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AECOM

Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2025

Merrimack Valley Transit (MeVa)



Acknowledgements

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Acronyms

ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APC	Automatic Passenger Count
AVL	Automatic Vehicle Location
BEB	Battery Electric Bus
CAD	Computer-Aided Dispatch
CDL	Commercial Driver's License
COA	Council on Aging
CRTP	Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan
CTGP	Community Transit Grant Program
DPF	Diesel Particulate Filter
FMCSA	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
FY	Fiscal Year
IIJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
LEHD	Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics
LRTA	Lowell Regional Transit Authority
MAPC	Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MARTA	Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority
MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MBTA	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
MeVa	Merrimack Valley Transit
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MVMPO	Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
MVPC	Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
MVRTA	Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority
NTD	National Transit Database
PTASP	Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan
RMV	Registry of Motor Vehicles
RTA	Regional Transit Authority
RTD	Rail & Transit Division
TAM	Transit Asset Management
TERM	Transit Economic Requirements Model
TSP	Transit Signal Priority

Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update

Merrimack Valley Transit

UMass	University of Massachusetts
VA	Veterans Administration
WMATA	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

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 paratransit, 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, primarily through electric power from batteries.

1 Executive Summary

This 2025 update of the Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan (CRTP) for Merrimack Valley Transit (MeVa) 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 MeVa 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. MeVa Bus Departing McGovern Station



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, and MeVa has undergone significant changes and updates:

- **FY 2022:** In the first half of 2022, MeVa optimized routing for select routes, added fixed route service in Groveland, and extended paratransit services to Rowley. Systemwide fare-free service was also adopted in March 2022. In late 2022, MeVa's comprehensive system rebrand was launched, consisting of a name change from Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) to MeVa, updated colors and graphics, and new bus wrapping.
- **FY 2023:** Service in Lawrence doubled in the fall of 2022. Additional route optimizations were implemented on select routes in the spring of 2023, including the reworking of old Routes 51 and 54 to become the current Routes 17, 19, and 20.

- **FY 2024:** In the second half of 2023, paratransit and certain routes were simplified for directness and rider ease of navigation, and select routes saw extended service later into the evening. In early 2024, service was added for six holidays on a Saturday schedule, Sunday service was relaunched on seven high volume routes (Routes 1, 2, 8, 10, 13, 17, and 24) after being discontinued due to COVID-19, and Veteran's Administration (VA) Bedford *mediMeVa* paratransit was launched. As of the end of FY 2024, Route 23 (Beach Express) was discontinued due to Route 17 serving Salisbury Beach hourly, seven days a week.
- **FY 2025:** In September 2024, the Lawrence hub was relocated from the physically and functionally obsolete Buckley Garage (owned by the City of Lawrence) to the MeVa-owned McGovern Transportation Center. As part of the hub relocation effort, all Lawrence-based service was reengineered. Service modifications included swapping route segments for Routes 8 and 9 (with an extension of Route 9 to Merrimack College), adjusting Route 14 to extend between Lawrence and Haverhill, and adding Route 11 express service.

1.2 Planning Process

The planning process for the CRTP was a collaborative effort in which MeVa engaged with key stakeholders, such as state and local government representatives, local community organizations and advocates, Councils on Aging (COAs), small business owners, members of the local arts community, multicultural leaders, veterans' services, 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.

MeVa used both quantitative and qualitative input when developing recommendations. An evaluation of MeVa'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, with key outreach activities including an in-person focus group with local leaders, an open house, a Board meeting, and a public survey targeting both riders and non-riders. Engagement activities were promoted through the MeVa website, flyer distribution, and social media platforms.

1.3 Recommendations

MeVa developed 43 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, training and operations, 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	Implement planned frequency increases on select routes and explore viable opportunities to increase frequencies on additional routes (by leveraging performance data, public and stakeholder feedback, etc.).	DP1
S2	Deploy fixed route service to Salem, New Hampshire.	PF4
S3	Increase the number of routes operating on Sundays and increase the span of Sunday operations.	DP1
S4	Extend service hours to operate select routes later in the evening.	DP1
S5	Enhance schedule alignment to streamline transfers between routes.	DP1
S6	Explore and implement strategies to improve the integration between fixed route and demand response services.	N/A
S7	Implement crosstown service in Methuen and explore viable opportunities to strategically weave additional crosstown service that is complementary to MeVa's existing fixed route network.	N/A
S8	In partnership with MVPC, advance ferryboat service implementation effort to achieve operation of the service.	AC9
S9	Utilize data, best practices information, and stakeholder and public feedback to expand coverage such as via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections to the future ferry dock in Amesbury • Enhanced service to Merrimack College • Service to downtown Georgetown 	DP1
S10	Conduct a demand response comprehensive service analysis (inclusive of microtransit and other on-demand service options) to identify opportunities for and inform policy refinement, pilot testing, and ongoing technology upgrades. Updates could include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of demand response policies that expand mobility and access, such as eligibility criteria • Limited testing of complementary service models, such as microtransit pilot programs • Investments in back-end technology infrastructure, such as upgraded scheduling software with dynamic scheduling capabilities 	T3, DP1

ID	Recommendation	Category Overlap
S11	Conduct a service analysis to improve service coordination between MeVa and LRTA routes at transfer points.	PF4

Outreach and Engagement

OE1	Build on progress made to simplify service information (i.e., clear schedules, general service information, MeVa policies) for the public and achieve a wider dissemination of up-to-date maps and schedules.	N/A
OE2	Continue to advance and maintain robust marketing efforts to grow ridership, leveraging creative means such as distribution of MeVa-branded merchandise and other intentional, culturally sensitive marketing.	N/A
OE3	Launch robust travel training to offer resources that encourage the transition of eligible riders from demand response to fixed route services.	PF5
OE4	Establish a consistent engagement practice targeting the older adult population in MeVa's communities (i.e., senior committee, elderly rider forum).	PF5
OE5	Continue to engage with non-profit organizations and cultural institutions across the service area, encouraging them to include guidance on how to use MeVa's transit services and access high-use destinations by transit.	PF5

Technology

T1	Collaborate with CAD/AVL provider to enhance real time information for riders.	N/A
T2	Explore and implement strategies to improve digital security including multifactor authentication and data security protocols.	N/A
T3	Procure scheduling/planning software.	S10
T4	Implement technology to enable remote access to vehicle camera feeds and footage.	N/A
T5	Install touchscreen digital information signage at McGovern Transportation Center as well as other key transfer stations.	AC1
T6	Implement access control at the Costello Center facility in Amesbury.	N/A
T7	Procure and install replacement cameras at the Costello facility in Amesbury.	N/A
T8	Transition to Microsoft Office365.	N/A

Asset and Capital

AC1	Complete the MeVa Bus Stop Study and align future bus stop modifications with Bus Stop Study recommendations.	T5
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ID	Recommendation	Category Overlap
AC2	Develop Bus Stop Guidelines that reflect Bus Stop Study outcomes, MeVa preferences for stop placement, and coordination with municipalities.	N/A
AC3	Develop a long-term bus stop shelter maintenance plan.	N/A
AC4	Continue the ongoing bus stop shelter installation effort, aligning with Bus Stop Study recommendations and bus stop guidelines, in partnership with member communities.	PF1
AC5	Explore and pursue opportunities to implement transit supportive infrastructure, such as dedicated bus lanes and transit signal priority (TSP) technology on buses.	N/A
AC6	Conduct a site-selection analysis utilizing data and public feedback to identify a new site for the Haverhill hub.	DP1
AC7	Conduct a feasibility assessment to identify and pursue a path forward for addressing MeVa's existing maintenance facility spatial constraints.	N/A
AC8	Maintain involvement with the ongoing research and development project to produce rear-wheel drive low floor paratransit minibuses.	N/A
AC9	As part of the ferryboat service implementation project, in partnership with MVPC, support and address capital needs associated with the ferryboat service supported by MeVa.	S8
AC10	Develop guidelines and implement improvements for age-friendly design for <i>miniMeVa</i> vehicles and fixed route bus stops.	N/A
AC11	Procure 40-foot buses for increased capacity.	N/A
Training and Operations		
TO1	Further push creative solutions for driver recruitment and retention, such as procuring a bus simulator for driver training or exploring the feasibility of offering CDL training for new drivers.	N/A
Data and Performance		
DP1	Continue to identify opportunities to streamline data collection, processing, cleaning, storage, and utilization to optimize decision-making and performance analysis practices.	S1, S3, S4, S5, S9, S10, AC6
DP2	Explore opportunities to implement data and performance dashboards.	N/A
Partnerships and Funding		
PF1	Continuously explore and pursue additional funding opportunities through partnerships; local, state, and federal resources; and non-traditional sources of funding.	AC4
PF2	Research and compile guidelines for pursuing innovative funding partnership models.	N/A

ID	Recommendation	Category Overlap
PF3	Maintain and enhance relationships with large employers and the business community to encourage increased collaboration and investment in transit.	N/A
PF4	Continue to collaborate with neighboring RTAs and other transit providers to identify areas for transit connection enhancements.	S2, S11
PF5	Bolster and leverage local partnerships for marketing and engagement support.	OE3, OE4, OE5

N/A = Not Applicable

2 Background and Context

MeVa, alongside the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' 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, MeVa updates its CRTP every five years. This document represents the 2025 update of the MeVa 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 MeVa that provide the foundation for recommendations over the next five years.
- **Existing Conditions:** Review of MeVa performance information.
- **Market Evaluation:** Assessment of transit demand through demographic analysis and engagement feedback results.
- **Performance Measures:** Review of performance measures used by MeVa to assess service.
- **Trends and Uncertainties:** Assessment of key uncertainties facing MeVa over the next five years and how those may impact implementation of recommendations.
- **Recommendations:** List of specific recommendations to guide MeVa priorities over the next five years.

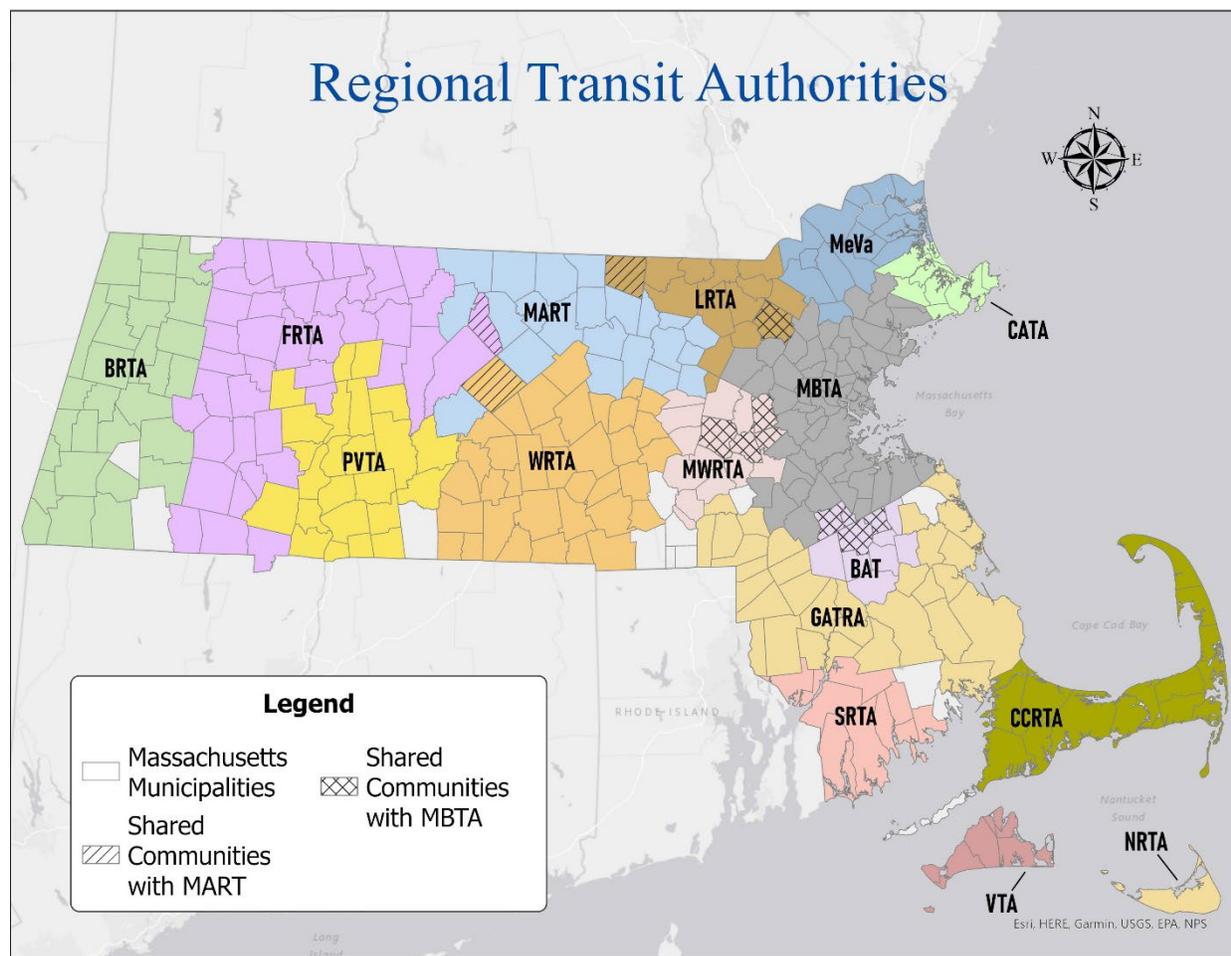
Additionally, the CRTP contains appendices that include reviewing fare (Appendix A) and environmental (Appendix B) considerations based on the broader statewide and national context, and listing open-ended survey comments (Appendix C). Fare-free service described in Appendix A in particular has been 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 MeVa Services

MeVa is headquartered in Haverhill and is one of the 15 RTAs that, along with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), operates public transportation in the Commonwealth. MeVa provides fixed route service across 26 year-round fixed routes, 4 of which are intercity routes, 3 of which are crosstown services, and another 3 of which are niche limited-schedule services. Fixed routes predominantly share a common terminus of either the McGovern Transportation Center in Lawrence or the Washington Square Transit Center in Haverhill. In compliance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations, MeVa also offers Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) *miniMeVa* paratransit service, which operates complementary to fixed route service. MeVa also offers non-ADA *miniMeVa* demand response service in each of the member communities served by fixed route.

Additional services include Ring & Ride demand response service for all residents of non-fixed route communities as well as Groveland and West Newbury; *mediMeVa* demand response service for *miniMeVa* customers and North Reading residents over 60, connecting MeVa's service area to the Peabody Lahey Clinic and City of Boston hospitals; and VA Bedford *mediMeVa* service for veterans and their families to access the VA Bedford Health Care System in Bedford, Massachusetts.

Figure 2. Massachusetts Transit Providers



Source: Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Since the 2020 CRTP, MeVa 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 MeVa’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* (see 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 MeVa'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 MeVa 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, MeVa seeks to address critical needs within the agency and the communities it serves. As part of MeVa's CRTP update, goals and objectives for this timeframe were identified that align with the agency's mission. The goals set forth include:

- Exploring, adopting, and implementing innovative ideas
- Thinking and planning boldly
- Enhancing mobility service
- Growing and maintaining the support and cultivation of the workforce
- Collaborating and coordinating with partners to advance shared goals
- Continuing to invest in modernizing fleet and expanding facilities

3.1 MeVa Mission

It is the mission of MeVa to position transit as a viable, convenient, climate-friendly transportation option in the Merrimack Valley.

MeVa achieves this mission by:

- "Being present in and representative of the culturally and linguistically rich communities we serve;
- Respecting the value of our riders' time and putting the customer first;
- Working collaboratively with partners, including our legislators, neighboring municipalities, community leaders; and
- Adopting and implementing big, innovative ideas and tools that are based on sound data."

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 MeVa'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 MeVa's specific needs and goals for the 2025 CRTP include:

- Supporting and growing transit ridership
- Exploring and maximizing innovative funding sources

- Promoting cross-RTA coordination and interconnectivity across services, where feasible
- Implementing zero emission fleets and pursuing opportunities for fleet transition and agency sustainability
- Ensuring COA services prioritize access for older adults and persons with disabilities

As detailed further in this chapter, the overarching goals for MeVa's CRTP update include system enhancements and innovation, promotion and awareness, service, asset development, and coordination, which are in alignment with these statewide goals. State goals to convert public transit fleets to be zero emission supports broader sustainability goals of providing all people access to a clean and healthy environment. MeVa is still exploring the long-term operational feasibility to implement, operate, and maintain zero emission technologies, which will require proper sequencing regarding supportive infrastructure and capacity at MeVa's maintenance facility.

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, MeVa 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:

- Implementing transit system enhancements, including increased frequency, expanded span of service, and added crosstown service
- Retaining existing riders and attracting new riders
- Maintaining a standardized, intuitive, and attractive system
- Expanding access across and beyond the MeVa service area
- Continuing to coordinate regionally
- Continually assessing and improving system performance
- Retaining existing funding, while exploring and positioning MeVa for future funding opportunities
- Enhancing technology to support improved operational efficiency
- Continuing to grow the workforce including supervisors and dispatchers
- Expanding existing transit facility capacity to accommodate administrative and fleet needs

3.4 Goals and Objectives

As part of MeVa'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 MeVa staff to identify priorities, opportunities, and any potential barriers for the 2025 CRTP. Key to this evaluation was the acknowledgement of the significant changes both within MeVa and on a broader scale, which have led to MeVa's comprehensive rebranding, provision of fare-free service, and transformation as a transit provider in the last several years. Thus, to identify goals and objectives, the evaluation focused on current priorities of MeVa 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 MeVa's 2025 CRTP include innovation, intentional planning, enhancing mobility service, safety and workforce development, collaboration, and asset development, which are reflective of the agency's needs and opportunities. The objectives associated with each of these six goals are as follows, in no particular order of priority:

- **Goal 1. Explore, Adopt, and Implement Innovative Ideas**
 - Objective 1: Explore new transit technologies and focus on implementation.
 - Objective 2: Advance the implementation of the solar-powered ferry and continue pursuing opportunities for enhanced mobility.
 - Objective 3: Continue successful efforts to promote MeVa's rebranding and a positive perception of public transit.
 - Objective 4: Identify new and sustainable funding sources.
- **Goal 2. Think and Plan Boldly**
 - Objective 1: Prioritize the delivery of services that are inclusive and accessible to all.
 - Objective 2: Deliver the level of service that communities need.
 - Objective 3: Continue to be present in and representative of the culturally and linguistically rich communities MeVa serves.
 - Objective 4: Focus on efforts to add wayfinding and bus stop signage to better serve riders.
- **Goal 3. Enhance Mobility Service**
 - Objective 1: Respect the value of rider's time and put the customer first.
 - Objective 2: Assess increased span(s) of service, route-level Sunday service additions, and expanded service geography to meet rider needs.
 - Objective 3: Assess the feasibility of increasing service frequency.
 - Objective 4: Explore opportunities to increase paratransit service efficiency.
 - Objective 5: Explore the feasibility of establishing transit connections to new destinations.
 - Objective 6: Continue evaluating and pursuing the implementation of a crosstown bus network to add coverage and create a more comprehensive transit network.
 - Objective 7: Continue efforts to implement the transition to a fixed bus stop system.
- **Goal 4: Support and Cultivate the Workforce**
 - Objective 1: Continue to build on existing efforts to promote a balanced culture of safety and quality service for passengers and drivers.
 - Objective 2: Attract and retain transit operators.
 - Objective 3: Uphold and champion a positive and vibrant working environment.
- **Goal 5. Collaborate and Coordinate with Partners to Advance Shared Goals**
 - Objective 1: Identify opportunities for fare and service interconnectivity with MBTA.

- Objective 2: Coordinate with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) and MBTA to leverage current or future efforts that would align with planned improvements to MeVa's transit system.
- Objective 3: Coordinate concurrent planning efforts to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize planning efficiency and outcomes.
- Objective 4: Cultivate existing and identify new partnership opportunities to implement transit plans, policies, and improvements.
- **Goal 6. Update and Expand Fleet and Fixed Assets**
 - Objective 1: Add 40-foot buses to high volume fixed route corridors.
 - Objective 2: Transition away from high-floor vehicles for paratransit services.
 - Objective 3: Procure a new fleet of vessels for the planned solar-powered ferry service.
 - Objective 4: Expand maintenance facility and storage capacity.
 - Objective 5: Continue to establish McGovern Transportation Center as a dynamic, welcoming community space.
 - Objective 6: Develop a new Haverhill hub to mirror McGovern Transportation Center as a dynamic, welcoming community space.
 - Objective 7: Implement mini hubs at locations where multiple bus routes connect, such as The Loop, North Andover Mall, Merrimac Plaza, Westgate Plaza, Newburyport Commuter Rail Station, etc.
 - Objective 8: Implement a bus stop network that positions bus stops as portals to the transit system.

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

4 Existing Conditions

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

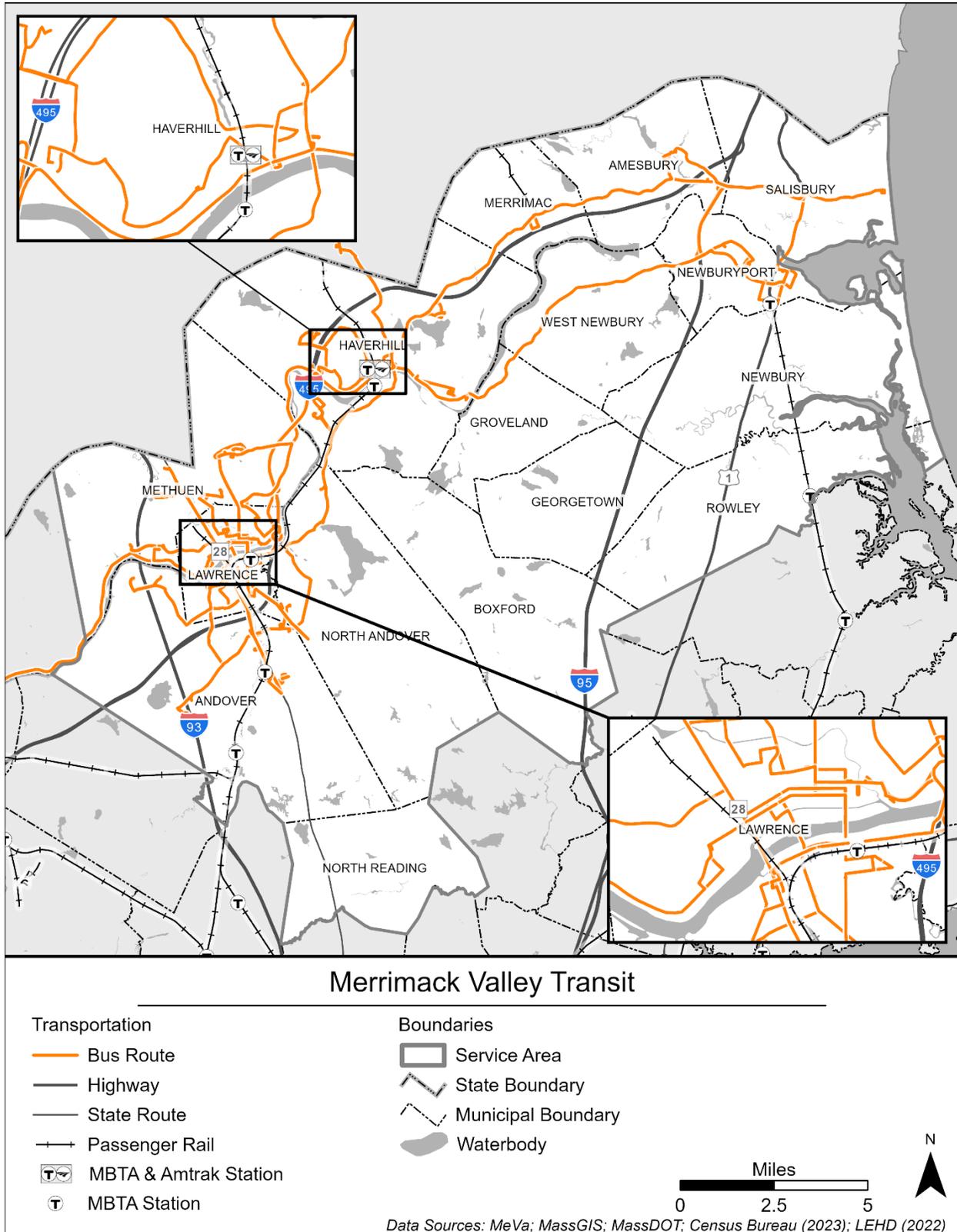
4.1 Transit Service Overview

MeVa's service area consists of 16 member communities: Amesbury, Andover, Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, Newbury, Newburyport, North Andover, North Reading, Rowley, Salisbury, and West Newbury. Since the 2020 CRTP, MeVa's system has undergone significant changes and updates:

- **FY 2022:** In the first half of 2022, MeVa optimized routing for select routes, added fixed route service in Groveland, and extended paratransit services to Rowley. Systemwide fare-free service was also adopted in March 2022. In late 2022, MeVa's comprehensive system rebrand was launched, consisting of a name change from MVRTA to MeVa, updated colors and graphics, and new bus wrapping.
- **FY 2023:** Service in Lawrence doubled in the fall of 2022. Additional route optimizations were implemented on select routes in the spring of 2023, including the reworking of old Routes 51 and 54 to become the current Routes 17, 19, and 20.
- **FY 2024:** In the second half of 2023, paratransit and certain routes were simplified for directness and rider ease of navigation, and select routes saw extended service later into the evening. In early 2024, service was added for six holidays on a Saturday schedule, Sunday service was relaunched on seven high volume routes (Routes 1, 2, 8, 10, 13, 17, and 24) after being discontinued due to COVID-19, and VA Bedford *mediMeVa* paratransit was launched. As of the end of FY 2024, Route 23 (Beach Express) was discontinued due to Route 17 serving Salisbury Beach hourly, seven days a week.
- **FY 2025:** In September 2024, the Lawrence hub was relocated from the physically and functionally obsolete Buckley Garage (owned by the City of Lawrence) to the MeVa-owned McGovern Transportation Center. As part of the hub relocation effort, all Lawrence-based service was reengineered. Service modifications included swapping route segments for Routes 8 and 9 (with an extension of Route 9 to Merrimack College), adjusting Route 14 to extend between Lawrence and Haverhill, and adding Route 11 express service.

With the implementation of these changes, MeVa's fixed route transit services currently include 26 year-round fixed routes, the majority of which share a common terminus of either the McGovern Transportation Center in Lawrence or the Washington Square Transit Center in Haverhill (Figure 3). Four of these routes are intercity bus services, connecting bus hubs in Amesbury, Haverhill, Lawrence, or Lowell. Three routes are crosstown services, referring to an orbital fixed route bus service that crosses the radial transit network. Three routes are niche limited-schedule services, including a school tripper service, each designed to address very targeted transportation needs.

Figure 3. Fixed Routes



Source: MeVa, AECOM

MeVa’s transit services beyond fixed routes currently include ADA *miniMeVa* paratransit service within a ¾ mile area surrounding each fixed route in compliance with FTA regulations, as well as non-ADA *miniMeVa* service for older adults and people with disabilities in each of the member communities served by fixed route. MeVa also operates Ring & Ride demand response service, which falls under the *miniMeVa* umbrella and provides all residents, regardless of age or ability, of non-fixed route communities (Boxford, Georgetown, Newbury/Byfield, and Rowley) with curb-to-curb demand response transportation. Groveland and West Newbury also continue to provide Ring & Ride services despite adding fixed route service in the last couple of years. *miniMeVa* customers, as well as North Reading residents over 60, also have access to *mediMeVa*, which provides trips from the MeVa service area to the Peabody Lahey Clinic and City of Boston hospitals. MeVa’s latest demand response service addition, as previously mentioned, is the VA Bedford *mediMeVa* service for veterans and their families residing within MeVa’s service area to access the VA Bedford Health Care System in Bedford, Massachusetts. The service was launched in January 2024.

4.1.1 Fixed Route Descriptions

MeVa’s 26 fixed routes are outlined in Table 2. Many of MeVa’s fixed routes (16 routes) operate out of the McGovern Transportation Center (McGovern). Fourteen of these routes operate in a hub and spoke model, among which two routes offer intercity service to Newburyport and Lowell, one route offers limited-schedule commuter service to the Raytheon Corporation and the Internal Revenue Service, and two routes provide service between the McGovern hub and the Washington Square Transit Center (Washington Square) hub in Haverhill. The two remaining routes operating out of McGovern provide crosstown service in Lawrence. In addition to the routes running between Washington Square and McGovern, five routes operate in a hub and spoke model out of Washington Square, one of which operates intercity service to Salisbury Beach via Amesbury. MeVa operates an additional limited-schedule commuter route and one limited-schedule tripper, designed to address targeted transportation needs. MeVa has been working to overlay additional crosstown service across its mostly radial network.

Table 2. FY 2026 Fixed Routes

Route	Service Type	Route Description
0 ^a	Fixed Route - Crosstown	McGovern - Essex Plaza via Essex Street
1	Fixed Route - Intercity	McGovern - Washington Square via the Loop
2	Fixed Route	McGovern - Andover Square via South Broadway
3	Fixed Route	McGovern - North Andover Mall via Main Street North Andover, Woodridge Housing
4	Fixed Route	McGovern - the Loop via Prospect Hill
5	Fixed Route	McGovern - Merrimac Plaza/Dana-Farber Cancer Institute via Water Street
6	Fixed Route	McGovern - Holy Family Hospital via Lawrence General, Lawrence Street
7	Fixed Route	McGovern - Springhill Suites via Beacon Street/Mount Vernon

Route	Service Type	Route Description
8 ^b	Fixed Route	McGovern - North Andover Mall via Parker Street
9 ^b	Fixed Route	McGovern - Merrimack College via South Union Street/North Andover Mall
10	Fixed Route	McGovern - Methuen Square/Village Plaza via Broadway
11 ^b	Fixed Route - Intercity Express	McGovern - Washington Square - Newburyport Station (Express)
12	Fixed Route - Crosstown	McGovern - Essex Plaza via Hampshire/Center Street
13	Fixed Route	Washington Square - Plaistow via Main Street/North Avenue
14 ^b	Fixed Route - Intercity	McGovern - Washington Square, via Amazon/Ward Hill
15	Fixed Route	Washington Square - Westgate Plaza via Hilldale
16	Fixed Route	Washington Square - Westgate Plaza via Washington Street
17	Fixed Route - Intercity	Washington Square - Salisbury Beach via Nicholas J. Costello Transportation Center (Amesbury)
18	Fixed Route	Washington Square - Groveland Housing via Riverside
19	Fixed Route	Newburyport MBTA Station - Nicholas J. Costello Transportation Center (Amesbury)
20	Fixed Route	Newburyport MBTA Station - Salisbury Beach
21	Fixed Route - Crosstown	Andover Senior Center - North Andover Mall
22	Fixed Route - Limited Schedule	Monday and Thursday: Buttonwoods Express: AHEPA Apartments - Rivers Edge Plaza
24	Fixed Route - Intercity	McGovern - Robert B. Kennedy Transfer Center (Lowell)
26	Fixed Route - Limited Schedule	McGovern - Raytheon Corporation, Internal Revenue Service
27	Fixed Route - Limited Schedule (Tripper)	Beacon Street and Andover Street, Robert Frost Elementary School, Lawrence High School

Source: MeVa

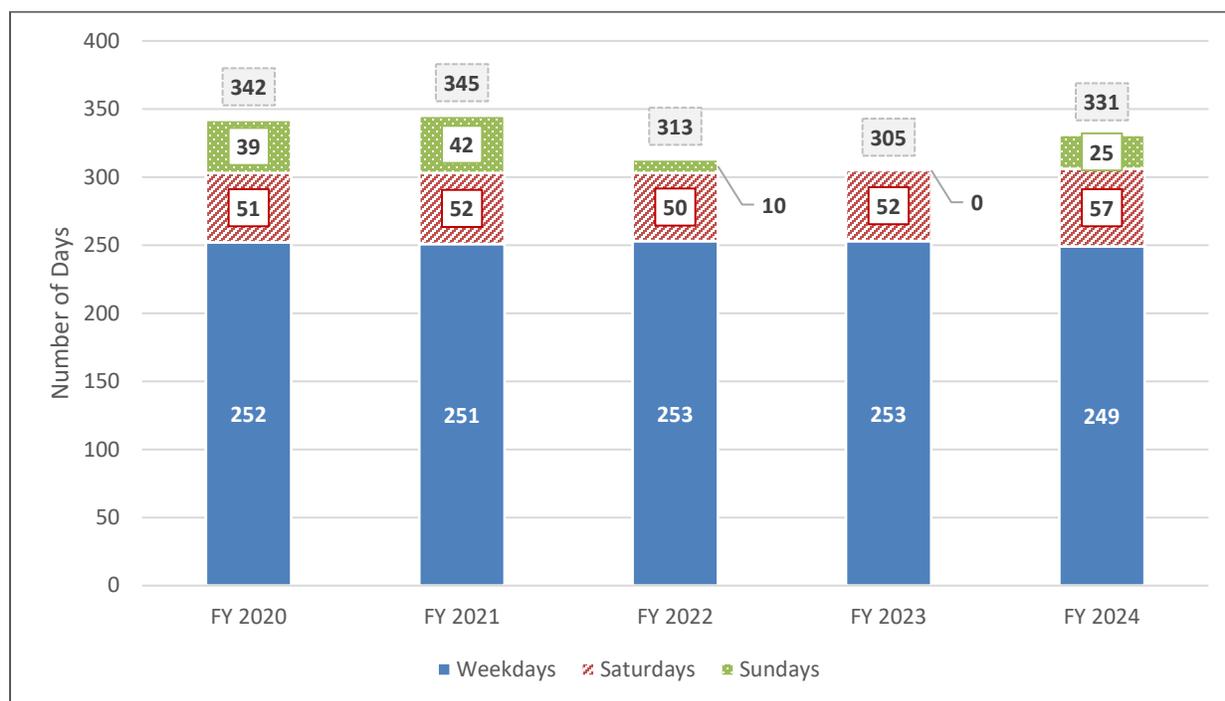
^a Route 0 is MeVa's most recent route addition and began service in FY 2026.

^b In FY 2025, MeVa swapped route segments on Routes 8 and 9 (with an extension of Route 9 to Merrimack College), added Route 11 express service, and adjusted Route 14 to extend between Lawrence and Haverhill.

4.1.2 Provided Service

All fixed routes run at least every weekday except for Route 22 (Buttonwoods Express), which runs on Mondays and Thursdays only. Saturday service is not provided on Route 11 (the Lawrence-Haverhill-Newburyport Limited route, launched at the beginning of FY 2025), Route 21 (Andover Shuttle), Route 26 (IRS/Raytheon), and Route 27 (Beacon Street Special tripper). Sunday service is provided on eight (about a third) of MeVa’s routes. Routes offering Sunday service include Route 1 (Lawrence-Haverhill via the Loop), Route 2 (Andover Square via South Broadway), Route 4 (The Loop via Prospect Hill), Route 9 (Merrimack College via South Union Street/North Andover Mall), Route 10 (Village Mall via Broadway), Route 13 (Stateline Plaza/Plaisitow), Route 17 (Salisbury Beach via Amesbury), and Route 24 (Lawrence-Lowell). Figure 4 highlights the number of days on which MeVa operated its full service in each fiscal year, by day type.

Figure 4. Number of Days Operated Full Service (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: MeVa

Note: Sunday service in FY 2024 began halfway through the fiscal year.

Current weekday headways vary depending on the route, with the majority of routes operating every 30 minutes, followed by routes operating every 60 minutes (Table 3). Routes 1 and 24 run every 20 minutes between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM, a large part of their service spans, making them the highest frequency routes in MeVa’s system. Lower frequency routes include Route 21, the crosstown route connecting Andover and North Andover that runs every 70 minutes, and the other limited-schedule services (Route 26 - IRS/Raytheon, and Route 27 - Beacon Street Special tripper), which provide one round trip each daily. All Saturday and Sunday services operate at 60-minute headways except Route 1, which runs every 30 minutes on Saturdays for most of its service span between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM.

Table 3. Span of Service and Headways (FY 2025)

Route	Weekday Service Hours	Saturday Service Hours	Sunday Service Hours	Weekday Headway (Minutes)	Saturday Headway (Minutes)	Sunday Headway (Minutes)	Days Operated
0	5:45 AM - 8:00 PM	7:45 AM - 6:00 PM	N/A	30 (8:45 AM - 5:15 PM) ^a 60 (5:45 AM - 8:45 AM and 5:15 PM - 7:00 PM)	60	N/A	6
1	5:00 AM - 9:45 PM	7:00 AM - 7:45 PM	9:00 AM - 5:45 PM	20 (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM) 30 (5:00 AM - 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM) 60 (7:00 PM - 9:00 PM)	30	60	7
2	5:00 AM - 9:40 PM	7:20 AM - 6:40 PM	9:00 AM - 5:40 PM	30	60	60	7
3	5:00 AM - 7:45 PM	7:00 AM - 6:45 PM	N/A	30	60	N/A	6
4	5:15 AM - 9:55 PM	6:45 AM - 6:40 PM	9:00 AM - 6:00 PM	30	60	60	7
5	5:00 AM - 7:45 PM	7:00 AM - 6:45 PM	N/A	30	60	N/A	6
6	5:00 AM - 7:50 PM	7:00 AM - 6:50 PM	N/A	30	60	N/A	6
7	5:15 AM - 7:55 PM	7:15 AM - 6:55 PM	N/A	30	60	N/A	6
8	5:00 AM - 7:35 PM	7:00 AM - 6:35 PM	N/A	30	60	N/A	6
9	5:15 AM - 9:45 PM	7:15 AM - 7:00 PM	9:00 AM - 5:45 PM	30	60	60	7
10	5:15 AM - 10:00 PM	6:45 AM - 6:45 PM	9:00 AM - 6:00 PM	30	60	60	7
11	5:45 AM - 8:10 PM	N/A	N/A	60 ^b	N/A	N/A	5

Route	Weekday Service Hours	Saturday Service Hours	Sunday Service Hours	Weekday Headway (Minutes)	Saturday Headway (Minutes)	Sunday Headway (Minutes)	Days Operated
12	5:15 AM - 7:25 PM	7:15 AM - 6:25 PM	N/A	30 (8:45 AM - 5:15 PM) ^a 60 (5:15 AM - 8:45 AM and 5:15 PM - 7:45 PM)	60	N/A	6
13	5:00 AM - 9:45 PM	7:00 AM - 6:45 PM	9:00 AM - 5:45 PM	30	60	60	7
14	5:30 AM - 7:35 PM	7:00 AM - 6:45 PM	N/A	30	60	N/A	6
15	6:00 AM - 7:25 PM	7:00 AM - 7:10 PM	N/A	45 ^c	45 ^c	N/A	6
16	5:30 AM - 7:35 PM	7:25 AM - 6:42 PM	N/A	45 ^c	45 ^c	N/A	6
17	5:00 AM - 8:45 PM	7:00 AM - 7:45 PM	9:00 AM - 5:45 PM	60	60	60	7
18	6:00 AM - 7:40 PM	7:00 AM - 6:40 PM	N/A	60	60	N/A	6
19	5:30 AM - 7:10 PM	7:30 AM - 7:10 PM	N/A	60	60	N/A	6
20	5:10 AM - 7:35 PM	7:10 AM - 7:30 PM	N/A	60	60	N/A	6
21	9:20 AM - 4:23 PM (5:35 PM on Thursdays)	N/A	N/A	60 ^d	N/A	N/A	5
22	Monday and Thursday: 10:30 AM - 11:45 AM	N/A	N/A	One AM run in each direction	N/A	N/A	2

Route	Weekday Service Hours	Saturday Service Hours	Sunday Service Hours	Weekday Headway (Minutes)	Saturday Headway (Minutes)	Sunday Headway (Minutes)	Days Operated
24	5:00 AM - 9:40 PM	7:00 AM - 6:40 PM	9:00 AM - 5:40 PM	20 (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM) 30 (5:00 AM - 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM) 60 (7:00 PM - 9:00 PM)	60	60	7
26	5:55 AM - 3:55 PM	N/A	N/A	One AM run One PM run	N/A	N/A	5
27	7:05 AM - 3:50 PM	N/A	N/A	One AM Run One PM Run	N/A	N/A	5

Source: MeVa

^aHeadways increased from 60 minutes to 30 minutes between 8:45 AM and 5:15 PM in January 2026.

^bRoute 11 currently runs on irregular headways.

^cHeadways increased from 60 minutes to 45 minutes in January 2026.

^dHeadways increased from 70 minutes to 60 minutes in January 2026.

N/A = Not Applicable

For demand response services, ADA *miniMeVa* paratransit is available on weekdays from 5:00 AM to 10:00 PM, on Saturdays from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM, and on Sundays from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM for trips that begin and end within ¾ mile of a bus route that operates on Sundays. Non-ADA *miniMeVa* and Ring & Ride service hours are weekdays from 5:00 AM to 8:00 PM and Saturdays from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM. *MediMeVa* provides trips to Boston hospitals and to the Lahey Clinic in Peabody on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, with one trip in the morning and one return trip in the afternoon. Hours vary depending on demand and customer appointment times, with the return trip departing both Boston and Peabody no later than 3:30 PM. Finally, Bedford VA *mediMeVa* is available on Wednesdays and Fridays, with one trip to Bedford in the morning, one return trip in the afternoon, and flexible hours dependent on demand and customer appointment times.

4.1.3 Transit Service Performance

This section provides information on MeVa’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 transit systems across Massachusetts and the nation is also provided.

MeVa’s annual fixed route operating statistics are broken down in Table 4. After a significant drop in ridership between FY 2020 and FY 2021, ridership increased year to year through FY 2024, with a significant jump in ridership from FY 2023 to FY 2024 of over one million riders. Revenue hours and revenue miles fluctuated year to year but followed a general upward trend over the five-year period, reaching period high hours and miles in FY 2024. Operating costs for fixed route operations increased steadily, rising an average of 8 percent annually.

Table 4. Annual Fixed Route Operating Statistics (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Statistic	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Ridership	1,540,513	994,873	1,201,418	1,793,478	2,848,699
Revenue Hours	129,470	132,465	130,123	140,008	148,465
Revenue Miles	1,454,823	1,450,213	1,446,336	1,503,697	1,621,549
Operating Costs	\$15,404,510	\$15,961,855	\$17,874,164	\$19,720,806	\$20,714,881

Source: MassDOT, MeVa

Note: Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus.

MeVa’s annual operating statistics for demand response service are broken down in Table 5. Revenue hours, revenue miles, and operating costs all dipped from FY 2020 to FY 2021 in parallel with ridership trends but have increased annually since that year.

Table 5. Demand Response Operating Statistics (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Statistic	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Ridership	71,158	43,821	62,767	86,556	100,889
Revenue Hours	44,206	31,835	38,127	52,811	62,470
Revenue Miles	664,657	496,995	653,995	879,667	1,007,261
Operating Costs	\$2,394,992	\$1,893,723	\$2,673,534	\$3,757,868	\$4,372,797

Source: MassDOT, MeVa

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 a poorly performing system. Larger values likely represent either shorter trips where passengers are traveling smaller distances or a high-performing system. More urban routes, which typically cover less distance over the same period of time compared to more rural routes, tend to perform more favorably when the passengers per mile metric is considered.
- **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. More rural routes tend to perform more favorably when the passengers per hour metric is considered than it does under the passengers per mile metric.

Service effectiveness for MeVa’s fixed route and demand response services from FY 2020 to FY 2024 are illustrated in Table 6. MeVa’s passengers per mile and passengers per hour values are above the state averages for fixed route service, and below the national averages, which are disproportionately high because numbers are heavily weighted by large systems in the country’s largest metropolitan areas. MeVa has continued to increase its service effectiveness annually since FY 2021, increasing its fixed route ridership while maintaining low increase rates for revenue hours and miles supplied, such that efficiency more than doubled for both metrics between FY 2021 and FY 2024. MeVa’s service effectiveness for demand response service is below the state and national averages. Passengers per mile values remained steady throughout the five years, and passengers per hour values peaked in FY 2022, decreasing annually through FY 2024.

Table 6. 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	1.06	11.90	0.11	1.61
FY 2021	0.69	7.51	0.09	1.38
FY 2022	0.83	9.23	0.10	1.65
FY 2023	1.19	12.81	0.10	1.64
FY 2024	1.76	19.19	0.10	1.61
FY 2024 Massachusetts Average ^b	1.25	17.87	0.12	1.95
National Average	1.92	23.06	0.13	1.92

Source: MassDOT

^a Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus.

^b Massachusetts average excludes MBTA.

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, the 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 7 illustrates the cost effectiveness of MeVa’s fixed route services from FY 2020 to FY 2024. In FY 2024, MeVa was more cost effective in cost per hour and cost per passenger compared to both the state and national averages. For cost per mile, MeVa was slightly less effective than state peers, but below the national average. As MeVa continues to provide more service, cost effectiveness has decreased slightly since FY 2020.

Table 7. Fixed Route Financial Efficiency (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Fiscal Year	Cost/Mile	Cost/Hour	Cost/Passenger
FY 2020	\$10.59	\$118.98	\$10.00
FY 2021	\$11.01	\$120.50	\$16.04
FY 2022	\$12.36	\$137.36	\$14.88
FY 2023	\$13.11	\$140.85	\$11.00
FY 2024	\$12.77	\$139.53	\$7.27
FY 2024 Massachusetts Average ^a	\$9.88	\$141.70	\$7.93
FY 2024 National Average	\$15.80	\$189.95	\$8.24

Source: MassDOT, National Transit Database (NTD)

^a Massachusetts average excludes MBTA

Note: Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus.

Demand Response Financial Performance

Table 8 illustrates the cost effectiveness of MeVa’s demand response services from FY 2020 to FY 2024. MeVa’s demand response costs are well below both the state and national averages for cost per mile, cost per hour, and cost per passenger measures, indicating that MeVa provides a typically high-cost service more efficiently from a cost perspective. Cost effectiveness fluctuated year to year for each metric, with costs per mile peaking in FY 2024 and cost per hour and per passenger peaking in FY 2023.

Table 8. Demand Response Financial Efficiency (FY 2020-FY 2024)

Fiscal Year	Cost/Mile	Cost/Hour	Cost/Passenger
FY 2020	\$3.60	\$54.18	\$33.66
FY 2021	\$3.81	\$59.49	\$43.21
FY 2022	\$4.09	\$70.12	\$42.59
FY 2023	\$4.27	\$71.16	\$43.42
FY 2024	\$4.34	\$70.00	\$43.34
FY 2024 Massachusetts Average ^a	\$5.43	\$87.07	\$44.76
FY 2024 National Average	\$6.32	\$97.27	\$50.57

Source: MassDOT, NTD

^a Massachusetts average excludes MBTA.

4.1.4 Funding

From FY 2022 through FY 2024, MeVa’s capital funding was sourced from a majority of federal funding, with state funds supporting MeVa’s remaining capital expenses. Overall, total capital funding has grown from \$6.1 million in FY 2022 to over \$13 million in FY 2024 (Table 9). The share of federal funds expended on capital peaked in FY 2023, with an increase of over \$2.5 million in federal funds expended from the previous year, outpacing the rate of increase for state funds expended between those two years. State funding expended increased most significantly between FY 2023 and FY 2024 by nearly \$1.5 million, while federal funds increased another \$2.5 million in that period. These capital increases can be attributed in part to accelerated vehicle procurements in the past few years and MeVa’s comprehensive rebrand effort, involving bus wrapping.

Table 9. Capital Funds Expended by Funding Source (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	\$3,989,887	65.24%	\$6,629,326	72.70%	\$9,146,178	70.07%
State	\$2,126,217	34.76%	\$2,489,336	27.30%	\$3,907,009	29.93%
Local	\$0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%
Farebox	\$0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%
Other	\$0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%	\$0	0.00%
TOTAL	\$6,116,104	100.00%	\$9,118,662	100.00%	\$13,053,187	100.00%

Source: MeVa

MeVa is funded by a mix of federal, state, local, partnerships/contracts, and other funding with an average of \$23,338,132 expended annually on operations from FY 2022 to FY 2024 (Table 10). Historically, farebox revenue also contributed a small amount of MeVa’s funding portfolio. Overall, total operating expenses increased by nearly \$5 million between FY 2022 and FY 2024, which coincides with an increase in revenue miles and hours from the service improvements previously stated. The increase in expenses is largely supported by an increase in state funds expended in FY 2024 of nearly \$6 million from the previous fiscal year. State funding represented the largest source of MeVa’s expended operating funds in FY 2024 (over \$13.8 million). This increase in state funding has enabled MeVa to rely less heavily on federal funds (e.g., FTA Section 5307), which can generally be used as capital funds but have been utilized more heavily in the past as operating funds. The second largest source was federal funds (over \$5.2 million), which dropped by almost half between FY 2023 and FY 2024. Operating expenses funded by partnerships/contracts increased by over \$200,000 in that same period, driven primarily by the successful solicitation of funds from the Barr Foundation, a local philanthropic organization, while expended local funds and “other funding” amounts remained fairly stable from FY 2022 to FY 2024. “Other funding” refers to terminal revenues, such as parking revenue, advertising, interest income, and miscellaneous other sources.

MeVa also previously received COVID-era federal funding in the form of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (which had to be obligated by May 11, 2023), Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (obligated by September 30, 2023), and American Rescue Plan Act funding (which had to be obligated by September 30, 2024). These fund sources could be used by MeVa for both capital and operating expenses. In FY 2021,

MeVa reported receiving approximately \$23 million across all COVID-funding sources. As of FY 2024, MeVa had a remaining fund balance of approximately \$5 million.

With MeVa’s adoption of fare-free service systemwide in March 2022, operating revenues sourced from fares dropped off in FY 2023. MeVa continued collecting fares in FY 2023 on the Boston Commuter Bus, until it was discontinued in September 2022.

