

ΣMBARK NORMAN



GO
NORMAN
TRANSIT STUDY

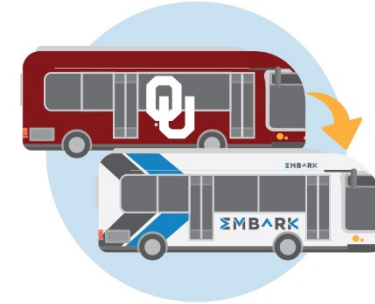
City Council Study Session

June 15, 2021

N NELSON
NYGAARD

BACKGROUND

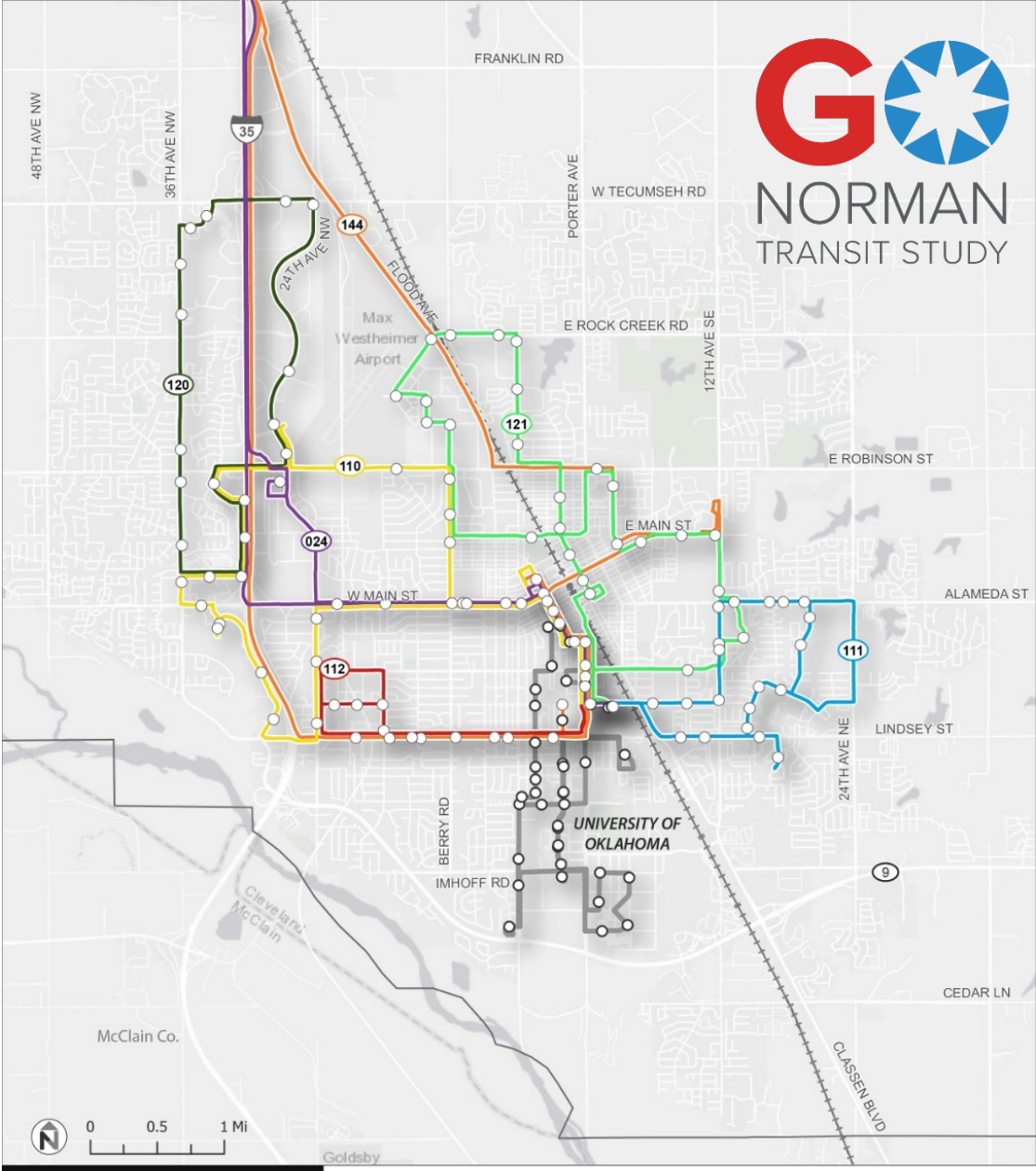
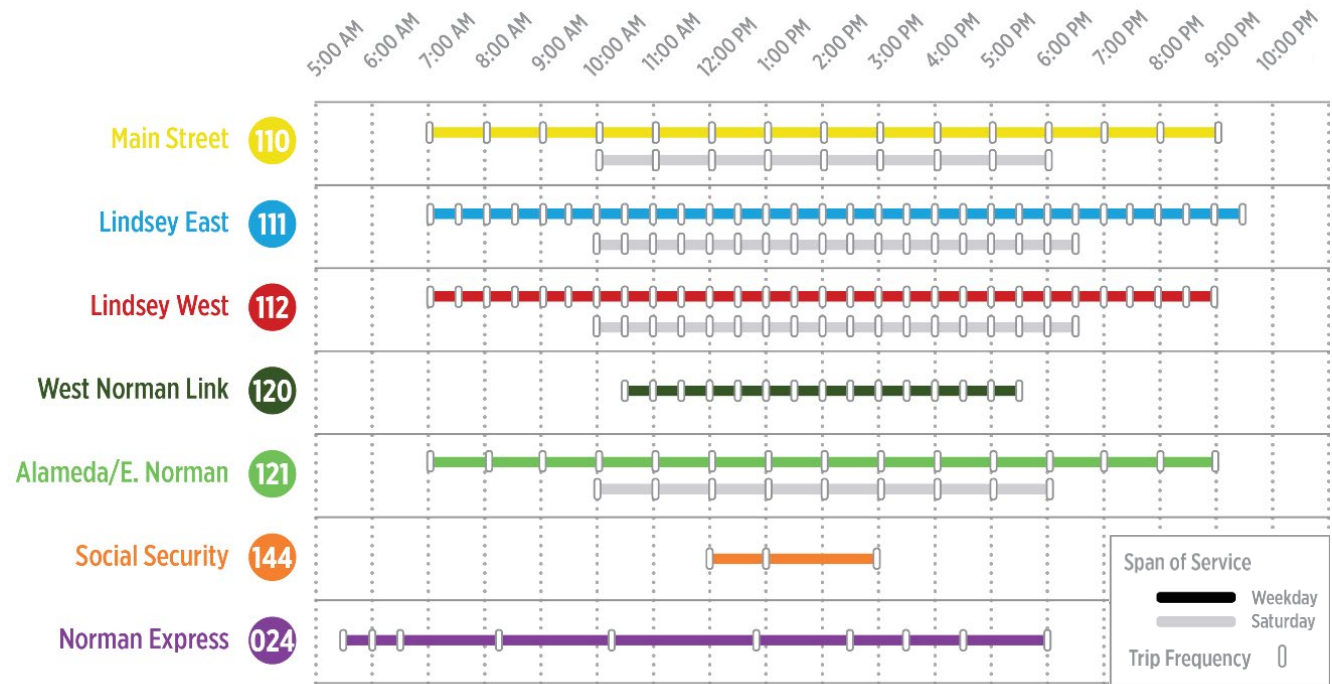
- February 2019
 - Regional Transportation Authority of Central Oklahoma
- July 2019
 - Public transportation transitions from the OU to City of Norman
 - Partnership with EMBARK
 - Fare free fixed-route and paratransit service
- November 2019
 - Transit sales tax approved
- July 2020
 - Transit study commences
- November 2020
 - Fleet maintenance and operations building breaks ground



