DESTINATION 2045

LONG RANGE PLAN

PierceTransit

2ND DRAFT

Revised June 18, 2025

A Welcome From the CEO

As Pierce Transit's CEO, I am pleased to present the all-new Destination 2045 Long Range Plan, a shared vision for what a world-class transit system could look like in Pierce County over a 20-year planning horizon.

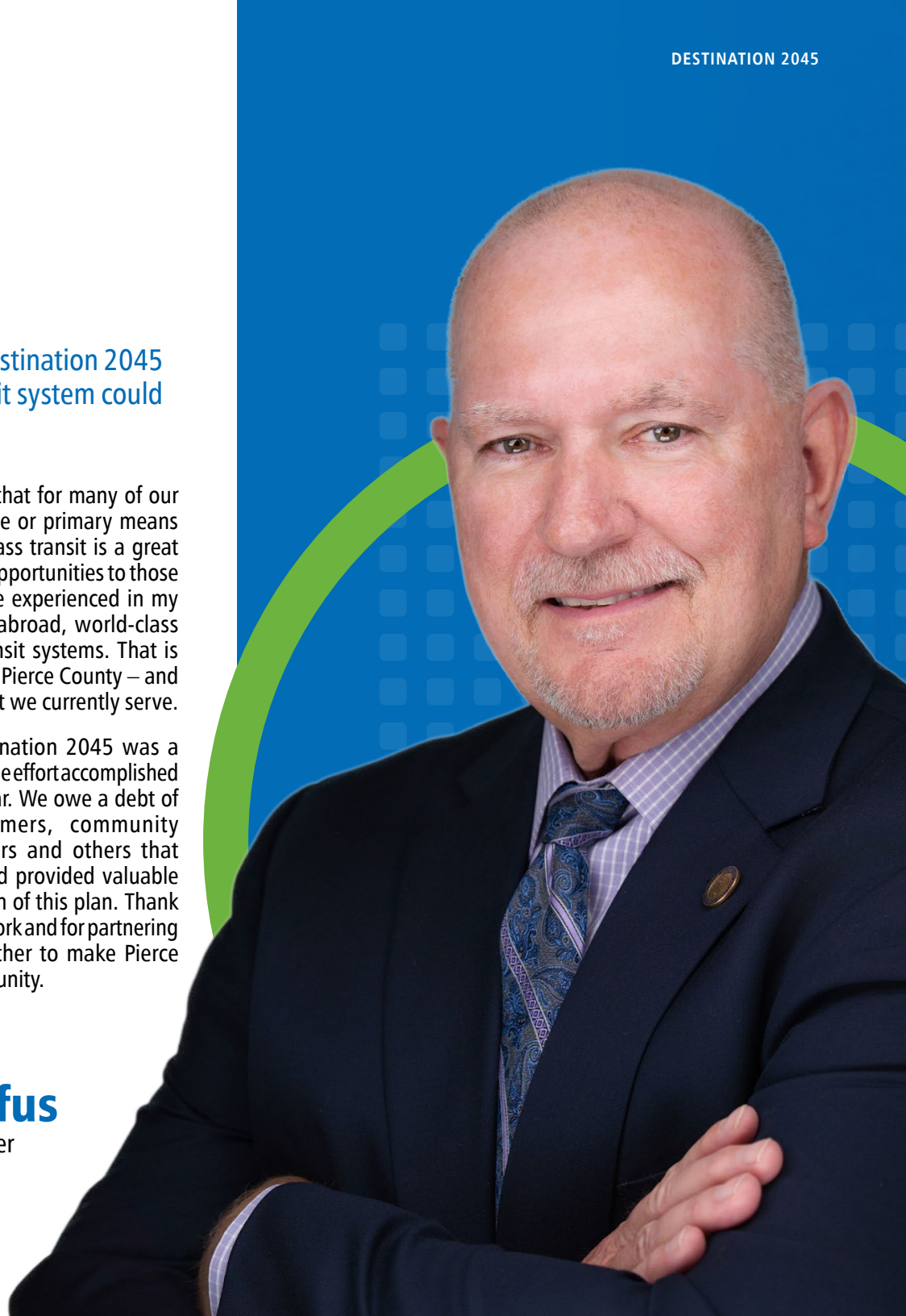
Pierce County is the second-largest county in the state, and our population is projected to grow by 30 percent over the next 20 years. These new residents will likely expect to find a transit system that is frequent, reliable, safe, and directly connects them to key destinations throughout the county. The creation of Destination 2045 sets up a vision for us to deliver on that promise.

Among other key factors, this comprehensive transit planning process focused on areas of the county with the highest projected clusters of housing and jobs. We also ensured that an equity lens was used as plans for new routes were developed or current ones were improved. One thing that should be noted is that fulfillment of Destination 2045 will not be possible without a substantial increase in operating revenues. As you will see in this plan, we will need additional Transit Operators, Heavy Duty Diesel Technicians, more buses (ideally zero-emission), new Maintenance & Operations base infrastructure, and other resources in order to one day turn this vision into a reality.

Pierce Transit understands that for many of our customers, we are their sole or primary means of transport. At its best, mass transit is a great social equalizer that offers opportunities to those who rely upon it. As I have experienced in my travels across the US and abroad, world-class cities have world-class transit systems. That is my ultimate vision for all of Pierce County – and not just within the parts of it we currently serve.

The development of Destination 2045 was a collaborative, communitywide effort accomplished over the course of a full year. We owe a debt of gratitude to our customers, community members, planning partners and others that offered input and ideas and provided valuable contributions to the creation of this plan. Thank you for your interest in this work and for partnering with us as we strive together to make Pierce County a transit-rich community.

Mike Griffus
Chief Executive Officer
Pierce Transit



Transit IMPROVES PEOPLE'S QUALITY OF LIFE.

Transit HELPS GET WORKERS TO JOBS, AND CUSTOMERS TO BUSINESS LOCATIONS.

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Key Terms and Definitions

Term	Acronym	Definition
ADA Paratransit (SHUTTLE)		ADA shared-ride service for people who, because of their disability, are unable to ride a regular Pierce Transit bus.
Bus Rapid Transit	BRT	High-capacity transit designed to deliver fast, efficient, and cost-efficient services by integrating features typically associated with light rail or streetcar systems.
Fixed Route Regular Bus		Transit service on fixed routes and set schedules. Pierce Transit operates 29 regular bus routes.
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	GHG	The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines GHG as gases that trap heat in the atmosphere, such as a carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide.
High-Capacity Transit	HCT	Light rail, commuter rail, Bus Rapid Transit, or enhanced bus lines that provide connections to regional destinations throughout the Central Puget Sound Region.
House Bill 1110	HB 1110	Adopted bill requiring cities in Washington State to provide middle housing in areas traditionally dedicated to single-family detached housing.
Long Range Plan	LRP	The long range plan provides a guide for long-term service and capital investment over the next 20+ years.
Microtransit (Runner) / On-demand Transit		A service strategy intended to provide first/last-mile connections and supplement existing fixed route bus. Pierce Transit's microtransit/on-demand transit service is known as Runner.
Public Transportation Benefit Area	PTBA	A special taxing district created for the purpose of funding public transportation.
Rideshare		A rideshare is a small group people who share their commute to and from work. Formerly known as Vanpool, Pierce Transit's Rideshare program provides vehicles for three or more occupants to share a commute.
Shared Mobility Hub		Places where transit, bicycles, rideshare, micromobility modes, and pedestrians converge to provide travel options for people not using a private vehicle.
Speed & Reliability	S&R	Improvements in transit design, roadway infrastructure, and technology designed to improve transit system performance.
Stream Community Line		Pierce Transit's high-capacity transit line connecting Tacoma and southeast Pierce County on Pacific Avenue S/SR 7.
Transit Development Plan	TDP	The TDP reviews transit agency accomplishments over the past calendar year and describes planned activities over the next six years.
Transit Propensity Index	TPI	A quantitative metric computed to determine the propensity of a rider to take transit based on the density of indicators such as people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and zero-vehicle households.
Vehicle Miles Traveled	VMT	Measure of total number of miles traveled of all vehicles in a region over a given time period.
Washington State Growth Management Act	GMA	Requires counties and cities to periodically review their plans and regulations to address any changes in the GMA and respond to changes in land use and population growth.

CHAPTER 1

Strategic Goals and Objectives

This chapter provides an introduction to Destination 2045, Pierce Transit's all-new Long Range Plan. Destination 2045 describes how Pierce Transit's services will expand and evolve over the next 20+ years to meet community needs.

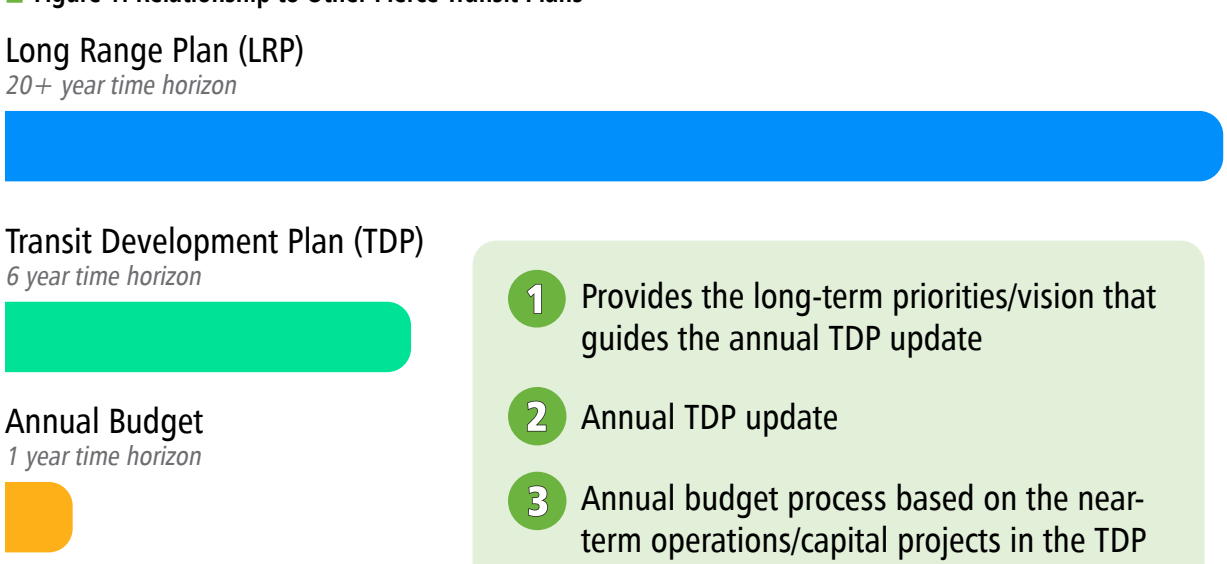
Why a Long Range Plan?

Destination 2045 helps define Pierce Transit's role over the next 20+ years.

The Long Range Plan (LRP) provides a guide for long-term service and capital investments, which inform near-term plans and processes such as the annual Transit Development Plan (TDP) and the annual budget. Destination 2045 outlines the priorities we heard from the community. These priorities guide how Pierce Transit will adapt to meet growth across the region, connect with Sound Transit's expanded regional Link light rail service, and respond to the changing transportation environment.

Figure 1 summarizes the purpose of the LRP and its relationship to other plans.

Figure 1. Relationship to Other Pierce Transit Plans



Goals and Objectives

Seven strategic goals guide Destination 2045. Specific sections in the LRP addressing each goal are linked below:

GOAL 1

Connect With Local and Regional Plans

Make sure this all-new plan works well with other local and long range plans.

LAND USE CHANGE, PAGE 20

GOAL 2

Provide More Diverse Transit Options

Work towards more frequent and expanded fixed route bus and new high-capacity transit options over the next 20 years.

GROWTH SCENARIOS, PAGE 39

GOAL 3

Improve Existing Routes

Focus on improving the reliability of existing high-performing routes and reducing travel time through S&R investments, which can be implemented faster and at lower cost than BRT. All S&R investments are assumed to be 100% grant funded and are not included in the capital cost estimates associated with the growth scenarios presented in this plan.

GROWTH SCENARIOS, PAGE 39

GOAL 4

Focus on Equity

Use equity as a key part of planning, aimed at those customers who rely on transit services the most.

DEMOGRAPHICS/TPI INDEX, PAGE 27

GOAL 5

Learn From the Pandemic

Use lessons learned during COVID-19 to better help essential workers get around.

RIDERSHIP CHANGES, PAGE 17

GOAL 6

Prepare for Climate Changes

Make plans to handle changes in the climate and other resiliency efforts.

APPENDIX E - PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCY

GOAL 7

Spot Future Problems

Figure out what might go wrong or could be challenging as Pierce Transit starts to implement this plan.

CAPITAL NEEDS, PAGE 51

CHAPTER 2

Planning Context

This chapter provides an overview of the existing and planned changes that affect Pierce Transit's operations. The planning context also summarizes key travel trends and predicted land use changes likely to impact how people travel across the region.

Pierce Transit Today

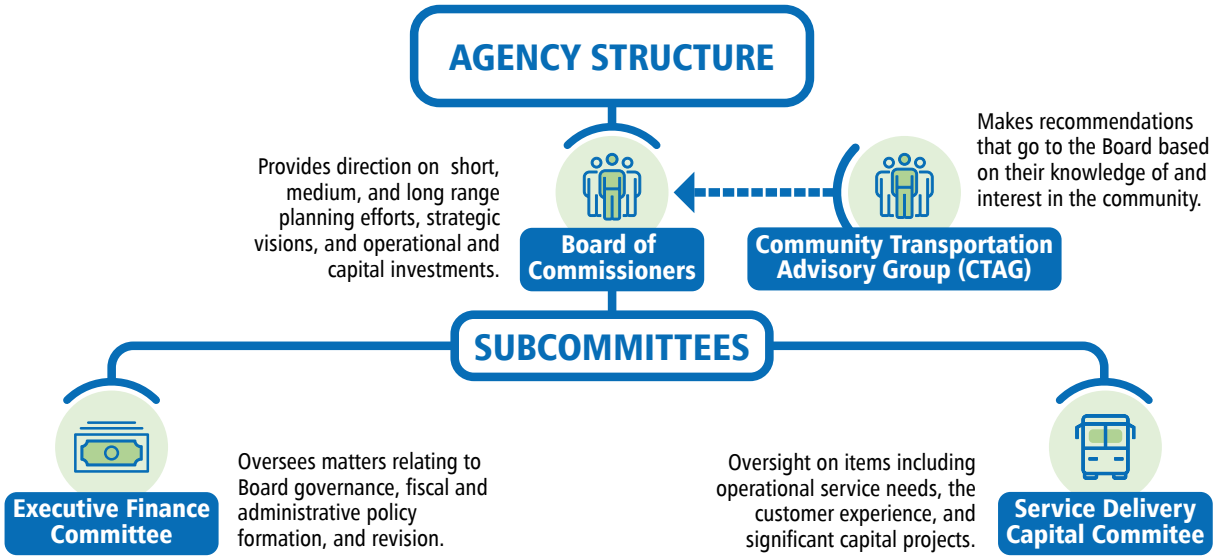
Pierce Transit provides public transportation services for Pierce County, Washington's second largest county with approximately 927,000 residents. The defined service area, or Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA), covers around 70 percent of Pierce County's population, or nearly 300 square miles in Pierce County's urban area, including 13 cities and towns and parts of unincorporated county.

Pierce Transit is governed by a nine-member Board of Commissioners representing communities in the service area, plus a tenth non-voting member representing the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 758 and the International Labor Union of Machinists and Aerospace Workers. Board members provide direction on a variety of short, medium, and long range planning efforts, strategic visions, as well operational and capital investments needed by the agency.

As **Figure 2** illustrates, the Board of Commissioners has two subcommittees: The Executive Finance Committee, which oversees matters related to Board governance and policy, and the Service Delivery Capital Committee, which advises on items like operational service needs, customer experience, and capital projects. Pierce Transit also engages community stakeholders through a chartered Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG) that provides insight into community interests.

The entire county is not covered by the PTBA.

Figure 2. Pierce Transit Governance



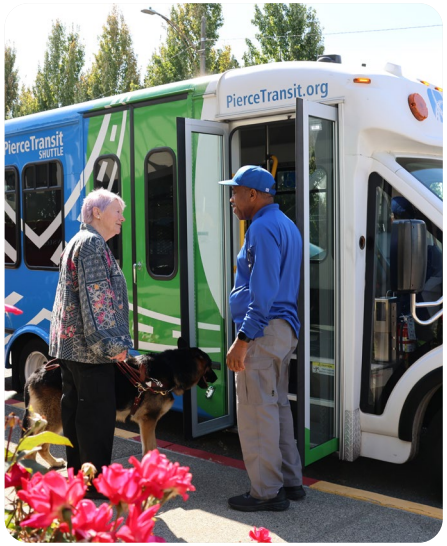
Service Types

Pierce Transit provides four types of public transportation service:

Fixed Route Bus

Pierce Transit runs and operates 29 bus routes on set schedules, plus additional regional express bus routes under contract with Sound Transit.

Learn more at PierceTransit.org/routes



Paratransit (SHUTTLE)

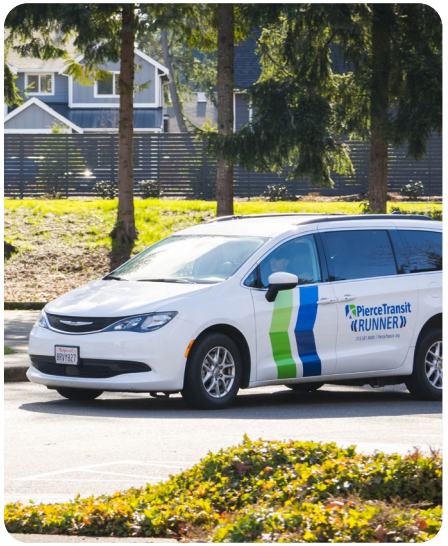
Pierce Transit's SHUTTLE service complements service areas and hours around fixed route corridors by matching operating hours and providing rides, scheduled one to five days in advance, within ¾ mile of any bus route.

Learn more at PierceTransit.org/shuttle

Rideshare

Previously known as Vanpool, Pierce Transit's Rideshare program provides vehicles for three or more occupants to share a commute, reducing travel by single-occupancy vehicles.

Learn more at PierceTransit.org/rideshare



Microtransit (Runner)

On-demand Microtransit service (known as Pierce Transit Runner) is a service strategy to supplement fixed route bus and provide first/last mile connections in six zones: Gig Harbor, Puyallup, Ruston, Spanaway, Tideflats, and Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM). Riders can use the Runner app on their smartphones to book a ride or call the Pierce Transit support number to request a pick-up/drop-off at a specific address.

Learn more at PierceTransit.org/runner

Current Initiatives

Pierce Transit has several initiatives currently underway:

Strategic Plan

Pierce Transit recently completed a new six-year Strategic Plan that focuses on four goals:

- Adopt a customer-first mindset;
- Engage the community;
- Elevate the employee experience; and
- Assure sustainability of our finances, infrastructure, and the environment.

Bus System Recovery and Restoration Plan

The recovery process following the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw a temporary decline in fixed route ridership and changes in ridership patterns, prompted a comprehensive review of current system performance and identified where improvements could be made. In 2023, after significant public input, Pierce Transit's Board adopted a Bus System Recovery and Restoration Plan that lays out a road map for restoring and increasing transit service. In early 2024, Pierce Transit accomplished the first action item in the Plan with the unveiling of South Sound's first high-capacity bus transit corridor that runs between Tacoma and southeast Pierce County on Pacific Avenue S/SR 7. This high-capacity transit (HCT) service is called **Stream Community Line**, and it is a partnership with MultiCare.

Sustainability

Pierce Transit continues to be a leader in transit environmental responsibility. Rather than diesel, most of Pierce Transit's buses run on Compressed Natural Gas, and have since the mid-1980s. For the few vehicles that do use diesel, the agency just switched over to Renewable Diesel, which is made from renewable feedstocks. Pierce Transit is also expanding its electric fleet, and last year installed its first-ever, on-route charging stations.

Pierce Transit is transitioning to a zero emission fleet through the installation of **INDUCTEV 300 kW fast charging pads** at two key transit centers. The first project, recommended for funding by WSDOT for the 2025-2027 biennium, will equip the Lakewood Transit Center with four charging pads to serve four 40-foot battery electric buses (BEBs). This center, located within the Towne Center retail area, is the agency's most-utilized facility, with over 1.9 million boardings from 2019 to 2023 and connects eight local routes to destinations like Tacoma, University Place, Steilacoom, Puyallup, and JBLM. The second project, awarded under the FHWA's CMAQ program for Federal fiscal year 2028, will install four charging pads at the Tacoma Community College Transit Center to serve eight local routes, including the system's two most productive, Routes 1 and 2.

Each project is estimated to cost around $2.8 million and will support Pierce Transit's goal of operating up to 49 BEBs, enhancing service efficiency, and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Operational Upgrades

Pierce Transit is making major improvements to the agency's 35-year-old Lakewood headquarters base, including a new fuel and wash building (opened in 2023), and upgrades to its maintenance and operations facility.

Pierce Transit has also been awarded two grants to help fund operational upgrades: the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) grant and the Green Transportation Capital grant, which was recommended in the State's budget for the 2025-2027 biennium. These grants will fully fund upgrades to charging capabilities; the planned 30-vehicle BEB overhead gantry system at the Lakewood base, plus the aforementioned four-vehicle BEB inductive charging system at the Lakewood Transit Center.

