

SEWRPC Community Planning Report No. 347

KENOSHA AREA TRANSIT ROUTE UPDATE

Chapter 2

EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICES AND TRAVEL PATTERNS FOR KENOSHA AREA TRANSIT

INTRODUCTION

The following chapter provides an inventory of current transit services in the City of Kenosha and. The topics described include a description of services; transit service operations, ridership, operating costs, and vehicle fleet; and travel patterns and characteristics of riders.

HISTORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Kenosha Area Transit

Urban public transit service has been available in the City of Kenosha since 1903, when streetcar operations began. Public transit service in the Kenosha area was provided exclusively by streetcars until 1932, when that service was replaced by a system of electric trolley bus—or “trackless trolley”—routes. The trolleybus system was converted to motor bus operation after World War II. Continuous declines in ridership and profits during the postwar period resulted in a series of private ownerships until February 1971, when, because of extreme financial difficulties, the last private operator ceased local bus operations. In September 1971, after almost eight months without local transit service, the City of Kenosha acquired the transit system, which it had subsidized for the previous two years, and began public operation of the Kenosha transit system.

Administrative Structure

The City of Kenosha owns Kenosha Area Transit and operates it using public employees under the direct supervision of the City of Kenosha Department of Transportation. The policy-making body of the transit system is the Kenosha Transit Commission, consisting of six members appointed by the Mayor and

confirmed by the Common Council. The powers of the Transit Commission are substantial, including essentially all the powers necessary to acquire, operate, and manage the transit system. The Kenosha Common Council has the ultimate responsibility for review and approval of certain important matters, including the annual budget for the public transit program.

EXISTING TRANSIT SERVICES

Kenosha Area Transit Local Transit Services

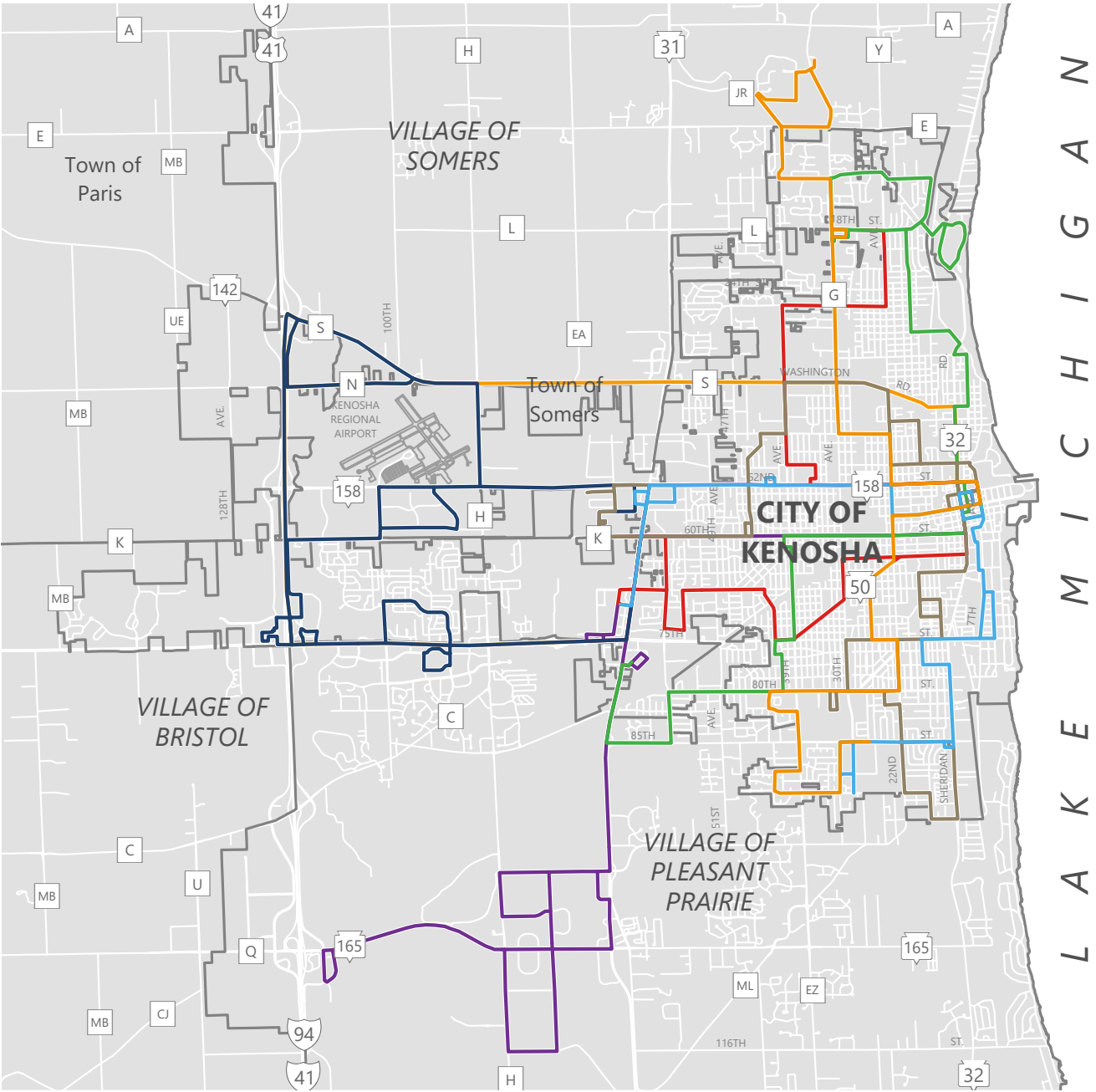
Maps 2.1 through 2.2 show the existing fixed-route transit service provided by Kenosha Area Transit as of September 2023. Kenosha Area Transit operates eight routes in a radial network, the majority of which serve the Joseph McCarthy Transit Center located on 54th Street between 8th Avenue and 6th Avenue. The bus routes serve key destinations throughout the City of Kenosha, including Froedtert Pleasant Prairie Hospital (Route 31), the University of Wisconsin-Parkside (Route 1), Carthage College (Route 4), Southport Plaza (Routes 2, 4, 31, and 35), Glenwood Crossings (Routes 1, 4, and 5) and public and private K-12 schools. Most of the routes operate within the City of Kenosha. However, certain routes extend beyond the City of Kenosha or pass through adjacent communities to provide service to key destinations. The City of Kenosha funds the segments that operate beyond its borders, as described below:

