
GIAMPO – Policy Board

Tuesday, December 12, 2017

Regular Session

Item E7

**Approval Recommendation of Final Draft Summary Final Report for
Regional Transit Study**

Staff Contact: Allan Zafft, MPO Program Manager

ISSUE

VOTE: FINAL DRAFT Summary Final Report for the Regional Transit Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study

BACKGROUND

Grand Island and Hall County have had public transportation services available to residents since the mid-1970s. These services were funded in part by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) rural transportation programs and Hall County. After the 2010 Census designation of Grand Island to an urban area, the federal funding mechanisms were affected for public transportation in Grand Island. As an urban area, the FTA appropriates federal funding to urban communities, such as Grand Island, by formula allocations across the United States each fiscal year. One designated recipient within the urban area is appointed by the Governor, and for Grand Island, it is the City of Grand Island. Beginning on July 1, 2016, the City of Grand Island became the primary funding partner from a local perspective, with a small portion of the local match (5%) from Hall County.

In April 2016, the City of Grand Island City Council approved an interlocal agreement where the City provides public transit services within Hall County. The City of Grand Island has an existing contract with Senior Citizens Industries, Inc. d/b/a Hall County Public Transportation for an initial 12-month term, with options for a maximum of two years renewal. The City began managing the transit service in July 2016.

GIAMPO in coordination with the City of Grand Island initiated the Regional Transit Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study in March 2017. Olsson Associates was retained by the City to lead the study efforts. The primary purpose of this study is to provide baseline information to the City of Grand Island, as the City's first year managing the transit service, and to give the City a plan for transit service based upon, but not limited to, community input and vision for the future.

In October 2017, Olsson Associates completed a DRAFT Summary Final Report for the study. This report provides the following information:

- Development of project goals and vision for transit service in Grand Island and Hall County
- Market analysis for the study area
- Evaluation of existing transit services
- Analysis of the existing transit needs, gaps, and potential future demand for transit service
- Review of peer communities
- Evaluation of contract models for transit agencies and a discussion on future governance options
- Public and stakeholder involvement during the study
- Development of future transit alternatives
- A five year plan and budget and an implementation plan for the City of Grand Island

The GIAMPO Public Participation Plan specifies there will be a 15-day public comment period before adoption of a GIAMPO report/document by the Policy Board. The DRAFT Summary Final Report was made available for a 15-day public comment period from October 31 to November 15, 2017. During this period, a public open house was held on November 9, 2017 to give the public an opportunity to offer ideas and suggestions about items relating to the report. One written comment was received during the public comment period. This comment will not result in changes to the content of the DRAFT Summary Final Report.

The DRAFT Summary Final Report is available here:

<http://grand-island.com/your-government/public-works/metropolitan-planning-organization/transit-study/documents>

The final version of the Summary Final Report will update the date of the report to December 12, 2017 and insert a page before the Table of Contents with the following information – recap of public comment period, approval dates by TAC and Policy Board, and information where the final report is available.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS/DISCUSSION

Transit Agency – Peer Review

The study included a Transit Agency Peer Review, which provides a useful tool in terms of lessons learned at other agencies and in assessing where Hall County Public Transportation is today, compared to peer communities, using transit industry typical statistics for reasonable costs, ridership, and service levels. The peer agencies included: Enid, OK; Idaho Falls, ID; Kingman, AZ; Helena, MT; Casper, WY; and North Platte, NE.

