SAN MIGUEL AUTHORITY FOR REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

STRATEGIC OPERATING PLAN

FEBRUARY 2025

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Executive Summary

Since the agency's formation in late 2016, San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) has been delivering integrated regional transit services across eastern San Miguel County and has since expanded to serve communities outside of the original service area including Rico, Nula, Naturita, Montrose, and Ridgeway. This Strategic Operating Plan builds off of all of the growth achieved following the 2018 plan and charts a path for the continued development of SMART's services into the next 5-years and beyond. Below is a summary of the phased service, capital, and fare structure improvements recommended by this plan. The rest of the Strategic Operating Plan provides more details on these recommendations and the process to develop them.

Improving Service

Route	Improvement
Phase 1 (1-3 Years)	
Lawson Hill Route	Increase to 45-minute Frequency All Day.
Mountain Village Route	Add Two Midday Runs
Rico Route	Add Stop at Lawson Hill Park n' Ride.
Rico Route	Provide Weekend Service.
Rico Route	Fare free service.
Rico Route	Add an additional afternoon round trip per day on weekdays.
Norwood Route	Additional Evening Run from Telluride (9:00 PM) to Norwood (10:10 PM) and Norwood (10:10 PM) to Telluride (11:25 PM). Requires 1 additional vehicle.
Down Valley Route	Add One Round Trip of Down Valley Weekend Service.
Down Valley Route	Fare free service.
Phase 2 (3-5 Years)	
Lawson Hill Route	Add an additional run at night to expand the service hours.
Mountain Village Route	Provide Weekend Service.
Nucla/Naturita Route	Extend Weekend Norwood Service to Nucla/Naturita.
New Route	New Vanpool Service to Ophir.
Phase 3 (5+ Years)	
Combination of Lawson Hill & Mountain Village Routes	Make the "off-season" route year-round by combining the existing Lawson Hill and Mountain Village Routes. Requires 2 additional vehicles.
Combination of Down Valley & Norwood Routes	Combine Down Valley & Norwood Routes. Requires 1 additional vehicle.
Combination of Down Valley & Norwood Routes	Increase combined Down Valley & Norwood Route to 10 round trips/day. Requires 1 additional vehicle.
Nucla/Naturita Route	Additional Weekday Roundtrip.

Building Needed Infrastructure

Route	Capital Improvement	Phase	Estimated Cost
All	Bus stop improvements program	Incremental Across Phases 1-3	$2 million - $2.5 million
Norwood/ Nucla/ Naturita	Partner to expand bus barn in Norwood	Phase 2 (4-5 years)	$2 million - $2.5 million
All	Lawson Hill Facility Renovations	Phase 2 (4-5 years)	$3 million – $5 million
All	New Ilium Bus Maintenance Facility	Phase 3 (5+ years)	$15 million - $20 million

Creating a Consistent Fare Structure

Fare Free Service within the District

For fixed-route services, it is recommended that all routes within the RTA district are fare free. This is likely to have positive impacts on increasing ridership and only creates a small loss in revenue.

Fares Based on Mileage for Out of District Routes

For fixed route services outside of the district, it is recommended that fares are set based on mileage of the route. This allows SMART to continue to collect fares that support service to communities that are not paying into the RTA and based on the mileage of the route allows for transparency and equality of the fare structure. Fixed route fares should be reevaluated on regular intervals to account for increases in operating costs and other factors that may impact the appropriate rates. Vanpools fares are recommended to be kept at $40/month in the short-term and that SMART explore setting them using a mileage-based formula to account for differences in the lengths of routes and therefore the differences in operating costs for each route in the future.

Service Area Demographics

The San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) provides regional transit services across San Miguel County, CO and connects to a few communities outside of San Miguel County including Rico, Montrose, Nucla, and Naturita. SMART strives to deliver safe and reliable transit services to the communities in their service area. This demographic analysis serves as a snapshot of the population within SMART's service area and helped inform improvements to existing services and expansions of SMART's current services in the final Strategic Operating Plan.

Population Overview

The current population of San Miguel county is just over 8,000 people and is forecasted to increase roughly 10% by 2030 and 31% by 2050 (**Table 1**). **Table 2** displays the population of each census tract in San Miguel County as well as the single census tract for Dolores County, which includes Rico) and the part of Montrose County that includes Redvale, Nucla, and Naturita. The densest parts of San Miguel County are Census Tracts 9681.01 and 9681.02 which include the towns of Telluride and Mountain Village, respectively. These two census tracts account for 57% of San Miguel County's Population.

Table 1: Population Over Time San Miguel County

2021 Population	2022 Population	2023 Population	2030 Forecasted Population	2050 Forecasted Population
8,085	8,000	8,057	8,829	10,571

Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office

Table 2: Population of SMART's Service Area by Census Tract

Census Tract	County	Total Population
Tract 9681.01 (includes Telluride)	San Miguel County	2,540
Tract 9681.02 (includes Mountain Village)	San Miguel County	1,807
Tract 9681.03 (Includes Sawpit & Placerville)	San Miguel County	2,050
Tract 9682 (Includes Norwood)	San Miguel County	1,687
Tract 1 (includes Rico)	Dolores County	952
Tract 9661 (includes Redvale, Nucla, & Naturita)	Montrose County	2,288

Source: 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

Income

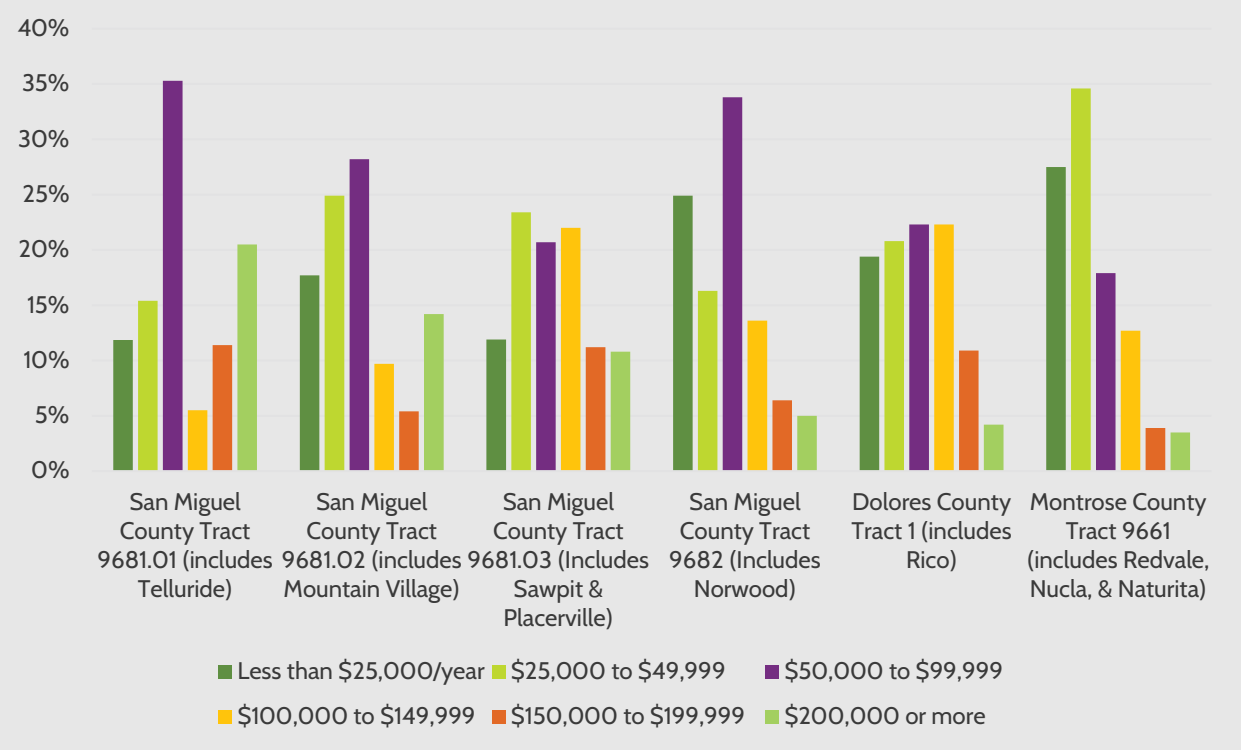
Income distribution varies widely across SMART's service area (**Figure 1**). Within San Miguel County, median household income ranges from $59,000/year in the western side of the county (Census Tract 9682 which includes Norwood) to $83,000/year in Census Tract 9681.03 (which includes Sawpit and Placerville). The median household income in Tract 9661 of Montrose County (includes Redvale, Nucla, & Naturita) is significantly lower at $39,000/year. Median household income is shown in **Table 3**. The western part of San Miguel County has a more low-income households compared to the rest of the county. Households with limited internet access mirror the geographic distribution of low-income households.

Table 3: Median Household Income by Census Tract

Census Tract	County	Median Household Income
Tract 9681.01 (includes Telluride)	San Miguel County	$82,455
Tract 9681.02 (includes Mountain Village)	San Miguel County	$63,488
Tract 9681.03 (Includes Sawpit & Placerville)	San Miguel County	$83,409
Tract 9682 (Includes Norwood)	San Miguel County	$59,931
Tract 1 (includes Rico)	Dolores County	$75,149
Tract 9661 (includes Redvale, Nucla, & Naturita)	Montrose County	$39,250

Source: 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

Figure 1: Income Distribution Across SMART's Service Area by Census Tract

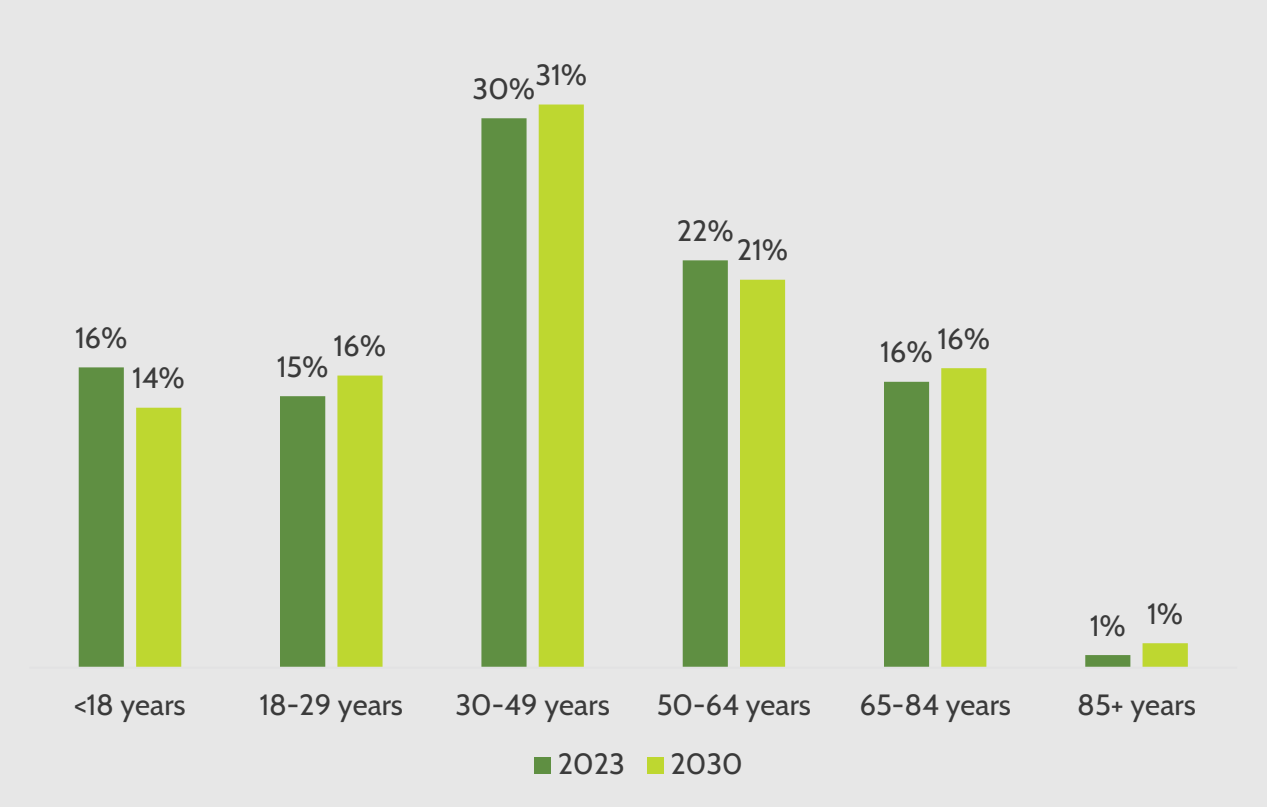


Source: 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates

Age Distribution

Figure 2 displays the age distribution of San Miguel County's population today, as well as forecasts of the County's age distribution in 2030. Currently a sizable portion of San Miguel's population are under 18 years old (16%) or 65 years and older (17%). These two age groups tend to be more likely to rely on transit. Younger people may not be old enough to drive or may not have access to a private vehicle. Some older adults no longer feel comfortable driving or are no longer able to drive themselves. Both of these age cohorts disproportionately rely on public transit or rides from friends and family to get around. Access to public transit can provide people in these age groups with greater independence to get where they need to go. Age distribution is forecasted to remain relatively the same in San Miguel County over the next 7 years.

Figure 2: Age Distribution of San Miguel County Population (2023 estimates, 2030 & 2050 forecasted)

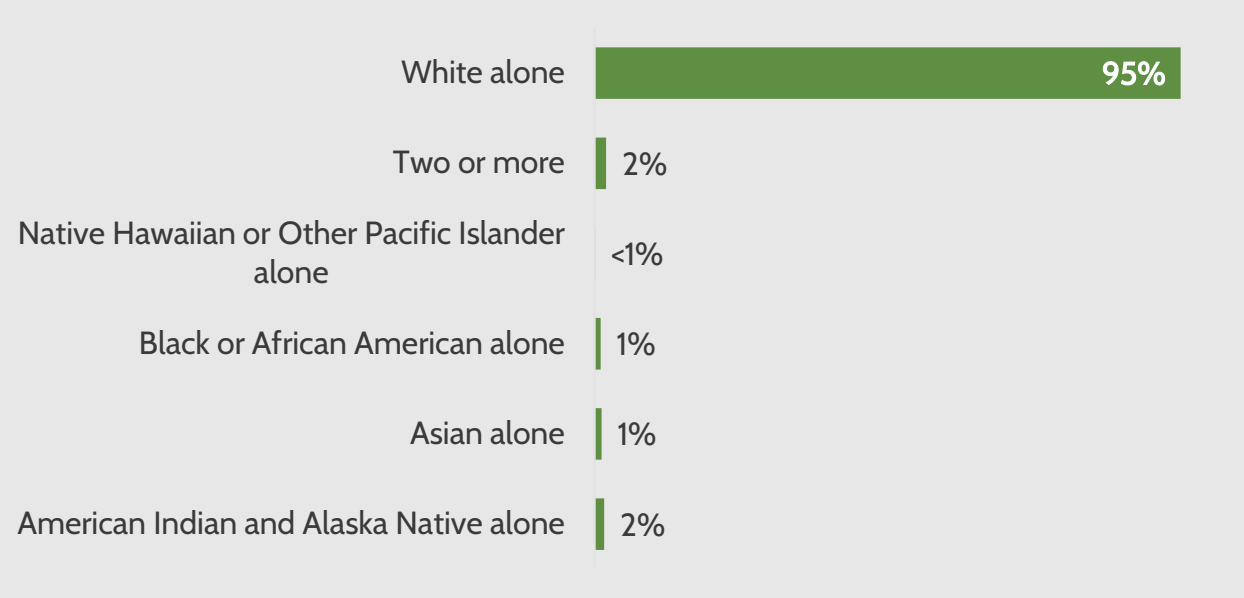


Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office

Race & Ethnicity

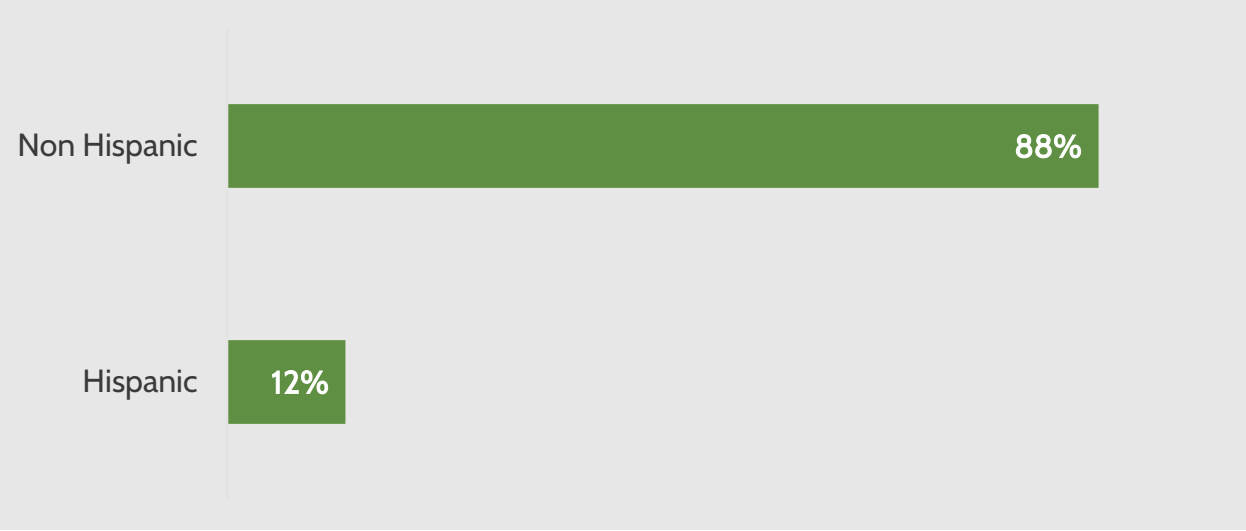
Figure 3 displays the distribution of San Miguel's population by race. **Figure 4** displays San Miguel County's population by ethnicity. The majority of San Miguel County's population identifies as white (95%). The majority of the county's population identifies as non-Hispanic (88%) but still a significant portion of people (12%) identify as Hispanic.

Figure 3: Figure 8: San Miguel County Population by Race



Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office 2020 Population Estimates

Figure 4: San Miguel County Population by Ethnicity

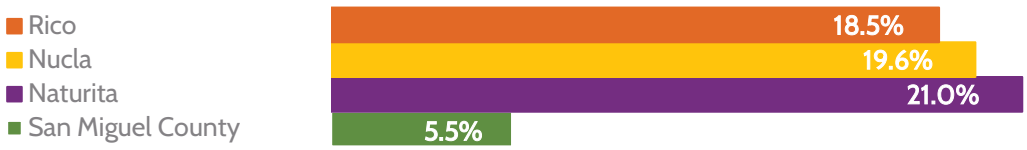


Source: Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office 2020 Population Estimates

People with Disabilities

In 2022 SMART developed a Specialized Transit Roadmap that documents the need for transit services that are designed to serve older adults and people with disabilities. This study found that the communities outside of San Miguel County that SMART currently serves have much higher rates of people with a disability than San Miguel County as a whole. **Figure 5** displays one of the charts from the specialized transit roadmap. This chart shows, of San Miguel County's population 5.5% of people report having a disability. Comparatively, the rates of people with a disability are about 4 times higher in Rico, Nucla, and Naturita than they are in San Miguel County. Many disabilities can affect people's ability to drive and therefore people with disabilities tend to ride transit or rely on friends and family for transportation at higher rates than people without disabilities.

Figure 5: Percentage of Residents with a Disability across SMART's Service Area



Data: US Census Bureau, American Communities Survey 2019 5-year Estimates;
Chart: SMART Specialized Transit Roadmap 2022

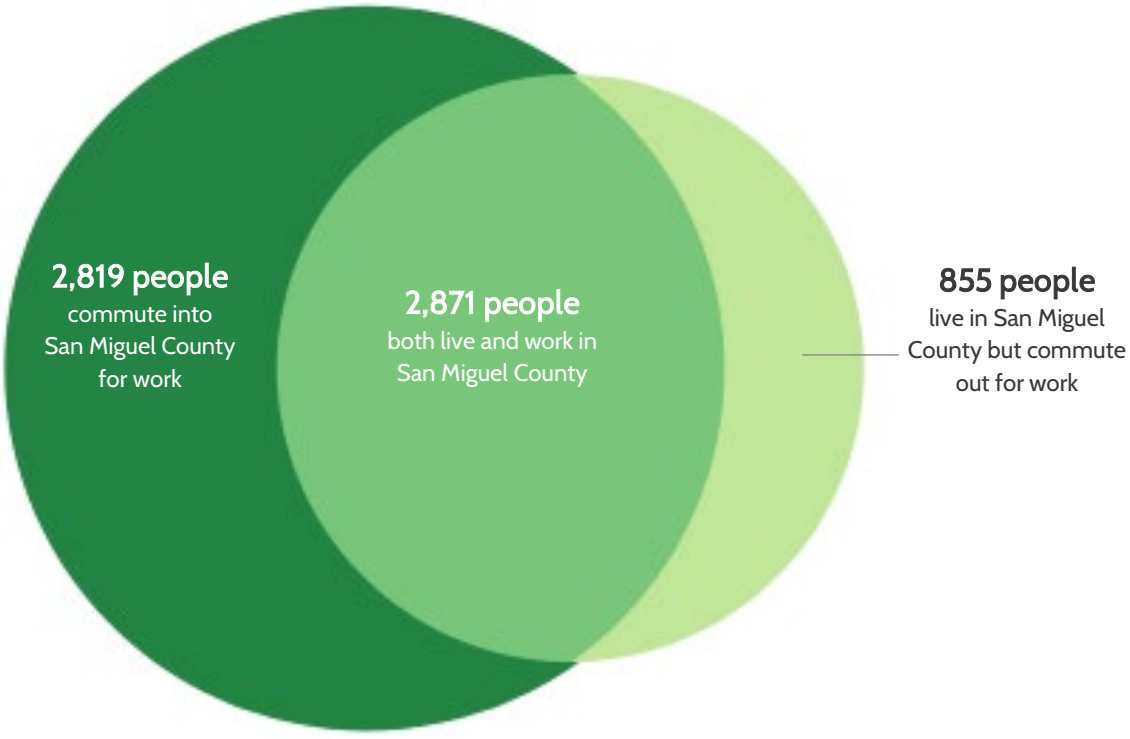
Existing Transportation Trends

Commute Flows

Figure 6 displays the commute trends into and out of San Miguel County for workers who live and/or work in the County. Of people who work in San Miguel County, about 50% live and work in the County and the other 50% commute in from other places. Of employed people who live in San Miguel County, about 23% commute out of the county for work.

