



Wood County Workforce Mobility Study



Final Report

September 2026



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1: Introduction

THE NEED FOR WORKFORCE MOBILITY

Wood County, Ohio is a large county with diverse transportation needs. Most of the county is rural with small towns and village centers, but the northern part of the county has emerged as an industrial employment center. It draws employees each day primarily from Wood and Lucas Counties. Bowling Green, which also serves as the county seat of Wood County, provides regional services in terms of jobs, education, and medical facilities.



Transportation remains a critical challenge, both for employers trying to attract and retain talent, and employees trying to get to jobs. Transit options are limited and rural land use patterns discourage walking. The **Wood County Workforce Mobility Study** - also known as WorkLink - aims to address these challenges by developing mobility strategies responding to four main needs identified by the community:

1. Employers say transportation access is a major challenge for attracting and retaining a dependable workforce.
2. Local and state legislators have stated a universal desire to support workforce.
3. Better transit to Wood County (especially from Lucas County) is a local transportation planning priority.
4. A recognition that transportation access to jobs is critical to economic development and growth.

**“WE HAVE A LOT OF EMPLOYEE
TURNOVER BECAUSE OF
TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES.”**
*WOOD COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCES
PROFESSIONAL*

PROJECT OVERVIEW

WorkLink was supported by the Ohio Department of Transportation’s (ODOT) Workforce Mobility Partnership Program. OWMP emphasizes collaboration among regional governments, transit agencies, private employers, and community groups to design flexible, workforce-focused transit solutions. Key partners represented in the Project Management Team included:

- Lake Erie West Regional Council, the regional planning agency for northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan.
- TARTA, the public transit operator in Lucas County and Rossford in Wood County.
- Great Lakes Community Action Partnership (GLCAP), a community non-profit serving Wood, Sandusky, Ottawa, and Seneca Counties.

Project Goals

The goals of the project (Figure 1) reflect ways of meeting the project needs identified above. The top identified priority is getting people to jobs, while the second goal recognizes that in such a large region, connections are needed between providers or from a bus stop to their destination. Transportation needs do not stop at city or county boundaries, but existing policies often do. Regional collaboration is needed to break down these barriers and ensure access to jobs. The fourth goal recognizes that transportation is not an end in itself but a tool to support economic growth.

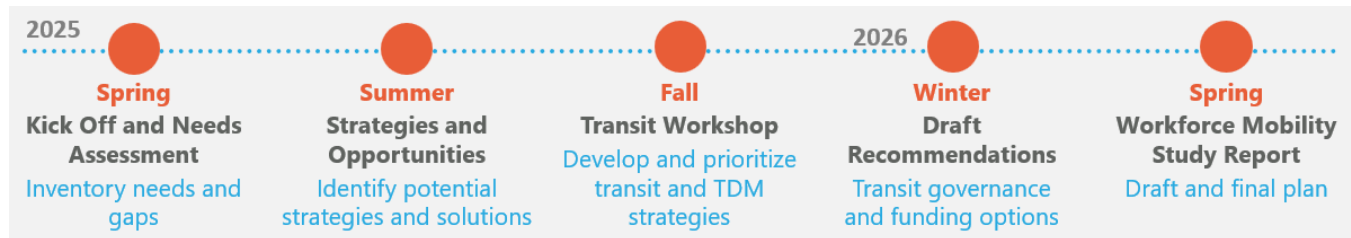
FIGURE 1 – PROJECT GOALS



Project Schedule

The project started in May 2025 and concluded in May 2026. Figure 2 shows the schedule and key elements of the technical process.

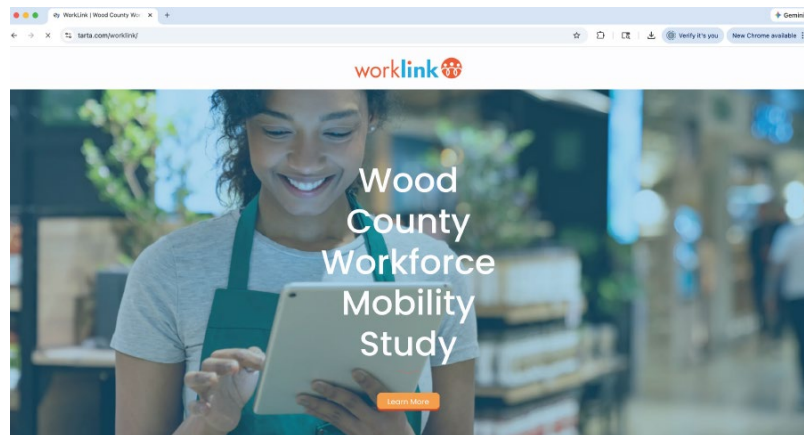
FIGURE 2 – PROJECT SCHEDULE AND KEY TASKS



Employer and Stakeholder Engagement

Workforce strategies must be informed by those most familiar with workforce needs. The project team's engagement activities:

- Engaged with a **Steering Committee** and larger **stakeholder group** six times throughout the project
- Gathered feedback from **small group and one-on-one employer interviews**
- **Surveyed** employers and employees
- Shared project progress at several **community events and conferences**
- Conducted **focus groups** to discuss Transportation Demand Management strategies
- Educated stakeholders at several **lunch-and-learn events**
- Documented progress and updates on the project website, woodcountyworklink.com

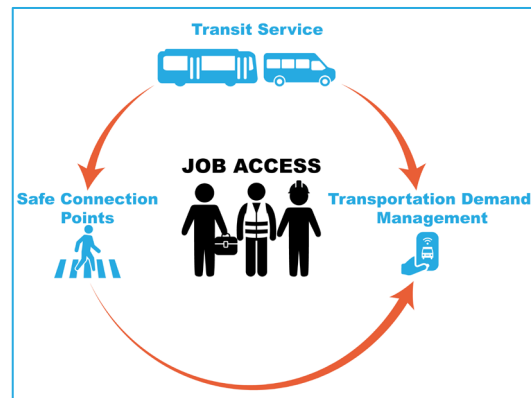


PROJECT OUTCOMES

Public transportation can play a critical role in connecting employees to jobs, especially for those without access to a private vehicle. But this connection depends on not just bus service itself, but safe access to transit stops and an awareness of available transit options. WorkLink’s outcomes address these foundational needs through strategies organized into three categories (Figure 3).

1. **Transit Service.** Five transit service strategies were developed, each meeting different workforce needs within geographic markets (urban, suburban, regional, and rural).
2. **Safe Connection Points.** More than a dozen potential sites were identified where passengers could transfer between transit providers.
3. **Transportation Demand Management (TDM).** TDM consists of a suite of strategies that increase awareness and reduce barriers around non-drive alone access to jobs. A Toolkit was developed to include added/improved mobility options, commute planning tools, cost incentives, and informational/promotional programs.

FIGURE 3 – THREE CATEGORIES OF JOB ACCESS STRATEGIES



Report Structure

This report is organized into the following sections:

- **Chapter 2** discusses workforce needs and the strengths and gaps of existing services.
 - *More detail is provided in [Appendix A: Needs Assessment](#).*
- **Chapter 3** includes a summary of employer, employee, and stakeholder engagement.
 - *More details can be found in [Appendix B: Engagement Summary](#).*
- **Chapter 4** provides an overview of the operating context and costs associated with existing transit.
 - *More details can be found in [Appendix C: Governance and Funding](#).*
- **Chapter 5** presents the transit strategies identified as ways of meeting workforce needs
- **Chapter 6** includes a summary of **connection point strategies** to get people to and from bus stops
 - *More details can be found in [Appendix D: Connection Points](#).*
- **Chapter 7** discusses TDM strategies linking people to transit services.
 - *More details can be found in [Appendix E: TDM Toolkit](#).*
- **Chapter 8** offers next steps to maintain momentum and move WorkLink forward.

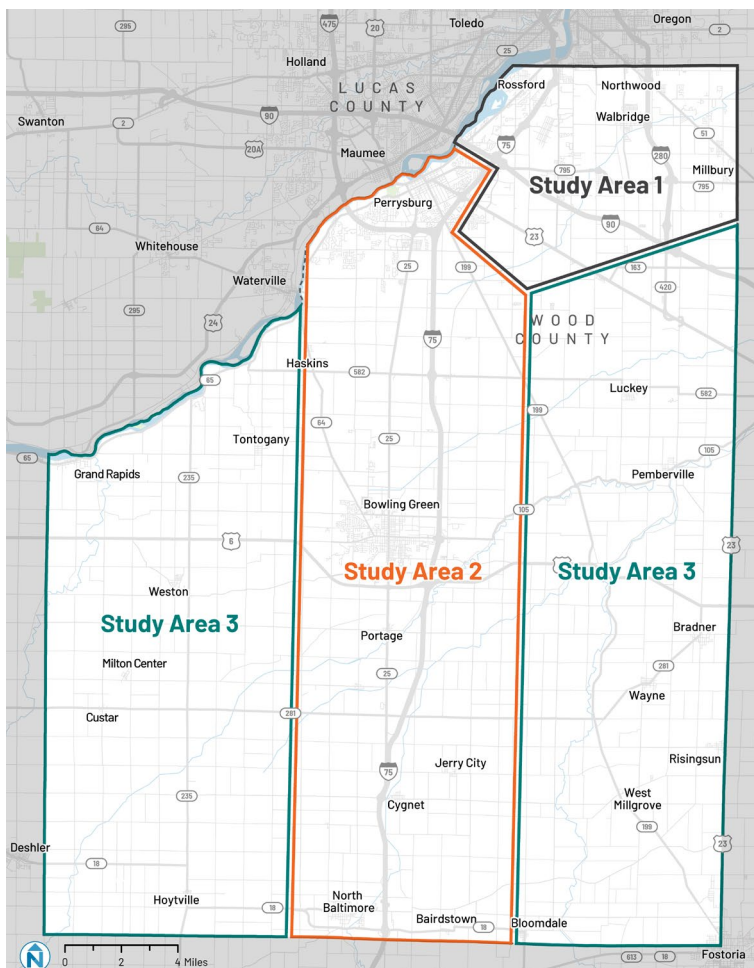
2: Workforce Needs

This chapter provides a summary of the travel markets and existing conditions in Wood County. More information can be found in **Appendix A: Needs Assessment**.

Wood County was divided into three study areas to understand travel patterns in detail (Figure 4).

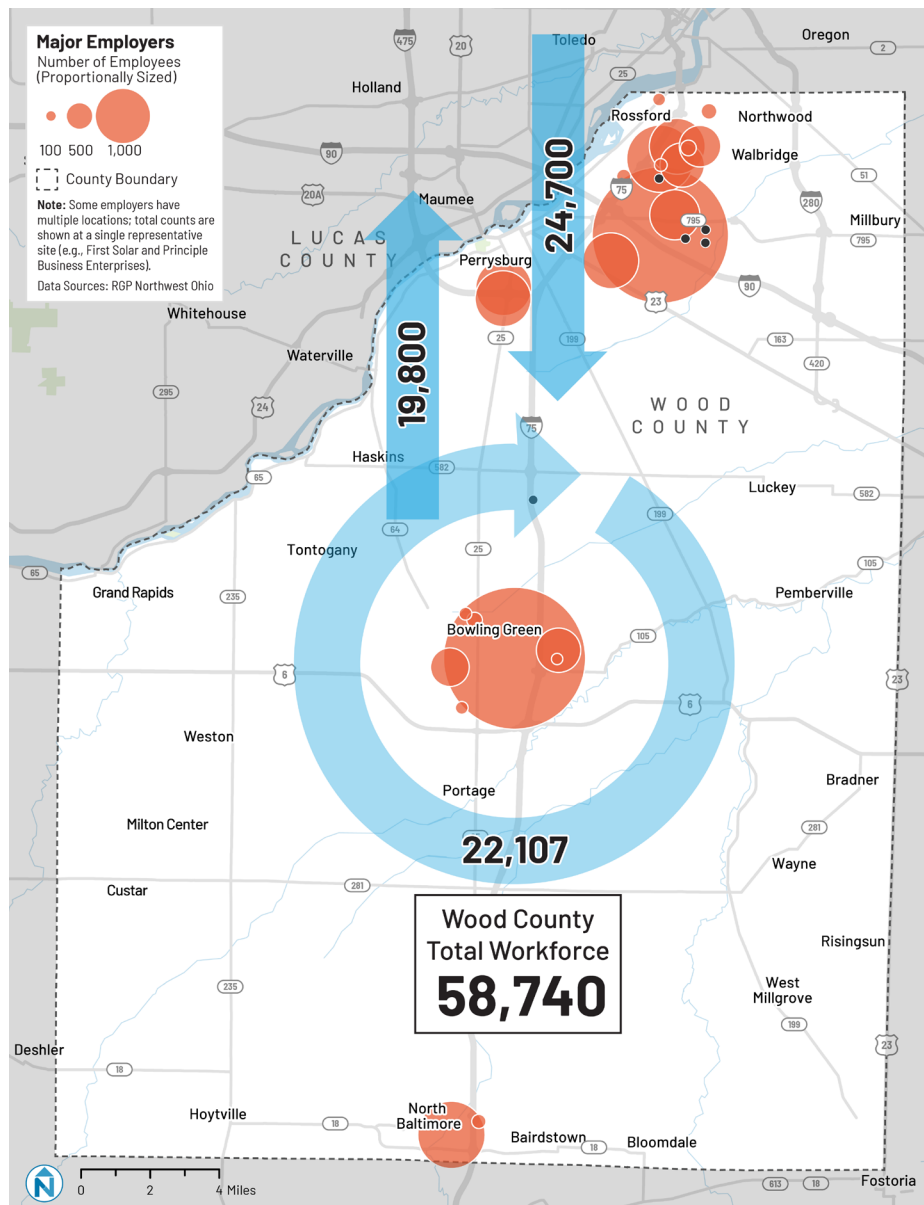
1. **795 Corridor:** Northwood, portions of Perrysburg Township, Rossford, Walbridge, and Millbury
2. **I-75 Corridor:** Perrysburg to Bowling Green to North Baltimore, plus communities of Middleton Township, Dunbridge, and Cygnet
3. **Countywide:** Luckey, Pemberville, Fostoria, Grand Rapids, West Millgrove, Tontogany, and Hoytsville

FIGURE 4 – STUDY AREAS



Wood County has more jobs (71,800) than people in the work force (58,700) as of 2022, meaning employers in Wood County rely on people traveling in from other places. Around 22,000 people both live and work in Wood County. Nearly 20,000 Wood County residents travel to Lucas County for work, while nearly 25,000 make the opposite trip from Lucas County into Wood County (Figure 5). This shows the importance of Lucas County residents to Wood County employers. A significant number of jobs are clustered in the north part of the county (Figure 5), in Study Area 1, as well as in Bowling Green, which is dominated by Wood County's largest employer (Bowling Green State University).