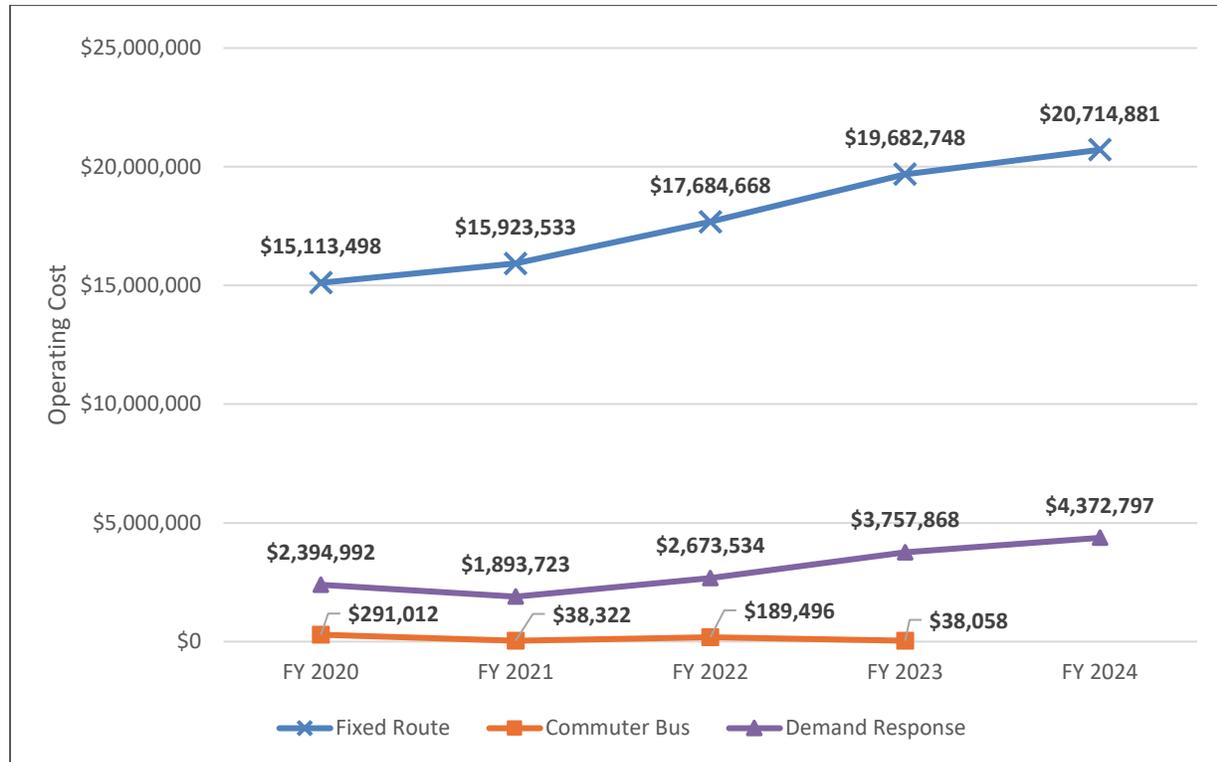
Table 10. Operating Funds Expended by Funding Source (FY 2022-FY 2024)

Funding Source	FY 2022	Percentage of FY 2022 Total	FY 2023	Percentage of FY 2023 Total	FY 2024	Percentage of FY 2024 Total
Federal	\$6,822,345	33.1%	\$10,113,108	42.4%	\$5,262,982	20.6%
State	\$7,765,512	37.7%	\$7,922,759	33.3%	\$13,817,489	54.1%
Local	\$4,248,289	20.6%	\$4,542,854	19.1%	\$4,656,425	18.2%
Farebox	\$561,084	2.7%	\$4,229	0.02%	\$0	0.0%
Partnerships / contracts	\$54,713	0.3%	\$35,838	0.2%	\$273,764	1.1%
Other	\$1,172,369	5.7%	\$1,207,083	5.1%	\$1,553,554	6.1%
TOTAL	\$20,624,312	100.0%	\$23,825,871	100.0%	\$25,564,214	100.0%

Source: MeVa

The annual operating cost for fixed route service increased year over year from FY 2020 to FY 2024, at an average annual increase rate of 8 percent. Demand response operating costs have risen steadily since FY 2021, after declining between FY 2020 and FY 2021 due to both reduced demand and trips operated during COVID. Commuter bus operating costs - referring to the former Route 99 Boston Commuter Bus, which provided coach bus service to Boston during the morning rush hour and return service from Boston during the evening rush hour – fluctuated between FY 2020 and FY 2023. Fluctuations were largely due to ridership being more impacted by work-from-home policies due to COVID than on any other MeVa route, resulting in inconsistent provision of the commuter bus service. The Boston Commuter Bus was suspended from spring 2020 until late 2021, and then ultimately discontinued for good in the fall of 2022 (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Annual Operating Cost by Mode (FY 2020 - FY 2024)

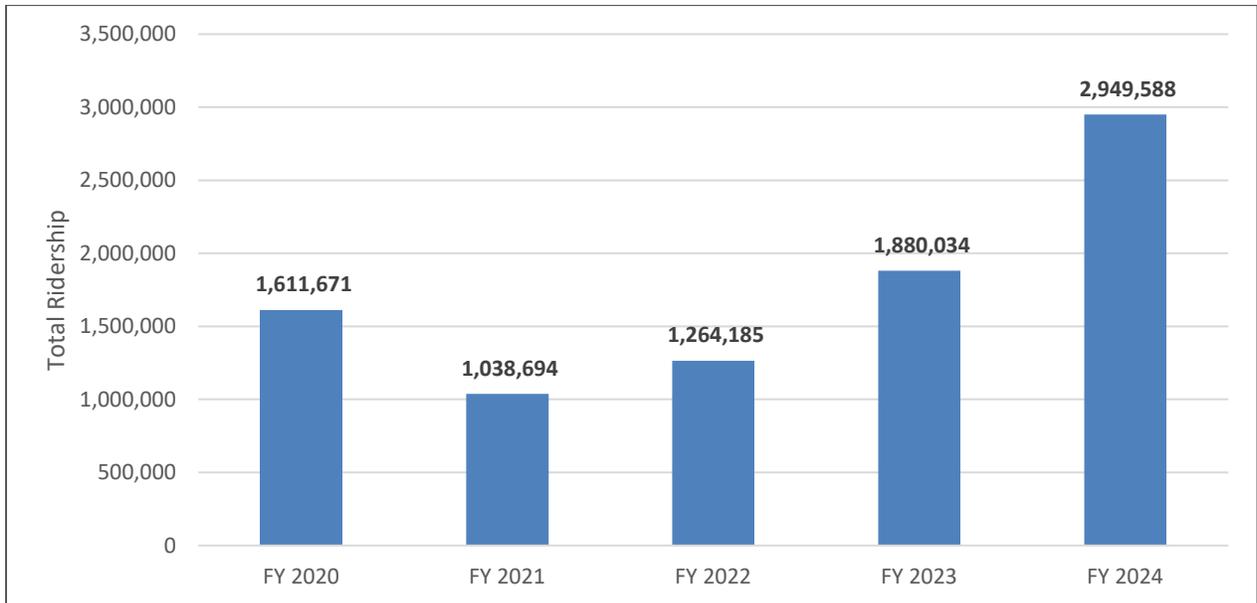


Source: MeVa

4.2 Ridership and Service Operations

MeVa’s overall system ridership is nearly 3 million riders as of FY 2024, and it trended upward from FY 2020 to FY 2024, with a ridership decrease occurring only between FY 2020 and FY 2021 (Figure 6). From FY 2021 to FY 2024, systemwide ridership nearly tripled, growing at an annual average rate of 42 percent. This growth is largely attributed to MeVa ridership steadily rebounding through the pandemic recovery period and adapting to MeVa service changes, such as the expansion of paratransit service, increased fixed route service, optimized routing, implementation of fare-free transit, and increased visibility of the service through MeVa’s comprehensive rebrand.

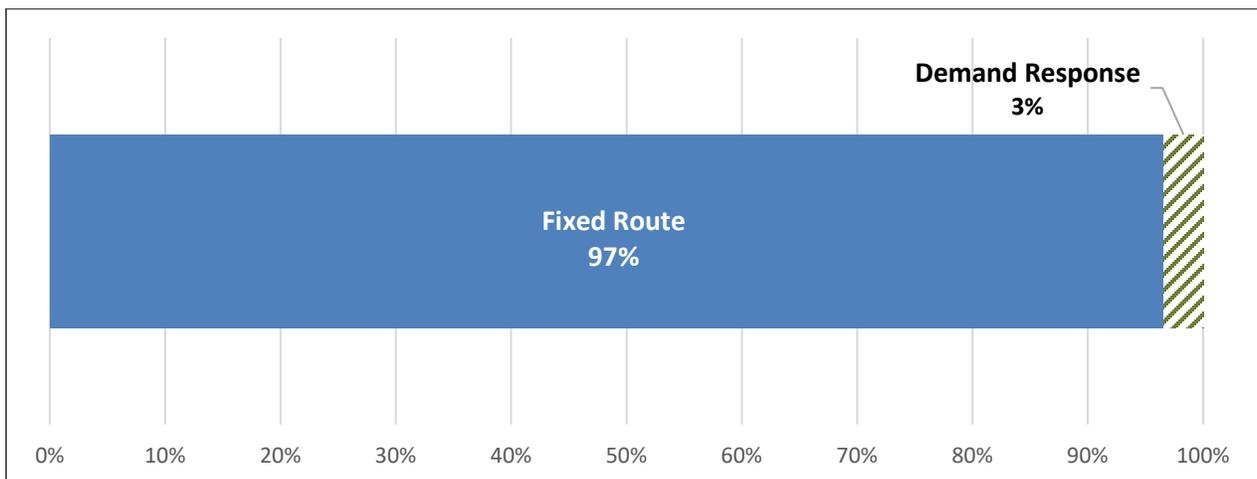
Figure 6. Annual System Ridership (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: MassDOT

In FY 2024, MeVa provided the majority of trips on its fixed routes, with only 3 percent of trips taken on demand response services (Figure 7).

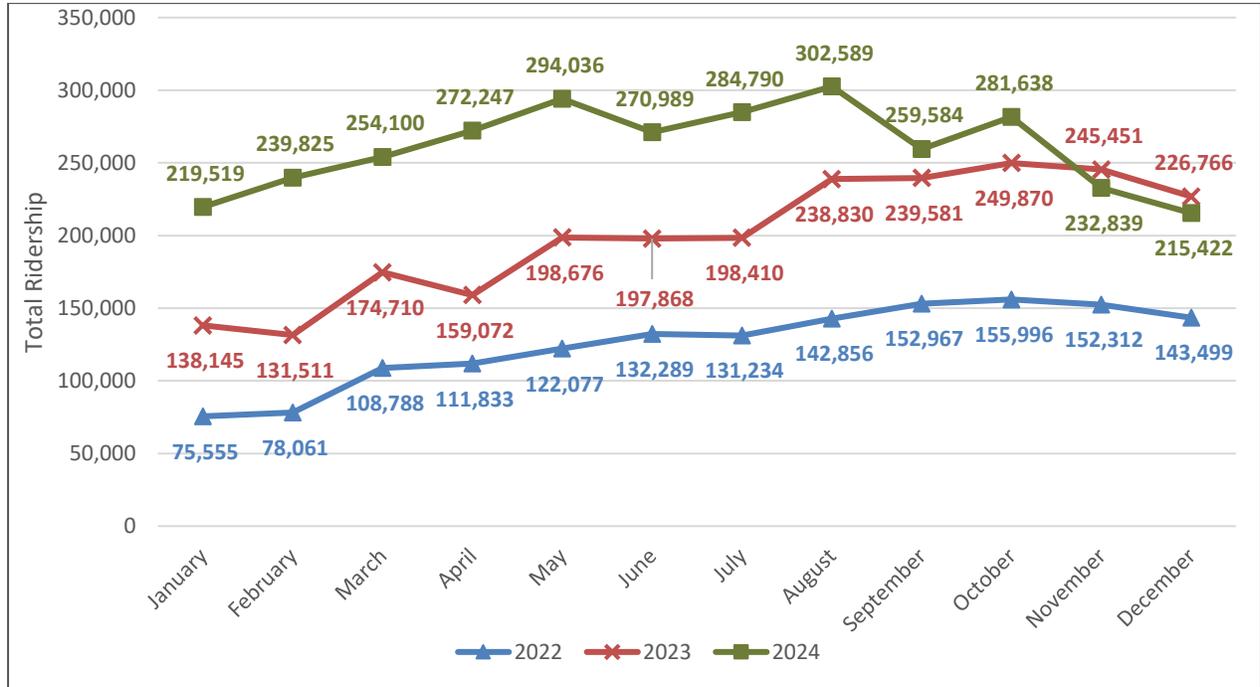
Figure 7. Ridership Breakdown by Service Type (FY 2024)



Source: MassDOT

Monthly ridership in 2022 and 2023 indicates that ridership follows an upward trend from the start of the calendar year through October, after which it steadies and decreases slightly through the end of the year. Monthly ridership in 2024 followed a slightly different pattern, with ridership increasing and then stabilizing earlier in the year, in August, and then following a downward trend through the end of the year. In the last two months of 2024, ridership dipped to be about the same as that of the first two months of the same year (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Monthly Ridership Trends, All Modes (2022-2024)

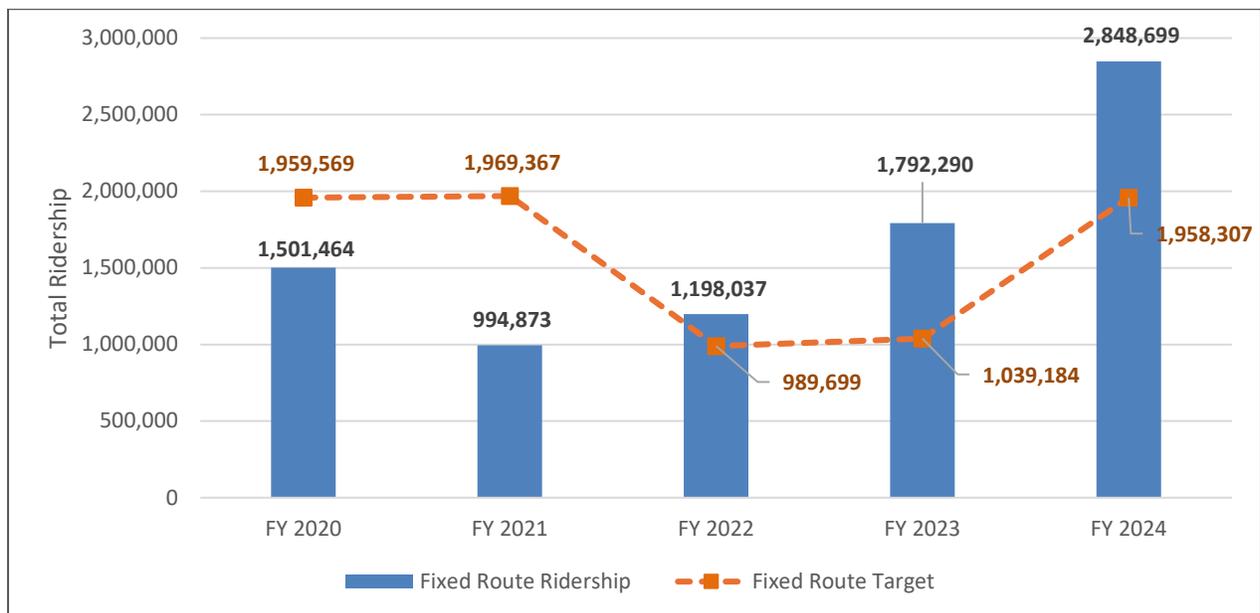


Source: MassDOT

4.2.1 Fixed Route Ridership

Fixed route ridership experienced a low in FY 2021 with a total of under one million riders (Figure 9). Since that year, ridership has steadily increased at an average rate of 43 percent annually, allowing MeVa to surpass its annual ridership targets from FY 2022 to FY 2024. In FY 2024, ridership rose to a high total rider count of over 2.8 million, nearly one million more riders than the FY 2024 fixed route ridership target of 1.9 million.

Figure 9. Fixed Route Annual Ridership (FY 2020-FY 2024)

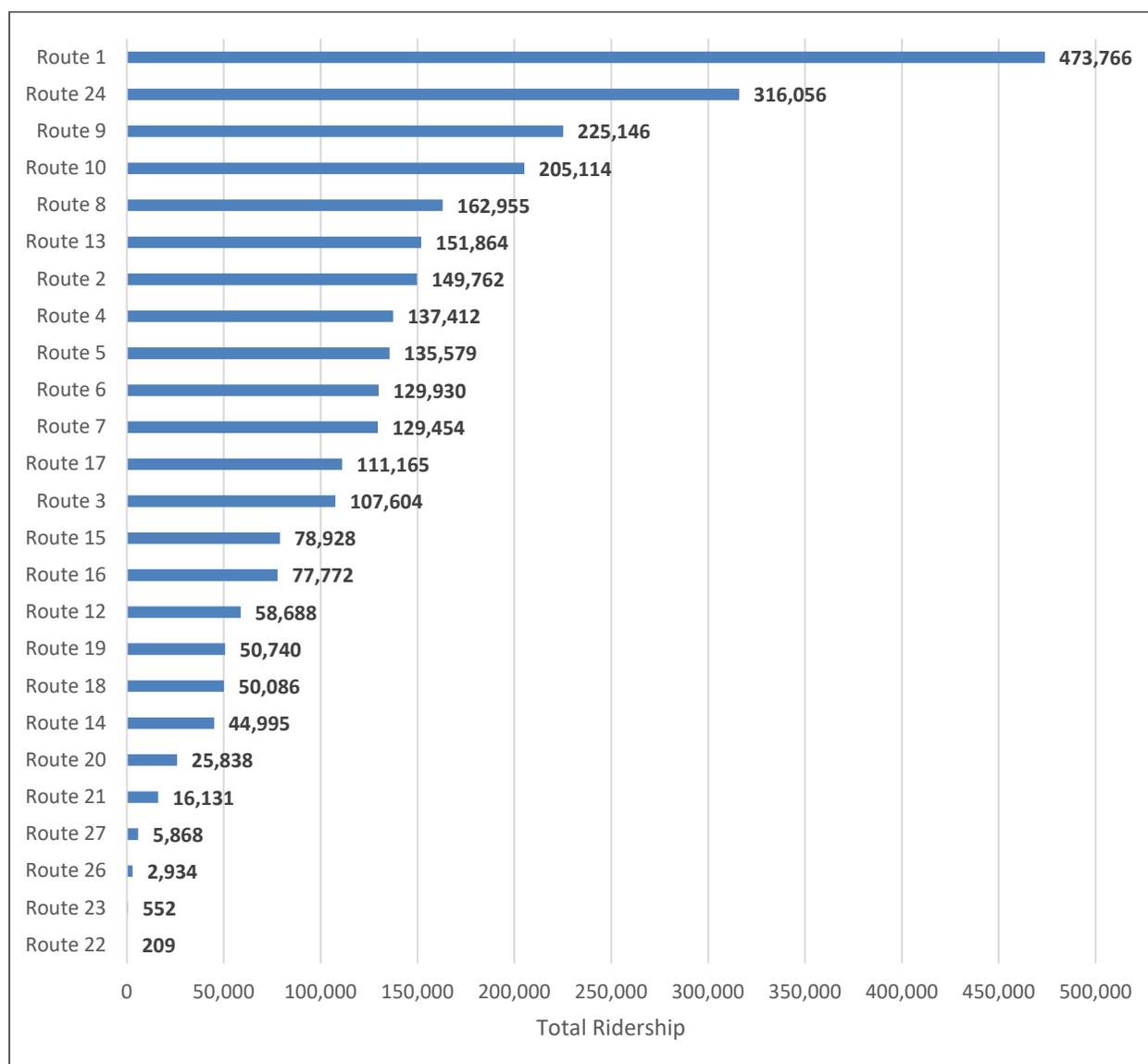


Source: MassDOT

Note: Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus

At a route level, Route 1 had the greatest number of riders annually across the fixed route network in FY 2024, by a margin of over 150,000 riders (Figure 10). Route 1 connects the Lawrence and Haverhill transit hubs via the Loop shopping mall in Methuen. Route 24, which also connects the Lawrence and Lowell transit hubs, was MeVa’s second highest ridership route. Route 9, which serves the North Andover Mall and Merrimack College, and Route 10, which serves Methuen Square via Broadway, were also high ridership routes. The lowest ridership routes were MeVa’s niche limited-schedule services, including Route 22 (Buttonwoods Express), which operates one round trip twice per week, and Route 26 (IRS/Raytheon) and Route 27 (Beacon Street Special tripper), both of which only run twice per day. Route 23 (Beach Express), which operated two round trips to Salisbury Beach on Saturdays only during the summer, was also a low-ridership route. As of the end of FY 2024, the route was discontinued as service had become redundant due to Route 17 being updated to serve Salisbury Beach hourly, seven days a week.

Figure 10. Annual Ridership by Route (FY 2024)

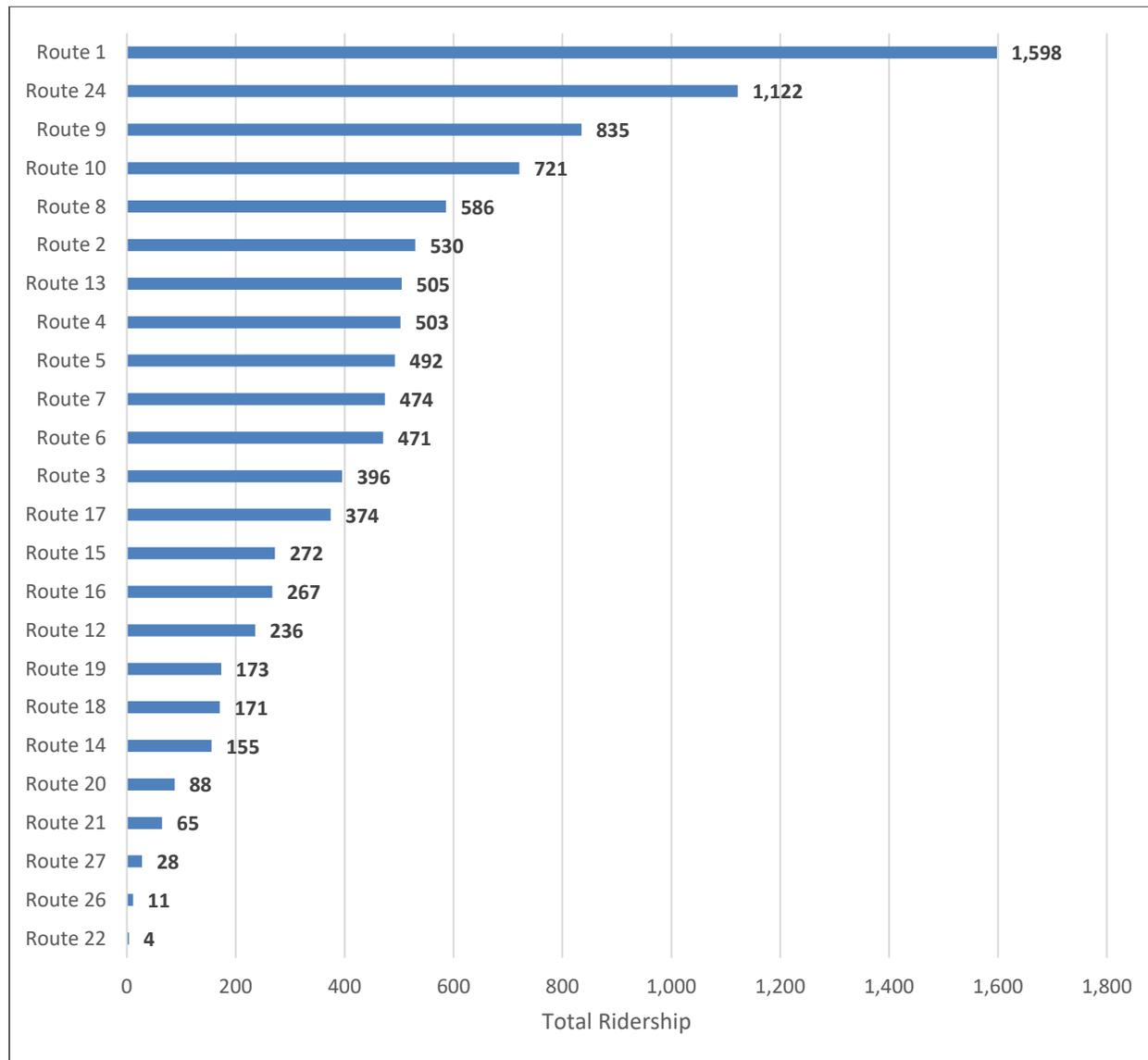


Source: MeVa

Note: The sum of route-level ridership (2,848,410 riders) is slightly lower than the overall FY 2024 fixed route ridership noted in Figure 9, likely due to slight variations in data provided by MeVa versus MassDOT.

On an average weekday MeVa carries just over 10,000 passengers. In descending order, Routes 1, 24, and 9 had the highest average weekday ridership across the fixed route system in FY 2024. The lowest ridership routes on weekdays were Routes 22, 26, and 27 (Figure 11). These weekday average route-level ridership patterns are consistent with the FY 2024 overall route-level ridership patterns.

Figure 11. Weekday Average Ridership by Route (FY 2024)

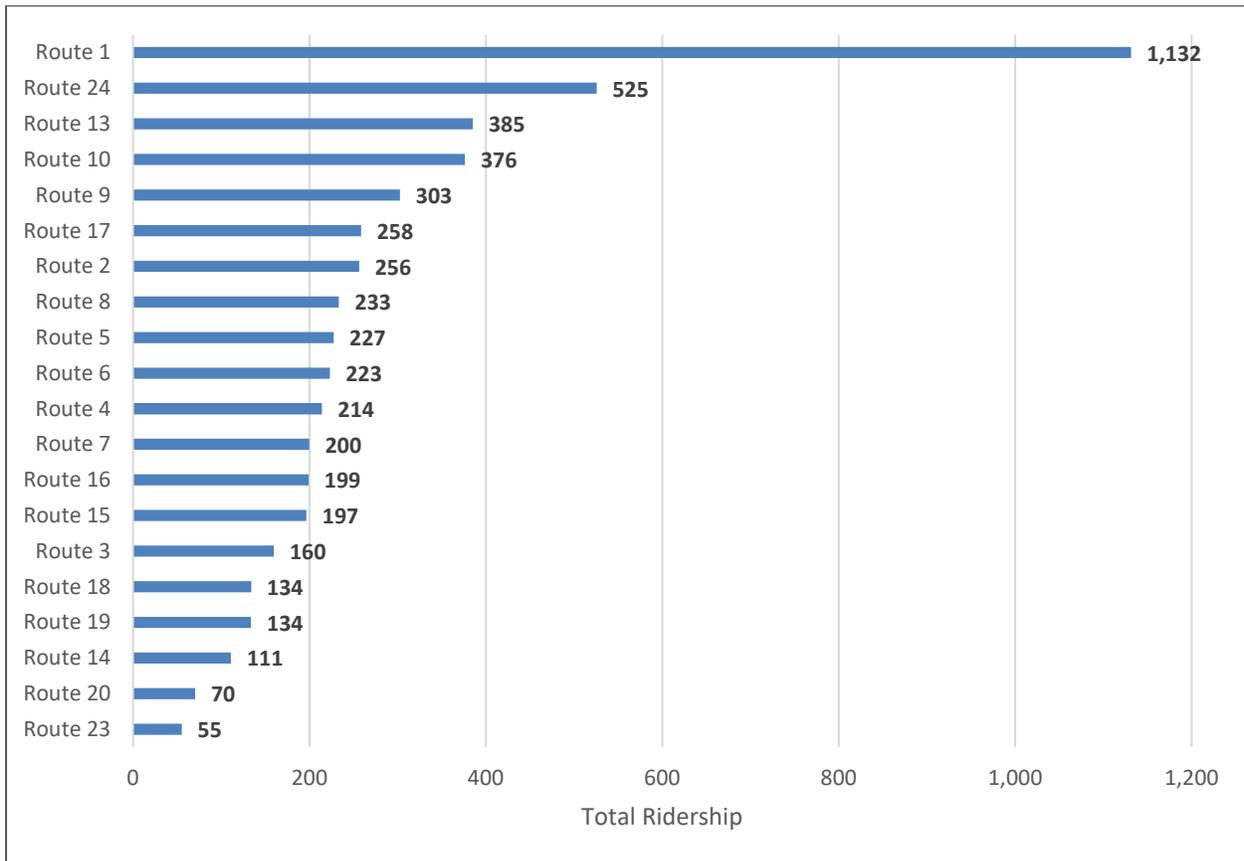


Source: MeVa

Saturday daily ridership is approximately half that of weekdays, with an average of around 5,300 passengers. Just as on weekdays, Routes 1 and 24 were the highest ridership routes on weekends in FY 2024 (Figure 12 and Figure 13). Weekend route ridership trends varied from weekdays in that Route 13 was MeVa’s third-highest ridership route on both Saturdays and Sundays, and Route 17 had relatively higher ridership on Saturdays than on weekdays. Route 13 travels over the New Hampshire border to the Stateline Plaza and Walmart in Plaistow, and Route 17 connects Haverhill, Amesbury, and Salisbury Beach. Route 23, MeVa’s discontinued summer express service to Salisbury Beach, was the lowest ridership route on Saturdays, followed by Route 20, connecting Newburyport MBTA Station to Salisbury Beach. Of the smaller number of routes operating on Sundays, Route 2 (connecting McGovern and Andover

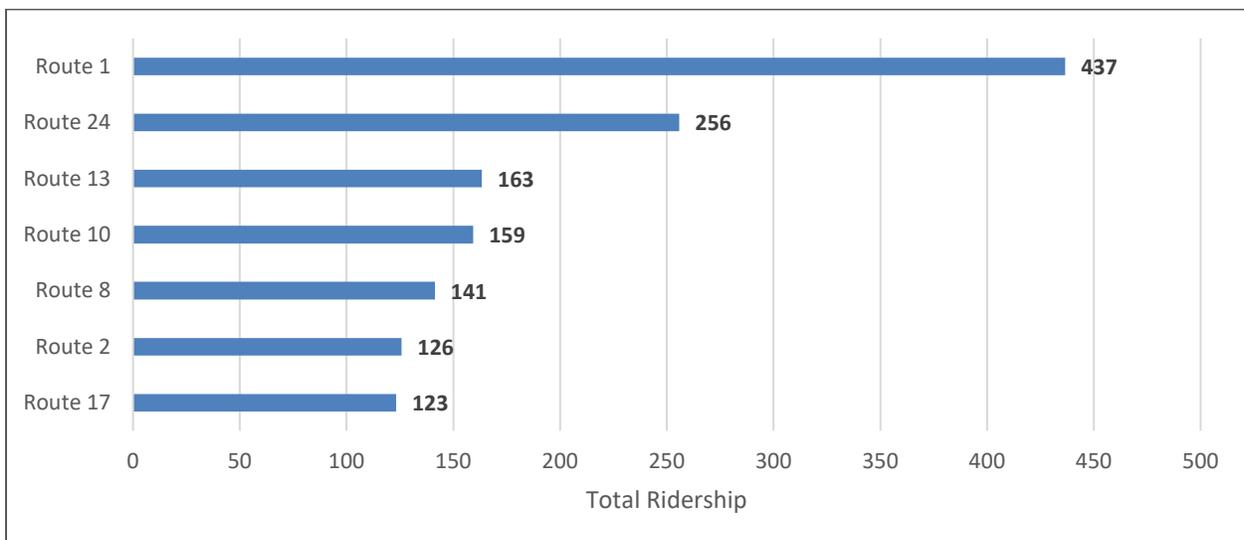
Square via South Broadway) and Route 17 were the lowest ridership Sunday routes in FY 2024. In FY 2025 (September 2024), MeVa began Sunday service on Route 4 and Route 9.

Figure 12. Saturday Average Ridership by Route (FY 2024)



Source: MeVa

Figure 13. Sunday Average Ridership by Route (FY 2024)

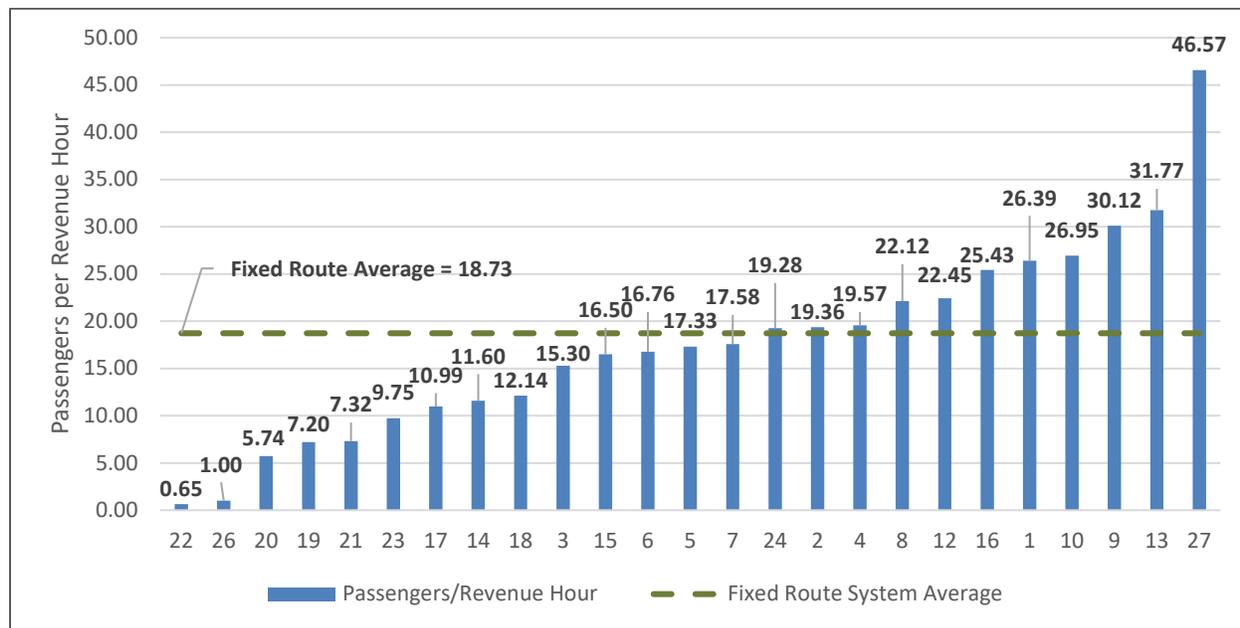


Source: MeVa

4.2.2 Fixed Route Operations

At a system level, MeVa’s fixed routes served an average of nearly 19 passengers per revenue hour during FY 2024. Several routes carried a higher-than-average number of passengers per revenue hour, with Route 27 (Beacon Street Special tripper) performance exceeding all other routes based on this metric. Route 27 operates only one trip in the morning and one trip in the afternoon on school days, for a total duration of under one hour daily. Routes 13, 9, and 10 represent the next top three highest performing routes (Figure 14). Nine routes were more than 30 percent below the system average, with two routes transporting on average one or fewer passengers per revenue hour (Routes 22 and 26 - both limited-service niche routes).

Figure 14. Passengers per Revenue Hour by Route (FY 2024)

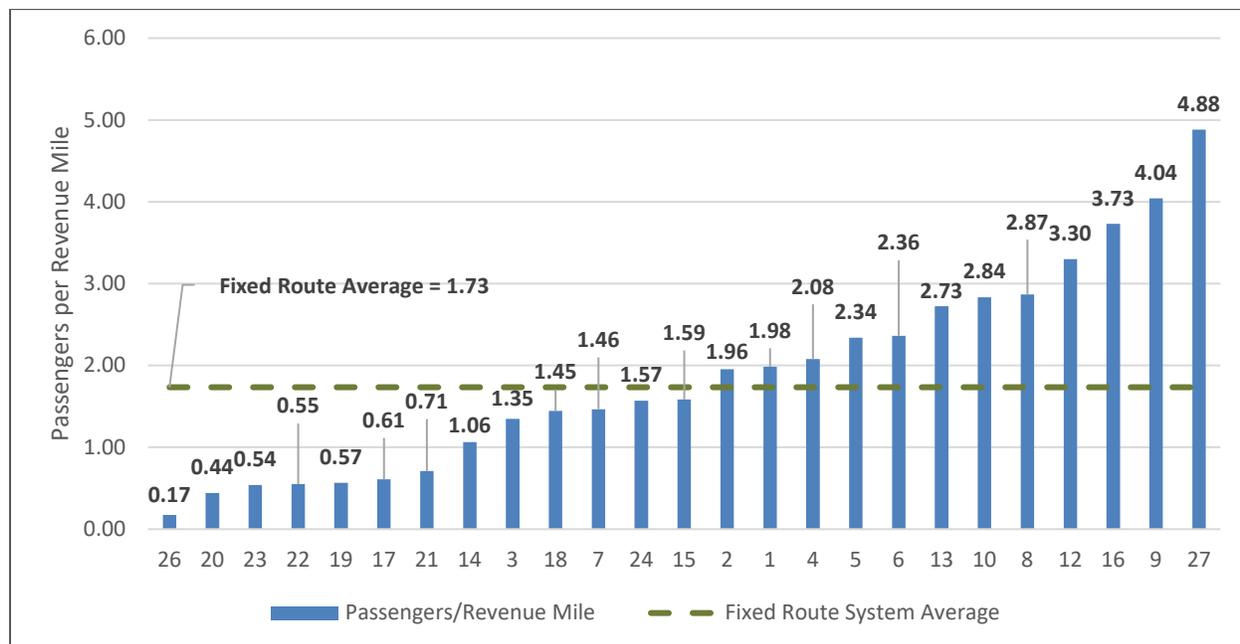


Source: MeVa

Note: The fixed route system average in this chart differs from the average noted in Table 6, due to variations in data provided by MeVa versus MassDOT sources, as well as variations in reported total ridership and vehicle revenue hours versus the sums of route-level ridership and vehicle revenue hour values.

MeVa’s fixed routes served an average of 1.73 passengers per revenue mile during FY 2024. Most routes carried a higher number of passengers per revenue mile, with Route 27 representing the top performing route based on this metric, just as for passengers per revenue hour. Routes 9, 16, and 12 represent the next top three highest performing routes (Figure 15). Eight routes were more than 30 percent below the system average: Route 26 accounted for the lowest ridership per revenue mile, followed by Route 20, Route 23 (no longer operating as of the end of FY 2024), Route 22, Route 19, Route 17, Route 21, and Route 14. These lower performing routes are consistent with those evaluated per the passengers per revenue hour metric.

Figure 15. Passengers per Revenue Mile by Route (FY 2024)



Source: MeVa

Note: The fixed route system average in this chart differs from the average noted in Table 6, due to variations in data provided by MeVa versus MassDOT sources, as well as variations between reported total ridership and vehicle revenue miles and the sums of route-level ridership and vehicle revenue mile values.

MeVa’s operating statistics for fixed routes in FY 2024 are broken down by route in Table 11. As identified previously, Routes 1, 24, and 9 were the highest performing routes when considering overall ridership, Routes 13, 9, and 10 were the highest when considering passengers per hour, and Routes 9, 16, and 12 were the highest when considering passengers per mile. The four routes with the lowest overall ridership in FY 2024 were those that operate significantly fewer hours and miles compared to MeVa’s other routes – Route 22 runs two round trips per week year-round, and Routes 26 and 27 run one round trip per weekday. Route 23 operated two round trips on Saturdays only during the summer before the route was replaced by the updated Route 17 in summer 2025. Of these limited schedule routes, Route 23 performed the best based on passengers per hour.

Table 11. Operating Statistics by Route (FY 2024)

Route	Ridership	Revenue Hours	Passenger Trips/ Revenue Hour	Revenue Miles	Passenger Trips/ Revenue Mile
1	473,766	17,952	26.39	238,836	1.98
2	149,762	7,736	19.36	76,575	1.96
3	107,604	7,032	15.30	79,865	1.35
4	137,412	7,022	19.57	66,142	2.08
5	135,579	7,823	17.33	57,963	2.34
6	129,930	7,751	16.76	54,960	2.36
7	129,454	7,362	17.58	88,366	1.46

Route	Ridership	Revenue Hours	Passenger Trips/ Revenue Hour	Revenue Miles	Passenger Trips/ Revenue Mile
8	162,955	7,368	22.12	56,827	2.87
9	225,146	7,476	30.12	55,715	4.04
10	205,114	7,612	26.95	72,348	2.84
12	58,688	2,615	22.45	17,779	3.30
13	151,864	4,780	31.77	55,710	2.73
14	44,995	3,880	11.60	42,361	1.06
15	78,928	4,784	16.50	49,797	1.59
16	77,772	3,058	25.43	20,850	3.73
17	111,165	10,115	10.99	182,523	0.61
18	50,086	4,127	12.14	34,646	1.45
19	50,740	7,050	7.20	89,474	0.57
20	25,838	4,504	5.74	58,470	0.44
21	16,131	2,204	7.32	22,696	0.71
22	209	320	0.65	380	0.55
23	552	57	9.75	1,026	0.54
24	316,056	16,397	19.28	201,217	1.57
26	2,934	2,936	1.00	16,841	0.17
27	5,868	126	46.57	1,202	4.88

Source: MeVa

Note: Sums in this table may not equal FY 2024 totals in Table 4 due to variations in data provided by MeVa versus MassDOT sources, as well as variations between reported total ridership, vehicle revenue hours, and vehicle revenue miles versus the sums of route-level ridership, vehicle revenue hour, and vehicle revenue mile values.

4.2.3 Demand Response Ridership and Operations

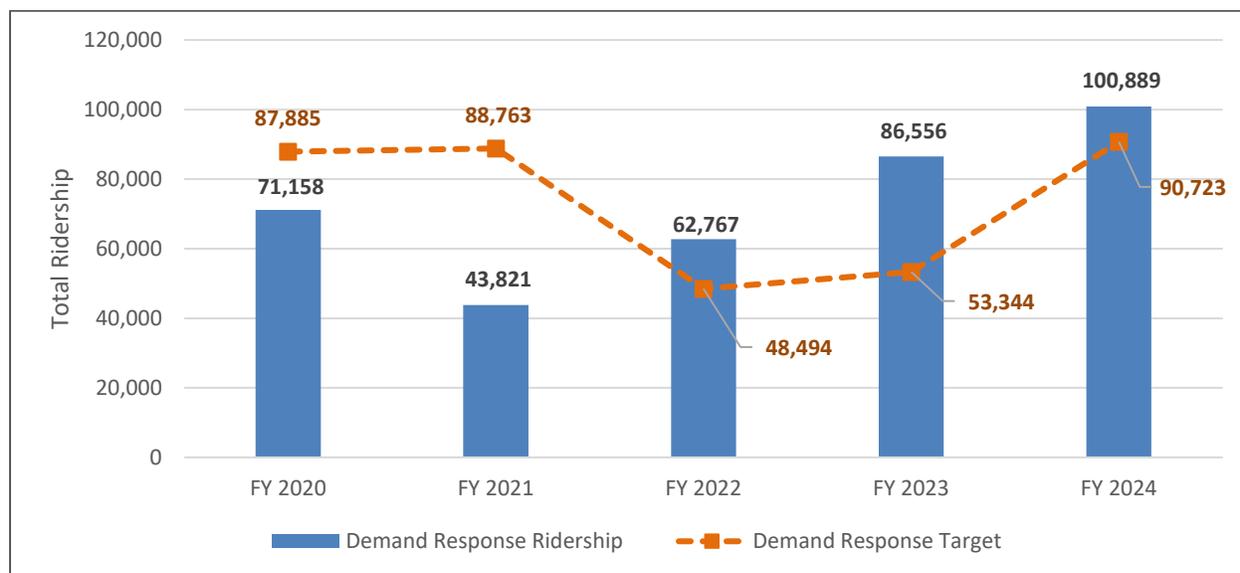
MeVa provides *miniMeVa* complementary ADA service, available within a 3/4 mile corridor on each side of any MeVa fixed bus route, and *miniMeVa* non-ADA service, available to individuals 60 years of age or older living in communities that receive MeVa’s fixed route service. *miniMeVa* Ring & Ride is another demand response service provided to all residents living in non-fixed route communities (Boxford, Georgetown, Newbury, and Rowley), plus Groveland and West Newbury, which only added fixed route in the last couple of years. Riders may utilize Ring & Ride service to travel within these six communities or to access destinations in Andover, Amesbury, Newburyport, Haverhill, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, North Andover, and Salisbury.

mediMeVa service is provided from anywhere within the service area to Peabody and City of Boston hospitals, and the VA Bedford Health Care System. The Boston/Peabody *mediMeVa* currently operates Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, and is open to anyone eligible for

miniMeVa, plus North Reading residents over 60 years old. The Bedford VA *mediMeVa* operates Wednesday and Friday, and is open to all veterans and their families who reside in MeVa’s service district.

Annual demand response ridership dipped in FY 2021 but has since increased year to year at an average annual rate of 33 percent. Ridership rose to over 86,000 riders in FY 2023 – a 38 percent increase from FY 2022. In FY 2024, ridership increased at a lower rate than the two previous fiscal years (17 percent) but surpassed the demand response target by a margin of over 10,000 riders (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Demand Response Annual Ridership (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: MassDOT

For demand response services, MeVa defines denied trips, missed trips, no-shows, late cancellations, and same-day cancellations. MeVa uses the following definitions for each of these cases:

- **Denied trip:** Trip denials result when the operator does not accept trip requests.
- **Missed trip:** Missed trips are caused by *miniMeVa* or its vendors and not by riders. Missed trips result from trips that are requested, confirmed, and scheduled, but do not take place because:
 - The vehicle arrives and leaves before the beginning of the pickup window without picking up the rider and without any indication from the rider that they no longer want to make the trip. Note that a rider is not obligated to board until the beginning of the pickup window or until 5 minutes have elapsed within the pickup window.
 - The vehicle does not wait the required time within the pickup window, there is no contact with the rider, and the vehicle departs without the rider. Note that if during the wait time the rider indicates they no longer want to take the trip, this is typically recorded as a “cancel at the door,” equivalent to a late cancellation.
 - The vehicle arrives after the end of the pickup window and departs without picking up the rider (either because the rider is not there or because the rider declines to take the trip because it is now late).
 - The vehicle does not arrive at the pickup location.

- **No-show:** This is when a disruption occurs when the *miniMeVa* vehicle arrives at the specified location within the 30-minute window and the customer is not ready or does not take the scheduled trip.
- **Late cancellation:** This disruption occurs when a customer fails to notify MeVa of a cancellation at least 1 hour prior to the scheduled pick-up time.
- **Same-day cancellation:** This occurs when a rider calls at least 1 hour in advance to cancel their ride that is booked for later that same day.

MeVa began tracking these metrics for both ADA and non-ADA *miniMeVa* demand response in FY 2022, which are broken down in Table 12. MeVa’s demand response customers take an average of nearly 86 demand response trips annually, as of FY 2024, an increase from previous years. The proportion of denied trips was null over the three-year period, and that of missed trips was also essentially null over that time. The proportion of no-shows dropped significantly from FY 2022 to FY 2023, when MeVa saw its lowest rate of no-shows (3.69 percent). No-shows then increased in the following year by less than one percentage point. Late cancellations have seen minor increases year to year, peaking in FY 2024 at 2.34 percent of demand response requested trips. Same-day cancellations remained fairly stable over the three-year period, with a slight drop in FY 2023 to 7.82 percent of demand response requested trips. Out of the total cancellations on MeVa’s demand response service, late cancellations represent on average 9 percent, and same-day cancellations represent on average 32 percent.

Table 12. ADA and Non-ADA Combined Demand Response Metrics (FY 2022-FY 2024)

Metric	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Average Trips/Passenger	70.60	82.28	85.79
% Denied Trips	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
% Missed Trips	0.01%	0.00%	0.00%
% No-show	12.33%	3.69%	4.52%
% Late Cancellation	2.15%	2.26%	2.34%
% Same-Day Cancellation	8.12%	7.82%	8.18%

Source: MeVa

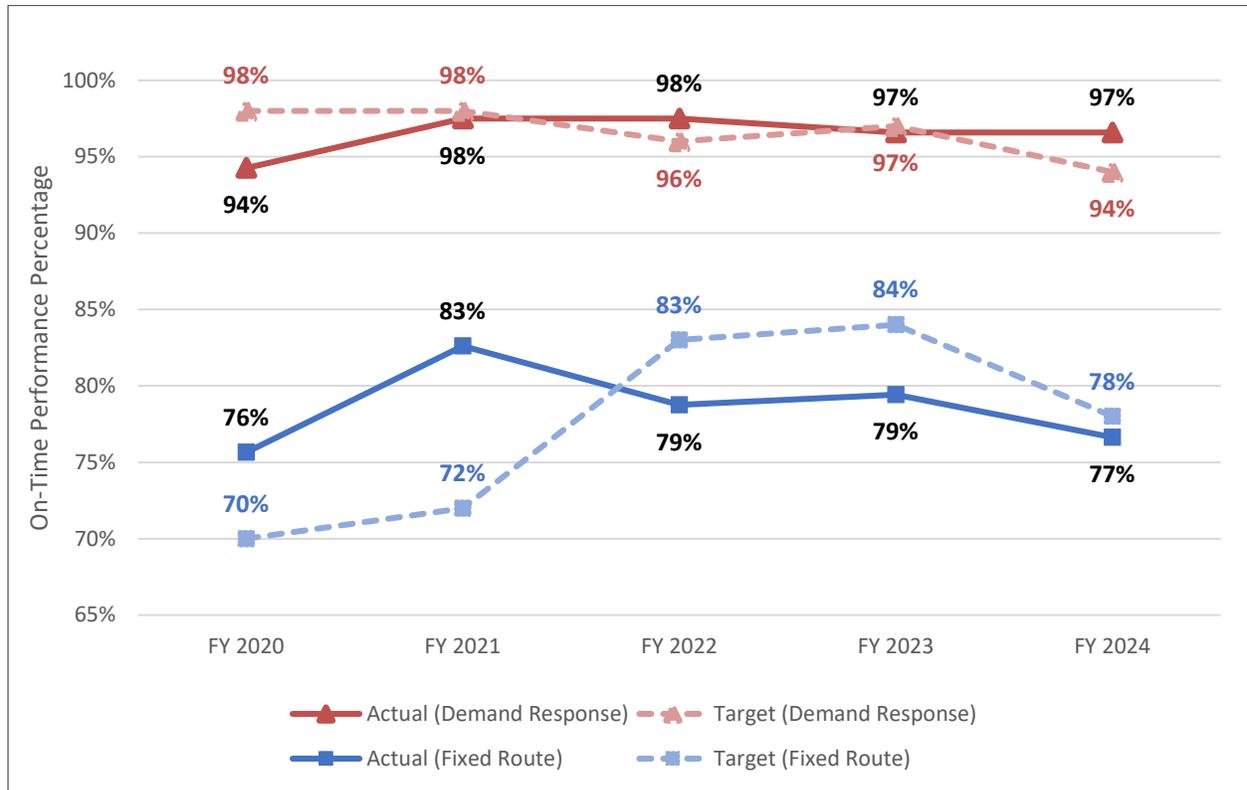
4.2.4 On-Time Performance and Trip Completion

For MeVa’s fixed route service, trips are considered on time when they arrive at timepoints no more than zero minutes early or no more than five minutes late. For MeVa’s ADA and non-ADA demand response trips, trips that arrive within the scheduled window are considered on time. From FY 2020 to FY 2021, MeVa improved its on-time performance on both fixed route and demand response services, with an increase of seven percentage points for fixed route service and an increase of four percentage points for demand response services (Figure 17).

In the following three fiscal years, fixed route on-time performance followed a downward trend, decreasing at an average annual rate of 2 percent to 77 percent in FY 2024. The FY 2024 target for fixed route on-time performance was 78 percent. On weekdays, when MeVa operates the most service, fixed route on-time performance averaged 76 percent in FY 2024, one percentage point lower than the average on-time performance on Saturdays in that year (Figure 18). Sundays had the highest average on-time performance in FY 2024, with MeVa’s seven Sunday fixed routes averaging 82 percent on-time performance.

Demand response on-time performance maintained a steady rate from FY 2021 to FY 2024, remaining at 98 percent in the first two fiscal years and 97 percent in the last two. The FY 2024 target for demand response on-time performance was 94 percent.

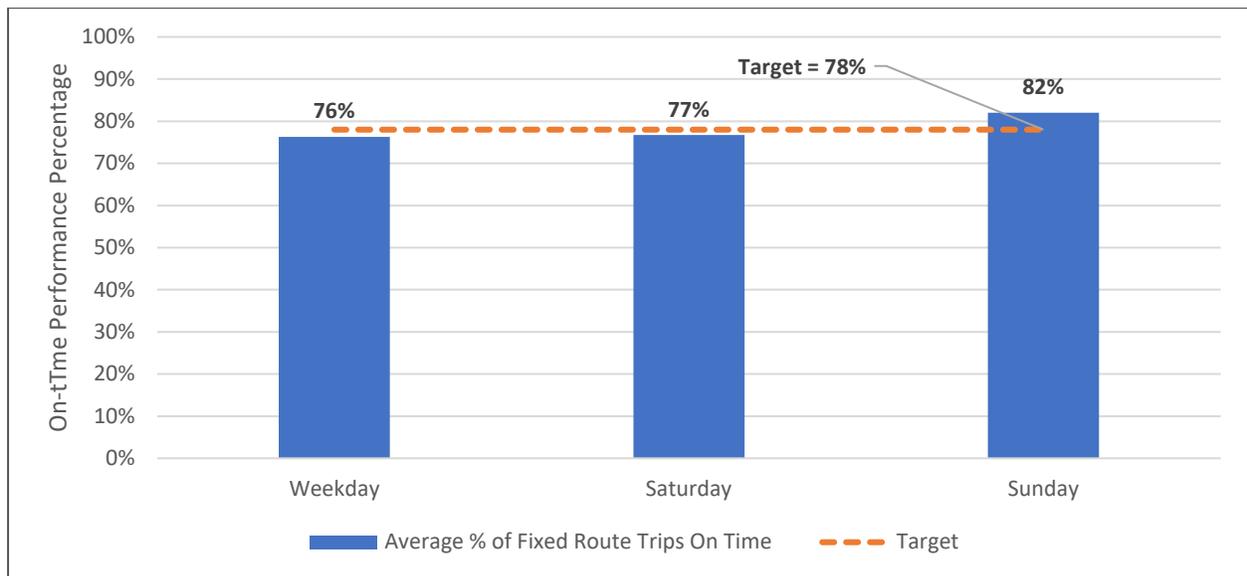
Figure 17. Annual On-Time Performance - Fixed Route and Demand Response (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: MassDOT

Note: Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus.