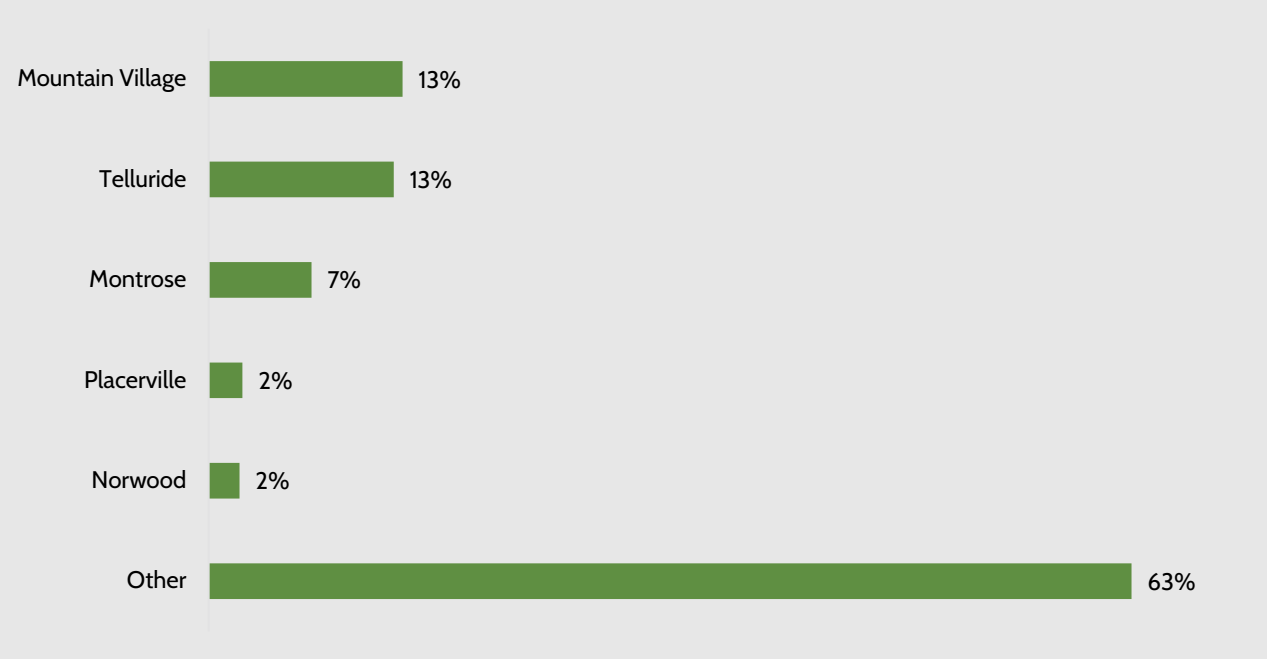
Figure 7 and **Figure 8** display the most common locations where San Miguel County workers live and where San Miguel County residents work, respectively. As the two biggest population centers in the County, Telluride and Mountain Village are at the top for places where workers live. The next most common locations for workers to live are Montrose, Placerville, and Norwood. Similarly, the majority (63%) of San Miguel County residents who are employed work either in Telluride or Mountain Village. The next most common work locations are Norwood (3%), Grand Junction (2%), and Denver (2%). The jobs located in Denver and Grand Junction may be remote or partially remote.

Figure 6: Commute Flows of Workers in and out of San Miguel County



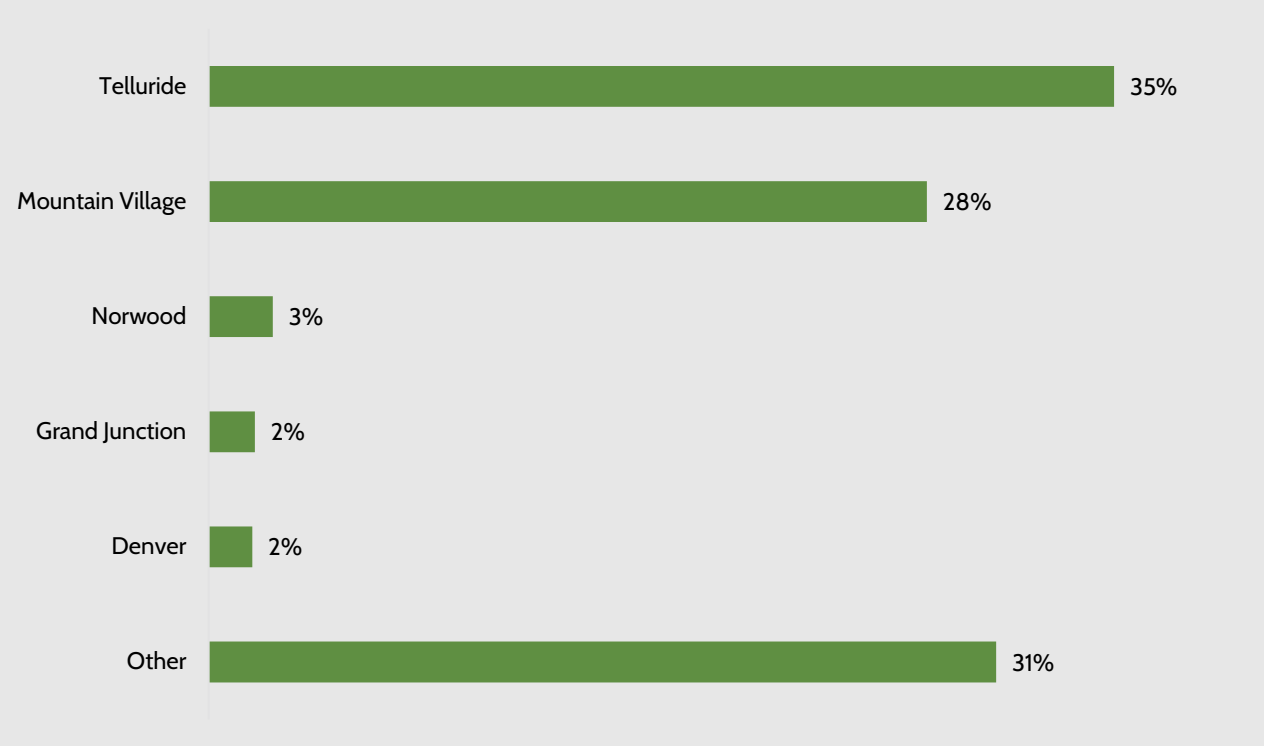
Data: US Census Bureau, 2021 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

Figure 7: Places Where People Who Work in San Miguel County Live



Data: US Census Bureau, 2021 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

Figure 8: Places Where San Miguel County Residents are Employed



Data: US Census Bureau, 2021 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

Mode Share – Commute to Work

SMART analyzed the US Census Bureau's 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) to understand commuting modes for San Miguel County. For all census tracts in San Miguel County but one, driving alone is the most common mode of commuting. The one exception is a census tract that includes Telluride (9681.01), where walking is the most common mode for traveling to work. For most census tracts in San Miguel County, commuting to work on public transportation is small share of mode choice for all commuters. Census Tract 9681.02, which is part of Mountain Village, has the highest percentage of workers commuting via public transit at 14.7%. In all other census tract areas, less than 5% of commuters use public transportation to travel to work.

Access to a Private Vehicle

The share of the population with access to a private vehicle is higher in SMART's service area than Colorado overall. The 2021 American Community Survey 5-year estimates show that San Miguel County and Rico have 3.3% and 2.9% of their population with no access to a vehicle. For comparison, in the State of Colorado 5.1% of the population does not have access to a personal vehicle. However, Naturita and Nucla have a greater share than the state as a whole of their populations at 5.7% and 5.8%, respectively, do not have access to a personal vehicle. The area with the highest percentage of households without access to a private vehicle is in the census tract containing Mountain Village (8.7%). This is likely because public transit is abundant, and destinations are very walkable around Mountain Village which limits the necessity of a private vehicle.

Access to Transit

In census tracts 9681.03 and 9682, both on the West End of San Miguel County, less than 40% of developed parcels are within a quarter mile of a bus stop or gondola terminal. In census tract 9681.02, 78.3% of developed parcels are within a quarter mile of a bus stop or gondola terminal. Additionally, 8.7% of this census tract has no access to a private vehicle. This census tract is where Mountain Village is located, and the low vehicle access could be because people are able to use the gondola and other local transit services and do not need to own a personal vehicle.

Transit Propensity & Transit Need

Transit Propensity Analysis

SMART conducted a transit propensity analysis to predict the likelihood that people will utilize public transit services if they are available in different areas not currently served by transit. Factors used to determine transit propensity include population density, travel time to work, location of jobs in the region, household income, number of cars per household, and prevalence of disabilities.

Based on the transit propensity analysis, Pioneer Village and Hillside of Norwood are both locations with high transit propensity and are not currently served directly by existing transit. However, while

these locations have high transit propensity, they both pose challenges to service. Creating a safe stopping area for a bus in Pioneer Village may be difficult due to its location adjacent to Highway 145. Adding a bus stop in Hillside of Norwood would require a mile-and-a-half detour off of Highway 145. Both the high transit propensity and the obstacles to serving these areas were considered in the development of this Strategic Operating Plan.

Known Transit Needs Based on Transit Dependent Demographics

In 2022 SMART developed the Specialized Transit Roadmap, to identify the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities in SMART's service area. This section summarized the high-level findings from the existing conditions and public input analyzed for the roadmap. The West End communities, Naturita, Nucla, and Rico all have at least 20% of their population in the age range of 65 years and over. In San Miguel County there are 14% of those aged 65 years and over. Seniors living in the West End communities are likely in greater need of transit routes to connect them to services, especially because of the disparity of those living with a disability.

Naturita, Nucla, and Rico have a larger share of the overall population living with a disability and seniors living with a disability compared to San Miguel County. This impacts the need for greater transportation choices for those needing assistance to access appointments, shopping, recreation, and other services. These communities also have a larger share of families living in poverty and households that make twenty to thirty thousand dollars less than the state median income.

From the data analyzed and the input from stakeholders in the SMART Senior and Disabled Transit Service Roadmap, a few key transportation needs rose to the top as most pressing for older adults and people with disabilities in the study area:

- Need for more service to the West End (Nucla, Naturita, Norwood)
- Desire for expansion of Tri-County health medical shuttle
- Growing numbers of people needing supportive services
- Lack of awareness about existing transit options

For a more detailed report on transportation needs, please see the SMART Senior and Disabled Transit Service Roadmap: Existing Conditions Assessment.

Existing Transit Operations

This section describes the existing transportation services that SMART currently operates as well as other transportation providers that operate in the region.

Fixed-Route Bus Service

Table 4 displays summary information for each of the five bus routes SMART currently operates. In addition to these existing routes SMART will begin a new bus route between Telluride and Montrose.

Table 4: Summary of SMART's Fixed-Route Bus Service

		Weekday			Weekend		
Route	**Extents**	**Span of Service**	**Frequency**	**Round Trips per Day**	**Span of Service**	**Frequency**	**Round Trips per Day**
Nucla/ Naturita	Nucla – Telluride	6:45 AM – 6:45 PM	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	0
Norwood	Norwood – Telluride	6:55 AM – 12:45 AM	2 EB per AM, 3 WB per PM	2.5	7:25 AM – 6:05 PM	24h	1
Down Valley	Placerville – Telluride	7:05 AM – 7:10 PM	EB: 2 AM, 1 MD, 1 PM; WB: 1 AM, 1 MD, 2 PM	4	N/A	N/A	0
Lawson Hill	Upper Lawson Hill – Telluride	6:25 AM – 10:40 PM	45m	18	6:25 AM – 10:40 PM	45m	18
Mountain Village	Upper Lawson Hill – Centrum Building	7:35 AM – 9:35 AM, 4:40 PM - 6:40 PM	40m	6	N/A	N/A	0
Off-season Route (Gondola Replacement)	Upper Lawson Hill – Telluride – Mountain Village	5:55 AM – 11:53 PM	45m	24	6:05 AM – 11:53 PM	90m	12
Off-Season Express	Telluride – Mountain Village	6:15AM - 7:10PM	55m	14	N/A	N/A	0
Rico	Rico - Telluride	7:00 AM – 6:10 PM	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	0

Vanpools

In addition to fixed-route bus services, SMART also facilitates a van pool program for commuters. Vanpools are available between Montrose and Telluride, Montrose and Mountain Village, Norwood and Mountain Village, and Ridgeway and Mountain Village. Vans, fuel, maintenance, and insurance are supplied by SMART, driven by a volunteer, and serve three or more individuals from one central location. The current cost to participate is $40 per month. The vanpool program had an average of 48 active subscribers/month in 2023 across the different vanpools.

Other Transportation Services

Telluride and the surrounding region is served by several other public transit agencies in addition to SMART and some private transportation companies. Below is a list of the public transportation providers.

All Points Transit

All Points Transit is a transit provider based out of Montrose. In SMART's service area All Points provides a medical shuttle to regional medical centers and also operates a dial-a-ride system in Norwood, Nucla, and Naturita. SMART contributes annually to both of these All Points Transit services.

Local Transit

The town of Mountain Village operates the gondola between Mountain Village and Telluride and the Chondola between Mountain Village and the Meadows in the winter season, and these services are both replaced by a SMART bus service in the off-season. Additionally, Mountain Village offers a shuttle between the Meadows Area and the Village Center, and the Telluride Mountain Village Owners Association operates a dial-a-ride service.

The Town operates a fixed-route circulator bus service in the Town of Telluride called the Galloping Goose.

Bustang Outrider

The Bustang Outrider is an Interregional Express Bus Service that is administered by the Colorado Department of Transportation and operated by the Southern Colorado Community Action Agency (SoCoCaa). It operates two routes through the SMART's service area:

The Durango – Grand Junction route stops at Rico, Telluride and Placerville within SMART's service area. It operates one round trip daily, going from Durango to Grand Junction in the morning and returning to Durango in the afternoon. **The Telluride – Grand Junction route** stops in Telluride and Placerville within SMART's service area. This route makes one round trip on weekdays leaving Telluride in the morning and returning in the evening.

Ridership of All Services Overtime

Table 5 displays ridership over time for the three types of services SMART provides as defined by the National Transit Database. Ridership decreased by more than 50% in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but has recovered to similar levels than were seen in 2019. Ridership over recent years shows that the vanpool service has grown in popularity since SMART took over operations of the vanpools implementation in 2020.

Table 5: Summary of SMART's Ridership by Service Type

Mode	Annual Unlinked Passenger Trips				
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Commuter Bus (Norwood/Nucla/Naturita, Down Valley, Rico, Mountain Village)	45,579	20,051	24,684	31,395	35,093
Bus (Lawson Hill)	32,557	16,848	24,687	30,448	42,873
Vanpool	N/A	2,620	2,792	6,837	7,664

Source: National Transit Database 2022 TS2.1 and SMART 2023 Ridership Logs

Table 6 shows the monthly ridership for each of SMART's fixed-route bus services. Norwood & Lawson Hill are the two highest ridership routes accounting for 46% and 39% of all ridership for SMART's regular season routes. Lawson Hill and Mountain Village routes do not operate in the off-season and are instead replaced by the Off-season route which operated when the Gondola is shut down for maintenance in the spring and fall. Most routes experience the highest ridership during peak ski season (December – March) with the exception of the Rico routes whose highest ridership months are September – November.

The relatively low ridership of the Down Valley route paired with its overlap with both the Norwood Route and Lawson Hill indicate it could be beneficial to consolidate into a single route that serves Norwood and Down Valley and increase service on both the Norwood/Down Valley Route and the Lawson Hill Route. Similarly, there could be efficiencies found in rethinking the Lawson Hill, Mountain Village, and off-season routes and study if there is a more efficient way to provide these routes at a higher level of service.

Public input from the survey indicated that many riders of the Rico Route are students or staff heading to schools in Telluride. The summer drop in ridership for this route may be due to this high school-oriented ridership and it may be beneficial to look at adjustments to the route's schedule that accommodate these school type trips.

Table 6: Summary of SMART's Ridership by Month

Route	2023 Ridership by Month												Annual Total
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
Norwood (Including Nucla/Naturita)	3,167	2,820	3,224	1,602	2,064	1,876	1,826	2,213	2,134	2,240	1,816	2,248	**27,230**
Down Valley	723	763	737	298	488	535	421	530	411	366	306	445	**6,023**
Lawson Hill	2,896	2,720	2,716	131	468	2,479	1,955	1,992	2,490	1,587	814	2,805	**23,053**
Mountain Village	208	180	198	1	11	166	132	170	74	152	59	272	**1,623**
Rico	3,167	2,820	3,224	1,602	2,064	1,876	1,826	2,213	2,134	2,240	1,816	2,248	**1,840**
Off-Season Route	-	-	-	5,531	6,012	-	-	-	-	2,562	4,062	-	**18,167**
Monthly Total (Excluding off-season route)	**7,127**	**6,613**	**7,026**	**2,032**	**3,031**	**5,082**	**4,351**	**5,052**	**5,365**	**4,345**	**2,995**	**5,922**	**57,929**
Monthly Total (Including off-season route)	**7,127**	**6,613**	**7,026**	**7,651**	**9,185**	**5,082**	**4,351**	**5,052**	**5,365**	**7,224**	**7,338**	**5,922**	**77,936**

Source: SMART 2023 Ridership Logs

Fixed-Route Bus Ridership by Stop

The following tables and charts display the annual boardings by stops for each of SMART's fixed route bus services.

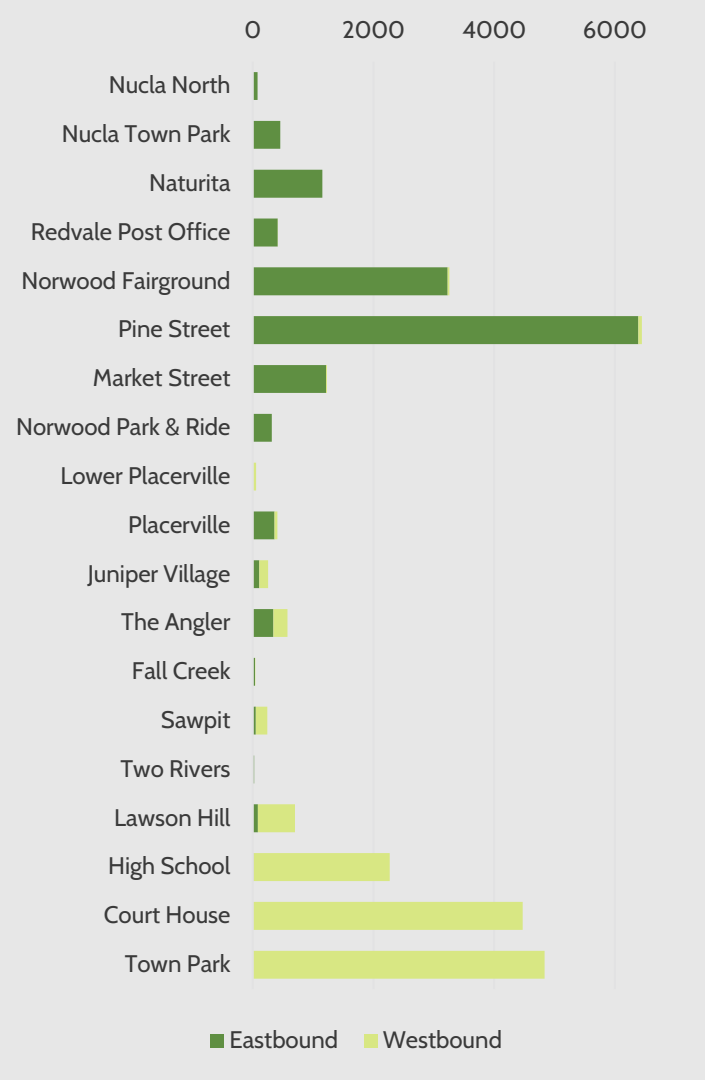
Norwood Route

Table 7: Norwood Route – Annual Boardings by Stop

Figure 9: Norwood Route Annual Boardings by Stop

Norwood Route			
Stop	**Eastbound**	**Westbound**	**Total**
Nucla North	80	0	80
Nucla Town Park	455	0	455
Naturita	1154	0	1154
Redvale Post Office	414	2	416
Norwood Fairground	3228	31	3259
Pine Street	6389	58	6447
Market Street	1214	15	1229
Norwood Park & Ride	316	0	316
Lower Placerville	1	53	57
Placerville	361	47	408
Juniper Village	109	145	254
The Angler	341	235	576
Fall Creek	37	5	42
Sawpit	49	191	240
Two Rivers	24	0	24
Lawson Hill	85	614	699
High School	9	2259	2268
Court House	5	4466	4471
Town Park/Pine St	0	4835	4835

