

## **Chapter 2 - Iowa Transit Systems**

Iowa has 35 designated transit systems. Sixteen of these systems are rural and nineteen are urban. [Chapter 324A](#) of the Iowa Code defines transit systems.

### **Designation of a Single Administrative Agency**

The Iowa DOT may only distribute state and federal public transit assistance to public transit systems that have been duly designated as a single administrative agency (transit system). [Chapter 324A](#) of the Iowa Code mandates that transportation services be coordinated and defines transit systems.

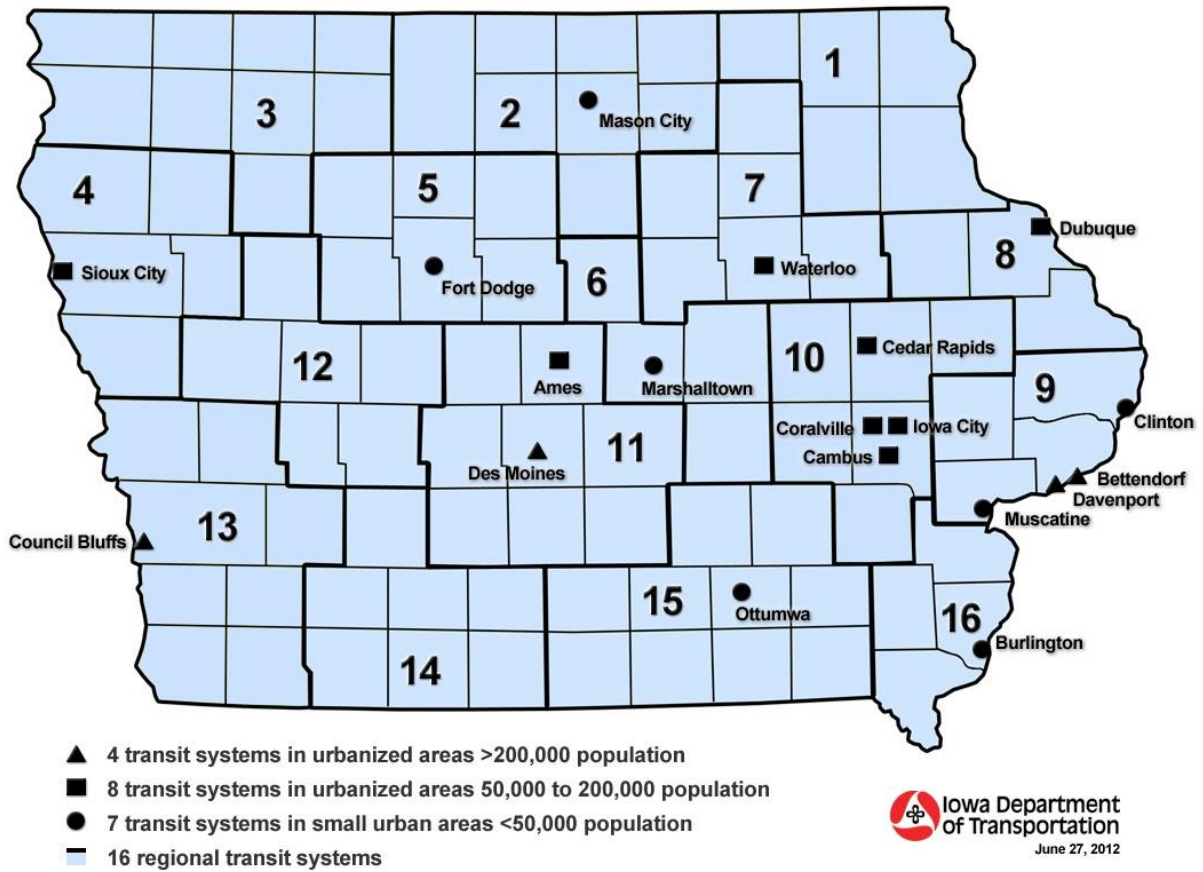
Within each urban area or region, local officials must designate a single agency to be responsible for the administration and provision of transit services to the general public. The only entities that may receive public transit assistance administered by the Public Transit Team (PTT) are the designated urban and regional transit systems. In no instance shall an individual county be funded directly. A city must have a population of at least 20,000 or be part of an urbanized area before it can be designated a transit system and be funded directly.