FIGURE 5 – AVERAGE DAILY EMPLOYMENT TRAVEL FLOWS AND MAJOR EMPLOYER LOCATIONS

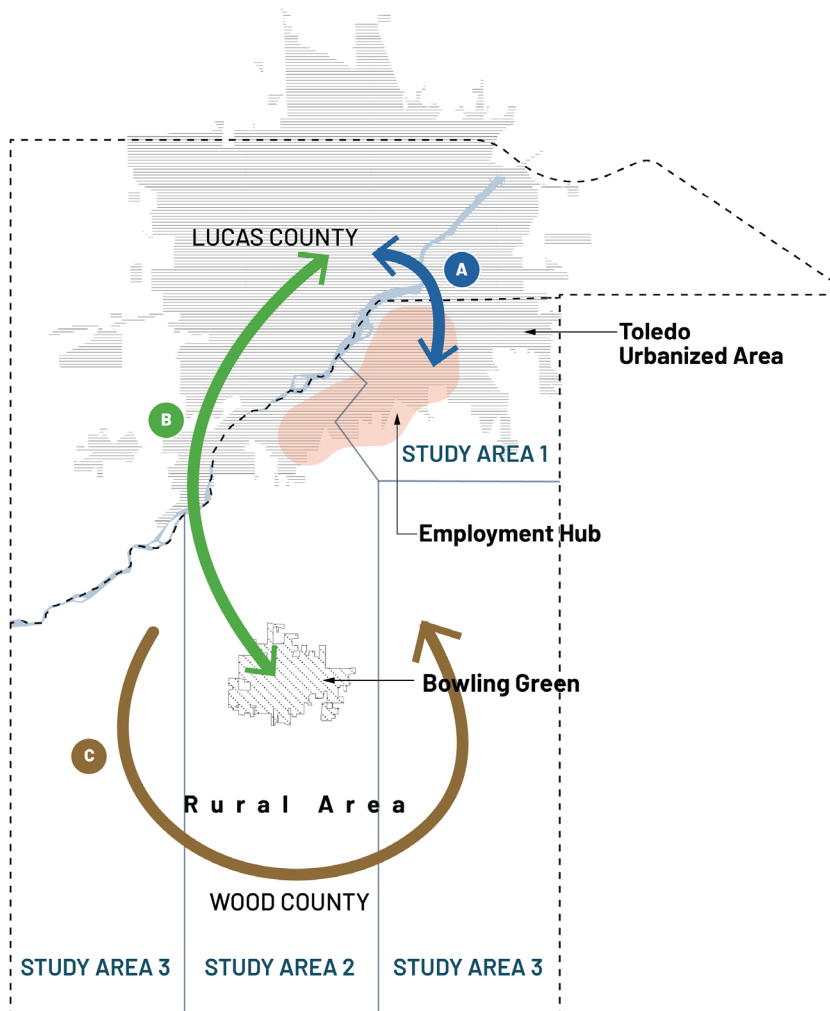


Transit connects people and destinations, therefore job locations and home locations shaped WorkLink’s transit strategies. Three transportation markets were identified (see Figure 6).

- A. Urban to Suburban:** Lucas County to Wood County. This link primarily serves work trips going to and from Study Area 1.
- B. Intercity:** Toledo area to Bowling Green. This link serves a mix of work, education, and general-purpose trips going to and from Study Area 2.
- C. Rural:** Trips in this area are for a mix of general-purpose needs traveling within and across Study Areas 1, 2, and 3.

As shown in Figure 6, the northern Wood County employment zone (shown in pink) is mostly in Study Area 1 plus part of Study Area 2.

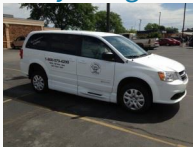
FIGURE 6 – TRAVEL MARKETS



EXISTING TRANSIT

Several public transit providers serve the Wood County workforce today (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7 – TYPES OF PUBLIC TRANSIT IN WOOD COUNTY

Service Type	Providers	Service Area	Service Days and Hours	Daily Ridership (Oct. 2024)
Local Fixed-Route <i>Bus runs on a fixed path and schedule, serving set stops</i>	TARTA Route 10 	Route 10: Toledo and Rossford	Mon-Fri: 6 am-10 pm (30 minute peak/midday) Sat/Sun 7:30 am-9 pm	Weekday: 195 Saturday: 92 Sunday: 86
Regional Service <i>Stops only in major hubs on a set route</i>	GoBus 	Stops in Bowling Green, connecting to Toledo in the north and Findlay in the south	3 trips per day NB from BG: 9:17 am, 3:33 pm, 6:33 pm Southbound from BG: 7:46 am, 10:46 am, 11:18 am	Service commenced March 2026
Microtransit <i>Same-day, door-to-door service</i>	TARTA Flex 	Eastern Zone: Rossford and Oregon	Mon-Fri: 7 am-9 pm; Sat/Sun: 7 am-7 pm	Weekdays: 6
On-Demand <i>Same-day or reservation-based door-to-door service</i>	Bowling Green & Perrysburg Transit 	City of Bowling Green + 1 mile outside City of Perrysburg	Mon-Fri: 6 am-8 pm; Sat 10 am-4 pm Mon-Sat: 8:30 am-8:30 pm; Sun 8:30 am-5:30 pm	Weekday: 82; Sat: 25 Weekday: 37; Sat/Sun: 22
Shuttle <i>Caters to a specific market, such as an employer or school</i>	BGSU 	BGSU campus and surrounding areas (including connecting to Meijer in Rossford)	Varies by route; operates 7 days per week when BGSU is in session	1,260 (annual total)
Paratransit <i>Door-to-door, schedule trips for pre-certified passengers</i>	TARTA Move 	¾ mile buffer around TARTA Route 10, covering Rossford and part of Perrysburg	Mon-Fri: 6 am-10 pm (hourly) Sat/Sun 7:30 am-9 pm	Varies by day, typically less than 5

WHY EXISTING TRANSIT FAILS IN THE WORKFORCE SETTING

Workforce mobility challenges in Wood County are driven not only by a lack of complimentary and connecting transit service, but by the underlying development pattern. Major Wood County employers are dispersed along high-speed suburban corridors without pedestrian access, travel demand occurs across multiple jurisdictions and shift schedules, and many industrial and logistics facilities were designed primarily for automobile access. These conditions make traditional fixed-route transit solutions difficult to implement efficiently.

WHAT IS ON-DEMAND VERSUS MICROTRANSIT?

On-demand services, such as Bowling Green Transit and Perrysburg Transit, provide critical door-to-door connections. Typically, these services require reservations.

How Microtransit Works

Request
by app/phone/web



Dynamic
routing



Rider
pickup



Efficient
sharing



Rider
drop-offs



Microtransit has emerged as a way of using technology to dispatch on-demand rides. Trips are booked online or via an app, and a microtransit vehicle can arrive as quickly as 30 minutes after booking. In Wood County, TARTA operates a microtransit zone called Flex covering both Rossford in Wood County and Oregon in Lucas County. Rides may be shared with other passengers. Pick-ups and drop-offs must be within the Rossford/Oregon Eastern Zone (shown on the right).

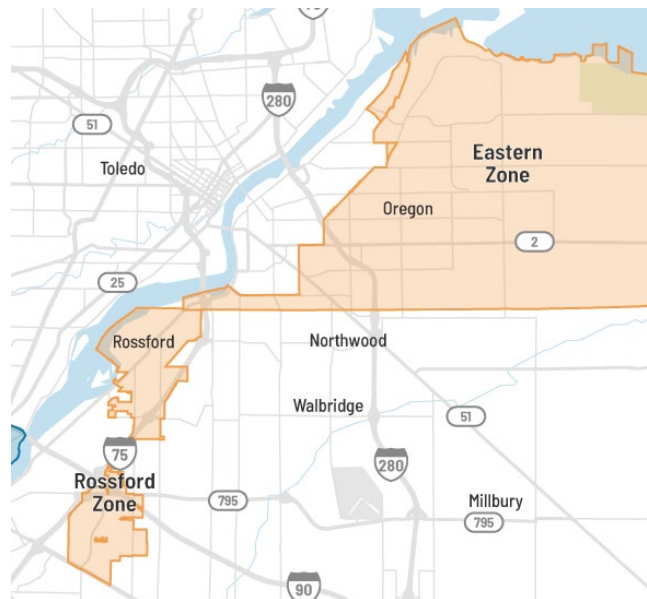
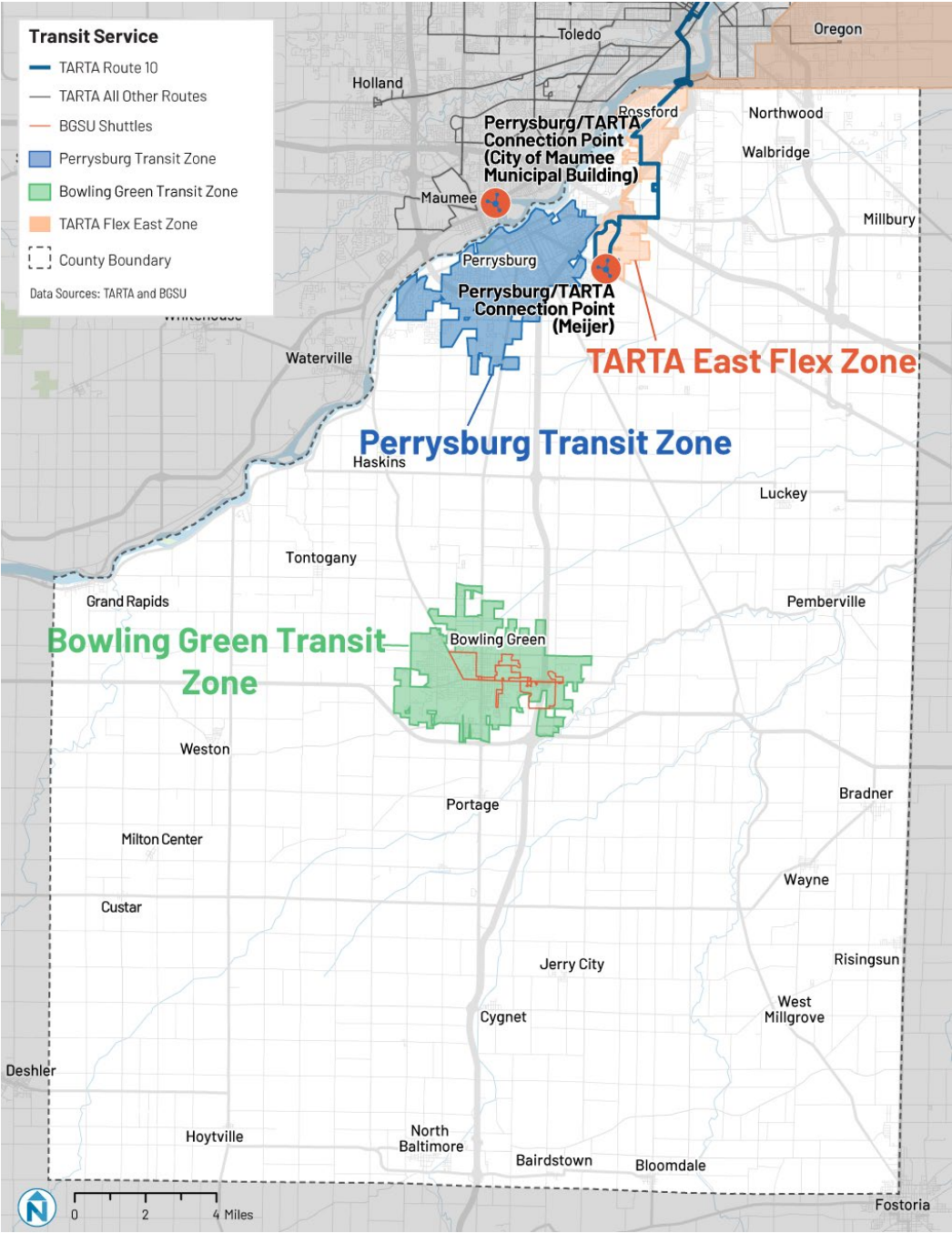


Figure 8 shows a map of existing transit services. Perrysburg Transit will go outside city limits to connect with TARTA at the Meijer in Rossford.

FIGURE 8 – EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICES



Strengths

- Both fixed route and on-demand services connect Lucas County to Rossford in Wood County. In early 2026, service changes to Route 10 added service hours and doubled the weekday frequency during peak hours.
- On-demand zones in Perrysburg and Bowling Green provide good local service coverage. Perrysburg will operate slightly outside city limits to connect to TARTA Route 10 at the Rossford Meijer.
- Existing microtransit responds quickly to customer needs. TARTA guarantees service within 30 minutes of a rider request in the Flex zone.
- Ohio GoBus began two routes in March 2026 that serve Wood County. The Red Line from Cincinnati and the Purple Line from Columbus both stop in Bowling Green, at the TARTA hub in Downtown Toledo, and at the University of Toledo. There are a total of three trips per day, across both lines. This provides a starting point for regional service linking Toledo and Bowling Green.

Gaps

- Overall, Wood County lacks transit coverage compared to neighboring counties. All neighboring counties have countywide or nearly countywide public transit (Figure 9).
- Existing transit (on-demand and fixed-route) does not cover many major employers in Wood County east of Rossford (Figure 10).
- Employers have a wide variety of shifts, including early morning, late evening, overnight, and weekend. Many shifts start at 6:00 am, around the same time TARTA Route 10 leaves the hub in Toledo, which doesn't allow people to access jobs in Wood County for these early shift starts. It is challenging for public transit to meet the wide variety of shift times.
- While GoBus is a strength, it also has limitations for workforce trips. Frequency is limited and the timing of routes is not aligned with most work trips.

