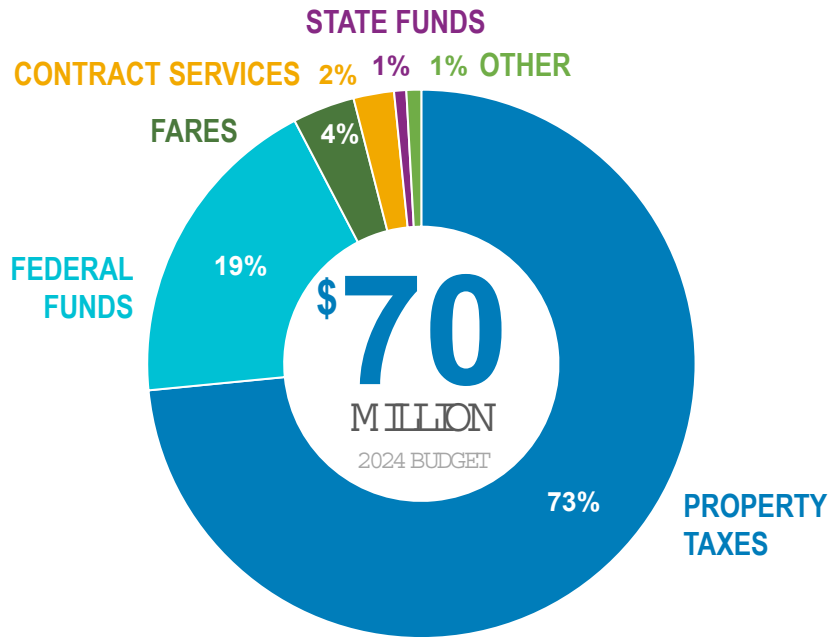
VALUES

Unity • Responsibility • Care
Resourcefulness • Learning
Appreciation



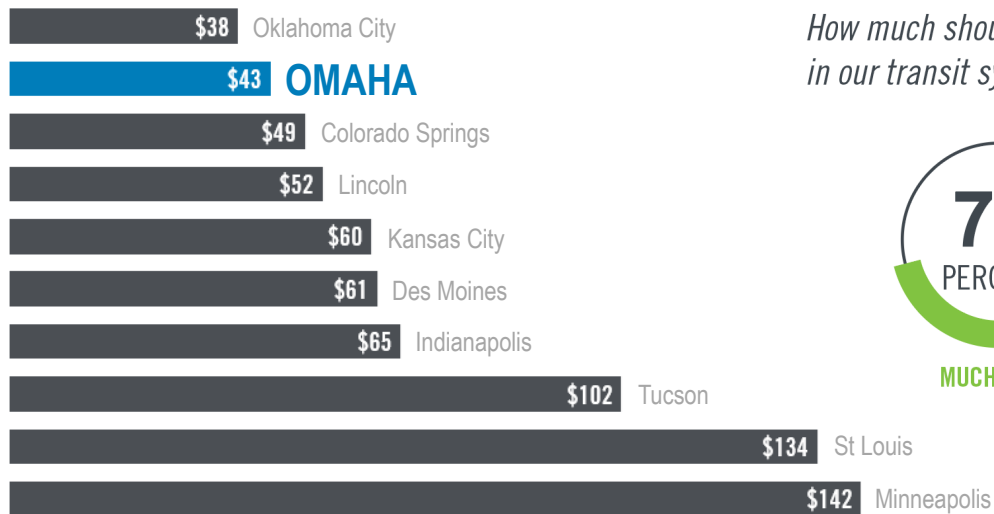
2

How is Metro Funded?



3

Transit Funding per Capita (\$2022)



How much should we be investing in our transit system?



4

Politics and politics

Who controls Metro's budget and priorities?

- Board of Directors
- FTA and State

Who impacts Metro's budget?

- Public opinion
- Passengers
- Local elected officials
- Stakeholders
- Philanthropic Organizations
- Non-profits and advocacy groups

5

Metro Becomes a Regional Transit Authority

IN JUNE 2022

Metro's Board of Directors
voted to convert the

Transit Authority of the
City of Omaha



REGIONAL METROPOLITAN
TRANSIT AUTHORITY OF OMAHA

TOOK EFFECT AUGUST 1, 2022



6

Joining the Regional Transit Authority

Municipalities in
MSA Must Vote
to Join RMTA



Requires
Supermajority
Vote



RMTA Board
Votes to Accept
- Supermajority



Enter Regional
Metropolitan
Transit Authority



7

How do we
decide where
routes go?

