

The background image shows a city street scene. In the foreground, a person is pushing a stroller with a large white bag on it. In the middle ground, a white bus with orange accents is stopped at a bus stop. The destination sign on the bus reads "COURT HWY". The bus has "IOWA CITY" written on its side. In the background, there are trees, a brick building, and a "DO NOT ENTER" sign for bicycles and bikes only. The overall scene is in winter, with some snow on the ground.

IOWA CITY AREA TRANSIT STUDY

RE • IMAGINE YOUR RIDE

Public Transportation Enhancements
City Council Work Session – March 2nd 2021

Iowa City Area Transit Study Timeline

- **Aug 2019** - Launched Study
- **Sept to Nov 2019** – Phase 1 Public Outreach
- **Oct & Nov 2019** – Background review/market analysis
- **Nov & Dec 2019** – Develop alternate service scenarios
- **Jan & Feb 2020** – Phase II Public Outreach
- **Mar to Aug 2020** – Development of Preferred Scenario (with COVID pause)
- **Oct & Nov 2020** – Presented study recommendations to City Council and received feedback regarding preferred transit system scenario, fare recommendations, and the priority of potential service enhancements
- **Nov to Mar 2021** – Preparing for Phase III Public Outreach
- **(TODAY) Mar 2021** – Present potential service enhancements to City Council



Vision for Transit: Public Transit Enhancements & Estimated Costs

	Enhancements	Recommendation	Operating Costs	One-Time Capital Costs
1	Fare-Free Iowa City Transit Service	Zero-fare service on Iowa City Transit fixed-route and demand-respond services.	\$2,274,000	\$4,900,000
2	15-Minute Service on Multiple Corridors	Bus routes with 15-minute frequency on nine major corridors in Iowa City and University Heights.	\$3,800,000	\$11,000,000
3	Sunday Service	Hourly Sunday service from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Iowa City Transit routes in the Preferred	\$780,000	\$0
4	Improved Saturday Service	Saturday service from 7:00 p.m. to midnight on Iowa City Transit routes in the Preferred	\$260,000	\$0
5	Late-Night Weekday Service	Service until midnight on Iowa City Transit routes in the Preferred Alternative.	\$540,000	\$0
6	On-Demand Night Owl Service	Subsidized ride-hail trips during late night periods near Iowa City Transit fixed routes.	\$127,750	\$0
7	On-Demand Service in Low-Density Neighborhoods	Subsidized ride-hail trips to places outside the fixed-route service area	\$560,000	\$0
8	A New Crosstown Route	A new crosstown Iowa City Transit fixed route operating with 30-minute headways on weekdays from 6:00 a.m. to midnight and weekends from 7:00 a.m. to midnight.	\$1,288,400	\$2,000,000
9	Additional South Iowa City Route	A new route to south Iowa City that serves growing neighborhoods off Sycamore Street and helps provide more frequent service on the S Gilbert Street corridor. This route would have 30-minute peak hour headways and operate from 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on weekdays and 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekends.	\$600,000	\$1,000,000
Total			\$10,230,150	\$18,900,000

Prioritized Public Transportation Enhancements

- Sunday Service
- Later Evening Service
(until midnight)
- Night-Owl Service
(overnight)



Preliminary Ridership Estimates

Service Enhancement	Estimated Ridership	
	Daily	Annual
Sunday - Fixed Route Transit	Up to 3,700	192,400 *
Sunday - Demand Response	100	5,200
Late Evening Service Fixed Route Transit (Additional Riders)	Up to 470 additional	171,550 *
Late Evening Service - Demand Response (Until Midnight)	30	10,920
Night-Owl Demand Response (Midnight - 6 am)	20	7,280

* Based on FY-19 data, pre-COVID

Assumed all rides to be within Iowa City limits

Ridership estimates developed by evaluating similar services offered in Ames and Cedar Rapids.



Ridership ultimately affected by type of service offered, fare, ease of access, program qualifiers, recovery from pandemic ect.

Transportation Services/Partnerships

Evaluated seven potential options for enhancing mobility in Iowa City



Iowa City Transit

Fixed-Route | Heavy Duty Buses



Neighborhood Transportation Service/Horizons

Demand-Response and On-Demand | Vanpool



Johnson County SEATS

Demand Response | Light-Duty Paratransit Vehicles



Yellow Cab

Taxi On-Demand and Demand Response | Taxicabs



Lyft

Transportation Network Company on Demand | Personal Vehicles



Uber

Transportation Network Company on Demand | Personal Vehicles



Via / Iowa City Transit

Microtransit Platform | Any vehicle type



Iowa City Transit

Fixed-route bus service | Heavy Duty Buses



• How it Works

- Fixed routes with set schedule
- Dedicated bus stops
- Prepaid bus pass or cash fare
- Complementary paratransit provided by SEATS
- Sunday service would mirror proposed Saturday service with 11 routes on hourly schedule
- Later evening service would involve running 11 routes until midnight