At least one public transit system is designated to serve every area of the state. Agencies other than a designated transit system may receive state or federal transit assistance funding only through pass-through agreements with a designated system. These agreements must entail coordination with the transit agency's direct services and services that are provided under other subcontracts the transit system may have with other providers. Please see [Chapter 8](#) for more information on subcontracts.

Any county may elect to designate the local urban transit system as its single administrative agency and may then become eligible to share the state or federal assistance received by that urban transit program.

The State of Iowa requires coordination of publicly funded passenger transportation services to maximize benefits from limited resources. Accordingly, all agencies providing transportation services need to coordinate services through urban or regional transit systems designated by local officials. The designated transit systems may purchase service from other transportation providers. [Exhibit 1](#) displays a list of sub-providers operating under the authority of a particular transit system.

### Iowa's Public Transit System



The service area of each of Iowa's sixteen regional transit systems includes multiple counties as shown above. Service is provided within each of Iowa's ninety-nine counties as well as between counties and between regions. These regional systems are organized in various ways. Some are public agencies, while others are private, non-profit entities. Some of the agencies are part of another agency and others are free-standing. Brokered Systems are those transit systems that provide no direct service, but contract with subproviders to operate transit services. Brokered Systems are responsible for all services and compliance of all operators.

| Organization of Iowa's Designated Rural Transit Systems   |                 |                                 |               |                         |   |                  |
|---|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|---|------------------|
| Transit System and Service Area   | Public Agencies | Private Nonprofit Organizations | Free-Standing | Part of Planning Agency | Social Agency (community action, aging) | Brokered Systems |
| <b>Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation</b> (Region 1) Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek counties  |                 | Y                               |               |                         | Y                                       |                  |
| <b>North Iowa Area Council of Governments</b> (Region 2) Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell, Winnebago, and Worth counties                      | Y               |                                 |               | Y                       |   | Y                |
| <b>Regional Transit Authority/RIDES</b> (Region 3) Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto, and Sioux counties                         |                 | Y                               | Y             |                         |   |                  |
| <b>Siouxland Regional Transit System</b> (Region 4) Cherokee, Ida, Monona, Plymouth, and Woodbury counties and Southern Union County, South Dakota                    |                 | Y                               |               | Y                       |   |                  |
| <b>Mid-Iowa Development Association</b> (Region 5) Calhoun, Hamilton, Humboldt, Pocahontas, Webster, and Wright counties  | Y               |                                 |               | Y                       |   |                  |
| <b>Region Six Planning Commission/PeopleRides</b> (Region 6) Hardin, Marshall, Poweshiek, and Tama counties   | Y               |                                 |               | Y                       |   |                  |
| <b>Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments/Regional Transit Commission</b> (Region 7) Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Chickasaw, and Grundy counties     | Y               |                                 |               | Y                       |   |                  |
| <b>Delaware, Dubuque &amp; Jackson County Regional Transit Authority</b> (Region 8) Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson counties   |                 | Y                               |               | Y                       |   |                  |
| <b>River Bend Transit</b> (Region 9) Cedar, Clinton, Muscatine, and Scott counties and the Illinois Quad City area  |                 | Y                               | Y             |                         |   |                  |
| <b>East Central Iowa Transit</b> (Region 10) Benton, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, and Washington counties  | Y               |                                 |               | Y                       |   | Y                |
| <b>Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency</b> (Region 11) Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Madison, Marion, Story, and Warren counties   | Y               |                                 | Y             |                         |   |                  |
| <b>Region XII Council of Governments/Western Iowa Transit System</b> (Region 12) Audubon, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Guthrie, and Sac counties                        | Y               |                                 |               | Y                       |   |                  |
| <b>Southwest Iowa Planning Council/Southwest Iowa Transit Agency</b> (Region 13) Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby counties | Y               |                                 |               | Y                       |   |                  |
| <b>Southern Iowa Trolley</b> (Region 14) Adair, Adams, Clarke, Decatur, Ringgold, Taylor, and Union counties  | Y               |                                 | Y             |                         |   |                  |
| <b>10-15 Regional Transit Agency (Region 15)</b> Appanoose, Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lucas, Mahaska, Monroe, Van Buren, Wapello, and Wayne counties                  | Y               |                                 | Y             |                         |   |                  |
| <b>Southern Iowa Regional Planning Commission/SEIBUS (Region 16)</b> Des Moines, Henry, Lee, and Louisa counties  | Y               |                                 |               | Y                       |   |                  |

