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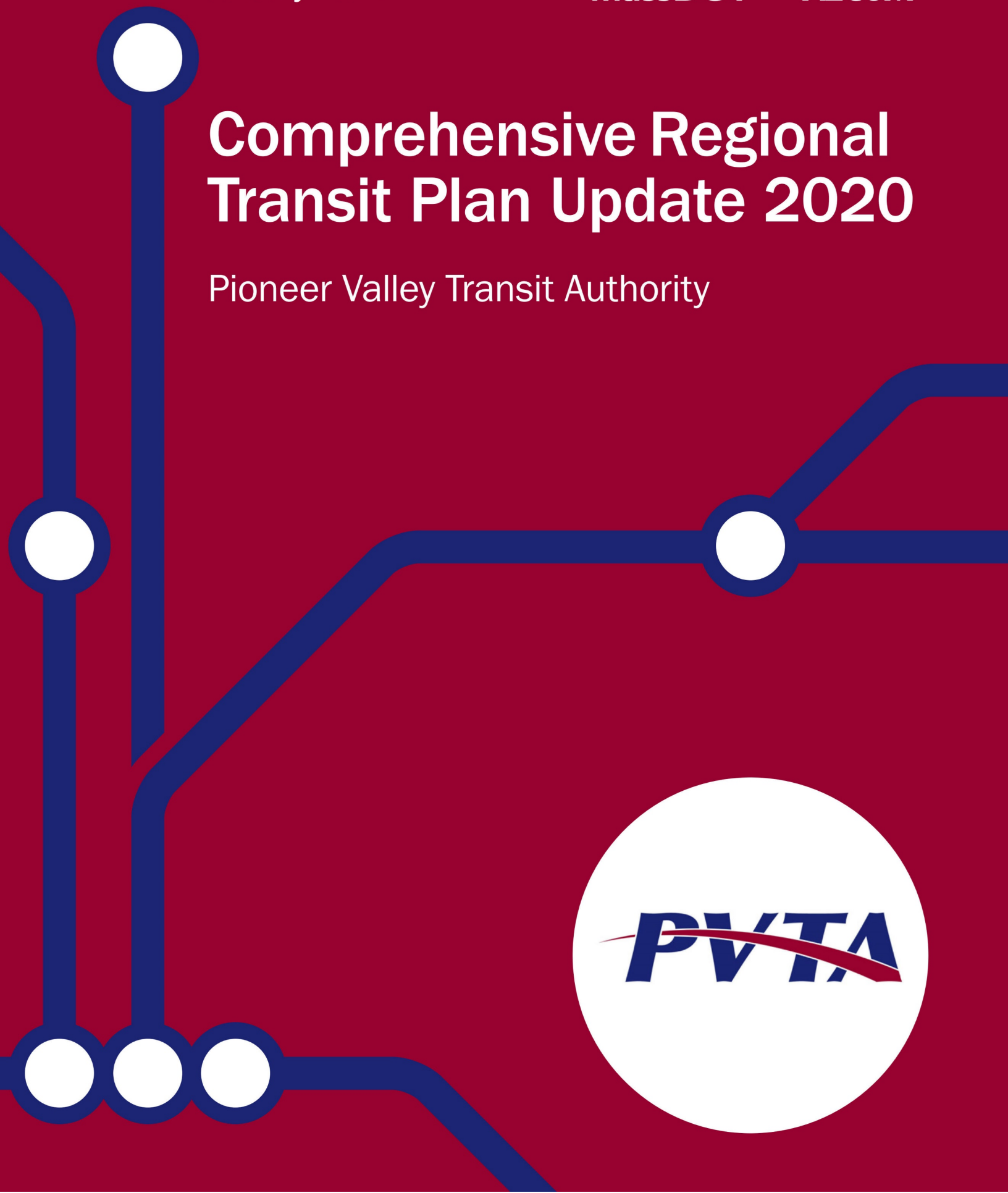
Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020

Pioneer Valley Transit Authority



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Acronyms

ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APC	Automated Passenger Counter
AVL	Automatic Vehicle Locator
BAT	Brockton Area Transit
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
CAD	Computer Assisted Dispatch
CARES	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security
CCRTA	Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority
COA	Council on Aging
COVID-19	Novel Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CSA	Comprehensive Service Analysis
CRTP	Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan
FAC	Fine Arts Center
FRTA	Franklin Regional Transit Authority
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
FY	Fiscal Year
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GWSA	Global Warming Solutions Act
HCC	Holyoke Community College
HST	Human Service Transportation
HTC	Holyoke Transportation Center
ILC	Integrated Learning Center
MART	Montachusett Regional Transit Authority
MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MBTA	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MVRTA	Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority
NEXT	National Express Transit
NTD	National Transit Database
O&M	Operations and Maintenance

OTP	On-Time Performance
PPRH	Passengers per Revenue Hour
PPRM	Passengers per Revenue Mile
PTASP	Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan
PVPC	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
PVTA	Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
RFP	Request for Proposal
RTA	Regional Transit Authority
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
SATCo	Springfield Area Transit Services
SBT	Springfield Bus Terminal
TAM	Transit Asset Management
TCI	Transportation and Climate Initiative
TERM	Transit Economic Requirements Model
TNC	Transportation Network Company
TVM	Ticket Vending Machine
ULB	Useful Life Benchmark
UMTS	UMass Transit Services
UPT	Unlinked Passenger Trip
VA	Veterans Administration
VATCo	Valley Area Transit Company
VRH	Vehicle Revenue Hour
VRM	Vehicle Revenue Mile
WRTA	Worcester Regional Transit Authority
WSU	Westfield State University

Glossary

Access: The opportunity to reach a given destination within a certain timeframe or without significant physical, social, or economic barriers.

Accessible Vehicle: A public transportation vehicle that does not restrict access, is usable, and provides allocated space and/or priority seating for individuals who use mobility devices.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in July 1991, gave direction to local transit agencies to ensure full access to transportation for persons with disabilities.

Boardings: The total number of passengers getting on a transit vehicle during a specified period of time. See also Ridership and Passenger Trip.

Capital Cost: The cost of equipment and facilities required to support transportation systems, including vehicles, radios, shelters, software, etc.

Central Transfer Point: A central meeting place where routes or zonal demand response buses intersect so that passengers may transfer. Routes are often timed to facilitate transferring and depart once passengers have had time to transfer. When all routes arrive and depart at the same time, the system is called a pulse system. The central transfer point simplifies transfers when there are many routes (particularly radial routes), several different modes, and/or paratransit zones. A downtown retail area is often an appropriate site for a central transfer point, as it is likely to be a popular destination, a place of traffic congestion and limited parking, and a place where riders are likely to feel safe waiting for the next bus. Strategic placement of the transfer point can attract riders to the system and may provide an opportunity for joint marketing promotions with local merchants.

Circulator: A bus that makes frequent trips around a small geographic area with numerous stops around the route. It is typically operated in a downtown area or area attracting tourists, where parking is limited, roads are congested, and trip generators are spread around the area. It may be operated all-day or only at times of peak demand, such as rush hour or lunchtime.

Commuter Bus Service: Transportation designed for daily, round-trip service, which accommodates a typical 8-hour, daytime work shift (e.g., an outbound trip arriving at an employment center by 8 AM, with the return trip departing after 5 PM).

Coordination: Coordination means pooling the transportation resources and activities of several agencies. The owners of transportation assets talk to each other to find ways to mutually benefit their agencies and their customers. Coordination models can range in scope from sharing information, to sharing equipment and facilities, to integrated scheduling and dispatching of services, to the provision of services by only one transportation provider (with other former providers now purchasing services). Coordination may involve human service agencies working with each other or with public transit operations.

Cost per Boarding: The total operating expenditures of a route or service divided by the number of total boardings.

Cost per Revenue Mile or Hour: The total operating expenditures of a route or service divided by the number of revenue miles or revenue hours.

Demand Response Service: Service to individuals that is activated based on passenger requests. Usually passengers call the scheduler or dispatcher and request rides for dates and times. A trip is scheduled for that passenger, which may be canceled by the passenger. Usually involves curb-to-curb or door-to-door service. Trips may be scheduled on an advanced reservation basis or in “real-time.” Usually smaller vehicles are used to provide demand

response service. This type of service usually provides the highest level of service to the passenger but is the most expensive for the transit system to operate in terms of cost per trip. In rural areas with relatively high populations of elderly persons and persons with disabilities, demand response service is sometimes the most appropriate type of service. Sub-options within this service type are discussed in order of least structured to most structured, in terms of routing and scheduling.

- **Pure Demand Response Service**: Drivers pick up and drop off passengers at any point in the service area, based on instructions from the dispatcher. In pure demand response systems, the dispatcher combines immediate requests, reservations, and subscription service for the most efficient use of each driver's time.
- **Zonal Demand Response Service**: The service area is divided into zones. Buses pick up and drop off passengers only within the assigned zone. When the drop off is in another zone, the dispatcher chooses a meeting point at the zone boundary for passenger transfer or a central transfer is used. This system ensures that a vehicle will always be within each zone when rides are requested.
- **Flexibly Routed and Scheduled Services**: Flexibly routed and scheduled services have some characteristics of both fixed route and demand response services. In areas where demand for travel follows certain patterns routinely, but the demand for these patterns is not high enough to warrant a fixed route, service options such as checkpoint service, point deviation, route deviation, service routes, or subscription service might be the answer. These are all examples of flexible routing and schedules, and each may help the transit system make its demand response services more efficient while still maintaining much of the flexibility of demand responsiveness.
- **Microtransit**: A form of demand response service, open to the general public, that requires some type of "reservation," typically made via an app-based system. Typically, microtransit uses software algorithms to completely automate the scheduling of the trip, the fare collection (if any), and the route the driver will utilize (communicating with the driver via some type of mobile data terminals).