PROJECT TIMELINE



TRANSIT TODAY



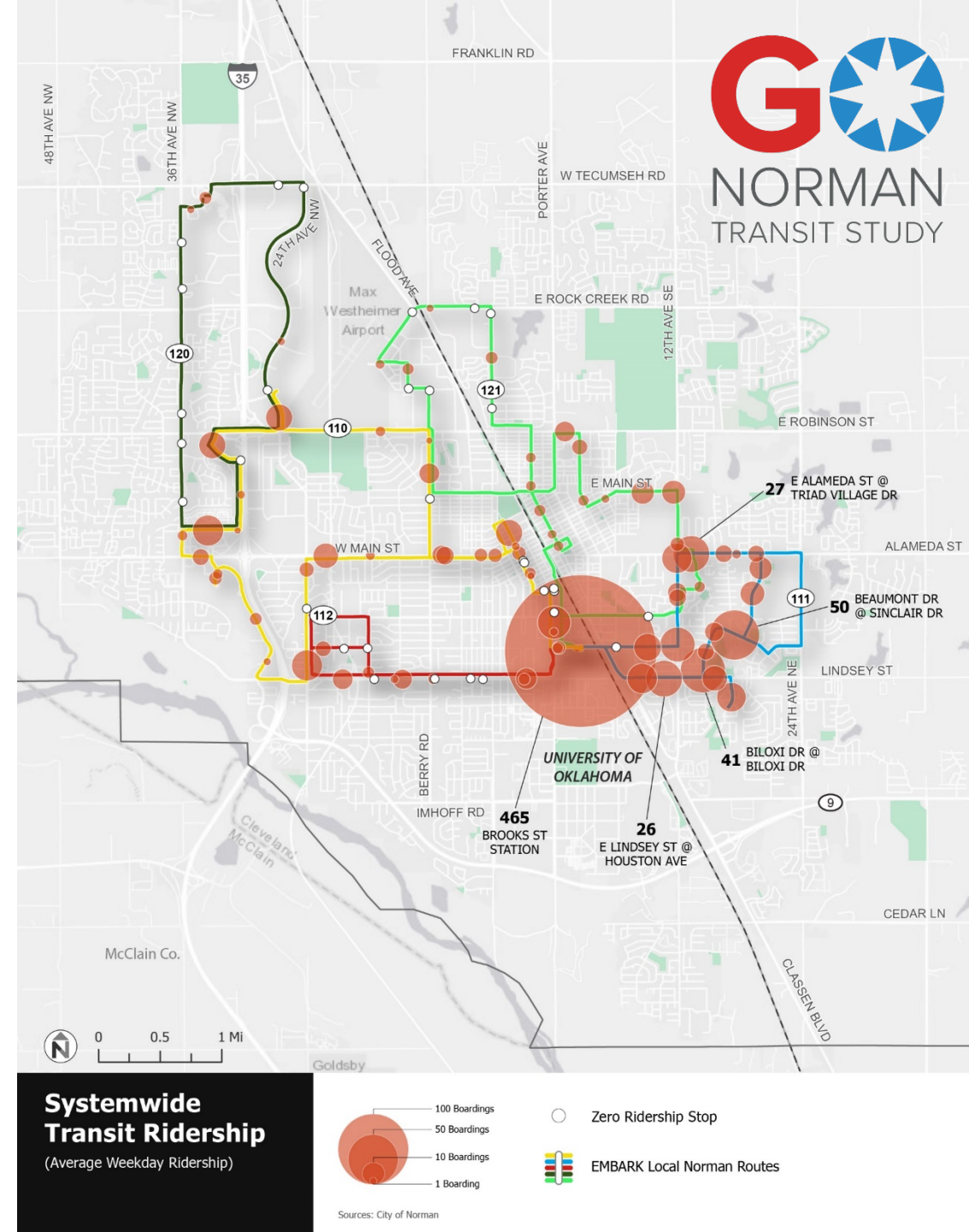
Existing Transit System

- EMBARK Norman Routes
- CART Routes

Sources: City of Norman

RIDERSHIP

- Major destinations
 - University of Oklahoma
 - Sooner Mall
 - University Town Center
 - Walmart Supercenter stores
 - Community Services Building
 - Robinson Crossing shopping center