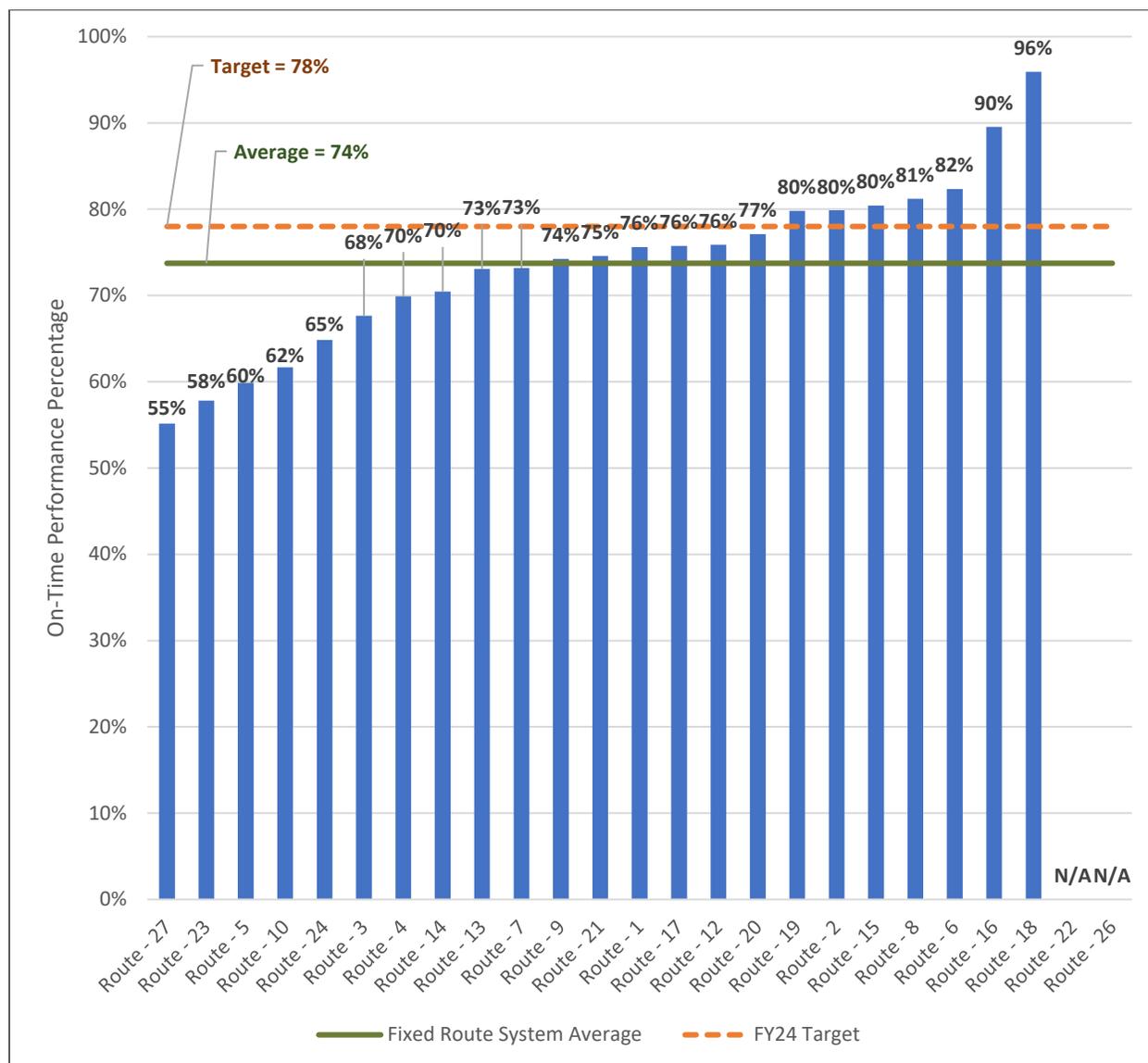
Figure 18. On-Time Performance by Day Type - Fixed Route (FY 2024)



Source: MeVa

Across the MeVa fixed route system, on-time performance averaged 74 percent in FY 2024 (Figure 19). Route 18, connecting Washington Square and Groveland Housing via Riverside, had the highest proportion of trips operating on time (96 percent), followed by Route 16 connecting Washington Square and Westgate Plaza via Washington Street (90 percent). The lowest performing route according to on-time performance is Route 27, MeVa’s limited schedule tripper, with 55 percent of trips operating on time. Nine other routes had an on-time performance that fell below the 74 percent system average. Six of these routes operate out of McGovern, while Route 13 runs out of Washington Square, Route 14 is an intercity route connecting McGovern and Washington Square, and Route 24 is an intercity route connecting McGovern and Lowell. Route 22 and Route 26 are limited-schedule routes operated using MeVa’s paratransit vehicles, which do not contain on-time performance tracking technology; on-time performance is therefore not tracked for these routes.

Figure 19. On-Time Performance by Fixed Route (FY 2024)



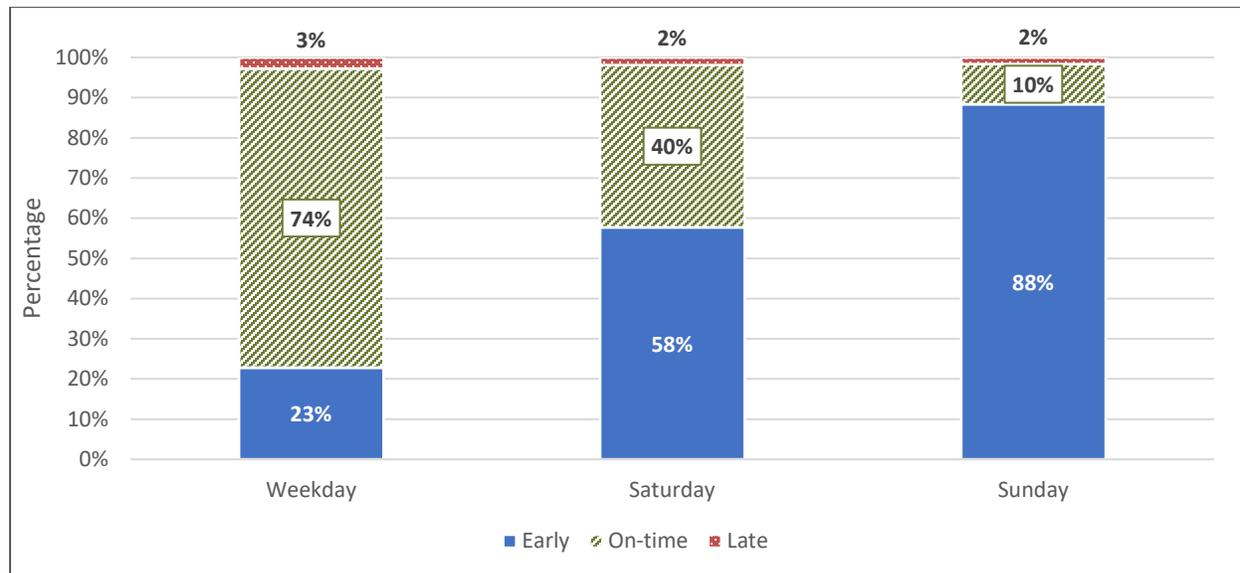
Source: MeVa

N/A = Not Applicable (data not available)

For MeVa’s ADA and non-ADA demand response trips, trips that arrive within the scheduled window are considered on time. Early pick-ups are also considered on time if a customer

agrees to the early pick-up. In FY 2024, 97 percent of weekday demand response trips were either early or on time, with most trips completed on time. Three percent of weekday trips were late. On Saturdays and Sundays, 98 percent of trips were either early or on time, and 2 percent were late. Trips completed early were more common on weekends than weekdays in FY 2024 — 58 percent of Saturday trips and 88 percent of Sunday trips were early (Figure 20).

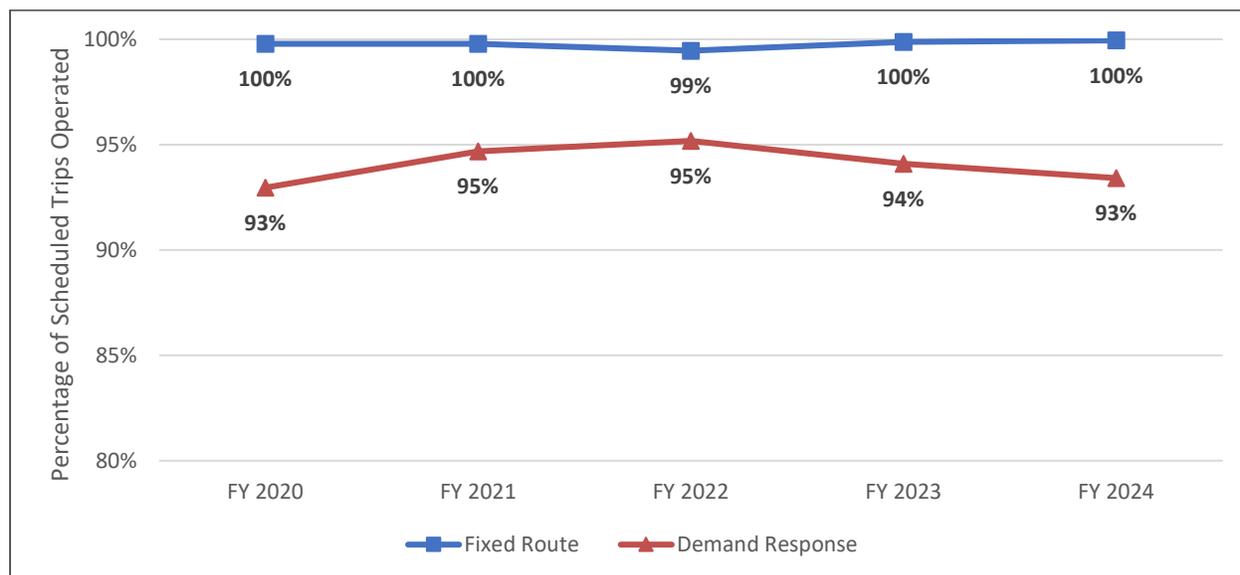
Figure 20. On-Time Performance by Day - ADA and non-ADA Demand Response (FY 2024)



Source: MeVa

MeVa operated 100 percent of scheduled fixed route trips between FY 2020 and FY 2024, aside from a minor dip in the FY 2022 rate of operated scheduled trips to 99 percent (Figure 21). MeVa increased its rate of scheduled demand response trips operated from FY 2020 to FY 2022, when the rate peaked at 95 percent. Demand response has since reported a declining trend in fulfilled scheduled trips, with an average annual decrease rate of 0.9 percent.

Figure 21. Scheduled Trips Operated (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: MassDOT

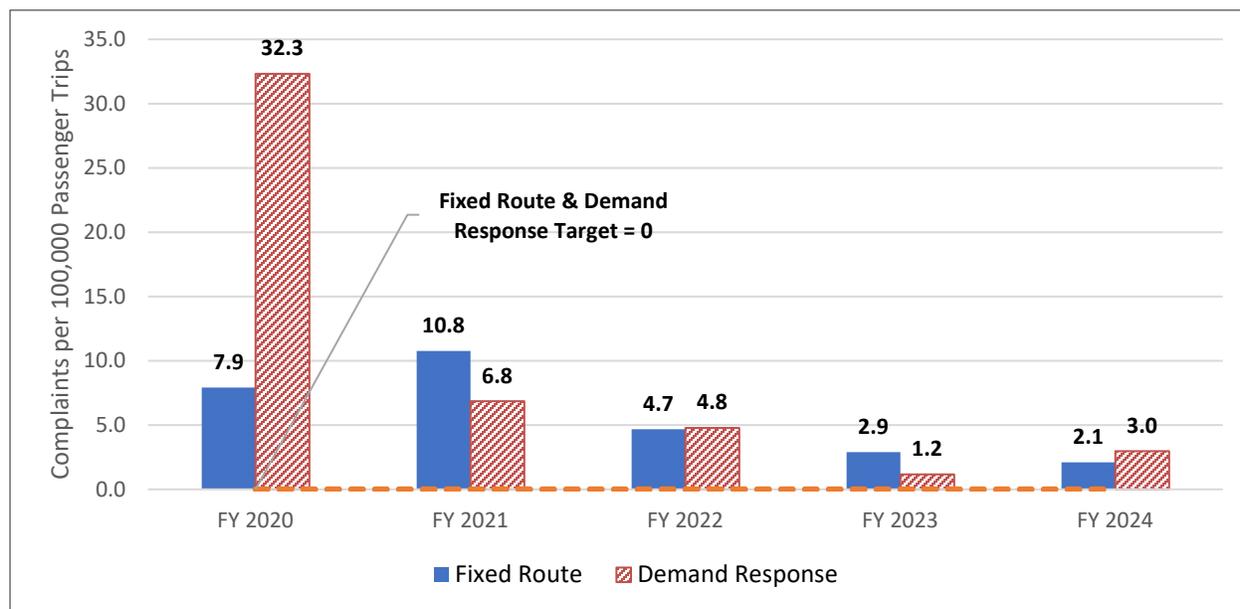
Note: Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus.

4.2.5 Customer Service

MeVa tracks the number of complaints per 100,000 passenger trips on both fixed route and demand response services to normalize complaints across fluctuating ridership (Figure 22). On fixed route services, there was a peak in the number of valid complaints per 100,000 trips in FY 2021, which was followed by a drop in the complaint rate by over half in FY 2022. Rider complaints further decreased year to year at an average annual rate of 33 percent. The decrease in complaints per 100,000 trips after FY 2021 can be attributed in part to the implementation of fare-free service during FY 2022, as disputes regarding fare payments had been a large source of complaints among MeVa’s riders in fiscal years prior to FY 2022.

On demand response services, the highest number of valid complaints per 100,000 trips by a large margin was recorded in FY 2020 (32.3 complaints per 100,000 trips). This high complaint rate resulted from a previous MeVa vendor carrying overflow trips not performing up to standard. The rate of complaints dropped in FY 2021 to nearly one-fifth of the previous year’s rate after MeVa ended its contract with the overflow vendor, and it further decreased annually to reach a period low of 1.2 complaints per 100,000 trips in FY 2023. MeVa recorded an increase in its demand response complaint rate in FY 2024 to 3.0 complaints per 100,000 trips.

Figure 22. Number of Valid Complaints per 100,000 Passenger Trips (FY 2020-FY 2024)

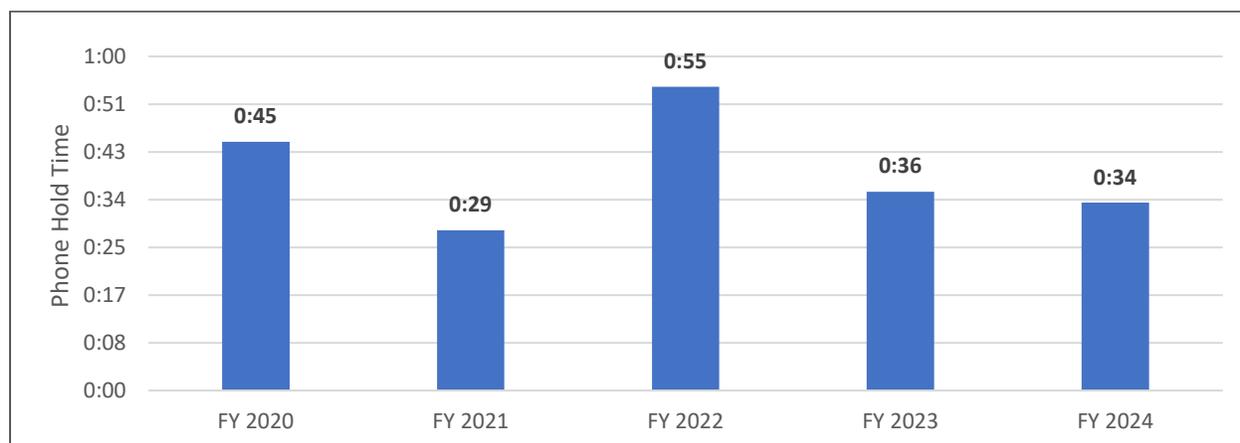


Source: MeVa

Note: Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus.

MeVa also tracks phone hold time for calls associated with booking a demand response ride (Figure 23). Average phone hold time peaked in FY 2022, missing the 1-minute mark by a margin of 5 seconds. The average hold time decreased in FY 2023, and again in FY 2024, dropping closer to the 30 second mark.

Figure 23. Average Phone Hold Time (mm:ss) for Booking Demand Response Trips (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: MeVa

4.3 Regional Connections and Partnerships

MeVa’s transit services can connect riders to three MBTA commuter rail lines, the Haverhill, Newburyport, and Lowell Lines, all of which provide regional connections to the North Station intermodal hub in Boston.

MeVa’s fixed routes offer direct connections to the Haverhill Line at two stations in Haverhill (Bradford and Haverhill Stations), one station in Lawrence (McGovern), and one station in Andover (Andover Station). In addition, the Ballardvale Station in Andover is served by *miniMeVa* paratransit. McGovern Transportation Center is co-located with MeVa’s Lawrence Hub, which is the largest bus hub in the MeVa system, serving 16 bus routes. It is a true intermodal station—in addition to both local MeVa bus and MBTA Commuter Rail, it also hosts a subsidized 10-bike Metro Mobility e-bike docking station, and a Community Room. Haverhill Station, served by Route 1 and Route 11, serves as the terminus of the Haverhill Commuter Rail line and is about a 5-minute walk to MeVa’s Washington Square Bus Hub, also served by Route 1 and Route 11 as well as six other MeVa bus routes. Additionally, the Haverhill Commuter Rail Station is served by Amtrak’s Downeaster intercity passenger rail service, which provides five daily round trips between Boston North Station and Portland, Maine, and limited service to Brunswick, Maine.

The Newburyport Line operates between North Station and Newburyport, with two stations located in MeVa’s service area — Rowley Station and Newburyport Station. MeVa utilizes the Newburyport Station as a mini hub, connecting riders to Newburyport Station via three fixed routes, and riders can utilize *miniMeVa* services to connect to Rowley Station. The Newburyport Station also connects to the Clipper City Rail Trail.

MeVa also provides fixed route service to the City of Lowell, which falls within the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) service area. MeVa’s Route 24 connects downtown Lawrence and downtown Lowell, where the MBTA Lowell Commuter Rail Line terminates, as well as the entire LRTA bus network.

Now that MeVa’s Route 1 and Route 24 run every 20 minutes on weekdays for the majority of the service day (as of FY 2025), directly connecting stations in Lowell, Lawrence, and Haverhill, riders seeking access to Boston have greater flexibility to choose whichever line best fits their schedule. In addition, MeVa’s express Route 11 connects MBTA Haverhill Commuter Rail Line stations in Lawrence and Haverhill with the Newburyport Line station in Newburyport, offering still more flexibility to Boston-bound riders.

mediMeVa many-to-few and many-to-one service to Boston and Peabody hospitals and the VA Bedford campus offers additional connection beyond MeVa's 16-community service district. MeVa also partners with local COAs by including COAs' vehicle request in Community Transit Grant Program (CTGP) applications through MassDOT. CTGP vehicles are paid for by MassDOT (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2025c).

In addition to these connections, MeVa has partnered with MVPC to launch ferryboat service along the Merrimack River between Haverhill, Amesbury, and Newburyport. The service is intended to complete a one-way trip in just over one hour and carry a minimum of 16 passengers, including accessible spaces. Three solar-powered electric ferries will operate this service. The project is supported by an FTA Low-No Emissions grant awarded to MeVa in 2022 and is currently in the business proposal development stage.

Finally, OurBus intercity bus company provides service to New York City from the Methuen Park & Ride on Pelham Street (served by MeVa Route 10).

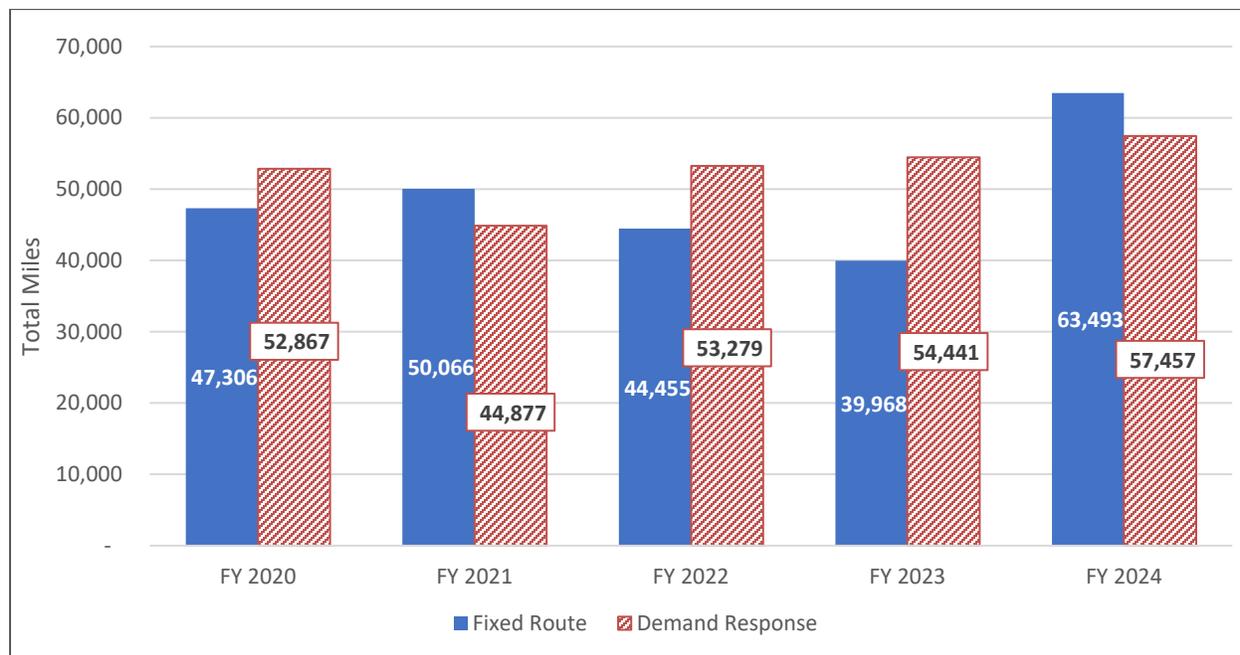
4.4 Asset Management

MeVa manages transit operations and its fleet of 106 revenue vehicles out of its facility in Haverhill. This section highlights the data MeVa 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 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 across MeVa's fixed route system decreased between FY 2020 and FY 2023 to reach a low of just under 40,000 miles in FY 2023, pointing to a rise in the frequency of road calls (Figure 24). From FY 2023 to FY 2024, miles between road calls on fixed route increased by 59 percent, a significant improvement from a maintenance and operations perspective. Across MeVa's demand response system, the greatest frequency of road calls occurred in FY 2021, with miles traveled between road calls reaching a low of 44,887. Since that year, the miles traveled between road calls increased annually, indicating a decrease in the frequency of road calls. Most significantly, the miles traveled between road calls on demand response increased by 19 percent between FY 2021 and FY 2022.

Figure 24. Miles Between Road Calls (FY 2020-FY 2024)



Source: MeVa

Note: Fixed route statistics are inclusive of commuter bus.

The FTA standard for preventive maintenance is that revenue vehicles undergo regular maintenance service according to a schedule based on vehicle miles. The minimum percentage of preventive maintenance completed on time is 80 percent, meaning 80 percent of vehicles have received preventative maintenance service within the scheduled mileage. MeVa tracked preventative maintenance in FY 2023 and FY 2024 and exceeded the FTA minimum, recording 100 percent of preventive maintenance completed on time in both years.

4.4.2 Vehicles

At the end of FY 2024, MeVa’s fleet consisted of 106 active revenue vehicles, with buses and cutaway vehicles making up a significant portion of the rolling stock (Table 13). Per the vehicle replacement standards defined in MeVa’s Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan (MVMPO 2025), 12 percent of the agency’s buses and 10 percent of cutaways are at or past their useful life benchmark, which exceeds MeVa’s target of maintaining zero percent of both bus and cutaway vehicles at or past their useful life.

MeVa operates 83 revenue vehicles in maximum service — 47 for fixed route and 36 for demand response, inclusive of MeVa’s non-dedicated vendor-owned fleet. MeVa contracts out demand response trips to a third-party vendor when necessary to meet demand. While the current spare ratio for MeVa’s fixed route service appears to be artificially high at 44.7 percent, this reflects MeVa’s proactive capital planning, which accelerated vehicle procurement over the last couple of years in anticipation of a significant growth in service. The spare ratio for demand response service is 5.5 percent. The spare ratio is calculated based on the FTA definition, where spare ratio is equivalent to the difference between vehicles available for maximum service — only accounting for MeVa owned vehicles — and vehicles operated in maximum service, divided by vehicles operated in maximum service. MeVa has 68 vehicles available for maximum service for fixed route service and 38 vehicles available for maximum service for demand response service, for a total of 106 vehicles available for maximum service.

Table 13. Equipment Inventory Summary (FY 2025)

Vehicle Type	Total Number	Average Age (Years)	Average Mileage	Useful Life Benchmark (Years)	Percentage at or past Useful Life Benchmark
Bus	68	7	201,399	14	12%
Cutaway	30	7	167,810	10	10%
Sport Utility Vehicle	8	1	9,746	8	0%
Sport Utility Vehicle and Pick-Up Truck (Non-Revenue)	12	7	75,626	8	58%
Automobile (Non-Revenue)	1	12	10,039	8	100%

Source: MeVa

4.4.3 Facilities

MeVa owns its Maintenance and Administrative Facility (Headquarters) in Haverhill, the transit hub/parking garage at McGovern Transportation Center in Lawrence (Figure 25), the Nicholas J. Costello Transit Center in Amesbury, as well as two other parking facilities — one garage in Haverhill and one surface lot in Lawrence (Table 14). MeVa’s Headquarters, built in 1979, has a Transit Economic Requirements Model (TERM) rating of 4, on a scale of 1 to 5, for its administrative building and maintenance garage, indicating the facility is in good condition. The wash bay and warehouse each have a TERM rating of 3, indicating the facility is in adequate condition. Importantly, the garage does not have sufficient capacity to store all MeVa vehicles indoors, and the building configuration requires vehicles to be backed into the facility for storage (Figure 26).

Figure 25. Buses at McGovern Facility



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 26. Buses at Haverhill Garage



Source: AECOM (2025)

The four other MeVa facilities are rated a 4 on the TERM scale, indicating these facilities are in good condition.

Table 14. Facility Inventory Summary

Facility Name	Year Built	Type	Location	Landowner the Facility is on	Direct Capital Responsibility	TERM Rating
Haverhill Parking	2011	Parking Garage	53 Granite Street, Haverhill MA 01835	MeVa	Yes	4
McGovern Transportation Center	2005	Intermodal Transit Station	211 Merrimack Street, Lawrence MA 01843	MeVa	Yes	4
Nicholas J. Costello Transit Center	2012	Other Transit Facility	36 Elm Street, Amesbury MA 01913	MeVa	Yes	4
Gateway Parking	2010	Parking Lot	1 General Street, Lawrence MA 01840	MeVa	Yes	4
Headquarters	1979	Bus Maintenance Garage / Administrative Building	85-86 Railroad Avenue, Haverhill MA 01835	MeVa	Yes	4
Headquarters	1979	Bus Maintenance Wash Bay / Warehouse	87-88 Railroad Avenue, Haverhill MA 01835	MeVa	Yes	3

Source: MassDOT, MeVa

4.4.4 Technology

MeVa uses a range of technologies to support its operations systemwide as outlined in Table 15. On the fixed route side, MeVa employs GMV Syncromatics software for automated next-stop announcements, automatic vehicle location (AVL), automatic passenger counters (APCs), dispatching, and real-time arrival digital displays at McGovern. Transit App is available for mobile trip planning and service alerts. As of November 2025, MeVa has also begun installation of MirrorLESS mirror technology onto its existing fleet to improve visibility on buses and reduce blind spots.

For demand response, MeVa replaced its vehicle tracking and dispatching software with ADEPT IQ as of 2025. MeVa also upgraded its in-vehicle tablets to support the new software.

Additional technology components of MeVa’s system include mobile device management, in-vehicle and facility cameras, a web-based phone system, radios, accounting software, and air sensors to monitor air quality in MeVa’s garage and maintenance building.

Table 15. Types of Technology

Technology	Technology Available (Yes/No)	Vendor	Comments
AVL	Yes	GMV/Syncromatics	N/A
APC	Yes	GMV/Syncromatics	N/A
Mobile trip planning app	Yes	Transit App	Transit App uses open-source data. No current formalized relationship between MeVa and Transit App
Automated announcements	Yes	GMV/Syncromatics	N/A
Next-stop announcements	Yes	GMV/Syncromatics	On-board and at McGovern
On-board cameras	Yes	Seon	N/A
Facility video cameras	Yes	Seon	N/A
Service alert system	Yes	MeVa website, Transit App, Twitter, Facebook, Local Media, GMV	Function available through the Transit App and through GMV technology
Dispatching software (fixed route)	Yes	GMV/Syncromatics	N/A
Dispatching software (demand response)	Yes	ADEPT IQ	N/A
Fixed route scheduling	No	N/A	Exploring potential to secure long-term solution.
Parts and maintenance	Yes	Ron Turley Associates	N/A
Vehicle-mounted collision warning or tracking systems	Yes	ADEPT IQ/StrataGen	N/A
File management	Yes	Dropbox	Use for files and video transfer of security video.
Radios	Yes	Kenwood	N/A
MirrorLESS Mirrors	Yes	SafeFleet	Utilized on board fixed route vehicles.

Source: MeVa (2025)
 N/A = Not Available

4.5 Policies and Procedures

4.5.1 Riders and Operations

MeVa’s policies and procedures detail how riders should use MeVa facilities and how MeVa conducts operations (Table 16). These policies can be found on MeVa’s website. As of early 2026, MeVa is updating existing policies and procedures, including but not limited to the Code of Conduct, Lost and Found, and How to Ride. These updates, when finalized, will be posted on the MeVa website.

Table 16. Policies and Procedures

Policy	Description
Code of Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service animals are allowed on MeVa buses but other small animals must be caged and held in the lap by a rider • As of April 2025, open strollers are allowed. Passengers may board with strollers in the unfolded (open) position, as long as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The stroller is occupied by a child at all times, secured with a safety belt. – Strollers used for groceries, pets, or as empty strollers, as well as baby push cars, are not permitted in the open position. – Only one child per stroller designed for one child. Double strollers must follow size guidelines. <p>Designated Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Placement: When available, strollers should be placed in the designated wheelchair priority seating area. – Priority: ADA passengers always have priority in these areas. – Operator’s discretion: If necessary, operators may ask passengers with strollers to move or fold them to accommodate a wheelchair user or ADA passenger. – Limitations: Only one stroller is allowed in the priority seating area at a time, and only standard-size strollers are permitted. Oversized strollers, grocery carts, pet strollers, empty strollers, or wagons are not allowed. – Folding: Strollers must be free of items and easy to fold quickly if needed for ADA passengers. <p>Securing the Stroller</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Positioning: Strollers must not block aisles, doors, or emergency exits. – Safety: The stroller must face forward and be held securely by the passenger to prevent rolling. – Brakes: Every stroller must have brakes and brakes must be engaged at all times. <p>Passenger Responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Care and supervision: The passenger is responsible for the child’s care and supervision at all times. – Physical contact: Passengers must maintain physical contact with the stroller at all times (e.g., keeping one hand on it). – Operator assistance: Transit operators cannot assist with boarding, lifting, or securing strollers.

Policy	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unattended strollers: Unattended strollers must be folded immediately for safety. <p>Size & Type Restrictions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Size limit: Strollers should not exceed reasonable dimensions (e.g., 48" long by 24" wide). - Oversized strollers: Multi-child or oversized strollers that do not fit safely on the bus must be folded before boarding. <p>Safety First</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crowded Buses: If the bus is crowded or safety is at risk, operators may request that the stroller be folded to ensure a safe environment for all passengers. - Emergency Situations: In the event of an emergency, strollers must not obstruct aisles, doorways, or emergency exits to allow for safe evacuation. - Passenger Alertness: Passengers with strollers must remain alert to prevent tipping or rolling. - Use the Front Door: Passengers with strollers must always use the front door when exiting the bus to help prevent stroller rollovers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaping, smoking, drug use, eating, and drinking are not allowed on the bus • Disruptive behavior, such as cursing and littering, is not permitted on the bus • Listening to music and talking on the phone is permitted at an appropriate volume so as to not disturb other riders.
Social Media Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MeVa reserves the right to delete posts that impede public safety and operations, invade personal privacy, are obscene, infringe on copyright, or disparage someone based on characteristics protected under law
Flag Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MeVa currently operates an almost complete flag stop bus system. There are currently a very limited number of fixed stops. However, MeVa is in the process of transitioning toward fixed bus stops, with a plan currently under development and rollout anticipated to begin by early summer 2026.
Bike Rack Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riders must load and unload their bike. For safety reasons, bus operators cannot get off the bus to assist you. • Bikes must be transported on these racks and are not allowed inside of the bus. • Children 10 and younger must be accompanied by adult to load and unload bikes. • If the bike rack is full, you will have to wait for the next bus. • Motorized bikes, such as mopeds and motorcycles, are not allowed on any bus rack. • There is no charge for using the bus bike rack.
Fare Free Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All MeVa bus and paratransit bus services are fare-free for all riders, meaning no payment is required to board any vehicle. This policy

Policy	Description
	<p>applies to all routes and services operated by MeVa during regular operating hours, with no distinction based on age, income, or disability status. Following a three-year demonstration, MeVa’s Board voted to implement a permanent fare-free policy in February 2025, making MeVa the first RTA in the Commonwealth to go fare-free on a permanent basis: https://mevatransit.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/MeVa-Fare-Policy-Statement_adopted-2_6_2025.pdf.</p>
Title VI Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MeVa fully complies with Title VI, and related statutes and regulations, in performing all services, programs and activities. MeVa operates without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.
Vehicle Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MeVa will no longer procure high floor revenue vehicles for both fixed route and demand response.

MeVa complies with Massachusetts Public Records Law, federal Title VI guidelines, and the ADA regarding paratransit eligibility and fares. More information can be found on MeVa’s website (<https://mevatransit.com/>).

4.5.2 Safety and Security

Safety is a top priority at MeVa. Since the 2020 CRTP, MeVa’s Safety and Training office has expanded from one person to three, reflecting both MeVa’s commitment to safety and its response to growth in service and workforce. All new drivers complete a rigorous training program before operating in revenue service. This training includes at least 200 hours of behind-the-wheel instruction, as well as a classroom component. All drivers participate in regular refresher courses, covering topics such as defensive driving, de-escalation techniques, and weather-related operations. MeVa’s Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) committee meets regularly to review and enhance safety procedures including an annual review and report on driver assaults required by FTA. MeVa’s Vehicle Accident Prevention committee conducts comprehensive reviews of all incidents.

To improve visibility on buses and reduce blind spots, MeVa has installed SafeFleet camera-based MirrorLESS mirror systems on all 45 of its bus rapid transit-style buses (all buses acquired since/manufactured since 2022), representing about two-thirds of the fleet (Figure 27). As of July 2024, a new Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) ruling allowed for the removal of physical mirrors if MirrorLESS mirror technology is installed in transit buses or other approved vehicles. Furthermore, MeVa has initiated conversation with MassDOT and the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) to promote the issuance of an official exemption in Massachusetts allowing eligible vehicles to install MirrorLESS mirror technology as an alternative to rear-vision mirrors. A state-level exemption would follow the lead of the New York Department of Motor Vehicles in issuing such an exemption.

Figure 27. MirrorLESS Mirror Bus Technology Mounted on MeVa Bus

Source: AECOM (2025)

MeVa's PTASP defines specific safety goals for the RTA. MeVa has a target of zero fatalities for both fixed route and demand response. In FY 2022 and FY 2023, MeVa did not record any fatalities on either service type; however, one fatality did occur in FY 2024 on fixed route. Data for fiscal years prior to FY 2022 were not recorded (MVMPO 2025).

MeVa aims to limit injuries to 2 per 100,000 miles on fixed route and zero injuries on demand response services. In FY 2022, no injuries occurred on either service type, while three injuries were recorded on fixed route services in both FY 2023 and FY 2024. No injuries occurred on demand response services in either FY 2023 or FY 2024. Data for fiscal years prior to FY 2022 were not recorded.

MeVa sets target limits for safety events for both demand response and fixed route services. A safety event is defined by FTA as "all safety events meeting an NTD major event threshold (events reported on the S&S-40 form)" (FTA 2020). MeVa targets four safety events for fixed route and two for demand response. In FY 2022, no safety events occurred on either service type, while one safety event was recorded in FY 2023 on demand response services. Six safety events were recorded on fixed route, and two safety events occurred on demand response in FY 2024. Data for fiscal years prior to FY 2022 were not recorded.

MeVa also tracks preventable accidents systemwide. Across the five-year period, the rate of preventable accidents remained below one accident per 100,000 miles. In FY 2022, MeVa's rate of preventable accidents peaked at 0.95 accidents per 100,000 miles then dropped to a period low rate of 0.71 preventable accidents per 100,000 miles in the following fiscal year. The preventable accident rate rose slightly in FY 2024 to 0.76 preventable accidents per 100,000 miles.

4.6 Peer Agency Analysis

A peer agency analysis assesses transit agency peers relative to MeVa that operate in a similar operating environment. Although each transit system is unique, the general similarities and differences provide useful insight into comparative transit statistics. Peers were chosen based

on the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates (US Census Bureau 2023) and reflect similarities in service area size, service area population density, as well as transit operating characteristics including ridership, operating budget, revenue hours and revenue miles, and farebox revenue. Most peer agencies in this cohort, like MeVa, are small to mid-sized operations that operate within a large urbanized area dominated by a larger, legacy system at the center (MBTA, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority [MARTA] in Georgia, and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority [WMATA] in Virginia).

Table 17 highlights Census data for the five peer agencies in comparison to MeVa. MeVa has the third lowest service area population and the second lowest population density, but MeVa’s population growth is highest relative to the other systems by a wide margin. MeVa’s poverty rate is above the peer average of 8.5 percent.

Table 17. Peer Systems Census Data (FY 2023)

System	Town	State	Population	Population Density	Population Growth Rate (2018-2023)	Percent Poverty
Loudoun County	Leesburg	VA	373,694	719	0.0%	4.5%
Arlington County, Virginia	Arlington	VA	234,200	9,008	3.5%	6.9%
Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners	Lawrenceville	GA	1,055,240	5,025	14.7%	11.7%
Prince George's County	Upper Marlboro	MD	967,201	1,986	6.0%	11.0%
Cobb County	Marietta	GA	688,078	3,277	0.0%	8.4%
<i>Peer Average</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>63,683</i>	<i>4,003</i>	<i>4.8%</i>	<i>8.5%</i>
Merrimack Valley Transit	Haverhill	MA	398,382	1,771	30.0%	9.4%

Source: NTD (2023), US Census Bureau, MeVa

The operating data by peer are shown in Table 18. MeVa’s annual ridership and the proportion of demand response trips provided are both second highest among the peer systems. Meanwhile, both MeVa’s operated revenue miles and revenue hours are the third lowest and below the peer averages for both metrics. MeVa has the second lowest operating budget compared to the peer systems and, in FY 2023, was the only system among its peers operating fare-free service on all services except the Boston Commuter route, which ceased operations in September 2022. This explains the gap in MeVa’s farebox revenue relative to that of its peers (averaging nearly \$1.8 million). To gain riders following the pandemic, one peer, Prince George County, implemented a reduced fare program and only reinstated approximately 80 percent of pre-COVID routes, which contributed to its reduced farebox revenue compared to previous years. As of December 2025, Prince George County also moved to a fully fare-free model.

Table 18. Peer Systems Operating Data (FY 2023)

System	Ridership (Unlinked Passenger Trips)	Percentage of Passenger Trips Demand Response	Operating Budget	Revenue Miles Operated	Revenue Hours Operated	Farebox Revenue
Loudoun County	526,819	2.84%	\$18,301,044	2,090,842	108,246	\$1,897,282
Arlington County, Virginia	2,097,034	2.29%	\$25,791,453	2,176,931	213,565	\$2,672,730
Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners	1,177,163	2.54%	\$24,279,961	2,621,613	156,634	\$2,271,145
Prince George's County	1,800,711	2.12%	\$39,042,475	3,245,730	276,295	\$128,872
Cobb County	854,074	6.00%	\$29,434,158	3,637,436	243,062	\$1,859,518
<i>Peer Average</i>	<i>1,291,160</i>	<i>3.16%</i>	<i>\$27,369,818</i>	<i>2,754,510</i>	<i>199,560</i>	<i>\$1,765,909</i>
Merrimack Valley Transit	1,880,034	4.60%	\$20,011,555	2,383,364	192,819	\$4,229

Source: NTD (2023), MassDOT (for MeVa values)

Table 19 highlights how MeVa compares with its five peer agencies when considering metrics related to ridership, operating costs, subsidies, and farebox recovery. MeVa's performance for passengers per revenue mile, passengers per revenue hour, cost per passenger, and subsidy per passenger are surpassed only by Arlington County's system performance. The cost per revenue hour for MeVa's system is the third lowest, after Arlington County and Cobb County. MeVa has the lowest farebox recovery rate due to its fare-free operations.

Table 19. Peer System Comparison Metrics (FY 2023)

System	Passengers/ Revenue Mile	Passengers/ Revenue Hour	Cost/ Revenue Hour	Cost/ Passenger	Subsidy/ Passenger	Farebox Recovery
Loudoun County	0.25	4.87	\$169.07	\$34.74	\$31.14	10.37%
Arlington County, Virginia	0.96	9.82	\$120.77	\$12.30	\$11.02	10.36%
Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners	0.45	7.52	\$155.01	\$20.63	\$18.70	9.35%
Prince George's County	0.55	6.52	\$141.31	\$21.68	\$21.61	0.33%
Cobb County	0.23	3.51	\$121.10	\$34.46	\$32.29	6.32%
Merrimack Valley Transit	0.79	9.75	\$103.78	\$10.64	\$10.64	0.02%

Source: NTD, MassDOT (for MeVa values)

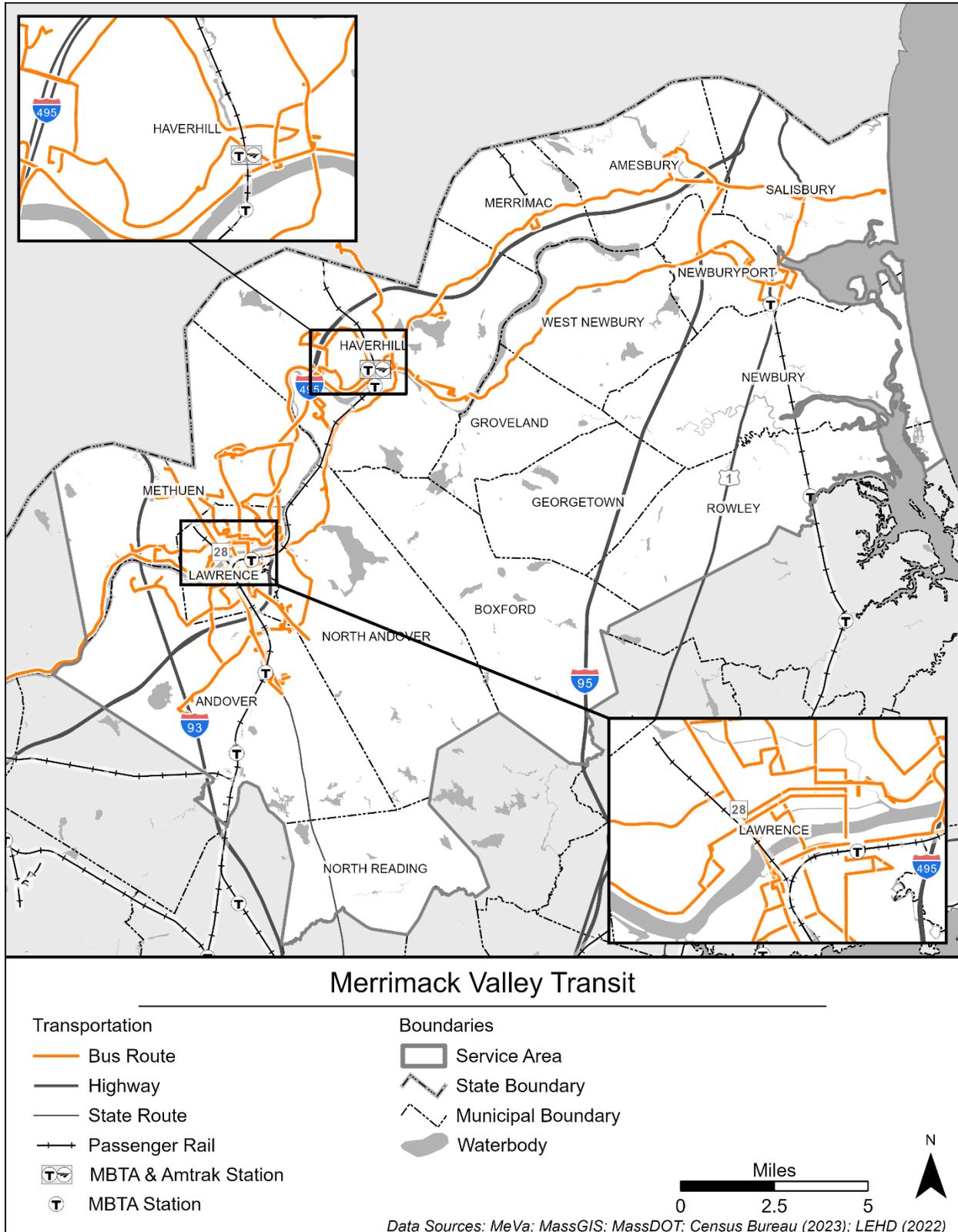
5 Market Evaluation

This chapter includes an overview of the existing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics for the MeVa service area as shown on Figure 28. 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 released in 2023 (US Census Bureau 2023), the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) 2022 data set (US Census Bureau 2025b), 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 planning process. MeVa conducted a focus group, open house, and public surveys (rider and non-rider) and presented at a Board meeting to better understand regional mobility needs. High-level findings from those activities are presented in this chapter, and the full list of public comments is included in Appendix C. Together, the demographic analysis and engagement results directly inform the needs and recommendations presented in Chapter 8.

As shown on Figure 28, MeVa has 16 communities in its service area. MeVa fixed route service spans 11 of these communities, connecting transit hubs in Lawrence and Haverhill to the surrounding communities of Andover, Methuen, North Andover, Groveland, West Newbury, Newburyport, Salisbury, Amesbury, and Merrimac.

Figure 28. Overview of MeVa Service Area



Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1 Demographic Analysis

The demographic analysis considers several key population indicators of transit use and demand to guide MeVa'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 most suitable types of transit to offer people in areas of different density. Density is also a strong proxy for transit-supportive land uses, which is indicative of areas where transit operates at peak efficiency.
- **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. At the request of MeVa's Board, a separate demographic analysis was prepared for residents 75 years of age or older, as people older than 75 have overlapping but different needs than people between 65 and 75 years of age.
- **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) and 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 MeVa to better contextualize their existing service and best meet the unmet needs of different segments of the community. Following engagement with MeVa's Board in September 2025, the demographic analysis was expanded when applicable to present the data in two ways: percentages and raw totals. Maps showing percentages can highlight areas with higher relative need, but they may overemphasize locations with smaller populations. To address this limitation, maps with raw totals are included to provide additional context and help balance interpretation by showing the absolute scale of need. Sections 5.1.1 through 5.1.10 illustrate the distribution of each demographic indicator throughout MeVa's service area.

5.1.1 Population Density

The population density, or population per square mile in the MeVa service area is shown on Figure 29. Population density is highest in the City of Lawrence, which is the heart of the MeVa service area. The central hub for fixed route transit and the Lawrence MBTA Station are adjacent to each other in downtown Lawrence, facilitating multimodal transfers. Additional pockets of concentrated population are in Haverhill and Newburyport. Fixed routes are currently available in these areas with greater population density.

5.1.2 Older Adult Population

To understand the older adult population in MeVa's service area, maps assessing two different age thresholds for older adults were prepared to understand the specific needs of the aging population. Older adults are likely to be transit dependent and/or prefer utilizing transit to maintain their independence to access medical appointments, grocery shopping, and recreation. For older adults located within the fixed route service area who may not be able to access the service, MeVa offers ADA and non-ADA paratransit services.

As shown on Figure 30 and Figure 31, older adults were defined as people 65 years of age or older. Based on this definition, high proportions of population over 65 exist in parts of North Andover, Amesbury, Haverhill, and Lawrence, and high counts are prevalent in parts of North Andover, Haverhill, Lawrence, Rowley, Salisbury, Newburyport, West Newbury, and Merrimac.

As shown on Figure 32 and Figure 33, older adults were also defined as people 75 years of age and older. The highest proportions of older adults 75 and older are found in the same pockets of North Andover, Haverhill, and Lawrence as those with high proportions of population over 65, and the highest counts are present in these same areas as well as in parts of Newburyport and Merrimac.

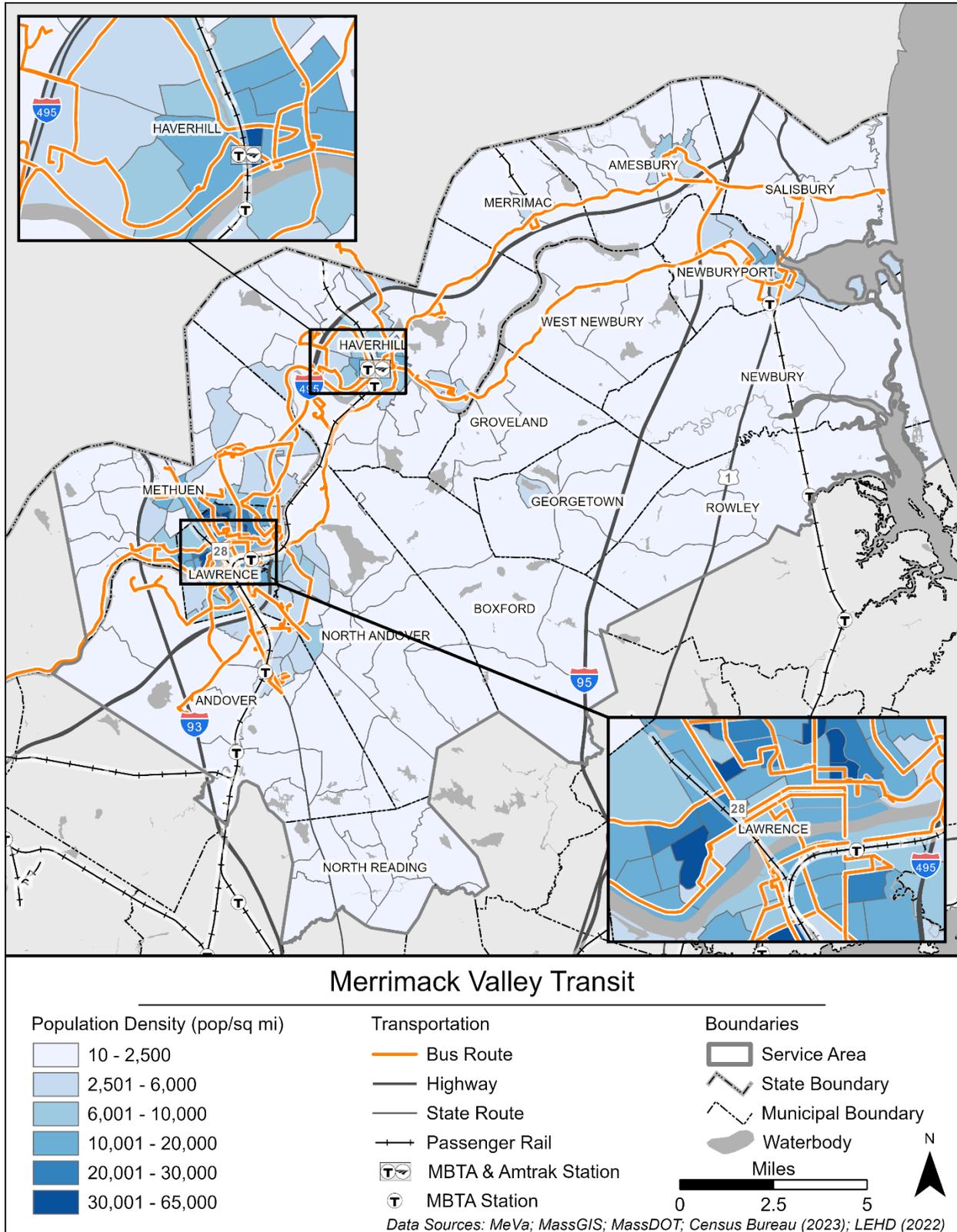
5.1.3 Youth Population

The youth population, defined as the population under the age of 18, is shown on Figure 34 and Figure 35. Youth are likely to utilize transit as a reliable and convenient form of transportation in lieu of car ownership. Across much of MeVa's service area, the proportion of youth population is consistently in the 16 to 30 percent range, with small pockets of high proportions of youth population located in central Lawrence and Andover, North Andover, and Haverhill. When considering total numbers, more segments of MeVa's service area stand out as having the highest numbers of people under 18, including parts of Lawrence, Andover, North Andover, North Reading, Haverhill, and Groveland.

5.1.4 Median Household Income

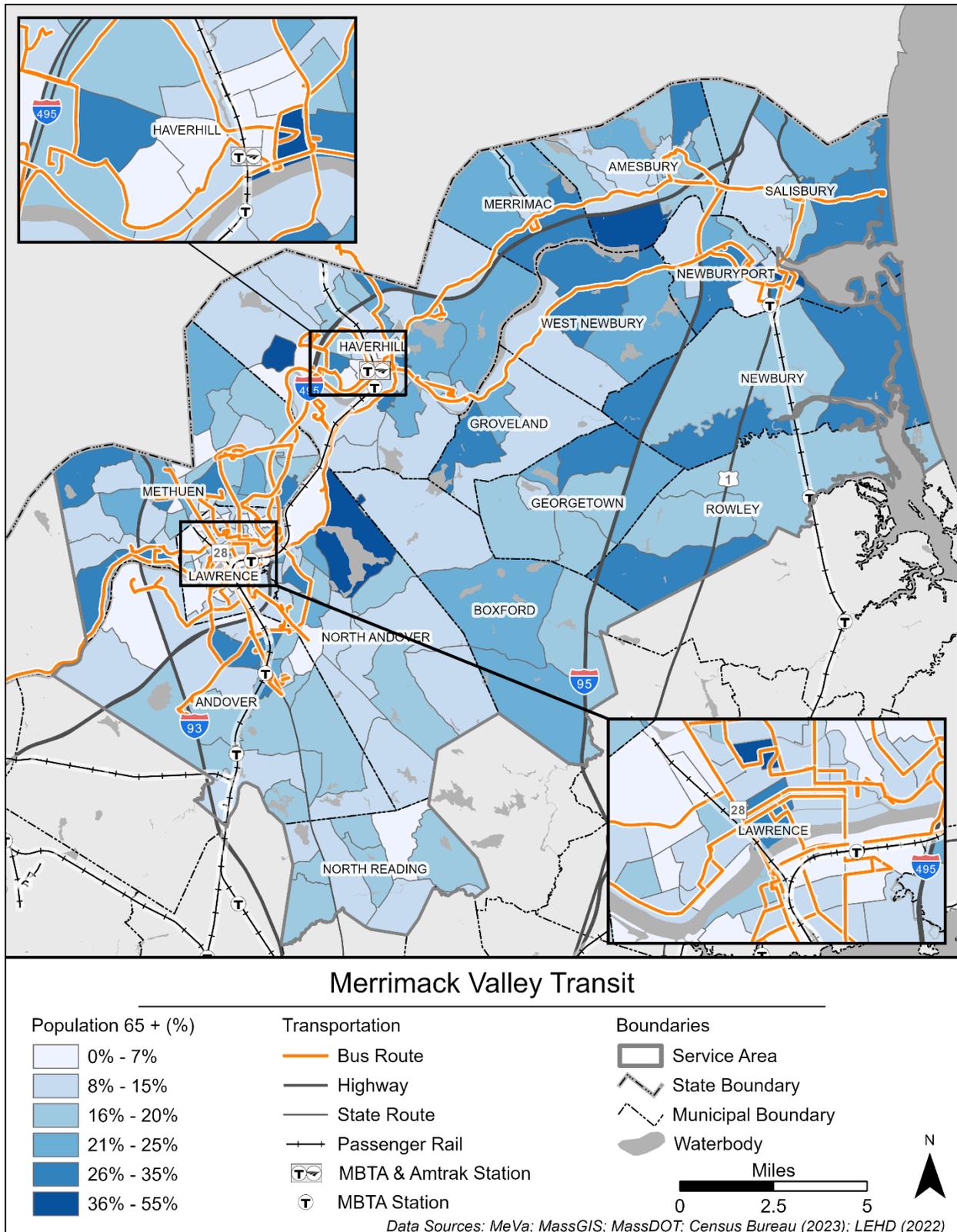
Median household income is based on household size and reported income. As shown on Figure 36, households with median incomes below \$60,000 are concentrated in the City of Lawrence and portions of Haverhill, Methuen, Salisbury, and Amesbury. High median household incomes are concentrated in the Towns of Andover, Boxford, North Andover, and Newbury.