Deviated Fixed Route Service: Transit buses travel along a predetermined alignment or path with scheduled time points at each terminal point and in some instances at key intermediate locations. Route deviation service is different than conventional fixed route bus service in that the vehicle may leave the route upon requests of passengers to be picked up or returned to destinations near the route. Following an off-route deviation, the vehicle typically returns to the point at which it left the route. Passengers may call in advance for route deviation or may access the system at predetermined route stops. The limited geographic area within which the vehicle may travel off the route is known as the route deviation corridor.

Dial-A-Ride Service: A name that is commonly used for demand response service. It is helpful in marketing the service to the community, as the meaning of "dial-a-ride" may be more self-explanatory than "demand response" to someone unfamiliar with transportation terms.

Environmental Justice: Executive Order 12898, issued in 1994, requires agencies receiving federal funds to determine whether their programs, policies, and activities will have disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations.

Express Bus Service: Express bus service characteristics include direct service from a limited number of origins to a limited number of destinations with no intermediate stops. Typically, express bus service is fixed route/fixed schedule and is used for longer distance commuter trips. The term may also refer to a bus that makes a limited number of stops, while a local bus makes many stops along the same route but as a result takes much longer.

Farebox Recovery Ratio: The percentage of operating costs covered by revenue from fares and contract revenue (total fare revenue and total contract revenue divided by the total operating cost).

Fares: Revenue from cash, tickets, and pass receipts given by passengers as payment for public transit rides.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA): An operating administration within the United States Department of Transportation that administers federal programs and provides financial assistance to public transit.

Feeder Service: Local transportation service that provides passengers with connections to a longer-distance transportation service. Like connector service, feeder service is service in which a transfer to or from another transit system, such as an intercity bus route, is the focal point or primary destination.

Fixed Route: Transportation service operated over a set route or network of routes on a regular time schedule.

Headway: The length of time between vehicles moving in the same direction on a route. Headways are called short if the time between vehicles is short and long if the time between them is long. When headways are short, the service is said to be operating at a high frequency; if headways are long, service is operating at a low frequency.

Intercity Bus Service: Regularly scheduled bus service for the public that operates with limited stops over fixed routes connecting two or more urban areas not near, that has the capacity for transporting baggage carried by passengers, and that makes meaningful connections with scheduled intercity bus service to more distant points, if such service is available. Intercity bus service may include local and regional feeder services, if those services are designed expressly to connect to the broader intercity bus network.

Interlined Routes: When fixed routes are routed through a transfer center or some other terminal location and become another route, with passengers typically allowed to ride through from one route to another without an additional fare and/or transfer fee. The “interline” is typically identified on public materials.

Operating Expenditures: The recurring costs of providing transit service (wages, salaries, fuel, oil, taxes, maintenance, insurance, marketing, etc.).

Operating Revenue: The total revenue earned by a transit agency through its transit operations. It includes passenger fares, advertising, and other revenues.

Paratransit Service: "Paratransit" means the transportation of passengers by motor vehicle or other means of conveyance by persons operating on a regular and continuing basis and the transportation or delivery of packages in conjunction with an operation having the transportation of passengers as its primary and predominant purpose and activity but excluding regular route transit. "Paratransit" includes transportation by carpool and commuter van, point deviation and route deviation services, shared-ride taxi service, dial-a-ride service, and other similar services.

Boardings per Mile or Hour: Productivity measure that takes the total boardings and divides by the miles and/or hours operated. The hours and/or miles may be presented as either total vehicle miles or hours or as revenue miles or hours.

Passenger Trip (Unlinked): Typically, one passenger trip is recorded any time a passenger boards a transportation vehicle or other conveyance used to provide transportation. “Unlinked” means that one trip is recorded each time a passenger boards a vehicle, no matter how many vehicles that passenger uses to travel from their origin to their destination.

Performance Indicator: An indicator is a metric that provides meaningful information about the condition or performance of the transportation system but is neither managed nor used to evaluate the effectiveness of policies, strategies, or investments.

Performance Measure: A performance measure is a metric that measures progress toward a goal, outcome, or objective. This definition covers metrics used to make decisions or evaluate the effectiveness or adequacy of a policy, strategy, or investment.

Performance Target: A target is a specific performance level representing the achievement of a goal, outcome, or objective.

Point Deviation Service: A type of flexible route transit service in which fixed scheduled stops (points) are established but the vehicle may follow any route needed to pick up individuals along the way if the vehicle can make it to the fixed points on schedule. This type of service usually provides access to a broader geographic area than does fixed route service but is not as flexible in scheduling options as demand response service. It is appropriate when riders change from day to day, but the same few destinations are consistently in demand. Also sometimes called checkpoint service.

Public Transportation: Transportation service that is available to any person upon payment of the fare either directly, subsidized by public policy, or through some contractual arrangement, and that cannot be reserved for the private or exclusive use of one individual or group. “Public” in this sense refers to the access to the service, not to the ownership of the system that provides the service.

Revenue Hours: The number of transit vehicle hours when passengers are being transported. Calculated by taking the total time when a vehicle is available to the public with the expectation of carrying passengers. Excludes deadhead hours, when buses are positioning but not carrying passengers, but includes recovery/layover time.

Revenue Miles: The number of transit vehicle miles when passengers are being transported. Calculated by taking the total mileage operated when a vehicle is available to the public with the expectation of carrying passengers. Excludes deadhead mileage, when buses are moving but not carrying passengers.

Ridership: The total of all unlinked passenger trips, including transfers. One trip that includes a transfer would be counted as two unlinked passenger trips.

Ridesharing: A form of transportation, other than public transit, in which more than one person shares the use of a vehicle, such as a van or car, to make a trip. Variations include carpooling or vanpooling.

Section 5304 (State Transportation and Planning Program): The section of the Federal Transit Act of 1991, as amended, that provides financial assistance to the states for purposes of planning, technical studies and assistance, demonstrations, management training, and cooperative research activities.

Section 5307 (Urbanized Area Formula Program): The section of the Federal Transit Act of 1991, as amended, that authorizes grants to public transit systems in urban areas with populations of more than 50,000 for both capital and operating projects. Based on population and density figures, these funds are distributed directly to the transit agency from the FTA.

Section 5310 (Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Persons with Disability): The section of the Federal Transit Act of 1991, as amended, that provides grant funds for the purchase of accessible vehicles and related support equipment for private non-profit organizations to serve elderly and/or people with disabilities, public bodies that coordinate services for elderly and

people with disabilities, or any public body that certifies to the state that non-profits in the area are not readily available to carry out the services.

Section 5311 (Non-urbanized Area Formula Program): The section of the Federal Transit Act of 1991, as amended, that authorizes grants to public transit systems in non-urbanized areas (fewer than 50,000 population). The funds initially go to the governor of each state.

Section 5339 (Bus and Bus Facilities): The section of the Federal Transit Act of 1991, as amended, that makes federal resources available to states and designated recipients to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities, including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities. Funding is provided through formula allocations and competitive grants. A sub-program provides competitive grants for bus and bus facility projects that support low and zero-emission vehicles.

Service Area: The geographic area that coincides with a transit system's legal operating limits (city limits, county boundary, etc.).

Service Gaps: When certain geographic segments cannot be covered by transportation services. This term can also refer to instances where service delivery is not available to a certain group of riders, or at a specific time.

Service Span: The duration of time that service is made available or operated during the service day (e.g., 6 AM to 10 PM on weekdays).

Spare Ratio: The percentage/number of vehicles that an operator purchases in excess of the number of vehicles required to provide the maximum level of service. The spares are required so that some vehicles may cycle through a preventive maintenance regimen while the full level of planned service can still be provided.

Standard: A recommendation that leads or directs a course of action to achieve a certain goal. A standard is the expected outcome for the measure that will allow a service to be evaluated. There are two sets of transit standards.

- **Service design and operating standards**: Guidelines for the design of new and improved services and the operation of the transit system.
- **Service performance standards**: The evaluation of the performance of the existing transit system and of alternative service improvements using performance measures.

State Contract Assistance: The program through which the RTAs receive state operating funding for transit at the discretion of the Massachusetts Legislature via the state budget process annually. The total amount of state contract assistance funding provided in the state budget is allocated to the RTAs via a formula developed with RTA input.

Through Routes: When fixed routes are routed through a transfer center or some other terminal location and become another route, but – unlike interlining – passengers are not typically allowed to ride through from one route to another, as a "through-route" is typically only visible/presented on the operating schedule for bus operators and is not identified on public materials.

Title VI: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that "No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Transportation Network Companies: Private sector companies that provide software routing, scheduling, and payment services to independent contractor drivers for a fee; these drivers then

utilize their own vehicles to provide a (typically) curb-to-curb transportation service, sometimes to sole riders and sometimes to pooled groups.

Total Operating Cost: The total of all operating costs incurred during the transit system calendar year, excluding expenses associated with capital grants.

Transfer: Passengers arrive on one bus and leave on another (totally separate) bus to continue their trip. The boarding of the second vehicle is counted as an unlinked passenger trip.