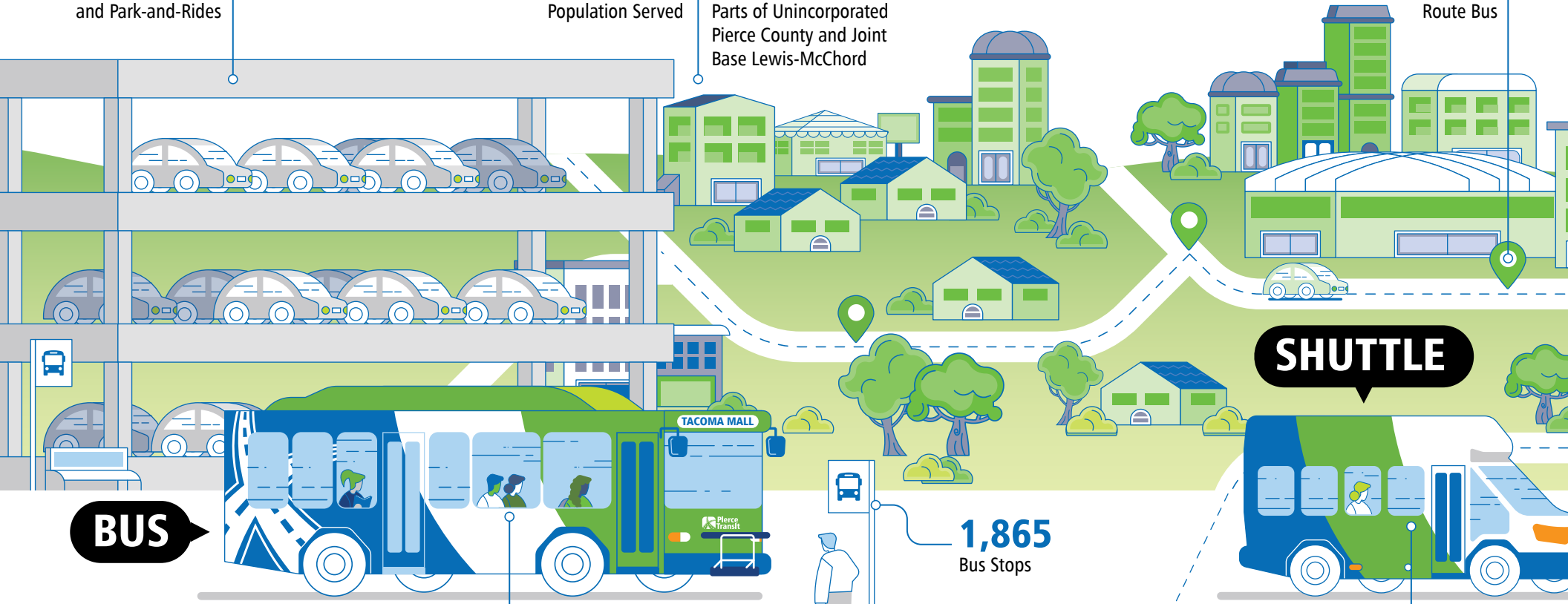
Fast Facts About Pierce Transit *Based on 2024 counts*

26
Transit Centers and Park-and-Rides

70%
Of Pierce County's Population Served

13
Towns and Cities Served, Parts of Unincorporated Pierce County and Joint Base Lewis-McChord

29
Local Fixed Route Bus



1,865
Bus Stops

174
Buses

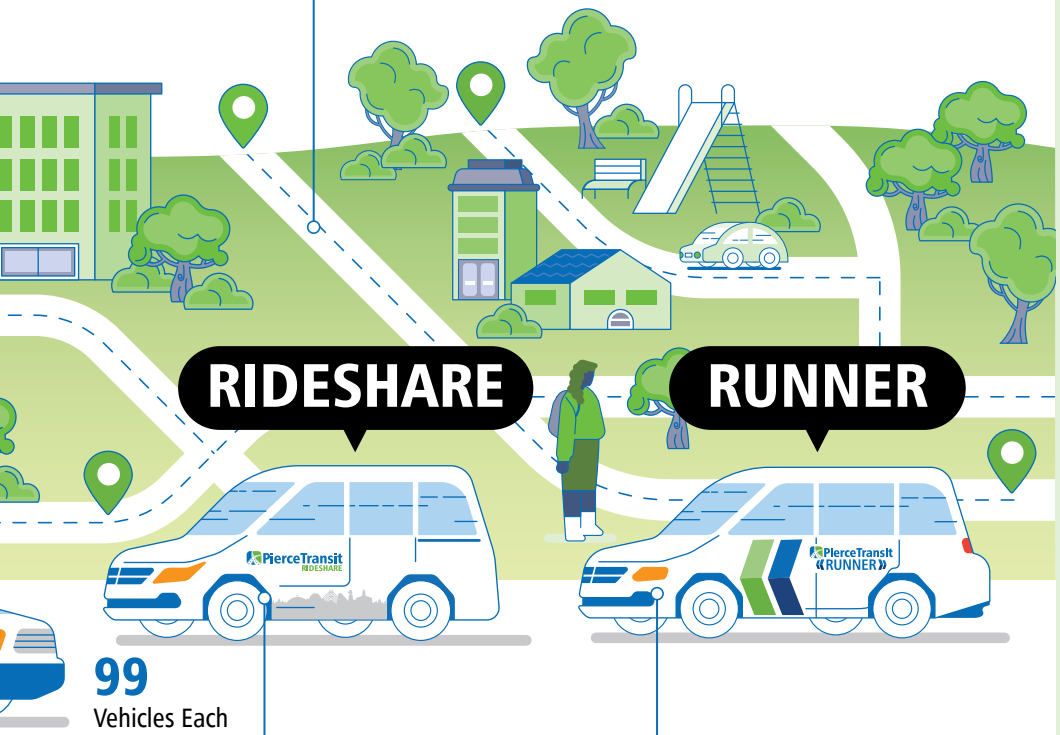
6.8 Million
Annual Passenger Boardings

22,106
Average Weekday Boardings

308,021
Annual Passenger Boardings

1,024
Average Weekday Boardings

11.7 Million
Annual Miles Traveled
(Bus, SHUTTLE, Rideshare, and Runner Combined)



99
Vehicles Each

363,989
Annual Passenger Boardings

1,364
Average Weekday Boardings

52,379
Annual Passenger Boardings

156
Average Weekday Boardings

Budget, Revenue, and Expenses

Local sales tax is by far Pierce Transit's largest funding source. Grants and fares also contribute but are a much smaller percentage. In fact, Pierce Transit collects just 6/10ths of a penny on every dollar spent within its service area, the lowest rate among similar sized transit agencies in Washington State.

Sales Tax *45%* Contracted Services *24%*
Grants *28%* Other *1%* Fares *3%*

Wages *30%* Maintenance & Operations *21%*
Capital Outlay *38%* Benefits *11%*

Our People

Pierce Transit currently has just under 1,000 employees, and roughly half of those are transit operators. In fact, our workforce is only 12 percent administrative employees, and the rest are directly supporting service on the street—bus operators (drivers), mechanics, dispatchers, service support personnel, and public safety employees, among others. Pierce Transit also partners with Sound Transit to operate and maintain the regional express buses that run between Pierce and King Counties. This partnership provides around 300 jobs and strengthens regional mobility.

939
Employees

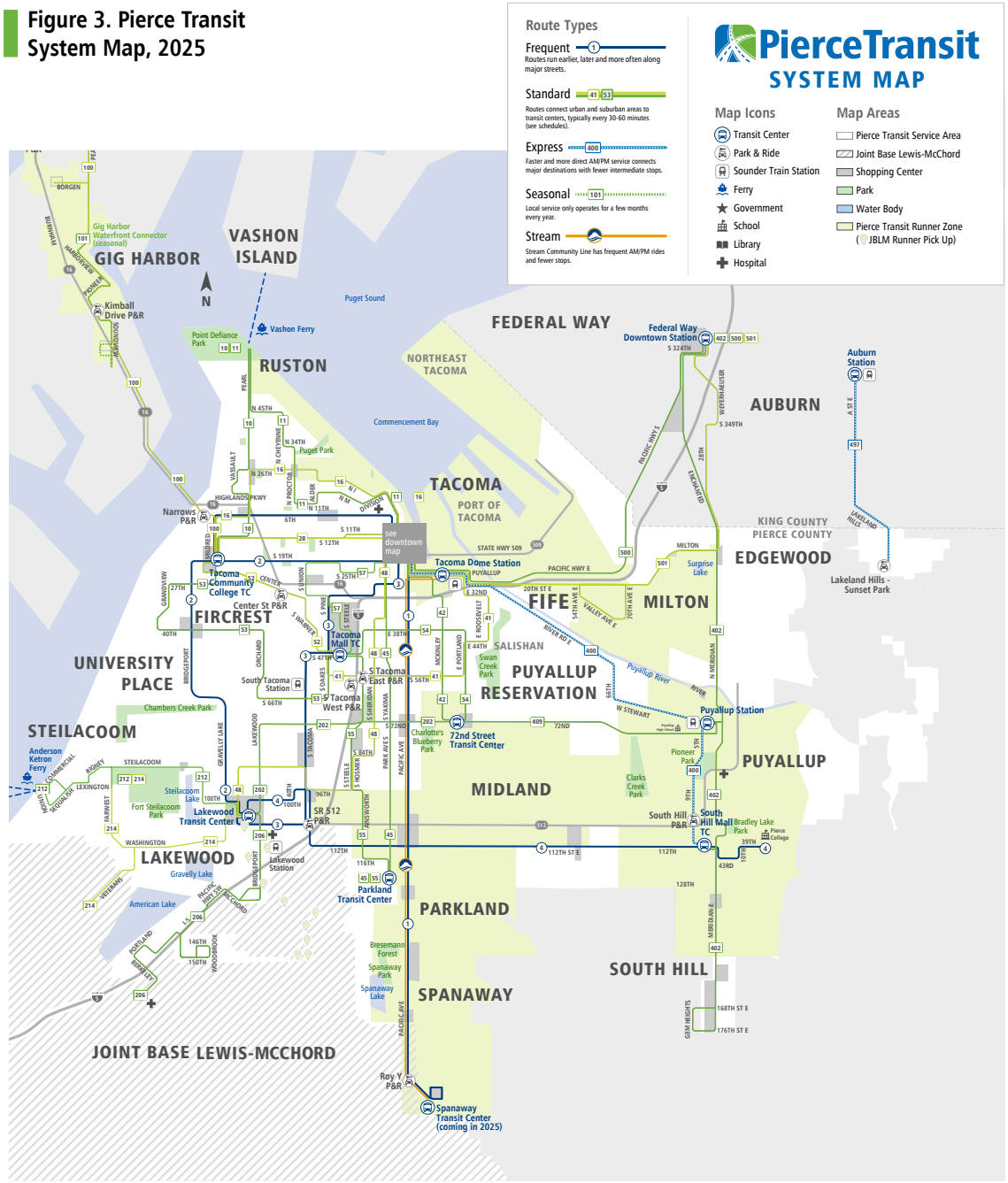
825
Service and Maintenance

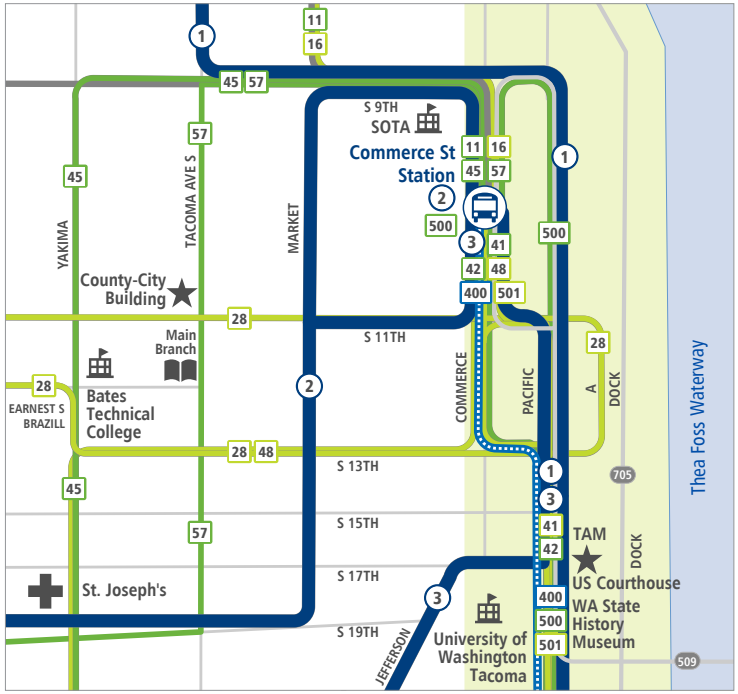
114
Administration

161
Veterans

483
Transit Operators

Figure 3. Pierce Transit System Map, 2025





Downtown Tacoma (Not to Scale)

Current System

Pierce Transit currently operates 29 routes that serve Pierce County and local jurisdictions within it.

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate Pierce Transit's current system. Individual routes vary in frequency and span of service. Over time, adjustments have been made in response to community feedback, observed demand, and evolving service priorities. Together, these routes represent the current system and serve as the baseline for evaluating future growth through 2045.

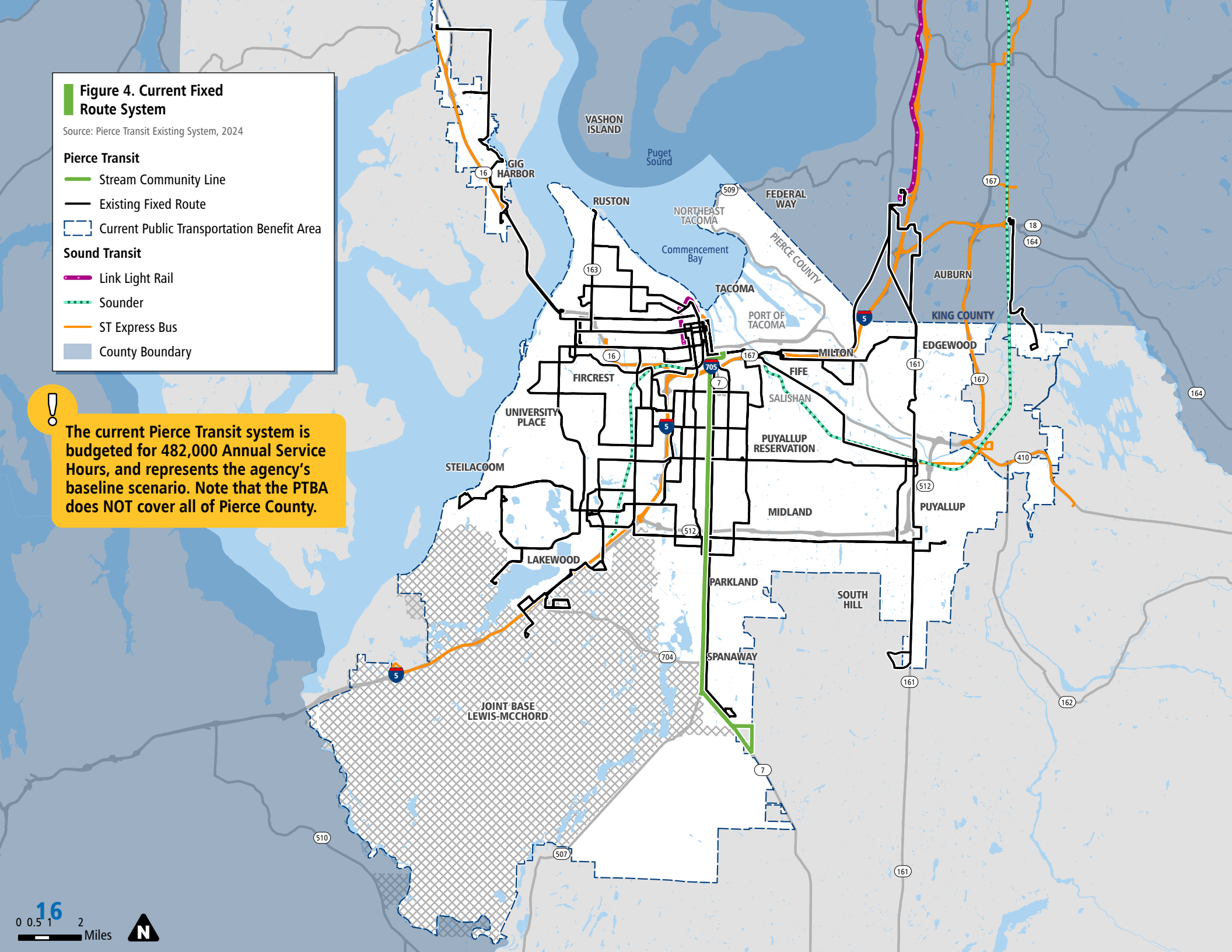


Figure 4. Current Fixed Route System
Source: Pierce Transit Existing System, 2024
Pierce Transit
Stream Community Line
Existing Fixed Route
Current Public Transportation Benefit Area
Sound Transit
Link Light Rail
Sounder
ST Express Bus
County Boundary
The current Pierce Transit system is budgeted for 482,000 Annual Service Hours, and represents the agency's baseline scenario. Note that the PTBA does NOT cover all of Pierce County.
VASHON ISLAND
Puget Sound
GIG HARBOR
RUSTON
NORTHEAST TACOMA
FEDERAL WAY
Commencement Bay
PIERCE COUNTY
AUBURN
TACOMA
PORT OF TACOMA
KING COUNTY
EDGEWOOD
MILTON
FIRCREST
FIFE
SALISHAN
UNIVERSITY PLACE
PUYALLUP RESERVATION
STEILACOOM
MIDLAND
PUYALLUP
LAKEWOOD
PARKLAND
SOUTH HILL
SPANAWAY
JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD
0 0.5 1 2 Miles
N
16

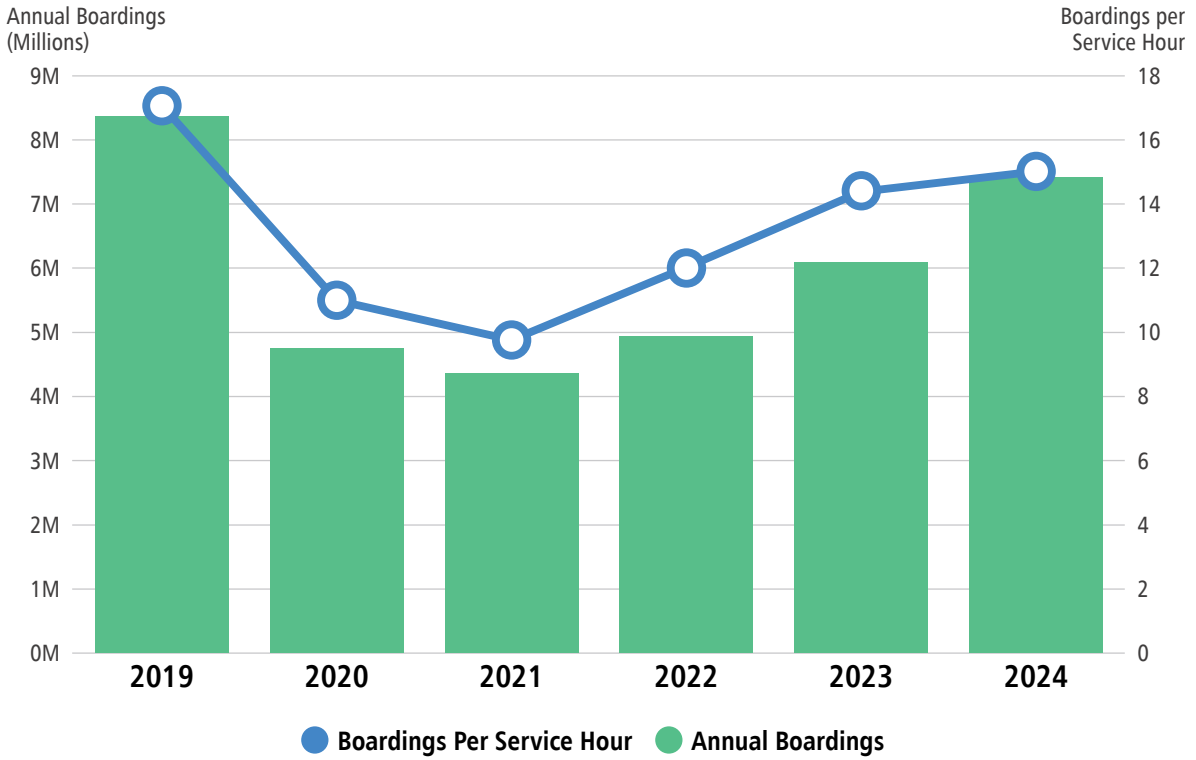
Ridership Change

Since the onset of COVID-19, transit agencies across the United States have experienced significant fluctuations in ridership due to shifts to remote work and changes in travel behavior. Pierce Transit was no exception, experiencing a sharp decline in ridership during the early stages of the pandemic.

As shown in **Figures 5 and 6**, ridership has been steadily recovering in recent years. By summer 2024, systemwide ridership was just 15 percent below pre-pandemic levels and had grown by more than 10 percent since 2023. This upward trend reflects the critical role Pierce Transit continues to play in connecting people to jobs, education, healthcare, and other essential services throughout the region.

