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massDOT AECOM

Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2025

Cape Ann Transportation Authority

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Acronyms

ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APC	Automatic Passenger Counter
ARPA	American Rescue Plan Act
AVL	Automatic Vehicle Location
BEB	Battery Electric Bus
CARES	Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security
CATA	Cape Ann Transportation Authority
CDL	Commercial Driver's License
COA	Council on Aging
CRRSA	Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations
CRTP	Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan
EV	Electric Vehicle
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GHS	Gloucester High School
HVAC	Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning
IIJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
LEHD	Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics
MAPC	Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MBTA	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NTD	National Transit Database
PTASP	Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan
RTA	Regional Transit Authority
RTD	Rail & Transit Division
TAM	Transit Asset Management
TERM	Transit Economic Requirements Model
TVM	Ticket Vending Machine
UMass	University of Massachusetts

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): Passed in July 1991, gave direction to local transit agencies to ensure full access to transportation for persons with disabilities

Boarding: The total number of passengers getting on a transit vehicle during a specified period of time.

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. Strategic placement of the transfer point can attract riders to the system and may provide an opportunity for joint marketing promotions with local merchants.

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).

Computer Aided Dispatch/ Automatic Vehicle Location: A computer technology with advanced dispatching capabilities combined with automatic vehicle location, ensuring that vehicles are where they need to be when required.

Coordination: 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. Boardings are often presented as unlinked passenger trips.

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.

Cutaway Vehicle: A smaller bus built on a modified van or truck chassis with the rear section removed, allowing a bus shell to be added by a second manufacturer, creating a customizable mini-bus or shuttle for services like parantransit, local routes, or demand response.

Demand Response Service: Service to individuals that is activated based on passenger requests. Usually involves curb-to-curb or door-to-door service. Trips may be scheduled on an advance 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.

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.

Express Bus Service: 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.

Fair Share Amendment: A 4 percent Massachusetts surtax on income above $1 million annually approved by Massachusetts voters in 2022. The revenue generated by the surtax is constitutionally dedicated to funding public education and transportation.

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

Fare-Free Transit: Any transit service that does not require a passenger fare to ride.

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).

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.

Memorandum of Understanding: A formal, non-binding document that outlines the framework for cooperation, roles, responsibilities, and objectives between multiple agencies or jurisdictions involved in providing transit services.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO): The policy board of an organization created and designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process. MPOs are required to represent localities in all urbanized areas with populations over 50,000.

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).

National Transit Database (NTD): The United States government's main repository of data about the financial, operating, and asset conditions of American transit systems.

Non-Revenue Vehicle: Any vehicle used by a public transit organization that is not used for passenger service but is essential to support transit operations and safety, such as service trucks, supervisor cars, and utility vehicles.

Operating Expenditure: The recurring cost 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: 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.

Passengers per Mile or Hour: Productivity measure that takes the total passengers and divides by the miles and/or hours operated. The passengers may be presented as unlinked passenger trips and hours and/or miles may be presented as either total vehicle miles or hours or as revenue miles or hours.

Performance Indicator: 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 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 specific performance level representing the achievement of a goal, outcome, or objective.

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.

Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP): A plan published by a public transit agency containing processes and procedures that define a comprehensive, collaborative, and systematic approach to managing safety. All public transportation systems that receive federal funds under the FTA Urbanized Area Formula Grants are required to have a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan.

Revenue Hour: 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 Mile: 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.

Revenue Vehicle: Any vehicle, such as a bus, train, or railcar, used to actively carry passengers or operating on a scheduled route to pick up or drop off 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.

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

Service Gap: 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.

State of Good Repair: The condition of physical assets used in public transit, such as vehicles, stations, and signals, that permits their full designed performance level, ensuring safe, reliable, and efficient use through regular maintenance and timely replacement.

Title VI: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which 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."

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 Asset Management Plan: A strategic document that helps transit agencies systematically manage their capital assets, such as vehicles, facilities, and other equipment, over their entire lifecycle and to ensure they are safe, reliable, and cost-effective. Transit agencies that own, operate, and manage capital assets and receive funding from FTA are required to adopt a Transit Asset Management Plan.

Transit Dependent: 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 Economic Requirements Model: A computer application published by FTA that is designed to estimate transit capital investment needs over an extended time horizon, helping transit agencies assess current asset conditions and adopt an asset management strategy that achieves state of good repair.

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

Transportation Network Company: 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.

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 pick-up window, it is considered a denial. If the passenger refused to accept a trip offered within the pick-up window, it is considered a refusal, not a capacity denial.

Unlinked Passenger Trip: Typically, one passenger trip 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.

Useful Life Benchmark: The expected service life for a capital asset, like a bus or utility vehicle, before major overhaul or replacement. Standards for useful life benchmarks for different vehicle classes are defined by FTA.

Zero Emission Vehicle: A vehicle that produces no tailpipe pollutants or greenhouse gases during operation, primarly through electric power from batteries.

1 Executive Summary

This 2025 update of the Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan (CRTP) for the Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) will shape and guide the region's transit priorities and improvements over the next five years. The recommendations in this plan emerged from a data-informed process that incorporated historical operational data, stakeholder feedback, industry standards, local policy, statewide objectives, and CATA priorities. They establish a framework for advancing strategic service adjustments, capital improvements, and policy initiatives, and make significant progress toward improving mobility for residents across the region.

Figure 1. CATA Facility (Garage)

Source: AECOM (2025)

1.1 Changes Since the 2020 Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan

The 2020 CRTP featured a range of recommendations including service enhancements and capital investments. In the last five years there has been a significant infusion of state and federal funding supporting expanded transit service. Some of the investments that CATA has made over the past five years include:

- Implemented fare-free transit service.
- Increased and enhanced services, including tripper service to Market Basket in Gloucester
- Reconfigured routes for simplified transfers.
- Implemented Dial-a-Ride service in the Towns of Hamilton (July 2020) and Manchester-by-the-Sea (August 2025) and expanded Dial-a-Ride service for the Town of Essex (July 2021).
- Expanded medical transportation in partnership with Councils on Aging (COA) and funded by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Funding for medical transportation is now managed and provided by Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

- Deployment of Spare Labs on-demand and paratransit scheduling, dispatching, and management software, which includes rider-facing tools, through a joint procurement with Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority.
- Procurement of three electric low-floor e-JEST Karsan minibuses
- Communications and marketing improvements through seasonal service-dedicated websites and increased activity on social media

1.2 Planning Process

The planning process for the CRTP was a collaborative effort in which CATA engaged with key stakeholders, such as state and local government representatives, local community organizations, COAs, housing authorities, and members of the public. Input from these groups, along with guidance from statewide and regional transportation plans, was used to establish goals and objectives for this plan.

CATA used both quantitative and qualitative input when developing recommendations. An evaluation of CATA's current transit operations, including existing service levels, ridership patterns, and overall system performance, helped to identify baseline efficiencies and opportunities. It should be noted that the data in this plan were largely gathered between April and October 2025 to analyze existing conditions and provide a foundation for later elements. Therefore, the data referenced are largely from FY 2020 to FY 2024—the plan's five-year reporting period. Service enhancements and ridership changes beyond this timeframe, while sometimes discussed in the narrative, are largely not fully captured in the data represented. Additionally, a market analysis was carried out to contextualize the region's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. The analysis included factors such as population trends, job locations, and transit demand to pinpoint areas with the most critical needs.

In parallel, a robust outreach campaign was conducted, utilizing both in-person gatherings and virtual sessions to ensure input from a diverse group of stakeholders. Key outreach activities included a virtual stakeholder meeting, two in-person pop-up events, and a public survey targeting both riders and non-riders.

1.3 Recommendations

CATA developed 39 recommendations that address the needs identified through the CRTP planning process (Table 1). These recommendations will guide efforts over the next five years and provide a flexible approach to pursuing strategic improvements in mobility depending on how the future unfolds. For instance, significant changes in ridership demand or propulsion technology could change how certain recommendations are prioritized.

The recommendations are grouped into seven primary categories: service, outreach and engagement, technology, asset and capital, staffing resources, data and performance, and partnerships and funding. Some recommendations incorporate elements that connect to other recommendations in different categories, such that pursuing one recommendation may consist of applying strategies or achieving related goals that are also applicable to another recommendation. Table 1 highlights these instances of overlap.

Table 1. Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Category Overlap
Service		
S1	Conduct a service analysis to explore the feasibility of modifying the Route 2 Gloucester Crossing/ Business Express route, such as by separating into two distinct routes to increase service efficiency and meet passenger demand.	N/A
S2	Monitor and evaluate high-demand fixed routes for potential increased frequency improvements during the summer months.	N/A
S3	Explore feasibility of increased frequency on Route 2A by completing a service analysis.	N/A
S4	Conduct operational analyses for both demand response and fixed route in order to identify opportunities for enhanced efficiency and expansion of mobility options.	T5, T6
S5	Explore the feasibility of implementing limited Sunday morning service.	N/A
S6	Explore potential demand for cross jurisdictional connections to nearby RTA service areas such as Merrimack Valley Transit. If demand is identified, consider exploring feasibility for new service.	N/A
S7	Explore the feasibility of providing additional service to major employment centers (similar to the Blackburn Express) to support workplace initiatives for employee transit connections in CATA communities.	PF1
S8	Summer/Seasonal Service: Explore potential of adding or modifying seasonal routes to better service the communities, businesses, residents, and visitors.	N/A
S9	Summer/Seasonal Service: Explore feasibility of evening service during the summer months to support the communities, businesses, residents, and visitors.	N/A
S10	Summer/Seasonal Service: Monitor Rockport On Demand during summer months to assess ridership demand and adjust service accordingly.	N/A
Outreach and Engagement		
OE1	Update and refine the CATA website by clarifying the tripper service and its connection to existing routes and adding a dedicated landing page for CATA On Demand in the home tabs to improve information access and clarity for riders.	N/A
OE2	Establish a plan and schedule for consistent travel training efforts.	N/A
OE3	Promote the new Spare Labs Rider app and support education around app use and registration support.	N/A

ID	Recommendation	Category Overlap
OE4	Continue marketing efforts to expand awareness of fare-free transit and ensure the public has an accurate understanding of the variety of services that CATA offers; consider leaning into rider feedback that CATA offers "convenient" service.	N/A
OE5	Promote the new shuttle service connecting MBTA Commuter Rail to Blackburn Industrial Park.	N/A
OE6	Promote the new CATA On Demand expansion into Rockport.	PF1
OE7	Establish a regular meeting schedule (at least annually) with COAs and other community groups such as housing authorities to conduct outreach and promote awareness of services especially options for older adult/aging population.	SR3, PF1
OE8	Develop and enact a plan for targeted engagement with GHS to promote CATA service for students.	PF1
Technology		
T1	Deploy AVL and APC technology.	DP2
T2	Deploy a public-facing live vehicle tracking functionality.	N/A
T3	Implement talking bus technology.	N/A
T4	Consider launch of a trip booking functionality in the Spare Labs Rider app for ADA customers. Identify partnerships to support long-term funding of functionality.	PF3
T5	Explore feasibility, in partnership with Spare Labs, to push Dial-a-Ride trip requests to COAs with van fleets for expanded flexibility and efficiency.	S4, PF1
T6	Explore feasibility, in partnership with Spare Labs, to push Dial-a-Ride trip requests to transportation network companies (e.g., Uber or Lyft) for expanded flexibility. Consider funding and resource needs associated with feasibility.	S4, PF1
T7	Create fare collection equipment procurement strategy in the event changes in state funding require CATA to reinstate fares.	N/A
Asset and Capital		
AC1	Maintain state of good repair for vehicles and facility.	N/A
AC2	Install additional EV chargers for Karsan minibuses on facility property.	N/A
AC3	Identify and pursue a path forward for bus stop implementation in CATA's core service area, focusing on downtown Gloucester and high ridership areas.	N/A

ID	Recommendation	Category Overlap
AC4	Continue to advance CATA Administration facility upgrades including strategically implementing prioritized upgrades including but not limited to HVAC, transformers, control system, water/sewer systems, windows, and other efficiency improvements to maintain a state of good repair.	N/A
Staffing Resources		
SR1	Support and coordinate with the operating company to promote innovative practices for hiring and retention of drivers and CDL mechanics.	N/A
SR2	Uphold a culture of positive reinforcement and acknowledgement of team accomplishments.	N/A
SR3	Implement travel training best practices including but not limited to recurring touch points with Senior Centers.	OE7
Data and Performance		
DP1	Streamline data collection, synthesis, and reporting processes. Specifically, assess the feasibility of streamlining data for trippers.	N/A
DP2	Explore opportunities to leverage performance dashboards, particularly once AVL and APC technology is deployed.	T1
DP3	Comprehensively assess the impact of CATA services on service area transit needs in an ongoing capacity.	N/A
DP4	Monitor the data and service implementation of the CATA On Demand expansion into Rockport, which was implemented in November 2025.	N/A
Partnerships and Funding		
PF1	Explore and leverage new or enhanced partnership opportunities to support service efficiency and expansion improvements including with businesses, social services organizations, and COAs.	S7, OE6, OE7, OE8, T5, T6
PF2	Boost coordination and partnership with the contracted operating company.	N/A
PF3	Continuously explore and identify additional funding opportunities, including with local partners.	T4

N/A = Not Applicable

2 Background and Context

CATA, alongside the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's 14 other Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs), plays a crucial role in providing essential mobility options and lifeline services to millions of residents across the Commonwealth. Demonstrating its commitment to continuous improvement, CATA updates its CRTP every five years. This document represents the 2025 update of the CATA CRTP, intended to support planning efforts over the next five years, through 2030.

The chapters of the plan include:

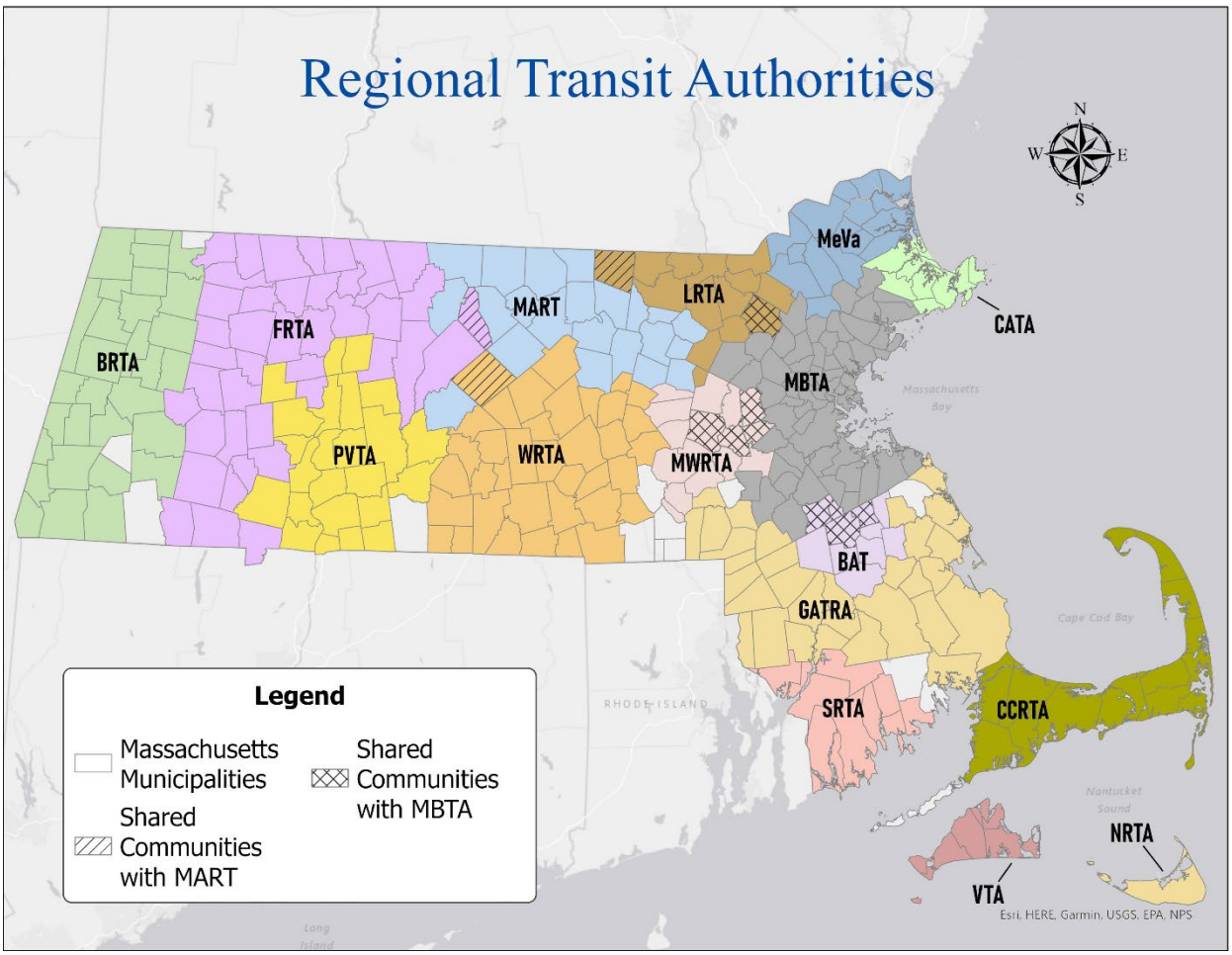
- Needs and Goals: Overview of identified needs and goals of CATA that provide the foundation for recommendations over the next five years.
- Existing Conditions: Review of CATA performance information.
- Market Evaluation: Assessment of transit demand through demographic analysis and engagement feedback results.
- Performance Measures: Review of performance measures used by CATA to assess service.
- Trends and Uncertainties: Assessment of key uncertainties facing CATA over the next five years and how those may impact implementation of recommendations.
- Recommendations: Listing of specific recommendations to guide CATA priorities over the next five years.

Additionally, the CRTP contains appendices that include reviewing fare (Appendix A) and environmental (Appendix B) considerations based on the broader statewide and national context. Fare-free service described in Appendix A in particular has been attributed as a key strategy supporting the ongoing recovery in transit ridership after the COVID pandemic. More information, including the history, context, and funding approach for fare-free service, can be found in that appendix.

2.1 Overview of CATA Services

CATA is headquartered in Gloucester and is one of the 15 RTAs that, along with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), operates public transportation in the Commonwealth (Figure 2). CATA provides fixed route service across 10 year-round fixed routes inclusive of school trippers and 3 seasonal fixed routes, predominantly sharing a common terminus of the Rose Baker Senior Center in Gloucester. In compliance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations, CATA also offers Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service, which operates complementary to year-round fixed route service in Gloucester, Rockport, and a portion of Essex, as well as to summer fixed route service in Ipswich and Essex. CATA also operates non-ADA Dial-a-Ride service in each of its member communities. Additional services include dialysis transportation, senior service to additional communities for Hamilton and Essex older adults, dedicated shopping trips for older adults, out-of-town medical transportation for Ipswich residents, and CATA On-Demand microtransit service in a subzone of Gloucester.

Figure 2. Massachusetts Transit Providers



Source: MassDOT

Since the 2020 CRTP, CATA has made new investments both in capital procurements as well as day-to-day operations. Additional information on those investments, as well as an overview of 2020 recommendations implementation, can be found in Chapter 8.

2.2 Purpose

The CRTP serves as a policy-level document outlining CATA's vision and priorities for the next five years. Supported by the Commonwealth as part of a statewide effort, it complements other statewide and regional plans such as the *Beyond Mobility Massachusetts 2050 Transportation Plan* and *Report of the Task Force on RTA Performance and Funding* (refer to Chapter 3 for complete list of relevant plans).

The *Task Force* report, in particular, recommends that "[a]ll state contract assistance will be connected to performance targets via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). MOUs will be bilaterally negotiated between MassDOT Rail & Transit Division (RTD) and each RTA and will identify performance targets in the following categories: ridership; customer service and satisfaction; asset management; and financial performance (incorporating a number of factors including farebox recovery ratio)." Based on this recommendation, the Massachusetts State Legislature has included language in the annual state budget since FY 2020 on the collection of performance data and the distribution of state funding in accordance with the most recently established MOU. As such, MassDOT RTD and the RTAs undergo a biennial bilateral negotiation process to establish an agreed upon MOU that includes performance targets in

the above-mentioned categories. Also included in the MOU is a commitment by the RTA to conduct a long-range CRTP as a mechanism to inform and support data-driven decisions, to work with local partners, and to communicate and discuss with MassDOT RTD on unmet needs or priorities and the potential for additional resources or support, if available.

Developed alongside these other plans, the CRTP provides guidance for CATA's state and local partners as they develop their own plans. The CRTP can also serve as a valuable tool for helping the public gain a clearer understanding of how CATA operates, the value it provides, and opportunities for improvements in the future.

Over the next five years, this document will serve as a resource, offering strategic guidance to inform policy decisions that shape the region's transportation future. Acting as a roadmap for data-driven decision-making that can inform more detailed capital and operational planning, the CRTP plays a dual role: it is both a product of ongoing discussions on public transportation in the state and region and a catalyst for future dialogue and action.

3 Needs and Goals

Over the next five years, CATA seeks to address critical needs within the agency and the communities it serves. As part of CATA's CRTP update, goals and objectives for this timeframe were identified that align with the agency's mission. The goals set forth include enhancing mobility service, promoting awareness of CATA services, expanding on agency operational strengths, and pursuing system enhancements.

3.1 CATA Mission

CATA operates according to its stated mission to "provide public transportation to residents and visitors of member communities in a safe and courteous manner that exceeds the customer's expectations for quality, reliability, and service in a comfortable and respectful environment."

3.2 Statewide Policies and Goals

Over the last six years, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has developed the following statewide planning and policy documents that are relevant to CATA's CRTP update and goal setting:

- *Beyond Mobility Massachusetts 2050 Transportation Plan* (2024)
- *Regional Bus Network Assessment* (2024)
- *Benefits of Regional Mobility Managers Plan* (2023)
- *Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2050* (2022)
- *Massachusetts State Plan on Aging* (2021)
- *Massachusetts 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap* (2020)
- *Report of the Task Force on RTA Performance and Funding* (2019)

Together, the documents highlight a number of robust goals and action steps that are relevant for all Commonwealth RTAs. Common goal themes as noted in the statewide documents that help inform the development of CATA-specific needs and goals for their 2025 CRTP include:

- Implementing zero emission fleets and pursuing opportunities for fleet transition and sustainability
- Promoting cross-RTA coordination and interconnectivity across services, where feasible
- Exploring fare-free transit
- Supporting and growing transit ridership
- Exploring and maximizing innovative funding sources
- Ensuring COA services prioritize access for older adults and persons with disabilities

As detailed further in this chapter, the overarching goals for the CATA CRTP update include expanding upon agency operational strengths, promotion and awareness, service, and system enhancements, which are in alignment with these statewide goals. State goals to convert public transit fleets to be zero emission support broader sustainability goals of providing all people access to a clean and healthy environment. CATA is still exploring the long-term operational feasibility to implement, operate, and maintain zero emission technologies.

3.3 Identified Needs

Through review and discussion of existing transportation challenges, past community feedback, findings from the 2020 CRTP, and regional, state, and federal priorities, CATA identified a list of needs to target in the 2025 CRTP. The current list of needs includes the following, in no particular order of priority:

- Increasing/expanding transit services
- Retaining existing riders and attracting new riders
- Simplifying the system
- Expanding access across the CATA service area and to neighboring jurisdictions
- Continuing to grow CATA's system capacity
- Continuing to coordinate regionally and leverage resource-sharing opportunities
- Continually assessing and improving system performance
- Exploring and positioning CATA for future funding opportunities

3.4 Goals and Objectives

As part of CATA's CRTP, goals and objectives were identified for the next five years in alignment with the agency mission.

Starting with the 2020 CRTP, an evaluation was conducted of the previous goals, objectives, needs, and recommendations. This information served as the basis for CATA staff to identify priorities, opportunities, and any potential barriers for the 2025 CRTP. To identify goals and objectives, CATA focused on priorities of CATA and the community and stakeholders. Additional consideration was given to regional goals, such as those of the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and of major regional partners in areas such as housing and economic development. The evaluation also focused on the broader context, including Commonwealth policies and goals and federal considerations.

The overarching goals identified for CATA's 2025 CRTP include expanding upon agency operational strengths, promotion and awareness, service, and system enhancements, which are reflective of the agency's needs and opportunities. The objectives associated with each of these four goals are as follows, in no particular order of priority:

- Goal 1. Enhance Mobility Service
  - Objective 1: Focus on opportunities to increase ridership.
  - Objective 2: Assess span(s) of service to meet rider needs.
  - Objective 3: Assess the feasibility of increasing service frequency.
  - Objective 4: Explore the feasibility of providing out-of-town medical access.
  - Objective 5: Explore the feasibility of establishing transit connections to new destinations.
- Goal 2. Promote Awareness of CATA Services
  - Objective 1: Identify opportunities to improve clarity of information about CATA services.
  - Objective 2: Explore opportunities for conducting further marketing efforts and outreach.

  - Objective 3: Explore strategies to attract non-riders to use the system.
  - Objective 4: Pursue opportunities to expand stakeholder awareness and understanding of CATA's system and services.
- Goal 3 Expand on Agency Operational Strengths
  - Objective 1: Focus on celebrating and acknowledging team accomplishments and efforts that contribute to agency success.
  - Objective 2: Explore resources and opportunities to empower existing staff and build additional staff capacity.
  - Objective 3: Explore innovative funding sources.
  - Objective 4: Continue collaborating with operating companies to identify transit service mitigations in the event of staff turnover that impact service delivery.
  - Objective 5: Assess opportunities to facilitate cross-jurisdictional coordination.
- Goal 4. Pursue System Enhancements
  - Objective 1: Promote the state of good repair of vehicles and facilities.
  - Objective 2: Identify opportunities to enhance passenger amenities.
  - Objective 3: Explore new transit technologies to enhance the system.

These goals and objectives were assessed against progress made since the 2020 CRTP in an effort to identify opportunities to increase ridership; expand mobility opportunities, access, and regional coordination; enhance system performance and capacity; and support a resilient sustainable system. These highlighted intentions, along with a detailed data assessment of CATA's system from the last five years, were used to inform the recommendations in this CRTP.

4 Existing Conditions

This chapter provides a comprehensive assessment of CATA's existing conditions regarding transit services provided, ridership, and performance evaluation.

4.1 Transit Service Overview

CATA was established in 1974 by Chapter 161B of the Massachusetts State Legislature to provide public transportation services to portions of Essex County. Today, CATA provides connections within the greater Cape Ann communities of Gloucester, Rockport, Ipswich, Essex, Hamilton, and Manchester-by-the-Sea. On an annual basis CATA carries 227,000 passengers, traveling approximately 535,000 revenue miles and operating 39,000 revenue hours, with an operating budget of over $4.2 million (Table 2).

Table 2. Statistics by Service (FY 2024)

FY 2024 Data	Fixed Route	Percentage of Total	Commuter Bus	Percentage of Total	Demand Response	Percentage of Total	Total
Ridership	161,828	71.3%	558	0.2%	64,704	28.5%	227,090
Revenue Miles	246,470	46.0%	7,175	1.3%	281,738	52.6%	535,383
Revenue Hours	19,426	49.6%	243	0.6%	19,467	49.7%	39,136
Operating Cost	$3,166,724	75.0%	$40,539	1.0%	$1,017,157	24.1%	$4,224,419

Source: MassDOT)

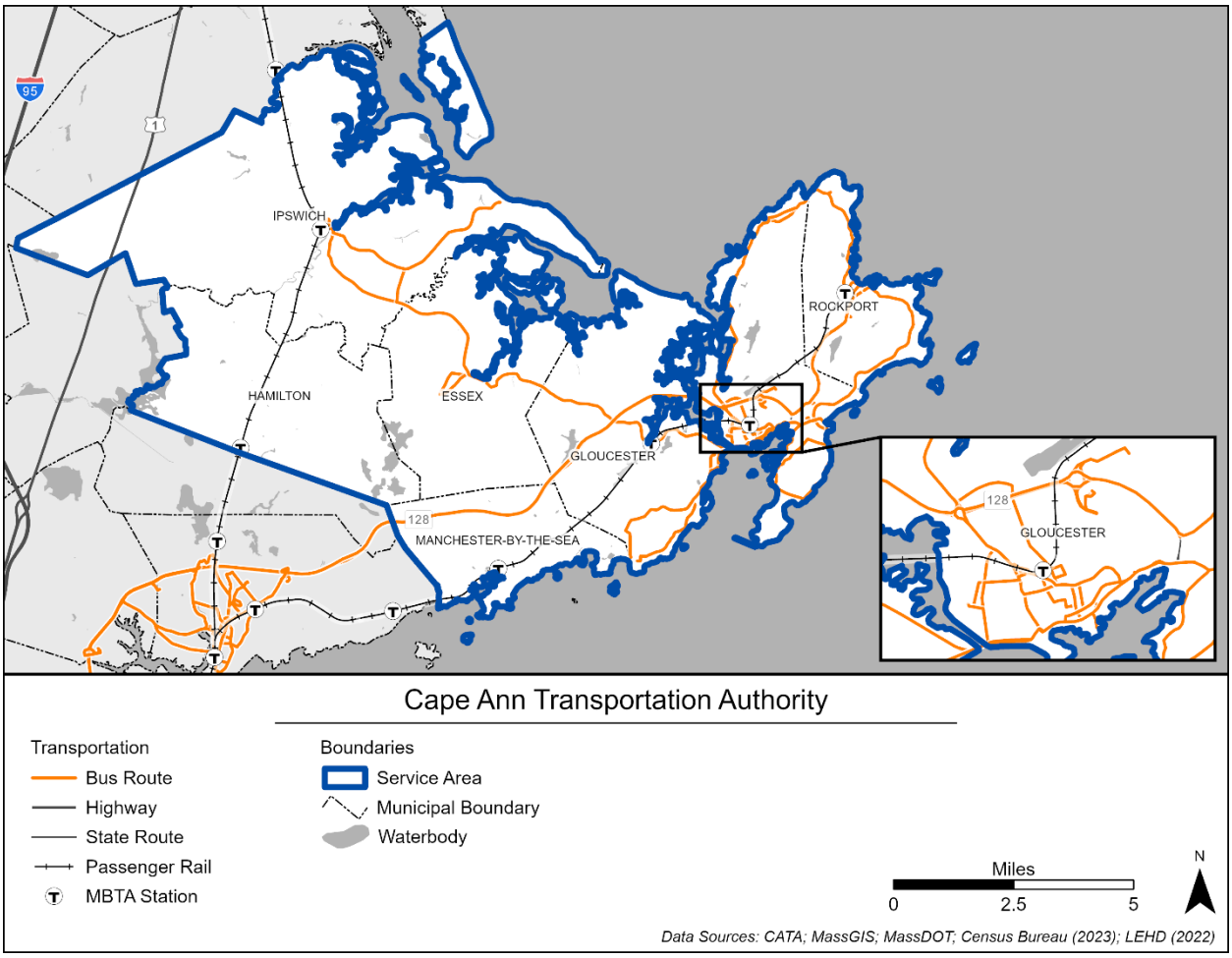
CATA serves an area with a highly seasonal population fluctuation, with summer tourism increasing the transportation demand. CATA's transit services include 10 year-round fixed routes, which includes tripper service, and 3 seasonal fixed routes. All year-round fixed routes, except for the City of Beverly Shuttle (Route 8) and the Beverly Commuter (Route 9), share a common terminus of the Rose Baker Senior Center in Gloucester. Most fixed route service is concentrated in the Rockport and Gloucester communities, with certain routes extending into Essex and Ipswich. The towns of Hamilton and Manchester-by-the-Sea are not served by fixed route; the Beverly Commuter runs through Manchester-by-the-Sea via MA Route 128 but does not stop. The Beverly Shuttle runs exclusively within the City of Beverly, and CATA is contracted by the City of Beverly to operate the service (Figure 3).

CATA operates year-round ADA service in Gloucester, Rockport, and a portion of Essex, and summer (approximately mid-May to early October) ADA service in Ipswich and Essex. In FY 2024, non-ADA Dial-a-Ride service was available year-round for older adults and people with disabilities in each of the member communities apart from Manchester-by-the-Sea. Manchester-by-the-Sea joined the CATA Dial-a-Ride service area in February 2025, and service started in August 2025. Additional services include dialysis transportation, service to additional communities for Hamilton and Essex older adults, special dedicated shopping trips for older adults, out-of-town medical transportation for Ipswich residents, and school tripper commuter routes for Gloucester High School (GHS) and O'Maley Innovation Middle School students. Finally, CATA offers on-demand service in a subzone of Gloucester, complete with a dedicated rider app, CATA On Demand, to book rides.

CATA's transit services primarily operate during the weekday with headways between 60 and 120 minutes. On Saturdays, CATA operates the Mall Shuttle (Route 7) and dialysis services in

addition to a reduced frequency fixed route and ADA service. CATA's seasonal fixed routes include Stage Fort Park Shuttle (Route 11), Rockport Shuttle (Route 10), and Ipswich/Essex Explorer (Route 12), which primarily operate on both weekdays and weekends from mid-May to mid-October and have greater frequencies, with headways between 20 and 60 minutes.

Figure 3. CATA Service Area Overview Map



Source: AECOM

4.1.1 Service Descriptions

4.1.1.1 Demand Response and On Demand

In addition to fixed route service, CATA provides Dial-a-Ride and ADA door-to-door services. Dial-a-Ride service is for adults 60 and over and for people with disabilities. Dial-a-Ride is available in Gloucester, Rockport, Ipswich, Essex, Hamilton, and Manchester-by-the-Sea. ADA, an eligibility-based service for persons with disabilities, is available in Rockport and Gloucester year-round and seasonally in Ipswich and Essex. CATA's Dial-a-Ride and ADA services are available during the same hours as CATA's fixed route bus service.

CATA On Demand is an on-demand microtransit service offering door-to-door transit services for the public. CATA offers On Demand in Gloucester and in late 2025 expanded On Demand service to Rockport.

Additionally, CATA offers other services for specific needs, including:

- Dialysis service to the North Shore Regional Dialysis Center in Beverly for all CATA communities. Service is available Monday through Saturday for customers scheduled for first or second shift dialysis treatments.
- Ipswich Medical Bus, in partnership with the Ipswich COA, to provide out-of-town medical transportation services to Ipswich residents.
- Hamilton Transportation Services for Hamilton older adults to the following towns: Hamilton, Wenham, Beverly, Manchester, Gloucester, Rockport, Essex, Ipswich, Rowley, Salem, Peabody, and Danvers. Transportation is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.
- Essex Transportation Services for Essex older adults to the following towns: Essex, Hamilton, Wenham, Beverly, Manchester, Gloucester, Rockport, Ipswich, Rowley, Salem, Peabody, and Danvers. Transportation is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.
- Manchester-by-the-Sea Transportation services for older adults to the following towns: Essex, Hamilton, Wenham, Beverly, Manchester, Gloucester, Rockport, Ipswich, Rowley, Salem, Peabody, and Danvers. Transportation is available Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.
- Cape Ann Seniors on the GO!, a transportation service providing pickups on Mondays from the Rose Baker Senior Center, offered in partnership with the City of Gloucester and Gloucester COA.

4.1.1.2 Fixed Routes

CATA's service area is served by 13 fixed routes, as outlined in Table 3. During the school year, five of the fixed routes run select weekday trips as trippers connecting to either GHS or O'Maley Innovation Middle School. Most fixed routes operate largely within Gloucester and Rockport, but some routes branch out from downtown Gloucester into surrounding municipalities such as Essex. One of the fixed routes, the Beverly Shuttle, runs exclusively within the City of Beverly. Additionally, CATA offers seasonal summer beach buses between approximately the month of May to mid-October, depending on the service.

Table 3. Fixed Routes

Route Number	Route Name	Service Type	Service Destinations
1	Gloucester – Rockport via Eastern Avenue	Fixed Route	Rockport Market, Dock Square, Shaw's & Stop and Shop Supermarkets, CVS, and Rose Baker Senior Center
2	Gloucester Crossing/Business Express	Fixed Route	Gloucester Crossing, YMCA, GHS, Addison Gilbert Hospital, Senior Center – Dunkin Donuts, Gloucester MBTA Commuter Rail Station, five older adult housing developments
	GHS via Orange Line	Tripper	Downtown Gloucester, Magnolia, GHS

Route Number	Route Name	Service Type	Service Destinations
	O'Maley School via Green/Blue Line	Tripper	Downtown Gloucester, Centennial Avenue, Washington Street, Cherry Street, O'Maley Innovation Middle School
2A	Gloucester Crossing/Blackburn Express	Fixed Route	Rose Baker Senior Center, YMCA, Washington Street, Gloucester MBTA Commuter Rail Station, Rose Baker Senior Center, older adult housing
3	Lanesville	Fixed Route	Rockport Market, Halibut Point State Park, Lanesville, Addison Gilbert Hospital, Gloucester MBTA Commuter Rail Station, Rose Baker Senior Center
	GHS via Blue Line	Tripper	Rockport, Lanesville, Washington Street, Cherry Street, GHS
4	Gloucester – Rockport via Thatcher Road	Fixed Route	Rockport Market, Good Harbor Beach, Niles Beach, GHS
	GHS via Red Line	Tripper	Back Shore, Rocky Neck, Eastern Avenue, Rockport, GHS
	GHS via Red Line (morning)	Tripper	Rockport Market, Niles Beach, Rocky Neck, Rose Baker Senior Center, GHS
5	Gloucester – West Gloucester – Essex	Fixed Route	Rose Baker Senior Center, West Gloucester MBTA Commuter Rail Station, South Village Center, Martin Street and Western Avenue
	GHS via Purple Line	Tripper	Magnolia Avenue, Atlantic Street, Essex Avenue, GHS
6	Magnolia	Fixed Route	Rose Baker Senior Center, Hammond Castle, Magnolia, Lexington Avenue and Flume Road
	GHS via Yellow Line	Tripper	Downtown Gloucester, Magnolia, GHS
7	Saturday Mall Shuttle	Fixed Route	Liberty Tree Mall, Gloucester MBTA Commuter Rail Station, Rose Baker Senior Center
8	City of Beverly Shuttle	Fixed Route	Bridge Street – Variety Store, Garden City Apartments, Beverly Hospital, Beverly and Montserrat MBTA Commuter Rail Stations, Beverly City Hall
9	Beverly Commuter	Fixed Route - Commuter	Beverly, Gloucester, and Rockport MBTA Commuter Rail Stations

Route Number	Route Name	Service Type	Service Destinations
10	Rockport Shuttle	Fixed Route – Summer (May to October)	Meadows Parking Lot, Dock Square, Back Beach, Rockport MBTA Commuter Rail Station
11	Stage Fort Park Shuttle	Fixed Route - Summer (June to September)	Stage Fort Park Visitor Center, The Fishermen's Memorial, Bass Rocks, Gloucester Stage Company, World War II Memorial, Gloucester MBTA Commuter Rail Station
12	Ipswich/Essex Explorer	Fixed Route – Summer (June to September)	Ipswich MBTA Commuter Rail Station, Crane Beach, Essex Shipbuilding Museum, Wolf Hollow

Source: CATA

4.1.2 Provided Service

Most fixed routes operate on weekdays and Saturdays, with no year-round Sunday service (Table 4). CATA's seasonal service, inclusive of Routes 10, 11, and 12, operate 7 days a week during the summer months to provide increased connectivity to beaches and key destinations in Gloucester, Rockport, Ipswich, and Essex (Table 5).

Weekday headways vary depending on the route and time of day, with most fixed routes operating at headways ranging from 60 to 120 minutes. The Route 7 Mall Shuttle only operates on Saturdays and some holidays. Route 10 operates at a much higher frequency from the rest of the fixed route system, with 20-minute headways on all seven days of operation. Saturday headways are consistent with weekday headways on all routes except Routes 3 and 4 due to the weekday school tripper service. The trippers each provide two one-way morning trips to GHS or O'Maley Innovation Middle School, and either two or three one-way afternoon trips from one of the schools.

Table 4. Span of Service and Headway

Route Number	Weekday Service Hours	Saturday Service Hours	Sunday Service Hours	Weekday Headway (Minutes)	Saturday Headway (Minutes)	Sunday Headway (Minutes)	Days Operated
1	7:30 AM – 6:15 PM	8:30 AM – 5:15 PM	N/A	60	60	N/A	6
2	6:20 AM – 6:50 PM	8:00 AM – 4:50 PM	N/A	60	60	N/A	6
GHS via Orange Line	6:58 AM – 3:15 PM	N/A	N/A	AM: 2 one-way trips PM: 3 one-way trips	N/A	N/A	5

Route Number	Weekday Service Hours	Saturday Service Hours	Sunday Service Hours	Weekday Headway (Minutes)	Saturday Headway (Minutes)	Sunday Headway (Minutes)	Days Operated
O'Maley School via Green/ Blue Line	7:17 AM – 2:20 PM	N/A	N/A	AM: 2 one-way trips PM: 2 one-way trips	N/A	N/A	5
2A	6:20 AM – 4:53 PM	10:20 AM – 4:53 PM	N/A	120	120	N/A	6
3	5:50 AM – 6:55 PM	7:50 AM – 5:55 PM	N/A	120	120	N/A	6
GHS via Blue Line	6:40 AM – 3:55 PM	N/A	N/A	AM: 2 one-way trips PM: 2 one-way trips	N/A	N/A	5
4	6:40 AM – 5:19 PM	8:50 AM – 5:19 PM	N/A	120	120	N/A	6
GHS via Red Line (afternoon)	2:15 PM – 2:46 PM	N/A	N/A	2 one-way trips	N/A	N/A	5
GHS via Red Line (Morning)	6:40 AM – 7:15 AM	N/A	N/A	AM: 2 one-way trips	N/A	N/A	5
5	7:30 AM – 6:12 PM	9:30 AM – 6:12 PM	N/A	120	120	N/A	6
GHS via Purple Line	6:49 AM – 4:10 PM	N/A	N/A	AM: 2 one-way trips PM: 3 one-way trips	N/A	N/A	5
6	6:55 AM – 5:21 PM	8:55 AM – 5:21 PM	N/A	120	120	N/A	6
GHS via Yellow Line	6:58 AM – 3:15 PM	N/A	N/A	AM: 2 one-way trips PM: 3 one-way trips	N/A	N/A	5

Route Number	Weekday Service Hours	Saturday Service Hours	Sunday Service Hours	Weekday Headway (Minutes)	Saturday Headway (Minutes)	Sunday Headway (Minutes)	Days Operated
7	N/A	10:00 AM – 5:47 PM	N/A	N/A	15-30	N/A	1
8	6:41 AM – 5:10 PM	7:45 AM – 5:10 PM	N/A	120	120	N/A	6
9	5:35 AM – 5:45 PM	N/A	N/A	AM: 1 one-way trip PM: 1 one-way trip	N/A	N/A	5

Source: CATA
N/A = Not Applicable

Table 5. Seasonal Routes Span of Service and Headway

Seasonal Route	Season	Seasonal Service Dates	Service Days	Service Hours	Headway (Minutes)	Days Operated
10: Rockport Shuttle	Summer	May 17, 2025, Memorial Day Weekend, June through Labor Day, October 18, 2025 (Harvest Festival)	Sunday – Saturday	11:00 AM – 6:53 PM	20	May through June: weekends and holidays July and August: 7 days
11: Stage Fort Park Shuttle	Summer	June 21 – September 4, 2025	Saturday and Sunday	10:00 AM – 5:56 PM	60	2 (weekends and holidays)
12: Ipswich/ Essex Explorer	Summer	June 21 – September 4, 2025	Saturday and Sunday	10:00 AM – 6:32 PM	45	2 (weekends and holidays)

Source: CATA

4.1.3 Transit Service Performance

This section provides information on CATA's systemwide performance trends for fixed route and demand response services from FY 2020 to FY 2024. Transit service performance is evaluated in two categories: service effectiveness and financial performance. A comparison with peer transit systems across Massachusetts and the nation is also provided.

CATA's annual fixed route operating values are broken down in Table 6. Ridership peaked in FY 2022 due to a rebound in ridership and continued demand for the MBTA Commuter Rail

shuttle bus. This was followed by a drop to period low ridership in FY 2023, largely due to CATA's ceased operation of the MBTA Commuter Rail shuttle, as well as the termination of the workforce commuter transportation service provided for the Cape Ann Works initiative. Ridership jumped again in FY 2024 close to FY 2020 ridership levels.

Both revenue hours and revenue miles peaked in FY 2021, remained relatively steady in the following year, then dropped in FY 2023 due to ceased operation of the MBTA Commuter Rail shuttle. Revenue hours and miles in FY 2024 remained close to the same as in the previous year. Operating costs for fixed route operations increased annually from FY 2020 to FY 2022, then dipped in FY 2023 from the previous fiscal year in a similar pattern to the change in revenue hours and miles. Operating costs increased by 22 percent from FY 2023 to FY 2024.

Table 6. Annual Fixed Route Operating Statistics (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Statistic	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Ridership	167,502	139,883	182,835	132,250	162,386
Revenue Hours	19,489	31,756	30,101	21,867	19,669
Revenue Miles	271,117	407,614	406,860	250,768	253,645
Operating Costs	$2,177,205	$2,591,646	$3,310,473	$2,622,965	$3,207,263

Source: CATA, MassDOT
Note: Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus

CATA's annual operating values for demand response are broken down in Table 7. Revenue hours and revenue miles both dipped from FY 2020 to FY 2021 in parallel with ridership trends and have increased annually since that year. Operating costs followed the same pattern, a decrease in FY 2021 followed by an increase in FY 2022; however, they were more in flux over the following two years.

Table 7. Demand Response and On-Demand Operating Statistics (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Statistic	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Ridership	25,377	19,062	36,402	52,446	64,704
Revenue Hours	10,471	9,460	13,705	17,705	19,467
Revenue Miles	129,551	116,735	195,454	251,130	281,738
Operating Costs	$916,146	$801,359	$1,024,454	$867,824	$1,017,157

Source: CATA, MassDOT

4.1.3.1 Service Effectiveness

Service effectiveness describes the amount of transit service utilized per unit amount of transit service that is provided. Service effectiveness is measured using two indicators: passengers per mile and passengers per hour.

- Passengers per mile measures the average number of unlinked passenger trips taken for every vehicle revenue mile provided. Though passengers per mile indicator is a strong measure of system efficiency, it is also influenced by the length of passenger trips. Smaller values likely represent either longer trips where passengers are travelling greater distances or poorly performing system. Larger values likely represent either

shorter trips where passengers are traveling smaller distances or high-performing system.

- Passengers per hour measures the average number of unlinked passenger trips taken for every vehicle revenue hour provided. Passengers per hour is influenced by the geographic area and the average operating speed of a route. Higher values indicate a more efficient system.

Service effectiveness for CATA's fixed route and demand response services from FY 2020 to FY 2024 are illustrated in Table 8. CATA's fixed routes perform below the state and national averages for passengers per mile and passengers per hour. However, CATA has increased its route productivity since FY 2020, indicating an increase in efficiency in operations. For demand response, CATA exceeds both the state and national averages for passengers per mile and passengers per hour.