- Route 1 extends to the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, just outside of the City of Kenosha.
- Route 31 serves the western portion of the City and passes through the Village and Town of Sommers and the Village of Pleasant Prairie.
- Route 35 primarily serves the Village of Pleasant Prairie, serving South Plaza, Haribo, Meijer, and Pleasant Prairie Premium Outlets.

The schedules of most routes (Routes 1 through 5 and the Amazon Express) are designed so that they meet at the Transit Center approximately every 60 minutes during the weekday peak periods and approximately every 60 to 70 minutes during other weekday times and weekends. This cycle, or “pulse,” scheduling allows passengers to transfer between bus routes and complete a trip with a minimum of delay.

At the time of this study, the City of Kenosha is considering relocating the transit center to a more centralized location adjacent to the Kenosha Innovation Neighborhood. In early 2024, SEWRPC staff compared the current and potential new transit center locations. Specifically, the analysis compared potential route alignments, people served, and jobs served. The potential new location (2709 60th Street) is approximately 1.25 miles west of the current transit center and directly south of the KIN project, which could help provide a more direct path for the bus routes and therefore a shorter overall journey for transit passengers. The initial review concluded that the proposed transit center location would serve more people

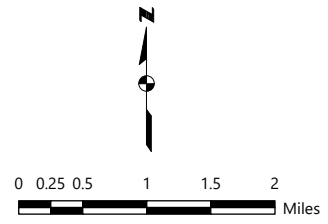
Map 2.1
Kenosha Area Transit Weekday Routes: 2023



KENOSHA AREA TRANSIT WEEKDAY DAYTIME ROUTES

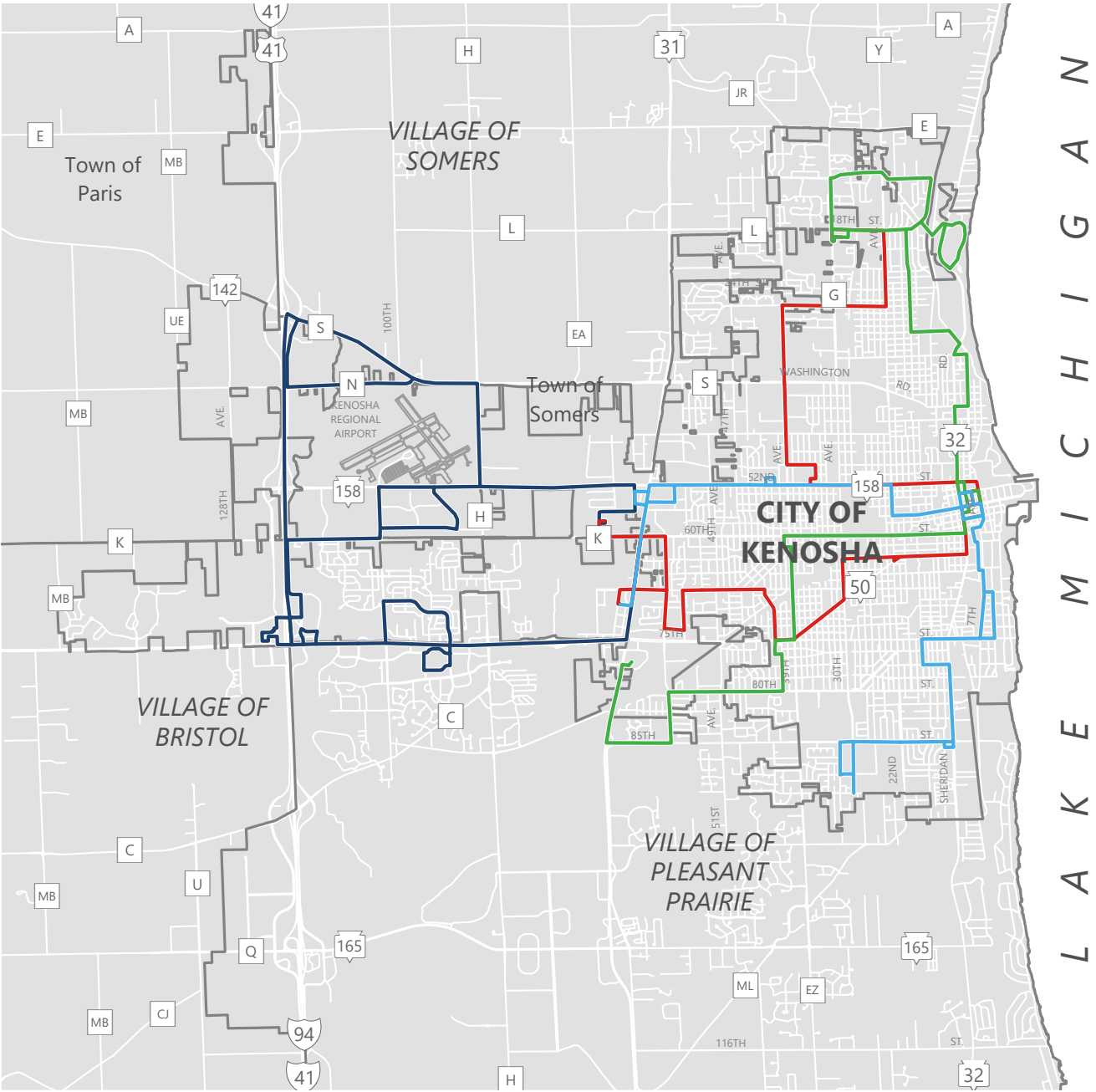
- ROUTE 1
- ROUTE 2
- ROUTE 3
- ROUTE 4
- ROUTE 5
- ROUTE 31

