

# 2026

## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



UNIFY, ADVOCATE, AND ADVANCE THE INTERESTS  
OF IOWA TRANSIT SYSTEMS TO INFLUENCE AND  
GAIN SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT AGENCIES,  
LEGISLATORS, AND OTHER ENTITIES



# THE VALUE

In 2025 Iowa Public Transit Association and Iowa DOT commissioned an economic impact study focused on public transit in Iowa.

## ROI for Statewide Investment in Public Transit

FOR EVERY **\$1** INVESTED IN PUBLIC TRANSIT **\$3** IS RETURNED

-Das, Biswa (2025) Iowa Public Economic Impact Study

**48%**

USE PUBLIC TRANSIT TO  
COMMUTE TO WORK

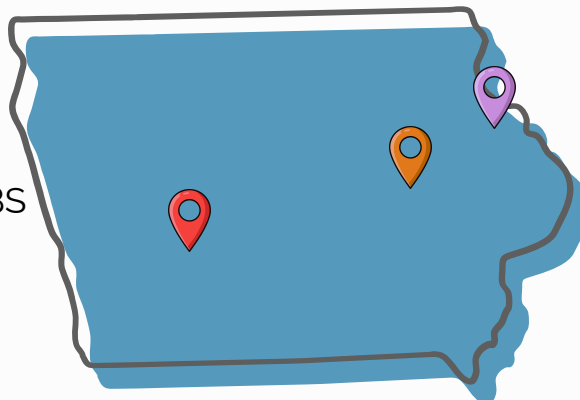
**19**

MILLION  
TOTAL RIDES  
IN FY24  
-Iowa DOT

## Economic value to communities by public transit calculated from study

 **CEDAR RAPIDS:** \$291 MILLION & 125 JOBS SUPPORTED

 **REGION 13 (SWITA):**  
\$95 MILLION & 69 JOBS  
SUPPORTED



 **CLINTON:** \$70 MILLION  
& 25 JOBS SUPPORTED

# THE CHALLENGE



**IOWA HAS ONE OF THE OLDEST FLEETS IN THE NATION.**

**OVER HALF OF IOWA'S PUBLIC TRANSIT VEHICLES SHOULD HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY NOW.**



**900 buses currently need to be replaced.**  
**The Iowa Transit Systems need \$216 million in funding to accomplish this.**

Right now, in order to keep transit services up and running, transit systems must utilize most of their operating budget on repairing their old buses. The maintenance on a bus that has reached its useful life is more than twice as much as the maintenance on a newer bus.

This is having an adverse affect on their entire organizations and making it challenging to keep the doors open at all.

This also impacts transit agencies' availability to expand service to meet the growing demand for rides. When operating budgets are drained to simply keep old buses functional, everything suffers.



# THE IMPACT

## Medical Appointments

"I have been able to make doctors appointments, get groceries, pick up prescriptions, and many other important tasks thanks to HIRTA. The staff and drivers are polite and friendly and very helpful to someone new to the area like me."



## Workforce Rides

**48%** of transit rides in Iowa are work-related, helping people access higher-paying jobs that might otherwise be out of reach due to transportation challenges.

## Moving Students

Students rely on public transit to pursue higher education. As we work to attract talent to our state, it's important to recognize that many individuals are accustomed to efficient public transit systems, which they view as a vital amenity.





# PRIORITIES

## 1. Increase funding for the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund (RIIF) to \$2 million for public transportation.

**RIIF, currently funded at \$1.3 million, has helped the following projects be launched:**

- Maintenance facility and rehab for MIDAS serving counties of Calhoun, Hamilton, Humboldt, Pocahontas, Webster, and Wright
- Repair and maintenance of bus shelters in Sioux City
- Replacement of CyRide's 34-year-old facility roof and HVAC system
- Construction of bus storage in Dubuque
- Improvements in security cameras for buses
- Updates to transit storage and maintenance facility for NIARTS serving counties of Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell, Winnebago, and Worth
- Renovation of bus storage facilities in Mt. Pleasant

### The CAMBUS RIIF Project:

#### Renovate CAMBUS Maintenance Facility

The CAMBUS Maintenance Facility has portions dating back to 1975. This renovation included updating the exterior and replacing the aged overhead doors. Interior updates included expansion and renovation of the staging and break room. Bathrooms, the technician locker room, offices, the parts room, technician workstations, and the HVAC system were also improved and renovated. The project resulted in the facility being more energy efficient, better sized for the operations, and ADA compliant.