Transit Dependent: A description for a population or person who does not have immediate access to a private vehicle, or because of age or health reasons cannot drive and must rely on others for transportation.

Transit Subsidy: The operating costs not covered by revenue from fares or contracts.

Trip Denial: Occurs when a trip is requested by a passenger, but the transportation provider cannot provide the service. Trip denial may happen because capacity is not available at the requested time. For ADA paratransit, a capacity denial is specifically defined as occurring if a trip cannot be accommodated within the negotiated pick-up window. Even if a trip is provided, if it is scheduled outside the +60/-60-minute window, it is considered a denial. If the passenger refused to accept a trip offered within the +60/-60-minute pick-up window, it is considered a refusal, not a capacity denial.

Volunteers: Persons who offer services to others but do not accept monetary or material compensation for the services that they provide. In some volunteer programs, the volunteers are reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses; for example, volunteers who drive their own cars may receive reimbursement based on miles driven for the expenses that they are assumed to have incurred, such as gasoline, repair, and insurance expenses.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

This 5-year Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan (CRTP) update builds on the work of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) 2014 Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA). This update was recommended by the Task Force on Regional Transit Authority Performance and Funding in its final report issued in April 2019.[1] The report included 24 recommendations in five categories:

- Investment and Performance
- Accountability
- Service Decisions
- Quality of Service
- Environmental Sustainability

The CRTP recommendation (No. 7) was included in the service decisions grouping. Specifically, recommendation 7 advised that "RTAs will continue to succeed by understanding their markets and by aiming to have their service networks meet the current and future mobility needs of their region as well as support connectivity to other regions where possible. This effort will be guided by (1) the completion or updating of Comprehensive Regional Transit Plans (CRTPs) every five years…"

Following publication of the Task Force Report, a commitment to complete the CRTP update was included in PVTA's 2-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) executed on August 14, 2019.

The primary goals of this CRTP are to (1) provide an agency and service overview including fare structure; (2) identify essential markets, gaps in service, and ridership growth opportunities given demographic, socioeconomic, and employment data and the impacts of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic; (3) evaluate the results of performance indicators and assess performance monitoring systems; and (4) provide recommendations for a strategic 5-year vision that will prioritize the development and implementation of a decision-making framework driven by data analysis and focused on performance.

PVTA Recognizes Drivers for their Dedication to Providing Essential Service

"We want to make sure our public transit workers continue to be recognized for their tireless efforts to maintain operations, deliver essential services, and protect and serve the public" —PVTA

April 9, 2020

The PVTA CRTP update started in December 2019, but took a profound and unexpected turn mid-way through the project. Following the kick-off meeting in January 2020, the process proceeded with data collection, goal development, and planning for community and rider engagement. However, by the middle of March 2020, when the engagement activities were scheduled to commence, the world experienced a historic pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to the pandemic, on March 10, 2020, Governor Baker declared a state of emergency and subsequently issued a stay-at-home order on March 23, 2020, closing all non-essential

[1] Task Force on Regional Transit Authority Performance and Funding, *A Vision for the Future of Massachusetts' Regional Transit Authorities*, April 2019, https://malegislature.gov/Reports/7917/SD2385_RTAtaskforceReport.pdf.

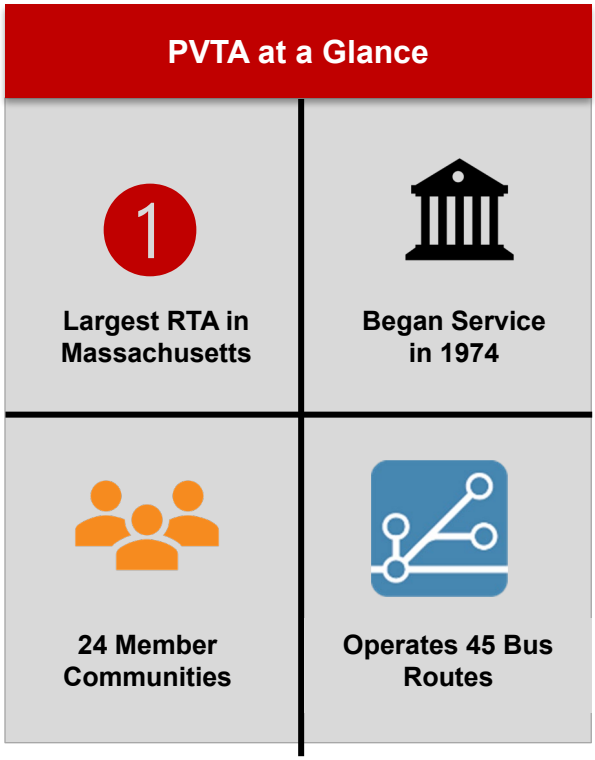
businesses. These safety measures, issued in the face of an unprecedented threat to public health, had serious, sweeping impacts, including on the development of this plan and transit operations writ large. PVTA, along with the other RTAs, suspended fare payment and reduced service levels, encouraging non-essential riders to temporarily discontinue travel.

While PVTA continues its return to normal service in accordance with public health guidelines, ridership is still depressed due to pandemic impacts such as distance learning, business closures and capacity limitations, remote work, furloughs, layoffs, and reluctance to use public transportation due to health safety concerns. In response to continued ridership volatility, this CRTP acknowledges that there will be many uncertainties and challenges over the coming months and years and equips PVTA with data-driven and performance-focused recommendations so that the Authority will be able to adapt quickly to a volatile transit market and ensure success.

1.2 Overview of PVTA Services

PVTA is 1 of the 15 Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) that operates public transportation in the Commonwealth along with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). PVTA is the largest regional transit authority in Massachusetts and the fourth largest in New England. PVTA has 24 participating member communities that span three counties and a diverse service area with urban, suburban, rural, and college communities. PVTA member communities include the cities of Agawam, Chicopee, Easthampton, East Longmeadow, Holyoke, Northampton, Springfield, Westfield, and West Springfield and the towns of Amherst, Belchertown, Granby, Hadley, Hampden, Leverett, Longmeadow, Ludlow, Palmer, Pelham, South Hadley, Sunderland, Ware, Wilbraham, and Williamsburg.

PVTA operates 45 bus routes with varying service levels to 20 communities,[2] specifically 36 fixed route local services, 6 express routes, and 3 deviated routes. PVTA also provides a senior van service throughout the entire 24-member service area and operates Dial-A-Ride and complementary Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit services. PVTA transit services operate with different spans of service on weekdays and weekends. Given the size of the service area, PVTA contracts with multiple operators to serve riders in the northern and southern tiers, which are divided approximately on the Hampshire/Hampden County line.



PVTA has implemented various service improvements over the last 5 years that support efforts to improve the customer experience and provide better service. Service improvements include adding bus routes, increasing span or frequency or service of routes, adjusting alignments, and minor timing changes to improve on-time performance (OTP).

1.3 Planning Process

The impacts and limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic required flexibility in developing this 5-year plan. While some

[2] Leverett, Pelham, and Hampden are member communities that do not have bus service, and Deerfield, Whately, and Southampton are non-member communities with bus service.

elements of the original process developed pre-pandemic remained viable, many had to be adapted to respond to the new realities of COVID-19. From public outreach to fare policy analysis to recommendations' structure, this planning process incorporates considerations relating to uncertainty around how the future might unfold.

1.3.1 Review of Transit Services and Market Conditions

A review of service from the last 5 years and market demand analysis were conducted to identify gaps and needs in PVTA's service area. The analysis indicated that PVTA service is provided in areas where the data indicate demand is highest. However, safety measures like remote learning and teleworking, along with furloughed workers and lay-offs, have disrupted PVTA's existing ridership patterns, making it difficult to infer future transit demand from past performance. This planning process brought to light the importance of harnessing new technology to conduct ongoing analysis of real-time data rather than focusing primarily on historical trends.

1.3.2 Scenario Planning

The project team used scenario planning exercises to imagine what the next 5 years might hold regarding ridership and market demand. Two months after the state of emergency was issued, PVTA leadership participated in a brainstorming session centered around establishing key uncertainties in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequent to that workshop, a high-ridership scenario (a return to 86 percent of pre-pandemic ridership), medium-ridership scenario (60 to 85 percent of pre-pandemic ridership), and low-ridership scenario (less than 60 percent of pre-pandemic ridership) were developed to inform the development of needs and recommendations. These scenarios formed the framework for the recommendations in this plan.