- ROUTE 35
- AMAZON EXPRESS



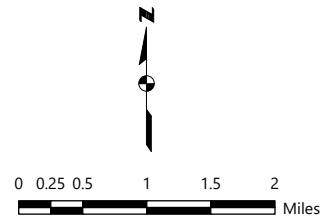
Source: Kenosha Area Transit
 and Southeastern Wisconsin
 Regional Planning Commission
 2/2025

Map 2.2
Kenosha Area Transit Saturday Routes: 2023



KENOSHA AREA TRANSIT SATURDAY ROUTES

- ROUTE 2
- ROUTE 4
- ROUTE 5
- ROUTE 31



Source: Kenosha Area Transit
 and Southeastern Wisconsin
 Regional Planning Commission
 2/2025

based on the current population, including people of color, families in poverty, and people with disabilities. Should the determination to move the transit center be made within the timeframe of this study, Commission staff will include this location in the potential route alignments.

Service Characteristics

The 2024 operating characteristics and service levels for the eight routes operated by Kenosha Area Transit are presented in Table 2.1. All eight routes operate on weekdays and four routes operate on Saturday. No routes operate on Sundays.

In addition, seven of the routes have variants that provide limited service to accommodate school and employment trips, including Routes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and Amazon Express. The majority of the limited service route variants operate at times that accommodate the beginning or end of the day at local schools while they are in session. In general, all routes begin at 4:55 a.m., with the exception of Route 31 beginning at 6:50 a.m., and Routes 35 and the Amazon Express beginning at 5:25 a.m.

The City of Kenosha provides paratransit service, Care-A-Van, for persons whose disability is of such a nature that they are unable to use fixed-route service. The paratransit services comply with Federal regulations implementing the public transit requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. These regulations require each entity that provides fixed-route transit service to provide paratransit service to persons unable to use fixed-route bus service as a complement to their fixed-route service.

Fares

Table 2.2 displays the fares charged in 2025 for fixed-route bus service. The base adult cash fare is \$2.00, which has remained unchanged since 2017. Passengers can purchase monthly passes (student, elderly and disabled, and Medicare card holder passes available) and "Saturday Super Transfer" passes for unlimited rides on Saturdays. Interline transfers are also available.

Kenosha Area Transit passes and ride cards must be purchased at one of the eight fare outlets. These locations include the Kenosha Transit Center, the Municipal Building, two Pick 'n Save locations, two Piggly Wiggly locations, Festival Foods on 80th Street, Associated Bank, PLS Check Cashiers on 22nd Avenue, Gateway Technical College, and UW-Parkside.

Kenosha Streetcar

Since 2000, Kenosha Area Transit has operated a 2-mile streetcar loop in downtown Kenosha. The streetcar leaves the downtown Transit Center every 15 minutes and serves the Metra train station, the Harbor Park

Table 2.1
Kenosha Area Transit Operating and Service Characteristics by Route: 2024

Service Availability						
Bus Route Number	Bus Route	Round Trip Route Length (miles)	Weekdays		Saturdays	
			Start Time First Trip	Start Time Last Trip	Start Time First Trip	Start Time Last Trip
1	UW Parkside/Tremper	26.30	4:55 a.m.	3:05 p.m.		
2	Mall/Anderson Park	22.95	4:55 a.m.	11:35 p.m.	9:00 a.m.	3:05 p.m.
3	Lincoln Park/Indian Trail	26.80	4:55 a.m.	6:35 p.m.		
4	Meijer/Carthage	27.73	4:55 a.m.	11:35 p.m.	9:00 a.m.	3:05 p.m.
5	63rd St/Saxony	25.65	4:55 a.m.	11:35 p.m.	9:00 a.m.	11:35 p.m.
31	Southport	23.58	6:50 a.m.	11:35 p.m.	10:00 a.m.	4:00 p.m.
35	Downtown/Outlets	26.85	5:25 a.m.	11:24 p.m.		
--	Amazon Express	33.76	5:25 a.m.	4:35 p.m.		
--	Peak-Hour Trippers	--	6:25 a.m.	4:35 p.m.		

Service Frequency (Minutes)							
Bus Route Number	Bus Route	A.M. Peak (6:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.)	Weekdays			Saturdays	
			Midday (9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.)	P.M. Peak (3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.)	Evening	Daytime (8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.)	Evening (6:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.)
1	UW Parkside/Tremper	55	55	55	55		
2	Mall/Anderson Park	55	55	55	55	55	
3	Lincoln Park/Indian Trail	55	55	55			
4	Meijer/Carthage	55	55	55	55	55	
5	63rd St/Saxony	55	55	55	55	55	
31	Southport	54	54	54	55	54	
35	Downtown	55	55	55	55		
--	Amazon Express	1 roundtrip		1 roundtrip			
--	Peak-Hour Trippers	33 roundtrips		33 roundtrips			