It should be noted that ridership changes have been driven by several key factors, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and adjustments to projected housing densities (which account for shifting commute patterns and changes to zoning and land use regulations).

Figure 5. Annual Pierce Transit Boardings and Boardings per Service Hour



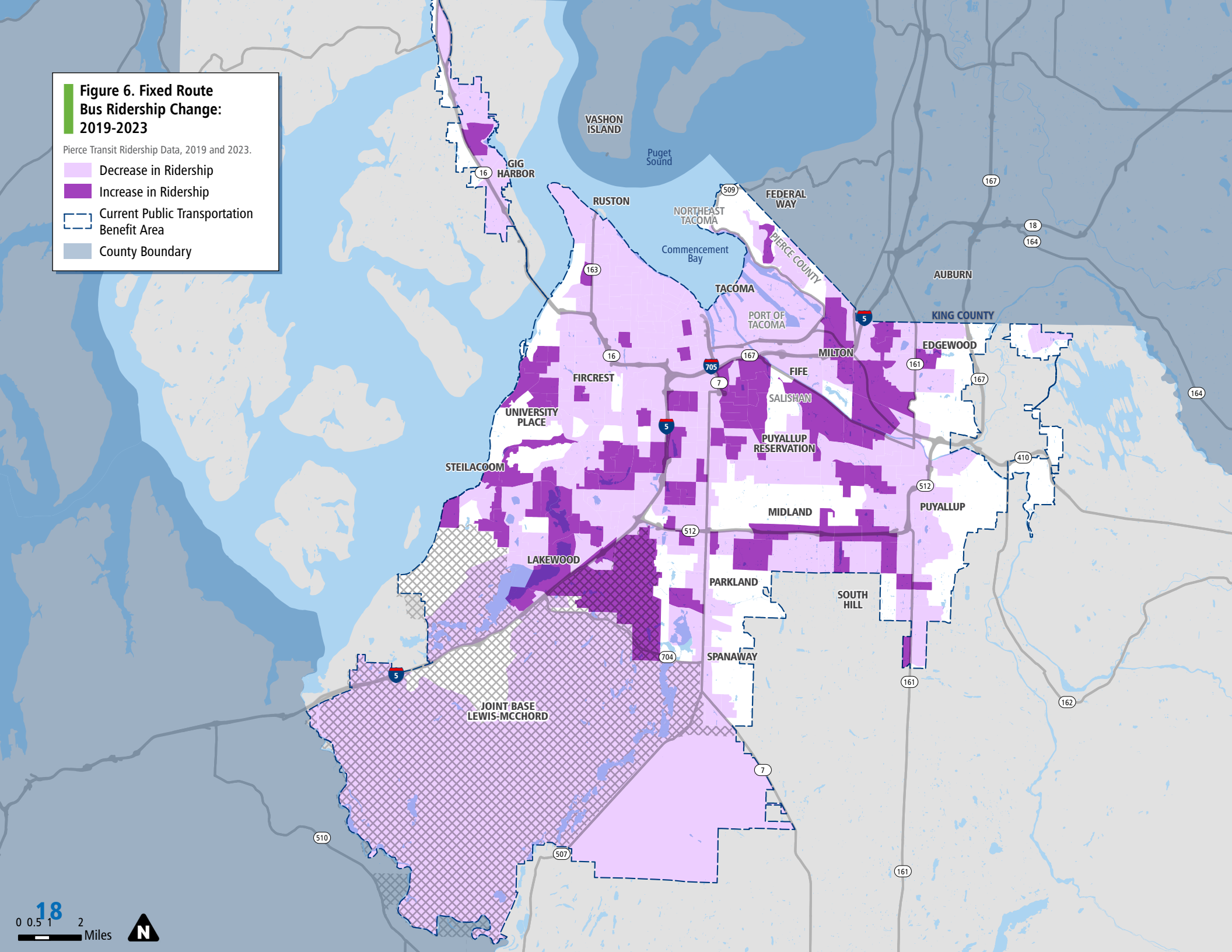


Figure 6. Fixed Route Bus Ridership Change: 2019-2023
Pierce Transit Ridership Data, 2019 and 2023.
Decrease in Ridership
Increase in Ridership
Current Public Transportation Benefit Area
County Boundary
VASHON ISLAND
Puget Sound
GIG HARBOR
RUSTON
NORTHEAST TACOMA
FEDERAL WAY
Commencement Bay
PIERCE COUNTY
AUBURN
TACOMA
PORT OF TACOMA
KING COUNTY
EDGEWOOD
MILTON
FIFE
SALISHAN
FIRCREST
UNIVERSITY PLACE
PUYALLUP RESERVATION
STEILACOOM
MIDLAND
PUYALLUP
LAKEWOOD
PARKLAND
SOUTH HILL
SPANAWAY
JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD
0 0.5 1 2 Miles
N

Land Use Change

> The projected net growth in population and employment reflects the potential to meet growing ridership demands for Pierce Transit.

Population growth in the area is driven by migration; newcomers are drawn by the South Sound's appeal as a more affordable residential and employment hub centered around the major metropolitan center of Tacoma. This population surge is anticipated to continue to be largely driven by young adults who have historically shown a greater propensity for transit patronage.

Combining population and employment to derive a growth per acre measure, high growth (as shown in **Figure 7**) is seen in two identifiable clusters—inner city census block groups of the three major cities of Lakewood, Puyallup, and Tacoma, and unincorporated areas of Pierce County, including South Hill and Spanaway. Additionally, cities outside of the PTBA, such as Bonney Lake, DuPont, Orting, and Sumner also show growth.

Growth in denser neighborhoods and unincorporated areas provide the opportunity for expanded service.

Alignment with Local and Regional Plans

The LRP highlights the jurisdictions—**Pierce County, Tacoma, Puyallup, and Lakewood**—that are undertaking initiatives to accommodate this future growth, including creating opportunities for additional transit service and improving ridership on existing routes.

Pierce County Comprehensive Plan Home in Tacoma

Puyallup 2044 Comprehensive Plan Lakewood Station Plan

Home in Tacoma

Lakewood Station Plan

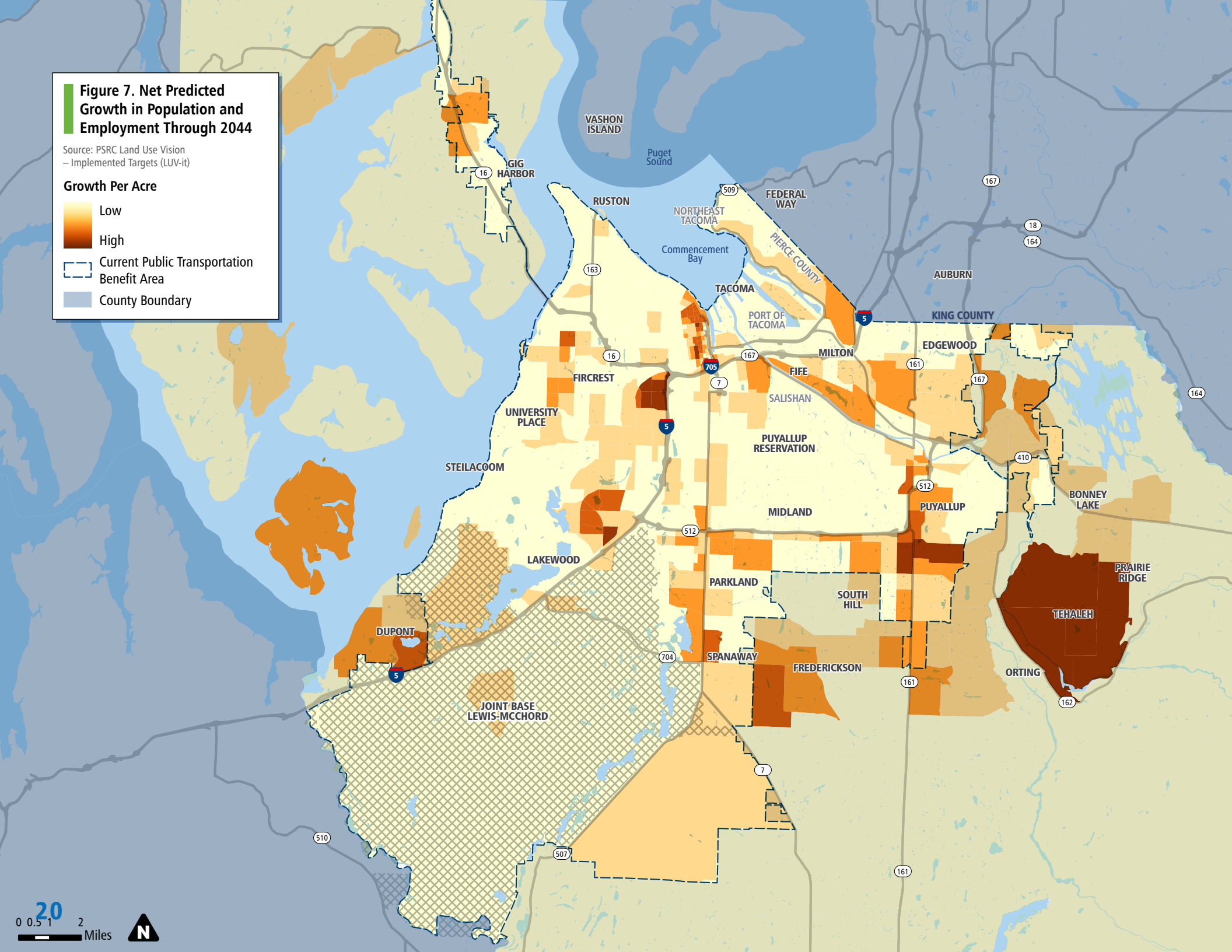


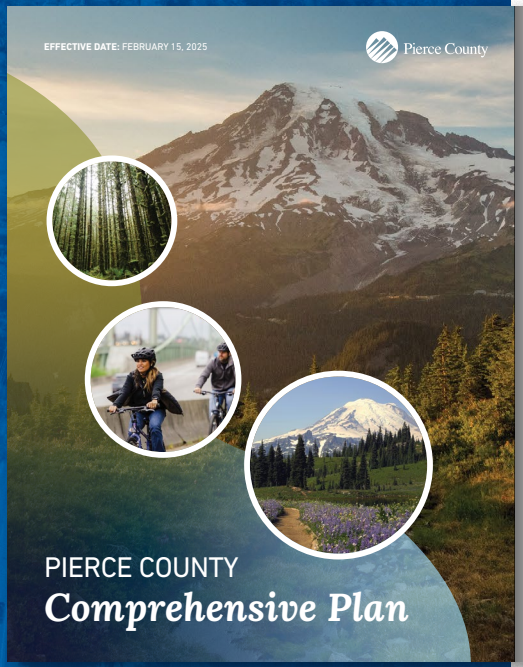
Figure 7. Net Predicted Growth in Population and Employment Through 2044
Source: PSRC Land Use Vision – Implemented Targets (LUV-it)
Growth Per Acre
Low
High
Current Public Transportation Benefit Area
County Boundary
VASHON ISLAND
Puget Sound
GIG HARBOR
RUSTON
NORTHEAST TACOMA
FEDERAL WAY
Commencement Bay
PIERCE COUNTY
AUBURN
TACOMA
PORT OF TACOMA
KING COUNTY
EDGEWOOD
MILTON
FIFE
SALISHAN
FIRCREST
UNIVERSITY PLACE
PUYALLUP RESERVATION
STEILACOOM
MIDLAND
PUYALLUP
BONNEY LAKE
LAKEWOOD
PARKLAND
SOUTH HILL
PRAIRIE RIDGE
TEHALEH
DUPONT
SPANAWAY
FREDERICKSON
ORTING
JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD
0 0.5 1 2 Miles
N

2024 Pierce County Comprehensive Plan

Pierce County's 2024 Comprehensive Plan prepares for the nearly 80,000 additional people who will make the County's unincorporated areas their home over the next 20 years.

To plan for changes in a way that protects the environment and infrastructure, the County adopted a layered network and multimodal approach focused on establishing Complete Streets policies, developing a multimodal level of service for County roads, and evaluating levels of traffic stress for people who walk, bike, or roll.

The Plan also outlines goals for most new housing and jobs to be located within the Urban Growth Area, near high-capacity transit. The new Plan expands past efforts of centering growth around walkable and transit-oriented communities by expanding the existing Centers and Corridors designation to include land within a half mile of high-capacity transit areas.



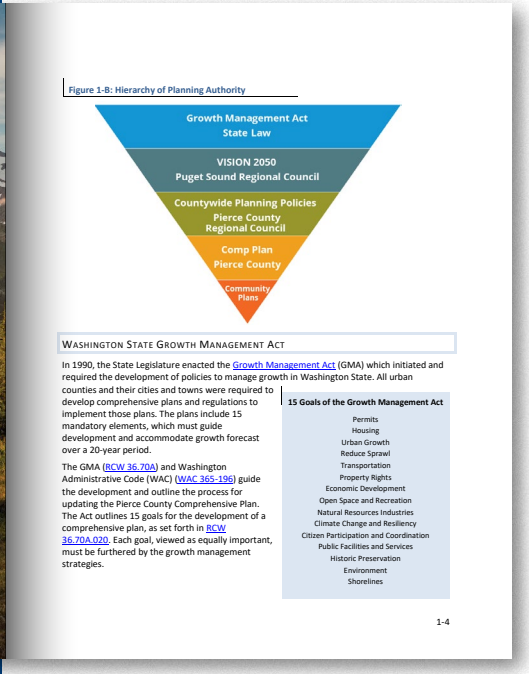


Figure 1-B: Hierarchy of Planning Authority

Growth Management Act
State Law

VISION 2050
Puget Sound Regional Council

Countywide Planning Policies
Pierce County
Regional Council

Comp Plan
Pierce County

Community Plans

WASHINGTON STATE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

In 1990, the State Legislature enacted the Growth Management Act (GMA) which initiated and required the development of policies to manage growth in Washington State. All urban counties and their cities and towns were required to develop comprehensive plans and regulations to implement those plans. The plans include 15 mandatory elements, which must guide development and accommodate growth forecast over a 20-year period.

The GMA (RCW 36.70A) and Washington Administrative Code (WAC) (WAC 365-196) guide the development and outline the process for updating the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan. The Act outlines 15 goals for the development of a comprehensive plan, as set forth in RCW 36.70A.020. Each goal, viewed as equally important, must be furthered by the growth management strategies.

15 Goals of the Growth Management Act

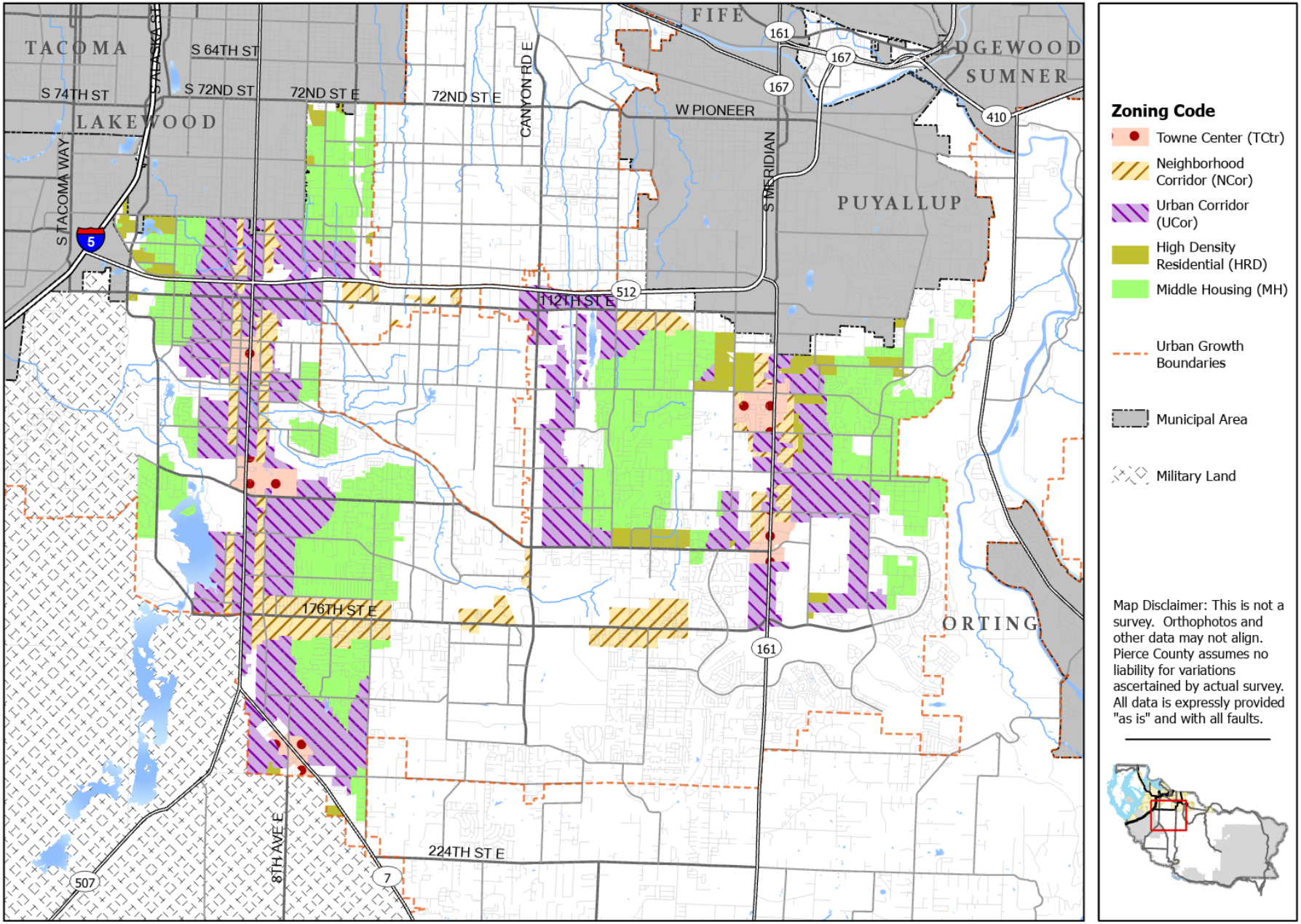
Permits
Housing
Urban Growth
Reduce Sprawl
Transportation
Property Rights
Economic Development
Open Space and Recreation
Natural Resources Industries
Climate Change and Resiliency
Citizen Participation and Coordination
Public Facilities and Services
Historic Preservation
Environment
Shorelines

1-4

Within the new Compact Urban designation, these areas will become the County's high-density, mixed use, multi-modal core, offering residents a balanced supply of affordable housing and jobs. **Figure 8** on the next page shows the County's compact urban land use designations.

Figure 8. Compact Urban Land Use Designation, Associated Zoning Codes

Source: Pierce County Planning & Public Works, 2025.



Home in Tacoma

The Home in Tacoma initiative is a planning effort by the City of Tacoma to promote diverse and affordable housing options within the jurisdiction.

It aims to diversify housing types, revise zoning regulations to promote higher density urban residential areas, and enhance supply of housing (as shown in **Figure 9**). The plan seeks to increase supply in areas well served by public transportation, and reduce parking requirements. These measures provide motivation for increased ridership on associated transit corridors and enhancing opportunities for newer routes, plus greater span and frequency improvements within Pierce Transit's service planning.