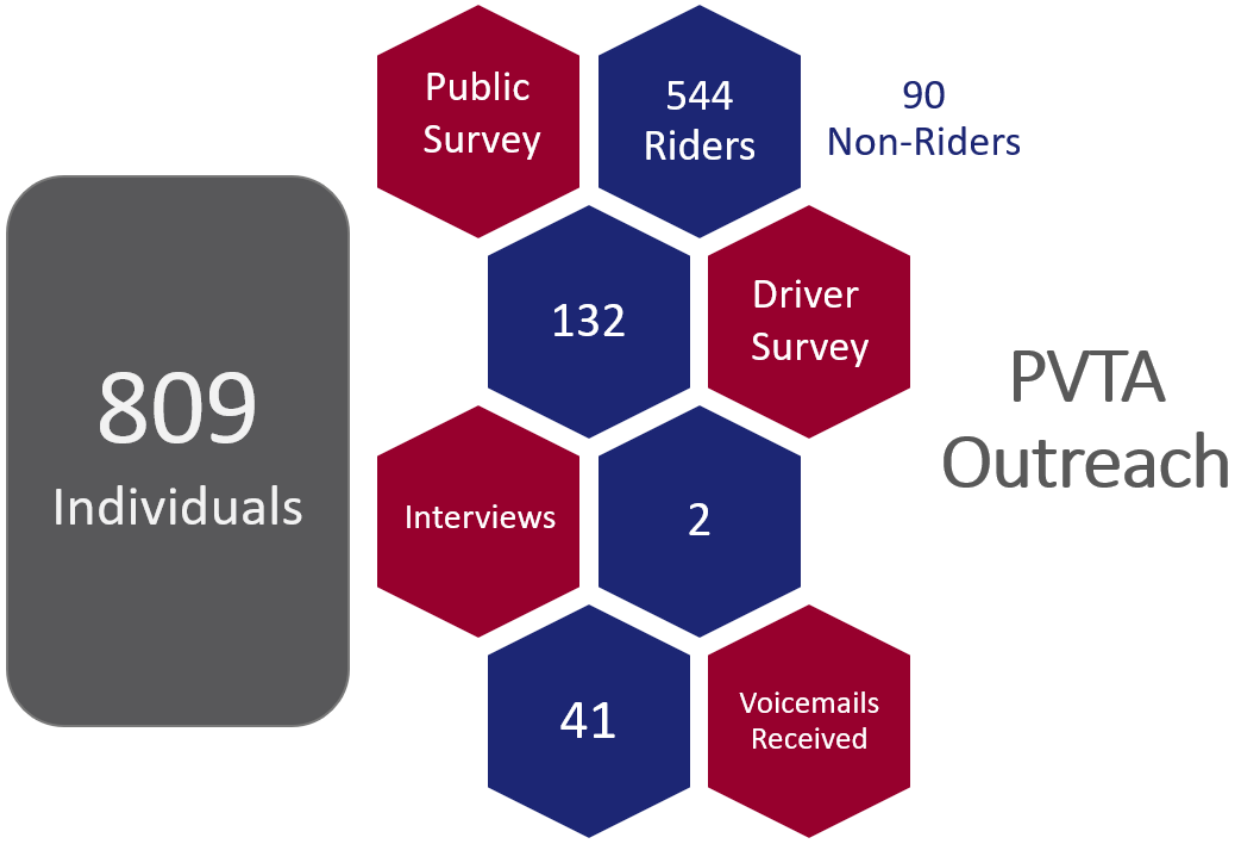
1.3.3 Public Outreach

Due to social distancing guidelines and other safety protocols resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, no in-person outreach could be conducted. The bulk of the outreach for this CRTP was undertaken through an online stakeholder outreach survey conducted June 15, 2020 until August 3, 2020. Additionally, PVTA conducted a driver survey and stakeholder interviews with the PVTA Consumer Advisory Committee.

Eight hundred and nineteen (809) responses were collected from the various outreach methods (Figure 1). Note that because of the limitations on collection methods due to COVID-19 the findings are not a statistically valid sample of PVTA riders or the region's residents. They should be used as a guide in the context of other public outreach and data analysis. Nonetheless, key takeaways that correlate with other planning efforts include:

- Demand response service needs a same-day option.
- Improved headways are needed.
- There is a need for later evening service in the southern tier.
- There is a need for express service between transit hubs.
- Non-riders understand the value PVTA brings to the region and emphasize that PVTA is a valuable public transportation resource.

Figure 1. Summary of Outreach



1.4 Needs and Recommendations

PVTA's needs and recommendations were classified into seven overarching categories (Figure 2). The study identified a total of 197 needs and 177 recommendations that PVTA can address over the next 5 years. Recommendations include expanding service, adjusting service hours, including a data-driven decision-making approach, and promoting PVTA services through existing and new technologies to improve service provision. Further recommendations include hiring additional staff to monitor and improve data analysis and measurement and enhance facilities. The full list of needs can be found in Chapter 7 and recommendations in Chapter 8.

Figure 2. Classification Categories

2. Background and 2020 Context

The 15 RTAs[3] provide vital mobility options and lifeline services to the millions of people across the Commonwealth outside of the Greater Boston region. The 2020 CRTP update process for the RTAs, funded by MassDOT, came out of Commonwealth-wide initiatives in 2018 and 2019, which prompted this plan update. The CRTPs are both a result of and a contributor to the ongoing discussions on regional transportation. Recent and ongoing initiatives include the following:

- Governor's Commission on the Future of Transportation[4]
- A Vision for the Future of Massachusetts' Regional Transit Authorities[5] (RTA Task Force)
- Transportation & Climate Initiative[6]

The RTA Task Force Final Report Recommendation No. 7[7] was a primary driver for the development of this CRTP. The CRTP is carried out as a commitment to PVTA's 2-year MOU with MassDOT signed in August 2019. In addition to the CRTP, the MOU also contained commitments on performance metrics and targets, maintaining an up-to-date asset inventory, submitting a fare policy by December 2020, submitting a balanced budget annually, and reporting timelines. The PVTA MOU is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

The PVTA CRTP update process started in December 2019, but took a profound and unexpected turn mid-way through the project. Following the kick-off meeting in January 2020, the process proceeded with data collection, goal development, and planning for community and rider engagement. However, by the middle of March 2020, when the engagement activities were scheduled to commence, the world experienced a historic pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to the pandemic, on March 10, 2020, Governor Baker declared a state of emergency and subsequently issued a stay-at-home order on March 23. The stay-at-home order, originally intended for 2 weeks, ended up lasting until May 18, 2020. As of the finalization of this plan in early 2021, the pandemic continues to disrupt services and negatively impact transit ridership. Given the unprecedented nature of this disruption and unknown long-term economic, social, and public health implications, the next few years will likely see continued widespread societal change. Therefore, transit agencies especially will need to continue to build a data-driven and performance-focused decision-making framework to respond to these uncertain demographic and industry trends.

This chapter provides background and current context around the CRTP update process for all RTAs. PVTA-specific contextual information is included in Sections 2.2 and 2.3.

2.1 Background

Commonwealth-wide initiatives, organized generally around the themes of climate change, new technology, and providing affordable and convenient transportation options for all people, set the stage for the CRTP update process. The RTAs play an important role in getting people around the diverse regions of the Commonwealth to work, to school, and to essential services.

[3] Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "General Laws Chapter 161B: Transportation Facilities, Highway Systems, and Urban Development Plans," https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXXII/Chapter161B.
[4] Commission on the Future of Transportation, *Choices for Stewardship: Recommendations to Meet the Transportation Future*, 2018, https://www.mass.gov/orgs/commission-on-the-future-of-transportation.
[5] Task Force on Regional Transit Authority Performance and Funding, *A Vision for the Future of Massachusetts' Regional Transit Authorities*, April 2019, https://malegislature.gov/Reports/7917/SD2385_RTAtaskforceReport.pdf.
[6] Transportation and Climate Initiative, accessed 2020, https://www.transportationandclimate.org/.
[7] Task Force on Regional Transit Authority Performance and Funding, *A Vision for the Future of Massachusetts' Regional Transit Authorities*, April 2019, https://malegislature.gov/Reports/7917/SD2385_RTAtaskforceReport.pdf.

Because of this role, the RTAs are pivotal in improving the public's mobility options as explored through the Commonwealth-wide initiatives described in this section.

2.1.1 Governor's Commission on the Future of Transportation

Established by Executive Order in January 2018, the Governor's Commission on the Future of Transportation (the Commission) was convened to explore the following topics across the Commonwealth and their impact on transportation between 2020 and 2040:

- Climate and Resiliency
- Transportation Electrification
- Autonomous and Connected Vehicles
- Transit and Mobility Services
- Land Use and Demographics

The Commission completed its work and released findings in December 2018 in a report entitled *Choices for Stewardship: Recommendations to Meet the Transportation Future*.[8] Findings from the report included:

- The Commonwealth is expected to grow by 600,000 residents by 2040 and job growth is also expected to continue.
- Commonwealth residents are on average older than in many other US states, and older adults are expected to comprise a larger portion of the population in the future.
- As with the national trend, transit ridership has been declining in recent years.
- Use of transportation network companies (TNCs)[9] has increased dramatically in recent years.
- Connected and autonomous vehicles are expected to radically change transportation and mobility in the future.
- The impacts of climate change are happening sooner and more intensely than originally projected with significant implications by 2040.
- Transportation in the Commonwealth accounts for 40 percent of all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- Electric vehicles could be part of the solution to reducing transportation emissions but would require significant infrastructure to implement.

The Commission used a scenario planning approach to itemize recommendations to prepare the Commonwealth's transportation system for the future. While many trends were evaluated for use in the scenario planning exercise, technology adoption as well as jobs and housing distribution were chosen as the two major trends that will most likely shape people's mobility options and needs. Based on the scenario planning trend analysis, the Commission then identified key challenges facing the Commonwealth's transportation system and developed recommendations across five categories to prioritize improvements over the next 20 years:

- Modernize existing state and municipal transit and transportation assets to more effectively and sustainably move more people throughout a growing Commonwealth.

[8] Commission on the Future of Transportation, *Choices for Stewardship: Recommendations to Meet the Transportation Future*, 2018, https://www.mass.gov/orgs/commission-on-the-future-of-transportation.
[9] Ride hailing companies such as Uber and Lyft that utilize technology to connect passengers with drivers using their personal vehicle.