Buses Required							
Bus Route Number	Bus Route	A.M. Peak (6:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.)	Weekdays			Saturdays	
			Midday (9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.)	P.M. Peak (3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.)	Evening	Daytime (8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.)	Evening (6:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.)
1	UW Parkside/Tremper	2	2	2			
2	Mall/Anderson Park	2	2	2	2	2	
3	Lincoln Park/Indian Trail	3	2	2	2		
4	Meijer/Carthage	2	2	2	2	2	
5	63rd St/Saxony	3	2	2	2	2	
31	Southport	1	1	1	1	1	
35	Downtown	1	1	1	1		
--	Amazon Express	1		1			
--	Peak-Hour Trippers						

Source: Kenosha Area Transit and SEWRPC
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Table 2.2**Fares for Fixed-Route Bus Service Provided by Kenosha Area Transit**

Fare Category	Adults (Ages 18 to 64)	Students (Ages 5 to 18)	Seniors (ages 65 and up) and People with Disabilities
Cash	\$2.00	\$1.50	\$1.00
Day pass ^a	\$3.50	\$3.50	\$3.50
Monthly Passes	\$60.00	\$45.00	\$30.00

^a Day pass only available on Saturdays.

Source: Kenosha Area Transit and SEWRPC

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residential development, two historic districts, downtown business districts, the Kenosha Public Museum, and other downtown locations. The weekday streetcar schedule varies by season, while operating on weekends year-round. Specifically, the streetcar operates from 11:05 a.m. to 6:35 p.m. in the Summer and Fall; 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. in the Spring; and does not operate during the weekdays during the Winter. The fare is \$1.00 per trip for all passengers over 13 years old, \$0.50 for children between the ages of 5 and 12, and free for children 4 years and younger. All day passes are available for \$3.50.

RIDERSHIP AND SERVICE LEVELS

In 2023, Kenosha Area Transit's fixed-route bus service carried 1,205,924 passenger trips.¹ Following national trends due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ridership decreased significantly in 2020. However, data from 2022 and 2023, show that ridership is beginning to slowly recover with over 1.2 million trips in 2023, an annual increase of over three percent. The amount of service provided has decreased in recent years, with a 24 percent decrease in annual revenue vehicle hours provided between 2019 and 2023, from 78,902 to 59,771, respectively. Table 2.3 also includes two measures of service effectiveness: passengers per vehicle hour and passengers per vehicle mile. In general, the service effectiveness of Kenosha Area Transit has generally increased over the past five years, with the exception of a slight decrease in 2020, as a result in the decrease in ridership.

Figure 2.1 displays ridership, service levels, and fare increases for years 2019 through 2023. Ridership significantly decreased in 2020 by approximately 42 percent from the previous year (from 1,339,237 to 777,818). However, as the figure shows, ridership has been steadily increasing while the amount of service offered has remained relatively constant between approximately 58,000 and 60,000 annual revenue vehicle hours since 2020.

Table 2.3 also includes ridership and service effectiveness measures for the Kenosha Streetcar. In 2023, the Streetcar provided 19,526 passenger trips and over 2,000 hours of service.

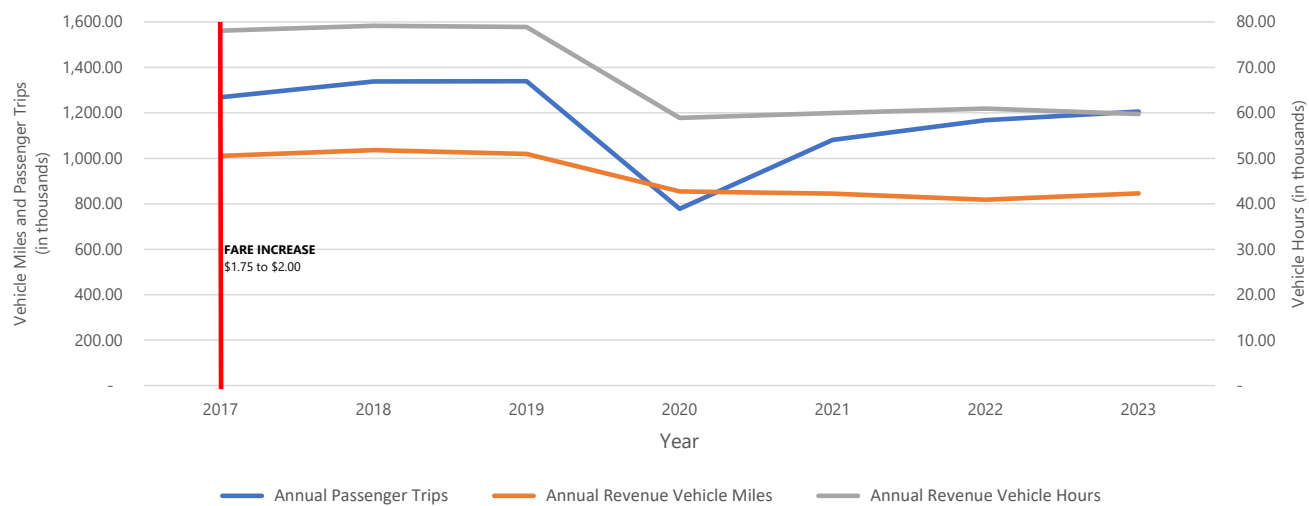
EXPENDITURES AND REVENUE

Kenosha Area Transit Bus

Table 2.4 shows the operating expenses, revenues, and assistance for Kenosha Area Transit Service between 2019 and 2023. The number of passenger trips declined ten percent between 2019 and 2023. However,

¹ Passenger trips include revenue passengers, free fare passengers, and transfers.

Figure 2.1
Kenosha Area Transit Service Ridership, Service Levels, and Fare Changes



Source: National Transit Database, Kenosha Area Transit, and SEWRPC.