EMBARK NORMAN TRANSIT RIDERS



Families without a car



Employees without a car



Seniors who do not drive



Students



Commuters to/from OKC

CAR-LESS OR CAR-LITE



Families without a car



Seniors who do not drive



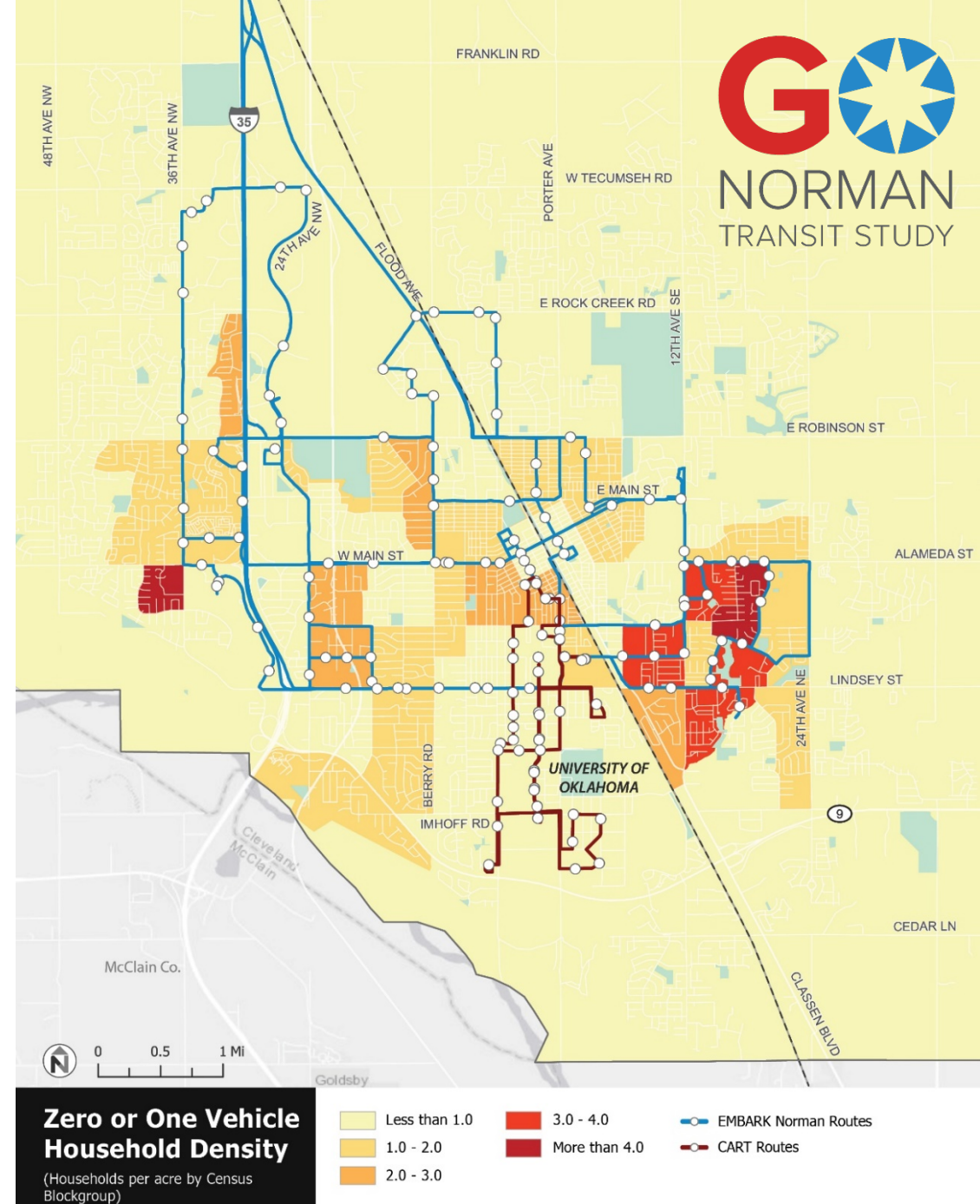
Students



Employees without a car



Commuters to/from OKC



SENIOR POPULATION



Families without a car



Seniors who do not drive



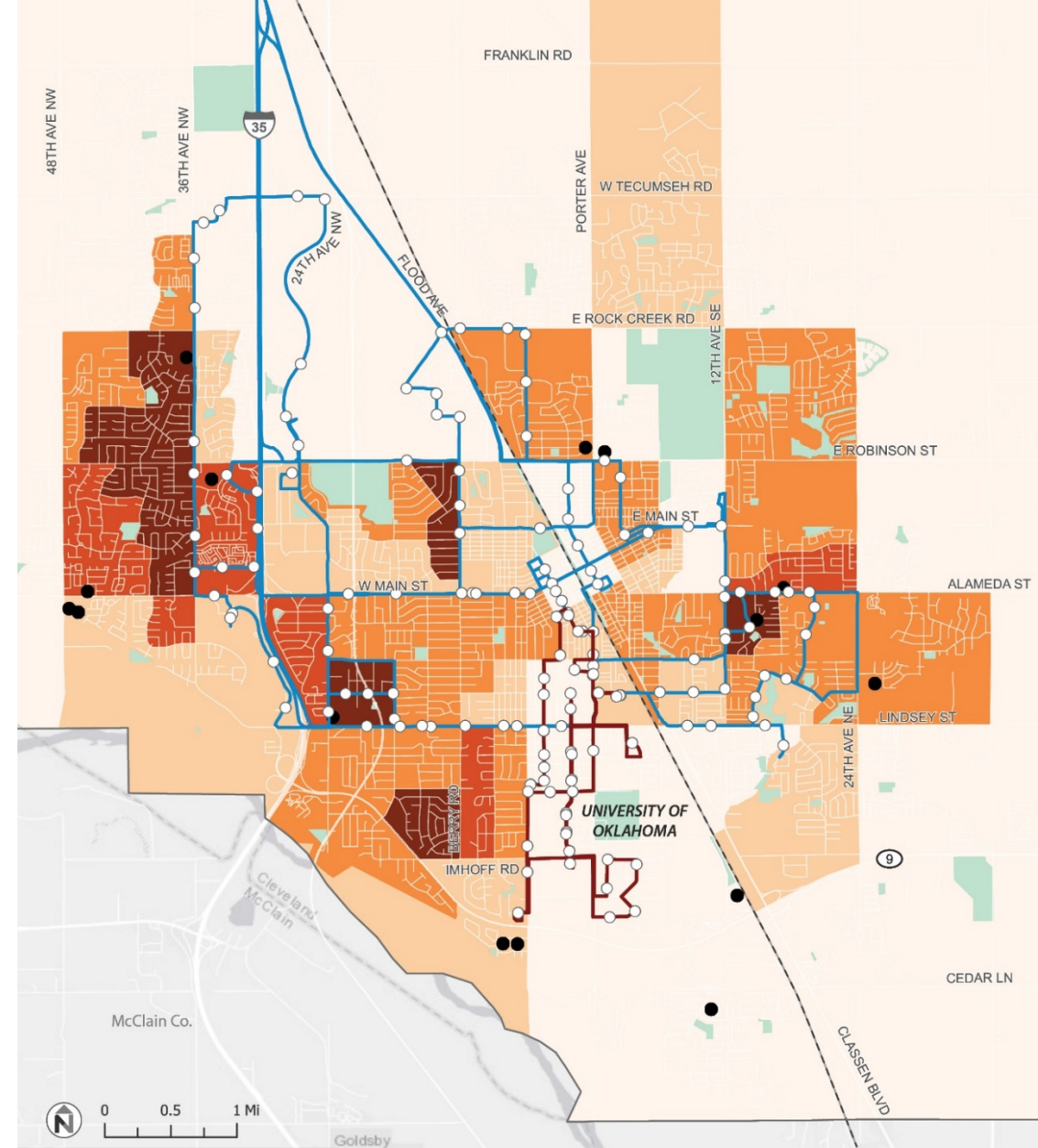
Employees without a car



Students

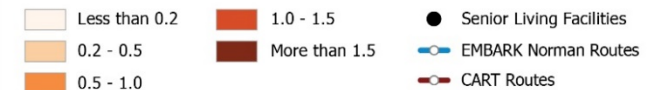


Commuters to/from OKC



Population Density of Older Adults

Older Adults defined as people 64 years or older (People per acre by Census Blockgroup)



Sources: City of Norman, ACS 2014-2018

LOW-WAGE EMPLOYEES



Families without a car



Seniors who do not drive



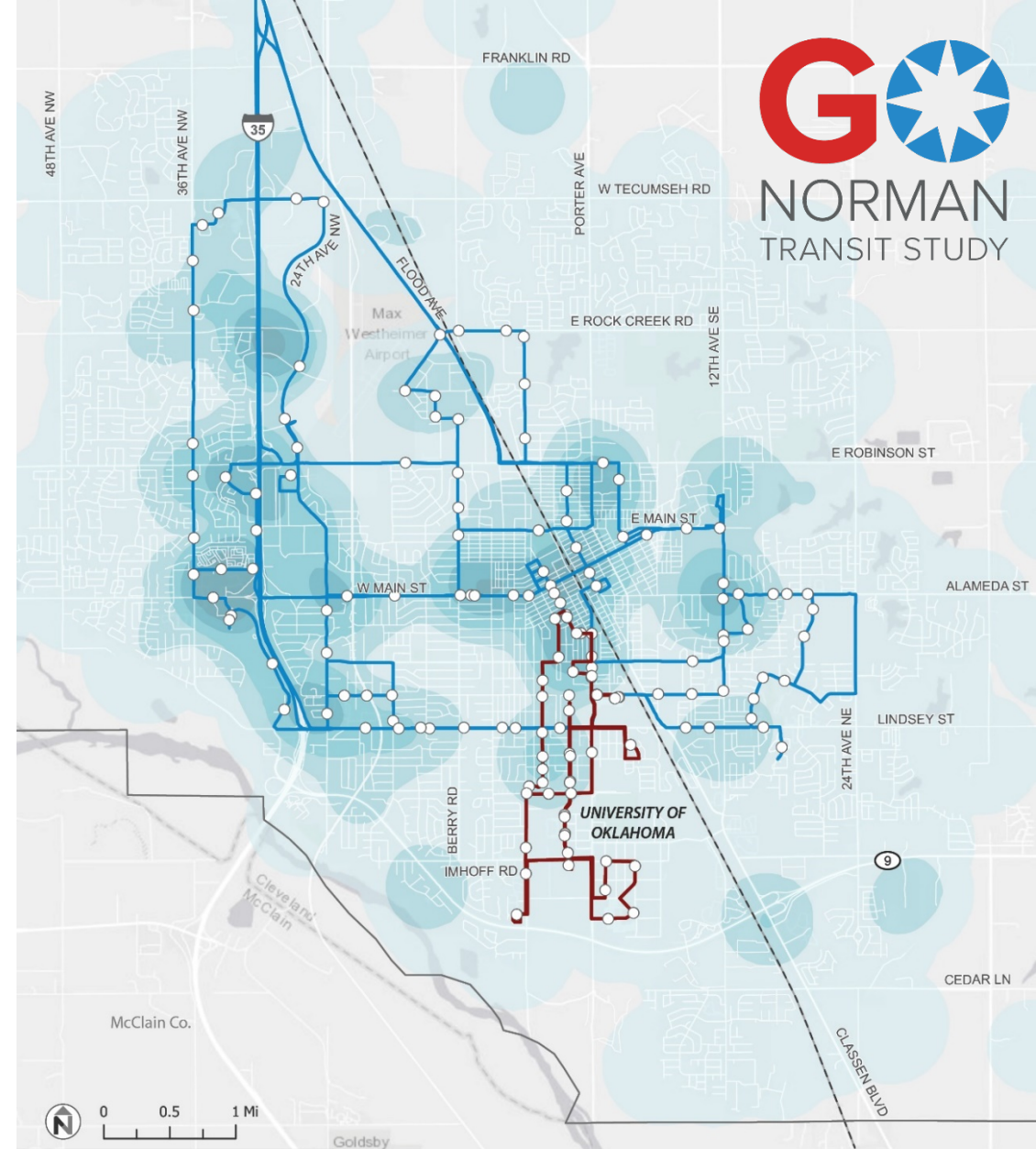
Students



Employees without a car

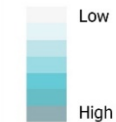


Commuters to/from OKC



Density of Low-Wage Jobs

Low Wage defined as jobs earning \$1,250/month or less (Number of Jobs synthesized by Census Block)