Table 8. Service Effectiveness (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Fiscal Year	Fixed Route Passengers/ Mile [a]	Fixed Route Passengers/ Hour[a]	Demand Response Passengers/ Mile	Demand Response Passengers/ Hour
FY 2020	0.62	8.59	0.20	2.42
FY 2021	0.34	4.40	0.16	2.02
FY 2022	0.45	6.07	0.19	2.66
FY 2023	0.53	6.05	0.21	2.96
FY 2024	0.64	8.26	0.23	3.32
FY 2024 Massachusetts Average [b]	1.25	17.87	0.12	1.95
National Average	1.92	23.06	0.13	1.92

Source: NTD
[a] Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus.
[b] Massachusetts average excludes MBTA (from all modes).

4.1.3.2 Financial Performance

Cost effectiveness is a measure of a transit system's performance in financial terms, indicating how efficiently funds are used to deliver the service. Many variables influence the financial efficiency of a transit agency, including the geographic area, ridership, cost of labor, and more. Cost effectiveness indicators are cost per mile, cost per hour, and cost per passenger.

- Cost per mile measures the overall expense of providing a transit service divided by the number of vehicle revenue miles provided by the service. A smaller value indicates more financially efficient system and/or faster operating speeds.
- Cost per hour measures the overall expense of providing a service divided by the number of vehicle revenue hours provided by the service. A smaller value indicates more financially efficient system and/or faster operating speeds.
- Cost per passenger measures the overall expenses required to operate the transit service divided by the number of unlinked passenger trips that were taken on the

service. A smaller value indicates a financially efficient system and/or a mode with high ridership.

Fixed Route Financial Performance

Table 9 illustrates the cost effectiveness of CATA's fixed route services from FY 2020 to FY 2024. In FY 2024, CATA exceeded the state average for all fixed route financial efficiency measures; however, CATA is below the national average for cost per mile and cost per hour. Cost effectiveness has decreased overall across the three efficiency measures since FY 2020. In FY 2022 and FY 2024, the cost per passenger decreased from the prior fiscal year, as the number of riders using the service increased more significantly than the cost of providing service.

Table 9. Fixed Route Financial Efficiency (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Fiscal Year	Cost/Mile	Cost/Hour	Cost/Passenger
FY 2020	$8.03	$111.71	$13.00
FY 2021	$6.36	$81.61	$18.53
FY 2022	$8.14	$109.98	$18.11
FY 2023	$10.46	$119.95	$19.83
FY 2024	$12.64	$163.06	$19.75
FY 2024 Massachusetts Average [a]	$9.88	$141.70	$7.93
FY 2024 National Average	$15.80	$189.95	$8.24

Source: NTD
[a] Massachusetts average excludes MBTA.
Note: Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus

Demand Response Financial Performance

Table 10 illustrates the cost effectiveness of CATA's demand response services from FY 2020 to FY 2024. CATA's demand response financial efficiency is below state and national averages for all measures, indicating that CATA provides demand response service more efficiently from a cost perspective. CATA's demand response ridership has grown since FY 2020 and has been able to maintain relatively steady year over year in operating expenses associated with the service.

Table 10. Demand Response Financial Efficiency (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Fiscal Year	Cost/Mile	Cost/Hour	Cost/Passenger
FY 2020	$7.07	$87.49	$36.10
FY 2021	$6.86	$84.71	$42.04
FY 2022	$5.24	$74.75	$28.14
FY 2023	$3.46	$49.02	$16.55
FY 2024	$3.61	$52.25	$15.72
FY 2024 Massachusetts Average [a]	$5.43	$87.07	$44.76
FY 2024 National Average	$6.32	$97.27	$50.57

Source: NTD
[a] Massachusetts average excludes MBTA.

4.1.4 Funding

In FY 2022, CATA's capital funding was sourced entirely from state funding. In the following two years, CATA increased the amount of state funds expended on capital projects, while also expending around $1 million in federal funding dollars each year. Overall, total capital funding grew from $151,000 in FY 2022 to over $1.2 million in FY 2024 (Table 11).

Table 11. Funding Sources Expended on Capital (FY 2022-FY 2024)

Funding Source	FY 2022	Percentage of FY 2022 Total	FY 2023	Percentage of FY 2023 Total	FY 2024	Percentage of FY 2024 Total
Federal	$0	0%	$1,002,337	67%	$999,000	80%
State	$150,678	100%	$486,065	33%	$250,718	20%
Local	$0	0%	$0	0%	$0	0%
Farebox	$0	0%	$0	0%	$0	0%
Other	$0	0%	$0	0%	$0	0%
TOTAL	$150,678	100%	$1,488,402	100%	$1,249,718	100%

Source: CATA

CATA is funded by a mix of federal, state, local, farebox, and other funding with an average of $4.8 million expended annually on operations from FY 2022 to FY 2024. The largest source of CATA's operating funds in FY 2024 came from state funding (over $2.4 million), followed by federal funds (over $900,000). From FY 2023 to FY 2024, CATA was able to leverage the increase of state funding for operations, which led to a reduction in the amount of federal funding expended on operations over the same time period. From FY 2022 to FY 2024, as shown in Table 12, operating funding expended overall decreased by approximately $130,000. In addition to state and federal funding sources, CATA also receives funding through local, farebox, and other sources, which consist of fares from the CATA On Demand service (beginning FY 2021), rental income, interest income, and other miscellaneous sources.

CATA also previously received COVID-era federal funding in the form of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (which had to be obligated by May 11, 2023), Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) (obligated by September 30, 2023), and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding (which had to be obligated by September 30, 2024). These fund sources could be used by CATA for both capital and operating expenses. In FY 2020, CATA received $1.5 million in CARES funding, which was then supplemented in FY 2021 by funding through ARPA and CRRSA, for a total of $3.3 million in relief funds. As of FY 2024, CATA had approximately $566,000 in remaining COVID-era relief funds.

From April 2020 through May 2022, CATA operated shuttle buses to replace MBTA Commuter Rail train service on the Newburyport/Rockport line, while MBTA conducted infrastructure upgrades, and CATA received additional revenue from MBTA for its operation of the shuttles — classified as "other funding." Due to the additional revenue from MBTA, CATA significantly reduced its expenditure of federal funds in FY 2022, as highlighted in Table 12. With the commuter shuttle service having ended in May 2022, the share of "other funding" sources expended on operations was reduced, while federal funding sources expended on operations was increased to compensate for the reduction in MBTA revenue funding associated with the shuttle operations.

Table 12. Funding Sources Expended on Operations (FY 2022-FY 2024)

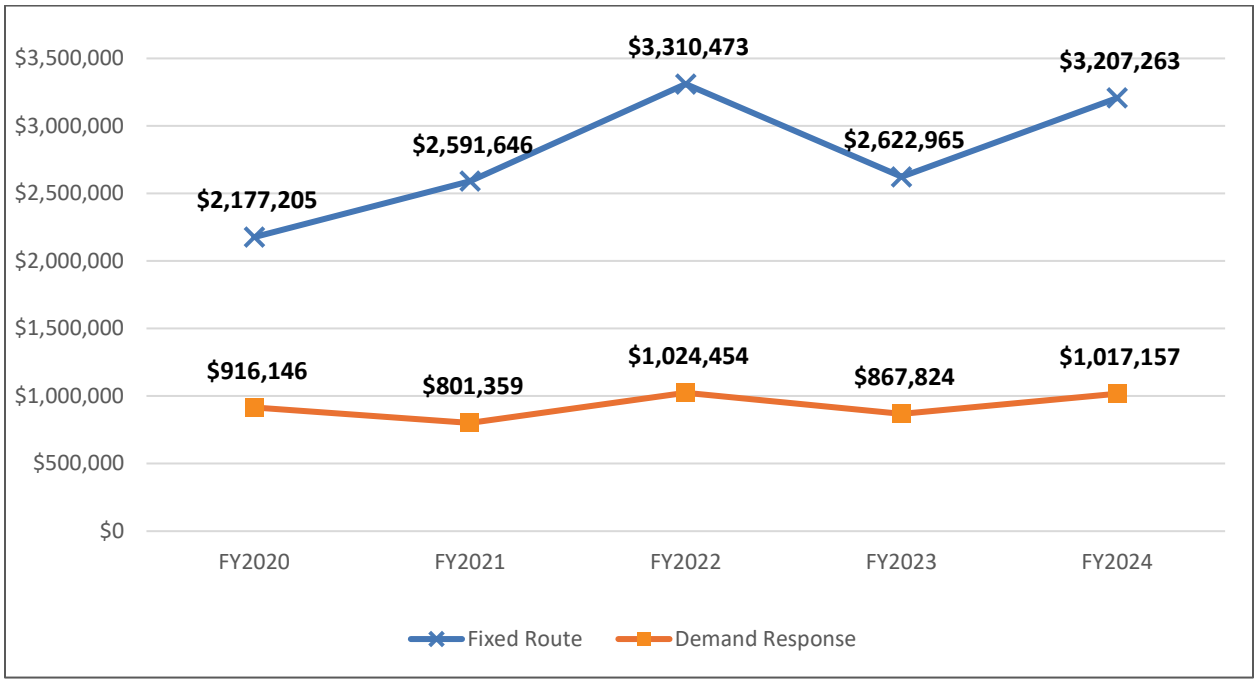
Funding Source	FY 2022	Percentage of FY 2022 Total	FY 2023	Percentage of FY 2023 Total	FY 2024	Percentage of FY 2024 Total
Federal	$110,809	2%	$1,633,965	36%	$945,811	19%
State	$1,502,964	30%	$1,517,243	33%	$2,405,382	49%
Local	$794,919	16%	$814,792	18%	$835,162	17%
Farebox	$148,395	3%	$139,277	3%	$190,812	4%
Other	$2,462,166	49%	$456,014	10%	$511,985	10%
TOTAL	$5,019,253	100.0%	$4,561,291	100.0%	$4,889,152	100.0%

Source: CATA
Note: The totals for annual funds expended in this table differ from total annual operating costs in Figure 4 due to variations in data provided by CATA versus MassDOT.

The annual operating cost for fixed route service increased year-to-year from FY 2020 to FY 2022, which is attributable to the MBTA Commuter Rail shuttle buses CATA operated during that period. After CATA ceased operation of the shuttle buses, there was a reduction in operating costs from FY 2022 to FY 2023 (Figure 4). CATA also operates the Route 9 Beverly Commuter bus, which reflects a portion of the operating costs shown in FY 2022 through FY 2024.

Demand response operating costs remained steady throughout the five-year period, with small fluctuations year-to-year and an average operating cost of approximately $945,000.

Figure 4. Annual Operating Cost by Mode (FY 2020-FY 2024)



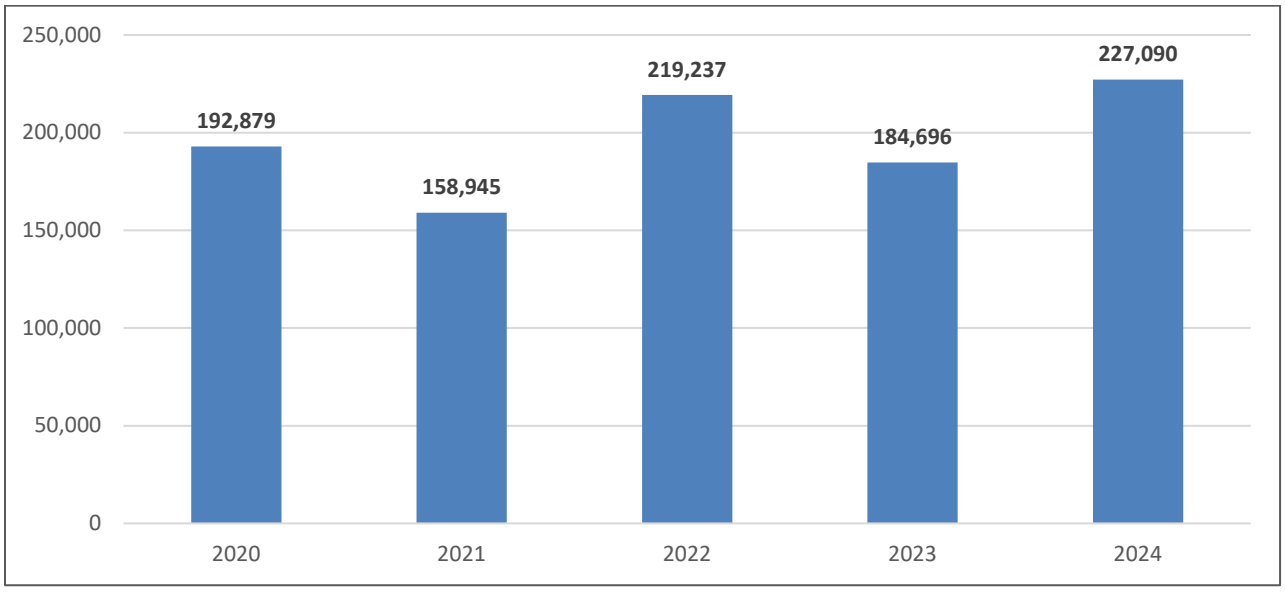
Source: MassDOT
Note: The totals for annual operating costs in this chart differ from total annual operating costs in Table 12 due to variations in data provided by MassDOT versus CATA.

Note: Fixed route operating costs are inclusive of the Route 9 Beverly Commuter bus operating costs, and demand response operating costs are inclusive of CATA On Demand operating costs (beginning FY 2021).

4.2 Ridership and Service Operations

CATA's overall system ridership is 227,090 riders as of FY 2024, representing an 18 percent increase from FY 2020 (Figure 5). Ridership dropped to a period low in FY 2021, driven by low ridership on both fixed route and demand response due to the reduced service provision in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (CATA 2022). The subsequent peak in ridership in FY 2022, an increase of approximately 60,000 riders (38 percent) from the previous fiscal year, occurred due to rebounded ridership across all modes as well as CATA's continued operation of the MBTA Commuter Rail shuttle bus. The 16 percent decrease in systemwide ridership between FY 2022 and FY 2023 came from a drop in ridership of over 53,000 fixed route riders, largely due to CATA's ceased operation of the MBTA Commuter Rail shuttle, as well as the termination of the workforce commuter transportation service provided for the Cape Ann Works initiative (CATA 2024). CATA then regained riders by FY 2024 to reach the highest system ridership recorded in the five-year period, which was driven by high ridership on fixed route, demand response, and On Demand services resulting from continued post-COVID recovery along with increased advertising, primarily on social media, and economic factors. CATA's system ridership has yet to surpass that of FY 2019, the year immediately preceding the COVID-19 pandemic (CATA 2021).

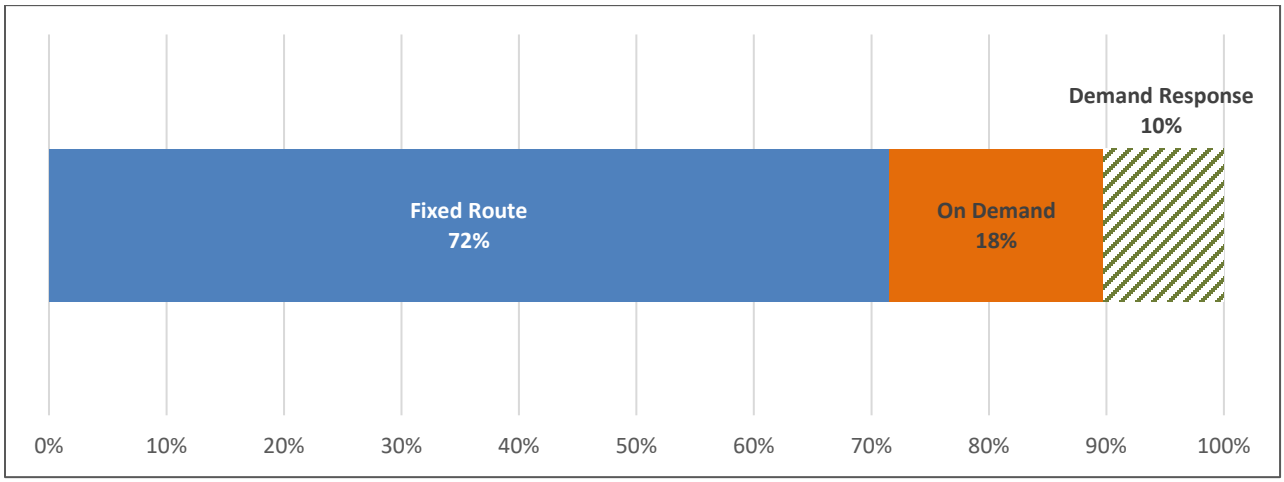
Figure 5. Annual System Ridership (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: MassDOT

In FY 2024, fixed route represented under three quarters of CATA's total ridership, and demand response and On Demand combined made up over one quarter (Figure 6). Fixed route ridership is inclusive of Route 9 Beverly Commuter ridership.

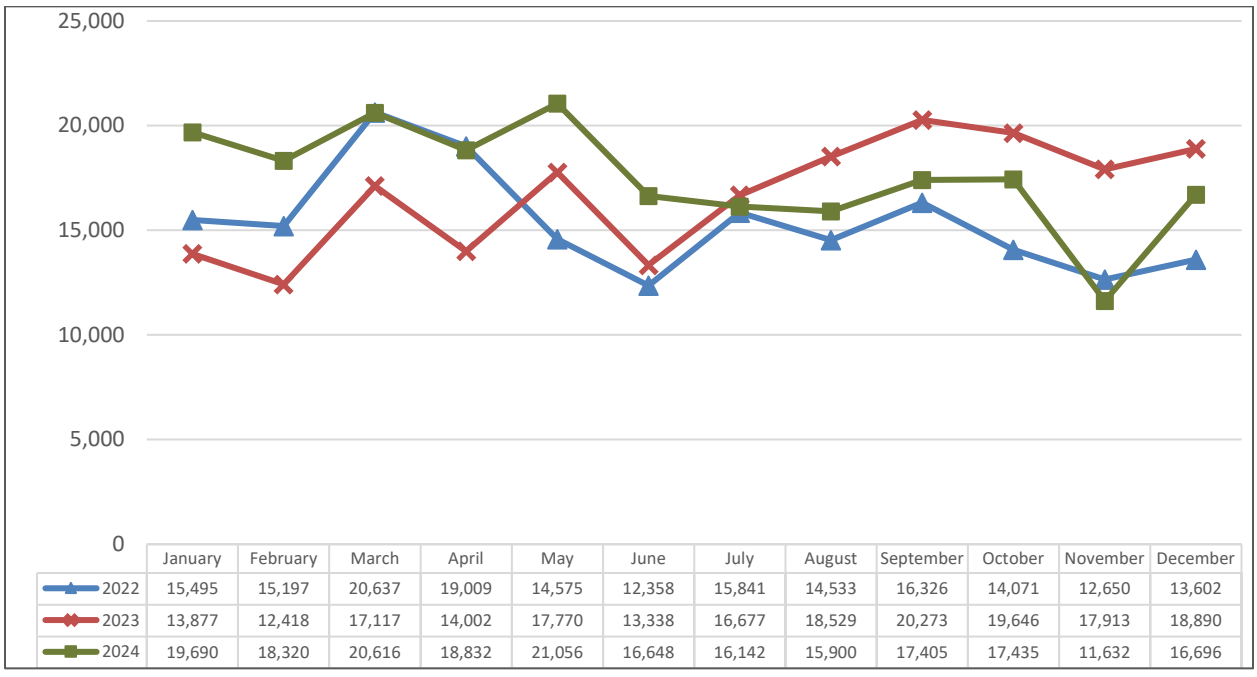
Figure 6. Ridership Breakdown by Service Type (FY 2024)



Source: MassDOT, CATA
Note: Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus.

Monthly ridership in 2022 and 2024 indicates that ridership tends to be higher in the late winter to early summer seasons, remains fairly stable through the late summer, then decreases into the fall and winter. Low ridership in the summer months is typically due to the lack of tripper service when schools are not in session, leading to a drop in student ridership on CATA buses. Monthly trends in 2023, however, showed an average upward trend, with the second half of the year seeing higher ridership than the first half (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Monthly Ridership Trends (2022-2024)



	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
2022	15,495	15,197	20,637	19,009	14,575	12,358	15,841	14,533	16,326	14,071	12,650	13,602
2023	13,877	12,418	17,117	14,002	17,770	13,338	16,677	18,529	20,273	19,646	17,913	18,890
2024	19,690	18,320	20,616	18,832	21,056	16,648	16,142	15,900	17,405	17,435	11,632	16,696

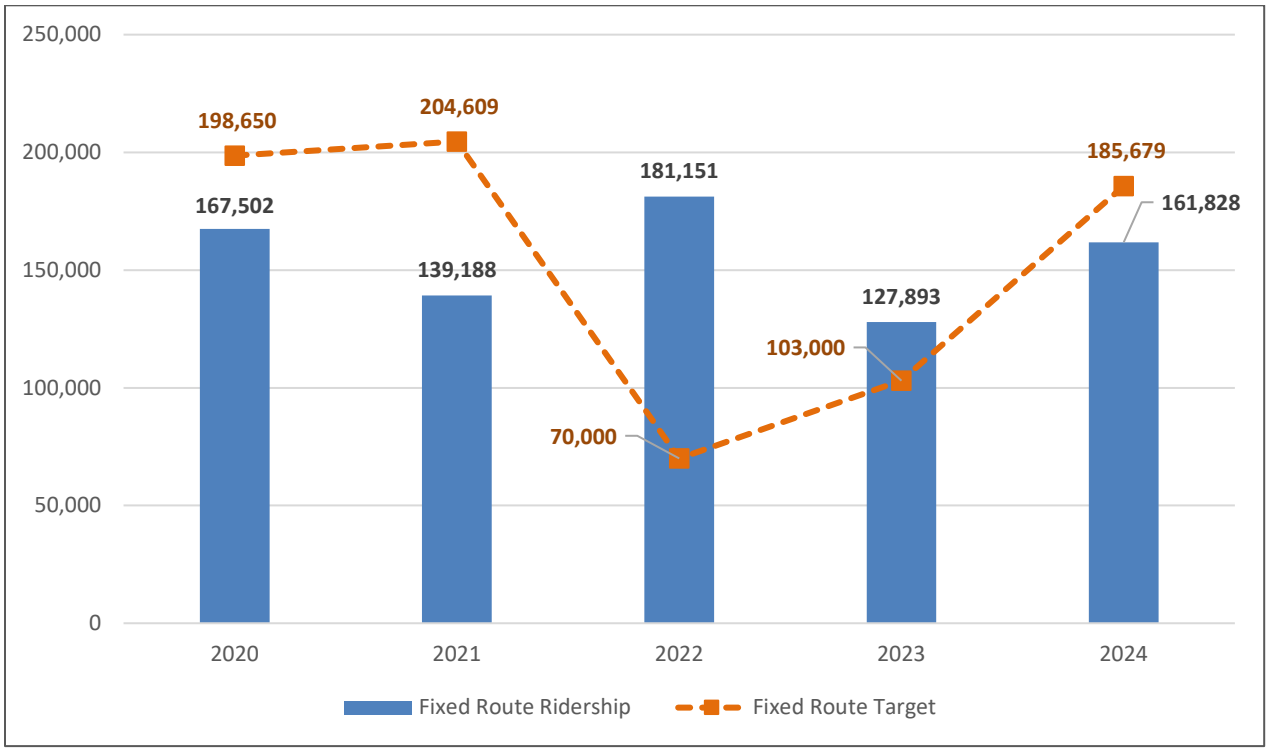
Source: MassDOT

4.2.1 Fixed Route Ridership

Fixed route service from FY 2020 to FY 2024 saw a peak in ridership in FY 2022. This peak was followed by a period low in FY 2023 of under 128,000 fixed route riders (Figure 8). Ridership

increased in FY 2024 by over 26 percent, although still under the FY 2024 fixed route ridership target by nearly 25,000 riders.

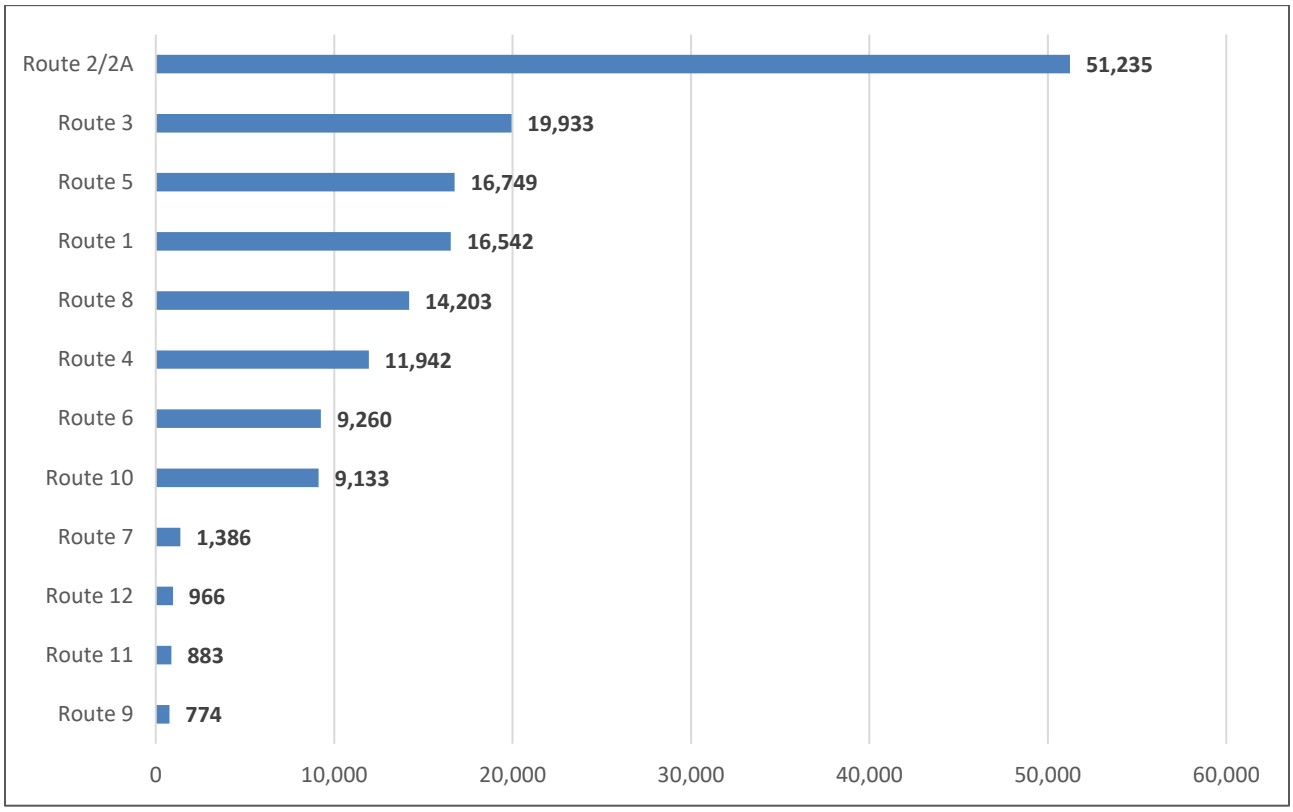
Figure 8. Fixed Route Annual Ridership (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: CATA, MassDOT

At a route level, Routes 2 (Gloucester Crossing/Business Express) and 2A (Gloucester Crossing/Blackburn Express) report a combined annual ridership that exceeds ridership on Route 3, the second highest ridership route, by 157 percent (Figure 9). Route 2 operates hourly on both weekdays and Saturdays, circulating through downtown Gloucester and serving numerous popular trip destinations — older adult and disabled housing developments, medical facilities and shopping centers, the Senior Center, the Gloucester Commuter Rail station, Blackburn Industrial Park, and more. Route 2A operates every two hours on both weekdays and Saturdays and runs a modified route through downtown Gloucester to Blackburn Industrial Park. The ridership on Route 2 also includes the tripper service. Routes 7, 12, 11, and 9 represent the four lowest ridership routes, with under 1,500 annual riders on each route. Route 7 is the Mall Shuttle operating on Saturdays only, Routes 11 and 12 are the seasonal Stage Fort Park and Ipswich/Essex Explorer shuttles, and Route 9 is the Beverly Commuter route operating one round trip on weekdays.

Figure 9. Annual Ridership by Route (FY 2024)



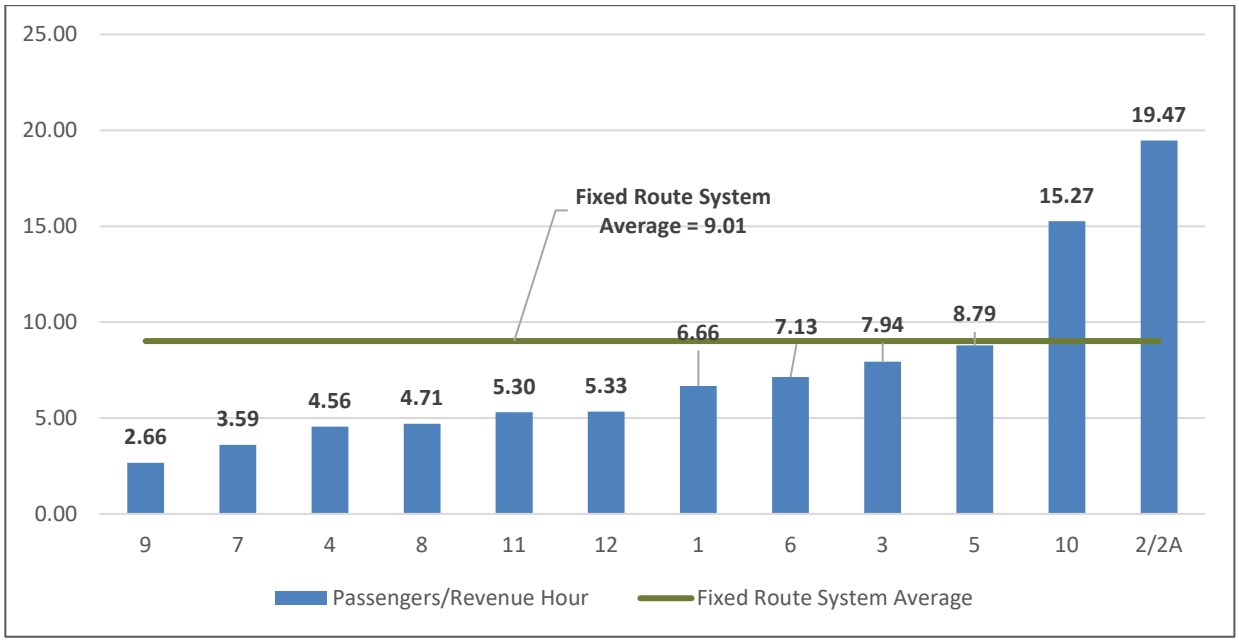
Source: CATA
Note: Route-level ridership data are combined for Routes 2 and 2A.
Note: The sum of route-level ridership (153,000 riders) is lower than the overall fixed route ridership noted in Figure 8, likely due to inaccurate data capture using the fareboxes; if fareboxes are not properly configured to the driver for the specific route being operated, ridership is captured as unclassified as opposed to being automatically associated with a route.

4.2.2 Fixed Route Operations

At a system level, CATA's fixed routes served an average of just over nine passengers per revenue hour, based on FY 2024 route-level ridership data and FY 2025 route-level revenue hour data. Route-level revenue hour data for Route 8 (City of Beverly Shuttle) were calculated based on CATA's posted schedule. Route-level revenue hour data are not available to the same extent for FY 2024 compared to FY 2025. FY 2025 revenue hour data were therefore considered instead of FY 2024, as it would not be significantly different from FY 2024 and has greater data reliability.

Route-level data in this section includes trippers operated by CATA. Route 2/2A carried nearly three times the number of passengers per revenue hour compared to the average of all other fixed routes, due to its significantly higher overall route ridership. The lowest performing routes based on this metric were Routes 9, 7, and 4 (Figure 10).

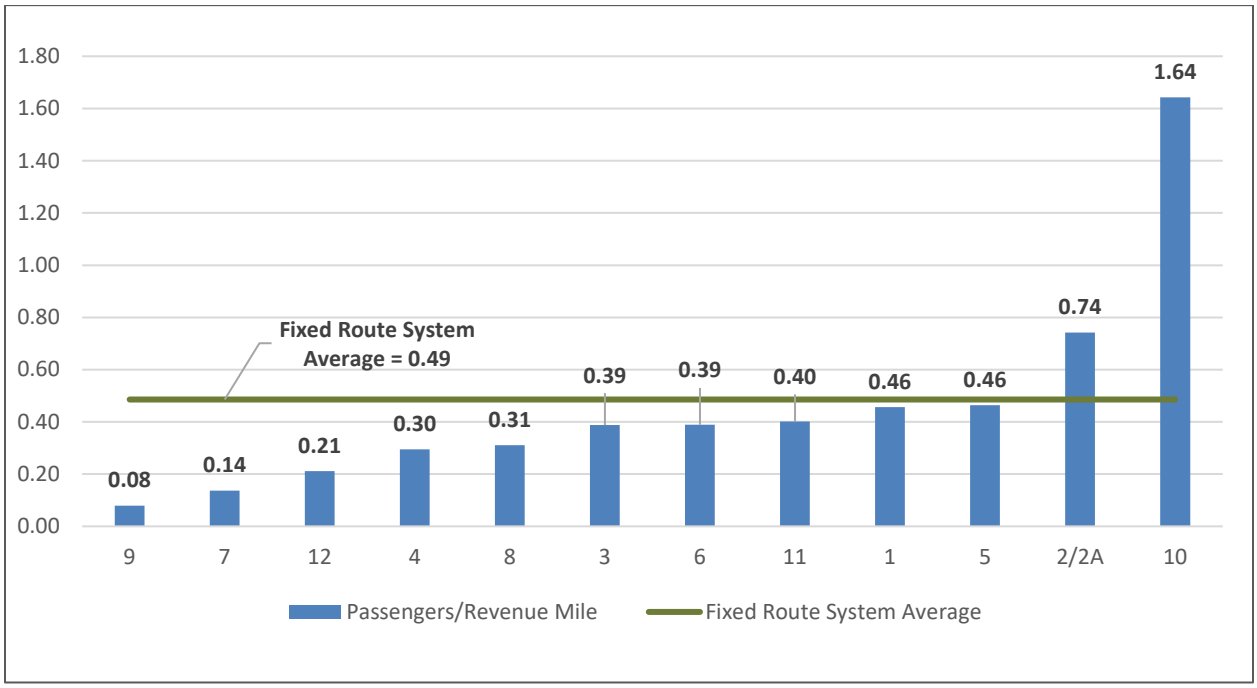
Figure 10. Passengers per Revenue Hour by Fixed Route (FY 2024)



Source: CATA (FY 2024 and FY 2025 data)
Note: The fixed route system average in this chart differs from the average noted for FY 2024 in Table 8 due to variations in data provided by CATA versus MassDOT sources, as well as variations between reported total ridership and vehicle revenue hours and the sums of route-level ridership and vehicle revenue hour values.

CATA's fixed routes served an average of 0.49 passengers per revenue mile, based on FY 2024 route-level ridership data and FY 2025 route-level revenue mile data. This average is skewed by the ridership rate per revenue mile on Route 10 (Summer Rockport Shuttle), which carried over four times the number of passengers per revenue mile compared to the average of all other fixed routes. Just as with the passenger per revenue hour metric, Route 2/2A carries the most passengers per revenue mile of all routes operating year-round. The lowest performing routes were Route 9 and Route 7 at 0.08 passengers per mile and 0.14 passengers per mile, respectively (Figure 11). Low performance on these routes is expected, as they both operate longer distances outside of the CATA service area with no intermediate stops. CATA does not have route-level ridership data for Route 2A, and route-level revenue mile data are not available for Route 8 (City of Beverly Shuttle). Additionally, route-level revenue mile data are not available to the same extent for FY 2024 compared to FY 2025. FY 2025 revenue mile data were therefore considered instead of FY 2024, as it would not be significantly different from FY 2024 and has greater data reliability.

Figure 11. Passengers per Revenue Mile by Fixed Route (FY 2024)



Source: CATA (FY 2024 and FY 2025 data)
Note: The fixed route system average in this chart differs from the average noted for FY 2024 in Table 8, due to variations in data provided by CATA versus MassDOT sources, as well as variations between reported total ridership and vehicle revenue hours and the sums of route-level ridership and vehicle revenue hour values.

CATA's operating statistics for fixed routes are broken down by route in Table 13, with route-level ridership data from FY 2024 and revenue hours and miles data from FY 2025. Just as FY 2025 data are included for route-level revenue hours and miles in the passengers per hour and per mile analyses by route, FY 2025 route-level revenue hours and miles data are presented in Table 12. Route 2/2A was the highest performing route when considering overall ridership and passengers per revenue hour, and Route 10 had the highest performance according to passenger trips per revenue mile. Routes that performed the lowest in passenger trips per revenue hour were Routes 9, 7, and 4, and those that performed lowest in passenger trips per revenue mile were Routes 9, 7, and 12. School tripper ridership, revenue hours, and revenue miles are included in their corresponding routes.

Table 13. Operating Statistics by Route (FY 2024 and FY 2025)

Route	FY 2024 Ridership	FY 2025 Revenue Hours	Passenger Trips/ Revenue Hour	FY 2025 Revenue Miles	Passenger Trips/ Revenue Mile
1	16,542	2,483	6.66	36,275	0.46
2/2A [a]	51,235	2,632	19.47	69,077	0.74
3 [a]	19,933	2,512	7.94	51,402	0.39
4 [a]	11,942	2,621	4.56	40,456	0.30
5 [a]	16,749	1,906	8.79	36,088	0.46
6 [a]	9,260	1,298	7.13	23,790	0.39

Route	FY 2024 Ridership	FY 2025 Revenue Hours	Passenger Trips/ Revenue Hour	FY 2025 Revenue Miles	Passenger Trips/ Revenue Mile
7	1,386	386	3.59	10,140	0.14
8	14,203	3,018	4.71	N/A	N/A
9	774	291	2.66	9,724	0.08
10	9,133	598	15.27	5,561	1.64
11	883	167	5.30	2,200	0.40
12	966	181	5.33	4,576	0.21

Source: CATA, MassDOT
[a] Each route's ridership, vehicle revenue hours, and vehicle revenue miles aggregate the regular route and corresponding tripper route data, as applicable.
N/A = Not Applicable

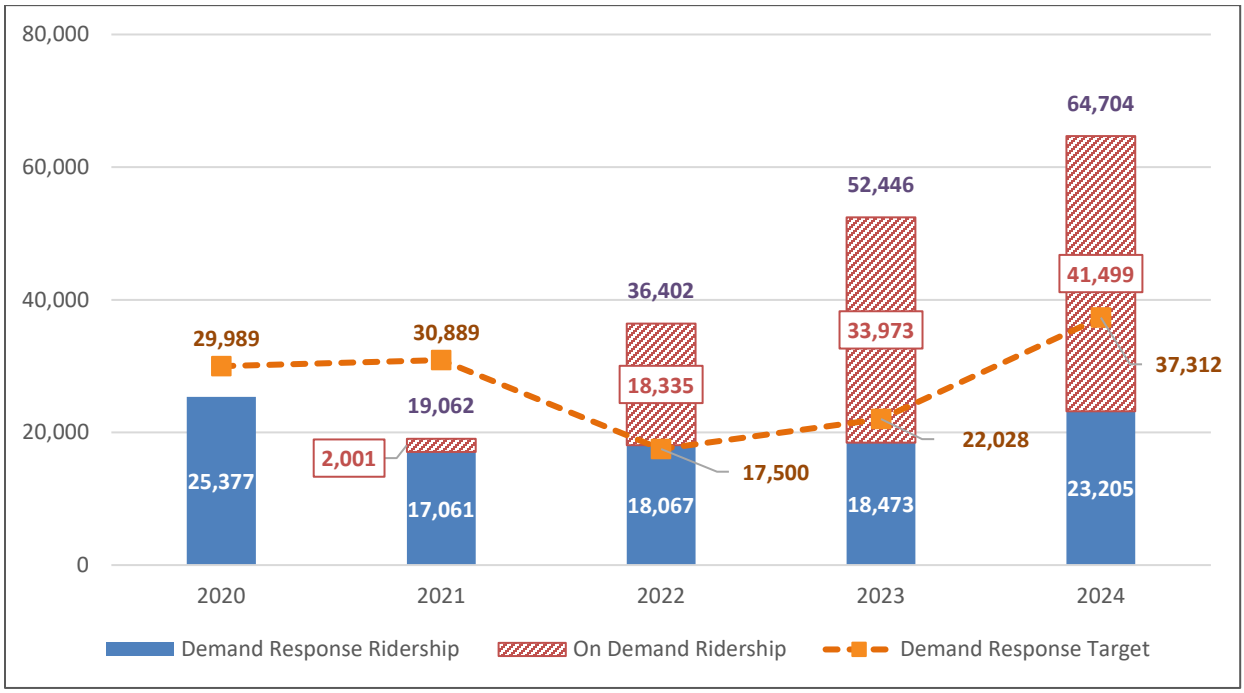
4.2.3 Demand Response and On Demand Ridership and Operations

CATA provides ADA service in Rockport and Gloucester year-round, as well as in Ipswich and Essex seasonally. Year-round Essex fixed route service and corresponding ADA Dial-a-Ride service began in FY 2025. Dial-a-Ride service is operated in Gloucester, Rockport, Ipswich, Essex, and Hamilton for individuals over 60 years old and/or with disabilities. As of FY 2024, Manchester-by-the-Sea did not participate in CATA's Dial-a-Ride services. The Dial-a-Ride service area was expanded to include Manchester-by-the-Sea on August 5, 2025. CATA On Demand is an on-demand transit service available to the general public in a subzone of Gloucester. Combined, demand response and On Demand ridership represent 28 percent of the overall system ridership.

Annual demand response ridership – including ADA Paratransit, Dial-a-Ride, and CATA On Demand ridership – dipped in FY 2021 but has increased year-to-year since, at an average rate of 11 percent (Figure 12). CATA On Demand ridership has seen more significant growth year after year since it began near the end of FY 2021 in April 2021, averaging an annual increase rate of over 300 percent and surpassing demand response ridership in its second year of operation. This high growth can be attributed to riders prioritizing a more customized service, the On Demand operating zone being centered over the downtown area of Gloucester where transit demand and propensity are higher, and the service operating later than CATA's fixed routes, which provides workers with non-traditional schedules a public transportation option. In addition, On Demand provides a more reliable alternative to work commuters during the morning rush hour. Over the years since the service's launch, these factors have worked in tandem to boost On Demand ridership.

In FY 2022, demand response ridership just surpassed the target of 17,500 riders by over 500 riders, and the On Demand ridership jumped from 2,000 riders in FY 2021 to just above demand response ridership levels in FY 2022. Demand response ridership did not experience a significant increase in FY 2023, while On Demand ridership increased by over 85 percent. In FY 2024; a more significant increase of nearly 26 percent occurred for demand response ridership compared to the previous fiscal year, and On Demand ridership rose by over 22 percent.

Figure 12. Demand Response Annual Ridership (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: CATA, MassDOT

CATA's ADA and non-ADA Dial-a-Ride services track the number of denied trips (for Dial-a-Ride only; CATA does not deny ADA trips), missed trips, no-shows, and late cancellations. The On Demand service tracks the number of denied trips, missed trips, no-shows, same-day cancellations, and other errors. CATA uses the following definitions for each of these cases:

- Denied Trip: A trip that cannot be accommodated within one hour of the requested time.
- Missed Trip: A trip "missed" by the system due to scheduling errors, customer appointment cancellation, emergencies, or other errors that are outside the customer's control.
- No-show: A rider is not present at the scheduled pick-up place and time, and did not call to cancel their reservation at least one hour before the scheduled pick-up. Riders are not considered no-shows if the reason for missing a ride is beyond their control.
- Late cancellation: A trip that is canceled within an hour of the trip.
- Same day cancellation: A trip cancellation that occurs on the same day, but more than 60 minutes before the pickup time.
- Other Errors: May include errors associated with dispatchers failing to enter a trip, a trip being entered into the system wrong, or problems with the software.

CATA's annual demand response, inclusive of Dial-a-Ride and ADA service metrics, is broken down in Table 14, and annual CATA On Demand metrics are in Table 15. The proportion of denied trips was null for demand response from FY 2020 to FY 2024, and that of missed trips was null for both demand response and On Demand throughout the five-year period. Demand response late cancellations have remained essentially null as well. Demand response no-shows saw an overall decline from FY 2020 to FY 2023, but increased in FY 2024, while On Demand no-shows increased at an average rate of 28 percent annually. The rate of same day cancellations for On Demand service peaked in FY 2022, then remained consistent at 7.3

percent from FY 2023 to FY 2024. Other errors occurred at a decreasing rate from FY 2021 to FY 2024, reaching a low of 1.9 percent in FY 2024.

Table 14. Demand Response Metrics (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Metric	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Average Trips/Passenger	36.31	35.00	35.65	33.08	36.67
% Denied Trips	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
% Missed Trips	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
% No-show	4.0%	4.2%	2.0%	1.3%	2.4%
% Late Cancellation	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: CATA

Table 15. On-Demand Metrics (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Metric	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Average Trips/Passenger	N/A	10.64	33.34	41.89	43.18
% Denied Trips	N/A	4.8%	25.2%	14.9%	22.4%
% Missed Trips	N/A	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
% No-show	N/A	0.5%	0.8%	0.8%	1.1%
% Same Day Cancellation	N/A	5.0%	8.3%	7.3%	7.3%
% Other Error	N/A	6.3%	2.7%	2.2%	1.9%

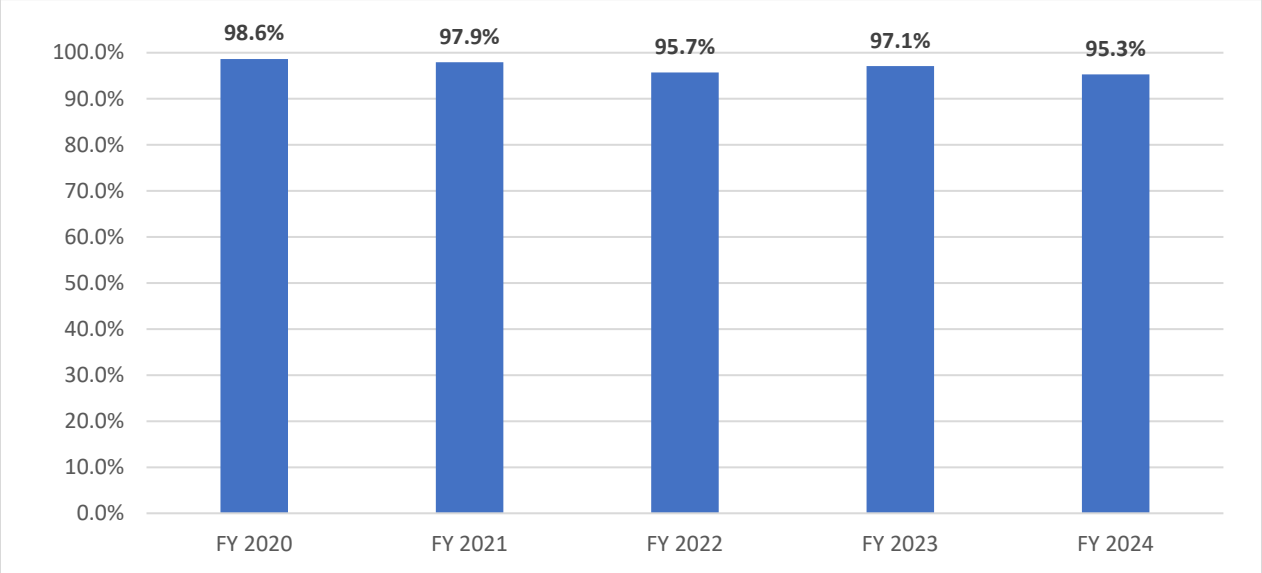
Source: CATA
N/A = Not Applicable

4.2.4 On-Time Performance and Trip Completion

For CATA's fixed route service, on time is when a vehicle pulls out of the garage on schedule. CATA does not currently have the resources to track on-time trip performance beyond pull out. The on-time performance target for fixed route operations is 100 percent.