Source: SMART 2023 Ridership Logs



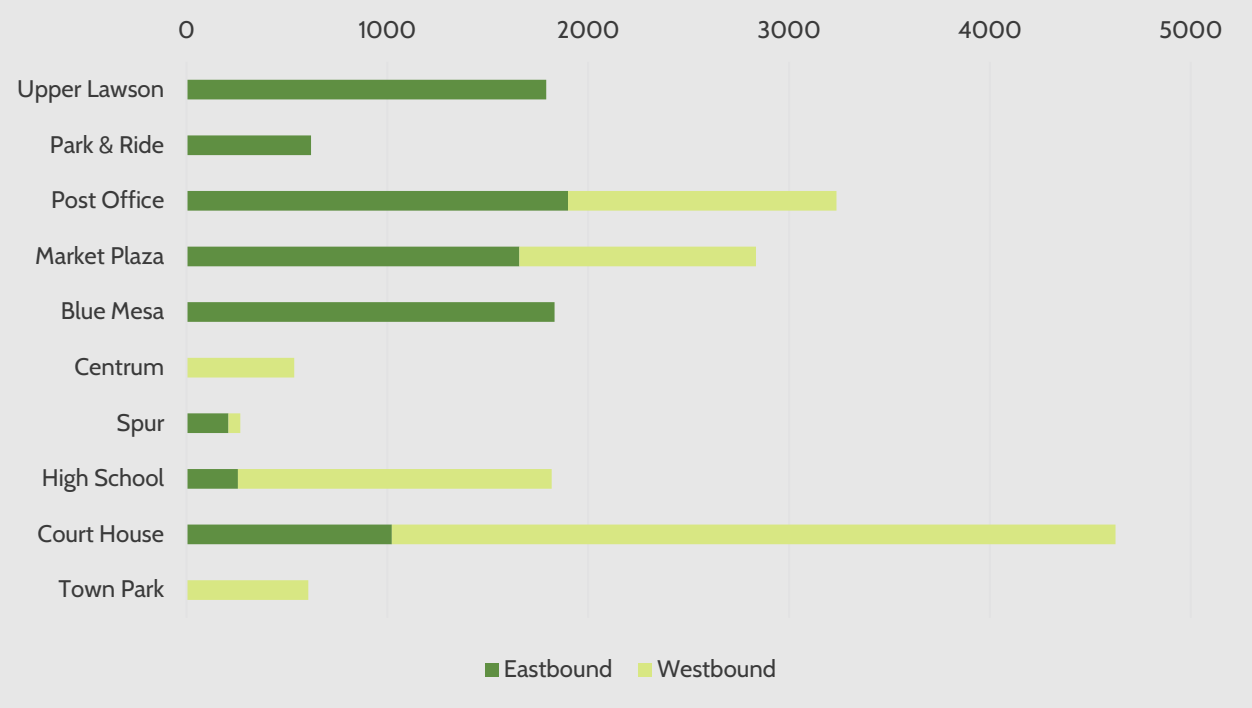
Off-Season Route

Table 8: Off-Season Route - Annual Boardings by Stop

Off-Season Route			
Stop	**Eastbound**	**Westbound**	**Total**
Upper Lawson	1791	0	1791
Park & Ride	620	0	620
Post Office	1899	1337	3236
Market Plaza	1657	1178	2835
Blue Mesa	1832	0	1832
Centrum	0	536	536
Spur	209	59	268
High School	256	1562	1818
Court House	1022	3603	4625
Town Park	0	606	606

Source: SMART 2023 Ridership Logs

Figure 10: Off-Season Route - Annual Boardings by Stop



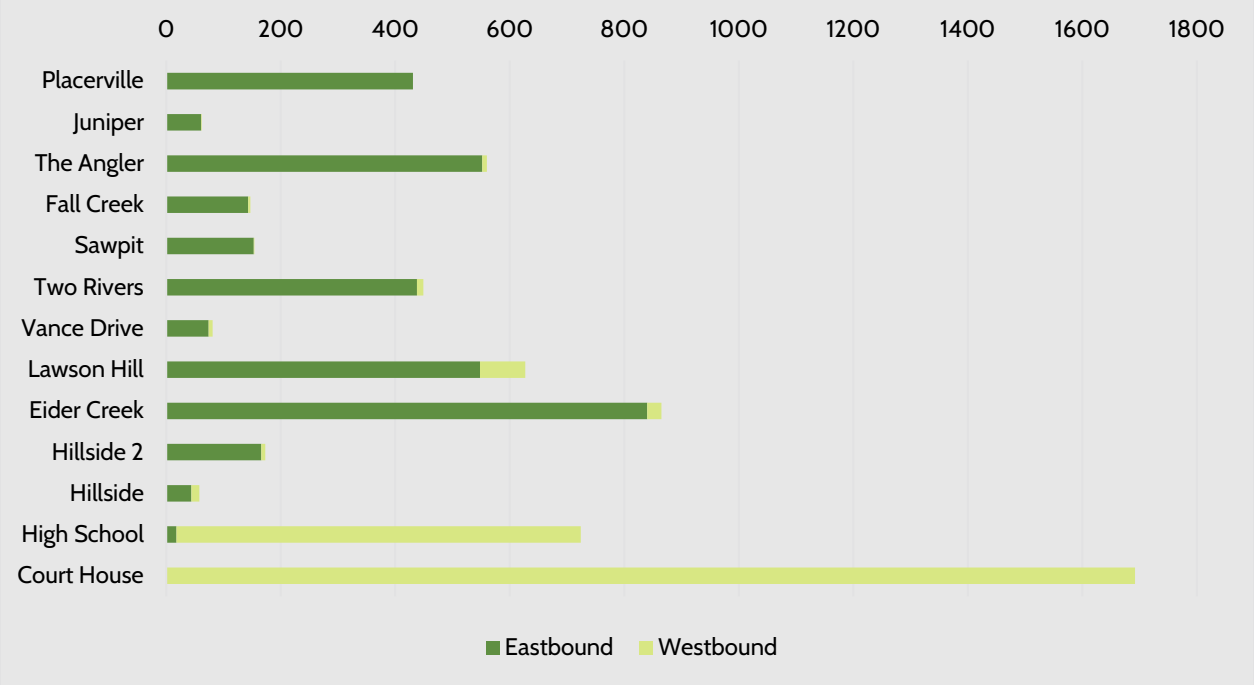
Down Valley Route

Table 9: Down Valley Route - Annual Boardings by Stop

Down Valley Route			
Stop	**Eastbound**	**Westbound**	**Total**
Placerville	431	0	431
Juniper	61	1	62
The Angler	552	8	560
Fall Creek	143	4	147
Sawpit	153	1	154
Two Rivers	438	11	449
Vance Drive	74	7	81
Lawson Hill	548	79	627
Eider Creek	840	25	865
Hillside 2	166	7	173
Hillside	44	14	58
High School	18	706	724
Court House	0	1692	1692

Source: SMART 2023 Ridership Logs

Figure 11: Down Valley Route - Annual Boardings by Stop



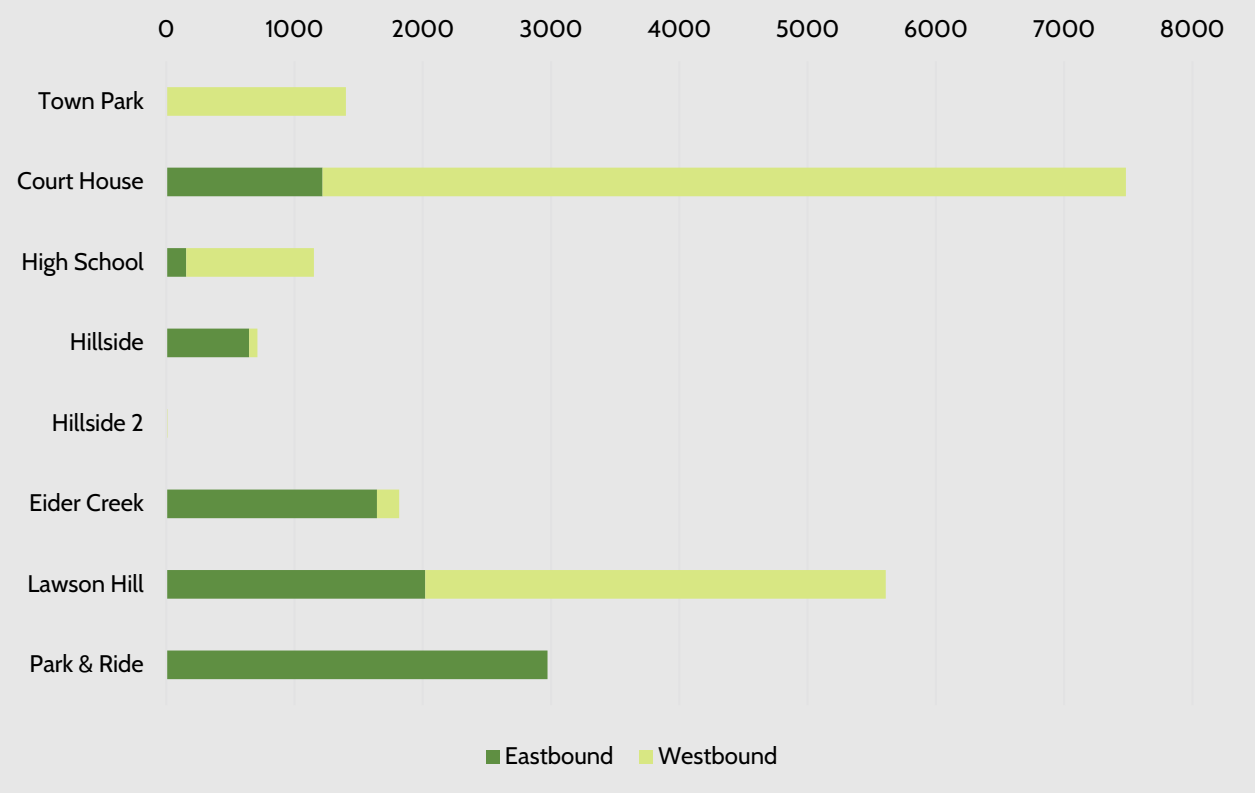
Lawson Hill Route

Table 10: Lawson Hill Route -Annual Boardings by Stop

Lawson Hill Route			
Stop	**Eastbound**	**Westbound**	**Total**
Town Park	0	1401	1401
Court House	1219	6263	7482
High School	312	2639	2951
Hillside	646	65	711
Hillside 2	N/A	10	10
Eider Creek	1643	173	1807
Lawson Hill	2019	3591	5610
Park & Ride	3081	0	3081

Source: SMART 2023 Ridership Logs

Figure 12: Lawson Hill Route – Annual Boardings by Stop



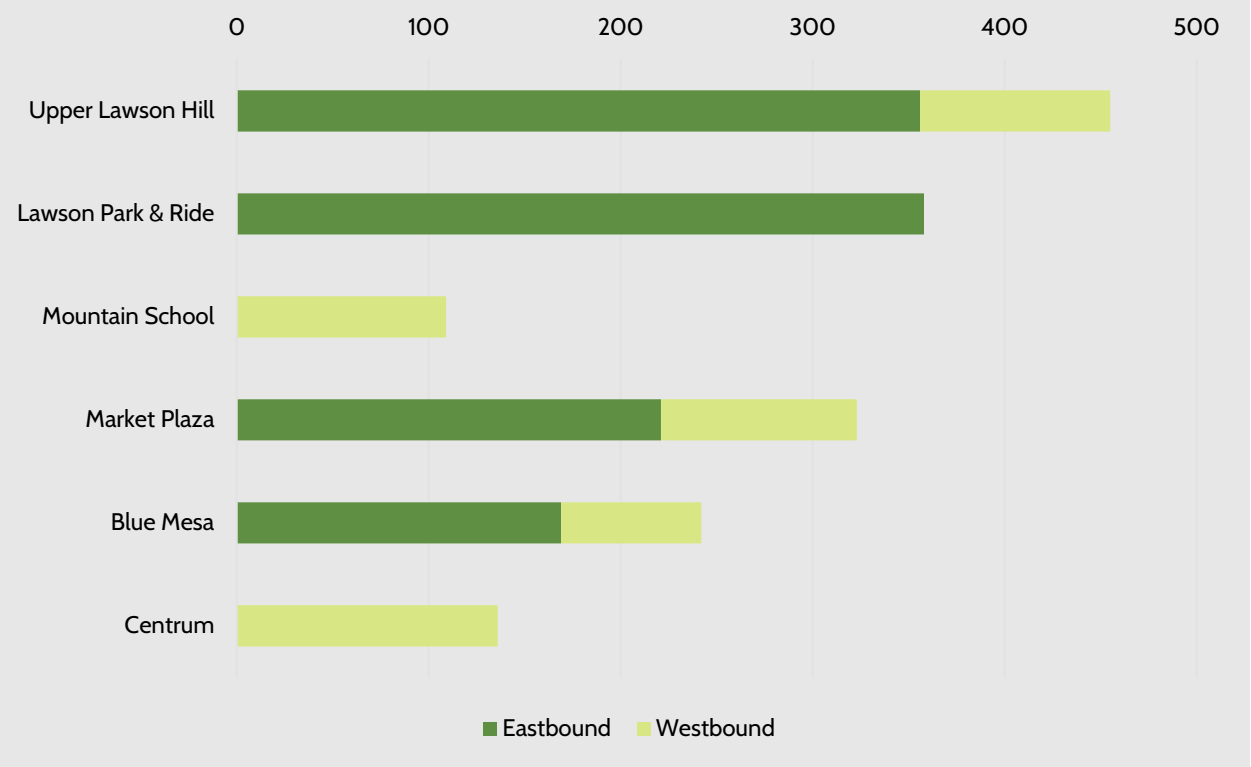
Mountain Village Route

Table 11: Mountain Village Route – Annual Boardings by Stop

Mountain Village Route			
Stop	**Eastbound**	**Westbound**	**Total**
Upper Lawson Hill	356	99	455
Lawson Park & Ride	358	0	358
Mountain School	0	109	109
Market Plaza	221	102	323
Blue Mesa	169	73	242
Centrum	0	136	136

Source: SMART 2023 Ridership Logs

Figure 13: Mountain Village Route - Annual Boardings by Stop



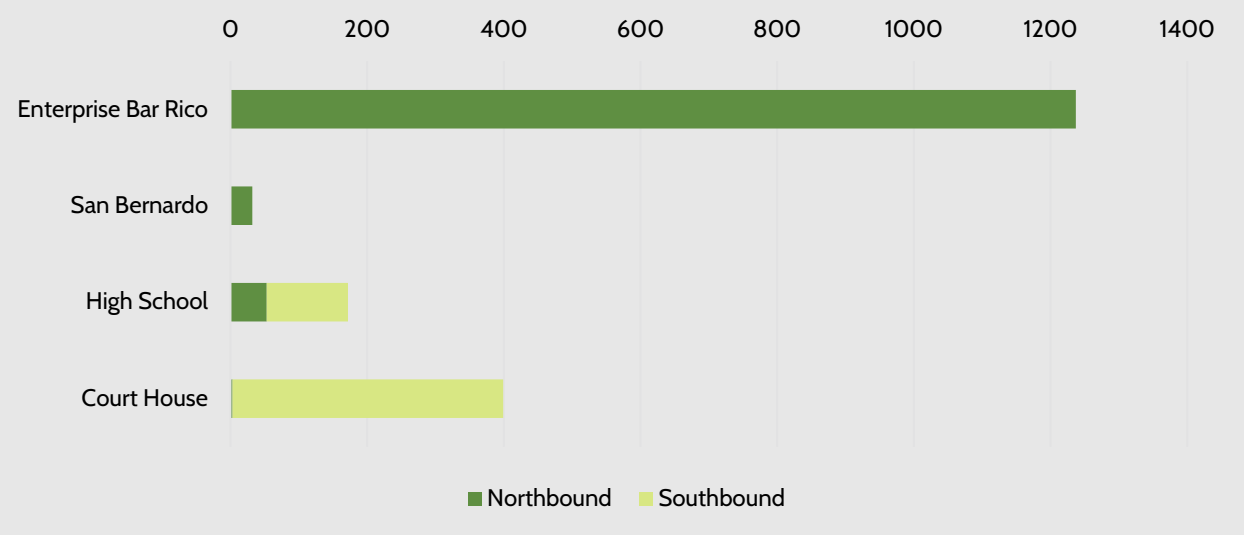
Rico Route

Table 12: Rico Route - Annual Boardings by Stop

Rico Route			
Stop	**Northbound**	**Southbound**	**Total**
Enterprise Bar Rico	1237	0	1237
San Bernardo	32	0	32
High School	53	119	172
Court House	3	396	399

Source: SMART 2023 Ridership Logs

Figure 14: Rico Route - Annual Boardings by Stop



Ridership by Time of Day

Table 13 displays the number of boardings for each route by time of day and direction of route. Unsurprisingly, morning riders tend to be eastbound towards Telluride, while most evening riders tend to be westbound on all routes except for Lawson Hill. Lawson Hill's highest ridership period is between 2:25PM – 8:25 PM due both to students taking the bus home after school and because there are more trips in this period than the other time periods.. Currently the Mountain Village Route operates in a way that caters to commute trips, and the ridership is low compared to the other SMART routes. Although lower ridership is common on newer routes like Mountain Village accommodating non-commute trips by adding midday service on this route may have benefits to ridership based on patterns seen on the Lawson Hill route. On Norwood and Down Valley routes, the midday busses showed heavier eastbound traffic, while the Lawson Hill midday ridership was more balanced with slightly heavier westbound traffic.

Table 13: SMART's Ridership by Time of Day

Annual Ridership by Time of Day					
Route	Time Period		Eastbound	Westbound	Total
Norwood	6:55 AM	8:30 AM	10587	N/A	10587
	9:45 AM	12:15 PM	1956	255	2211
	5:00 AM	6:45 AM	N/A	9905	9905
	11:30 AM	12:45 PM	N/A	1074	1074
	7:30 AM	8:30 AM	1728	N/A	1728
	5:05 PM	6:10 PM	N/A	1725	1725
Off-Season	6:05 AM	11:51 AM	3444	4256	5900
	12:10 PM	5:56 PM	4433	4447	8880
	6:15 PM	12:01 AM	1409	1978	3387
Down Valley	7:05 AM	9:10 AM	2498	244	2742
	11:30 AM	1:00 PM	816	237	1053
	5:10 PM	7:10 PM	154	2074	2228
Lawson Hill	6:25 AM	11:20 AM	2004	5440	7444
	2:25 PM	8:25 PM	5984	6905	12889
	8:25 PM	10:40 PM	923	1797	2720
Mountain Village	7:35 AM	9:35 AM	620	209	829
	4:40 PM	6:40 PM	484	310	794
Rico	7:00 AM	7:45 AM	1325	N/A	1325
	5:15 PM	6:10 PM	N/A	515	515

Source: SMART 2023 Ridership Logs

Route Performance

Table 14 displays the annual ridership, service hours, and service miles for the regular SMART routes. The Norwood and Lawson Hill routes have by far the highest ridership and the Down Valley route has considerably higher service milage compared to its ridership. The Norwood Route also has the highest number of service miles because of the length of the route. Lawson Hill has the most annual vehicle hours even though it is one of the shorter routes due to its frequent schedule in comparison to the other routes in the system.

Table 14: Ridership, Vehicle Hours, and Vehicle Miles

	Ridership		Vehicle Service Hours		Vehicle Service Miles	
Routes	Total 2023 Ridership	% of total system	Total 2023 Hours	% of total system	Total 2023 Miles	% of total system
Norwood	27,230	34.94%	2,642	21.94%	84,296	33.57%
Down Valley	6,023	7.73%	1,423	11.81%	40,040	15.95%
Lawson Hill	23,053	29.58%	3,701	30.74%	47,212	18.80%
Mountain Village	1,623	2.08%	798	6.63%	11,693	4.66%
Off-Season	18,167	23.31%	3,041	25.25%	53,495	21.31%
Rico	1,840	2.36%	436	3.62%	14,352	5.72%
System Total	**77,936**	**100%**	**12,041**	**100%**	**251,088**	**100%**

Source: SMART 2023 Ridership Logs and 2023 Annual Report

Table 15 displays the comparative productivity metrics of each of the regular SMART routes. The average cost per passenger trip (vanpools excluded) is nearly $25 and the average cost per mile (vanpools excluded) is nearly $5. Mountain Village has a high cost per passenger trip based on 2023 data at almost $50 per passenger trip due to its lower ridership compared with the other services in the system. Lower ridership is common for new routes like Mountain Village, but there may be improvements that can be made to the route's schedule or in combination with other routes to increase ridership for this route.

Table 15: Summary of SMART's Route Productivity

Route Productivity				
Routes	Passenger trips per hour	Passenger trips per mile	Cost per passenger trip	Cost per mile
Norwood	10.3	0.32	$10	$3
Down Valley	4.2	0.15	$24	$4
Lawson Hill	6.2	0.49	$15	$7
Mountain Village	2.0	0.14	$48	$7
Off-Season	6.0	0.34	$15	$5
Rico	4.2	0.13	$26	$3
System Average	**5.5**	**0.26**	**$23**	**$5**

Source: SMART 2023 Ridership Logs and 2023 Annual Report

Operational Analysis of Vanpool Service

For 2023, based on available data and estimates, the SMART vanpool services operated with:

- 7,664 one-way rides
- 3,234 hours
- 2,691 miles
- $47,529 in direct costs

Based on these 2023 data and using the 2023 reported ridership, the system performance metrics are calculated as:

- Passengers per hour = 42.4
- Cost per passenger trip = $6.20
- Cost per mile = $17.66

Source: SMART 2023 Ridership Logs and 2023 Annual Report

Progress Since Previous Strategic Operating Plan

Table 16 displays the service recommendations from the previous strategic operating plan and their status as of March 2024. Seven of the ten recommendations have either been implemented or are currently in progress. The remaining recommendations were carried forward as recommendations in the 2024 Strategic Operating Plan.

Table 16: Status of Recommendations from Previous Strategic Operating Plan

ID	Route	Project	Status
1	Rico Route	Add a new bus stop at Ophir Road on the southern route (now Rico route).	Incomplete – Carried forward as a long-term recommendation as the area develops.
2	Down Valley Route	Add a new stop at Ilium/Two Rivers.	**Complete**
3	Norwood Route	Extend route to Naturita (one bus in phase 1, two buses in phase 2)	**Partially Complete -** Only one bus extends on the Norwood Route to Nucla/Naturita.
4	Norwood Route	Additional weekday, midday trip.	**Complete**
5	Montrose Vanpool	Add an additional van.	**Complete**
6	Montrose Fixed-route Bus	A new fixed route bus between Montrose and Telluride with a stop in Ridgeway.	**Complete** - Montrose to Telluride bus service started in February 2025.
7	Lawson Hill Route	Expand Lawson Hill service to be year round.	**Complete**
8	Mountain Village Route	New year round service between Lawson Hill intercept lot and the Town of Mountain Village.	**Complete -** New Mountain village bus route began service in 2022.
9	Lawson Hill	Fill-in midday service gap to provide 30-minute frequencies all day.	Incomplete – Carried forward into this plan.
10	Off-Season Route	Eliminate Off-season II (Express) route and replace it with the new Lawson Hill tripper route (now the Mountain Village route).	**Partially Complete -** Express off-season route still operating but the new Mountain Village route has also begun operations.