		2014 Population	Post-Secondary School Enrollment	Demand Response Trips	Fixed Route Trips	Total Trips	Transit Trips per Capita	Operating Budget	Operating Budget per Capita	Revenue Hours (Revenue Miles)	Cost per Revenue Hour
	Grand Island, NE	51,236	2,163	35,085	N/A	35,085	0.7	\$490,000	\$10.10	14,705 (170,497)	\$33.32
1	Enid, OK	51,386	1,902	40,800	N/A	40,800	0.8	\$735,446	\$14.89	18,400 (N/A)	\$39.07
2	Idaho Falls, ID	58,691	862	N/A	79,914	79,914	1.4	\$1,229,217	\$20.94	27,924 (350,476)	\$44.02
3	Kingman, AZ	28,912	1,707	N/A	116,352	116,352	4.0	\$771,819	\$26.70	16,564 (170,567)	\$46.60
4	Helena, MT	29,943	2,400	N/A	173,775	173,775	5.8	\$1,317,688	\$46.76	25,209 (488,299)	\$52.27
5	Casper, WY	60,086	4,648	54,213	125,460	179,673	3.0	\$1,730,107	\$31.28	37,410 (448,385)	\$46.25
6	North Platte, NE	24,592	3,250	76,289	N/A	76,289	3.1	\$634,603	\$26.09	14,183 (163,656)	\$44.74
	Average	42,268	2,462	57,101	123,875	111,134	3.0	\$1,069,813	\$27.78	23,282 (324,277)	\$45.64

As shown above, the operating cost per vehicle for the peer agencies range from approximately \$40 to 52 per revenue vehicle hour. The operating cost per vehicle revenue hour performance

measure accounts for every hour a transit vehicle is in service. Hall County Public Transportation is lower than all the peer agencies at \$33.32 per revenue vehicle hour and has a low cost to operate the system.

Contracting Models

The study evaluated different contract models for the City of Grand Island to consider for its operation management in the future.

1. Traditional Transit Management Model – The contractor senior management typically manages the public transit budget and all aspects of the agency’s performance. They also typically report to the public sector board or local overseeing governmental agency. The financial risk of the operation resides with the public transit agency.
2. Operating Service Model – The transit agency contracts with the private sector to operate and manage its service operations, while maintaining the transit agency fleet. The transit agency continues to manage the other key functions of the service.
3. Turn-key Operating Service Contract Model – This is a partnership with a contractor and the public transit agency, who delegates the management and operation of an entire transit system to the contractor, who is held contractually accountable for all aspects and functions of the transit agency.
4. Purchase of Service Contract Model – This is a partnership with the public transit agency and the private provider, who specifically only provides service, direct operations management, and may or may not provide maintenance of the vehicles, depending upon the needs of the agency. This service model typically has payment per trip.

The local estimates for the City of Grand Island for contract models and in-house models are shown in the table below.

Operation Models	City Cost	Contractor Cost	Total Transit Costs
Today*	\$93,000	\$490,000	\$583,000
Traditional	\$93,000	\$698,200	\$791,200
Operating Service	\$93,000	\$668,790	\$761,790
Turn-key	\$93,000	\$943,200	\$1,036,200
Purchase of Service	\$93,000	\$632,215	\$725,215
In-House (incl full-time & part-time drivers)	\$854,725	\$0	\$854,725
In-House (incl part-time drivers)	\$781,200	\$0	\$781,200

* Existing contract with SCI with contract amount of \$638,000

There is not a wrong contracting model. Each community must choose a model that works best for their environment and political culture, keeping in mind, whichever model is chosen will have the best management and use of taxpayer dollars.

Based upon the estimates from the operations table and the longevity of successful contracting for transit services in the Grand Island area, it is recommended the City continue to use contracting in the short term.

Future Governance Options

The City of Grand Island is the new manager of public transportation within the urbanized area of Grand Island. Prior to 2016, Hall County was the manager of public transit services. In the future, it is recommended to begin discussions of a formal governance structure, which incorporates representatives from each of the governmental entities in the region. This governance should be considered for several reasons:

- To establish fair and acceptable cost-sharing arrangements among all entities
- To fund the service through administration of a dedicated funding source
- To ensure that any service changes contemplated in the future are in the best interests of the region and are fair and acceptable to each entity involved
- To establish a long-term commitment for the provision of transit service among all entities

The creation of a multiple entity Regional Authority changes the existing structure and presents an opportunity for a sizable expansion of the service area, if adjacent entities join the Authority. The formation of an Authority allows the regional governance of planning, funding, and operations all under one entity, making it more efficient to provide transit service beyond the city limits of Grand Island.