To learn more, visit the City of Tacoma's [Affordable Housing Action Strategy](https://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/one.aspx?pageId=180033) website.[1]

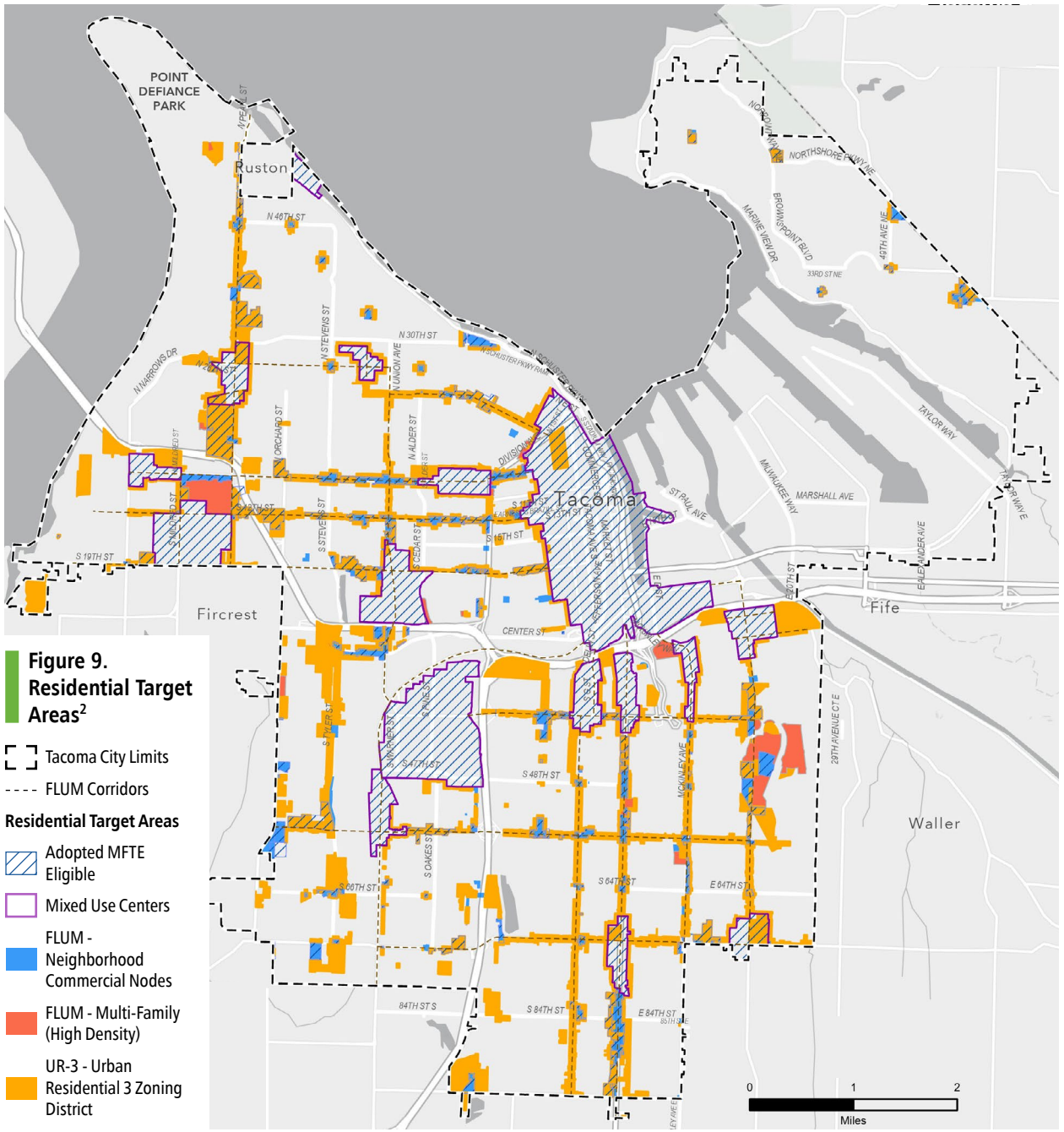


Figure 9. Residential Target Areas[2]

- Tacoma City Limits
- FLUM Corridors

Residential Target Areas

- Adopted MFTE Eligible
- Mixed Use Centers
- FLUM - Neighborhood Commercial Nodes
- FLUM - Multi-Family (High Density)
- UR-3 - Urban Residential 3 Zoning District

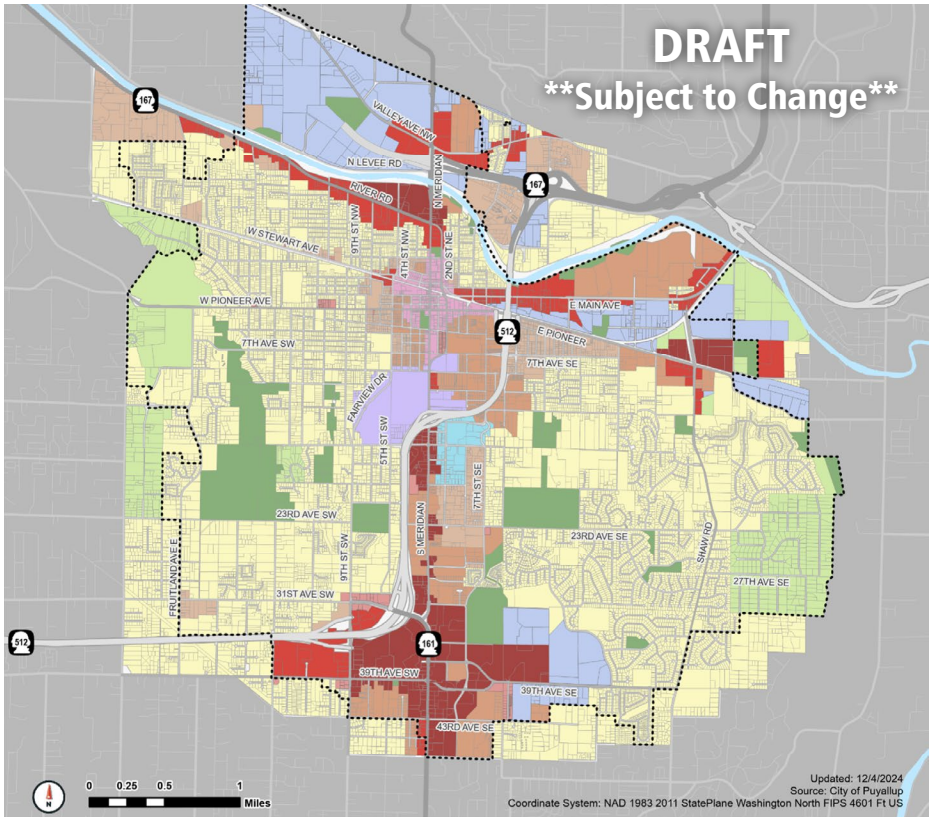
1 City of Tacoma Affordable Housing Action Strategy website: https://www.cityoftacoma.org/cms/one.aspx?pageId=180033

2 City of Tacoma, https://www.cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/Planning/Affordable%20Housing/AHAS%20Planning%20Actions/Residential%20Target%20Areas%20(Municipal%20Code%208x11)%20062124.pdf

Puyallup 2044 Comprehensive Plan Update

The draft preferred alternative (shown in **Figure 10**) in Puyallup's 2044 Comprehensive Plan Update assumes a target increase of 18,500 people, 14,700 jobs, and 7,500 housing units. This represents a nearly 50 percent increase across each category. The alternative is currently under consideration and subject to change.

Figure 10. Draft Puyallup Future Land Use Map[3]



3 City of Puyallup, https://compplan-puyallup.hub.arcgis.com/pages/draft-comp-plan

4 City of Lakewood, https://cityoflakewood.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Ordinance-751.pdf

Lakewood Station District Subarea Plan

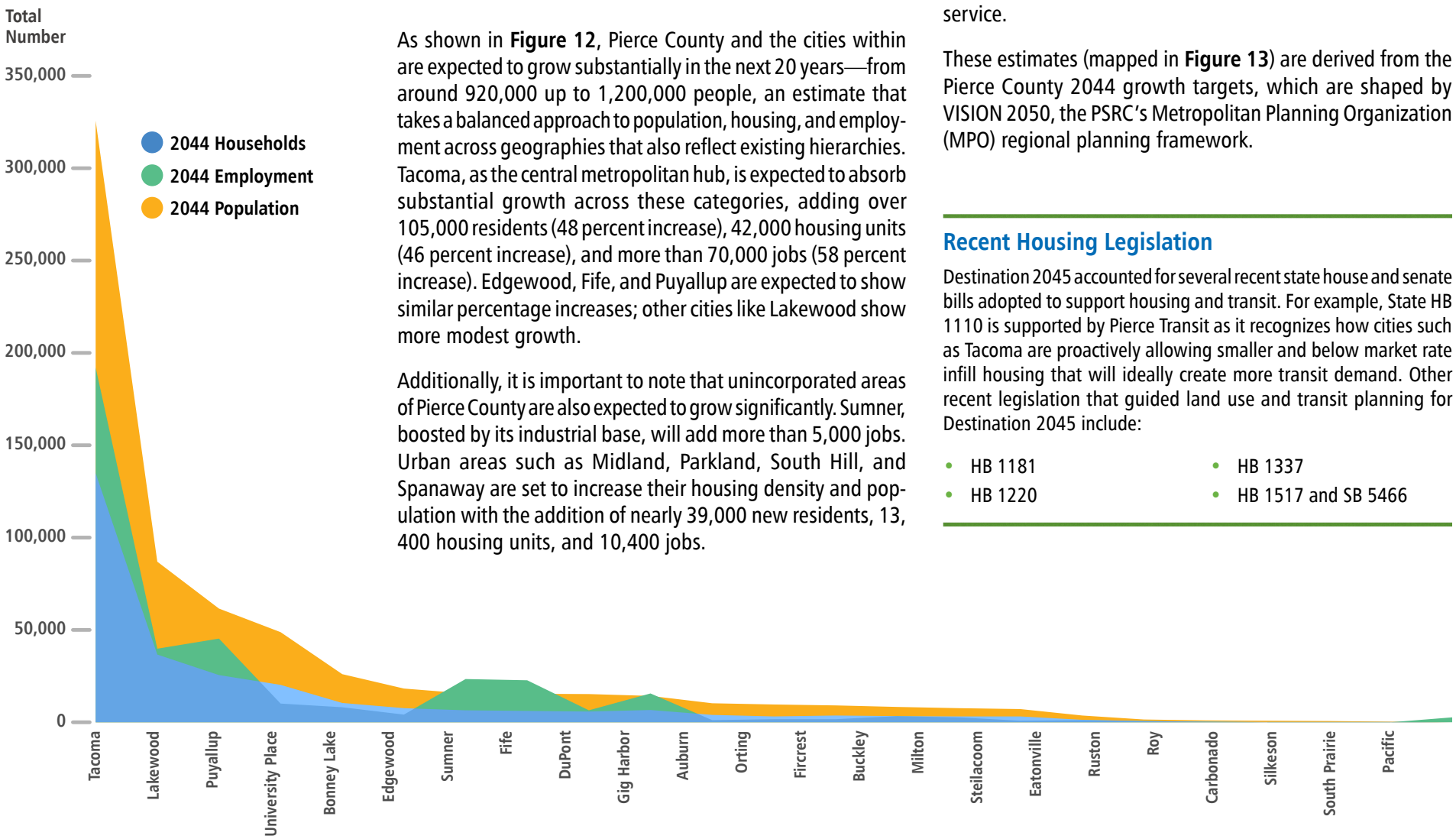
As part of the City's plans to accommodate an additional 11,500 residents by 2030, Lakewood's Station District Subarea Plan sets out a vision to redevelop the area near Lakewood Station to provide more opportunities for housing, business, and transit access. The Plan highlights growth in locations that can add HCT service and support ridership on existing routes. **Figure 11** shows existing land use in the Lakewood Station area.

Figure 11. Existing Land Use[4]

Land Use Growth Assumptions by Pierce County City or Town

Figure 12. Total Population, Employment, and Housing in 2044

Source: Pierce County Adopted Growth Targets, 2022



By 2044, Tacoma, Lakewood, and Puyallup will experience the largest population growth and those three cities, plus Fife and Sumner, will see the largest increase in jobs.

As shown in **Figure 12**, Pierce County and the cities within are expected to grow substantially in the next 20 years—from around 920,000 up to 1,200,000 people, an estimate that takes a balanced approach to population, housing, and employment across geographies that also reflect existing hierarchies. Tacoma, as the central metropolitan hub, is expected to absorb substantial growth across these categories, adding over 105,000 residents (48 percent increase), 42,000 housing units (46 percent increase), and more than 70,000 jobs (58 percent increase). Edgewood, Fife, and Puyallup are expected to show similar percentage increases; other cities like Lakewood show more modest growth.

Additionally, it is important to note that unincorporated areas of Pierce County are also expected to grow significantly. Sumner, boosted by its industrial base, will add more than 5,000 jobs. Urban areas such as Midland, Parkland, South Hill, and Spanaway are set to increase their housing density and population with the addition of nearly 39,000 new residents, 13,400 housing units, and 10,400 jobs.

These targets assume HCT service connecting these communities. With most jurisdictions incorporating a transit-oriented planning vision within their comprehensive plans, growth is expected to be more centralized with potential for expanded service.

These estimates (mapped in **Figure 13**) are derived from the Pierce County 2044 growth targets, which are shaped by VISION 2050, the PSRC's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) regional planning framework.

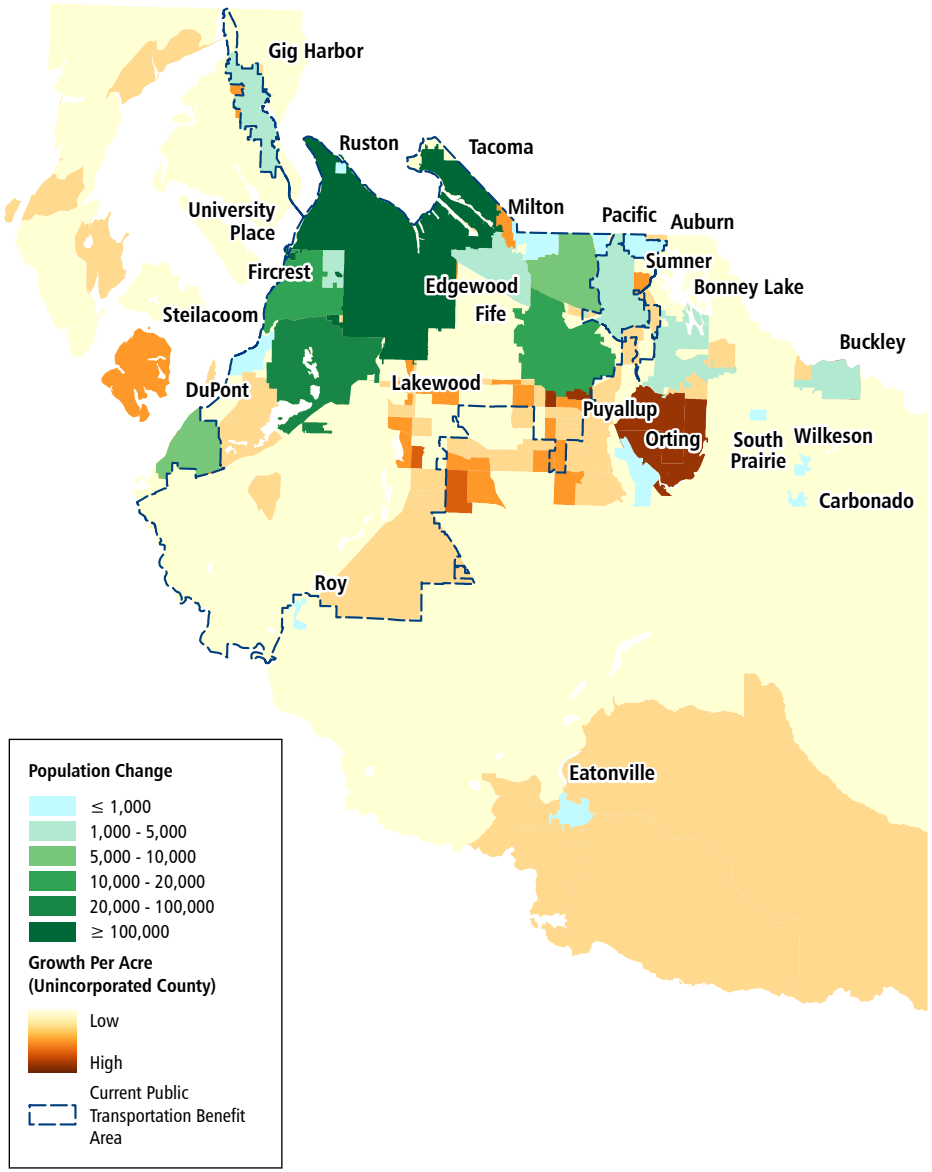
Recent Housing Legislation

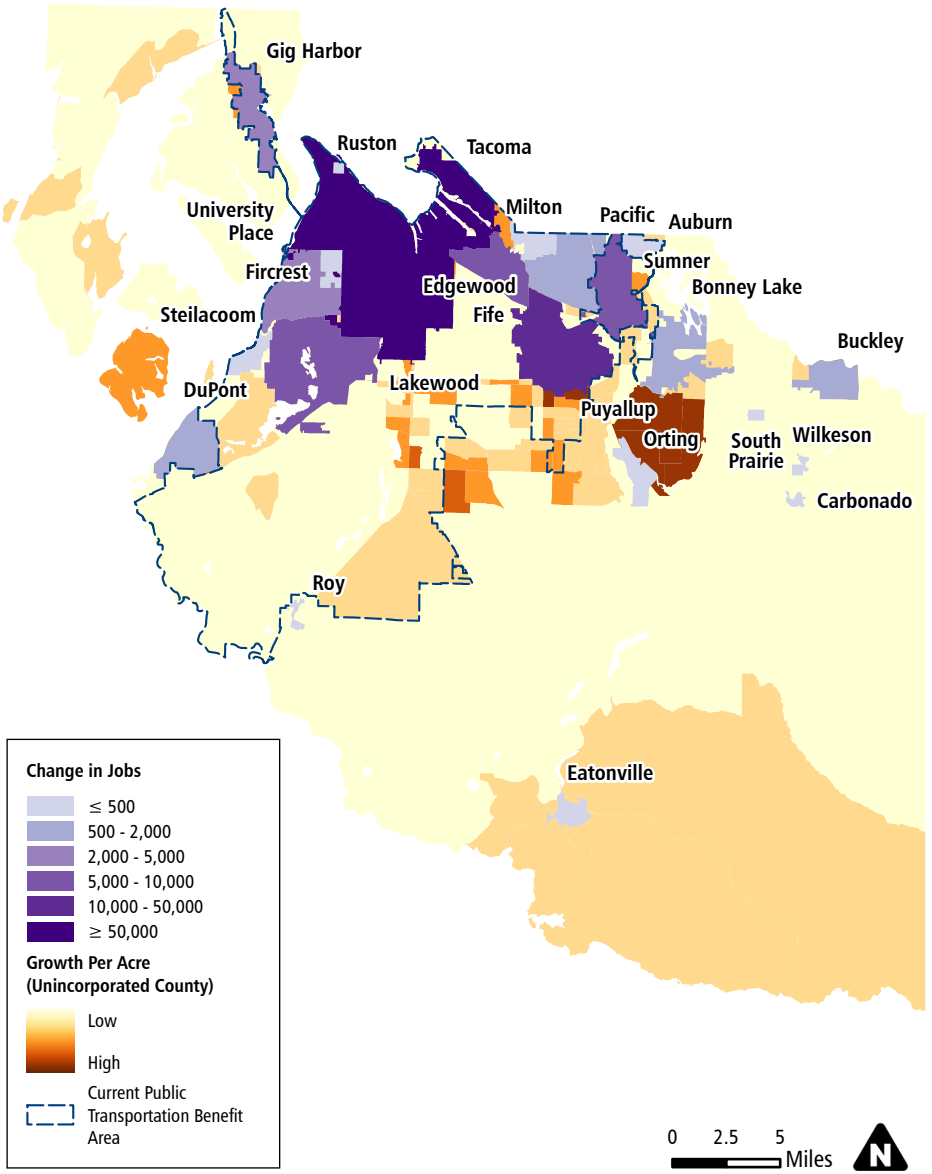
Destination 2045 accounted for several recent state house and senate bills adopted to support housing and transit. For example, State HB 1110 is supported by Pierce Transit as it recognizes how cities such as Tacoma are proactively allowing smaller and below market rate infill housing that will ideally create more transit demand. Other recent legislation that guided land use and transit planning for Destination 2045 include:

- HB 1181
- HB 1220
- HB 1337
- HB 1517 and SB 5466

Figure 13. Pierce County – Projected Growth in Population and Employment by 2044

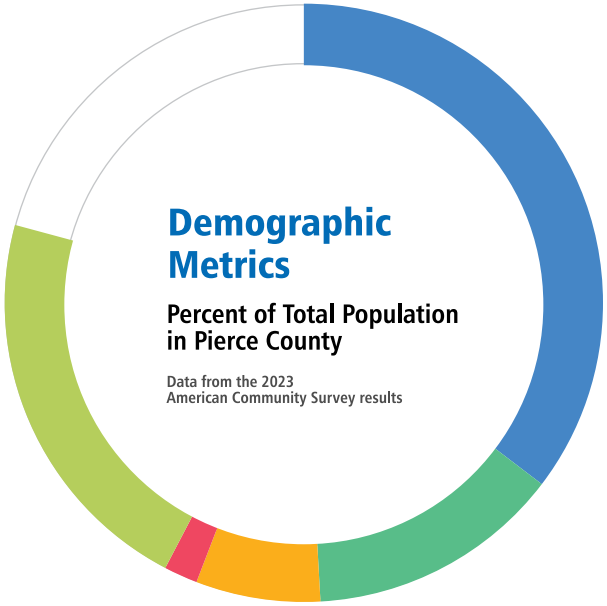
Source(s): Pierce County Adopted Growth Targets, 2022





Demographic Changes

Employment, population, and household growth are key metrics for determining the market for transit ridership. Demographic metrics should also be considered to align new transit service with growth.



Using data from the American Census Bureau for census block groups, metrics such as zero-vehicle households, foreign-born population density, people with disabilities, low income populations, limited English speaking households, and non-white or Hispanic population numbers are used to define priority populations.

Given that many of these metrics are interrelated, this document utilizes the **Transit Propensity Index (TPI)**[5], that is consistent with the Bus System Recovery Plan 2023[6] by Pierce Transit.

The **TPI** is a quantitative metric computed to determine the propensity of a rider to take transit based on the density of three combined indicators:

- People with disabilities.
- People with low incomes (less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level).
- Zero-vehicle households.

The TPI is developed by taking the relative densities for each of these three indicators and assigning each block group a score. These scores then yield a single index that weighs each of these three indicators evenly. The TPI within Pierce County is shown in **Figure 14**.

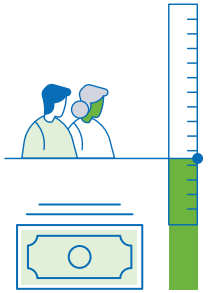
Propensity to take transit is more acute in seven clusters: southeast Tacoma, downtown Puyallup and South Hill, Parkland, and southeast and downtown Lakewood.