- Create a 21st century "mobility infrastructure" that will prepare the Commonwealth and its municipalities to capitalize on emerging changes in transportation technology and behavior.
- Substantially reduce GHG emissions from the transportation sector in order to meet the Commonwealth's Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) commitments, while also accelerating efforts to make transportation infrastructure resilient to a changing climate.
- Coordinate and modernize land use, economic development, housing, and transportation policies and investment in order to support resilient and dynamic regions and communities throughout the Commonwealth.
- Make changes to current transportation governance and financial structures in order to better position Massachusetts for the transportation system that it needs in the coming years and decades.

Within these five categories are a total of 18 recommendations on how to best prepare the Commonwealth's transportation network for challenges and opportunities through 2040. The recommendations will guide Commonwealth-wide systems, specific solutions, and transportation investments and will have a profound impact on the RTAs over the next 20 years.

2.1.2 A Vision for the Future of Massachusetts' Regional Transit Authorities

Resulting from the Governor's Commission on the Future of Transportation initiative and directed by Outside Section 72 of the FY 2019 Massachusetts State Budget,[10] a Task Force on Regional Transit Authority Performance and Funding was established in the fall of 2018. The Task Force issued a final report entitled *A Vision for the Future of Massachusetts' Regional Transit Authorities: Report of the Task Force on Regional Transit Authority Performance and Funding* in April 2019.[11]

The report built on the first recommendation from the Commission, "Prioritize investment in public transit as the foundation of a robust, reliable, clean, and efficient transportation system." It set forth a path to stabilize, modernize, and improve the RTAs through five categories of action: Investment and Performance, Accountability, Service Decisions, Quality of Service, and Environmental Sustainability.

From those five categories, several goals related to the CRTP emerged:

- Sign a mutually negotiated MOU with MassDOT on a plan for performance monitoring and development of performance targets.
- Complete the CRTP and update every 5 years.
- Identify and evaluate a demonstrated community need for evening and seven-day service.
- Identify and evaluate appropriate transit services and potential partnerships based on level of demand and efficiency.
- Develop pilot programs for innovative delivery models.
- Increase regional collaboration, including cross-RTA services.
- Collaborate with municipalities to provide safe walking and bicycle access to transit and comfortable, safe bus stops.
- Conduct a fare equity analysis every 3 years.

[10] Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "Budget Summary FY2019," https://budget.digital.mass.gov/bb/gaa/fy2019/os_19/houtexp.htm.
[11] Task Force on Regional Transit Authority Performance and Funding, *A Vision for the Future of Massachusetts' Regional Transit Authorities*, April 2019, https://malegislature.gov/Reports/7917/SD2385_RTAtaskforceReport.pdf.

- Collaborate with the MBTA Fare Transformation process and adopt the proposed system.
- Participate in the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act process.
- Maximize multimodal connectivity.
- Maintain an easily accessible website and robust social media presence.
- Collaborate with MassDOT and MBTA to integrate information services.
- Employ intentional outreach strategies.
- Purchase all zero-emission public buses by 2035.

Many of these goals are addressed and/or discussed as part of this CRTP.

2.1.3 Transportation & Climate Initiative

Massachusetts is a participating state in the Transportation & Climate Initiative of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic States:

> The Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) is a regional collaboration of Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states and the District of Columbia that seeks to improve transportation, develop the clean energy economy and reduce carbon emissions from the transportation sector. The participating states are Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia, as well as the District of Columbia.
>
> The initiative builds on the region's strong leadership and commitment to energy efficiency and clean energy issues, and its programs to reduce carbon emissions in the power sector, which have resulted in the region becoming one of the most energy efficient areas in the nation. At the same time, the effort underscores the sense of urgency shared by all 12 jurisdictions, and their collective aspirations to become the leading region for sustainability and clean energy deployment in the country.

While the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily reduced congestion and associated pollution in the short-term, it has likely altered commuting patterns and housing choice in the long-term, which has environmental and sustainability implications. As such, the need to reduce carbon emissions from the transportation sector is just as important as it was before the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted racial disparities in exposure to air pollution and disproportionate impacts of threats to public health. To that end, the TCI jurisdictions are collaborating to develop a low-carbon transportation program that advances equity.

The TCI jurisdictions are collaborating to develop a regional agreement to cap pollution from transportation fuels and invest in solutions that result in reduced emissions, cleaner transportation, healthier communities, and more resilient infrastructure. Massachusetts TCI participation will likely impact the RTAs in several ways, including vehicles, infrastructure, technology, and funding.

In December 2020, Massachusetts joined with Connecticut, Rhode Island, and the District of Columbia to be the first jurisdictions to launch a multi-state program to reduce pollution and invest $300 million per year in cleaner transportation choices and healthier communities.[12]

[12] Transportation and Climate Initiative, “Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, D.C. are First to Launch Groundbreaking Program to Cut Transportation Pollution, Invest in Communities,” December 2020, https://www.transportationandclimate.org/final-mou-122020.

2.2 2020 Context

The year 2020 unfolded in a radically different manner than was anticipated. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the as-yet-unknown ways that the pandemic and its aftermath will permanently alter how, when, and where people travel, the CRTP update process had to be flexible and RTAs will need to be nimble, data-driven, and performance-focused in responding to an uncertain future. To that end, it will be critical for PVTA to continue building a data-driven and performance-focused decision-making and management framework to lean into and respond to the rapid changes that are expected to continue to impact the future of the transit industry. This data-driven and performance-focused approach will position PVTA for continued success.

2.2.1 COVID-19 Pandemic

Impacts to the transit industry from the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 included the following:

- Reduction of service due to diminished rider demand and driver availability, social distancing requirements and associated capacity constraints on transit vehicles, and reduced demand
- Loss of ridership due to business closures/disruptions, remote working and learning, increased popularity of online shopping and telemedicine due to safety concerns, and stay-at-home orders and advisories that have depressed demand for discretionary trips, student, and work trips
- Temporary suspension of fare collection or fare collection enforcement along with rear-door boarding by many operators
- Implementation of employee protection measures, such as plexiglass shields and distribution of personal protective equipment
- New rigorous public space cleaning protocols and the removal of seats and tables from transit facilities to discourage congregation

As a result of these impacts, ridership on systems across the country initially declined by up to 80 percent and has been rebounding slowly (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Change in Transit Demand (April 15, 2020–October 12, 2020)

Source: Transit App

Since March 2020, PVTA has experienced a 50 percent decline in ridership overall and a decline between 78.5 and 40.9 percent between April and June 2020. PVTA modified its bus route schedules, cancelled service for a few bus routes, and temporarily suspended fares. Additionally, PVTA implemented capacity restrictions on its fleet, requested passengers to wear masks, and requested only passengers taking essential trips use the service. PVTA worked to ensure that drivers had the necessary equipment to drive safely including personal protective equipment, sanitizer, and disinfecting wipes. In July 2020, PVTA resumed fare collection, announced a fall 2020 schedule with some modified service times, and continued disinfecting and cleaning vehicles and encouraged social distancing.

2.2.2 Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act

PVTA has been able to continue to mitigate the financial impacts of the pandemic through funding from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The CARES Act has provided operating and capital funds for public transportation to mitigate lost revenue due to severe ridership decline, the suspension of fare collection, the implementation of cleaning and protection protocols, etc. The funding has been provided through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5337 (capital – state of good repair), Section 5307 (urbanized area), and Section 5311 (rural areas) programs. For the RTAs, a total of $213.4 million was apportioned through the CARES Act with $36,615,416 provided to PVTA.

2.3 Plan Considerations

Given all the previous work that led to the development of the CRTPs and the unprecedented, transformational conditions during which the CRTPs were developed, the CRTP update process necessarily evolved through 2020. Considerations for all RTAs include the following:

- The 5-year period prior to the 2020 pandemic year, fiscal year (FY) 2015 to FY 2019, was considered for recent historical trend analysis to understand how the systems were operating prior to the pandemic and to provide a baseline for understanding the market for transit service in each community.
- Rider, community, public, and stakeholder outreach was primarily conducted online. The PVTA and study team provided a phone-based survey to participate in the outreach process for people without access to the internet or smartphones. As with all transit planning processes, outreach is one component of many that go into the identification of needs, solutions, and recommendations.

For PVTA, the following are additional considerations for understanding the context of the CRTP:

- Colleges and universities in the PVTA service area transitioned from in-person learning to remote learning. This transition had an impact on PVTA's ridership and service.