FIGURE 9 – TRANSIT SERVICE COVERAGE IN WOOD COUNTY AND NEIGHBORING COUNTIES

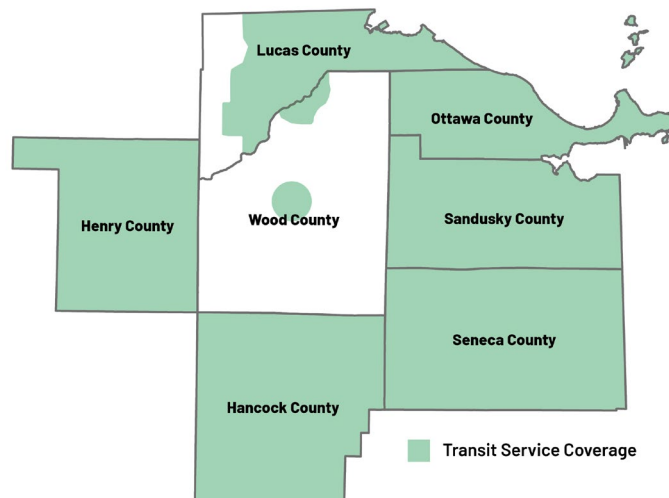
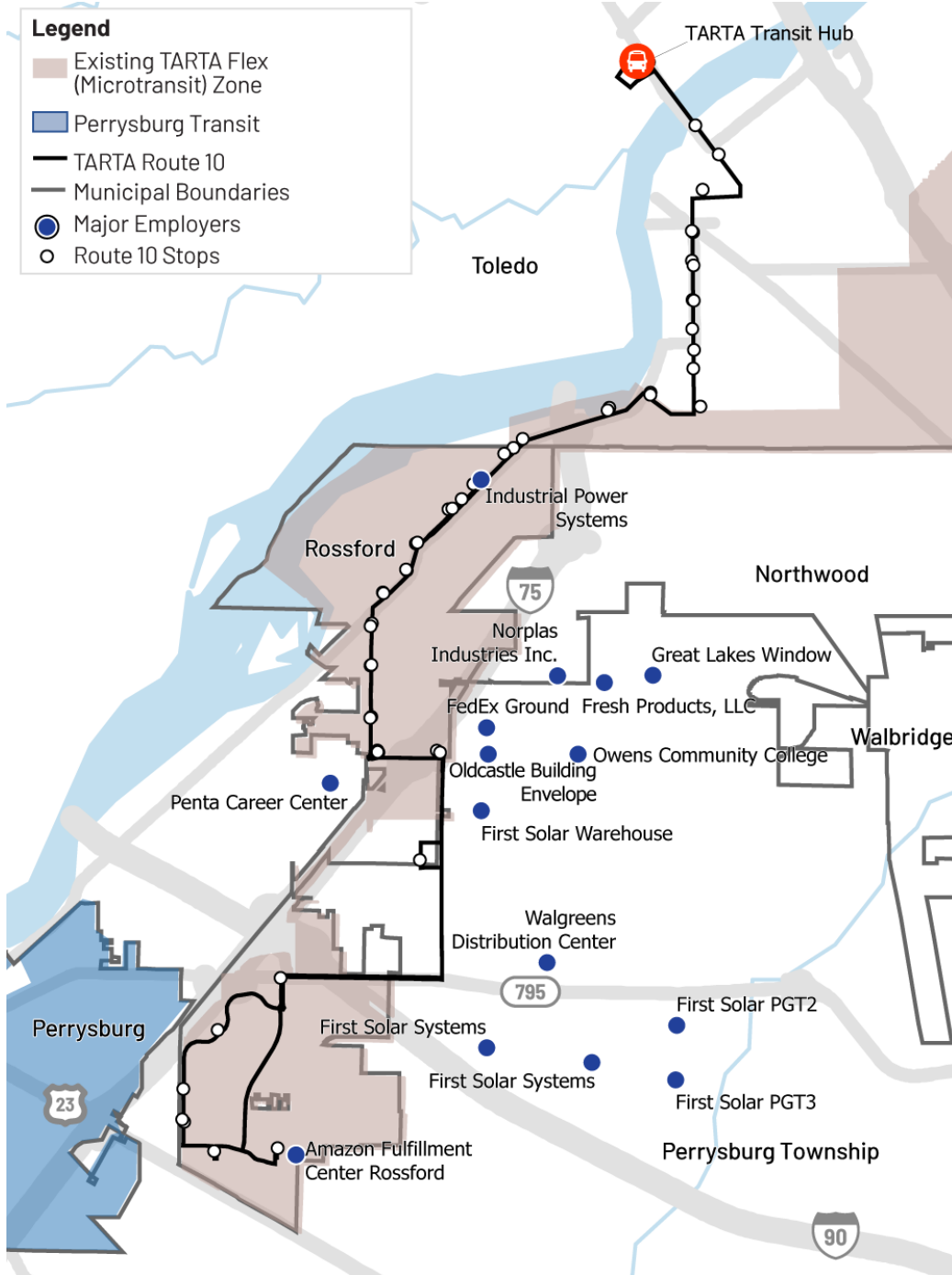


FIGURE 10 – MAJOR EMPLOYERS IN NORTHERN WOOD COUNTY COMPARED TO EXISTING TRANSIT COVERAGE



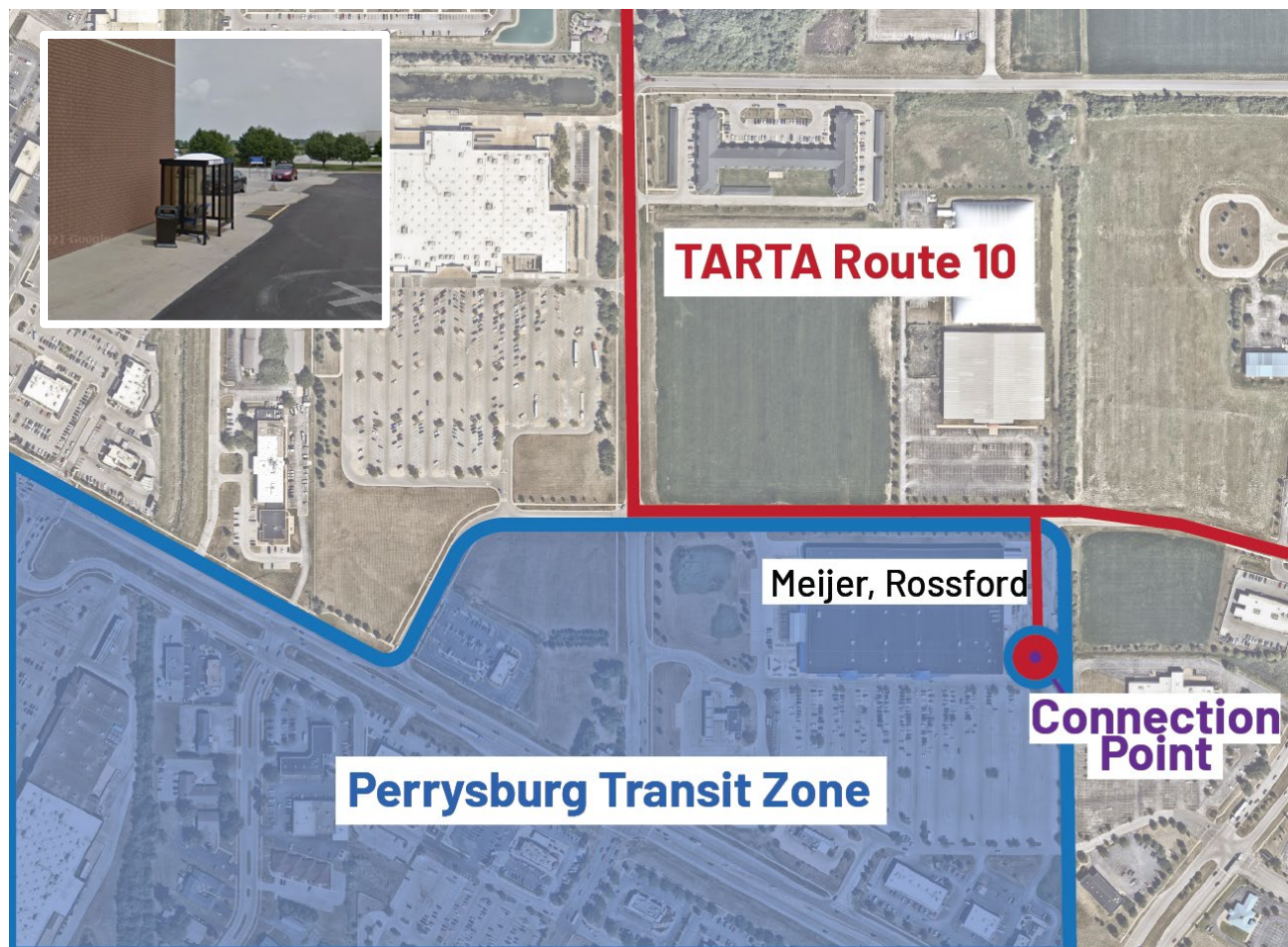
CONNECTION POINTS

Transit connection points range from simple, on-street bus stops to more complex nodes like transit centers, park-and-ride lots, or shared mobility hubs. They link public transit with other travel modes and must be seamless, safe, and comfortable for people driving, parking, biking, and walking.

Strengths

The existing connection point between TARTA Route 10 and Perrysburg Transit at the Rossford Meijer has a shelter, sidewalk connection, and is located directly next to a grocery store (Figure 11). This means the waiting environment is within the shopping center access area with lower-speed drivers compared to an arterial roadway.

FIGURE 11 – CONNECTION POINT AT THE MEIJER IN ROSSFORD



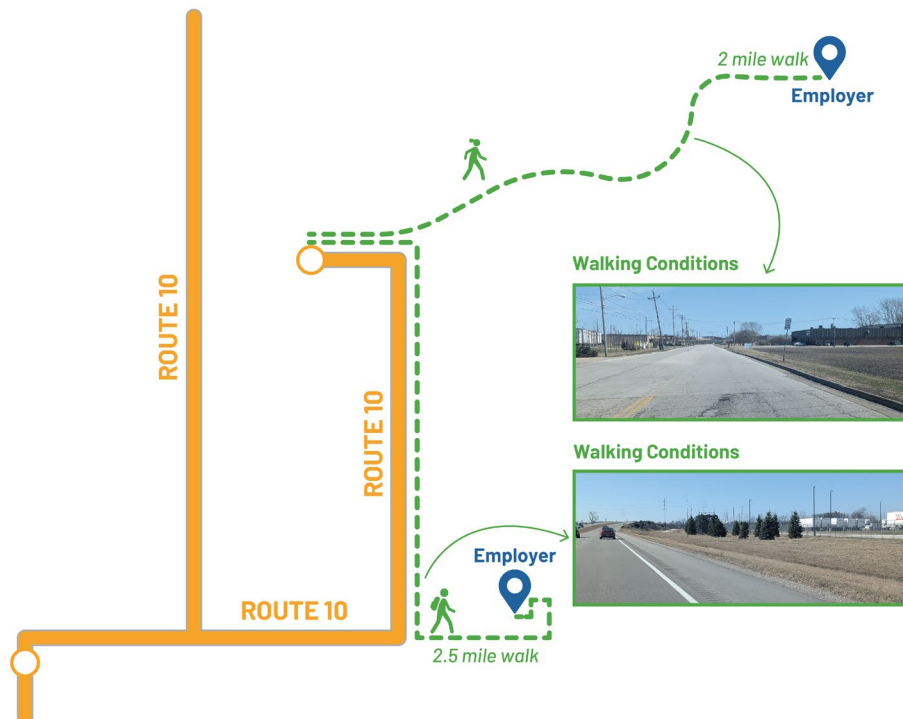
Gaps

Some employers are located on 55 mph posted speed limit arterial roads like 795, which is a highway that is dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians. The street network is not well connected, so getting to employers can expose people to long and dangerous routes. Many employers are located along streets with no sidewalks (Figure 12), and sidewalks may not be feasible due to drainage ditches on many streets. Using existing TARTA Route 10 to reach jobs is challenging because many employers are located very far from existing stops (Figure 13).

FIGURE 12 – STREETS LEADING TO EMPLOYERS LACK SIDEWALKS OR ARE ALONG HIGH-SPEED ROADWAYS



FIGURE 13 – EMPLOYERS ARE VERY FAR AWAY FROM EXISTING TRANSIT, AND/OR THE WALKING CONDITIONS ARE UNSAFE



TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) complements transit service by providing strategic policies, programs, services, and infrastructure improvements that expand and improve non-drive-alone options.

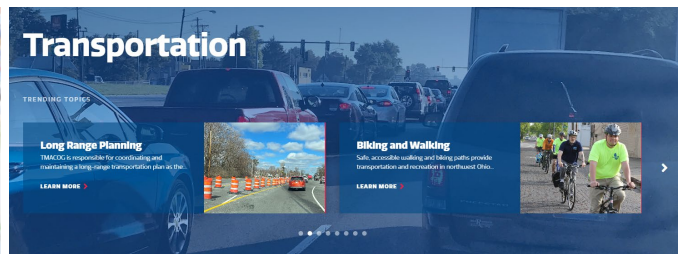
TDM can:

- Increase awareness of all available transportation options
- Reduce the barriers (cost, spatial, design, safety, accessibility) to using transportation options
- Expand/improve available transportation options

TDM strategies act as the support structure underpinning non-driving workforce mobility options. Some of the most common strategies include:

- Providing education, outreach, and resources to raise awareness of available drive-alone alternatives for workplace access.
- Providing complementary transit service, including via first-/last-mile connecting services
- Helping to reduce alternative-mode costs, either directly (such as with subsidized transit-pass program) or indirectly (such as through pre-tax transit-pass purchase setups)
- Ride-matching assistance for carpools or vanpools
- Guaranteed-ride-home benefits, that reimburse the cost of taxi or Uber/Lyft rides taken by non-drive-alone commuters who need to return home unexpectedly. This reduces the “risk” of taking transit.

Strengths



As the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization, **Lake Erie West Regional Council** is responsible for coordinating and maintaining a long-range transportation plan. The current plan, adopted in July 2025, identifies several objectives that would advance transit and TDM in Wood County, including:

- Implementing a transit connection between Lucas County and Bowling Green and PENTA Career Center.
- Support transit expansions within Wood County

- Support expanded transit service and transit options to ensure the students, and the workforce can get to school and/or jobs
- Completing sidewalk networks, particularly along transit networks, and around transit stops
- Seeking a “role in providing transportation services” in the region

Gohio Commute (<https://gohiocommute.com/>) is an interactive commuter information and planning platform funded and operated by members of the Ohio Association of Regional Councils. In Northwest Ohio, the platform is supported by regional partners, including Lake Erie and GLCAP Mobility Management.

- This site provides a wealth of information on available services, including transit options specific to home and job locations.
- It includes ride-matching, allowing employees to find others with a similar schedule and job area so they can carpool. The site allows filtering down to specific employers.
- Commuters can register their interest in various commute modes, to receive information and updates on those options.

Mobility Management is an ODOT program that designates staff to TDM programming on local, regional and state levels. GLCAP serves this role in Wood County plus surrounding counties.

Gaps

Several additional TDM best practices would expand upon existing resources to provide a more robust set of workforce mobility options.

SUMMARY OF OVERALL NEEDS

In summary, key transportation needs across transit, connection points, and TDM topics include:

- A transit connection from Lucas County to Wood County east of Rossford, which has no public transit available today.
- Transit service that matches the days and times of work shifts, especially for 6:00 am shift starts.
- Additional intercity trips from Toledo to Bowling Green that are aligned with work shifts and that could complement GoBus
- Countywide transit service in Wood County, similar to the coverage provided in neighboring counties.
- Improved sidewalk infrastructure and crossings at or near bus stops. These gaps are extensive and will be expensive to fix. Therefore, gaps must be prioritized to match funding realities.
- Recommitment to leveraging existing TDM resources, and funding additional strategies and resources.

3: Employer and Stakeholder Outreach

WHO WE ENGAGED WITH

The primary goal of employer and stakeholder engagement was to understand workforce transportation challenges in Wood County. Input was gathered through several methods, including a project Steering Committee, focus groups, surveys, updates at community forums, lunch and learns, and conference presentations. All project updates were shared on the project web site, woodcountyworklink.com. This chapter describes input gathered from the Steering Committee, employers, and employees. More details can be found in **Appendix B: Engagement Summary**.

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee (SC) was formed to share information and seek input from regional partners and community representatives, including major employers, representatives from public agencies in Wood County, and non-profit organizations. SC membership consisted of 34 people from 25 local agencies, community organizations, and major employers (Figure 14). The steering committee met six times both virtually and in-person to discuss project deliverables and progress.

