

Intercity Bus 101: State of the Industry

July 25, 2023, 2:00-3:30 PM ET

National RTAP
Rural Transit Assistance Program

FTA
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration

TRAVEL WASHINGTON INTERCITY BUS

National RTAP Intercity Bus Workshop

July 2023

Nina Stocker
Intercity Bus Program Manager
Public Transportation Division

Don Chartock
Deputy Director
Public Transportation Division

Travel Washington Intercity Bus Program

The **Travel Washington Intercity Bus Program** connects rural communities in Washington state with larger urban centers, providing connections to the national intercity transportation network that includes bus, rail, air, and ferry.

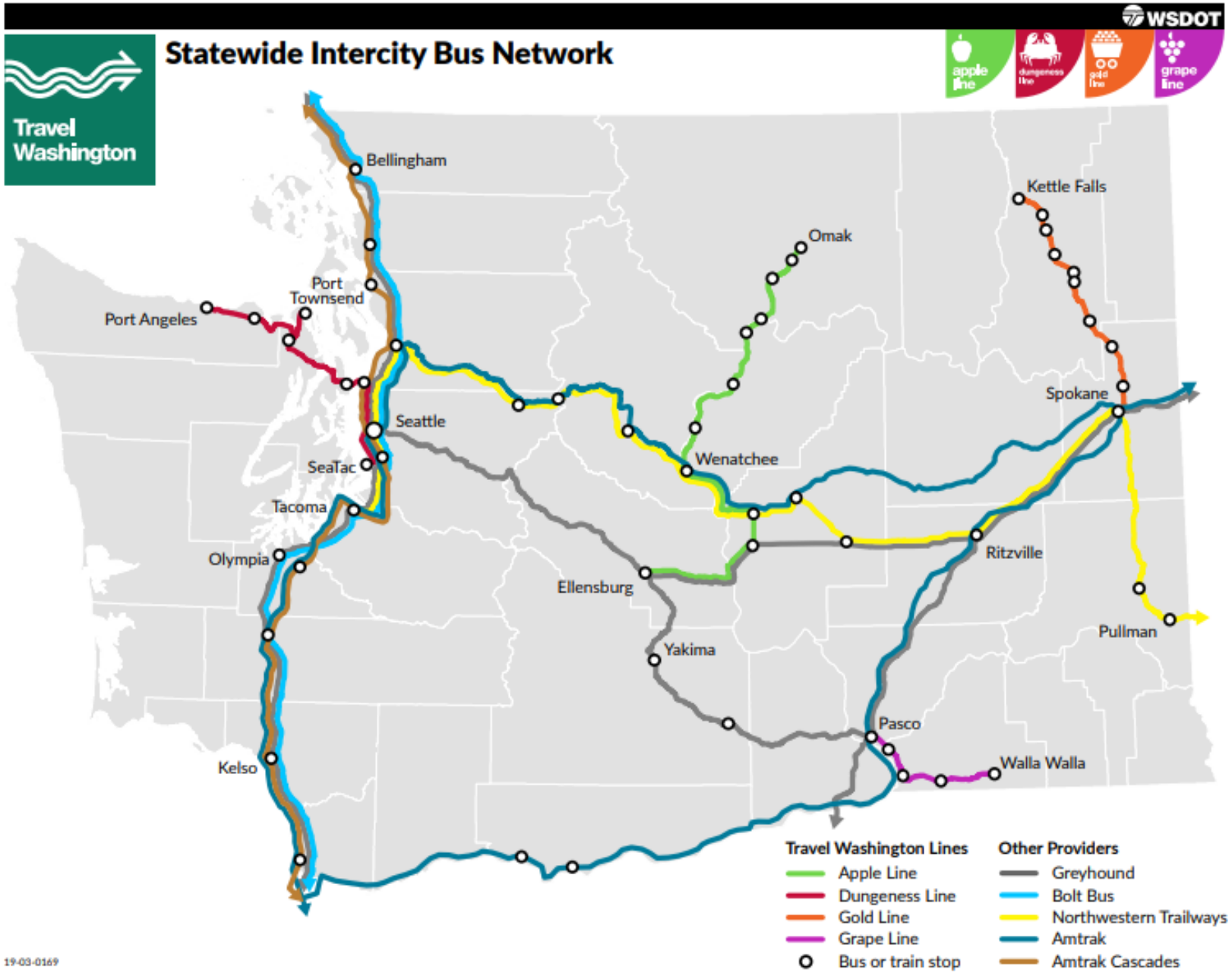
The program uses federal 5311(f) formula funds and private, in-kind matching funds provided by Greyhound to operate the program.

WSDOT Intercity Bus Program goal: To provide mobility and access for rural residents with unmet transportation needs.

FTA objectives: Support the connection between non-urbanized areas and the larger regional or national system of intercity bus service.

Four intercity bus routes

- The ***Grape Line*** launched in 2007 with three round-trips daily from Walla Walla to Pasco, operated by Central Washington Airporter.
- The ***Dungeness Line*** launched in 2008 with two round-trips daily from Port Angeles to SeaTac airport, operated by Greyhound.
- The ***Apple Line*** launched in 2008 with one round-trip daily from Omak to Ellensburg, operated by Northwest Stage Lines.
- The ***Gold Line*** launched in 2010 with two round-trips daily from Kettle Falls to Spokane, operated by Central Washington Airporter.


WSDOT
Travel Washington
Statewide Intercity Bus Network
apple line
dungeness line
gold line
grape line
Bellingham
Port Townsend
Port Angeles
Seattle
SeaTac
Tacoma
Olympia
Kelso
Omak
Wenatchee
Ellensburg
Yakima
Kettle Falls
Spokane
Ritzville
Pullman
Pasco
Walla Walla
Travel Washington Lines
Apple Line
Dungeness Line
Gold Line
Grape Line
Bus or train stop
Other Providers
Greyhound
Bolt Bus
Northwestern Trailways
Amtrak
Amtrak Cascades
19-03-0169

Coverage of Travel Washington intercity bus network

- About 77 percent of Washington residents live within 10 miles of an intercity bus stop or station

- 95 percent live within 25 miles of intercity bus stops/stations

Source: KFH Group, 2019 Travel Washington Study

How we got started

2005

WSDOT consultant, KFH Group, works with FTA, state DOTs, and intercity bus representatives to explore the value of unsubsidized match

2005-2007

WSDOT provides grant funding for two intercity bus-type projects (Port Angeles and Walla Walla service)

2006

WSDOT consultant produces the first “Washington State Intercity Bus Service Study”

2006-2007

WSDOT develops Travel Washington Intercity Bus Program based on 2006 study

Selecting providers and awarding service contracts

- Request for Proposals (RFP) for specific routes within the identified corridor
- Provides flexibility to meet identified rural transportation needs
- Select best operator for each project
- Competition is between providers, not projects
- Purchase of Service Contract, rather than operating assistance grant
- Establishes expectations in advance, provides more control
- Require interline ticketing agreements

Branding and marketing

- Standardized branding across all routes and vehicles
- Each route is branded with a name based on a regional theme
- Contractors are required to market their route using the Travel Washington brand



In-kind match

The 2006 study also developed a creative method to use FTA 5311(f) funding for operating assistance using the value of in-kind matching funds by way of connecting intercity bus services, to serve as the required local match for the federal funds.

Greyhound evaluates connecting service schedules and provides letters to WSDOT of match guarantee

This method is supported by the FTA - WSDOT has seen this method through several triennial reviews

State of the program

Over **130,000** rides provided since 2018

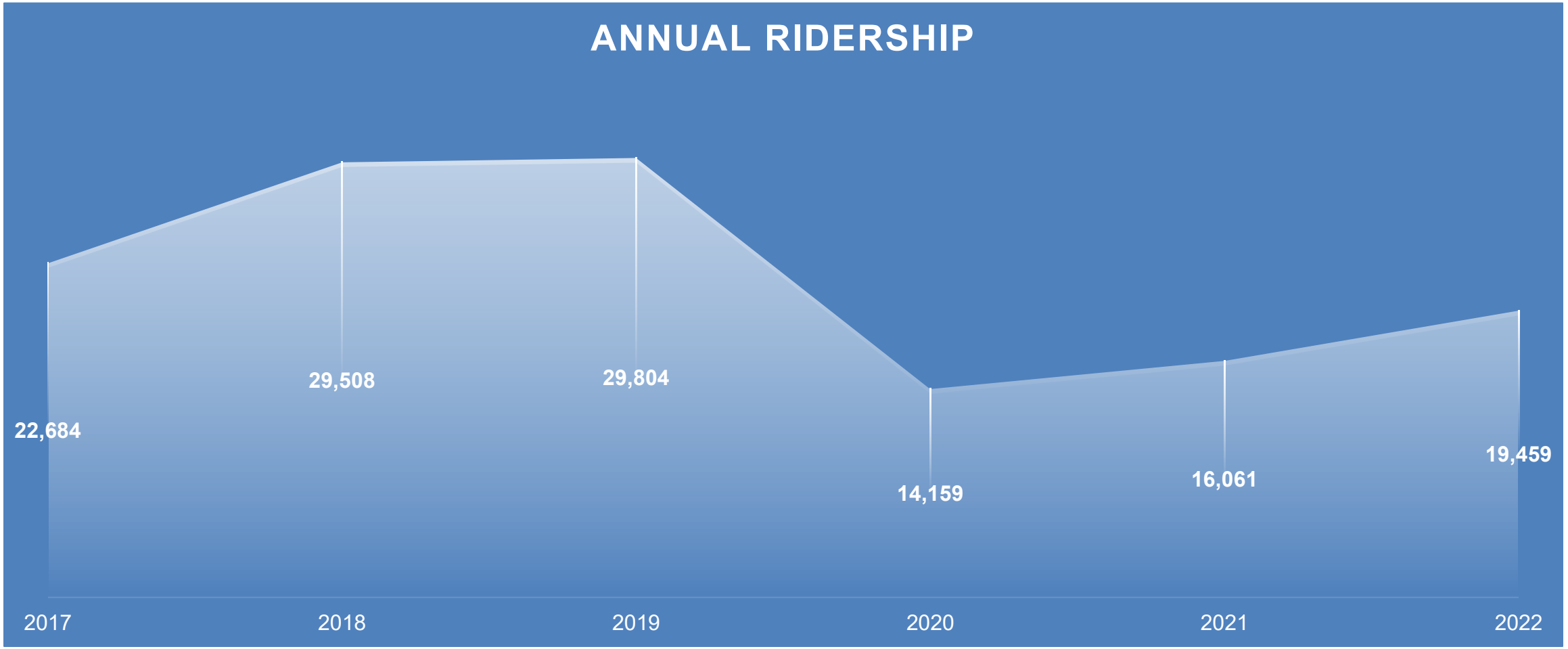
47% decrease in annual ridership in 2020 as compared to 2019 (COVID pandemic)

Today ridership has returned to 80% of pre-pandemic numbers

Some routes have recovered better than others often dependent on the availability of meaningful connections to the network

CRRSAA/ARPA NOFO - April 2023
WSDOT awarded **$7,503,601** with a focus on restoring meaningful connections and addressing continued operating losses due to pandemic