Public Input

As part of this update to the Strategic Operating Plan, San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation conducted an initial phase of public outreach to understand how community members use SMART's services today, what challenges they encounter, and what improvements they would like to see made to SMART's services in the future. For this initial phase of outreach, a survey was available online between December 18, 2023, and February 3, 2024. It was advertised to community members via the SMART websites, local email lists, local radio station, and a demonstration in the local library. A total of 193 responses were collected online. Select questions were also available for community input via a physical board located in the Wilkinson Public Library during the period the online survey was open.

In addition to the initial survey, the project team also held public open houses in the spring of 2024 to solicit feedback on potential service improvements. The results from these public open houses helped the project team refine and prioritize their recommendations. The sentiment from these public open houses is captured in the Operating Improvements Evaluation section of this report.

The following section includes the results of a few key questions asked in the survey. The details of the survey results can be found in Appendix A - Public Survey Results.

Figure 15: When you ride the bus, where do you typically go?

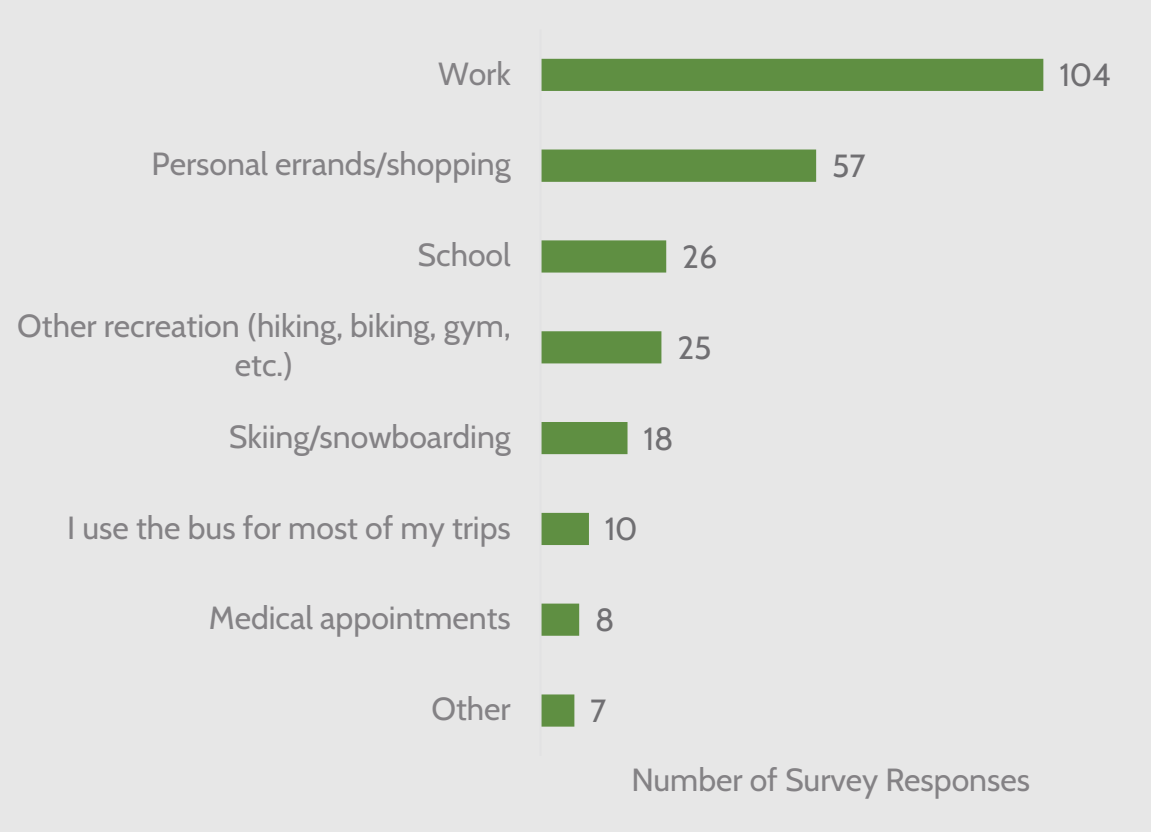


Figure 16: What are the barriers that stop you from riding the bus more or riding the bus at all?

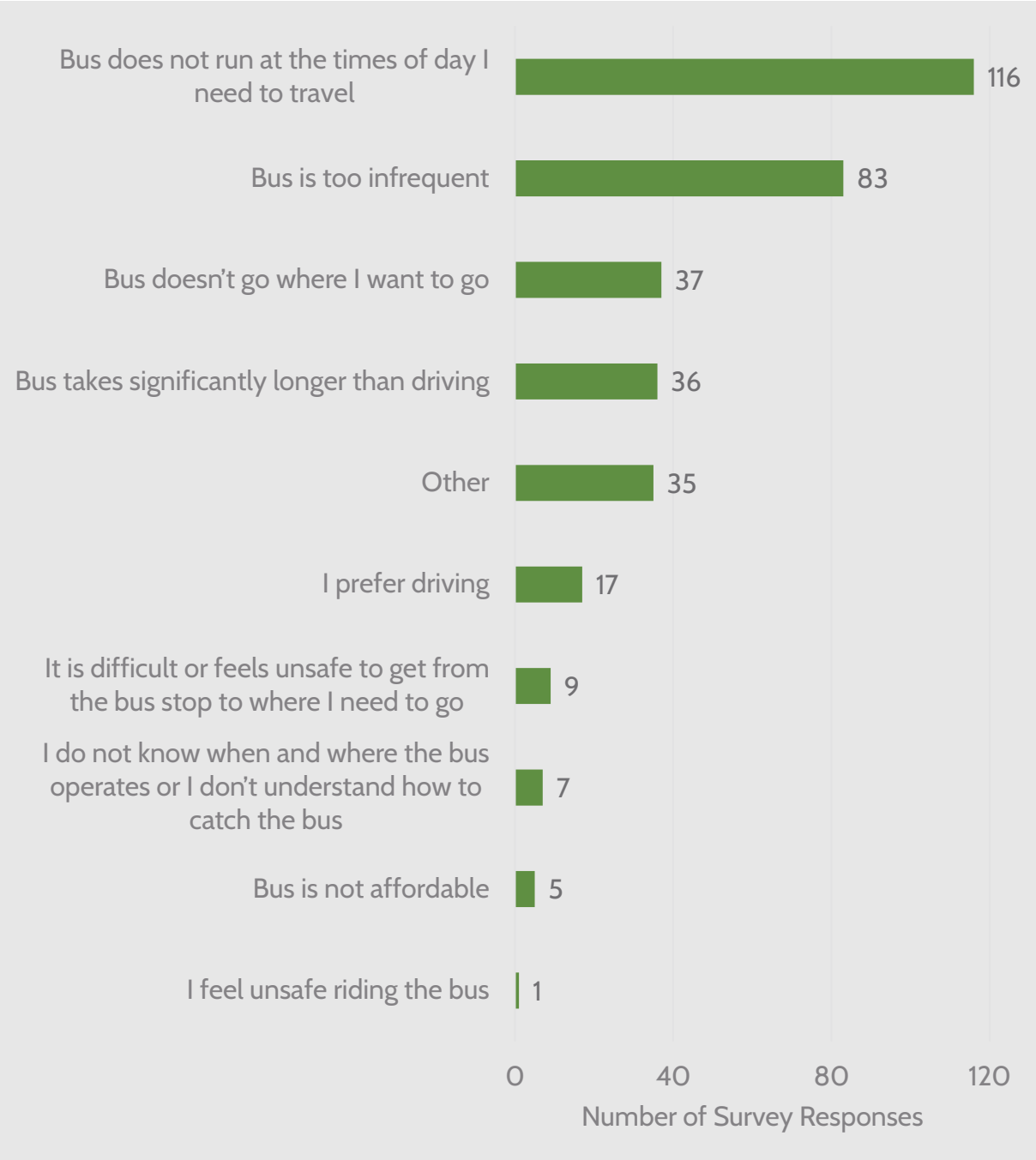


Figure 17: Rank your priorities for potential improvements to SMART's existing bus routes.

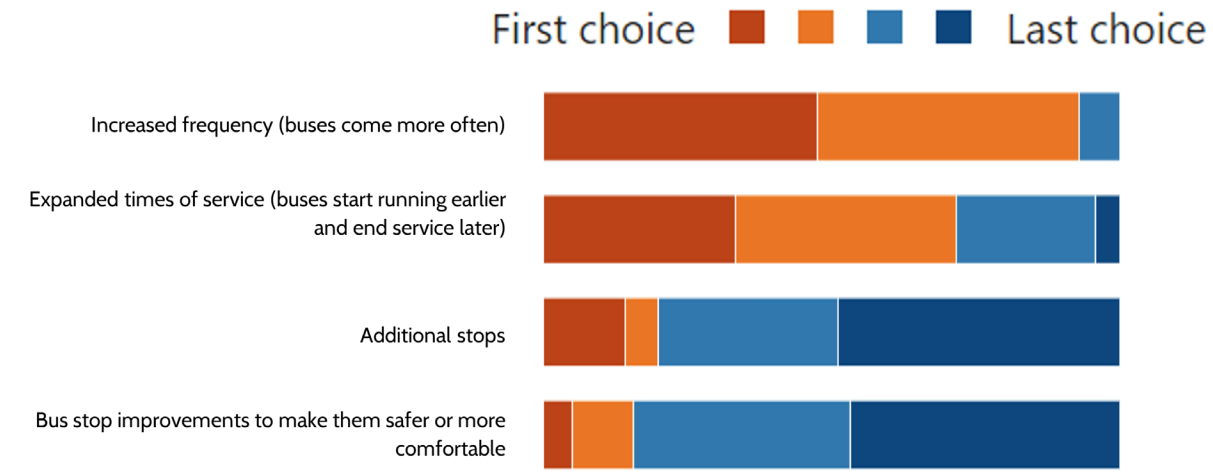
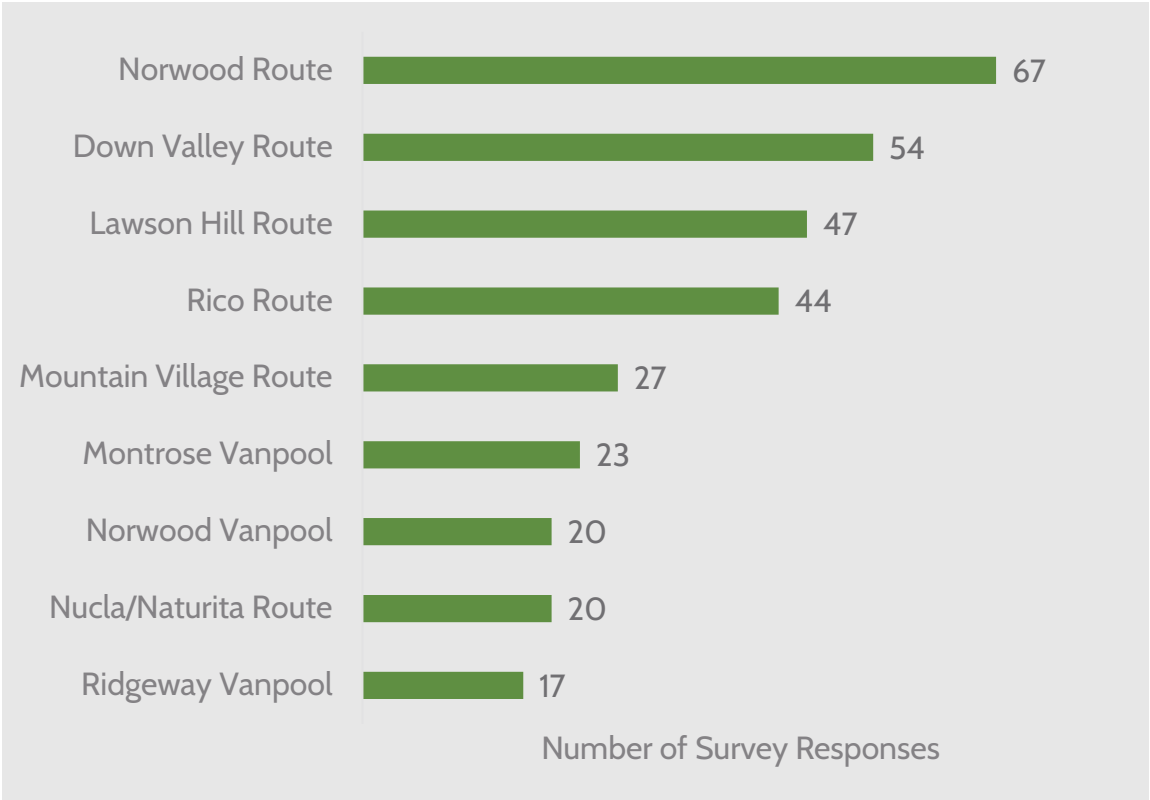


Figure 18: Which routes are your top priority for greater frequency of service?



Fare Structure Evaluation

This section provides an analysis of SMART's current fare structure and level of subsidies for each service, summary of fare structures of peer agencies, and the benefits and drawbacks of different alternatives for structuring SMART's fares in the future. **Table 17** displays SMART's current fares by route and how these fares compare to operating costs, revenue, and mileage. **Table 18** displays the fares of peer agencies across the state of Colorado and a summary of hoe these fares compare to mileage and whether or not the service is within the agency's funding district.

Table 17: SMART's Current Fares by Route

Route	One-Way Length of Route (miles)	Fare (per one-way trip unless otherwise noted)	2023 Revenue from Route	2023 Operating Cost of Route	Net Farebox Recovery	% Farebox Recovery	Fare/10 Miles (Average one-way Trip Distance)
Norwood Route	34 miles	$2	$26,681	$215,857	$ 25,276	12%	$0.60
Nucla/Naturita/Redvale	57 miles	$3	$18,759	$106,537	$ 18,024	17%	$0.52
Down Valley Route	16 miles	$1	$3,175	$166,348	$ 2,023	1%	$0.64
Rico Route	28 miles	$3	$4,074	$52,991	$ 3,721	7%	$1.09
Lawson Hill Route	5 miles	Fare Free	$0	$399,658	$ 0	0%	$0
Mountain Village Route	8 miles	Fare Free	$0	$88,587	$ 0	0%	$0
Off-Season Route	25 miles (complete loop)	Fare Free	$0	$306,229	$ 0	0%	$0
Off-Season Express Route	8 miles	Fare Free	$0		$ 0	0%	$0

Table 18: Peer Agency Fare Structures

Agency	Overall Approach to Fare Structure	Service Type	Inside or Outside of Funding District	Range of Trip Lengths (One-way)	Fare	Fare/10 Miles (Average one-way Trip Distance)
Eagle Valley Regional Transportation Authority (ECO Transit)	Fare free service within RTA Outside of RTA riders pay a fare per ride or through purchase of 24-hr or 30-day unlimited passes Discounts available for youth, seniors, military members, and through bulk purchase from employers	Regular Routes	Inside	15-30 miles	Free	$ 0
		Regular Routes (Gypsum Stops Only)	Outside (10-mile extension of an in-district route)	40 miles	$3/trip $6 for 24-hr unlimited pass $63 for 30-day unlimited pass	$ 0.75
		Premium Route (Leadville Stops Only)	Outside	40 miles	$7/trip $14 for 24-hr unlimited pass $200 for 30-day unlimited pass	$ 1.75
Roaring Fork Transportation Authority	Zone based fares where local trips within one zone (on both regional and local services) are free	Local	Inside (with additional local subsidy)	1-10 miles	Free	$ 0
		Regional	Inside	25-45 miles	Ranging from free (within zone) to $8 (extend of two regional routes combined)	$ 1.78

Agency	Overall Approach to Fare Structure	Service Type	Inside or Outside of Funding District	Range of Trip Lengths (One-way)	Fare	Fare/10 Miles (Average one-way Trip Distance)
Gunnison Valley Transportation Authority	Free	Regional	Inside	30 miles	Free	$ 0
Summit Stage	Free Transit Service on All Routes	Local (within Summit County)	Inside	4-20 miles	Free	$ 0
		Regional (connections to Lake County & Park County)	Terminate outside with some stops inside.	20-35 miles	Free (Fares used to be collected on commuter routes outside of Summit County but this was suspended in 2020, and fare free regional service continues today)	$ 0
Steamboat Springs Transit	Free local bus service and zone based fares for the regional route	Local	Inside	1-5 miles	Free	$ 0
		Regional	Outside	45 miles	Ranging from $1 - $6 based on length of trip	$ 1.33

Fixed Route Bus Fare Structure Alternatives

The following section details different alternatives for fare structure that were considered and the likely benefits and drawbacks of each alternative based on a set of evaluation criteria.

Evaluation Criteria

What are the considerations for each of these topics (most agencies lead decisions with one of these criteria):

- Equitable for taxpayers in district
- Equitable for low-income populations with the fewest transportation options and who experience the greatest cost burden from transportation
- Maximize farebox recovery
- Potential to increase ridership
- Transparency to the public

Fare Free Bus Service within District

This alternative includes making the Rico Route and Down Valley Route Fare Free and retaining fares on the Norwood/Nucla/Naturita Route, the new Montrose/Ridgeway Route.

Benefits

- Improve experience for riders on regional routes within the district.
- Potential increase to ridership on Down Valley and Rico routes, especially if fare free service is combined with increases in frequency.
- Benefits riders traveling within the district by eliminating fares.

Costs/Drawbacks

- Loss of revenue from Down Valley and Rico routes ($5,744 in 2023).
- Retain administration and financial costs for fare collection and tracking on out of district routes.
- Does not provide benefits to riders traveling outside of the district, where a significant portion of the workforce lives, particularly low- to middle-income workers commuting into the district daily.

Fare Free for All Fixed-Route Services

In this alternative, all fixed-route bus services would be free, and fares would only continue to be collected on the vanpool routes.

Benefits

- Improve experience for riders on all reginal bus routes.
- Potential increase in ridership from fare free service, especially if combined with increases in frequency of routes.
- Eliminate the administrative and financial cost of collecting and tracking fares.

Costs/Drawbacks

- Loss of revenue from all existing fixed route services ($49,044).
- Provides full subsidy of transit for communities outside of the district who are not currently paying into the system. SMART could consider service agreements with those communities to offset this subsidy.

Use of Mileage & Peer Agencies to Determine Fares

Currently SMART's fares are about $0.71/10 miles, roughly half the average of the cost of peer agency fares ($1.40/10 miles) on similar routes. SMART could standardize fares by the length of each route and increase fares to be more in line with those of peer agencies across the state.

This methodology, using $1.40/10 miles, would result in the following fare prices for the various destinations on each route that currently has or is planned to have a fare:

- Rico (28 miles): $3.86 (round to $4)
- Down Valley (16 miles): $2.18 (round to $2)
- Norwood (34 miles): $4.70 (round to $5)
- Nucla/Naturita (57 miles): $8.02 (round to $8)
- Montrose (67 miles): $9.38 (round to $9)
- Ridgeway (39 miles): $5.46 (round to $5)
- Vanpools (550 miles/month): $77/month
- (This is the average monthly mileage across all vanpools but could be adapted vanpool to vanpool based on distance traveled.)

Benefits

- Creates a consistent and transparent formula across all service types for fares to be determined.
- A periodic review of peer agency fares could be conducted to establish when raising the rate/10 miles is appropriate.
- Would generate additional revenue for SMART's services assuming current ridership trends continue.
- Provides a case for the need to increase fares on SMART's services.
- Can be combined with fare free service within the district if desired.

Costs/Drawbacks

- Could have negative impacts to ridership, particularly if fare increases are introduced too suddenly.
- Using a fare by distance model put the greatest cost burden on riders traveling the furthest, many of whom are likely to be low- to middle-income workers relying on the bus daily to and from work.

Standard Rate of Subsidy to Determine Fares

In this alternative all routes would receive standard rates of subsidy based on the type of route and whether they are within SMART's district. Fares would be determined by the amount needed to cover the unsubsidized portion of the route's expenses. Below is one an example of how this model of fare structure could look:

Table 19: Example of Structuring Fares Based on Subsidy Level

Fare Subsidy Calcs	% Subsidy	$ Amount Subsidized	$ Amount Covered by Fares	Annual Ridership (Vanpools show average monthly subscribers)	Fare	Rounded
Norwood Route	80%	$172,685.60	$43,171.40	22294	$1.94	$2/ride
Nucla/Naturita/Redvale	80%	$85,229.60	$21,307.40	4210	$5.06	$5/ride
Down Valley Route	95%	$158,030.60	$8,317.40	8065	$1.03	$1/ride
Rico Route	95%	$50,341.45	$2,649.55	1840	$1.44	$1/ride
Vanpools	80%	$38,023.52	$9,505.88	48	$16.50	$17/month

Note: This example assumes:

- *Currently free routes remain free (100% subsidized)*
- *Nucla/Naturita/Redvale Ridership was estimated by doubling the number of boardings that occur in this fare zone on the Norwood route.*
- *Norwood ridership is twice the number of boardings that occur at stops in Norwood fare zone on the Norwood route.*
- *Down Valley ridership is twice the number of boardings in the Down Valley fare zone of the Norwood route plus the total annual ridership of the Down Valley route.*

Benefits

- Allows for clear decisions around route subsidies to be set where in-district routes can have higher levels of subsidy.
- Determines fares directly based on the cost to operate the route in relation to the ridership of that route.
- Fares not as directly tied to the lengths of routes may provide the benefit of lower fares for riders on popular routes that are longer.

Costs/Drawbacks

- This method of fare setting may be less transparent to the general public.
- Setting fares based on fluctuating factors like operating cost and ridership may require SMART to change fares more often to remain true to the fare structure method or determine appropriate intervals for reassessing fares and accept that the level of subsidy may not be exact through longer intervals.

