

SECTION 6.3

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



W A M P O

Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

SECTION 6.3: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



Overview

Public transportation provides passenger transportation services for the general public. Bus service and **demand response service** provide transportation options for many residents in the WAMPO region. Many residents of the WAMPO region rely on public transportation as their primary means of travel.

This section of the MTP 2035 provides an overview of the existing public transportation system. It also identifies plans for the system, highlights regional needs, and recommends improvements to promote use of the system.

Public transportation in the WAMPO region is provided by many different agencies. These include:

- Wichita Transit.
- Taxicab companies.
- Non-profit organizations.
- Private institutions.
- Government agencies.

These public transportation services provide mobility to residents, support local businesses, and improve livability and quality of life in the region.

In order to provide effective public transportation services, fundamental infrastructure is required. Public transportation systems rely on a complete road network and supporting traffic control devices for efficient routing of vehicles. Equally important is an environment that allows both able-bodied and disabled individuals to get to and from the public transportation system (e.g., sidewalks).

Background

Information is provided in this section on the region's service providers, the existing service and facilities, the facilities and services that are currently planned, regional needs, and recommendations to improve public transportation.

What is public transportation?

A system of vehicles available for use by the general public. Individual public transportation systems can consist of various forms of shared-ride services including bus, passenger rail, and demand response vehicles.

What is demand response service?

A transit service where the passenger calls and makes an advanced reservation to be picked up and taken somewhere. It is more common in rural areas with no fixed bus or train routes.



Wichita Transit Bus with Bike Rack



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Service Providers

Public transportation within the WAMPO region consists of intercity bus transportation provided by Greyhound, taxicab service provided by private companies, and transit services provided by Wichita Transit, the City of Derby, and over 15 other agencies.

What is fixed route service?

Transit services where vehicles operate on a repetitive, set schedule along a specific route with little or no deviation. Typically, fixed route service features printed schedules or timetables, designated stops, and the use of large transit vehicles.

What is paratransit service?

Refers to a demand response service for the general public that specializes in providing transportation to people with disabilities, senior citizens, and low-income populations. Paratransit can include smaller buses, vans, or taxis.

Wichita Transit

Wichita Transit is a City of Wichita department with the purpose of providing cost-effective and reliable public transportation services. Wichita Transit operates both **fixed route** and **paratransit** services. In addition, they contract with social service agencies to provide additional paratransit service. In December 2008, the Wichita Transit Advisory Board was created to advise the City Council on issues related to the operation and planning of the transit system within the City of Wichita. The Wichita Transit Advisory Board is composed of 21 members that are appointed and approved by the Mayor and City Council. Board members represent many aspects of the community including residents, employers, social service agencies, business organizations, educational institutions, and government.

Derby Dash

The City of Derby operates a demand response service called the Derby Dash. The Derby Dash was initiated in April 2007 and is available to all residents of Derby. The service area includes the City of Derby and serves more than 22,000 residents.

Coordinated Transit District #12 Organizations

Kansas is divided into 15 Coordinated Transit Districts (CTDs), each of which is responsible for coordinating transit service within their area. The CTDs are composed of organizations that have a vested interest in paratransit services. Most of these organizations receive transit funds from the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to provide paratransit services. The CTD #12 is composed of service providers in Butler, Harvey, and Sedgwick Counties. This includes Wichita Transit, social service agencies, non-profits, and private institutions that provide a variety of paratransit services. CTD #12 is the decision making body

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for paratransit service coordination and has four voting members, one representative from each of the following:

- Butler County Department on Aging.
- Harvey County Department on Aging.
- Sedgwick County Department on Aging.
- At-large member of the Paratransit Council Inc.

CTD #12 is guided by the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Plan, which is covered later in the section.

Intercity Bus Transportation

Greyhound bus service connects Wichita to Kansas City and Oklahoma City. There are four departures daily from the Wichita Greyhound bus station located in downtown Wichita. Intercity bus service has recently been instituted on two new routes; Wichita/Salina and Wichita/Pueblo, CO. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) stipulates that 15% of the allocation for rural transit must be used for intercity transit. KDOT will allocate about \$2 million for the two new intercity bus routes.



