# Citrus Connection
# 2025 Transit Development Plan Update

Final

*November 2025*

CitrusConnection
PROGRESS IN MOTION

Polk Transportation Planning Organization

# Citrus Connection 2025 Transit Development Plan Update

*Final*

*Prepared for*
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## *List of Acronyms*

| | |
|---|---|
| **AADT** | Annual Average Daily Traffic |
| **ADA** | Americans With Disabilities Act |
| **APR** | Annual Progress Report |
| **APTA** | American Public Transportation Association |
| **BEBR** | Bureau Of Economic and Business Research |
| **BRT** | Bus Rapid Transit |
| **CEDS** | Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy |
| **CFDC** | Central Florida Development Council |
| **CIG** | Capital Investment Grants |
| **CTC** | Community Transportation Coordinator |
| **DTA** | Density Threshold Assessment |
| **FAC** | Florida Administrative Code |
| **FDOT** | Florida Department of Transportation |
| **FHWA** | Federal Highway Administration |
| **FLU** | Future Land Use |
| **FTA** | Federal Transit Administration |
| **FTIS** | Florida Transit Information System |
| **FY** | Fiscal Year |
| **GTFS** | General Transit Feed Specification |
| **HART** | Hillsborough Area Regional Transit |
| **LAMTD** | Lakeland Area Mass Transit District |
| **LDDA** | Lakeland Downtown Development Authority |
| **LEHD** | Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics |
| **LEP** | Limited English Proficiency |
| **LRTP** | Long Range Transportation Plan |
| **MPO** | Metropolitan Planning Organization |
| **NTD** | National Transit Database |
| **PCTA** | Polk County Transit Authority |
| **PCTS** | Polk County Transit System |
| **PIP** | Public Involvement Plan |
| **PPP** | Public-Private Partnerships |
| **RLRTP** | Regional Long Range Transportation Plan |
| **SOV** | single-occupant vehicles |
| **SWOT** | Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threat |
| **TAZ** | Traffic Analysis Zone |
| **TBEST** | Transit Boardings Estimation and Simulation Tool |
| **TBRPC** | Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council |
| **TCAR** | Transit Concept and Alternatives Review |
| **TCCO** | Transit Corridors and Centers Overlay |
| **TCPE** | Transit Corridor and Project Evaluation |
| **TCRP** | Transit Cooperative Research Program |
| **TD** | Transportation Disadvantaged |
| **TDP** | Transit Development Plan |
| **TDSP** | Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan |
| **TIP** | Transportation Improvement Program |
| **TNC** | Transportation Network Companies |
| **TOI** | Transit Orientation Index |
| **TPO** | Transportation Planning Organization |
| **TRB** | Transportation Research Board |
| **TSDA** | Transit Supportive Development Areas |
| **TSP** | Transit Signal Priority |
| **UAP** | Universal Access Program |
| **UPWP** | Unified Planning Work Program |
| **VMT** | Vehicle Miles Traveled |
| **VOMS** | Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service |
| **WHAT** | Winter Haven Area Transit |

# Section 1. Introduction

This Transit Development Plan (TDP) is led by the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) in collaboration with Citrus Connection, Polk County's transit service provider. It represents Polk County's vision to identify strategies to increase ridership and efficiency of Citrus Connection's current services while enhancing connectivity to other local or regional transit services. This TDP was updated to coordinate and synchronize with the Polk TPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

Preparing and submitting a TDP that complies with Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.) Rule 14-73.001 (commonly called the TDP Rule) every five years is also required by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) as a prerequisite to the receipt of Public Transit Block Grant funds. According to the TDP Rule, "The TDP shall be the applicant's planning, development and operational guidance document to be used in developing the Transportation Improvement Program and the Department's Five-Year Work Program."

A TDP also allows transit agencies to outline actions to be taken in the following year and set goals for subsequent years. As a strategic plan, the TDP identifies needs in an unconstrained fashion and for which currently there is no funding. This current update of the TDP covers the 10-year period from Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 to FY 2035.

## Objectives of This Plan

The primary objective of this effort is to update the currently adopted Polk Transit Vision TDP, as required by the TDP Rule. This TDP update provides a 10-year vision plan to help Polk County continue providing transit service that supports the broader local and regional multimodal transportation goals. The recommendations herein provide a blueprint for Polk County to improve transit while also assisting in the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), FDOT Five-Year Work Program, and FDOT Program and Resource Plan.

## TDP Requirements

Key requirements of the current TDP Rule, effective July 9, 2024, include:

- Major update completed every 5 years, covering a 10-year planning horizon.
- A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) approved by FDOT or consistent with the approved Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)/TPO public participation plan.
- Description of the process used, and the public involvement activities undertaken.

- Solicitation of comments from the local and the regional workforce development board.
- Notification to FDOT, the local/regional workforce board, local government comprehensive planning departments, and the MPO of all public meetings. These entities must also be given an opportunity to review and comment on the TDP during the development of the proposed public transportation projects and services and the 10-year implementation program.
- Detailed coordination program defining collaborative participation and consistency in developing and implementing the TDP and the LRTP with the local MPO, and other related programs such as the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), TIP, and Corridor Development Studies.
- Estimation of the community's demand for transit services using the planning tools provided by FDOT or an alternative demand estimation technique approved by FDOT.
- Assessment of land use and urban design patterns to the extent of supporting or hindering transit services, including efforts to support a multimodal environment and an assessment to address priority transit corridors.
- A 10-Year Operating and Capital program, including a schedule of projects, a financial plan, and a list of priority projects.

## TDP Checklist

This TDP meets the requirements for a five-year TDP update in accordance with Rule Chapter 14-73, F.A.C. Table 1-1 is a list of TDP requirements from Rule 14-73.001 and indicates where each can be found in this 10-year plan.

**Table 1-1: TDP Checklist**

| | TDP Rule Requirement | TDP Component /Section |
|---|---|---|
| ✓ | Approved PIP for public involvement (TDP-specific PIP approved by FDOT, or TPO-adopted PIP approved by Federal Transit Administration [FTA] and Federal Highway Administration [FHWA]) | Public Involvement \| Section 2 & Appendix A |
| ✓ | Opportunities for public involvement outlined in PIP | Public Involvement \| Section 2 & Appendix A |
| ✓ | Summaries of outreach process and activities included in TDP | Public Involvement \| Section 2 |
| ✓ | Solicitation of comments from local/regional workforce board | Public Involvement \| Section 2 |
| ✓ | Notifications on public meetings to FDOT, local/regional workforce board, local government comprehensive planning departments, and TPO | Public Involvement \| Section 2 |
| ✓ | Review opportunities for FDOT, local/regional workforce board, local government comprehensive planning departments, and TPO | Public Involvement \| Section 2 |
| ✓ | Relationship reviews of plans/studies as identified by TDP Rule | Context Evaluation \| Section 3 |
| ✓ | Coordination with TPO on LRTP data, outreach, and goals | Context Evaluation \| Section 3 |
| ✓ | Consistency review with UPWP, TIP, and Corridor Development Studies | Context Evaluation \| Section 3 |
| ✓ | Assessment of land use and urban design patterns | Land Use & Corridor Development\| Section 4 |
| ✓ | Identification, evaluation, and ranking of priority transit corridors | Land Use & Corridor Development\| Section 4 |
| ✓ | Annual projections of transit ridership using FDOT-approved software tool or other FDOT-approved method | Operating & Capital Program \| Section 5 |
| ✓ | 10-year Schedule of Projects with descriptions, maps, timelines, costs, and the types and levels of service and capital improvements | Operating & Capital Program \| Section 5 |
| ✓ | 10-year Financial Plan with operating and capital costs for the Schedule of Projects | Operating & Capital Program \| Section 5 |
| ✓ | Ranked List of Priority Projects based on the Schedule of Projects, with descriptions, types, locations, and funding availability | Operating & Capital Program \| Section 5 |
| ✓ | Presented to the TPO Board | N/A |
| ✓ | Approved by transit agency governing board | N/A |
| ✓ | Submitted to FDOT by March 1, 2026 | N/A |

## Study Area

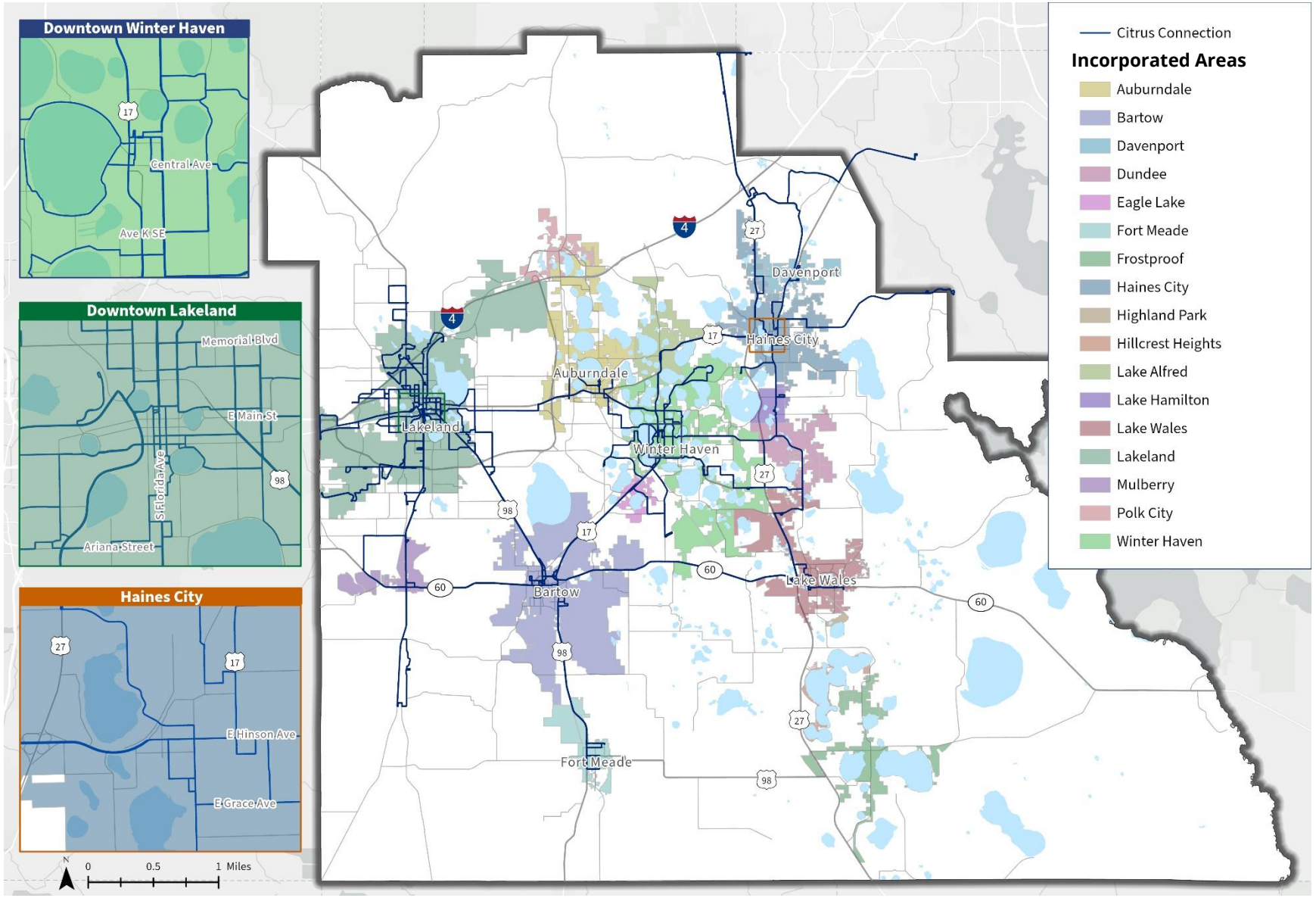
Located in central Florida, the TDP study area, Polk County, is undergoing significant growth. It is Florida's fourth largest county by size (1,798 square miles) and the ninth largest by population with 826,090 residents in 2024.[1] There are 17 incorporated areas including Lakeland, Davenport, Winter Haven, and Haines City among others (Map 1-1). Furthermore, it features many lakes and other attractions like Lake Kissimmee State Park and Legoland Florida Resort. Polk County directly borders ten other counties: Hillsborough, Pasco, Sumter, Lake, Manatee, Okeechobee, Orange, Osceola, Highlands, and Hardee and is well connected by major roadways such as I-4, US-17, US-98, and SR-60.

Transit services within the study area are provided by Citrus Connection, which operates local and regional fixed-route bus, paratransit, and local shuttle services.

*Source: Benesch*

[1] *2024 Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) Florida Estimates of Population*

## Map 1-1: Study Area




*Source: Polk County*

## Organization of This TDP

This report is organized into five sections, including this Introduction.

**Section 2** presents the **Public Outreach** activities, including a summary review of the outreach efforts completed and the associated findings. TDP outreach efforts were conducted in two phases and included stakeholder interviews, public input surveys, public workshops, discussion group workshops, and use of online platforms and tools.

**Section 3** summarizes the **Operating Context Evaluation** for transit services in Polk County. This includes a physical description of the study area, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics and trends that may impact transit services. Citrus Connection's existing services were also reviewed and assessed. A review of local, regional, state, and federal plans and documents is presented to identify and evaluate applicable federal and state policies, as well as local and regional community goals and objectives that relate to transit and mobility.

**Section 4** documents the **Land Use & Corridor Development Assessment**, which addresses local land use policies, urban design practices, and development patterns in Polk County. This section also includes a Corridor Assessment which integrates data and findings with input and direction from the community to identify priority corridors for improving transit in the next 10 years.

**Section 5** summarizes the **10-Year Operating & Capital Program** developed for Citrus Connection's transit service. This includes the recommended service and capital/technology/policy improvements and unfunded needs. It also includes a discussion of the capital and operating costs and revenue assumptions used. The improvements are prioritized and programmed into a phased 10-year implementation plan.

# Section 2. Public Outreach

Public involvement provides critical information for developing the 10-year transit needs in the community, including perceptions on and expectations for local and regional transit services. This section summarizes the public involvement process and activities conducted for the Citrus Connection TDP. Key findings from each also are analyzed and discussed.

Prior to initiating any outreach activities, Citrus Connection and the Polk TPO prepared a PIP to guide the public involvement process and activities to be undertaken during the TDP. The PIP was submitted for review and approval by FDOT District One prior to implementing the TDP outreach activities. As shown in Appendix A, the PIP includes a wide range of activities to provide numerous opportunities for involvement by the public and key stakeholders representing local and regional public or private agencies and organizations.

*Source: Benesch*

## Public Involvement Techniques

To engage a full range of community stakeholders and facilitate active participation during the Citrus Connection TDP process, outreach activities categorized as direct or indirect were used.

## TDP Outreach Overview

Multiple outreach techniques were used to ensure adequate opportunities for Citrus Connection's existing customers, community stakeholders, and the public to participate in the TDP development process. Table 2-1 summarizes the public involvement activities conducted and the scale of engagement.

**Table 2-1: TDP Outreach Participation Overview**

| Event | Date | Engaged |
|---|---|---|
| **Stakeholder Interviews** | September 2024 – January 2025 | 25 |
| **Discussion Groups** | | |
| Social Services/Job Access | October 29, 2024 | 9 |
| Business/Growth | October 30, 2024 | 12 |
| Customer | November 6, 2024 | 31 |
| **Open House Public Workshops** | | |
| Lakeland Public Library | November 6, 2024 | 74 |
| Winter Haven Downtown Terminal | June 17, 2025 | 55 |
| **Surveys** | | |
| Customer Experience | Summer 2024 | 410 |
| Bus Operator | September – October 2024 | 18 |
| Transit Needs | September – November 2024 | 357 |
| Transit Priority Feedback | June 2025 | 30 |
| Grassroots Outreach | October 2024 – August 2025 | 12 |
| **Other Outreach** | | |
| LRTP Outreach | June – August 2025 | 203 |
| Web and Social Media | September 2024 – August 2025 | 50 |
| Email and Other Outreach | September 2024 – August 2025 | 40 |
| **Total** | | **1,326** |

*Note: Customer Experience survey data collected by Citrus Connection.*

## *Review Team Meetings*

A Review Team was formed to guide the TDP process in a transparent manner, provide input during its development, and ensure a quality deliverable. The Review Team consisted of representatives from FDOT District One, the Polk TPO, Citrus Connection, CareerSource Polk, and the Polk County Office of Planning and Development. Three virtual meetings were held with the Review Team during the TDP update process:

- August 2024—This meeting kicked off the project and participants discussed the TDP goals and objectives, project tasks and deliverables, planned public involvement strategies, and the project schedule.
- March 2025—The Review Team discussed the public outreach efforts and the transit needs identified. Feedback regarding transit needs was collected and incorporated into the Schedule of Projects.
- August 2025—The Review Team discussed the prioritization of the schedule of projects and the funded plan.

*Source: Benesch*

## *Stakeholder Interviews*

Stakeholder interviews are one-on-one meetings for the purpose of gathering input from policy, agency, or community leaders regarding the future needs of Citrus Connection and transit needs in the community. This input enhances the understanding of local conditions for transit as assessed through the perceptions and attitudes of stakeholders representing members of the broader public. To gather this input, 25 stakeholders (as shown in Table 2-2) were contacted from September 2024 through January 2025.

### *Interview Methodology and Technique*

A uniform list of questions and discussion topics were discussed with each stakeholder (see Stakeholder Discussion Questions in Appendix A). The input received was reviewed and major themes identified and summarized. Overall, interviewees indicated a need for better transit connections in preparation for anticipated regional growth. They praised the staff and leadership of Citrus Connection and expressed a desire to see more funding for the agency.

**Table 2-2: Stakeholders**

| Name | Organization |
|---|---|
| **Nancy Daley** | Lake Alfred Mayor |
| **William Mutz** | Lakeland Mayor |
| **Nat Birdsong** | Winter Haven Mayor |
| **Sam Pennett** | Dundee Mayor |
| **Morris West** | Haines City Vice Mayor |
| **Omar Arroyo** | Haines City Mayor |
| **Jack Hilligoss** | Lake Wales Mayor |
| **Jeremy Clark** | City of Davenport Vice Mayor |
| **Dorthea Bogert** | Auburndale Mayor |
| **Trish Pfeiffer** | Bartow Mayor |
| **Brian Yates** | Winter Haven Mayor Pro Tem |
| **Bradley Dantzer** | Winter Haven Commissioner |
| **Keith Cowie** | Auburndale Vice Mayor |
| **L. Tracy Mercer** | Winter Haven Commissioner |
| **Mike Herr** | Bartow City Manager |
| **Kelly Callihan** | Davenport City Manager |
| **Tandra Davis** | Dundee Town Manager |
| **James Elensky** | Haines City City Manager |
| **Joseph Lesniewicz IV** | Representing Veterans |
| **Diane Durr** | Winter Haven Affordable Housing Manager |
| **Connie Miller** | Agency for Persons with Disabilities |
| **Chuck Barmby** | Lakeland Planning Manager |
| **Sean Byers** | Winter Haven Planning Manager |
| **Kris Hallstrand** | Lakeland Linder International Airport Director |

## Transit Today

- Population Increase—Stakeholders indicated that population growth is occurring throughout Polk County, but significant development and growth in eastern Polk County was highlighted. Stakeholders noted that Lakeland's population is expected to keep growing, accompanied by additional new office parks and medical facilities. Additionally, Winter Haven is experiencing high-density growth along major roadways.
- Community—While Citrus Connection should continue to attract new markets, it is necessary to serve people with low incomes, individuals with disabilities, seniors, veterans, and students.
- Community Awareness—Better outreach efforts and strategic marketing are needed. Stakeholders agreed that outside of existing customers, the public lacks knowledge about existing services.
- Citrus Connection's Staff—Stakeholders praised Citrus Connection staff for their leadership, vision, and recent improvements. Additionally, they acknowledged how responsive the agency is despite budget constraints.
- Traffic Congestion—Stakeholders highlighted traffic congestion as an existing issue expected to worsen without transit investments and the influx of new residents projected throughout the county.

## Where We Want to Go

- Regional Connections—Stakeholders highlighted the benefits of regional transit connections. Stakeholders agreed that regional connections would ideally be provided by rail but expressed interest in regional express bus routes between major activity centers as a goal for the next 10 years.
- New Connections and Services—Stakeholders indicated a need to connect to the Lakeland Airport that recently began commercial flights. Innovative strategies to provide mobility to residents and visitors throughout Polk County are needed. A few stakeholders mentioned microtransit for more rural areas. Stakeholders also suggested services like the Squeeze in downtown areas to quickly connect people to errands and restaurants. Additionally, stakeholders mentioned new connections to areas where population is increasing.
- Increased Frequency—Stakeholders agreed that increasing frequency on popular routes would attract new customers and increase the quality of service for existing customers.

- Upgraded Stations and Stops—More shelters and benches are needed to make using the system more appealing.

### How Do We Get There

- Funding—Stakeholders highlighted funding limitations and were open to additional funding mechanisms like sales taxes and impact fees that increased funding for transit, rather than reallocating from other essential departments' funding.
- Political and Popular Support—Some stakeholders expressed the desire to give the public the opportunity to vote on a local option sales tax. Greater advocacy by elected officials is needed. Stakeholders mentioned that the local population needs to see how investments will benefit them.
- Universal Access Program (UAP)—Stakeholders praised the program, which allows organizations to give employees or students access to Citrus Connection services, and hope to see more major employers and institutions participate.

*Source: Polk TPO*

## *Discussion Group Workshops*

Three discussion group workshops with stakeholders representing key focus areas for transit were held. The TDP project team coordinated to invite potential participants representing existing customers, social/public service agencies and the business/education perspective.

After a presentation to set the foundation for a discussion on transit needs and vision, the attendees participated in a guided discussion. During the roundtable discussions, participants reviewed existing services and explored future transit needs through guided questions designed to motivate and inspire conversation about the transit development process.

### *Social Services/Workforce Discussion Group*

Stakeholders from social service and workforce agencies who regularly engage with residents throughout Polk County were invited to a discussion group on October 29, 2024, to provide input on their client's transit needs.

Participants from the following agencies contributed to the discussion:

- Bartow Housing Authority
- Bartow Kiwanis Club
- Junior League of Lakeland
- Pace Center for Girls
- Peace River Center
- Polk County Health and Human Services
- United Way of Central Florida
- Winter Haven Housing Authority

Input obtained from the guided group discussion was categorized into key themes and summarized below.

#### Transit Today

- Part of the Community Fabric—Participants perceive Citrus Connection as a critical service to the community. They mentioned how transit is vital to connect customers to lifeline trips, such as health care and grocery shopping. Other participants mentioned that Citrus Connection is a big part of connecting the community. One participant praised Citrus Connection for altering a route to connect children to educational opportunities.
- Lack of Awareness—Participants feel there was a lack of awareness about routes and what services Citrus Connection offers. A participant mentioned that some people who may want to use Citrus Connection may not know how to access or navigate the system.
- Expanded Availability of Bus Passes—Although information on transit is available, participants mentioned that there is limited availability to buy passes. Some participants mentioned the

need for social service agencies and county departments to coordinate to ensure that passes are available to purchase at a variety of locations.

### Where We Want to Go

- Expanded Service—Participants want to see expanded evening service and expansion of routes.
- Regional Rail Options—Participants liked the idea of SunRail or Brightline services in Polk County, but it would be necessary to have direct connections to and from Lakeland, Auburndale, Winter Haven, and Haines City.

### How Do We Get There

- Extended Service Hours—Later service was indicated as the top need. One participant would like to see Citrus Connection operate 24 hours a day.
- Increasing Connectivity—While participants noted the importance of regional connectivity, most indicated improving connectivity within Polk County. Some participants mentioned providing park-and-rides in conjunction with regional service to reach events and medical services, such as the VA Hospital and Moffitt services.
- Funding—One participant mentioned that with the population increasing, Citrus Connection will be strained. Participants recommended coordinating with the regional economic development agency to foster relationships and increase public-private partnerships (PPP) and better coordination with larger employers.

## *Business/Growth Discussion Group*

The Business/Growth discussion group workshop was held on October 30, 2024, with business, education, and economic development leaders to gauge their input on existing and future transit needs in Polk County. Participants from the following agencies contributed to the discussion:

- Ameriprise Financial
- Central Florida Development Council
- City of Lakeland
- Community member
- Polk County School Board
- Webber International University

Information received and transit needs identified from workshop attendees include the following:

### Transit Today

- Citrus Connection is Needed—Participants agree Citrus Connection is a critical service that should serve everyone in the community and is helpful to connect customers to and from lifeline trips, such as education and work.

Participants also feel that Citrus Connection's materials are very helpful, functional, and aesthetically pleasing.

- Transit Bolsters the Economy—Participants see transit as an economic development driver and its importance to connecting people to major emerging job hubs. Some participants mentioned that transit will be important to support the county's population growth.
- Traffic Congestion is a Major Issue—Some participants mentioned they want Citrus Connection to be part of the solution to worsening traffic congestion, especially on already congested corridors like Florida Avenue and Bartow Road.

### Where We Want to Go

- Increased Service Options and Supply for Growth—Participants expressed a need to enhance mobility options to better serve the community and to address traffic congestion. They expressed that the current service has great reach, but more frequent service is needed. Some participants mentioned the need to review service schedules to align with school schedules for students who rely on the service.
- New Services—Participants mentioned that due to the rapid growth projected in the eastern part of the county, there is a need for service on US-27. There will also be a need for additional regional services to the east and west to improve connectivity. Furthermore, there is rapid growth in the Innovation District, adjacent to Florida Polytechnic University, with new medical facilities and centers. It will be critical to connect to this area as it develops.
- Premium Service—Some participants agreed that they would like to see premium service options like Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on busy and developed corridors, such as Florida Avenue.
- Increased Awareness—Participants suggested improving communications about Citrus Connection services to increase ridership after the public health emergency in 2020. It was mentioned that the MyStop app should be improved and better marketed as many people do not know about it.

### How Do We Get There

- Unique Service Area—Participants mentioned that Polk County is a large service area so different approaches should be applied. It was noted that for lower density areas flex service may be best, whereas fixed-route service may be best for denser areas.
- Supportive Infrastructure—Participants would like to see supportive infrastructure for BRT such as bus-only lanes and park-and-rides.

- Regional Connectivity—Participants felt that regional connectivity is needed for educational opportunities. They also noted the need for additional or enhanced regional connections to Hillsborough and Orange counties given strong commuting patterns.
- Community Awareness—Participants want to see more outreach to smaller community groups, such as faith-based entities, retirement communities, and homeowner associations. Additionally, these opportunities should be evaluated to ensure this information is distributed effectively.

### *Customer Discussion Group*

The Customer discussion group workshop was held in-person on November 6, 2024, with customers to gauge their input on transit needs in Polk County. Approximately 31 customers at the Lakeland Downtown Terminal gave their input on needed transit services, including the following:

- Extended service hours to at least 9:00 PM
- More frequent service
- Connections to Tampa and Orlando

*Source: Benesch*

## *Citrus Connection Customer Experience Survey*

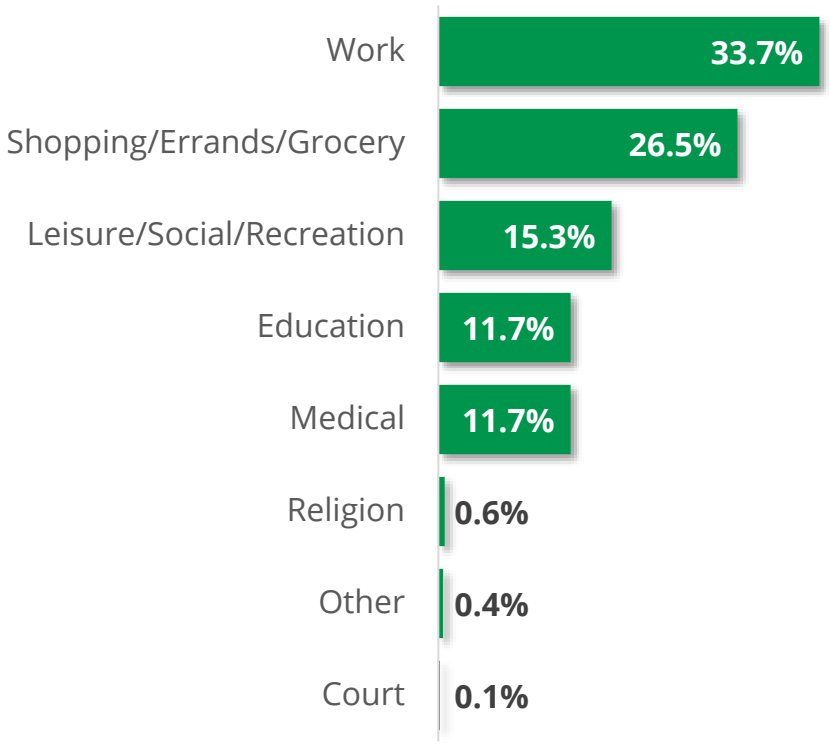
To gauge existing customers' perception of Citrus Connection services and future needs, customers were recently surveyed in-person by Citrus Connection. Throughout the process, 410 customers were surveyed while they were on the bus or waiting for a bus at various terminals and stations in Polk County. As part of the TDP, information from this recent customer experience survey was reviewed and summarized below.

Most customers rated Citrus Connection favorably and would recommend it to a friend or neighbor. Most customers do not own a vehicle and are frequent customers, with nearly half (47.3%) riding the bus five or more days a week.

### *Key Takeaways*

Most use Citrus Connection to go to work (33.7%). Shopping, errands, or groceries trips (26.5%) and leisure, social, or recreation activities (15.3%) were also common trip purposes (Figure 2-1).

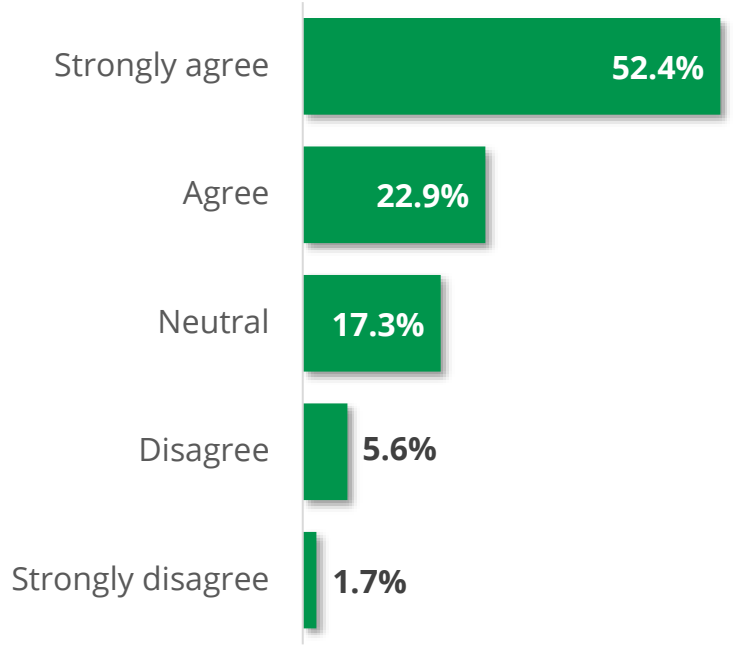
**Figure 2-1: What is your primary purpose of using transit?**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

Most customers (75.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that the frequency of the service is satisfactory, while only 7.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed, as shown in Figure 2-2.

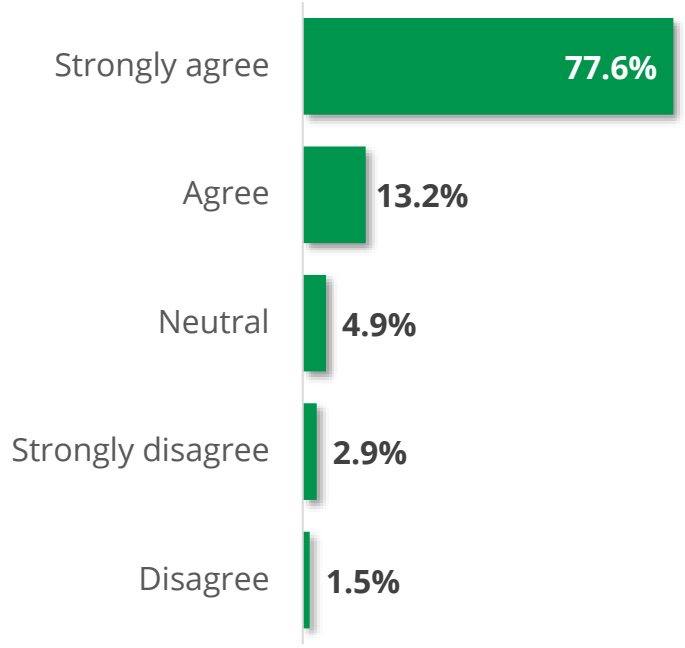
**Figure 2-2: The frequency of service (how often the buses come) is satisfactory.**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

Most customers (90.8%) strongly agreed or agreed that Citrus Connection services begin early enough in the morning. Figure 2-3 shows a marginal number strongly disagreed (2.9%) or disagreed (1.5%).

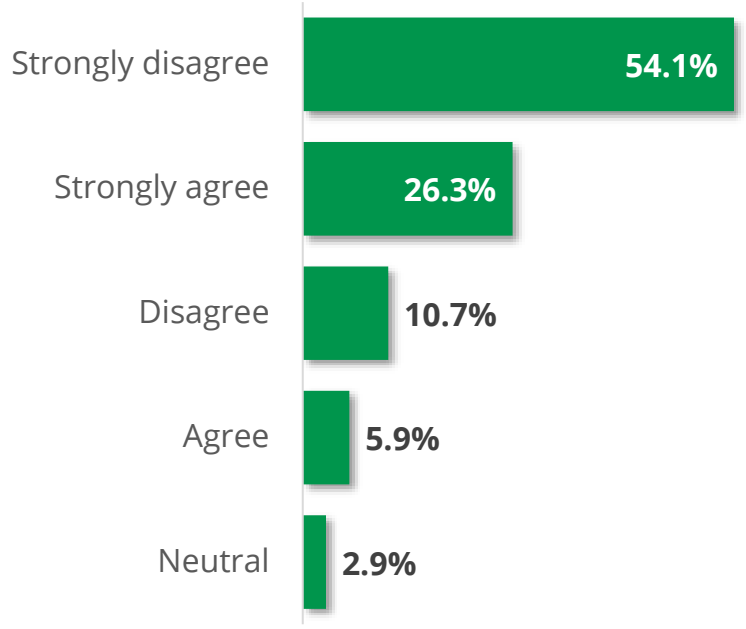
**Figure 2-3: Transit services begin early enough in the morning to meet my needs.**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

Figure 2-4 shows that most customers (54.1%) strongly disagreed that Citrus Connection services operate late enough, followed by 26.3% who strongly agreed that operating times are satisfactory.

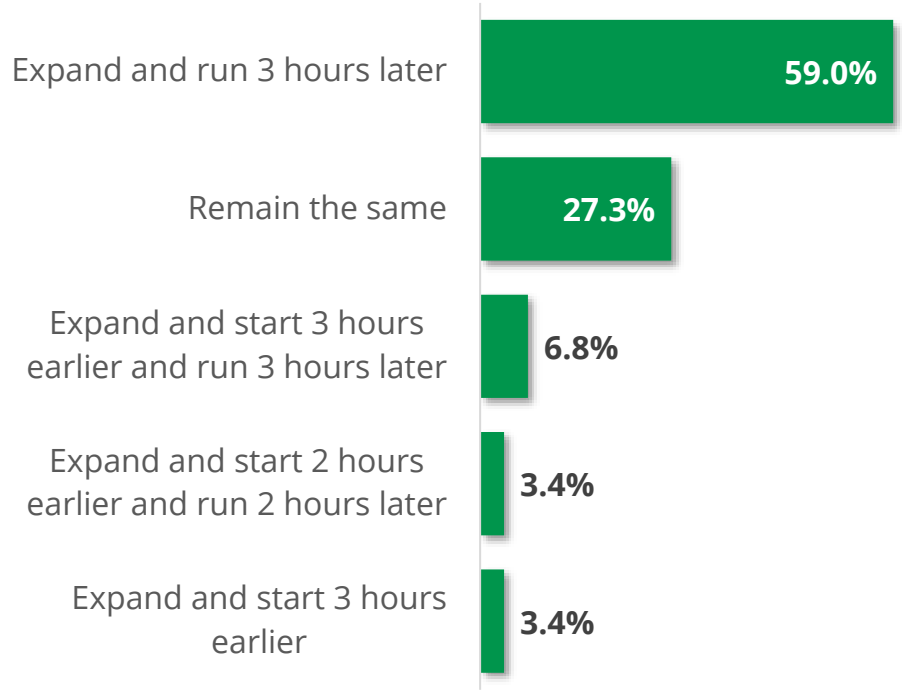
**Figure 2-4: Transit services continue to run late enough at night to meet my needs.**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

When asked about service hours, the top request was to run evening service three hours later (59.0%). Approximately 27.3% of customers would like service hours to remain the same, as shown in Figure 2-5. Other responses included expanding service hours by three hours earlier and later (6.8%), two hours earlier/later (3.4%), or starting three hours earlier (3.4%).

**Figure 2-5: I would like to see service hours:**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

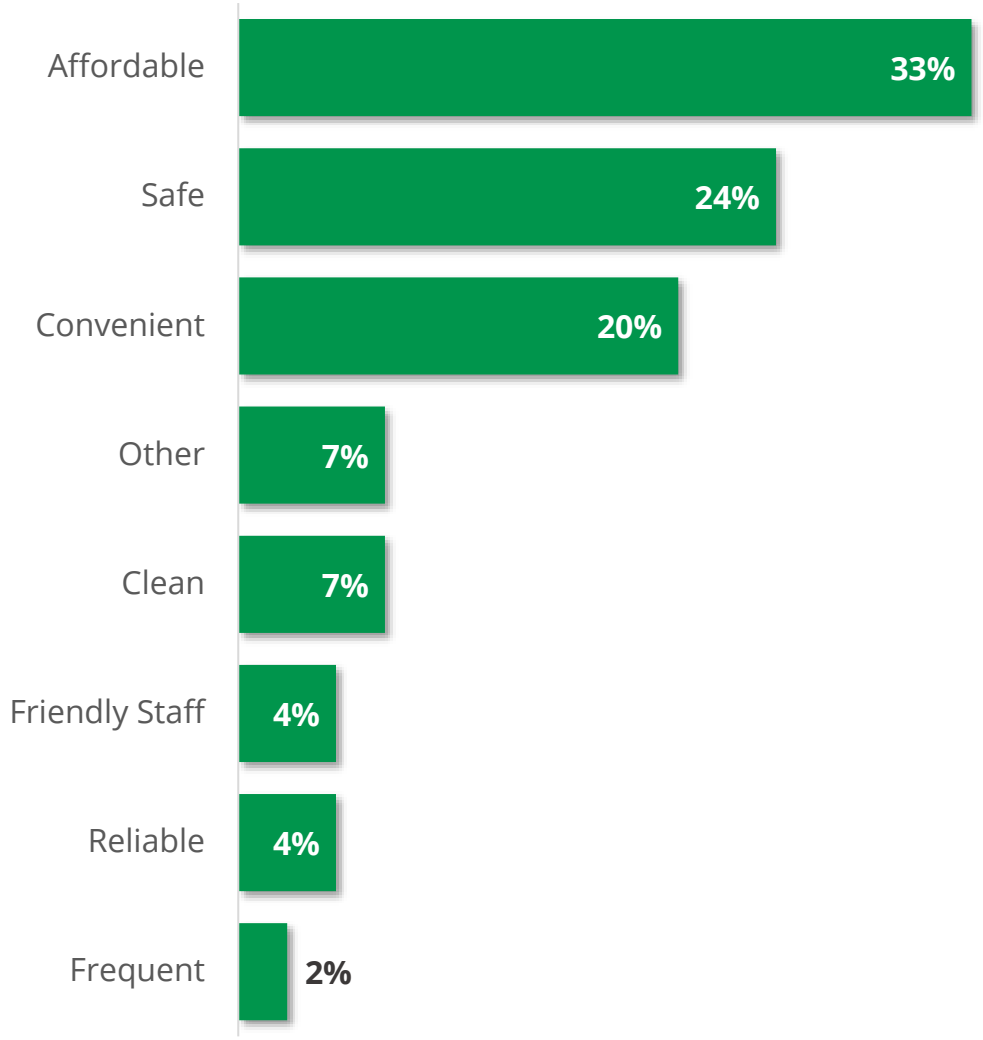
## *Bus Operator Survey*

Bus operators, as ambassadors of Citrus Connection, have ongoing contact with customers. This, plus their input on route-level and system operations from delivering the services, makes their input critical. As part of the TDP, 18 Citrus Connection bus operators were surveyed on existing services, future improvements, safety issues, and customer remarks.

Key operator input includes the following:

- The top benefits for customers are that the system is affordable, safe, and convenient (Figure 2-6).
- Customers want more frequent service, improved on time performance, expanded weekend service, and access to new destinations.
- Providing Wi-Fi on buses and prioritizing traffic signals for buses would improve service.
- Traffic congestion and other safety concerns are key issues.

**Figure 2-6: Bus Operator Survey | Top Positive Customer Comments**



## *Transit Needs Survey*

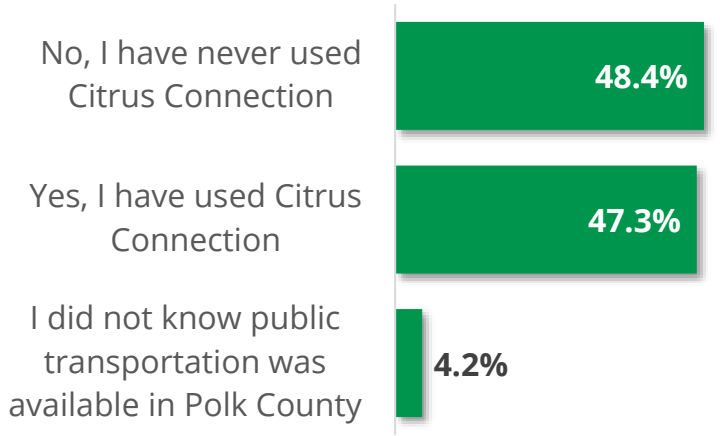
An online public survey was conducted from September to December 2024 via social media, email, the Citrus Connection website, the Polk TPO website, and electronic tablets at the TDP public workshop. An awareness campaign on the survey also occurred using online platforms and through the various TDP stakeholders.

Questions were asked about current services, willingness to use transit, and the community's transit needs. The survey was also designed to gauge public awareness of transit in Polk County and to gather socio-demographic information about respondents. A total of 357 surveys were completed, and the results are summarized below.

### *Survey Results*

Approximately half, 48.4%, of respondents had not used Citrus Connection, while 47.3% have. Another 4% were unaware that transit is available (Figure 2-7).

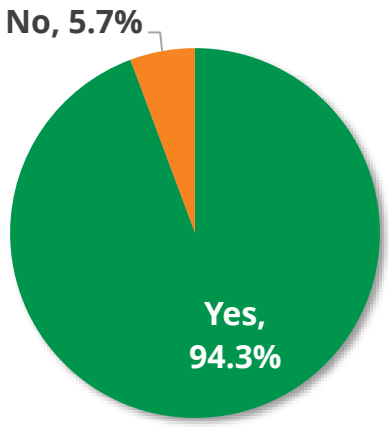
**Figure 2-7: Have you or a member of your household used Citrus Connection, the public transportation service in Polk County?**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

Most respondents (94.3%) agreed there is a need for improved transit services (Figure 2-8).

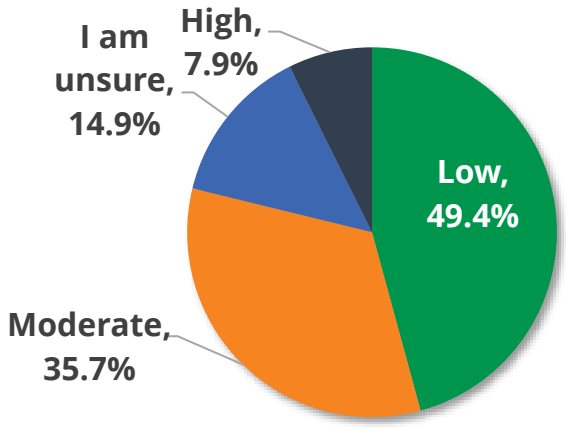
**Figure 2-8: Do you think there is a need for additional/improved transit services in Polk County?**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

Approximately half of the respondents agreed that awareness is low. A smaller group (35.7%) rated awareness as moderate, while 14.9% were unsure. Only 7.9% considered awareness to be high (Figure 2-9).

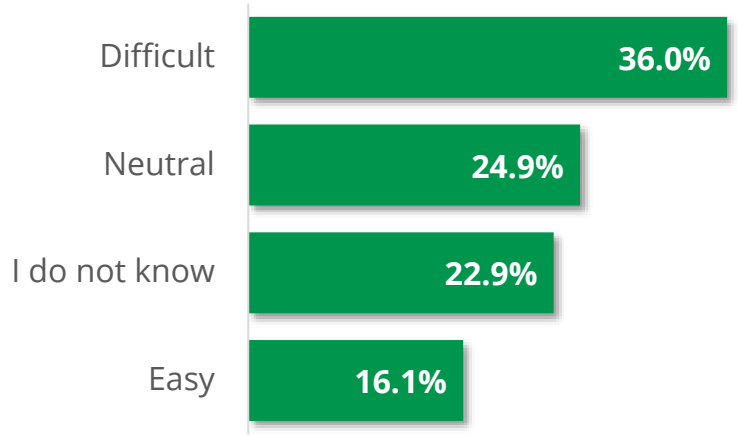
**Figure 2-9: How much awareness is there in Polk County about Citrus Connection's services?**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

Figure 2-10 shows that a significant percentage of respondents (56.2%) find access to a bus stop difficult. Another 38.9% expressed neutrality, indicating neither ease nor difficulty. Additionally, 35.8% stated they do not know, which may reflect a lack of familiarity with bus stop locations. Only 25.2% reported finding access easy.

**Figure 2-10: Please rate the ease of access to a Citrus Connection bus stop from your home or work.**

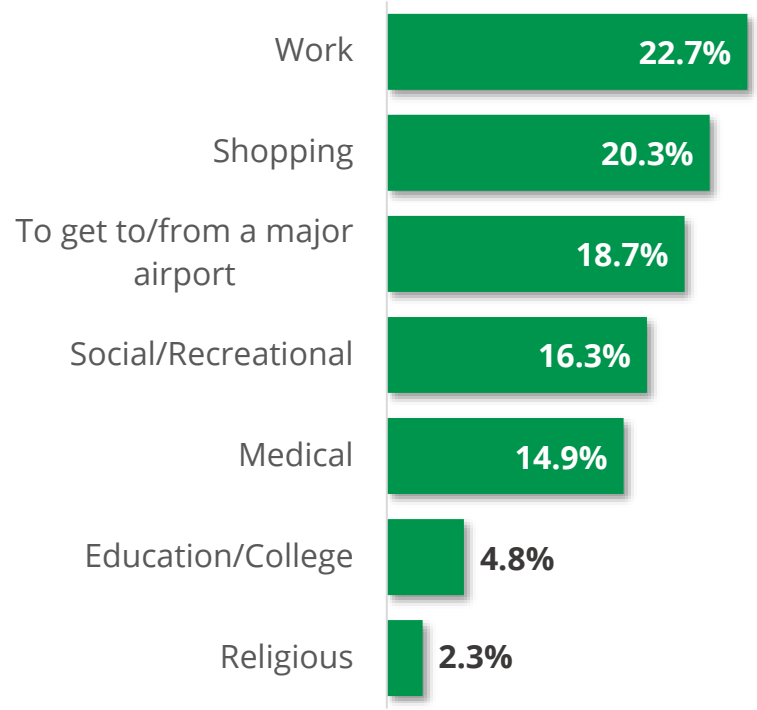



*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

Respondents were asked where they would go if they used transit or decided to use it in the future and could select up to three trip purposes. Work-related trips are the most popular choice (22.7%). Shopping trips (20.3%) and trips to or from major airports (18.7%) followed closely.

Other common trip purposes included social or recreational (16.3%) and medical (14.9%). Education or college trips (4.8%) and religious activities (2.3%) represent smaller proportions of desired trip purposes (Figure 2-11).

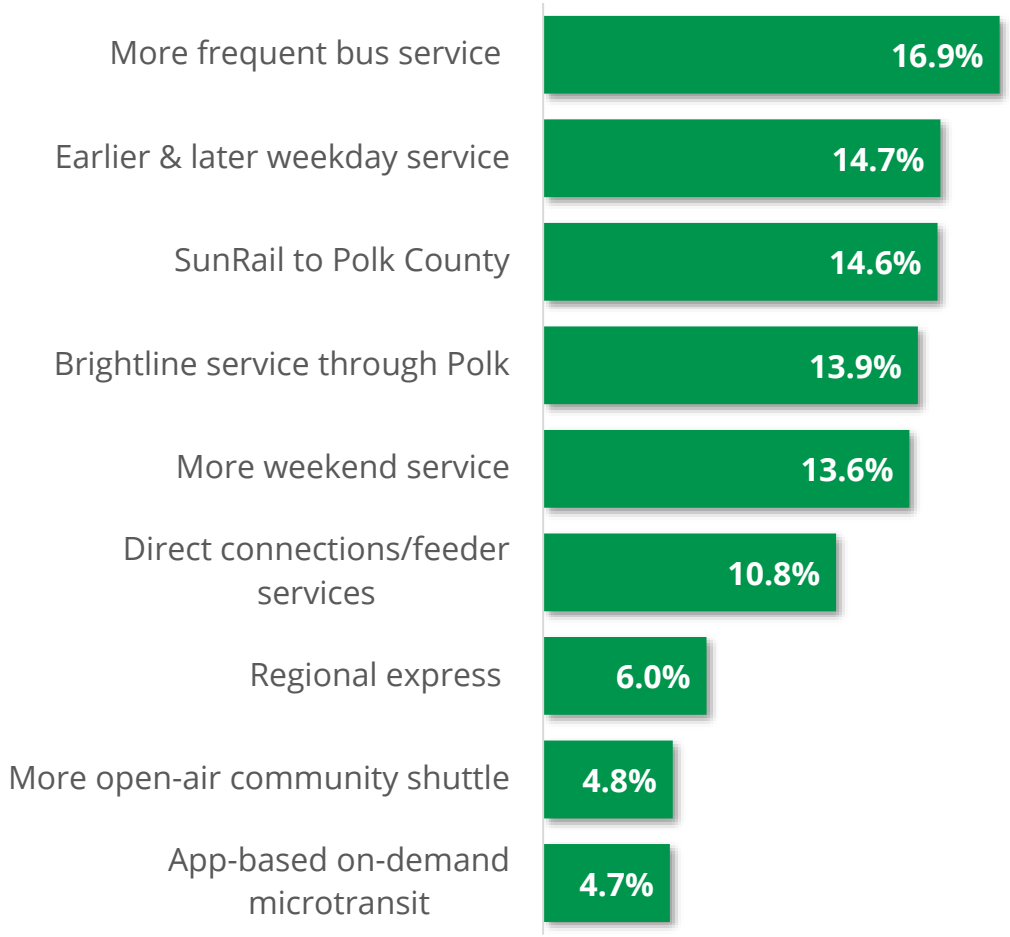
**Figure 2-11: If you use Citrus Connection's services now or decide to use them in the future, where would you go using it?**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

Survey respondents were asked to select the top three service improvements for the next 10 years. The top request was for more frequent bus service (16.9%), followed by a desire for earlier and later weekday service (14.7%). There was also strong support for introducing SunRail (14.6%) or Brightline service (13.9%) to Polk County, which would offer high-speed rail connectivity. Additionally, 13.6% of respondents would like more weekend service, and 10.8% support direct connections or feeder services to future rail stations. Figure 2-12 shows other well-received responses included regional express services (6.0%), open-air community shuttles (4.8%), and app-based on-demand microtransit (4.7%).

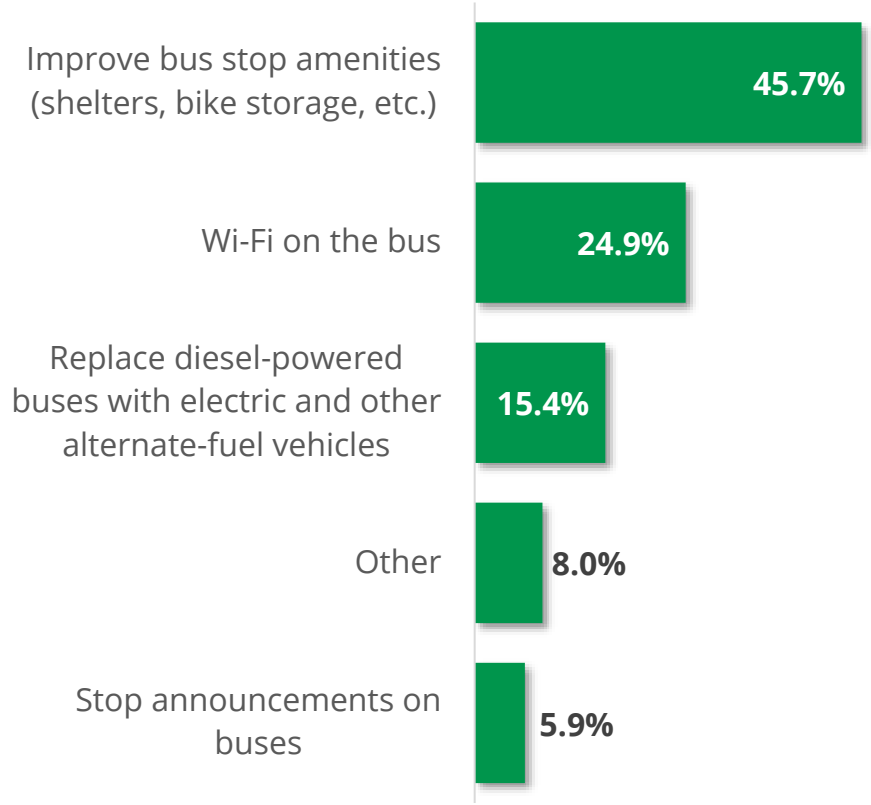
**Figure 2-12: What should Citrus Connection consider as top improvements for the next 10 years?**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

When asked about the top capital/technology improvement in the next 10 years, the most popular suggestion was to improve bus stop amenities (45.7%), emphasizing the need for more comfortable and user-friendly waiting areas. The second most common response (24.9%) was Wi-Fi on buses, indicating a desire for enhanced connectivity during commutes. Figure 2-13 shows support for replacing diesel-powered buses with more sustainable alternatives, with 15.4% endorsing this improvement. Other suggestions (8.0%) and the introduction of stop announcements on buses (5.9%) were also received favorably.

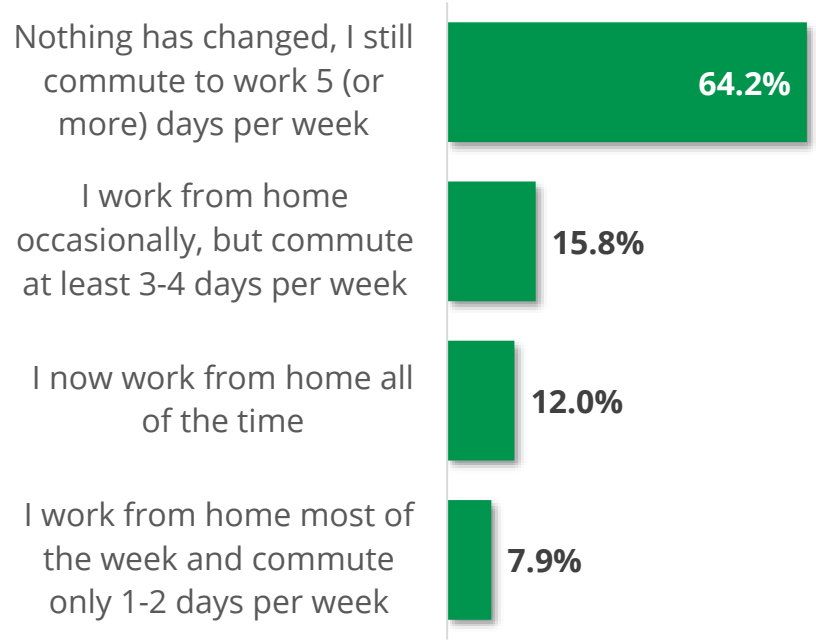
**Figure 2-13: What is your top capital/technology improvements for the next 10 years?**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

Regarding their commute, most respondents (64.2%) reported no changes since the 2020 public health emergency and they still commute to work five or more days per week. A smaller group (15.8%) work from home occasionally but still commute at least 3-4 days per week. About 12.0% now work from home full-time, reflecting a more permanent shift away from office-based work. Finally, 7.9% work from home most of the week commuting only 1-2 days (Figure 2-14). These findings suggest that while many individuals have returned to pre-pandemic commuting habits, remote work has persisted for a significant portion of the workforce.

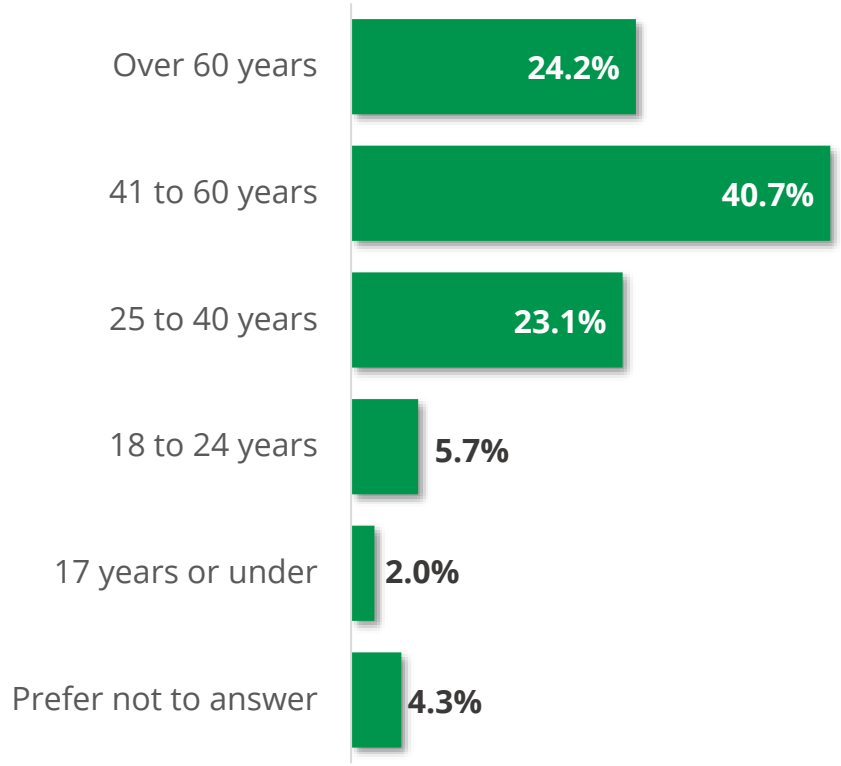
**Figure 2-14: If you are currently employed, has your work commute changed since the pandemic?**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

The largest group of respondents were between 41 to 60 years (40.7%). Other more frequent responses were from people over 60 years (24.2%) and 25 to 40 years (23.1%). Approximately 5.7% are 18 to 24 years and 2.0% respondents are 17 or under. Approximately 4.3% chose not to answer this question. These results suggest survey respondents who are primarily working age and may have specific transit needs and preferences (Figure 2-15).

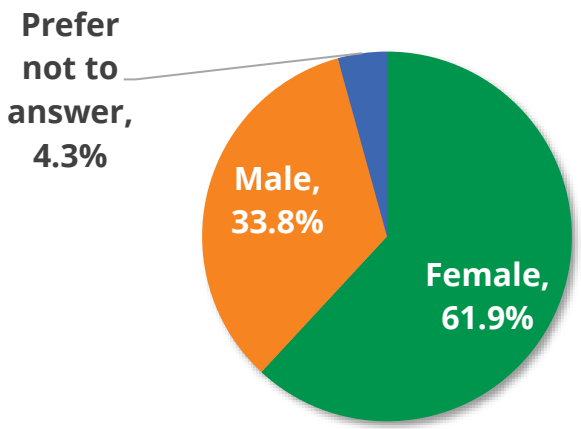
**Figure 2-15: Age**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

Most respondents (61.9%) were female while 33.8% are male. A small group of respondents, 4.3%, preferred not to answer (Figure 2-16).