• Benefits

- Community familiarity
- \$1/ride; lower if qualified for reduced fare
- Addresses top community priorities
- Expansion could better serve current riders, and help attract new riders



Iowa City Transit

Fixed-route bus service | Heavy Duty Buses



• Challenges

- Less flexible than on-demand or demand response
- Buses will be on the road whether there are riders or not
- Will need to expand staffing and develop new staff schedules

• Costs

\$1 fare

Organization		Startup Needs		Annual Service Cost Estimates				
Transportation Service Provider		Needs	Costs	Sunday Service	Late Evening Service - Daily (Until Midnight)	Late Evening Service - Weekdays (Until Midnight)	Late Evening - Saturdays (Until Midnight)	Night-Owl Overnight Service (Midnight - 6 am)
①	Iowa City Transit	Staffing	Included in Service Cost	\$780,000	\$1,060,000	\$540,000	\$260,000	N/A

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Neighborhood Transportation Service (NTS/Horizons)

Demand response vanpool service with mission to provide transportation for work, education and life-skills



• How it Works

- Vanpool service / shared rides
- Serves Cedar Rapids metro off-transit hours; evenings, overnight, and Sundays; Riders pay \$6 per trip
- Schedule day before or 1-hr advance, as of January on-demand
- Uses Via platform/App or call-in for ride scheduling
- Open to public; no income qualifiers
- Provide paratransit service

• Benefits

- Lower overall costs than fixed route service
- Use of Via app or phone to book ride
- Can provide demand-response or on-demand service
- Curb-to-curb service
- Multi-passenger rides; more economical
- 25-year partnership with Cedar Rapids Transit for off-transit hours transportation service

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Neighborhood Transportation Service (NTS/Horizons)

Demand response vanpool service with mission to provide transportation for work, education and life-skills



• Challenges

- Vehicles and office space would need to be procured for expansion to Iowa City

• Costs

\$2 fare

Organization		Startup Needs		Annual Service Cost Estimates				
Transportation Service Provider		Needs	Costs	Sunday Service	Late Evening Service - Daily (Until Midnight)	Late Evening Service - Weekdays (Until Midnight)	Late Evening - Saturdays (Until Midnight)	Night-Owl Overnight Service (Midnight - 6 am)
②	Neighborhood Transportation Service / Horizons	Vehicles, Office Space	\$219,000 for vehicles + office space	\$92,000	\$357,000	--	--	\$321,000

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Johnson County SEATS

Demand Response | Light-Duty Paratransit Vehicles



• How it Works

- Qualified riders call or use Amble app to schedule rides 1-day in advance
- Curb-to-curb service
- Existing 13 vehicle paratransit fleet

• Benefits

- SEATS already provides transportation services to the community
- City already owns and maintains the paratransit vehicle fleet
- Paratransit service is included

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Johnson County SEATS

Demand Response | Light-Duty Paratransit Vehicles

• Challenges

- Customers must have an account set up with SEATS to use the Amble App
- All public riders would need to use phone to schedule a ride
- Putting mileage on paratransit vehicles for non-paratransit rides



• Costs

\$2 fare

Organization		Startup Needs		Annual Service Cost Estimates				
Transportation Service Provider		Needs	Costs	Sunday Service	Late Evening Service - Daily (Until Midnight)	Late Evening Service - Weekdays (Until Midnight)	Late Evening - Saturdays (Until Midnight)	Night-Owl Overnight Service (Midnight - 6 am)
③	Johnson County SEATS	Supervisor + drivers	\$89,000 to hire a Supervisor	\$172,000	\$361,000	--	--	\$241,000

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Yellow Cab

On-Demand or Scheduled | Taxi Service



• How it Works

- Riders request ride by phone only, and they must call 30 minutes in advance
- In North Liberty, ID cards are issued to qualified passengers who pay \$1 fare with City subsidizing remaining amount
- North Liberty has specified eligible trip locations including grocery stores, medical facilities, governmental buildings, ect
- Monthly invoicing to City

• Benefits

- Curb-to-curb service
- Fleet includes accessible vehicles and could provide complementary paratransit service
- Low-cost

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Yellow Cab

On-Demand or Scheduled | Taxi Service



• Challenges

- No App, riders must request ride by phone
- Meeting service demand without strict eligibility requirements may be challenging

