MEMO

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To: Sarah Ingle, RIPTA

Subject: TASK 4: PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OPERATIONS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

RIPTA, as Rhode Island's Mobility Manager, provides a statewide service that enables access to jobs, education, healthcare, and economic opportunity for Rhode Islanders. The agency strives to deliver this service in an efficient manner, optimizing resources to meet the needs of both urban and rural communities. In particular, the system is a lifeline for many low-income households, individuals without access to a car, and workers in service-sector or lower-wage jobs. As one staff member noted, *"We have two types of passengers: those by choice and those who must. We're really a lifeline for those passengers [who must]."* This perspective reflects RIPTA's core commitment to ensuring mobility and equity for the people who depend on it most. The transit network supports both mobility and equity and connects residents to higher-paying jobs, helping to foster upward economic mobility.

The purpose of this report is to present a performance assessment of RIPTA's services and identify opportunities to prioritize resources, fill gaps, and consider service restructuring, as part of Task 4 of the Operational Efficiency Study. The analysis covers **Fixed-Route Service** (including express and seasonal routes), **Flex/Flex On Demand**, **RIde ADA paratransit/RIde Anywhere**, and the **Commuter Resource RI (CRRI) program**, highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and impacts each of these modes has on mobility, economic development, and the environment.

A Composite Route Score method was used to assess Fixed-Route and Flex/Flex On Demand service, combining metrics of Impact, Efficiency, and Equity. Additional data was used to evaluate performance and environmental impacts of all service modes. Qualitative data from stakeholder sessions and rider engagement further contextualizes how services perform and are experienced across the state.

Findings from this study can be used to inform future service planning, guide resource allocation, and support RIPTA's mission to provide equitable, efficient, and sustainable transit across the state.

Table 1 provides a high-level summary of each service type in distinct categories.

Table 1 | High-Level Summary by Service Type

	FIXED-ROUTE/EXPRESS/ SEASONAL	FLEX/FLEX ON DEMAND	RIDE ADA PARATRANSIT/ RIDE ANYWHERE	COMMUTER RESOURCE RI (CRRI) PROGRAM
Users	High school students, college students and faculty, low-income individuals, seniors, people with disabilities, tourists, commuters	Individuals with mobility limitations, students, and low-income workers in areas underserved by fixed-route service	People with disabilities who cannot use fixed-route service	University students and faculty, shift workers, seniors, youth, high school students, low-income individuals, people with disabilities
Issues and Needs of Users	Need for more frequent and reliable service, cross-town and rural routes	Need for expansions or adjustments of flex zones	Issues with timeliness and routing software for RIde ADA paratransit	Challenges recruiting employers for Wave to Work and securing vanpool drivers
Impact on Mobility	Primary mode for transit dependent individuals and those commuting to major job centers	Enhances mobility for users not served by transit with limited to no car access	Essential for the mobility of people with disabilities	Improves mobility for shift workers working outside of fixed-route service hours and with limited car access
Impact on Economic Development	Connects riders to employment and commercial centers, helps reduce unemployment	Connects workers to employment and commercial centers	Broadens employment opportunities for users and connects users to commercial centers	Wave to Work program brings private funding to RIPTA fixed-route service Lowers costs for employers and employees
Impact on Environment	Reduces congestion and emissions, particularly in high traffic areas	Shared trips reduce the number of single occupancy vehicle trips and improve congestion and emissions	Grouped RIde paratransit ride requests reduce number of single occupancy vehicle trips	Promotes sustainable mode use and reduces number of single occupancy vehicle trips
Overall Role	Provides essential transportation throughout Rhode Island	Fills gaps in fixed-route service	Connects people with disabilities to essential goods and services	Incentivizes and facilitates the use of RIPTA fixed service and other modes
Overall Impact	"Lifeline" for transit-dependent individuals and vulnerable communities	Critical service, only option for many users in service areas	Critical service, life-changing for people with disabilities	Reduces single occupancy vehicle trips and increases transit ridership
Ridership Data	Annual Ridership: 12,662,251 Annual Passenger Miles (estimated): 52,312,556	Annual Ridership: 40,489 Annual Passenger Miles: 182,744	Annual Ridership: 299,238 Annual Passenger Miles: 4,934,430	Annual Ridership (Vanpool): 79,242 Annual Passenger Miles (Vanpool): 528,303
Performance Data	Annual Revenue Hours: 687,134 Operating Cost: $208.81 per vehicle revenue hour	Annual Revenue Hours: 26,955 Operating Cost: $115.14 per vehicle revenue hour	Annual Revenue Hours: 167,266 Operating Cost: N/A	Annual Revenue Hours (Vanpool): 10,496 Operating Cost (Vanpool): $0.15 per passenger mile traveled
Trip Purposes	Commute trips to work and school, medical appointments, shopping, and other daily trips	Commute trips to work and school, medical appointments, shopping	Commute trips to work, medical appointments, shopping, social/community events	Commute trips to work and school

QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT – FIXED-ROUTE SERVICE

The consultant team conducted a **quantitative performance assessment** of RIPTA's fixed-route services using a **Composite Route Score** approach. This approach has been applied successfully in similar network evaluations, such as for WMATA's Better Bus Network Redesign. This analysis helps RIPTA identify where service is providing the greatest impact and where adjustments may be warranted by evaluating fixed routes using consistent, data-driven metrics. However, it is recognized that some routes serve vital community purposes not always captured in standard performance measures.

Each route was assessed using a **Composite Route Score**, which incorporates three equally weighted components:

- **Impact:** Assesses ridership, population served, job access, connectivity (transfers), and unique access provided.
- **Efficiency:** Measures service productivity (passenger trips per revenue hour) and cost-effectiveness (cost per passenger trip).
- **Equity:** Evaluates rider demographics, service area characteristics, and access to lower-wage jobs.

The fixed routes were divided into three categories, with scores for each route calculated and compared only against others within the same category. The categories and their respective routes are listed below:

- **Local Routes:** All rapid bus routes, high-frequency routes, local routes, and special services
- **Express Routes:** 9x, 10x, 12x, 24L, 59x, 61x, 65x, 95x, QX
- **Seasonal Routes:** 45, 46, 47

A comprehensive list of fixed route names and route numbers, in addition to their schedules and maps, can be found on RIPTA's website.

The seasonal routes serve very specific purposes, connecting the urban areas of the state to the state's beaches. As a result, all three routes score similarly and demonstrate high Impact and Equity Scores, reflecting their role in providing access to recreation and beaches for transit-dependent populations during peak seasonal demand.

The three scores for all fixed routes are displayed in the Composite Route Score in **Figure 1**, **Figure 2**, and **Figure 3**.