Vanpool Fare Analysis

Peer Agency Vanpool Pricing

We compared five peer transit agencies with vanpool programs to understand the pricing structures of their vanpools. The three programs that charge for their vanpools all very their pricing by route either using mileage, operating cost, or ridership to determine each fare. Two agencies fully subsidize their vanpools with Cascades East Transit fully subsidizing all vanpool in the district and Park City fully subsidizing vanpools for their employees.

Table 20: Vanpool Fare Comparison of Peer Agencies

Agency	Overall Approach to Vanpool Fare Structure	Inside or Outside of Funding District	Average Miles/Month (estimates)	Average Fare	Average Fare/ 10 miles
SMART	**One flat monthly fee across all vanpools**	**Outside**	**1816 miles/month**	**$40/month**	**$0.22**
Mountain Metro Transit	Rate per person based on miles traveled per month and van type	Inside	2,000 miles/month	$198/month	$0.99
				$130/month	$0.65
Missoula Ravalli Transportation Management Association	Monthly fare varies by route	Both	1130 miles/month	$100/month	$0.88
North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization	All costs are split between riders	Inside	2400 miles/month	$200/month	$0.83
Cascades East Transit	Subsidized entirely within the funding region	Inside (outside is organized separately and not subsidized)	6-60 miles	N/A	N/A
Park City Municipal	Free for Park City Municipal Employees	Inside	34 miles	N/A	N/A

Vanpool Pricing Alternatives

The following section details the different alternatives for pricing vanpools that were considered and likely benefits and drawbacks of each.

Standard Monthly Rate Across All Vanpools (Current Model)

This alternative involves setting a standard monthly rate across all vanpools regardless of route length. This rate could be set by dividing the cost of operating all of the vanpools (minus the desired amount of subsidization) by the typical number of monthly subscribers.

Benefits

- Simple to calculate and communicate across all vanpools.
- All riders pay the same rate which benefits riders coming from further away where housing prices are lower and where more of the service workers tend to commute from.

Costs/Drawbacks

- Riders of shorter vanpools that cost less to operate are helping to subsidize the longer vanpool routes that cost more to operate.

Standard Rate Based on Miles Traveled

This alternative involves setting a monthly rate for various ranges of maximum miles traveled per month and dividing the rate equally amongst riders of each van.

Benefits

- Allows for greater revenue from vans that see higher mileage and use.
- Could increase ridership for shorter commutes because the cost is proportionally lower.

Costs/Drawbacks

- Requires more detailed organization of costs across the vanpool system.

Standard Rate Based on Defined Route

This alternative involves setting a monthly rate for each route established by riders and dividing the rate equally amongst riders of each van.

Benefits

- Allows for greater revenue from vans that see higher mileage and use.
- Could increase ridership for shorter commutes because the cost is proportionally lower.
- Allows for variables other than mileage to be incorporated into rider cost, just as vehicle storage, average ridership, etc.

Costs/Drawbacks

- Requires more detailed organization of costs across the vanpool system.

Riders Share Monthly Expenses

This alternative involves the riders of each van documenting and splitting the cost of the van, fuel, maintenance, and insurance. (This alternative could also be adjusted with SMART covering a subsidized portion of the costs and fares being set to recoup the remaining cost.)

Benefits

- Removes the cost burden of vehicle maintenance and insurance from SMART.

Costs/Drawbacks

- Variable cost could detract ridership.
- Riders receive the burden of tracking cost and van maintenance.

Cost Covered by Employer

This alternative involves incentivizing employers within the region to cover the cost of vanpooling for their employees.

Benefits

- Could help employers retain employees by subsidizing their commute if they have to live outside of Telluride or in employee housing.

Costs/Drawbacks

- Requires employer buy-in.
- Requires riders to group themselves by employer instead of by desired route.

Fare Structure Recommendations

Based on the analysis of SMART's current fare structure for fixed-route buses and vanpool services, it is recommended that SMART consider adopting a new fare structure to make the systems fares more consistent, easy to understand, and considerate of the investment already made by communities within the RTA district.

A mileage-based approach to pricing vanpools is recommended to better align with the pricing rational for fixed route buses and account for longer routes costing more money to operate.

For more details on the recommendations for SMART's fare structure see the Updated Fare Structure section of this report.

Microtransit Feasibility Assessment

As part of the strategic operating plan, the project team evaluated the feasibility of microtransit as a tool to employ in SMART's service areas. This section provides information on the basics of microtransit (what it is, where it works best, and what transportation gaps it can help solve) and an assessment of whether or not microtransit is a reasonable service within SMART's service area.

Overview of Microtransit

What is Microtransit?

Microtransit is a form of on-demand response transit using a smartphone app to match trip requests in real-time. Microtransit typically uses small vans or shuttle buses and can be contracted turn-key or operated by an agency with purchased ride-matching technology. Microtransit operates dynamically providing point-to-point connections within a defined area (zone) in response to real-time rider trip requests. Microtransit connects low to medium density areas to key destinations where origin/destination pairs are too spread out to be served well by a fixed route bus.

Figure 19: Photo of High Valley Microtransit in Park City, UT (Source: High Valley Transit)

For users, it is similar to using ride hailing services such as Uber or Lyft with the ability to request a trip within a short timeframe (typically 15 minutes or less) and be picked up and dropped off within a short distance of the destination.

Where Does Microtransit Make Sense?

In recent years microtransit has proven as a successful tool to meet certain transportation needs in areas with characteristics including:

- Low to mid density (<15 residents/acre or <10 jobs/acre)
- A mix of housing, jobs, shopping, and services within 1-2 miles of each other
- Desired origin/destination patterns are scattered rather than linear, therefore not served well by a fixed-route bus
- Communities where many people do not have access to private vehicles or cannot easily afford gas or transit passes
- First/last-mile gaps to high frequency transit
- A service area close to six square miles is ideal for efficiency of the service (although larger and smaller service areas have proven successful in certain circumstances)

Even in an ideal service area, microtransit may not always be the best solution to providing transportation depending on an agency's goals for a new service. Microtransit has potential benefits and common trade-offs:

Potential Benefits

- Popular with users/community members.
- Provides an affordable transportation option (if free or at a low fare).
- Increased transit ridership on fixed-route buses when used as a fist/last-mile tool.
- Provides a safe transportation option in areas where walking or biking is unsafe.
- Helps with parking management.
- This can be implemented quickly through turn-key operator contracts with little infrastructure required.

Common Trade-offs

- Cost per passenger on microtransit is typically significantly higher than on other fixed-route services.
- Can add to traffic and vehicle miles traveled due to dead-head distances between trips.
- Requires purchasing technology and on-demand dispatch services.
- The larger the service area the more vehicles required to serve that area, or the longer response times are for requested rides.
- The more demand grows, the more operating resources (drivers, vehicles, and associated costs) are required to meet that demand.
- Some microtransit trips replace what would otherwise have been a bike or walk trip.

Types of Microtransit Service

There are several different ways microtransit can operate. Each model has advantages and disadvantages – the best choice is usually determined by which service best achieves community goals and serves the target populations.

Zonal

In a zonal model, any two points within a defined microtransit zone can be connected. The points are typically connected door-to-door or street corner to street corner. Passengers enjoy the advantage of getting picked up and dropped off where they are and where they want to go with minimal walking required, as well as being able to use the service for a variety of trip purposes within the zone. This model works best for areas that are about six square miles in size and contain a mix of housing, services, and employment with no dominant origin/destination patterns. This model is the most flexible and convenient for riders but is the least efficient to operate since it is more challenging to combine trips efficiently when they do not share a common origin or destination.

Zone to Point

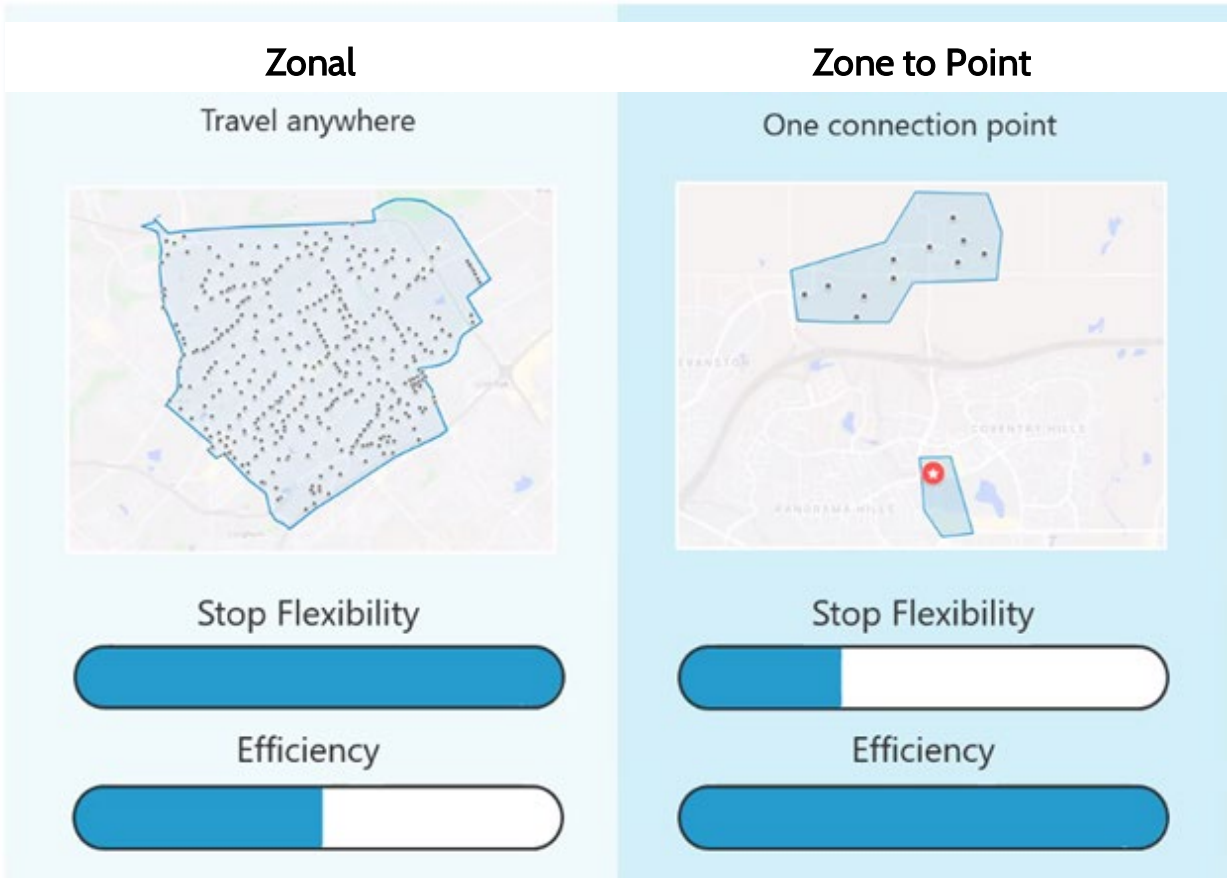
In a zone to point model, a microtransit zone is defined in combination with a specific destination point, usually a bus or rail station, outside of the zone. In this model, passengers can only go from the microtransit zone to the defined point. Passengers can get picked up or dropped off door-to-door or corner-to-corner in the microtransit zone, but the trip typically needs to start or end at the defined point. This type of service often departs and arrives at the defined point at times that correlate to bus or train departure or arrival times. A zone to point model usually has high ridership but is primarily used by commuters (or other specific user groups) as a first and final mile connection to rapid transit.

Flex Route

A microtransit flex route model operates more like a fixed route bus with pre-determined bus stops and time points, but a flex route has the ability to go off-route within a specific zone between stops to pick up and drop off passengers who request real-time trips. This allows passengers to use defined stops at a scheduled time (like a traditional bus) or to request a trip in real-time within the flex route zone. This model is more efficient than the two previously described models since many passengers will elect to use the scheduled route. However, in combining both types of services, both trips taken on the scheduled route and through on-demand requests are less convenient than they would be independently. This is because on-demand trips are served in a way that provides the least disruption to the scheduled route, making response times longer than the on-demand only services, and the scheduled route has to build in extra time for deviations into the schedule. This model of microtransit service works best where the majority of desired origins and destinations fall along a linear route and requested deviations are infrequent and primarily provide a paratransit like service for people unable to easily reach the designated stops. This option allows smaller agencies to provide local bus routes and paratransit service with a single vehicle.

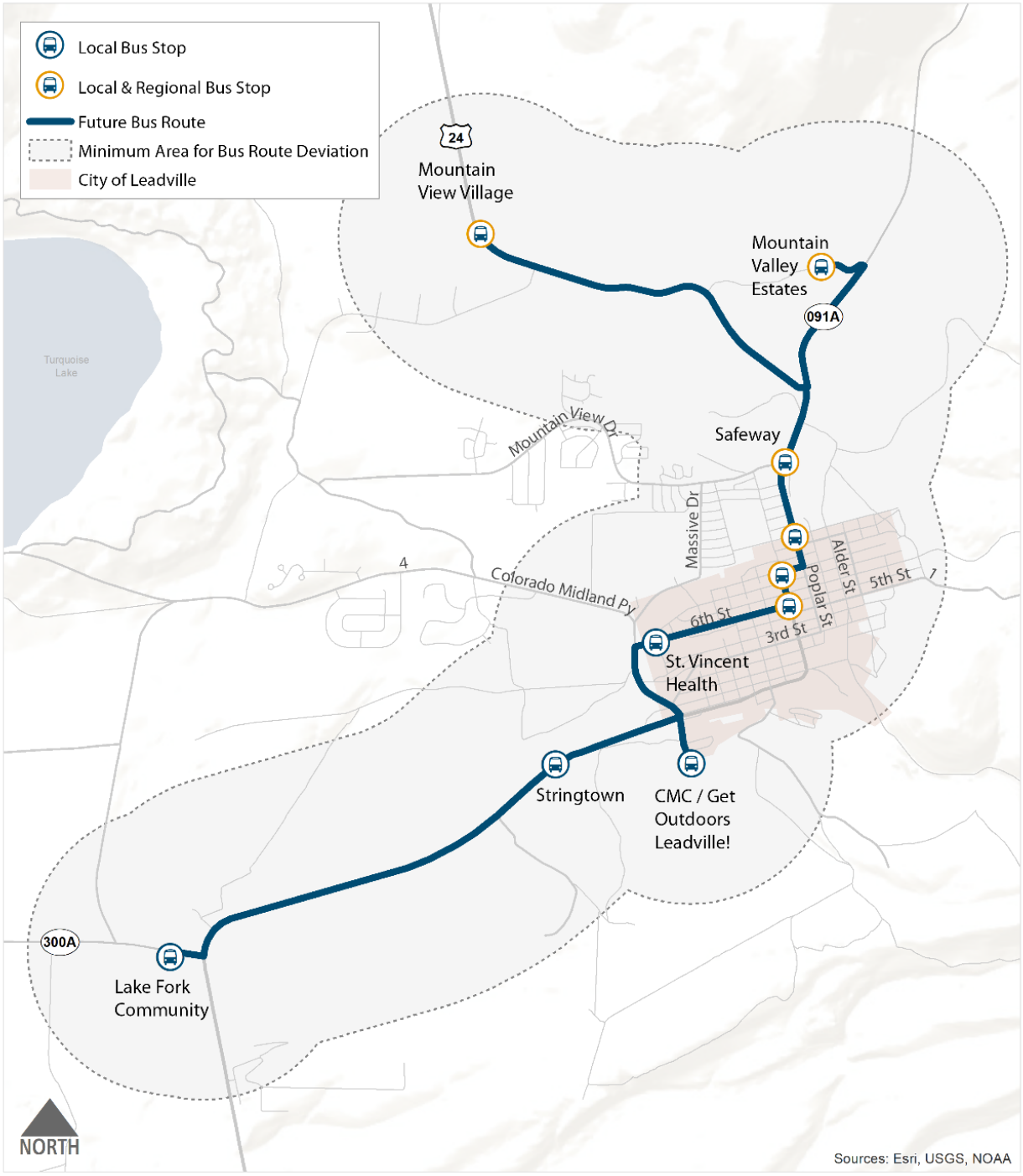
Examples of microtransit applications and microtransit service models are shown in **Figure 20 & Figure 21**.

Figure 20. Zonal & Zone-to-Point Microtransit Service Model Examples



Source: RideCo, Inc.

Figure 21: Example Map of a Flex Route Microtransit System

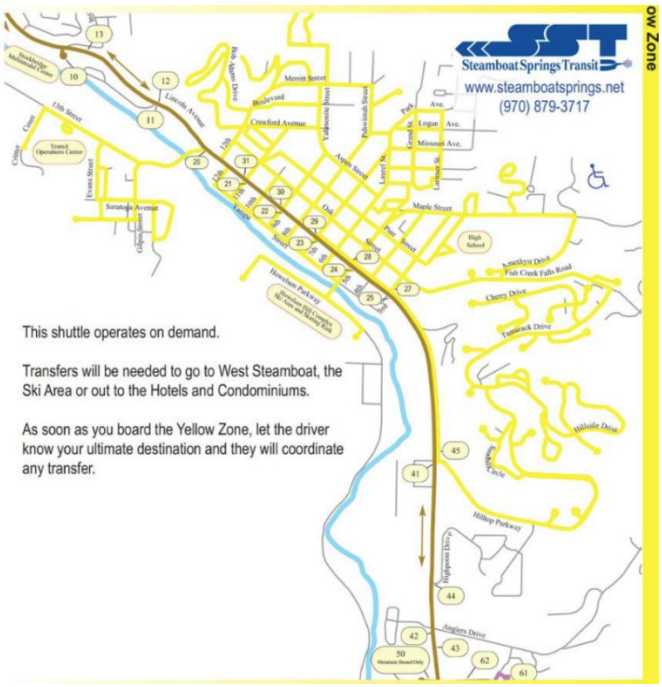


Examples of Peer Communities with Microtransit

Yellow Zone Microtransit – Steamboat Springs, CO

The Yellow Zone microtransit serves downtown Steamboat Springs and surrounding neighborhoods, recreation center, and multimodal center shown in **Figure 27.** It replaced an underutilized transit route that previously served the downtown area. The service area is approximately 3.2 square miles, and the "Yellow Zone" is a small part of the Steamboat Springs Transit service area that contains schools, high density areas, low income residential areas, the historic downtown, and remote parking. Rides on the Yellow Zone service can be between any two points within the service area. Wait times for a ride can be up to 15-minutes, but many rides are responded to in seven minutes or less.

Figure 22: Yellow Zone Service Area



Source: SST, City of Steamboat Springs, 2023.

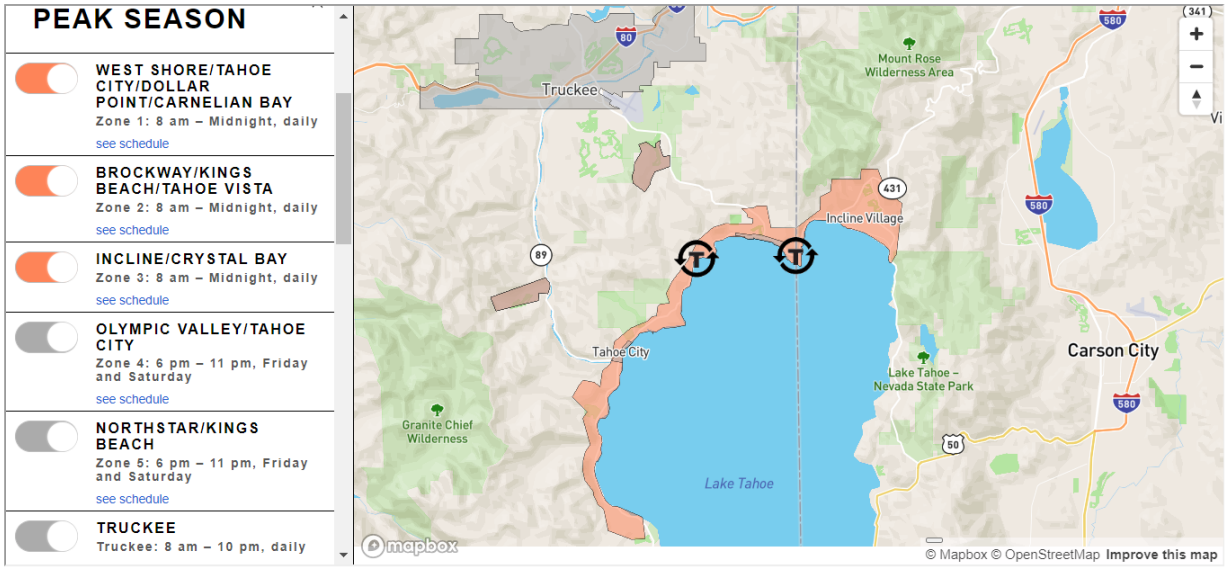
Steamboat Springs uses one to two battery electric vans to support the service in addition to one gasoline-powered ADA-compliant van (to be converted to battery/electric van soon). Each van is equipped with bike racks and only service animals are allowed in the vehicle.

TART Connect – Placer County, CA

The Tahoe Truckee Area Regional Transit (TART) Connect offers free, on-demand microtransit service that operates in Placer County, California and Washoe County, Nevada. TART Connect operates six different geographical zones surrounding Lake Tahoe, neighborhoods along two state highways, and the adjacent city, Truckee, as shown in **Figure 23**. During the peak season there are a total of six zones and during the off-peak season, there are four.

There are 11 vehicles that operate within the Placer County zones and a total of six in the Washoe County zones. The North Lake Tahoe TART Connect allows service animals only while Truckee TART Connect allows all well-behaved pets. There are two service vehicles that are ADA accessible that riders may request. The vehicles are gasoline-powered vans equipped with bike racks in the summer. Due to the high demand for the service and the large service area, the response time for a ride can take up to 40 minutes in some zones.

Figure 23. TART Connect Zones



Source: TART, 2023.