**Figure 2-16: Gender**



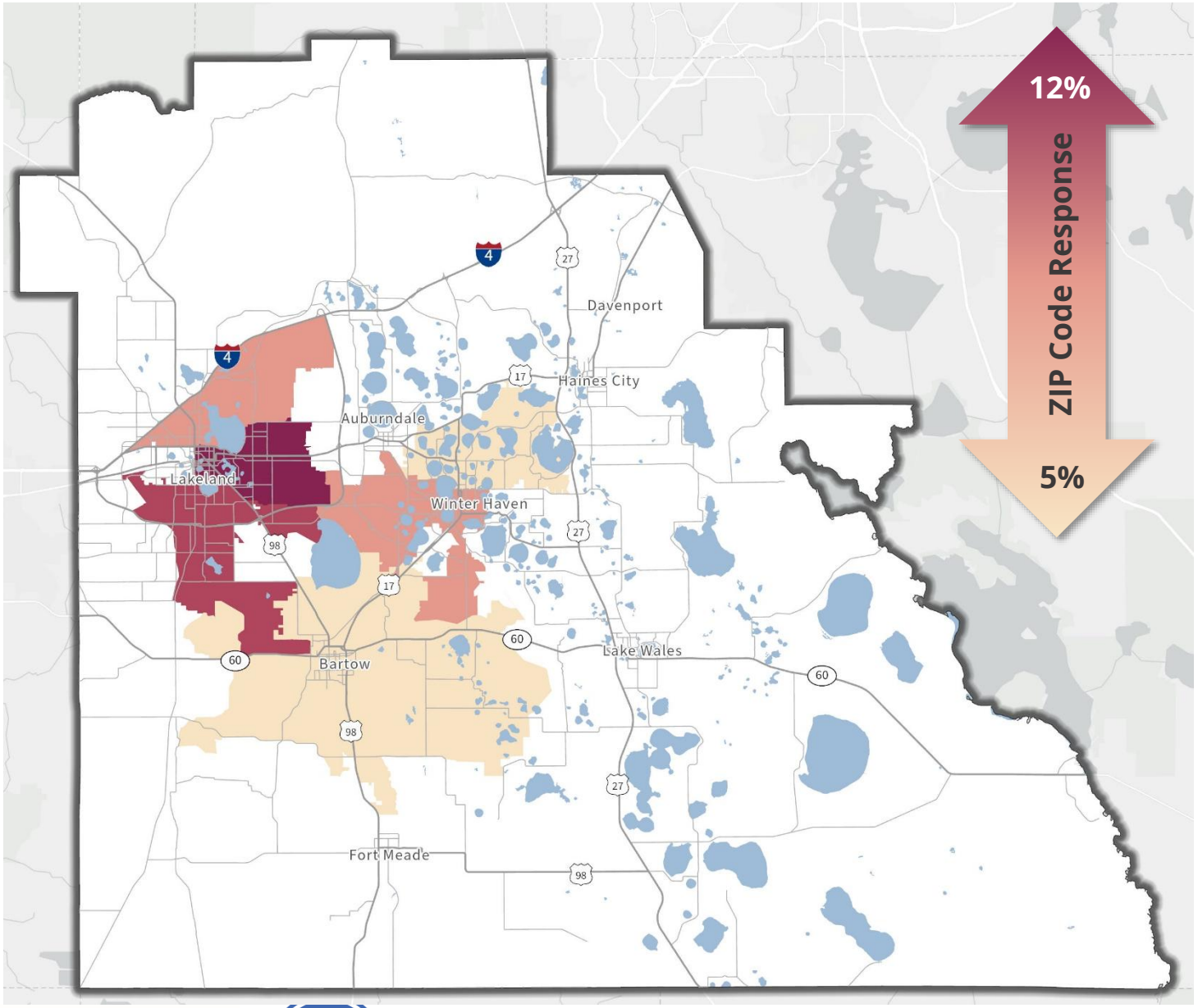

*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

Respondents were asked about their home ZIP codes. The 33801 ZIP code was the most reported (12%). followed by 33803 (9%), 33813 (7%), and 33805 (6%). Additional ZIP codes contributed between 1% and 5% of the sample. These results suggest some geographic representation across Polk County by this survey (Map 2-1).

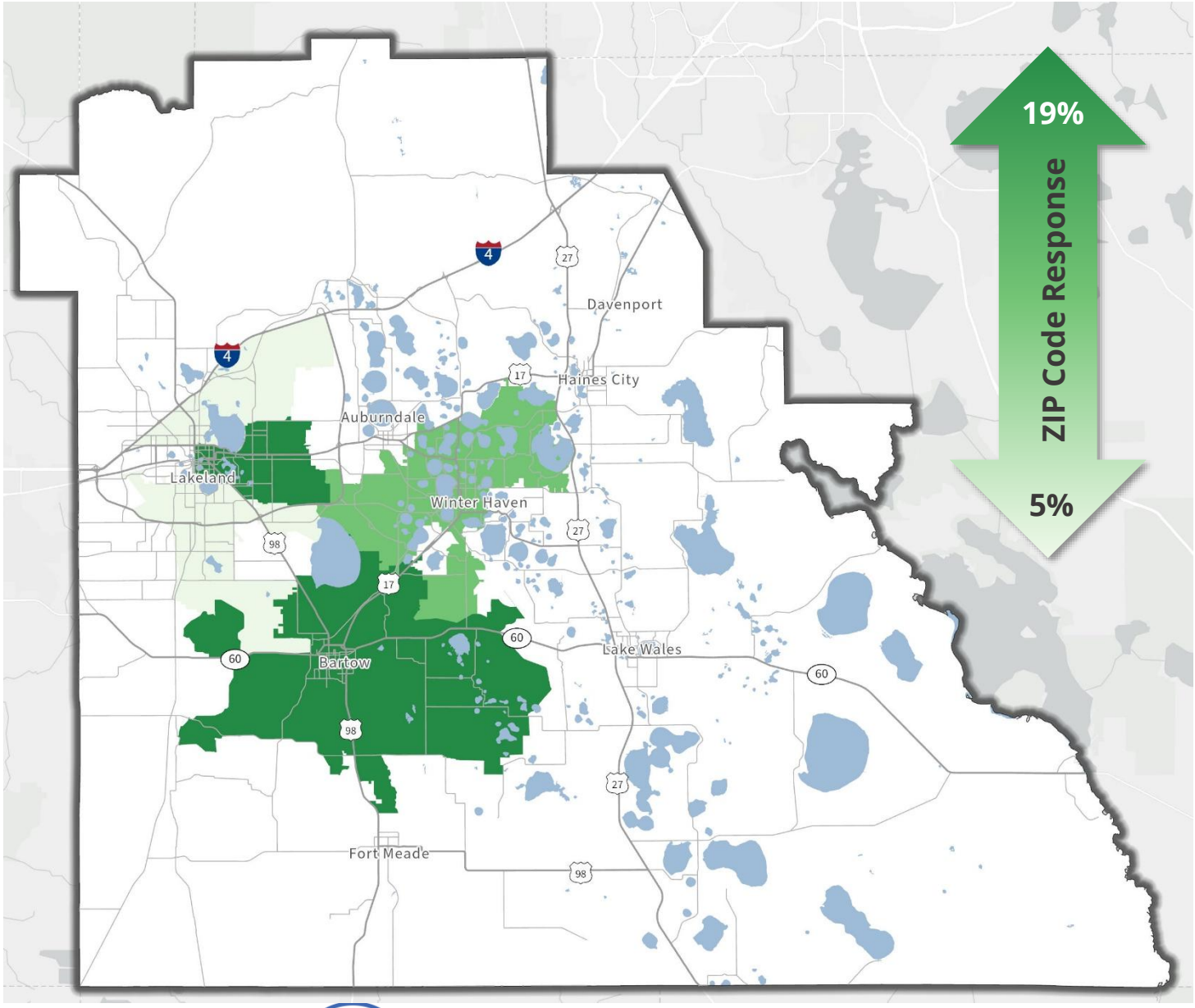
Respondents provided their work or school ZIP codes, with 33830 (19%) reported as the most common followed by 33801 (12%), 33880 (8%), 33881 (6%), and 33815 (5%) (Map 2-2).

Collectively the data indicate that the respondents' residences and workplaces/schools are concentrated in established places such as Lakeland, Bartow, and Winter Haven.

## Map 2-1: Home ZIP Codes

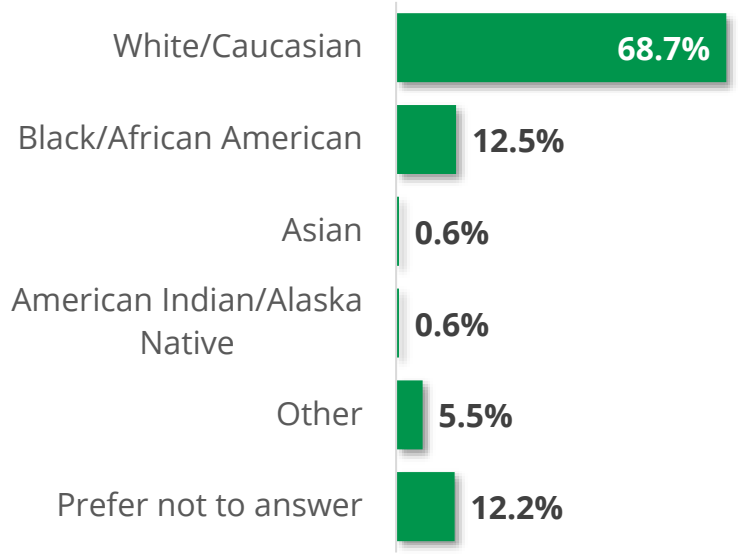


## Map 2-2: Work/ School ZIP Codes



Approximately 68.7% of respondents identified as White/Caucasian. A smaller but notable group, 12.5%, identified as Black/African American, while another 12.2% preferred not to disclose their race. Other represented races include Other (5.5%) and American Indian/Alaska Native or Asian, 0.6% respectively (Figure 2-17).

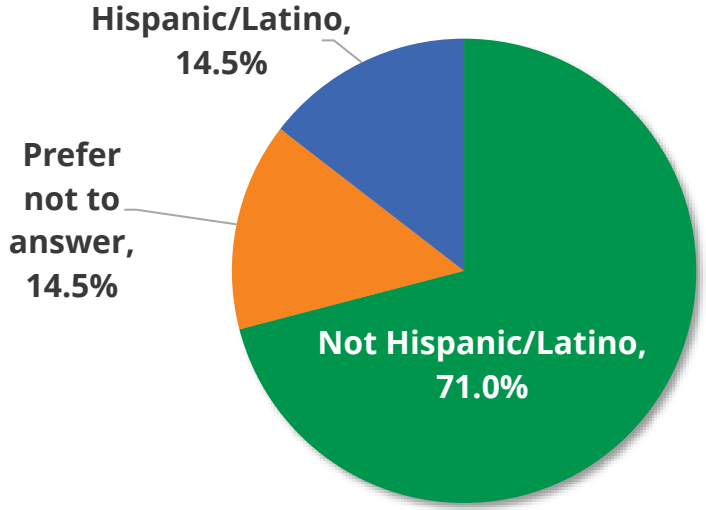
**Figure 2-17: Race**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

When asked about their Hispanic/Latino ethnicity, most respondents, 71.0%, did not identify as Hispanic/Latino. In contrast, 14.5% did identify as Hispanic/Latino, while the remaining 14.5% preferred not to answer (Figure 2-18).

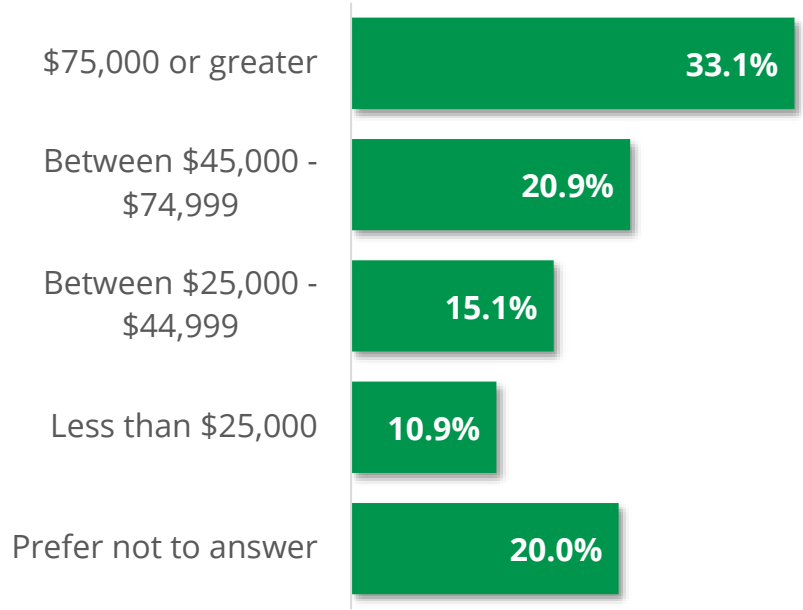
**Figure 2-18: Hispanic/Latino**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

When asked about their 2023 household income, approximately 26% reported incomes less than $45,000. Approximately 33.1% of respondents reported earning $75,000 or greater. Another 20.9% reported their income to be between $45,000 and $74,999, while 15.1% indicated an income between $25,000 and $44,999. A smaller portion, 10.9% reported earning less than $25,000, and 20.0% preferred not to disclose their income (Figure 2-19).

**Figure 2-19: Total household income for 2023**




*Note: Due to rounding, totals may not add up to 100%.*

*Source: Benesch*

### *Transit Priority Feedback*

A transit priority feedback form was brought to the second public workshop in June 2025. The feedback form asked workshop participants about transit usage, trip purpose, and to rank transit priorities.

All participants or a member of their household had used transit and the top trip purposes were shopping, work, and social/recreational trips.

Participants' top three priorities are later bus service, rapid transit on US-98 and Florida Avenue, and a bus every 30 minutes on major corridors (Figure 2-20).

This feedback assisted with prioritization in service improvement.

**Figure 2-20: Transit Priorities Feedback Form Ranked**

1. **Later bus service hours**
2. **Rapid transit on US-98 & Florida Avenue (bus every 15 minutes or less)**
3. **Bus every 30-minutes on major corridors**
4. **Peak-hour commuter express to SunRail stations via I-4 and US-27**
5. **More weekend service**
6. **SunRail Stations in Haines City & Lakeland**
7. **Regional bus connection to Tampa**
8. **Connection to Lakeland Airport**
9. **App-Based Microtransit service**

## *Public Workshops*

As part of the TDP public involvement process to determine how Citrus Connection should improve its service and to identify specific and additional service and capital needs, an open house public workshop was held. The focus was to understand participants' views about Citrus Connection and how to make transit a more viable travel alternative. The Review Team members, stakeholders, and discussion group participants were invited to attend.

### *Phase I*

The Phase I public workshop was held outside at the Lakeland Public Library in Lakeland from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM on November 6, 2024.

The workshop was attended by 74 participants who indicated their top needs are extended service hours, weekend service, and multiple fare options. In addition to various display boards and feedback stations, an interactive exercise was conducted. When participants were asked during the activity to identify if they would rather have a longer walk to a bus stop with a shorter trip or a shorter walk with more stops making a longer trip, all that participated in the activity indicated that they would rather have a longer walk with a shorter trip. Additionally, most participants preferred high-frequency service more than an expanded-service area footprint although equal participants felt neutral and wanted an expanded service area.

Source: Benesch

*Phase II*

The Phase II public workshop was held at the Winter Haven Downtown Terminal on June 17, 2025 from 9:00 AM to 11:00 AM and attended by 55 participants.

Participants viewed the display boards and materials showing existing service information and the 2035 Needs Plan. Feedback forms were also available in print to gather information on participants' priorities.

Participants mentioned the need to extend service span and improve frequency to increase connectivity throughout Polk County.

*Source: Benesch*

## *Grassroots Outreach*

In addition to the planned TDP public outreach events, TPO staff participated in grassroots events to promote the TDP. They raised awareness about the public input surveys, public workshops, and other TDP outreach efforts, while also attempting to obtain input from those attending.

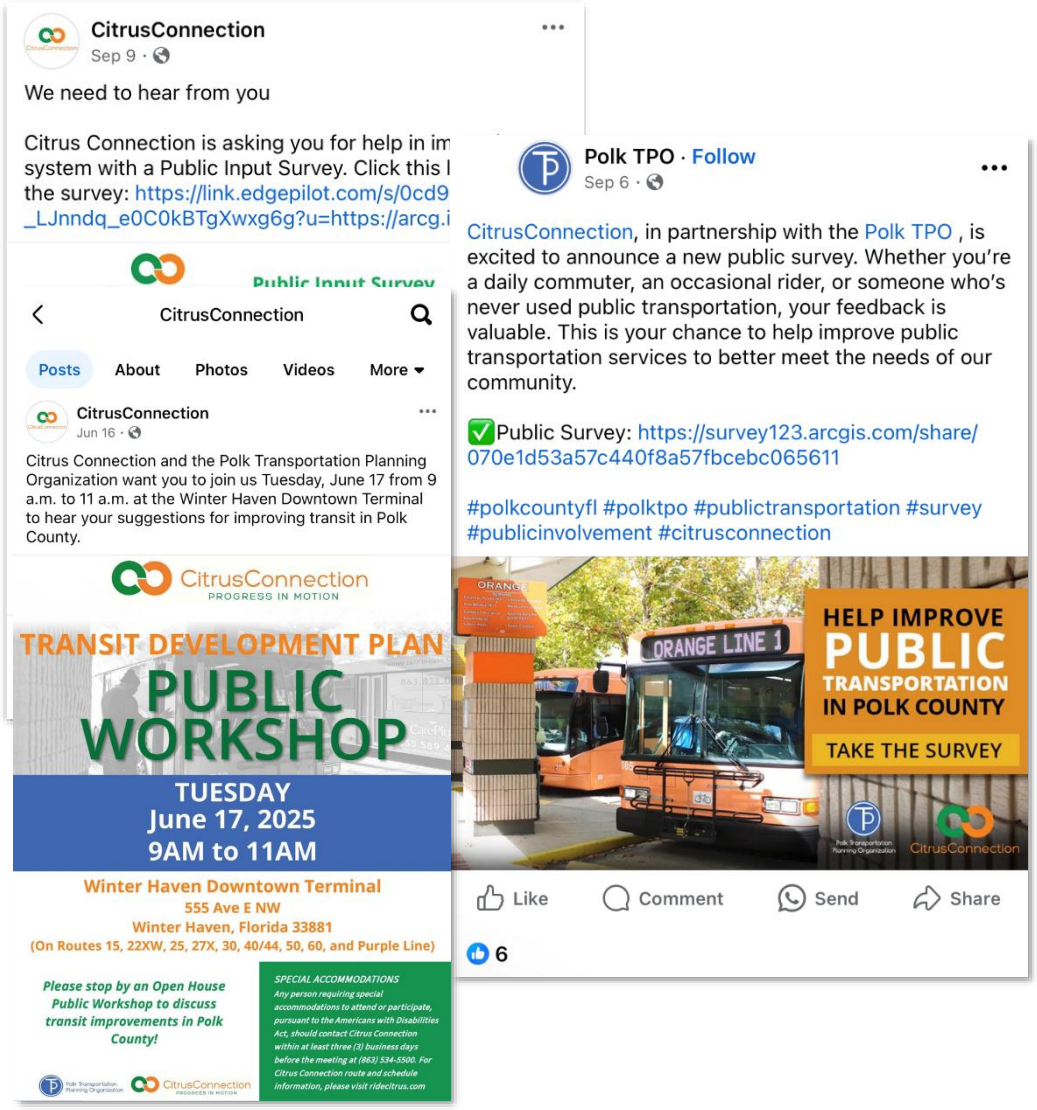
The Polk TPO staff participated in Bartow's Friday Fest on Friday, October 18, 2024. Staff engaged 12 people to discuss FDOT's Mobility Week and to inform the public about Citrus Connection.

*Source: Polk TPO*

## *Social Media*

Several indirect outreach methods were also used to educate and inform the public about the TDP process.

Advertisements and content for customers and the public informed on the latest TDP outreach events and updates were also posted on the Citrus Connection social media pages. Additionally, Citrus Connection and the TPO websites encouraged the public to take TDP surveys and attend the workshops.



## *Email and Other Outreach*

Numerous emails with information about the online survey, upcoming public workshops, and the TDP development process were used to engage and encourage public participation. Stakeholders and discussion group members were sent email notices and reminders for upcoming events such as the public workshops and encouraged to distribute the survey and information to other interested parties. The following are different email lists that the information was distributed and shared to:

- Polk Gateway—Internal Polk County email
- Adviser Network—Polk Vision email listserv
- News Channel 8 Event Calendar

Transit Public Survey on Polk Gateway (intranet), --9-16-2024

## TDP-LRTP Planning Process Coordination

Per the 2024 TDP Rule requirement concerning coordination with the TPO's planning process, close coordination with the ongoing Polk TPO's 2050 LRTP occurred.

To maximize coordination and financial resources for the TDP, the project team engaged TPO staff throughout the TDP to feed the short-term transit needs into the LRTP. Additionally, the TDP project team coordinated with TPO staff to prepare for and support LRTP workshops.

Furthermore, this coordination includes information sharing in other areas/steps of the TDP-LRTP process as discussed below.

- Data/Analysis—Coordination on baseline year and future year data so the TDP utilizes any readily available data from the LRTP on the multimodal system deficiencies identified considering land use, state and local transportation plans, other governmental actions and policies, and socioeconomic trends. The TDP team has coordinated with TPO staff to incorporate LRTP data.
- LRTP Goals & Plan Consistency—There was also consistency between the two plans on the short-term transit improvements/strategies. The TPO plans to use the service, capital, technology, and policy needs in the 10-year TDP to guide transit-related goals and objectives in its LRTP.

### *LRTP Virtual Workshop*

The TDP consultant team attended the first Envision 2050 LRTP workshop on June 20, 2025, at 12:00 PM. The focus was to update the public on progress and present information, including transit, and answer submitted questions.

## Other Agency Coordination

Several key agencies were also involved in various capacities in the development of this TDP major update. As required by Section 341.052, F.S., comments were solicited from local and regional workforce boards established under Chapter 445, F.S.

In addition, FDOT District One, the Polk County Comprehensive Planning Department, local/regional workforce board, and the Polk TPO were advised of all public meetings where the draft TDP was presented or discussed.

# Section 3. Operating Context Evaluation

This section reviews the study area context to understand the conditions and potential influencing factors in which Citrus Connection operates. This information provides the foundation upon which to review or analyze trends and helps identify areas of opportunity for development of future modified, enhanced, and/or expanded transit services. The following topics are discussed in this section:

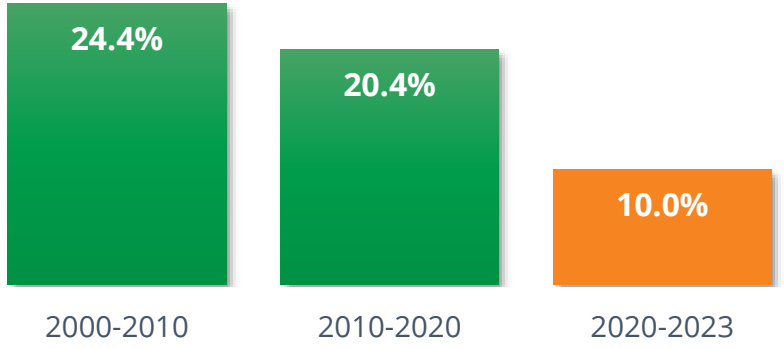
- First, a review of **Demographics** summarizes Polk County's population characteristics, including growth trends, age distribution, household socioeconomic composition, travel behavior, roadway and traffic conditions, key trip attractors, and tourism.
- The **Existing Transit Service Evaluation** describes the extent of coverage, frequency, and connectivity, as well as recent ridership trends and system performance. Furthermore, it includes trend and peer analyses to assist the understanding of strengths and opportunities for Citrus Connection.
- **Transit Demand Assessments** were conducted to bolster the understanding of the operating environment. These include the Transit Accessibility Analysis, which evaluates how easily customers can reach destinations using existing services. It also explores discretionary and traditional markets through two assessments based on density and latent demand.
- The **Relationship to Plans Review** assists in understanding how, at the local, regional, state, and federal levels, Citrus Connection can identify opportunities for coordination, anticipate policy conflicts, and highlights initiatives to improve service delivery and operations. This assessment also considered key plans and studies.

# Demographics & Travel Demand Factors

## *Population Trends*

Higher population density can be a key indicator of a healthy transit market. Areas with high population density often include land uses and infrastructure that promote transit use and multimodal activity. According to estimates from the University of Florida Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR), between 2000-2023, Polk County grew by 64.8%. Since 2020, the population growth (10.0%) has exceeded the previous decade's pace (Figure 3-1).

**Figure 3-1: Population Growth | 2000-2023**



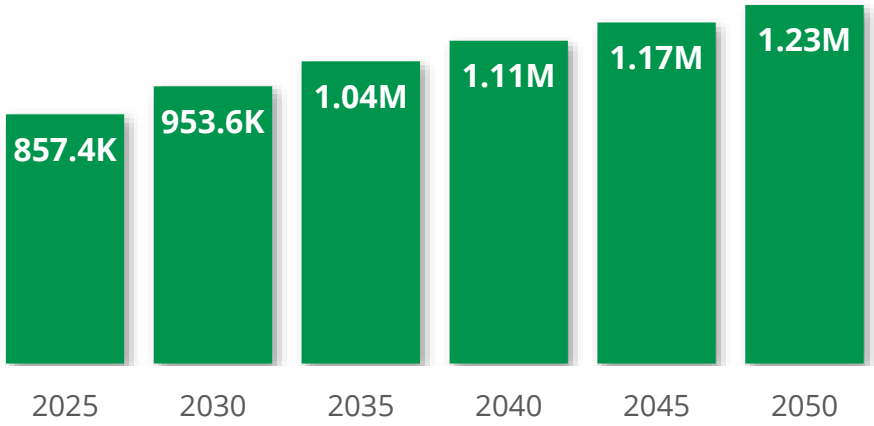

*Source: BEBR*

## *Population Projections*

BEBR estimates that Polk County's population growth will continue, surpassing 1 million residents in 2034 and reaching 1.23 million by 2050. Polk County's population is expected to grow 11% between 2025 and 2030, as shown in Figure 3-2.

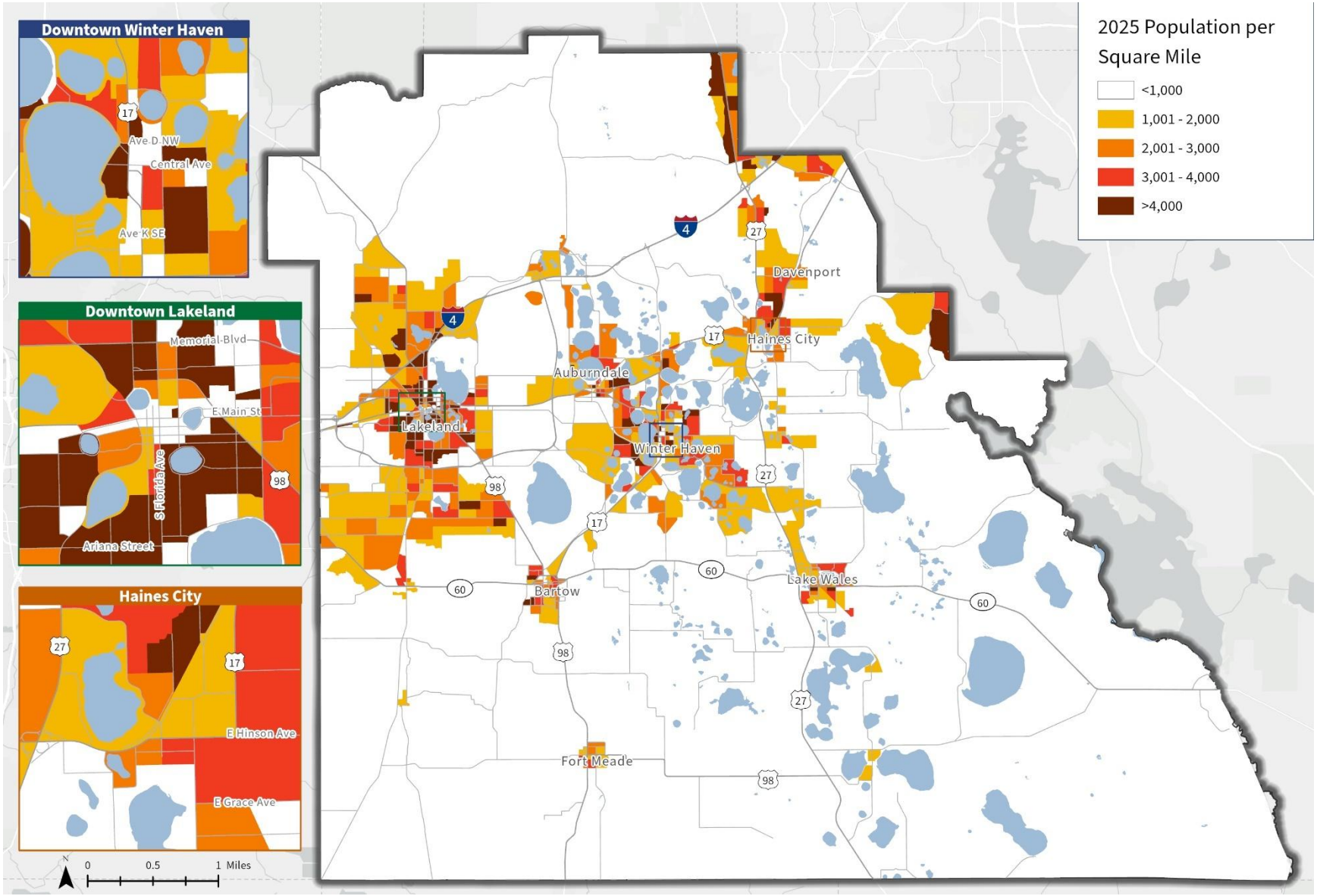
Socioeconomic data forecasts by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ) developed for the Polk TPO's 2050 Population and Employment Forecast were used to examine the growth in population density. Map 3-1 shows existing high population density is concentrated in downtown Lakeland, Winter Haven, and along major corridors. In Map 3-2, parts of Lake Wales, downtown Winter Haven, and Haines City are expected to see density growth to more than 4,000 people per square mile.

**Figure 3-2: Population Projections | 2025-2050**



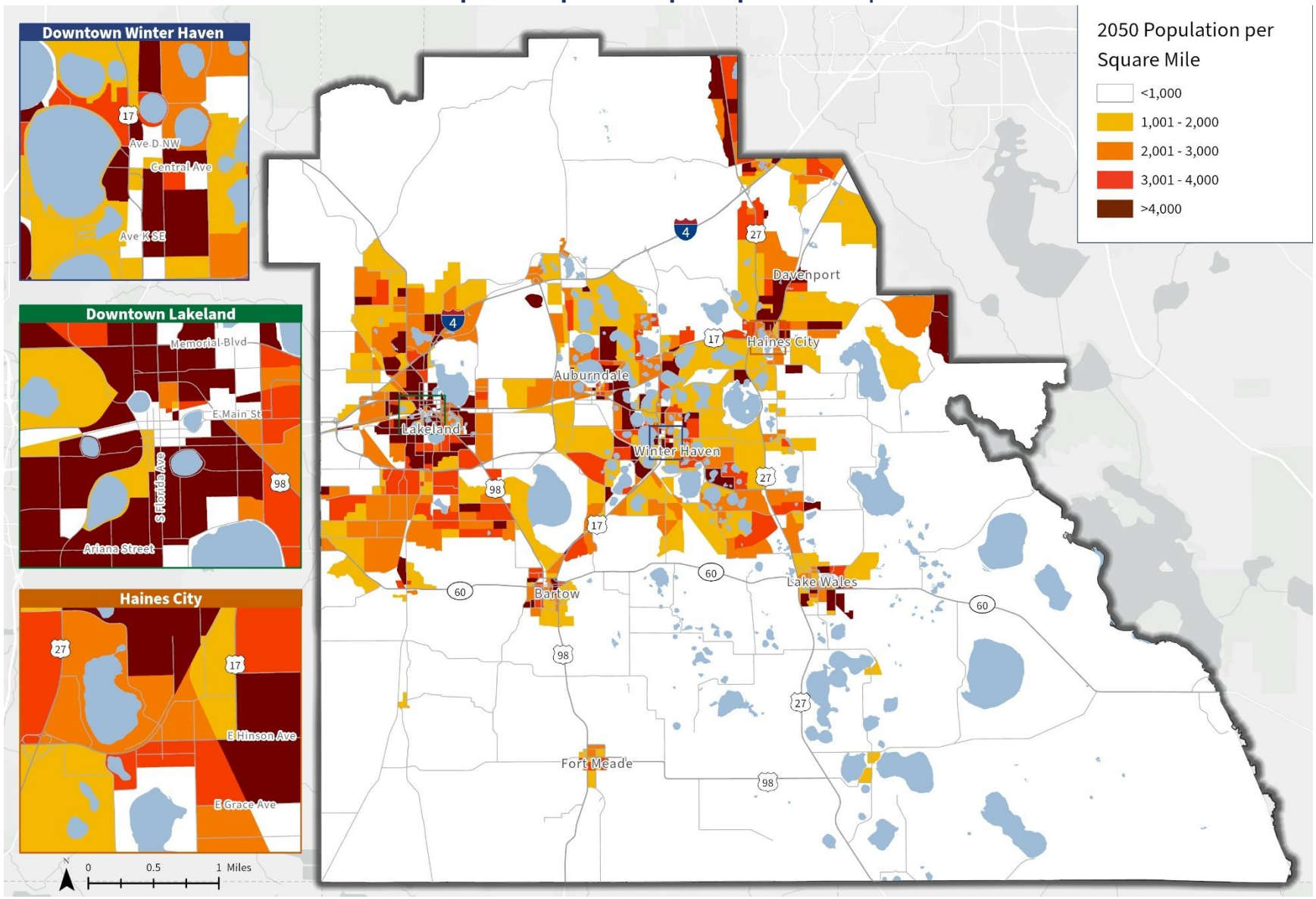

*Source: BEBR*

## Map 3-1: Population per Square Mile | 2025




*Source: Polk TPO's 2050 Population and Employment Forecast*

## Map 3-2: Population per Square Mile | 2050

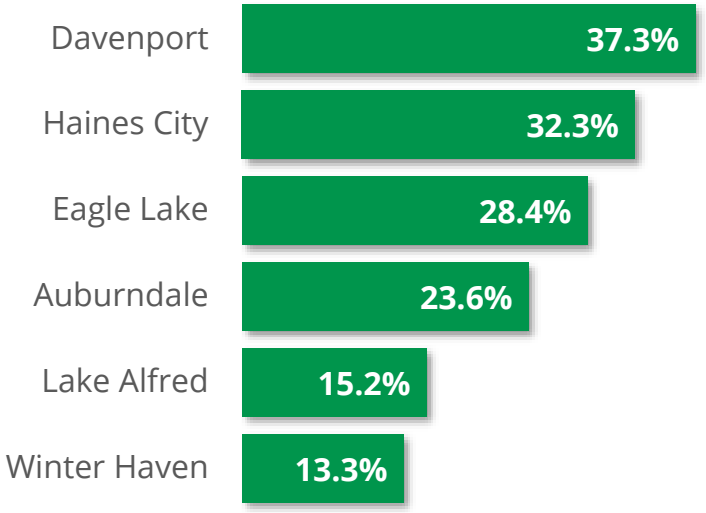



*Source: Polk TPO's 2050 Population and Employment Forecast*

*Incorporated Areas*

Polk County has 17 incorporated areas, and the populations of nearly all have grown since 2020 (Table 3-1). From 2020 to 2023, Davenport and Haines City experienced the highest growth, 37.3% and 32.3%, respectively followed by Eagle Lake, Auburndale, Lake Alfred, and Winter Haven (Figure 3-3).

**Figure 3-3: Top Municipality Population Growth | 2020-2023**




*Source: BEBR*

**Table 3-1: Municipality Population Growth | 2020-2023**

| Municipality | Growth (2020-2023) |
|---|---|
| **Davenport** | 37.3% |
| **Haines City** | 32.3% |
| **Eagle Lake** | 28.4% |
| **Auburndale** | 23.6% |
| **Lake Alfred** | 15.2% |
| **Winter Haven** | 13.3% |
| **Mulberry** | 9.9% |
| **Polk City** | 9.6% |
| **Lakeland** | 8.3% |
| **Unincorporated Polk County** | 8.2% |
| **Dundee** | 8.0% |
| **Lake Wales** | 6.3% |
| **Frostproof** | 5.3% |
| **Bartow** | 3.4% |
| **Lake Hamilton** | 2.2% |
| **Highland Park** | 0.0% |
| **Hillcrest Heights** | -1.2% |
| **Fort Meade** | -1.8% |

*Source: BEBR*

## *Age Distribution*

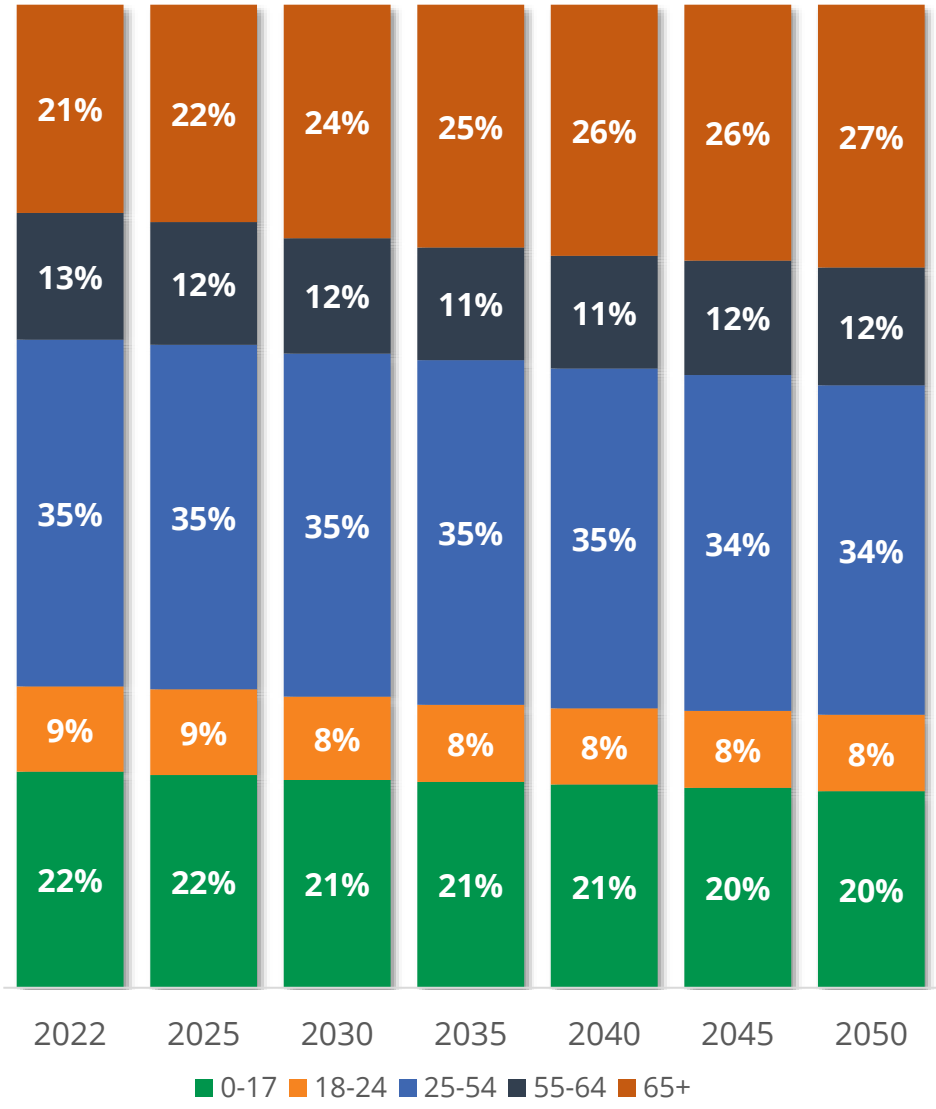
Age can affect individual transportation preferences and needs. Millennials and Generation Z tend to drive less and desire more transportation choices compared to earlier generations. Older adults can become more mobility limited with age due to physical or cognitive impairments and are a population group that tends to rely more on transit.

Polk County's population is stratified across age groups and, in 2022, had a median age of 39.8 years.

According to American Public Transportation Association (APTA), almost 80% of transit riders are between the ages of 25 and 50. Figure 3-4 shows that the proportion of Polk County residents who are of typical working age (18-64) will decline marginally by 2050 (-4%). Furthermore, by 2035, one in four residents will be 65 years or older.

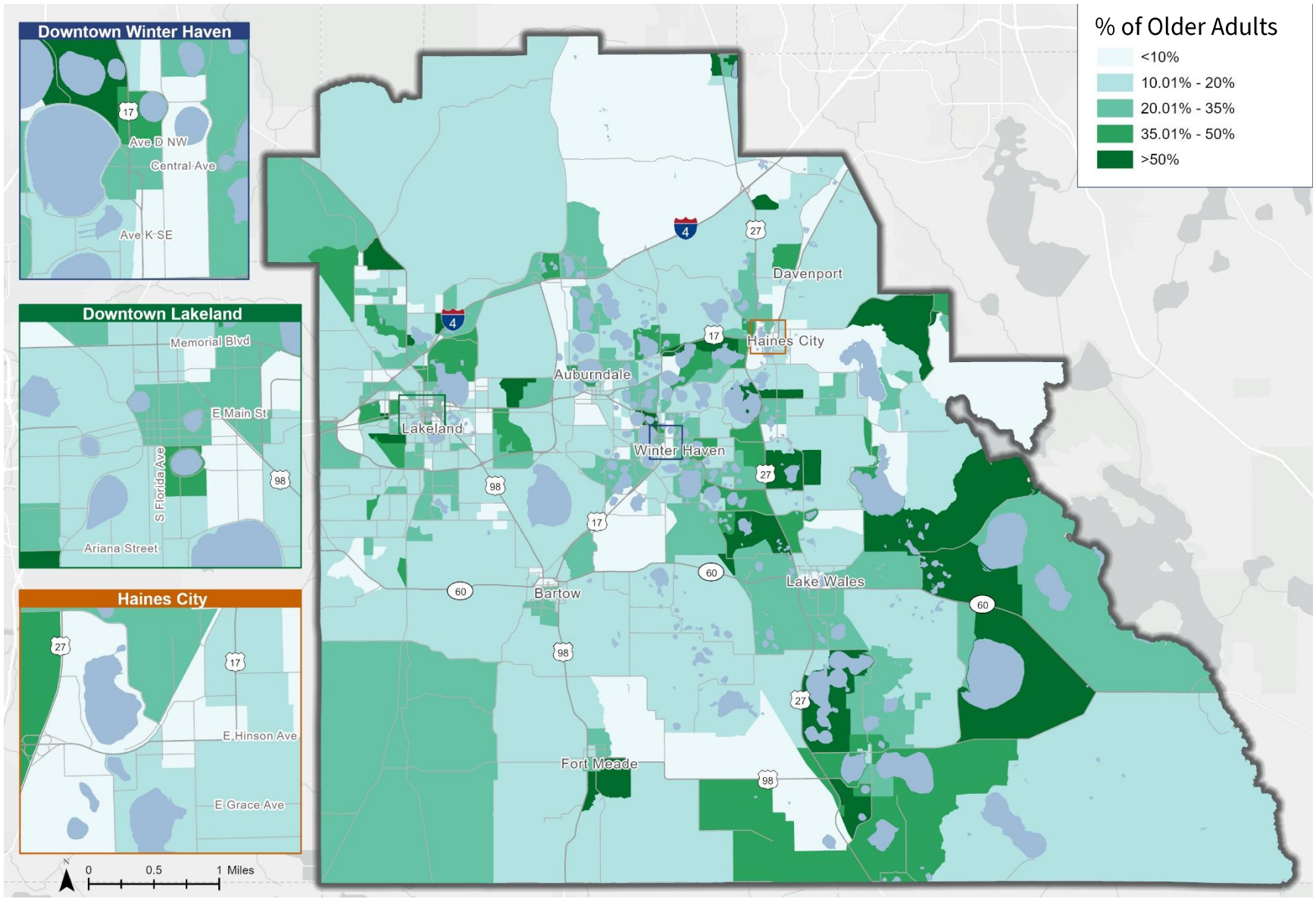
Maps 3-3 and 3-4 show block groups where older adults (65+) and younger adults (18-24) are concentrated, respectively. Higher concentrations of older adults are scattered throughout the county, including Lakeland, Winter Haven, Haines City, Davenport, and Frostproof.

**Figure 3-4: Population by Age Group**



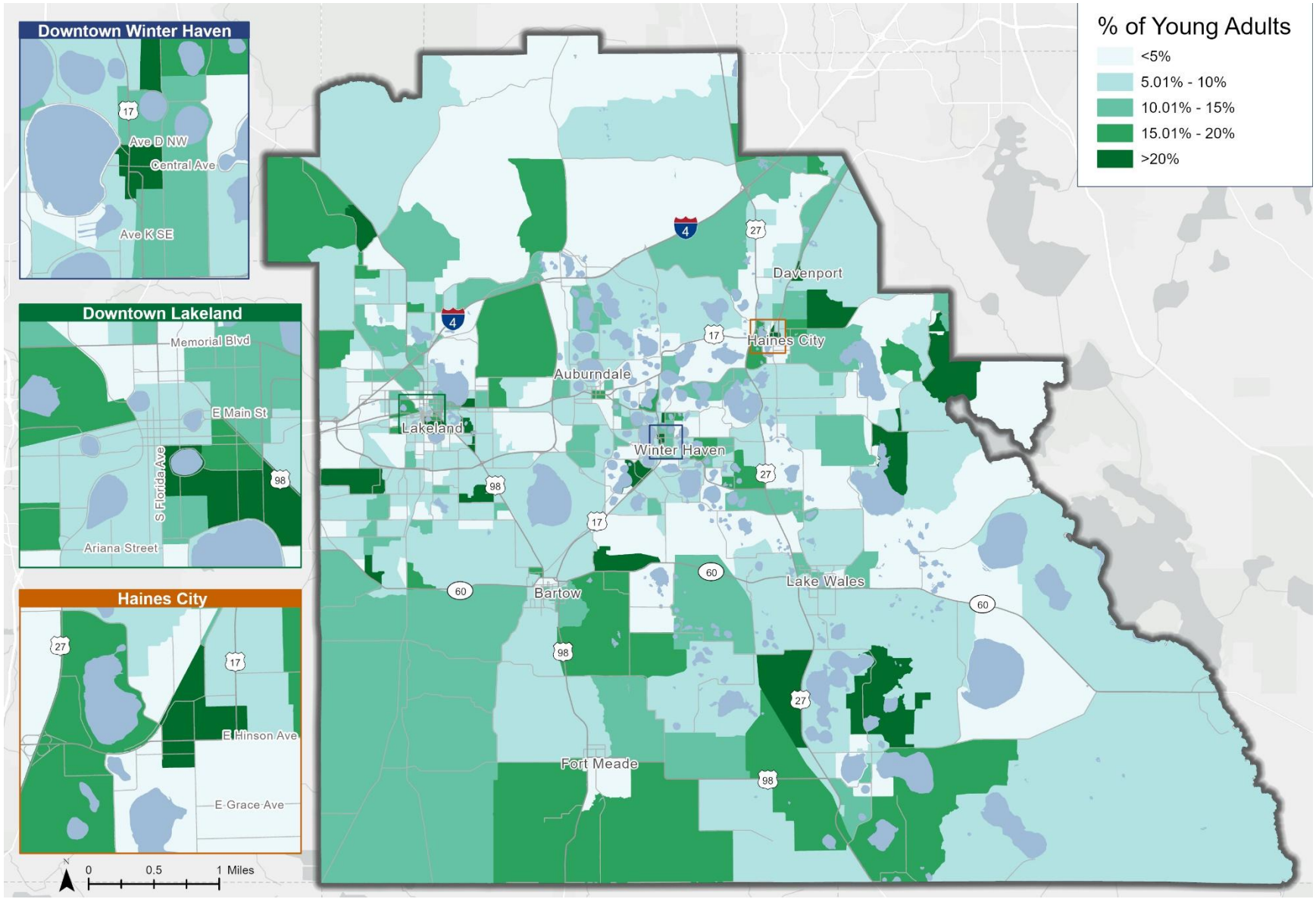

*Source: BEBR*

## Map 3-3: Older Adults (65+) | 2022




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

## Map 3-4: Young Adults (18-24) | 2022




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

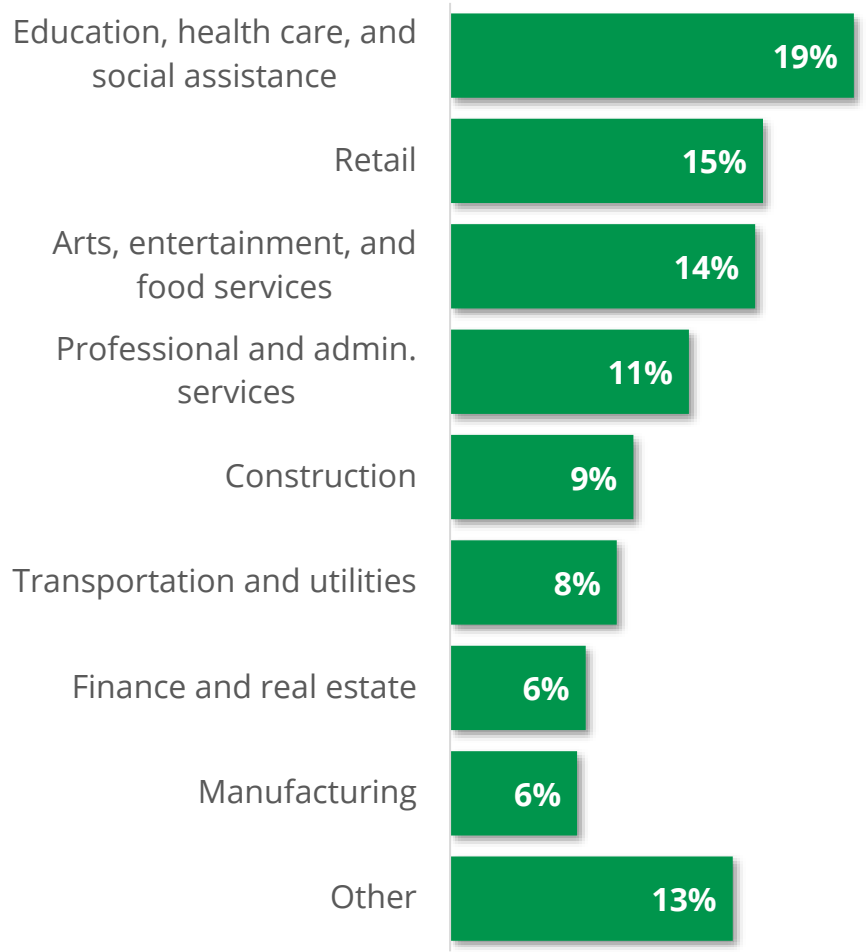
## *Employment*

Employment density plays a crucial role in transit demand. Areas with high employment density often feature activity hubs, including shopping centers, medical facilities, and educational institutions that can draw a significant number of transit users. Denser areas like a downtown typically exhibit higher employment with more restricted or higher cost parking options. Access to jobs via transit enables workers to reach their workplace in a more affordable and potentially efficient manner.

It is also important to understand where the jobs in the county are most concentrated. Higher employment densities are found along major roadways, with notable clusters in downtown Lakeland, Winter Haven, and Bartow (Map 3-5). Employment density is projected to increase in downtown Winter Haven, Auburndale, Bartow, and along major highways (Map 3-6).

Based on 2022 ACS data, the largest employment sectors in Polk County are education, health care, and social assistance (19%); retail (15%); and art, entertainment, and food services (14%), as shown in Figure 3-5.

**Figure 3-5: Employment Industries | 2022**




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

### *Major Employers*

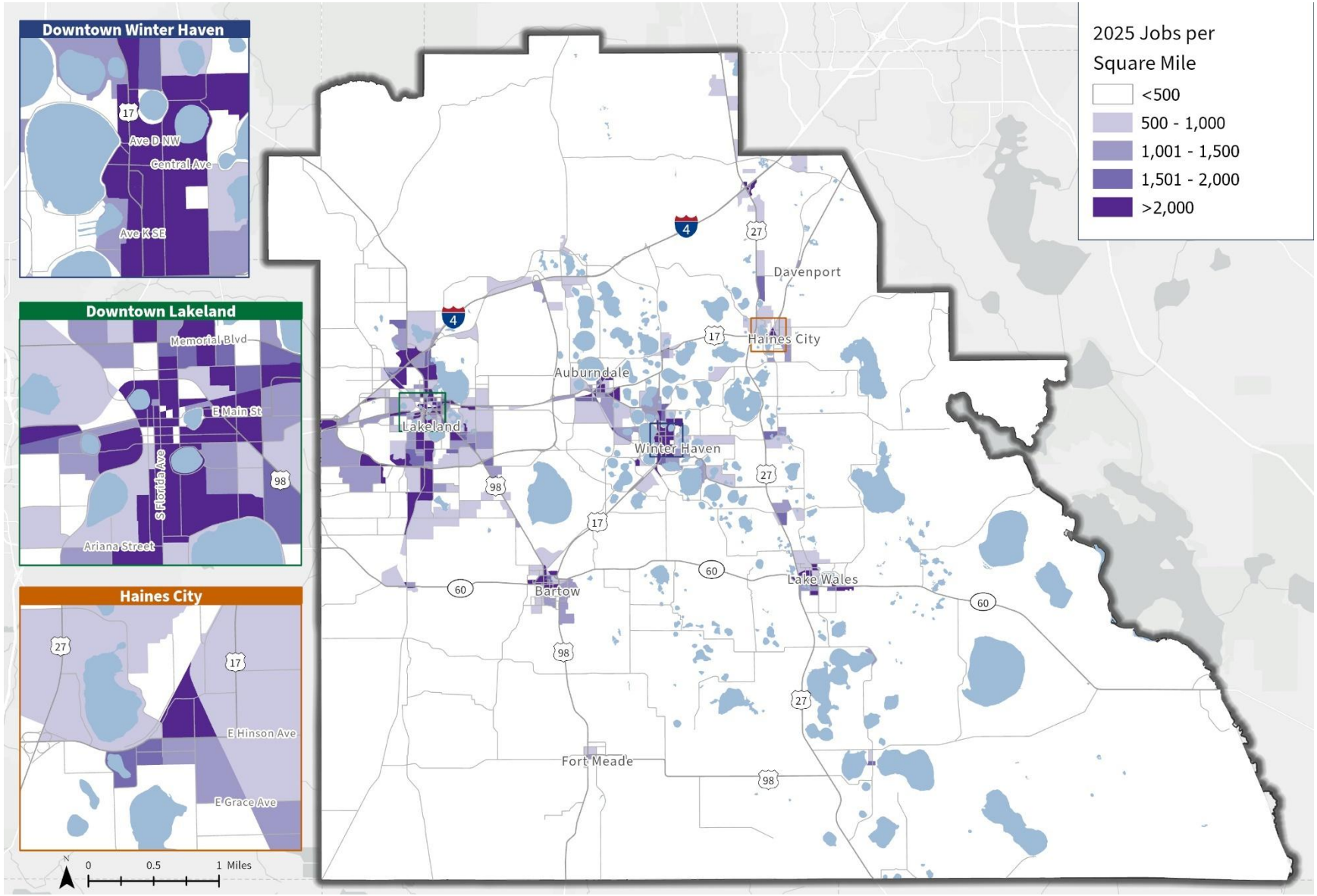
Polk County is home to several large employers and employment centers, primarily in the healthcare, retail, and government sectors. The headquarters for Publix Supermarkets, a regional supermarket chain operating in the southeastern US and the largest employer in Polk County, is in Lakeland. The remaining top employers in Polk County are listed in Table 3-2.