Figure 1 | Composite Route Scores (Local)

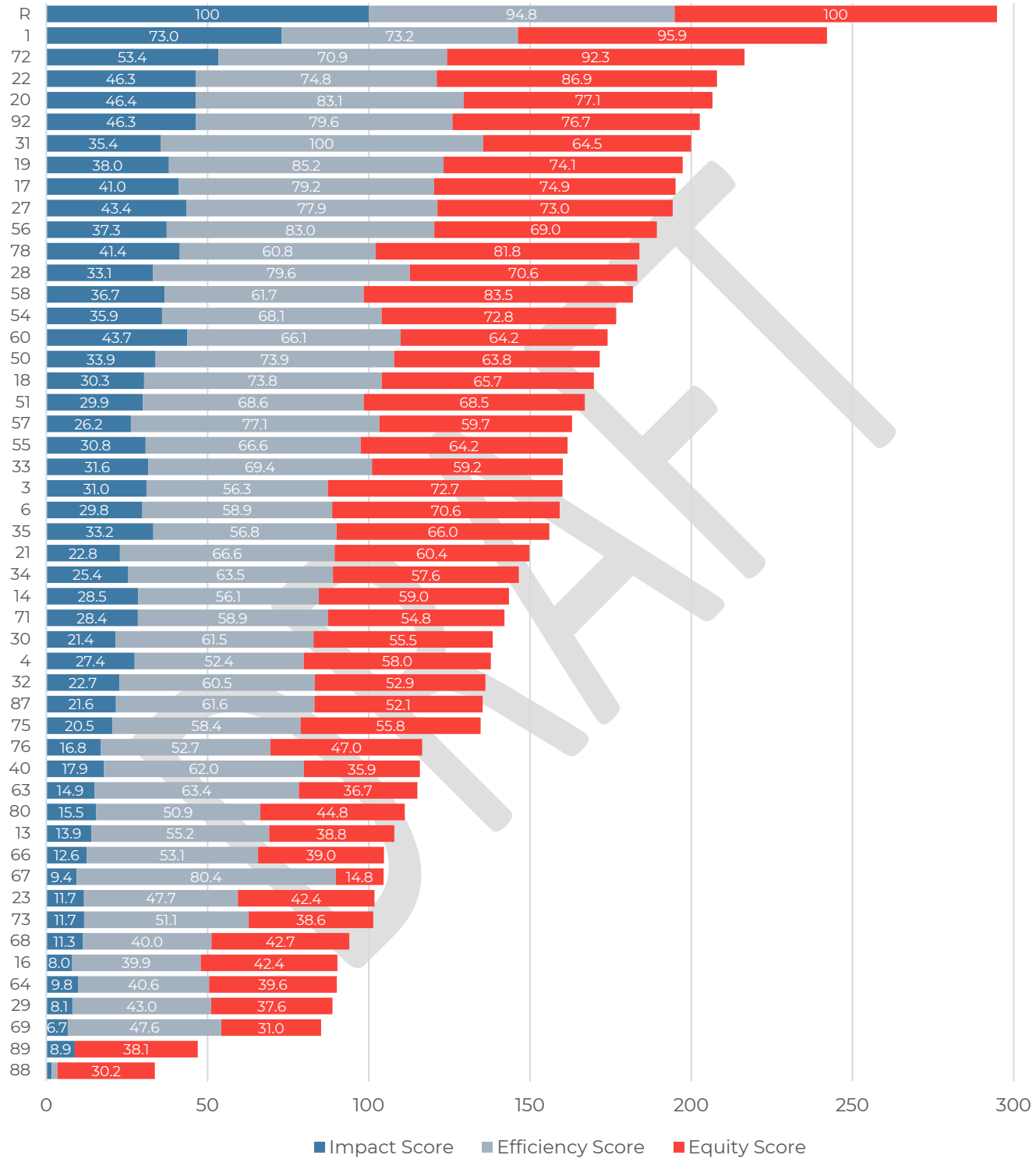


Figure 2 | Composite Route Scores (Express)

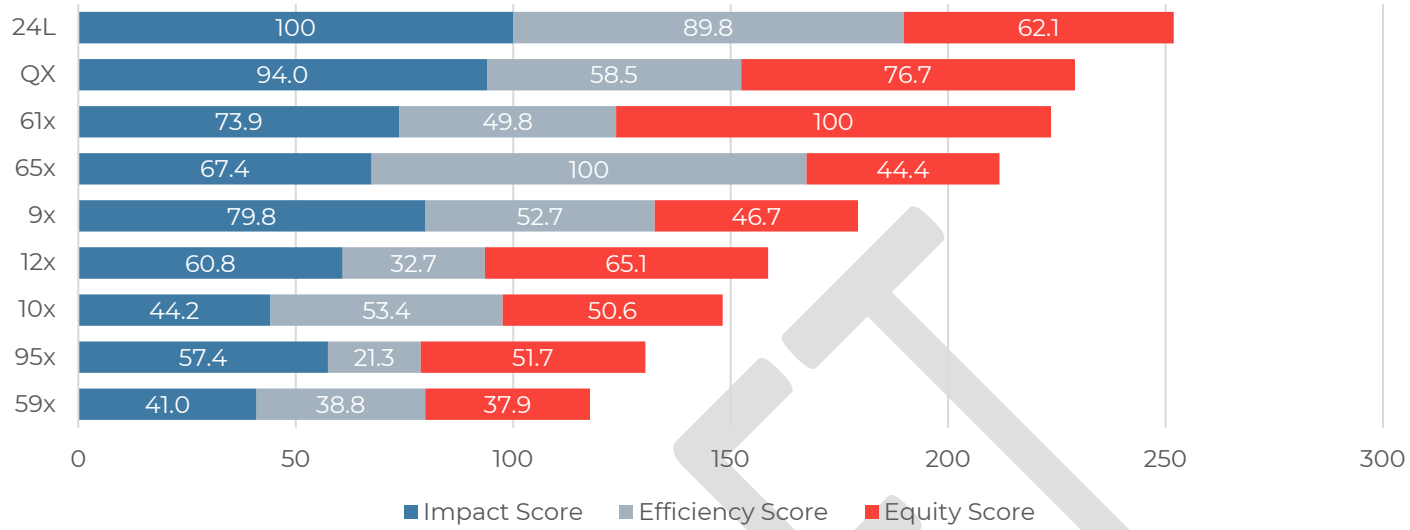
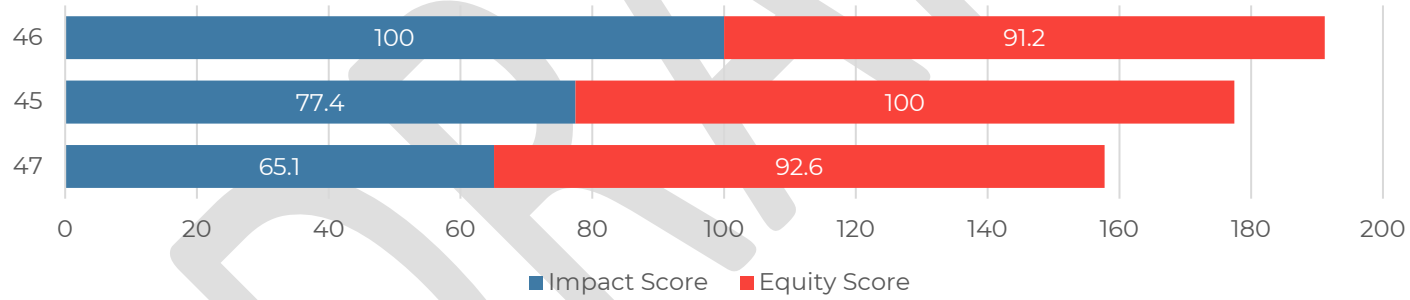