Micro by High Valley Transit – Summit County, UT

High Valley Transit provides free microtransit service in three distinct zones in northern Summit County, Park City, and Heber Valley, Utah shown in **Figure 29.** The service connects to high-frequency microtransit and fixed-route buses, providing seamless travel throughout the region. Initially launched with one zone, approximately 30 square miles in size, and 14 vehicles at peak time, the service has expanded to include two additional zones due to its popularity. High Valley Transit uses approximately 20 branded sedans, minivans, and SUVs equipped with bike racks and ski racks in the winter, making it a convenient and sustainable option for residents and visitors alike to get around. There was a 41% increase in total fixed route rides and a 113% increase in micro rides between July 2022 and July 2023.

Figure 24: High Valley Transit Service Map

Source: High Valley Transit, 2023.

Does Microtransit Help Achieve SMART's Goals?

Microtransit can be an effective tool for filling transportation gaps for areas that cannot be better served by a fixed route bus service. However, microtransit is not always the best solution, depending on an agency's goals. The following section lists SMART's goals as an agency and describes whether or not microtransit serves each.

Efficiency

Regional transit can better coordinate planning, service, and infrastructure to deliver coordinated transportation services.

Microtransit is likely to have a negative impact on the efficiency of SMART's operations. Microtransit is a less efficient service from a cost per passenger perspective than SMART's existing services (fixed route bus and vanpool) and requires purchasing new technology from a provider for the SMART phone app and call-in dispatch service. The management of a microtransit system would likely require an additional staff member to manage the microtransit service as at least part of their role. The additional cost and administrative time could be worth it if a significant need is identified that would be best served by microtransit. However, if the need could be served by vanpool or a fixed-route bus instead, then these services are more efficient options.

Economy

Improved services will give businesses, employees, and guests more reliable transit options.

Microtransit could have a positive impact to local economic activity if it is designed in a way that allows people to take trips they were not already taking by improving convenient access to more jobs, services, shopping, or recreation. This would be most relevant to the populations who do not have access to a private vehicle, in areas not currently well served by existing transit, or during times bus routes are not operating (i.e. late at night when bars close).

Reduced Traffic

A convenient, affordable transit system reduces traffic and parking impacts.

Microtransit is likely to have a negative impact to traffic. Although microtransit trips may convert some single-occupancy car trips to shared microtransit trips, overall microtransit has been shown not to reduce (and in many cases increase) vehicle miles traveled due the deadhead miles that occur between trips, which are typically not sequential and not shared, and the fact that some microtransit trips may replace trips that were previously taken by walking or biking.

Microtransit could have a positive impact to parking demands if paired with a park-n-ride lot or if service is sufficient to replace trips that would otherwise be taken by car by residents, visitors, or employees.

Green Choice

Fewer vehicles on the roads mean improved air quality.

If the microtransit were operated with gasoline-powered vehicles, it is likely to have a neutral to negative impact to air quality because microtransit does not reduce vehicle miles traveled as explained under the previous goal.

If the microtransit vehicles are battery electric and are shown to replace gasoline-powered vehicle trips, this could have a positive effect on local air quality, but this outcome cannot be guaranteed considering the extra vehicle miles microtransit typically generates.

Grants

Offers more leverage for our region to obtain expanded funding from grants.

There may be additional grants available outside of SMART's current funding sources that SMART could pursue to fund a new microtransit service. However, overall adding a microtransit service is likely to neither improve nor hinder SMART's ability to apply for additional grants or other new funding streams. Other transit agencies have found that microtransit competes with existing resources for fixed route transit and have had to develop new local funding sources to sustain ongoing microtransit operations.

Access

Increases mobility for everyone in our region.

Microtransit could have a positive impact on access if designed to address the travel needs of people with limited transportation options in areas not currently well served by existing transit, walking or biking routes. Of SMART's goals, access is the one that microtransit could provide the most benefit to if an appropriate service area were identified.

In summary, a microtransit system (if designed to serve an existing gap in services) has the potential to help SMART achieve its goals of improved **economy** and **access**. Adding a microtransit service may negatively impact SMART's goals for improving **efficiency** and **reducing traffic**. The impacts of a microtransit service to SMART's goals of acquiring more **grant funding** and providing **green transportation choices** are less clear but likely impacts would be neutral to slightly negative.

Suitability of Microtransit in Select Locations

Microtransit Suitability Criteria

The project team chose four suitability assessment factors for consideration of how microtransit could serve identified geographic areas.

- **Sufficient mix and density of land uses:** There is a mix of low and medium development in the areas (apartments or single family homes on small lots) and there is both residential and commercial/employment in the area that people want to connect between.
- **Lack of existing transit access:** No transit stops within a quarter-mile
- **Dispersed trip pairs:** Likely origin and destination pairs are hard to define and hard to serve with a fixed route bus.
- **Identified equity need:** There has been a need identified for improving transportation equity to a particular population in the areas.

Microtransit Suitability Comparison of Select Locations

These currently unserved or underserved areas are included based on past community requests for new or improved service in areas where running a fixed route bus does not currently make sense. Each location was evaluated for microtransit feasibility, and the findings are detailed in the following section, organized by location.

Ski Ranches

Sufficient Mix and Density Of Land Uses	No – The Ski Ranches is only low density residential properties and demand for connecting into an outside point (like Mountain Village Town Center) is likely too low to support a microtransit service.
Lack of Existing Transit Service	Yes – there is currently no bus stops within ¼ mile of most properties within the ski ranches.
Dispersed Trip Pairs	No - Although the homes in the Ski Ranches are quite spread out, the area is small, and most trips would likely be taken from the subdivision to either Telluride or Mountain Village. These trips could be more efficiently served with vanpool or a fixed route bus (though demand is likely inefficient for either).
Identified Equity Need	None
Suitability	The Ski Ranches are **not suitable** for microtransit service because the very low density development of the areas would not generate sufficient demand to justify a microtransit service.

Meadows

Sufficient Mix and Density Of Land Uses	Yes – The Meadows has a mix of single family homes, apartments, and condos. The proximity to Mountain Village Town Center would allow for a mix of land use type in a microtransit zone.
Lack of Existing Transit Service	No - the meadows is served by the Chondola in the winter season and the Off-Season SMART route in the spring and fall when the gondola is closed. In the summer, the Meadows does not have direct transit service as the Chondola remains closed through the summer due to conflicts with the operations of the golf course.
Dispersed Trip Pairs	No - Although residences in The Meadows are spread out, the area is small, and most trips would likely be taken from the neighborhood to either Telluride or Mountain Village. These trips could be more efficiently served with a fixed route in the summer.
Identified Equity Need	None
Suitability	The Meadows is not suitable for microtransit due to its connectivity to existing transit services most of the year. Service to this area in the summer is better served by a fixed-route bus than a new microtransit service.

Aldasoro & Telluride Airport

Sufficient Mix and Density Of Land Uses	No – Aldasoro is only low density residential properties and demand for connecting into an outside point (like Telluride or the Telluride Airport is likely too low to support a microtransit service.
Lack of Existing Transit Service	Yes – there is currently no bus stops within ¼ mile of the properties in Aldasoro or the Telluride Airport.
Dispersed Trip Pairs	No - Although the homes in the Aldasoro are quite spread out, most trips would likely be taken from the subdivision to either Telluride or Mountain Village. These trips could be more efficiently served with vanpool or a fixed route bus (though demand is likely two low for either of these service types). Trips to and from the Telluride airport would likely be fairly dispersed across different areas, but the demand for this service is likely too low to support a microtransit service or a fixed-route bus.
Identified Equity Need	None
Suitability	Adlasoro and the Telluride Airport are not suitable for microtransit service because the very low density development of the areas would not generate sufficient demand to justify a microtransit service.

Two Rivers & Ilium

Sufficient Mix and Density Of Land Uses	No – Currently there is only a small amount of residential development in this area and some industrial uses. However, with planned developments this area is anticipated to grow significantly – mostly with residential development. The suitability of a microtransit service can be reevaluated as additional development is constructed in the area.
Lack of Existing Transit Service	Yes – There is currently a bus stop on the Down Valley and Norwood routes that is within ¼ mile of most of the residences in this area.
Dispersed Trip Pairs	No - Current trips to and from the area are most likely terminating in the nearby populations centers of Telluride, Mountain Village, and Norwood. There is not a sufficient density or mix of land uses to create a demand for internal trips within the area and these regional trips are already served by existing transit. As new development is built in the area it is likely these trip patters will remain similar. Therefore, new development in the area is likely better served by a new fixed route bus connecting into Telluride or Mountain Village than a microtransit service for shorter trips.
Identified Equity Need	Not currently, but this is likely to change with the development of additional affordable housing in the area.
Suitability	Two Rivers & Ilium are currently not suitable to serve with microtransit due to the small population in the area today. As the area grows with new development it is likely the area could be better served by a new fixed-route bus rather than microtransit due to the more linear nature of likely trips to and from the area.

Conclusion of Microtransit Feasibility

After compiling the benefits and tradeoffs of microtransit and assessing candidate locations in the SMART service area, the project team recommends that SMART does not pursue developing microtransit at this time for the following reasons:

- None of the candidate areas are well suited for microtransit.
- There is not a clear opportunity to improve transportation equity with a new microtransit service.
- It may negatively impact some of SMART's goals of improving efficiency and reducing the number of cars on the road.

Operating Improvements Evaluation

This section provides an evaluation of the initial draft list of projects for SMART's 2024 Strategic Operating Plan. Draft projects were developed from public input from a community survey and direct community communication with SMART as well as from findings from an analysis of SMART's current operations. This evaluation helped the project team narrow down the list of recommended improvements and prioritize them into implementation phases.

Project Evaluation Criteria

Draft projects were evaluated based on the following 5 criteria:

- **Estimated Operating Cost**
  For applicable projects, the additional annual operating cost for a new service or improvement of an existing service were calculated based on additional hours and days of operation based on the specific improvement and an assumption of $100.75/hour operating cost for fixed-route buses and $20/hour operating cost for vanpool.
- **Improvements to Passenger Ease of Use**
  Passenger ease of use serves as a qualitative measure, indicating whether a project enhances a service to be more intuitive for riders, minimizes the need for transfers during a trip, responds to common requests from the community, or provides other qualitative enhancements to the rider experience.
- **Estimated Capital Costs**
  For applicable projects, planning level capital cost estimates were developed for needed additional buses, stop and bus turn around improvements, and other eventual capital costs.
- **Potential Impacts to Ridership**
  Potential impacts to ridership is a high-level assessment of the likelihood that a particular project will increase ridership based on increased frequency of buses, new connections
- **Impacts to Transit Travel Times**
  For applicable projects, the estimated impact to travel times of the relevant transit trips were calculated.

This section includes the complete tables of the improvements considered to operations, their associated operating and capital costs and likely impacts to the evaluation criteria described above. The tables are separated by routes.

Evaluation Summaries of Potential Improvements

Note: All cost estimates are in 2024 dollars and do not account for inflation.

Lawson Hill, Mountain Village, and Off-Season Routes

ID	Potential Improvement	Current Annual Operating Cost	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Improvements to Passenger Ease of Use	Estimated Capital Costs	Potential Increase to Ridership	Impacts to Transit Travel Times
1	Make the "off-season" route year-round by combining the existing Lawson Hill and Mountain Village Routes	$795,000	$228,000	Streamlining of schedules and services Major increase in frequency	Additional Bus	High	-
2	Increase to 45-minute Frequency All Day	$400,000	$129,000	Major increase in frequency	-	High	-
3	Increase to 30-minute Frequency	$400,000	$560,000	Major increase in frequency	Additional Bus	High	-
4	Route to Stop at Gondola instead of Court House	$400,000	$146,000	Creates direct transfer to Gondola	$15-20K	Medium	11 additional minutes/round trip
5	Add an additional run at night to expand the service hours from 6:25 AM-10:40 PM to 6:25 AM-11:25 PM	$400,000	$31,000	Minor increase in frequency	-	Low	-
6	Extend Lawson Hill Route on the weekend Bridal Veil Trailhead in the summer	$400,000	$7,000	New stop	$1 million+	Low	-
7	Provide Weekend Service (Improvement already covered if routes are combined.)	$89,000	$48,000	New weekend service	-	Medium	-

ID	Potential Improvement	Current Annual Operating Cost	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Improvements to Passenger Ease of Use	Estimated Capital Costs	Potential Increase to Ridership	Impacts to Transit Travel Times
8	Add Two Midday Runs (Improvement already covered if routes are combined.)	$89,000	$56,000	Major increase in frequency	-	Medium	-

Rico Route

ID	Potential Improvement	Current Annual Operating Cost	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Improvements to Passenger Ease of Use	Estimated Capital Costs	Potential Increase to Ridership	Impacts to Transit Travel Times
9	Route to Stop at Gondola instead of Court House	$53,000	$2,000	Creates direct transfer to Gondola	$15-20K	Medium	5 additional minutes/round trip
10	Add an additional run from Telluride (3:30 PM) to Rico (4:15 PM) and from Rico (4:30 PM) to Telluride (5:15 PM)	$53,000	$45,000	Major increase in frequency	-	Medium	-
11	Add Stop at Lawson Hill Park n' Ride for and align with Mountain Village Route for a timed transfer	$53,000	$10,000	New stop	-	Low	20 additional minutes/round trip
12	Provide Weekend Service	$53,000	$18,000	New weekend service	-	Low	-
13	Add two stops at Ski Ranches	$53,000	$15,000	New stops	$50-100K	Low	30 additional minutes/round trip

Down Valley & Norwood Routes

ID	Potential Improvement	Current Annual Operating Cost	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Improvements to Passenger Ease of Use	Estimated Capital Costs	Potential Increase to Ridership	Impacts to Transit Travel Times
14	Combine Down Valley & Norwood Routes	$382,000	$135,000	Streamlining of schedules and services Major increase in frequency	-	High	-
15	Increase combined Down Valley & Norwood Route to 10 Round Trips/Day	$382,000	$224,000	Major increase in frequency	-	High	-
16	Add One Round Trip of Down Valley Weekend Service (If routes are combined, increase weekend service of combined route from 1 trip [existing] to 2 trips per day.)	$166,000	$16,000	Minor increase in frequency	-	Low	-
17	Extend one round trip of Down Valley Route to Norwood (Improvement already covered if routes are combined.) Norwood (7:50 AM) to Telluride (9:10 AM) and Telluride (6:30 PM) to Norwood (7:40 PM)	$216,000	$35,000	Minor increase in frequency	Additional Bus	High	-

ID	Potential Improvement	Current Annual Operating Cost	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Improvements to Passenger Ease of Use	Estimated Capital Costs	Potential Increase to Ridership	Impacts to Transit Travel Times
18	Add a from Norwood (6:35 AM) to Telluride (7:45 AM) (Improvement already covered if routes are combined.)	$216,000	$17,000	Minor increase in frequency	Additional Bus	Medium	-
19	Additional Evening Run Telluride (9:00 PM) to Norwood (10:10 PM) and Norwood (10:10 PM) to Telluride (11:25 PM)	$216,000	$75,000	Minor increase in frequency	-	Medium	-
20	Additional Afternoon Run Telluride (4:00 PM) to Norwood (5:10 PM) and Norwood (5:10 PM) to Telluride (6:20 PM)	$216,000	$75,000	Minor increase in frequency	-	Medium	-
21	Adjust 5:15 PM Run to Leave Telluride Town Park at 6:00 PM instead	216000	N/A	Greater spacing in time between similar trips	-	Low	-
22	Add Two Rivers Stop on Weekend Norwood Runs	$216,000	$4,000	New weekend service	-	Low	10 additional minutes/round trip
23	Add a Midday Run to Weekend Service	$216,000	$30,000	Minor increase in frequency	-	Low	-
24	Additional Weekday Roundtrip	$107,000	$16,000	Major increase in frequency	-	Medium	-

ID	Potential Improvement	Current Annual Operating Cost	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Improvements to Passenger Ease of Use	Estimated Capital Costs	Potential Increase to Ridership	Impacts to Transit Travel Times
25	Extend Weekend Norwood Service to Nucla/Naturita	$107,000	$16,000	New weekend service	-	Low	-
26	Add Stop on Nucla/Naturita Runs at the Pioneer Village Subdivision	$107,000	$10,000	New stop	$1 million+	Low	20 additional minutes/round trip

Other Operating Improvements

These other operating improvements include new routes and a new stop that impacts multiple routes.

ID	Potential Improvement	Estimated Annual Operating Cost	Improvements to Passenger Ease of Use	Estimated Capital Costs	Potential Increase to Ridership
27	All routes to Terminate at Gondola instead of Court House	Long-term - Evaluate operating cost closer to implementation of necessary capital improvements	Creates direct transfer to Gondola	$300k-400k	Medium
28	New Vanpool Service to Ophir	$5,000	New service	Additional Bus	Low
29	New bus route between Norwood and Mountain Village	$70,000	New service	Additional Bus	Low
30	New Route to Telluride Airport and Aldasoro Ranches	$84,000	New service	Additional Bus	Low
31	Add Stop at Future Medical Center at Society Turn	Long-term - Evaluate operating cost closer to implementation of necessary capital improvements	New stop	35-50k	Medium

Final Strategic Operating Plan

The following section details the final strategic operating plan to help guide San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation into the future. This section is broken into three phases based on the years after adoption of this plan: phase 1 (1-3 years), phase 2 (3-5 years), and phase 3 (5+ years). Also included in this section are potential long-term improvements (10+ years) for SMART to consider as the agency continues to evolve.

Note: All cost estimates are in 2024 dollars and have not been adjusted to account for inflation.

Phase 1 (1-3 Years)

Phase 1 - Transit Service Improvements

Route	Improvement	Benefits	Current Annual Operating Cost	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Total Annual Operating Cost
Lawson Hill Route	Increase to 45-minute Frequency All Day	Provides a higher level of service for riders all day and missing midday service to make the route function better as a local circulator for non-commute type trips.	$400,000	$129,000	$529,000
Mountain Village Route	Add Two Midday Runs	Provides missing midday service to make the route function better as a local circulator for non-commute type trips.	$89,000	$56,000	$145,000
Rico Route	Add Stop at Lawson Hill Park n' Ride for and align with Mountain Village Route for a timed transfer	Provides a more direct route to for Rico riders to Mountain Village.	$53,000	$10,000	$63,000
Rico Route	Provide Weekend Service	Provides for non-traditional commutes and other non-work trips between Rico and Telluride.	$53,000	$18,000	$71,000
Rico Route	Fare free service	All in-district routes become free.	$53,000	$4,000	$57,000

Route	Improvement	Benefits	Current Annual Operating Cost	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Total Annual Operating Cost
Rico Route	Add an additional roundtrip per day on weekdays that brings people from Telluride to Rico in the afternoon.	Provides earlier service back to Rico to accommodate teachers, staff, students and others with a non-traditional commute schedule.	$53,000	$45,000	$98,000
Norwood Route	Additional Evening Run Telluride (9:00 PM) to Norwood (10:10 PM) and Norwood (10:10 PM) to Telluride (11:25 PM)	Accommodates people with later work schedules and people who wish to stay in town later. Requires 1 additional vehicle.	$216,000	$75,000	$291,000
Down Valley Route	Add One Round Trip of Down Valley Weekend Service (If routes are combined, increase weekend service of combined route from 1 trip [existing] to 2 trips per day.)	Accommodates shift and service work commute trips and non-work trips on weekends.	$166,000	$16,000	$182,000
Down Valley Route	Fare free service.	All in-district routes become fare-free.	$166,000	$2,000	$168,000

Phase 1 - Capital Improvements

Route	Improvement	Phase	Estimated Cost
All	Bus stop improvements program	Phases 1-3	$2 million - $2.5 million
Norwood Route	1 Additional Vehicle	Phase 1	$500,000

Phase 1 - Other Improvements

Route	Improvement	Notes	Estimated Implementation Cost
All	Improve & Standardize Bus Schedules	Simplifying and standardizing route schedules can make riding the bus more intuitive, especially for new or infrequent riders.	$10,000
All	Improve & Advertise Trip Planning App	Improvements and greater marketing of the app will help riders plan their trips and feel confident riding the bus.	$20,000

Phase 2 (3-5 Years)

Phase 2 - Transit Service Improvements

Route	Improvement	Benefits	Current Annual Operating Cost	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Total Annual Operating Cost
Lawson Hill Route	Add an additional run at night to expand the service hours from 6:25 AM-10:40 PM to 6:25 AM-11:25 PM	Provides an additional late-night service.	$400,000	$31,000	$431,000
Mountain Village Route	Provide Weekend Service	Provided new weekend service to accommodate shift and service worker schedules and non-commute type trips.	$89,000	$48,000	$137,000
Nucla/Naturita Route	Extend Weekend Norwood Service to Nucla/Naturita	Provides additional trip options for riders coming from Nucla & Naturita.	$107,000	$16,000	$123,000
New Route	New Vanpool Service to Ophir	Provides a service for commuters into Telluride or Mountain Village from Ophir.	NA	$5,000	$5,000

Phase 2 - Capital Improvements

Route	Improvement	Phase	Estimated Cost
All	Bus stop improvements program	Incremental Across Phases 1-3	$2 million - $2.5 million
Norwood/ Nucla/ Naturita	Partner to expand bus barn in Norwood	Phase 2 (4-5 years)	$2 million - $2.5 million
All	Lawson Hill Facility Renovations	Phase 2 (4-5 years)	$3 million – $5 million

Phase 3 (5+ years)

Phase 3 - Transit Service Improvements

Route	Improvement	Benefits	Current Annual Operating Cost	Additional Annual Operating Cost	Total Annual Operating Cost
Combination of Lawson Hill & Mountain Village Routes	Make the "off-season" route year-round by combining the existing Lawson Hill and Mountain Village Routes.	Provides a more intuitive experience for riders and streamlines operations. The Off-season Express route would still operate during Gondola closures to provide additional replacement service. Requires 2 additional vehicles.	$795,000	$228,000	$1,023,000
Combination of Down Valley & Norwood Routes	Combine Down Valley & Norwood Routes.	Makes route planning more intuitive for riders of both routes, doubles the frequency of buses to Norwood, simplifies operations by eliminating coordinating the two routes separately, and adjusts the timing of trips to provide more options for all riders. Requires 1 additional vehicle.	$382,000	$135,000	$517,000
Combination of Down Valley & Norwood Routes	Increase combined Down Valley & Norwood Route to 10 Round Trips/Day.	Increases the number of round trips from 7 (existing runs of Down Valley & Norwood Routes combined) and provides additional midday and evening service requested through community input. Requires 1 additional vehicle.	$382,000	$224,000	$606,000
Nucla/Naturita Route	Additional Weekday Roundtrip.	Provides additional trip options for riders coming from Nucla & Naturita.	$107,000	$16,000	$147,000

Phase 3 – Capital Improvements

Route	Improvement	Phase	Estimated Cost
All	Bus stop improvements program	Incremental Across Phases 1-3	$2 million - $2.5 million
All	New Ilium Bus Maintenance Facility	Phase 3 (5+ years)	$15 million - $20 million
Combined Lawson Hill & Mountain Village Route	2 Additional Vehicles	Phase 3 (5+ years)	$1 million
Combined of Down Valley & Norwood Route	2 Additional Vehicles	Phase 3 (5+ years)	$1 million

Additional Considerations for Future Improvements

Gondola Station Area Reconstruction

Evaluate the feasibility and efficiency of all routes stopping at the Gondola in Telluride when the station area is rebuilt in order to better align different transit services and enhance the Gondola station's role as a mobility hub for the region.