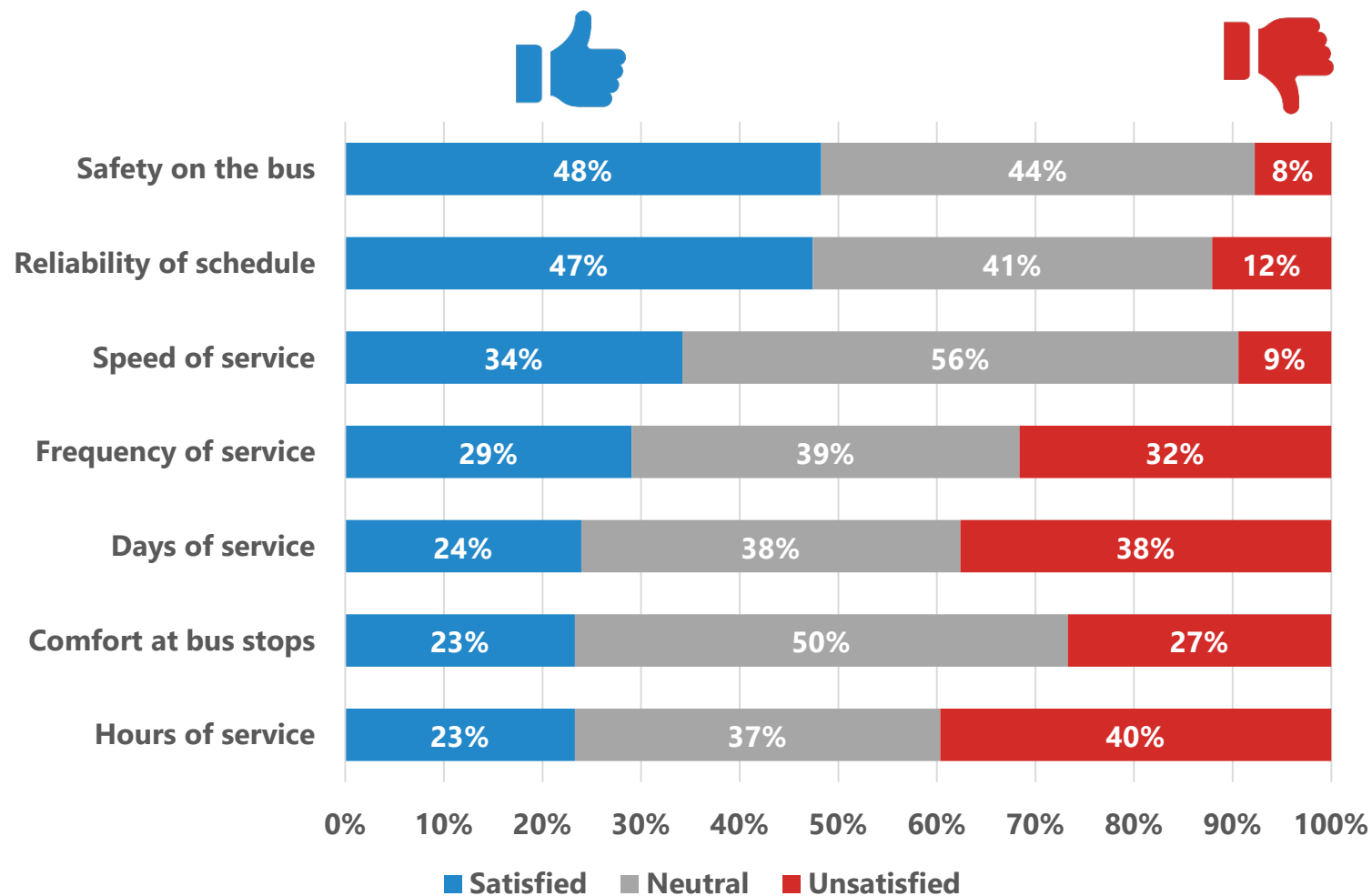


EMBARK Norman Routes
CART Routes

Sources: City of Norman, LEHD 2017

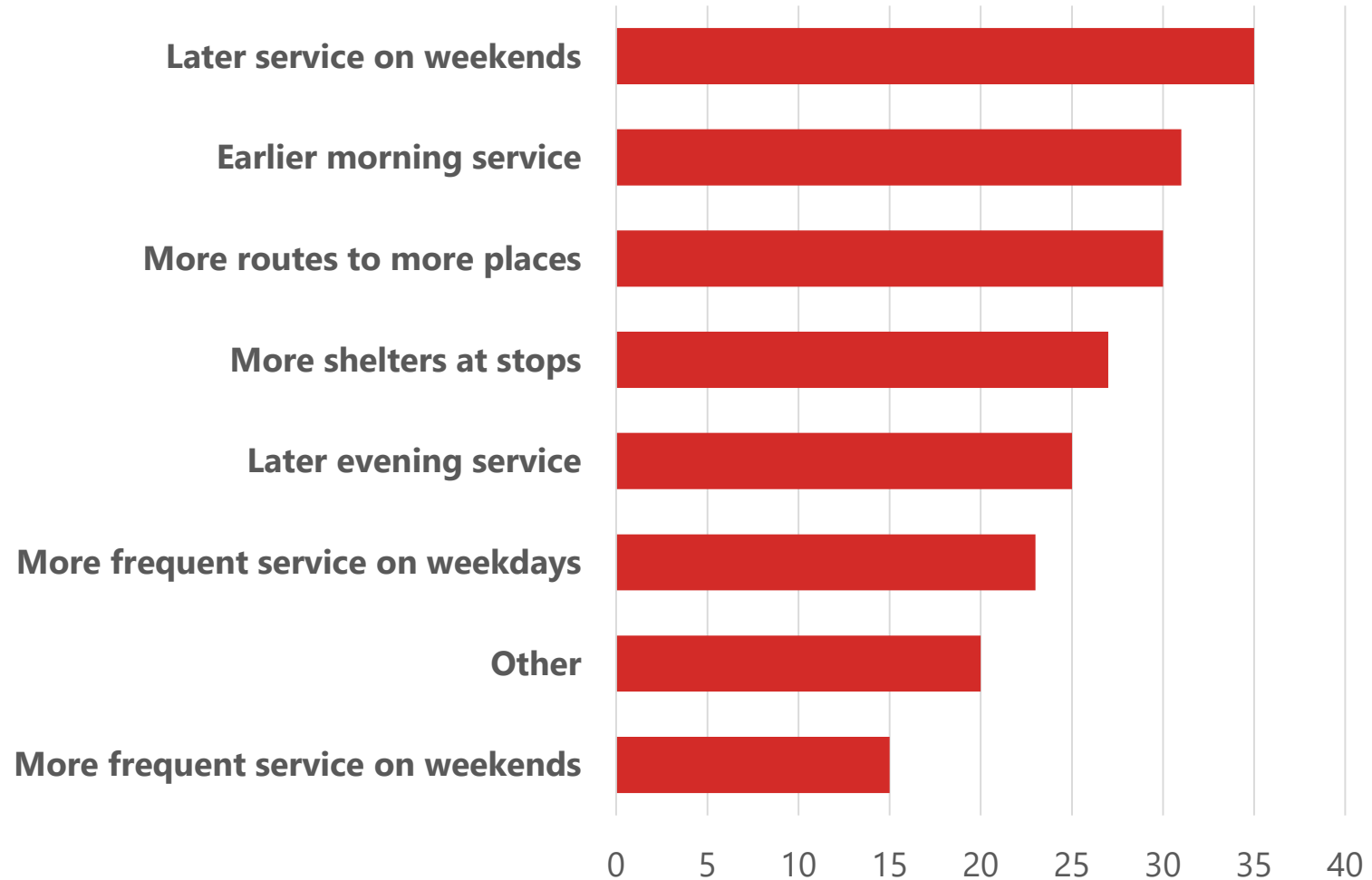
RIDER SATISFACTION

Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of EMBARK Norman service.



RIDER NEEDS

What one improvement would you like to see in transit service here in the area?