Figure 3 | Composite Route Scores (Seasonal)



ROUTE IMPACT SCORE

The Route Impact Score highlights how each route contributes to the overall fixed-route network, offering a consistent framework to compare each route. The score can help to identify which routes need improvements to make them more impactful and which routes play the most vital role in supporting the overall network and therefore should be prioritized for investments. The consultant team has used this type of score on several bus network redesigns to help evaluate individual fixed routes, including for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS). For each of these studies, the Route Impact Score helped identify how different routes impact the network as a whole outside of pure ridership and efficiency metrics. **The score helped recognize that some routes may perform lower in terms of ridership, etc. yet still benefit the network as a whole by feeding passengers into other routes, serving vulnerable populations, and providing service coverage in transit-dependent neighborhoods.**

The **Route Impact Score comprises three components**:

- **Ridership:** Intended to highlight high ridership routes that form the backbone of the network.
- **Population Served:** Intended to highlight routes that serve high concentrations of vulnerable populations and in the case of express routes, commuters.
- **Network Value:** Intended to highlight routes that play an integral role in enhancing connectivity in the network by facilitating transfers and feeding into higher ridership routes.

. Takeaways from local routes include:

- The R Line and Route 1 score the highest in each component and the overall Route Impact Score. These routes are high ridership, high frequency, and help form the core of the fixed-route network.
- Lower scoring routes in each component contribute less overall to the network but may still serve specific purposes that need to be considered as they can be lifelines for vulnerable populations. This includes:
  - Serving senior housing and shopping centers (e.g., Special Service Routes 88 and 89).
  - Providing feeder service to the higher frequency fixed-route network and the MBTA Commuter Rail that may have lower ridership but provide essential connections (e.g., Routes 76 and 80).
  - Connecting key educational institutions and regional hubs, such as routes which serve South County and link the state's flagship university (URI) with the fixed-route network at CCRI Warwick and downtown Providence (e.g., Routes 66 and 69).

Takeaways from express routes include:

- Routes 24L and QX provide express service to outlying employment centers and smaller cities in the Providence metro and this important aspect is represented by their high scores.
- Lower scoring routes in each component may have less impact on the overall network but still satisfy specific needs such as providing park-and-ride service from the northern part of the state to Providence and connecting to suburban employment centers (e.g., Route 59x).

ROUTE EFFICIENCY SCORE

The Route Efficiency Score evaluates how effectively each route utilizes resources relative to the demand it serves. It captures two key dimensions: **Service Productivity**, measured by passenger trips per revenue hour, and **Financial Performance,** measured by cost per passenger trip. Higher ridership per revenue hour indicates that a route is highly productive. Higher cost per rider suggests lower financial efficiency and potential for service optimization.

Takeaways from local routes include:

- Local routes average 14.2 passenger trips per revenue hour, far outperforming express routes, which average 3.6 trips per revenue hour. As a whole, the fixed route network sees 16.7 passenger trips per revenue hour.
- The average cost per passenger trip for local routes is $22.30, more cost-efficient compared to $68.70 for express routes. As a whole, the fixed route network costs $12.47 per passenger trip.
- **Route 31 and the R Line are most productive** among local routes in terms of trips per hour and cost-efficiency. This is largely because they serve dense neighborhoods with transit-dependent populations, where strong demand is supported by frequent and reliable service.
- Routes with limited connections to dense neighborhoods tend to have lower efficiency due to their lower demand, but they may still serve important functions by connecting specific transit-oriented populations to essential goods and services, such as linking senior housing with shopping center. In such cases, maintaining the current service may be warranted despite lower performance metrics (e.g., Special Service Route 88).

Takeaways from express routes include:

- **Route 65x ranks highest in efficiency among express routes, with Route 24L also showing strong performance**. Their efficiency is supported by service to major transit centers, and offering connections to intercity bus services, increasing their utility for long-distance travelers.
- The least efficient routes are primarily impacted by longer travel distances and lower ridership, resulting in higher costs per passenger. **However, many of these routes serve key connection points such as railroad stations or park-and-ride.** In these cases, it may be warranted to reassess alternative connection methods, while recognizing that maintaining these services could be essential if they are the only viable option for transferring commuters along key corridors. Reducing the service only during specific time periods with consistently low demand, while preserving critical access during peak travel times, could help improve the efficiency of these routes (e.g., Routes 95x and 12x).

ROUTE EQUITY SCORE

The Route Equity Score assesses each route's accessibility to key populations and jobs by evaluating its demographic reach. The score is made up of three components: Rider Demographics, Service Area Demographics, and Transit-Oriented Jobs. A higher Route Equity Score indicates that a route provides access to a greater number of transit-dependent riders and essential destinations.

Takeaways from local routes include:

- **The R Line provides the greatest access to transit-dependent populations and essential destinations among local routes, followed by Routes 1 and 72.**
- **Route 19 has the highest share of transit-oriented riders among all local routes, followed by Routes 78 and 56,** based on responses from the OD survey, indicating a strong presence of transit-dependent riders on these routes.
- Although some routes have lower access to transit-oriented neighborhoods or jobs, but they still attract a relatively higher share of transit-dependent riders on board, suggesting strong reliance on these routes highlights their role in supporting regional commute, despite limited geographic equity coverage (e.g., Routes 69, 29).

Takeaways from express and seasonal routes include:

- **Routes 61x, QX and 12x provide access to the most transit-reliant individuals and jobs among all express routes**, by connecting downtown Providence with employment centers and smaller cities in the south, including Tiverton, Quonset, and various park-and-ride locations. These routes play a key role in supporting long-distance commutes for transit-dependent populations.
- Despite having lower access to transit-oriented populations, some express routes have a higher share of transit-oriented riders among express routes, as shown in the Rider Demographics component. This suggests that these routes play a critical role for transit-dependent individuals who may travel from outside the immediate service area or rely on it for longer-distance connections to areas, such as in Fall River and Newport (e.g., Route 24L).
- Seasonal routes connect the urban areas of the state to the state's beaches, and they share similar level of access to transit-oriented populations and jobs.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF FIXED-ROUTE SERVICE

RIPTA's fixed routes have a substantial positive impact on the environment and the transportation system as a whole. By converting single-occupant vehicle trips into transit trips, RIPTA capitalizes on economies of scale to reduce

emissions and improve congestion. Since fixed-route service operates on a set schedule, the number of trips and VMT by buses remains constant regardless of how many riders are being served. In the past year, RIPTA's fixed-route service had the following impact: [1]

- Statewide vehicle trips were reduced by approximately 11.5 million trips and statewide vehicle miles traveled (VMT) were reduced by over 43 million miles.
- Emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOC) were reduced by 96 percent, or over 10,400 kg, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were reduced by 25 percent, or 4,620 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e).

