

# Application: Cedar County Transit Expansion

Cedar County Transit  
Community Rides Grant Program

## Summary

**ID:** 3478188346

**Last submitted:** Mar 31 2023 12:11 PM (EDT)

## Final Report Form

**Completed** - Mar 31 2023

The purpose of this report is to document the strategies you implemented for this project, the outcomes, and to help others learn from your experience. Please be honest about any challenges you faced, or things you would have done differently. Some of the information and photos/graphics from this report may be made available to the public, but we will get your permission in advance.

All boxes on the form can be expanded. There are no character limits, but be as concise as you can, while including all pertinent information and data you have collected. Most questions are required, but some are optional. For the uploads, you can upload multiple files if needed. If you prefer to submit your report as a Word document, you can [download this list of the questions](#) and send your responses to your project manager.

This report is due no later than March 31, 2023.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Please provide a 1-3 paragraph summary with the crux of what people need to know about your project and the key outcomes.

The Cedar County Transit Expansion project was a coordinated effort among multiple partners to bring affordable transit service to an area of high need. This need was identified through strategic outreach with the community and key stakeholders in Knox County. Cedar County Transit gathered resources and support throughout the region to build an expanded service to meet this need and provide the community with affordable transportation and access to essential services.

Cedar County Transit assembled a Technical Committee, consisting of local and regional partners to support the launch and implementation of the expanded service. Along with the support of this Technical Committee, the agency planned a phased approach to service implementation keeping in mind the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic affects in northeast Nebraska. The team tracked performance through ridership, partner participation, and outreach. Feedback from project partners was critical to developing a successful and sustainable service. Outreach efforts to market the expanded service were effective and demand for rides grew consistently after the service launch in January 2022, even eliciting the need to hire additional drivers to meet the demand. Throughout 2022, overall ridership for Cedar County Transit almost doubled. New passenger trips in both counties also grew steadily and significantly over time. The agency maintained a high standard of service throughout the entire project and heard directly from members of the community on the importance of providing this service. Most notably, an agreement between Cedar County and Knox County was signed and allows for continuation of the expanded service into 2023.

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## **TELL YOUR PROJECT'S STORY - Who, What, Where, When, Why & How**

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### **Describe where your agency is located and the service area for the project.**

Cedar County Transit is located in Hartington, Nebraska. Service was previously provided in Cedar County, but through this project was expanded to include eastern Knox County as well.

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### **What was the problem or need that this project hoped to address?**

Based on surveys, community feedback, and information sessions with the Knox County Board of Supervisors, an unmet need for affordable transit was identified in Knox County. The Knox County residents needed affordable transportation to access critical services such as the local clinic, hospital, and pharmacies. In order to address this need, Cedar County Transit required additional drivers to support the expansion of transit services.

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**What were the original project goals and did they change at all over time?**

The original goals of the project were to provide affordable transit to eastern Knox County using a phased transit approach with two set routes and possible set of pickup locations. While the goal of providing affordable transit remained the same, the method to achieve it changed slightly as service was actually provided using demand response transit operated at equivalent hours of Monday – Friday, 6AM-6PM.

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**Who were your project partners? Who was your most effective partner?**

Partners identified to assist with transit service expansion included the Knox County Board of Supervisors, NE Nebraska Areas Agency on Aging, Avera Sacred Heart Hospital, Yankton Medical Clinic, Cedar County, and Nebraska Department of Transportation. Each of the partners was equally valuable and effective. In the end, Knox County feedback from community members to the Knox County Board of Supervisors helped elected officials see the value of the service and support continuation.

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**Who was the target audience for the project?**

The project was intended to serve residents in Knox and Cedar counties looking for affordable transportation to access critical services.

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**What strategies did you use to implement the project?**

Several strategies were utilized to successfully implement the project. First, the expanded service implementation was approached in phases to account for pandemic-related travel patterns. A recently acquired transit software was used to collect specific and accurate data to generate reports and present data to the Technical Committee to evaluate progress.

The service was strategically marketed through social media, radio, flyers, the newspaper, community meetings, and more. In addition to these key marketing strategies, riders were offered their first 3 trips free to attract new ridership. For the launch in

January 2022, a grand opening open house was hosted at Cedar County Transit’s new facility to welcome the community to the new space, recognize project partners, and announce the expanded service. To best implement marketing efforts, dispatch recorded where passengers indicated they heard about the service.

Finally, a Technical Committee was developed with the purpose of providing feedback on transit needs, outreach, and the expansion of service. The committee also reviewed plans and assisted in promoting the expanded service before and after launch.

**What resources did you use? (e.g., outside funding, technology, technical assistance, consultant expertise, training, partners, etc.)**

The primary funding source was Cedar County, with reimbursement from the State of Nebraska and FTA. Partner feedback was also an invaluable resource. A Technical Committee including the NDOT Mobility Management team and representatives from each of the project partners was established after the launch of the project. The Committee met regularly and served as a resource for providing feedback and assisting in the marketing and operations plan. Members of the Committee also marketed the service within their own networks. To support operations, Cedar County Transit relied heavily on a newly acquired transit software to collect data and generate reports needed to understand ridership and other metrics related to the expansion of service.

