



## Chapter 6: Transit Element



Bus transit provides mobility to thousands of residents who cannot, or choose not to, drive. Bus transit also provides a regional air quality benefit by reducing the number of cars on the road, particularly during congested travel periods and on hot summer days. The region's transit services provide access to major regional employers, shopping areas, health care services, social services, universities, and even a connection between Charleston, Teays Valley, and Huntington. Chapter 6 examines transit initiatives and describes the challenges facing the Kanawha Valley Regional Transportation Authority (KVRTA). In addition, the chapter identifies several roadway recommendations that will likely benefit the transit system.



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## The Kanawha Valley Regional Transit Authority (KVRTA) System

KVRTA serves Kanawha County and portions of Fayette and Putnam counties. The service area is approximately 913 square miles, with a population of approximately 195,413. An estimated 88.0% of Kanawha County's residents live within three-quarters of a mile of a KVRTA route.

KVRTA operates a network of 21 fixed routes oriented around the commercial center of Charleston (Figure 30). With the exceptions of four holidays during the year, KVRTA provides service seven days a week. The earliest routes begin at 4:20 a.m., and service continues until 12:30 a.m. the next day. Complementary paratransit service, known as Kanawha Alternative Transit, or KAT, operates during the same days and hours.

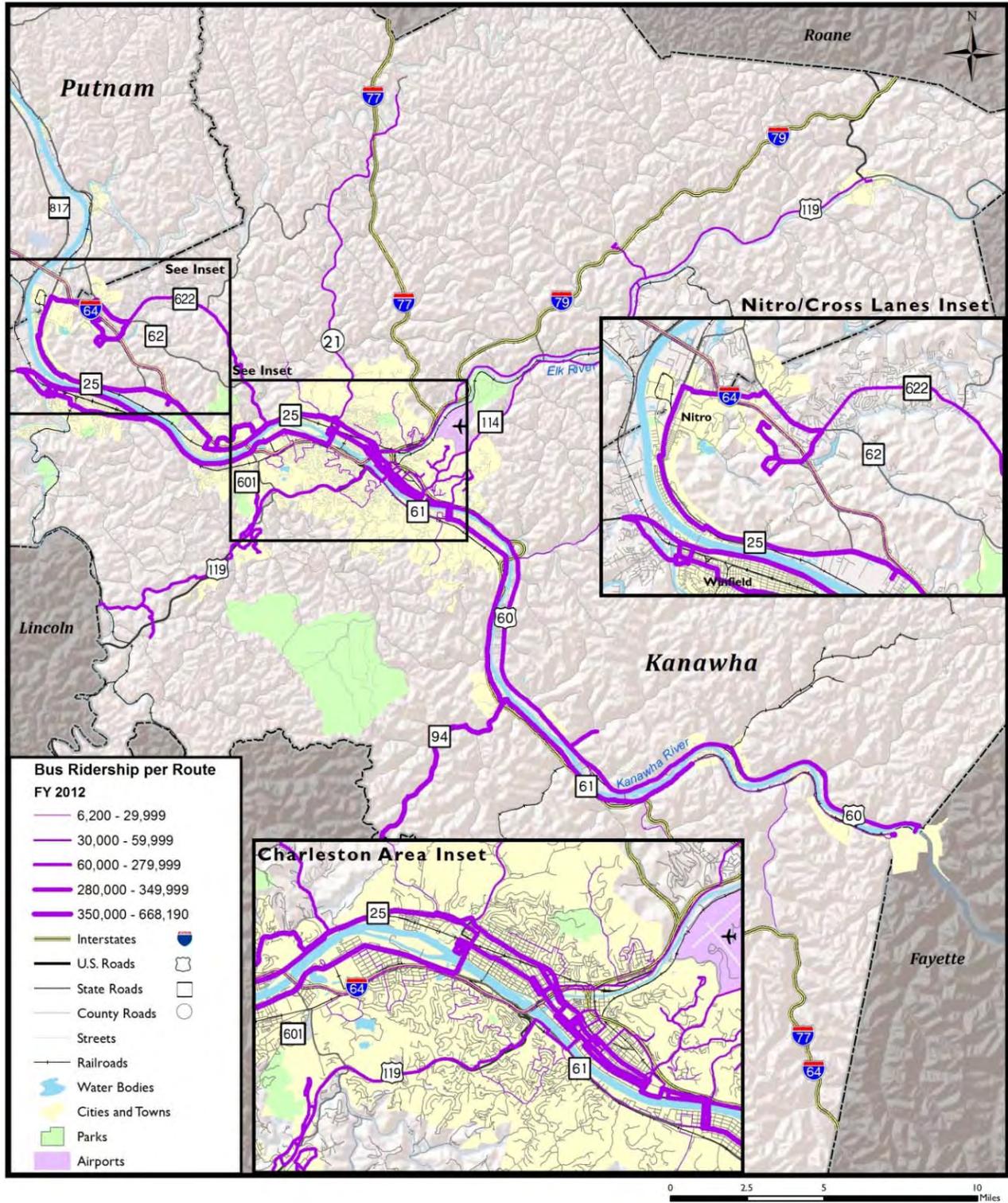
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KVRTA uses zoned fares, with a fixed-route base zone fare of \$1.00. Fares increase by zone to a maximum of \$2.50. Reduced fares are offered during all hours to the elderly, persons with a disability, and Medicare cardholders. The reduced base zone fare is \$0.50, with successive fares either exactly half or rounded down. The fares for the paratransit service are twice the fixed-route fares for the respective zones. KVRTA offers discount passes and reduced student fares on all routes. There is a five-mile rubber-tire trolley loop that serves the State Capitol area and major suburban retail centers.