Table 2.3
Kenosha Area Transit Service Ridership and Service Levels

Fixed-Route Bus Service						
Characteristic	Year					Average 2019-2023
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Primary Service Area Population	99,894	99,894	99,894	99,894	99,894	99,894
Passenger Trips						
Annual Passenger Trips	1,339,237	777,818	1,080,782	1,167,963	1,205,924	1,114,345
Average Daily Passenger Trips	4,071	2,534	3,509	3,829	3,980	3,585
Service Provided						
Annual Revenue Vehicle Miles	1,019,378	854,155	844,411	817,940	845,651	876,307
Annual Revenue Vehicle Hours	78,902	58,890	59,963	60,947	59,771	63,695
Service Effectiveness						
Passengers per Vehicle Mile	1.31	0.91	1.28	1.43	1.43	1.27
Passengers per Vehicle Hour	16.97	13.21	18.02	19.16	20.18	17.51

Characteristic	Annual Change from Previous Year by Percent					Average 2019-2023
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Passenger Trips						
Annual Passenger Trips	0.1	-41.9	39.0	8.1	3.3	1.7
Average Daily Passenger Trips	0.1	-37.8	38.5	9.1	3.9	2.8
Service Provided						
Annual Revenue Vehicle Miles	-1.6	-16.2	-1.1	-3.1	3.4	-3.7
Annual Revenue Vehicle Hours	-0.3	-25.4	1.8	1.6	-1.9	-4.8
Service Effectiveness						
Passengers per Vehicle Mile	1.7	-30.7	40.6	11.6	-0.1	4.6
Passengers per Vehicle Hour	0.4	-22.2	36.5	6.3	5.3	5.3

Source: U.S. Census, Kenosha Area Transit, and SEWRPC

Table 2.4**Annual Operating Expenses, Revenues, and Assistance for Kenosha Area Transit Fixed-Route Service**

Characteristics	Year					Change 2019-2023	
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Number	Percent
Services Provided							
Total Vehicle Miles	1,019,378	854,155	844,411	817,940	845,651	-173,727	-17.0
Total Vehicle Hours	78,902	58,890	59,963	60,947	59,771	-19,131	-24.2
Annual Passenger Trips	1,339,237	777,818	1,080,782	1,167,963	1,205,924	-133,313	-10.0
Expenses and Revenues							
Operating Expenses	\$7,726,351	\$6,893,901	\$7,136,418	\$7,665,602	\$7,980,006	\$253,655	3.3
Farebox Revenues	\$1,660,929	\$1,357,123	\$1,461,002	\$1,660,929	\$1,706,981	\$46,052	2.8
Percent of Expenses							
Recovered through Revenues	21.5	19.7	20.5	21.7	21.4	-0.1	-0.5
Operating Assistance							
Federal	\$2,848,939	\$3,224,401	\$2,661,276	\$2,839,501	\$3,070,704	\$221,765	7.8
State	\$1,792,779	\$1,798,540	\$1,772,337	\$1,848,057	\$1,852,826	\$60,047	3.3
Local	\$1,416,908	\$954,446	\$1,365,160	\$1,466,000	\$1,466,000	\$49,092	3.5
Total	\$6,058,626	\$5,977,387	\$5,798,773	\$6,153,558	\$6,389,530	\$330,904	5.5
Per Trip Data							
Operating Expenses	\$5.77	\$8.86	\$6.60	\$6.56	\$6.62	\$0.85	14.7
Farebox Revenue	\$1.24	\$1.74	\$1.35	\$1.42	\$1.42	\$0.18	14.1
Total Operating Assistance	\$4.52	\$7.68	\$5.37	\$5.27	\$5.30	\$0.77	17.1
Local Operating Assistance	\$1.06	\$1.23	\$1.26	\$1.26	\$1.22	\$0.16	14.9
Operating Expenses Per Mile	\$7.58	\$8.07	\$8.45	\$9.37	\$9.44	\$1.86	24.5
Operating Expenses Per Hour	\$97.92	\$117.06	\$119.01	\$125.77	\$133.51	\$35.59	36.3

Source: National Transit Database and SEWRPC

there was an approximately three percent increase in farebox revenue. During the same time, Federal, State, and Local operating assistance increased at a rate of 5.5 percent.

Trends in operating expenses, State and Federal assistance, local funding, and fare revenue for the years 2017 through 2023 are shown in Figure 2.2 Federal assistance increased significantly in 2020 due to COVID relief funds, which helped offset losses in fare revenue. Operating expenses, fare revenue, and local assistance have remained relatively stable since 2017, with an increase in fare revenue due to the fare increase. In recent years, fare revenue has been trending downward, while local assistance has increased slightly.

CHARACTERISTICS AND TRAVEL PATTERNS OF USERS

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) conducted a passenger survey of the Kenosha Area Transit System in 2023. The survey entailed distributing a prepaid, pre-addressed, mail-back survey questionnaire to all passengers on each scheduled weekday bus trip operated by the transit system on the survey day. Surveys could also be completed online at the passengers' convenience. Passengers who preferred to use Spanish were provided with a Spanish translation of the questionnaire.