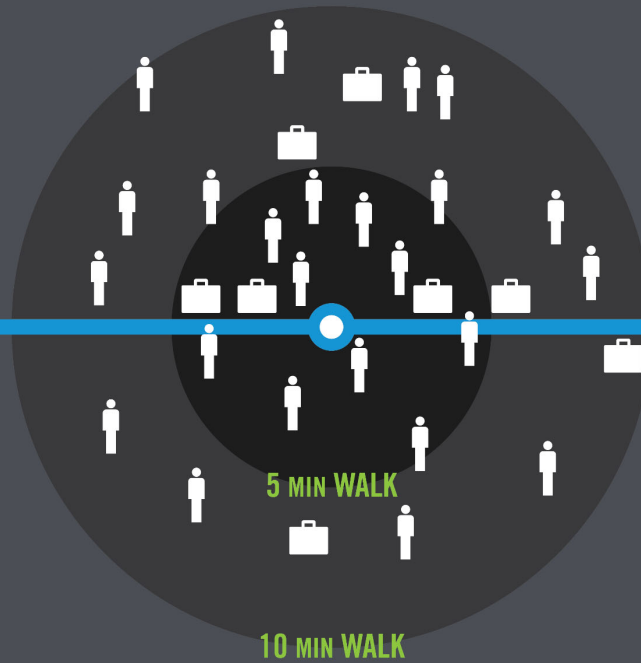
5 MIN WALK

10 MIN WALK

8

BEST PREDICTOR OF RIDERSHIP

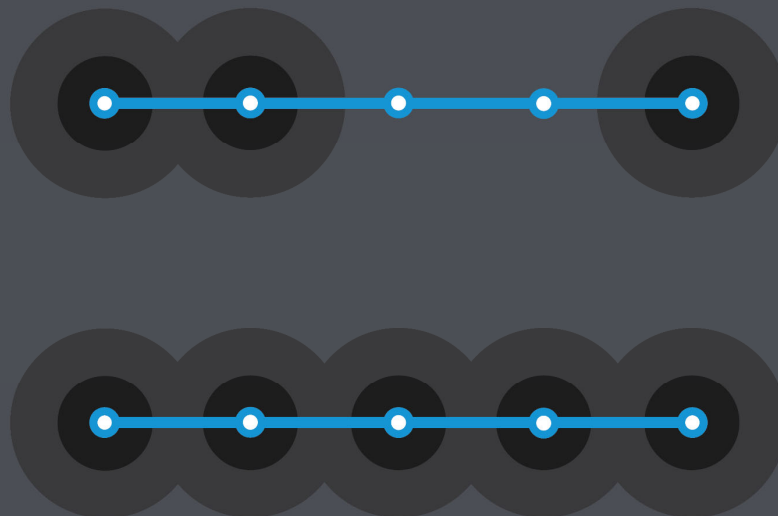
The number of people and jobs within walking distance