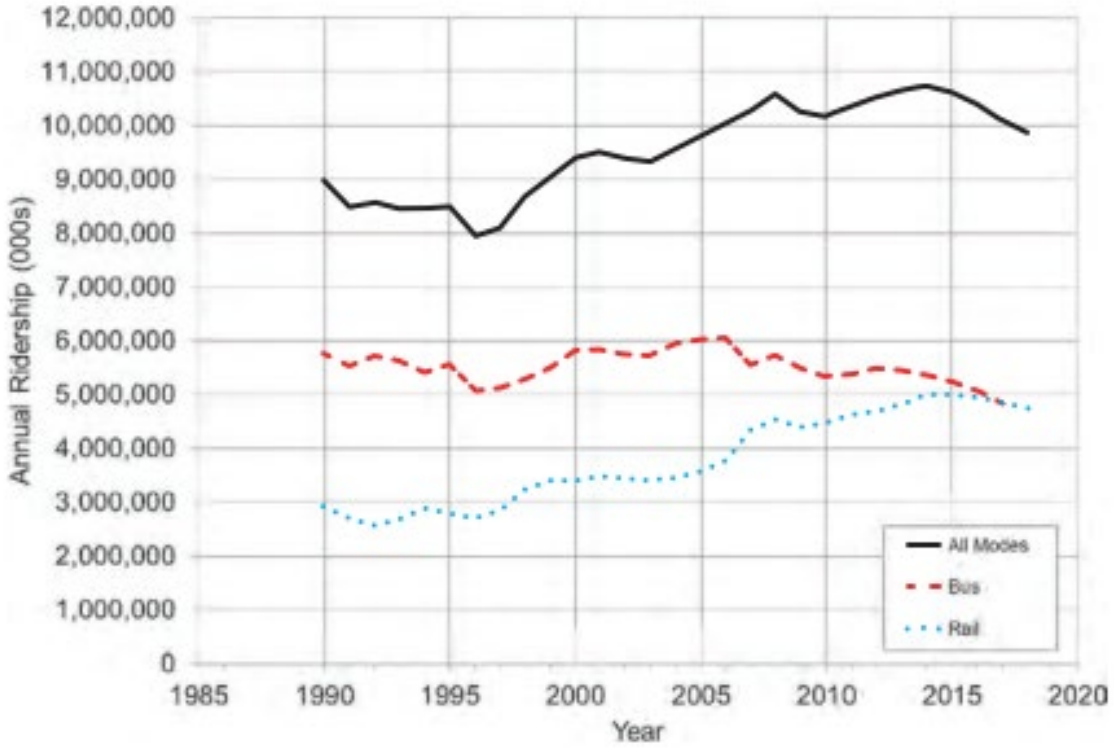
2.3.1 Transit Demand and Economic Uncertainties

Notwithstanding COVID-19 pandemic-related disruptions, for many years, transit ridership has been stagnant or declining nationally (Figure 4).[13] This trend has accelerated in the past few years, with most systems – and bus transit in particular – experiencing steady declines in ridership, despite a historically good economy. The American Public Transportation Association attributes the decline to four broad categories: erosion of time competitiveness, reduced affinity, erosion of cost competitiveness, and external factors.[14] The erosion of time competitiveness is

[13] National Academy of Science, Transportation Research Board, Transportation Cooperative Research Program, "TCRP Research Report 209: Analysis of Recent Public Transit Ridership Trends," http://www.trb.org/TCRP/Blurbs/179912.aspx.
[14] American Public Transportation Association, "Understanding Recent Ridership Changes," https://www.apta.com/research-technical-resources/research-reports/understanding-recent-ridership-changes/.

related to increasing traffic congestion and competing uses of street and curb space. Reduction in affinity refers to more competition for customer loyalty, and the erosion of cost competitiveness has to do with increasing costs without corresponding increase in demand for the service. And, finally, external factors are both the most challenging to define and to mitigate and include such things as policy changes that could improve transit usage but are too far-reaching for a transit agency alone to tackle.

Figure 4. National Change in Annual Ridership by Year for Bus, Rail, and All Modes (1985–2020)



Source: TCRP Research Report 209, Analysis of Recent Public Transit Ridership Trends

It is uncertain whether the pre-pandemic downward trends in transit ridership in recent years combined with the pandemic's negative impact on transit ridership will become a longer-term pattern that will continue to depress transit usage. Pandemic trends potentially most impactful to PVTA include the increase in remote work and distance learning. Those trends could significantly impact the workforce and student ridership markets for commuter and express services as well as local routes that serve colleges and universities.

For all transit systems, including PVTA, public concern about the health impacts of shared ride services will remain a challenge. While public transit has instituted facial covering requirements, cleaning protocols, social distancing, and other mitigation measures, systems will also have to continue to reassure riders about the public health and safety of their services.

To monitor and lean into these trends and position the Authority for success, it will be critical for PVTA to use data tools to routinely analyze key system performance metrics and make service and financial decisions within the context of a performance-focused framework.

3. Agency Overview

PVTA was created by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 161B in 1974 to provide oversight and coordination of public transportation within the Pioneer Valley region. As the largest regional transit authority in Massachusetts and fourth largest in New England, PVTA has a fleet of 362 active revenue and 54 non-revenue vehicles. PVTA has 24 participating member communities and spans 3 counties and a diverse service area of 619 square miles containing urban, suburban, rural, and college communities. PVTA member communities include the cities of Agawam, Chicopee, Easthampton, East Longmeadow, Holyoke, Northampton, Springfield, Westfield, and West Springfield and the towns of Amherst, Belchertown, Granby, Hadley, Hampden, Leverett, Longmeadow, Ludlow, Palmer, Pelham, South Hadley, Sunderland, Ware, Wilbraham, and Williamsburg. Additionally PVTA serves a small section of Southampton, Deerfield, and Enfield, Connecticut, three non-member communities, in order to connect with adjacent transit systems and provide mobility throughout the region.

3.1 Transit Agency Background

Service is provided via 45 bus routes with varying levels of service to 20 communities (Leverett, Hampden, and Pelham do not have bus service) and a systemwide demand response system. PVTA provides a senior van service throughout the entire service area, operates Dial-A-Ride in Wilbraham for the general public, and provides complementary ADA paratransit services for eligible individuals residing within the geographic boundaries of the member communities or within ¾ mile of a fixed route for non-member communities. Figure 5 and Figure 6 illustrate the participating member communities in the PVTA service area along with the PVTA fixed routes and demand response service areas, respectively.

The service area is divided into northern and southern tiers, divided approximately on the Hampshire/Hampden County line. Service in the northern tier is heavily geared toward college communities. The northern tier has weekday spans of 5:45 AM to 12:00 AM in the Northampton area with select routes running to 12:00 AM and as late as 3:00 AM on Thursdays and Friday. In the Amherst area weekday spans are from 7:00 AM to 12:00 AM with some routes providing late night services until 3:00 AM on Fridays. On Saturdays and Sundays, service hours in the northern tier span from 6:00 AM to 12:50 AM. In the southern tier, service generally ranges from 5:00 AM to 11:30 PM during the weekdays, from 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM on Saturdays, and 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM on Sundays.

PVTA operates 36 fixed route local services, 6 express routes, 3 deviated routes, a systemwide demand response service for the elderly and disabled, plus several “tripper” routes in Springfield and Holyoke that act as overflow on the regular fixed routes during distinct times when public schools are in session.

In FY 2019, PVTA carried 10,125,566 passengers, traveling 7,496,511 miles and 548,804 hours (Table 1). On an average weekday in FY 2019, PVTA transported 41,436 passengers on its bus system.