Intercity Bus Service

Taxicab Transportation

Taxicab service in Wichita is provided by several private companies. These companies provide a variety of services including regular taxi trips, parcel delivery, and long distance shuttle service to cities such as Kansas City and Lawrence. Services are available 24 hours a day from some companies.



Taxicab Service at Mid-Continent Airport

Existing Transit Services

The following paragraphs describe the existing fixed route transit and paratransit services in the WAMPO region.

Fixed Route Service

Fixed route services operate on specific routes and schedules. Fixed route service in the region is provided by Wichita Transit and by several CTD #12 service providers.

Wichita Transit currently operates 51 buses on 18 fixed routes that carry over two million passengers annually. Wichita Transit operates a **radial bus network** where most

What is a radial bus network?

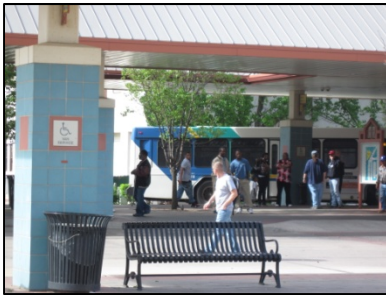
Transit service where routes start at a central hub (e.g., Downtown Transit Center), move out like the spokes on a wheel, and then return on the same general path.



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Wichita Transit Center



Wichita Transit Center



Q-Line Stop

routes are designed to provide service to and from the Downtown Transit Center. Of the buses on the radial routes, all are scheduled to arrive simultaneously at the transit center so that transfers between routes may be accommodated. There are also subarea circulator routes which do not directly connect to the transit center. These routes circulate in designated areas and connect with other routes that provide service to and from the Downtown Transit Center. **Exhibit 6.3.1** shows a map of the current fixed route service for Wichita Transit.

Wichita Transit fixed route services are provided weekdays (5:45 a.m. to 6:45 p.m.) and Saturdays (6:45 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.) on all routes. Routes generally operate on weekdays every 30 minutes in the rush hours and every 60 minutes during the midday.