**Did the project follow your anticipated timeline? If not, why?**

Yes, the proposed timeline worked well.

**Please upload a map and/or other images that help provide context or demonstrate the impact of your project.**

[Cedar Knox grant service area map.docx](#)

**Filename:** Cedar Knox grant service area map.docx **Size:** 2.2 MB

**Is there a web site or page where one could learn more about your services related to this project?**

Yes, the project successfully piloted expansion of transit services and connected members of the community to essential services. The success of this pilot lead to a signed contract between Cedar County and Knox County for continuation of the expanded service

into 2023. The goal of providing affordable transit to eastern Knox County to address an unmet need was achieved. Through the work of the Technical Committee, the project also developed a strong network of partners to support transit service in the region.

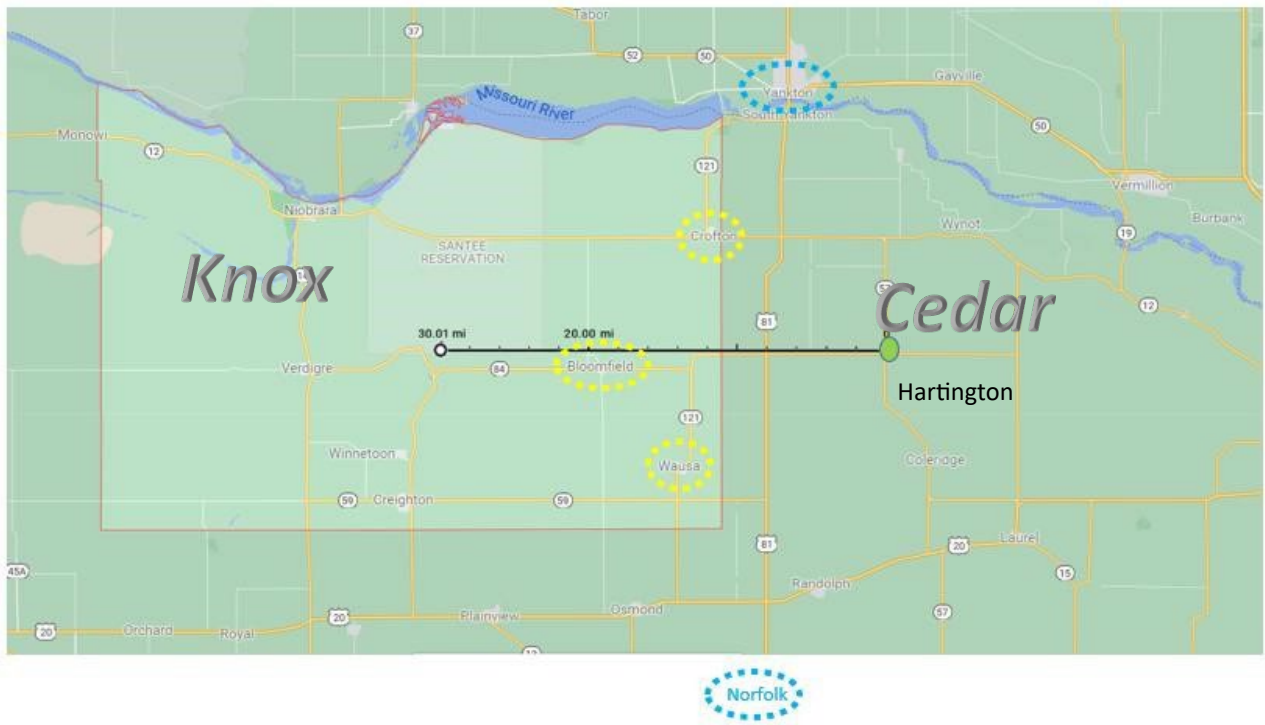