Figure 5. Location Map with Fixed Route Services

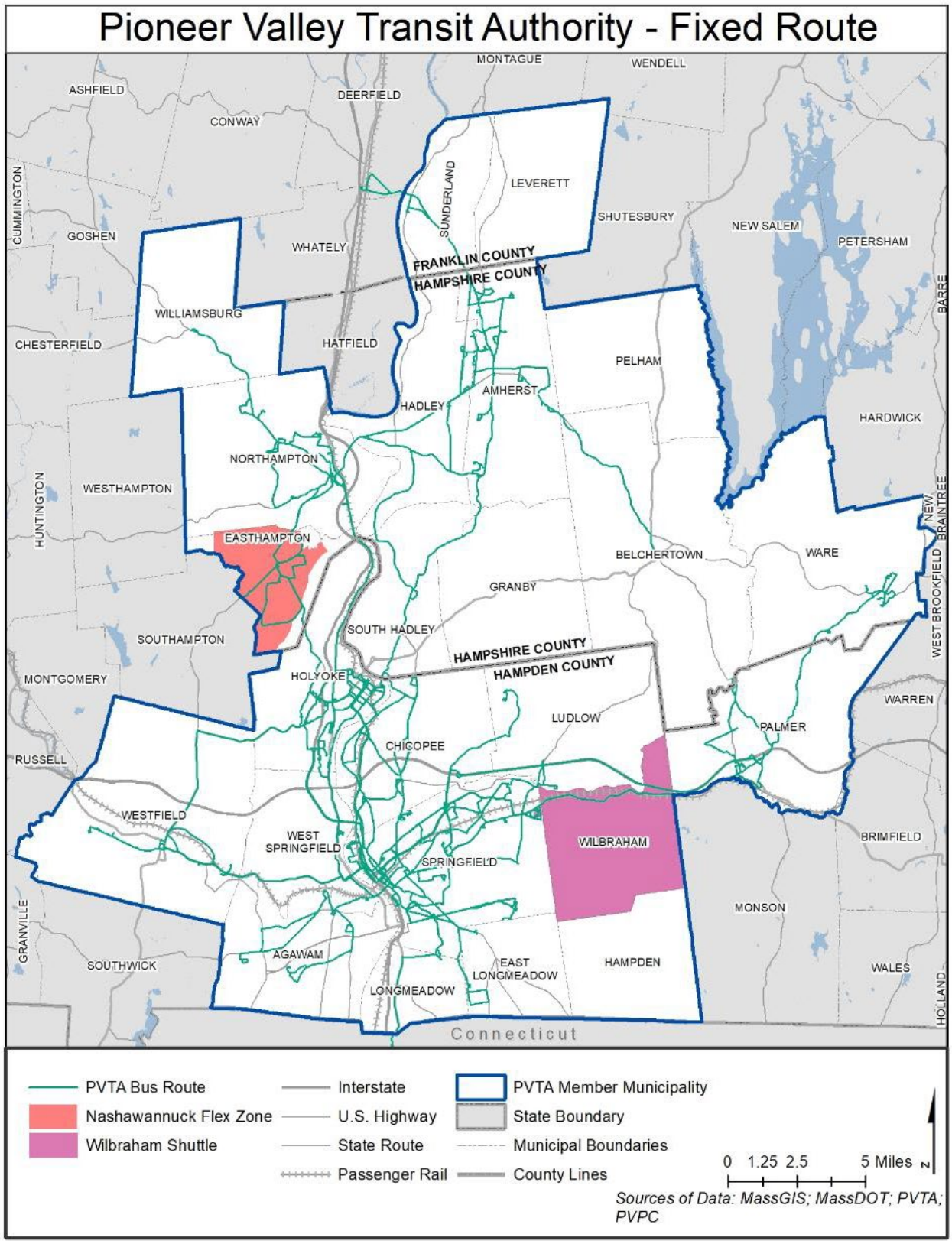


Figure 6. Location Map with Demand Response Services

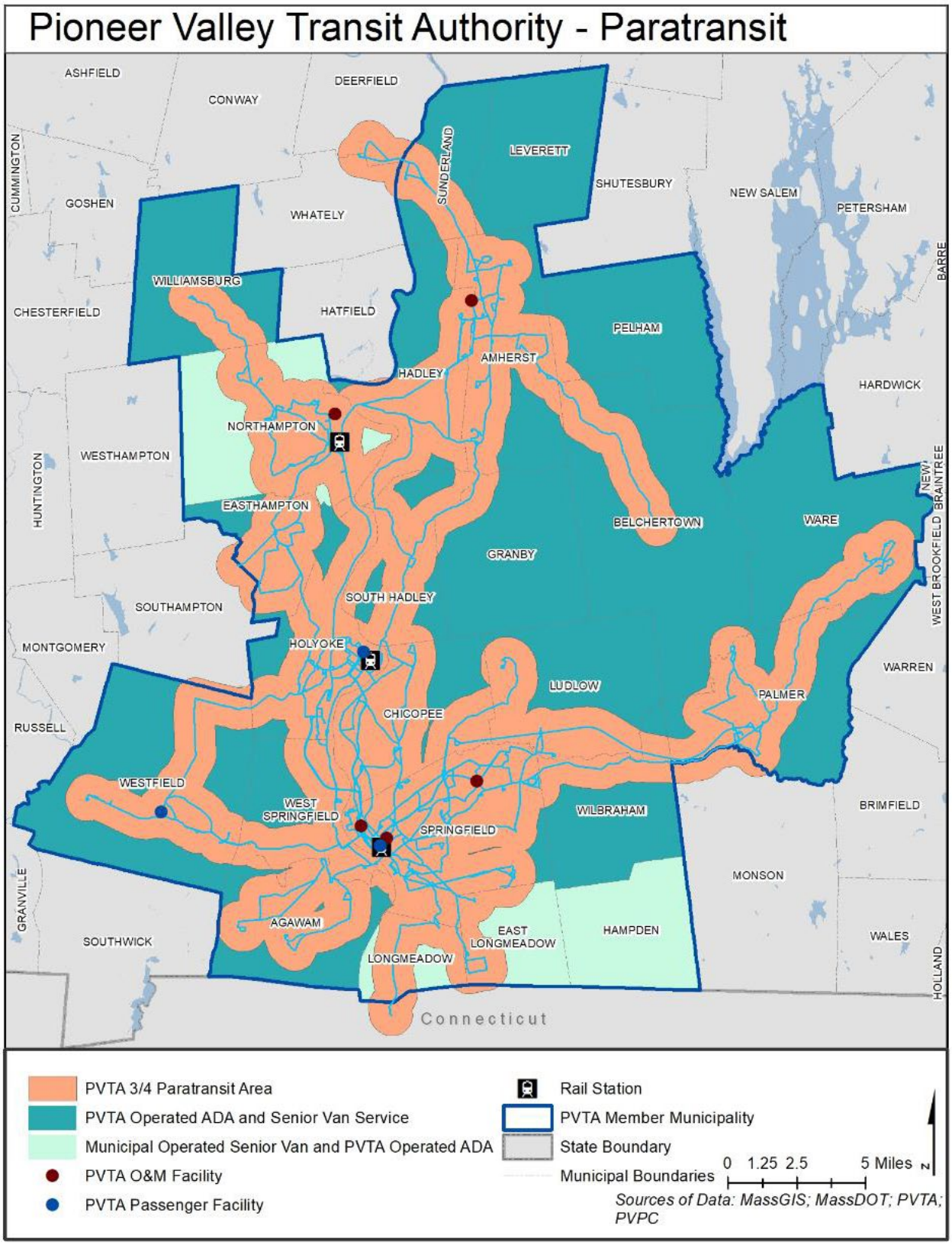


Table 1. Service Statistics (FY 2019)

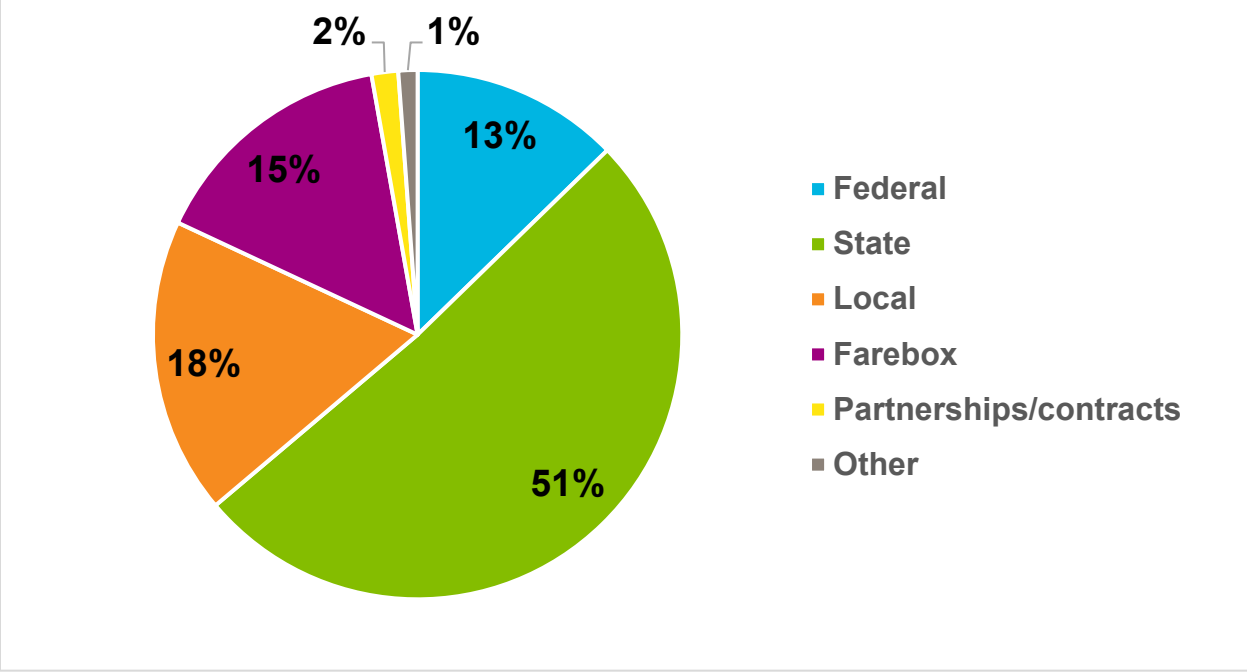
Route	Demand Response	Fixed Route	Express Routes	Deviated Routes	Total
Ridership	244,356	9,878,152	185,776	56,150	10,364,434
	(2.5%)	(95.0%)	(1.99%)	(0.6%)	(100%)
Revenue Hours	184,459	352,962	9,049	8,033	554,503
	(33.3%)	(63.6%)	(1.6%)	(1.%)	(100%)
Revenue Miles	2,679,969	4,529,014	200,944	149,360	7,559,287
	(35.4%)	(59.9%)	(2.7%)	(2.0%)	(100%)

Source: PVTA FY 2019 Route Data

The FY 2019 operating budget was $49 million. PVTA receives funding from several sources to finance the transit service operations, including FTA, MassDOT, local assessments from member communities, farebox revenue, and other revenue sources such as advertising, partnership, and contracts with other operating agencies (Figure 7). The largest percentage of funding (51 percent in FY 2019) comes from the Commonwealth. In FY 2019, farebox revenue accounted for 17 percent, local assessments for 18 percent, and federal participation for 13 percent. PVTA has several contracts and partnerships with local colleges and businesses, that entirely or partially cover the cost of service on specific routes or for specific segments of the population. In FY 2019, the partnerships and contracts accounted for 2 percent of operating costs. These partnerships and the contracts are discussed further in later sections and exemplify a best practice for transit providers.

Capital expenditures vary each year but are typically in the range of $5 to $10 million per year. These funds are utilized for the acquisition of transit vehicles and equipment and to maintain infrastructure.