**Table 3-2: Top 10 Employers in Polk County | 2024**

| Rank | Employer | Employees |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Publix Super Markets | 21,618 |
| **2** | Polk County School Board | 13,500 |
| **3** | Lakeland Regional Health | 7,865 |
| **4** | Walmart | 5,523 |
| **5** | Amazon | 5,500 |
| **6** | Baycare | 3,332 |
| **7** | Geico | 3,000 |
| **8** | City of Lakeland | 2,696 |
| **9** | Polk County Board of County Commissioners | 2,270 |
| **10** | Polk County Sheriff's Office | 1,950 |

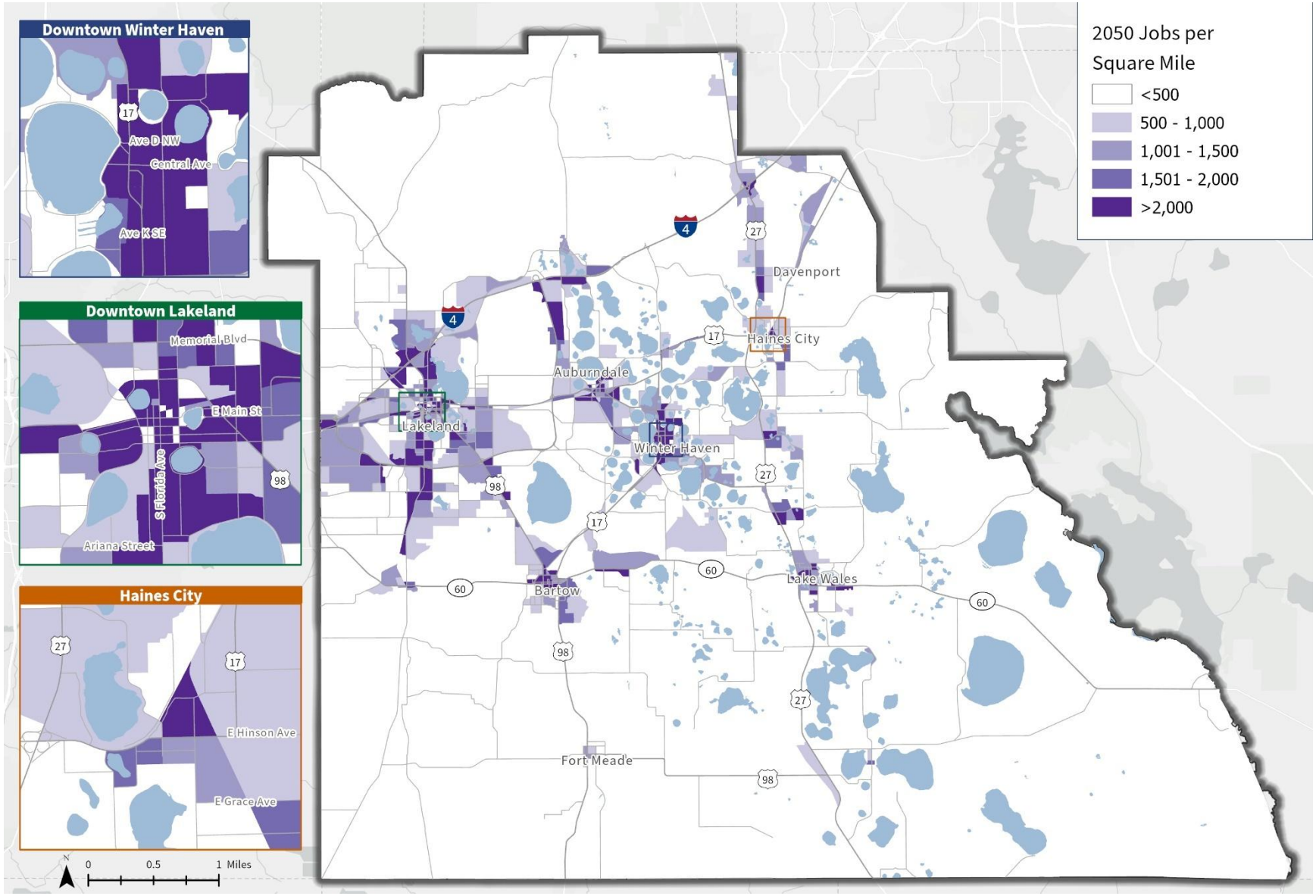
*Source: 2024 Polk County Annual Comprehensive Financial Report*

## Map 3-5: Jobs per Square Mile | 2025




*Source: Polk TPO's 2050 Population and Employment Forecast*

## Map 3-6: Jobs per Square Mile | 2050




*Source: Polk TPO's 2050 Population and Employment Forecast*

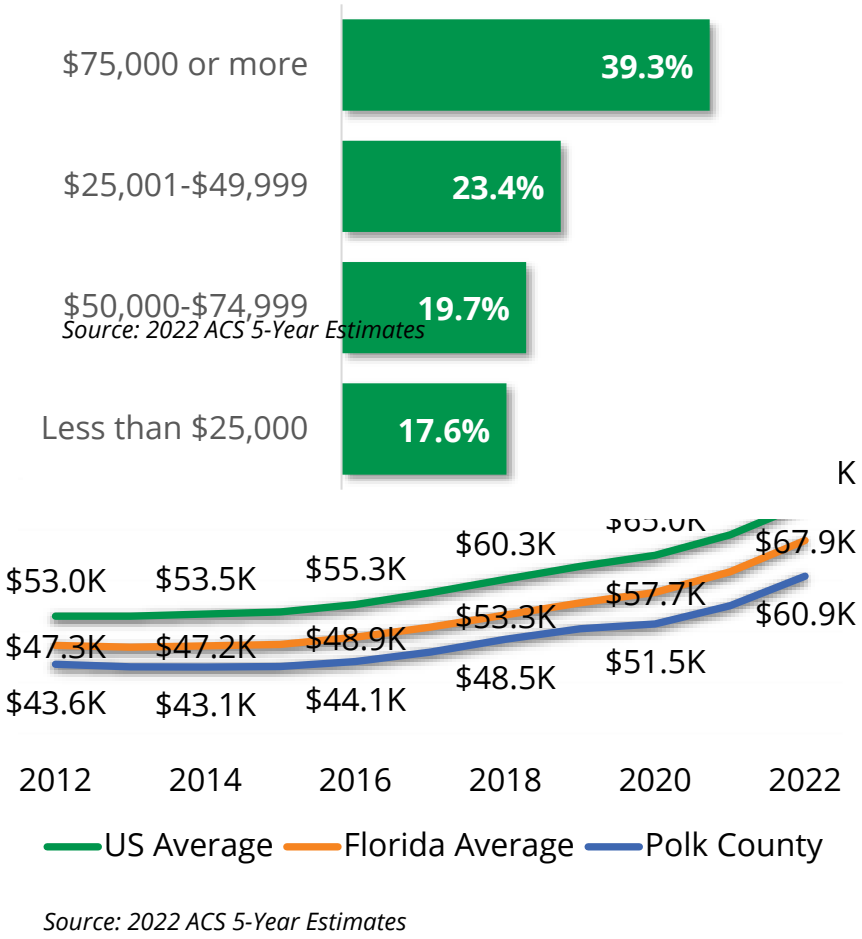
## *Income Distribution*

Annual household income also can be a key indicator of potential transit need.

Approximately 39% of Polk County households have an annual income of $75,000 or more, while under one in five households make less than $25,000 annually (Figure 3-6).

The median household income in Polk County is $60,901. While this is lower than the US average ($75,149) and Florida average ($67,917), the county's annual income growth is similar, approximately 42% and 44%, respectively (Figure 3-7).

**Figure 3-6: Household Income | 2022**







*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

### *Poverty*

Residents living in poverty often need more access to transportation options for work or other lifeline trips.

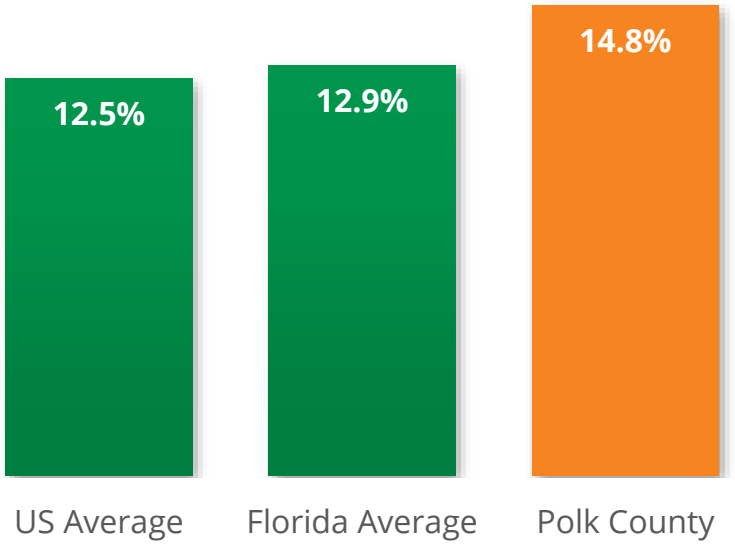
In Polk County, 14.8% of residents are living in poverty; this is slightly higher than the US and Florida averages (Figure 3-8). Pockets of block groups experiencing poverty rates higher than the county average are around Lakeland, Fort Meade, and east Polk County (Map 3-7).

In Polk County, 3.1% of residents who worked full-time were also living below the poverty level and may have challenges affording transportation. Map 3-8 shows areas with employed workers in poverty are near Lakeland, Haines City, and Fort Meade.

### *Unemployment*

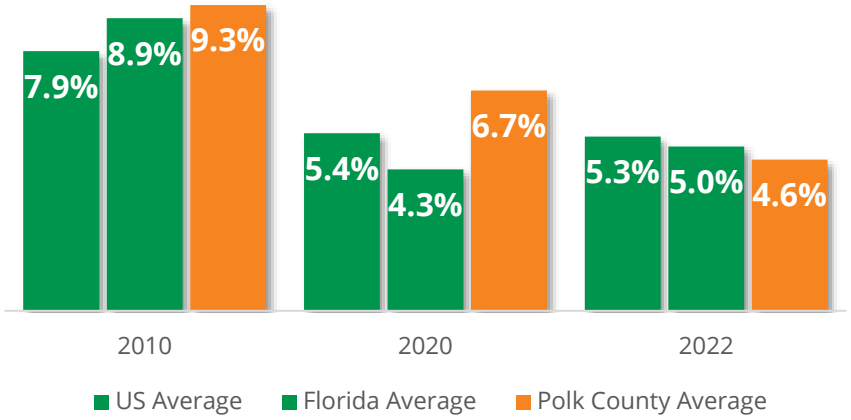
The unemployment rate serves as a key economic indicator, reflecting shifts in household income that can directly influence spending on transportation. Since 2010, the unemployment rate in Polk County has decreased. According to the Central Florida Development Council, approximately 4.6% of Polk County residents were unemployed as of August 2022 (Figure 3-9).

**Figure 3-8: Poverty Rate | 2022**



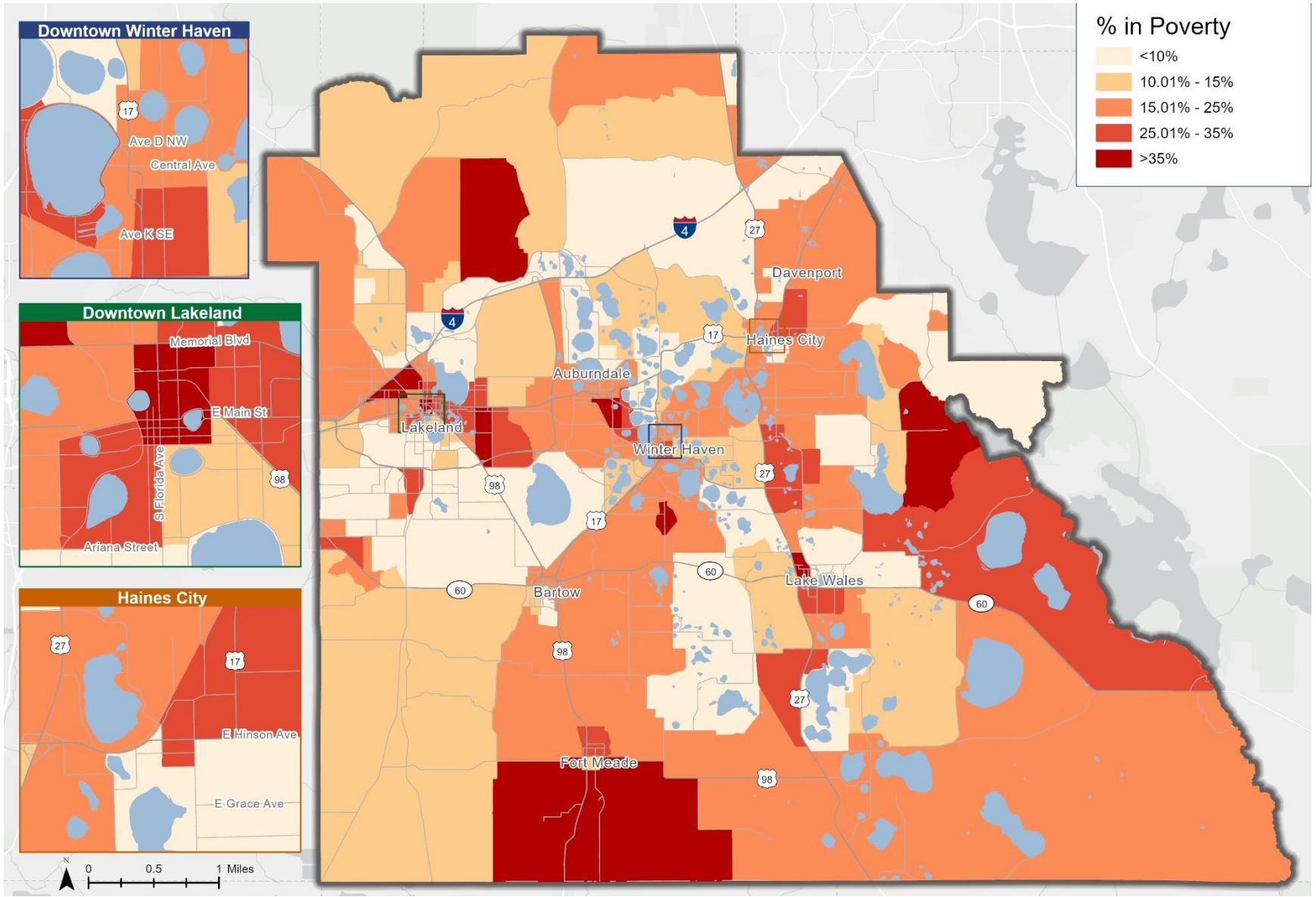

*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

**Figure 3-9: Unemployment Rate | 2010 - 2022**



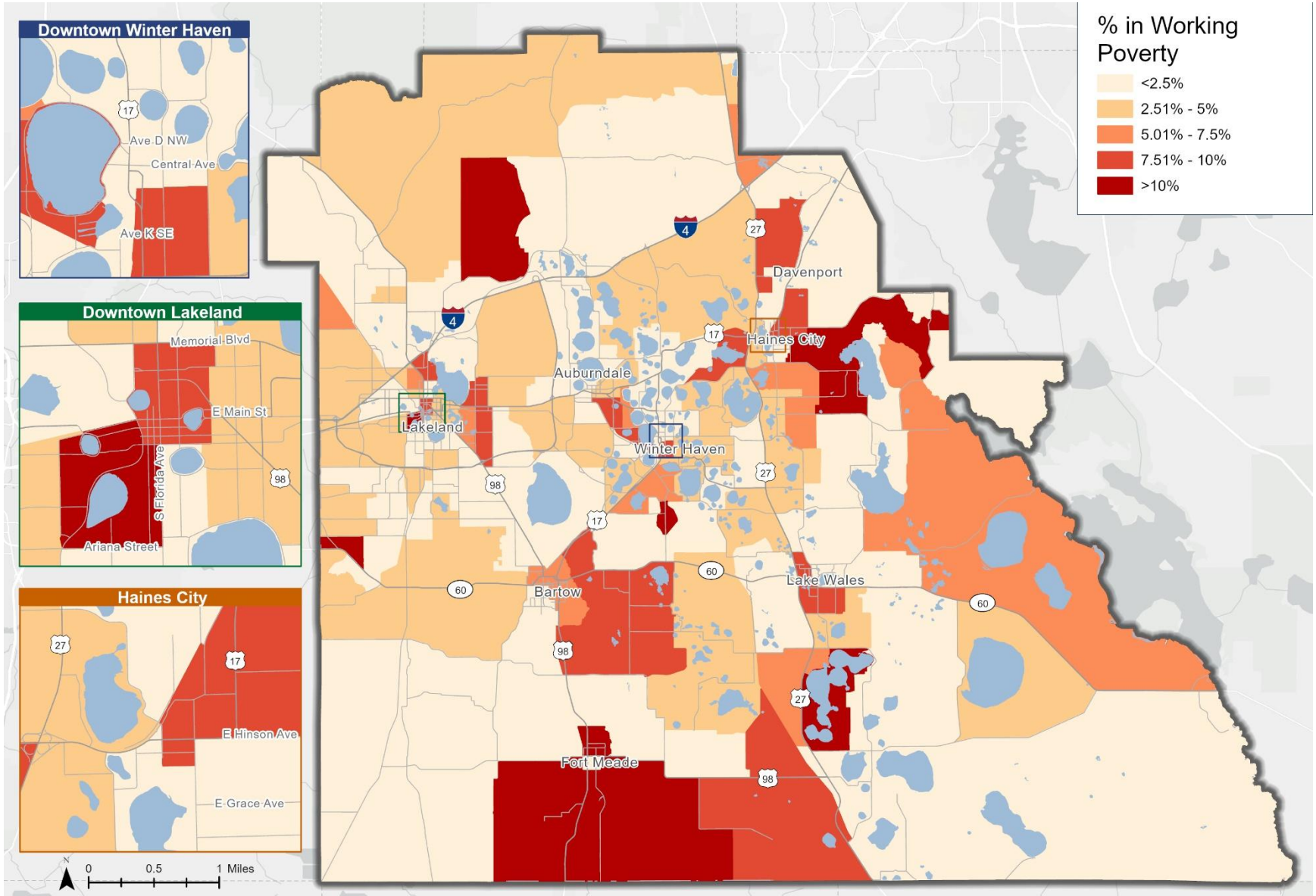

*Source: ACS, Floridajobs.org, and Central Florida Development Council*

## Map 3-7: Poverty | 2022




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

## Map 3-8: Working Poverty | 2022




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

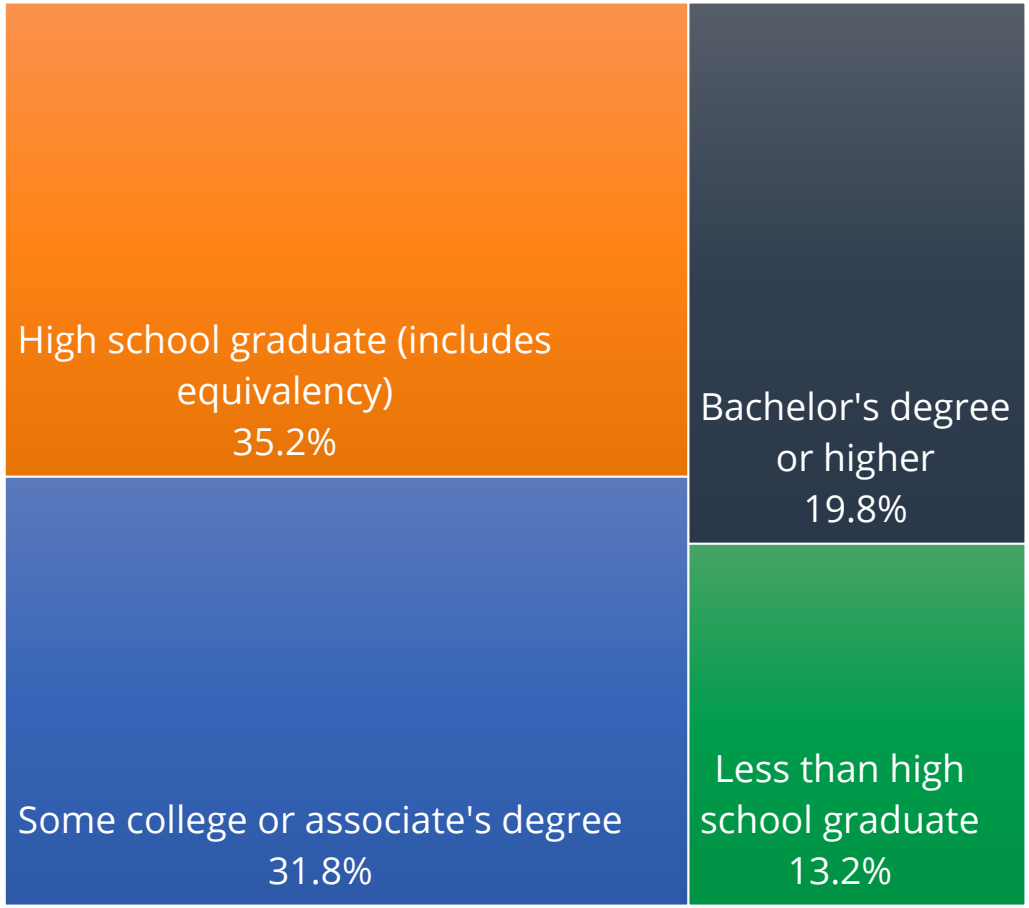
## *Educational Attainment*

Education level is important to understanding local demographics as, generally, education level correlates with income.

The majority (51.6%) of Polk County residents have attended some level of higher education, whereas 13.2% have not completed high school (Figure 3-10).

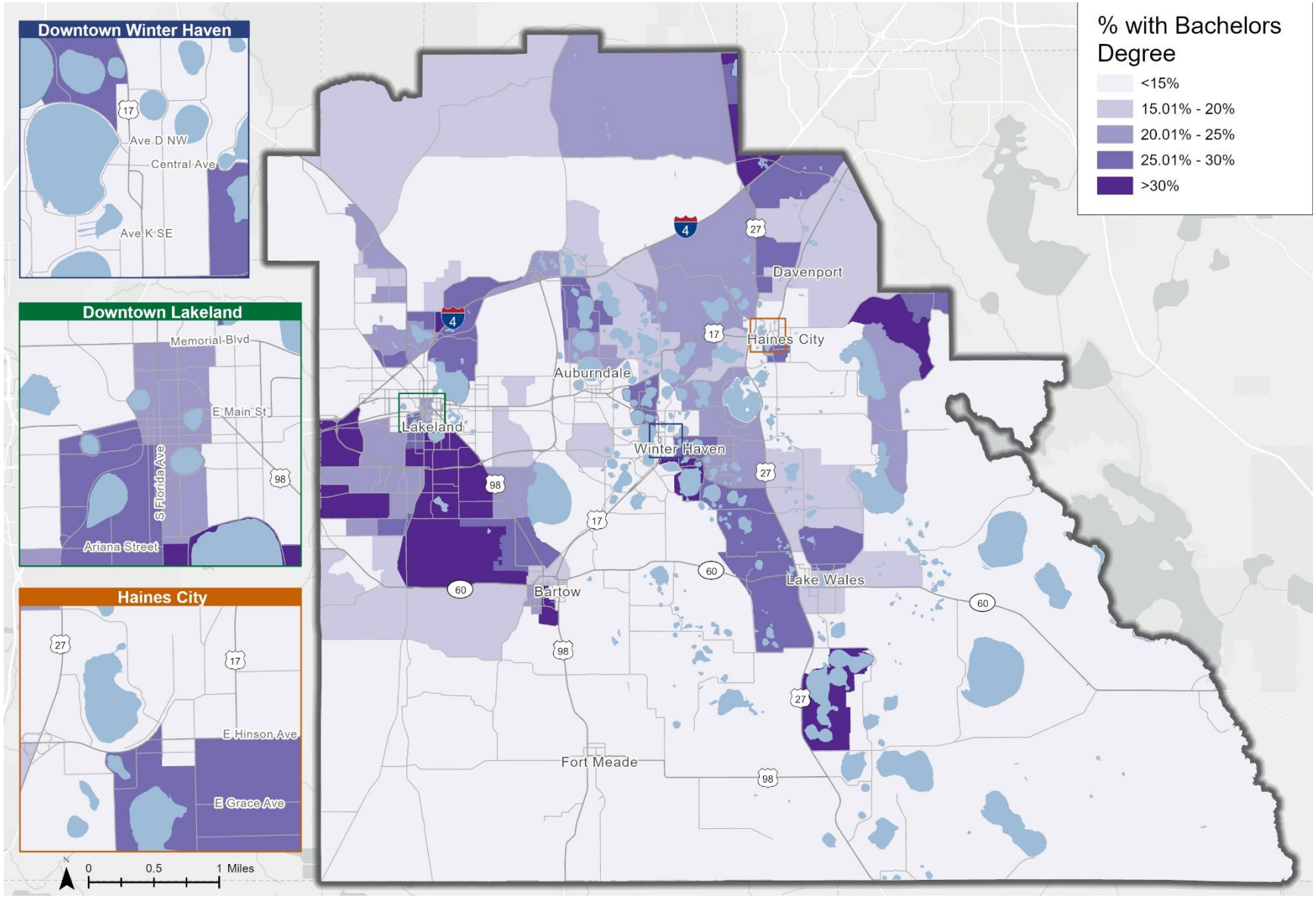
The highest concentration of college-level educated residents are found south of Lakeland and between Winter Haven and Lake Wales (Map 3-9).

**Figure 3-10: Educational Attainment | 2022**




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

## Map 3-9: Educational Attainment | 2022



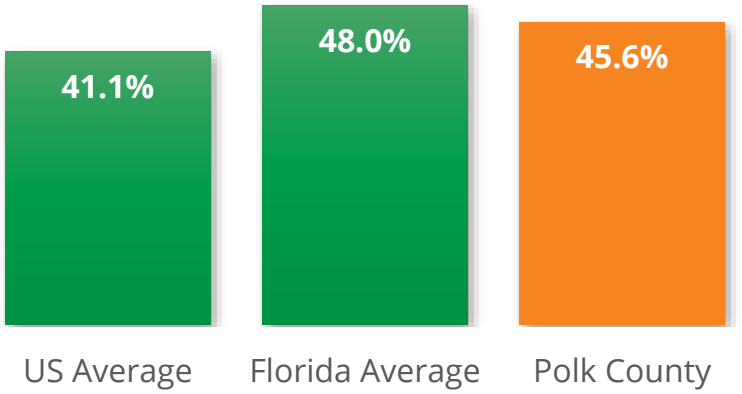

*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

### *Non-White Residents*

Historically, non-White persons represent a greater proportion of transit passengers nationally compared to the US population, so it is important to identify the extent of those populations in Polk County.

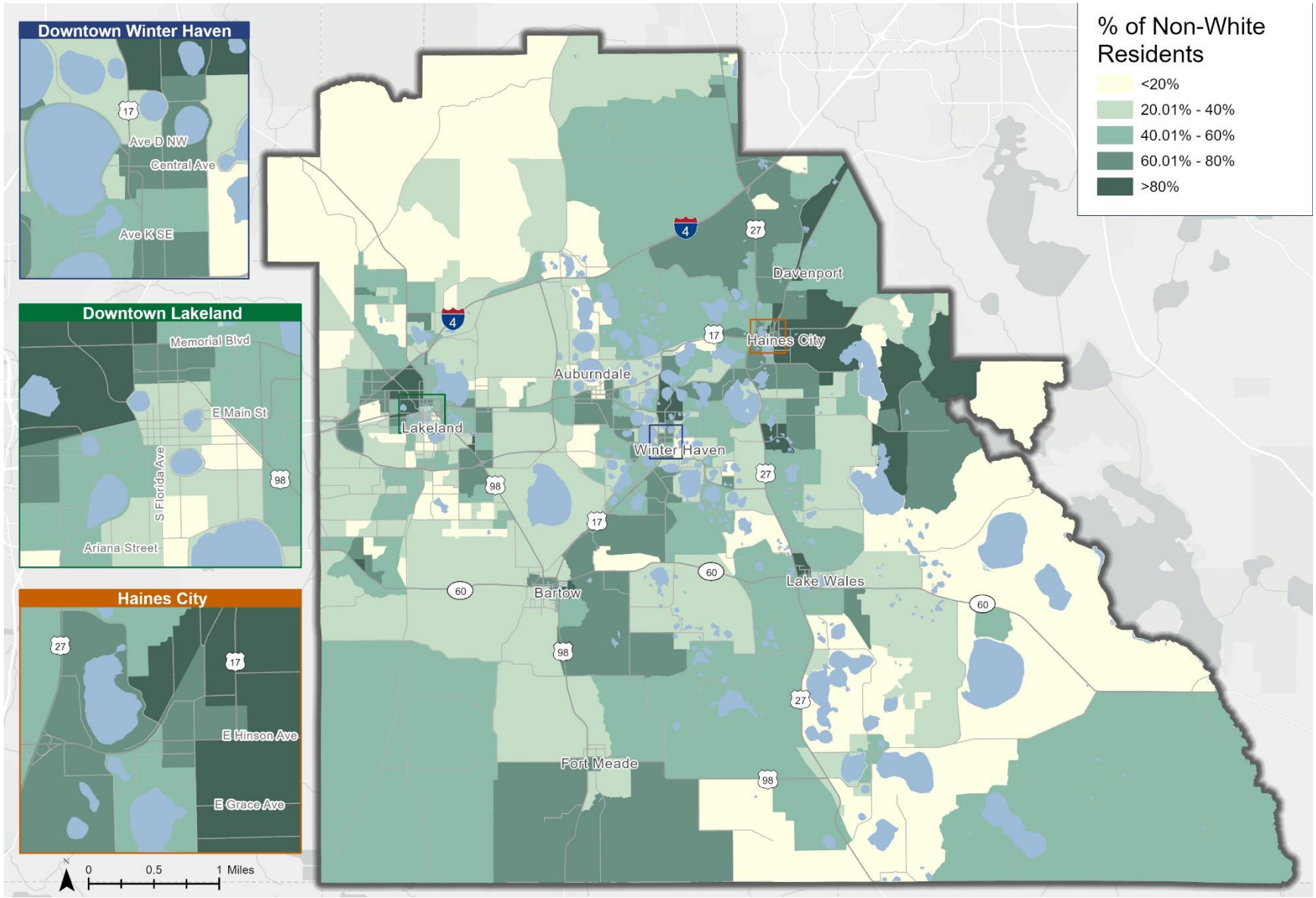
Polk County has a marginally higher percentage of minority residents than the US average and slightly lower than the Florida average (Figure 3-11). Non-White populations are prevalent in north Lakeland, west of Haines City, and surrounding Bartow and Fort Meade (Map 3-10).

**Figure 3-11: Non-White Populations | 2022**




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

## Map 3-10: Non-White Residents | 2022



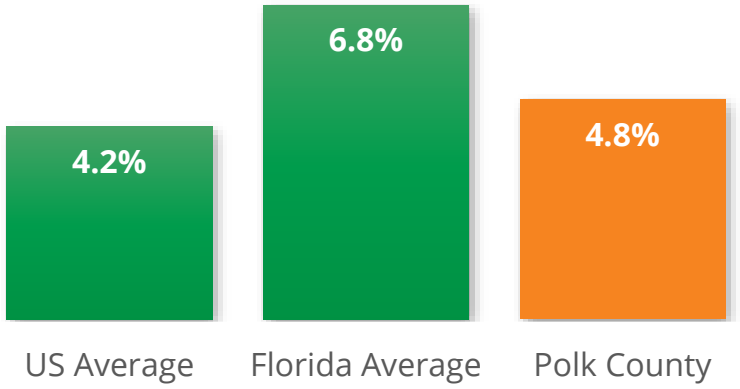

*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

### *Limited English Proficiency*

People with limited English proficiency (LEP) are defined by the US Census Bureau as persons aged 5 or older who self-identify as speaking English less than "very well." Transit can provide LEP persons in Polk County with additional travel options to services and jobs.

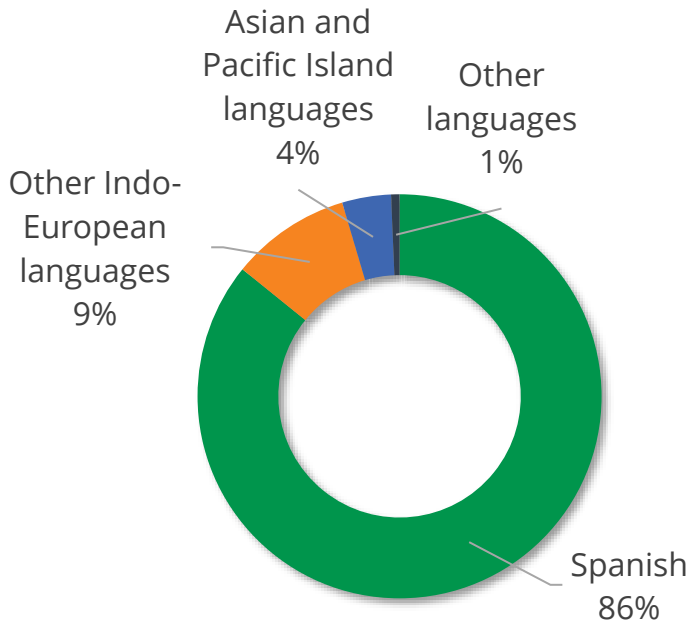
In Polk County 4.8% of households are considered LEP. This is lower than the Florida average (6.8%), but higher than the US average (4.2%) (Figure 3-12). Of all LEP households in Polk County, 86% are Spanish speaking while other languages make up the remaining 14% (Figure 3-13). LEP households are most concentrated across Lake Wales, Haines City, and adjacent to I-4 and US-27 (Map 3-11).

**Figure 3-12: LEP Households | 2022**



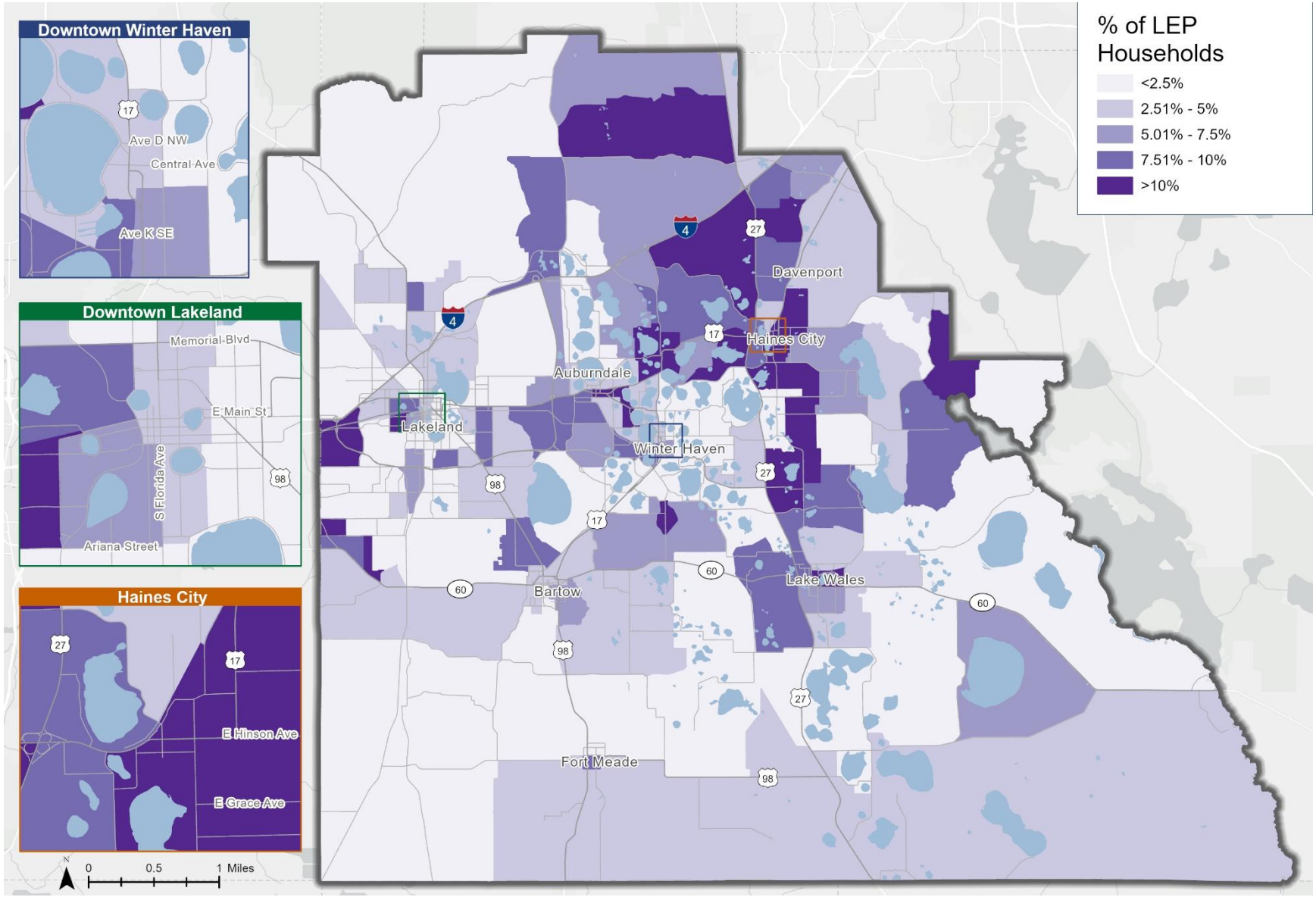

*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

**Figure 3-13: LEP Household Languages | 2022**




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

## Map 3-11: LEP Households | 2022




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

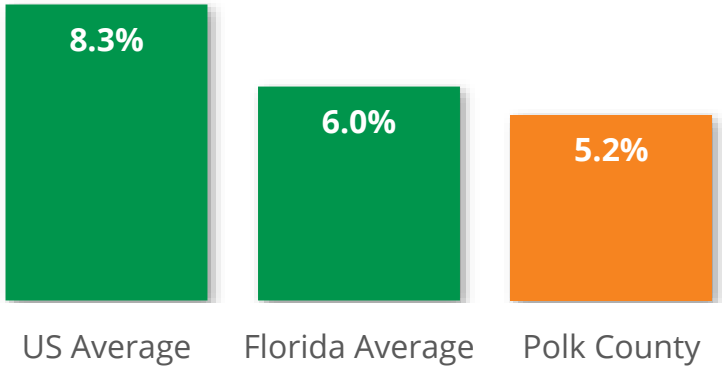
## *Automobile Ownership*

Owning a vehicle can be a significant cost, particularly for households already near or below the poverty line. Households that do not own a vehicle, either because of unaffordability or by choice, are considered "zero-vehicle households" and are more likely to use transit for work, education, and recreational trips.

Within Polk County, 5.2% of households are "zero-vehicle." This is lower than the Florida average (6.0%) and the US average (8.3%) (Figure 3-14). Renters in Polk County are more than three times more likely to not own a vehicle at 10.4% compared to owner-occupied units (Figure 3-15).

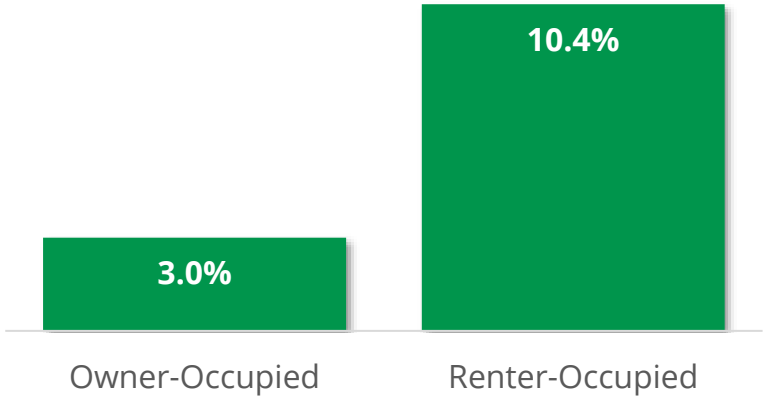
Map 3-12 shows that the Lakeland, Winter Haven, Haines City, Lake Wales, and Fort Meade areas have block groups exceeding 20% of households with no vehicle.

**Figure 3-14: Zero Vehicle Households | 2022**



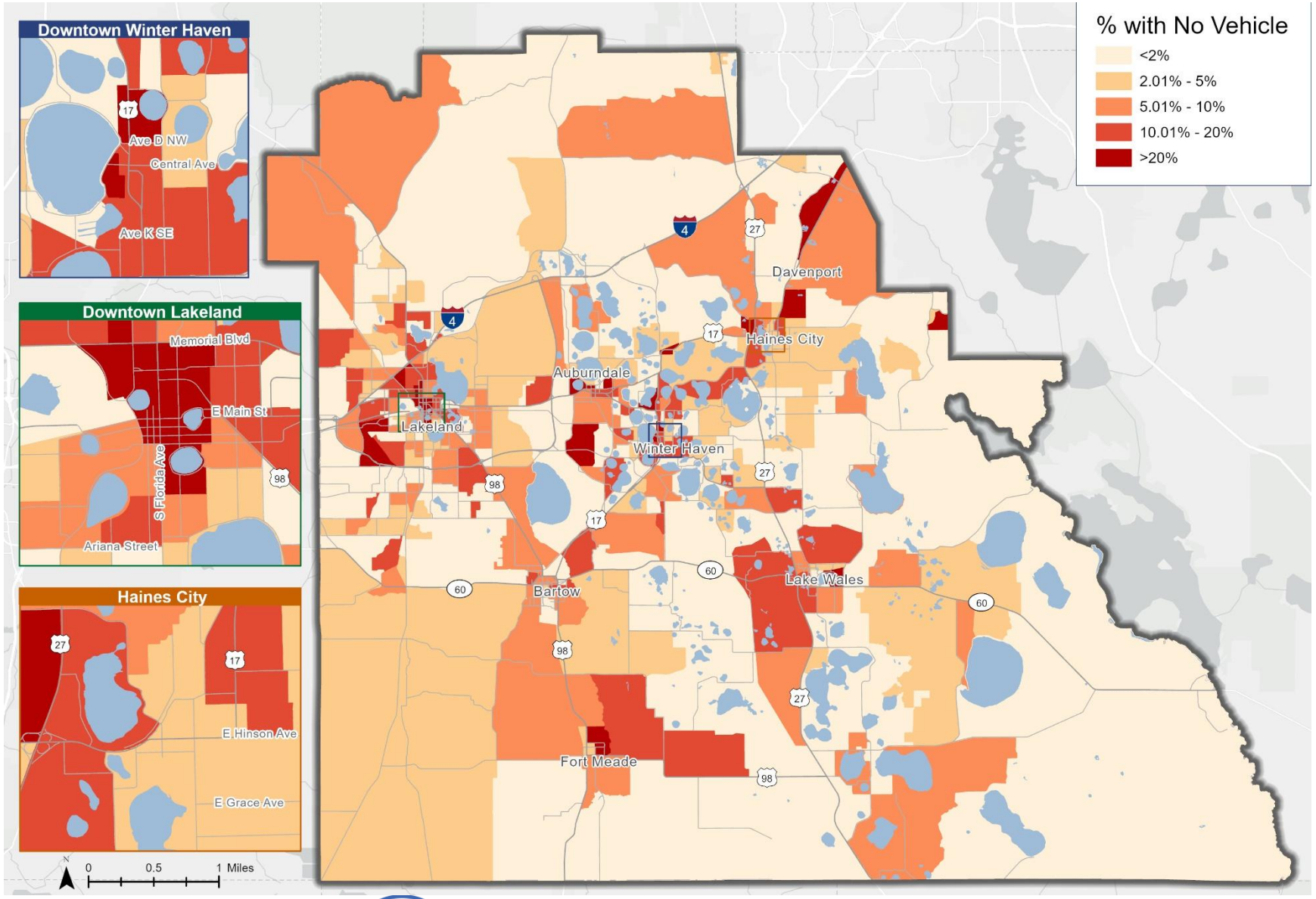

*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

**Figure 3-15: Zero Vehicle Households by Tenure | 2022**




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

## Map 3-12: Zero-Vehicle Households | 2022




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

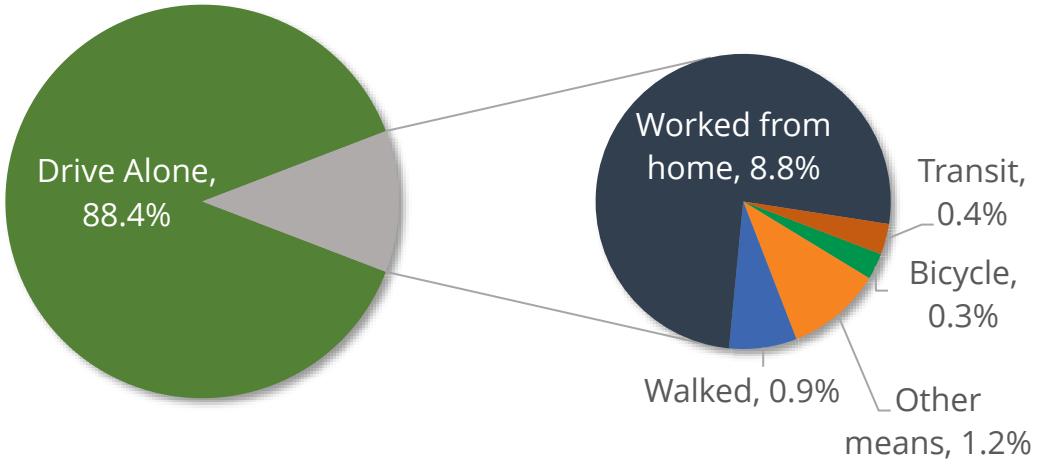
### *Travel Behavior*

Travel flow data were analyzed to assess general travel behaviors and patterns in and around Polk County. By better understanding commuting behaviors and general travel patterns, Citrus Connection may plan its transit services to better accommodate demonstrated travel demand.

### *Commute Profile*

The most popular commute choice for Polk County residents is driving (88.4%). Working from home is the second most popular mode of commuting, comprising an all-time high of 8.8%. All other modes for commuting, including transit, only amount to 2.8% of all commuting trips (Figure 3-16).

**Figure 3-16: Commute Mode | 2022**



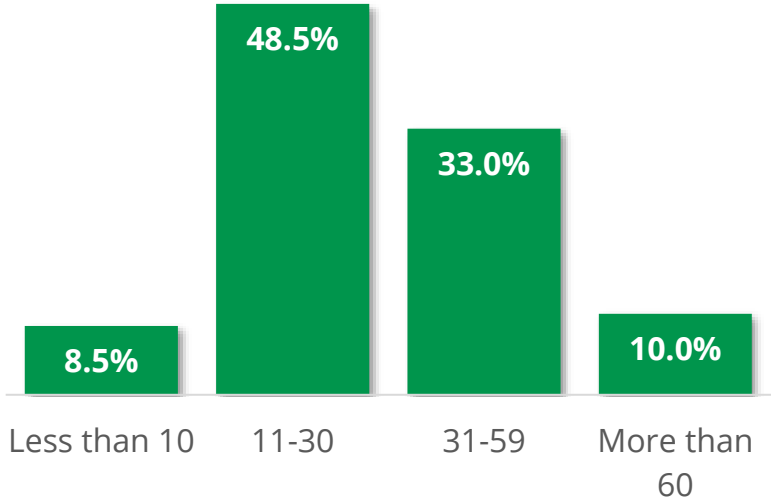

*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

Insight into commuting time is important to understand how transit may help the community's travel options. The average commute time in Polk County is approximately 30 minutes. Figure 3-17 shows more than half of commute trips are 30 minutes or less, and only one in ten commutes exceeds an hour. Map 3-13 displays the proportion of people who have a commute greater than 30 minutes by block group. Areas with the highest proportion of long commutes are located closest to Lake, Osceola, and Orange counties, suggesting many residents in northeast Polk County commute to the Orlando metropolitan area.

### *Polk County Commute Origins*

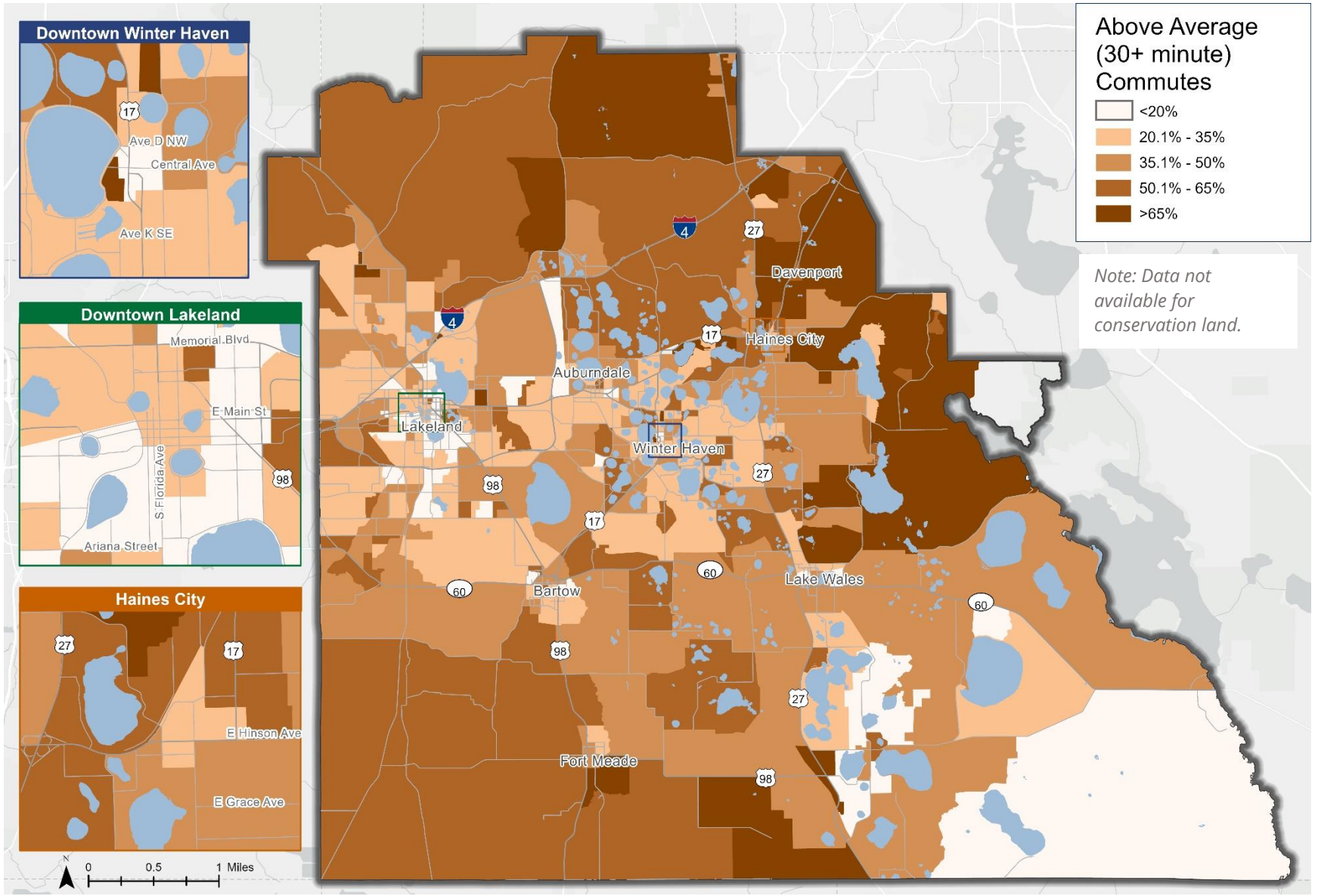
Replica, a mobility and economic activities data management tool, estimates travel trends based on data sources like road traffic, mobile locations, and financial transactions. At a more granular level, Replica compiles data for commute trips that originate or terminate within a given Census block group. Trips originating from Census block groups throughout Polk County are displayed in Map 3-14, which highlights elevated levels of commuting activity in many parts of Lakeland and areas of Haines City, Davenport, and Poinciana.

**Figure 3-17: Commute Trips by Duration (minutes) | All Modes| 2022**



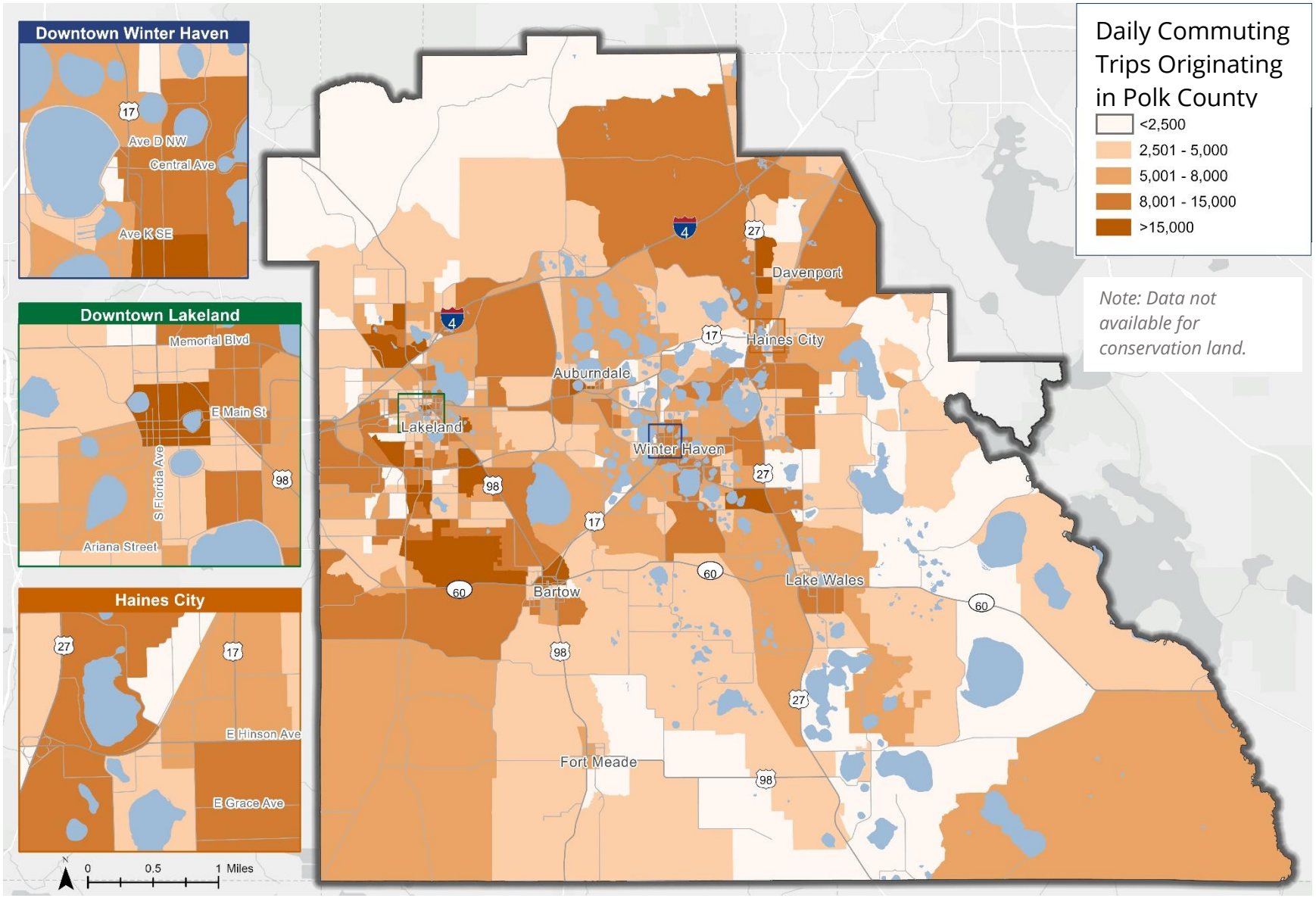

*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

## Map 3-13: Above Average Commute Duration by Block Group in Polk County | 2022




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

## Map 3-14: Daily Commuting Trips Originating in Polk County (Replica, 2023)




*Source: Replica, 2023*

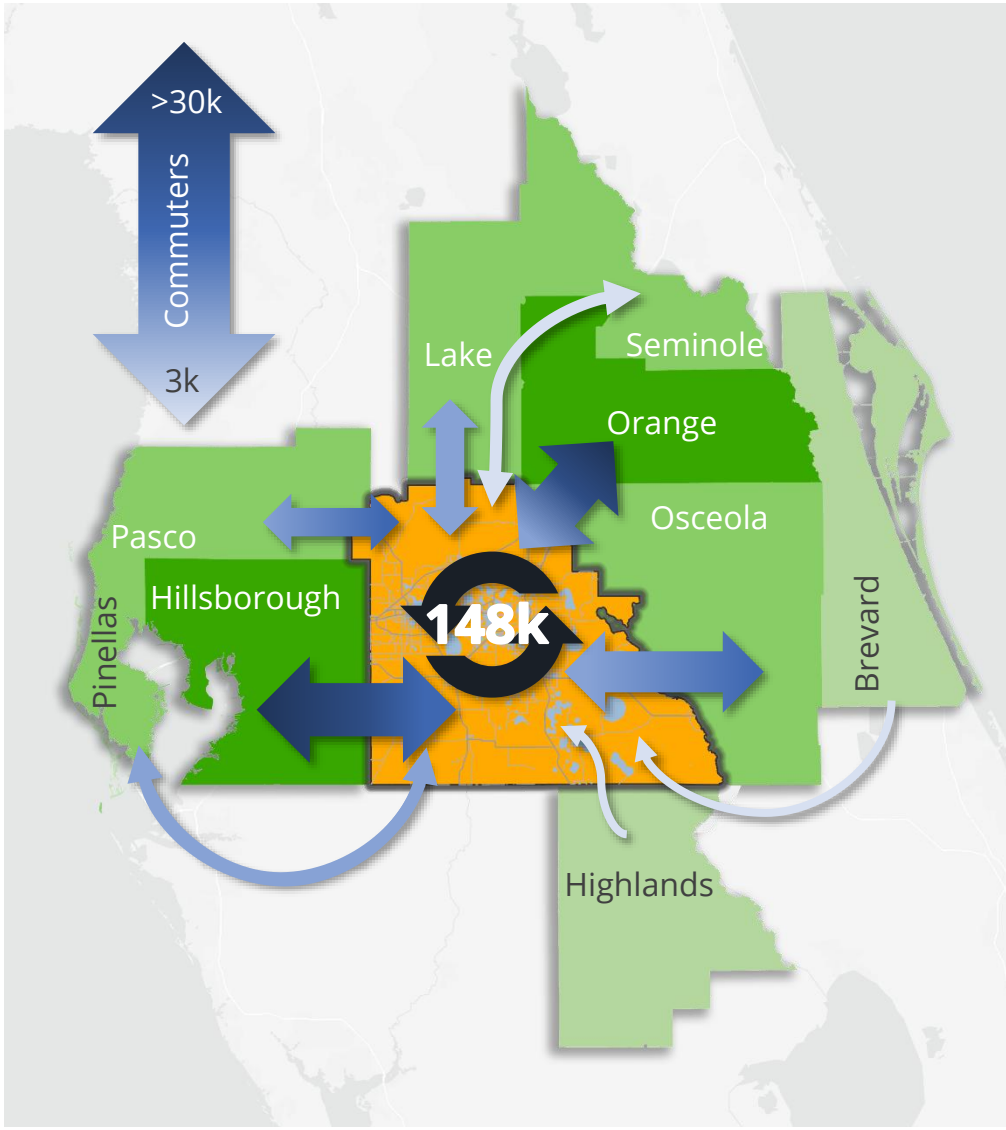
*Regional Commute Inflow and Outflow*

Reviewing regional commute patterns is important to evaluate existing transit services and understand the potential need for more regional travel connections. According to the Census-based Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) "OnTheMap" tool, over 150,000 Polk County residents leave the county every day to work. This accounts for over half of commute trips that start in Polk County (Map 3-15). The top inflow for Polk County workers who live elsewhere is Hillsborough County, while the top outflow for Polk County residents leaving to work is Orange County (Table 3-3). Osceola and Pasco counties also experience high travel inflow and outflow.

**Table 3-3: Regional Commuter Travel Flow | 2022**

| County | Inflow | Outflow |
|---|---|---|
| **Hillsborough** | 23,722 | 31,815 |
| **Orange** | 11,235 | 41,088 |
| **Osceola** | 8,726 | 11,265 |
| **Pasco** | 7,243 | 4,336 |
| **Pinellas** | 5,785 | 7,825 |
| **Lake** | 3,948 | 3,959 |
| **Seminole** | 3,225 | 4,491 |
| **Highlands** | 3,457 | - |
| **Brevard** | 3,231 | - |
| **Total** | 70,572 | 104,779 |

**Map 3-15: Polk County Regional Commute Travel Flow**




*Source: LEHD "OnTheMap" tool*
*Note for Table 3-3: "-" denotes that there was not a notable number of commuters according to the Census.*

## *Roadway and Traffic Conditions*

A review of the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) on significant roadways in Polk County was conducted based on data available from FDOT. The AADT represents the average daily volume of traffic on a defined section of roadway. The AADT helps to assess heavily traveled or congested roadways that may be better served by transit. Implementing transit on congested roadways can replace some automobile trips, improve traffic flow, and reduce emissions.