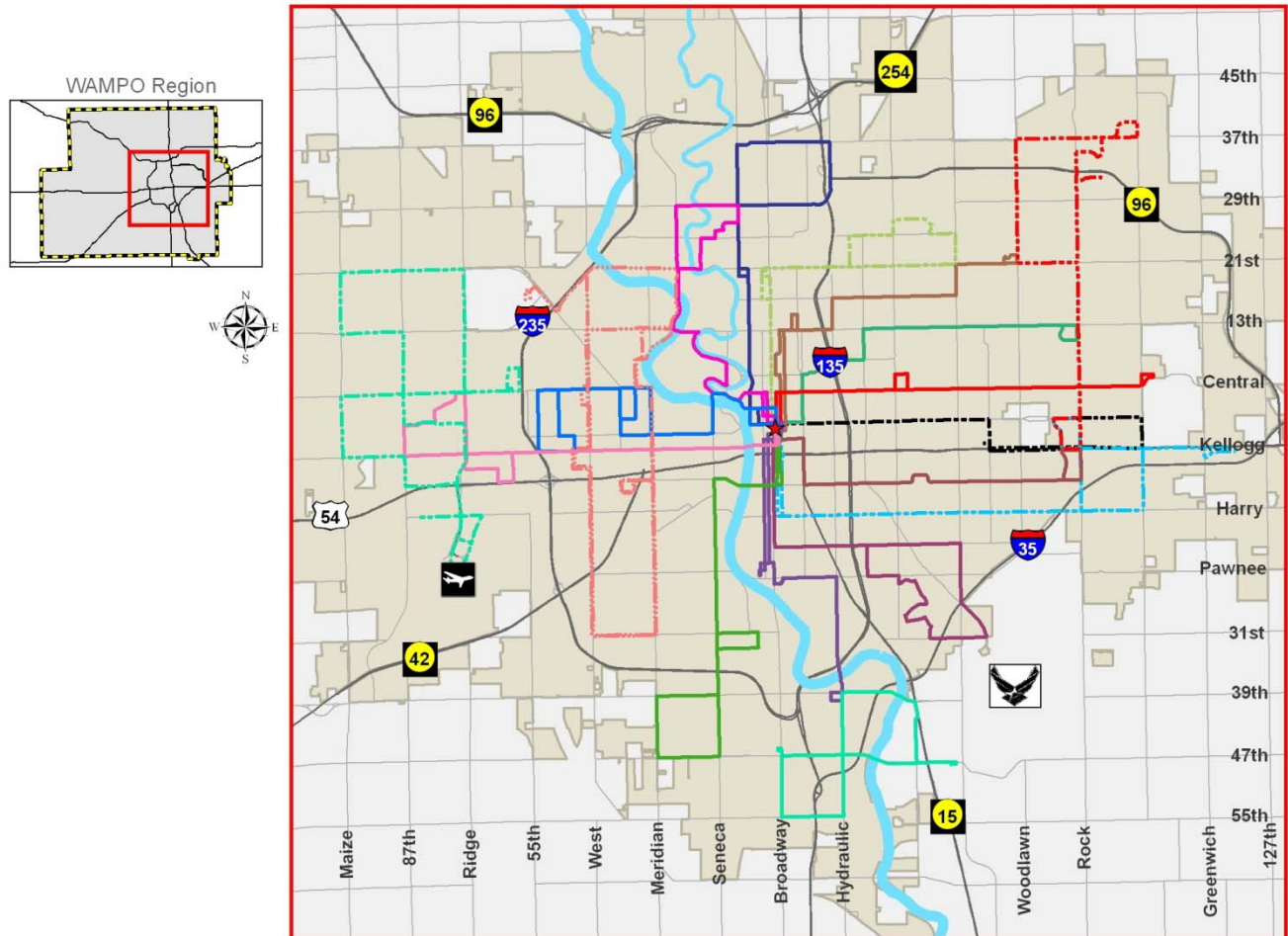
The Q-Line is a trolley service connecting restaurants, hotels, and entertainment venues in downtown Wichita. Downtown visitors and residents use the Q-Line to access venues such as Old Town, the Keeper of the Plains, Lawrence-Dumont Stadium, Century II Convention Center, and Intrust Bank Arena. The Q-Line, which is operated by Wichita Transit, runs from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 6 p.m. to midnight on Friday, and noon to midnight on Saturday.

Schedules, maps, and other information on Wichita Transit are available on the City of Wichita website (www.wichita.gov).

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Exhibit 6.3.1: 2010 Bus Routes



Fixed route services are also provided by at least three other CTD #12 member organizations. As an example, the Kansas Elks Training Center for the Handicapped (KETCH) operates daily fixed route service providing their clients with rides to work. These smaller scale fixed route services are an efficient and effective method to address particular transportation needs within each organization.

Paratransit Service

Paratransit services differ from transit services in that the routes and schedules vary based on demand. Typical paratransit services offered include deviated fixed route (e.g., off of a regular route), curb-to-curb, door-to-door, and ambulance services. Paratransit services are provided by Wichita Transit and 15 private, non-profit, and social



Paratransit Service



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Interior of Paratransit Vehicle

service agencies in the region. Wichita Transit currently operates 26 wheelchair lift-equipped vans providing service to the general public on 17 demand response paratransit routes. Wichita Transit has also contracted with six other CTD #12 agencies to provide paratransit services. These other agencies have their own vehicles and routes in addition to those previously mentioned. Over 320,000 passengers annually are carried by the combined Wichita Transit paratransit services. Approximately 75% of these paratransit customers are carried by the contracted carriers. Normal operating hours are weekdays from 5:15 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. and Saturdays from 6:25 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Other CTD #12 members provide specialized transportation services for their clients. The services are all designed to meet the individual needs of each organization. For this reason, the characteristics of the service in terms of the type of vehicles used, the hours of service, and the service design and frequency differ by service provider. Generally, CTD #12 providers serve the elderly, the physically or mentally challenged, and the economically disadvantaged.