Figure 29. Population Density



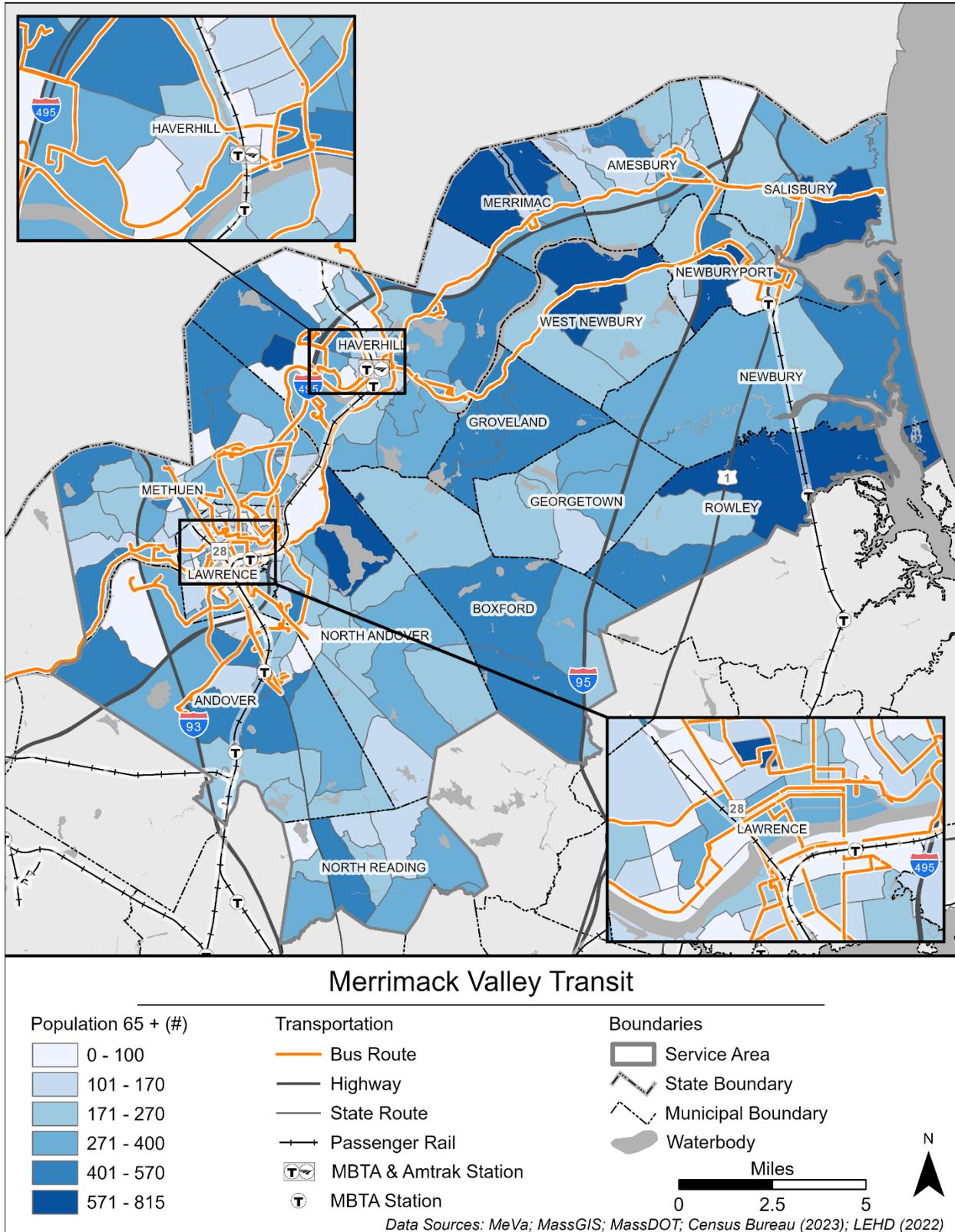
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 30. Older Adult Population 65+ (Percentage)



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 31. Older Adult Population 65+ (Number)



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 32. Older Adult Population 75+ (Percentage)

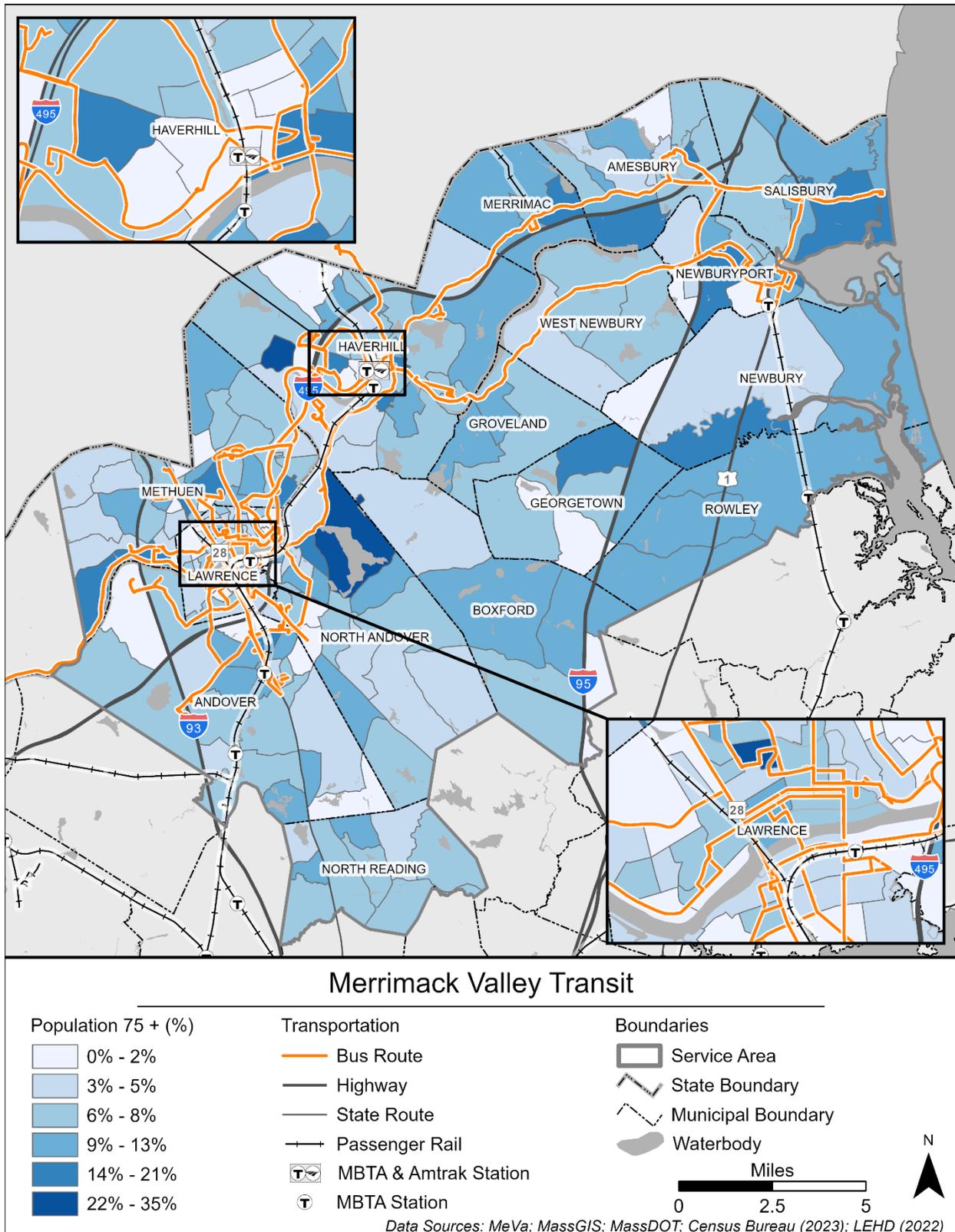
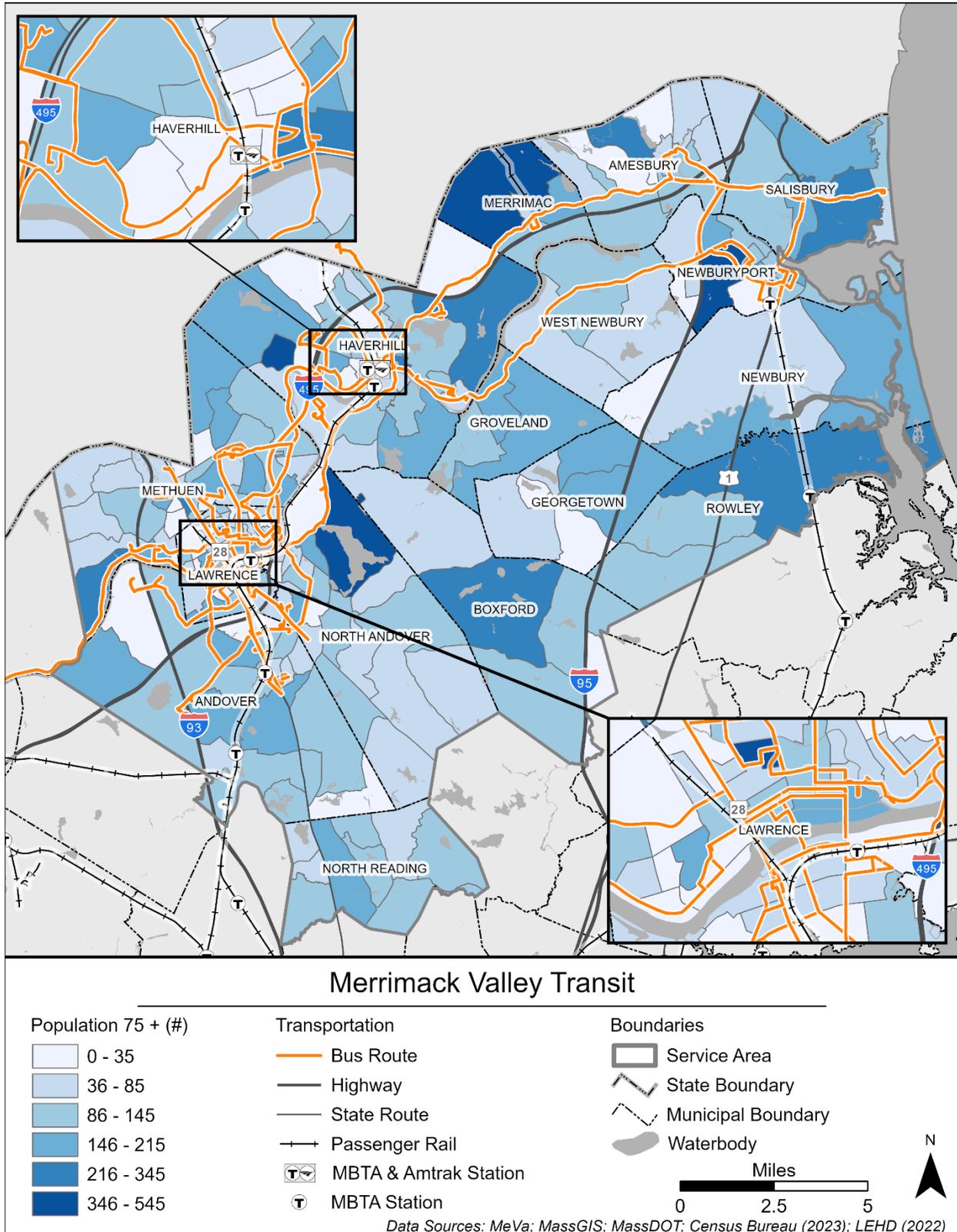
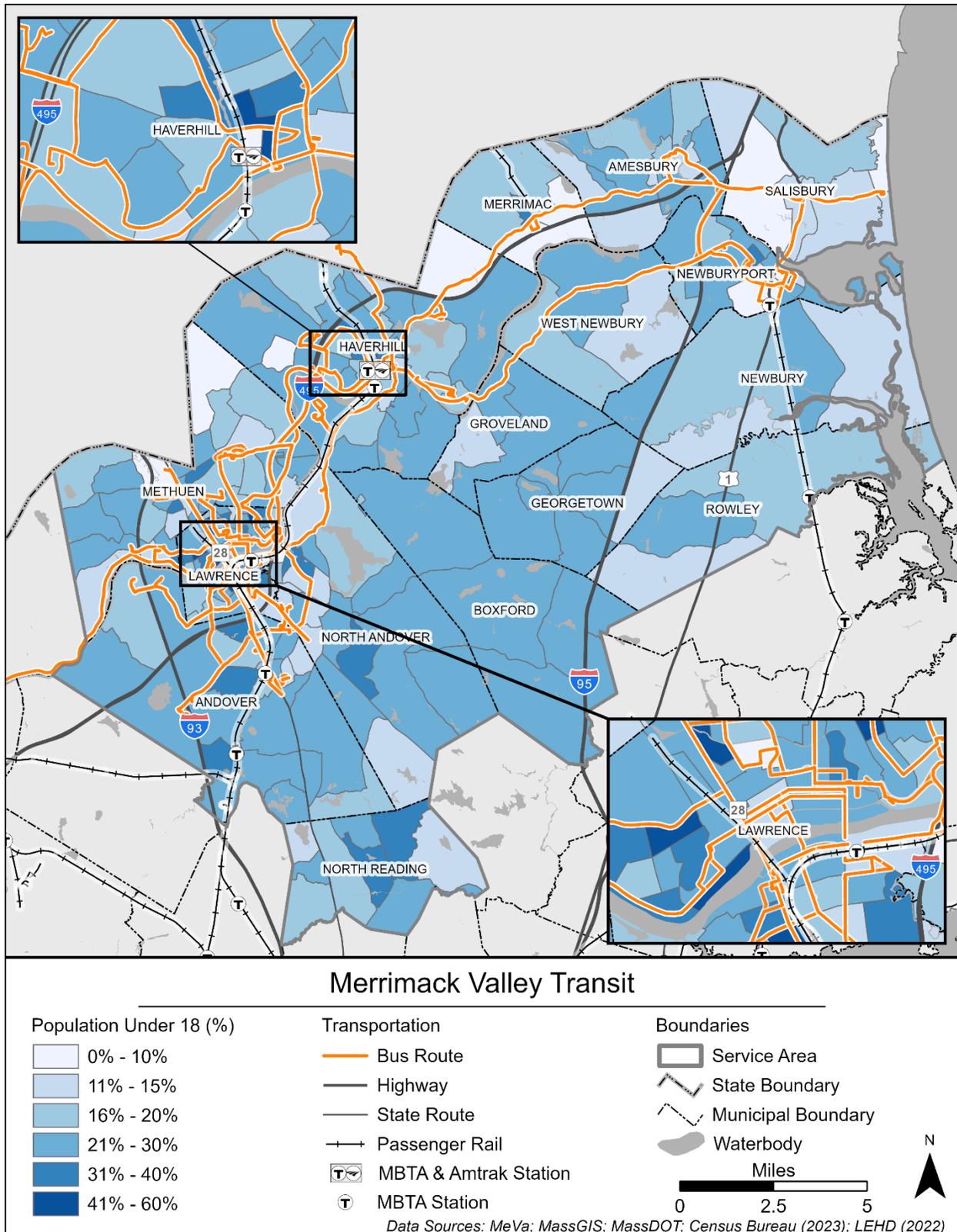


Figure 33. Older Adult Population 75+ (Number)



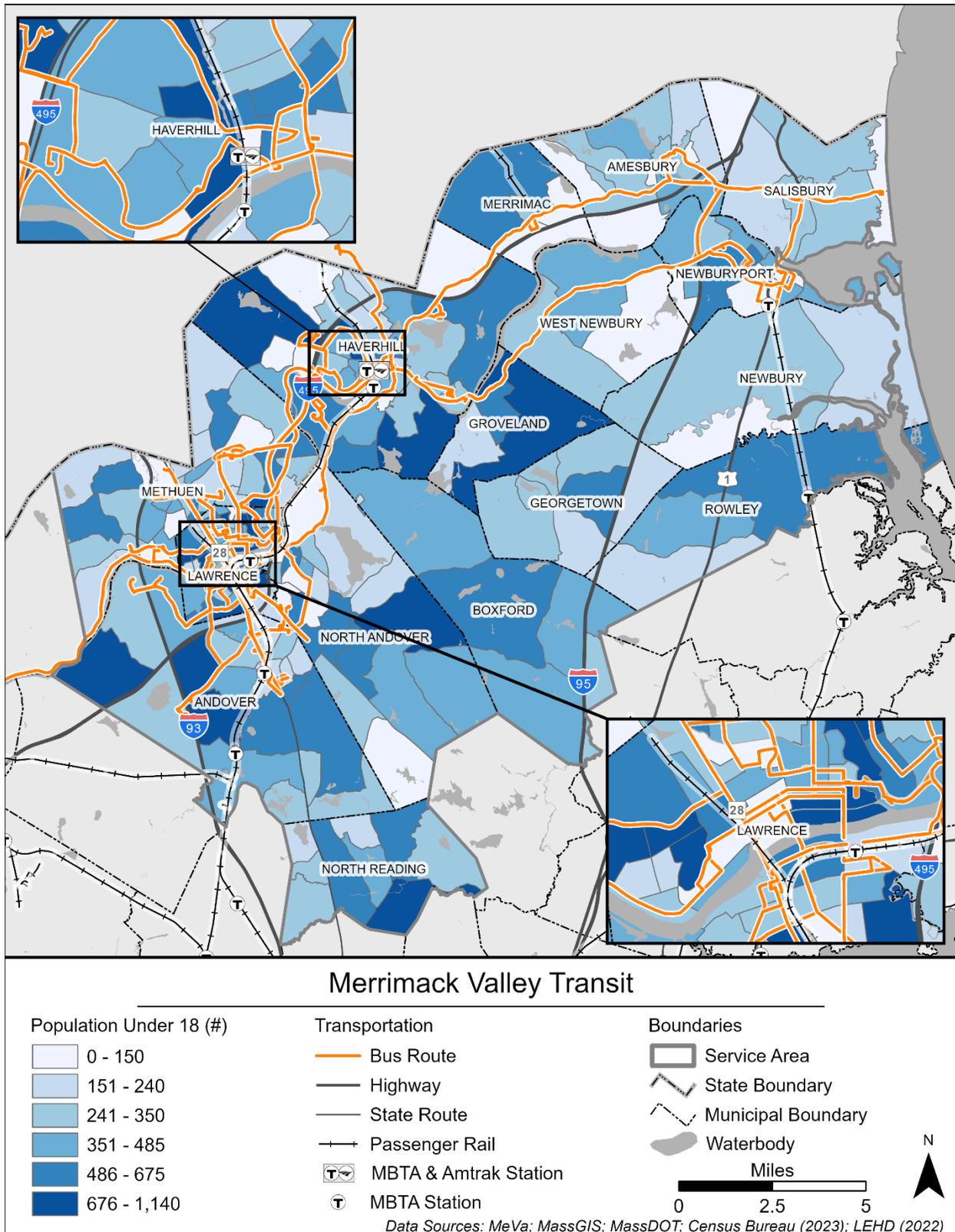
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 34. Youth Population Under 18 (Percentage)



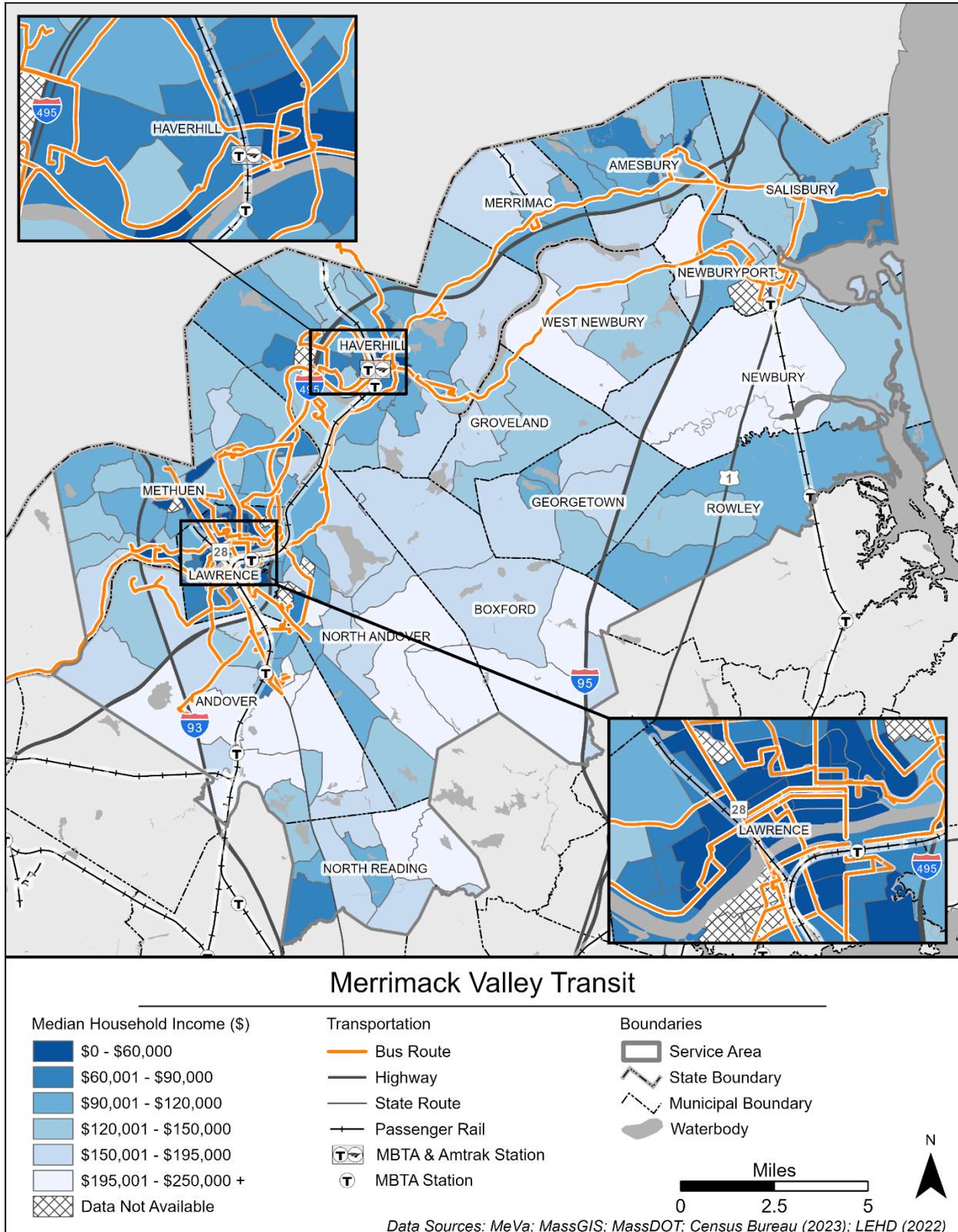
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 35. Youth Population Under 18 (Number)



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 36. Median Household Income



Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.5 Low-Income Population

MeVa defines low income as households whose median household income is less than \$74,104. For MeVa, low-income block groups have a larger than average low-income population, or those whose median household incomes are less than 65 percent of the median income of MeVa's service area. Figure 37 and Figure 38 show the low-income population in the MeVa service area. One pocket of Lawrence exceeds all other parts of MeVa's service area in count of low-income population, with additional higher count pockets in North Andover, Methuen, and Haverhill. Some of these pockets overlap the areas containing high proportions of low-income population. Generally, areas with high proportions of low-income population are concentrated in Lawrence, Merrimac, and Haverhill, with some additional areas in Methuen, North Andover, and Amesbury.

5.1.6 Zero-Vehicle Households

The highest concentration of households without access to a personal vehicle is in Lawrence, as shown on both Figure 39 and Figure 40, particularly across the Merrimack River from the Lawrence MBTA Station. Outside of Lawrence, pockets of medium-high proportions of zero-vehicle households are located in Haverhill, North Andover, North Reading, and Methuen, and pockets of medium-high counts of zero-vehicle households are limited to Haverhill and Methuen.

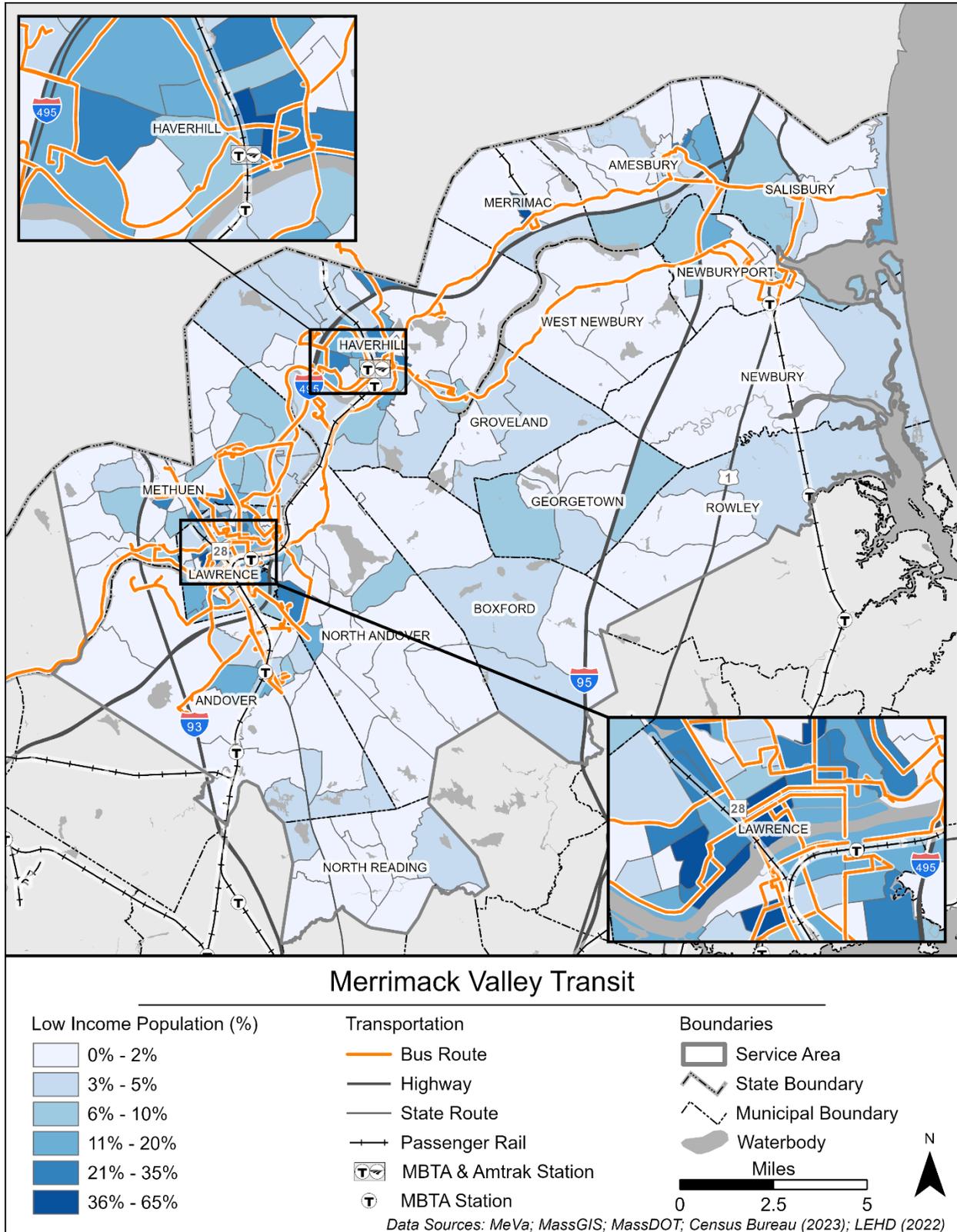
5.1.7 Population Other Than Non-Hispanic White

Figure 41 and Figure 42 show the concentration of demographic groups other than non-Hispanic white. These populations are concentrated in the gateway cities of Lawrence, Haverhill, and parts of Methuen.

5.1.8 Adult Disabled Population

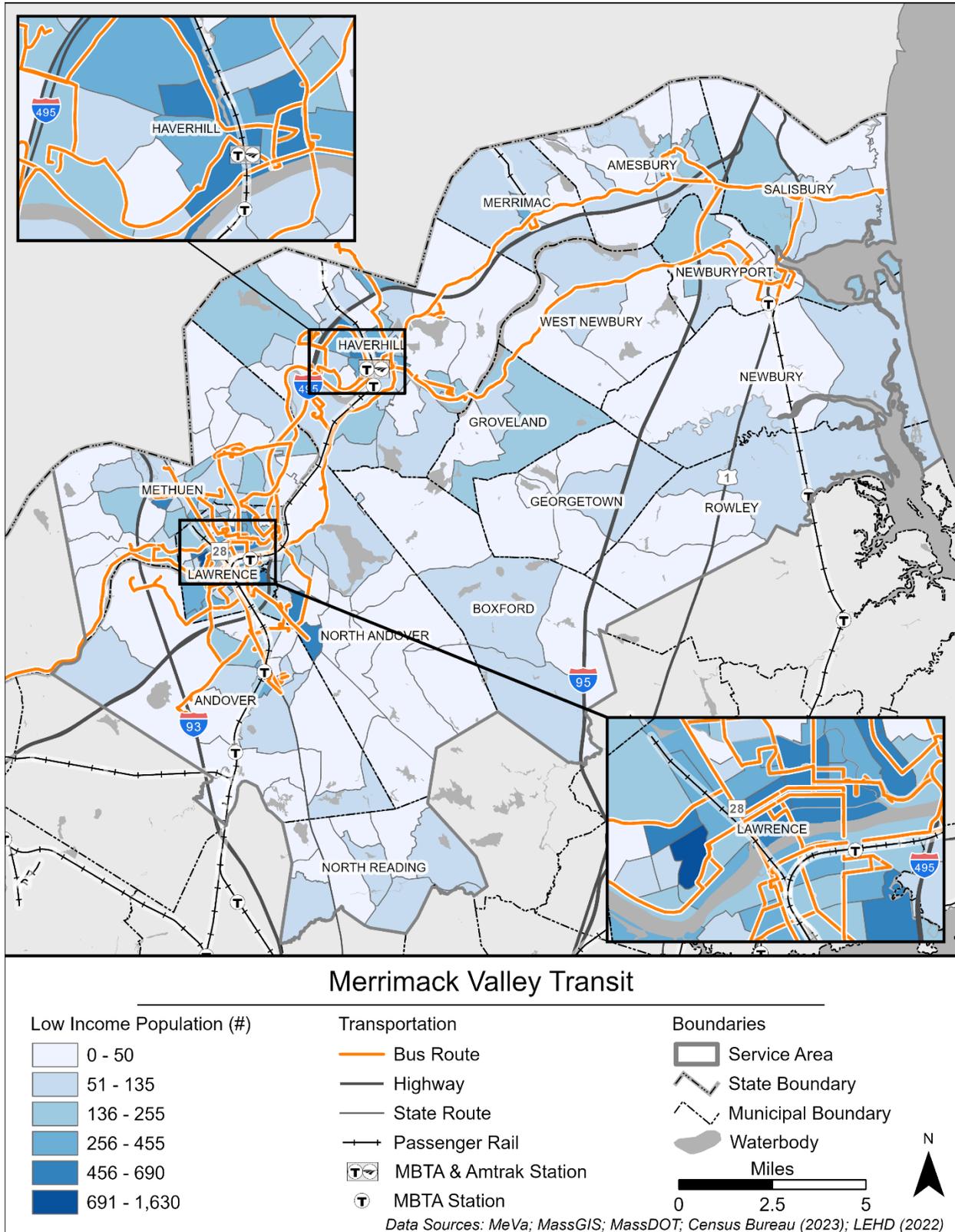
MassDOT and MeVa utilize data on older adults, persons with disabilities, and low-income populations to identify opportunities to improve mobility across the service area. The adult disabled population, defined as adults who are identified as mentally or physically disabled, is shown on Figure 43 and Figure 44. Comparatively high proportions of adults with disabilities are concentrated in pockets of Lawrence, Haverhill, Merrimac, Salisbury, and North Andover. When considering the adults with disabilities by count, additional parts of MeVa's service area emerge as having higher numbers, including pockets in North Reading, Boxford, Methuen, Rowley, Merrimac, Amesbury, and Salisbury.

Figure 37. Low-Income Population (Percentage)



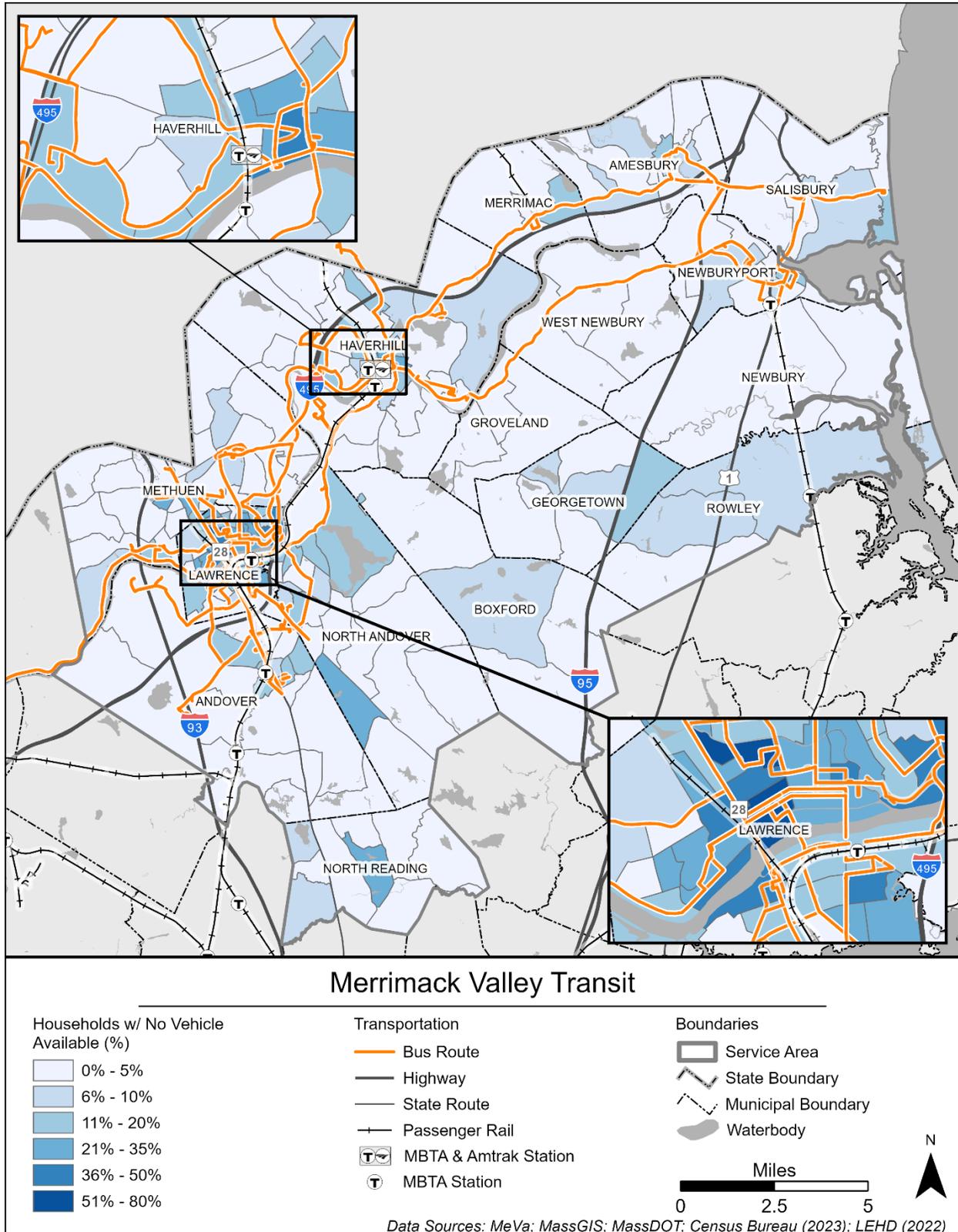
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 38. Low-Income Population (Number)



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 39. Zero-Vehicle Households (Percentage)



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 40. Zero-Vehicle Households (Number)

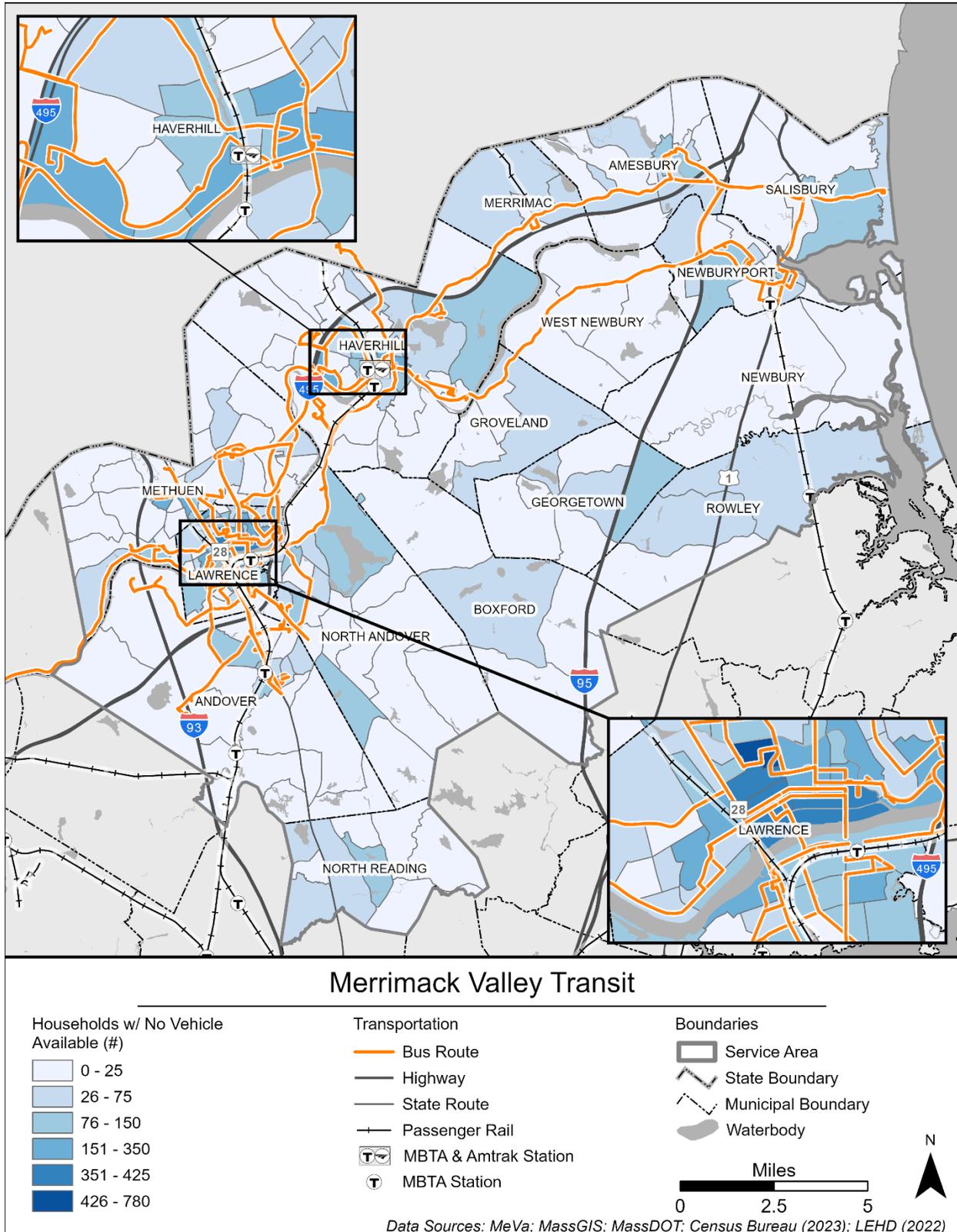
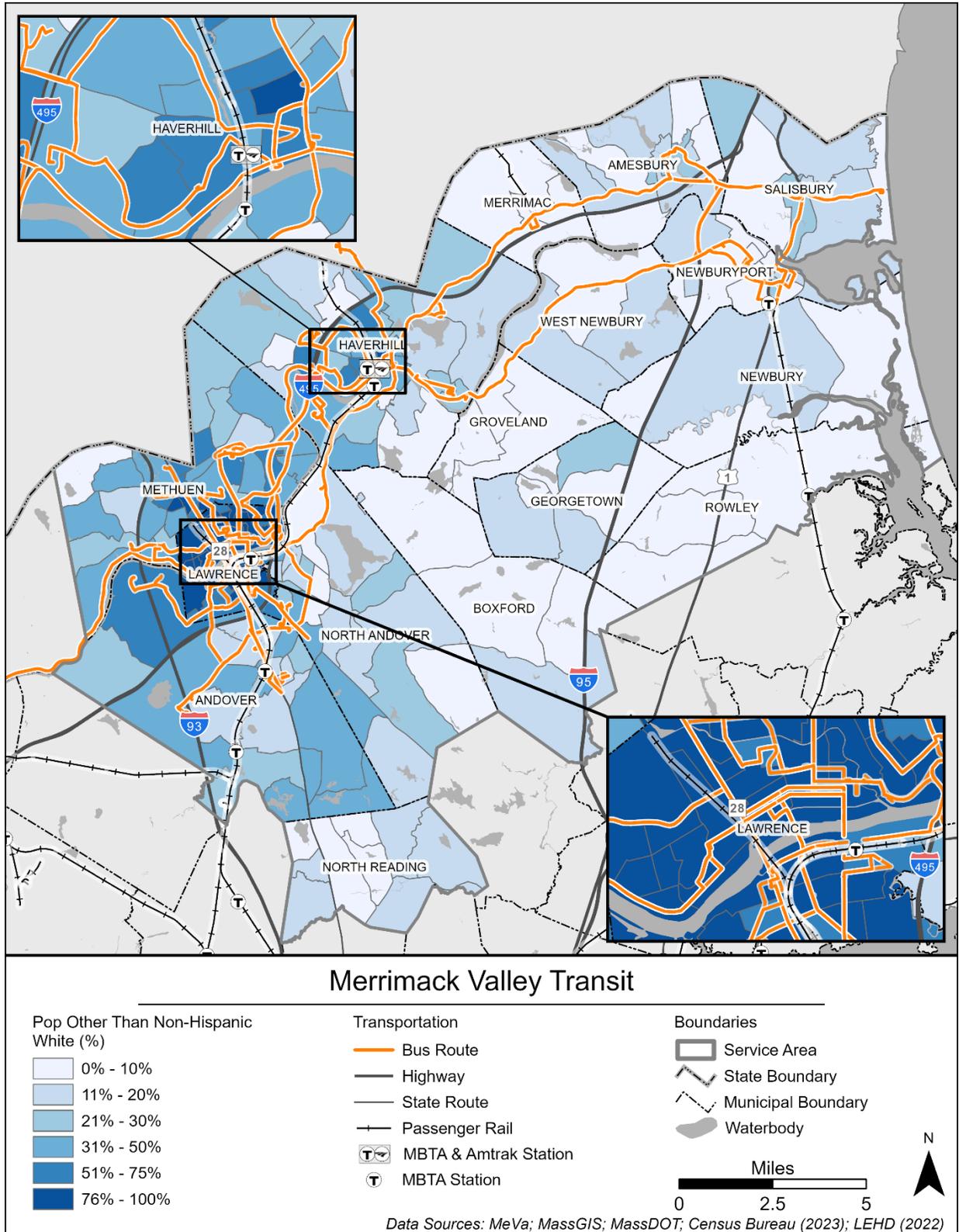


Figure 41. Population Other Than Non-Hispanic White (Percentage)



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 42. Population Other Than Non-Hispanic White (Number)

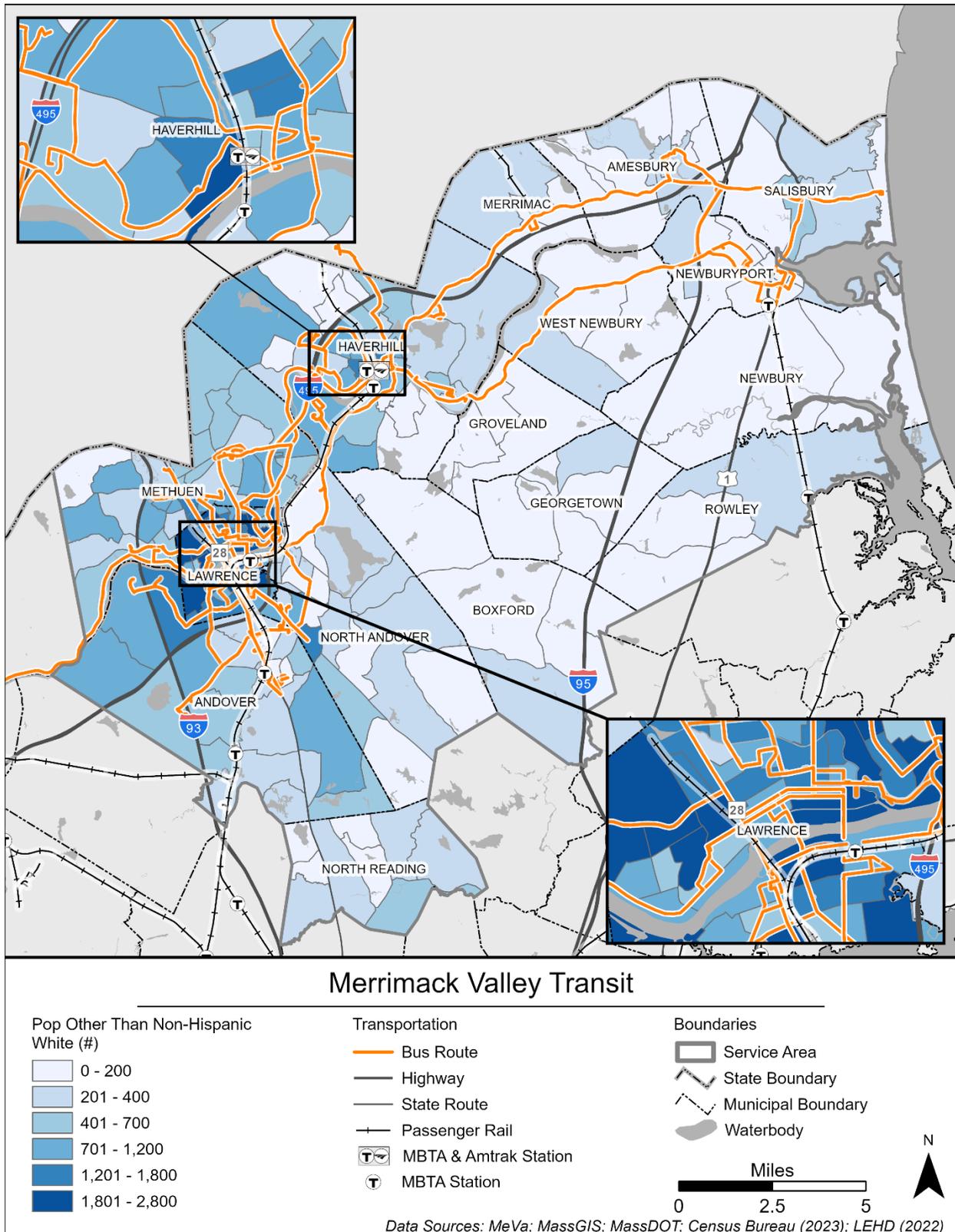
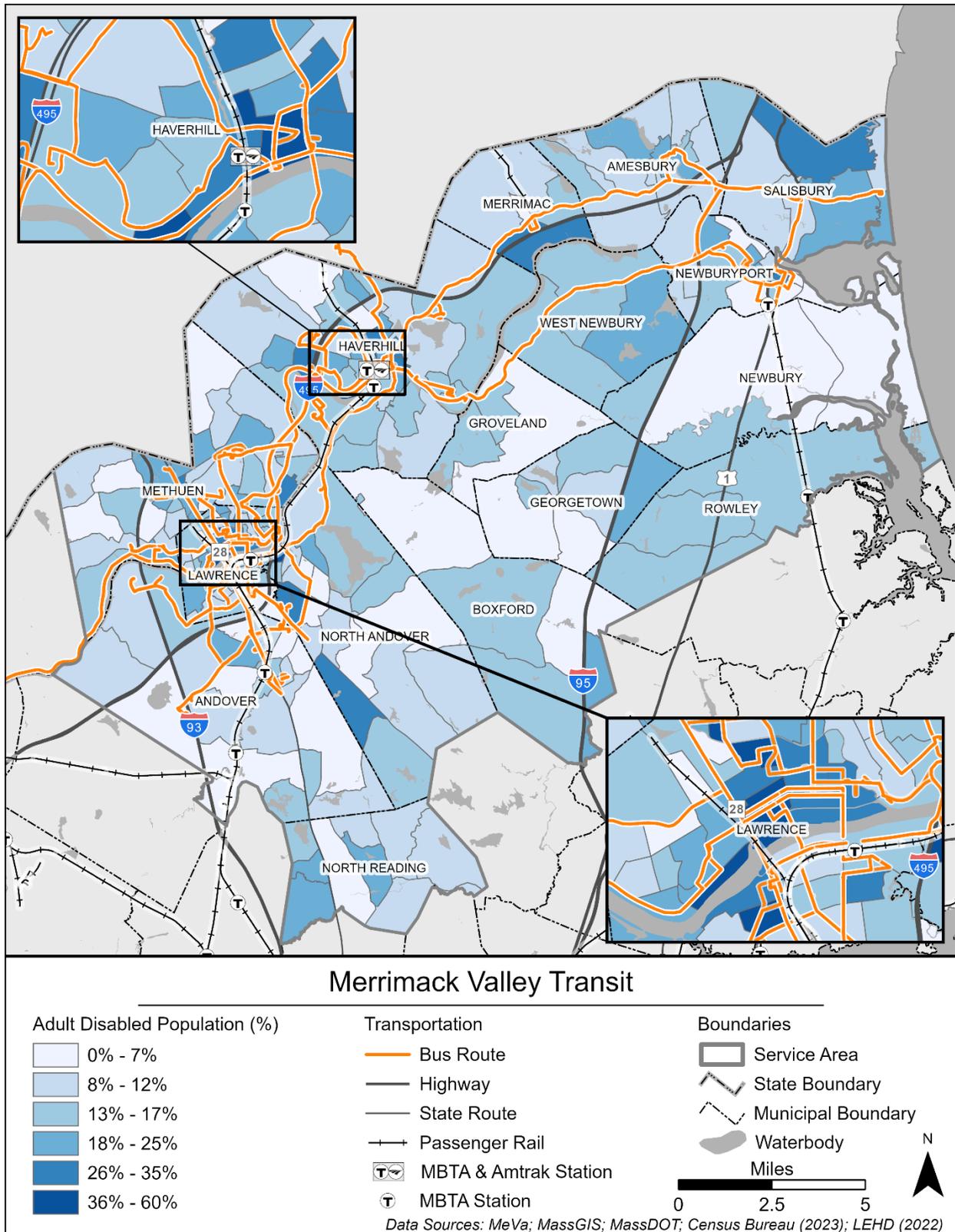
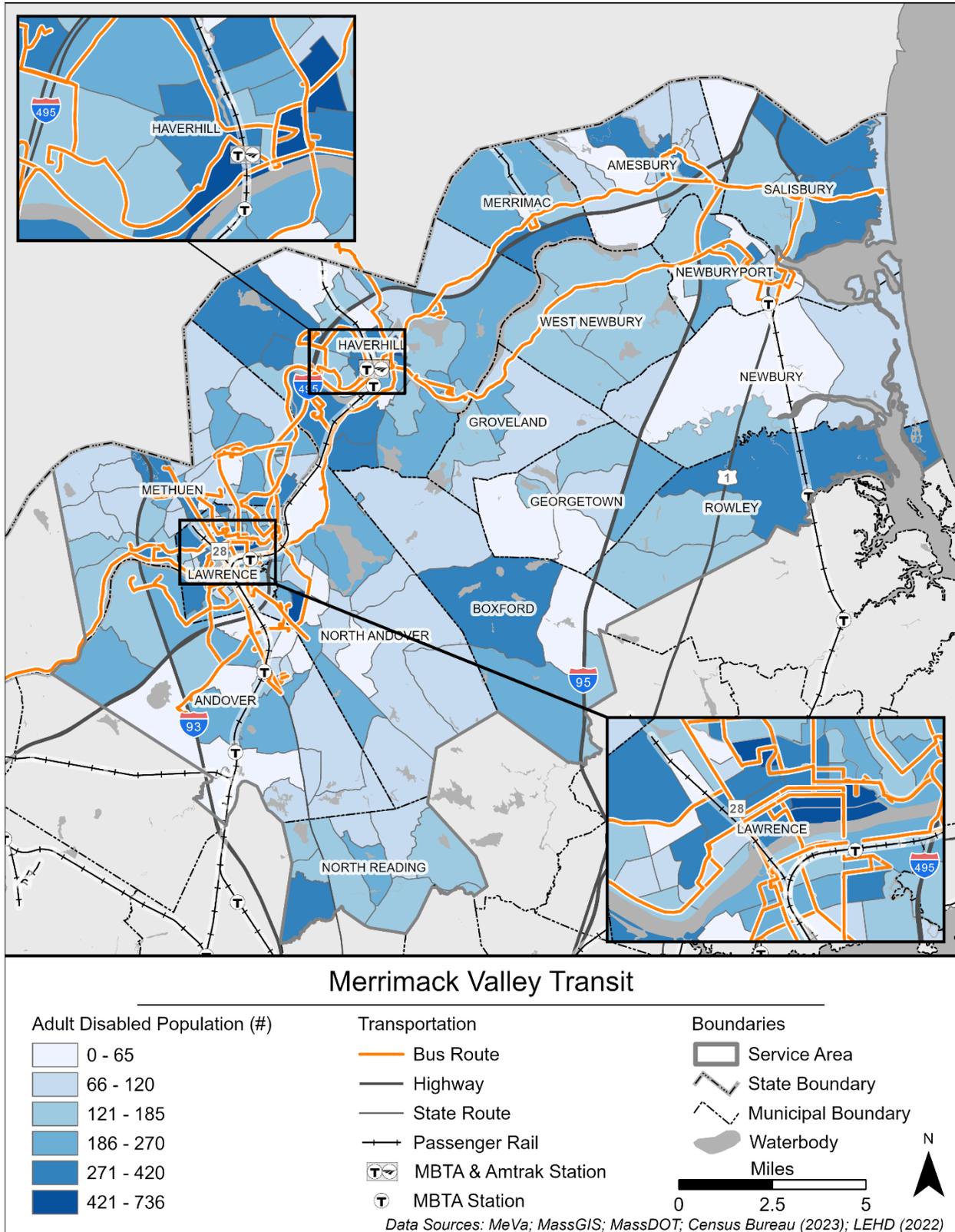


Figure 43. Adult Disabled Population (Percentage)



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 44. Adult Disabled Population (Number)



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, MeVa is required to comply with Title VI requirements as a recipient of federal funds.