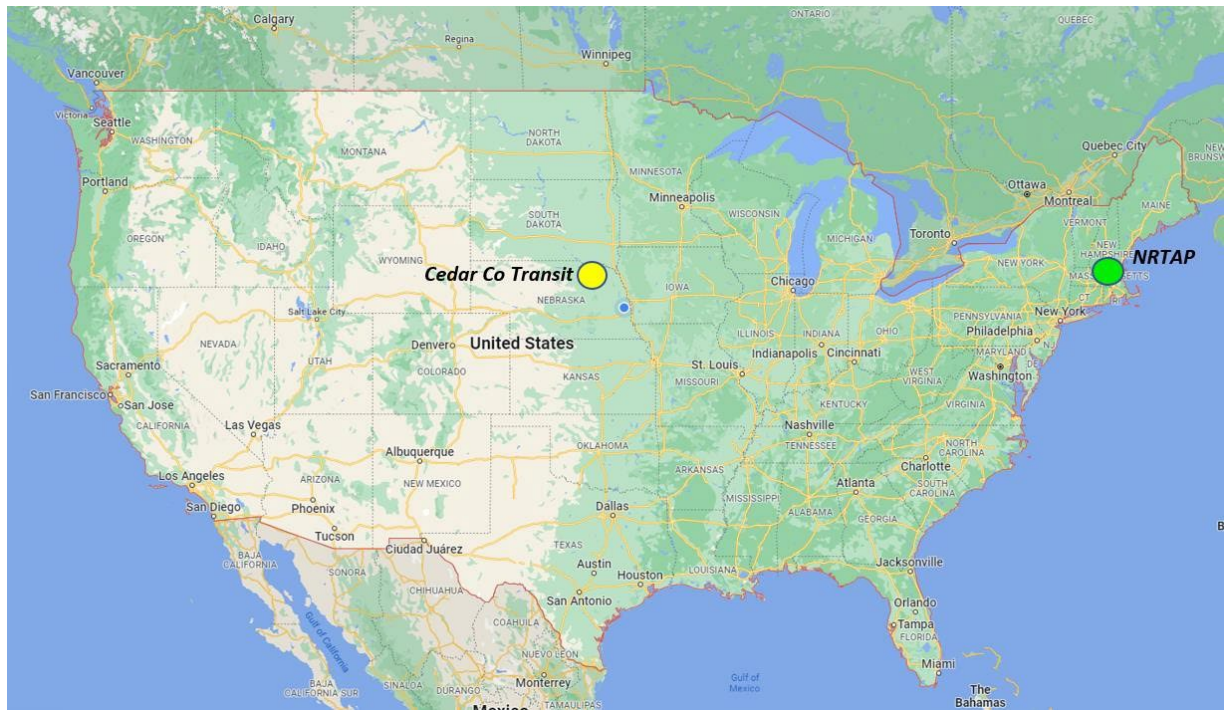
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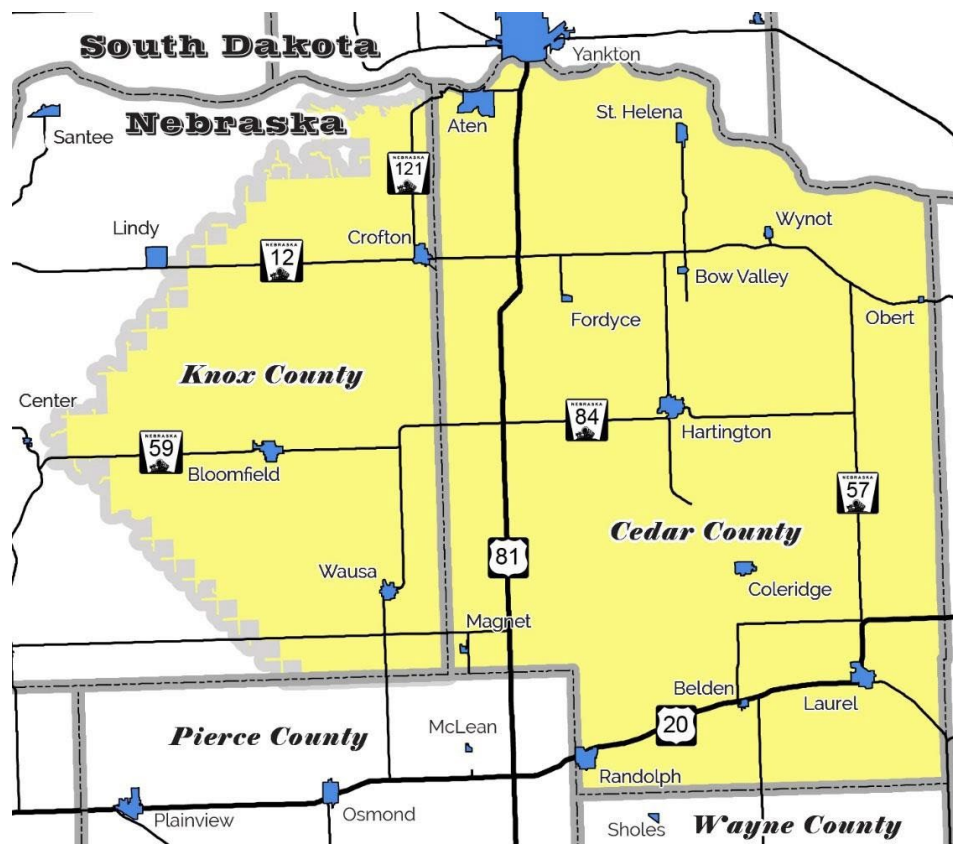
## OUTCOMES, IMPACT & PERFORMANCE MEASURES

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### What were the project outcomes? Did you achieve your project goals?

The project had a positive impact on passengers, partners, the transit agency, and the community. The agency gained many new riders in Knox and Cedar Counties throughout the year of pilot service and received many positive testimonials and gratitude for the expanded service. All members of the community were able to benefit, and the service provided independence for those with limited mobility. Passengers consistently praised the service for these reasons and commended drivers for their friendliness and professionalism. The project also demonstrated the value of this service to the community and stakeholders, developing a strong network of project partners to support sustainability of service into the future.