[1] Data represents March 2024 through February 2025. Routes 45, 46, 47, 88, 89, and QX are not included due to lack of data. Calculations assume all transit trips become single-occupant vehicle trips.

QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT - NON-FIXED SERVICE/PROGRAMS

RIPTA operates three categories of non-fixed services and programs: Flex/Flex On Demand, RIde ADA paratransit/RIde Anywhere, and the Commuter Resource RI (CRRI) program. These services target specific populations and geographies that are not well-served by standard routes, while also promoting sustainable travel behavior among commuters. The following sections describe each service, its available performance data, and environmental impact.

FLEX/FLEX ON DEMAND

Flex On Demand, currently a pilot program, offers passengers the option of choosing their own pick-up or drop-off point within a designated Flex Zone and, in some zones, picking up the Flex vehicle at a scheduled stop. Flex provides local service within each zone as well as connections to RIPTA's statewide fixed-route network. To use Flex, passengers can either make a reservation 24 hours in advance or board the Flex vehicle at any of the scheduled Flex stops within three zones: 204 (Westerly), 231 (South Aquidneck), and 282 (Pascoag/Slatersville).

Flex On Demand allows passengers to use a smartphone app to request a ride to and from anywhere they wish to travel within the Flex Zone. Unlike Flex, passengers do not need to make a reservation in advance. The service is currently being offered in the Flex 203 zone, which includes Kingston Village and the University of Rhode Island.

Flex/Flex On Demand provided just over **40,000 passenger trips from March 2024 through February 2025. Passengers traveled over 180,000 miles,** with an average trip length of 4.5 miles. Flex/Flex On Demand operated in revenue service for almost 27,000 hours at a fully allocated cost of $115.14 per vehicle revenue hour.

Zone Impact and Equity Scores

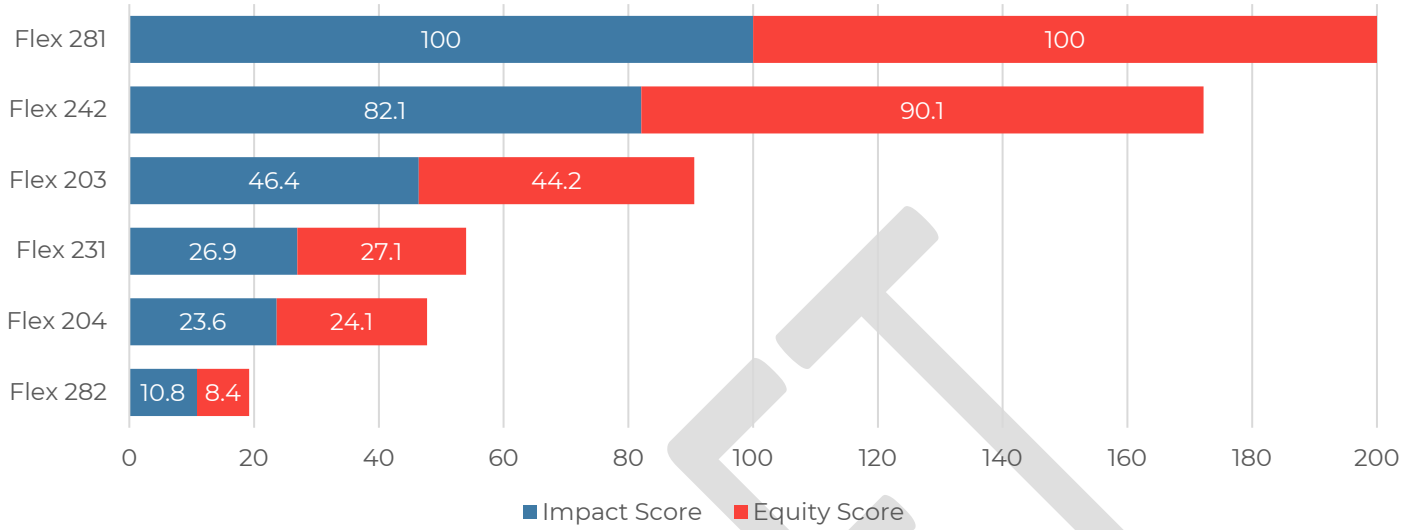
Similar to the fixed routes, a Composite Zone Score was generated for each Flex/Flex On Demand Zone. The score incorporates two equally weighted components:

- **Impact:** Assesses population served.
- **Equity:** Evaluates rider demographics, service area characteristics, and access to lower-wage jobs.

The Composite Zone Scores for the six Flex/Flex On Demand zones are shown in **Figure 4**, and the components of the Zone Equity and Impact Scores are detailed in **Appendix A: Route Scoring Details**.

- **Zone 281 (Woonsocket/Manville) scores the highest in both Impact and Equity, followed by Zone 242 (West Warwick/Coventry).** Both are relatively more urbanized than the other zones.
- **Zone 282 (Pascoag/Slatersville) scores the lowest in both Impact and Equity**. In general, the more rural Flex zones have lower scores than zones in more urbanized areas or near the Providence metro area.

Figure 4 | Composite Zone Scores



RIDE ADA PARATRANSIT/RIDE ANYWHERE

RIde ADA paratransit is a complementary ADA paratransit service that provides door-to-door service for people with disabilities who are traveling within ¾-mile of a fixed bus route and cannot independently take the bus or travel to and from a bus stop. This paratransit service is mandated by federal guidance and operates during the same spans as the fixed-route service it is complementing. In January 2024, RIPTA launched RIde Anywhere, a pilot program that provides door-to-door service statewide for RIde paratransit passengers.

- RIde ADA paratransit/RIde Anywhere provided almost 300,000 passenger trips from March 2024 through February 2025, an average of 818 daily trips.
- Passengers traveled over 4,930,000 miles, with an average trip length of 16.5 miles.
- RIde ADA paratransit/RIde Anywhere operated in revenue service for over 167,000 hours.

Environmental Impacts of RIde/RIde Anywhere

RIPTA's paratransit service has a positive impact on the environment and the transportation system as a whole. By converting single-occupant vehicle trips into transit trips with potentially more than one rider, the service reduces emissions and improves congestion. Overall, these services:

- Reduced statewide vehicle trips by 69,400 and statewide VMT by over 1.7 million.[2]
- Reduced NOx emissions by 33 percent, or 425 kg; VOC emissions by 75 percent, or 397 kg; and GHG emissions by 14 percent, or 236 metric tons CO2e.