For Title VI reporting, MeVa defines minority as a block group with a larger than average minority threshold, which is approximately 39.8 percent. Title VI indicators include two factors: low income and population other than non-Hispanic white. Figure 45 shows two factors as previously described and highlights communities where the population is both low income and a population other than non-Hispanic white. Specifically low-income communities are dispersed across much of the service area, with a few large pockets located in the abutting communities of Newbury, Boxford, Newburyport, Andover, North Andover, Amesbury, and Haverhill. Communities other than non-Hispanic white communities include parts of Lawrence, Methuen, Haverhill, Andover, and North Andover. Lawrence, Haverhill, Methuen, and North Andover are communities with concentrations of both low-income and populations other than non-Hispanic white. As MeVa 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.

5.1.10 Job Density

Job density is highest in Lawrence's Central Business District, with other pockets of employment at the termini of certain MeVa fixed routes such as in Andover, Haverhill, and Newburyport, as shown on Figure 46. Additional areas with high employment are in North Reading where there is a business district. Unlike population density, job density is not necessarily a proxy for transit-supportive land uses. For example, while Central Business Districts do indicate highly transit-supportive land use ideal for efficient transit operations, sprawling office parks may not be. As a result, the true context of areas with high employment density must be evaluated.

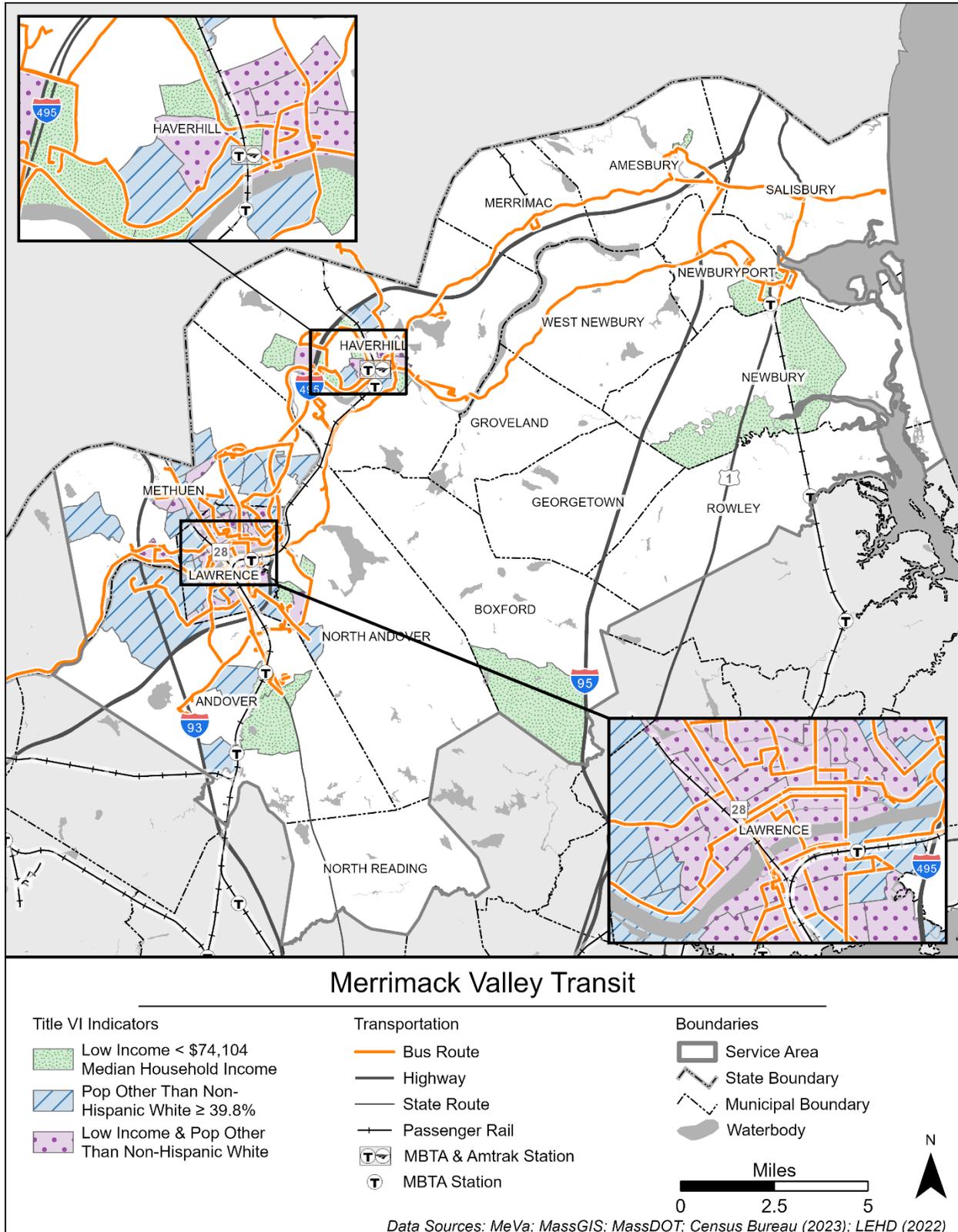
5.1.11 Limited English Proficiency

Figure 47 and Figure 48 show the concentration of households with limited English proficiency. These households are concentrated in the gateway cities of Lawrence and Methuen.

5.1.12 Non-Citizens and Naturalized Citizens

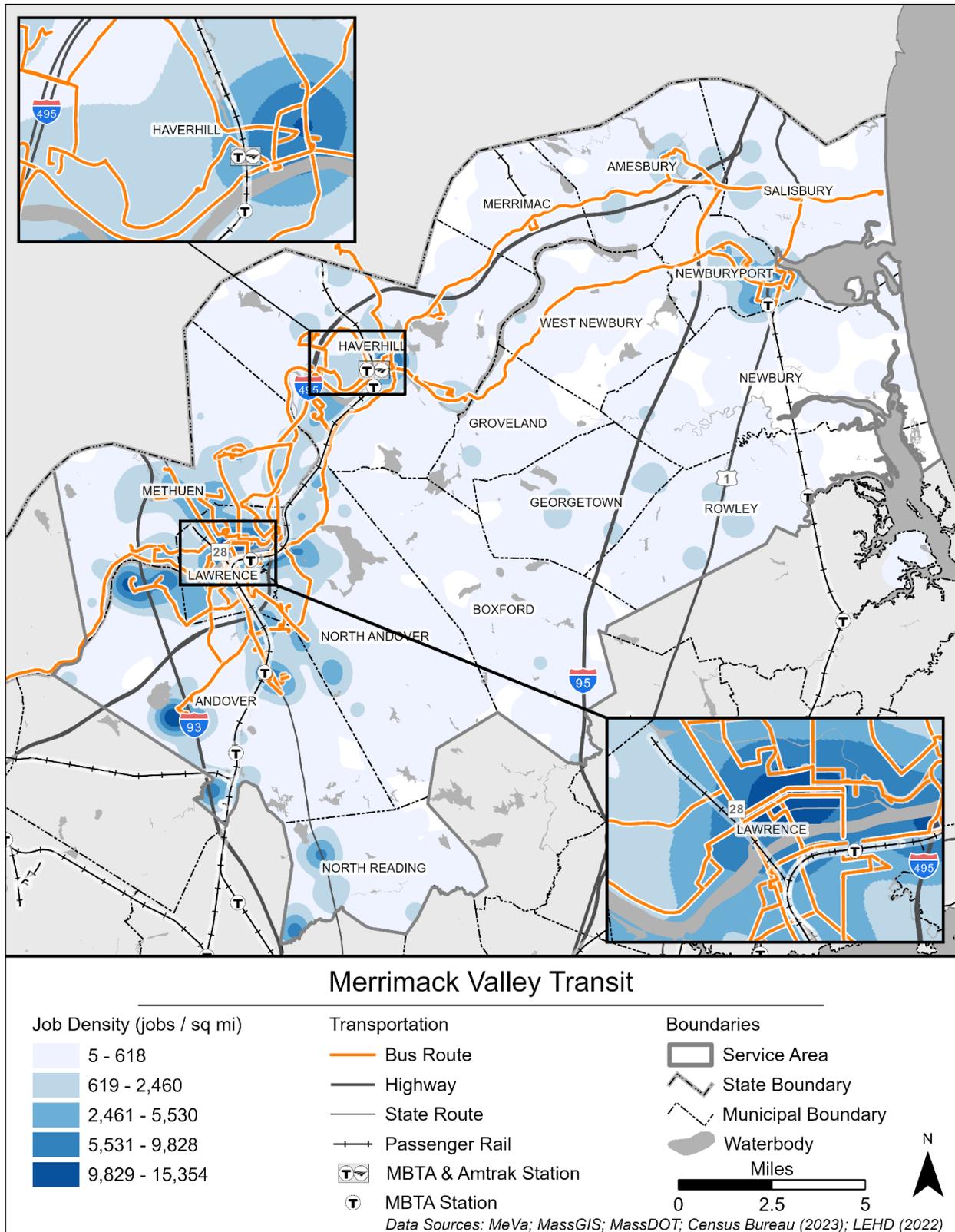
Figure 49 and Figure 50 show the concentration of non-citizen and naturalized citizen populations. In MeVa's service area, the greatest proportions of these populations are concentrated in the gateway city of Lawrence. High counts of non-citizens and naturalized citizens are similarly concentrated in Lawrence, although parts of Andover and Methuen also indicate medium-high counts.

Figure 45. Title VI Population



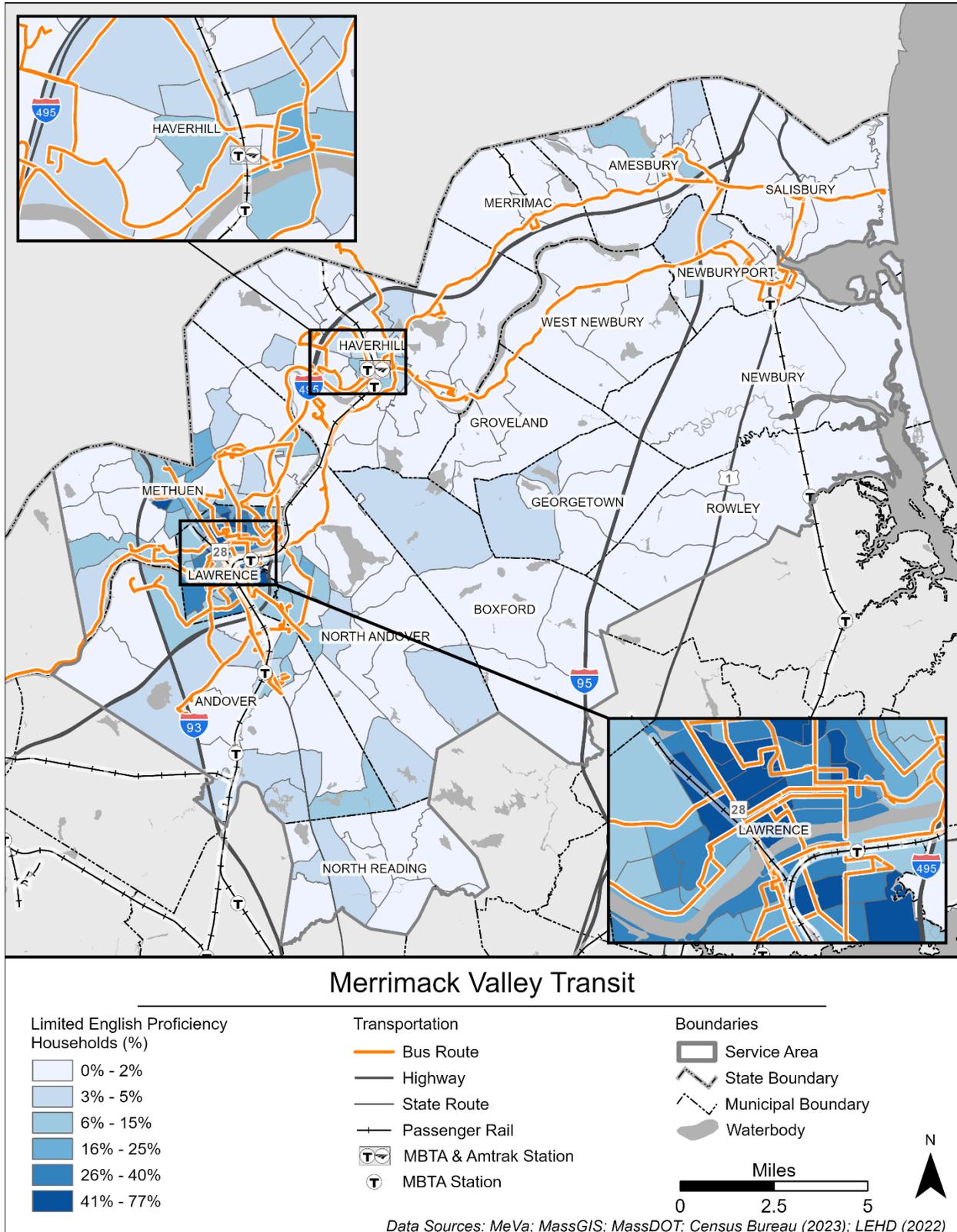
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 46. Job Density



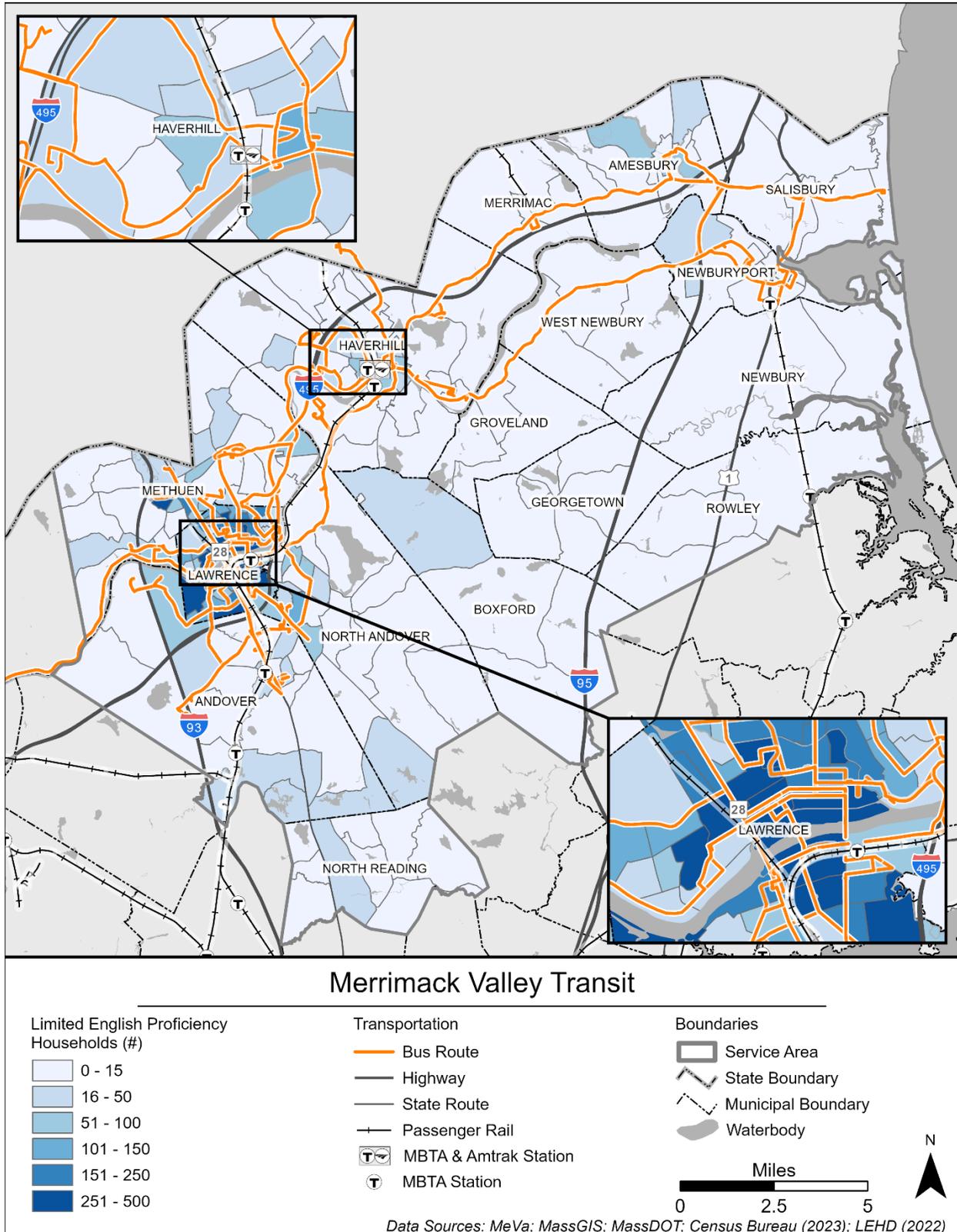
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 47. Limited English Proficiency Households (Percentage)



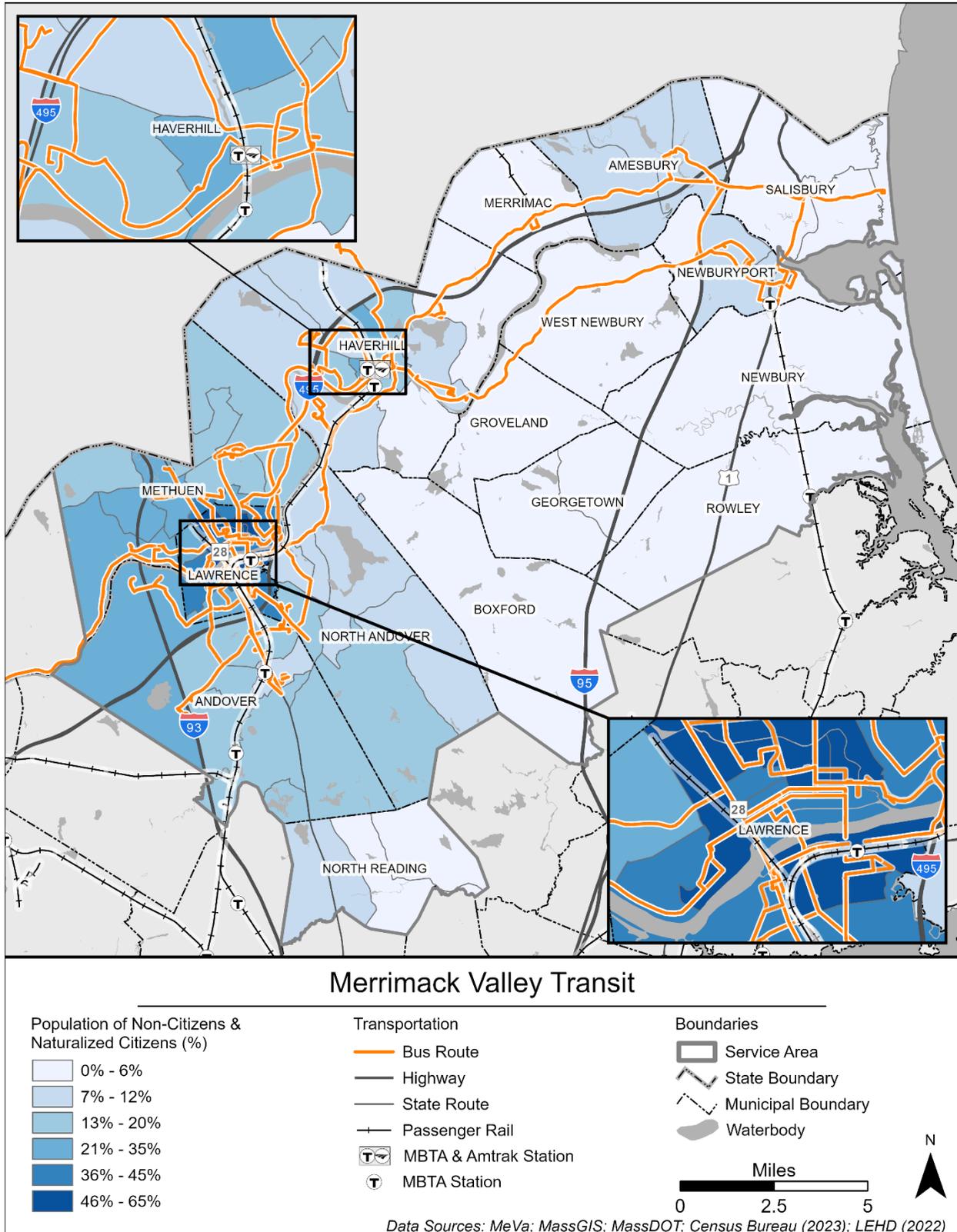
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 48. Limited English Proficiency Households (Number)



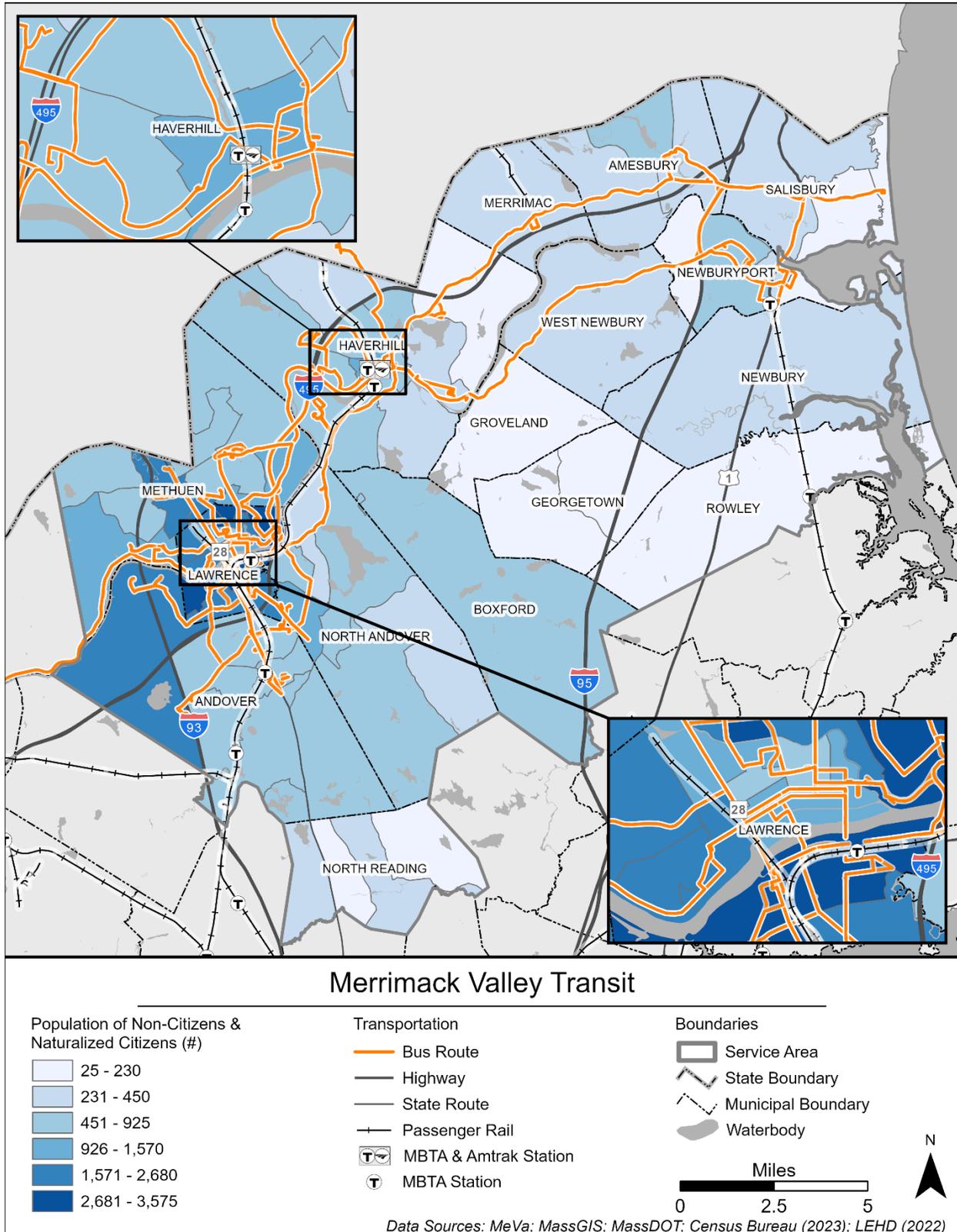
Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 49. Population of Non-Citizens and Naturalized Citizens (Percentage)



Source: AECOM (2025)

Figure 50. Population of Non-Citizens and Naturalized Citizens (Number)



Source: AECOM (2025)

5.1.13 Transit Score

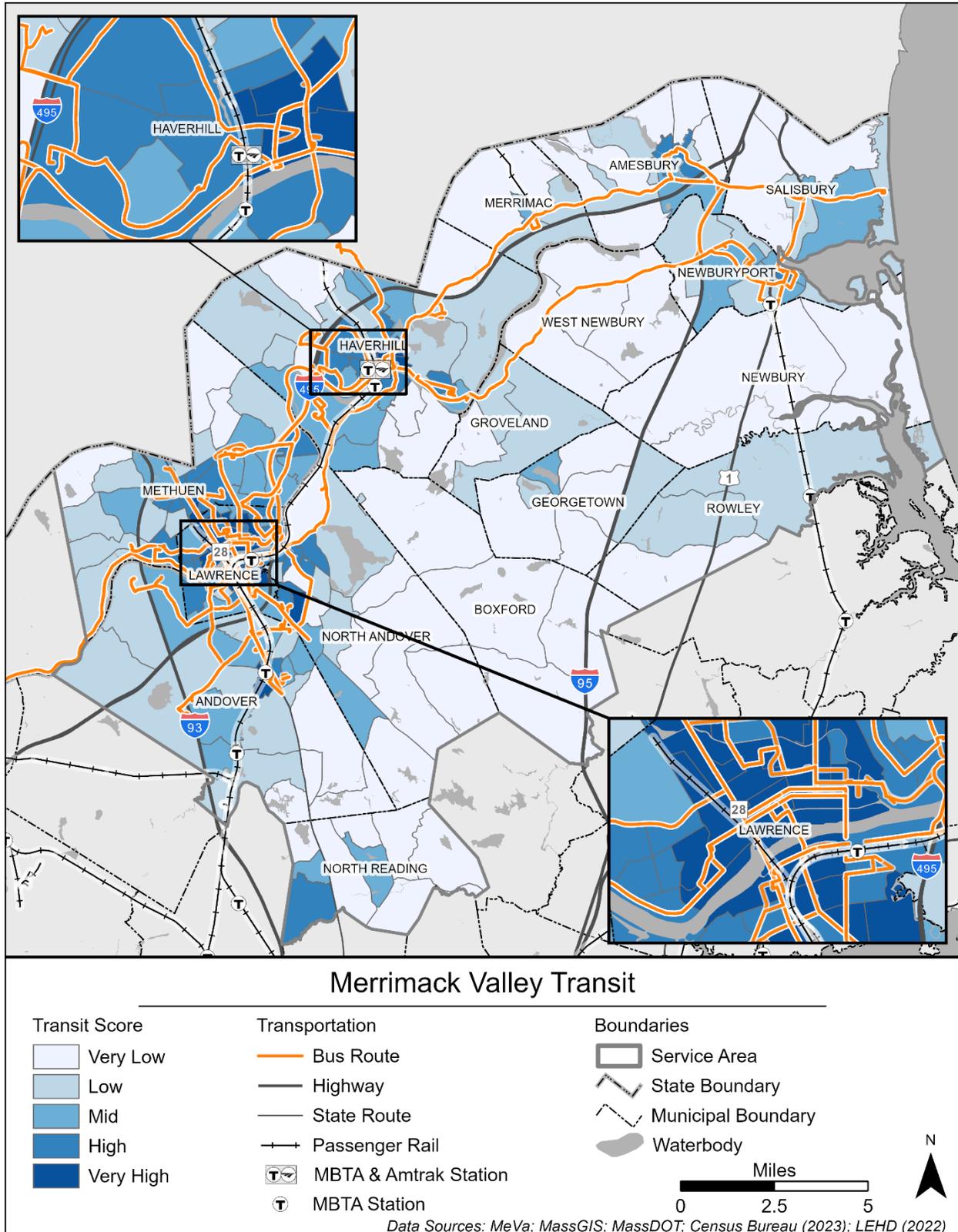
The transit score map is created to spatially analyze several transit-oriented demographic and socioeconomic characteristics at the same time (the characteristics discussed individually in this chapter so far). The transit score is a relative measure of how successful a fixed route transit system is 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. Note that, while the popular term “Walk Score” evaluates the walkability of an area, “Transit Score” is used here to indicate *potential* transit use, but not necessarily a high transit level of service under existing conditions.

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 51 illustrates the transit scores across the MeVa service area. Certain areas of a community have wide-ranging transit scores based on the existing transit routes. Lawrence, Andover, Methuen, and Haverhill are the only communities in the service area with geographic units scoring very high for transit scores. In Lawrence, areas with very high transit scores are concentrated around McGovern and the Lawrence MBTA Station. The very high transit scoring areas in Haverhill, Methuen, and Andover are along MeVa fixed routes. Other communities like North Reading and Amesbury have high transit scoring areas. Amesbury is served by MeVa fixed route, and the high transit scoring pocket in North Reading is in close proximity to the North Wilmington MBTA Station on the Haverhill Line. With a few exceptions, transit scores tend to be lower in communities located farther from MeVa fixed routes or the MBTA Commuter Rail line.

Figure 51. Transit Score



Source: AECOM (2025)

5.2 Public and Stakeholder Engagement

Outreach and engagement for MeVa's CRTP were undertaken through a focus group, an open house, a Board meeting, and an online survey. Additional outreach activities included survey, 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.

Throughout the process, MeVa adapted its approach to address unique challenges within the community. For example, survey pop-up events were designed to overcome language and technology barriers and to build trust among participants. One significant challenge was the community's concern around changes in immigration enforcement or other public safety conditions, which created fear in the region and contributed to hesitation by survey participants to respond to the public survey. This concern was reflected in engagement trends. Attendance at the first pop-up event in May 2025 was noticeably higher than at similar events held in October 2025.

Key takeaways from these combined efforts include support for:

- **Better, safer, and more visible stops.** Riders highlighted concerns about road/pedestrian safety and accessibility at stops, including lighting, crosswalks, sidewalks in need of repair or the lack of sidewalks altogether, and clearer signage.
- **Improved connectivity.** There is strong interest in better travel connections, particularly with other RTAs, with MBTA, to New Hampshire, and to destinations such as Tuscan Village and the Mall at Rockingham Park in Salem, New Hampshire.
- **Expanded weekend service.** Riders requested more Sunday routes and later service hours on weekends.
- **Extended weekday hours.** Many riders rely on MeVa for commuting and errands and want extended service hours.
- **Continued fare-free service.** Riders expressed appreciation for the fare-free policy and voiced concerns about its potential discontinuation.

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

5.2.1 Focus Group

MeVa hosted a focus group with local officials and stakeholders to explore ways to make McGovern more welcoming for riders, to consider opportunities to repurpose space at the center, and to gain a better understanding of community priorities. More than 30 local leaders participated, and MeVa invited them to stay engaged in upcoming outreach initiatives.

- **Location:** McGovern Transportation Center in Lawrence, Massachusetts
- **Date and time:** May 28, 2025, 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM

5.2.1.1 Attendees

Local government officials, COA representatives, community advocates, small business owners, members of the local arts community, and other community organization leaders attended.

5.2.1.2 Feedback

Participants shared their thoughts on transforming McGovern into a vibrant community hub. Ideas included repurposing space for local concerts and food festivals, adding more green

areas and comfortable seating, and creating partnerships with local schools and non-profits to host activities. Lighting improvements were also highlighted as essential to ensure the space feels safe and welcoming for everyone.

5.2.2 Open House

MeVa hosted an open house to introduce and promote the CRTP initiative, inviting riders to share their perspectives on improving regional transit. As part of the session, participants took part in an interactive map activity, pinpointing challenges along specific bus routes and connections (Figure 52). The event drew more than 75 riders, providing valuable insights to guide future planning

- **Location:** McGovern Transportation Center in Lawrence, Massachusetts
- **Date and time:** May 29, 2025, 10 AM to 2 PM

Figure 52. MeVa Open House



5.2.2.1 Attendees

Attendees included local riders from the Lawrence region in addition to local representatives from the COA, City of Lawrence, community advocates, local arts organization, small businesses, veterans' services, and multicultural leaders.

5.2.2.2 Interactive map activity

An interactive map exercise gave participants the chance to pinpoint challenges along specific bus routes and connections, providing detailed feedback to inform future improvements. Detailed feedback received during the activity is in Table 20.

Table 20. Interactive Map Activity Feedback

Topic	Comment
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants were supportive of additional accessibility enhancements. To represent this, the MeVa team began using a sticker at the top left of the interactive engagement map to signal an overwhelming number of concerns by riders; specifically, crosswalks, lighting, sidewalks in need of repair, and better signage/ use of braille and other languages. • Improve accessibility on Route 11 service in West Newbury.
Add Bus Stop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add a stop to the City of Andover to improve safety and decrease the distance. Some riders have to walk from one pick-up “area/spot” to another. • The Whole Foods in Andover needs to have a better place to stop for drop-off and pick-up. This is also a safety issue.
Transfer/Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was also very popular among most, particularly the connection to transportation options in New Hampshire. • Transferability beyond Merrimack College. • Expand service stops beyond Methuen, and improve reliability on Route 10.
Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McGovern needs more buses and more frequent, and improved signage on the schedules.
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve reliability at the North Andover Mall, specifically on Routes 8, 9, and 3. This included reliability and ease of transfers and on-time performance. • More reliable Route 5 for Dana-Farber.
Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand Route 24 service to 10 PM (Note: Route 24 already runs until 10 PM on weekdays). • Expand Route 6 and Route 4 (Note: Route 4 already runs until 10 PM on weekdays).
Weekend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand weekend service to the Minuteman-Marriott on weekends and evenings. • Route 11 needs weekend service. (This was mentioned by a few riders.)
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main concern around safety came from the need to repair public sidewalks, add crosswalks, and create proper bus stops instead of the flag stop system currently utilized. • Additional comments noted concerns about lack of lighting and need for additional lighting near bus stops. • Improve safety in Lowell stops at the last bus stops.

Topic	Comment
Other/Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service to seasonal destinations like the mall in New Hampshire, Hampton Beach, and Plum Island. • More partnerships with the COA. • Covers or canopies for bus shelters/stops. • Haverhill Transit Center needs more frequency, reliability, better signals, and more buses. Service hours should be expanded in the evening to run after 11 PM.

5.2.2.3 Key Takeaways

The following are key takeaways from the open house.

- Desire for better accessibility and safety in crosswalks, lighting, sidewalks in need of repair, and better signage
- Desire for a better bus stop in Andover
- Desire for connections to transportation options in New Hampshire
- Desire for service to the Mall at Rockingham Park and Tuscan Village in Salem, New Hampshire
- Desire for improvement of route reliability and expansion
- Desire for expanded weekend and evening service
- Desire for partnerships with COAs

5.2.3 Board Meeting

MeVa held a Board meeting with key stakeholders to share progress about the CRTP and help promote and distribute the survey across the region MeVa serves. The team highlighted CRTP public engagement activities.

- **Topic:** Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan
- **Date and time:** September 4, 2025, 8:30 AM to 11 AM
- **Location:** 85 Railroad Avenue, Haverhill, Massachusetts

5.2.3.1 Attendees

The meeting was attended by MeVa staff and Board members from Amesbury, Andover, Boxford, Groveland, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, Newbury, Newburyport, North Reading, and West Newbury. Meeting attendees also included a riders’ representative and a disabled riders’ representative.

5.2.3.2 Agenda

- Overview
- Project Context - 2020 CRTP
- 2025 CRTP Scope of Work
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Schedule

- Discussion

5.2.3.3 Feedback

The Board emphasized the importance of documenting public opinion and using that public feedback to inform recommendations in the CRTP strategies for the next five years. The Board also mentioned interest in demographic maps for the service area to continue to understand key trends for the next five years.

5.2.4 Public Survey

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

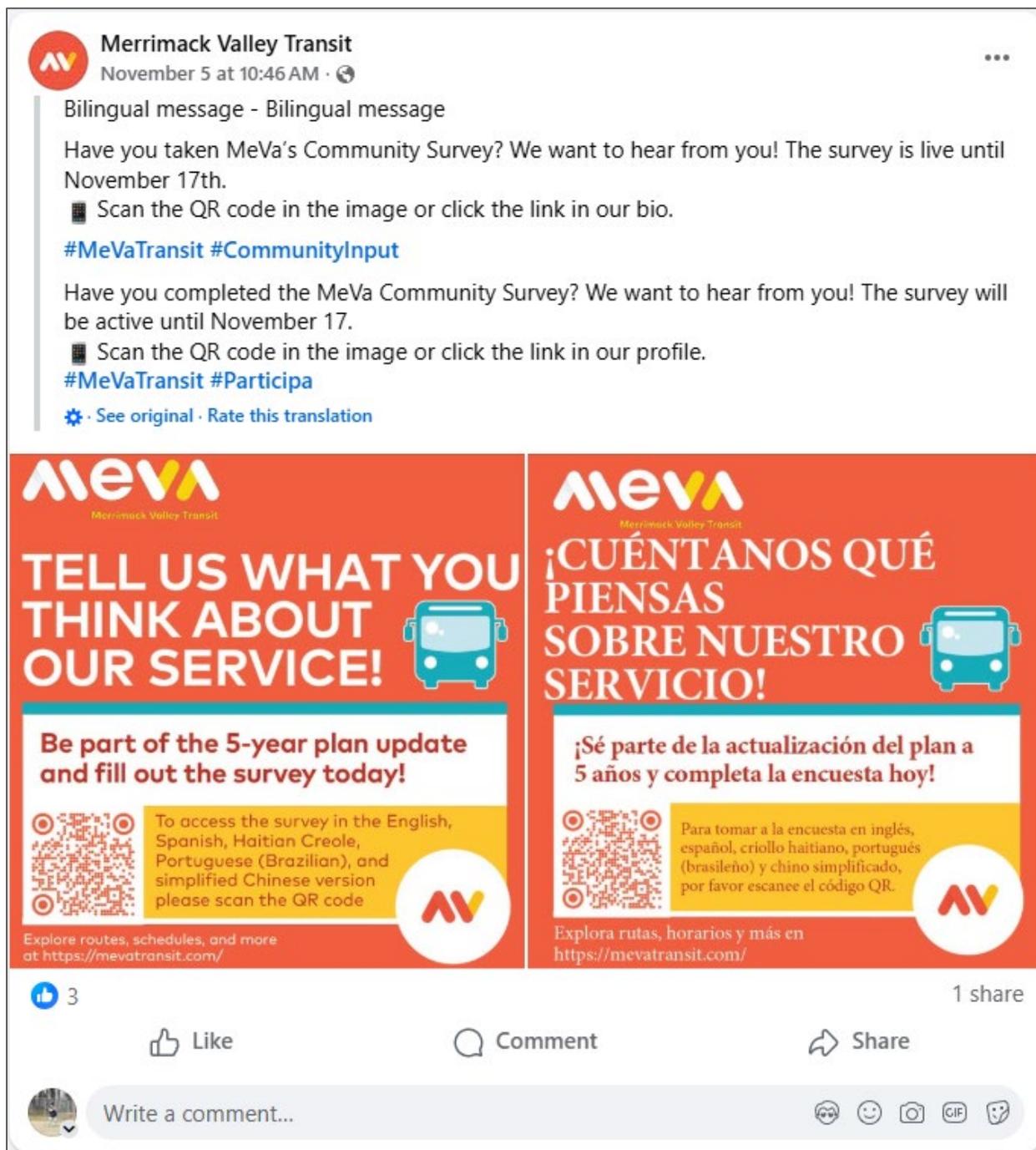
5.2.4.1 Survey Outreach

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

- The survey link was posted on MeVa's website and promoted through social media posts (Figure 53).
- The survey link, QR code, and survey promotional materials were shared with stakeholder meeting participants and the MeVa Board, who were encouraged to share them with their communities.
- At pop-up events, MeVa staff distributed flyers featuring the survey link and QR code, and paper copies of the survey were also available.
- Digital posters were placed on all the buses and MeVa vehicles.
- MeVa promoted the survey on a local radio talk show.

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 53. MeVa Social Media Post



5.2.4.2 Survey Pop-Up Events

MeVa held two pop-up events to advertise its survey and assist riders and non-riders—particularly those with limited English proficiency—in completing it. One event took place at McGovern, and the other was held across various bus routes. Together, these efforts engaged more than 50 riders.

Recognizing the cultural and linguistic needs of the community, the events were designed with inclusiveness in mind. Approximately 82 percent of Lawrence residents are Spanish speakers, and many participants were Spanish-speaking elders who felt uncomfortable using technology—even when the survey was available in Spanish. To address this, MeVa staff

provided hands-on assistance using tablets and smartphones. Additionally, Spanish-speaking staff were present on-site, enabling meaningful conversations and fostering stronger engagement with local riders.

Survey Pop-Up Events

- **Location:** McGovern Transportation Center, Lawrence, Massachusetts; and various bus routes
- **Date and time:** October 7, 2025, 10 AM to 5 PM; and October 27, 2025, 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM

Key Takeaways

The following are key takeaways from the survey pop-up events.

- Riders expressed appreciation for the fare-free service.
- Riders raised concerns about challenges with flag stops, highlighting areas for operational improvement.
- Language accessibility was an identified barrier; in response to rider feedback, MeVa adjusted some of the survey questions to use simpler, more direct language, making them easier for Spanish-speaking participants to understand and respond to.

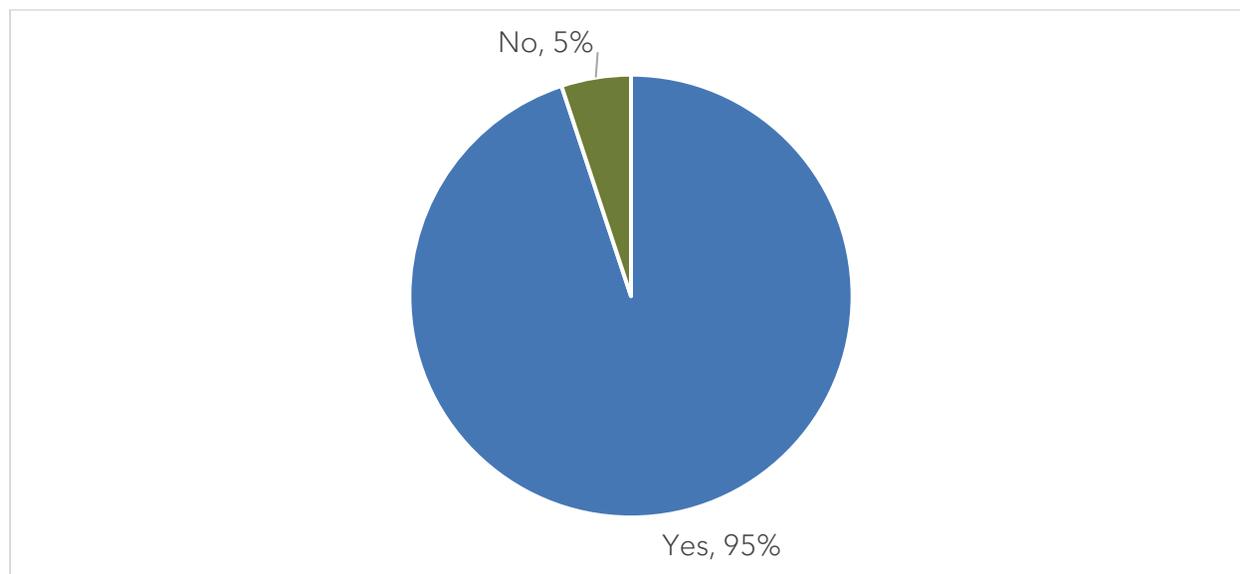
5.2.4.3 Survey Results Summary

MeVa’s online survey opened to the public on September 2, 2025, and closed November 17, 2025. The survey, which was hosted on Microsoft Forms, was available online in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Brazilian Portuguese, and simplified Chinese.

Of the 318 responses collected using online and paper surveys, 189 people (60 percent of survey respondents), responded in English, 125 people (39 percent) responded in Spanish, four people (1 percent) responded in Haitian Creole, and no responses were recorded in Brazilian Portuguese or simplified Chinese.

Survey responses reflected that 95 percent of respondents use MeVa services, while 5 percent do not (Figure 54).

Figure 54. Do you use any of the MeVa services?



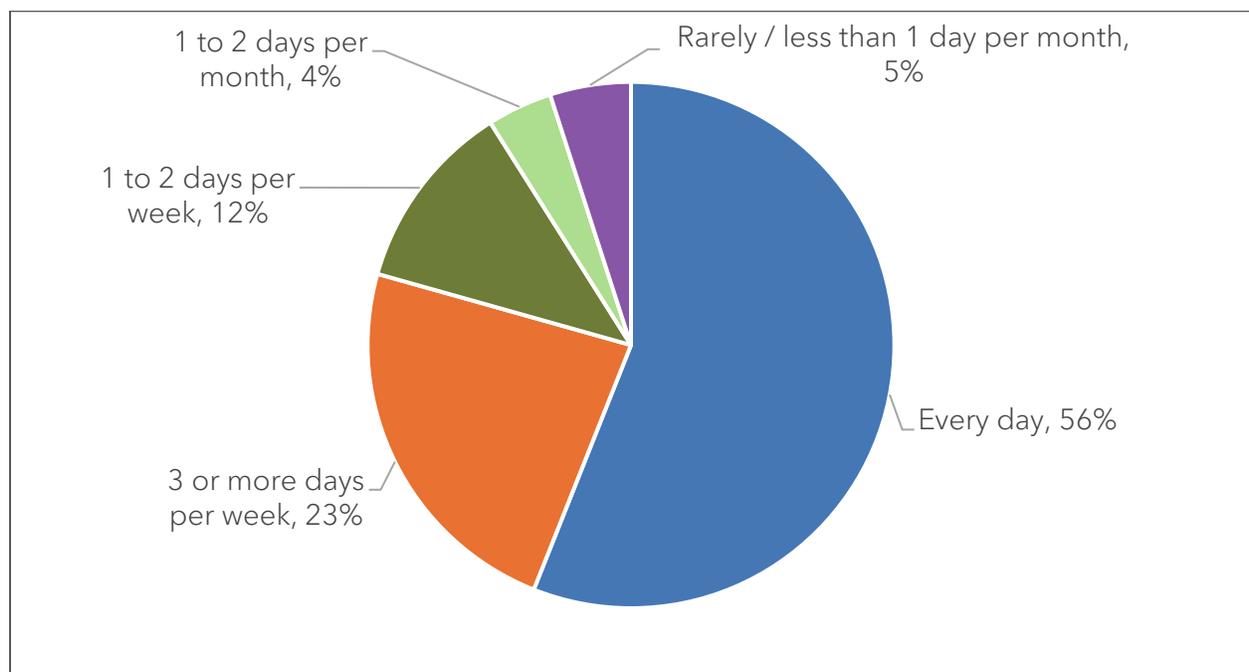
Rider Survey

To gather insights from those currently using MeVa 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 for how often respondents use MeVa services (Figure 55) reflected the following:

- Every day (56 percent)
- 3 or more days per week (23 percent)
- 1 to 2 days per week (12 percent)
- Rarely/less than 1 day per month (5 percent)
- 1 to 2 days per month (4 percent)

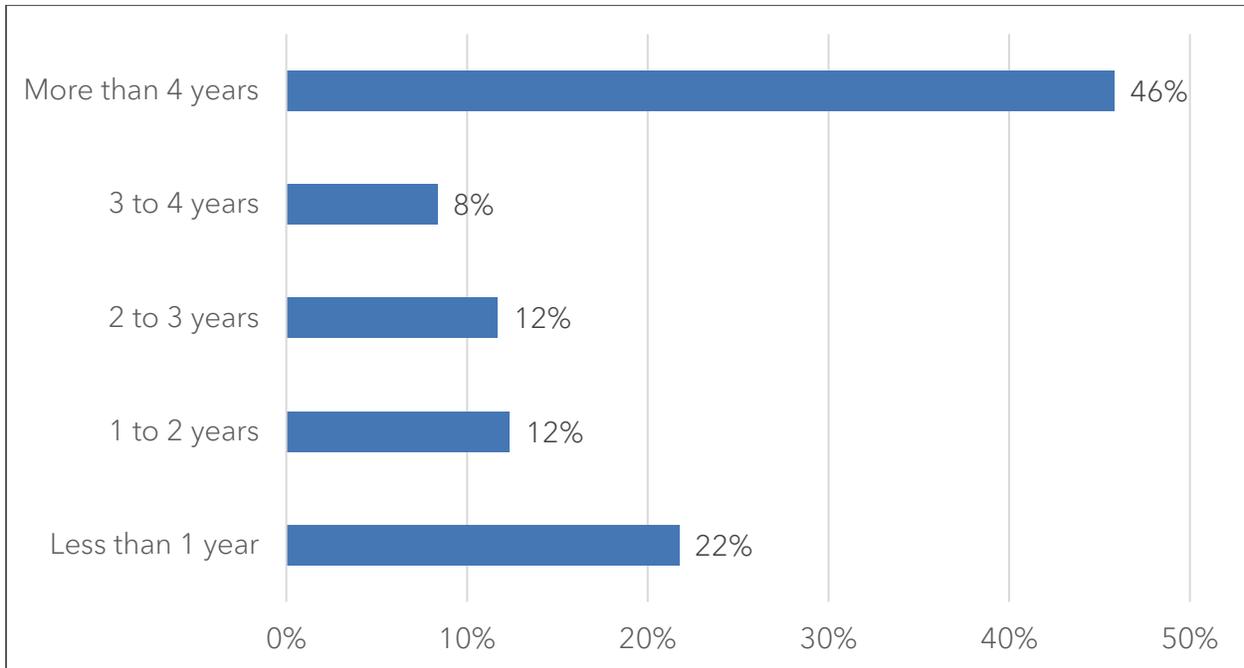
Figure 55. How often do you use MeVa services?