Travel Washington ridership



Challenges and opportunities

- Focus on sustaining meaningful connections across the intercity bus network
- Capital assets: from vehicles to bus stops and stations
- Need for more subsidized service as private intercity network continues to shift
- Coordination between private providers, state DOTs, and public transit agencies
- Interlining agreements
- If in-kind match is limited in the future due to the loss of connecting service, WSDOT may consider the use of toll credits to supplement

Looking forward

WA State Legislature allocated funding in 2023 budget to update 2019 study

Goal:

explore feasibility of service expansion in Yakima Valley and on the I-90 corridor where frequency of meaningful connections has been lost

Two RFPs coming in 2024 (*Apple Line* and *Dungeness Line*)

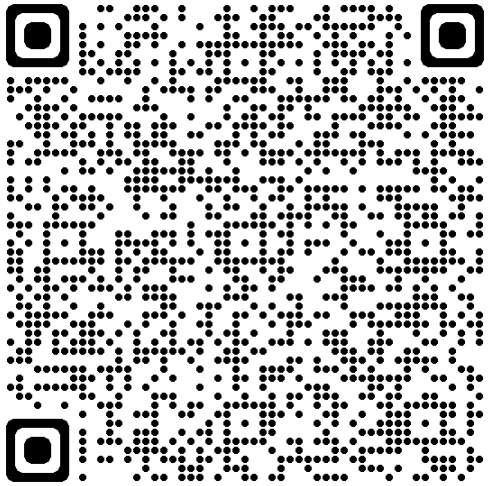
Role of the state is continuing to evolve as the private intercity bus industry continues to shift

Choosing to be proactive rather than reactive during times of change

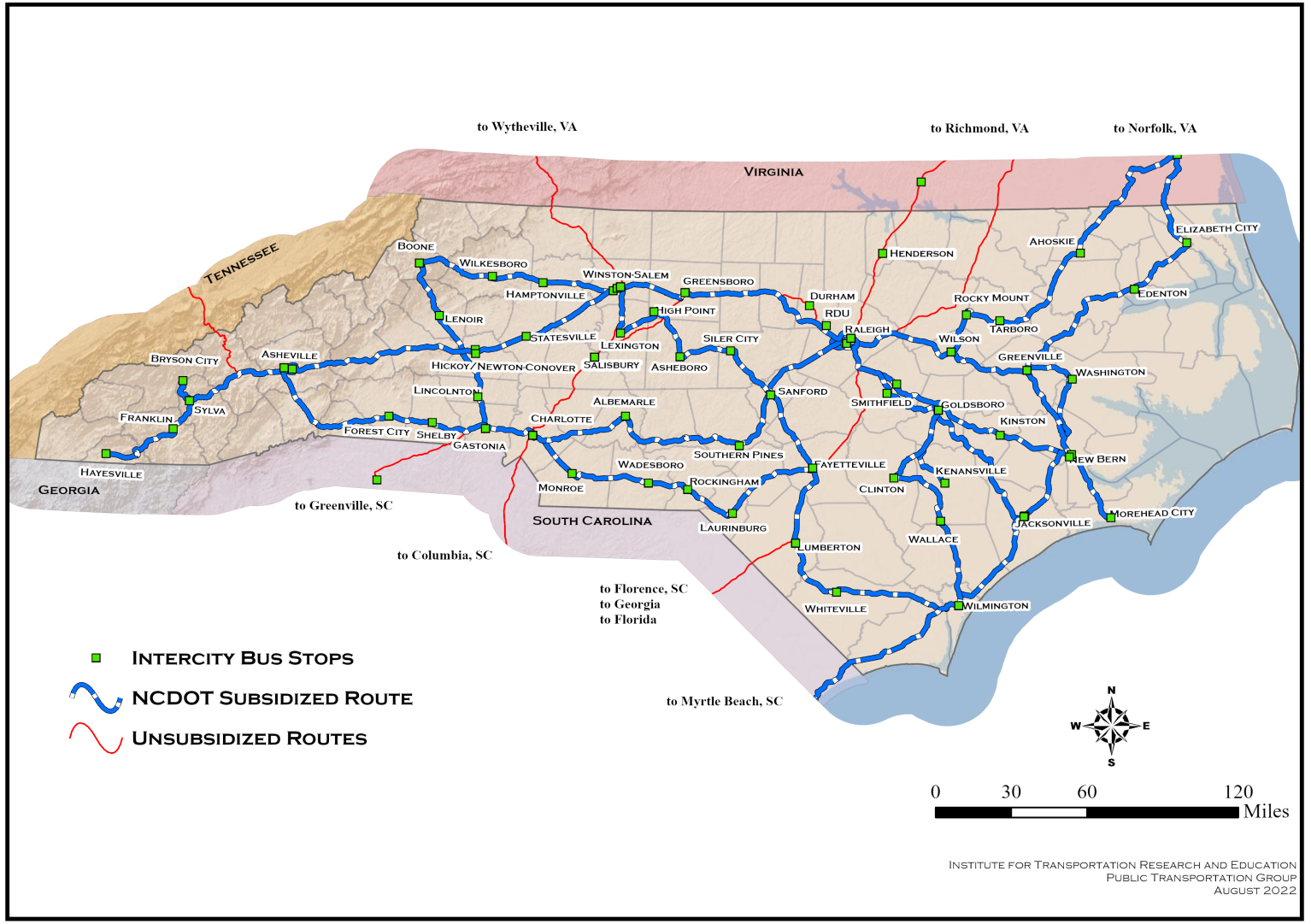
Importance of coordination between private providers and state DOTs

For more information on the Travel Washington Intercity Bus Program please contact:

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360-878-4695
nina.stocker@wsdot.wa.gov
or
visit our webpage using the QR code below