**What impact has this project had on passengers, partners, the transit agency, and/or the broader community?**

The project had a positive impact on passengers, partners, the transit agency, and the community. The agency gained many new riders in Knox and Cedar Counties throughout the year of pilot service and received many positive testimonials and gratitude for the expanded service. All members of the community were able to benefit, and the service provided independence for those with limited mobility. Passengers consistently praised the service for these reasons and commended drivers for their friendliness and professionalism. The project also demonstrated the value of this service to the community and stakeholders, developing a strong network of project partners to support sustainability of service into the future.



**If you have testimonials from people impacted by the project, please share them here, ideally with their name and who they are (rider, partner, etc.). You could also share a link to any video testimonials.**

Testimonials from riders and community members:

- Margaret A. uses the service 5 times a month and doesn't drive anymore. She will continue to use the service and thinks the drivers are very nice.
- Charleen K. called & said it is very important to have this service as she uses it regularly as well as her daughter who is blind. She wants the service to continue.
- Donna S. needs transportation and uses this service all the time. She thinks it "is an awesome service". Donna is legally blind so transportation is important so she can be independent.
- Marietta M. is very appreciative of the transit. She can no longer drive because of vision problems and uses it to go to appointments. She has five children and all but one live within the 200 miles. She can go and come back in one day if she wants to. She lives ½ mile from Cedar County and would not have been able to use the service before now. She says they come right to the house and are on time.
- Dorothy C's husband John is in a wheelchair. They have used the service over and over to go to physical therapy (around 10 times) and dentist. John's 400 pound wheelchair needs to be tied in and has to be secured and these drivers handle it well. It's much easier to use the transit now. Dorothy has also used the service for wellness and other appointments. She uses a walker and can drive but having transit serviced to utilize when weather is not good or she is tired is great. She sometimes shares a ride with someone else use the service to go in the same direction. One elderly lady she rode with had a colon scope which was serious so having transit was wonderful for her.
- Laverta M. said the transit service is wonderful for appointments. Her neighbor in a wheelchair and his wife uses it often. She thinks it's wonderful to have and wants the service to continue.
- All responses mention that the drivers are very friendly and helpful.
- Email from Colette P.:
  - "I just want to say that this is a very much needed service to our area. Yesterday at the Senior Citizens dinner luncheon here at the Community Center in Bloomfield, several ladies were talking about how they had used this service and how wonderful it was! They would otherwise not be able to travel to appointments without trying to find a family member or someone to drive them (in most cases someone their own age). Please if at all possible, keep this service available in our area."

**Please share your performance measures here and/or as a chart or spreadsheet attachment in the next question.**

The performance measures selected to evaluate success of the project are listed below:

1. Partner participation – a critical grassroots measure showing the needs for public transportation from community input, major activity centers and business input, local city/county staff input, and from elected officials.



2. Ridership – growth measured throughout the life of the project and details of where ride requests come from.
3. Marketing Efforts/Outreach – measurement of how outreach is conducted to market this project and how projectpartners are assisting in outreach

Project partners met regularly with consistent attendance and commitment to discussing project operations and marketing. Marketing efforts were documented monthly and included a variety of tools including social media, radio, flyers, the newspaper, community meetings, and more. A marketing plan was developed that included a situation analysis, marketing goals, target audience identification, marketing tools to be utilized, strategies, measurement and reporting, timeline, and budget. Engagement on social media was tracked closely along with notes from dispatch on where riders were learning of the service. Ridership reports were pulled from the transit software utilized by Cedar County Transit. Key ridership trends are shown in the two figures below. Annual average ridership increased from 520/month in 2021 to 971/month in 2022. There was an average of 10,000 annual trips in 2022 and 221 total new riders.

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**Upload at least one chart (or spreadsheet) to show the data you collected for your performance measures and the impact of your project.** [grant final report ridership charts.docx](#)

**Filename:** grant final report ridership charts.docx **Size:** 20.7 kB

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**Were your initial performance measures valuable, or how have they changed? How will you measure the value of this project going forward?**

Yes, they allowed the project team to visualize the growth in ridership, track partner engagement, and evaluate which marketing efforts were most valuable for advertising the expanded service. The ridership measure was particularly helpful and will continue to be monitored through reports from the CTS TripMaster software.

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## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED**