Survey responses for how long respondents have been using MeVa services (Figure 56) included the following:

- More than 4 years (46 percent)
- 3 to 4 years (8 percent)
- 2 to 3 years (12 percent)
- 1 to 2 years (12 percent)
- Less than 1 year (22 percent)

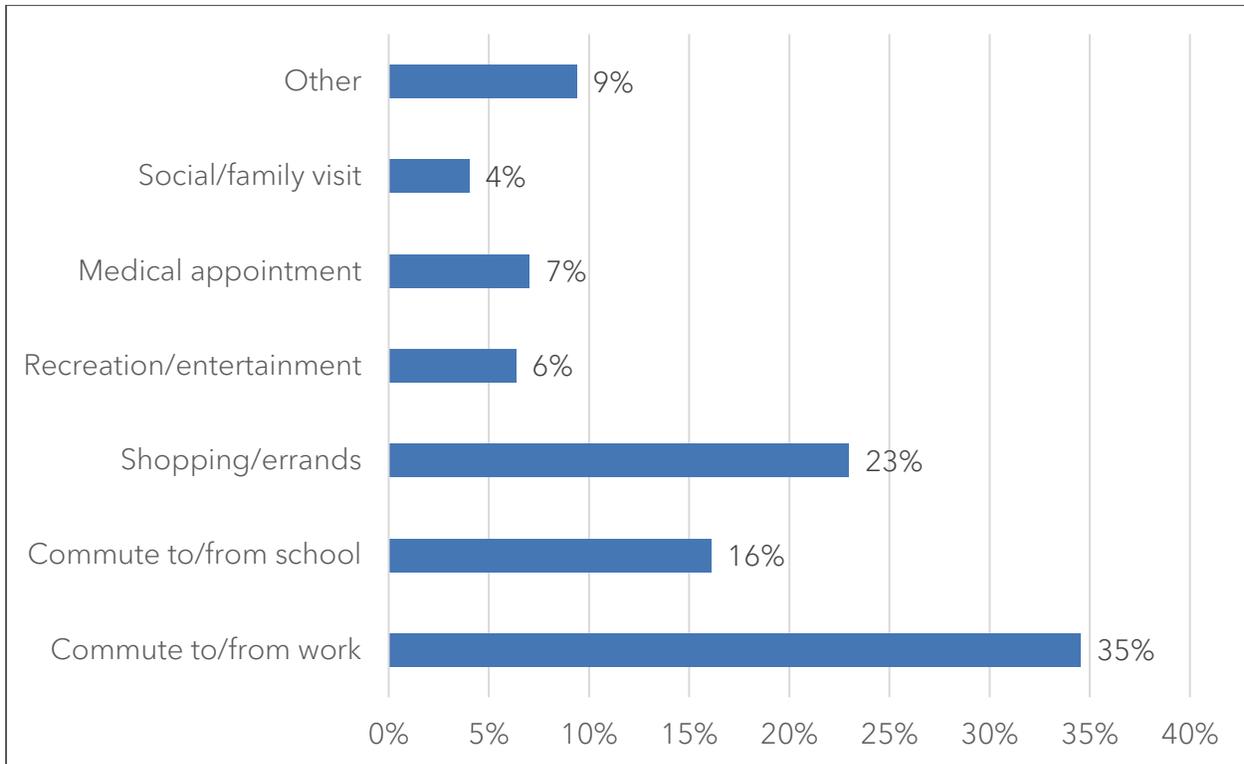
Figure 56. How long have you been using MeVa services?



Survey responses for the primary purpose of respondents' last MeVa ride (Figure 57) reflected the following:

- Commute to/from work (35 percent)
- Shopping/errands (23 percent)
- Commute to/from school (16 percent)
- Other (9 percent)
- Medical appointment (7 percent)
- Recreation/entertainment (6 percent)
- Social/family visit (4 percent)

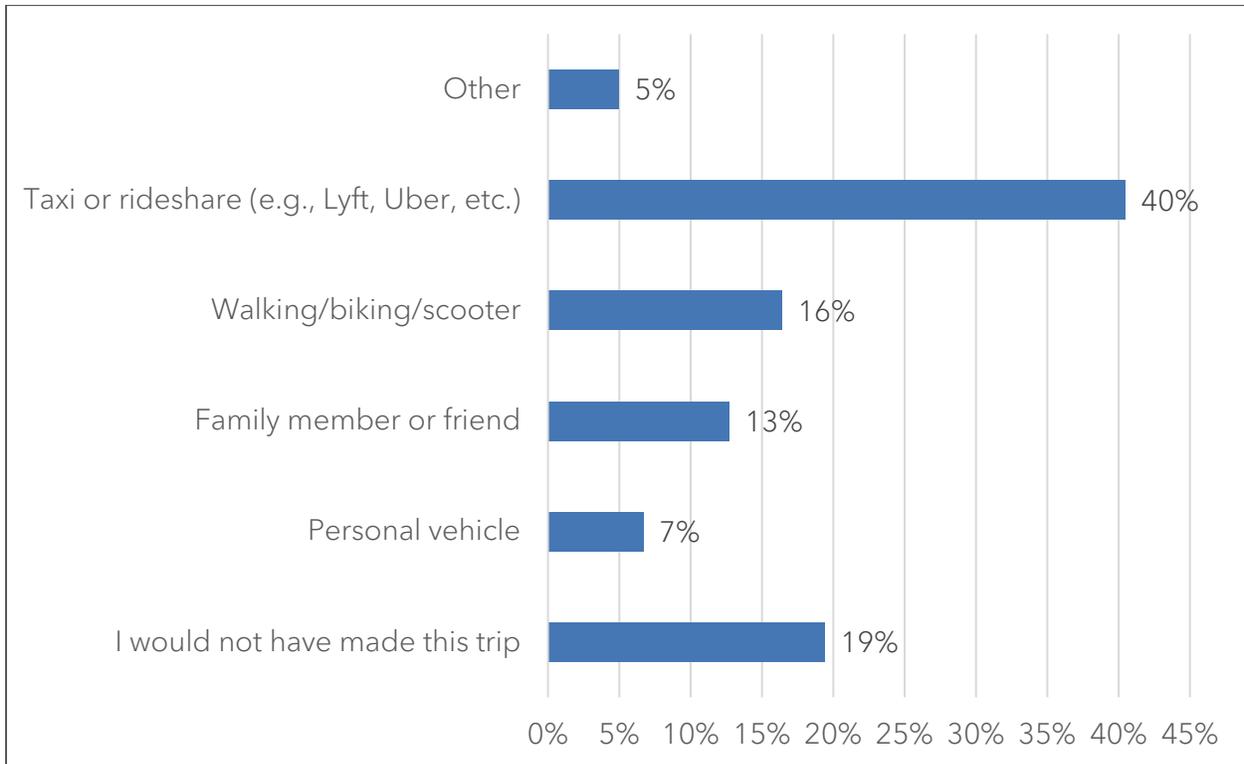
Figure 57. What is your primary purpose of your last MeVa ride? (select one)



Survey responses for how respondents would have made the above trip without MeVa (Figure 58) reflect the following:

- Taxi or rideshare (e.g., Lyft, Uber, etc.) (40 percent)
- I would not have made this trip (19 percent)
- Walking/biking/scooter (16 percent)
- Family member or friend (13 percent)
- Personal vehicle (7 percent)
- Other (5 percent)

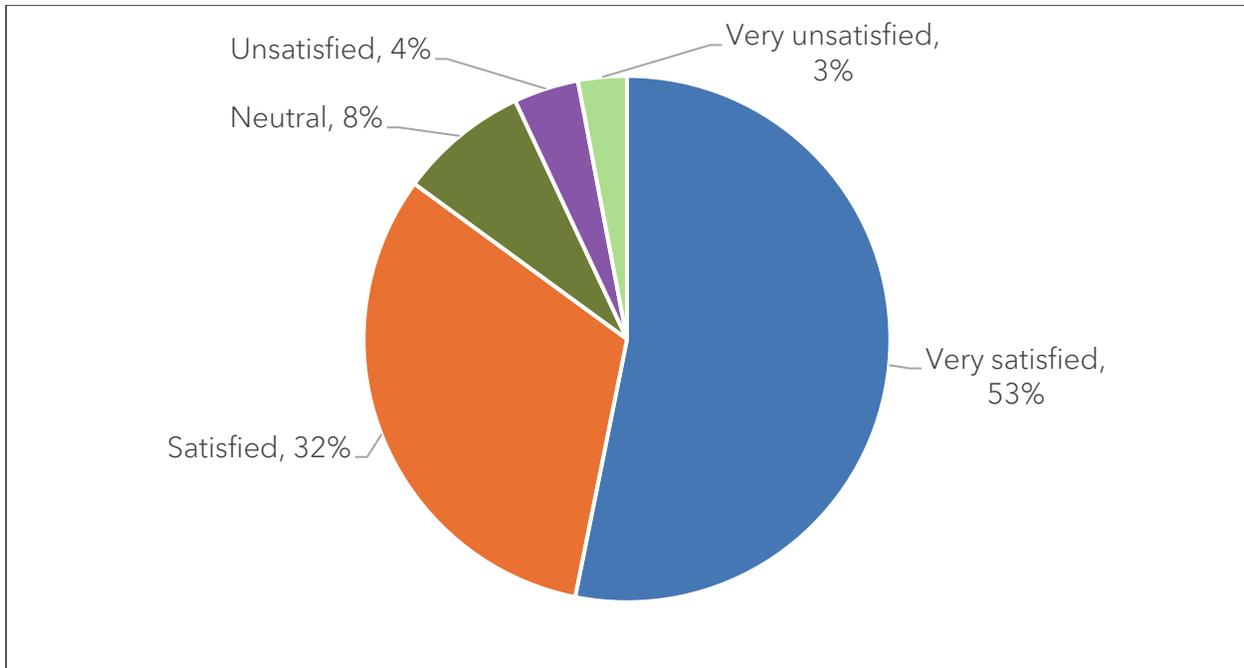
Figure 58. How would you have made this trip if MeVa was not a choice?



Survey responses on satisfaction with MeVa services (Figure 59) reflect the following:

- Very satisfied (53 percent)
- Satisfied (32 percent)
- Neutral (8 percent)
- Unsatisfied (4 percent)
- Very unsatisfied (3 percent)

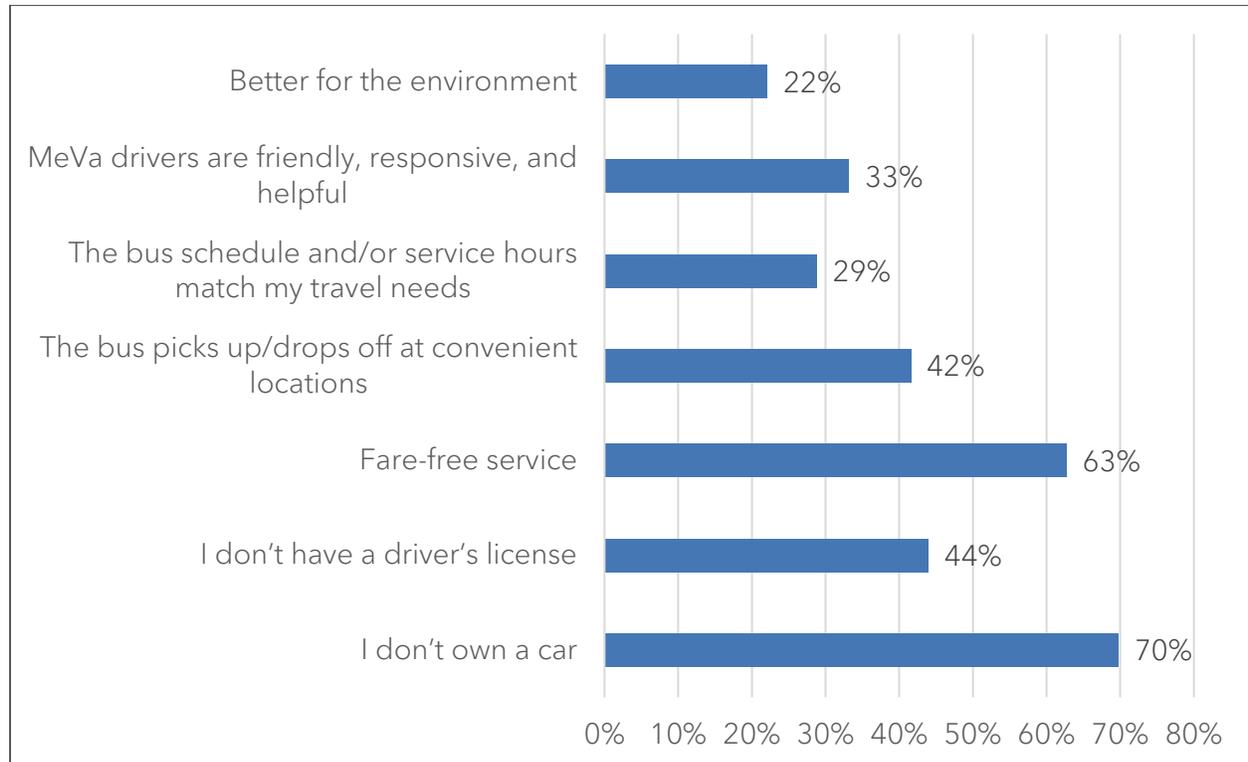
Figure 59. How satisfied are you with MeVa's service?



Survey responses for what motivates riders to use MeVa services (Figure 60) reflected the following (responders were instructed to select all that apply, so the total exceeds 100 percent):

- I don't own a car (70 percent)
- Fare-free service (63 percent)
- I don't have a driver's license (44 percent)
- The bus picks up/drops off at convenient locations (42 percent)
- MeVa drivers are friendly, responsive, and helpful (33 percent)
- The bus schedule and/or service hours match my travel needs (29 percent)
- Better for the environment (22 percent)

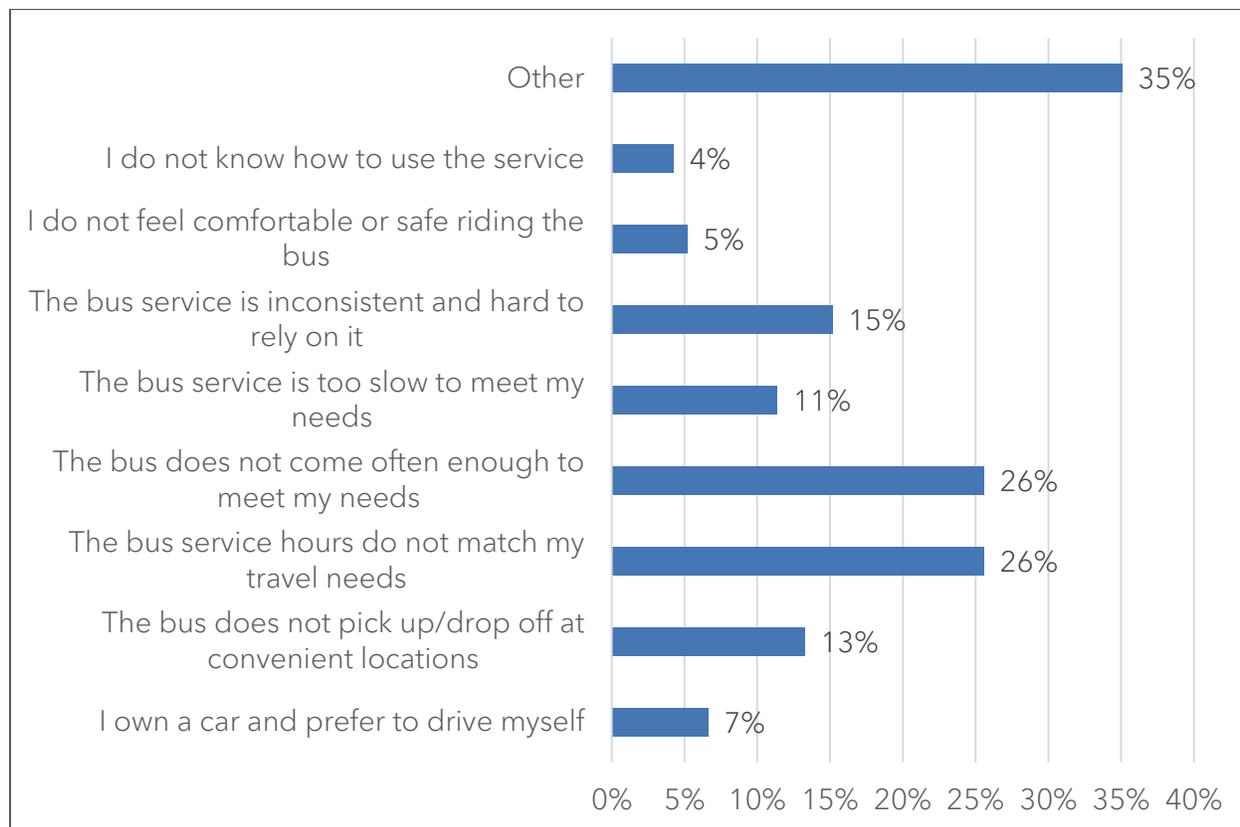
Figure 60. What motivates you to use MeVa services? (select all that apply)



Survey responses for what keeps riders from using MeVa (Figure 61) include the following (responders were instructed to select all that apply):

- Other (35 percent)
- The bus service hours do not match my travel needs (26 percent)
- The bus does not come often enough to meet my needs (26 percent)
- The bus service is inconsistent and hard to rely on (15 percent)
- The bus does not pick up/drop off at convenient locations (13 percent)
- The bus service is too slow to meet my needs (11 percent)
- I own a car and prefer to drive myself (7 percent)
- I do not feel comfortable or safe riding the bus (5 percent)
- I do not know how to use the service (4 percent)

Figure 61. What keeps you from using MeVa? (select all that apply)

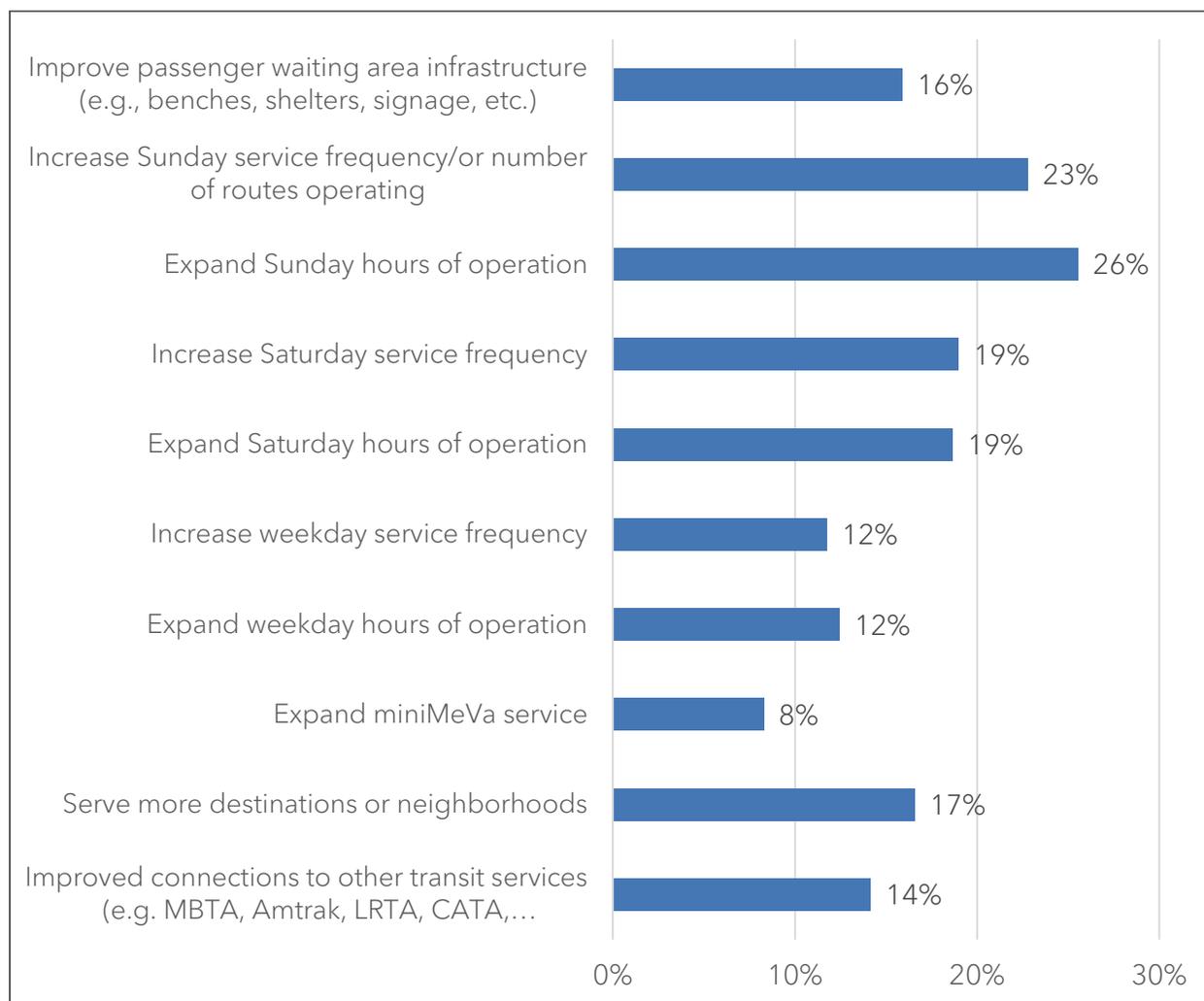


See Appendix C for a list of destinations currently underserved by MeVa respondents would like to be able to access via MeVa service.

Survey responses on the most important improvements MeVa should prioritize over the next five years (Figure 62) included the following:

- Expand Sunday hours of operation (26 percent)
- Increase Sunday service frequency/or number of routes operating (23 percent)
- Increase Saturday service frequency (19 percent)
- Expand Saturday hours of operation (19 percent)
- Serve more destinations or neighborhoods (17 percent)
- Improve passenger waiting area infrastructure (e.g., benches, shelters, signage, etc.) (16 percent)
- Improve connections to other transit services (e.g., MBTA, Amtrak, LRTA, CATA, Manchester Transit, etc.) (14 percent)
- Expand weekday hours of operation (12 percent)
- Increase weekday service frequency (12 percent)
- Expand miniMeVa service (8 percent)

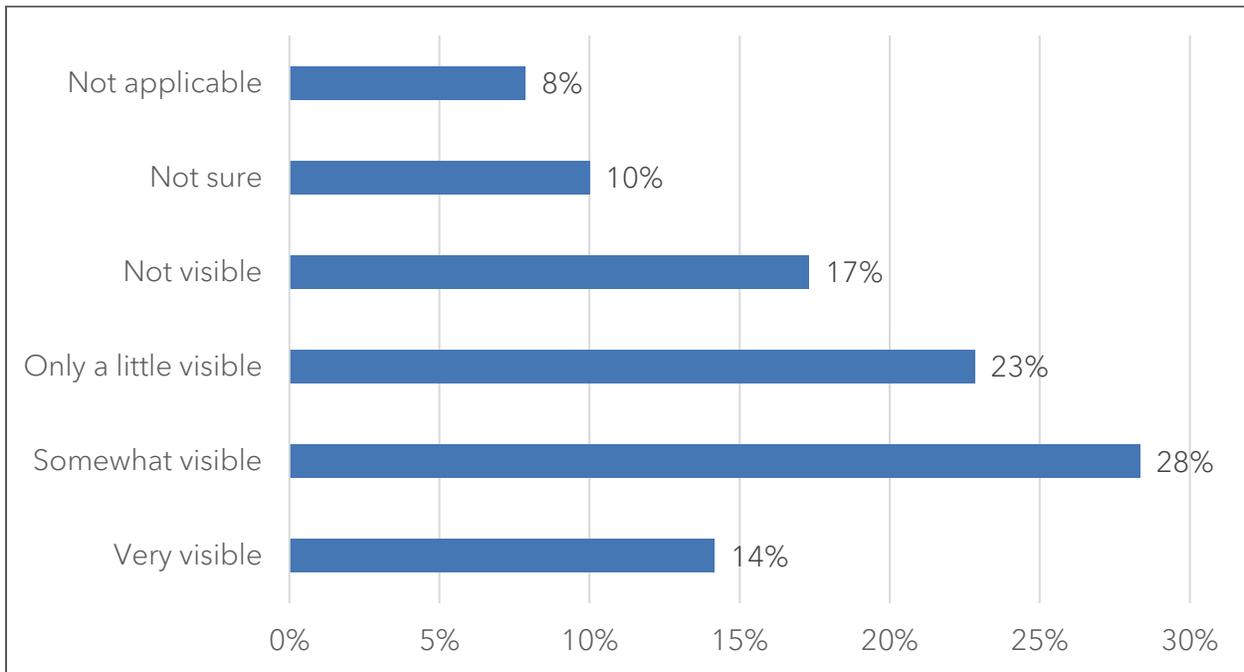
Figure 62. What are the most important improvements you would like MeVa to prioritize over the next 5 years? Please select your top three choices.



Survey responses for how visible public transport bus stops are (Figure 63) reflected the following:

- Somewhat visible (28 percent)
- Only a little visible (23 percent)
- Not visible (17 percent)
- Very visible (14 percent)
- Not sure (10 percent)
- Not applicable (8 percent)

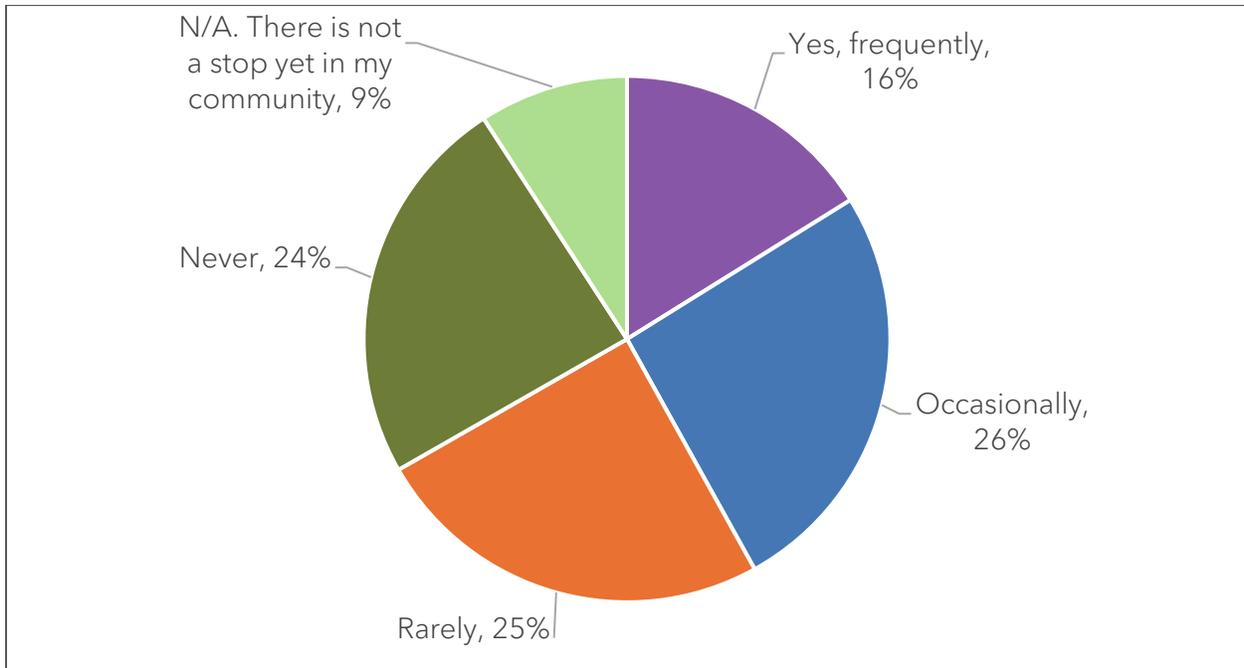
Figure 63. MeVa is phasing out its flag-stop system. As the new stops are built, how visible are public transport bus stops in your community?



Survey responses on whether respondents have seen clear signage or maps at or near bus stops in their area (Figure 64) reflected the following:

- Occasionally (26 percent)
- Rarely (25 percent)
- Never (24 percent)
- Yes, frequently (16 percent)
- N/A. There is not a stop yet in my community (9 percent)

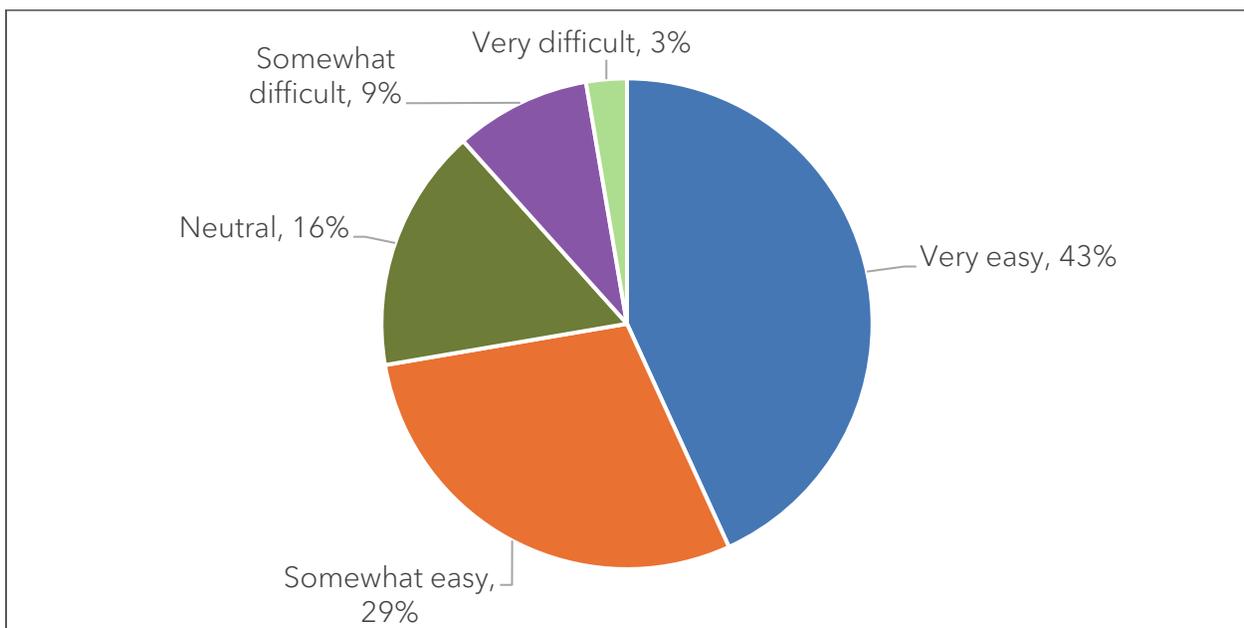
Figure 64. Have you seen clear signage or maps at or near bus stops in your area?



Survey responses for how respondents rate the ease of finding information about local bus service (Figure 65) reflected the following:

- Very easy (43 percent)
- Somewhat easy (29 percent)
- Neutral (16 percent)
- Somewhat difficult (9 percent)
- Very difficult (3 percent)

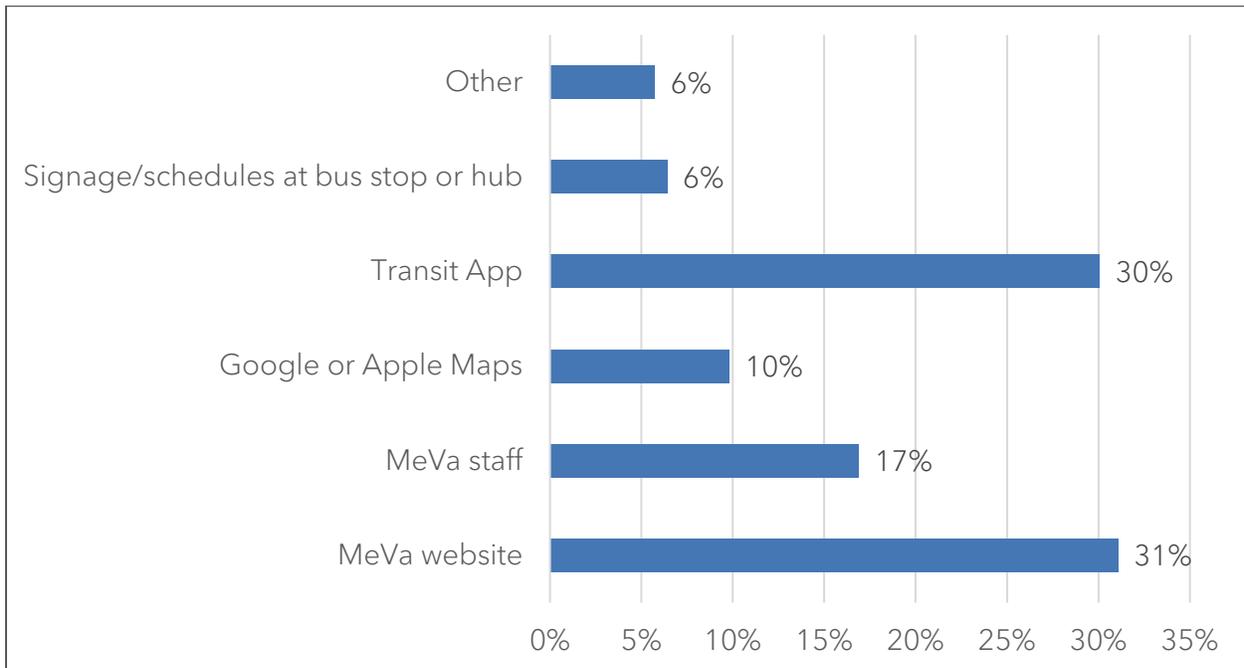
Figure 65. How would you rate the ease of finding information about local bus service (routes, schedules, stops)?



Survey responses on how respondents plan their trips using MeVa services (Figure 66) reflected the following:

- MeVa website (31 percent)
- Transit App (30 percent)
- MeVa staff (17 percent)
- Google or Apple Maps (10 percent)
- Signage/schedules at bus stop or hub (6 percent)
- Other (6 percent)

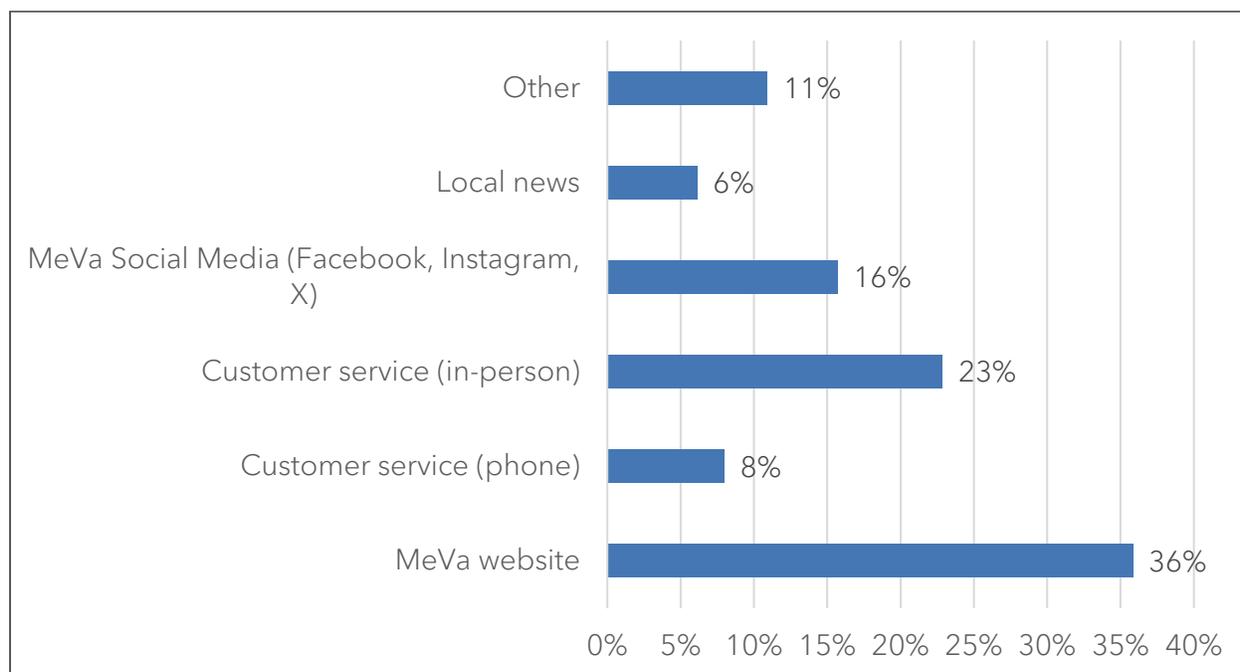
Figure 66. How do you plan your trips using MeVa services?



Survey responses for how riders receive service communications and alerts about MeVa service (Figure 67) included the following:

- MeVa website (36 percent)
- Customer service (in-person) (23 percent)
- MeVa Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, X) (16 percent)
- Other (11 percent)
- Customer service (phone) (8 percent)
- Local news (6 percent)

Figure 67. How do you currently receive service communications and alerts about MeVa service?



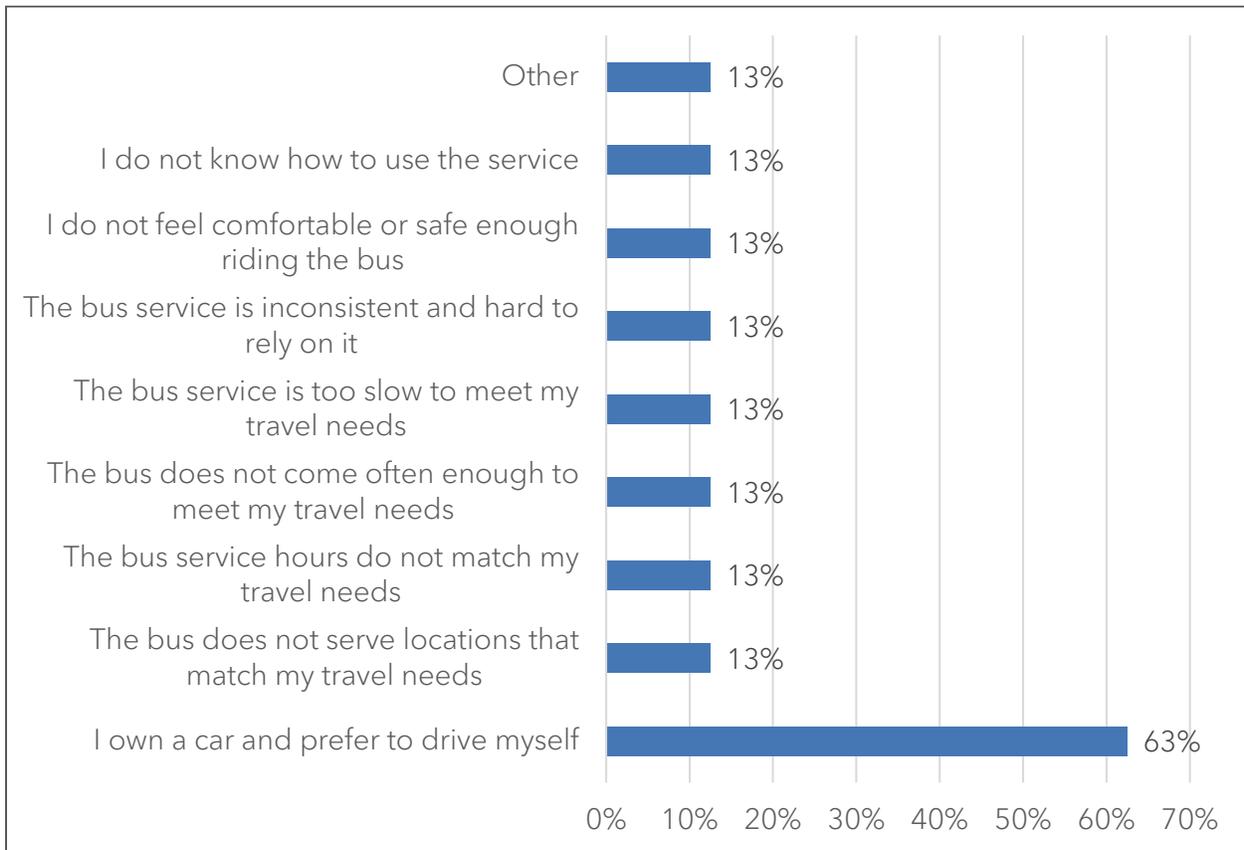
Non-Rider Survey

To capture perspectives from those not currently using MeVa 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 the main reason non-riders do not currently use public transportation in their area (Figure 68) reflected the following (respondents were instructed to select all that applied):

- I own a car and prefer to drive myself (63 percent)
- Other (13 percent)
- I do not know how to use the service (13 percent)
- I do not feel comfortable or safe enough riding the bus (13 percent)
- The bus service is inconsistent and hard to rely on (13 percent)
- The bus service is too slow to meet my travel needs (13 percent)
- The bus does not come often enough to meet my travel needs (13 percent)
- The bus service hours do not match my travel needs (13 percent)
- The bus does not serve locations that match my travel needs (13 percent)

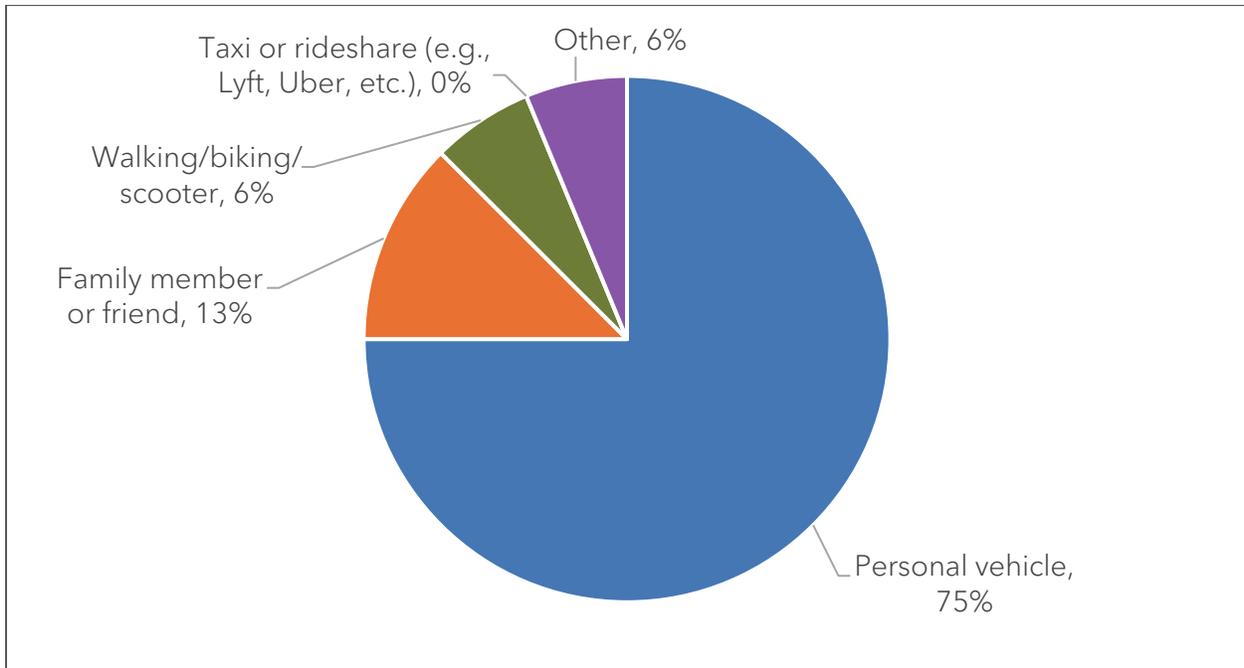
Figure 68. What are the main reasons you do not currently use public transportation in your area? Select all that apply.



Survey responses on what type of transportation non-riders use most frequently (Figure 69) reflected the following:

- Personal vehicle (75 percent)
- Family member or friend (13 percent)
- Other (6 percent)
- Walking/biking/soccer (6 percent)
- Taxi or rideshare (0 percent)

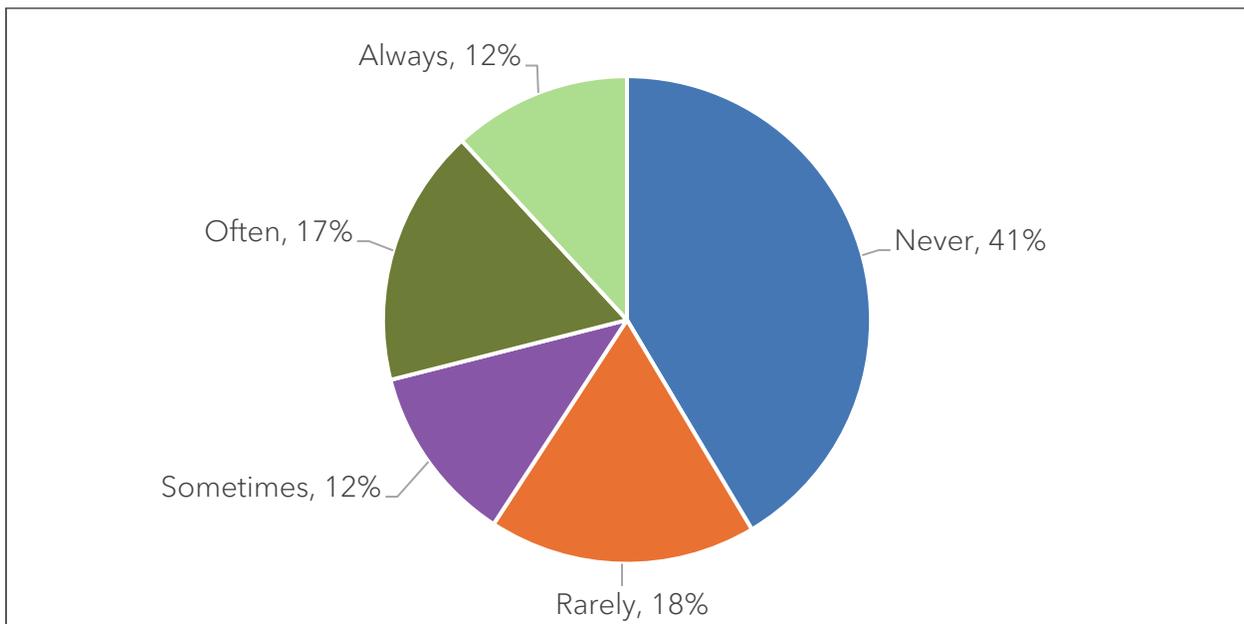
Figure 69. What type of transportation do you currently use most frequently?



Survey responses for how often non-riders consider public transit as a transportation option (Figure 70) reflected the following:

- Never (41 percent)
- Rarely (18 percent)
- Often (17 percent)
- Sometimes (12 percent)
- Always (12 percent)

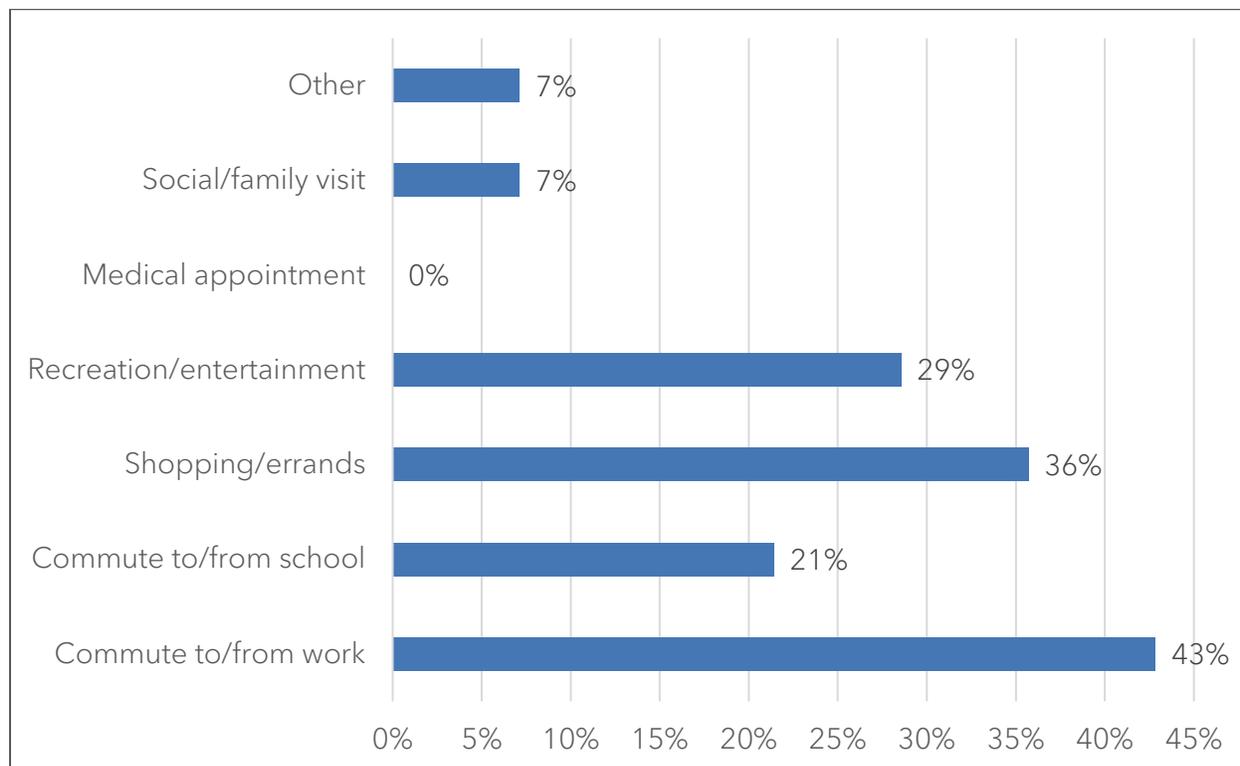
Figure 70. How often do you consider public transit as a transportation option? Select all that apply.



Survey responses for what type of trip non-riders would consider using MeVa service for if it were more convenient (Figure 71) reflect the following (respondents were instructed to select all that applied):

- Commute to/from work (43 percent)
- Shopping/errands (36 percent)
- Recreation/entertainment (29 percent)
- Commute to/from school (21 percent)
- Social/family visit (7 percent)
- Other (7 percent)
- Medical appointment (0 percent)

Figure 71. What type of trip would you consider using MeVa service for if it were more convenient? Please select all that apply.

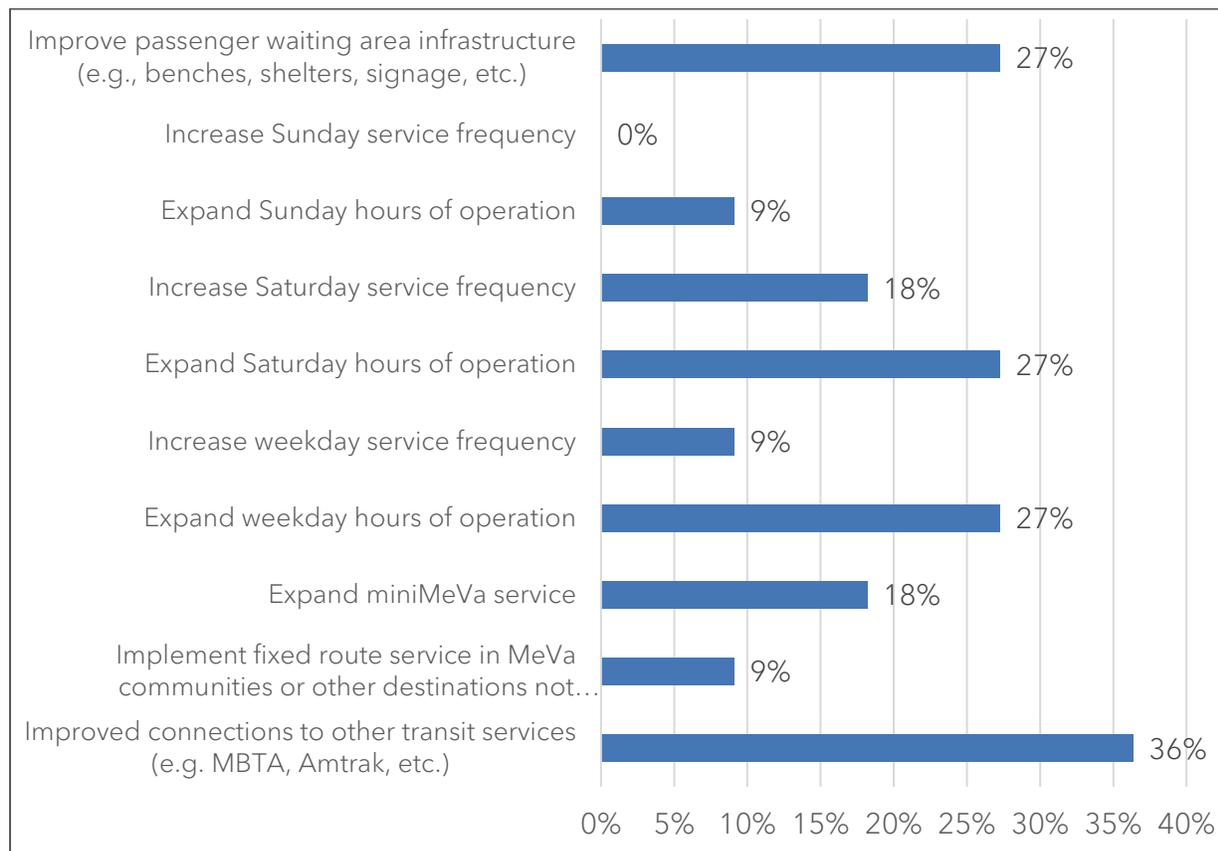


Survey responses for what MeVa should prioritize that would make non-riders consider using services (Figure 72) reflected the following (respondents were instructed to select their top three choices):

- Improved connections to other transit services (e.g., MBTA, Amtrak, etc.) (36 percent)
- Improve passenger waiting area infrastructure (e.g., benches, shelters, signage, etc.) (27 percent)
- Expand Saturday hours of operation (27 percent)
- Expand weekday hours of operation (27 percent)
- Increase Saturday service frequency (18 percent)
- Expand miniMeVa service (18 percent)

- Expand Sunday hours of operation (9 percent)
- Increase weekday service frequency (9 percent)
- Implement fixed route service in MeVa communities or other destinations not currently covered by the network (9 percent)
- Increase Sunday service frequency (0 percent)

Figure 72. What are the most important improvements that MeVa should prioritize that would make you consider using their services more? Please select your top three choices.