• Costs

\$2 fare

Organization		Startup Needs		Annual Service Cost Estimates				
Transportation Service Provider		Needs	Costs	Sunday Service	Late Evening Service - Daily (Until Midnight)	Late Evening Service - Weekdays (Until Midnight)	Late Evening - Saturdays (Until Midnight)	Night-Owl Overnight Service (Midnight - 6 am)
④	Yellow Cab	None identified	N/A	\$57,000	\$120,000	--	--	\$80,000

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Lyft

Transportation Network Company on Demand | Personal Vehicles



• How it Works

- Riders request a ride using Lyft App or call Iowa City Transit
- Income qualified riders enter a code to receive discounted fare
- Independent contractors working on Lyft's behalf provide ride
- Lyft invoices the City monthly

• Benefits

- Curb-to-curb service
- Can link to Lyft through the Transit App
- Service already exists in the community
- Low-cost
- Those without smartphone can still access to service
- Transit planning, reporting and administrative tools

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Lyft

Transportation Network Company on Demand | Personal Vehicles

• Challenges

- No accessible vehicles; paratransit services would need to be outsourced
- No oversight of drivers/no clear indication of supply of available vehicles
- Need to set up call-in process for riders without smart phones or who are unfamiliar with App
- Potential for “discount code” abuse



• Costs

\$2 fare

Organization		Startup Needs		Annual Service Cost Estimates				
Transportation Service Provider		Needs	Costs	Sunday Service	Late Evening Service - Daily (Until Midnight)	Late Evening Service - Weekdays (Until Midnight)	Late Evening - Saturdays (Until Midnight)	Night-Owl Overnight Service (Midnight - 6 am)
⑤	¹⁶ Lyft w/ SEATS Paratransit	Paratransit Services	Paratransit included in Service Cost	\$50,000	\$105,300	--	--	\$70,000



Uber

Transportation Network Company on Demand | Personal Vehicles



• How it Works

- Riders request a ride using Uber App or call Iowa City Transit
- Code entered for reduced fare
- Independent contractors working on Uber's behalf
- Uber invoices the City monthly

• Benefits

- Curb-to-curb service
- Can link to Uber through the Transit App
- Service already exists in the community
- Those without smartphone can still access to service
- Low-cost



Uber

Transportation Network Company on Demand | Personal Vehicles



Challenges

- No accessible vehicles; paratransit services would need to be outsourced
- No oversight of drivers/no clear indication of supply of available vehicles
- Need to set up call-in process for riders without smart phones or who are unfamiliar with App
- Potential for “discount code” abuse

Costs

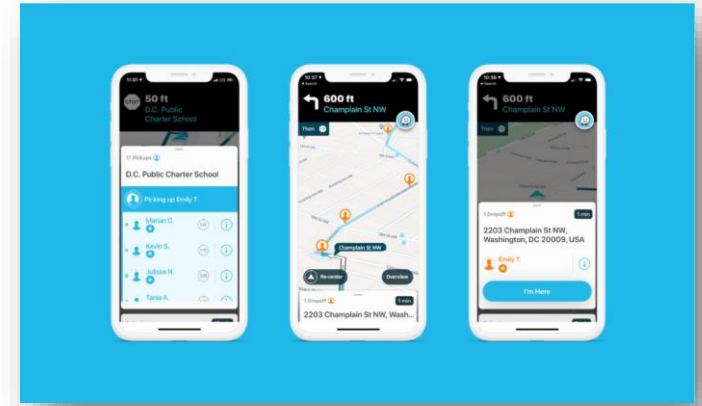
\$2 fare

Organization		Startup Needs		Annual Service Cost Estimates				
Transportation Service Provider		Needs	Costs	Sunday Service	Late Evening Service - Daily (Until Midnight)	Late Evening Service - Weekdays (Until Midnight)	Late Evening - Saturdays (Until Midnight)	Night-Owl Overnight Service (Midnight - 6 am)
⑥	¹⁸ Uber w/SEATS Paratransit	Paratransit Services	Paratransit included in Service Cost	\$50,000	\$105,300	--	--	\$70,000

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Via / Iowa City Transit

In-House On-Demand | Vanpool



• How it Works

- City Employees would provide transportation
- City purchases and employs Via platform to enable on-demand transportation and installs GPS enabled tablets in all vehicles.
- Riders request a ride using Via app or by phone call to Iowa City Transit
- App strategically routes vehicles to optimize service, reduce travel time and costs
- City pays installation fee to help with set up, then a per-vehicle monthly charge