FIGURE 14 – STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Steering Committee Member Organizations		
Alison	Avendt	Perrysburg Mercy Hospital
Marissa	Bechstein	Lake Erie West Regional Council (formerly TMACOG)
Mason	Davis	North Baltimore
Brian	Dicken	Toledo Regional Chamber of Commerce
Gary	Doran	TARTA
Joe	Fawcett	City of Perrysburg
Nichole	Fifer	BGSU Center for Regional Development
David	Gedeon	Lake Erie West Regional Council (formerly TMACOG)
Wade	Gottschalk	Wood County Economic Development Commission (WCEDC)
Angela	Landgraf	Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio
Ryan	Lee	Penta Career Center
Sam	Melden	TARTA
Allyson	Murray	City of Rossford
Lucy	Myers	La Conexion de Wood County
Mindy	Birkholz	GLCAP
Charlene	Page	Owens CC
Zach	Schmidt	TARTA
Carri	Stanley	Wood County Commissioners
Kristine	Wasler	First Solar
Matt	Snow	City of Bowling Green
Heather	Mallette	Northwest Ohio HR Assoc
Michael	Fuller	Wood Co JFS
Jon	Eckel	Perrysburg Township
Ed	Ewers	Penta Career Center
Rex	Huffman	Wood County Port Authority
Kevin	Laughlin	City of Northwood
John	Stewart	BGSU Shuttle /Parking Services
David	Takats	Goodwill
Lori	Tretter	City of Bowling Green
Gary	Thompson	Regional Growth Partnership - JobsOhio
Ben	Batey	BGSU
Josh	Bender	North Baltimore
Jim	Woelke	GLCAP
Martha	Woelke	City of Bowling Green
Jeremy	Zilmer	BGSU

Employers

Employer interviews were conducted with 11 major employees:

- Rudolph Libbe
- Mercy Health Perrysburg
- Envelope Mart
- Bowling Green State University
- First Solar
- NuProduce
- Rosenboom
- Lubrizol
- Magna Norplas
- Wood County Hospital
- Amazon

Interviews covered subjects such as employer operations, shift structures, and employee commute patterns. In addition, employers also participated in focus groups and a survey to gauge employer familiarity with available transportation services.

Employees

An employee survey was conducted in August 2025 to estimate common shift times, commute characteristics, and gauge employee familiarity and interest in transit options. Community members also had the opportunity to attend three regional forums throughout the project. The first, held in May 2025 at Owens Community College, introduced the project and asked for feedback on workforce needs in Wood County. The second regional forum was held virtually in December 2025 and presented draft recommendations. The third regional forum was held in March 2026 at Penta Career Center and presented the final proposed strategies through an open house format.

• **“MY DAUGHTER WITH EPILEPSY HAS TO GET DROPPED OFF A MILE AWAY FROM OWENS AND IS EXPECTED TO WALK ON A STREET WITHOUT SIDEWALKS AND STREET LIGHTS. WE NEED TO DO BETTER.” OWENS COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARENT**

WHAT WE HEARD

Challenges

- Employers operate a wide variety of schedules and shifts can be staggered or overlap. Many employers also have different staffing needs throughout the year. Transportation barriers are most acute for second and third shifts and during shift change periods.
- Lack of reliable transportation alternatives can act as a barrier to employee recruitment and retention, particularly for lower-wage positions.
- Housing costs, or the general lack of housing near major employment sites in Wood County, result in people living far away from jobs and employees needing to rely heavily on personal vehicles. Employees are commuting across Northwest Ohio, with strong travel patterns between Lucas and Wood Counties. The travel flows for lower paying jobs tend to be from Lucas County into Wood County, and higher paying jobs tend to flow from Wood County into Lucas County.
- Employment campuses are often very large and the lack of last mile connections and walkable infrastructure along corridors make employee access to transit difficult.
- There is little local funding available from government agencies to support new transit options.

Opportunities

- There is strong interest in regional connectivity, especially connecting Wood County to Lucas County and improving transit connections between Bowling Green, Perrysburg and Toledo.
- Employers expressed interest in flexible workforce transportation solutions, including vanpools, shared hubs, improved transit connections and supportive infrastructure improvements like sidewalks.
- Employers expressed interest in learning more about available mobility options for employees.
- Wood County currently receives far less federal transit funding than other neighboring counties and there is opportunity to increase funding through service coordination.
- Transit strategies can have more flexibility if they can tap into private funding sources.

4: Transit Funding and Governance

This section summarizes how transit in the study area is funded today, and governance options for the transit strategies in Chapter 5. More detail on transit funding and governance is provided in Appendix C: Governance.

TRANSIT FUNDING TODAY

Public transportation in the United States is funded through a combination of federal, state, and local sources. In terms of eligible expenses, transit funding can generally be divided into two categories:

- **Operating funding.** Supports the day-to-day cost of providing service (driver wages, fuel, maintenance, insurance, administration).
- **Capital funding.** Supports investment in long-term assets (buses, vans, facilities, stop elements, technology).

Federal Funding

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) administers several operating and capital funding programs based on a formula of population, service levels, and other factors. FTA funding requires matching funds (state or local). In most programs, capital costs are subsidized at a higher percentage (typically 80%) compared to operating costs (typically 50% or less).

FTA programs are specific to whether the applicant is in a rural or urban area. Most of Wood County is rural, while northern Wood County (the location of many job sites) is part of the Toledo urbanized area of more than 500,000 people. Urbanized areas are designated by the Census, so they follow population patterns rather than municipal or county lines.

The FTA programs most relevant to Wood County are summarized in Figure 15.

FIGURE 15 – FTA FUNDING PROGRAMS RELEVANT TO WOOD COUNTY

Program	Eligible Activities	Eligible Service Areas	Current Study Area Recipients
5310: Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities	• Vehicle purchases • Operations and maintenance for paratransit • Nonprofit transportation • Travel training and mobility management	Rural and Urban	Nonprofit providers
5311: Rural Area Formula Program	• Operating expenses • Vehicle purchases • Preventive maintenance • Transit planning	Rural	Bowling Green Transit
5311 (f): Intercity Bus Program	• Planning and marketing • Capital grants for bus facilities • Operating assistance	Rural; states must spend 15% of 5311 money on intercity bus	None. ¹
5339: Bus and Bus Facilities	• Vehicle purchases • Maintenance facilities • Charging or fueling infrastructure • Passenger facilities	Rural and Urban	TARTA, Bowling Green Transit
5307: Urbanized Area Formula	• Vehicle purchases • Preventive maintenance • Passenger facilities • Transit planning • Technology	Urban areas with more than 200,000 people	TARTA ²
Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)	• Capital investments of operations that reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality	Urbanized areas	Local governments, local public agencies (LPA's), and transit agencies

State Funding

The Ohio Department of Transportation provides funding and technical assistance to transit agencies. The biggest funding source is the Ohio Transit Partnership Program (OTP2), funded with a mix of state and federal sources. State funds can be used as a match for federal funds.

ODOT also acts as the designated recipient for federal funds, which it then distributes to partners. In Ohio, there can only be one recipient for 5311 funds per county. In Wood County, the City of Bowling Green is the designated recipient for 5311, which funds Bowling Green Transit.

Local Funding

Local funds are needed to match any federal funds. For example, an applicant to the 5311 program can fund 50% of program costs from the federal government but the other 50% must come from local sources. “Local” includes funding from the State of Ohio or funds coming from jurisdictions within Wood County. In general, federal funds cannot be used as match for other funds except in specific circumstances, such as the federal Community Development Block Grant Programs.

Funds currently used as local match in Wood County include:

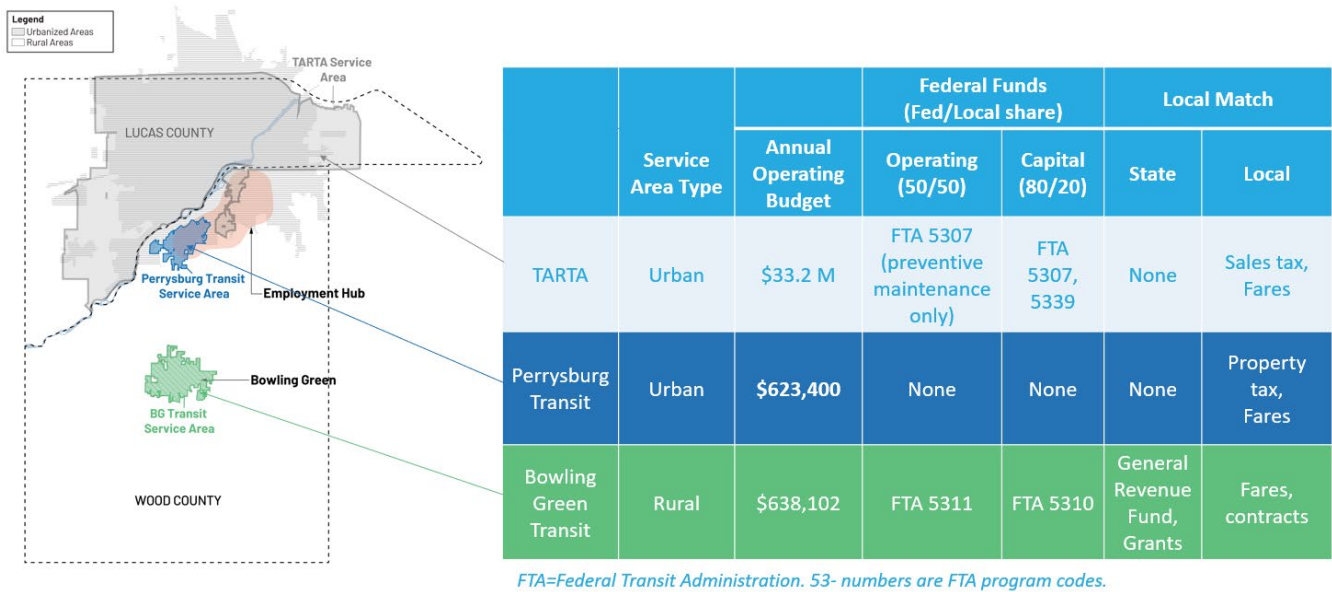
- State General Revenue Fund (GRF)
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- City general funds
- Fares
- Student fees (such as for BGSU shuttles)
- Contracts

Figure 16 shows which parts of Wood County are urban (grey) compared to rural (white). Figure 16 also shows how the urban/rural distinction affects how three Wood County transit providers are funded. TARTA, as a large urbanized area transit provider, is expected to generate most of its operating funding locally and does not receive any federal operating funds. For example, in Wood County, TARTA assesses Rossford with a sales tax. The FTA will only fund one transit provider per urban area. Therefore, Perrysburg Transit, which operates in the grey urban area, is not eligible for any FTA funds. Perrysburg Transit generates all its funding locally. Bowling Green Transit in Wood County’s rural area receives federal funding for both capital and operating expenses.

¹ The Hocking-Athens-Perry Community Action Partnership (HAPCAP) receives this funding to operate GoBus service, including the routes to Bowling Green and Toledo

² 5307 funds can be used for operations, but only if the service area population is less than 200,000 people. TARTA does not qualify since the urbanized area population is greater than 200,000.

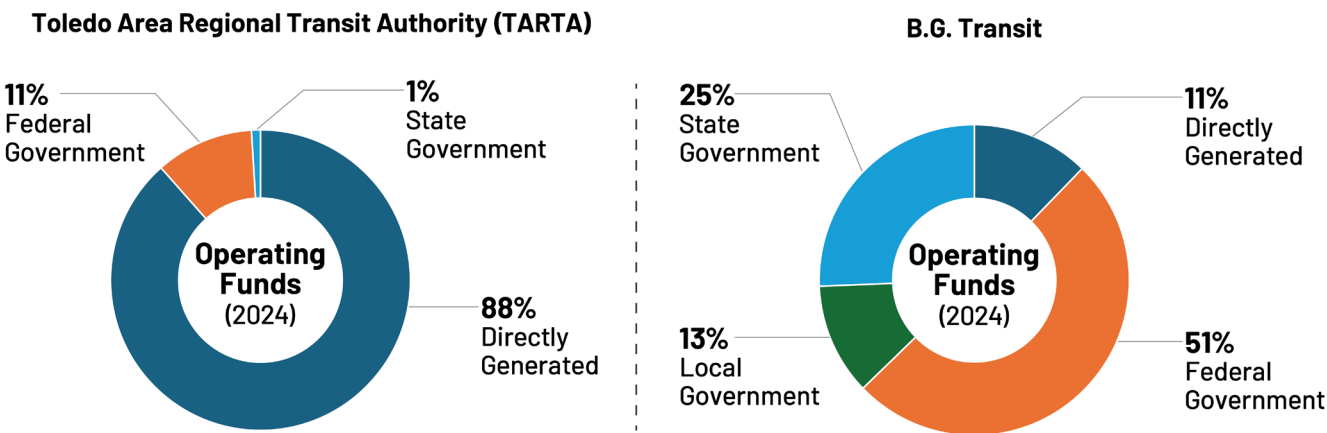
FIGURE 16 – TRANSIT FUNDING IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS OF WOOD COUNTY



Source: TARTA and BGT: National Transit Database (2023); Perrysburg Transit: 2025 Annual Budget

The FTA provides larger operating subsidies in rural areas compared to urban areas. As shown in Figure 17, TARTA directly generates nearly all of its operating funds, while BGT generates half, with the other half coming from the FTA.

FIGURE 17 – FUNDING BREAKDOWN FOR AN URBAN (TARTA) AND RURAL (BOWLING GREEN TRANSIT) PROVIDER (2023)



GOVERNANCE MODELS

Service governance refers to the organizational structure responsible for planning, funding, and overseeing transit service. The governing agency or service owner can be separate from the agency who operates service. For example, Bowling Green Transit is governed by the City of Bowling Green and operated by Groome Transportation.

Governance influences funding eligibility, operational policies, and decision-making authority. For Wood County, there are four main governance models within which transit strategies could be implemented (Figure 18).