Figure 7. PVTA FY 2019 Funding Sources



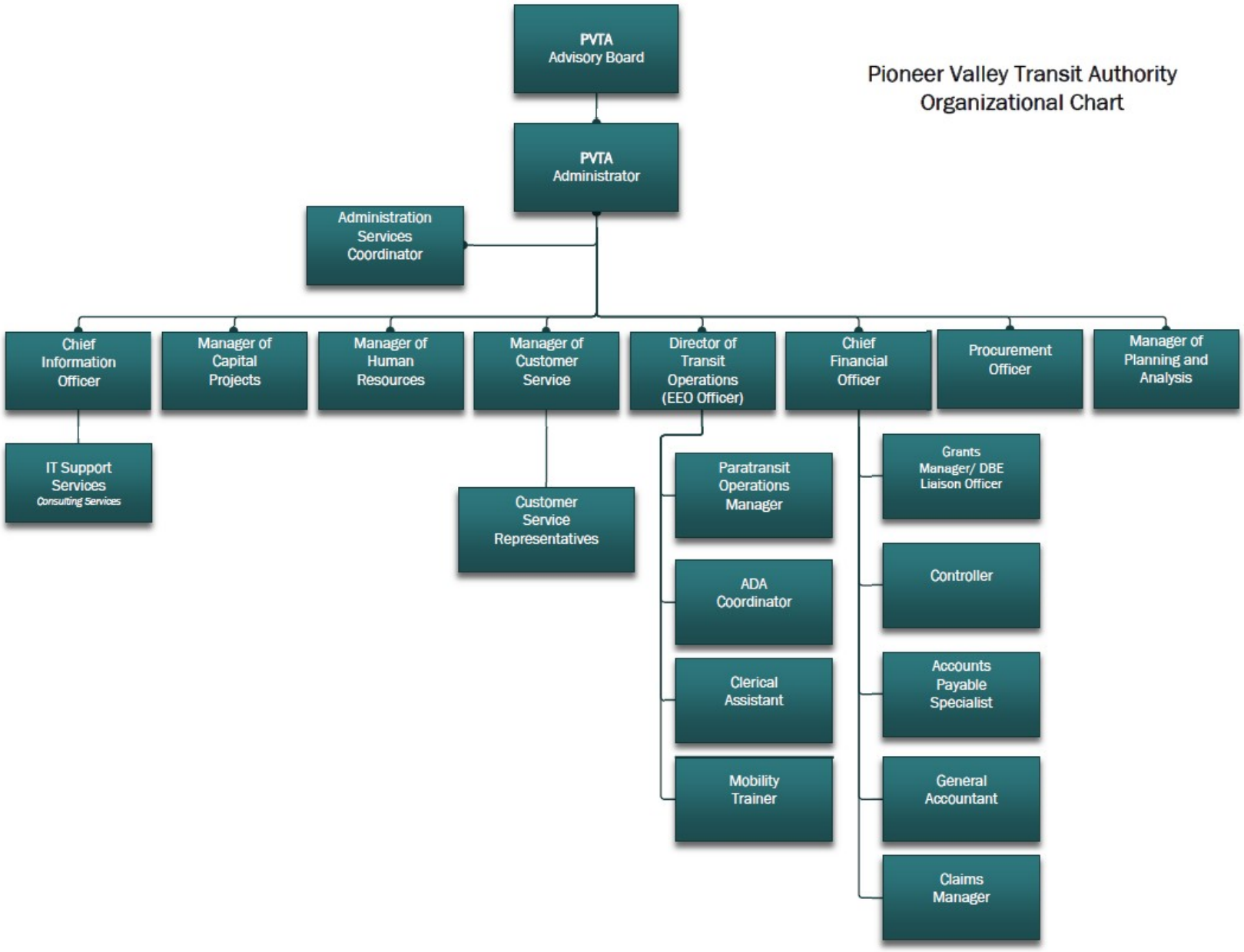
PVTA has general responsibility to develop, finance, and contract the operation of mass transportation services and facilities within its region. While an administrator and support staff are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the agency, PVTA's operations are overseen by an advisory board made up of one member from each of the 24 communities, one representative of the disability community,[15] and a "rider" representative. The Advisory Board consists of the chief elected official of each city; the Chair of the Board of Selectmen of each town having such board, or the Town Manager or Town Administrator of each town.[16] Finance, paratransit, and route committees help guide the board. The paratransit and ridership committees provide input on service design and operations, while the finance committee reviews the budget and any major changes in costs associated with operating service. The PVTA administrator is the only position appointed by the advisory board. In addition to the administrator, PVTA has 24 support staff and IT consultants (Figure 8).

In accordance with Section 25 of Chapter 161B of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts statute, PVTA contracts with private operators for the provision of service. Due to the size of the service area PVTA holds several operating contracts. In the northern tier bus service is operated by the Valley Area Transit Company (VATCo) in the Northampton area, UMass Transit Services (UMTS) on the University of Massachusetts Amherst campus and surrounding communities, and Hulmes Transportation Services LTD in Easthampton, Palmer, and Ware. In the southern tier bus service is primarily operated by the Springfield Area Transit Company (SATCo). National Express Transit (NEXT) operates demand response services, including ADA paratransit service as well as the Survival Center and Wilbraham shuttles. Additionally, PVTA partners with senior centers to provide Dial-A-Ride services in Northampton, East Longmeadow, Longmeadow, Hampden, and Agawam. Hadley is scheduled to begin implementing its own Dial-A-Ride program in late 2020.

The contract with VATCo and SATCo is with First Transit for management services[17] and is a 3-year contract from July 2011 to July 2014 with the option for two additional three year periods. PVTA has exercised these options and the contract is set to expire July 2020, at which time PVTA must then go through the procurement process for a new contract. The contract with UMTS is a 5-year interagency agreement with the University of Massachusetts that will expire June 30, 2025. The contract is not required to be bid out through procurement processes as it is an interagency agreement. The shuttle service operated by Hulmes is not under contract.[18] The contract with Next is a 2-year contract from July 1, 2018 to July 30, 2020, with three consecutive one-year renewal periods. PVTA will be terminating the contract with Next effective June 30, 2021, as the two were unable to successfully negotiate a contract extension.[19] The contracts with the Councils on Aging (COAs) are for 1-year periods, with the ability to extend the agreements one-year at a time.[20]

[15] This position (mobility representative) is currently vacant.
[16] Voting is based on Massachusetts General Law 161B Section 5 that states each city and town shall have one vote on the advisory board plus additional votes and fractions thereof determined by multiplying one and one half times the number of cities and towns in the authority by a fraction of which the numerator shall be the total amount of all assessments made by the state treasurer to such city or town under this chapter and the denominator shall be the total amount of all such assessment made by the state treasurer to such cities and towns. The rider representative and mobility representative each have one vote.
[17] SATCo and VATCo are subsidiaries of First Transit. SATCo is represented by the Amalgamated Transit Union, and VATCo by the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. Both are protected under public transit employee protections in Section 13(c) of the Federal Transit Act, which gives them the right to operate the service in that area as they were the private operator prior to the creation of PVTA in 1974. PVTA is responsible for contracting out management for both.
[18] The contract has expired but Hulmes is still operating the service.
[19] Services will be provided by a temporary operator until PVTA is able to procure services through an RFP process.
[20] PVTA is not required to go through a competitive procurement for these operators because of the contract value.

Figure 8. Organizational Chart (as of February 2020)



3.2 Mission

PVTA's mission statement as listed on the official website is stated below:

> "PVTA is committed to providing the highest quality of convenient and accessible public transportation service that meets the needs of our customers in an efficient, cost effective manner."

3.3 Vision Statement

PVTA's vision statement as listed on the official website is stated below:

> "The vision of PVTA is to assist the Pioneer Valley in making our communities more livable through transportation services."

3.4 Goals and Objectives

PVTA has identified the following 6 goals and 19 supporting objectives to support the completion of the CRTP update. These goals and objectives were developed based on feedback at the kick-off meeting with PVTA staff and contracted operators.

Goal 1. Maximize mobility options for residents of the region

Objectives:

- Improve connectivity between the north and south service areas.
- Pursue innovative service delivery models and develop pilot programs.
- Adjust existing service and/or implement new service to meet service demands of existing and potential customers.
- Provide transit options for all community members in the PVTA service area.

Goal 2. Deliver the service of choice

Objectives:

- Improve frequency and span of service.
- Implement faster more direct service along key corridors with connecting feeder services.
- Increase the mode share for transit in the region.

Goal 3. Obtain sustainable funding options

Objectives:

- Secure a long-term local dedicated funding source such as a regional ballot initiative or other measures to increase funding at the local level.
- Advocate for state contract assistance to include an automatic inflator to prevent level funding.
- Identify and determine the feasibility of new funding partnerships.

Goal 4. Operate in the most cost-effective and efficient way possible

Objectives:

- Examine route performance to determine service adjustments as needed.
- Continue program of monitoring route and system performance.

Goal 5. Support economic development

Objectives:

- Coordinate with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) and member municipalities to integrate transit into land use planning and development/infrastructure plans.
- Enhance service to centers of employment and shopping within the region.
- Identify Environmental Justice communities and their transportation needs to ensure that these populations benefit from economic development efforts.

Goal 6. Develop a capital program that aligns with the Governor's Commission on the Future of Transportation

Objectives:

- Replace vehicles according to their useful life benchmark (ULB) and the Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan with financially and environmentally sustainable choices.
- Reduce the amount of capital funding flexed to operating while maintaining or increasing service levels.
- Implement a plan to operate, maintain, and upgrade the transportation system.
- Examine facility infrastructure needs to accommodate an alternate fuels fleet.