TELL US MORE

The buses originally ran every 30 minutes on almost every route.

We would all like for all buses to run every 30 minutes and Sunday service as well.

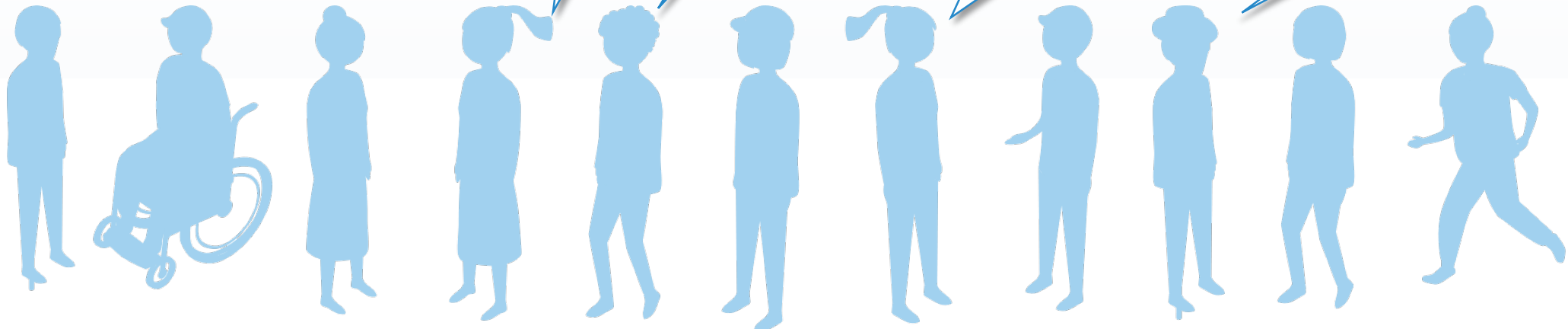
Think about running 7 day a week so everybody can get to work if needed.

The East Norman Library needs to be added on to a route so that residents on the east side of town can use the library.

It would be nice if it went to more grocery stores.

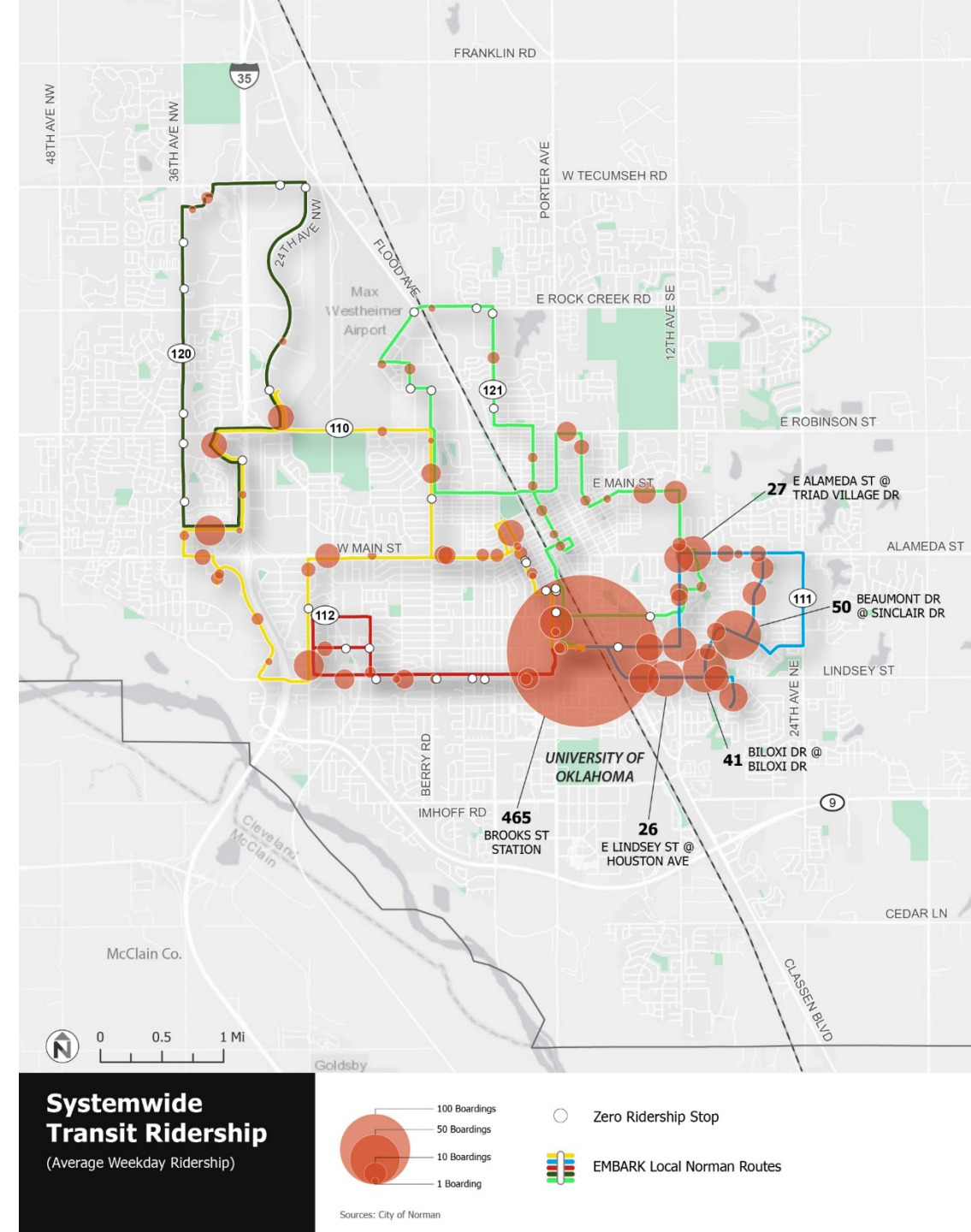
I'm increasingly concerned about elderly residents and their ability to get to the store.

The circular routes make it difficult to travel to destinations and return home in a short time.