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) categorizes urban systems by population of the city. Iowa has seven small urban transit systems in cities with population under 50,000, eight large urban transit systems in cities with populations between 50,000 and 200,000, and four large urban systems in metropolitan areas with populations greater than 200,000. The size of the city effects how transit funds are distributed and is explained in [Chapter 3](#).

| Iowa's Designated Urban Transit Systems |   |                                      |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| Small Urban Population under 50,000     | Large Urban Population 50,000 - 200,000 | Larger Urban Population over 200,000 |
| Burlington                              | Ames                                    | Bettendorf                           |
| Clinton                                 | Cedar Rapids                            | Council Bluffs                       |
| Fort Dodge                              | Coralville                              | Davenport                            |
| Marshalltown                            | Dubuque                                 | Des Moines                           |
| Mason City                              | Iowa City                               |                                      |
| Muscatine                               | Sioux City                              |                                      |
| Ottumwa                                 | University of Iowa (Cambus)             |                                      |
|   | Waterloo                                |                                      |

Most urban transit systems are a department within their respective city. The exceptions are:

- Ottumwa, operated by the regional public transit agency, 10-15 Transit
- Fort Dodge, operated by the local Council of Governments, MIDAS
- The Metropolitan Transit Authority of Black Hawk County, based in Waterloo, which is an intergovernmental agency formed by the cities of Waterloo and Cedar Falls under Chapter 28E of the Code of Iowa
- The Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART) which serves all of Polk County as well as communities that are at least partially within Dallas, Madison, and Warren counties
- Cambus, which is operated by the University of Iowa

### Transit System Responsibilities

**Provision of Public Transit Services** – Transit systems receiving federal or state funds are required to provide transportation for the general public. The three main types of public transit services are fixed route, ADA complementary paratransit, and demand response service.

Fixed route public transit services are provided by the 19 urban transit agencies. This type of transit is provided with set routes, stops, and time points. No advance reservations are necessary. Service is available to the general public, including persons with disabilities. Several urban systems also offer deviated fixed route to accommodate persons with disabilities living near, but not on, the fixed route. Also, rather than having signed stops along a route, a few of Iowa's fixed route public transit agencies utilize a flag-stop system where persons wishing to ride simply stand at any intersection along the route and wave to flag down the bus as it approaches in order to signal their desire to board. The passenger informs the driver of their desired destination along the route.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit is provided by the 19 urban transit agencies in, at a minimum, ¾-mile around a fixed route. Passengers must apply, meeting ADA qualifications in order to ride. Ride reservations are arranged by the rider at least one day prior to a

desired trip. The bus picks the passenger up at their location, taking them to the desired destination. Fares for this origin-destination service may be no more than double the regular fixed route fare. More information on ADA complementary paratransit is included in [Chapter 13](#).

Demand response public transit services are provided by the 16 regional transit agencies. Ride reservations are made in advance, normally 24 hours. With demand response service, the bus picks the passenger up at their location and taking them to their desired destination. Service is available to the general public, including persons with disabilities.

A few of Iowa's public transit agencies also provide ridesharing services. Also known as vanpooling, public transit provision of rideshare services is done with vans owned or leased by the public transit agency with ridership consisting of several passengers – typically commuters – with similar origins and destinations paying a monthly fare to participate. One or more of the passengers serve as drivers in the rideshare, thus reducing their fare to utilize the service. For more information about ridesharing, visit <https://www.iowarideshare.org/Public/Home.aspx>.

Client transportation may also be provided with federal and/or state funds if the service is open to the general public. All services must meet ADA accessibility requirements.

Each transit system must provide complete information about the availability of its service to the general public. FTA requires that each transit system provide information on routes or service areas and make it available to the public at all times. Any brochure, publication, or other printed information regarding a transit agency's service area or schedule must state that the service is open to the general public, including persons with disabilities. The general public must also be provided information on the general public fare. General public fares must reflect the benefit of state and federal subsidies. All system information must be available in accessible formats.

Incidental transportation activities such as charters (meeting the FTA standards, see [Chapter 15](#)), parcel delivery, or meal delivery, are allowed as long as the use of any equipment for these purposes does not exceed 20-percent of the total use. This service should be identified, reported separately, and documented that it is fully supported with non-federal or non-state transit funds.