FIGURE 18 – GOVERNANCE MODELS WITH CURRENT LOCAL EXAMPLES FOR WOOD COUNTY

Local Government



Regional Transit Authority (RTA)



Transportation Management Assn. (TMA)

No Local Examples

Non-Profit

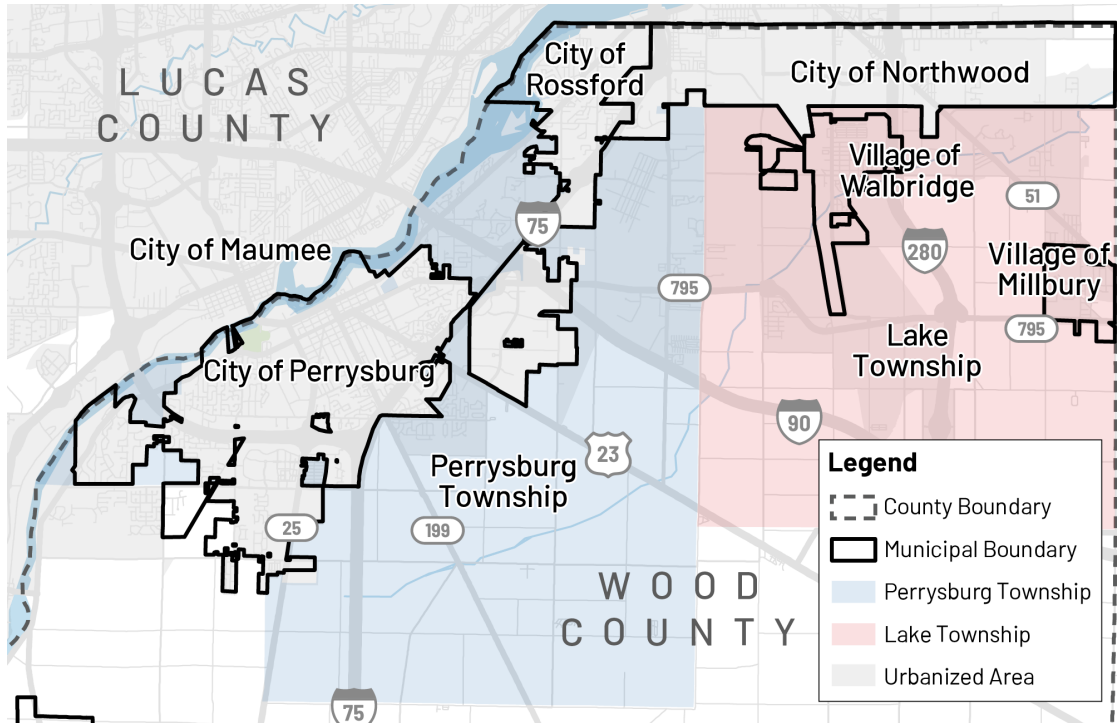


Local Government

Local governments (cities, villages, townships, or counties) may operate transit services directly. A benefit of this model is it allows communities to tailor services to local needs. Local officials have direct control over service decisions such as routes, schedules, and fares. A drawback is this model can lead to a fragmented transit system if multiple jurisdictions operate their own service. Wood County contains three types of local government: incorporated municipalities, townships, and county-level.

Figure 19 shows the municipal and townships boundaries of northern Wood County as a reference.

FIGURE 19 – WOOD COUNTY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



Incorporated Municipalities

Municipal governments (cities and villages) have broad authority to provide services and raise revenue. Municipalities can levy income taxes and have the most financial flexibility of the three types of local governments. A limitation is that municipal services are confined to the geographic boundaries of the city or village, which will only meet certain transportation needs. Perrysburg Transit and Bowling Green Transit are examples of transit services governed by a municipality.

Townships

Townships are the most limited form of government in Ohio in terms of both authority and resources. Townships provide basic services such as road maintenance, zoning administration, and fire protection. Townships generally do not operate large-scale public services such as transit. Townships rely on property tax levies approved by voters and do not have authority to impose income or sales taxes.

County

Ohio counties serve as regional administrative units coordinating services across municipalities and townships. County governments are responsible for services benefiting residents across a broad geographic area, such as regional planning and public health programs. Counties may provide transit,

especially in rural areas, and can be the designated recipient of the FTA's 5311 program funds. Counties rely on property tax levies and voter-approved sales taxes and do not have the authority municipalities have to levy local income taxes. OCTA (Ottawa County Public Transit) is an example of a transit service governed by a county.

Regional Transit Authority (RTA)

Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) are public agencies created under state enabling legislation to provide transit services across multiple jurisdictions. TARTA is an example of an RTA operating in northwest Ohio. RTAs are governed by boards that represent participating communities. These agencies typically have the authority to levy taxes or receive dedicated funding to support transit operations. RTAs can be formed by a group of local government (county, municipality, township). RTA boundaries cannot overlap. RTAs offer several advantages, including the ability to plan transit services across municipal boundaries and secure stable funding sources through dedicated tax revenues. TARTA, for example, is funded by a voter-approved sales tax allocation.

RTAs may be expanded by amending the original resolution or ordinance to include additional counties, municipalities, or townships. The updated resolution or ordinance must be passed by the legislative bodies of a majority of current RTA member jurisdictions (including any that may have joined since its creation), as well as each jurisdiction proposing to join the RTA.

What Could RTA Governance Look Like in Wood County?

RTA formation could be pursued under two options, if desired by Wood County stakeholders.

- Expansion of TARTA to Wood County.** Interested Wood County jurisdictions would need to pass a resolution or ordinance to join TARTA. A majority of existing TARTA members (Lucas County and the City of Rossford) would need to pass resolutions approving the expansion. The expanded jurisdictions would then need to hold a public vote to extend the RTA boundary and join the sales tax district. If all of Wood County wanted to join, a referendum would need to be passed in the county, with the exception of Rossford, which is already a TARTA member.
- Creation of a new RTA.** Each jurisdiction would need to pass a resolution or ordinance. If the RTA covered part of Wood County, the RTA would be formed by individual municipalities and townships. If the RTA were formed at the county level, the county commissioners would need to vote in favor and the City of Rossford would need to pass a resolution to withdraw from TARTA.

**"I SOMETIMES WILL DRIVE TO MY
EMPLOYEE'S HOUSE TO PICK THEM
UP FOR WORK."**

WOOD COUNTY EMPLOYER

The RTA would gain taxation authority if passed by a majority vote in a referendum in the service area.

Transportation Management Association (TMA)

A Transportation Management Association (TMA) is an administrative body created to manage the transportation needs of a particular venue, district, or community - typically as a non-profit, member-controlled organization. Common TMA objectives include reducing drive-alone commute trips and expanding access to local destinations.

TMA's can be funded through a mixture of member dues or assessments, fees for services, and government and philanthropic grants. Most new TMA's, if not established within a public agency or an existing organization, are incorporated as 501(c)(3) nonprofits, while others include 501(c)(4), 501(c)(6), special improvement, or assessment districts.

Employers participate in the TMA by paying membership dues, which fund transportation services. In some cases, local governments or regional transit agencies also contribute funding. Because multiple employers share the cost of the service, the financial burden on any single employer is reduced.

TMA shuttle programs commonly operate using small or medium-sized buses that run fixed routes between transit stations and employment sites. In recent years, some TMA's have begun to operate more flexible service models, including demand-response service or rideshare subsidies. These transportation options may enable TMA's to be more responsive to changing travel needs. If the TMA relies on local funding, transportation services do not have to follow FTA public transit requirements. This can reduce costs.

Example: TMA Bucks, Bucks County, PA

Bucks County is in the Philadelphia metropolitan area but most of the county's population is located far from bus and rail networks. TMA Bucks was formed in 1998 and is a member-based, 501(c)4 nonprofit with a staff of five and a board representing member organizations. TMA Bucks partners with Bucks County Transport, the county's nonprofit transit provider, to offer two employer shuttle routes connecting to bus and rail networks. Routes run Monday through Friday during rush hour and are operated with small buses. Fares are \$1 for general passengers.

What Could TMA Governance Look Like in Wood County?

A TMA could be formed through a partnership of employers, property owners, or other regional organizations. The TMA could be established as a 501(c)(3), 501(c)(4), or 501(c)6. In terms of TMA startup, initial funding could help the TMA hire at least one staff member, who would be responsible

**"WE DON'T THINK ABOUT IT, BUT
OUR RECRUITMENT AREA IS
NECESSARILY LIMITED BY HOW FAR IT
IS PRACTICAL TO DRIVE FOR A JOB OF
THIS TYPE."** *WOOD COUNTY EMPLOYER*

for establishing and growing the TMA's membership. That initial startup could be funded through CMAQ and the staff person could be housed within an agency like GLCAP or Lake Erie West in the near-term.

The TMA's transportation services could be operated directly or contracted to an existing transit provider. If federal funding were used to operate service, the TMA would have to follow public transit requirements (such as operator training, drug and alcohol testing, and vehicle accessibility). The TMA could also implement TDM strategies.

Nonprofit

Many nonprofits operate workforce transportation, including areas near Wood County. For example, North Central Area Transit is a nonprofit serving Seneca County. HATS in Hancock County is operated by the Hancock Hardin Wyandot Putnam Community Action Commission. Nonprofits can partner with employers, workforce development agencies, and local governments to provide service. This model can be useful for launching pilot programs or serving specialized populations.

Example: Wheels to Work, West Michigan

The nonprofit Hope Network operates the Wheels to Work program, which is focused specifically on employment transportation. The service picks workers up from their homes and takes them directly to workplaces. The program uses a shared-cost model between employers and employees, keeping the program fares low. In addition, the program has financial support from local governments, workforce development organizations, and community organizations.

What Could Nonprofit Governance Look Like in Wood County?

A nonprofit model could be achieved through an existing nonprofit or through formation of a new nonprofit. The Wood County Board of Developmental Disabilities and the Wood County Committee on Aging already contract out to provide transportation for people with disabilities, medical trips, or for older adults. This service could be expanded to include work trips.

Tradeoff Summary

Figure 20 summarizes the tradeoffs between the four governance models.

FIGURE 20 – TRADEOFFS BETWEEN GOVERNANCE MODELS

Criteria	Local Government	RTA	TMA	Nonprofit
Can leverage FTA operations funds?	Urban area: No Rural area: Yes, 5311 funds	Urban area: No Rural area: Yes, 5311 funds	Urban area: No Rural area: Yes, 5311 funds .	Urban area: No Rural area: Yes, 5311 funds
Can leverage FTA capital funds?	Yes, 5339 and/or 5310 funds.	Yes, 5339 and/or 5310 funds.	Yes, 5339 and/or 5310 funds.	Yes, 5339 and/or 5310 funds.
Ability to meet FTA regulations?	May require changes to meet additional federal requirements	Yes, well prepared.	Yes, depending on operating model.	Yes, depending on operating model.
Can use existing maintenance facility?	Yes, either in-house or through contract operator.	Yes, could use existing facility.	Unlikely due to high cost.	Yes, depending on the operating model.
Will use accessible vehicles?	Yes, existing fleet is fully accessible.	Yes, existing fleet is fully accessible. Any new RTA would need to acquire accessible vehicles.	Required if using public funding.	Required if using public funding.

5: Transit Strategies

The workforce needs and stakeholder and employer input led to the creation of five transit strategies, tailored to the three study areas (refer to Figure 4 for the study areas). This section describes each strategy.

STRATEGY COMPONENTS

Each strategy includes the following components.

How it Works

Step-by-step walk through of how each would function in terms of logistics plus a map of the service.

Costs and Governance

Costs for existing providers and service types (Figure 21) were used to estimate a range of costs.

Each strategy also contains a set of governance prioritizations suggestions. This work reflects the project's current assumptions, analysis, and stakeholder consensus and is intended to provide a practical framework for decision-making. As regional conditions, organizational capacity, and external factors change, the recommended governance approaches should be reassessed to ensure continued alignment with the various transit solutions.

FIGURE 21 – COST OF CURRENT PROVIDERS PER HOUR

Service Type	Agency	Cost/Hour
Paratransit	TARTA Move	\$73
On-Demand	Bowling Green Transit	\$112
On-Demand	Perrysburg Transit	NA
Microtransit	TARTA Flex	\$69
Fixed Route – Shuttle	BGSU	\$117
Fixed Route	TARTA	\$129

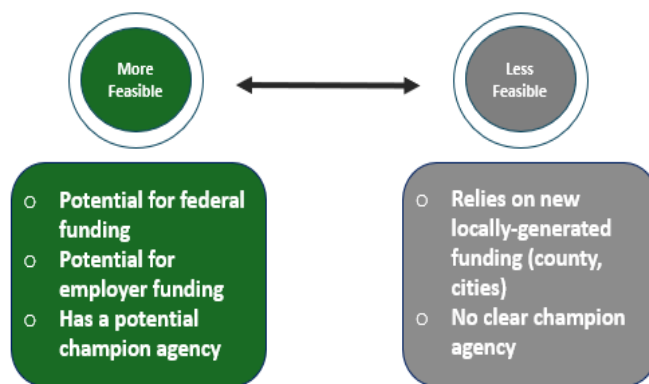
To be conservative and account for higher costs in a future implementation scenario, the following ranges were used to project the costs of transit strategies:

- On-demand services operated as public transit, meaning the agency must follow all federal transit regulations such as using accessible vehicles: **\$120-\$140/hour**

- On-demand services operated as employer-focused shuttles that are not designed for the public, meaning the service can be provided on smaller vehicles that are not accessible: **\$75-\$100/hour**
- Intercity service: **\$150/hour**
- Rural on-demand service: **\$80/hour**

A high-level assessment is included of which of the four governance models is more or less feasible. This assessment was based on stakeholder and employer input, cost information, and funding options (Figure 22).

FIGURE 22 – FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT



Case Study

An example of how this strategy operates in similar communities is provided, if available.

STUDY AREA 1

The Steering Committee voiced strong support for a new service linking the urbanized areas in Lucas County and Wood County. There are three strategies:

1. Feeder Shuttle
2. Commuter Shuttle
3. Microtransit Shuttle

The design of the strategies for Study Area 1 had to balance safe access with service speed. In a connected street grid with sidewalks and crossings, one bus stop can serve many destinations in a time-efficient way. But Wood County roads are not connected and do not have sidewalks. Public transit cannot rely on a centralized bus stop but must take people directly to the front door of their destination (Figure 23). This adds time to the bus route. If the route becomes too long, workers will not want to use transit. Each Study Area 1 strategy provides different ways of achieving this balance of safe access and service speed.

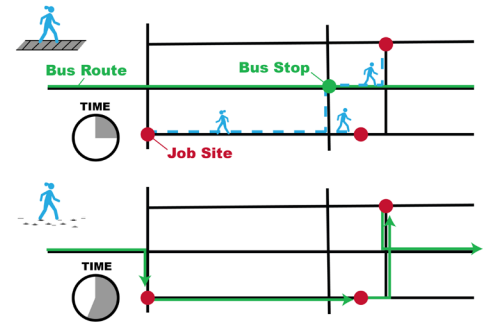


FIGURE 23 – WALKING ACCESS CONDITIONS AFFECT THE DESIGN OF TRANSIT SERVICE

Feeder Shuttle

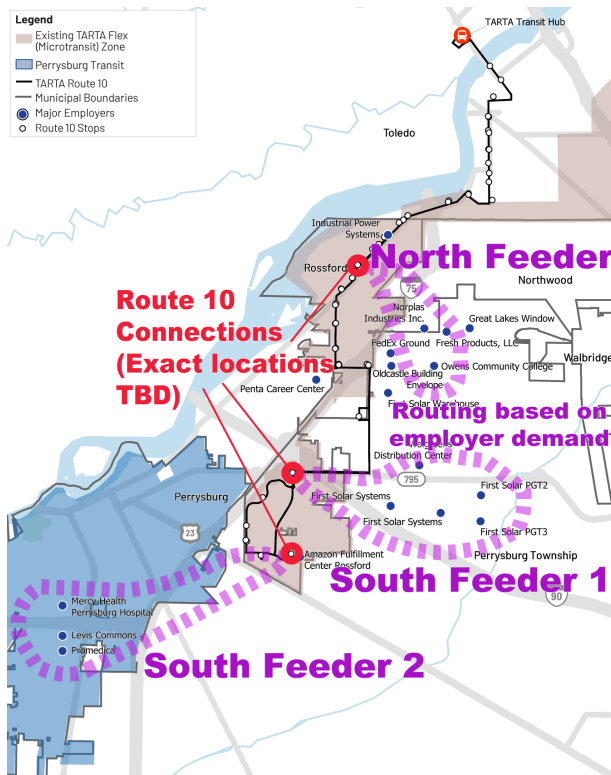
A feeder shuttle meets people at fixed stops then shuttles people to their final destination. It would serve those who pay into service.