Two Rivers/Ilium Development

Additional service to Two Rivers/Ilium once planned development is built in order to serve that future demand. Our assessment found that the current service works well now but may be insufficient as the area develops.

Ophir Curves Development

Evaluate the potential feasibility of adding service to the planned development near the Ophir curves once development occurs.

Updated Fare Structure

Based on the analysis of SMART's current fare structure for fixed-route buses and vanpool services, it is recommended that SMART consider adopting a new fare structure to make the systems fares more consistent, easy to understand, and considerate of the investment already made by communities within the RTA district.

Fixed Route Bus Service Fare

Fare Free Service within SMART District

It is recommended that SMART move to make all routes within the RTA district fare free. Currently some of the routes within the district are fare free while others have a fare. Making all in district trips

free provides significant benefits to all community members in the RTA, is likely to have positive impacts to ridership, and results only in a minor loss in revenue compared to SMART's overall costs ($5,744 in 2023).

Simplified Distance Based Fare Structure Out of District

It is also recommended that for bus routes outside of the RTA district that fares still be collected since these communities are not paying into the RTA and these routes are long making them more costly to operate than the in-district routes.

Below is a breakdown of fares for each route:

- Norwood - $2/ride
- Nucla/Naturita/Redvale - $3/ride
- Ridgeway - $4/ride
- Montrose - $5/ride

SMART should also adopt regular intervals where fares are reevaluated and adjusted as necessary to account for increased operating costs and other factors that may impact on the appropriate rate for fares.

This fare structure is compatible with future funding agreements with municipalities or other agencies outside of the SMART district that wish to contribute into the system and perhaps subsidize fares additionally on top of SMART's subsidy.

Vanpool Pricing

It is recommended that for now SMART continue to chare $40/month for vanpools in the near-term to keep stability of the vanpools as the effects of other service changes are seen in the system.

In the long-term it is recommended SMART explore a mileage-based approach to pricing vanpools to better align with the pricing rational for fixed route buses and account for longer routes costing more money to operate. The average fare on the vanpools today is $0.22/10 miles (monthly) compared $0.84/10 miles for the average across the peer agencies. The fare rate could be determined in a variety of ways, either increasing it at the rate of increasing operating costs or choosing a desired level of fare recovery and setting the fare rate to achieve that fare recovery.

Appendix A - Public Survey Results

FEHR PEERS

Memorandum

Date: February 16, 2024

To: Kari Distefano & David Averill, San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation

From: Sydney Provan, AICP & Luna Hoopes - Fehr & Peers

Subject: Strategic Operating Plan – Public Outreach Phase 1 Summary

DN23-0791

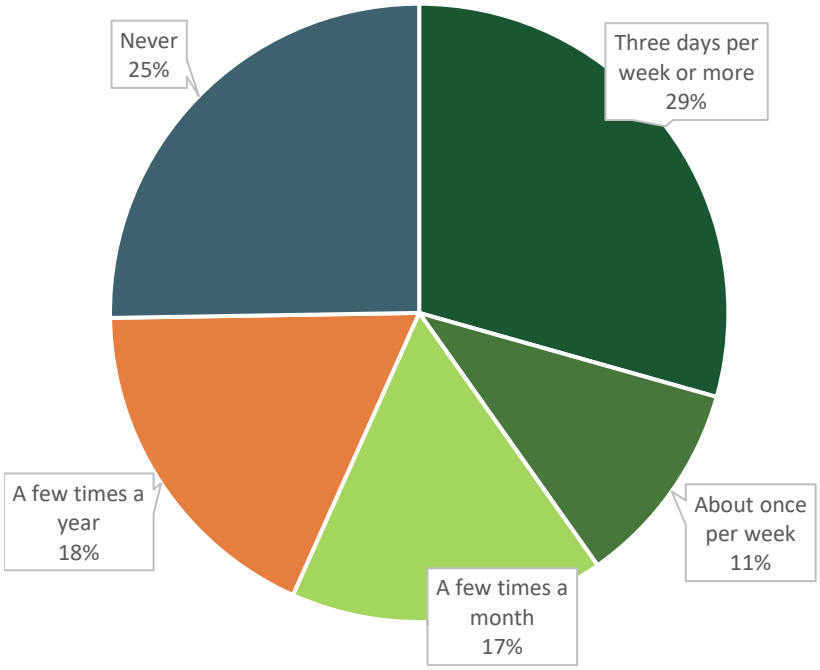
In October 2023, the San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) kicked off a project to update the agency's strategic operating plan. As part of this project the agency conducted an initial phase of public outreach to understand how community members use SMART's services today, what challenges they encounter, and what improvements they would like to see made to SMART's services in the future. For this initial phase of outreach, a survey was available online between December 18, 2023, and February 3, 2024. It was advertised to community members via the SMART websites, local email lists, local radio station, and a demonstration in the local library. A total of 193 responses were collected online.

Select questions (**Appendix A**) were also available for community input via a physical board located in the Wilkinson Public Library during the period the online survey was open. The results from this physical board have been integrated into the overall results summarized in this memo.

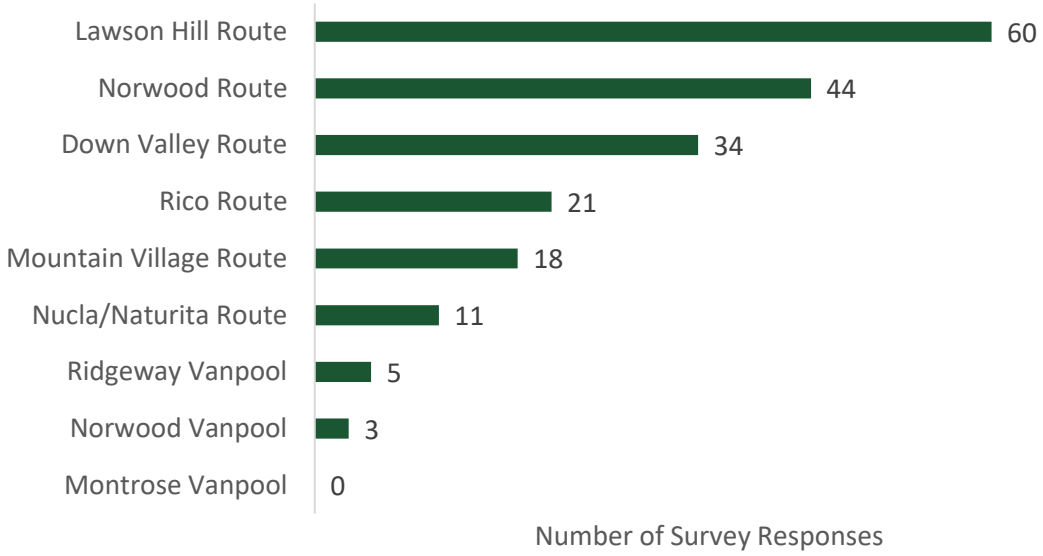
The remainer of this report summarizes the responses to each question asked during this first phase of public outreach for the SMART Strategic Operating Plan. This public outreach was used in combination with analysis of SMART's operational data to develop recommended improvements and expansions to SMARTs service.

Outreach Results Summary

1. How often do you currently ride SMART buses or vanpools? (pick one)

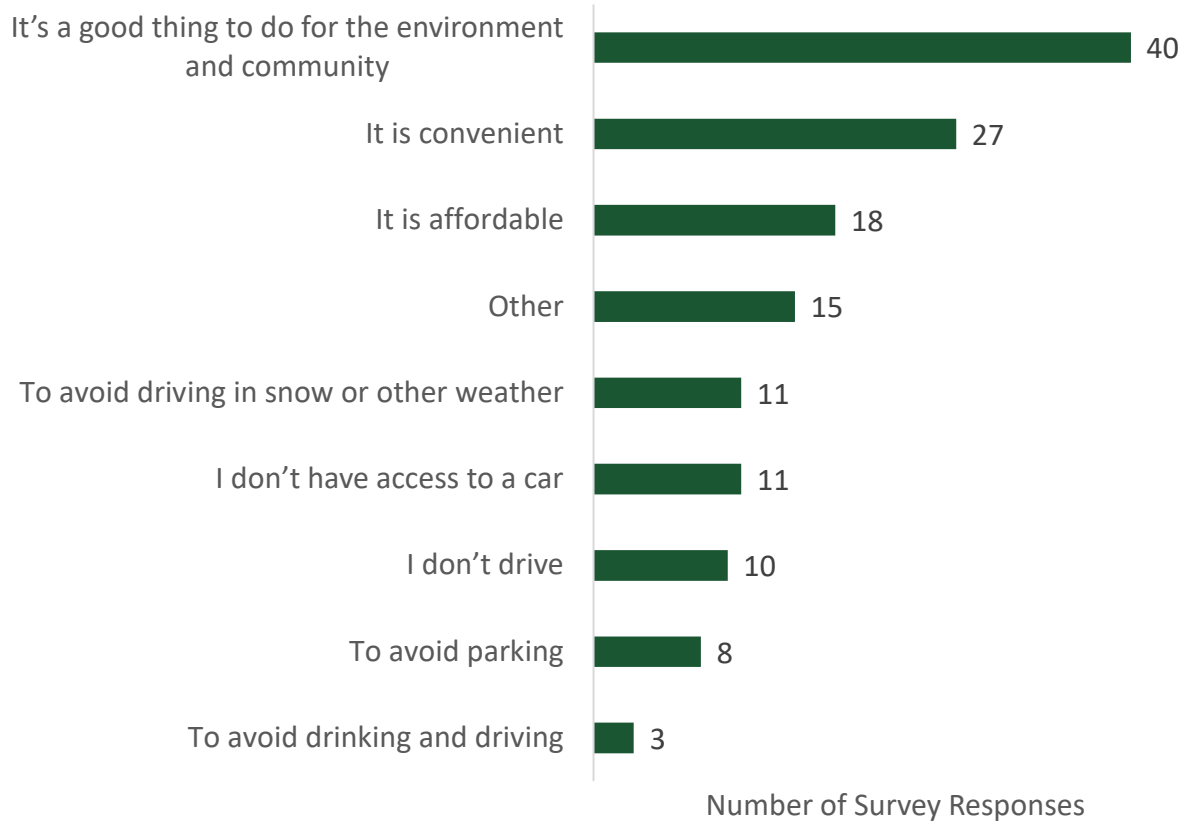


2. What services do you primarily ride (pick up to three)?

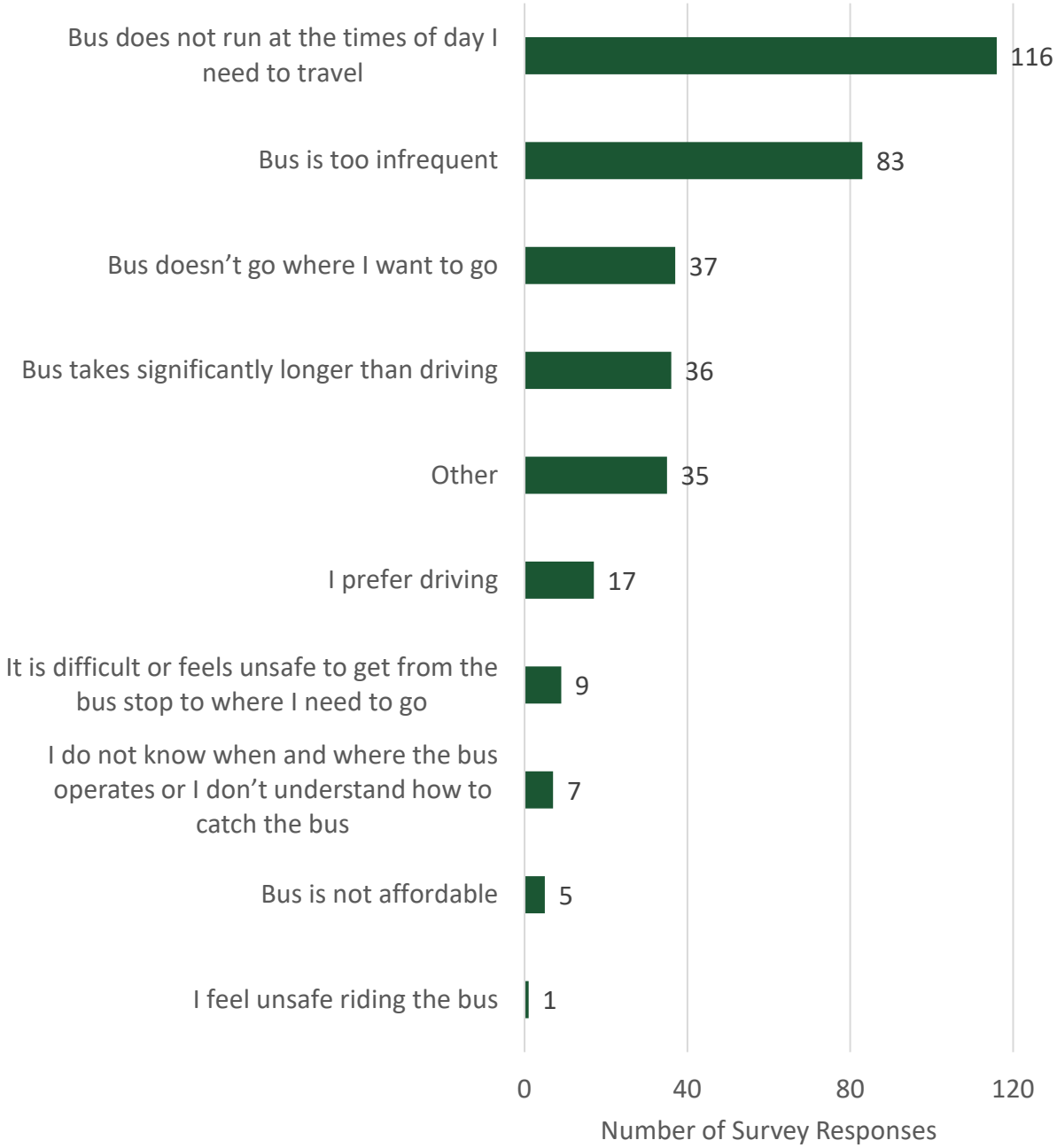


3. When you ride the bus, where do you typically go? (pick up to three)

4. What is the primary reason you ride SMART services? (pick only one answer)



5. What are the barriers that stop you from riding the bus more or riding the bus at all[1]? (pick up to three answers)



[1] Question asked online and on the interactive board.

6. Please provide greater detail about the barriers you selected in the previous question.

Of the 194 responses to question #5, 150 respondents added further detail about their responses in question 6. Most comments were concerning specific routes which are outlined in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Route-specific Barriers

Lawson Hill Route (27 Comments)	**Norwood Route** (24 Comments)	**Rico Route** (15 comments)
• Would like the bus to run more frequently with varied times • Issues with midday gap in service	• Would like more options earlier in the morning and in the afternoon/evening (mostly earlier) • Crowded during ski season • Schedule is different weekdays vs weekends (fewer on weekends)	• Route is expensive • Would like more frequent service and times

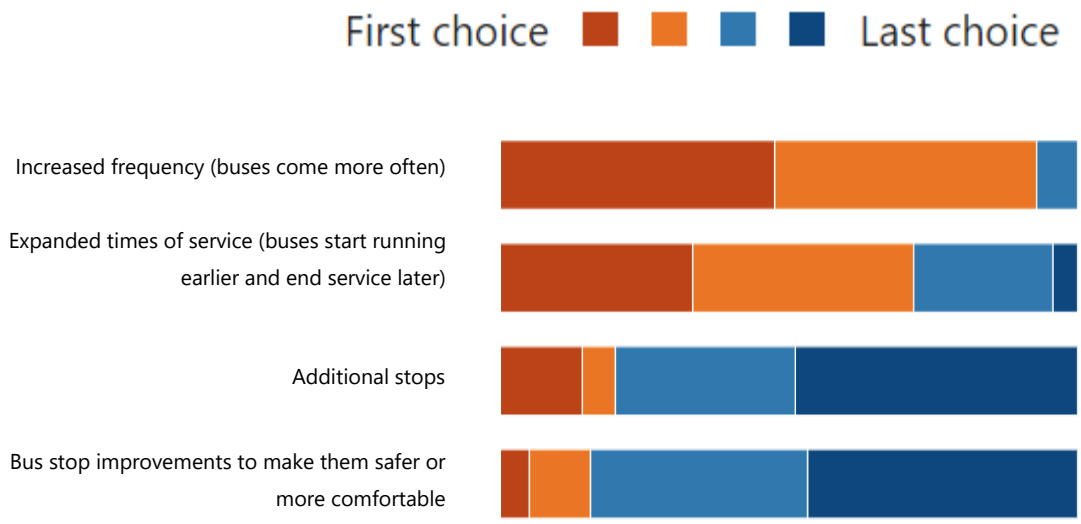
Other recurring comments (6 comments) concerned maintenance and comfort issues including:

- buses breaking down
- buses being cold
- issues with motion sickness due to sitting sideways while riding

Several comments (9 comments) were regarding transit service for students, mentioning timing issues with school schedules and afterschool programs as well as issues with safety while accessing bus stops.

The remainder of comments were primarily regarding specific timing issues between the bus schedules and respondent's individual needs or provided by respondents who either prefer to drive or whose origins and destinations are not served by SMART transit service.

7. Rank your priorities for the following potential improvements to SMART's existing bus routes from 1-most important to you to 4-least important to you.[2]



[2] Question asked online and on the interactive board.

8. What other priorities do you have for improvements to existing bus routes? (open ended)

Eighty-one respondents provided answers to this question. The greatest share of responses (28% or 23 comments) mentioned a desire for increased frequency of bus service. Specific requests included addressing the Lawson Hill midday gap in service and providing late night service on Norwood-Telluride and Rico-Telluride routes to accommodate late shift service workers, with requests ranging from 10pm to 12pm.

Seven comments (9%) were concerning a desire for other increases to span of service for routes including Lawson Hill, Mountain Village, Norwood, and Rico. These requests are tied to the greatest share of comments regarding increased frequency of service in that several responses concerned transit service for service workers and others who work outside typical working hours. Another prominent theme of these comments was about late-night service providing options for people to drink and not drive home.

Priorities regarding express or direct routes to Telluride or Mountain Village made up 10% of comments (8 comments). Several requests specified a change that would provide alternate service to Two Rivers and remove this stop from the Norwood route, decreasing travel time for commuters between Norwood and Telluride.

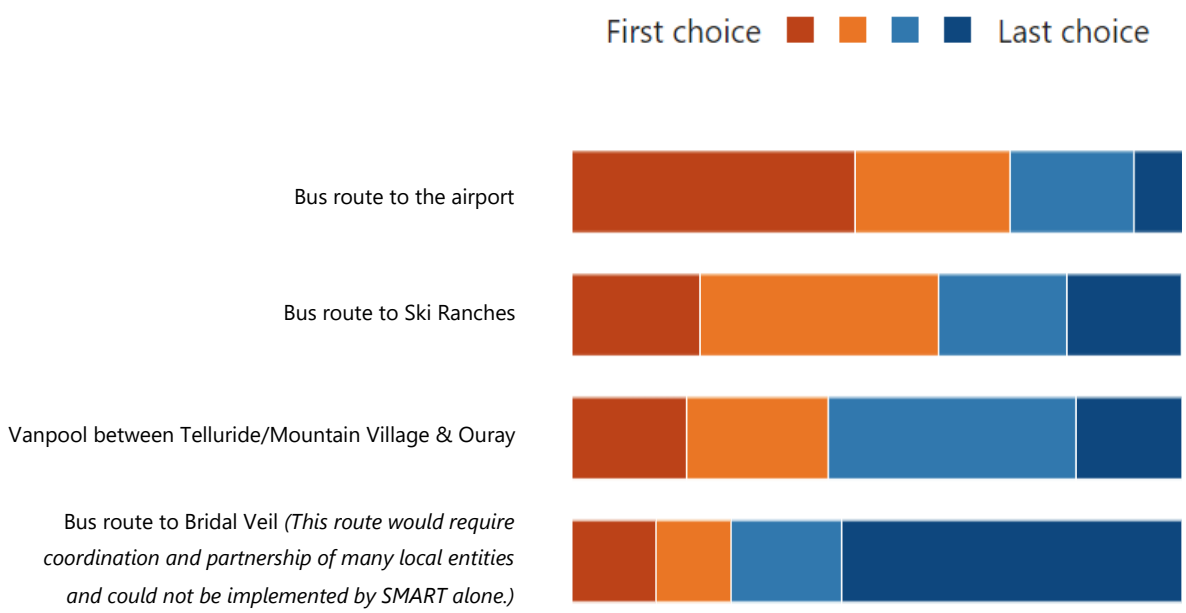
Other comments about existing services were concerned with improved comfort and convenience of SMART's service including:

- Timing and alignment with other services (e.g., Telluride and Mountain Village/Lawson shuttles align with buses coming from Norwood, Down Valley, and Ridgway).
- GPS app that tracks buses arrival and departures as a way to allow riders to shorten their wait times at the stop on the road.
- Issues with the comfort of SMART buses including crowding, no Wi-Fi service, safe storage for skis and equipment outside the bus.