COMMUTER RESOURCE RI PROGRAM (VANPOOL, CARPOOL, BIKE TO WORK, U-PASS, WAVE TO WORK)

Commuter Resource RI (CRRI) is Rhode Island's statewide transportation demand management (TDM) program. CRRI manages a range of initiatives that aim to convert single-occupant vehicle trips into alternative modes to reduce congestion and the environmental impacts of travel, including:

[2] Data represents March 2024 to February 2025. Calculations assume all transit trips become single-occupant vehicle trips.

- Wave to Work program, which allows employers to subsidize bus fares partially or fully for their employees by providing them with preloaded Wave smart cards.
- University Pass Program (U-PASS) allows students, faculty, and staff at participating universities to receive transit benefits.
- Subsidized vanpool service through a partnership with Commute with Enterprise.
- The vanpool program 30 participating vanpools served 150 total riders and drivers in FY23
- The program is less expensive to operate than fixed-route service ($0.15 per passenger mile traveled versus $2.03) and has a significantly higher farebox recovery rate (95 percent versus 14 percent).
- The program had a positive return on investment, generating almost $350,000 in federal formula funds after accounting for state subsidies.
- The program provides access to some major outlying employment sites that have struggled to support fixed-route service, including the Quonset Business Park.
- The Drive Less RI app allows commuters to log non-single-occupancy vehicle trips and receive rewards and connect with active carpools.
- Drive Less RI has over 560 participating organizations and 4,200 participating commuters; of the more than 600 active participants, more than half previously drove alone to work.
- Since April 2024, participants recorded over 35,000 non-single-occupant vehicle trips in Drive Less RI, reducing statewide VMT by over 540,000 miles.
- Participants saved $370,000 when accounting for vehicle-related costs.
- While over 40 percent of trips were made by bicycle, carpool trips accounted for the vast majority of VMT reductions and money saved.
- Over 1,900 ridesharing inquiries were made and over half produced matching names for potential carpooling or vanpooling.

TRANSIT PROPENSITY & GAPS ANALYSES

Identifying where transit users are and where they want to go is a key component in evaluating how RIPTA's existing service meets current and future transit demand. As part of Transit Forward RI 2050, transit propensity and gaps analyses were conducted to identify areas with transit demand, including those with service gaps. The analysis identified areas of **high potential transit demand** based on:

- Population density
- Employment density
- Demographics (e.g., low-income, zero-car households)

As population density increases, the ridership base for transit service grows. Similarly, the location and density of jobs is an indicator of demand since commuting represents a sizable portion of transit trips. Employment can indicate potential demand for other types of trips as well. For example, destinations like shopping malls or hospitals are frequented by employees and visitors alike. As population and employment densities increase, there is more demand for transit and more intensive service becomes more appropriate.

In addition to raw population and employment density, socioeconomic characteristics can be indicators of a population's likelihood of using transit. For example, households with limited or no access to a personal vehicle are more likely to use and rely on transit. Other demographic groups with higher propensity for transit use include minority populations, immigrant communities, and lower income households.

High transit demand areas in population, employment, and demographics include the **urban core of the state (Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls), Cranston/Warwick along the I-95 corridor, West Warwick, Woonsocket, and Newport**. More moderate demand exists in Quonset, Kingston, Westerly, Wakefield, and much of the

East Bay. The more urban parts of these communities have higher concentrations of populations that are more likely to use transit, as opposed to more suburban areas such as East Greenwich, Smithfield, and Lincoln with lower expected demand**. Employment is concentrated in downtown Providence and its immediate surroundings, with notable pockets in Central Falls, Woonsocket, Quonset, and Newport**. Outside of these communities, much of Rhode Island has little to no demand for more intensive fixed-route service due to its exurban or rural nature.

Gaps in fixed-route service frequency and coverage exist across the state. There is demand **for more frequent service along major corridors within and between urban areas such as Providence, Pawtucket, and Warwick**. There is also demand **for additional fixed-route service outside of the Providence metro area, including within Woonsocket, Cranston-Warwick-West Warwick, Quonset, Kingston-Wakefield, Newport, and Westerly**. Additionally, there is demand for new crosstown service along the Park Avenue corridor in Cranston, between Pawtucket and Johnston, and between eastern and western portions of Warwick.

Looking into the future, demand for transit will likely remain similar or increase slightly since the statewide population is projected to remain relatively constant and employment is projected to grow. In particular, **demand is expected to increase in Newport and around T.F. Green Airport**, as well as across the state border in Fall River, Massachusetts.

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT – ALL SERVICES

The **qualitative assessment** complements the quantitative performance metrics by capturing the lived experiences and perspectives of RIPTA riders, staff, and community stakeholders through targeted outreach sessions. Feedback on the role, impact, and effectiveness of each service provides critical context to understand not only how each service operates, but how it is perceived and experienced by the people who rely on it daily – particularly underserved populations. The findings highlight recurring themes, identify gaps, and inform recommendations to enhance service quality, equity, and access.

Four stakeholder outreach sessions were held, each focusing on one of RIPTA's core services: Fixed-Route (including express and seasonal services); Flex/Flex On Demand; RIde Anywhere/RIde ADA paratransit; and the Commuter Resource RI program. Each session included a mix of community members and representatives from RIPTA, social service organizations, local businesses, a community group, and other stakeholders.

Each session opened with a presentation introducing the goals of the study and the purpose of the outreach sessions. A series of questions were posed to participants to understand the impact and role of the service for stakeholders, as well as the needs of users, trip purposes and other qualitative data.

The discussion was guided by the following topics and questions:

- **Issues and needs of users:** Which populations are primarily using this service today? Are there groups who especially depend on this service? What challenges do users face when trying to access or use these services? Are there specific needs that are currently unmet by this service?
- **Impact on mobility:** How does this service impact people's ability to get where they need to go? Are users dependent on this service or do they generally have other transportation options as well?
- **Impact on economic development:** In what ways does this service help support access to jobs, businesses, or economic activity in your community?
- **Impact on environment:** Do you see this service contributing to reduced car trips, traffic congestion, or emissions in your community?
- **Overall role of service(s):** Overall, how important would you say this service is for your community's transportation needs?

- **Ridership information:** Are you aware of general usage patterns for this service? How frequently do people you work with use this service?
- **Performance data:** From what you observe, does this service seem to be run efficiently? Are there concerns about service reliability, timeliness, or coverage?
- **Trip purposes:** For the people you serve, what are the main reasons they use this service? Are there trip purposes that are especially critical for this community?

The following sections describe the findings from each session. A matrix with a high-level summary of the qualitative assessment can be found in the *Value Assessment of Each Service* section.

FIXED-ROUTE – OUTREACH FINDINGS

The Fixed-Route Service stakeholder session was held on May 14, 2025 at RIPTA Headquarters. A virtual option was available for remote attendees. Approximately two dozen stakeholders were in attendance, including individual riders and representatives from RIPTA, the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals (BHDDH), Quonset Development Corporation, and South Kingstown Senior Services.