North Carolina Intercity Bus Service: FY23-24

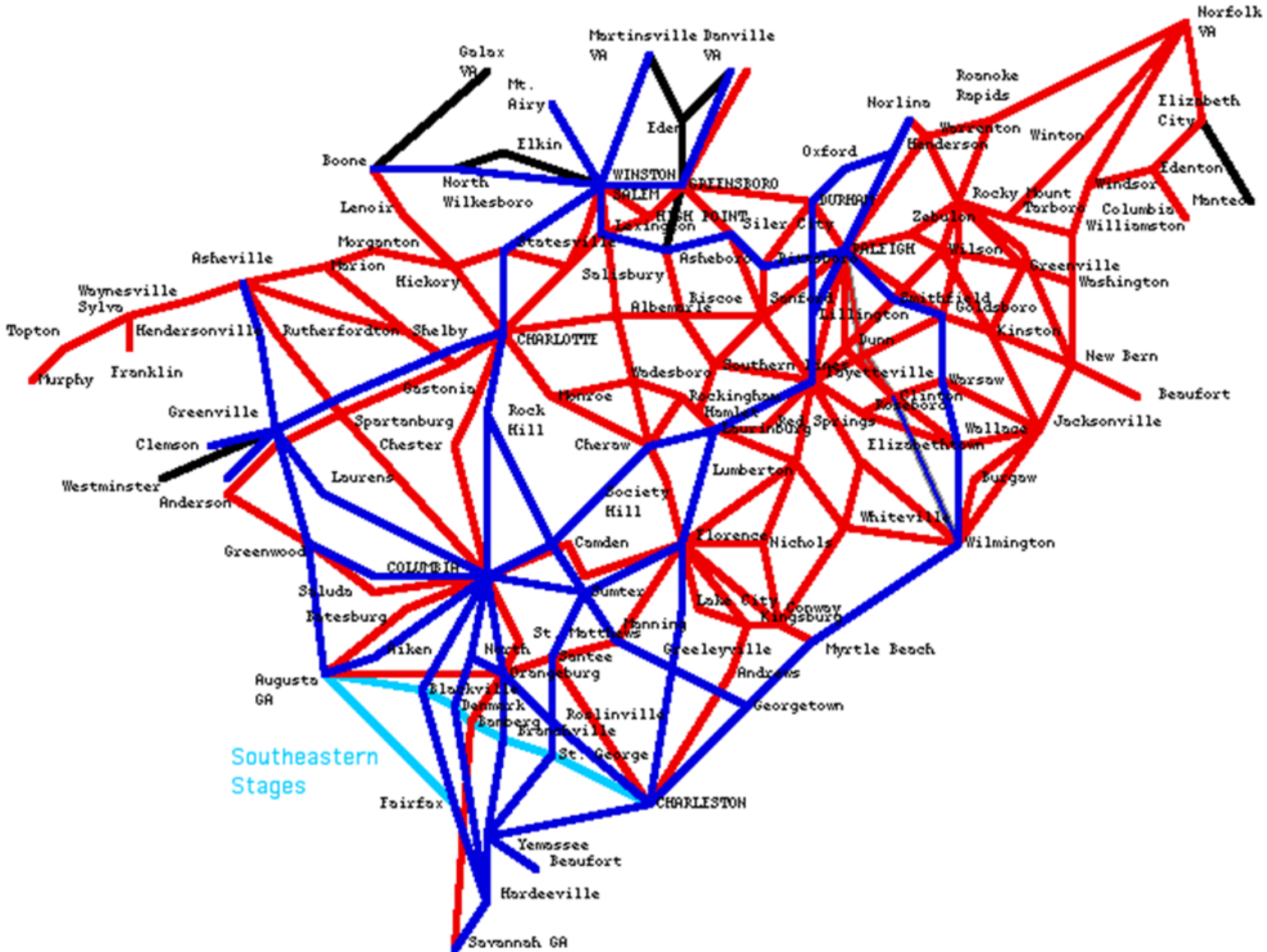


North Carolina Intercity Bus Overview and Vision

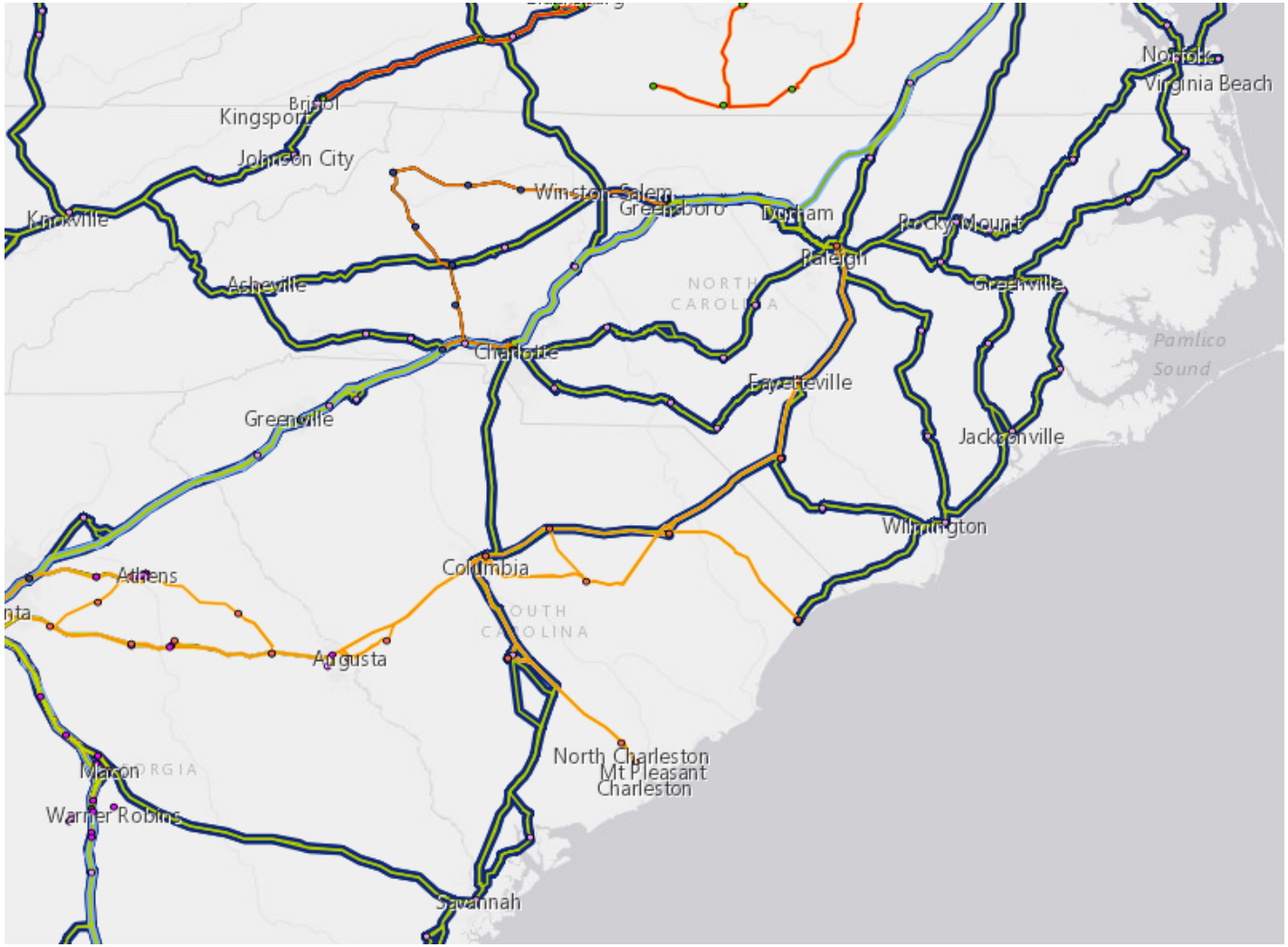
July 25, 2023

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Public Transportation Group
Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE)
North Carolina State University
www.itre.ncsu.edu

Southeastern ICB Service in 1976

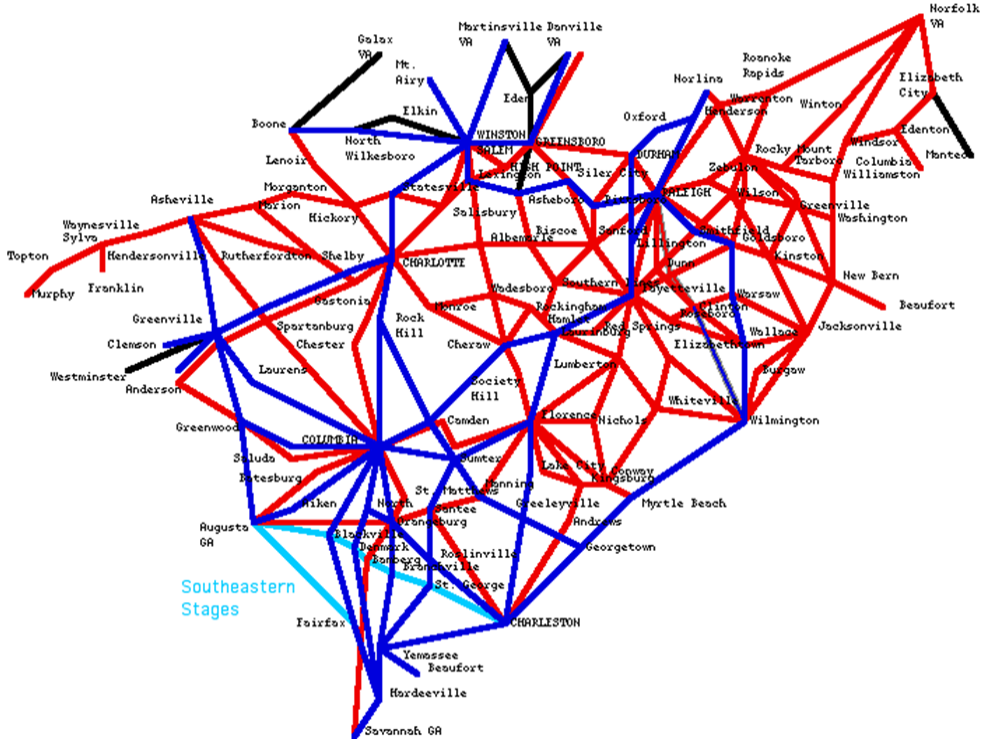


...ICB Service in 2023

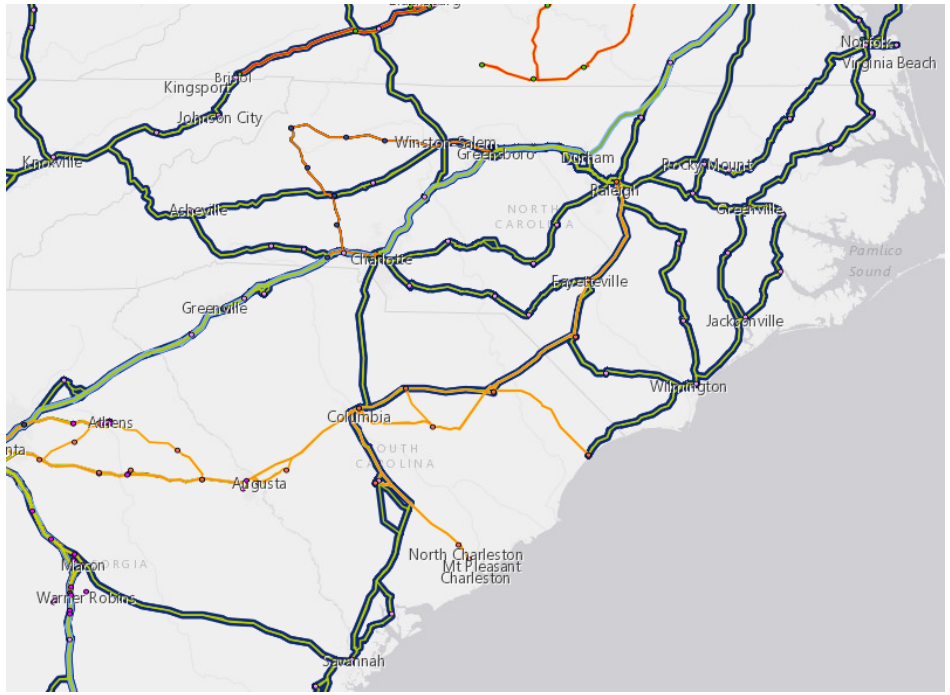


Intercity Bus Atlas - 2023

1976


Norfolk VA
Martinsville VA
Danville VA
Galax VA
Mt. Airy
Roanoke Rapids
Norlina
Elizabeth City
Oxford
Winton
Boone
Elkin
Eden
WINSTON SALEM
GREENSBORO
DURHAM
Rocky Mount
Windsor
Edenton
North Wilkesboro
Lenoir
HIGH POINT
Lexington
Salisbury
Asheboro
Zebulon
Columbia
Williamston
Asheville
Morganton
Marion
Statesville
RALEIGH
Wilson
Greenville
Washington
Waynesville
Sylva
Hickory
Albemarle
Kinston
Topton
Hendersonville
Rutherfordton
Shelby
CHARLOTTE
Wadesboro
Southern Pines
Fayetteville
New Bern
Murphy
Franklin
Gastonia
Monroe
Rockingham
Warsaw
Beaufort
Greenville
Spartanburg
Rock Hill
Cheraw
Elizabethtown
Jacksonville
Clemson
Chester
Wallace
Westminster
Laurens
Lumberton
Burgaw
Anderson
Society Hill
Whiteville
Greenwood
Camden
Florence
Nichols
Wilmington
COLUMBIA
Saluda
Sumter
Lake City
Conway
Kingstree
Batesburg
Aiken
North
St. Matthews
Manning
Georgetown
Myrtle Beach
Augusta GA
Santee
Orangeburg
Andrews
Bamberg
Denmark
Ridgeville
Walterboro
Summerville
Southeastern Stages
St. George
CHARLESTON
Fairfax
Yemassee
Beaufort
Hardeeville
Savannah GA

2023

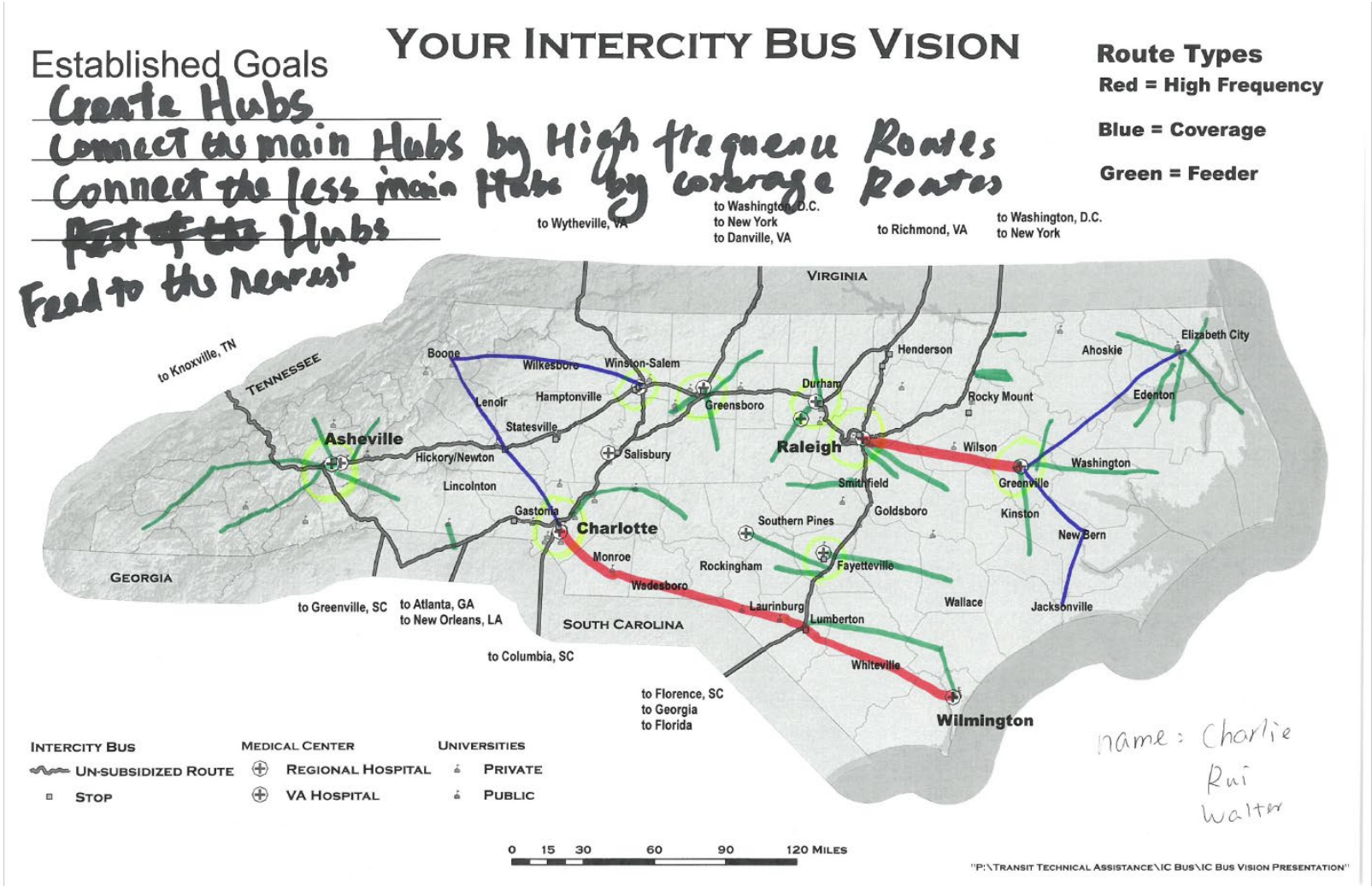

Kingsport
Bristol
Johnson City
Knoxville
Winston-Salem
Greensboro
Durham
Raleigh
Asheville
Charlotte
Fayetteville
Greenville
Jacksonville
Wilmington
Columbia
Athens
Augusta
Macon
Warner Robins
North Charleston
Mt Pleasant
Charleston
Savannah
Pamlico Sound