Most CTD #12 member organizations operate fewer than ten vehicles. However, four member organizations operate between ten and 25 vehicles and one member organization operates over 70 vehicles.

The Derby Dash is operated by the City of Derby. It is a curb-to-curb paratransit service available to all residents of Derby. Advance reservations are required 24 hours prior to the trip. Residents intending to ride the Derby Dash fill out an application prior to making a reservation for a trip. The service operates weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Paratransit Service

Existing Transit Facilities

This section describes major transit facilities that exist to support the services offered. Physical infrastructure includes vehicles, facilities, and support equipment.



Downtown Transit Center

The Downtown Transit Center is located at 214 S. Topeka and is the transfer site for all Wichita Transit bus routes operating on the radial network. The Transit Center was built in 1993 and has a large waiting area for passengers, public facilities, an information booth, 24 parking bays for buses and/or vans, and a small amount of office space. Transit customers may ask questions, buy passes, pick up schedules, and fill out **half fare applications** at the Transit Center. Operating hours are 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays only.

Main Garage and Administration Offices

The Transit Operations Center is located at 777 E. Waterman and opened in 1999. It provides offices and meeting rooms for Wichita Transit administration staff, operation dispatch centers for fixed route bus and paratransit van services, and vehicle maintenance and storage facilities. Vehicles are parked inside the facility, which is designed for diesel buses. Vans are currently maintained at the City's Central Maintenance Facility; however, a Regional Van Maintenance Facility is currently under construction.

Programs, Plans, and Studies

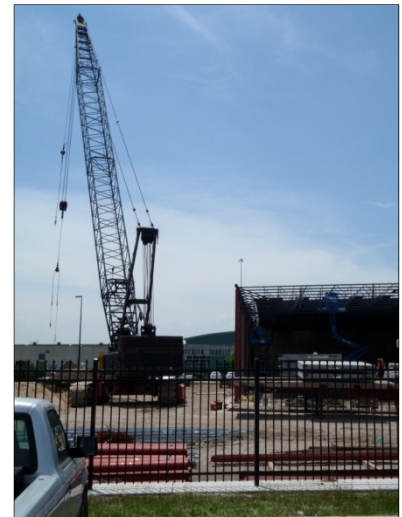
A number of programs, plans, and studies related to public transportation in the WAMPO region help guide investments in public transportation infrastructure. This section highlights the programs, plans, and studies, and provides a summary of their contents and outcomes.

Transportation Improvement Program

WAMPO produces a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which identifies specific projects to receive federal transportation funds. Although all project types (e.g., road, bridge, etc.) are included in the TIP, many of the projects are transit and paratransit projects. These projects include such things as operations, purchase of vehicles, and maintenance.

What is a half fare application?

Wichita Transit provides riders with the opportunity to apply for reduced fares. This program allows riders that have a Medicare card, are age 65 or older, or persons with disabilities to pay half price for bus service.



Regional Van Maintenance Facility



Transit Operations Center



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Unified Planning Work Program

WAMPO and Wichita Transit produce an annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The UPWP outlines all transportation planning activities, including those related to transit and paratransit, that will be conducted by WAMPO and Wichita Transit.



Wichita Transit Bus in Construction Zone

Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Plan

The Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Plan is an important reference for the MTP 2035. It presents information on agencies providing transportation services in Butler, Harvey, and Sedgwick counties to aid in achieving a coordinated strategy of public transportation service delivery. The plan complies with federal funding program requirements for the Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program, and New Freedom Program. This plan is updated periodically to reflect the changing needs and conditions within CTD #12. This plan is available on the WAMPO website.

Wichita Transit Development Plan

The draft Wichita Transit Development Plan provides service recommendations and a review of transit funding. The plan recommends new evening service, increased service frequency, park and ride lots to support new commuter bus routes, and a new crosstown bus route. During the development of the MTP 2035, the University of Kansas was assisting Wichita Transit in developing a new plan. When this plan is adopted, recommendations will likely impact the MTP 2035.