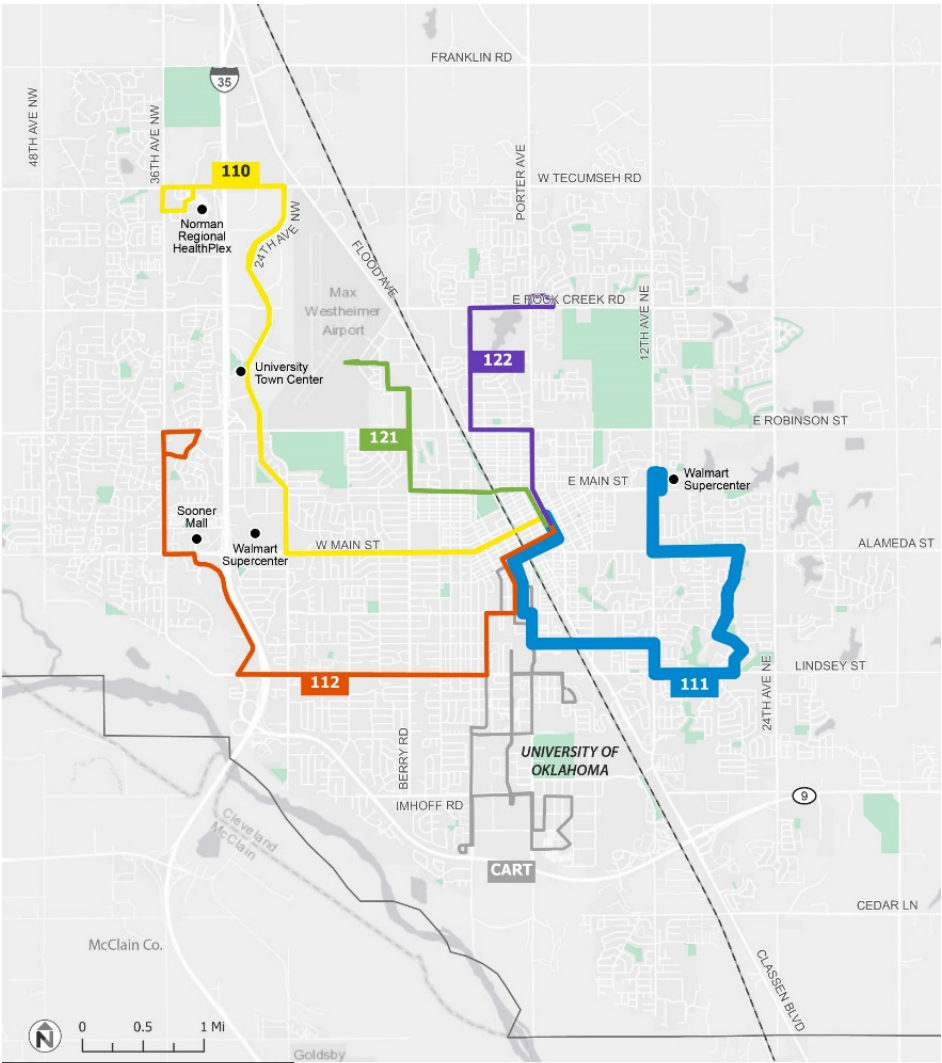


SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Strengths
 - Extensive coverage
 - Fare free
 - Service ends at 10pm on weeknights
 - High ridership in East Norman
- Challenges
 - Limited resources
 - Unserved destinations
 - Fleet age and reliability
- Opportunities
 - Sunday service
 - Longer hours on Saturdays
 - More frequent service
 - Service to new areas
 - More direct routes