ITRE Contacting and Planning Tasks

- Conduct needs assessments and stakeholder survey
- Issue and manage the Call for Applications
- Track performance and expenditures throughout the life of the contract
- Address issues with stop locations
- Biannual Contacts
  - Year 1 is for information gathering (needs assessment, stakeholder surveys, local transit agency engagement)
  - Year 2 is for writing and managing the Applications
- Assessing performance and expenditure trends against previous contract years

Visioning Workshop

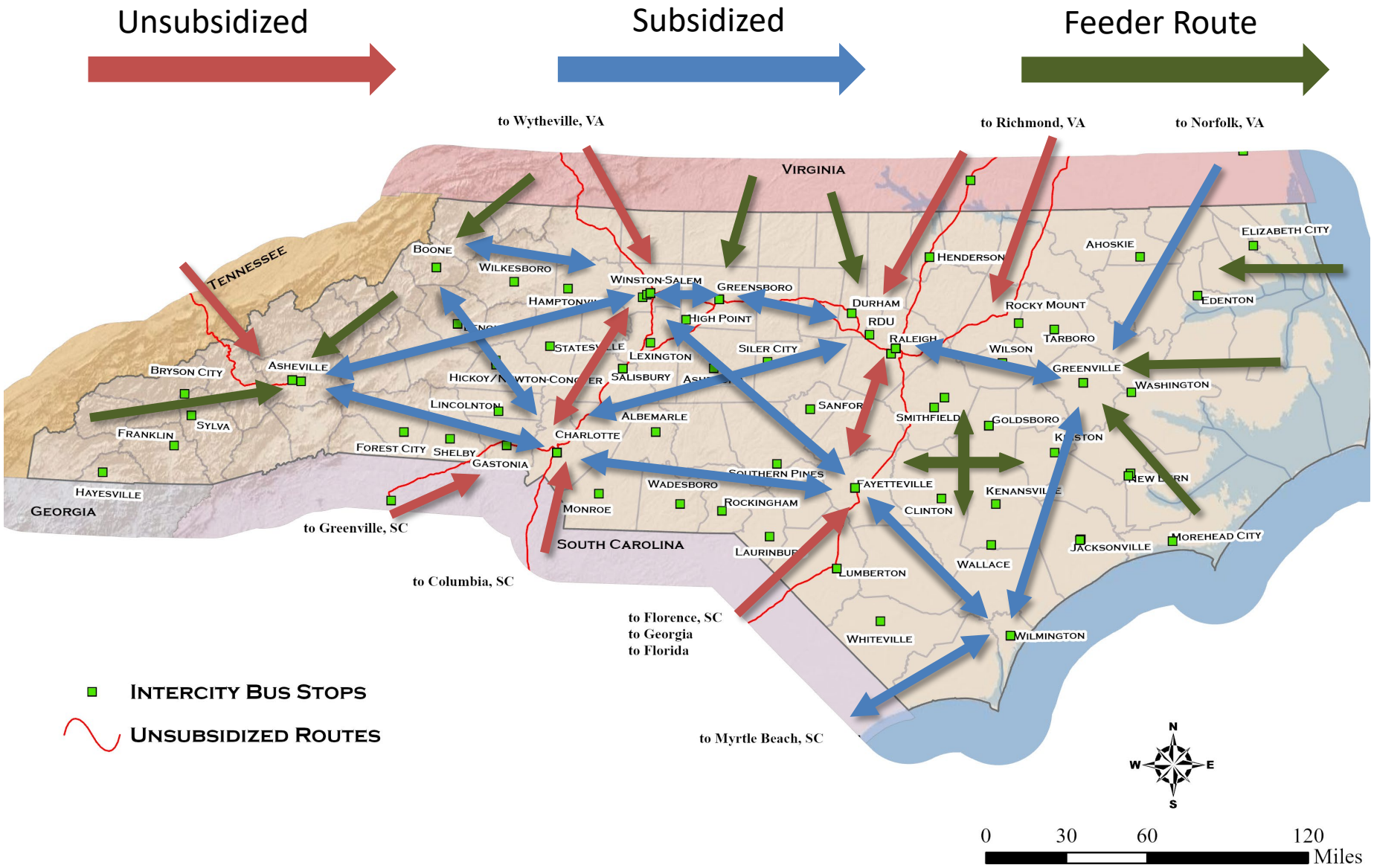
- **ITRE conducted a "Visioning Workshop" with transit NC transit agency representatives and NCDOT staff at NCPTA 2017**



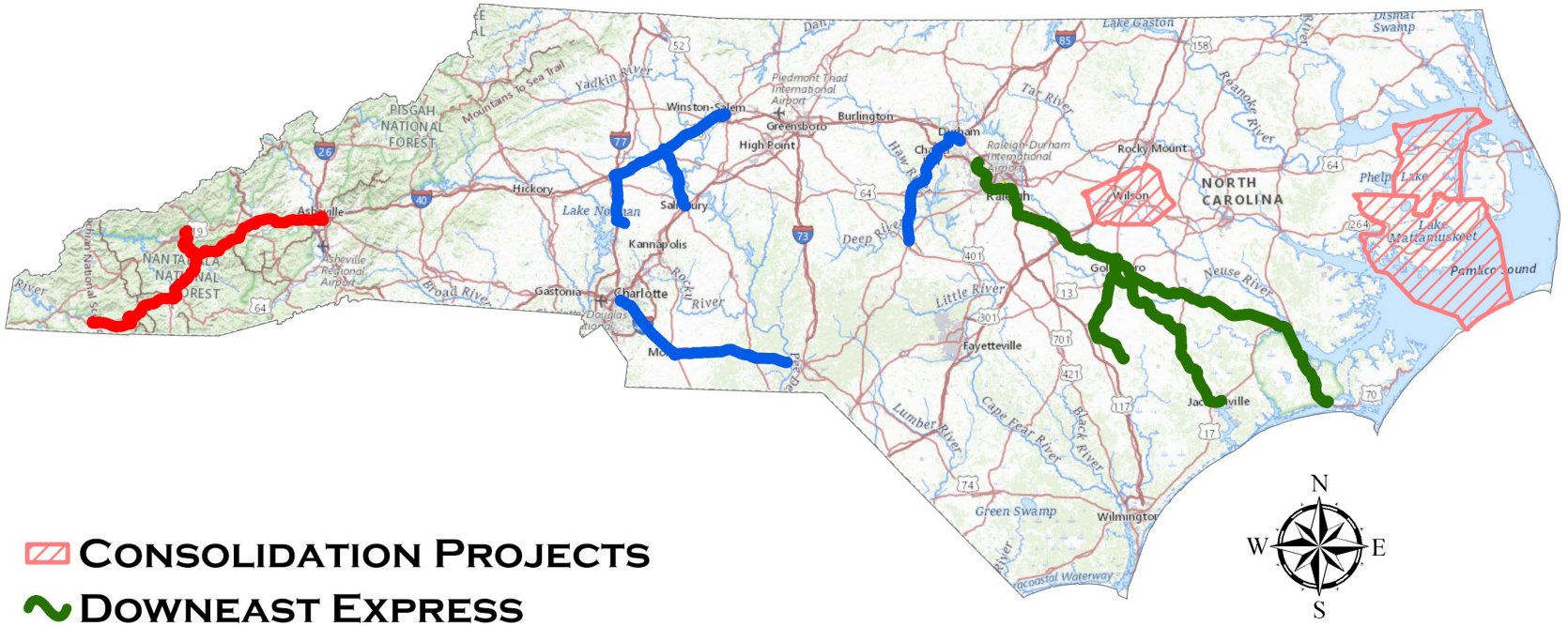
Intercity Bus Vision for the Future

- Frequent, high-quality, accessible service connecting rural communities to opportunities in urban and rural areas.
  - Feeder service to the existing carrier routes, expanding ridership
  - Encourage coordination between rural transit agencies to provide intercity connectivity
  - Meaningful connections, particularly for rural residents
- Build service around multimodal centers
- Support connections outside of the state

ICB Connectivity



ConCPT – Consolidation and Coordination of Public Transportation



- Consolidation Projects
- Downeast Express
- Ridgerunner
- In Development

October 2022
Institute for Transportation Research and Education
North Carolina State University
P:\Transit Technical Assistance\IC Bus\ConCPT\ConCPT

5311(f) Eligible Activities In North Carolina

- Planning
- Marketing
- Capital Assistance for Vehicles
- Facilities (Bus or Intermodal)
- Shelters
- Operating Assistance
- Rural Coordination
- In-Kind Match

In-Kind Match

- FY23-24: ~$10.8 million
- In-Kind match eligible services require no State funds
- Leverages private capital to access Federal funds

Intercity Bus Needs Assessment

Purpose

1. To gather input from stakeholders on the current service and propose potential new routes
2. To gather input from stakeholders on their satisfaction with the services and demographic information
3. To gather input on potential schedule changes
4. Satisfy FTA Requirement

Governor's Certification

"A State certifying that its needs are adequately met must demonstrate that it has assessed statewide intercity mobility needs no more than **four years** before the date of the certification."