KVRTA operates a fleet of 55 vehicles for fixed-route service. The fleet consists of 30 and 35-foot long transit coaches, minibuses, and five rubber-tired trolleys. KVRTA also has 15 cutaway vans for the KAT complementary paratransit service.

KVRTA's operations, maintenance, and administrative headquarters are located on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Charleston. The Laidley Street Transit Mall, in downtown Charleston, is the hub and transfer center for all routes. The Transit Mall is a component of the multi-use, multi-modal space that includes commercial and entertainment venues, hotels, and government offices.

FIGURE 30: KVRTA RIDERSHIP PER ROUTE (FY 2012)



## Recent Initiatives

In an effort to accommodate current and anticipated employment growth in South Charleston, KVRTA recently introduced a route extension to the West Virginia Regional Technology Park (formerly the Dow Technical Center).

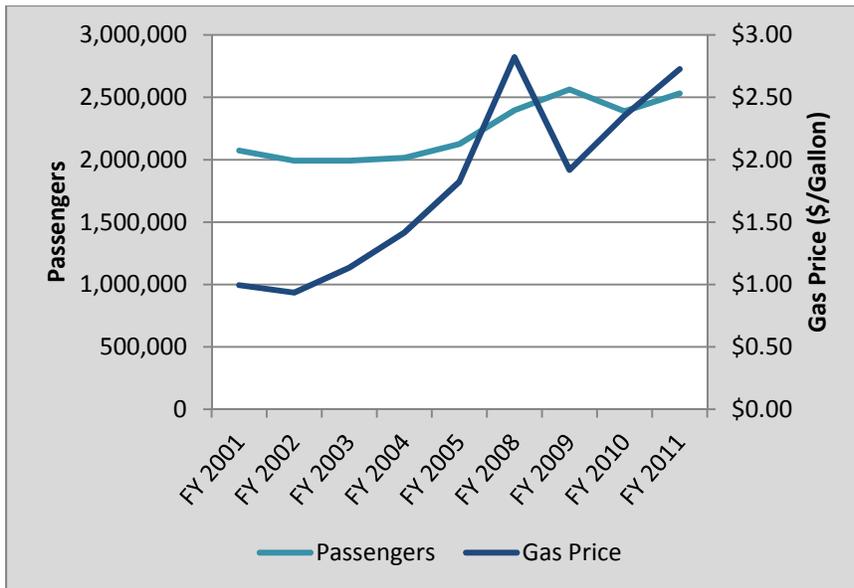
In addition, KVRTA and the Tri-State Transit Authority (the transit agency for the Huntington-area), in partnership with the state, operate an intercity Charleston-Huntington route, with an interim stop in Putnam County. While ridership on the intercity route has declined since a recent fare increase (from approximately 34 passengers to 25 passengers), the route is funded until 2015, at which point KVRTA will evaluate the feasibility of continuing service between the two cities.