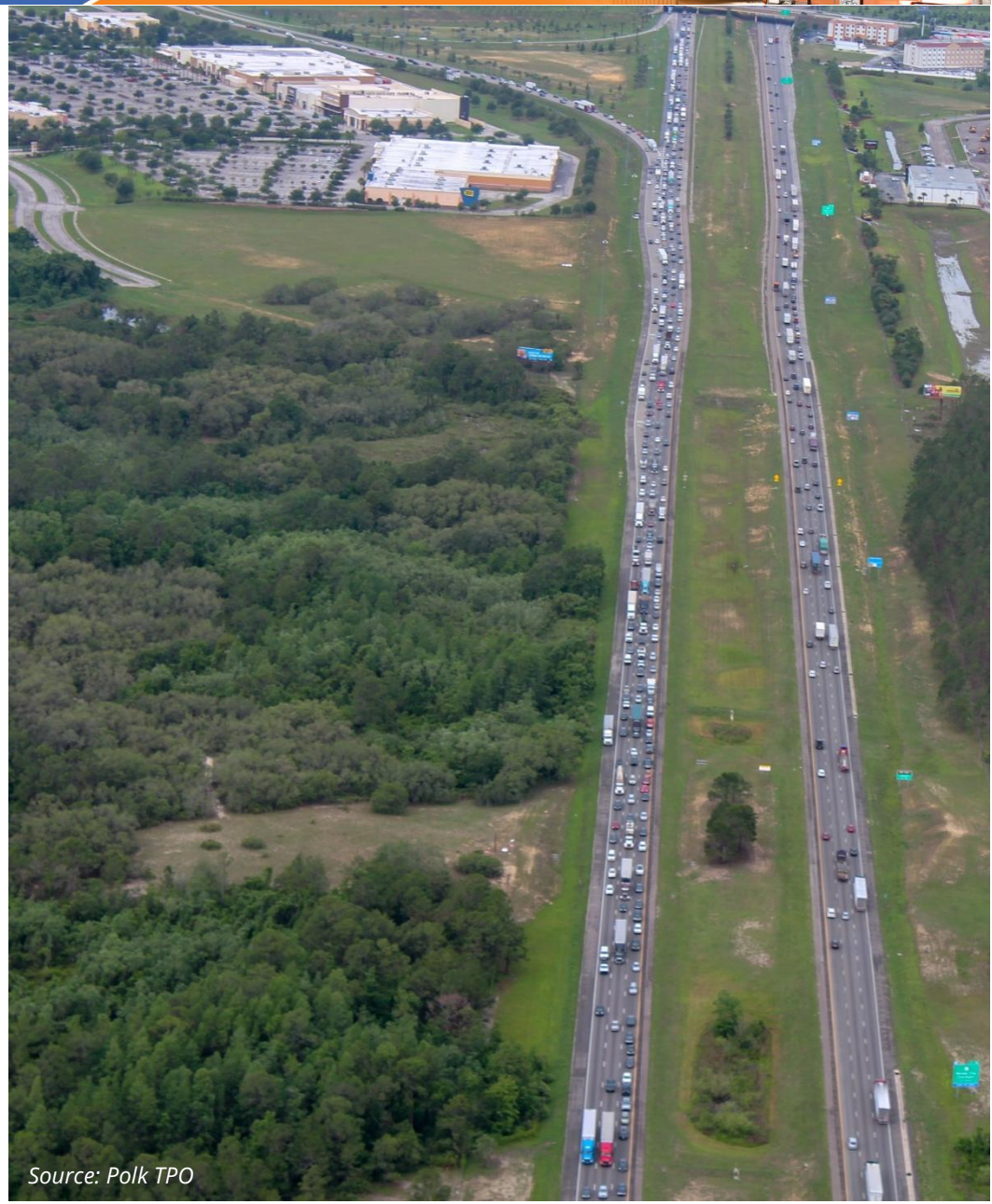
Roadways in Polk County with the highest AADT (60,000+ daily trips) consist of:

- I-4 throughout the county
- US-27 between I-4 and US-17/92

Other major roadways with elevated levels of traffic (more than 40,000 daily trips) include:

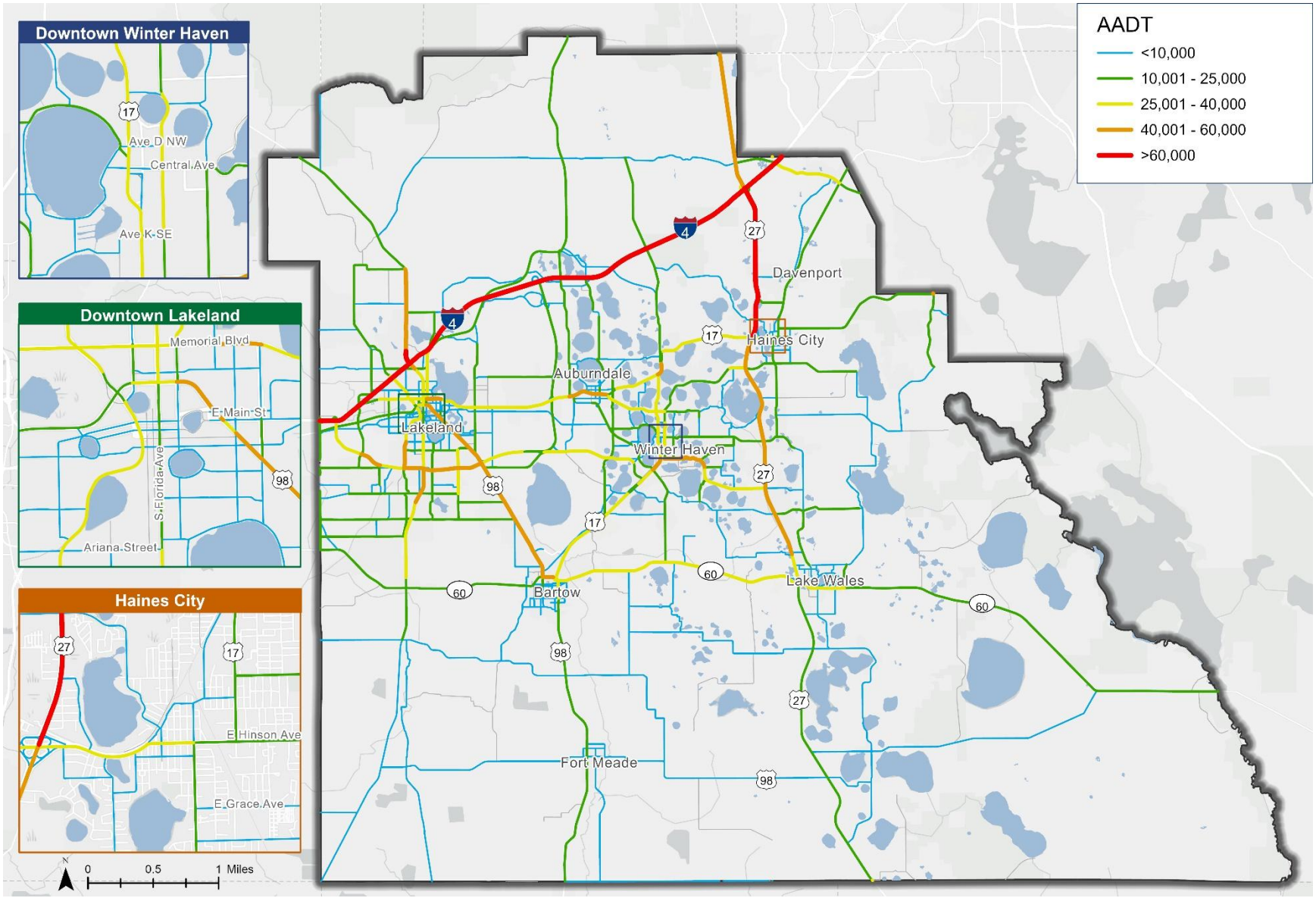
- US-98 between Bartow and Socrum Loop Road
- US-27 north of I-4 and between Lake Wales and Haines City
- Segments of the Polk Parkway

Map 3-16 shows the major roadways that FDOT monitors symbolized by AADT counts.



*Source: Polk TPO*

## Map 3-16: AADT in Polk County | 2023




*Source: FDOT*

### *Crashes*

Examining crash data is essential to understand where transit improvements can enhance safety and alternative transportation options. Often secondary roads that connect local roads to primary highways are where most vehicular crashes occur.

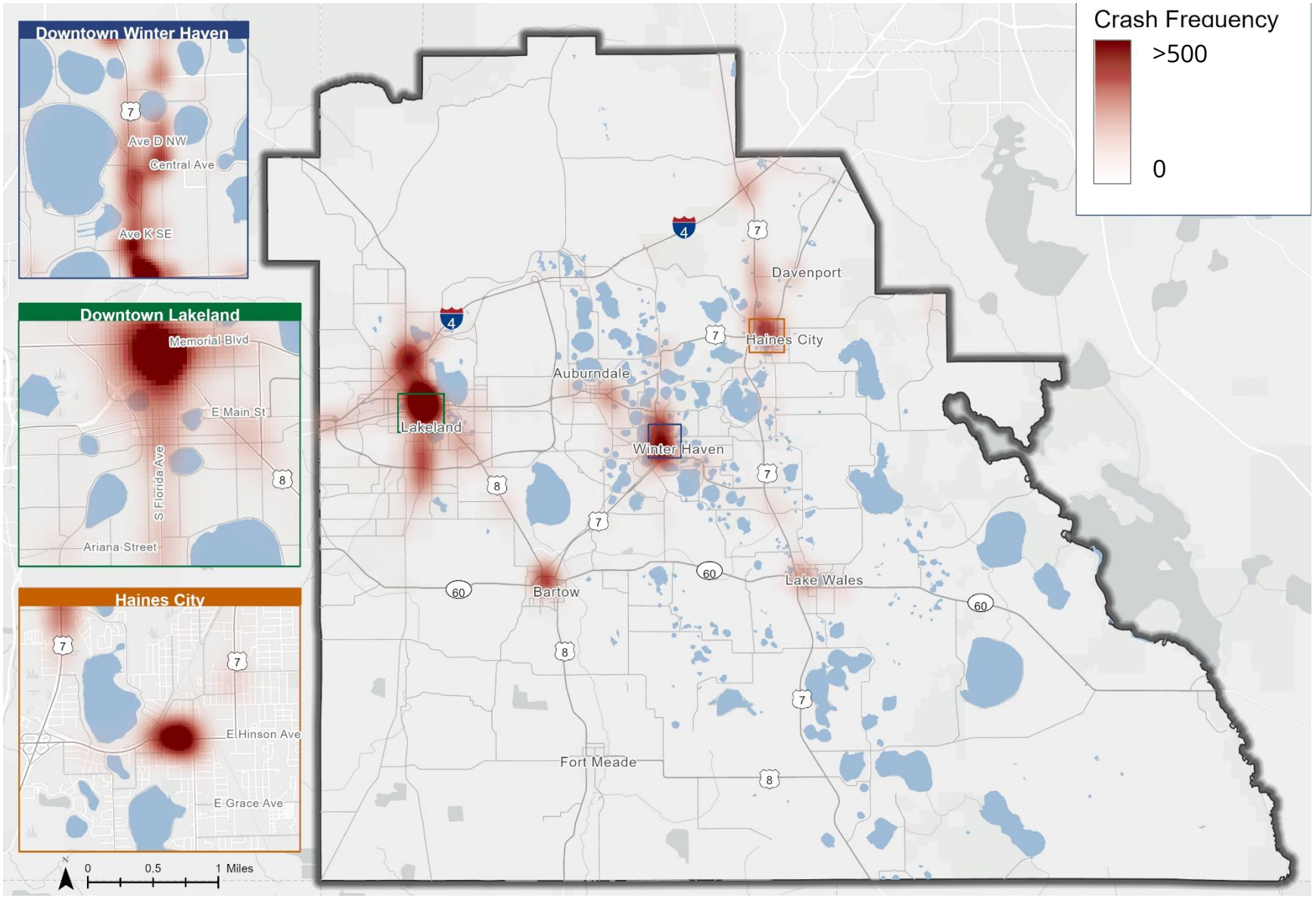
In Polk County, roadways with the highest crash rates are near the downtown cores of several cities, the highest being downtown Lakeland.

Specific intersections where crashes occur most often include:

- Lakeland
  - Florida Avenue and Memorial Boulevard
  - Florida Avenue and Bartow Road
  - I-4 exit 32 and US-98
- Winter Haven
  - U.S. Route 17 between Cypress Gardens Boulevard and Havendale Boulevard
  - Cypress Creek Boulevard between US-17 and Overlook Drive
- Haines City
  - US-17 and 3rd Street, 4th Street, and Jones Avenue
- Bartow
  - US-98/SR-60 through the US-17 intersection

Map 3-17 shows the roadways with higher-frequency crashes compared to the rest of the roadway network.

## Map 3-17: Crashes in Polk County | 2023

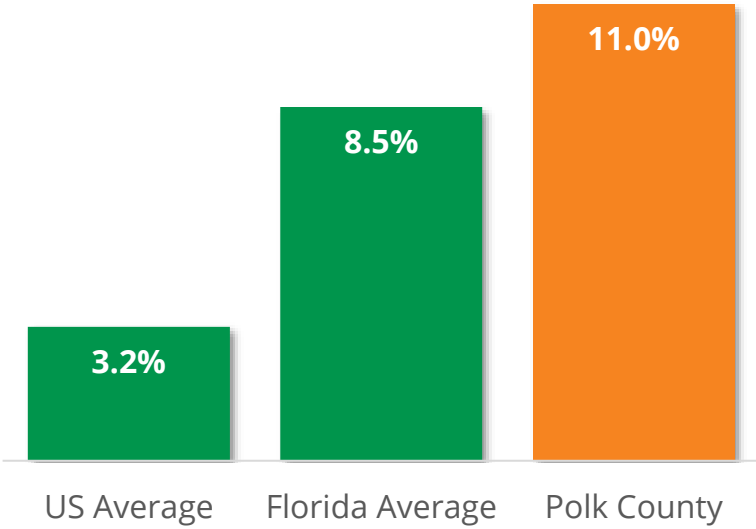



*Source: Signal 4*

## *Seasonal Residents*

Like tourists, seasonal residents also enjoy Polk County's attractions and amenities during the winter and spring months. These residents could benefit from transit services connecting them to popular destinations or the airports. According to the ACS, more than 10% of Polk County dwelling units is for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. This is slightly higher than the Florida average and more than three times the US average (Figure 3-18). This suggests that Citrus Connection should consider special or enhanced services when seasonal residents and visitors are present.

**Figure 3-18: Percent of Seasonal Dwelling Units | 2022**




*Source: 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates*

## *Key Trip Attractors and Activity Hubs*

Major activity centers attract residents, employees, or tourists for various activities such as employment, shopping, education, recreation, and cultural events. Understanding the demand of major activity centers as trip generators is crucial to ensure appropriate transit accessibility. The major activity centers discussed below are located throughout the county and close to major roadways.

### *Lakeland Linder International Airport*

Avelo Airlines began passenger service at Lakeland International Airport in June 2024. Avelo Airlines may also expand service by adding routes. According to the City of Lakeland, the airport will complete $1.6 million of upgrades to expand the passenger security screening checkpoint, add additional hold room seating, and improve the rental car offices. The airport generates over $1.5 billion in economic impact to the region. Citrus Connection's Red line currently serves the airport.

*Source: Google Earth*

### *Joker Marchant Stadium*

Joker Marchant Stadium, located adjacent to Lakeland Hills Boulevard, is a historic baseball venue that is the spring training home of the Detroit Tigers. The Detroit Tigers Spring Training has been held in Lakeland since the 1930s. The stadium also hosts the Lakeland Flying Tigers, the Detroit Tigers' minor league affiliate, and other community events, concerts, and baseball tournaments.

Currently, Citrus Connection's Pink Line serves the stadium. The TIGERTOWN Express Pilot Service began in 2024 and will operate service to Joker Marchant Stadium from various park and ride facilities during spring training seasons through 2028.

### *Downtown Lakeland*

According to Lakeland Downtown Development Authority, also known as Downtown Lakeland, there are 40 restaurants, 20 retail stores, 7 salons and spas, or other attractions in the area such as parks, higher education centers, and an outdoor amphitheater. In April 2024, Lakeland's City Commission adopted the Downtown West Action Plan to improve multimodal connectivity. Most west Polk County transit routes can be accessed from downtown Lakeland in addition to the Purple route connecting Lakeland to Winter Haven.

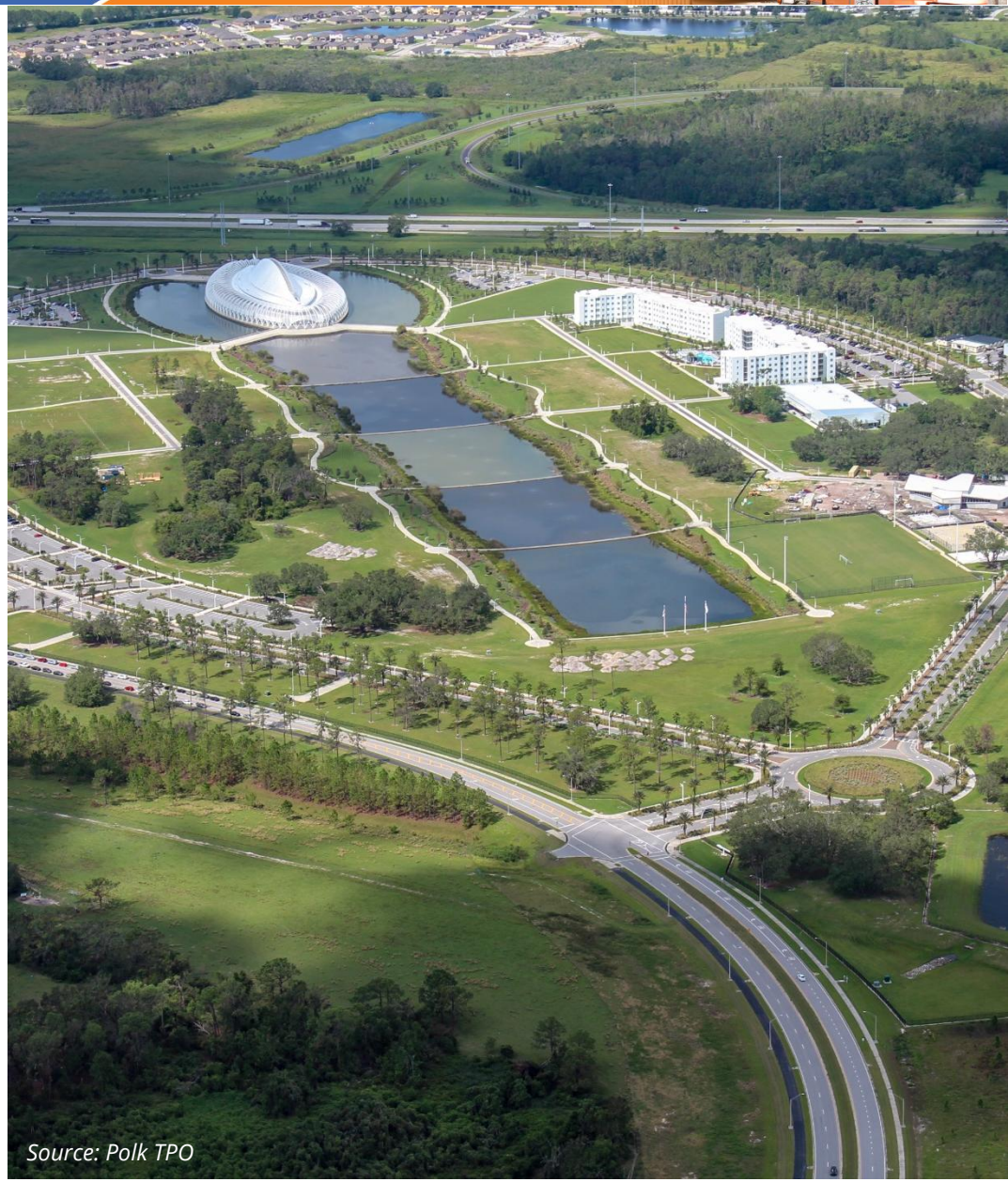
*Source: Polk TPO*

### *Higher Education Centers*

Polk County is home to higher education institutions that cater to student populations and offer a wide range of academic programs. Key institutions include:

- Florida Polytechnic University
- Florida Southern College
- Polk State College
- Ridge Technical College
- Southeastern University
- Warner University
- Webber International University

Florida Southern College and Southeastern University campuses are in Lakeland. Polk State College has multiple campuses with locations in Lakeland, Winter Haven, Bartow, and Lake Wales. Florida Polytechnic University and Ridge Technical College campuses are in Winter Haven while Warner University is in Lake Wales. Webber International University is in Babson Park. Southeastern University and Polk State College participate in the UAP, discussed more in the next section. Through the UAP all enrolled students have access to Citrus Connection network. There are approximately 14,800 students enrolled at Polk State College with 90% being Polk County residents, according to Polk State College. Citrus Connection also serves Ridge Technical College.



*Source: Polk TPO*

### *Bok Tower Gardens*

Bok Tower Gardens is a designated National Historic Landmark located in Lake Wales east of US-17. The 250 acre property features gardens, walking paths, a visitor center, shops, and a cafe. It can host group events, weddings, and concerts. This attraction currently has no transit connections.

### *Legoland*

Legoland is a 150 acre theme park located in Winter Haven. It also offers a water park, two on-site hotels, and other attractions. Customers can connect to the park at nearby transit stops on Old Helena Road and Legoland Way via Citrus Connection Route 30, which connects to the nearby Winter Haven Terminal.

Furthermore, Legoland participates in the UAP program, allowing employees to access any transit route seven days a week by presenting their ID badge.

*Source: Polk TPO*

## *Tourism*

Tourists are an important group of customers to consider when identifying local and regional transportation needs. Regional connections to nearby international airports would cost less than renting a car and would be convenient for visitors who do not want to or cannot drive. Residents and tourists traveling around the region will also benefit if transit is a convenient option and reduces congestion.

With its central location and many attractions, tourism is a key local industry. According to the Central Florida Development Council (CFDC), Polk County hosts over 5 million visitors annually. It is also Florida's top host of amateur sporting events, hosting more than 260 and generating more than $149 million in economic impact annually. It is estimated that 41,000 employees support tourism and hospitality.

*Source: Polk TPO*

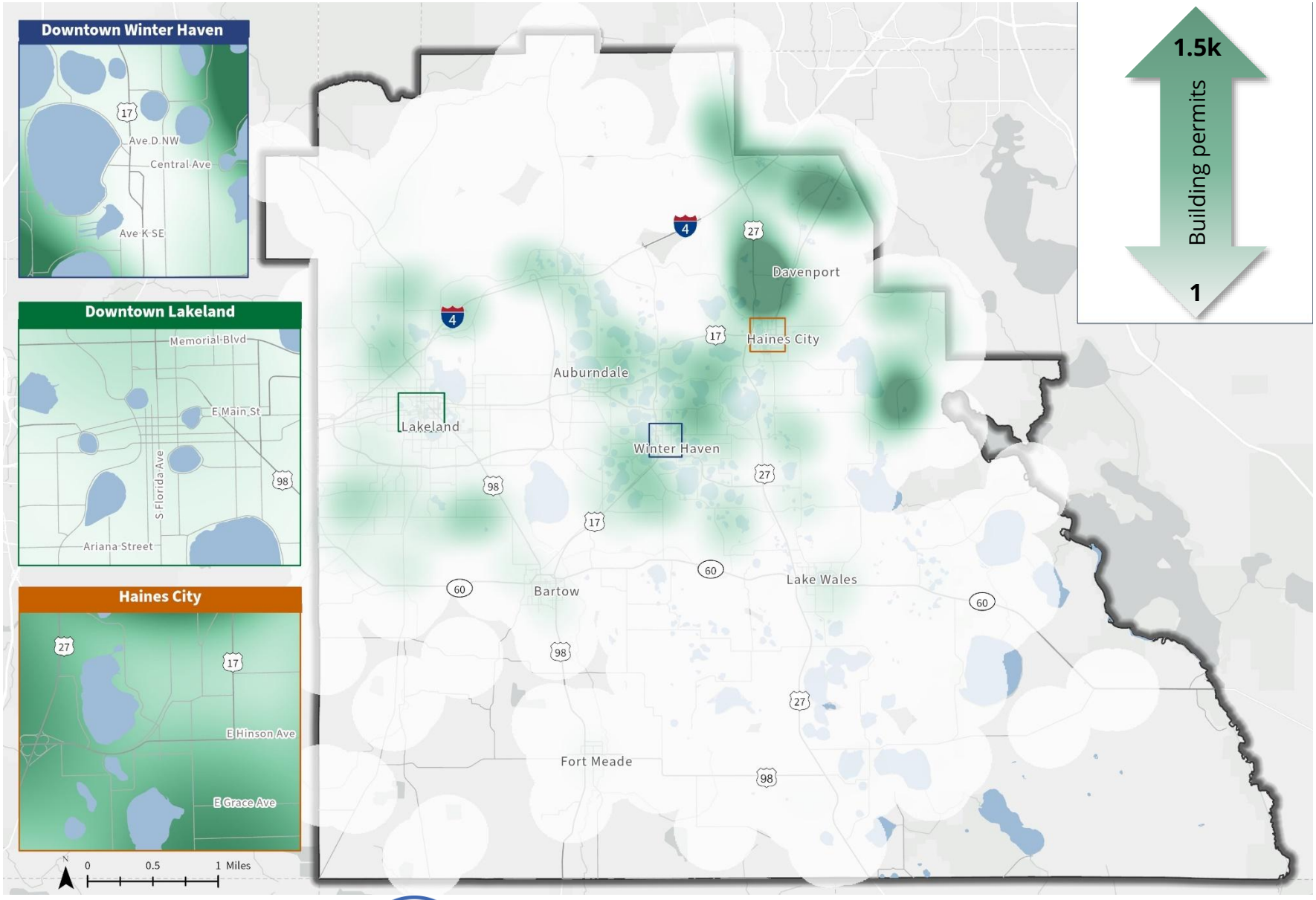
## *Growth and Development*

Polk County is growing rapidly, and new development affects where and how transit services should be operated in the future. As major employers or new developments can be large transit trip generators, it is important to understand location relative to existing transit services.

Map 3-18 showcases where building permits have been issued over the past five years, indicating potential patterns in recent development. Although nearly 16,000 building permits were issued, hot spots of development include northeast Polk County area including Davenport, Haines City, Poinciana, Auburndale, and Haines City.

*Source: Polk TPO*

## Map 3-18: Building Permits Issued in Polk County| 2018-2023




CitrusConnection
PROGRESS IN MOTION

Polk Transportation Planning Organization

*Source: Polk County*

*Housing*

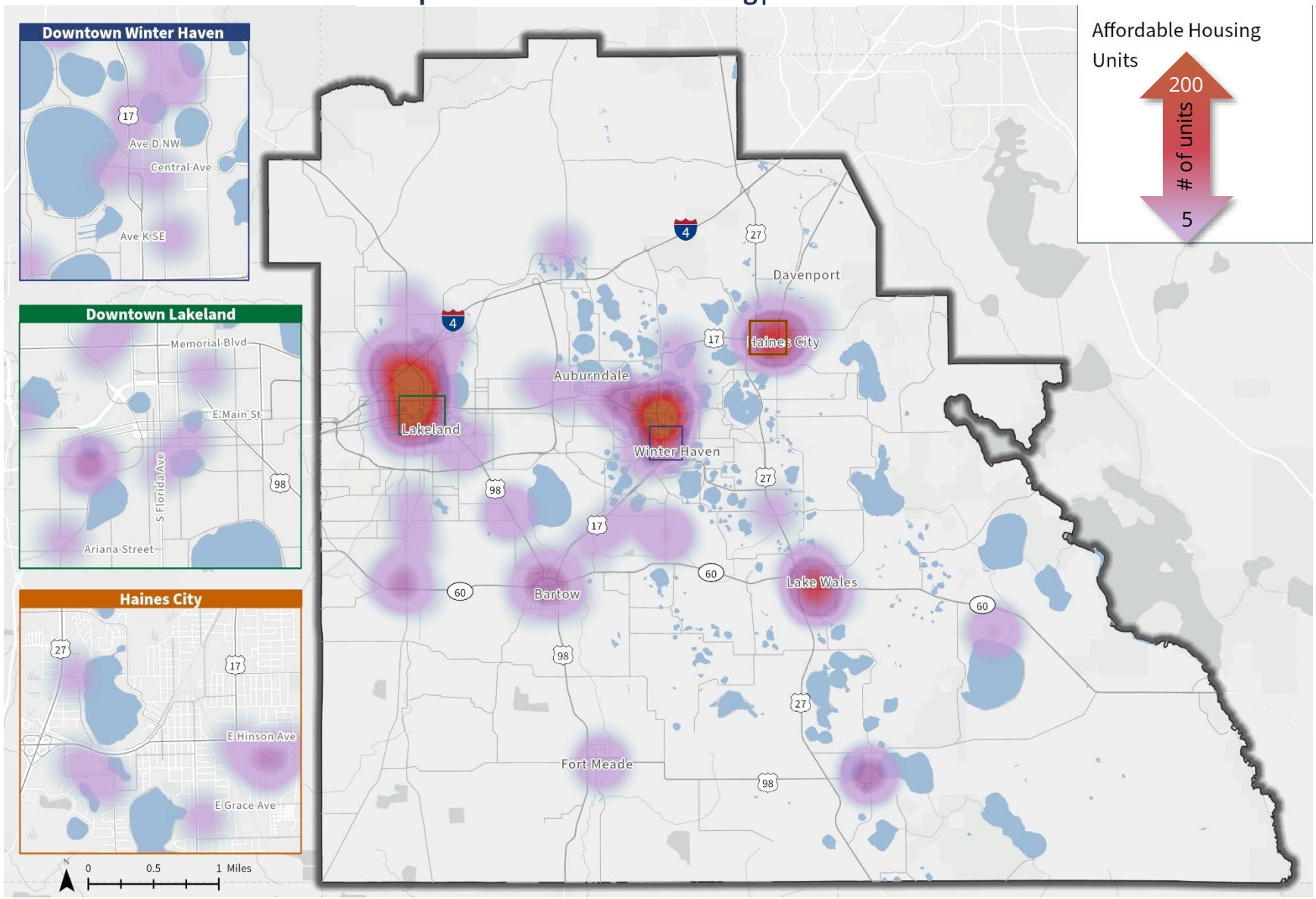
A combination of federal and local programs provides funding assistance for housing coordination. Reflecting data from the Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse, Table 3-4 summarizes the 7,766 assisted units in Polk County by location. Map 3-19 shows the coordinated housing locations by number of units.

**Table 3-4: Coordinated Housing Properties and Units by Location | 2024**

| Location | Assisted Units |
|---|---|
| **Auburndale** | 193 |
| **Bartow** | 688 |
| **Fort Meade** | 83 |
| **Frostproof** | 101 |
| **Haines City** | 687 |
| **Lake Alfred** | 30 |
| **Lake Wales** | 731 |
| **Lakeland** | 3,129 |
| **Mulberry** | 187 |
| **Polk City** | 35 |
| **Unincorporated Polk County** | 115 |
| **Winter Haven** | 1,787 |
| **Total** | 7,766 |

*Source: Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse*

## Map 3-19: Coordinated Housing| 2023




*Source: Florida Housing Data Clearinghouse*

## Demographics & Travel Demand Trend Overview | 2022 to 2025

Polk County has been shaped by shifts in population growth, demographics, new key activity hubs, and travel behavior. Since the adoption of the Polk Transit Vision 2032 TDP in 2022, Polk County has experienced ongoing population growth accompanied by significant new developments throughout the area.

The Cities of Davenport and Haines City continue to be the fastest growing incorporated areas within Polk County, 37.3% and 32.3% growth from 2020 to 2023, respectively. Although growth will continue throughout Polk County, according to the 2050 population density maps, density in eastern Polk County will continue to increase at a faster rate than other areas in Polk County.

Since the 2022 TDP, the proportion of households in Polk County making more than $50,000 annually has increased by 8.4%, while the proportion of residents living in poverty decreased in tandem. Simultaneously, the proportion of zero-vehicle households increased by 2.9%.

While the proportion of residents with a high school diploma continues to be the most common level of education attainment, the proportion of residents that have attended some college or have a bachelors degree or higher has increased marginally.

The top five employers included in the Polk Transit Vision 2032 TDP continue to be the top employers in 2025, with additional employees. Updated BEBR estimates indicate the share of working adults and the age bracket that would most likely be commuting, 25 to 64, would remain approximately half of the total population. Since the 2022 TDP, the proportion of commuters who choose to drive alone and worked from home has increased by 5.0% and 4.8%, respectively. While the 2022 TDP shows the majority (59.8%) of those who drove alone had a commute time of 30 minutes or less, all commuters that had a commute of 30 minutes or less is now 48.5%. Hillsborough County continues to be the top inflow and outflow pattern for commuters.

Roadways including I-4 and parts of US 27 continue to have high traffic volume with more than 50,000 annual average daily vehicles in both 2022 and 2025 TDPs. With additional employment opportunities, local and regionally, there may be a demand for alternative transportation options as traffic continues to increase with a higher share of commuters choosing to drive alone.

## Existing Transit Service Evaluation

This section provides a snapshot of current Citrus Connection services and facilities. Information on other public transportation services within the county or that offer regional connections is also summarized to provide a comprehensive picture of transit options available for Polk County residents and visitors.

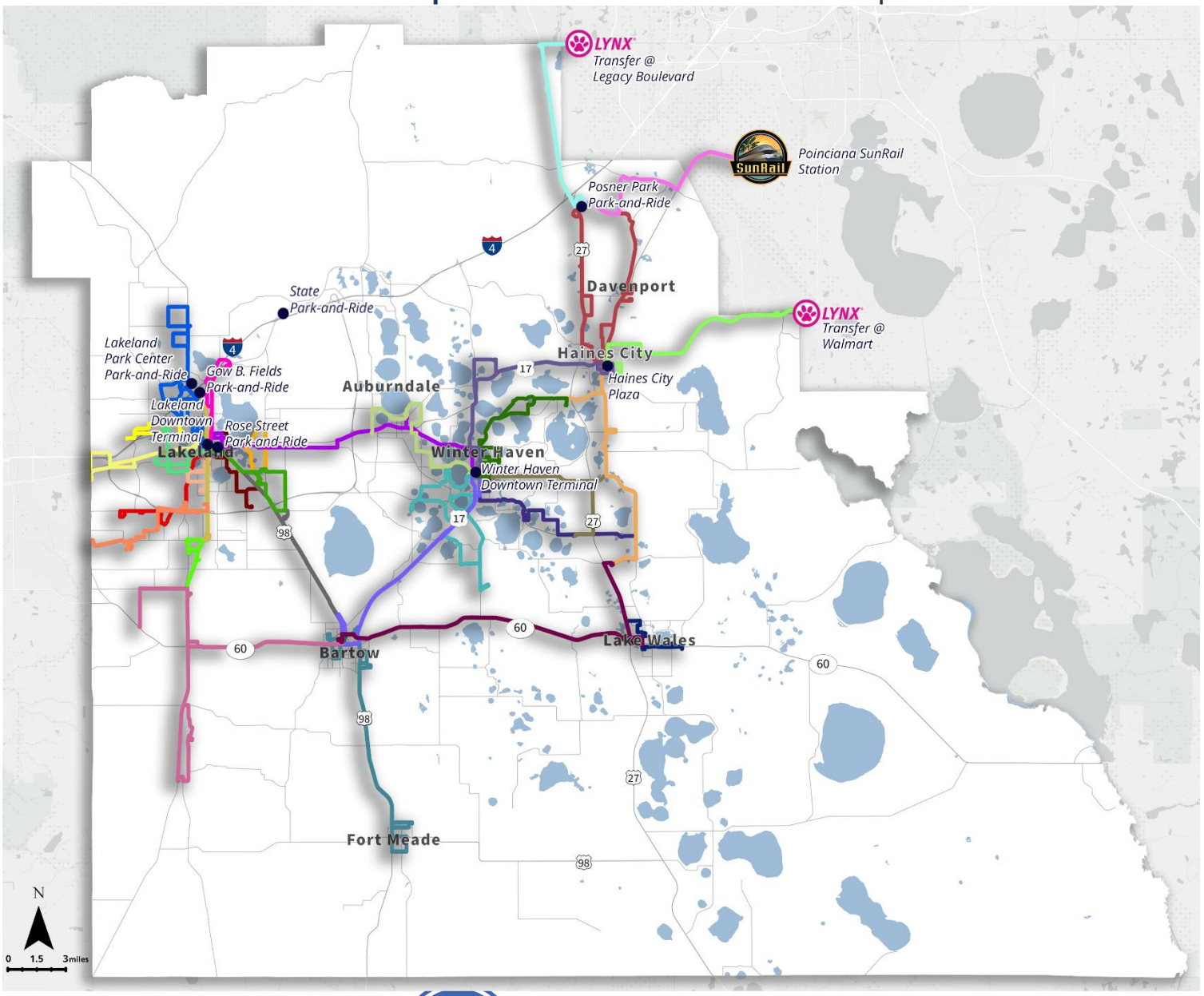
### *Citrus Connection Overview*

Starting in 1983, transit in Polk County was provided by the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD) now operating as Citrus Connection. Since 2015, Citrus Connection has operated all public transportation services in the county, including rural routes servicing Bartow and Fort Meade. These routes, along with countywide paratransit service, were provided previously by Winter Haven Area Transit (WHAT) and Polk County Transit System (PCTS). These three agencies operated independently of each other, creating challenges and inefficiencies given the limited funding and other resources available between the two designated urbanized areas and vast rural areas in the county.

Citrus Connection's current fixed-route system consists of 31 routes providing local and regional access for Polk County residents and visitors (Map 3-20). The Squeeze, a localized golf-cart shuttle service, serves Bartow, Lakeland, and Lake Wales.

*Source: Benesch*

## Map 3-20: Citrus Connection Network | October 2024




CitrusConnection
PROGRESS IN MOTION

**East Routes**

- 15
- 16X
- 17X
- 18X
- 19X
- 20X
- 21X East
- 22XW
- 25
- 27X
- 30
- 40/44
- 50
- 60
- Lake Wales Circulator

**West Routes**

- Blue Line
- Circulator East
- Circulator West
- Coral Line
- Gold Line
- Green Line
- Lemon Line
- Lime Flex Line
- Orange Line
- Peach Line
- Pink Line
- Purple Line
- Red Line
- Silver Line
- Yellow Line
- 21X West

*Source: Citrus Connection*

## *Network Profile*

Tables 3-5, 3-6, 3-7, and 3-8 show the weekday and weekend service spans for all Citrus Connection routes. All current headways are 30 minutes or longer. Morning service begins at 5:45 AM in the east and west areas on select routes. During peak morning hours (6:00–9:00 AM), all routes are in operation.

### *East Routes*

Most east routes operate with weekday headways of 45 minutes or longer. Route 27X has limited service from Dundee to and from the Eagle Ridge Mall, Walmart, and Winter Haven Transfer Center. All routes have a more limited service on Saturdays, with most operating 90-minute headways or longer. The Lake Wales Circulator has 40-minute service on Saturday. Route 30, serving Legoland, is the only route that operates on Sunday with funding from Legoland. It serves the theme park and other stops every 2 hours.

### *West Routes*

The Gold, Peach, and Pink Lines provide 30-minute service in western Polk County. The Peach Line, serving the area around Florida Avenue in Lakeland, begins service at 6:17 AM and ends at 7:05 PM; this is the longest service span among the routes with 30-minute headways.

Like the east routes, most west routes have limited Saturday service. The Blue, Lemon, and Yellow Lines, the Circulator Eastside, and the Circulator Westside have headways of 2 hours or greater on Saturdays. Most west routes operate from 7:15 AM to 3:00 PM on the weekends.

**15** Routes serve East Polk

**14** Routes serve West Polk

**3** Routes connects East-West

**Table 3-5: Citrus Connection Network | East Routes**

| Route | Weekday | | Saturday | | Sunday | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Headway**** | ***Service Span*** | ***Headway**** | ***Service Span*** | ***Headway**** | ***Service Span*** |
| **15** | 90 | 5:45 AM - 7:05 PM | 180 | 6:40 AM - 2:55 PM | | |
| **16X** | 90 | 6:25 AM - 7:45 PM | | | | |
| **17X** | 120 | 6:15 AM - 7:10 PM | 120 | 7:25 AM - 3:06 PM | | |
| **18X** | 90 | 5:45 AM - 7:06 PM | 90 | 7:15 AM - 4:06 PM | | |
| **19X** | 30/60 | 5:45 AM - 7:10 PM | | | | |
| **20X** | 90 | 5:45 AM - 7:05 PM | 90 | 7:15 AM - 4:05 PM | | |
| **22XW** | 90 | 5:45 AM - 7:04 PM | 240 | 8:15 AM - 1:34 PM | | |
| **25** | 60/75 | 5:45 AM - 6:23 PM | | | | |
| **27X** | 300 | 6:00 AM - 7:05 PM | | | | |
| **30** | 60 | 6:15 AM - 7:00 PM | 120 | 7:15 AM - 4:00 PM | 120 | 8:15 AM - 3:00 PM |
| **40/44** | 90 | 5:45 AM - 7:02 PM | 180 | 6:45 AM - 3:02 PM | | |
| **50** | 90 | 5:45 AM - 7:00 PM | 240 | 8:15 AM - 1:30 PM | | |
| **60** | 90 | 5:15 AM - 5:45 PM | | | | |
| **603** | 120 | 6:10 AM - 6:10 PM | 120 | 6:10 AM - 6:10 PM | | |
| **Lake Wales Circulator** | 55 | 6:15 AM - 5:55 PM | 55 | 8:15 AM - 4:36 PM | | |

*Source: Citrus Connection*

**in minutes rounded to the nearest 15-minute interval*

**Table 3-6: Citrus Connection Network | West Routes**

| Line | Weekday | | Saturday | | Sunday | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Headway**** | ***Service Span*** | ***Headway**** | ***Service Span*** | ***Headway**** | ***Service Span*** |
| **Blue** | 45 | 5:45 AM - 6:50 PM | 150 | 7:15 AM - 2:27 PM | | |
| **Circulator Eastside** | 60 | 6:15 AM - 6:09 PM | 120 | 8:15 AM - 2:09 PM | | |
| **Circulator Westside** | 60 | 6:15 AM - 6:05 PM | 120 | 7:15 AM - 3:05 PM | | |
| **Coral** | 90 | 7:45 AM - 5:30 PM | | | | |
| **Gold** | 30 | 6:15 AM - 6:35 PM | 30 | 7:15 AM - 3:35 PM | | |
| **Green** | 60 | 6:15 AM - 6:05 PM | 60 | 7:15 AM - 3:05 PM | | |
| **Lemon** | 60 | 5:45 AM - 5:38 PM | 120 | 7:15 AM - 3:06 PM | | |
| **Lime** | 60 | 6:15 AM - 6:08 PM | | | | |
| **Orange** | 60 | 6:15 AM - 6:06 PM | 60 | 7:15 AM - 3:05 PM | | |
| **Peach** | 30 | 6:17 AM - 7:05 PM | 60 | 7:17 AM - 3:05 PM | | |
| **Pink** | 30 | 6:15 AM - 6:08 PM | | | | |
| **Red** | 60 | 5:45 AM - 5:35 PM | | | | |
| **Silver** | 45 | 5:45 AM - 5:49 PM | | | | |
| **Yellow** | 60 | 6:15 AM - 5:59 PM | 120 | 8:15 AM - 1:59 PM | | |

*Source: Citrus Connection*

**in minutes rounded to the nearest 15 minute interval*

**Table 3-7: Citrus Connection Network | East-West Service**

| Line | Weekday | | Saturday | | Sunday | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Headway**** | ***Service Span*** | ***Headway**** | ***Service Span*** | ***Headway**** | ***Service Span*** |
| **Purple** | 90 | 5:45 AM - 6:50 PM | 120 | 7:15 AM - 3:05 PM | | |
| **21X East** | 120 | 6:30 AM - 6:05 PM | 120 | 7:30 AM - 3:05 PM | | |
| **21X West** | 120 | 6:30 AM - 6:17 PM | 120 | 7:30 AM - 3:17 PM | | |

*Source: Citrus Connection*
**in minutes rounded to the nearest 15 minute interval*

**Table 3-8: Citrus Connection Network | Squeeze Service**

| Service | Weekday | | Saturday | | Sunday | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Headway*** | ***Service Span*** | ***Headway*** | ***Service Span*** | ***Headway*** | ***Service Span*** |
| **Bartow - Lunch** | 10 | 10:30 AM - 2:30 PM | | | | |
| **Lake Wales - Lunch** | 12 | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM | | | | |
| **Lakeland - Lunch** | 6-8 | 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM | | | | |
| **Lakeland - Day** | 25 | 8:00 AM - 3:05 PM | 25 | 8:00 AM - 3:05 PM | | |
| **Lakeland - Night** | 25 | 4:00 PM - 11:05 PM | 25 | 4:00 PM - 11:05 PM | | |

*Source: Citrus Connection*

*The Squeeze*

The Squeeze is a fare free shuttle service, providing service within three Polk County downtown areas. The Lakeland Lunch Squeeze is sponsored by the Lakeland Downtown Development Authority (LDDA) while the Bartow and Lake Wales Squeeze services are paid for by their respective municipalities.

Over the past two years, The Squeeze has expanded from serving only downtown Lakeland to Bartow and Lake Wales and expanding service hours in Lakeland. The service runs during weekday lunch hours in Lakeland (11:00 AM - 2:00 PM), Lake Wales (11:00 AM - 2:00 PM), Bartow (10:30 AM - 2:30 PM). The Squeeze also operates on Friday and Saturday from 8:00 AM - 3:05 PM and 4:00 PM - 11:00 PM throughout Lakeland. Appendix B shows the current Squeeze routes.

**5** Squeeze shuttles serve Polk County

*Source: Citrus Connection*

## *Existing Regional Connections*

There are currently three Citrus Connection routes that service locations where customers can transfer to transit networks in adjacent counties.

Route 18X serves Four Corners in Orange County, connecting to the LYNX bus network via Legacy Boulevard. Route 19X serves the Poinciana SunRail Station in Osceola County, with connections to both SunRail and LYNX services. Route 16X connects to LYNX at Walmart in Poinciana, Osceola County.

On weekdays, Routes 16X and 18X run between 5:45 AM-7:00 PM, while 19X runs from 6:25 AM-7:45 PM. Route 18X operates on Saturdays 7:15 AM-4:00 PM.

## *Recent Service Improvements and Additions*

Resources from Route 35 were repurposed to improve the 21X and 22XW routes to 90-minute headways. Changes to expand coverage were made to Routes 15 and 60. In western Polk County, resources from the Cyan Line were repurposed to implement four new routes: the Coral Line serving southwest Lakeland; the Lemon Line serving west Lakeland; and two circulator routes serving interior Lakeland neighborhoods east and west of downtown. Additionally, the Blue and Orange Lines were streamlined and Circulator East was extended to connect to the Veterans Administration Hospital. To improve on-time performance, a second bus was added to the Silver Line and the Lemon Line was modified.

*Source: Polk TPO*

Citrus Connection also has implemented a fare-free seasonal service, the TIGERTOWN Express, to Joker Marchant Stadium for the Detroit Tigers Spring Training games. The TIGERTOWN Express serves the following locations:

- Gow B. Fields Park-and-Ride
- Lakeland Park Center
- Rose Street Park-and-Ride
- RP Funding Center
- Select hotels in the Lakeside Village area

The TIGERTOWN Express has four routes. The north route connects customers to and from Lakeland Park Center and Gow B. Fields park-and-rides to the stadium every 10-12 minutes. The south route connects to and from the RP Center and Rose Street park-and-rides to the stadium every 13-15 minutes. The Lakeside Village route serves that area along with other park-and-rides. The northeast route services the Socrum Loop neighborhoods north of Griffin Road every 13-15 minutes. Figure 3-1 shows the flag at each park-and-ride for recognition.

*Source: Citrus Connection*

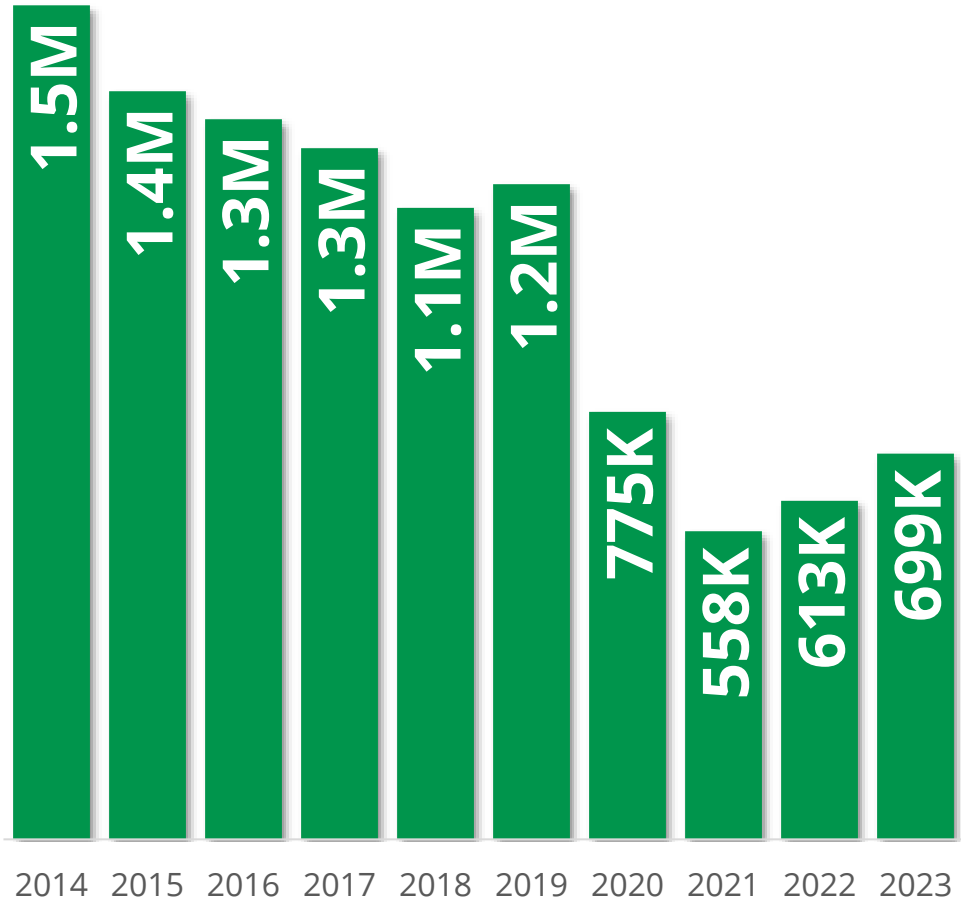
## *Ridership Trends*

Figure 3-19 summarizes Citrus Connection ridership trends from 2014 to 2023, based on data from Florida Transit Information System (FTIS), and validated National Transit Database (NTD) data.

From 2014-2018, Citrus Connection ridership steadily decreased from 1.5 million passenger trips to 1.1 million (-24.3%). However, in 2019, ridership increased to 1.2 million.

Due to a 2020 public health emergency, in 2021, ridership decreased significantly from 2019 (-53%). According to the Congressional Research Service, nationwide transit ridership fell by approximately 50% of pre-emergency levels in 2020 and 2021. More recently, Citrus Connection's ridership increased 25.2% from 2021 to 2023.

**Figure 3-19: Citrus Connection Ridership | 2014 - 2023**




*Source: FTIS and Citrus Connection*

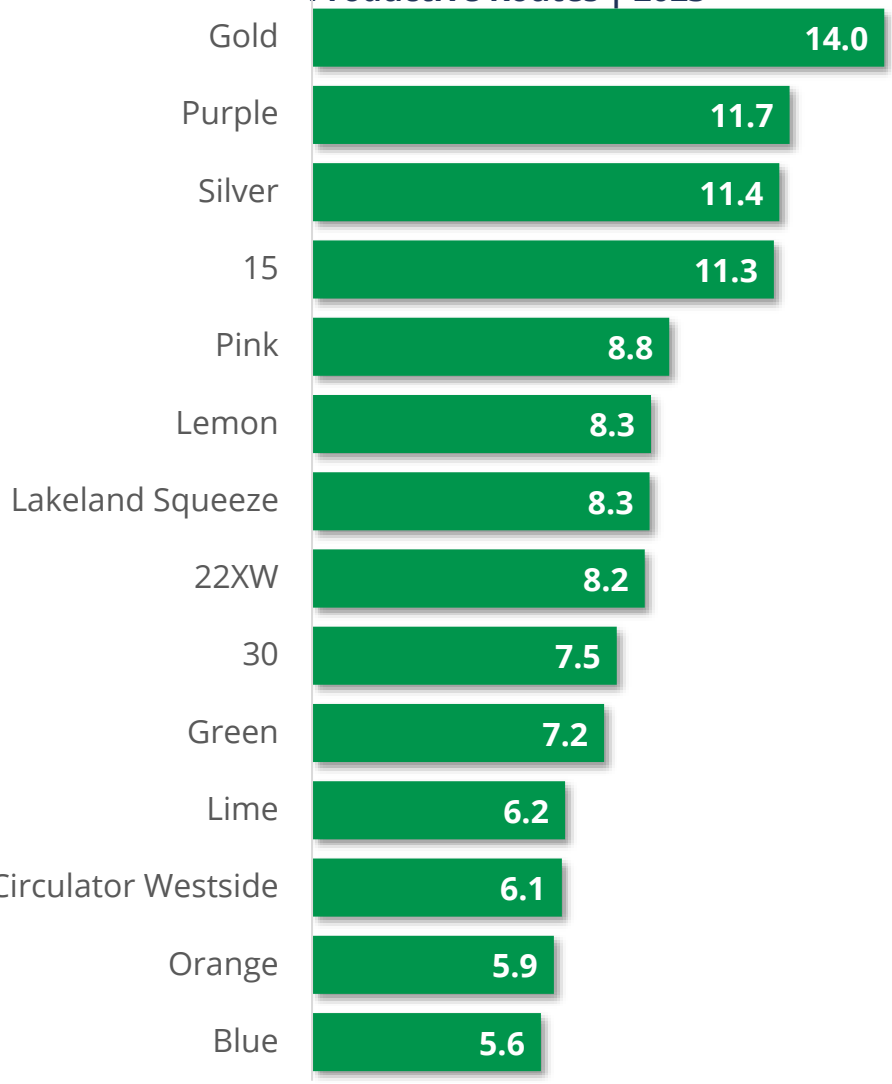
*Ridership Productivity*

While the absolute number of trips generated by a route is one way to assess its productivity, it may not fully capture the overall performance or potential. Routes may operate at various times at different frequencies. Exploring trips per revenue hour by route normalizes the average amount of service supplied to examine productivity. Trips per revenue hour is defined as the number of passenger trips in an hour while a route is in service.

In FY 2023, the average trips per revenue hour systemwide was 5.2. Figure 3-20 shows the most productive Citrus Connection routes that surpass the systemwide average.

Citrus Connection's most productive route is the Gold Line, with 14 customers per revenue hour. The Purple Line, Silver Line, and Route 15 serve 11 customers per hour on average. All other routes serve less than 10 customers per hour.

**Figure 3-20: Citrus Connection Ridership | Most Productive Routes | 2023**




*Source: Citrus Connection*

*Ridership by Bus Stop*

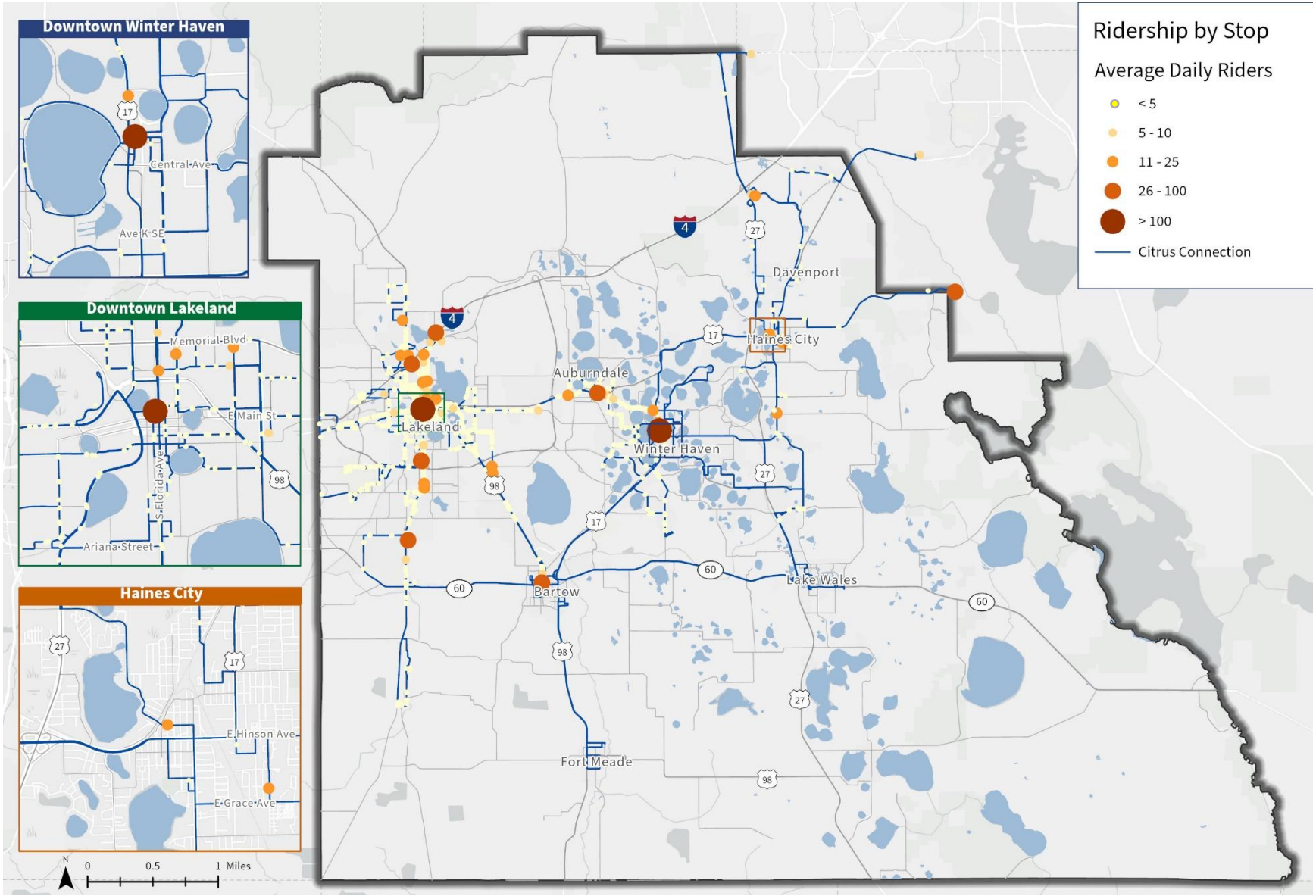
Most Citrus Connection bus stops are in incorporated areas with higher density and employment. As the availability and use of these capital facilities is important to understand, GIS data on ridership/activity were analyzed.

Map 3-21 shows that the highest activity occurs at the transfer centers facilitating connections between routes. Most facilities with higher ridership are located along corridors with a high density of retail and major attractions, such as Florida Avenue.

The park-and-rides lots connecting riders to and from other regional transit systems have at least 5 daily boardings with the SunRail station connection averaging at least 26 daily boardings. Other areas with notable ridership are in Auburndale, Bartow, and Haines City.

*Source: Google*

## Map 3-21: Citrus Connection | Average Daily Ridership by Stop




*Source: Citrus Connection*

## *Paratransit Services*

Citrus Connection also provides transportation options for individuals who are unable to use the bus system or otherwise qualify for door-to-door paratransit service under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Citrus Connection features an online reservation system for paratransit trips via its website.

### *ADA Paratransit*

Citrus Connection's ADA paratransit serves customers who are unable to use fixed-route services. Paratransit services have a specialized fleet with wheelchair lift-equipped buses and functions as a call ahead, door-to-door service for older adults, disadvantaged citizens, and individuals with disabilities throughout Polk County. One-way fares for the service are $2 and customers can find information on the website. Citrus Connection requires residents to qualify and encourages transportation plans to be made ahead of time. The paratransit service hours are comparable to fixed-route with reservations taken Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM and 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM on Saturdays, excluding holidays. Customers must apply for and be certified as qualified to use the ADA paratransit service. A qualifying individual can be picked up within ¾-miles of a fixed route and there is no limit to the number of rides once they are qualified.