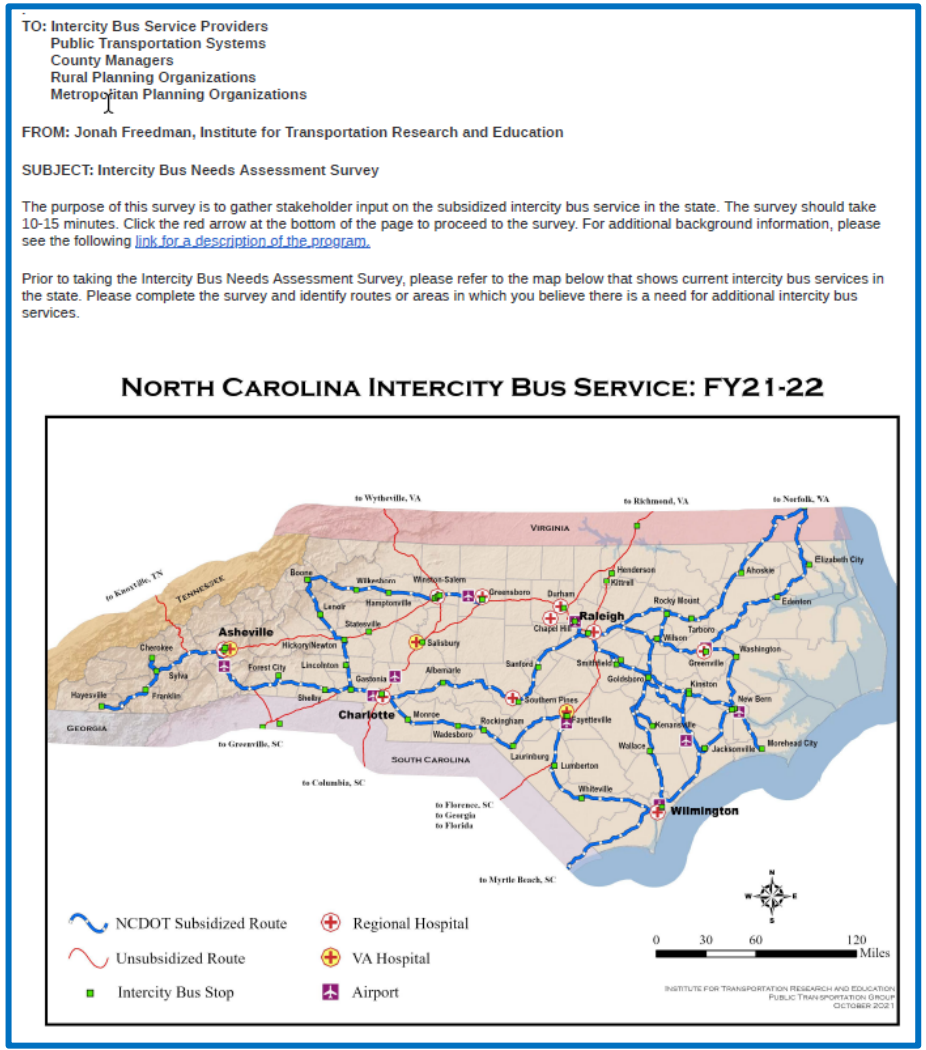


ICB Needs Assessment: Stakeholder Survey

Stakeholders

- 100 Counties
- 104 Transit Agencies
- MPOs and RPOs
- Intercity Bus Providers
- Advocacy Groups

- Every new service operated in the state began as a proposal from a stakeholder



TO: Intercity Bus Service Providers
Public Transportation Systems
County Managers
Rural Planning Organizations
Metropolitan Planning Organizations

FROM: Jonah Freedman, Institute for Transportation Research and Education

SUBJECT: Intercity Bus Needs Assessment Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather stakeholder input on the subsidized intercity bus service in the state. The survey should take 10-15 minutes. Click the red arrow at the bottom of the page to proceed to the survey. For additional background information, please see the following link for a description of the program.

Prior to taking the Intercity Bus Needs Assessment Survey, please refer to the map below that shows current intercity bus services in the state. Please complete the survey and identify routes or areas in which you believe there is a need for additional intercity bus services.