How it Works

1. The feeder shuttle can be timed to meet Route 10 at to-be-determined connection points for a seamless transfer.
2. The feeder shuttle route would be pre-determined based on employer demand. The service could start with one route. Over time, three on-demand routes serving northern, central, and southern employers could provide good coverage of all employers while keeping each route time-efficient (Figure 24).



FIGURE 24 – FEEDER SHUTTLE ROUTE



Costs and Governance

This option could have lower costs than other options if it is marketed as an employee service and is not open to the general public (Figure 25). Service could be operated on a van or other small vehicle that is not accessible, and the driver could be an employee rather than a public transit operator. This means service would not be eligible for FTA funding. If three shuttles were in operation, operating costs would be \$525K-\$612K.

Stakeholders and employers voiced that work shifts take place throughout the day, seven days per week. Therefore, all transit strategies are assumed to run Monday to Sunday to serve employment needs.

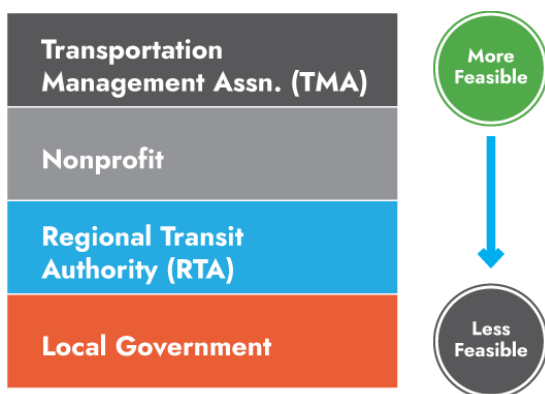
FIGURE 25 – FEEDER SHUTTLE SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS AND COSTS

Characteristics	Peak Service
Days of Operation	Monday-Sunday
Daily Service Hours	5-7 am; 5-7 pm Every 30 minutes
Vehicles in Operation	1
Annual Service Hours	1,460
Operating Cost per Hour	\$75-\$100
Annual Operating Cost	\$110-\$146K

A TMA or nonprofit are the most feasible governance models (Figure 26). An RTA covering the shuttle service area would require either forming a new RTA, contracting with TARTA, or joining TARTA. All of these options felt less feasible to stakeholders due to the need for new local funding and the complexity of employers being dispersed over several local government administrative areas. A local government model would be limited to municipal boundaries, and as the needs assessment showed most work trips are coming from outside Wood County. A local government model would also require new local funding. The employment hub is primarily within the urbanized part of Wood County, which limits opportunities for FTA funding (see section 4 for additional details).

Therefore, a TMA or nonprofit model relying on grants, non-FTA funding, and private contributions seemed the most feasible. The feasibility of governance models is relatively similar for all three Study Area 1 strategies.

FIGURE 26 – FEEDER SHUTTLE, COMMUTER SHUTTLE, OR MICROTRANSIT GOVERNANCE MODELS



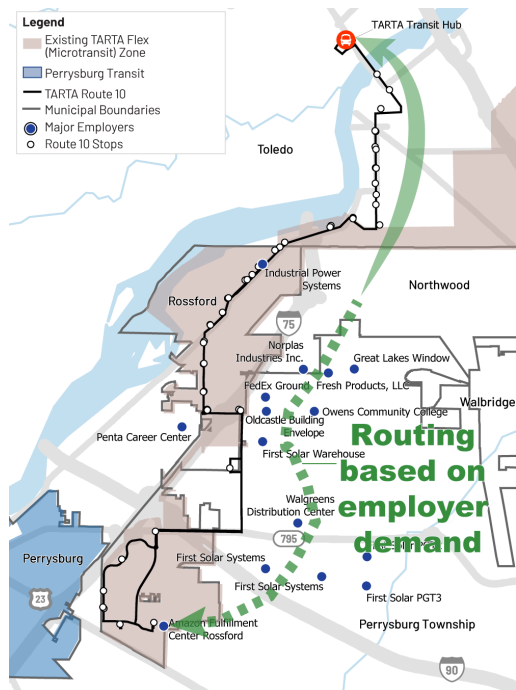
Commuter Shuttle

A commuter shuttle would start in Toledo and provide front-door service to employers. Employees are time-sensitive, therefore it could only serve a limited number of employees.

How it Works

1. The commuter shuttle starts at the Toledo hub where riders can transfer from other TARTA routes. It ends in Rossford where riders can transfer to Route 10.
2. The commuter shuttle directly serves employer front doors. The exact routing would be based on employer demands and interest (Figure 27).

FIGURE 27 – COMMUTER SHUTTLE ROUTE



Costs and Governance

The costs in Figure 28 assume this is a public transit service since it starts in Downtown Toledo and will attract passengers. Therefore, costs are higher than the feeder shuttle since they assume an accessible vehicle, with operations potentially supported with FTA funding.

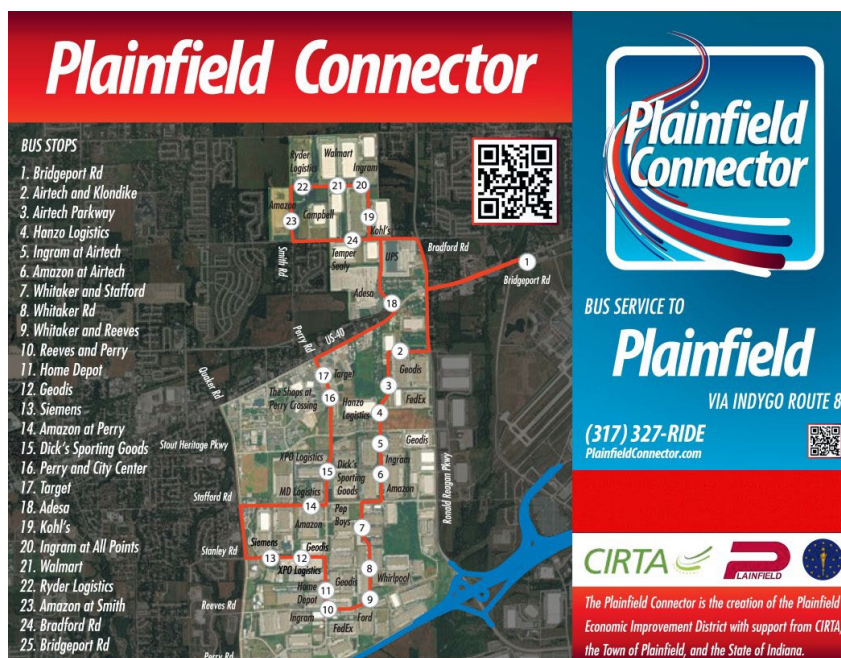
FIGURE 28 – COMMUTER SHUTTLE SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS AND COSTS

Characteristics	Peak Service
Days of Operation	Monday-Sunday
Daily Service Hours	5-7 am; 5-7 pm
Vehicles in Operation	2
Annual Service Hours	2,920
Operating Cost per Hour	\$120-\$140
Annual Operating Cost	\$350-\$409K

Governance model feasibility is the same for all three Study Area 1 strategies (Figure 26).

Case Study: CIRTAs Plainfield Connector

The Plainfield Connector connects people from the Indianapolis area outward into suburban job centers and is operated by the Central Indiana Regional Transit Authority (CIRTA). The service startup was funded by the federal Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) program in 2012. Local funding comes from an Economic Improvement District that assesses property owners. The service is free for all riders, regardless if they work in the area. Operating costs are \$750,000 per year.



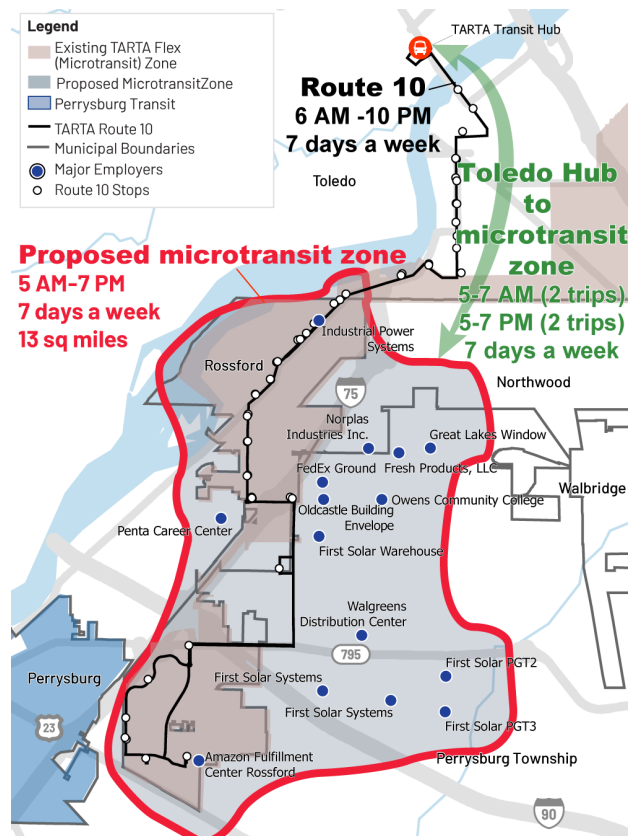
Microtransit Shuttle

Microtransit provides on-demand, same-day service that relies on technology to maximize efficiency. Microtransit serves low-density areas well and can also serve as a first mile/last mile link to other transit services.

How it Works

1. Riders schedule a pick-up and drop-off in advance (usually via an app). Workforce trips could be prioritized.
2. Passengers get dropped off or picked up anywhere in the microtransit zone. The bus operator runs the most direct route between destinations.
3. In the morning and afternoon peak hours, service starts or ends at the TARTA hub in Downtown Toledo (Figure 29).

FIGURE 29 – MICROTRANSIT ZONE



Costs and Governance

This strategy includes two distinct types of microtransit - peak hour service geared toward employees and off-peak service for the general public. The costs in Figure 30 are therefore much higher than the feeder shuttle and commuter shuttle since microtransit would run all day. The benefit is that during the off-peak, microtransit would serve the general public including portions of Rossford, Northwood, Lake Township, and Perrysburg Township.

FIGURE 30 – MICROTRANSIT SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS AND COSTS

Characteristics	Peak Service	Off-Peak Service
Days of Operation	Monday-Sunday	Monday-Sunday
Daily Service Hours	5-7 am; 5-7 pm	5 am-7 pm
Vehicles in Operation	2	1
Estimated Daily Riders	80	60
Annual Service Hours	2,920	3,650
Operating Cost per Hour	\$120-\$140	\$120-\$140
Annual Operating Cost	\$350-\$409K	\$438K-\$511K

Governance model feasibility is the same for all three Study Area 1 strategies (Figure 26).

Case Study: COTA GREAT

Groveport Rickenbacker Employee Access Transit (GREAT) connects COTA riders to the Rickenbacker industrial area of Groveport, OH (south of Columbus). COTA's newly built Mobility Center at Rickenbacker now serves as the connection point between COTA Lines 22 & 24 and GREAT shuttles. GREAT shuttles meet COTA buses and connect them directly to their place of employment.

The service is free and funded entirely by the City of Groveport's general fund with an annual operating cost of \$390,000. The City views the GREAT shuttle as an essential way of protecting the thousands of jobs in the Rickenbacker area and the tax revenues they generate.



STUDY AREA 2

The Steering Committee and stakeholders voiced the need for more intercity connections from Bowling Green to Toledo, resulting in one strategy around creating a new regional route focused in Study Area 2. This solution also addresses Wood County's need to provide local workforce mobility to its post-secondary educational institutions, specifically Bowling Green State University and Owens Community College.

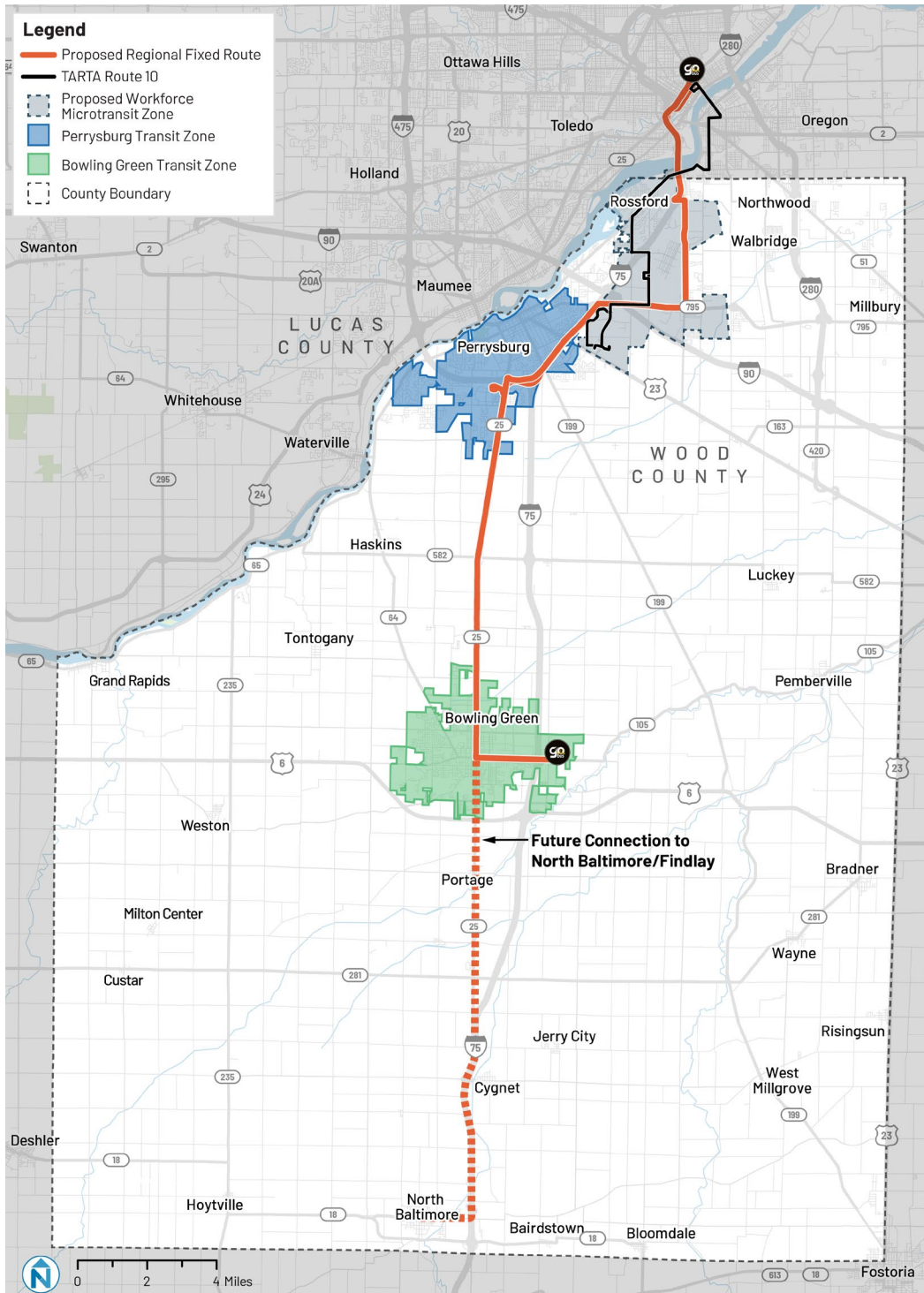
Regional Route

The regional route connects Toledo, Northwood, Perrysburg Township, Rossford, City of Perrysburg, and Bowling Green. All these destinations are home to major employers. This service could be considered an “enhanced Intercity” with key employment hub stops serving the northern half of Wood County. Service would have limited stops (2-4 per municipality) to make it fast and direct. Connection points could be built to facilitate connections between existing transit services, shuttles and ARide/Uber. It would not require ADA paratransit if it were pursued under the FTA Commuter bus designation or formed by a TMA. The route could connect all the existing providers in Wood County (Bowling Green Transit, Perrysburg Transit, BGSU Shuttle, GoBus, and TARTA Route 10).