**Coordination** - Managers of each transit system should coordinate their service to meet the transportation needs of human service agencies in their area. When an agency asks for service (other than charter service), the transit system should make every effort to provide service if drivers, vehicles, and funds are available. The cost of this service should reflect subsidized state and federal funds when possible. [Chapter 15](#) discusses the coordination mandated in [Chapter 324A](#) of the Iowa Code

**Equitable Distribution of Transit Assistance** - State and federal transit funds are to be fairly distributed among all the services a transit system provides. The benefit of state and federal transit assistance should be considered when calculating all fares. Although the allocation of the distribution is a local decision, PTT may review and comment. Information on internal distribution of funds by each of Iowa's transit systems is public information and is subject to public scrutiny.

**Insurance** - Transit systems are required to carry \$1,000,000 liability insurance on each vehicle. Transit systems are responsible for verifying that coverage is adequate for the use being made of each vehicle. If a transit system operates in more than one state, they must meet the state requirement with the highest minimum. Each transit system is strongly encouraged to carry \$1,000,000 liability for underinsured/uninsured motorist. A transit system/provider that is a governmental agency that can levy taxes or can show sufficient financial reserves can be self-insured. Insurance requirements are explained in [Chapter 11](#).

**Maintenance** - Federal and state-funded vehicles, facilities and equipment must be adequately maintained and any damage must be repaired. Vehicle, facility and equipment maintenance is covered in [Chapter 10](#). Each asset funded with federal or state assistance by a transit agency must be listed on that

agency's asset inventory. Plans for maintenance of each owned asset over the course of its useful life is required.

**Compliance with state and federal requirements** - Transit systems must comply with all applicable federal and state regulations.

**Contracted Service Providers** – If a designated transit system chooses to subcontract services from other entities, those other entities must also comply with the state and federal requirements. The designated transit system is responsible for overseeing the operations and assuring compliance of its sub-providers. To ensure that sub-providers are in compliance, requirements must be clearly stated in the contracts with providers. [Chapter 8](#) lists elements that need to be included when subcontracting service.

### **Withdrawing Designation/Re-designation Procedures**

If a county elects to withdraw from participating in a region's public transit program, it may designate another region as its single administrative agency if all three of the following conditions are met:

1. The new region's area adjoins the county
2. A majority of the counties participating in the public transit program of the adjoining region agree to accept the county as a participant in their program
3. The Iowa DOT concurs in a county's designation of a single administrative agency that has already been duly designated by a contiguous region

If an agency designated as the regional transit system no longer wishes to serve this function, or if the counties involved feel the agency is not performing its role adequately, the counties may choose to designate a new transit agency.

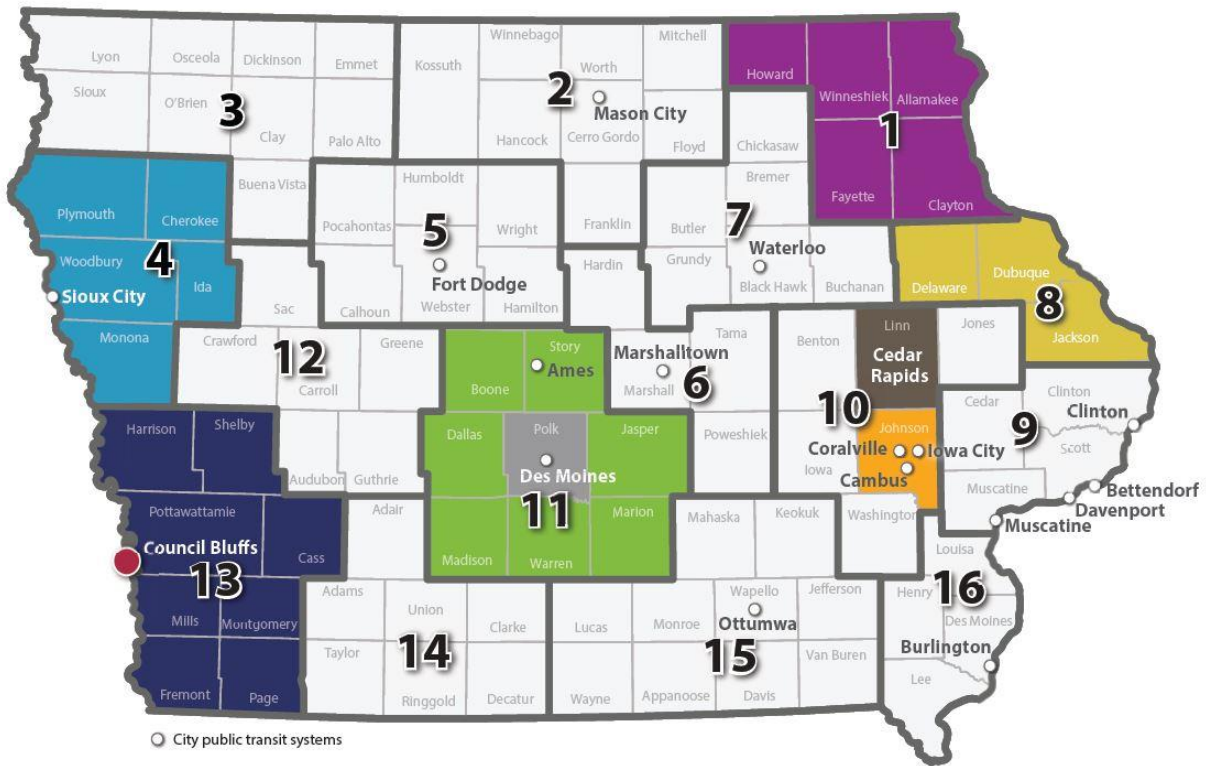
Iowa DOT policy requires the federal share of all vehicles and any other federally funded equipment be transferred to a newly designated regional system to be used for the original public transportation purpose. Iowa DOT policy does not require any buyout of the local share; however, a buyout is normally a locally-negotiated issue. In the past, agreements have ranged from a complete local share transfer to complete buyout of the local share by the new agency.