*Source: Citrus Connection*

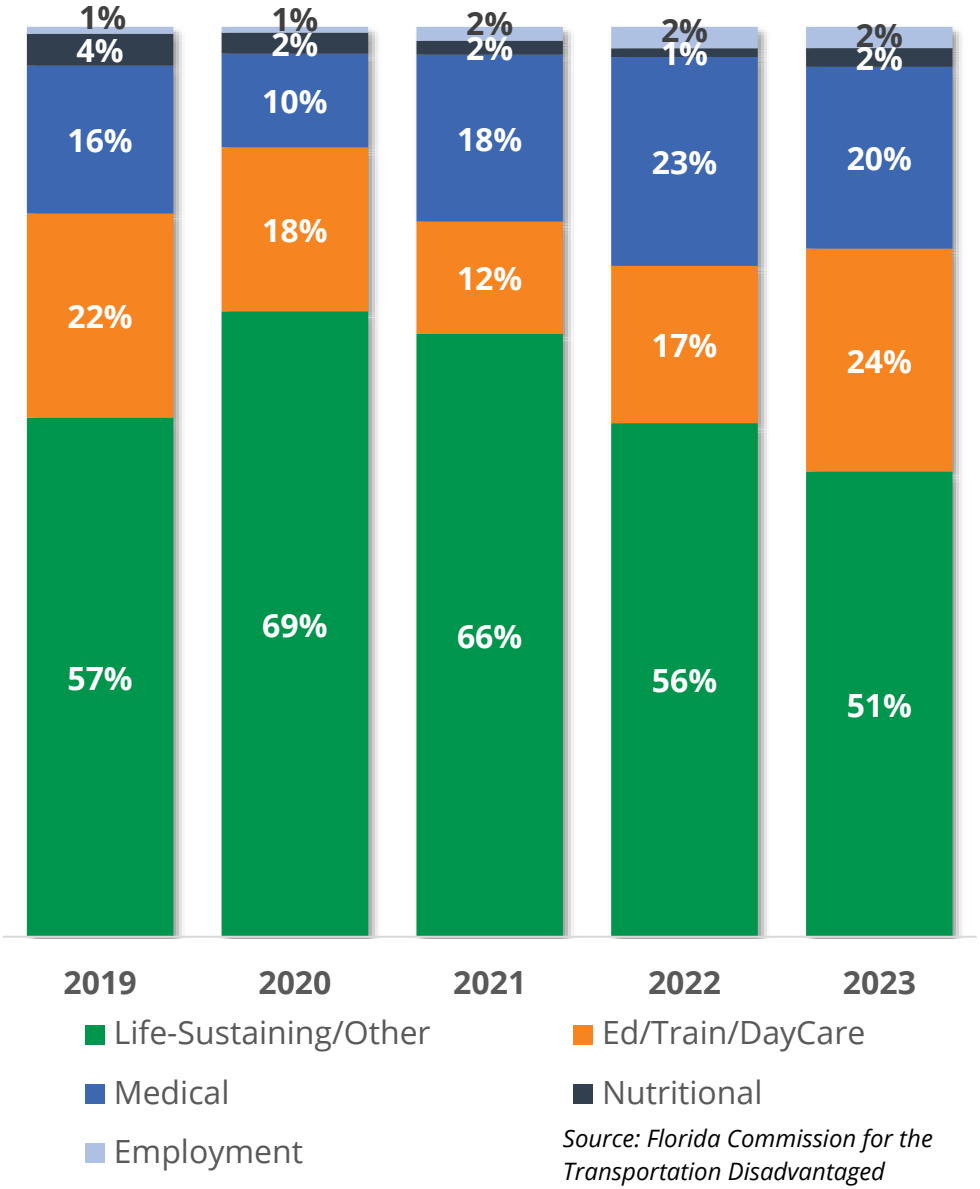
## *Transportation Disadvantaged*

Citrus Connection serves as Polk County's Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) program. This state-funded program serves at-risk children, older adults, individuals with disabilities, and low-income residents.

TD trips are categorized by trip purpose as Employment, Medical, Education/Training/Day Care, Nutritional, or Life-Sustaining/Other. Trips categorized as Life-Sustaining and Other have been the largest proportion of TD trips in Polk County, with over half of the total annual trips in the previous five years.

Education/Training/Day Care and Medical trips are also common, while Employment and Nutrition combined were less than 5% in each of the previous five years (Figure 3-21). It is worth noting that, following 2020, there was decrease in the share of Life-Sustaining trips (from 69% in 2020 to 51% in 2023), with each of the four other categories making up greater proportion of trips.

**Figure 3-21: Transportation Disadvantaged | Trip Purpose**




*Source: Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged*

## *Current Fare Structure*

Table 3-9 shows the current Citrus Connection fare structure. Customers should have either exact cash, a SMARTCARD, or their phone to show digital payment.

### *Digital Payment*

Citrus Connection offers customers the convenience of contactless fare payment using the mPass app. In the app, customers can pay their fare via credit/debit card or digital services such as ApplePay, Google Pay, or Masterpass.

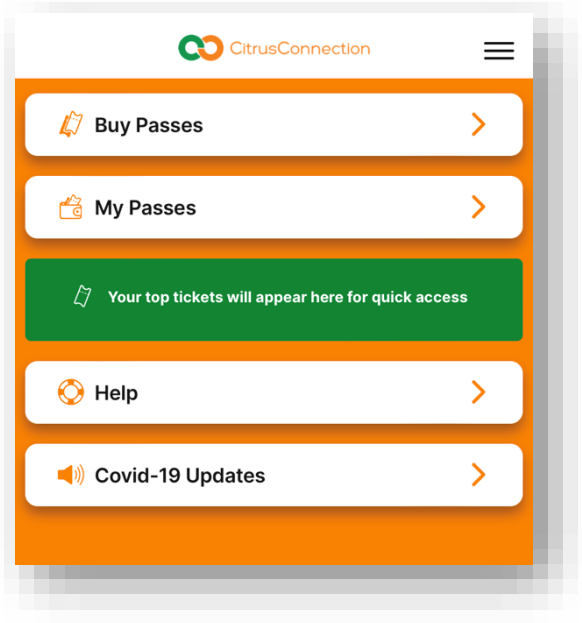



**Table 3-9: Citrus Connection | Fare**

| Type | Price |
|---|---|
| **Single Fare** | |
| **Adults** | $1.50 |
| **Students** | $1.25 |
| **Seniors (65+)** | $0.75 |
| **Disabled** | $0.75 |
| **ADA Paratransit** | $2.00 |
| **ADA Fixed-Route** | FREE |
| **Children** | FREE |
| **Multi-Fare Passes** | |
| **Monthly Pass** | $47.00 |
| **Weekly Unlimited Pass** | $12.00 |
| **Adult Day Pass** | $3.00 |
| **Student Day Pass** | $2.50 |
| **Senior/Disabled Day Pass** | $1.50 |
| **Senior/Disabled Week Pass** | $9.00 |
| **Senior/Disabled Monthly Pass** | $31.50 |

*Source: Citrus Connection*

## *Universal Access Partnership*

The UAP program allows members of participating organizations to ride Citrus Connection for free with a valid ID. This service is aimed at schools and employers looking to help their students or employees find alternative ways to travel.

The following entities, among others, currently participate in the UAP:

- Polk State College
- Southeastern University
- Legoland
- Polk County Schools
- Lakeland Downtown Development Authority
- Veterans
- Spectrum
- Pace Center for Girls
- Central Florida Healthcare
- Peace River Center
- New Beginnings High School

*Source: Citrus Connection*

## *Capital Facilities/Transit Infrastructure*

A review of the capital assets supporting Citrus Connection was also conducted. The capital inventory includes bus stops, transfer stations, and administrative offices.

### *Bus Stop Infrastructure*

Understanding the placement and distribution of stops can help identify gaps in service. Citrus Connection has more than 1,000 stops throughout its service area and nearly 400 are within the Lakeland city limits. There are over 380 stops distributed throughout unincorporated Polk County (Table 3-10).

**Table 3-10: Citrus Connection | Bus Stops by Location**

| Municipality Name | # of Bus Stops |
|---|---|
| **Lakeland** | 399 |
| **Unincorporated Polk** | 381 |
| **Winter Haven** | 119 |
| **Bartow** | 54 |
| **Auburndale** | 34 |
| **Lake Wales** | 29 |
| **Haines City** | 18 |
| **Lake Alfred** | 15 |
| **Fort Meade** | 14 |
| **Mulberry** | 10 |
| **Davenport** | 4 |
| **Lake Hamilton** | 4 |
| **Dundee** | 3 |
| **Total** | **1,084** |

*Source: Citrus Connection and Transitions*

### *Transfer Facilities*

Currently, there are two bus transfer facilities in Polk County, in Lakeland and Winter Haven. Additionally, there is the SunRail station in Poinciana, located just outside of the Polk County limits. All routes in the respective areas converge to allow customers to transfer to access other various areas of the Citrus Connection service area.

#### Winter Haven Downtown Terminal

Citrus Connection's east transfer hub is the Winter Haven Downtown Terminal, located in downtown Winter Haven at 555 Avenue E NW. The terminal currently serves eight routes, providing transfers to routes across Polk County and to specific points in Orange and Osceola counties. The Purple Line connects Winter Haven to Lakeland as well as Greyhound buses. It has shelters, benches, picnic tables, bicycle racks, and trash cans.

*Source: Polk TPO*

## Lakeland Downtown Terminal

The Lakeland Downtown Terminal is located at 200 N Florida Avenue in downtown Lakeland. The facility provides connections for the west bus routes and is adjacent to rail tracks. The terminal provides a covered waiting area and has benches, trash cans, and designated bicycle storage areas.

This location serves mostly west routes—Blue, Gold, Green, Lemon, Lime, Orange, Peach, Pink, Red, Silver, and Yellow, as well as the Circulator routes. It also connects to the Purple Line serving the Winter Haven Terminal for transfers to other east routes.

*Source: Polk TPO*

## Posner Park Station

The Posner Park Station is in Davenport adjacent to the Posner Village shopping center at the corner of I-4 and US-27. The facility features four shelters with benches and bicycle racks. It also helps customers connect to the US-27 corridor, the Poinciana SunRail station, and LYNX system via routes 18X, 19X, and 20X. Service to and from this station began on September 8, 2020.

*Source: Google*

### SunRail Poinciana Station

Located approximately six miles east of Polk County in Osceola County, the SunRail station in Poinciana is a key part of the regional transit network. SunRail is central Florida's regional commuter rail service. SunRail currently operates over 61 miles with 17 stations between Volusia, Seminole, Orange, and Osceola counties. SunRail connects Citrus Connection customers to the greater Orlando area via both SunRail and LYNX routes serving its Poinciana station located at 5025 S Rail Avenue. Citrus Connection's Route 19X provides service to the station from the Posner Park Park-and-Ride. The station features shelters, bicycle racks, benches, displays, and a park-and-ride lot.

## *Future Facilities*

### SunRail

Recently, FDOT conducted a feasibility study to extend service into Polk County. The study identified proposed/potential future stops in Loughman, Davenport, Haines City, Lake Alfred, Auburndale, Winter Haven, and Lakeland. Loughman, Davenport, and Haines City are the expected locations for the first phase of SunRail station in Polk County.

*Source: Citrus Connection*

### Brightline

Brightline is a high-speed rail service that currently operates from downtown Miami to the Orlando International Airport. The route serves six stations with two additional stations planned to open along this route. Although there is not an official timeline, future service from Orlando to Tampa is being discussed and may include a station in Polk County. This would connect Polk County to Tampa, Orlando, and other major cities in south Florida.

### Lakeland Intermodal Facility

The Lakeland Downtown Terminal currently functions as the primary transfer center for west Polk County routes. There is a need to relocate the Lakeland Intermodal Center to the site identified in the Lakeland Intermodal Study, discussed later in this report. The proposed facility will feature bus bays, park-and-ride lots, multimodal infrastructure, and dedicated areas for passenger drop-off and pick-up, along with other customer amenities.

### East County Facility

The planned East County Facility is intended to enhance operational efficiency by reducing deadhead mileage for transit services in east Polk County. The facility will centralize administrative functions, maintenance operations, and vehicle storage to support these routes.

## *Park-and-Ride Facilities*

Currently, there are five park-and-ride facilities in Polk County, with four that serve the east and west area Citrus Connection routes.

### Posner Park Station Park-and-Ride

The Posner Park Park-and-Ride is in Davenport adjacent to Posner Park's shops and restaurants and I-4. This facility serves customers traveling via routes 18X, 19X, and 20X.

### Gow B. Fields Park-and-Ride

The Gow B. Fields Park-and-Ride on north US-98 adjacent to I-4 was completed in June 2017. It has three shelters with benches and connects the Blue, Pink, and Gold Lines in Lakeland.

### Rose Street Park-and-Ride

The Rose Street Park-and-Ride connects the Purple and Silver Lines in Lakeland. It is adjacent to US-98 and Lake Mirror. The facility features covered benches, bike racks, and a bus bay.

### Lakeland Park Center Park-and-Ride

The Lakeland Park Center Park-and-Ride connects customers to the Gold Line in Lakeland. It is adjacent to US-98 and I-4 with its amenities. The facility is adjacent to the Lakeland Park Center with shops and restaurants.

## State Park-and-Ride

The State Park-and-Ride adjacent to I-4 and SR-33 in Lakeland is not currently served by Citrus Connection. It has 26 parking spots, of which 4 are reserved wheelchair-accessible parking spots.

### *Administrative Facility*

The main administration facility for Citrus Connection is located at 1212 George Jenkins Blvd in Lakeland. It is the hub for all administrative functions, including operations, finance, and all other non-driving work. The administrative offices are attached to a bus garage providing the following functions:

- Maintenance garage
- Fueling station
- Washing station
- Bus storage lot

*Source: Citrus Connection*

### *Fleet Inventory*

Citrus Connection's fleet consists of 45 vehicles. With a fleet-wide average age of 7.7 years, most vehicles (60%) are within their useful life based on FTA guidance. All buses are equipped with bike racks and touchless tap card payment options.

While more vehicles are reaching their expected service life, there are efforts to replace them as they age out of service. Citrus Connection currently has 31 vehicles on order and expects to begin replacing the aging current vehicles within the next year. Many of these vehicles include 26-foot cutaway buses.

### *Other Transit Providers*

The following describes other transit providers within Polk County.

- FlixBus USA & Greyhound runs service through Polk County in Lakeland, Auburndale, Winter Haven, and Lake Wales, connecting directly to several destinations including Tampa, Orlando, and Miami. These bus routes also have connections to other FlixBus and Greyhound lines, connecting Polk County to the rest of the United States and Canada.
- Amtrak has two stations serving Polk County. Lakeland and Winter Haven both have entry points onto Amtrak train routes, connecting to much of the United States.
- As previously mentioned, Citrus Connection has a connecting route to SunRail at Poinciana Station. The existing SunRail route connects Volusia County and Poinciana.
- Although not regularly-scheduled, Uber and Lyft are Transportation Network Companies (TNC) providing app-based on-demand transportation throughout the county. Although service can be requested to and from any location, Uber and Lyft rides are most conveniently accessed in more urban areas where driver supply and rider demand is higher.
- Other local transportation providers in Polk County are shown in Appendix C.

### *Trend Analysis*

This section includes a review of selected service performance trends for Citrus Connection. A peer review analysis also was conducted to compare Citrus Connection's performance with other selected transit systems with similar operating characteristics that Citrus Connection aspires to. The performance indicators help evaluate and benchmark the effectiveness and efficiency of Citrus Connection services. Each analysis is summarized in detail in the remainder of this section.

Data from the FTIS, a comprehensive repository of validated NTD data for transit agencies in the US, were used for these analyses. As published NTD data are typically two years behind the current operating year due to the FTA's rigorous review and validation processes, performance data for 2023 were not available from FTA and were obtained directly from Citrus Connection for the trend analysis.

#### *Performance Trend Analysis*

To assess how efficiently Citrus Connection supplies its fixed-route services and how effectively each meets the needs of the area, the trend analysis used a set of key performance indicators and two types of measures.

- General Indicators—Quantity of service supply, passenger and fare revenue generation, and resource input.
- Effectiveness Measures—Extent to which the service is effectively provided.
- Efficiency Measures—Extent to which cost efficiency is achieved.

A more recent 2022 to 2023 fixed-route trend analysis summary of findings are presented following Figure 3-22. Appendix D provides a detailed table summary of the indicators and measures in the trend analysis. The trend analysis, summarized in the tables in Appendix D, is organized by type of measure or indicator and includes statistics and tables to illustrate Citrus Connection's performance over the past five years.

Figure 3-22: Citrus Connection Trends | 2022–2023

# 2022-23 Trends

**Passenger Trips**

+25%

**Revenue Miles**

+16%

**Revenue Hours**

+17%

**Passenger Trips per Hour**

+7%

CitrusConnection
PROGRESS IN MOTION

## Operating Expense per Revenue Hour

$118.39

-0.3%

## Passenger Trips per Capita

0.93

10.2%

## Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour

5.95

6.6%

## Operating Expense per Passenger Trip

$19.90

-6.5%

### General Indicators

- All general indicators have increased.
- Ridership has significantly increased over the previous year (24.6%), outpacing all other indicators. Revenue miles and revenue hours have also increased, but 16.4% and 16.9% respectively. Ridership growth has also outpaced the growth of the operating expense (16.5%). While Citrus Connection has added service between 2022-2023, customers' use is outpacing service expansion.
- Population has increased by 13.1% between 2022 and 2023 resulting in a greater need for transportation infrastructure and transit services.

### Effectiveness Measures

- All Citrus Connection's effectiveness measures have increased between 2022 and 2023. Passenger trips per revenue mile and passenger trips per revenue hour increased at a similar rate, 6.6% and 7.0%, respectively, suggesting that more customers are using the service to take longer-distance trips.
- Due to ridership growth outpacing service supply, productivity has increased. This could be due to external factors could include traffic, increased cost of living, or increased public awareness.

### Efficiency Measures

There has been an increase in all efficiency measures.

- Citrus Connection's operating expense per capita increased the most over the year (3.0%). This marginal increase is consistent with historic inflation which has affected maintenance costs, necessary capital purchases, and contributed to a driver shortage.
- The operating expense per passenger trip (-6.5%) decreased the most out of all the metrics due to the increase in ridership.

## *Peer Analysis*

In addition to the trend analysis previously presented, a peer system review also was conducted with the same measures to assess how Citrus Connection compares to comparable transit agencies. The selection process for the peer agency systems is described first, followed by the summary results of the peer review analysis.

### *Peer System Selection Methodology*

The fixed-route peer system selection was conducted using 2022 NTD data and compared to Citrus Connection. The peers were assessed and subsequently scored using the following method:

***Step 1 | Geographic Elimination*** First, the field of peers was narrowed by geographic location to agencies in the southeast US, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. These states are considered to have similar operating environments to Citrus Connection. In addition, special consideration was given to transit properties operating geographically closer to Citrus Connection.

***Step 2 | Mode Review*** Using the subset of southeast agencies determined in Step 1, the pool was further narrowed by mode to agencies providing fixed-route or motorbus service (classified as "MB" mode in the NTD).

***Step 3 | NTD Analysis*** Using 2022 NTD data, the pool of potential peers was scored through an objective assessment of eight standard key variables:

- Average speed (revenue miles/revenue hours)
- Passenger trips
- Revenue miles
- Service area population
- Service area population density
- Total operating expense
- Vehicles operated in maximum service (VOMS)
- Revenue hours

Each agency was scored on each variable based on its similarity to Citrus Connection for that year. An agency received 1 point when its performance value for a variable was within one standard deviation of Citrus Connection's performance value and 0.5 points for each variable that fell within two standard deviations of Citrus Connection's performance value. If an agency's value fell outside of two standard deviations of Citrus Connection's performance value, no points were given.

After each agency was scored on each variable, the agencies were ranked based on the total points received. The top 25 ranked agencies moved to Step 4.

***Step 4 | Peer Selection*** The final list of peers was determined through further qualitative scoring. Any agency Citrus Connection had identified as a peer through a past peer selection process or is geographically similar was given additional consideration. The final agencies selected are listed in Table 3-11.

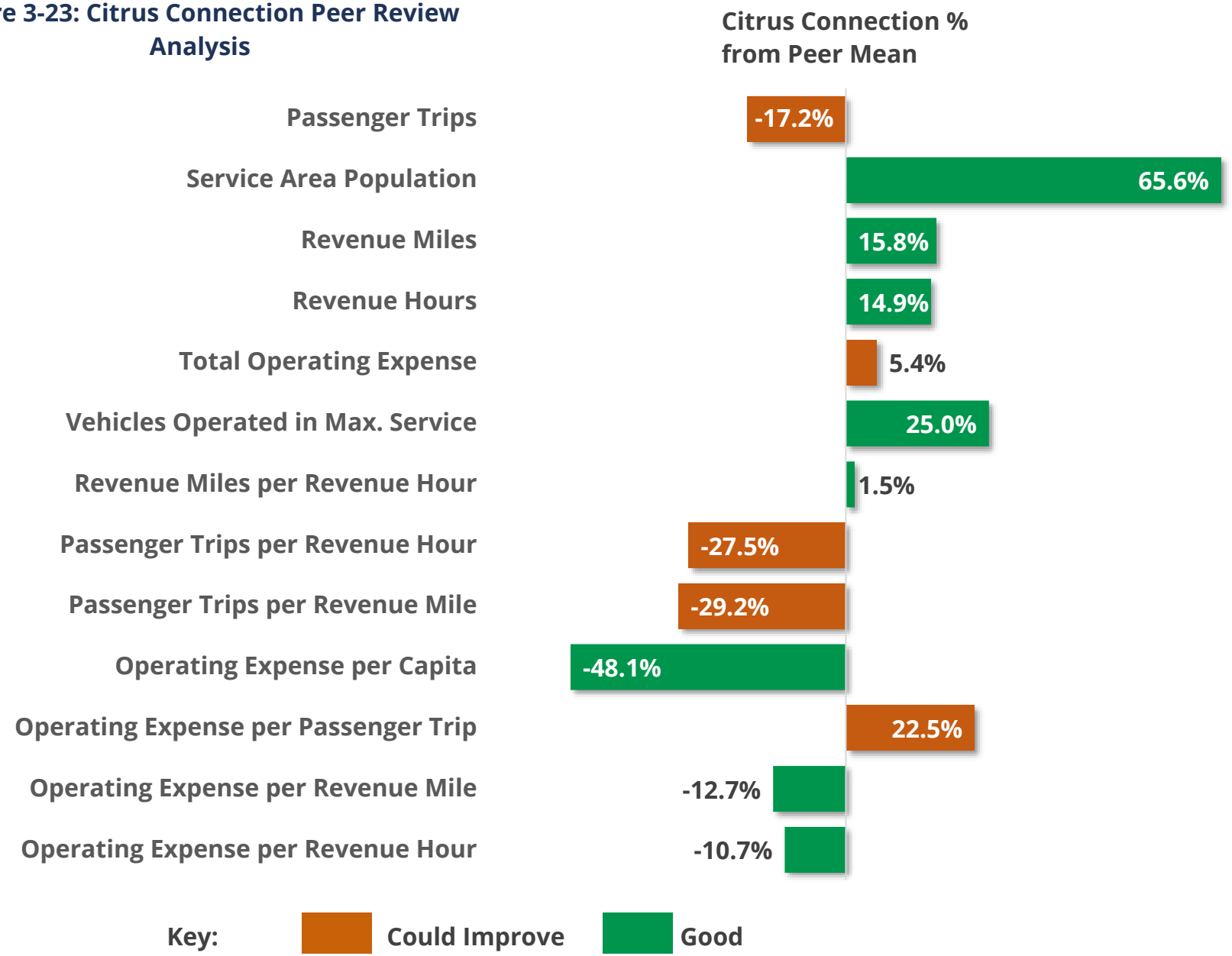
### *Peer Review Analysis Summary*

The results of the peer review analysis of Citrus Connection's fixed-route bus service are presented in Figure 3-23. It shows the findings by key indicators/measures in terms of their deviation above or below the peer group mean and a general assessment of the result.

**Table 3-11: Selected Peers**

| Agency Name | Location |
|---|---|
| **Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission** | Woodbridge, VA |
| **Pasco County Board of County Commissioners** | New Port Richey, FL |
| **Kanawha Valley Regional Transportation Authority** | Charleston, WV |
| **Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners** | Lawrenceville, GA |
| **Escambia County Board of County Commissioners** | Pensacola, FL |

**Figure 3-23: Citrus Connection Peer Review Analysis**



### General Performance Indicators

- Most indicators for Citrus Connection are above the peer mean except the passenger trips.
- Citrus Connection also operates at a marginally higher operating cost than its peers while maintaining more buses than the peer average, indicating that it is more efficient than its peers.

### Effectiveness Measures

- The average speed (revenue miles per revenue hours) of Citrus Connection's service is marginally higher than the peer mean (1.5%), which could indicate that Citrus Connection operate some longer routes than its peers.
- Citrus Connection serves less passenger trips per revenue hour and revenue mile, -27.5% and -29.2% respectively, than its peers. This means that there are comparatively less people using the service over time and distance. Given Polk County's growing population, focusing on continuing to support transit development may prove to be beneficial for improving countywide access.

### Efficiency Measures

- Due to Polk County's growing population and similar operating expense, the operating expense per capita is much lower (-48.1%) than the peer mean.
- Although Citrus Connection's operating expenses per revenue mile (-12.7%) and revenue hour (-10.7%) are lower than its peers, its operating expense per passenger trip is 22.5% higher. This suggests that Citrus Connection supplies service more efficiently than its peers, but not as many passengers are using the service.

## Transit Demand Assessments

A key step in understanding the operating environment in which Citrus Connection operates is conducting transit demand assessments. These tools utilize GIS to assist in understanding and visualizing data to supplement the population and employment data analyses.

The Transit Accessibility Analysis assesses how well customers can access Citrus Connection's existing services from key locations.

The Density Threshold Assessment (DTA) illustrates the relationship between the discretionary market (potential customers living and/or working in higher-density areas who may choose to use transit) and the use of transit as a commuting alternative.

The Transit Orientation Index (TOI) measures levels of traditional markets, such as older adults, youth, low-income, and zero-vehicle households, compared to existing transit coverage to gauge propensity for transit use.

### *Transit Accessibility Analysis*

An analysis was conducted to identify the degree of accessibility from key cities via the current Citrus Connection network. The extent to which a major destination is accessible via transit provides valuable information on how the system may impact travel patterns of current and potential Citrus Connection customers.

#### *Existing Network Accessibility Methodology*

Using population and service area data and functionalities of FDOT's ridership demand estimation software, Transit Boardings Estimation and Simulation Tool (TBEST), a travel time analysis for current and potential Citrus Connection customers was conducted. The analysis examined areas of the county within a gradient of travel sheds ranging from 0–60 minutes in total travel time from the following locations:

- Downtown Bartow
- Downtown Lakeland
- Downtown Winter Haven
- Haines City
- Downtown Lake Wales

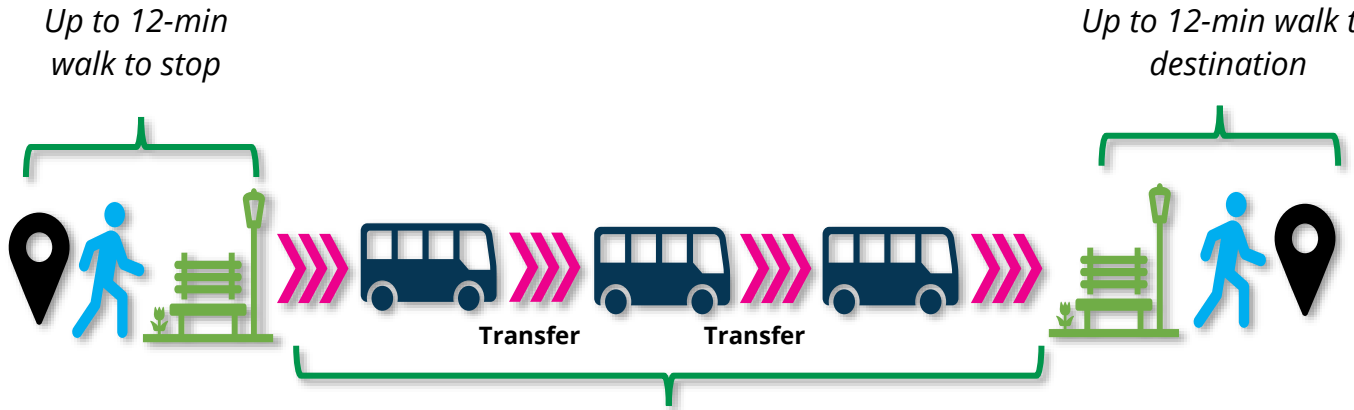
For these locations, accessibility was measured for weekday service in the morning peak period within a ¼-mile walk access to transit.

*Network Accessibility Analysis Summary*

As shown in Figure 3-24, the total travel time to a location includes not just time on board the bus, but also time waiting to board the first bus, other wait/walk times if a transfer is necessary, and walk time from the bus stop to the final destination. For any areas not colored according to the legend, it can be inferred that they are beyond the 60-minute travel time shed.

The accessibility/travel pattern analyses is summarized in Maps 3-22 through 3-26 includes the existing Citrus Connection network as well as other key interstates and major roadways. Areas not colored are beyond the 60-minute travel time shed.

**Figure 3-24: Accessibility | Travel Time**



### Downtown Bartow

The Polk County Courthouse parking garage stop on North Carpenter Avenue in downtown functions as the primary transit hub in Bartow. This stop facilitates connections for four bus routes enabling passengers to access Fort Meade, Lake Wales, Lakeland, Mulberry, and Winter Haven within 60 minutes. Within the 60-minute travel shed there is a population of 43,205 and 43,642 jobs.

### Downtown Lakeland

The Lakeland Downtown Terminal is adjacent to Pine Street and Missouri Avenue and serves as the central location for all existing west Citrus Connection routes, except for the Lime and Coral Lines. This location provides local access to downtown Lakeland, Florida Avenue, and US-98. From this facility, customers can access nearly all of Lakeland and some destinations in Auburndale and Bartow within 60 minutes. These routes provide access to a population of 124,102 and 106,328 jobs within a 60-minute trip.

### Downtown Winter Haven

The Winter Haven Downtown Terminal serves as the central connection in eastern Polk County. This facility provides access to US-17 and is near Central Avenue, FL-542, and 1st Street. Customers may access most of Winter Haven and may reach destinations in Auburndale, Bartow, Cypress Gardens, and Haines City. Within the 60-minute travel time, there is a population of 54,114 and 43,416 jobs.

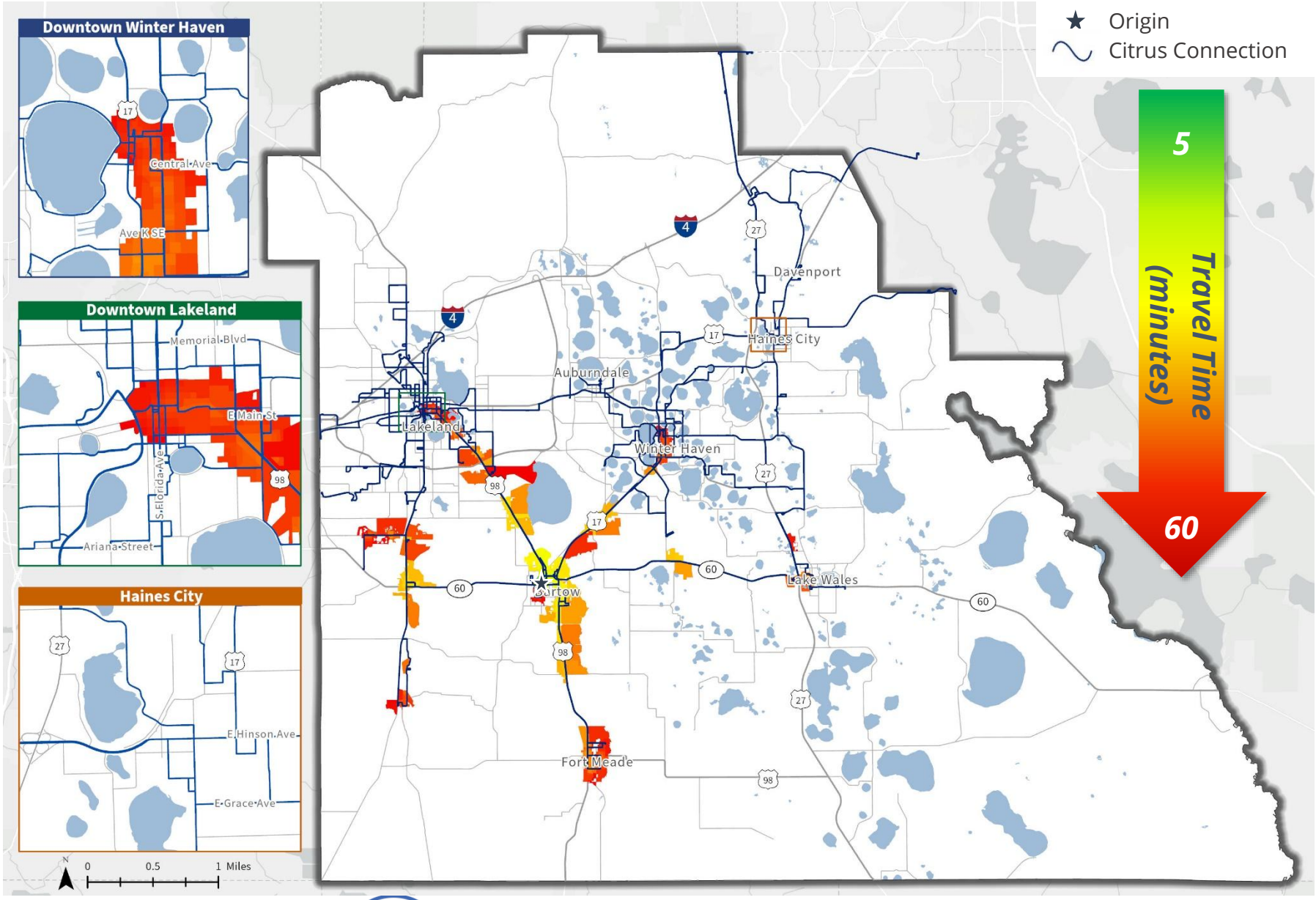
### Haines City

The central location for transit in Haines City is the Haines City Plaza, located on 17th Street at the turning point for US-17, and provides access to most of the city. Customers can access Davenport, Lake Alfred, and Winter Haven within a 60-minute ride. Approximately 19,837 people and 10,049 jobs are within the 60-minute travel shed from the Haines City Plaza.

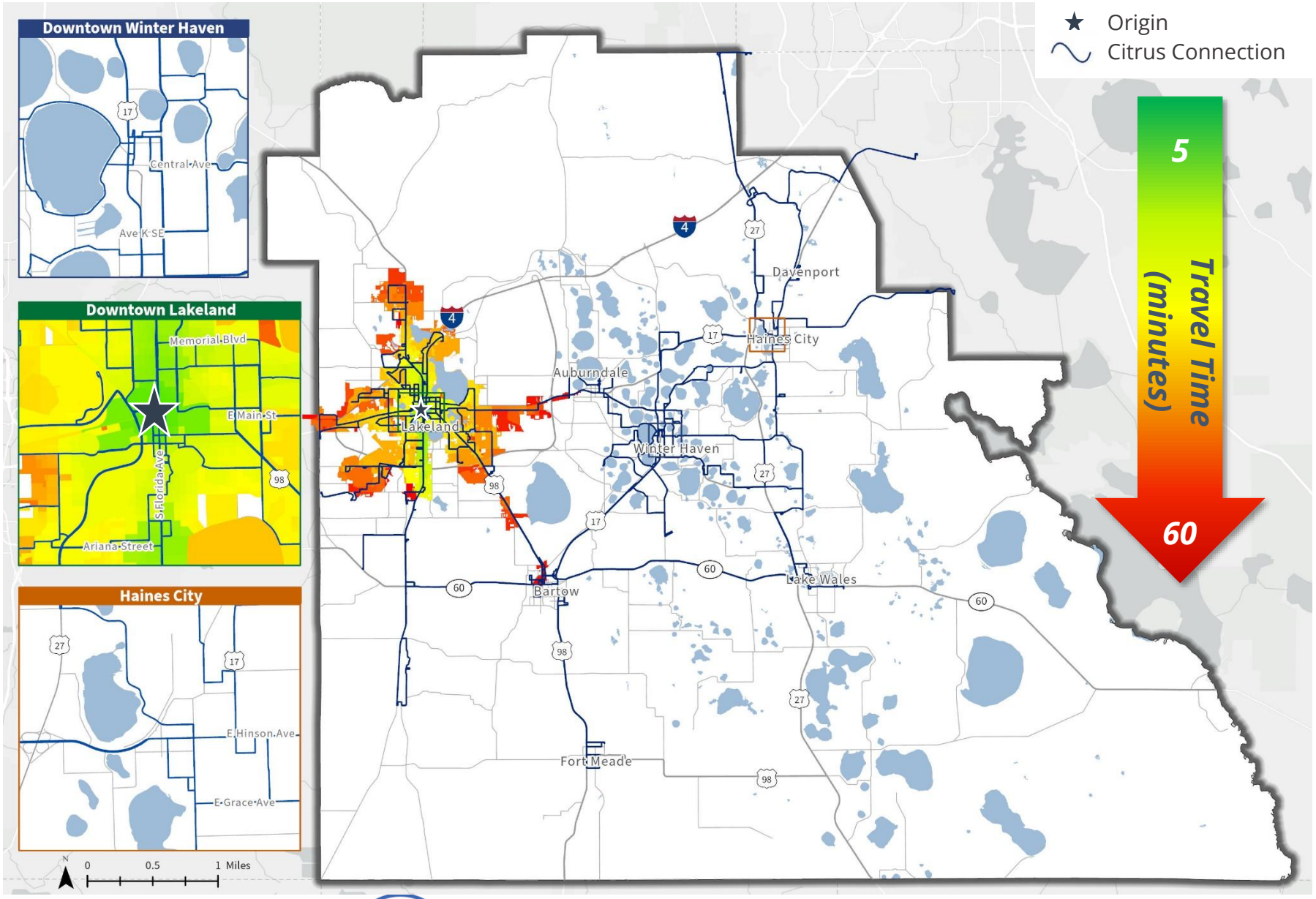
### Downtown Lake Wales

The central stop within Lake Wales is located near West Central Avenue and South 1st Street, providing immediate access to downtown businesses located around Stewart Avenue and Park Avenue. The routes that serve Lake Wales provide access to most of west and south Lake Wales, Legoland, Winter Haven, and central Bartow. Approximately 23,516 people and 17,408 jobs are within a 60-minute travel shed from this stop.

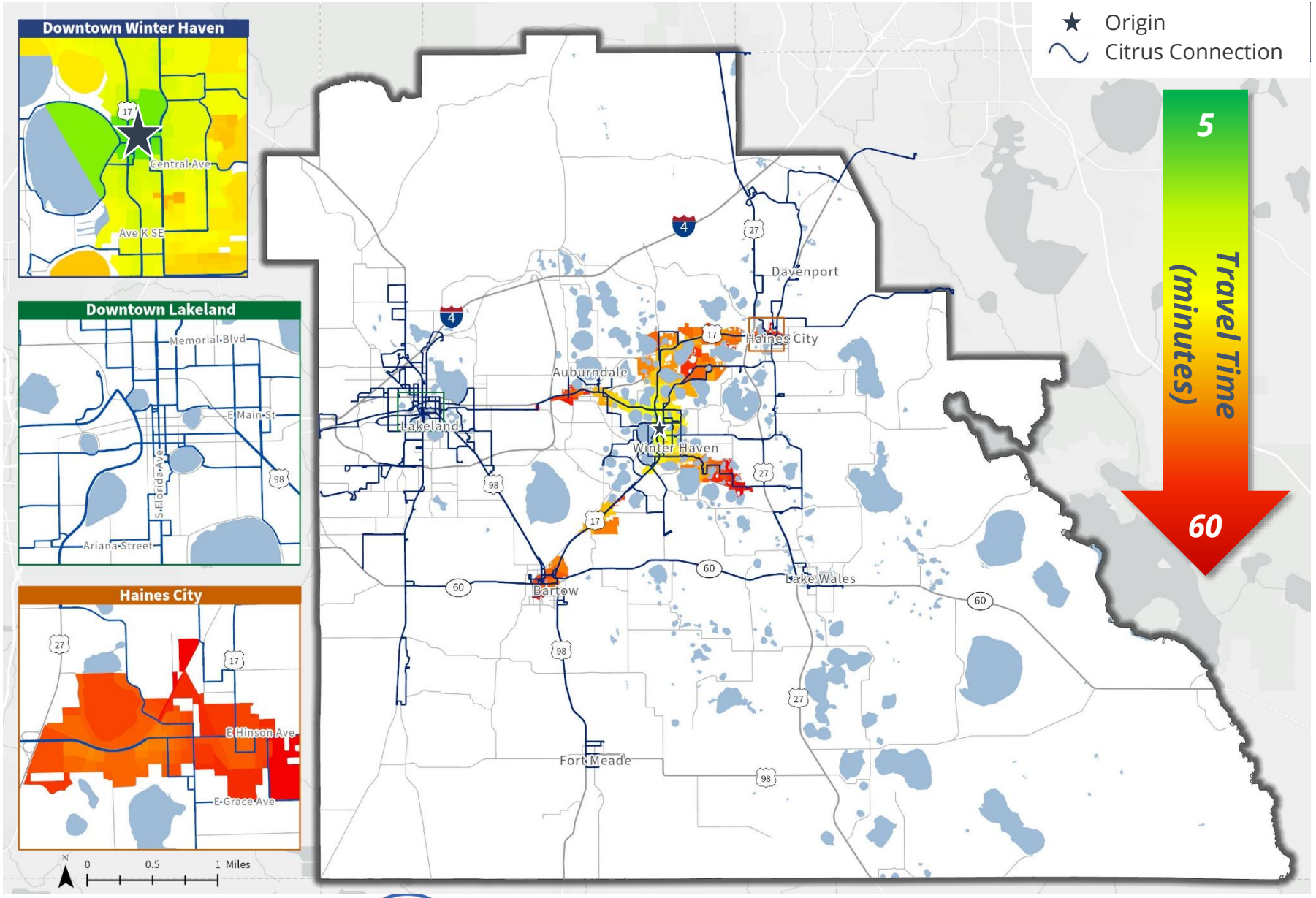
## Map 3-22: Downtown Bartow Accessibility



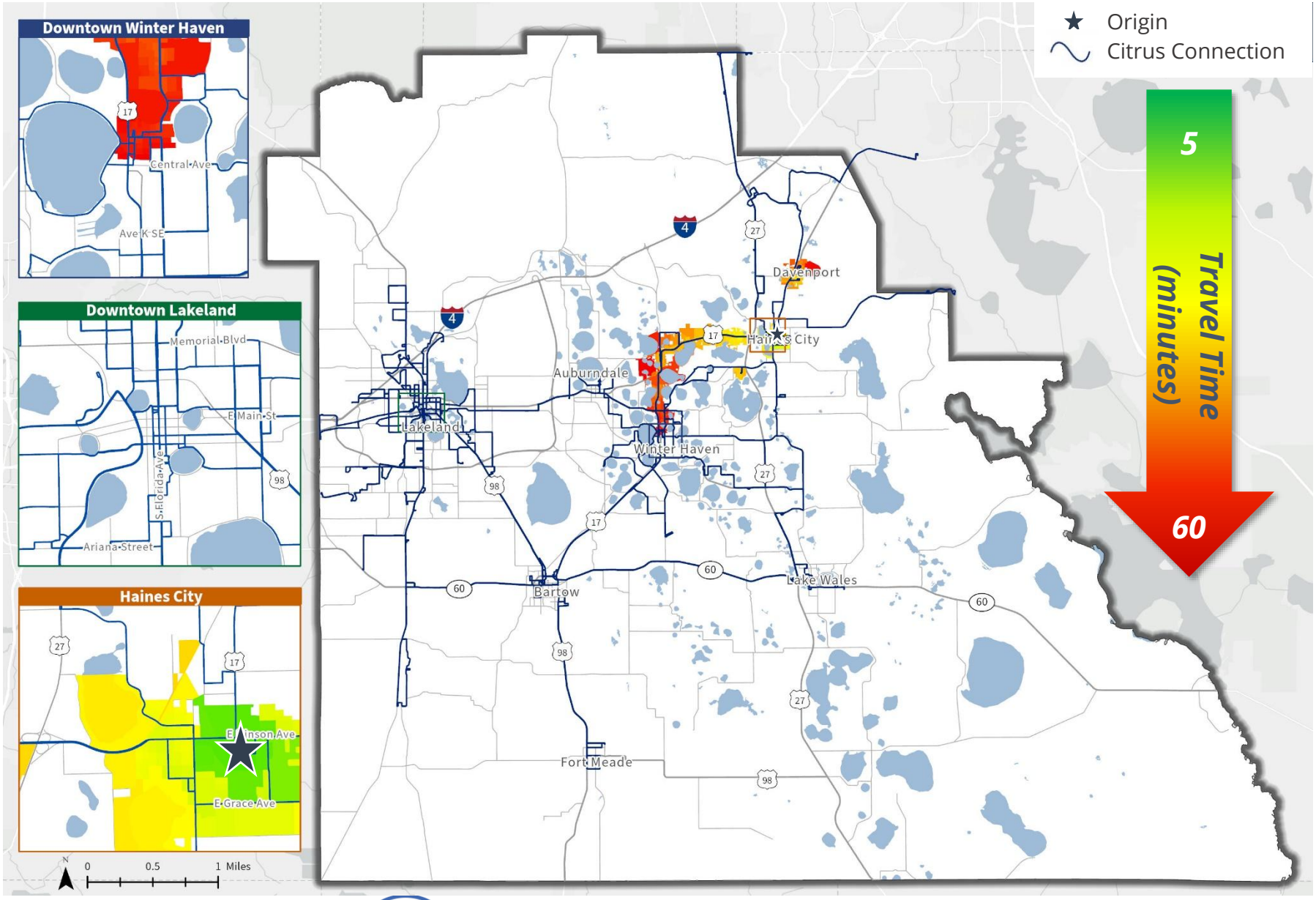
## Map 3-23: Downtown Lakeland Accessibility



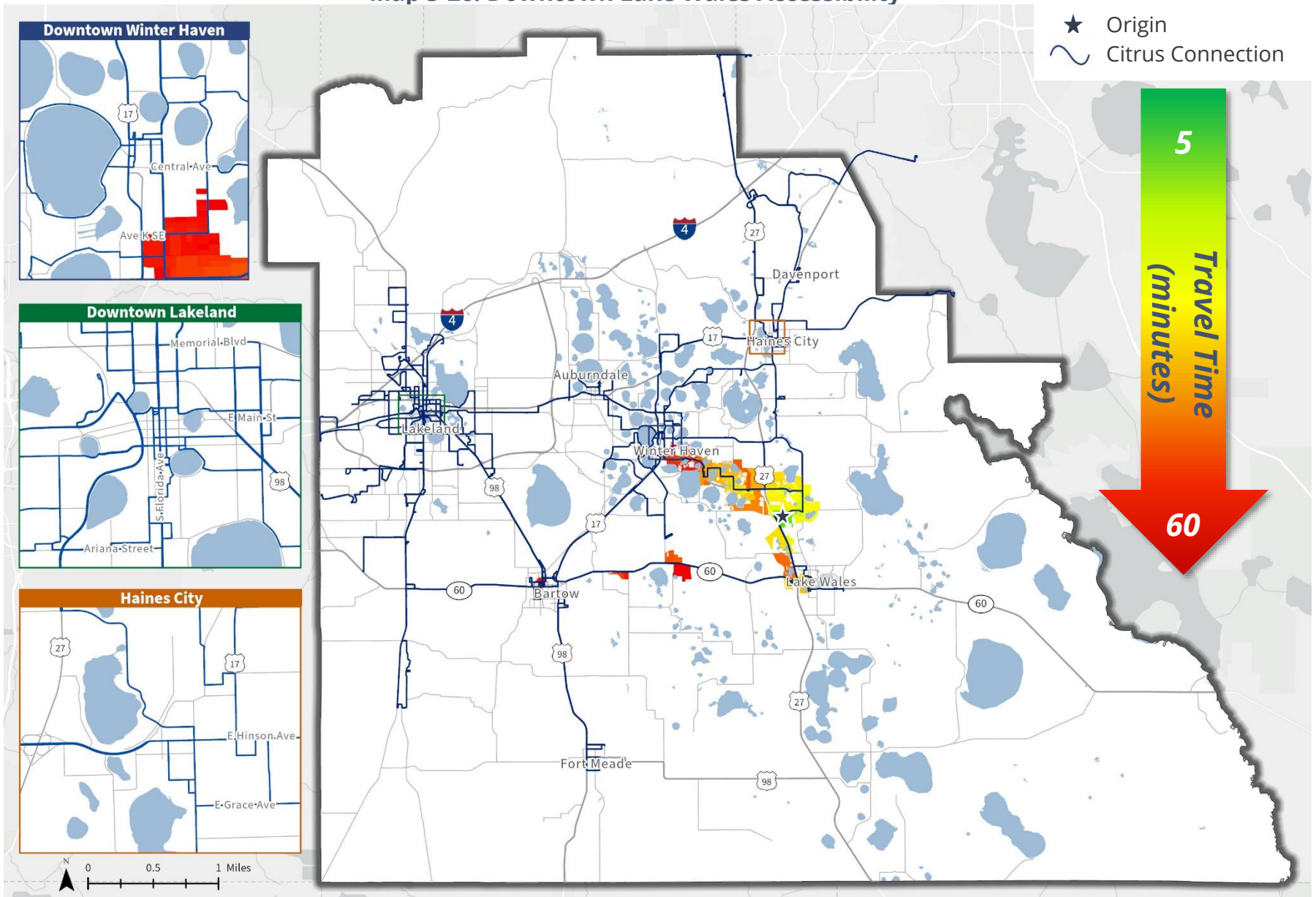
## Map 3-24: Downtown Winter Haven Accessibility



## Map 3-25: Haines City Accessibility



## Map 3-26: Downtown Lake Wales Accessibility



## *Discretionary Markets*

A DTA was conducted using industry-standard density thresholds to identify areas with transit-supportive residential and employee density levels today and in the future. Socioeconomic data for the study area, including dwelling units and employment levels developed for the regional travel demand model, were used.

### *Discretionary Market Assessment Methodology*

Socioeconomic data forecasts developed for the Polk County TPO's 2050 Envision LRTP, including dwelling unit and employment data by TAZ, were used for the DTA. These results are also critical for subsequent assessment of transit needs and demand.

Three density thresholds based on industry standards and available research were used to define corresponding investment levels for transit (Table 3-12).

**Table 3-12: DTA | Dwelling Unit and Employment Density Thresholds**

| Level Of Transit Investment | Dwelling Unit Density Threshold[1] | Employment Density Threshold[2] |
|---|---|---|
| **Minimum Investment** | 4.5–5 Dwelling Units/Acre | 4 Employees/ Acre |
| **High Investment** | 6–7 Dwelling Units/Acre | 5–6 Employees/ Acre |
| **Very High Investment** | ≥8 Dwelling Units/Acre | ≥7 Employees/ Acre |

[1] Transportation Research Board (TRB), National Research Council, Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 16, Volume 1 (1996), "Transit and Land Use Form," November 2002, MTC Resolution 3434 TOD Policy for Regional Transit Expansion Projects.

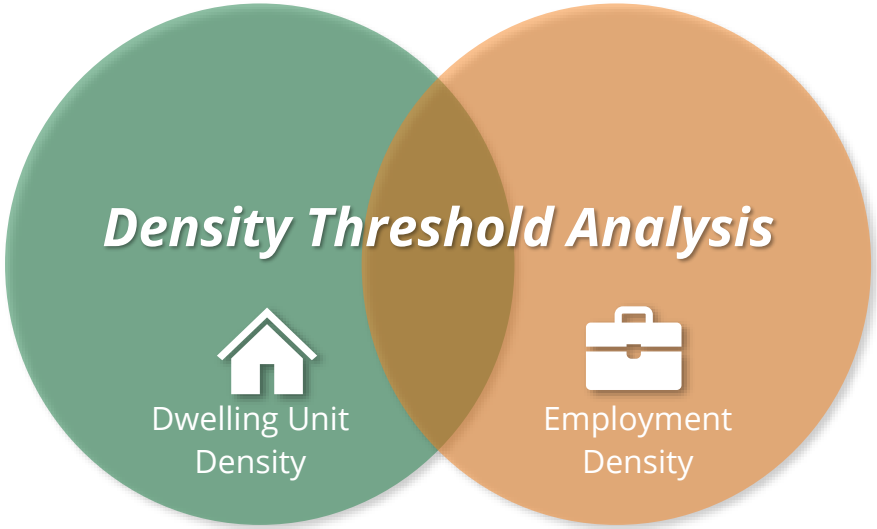
[2] Based on review of research on relationship between transit technology and employment densities.

*Discretionary Market Assessment Summary*

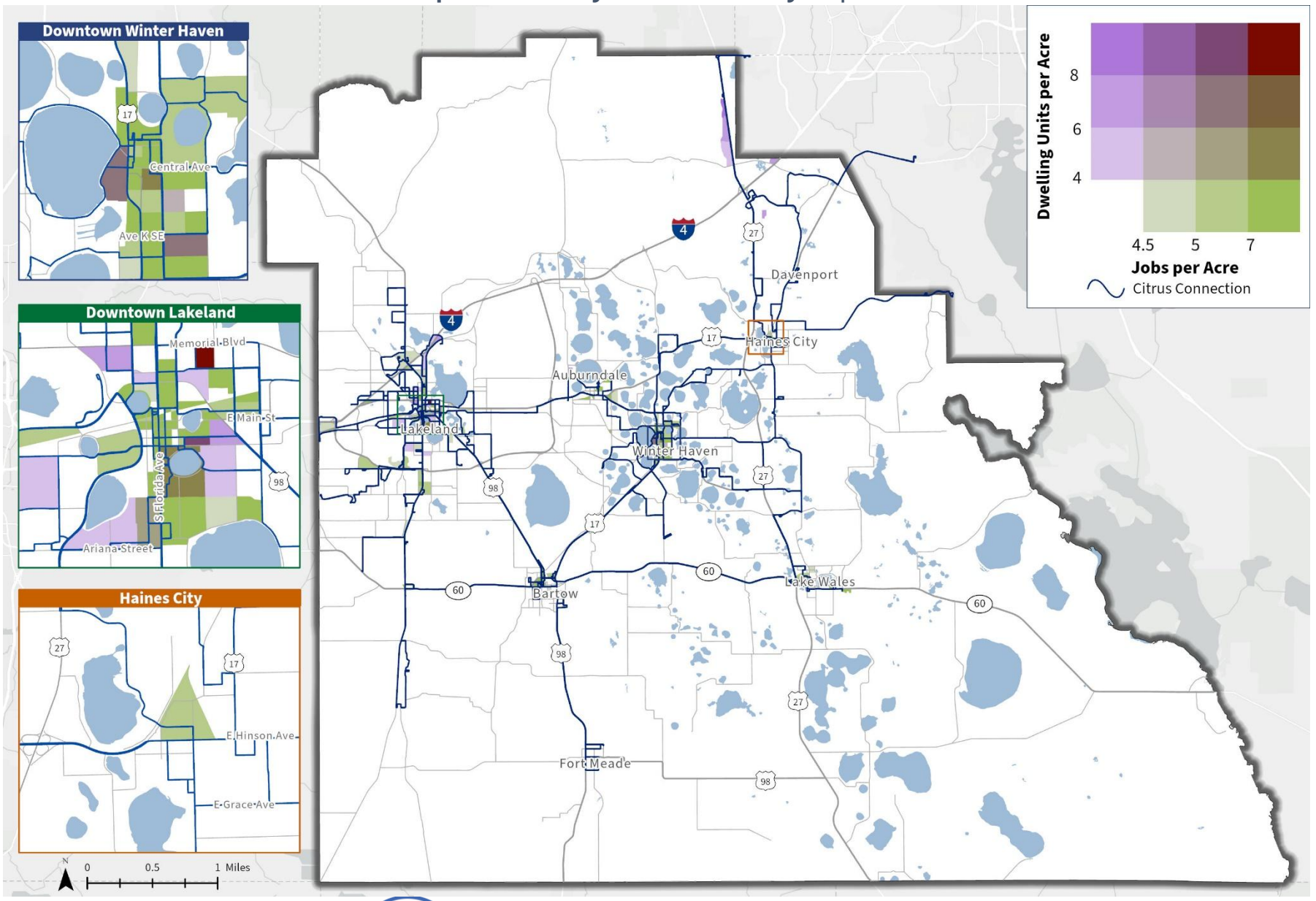
Maps 3-27 and 3-28 illustrate the results of the 2025 and 2050 DTA analyses for Polk County. Each identify areas that support the various levels of transit investment within their respective timeframe, based on existing and future dwelling unit and employment densities.

The 2025 DTA shows a current need for transit development in the central areas of Lakeland and Winter Haven, with specific blocks being home to the “minimum” and “high” levels of transit intensity necessary. There is also a “minimum” and “high" need for transit in several areas outside of these downtowns, such as south, west, and north Lakeland, central Bartow, central Lake Wales, and Auburndale.

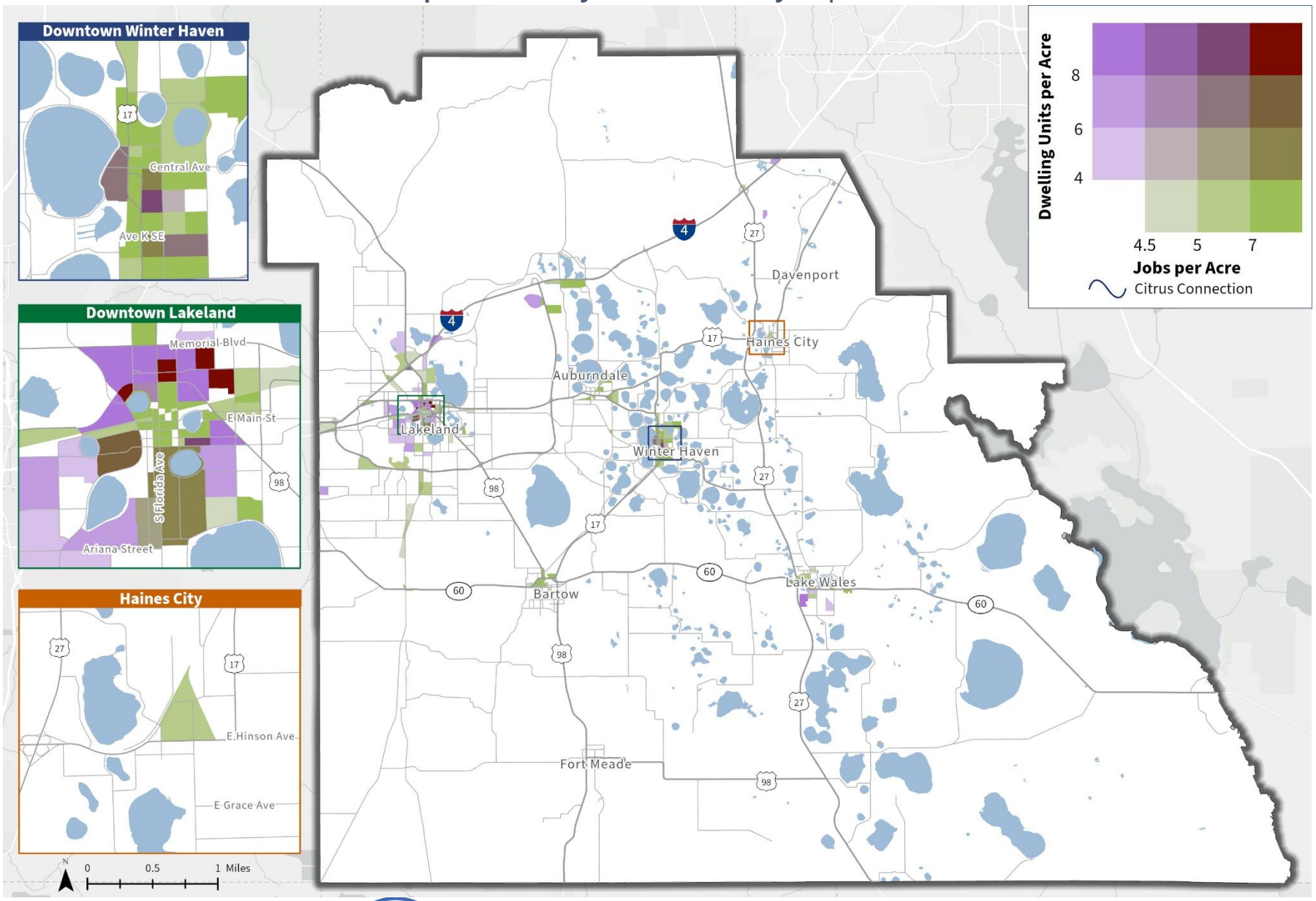
The second map shows that the Lakeland and Winter Haven downtown areas are expected to continue developing and, by 2050, will need “high” and “very high” transit intensity. It is also expected that the neighborhoods outside the aforementioned downtowns will need “high” levels of investment. Many neighborhoods located between these areas of Lakeland and Winter Haven will grow to need “minimum” to “high” investment.