Types of Buses used by Wichita Transit

Passenger Rail Studies

Several reports have been published regarding restoration of the intercity passenger rail service that once connected Wichita to Kansas City, Oklahoma City, Fort Worth, and other cities. Amtrak conducted a study for KDOT which examined the costs and logistics associated with the potential expansion of passenger rail service in Kansas. The study, Feasibility Report of Proposed Amtrak Service, was completed in March 2010. It identified and investigated four possible intercity passenger rail

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scenarios. KDOT and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation will build on these results by providing matching funds for a Service Development Plan. This plan will choose one of the scenarios identified in the feasibility study and develop a business and operations plan for expanded passenger rail service in Kansas. Publication of a Kansas state rail plan, a long-range plan covering freight, short line, and passenger rail activities, is anticipated in 2010. The University of Kansas, School of Business and the Northern Flyer Alliance, Inc. have also produced reports that analyze the economic benefit potential of new passenger rail service connections to Wichita: [Economic Benefit Study of Renewed Passenger Rail Service between Kansas City and Oklahoma City, December, 2009](#), and [Final Return on Investment Review, December 2009](#).

Regional Needs

Surveys were conducted at the Downtown Transit Center and through an on-line survey to obtain information from residents and transit users on frequency of transit use, trip purposes, satisfaction, and funding priorities. In addition, interviews were conducted with regional public transportation providers and social service agencies. This data collection effort resulted in the identification of a number of public transportation issues and needs including:

- Grid bus network.
- Improved transit service frequency.
- Park and ride lots.
- Additional transit service hours.
- Expanded service coverage - fixed route and paratransit systems.
- Bike racks/lockers.
- Downtown Wichita Transit service.
- Passenger rail service (Amtrak).

The input received during the public outreach efforts and the results of previous studies generated the list of recommendations described in the next section.



Wichita Transit Center



Bike Rack at Wichita Transit Center



Wichita Transit Stop



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Recommendations



Wichita Transit Stop

The recommended public transportation projects are listed in **Appendix 4: Project List**. The projects include funding to support maintenance of the existing system such as vehicle replacements and operating funds. The projects also include upgrades to the current system as described in the sections that follow. These recommendations were supported by the MTP Project Advisory Committee and public input. However, decisions regarding Wichita Transit improvements will be made by the City of Wichita City Council, with input from the Wichita Transit Advisory Board.

Grid Bus Network

What is a grid bus network?

Refers to a service pattern where routes operate along linear and parallel paths. Routes operating in the north/south direction intersect routes operating in the east/west direction.

The MTP 2035 proposes that Wichita Transit transition from the radial bus network to a **grid bus network**. The current radial bus system has served Wichita well in the past, but as the region continues to grow, the transit system must be in a position to be more effective and efficient.

A grid bus network, combined with a liberal transfer policy, allows a greater number of residents to access a bus network because more residents will be within a reasonable walking distance of a bus route. It can also extend the market area of major destinations such as retail establishments, entertainment venues, business centers, airports, and educational institutions through the interconnected network of routes. In addition, a grid network eliminates indirect routings, reducing overall travel times for transit trips.



Wichita Transit Bus

Improved Transit Service Frequency

Improved service frequency was identified as a desired improvement during the public outreach efforts. This desire conveniently coincides with the need to provide improved frequencies with a grid bus network system. Subjective evidence from other cities indicates that increased service frequency has a positive impact on transit ridership. Improved frequencies typically allow transit passengers greater flexibility in meeting personal schedules.

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For the transit system to be attractive to more riders, travel times and frequency of service must be improved.

Although a grid bus network has several advantages over the current radial system, there are some impacts that must be considered. Grid bus networks generally operate at service frequencies of 15 minutes or less. This is because some trips will require a transfer for riders to be able to get to a desired destination. Wichita Transit currently operates at frequencies of 30 or 60 minutes. Scheduled frequencies may need to be reduced from the current operation so that wait time when transferring is within reasonable limits.