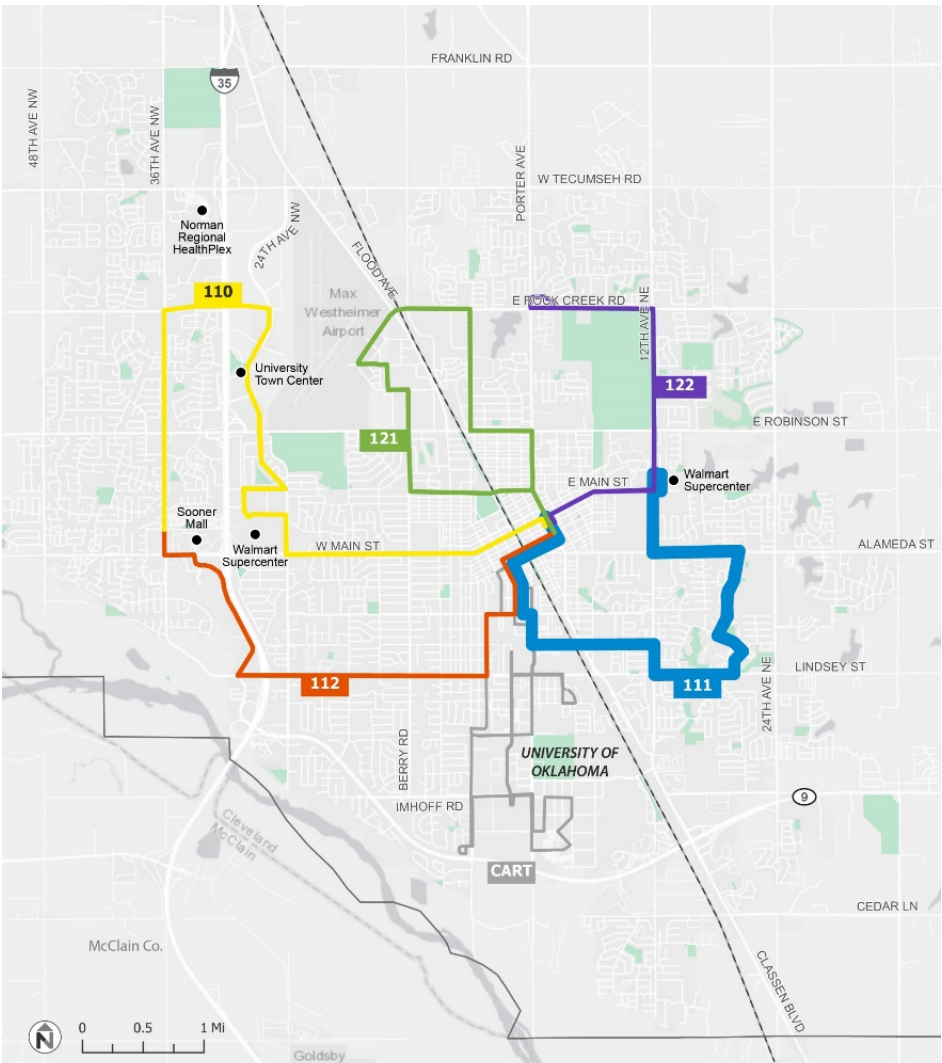
ROUTE NETWORK CONCEPTS



Scenario A

EMBARC Scenario A Routes

CART Routes



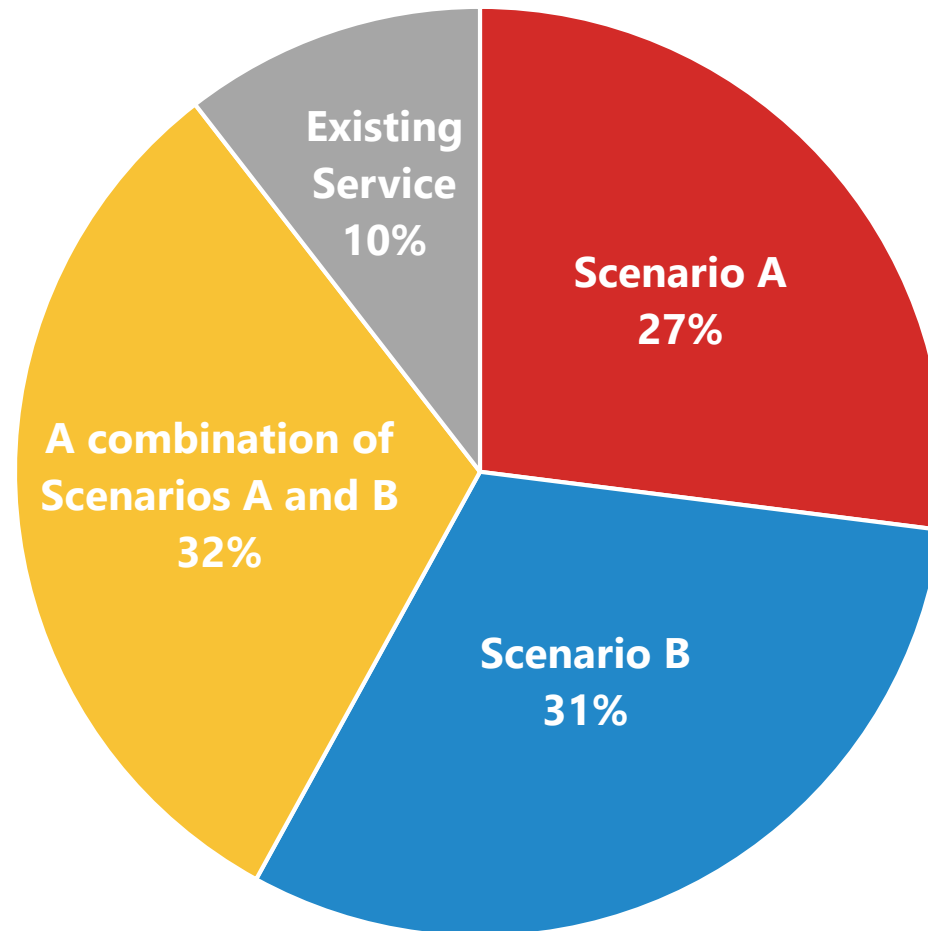
Scenario B

EMBARC Scenario B Routes

CART Routes

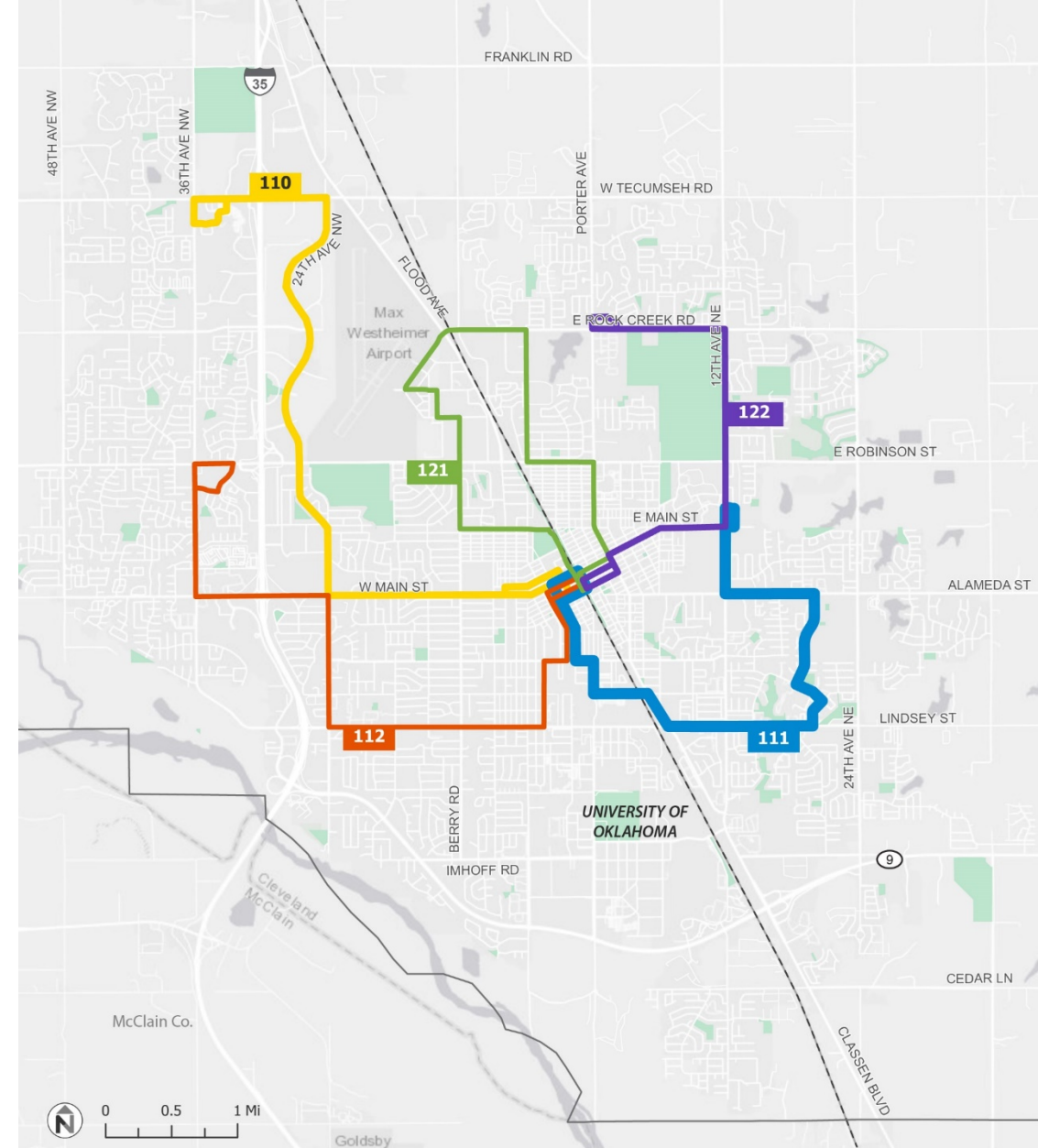
ROUTE NETWORK CONCEPTS

Community survey question:
Which route network do you prefer?



RECOMMENDED NETWORK

- Improves access to key destinations:
 - Norman Regional HealthPlex
 - University Town Center
 - Walmart Supercenter stores
 - Sooner Mall
- Introduces service to Northeast Norman
 - Garland Square
 - 12th Ave Recreation Center
- Provides framework for future expansion