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

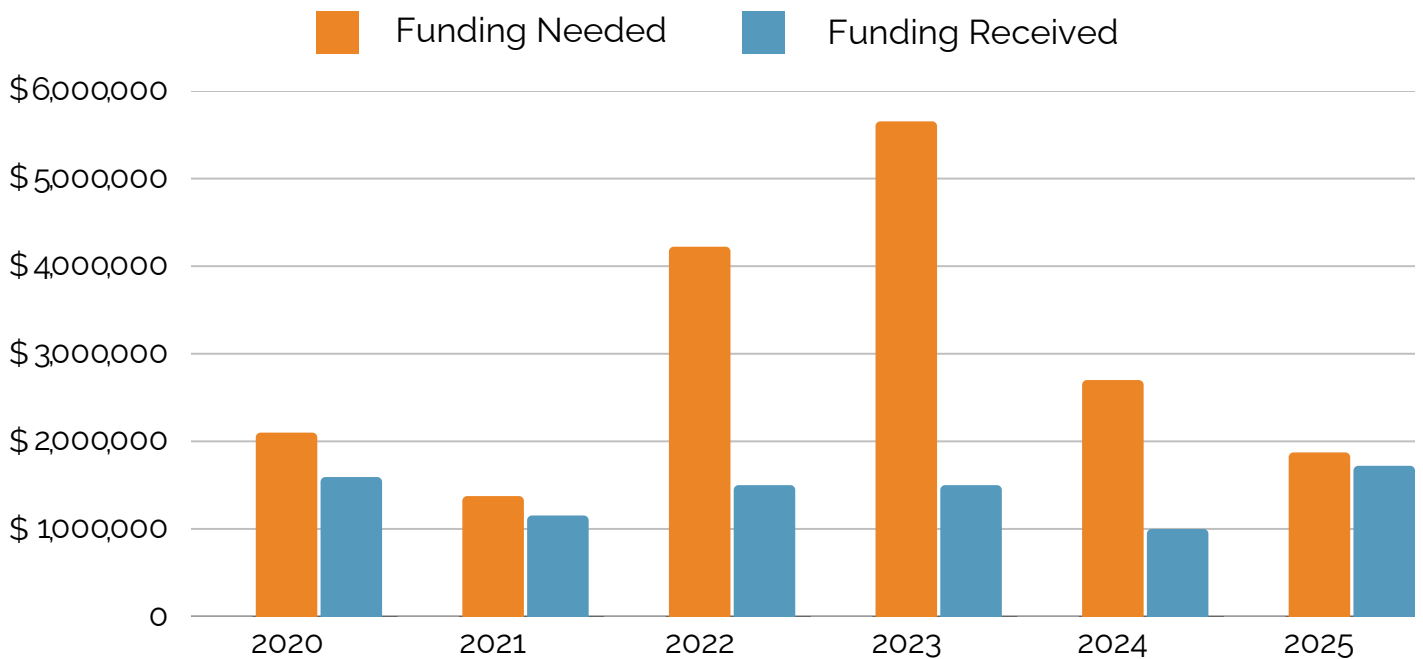


*RIIF CONTINUED ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE*

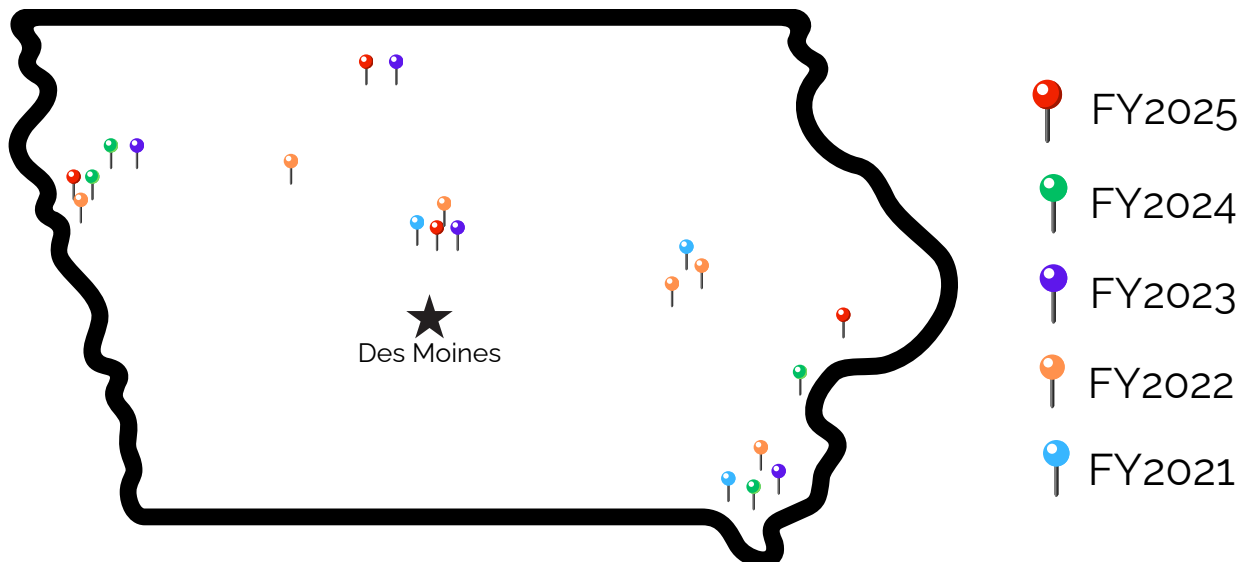
# PRIORITIES

## RIIF FUNDING IS OVERSUBSCRIBED

\$34,583,081 Needed vs. \$19,592,660 Received



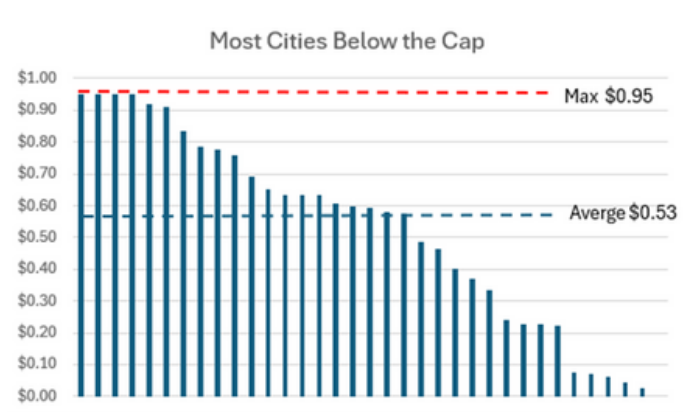
## RIIF Project Locations | Fiscal Years 2021 - 2025



# PRIORITIES

## 2. Protect the local transit levy.

Iowa's local transit levy is already managed responsibly and efficiently.



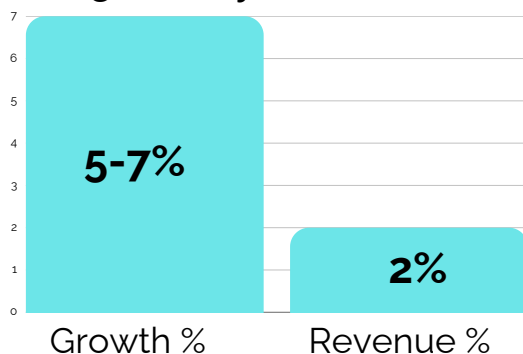
- Capped at \$0.95 per \$1,000 - one of Iowa's lowest dedicated levies.
- Average levy statewide: \$0.53
- 5 cities at cap, most below \$0.70 - showing strong fiscal restraint.
- Cities large and small manage this tool locally and efficiently.

Protecting local flexibility keeps Iowa communities connected.

**PROTECTING THE  
TRANSIT LEVY  
=  
PROTECTING LOCAL  
CONTROL**

- 15 cities lowered their rates since 2021.
- Average change stateside has remained flat.
- Levy adjustments mirror fuel, wage and maintenance costs - not new spending.
- Each community sets its own rate based on local needs.

Restricting the levy would cost more than it saves.

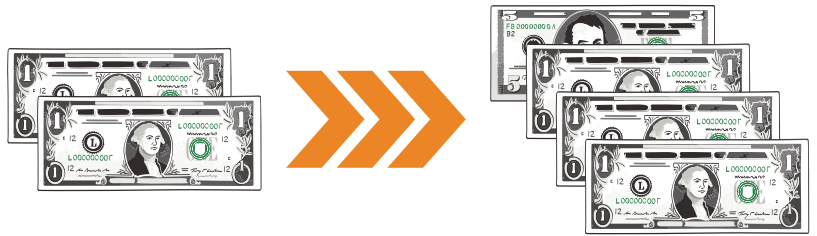


- Transit costs (fuel, wages, parts) rise faster than 2%.
- Cutting levy flexibility would force **service reductions** and **forfeit millions in federal match funds**.

# PRIORITIES

### 3. A relatively small investment from Iowa can generate a large amount of funding from the Federal Government.

\$2.00 invested by the State of Iowa equals \$8.00 of funding from the Federal Government.



Iowa received \$77 million in Federal grants in FY25 for bus and bus facilities. While systems have committed to local match, costs have increased beyond projected cost making it difficult to realize Federal dollars coming into Iowa.

#### Funding Proposal:

- Full allocation of tax revenues for State Transit Assistance. Funding is derived from a portion of sales tax collected on the sale of vehicles. When sales tax was increased from 4% to 5%, public transit's allocation was not proportionately increased.

### 4. Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) should be given to transit systems first before outsourcing to other entities.

- Iowa introduced a tiered-rating system for benefit providers, bundling different services (housing, food, transportation, etc.) into one flat rate. As a result, providers often allocate funds toward other necessities over transportation.
- Tiered rates, which were an administrative not legislative change, have adversely impacted 29 transit systems by reducing their total revenues by as much as 30%. As a result, some transit systems are no longer able to provide Medicaid trips because they do not have the local funding to cover the gap not being paid by Medicaid.
- Transportation services from Medicaid provider tiered rates should be coordinated and directly billed as previously done, and subject to Iowa Code Chapter 324A.4.