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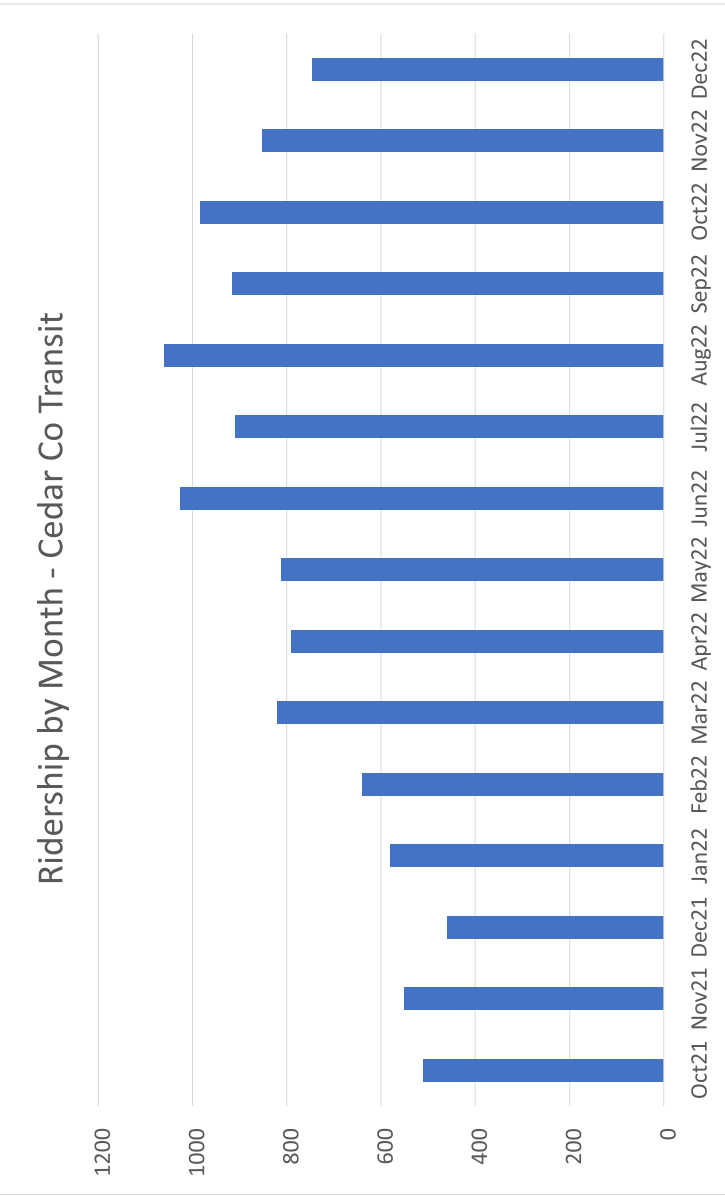
**What about this project are you most proud of?**

The project was able to help many riders in need of transportation. The budget was expended wisely over the full length of the project and marketing efforts were implemented strategically to support the sustainability of the service over time. Most importantly, the success of this pilot allows the service to be sustained through an agreement between Cedar and Knox Counties.

**What challenges or barriers did you face, internal or external?**

There was a significant vehicle and staff shortage concurrent with increasing requests for transit services. To help mitigate this, the County fully funded the purchase of 2 new vehicles. The agency also added 4 new part-time drivers and created one full-time driver position.

The health pandemic Covid-19 aftermath left riders nervous about utilizing a new service and we seen dips in ridership at times to different health surges. This also led to many other transit and vehicles supplies shortages. From a marketing standpoint, the cost of radio advertising proved to be a challenge and the marketing budget was adjusted to focus on other areas of outreach a few months after launch.