## Map 3-27: Density Threshold Analysis | 2025



## Map 3-28: Density Threshold Analysis | 2050

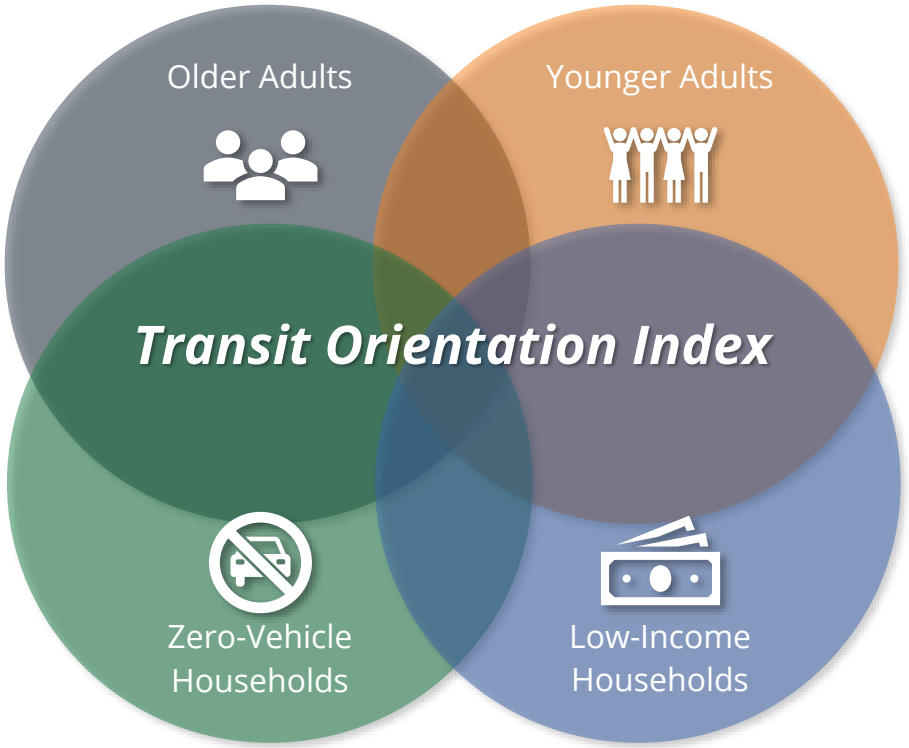


## *Traditional Markets*

The traditional market includes population segments that historically have a higher propensity to use or depend on transit for their transportation needs. For some individuals, the ability to drive is greatly diminished with age and they must rely on others for transportation. Younger people may not have a driver's license, access to a car, or may prefer using transit to reach work, school, and recreational activities than prior generations. For lower-income households, transportation costs can be more burdensome, resulting in less vehicle access and more reliance on public transportation.

The TOI assists in identifying residential areas of the county where traditional markets exist defined as:

- Younger Adults—persons 17 to 24 years
- Low-income households—households that meet the federal poverty definition
- Zero-vehicle households—households that report not having access to a vehicle
- Older adults—persons 65 years and older



### *Traditional Market Methodology*

To create the TOI, the selected demographic data from the 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates (2019–2023) were analyzed by block group to develop a composite ranking. Each block group was assigned a transit orientation of "very high," "high," "medium," or "low." Any block group with a population density under 100 people per square mile was assigned "very low" and excluded from the analysis.

Map 3-29 illustrates the 2023 TOI results, reflecting areas throughout Polk County with varying traditional market densities.

### *Traditional Market Summary*

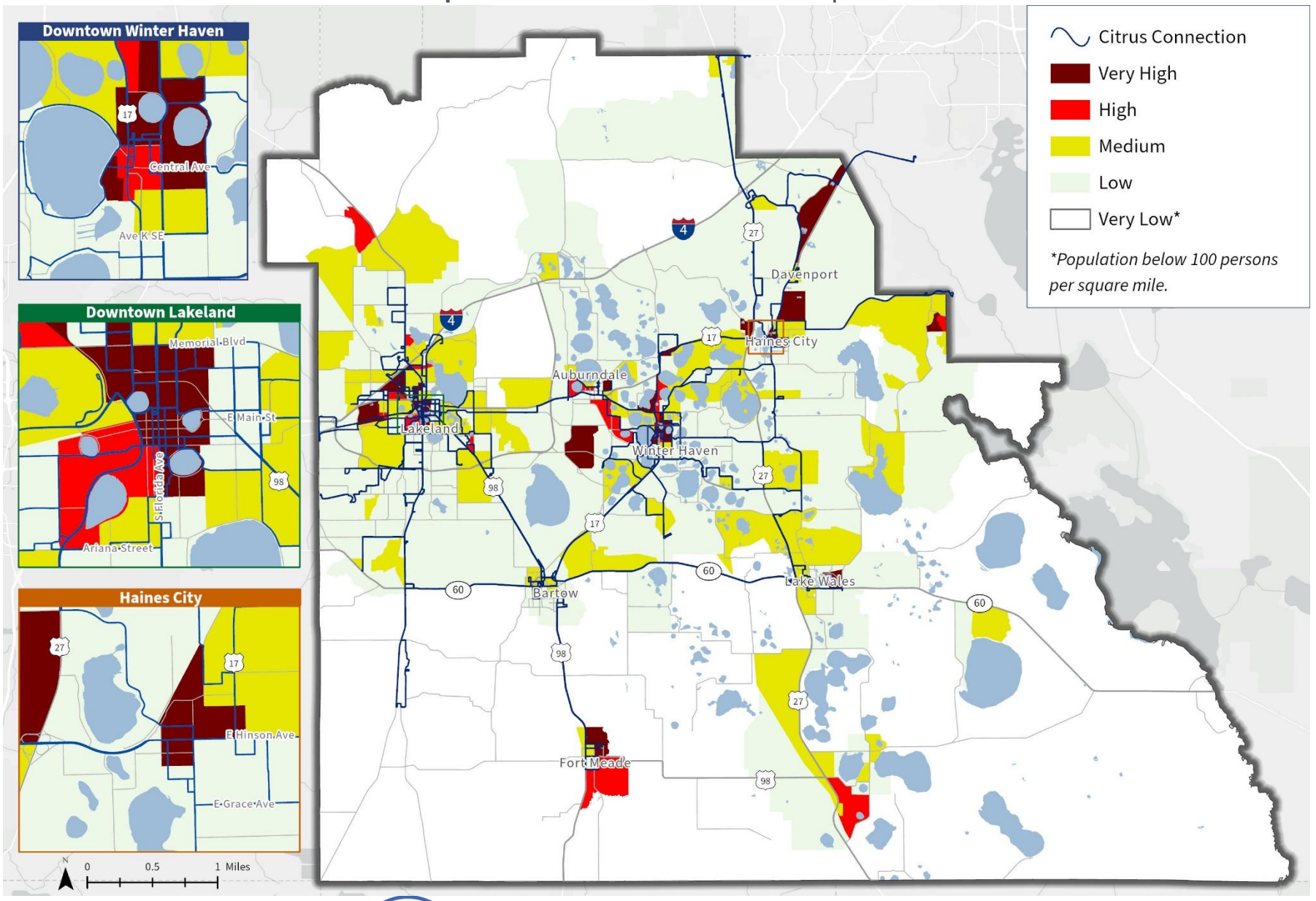
Areas that exhibit "low" and "medium" TOI are primarily rural lands surrounding municipalities.

- Between FL-570 and FL-60 south of Lakeland
- Along and between FL-570 (north of Auburndale), I-4, US-27 (north of Haines City)
- US-17 between Bartow and Winter Haven
- US-27 between Lake Wales and Haines City
- US-98 through Gibsonia
- US-27 between Lake Wales and US-98

Areas that exhibit "high" and "very high" TOI exist mainly within the central neighborhoods of municipalities, including:

- Lakeland
  - Downtown neighborhoods between Memorial Boulevard, Cresap Street, FL-563, and Lake Mirror
  - FL-539 between West 10th Street and I-4.
  - Between US-92, North Galloway Road, West Memorial Boulevard, and North Wabash Avenue
- Winter Haven
  - The 1st Street North corridor between Martin Luther King Boulevard and Central Avenue
  - Between Lake Hartridge, Lake Alfred Road, and Havendale Boulevard Northwest
  - Around Polk State College and other educational facilities on FL-540
- Davenport
  - Neighborhoods north of/along US-17 between Haines City and the Polk/Osceola county line
- Haines City
  - Central Haines City and north of Baker Avenue
- Fort Meade
  - East of US-98

## Map 3-29: Transit Orientation Index | 2023



## Relationship Review to Other Plans

A coordinated and integrated approach is essential to ensure that the Citrus Connection's future services align with broader transportation objectives and community development goals. The plans review provided in this section is a TDP Rule requirement and provides Citrus Connection with a thorough understanding of the direction and policies of other relevant plans.

By analyzing planning documents at the local, regional, state, and federal levels, Citrus Connection can identify opportunities for strategic coordination, anticipate potential policy conflicts, and highlight initiatives that may improve service delivery and operational effectiveness. This review included a range of foundational plans and studies, including the Florida Transportation Plan, local government comprehensive plans, LRTPs, regional transportation goals, and strategic plans.

Additionally, the review includes the Citrus Connection's adopted TDP and recent Annual Progress Report (APR), transit plans from neighboring agencies, relevant economic development strategies, and existing management frameworks for consistency with established priorities and long-term objectives.

The key findings from the review process highlight relevant recommendations, policies, initiatives, and objectives that may impact the TDP's operational and capital program priorities. Ultimately, the insights from these plans will contribute to the development of the schedule of projects, to better serve the community. Appendix E includes a full review of all listed plans.

## *Local Plans*

Local planning documents, including comprehensive plans and strategic plans, outline the need to expand and enhance Citrus Connection in conjunction with existing and anticipated land uses. The plans discuss and include goals, objectives, and policies, including enhanced multimodal integration and improved connectivity throughout Polk County. The following plans were reviewed:

- Polk County Comprehensive Plan
- City of Lakeland Comprehensive Plan
- City of Winter Haven Comprehensive Plan
- City of Bartow Comprehensive Plan
- Lakeland Area Alternatives Analysis – US-98 BRT Feasibility Study
- Lakeland Intermodal Study
- East Polk Transit Maintenance Facility Siting Analysis
- Feasibility of Premium Transit
- 2045 Polk County LRTP
- Polk County Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP)
- Polk UPWP
- Polk TIP
- Polk County SunRail Extension Study
- Polk Transit Vision 2032 TDP
- Polk Transit Vision 2032: 2024 APR
- Polk TPO Strategic Plan

### *Key Takeaways*

Goals, policies, and recommendations from the plans were reviewed. Key takeaways from the plans focus on:

#### Service

- Extend SunRail service to Lakeland, with additional stations in Auburndale, Lake Alfred, Loughman, Davenport, Haines City, a location adjacent to the Central Polk Parkway (FL-570), and Lakeland.
- Implement BRT on Florida Avenue and US-98.
- Increase frequency and extend service span on routes with high demand.

#### Infrastructure/Technology/Policy

- Invest in the Lakeland Intermodal Center.
- Implement improved and upgraded SmartCard or digital payment systems.
- Encourage employers to participate in commuter assistance programs, such as UAP.
- With BRT service, implement transit signal priority (TSP), branded BRT stations, and a dedicated bus lane on certain road segments.
- Continue to coordinate with necessary partners to implement the East Polk Transit Maintenance Facility.

## *Regional Plans*

Strategic regional planning coordination is critical to enhancing long-term economic resilience, advancing sustainable growth, and identifying meaningful infrastructure investment. To analyze the influence on Citrus Connection, several key regional plans were identified and reviewed to assess goals, policies, and recommendations related to regional transportation strategies and economic development. These plans also emphasize the importance of coordination to address regional mobility needs and support an integrated transit network. The following regional plans were reviewed:

- Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART) TDP
- Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority (dba LYNX) TDP
- Lake County TDP
- West Central Florida Regional Long Range Transportation Plan 2045
- Tampa Bay Economic Development Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 2023-2027

### *Key Takeaways*

Key insights on priorities, strategic policies, and actionable steps that may influence Citrus Connection include:

#### Service

- Expand regional express service, including connections to Tampa.
- Consider future BRT service in Lakeland and Winter Haven.
- Continue to support existing regional connections.

#### Infrastructure/Technology/Policy

- Promote regional multimodal transportation options.
- Continue coordination with neighboring agencies.
- Support diversified economy by expanding job opportunities and quality.
- Provide a network of public infrastructure with supportive land uses.

## *State and Federal Plans*

State and federal planning efforts play a critical role in guiding long-term growth, infrastructure investment, and policy development. The key state and federal plans and frameworks include goals, policies, and strategic recommendations that may influence future transit service and capital improvements over time. These findings offer a foundation for coordinated decision-making and ensure alignment with broader state and federal priorities, supporting the development of a more resilient, integrated, and connected transportation network. The following plans were reviewed as part of this analysis:

- FDOT Districtwide Bus Rapid Transit Feasibility Study
- State of Florida Transportation Disadvantaged 5-Year/20-Year Plan
- Update: Handbook and Design Manual
- 2055 FDOT Florida Transportation Plan (ongoing)
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117–58)
- Implications to Public Transportation of Emerging Technologies

### *Key Takeaways*

Key insights at the state and federal levels that may affect Citrus Connection's future include the following priorities, strategic policies, and actionable steps include the following:

#### Service

- Implement BRT on Florida Avenue, US-98, and US-92.
- Expand transit service areas.
- Develop a universal cost-effective transportation system.
- Add and implement regional connections.
- Implement a uniform funding system.
- Add transportation solutions that strengthen Florida's economy.
- Implement mobility solutions that enhance Florida communities and preserve its environment.
- Meet transportation needs for all.

#### Infrastructure/Technology/Policy

- Repair and upgrade existing infrastructure.
- Increase access to transit services.

# Section 4. Land Use & Corridor Development Assessment

This effort assesses the effectiveness of local land use policies and urban design patterns to help Citrus Connection focus on areas that may accommodate transit now or in the future. This section also includes an assessment of key Polk County roadway corridors for focusing transit in the next 10 years, which may assist Citrus Connection in planning and prioritizing services and facilities improvements in the future.

## Land Use & Urban Design Assessment

There is a need to understand the existing and future developments that affect the built environment in which Citrus Connection functions. Assessing the existing plans and initiatives regarding transit and surrounding land uses provides context for transit development projects.

Polk County's Comprehensive Plan, the county's blueprint for growth, includes several policies that support transit. Notably this includes promoting land use strategies that encourage higher density developments such as transit supportive development areas on key corridors and growth areas.

The remainder of this section discusses these strategies and policies to support transit and minimize barriers over time.

*Source: Benesch*

## Future Land Use Review

Transit is best supported by land uses such as high-density residential areas and employment centers. Examining Future Land Use (FLU) data may provide valuable guidance for transit in Polk County. FLU data and the key trends for Polk County, Lakeland, Winter Haven, and Haines City are noted below.

### *Polk County*

According to the 2030 Future Land Use Map, most of the county is dedicated to environmentally sensitive areas such as agriculture, conservation, recreation and open space, and preservation (Map 4-1).

- A significant area is classified as Agriculture/Residential-Rural, Recreation Open Space, or Phosphate Mining, which are concentrated adjacent to each other and on the boundaries of the county.
- Most residential land uses are low-density up to five dwelling units per acre.
- High Density Residential uses are present near incorporated areas in Polk County.

*Source: Polk TPO*

### *Lakeland*

Map 4-2 shows the City of Lakeland 2030 Future Land Use Map and notably:

- The top land uses are Residential Medium, Residential Low, and Conservation.
- Low-Density Residential is found on the periphery of the city and mostly found adjacent to Conservation uses.
- High-Density Residential and Regional Activity Center land uses are found in and around downtown Lakeland.
- Industrial land uses are found in the southern parts of the city and north of Lake Parker.

### *Winter Haven*

A review of the City of Winter Haven 2025 Future Land Use Map (Map 4-3) shows the following:

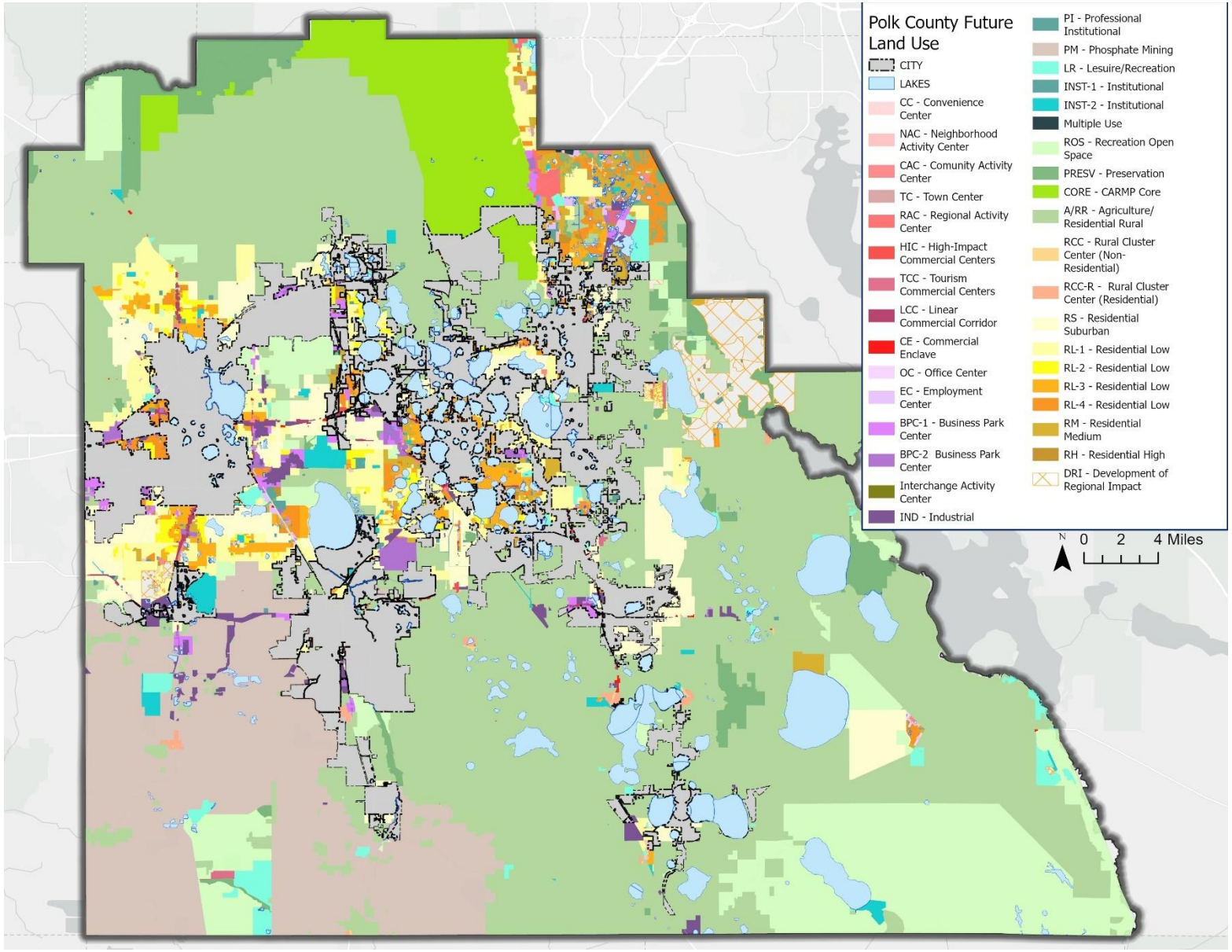
- Low density and estate are the primary residential land uses.
- High density residential land uses are adjacent to traditional neighborhood areas and commercial land uses.
- Primary activity center land uses, which may have up to 20 units per acre, are adjacent to US-17 in downtown Winter Haven.
- Regional activity centers are found along Cypress Gardens Boulevard.
- Industrial and institutional land uses can be found in the southern part of the city, adjacent to Conservation and Estate Residential uses.

### *Haines City*

The City of Haines City 2030 Future Land Use Map, shown in Map 4-4, highlights the following:

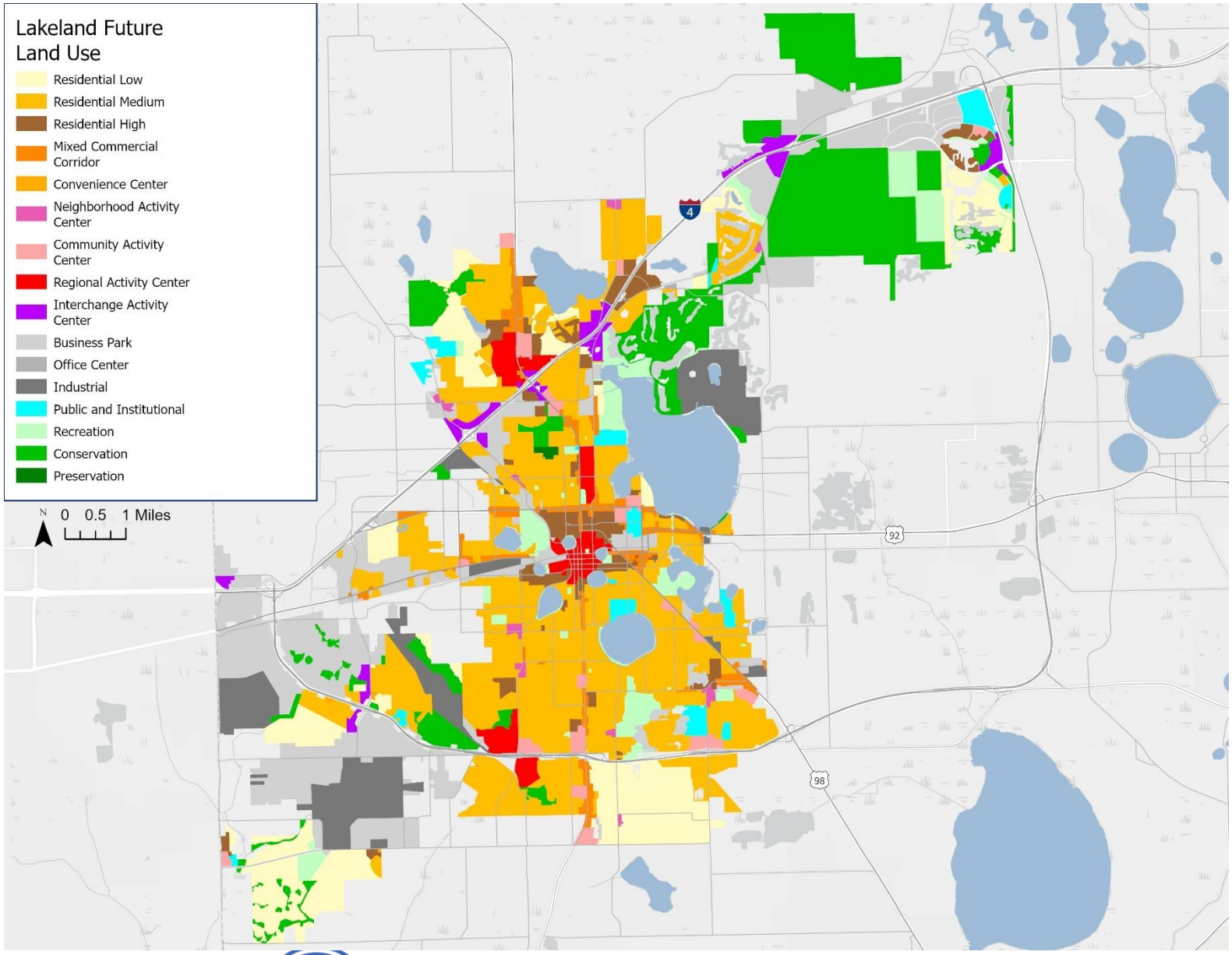
- Residential land uses make up the majority, with low density residential the primary residential uses.
- Neighborhood Activity Centers, Community Activity Centers, and Professional Institutional Centers land uses are found adjacent to US-27.
- Commercial uses are found adjacent to US-27 and US-17/92.
- Industrial land uses are found along Marion Road.

## Map 4-1: Polk County 2030 Future Land Use



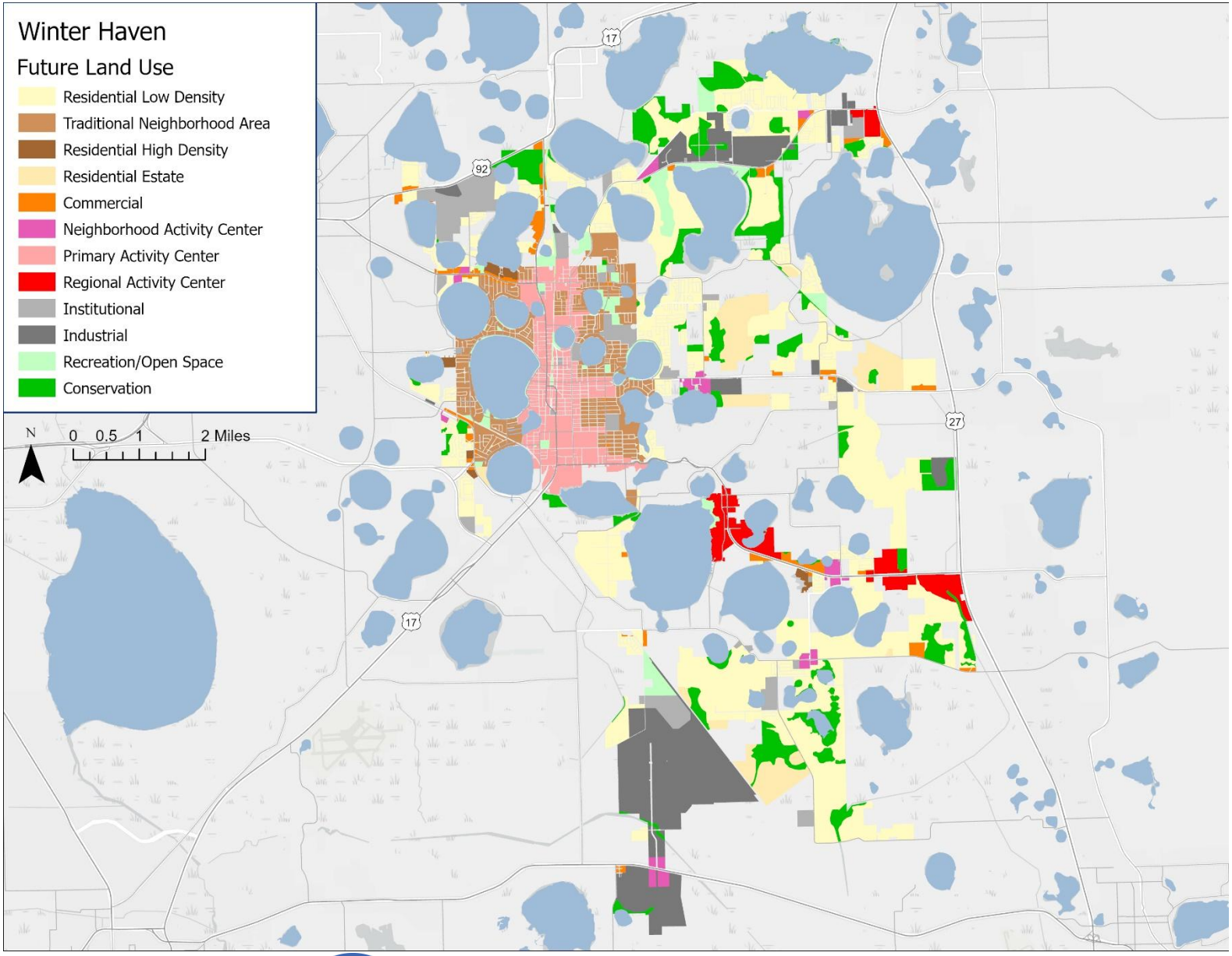

*Source: Polk County*

## Map 4-2: Lakeland 2030 Future Land Use



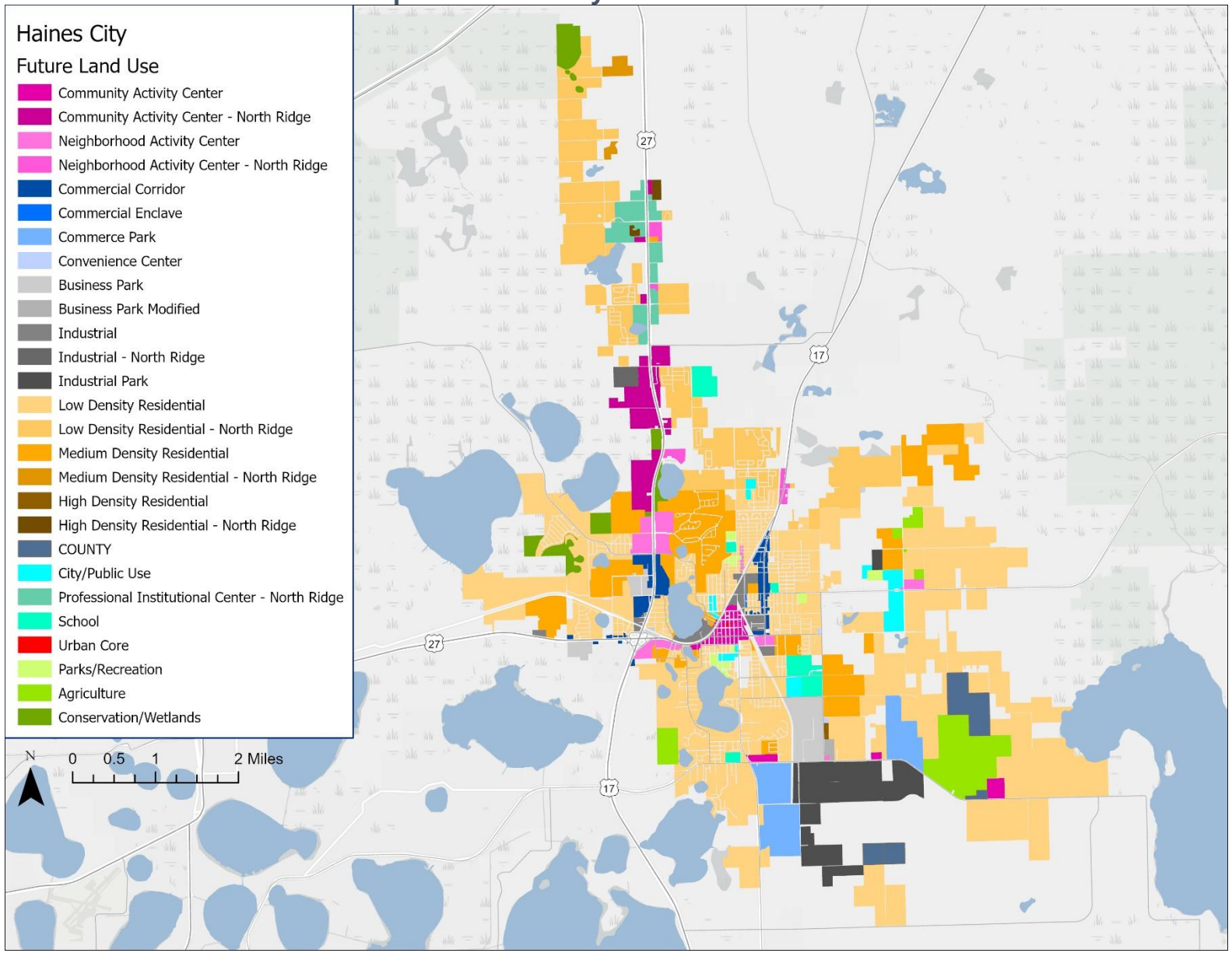

*Source: City of Lakeland*

## Map 4-3: Winter Haven 2035 Future Land Use




*Source: City of Winter Haven*

## Map 4-4: Haines City 2030 Future Land Use




*Source: City of Haines City*

## Ongoing Land Use Developments and Associated Transit Initiatives

As Polk County continues to grow, Citrus Connection should evaluate planned developments and identify opportunities where dedicated transit infrastructure may be provided.

### *Planned Developments*

Within non-incorporated areas of Polk County there are many planned developments (SPDS, PDs, PUDs, etc.). Most are in northeastern Polk County, closer to the Orlando suburbs. Once constructed, these developments will increase population densities, creating greater demand for transit over time.

### *Clear Springs Stewardship District*

In 2023, a nearly 18,000-acre site within the south and east portions of Bartow was designated as the Clear Springs Stewardship District by Governor Ron DeSantis (Figure 4-1). This designation allows the area to act as a local government to develop Clear Springs, a site for mixed-use development within Bartow. Upon development, the site will include 11,000 residential units, approximately 22 million square feet of industrial and warehousing space, 7 million square feet of commercial space, a research park, multiple schools, and several large tracts of land for conservation. This development aims to promote housing and economic development through employment opportunities. Bartow and the Clear Springs Stewardship District began reviewing applications for housing developments in early 2025, which would mark the beginning of residential construction along SR-60 through the site.

This development will substantially increase the population of Bartow and produce new pockets of density within the city. Coordination between developers and Citrus Connection will be vital in ensuring accessibility between the development, the City of Bartow, and Polk County.

**Figure 4-1: Clear Springs Stewardship District**

## *Central Florida Innovation District*

The Central Florida Development Council is partnering with local agencies to create the Central Florida Innovation District, planned to encompass approximately 3,000 acres surrounding I-4 and the eastern section of the Central Polk Parkway (FL-570) (Figure 4-2). The goal of the Innovation District is to provide opportunities to diversify the economy and contribute to cutting-edge technology development within Polk County. The implementation of an innovation district, given its connection to local anchor institutions and community groups, will require funding for transportation infrastructure. Also, the project's intention of providing resources for innovative technology may allow for technological advancements within the local transit system, potentially enabling service improvements in the long-term. The SunRail Transit Concept and Alternatives Review (TCAR) Study considered this area as a potential stop.

**Figure 4-2: Central Florida Innovation District**

*Source: https://www.cfdc.org/*

## *Polk County FDOT Projects*

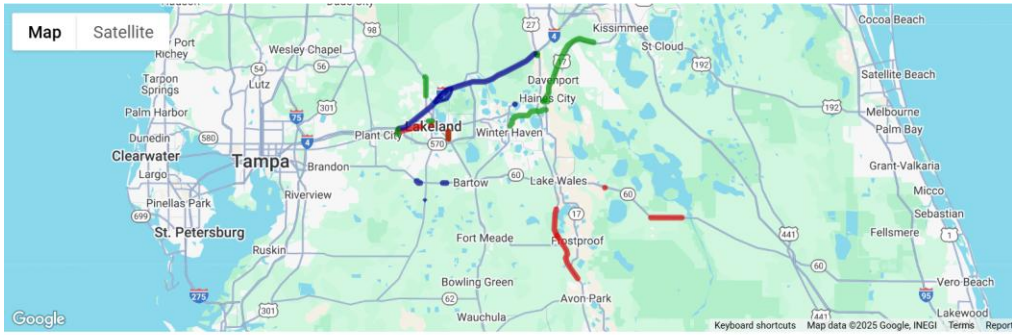
FDOT is currently conducting several projects which have goals to expand transportation options. Eight ongoing projects specifically mention outcomes that increase pedestrian accessibility through new and upgraded sidewalks and crossings. Three additional projects include implementing bike lanes/facilities and include two that are part of a complete streets project, aiming to create transportation corridors accessible to various modes of transportation.

The specific corridors with bike or complete streets projects ongoing are:

- SR-559 between SR-33 and I-4
- US-92 between E Gary Road and Combee Road
- US-98 between Griffin Road and Sharon Drive (segment crossing I-4)

Several other FDOT projects in Polk County include elements of pedestrian accessibility and safety like new sidewalks, curb cuts, increased lighting, crosswalks, and other visibility infrastructure (Figure 4-3).

**Figure 4-3: Future FDOT Polk County Projects**




All Current Projects | Construction Projects | Future Projects | Design Projects | PD&E Projects | Planning Projects | Completed Projects

| | |
|---|---|
| 111111-1 | US 17/ Experiment Station Road Safety Improvements |
| 111111-9 | Drainage Connection Permitting Town Hall |
| 201210-7 | I-4 at US 27 Backage Road |
| 419243-2 | US 27 from Polk/Highlands County Line to CR 630A |
| 419243-5 | US 27 (SR 25) from north of County Road 630A to Presidents Drive |
| 431351-1 | US 17/92 Hinson Avenue PD&E Study |
| 433558-2 | US 92 from County Line Road to Wabash Avenue |
| 433856-2 | SR 60 from CR 630 to Grape Hammock Road |
| 435391-1 | Old Dixie Trail |
| 436656-1 | New York Avenue Pedestrian Crossing Design |
| 436672-1 | US 98 (SR 35) from West Daughtery Road to North of West Socrum Loop Road |
| 440272-1 | Fort Fraser Trail Over SR 60 |
| 440273-1 | SR 544 (Lucerne Park Road) |
| 440274-1 | SR 659 (Combee Road) from US 98 to North Crystal Lake Drive |
| 440274-2 | SR 659 (Combee Road) from US 98 to North Crystal Lake Drive |
| 440791-1 | SR 60 at Walk in Water Road/Boy Scout Camp Road Safety Improvements |
| 442512-1 | Southwest Connect I-4 Corridor Master Plan Study |
| 445438-1 | State Road 37 Roundabout at County Road 640 (Pinecrest Road) |
| 445930-1 | US 92 (Memorial Boulevard) PD&E Study |
| 446387-1 | SR 60/Mosaic from Bonnie Mine Rd to Mosaic Entrance Rd |
| 446402-1 | SR 60/Nichols Rd from N of CR 676 (Nichols) to Jenkins Rd |
| 446404-1 | County Line Road Project Development and Environmental Study from Amberjack Boulevard to Frontage Road South |
| 447989-1 | Tradeport Boulevard Feasibility Study |
| 449503-1 | US 27 Mobility Analysis |
| 449504-1 | Collier to Polk Regional Trail Master Plan |
| 450899-2 | Polk County SunRail Expansion PD&E Study |
| 455781-1 | PD&E Study from SR 66 to US 98 |

*Source: https://www.swflroads.com/*

### *Other Development Projects*

Other development projects that may spur additional demand for transit are ongoing throughout Polk County. Citrus Connection may coordinate to provide sufficient transportation options as development occurs. Some of these include:

- Richland Communities acquired 4,100 acres southwest of US-27 and SR-60 near Lake Wales. While no formal plans have been announced as of March 2025, future residential or mixed-use development is speculated.
- Lake Wales Commons (558-acres) will be a mixed-use development including 3,200 housing units of varying types and more than 1 million square feet of light industrial and warehousing space.
- The future Crossroads Village (120-acres) in Haines City will provide 130,000 square feet of commercial space by the end of 2026 but also plan on implementing housing and other mixed-use amenities along the rest of the site.
- Lake Wire Mixed-Use Development (25-acres) in Lakeland is a project that will provide 630 multifamily apartments and two retail buildings.

### *Multimodal Initiatives*

The City of Lakeland had a bike-sharing service from 2015 to 2018. The City and the Lakeland Downtown Development Authority are exploring re-establishing this service in downtown Lakeland. The Lakeland Downtown Development Authority is considering implementing a micromobility program with options, including pedal bikes, e-bikes, and scooters.

## *Existing Transit-Supportive Planning Efforts*

Polk County has ongoing planning initiatives regarding transit supportive development areas and transit development corridors within the county.

According to Polk County's Comprehensive Plan[2], Transit Supportive Development Areas (TSDA) are adjacent to established city limits and meet the following criteria:

- Where the availability of infrastructure and other community facilities and services, including, but not limited to mass transit and other transportation alternatives, utilities, public safety, recreational and educational services, promotes and supports the location of higher density and intensity compact, mixed-use development.
- Be supported by existing or planned urban type services that are programmed or expected for the 10-year planning horizon.
- Be designated as part of a coordinated land use and transportation strategy that supports the provision of improved and expanded transit services, as identified in the TPO's 2060 Transportation Vision Plan and the connecting circulator routes, to increase mobility and travel options.
- Include development criteria that:
    - Promote the development of walkable communities, which includes a balance between employment opportunities, mix of complementary uses and activities, and a range of housing opportunities.
    - Improve access to employment areas, schools, shopping and recreational opportunities.

The Polk County Transit Corridors and Centers Overlay (TCCO) identifies where key transit projects are expected to occur over future years. Map 4-5 illustrates these corridors and centers. The overlay provides a framework for land use policies and mobility strategies that:

- Connect city centers.
- Improve access to transit services including high speed rail service.
- Improve transit access to/from rural areas.
- Promote compact, mixed-use development.
- Improve travel connections and access between land uses.

[2] Since the Polk Comprehensive Plan, TDP, and LRTP 2050 updates are all occurring simultaneously, the Comprehensive Planning Department was consulted and data was incorporated as appropriate.

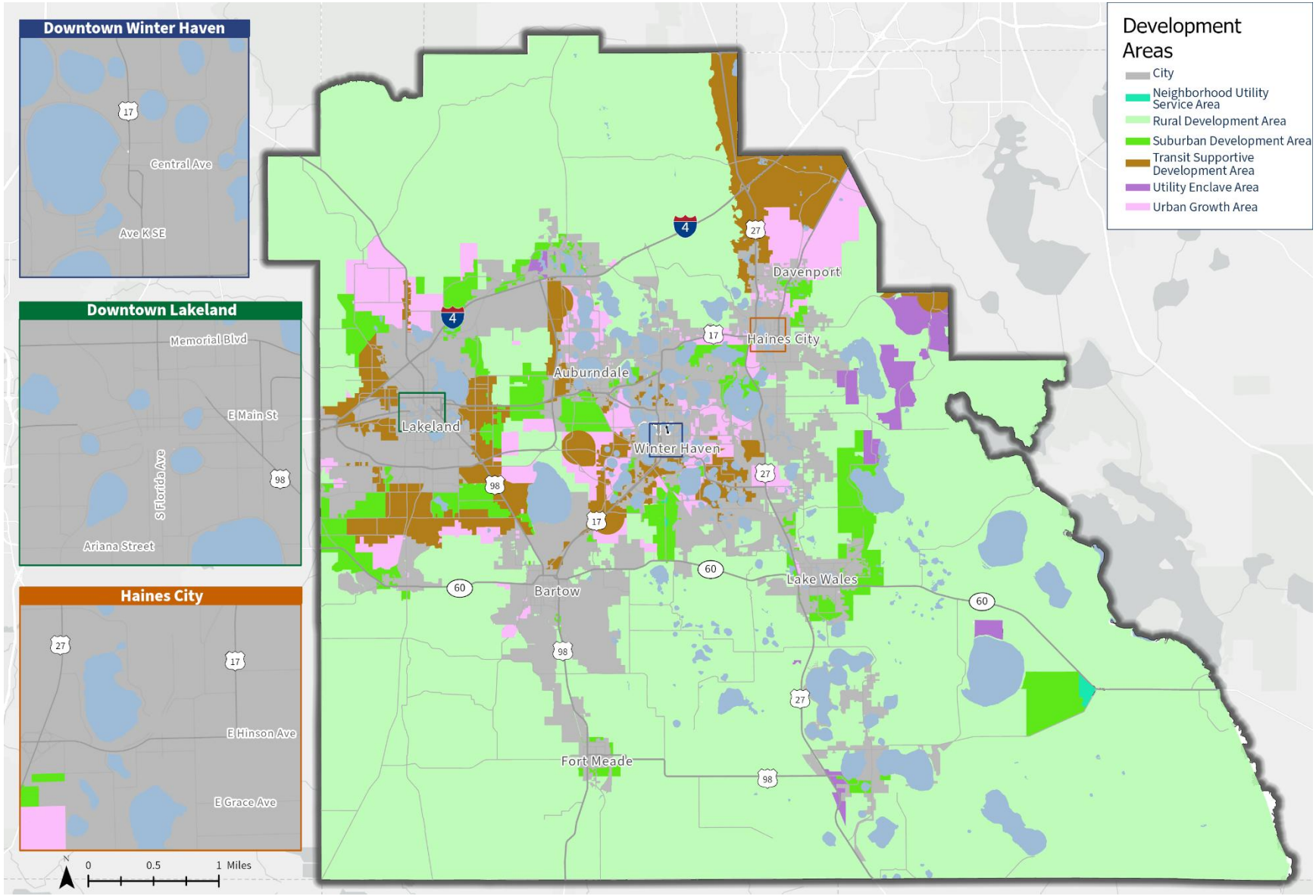
- Provide a pedestrian-scale built environment and encourage pedestrian activity.
- Promote the provision of public spaces and improved access to public spaces.
- Implement reduced or flexible parking standards.
- Increase travel options as part of a multimodal transportation system.
- Reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicles (SOV) and vehicle miles of travel.
- Reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Design principles within the corridor and overlay areas include:

- Convenient, direct and safe pedestrian connections to building entrances, existing and planned transit stops, parking facilities, mixed land uses and public spaces.
- Pedestrian-scale blocks and interconnected street networks to promote pedestrian mobility.
- Architecture and streetscape features, such as awnings, articulated facades, pedestrian lighting, sidewalk furniture, street trees and store front display windows to create a human-scale or pedestrian focused environment.
- Orientation of buildings and entrances towards streets or public spaces to encourage and support pedestrian activity.
- Discouragement of auto-dependent uses in proximity to transit hubs.
- Provision of complete streets to increase mobility for transportation system users.
- Provision of parks, plazas and greenways to create community gathering places.
- Provision of bicycle parking.
- Incorporating transit facilities and amenities into site design, e.g., shelters, benches, and lighting.
- Provision of structured parking as part of mixed land uses.
- Reduced or shared parking.

Polk County seeks to encourage higher-density and mixed-use developments within TSDAs and TCCOs. Areas within the overlap of TSDAs and TCCOs may allow higher densities and intensities of development. Table 4-1 shows the maximum densities within these areas.

## Map 4-5: Transit Supportive Development Area (TSDA)



## Map 4-6: Transit Corridors and Centers Overlay (TCCO)

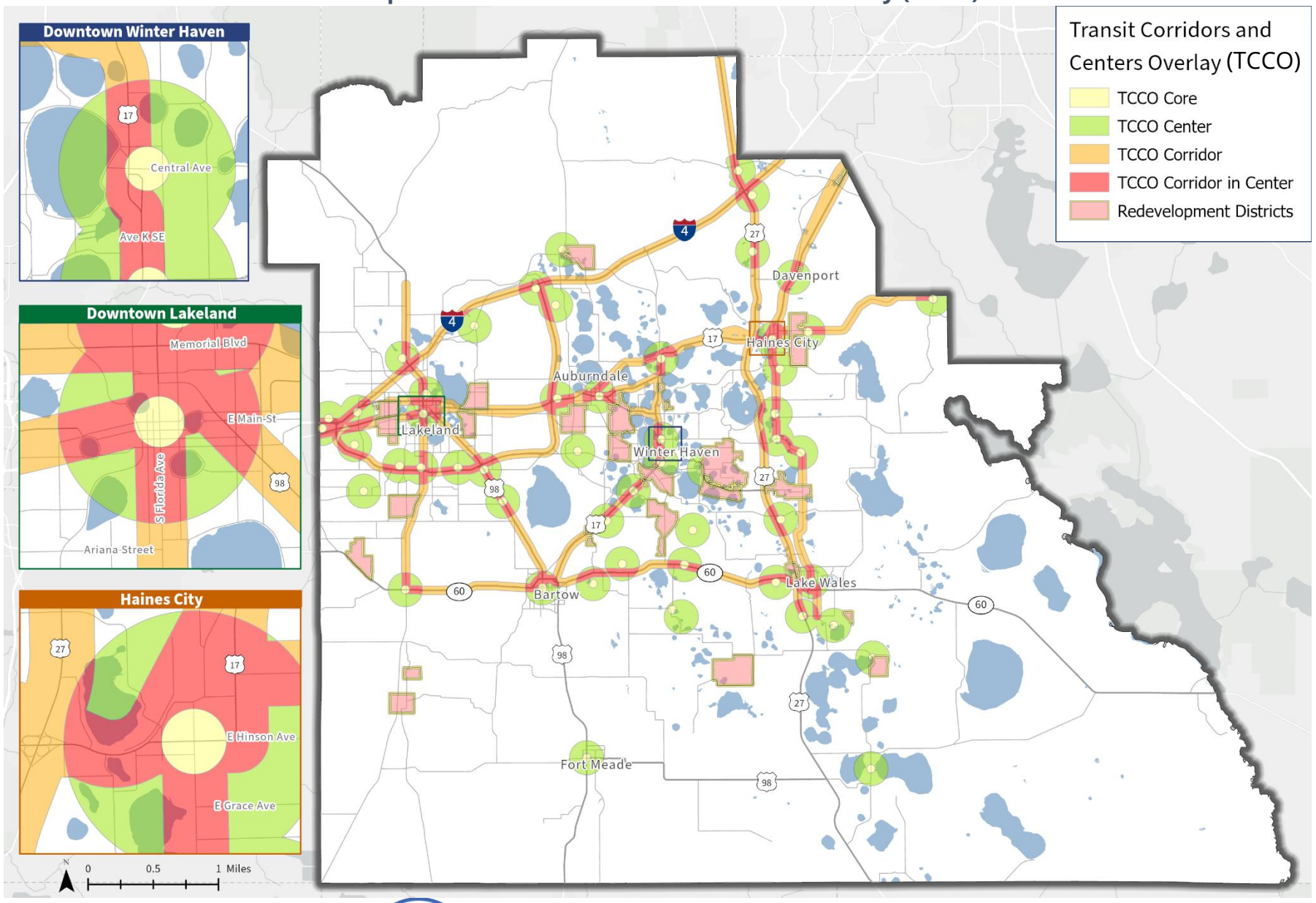


**Table 4-1: TSDAs and TCCOs Maximum Densities**

| Density Schedule (Dwelling Units per Acre) | Residential Low | | Residential Medium | | Residential High | | Mixed Use | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Minimum | Maximum | Minimum | Maximum | Minimum | Maximum | Minimum | Maximum |
| **TSDA** | 3 | 7 | 5 | 10 | 7 | 15 | | |
| **Transit Corridor** | 4 | 10 | 7 | 12 | 10 | 17 | | |
| **Transit Center** | 6 | 12 | 10 | 15 | 12 | 18 | 10 | 18 |
| **Transit Corridor within Transit Center** | 8 | 15 | 12 | 18 | 15 | 20 | 10 | 20 |
| **Transit Center Core** | 10 | 25 | 15 | 30 | 20 | 40 | 15 | 40 |

## Priority Transit Corridor Assessment

Identifying key corridors to improve transit services and facilities is now a requirement under the TDP Rule. This section draws on data and findings from previously completed analyses and outreach to identify corridors to prioritize improving transit in the next 10 years.

### *Approach*

The chosen methodology for selecting and prioritizing the corridors includes a two-phase multi-criteria analysis.

In the first phase, corridor selection, all key corridors in Polk County are reviewed to select a pool of priority corridors using quantifiable and qualitative criteria and data.

Under the second phase, corridor prioritization, an expanded set of criteria are used to score the selected corridors. Each criterion is given a weight to reflect the importance.

### *Corridor Selection Methodology*

The corridor selection process identifies the most suitable corridors in the county based on criteria that consider a holistic review of the multimodal environment. The process used GIS software and spreadsheet model-based approach. The criteria used to select the initial set of priority transit corridors are described below.

#### *Existing & Planned Services*

The existing roadways currently served by Citrus Connection or identified for improved/future transit service in the currently adopted TDP were reviewed.

#### *Population and Employment Projections*

Higher population and employment densities are shown to support transit services. Using socioeconomic data consistent with the Polk County TPO's 2050 Envision LRTP, existing and future population and employment density projections and other relevant information from the operating environment were reviewed.

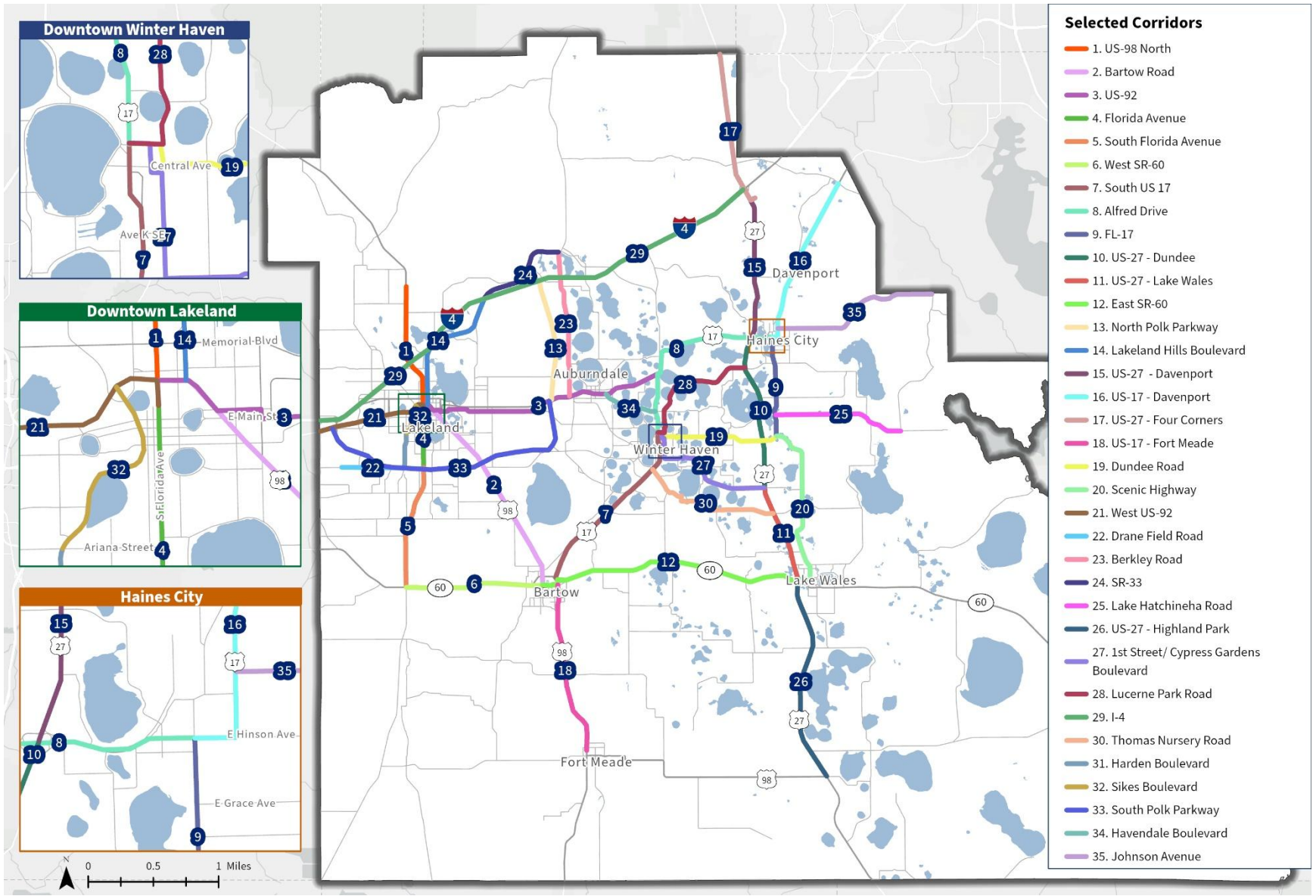
#### *Plans Review*

Key takeaways from the Relationship to Plans Review in Section 2 provide insight into the study area at the local, regional, state, and federal levels.

### *Selected Corridors*

Using these criteria, 35 corridors were selected (Map 4-7 and Table 4-2).

## Map 4-7: Selected Corridors




*Note: The selected corridors are numbered and shown on the map. The selected corridors are not listed in priority order.*

**Table 4-2: Selected Corridors**

| Corridor # | Corridor Name | From | To | Existing/Proposed Transit Availability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | North US-98 | Banana Road/Wilder Road | Pine Street | Yes |
| **2** | Bartow Road | Pine Street | SR-60 | Yes |
| **3** | US-92 | Pine Street | Lake Alfred Road | Partial |
| **4** | Florida Avenue | Pine Street | Central Polk Parkway | Yes |
| **5** | South Florida Avenue | Polk Parkway | Canal Street | Yes |
| **6** | West SR-60 | S Florida Avenue | Broadway Avenue | Yes |
| **7** | South US-17 | Bartow Road | Avenue E | Yes |
| **8** | Alfred Drive | Avenue E | S 10 Street | Yes |
| **9** | FL-17 | Hinson Avenue | Main Street | Yes |
| **10** | US-27 - Dundee | US-17 | Cypress Gardens Boulevard | Partial |
| **11** | US-27 - Lake Wales | Cypress Gardens Boulevard | SR-60 | Partial |
| **12** | East SR-60 | Broadway Avenue | US-27 | Yes |
| **13** | North Polk Parkway | I-4 | US-92 | No |
| **14** | Lakeland Hills Boulevard | I-4 | Bartow Road | Partial |
| **15** | US-27 - Davenport | Ernie Caldwell Boulevard | US-17 | Yes |
| **16** | US-17 - Davenport | Poinciana Parkway | Hinson Avenue | Partial |
| **17** | US-27 - Four Corners | US-27 | Ernie Caldwell Boulevard | Yes |
| **18** | US-17 - Fort Meade | SR-60 | Broadway Street | Yes |
| **19** | Dundee Road | 6th Street | Center Street | Yes |
| **20** | Scenic Highway | Center Street | US-27 | Partial |

*Note: The selected corridors are not listed in priority order.*

**Table 4-2: Selected Corridors (continued)**

| Corridor # | Corridor Name | From | To | Existing/Proposed Transit Availability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **21** | West US-92 | County Line Road | S Florida Avenue | Yes |
| **22** | Drane Field Road | Fiddle Leaf Way | Harden Boulevard | Yes |
| **23** | Berkley Road | Commonwealth Avenue | US-92 | Partial |
| **24** | SR-33 | I-4 | Berkley Road | No |
| **25** | Lake Hatchineha Road | Scenic Highway | Poinciana Parkway | No |
| **26** | US-27 - Highland Park | SR-60 | US-98 | No |
| **27** | 1st Street/ Cypress Gardens Boulevard | 6th Street | US-27 | Partial |
| **28** | Lucerne Park Road | 6th Street | US-27 | Partial |
| **29** | I-4 | County Line Road | US-27 | No |
| **30** | Thomas Nursery Road | US-17 | US-27 | Partial |
| **31** | Harden Boulevard | Ariana Street | Drane Field Road | Yes |
| **32** | Sikes Boulevard | George Jenkins Boulevard | Ariana Street | Yes |
| **33** | South Polk Parkway | US-92 | US-92 | No |
| **34** | Havendale Boulevard | US-92 | Lake Alfred Road | Yes |
| **35** | Johnson Avenue | 10th Street | Marigold Avenue | Partial |

*Note: The selected corridors are not listed in priority order.*

## *Corridor Prioritization Methodology*

This section presents the methodology used to prioritize the selected corridors, structured to cover a spectrum of qualitative and quantitative factors to prioritize those best able to improve transit.

Each corridor was evaluated using the weighted criteria in Table 4-3. The composite score is used to rank the 35 corridors. The evaluation criteria used to prioritize the corridors are described in detail thereafter.

The prioritization of the selected corridors assists Citrus Connection and the Polk TPO with identifying its short- and mid-term transit needs, the level of investment, and the type of improvement and enhancement necessary.

**Table 4-3: Prioritization Criteria**

| Category | Measure | Weights | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Provider's Service Area** | Key Local Hub/Regional Connectivity | 25% | 40% |
| | Ridership Productivity | 15% | |
| **Urban Design Pattern** | Transit Supportive Land Use | 20% | 40% |
| | Metropolitan Planning Input | 20% | |
| **Multimodal Environment** | Multimodal infrastructure/ facilities | 20% | 20% |
| | | **Total** | **100%** |

### *Key Local Hub/Regional Connectivity*

Enhanced connectivity between key local hubs or major regional hubs complement the larger economic development and growth efforts in Polk County. The opportunity for travel to and from selected local/regional activity hubs using transit was reviewed for each corridor.