Respondents were asked what specific destination(s) currently unserved by MeVa would make non-riders more likely to consider using MeVa services. Responses included the following:

- Seabrook, NH
- I'm not sure
- Going to the airport
- Direct service from Amesbury to Newburyport Station
- If I didn't have a vehicle
- MeVa should make their current destinations more clear to those who have never used the service
- The beach

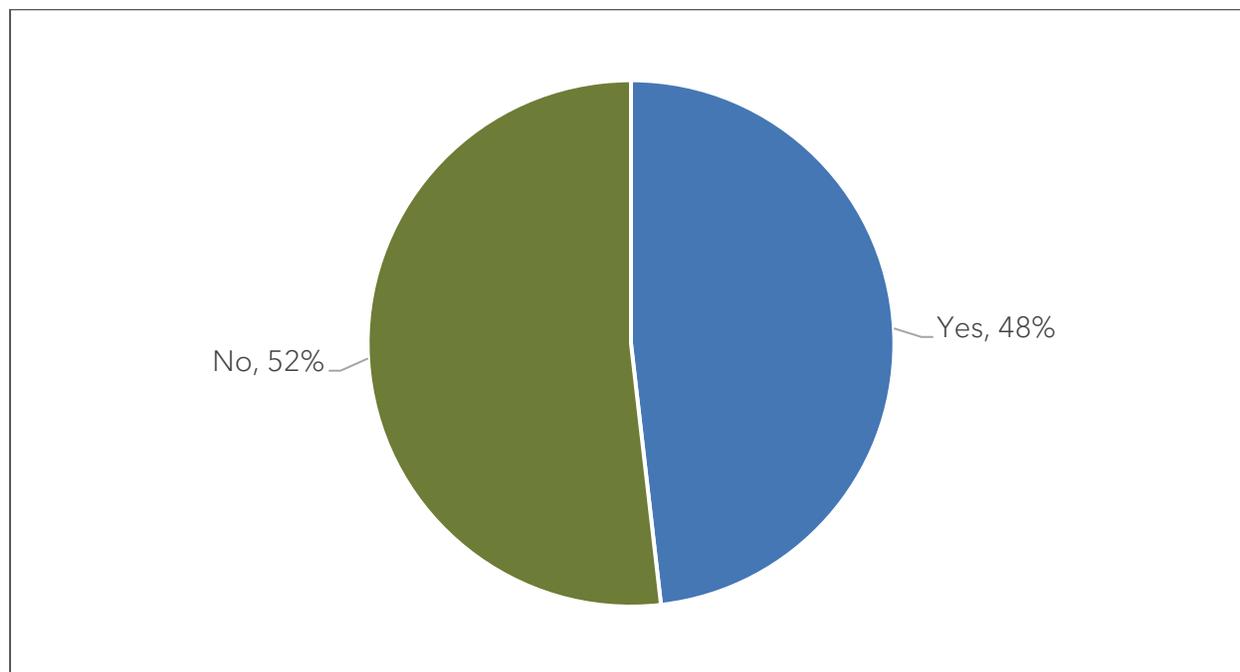
Respondents were asked what changes or ideas non-riders have would make them consider using public transit. Responses included the following:

- I mean it might be helpful to me someday. I don't know. I work in Danvers so I have to drive.
- None
- We need last mile connection to the commuter rail, specifically direct [connection] from Amesbury Center to Newburyport Station.
- Longer hours to services the public for transportation service on week and weekend
- I don't think MeVa is doing their job relating to me just how convenient their service is for me.
- I don't own a car.

Survey Demographics

Survey responses on whether someone assisted in filling out the survey (Figure 73) reflected that 52 percent of respondents did not and 48 percent did have help. This high rate of assistance is likely reflective of the survey pop-up event and in-person engagement efforts led by MeVa and CRTP team staff in an effort to reduce barriers to completing the survey, especially for respondents whose primary language is not English.

Figure 73. Did someone assist you in filling out this survey?



Respondents were asked what city or town they lived in and provided the following answers:

- Lawrence (153)
- Haverhill (40)
- Methuen (35)
- Andover (16)
- Amesbury (12)
- Lowell (6)
- North Andover (5)

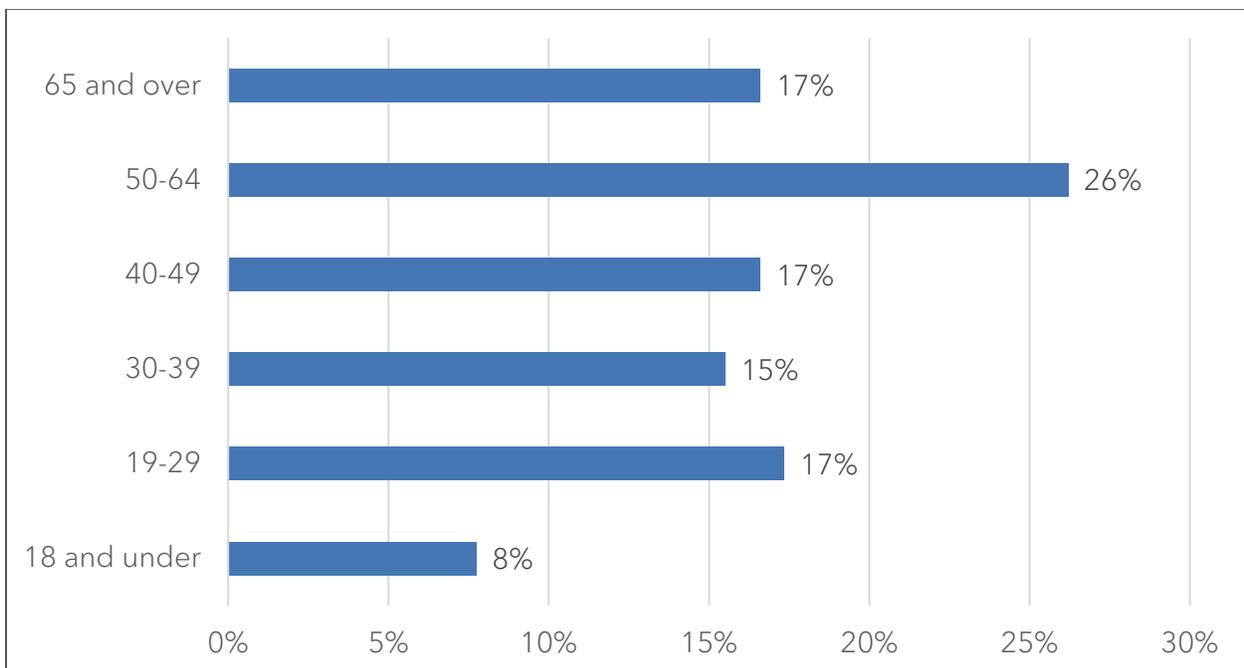
- Groveland (3)
- Newburyport (2)
- Boston (2)
- Atkinson (1)
- South Lawrence (1)
- Peabody (1)
- Brighton (1)
- Bradford (1)
- Belmont (1)
- Merrimac (1)
- Chelsea (1)

See Appendix C for the list of respondents' home zip codes.

Survey responses on age (Figure 74) reflected that respondents were in the following age ranges:

- 65 and over (17 percent)
- 50-64 (26 percent)
- 40-49 (17 percent)
- 30-39 (15 percent)
- 19-29 (17 percent)
- 18 and under (8 percent)

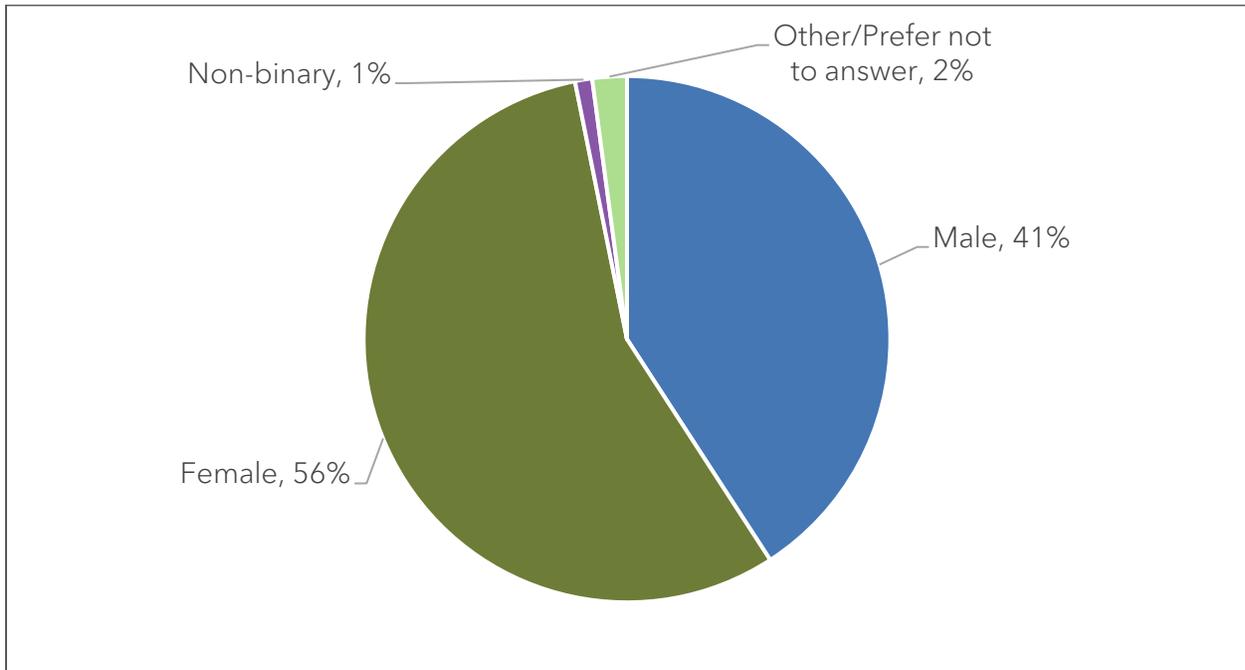
Figure 74. What is your age?



Survey responses for how respondents identify (Figure 75) reflected the following:

- Female (56 percent)
- Male (41 percent)
- Other/prefer not to answer (2 percent)
- Non-binary (1 percent)

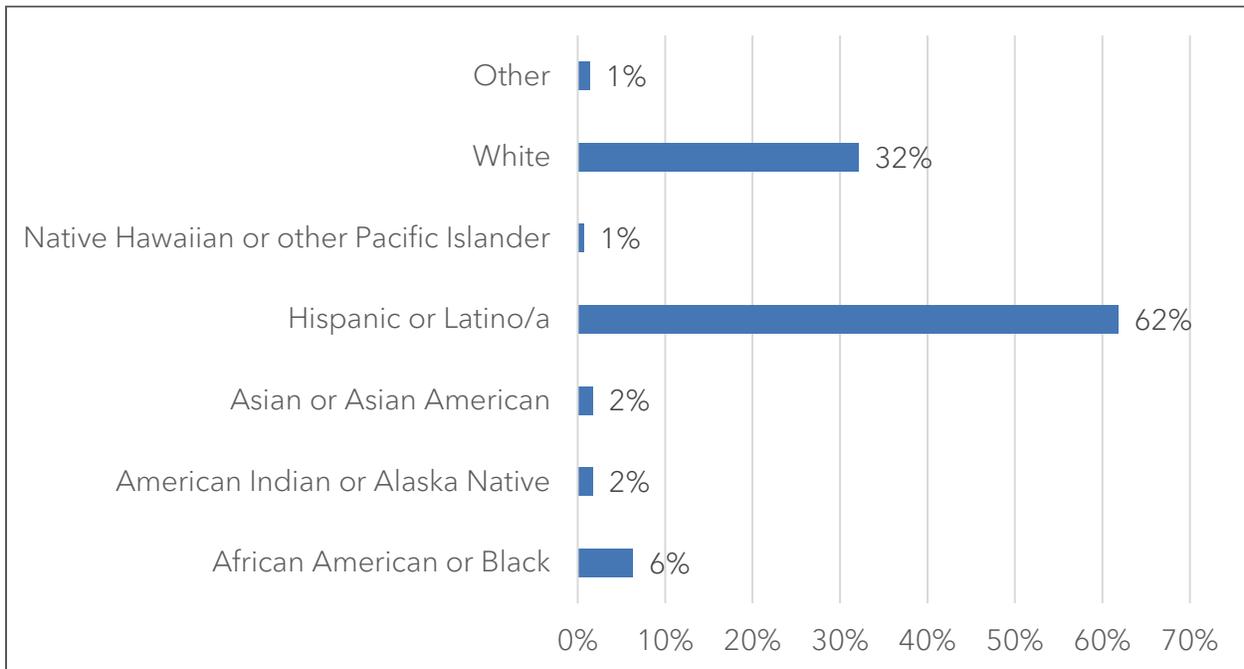
Figure 75. How do you identify? (select one)



Survey responses for respondent race and ethnicity (Figure 76) reflected the respondents identified as the following (respondents were instructed to select all that applied):

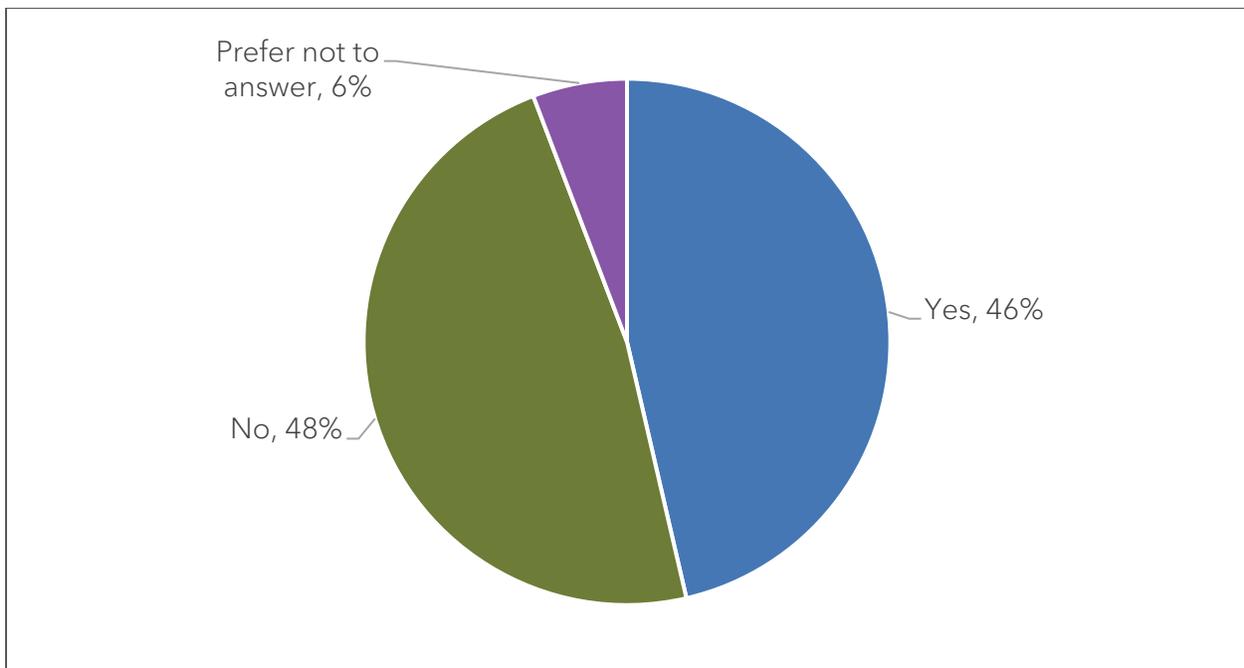
- Hispanic or Latino/a (62 percent)
- White (32 percent)
- African American or Black (6 percent)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (2 percent)
- Asian or Asian American (2 percent)
- Other (1 percent)
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (1 percent)

Figure 76. Which of the following best describes your race and ethnicity? (select all that apply)



Survey responses on if respondents were born in a country other than the United States (Figure 77) reflected that 48 percent were born in the United States, 46 percent were not, and 6 percent preferred not to answer.

Figure 77. Were you born in a country other than the United States?

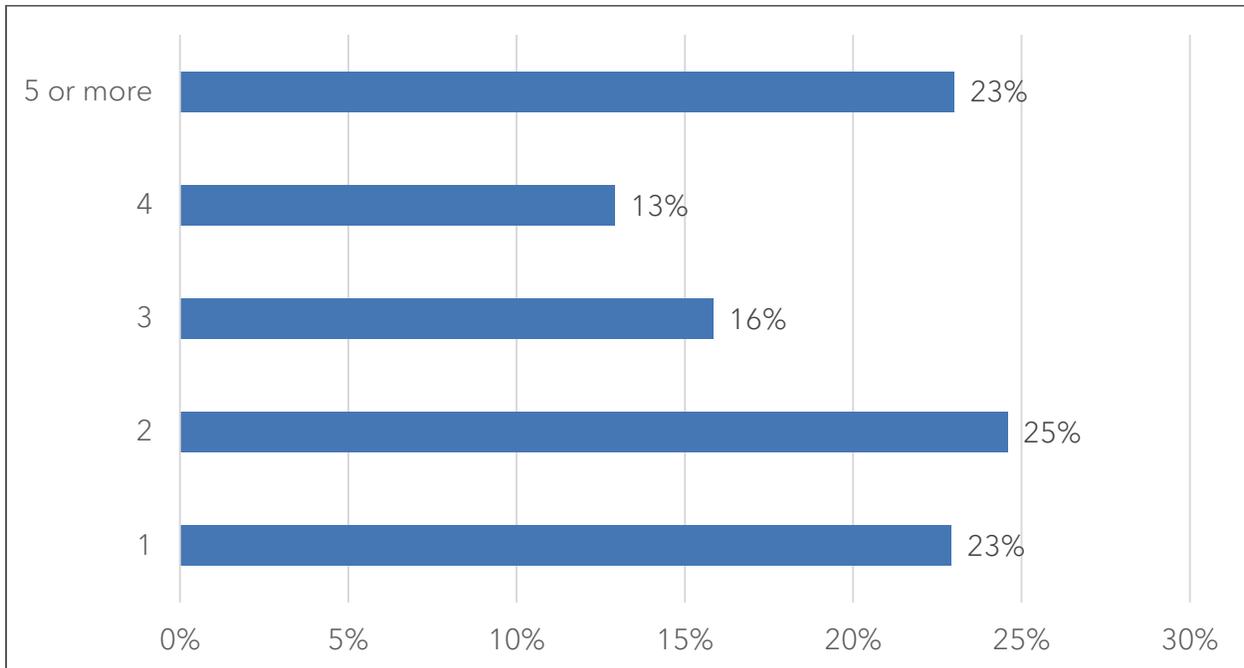


Survey responses for the number of people who live in a respondent’s household (Figure 78) reflected the following:

- 5 or more (23 percent)
- 4 people (13 percent)

- 3 people (16 percent)
- 2 people (25 percent)
- 1 person (23 percent)

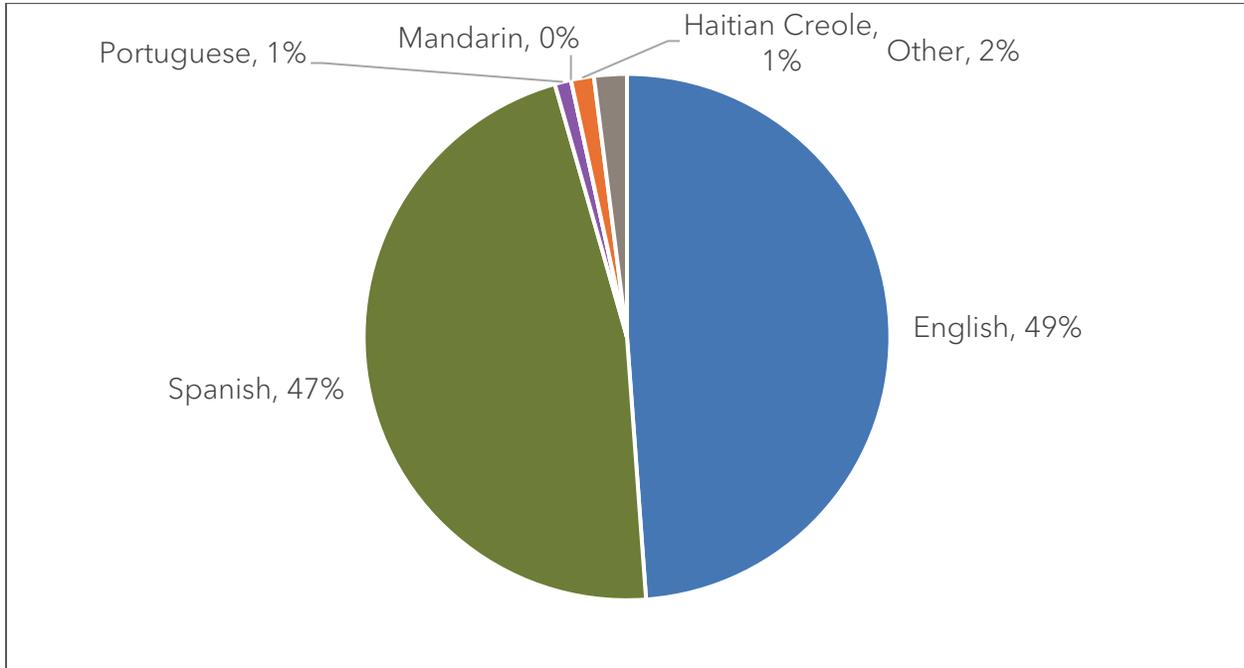
Figure 78. How many people live in your household (including yourself)?



Survey responses for languages spoken at home (Figure 79) reflected the following:

- English (49 percent)
- Spanish (47 percent)
- Other (2 percent)
- Haitian Creole (1 percent)
- Portugues (1 percent)

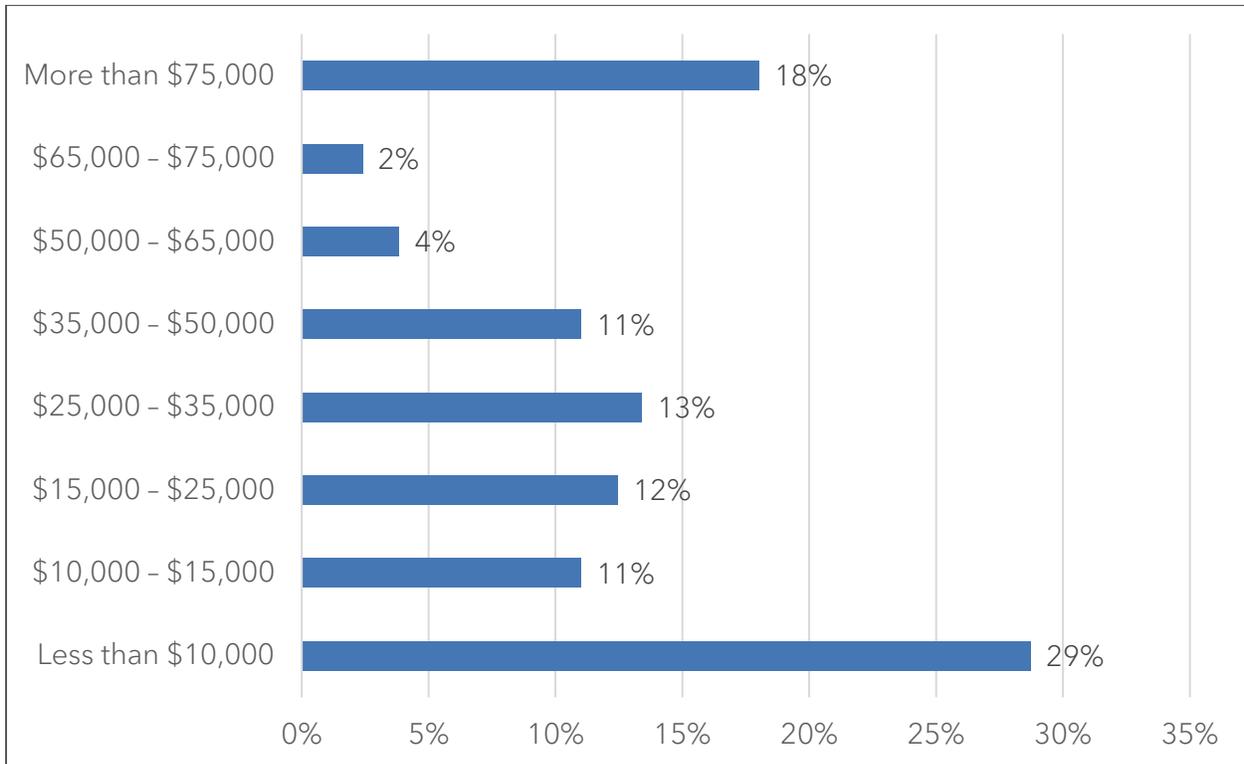
Figure 79. Languages spoken at home



Survey responses for annual household income (Figure 80) reflected the following:

- Less than \$10,000 (29 percent)
- \$10,000-\$15,000 (11 percent)
- \$15,000-\$25,000 (12 percent)
- \$25,000-\$35,000 (13 percent)
- \$35,000-\$50,000 (11 percent)
- \$50,000-\$65,000 (4 percent)
- \$65,000-\$75,000 (2 percent)
- More than \$75,000 (18 percent)

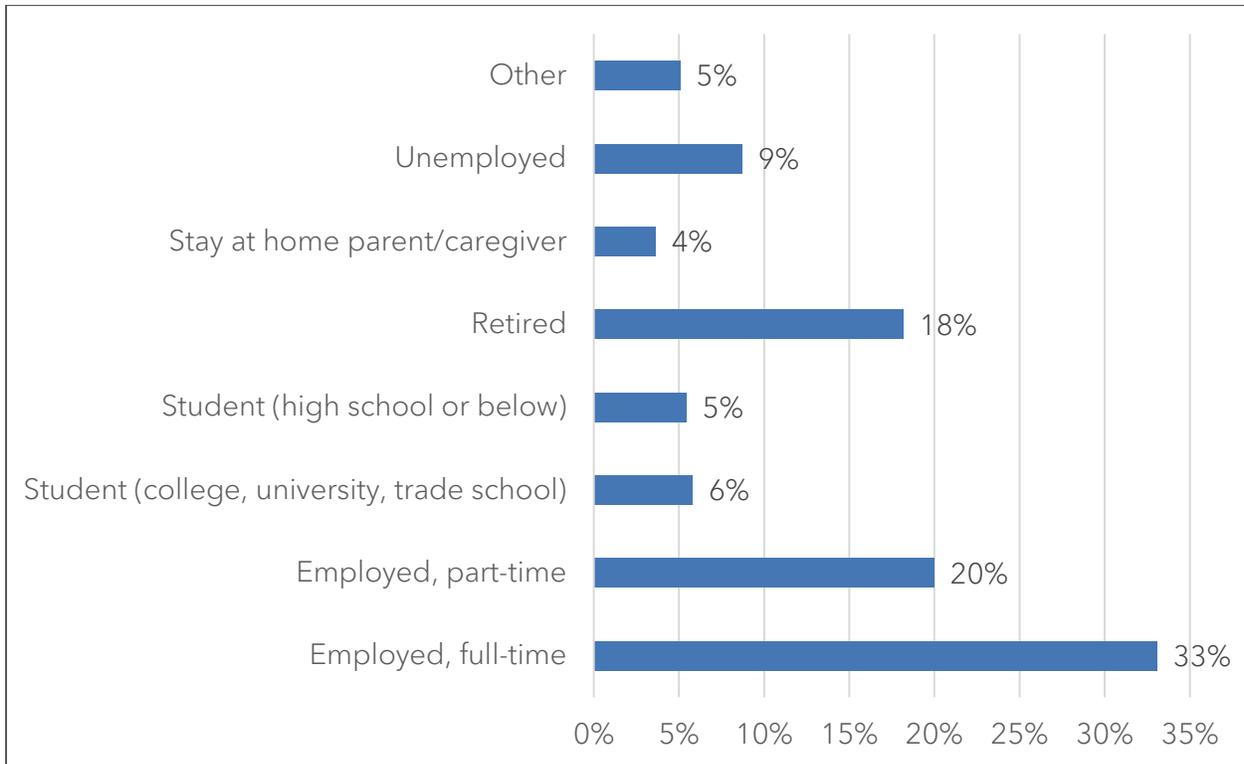
Figure 80. What is your annual household income?



Survey responses on employment status (Figure 81) reflected the following:

- Employed, full-time (33 percent)
- Employed, part-time (20 percent)
- Retired (18 percent)
- Unemployed (9 percent)
- Student (college, university, trade school) (6 percent)
- Student (high school or below) (5 percent)
- Other (5 percent)
- Stay at home parent/caregiver (4 percent)

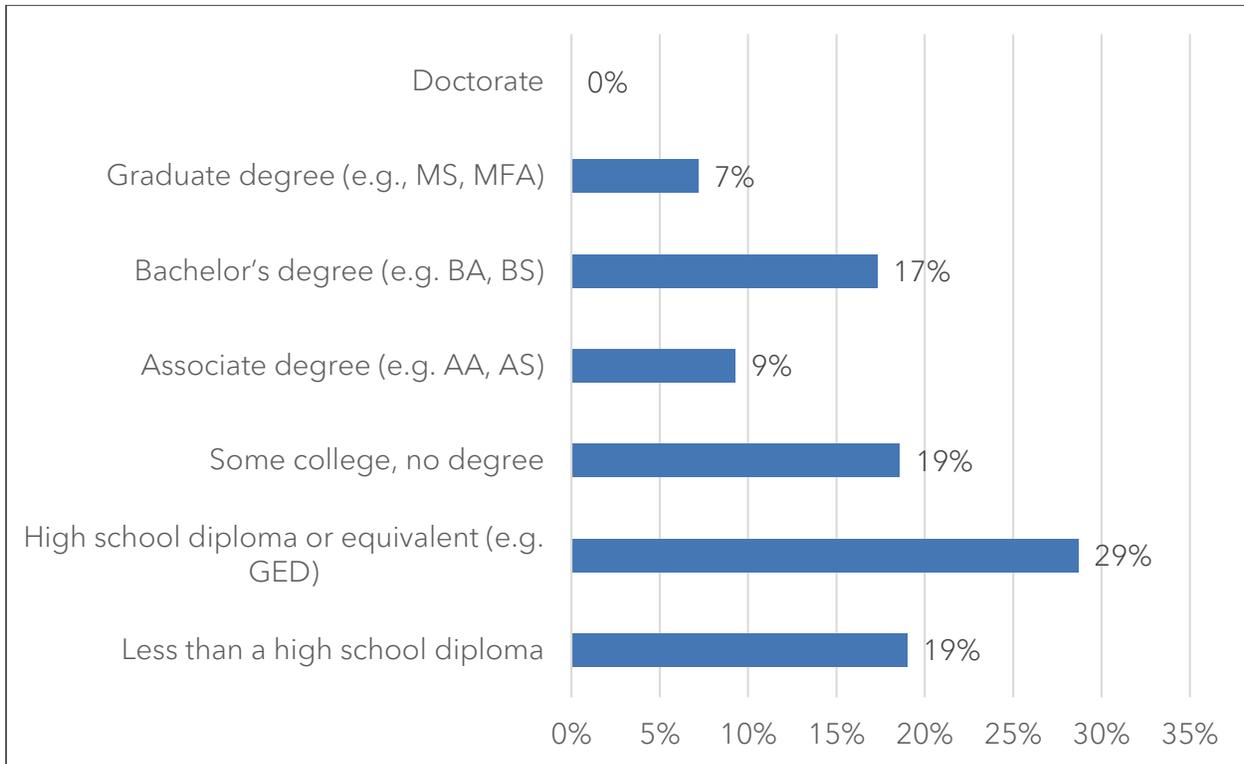
Figure 81. What best describes your employment status?



Survey responses for educational attainment levels (Figure 82) reflected the following:

- High school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED) (29 percent)
- Less than a high school diploma (19 percent)
- Some college, no degree (19 percent)
- Bachelor’s degree (e.g., BA, BS) (17 percent)
- Associate degree (e.g., AA, AS) (9 percent)
- Graduate degree (e.g., MS, MFA) (7 percent)
- Doctorate (0 percent)

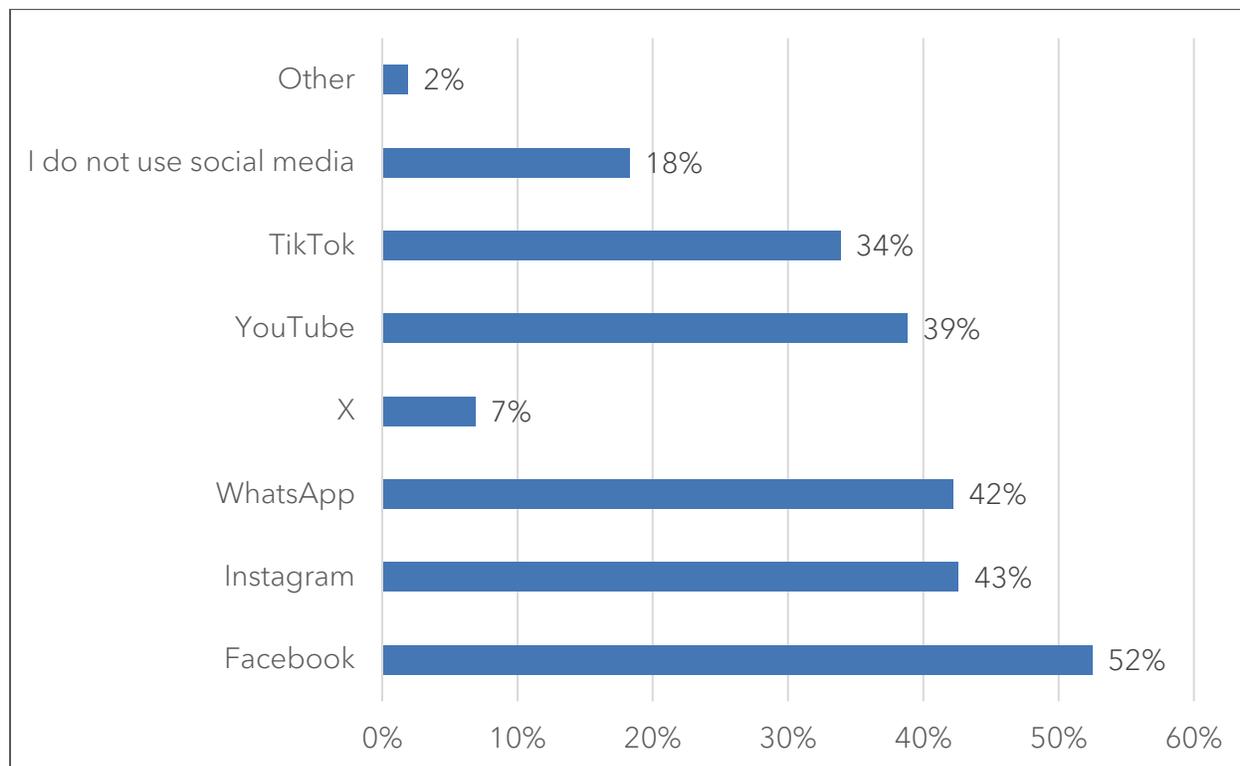
Figure 82. What is your highest level of educational attainment?



Survey responses for what social media platforms respondents use (Figure 83) reflected the following (respondents were instructed to select all that apply):

- Facebook (52 percent)
- Instagram (43 percent)
- WhatsApp (42 percent)
- YouTube (39 percent)
- TikTok (34 percent)
- I do not use social media (18 percent)
- X (7 percent)
- Other (2 percent)

Figure 83. What social media platform(s) do you currently use? (select all that apply)



5.2.4.4 Key Takeaways

The following are key takeaways from the public survey effort.

- Riders expressed a strong desire for longer service hours and increased frequency to better meet their travel needs.
- Many participants requested expanded Saturday and Sunday service with more frequent trips throughout the day.
- There was significant interest in improved travel connections, particularly to destinations in New Hampshire.
- MeVa riders use transit for diverse trip types. While commuting to/from work and shopping/running errands are the most popular primary purposes identified for using MeVa, neither purpose was identified by a majority of respondents.
- Most riders could not get where they need to go without MeVa.
- Riders raised concerns about road/pedestrian safety and accessibility at stops, including issues with signage and infrastructure.
- There was a clear demand for real-time bus information to help riders plan their trips more effectively.
- Non-riders indicated that they rely on personal vehicles and are generally not engaged with MeVa services.

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. This chapter outlines the performance measures and targets selected and defined by MeVa. Data examining performance from FY 2020 through FY 2024 can be found in Chapter 4.

MeVa reports performance data on a quarterly basis across a variety of metrics as described in this section. The targets are updated annually as mutually agreed upon by MeVa 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. MeVa ridership metrics and targets are shown in Table 21. Monthly data are submitted quarterly and compared to the annual target set by MeVa.

Table 21. Ridership Metrics and Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route	Demand Response
Unlinked passenger trip	2,980,695	116,851
Unlinked passenger trip per vehicle revenue mile	1.61	0.10
Unlinked passenger trip per vehicle revenue hour	19.23	1.69

Source: MassDOT

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 revenue miles, 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 2025, all MeVa services are fare-free. As such, the target for fixed route and demand response is zero percent. MeVa financial targets are displayed in Table 22.

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 22. Financial Metrics and Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route	Demand Response
Operating expenses per vehicle revenue mile	\$14.65	\$4.83
Operating expenses per vehicle revenue hour	\$175.39	\$80.71

Metric	Fixed Route	Demand Response
Operating expenses per unlinked passenger trip	\$9.12	\$47.66
Farebox recovery ratio	0.00%	0.00%

Source: MassDOT

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:** Vehicles depart no more than five minutes late at the start of a run, arrive at the end of a run no more than two minutes early, and arrive at timepoints no more than zero minutes early or no more than five minutes late.
- **Demand Response:** Vehicles arrive within the scheduled window.

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 23 shows MeVa’s customer service targets for fixed route and demand response service.

Table 23. Customer Service and Satisfaction Metrics and Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route	Demand Response
On-time performance	80.00%	94.88%
Scheduled trips operated	99.89%	92.07%

Source: MassDOT

6.4 Asset Management

The state of good repair for capital assets is a priority of MassDOT, FTA, and MeVa. Equipment in poor condition can result in reliability issues, safety risks, poor customer perceptions, and other problems that impede a successful transit operation. Each RTA has a TAM Plan that lays out the condition of assets and priorities for capital improvements. The TAM Plan must be submitted every four years or whenever the RTA updates its targets, whichever comes first. Targets are reviewed annually, and any updates are submitted to NTD. Table 24 breaks down MeVa targets for the percentage of vehicles exceeding their useful life, by vehicle type, and Table 25 shows the target for the percentage of facilities exceeding their useful life, by facility type.

Table 24. Vehicle Asset Management Metrics and Targets (FY 2025)

Metric	Target
Buses	0.00%
Cutaways	0.00%

Metric	Target
Automobiles (Non-revenue)	100.00%
Trucks and other rubber tire vehicles (Non-revenue)	0.00%

Source: MassDOT

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

Metric	Target
Passenger/parking facilities	0.00%
Administrative/maintenance facilities	0.00%

Source: MassDOT

6.5 Safety

Safety is the number one priority when delivering transit service. As an urban system, MeVa develops a PTASP that defines specific safety goals for the authority. These are reviewed annually and updated as part of a PTASP update in coordination with MVPC and MassDOT. Performance data are submitted annually in NTD then provided to MassDOT. Safety targets are shown in Table 26.

Table 26. Safety Metrics and Targets (Calendar Year 2025)

Metric	Fixed Route	Demand Response
Fatalities	0	0
Fatality Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	0	0
Injuries	2	0
Injury Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	0.18	0
Safety Events	4	2
Safety Event Rate (per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles)	0.29	0.20
System Reliability (miles between failures)	250,000	150,000

Source: MeVa

6.6 Annual Performance

Two annual performance metrics reported to MassDOT are unique metrics chosen by MeVa. 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 MeVa are:

- RTA-Choice Metric:** MeVa is transitioning from a primarily flag stop to a fixed stop system. The goal is to have the Bus Stop Implementation plan completed in FY 2026, with some bus stops that require minimal design/construction. In FY 2027, MeVa will move to Phase 2 of the plan, involving coordination with municipalities to install the more complex stops.

- **RTA-Choice Metric Tied to CRTP:** MeVa would like to implement a metric that results from the 2025 CRTP and has delayed selection of the choice metric until FY 2027 after recommendations are identified.

Other annual performance metrics are external partnerships and fleet composition by fuel type, as shown in Table 27. Both are reported annually and are not compared to an annual target.

Table 27. Fleet Composition by Fuel Type and External Partnership Annual Performance Metrics and Targets (FY 2026)

Metric	Fixed Route	Demand Response
Percent fleet composition - Electric	0.00%	0.00%
Percent fleet composition - Hybrid	20.00%	0.00%
Percent fleet composition - Compressed Natural Gas	0.00%	0.00%
Percent fleet composition - Diesel	80.00%	0.00%
Percent fleet composition - Gasoline	0.00%	100.00%
Number of External Partnerships	125	125

Source: MassDOT

7 Trends and Uncertainties

MeVa held an alternatives scenario workshop on November 13, 2025, to explore future uncertainties and market trends that could potentially impact transit over the next 5 years. During this exercise, MeVa examined how these trends might influence ridership levels and identified how it may respond to each scenario. The recommendations are informed by ridership scenarios, enabling MeVa to identify which recommendations are most applicable based on current conditions. Key topics and solutions that arose during the scenario discussions for MeVa to consider in the future are presented below.

7.1 Future Uncertainties

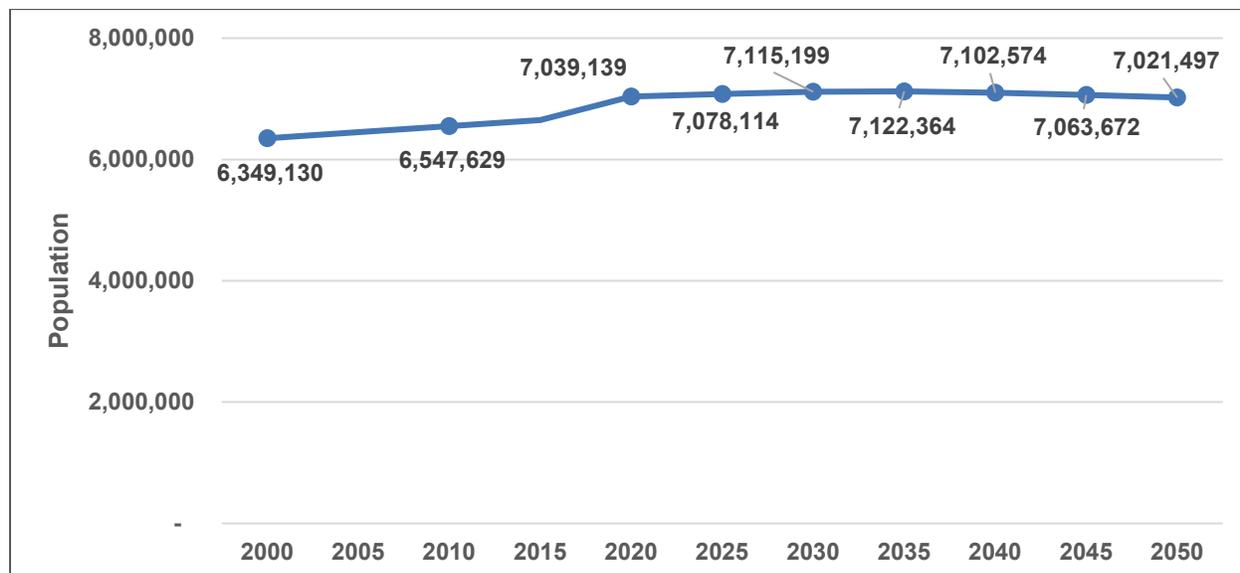
As MeVa prepares for the next five years, it is important to recognize and plan for trends that are both highly impactful and deeply uncertain. These uncertainties may define the operating circumstances of MeVa, possibly influencing factors such as public expectations of transit, service models, funding 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 MeVa'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 84, 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 84. Long-term Population Projections for Massachusetts (2000-2050)



Source: UMass Donahue Institute 2025

When considering the core of MeVa’s service area, particularly Lawrence, Haverhill, and Methuen, high rates of immigration and population growth have made these centers of gravity for MeVa’s fixed route service outliers in the broader county and state trends of a stagnant or declining population. Essex County’s population saw a 0.95 percent increase from 2020 to 2024.

It should be noted too that trends are based on past experience, which may be less predictive of future patterns now, given dynamic changes in federal policy over the last year. As an example, anecdotally, Massachusetts has experienced an uptick in domestic in-migration from states that have been less hospitable with respect to rights for members of the LGBTQ+ community, or supportive of reproductive rights. Likewise, Puerto Ricans are the second largest ethnic group in the City of Lawrence and, as US citizens, are not subject to any immigration constraints and may be inclined to move to areas like the Merrimack Valley’s gateway cities with already established Puerto Rican communities. In other cases, speculation on how people will behave due to changing economic conditions must be revised if they do not pan out as projected. While many had predicted an outflow of millionaires following implementation of the Fair Share Amendment in 2023, that did not happen.

Population and demographic trends hold a defining influence on transportation needs, the quality of transit service, and the cultural expectations around transit. Should the statewide trends of a stagnant or declining population begin to manifest in the MeVa service area, a variety of impacts could arise, 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 MeVa 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 MeVa’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 2025a). 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). Coincidentally, the proportion of Massachusetts residents aged 21 or younger is projected to decline through 2030 (Point32 Health Foundation 2025). Not only does the rate of aging in Massachusetts outpace national averages, but it also exceeds earlier state-level estimates (Renski 2015).

It is worth noting that MeVa's largest city, Lawrence, is comparatively younger than the rest of Essex County and Massachusetts, with 28 percent of the population under 21 years old (2024 ACS 1-Year). This is due to a larger percentage of families with children immigrating to the city. In this regard, some of the pressures with respect to an aging population may be somewhat mitigated for MeVa, at least in Lawrence.

In 2025, 25.3 percent of Essex County residents are above the age of 60, and that percentage is projected to grow through 2050. Between 2010 and 2022, the population of people aged 60 to 84 increased by 42 percent, and the county continues to age faster than the rest of the Commonwealth. 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 MeVa. 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 MeVa'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 2025f). 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.

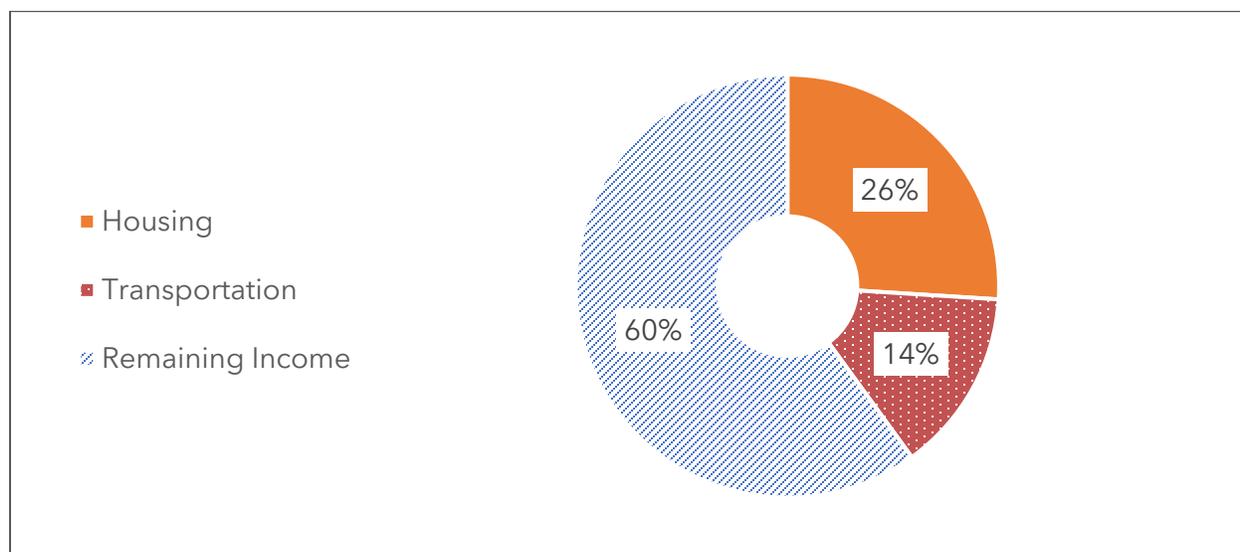
In tandem with housing costs, transportation expenses have also imposed an outsized burden on Massachusetts residents in recent years. According to Transportation for Massachusetts' 2024 survey, 71 percent of Massachusetts residents report housing cost burden, while 57 percent are burdened by transportation costs (Transportation for Massachusetts 2024). 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 MeVa's ridership base, residents spend an estimated 40 percent of their income on housing and transportation expenses as seen in Figure 85 (Center for Neighborhood Technology 2025).

MeVa's service area is characterized by a significant scatter with respect to income, affordability, and cost of living. While the service area covers some of the lowest income municipalities in the state, it also serves more affluent areas. The result is a stark spatial

mismatch, where some areas with a high concentration of jobs may be unaffordable to people who could perform those jobs. It was in this vein that MeVa introduced the Route 11 connection between residents of Lawrence and Haverhill with jobs in Newburyport, or the Route 14 extension, connecting jobs at the new Amazon Distribution Center in North Andover with Lawrence in 2024.

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 MeVa to appropriately balance more extensive transportation needs of the individual while accommodating a potentially increased ridership demand at the community level.

Figure 85. Essex County Housing and Transportation Costs as a Percentage of Residents’ Income



Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2025

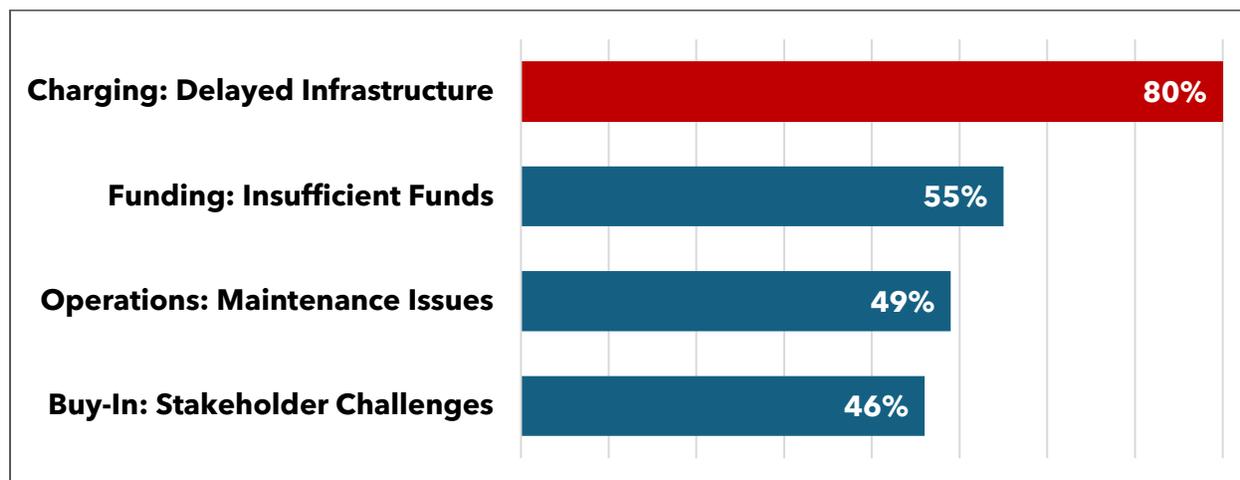
7.1.3 Technology

Transit agencies across Massachusetts and the United States have employed a diversity of approaches and levels of initiative towards fleet modernization. Fleet modernization within RTAs 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). MeVa, which has taken a very cautious approach to embracing full battery-electric technology, did prevail in securing \$7.2 million in FY 2025 Low-No grant funding for six 40-foot hybrid-electric buses, as announced by FTA on November 20, 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 86, 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.

It is also crucial to get the sequencing right. In MeVa’s case, the maintenance facility is very constrained and has no capacity to add necessary components for zero-emissions vehicles, such as charging infrastructure. As a result, MeVa would need make a large capital investment in expanding the facility before it could reasonably entertain procuring zero-emissions vehicles at more than a very small demonstration level.