Frequency, reliability, and funding for RIPTA's fixed-route service were central themes of the session discussion.

- **Desire for more predictable service,** particularly on routes with high variability.
- Inconsistent service on specific routes, including:
  - Buses serving the **Kingston Amtrak Station.**
  - Routes connecting **East Side and Downtown Providence.**
- **More frequent delays** and service gaps during **weekday evenings** when riders reported greater difficulty planning trips.
- Community members echoed a general sentiment of wanting **more resources to expand service and improve ridership and user experience**.
- Many participants voiced concerns about **reducing or eliminating service on routes with low ridership, particularly the negative impacts this could have on transit dependent communities in rural areas**. One rider emphasized that relying solely on ridership data to allocate resources could harm transit-dependent communities, stating:

> *"Putting resources where resources are needed might cancel some routes that are needed so using just ridership data won't improve the reliability of RIPTA."*

Overall, the discussion highlighted fixed-route service as essential to meet the mobility needs of Rhode Islanders, with concerns that reduced service could be detrimental to individuals who rely on transit, particularly vulnerable communities in rural areas. Regarding the importance of RIPTA fixed-route service, a representative commented that:

> *"We have two types of passengers: those by choice and those who must. We're really a lifeline for those passengers [who must]."*

To **improve service reliability**, participants recommended:

- Better promotion of schedule-tracking apps,
- The designation of more dedicated areas for buses operating early to pause and to maintain schedule adherence, and

- The marketing and promotion of the Wave smart card and mobile app, to move away from cash payment and speed up the boarding process.

Geographic and temporal gaps were identified:

- The need for cross-town routes, service in rural areas, and a shift away from the hub-and-spoke system was raised.
- Concerns were raised about the span on particular routes including from a representative of Quonset Business Park who noted that routes do not serve early-morning shift workers.
- RIPTA representatives acknowledged that service must adjust to the movement of jobs out of the urban core and the need to serve outlying areas and shift-based workers. However, this will continue to be a challenge without sufficient funding.

High ridership routes were identified:

- Participants noted the R Line and Route 1 (Eddy/Hope/Benefit) as being consistently overcrowded, with workers, high school students, university students and faculty, particularly during peak hours.
- Routes serving the University of Rhode Island (URI) were also noted as having high ridership, as well as overcrowding on routes serving Brown University and high schools in Providence.
- Route 50 (Douglas Ave/Bryant University) was identified as important for economic activity and access to jobs.
- Rural routes serving South Kingstown senior housing facilities were noted as being valuable for seniors who are low income or have mobility limitations.
- Some observations and feedback on express and seasonal routes were provided. A suggestion was made to consider a focus on tourism and increasing service in Newport and South County.
- Another participant observed lower ridership on express routes in South Kingstown post-pandemic.

FLEX/FLEX ON DEMAND – OUTREACH FINDINGS

The Flex/Flex On Demand stakeholder session was held on May 14, 2025 at RIPTA Headquarters. A virtual option was available for remote attendees. Eight stakeholders were in attendance, including current users and representatives from RIPTA and Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds in Washington County. Written feedback from a RIPTA employee who works as a Flex Service Scheduler was also included in the outreach findings. **Feeback focused on the importance of this service for users who live outside of the fixed-route service area.**

Key points of feedback included:

- Current riders in Woonsocket and South County expressed **ease of use with the Flex On Demand app** and reported their communities relying heavily on the service.
- A RIPTA employee who manages data tracking for the Flex program identified **Westerly and Narragansett as areas with high vehicle trips**.
- RIPTA representatives shared that Flex and Flex On Demand have a **core group of users who depend on the service for recurring trips** to get to work, medical appointments, school, run errands and attend social activities and community events. One participant and user of Flex for 15 years shared:

"I depend on Flex. I use it for shopping and medical appointments."

Stakeholder feedback identified key user groups, including low-income workers, veterans, students, and individuals with mobility limitations, including seniors and people with disabilities. The Flex/Flex On Demand service attracts riders who have no or limited access to a personal vehicle and live in areas with little to no fixed-route service.

Flex/Flex On Demand is a critical service for these groups. Another participant noted that community members in South County are dependent on both Flex and Flex On Demand service.

"In South County, there are people who really don't have any other options."

- Several needs and recommendations were identified by the stakeholders, most notably **expanding flex zones into rural** areas and urban areas that are underserved by transit.
    - One participant identified the need for expanded flex zones into rural areas of South Kingstown.
- One participant relayed feedback that **Flex On Demand requests can interfere with users who have prebooked Flex service.**
- A Flex service representative also identified **scheduling challenges with booking 24 hours** in advance and recommended real-time booking options to better meet the needs of users.
- Fares **may be cost-prohibitive for low-income users**. A participant suggested offering lower-cost options for income-qualifying riders.

RIDE ADA PARATRANSIT/RIDE ANYWHERE – OUTREACH FINDINGS

The RIde Anywhere/RIde ADA paratransit stakeholder session was held on May 15, 2025 at RIPTA Headquarters. A virtual option was available for remote attendees. Nine stakeholders were in attendance, including current users and representatives from RIPTA and BHDDH.

RIde Anywhere and RIde ADA paratransit user feedback was mostly positive, noting:

- The RIde Anywhere pilot program is particularly critical for individuals with disabilities living in rural areas.
- Several users remarked that the RIde Anywhere pilot program has significantly increased their independence, mobility, and quality of life, connecting them to employment, medical appointments, social activities, and other opportunities that would have otherwise been challenging or impossible to access. Without the RIde Anywhere pilot program, users shared they would have no other options to maintain their mobility. One user described the RIde Anywhere and RIde ADA paratransit services as:

"Absolutely essential to the mobility of people with disabilities."

- Another user expressed how much the RIde Anywhere pilot program has changed her life, noting that:

"Up until the program began in 2024, I was housebound for five years."

- Further, she mentioned the service enables her to better access essential services and feel connected to her community. RIde Anywhere and RIde ADA paratransit are critical for the mobility of users with participants sharing that a loss of the service would be detrimental to their quality of life, access to employment, and independence.

Issues with the timeliness and routing of the RIde ADA paratransit service were noted, with a participant having experienced lagged tracking of buses and late departures and arrivals, despite users planning in advance:

- Users experience challenges, particularly during peak commute hours, with wait times for the scheduling phone line and online software incorrectly estimating trip times, causing delays.
- Some RIde paratransit users recounted instances where individual trips could have been grouped but were not. It was suggested that scheduling improvements could be made to group nearby trip requests and decrease the number of solo trips.
- It was suggested that operators should have improved ability to better account for traffic and streamline routing for group trips that include multiple destinations.

RIPTA RIde Services – Rider Engagement

RIPTA conducted separate outreach to RIde Anywhere pilot program users, including nine individual interviews, a focus group with five participants, and an online survey to better understand rider travel needs and identify opportunities for service improvement. The feedback was very positive, with many riders emphasizing how the service enhances their independence, reduces social isolation, and provides critical access to jobs and essential services beyond RIde ADA paratransit hours. These insights echoed themes heard during the Operational Efficiency Study outreach.