### *Existing Ridership Productivity*

Gauging existing demand can help determine which areas have potential to increase ridership with enhanced or additional services. Existing demand, measured by ridership per revenue mile in each corridor, will help prioritize areas with high potential to enhance service and serve the most customers efficiently. The ratio of existing transit service mileage per corridor mileage was measured in GIS.

### *Transit Supportive Land Use*

The availability of transit service to serve transit-supportive land use was an important consideration. Land uses considered to be transit-supportive include higher density residential, multi-family residential, public uses, commercial, restaurants, shopping centers, higher education, hotel, medical, and office uses. The proportion of these land uses in each corridor was scored in GIS.

### *Stakeholder/Community Input*

Public support and input helped support the prioritization of the transit corridors. The conclusions from public outreach efforts, such as comments made at public workshops and quantitative survey results, and input from stakeholder interviews were reviewed to gauge public and key stakeholder support.

### *Multimodal Facility Access*

A large presence of sidewalk and bicycle facilities could suggest that an area is pedestrian-supportive and may be more accessible for customers. The sidewalk and bicycle facility mileage per corridor was measured.

The thresholds for the criteria were determined using the average of the entire data set and one standard deviation above or below the average. Table 4-4 shows the thresholds and scoring for each criterion.

### *Prioritized Corridors*

The prioritized corridors are shown on Map 4-5 and summarized in Table 4-4. The North US-98 (from Banana Road/Wilder Road to Pine Street) and Florida Avenue (from Pine Street to Central Polk Parkway) corridors scored the highest. These are in the Lakeland area where population and employment growth, along with transit-supportive land uses, is expected.

**Table 4-4: Prioritization Criteria Thresholds**

| Criteria | Range | Score |
|---|---|---|
| Key Local Hub/Regional Connectivity | None | 1 |
| | Moderate | 3 |
| | High | 5 |
| | Very High | 7 |
| Existing Ridership Productivity | Less than (Average – 1 SD) | 1 |
| | Between (Average – 1 SD) to Average | 3 |
| | More than Average to (Average + 1 SD) | 5 |
| | More than (Average + 1 SD) | 7 |
| Transit Supportive Land Use | Less than (Average – 1 SD) | 1 |
| | Between (Average – 1 SD) to Average | 3 |
| | More than Average to (Average + 1 SD) | 5 |
| | More than (Average + 1 SD) | 7 |
| Stakeholder/ Community Input | None | 1 |
| | Moderate | 3 |
| | High | 5 |
| | Very High | 7 |
| Multimodal infrastructure/ facilities | Less than (Average – 1 SD) | 1 |
| | Between (Average – 1 SD) to Average | 3 |
| | More than Average to (Average + 1 SD) | 5 |
| | More than (Average + 1 SD) | 7 |

*Note: SD = statistical Standard Deviation*

## Map 4-8: Prioritized Corridors

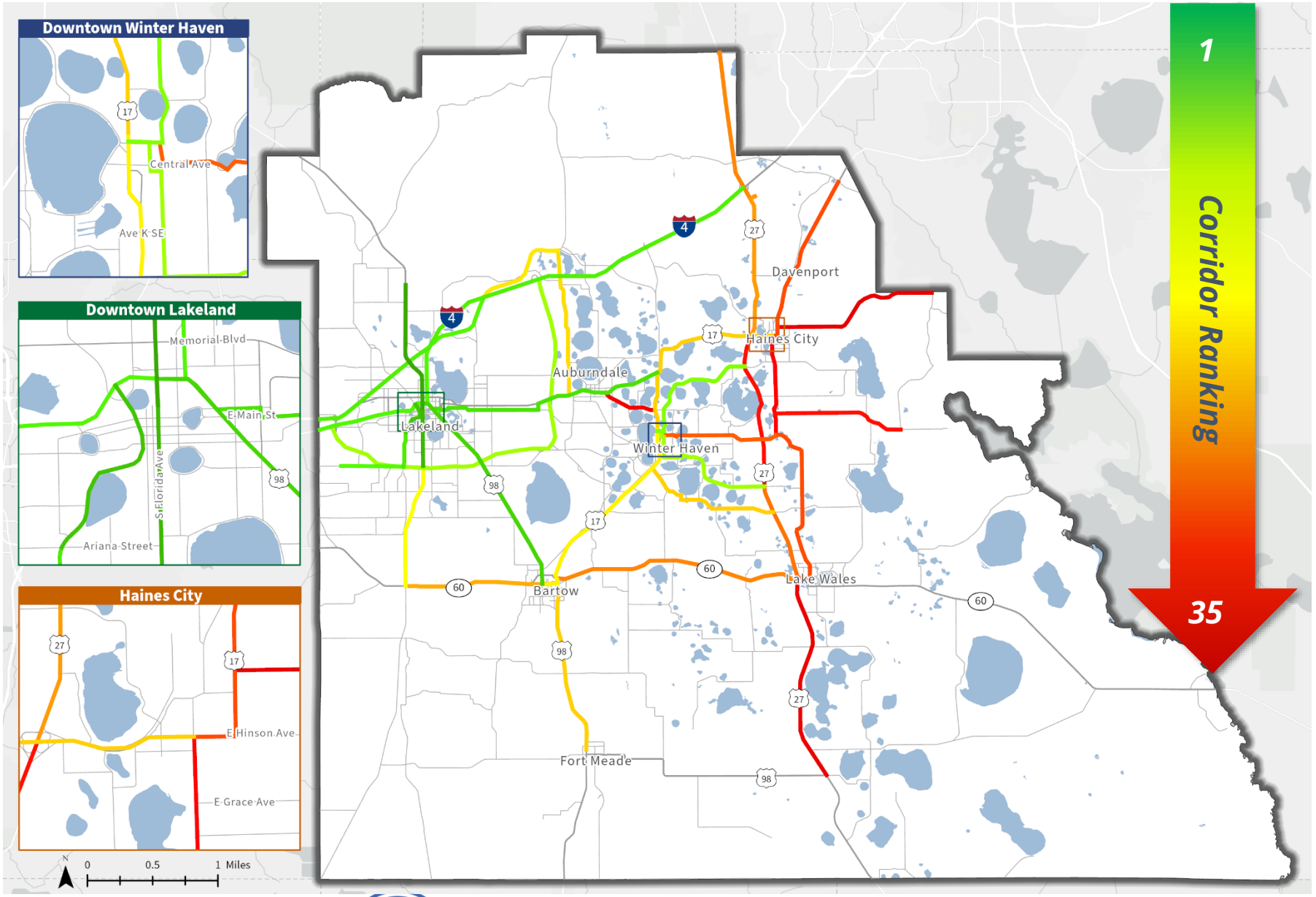


Table 4-5: Prioritized Corridors Evaluation Summary

| Rank | Corridor # | Corridor Name | Key Local Hub/Regional Connectivity | Ridership Productivity | Stakeholder/ Community Input | Transit Supportive Land Use | Multimodal infrastructure/ facilities | Priority Corridor Weighted Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | 1 | North US-98 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6.7 |
| **1** | 4 | Florida Avenue | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6.7 |
| **3** | 32 | Sikes Boulevard | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6.2 |
| **4** | 2 | Bartow Road | 7 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5.9 |
| **5** | 3 | US-92 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5.5 |
| **6** | 31 | Harden Boulevard | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5.4 |
| **7** | 29 | I-4 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 5.1 |
| **8** | 22 | Drane Field Road | 5 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 4.6 |
| **9** | 14 | Lakeland Hills Boulevard | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4.6 |
| **9** | 21 | West US-92 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4.6 |
| **11** | 28 | Lucerne Park Road | 3 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 4.5 |
| **12** | 33 | South Polk Parkway | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 4.2 |
| **12** | 13 | North Polk Parkway | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4.2 |
| **14** | 27 | 1st Street/ Cypress Gardens Boulevard | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4.2 |
| **15** | 5 | South Florida Avenue | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4.1 |
| **16** | 7 | South US-17 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4.1 |
| **17** | 24 | SR-33 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3.7 |
| **18** | 23 | Berkley Road | 5 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3.6 |

Table 4-5: Prioritized Corridors Evaluation Summary (continued)

| Rank | Corridor # | Corridor Name | Key Local Hub/Regional Connectivity | Ridership Productivity | Stakeholder/ Community Input | Transit Supportive Land Use | Multimodal infrastructure/ facilities | Priority Corridor Weighted Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **19** | 30 | Thomas Nursery Road | 3 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 3.3 |
| **20** | 8 | Alfred Drive | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3.3 |
| **21** | 18 | US-17 - Fort Meade | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3.3 |
| **22** | 6 | West SR-60 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 3.3 |
| **23** | 15 | US-27 - Davenport | 5 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3.2 |
| **24** | 17 | US-27 - Four Corners | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3.0 |
| **25** | 11 | US-27 - Lake Wales | 3 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2.9 |
| **26** | 12 | East SR-60 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2.9 |
| **27** | 16 | US-17 - Davenport | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2.7 |
| **28** | 19 | Dundee Road | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2.7 |
| **29** | 20 | Scenic Highway | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2.7 |
| **30** | 25 | Lake Hatchineha Road | 3 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2.5 |
| **31** | 9 | FL-17 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2.5 |
| **32** | 10 | US-27 Dundee | 3 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2.5 |
| **33** | 34 | Havendale Boulevard | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2.3 |
| **34** | 26 | US-27 - Highland Park | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2.3 |
| **35** | 35 | Johnson Avenue | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1.9 |

# Section 5. Ten-Year Operating & Capital Program

This section presents the Ten-Year Operating and Capital Program for Citrus Connection TDP, including the schedule of projects. The schedule of projects summarizes the 10-year transit needs, including service, capital/infrastructure, technology projects and policy initiatives developed without considering financial constraints. Later in the process, the financial plan details the operating and capital costs and revenues and proposed 10-year list of priority projects.

*Source: Benesch*

## Schedule of Projects Development

The schedule of projects describes improvements needed to fulfill the community's vision for transit and provides an unconstrained outlook on the community's transit service and capital needs. The following provides the basis for the schedule of projects.

- **Community Direction**—Findings from public outreach efforts and input from stakeholders were reviewed to gauge public interest.
- **Operating Context Review**—Understandings from the review of the study area data that influence how transit functions in Polk County.
- **Plans and Policy Direction**—Review of related plans and policies at the local, regional, state, and federal levels.
- **Land Use and Corridor Assessment**—Insight from the review of transit supportive land use and urban design efforts in combination with direction from the Priority Transit Corridor Assessment.

## Schedule of Projects

A range of transit improvements to support the creation of a practical, actionable, and evolving plan reflecting Polk County's long-term vision for growth and enhancement was developed. As noted earlier, the project schedule presents the initiatives in an unconstrained manner.

### *TDP Service Improvements*

Service improvements were developed to improve transit access to jobs and services in and next to Polk County and help reduce traffic congestion in core areas and corridors. These include strategies to enhance existing services and new services. New services include premium transit options, new express and local routes, and technology-based microtransit services.

*Source: Benesch*

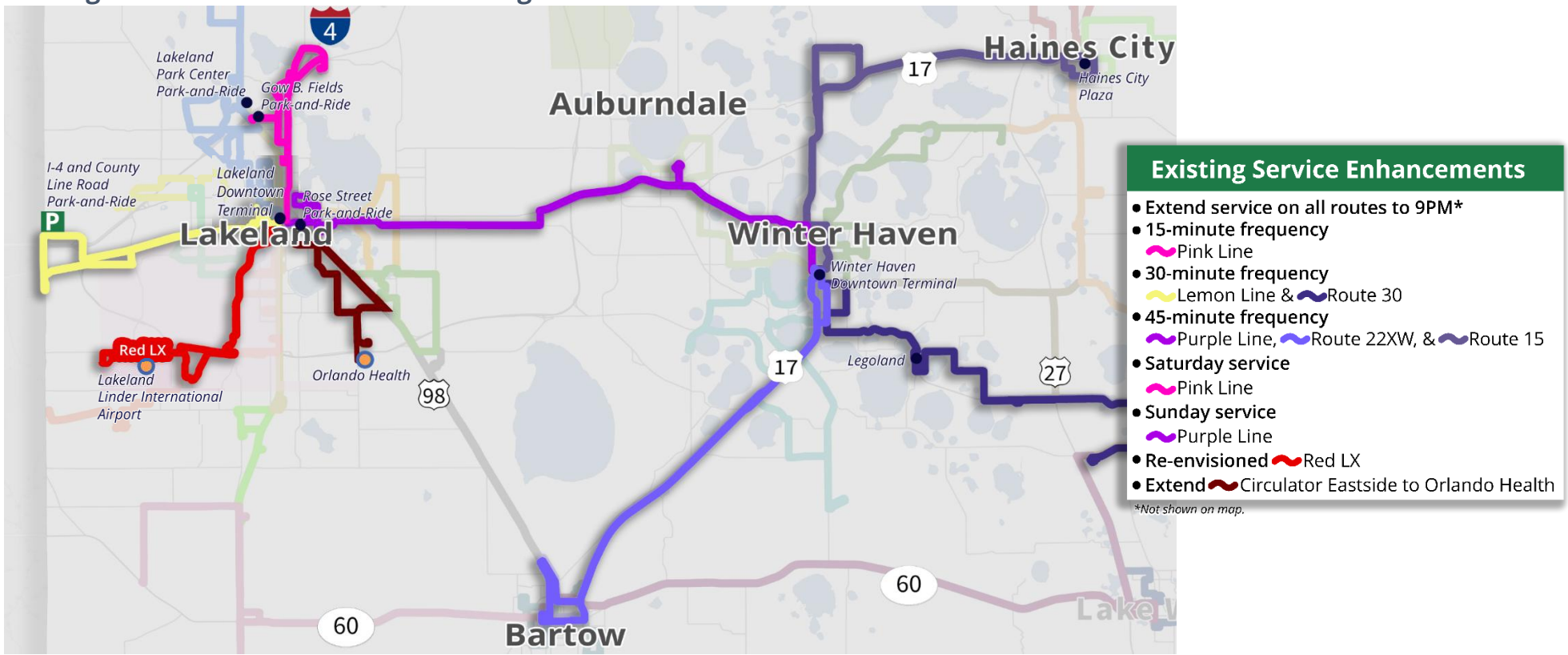
### *Enhancements to Existing Network*

A review of the operating environment, existing service performance data, and input from the public and bus operators indicate a need to improve the existing network by extending service and increasing frequency. These improvements will enhance customer experience and provide direct connections to key destinations.

The following are the recommended improvements:

- Extend weekday service span until 9:00 PM
- 15-minute service on Pink Line
- 30-minute service on Lemon Line and Route 30
- 45-minute service on Purple Line and Routes 15 and 22XW
- Saturday service on Pink Line
- Sunday service on Purple Line
- Convert Red Line to limited express service
- Extend Circulator Eastside to Orlando Health

**Figure 5-1: Enhancements to Existing Network**

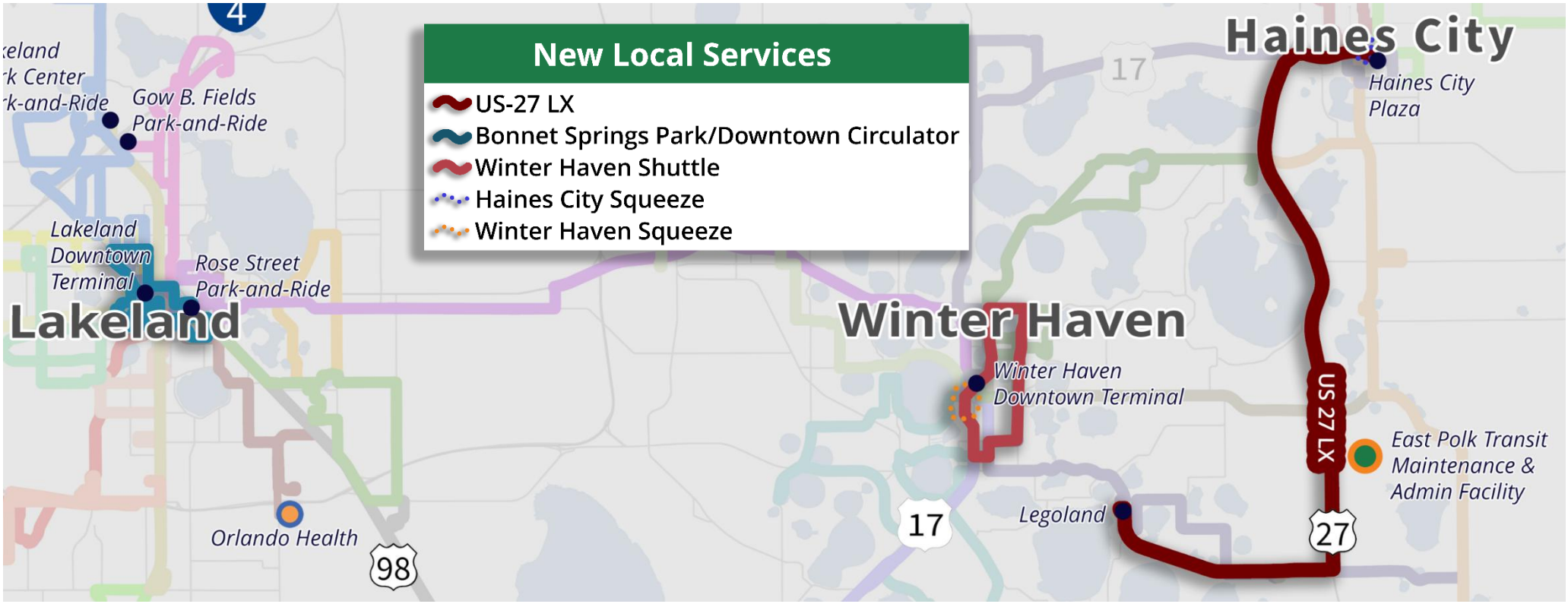


### *New Local Service*

As Polk County's population and employment continues to grow, the need for alternative mobility options increases. Transit will continue to potentially mitigate worsening traffic congestion resulting from this growth. To increase network connectivity and expand service coverage, the new services shown in Figure 5-2 are recommended.

- *US-27 LX*—Demand analyses indicated a need for additional connections from Winter Haven to Haines City and service along US-27. This route will connect Legoland to Haines City while also serving other businesses and residential areas every 45 minutes Monday through Friday.
- *Bonnet Springs Park/Downtown Circulator*—Staff direction and outreach suggest adding additional connections in Lakeland. This service will connect customers to the area adjacent to Bonnet Springs Park and downtown.
- *Winter Haven Shuttle*—Growing population and employment densities indicate the need for a flex service to connect residents in the northeast to businesses and medical offices in southwest Winter Haven. This route will enhance connectivity in Winter Haven Monday through Friday.
- *Haines City Squeeze*—This service will connect residents and workers to businesses and the proposed SunRail station when implemented on the weekdays.
- *Winter Haven Squeeze*—Throughout the community outreach process, stakeholders and the public indicated a need for a convenient travel alternative to restaurants and other businesses during lunch time on the weekdays. Depending on demand, this service may be extended to nights and weekends.

**Figure 5-2: New Local Service**

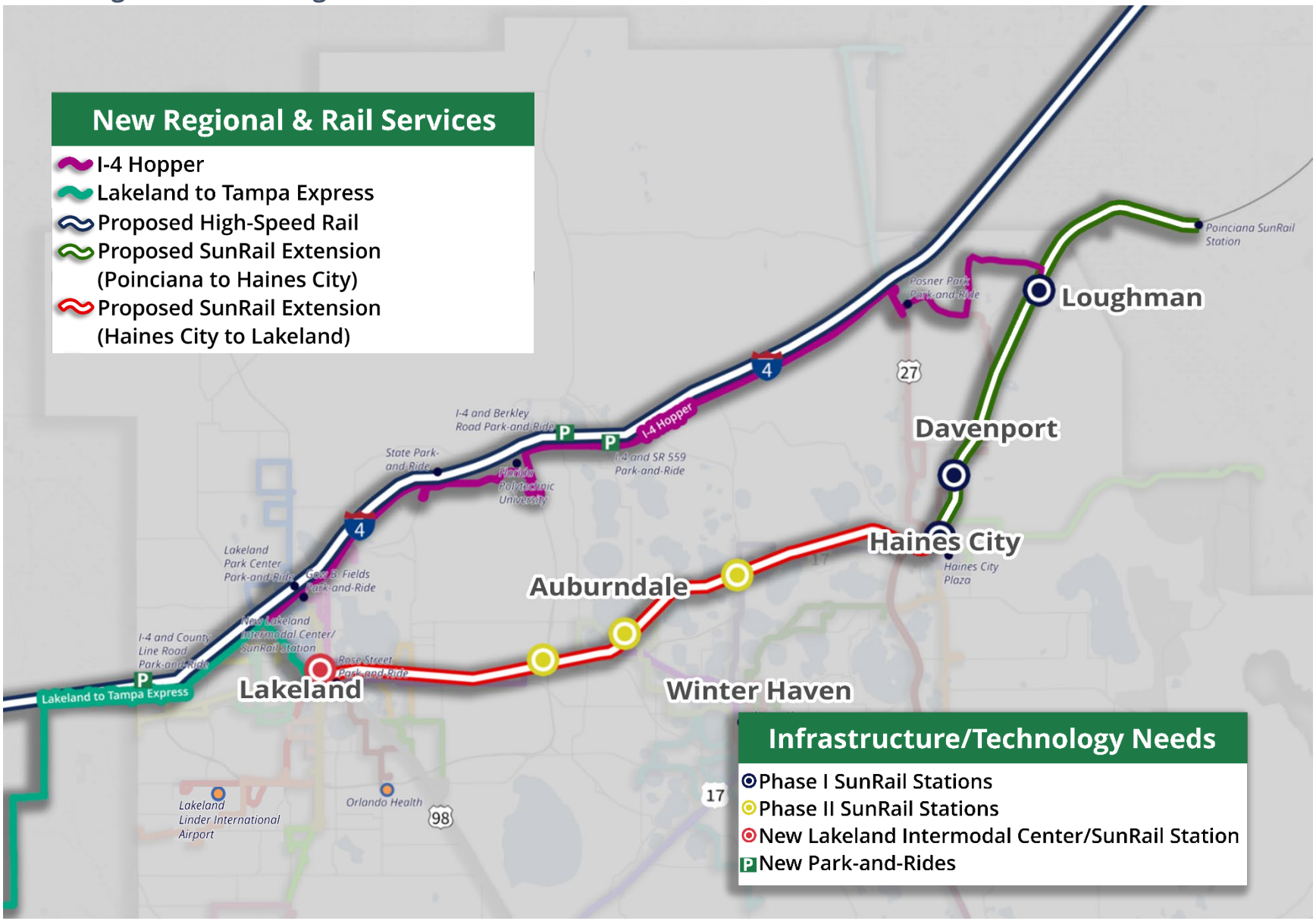


### *New Regional and Rail Services*

Regional services were identified by the public and key stakeholders as a key need to support growth and enhance connectivity within and beyond Polk County. There was consensus that such services may help bolster economic development, quickly connecting growth centers and jobs to people regionally. Figure 5-3 shows the following improvements were identified to address this need:

- *Proposed SunRail Extension*— The existing SunRail system spans 51 miles, connecting 17 stations from DeLand to Poinciana. In 2023, FDOT completed the Polk County SunRail Extension Study, which recommended extending SunRail service into Polk County. The preferred alternative includes seven proposed stations: Lakeland, a site near the Polk Parkway, Auburndale, Lake Alfred, Haines City, Davenport, and Loughman. The study also recommended a phased approach to implementation. Phase One focuses on extending service to the eastern portion of the alignment, with proposed stations in Haines City, Davenport, and Loughman. This phase is currently in the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) stage. It is assumed in this TDP that SunRail service will be extended to Lakeland by 2035, the designated horizon year for the plan.
- *I-4 Hopper*—Public outreach and guidance from staff indicate a need to conveniently and quickly connect key trip generators, higher education centers, and shopping hubs adjacent to I-4. The I-4 Hopper would connect downtown Lakeland to Florida Polytechnic University, the Innovation District, and Posner Park during peak hours. If SunRail is extended to Polk County, this route would then extend to either the Loughman, Davenport, or Haines City station for a direct connection to SunRail.
- *Lakeland-Tampa Express*—This regional connection would link Lakeland to Tampa and the HART bus network via the eastern stop on SR-60 in Dover. Regional travel flow data in combination with discussion group feedback supports the connection to Hillsborough County during peak hours.
- *High-Speed Rail*—This TDP assumes high-speed rail on the I-4 corridor. This improvement is included as a long-term service option per TPO staff. No time frame, scale, or stations have been identified.

Figure 5-3: New Regional and Rail Services



### Pre-SunRail Bus Connections

- *Lakeland to Poinciana Express*—This express route would provide a direct connection from Lakeland to the existing Poinciana SunRail station until SunRail is expanded into Polk County. This express service would have limited stops and provide direct connections near the Polk Parkway, in Auburndale, Lake Alfred, Haines City, Davenport, and Loughman on weekdays every hour.
- *Haines City-Posner Express*—Until SunRail is extended to Polk County, this direct connection would link the Haines City Plaza to the Posner Park-and-Ride every 60 minutes. This route would connect to Route 19X, providing a connection to the Poinciana SunRail station.

### *New Premium Service*

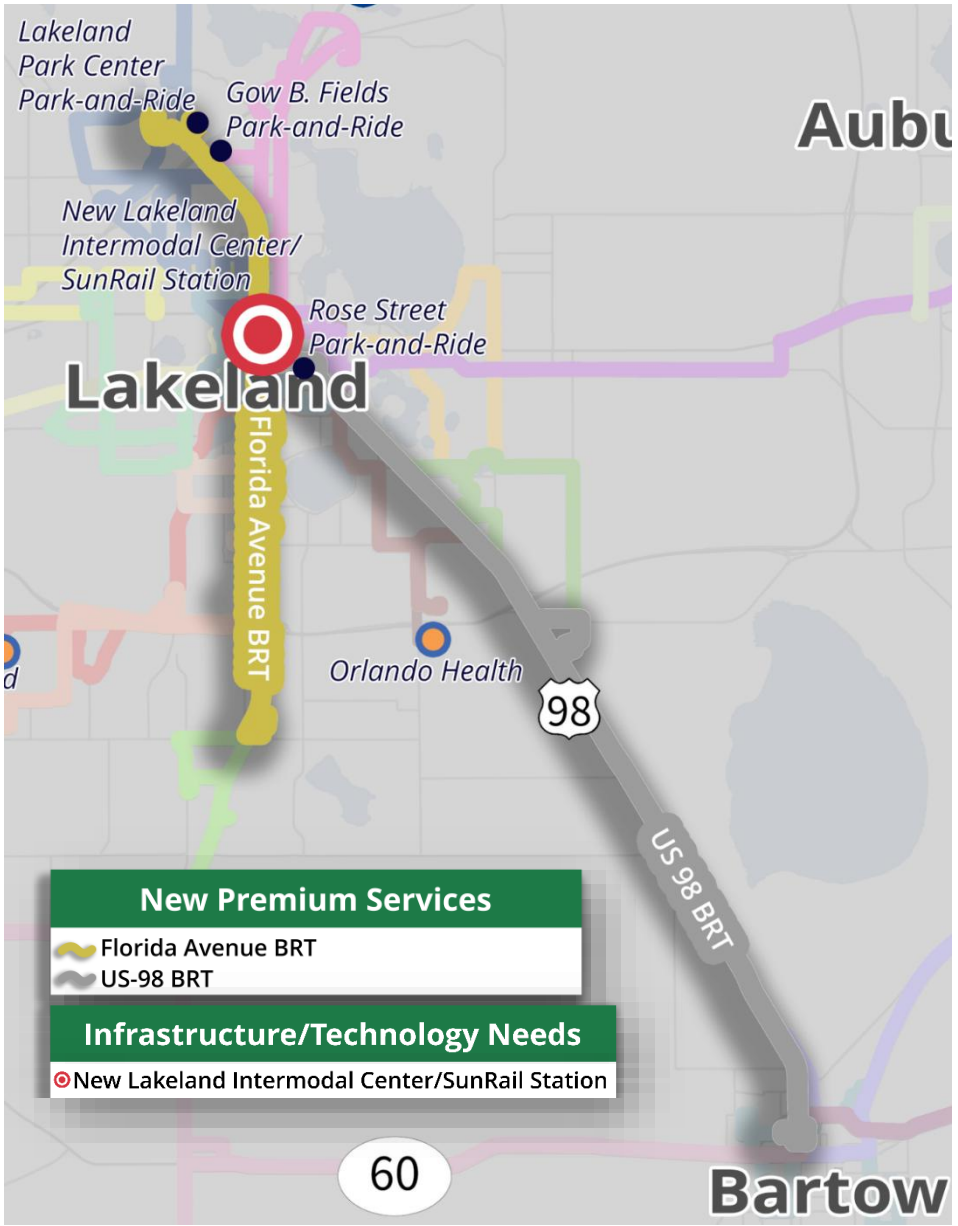
With direction from previously reviewed plans, demand assessments, and support from stakeholders and the community, adding premium service on high demand corridors/areas is recommended. Enhancing service on already high performing corridors and adding transit-supportive technology/infrastructure on them may not only help attract new customers but improve the quality of service for current customers.

Key features of the service may include bus preferential treatments such as TSP/queue jumps at needed/applicable intersections, branded stations with enhanced amenities (covered/ sheltered bus stops with real-time passenger information, WiFi, information kiosks, etc.), and branded low-floor BRT vehicles. Figure 5-4 shows the recommended premium service improvements summarized below:

- *Florida Avenue BRT*—This high-frequency, 15-minute service premium transit connection would link the new Lakeland Intermodal Center to the Lake Miriam Shopping Center. The Florida Avenue BRT would serve the same areas as the existing highly productive Gold Line. The recommended BRT service would operate in mixed traffic (sometimes called “BRT Lite”) along Florida Avenue.
- *US-98 BRT*—Plans previously conducted by FDOT and Polk County recommended to enhance the

existing Silver Line by adding mixed-traffic BRT service on US-98. When implemented, the US-98 BRT will link Lakeland and Bartow every 20 minutes, providing much-needed travel options for thousands of residents, workers, and visitors in these growing areas.

**Figure 5-4: BRT Routes**

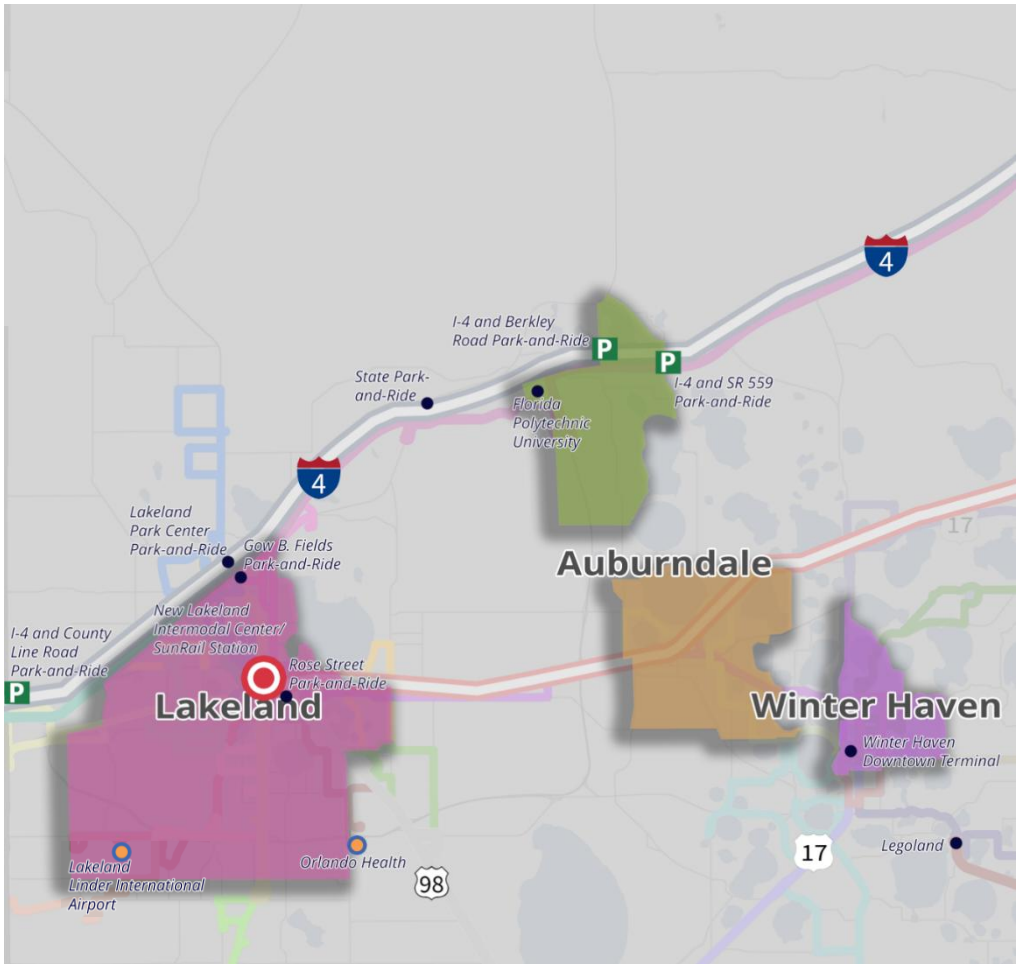


### *New Microtransit Service*

Microtransit has become a popular transit option due to its on-demand technology-based trip hailing options and convenience. It is also accessible to people with disabilities who cannot access a fixed route stop and would otherwise rely on ADA paratransit service. The concept can promote transit, provide efficient service in low-density areas where traditional bus may be inefficient, and provide a way for transit agencies to enhance access. These services also serve as first/last-mile service for fixed-route customers. The following zones, as shown in Figure 5-5, are recommended to meet localized mobility needs:

- The Lakeland/Airport microtransit zone will connect customers to the Lakeland Linder International Airport, neighborhoods, and businesses in Lakeland.
- The Innovation District/Polk City microtransit zone will link customers in Polk City to Florida Polytechnic University, attractions, shops, and the developing Innovation District.
- The Auburndale microtransit zone will connect customers to lifeline trips in the area from Lake Ariana Boulevard to K-Ville Ave between Berkley Road and Lynchburg Road.
- The Winter Haven microtransit zone will link customers to medical and grocery shopping in and around downtown from US 17 to Buckeye Loop, north of Dundee Road.
- There is a consideration for a new Bartow microtransit zone. The boundaries will be defined when demand is determined.

**Figure 5-5: New Microtransit Service**



## *Capital Improvements*

The implementation of these transit services should be supported by necessary infrastructure and technological improvements to ensure enhanced experience. The following have been identified to support the operational investments.

### *Lakeland Intermodal Center/SunRail Station*

The Lakeland Downtown Terminal is currently the only major transfer center for west Polk County and is served by the west Polk County routes. The terminal size is not adequate to serve expanded transit service. It is anticipated that the Lakeland Intermodal Center will be relocated to the location identified in the Lakeland Intermodal Study (Figure 5-6). The proposed facility design includes bus bays, park-and-ride facilities, multimodal amenities, a drop-off and pick-up area, and other amenities. The proposed new transfer center would also be adjacent to the existing railroad track which could facilitate access to any future rail service. A PD&E study to support this effort will be conducted.

**Figure 5-6: Lakeland Intermodal Center**

### *East Polk Transit Maintenance and Administrative Facility*

This new facility is already planned to increase efficiency by reducing deadhead mileage for services in east Polk County. The already acquired site is located along Lincoln Avenue and will consolidate administration, maintenance, and vehicle storage for these routes.

### *Proposed New Transit Center/Super Stop*

Transit centers and super stops are critical infrastructure upgrades that will support the growing Citrus Connection network.

A new transit center serving Lakeland Linder International Airport is proposed to connect passengers and workers to and from the Airport, which now provides commercial flights.

A super stop, or enhanced bus stop with enhanced amenities, is proposed at the new Orlando Health location adjacent to Lakeland Highlands Road to provide quality experience for customers with comfort and ease to access services.

*Source: Benesch*

*Source: Benesch*

## *New Park and Ride Facilities*

Park-and-ride facilities allow commuters to avoid traffic congestion and do other activities while traveling to their destination. Currently, there are five park-and-ride facilities in Polk County, four located in or around Lakeland and one in Davenport.

To support the new regional/express services and the extended route network growth, three additional park and ride facilities are proposed at the following locations.

- I-4 and Berkley Road
- I-4 and SR-559
- I-4 and County Line Road

Before these park-and-ride facilities are implemented, feasibility studies will be conducted.

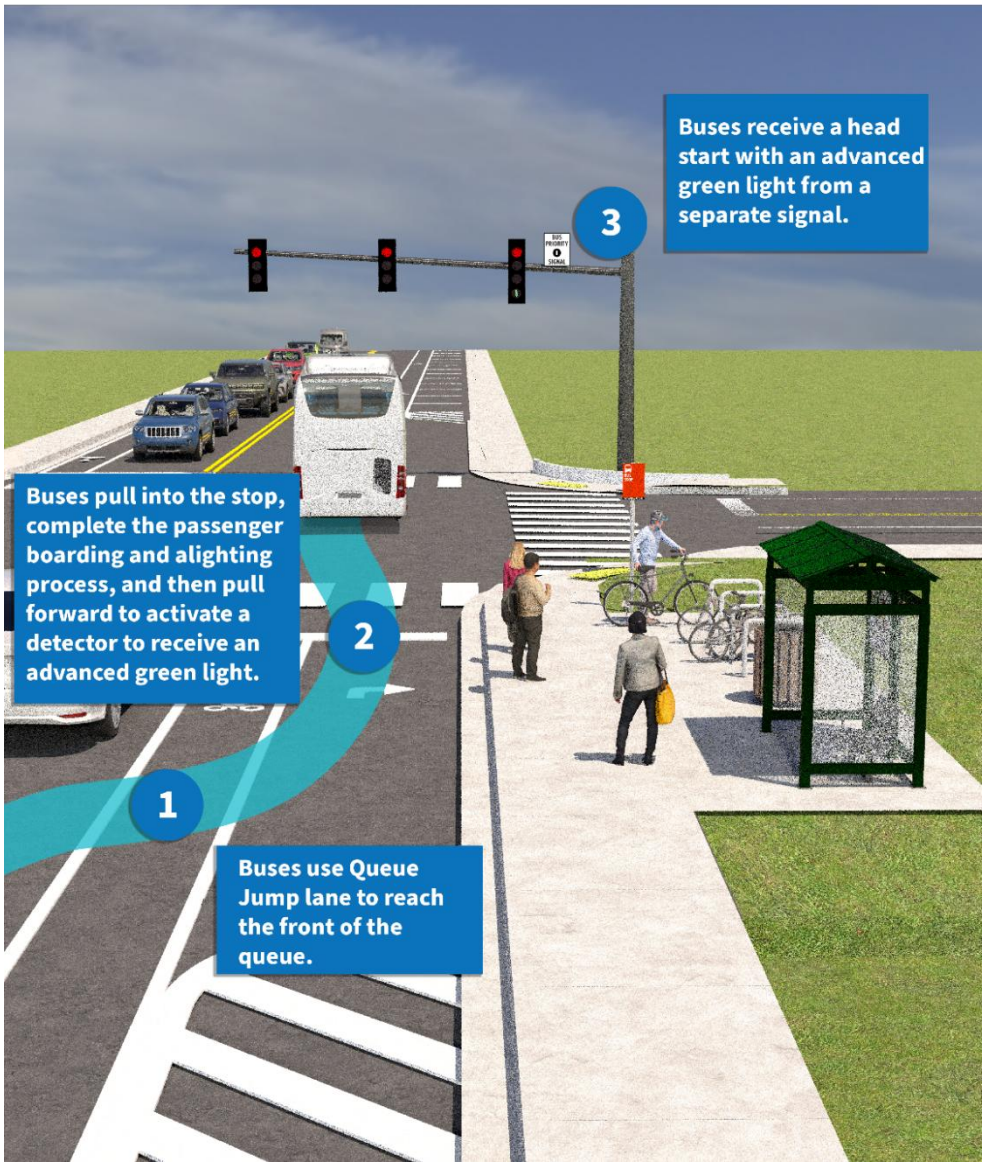
*Source: Benesch*

*TSP/Queue Jumps*

To mitigate the effects of increased traffic on critical corridors, such as Florida Avenue and US-98, implementation of bus preferential treatments such as TSP and queue jumps is recommended. Traffic congestion significantly influences travel times for services operating in mixed-flow conditions, potentially diminishing the attractiveness of transit to prospective customers and reducing reliability for existing customers. TSP and queue jumps are strategic enhancements to create more efficient transit travel, particularly during peak periods of congestion. These technologies should be prioritized at identified intersections and are essential to the successful implementation of BRT services. By reducing delays and improving on time performance, these measures enhance the overall attractiveness of transit compared to SOV travel. Figure 5-7 shows a TSP and queue jump configuration to prioritize transit movement at an intersection.

It is recommended that Citrus Connection review the 2024 FDOT District One Districtwide BRT Feasibility Study to plan for potential TSP and queue jump implementation, in coordination with the appropriate local agencies.

**Figure 5-7: TSP with Queue Jump Concept to Support BRT**




*Source: Benesch and NACTO*

### *Implement Alternative Fuel Vehicles*

Citrus Connection continues to replace its fleet and add new vehicles to provide service improvements. With the proposed on-demand and Squeeze services, it is recommended that Citrus Connection consider acquiring alternative fuel vehicles as replacements, when possible. This may not only attract potential new customers, including the younger and environmentally conscious car drivers to transit, but may also help the overall marketing strategy and image building.

### *Additional/Enhanced Facilities and Bus Stop Infrastructure*

Citrus Connection's dedication to enhancing its infrastructure with amenities such as bus shelters, benches, and bike racks should continue, with plans to invest in facilities to support the existing and proposed routes. Installing these amenities will enhance the existing customer experience and may encourage new customers to try the service.

### *Expand Pass Sale Location and Implement Mobile Payment*

Public outreach feedback suggests that Citrus Connection needs to expand the locations that bus passes can be bought by customers. Citrus Connection should consider partnering with libraries, county facilities, and any other businesses willing to host bus pass sales.

While the existing Citrus Connection mobile app is helpful to customers to anticipate the next bus arrival, customers would also like to pay fares via mobile payment. Furthermore, if the microtransit services are implemented, enhancing the app to include a way to procure a ride via microtransit should be considered. Furthermore, fareboxes will be upgraded to be able to accept mobile payment.

### *Enhance Marketing and Promote UAP Partnerships*

Citrus Connection should broaden its marketing reach by engaging major employers and higher education centers. Additionally, increased public education on the benefits of transit is essential, along with the use of targeted social media campaigns to reach specific audiences. Expanding access to transit information is also important, including an array of outreach tools.

Tables 5-1 and 5-2 show schedule of projects for services and capital improvements, respectively. Thereafter, Map 5-1 shows the 10-Year Schedule of Projects for the TDP.

**Table 5-1: 10-Year Schedule of Projects | Services**

| Project | Description/ Location | Type of Service | Level of Service | | | Associated Costs (2025$) | | Recommended Implementation Timeframe | Consistent with/Support for Related Plan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Freq (min) | Span of Service | Days of Service | Operating | Capital | | |
| ***Enhancements to Existing Services*** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Extend weekday service until 9:00 PM** | Throughout Polk County | Local | Various | Various | Monday - Friday | $3,951,176* | N/A | 2-3 years | Local |
| **15-minute Frequency on Pink Line** | Along SR 33, Parkview Place, and Florida Avenue | Local | 15 | 6:15 AM - 6:08 PM | Monday - Friday | $570,673* | $1,400,000 | 2-5 years | Local |
| **30-minute Frequency on Lemon Line** | Along George Jenkins Boulevard, US 92, and County Line Road | Local | 30 | 5:45 AM - 5:38 PM | Monday - Friday | $397,109* | $700,000 | 2-5 years | Local |
| **30-minute Frequency on Route 30** | Along Central Avenue, Cypress Gardens Boulevard, Waverly Road, and Scenic Highway | Local | 30 | 6:15 AM - 7:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $871,520* | $1,400,000 | 2-5 years | Local |
| **45-minute Frequency on Purple Line** | Along Main Street, US 92, Havendale Boulevard, and US 17 | Local | 45 | 5:45 AM - 6:53 PM | Monday - Friday | $551,851* | $1,400,000 | 2-5 years | Local |
| **45-minute Frequency on Route 15** | Along 6th Street, Lake Alfred Road, and US 17 | Local | 45 | 5:45 AM - 7:10 PM | Monday - Friday | $440,171* | $700,000 | 2-5 years | Local |
| **45-minute Frequency on Route 22XW** | Along US 17, US-98, and Main Street | Local | 45 | 5:45 AM - 7:04 PM | Monday - Friday | $439,139* | $700,000 | 2-5 years | Local |
| **Saturday service on Pink Line** | Along SR 33, Parkview Place, and Florida Avenue | Local | 30 | 7:00 AM - 3:00 PM | Saturday | $103,533* | N/A | 5-10 years | Local |
| **Sunday service on Purple Line** | Along Main Street, US 92, Havendale Boulevard, and US 17 | Local | 90 | 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM | Sunday | $77,650* | N/A | 5-10 years | Local |
| **Convert Red Line to Limited Express** | Along Sikes Boulevard and Drane Field Road | Local | 30 | 5:45 AM - 5:35 PM | Monday - Friday | N/A | N/A | 2-3 years | Local |
| **Extend Circulator Eastside to Orlando Health** | Along Lakeland Highlands Road | Local | 60 | 6:15 AM - 6:15 PM | Monday - Saturday | $86,236* | N/A | 1-2 years | Local |

**Incremental cost.*

**Table 5-1: 10-Year Schedule of Projects | Services (continued)**

| Project | Description/ Location | Type of Service | Level of Service | | | Associated Costs (2025$) | | Recommended Implementation Timeframe | Consistent with/Support for Related Plan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Freq (min) | Span of Service | Days of Service | Operating | Capital | | |
| ***New Local Service*** | | | | | | | | | |
| **US-27 LX** | Along US 301 and Eiland Boulevard | Local | 45 | 6:00 AM - 7:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $689,888 | $1,400,000 | 5-10 years | Local |
| **Bonnet Springs Park/ Downtown Circulator** | Along Kathleen Street, 5th Street, Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard, George Jenkins Boulevard, Lake Morton Drive, Bonnet Springs Boulevard | Local | 45 | 7:30 AM - 6:45 PM | Monday - Friday | $208,768 | $250,000 | 1-2 years | Local |
| **Winter Haven Shuttle** | Along 6th Street, 1st Street, Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard, 7th Street, Avenue O, and Cypress Gardens Boulevard | Local | 30 | 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $148,457 | $250,000 | 1-2 years | Local |
| **Haines City Squeeze** | Along Main Street,4th Street, Oak Avenue, Ledwith Avenue, and 8th Street | Local | 10 | 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $37,800 | $75,000 | 5-10 years | Local |
| **Winter Haven Squeeze** | Along Lake Howard Drive, Avenue C, 1st Street North, and Avenue E | Local | 10 | 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $37,800 | $75,000 | 2-3 years | Local |
| ***New Regional and Rail Services*** | | | | | | | | | |
| **I-4 Hopper** | Along I-4 from US-98 to Loughman SunRail station | Express | 60 | 6:00 AM – 9:00 AM/ 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $376,303 | $1,400,000 | 5-10 years | Local, Regional |
| **Lakeland – Tampa Express** | Along I-4 from downtown Lakeland to SR-60 in Dover | Express | 90 | 6:00 AM – 9:00 AM/ 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $188,151 | $700,000 | 5-10 years | Local, Regional |
| **Haines City – Posner Express (Pre-SunRail)** | Along US-27 from 17th Street to Ernie Caldwell Boulevard | Express | 60 | 6:00 AM – 9:00 AM/ 3:00 PM – 6:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $188,151 | $700,000 | 2-5 years | Local |
| **Lakeland – Haines City Express (Pre-SunRail)** | Along US-92 from downtown Lakeland to Poinciana SunRail station | Express | 60 | 6:00 AM – 11:00 AM/ 3:00 PM – 8:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $1,254,342 | $2,800,000 | 2-5 years | Local |

**Table 5-1: 10-Year Schedule of Projects | Services (continued)**

| Project | Description/ Location | Type of Service | Level of Service | | | Associated Costs (2025$) | | Recommended Implementation Timeframe | Consistent with/Support for Related Plan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Freq (min) | Span of Service | Days of Service | Operating | Capital | | |
| ***New Premium Service*** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Florida Avenue BRT** | Along Florida Avenue from downtown Lakeland to Lake Miriam Shopping Center | BRT | 15 | 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $1,121,591* | $2,800,000 | 5-10 years | Local, Regional, State |
| **US-98 BRT** | Along US-98 from downtown Lakeland to downtown Bartow | BRT | 20 | 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $3,469,350 * | $4,200,000 | 5-10 years | Local, Regional, State |
| ***New Microtransit Service*** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Auburndale** | In Auburndale from Lake Ariana Boulevard to K-Ville Avenue between Berkley Road and Lynchburg Road. | Microtransit | On-Demand | 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $201,600 | $500,000 | 1-2 years | Local |
| **Innovation District/Polk City** | In central Polk County adjacent to I-4 and Polk Parkway | Microtransit | On-Demand | 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $201,600 | $500,000 | 2-5 years | Local |
| **Lakeland/Airport** | In Lakeland, west of County Road 33A along Drane Field Road | Microtransit | On-Demand | 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $403,200 | $1,000,000 | 1-2 years | Local |
| **Winter Haven** | In central Winter Haven from US 17 to Buckeye Loop, north of Dundee Road. | Microtransit | On-Demand | 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM | Monday - Friday | $100,800 | $250,000 | 1-2 years | Local |

**Incremental cost.*

*Note: The High Speed Rail project and SunRail extension to Polk County are not included in the TDP Schedule of Projects. The SunRail extension continues to be studied by FDOT.*

**Table 5-2: 10-Year Schedule of Projects | Capital**

| Project | Description/ Location | Type of Service | Level of Service | | | Associated Costs (2025$) | | Recommended Implementation Timeframe | Consistent with/Support for Related Plan |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Freq (min) | Span of Service | Days of Service | Operating | Capital | | |
| ***Capital Improvements*** | | | | | | | | | |
| **Lakeland Intermodal Center/SunRail Station** | Intermodal facility in downtown Lakeland | Intermodal Center | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | $30,000,000 | 5-10 years | Local |
| **East Polk Transit Maintenance & Administration Facility** | Maintenance and Administration in Dundee, Florida | Maintenance/ Administration Facility | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | $13,500,000 | 5-10 years | Local |
| **Proposed New Transit Center/Super Stop** | At the Lakeland Linder International Airport and Orlando Health facility | Infrastructure | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | $500,000/ $250,000 | 2-5 years | Local |
| **I-4 and County Line Road Park-and-Ride** | Park-and-Ride facility adjacent to I-4 and County Line Road | Park-and-Ride | N/A | N/A | N/A | $12/parking spot** | TBD* | 5-10 years | Local |
| **I-4 and Berkley Road Park-and-Ride** | Park-and-Ride facility adjacent to I-4 and Berkley Road | Park-and-Ride | N/A | N/A | N/A | $12/parking spot** | TBD* | 5-10 years | Local |
| **I-4 and SR 559 Park-and-Ride** | Park-and-Ride facility adjacent to I-4 and SR 559 | Park-and-Ride | N/A | N/A | N/A | $12/parking spot** | TBD* | 5-10 years | Local |
| **Transit Signal Priority** | Florida Avenue and US-98 | Technology | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | $32,000 each | 5-10 years | Local, State |
| **Queue Jumps** | Florida Avenue and US-98 | Technology | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | $150,000 each | 5-10 years | Local, State |
| **Alternate-Fuel Vehicles** | Throughout Polk County | Technology | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | $1,000,000 each | 5-10 years | Local |
| **Lakeland Intermodal Center PD&E Study** | Intermodal facility in downtown Lakeland | Study | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | $2,000,000 | 1-2 years | Local |
| **Additional/Enhanced Facilities and Bus Stop Infrastructure** | Throughout Polk County | Infrastructure | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | $250,000** | 5-10 years | Local |
| **Expand Pass Sale Locations/Mobile Payment/Fare Options** | Throughout Polk County | Technology | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | $25,000 | 2-5 years | Local |
| **Expand Transit Marketing/UAP** | Throughout Polk County | Marketing | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | $150,000** | 2-5 years | Local |

**Note: To Be Determined. The cost will be determined based on the cost of land and development. This cost will be explored in a later study.*

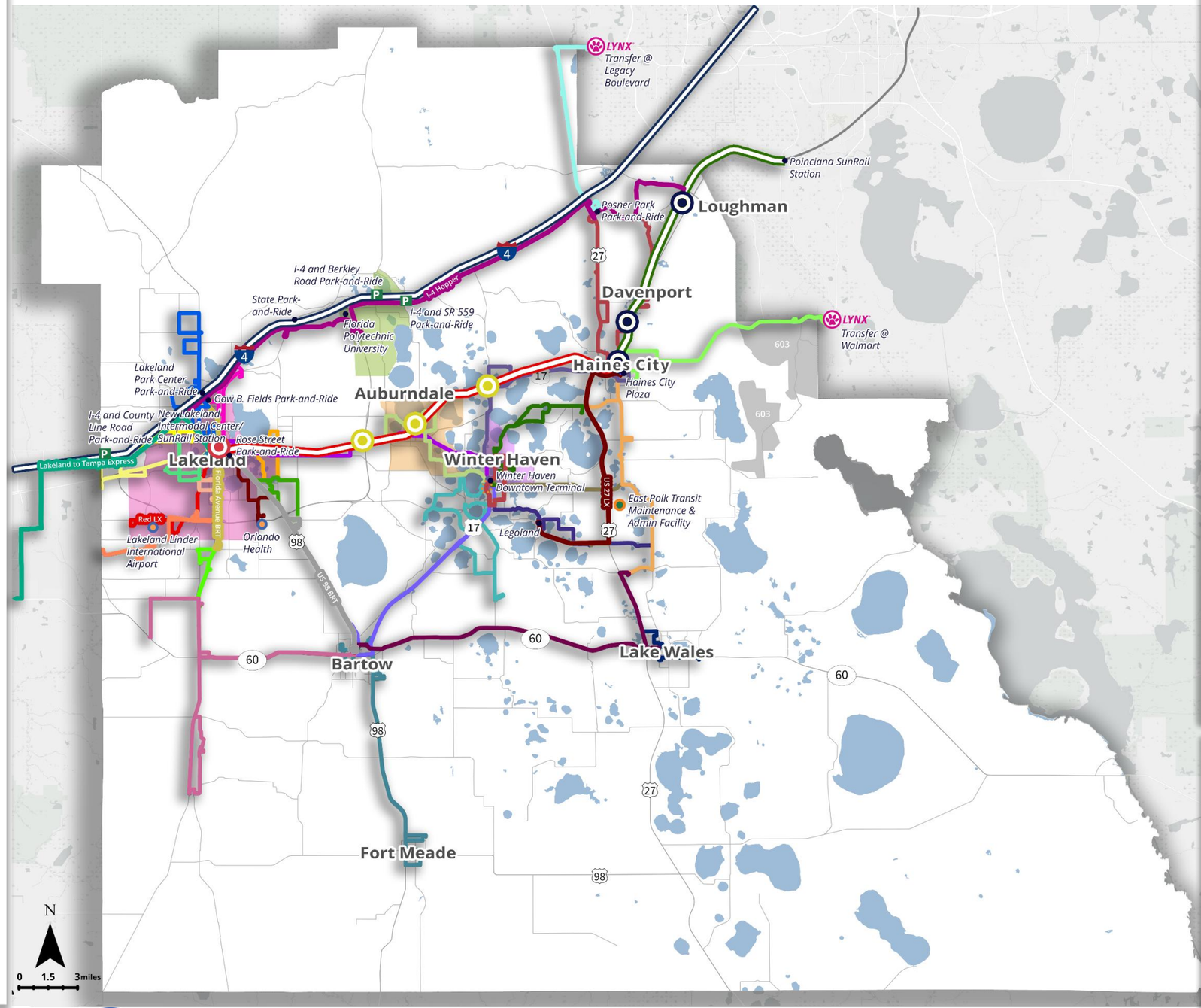
***Annually*

## Map 5-1: TDP Schedule of Projects | 2035

CitrusConnection
PROGRESS IN MOTION

### East Routes
- 15
- 16X
- 17X
- 18X
- 20X
- 21X East
- 22XW
- 25
- 27X
- 30
- 40/44
- 50
- 60
- Lake Wales Circulator

### West Routes
- Blue Line
- Circulator East
- Circulator West
- Coral Line
- Green Line
- Lemon Line
- Lime Flex Line
- Orange Line
- Peach Line
- Pink Line
- Purple Line
- Yellow Line
- 21X West




## New Transit Services
- Florida Avenue BRT
- US-98 BRT
- I-4 Hopper
- Lakeland to Tampa Express
- US-27 LX
- Bonnet Springs Park/Downtown Circulator
- Winter Haven Shuttle
- Haines City Squeeze
- Winter Haven Squeeze
- Proposed High-Speed Rail
- Proposed SunRail Extension (Poinciana to Haines City)
- Proposed SunRail Extension (Haines City to Lakeland)
- Auburndale Microtransit
- Innovation District/Polk City Microtransit
- Lakeland/Airport Microtransit
- Winter Haven Microtransit

## Existing Service Enhancements
- Extend service on all routes to 9PM*
- 15-minute frequency
  - Pink Line
- 30-minute frequency
  - Lemon Line & Route 30
- 45-minute frequency
  - Purple Line, Route 22XW, & Route 15
- Saturday service
  - Pink Line
- Sunday service
  - Purple Line
- Re-envisioned Red LX
- Extend Circulator Eastside to Orlando Health

*Not shown on map.

## Infrastructure/Technology Needs
- Phase I SunRail Stations
- Phase II SunRail Stations
- New Lakeland Intermodal Center/SunRail Station
- East Polk Transit Maintenance & Admin Facility
- Proposed New Transit Center/Super Stop
- P New Park-and-Rides
- Transit Signal Priority/Queue Jumps for BRT*
- Alternate-Fuel Vehicles*
- Expand Pass Sale Location and Add Mobile Payment*
- Enhance Marketing and Promote Universal Access Partnership*

*Not shown on map.

## Transit Demand Estimation

The existing and proposed fixed-route transit networks were analyzed using the ridership forecast data from TBEST, the FDOT-approved ridership estimation software for TDPs. This analysis was completed to gauge route-level and system-wide demand, assuming the maintenance of existing transit service and implementation of the potential improvements proposed by the TDP. The transit route network for all existing Citrus Connection routes was created to reflect 2024 conditions, the validation year for the model. General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data as of October 2024 were used to provide the input for the base transit system.

Although TBEST is an important tool for evaluating improvements to existing and future transit services, model outputs do not account for latent demand for transit that could yield significantly higher ridership. In addition, TBEST cannot display sensitivities to external factors such as an improved marketing and advertising program, changes in fare service for customers, fuel prices, parking supply, walkability, and other local conditions and, correspondingly, model outputs may under- or over-estimate demand in isolated cases. As a result, model outputs are not absolute ridership projections, but, rather, are comparative estimates best used for evaluation in actual service implementation decisions.

### *Microtransit Ridership Estimation*

TBEST cannot currently estimate ridership for on-demand transit services and there are few external methodologies available to do this easily. Therefore, Remix was utilized to estimate microtransit ridership for the 10-year TDP. Remix is a data-driven transit planning software that uses Census and other open-source data.

## *Special Generators*

Special generators were identified and coded into TBEST to evaluate the opportunity for generating high ridership. Citrus Connection special generators include the following:

- Higher Education Centers—Florida Polytechnic University, Polk State College campuses throughout Polk County, Keiser University, Florida Southern College, Southern Technical College, Ridge Technical College, Warner University, and Webber International University
- Transfer Hubs—Winter Haven Downtown Terminal, Lakeland Downtown Terminal, Haines City Plaza
- Major Rail Transfer Stations—future SunRail stations
- Park and Rides—Gow B Fields Park-and-Ride, Lakeland Park Center Park-and-Ride, Rose Street Park-and-Ride, Posner Park Park-and-Ride, I-4 and Berkley Road, I-4 and SR-559, and I-4 and County Line Road
- Shopping Malls—Eagle Ridge Mall, Lakeland Square Mall, Lakeland Town Center
- Hospitals—Bartow Regional Medical Center, Heart of Florida Hospital, Lakeland Regional Health Medical Center, Lake Wales Medical Center, Winter Haven Hospital, and Orlando Health in Lakeland Highlands

## *Ridership Forecasts*

The following model scenarios and ridership forecasts were developed for this TDP major update:

- Existing Network Scenario—Assumes no change will be implemented to the existing route network.
- TDP Network Scenario—Assumes implementation of the TDP Network.

