



DRIVING MEMPHIS TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE

How Transit Vision, a plan powered by Innovate Memphis, aims to enhance job access and economic development in Memphis by improving public transit.



HOW CAN IMPROVED PUBLIC TRANSIT ENHANCE ACCESS TO JOBS AND CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?

Over 25,000 households in Memphis don't have access to a vehicle, and in many low income areas, 30-50% of households do not have access. The vast majority of Memphians using public transit to get to work in this group spend twice as long getting to work as those commuting in private vehicles and have an annual income far below the Memphis average.

Even for those who do have access to a vehicle, the average cost of driving a car in Memphis is over \$13,000 annually and rising each year. Reliable, high-frequency public transit is a solution that can greatly improve job access and economic development — not just for bus riders, but for the entire community.

In 2015, [Innovate Memphis](#), local nonprofit organizations, business leaders, advocacy groups, and philanthropists formed the Transit Funding Working Group with a focus on improving reliable transit to jobs. The group published a [white paper in 2016](#) to make the case for increased local funding for transit through a dedicated public source.

In 2018, the City of Memphis initiated the [Memphis 3.0 comprehensive plan](#) and Innovate Memphis led the public feedback and design process for a corresponding Transit Vision 3.0 plan in partnership with [Jarrett Walker & Associates](#).

[Transit Vision](#) is a collaborative initiative between the City of Memphis, Innovate Memphis, [Memphis Area Transit Authority](#) (MATA), and [Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) (MPO).

The program focuses on improving transit frequency and service hours for economic development, health, safety, equity, and sustainability in Memphis.

DEVELOPMENT

Innovate Memphis led two phases of public engagement.

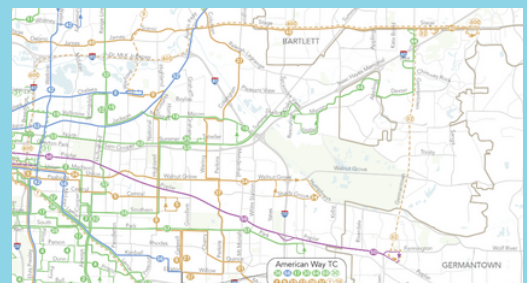
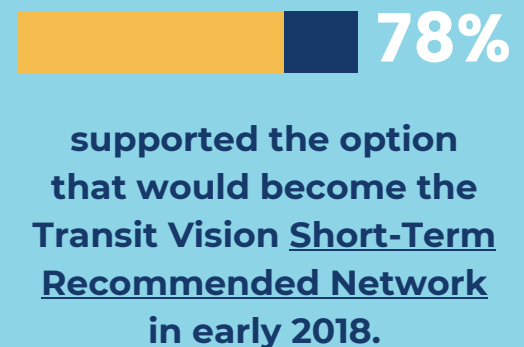
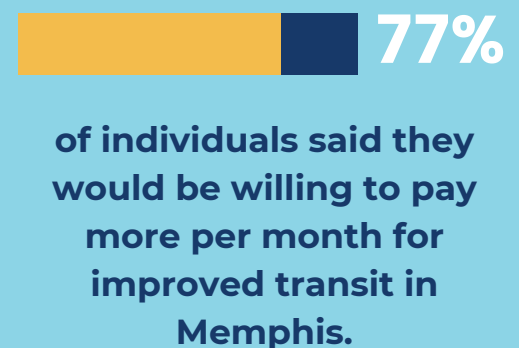
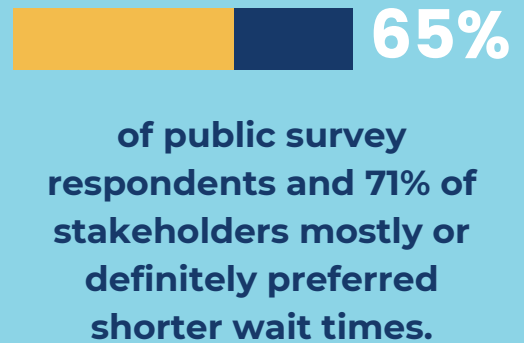
In Phase 1 (fall 2017), the team presented potential transit choices and trade-offs to the public, receiving input from around 1,000 respondents through web and paper surveys, as well as a Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

In Phase 2 (November 2017 to February 2018), constituents had the chance to review a smaller, detailed set of bus route and network options with Innovate Memphis gathering feedback from approximately 1,200 respondents through web and paper surveys.

The top priority regarding transit improvements was higher frequency service on weekdays so that riders had shorter wait times to get to jobs and run errands during business hours. The second priority regarding transit improvements was covering places that did not have access to bus routes already.

In gathering community feedback, the Innovate Memphis team focused on inclusivity and engaging residents on their own turf. For instance, the engagement team consistently conducted surveys at the Hudson, Airways, and American Way transit centers several times a week. Beyond riders' input via survey and route design sessions, two representatives from the Bus Riders Union served on the Memphis 3.0 Transit Vision Stakeholder Working Group.

KEY RESULTS FROM PHASE 1 AND PHASE 2 SURVEYS



EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Based on MATA's expense formula in 2018, a \$30 million annual investment was projected to grow bus service hours by 50 percent, adding 220,000 hours and 3 million rides per year. This expanded service was anticipated to result in:

- New routes with more frequent service – less waiting and going further, faster
- Extended weekend and evening service
- 17,000 more jobs reachable in an hour by transit for the average Memphian – a 39% increase
- 45% more jobs reachable in an hour for minority residents and 49% for low-income residents
- 79,000 more people and 103,000 more jobs near frequent service (every 15 minutes)

However, local funding for MATA hasn't met current operational expenses required to sustain its level of service or invest more in Transit Vision. Recent challenges have included lower ridership, operational funding, inflation costs, and staff shortages with drivers and bus mechanics.

NEXT STEPS

In 2023, MATA proposed a [phased implementation plan](#) for Transit Vision to align with available funding and adapt to current ridership that is pending approval by the MATA Board of Commissioners.

Another Transit Vision project is set to serve Memphis riders starting in 2029 – the Innovation Corridor's [mConnect](#), a bus rapid transit (BRT) system. mConnect will offer increased frequency with buses arriving along Poplar Avenue every 10 minutes during peak hours and every 30 minutes during off-peak hours. mConnect's network extends its benefits citywide, connecting with 18 other bus routes.

While the implementation of Transit Vision hasn't come to fruition yet, our extensive engagement and design process show strong public support for these improvements. We believe the Transit Vision plan still shows how it is possible for our city to connect more Memphians to opportunities that can grow our economy, improve quality of life and improve environmental and traffic outcomes that benefit everyone.