Through FY 2024, CATA tracked on-time performance for ADA demand response services only. On August 11, 2025, CATA deployed a new paratransit software that tracks performance on all demand response services — ADA, senior Dial-a-Ride, and microtransit. Prior to this deployment, CATA tracked on-time performance for ADA trips only. ADA paratransit trips are considered on time when the vehicle arrives either 15 minutes before or after the scheduled pickup time. In addition, drop-off should be no more than 30 minutes prior to the requested time for the trip to be considered on time. The on-time performance target for demand response operations is 100 percent. From FY 2020 through FY 2024, CATA saw an overall downward trend in ADA paratransit on-time performance, at an average annual decrease rate of 0.8 percent (Figure 13).

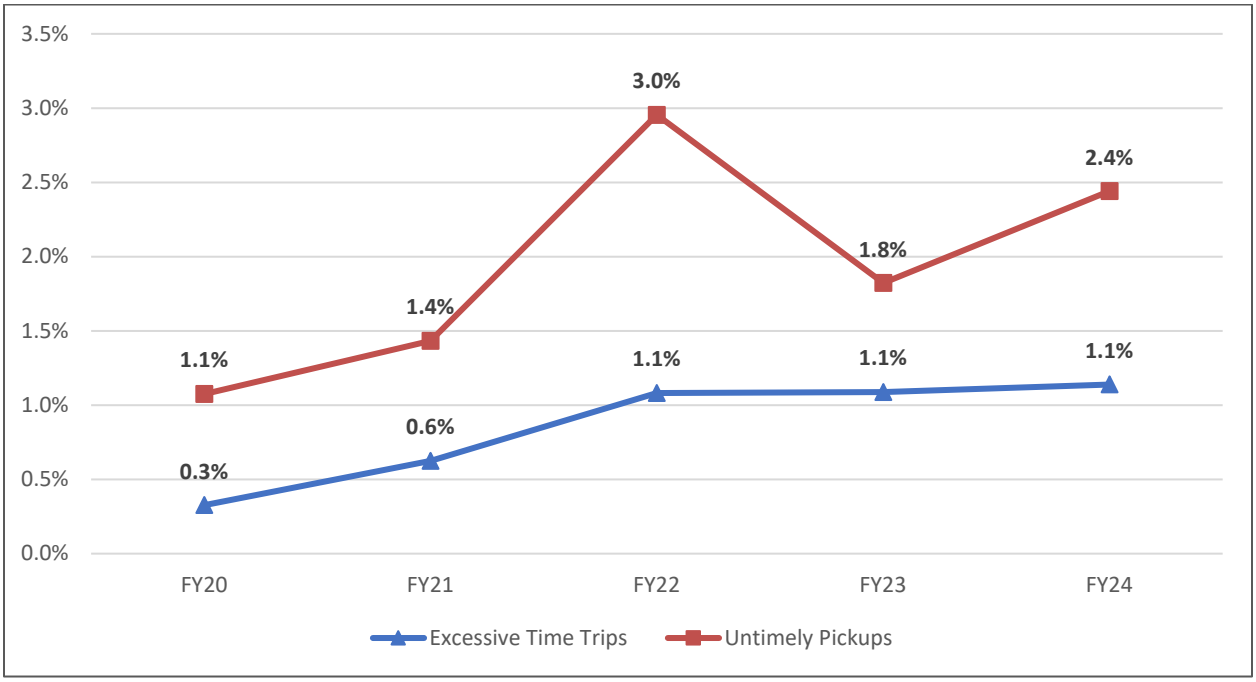
Figure 13. ADA Demand Response On-Time Performance (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: CATA

CATA tracks untimely pickups and excessive trip times as part of its ADA paratransit on-time performance tracking. Untimely pickups refer to trips where the vehicle reaches the pickup location more than 15 minutes early or drops off a customer more than 30 minutes before the scheduled drop off time. Trips are characterized as excessive time trips when a customer is riding in the vehicle for an excessive period of time (over an hour). Untimely pickups are more common than excessive time trips and followed an upward trend from FY 2020 to FY 2024. There was a peak in untimely pickups in FY 2022, when the rate of these trips more than doubled from the previous year. Excessive time trips increased from FY 2020 to FY 2022 and remained stable at 1.1 percent over the following two years (Figure 14).

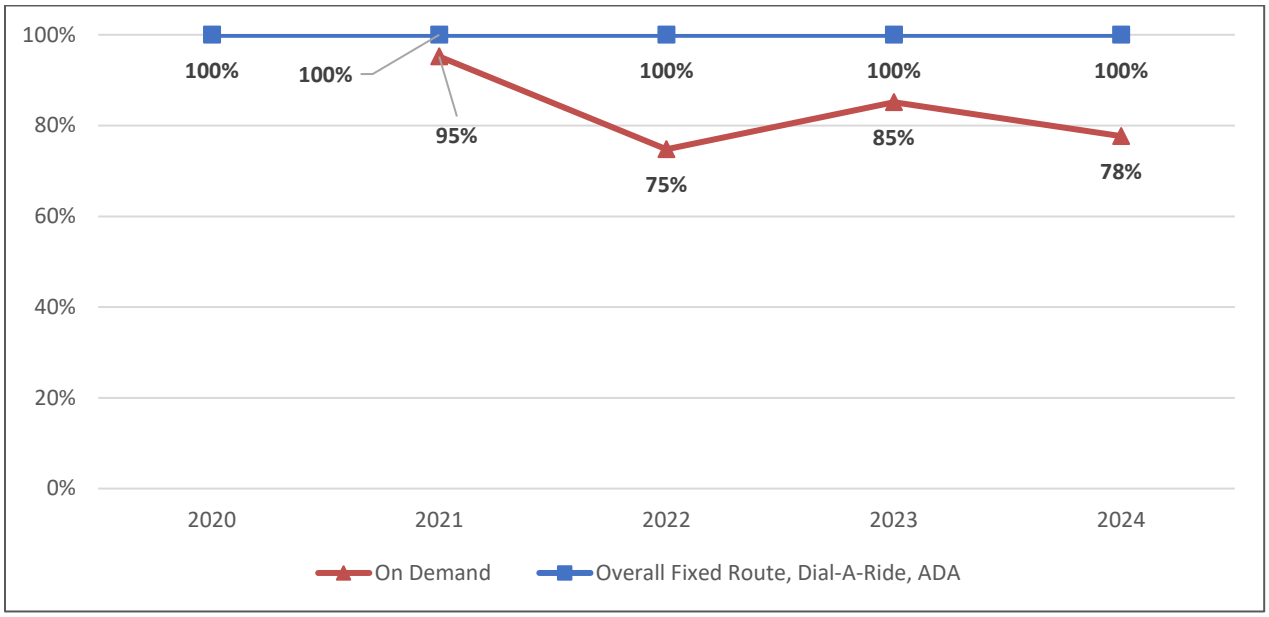
Figure 14. ADA Paratransit Untimely Pickups and Excessive Trip Times (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: CATA

CATA has operated 100 percent of scheduled fixed route, Dial-a-Ride, and ADA demand response trips (CATA does not deny ADA trips) between FY 2020 and FY 2024 (Figure 15). CATA's On Demand service has reported an overall declining trend in fulfilled trip requests since it started operating in April 2021, with an average decrease rate of 5.5 percent.

Figure 15. Scheduled/Requested Trips Operated (FY 2020-FY 2024)

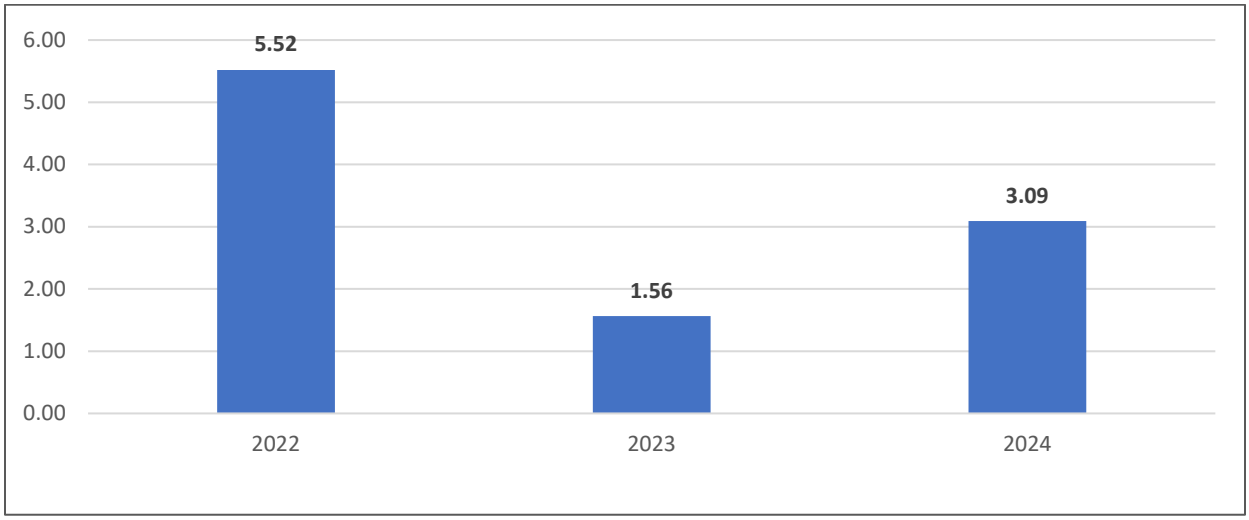


Source: MassDOT, CATA

4.2.5 Customer Service

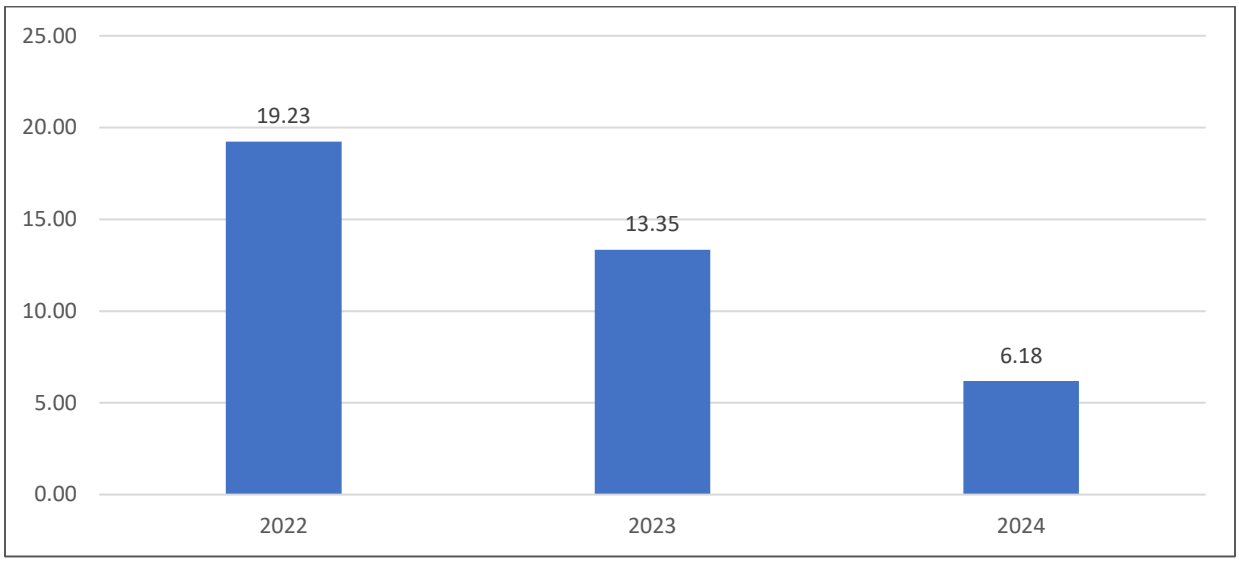
Since 2022, CATA has tracked the number of complaints per 100,000 passenger trips to normalize complaints across fluctuating ridership. The highest rate of valid complaints on both fixed route service and demand response service occurred in FY 2022. In FY 2023, the complaint rate for fixed route dropped to a low of 1.56 valid complaints per 100,000 passenger trips, then increased again in the following year (Figure 16). The annual valid complaint rate on demand response decreased from FY 2022 to FY 2024, averaging a 42 percent decrease annually (Figure 17). CATA successfully tracked customer phone calls in calendar years 2021 and 2022, recording total calls to queue, calls abandoned, and calls timed out. During this period, if an inbound call was not completed or immediately picked up, most often it was sent to the queue (when a caller is transferred to the waiting room) (Figure 18).

Figure 16. Number of Valid Complaints per 100,000 Passenger Trips: Fixed Route (FY 2022-FY 2024)



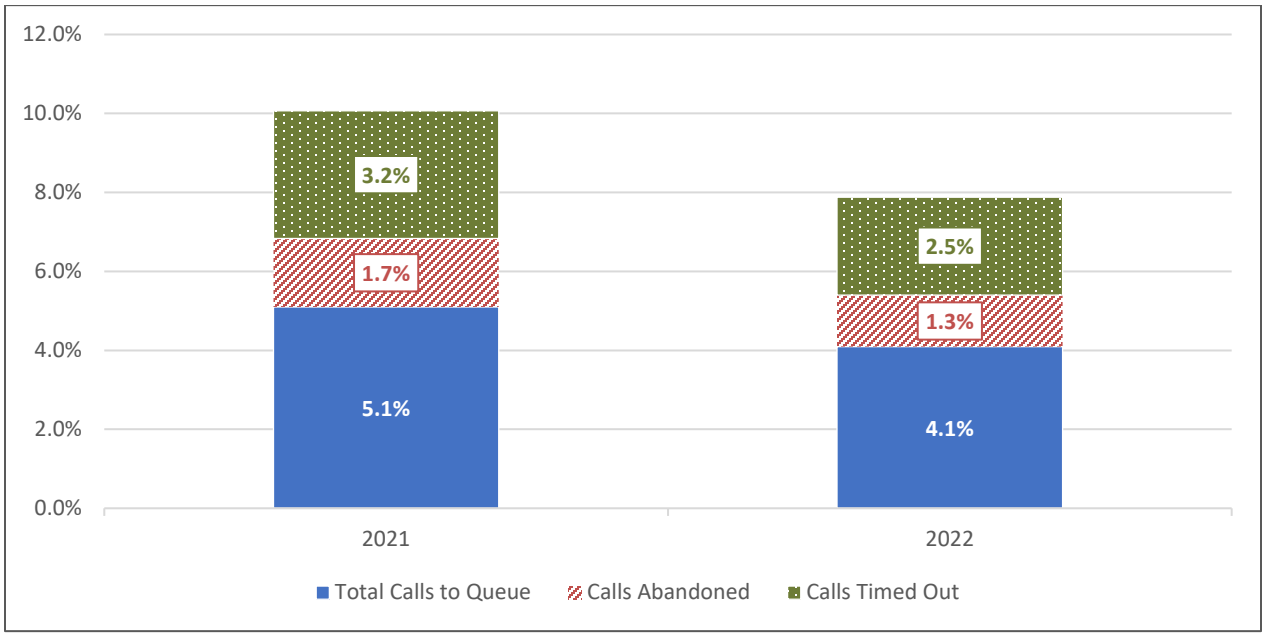
Source: CATA

Figure 17. Number of Valid Complaints per 100,000 Passenger Trips: Demand Response (FY 2022-FY 2024)



Source: CATA

Figure 18. Incomplete Customer Phone Call Outcomes (2021-2022)



Source: CATA

4.3 Regional Connections and Partnerships

CATA provides direct connections to four MBTA Commuter Rail stations via fixed routes year-round, including Rockport, Gloucester, West Gloucester, and Beverly. Fixed route connections to the Ipswich MBTA Commuter Rail station are offered through CATA's summer Ipswich/Essex Explorer fixed route service. Demand response services provide older adults and people with disabilities year-round access to the aforementioned stations, in addition to Hamilton/Wenham and Manchester stations.

In addition to operating the Beverly Commuter route, which connects the Rockport, Gloucester, and Beverly MBTA Commuter Rail stations, CATA is contracted with the City of Beverly to operate the Beverly Shuttle fixed loop route within the community. This service provides CATA riders with greater regional mobility and provides a direct connection between the CATA and MBTA service areas.

CATA partners with local COAs to provide enhanced public transportation options for resident older adults or people with disabilities. Ipswich residents may request out-of-town medical transportation services, Gloucester older adults may participate in Cape Ann Seniors on the GO! for scheduled shopping trips, and Essex and Hamilton older adults benefit from transportation services serving towns outside the CATA service area.

CATA also continues to explore partnership opportunities with other RTAs for joint procurement efforts. Most recently, CATA and Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority jointly procured Spare Labs on demand and paratransit scheduling, dispatching, and management software. The software was deployed at CATA on August 11, 2025.

4.4 Asset Management

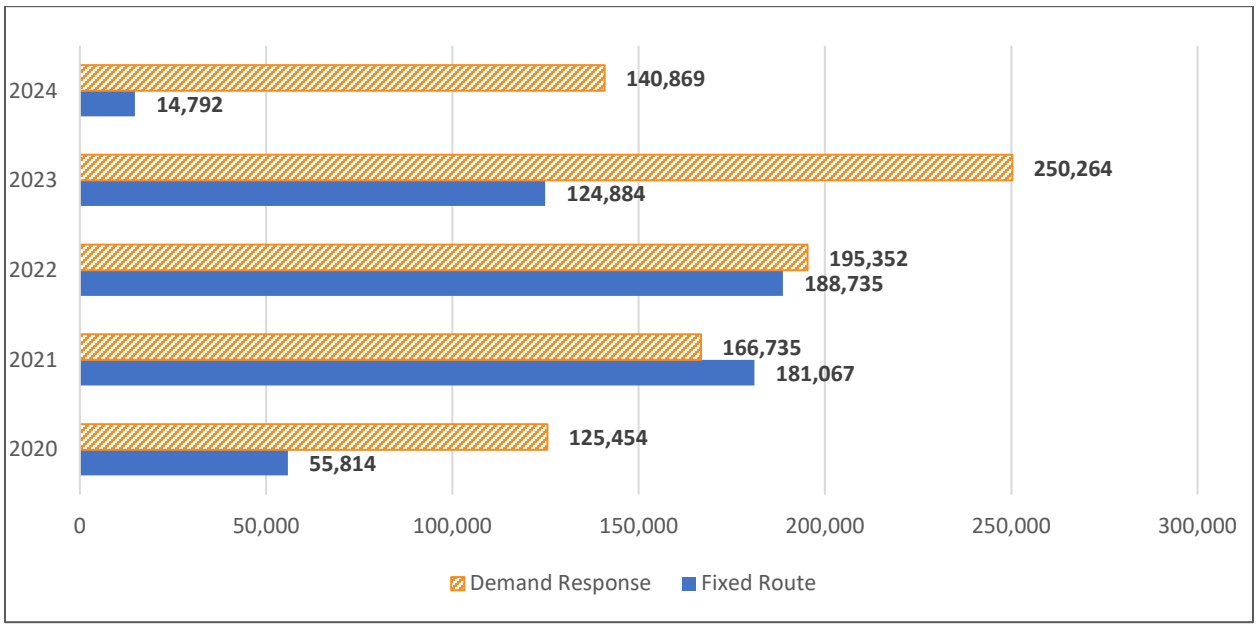
CATA manages transit operations out of its facility in Gloucester and operates its fixed route, Dial-a-Ride, ADA, and On Demand services with a fleet of 32 revenue vehicles with dedicated vehicles for both service types, fixed route and demand response. This section highlights the data CATA tracks and the targets it sets related to the condition, maintenance, and

performance of its assets, as well as any implemented or planned technology upgrades to support operations.

4.4.1 Maintenance

Mean miles between major mechanical failures provides a means of understanding the annual frequency of major mechanical failures in the context of revenue miles traveled. A higher average of miles between major mechanical failures indicates a lower rate of failures. The National Transit Database (NTD) defines major mechanical failures as "a failure of some mechanical element of the revenue vehicle that prevents the vehicle from completing a scheduled revenue trip or from starting the next scheduled revenue trip because actual movement is limited or because of safety concerns." CATA experienced a peak in the mean miles traveled between major mechanical failures on fixed route vehicles in FY 2022 and a peak on demand response vehicles in FY 2023 (Figure 19). On fixed route vehicles, the mean miles between major mechanical failures dropped over threefold from FY 2020 to FY 2022, indicating a decrease in failure frequency. From FY 2022 to FY 2024, however, the frequency of major mechanical failures on fixed routes increased, indicated by the drop in mean miles between failures to a five-year period low of 14,792 (a 92 percent decrease). This is likely due to the high age of vehicles in CATA's fleet. The rate of major mechanical failures on demand response vehicles occurred at an increasingly lower rate from FY 2020 to FY 2023, although this was followed by a 44 percent reduction in mean miles traveled between major mechanical failures in FY 2024.

Figure 19. Mean Miles Between Major Mechanical Failures (FY 2020-FY 2024)

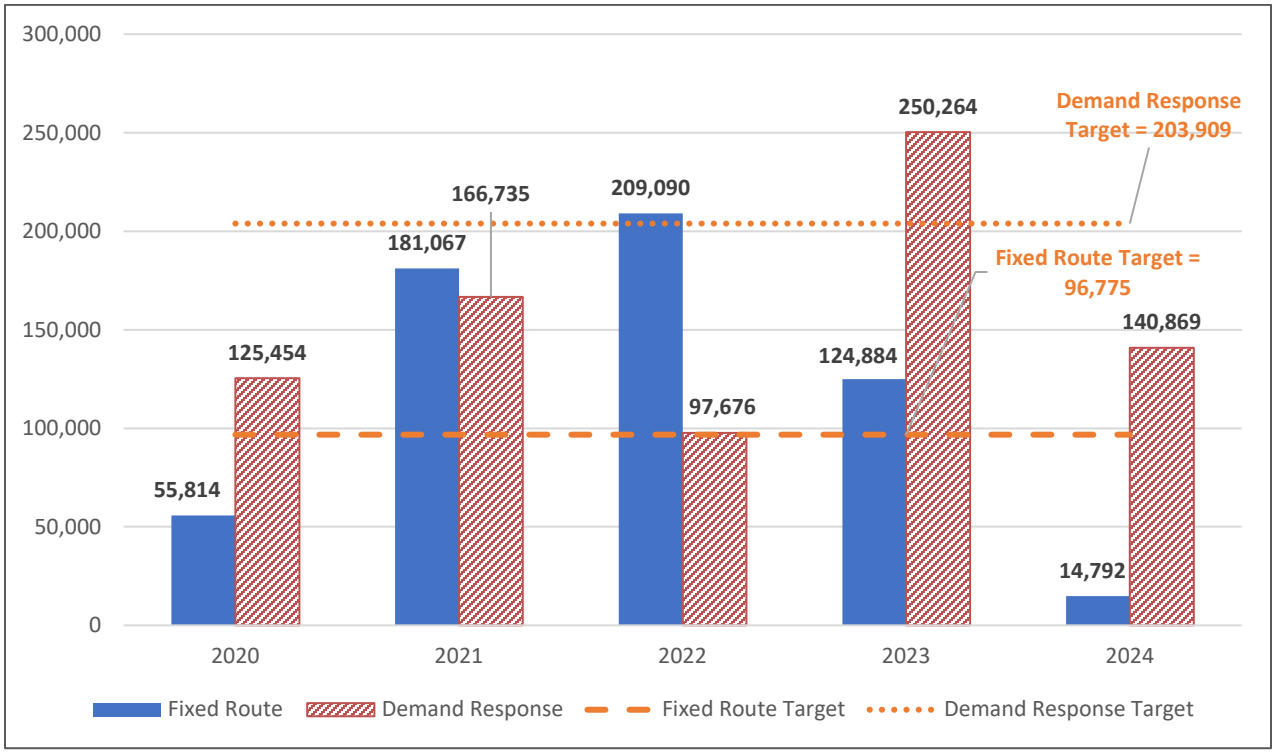


Source: CATA

Similar to the mean miles traveled between major mechanical failures, mean miles traveled between road calls provides a means of understanding the annual frequency of road call occurrences in the context of revenue miles traveled. A higher average of miles between road calls indicates a lower rate of road calls. Miles traveled between road calls on fixed route service increased annually from FY 2020 to FY 2022, reaching a period-low road call rate in which the average miles traveled between road calls in FY 2022 was over double the CATA-identified fixed route target. The road call rate then increased annually through FY 2024, reaching a period-high road call rate of less than 15,000 miles traveled on average between calls (Figure 20). The rate of road calls for demand response fluctuated over the five-year

period, with the highest road call rate recorded in FY 2022 and the lowest in FY 2023. FY 2023 was the only year in which the average miles traveled between road calls exceeded the CATA-identified target for demand response.

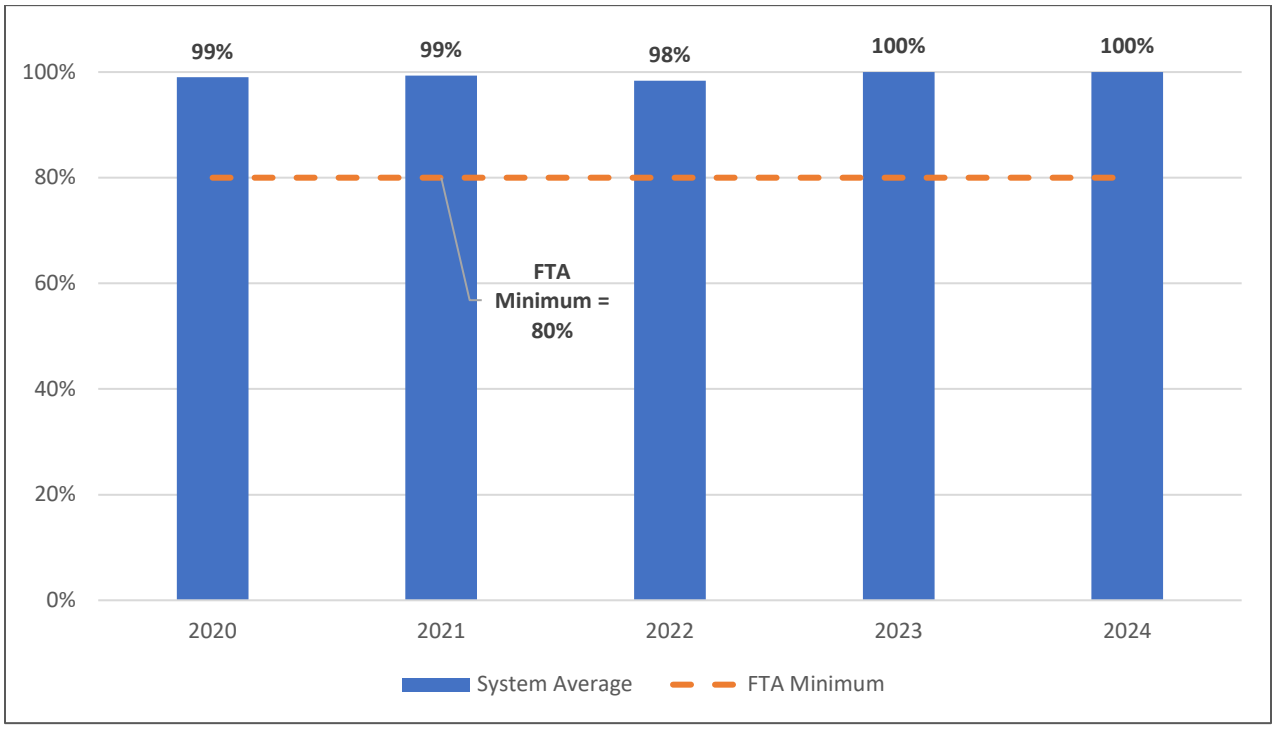
Figure 20. Miles Between Road Calls (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: CATA

FTA has a set minimum percentage of 80 percent for systemwide preventable maintenance completed on time, as shown in Figure 21 (FTA 2018). CATA continued to exceed this minimum from FY 2020 to FY 2024, with 100 percent of preventive maintenance performed on time in FY 2024.

Figure 21. Systemwide Preventive Maintenance Performed On-Time (FY 2020–FY 2024)



Source: CATA

4.4.2 Vehicles

CATA operates a total of 32 revenue vehicles, with buses and cutaway vehicles making up a significant portion of the rolling stock (Table 16). Per the vehicle replacement standards defined in CATA's Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan (CATA 2018), 13 percent of the agency's buses and 7 percent of cutaways are at or past their useful life benchmark. CATA has four 29 foot low-emission diesel bus replacements programmed for FY 2025, and an additional three bus replacements programmed for FY 2026.

CATA has 10 revenue vehicles operated in maximum service for fixed route operations, with 17 vehicles available for maximum service, and 10 vehicles operated in maximum service for demand response, with 14 demand response vehicles available for maximum service. The spare ratio for CATA's fixed route service is 70 percent, and the spare ratio for demand response service is 40 percent. FTA does not require a maximum spare ratio for operators of fewer than 50 fixed route revenue vehicles.

Table 16. Vehicle Inventory Summary (FY 2024)

Vehicle Type	Total Number	Average Age (Years)	Average Mileage	Useful Life Benchmark (Years)	Percentage at or Past Useful Life Benchmark
Bus	16	8	163,764	14	13%
Cutaway	15	8	149,579	10	7%
Van	1	4	90,218	8	0%

Vehicle Type	Total Number	Average Age (Years)	Average Mileage	Useful Life Benchmark (Years)	Percentage at or Past Useful Life Benchmark
Trucks or other rubber tire vehicles [a]	1	9	N/A	14	0%
Automobile [a]	2	8	N/A	8	100%

Source: CATA
[a] Non-revenue vehicles
N/A = Not Applicable

4.4.3 Facilities

CATA owns its Administration and Operations facility, located in Gloucester (Table 17). The facility, built in 1980, has a Transit Economic Requirements Model (TERM) rating of four, on a scale of one to five, indicating the facility is in good condition.

Table 17. Facility Inventory Summary

Facility Name	Type	Location	Landowner the Facility is on	Direct Capital Responsibility	TERM Rating
Administration and Operations Facility	Combined Administrative and Maintenance Facility	3 Pond Road, Gloucester MA, 01930	CATA	Yes	4

Source: MassDOT, CATA

4.4.4 Technology

CATA recently deployed Spare Labs on-demand and paratransit scheduling, dispatching, and management software as of August 11, 2025, to integrate ADA, Dial-a-Ride, and CATA On Demand operations into a single platform. The deployment involves transitioning away from both the QRyde (an HBSS product) ADA software and the Via software for CATA On Demand. The software will give customers the option for mobile booking for demand response and On Demand trips, will support automated trip confirmation notifications, and will allow for the commingling of trips to increase efficiency without compromising ADA compliance. The software will also allow for mobile payment, currently only applicable to CATA On Demand service as CATA's other services are fare free. CATA anticipates this technology upgrade will particularly help mitigate the pressure of increased demand in Gloucester.

CATA also has funding through the MPO and MassDOT to procure automatic passenger counters (APCs) and plans to deploy the technology in FY 2026. CATA is also exploring the possibility of an additional procurement for automatic vehicle location (AVL) technology along with the APC procurement.

4.5 Policies and Procedures

4.5.1 Rider Policies

CATA's policies provide guidelines for riders to use its services, in compliance with Massachusetts Public Records Law, federal Title VI guidelines, and the ADA regarding paratransit eligibility and fares. These policies can be found on the CATA website (https://canntran.com/) and are presented in Table 18.

Table 18. CATA Policies

Policy	Description
Code of Conduct	• For your safety, do not cross in front of the bus. Let the bus pass and look both ways before crossing street. • No smoking/vaping, eating or drinking. • No loud talking, noise or radios • Offensive behavior will not be tolerated. The offender will be subject to ejection from the bus. • Pay or show pass upon boarding-exact change is required, • Appropriate dress, shirt, and shoes required. • Only caged or service animals allowed.
Bag Policy	• Up to Three Bags: You are welcome to bring up to three bags with you on the bus. • One Trip: You must be able to board and deboard the bus in one trip. • Size and Safety: Please ensure that your bags are manageable, under your control, and do not block the aisles or take up additional seating
Small Personal Carts Policy	• Keep aisles clear: Carts must be stored out of the aisle. If a cart cannot be fully removed from the aisle, please remove its contents and fold it up. • Maintain control of your items: Passengers must keep their carts and bags secure at all times. • Accessibility: If you need assistance boarding or exiting the bus with your cart, you are welcome to request use of the lift. • Safety first: Bulky items cannot be placed in the aisle, as they may interfere with the safe operation of the vehicle.
Tip Policy	• CATA drivers may not accept tips
Seat Belt Policy	• All customers are required by law to wear their seat belt while on the CATA Paratransit vans.

Policy	Description
Title VI Policy	• The CATA operates its transit service and programs without regard to race, color, and national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Title VI provides that "no person in the United States shall, on the ground 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." Any person who believes she or he has been aggrieved by any unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint with the CATA.

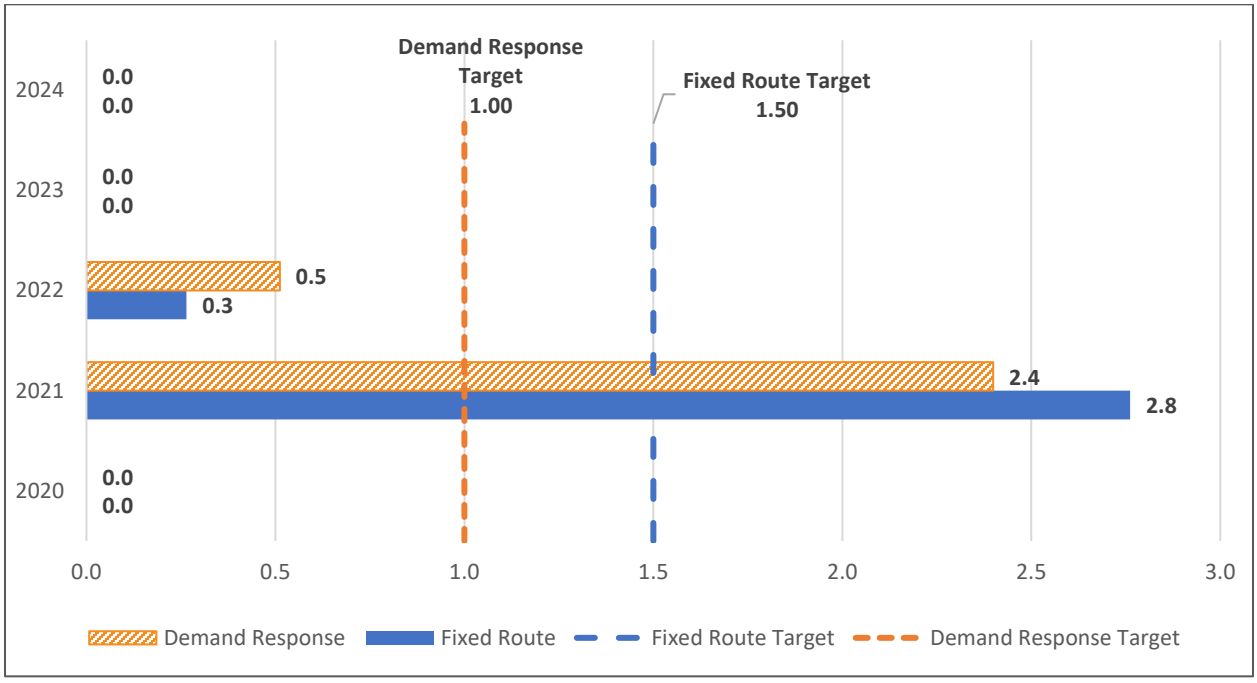
Source: CATA

4.5.2 Safety and Security

As an urban system, CATA develops a Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP), which outlines specific safety goals for the RTA in accordance with NTD Safety and Security Reporting. CATA's FY 2021 PTASP set targets of zero fatalities per 100,000 miles and zero injuries per 100,000 miles for both demand response and fixed route (CATA 2020). Over the last five years, CATA did not record any fatalities or injuries for both service types.

CATA set target limits of 1.5 safety events per 100,000 miles for fixed route and one event per 100,000 miles for demand response in its FY 2021 PTASP. CATA tracks all major and minor safety events, including any accidents, incidents, or occurrences (CATA 2024). The frequency of safety events jumped from zero in FY 2020 to a peak in FY 2021 for both modes, at nearly three events per 100,000 miles on fixed route service and over two events per 100,000 miles on demand response service. The rate of events dropped in FY 2022, and again in FY 2023 to zero. The safety event rate remained null in FY 2024 (Figure 22).

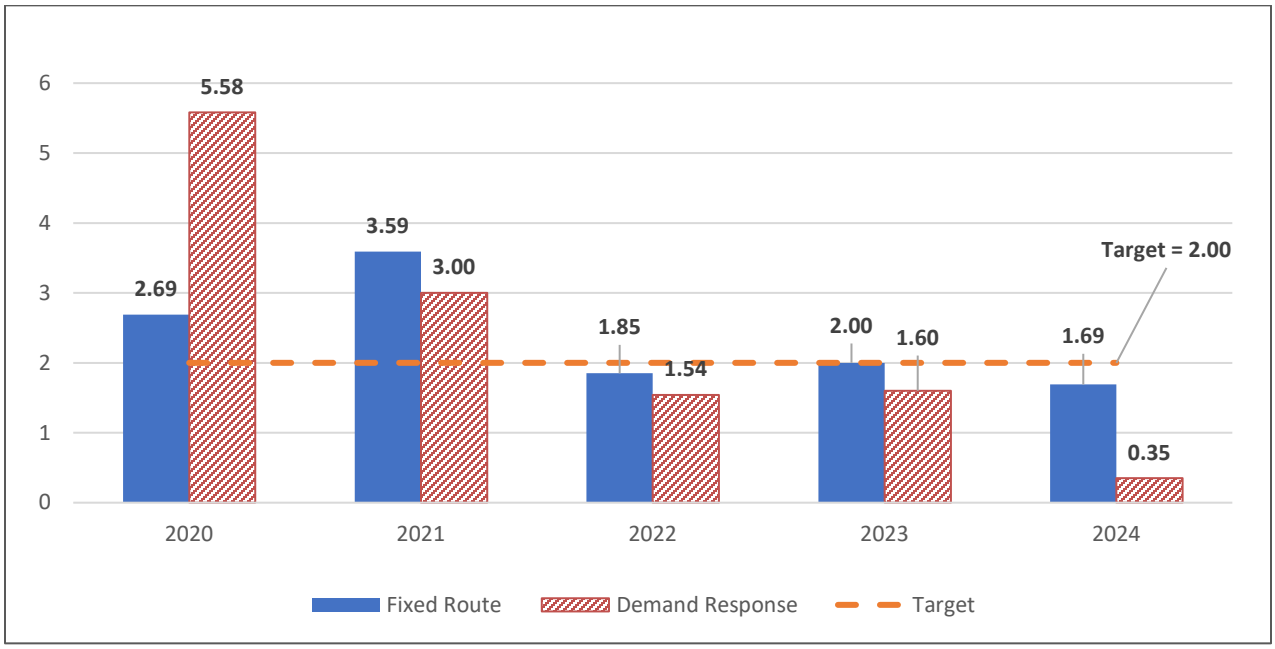
Figure 22. Number of Safety Events per 100,000 Miles (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: CATA

CATA tracks preventable accidents per 100,000 miles on both fixed route and demand response service, targeting a maximum of two preventable accidents per 100,000 miles for each service type. Preventable accidents per 100,000 miles peaked on fixed route service in FY 2021, exceeding the target by over 1.5 preventable accidents per 100,000 miles, but have remained at or below the target every year since (Figure 23). Demand response saw a general downward trend in preventable accidents over the five-year period, averaging a 42 percent annual decrease and achieving the target of fewer than two preventable accidents per 100,000 since FY 2021. FY 2024 had the lowest rate of preventable accidents for both fixed route and demand response.

Figure 23. Number of Preventable Accidents per 100,000 Miles (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: CATA

4.6 Peer Agency Analysis

As part of CATA's CRTP, a peer review was conducted to compare other transit systems with similar characteristics to CATA. This peer review explores five transit systems that operate in similar conditions. Although each transit system and its routes are unique, the general similarities provide useful insight into how transit service is provided and operated throughout the country and how CATA compares. CATA developed a group of peer agencies for performance reporting and policy review as part of 2020 CRTP update. Peers were chosen based on similarity in service area size, service area population density, and size of their fixed route vehicle fleet. These same peers were reevaluated for this 2025 CRTP update to maintain consistency. Peer data are sourced from the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates (US Census Bureau 2023).

Table 19 highlights Census data for the five peer agencies in comparison with CATA. CATA's service area has the smallest population, but the highest population growth rate relative to the other systems. Population density is approximately equal to the median among the five peers, and CATA's poverty rate is just above the peer average of 9.2 percent.

Table 19. Peer Systems Census Data (FY 2023)

System	Town	State	Population	Population Density	Population Growth Rate (2018-2023)	Percent Poverty
IndeBus	Independence	MO	116,830	1,498	0.0%	11.7%
Plymouth Metrolink	Plymouth	MN	80,762	2,307	3.1%	10.1%
Putnam County Transit	Carmel	NY	62,901	642	6.1%	8.8%
Cecil Transit	Elkton	MD	102,383	296	0.0%	10.3%
Link	Flemington	NJ	129,777	296	1.1%	4.9%
Peer Average	*N/A*	*N/A*	*98,531*	*1,008*	*2.1%*	*9.2%*
Peer Median	*N/A*	*N/A*	*102,383*	*642*	*1.1%*	*10.1%*
Cape Ann Transportation Authority	Gloucester	MA	60,184	647	11.2%	9.4%

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates
N/A = Not Applicable

Table 20 breaks down the operating data for CATA and its five peer agencies. CATA's ridership and operating budget are the second highest among its peers, and the proportion of revenue miles operated for demand response services is above the peer average of 23 percent. CATA operates just below the peer average of approximately 514,000 revenue miles, and above the peer average of approximately 29,000 revenue hours. Like CATA, the IndeBus and Link systems are fare-free, and thus farebox revenue does not contribute to these systems' funding sources.

Table 20. Peer Systems Operating Data (FY 2024)

System	Ridership (Unlinked Passenger Trips)	Percentage of Passenger Trips Demand Response	Operating Budget	Revenue Miles Operated	Revenue Hours Operated	Farebox Revenue
IndeBus	376,381	3.7%	$2,945,361	324,150	25,374	$0
Plymouth Metrolink	212,969	25.1%	$5,400,495	620,431	34,177	$486,840
Putnam County Transit	106,006	11.1%	$2,570,032	541,666	28,396	$175,159
Cecil Transit	89,573	33.9%	$2,752,745	520,050	28,508	$112,364
Link	129,618	34.4%	$2,485,562	629,715	32,829	$0
Peer Average	*182,909*	*21.6%*	*$3,230,839*	*527,202*	*29,857*	*$154,873*
Cape Ann Transportation Authority	227,090	28.7%	$4,224,420	535,383	39,136	$190,812

Source: NTD 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d, 2024d, MassDOT and CATA (for CATA statistics)

Table 21 highlights how CATA compares with its five peer agencies when considering metrics related to ridership, operating costs, subsidies, and farebox recovery. CATA's performance for passengers per revenue mile is just below the peer average of 0.42, and passengers per revenue hour is below the peer average of 6.38. The costs per hour and per passenger for operating CATA's services are each the second lowest among the five peers, and, even with three of the peer agencies collecting revenue from fares, CATA's subsidy per passenger is also the second lowest among the five peers.

Table 21. Peer System Comparison Metrics (FY 2024)

System	Passengers/ Revenue Mile	Passengers/ Revenue Hour	Cost/ Revenue Hour	Cost/ Passenger	Subsidy/ Passenger	Farebox Recovery
IndeBus	1.16	14.83	$116.1	$7.83	$7.83	0%
Plymouth Metrolink	0.34	6.23	$158.0	$25.36	$23.07	9%
Putnam County Transit	0.20	3.73	$90.5	$24.24	$22.59	7%
Cecil Transit	0.17	3.14	$96.6	$30.73	$29.48	4%
Link	0.21	3.95	$75.7	$19.18	$19.18	0%
Peer Average	*0.42*	*6.38*	*$107.4*	*$21.47*	*$20.43*	*4%*
Cape Ann Transportation Authority	0.42	5.80	$107.9	$18.60	$17.76	5%

Source: NTD, CATA

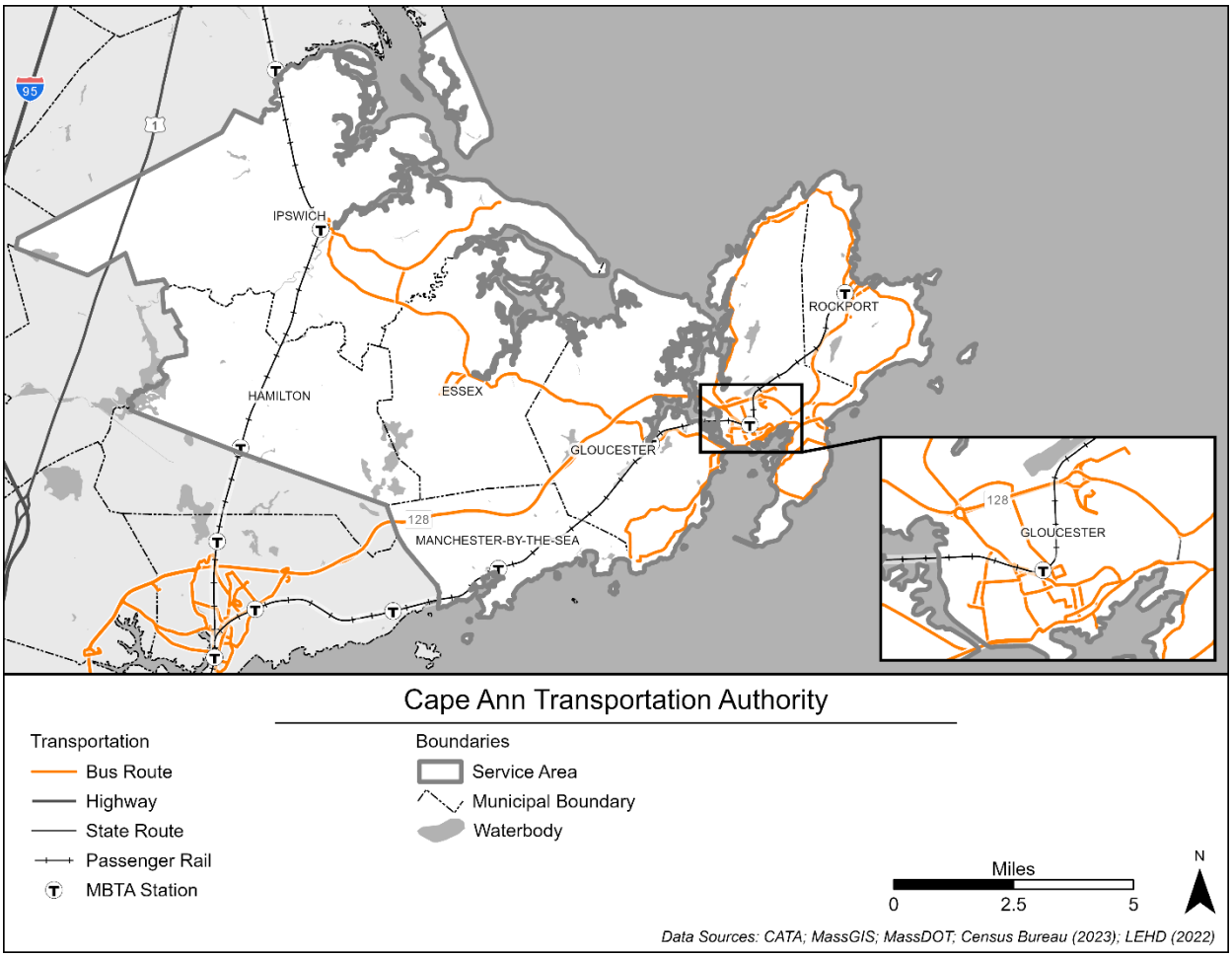
5 Market Evaluation

This chapter includes an overview of the existing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics for the CATA service area as shown in Figure 24. A market assessment can identify areas for existing and future connectivity based on population, job, and transit demand factors. This market assessment utilizes US Census Bureau's 2018-2022 ACS 5-year estimates (US Census Bureau 2025a), the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) 2022 data set (US Census Bureau 2025b) for the demographic data, and Replica data (Replica 2024) for the number of transit trips taken.