The existing state law does not permit the City of Grand Island, nor Hall County to form an authority at this time. In 1972, the Nebraska State Legislature passed Legislative Bill 1275 “enabling” the creation of the Transit Authority, City of Omaha, a governmental subdivision of the State of Nebraska, pursuant to statute 14-1803, and the only such transit authority in the state. No other Authority is allowed outside the City of Omaha without the change of this legislative bill. This study recommends the City continue discussions with Hall County and surrounding counties and cities to determine interest in changing existing state law for authorization in the development of an Authority.

Future Alternatives Development

The study developed future transit alternatives that shaped by the vision and goals articulated early in the process, historical ridership and boarding / de-boarding data, transit need, gaps, evaluation of transit delivery in peer cities, input from the community, key stakeholders, rider and community surveys, and consideration of potential services within the community.

Four primary alternatives were developed for the Grand Island and Hall County Region.

1. Status Quo – This is the existing service, which is 24-hour reservation, demand-response.
2. Same-day Demand Response – Resident calls for a reservation, and the bus will pick-up this person at curbside within three hours.
3. Flexible Route Service – Two routes operating in Grand Island, with the option of calling into the office for a route deviation if the rider is unable to walk to the bus stop.
4. Fixed Route Service – Three scheduled routes throughout Grand Island. Eligible passengers who are unable to walk to the bus stop due to a physical or medical disability, have

complementary curb-side paratransit service available to them, if the resident lives ¼-mile of the designated fixed bus route.

Five additional services were also examined for their potential application for area residents and employees.

5. Regional Airport Service – This service provides regularly scheduled, reservations-required, ground passenger transit service to Central Nebraska Regional Airport from North Platte, Lexington, Kearney, and Grand Island, with one daily round trip seven days a week.
6. Commuter Express Routes (renamed to Intercity Bus Service) – Two routes operating on Highway 30 between Grand Island and Kearny and Highway 34 between Grand Island and Hastings. This service would operate three trips, Monday through Friday - one morning trip, one mid-day trip, and late afternoon trip with connections to intermodal points.
7. Ridershare Program – This program is based on an online software program that matches two or more persons traveling together in a vehicle.
8. Vanpool Program – An option for a group of residents traveling to/from similar locations through a program in partnership between the Nebraska Department of Transportation and Enterprise.
9. Autonomous Vehicle Technology – Autonomous vehicles rely on “smart infrastructure” that facilitates automatic communication between cars, roadways, bridges, and traffic signals.

The four primary alternatives are exclusive alternatives, meaning only one of these alternatives would be implemented. Each of the additional services could theoretically operate alongside any of the other additional services, or with one of the primary alternatives. Autonomous Vehicle Technology, when sufficiently developed, could also be incorporated into any of the alternatives.

The estimated costs for each transit alternative is summarized in the below table.

Future Transit Alternatives	Annual Operating Cost	Total Capital Vehicles	Total Capital Other	Total Costs - Year 1
Status Quo	\$490,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Same-day Demand Response	\$738,098	\$700,000	\$60,000	\$1,498,098
Flexible Route Service	\$682,549	\$490,000	\$601,500	\$1,774,049
Fixed Route Service	\$910,066	\$630,000	\$868,250	\$2,408,316
Regional Airport Service	\$67,737	\$70,000	\$10,000	\$147,737
Commuter Express Routes	\$53,997	\$140,000	\$10,000	\$203,997
Ridershare Program	\$12,500	\$0	\$60,000	\$72,500
Vanpool Program	Data Varies Depending Upon Trip Distances and # of Participants			
Autonomous Vehicle Technology	Data Varies Depending Upon Trip Distances and # of Participants			

Five Year Plan

The study has recommended the Fiscally Constrained Plan as the five year plan for the City of Grand Island and Hall County. The Fiscally Constrained Plan is based upon technical data analysis, the public engagement process for this study, and the realistic financial projections for the City for the next five years. Due to the limited resources of the City's general fund, there is very little flexibility with the budget for the City, which is reflected in the Fiscally Constrained Plan.