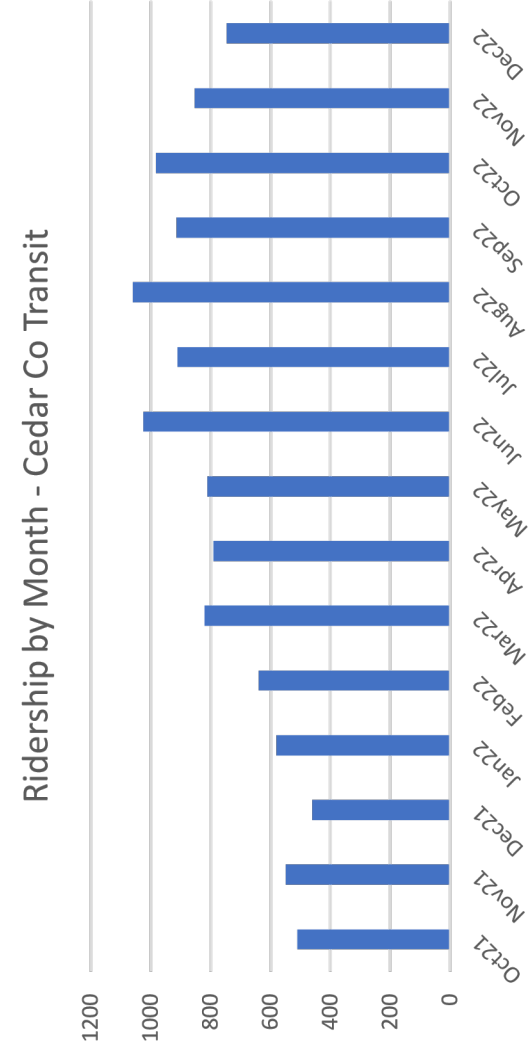
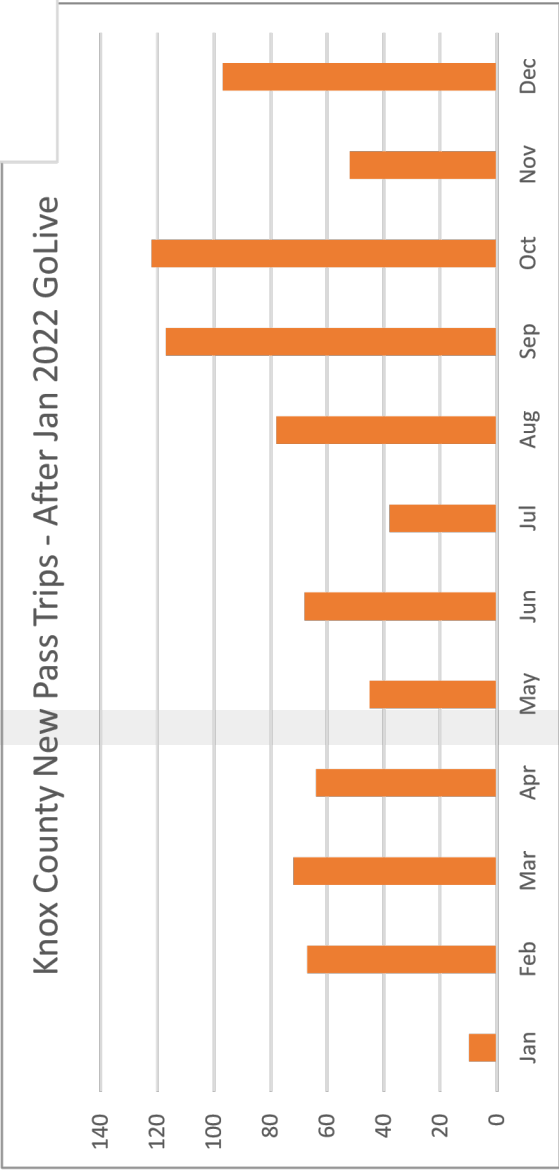
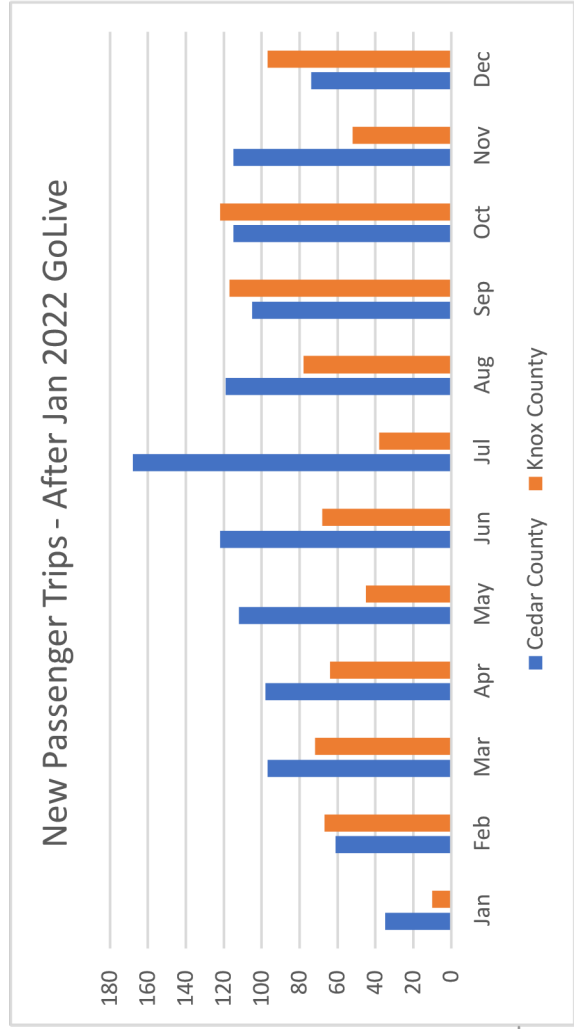
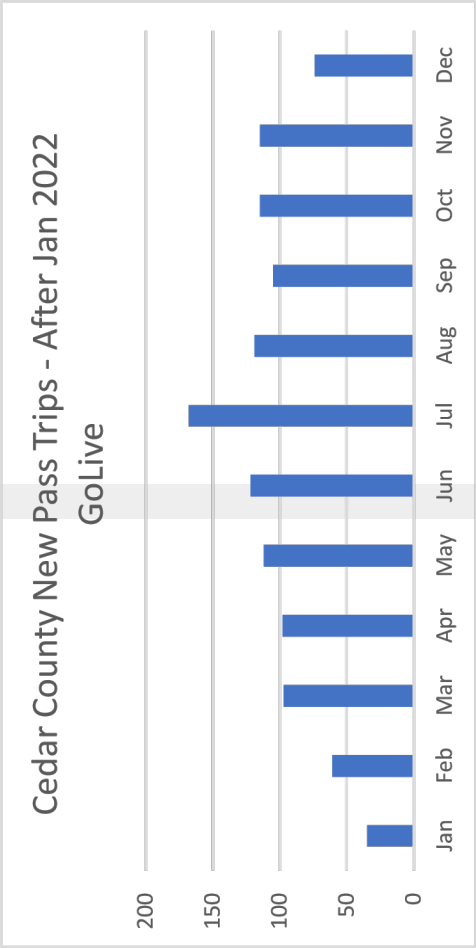