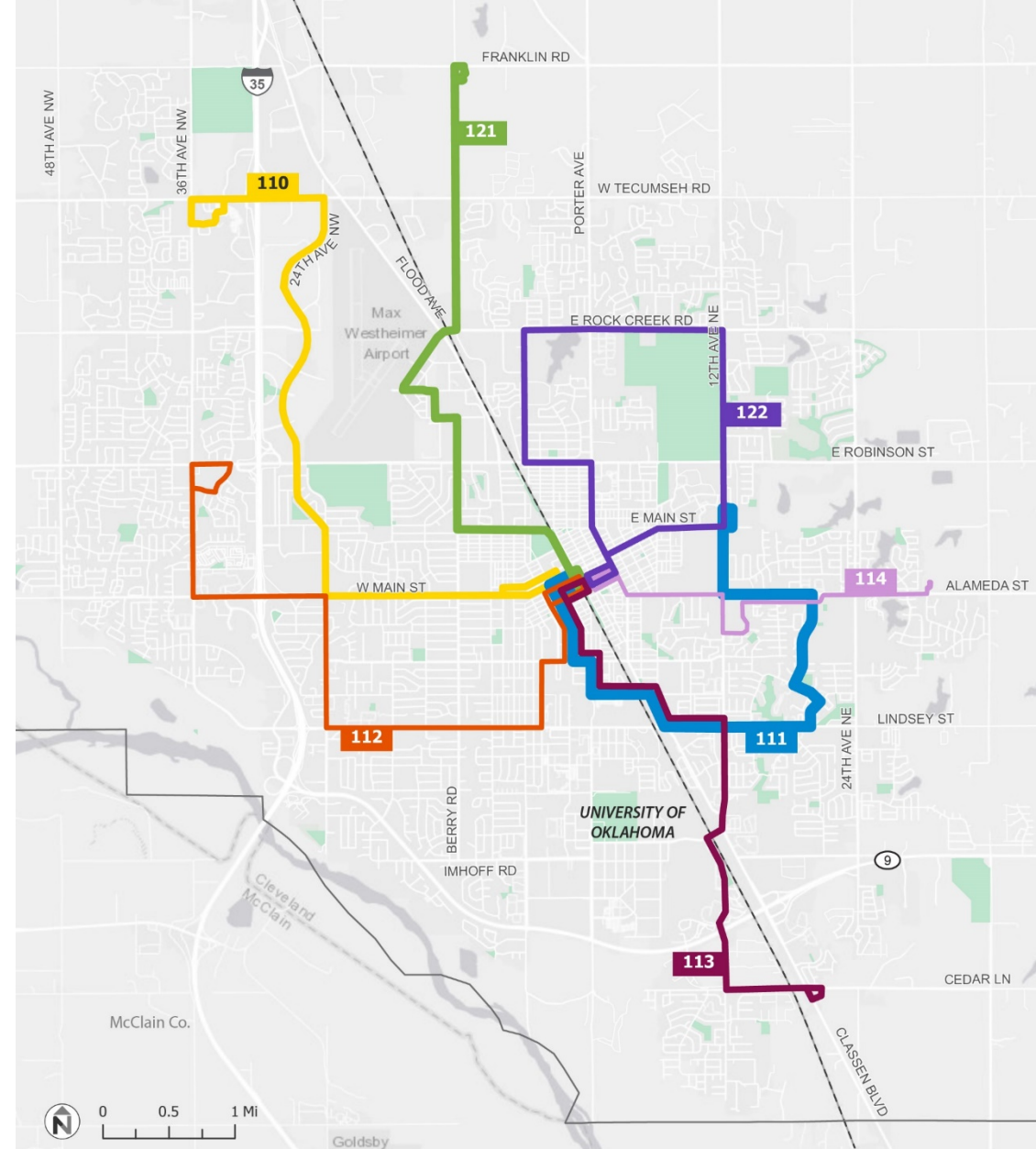


**Preferred
Alternative**

EMBARK Preferred Alternative Routes

FUTURE EXPANSION PRIORITIES

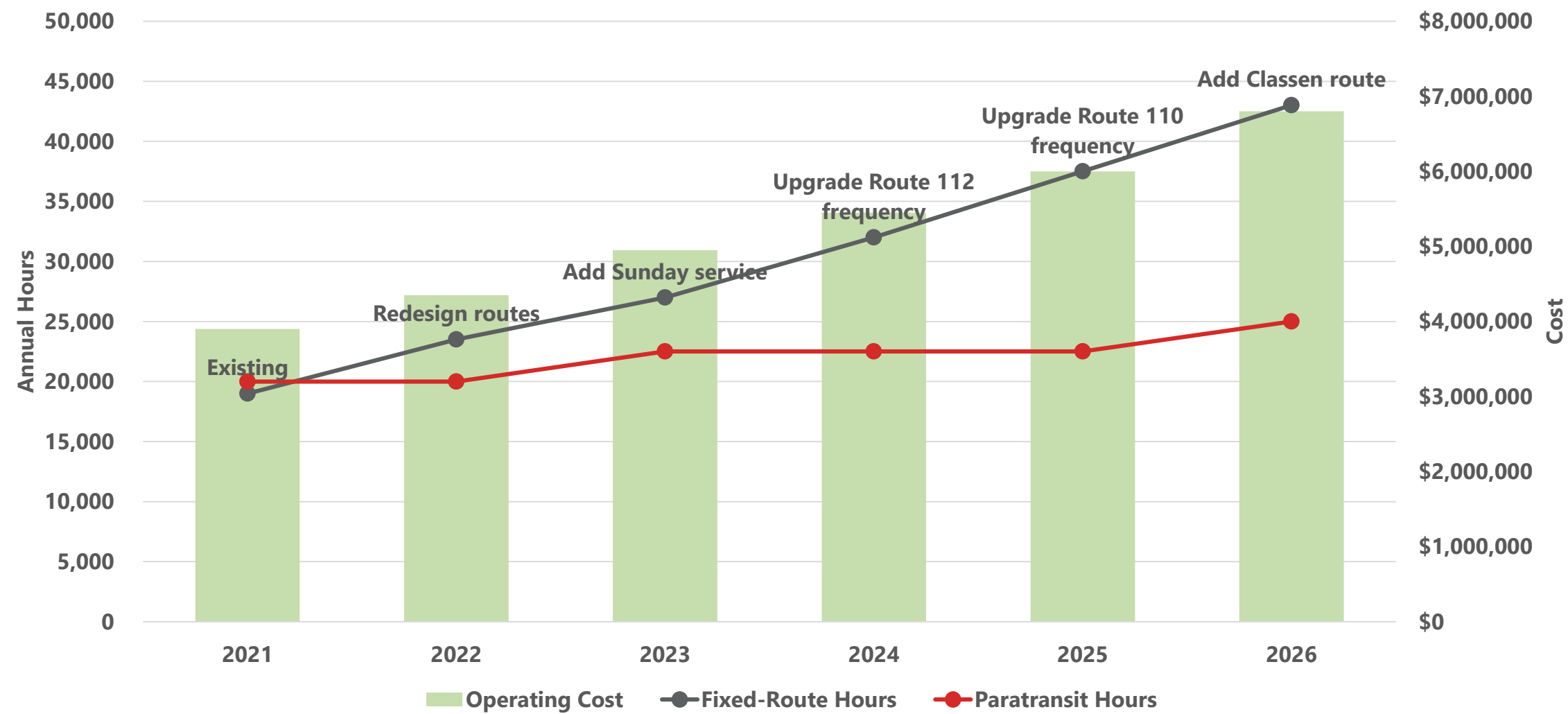
- Add Sunday service
- Add service to new destinations
 - Moore Norman Technology Center
 - Norman East Branch Library
 - Walmart Supercenter on Classen Blvd
- Upgrade frequencies on all routes
 - 15-minute service on Route 111
 - 30-minute service on all other routes



Future Expansion

EMBARK Future Expansion Routes

5-YEAR SERVICE PLAN











































DOWNTOWN TRANSIT CENTER SITE SELECTION

- Screening process
 - City-owned parcels
 - Centrally located
 - Proximity to The Depot
 - Vacant or retrofittable tracts
- Evaluation criteria
 - Pedestrian access
 - Adjacent land uses
 - Operational efficiency
 - Proximity to The Depot



EVALUATION CRITERIA

	Option A	Option B	Option C
	Norman Station The Depot	Gray Street Parking Lot	James Garner at City Hall
 Pedestrian access	  	  	  
 Adjacent land use	  	  	  
 Operational efficiency	  	  	  
 Proximity to Norman Station	  	  	  

BENEFITS OF THE DEPOT SITE

- Provides capacity for up to 6 buses
- Proximity to local destinations:
 - Main Street
 - City Hall
 - Cleveland County Complex
 - The Well
- Promotes multimodal connectivity
 - Legacy Trail
 - Amtrak
 - Future RTA commuter rail



FARE ANALYSIS

Peer City Best Practices

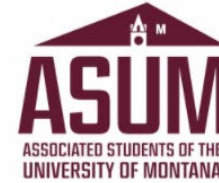
- Generally low base fares - \$1.00
- Day and monthly pass options
- Agreements with Universities
 - Student Fees
 - Contract Revenue
 - Funding Partnerships

System Name	City
EMBARK OKC	Oklahoma City, OK
Huntsville Transit	Huntsville, AL
The Ride	Ann Arbor, MI
CyRide	Ames, IA
Lawrence Transit	Lawrence, KS
Mountain Line	Missoula, MT

BEST PRACTICE: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Sustainable Missoula

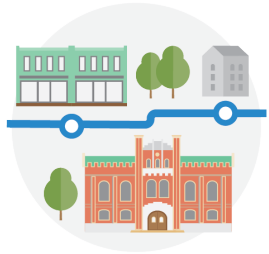
- Began in 2015 as partnership with 11 local business and organizations
- Has grown to 24 members
- Attractive to new businesses
- Allows transit managers to focus on other sustainability efforts
- Builds on community support



FARE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

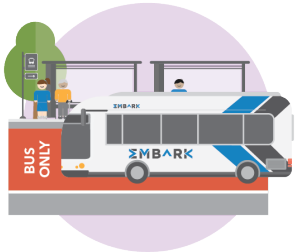
- **Continue operating fare free for at least 2 years**
 - Allow riders to adjust to recommended Fall 2022 route changes
 - Allow ridership to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Begin discussions with OU regarding funding partnership and student pass
- **Re-evaluate the potential for fare implementation in 2 years**
 - Continue operating fare free, or
 - Implement a new fare policy
 - Establish a fare structure with low base fares to mitigate potential ridership loss
 - Partner with OU on a student pass program
 - Adopt fare technology in line with best practices
 - Explore potential alignment with EMBARK OKC's fare policy

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS



Update and streamline the route network

Realign bus routes to better serve the needs of existing and potential transit riders by improving access to key destinations and reducing travel time.



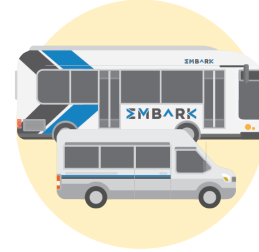
Establish a Downtown Transit Center

Relocate the local route transfer hub from the OU campus to downtown Norman to maximize efficiency and allow for future service expansion.



Strategically expand bus service

Extend routes to serve emerging destinations, offer longer hours and more frequent service, and operate on Sundays.



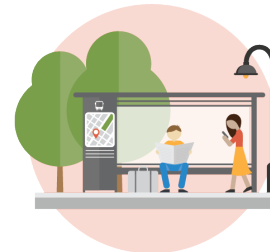
Upgrade and standardize the fleet

Replace aging vehicles and assemble a uniform fleet to minimize maintenance costs. Pursue Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants for replacement buses.



Continue to operate fare-free

Avoid costly fare collection equipment on new buses. Allow riders to adjust to route changes and the local economy to recover from the pandemic before re-evaluating the fare policy.



Promote transit supportive land use

Make transit easier to access and encourage more sustainable development. Maximize rider safety, comfort, and convenience.

NEXT STEPS

- **June 22**
 - **Seek City Council adoption**
- **FY 2022**
 - **Prepare for route network redesign**
 - **Establish a Downtown Transit Center**
 - **Install new bus stops**
 - **Coordinate with EMBARK**
 - **Update rider information**
 - **Perform rider outreach**
 - **Make necessary operational changes**
- **Fall 2023**
 - **Implement recommended route network redesign**