The Fiscally Constrained Plan includes the following elements:

- Status Quo – Demand Response Service
 - 24-hour Reservation
 - Curb-to-curb service
 - Monday through Friday from 6:00a to 5:00p
 - 7 to 8 peak vehicles
 - \$490,000 annual operating
 - \$2 base fare
- NEW – Transit Service
 - Vanpool Service
 - Rideshare Program
- NEW Changes
 - Branding for the transit service; new look, new image, new name.
 - Increase in transit marketing from dedicated City staff oversight.
 - Increased oversight of transit contract with dedicated City staff oversight.
 - Planning for Intercity Bus Service to/from Kearney and Hastings.

The study has proposed an Illustrative Plan for the City of Grand and Hall County. This plan builds on the Fiscally Constrained Plan and transitions the transit service for the Grand Island urbanized area from Status Quo – Demand Response Service to Flexible Route Service. Due to the current budget constraints for the City, this option is not feasible for at least three years. Should additional funding become available in the near-term, the City's Transit Program Manager would begin initial planning efforts to implement the Flexible Route concept.

The Illustrative Plan includes the following elements:

- Flexible Route Service
 - 2 Routes with 60-minute headways
 - Monday through Friday from 6:00a to 6:30p
 - 6 peak vehicles in urban area
 - \$683,000 annual operating / \$961,500 start-up costs
- Intercity Bus Service
 - Monday through Friday
 - Three trips per day
 - Wifi -equipped vehicles
 - 2 routes (Hastings from/to Grand Island and Kearney from/to Grand Island)

The implementation of the Intercity Bus Service is dependent on identifying the local match for cost of capital projects associated with the service.

Implementation Plan

The study has included an implementation plan with steps for the next two years to continue the momentum for public transportation in Grand Island. These steps will be carried out by the City’s Transit Program Manager.

The implementation plan for actions over the next two year is shown in the following table:

		2018	2019
Initial Implementation Steps			
1	Research Rideshare software program options and develop RFP for purchasing the Rideshare software for implementation.		
2	Implement Rideshare software and coordinate with software developer staff to design software infrastructure relative to local and regional needs.		
3	Coordinate with Enterprise Vanpool program representative and establishments such as JBS and Veterans Home.		
4	Finalize contract with vendor and rollout of Enterprise Vanpool program.		
5	Develop general marketing plan for community outreach and awareness for transit services.		
6	Continue coordination with NDOT on the Intercity Bus Service Plan.		
7	Coordinate with NDOT to develop RFP for Intercity Bus Service Operations Plan and Park and Ride Study.		
8	Coordinate with local agencies and establishments to fund the local match for the vehicles and other capital improvements for Intercity Bus Service.		
9	Develop Bid for service contract of transit operations.		
10	Develop RFP for transit facility preliminary planning.		

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The urbanized area projects in the Fiscally Constrained Plan is funded by FTA Section 5307 funds, FTA Section 5339 funds, Section 5311(f), state match, and local match. The Financial Capacity and Recommended Transportation Plan sections of the Long Range Transportation Plan will be amended to incorporate the operating and capital expenses and the funding of the urbanized area projects in the Fiscally Constrained Plan.

COMMITTEE ACTION

The TAC approved the recommendation of the Summary Final Report on October 30, 2017.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the Summary Final Report for the Regional Transit Study.

STAFF CONTACTS

Allan Zafft



Future Governance Options

The City of Grand Island is the new manager of public transportation within the urbanized area of Grand Island. Prior to 2016, Hall County was the manager of public transit services. In the future, it is recommended to begin discussions of a formal governance structure, which incorporates representatives from each of the governmental entities in the region. This governance should be considered for several reasons:

- To establish fair and acceptable cost-sharing arrangements among all entities
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Implementation Plan

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4	Finalize contract with vendor and rollout of Enterprise Vanpool program.	
5	Develop general marketing plan for community outreach and awareness for transit services.	
6	Continue coordination with NDOT on the Intercity Bus Service Plan.	
7	Coordinate with NDOT to develop RFP for Intercity Bus Service Operations Plan and Park and Ride Study.	
8	Coordinate with local agencies and establishments to fund the local match for the vehicles and other capital improvements for Intercity Bus Service.	
9	Develop Bid for service contract of transit operations.	
10	Develop RFP for transit facility preliminary planning.	