Participants expressed a **strong preference for RIPTA-operated vans over taxis**, especially among riders with low vision or those who use wheelchairs. It was mentioned that there are recurring issues with communication and trip tracking for taxi rides. Notably, the majority of the interviewees' RIde Anywhere trips were solo trips, even during peak commute hours, suggesting inefficiencies in vehicle utilization. **An analysis of the engagement suggests trip negotiation as a potential solution to group trips, reduce inefficiencies, and lower costs.**

Overall, the **RIde Anywhere pilot program significantly improves mobility and quality of life for riders with disabilities**, with some customers noting that they would still use RIde Anywhere even if fares were increased to be higher than the standard RIde ADA paratransit fare.

COMMUTER RESOURCE RI PROGRAM (VANPOOL, CARPOOL, BIKE TO WORK, WAVE TO WORK) – OUTREACH FINDINGS

The Commuter Resource RI (CRRI) stakeholder session was held on May 15, 2025 at RIPTA Headquarters. A virtual option was available for remote attendees. Six stakeholders were in attendance, including a current RIPTA rider and representatives from CRRI, BHDDH, The State of Rhode Island Governor's Commission on Disabilities, and Rhode Island Transit Riders.

The stakeholder discussion identified CRRI programs, namely Wave to Work, vanpools, and travel training, as serving predominantly university students and staff, shift-workers, and youth and seniors, respectively. Insights showed Wave to Work and vanpools as having positive impacts on mobility and economic development by providing low-cost options for workers with limited car access and shift workers who work schedules outside of transit service. Some of the key insights included:

- CRRI travel training was noted as a vital service for helping youth and seniors learn how to use and rely on transit, further boosting mobility for these groups.
- Overall, CRRI was seen as having a positive environmental impact by working to reduce drive alone trips, leading to lower congestion on roadways. The discussion also identified CRRI programs as an important way to expand transit ridership by attracting riders and encouraging behavior change. One participant noted:

"Compared to the other sectors like the fixed route, these options attract choice riders that have other options, but when you think about climate change and mode shift, this is making a bigger climate impact."

- CRRI representatives identified challenges with effectively marketing their services, recruiting employers for Wave to Work, and securing drivers for vanpools. Stakeholder recommendations included outreach to small employers (particularly those in suburban office parks), non-profits, and worker co-operatives which may have higher employee interest in vanpool and transit.

VALUE ASSESSMENT OF EACH SERVICE

Each of RIPTA's services has its strengths and weaknesses while at the same time serving a number of purposes for Rhode Islanders. Together, these services create a far-reaching network throughout the state that offers extensive mobility options for vulnerable populations and choice riders, has positive impacts on the environment in a state that is highly vulnerable to climate change, and also improves the state's economy by offering access to jobs and services and providing connections to higher paying jobs in the Boston metro through the MBTA commuter rail. The following sections summarize the value of each service in providing a unique, statewide transit service that is rare in America.

FIXED-ROUTE VALUE

RIPTA's fixed-route bus network provides far-reaching and reliable service to the residents of Rhode Island, carrying over **12.6 million passenger trips in FY2024 – an increase of 17 percent from FY2023**. The fixed-route network is highly reliable with an **on-time performance rate of nearly 80 percent** in 2025. It also performs well overall in terms of efficiency, delivering just over **20 passengers per revenue hour** in FY2023. Environmentally, **fixed-route service takes 11.5 million trips off the road and reduces statewide vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by over 43 million miles** – reducing emissions and easing congestion.

The **fixed-route network alone** provides transit access to:

- **Nearly 560,000 people,**
- **87,000 seniors,**
- **79,000 low-income households,**
- **250,000 minorities, and**
- **266,000 jobs** and allows for several connections to suburban job sites that typically are difficult to serve on routes like the 10x, QX, and 75.

Access to jobs is one of the most important benefits of fixed-route transit for the local economy. According to a 2020 study by the American Public Transit Association (APTA), **transit investments support cost savings for both public transit users and non-users through reductions in car ownership and reductions in traffic congestion.** By giving people an opportunity to reduce car ownership**, public transit can save users nearly $10,000 per year**.[3] This savings can be reinvested in the local economy. Additionally**, bus transit in small or medium-sized cities has been shown to reduce reliance on public assistance, lower unemployment, and decrease poverty**[4].

Certain local fixed routes serve different purposes, as outlined in the Route Impact, Efficiency, and Equity scores. While some **routes like the R-Line, 1 (Eddy/Hope/Benefit), and 72 (Weeden/Central Falls) have a high impact, high**

[3] APTA. (2020). Economic Impact of Public Transportation Investment. Retrieved from: https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-Economic-Impact-Public-Transit-2020.pdf

[4] Faulk, D. & Hicks, M. (2010). The Economic Effects of Bus Transit in Small Cities. *Public Finance Review*, 38(5) 513-539.

efficiency, and serve large numbers of vulnerable populations, others serve more specific purposes. A number of routes **score much higher in their Equity score than they do in Route Impact and Efficiency**. For example:

- **Route 88**, which provides service between Simmons Village in Johnston and the Cranston Walmart, scores much higher in equity than efficiency and provides the ability for seniors to access shopping.
- **Route 58**, which provides crosstown service on Mineral Spring Avenue in North Providence, also provides access to shopping at Smithfield Crossing for vulnerable populations, including seniors, who reside in North Providence.
- **Route 3,** which provides service to the Brown Health hospital complex, Washington Park, and much of Warwick including Oakland Beach, also serves a number of vulnerable populations with high transit propensity despite being less efficient than some urban fixed routes.

RIPTA may want to review local routes with low Impact, Equity, and Efficiency scores to determine whether these routes could be restructured for more effective use of resources.

FLEX/FLEX ON DEMAND VALUE

RIPTA's Flex service provides a different service option for suburban or outlying urban residents that can connect them to the fixed-route network for statewide travel or allow access to essential services within their communities. During outreach, RIPTA staff mentioned that there is **a core group of Flex riders that rely on this service for school, shopping, and medical appointments**. All-in-all, **Flex service provided just over 40,000 passenger trips traveling over 180,000 passenger miles** in the 12 months starting in March 2024 – reducing the number of vehicle trips in the state. Additionally, t**he Flex service area serves 137,000 people and just over 60,000 jobs**. When looking at the Flex Suitability analysis, **all of RIPTA's current flex zones show levels of suitability and therefore are serving the appropriate need**. Like fixed routes, different Flex zones serve different needs around the state. For example:

- **Zone 282 provides essential service for Woonsocket residents** – many of whom are seniors or low-income. Woonsocket also has moderate transit demand as documented in the Transit Propensity analysis. This zone also allows connections to Woonsocket's main fixed route, Route 87.
- **Zone 242 provides essential service in Kent County** including to major shopping districts and the RIPTA hub at CCRI.
- **Zone 203 provides service in Narragansett and South Kingstown** – areas with less frequent fixed-route service but also major activity centers like Wakefield and URI.