This chapter also summarizes the findings from the stakeholder and public engagement activities undertaken as a part of the CRTP planning process. CATA conducted an open stakeholder meeting, an online public survey for riders and non-riders, and a pop-up event to better understand regional mobility needs. High-level findings from those activities are presented in this chapter. Together, the demographic analysis and engagement results directly inform the needs and recommendations presented in Chapter 8.

As shown in Figure 24, CATA has six communities in its service area. CATA fixed route service operates in each of these communities except Hamilton and Manchester-by-the-Sea; the Beverly Commuter travels on MA Route 128 through Manchester-by-the-Sea, but does not stop until the Beverly MBTA Commuter Rail station. Fixed routes connect downtown Gloucester to the surrounding communities of Rockport, Essex, and Ipswich, in addition to the non-member community of Beverly.

Figure 24. Overview of CATA Service Area



Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1 Demographic Analysis

The demographic analysis considers several key population indicators of transit use and demand to guide CATA's transit service planning.

- Population density is often a key determinant of transit use, with transit offering a more efficient way to move many people in a constrained area than personal vehicles. Knowing the population density can help transit agencies identify and plan for the suitable types of transit to offer people in areas of different density.
- Older adult population includes those residents 65 years of age or older. As people age, their ability to safely operate a personal vehicle often becomes limited, making transit or other shared transportation a vital part of maintaining mobility and accessing shops, medical resources, and entertainment. US Census data for older adult population includes individuals aged 65 or older. CATA considers older adults to be individuals aged 60 or older.
- Youth population includes people under the age of 18 years old. Many children and teenagers rely on transit to reach school, activities, sports, etc., often at times when their caregivers or school-sponsored transportation is unavailable.

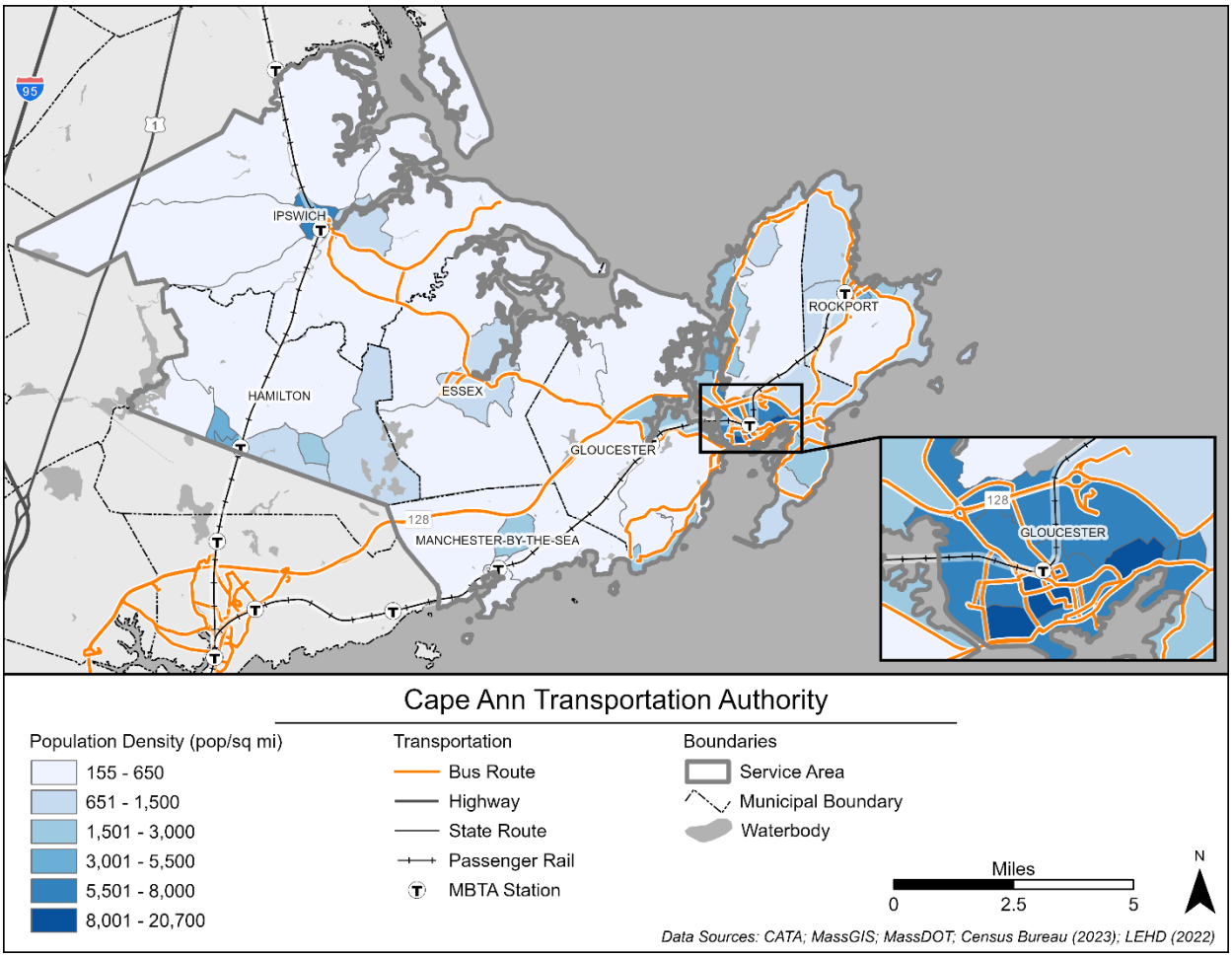
- Median household income and low-income population are important measures to understand the potential for transit demand, as low-income individuals and households tend to rely on transit.
- Zero-vehicle households are likely to rely on transit service as a reliable source of transportation to meet their mobility needs.
- Populations other than non-Hispanic white is an important metric to comply with federal regulations and agency goals to ensure service for majority-minority communities.
- Population with disabilities shows the concentration of people who, by some measure of physical or mental disability, cannot readily operate a personal vehicle and often rely on transit use, especially paratransit services.
- Title VI indicators include low-income and population other than non-Hispanic white (as previously described) are used to guide Title VI planning efforts.
- Job density, like population density, indicates a concentration of trip generators that may be well-served by transit, especially at shift changes that may result in many people commuting to or from work at the same time.

Together, these enable CATA to better contextualize their existing service and best meet the unmet needs of different segments of the community. The following sections illustrate the distribution of each demographic indicator throughout CATA's service area.

5.1.1 Population Density

The population density, or population per square mile, in the CATA service area is shown on Figure 25. Population density is highest in the downtown area of Gloucester, which is the heart of the CATA service area and the location of the Rose Baker Senior Center, where most routes converge. Additional pockets of concentrated population are in areas of Hamilton bordering Wenham, downtown Ipswich, and downtown Rockport. Each of these areas is adjacent to an MBTA Commuter Rail station on the Newburyport/Rockport line. Fixed routes are also accessible in these areas except for Hamilton.

Figure 25. Population Density

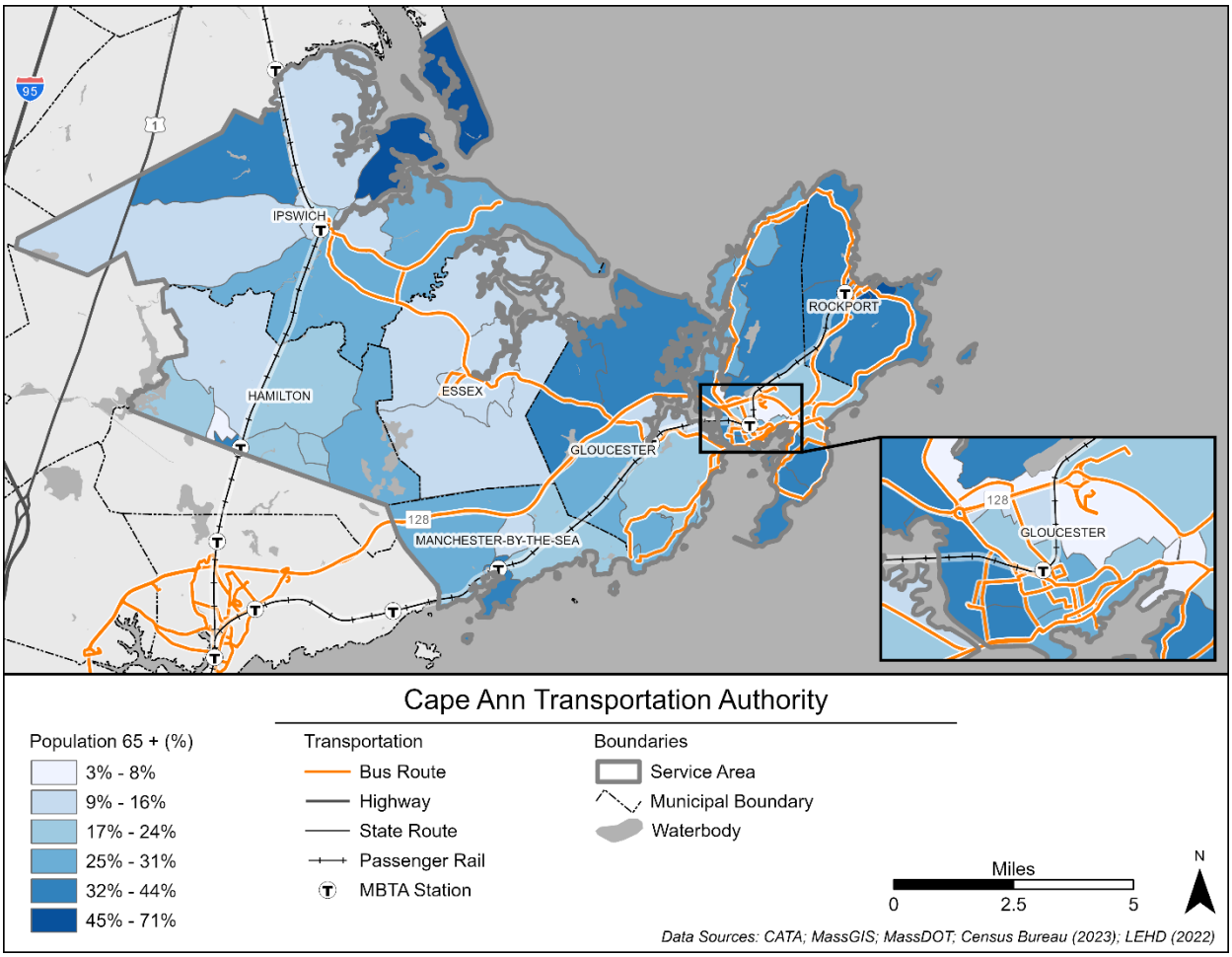


Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.2 Older Adult Population

Older adults, defined by the US Census Bureau as people equal to or greater than 65 years of age, are likely to be transit dependent and/or prefer utilizing transit to maintain their independence to access medical appointments, grocery, and recreation. As shown on Figure 26, the highest concentration of population over 65 is in northeastern Ipswich. Additional pockets of high older adult population concentration are in Gloucester, Rockport, and northern Ipswich. For older adults located in Gloucester, Rockport, and a portion of Essex, CATA offers ADA paratransit service in alignment with fixed route service. Year-round non-ADA Dial-a-Ride service is also available in each of CATA's member communities, and senior service to additional communities is offered to Hamilton and Essex residents, as well as Ipswich residents for medical appointments only. ADA paratransit is offered in Ipswich during the summer months when the Ipswich/Essex Explorer is running. Manchester-by-the-Sea joined the CATA Dial-a-Ride service area in February 2025 and service started in August 2025.

Figure 26. Older Adult Population

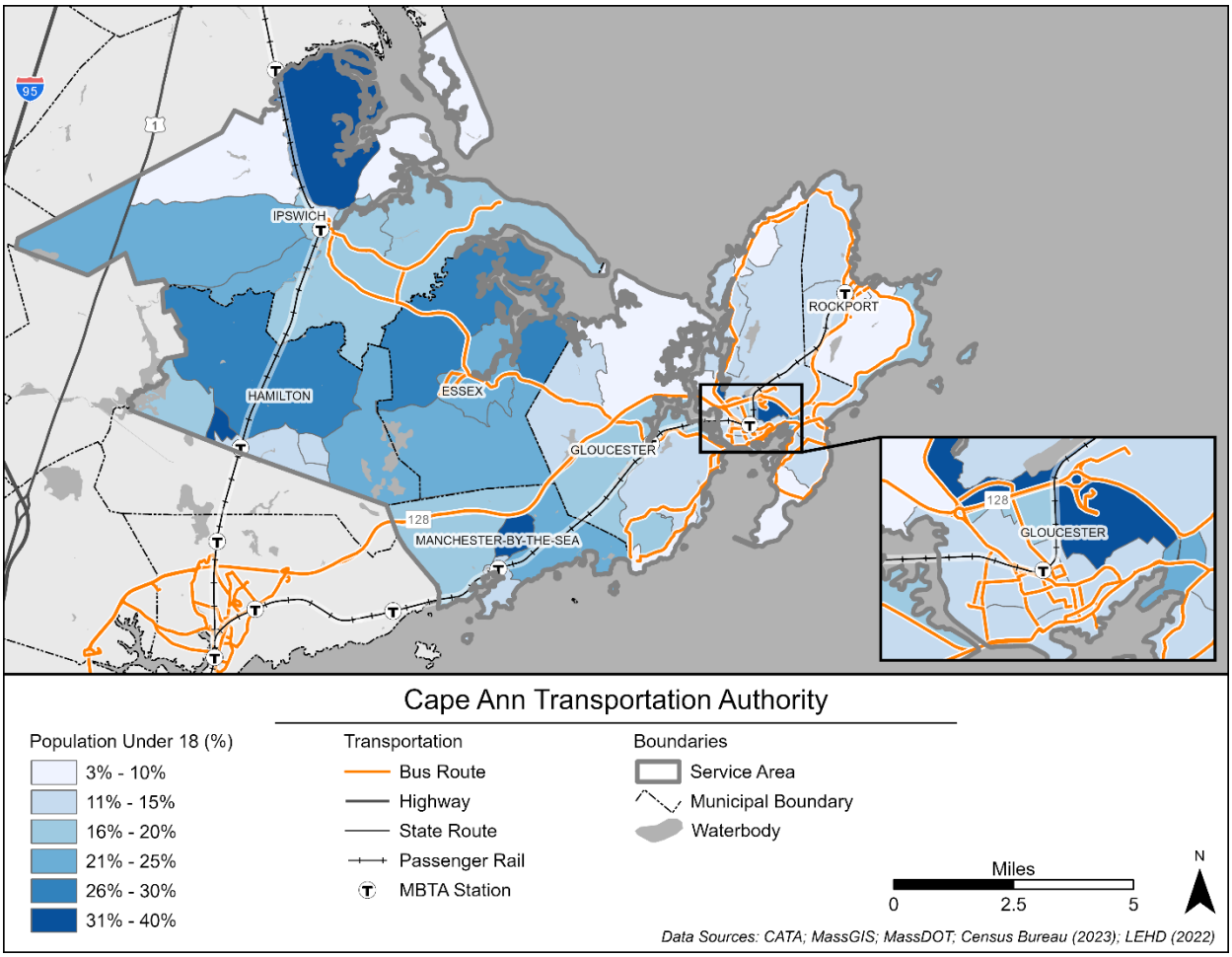


Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.3 Youth Population

The youth population, defined as the percentage of the population under the age of 18, is shown on Figure 27. Youth are likely to utilize transit as a reliable and convenient form of transportation in lieu of car ownership. The youth population is concentrated in northern Ipswich, downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea, the Hamilton neighborhood abutting the MBTA Commuter Rail station, and in a section of downtown Gloucester. Essex and Hamilton have higher and more evenly distributed concentrations of youth population within their municipal boundaries. Rockport and Gloucester generally have much lower youth population rates relative to the rest of CATA's service area.

Figure 27. Youth Population

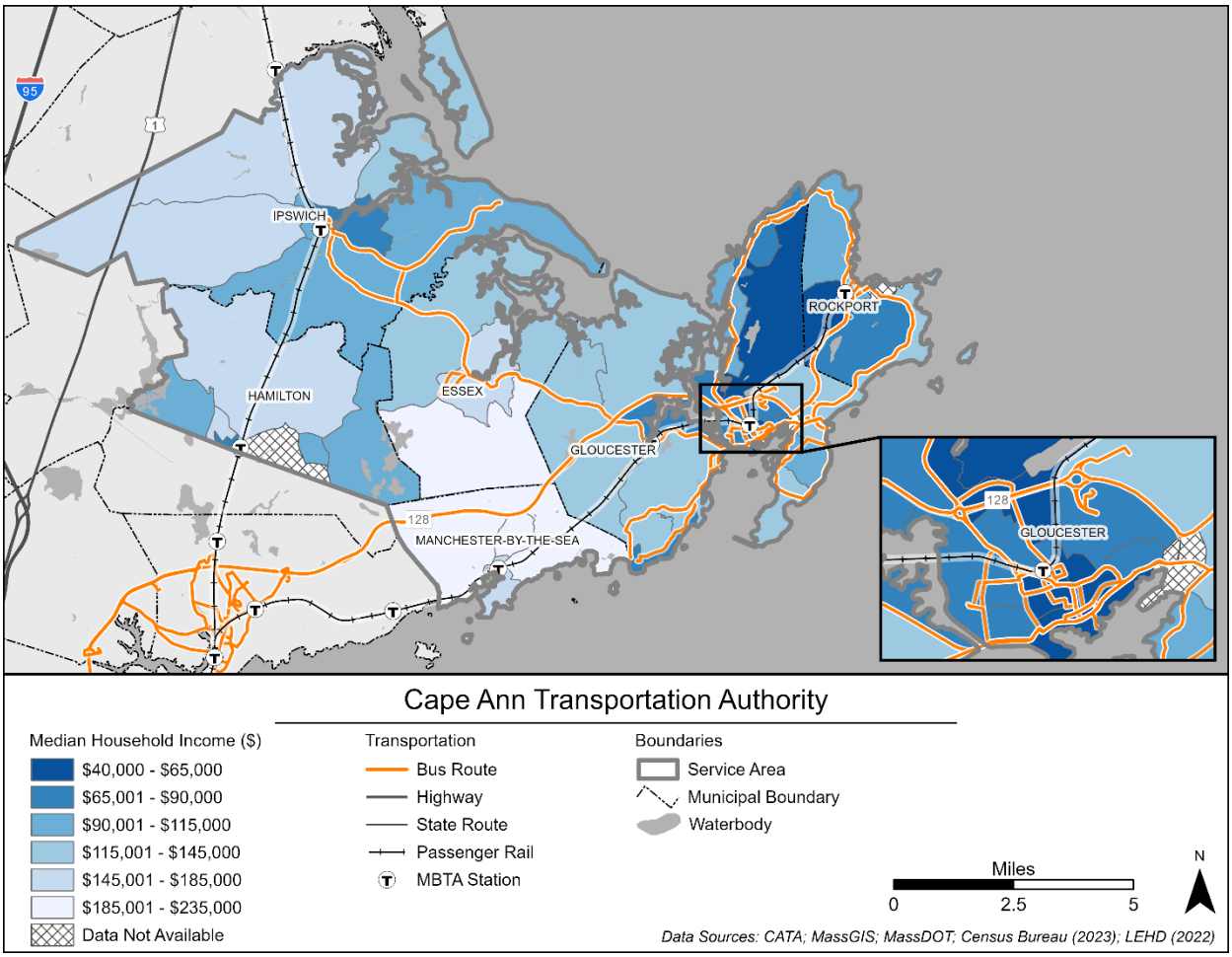


Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.4 Median Household Income

Median household income is based on household size and reported income. As shown on Figure 28, households with median incomes below $65,000 are concentrated in Gloucester's downtown area, northeastern Gloucester, and eastern Rockport. Southern Rockport and the area of Ipswich east of the MBTA Commuter Rail station also have relatively low median household incomes. Manchester-by-the-Sea and southern Essex, as well as much of Hamilton and the northern half of Ipswich, are characterized by high median household incomes.

Figure 28. Median Household Income

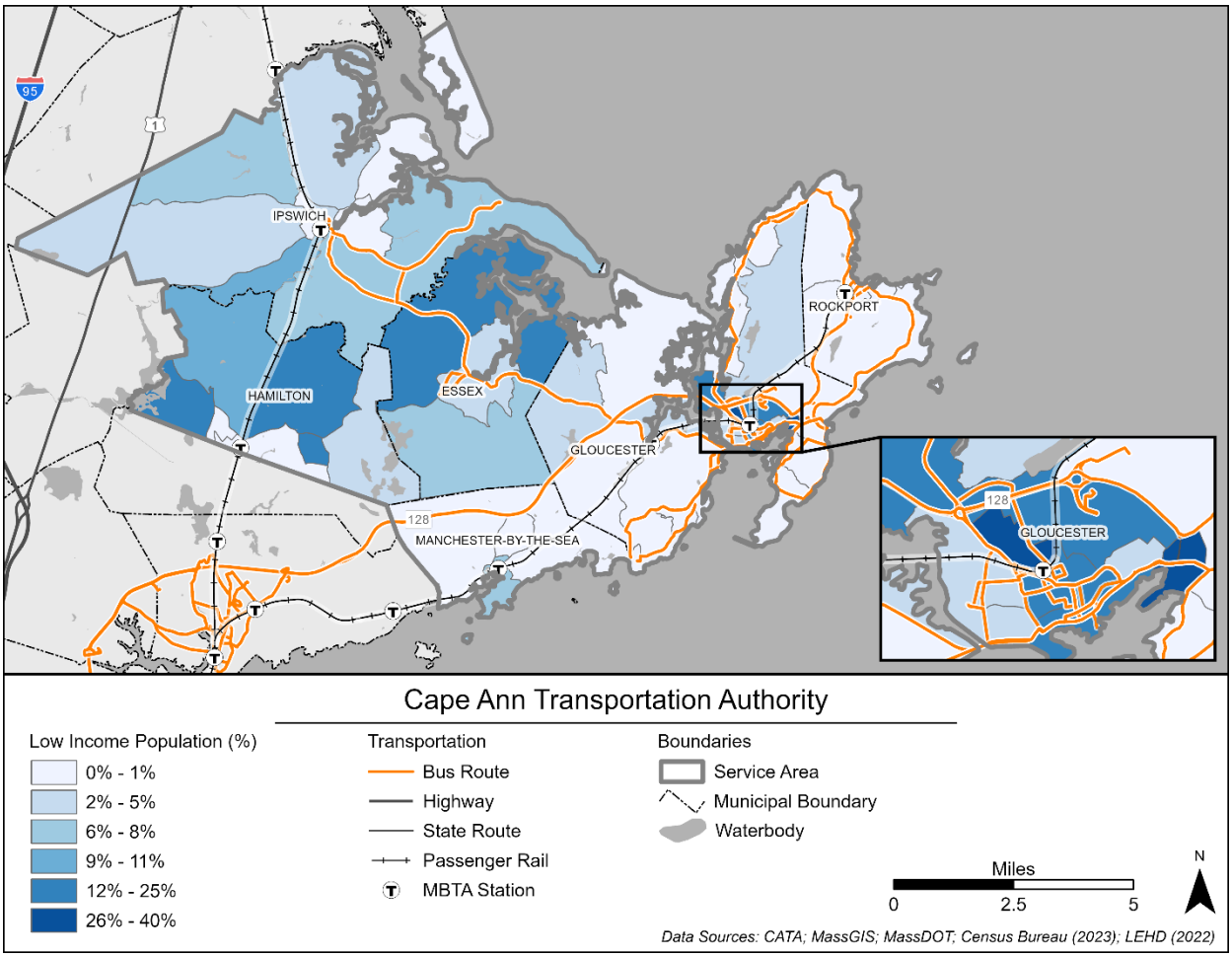


Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.5 Low-Income Population

CATA defines low income as households below 100 percent of the federal poverty rate. For CATA this is block groups with a larger than average low-income population, or 7.7 percent. Figure 29 shows the low-income population in the CATA service area. The highest concentration is in downtown Gloucester, with additional high concentration pockets in Essex and Hamilton, which similarly demonstrate high concentrations of youth.

Figure 29. Low-Income Population

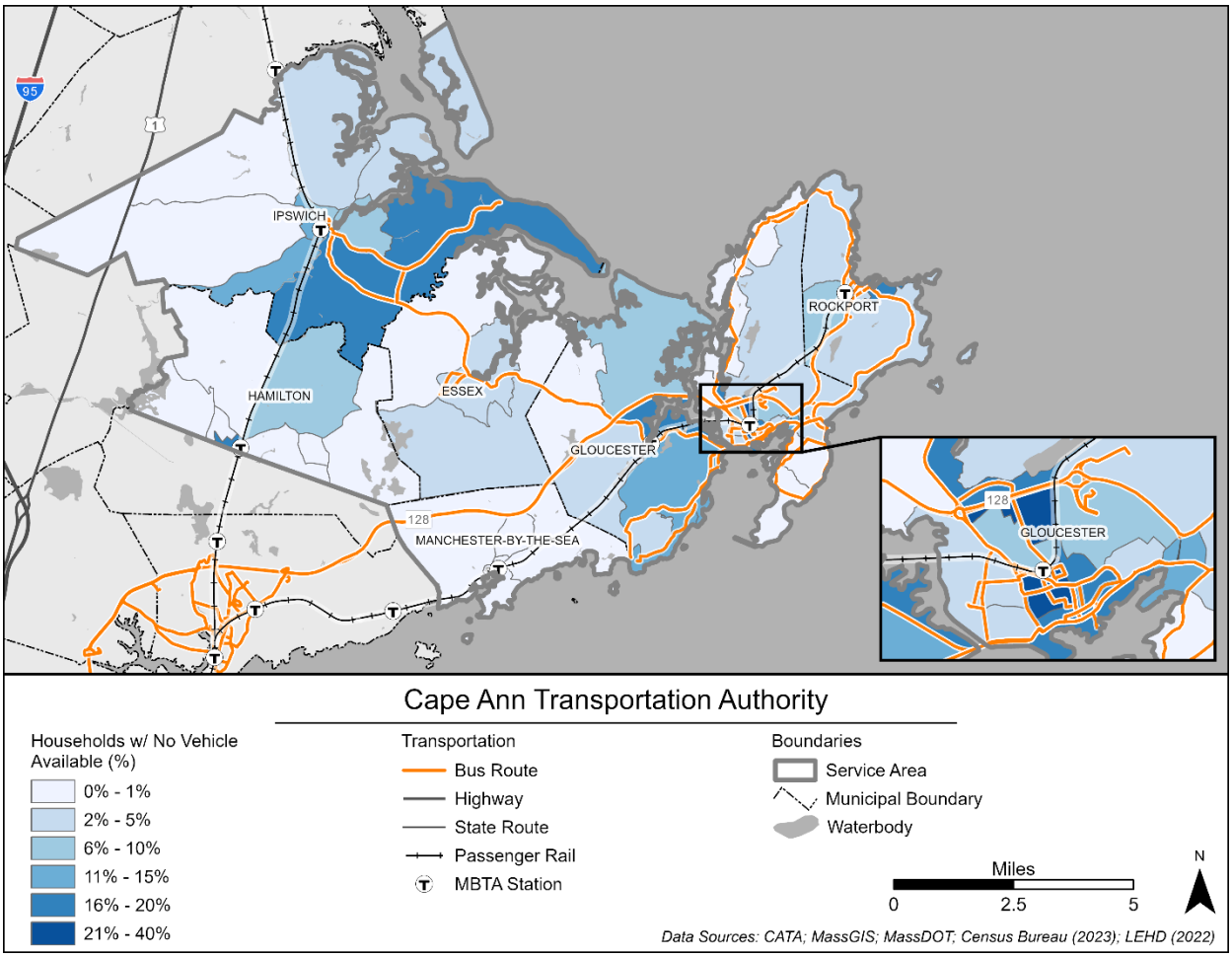


Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.6 Zero-Vehicle Households

The highest concentration of households without access to a personal vehicle is in Gloucester, as shown on Figure 30, particularly in the McPherson Park/Lookout Park neighborhood and the neighborhood northeast of Oak Grove Cemetery. Outside of the City of Gloucester, pockets of high concentrations of zero-vehicle households are in the southern third of Ipswich and the Davis Park area of Rockport, which suggest potential for enhanced transit connectivity.

Figure 30. Zero-Vehicle Households

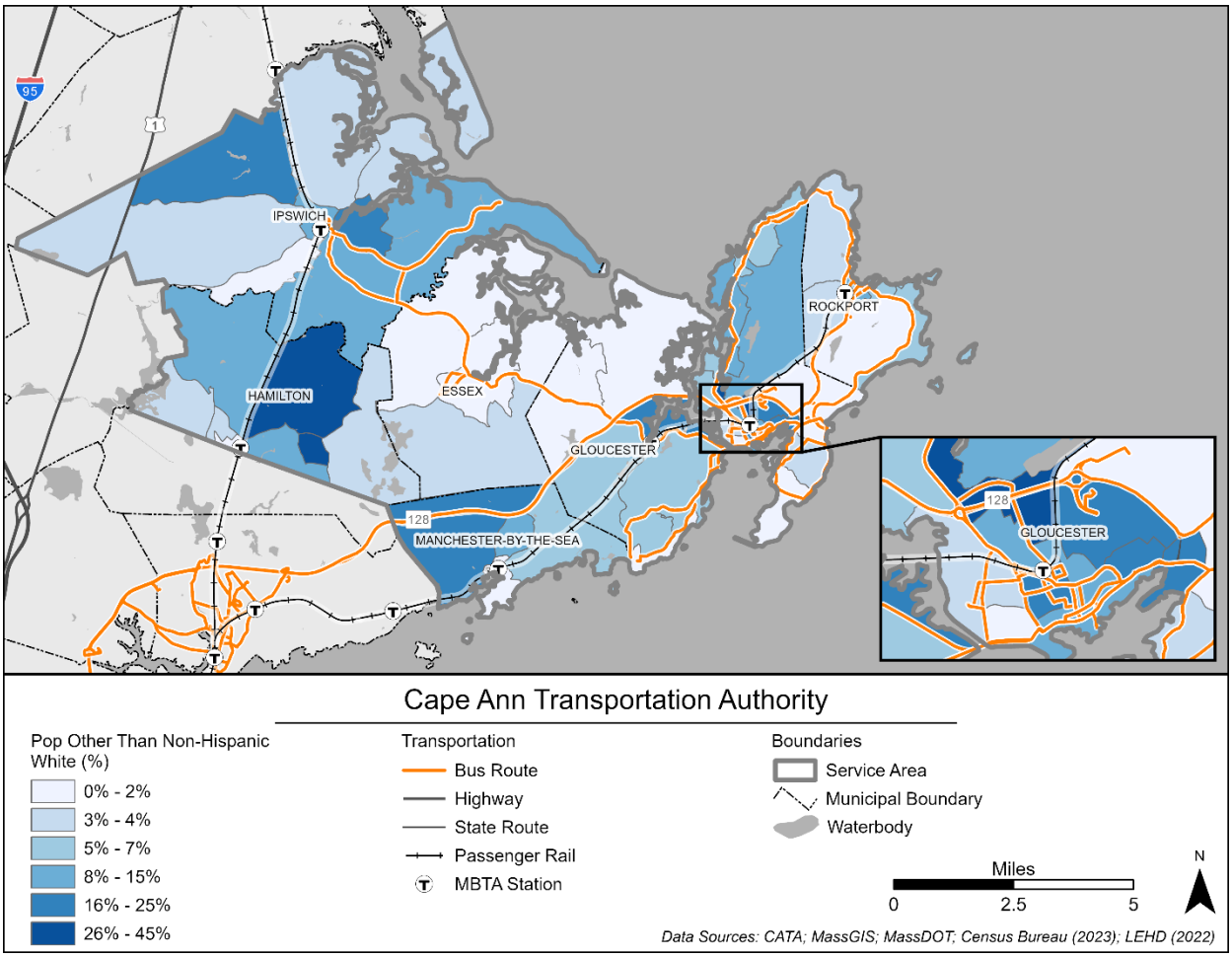


Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.7 Population Other Than Non-Hispanic White

Figure 31 shows the concentration of demographic groups other than non-Hispanic white. These populations are concentrated in Hamilton and the Gloucester neighborhood northeast of Oak Grove Cemetery. Manchester-by-the-Sea, downtown Gloucester, and northern Ipswich have additional pockets of high non-Hispanic white population concentrations.

Figure 31. Population Other Than Non-Hispanic White

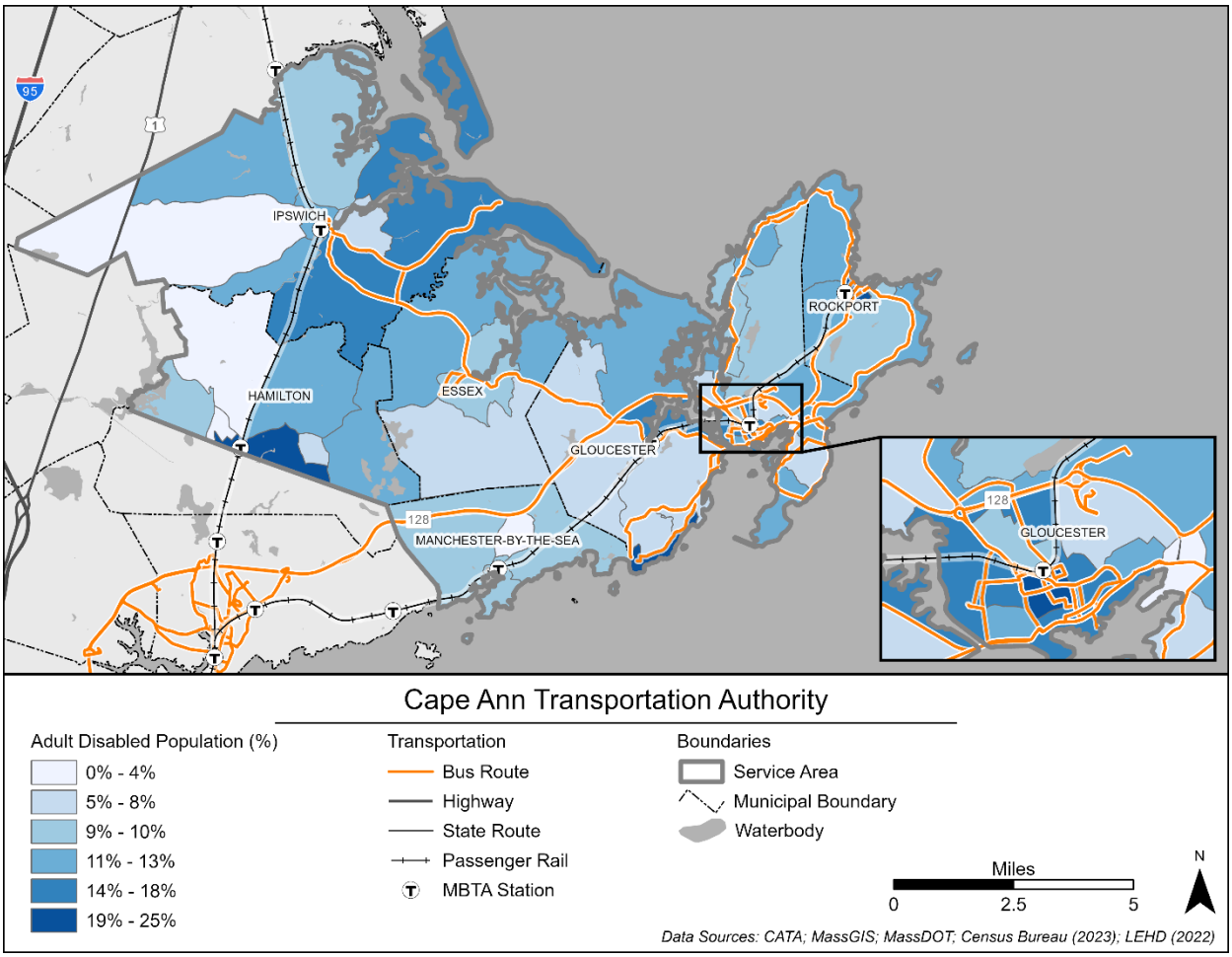


Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.8 Adult Disabled Population

MassDOT and CATA utilize data on older adults, persons with disabilities, and low-income populations to identify opportunities to improve mobility across the service area. The adult disabled population, defined as adults who are identified as mentally or physically disabled, are shown in Figure 32. The population of adults with a disability is concentrated in downtown Gloucester south of the MBTA Commuter Rail station and in Hamilton neighborhoods adjacent to the MBTA station. The southern third of Ipswich has high proportions of adults with disabilities, while eastern Hamilton, eastern Ipswich, and a pocket of Manchester-by-the-Sea have the lowest adult disabled population concentrations in the service area.

Figure 32. Adult Disabled Population



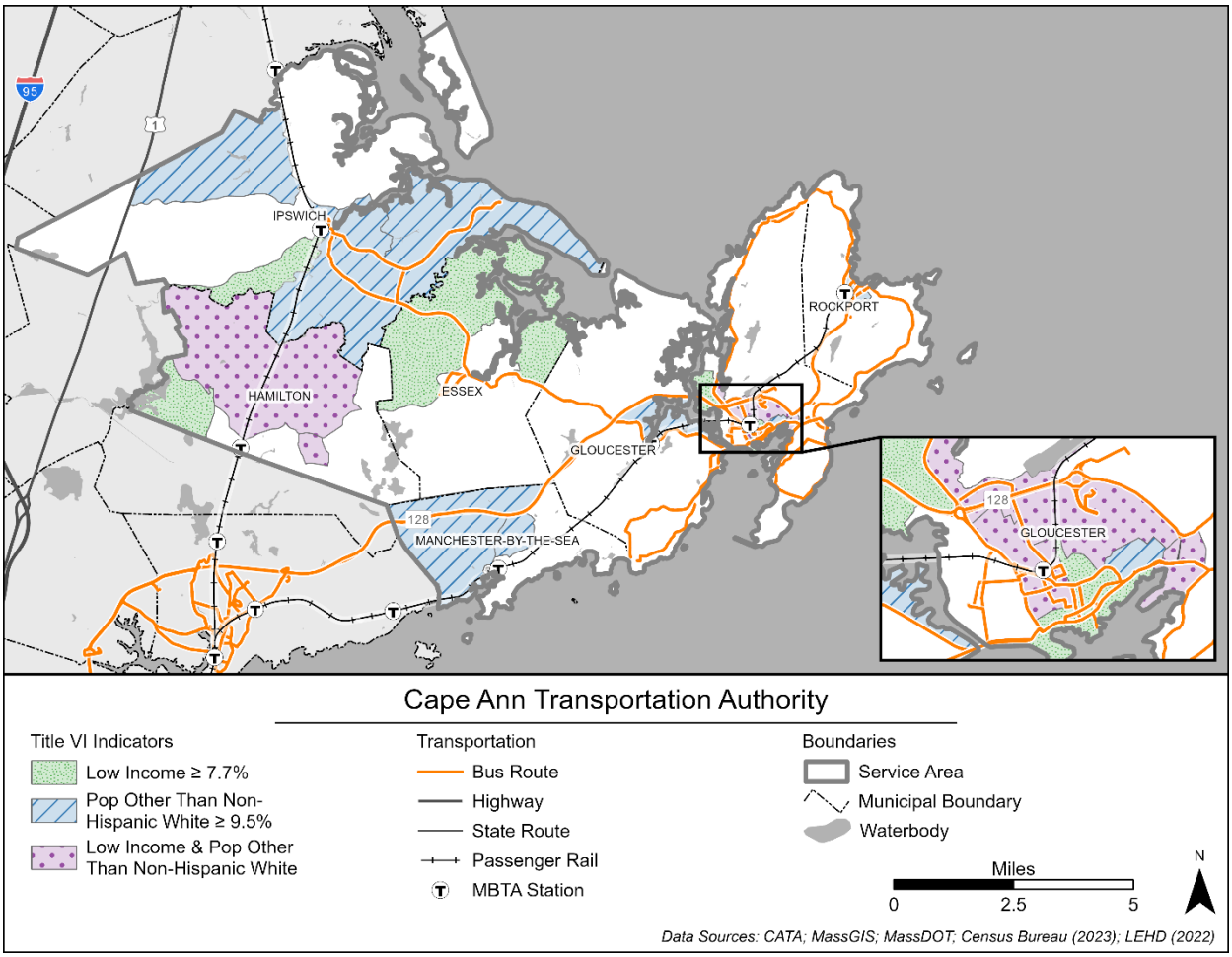
Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.9 Title VI Population

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in federally assisted program. As a transit authority, CATA is required to comply with Title VI requirements as a recipient of federal funds.

For Title VI reporting, CATA defines minority as a block group with a larger than average minority threshold, which is approximately 9.5 percent. Title VI indicators include two factors: low income and population other than non-Hispanic white. Figure 33 shows two factors as previously described and highlights communities where the population is both low income and non-Hispanic white. Specifically, low-income communities are present in a large pocket of Essex, as well as small pockets of Hamilton, Ipswich, and Gloucester. Non-Hispanic white communities include two large areas of Ipswich, much of Manchester-by-the-Sea, and a few small pockets of Gloucester. Hamilton and Gloucester are communities with concentrations of both low-income and non-Hispanic white populations. As CATA modifies any fixed route service or introduces new fixed route service, the Title VI market analysis can help inform program modifications and long-term engagement strategies.

Figure 33. Title VI Population

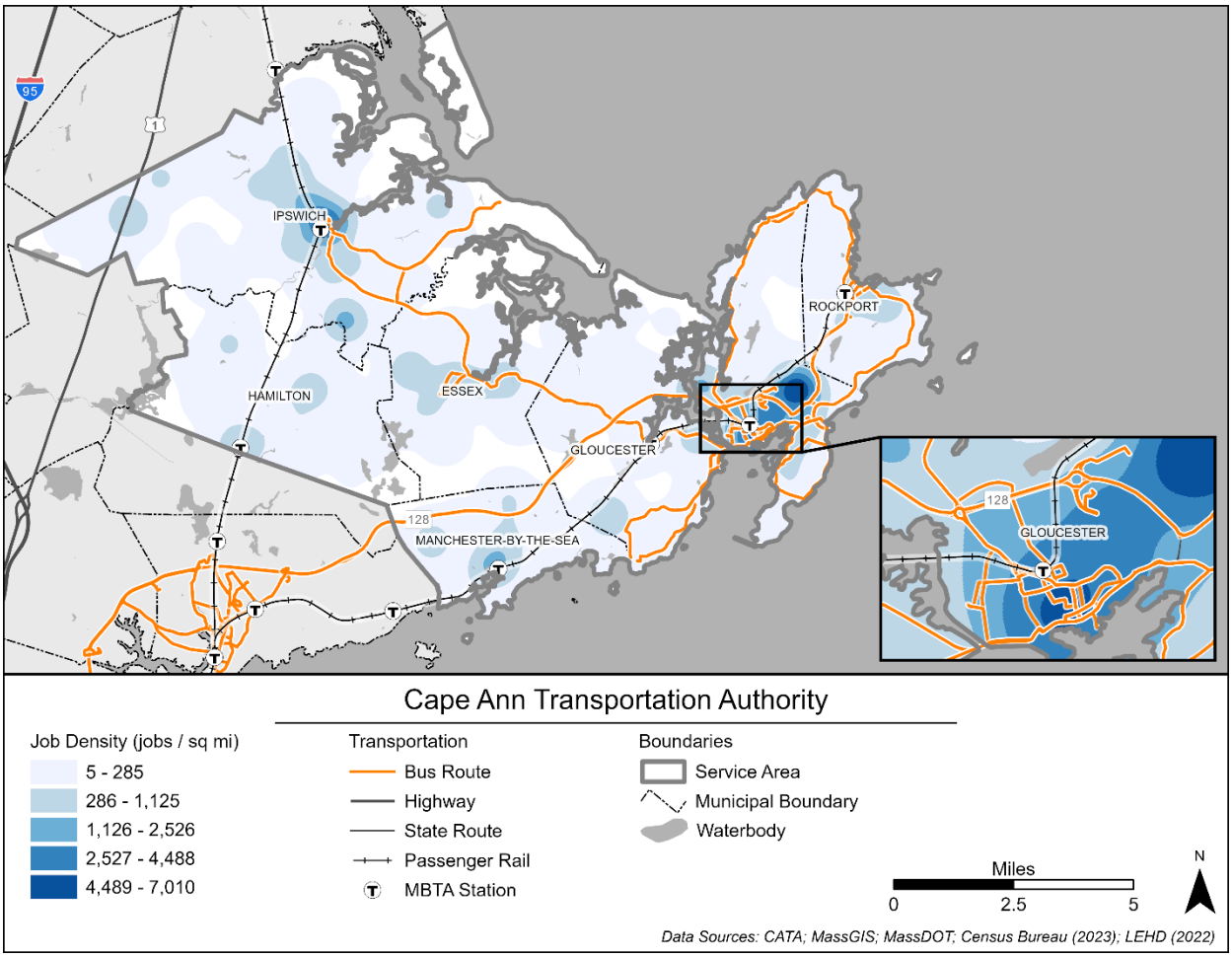


Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.10 Job Density

Job density is highest in downtown Gloucester, Gloucester's Blackburn Industrial Park, and downtown Ipswich, with other pockets of employment in southern Ipswich and downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea, as shown on Figure 34.

Figure 34. Job Density



Source: AECOM (2025)

5.2 Transit Score

The transit score map is created to spatially analyze several transit-oriented demographic and socioeconomic characteristics at the same time (the characteristics discussed individually in this chapter so far). The transit score is a relative measure of how successful a fixed route transit system is expected to be in a particular region. Used in conjunction with a congruency analysis of major transit generators, the transit score can be used to evaluate existing service and to identify areas of potential demand.