NORTH CAROLINA INTERCITY BUS SERVICE: FY21-22

FY 17-18 Intercity Bus Routes



G.K Butterfield Transportation Center

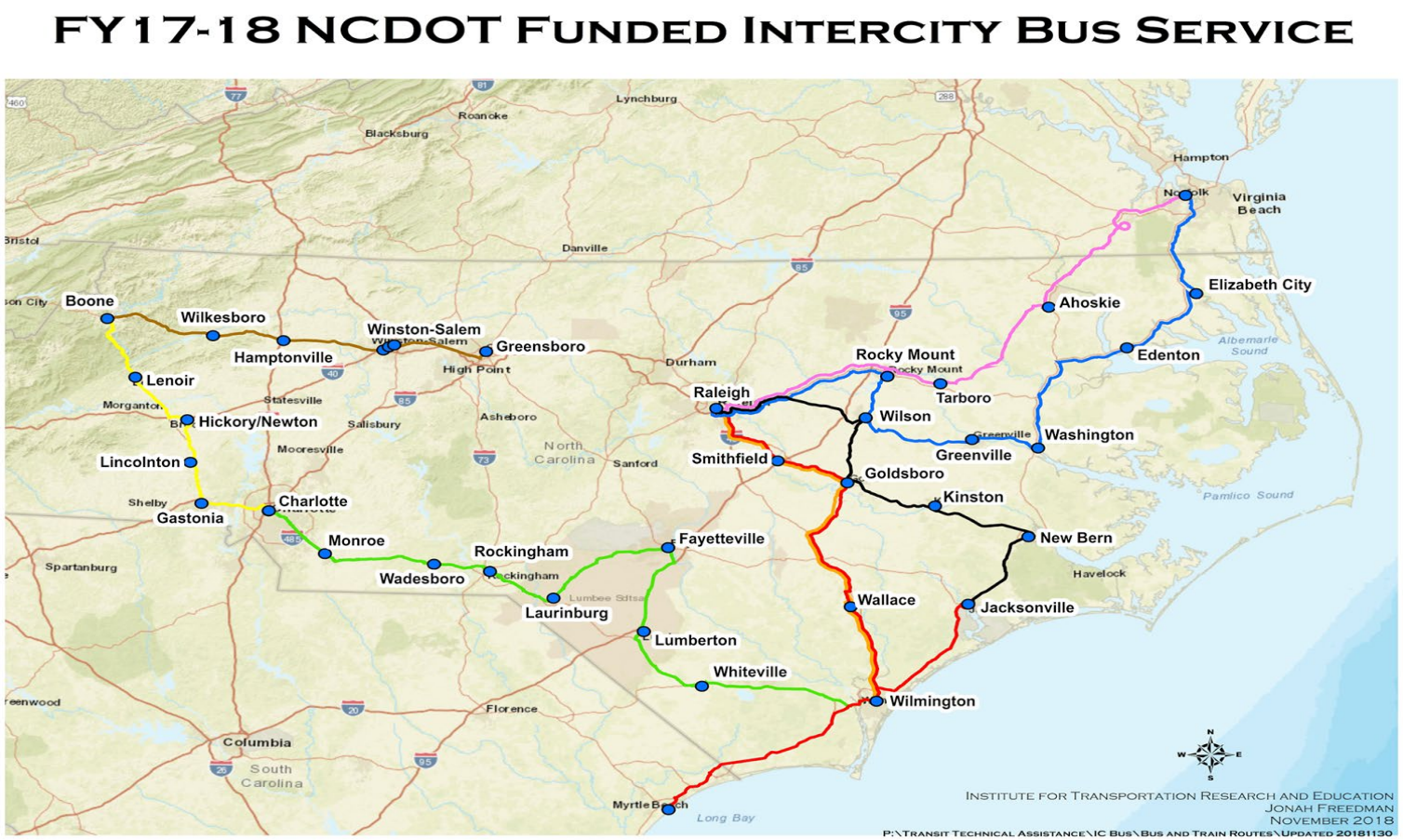






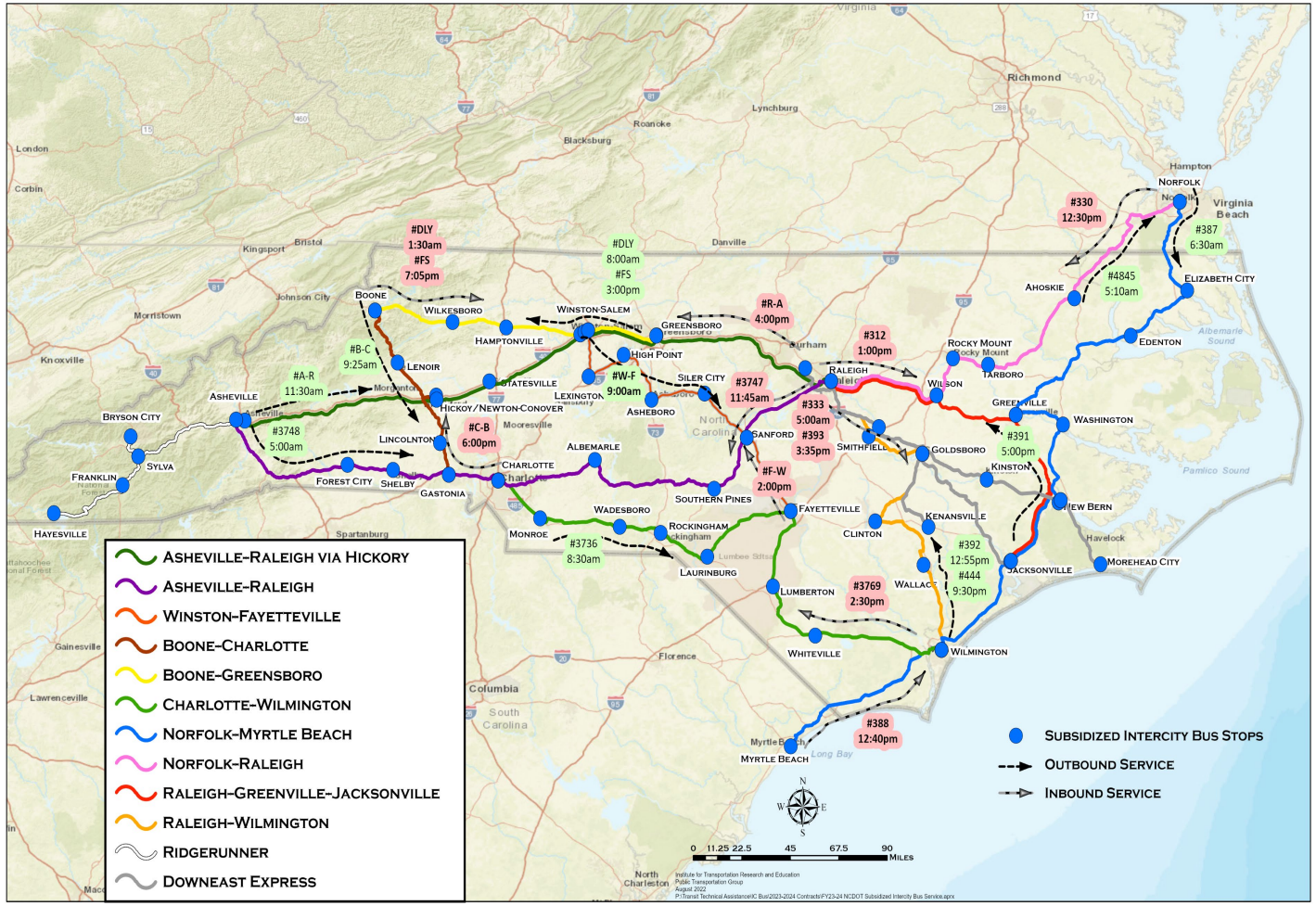


FY 17-18 Intercity Bus Routes



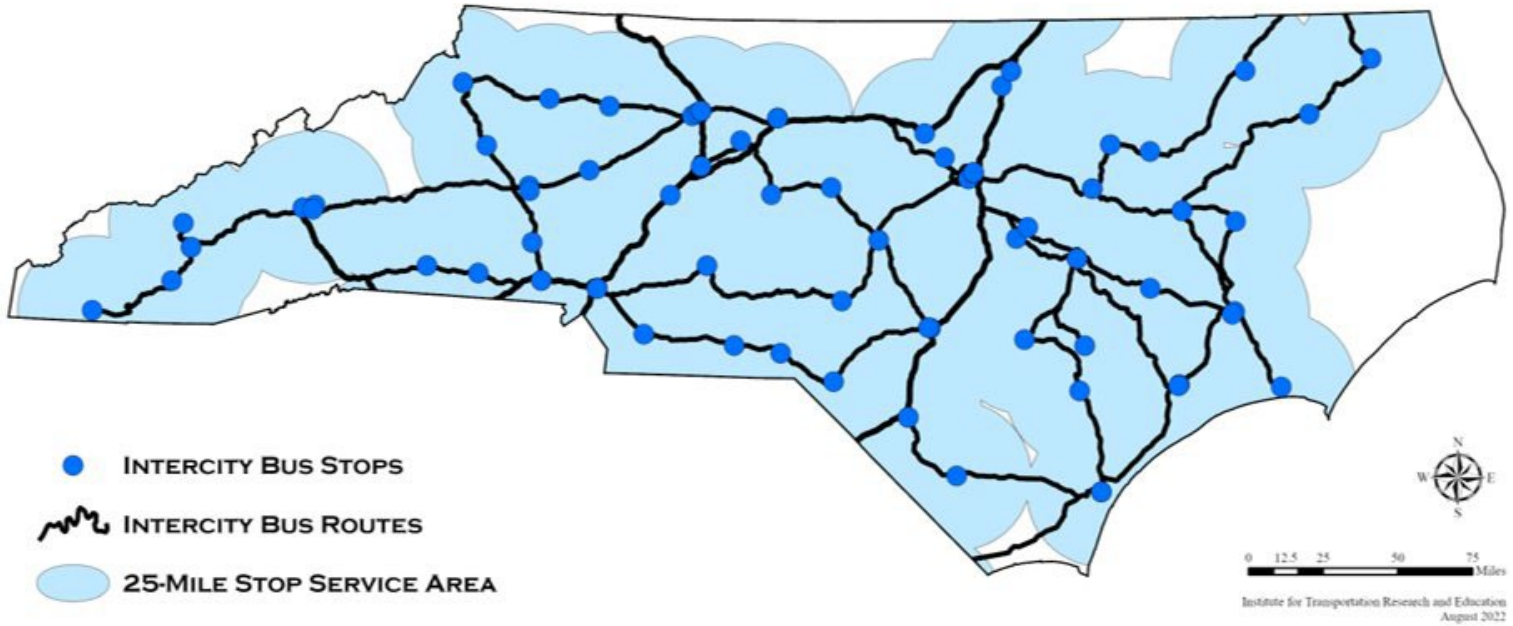


NCDOT-Funded Intercity Bus Service FY23-24

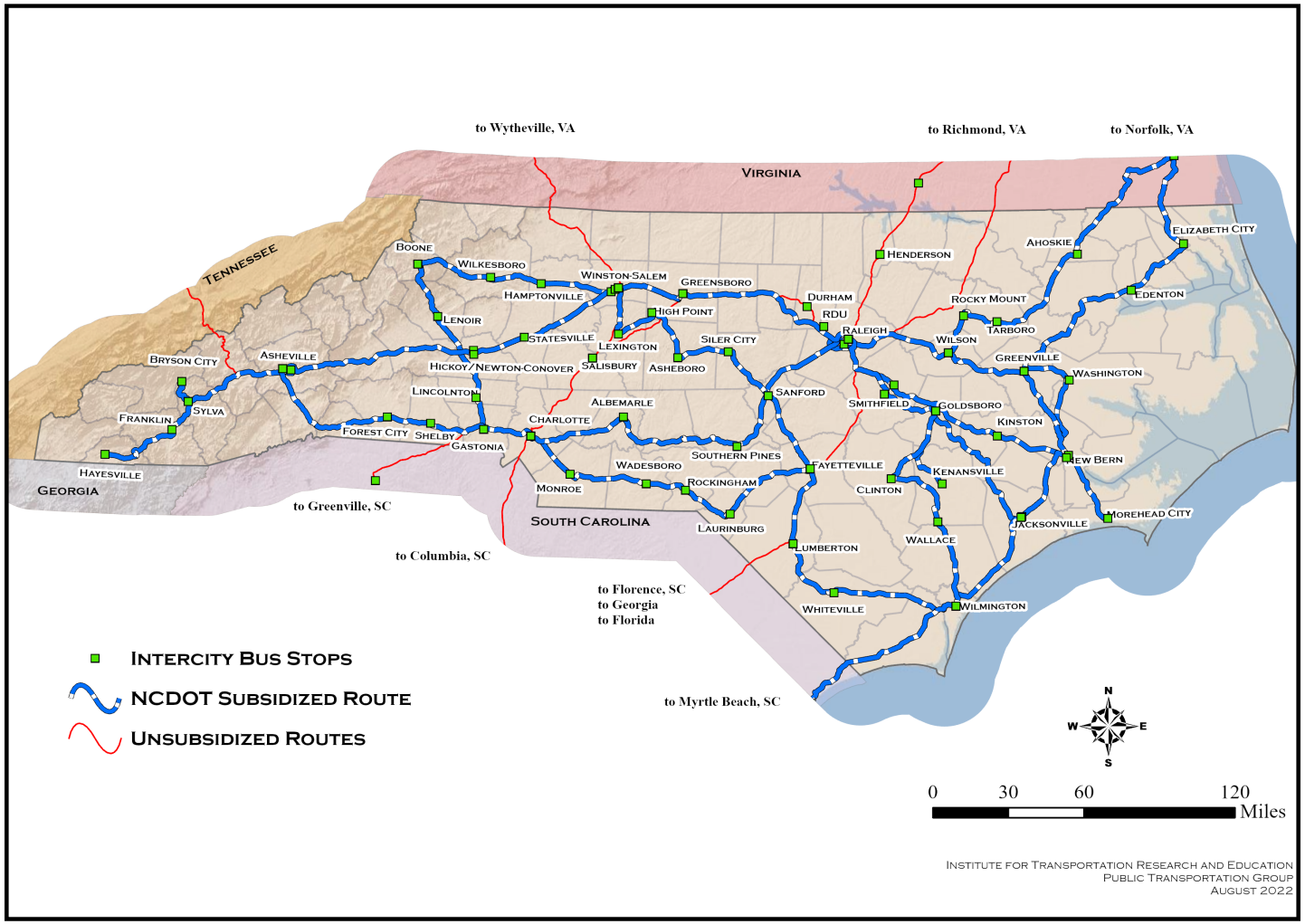


FY23-24 Intercity Bus Service Contract

- New Routes
  - Asheville—Raleigh via Hickory
  - Winston-Salem—Fayetteville
- We have a GTFS feed from all providers
- This contract is the first in NCDOT history to expend all 5311(f) funds
  - No Governor's certification of meeting ICB needs
- This map represents the most intercity service coverage we've had in the state.



North Carolina Intercity Bus Service: FY23-24



North Carolina Intercity Bus Overview and Vision

July 25, 2023

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Intercity Bus 101: State of the Industry

Fred Fravel, KFH Group, Inc.

For:

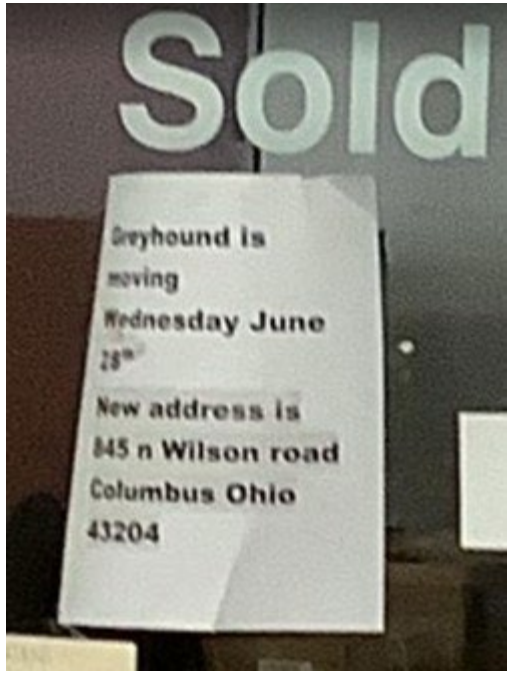
- National RTAP
- Transportation Research Board Committee on Rural, Intercity and Specialized Transportation AP055, Intercity Bus Subcommittee

July 25, 2023

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Change Happens!





Impact of COVID-19 Continues:

- **Ridership fell to 20% (approximately) of pre-Covid**
- **Revenue fell the same**
- **Most of the industry is unsubsidized in any way, so it was dependent on revenue**
- **Federal funding for intercity bus was limited**
- **Contrast it to the funding provided to the airline industry, Amtrak—which allowed them to retain much staff—left them with ability to ramp up post-pandemic**



Capacity constraints continue:

- Intercity bus demand has recovered to large extent, but
- Difficulty in getting drivers, equipment
- Frequency now much lower on many routes, much of the network is one bus a day each way:
  - User options limited, longer trips with fewer connections
  - Planning S.5311(f) more difficult, fewer potential connections to national network.
- Revenue is constrained by issues putting enough service on the road to meet the demand

FlixMobility Purchases Greyhound:

- Then, October of 2021, FlixMobility purchased Greyhound—the bus company, but not the real estate
- Work begins on combining these companies that have different business models:
  - Flixbus does planning, marketing, ticketing, oversight--but contracts for all bus operations, uses curbside stops for point-to-point services
  - Greyhound owns and operates buses, passenger and operating facilities, operates as a network with many connecting passengers, interline connectivity with many other carriers
- Work underway on combining these models





Early Impacts: New Ticketing System:

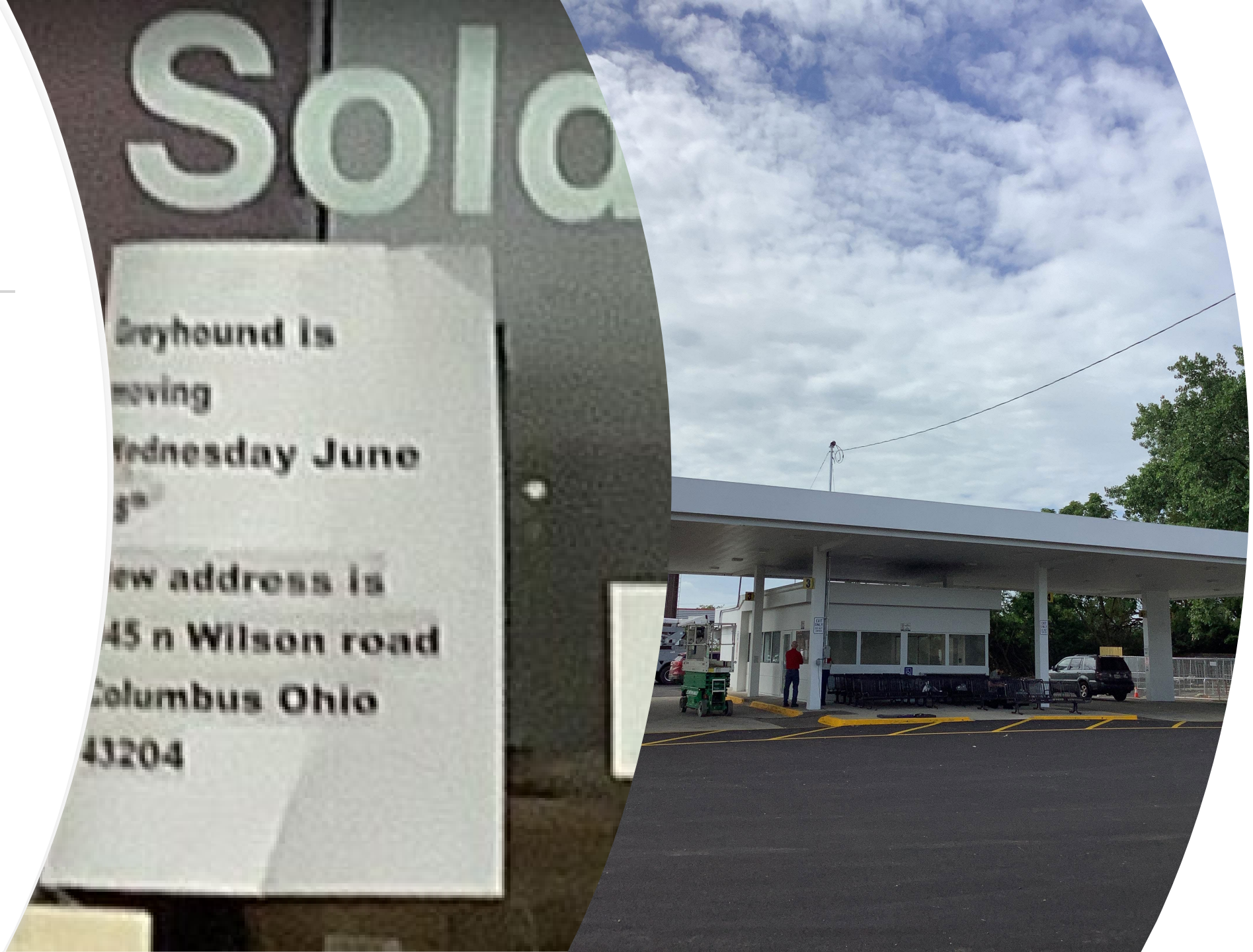
- **Early Impacts: #1 Combined Ticketing Systems-February 2023**
  - **System shows both Greyhound and Flixbus services—more options**
  - **Includes interline partners—but there are changes—some previous Greyhound interline partners are going a different way**
  - **New options include seat reservations, choice of seats**
  - **Tighter baggage restrictions**



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Early Impacts: Loss of stations

- Early Impacts: #2 Loss of Stations
- Flixbus did not purchase real estate (with a few exceptions)
- Previous Greyhound owner sold the real estate, and bus stations are having to move—often on short notice: Joe Schweiterman will talk about current issues and status



Early impacts: New Services

- **Early Impacts: #3 New Services**
- **Flixbus is implementing new services in a number of corridors**
- **New services are not rural, many offer point-to-point services from new suburban stops, serve larger urban areas or university towns**
- **Success with Section 5311(f) routes and services—branded and unbranded**



The Network Mapped: the National Intercity Bus Atlas

- **Bureau of Transportation Statistics/NCHRP 08-133—Implementation of the National Intercity Bus Atlas**
- **Map is being built**
- **Still need many companies to sign the Memorandum of Understanding with BTS, and start providing GTFS data.**

Bus Service Providers may join the Intercity Bus Atlas Initiative by emailing busatlas@rsginc.com.

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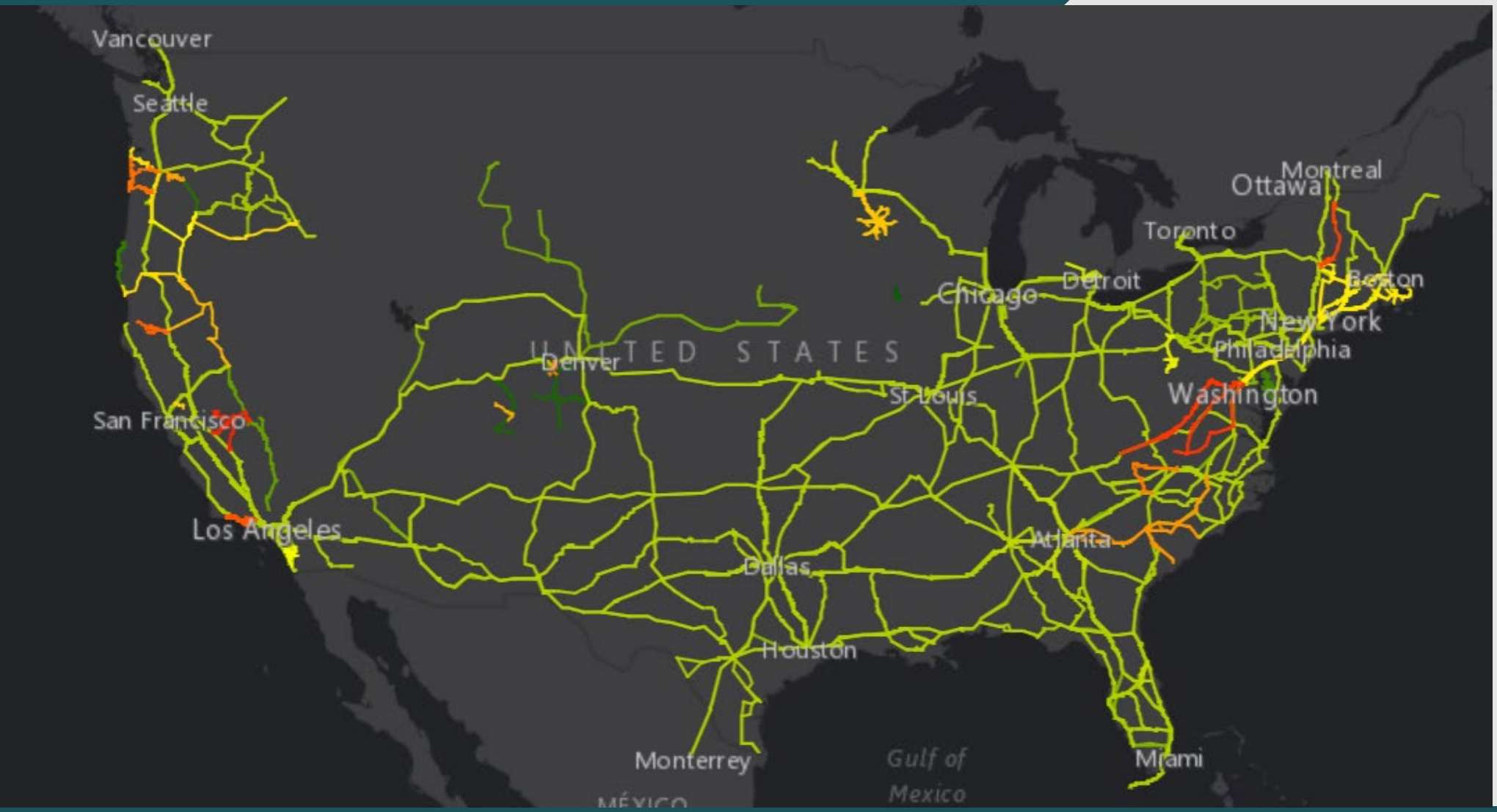
The Network Mapped:



- BTS is taking all the GTFS files collected from the NCHRP project and aggregating them into a routes and a stops file. Those layers are in the que to be published by our data curator.
- Once the data is published BTS will start publishing maps and apps.
- BTS will highlight the contents on the BTS website and would like to coordinate that with the industry.

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The Network Mapped:



Maintaining a Connected Network: A Role for the States

- Federal policy requires publicly-funded transit facilities to provide "reasonable access" to intercity bus lines—but that is undefined
- State-funded routes usually require connections in urban areas to be feasible
- Because these facilities are usually in Urbanized areas, the state role is typically limited, but states may have a role: Use of Section 5311(f), 5339 other funding to help accommodate the need for stations:
    - Capital improvements in public intermodals where needed
    - Security costs
    - Support for including intercity bus in public terminals
- Use of Section 5311(f) funding to fund the rural/small urban services that will need funding going forward—planning connections currently a challenge because of low frequencies, changing routes—but more routes than ever will need assistance!



Problems Posed by the Closure of Traditional Greyhound Stations

Joseph Schwieterman
Professor and Director
Chaddick Institute at DePaul University



New Destinations:

2023 Outlook for the Intercity Bus Industry in the United States

Includes 2022 Year-in-Review

The Chaddick Institute's Annual *Intercity Bus Review* | February 4, 2022
By Joseph P. Schwieterman, Abby Mader, and Allison Woodward

A series of initiatives by intercity bus lines in 2022 surprised observers and are imbuing optimism about scheduled long-distance bus travel. The developments of last year, ranging from the rollout of first-class and sleeperette service and new partnerships to expand schedule the reservation options are accelerating the transformation of an industry that many regarded as stodgy and stuck in a bygone era just a few years ago. The industry is becoming more data-driven and open to experimentation.

Yet, the excitement generated by these initiatives must be tempered by the realization that serious problems persist. Chronic driver and mechanic shortages, the shuttering of traditional bus terminal, the increasing average age of motor coaches, and unpleasant customer experiences due to the conditions around curbside spots and unruly passengers continue to hurt the industry. The intercity bus industry continues to be overlooked in many discussions about U.S. intercity travel market.

New Destinations highlights the notable developments of 2022, organized by geographic region, and key nationwide trends, each with a prediction. We exclude from our review moves to restore schedules dropped during the pandemic, most action by airport and campus shuttle operators, and efforts by rural bus lines to shift from regularly scheduled service to variable-route or demand-responsive services.

Interested in a Particular Region?
Refer to our geography sections:

- New England & New York State, page 3
- Mid-Atlantic States, page 5
- South & Southeast, page 7
- Midwest & Central, page 9
- Texas & Oklahoma, page 11
- Mountain States, page 12
- Southwest, page 13
- Pacific Northwest, page 15

Conclusions & predictions, page 16

CHADDICK INSTITUTE FOR METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT
DEPAUL UNIVERSITY | CHICAGO, IL

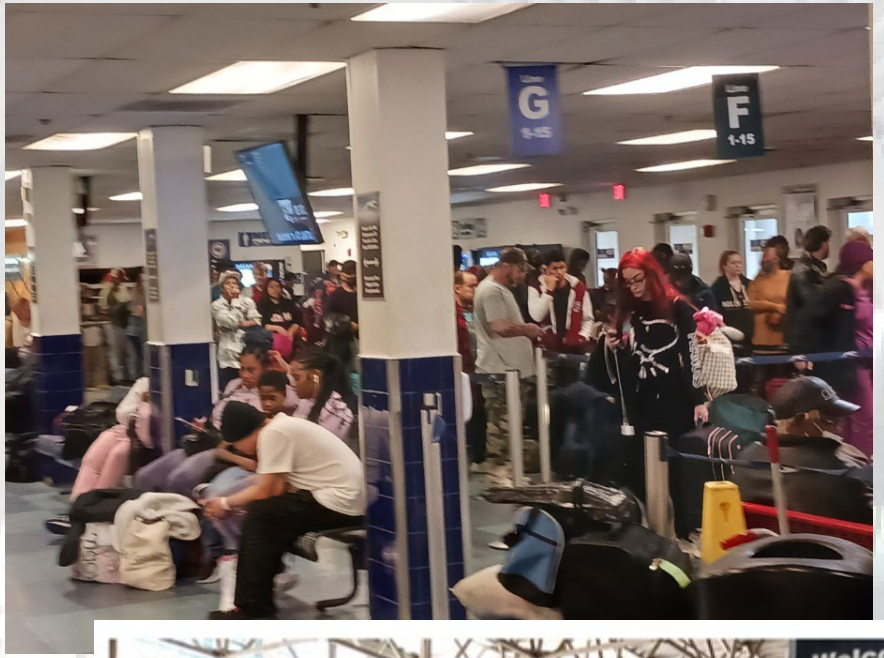
JOSEPH SCHWIETERMAN, PHD
ABBY MADER
ALLISON WOODWARD

DePaul University
College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development



Concern expressed in January:

Major legacy bus lines will involuntarily be forced to relocate from several more traditional stations. Many will look to state and local governments to assist in finding safe and comfortable places for passengers.