Almost 15,000 households

in the service area **don't own** a vehicle.

Almost 15%

of the population is **over 65 years** of age. This percentage is forecast to increase over the next 20 years.



Over 25%

of the population is below 200% of the **federal poverty level**.

Almost 15%

of the population has **a disability**.

5 Derived from the 5-year Amercian Community Survey results, 2021.
6 Pierce Transit Bus System Recovery Plan Final Report, December 2023, https://piercetransit.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Bus-System-Recovery-Plan_Final-Report-15Dec2023.pdf

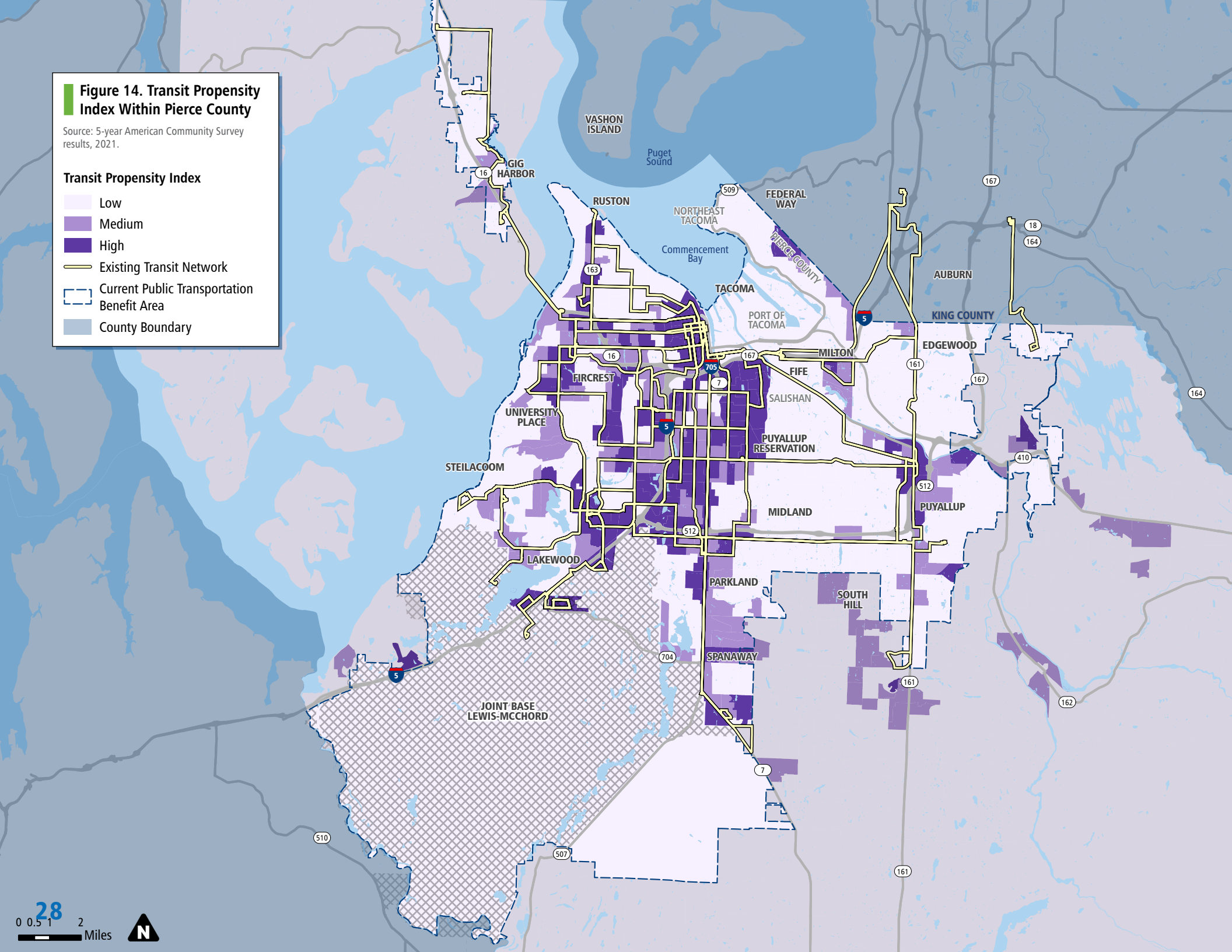


Figure 14. Transit Propensity Index Within Pierce County
Source: 5-year American Community Survey results, 2021.
Transit Propensity Index
Low
Medium
High
Existing Transit Network
Current Public Transportation Benefit Area
County Boundary
VASHON ISLAND
Puget Sound
GIG HARBOR
RUSTON
NORTHEAST TACOMA
FEDERAL WAY
Commencement Bay
TACOMA
PIERCE COUNTY
AUBURN
PORT OF TACOMA
KING COUNTY
EDGEWOOD
MILTON
FIFE
FIRCREST
SALISHAN
UNIVERSITY PLACE
PUYALLUP RESERVATION
STEILACOOM
MIDLAND
PUYALLUP
LAKEWOOD
PARKLAND
SOUTH HILL
SPANAWAY
JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD
0 0.5 1 2 Miles
N

Transportation System Change

Several HCT and regional trail projects (shown in **Figure 15**) are planned to serve Pierce County by 2045. HCT provides connections to regional destinations throughout the Puget Sound region through fast and reliable transit service, such as light rail, commuter rail, and BRT. Regional trail projects help riders connect to the broader transit system through nonmotorized paths that are safe for all ages and abilities.

Stream System

PIERCE TRANSIT

Pending funding availability, Pierce Transit is planning to further improve the current Stream Community Line and introduce additional enhanced Stream services on Route 2 and Route 3.

Planned Regional Projects with Agency Partners

SOUND TRANSIT

Extension of Link Light Rail to Tacoma Dome Station

This route would connect riders to Federal Way, Sea-Tac International Airport, Seattle, and north to Lynnwood and Everett. Completion of the Tacoma Dome Extension is planned for 2035.

SOUND TRANSIT

Extension of the Tacoma Link (T Line) Light Rail West to Tacoma Community College

This route would provide a dedicated and reliable connection from Tacoma Community College to Downtown Tacoma and regional light rail and commuter rail. Completion of the extension is planned for 2039.

SOUND TRANSIT

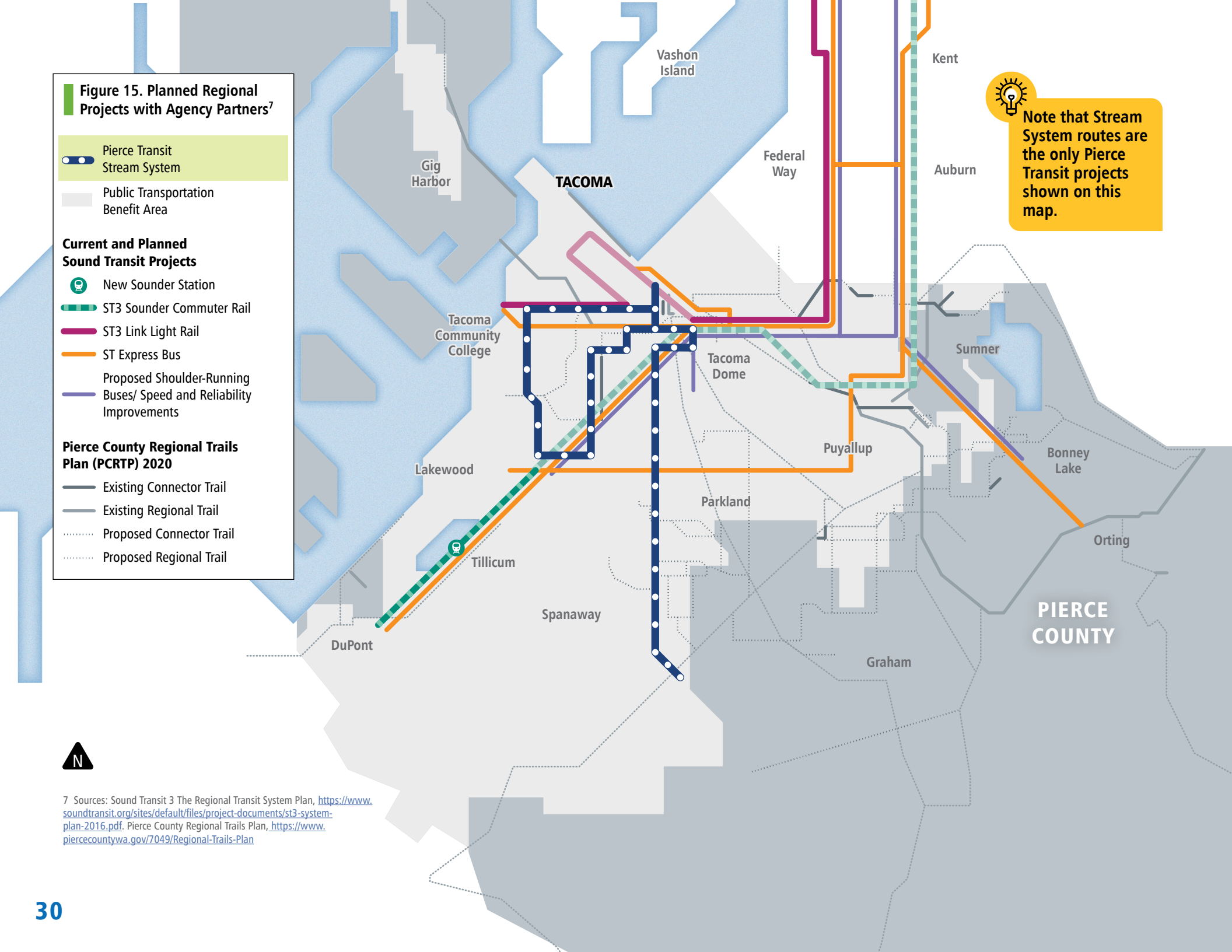
Extension of Sounder Commuter Rail to DuPont

This route would connect riders via heavy commuter rail to Tacoma, Tukwila, and Downtown Seattle and is planned for completion by 2045.

PIERCE COUNTY

Expansion of the Pierce County Regional Trails Network

Trail expansions as outlined in the County's Regional Trails Plan adopted in 2020.



7 Sources: Sound Transit 3 The Regional Transit System Plan, https://www.soundtransit.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/st3-system-plan-2016.pdf. Pierce County Regional Trails Plan, https://www.piercecountywa.gov/7049/Regional-Trails-Plan

Technological Changes

Technological advancements are transforming how transit services are delivered. Innovations such as on-demand transit and Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems are reshaping service delivery, and enhancing the overall customer experience. These technologies provide new opportunities for transit agencies to offer more efficient, flexible, and user-friendly services. Customers now expect seamless, on-demand transit solutions that can adapt to their changing needs and improve the convenience and accessibility of public transportation.

On-Demand Transit

On-demand transit is emerging as a promising solution for transit agencies, offering flexible, user-responsive services that can effectively serve lower-density areas where traditional fixed route bus may be less efficient.

This innovative approach leverages technology to provide seamless, real-time rides tailored to individual needs, thereby enhancing accessibility and convenience for residents who rely on public transportation. However, the implementation of on-demand transit also comes with challenges, notably higher costs per rider served compared to conventional transit systems. Despite these costs, the adaptability and potential to meet the needs of underserved areas make on-demand transit a valuable addition to the array of public transportation options.

First introduced in 2021, Runner is an on-demand transit option offered by Pierce Transit in select areas such as Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Puyallup, Ruston, Spanaway, and the Tideflats area. However, historical costs to serve each rider have averaged between $50 and $70, compared to less than $15 per fixed route bus rider.

Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming how public transportation agencies plan, operate, and deliver services. AI tools can process large volumes of data in real time, helping agencies improve efficiency, reliability, and the rider experience.

In transit planning, AI-powered analytics can identify travel patterns, optimize routing and scheduling, and support more responsive service adjustments based on demand. On the operations side, AI can be used to predict maintenance needs, reduce vehicle downtime, and enhance safety by identifying potential mechanical issues before they become critical.

AI also plays a growing role in customer service, powering chatbots, trip planning tools, and real-time alerts that help riders navigate the system with greater ease. As agencies continue to explore these emerging technologies, AI offers promising opportunities to enhance system performance and deliver smarter, more adaptable transit service.

Technological Changes (Runner)

Runner's goal is to provide first/last-mile connections where there is no existing bus service, including access to transit stops and centers, and bus and rail. Runner fills gaps in Pierce Transit's network, supports or replaces underperforming routes, and provides riders with more transit options during off-peak hours.

Each Runner service has its own zone or designated curb-to-curb pick-up/drop-off spots where a rider can travel within that zone and make connections between a rider's starting point and other transit services.

Pierce Transit offers Runner services in six zones (as shown in **Figure 16**): Gig Harbor, JBLM (stop-to-stop), Puyallup, Ruston, Spanaway, and Tideflats. Runner is designed as a supplementary service to fixed routes with the intent to provide critical first/last-mile connectivity.

Runner is meant to supplement fixed route bus service, not replace it.

Frequently Asked Questions about Runner

1. How were the current six zones determined?

Runner was introduced in areas where a fixed bus route experienced perpetual low ridership, and/or was not feasible to operate due to constraints like topography, narrow or curvilinear roadways, or geographic barriers like entering through a gated and guarded military base.

2. Why isn't it simple to add more zones, especially to areas that are currently minimally or poorly served by fixed route?

Pierce Transit is constrained by an agreement with its union (ATU Local 758) to not operate more than six Runner microtransit zones simultaneously.

3. Why is Runner more expensive to operate?

Runner costs more per person than bus because it transports fewer customers. The Runner currently costs $61 per ride, while the cost per bus boarding is $13.

4. Can we replace more fixed route bus with Runner service?

Runner is a difficult service to scale to meet the unique needs of any given community or ridership base, while also staying within Pierce Transit's budget constraints. As a microtransit system, Runner is not intended (nor can it be feasible) to serve the same level of passengers as fixed route bus service; in 2024, Runner only provided 0.007% of total boardings of all Pierce Transit modes combined.

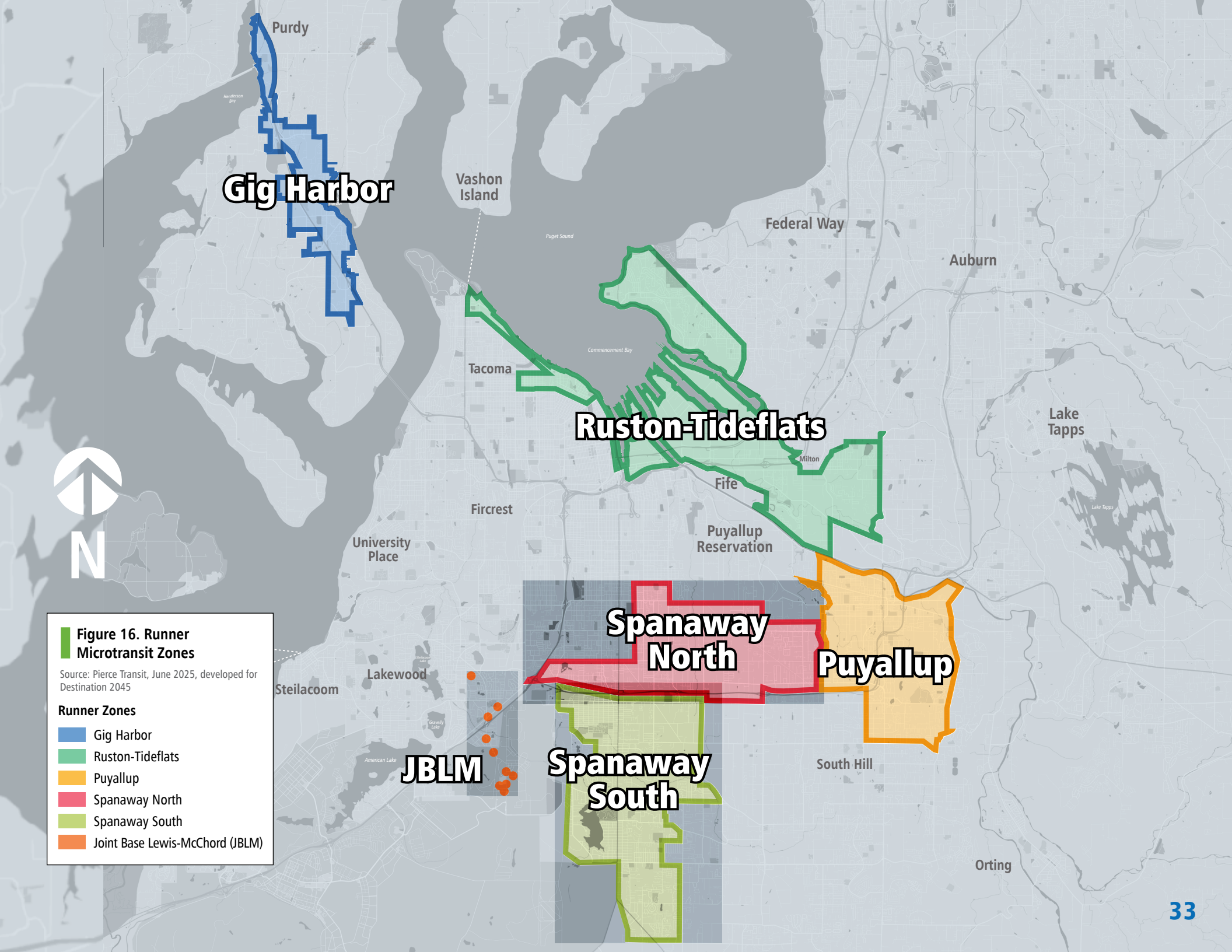


Figure 16. Runner Microtransit Zones

Source: Pierce Transit, June 2025, developed for Destination 2045

Runner Zones

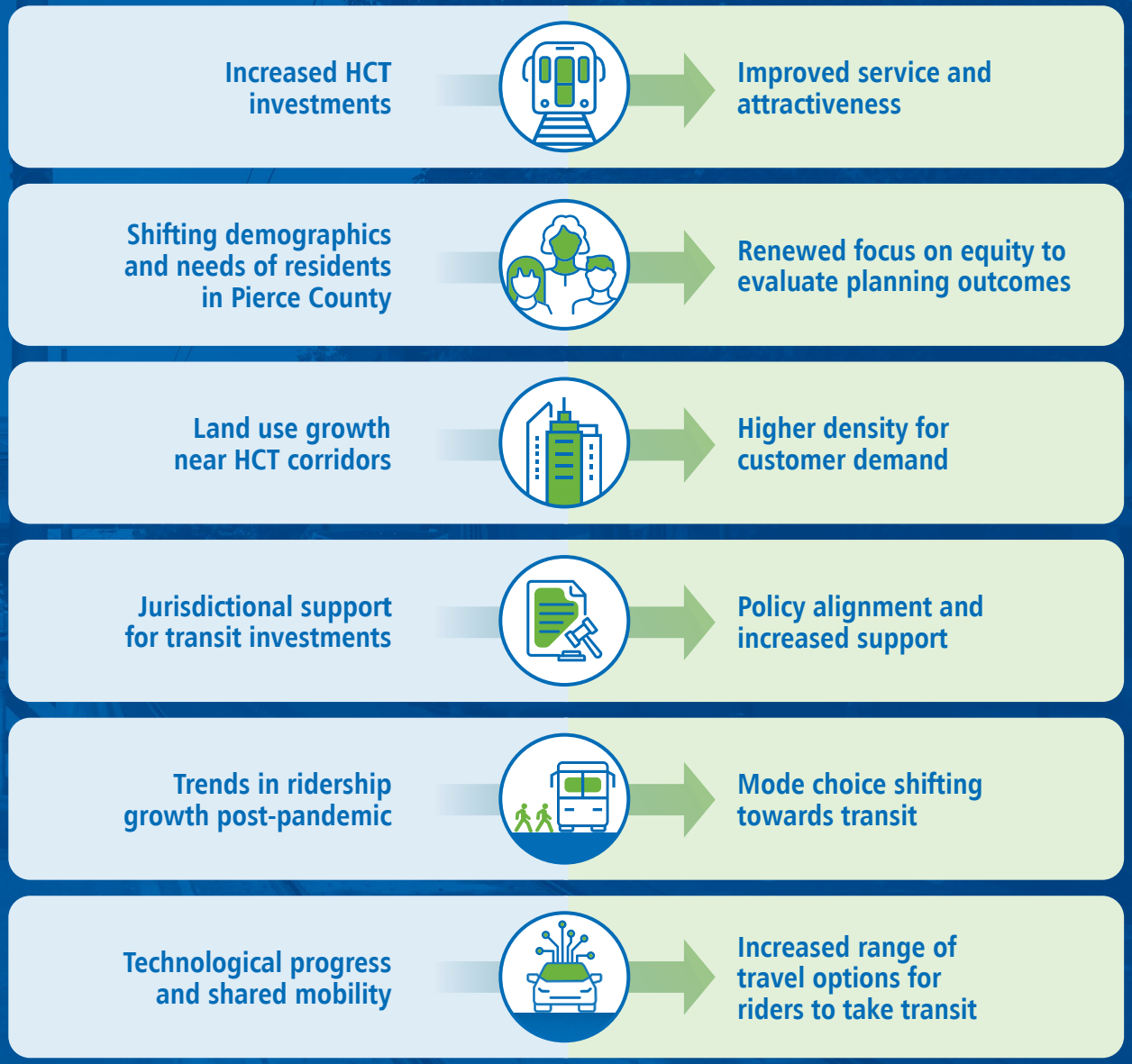
- Gig Harbor
- Ruston-Tideflats
- Puyallup
- Spanaway North
- Spanaway South
- Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM)

Summary

The factors described in the Planning Context chapter highlight the need for Pierce Transit to remain adaptable and flexible to new conditions in the future to best serve a growing community.