Ridership Chart

Highest ridership

Oct21	510	
Nov21	550	
Dec21	460	
Jan22	580	
Feb22	640	
Mar22	820	
Apr22	790	
May22	812	
Jun22	1025	2
Jul22	910	5
Aug22	1060	1
Sep22	915	4
Oct22	983	3
Nov22	853	
Dec22	746	

average: 971.1667



New Passenger Trips		
New Passenger Trips - After an 2022 GoLive		
	Cedar Coun	Knox County
Jan	35	10
Feb	61	67
Mar	97	72
Apr	98	64
May	112	45
Jun	122	68
Jul	168	38
Aug	119	78
Sep	105	117
Oct	115	122
Nov	115	52
Dec	74	97
Knox County New Pass Trips - After Jan 2022 GoLive		
Jan	10	
Feb	67	
Mar	72	
Apr	64	
May	45	
Jun	68	
Jul	38	
Aug	78	
Sep	117	
Oct	122	
Nov	52	
Dec	97	
	averageKC	69.2
	AverageCC	104.3





### What would you do differently if you had the chance?

Despite overall success with the project, the budget should be monitored closely, especially in respect to marketing expenses. Specific marketing efforts, such as radio, have a significant cost and close attention needs to be paid to ensure funds will last for the duration of the project.

### If another transit agency was about to start a similar project, what would you want them to know? What could other stakeholders (government agencies, local businesses, advocates, riders, etc.) learn from your project?

Be intentional about finding stakeholders who will not only be involved and supportive but will also help advocate for the project. Make sure your funding source is open to unexpected costs and on board with the vision behind the project.

### Are there any other files you would like to upload that demonstrate the project outcomes? (e.g., updated marketing materials, reports from consultants, etc.)

[Cedar County Expansion Trifold\\_2-1-22.pdf](#)

**Filename:** Cedar County Expansion Trifold\_2-1-22.pdf **Size:** 978.6 kB [van logo Cedar expanding Knox.png](#)

**Filename:** van logo Cedar expanding Knox.png **Size:** 297.8 kB

[Grand final report\\_Ridership Charts.xlsx](#)

**Filename:** Grand final report\_Ridership Charts.xlsx **Size:** 32.3 kB

[Knox County Fare Poster 2022.xlsx](#)

**Filename:** Knox County Fare Poster 2022.xlsx **Size:** 68.2 kB

[Cedar County Transit Fares 2021 poster.xlsx](#)

**Filename:** Cedar County Transit Fares 2021 poster.xlsx **Size:** 68.4 kB

### PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

#### What is the future of the project or service? Is ongoing funding secured?

The piloted transit service will continue with the support of funding secured through Knox County. Annual contracts will be renewed based on service needs and cost.

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**How will your partnership(s) continue after this project?**

Knox County will continue to partner with Cedar County Transit to support the sustainability of the expanded service.

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**Will any policies, plans, or procedures that were developed during the project continue to be used?**

All the policies and procedures developed to provide service into Knox County will remain. Software will continue to be utilized to track all ride info and implement the 30 mile service area into Knox County from the transit facility.

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**Would you have been able to implement this project or service without this grant program?**

No

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**Is there anything else you want to share about your project that did not fit into any of the questions above?**

No, without the support of this grant, the agency could not show the Cedar County Commissioners (the main funding source) there was room for growth and a huge unmet need for affordable transit service. The grant enabled Knox and Cedar Counties to work together and determine a financial strategy for how to sustain this essential service.

## **Upload PowerPoint (or Conference Poster)**

**Completed** - Mar 31 2023

- In addition to answering the above questions, please submit a PowerPoint (or conference poster) either in SurveyMonkey or via email to your project manager. If you are interested in doing a conference poster and would like to learn more or see a template, let us know!
- The presentation length should be approximately 15-20 minutes or 15-20 slides and should utilize the Widescreen (16:9) format.

The audience for the presentation is primarily other rural or tribal transit agencies, but also potentially local, state, or federal agencies or other transit stakeholders.

- Tell the story of the project, with who, what, where, when, why, and how, just to give enough context. Then focus on the outcomes and the lessons you learned and what others can learn from the project. Use pictures, maps, and charts to depict your geographic area, service delivery, operations, performance measures, and/or community impact, etc.
- Include testimonials from those involved and impacted, if possible.
- This PowerPoint is due no later than March 31, 2023.

### **[Cedar County Transit Expansion Project - Final Report](#)**





## PILOT PROJECT

Cedar County Transit is Expanding Service!

In 2021 Cedar County Transit was awarded a national transit grant to expand general public transportation services for Cedar County Residents and also expand 30-miles into Knox County. Call the office, in advance, to book a trip.