Figure 86. Inadequate Charging Infrastructure is the Leading Obstacle to Fleet Modernization



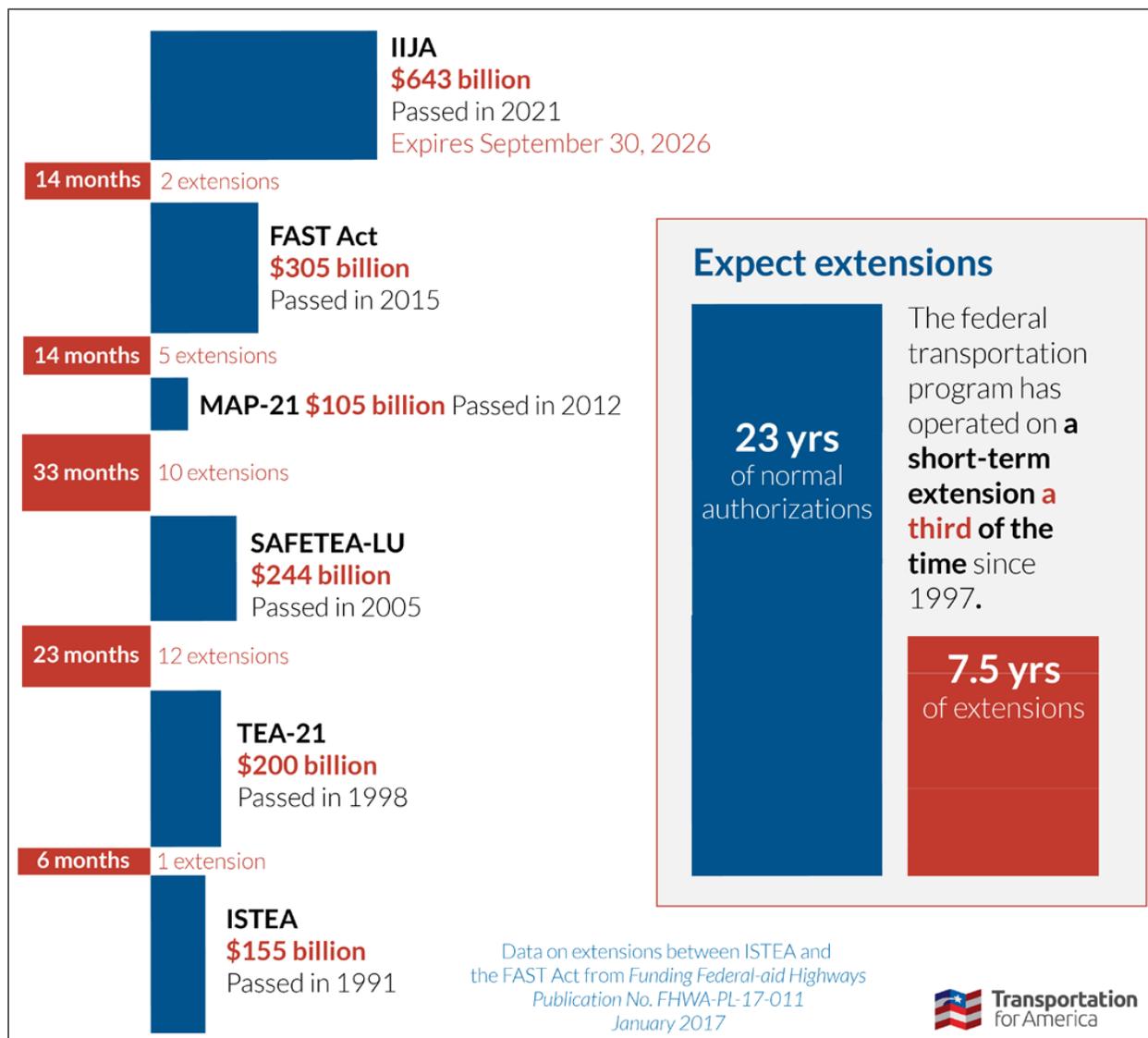
Source: Optibus 2025 State of Public Transportation Industry Survey

Over the past five years, remote work and virtual connectivity have significantly altered the commuting patterns across Massachusetts, although to a lesser extent for MeVa’s ridership. 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, MeVa 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. Also, with less standard work schedules, demand for weekend service can be expected to grow.

7.1.4 Funding for Transit

The stability and size of funding streams is paramount to determining MeVa’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 87 (Davis 2025). Given this historical record, the level of federal transit funding is uncertain over the next five years.

Figure 87. 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 88 (MassDOT 2025). The funding spike in 2024 followed an almost 10-year period of mostly level funding, which in constant dollars amounted to a funding cut. In this context, what appears as a financial windfall in reality only catches RTAs up to the bare minimum funding levels needed to provide for the communities they serve.

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. While MeVa has been successful in securing additional funding through these discretionary funding, the challenge is sustaining successful initiatives paid for with on-time funding.

In FY 2026, \$35 million was appropriated 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 MeVa, which permanently

adopted a fare-free policy in February 2025, the funds support its ongoing fare-free operation, which has demonstrated significant quantifiable benefits to MeVa directly and to the community since fare-free service was first piloted in a limited capacity in September 2019. (For more information on fare-free transit and MeVa’s fare policy, see Appendix A.) With MeVa’s commitment to permanent fare-free operations and the Commonwealth’s statutory funding requirement, there is a greater degree of certainty that funds will be available each year to support fare-free transit. However, “subject to appropriation” in the amendment suggests that the funding could be at risk from prolonged budgetary constraints. Should state funding for fare-free transit be compromised in the future, MeVa would need to be prepared with alternative funding sources to support its permanent fare-free policy.

Figure 88. State Funding for Massachusetts’ RTAs from FY 2007 to FY 2025



Source: MassDOT 2025

7.2 2020 Alternative Scenarios

MeVa last updated its CRTP in 2020, at the peak of the pandemic, when MeVa 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, MeVa 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.

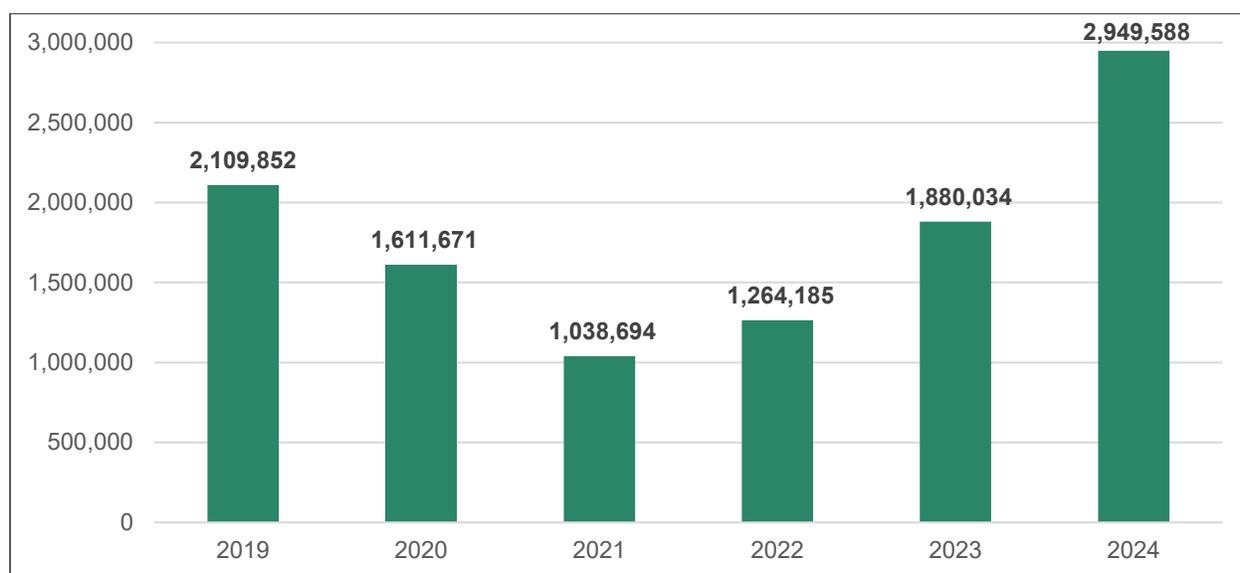
In order to address this uncertainty, MeVa defined three qualitative ridership scenarios to map out the future of transit demand through 2025. The three scenarios were:

- **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 2019 to FY 2024, MeVa’s ridership far exceeded even the high ridership scenario, as shown in Figure 89.

Beginning in 2021, new leadership at MeVa worked with the community to pursue significant improvements to MeVa’s service, as described in previous chapters. While MeVa was able to effectively utilize the 2020 CRTP recommendations consistent with the high ridership scenario for informed decision making and MeVa priority action items, a more ambitious high ridership scenario might have been better aligned with MeVa’s industry-leading performance success, as well as the bold vision of its leadership and Board.

Figure 89. MeVa Annual System Ridership (2019-2024)



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 MeVa’s region, key questions emerge: “What comes next?” and “What can be done?” While many of these trends lie beyond MeVa’s control, how they unfold will likely have a significant impact on ridership. MeVa can proactively respond by planning for different ridership levels over the next five years. As part of this process, MeVa conducted a workshop that explored three different ridership scenarios: low ridership, medium ridership, and high ridership. In contrast to the conservative scenarios established in the 2020 CRTP, this time MeVa embraced more ambitious targets, such that the low ridership scenario is actually well above the high ridership scenario levels established previously.

The scenarios are defined as follows, with a baseline ridership threshold of 3 million riders based on FY 2025 ridership levels, and they are further detailed in the following sections:

- **Low Ridership:** Ridership plateau (approximately 3 million riders)
- **Medium Ridership:** Steady ridership growth, with up to 15 percent growth from FY 2025 or 3 million riders

- **High Ridership:** Substantial growth, above the 15 percent growth in the medium ridership scenario from FY 2025 levels or 3 million riders

7.3.1 Low Ridership

Low ridership for MeVa is characterized by ridership numbers across services plateauing, demonstrating no growth from the 3 million rider threshold 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, although this has not been as much of a factor in MeVa's service area.
- Demographic shifts, such as an aging population, might lead to a decline in work or school-based ridership.
- Housing, retail, employment, and medical development could exacerbate non-transit supportive land uses.

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

In addition to these potential trends, MeVa considered other factors that may cause ridership to reduce over the next five years. MeVa identified the following driving factors for a low-ridership potential scenario:

- Reduction in anticipated federal and/or state funds, such as Fair Share Amendment state funding, which would restrict MeVa's ability to support its ongoing operations, fare-free services, and planned capital and operational investments.
- Changes in immigration enforcement or other public safety conditions may create fear among vulnerable groups and reduce their willingness to use public spaces such as public transit. MeVa does not control enforcement policy but monitors community conditions that may affect mobility and access.

7.3.2 Medium Ridership

Medium ridership for MeVa is characterized by ridership across services growing by up to 15 percent from the 3 million rider threshold over the next five years.

Several market trend factors could potentially contribute to this scenario:

- 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.
- Localized developments such as new transit-oriented housing developments, pursued in proactive coordination with MeVa, could further contribute to ridership growth in this scenario.

These potential market trends, as discussed previously, could collectively shape MeVa's ridership patterns in a medium-ridership growth scenario. In addition to these potential trends, MeVa determined that the driving factors for a steady growth in ridership would be the following:

- Continued federal and state funding to support operations and planned capital and operational investments.
- Increased partnerships with large employers and clusters of employers, which would support transit-first collaboration and investment from the business community.
- Successful service enhancements and expansion (such as increased spans of service, route-level Sunday service additions, and expanded service geography), to grow MeVa's reach and ability to maximize provision of convenient services.
- Continued successful marketing and outreach efforts, such as via non-profit and cultural institution connections, to increase visibility and awareness.
- Continued prioritization of MeVa's transit services as a diversified system to meet the needs of all types of trips and demographics.
- Successful implementation of transit supportive infrastructure to ensure a hospitable environment for patrons and a positive user experience.
- Permanent operation of fare-free service.

7.3.3 High Ridership

High ridership for MeVa is characterized by a substantial increase in ridership numbers across services, above the 15 percent growth in the medium ridership scenario from the 3 million rider threshold 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 MeVa's ridership patterns in a high-ridership scenario. In response to these potential impacts, MeVa considered in addition to the external market trends, why might ridership increase substantially?

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

- Continued federal and state funding to support operations, service enhancements, and capital investments.
- Successful service enhancements and expansion (such as increased spans of service, route-level Sunday service additions, and expanded service geography), to grow MeVa's reach and ability to maximize provision of convenient services.
- Continued commitment to marketing and outreach efforts, destigmatizing public transit, and improving the rider experience.
- Successful implementation of the planned fixed bus stops, which will increase visibility of MeVa's fixed routes, and enhance accessibility, comfort, and trust in the system.

- Successful implementation of the planned MeVa ferry service, which will appeal to a wider audience, while serving as a gateway to bus transit services by integrating with MeVa’s existing transit network.
- Successful implementation of further on-road infrastructure improvements, such as transit signal priority, bus lanes, and queue jumps, to develop a more transit-friendly traffic environment and mitigate the current traffic challenges.
- Permanent operation of fare-free service.

7.4 Future Opportunities

Table 28 summarizes the opportunities and corresponding scenarios that arose during the scenario discussions. Depending on ridership levels over the next five years, MeVa can determine which strategic opportunities may be applicable to pursue. For items that are applicable regardless of ridership level, “all scenarios” is indicated.

Table 28. Opportunities by Ridership Scenario

Description of Opportunity
<p>All Scenarios</p> <p>Monitor / seek opportunities for increased funding or additional funding sources. Potential tools include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and bolster partnerships, such as those with member municipalities, large employers, community-based organizations, and the business community, to support the continuation of services and/or service expansions. • Identify non-traditional funding sources. • Maximize data-driven decision-making opportunities through regular and accurate reporting efforts. <p>Develop a targeted outreach plan centering the needs vulnerable communities, in particular those targeted by anti-immigration measures, and identifying strategies to maximize the safety of these communities throughout MeVa’s system.</p> <p>Monitor population and demographic trends in the service area, identifying any emerging areas of transit propensity to evaluate for new or increased services.</p> <p>Continue and expand marketing and outreach efforts to increase visibility and trust in MeVa’s system.</p>
<p>Medium / High Ridership</p> <p>Successful service enhancements and expansion (such as increased spans of service, route-level Sunday service additions, and expanded service geography), to grow MeVa’s reach and ability to maximize provision of convenient services</p>
<p>High Ridership</p> <p>Investigate strategies to better integrate demand response and fixed route services and increase efficiencies. Identify opportunities to improve the user experience, particularly among older adult riders, and encourage out-of-the-box solutions for meeting the needs of communities.</p>

Description of Opportunity

Successful implementation of the planned MeVa ferry service, which will appeal to a wider audience, while serving as a gateway to bus transit services by integrating with MeVa's existing transit network

Identify and pursue opportunities to build on planned infrastructure enhancements to further develop a transit-supportive environment across the service area.

Source: MeVa Alternative Workshop on November 13, 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 MeVa 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 MeVa has implemented over the past five years, as well as additional investments made include:

- Implementation of fare-free transit service pilots followed by the permanent adoption of systemwide fare-free service.
- Expansion of fixed route and paratransit service coverage, both within and beyond the borders of MeVa's service area (i.e., Lowell).
- Implementation of optimized routing, increased frequencies, and extended service hours and days on select routes.
- Relocation of the Lawrence hub to the MeVa-owned McGovern Transportation Center, complete with service modifications to optimize Lawrence-based routes.
- Launch of VA Bedford *mediMeVa* service for veterans and their families to access the VA Bedford Health Care System in Bedford, Massachusetts.
- Ongoing work to overlay additional crosstown service across MeVa's largely radial network.
- Initiation of performance data tracking for ADA and non-ADA demand response services, including the rates of denied trips, missed trips, no-shows, late cancellations, and same-day cancellations.
- To improve quality of service, sunset contract with previous service overflow vendor.
- Investment in MirrorLESS mirror technology, already installed on all 45 bus rapid transit-style buses (nearly two-thirds of the fixed route fleet).
- Deployment of new vehicle tracking and dispatching software, with new in-vehicle tablets, for demand response vehicles.
- Expansion of MeVa's Safety and Training office from one staff member to a team of three staff, and enforcement of rigorous training for new drivers and regular refresher courses for retained drivers.
- Comprehensive system rebrand to refresh the MeVa color scheme, logo, and fleet design, as well as to update its full name to Merrimack Valley Transit, to increase its visibility across its communities.

- Ongoing bus stop study to transition from a primarily flag-stop system to a fixed-stop system.
- Ongoing project to introduce solar-powered electric ferryboat service connecting Haverhill, Amesbury, and Newburyport along the Merrimack River, currently in the ferryboat business plan development stage.
- Investment in 15 hybrid diesel-electric buses.
- Installation of an industrial diesel particulate filter cleaner at MeVa's maintenance facility.

8.2 Planning for an Uncertain Future

As described in Chapter 7, the Commonwealth may face key uncertainties in the next five years, potentially impacting ridership both positively and negatively. The five-year vision accounts for these variables, particularly the level of ridership by mode in the MeVa 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 CRTP, level of ridership demand by mode was identified as one of the key uncertainties driving MeVa actions, including:

- **Low Ridership:** If the level of ridership demand over the next five years plateaus at 2025 levels or approximately 3 million riders, 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 rate of ridership growth over the next five years remains steady, increasing up to 15 percent from 2025 levels or 3 million riders, more robust service and capital expansions will be warranted. Some of those might include implementing service enhancements, addressing spatial constraints at MeVa's facility, and procuring new 40-foot hybrid-electric transit buses.
- **Higher Ridership:** If the level of ridership demand over the next five years increases substantially, above 15 percent growth from 2025 levels or 3 million riders, then the most enhanced service and capital investments will be warranted. Some of those might include implementing more robust service, including increased frequency and spans of service, expanding coverage, conducting a site-selection analysis to identify potential locations for a new Haverhill hub, and identifying and pursuing opportunities to deploy transit signal priority improvements.
- **Core:** Many recommendations are included regardless of ridership level and are considered core needs. Some of those might include building on progress to streamline transfers between routes and across jurisdictions, launching a travel training program, conducting a demand response comprehensive service analysis, procuring scheduling and planning software, completing the transition from a predominantly flag stop system to a fixed stop system, continuing efforts to streamline data collection and analysis processes to support data-driven decision making, and pursuing non-traditional funding.

The next section presents the recommendations for MeVa 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, training and operations, data and performance, and partnerships and funding (Table 29). For recommendations that fall under multiple categories, a note in the final column highlights their cross-listing.

Table 29. 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 marketing, engagement, and educational efforts and agency policies.
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.
Training and Operations	Training and Operations recommendations deal with staff hiring and retention practices.
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 MeVa focus on ensuring the successful implementation of planned service improvements and expansions, conducting service analyses to identify and plan for further service improvement and expansion opportunities, and exploring options for a potential introduction of microtransit service (Table 30). Generally, additional funding and vehicle and staff resources must be considered to facilitate the responsible and successful implementation of any of these recommendations, and robust promotional efforts must be incorporated to support public awareness of any service changes.

Table 30. Service Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Also in Category...
S1	Implement planned frequency increases on select routes and explore viable opportunities to increase frequencies on additional routes (by leveraging performance data, public and stakeholder feedback, etc.).	Core	Data and Performance
S2	Deploy fixed route service to Salem, New Hampshire.	Core	Partnerships and Funding
S3	Increase the number of routes operating on Sundays and increase the span of Sunday operations.	Medium/High	Data and Performance
S4	Extend service hours to operate select routes later in the evening.	Medium/High	Data and Performance
S5	Enhance schedule alignment to streamline transfers between routes.	Core	Data and Performance
S6	Explore and implement strategies to improve the integration between fixed route and demand response services.	Core	N/A
S7	Implement crosstown service in Methuen and explore viable opportunities to strategically weave additional crosstown service that is complementary to MeVa's existing fixed route network.	Core	N/A
S8	In partnership with MVPC, advance ferryboat service implementation effort to achieve operation of the service.	Core	Asset and Capital
S9	Utilize data, best practices information, and stakeholder and public feedback to expand coverage such as via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections to the future ferry dock in Amesbury • Enhanced service to Merrimack College • Service to downtown Georgetown 	Medium/High	Data and Performance
S10	Conduct a demand response comprehensive service analysis (inclusive of microtransit and other on-demand service options) to identify opportunities for and inform policy refinement, pilot testing, and ongoing technology upgrades. Updates could include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of demand response policies that expand mobility and access, such as eligibility criteria • Limited testing of complementary service models, such as microtransit pilot programs • Investments in back-end technology infrastructure, such as upgraded scheduling software with dynamic scheduling capabilities 	Core	Technology, Data and Performance

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Also in Category...
S11	Conduct a service analysis to improve service coordination between MeVa and LRTA routes at transfer points.	Core	Partnerships and Funding

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.2 Outreach and Engagement Recommendations

MeVa has made substantial progress in recent years in bolstering its engagement and marketing efforts to facilitate the successful solicitation of feedback, increase service awareness, and boost ridership. As a key example, MeVa completed its comprehensive system rebrand, complete with an agency rename and a new vibrant color scheme incorporated into an updated website, new bus wraps, and the new McGovern Transportation Center. Over the next five years, regardless of ridership levels, MeVa is committed to building on this work and effectively advertising new or modified services, such as through the launch of a travel training program and establishing an older adult rider engagement program (Table 31).

Table 31. Outreach and Engagement Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap...
OE1	Build on progress made to simplify service information (i.e., clear schedules, general service information, MeVa policies) for the public and achieve a wider dissemination of up-to-date maps and schedules.	Core	N/A
OE2	Continue to advance and maintain robust marketing efforts to grow ridership leveraging creative means such as distribution of MeVa-branded merchandise, and intentional marketing.	Core	N/A
OE3	Launch robust travel training to offer resources that encourage the transition of eligible riders from demand response to fixed route services.	Core	Partnerships and Funding
OE4	Establish a consistent engagement practice targeting the older adult population in MeVa's communities (i.e., senior committee, elderly rider forum).	Core	Partnerships and Funding
OE5	Continue to engage with non-profit organizations and cultural institutions across the service area, encouraging them to include guidance on how to use MeVa's transit services and access high-use destinations by transit.	Core	Partnerships and Funding

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.3 Technology Recommendations

MeVa has demonstrated a motivation to update or 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 MeVa services. Moving forward, MeVa values opportunities to enhance digital security, operational efficiency, and the accessibility of

real-time trip information for riders. Funding needs must be considered when pursuing any of the technology recommendations (Table 32).

Table 32. Technology Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap...
T1	Collaborate with CAD/AVL provider to enhance real-time information for riders.	Core	N/A
T2	Explore and implement strategies to improve digital security including multifactor authentication and data security protocols.	Core	N/A
T3	Procure scheduling/planning software.	Core	N/A
T4	Implement technology to enable remote access to vehicle camera feeds and footage.	Core	N/A
T5	Install touchscreen digital information signage at McGovern Transportation Center as well as other key transfer stations.	Core	Asset and Capital
T6	Implement access control at the Costello Center facility in Amesbury.	Core	N/A
T7	Procure and install replacement cameras at the Costello facility in Amesbury.	Core	N/A
T8	Transition to Microsoft Office365.	Core	N/A

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.4 Asset and Capital Recommendations

MeVa continues to prioritize maintaining and updating its facility infrastructure and vehicle assets, and the agency has initiated or demonstrated interest in expanding its capital assets, such as bus stop infrastructure and higher-capacity 40-foot buses (Table 33). MeVa is conducting a Bus Stop Study to guide the replacement of its predominantly flag-stop fixed route service with a fixed stop system, and the effort to launch ferry service on the Merrimack River is underway. Coordination with these and other ongoing planning efforts, as well as the consideration of funding needs, are necessary for each of these recommendations to be achieved (i.e., MassDOT support is required for bus stop installation efforts).

Table 33. Asset and Capital Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap...
AC1	Complete the MeVa Bus Stop Study and align future bus stop modifications with Bus Stop Study recommendations.	Core	Technology
AC2	Develop Bus Stop Guidelines that reflect Bus Stop Study outcomes, MeVa preferences for stop placement, and coordination with municipalities.	Core	N/A

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap...
AC3	Develop a long-term bus stop shelter maintenance plan.	Core	N/A
AC4	Continue the ongoing bus stop shelter installation effort, aligning with Bus Stop Study recommendations and bus stop guidelines, in partnership with member communities.	Core	Partnerships and Funding
AC5	Explore and pursue opportunities to implement transit supportive infrastructure, such as dedicated bus lanes and TSP technology on buses.	Medium / High	N/A
AC6	Conduct a site-selection analysis utilizing data and public feedback to identify a new site for the Haverhill hub.	Medium	Data and Performance
AC7	Conduct a feasibility assessment to identify and pursue a path forward for addressing MeVa's existing maintenance facility spatial constraints.	Medium/High	N/A
AC8	Maintain involvement with the ongoing research and development project to produce rear-wheel drive low floor paratransit minibuses.	Core	N/A
AC9	As part of the ferryboat service implementation project, in partnership with MVPC, support and address capital needs associated with the ferryboat service supported by MeVa.	Core	Service
AC10	Develop guidelines and implement improvements for age-friendly design for <i>miniMeVa</i> vehicles and fixed route bus stops.	Core	N/A
AC11	Procure 40-foot buses for increased capacity.	Medium/High	N/A

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.5 Training and Operations Recommendations

MeVa is committed to sustaining a positive, supportive, and safe workplace culture, such as through enhanced training programs and creative solutions to engage new operators (Table 34).

Table 34. Training and Operations Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap...
TO1	Further push creative solutions for driver recruitment and retention, such as procuring a bus simulator for driver training or exploring the feasibility of offering CDL training for new drivers.	Core	N/A

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.6 Data and Performance Recommendations

MeVa continues to pursue opportunities to improve data quality and leverage collected data for enhanced performance monitoring and data-driven decision making. Access to accurate data and performance dashboards will support decision-making, greater clarity and transparency around operations, and expanded opportunities to leverage performance assessments (Table 35).

Table 35. Data and Performance Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap...
DP1	Continue to identify opportunities to streamline data collection, processing, cleaning, storage, and utilization to optimize decision-making and performance analysis practices.	Core	Service, Asset and Capital
DP2	Explore opportunities to implement data and performance dashboards.	Core	N/A

N/A = Not Applicable

8.3.7 Partnerships and Funding Recommendations

MeVa intends to continue efforts to maintain and enhance partnerships with statewide, regional, and local leaders and organizations, as well as the local business community. MeVa 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 36).

Table 36. Partnerships and Funding Recommendations

ID	Recommendation	Ridership Scenario	Category Overlap...
PF1	Continuously explore and pursue additional funding opportunities through partnerships; local, state, and federal resources; and non-traditional sources of funding.	Core	Asset and Capital
PF2	Research and compile guidelines for pursuing innovative funding partnership models.	Core	N/A
PF3	Maintain and enhance relationships with large employers and the business community to encourage increased collaboration and investment in transit.	Core	N/A
PF4	Continue to collaborate with neighboring RTAs and other transit providers to identify areas for transit connection enhancements.	Core	Service
PF5	Bolster and leverage local partnerships for marketing and engagement support.	Core	Outreach and Engagement

N/A = Not Applicable

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Appendix A Fares

Fare policy is part of a broader set of RTA and Commonwealth policies that affect public access to transit, RTA revenue, transit system operations, and many other facets of transit service in Massachusetts.

This appendix explores fare policy for MeVa 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

MeVa has been an early adopter of fare-free transit and a national leader in the fare-free space. When the MeVa Board first voted to go fare-free systemwide starting in March 2022, arguments for and against fare-free transit were rooted more in speculation as to what *might* happen than in actual data. By piloting free-fare transit over an extended period, MeVa has been able to document the true benefits and costs of providing fare-free transit, which gave MeVa's Board the comfort and analytic support to vote to adopt a permanent fare-free policy in February 2025. In many ways, MeVa's early success with fare-free transit provided a road map for other transit providers, including peer Massachusetts RTAs, to explore implementing fare-free transit.

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 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, MeVa received \$159,181 to support suspended fare collection. The fare suspension was funded by a \$2.5 million appropriation available to RTAs in the FY 2023 Massachusetts State Budget, which was used to support fare-free transit for all RTAs during the holiday shopping season, although RTAs were given some latitude as to how they would implement the program. In MeVa's case, the funds were used to extend by six weeks the initial two-year pilot program authorized by MeVa's board. This was the first program funded with an appropriation in the state budget. While the limited duration of the program for most RTAs makes it challenging to measure changes in ridership trends statewide, extending MeVa's initiative did help add to the data collection used to later objectively evaluate the full impact of the initiative, both at MeVa and beyond.

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. MeVa received \$1,834,145 in a first allocation and another \$264,022 in the spring of 2024 — for a total funding amount of \$2,098,167 in FY 2024 — to support longer duration fare suspension. MeVa further extended its two-year fare-free pilot program another year, which further gave the MeVa Board the backup to support its vote to permanently adopt a systemwide fare-free policy in February 2025 before the pilot end date.

On balance, RTA customers statewide, 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. The FY 2025 appropriation provided for a full year of fare-free operations and went beyond revenue replacement and extended funding to address the increased costs associated with additional ridership. MeVa received a grant of \$2,575,810 to support its ongoing fare-free operation.

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 was the first year funds were appropriated, 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. For FY 2025, the Fair Share Amendment was expected to generate \$1.3 billion, \$605 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 prohibits RTAs from charging passenger fares for all fixed route services and paratransit services, subject to appropriation of funding to replace fare revenue. MassDOT is responsible for reimbursing RTAs for lost fare revenue attributable to the fare-free service mandate. MeVa is required to collect and report ridership data to MassDOT in a format and frequency prescribed by MassDOT.

MeVa's Fare Policy

MeVa initially embraced the implementation of fare-free transit in a limited capacity prior to COVID-19 and the Try Transit program. Starting in September 2019, the City of Lawrence paid a total of \$253,125 for three Lawrence-based routes (old Routes 34, 37, and 85) to operate fare-free, along with all paratransit within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of those routes. Ridership on all three routes increased significantly before operations were impacted by COVID-19 six months later. The success of the piloted fare-free service on the three routes and the demonstrated resiliency of those routes in the COVID-19 recovery period motivated the MeVa Board to vote in favor of systemwide fare-free service beginning in March 2022. In 2024, the area planning commission, MVPC, retained Stantec, a consulting firm, to complete an objective Fare-Free Evaluation and Business Case (MVPC 2025a) on the effects of fare-free service in MeVa's service area, including conducting extensive public outreach amongst riders, drivers, social service agencies, and local businesses. The findings of that study illustrated the environmental, social, and economic benefits of the fare-free program. As a result of this report, the MeVa Board adopted a permanent fare-free policy in February 2025, making MeVa the first RTA in the state to enact such a policy. It states that:

All MeVa bus and paratransit bus services will be fare-free for all riders, meaning no payment is required to board any vehicle. This policy applies to all routes and services operated by

MeVa Transit during regular operating hours, with no distinction based on age, income, or disability status (Fare Policy Statement).

Fare-free Program

Appropriations in the Massachusetts State Budget between FY 2023 and FY 2025 for fare-free transit operations provided the following annual funding amounts for MeVa:

- FY 2023 - Try Transit holiday promotion: \$159,181
- FY 2024 - Fare-free Implementation: \$1,834,145 + \$264,022 (\$2,098,167 total)
- FY 2025 - Fare-free Implementation: \$2,575,810

MeVa's Fare-Free Experience and Lessons

MeVa's fare-free evaluation explored the benefits of fare-free service across several dimensions to weigh the merits of continuing to suspend fare collection. Overall, the quantifiable benefits to MeVa directly and to the community outpace revenue from fare collections by 30 percent. Beyond the high-level benefit-cost analysis, MeVa observed improvements in many areas:

- Ridership nearly tripled and exceeds 2019 totals while increasing the ridership per revenue mile.
- On-time performance has remained consistent despite increased ridership, with dwell times dropping by half.
- Driver satisfaction and morale have improved by eliminating fare-related conflicts. Customer complaints have been halved despite ridership tripling.
- Riders reported feeling safer on MeVa buses under the fare-free program, as there are now more "eyes on the bus." This refutes some speculative arguments against fare-free transit that it would have negative safety impacts.
- Staff time and resources dedicated to fare collection, cash management, and farebox maintenance have been able to be reallocated to other activities, improving customer service and rider experience.
- The average MeVa rider saved over \$200 per year while fare collection was suspended, redirecting spending back into the community.
- About one-fifth of trips on MeVa would have been made via personal vehicles, carpools, or rideshare if MeVa was not an option. The emissions reduction from these trips equate to over 200 vehicles removed from the road annually.

The social, environmental, and economic impact of the fare suspension to MeVa communities was instrumental in the commitment to a permanent fare-free policy. Simplifying the riding experience and providing an affordable service has been valuable in enhancing mobility throughout the Merrimack Valley, especially for growing New American communities, students, and aging residents. Riders have indicated they've been able to reach community spaces, access healthcare, and visit family and friends more often than prior to fare-free operations. MeVa is proud to provide convenient, safe, and affordable service to contribute to the vibrancy and connectedness of the region.

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 Law Chapter 161B in the FY 2026 state budget, which

mandates fare-free service, changes considerations around the maintenance and use of fare collection equipment today and in the future.

MeVa's Scheidt & Bachmann fare collection system had dated from 2012 and was considered by MeVa to be past its useful life when the equipment was first removed from vehicles in 2022. With the permanent fare-free policy adoption, MeVa no longer owns or maintains this equipment and can reallocate the staff time saved to address other needs. Had MeVa not adopted a permanent fare-free policy, it would have had to anticipate a significant capital investment in new fare collection equipment.

Fare-free Transit Best Practices

MeVa is recognized across the industry as a best practice model for the implementation of fare-free transit, cited in graduate student research, at the Transportation Research Board annual meeting in January 2026, and at numerous local events and conferences. In conjunction with other studies referenced in this section, the Fare-Free Analysis Report provides additional insights that inform future service and justify the continuation of fare-free transit (MVPC 2025a).

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 — MeVa saw a 46.7 percent increase in ridership on three of its Lawrence-based routes within six months (Comfort 2024).

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). The commissioned Fare Free Report highlights the ongoing fixed route and paratransit ridership growth after MeVa implemented its systemwide fare-free program. The report also indicates that new riders under the fare-free system have transitioned to become frequent riders, and that half of all riders take MeVa buses nearly every day.

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. Shorter 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), and the Fare Free Report confirms this for MeVa's system — dwell time per passenger decreased by half immediately after buses became fare-free, and MeVa has the opportunity to further reduce dwell times by allowing rear-door boarding.

While in some cases, free fares may encourage more frequent shorter rides by passengers who may have otherwise walked, this is offset by increased access to essential services, including clinics and hospitals. Despite the reduced dwell time per passenger resulting from elimination of farebox queues, more stops and larger boarding and alighting volumes may negatively impact absolute dwell time. This is most acute for flag stop systems or 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 important to the maintenance of fare-free transit. Small to mid-sized agencies, like Massachusetts' RTAs, where fare revenue is a small portion of operating revenue, face less financial difficulty in implementing and maintaining fare-free transit.

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). The Fare Free Report determined that the equivalent of three full-time employees was saved due to the fare-free program implementation.

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 higher costs associated with providing higher capacity service to accommodate increased ridership. As of the Fare Free Report's publication, ridership growth on fixed routes primarily occurred where MeVa had existing capacity, preventing the need for additional fixed route resource allocation.

A bigger challenge for MeVa 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 tends to fall and 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. The increase in MeVa's paratransit demand has yet to require increased service, although this need remains a consideration for the future.

Operator and Passenger Experience

Farebox disputes are the most likely incident that results in transit operator assaults. FTA reports operator assaults per unlinked passenger 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 2025).

Fare-free transit can increase the number of non-destination riders (i.e., people who use the transit system for shelter or as a pastime). Fare-free transit is an attractive option for someone without shelter to find respite from weather. Because transit is a public service, it is a challenge

to provide equitable access for all members of the community while discouraging non-destination riding that may be disruptive to other passengers.

Riding policies, like having all passengers exit the bus at the end of the line, can dissuade non-destination riding. Agencies can collaborate with social service providers to extend outreach and intervention opportunities (GoTriangle 2025). Loitering rules can be better enforced at terminals and bus stops, and rules of conduct can be imposed and enforced when customers act unruly or disturb other passengers on board.

Future of Fare-free Regional Transit

Risks

State Funding

Starting in the FY 2024 state budget, fare-free service was funded with a discretionary grant program appropriated annually and funded with Fair Share Amendment revenue. The FY 2026 state budget amended Massachusetts General Law 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 MeVa 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

MeVa’s Scheidt & Bachmann fare collection system had dated from 2012 and was considered by MeVa to be past its useful life when the equipment was first removed from vehicles in 2022. With the permanent fare-free policy adoption, MeVa no longer maintains this equipment and can reallocate the staff time saved to other address other needs.

The amendment to Massachusetts General Law provides 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, MeVa 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

Fare-free transit benefits social service agencies, school districts, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and other community-based organizations that have historically made bulk pass purchases. MeVa had agreements with Northern Essex Community College and UMass Lowell, both of which covered fares for their students, as well as with the Town of Andover, which covered fares on the Route 21 - Andover Shuttle. These agreements varied year to year before MeVa implemented its systemwide fare-free policy, amounting to \$27,500 in FY 2020, \$2,574 in FY 2021, and \$6,731 in FY 2022. Fare-free transit is cost-saving for these institutions; however, it represents a revenue loss for MeVa, which is offset with Section 161B funds.

Opportunities for revenue enhancements to replace farebox collections are limited. Higher 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 higher

ridership may present more opportunities for vehicle exterior advertising space. Other non-traditional sources of funding are also important to investigate.

Future of Fare-Free Policy

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

Given the recent adoption of a permanent fare-free policy, MeVa is committed to maintaining fare-free service for the Merrimack Valley. The findings of the Fare Free Report illustrate the business case for doing so, with quantifiable community benefits and savings from fare collection exceeding direct fare revenue by over 30 percent. However, MeVa's fare policy focuses on existing services branches (i.e., fixed route, paratransit, and on-demand services). Any future modes must be evaluated to determine whether and how they integrate with fare-free operations.

MeVa, in partnership with MVPC, plans to introduce ferryboat service following the receipt of an FTA Low-No Emissions grant in 2022. The ferryboat is planned to connect Haverhill, Amesbury, and Newburyport along the Merrimack River with three solar-powered electric ferries. These small passenger vessels are intended to complete a one-way trip in just over one hour and carry a minimum of 16 passengers, including accessible spaces. Designed to be net-zero energy vessels, the ferries will offer a silent, sustainable connection along the Merrimack River.

MVPC issued a request for proposals in July 2025 to develop a ferryboat business plan, and has since retained the firm KPFF to conduct the plan (MVPC 2025b). The plan will lay the groundwork for implementing service by assessing operational and infrastructure needs. While the Low-No grant will provide funding for the small passenger vessels, it does not support dockside improvements or ongoing operations. As such, a financial analysis and business plan will determine the costs and potential funding sources for any non-vessel related improvements and service. This will include an assessment of non-fare/sales revenue as well as fare collection, concessions, passes, and other direct revenue from service. The findings from the financial analysis will inform any future fare policy that ensures the affordability and reliability of this new travel mode for MeVa's customers.

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 MeVa 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 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 (Baker 2018), this commission developed multiple recommendations related to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting energy efficiency (Governor's Press Office 2018).
- **2050 Decarbonization Roadmap:** Published in December 2020, the Roadmap is a result of a Massachusetts 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 2024a).
- **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 2025d).
- **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 2025e).
- **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 their communities.

Regional Efforts

The following regional policies are supportive of maximizing transit ridership.

- MVPC/Greater Boston Priority Climate Action Plan (MAPC 2024):
 - Expand public transit service by increasing frequency and reliability, make stops and stations more accessible.
- MVPC/MV Moves: Merrimack Valley Active Transportation Plan (MVPC 2024a):
 - Improve connectivity between transit stops and the active transportation network.

- MVPC/MV Vision Zero: Regional Safety Action Plan (MVPC 2024b):
 - Strategy #29: Support policies that promote expansion of MeVa services.
 - Strategy #39: Promote transit use amongst elderly population and caregivers with targeted outreach.

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 Law 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 2025f). 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.

- MVPC /Greater Boston Priority Climate Action Plan (MAPC 2024):
 - Build, improve, and expand infrastructure to support multimodal transportation.
 - Connect infrastructure to public or shared modes of transportation.
- MVPC /*Merrimack Valley Vision 2050*: Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MVPC 2023):
 - Study MeVa services to connect multifamily housing neighborhoods created through MBTA Communities Legislation.
 - Support a complete bus stop plan for MeVa.
 - Analyze MeVa transit service connections with MBTA Commuter Rail stations.
- MVPC/MV Moves: Merrimack Valley Active Transportation Plan (MVPC 2024a)
 - Expand active transportation networks
- MVPC /MV Vision Zero: Regional Safety Action Plan (MVPC 2024b):
 - Prioritize safety improvement projects for vulnerable road users around transit corridors.

Zero-Emission Vehicle Conversion

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 electric vehicles. 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 2022). 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.

- MVPC/*Merrimack Valley Vision 2050* (MVPC 2023)
 - Move toward electrification of the transportation network
 - Study the potential for diesel or electric multiple-unit trains along Haverhill line between Ballardvale and Haverhill.
 - Implement solar ferry boat services.
- MVPC/Greater Boston Priority Climate Action Plan (MAPC 2024)
 - Decarbonize and electrify bus transit while maintaining reliable service

Supportive Local Efforts

Table 37 demonstrates where MeVa’s transportation planning efforts may coordinate with or support existing plan and policy goals for cities within the MeVa planning area. For cities that do not have climate plans or whose climate plans do not contain transportation-related actions, the transportation planning work of RTAs may help to fill the gap.

Table 37. Cities in MeVa Service Area with Climate Action Plan Transportation Goals

City Name	Climate Action Plan
Haverhill	Vision Haverhill 2035: City of Haverhill Master Plan Update
Newburyport	Newburyport Climate Resiliency Plan
Andover	Andover Climate Action & Sustainability Plan
Methuen	Fleet Electrification Assessment

While transportation actions varied across communities, general themes emerged around mobility, access, affordability, greenhouse gas emissions 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

While often generating less attention than vehicle fleet power transitions, MeVa has championed modeshift from private automobiles to public transit as the most effective environmental policy initiative. MeVa continues to explore investments to encourage modeshift from single-occupancy vehicles to public transit, in alignment with Commonwealth and regional plans for the environment. MeVa has supported modeshift through its initiation of fare-free service in March 2022, which was permanently adopted by its Board on February 6, 2025. MeVa has also placed great emphasis on updating its image and visibility across its communities. In 2022, MeVa completed a full system rebrand, updating its name to MeVa Transit and launching a new color scheme, logotype, and fleet design. The organization also completed its opening of the new central intermodal hub at McGovern in September 2024, which has reflected MeVa's rebrand in its colorful design and has included space for a new community room. The rebrand has been a momentous effort by the MeVa team to enhance its prominence across the service area and build the attractiveness of transit over personal vehicles. On the service side, MeVa has increased frequencies, extended service span, optimized routes, and extended fixed route service into the communities of Groveland and West Newbury, further demonstrating its commitment to attracting transit ridership and supporting modeshift. MeVa's updates and initiatives collectively have contributed to a significant growth in ridership over the past five year period, reaching almost double the pre-pandemic ridership levels.

While MeVa is committed to exploring opportunities for investments in zero-emission vehicle technology, it has been prudent in ensuring that new technologies make sense for its riders and operations, and has the proper sequencing. In 2022, MeVa received FTA Low-No Emissions Grant funding for the construction of three high efficiency solar electric mini-ferryboats. MVPC has retained the firm KPFF to conduct a ferryboat business plan for additional estimated funding needs, infrastructure assessments, and ferry service operations planning. The net-zero ferryboat service proposes connections between Haverhill, Amesbury, and Newburyport along the Merrimack River. The ferries will offer a silent, sustainable connection along the Merrimack River, between two MBTA Commuter Rail terminals, and MeVa transit hubs, representing a creative mobility solution that aligns with environmental and resiliency goals.

On the bus vehicle side, MeVa has been judicious, taking a measured approach to not committing to technologies that may not yet work for MeVa's operations, which includes varied terrain, cold climate, and long service hours requiring extended vehicle range. While MeVa does not currently have a battery-electric bus (BEB) in its fleet, it does have fifteen hybrid diesel-electric buses, eight of which utilize the new generation Allison eGen Flex engines. The performance of these vehicles is noteworthy, with actual CO₂ reductions at 25 percent over MeVa's newest 35-foot diesel buses. Different from a standard diesel bus, these buses are most efficient in the most congested parts of the service area, where regenerative braking has the largest impact. Additionally, through geofencing, MeVa is able to target when the buses are operating exclusively on battery power in order to increase electric running time and further reduce emissions and noise, particularly in denser urban and environmental justice areas where the benefits are greatest. MeVa's maintenance department reports that eGen Flex engines use 50 percent less fuel than traditional diesel.

MeVa has also taken measures to operate cleaner engines in its existing diesel buses by installing an industrial diesel particulate filter (DPF) cleaner at its maintenance facility. The DPF cleaner includes a DPF thermal oven designed to bake excess deposits and diesel particulate matter into ash to be filtered and collected. Running vehicles with cleaned filters supports reduced emissions, improved fuel efficiency, and enhanced engine performance. The agency has also invested in hybrid vehicles when replacing older vehicles that have reached the end of their useful life.

MeVa continues to gather fleet performance data to understand operational benefits and constraints of operating zero-emission vehicles. Capital costs associated with implementing and maintaining BEBs remain a key factor for long-term decision making. MeVa is monitoring ongoing economic changes associated with rolling stock manufacturing and procurement. From a space standpoint, MeVa faces the challenge of being spatially constrained at its headquarters/maintenance facility, with no capacity to install the necessary infrastructure for electric vehicle charging under present conditions. Operationally, MeVa must also consider the agency's need to respond quickly in the event of regional power outages driven by emergency events and evacuations. BEBs require additional safety and operations training, often in partnership with local emergency personnel to address BEB fires from battery malfunctions or bus collisions.

Longer-term, MeVa is monitoring the maturation of low- and zero-emission propulsion technologies to understand whether and how they may be integrated into MeVa'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. MeVa continues to engage with RTA peers who are implementing BEB technologies to exchange knowledge, understand lessons learned, and disseminate best practices across the state.

Appendix C Public Survey Open-Ended Responses

This appendix contains responses to open-ended questions on the public survey.

Respondents were asked what other destinations currently underserved by MeVa they would like to be able to access via MeVa service. Responses included the following:

- Salem, NH
- Mall at Rockingham Park - Salem, NH; Hampton Beach - Hampton, NH
- New Hampshire
- Medical location NOT available only by EZtrans
- Salem New Hampshire mall, and a bus from west Methuen to the loop without going to Lawrence. In the 90s there use to be a bus that went from the old Methuen mall past the senior center to Haverhill Street.
- Haverhill bus station is awful the drivers are the worst - they have the worst attitudes.
- Tuscan Village, and others
- Boston
- None
- Airport
- None
- Beach
- I'm not sure.
- Rockingham Mall
- New Hampshire
- Tusca Village in Salem, NH
- None
- Berkly Street in Methuen
- Maybe New Hampshire or MeVa going to all the streets of the City of Lawrence and North Andover, also in Methuen.
- Chandler Street
- Bus drivers need be nicer to people and not be rude.
- Get Boston back - it was a great service on a limited run.
- Salem Transportation Center
- The Mall at Rockingham Park
- Salem, New Hampshire
- Earlier service
- Harold Parker State Forest
- Mall at Rockingham Park
- The Mall of Rockingham Park

- Boston shuttle service, Middleton, Danvers, and Salem, New Hampshire
- The destinations are good as they are.
- I dont know.
- Newburyport
- Certain parts of Methuen by the Marsh School
- Valley Road
- The shuttle
- New Hampshire
- Rockingham Mall and Salem, MA or NH
- Burlington hospital, lots of our doctors moved there from Methuen and Haverhill
- Salem, NH
- New Hampshire, malls
- Salem, NH
- Salam, NH
- Salem Mall
- We need half-hour service for route 13 on Saturdays.
- Salem, NH
- New Hampshire
- To Rockingam Mall, NH
- Tuscan Village
- Not sure
- To the Rockingham Mall
- New Hampshire
- Top of Whitehall Road in Amesbury - very high population density and many people who don't own cars
- Amesbury Park
- 7 bus on Sunday
- Seabrook, NH: Walmart, Salem, NH: Rockingham Mall, Danvers, MA: Costco
- Business Parks Hexcel and Munters
- Bradford and Riverside
- Seabrook
- Mall at Rockingham Park
- Newbury/Salisbury state reservation beach and Walmart/Home Depot in Seabrook
- I don't have any in mind.
- Amesbury

- The Rockingham Mall
- C and J Bus Service
- Mall at Rockingham Park
- I don't know, yet.
- Salem
- Please have commuter friendly options for residents of Amesbury going to Newburyport MBTA.
- Lowell to Haverhill
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Include ring and ride for Newburyport residents especially in rain and snow colder months.
- I would like MeVa to have Sunday service where I live.
- Firehouse center for the arts in Newburyport Massachusetts
- South Lawrence around service
- Salem, NH, to MGB, Tuscan stores, Market Basket
- The mall to New Hampshire
- Amesbury
- Rockingham Mall or Tuscan Village in Salem, NH
- Boston
- Salem, NH
- No
- The New Hampshire Mall
- The mall in Salem
- More bus stops
- The upper half of New Hampshire, specifically Pelham, Salem, Windham, etc.; even expand outside of Lowell
- Timeframes for going to Boston
- Water Street like the bus going to the whole street
- Starbucks and Dunkin
- Dunkin, Starbucks
- Manchester, but maybe you travel there already, I don't know but that would be neat
- How about some destinations in Seabrook, NH.
- Connection to Amtrak in Exeter/NH Seacoast, or connection to Concord Coach in Salem, NH
- Buses to and from Salem, NH
- An app that can show when the bus is arriving

- Salem, NH
- Salem, NH
- It's less underserved and needs more extended hours
- Routes in Lowell or to Boston would be very helpful
- From Lawrence to South Lawrence without having to go to the main station
- Tuscan Village
- Salem, NH
- Rockham mall
- New Hampshire mall
- Lowell Street in Methuen
- Lowell Street in Andover, MA
- Howe Street in Methuen. I'd like to go to the Howe Street Superette (it houses Tripoli's bakery, a PO, and Dunkins).
- Tenney Place apartments
- Walmart
- Sunday routes, at the Beacons, difficulty going to church
- Walmart, Haverhill, etc.
- Rockingham Mall
- Methuen
- Boston
- Rockingham
- More Methuen
- Pleasant Street
- Tuscan Village, NH
- Saint Mary, Lawrence
- Mall, New Hampshire
- Boston
- Mall
- 106 Water
- Rockingham Mall
- Mall
- Salem, NH
- Salem, Wilmington, Boston
- Pelham Street and Nelson Avenue in Methuen
- New Hampshire

- None
- Rockingham mall
- New Hampshire
- To the mall
- Rockingham
- Unable to complete the remaining questions
- To New Hampshire
- Cava restaurant on Route 114
- 1843
- Lawrence
- Boston
- New Hampshire
- Rockingham Park mall in New Hampshire
- Salem and Boston
- Essex Broadway
- New Hampshire
- New Hampshire
- Andover - South Union
- Rockingham Mall
- Boston
- Boston
- Nothing
- To the mall of New Hampshire
- I don't know
- I don't know
- The mall
- I don't know
- Nothing
- New Hampshire
- To the mall of New Hampshire
- Mall in New Hampshire
- New Hampshire
- Peabody Liberty Mall, or New Hampshire
- Que la 8 cruce por la market st, lawrence. Que llegue a más tiendas y centros recreativos; Ejemplo el mall de NH

- *"Have Route 8 go through Market Street in Lawrence. Make it reach more stores and recreational centers; for example, the mall in New Hampshire"*
- Frecuencias a Dana Farber en Methuen
 - *"Frequencies to Dana-Farber in Methuen"*
- Playa
 - *"Beach"*
- Otros viajes más largos
 - *"Other longer trips"*
- Más en Methuen
 - *"More in Methuen"*
- Más paradas en la escuelas
 - *"More stops at schools"*
- Ninguno
 - *"None"*
- A todo lugar
 - *"To every place"*
- A lugares turísticos de ciudades cercanas.
 - *"To tourist places in nearby cities"*
- Hampton Beach, New Hampshire y plays locales
 - *"Hampton Beach, New Hampshire and local beaches"*
- Edem jwen yon travail nan MeVa poum propte machine yo chak matin
 - *I would like assistance in finding a job at MeVa to clean the vehicles each morning"*
- Plis bis
 - *"More buses"*

Respondents were asked their zip code and provided the following answers:

- 01841 (67)
- 01843 (47)
- 01844 (36)
- 01832 (22)
- 01840 (15)
- 01810 (15)
- 01913 (12)
- 01830 (10)
- 01845 (6)
- 01835 (5)

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- 01834 (3)
- 01854 (2)
- 01842 (2)
- 01950 (2)
- 03811 (1)
- 01850 (1)
- 01851 (1)
- 02135 (1)
- 01853 (1)
- 02478 (1)
- 01860 (1)
- 02134 (1)
- 01417 (1)
- 18439 (1)
- 02150 (1)