In 2012, RIC and KVRTA conducted a passenger survey, which aimed to collect information about rider demographics and travel behavior. A total of 380 surveys were collected. The most frequent responses are summarized below:

- How do you complete your trip: Walk (60.0%)
- How many blocks: 1 or less (48.0%); 2-5 (42.0%)
- How long have you ridden KVRTA buses: 5+ years (63.0%)
- Trip Purpose: Work (50.0%)
- How many trips per week: 10 or more (35.0%)
- In the last year riders have been riding: About the same (49.0%); more (45.0%)
- Valid Driver's License: No (60.0%)
- Female: (52.0%)
- Age: 45-64 (40.0%)
- Income: \$15,000 to \$25,000 (33.3%)

In addition, RIC and KVRTA conducted a route analysis in 2012, evaluating ridership, costs, and revenues. The data indicate that KVRTA bus ridership increased by 22.1%, from 2,073,029 (FY 2001) to 2,530,383 (FY 2011). Meanwhile, gas prices increased by approximately 174.0% over the same period. Generally, rising fuel prices coincide with higher transit ridership, with the exception of 2009, in which KVRTA ridership hit an all-time high despite a temporary decline in fuel prices (Figure 31). The St. Albans/West Charleston route (Route 1) had the highest ridership in 2012, accounting for 668,190 passengers (24.2% of all KVRTA trips).

FIGURE 31: KVRTA PASSENGERS AND WEST VIRGINIA GAS PRICES



Source: EIA, West Virginia, Price by All Sellers  
[http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=PET&s=EMA\\_EPM0\\_PTC\\_SWV\\_DPG&f=M](http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=PET&s=EMA_EPM0_PTC_SWV_DPG&f=M)

## Transit Expenditures and Revenues

The two primary funding sources for KVRTA’s gap between costs and farebox revenues are: 1) special levy money; and 2) the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) Section 5307 Operating Assistance. The levy amount, determined by local property taxes, requires approval by Kanawha County voters every four years (60.0% approval is required).

FTA apportions Section 5307 funds on a formula basis. KVRTA also uses a portion of its Section 5307 funds for capital expenses. Historically, KVRTA has also received capital assistance from the FTA Section 5309 (Bus Discretionary Fund). However, as discussed below, recent legislation within MAP-21 replaced Section 5309. Table 13 presents recent KVRTA funding history.

KVRTA receives funding through several state programs, such as the TRIP program (currently not in use), the Statehouse Shuttle, and Medicare costs. Table 13 reflects these revenues under the State Operating Assistance category; KVRTA does not directly receive operating assistance from the state.

**TABLE 13: KVRTA EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES (2000-2012)**

Year	Property Levy	5307 Operating	Section 5307 Capital	Section 5309 Capital	Operating Revenues	State Operating Assistance	Interest & Misc. Revenue	Total Revenue
2000	\$5,646,469	\$896,469	\$1,424,253	\$2,664,208	\$1,525,833	\$31,486	\$167,017	<b>\$12,355,735</b>
2001	\$6,178,815	\$1,078,815	\$492,304	\$175,982	\$1,424,548	\$23,731	\$173,001	<b>\$9,547,196</b>
2002	\$6,795,892	\$1,008,707	\$179,827	\$400,272	\$1,432,950	\$21,973	\$126,828	<b>\$9,966,449</b>
2003	\$6,338,034	\$1,100,000	\$463,599	\$109,748	\$1,395,705	\$20,851	\$94,302	<b>\$9,522,239</b>
2004	\$6,571,754	\$912,067	\$1,098,931	\$5,149,057	\$1,437,030	\$20,593	\$83,851	<b>\$15,273,283</b>
2005	\$6,505,950	\$1,755,933	\$391,190	\$0	\$1,669,976	\$19,427	\$84,711	<b>\$10,427,187</b>
2006	\$6,637,560	\$2,231,241	\$429,679	\$91,893	\$1,678,585	\$20,604	\$134,522	<b>\$11,224,084</b>
2007	\$6,875,215	\$2,249,150	\$1,376,343	\$176,019	\$1,832,492	\$22,464	\$226,521	<b>\$12,758,204</b>
2008	\$6,958,109	\$2,000,000	\$357,831	\$49,350	\$1,907,237	\$36,254	\$291,867	<b>\$11,600,648</b>
2009	\$7,410,785	\$2,090,621	\$264,010	\$24,457	\$2,074,676	\$36,594	\$166,019	<b>\$12,067,162</b>
2010	\$8,406,508	\$2,078,641	\$5,535,470	\$0	\$1,958,598	\$35,984	\$109,807	<b>\$18,125,008</b>
2011	\$7,950,814	\$2,375,497	\$1,023,733	\$0	\$2,027,532	\$33,687	\$208,651	<b>\$13,619,914</b>
2012	\$8,278,784	\$2,658,060	\$1,576,449	\$0	\$2,139,205	\$39,204	\$87,753	<b>\$14,779,455</b>