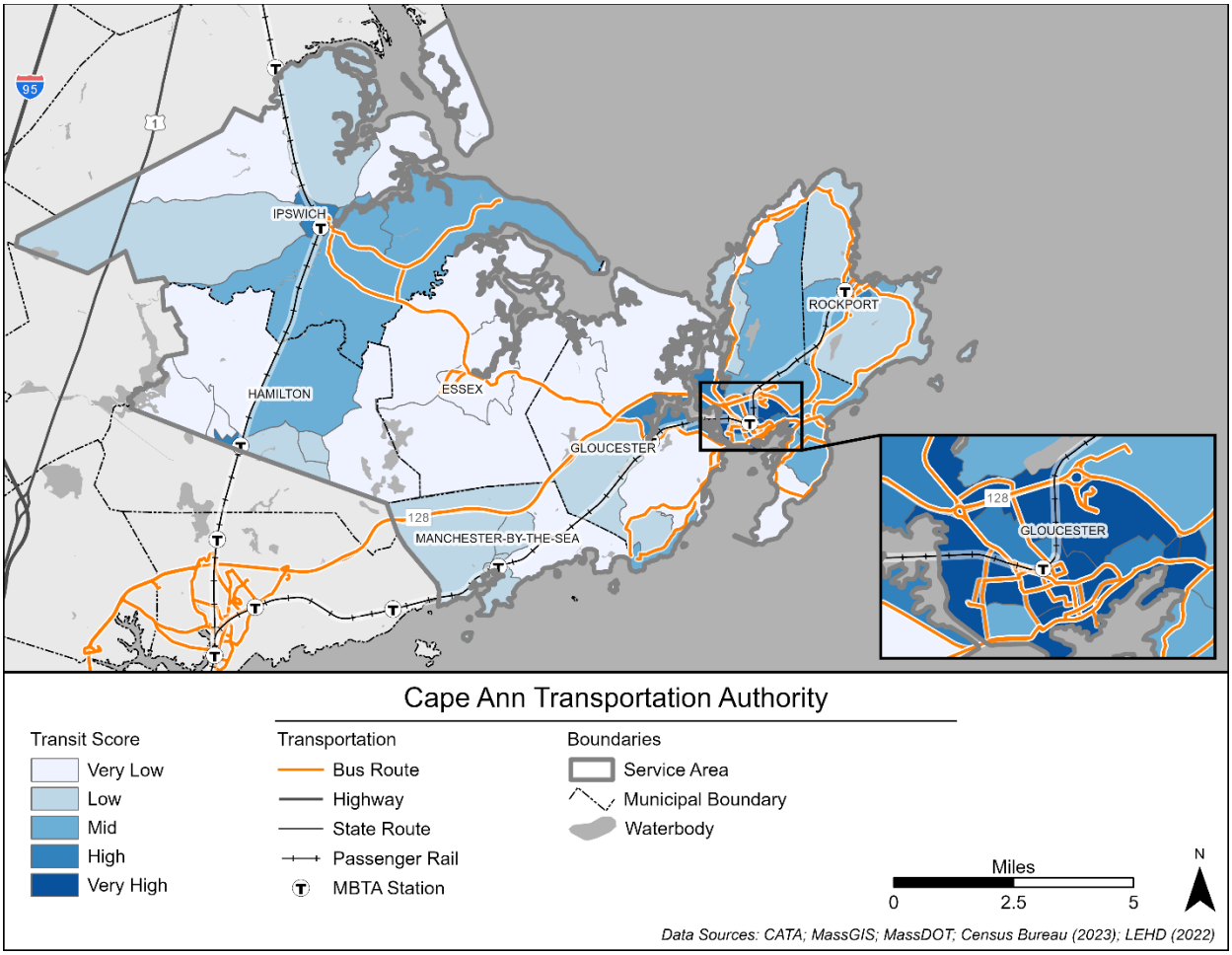
Demographic and socioeconomic information is collected from the US Census Bureau for a region divided into smaller geographic units such as tracts, block groups, or blocks. Block groups and census tracts were used for this analysis. Transit-oriented variables used for the analysis include:

- Overall population density
- Overall job density
- Density of the population under the age of 18
- Density of the population over the age of 65
- Median household income

- Percentage of the population living below the poverty level
- Percentage of zero-car households

Figure 35 illustrates the transit scores across the CATA service area. Gloucester is the only community in the service area with geographic units scoring very high for transit scores. In Gloucester, areas with very high transit scores are largely concentrated in the downtown area south of Yankee Division Highway — around the CATA Hub at the Rose Baker Senior Center and Gloucester MBTA Commuter Rail station. Downtown Ipswich, downtown Hamilton, and a pocket of West Gloucester have high transit scoring areas, which are along both CATA fixed routes and MBTA Commuter Rail stations (apart from downtown Hamilton, where fixed route service is not provided). Rockport is predominantly characterized by low transit scores, with a few small pockets of high transit scores around the Rockport MBTA Commuter Rail station and along the rail line. Transit scores are low in areas of Ipswich, Gloucester, Hamilton, and Manchester-by-the-Sea. The latter two communities are not served by CATA fixed routes but are served by MBTA Commuter Rail. The entire municipality of Essex has a very low transit score, despite CATA operating a year-round fixed route (Route 5) and a seasonal shuttle route (Route 12) through this community.

Figure 35. Transit Score for CATA Service Area



Source: AECOM (2025)

5.3 Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Outreach and engagement for CATA's CRTP was undertaken through an open stakeholder meeting and an online survey. Additional outreach activities included pop-up events and social media promotion of survey links. The activities were carried out in 2025, and a diverse range of voices and perspectives was captured to support CRTP development.

Key takeaways from these combined efforts include support for:

- CATA's role and service quality. Across all engagement formats, participants expressed appreciation for CATA's fare-free service, friendly drivers, and overall convenience. Riders rated safety highly, and non-riders acknowledged CATA as a valuable regional resource.
- Expanded service hours and frequency. Survey respondents and meeting participants consistently requested more frequent buses and extended hours—especially on weekends, evenings, and early mornings. Dial-a-Ride expansion was a top priority for many.
- Broader coverage and connectivity. Community members emphasized the need for service to reach more destinations, including medical facilities in Peabody, Beverly, and Boston, as well as key local hubs like train stations and Gloucester Crossing.
- Flexible, accessible transit options. On-demand transit was a recurring theme, particularly among older adults and those with mobility challenges. Many requested expansion of CATA On Demand service to towns like Rockport and expressed interest in ride-hailing partnerships.
- Addressing barriers to understanding services. Non-riders cited confusion around schedules, pick-up locations, and online navigation as barriers. Suggestions included clearer signage, paper schedules, and travel training to help residents understand and use services.

Subsequent sections detail feedback collected during all of CATA's engagement efforts.

5.3.1 Stakeholder Meeting

CATA held a meeting with key stakeholders, which was also open to the public, to get CRTP feedback.

- Topic: Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan
- Date and time: September 17, 2025, 2 PM to 3 PM
- Location: Virtually, through Zoom

5.3.1.1 Attendees

CATA's meeting with stakeholders from the region featured local organizations, local officials, and members of the public. Staff from multiple state representatives' offices, COAs, housing authorities, and other community groups attended.

5.3.1.2 Agenda

- Welcome
- Introductions
- Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan (CRTP)

- Feedback: Live Polls and Whiteboard activity
- Q&A
- Next Steps

5.3.1.3 Interactive Activities

CATA solicited comments from attendees through two activities: a live poll function and an interactive whiteboard activity.

Poll Activity

During the meeting, a live poll with two questions was administered.

First, attendees were asked which areas CATA should prioritize if additional funding becomes available. The percentages shown next to each response option represent the proportion of participants who selected that specific reason from the list provided. Respondents could choose multiple options, so the percentages do not add up to 100 percent.

- Expanding fixed route service coverage (11 percent)
- Expanding Dial-a-Ride service hours/days (78 percent)
- Continuing free fare (56 percent)
- Increasing frequency on existing routes (67 percent)
- Developing Uber/Lyft partnerships (44 percent)
- Investing in electric or low-emission buses (22 percent)
- Upgrading bus stops and passenger amenities (11 percent)
- Improving coordination with MBTA commuter services (11 percent)

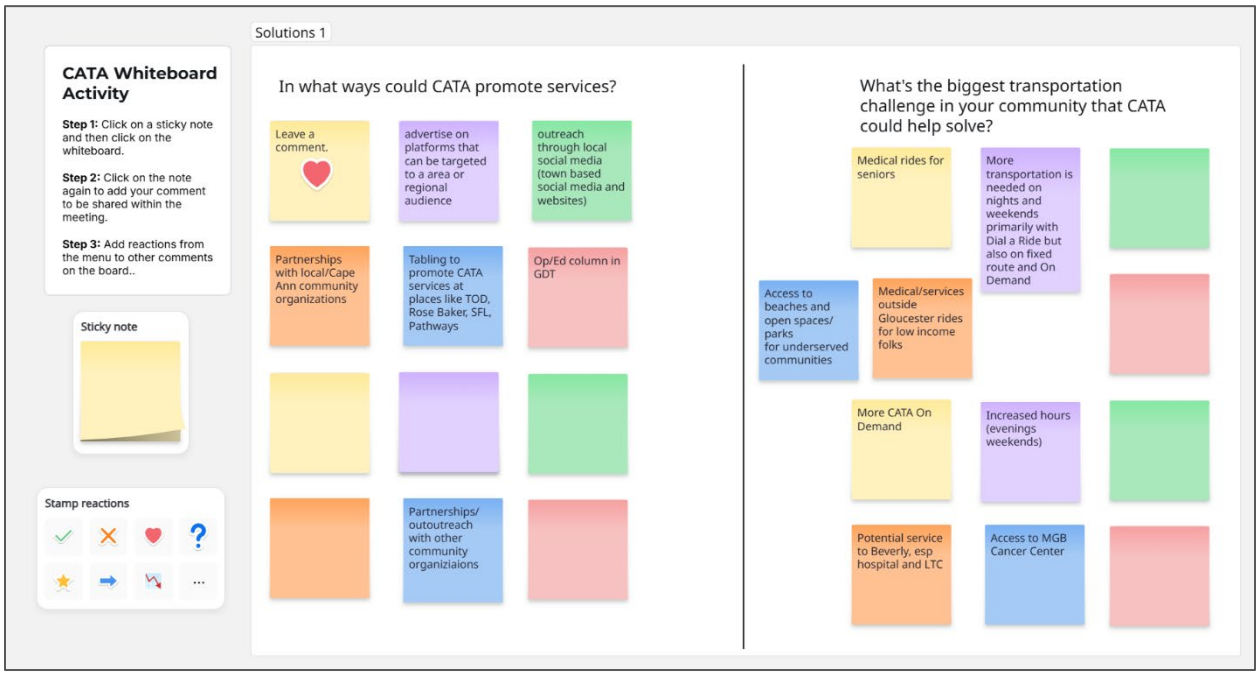
Next, attendees were asked which type of service expansion would have the most impact. The percentages shown next to each response option represent the proportion of participants who selected that specific reason from the list provided.

- More Dial-a-Ride services (expanded hours or days) (45 percent)
- Expanded coverage to underserved communities (33 percent)
- Expanded CATA On Demand (22 percent)

Whiteboard Activity

During an interactive whiteboard activity (Figure 36), participants were asked to answer two questions with open-ended responses: In what way could CATA promote services, and what's the biggest transportation challenge in your community that CATA could help solve?

Figure 36. Interactive Whiteboard Activity



Answers for the question, "In what way could CATA promote services?" included:

- Advertising on platforms that can be targeted to an area or regional audience
- Outreach through local social media (town-based social media and websites)
- Partnerships with local Cape Ann community organizations
- Tabling to promote CATA services at places like Rose Baker, Sawyer Free Library, Pathways
- Op/ed columns in Gloucester Daily Times
- Partnerships/outreach with other community organizations

Answers for the question, "What's the biggest transportation challenge in your community that CATA could help solve?" included:

- Medical rides for older adults
- More transportation is needed on nights and weekends primarily with Dial-a-Ride but also fixed route and On Demand
- Access to beaches and open spaces/parks for underserved communities
- Medical/services outside Gloucester, rides for low income folks
- More CATA On Demand
- Increase hours (evenings, weekends)
- Access to Mass General Brigham Cancer Center
- Potential service to Beverly, especially the hospital and long-term care facilities

5.3.1.4 Key Takeaways

The following are key takeaways from the stakeholder meeting.

- Dial-a-Ride service expansion—including extended hours and days—was the top priority among participants.
- Increasing frequency on existing routes and maintaining fare-free service were also highly supported.
- Participants expressed interest in partnerships with ride-hailing services (e.g., Uber/Lyft) and investments in low-emission vehicles.
- Senior transportation needs, particularly for medical appointments and regional access, were emphasized as critical.
- Community members expressed strong support for CATA's current efforts and a willingness to help promote services and surveys.

5.3.2 Pop-Up Events

CATA held two in-person pop-up events to distribute information, advertise its survey, and seek public feedback. More than 20 participants were engaged, and they were invited to share their thoughts on current transit services, future improvements, priorities for regional mobility, or anything on their mind. Materials including paper surveys and flyers as well as informational materials outlining CATA's proposed CRTP goals were shared, and feedback was collected on a range of topics.

5.3.2.1 Gloucester Senior Center Pop-Up Event

- Location: Rose Baker Senior Center in Gloucester
- Date and time: August 21, 2025, 10 AM to 12 PM

The following are key takeaways from the Senior Center pop-up event.

- Attendees expressed appreciation for CATA's fare-free service, convenience, and helpfulness—especially for those recovering from surgery, sharing a household vehicle, or planning future use due to aging or other driving impediments.
- There was strong interest in on-demand transit options, especially among those who no longer drive due to health reasons. Several attendees either signed up for Dial-a-Ride or gathered information for themselves or others, indicating a need for flexible, accessible transportation.
- Several comments reflected future intent to use services, either due to changing mobility needs or increased awareness. This suggests that outreach efforts like the pop-up event are effective in building trust and encouraging ridership.
- Some recurring themes were confusion around schedules, pick-up locations, and online navigation. Suggestions included:
    - More visible signage
    - Paper schedules for non-tech-savvy riders
    - A travel trainer to help residents understand and use services

5.3.2.2 Dock Square Pop-Up Event

- Location: Dock Square in Rockport
- Date and time: August 21, 2025, 12:30 PM to 2:30 PM

The following are key takeaways from the Dock Square pop-up event.

- One rider praised the on-time performance, fare-free access, and friendly drivers, and highlighted the convenience of wave-down service and connections to the senior center and local stores. This reflects strong satisfaction with the existing Rockport-area service.
- A visitor from Beverly expressed interest in CATA service extending into Beverly, noting that the current Beverly shuttle is limited to intra-city travel and doesn't connect to other destinations. This suggests a potential opportunity to explore regional service expansion or coordination.

5.3.3 Public Survey

As a primary tool to gather feedback from current riders and non-riders, CATA staff developed an online survey. The purpose of the survey was to get a better understanding of stakeholder preferences regarding current services and gather feedback about the desire for potential improvements or changes.

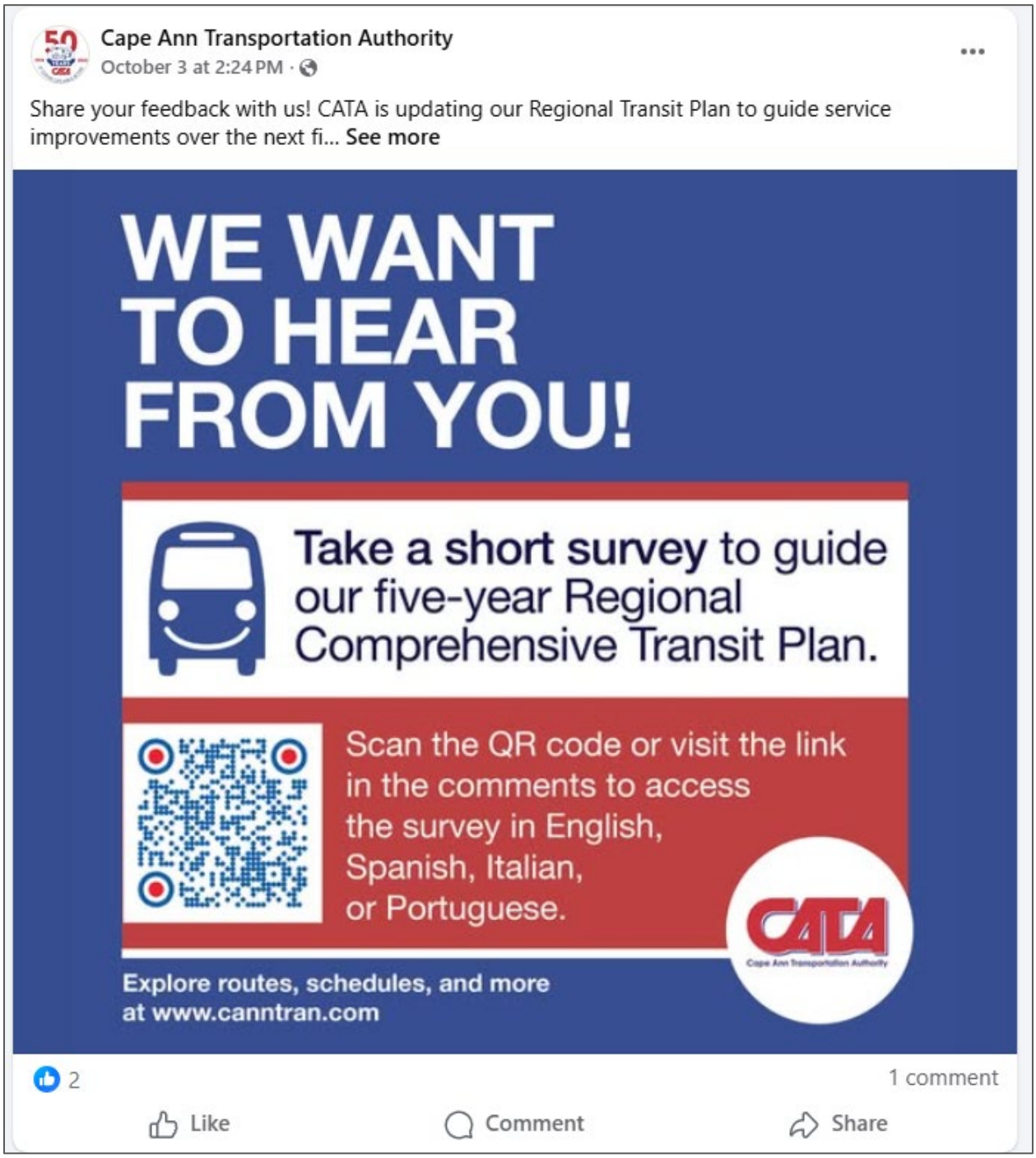
5.3.3.1 Survey Outreach

To promote participation in the online survey, CATA shared it through multiple channels:

- The survey link was posted on CATA's website and promoted through social media posts (Figure 37).
- The survey link, QR code, and survey promotional materials were provided to stakeholder meeting participants, who were encouraged to share them with their communities.
- At its pop-up event, CATA staff distributed flyers featuring the survey link and QR code, and paper copies of the survey were also available.
- CATA staff provided paper copies of the survey to different social service agencies for distribution to their clients.

The survey was designed to be mobile-friendly. The survey link was accompanied by a QR code to enable a quick scan using a smart phone to direct immediately to the survey.

Figure 37. Social Media Post



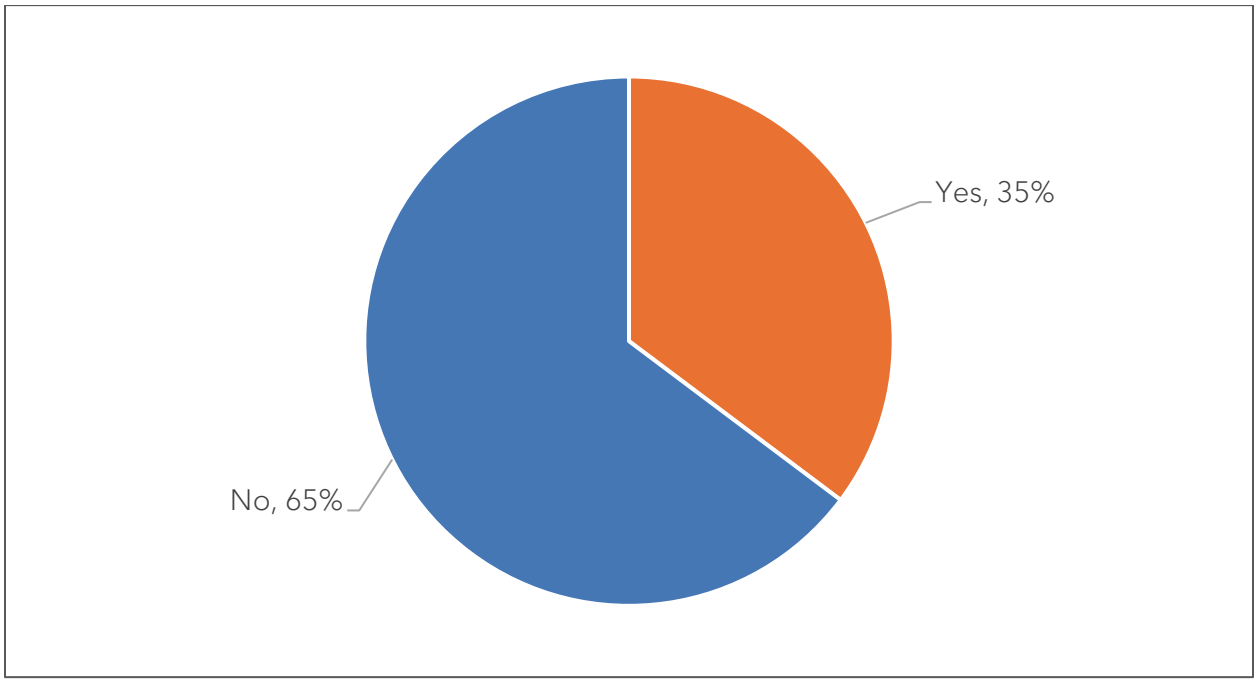
5.3.3.2 Survey Results Summary

CATA's online survey opened to the public September 2, 2025, and closed October 13, 2025. The survey, which was hosted on Microsoft Forms, was available online in English, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese.

Of the 122 responses collected using online and paper surveys, 122 people (100 percent of survey respondents) responded in English.

Survey responses on CATA use (Figure 38) reflected that 35 percent of respondents use CATA, and 65 percent do not.

Figure 38. Do you use CATA transportation services?

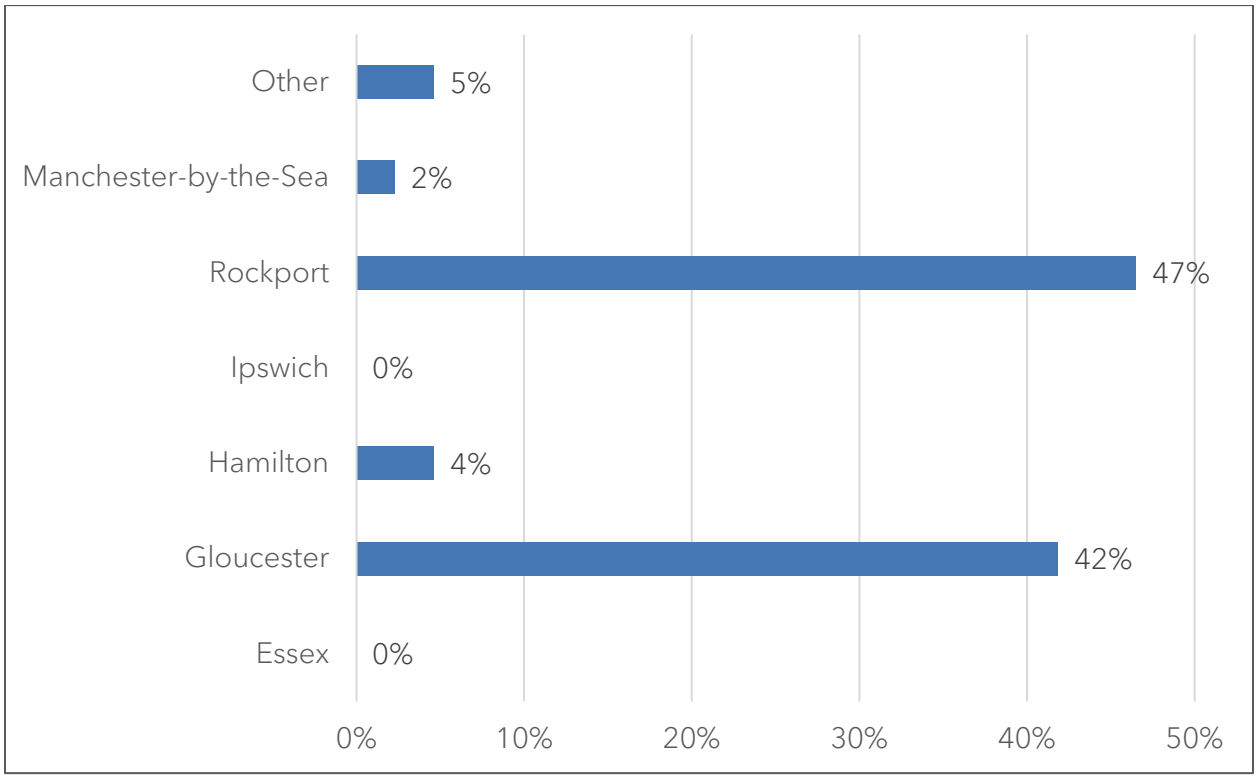


Rider Survey

To gather insights from those currently using CATA services, a dedicated set of survey questions was directed toward riders. This section explores rider experiences, satisfaction with existing services, and priorities for future improvements to better meet the needs of the riding public.

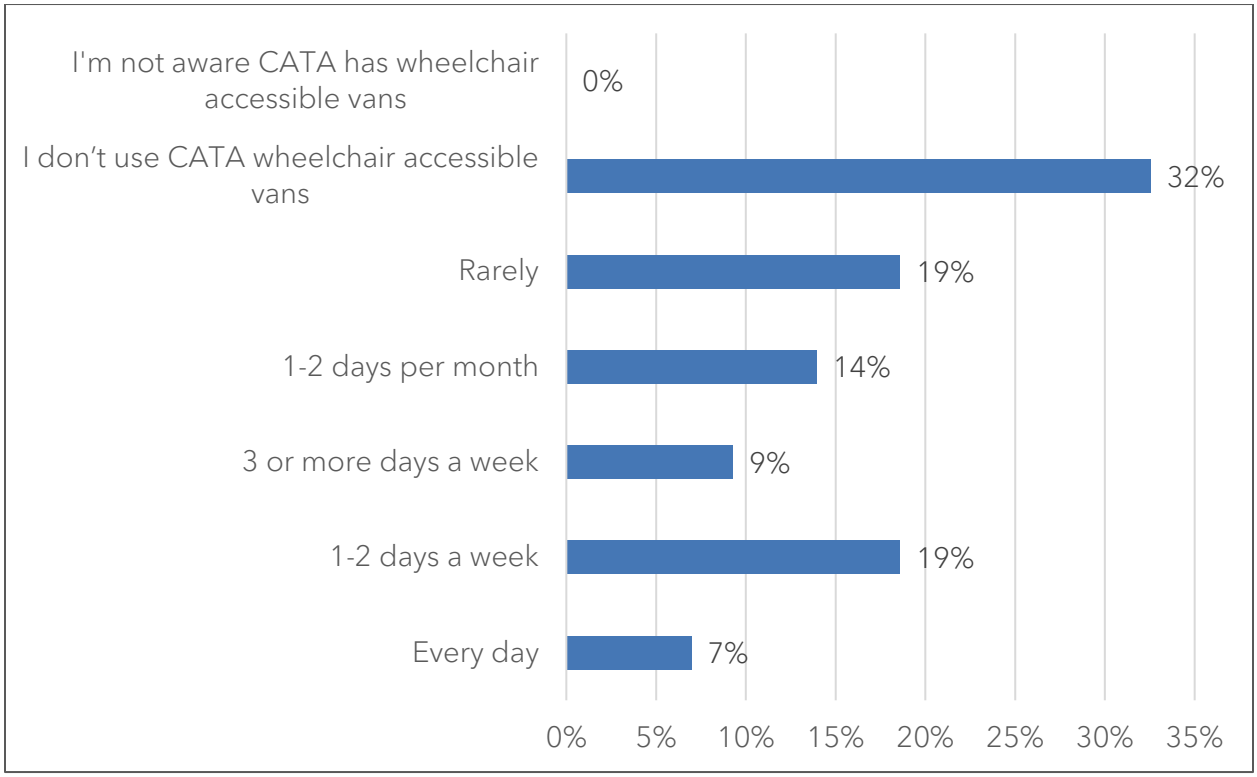
Survey responses on what town respondents live in (Figure 39) reflected that 47 percent live in Rockport, 42 percent live in Gloucester, 4 percent live in Hamilton, and 2 percent live in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Five percent responded "other," and answered Beverly, and no one selected Ipswich or Essex.

Figure 39. In what town do you live?



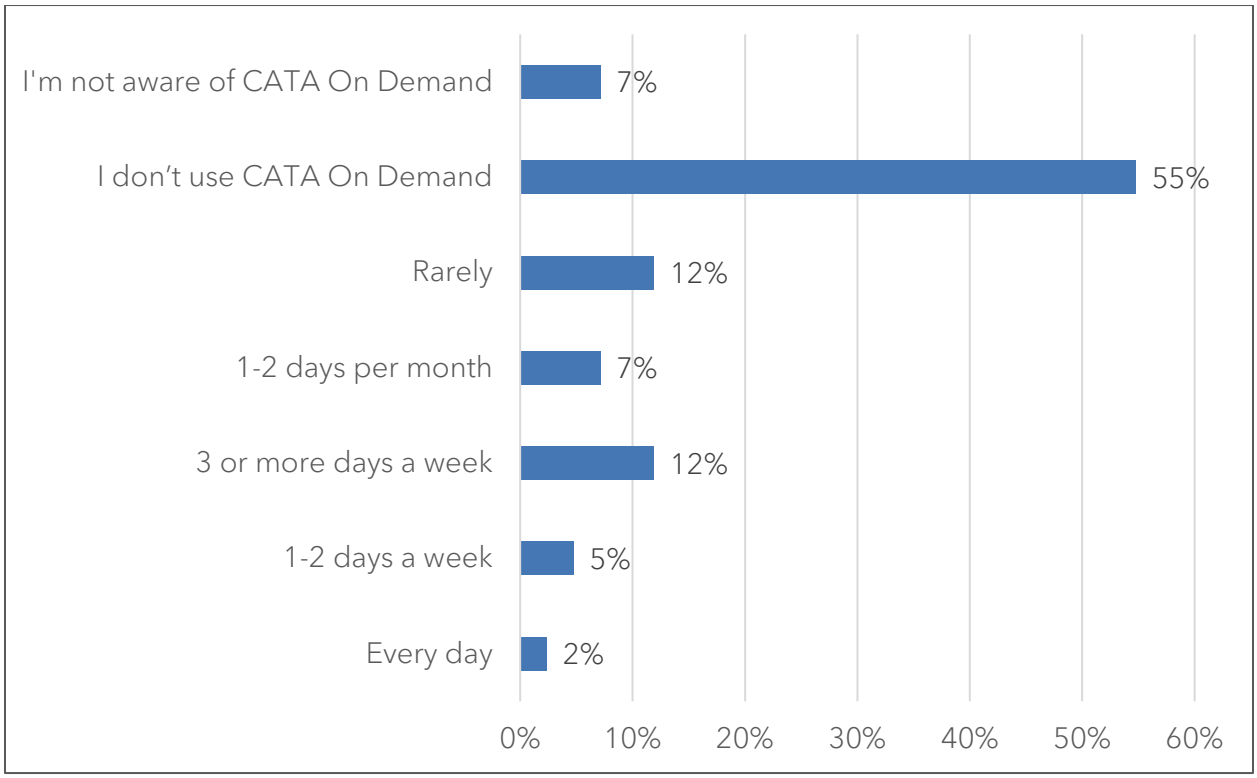
Survey responses on CATA Senior and ADA Dial-a-Ride service (Figure 40) reflected that 32 percent of respondents don't use the services, 19 percent use them one to two days a week, 19 percent use them rarely, 14 percent use them one to two days per month, 9 percent use them three or more days a week, and 7 percent use them every day.

Figure 40. How often do you use the CATA Senior and ADA Dial-a-Ride service (van service)?



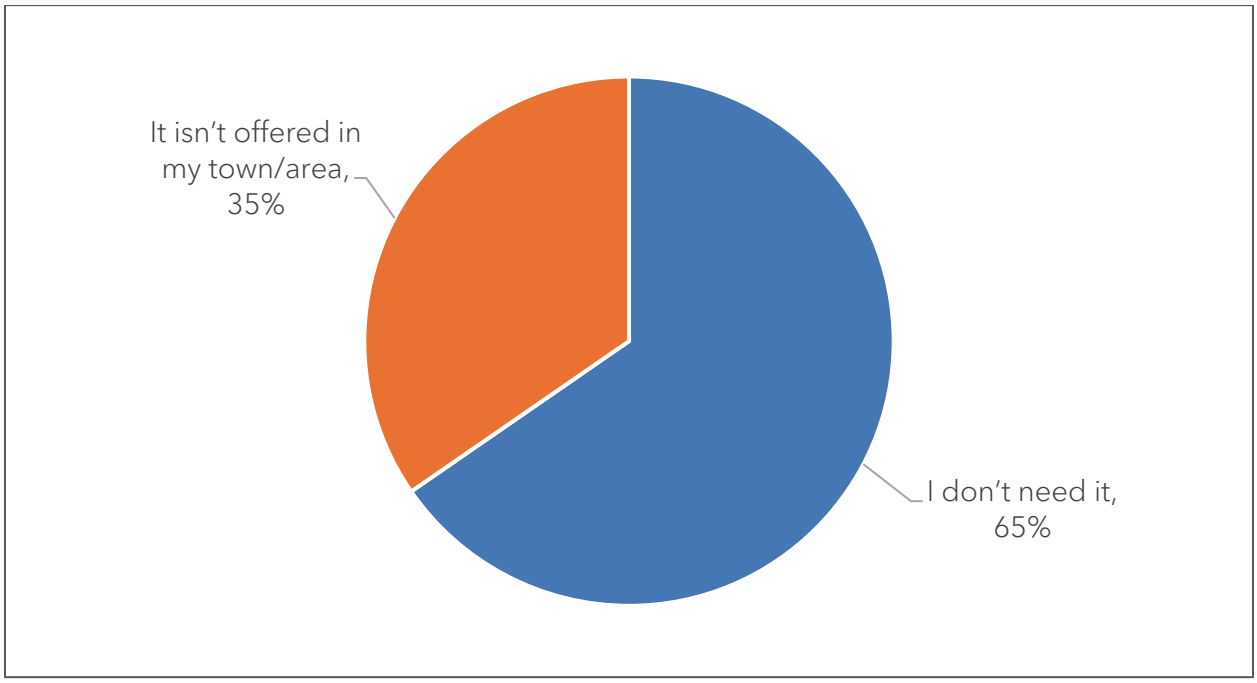
Survey responses on CATA On Demand service usage (Figure 41) reflected that 55 percent of respondents do not use CATA On Demand, 12 percent use it three or more days per week, 12 percent use it rarely, 7 percent use it one to two days per month, 7 percent said they were not aware of CATA On Demand, 5 percent use it one to two days per week, and 2 percent use it every day.

Figure 41. How often do you use the CATA On Demand service?



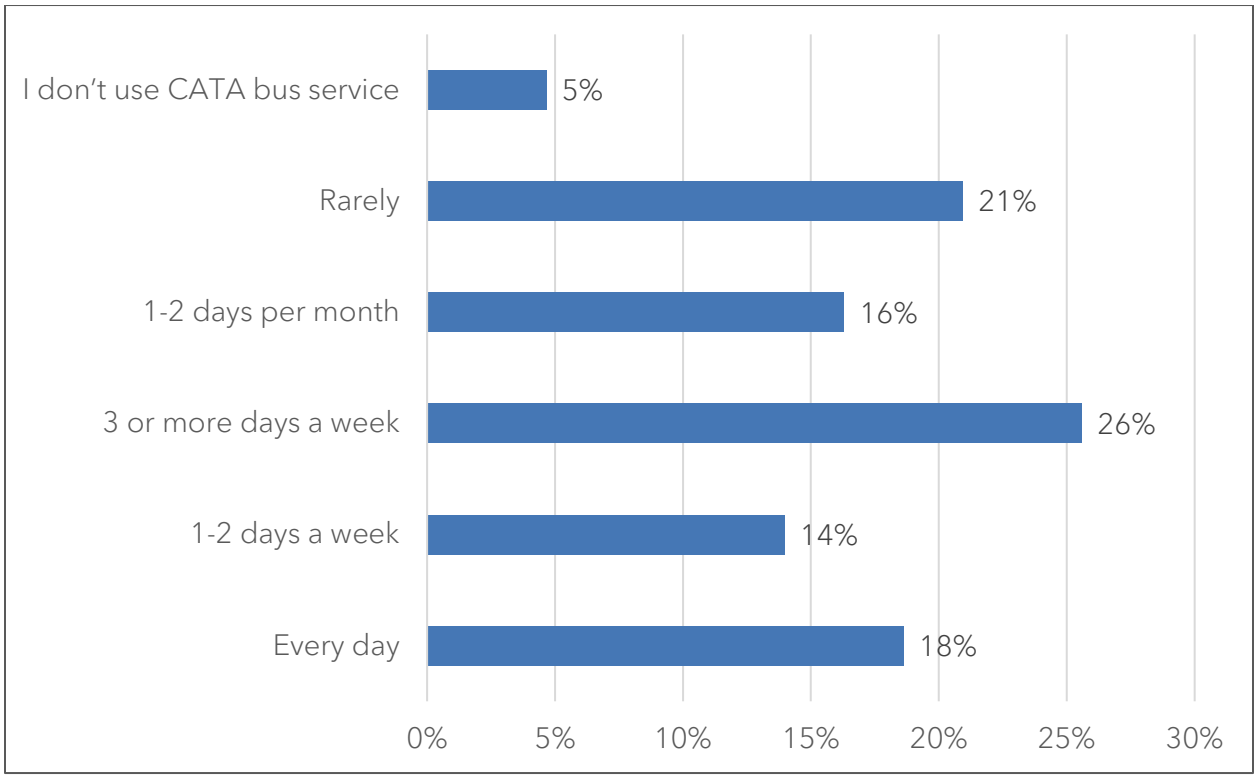
Respondents who selected they did not use CATA On Demand service were asked why (Figure 42). Sixty-five percent said they do not need CATA On Demand, and 35 percent said it is not offered in their town/area.

Figure 42. If you don't use CATA On Demand, why is that?



Survey responses for how often respondents use CATA bus service (Figure 43) reflected that 26 percent use it three or more days a week, 21 percent use it rarely, 18 percent use it every day, 16 percent use it one to two days per month, 14 percent use it one to two days a week, and 5 percent do not use CATA bus service.

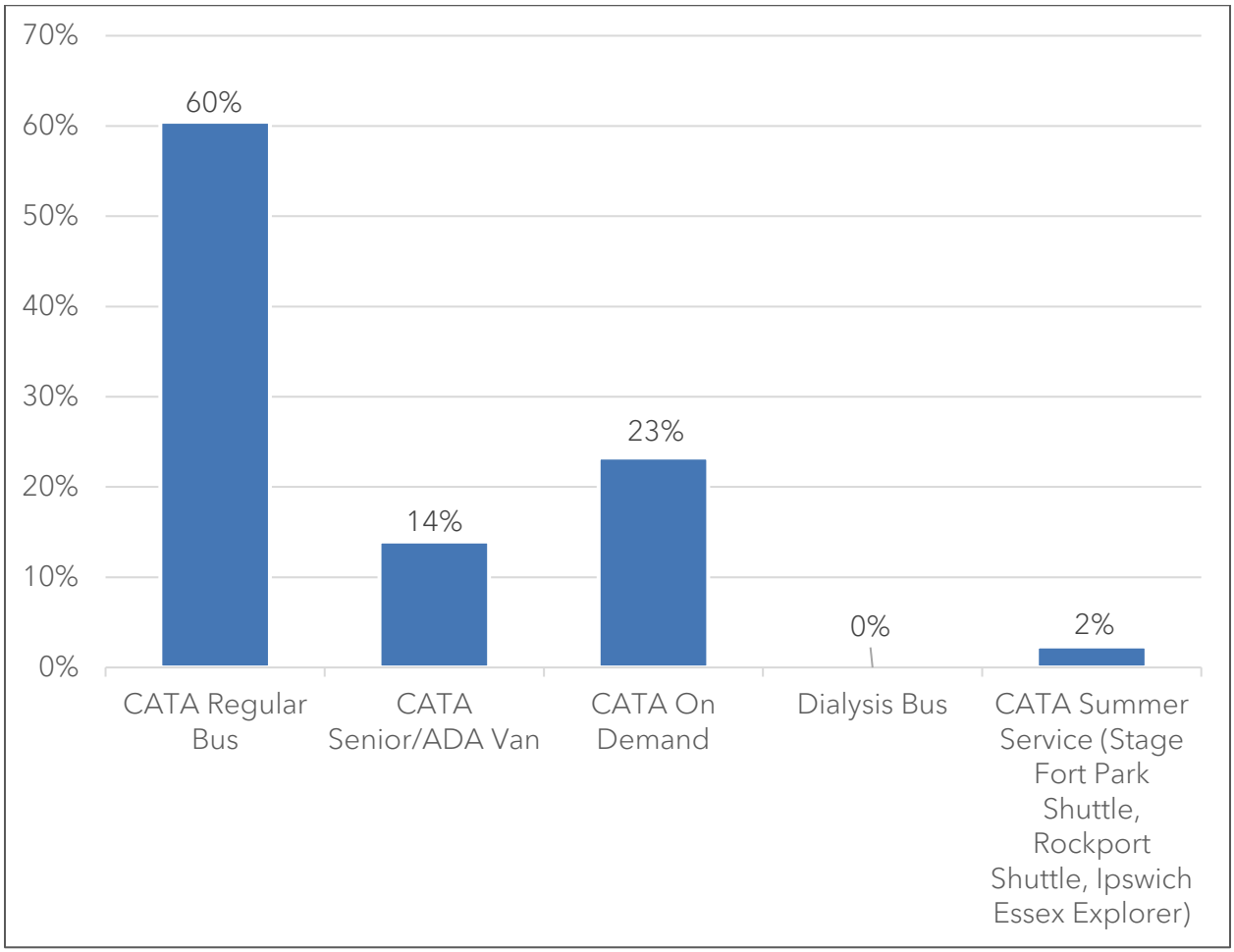
Figure 43. How often do you use CATA bus service?



Survey responses for which CATA services are primarily used (Figure 44) reflected the following, with respondents able to select up to two answers:

- CATA Regular Bus (60 percent)
- CATA On Demand (23 percent)
- CATA Senior/ADA Van (14 percent)
- CATA Summer Service (2 percent)
- Dialysis Bus (0 percent)

Figure 44. Which CATA services do you primarily use? (Select up to two)



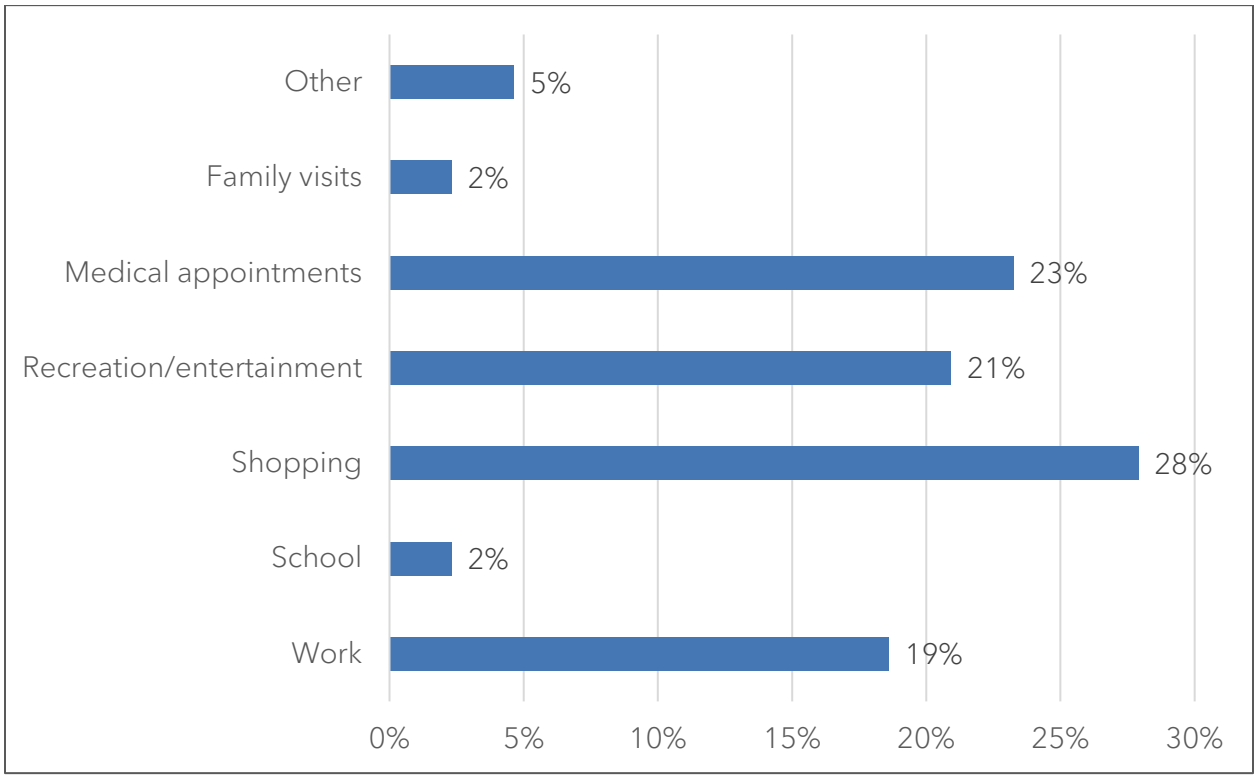
Respondents' primary trip purposes while using CATA services (Figure 45) included:

- Shopping (28 percent)
- Medical appointments (23 percent)
- Recreation/entertainment (21 percent)
- Work (19 percent)
- Family visits (2 percent)
- School (2 percent)

"Other" responses (5 percent) included:

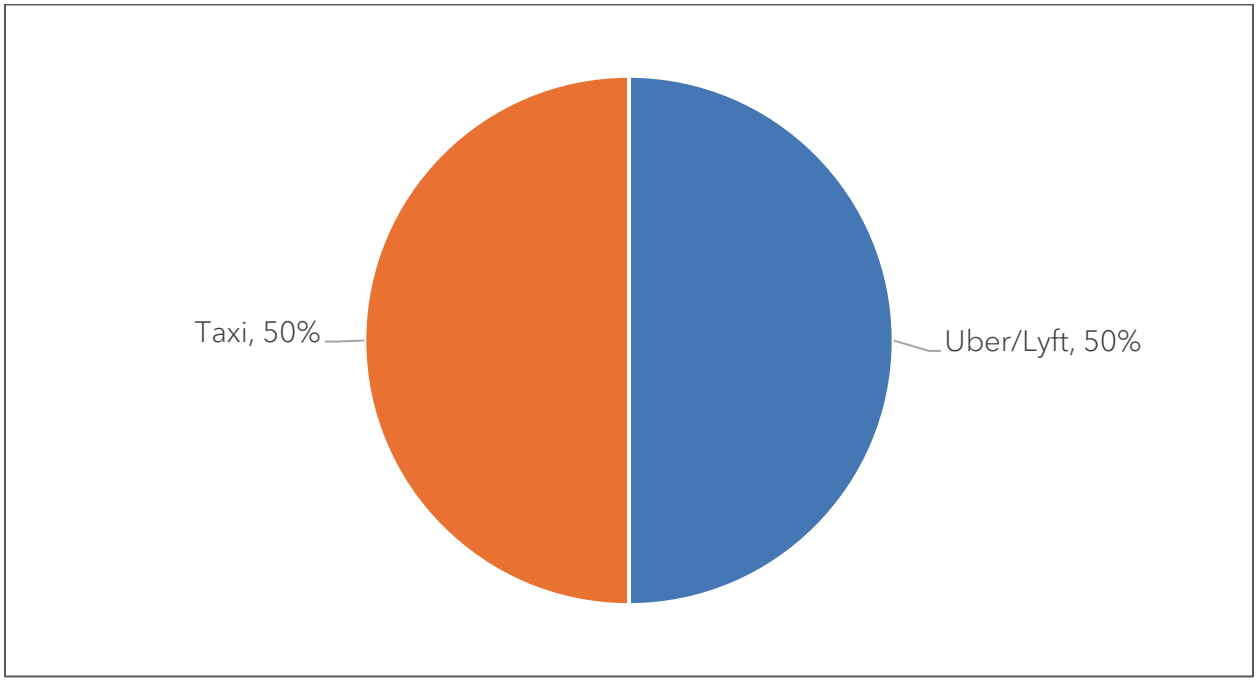
- Whenever I'm carless.
- I use it for everything.