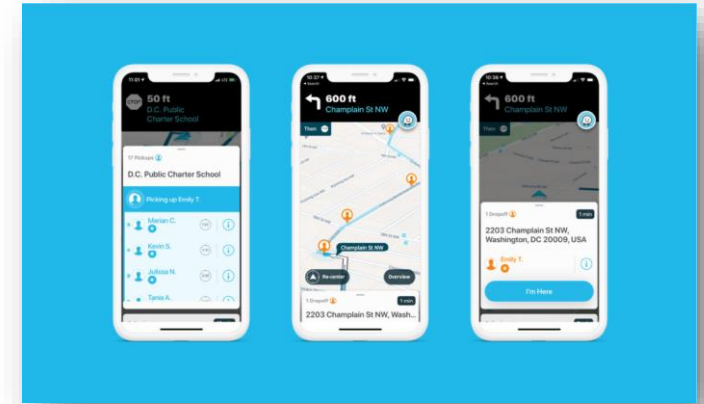
• Benefits

- Highly customizable on-demand service
- Could use passenger vans, mini-vans, or 40' buses to provide service
- Vehicles are matched to riders, based on location and destination
- Staff has access to operations planning tools and dashboard

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Via / Iowa City Transit

In-House On-Demand | Vanpool



• Challenges

- Heated storage for vehicles
- Integrating on-demand operations into a fixed-route operation

• Costs

\$2 fare

Organization		Startup Needs		Annual Service Cost Estimates				
Transportation Service Provider		Needs	Costs	Sunday Service	Late Evening Service - Daily (Until Midnight)	Late Evening Service - Weekdays (Until Midnight)	Late Evening - Saturdays (Until Midnight)	Night-Owl Overnight Service (Midnight - 6 am)
⑦	²⁰ Via / Iowa City Transit Demand Response	Staffing/Dispatching	\$276,500 for vehicles and Via installation	\$188,000	\$338,000	--	--	\$310,000

Service Comparison

Organization		Startup Needs		Annual Service Cost Estimates				
Transportation Service Provider		Needs	Costs	Sunday Service	Late Evening Service - Daily (Until Midnight)	Late Evening Service - Weekdays (Until Midnight)	Late Evening - Saturdays (Until Midnight)	Night-Owl Overnight Service (Midnight - 6 am)
①	Iowa City Transit	Staffing	Included in Service Cost	\$780,000	\$800,000	\$540,000	\$260,000	N/A
②	Neighborhood Transportation Service / Horizons	Vehicles, Office Space	\$219,000 for vehicles + office space	\$92,000	\$357,000	--	--	\$321,000
③	Johnson County SEATS	Supervisor + drivers	\$89,000 to hire a Supervisor	\$172,000	\$361,000	--	--	\$241,000
④	Yellow Cab	None identified	N/A	\$57,000	\$120,000	--	--	\$80,000
⑤	Lyft w/ SEATS Paratransit	Paratransit Services	SEATS costs included	\$50,000	\$105,300	--	--	\$70,000
⑥	Uber w/SEATS Paratransit	Paratransit Services	SEATS costs included	\$50,000	\$105,300	--	--	\$70,000
⑦	Via / Iowa City Transit Demand Response	Staffing/Dispatching	\$276,500 for vehicles and Via installation	\$188,000	\$338,000	--	--	\$310,000

Recommendation



Two-Year Pilot: Fixed Route Bus Service on Sundays

- Addresses the unmet demand for public transportation on Sundays, the most requested enhancement in the transit study. Revisit after two-years.
- Two-year pilot provides ample time to establish service and build ridership
- Sunday service would mirror Saturday service, 11 routes running hourly service 7 AM – 7:30 PM
- Reinforces Climate Action goals, including enabling a shift 55% of vehicle trips to more sustainable modes by 2050
- **Annual Estimated Costs: \$780,000. 192,400 estimated annual riders.**

Optional add-on service if later evening/overnight service is desired:

Partner with NTS/Horizons to provide late night/overnight transportation

- Supports late night or 3rd shift workers
- Service would begin when transit service ends and run until 6 AM
- Shared curb-to-curb service during evening hours for qualified riders
- Provide a demand-response (scheduled) or on-demand service
- Easy to schedule a ride using Via App or by phone
- Long, successful partnership with the City of Cedar Rapids
- **Annual Estimated Costs: \$648,000 + \$219,000 startup costs for vehicles. 18,200 estimated annual riders.**

Combined Annual Costs \$1,428,000

Transit Study Timeline – Next Steps



- Mar 2021 – Executing implementation plan for transit system changes
- April or May 2021 – Phase III Public Outreach with final routes/stops and service changes
- May to June 2021 – Implementation of fare change recommendations
- May 2021 – Finalize document and City Council consideration of transit study plan
- July 2021 – Final Phase IV Public Outreach
- **Aug 2021** – Implementation of preferred transit system recommendations including new routes, stops, service frequency, hours of operation
- **Late 2021/Early 2022** – Implement vision item enhancements



Thank you!

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