Wichita Transit Bus

Another consideration is an improved availability of transit information through real time bus location and arrival information. This is further discussed in **Section 6.8: Operations, Maintenance, and System Management**.

The transition to a grid bus network with improved service frequencies requires additional vehicles, maintenance facilities, marketing materials, and manpower. Funding requirements associated with these costs also need to be considered.

Park and Ride Lots

Park and ride lots improve the availability of transit because they provide another option to access the service (drive to a bus stop rather than walk). These lots often incorporate space for bicycle parking and can also be used as a meeting place for carpools and vanpools. Park and ride lots are typically successful when built to address severe traffic congestion or changes in downtown parking policies such as increased parking fees or reductions in downtown parking facilities. Express bus service is generally associated with these lots to limit travel time so that the bus service is competitive with automobile travel.



Wichita Transit Stop

Additional Transit Service Hours

Expansion of service hours into the evening and the addition of Sunday service were identified as regional needs during the public outreach process. Evening service was also recommended by the draft Wichita Transit Development Plan.

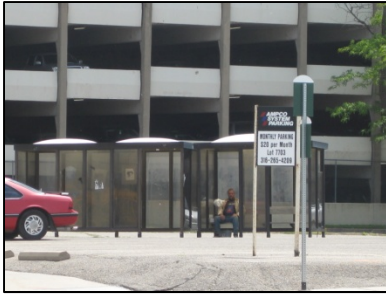


Wichita Transit Center



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The traditional nine to five work day is not as common as it used to be. The move to flexible working hours has an impact on the needs of transit users. Also, many employees work second or third shift which require them to travel at nontraditional times. Residents and workers desire the freedom to travel to entertainment venues, restaurants, employment sites, and churches at times when it is convenient for them. The expansion of service hours is recommended, with priority given to extension of evening hours.



Wichita Transit Stop

Expanded Service Coverage

Service coverage refers to the area that a transit system serves. This is normally based on walking distance. An acceptable walking distance to get to a bus is generally $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. However, studies have shown that certain people will walk up to a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile or even further. Service coverage within the City of Wichita will improve with implementation of the grid network. However, as growth continues to occur outside of the Wichita city limits, the region will ultimately need to consider expansion of transit service into these growing markets. Studies will need to be completed to determine the feasibility of expanded service beyond the city limits.



Q-Line Trolley

Downtown Wichita Transit Service

Expanded evening service on the Q-Line Trolley is recommended in the short-term to mitigate traffic congestion associated with events at Intrust Bank Arena and in downtown Wichita. In the short-term, Q-Line Trolley service should be expanded to serve new venues and developments. In the long-term, as downtown Wichita grows and ridership on the Q-Line increases, investigation into the feasibility of transitioning the bus trolley service to a rail trolley or light rail service should be considered.

Passenger Rail Service (Amtrak)

Several recent studies have set the stage for investigating the restoration of intercity passenger rail service to serve the WAMPO region. The study conducted for KDOT identified the following four scenarios to expand intercity passenger rail in Kansas:

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- Night time extension of the Heartland Flyer between Oklahoma City and Newton.
- Night time extension of Heartland Flyer between Oklahoma City and Kansas City.
- Day service between Fort Worth and Kansas City.
- Day service between Oklahoma City and Kansas City.

These services would be routed through the WAMPO region, with the potential for a passenger station(s) located somewhere in the region. The integration of passenger rail service and the regional transit service (e.g., bus system) would be viewed as a priority to increase the mobility of passengers.

A grant from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail program with matching funds from KDOT and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation will fund a second study to build on the results of the first. This second study will develop a Service Development Plan for one of the four scenarios. The Service Development Plan will produce a comprehensive business and operations plan. Additional studies in the next 25 years may be conducted to investigate additional service in the Kansas City - Fort Worth corridor or expansion of intercity passenger rail service into other corridors.

The recommendations described in the paragraphs above will continue to be studied and refined as necessary. They will be incorporated into future plans as appropriate.