In general, the conditions reaffirm the need to provide good quality transit connections and to match the growth planned for Pierce County. Key findings from each factor are highlighted in **Figure 17**.

Figure 17. Planning Context Key Findings



CHAPTER 3

Outreach

Engaging the community and other key stakeholders was a vital component of Destination 2045. The outreach process provided diverse community perspectives, helped build trust around the LRP outcomes, and informed the development of the growth scenarios. This chapter summarizes key insights gained through the outreach process.

Public Involvement and Outreach

Pierce Transit conducted three phases of outreach (summarized in **Figure 18**), starting in the summer of 2024 and continuing into 2025 with the publication of the final LRP.

Phase 1 focused on engaging with the general public through online surveys and interactive mapping exercises to collect initial ideas and feedback on areas for improvement and innovation. Community comments were carefully considered in the development of the growth scenarios.

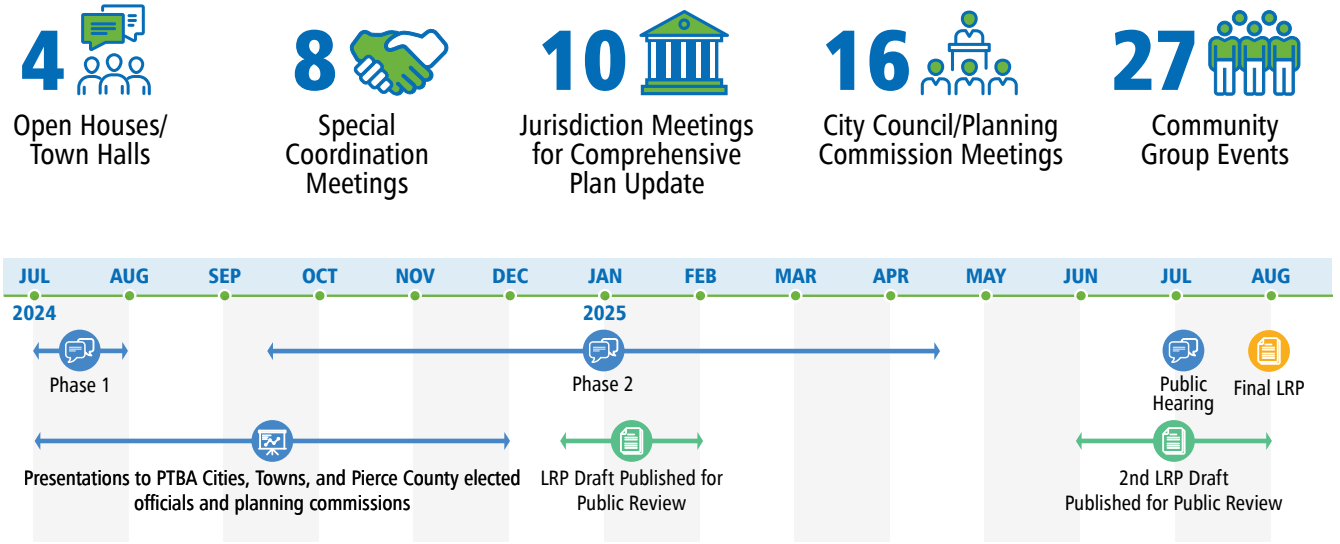
Phase 2 involved soliciting initial public feedback on the growth scenarios. The Planning Team also met with other key stakeholders, including the cities of Edgewood, Fife, Fircrest, Gig Harbor, Lakewood, Milton, Puyallup, Steilacoom, Tacoma, University Place, and officials from Pierce County, to ensure the LRP vision and long-term strategy for transit needs aligned with local Comprehensive Plan Updates, along with regional plans.

700
Survey responses received (Phase 1)

JULY 2024-JUNE 2025
Outreach time frame

75%
Of survey respondents are current riders

Figure 18. Public Involvement and Outreach Process



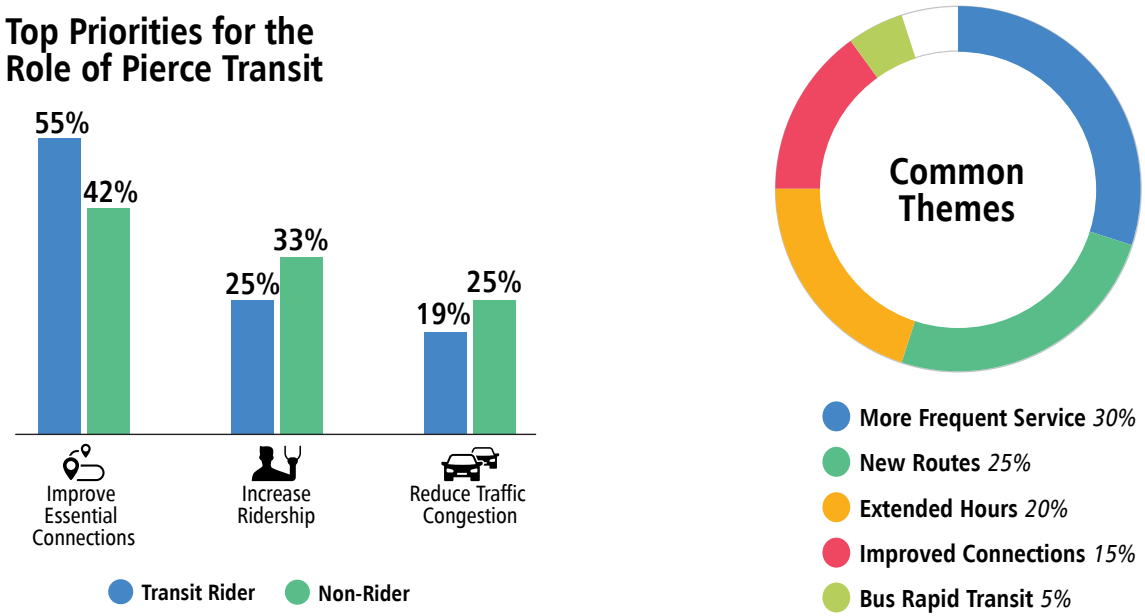
Phase 1 Outreach

In addition to several public outreach events that took place over the summer of 2024, Pierce Transit conducted an online survey in July to request public input on agency priorities for Destination 2045 and specific location-based or route-based improvements using an interactive mapping tool. The results from Phase 1 outreach are illustrated in **Figures 19 and 20**.

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents self-identified as current transit riders. Key findings included:

- Improving essential connections is considered the top priority amongst riders and non-riders, followed by increasing ridership and reducing traffic congestion.
- The top three concerns mentioned in responses included more frequent service, new routes, and extended hours.
- Location-based comments indicate a need for improved service in growing communities, particularly those around the southeast boundary of the PTBA, such as Bonney Lake, Frederickson, Graham, Spanaway, and South Hill. Enhanced connections to local and regional amenities and institutions was also a commonly cited concern.

Figure 19. Key Findings from Phase 1 Outreach Survey (July 2024)



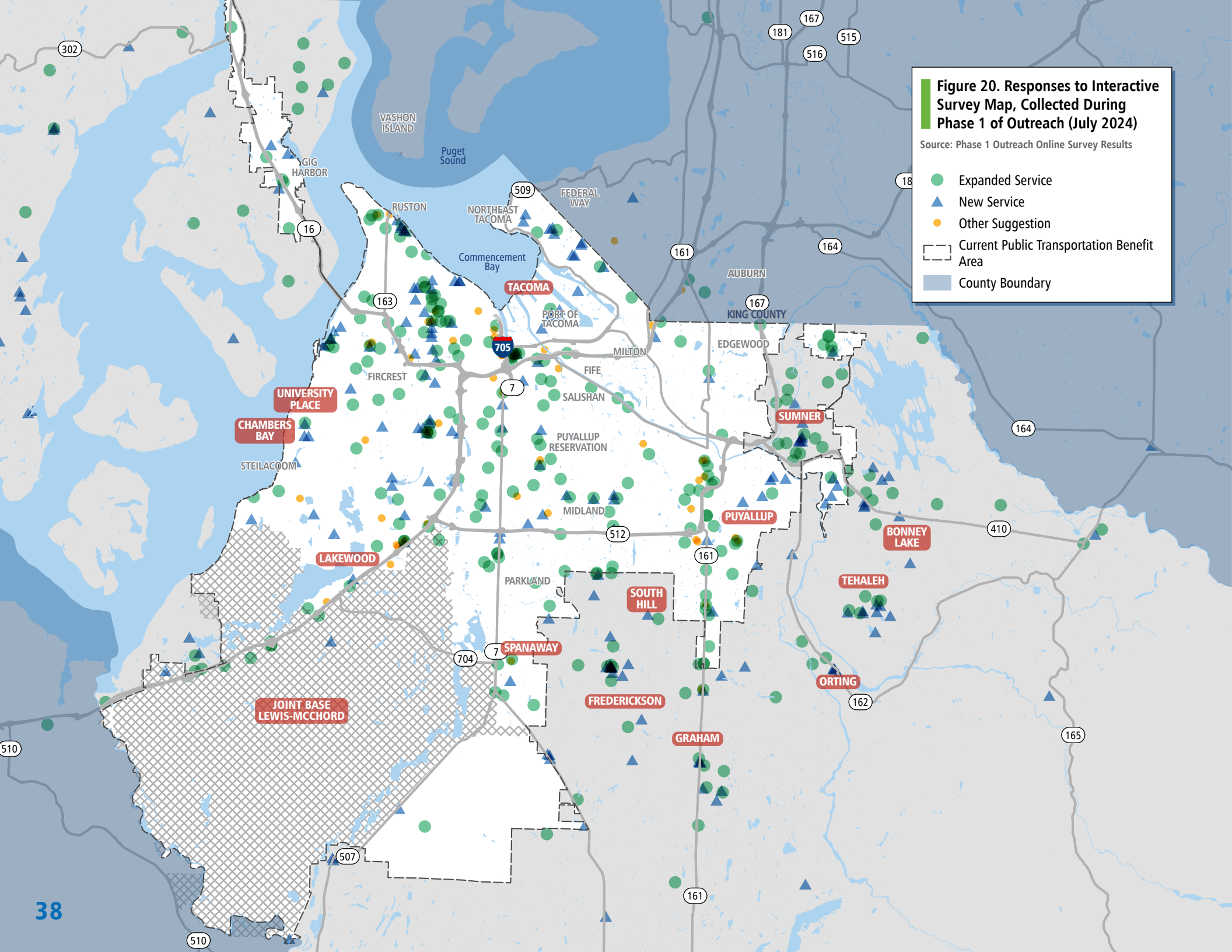


Figure 20. Responses to Interactive Survey Map, Collected During Phase 1 of Outreach (July 2024)
Source: Phase 1 Outreach Online Survey Results
Expanded Service
New Service
Other Suggestion
Current Public Transportation Benefit Area
County Boundary
VASHON ISLAND
Puget Sound
GIG HARBOR
RUSTON
NORTHEAST TACOMA
FEDERAL WAY
Commencement Bay
TACOMA
PORT OF TACOMA
AUBURN
KING COUNTY
EDGEWOOD
MILTON
FIFE
FIRCREST
SALISHAN
UNIVERSITY PLACE
CHAMBERS BAY
STEILACOOM
PUYALLUP RESERVATION
SUMNER
MIDLAND
PUYALLUP
BONNEY LAKE
LAKEWOOD
PARKLAND
SOUTH HILL
TEHALEH
SPANAWAY
ORTING
FREDERICKSON
JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD
GRAHAM
302
16
509
167
181
515
516
18
161
164
163
705
7
512
410
704
162
165
507
510

CHAPTER 4

Scenarios for Fixed Route System Growth

Based on comprehensive long-term financial forecasting, Pierce Transit developed one baseline scenario that reflects current funding levels, along with two additional scenarios that explore potential fixed route transit service growth should additional sales tax revenue become available. These growth scenarios were shaped by several key factors: projected population and employment growth, public feedback gathered during outreach efforts, current system performance, and the Transit Propensity Index, a measure of how likely an area is to rely on transit.

All scenarios presented in this Chapter assume that Pierce Transit's current service area remains unchanged. However, for the growth scenarios, the potential increase in service hours that could result from a jurisdiction joining or rejoining the service area is also shown. This allows for a better understanding of the types of services that might be offered if the service area were to expand.

Long Range Forecasting & Implications for Scenarios

To ensure the growth scenarios outlined in this plan are financially achievable, Pierce Transit conducted multiple rounds of long-range forecasting. These projections considered factors such as future sales tax revenue based on population growth, projected operating costs, including wages and benefits, and required capital investments like fleet expansion and facility upgrades to support increased service levels. Additional forecasts were developed to model funding outcomes under potential sales tax increases to 0.9 percent and 1.1 percent.

Sustainability of Current Services

The long-range forecasting process provided insight beyond the typical six-year financial window used in annual budgeting. While Pierce Transit can modestly increase service to a budgeted total of 482,000 annual service hours with current funding, projections show that without additional funding, expenses will begin to outpace revenues in the years that follow.

By 2031, the agency may need to implement cost-saving measures while striving to maintain essential services for those who depend on them most.

Major Capital Projects

The analysis revealed that large-scale capital projects, such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), would significantly reduce the number of service hours achievable through additional sales tax funding. These projects are costly and involve major infrastructure investments, including transit-only lanes, pedestrian improvements, stations, and 60-foot articulated buses.

Public outreach indicated that riders prioritize more frequent service and longer hours over capital-intensive upgrades. As a result, these major investments were excluded from the financial forecasts and growth scenarios. However, Pierce Transit will continue to pursue grant opportunities to fund such projects where possible.

The 20-year forecast is based on the following key assumptions:

- **For scenarios dependent on additional sales tax revenue, service growth is front-loaded in the first two to three years after that revenue becomes available, providing customers with early, noticeable improvements.**
- **Sound Transit contracted services remain stable throughout the plan period, continuing as a significant source of cost sharing revenue.**
- **SHUTTLE paratransit service scales alongside Fixed Route growth to meet ADA requirements.**
- **At the baseline service level, wages increase by 4.26 percent to 6.26 percent, and overall benefits grow by 1.7 percent to 13.29 percent, year over year.**

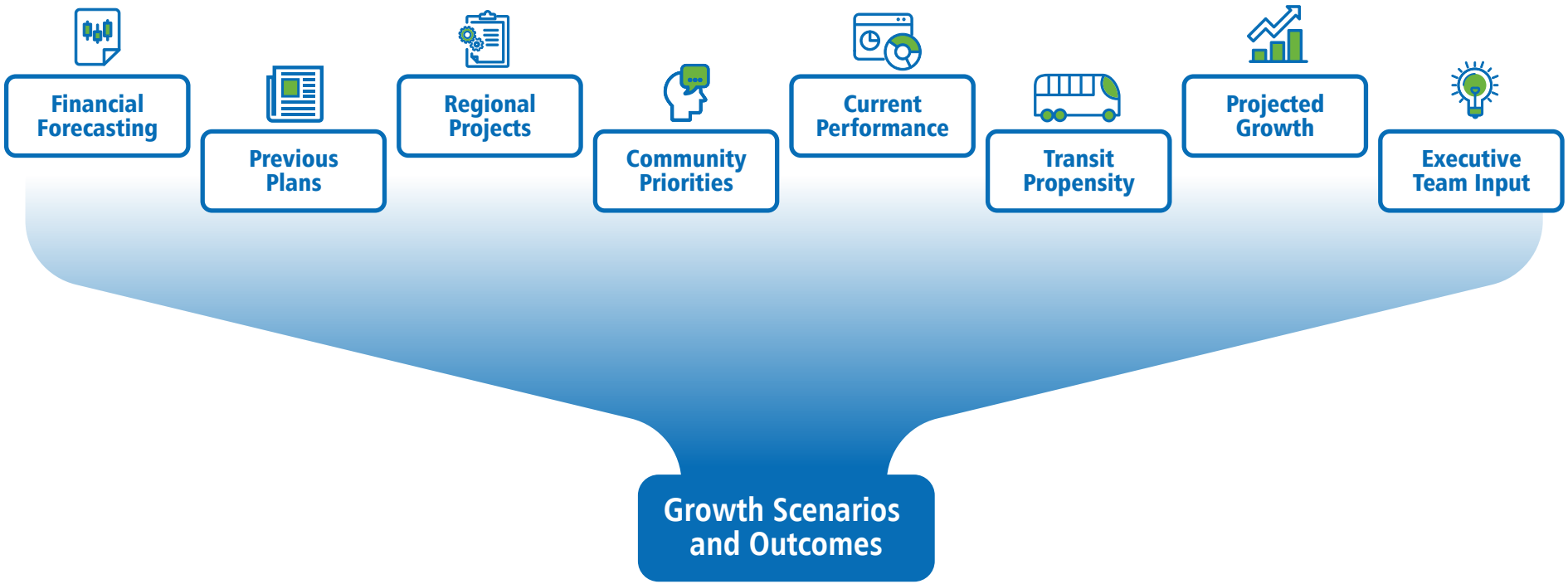
Scenario Development Process

Service allocations across each scenario were shaped by a variety of key factors.

Foundational planning effort, such as the original Destination 2040 Long Range Plan and the 2023 System Recovery Plan, provided the initial framework. Priority was also given to improving connections to major regional projects, including Sound Transit's Tacoma Dome Link Extension. Additional considerations included community feedback, projected population and land use growth, transit propensity, and current route performance. Service allocations that addressed multiple factors were prioritized.

Each scenario in this Chapter outlines the underlying service assumptions, proposed transit network alignments, and the potential outcomes of implementation. **Figure 21** summarizes key components that fed into the development of the scenarios and outcomes for evaluation.

Figure 21. Growth Scenarios and Outcomes Development Process



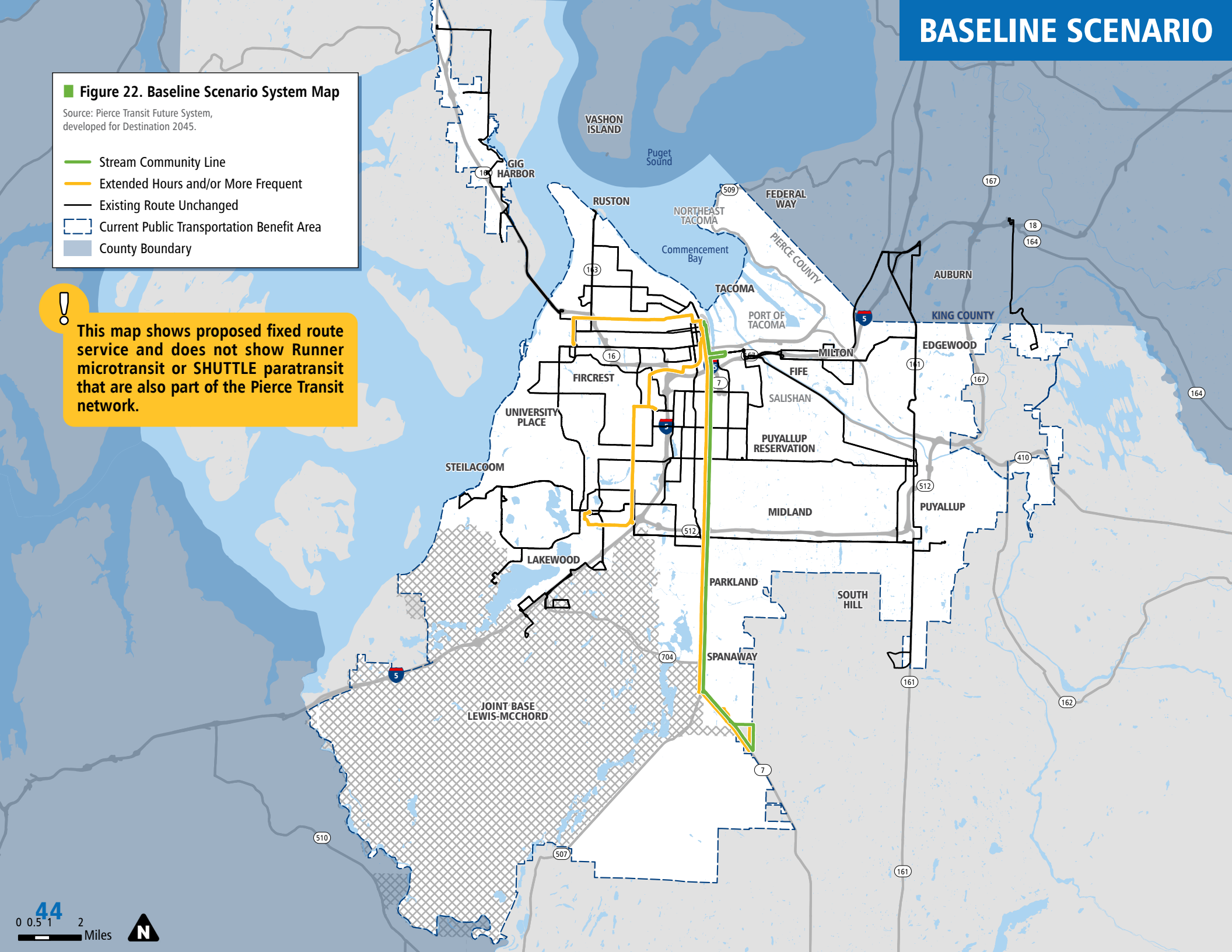
Baseline Scenario – Growth to 482,000 Service Hours

The baseline scenario reflects a modest increase in fixed-route service. As of March 2025, Pierce Transit operates at 470,000 service hours, leaving 12,000 hours available for allocation under current funding constraints.