Figure 45. What is your primary trip purpose when you use CATA services?



Respondents were asked about whether they have used Uber/Lyft or taken a taxi in the past year (Figure 46). The response rate was split: 50 percent of respondents had used those services in the past year, and 50 percent had not.

Figure 46. Have you used the following services in the past year?



Respondents provided these reasons for why they use CATA service (Figure 47):

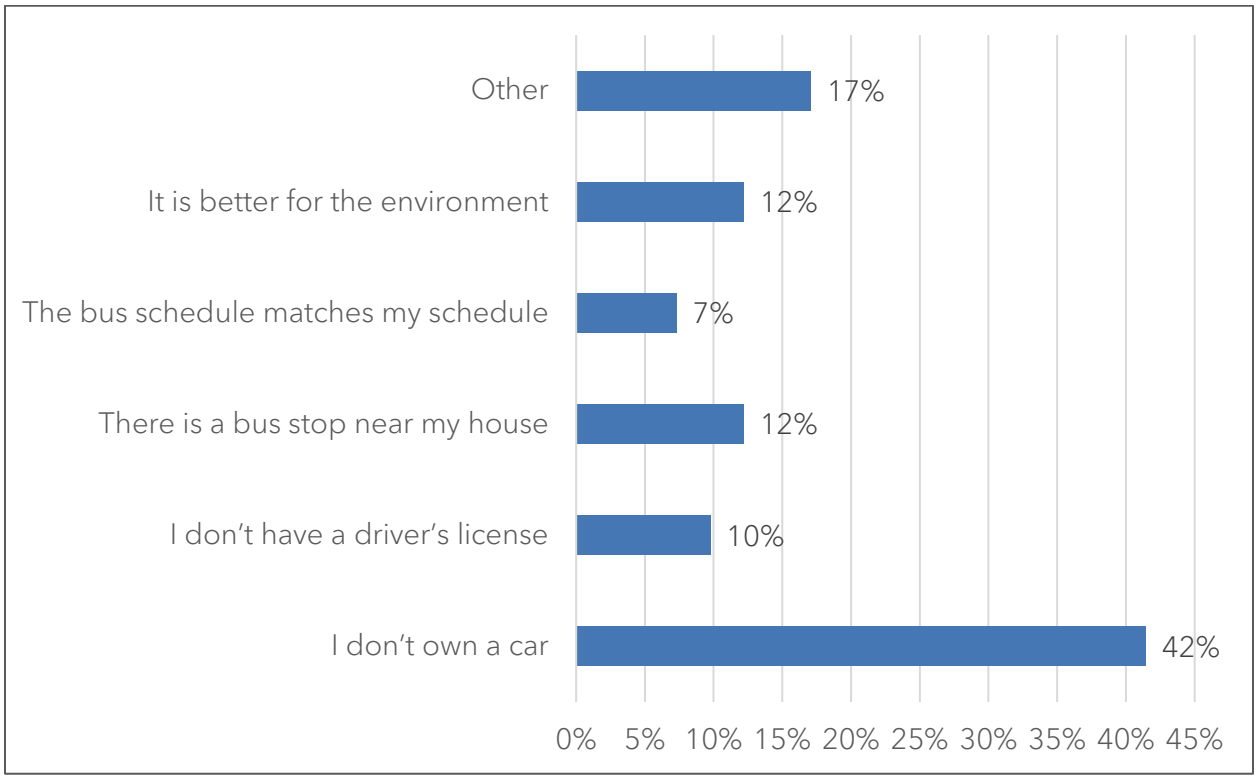
- I don't own a car (42 percent)
- It's better for the environment (12 percent)

- There is a bus stop near my house (12 percent)
- I don't have a driver's license (10 percent)
- The bus schedule matches my schedule (7 percent)

"Other" responses (17 percent) included:

- Car is in the shop.
- One-car family, middle school bus route
- Elders that no longer drive
- I love public transportation, but not only because it is better for the environment – though it certainly is. I think public transportation also builds community.
- Handicapped
- Parking is hard in Gloucester.

Figure 47. Why do you use CATA service? (Select One)

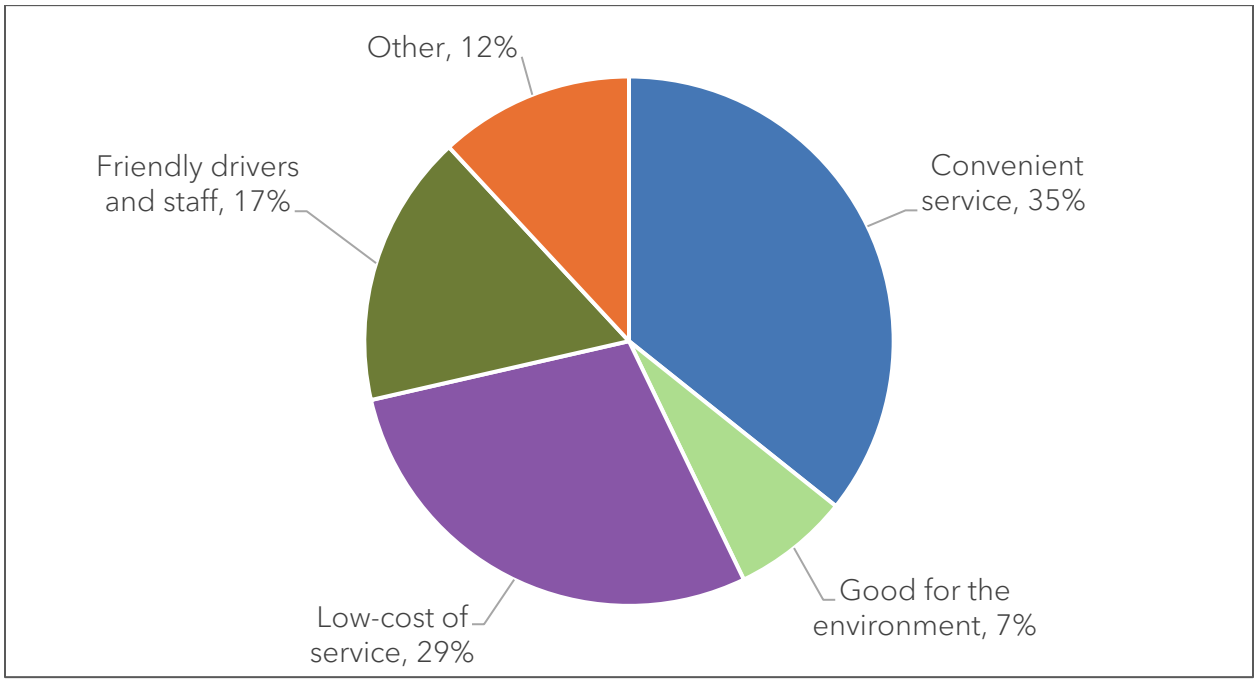


Respondents were asked about what the major advantages of using CATA service are (Figure 48). Thirty-five percent selected convenient service, 29 percent selected low-cost of service, 17 percent selected friendly drivers and staff, and 7 percent selected because it is good for the environment.

Other responses (12 percent) included:

- All of the above (multiple)
- It gets me home.

Figure 48. What is the major advantage of using CATA service?



Respondents were asked where they would like to go that they are currently not able to. Their responses included:

- Currently wait up to 55 minutes for last bus of the day. Too much waiting and food goes bad.
- Airport
- Manchester by the Sea Train Station
- Nowhere. But CATA gets me there with no parking issues or driving worries.
- Train station from Magnolia, to Beverly from Gloucester daily
- Medical appointments in Peabody
- Boston
- Doctors office on Manchester, MM
- Not sure
- Further places in Cape Ann
- Lahey Peabody/Beverly Hospital
- Beverly Medical Appointments
- Medical appointments in Peabody
- Beverly Senior Center
- Would like On Demand to be available in Rockport.
- Walmart
- Walmart, Savers, restaurants
- Go directly to Gloucester Crossing

- Market Basket/Gloucester Crossing

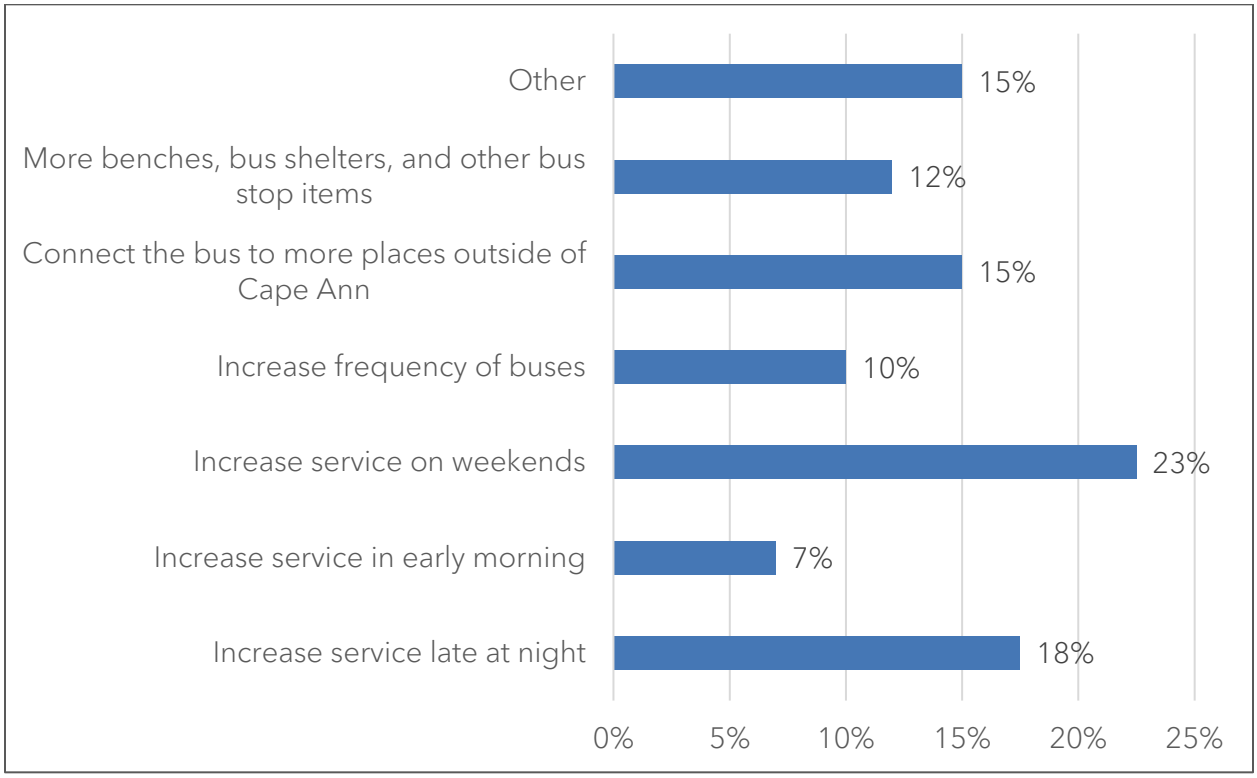
Suggestions for the biggest improvements CATA should make over the next five years (Figure 49) included:

- Increase service on weekends (23 percent)
- Increase service late at night (18 percent)
- Connect the bus to more places outside of Cape Ann (15 percent)
- More benches, bus shelters, and other bus stop items (12 percent)
- Increase frequency of buses (10 percent)
- Increase service in early morning (7 percent)

Other responses (15 percent) included:

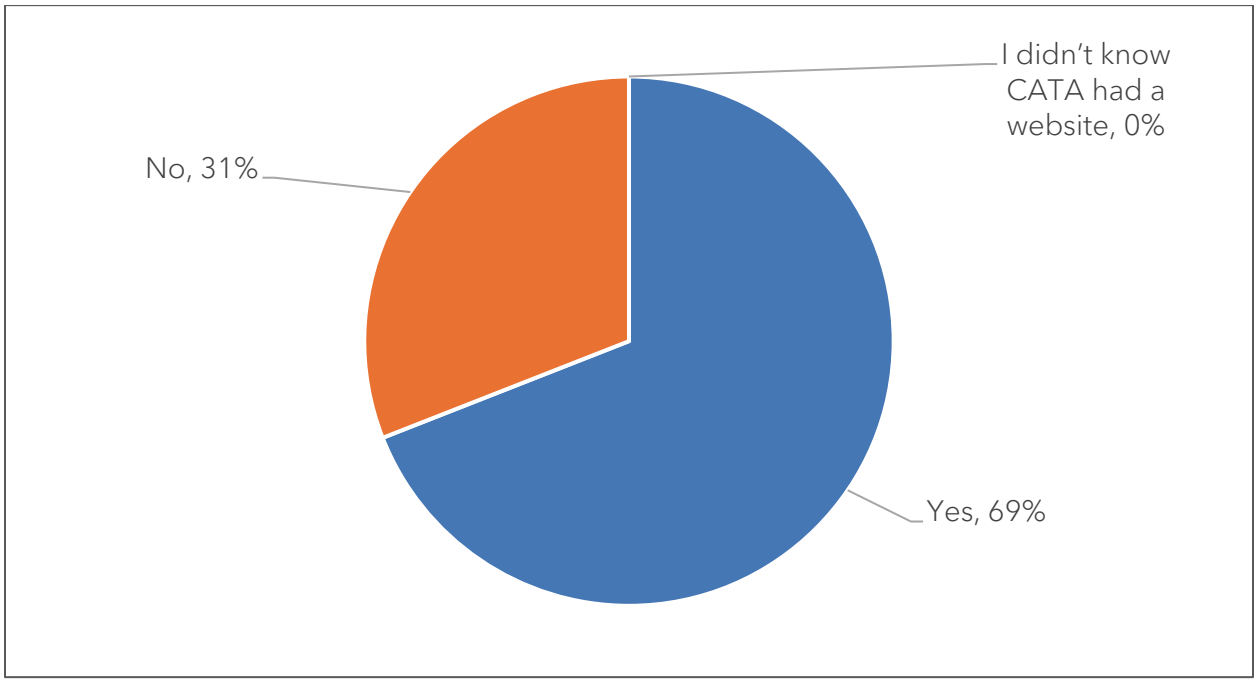
- Electrification
- Clean the seats, more frequent and direct service from senior living buildings to groceries
- Extend service to 8 PM like CATA On Demand and increase service during commuting times.
- Make bus routes more efficient.
- Better public promotion of bus services.
- Make On Demand available to towns other than Gloucester.

Figure 49. What are the biggest improvements that CATA should make over the next 5 years?



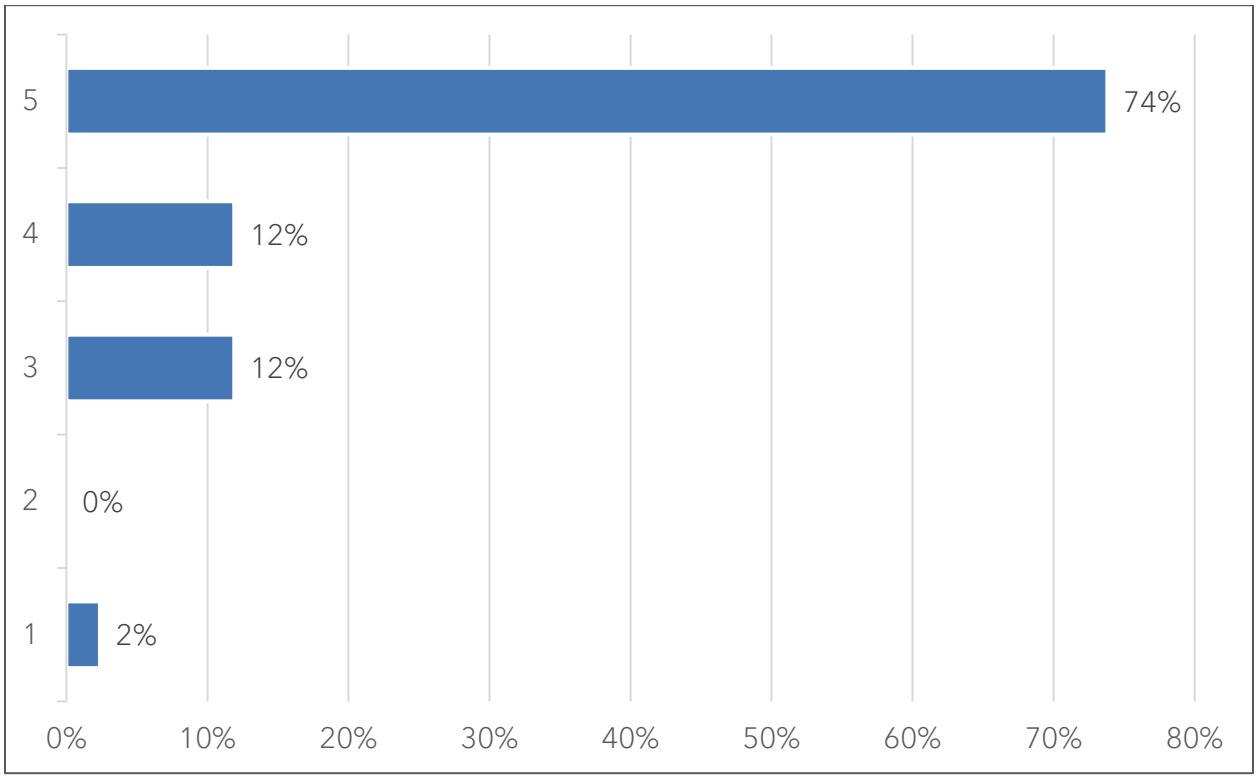
In terms of CATA website usage (Figure 50), 69 percent of respondents said they use the website, and 31 percent said they do not. All respondents were aware of CATA's website.

Figure 50. Do you use the main CATA website for information?



Respondents were asked to rate how safe they feel on a CATA vehicle (Figure 51) on a scale of one (which indicated unsafe) to five (which indicated very safe). Responses showed that 74 percent of respondents feel very safe on a CATA vehicle (a rating of 5). Twelve percent rated it a "4," 12 percent rated it a "3," and 2 percent rated it a "1." No one selected "2" as a response.

Figure 51. How safe do you feel while riding on a CATA vehicle? (5 = very safe and 1 = very unsafe)



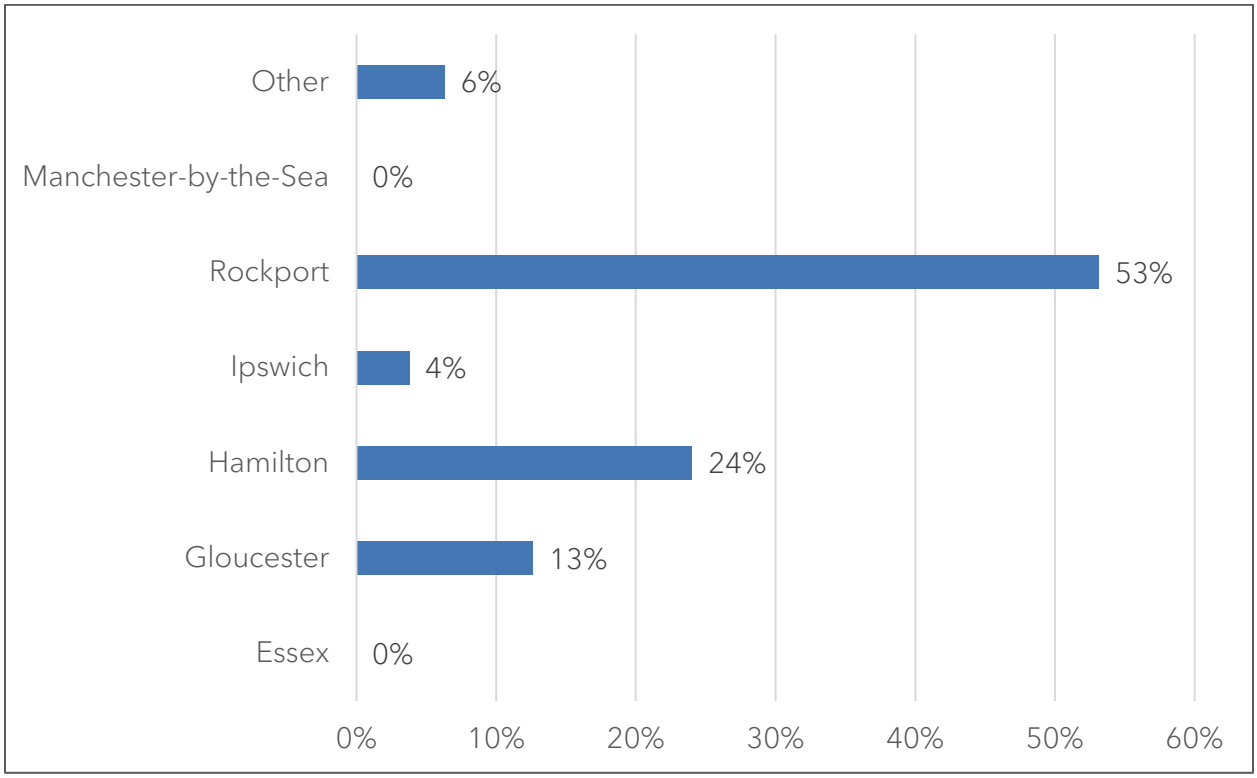
Non-Rider Survey

To capture perspectives from those not currently using CATA services, a separate set of survey questions was directed toward non-riders. This section aimed to better understand barriers to transit use, perceptions of the system, and what changes might encourage future ridership.

Survey responses for what town non-riders live in (Figure 52) reflected the following:

- Rockport (53 percent)
- Hamilton (24 percent)
- Gloucester (13 percent)
- Ipswich (4 percent)
- Manchester-by-the-Sea (0 percent)
- Essex (0 percent)
- Other (6 percent)

Figure 52. In what town do you live?

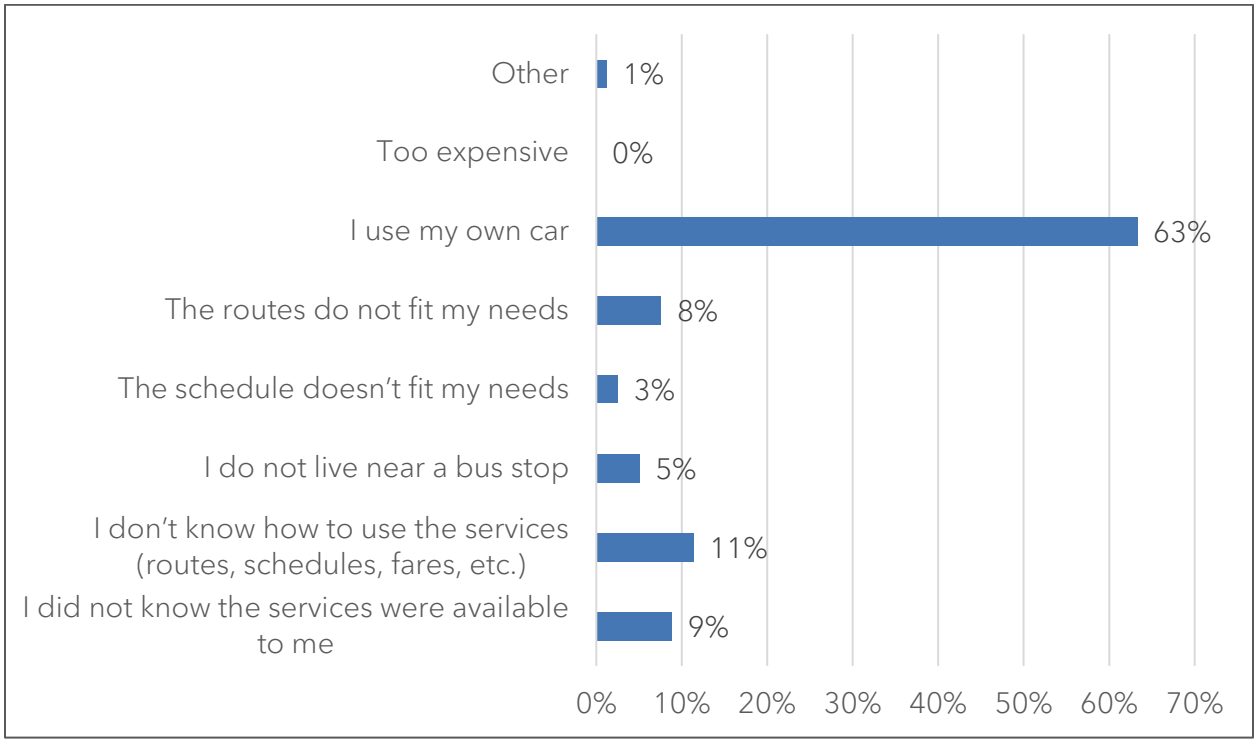


Survey responses for primary reason respondents don't use CATA transit services (Figure 53) reflected the following:

- I use my own car (63 percent)
- I don't know how to use the services (11 percent)
- I did not know the services were available to me (9 percent)
- The routes don't fit my needs (8 percent)
- I do not live near a bus stop (5 percent)
- The schedule doesn't fit my needs (3 percent)

- Other (1 percent)
- Too expensive (0 percent)

Figure 53. What is the primary reason you do not use CATA transit services?



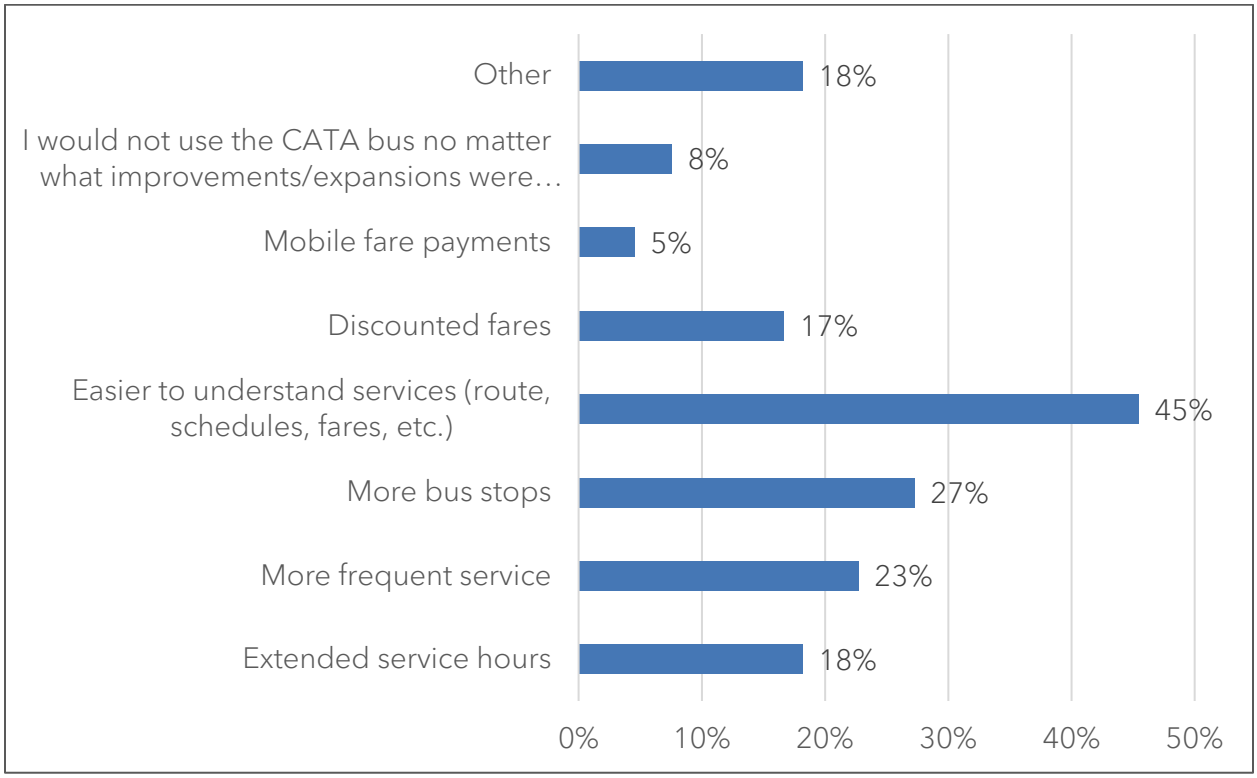
Respondents were asked what improvements would get them to use CATA transit services (Figure 54). They could select all that applied. Responses included:

- Easier to understand services (route, schedules, fares, etc.) (45 percent)
- More bus stops (27 percent)
- More frequent service (23 percent)
- Extended service hours (18 percent)
- Discounted fares (17 percent)
- I would not use the CATA bus no matter what improvements/expansions were made (8 percent)
- Mobile fare payments (5 percent)

Other responses (18 percent) included:

- Rockport needs CATA On Demand
- More electric buses
- Signs designating stops
- More seats
- Gloucester Crossing
- Add an Uber-like feature at a discount for seniors and disabled for Boston medical appointments.

Figure 54. What improvements would get you to use CATA transit services? (Select all that apply)



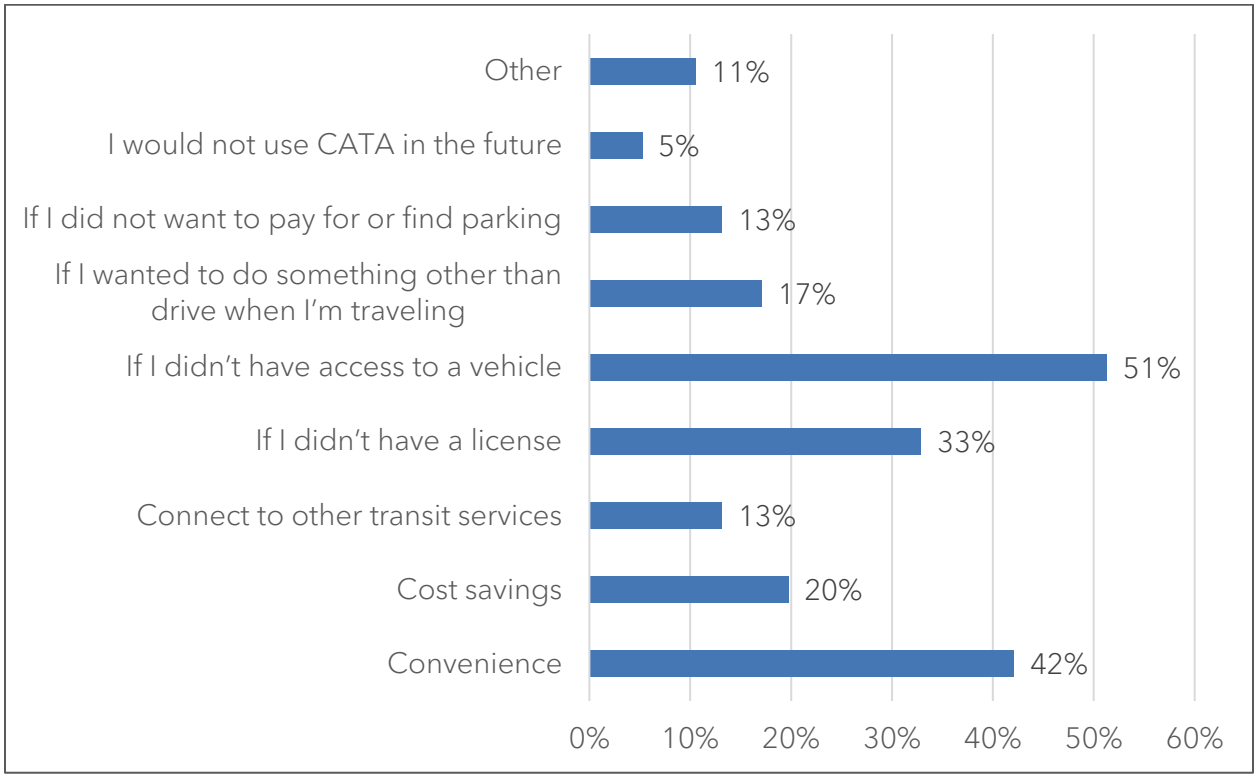
The primary reasons non-riders would use CATA in the future (Figure 55) included:

- If I didn't have access to a vehicle (51 percent)
- Convenience (42 percent)
- If I didn't have a license (33 percent)
- Cost savings (20 percent)
- If I wanted to do something other than drive when I'm traveling (17 percent)
- Connect to other transit services (13 percent)
- If I did not want to pay for or find parking (13 percent)
- I would not use CATA in the future (5 percent)

Respondents could select all options that applied to them. "Other" responses (11 percent) included:

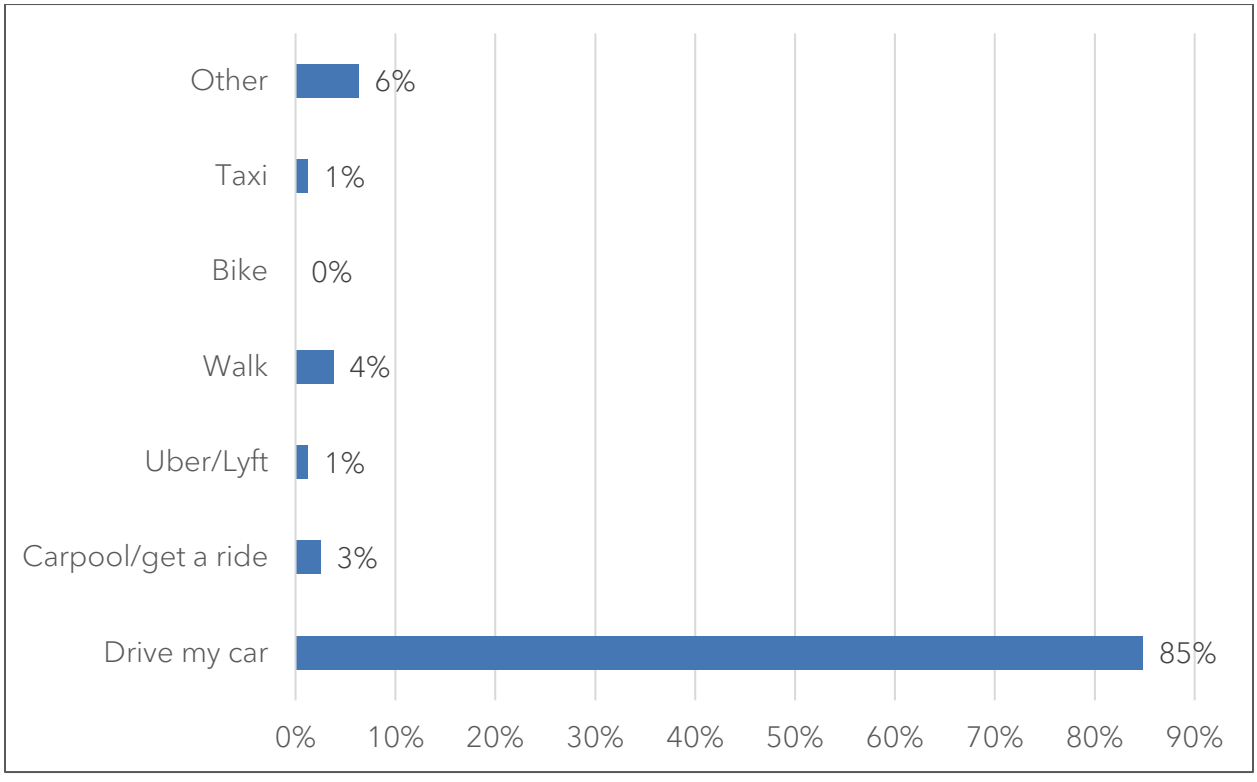
- Concern for the environment, and I am 79 so having alternatives is a good thing.
- Lowering carbon emissions
- I could no longer drive.
- Places where parking is expensive and go to beach
- Please stop at Rockport Community Center.
- Gloucester Crossing
- Traffic, aging

Figure 55. What are the primary reasons you would use CATA in the future? (select all that apply)



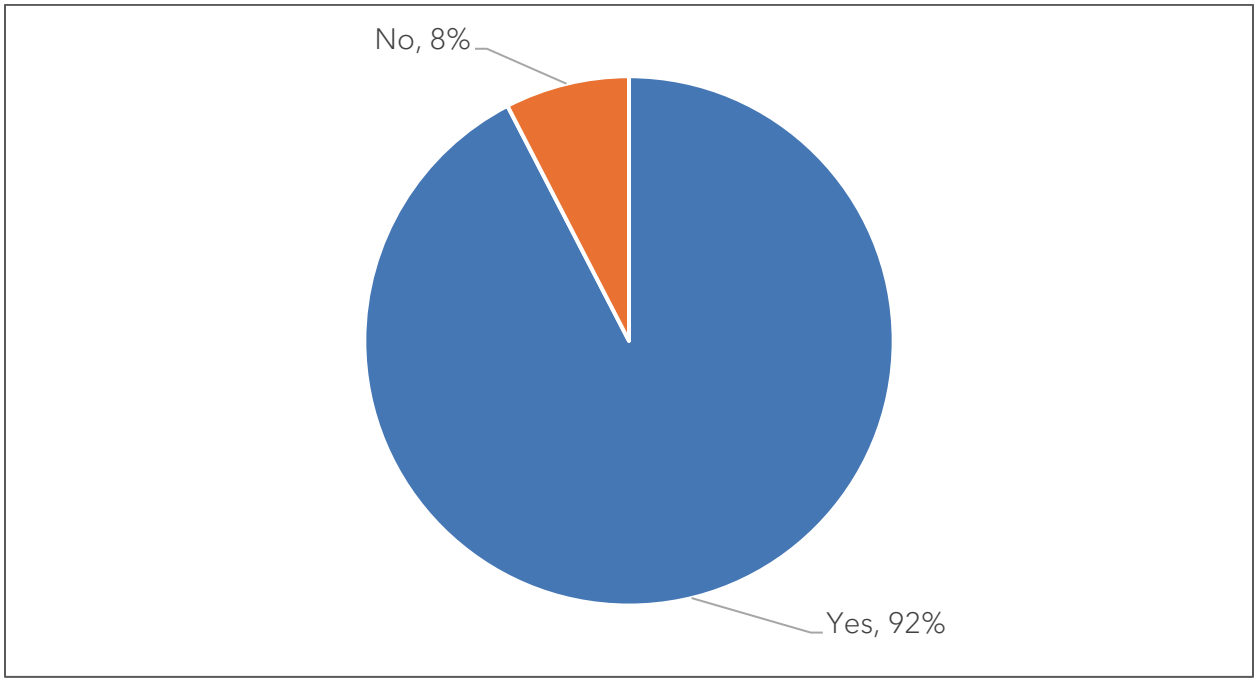
Non-riders' primary mode of transportation (Figure 56) shows that 85 percent of respondents drive their car, 4 percent walk, 3 percent carpool/get a ride, 1 percent take a taxi, and 1 percent take an Uber or Lyft. No respondent selected via bike. Six percent responded "other."

Figure 56. What is your primary mode of transportation?



Though they do not use CATA services, 92 respondents said they feel that CATA is a valuable public transportation resource in the region (Figure 57). Eight percent said they do not feel it is valuable.

Figure 57. Do you feel that CATA is a valuable public transportation resource in the region?

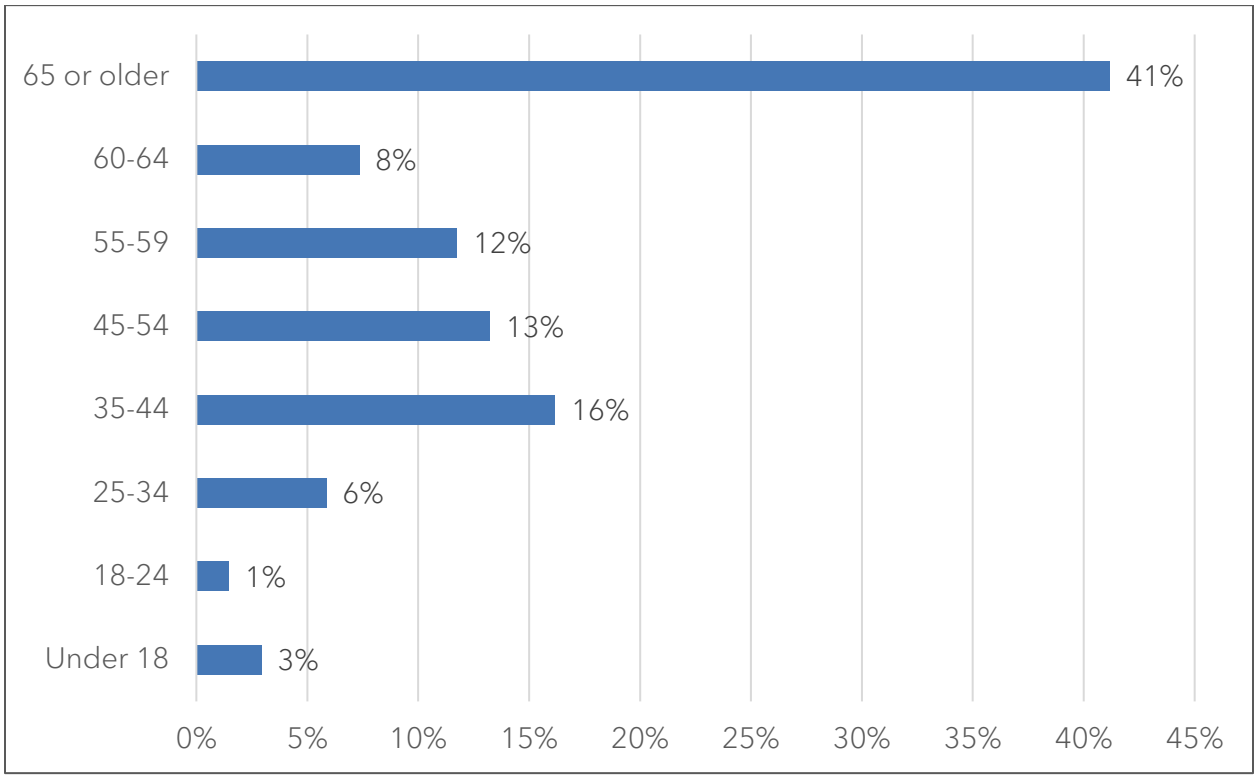


Survey Demographics

Survey responses for age (Figure 58) indicated that respondents comprised the following ages:

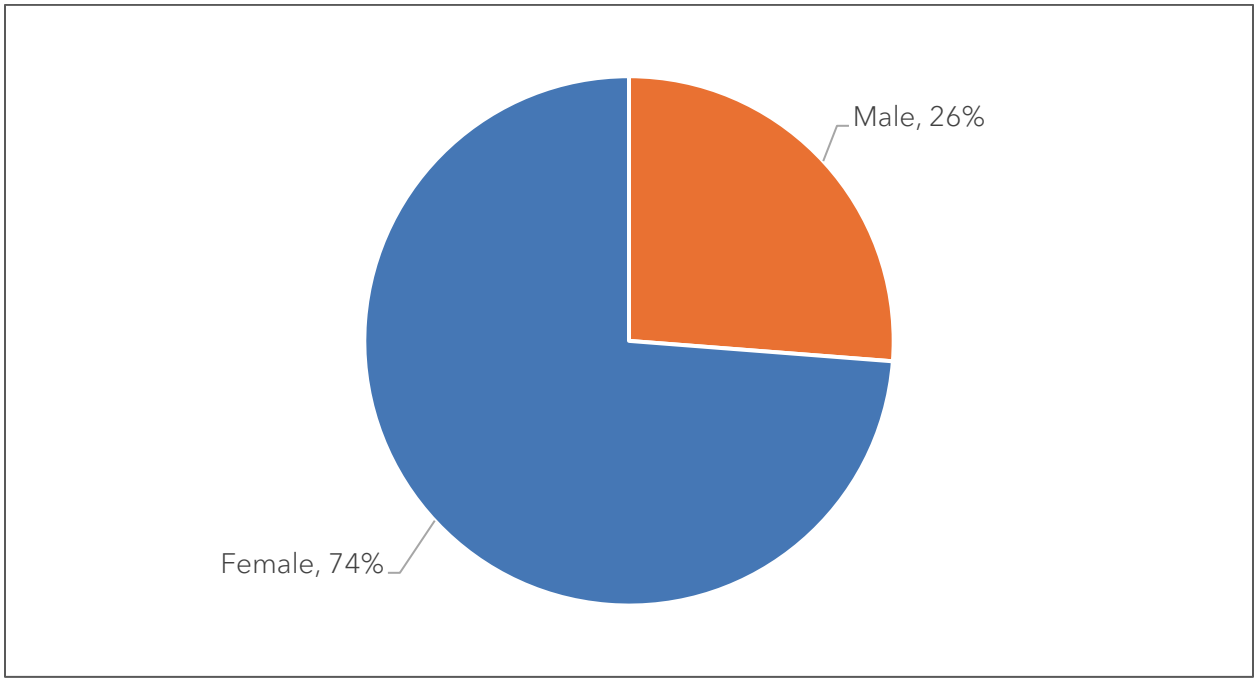
- 65 or older (41 percent)
- 60 to 64 (8 percent)
- 55 to 59 (12 percent)
- 45 to 54 (13 percent)
- 35 to 44 (16 percent)
- 25 to 34 (6 percent)
- 18 to 24 (1 percent)
- Under 18 (3 percent)

Figure 58. What is your age?



Survey respondents were asked to identify their gender (Figure 59), with the following results. Seventy-four percent identified as female, and 26 percent identified as male.

Figure 59. What is your gender?