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 Grand Island, NE 68802
 308.389.0273
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Getting to the Route of It

THE ROLE OF GOVERNANCE IN REGIONAL TRANSIT



The implementation plan includes specific projects identified within the study to continue the momentum of enhancing public transit in the Grand Island region. In the next two years, transit projects are planned, which will set the stage for the next phases of enhanced public transit service in the community.



Executive Summary

October 16, 2017

Study Background

Grand Island and Hall County have had public transportation services available to residents since the mid-1970s. After the 2010 Census designation of Grand Island to an urban area, the City of Grand Island became the primary provider for public transportation within the urbanized area, with Hall County responsible for the rural areas within the County. The City began managing transit service in July 2016. The City currently contracts with Senior Citizens Industries, Inc. (SCI) d/b/a Hall County Public Transportation to operate transit services within the urbanized area. SCI also provides transit service in the rural area with funding from Hall County.

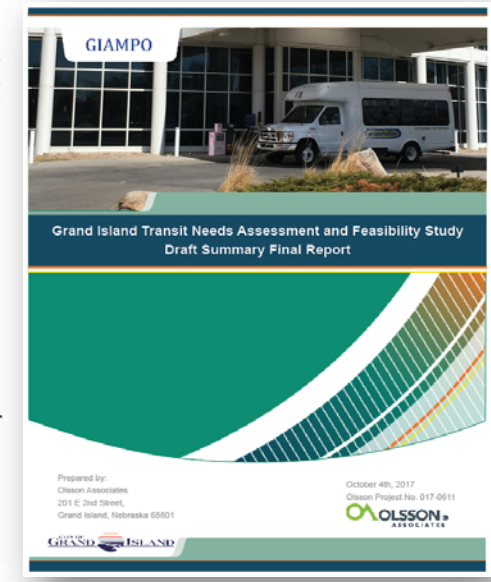
The primary purpose of this study is to provide baseline information to the City of Grand Island, as the City's first year managing the transit service, and to give the City a plan for transit service based upon, but not limited to, community input and vision for the future.

The study identifies future transit opportunities, challenges, and overall transit demand for public transportation in Grand Island and Hall County.



Regional Transit Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study

Final Report



The project included a multi-level data collection effort, evaluation of current conditions and operational structures, a review of peer communities, and the development of future transit alternatives. Based on technical analysis, public and stakeholder involvement, enhanced transit improvements are recommended. The study approach concluded with a 5-Year Fiscally Constrained Plan and a 5-Year Illustrative Plan for the urbanized area. An Implementation Plan with steps for the next two years is also included in the study.

Transit Vision

Efficient Mobility for All Residents in the Grand Island Region



In March 2017, the Grand Island Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (GIAMPO) retained Olsson Associates, and worked closely with stakeholders from around the community to develop future transit alternatives and develop this plan.

The Summary Final Report includes a review of existing transit operations in the study area, identifies the areas in Grand Island with the greatest transit need, presents future transit options, and provides a realistic plan moving forward for the City of Grand Island. The study provides a roadmap for the City to follow to meet the future vision of transit for the Grand Island community.

Fiscally Constrained Plan

The Fiscally Constrained Plan is based upon technical data analysis, the public engagement process for this study, and the realistic financial projections for the City for the next five years. Due to the limited resources of the City's general fund, there is very little flexibility with the budget for the City, which is reflected in the Fiscally Constrained Plan with the recommendation for remaining Status Quo, 24-hour demand response service, which is what is provided today.

Even though limited funding is projected to continue for the next five years, there are planning projects to begin immediately that require little or no funding increases over the existing budget, as shown on the right.