Key Features

- **Spanaway Transit Center is served by both Stream and Route 1.**
- **The Stream Community Line is extended to reach Commerce Street Station.**
- **Routes 2, 41, 42, 400, 402, 500, and 501 are modified to connect with new Sound Transit Link stations in Tacoma, Fife, and Federal Way.**
- **Route 1 sees increased frequency, with buses running every 15 minutes from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. during weekdays.**
- **Route 3 frequency is increased to every 15 minutes between 6:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. during weekdays as part of Phase 2 of the Service Recovery Plan.**

BASELINE SCENARIO



Scenario A – Growth to 600,000 Service Hours

BASELINE: 482,000 ANNUAL SERVICE HOURS

This scenario, illustrated in **Figure 23**, outlines a level of service that exceeds Pierce Transit's current funding capacity and would require additional revenue to implement. **Long-range financial forecasting indicates this level of service could be achieved with a sales tax rate of 0.9 percent.**

Building on the Baseline Scenario, this plan increases span and/or frequency on more than half of Pierce Transit's existing routes and includes targeted adjustments to improve system efficiency.

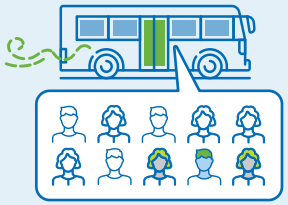
Key Features

- **Improvements from Baseline Scenario**
- **Route 1 is retired; its segment from Spanaway Transit Center to Commerce Street is replaced by the Stream Community Line running every 15 minutes on weekdays. Additional stops will be added to meet bus stop spacing standards.**
- **Route 25 is introduced to replace Route 1's TCC to Commerce segment, also at 15-minute frequency.**
- **Routes 52 and 55 are combined into a new Route 5, following the same path and frequency.**
- **Full Implementation of the Service Recovery Plan.**
- **Increased frequency and/or span for 21 routes.**

Key Metrics

Priority to Support Essential Connections

30%
Of Priority Populations with Access to 20-minute or Better Service



40% Increase in Jobs Accessible for High Transit Propensity Areas

Priority to Increase Ridership

40%
Increase in Annual Riders by 2045

$13-14
Cost to Pierce Transit Per Rider

Priority to Reduce Traffic Congestion

25%
Reduction in Vehicle-miles Traveled and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

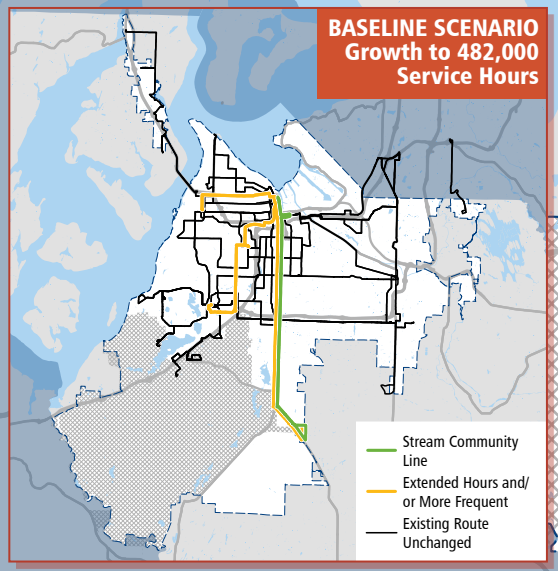
SCENARIO A

Figure 23. Scenario A System Map

Source: Pierce Transit Future System, developed for Destination 2045.

- Stream Community Line
- Extended Hours and/or More Frequent
- New Fixed Route
- Existing Route Unchanged
- Current Public Transportation Benefit Area
- County Boundary

This map shows proposed fixed route service and does not show Runner microtransit or SHUTTLE paratransit that are also part of the Pierce Transit network.



VASHON ISLAND
Puget Sound
GIG HARBOR
RUSTON
NORTHEAST TACOMA
FEDERAL WAY
Commencement Bay
PIERCE COUNTY
AUBURN
TACOMA
PORT OF TACOMA
KING COUNTY
EDGEWOOD
MILTON
FIFE
FIRCREST
SALISHAN
UNIVERSITY PLACE
PUYALLUP RESERVATION
STEILACOOM
MIDLAND
PUYALLUP
LAKEWOOD
PARKLAND
SOUTH HILL
SPANAWAY
JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

N

Scenario B – Growth to 750,000 Service Hours

BASELINE: 482,000 ANNUAL SERVICE HOURS

This scenario, illustrated in **Figure 24**, presents a level of service that exceeds Pierce Transit's current funding capacity and would require additional revenue to implement. **Long-range financial forecasts indicate this level of service could be supported by a sales tax rate of 1.1 percent.** However, current RCW does not permit Pierce Transit to levy this rate, and legislative action would be required to authorize it.

Building on the Baseline and 0.9 percent sales tax scenarios, this plan expands service by increasing frequency and span on nearly all routes, with a significant boost in weekend service. The Stream Community Line, along with Routes 2 and 3, is elevated to a high-capacity level of service consistent with the Stream route classification—15-minute frequencies on weekdays and 20-minute frequencies on evenings and weekends. Four new routes are also introduced to address growth, community outreach findings, and transit propensity.

Key Features

- **Includes all service allocations from Scenario A.**
- **High-capacity service (15-minute weekdays, 20-minute evenings and weekends) for the Stream Community Line and Routes 2 and 3. Routes 2 and 3 are re-classified to Stream routes.**
- **20-minute weekday frequency for Routes 4, 41, 48, 54, and 202.**
- **30-minute weekend frequency for most routes.**
- **Extended service span (primarily on weekends) for 13 routes.**
- **Introduction of new Routes 15, 40, 51, and 491.**

Key Metrics

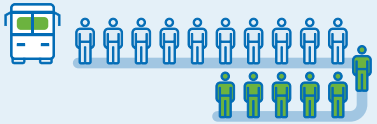
Priority to Support Essential Connections

35%
Of Priority Populations with Access to 20-minute or Better Service

50% Increase in Jobs Accessible for High Transit Propensity Areas

Priority to Increase Ridership

60%
Increase in Annual Riders by 2045



$12-13
Cost to Pierce Transit Per Rider

Priority to Reduce Traffic Congestion

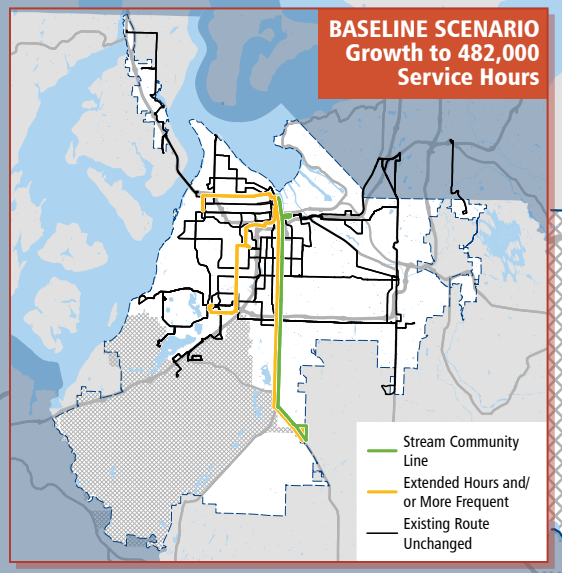
35%
Reduction in Vehicle-miles Traveled and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

SCENARIO B

WHY 1.1 PERCENT?

Some transit agencies in Washington State have received authority to increase sales tax collections up to 1.2 percent. While service levels under a 1.2 percent sales tax scenario were modeled, it was determined that achieving this level of service would require the construction of a new operations base to accommodate the additional buses. Pierce Transit's current headquarters can support up to 315 buses, with capital investments already accounted for to maximize the existing space. However, the cost of acquiring and developing a new base renders the 1.2 percent scenario financially infeasible based on current projections.

This map shows proposed fixed route service and does not show Runner microtransit or SHUTTLE paratransit that are also part of the Pierce Transit network.



VASHON ISLAND
Puget Sound
GIG HARBOR
RUSTON
NORTHEAST TACOMA
FEDERAL WAY
Commencement Bay
PIERCE COUNTY
AUBURN
TACOMA
PORT OF TACOMA
KING COUNTY
EDGEWOOD
MILTON
FIFE
FIRCREST
SALISHAN
UNIVERSITY PLACE
PUYALLUP RESERVATION
STEILACOOM
MIDLAND
PUYALLUP
LAKEWOOD
PARKLAND
SOUTH HILL
SPANAWAY
JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD

Figure 24. Scenario B System Map

Source: Pierce Transit Future System, developed for Destination 2045.

- Stream Community Line
- New Stream Lines (Routes 2 and 3)
- New Fixed Route
- Extended Hours and/or More Frequent
- Existing Route Unchanged
- Current Public Transportation Benefit Area
- County Boundary

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

N

Service Area Expansion Under Growth Scenarios

Table 1 below shows the estimated number of service hours that could be added if a jurisdiction or area were to join the Pierce Transit service area under each growth scenario, based on current sales tax collection data.

The potential services listed are based on the average annual service hours required to operate one of Pierce Transit's existing routes under baseline conditions—approximately 16,000 hours. It's important to note that the frequency, span, and length of a route affect the total service hours required. For context, Route 1—Pierce Transit's longest and most frequent route—currently requires approximately 70,000 annual service hours to operate.

Table 1. Estimated Service Hours Added Under Each Scenario

	SCENARIO A 0.9% Sales Tax		SCENARIO B 1.1% Sales Tax	
Jurisdiction	**Estimated Service Hours Added**	**Potential Services**	**Estimated Service Hours Added**	**Potential Services**
Bonney Lake	36,709	One to two new routes depending on length, frequency, and span.	43,129	Two to three new routes depending on length, frequency, and span.
DuPont	7,093	Likely extension of an existing route.	8,334	Likely extension of an existing route.
Orting	4,914	Likely extension of an existing route.	5,723	Likely extension of an existing route.
Sumner	39,684	One to two new routes depending on length, frequency, and span.	46,217	Two to three new routes depending on length, frequency, and span.

We recognize the strong interest from residents in Graham, Frederickson, and the Key Peninsula in joining the service area. However, because these communities are located in unincorporated Pierce County, specific sales tax data is not available, making it difficult to estimate the number of service hours that could be added to the system. If the service area were to expand, input would be gathered from community members, elected officials, and the Pierce Transit Board of Commissioners to determine the appropriate level and type of service for the newly included area.

Service Area Change Process

There are two methods for changing Pierce Transit's service area boundaries. A high-level summary of each is provided below.

Public Transportation Improvement Conference (PTIC) (RCW 36.57A.020)

PROCESS: Initiated by the County Council, two or more city resolutions, or a petition from 10% of voters in the current service area.

INVOLVES: All cities in Pierce County appointing representatives to discuss boundary changes.

OUTCOME: Can result in adding or removing areas, as long as boundaries are connected and do not create service "islands" or "doughnuts."

CONTROL: Final decision rests with the County Council. Each city also has 60 days to pass a resolution to withdraw.

Annexation (RCW 36.57A.140)

PROCESS: Occurs when an adjacent area joins the service area.

REQUIRES: A vote of the people in the area to be annexed, including approval of taxation.

INITIATED BY:

- PTBA board resolution (if deemed in the public interest),
- A petition signed by 4% of voters in the area, or
- A city council request for annexation.

CONTROL: Final decision lies with the voters in the area to be annexed.

CHAPTER 5

Capital Needs

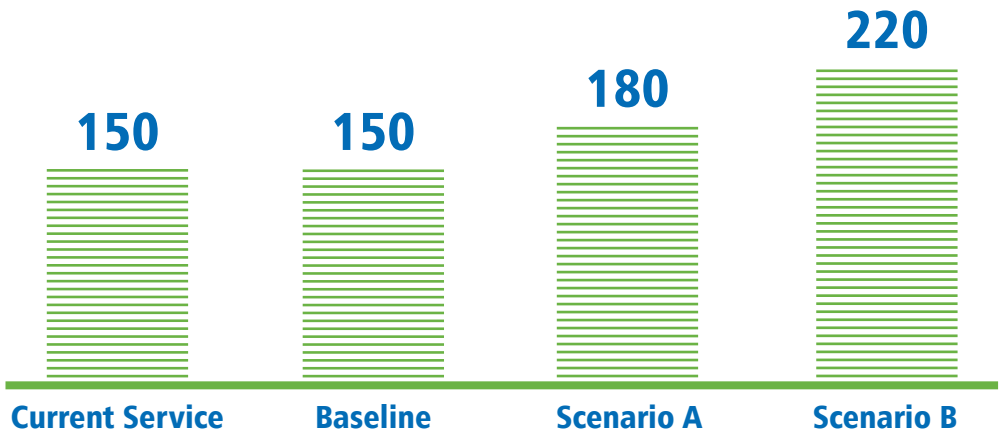
System growth and other improvements will require an increase in capital spending. In addition to fleet expansion, maintenance and operations needs also come with challenges associated with fleet electrification, staff recruitment and retention, and other capital infrastructure, highlighting the importance of careful planning around revenues and expenditures to achieve the LRP's vision.

Fleet Expansion

To implement the enhanced transit services outlined in Destination 2045, Pierce Transit must adjust its fleet composition and expand its size to support increased service frequency and extended operating hours. The agency recognizes the need not only for expansion but for replacement as well across the categories of Hybrid Electric Buses (HEBs), Battery Electric Buses (BEBs), and Compressed Natural Gas Buses (CNGs).

Figure 25 illustrates the additional fixed route bus needs for each scenario through 2045 which includes replacement and expansion.[8] In addition, expansion of the other innovative services will require a higher number of paratransit and other supporting vehicles. Runner and Rideshare program expansion and design will vary based on demand and identified needs. This comprehensive fleet strategy is designed to meet the evolving transportation needs of the community while supporting environmental sustainability objectives.

Figure 25. Fleet Needs and Costs by Scenario[9]



8 Fleet need numbers were developed for Destination 2045. Associated cost estimates represent the cost of additional buses beyond current service levels.
9 Current Service value does not include the standard 25 vehicles in reserve.

Zero Emissions Fleet Transition

Dependent on available grant funding, agency plans include converting 20 percent of its fleet to BEBs or hydrogen fuel cell buses by 2030 and 100 percent by 2042.

Pierce Transit operates one of the cleanest bus fleets in the nation. In 2024, around 80 percent of its buses ran on compressed natural gas; 13 percent were hybrid-electrics; and 5 percent were battery-electrics. Only 2 percent of the fleet operated on diesel.

Pierce Transit aims to fully transition to a zero emissions bus fleet, with specific goals set for the coming decades. Agency plans include converting its fleet to BEBs or hydrogen fuel cell buses.

While the initial cost of transition may be high, the phased maintenance and operations cost will be lower than existing fossil fuel costs. To support this transition, Pierce Transit has secured significant funding, including a $14.8 million Federal Transit Administration grant awarded in July 2024.

This grant will facilitate the purchase of additional BEBs and the installation of new charging infrastructure, advancing the agency's electrification efforts.

Considerations

Procurement of Electric Buses

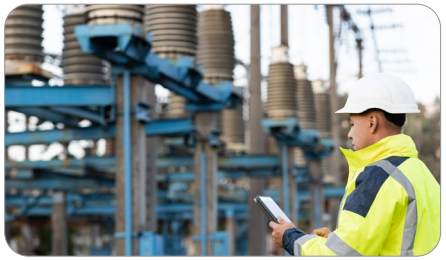
BEBs have high initial capital costs plus extended manufacturing lead times, so procurement will need to be phased.

Charging Infrastructure

The design, construction, and installation of charging infrastructure can add significant expense, the amount of which can vary based on site-specific requirements.

Facility Upgrades

This includes electrical capacity enhancements and space modifications, such as increased power demands leading to accommodations of transformers and electrical panels.



Electrical Grid Infrastructure

Collaboration with utility providers is essential to ensure the local grid can support the additional load from bus charging activities.

Training and Workforce Development

Operators and maintenance personnel need specialized training to manage and service BEBs and their associated systems.

Contingency Planning

Similar to current operations, maintaining an inventory of spare parts specific to BEBs is critical to minimizing downtime during maintenance.

Maintenance & Operations Needs

Maintenance and operations needs will change significantly through 2045, due to fleet expansion associated with the different scenarios, the transition to a zero emissions fleet, and increased labor needs.

Fleet Expansion

The current Maintenance and Operations Base will not support the necessary fleet expansion to meet potential 2045 service levels. Several short-term capital projects have been identified in the TDP.

Some of the potential long range Maintenance and Operations Base improvements in Lakewood associated with the growth scenarios include:

- West Base Building and Site Improvements
- Building 1 Improvements
- South Base Parking for Vehicles
- Miscellaneous Improvements

Workforce Needs

Maintaining a qualified workforce plays a key role in Pierce Transit's maintenance and operations needs. Recruitment and retention actions center on four key areas:

Skill Assessment

Identify existing skill gaps among employees, particularly in areas related to electric vehicle technology and maintenance.

Training Programs

Implement specialized training for operators and maintenance staff to handle electric vehicle-specific systems, such as high-voltage components and battery management.

Just Transition Policies

Develop strategies to protect workers whose roles may be affected by new technology to ensure job security and fair compensation.

Hiring Initiatives

Recruit additional staff to manage the increased workload from fleet expansion and the specialized needs of electrical vehicle maintenance.

KEY NEEDS WILL INCLUDE:

- **Maintenance and service of fixed route fleet and additional innovative services fleet.**
- **Increase in number of Heavy Duty Diesel Technician and Transit Operators with specialized knowledge for a new zero emissions or electric fleet.**
- **Increased need for additional staff parking.**
- **Charging infrastructure for all-electric fleet transition.**

Speed & Reliability Improvements

Speed & Reliability (S&R) improvements can help enhance system performance and provide faster, more reliable transit service at lower cost compared to BRT. With grant funding, these investments can be the introduction to better services for corridor building toward BRT.

Recognizing that some people avoid transit due to delays caused by traffic congestion, improving the speed and reliability of bus service can help encourage potential riders to switch from using personal vehicles to public transit for trips.

Currently, investments in BRT development come with high initial planning, design, and construction costs, which can result in longer implementation schedules. By contrast, modern advances in transit encourage a mix of services to provide targeted benefits and reduce reliance on BRT alone to provide quicker service. S&R improvements offer an effective alternative for fast and reliable transit that requires minimal and lower cost improvements.

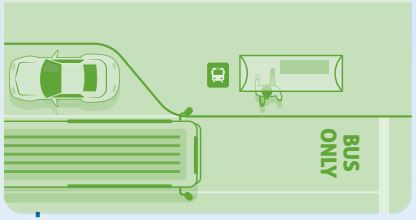
It is important to note that S&R improvements require significant coordination with local jurisdictions and evaluation of potential locations using traffic congestion and transit reliability data.

Improvements May Include:

- **Bus Bulbs**
- **Dedicated Bus Lanes, Generally BAT Lanes**
- **Fleet Modernization**
- **Multi-Depot Vehicle Scheduling**
- **All-Door Boarding**
- **Off-Board Fare Collection**
- **Bus Islands**
- **Bus Stop Balancing and Optimization**
- **Real-Time Information Systems**
- **Queue Jumps**
- **Turn Restrictions**
- **Transit Signal Priority**

Bus Bulbs

Bus bulbs are curb extensions that allow buses to stop in the travel lane without pulling over to the curb. This design reduces both delays caused by merging in and out of traffic and passenger loading times. Bus bulbs also provide more space for people waiting to board and can shorten pedestrian crossing distances.



Dedicated Bus Lanes, Generally BAT Lanes

Allocating lanes that prioritize buses and business access minimizes interference from other vehicles, leading to faster and more predictable service. For instance, the RapidRide J Line project in Seattle includes dedicated transit lanes to enhance bus speed and reliability.