## The Financial Climate

KVRTA increasingly faces the challenge of needing to do more with less. Bus passenger volumes are close to all-time highs while federal funding continues to decline. Simply put, there is insufficient funding to cover KVRTA’s capital and operational costs. Under MAP-21 legislation, Section 5339 (Bus and Bus Facilities Program) replaced Section 5309 (Bus Discretionary Fund). The WV Division of Transit will administer Section 5339 and distribute funding to all small-urban areas (8 throughout the state). As of January 2013, it was uncertain how much KVRTA would receive from this state administered fund.

In addition, transit funding has changed due to shifting urbanized area boundaries. Specifically, Teays Valley is now part of the Huntington, WV Urbanized Area. While specifics remain uncertain, the urbanized area boundary realignment, coupled with MAP-21 funding changes, may reduce KVRTA’s annual funding by \$400,000.

In an effort to adapt to the challenging fiscal climate, KVRTA is conducting a system analysis to evaluate potential service expansion and reduction. The study will analyze demographics, conduct passenger surveys, identify the potential for non-traditional and innovative transit service, evaluate the existing route structure, forecast future service levels, and propose future funding strategies.

## Recommendations

The Metro Mobility 2040 study team considered potential transit benefits when prioritizing highway improvement projects and



developing recommendations. Given that a detailed market study and system analysis is underway, Metro Mobility 2040 does not include a detailed evaluation of existing routes. However, a regional assessment of KVRTA’s fixed routes relative to key market characteristics (demographics and commuting patterns) is presented in Chapter 10 and shows a strong correlation between regional transit markets and the KVRTA system coverage. The following projects listed in Table 14 provide roadway improvements along current KVRTA routes. The study team anticipates that these projects will improve transit operations on routes that use these roadways.

**TABLE 14: TRANSIT RECOMMENDATIONS – ROADWAY PROJECTS THAT INCLUDE IMPROVEMENTS ALONG TRANSIT ROUTES**

ID	Facility	Description
KC-1	3rd Street	Widen and upgrade the 3rd street underpass in St. Albans
KC-3	WV 622	Improve intersection of WV 622 (Big Tyler Road) and WV 62 (Cross Lanes Drive): Enhance signal timing; extend turn lanes; develop shared through-right turn lanes
KC-4	US 119 (Corridor G)	From Cantley Road to MacCorkle Avenue: Add third lane to US 119 northbound and improve operations
KC-5	US 119 (Corridor G)	From Lawndale Ln. to MacCorkle Ave: Add lane northbound and southbound; add lane to I-64 connector; install new Cantley Flyover; develop Lucado Road/Oakwood Road underpasses and; improve operations
KC-6	US 119 (Corridor G)	From WV 601 (Jefferson Road) to Emerald Road: Add third lane to US 119 northbound and improve operations
KC-7	WV 94 (Lens Creek Road)	From Six Mile Hollow Road to Interstate 64: Widen to 3 lanes on steep grades to provide truck passing lanes
KC-8A	US 60 (Dupont Avenue)	From Chelyan Bridge (Admiral TJ Lopez Bridge) to CR 81 (Kelly's Creek Road): Widen US 60 to 4-lanes divided
KC-8B	US 60 (Dupont Avenue)	From CR 81 (Kellys Creek Road) to the west side of WV 6 (Montgomery Bridge): Implement spot improvements (center turn lanes and right turns) along key segments of the corridor

### Transit and Park & Ride Accessibility

The 2011 **WVDOT Park & Ride Study** provided insight into the location, surface type, and utilization of park & ride facilities throughout the state. The study team imported this data into GIS and compared the facility locations to current KVRTA route destinations. While KVRTA routes serve most of Kanawha County’s park & ride facilities, several

facilities lack transit connectivity. Those facilities, located along I-77 and I-79, are listed below and shown in Figure 32. The study team recommends that future KVRTA studies evaluate the feasibility of connecting to those park & ride facilities currently lacking transit service.

- I-77, Exit 106 – Edens Fork Road
- I-77, Exit 116 – Haines Branch
- I-79, Exit 5 – Big Chimney Road
- I-79, Exit 19 – Clendenin

**FIGURE 32: PARK & RIDE FACILITIES AND CURRENT KVRTA ROUTES**