9

BEST PREDICTOR OF RIDERSHIP

Consistent population and job density along the corridor



10

**Designed
for People**



**Designed
for Cars**

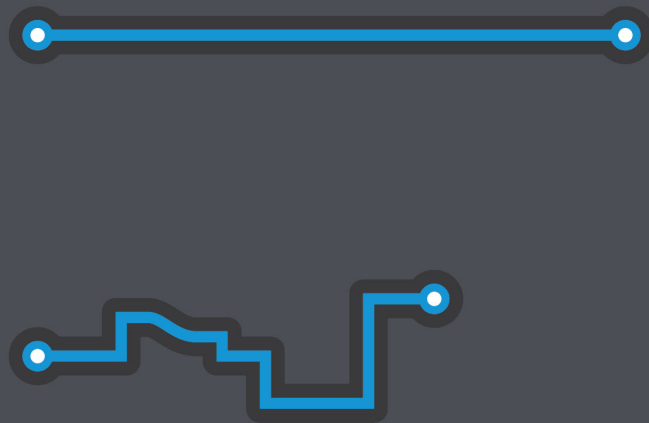


*Ask: Where are
the doors?*

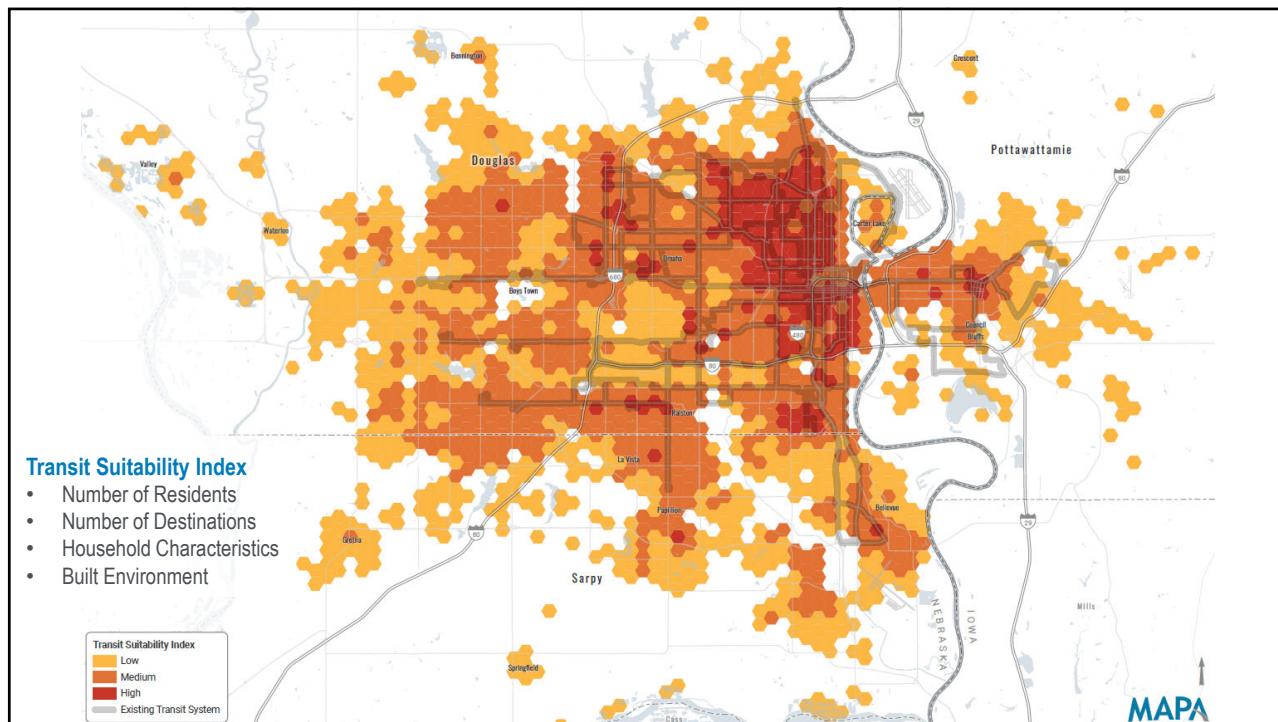
11

**DIRECT
ROUTING**

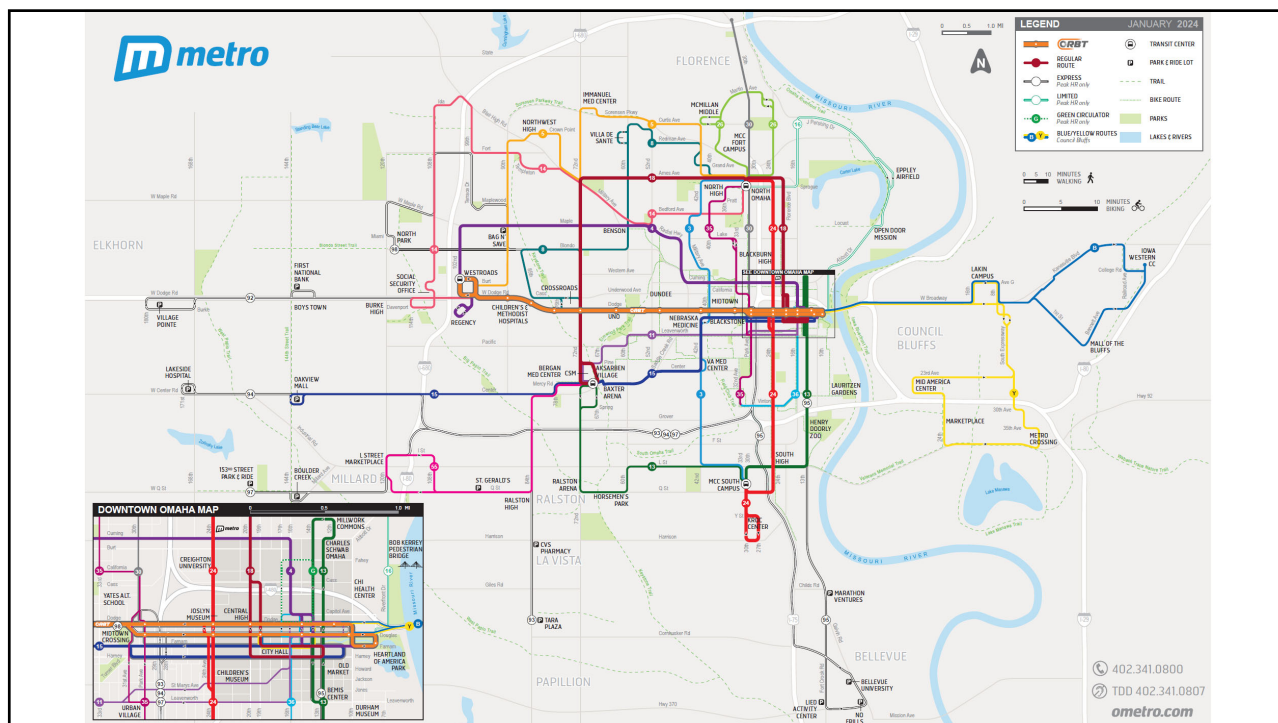
*Reduces
customer delay &
operational cost*