Any program surplus dollars reserved for a specified transit purpose, such as designated transit capital replacement funds, are expected to transfer. The transfer of transit funds generated as an inadvertent result of differences in contracted service rates and actual costs would be negotiated between the transferring parties. The transfer of any remaining transit funds received from local governments and agencies is also negotiated between the newly designated agency and the former agency. The counties involved will resolve any conflicts or concerns of local share. Transit service contracts should state how surplus funds are handled.

### **Mobility Management**

As mentioned above, coordination of public transit services is required in Iowa. One way to reach out to partner agencies in the community and region is through a mobility manager or, as they are sometimes known, a mobility coordinator. As of February 2019, eight of Iowa's public transit agencies had mobility coordinators on staff. Up-to-date mobility coordinator contact information can be found at <https://iowadot.gov/iowamobilitymanagement/>. The areas of concentration for these mobility managers typically are dictated by the boundaries of the transit agency employing the mobility manager. Iowa DOT also employs one statewide mobility coordinator who maintains a broad scope of work, focused on systemic initiatives to improve passenger transportation in Iowa as a whole. Statewide efforts have included ongoing outreach and education, partnership on coordination grants and initiatives, aligning priorities with various state agencies, and participating with planning efforts and/or committees.

### Locations of Iowa's Mobility Managers



Mobility managers can take on many roles for a public transit agency. Mobility management is a person-centered, case management approach to passenger transportation by connecting riders with a range of options, not just public transit. Mobility managers are encouraged to network with community providers, bringing awareness of transportation services, as well as being a familiar face in the community. While it is difficult to apply a broad set of job duties, it is certain that mobility management centers around assisting individual riders and making connections within the community; through community outreach and education, presentations to partners, networking meetings, attending or planning community events, and travel instruction and/or training.

Mobility management is an eligible capital expense and can be supported by (up to) 80-percent Federal participation, under Federal Transit Administration (FTA) sections 5307, 5310, 5311, and various discretionary grant programs. The goals of mobility management are to develop and enhance coordination among Iowa's 35 public transit providers in conjunction with human service providers to assist individuals that need transportation, and to expand the availability of services to meet the unmet transportation needs of the community.

In order to support Iowa's mobility coordinators, the Iowa's Mobility Management Network (IMMN) formed with regular meetings to bounce ideas off other mobility managers and learn of the successful – and not so successful – projects mobility managers have tried around the state.

For more information about mobility management, the following links provide a wealth of resources:

National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM)  
<https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/>

Federal Transit Administration (FTA)  
<https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/environmental-programs/livable-sustainable->

[communities/mobility-management](#)

FTA Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM)

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/ccam/about>

American Public Transportation Association (APTA)

<https://www.apta.com/resources/mobility/Pages/default.aspx>