How it Works

1. Service operates on a fixed route and is focused on serving key work and school start times.
2. Connects Bowling Green to northern Wood County and Lucas County. Service could be extended further south in the longer-term.
3. The route could complement new GoBus intercity stops in Bowling Green and Toledo.
4. Could serve as a connection point or spine to countywide service microtransit zones (see rural strategy) (Figure 31).

FIGURE 31 – REGIONAL ROUTE



Costs and Governance

The regional route could complete a round trip every 2 hours. Costs are shown in Figure 32.

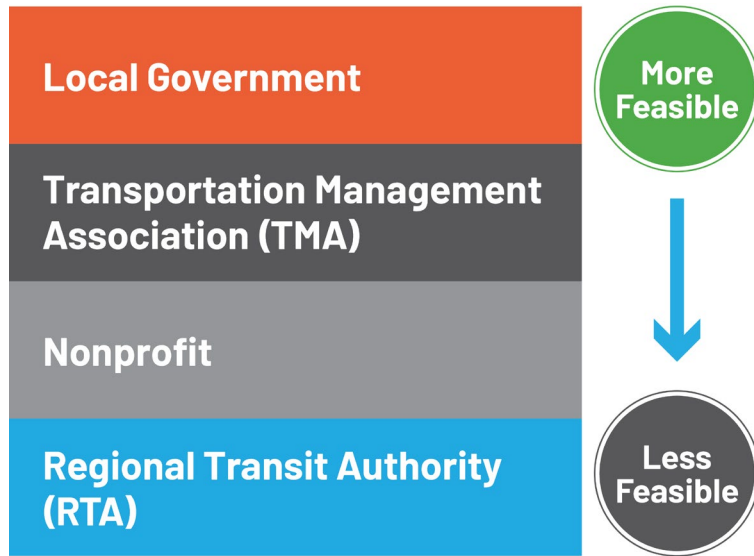
FIGURE 32 – REGIONAL ROUTE SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS AND COSTS

Characteristics	Peak Service
Route Length	~ 27 miles
Days of Operation	Monday-Sunday
Daily Service Hours	5 am-7 pm
Vehicles in Operation	1
Service Frequency	Every 2 hours
Estimated Daily Riders	80
Annual Service Hours	5,100
Operating Cost per Hour	\$150
Annual Operating Cost	~\$770K

By establishing an enhanced intercity regional route through a Transit Management Association (TMA) formed by a coalition of employers and local governments, the service could be funded under a 5- to 10-year contractual agreement, providing operational stability while creating a pathway for future integration into a countywide Section 5311-funded transit program. Because the regional route serves both rural and urban Wood County, there is an opportunity to subsidize part of this route with rural FTA funding. A **phased implementation strategy** could be considered that uses different governance over time:

- Launch service through a TMA-supported contractual model.
- Establish stable operations over 5–10 years.
- Transition, when appropriate, into a broader countywide Section 5311 program.

FIGURE 33 – REGIONAL ROUTE GOVERNANCE MODELS



Case Study: GoBus



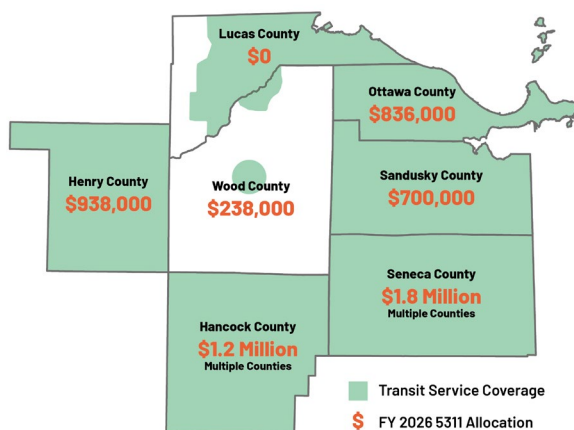
GoBus is operated by the Hockings-Athens Community Action Partnership using FTA 5311(f) funds. It connects cities across the state with a focus on college and university markets. In 2026, GoBus began two new routes - the Purple Line (Columbus-Bowling Green-Toledo) and the Red Line (Cincinnati-Bowling Green-Toledo). The Purple Line has one round trip per day, and the Red Line has two round trips per day. Both lines run 7 days per week with its Wood County stop in Bowling Green at the Meijer.

STUDY AREA 3

Countywide Service

Most counties in Ohio offer transportation, often in the form of countywide demand-response and in some cases, fixed routes in denser areas. The FTA's 5311 program will cover 50% of operating costs in county rural areas. Today, Bowling Green Transit is the recipient of 5311 funds in Wood County. Compared to other Ohio counties, Wood County receives very little 5311 (Figure 34).

FIGURE 34 – WOOD COUNTY RECEIVES A LOW AMOUNT OF 5311 MONEY COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTIES

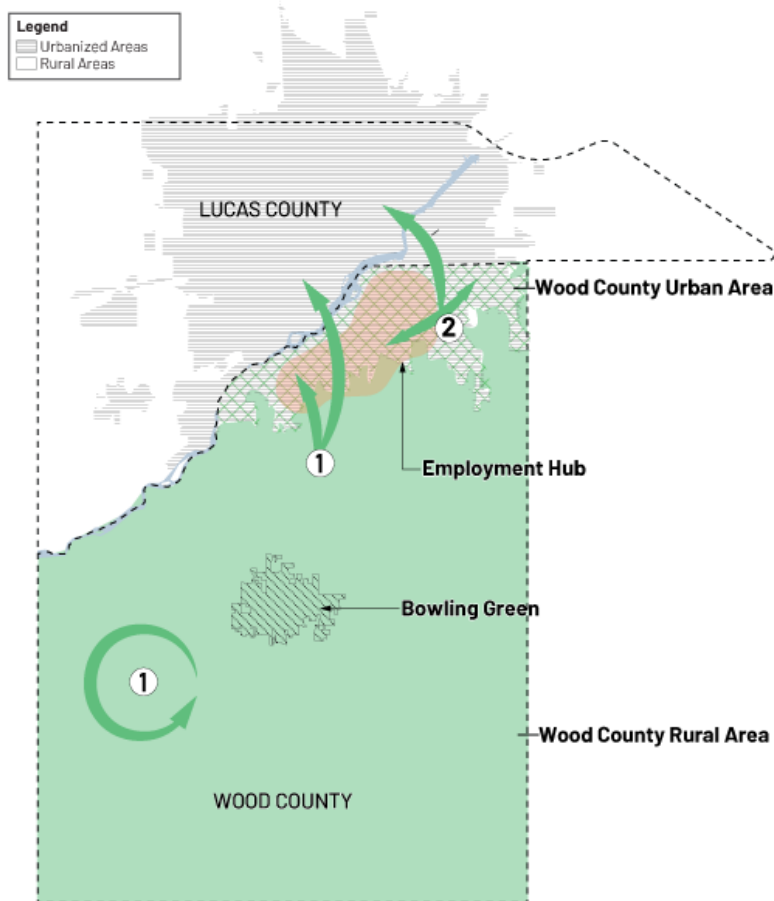


A strategy around countywide transportation has precedent in other communities and could serve all three study areas.

How it Works

1. A coordinated funding effort could advance on-demand rural countywide service leveraging federal transit funding. Federal transit funding could subsidize trips within the rural portion of Wood County and for transporting people from the rural areas into the urbanized areas.
2. A countywide provider could transport people within the northern Wood County urbanized area or into Lucas County. These trips would not be eligible for federal transit funding. The provider can track the rural and urban trip costs separately, and use different funding sources to pay for them.

FIGURE 35 – COUNTYWIDE SERVICE



Costs and Governance

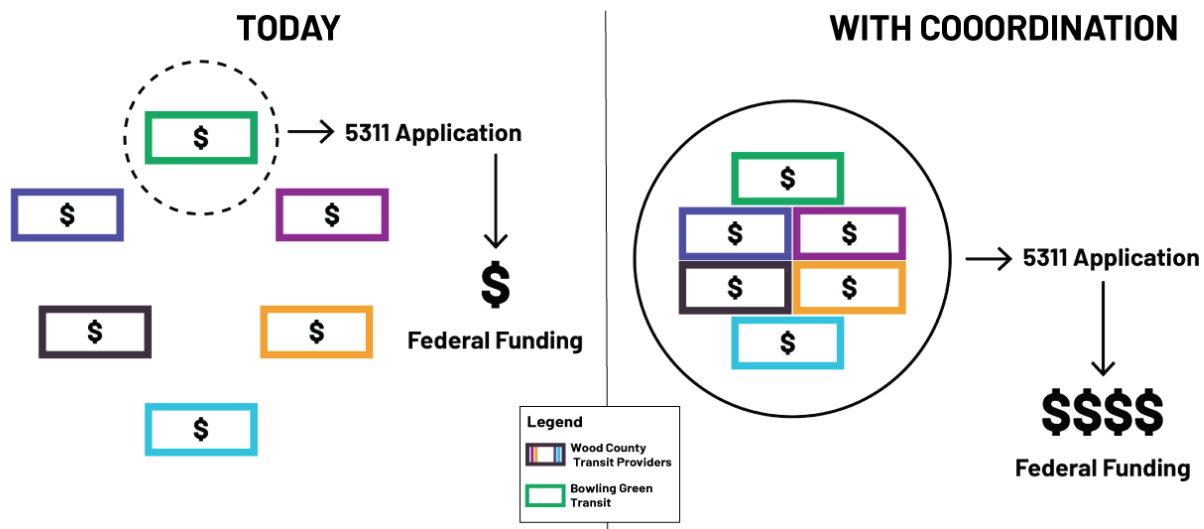
The costs in Figure 36 assume a robust level of service to cover such a large county. Service could be scaled down initially, if desired.

FIGURE 36 – COUNTYWIDE SERVICE CHARACTERISTICS AND COSTS

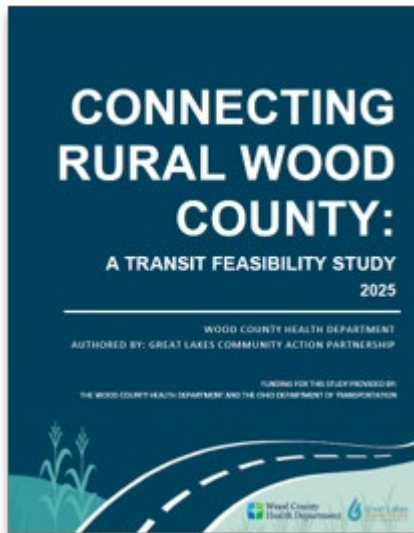
Characteristics	All Day
Days of Operation	Monday-Sunday
Daily Service Hours	5 am-7 pm
Vehicles in Operation	10
Annual Service Hours	48,000
Operating Cost per Hour	\$80
Annual Operating Cost	~\$3.84 M

Rural countywide service could be partially funded through the FTA. Several Wood County organizations pay to operate client-specific service today, but Bowling Green Transit is the sole recipient of FTA 5311 funding. Existing providers could coordinate services to apply together for 5311 funding. By pooling the money already being used to pay for transit, Wood County could leverage more 5311 than it receives today without requiring significant new local funding (Figure 37).

FIGURE 37 – TODAY, SEVERAL AGENCIES PAY FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT. WITH COORDINATION, RESOURCE POOLING COULD LEVERAGE ADDITIONAL FEDERAL FUNDING

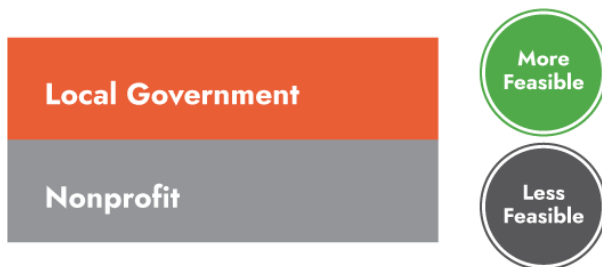


This approach has been documented in GLCAP's *Connecting Rural Wood County* study from 2025. The report recommended moving toward a county-level model with shared oversight and coordination among the existing providers.



Under a coordinated model, it would make sense for Wood County rather than Bowling Green to become the designated recipient for 5311 funding. This is possible while still maintaining the service levels and quality currently provided by Bowling Green Transit. A local government model (with the county in the lead) is most feasible (Figure 38).

FIGURE 38 – COUNTYWIDE SERVICE GOVERNANCE MODELS



FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE SUMMARY

The transit strategies all have merit and enthusiasm from stakeholders. But the biggest challenge to implementation will be identifying an owner to govern service and finding funding to run service.

Study Area 1 presents particular challenges because FTA funding for the key programs used to fund operations is not applicable since Study Area 1 is mostly urbanized. There are other federal programs that can fund transit, but FTA funds are the most commonly used and the most reliable for peer operations in neighboring counties. The lack of FTA opportunities in Study Area 1 limits the types of

service that could be implemented. The biggest opportunity in Study Area 1 is forming a TMA (see section 4 for details) to build partnerships around transit service.