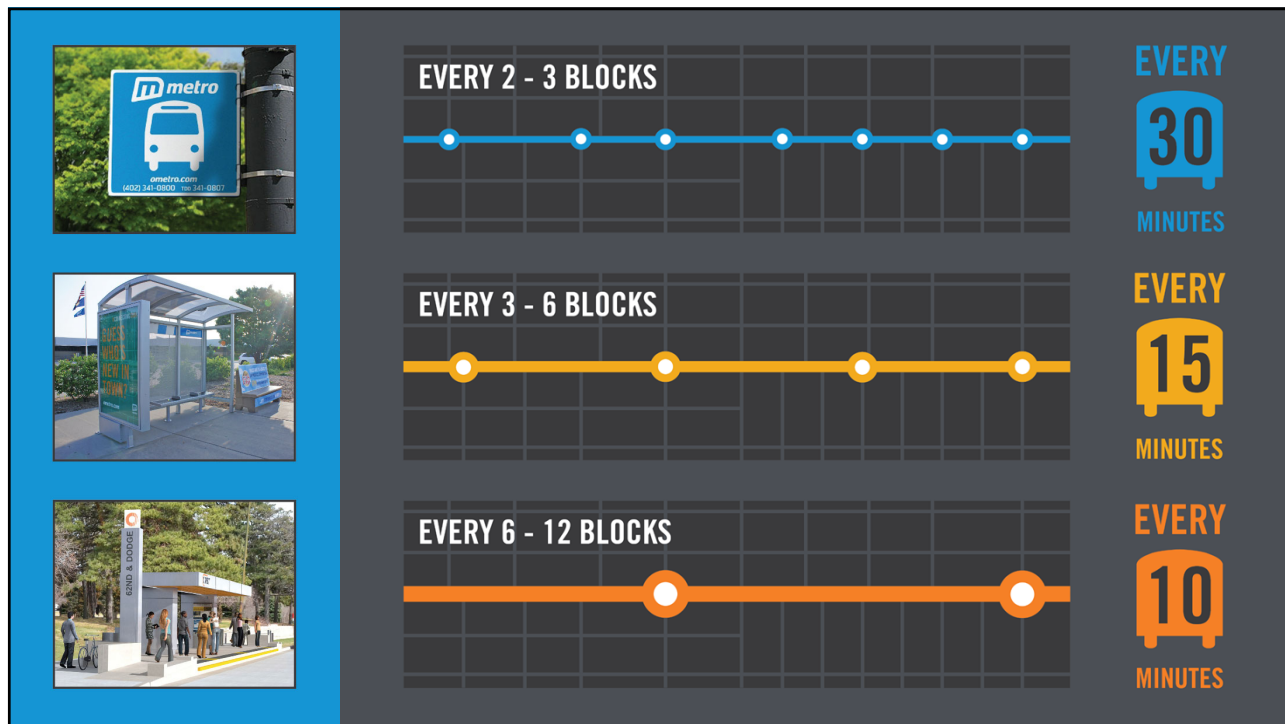
12



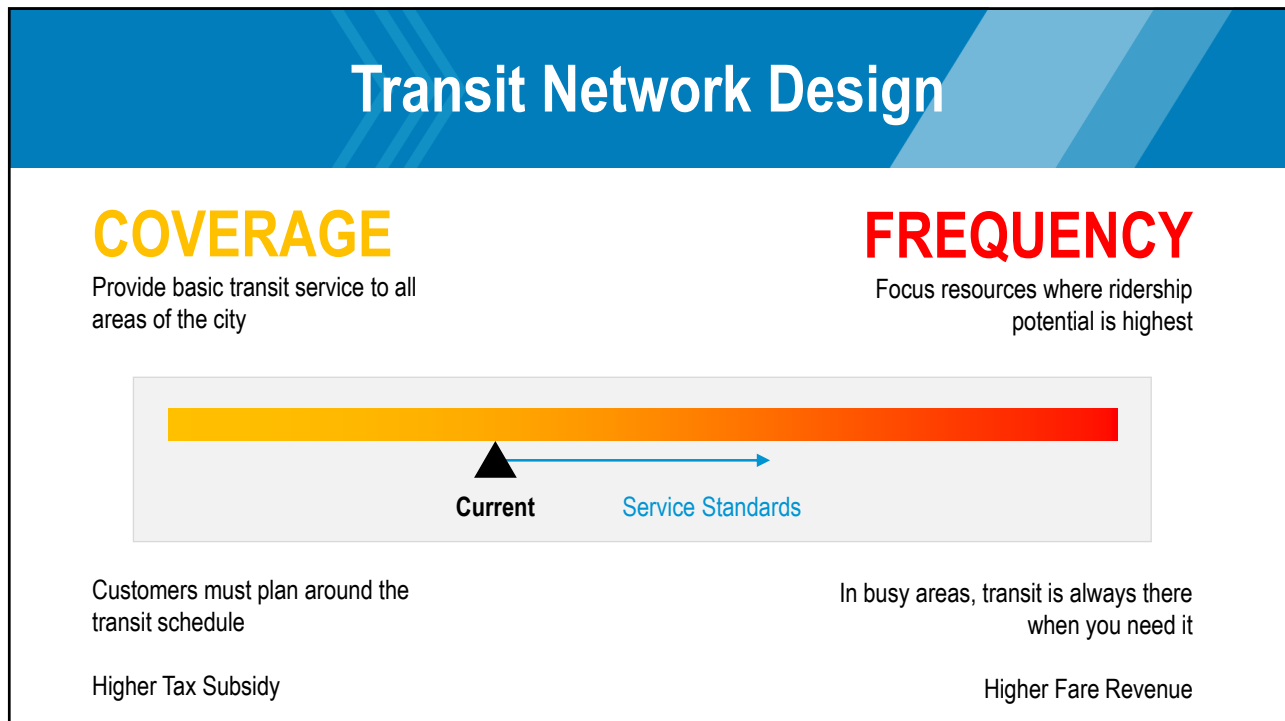
13



14



15



16

Take-Aways

“Transportation is the centre of the world. It is the glue of our daily lives. When it goes well, we don’t see it. When it goes wrong, it negatively colours our day, makes us feel angry and curtails our possibilities.”

— Robin Chase

“Our transportation decisions determine much more than where roads or bridges or tunnels or rail lines will be built. They determine the connections and barriers that people will encounter in their daily lives, and thus how hard or easy it will be for people to get where they need and want to go.”

— Elijah Cummings