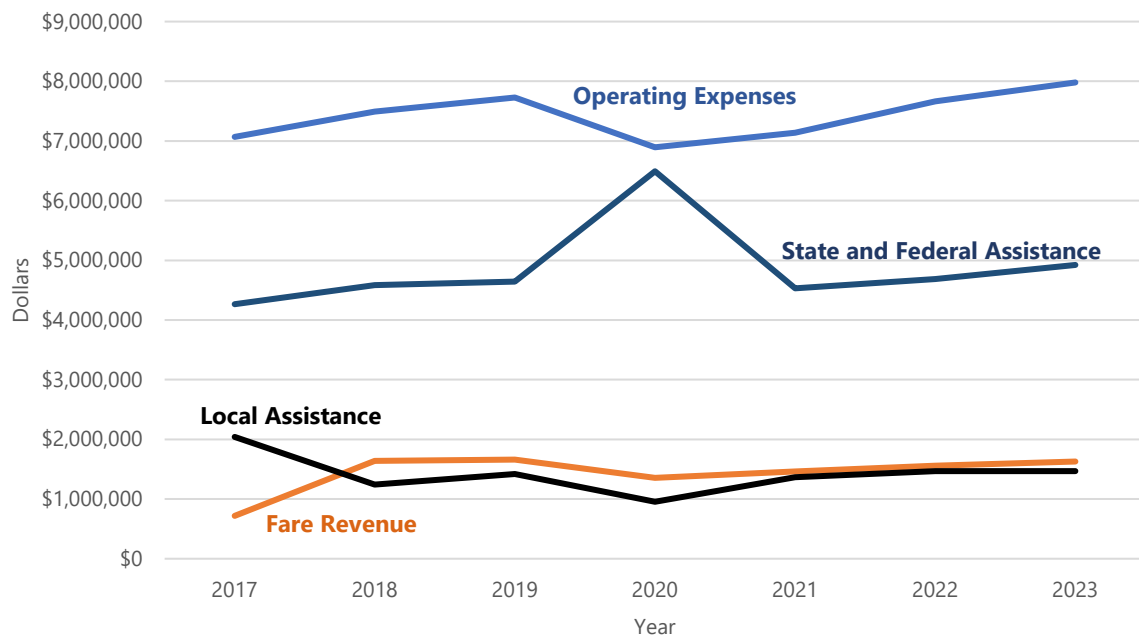
Kenosha Area Transit Bus

Characteristics of Users

Commission staff received 213 completed survey questionnaires, representing about nine percent of the average weekday trips made in 2023. Table 2.5 provides a summary of the socio-economic characteristics of Kenosha Area Transit passengers using the bus service in 2023. The following observations can be made based upon an examination of this information:

- Kenosha Area Transit passengers represent all age groups, with the highest percentage of riders under 18 years old at 21.4 percent and the lowest percentage of riders between 45 years old and 54 years old, or 7.9 percent.
- About 38 percent of Kenosha Area Transit riders did not have access to a vehicle and over half of riders reported not having a driver's license.
- A majority of riders (41.4 percent) used Kenosha Area Transit more than five times a week.

Figure 2.2
Kenosha Area Transit Service Operating Expenses, Revenues, and Assistance



Source: National Transit Database, Kenosha Area Transit, and SEWRPC.

Table 2.5
Socioeconomic Characteristics of Weekday Transit
Riders on Kenosha Area Transit: 2023

Category	Percent of Total Trips
Age	
Under 18	21.4
18 to 24	11.7
25 to 34	9.6
35 to 44	16.3
45 to 54	7.9
55 to 64	14.8
65 and over	10.9
No Response	7.4
Total	100.0
Sex	
Female	38.8
Male	47.2
No Response/Prefer Not to Answer	14.0
Total	100.0
Licensed Driver	
Yes	25.2
No	58.3
No Response	16.5
Total	100.0
Frequency of Use	
Less than once a month	2.0
1-3 days a month	4.3
1-2 days a week	6.5
3-4 days a week	41.7
More than 5 days a week	41.4
No Response	4.1
Total	100.0
Household Income	
Under \$10,000	23.3
\$10,000-\$19,999	12.1
\$20,000-\$29,999	6.7
\$30,000-\$39,999	8.7
\$40,000-\$49,999	4.9
\$50,000-\$74,999	3.7
\$75,000-\$99,999	2.2
Over \$100,000	1.1
No Response	37.3

Table 2.5
Socioeconomic Characteristics of Weekday Transit
Riders on Kenosha Area Transit: 2023

Category		Percent of Total Trips
	Total	100.0
Vehicles Available per Household		
No vehicle		38.4
One vehicle		20.8
Two or more vehicles		13.4
No Response		27.4
	Total	100.0
Trip Purpose		
Home Based Work		24.7
Home Based Shopping		12.7
Home Based Social		7.9
Home Based Personal Business		5.9
Home Based School		28.2
Home Based Other		4.9
Non-Home Based Work		5.3
Non-Home Based School		2.3
Non-Home Based Other		5.1
Unknown		3.0
	Total	100.0
Frequency of Use		
Less than once a month		2.0
1-3 times a month		4.3
1-2 times a week		6.5
3-4 times a week		41.7
More than 5 times a week		41.4
No Response		4.1
	Total	100.0
Duration of Use		
Less than 3 Months		8.8
3-12 Months		8.1
1-2 Years		13.4
3-4 Years		12.3
5+ Years		38.9
No Response		18.5
	Total	100.0
Payment Method		
Cash		30.5
Free		13.9

Table 2.5
Socioeconomic Characteristics of Weekday Transit
Riders on Kenosha Area Transit: 2023

Category		Percent of Total Trips
Monthly Pass		45.5
Ticket		4.5
Transfer		3.1
No Response		2.5
Total		100.0
Minority Status		
Yes		52.1
No		32.1
Not Enough Information		15.8
Total		100.0

Source: SEWRPC

- In 2023, most Kenosha Area Transit riders had an annual household income under \$39,999, with the highest percentage of riders reporting an annual household income of \$10,000 or less at 23.3 percent.
- The highest percentage of riders used Kenosha Area Transit to commute to school at 28.2 percent, followed by work trips at 24.7 percent, and shopping at 12.7 percent.