Comments concerning new services comprised 11% of responses (9 comments). These responses have been included in the total results for question 10 which is about new services.

9. Rank your priorities for potential new services for SMART to operate from 1-most important to you to 4-least important to you.[3]

(Note: SMART is currently working to add a new route between Montrose and Telluride which is scheduled to begin service in 2024).



[3] Question asked online and on the interactive board.

10. What other priorities do you have for new bus services? (open ended)

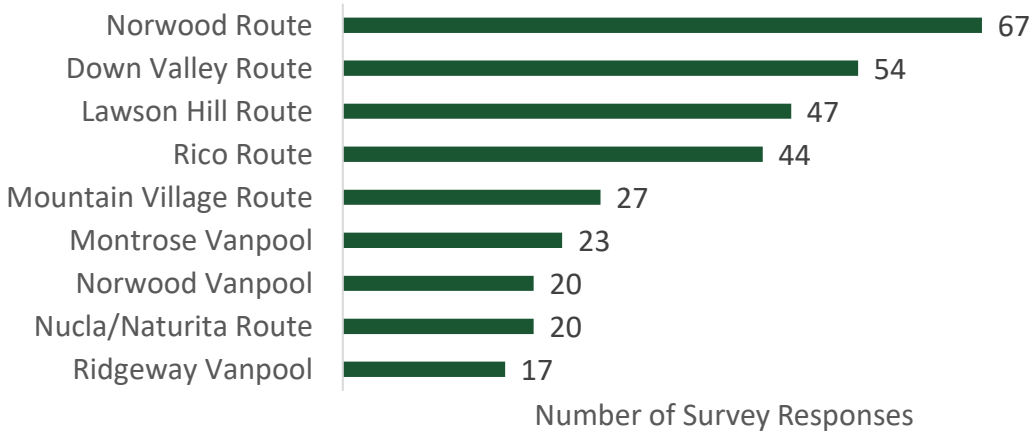
This question received 82 responses. Twenty-nine comments suggested new bus routes to specific destinations from Telluride, see **Table 2** for the full list.

Table 2. New Service Suggestions

Destination from Telluride	Count of Comments
Ridgway	7
Montrose	6
Airport	4
Ilium	3
Trout Lake	2
Meadows Parking Lot	2
Nucla	1
Ouray	1
Rico	1
Aldasoro Boulevard	1
Deep Creek	1
Hastings Mesa	1
Mancos/Cortez/Dolores	1

20% of the total comments on this question (17 comments) were regarding increased frequency of service. The specifics of these comments have been included in the summary of question 8.

11. Which routes are your top priority for greater frequency of service (buses come more often)?



12. Which routes do you wish had expanded times of service (earlier or later service) and what times of day do you wish they ran? (open-ended response)

This question received 94 comments regarding specific requests on existing routes. **Table 2** provides detail on the number of comments per route mentioned.

Table 3. Existing Routes with Specific Service Expansion Requests

Existing Route	Number of Comments
Norwood (includes "Norwood/Down Valley" comments)	34
Rico	20
Down Valley	16
Lawson Hill	16
Ridgway/Montrose	5
Mountain Village	3

Comments describing priorities for Ridgway/Montrose included weekend service, earlier and later service to accommodate 9-hour workdays, as well as an option for part-time ridership (3 days per week.) Comments about Mountain Village were generic, with one comment requesting increased frequency and weekend service.

A summary of specific timing requests for Norwood, Rico, Down Valley, and Lawson Hill routes can be found in **Figure 1** - **Figure 5**. These charts were derived by analyzing the comments and assigning a point to each specific request within each comment. A point was assigned in the appropriate category any time anyone mentioned expanded service earlier than currently provided, later than currently provided, service between the first and last bus of the day (labeled as "mid-day/more frequent,") or weekend service not currently provided for each route. If a comment mentioned a specific route but did not mention specific times, one point was assigned as "unspecified."

Figure 1. Norwood Route Requests

(includes "Norwood/Down Valley" comments)

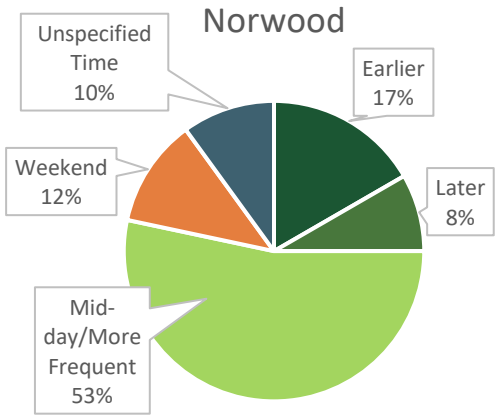


Figure 2. Rico Route Requests

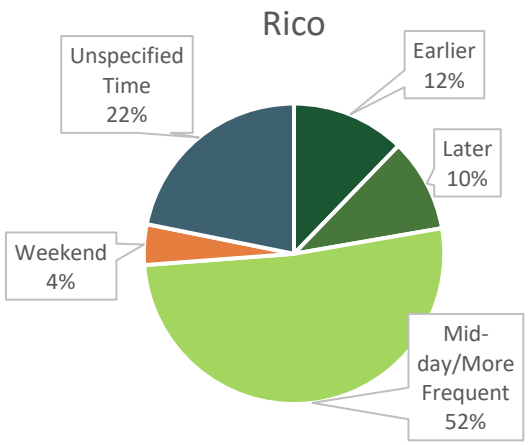


Figure 4. Down Valley Route Requests

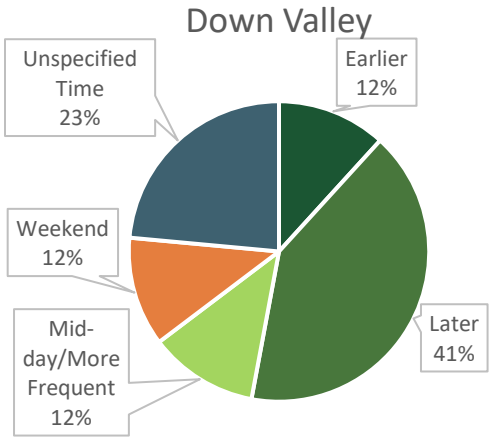


Figure 3. Lawson Hill Route Requests

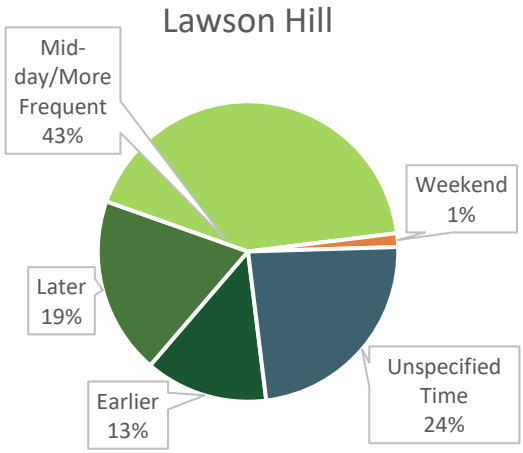
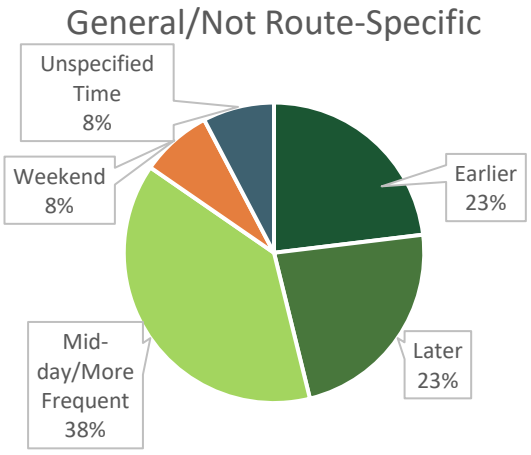


Figure 5. General/Not Route-Specific Requests



13. Which bus stops are most in need of improvements and what improvements would you like to see at those locations? (open-ended response)

This question received 61 responses. Specific stops mentioned can be found in **Table 3**.

Table 4. Specific Bus Stops Identified Needing Improvements

Specific Stop Mentioned
Courthouse
Eider Creek
Hillside
Pine Street
Placerville
Rico
Sawpit WB
The Bivi WB
Upper Lawson Hill

30% of responses (18 comments) mentioned a lack of infrastructure at bus stops such as shelters, warming, and lighting. Five comments included signage and wayfinding issues and timing and pick up issues. Five comments related to timing and pick up issues including requests for more frequent service, issues with drivers not stopping at designated stops, and a request for GPS tracking app to increase convenience for riders. Four comments mentioned concerns of the safety from traffic of waiting transit riders.

14. What locations, if any, would you like to see additional bus stops be located? (open-ended response)

This question received 58 responses. **Table 4** provides the responses in full, organized by requests with the highest number of comments first.

Table 5. Additional Stop Requests

Stop	*Count of Comments*	Stop	*Count of Comments*	Stop	*Count of Comments*
Trout Lake	*6*	CR 5 and Riggs	*1*	Mountain Village Market	*1*
Ophir	*5*	Deep Creek	*1*	Norwood	*1*
Airport	*4*	Dolores	*1*	Ouray	*1*
Aldasoro	*3*	Down Valley Park	*1*	Pioneer Village	*1*
Bridal Veil	*2*	Fox Farm	*1*	Rico	*1*
Hastings Mesa	*2*	Highway 62 and Last Dollar Road	*1*	Rico (north)	*1*
Higher than Upper Lawson	*2*	Log Hill turnoff	*1*	Rico (south)	*1*
San Bernardo	*2*	Matterhorn	*1*	Rico gas station	*1*
Sunnyside	*2*	Meadows Parking Lot	*1*	Ridgway	*1*
Telluride Elementary School	*2*	Montrose	*1*	Ski Ranches 2nd Entrance	*1*
Boomerang Trail	*1*	Montrose Airport	*1*	Specie Mesa	*1*
Brown Homestead	*1*	Mountain Village	*1*	Townsend Avenue	*1*
County Shops in Norwood	*1*	Mountain Village Boulevard	*1*	Willow Street	*1*

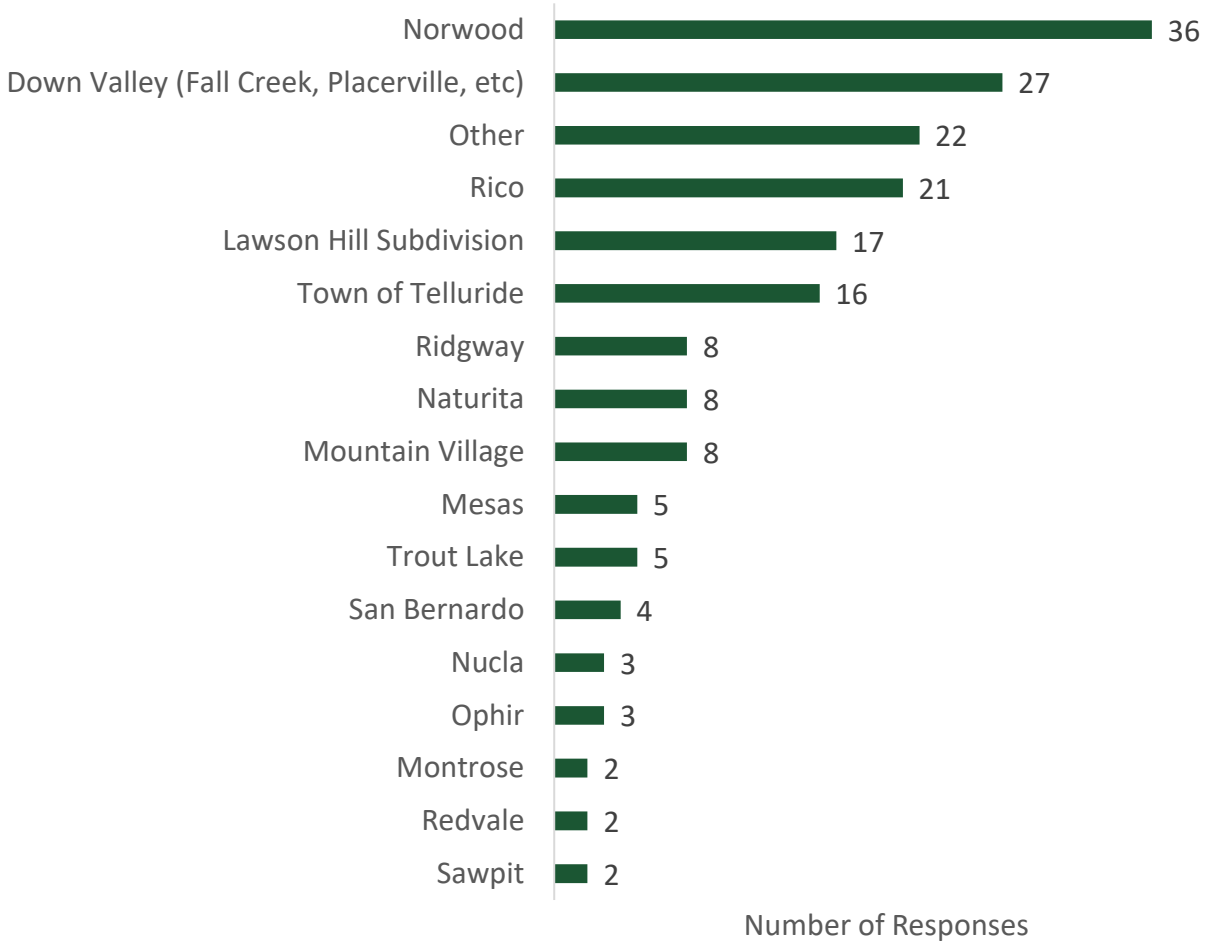
15. What other ideas for improvements would you like to see to SMART's services? (open-ended response)

This question received 59 responses. 22% of respondents (13 comments) had no complaints about SMART's services. Following a theme seen in other responses, 8% requested a GPS tracking app to improve convenience (5 comments). A further 8% requested Wi-Fi on the buses (5 comments) and 7% requested improved buses (bigger and/or zero-emission vehicles) (4 comments).

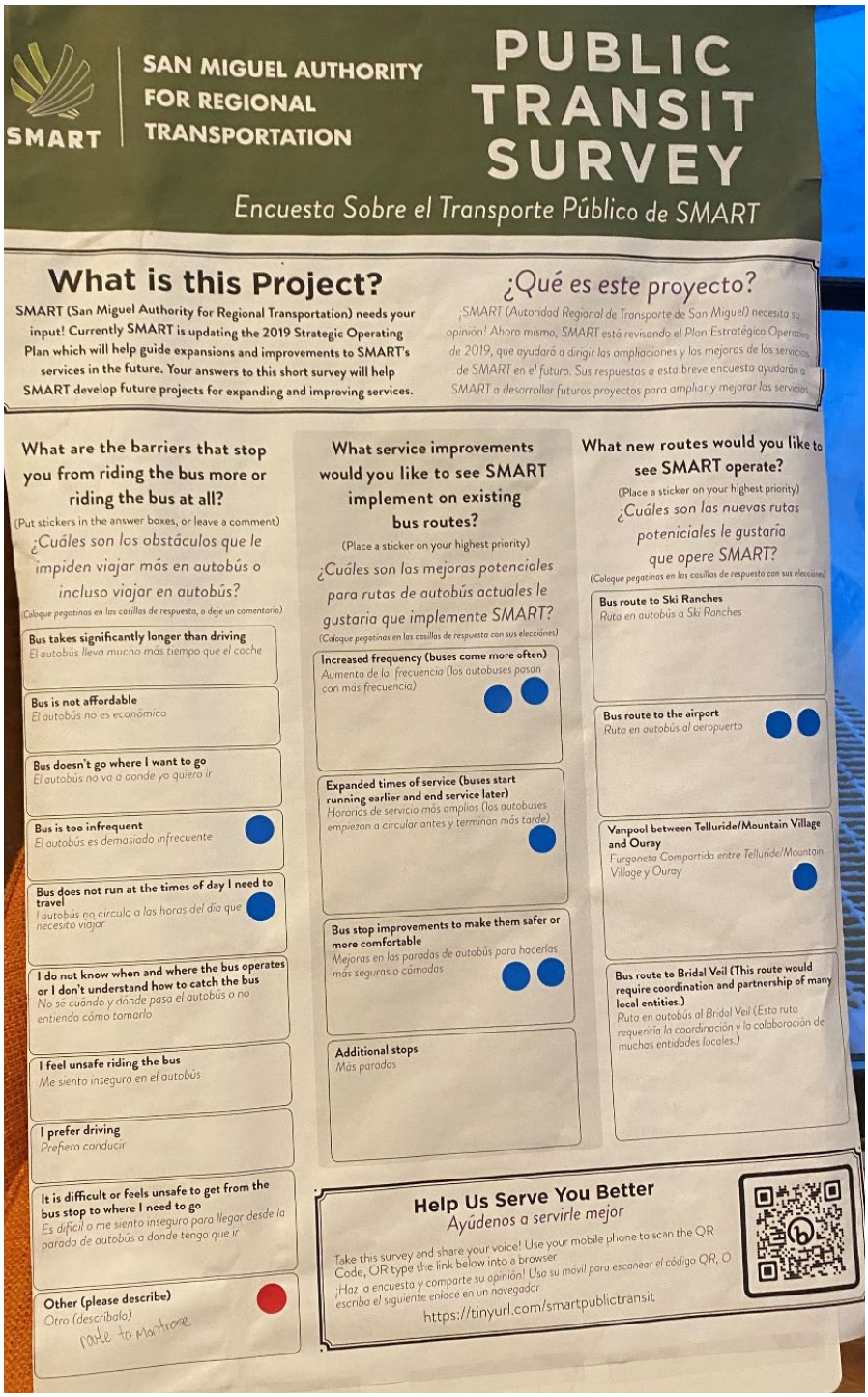
The following categories received 3 or fewer comments each:

- Better passenger behavior
- Fare adjustments
- Gondola-related
- Increased frequency
- More funding
- New service
- Improved maintenance and cleanliness
- Ski storage
- Driver training
- Enhanced stops
- Express service
- New vanpool service
- On-board amenities
- On-demand service
- Weekend service

16. Where do you live?



Appendix A



SAN MIGUEL AUTHORITY FOR REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

SMART

PUBLIC TRANSIT SURVEY

Encuesta Sobre el Transporte Público de SMART

What is this Project?

SMART (San Miguel Authority for Regional Transportation) needs your input! Currently SMART is updating the 2019 Strategic Operating Plan which will help guide expansions and improvements to SMART's services in the future. Your answers to this short survey will help SMART develop future projects for expanding and improving services.

¿Qué es este proyecto?

¡SMART (Autoridad Regional de Transporte de San Miguel) necesita su opinión! Ahora mismo, SMART está revisando el Plan Estratégico Operativo de 2019, que ayudará a dirigir las ampliaciones y las mejoras de los servicios de SMART en el futuro. Sus respuestas a esta breve encuesta ayudarán a SMART a desarrollar futuros proyectos para ampliar y mejorar los servicios.

What are the barriers that stop you from riding the bus more or riding the bus at all?

(Put stickers in the answer boxes, or leave a comment)

¿Cuáles son los obstáculos que le impiden viajar más en autobús o incluso viajar en autobús?

(Coloque pegatinas en las casillas de respuesta, o deje un comentario)

- **Bus takes significantly longer than driving** — El autobús lleva mucho más tiempo que el coche
- **Bus is not affordable** — El autobús no es económico
- **Bus doesn't go where I want to go** — El autobús no va a donde yo quiero ir
- **Bus is too infrequent** — El autobús es demasiado infrecuente
- **Bus does not run at the times of day I need to travel** — El autobús no circula a las horas del día que necesito viajar
- **I do not know when and where the bus operates or I don't understand how to catch the bus** — No sé cuándo y dónde pasa el autobús o no entiendo cómo tomarlo
- **I feel unsafe riding the bus** — Me siento inseguro en el autobús
- **I prefer driving** — Prefiero conducir
- **It is difficult or feels unsafe to get from the bus stop to where I need to go** — Es difícil o me siento inseguro para llegar desde la parada de autobús a donde tengo que ir
- **Other (please describe)** — Otro (describalo) — note to Montrose

What service improvements would you like to see SMART implement on existing bus routes?

(Place a sticker on your highest priority)

¿Cuáles son las mejoras potenciales para rutas de autobús actuales le gustaria que implemente SMART?

(Coloque pegatinas en las casillas de respuesta con sus elecciones)

- **Increased frequency (buses come more often)** — Aumenta de la frecuencia (los autobuses pasan con más frecuencia)
- **Expanded times of service (buses start running earlier and end service later)** — Horarios de servicio más amplios (los autobuses empiezan a circular antes y terminan más tarde)
- **Bus stop improvements to make them safer or more comfortable** — Mejoras en las paradas de autobús para hacerlas más seguras o cómodas
- **Additional stops** — Más paradas

What new routes would you like to see SMART operate?

(Place a sticker on your highest priority)

¿Cuáles son las nuevas rutas potenciales le gustaría que opere SMART?

(Coloque pegatinas en las casillas de respuesta con sus elecciones)

- **Bus route to Ski Ranches** — Ruta en autobús a Ski Ranches
- **Bus route to the airport** — Ruta en autobús al aeropuerto
- **Vanpool between Telluride/Mountain Village and Ouray** — Furgoneta Compartida entre Telluride/Mountain Village y Ouray
- **Bus route to Bridal Veil (This route would require coordination and partnership of many local entities.)** — Ruta en autobús al Bridal Veil (Esta ruta requeriría la coordinación y la colaboración de muchas entidades locales.)

Help Us Serve You Better

Ayúdenos a servirle mejor

Take this survey and share your voice! Use your mobile phone to scan the QR Code, OR type the link below into a browser

¡Haz la encuesta y comparte su opinión! Usa su móvil para escanear el código QR, O escriba el siguiente enlace en un navegador

https://tinyurl.com/smartpublictransit