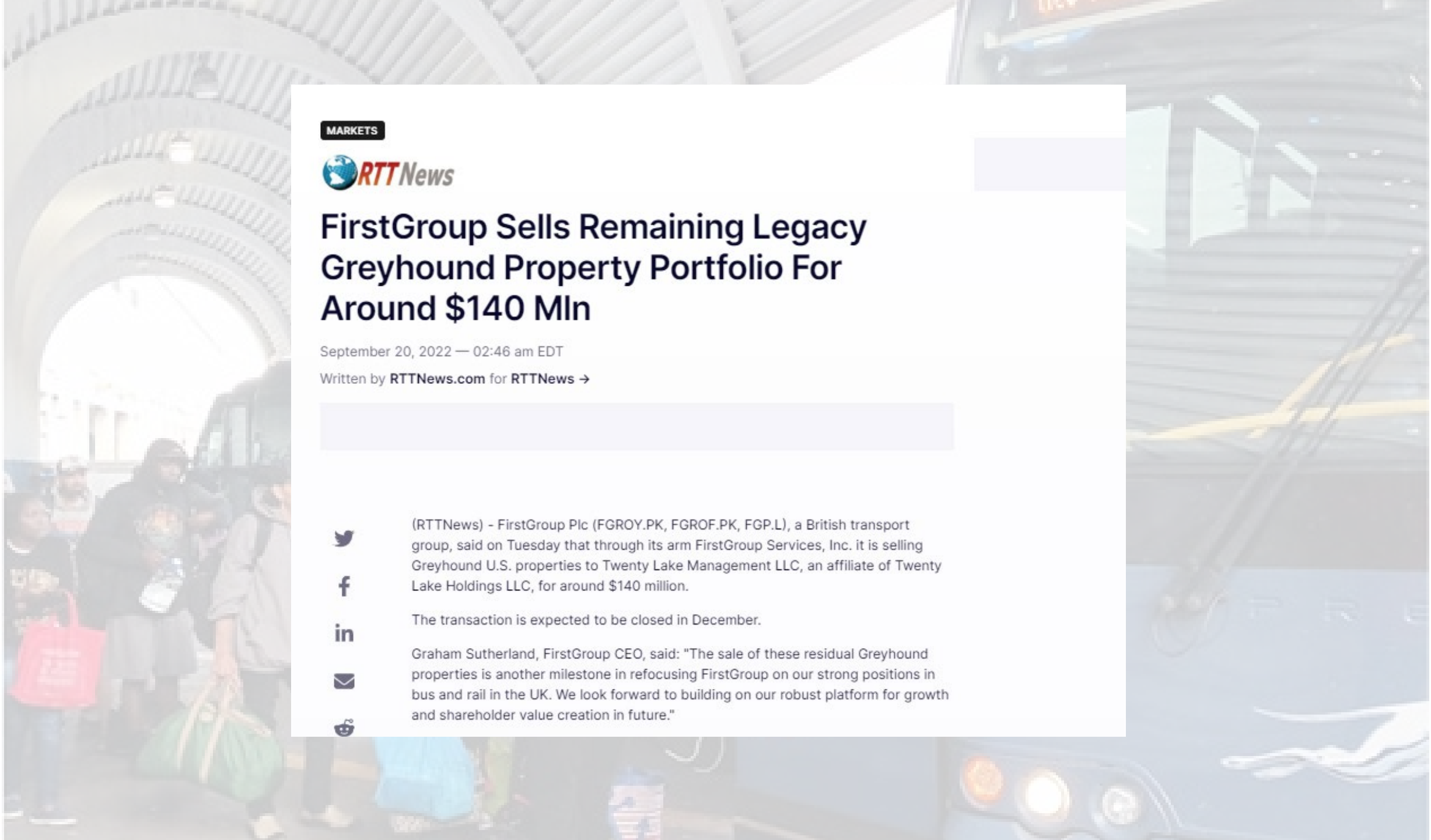






The concourse of the now-closed Philadelphia Greyhound Terminal in 2021





MARKETS

RTTNews

FirstGroup Sells Remaining Legacy Greyhound Property Portfolio For Around $140 Mln

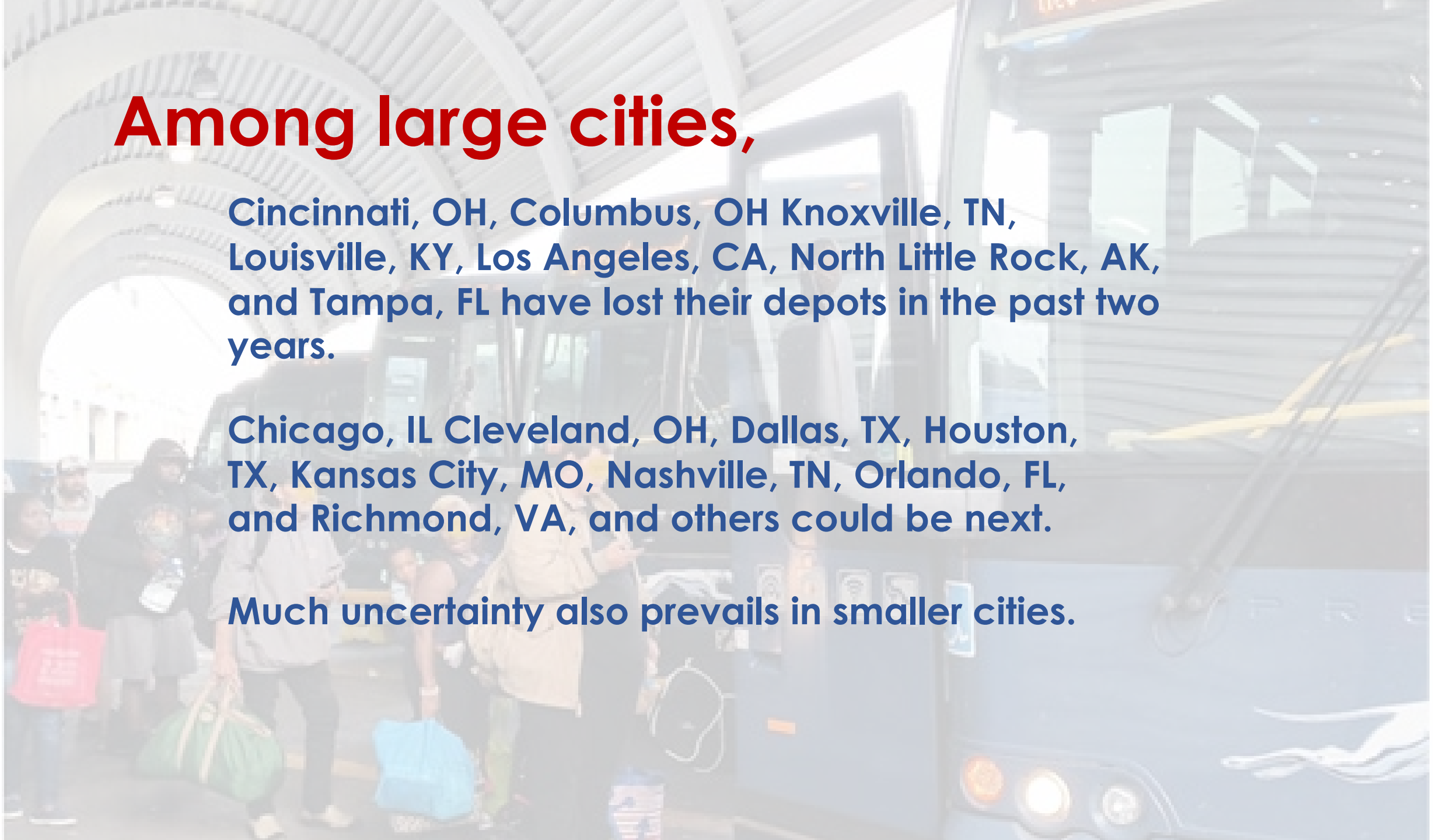
September 20, 2022 — 02:46 am EDT

Written by **RTTNews.com** for **RTTNews** →

(RTTNews) - FirstGroup Plc (FGROY.PK, FGROF.PK, FGP.L), a British transport group, said on Tuesday that through its arm FirstGroup Services, Inc. it is selling Greyhound U.S. properties to Twenty Lake Management LLC, an affiliate of Twenty Lake Holdings LLC, for around $140 million.

The transaction is expected to be closed in December.

Graham Sutherland, FirstGroup CEO, said: "The sale of these residual Greyhound properties is another milestone in refocusing FirstGroup on our strong positions in bus and rail in the UK. We look forward to building on our robust platform for growth and shareholder value creation in future."



Among large cities,

Cincinnati, OH, Columbus, OH Knoxville, TN, Louisville, KY, Los Angeles, CA, North Little Rock, AK, and Tampa, FL have lost their depots in the past two years.

Chicago, IL Cleveland, OH, Dallas, TX, Houston, TX, Kansas City, MO, Nashville, TN, Orlando, FL, and Richmond, VA, and others could be next.

Much uncertainty also prevails in smaller cities.



NEIGHBORHOODS

Greyhound's bus station move leads to dead-end on Cuthbert and crowds of customers on Market

Did this happen because of the Sixers arena? It could have been a factor.

by Meir Rinde July 6, 2023



Passengers waiting for their bus to arrive. The 7th and Market pickup spot is shared by Greyhound, Flixbus, and Peter Pan.

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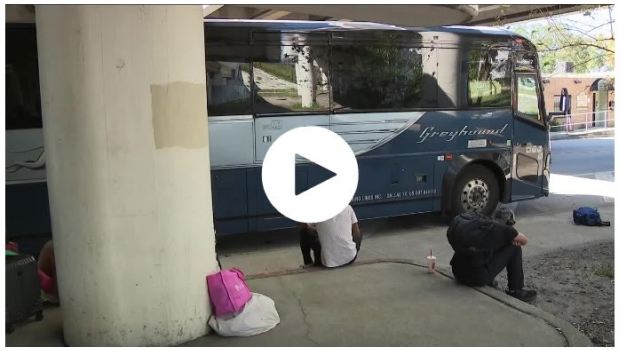

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NEWS > HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Greyhound bus riders continue to raise concerns over new pickup and drop-off location



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The search for solutions

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Questions

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