Travel Patterns of Users

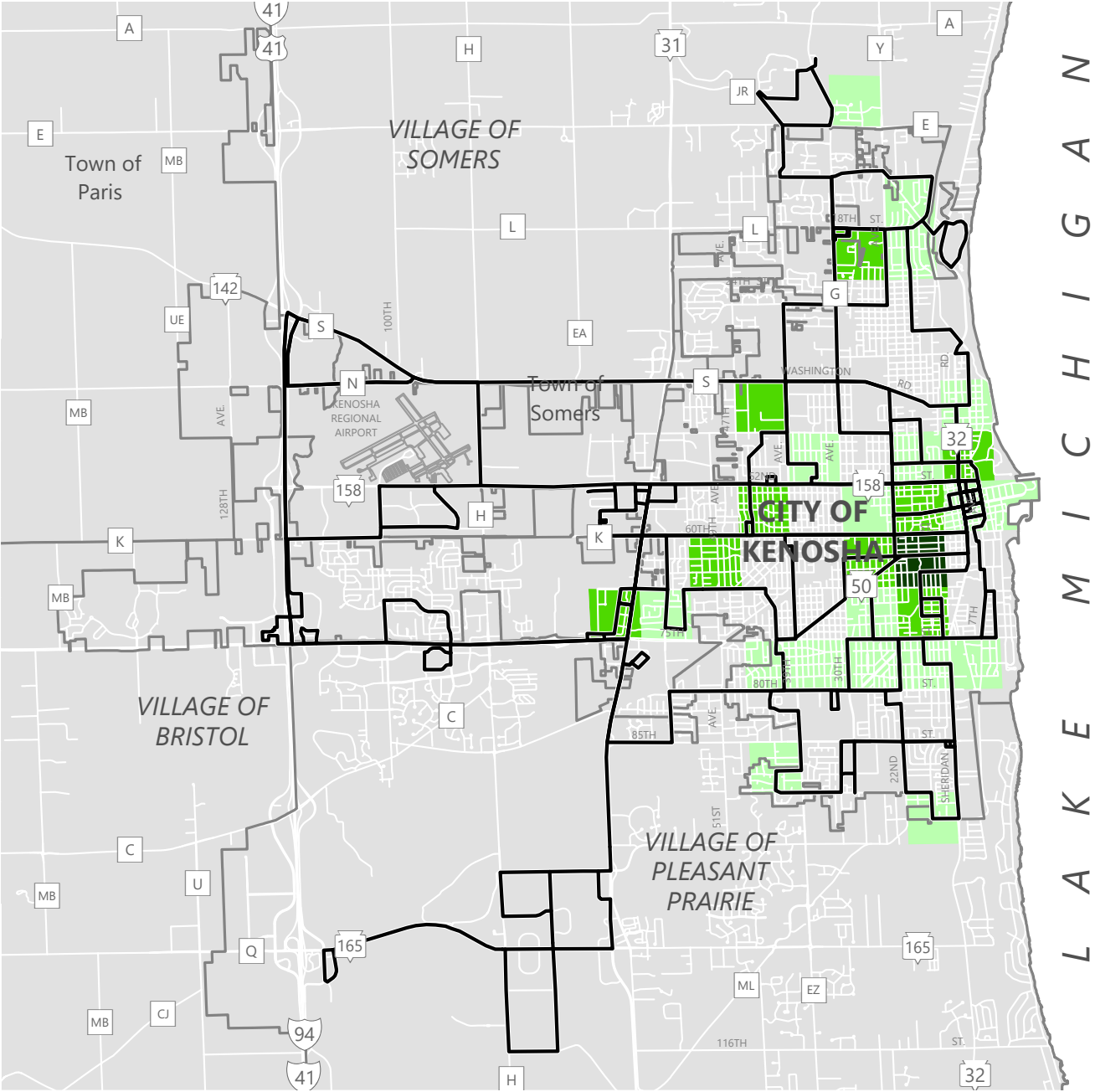
As part of the passenger survey of Kenosha Area Transit, riders were asked to record where they were coming from and going to on their trip. Map 2.3 and Map 2.4 show the distribution of weekday trip productions and attractions for the Kenosha Area Transit routes. The production area for trips having one end at “home,” which either is coming from or going to home, is the area containing the location of the “home.” The attraction area is the area containing the “non-home” end of that trip. The production area for trips having neither end at “home” is the area where the trip started and the attraction area is the location of the trip destination. The following observations may be made based upon the maps:

- A significant portion of trip production takes place in densely populated areas within the City of Kenosha, particularly in neighborhoods boarding between 52nd and 75th Streets to the north and south and 30th Street and Sheridan Road to the west and east, including Mount Carmel, Frank, Lincoln Park, St. Joe’s, Uptown, and Bain Park.
- Additional areas that produce a relatively high number of weekday transit trips include the Glenwood Crossings, neighborhoods near the Kenosha Transit Administration building, and developments near Green Bay Road and STH 50.
- Gateway Technical College and Carthage College appear to attract higher numbers of transit trips. In addition, the Lincoln Park neighborhood near 75th Street and 30th Avenue also attracts many transit trips. Other notable attraction areas include the YMCA and Indian Trails High School and Academy, Pershing Plaza, and the areas around St. Catherine’s Medical Center.