New transit services in the next five years include coordination with the Nebraska Department of Transportation for Vanpool Services, which focus on major activity centers in the region and connecting riders to similar destinations. In addition, the City is implementing a free Rideshare Program available for all residents in the community. The Rideshare Program is based on an online software program that matches two or more persons traveling together in a vehicle.



Vanpool Coordination



Transit Branding

Illustrative Plan

The Illustrative Plan for the City of Grand Island and Hall County includes the Flexible Route Service concept. Due to the current budget constraints for the City, **this option is not feasible for at least three years**. Should additional funding become available in the near-term, the Transit Program Manager would begin initial planning efforts to implement the Flexible Route concept.

ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

- **Flexible Route Service**
- 2 Routes
- Monday – Friday
- 6:00 am – 6:30 pm
- 6 peak vehicles in urban area
- 60-minute headways
- \$683,000 annual operating/
\$961,000 start-up costs
- 19,125 annual revenue hours
- **Intercity Bus Service**
- Monday - Friday
- Three trips per day
- Wifi-equipped vehicles
- 2 routes -
 - Hastings from/to Grand Island
 - Kearney from/to Grand Island

FISCALLY CONSTRAINED PLAN

Status Quo – Demand Response Service

- Demand Response
- 24-hour Reservation
- Curb-to-curb service
- Monday – Friday
- 6:00 am – 5:00 pm
- 7 to 8 peak vehicles
- \$490,000
- \$2.00 base fare
- 12 vehicles

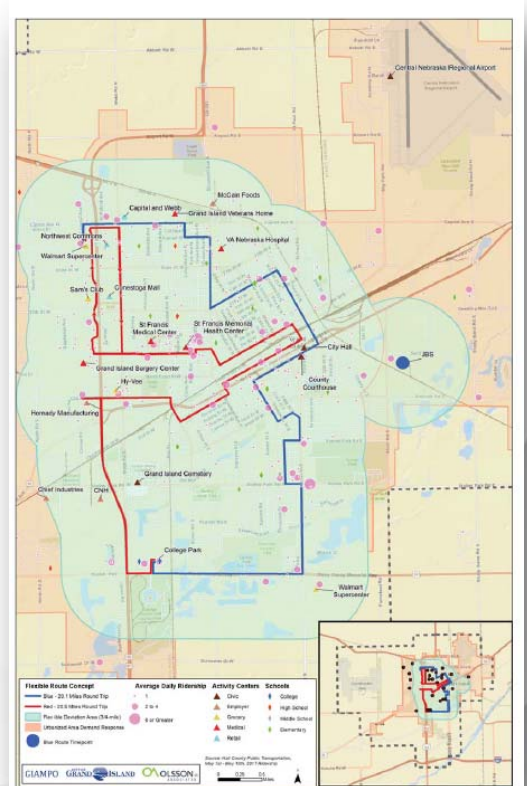
NEW – Transit Service

- Vanpool Service
- Rideshare Program

NEW Changes

- Branding for the transit service; new look, new image, new name.
- Increase in transit marketing from dedicated City staff oversight.
- Increased oversight of transit contract with dedicated City staff oversight.
- Planning for Intercity Bus Service to/from Kearney and Hastings.

FLEXIBLE ROUTE SERVICE



Multiple opportunities were provided for public engagement and activity participation throughout the study process.

Public Engagement



Many opportunities for public engagement were available throughout the study, including:

- Public Open Houses
- Focus Group meetings
- Major employer meetings
- Online community survey
- Social media outreach
- Transit rider survey
- Local Project Team meetings
- Transit provider interviews



Future Alternatives Development

Future transit alternatives were developed and shaped by the vision and goals articulated early in the process, historical ridership and boarding / de-boarding data, transit need, gaps, evaluation of transit delivery in peer cities, input from the community, key stakeholders, rider and community surveys, and consideration of potential services within the community.

Four primary alternatives were developed for the Grand Island and Hall County Region.