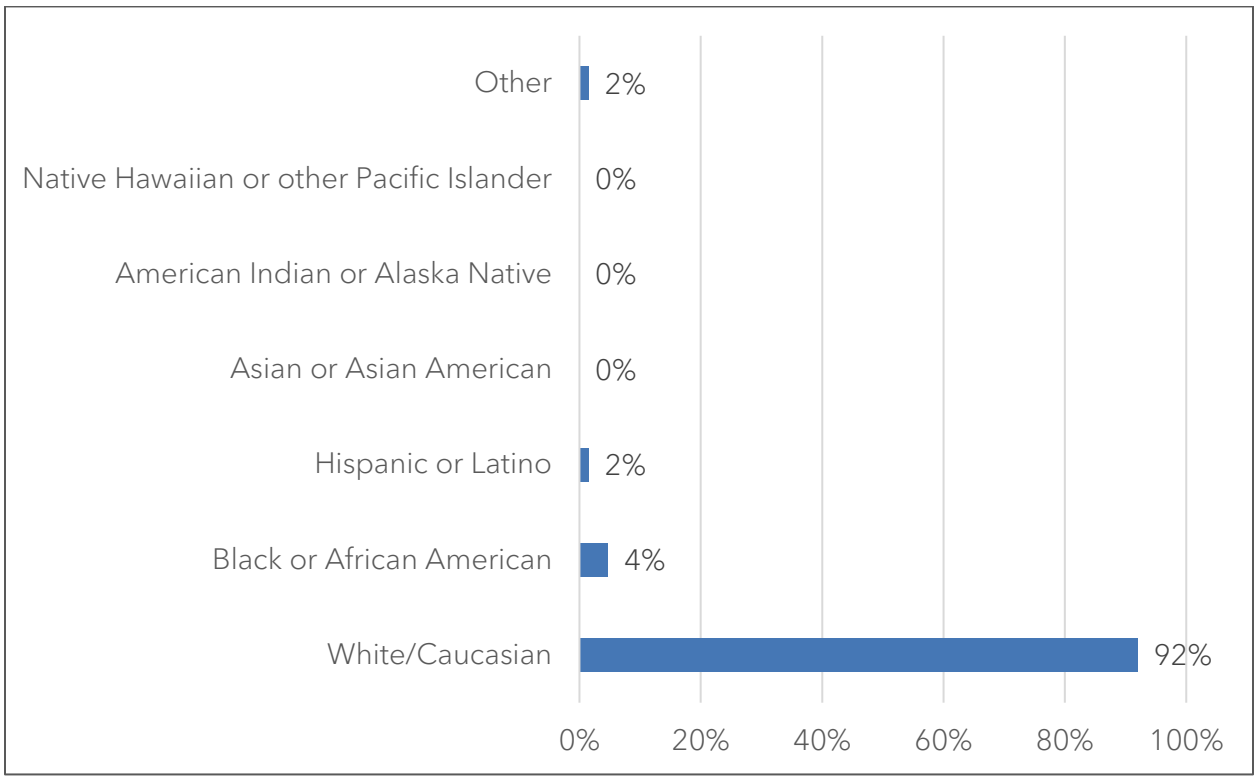


Survey respondents were asked to identify their race or ethnicity (Figure 60). They could select all options that applied. Responses included:

- White/Caucasian (92 percent)
- Black or African American (4 percent)

- Hispanic or Latino (2 percent)
- Other (2 percent)
- No respondents selected Asian or Asian American, American Indian or Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Figure 60. What is your race/ethnicity? (Select all that apply)

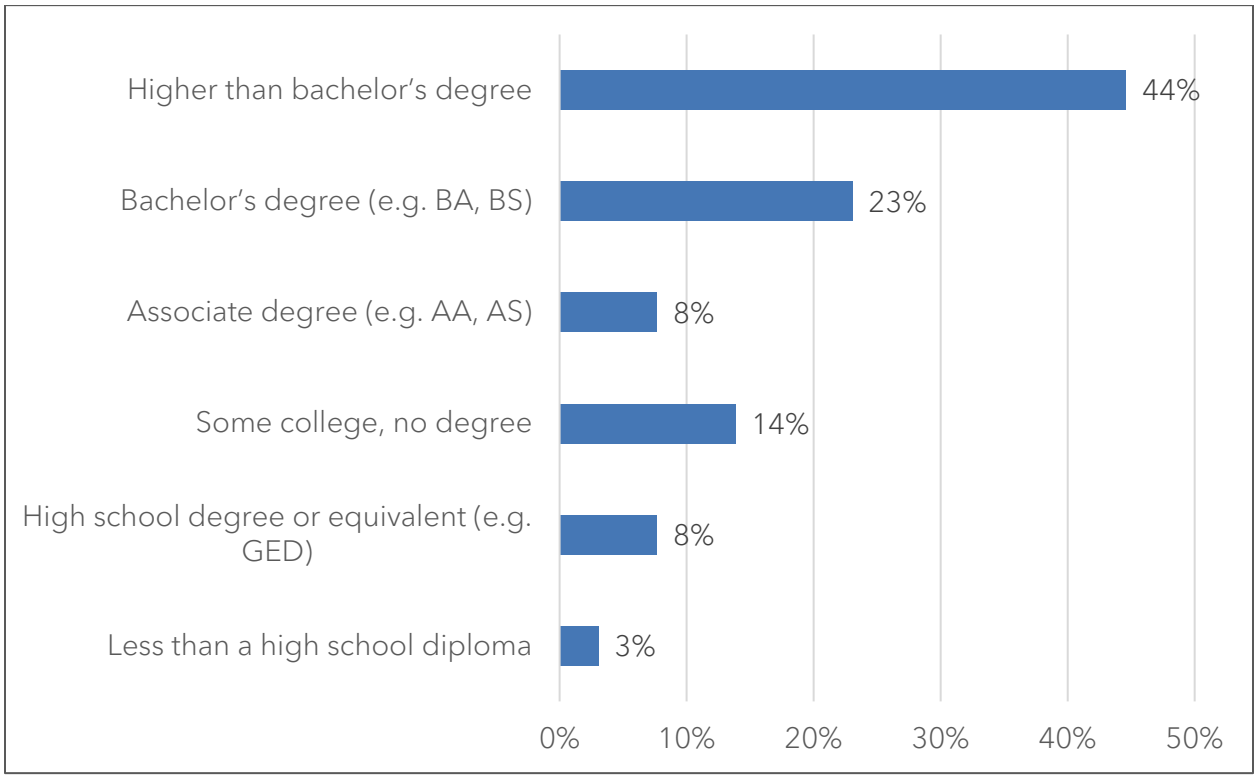


Respondents were asked what their primary language spoken in their home was, and 100 percent responded English.

The highest educational attainment achieved by respondents (Figure 61) included:

- Higher than bachelor's degree (44 percent)
- Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS) (23 percent)
- Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS) (8 percent)
- Some college, no degree (14 percent)
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED) (8 percent)
- Less than a high school diploma (3 percent)

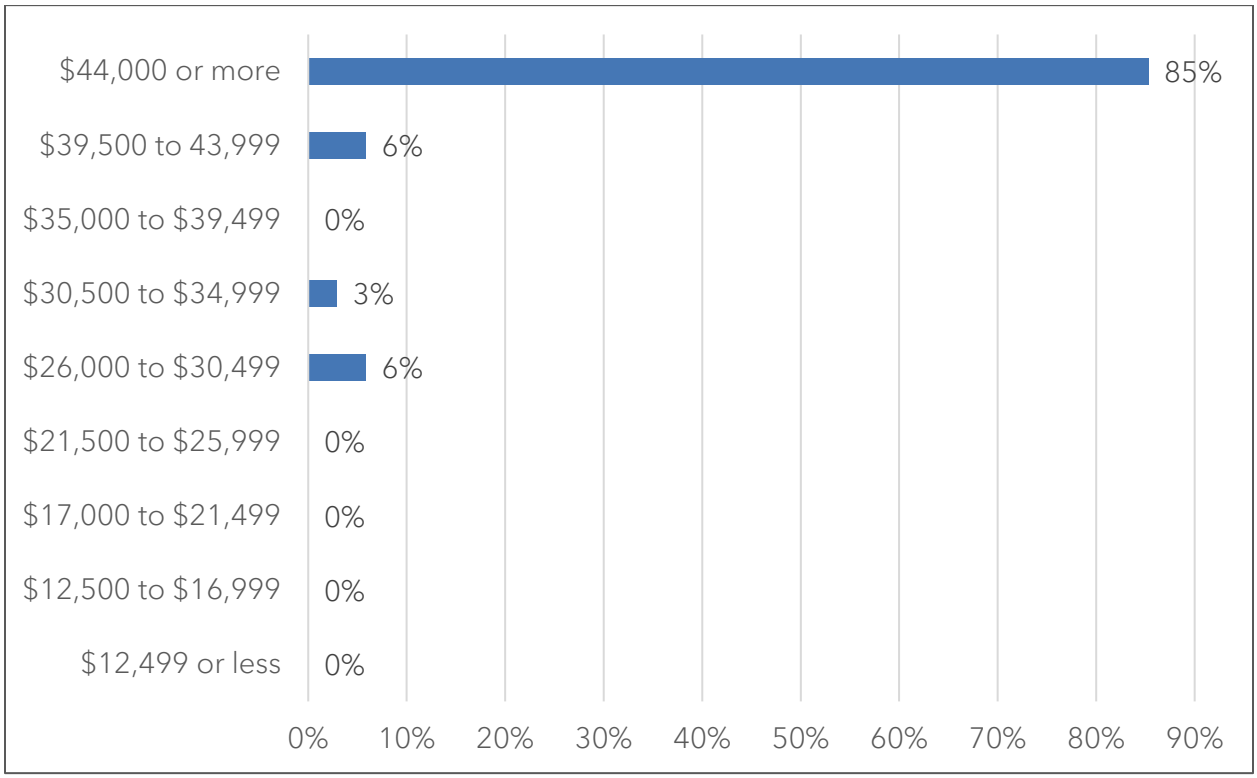
Figure 61. What is your highest level of educational attainment?



Survey responses about household income (Figure 62) reflected that 85 percent of respondents earn $44,000 or more. Other responses included:

- $39,500 to $43,999 (6 percent)
- $35,000 to $39,499 (0 percent)
- $30,500 to $34,999 (3 percent)
- $26,000 to $30,499 (6 percent)
- $21,500 to $25,999 (0 percent)
- $17,000 to $21,499 (0 percent)
- $12,500 to $16,999 (0 percent)
- $12,499 or less (0 percent)

Figure 62. What is your annual household income?



5.3.3.3 Key Takeaways

The following are key takeaways from the public survey.

- A majority of riders rated their safety on CATA vehicles as "very safe," and many cited friendly drivers and convenience as major advantages, reinforcing the value of maintaining service quality.
- Respondents consistently requested more frequent buses, especially during peak commuting times, weekends, and evenings.
- Riders and non-riders alike expressed a desire for service to reach more destinations, including medical facilities in Peabody, Beverly, and Boston, as well as better connections to train stations and shopping centers like Gloucester Crossing and Walmart.
- A significant portion of non-riders indicated they either didn't know CATA services were available or didn't understand how to use them. Simplifying service information and improving outreach could help convert these potential riders.
- Many comments requested expansion of On Demand to towns like Rockport.

6 Performance Measures

Performance measurement is a foundational component of enhancing operational efficiency, improving the customer experience, ensuring safety, and meeting the numerous other goals that a transit agency may have by supporting and driving data-driven decision-making. This chapter outlines the performance measures and targets selected and defined by CATA. Data examining performance from FY 2020 through FY 2024 can be found in Chapter 4.

CATA reports performance data on a quarterly basis across a variety of metrics as described in this chapter. The targets are updated annually as mutually agreed upon by CATA and MassDOT for the FY 2026 through FY 2027 time period. Where an RTA is performing well, there is an opportunity to share best practices with other RTAs in the Commonwealth. Where an RTA is not meeting targets, this is an opportunity to assess avenues for potential improvements.

6.1 Ridership

Ridership is reported as unlinked passenger trips. Each boarding is counted and summed toward the overall unlinked passenger trips metric. This metric is also normalized to vehicle revenue miles and vehicle revenue hours to better understand how ridership compares to the level of service provided. CATA ridership metrics and targets are listed in Table 22. Monthly data are submitted quarterly and compared to the annual target set by CATA.

Table 22. Ridership Metrics and Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route	Demand Response	Commuter Bus
Unlinked passenger trips	165,000	65,000	500
Unlinked passenger trips per vehicle revenue mile	0.60	0.23	0.08
Unlinked passenger trips per vehicle revenue hour	8.25	3.50	2.00

Source: MassDOT, CATA

6.2 Financial

Each RTA differs in the level of service, geographic area, modes operated, and other aspects of its operation, and as such financial metrics are reported normalized by vehicle revenue miles, vehicle revenue hours, and unlinked passenger trips. As discussed in Chapter 4, these financial metrics measure the expense rate for providing a transit service based on revenue miles, revenue hours, and trips. A smaller value indicates a more financially efficient system, faster operating speeds, and/or a high ridership. Farebox recovery ratio is a measure of revenue collected through fares as a ratio to operating expenses. As of FY 2026, all RTAs will operate fare-free fixed route service and ADA demand response service. CATA's On Demand, a microtransit service, continues to collect fares from riders. As such, the target for fixed route is zero percent and demand response is reflective of the farebox recovery ratio for the On Demand services. CATA financial targets are displayed in Table 23.

Typically, each RTA verifies its financial data annually through an end-of-year audit. Therefore, annual data are submitted for comparison against performance targets.

Table 23. Financial Metrics and Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route	Demand Response	Commuter Bus
Operating expenses per vehicle revenue mile	$8.86	$5.52	$4.59
Operating expenses per vehicle revenue hour	$140	$85	$140
Operating expenses per unlinked passenger trip	$20	$23	$90
Farebox recovery ratio	0.00%	4.00%	0.00%

Source: MassDOT, CATA

6.3 Customer Service and Satisfaction

Reliability of service is an important element to providing transit that meets customer needs. Therefore, customer service and satisfaction are measured through on-time performance of fixed route and demand response modes. The definitions of on-time performance for each mode are:

- Fixed Route / Commuter Bus: Vehicle pulls out of the garage on schedule. CATA does not currently have the resources to track on-time trip performance beyond pull out.
- Demand Response: Vehicle arrives 15 minutes before or after the pickup time or drops off no more than 30 minutes prior to the requested time.

Scheduled trips operated also measures service reliability, as "dropped" trips may suggest labor capacity limitations, equipment failure, or other operational constraints. From the customer's perspective, they are waiting for a vehicle that does not arrive. For fixed route service, this is especially challenging for routes with less frequent service.

Monthly data are submitted quarterly and compared against the annual target. Table 24 shows CATA's customer service targets for fixed route, demand response, and commuter bus service.

Table 24. Customer Service and Satisfaction Metrics and Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route	Demand Response	Commuter Bus
On-time performance	100%	92%	100%
Scheduled trips operated	100%	100%	100%

Source: MassDOT, CATA

6.4 Asset Management

The state of good repair for capital assets is a priority of MassDOT, FTA, and CATA. Equipment in poor condition can result in reliability issues, safety risks, poor customer perceptions, and other problems that impede a successful transit operation. CATA identifies asset management targets as part of its reporting to NTD and further documented in the TAM Plan that lays out the condition of assets and priorities for capital improvements. Table 25 breaks down CATA targets for the percentage of vehicles exceeding their useful life, by vehicle type, and Table 26 shows the target for the percentage of facilities exceeding their useful life.

Table 25. Vehicle Asset Management Metrics and Targets (FY 2025)

Metric	Target
Buses	25%
Cutaways	20%
Trucks and other rubber tire vehicles (Non-revenue)	67%

Source: MassDOT, CATA

Table 26. Facility Asset Management Metrics and Targets (FY 2025)

Metric	Target
Administrative/maintenance facilities	0%

Source: MassDOT, CATA

6.5 Safety

Safety is the number-one priority when delivering transit service. As an urban system, CATA develops a PTASP that outlines specific safety goals for the authority in accordance with NTD Safety and Security Reporting. Safety targets for calendar year 2025, provided in February 2025, are shown in Table 27.

Table 27. Safety Metrics and Targets (Calendar Year 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route	Demand Response
Fatality Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	0	0
Injury Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	0	0
Transit Worker Fatality Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	0	0
Transit Worker Injury Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	0	0
Assault on Transit Worker Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	0	0
Collision Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	2	2
Pedestrian Collision Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	0	0
Vehicular Collision Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	0	0
Safety Events	2	1
Safety Event Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	0.5	0.5
System Reliability (miles between failures)	96,775	203,908

Source: CATA PTASP

6.6 Annual Performance

Annual performance metrics reported to MassDOT are unique metrics chosen by the RTA. As part of the bilateral MOU negotiation process, each RTA identifies and reports a metric and target of their choosing, and a second metric is chosen based on prioritized recommendations included in the CRTP. For the FY 2026 MOU period, the metric is tied to the 2020 CRTP. The two metrics for CATA are detailed in Table 28.

Table 28. Annual Performance Metrics

Metric	Description
RTA-Choice Metric Tied to CRTP: Communications strategy and community center engagement	CATA will continue to focus on communication, including a redesign of the main website as well as increased visits to community centers (COAs, senior housing, community events)
RTA-Choice Metric: Rider-facing technology	CATA will continue to focus on the implementation of rider-facing technology, including the launch of a trip booking functionality in the Spare Labs Rider app for ADA customers.

Source: CATA

Other annual performance metrics are external partnerships and fleet composition by fuel type, as shown in Table 29. Both are reported annually and are not compared with an annual target.

Table 29. Fleet Composition by Fuel Type and External Partnership Annual Performance Metrics and Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route	Demand Response
Percent Electric Fleet	0%	18%
Percent Hybrid Fleet	0%	0%
Percent Compressed Natural Gas Fleet	13%	0%
Percent Diesel Fleet	88%	0%
Percent Gasoline Fleet	0%	82%
Number of External Partnerships	16	16

Source: MassDOT, CATA

7 Trends and Uncertainties

CATA held an alternatives scenario workshop on October 10, 2025, to explore future uncertainties and market trends that could potentially impact transit over the next five years. During this exercise, CATA examined how these trends might influence ridership levels and identified how it may respond to each scenario. In developing this CRTP, it is essential that the final recommendations align with operational, policy, and financial realities over time. The recommendations are informed by ridership scenarios, enabling CATA to identify which recommendations are applicable based on current conditions. Key topics and solutions that arose during the scenario discussions for CATA to consider in the future are presented below.

7.1 Future Uncertainties

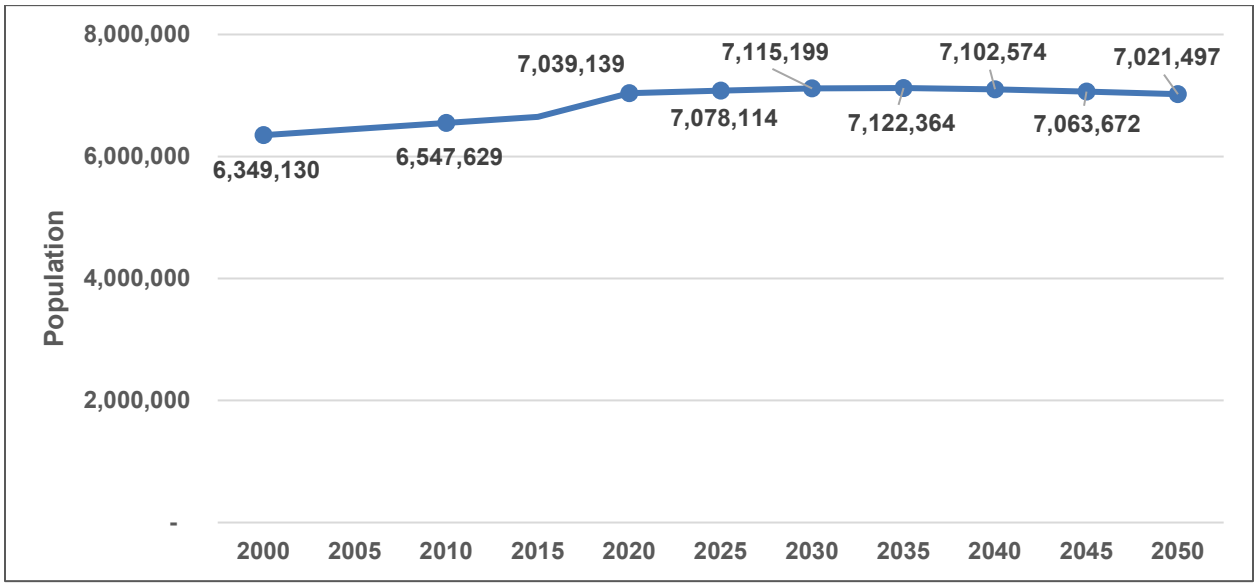
As CATA prepares for the next five years, it is important to recognize and plan for trends that are both highly impactful and deeply uncertain. These uncertainties may define the operating circumstances of CATA, possibly influencing factors such as public expectations of transit, service models, funding sources, transit technologies and infrastructure, and ultimately ridership demand. The following section outlines critical uncertainties that were explored during the workshop due to their potential to plausibly shape the future of CATA's operation.

7.1.1 Population and Demographics

7.1.1.1 General Population Trends

Massachusetts has experienced consistent population growth throughout the twenty-first century and at a pace that exceeds neighboring New England states. This is particularly true in most recent years, as Massachusetts recorded the largest annual percentage increase in population in over a decade from 2023 to 2024 (University of Massachusetts [UMass] Donahue Institute 2025). However, as seen in Figure 63, the population of Massachusetts is projected to plateau with little to no growth from 2025 to 2035 and then decline from 2035 to 2050 (Renski 2015; UMass Donahue Institute 2025). A slow down and eventual decline in population is largely attributed to two factors: domestic out-migration and international migration uncertainty. First, multiple migration measures, such as the U-Haul Growth Index, indicate very large rates of domestic migration out of the state (U-Haul 2025). In 2022, Massachusetts lost an estimated 24,000 working-age adults and 54,000 residents total through migration to other states. Second, international migration—one of the largest and most consistent sources of new residents to the Commonwealth—is highly uncertain and subject to significant changes in the future.

Figure 63. Long-term Population Projections for Massachusetts (2000-2050)



Source: UMass Donahue Institute 2025

Population and demographic trends hold a defining influence on transportation needs, the quality of transit service, and the cultural expectations around transit. A stagnant or declining population may manifest in a variety of ways for CATA, including:

- A reduced labor supply could present significant challenges to future workforce recruitment efforts.
- A small ridership base may reduce demand for transit and present the need for CATA to make service changes.
- Changing demographics may shift public expectations about the function, frequency, and quality of regional transit service.

All of these present uncertainties that are integral to determining CATA's operations over the next five years.

7.1.1.2 Aging Constituency

Massachusetts' population is both older and aging at a rate that exceeds the national average. In 2025, 20.4 percent of the state is 65 years or older compared to 18 percent of the US population (UMass Donahue Institute 2025; US Census Bureau 2025). Individuals aged 65 years or older are projected to increase to 22.3 percent of the state's population by 2030. Meanwhile, the national population for this same age group is projected to increase to 21 percent of the population (Vespa 2018). Coincidingly, the proportion of Massachusetts residents aged 21 or younger is projected to decline through 2030 (Point32Health Foundation 2025). Not only does the rate of aging in Massachusetts outpace national averages, it also exceeds earlier state-level estimates (Renski 2015).

In 2025, 25.3 percent of Essex County residents are above the age of 60, and that percentage is projected to grow through 2050. In the City of Gloucester, where much of CATA's ridership base is concentrated, the proportion of residents above the age of 60 is 35.3 percent in 2025 and will continue to grow through 2050. The aging constituency will create more pronounced effects on transit service compared to statewide estimates. Massachusetts' increasingly older population places more pressure on demand response transportation services. Given the cost-intensiveness of demand response compared to fixed route transit, accommodating increased

demand response activity imposes larger workforce needs and potentially higher operating costs on CATA. Meanwhile, workforce recruitment challenges may be exacerbated as a large proportion of the population ages out of their working years. The impact of aging among Massachusetts residents therefore presents uncertainty that should be considered in CATA's future operations.

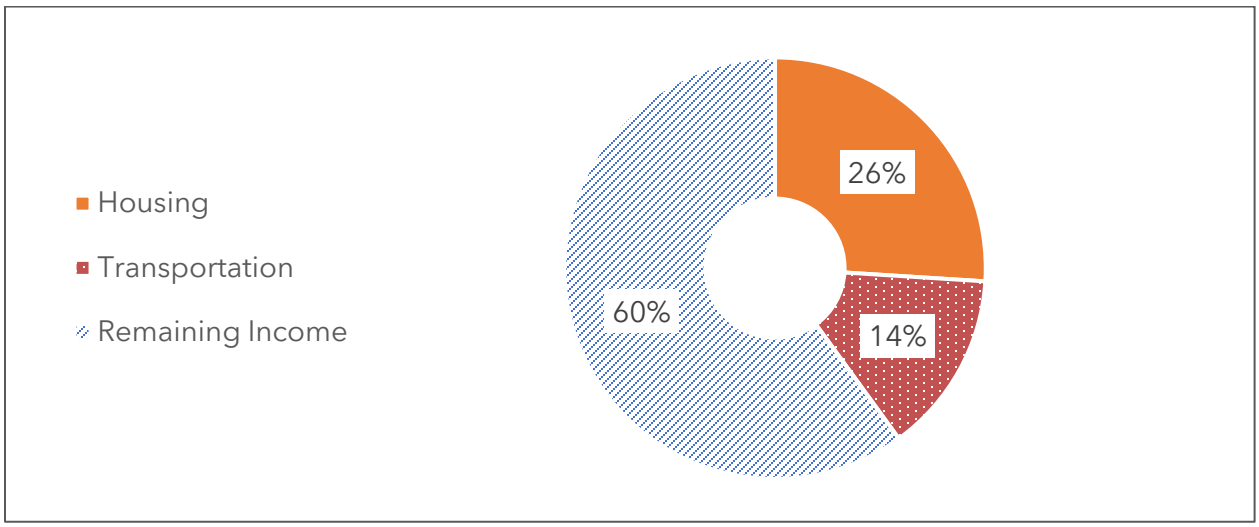
7.1.2 Affordability

The cost of living has increased considerably in Massachusetts, representing some of the highest rates across the United States. High and rapidly growing housing prices are at the center of the Commonwealth's affordability dilemma. Soaring housing costs are largely attributed to an insufficient supply of units. The Massachusetts Comprehensive Housing Plan estimates 222,000 homes need to be produced from 2025 to 2035 to adequately meet the needs of all residents (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2025a). Production rates in recent years have fallen below the annual rate required to meet this goal, thus signaling continued shortages and rising housing prices into the future.

In tandem with housing costs, transportation expenses have also imposed an outsized burden on Massachusetts residents in recent years. According to Transportation for Massachusetts' 2024 survey, 71 percent of Massachusetts residents report housing cost burden, while 57 percent are burdened by transportation costs. Among the cost-burdened, 53 percent of these residents foresee themselves moving within or out of Massachusetts due to issues of affordability, further fueling rates of out-migration and geographic disparities. Among CATA's ridership base, residents spend an estimated 40 percent of their income on housing and transportation expenses as seen in Figure 64 (Center for Neighborhood Technology 2025).

Affordability is one of the single-most influential factors in determining an individual's place of residence and transportation needs. Issues of affordability widen disparities around transportation access within communities and induce sprawling development and migration patterns that strain the transportation system between communities. As the basic expenses of shelter and getting around continue to rise, individual commuting distances and demand for less expensive transportation options will likely increase. This poses a unique challenge to CATA to appropriately balance more extensive transportation needs of the individual while accommodating a potentially increased ridership demand at the community level.

Figure 64. Essex County Housing and Transportation Costs as a Percentage of Residents' Income (2025)



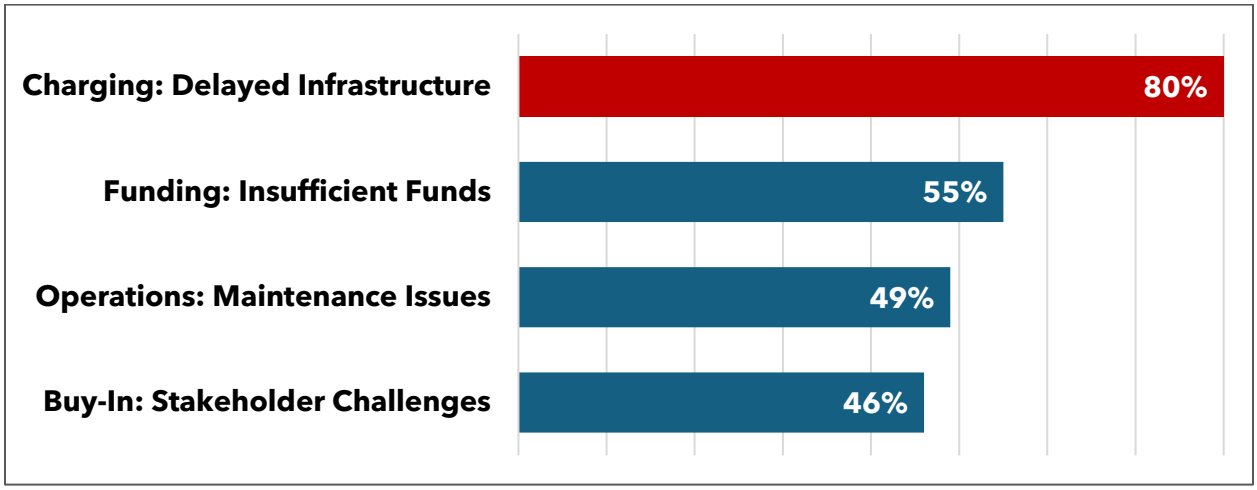
Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2025

7.1.3 Technology

Transit agencies across Massachusetts and the United States have employed a diversity of approaches and levels of initiative towards fleet modernization. Fleet modernization within regional transit agencies has also become highly contingent upon available funding streams at both the federal and state levels. At the federal level, the FTA Section 5339(c) Low or No Emission "Low-No" grant program is shifting toward a trend of funding a more diverse array of vehicle procurements outside of "no-emissions" procurements (Ekbatani 2025).

Despite federal policy changes, Massachusetts has maintained fleet modernization goals However, inadequate energy infrastructure has consistently presented a significant challenge to adoption of zero-emission vehicles. As seen in Figure 65, in a 2025 survey, 80 percent of transit agencies reported infrastructure delays as the largest challenge to adopting zero-emission vehicles (Optibus 2025). Insufficient electrical capacity, complex negotiations, and long lead times with utility providers can delay charging infrastructure. CATA continues to invest in zero-emission vehicle technology, introducing its first zero-emission vehicle in 2025 and installing charging infrastructure on-site at CATA headquarters. CATA expects to continually assess opportunities for additional fleet modernization and electrification in accordance with projected ridership and operational needs, and in support of agency efficiency of operations.

Figure 65. Inadequate Charging Infrastructure is the Leading Obstacle to Fleet Modernization



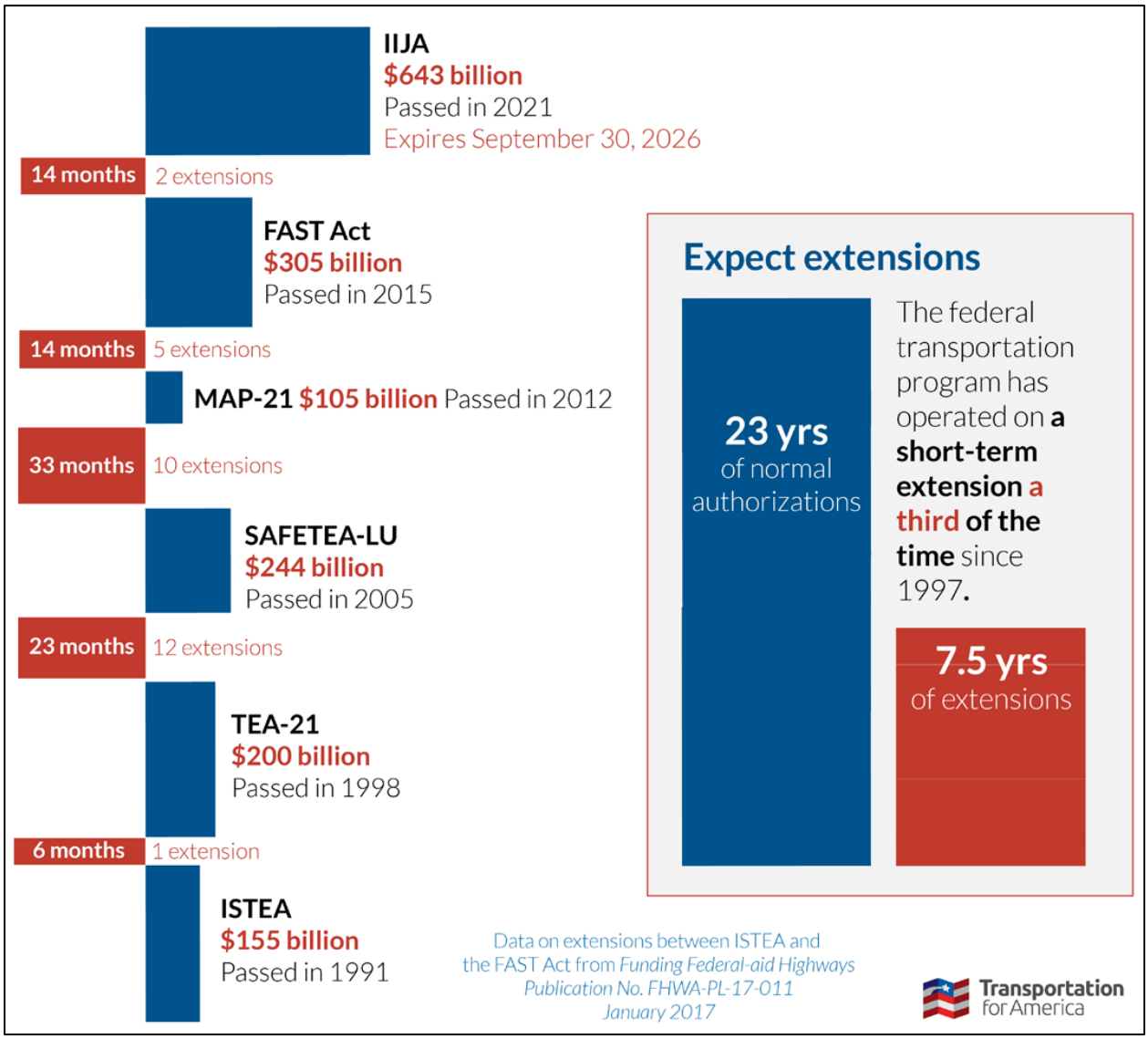
Source: Optibus 2025 State of Public Transportation Industry Survey

Over the past five years, remote work and virtual connectivity have significantly altered the commuting patterns of CATA's general population. Now, five years since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work has been more permanently cemented as a long-term fixture of the job landscape in Massachusetts and the United States in general. Additionally, the transition of other routine daily functions towards remote services, such as telemedicine and online delivery platforms, has further lessened individual travel needs. As remote work and virtual services evolve, CATA could experience substantially different impacts on ridership and transit demand. For example, a widespread return to in-person work could increase transit demand. Continued expansion of telemedicine services may lessen need for demand response services. Increased adoption of remote work and long-term normalization of the remote lifestyle could disrupt the public's perceived function of public transit.

7.1.4 Funding for Transit

The stability and size of funding streams is paramount to determining CATA's level of service and operational success. At the federal level, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) has provided over $550 billion in funding towards transportation programs across the United States and is expected to provide $660 billion across its total five-year lifespan. Funding in the amount of $116 billion in IIJA funds is allocated towards transit programs, which represents a 40 percent expansion in federal transit funding compared to past levels (Bureau of Transportation Statistics 2025). However, the IIJA is scheduled to expire at the end of FY 2026. Despite the unprecedented levels of transit funding and investment the act has facilitated, an immediate funding replacement is not guaranteed. Intermediate funding extensions have occurred between each of the last five federal transportation funding laws, comprising 7.5 years of the last three decades, as shown in Figure 66 (Davis 2025). Given this historical record, the level of federal transit funding is uncertain over the next five years.

Figure 66. Record of Extensions for the Last Six Federal Transportation Funding Laws



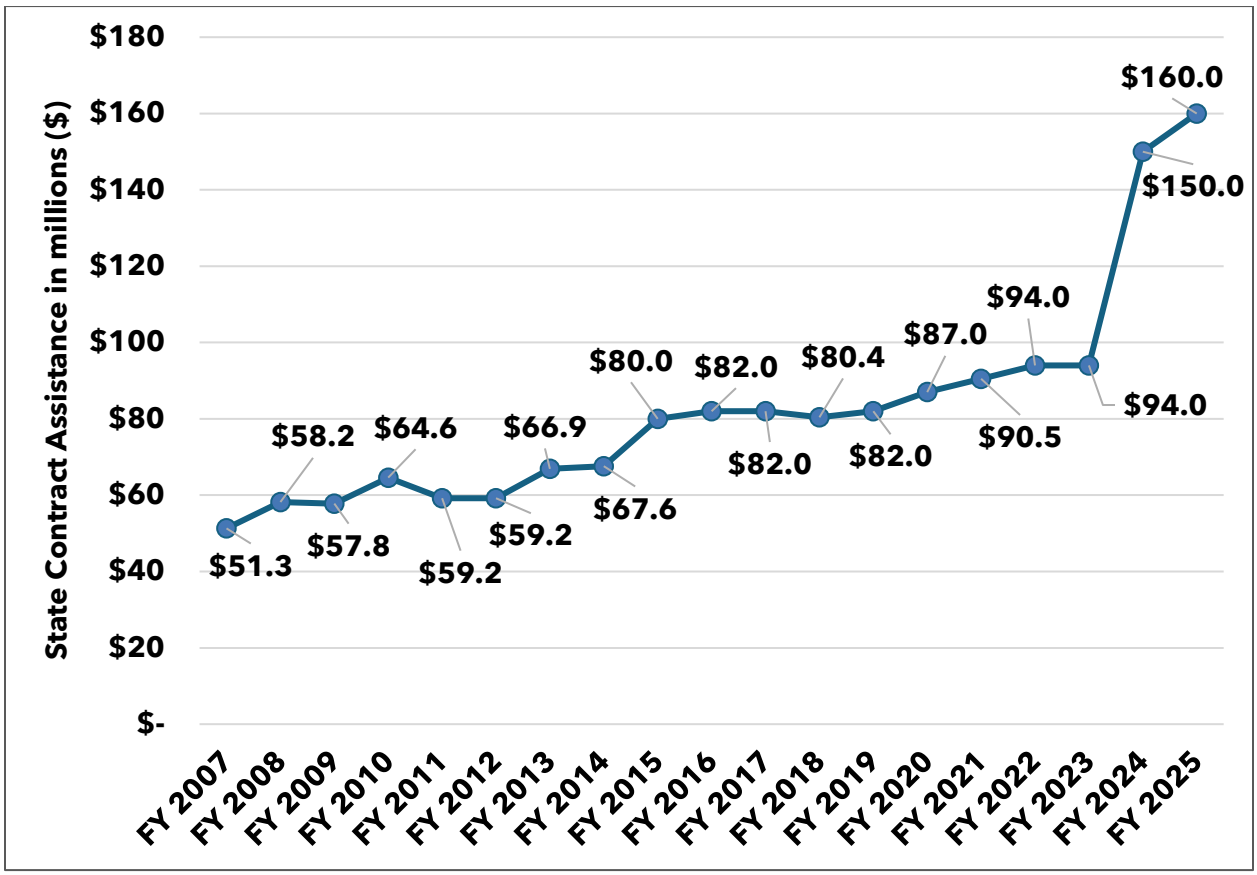
Source: Davis 2025

State funding for Massachusetts' RTAs has consistently grown in recent years. Since 2020, total funding provided to all RTAs through State Contract Assistance has nearly doubled from

$87 million to $160 million, as shown in Figure 67 (MassDOT 2025). In addition to general operating funds, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has implemented additional funding through initiative-based channels, such as discretionary grant programs and fare-free pilots.

Fare-free transit at CATA is on a trajectory to become long term as a product of state funding. $35 million was appropriated in FY 2026 for the implementation or continuation of fare-free transit at all RTAs. Additionally, a statutory amendment to Chapter 161B of Massachusetts General Laws prohibited all RTAs from charging a fare for transit services but still maintains that fare-free transit be subject to annual funding appropriation. (For more information on fare-free transit and CATA's fare policy, see Appendix A.) Fare-free transit has demonstrated the potential to positively impact ridership at CATA. However, the dependency on the Commonwealth's appropriation of future fare-free transit funding introduces uncertainty and could influence CATA's operations.

Figure 67. State Funding for Massachusetts' RTAs from FY 2007 to FY 2025



Source: MassDOT 2025

7.2 2020 Alternative Scenarios

CATA last updated its CRTP in 2020, at the peak of the pandemic, when CATA was facing many uncertainties across the transportation landscape that were largely outside of its control. The entire transportation industry was grappling with unknowns about the long-term impact of the pandemic on overall ridership, and whether remote work would drive increases in sprawl. Like all transit agencies, CATA was unsure which routes and services would recover ridership first and which would see a slower recovery. Forces beyond the pandemic such as national economic policy, unemployment rates, education policy, availability of funding for capital investments, and municipal land use plans were all outside of its control. However, CATA could plan for the resulting impacts to demand for its services.

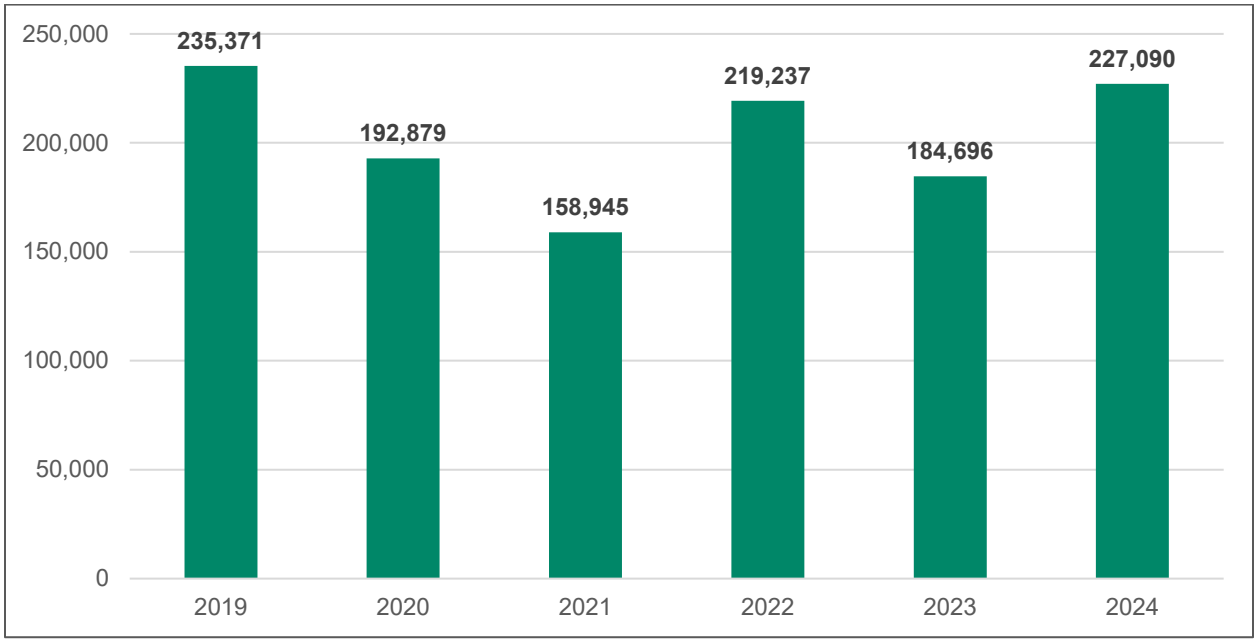
In order to address this uncertainty, CATA defined three qualitative ridership scenarios to map out the future of transit demand through 2025. The three scenarios were:

- Low Ridership: Ridership that remains below 60 percent of 2019 levels.
- Medium Ridership: Stable ridership between 60 and 85 percent of 2019 levels.
- High Ridership: Ridership that returns to 86 percent or more of 2019 levels.

Today, looking at ridership levels from FY 2020 to FY 2024, CATA's ridership aligned with the high ridership scenario.

CATA's foresight in planning for three potential scenarios ensured it was well-prepared for the fluctuating annual ridership changes and the overall rebound growth in ridership from FY 2021 to FY 2024, as shown in Figure 68. This enabled the organization to effectively utilize the 2020 CRTP recommendations for informed decision making and CATA priority action items. CATA largely implemented recommendations addressing its core needs and succeeded in launching new Essex fixed route service and corresponding ADA Dial-a-Ride service in FY 2025, which was included as a high-ridership scenario recommendation in the 2020 CRTP.

Figure 68. CATA Annual System Ridership (FY 2019-FY 2024)



Source: MassDOT, 2025

7.3 Looking Ahead: 2025 to 2030 Scenario Planning

In light of the varied and numerous uncertainties affecting the United States, Massachusetts, and CATA's region, key questions emerge: "What comes next?" and "What can be done?" While many of these trends lie beyond CATA's control, how they unfold will likely have a significant impact on ridership. CATA can proactively respond by planning for different ridership levels over the next five years. As part of this process, CATA conducted a workshop that explored three different ridership scenarios: low ridership, medium ridership, and high ridership.

The scenarios were determined to be as follows and further detailed in the following sections:

- Low Ridership: Ridership that remains below 100 percent of 2024 levels.

- Medium Ridership: Steady growth, with ridership between 100 and 115 percent of 2024 levels.
- High Ridership: Substantial growth, with ridership that is above 115 percent of 2024 levels.

7.3.1 Low Ridership

Low ridership for CATA is characterized by ridership numbers across services remaining below 100 percent of 2024 ridership levels over the next five years (2025 to 2030).

Several market trend factors could potentially contribute to this scenario:

- Economic downturn and widespread unemployment could significantly reduce work commutes.
- Continued prevalence of remote work could further suppress demand for commuting services.
- Demographic shifts, such as an aging population, might lead to a decline in work or school-based ridership.

These potential market trends, as discussed previously, could collectively shape CATA's ridership patterns in a low-ridership scenario.

In response to these potential impacts, CATA considered, in addition to external market trends, what other factors may cause ridership to reduce over the next five years.

Based on this question, CATA identified a decrease in the number of school children as one potential driving factor for a low ridership scenario. CATA's On Demand service is set up to support work commute trips, particularly in the morning when school tripper routes occupy much of the provided fixed route service. A decrease in the demand for school tripper service could lead CATA to modify service, which could impact the work commuter demand for On Demand service, lead to higher operating costs, and have an overall negative impact on ridership. Another factor would be the reduction in anticipated state funding assistance. If state funding was reduced, CATA could face the need to reduce service, which would have a direct impact on ridership.

7.3.2 Medium Ridership

Medium ridership for CATA is characterized by ridership numbers across services steadily growing to up to 115 percent of 2024 ridership levels over the next five years.