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarized the existing fixed-route public transit in the City of Kenosha with the most recent data available. The review of services indicates that despite the drastic drops in ridership in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, levels of service for Kenosha Area Transit have been returning to almost what they were prior to 2020. However, a slow but steady recovery in ridership, as indicated by data from 2022 and

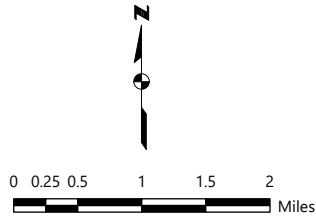
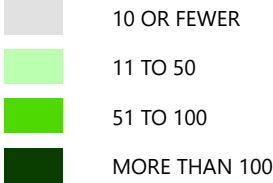
Map 2.3
Locations of Trip Productions of Weekday Revenue Passengers on Kenosha Area Transit Routes



KENOSHA AREA TRANSIT

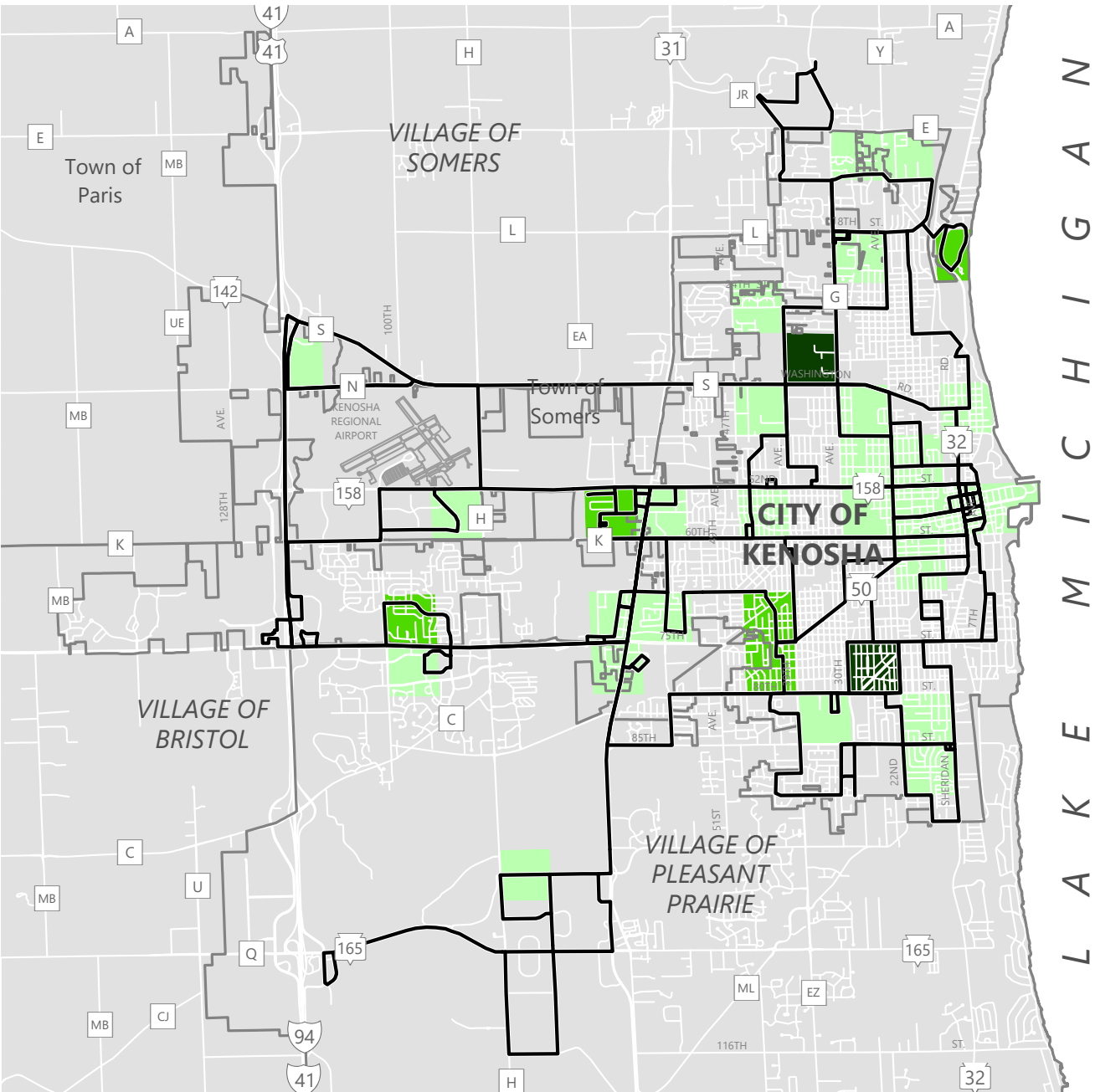
— WEEKDAY DAYTIME ROUTE

NUMBER OF TRANSIT TRIPS PRODUCED PER U.S. PUBLIC LAND SURVEY QUARTER SECTION



Source: Kenosha Area Transit
 and Southeastern Wisconsin
 Regional Planning Commission
 2/2025

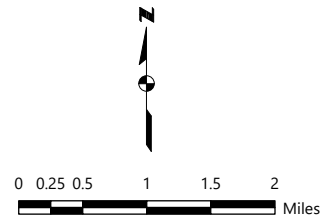
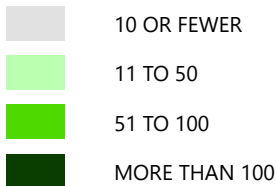
Map 2.4
Locations of Trip Attractions of Weekday Revenue Passengers on Kenosha Area Transit Routes



KENOSHA AREA TRANSIT

— WEEKDAY DAYTIME ROUTE

NUMBER OF TRANSIT TRIPS ATTRACTED PER U.S. PUBLIC LAND SURVEY QUARTER SECTION



Source: Kenosha Area Transit
 and Southeastern Wisconsin
 Regional Planning Commission
 2/2025

2023, highlights a gradual return of passengers. Kenosha Area Transit has demonstrated resilience in maintaining operations while adjusting to these challenges, and the recovery of ridership, albeit slow, suggests that public transit will continue to play a critical role in the city's mobility landscape in the coming years. Going forward, efforts to rebuild ridership post-pandemic, adapt to new patterns of travel, and response to decreases in Federal, State and local funding, will be crucial to ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of the transit system.