Figure 39 summarizes the operating characteristics of each transit strategy and likely operations funding sources. There are three main sources:

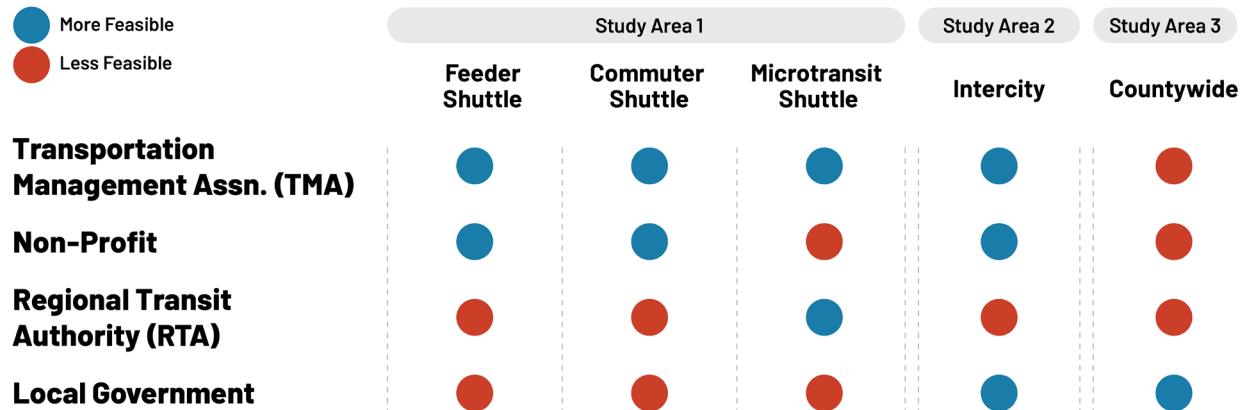
1. Local funding, such as local government budgets, sales tax, fares, contracts, advertising, etc.
2. Private funding, such as contributions from employers or property owners
3. Federal funding. For Study Area 1, federal CMAQ money could support Study Area 1 strategies. For Study Areas 2 and 3, FTA funding is possible.

FIGURE 39 – SUMMARY OF TRANSIT STRATEGIES, COSTS, AND POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Study Area	Strategy	Cost (Low End)	Cost (High End)	Funding Source: Local Funds	Funding Source: Private	Funding Source: Federal
1: Urban to Suburban	Feeder Shuttle	\$110K - Not open to the public - AM/PM peak only 7 days/week 1 route – 1 vehicle	\$610K - Not open to public - AM/PM peak only 7 days/week 3 routes – 3 vehicles	Yes	Yes	CMAQ up to 5 years
1: Urban to Suburban	Commuter Shuttle	\$350K - AM/PM peak only 7 days/week 2 vehicles	\$410K - AM/PM peak only 7 days/week 2 vehicles	Yes	Yes	CMAQ up to 5 years
1: Urban to Suburban	Microtransit Shuttle	\$350K - AM/PM peak only 7 days/week 2 vehicles	\$920K - All day service 7 days/week 2 vehicles during peak; 1 off-peak	Yes	Yes	CMAQ up to 5 years
2: Intercity	Regional Route	\$770K 5 am-7 pm; every 2 hours 7 days/week 1 vehicle	\$1.5M 5 am-7 pm; every hour 7 days/week 2 vehicles	Yes		5311
3: Rural	Countywide	\$3.8 M 5 am-7 pm 7 days/week 10 vehicles	Same as low end	Yes		5311

Figure 40 summarizes the more and less feasible governance models by strategy. Service models relying on local funding are less feasible in Wood County.

FIGURE 40 – GOVERNANCE MODELS BY STRATEGY



6: Connection Points Strategies

Connection points are designated places linking transportation options. They could be:

- From one public transit provider to another
- From public transit to a shuttle
- From public transit to a sidewalk or bike lane/bike share

SITE IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION

More than a dozen potential connection point locations were identified based on activity centers such as retail, health care, community centers, mixed-use destinations, or education facilities. Once the sites were identified, they were assessed using an evaluation framework of 16 criteria. More details on the evaluation can be found in Appendix E.

This evaluation process was grounded in 16 criteria that emphasize consistent functional needs across Connection Point types. Criteria included the ability for a bus to use the site, the cost to make the site safe/accessible, and the value within the land use/street network. The results allowed the sites to be grouped into a list of priority and secondary connection points.

The criteria are as follows:

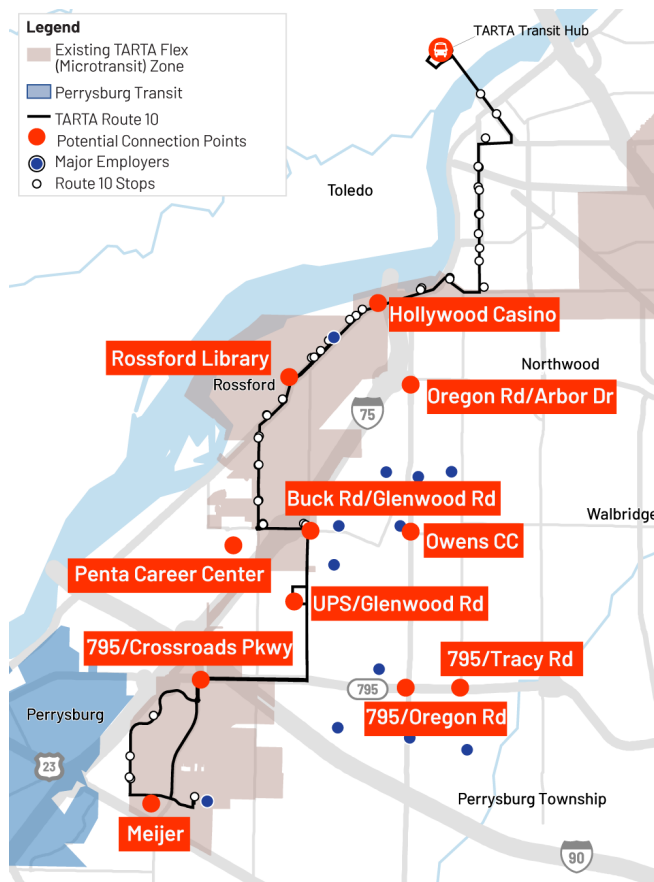
- Regional Demand and Trip Generators
- Access to Workforce opportunity
- Land-Use Readiness
- Network Connectivity
- First/Last-Mile Options
- Safety and Security
- Regional Gap-Closure and Coverage
- Partnership and Community Support
- Site Suitability and Space
- Operational Feasibility
- Implementation Readiness
- Capital Cost (Order of Magnitude)
- Ongoing O&M Burden
- Economic Development
- Environmental Benefits
- Digital Readiness

CONNECTION POINT LOCATIONS REVIEWED

As part of the preliminary Connection Point identification process, the project team evaluated 15 potential locations. The locations represent a mix of activity centers along major travel corridors, including workforce concentrations, post-secondary education anchors, retail and mixed-use destinations, health care facilities, and civic/community nodes. The intent was to describe and compare locations, recognizing that the built environment and access conditions vary widely across the county. The project team has not been provided a single definitive parcel or facility location for any connection point. The evaluation did employ the use of population and employment densities within one mile of the centroid of each proposed connection point location, along with identifying primary travel markets and (to the degree available) likely origins and destinations. Ultimately, the implementation of connection point sites will depend on which transit strategy moves forward and where the routes go.

Potential connection points in northern Wood County are shown in Figure 41.

FIGURE 41 – POTENTIAL CONNECTION POINTS



EVALUATION RESULTS

Example Priority Connection Points

Two priority connection points are Rossford Library and 795 at Crossroads Parkway. Both sites are served by TARTA Route 10 today and could become a connection point with the implementation of Study Area 1 strategies.

“I HAVE TO WALK AN HOUR TO GET TO MY BUS STOP.” *WALGREENS DISTRIBUTION CENTER EMPLOYEE*

Figure 42 and Figure 43 below show examples of how connection points would need to be physically upgraded to achieve passenger safety and legibility. For example, at the Rossford Library (Figure 42), additional design work would be needed to ensure a shuttle vehicle could turn around in the parking lot, as shown in the graphic. Similarly, Crossroads Parkway (Figure 43) currently lacks sidewalks. Sidewalks are needed at a connection point for safe transfers and waiting areas. Operational logistics and crosswalks must also be considered.

FIGURE 42 – EXAMPLE CONNECTION POINT AT ROSSFORD LIBRARY



FIGURE 43 – EXAMPLE CONNECTION POINT AT 795 AT CROSSROADS PARKWAY



7: TDM Strategies

The [Workplace Access Toolkit](#) developed for WorkLink introduces the concept of Transit Demand Management (TDM) in the workplace and a review of existing resources. The TDM strategies are organized into expanding/improving Transportation Options and a complementary section outlining Programs & Incentives to improve access to Wood County jobs.

TOOLKIT IMPLEMENTATION

The following strategies are recommended for implementation to support existing and future transit solutions for accessing Wood County jobs.

Pre-Tax Transit Fare Purchase Assistance

TARTA has been developing resources to be able to provide this assistance to employers, helping them set up their payroll processing to offer direct, pre-tax transit-fare purchases to their employees. Such programs have become widely used across the country, enabling employers to offer a benefit that saves employees money (the income they spend on the fares is not taxed) and reduces their own payroll tax liability levels (the income spent on transit fares is not included as taxable payroll).

Programs and Incentives: Lake Erie West should partner with TARTA to ensure that, once this option is active, it is promoted to Wood County employers.

Carpool Promotion

One of the core strengths of the GOOhio Commute platform is its capacity to maintain a database of commuters interested in carpooling, and to match potential partners, based on commute route and schedule compatibility. It can even enable carpool matching among employees commuting to the same workplace, reducing a common barrier to carpooling. Most commuters in Wood County, however, are unlikely to know that this level of sophisticated ride matching service is possible, let alone available free of charge to Wood County commuters.

Programs and Incentives: Current volatility around fuel costs may increase interest in money-saving commute options like carpooling, creating opportunity for Lake Erie West to roll out a new GoOhio promotional campaign as part of its reintroduction to Wood County employers.

Vanpool Program

Partnered with Commute with Enterprise, TARTA offers a vanpool program for anyone who lives or works in Lucas County and Rossford. Commute with Enterprise manages the vans and helps to coordinate employees to form a carpool. TARTA's program provides a 50% subsidy.

Programs and Incentives: FTA Planning funding could enable TARTA to expand this program to more of Wood County.

Promoting Transportation Options

The combined resources of Lake Erie West and GLCAP's Mobility Managers Program provide a strong foundation for helping employers connect workers with existing transportation options, including public transit and transportation demand management (TDM) services. Framing these resources as tools to support employee recruitment and retention may increase employer interest and engagement, particularly when paired with data demonstrating how frequently workers face challenges accessing or maintaining reliable personal transportation.

**"ON A DAILY BASIS WE INTERACT
WITH DRIVERS DRIVING WITHOUT
VALID LICENSES WHO ARE
KNOWINGLY CONTINUING TO DRIVE
TO WORK." *NORTHWOOD LAW
ENFORCEMENT***

TOOLKIT OWNERSHIP/CHAMPION

If established, a TMA, as recommended elsewhere in the report, would facilitate the ongoing use of the Toolkit, and seek out new opportunities to implement more of the strategies it outlines. TMAs are often resources for monitoring the effectiveness of TDM investments and programs, helping to build the case for funding continuation and expansion of proven strategies. In the absence of a TMA, Lake Erie West is recommended as the ideal owner of the Toolkit, and champion for the TDM recommendations listed above.

8: Next Steps

In March 2026, a regional forum was held at the PENTA Career Center. More than 60 stakeholders joined to hear about WorkLink’s outcomes. Based on this feedback and a compilation of all work done to date, a series of next steps have been documented with specific actions to move WorkLink forward.



SHORT-TERM (0-1 YEAR: 2026)

Action	Description	Lead Agencies
Maintain study momentum	Continue to update the Wood County Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) on WorkLink progress.	GLCAP, TARTA, Lake Erie West Regional Council, Wood County Commissioners, municipalities, county service agencies
Continue study of travel patterns and barriers	Advance the “Building Access” study, which examines housing, workforce, and transportation choices regionally. This study builds on WorkLink’s analysis and further defines transportation needs in Wood County and beyond the adjacent counties in the Lake Erie West region.	Lake Erie West Regional Council
Study Area 1: Begin TMA formation	Make preparations to apply for CMAQ or OWMP funding in 2026-2027 timeframe. This funding can be used as seed money to fund the first 12-18 months of service to commuters in northern Wood County and create a member-driven TMA in 2027-2030. This organization can also manage and implement TDM programs.	TARTA, GLCAP, NOIC, local agencies and employers
Study Area 1: Build partnerships	Continue building relationships with agencies and organizations that could complement employee membership in a TMA such as NOIC, Wood County Port Authority, Chambers of Commerce, Regional Growth Partnership, Wood County TAC, Wood County Economic Development.	TARTA, Lake Erie West Regional Council, GLCAP
Study Area 3: Information share	Convene an information share between neighboring county transportation providers and Wood County TAC to understand how other counties have structured their transit programs.	GLCAP
Fund capital investments	Apply for capital funding for safety and access projects at high-priority connection points.	TARTA, ODOT, Wood Co Port Authority
TDM: Gohio refresh	Promote the pre-tax transit benefit and update the Gohio platform. Increase awareness among employees about these programs. Work with employers to sign employees up with passes.	Lake Erie West Regional Council, TMA
Organize Regional Forum	Set a quarterly forum of educational elements like TMA formation, legal counsel, marketing TMA formation to employers, etc.	TARTA, WorkLink partners, employers

MID-TERM (2-5 YEARS: 2027-2030)

Action	Description	Lead Agencies
Study Area 1 & 2: TMA formation	Form a TMA as a nonprofit or other stand-alone organization. The TMA would recruit members, operate TDM workforce programs, and set up a workforce regional fixed line or shuttle pilot.	TARTA, GLCAP, Lake Erie West Regional Council
Advance TMA	Submit an application for the next round of CMAQ funding in 2030 that advances TMA, fixed line, shuttle, and other workforce mobility strategies.	Future TMA
Study Area 2: GoBus analysis	Analyze GoBus data serving Bowling Green and Toledo. Survey riders to understand trip purposes. Determine how a regional fixed route could complement GoBus service.	GLCAP
Study Area 3: rural/urban funding	Advance service coordination discussions among Wood County's existing transportation providers. Meet with ODOT to better understand how to become a countywide operator. Interview peers to gather ways other systems track trips in rural and urban areas.	Lake Erie West Regional Council, GLCAP, ODOT
Elevate connection points in capital planning	Cross-reference connection points with capital projects lists and elevate connection points needed in local plans. This includes Lake Erie West's Long Range Plan as well as county and municipal capital projects lists and maintenance plans.	Lake Erie West Regional Council, municipalities, TARTA
Advance Regional Fixed Line	Build TMA membership to include municipalities, major employers and agencies to launch a self-funded service for a 5-10 year period. Move toward Wood County 5311 funding to offset this in the future.	Regional Forum

LONG-TERM (2031 AND BEYOND)

Beyond 5 years, actions will depend on whether transit services can launch in the near-term. But assuming they can, following are additional actions that would mature the services over time.

Action	Description	Lead Agency
Begin TARTA service earlier	Begin TARTA service earlier to reach the downtown hub to meet commuter shuttles. Many employees start work at 6 am.	TARTA
Extend regional route	Extend service further south to North Baltimore. Integrate with Countywide microtransit zones	Regional route operator
Established regional forum	By this point, have a well-established Wood County regional forum for workforce transportation where performance, best practices, and future improvements can be discussed.	Wood County, GLCAP, Lake Erie West Regional Council, TARTA

Establish Countywide 5311 funding. Arrange County organizations to leverage and reorganize county-wide transportation. Local Government.