This scenario could result from a combination of potential factors:

- Stagnant household incomes or high inflation might make personal vehicle ownership less feasible, leading more people to rely on public transit.
- A shift toward more consistent in-office work could increase the volume of work-related commutes.
- Successful service expansion could drive high demand.
- Localized developments—such as new transit-oriented housing developments or an increase in seasonal workforce transit use—could further contribute to ridership growth in this scenario.
- Continuation of fare-free service.

These potential market trends, as discussed previously, could collectively shape CATA's ridership patterns in a medium-ridership scenario. In response to these potential impacts, CATA considered in addition to external market trends, why might ridership continue to increase at a steady pace?

Based on this question, CATA determined that the driving factors for a medium-ridership potential scenario would be the following:

- An increase in commuters using CATA services due to influences such as marketing, targeted services (i.e., a shuttle from MBTA Commuter Rail stations to employment centers), or first time riders recognizing the potential value of CATA's transit services for their commuting needs.
- The implementation of new and upgraded technology, such as the planned APC, Global Positioning System, and AVL upgrades in the next one to two years.
- The potential reconfiguration of parking in Gloucester, which could impact driving patterns and create opportunities for CATA to fill any resulting gaps.
- The construction of Section 3A housing under the MBTA Communities Law, which would be zoned for multi-family housing and support transit-oriented communities.

7.3.3 High Ridership

High ridership for CATA is characterized by a substantial increase in ridership numbers across services, reaching above 115 percent of 2024 ridership levels over the next five years.

This scenario could be driven by several potential factors:

- A sharp rise in gas prices may encourage more people to choose public transit over personal vehicles.
- An aging population could lead to a significant increase in demand response ride requests.
- The expansion of service-based industries and tourism economies might create a sustained spike in ridership.

These potential market trends, as discussed previously, could collectively shape CATA's ridership patterns in a high-ridership scenario. In response to these potential impacts, CATA considered in addition to the external market trends, why might ridership increase substantially?

Based on this question CATA determined that the driving factors for a high-ridership potential scenario would be the following:

- Implementation of new service, such as the Business Express bus route that serves every housing community and is split into two unique routes to reduce the run time. This would require a known dedicated source of funding, such as an increase in local assessment.
- Expansion of service hours, such as later service on the Business Express bus route or on routes connecting Gloucester and Rockport.
- Increased workforce pool to ensure the availability of drivers to operate increased service.
- Expansion of On Demand zones, which would attract more work commuters.
- Increased marketing efforts, particularly to emphasize CATA's fare-free services.

- Continuation of fare-free service

7.4 Future Opportunities

Table 30 summarizes the opportunities and corresponding scenarios that arose during the scenario discussions. Depending on ridership levels over the next five years, CATA can determine which strategic opportunities may be applicable to pursue.

Table 30. Opportunities by Ridership Scenario

Ridership Scenario	Description of Opportunity
All Scenarios	Monitor / seek opportunities for increased funding or additional funding sources. Potential tools include: • Maintain and bolster partnerships, such as those with member municipalities, to support the continuation of services and/or service expansions. • Maximize data-driven decision making opportunities through regular and accurate reporting efforts.
	Continue marketing efforts to expand awareness of fare-free transit across CATA communities, and of CATA transit services in general, to support increased ridership.
	Prioritize an open hiring approach and identify multiple diverse pathways to promote hiring.
Low Ridership	Monitor school tripper ridership and demand, and identify partnership and outreach opportunities with local schools and other institutions to promote CATA tripper services.
	Monitor population and demographic trends in the service area, paying particular attention to shifts in workforce home locations out of the Gloucester core of the service area.
	Utilize ridership reports to make data-driven decisions on how to balance service with demand and where to reduce service, should funding restraints require.
Medium Ridership	Explore and pursue opportunities to enhance targeted services for work commuters.
	Ensure the successful deployment of new transit technologies, and continue investing in customer-facing technology and the state of good repair of vehicles to enhance the rider experience and comfort with the system.
	Monitor planning decisions and developments in the service area, and leverage local connections to boost proactive and collaborative planning — such as where CATA is considered a partner in supporting any transit-oriented developments.
High Ridership	Explore and pursue opportunities to introduce enhanced service, increased service frequency/hours, expanded on-demand zones, etc.

Source: CATA Alternative Workshop on October 10, 2025.

8 Recommendations

The recommendations in this five-year plan emerged from a data-informed process that incorporated historical operational data, stakeholder feedback, industry standards, local policy, statewide objectives, and CATA priorities. These recommendations establish a framework for advancing strategic service adjustments, capital improvements, and policy initiatives based on data-driven analysis, and make meaningful progress toward better mobility for residents across the region.

8.1 Changes Since the 2020 Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan

The 2020 CRTP included numerous recommendations across a variety of categories, such as service and capital investments. Since that plan was produced, there has been a significant infusion of state and federal funding supporting expanded transit service. Recommendations that CATA has implemented over the past five years, as well as additional investments made, include:

- Eliminated the zonal fare structure, followed by the implementation of fare-free transit service
- Procured three electric low-floor e-JEST Karsan minibuses in 2025, aligning with CATA's goal to continually pursue funding opportunities to meet Commonwealth-wide environmental goals
- With Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority procured Spare Labs on-demand and paratransit scheduling, dispatching, and management software, which includes rider-facing booking and vehicle tracking capabilities
- Partnered with COAs to provide medical transportation, funded through the Taxi Livery Grant (now the Community Transit Grant Program) through MassDOT
- Added tripper service to Market Basket in Gloucester
- Continued procurement of APCs with funding through the MPO and MassDOT, planned for deployment in FY 2026
- Reconfigured routes for simplified transfers (e.g., Route 1 connects to Route 3 and Route 4 every other trip)
- Implemented marketing improvements such as the addition of three new webpages dedicated to each of the summer bus services and increased activity on social media

8.2 Planning for an Uncertain Future

As described in Chapter 7, the Commonwealth may face key uncertainties in the next five years, including ridership. The five-year vision accounts for these variables, particularly the level of ridership in the CATA service area. Refer to Chapter 7 for ridership scenarios and their impact on the plan.

Depending on how the future unfolds, different uncertainties may impact the listed recommendations differently. For the purposes of the five-year plan, level of ridership demand was identified as one of the key uncertainties driving CATA actions, including:

- Low Ridership: If the level of ridership demand over the next five years decreases from 2024 levels, a focus on recommendations that are not contingent on sustained or

increased ridership levels would be judicious. Thus, in a low ridership scenario, pursuing the list of core recommendations would be warranted.

- Medium Ridership: If the level of ridership demand over the next five years increases steadily from 2024 levels, more robust service and capital expansions may be warranted. Some of those might include evaluating the feasibility of increasing certain service frequencies and spans; exploring options with Spare Labs for transportation network company trip coordination; and developing a bus stop implementation plan.
- Higher Ridership: If the level of ridership demand over the next five years increases substantially from 2024 levels, then the most enhanced service and capital investments may be warranted. Some of those might include expanding CATA On Demand into Rockport; reconfiguring and increasing service on the Business Express route; and leveraging Spare Labs software to balance CATA On Demand trips with transportation network company resources.
- Core: Many recommendations are included regardless of ridership level and are considered core needs. Some of those might include boosting marketing efforts, deploying new or upgraded technologies, and streamlining data collection, analysis, and reporting processes.

The next section presents the recommendations for CATA to use as a roadmap for the next five years across a variety of topic areas.

8.3 Recommendations

The needs identified in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 served as the foundation for the recommendations detailed in the subsequent sections. The quantitative data analysis in the existing conditions section and market assessment, in combination with the qualitative feedback from the public and stakeholder outreach, provided the basis for these recommendations. They were further augmented by staff review to confirm applicability to operational realities and ensure alignment with other planning documents (e.g., regional long-range transportation plan).

The recommendations are organized into categories, including service, outreach and engagement, technology, asset and capital, staffing resources, data and performance, and partnerships and funding (Table 31). For recommendations that fall under multiple categories, a note in the final column highlights their cross-listing.

Table 31. Recommendations Categories

Category	Description
Service	Service recommendations deal with specific modes, routes, or other operational considerations of day-to-day provision of service.
Outreach and Engagement	Outreach and engagement recommendations deal with public-facing marketing and education efforts.
Technology	Technology recommendations deal with the procurement of transit technologies and functionality upgrades.
Asset and Capital	Asset and capital recommendations deal with the purchase or management of equipment, rolling stock, facilities, or other assets.
Staffing Resources	Staffing resources recommendations deal with staff hiring and retention practices.

Category	Description
Data and Performance	Data and performance recommendations deal with the systems and protocols for monitoring agency operations.
Partnerships and Funding	Partnerships and funding recommendations deal with coordination between the RTA and other regional and statewide partners, particularly to leverage funding opportunities.

8.3.1 Service Recommendations

Service recommendations for CATA focus on changes to service, whether by changing frequencies, spans, or days per week operated, or by expanding service areas or reworking existing routes (Table 32). Several recommendations target improved transportation options for work commuters, which make up an important part of CATA's ridership base. Additional funding and vehicle and staff resources are critical to the responsible and successful implementation of these recommendations, and robust promotional efforts must be incorporated to support public awareness. CATA also intends to continue using performance monitoring and stakeholder feedback to inform decisions regarding service changes and expansion, a strategy that is incorporated into the service recommendations as a core need, in particular for high-demand fixed routes.

Table 32. Service Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap
S1	Conduct a service analysis to explore the feasibility of modifying the Route 2 Gloucester Crossing/ Business Express route, such as by separating into two distinct routes to increase service efficiency and meet passenger demand.	Core	N/A
S2	Monitor and evaluate high-demand fixed routes for potential increased frequency improvements during the summer months.	Core	N/A
S3	Explore feasibility of increased frequency on Route 2A by completing a service analysis.	Medium / High	N/A
S4	Conduct operational analyses for both demand response and fixed route in order to identify opportunities for enhanced efficiency and expansion of mobility options.	Medium / High	Technology
S5	Explore the feasibility of implementing limited Sunday morning service.	Medium / High	N/A
S6	Explore potential demand for cross jurisdictional connections to nearby RTA service areas such as Merrimack Valley Transit. If demand is identified, consider exploring feasibility for new service.	Medium / High	N/A
S7	Explore the feasibility of providing additional service to major employment centers (similar to the Blackburn Express) to support workplace initiatives for employee transit connections in CATA communities.	Medium/High	Partnerships

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap
S8	Summer/Seasonal Service: Explore potential of adding or modifying seasonal routes to better service the communities, businesses, residents, and visitors.	Core	N/A
S9	Summer/Seasonal Service: Explore feasibility of evening service during the summer months to support the communities, businesses, residents, and visitors.	Core	N/A
S10	Summer/Seasonal Service: Monitor Rockport On Demand during summer months to assess ridership demand and adjust service accordingly.	Core	N/A

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.2 Outreach and Engagement Recommendations

CATA has made important progress in recent years in improving its marketing efforts and public-facing resources to boost awareness and ridership. Over the next five years, regardless of ridership levels, CATA is committed to continuing this work and to effectively advertising new or modified services. CATA also intends to maximize the usability and benefits of the newly-deployed Spare Labs demand response and paratransit Rider app (Table 33).

Table 33. Outreach and Engagement Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap
OE1	Update and refine the CATA website by clarifying the tripper service and its connection to existing routes and adding a dedicated landing page for CATA On Demand in the home tabs to improve information access and clarity for riders.	Core	N/A
OE2	Establish a plan and schedule for consistent travel training efforts.	Core	N/A
OE3	Promote the new Spare Labs Rider app and support education around app use and registration support.	Core	N/A
OE4	Continue marketing efforts to expand awareness of fare-free transit and ensure the public has an accurate understanding of the variety of services that CATA offers; consider leaning into rider feedback that CATA offers "convenient" service.	Core	N/A
OE5	Promote the new shuttle service connecting MBTA Commuter Rail to Blackburn Industrial Park.	Core	Partnerships
OE6	Promote the new CATA On Demand expansion into Rockport.	Core	Partnerships

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap
OE7	Establish a regular meeting schedule (at least annually) with COAs and other community groups such as housing authorities to conduct outreach and promote awareness of services especially options for the older adult/aging population.	Core	Partnerships, Staffing
OE8	Develop and enact a plan for targeted engagement with GHS to promote CATA service for students.	Core	Partnerships

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.3 Technology Recommendations

CATA has demonstrated a motivation to implement new technologies both to support internal operational efficiencies and to offer public-facing tools for enhanced accessibility, comfort, and ease of use when riding CATA services. Funding has already been awarded to procure APCs for CATA's fixed route vehicles, which are programmed for deployment in FY 2026. CATA is also exploring an additional procurement for AVL software, which would help maximize the value of using APC technology and support CATA's goal to offer riders a live vehicle tracking tool. CATA would require additional funding for any recommendations involving technology procurements. CATA is also interested in collaborating with Spare Labs on enhancements to its software features and functionalities. Most of these technology recommendations are core recommendations, either because initial steps have already been taken or because they offer critical value to CATA's system regardless of ridership levels (Table 34).

Table 34. Technology Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap
T1	Deploy AVL and APC technology.	Core	Data and Performance
T2	Deploy a public-facing live vehicle tracking functionality.	Core	N/A
T3	Implement talking bus technology.	Core	N/A
T4	Consider launch of a trip booking functionality in the Spare Labs Rider app for ADA customers. Identify partnerships to support long-term funding of functionality.	Medium/High	Partnerships
T5	Explore feasibility, in partnership with Spare Labs, to push Dial-a-Ride trip requests to COAs with van fleets for expanded flexibility and efficiency.	Medium/High	Service, Partnerships
T6	Explore feasibility, in partnership Spare Labs, to push Dial-a-Ride trip requests to transportation network companies (i.e., Uber or Lyft) for expanded flexibility. Consider funding and resource needs associated with feasibility.	Medium / High	Service, Partnerships

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap
T7	Create fare collection equipment procurement strategy in the event changes in state funding require CATA to reinstate fares.	Core	N/A

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.4 Asset and Capital Recommendations

CATA continues to prioritize maintaining state of good repair for both its fleet and its facility, and the agency has already programmed an additional three bus replacements in FY 2026, on top of the four replacements it completed in FY 2025. With the recent deployment in FY 2025 of CATA's first zero emission vehicle, the Karsan e-JEST 19-passenger low-floor minibus, CATA intends to continue to support its new electric vehicle (EV) charging need by installing chargers on-site at its facility. Finally, CATA is interested in exploring the potential for implementing bus stops primarily in the downtown Gloucester area to boost visibility of the system, improve rider comfort and safety, and increase ridership (Table 35). To implement asset and capital recommendations, CATA would need additional funding beyond existing budgets. Additionally, for CATA to advance its bus stop implementation, continued partnerships and local jurisdictional approvals would be required.

Table 35. Asset and Capital Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap
AC1	Maintain state of good repair for vehicles and facility.	Core	N/A
AC2	Install EV chargers, already procured, for Karsan minibuses on facility property.	Core	N/A
AC3	Identify and pursue a path forward for bus stop implementation in CATA's core service area, focusing on downtown Gloucester and high ridership areas.	Medium / High	N/A
AC4	Continue to advance CATA Administration facility upgrades including strategically implementing prioritized upgrades including but not limited to HVAC, transformers, control system, water/sewer systems, windows, and other efficiency improvements to maintain a state of good repair.	Core	N/A

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.5 Staffing Resources Recommendations

With hiring and retaining staff continuing to present challenges across most RTAs, CATA is motivated to explore and leverage strategic and creative solutions, regardless of its ridership levels (Table 36).

Table 36. Staffing Resources Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap
SR1	Support and coordinate with the operating company to promote innovative practices for hiring and retention of drivers and CDL mechanics.	Core	N/A
SR2	Uphold a culture of positive reinforcement and acknowledgement of team accomplishments.	Core	N/A
SR3	Implement travel training best practices including but not limited to recurring touch points with Senior Centers.	Core	Outreach

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.6 Data and Performance Recommendations

CATA initiated efforts in FY 2025 to establish more efficient and effective data collection and reporting procedures. Access to accurate data will support decision-making, greater clarity and transparency around operations, and expanded opportunities to leverage performance assessments under any ridership scenario (Table 37).

Table 37. Data and Performance Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap
DP1	Streamline data collection, synthesis, and reporting processes. Specifically, assess the feasibility of streamlining data for trippers.	Core	N/A
DP2	Explore opportunities to leverage performance dashboards, particularly once AVL and APC technology is deployed.	Core	Technology
DP3	Comprehensively assess the impact of CATA services on service area transit needs in an ongoing capacity.	Core	N/A
DP4	Monitor the data and service implementation of the CATA On Demand expansion into Rockport, which was implemented in November 2025.	Core	N/A

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.7 Partnerships and Funding Recommendations

CATA intends to continue efforts to maintain its strong partnerships with statewide, regional, and local leaders and organizations. Past coordination has led to joint procurements, partnerships for expanded service, and funding opportunities. CATA recognizes the critical value of ongoing coordination and strategic and creative fund-seeking approaches to ensure its services continue to improve and meet transit needs (Table 38).

Table 38. Partnerships and Funding Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap
PF1	Explore and leverage new or enhanced partnership opportunities to support service efficiency and expansion improvements including with businesses, social services organizations, and COAs.	Core	Service, Outreach and Engagement, Technology
PF2	Boost coordination and partnership with the contracted operating company.	Core	N/A
PF3	Continuously explore and identify additional funding opportunities, including with local partners.	Core	N/A

N/A = Not Applicable

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Appendix A Fares

Fare collection is part of a broader set of RTA revenues that support public access to transit, RTA revenue, transit system operations, and many other facets of transit service in Massachusetts.

This appendix explores fare policy for CATA and fare replacement programs funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It also examines the industry's best practices for fare-free transit operations and provides an outlook for the future of fare collection.

Fare Collection and Revenue Replacement Program

In accordance with current state law, CATA does not currently charge for fixed route or ADA paratransit service. In addition, CATA offers free paratransit service to older adults through CATA's Dial-a-Ride services. CATA continues to charge a fare ($2.00) for its CATA On Demand service.

The following subsections describe the evolution of fare collection and revenue replacement—from fare suspension during the COVID-19 pandemic to the approval of funds for fare-free operations in the Commonwealth's FY 2026 budget— and CATA's fare policy.

Fare-free Regional Transit – Statewide Background

COVID-19 Fare Suspension

In March 2020 the Commonwealth, along with the rest of the United States, was grappling with a global pandemic. To slow the spread of COVID-19, measures were put in place to encourage social distancing and minimize contact between front line service workers and the public. Several RTAs responded by suspending fare collection as part of their COVID mitigation measures. Fare suspension durations varied across the Commonwealth, and many RTAs, including CATA, reinstated fare collection once measures were in place to protect bus operators from exposure to COVID-19.

Try Transit Program

Beginning on November 25, 2022, and through the end of 2022, CATA received $15,566 to suspend fare collection. The fare suspension was funded by a $2.5 million appropriation available to RTAs in the FY 2023 Massachusetts State Budget and restricted to fare-free operations. This was the first program funded with an appropriation in the state budget. The limited duration of the program made it challenging to measure changes in ridership trends. However, anecdotally, it was popular among riders.

Fare-free funding was extended to RTAs again in the FY 2024 Massachusetts State Budget with a $15 million appropriation restricted to fare suspension programs. The funding allowed for longer duration fare suspension but remained a pilot program since it provided funds for a partial fiscal year. CATA received $89,156 and suspended fares for one month, from November 24 to December 31, 2023.

On balance, RTA customers, staff, and stakeholders across the Commonwealth considered the FY 2024 program successful and funding was again appropriated in the FY 2025 State Budget with $30 million. CATA received $24,055.93 for November 2024 through December 31, 2024, which was carried over from this original FY 2023 funding amount. CATA then received a grant of $293,054 to support fare-free operations through December 31, 2025.

Fair Share Act

In November 2022, voters approved an amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution that assesses a 4 percent surtax on incomes over $1 million that would be restricted to education and transportation. The Commonwealth began tax collection on January 1, 2023, and used the revenue collected during the remainder of the FY 2023 budget year to create a trust fund from which funds would be distributed in future years.

The FY 2024 budget included the first appropriation of surtax revenues, and $1 billion was included in the budget; $510 million was appropriated to education and $490 million was appropriated to transportation. The RTAs were appropriated $25 million, and $15 million was used to support the FY 2024 Try Transit program. The Fair Share Amendment was expected to generate $1.3 billion, $605 million of which was appropriated to transportation. The RTA share increased to $90 million; $30 million was used to support the FY 2025 Try Transit program.

State Fiscal Year 2026 Fare-Free Budget and Legislation

The FY 2026 budget for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was signed into law on July 4, 2025. In FY 2026, $35 million was appropriated for the implementation of year-round fare-free transit service across the Commonwealth's RTAs. This funding accompanies a statutory amendment to Chapter 161B of Massachusetts General Laws, which now mandates RTAs provide fare-free service on all fixed routes as well as complementary ADA paratransit service, subject to appropriation of funding to replace fare revenue. MassDOT is responsible for providing RTAs with fare revenue attributable to the fare-free service mandate. CATA is required to collect and report ridership data to MassDOT in a format and frequency prescribed by MassDOT.

RTA Fare Policy

Prior to fare-free service, CATA adopted a new fare policy in May 2022, which decreased fares on all services to the rates shown in Table 39 and Table 40. This change in fare policy was a result of recommendations from the 2020 CRTP, which included elimination of fare zones and simplification of the fare policy for ease of use. Fares were suspended for one month at the end of 2022, and again in 2023, and were reinstated after the one month periods until CATA's reintroduction of fare-free service in December 2024.

Table 39. Fixed Route Fare Policy

Fare Product	Fare Price
Full-Fare (Gloucester, Rockport, Magnolia, West Gloucester)	$1.00
Seniors age 60+ or Disabled (Gloucester, Rockport, Magnolia, West Gloucester)	$ 0.50
Children 5-12 (Gloucester, Rockport, Magnolia, West Gloucester)	$1.00
Full-Fare One Way (Danvers and Peabody Malls)	$2.50
Seniors age 60+ or Disabled (Danvers and Peabody Malls)	$1.25
Children 5-12 (Danvers and Peabody Malls)	$1.25
Child (under 5 Years Old with an Adult)	FREE
Annual Student Pass (all routes except Mall Bus)	$200.00
Fall Semester Student Pass (all routes except Mall Bus)	$100.00

Fare Product	Fare Price
Annual Pass Plus Student Pass (Allows discount fare of $0.50 every ride except on Mall Bus route)	$25.00

Source: CATA Fare Policy, 2022 (suspended as of November 2024)

Table 40. ADA and Senior Van Service Fare Policy

Fare Product	Fare Price
ADA One-Way	$2.00
Personal Care Attendant	FREE
Companion One-Way	$2.00
Dial-a-Ride (within Gloucester, Rockport, Essex, and Ipswich)	$2.00
Dial-a-Ride (outside Cape Ann)	$2.00

Source: CATA Fare Policy, 2022 (suspended as of November 2024)

Fare Collection Infrastructure

Fare collection equipment serves two main purposes: (1) collect, count, and securely store money deposited by riders upon boarding and (2) count passenger boardings. The amendment to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 161B in the FY 2026 budget, which mandates fare-free service change considerations around the maintenance and use of fare collection equipment today and in the future.

Absent of the need to collect fares, the equipment continues to be used to count passenger boardings. Passenger counting is a secondary function of fare equipment, and while a historically reliable method to count boardings, technology is widely available to provide more detailed passenger boarding information. Awareness of this fact led CATA to pursue and receive funding through the MPO and MassDOT to procure APCs, and the agency is planning to deploy the new technology in FY 2026. Until the deployment is complete, the fare collection equipment will continue to serve as CATA's means of passenger counting.

On-board Equipment and Ticket Vending Machines

Prior to its fare-free operations, CATA had been using Scheidt & Bachmann fareboxes on their fixed route buses since March 2012. These fareboxes accepted cash, transfers, and MBTA CharlieCards to enable interconnectivity with the MBTA system. Other RTAs had also deployed these same farebox systems primarily for interoperability with MBTA.

There are no ticket vending machines (TVMs) in CATA's service area for purchasing CharlieCards or adding value — both the lack of a central intermodal terminal and the cost of TVM procurement and maintenance prevented CATA from deploying a TVM unit. Instead, customers would load value onto their CharlieCards through the MBTA website or at a TVM within MBTA (or another RTA) service area. Older adults and persons with disabilities could apply for senior/TAP Charlie Cards at the CATA Operations Center in Gloucester, and student passes could be purchased at CATA's offices, at prescheduled sales at the local schools, or online through CATA's website.

In the fall of 2022, CATA launched a mobile ticketing application for fixed route service. CATA customers could use the MassDOT Bus Plus mobile application to purchase single ride tickets,

daily passes, or monthly passes. After creating an account, customers could purchase tickets for use on the regular CATA fixed route, the Mall Bus, as well as all summer services. When boarding, customers would activate the ticket and display the ticket to the driver for validation.

Should CATA reinstate fares, the agency would move away from the stored value CharlieCards and focus instead on cash, debit/credit, and mobile payment-based fare collection. Riders could manage and reload funds in online accounts for mobile fare payment.

Although there are no capital plans for replacement of the Scheidt & Bachmann fareboxes at the time of this document's publication, CATA anticipates the possibility of the technology becoming inoperative. CATA is exploring the feasibility of replacing its fare collection technology should the agency need to reinstate fares in the absence of funding for fare-free operations. The replacement would seek to address challenges with the Scheidt & Bachmann system; ensure the technology is up-to-date and functional; allow for cash, mobile, and credit/debit card payment; ensure fare capping; and potentially coordinate with the MBTA's ongoing fare collection system update.

Cash Control and Management

CATA's Scheidt & Bachmann system accepted cash, which required the agency to develop a process for cash control and management. The amount of time dedicated to processing cash was one hour daily, with additional time dedicated on a monthly basis for cash reconciliation and bookkeeping. The General Manager (or Transit Supervisor in his absence) was responsible for counting fare revenue each day and preparing the deposit slip. Brinks would pick up the fare revenue and other deposits weekly and deliver them to a local bank for processing.

CATA did not participate in the Scheidt & Bachmann maintenance agreement due to the high cost of the maintenance agreement compared to the "out of pocket" repair costs incurred by CATA. With the potential adoption of new fare technology in the future, CATA will have to be mindful of recurring annual software costs and per transaction fees charged by third party payment processors or fare technology providers.

Fare-free Transit Best Practices

Transit Access and Efficiency

Ridership

Fare-free transit almost always is associated with a significant increase in ridership. Fare-free transit has repeatedly shown to increase ridership by 20 percent to 60 percent for transit agencies in the United States. Agencies that went fully fare-free before the COVID-19 pandemic experienced 20 percent to 100 percent increases in ridership within the first two years of the policy change. Paratransit services have seen similar growth, with increases up to 60 percent after implementation of fare-free service. Studies suggest that 5 percent to 30 percent of new trips resulting from fare-free policy come from those who previously took other motorized modes of travel (Volinski 2012).

Operational Efficiency

Fare-free transit simplifies both the ride experience for passengers and the workload of operators. Without fare collection, dwell time per passenger during boarding and alighting is reduced without the queues at the farebox; it also enables more efficient all-door boarding. Short dwell time improves on-time performance and service reliability. Fare-free transit has been acknowledged to have significantly improved on-time performance at RTAs in Massachusetts (Baxandall 2025).

Free fares may encourage more frequent short rides by passengers who may have otherwise walked. Despite the reduced dwell time per passenger resulting from elimination of farebox queues, more stops and large boarding and alighting volumes may negatively impact absolute dwell time. This is most acute where stops are located in close proximity to each other and can be mitigated with increased spacing that balances operational efficiency with passenger access.

Financial Health

Revenue Sources

Identifying and acquiring alternative revenue sources to replace fare revenue is a significant barrier to implementing and maintaining fare-free transit. Securing a funding source for Massachusetts RTAs is essential to the maintenance of fare-free transit. Replacement of fare revenue lost is a concern expressed by CATA's Advisory Board.

Revenue Collection Costs

The loss of revenue by eliminating fare collection is a concern for RTAs. However, fare-free transit also provides an opportunity for cost savings. Fare-free transit eliminates costs associated with the administration, enforcement, and equipment maintenance of fare collection. Fare administration, collection, and enforcement has been documented as consuming over 25 percent of fare revenue at Massachusetts RTAs (Worcester Regional Research Bureau 2019).

Increased ridership resulting from fare-free transit often creates the need for increased capacity. RTAs may need to act to effectively handle the increased demand, such as expanding fleets, hiring more staff, or expanding service. Agencies should anticipate or acknowledge the potential for high costs associated with providing high-capacity service to accommodate increased ridership.

A bigger challenge for CATA may be the complementary paratransit service provided for older adults and people with disabilities. Paratransit services do not scale the same as fixed route services. The personalized nature of the service means that, as more riders book more trips, both vehicle and staff productivity tend to fall and the capacity to provide trips becomes strained. Funding is needed to not only replace revenue lost to fare suspension but also provide resources to hire and train additional staff needed to meet the growing demand for paratransit service.

Operator and Passenger Experience

Farebox disputes are the most likely incident that results in transit operator assaults. FTA reports operator assaults per unlinked passenger have increased fourfold from 2009 to 2020 (Van Eyken 2022). Fare-free transit programs improve operator safety by eliminating conflict over fare collection and have generally received positive feedback from operators. Many prominent transit organizations are in support of fare-free transit for its positive implications towards ensuring operation safety. Fare-free transit also reduces barriers to operator recruitment by reducing the need of operators to hold technical knowledge regarding farebox technologies (Transit Workforce Center 2022).

Future of Fare-free Regional Transit

Risks

State Funding

Starting in the state FY 2024 budget, fare-free service was funded with a discretionary grant program appropriated annually and funded with Fair Share Amendment revenue. The state FY 2026 budget amended Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 161B with a mandate for fare-free transit service. The transition from a discretionary program to a statutory funding requirement provides a greater degree of certainty to CATA that the funds will be available each year; however, "subject to appropriation" in the amendment suggests that the funding could be at risk from prolonged budgetary constraints.

Fare Equipment State of Good Repair

CATA continues to maintain fare collection equipment that is used only to count passenger boardings. This maintenance adds costs to operating budgets with no direct benefit to the public or improved operating efficiency. The Scheidt & Bachmann fare collection system is now 13 years old. Fare collection equipment has a usable life benchmark of 10 years set by CATA. Maintaining equipment that is no longer needed for fare collection and only is used to count passengers is costly and does not produce the same precision passenger counts as an APC system.

The amendment to Massachusetts General Laws provides some certainty that lost fare revenue will be reimbursed. The risk, however, is that if the state budget is constrained and funds are not appropriated to reimburse lost fare revenue, CATA will not have the capacity to collect fares once fare collection equipment has been phased out. The timeline for a fare collection system design and implementation can take years. The long lead time means it is unlikely a new system can be deployed between the time fare-free funding is suspended and revenue is needed to maintain a balanced operating budget.

Opportunities

Opportunities for revenue enhancements to replace farebox collections are limited. High ridership may make advertising space inside the bus, at terminals, and stops more attractive as it is visible to more people. Additional vehicles in service to meet the demands of high ridership may present more opportunities for vehicle exterior advertising space.

CATA uses fare collection equipment to count passenger boardings. The equipment can register an accurate count of boardings; however, the technology is limited compared to APC systems. In FY 2026, CATA will be upgrading its technology to deploy APCs, along with a new AVL system. This technology will provide precise vehicle location and passenger counts that can be used to improve system performance. Without the need for a fare collection system, CATA can continue to spend limited capital funds on technology that improves operations.

Future of Fare-Free Policy

With the passage of the FY 2026 state budget and the changes to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 161B, there is increased certainty in the state policy environment regarding fare-free regional transit. RTAs around the Commonwealth may choose to make policy and operational decisions that assume future funding replacement for fare revenue.

In the event that CATA would reinstate fares, CATA anticipates using the rates it had set before going fare-free. Since the fare policy was revised in 2022, CATA does not anticipate needing to

adopt an updated fare policy in the next few years. If fares were to be reinstated beyond a reasonable period post-fare suspension, CATA would consider fare policy modifications such as options to institute an automatic yearly rate escalator with a cap.

Appendix B Environmental Policy

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has set ambitious statewide goals regarding environmental quality, as have many of its regions and municipalities. With transportation emissions contributing significantly to statewide greenhouse gas emissions and poor air quality, efforts to reduce those emissions through technology or encouraging transit ridership are described in this appendix. This appendix highlights how those environmental policies or programs may intersect with, inform, or drive CATA actions.

Overview of Environmental Policies that May Intersect with Regional Transit Authority Activities

The following sections identify RTA activities and the associated supportive policies:

- Commonwealth policies are statewide policies or goals that support specific RTA activities.
- Regional policies are any climate action plans established by Regional Planning Agencies if those plans include transportation goals, targets, or actions.

RTA-specific goals and studies are another important source of information supporting specific RTA actions regarding environmental quality. Together, the statewide and regional policy context should help to inform decision making and goals contained within the five-year RTA plan.

Foundational Commonwealth Environmental Policies

There are several foundational Commonwealth policies that set the stage for greenhouse gas emissions reductions from the transportation sector. These policies may support numerous RTA activities as they relate to greenhouse gas emissions reductions, given the alignment between emissions reductions and maximizing transit ridership, serving transit-oriented places, and installing green energy infrastructure.

- Global Warming Solutions Act: Signed into law in August 2008, this act required the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to set economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals, including for transportation, that achieve a 10 percent to 25 percent reduction below statewide 1990 levels by 2020 and at least 80 percent reduction below statewide 1990 levels by 2050 (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2008b).
- Commission of the Future of Transportation in the Commonwealth: Established by Executive Order 579, this commission developed multiple recommendations related to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting energy efficiency (Baker 2018).
- 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap: Published in December 2020, the Roadmap is a result of an Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs planning process to identify cost-effective and equitable strategies for Massachusetts to reach its goal of 85 percent greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 2050 and achieving net zero emissions (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2020).
- Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2050: Released in 2022, this plan represents Commonwealth policies and strategies to reach net zero in 2050 (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2022).
- Green Communities Act: Signed in 2008, this act expanded energy efficiency, supported the development of renewable energy resources, created a greener state

building code, and created the green communities program (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2008a).

- Beyond Mobility: The statewide long-range transportation plan, published in 2024, lays out a number of actions to be undertaken by MassDOT, several of which focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2024a).

Maximizing Transit Ridership

Commonwealth Efforts

A key method of reducing environmental impact of the transportation sector is increasing ridership on transit, particularly if it shifts people from single-occupancy vehicles into a comparatively efficient transit bus. There have been multiple efforts undertaken at the statewide level to increase RTA ridership:

- Funding for Fare-Free Service: After a $15 million pilot for fare-free RTA transit in FY 2024, Massachusetts approved funding in its FY 2025 budget granting $30 million to 13 RTAs to provide year-round, fare free service (MassDOT 2024b).
- Coordination of Service Providers: MassDOT provides a toolkit on coordinating service providers to maximize mobility, increase ridership, and serve riders more efficiently. The toolkit includes case studies, ways to get involved, and Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plans developed by Regional Planning Agencies (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2025c).
- Mobility Management: MassMobility is a MassDOT initiative that aims to increase mobility for those who lack transportation access, including older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, and low-income commuters (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2025d).
- Regional Transit Innovation Grant: MassDOT has provided grants that provide funding to transit providers for innovative projects. Eligible projects enhance or expand existing service, provide innovative transit service, improve connectivity of rural areas and between regional transit service areas, or support electrification (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2024b).
- 310 Code of Massachusetts Regulations 60.05, Global Warming Solutions Act Requirements for Transportation: Includes requirements that support maximizing transit ridership and may be an effective tool for RTAs who are working to increase ridership in communities that they serve.

Regional Efforts

The following regional policies are supportive of maximizing transit ridership.

- Boston Region MPO/*Destination 2050*: *Long Range Transportation Plan* (Boston Region MPO 2023a)
  - Expand access to and quality of public transit to increase travel choices and opportunities
  - Improve state of good repair for transit facilities and assets
  - Remove barriers to support people of all abilities using the transit system
  - Identify new corridors for bus rapid transit, improve bus reliability

- Boston Region MPO/Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (Boston Region MPO 2023b):
  - Provide travel training to support transit use, especially among older adults and people with disabilities
  - Improve accessibility of and comfort at transit stops
- MAPC/Greater Boston Priority Climate Action Plan (MAPC 2024b):
  - Improve and expand public transit service
  - Fill gaps in transit options
  - Decarbonize and electrify bus transit while maintaining service reliability
  - Improve accessibility of and comfort at transit stops
  - Improve multimodal connections and wayfinding
- MAPC/MetroCommon 2050 (MAPC 2021):
  - Improve transportation choices
  - Improve public transit services, access, and operation
  - Improve multimodal connections
- City of Gloucester/Gloucester Comprehensive Plan 2025-2035 (City of Gloucester 2025)
  - Create and support a comprehensive transportation network to provide safe and viable connections to key destinations.
  - Explore the feasibility of a fee-based seasonal shuttle service or continued partnership with CATA to connect the commuter rail station to popular downtown beaches to improve visitor access and reduce traffic congestion.
  - Consider transportation demand management policies to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles. Examples include subsidized transit fares for municipal employees, zoning incentives, and requirements that encourage alternative transportation.
  - Advocate for increased frequency of CATA routes and improved coordination with the MBTA schedule. Explore "last mile" transit solutions to connect industrial parks, downtown, and employment centers.

Serving Transit-Oriented and Transit-Dependent Places

Commonwealth Efforts

There are several statewide initiatives to support the development of transit-oriented places and to focus transit service on those places that are most dependent on public transportation.

- Massachusetts Chapter 40R, or The Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Act, Chapter 249 of the Acts of 2004: Encourages dense residential and mixed-use development through "smart growth" zoning districts. The goal is to increase housing supply by increasing the amount of land zoned for dense housing, including a high percentage of affordable housing units to be located near transit stations. Communities are eligible for Chapter 40R payments and other financial incentives upon state review and approval of a local overlay district (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2025b).

- Section 3A of Massachusetts General Laws c.40A, also known as the MBTA Communities Law: The goal of this law is to create zoning that encourages the development of housing in areas served by MBTA rapid transit (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2025e). Given the overlap between RTA and MBTA rapid transit-served areas, as housing developments come to those areas targeted by the law, RTAs may consider enhancing complementary fixed route service depending on the context and need.

Regional Efforts

The following regional policies are supportive of serving transit-oriented or transit-dependent places.

- MAPC/Greater Boston Priority Climate Action Plan (MAPC 2024b):
  - Build, improve, and expand infrastructure to support multimodal transportation.
  - Connect infrastructure to public or shared modes of transportation
  - Update zoning codes to encourage transit-oriented development
- MAPC/E-Cargo Bikes: Strategies for Municipal Delivery Transition (MAPC 2024a)
  - E-cargo bike to reduce vehicle use in the Greater Boston area
- Boston Region MPO/*Destination 2050*: *Long Range Transportation Plan* (Boston Region MPO 2023a)
  - Complete streets, infrastructure, intersection, and bike network improvements to support transportation in the area
- Boston Region MPO/*Transportation Improvement Program* (Boston Region MPO 2024)
  - Support state of good repair, modernize transportation systems, and promote transportation access
- Boston Region MPO/Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (Boston Region MPO 2023b):
  - Explore the coordination of housing with transportation improvements to enhance access to human service transportation
  - Invest in walkable communities and in transit connections to housing developments
  - Improve first and last mile transit service
- MAPC/MetroCommon 2050 (MAPC 2021):
  - Support local land use policies and new developments that encourage concentrated growth around transit and other key services.
  - Invest in a robust, reliable, and affordable public transit network and accelerate the production of affordable housing and mixed-used development near transit.
- City of Gloucester/ Gloucester Comprehensive Plan 2025-2035 (City of Gloucester. 2025)
  - Implement flexible zoning policies in key economic hubs to attract investment, encourage infill development, and support high value industries that creates sustainable living wage jobs.
  - Consider high-density, mixed use development near existing infrastructure.

- Review and adopt zoning standards to modify or remove off-street parking minimums in zoning districts with public transit resources to foster more efficient land use and multimodal accessibility.

Vehicle Emission Reductions

Commonwealth Efforts

The Commonwealth has provided policy and funding support for transition of public transportation vehicles to zero-emission forms of propulsion. This complements RTA efforts to incorporate low- and zero-emission vehicles into their fleet.

- H.5060 An Act Driving Clean Energy and Offshore Wind, the Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2050: This act contains numerous transportation-related actions. This policy can be supportive of those efforts in that it calls for the MBTA bus fleet to be all electric by 2040; RTAs could potentially leverage that electrification effort to support procurement of their own EVs. Additionally, it requires MassDOT to provide technical and funding assistance to RTAs to help electrify their fleets and to provide RTAs with assistance to create an electric bus rollout plan. MassDOT is also directed to consult with RTAs on developing and issuing recommendations for a program of incentives for authorities to develop and maintain buses and other zero emissions vehicles (Bill H.5060). The directives to MassDOT could be a significant source of support for RTAs in this work.
- Beyond Mobility: This statewide plan contains a specific action to support electrification of public transportation vehicles, including RTA vehicles (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2024a).

Regional Efforts

The following regional policies are supportive of electrification.

- MAPC (MAPC 2025):
  - Electric school buses roadmap, acquisition of electric police cruisers, EV rebates
- Boston Region MPO/*Destination 2050*: *Long Range Transportation Plan* (Boston Region MPO 2023a)
  - Net zero emissions by 2050
  - Support transit vehicle electrification
  - Support investments that reduce emissions from single occupancy vehicle travel and other transportation activities through mode shift and electrification
- MAPC/Greater Boston Priority Climate Action Plan (MAPC 2024b)
  - Decarbonize and electrify bus transit while maintaining service reliability
  - Create and support electric vehicle car share programs
  - Expand technical and financial assistance programs for residents and small businesses to purchase electric vehicles.
  - Explore group purchasing opportunities for municipalities and residents to purchase EV sat lower negotiated prices.
  - Develop a regional EV charging network strategy.
  - Explore EV charging incentives and cost reduction programs.

- MAPC/MetroCommon 2050 (MAPC 2021):
  - Net zero emissions by 2050
  - Accelerate a commitment to expand and electrify public transit
- City of Gloucester/Gloucester Comprehensive Plan 2025-2035 (City of Gloucester. 2025)
  - Provide climate preparedness training and education for key personnel.
  - Continue transitioning to EVs as replacements are needed.
  - Promote Green Building practices, including enhanced energy efficiency, pre-wiring for EV charging, and solar energy.
  - Expand public EV charging infrastructure, including installing public DC fast chargers. Conduct an assessment to determine optimal locations for charging stations, including whether they should be concentrated in off-street parking lots.

Supportive Local Efforts

Table 41 demonstrates where CATA's transportation planning efforts may coordinate with or support existing plan and policy goals for respective municipalities within the CATA planning area. For communities that do not have climate plans or whose climate plans do not contain transportation-related actions, the transportation planning work of CATA may help to fill the gap.

Table 41: Municipalities in the CATA Service Area with Climate Action Plan Transportation Goals

City Name	Climate Action Plan
Beverly	Resilient Together (City of Beverly and City of Salem 2021)
Danvers	Resilient Danvers (Town of Danvers 2023)
Gloucester	Climate Action and Resilience Plan (City of Gloucester 2022)
Ipswich	Ipswich Climate Action Plan: 2017 Update (Ipswich Climate Change Committee 2017)
Manchester-by-the-Sea	Manchester-By-The-Sea Net Zero Municipal Operations Plan (MAPC 2023a)
Peabody	Net Zero Roadmap (MAPC 2023b); Local Hazard Mitigation Plan update (*in progress*)

In addition to these municipal climate plans, Beverly, Danvers, Ipswich, Manchester-by-the-Sea, and Peabody have developed or are in the process of updating local Hazard Mitigation Plans and Open Space and Recreation Plans. Gloucester published its Open Space and Recreation Plan update in 2022 (MAPC 2022).

While transportation actions varied across communities, general themes emerged around mobility, access, affordability, greenhouse gas emission reductions including electrification, and protecting transportation infrastructure (e.g., roads, bridges, culverts) from the effects of climate change to maintain continuity of operations and evacuation routes.

Challenges and Opportunities

CATA continues to explore investments to encourage mode shift from single-occupancy vehicles to public transit, in alignment with Commonwealth and regional plans for the environment. CATA has supported mode shift through its initiation of fare-free service through the end of 2025, now to be extended through the end of FY 2026 due to the Commonwealth's official appropriation of funds for year-round fare-free service and its amendment to Chapter 161B of Massachusetts General Laws mandating RTAs provide fare-free service on fixed route and paratransit service. Additional efforts to attract riders include route reconfigurations to support easy route transfers, increased marketing efforts and social media activity to introduce and help explain different CATA services to a wider audience, and the upcoming implementation of public-facing technology that will allow for mobile transit booking for ADA customers. These efforts aim to support CATA's visibility and attractiveness to riders and non-riders alike and encourage further mode shift from personal vehicles to public transit.

CATA continues to invest in zero-emission vehicle technology. Vehicle size is a key consideration for CATA when replacing buses and vans to account for projected ridership and in support of agency efficiency of operations. In 2025, CATA introduced its first zero emission vehicle, the Karsan e-JEST 19-passenger electric low-floor minibus (Figure 69). CATA first deployed three of these vehicles in mid-June 2025 and installed one ABB electric charger on-site at CATA headquarters (Figure 70). To better address the electric vehicle charging need, CATA expects to install two more chargers on-site. CATA considered the feasibility of deploying electric chargers on-route; however, maintenance and operational needs require the chargers to be installed on CATA property only.

Figure 69. CATA Karsan e-JEST Minibus

Figure 70. ABB Electric Charger

CATA continues to gather fleet performance data to understand operational benefits and constraints of operating zero-emission vehicles. Capital costs associated with implementing battery electric buses (BEBs) remain a key factor for long-term decision making. CATA continues to monitor ongoing economic changes associated with rolling stock manufacturing and procurement. Additionally, CATA's team of two full-time staff and the agency's sustained need for hiring additional operators and mechanics present a barrier to pursuing a fleet transition. Operationally, CATA must also consider the agency's need to respond quickly in the event of regional power outages driven by emergency events and evacuations. BEBs also require additional safety and operations training, often in partnership with local emergency personnel to address the potential of BEB fires from battery malfunctions or bus collisions.

Range and reliability are additional key considerations regarding BEB implementation. CATA switches out its electric buses more frequently for charging, which requires the availability of maintenance staff. CATA is also assessing options to address long-term redundancy to better meet vehicle charging needs in a warm and cool climate, and the agency continues to explore BEB storage options that could support a large-scale fleet transition.

Long-term, CATA is monitoring the maturation of low- and zero-emission propulsion technologies to understand whether and how they may be integrated into CATA's fleet. MassDOT's Battery Electric Bus Phase II Study will inform the development of a zero-emission fleet transition plan and outline implementation strategies, including workforce development and training needs. CATA continues to engage with RTA peers who are implementing BEB

technologies to exchange knowledge, understand lessons learned, and disseminate best practices across the state.

Other environmental features that CATA has on-site include solar panels (Figure 71) and recycling. Funding is programmed in the FFYs 2026-2030 Boston Region MPO Transportation Improvement Program to support modernization of the Gloucester Administration and Maintenance Facility (Boston Region MPO 2025). Facility updates include upgrades to the insulation and heating, ventilation, and air condition (HVAC) building control system, and the installation of new windows.

Figure 71. Solar Panels at CATA