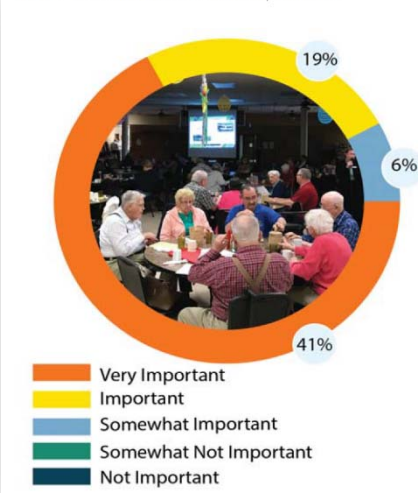
1. Status Quo
2. Same-day Demand Response
3. Flexible Route Service
4. Fixed Route Service

Five additional services were also examined for their potential application for area residents and employees.

5. Regional Airport Service
6. Commuter Express Routes
7. Rideshare Program
8. Vanpool Program
9. Autonomous Vehicle Technology

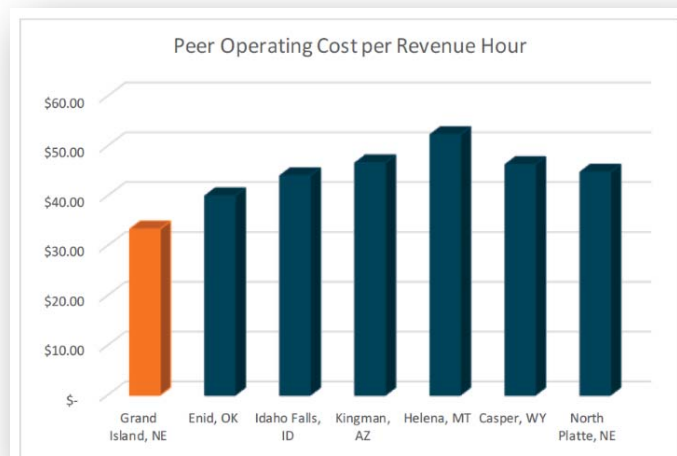
During Round Two Focus Groups, a representative from the NDOT suggested revisiting the Commuter Express Route as an Intercity Bus Route and provide transit service outside typical commute hours. The study team updated the service option to two Intercity Bus Routes, to/from Grand Island, Kearney, and Hastings.

Figure 7.2: Importance of Transit Tomorrow



Transit Agency - Peer Review

The study included a Transit Agency Peer Review, which provides a useful tool in terms of lessons learned at other agencies and in assessing where Hall County Public Transportation is today, compared to peer communities, using transit industry typical statistics for reasonable costs, ridership, and service levels. The peer agencies included: Enid, OK; Idaho Falls, ID; Kingman, AZ; Helena, MT; Casper, WY; and North Platte, NE.



GIAMPO RESOLUTION NO. 2017-16

Grand Island Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

A Resolution Approving the Summary Final Report for the Regional Transit Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study

WHEREAS, the Grand Island Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (GIAMPO), is designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Grand Island Urbanized Area, by the Governor acting through the Nebraska Department of Transportation in cooperation with locally elected officials of the Grand Island Urbanized Area; and

WHEREAS, GIAMPO has prepared a Summary Final Report for the Regional Transit Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study to provide the City of Grand Island a five-year plan to efficiently operate transit service within the Grand Island Metropolitan Planning Area; and

WHEREAS, the preparation of the Summary Final Report has involved extensive public participation and outreach efforts; and

WHEREAS, the Summary Final Report is consistent with the goals and objectives contained in the Long Range Transportation Plan "Journey 2040"; and

WHEREAS, the Draft of the Summary Final Report was made available for public comment for a fifteen (15) day period; and

WHEREAS, the Draft of the Summary Final Report was reviewed and recommendation for adoption by the MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was made at their October 30, 2017 meeting; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Policy Board of the Grand Island Area Metropolitan Planning Organization approves and adopts the Summary Final Report for the Regional Transit Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chairperson is hereby authorized and directed to execute such agreement on behalf of the Grand Island Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Certification:

The foregoing resolution was approved by the Grand Island Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board at its regularly scheduled meeting on December 12, 2017.

By:

Attest:

Jeremy Jensen, Mayor / Chairperson

John Collins, Public Works Director