Fleet Modernization

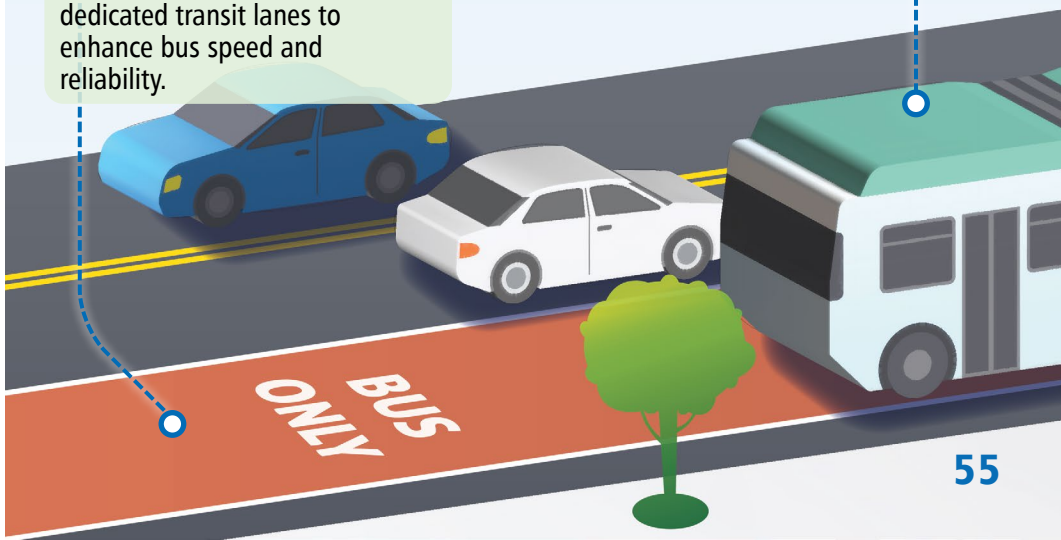
Upgrading to newer vehicles with advanced technologies can improve reliability.

Adaptive Transit Design

Combining fixed route and demand-responsive transit services allows for flexibility in meeting varying passenger demands, particularly in suburban areas and during off-peak times. This approach can enhance both speed and reliability.

Multi-Depot Vehicle Scheduling

Optimizing the scheduling of vehicles across multiple depots can improve service reliability by ensuring that buses are deployed efficiently to meet demand. Research into incorporating service reliability into multi-depot vehicle scheduling has shown promising results.



All-Door Boarding

Permitting passengers to board through all bus doors reduces boarding times and helps maintain schedules. This practice is part of King County Metro's RapidRide strategy to improve efficiency.

Off-Board Fare Collection

Providing fare payment systems at transit stations allows passengers to pay before boarding, which can reduce dwell times at stops and contribute to quicker boarding processes.

Bus Islands

Bus islands are platforms situated between the travel lane and a bike lane or parking lane, that allow buses to stop without merging into the curb lane. This setup minimizes delays and enhances safety for cyclists and pedestrians by reducing conflicts.

Bus Stop Balancing and Optimization

Evaluating and adjusting the number and location of bus stops can lead to more consistent spacing and improved service. Removing closely spaced or low utilization stops and relocating others to optimize access can enhance overall travel times and reliability.

Queue Jumps

Queue jump lanes are short, dedicated lanes at intersections that allow buses to bypass traffic queues. Paired with specialized traffic signals, they enable buses to proceed ahead of general traffic, reducing delays at congested intersections.

Real-Time Information Systems

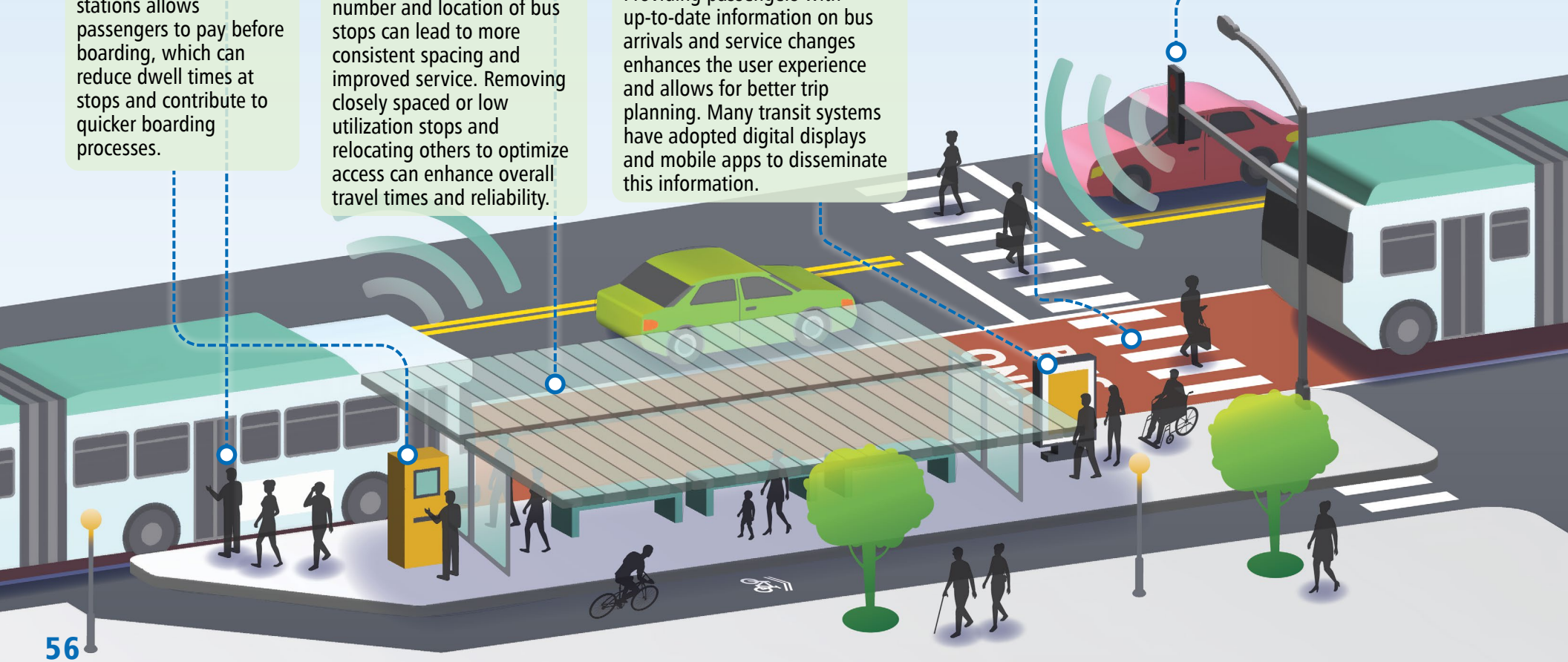
Providing passengers with up-to-date information on bus arrivals and service changes enhances the user experience and allows for better trip planning. Many transit systems have adopted digital displays and mobile apps to disseminate this information.

Turn Restrictions

Implementing turn restrictions for general traffic at certain intersections can reduce delays for buses traveling straight through. By limiting left or right turns during peak hours, buses experience fewer interruptions, leading to more consistent travel times.

Transit Signal Priority (TSP)

TSP involves adjusting signal times to favor buses, therefore reducing delays and leading to more predictable service. This reduces travel times and improves transit experience. The Tacoma Link Light Rail currently deploys TSP (or utilizes TSP) at intersections downtown and in the Stadium District.



Speed & Reliability Costs

The different S&R improvements are relatively low-cost but will require significant coordination with local jurisdictions and an assessment of appropriate targeted needs for each route. S&R upgrades can only move forward with significant grant funding and committed partnership support from the local jurisdiction with control of the public right of way.

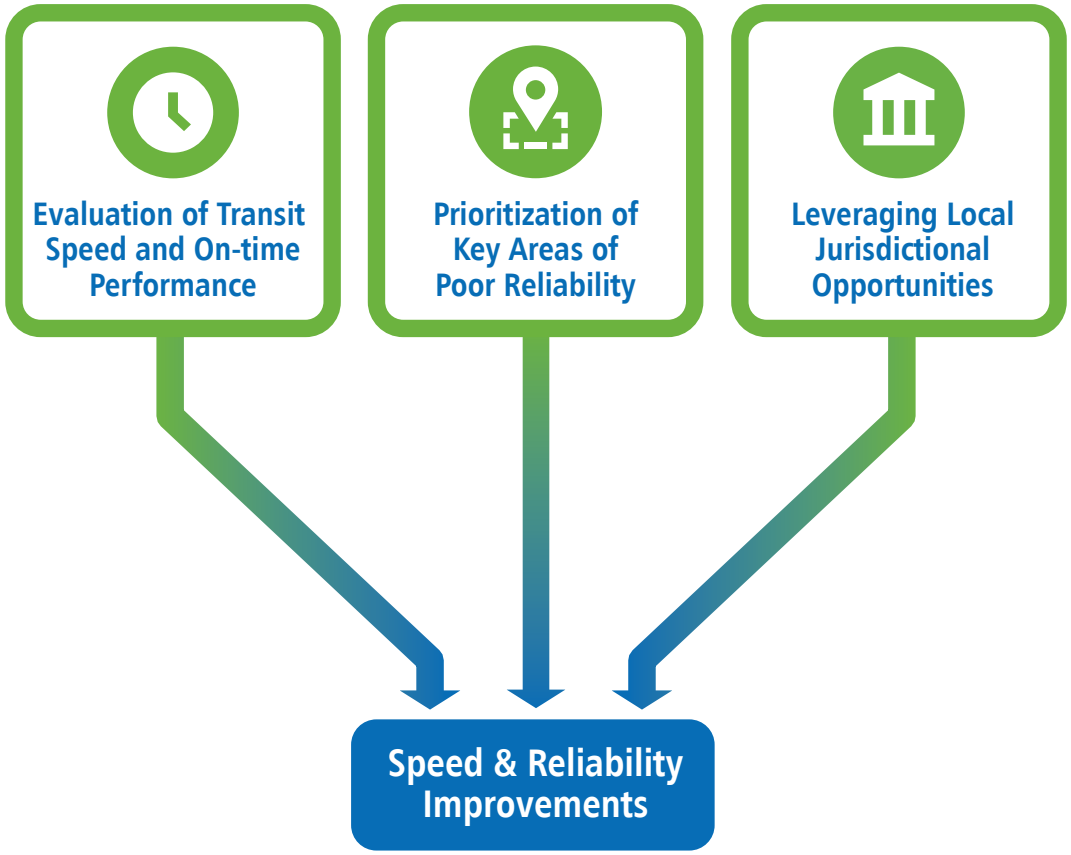
As an estimate, $3 to 5 million per mile is a reasonable projection to undertake a set of improvements that will result in significant transit speed and reliability upgrades.

Implementing S&R improvements requires a process (shown in **Figure 26**) that analyzes contextual opportunities and operational deficiencies. Using system performance data can help identify areas of need to make improvements. This process requires coordination with local jurisdictions to facilitate infrastructural improvements that can make routes more reliable.

Performance and reliability can be impacted by the route operations. For example, dwell time data indicate the time spent at specific stops. If this contributes to delays, S&R elements, such as all-door boarding, off-board fare collection, and bus stop design can reduce stop times for routes and improve performance. Performance and reliability is also directly affected by the infrastructure and traffic volume on a given route.

Additionally, specific portions of a route may contribute to greater delay. Portions like intersections may perform poorly overall or during peak congestion periods. To improve performance, targeted spot improvements, such as bus bulbs or TSP at the most congested intersections, can alleviate bottlenecks.

Figure 26. Process to Identify S&R Improvements



Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Key BRT features may include branded vehicles operating in transit-exclusive or Business Access and Transit (BAT) lanes, traffic signal priority to reduce delays at intersections, stations with level boarding platforms for improved accessibility, and off-board fare collection to speed up boarding.

Long-range financial forecasting showed that major capital projects like BRT significantly limit the number of service hours Pierce Transit can provide, as they draw resources away from day-to-day operations. While BRT is not included in the core Long Range Plan for this reason, Pierce Transit may still pursue grant funding to advance BRT upgrades where feasible.

Case Study: Pacific Avenue/State Route 7 and BRT

In 2023, rising costs and limited funding led Pierce Transit to reassess its BRT project on Pacific Avenue/State Route 7. Projected costs exceeded $300 million, well beyond what the agency could afford, due to factors such as inflation, COVID-related supply chain disruptions, evolving project requirements, anticipated property impacts, and new insights from the planning process.

As a result, in August 2023, the agency made the difficult decision to pause the full BRT buildout and instead pivot to a more affordable approach. This led to the launch of the Stream Community Line in March 2024, an enhanced bus service that could be upgraded to BRT in coordination with the City of Tacoma and WSDOT's long-term Complete Streets plans.

Key Lessons Learned:

- Strong coordination, jurisdictional readiness, and support are critical for successful implementation.
- Available right-of-way (ROW) greatly influences project costs, especially when BRT infrastructure like BAT lanes requires road widening and property acquisition.
- Aligning transit projects with local roadway upgrades, such as Complete Streets improvements, can improve efficiency and reduce impacts.

CHAPTER 6

The Road Ahead

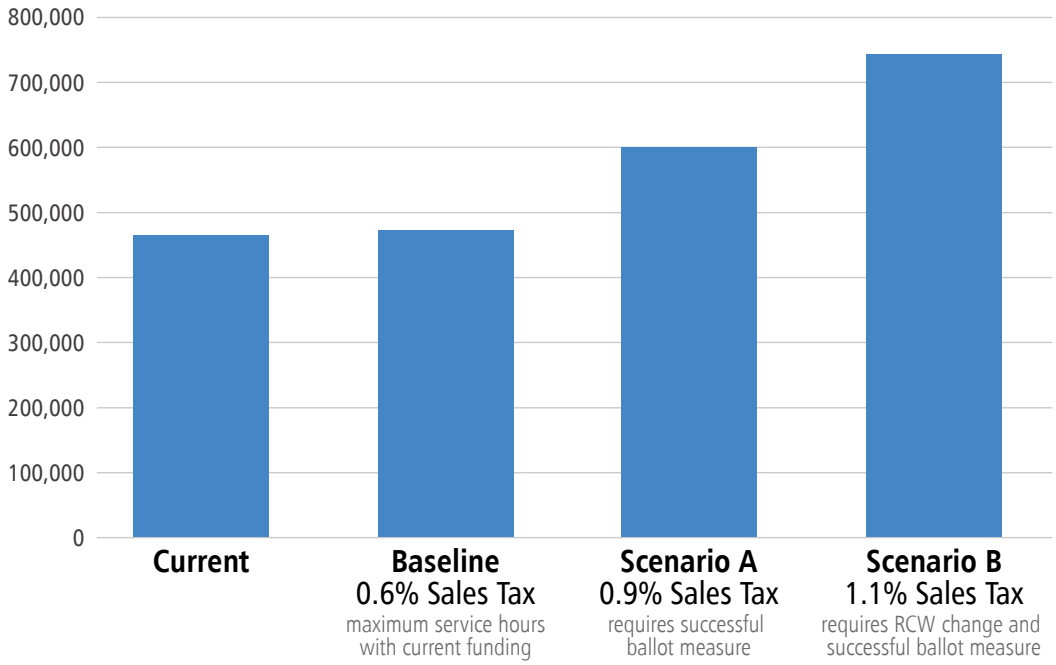
Destination 2045 outlines a vision for expanding services to meet the growing transportation needs of the service area. This chapter identifies the agency's preferred scenario, path to implementation, and other funding strategies that may help close the funding gap.

Preferred Alternative

Pierce Transit's preferred alternative is Scenario A, which would require a successful ballot measure to increase sales tax revenue to 0.9%. While Scenario B would generate even more funding, it presents a greater challenge as it would require a change to state law.

Scenario A offers significant benefits within the existing legal framework, enhancing service on 21 of the agency's 29 routes. It fulfills the commitment made to the community through the System Recovery Plan, adopted by the Board of Commissioners in late 2023. The scenario also delivers essential connections to new light rail stations in Federal Way, Fife, and Tacoma. Critically, it allows for the completion of the agency's first enhanced bus route, the Stream Community Line, which replaces Route 1 along the Pacific Avenue/State Route 7 corridor and maintains high-frequency service for one of the region's busiest corridors.

Figure 27. Comparison of service hours possible at each taxing authority (including baseline & current)



Path to Implementation

Ballot Measure

To move forward with a sales tax increase, Pierce Transit's Board of Commissioners would need to authorize placing the measure on the ballot. While agency staff can provide the public with information about the proposed improvements and what could be achieved with additional funding, they are not permitted to campaign for the measure's passage.

Ramping Up Service

If approved, Scenario A would result in noticeable service improvements within the first three years. To support this expansion, Pierce Transit would launch robust recruitment campaigns to hire the Operators and Maintenance staff needed to deliver the increased service.

Additionally, essential capital investments, such as new buses, would be ordered immediately to ensure quick implementation.

Without Additional Revenue

Without additional revenue, Pierce Transit can support only a modest increase in service, as outlined in the Baseline scenario. While this allows for some improvements, long-range financial forecasting indicates that by 2031, without additional revenue, cost saving measures may be needed to offset expenses outpacing revenues.

Recognizing that public transportation is a vital service for many in the community, Pierce Transit would prioritize protecting core service levels. Cost-saving efforts would almost certainly focus on areas outside direct service, such as delaying or forgoing necessary capital projects and reducing administrative expenses.

The agency may also explore opportunities to redesign the transit system to improve efficiency and provide more service with existing resources. However, a system redesign would be a significant undertaking, requiring careful analysis and public engagement.

275,668
New Residents
expected by 2044

117,800
New Jobs
expected by 2044

Other Funding Strategies

While sales tax is the most significant funding mechanism available to Pierce Transit, and thus forms the foundation of the growth scenarios, other potential revenue sources may also play a supporting role.

Farebox Revenues

The scenarios do not assume any additional farebox increases. Pierce Transit has not raised fares since November 2010. Although fare increases have been discussed, they require approval from the Board of Commissioners. Even a modest fare adjustment would have a minimal impact on long-term operating expenses.

Public-Private Partnerships

Collaborations between government entities and private companies can facilitate the financing, construction, and operation of transit projects by leveraging private investment to advance public infrastructure. It is challenging to fund our bus services through public-private partnerships.

Federal and State Funding

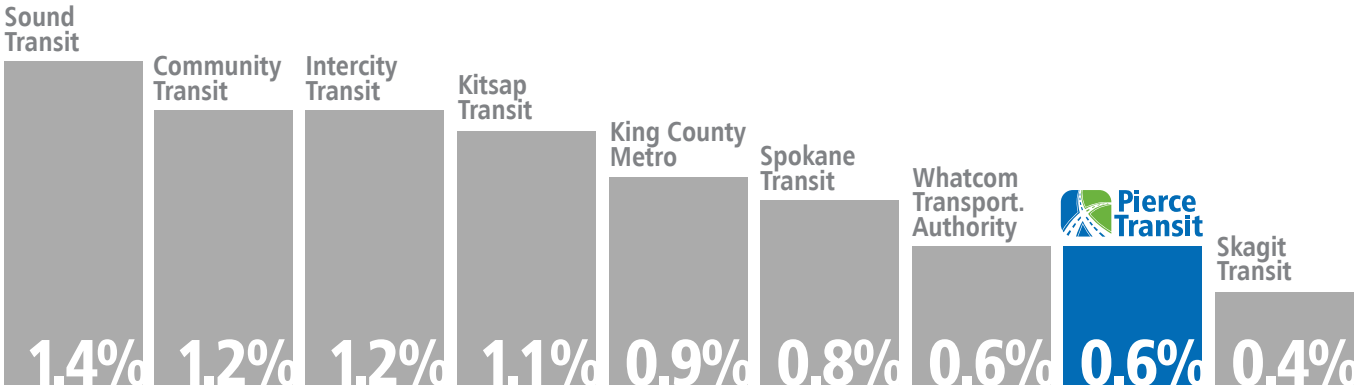
Federal and state funding in the form of grants play a key role in supporting capital projects. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) offers several programs that provide financial assistance to transit agencies, including formula grants based on service levels and other characteristics. Competitive grants are also available for specific capital needs, such as rail systems or Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). While Pierce Transit will continue to seek grant funding for such enhancements, these sources cannot be relied upon to support ongoing service expansion.

Transit Agency Sales Tax Revenues

Under RCW 82.14.045, transit agencies in Washington can levy a local sales tax of up to 0.9% with voter approval. Some agencies are permitted to go up to 1.2% under Section 3. To implement Scenario B, the law would need to be amended to let Pierce Transit exceed the current 0.9% cap.

Pierce Transit currently collects 0.6%, lower than many similarly sized transit agencies in the region. Figure 28 compares sales tax rates across peer agencies.

Figure 28. Sales Tax Rates by Peer Transit Agency in Washington[10]



King County Metro

Imposes the full **0.9 percent sales tax**, which constitutes a significant portion of its operating revenue.

Community Transit

Levies a **1.2 percent sales tax** within its service area, exceeding the standard 0.9 percent cap through additional voter-approved measures.

Pierce Transit

Imposes a **0.6 percent sales tax** within its PTBA to support its bus operations.

Skagit Transit

Collects a **0.4 percent sales tax**, which accounted for over 59 percent of its funding in 2023.

Intercity Transit

Collects the maximum **0.9 percent sales tax** in addition to a voter approved 0.3 percent measure.

Sound Transit

Levies **1.4 percent sales tax** revenue. This rate comprises an initial 0.9 percent approved in earlier measures and an additional 0.5 percent authorized by voters in 2016. Sound Transit also has other revenue sources, such as a percentage of the Motor Vehicles and Excise Tax and Property Tax.

Kitsap Transit

Levies a **0.8 percent sales tax** revenue. In addition, a 0.3 percent revenue is levied for passenger-only ferry service.

Spokane Transit Authority

Spokane Transit Authority has implemented a **0.8 percent sales tax** within its service area to fund transit services. This rate includes a **0.2 percent increase** approved by voters in 2016.

Whatcom Transportation Authority

Whatcom Transportation Authority in Bellingham levies a **0.6 percent sales tax** revenue.

10 Developed for Destination 2045.

DESTINATION 2045

LONG RANGE PLAN

PierceTransit

2ND DRAFT

Revised June 18, 2025