Overall, **Zones 204 (Westerly) and 282 (North Smithfield-Burrillville) provide the least overall impact** and serve lower numbers of vulnerable populations and jobs. However, **portions of each zone show as suitable for flex service**, and in Zone 282, an expansion to adjacent suitable areas to the south and west could attract additional riders.

RIDE ADA PARATRANSIT/RIDE ANYWHERE VALUE

RIPTA's RIde paratransit service and RIde Anywhere pilot program provide essential services to some of the most vulnerable populations in the state. RIde paratransit service fulfills federal laws requiring complementary ADA paratransit service that provides door-to-door service for people with disabilities who are traveling within ¾-mile of a fixed bus route and cannot independently take the bus or travel to and from a bus stop. This requirement makes the RIde program dependent on fixed route locations and service times, and often areas that lose fixed-route service get "grandfathered in" and allow existing riders in these areas to still use the service. **In the 12-month period beginning in March 2024, RIde provided nearly 300,000 passenger trips for its 4,000 enrollees, the majority of whom have no other transportation option**.

The RIde Anywhere pilot program provides paratransit service statewide and for fixed hours (6am to 11pm on weekdays, often longer than the regular RIde service area). During outreach, it was noted that **this service in particular has given mobility to individuals with disabilities and seniors who live outside of the RIde paratransit service area- particularly in more rural areas of the state**. As was previously mentioned, transit can have positive effects on the need for social assistance, and counties with bus transit have lower unemployment rates than those that do not. The program also provides independence for these individuals and access to employment and the local economy. According to the latest American Community Survey (2023), **just over 270,000 Rhode Islanders are seniors aged 65 or older, and over 154,000 have a disability.**

COMMUTER RESOURCE RI VALUE

The Commuter Resource RI program provides a number of different services that help reduce vehicle miles traveled in the state, including vanpools, transit passes, and carpool matching platforms. This program supports not only all of the other RIPTA services but also automobile commuters who are seeking ways to reduce their transportation costs by carpooling or using vanpools to avoid high parking costs and gas prices. The **Wave to Work program**, managed by CRRI, **bolsters RIPTA's fixed-route service by encouraging employers to buy transit passes for their employees – providing a bucket of private funding for RIPTA's fixed-route service**. reduced statewide vehicle trips by 73,200 and statewide VMT by over 2.8 million.

In particular, the **vanpool program took around 73,000 vehicles off the road and reduced statewide vehicle miles traveled by over 2.8 million annually – reducing emissions and helping ease congestion**. The program also has a **significant impact on the local economy as many vanpools serve outlying business parks like Quonset** that otherwise have limited fixed-route service. The vanpool program has been an effective marketing tool for Quonset Development Corporation, which has used it to recruit companies and employees. This expands access to well-paying jobs in these areas to individuals who may lack access to a private vehicle or are "car-lite." **In the 12 months beginning in March 2024, nearly 80,000 trips were taken by vanpool**. Vanpools also provide a method for users who cannot afford parking in downtown Providence a cheaper option for their commute. As there is cost differential to the passenger in comparison to a monthly bus pass, vanpool should not be considered as a replacement for fixed-route service.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the quantitative and qualitative analyses, a number of conclusions can be drawn to demonstrate the positive impacts of RIPTA's services and help inform policy for RIPTA.

- **Fixed-Route Service** forms the backbone of the system and performs well, especially in core urban corridors.
- **Flex/Flex On Demand** is essential for transit-oriented populations in lower density areas. Some current zones are sprawling or overlap the fixed-route network. Refinement and clarification of service roles could be beneficial.
- **RIde ADA paratransit/RIde Anywhere** pilot program delivers life changing access for individuals with disabilities. RIde Anywhere is especially important in rural areas unserved by fixed routes. They are a critical part of RIPTA's equitable transit network.
- **Commuter Resource RI (CRRI) fills** gaps through employer partnerships and commuting programs, especially in areas where fixed routes are infeasible. Programs like the vanpool program nearly pay for themselves, generate additional matching funds for RIPTA, and are used as recruiting tools by business parks and employers.

High-Level Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Investment in High-Performing Routes.**
   - **Maintain or increase service on routes that score above average in the Composite Score** and its individual components (Route Impact, Route Efficiency, and Route Equity).
   - **Maintain routes with above average equity scores** – these routes serve vulnerable, transit-oriented populations and provide lifelines for seniors, low-income individuals, and individuals without access to a private a vehicle to reach jobs, shopping, medical appointments, and other services.
2. **Assess Less Critical/Underperforming Routes**.
   - **Consider reducing or reallocating resources on local routes that score below average in the Composite score** and its individual components (Route Impact, Route Efficiency, and Route Equity) – **particularly those with higher operating costs**. These routes may be candidates for reductions or consolidations.
     - However, low-cost/higher need routes like the 88 and 89 (among others) with specific purposes should be maintained.
   - **Study how restructuring routes with below average Efficiency scores but higher operating costs could help improve efficiency** while maintaining their impacts on the network and their purpose in providing equity in the network.
   - Restructuring examples include: consolidation with connecting or parallel routes, extensions to major generators, and shifting alignments to major corridors to provide more frequent service along them. If low efficiency routes score more highly in the Impact and Equity scores, their alignments should not be eliminated.
3. **Reevaluate Flex Service Area.**
   - **As Flex zones are upgraded to on-demand service, reevaluate zone size and structure** with reference to the Flex Suitability analysis findings.
     - Where larger zones show suitability in smaller areas, consider reducing zone size or splitting zones.
   - **Further study areas with Flex Suitability to determine if they could support Flex service**, e.g., in Greenville and the Route 114 corridor in East Providence.
   - Consider exploring **software and scheduling enhancements** to increase efficiency in each zone and cut down on vehicles running without passengers.
4. **Continue Providing RIde Anywhere Services**.
   - The RIde Anywhere pilot program is a statewide mobility lifeline for people with disabilities in more rural areas, providing access to jobs, shopping, and medical appointments and therefore bolstering the local economy. **RIde Anywhere is a vital service that should be maintained beyond its pilot.**
   - Continue exploring **software and scheduling enhancements** to increase efficiency.
5. **Expand CRRI's Reach.**
   - **Continue promoting employer and university participation** in Wave to Work and vanpool programs to attract new riders (e.g., Quonset, Warwick Industrial Parks).
   - **Implement plans to increase and expand travel training activity. This is a vital service** for helping youth, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.
   - Continue building partnerships with suburban office parks and outlying job centers not served by fixed routes, Promote **vanpool, carpool, and other innovative job access tools** for shift workers.

These recommendations outline a roadmap for RIPTA to consider as it supports strategic growth and respects community needs.