**402.640.6147**

**Every ride MATTERS**

[Facebook.com/CedarCountyTransit](https://www.facebook.com/CedarCountyTransit)

February 1, 2022

**Within Hartington \$3**

**Within Own Cedar County Towns (Except Hartington): \$5**

**From Hartington to:**

- \$5 - rural Hartington to town, Coleridge, Fordyce, Saint Helena, Wynot
- \$7 - Belden, Bloomfield, Brooky Bottom, Crofton, Laurel, Randolph, Wausa
- \$8 - Osmond, Wayne, Vermillion, Yankton
- \$10 - Norfolk
- \$12 - Sioux City, Dakota Dunes
- \$25 - Columbus, Sioux Falls
- \$30 - Fremont
- \$40 - Elkhorn \$50 - Omaha
- \$55 - Lincoln \$70 - Kearney

**From Coleridge to:**

- \$5 - Hartington
- \$7 - Belden, Bloomfield, Laurel, Randolph, Wausa
- \$8 - Osmond, Wayne, Yankton
- \$10 - Norfolk, Vermillion
- \$12 - Dakota Dunes, Sioux City
- \$25 - Columbus
- \$30 - Fremont, Sioux Falls
- \$40 - Elkhorn \$50 - Omaha
- \$55 - Lincoln \$70 - Kearney

**From Wynot, Fordyce & Saint Helena to:**

- \$5 - Hartington
- \$8 - Vermillion, Yankton
- \$10 - Wayne
- \$12 - Norfolk, Sioux City, Dakota Dunes
- \$25 - Sioux Falls
- \$30 - Columbus \$55 - Omaha
- \$35 - Fremont \$60 - Lincoln
- \$45 - Elkhorn \$75 - Kearney

**\*\* CCT accepts Nebraska Medicaid companies United Healthcare and Heritage Health/Nebraska Totalcare for payments**

**\*\* prices are based on mileage starting from Hartington and approximates depending on addresses, call for towns not listed**

**We provide transit for all patrons that reside within Cedar County, NE. Driving hours: Monday thru Friday 6am-6pm & office 8am-5pm**

**All transit services are available to the general public, including persons with disabilities.**

*\*effective 7/1/19*



**402-640-6147**

**Every ride MATTERS**

**From Laurel & Belden to:**

- \$7 - Hartington
- \$8 - Wayne
- \$10 - Osmond, Wausa
- \$12 - Norfolk, Sioux City, Dakota Dunes, Vermillion, Yankton
- \$30 - Columbus, Fremont, Sioux Falls
- \$40 - Elkhorn \$50 - Omaha
- \$55 - Lincoln \$75 - Kearney

**From Randolph to:**

- \$7 - Hartington, Laurel
- \$8 - Osmond, Wausa
- \$10 - Norfolk, Wayne, Yankton
- \$15 - Sioux City, Dakota Dunes
- \$30 - Fremont, Sioux Falls
- \$45 - Elkhorn \$60 - Omaha
- \$60 - Lincoln \$70 - Kearney

**From Bow Valley to:**

- \$5 - Hartington
- \$8 - Vermillion, Yankton
- \$12 - Norfolk, Sioux City, Dunes
- \$25 - Sioux Falls
- \$30 - Columbus \$55 - Omaha
- \$35 - Fremont \$60 - Lincoln
- \$45 - Elkhorn \$75 - Kearney

**Brooky Bottom to:**

- \$8 - Vermillion \$10 - Yankton
- \$12 - Sioux City, Dakota Dunes
- \$15 - Norfolk \$30 - Sioux Falls
- \$55 - Omaha \$60 - Lincoln

**Magnet to:**

- \$7 - Hartington
- \$10 - Norfolk
- \$12 - Wayne
- \$65 - Omaha, Lincoln

## Within Own Knox County Town: \$5

### From Crofton to:

- \$7 - rural Crofton to town, Fordyce, Hartington, Saint Helena
- \$8 - Bloomfield, Wausa, Wynot, Yankton SD
- \$10 - Creighton, Niobrara, Osmond, Verdigre, Vermillion SD
- \$12 - Norfolk, Randolph
- \$15 - Wayne
- \$20 - Sioux City IA, Dakota Dunes SD
- \$30 - Sioux Falls, SD
- \$50 - Freemont
- \$65 - Omaha
- \$70 - Lincoln

### From Bloomfield to:

- \$7 - rural Bloomfield to town
- \$8 - Crofton, Wausa, Osmond
- \$10 - Creighton, Niobrara, Planview, Randolph, Verdigre, Wynot, Yankton SD
- \$12 - Norfolk
- \$15 - Wayne
- \$25 - Dakota Dunes & Sioux City IA
- \$40 - Sioux Falls, SD
- \$50 - Freemont
- \$70 - Lincoln, Omaha

### From Wausa to:

- \$7 - rural Wausa to town
- \$8 - Bloomfield, Crofton, Osmond
- \$10 - Norfolk, Plainview, Randolph, Verdigre, Yankton SD
- \$12 - Niobrara, Wayne
- \$20 - Sioux City, IA & Dakota City, SD
- \$45 - Freemont
- \$65 - Lincoln, Omaha

**\*\* CCT accepts Nebraska Medicaid companies United Healthcare and Heritage Health/Nebraska Totalcare for payments**

**\*\* prices are based on mileage starting from Hartington and approximates depending on addresses, call for towns not listed**

**Transit provided for Knox County residents who live 30 miles from Hartington, NE. Please be Kind and call in Advance!**

**All transit services are available to the general public, including persons with disabilities.**



**402-640-6147**

**Every ride MATTERS**

**\*\*January-December 2022, new customers get 3 free rides**

*\*effective 1/10/22*