Table 5-3 shows the projected ridership for the Existing Network Scenario and TDP Network Scenario for 2026 and 2035.

Table 5-3: TBEST Scenario | Existing Network*

| Route/Service | Existing Network | | Schedule of Projects Network | | 2035 Ridership Growth Potential (% Change)♦ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2026 | 2035 | 2026 | 2035 | |
| **15** | 43,772 | 63,269 | 45,453 | 65,584 | 3.7% |
| **16X** | 5,121 | 6,690 | 9,108 | 11,884 | 77.6% |
| **17X** | 6,500 | 9,265 | 13,845 | 19,714 | 112.8% |
| **18X** | 14,239 | 21,408 | 23,236 | 34,827 | 62.7% |
| **19X** | 3,964 | 5,170 | 7,038 | 9,166 | 77.3% |
| **20X** | 16,895 | 24,024 | 23,640 | 33,490 | 39.4% |
| **21X East** | 4,079 | 5,360 | 4,610 | 6,102 | 13.8% |
| **21X West** | 8,136 | 11,009 | 8,794 | 11,867 | 7.8% |
| **22XW** | 31,918 | 46,607 | 36,106 | 56,657 | 21.6% |
| **25** | 23,320 | 32,790 | 23,610 | 33,033 | 0.7% |
| **27X** | 584 | 752 | 605 | 774 | 2.9% |
| **30** | 62,158 | 90,007 | 71,823 | 104,495 | 16.1% |
| **60** | 9,284 | 15,866 | 9,944 | 16,839 | 6.1% |
| **Blue** | 38,831 | 57,531 | 162,619 | 241,562 | 319.9% |
| **Circulator E** | 6,324 | 9,446 | 6,835 | 10,274 | 8.8% |
| **Circulator W** | 9,773 | 14,654 | 13,188 | 19,553 | 33.4% |
| **Coral** | 1,722 | 2,303 | 2,034 | 2,739 | 18.9% |
| **Gold**** | 161,494 | 230,496 | 480,768 | 684,156 | 196.8% |
| **Green** | 21,580 | 33,000 | 27,331 | 41,766 | 26.6% |
| **Lake Wales Circulator** | 4,980 | 6,837 | 10,220 | 14,111 | 106.4% |
| **Lemon** | 23,904 | 33,045 | 37,685 | 52,023 | 57.4% |
| **Lime** | 16,010 | 22,254 | 25,765 | 35,164 | 58.0% |
| **Orange** | 20,335 | 29,830 | 23,750 | 34,789 | 16.6% |
| **Peach** | 13,950 | 21,174 | 20,589 | 30,479 | 43.9% |
| **Pink** | 35,581 | 52,896 | 99,380 | 146,324 | 176.6% |
| **Purple** | 93,043 | 137,002 | 146,437 | 239,392 | 74.7% |
| **Red** | 8,670 | 11,998 | 13,174 | 18,316 | 52.7% |
| **Silver***** | 29,137 | 40,987 | 101,815 | 167,462 | 308.6% |
| **Yellow** | 13,150 | 20,248 | 15,164 | 23,235 | 14.8% |
| **Total** | 728,454 | 1,055,918 | 1,464,566 | 2,165,777 | 105.1% |

*♦Compares 2035 Existing Network to 2035 Schedule of Projects Network.*
**Based on TBEST Model*
***Becomes Florida Ave BRT in 2035 Schedule of Projects Network Scenario*
****Becomes US-98 BRT in 2035 Schedule of Projects Network Scenario*

**Table 5-4: TBEST Scenario | New Services***

| Route/Service | New Services | | Ridership Growth Potential (% Change)♦ |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 2026 | 2035 | |
| **Fixed-Route** | | | |
| **Bonnet Springs Park/Downtown Circulator** | 31,385 | 49,478 | 57.6% |
| **Haines City Squeeze** | 13,668 | 18,007 | 31.7% |
| **I-4 Hopper** | 5,313 | 7,623 | 43.5% |
| **Lakeland to Tampa Express** | 25,056 | 37,862 | 51.1% |
| **US-27 LX** | 11,798 | 16,988 | 44.0% |
| **Winter Haven Shuttle** | 49,301 | 84,526 | 71.4% |
| **Winter Haven Squeeze** | 12,914 | 17,827 | 38.0% |
| ***Microtransit*** | | | |
| **Lakeland/Airport** | 44,460 | 66,642 | 49.9% |
| **Innovation District/Polk City** | 5,096 | 6,094 | 19.6% |
| **Auburndale** | 16,744 | 25,132 | 50.1% |
| **Winter Haven** | 12,896 | 19,318 | 49.8% |
| **Total** | 228,631 | 349,497 | 52.9% |

*♦Compares 2026 New Services estimates to 2035 New Services estimates.*
**Based on TBEST Model*

**Table 5-5: TBEST Scenario | Total Ridership Estimates***

| | Existing Network | | Schedule of Projects Network | | 2035 Ridership Growth Potential (% Change)♦ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2026 | 2035 | 2026 | 2035 | |
| **Total** | 728,454 | 1,055,918 | 1,693,197 | 2,515,274 | 138.2% |

*♦Compares 2035 Existing Network to 2035 Schedule of Projects Network.*
**Based on TBEST Model*

## Finance Plan

A financial plan was developed as part of the TDP's 10-Year operating and capital program that identifies operating and capital costs for the schedule of projects, matched with the available and anticipated new revenues. The estimated costs in this plan also help to develop the TDP's list of priority projects, which is discussed in the next section.

First, cost and revenue assumptions used to develop the financial plan are presented below. That is followed by a summary of cost and revenue projections for Citrus Connection's 10-year TDP. The summary includes annual costs for service and capital/infrastructure/technology/policy improvements programmed for implementation within the next 10 years, together with supporting revenues that are reasonably expected to be available to fund the implementation.

### *Operating Cost Assumptions*

Numerous assumptions were made to forecast the transit-operating costs, including:

- Based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) data for the last 10 years (from 2014 to 2024), an average annual inflation rate of 2.5% is used for all operating cost projections.
- Annual operating costs for fixed-route services are based on FY 2023 NTD operating expense information at a unit cost of $124.44 (2025$) per revenue service hour.
- Annual operating costs for ADA paratransit services are based on FY 2023 operating expense information from NTD and inflated.
- Annual operating costs for microtransit and the Squeeze services are estimated using a per-revenue-hour cost of $50.00 (2025$), based on industry data.

### *Capital Cost Assumptions*

Assumptions developed to project costs for capital/infrastructure/technology needs described previously include:

- New bus facilities repair and upgrades, farebox replacement and system upgrades, and mobile app/fare options are based on data from Citrus Connection.
- Additional bus stop infrastructure and amenities at high ridership stops are planned to be $250,000 (2025$) annually.
- Expanding marketing efforts and the UAP are assumed to cost $150,000 (2025$) annually.
- The PD&E study for the new Lakeland Intermodal Center is estimated to cost $2 million (2026$).
- The cost of deploying TSP at an intersection is assumed at $32,000 (2025$) and converting

already existing right turn lanes to Queue Jump lanes at an intersection is assumed at $150,000 (2025$) per intersection. This is based on recent data from FDOT and studies from the southeastern U.S.

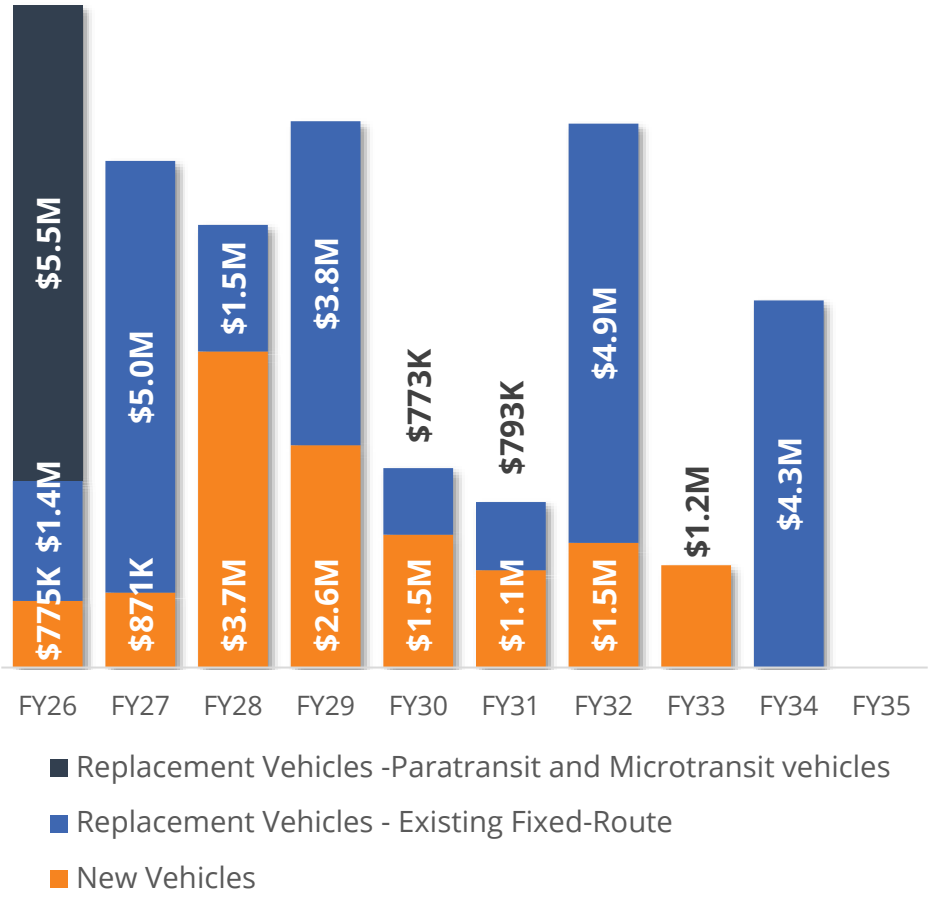
- The cost for establishing a new transit center is assumed at $500,000 (2025$) and the cost of a super stop is assumed at $250,000 (2025$), as provided by Citrus Connection staff.
- The cost of studies to support establishing new park-and-rides is assumed at $250,000 (2025$).
- The cost for additional technology upgrades is assumed at $250,000 (2025$).

### *Vehicle Acquisition Plan*

Acquisition of new and replacement vehicles is a critical component of the capital investment to improve Citrus Connection services. Figure 5-8 shows the new vehicles needed by year for the TDP.

- The FTA-standard rate of 20% spare vehicle ratio is assumed for new vehicle purchases.
- Vehicle useful life cycle assumptions are based on guidelines from FTA. A fixed-route bus is 14 years and demand response vehicle is 10 years.
- Replacement vehicles will replace those in the existing fleet that reach their useful life within the TDP planning period. The cost of a diesel bus is assumed at $700,000 (2025$). The cost of a microtransit vehicle is assumed at $250,000 (2025$).
- An annual growth rate of 2.5% is also used for cost projections to adjust for inflationary pressures in the future.

**Figure 5-8: 10-Year Vehicle Acquisition Plan**



## *Revenue Assumptions*

The following key assumptions are used to project Citrus Connection's TDP revenues.

- Annual grants/revenue information for existing federal, state, and local sources is from Citrus Connection for FY 2026. Based on discussions with Citrus Connection, an annual growth rate of 2.5% was used to project the revenues for the 10-year TDP.
- Revenues from FTA Section 5307 and 5311 grants are assumed at $106.1 million throughout the 10-year period.
- Existing funds received from FDOT, including Congestion Management, Transit Corridor, Block Grant, and Transportation Disadvantaged Program funding, are assumed to be $67.2 million throughout the 10-year period.
- Based on Citrus Connection guidance, local contributions are $94.5 million throughout the 10-year period.
- Farebox and contract revenues are expected to generate $127.1 million throughout the 10-year period.
- Paratransit and microtransit vehicle replacement, new bus facilities repair and upgrades, farebox replacement and system upgrades, and mobile/app fare options are assumed to be covered by an already earmarked federal grant totaling $8 million.

This plan also assumes the following additional new funding to support the implementation of new service and capital projects:

- Contributions from the Winter Haven Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) are expected to support the Winter Haven Shuttle with $150,000 (2025$) annually.
- To be conservative, a farebox recovery ratio of 4% (based on 2023 farebox recovery data from NTD) is used to estimate fare revenue for new services.
- New Public Private Partnerships (PPP) are expected to provide service support for five years, a vehicle, new transit center, and super stop.

## *10-Year Cost/Revenue Summary*

The annual operating and capital costs and supporting revenues are summarized in Table 5-6. As shown, it is estimated to cost $373.4 million to operate Citrus Connection over the next 10 years with another $56.6 million in capital costs to support the necessary technology, fleet, and capital infrastructure. It is anticipated that the operating costs will continue to be funded mainly with a mix of local, state, and federal

sources and fare revenues generated by existing and new transit services.

Figure 5-9 shows the annual operating and capital costs for the TDP implementation plan, and Figure 5-10 shows the revenues by source to support the system.

**Figure 5-9: Annual Operating and Capital Costs**

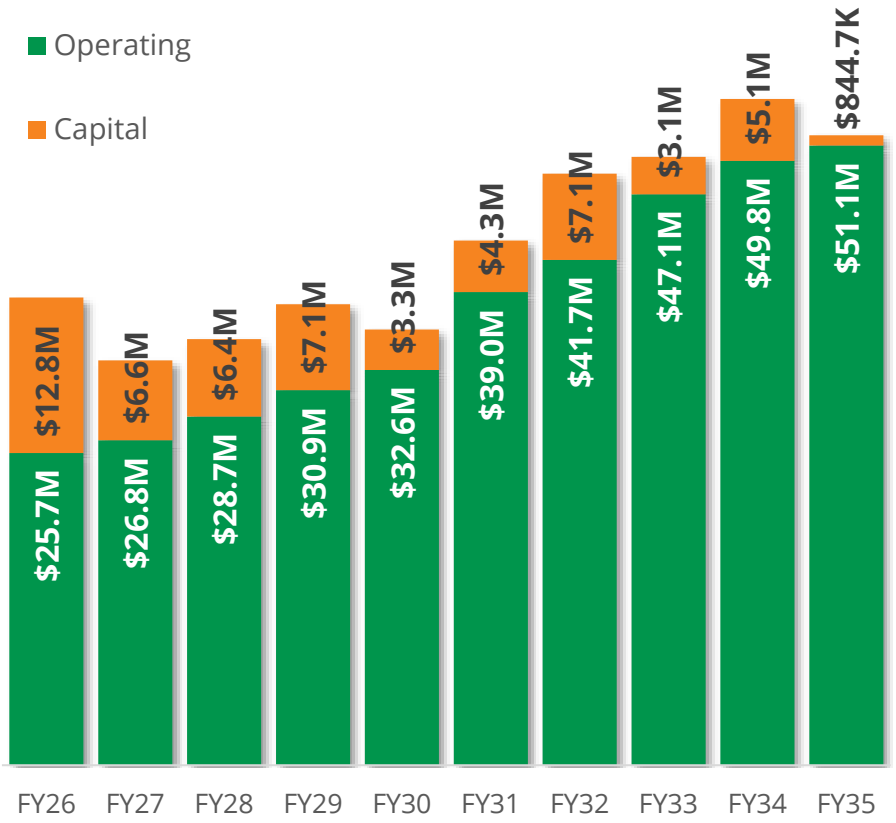
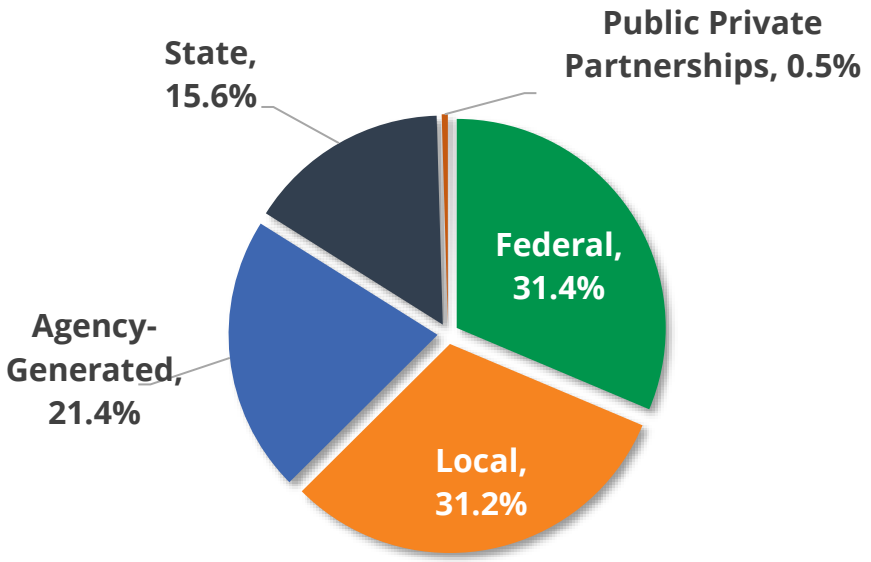



**Figure 5-10: Revenues**



## Table 5-6: 2035 Financial Plan

| Cost/Revenue | FY26 | FY27 | FY28 | FY29 | FY30 | FY31 | FY32 | FY33 | FY34 | FY35 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Operating Costs*** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Citrus Connection Network | $16,386,403 | $16,799,787 | $17,223,600 | $17,658,105 | $18,103,570 | $18,560,274 | $19,028,499 | $19,508,536 | $20,000,684 | $20,505,246 | **$183,774,706** |
| Existing ADA Paratransit Service | $9,043,450 | $9,271,592 | $9,505,489 | $9,745,286 | $9,991,133 | $10,243,182 | $10,501,590 | $10,766,516 | $11,038,126 | $11,316,588 | **$101,422,954** |
| Enhancements to Existing Service | $88,411 | $90,642 | $520,856 | $1,774,151 | $1,818,908 | $7,465,088 | $7,745,856 | $8,067,632 | $8,271,156 | $8,479,815 | **$44,322,514** |
| New Transit Services - Local Services | $213,851 | $414,886 | $1,168,780 | $1,198,265 | $1,228,494 | $1,259,486 | $1,291,259 | $1,323,834 | $2,926,861 | $3,000,697 | **$14,026,413** |
| New Transit Services - Microtransit | $0 | $211,900 | $325,868 | $334,089 | $799,207 | $819,369 | $1,080,051 | $1,107,297 | $1,135,231 | $1,163,870 | **$6,976,883** |
| New Transit Services - Regional Services | $0 | $0 | $0 | $207,868 | $639,336 | $655,465 | $672,000 | $688,953 | $706,333 | $724,152 | **$4,294,107** |
| New Transit Services - Premium Services | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $1,335,289 | $5,603,545 | $5,744,907 | $5,889,835 | **$18,573,577** |
| **Total Operating Costs** | **$25,732,116** | **$26,788,807** | **$28,744,593** | **$30,917,764** | **$32,580,649** | **$39,002,864** | **$41,654,545** | **$47,066,314** | **$49,823,298** | **$51,080,204** | **$373,391,154** |
| ***Capital Costs*** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| New Vehicles | $775,000 | $871,443 | $3,678,818 | $2,586,257 | $1,546,709 | $1,132,663 | $1,451,546 | $1,190,532 | $0 | $0 | **$13,232,969** |
| Replacement Vehicles - Existing Fixed-Route | $1,400,000 | $5,023,614 | $1,471,527 | $3,771,625 | $773,355 | $792,864 | $4,877,196 | $0 | $4,271,980 | $0 | **$22,382,161** |
| Replacement Vehicles -Paratransit and microtransit vehicles | $5,533,206 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | **$5,533,206** |
| Expand Transit Marketing/UAP | $150,000 | $153,784 | $157,664 | $161,641 | $165,719 | $169,899 | $174,186 | $178,580 | $183,085 | $187,704 | **$1,682,261** |
| Additional Bus Stop Infrastructure | $250,000 | $256,307 | $262,773 | $269,402 | $276,198 | $283,166 | $290,309 | $297,633 | $305,141 | $312,839 | **$2,803,768** |
| Queue Jumps | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $1,019,397 | $0 | $714,319 | $0 | $0 | **$1,733,716** |
| Transit Signal Priority | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $543,678 | $0 | $380,970 | $0 | $0 | **$924,649** |
| New Transit Center | $0 | $0 | $525,545 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | **$525,545** |
| Super Stop | $250,000 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | **$250,000** |
| Bus Facilities Repair and Enhancement | $1,656,120 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | **$1,656,120** |
| Farebox Replacement and System Upgrades | $462,157 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | **$462,157** |
| Mobile App/ Fare Options | $350,000 | $25,631 | $26,277 | $26,940 | $27,620 | $28,317 | $29,031 | $29,763 | $30,514 | $31,284 | **$605,377** |
| Lakeland Intermodal PD&E Study | $2,000,000 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | **$2,000,000** |
| Park-and-Ride Studies | $0 | $256,307 | $262,773 | $269,402 | $276,198 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | **$1,064,679** |
| New Technology Upgrades | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $276,198 | $283,166 | $290,309 | $297,633 | $305,141 | $312,839 | **$1,765,287** |
| **Total Capital Costs** | **$12,826,483** | **$6,587,085** | **$6,385,378** | **$7,085,267** | **$3,341,996** | **$4,253,150** | **$7,112,577** | **$3,089,430** | **$5,095,862** | **$844,666** | **$56,621,895** |
| **All Costs** | **$38,558,599** | **$33,375,892** | **$35,129,971** | **$38,003,031** | **$35,922,645** | **$43,256,014** | **$48,767,122** | **$50,155,744** | **$54,919,161** | **$51,924,870** | **$430,013,049** |
| ***Revenues*** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| LAMTD - Local General Revenue | $1,489,149 | $1,526,717 | $1,565,232 | $1,604,718 | $1,645,201 | $1,686,705 | $1,729,256 | $1,772,880 | $1,817,605 | $1,863,458 | **$16,700,920** |
| PCTA - City Contributions | $600,584 | $615,735 | $631,268 | $647,193 | $663,520 | $680,259 | $697,420 | $715,014 | $733,052 | $751,545 | **$6,735,592** |
| PCTA - Contract Revenue | $3,409,461 | $3,495,472 | $3,583,654 | $3,674,060 | $3,766,746 | $3,861,771 | $3,959,193 | $4,059,072 | $4,161,472 | $4,266,454 | **$38,237,354** |
| LAMTD - Farebox Revenue | $1,000,853 | $1,026,102 | $1,051,988 | $1,078,526 | $1,105,735 | $1,133,629 | $1,162,228 | $1,191,548 | $1,221,607 | $1,252,425 | **$11,224,640** |
| PCTA - Farebox Revenue | $197,949 | $202,943 | $208,062 | $213,311 | $218,692 | $224,209 | $229,866 | $235,664 | $241,610 | $247,705 | **$2,220,011** |
| LAMTD - FTA 5307 Operating | $2,860,942 | $2,933,116 | $3,007,110 | $3,082,972 | $3,160,747 | $3,240,484 | $3,322,232 | $3,406,043 | $3,491,968 | $3,580,061 | **$32,085,674** |
| PCTA - FTA 5307 Operating | $3,291,592 | $3,374,630 | $3,459,763 | $3,547,043 | $3,636,525 | $3,728,265 | $3,822,319 | $3,918,746 | $4,017,605 | $4,118,958 | **$36,915,446** |
| PCTA - FTA 5311 Operating | $2,519,648 | $2,583,212 | $2,648,380 | $2,715,191 | $2,783,688 | $2,853,913 | $2,925,909 | $2,999,722 | $3,075,397 | $3,152,981 | **$28,258,041** |
| Property Tax | $6,336,997 | $6,496,862 | $6,660,761 | $6,828,793 | $7,001,065 | $7,177,683 | $7,358,756 | $7,544,398 | $7,734,722 | $7,929,848 | **$71,069,886** |
| State Block Grant | $1,803,808 | $1,849,313 | $1,895,966 | $1,943,796 | $1,992,833 | $2,043,107 | $2,094,649 | $2,147,491 | $2,201,666 | $2,257,208 | **$20,229,838** |
| FL Transportation Disadvantaged Program | $1,436,567 | $1,472,807 | $1,509,962 | $1,548,055 | $1,587,108 | $1,627,146 | $1,668,195 | $1,710,279 | $1,753,424 | $1,797,658 | **$16,111,201** |
| FD0T Congestion Management | $421,627 | $432,263 | $443,168 | $454,348 | $465,810 | $477,561 | $489,609 | $501,960 | $514,623 | $527,606 | **$4,728,576** |
| FDOT Transit Corridor | $850,885 | $872,350 | $894,357 | $916,919 | $940,051 | $963,766 | $988,079 | $1,013,005 | $1,038,561 | $1,064,761 | **$9,542,733** |
| FDOT - Travel Trainer | $66,428 | $68,103 | $69,821 | $71,583 | $73,389 | $75,240 | $77,138 | $79,084 | $81,079 | $83,125 | **$744,990** |
| FTA - 5307 Capital | $788,065 | $807,946 | $828,328 | $849,224 | $870,648 | $892,612 | $915,130 | $938,216 | $961,885 | $986,151 | **$8,838,205** |
| FDOT Urban Transit Capital | $1,408,843 | $1,444,385 | $1,480,822 | $1,518,180 | $1,556,479 | $1,595,745 | $1,636,001 | $1,677,273 | $1,719,586 | $1,762,966 | **$15,800,280** |
| Paratransit Operating Revenue | $6,722,045 | $6,891,624 | $7,065,481 | $7,243,724 | $7,426,463 | $7,613,813 | $7,805,889 | $8,002,810 | $8,204,699 | $8,411,681 | **$75,388,230** |
| FTA Bus and Bus Facilities Grant | $8,000,000 | $5,023,614 | $1,471,527 | $3,771,625 | $773,355 | $792,864 | $4,877,196 | $0 | $4,271,980 | $0 | **$28,982,161** |
| Winter Haven CRA | $0 | $155,908 | $159,841 | $163,874 | $168,008 | $172,246 | $176,592 | $181,046 | $185,614 | $190,296 | **$1,553,426** |
| New Service Farebox Recovery | $11,239 | $26,677 | $74,944 | $130,677 | $166,804 | $379,252 | $450,832 | $624,361 | $698,477 | $716,097 | **$3,279,360** |
| Public Private Partnerships | $900,000 | $150,000 | $675,545 | $150,000 | $150,000 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | $0 | **$2,025,545** |
| All Revenues | **$44,116,683** | **$41,449,780** | **$39,385,982** | **$42,153,813** | **$40,152,866** | **$41,220,269** | **$46,386,487** | **$42,718,613** | **$48,126,632** | **$44,960,985** | **$430,672,110** |
| ***10-Year Cost & Revenue Summary*** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Total Revenues** | **$44,116,683** | **$41,449,780** | **$39,385,982** | **$42,153,813** | **$40,152,866** | **$41,220,269** | **$46,386,487** | **$42,718,613** | **$48,126,632** | **$44,960,985** | **$430,672,110** |
| **Total Costs** | **$38,558,599** | **$33,375,892** | **$35,129,971** | **$38,003,031** | **$35,922,645** | **$43,256,014** | **$48,767,122** | **$50,155,744** | **$54,919,161** | **$51,924,870** | **$430,013,049** |
| **Revenues Minus Costs** | **$5,558,084** | **$8,073,888** | **$4,256,011** | **$4,150,782** | **$4,230,221** | **-$2,035,744** | **-$2,380,635** | **-$7,437,131** | **-$6,792,528** | **-$6,963,885** | |
| **Rollover from Prev. Year** | **$0** | **$5,558,084** | **$13,631,972** | **$17,887,983** | **$22,038,764** | **$26,268,985** | **$24,233,241** | **$21,852,606** | **$14,415,475** | **$7,622,946** | |
| **Surplus/Shortfall** | **$5,558,084** | **$13,631,972** | **$17,887,983** | **$22,038,764** | **$26,268,985** | **$24,233,241** | **$21,852,606** | **$14,415,475** | **$7,622,946** | **$659,061** | **$659,061** |

## List of Priority Projects

After the Schedule of Projects were developed, a prioritization process framework also was developed to rank the Schedule of Projects and help Citrus Connection develop its list of priority projects, which sets priorities for the next 10 years. The prioritization process is structured to cover a wide spectrum of factors that are qualitative and quantitative to ensure it is complete as well as comprehensive.

A quantitative-qualitative hybrid methodology was used to evaluate and prioritize the transit needs. By conducting this evaluation, Citrus Connection can meaningfully prioritize projects for its consideration as well as the consideration of its regional partners, such as FDOT and the TPO. The criteria used for the process reflect Citrus Connection's priorities to accomplish its own vision and secure necessary local and state support.

### *Evaluation Process*

The seven evaluation measures used to develop the Citrus Connection TDP list of priority projects are identified in Table 5-7. In addition, it shows the category weights that were used to rank the TDP schedule of projects. The projects are ranked using the criteria described below.

**Table 5-7: Prioritization Criteria**

| Criteria | Measure | Measure Weight | Criteria Weight |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Public Support** | Public Input Survey Results | 15% | **30%** |
| | Stakeholder Input | 15% | |
| **Priority Transit Corridor Access & Connectivity** | Priority Transit Corridors Access and Connectivity | 15% | **30%** |
| | Transit-Supportive Land Use & Urban Design Interface | 15% | |
| **Funding Feasibility** | Likelihood of securing funding | 20% | **20%** |
| **Quality of Life Improvement** | Anticipated benefits to customers | 10% | **10%** |
| **Cross-Geographic Connectivity** | Connections to local/regional hubs | 10% | **10%** |
| **Total Weight** | | | **100%** |

### *Public Support*

The public outreach process conducted for this TDP effort resulted in numerous opinions and suggestions about transit services from customers and non-customers. In addition, the public outreach process also included discussions with local business/community leaders and policy makers, as well as meetings with Citrus Connection and TPO staff to gauge their views on transit services. Based on an in-depth review of this input received, this criterion considers interest in a particular route or type of service was considered.

### *Priority Transit Corridor Access and Connectivity*

The corridor assessment conducted for the Citrus Connection TDP brings data and findings from all TDP components and, therefore, consideration of these priority transit corridors can assist in ranking projects for implementation in the next 10 years. These priority transit corridors have been previously identified and evaluated for the TDP based on key factors, such as context evaluation and land use/urban design assessments, as well as input and direction from the community resulting from the public involvement process. This criterion considers the access and connectivity to the identified corridors.

### *Transit-Supportive Land Use & Urban Design Interface*

Analysis conducted for the TDP pertaining to transit-supportive land use and projected developments is pertinent to understanding the built environment that Citrus Connection serves. This criterion considers the geographic distribution of major development and policies to support transit in Polk County.

### *Funding Feasibility*

This criterion considers the likelihood of securing stable operational funding for the recommended improvements. The funding potential for each improvement was evaluated based on the possibility of securing eligible sources at Federal, State, and/or local levels. For example, the likelihood of securing local funding may be higher if a transit investment would serve as a catalyst for development/redevelopment, whereas a regional connection may enhance the likelihood of securing funding from regional or state sources. Qualitative information on perceived policy support was derived from discussions with stakeholders and professional judgement.

### *Quality of Life Improvement*

This criterion was used to assess how a service improvement may enhance the overall well-being of the community it serves. This criterion considers both direct and indirect impacts on customer experience,

including increased access to essential services, potential to reduce traffic, improved safety, and environmental benefits. Furthermore, these improvements may encourage multimodal access, promote healthy living, and expand access to commuters. This criterion assesses the improvement's ability to expand current and potential customers' transit access, encourage public health benefits, and decrease SOV trips.

### *Cross-Geographic Connectivity*

The level of connectivity to key hubs and areas for each project was assessed for potential local/regional connectivity. Intra- and inter-county routes with connections to key activity centers (existing and future) or hubs were scored higher than those not serving such locations. This criterion considers whether an improvement improves quick and convenient connectivity between local or regional major activity centers.

## *10-Year Project Priorities*

Table 5-8 shows the list of priority projects for the Citrus Connection TDP, evaluated and ranked using the process previously discussed. Table 5-9 shows the capital projects that are proposed to support the implementation of the listed service priorities. Appendix F shows the detailed list of priority projects' evaluation and ranking scoring matrix.

It should be noted that the implementation timelines shown in these tables do not preclude Citrus Connection the opportunity to advance or delay any project. As priorities change, funding does not materialize as assumed, or more funding becomes available, this list of priority projects can and should be adjusted accordingly. The changes in implementation and shifts in priorities should be reported in the Annual TDP Update.

**Table 5-8: List of Priority Projects**

| Rank | Project | Description/ Location | Type of Service | Implementation Year | Funding Availability |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Florida Avenue BRT | Along Florida Avenue from downtown Lakeland to Lake Miriam Shopping Center | BRT | 2032 | Federal/State/Local |
| **2** | US-98 BRT | Along US-98 from downtown Lakeland to downtown Bartow | BRT | 2033 | Federal/State/Local |
| **3** | Lakeland – Tampa Express | Along I-4 from downtown Lakeland to SR-60 in Dover | Express | 2029 | Federal/State/Local |
| **4** | 15-minute Frequency on Pink Line | Along SR 33, Parkview Place, and Florida Avenue | Local | 2029 | Federal/State/Local |
| **5** | 30-minute Frequency on Lemon Line | Along George Jenkins Boulevard, US 92, and County Line Road | Local | 2028 | Federal/State/Local |
| **6** | 30-minute Frequency on Route 30 | Along Central Avenue, Cypress Gardens Boulevard, Waverly Road, and Scenic Highway | Local | 2031 | Federal/State/Local |
| **7** | Extend weekday service until 9PM | Throughout Polk County | Local | 2031 | Federal/State/Local |
| **8** | US-27 LX | Along US 301 and Eiland Boulevard | Local | 2028 | Federal/State/Local |
| **9** | Bonnet Springs Park/ Downtown Circulator | Along Kathleen Street, 5th Street, Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard, George Jenkins Boulevard, Lake Morton Drive, Bonnet Springs Boulevard | Local | 2026 | Federal/State/Local |
| **10** | I-4 Hopper | Along I-4 from US-98 to Loughman SunRail station | Express | 2030 | Federal/State/Local |

**Table 5-8: List of Priority Projects (continued)**

| Rank | Project | Description/ Location | Type of Service | Implementation Year | Funding Availability |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **11** | Convert Red Line to Limited Express | Along Sikes Boulevard and Drane Field Road | Local | 2026 | Federal/State/Local |
| **12** | 45-minute Frequency on Purple Line | Along Main Street, US 92, Havendale, and US 17 | Local | 2029 | Federal/State/Local |
| **13** | Lakeland – Haines City Express (Pre-SunRail) | Along US 92 from downtown Lakeland to Poinciana SunRail station | Express | 2034 | Federal/State/Local |
| **14** | Winter Haven Squeeze | Along Lake Howard Drive, Avenue C, 1st Street North, and Avenue E | Local | 2027 | Federal/State/Local |
| **15** | 45-minute Frequency on Route 15 | Along 6th Street, Lake Alfred Road, and US 17 | Local | Unfunded | Unfunded |
| **16** | 45-minute Frequency on Route 22XW | Along US 17, US-98, and Main Street | Local | Unfunded | Unfunded |
| **17** | Extend Circulator Eastside to Orlando Health | Along Lakeland Highlands Road | Local | 2026 | Federal/State/Local |
| **18** | Winter Haven Shuttle | Along 6th Street, 1st Street, Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard, 7th Street, Avenue O, and Cypress Gardens Boulevard | Local | 2027 | Local |

**Table 5-8: List of Priority Projects (continued)**

| Rank | Project | Description/ Location | Type of Service | Implementation Year | Funding Availability |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **19** | Haines City Squeeze | Along Main Street,4th Street, Oak Avenue, Ledwith Avenue, and 8th Street | Local | Unfunded | Unfunded |
| **20** | Lakeland/Airport Microtransit | In Lakeland, west of Florida Avenue and north of Drane Field Road | Microtransit | 2030 | Federal/State/Local |
| **21** | Haines City – Posner Express (Pre-SunRail) | Along US-27 from 17th Street to Ernie Caldwell Boulevard | Express | Unfunded | Unfunded |
| **22** | Saturday service on Pink Line | Along SR 33, Parkview Place, and Florida Avenue | Local | 2033 | Federal/State/Local |
| **23** | Sunday service on Purple Line | Along Main Street, US 92, Havendale, and US 17 | Local | 2032 | Federal/State/Local |
| **24** | Innovation District/Polk City Microtransit | In central Polk County adjacent to I-4 and Polk Parkway | Microtransit | 2032 | Federal/State/Local |
| **25** | Auburndale Microtransit | In Auburndale from Lake Ariana Boulevard to K-Ville Ave between Berkley Road and Lynchburg Road. | Microtransit | 2027 | Federal/State/Local |
| **26** | Winter Haven Microtransit | In central Winter Haven from US 17 to Buckeye Loop, north of Dundee Road. | Microtransit | 2028 | Federal/State/Local |

*Note: The High Speed Rail project and SunRail extension to Polk County is not included in the TDP List of Priority Projects. The SunRail extension continues to be studied by FDOT.*

**Table 5-9: Supporting Priority Projects | Capital**

| Rank | Project | Description/ Location | Type of Capital | Implementation Year | Funding Availability |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Lakeland Intermodal Center PD&E Study | Intermodal facility in downtown Lakeland | Study | 2026 | Federal/State/Local |
| **2** | Lakeland Intermodal Center/SunRail Station | Intermodal facility in downtown Lakeland | Intermodal Center | Unfunded | Unfunded |
| **3** | Expand Pass Sale Locations/Mobile Payment/Fare Options | Throughout Polk County | Technology | 2026 | Federal/State/Local |
| **4** | Additional/Enhanced Facilities and Bus Stop Infrastructure | Throughout Polk County | Infrastructure | 2026 | Federal/State/Local |
| **5** | East Polk Transit Maintenance & Administration Facility | Maintenance and Administration in Dundee, Florida | Maintenance/ Administration Facility | Unfunded | Unfunded |
| **6** | Transit Signal Priority | Florida Avenue and US-98 | Technology | 2031& 2033 | Federal/State/Local |
| **7** | Queue Jumps | Florida Avenue and US-98 | Technology | 2031& 2033 | Federal/State/Local |
| **8** | Proposed New Transit Center/Super Stop | At the Lakeland Linder International Airport and Orlando Health facility | Infrastructure | 2026, 2028 | PPP |
| **9** | Expand Transit Marketing/UAP | Throughout Polk County | Marketing | 2026 | Local |

**Table 5-9: Supporting Priority Projects | Capital (continued)**

| Rank | Project | Description/ Location | Type of Capital | Implementation Year | Funding Availability |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **10** | I-4 and County Line Road Park-and-Ride | Park-and-Ride facility adjacent to I-4 and County Line Road | Park-and-Ride | Unfunded | Unfunded |
| **11** | I-4 and Berkley Road Park-and-Ride | Park-and-Ride facility adjacent to I-4 and Berkley Road | Park-and-Ride | Unfunded | Unfunded |
| **12** | I-4 and SR 559 Park-and-Ride | Park-and-Ride facility adjacent to I-4 and SR 559 | Park-and-Ride | Unfunded | Unfunded |
| **13** | Alternate-Fuel Vehicles | Throughout Polk County | Technology | Unfunded | Unfunded |

## *TDP Post-Adoption Action Items*

Obtaining the support of decision-makers who support Citrus Connection is only the first step in a longer process of bringing the TDP to fruition. The following are action items to complete to carry out the transit vision:

### *Coordinate with Polk TPO*

Citrus Connection will continue to build off existing coordination efforts with the TPO to support its efforts to consider/include TDP project priorities in TPO's TIP updates, corridor development, and other studies.

### *Engage FDOT as a Partner*

Continuing to engage FDOT District One staff is a key and mutually beneficial endeavor as Citrus Connection and FDOT share a lot of common goals when it comes to making travel using alternatives a viable and attractive option. Citrus Connection will continue to coordinate with the TPO and District One to ensure the TDP project priorities are considered in UPWP updates and other applicable studies.

### *Continue Marketing/Outreach*

During the TDP process, Citrus Connection conducted public outreach that can be leveraged and expanded to market other planning efforts, such as service initiation efforts, marketing programs and campaigns, and budget plans.

*Source: Benesch*

# Appendix A. Public Outreach

# Citrus Connection TDP

# Public Involvement Plan

CitrusConnection
PROGRESS IN MOTION

Polk Transportation Planning Organization

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# 1. Introduction

This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) summarizes the details and proposed schedule for the public outreach activities planned for Citrus Connection's 10-Year Transit Development Plan (TDP) Major Update. The TDP, led by the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) in collaboration with transit agency serving Polk County, Citrus Connection, will guide the transit vision in Polk County. The Polk TPO conducts the transportation planning activities in Polk County and is currently updating its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The TPO will manage this TDP update and oversee its coordination with the 2050 LRTP update.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requires that transit agencies receiving State Block Grant funding prepare a major TDP update every five years, with annual updates to the TDP to track implementation progress in the interim years. The State of Florida Public Transit Block Grant Program was enacted by the Florida Legislature to provide a stable source of funding for public transit.

This 10-year TDP Major Update covers FYs 2026-2035 and will be approved by the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD) Board, as the governing body for the Citrus Connection system, prior to submitting it to FDOT District One for approval.

A primary goal of this TDP update is to identify strategies to increase ridership and efficiency of Citrus Connection's current services and enhance connectivity to other local or regional transit services.

The resulting TDP will be compliant with the latest TDP Rule adopted July 9, 2024, as outlined in Chapter 14-73, F.A.C. As a strategic plan, the TDP will identify needs in an unconstrained fashion and identify service improvements that are currently unfunded. The 10-year vision will identify improvements and provide a beneficial tie and be consistent with the Polk TPO's LRTP goals and priorities.

This PIP also has been developed in accordance with the 2024 TDP Rule, which continues to require a PIP. If developed specifically for a TDP, as in this effort, the PIP must be approved by FDOT. In addition, the Rule now requires enhanced coordination with the area MPO/TPO's LRTP efforts.

The Rule also requires that the TDP preparation meets the following requirements:

- Soliciting comments from local and the regional Workforce Development Board.
- Notifying FDOT, the local/regional workforce board, local government comprehensive planning departments, and the TPO on all public meetings. It also requires that these

entities are given an opportunity to review and comment on the TDP during the development of the proposed public transportation projects and services, and the TDP ten-year implementation program.

The goal of this PIP is to engage the public and key stakeholders with a broad spectrum of perspectives, interests, and backgrounds. This will provide valuable public input on transit needs, priorities, and implementation strategies to enhance public transportation in Polk County. The Polk TDP PIP outlines strategies that encourage community input and buy-in. It provides ample opportunities for the private sector, state, and local agency stakeholders to understand the components and benefits of the plan and to provide feedback through open, two-way communication options.

This PIP is prepared to provide flexibility as the TDP is developed. While the outreach activities are set, the exact time frame and format or number may change to accomplish the best results for the TPO and Citrus Connection within the available resources.

As a public transit agency and recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding, Citrus Connection is required to adhere to federal non-discrimination regulations, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Citrus Connection has developed and maintains a Title VI Plan, outlining the procedures and policies to ensure inclusive and representative participation of minorities and persons who are LEP. By reference, the policies and procedures of the Title VI Plan are integrated into the programs, activities, and services of this PIP.

The remainder of this PIP illustrates how the public and stakeholders will be engaged to inform the TDP.

## 2. TDP Public Involvement Process

The public involvement process seeks transit user and non-user public input on transit needs, priorities, and implementation strategies to enhance public transportation in Polk County over the next 10 years.

To gather meaningful input for the TDP, this public outreach effort will ensure that a broad range of groups are consulted, including riders, major employers, social service providers, Citrus Connection operators, and the public. Furthermore, a variety of public involvement techniques were selected for inclusion in the PIP to ensure the active participation of community members, including residents, employees, and other visitors.

Coordination with and/or notification of key agencies is also included to ensure the TDP is consistent and collaborates with other applicable planning processes in the study area.

Table 2-1 presents the types of activities that will be completed for the TDP and the tools associated with each.

**Table 2-1: TDP Public Involvement Activities**

| Public Involvement Activity | | Citrus Connection PIP |
|---|---|---|
| Collateral Materials and Visual Aids | Flyers/fact sheets | ✓ |
| | Web outreach | ✓ |
| | Social media & email outreach | ✓ |
| Community Engagement, Review, and Comment | Public opinion surveys | ✓ |
| | Public workshops | ✓ |
| | Stakeholder interviews | ✓ |
| | Discussion group workshops | ✓ |
| | Email, in-person, and telephone comments | ✓ |
| | Public Meeting Notifications | ✓ |
| Agency & LRTP Coordination | TDP review/guiding team | ✓ |
| | MPO, FDOT coordination | ✓ |
| | Workforce, comprehensive planning agency notifications | ✓ |
| | LRTP outreach/goals/data coordination | ✓ |

### Phases of TDP Outreach

The approach to this TDP outreach process consists of two phases.

#### Phase I Outreach

Public involvement activities during this phase will gauge public opinion on current transit services and gather input on future transit service, capital, technology, and infrastructure needs. A public online survey, stakeholder interviews, discussion group workshops, an operator survey, and an open house public workshop will be conducted during this phase.

The TDP team will also coordinate with the TPO's ongoing LRTP update to incorporate any transit input from those outreach activities and/or share resources, as applicable.

#### Phase II Outreach

This phase will include outreach activities following the identification of 10-year needs, developed based on an assessment of the input received during Phase I and various data analyses conducted for the TDP. As part of this phase, another open house public workshop and public input survey (piggybacking on the LRTP survey process) will be conducted. As in Phase I, the TDP team will continue to coordinate with the LRTP.

The following section summarizes these activities in detail. Efforts will also be made to gather input from LEP individuals in Polk County. To the extent possible, the TDP project team will provide pertinent materials such as surveys and workshop flyers in Spanish.

## 3. Public Involvement Activities

Several public involvement techniques described in this PIP support direct and indirect participation from the community within Citrus Connection's service area. The remainder of this section summarizes these activities.

### Review/Coordination Team Meetings

As one of the initial outreach tasks for the TDP, a team of representatives from the FDOT, Polk TPO, Citrus Connection, Polk County Comprehensive Planning Department, and local/regional workforce development board will be established to support and guide the TDP effort and to serve as a technical resource for data and information.

The initial meeting was held with Citrus Connection and the Polk TPO in August 2024, to discuss the project scope, project schedule, milestones, and deliverables.

Key timelines, particularly for near-term anticipated completion dates, were clarified and a substantial discussion took place regarding the composition and timeline for the public involvement activities. Two

additional meetings are envisioned at key technical/outreach milestones:

- March 2025 – Present draft TDP needs
- July 2025 – Present draft 10-Year TDP

## Stakeholder Interviews

Identifying key stakeholders and early coordination with various agencies, organizations, and elected officials is crucial to the success of any transportation project. Having a proactive outreach program to engage these stakeholders allows the opportunity to offer important feedback and be informed when addressing questions from their constituents or the media on the TDP.

Citrus Connection and TPO staff will identify representatives of key public and private sector stakeholders to obtain feedback about perceptions and attitudes towards transit in Polk County and its immediate region. The project consultant will conduct interviews with the identified stakeholders.

This is a key component of the public involvement effort and will enhance the understanding of local conditions from those who rely on transit.

In total, up to 25 stakeholders will be engaged through interviews to better understand the commuting habits of their employees or constituents, their current use of transit, and the transit use of their clients or customers, if applicable. This will allow them to provide suggestions for improvements to transit services. Prior to conducting interviews, a draft interview questionnaire will be submitted to Citrus Connection and TPO staff for review and approval. The interviews will be scheduled in advance and conducted virtually. Once all stakeholder interviews are complete, the TDP project team will prepare a draft summary of the stakeholder interviews as part of its public involvement documentation records.

In addition to providing input on transit's future in the county, the stakeholders will also be asked to assist the outreach campaign by distributing information and to spread the word on any upcoming outreach efforts.

## Bus Operator Survey

As ambassadors of the transit agency, bus operators have the most opportunity for, and greatest depth of, contact with existing patrons on a day-to-day basis. This makes them an asset for vetting rider input and providing important insights into route and system network issues related to operations, safety, scheduling, and other concerns.

The TDP project team will obtain valuable system and route level observations from Citrus Connection bus operators and supervisors through an online survey.

## TDP Needs Survey

The TDP project team will also conduct an online public input survey. A survey instrument will be developed and will be reviewed/coordinated with TPO and Citrus Connection staff. The survey will be conducted in the first phase of the TDP outreach to seek public input on needs and obtain information related to attitudes, latent demand, and general support of the community related to transit services.

This online survey will be posted on the TPO and Citrus Connection websites and distributed via available email and social media outlets. As feasible, the survey link will be posted on other stakeholder websites and provided at public workshops and discussion groups. Participants will be encouraged to complete the survey online to improve the ease and accuracy of data collection and reporting. As noted earlier, participants of the stakeholder interviews and discussion group workshops will be invited to disseminate the survey links.

## Discussion Group Workshops

The TDP outreach will include three invitation-based discussion group workshops, each involving a group of 8-12 participants in a small group to promote more in-depth, open-ended discussion about transit issues, needs, and opportunities. The project team will coordinate with Citrus Connection and TPO staff to identify and invite workshop participants.

Each discussion group will be attended by participants from organizations and groups of similar interests to engage in a productive and robust discussion that will help Citrus Connection plan its future transit services and allocate resources efficiently.

The outreach process includes three types of discussion groups:

- Business and Neighborhood Leaders
- Social Services/Workforce/Community Representatives
- Current Citrus Connection Bus Riders

To make it convenient for stakeholders to attend and participate, these discussions will be held virtually. A presentation to provide project background information will be given, followed by a guided discussion.

## TDP Public Workshops

Two open house style public workshops will be conducted to solicit feedback. One workshop during Phase I outreach for feedback on the proposed transit needs and one to solicit feedback on the proposed transit improvements developed in Phase II. The workshops will be held at locations identified by Citrus Connection/TPO staff and accessible by transit. They

will be designed to capture information from participants about community values, needs, and priorities. Additionally, they may feature displays, interactive information exchange, public surveys, or enlistment for social media outreach.

### Social Media Outreach

The project team will coordinate with Polk County's Communications Department, via the Polk TPO to utilize existing social media channels to inform the public on TDP outreach opportunities. Posts to social media will occur as necessary, mostly to advertise any survey input opportunities and outreach events.

### Collateral Materials and Public Notification

Collateral materials will be developed, as applicable and necessary, to distribute information about public outreach activities. These materials may include the following:

- Fact Sheets – These will provide information to the public at outreach events and public workshops to offer an overview of Citrus Connection services, while promoting the value and importance of TDP and public involvement efforts. The flyers will direct and encourage the public to reach out to the TDP project team to share input.
- Flyers – To share information with the public about upcoming events and the value of their participation; will direct the public to visit the Citrus Connection and Polk TPO websites to stay involved and informed with the development of the TDP.
- Display Boards – These will illustrate service and demographic maps, plan proposals, and more at public workshops.
- Public Meeting Notifications – Notifications of all public meetings at least 14 days in advance will be provided through one or more of the following: media advertisements/news articles; Polk County, Citrus Connection, and Polk TPO websites; bus seat flyer drops; flyers; social media, and emails to TDP stakeholders to share within their organizations or to people they represent.

## 4. TDP-LRTP Coordination Program

Per the 2024 TDP Rule requirement concerning coordination with the TPO's planning process, close coordination with the ongoing Polk TPO's 2050 LRTP will be conducted throughout this TDP process. This may include coordination and information sharing in key steps of the TDP-LRTP process discussed below.

### Data/Analysis

Coordination on baseline year and future year data so the TDP utilizes any readily available data from the LRTP on the multimodal system deficiencies identified considering land use, state and local transportation plans, other governmental actions and policies, and socioeconomic trends.

### Public Outreach

To maximize coordination and financial resources for the TDP, the project team will utilize LRTP outreach events to obtain transit input while also sharing TDP findings, mutually benefiting both the TDP and LRTP processes.

Key public outreach coordination with the 2050 LRTP will include the following:

- TDP Phase I Outreach – In addition to the Phase I public workshop planned for the TDP, the project team will coordinate with TPO staff to prepare for and attend one LRTP workshop that may be conducted during the early part (Phase I) of the TDP outreach timeline. The display material developed for the TDP Phase I workshop will be used to obtain additional input as well as the online TDP survey to obtain more direction from the community. The display materials will also be made available for the LRTP workshop.
- TDP Phase II Outreach – This phase of TDP outreach will take advantage of the LRTP outreach activities to gather transit input. Instead of an TDP-exclusive transit priorities survey as previously done, the LRTP needs survey will be used to gather input on 10-year priorities to inform the TDP. In addition to the Phase II public workshop planned for the TDP, the TDP project team will also coordinate with TPO staff to prepare for and attend one LRTP workshop as well to share the 10-year needs plan for the TDP.

### LRTP Goals & Plan Consistency

The third main component under TDP-LRTP coordination program supports consistency between the two plans on the short-term transit improvements/strategies. The TPO, which is managing the TDP, can then use the service, capital, technology, and policy needs in the 10-year TDP to guide transit-related goals and objectives in its LRTP. The TDP project team, in its identification and development of transit priority corridors, will ensure consistency with applicable LRTP multimodal emphasis/priority corridors.

## 5. Agency Review & Coordination

Several key agencies will also be involved in various capacities in the development of this TDP major

update. As required by Section 341.052, F.S., comments will be solicited from local and regional workforce boards established under Chapter 445, F.S.

In addition, FDOT District One, CareerSource Polk, local government comprehensive planning departments, and the Polk TPO will be advised of all public meetings where the draft TDP is to be presented or discussed. These agencies will also be given an opportunity to review and comment on the draft TDP during the development of the proposed public transportation projects and services and the ten-year implementation program.

## 6. Public Involvement Activity Schedule

The public outreach schedule supports planning and completion of the previously summarized public outreach activities and coordination efforts. Table 4-1 presents the tentative schedule for the public outreach activities included in this major update to the Citrus Connection TDP.

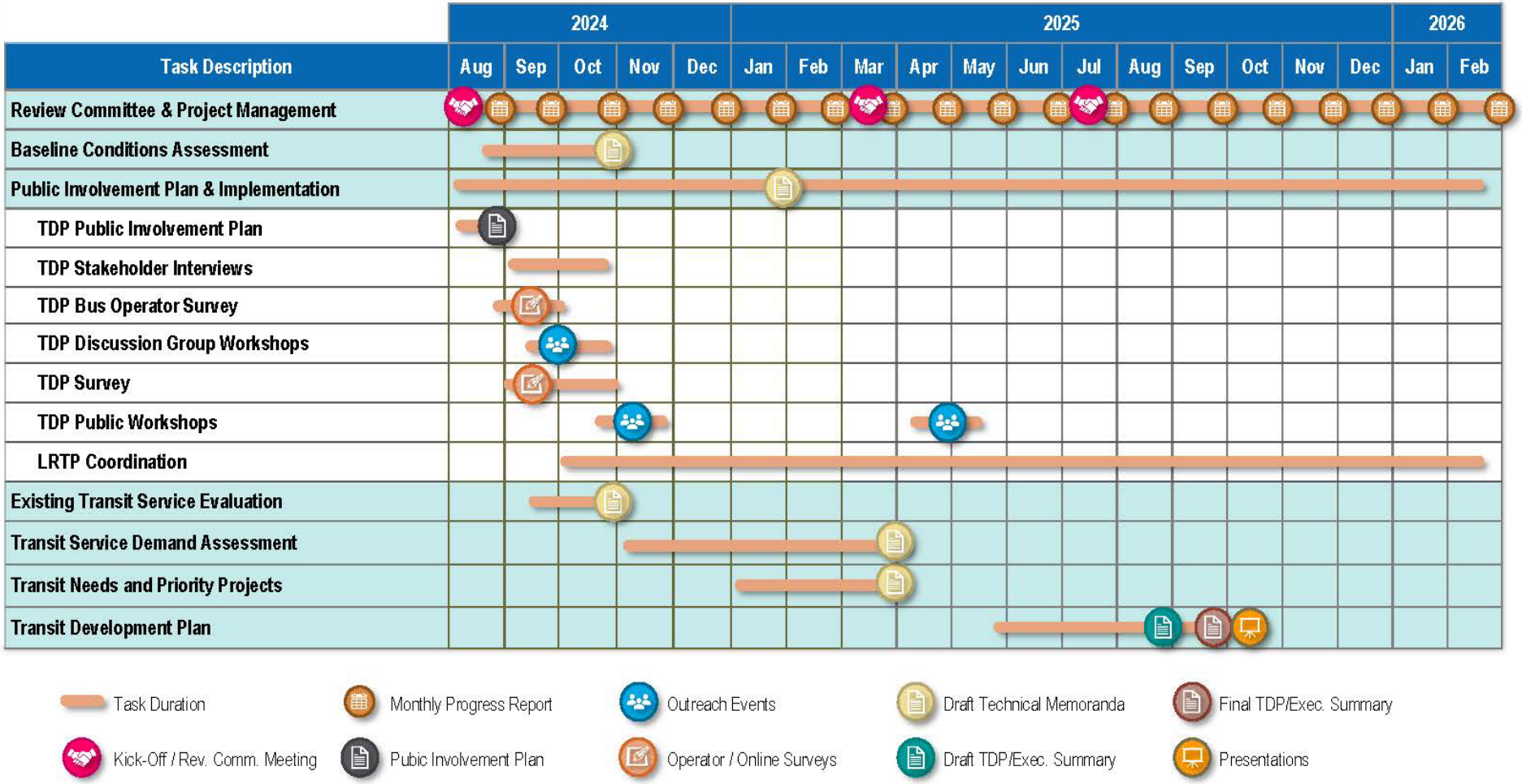
The overall schedule for completing the TDP, which includes outreach and all other components, is shown in Appendix A.

**Table 4-1: Tentative Public Involvement Schedule**

| Outreach Activity | Date |
|---|---|
| Stakeholder Interviews | September–October 2024 |
| Bus Operator Survey | September 2024 |
| Discussion Group Workshops | September–October 2024 |
| TDP Needs Survey | September–October 2024 |
| LRTP Coordination | October 2024–December 2025 |
| Phase I Public Workshop | November 2024 |
| Phase II Public Workshop | April/May 2025 |
| TDP Presentations | September/October 2025 |

# Appendix A

## TDP Project Schedule



Florida Department of Transportation

RON DESANTIS
GOVERNOR

605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

JARED W. PERDUE, P.E.
SECRETARY

August 30, 2024

Polk TPO
Ms. Julia Davis
330 W. Church St., P.O. Box 9005, Drawer TS 0 5
Bartow, FL 33831-9005

RE: 2026-2035 Transit Development Plan Public Involvement Plan

Dear Ms. Davis:

This letter pertains to the Department's review of Citrus Connection's Public Involvement Plan (PIP) of the 2026-2035 Transit Development Plan (TDP). District One Department staff received the PIP on August 29, 2024.

The Department has completed its review of the document based on Rule Chapter 14-73.001(3)(a), F.A.C. pertinent to the requirements for the TDP. The Department finds Citrus Connection's PIP for the TDP to be in compliance with Chapter 14-73, F.A.C.

Please provide a copy of this compliance letter as an attachment within the final TDP Major Update.

If you have any questions, please contact me via email at Peyton.McLeod@dot.state.fl.us or at (813) 486-6917.

Sincerely,

Peyton McLeod
Congestion Management Multi-Modal Planner

Cc: Michelle Peronto, Transit Programs Administrator
Dale Hanson, Transit Projects Coordinator
Rohan Sadhai, Congestion Management Multi-Modal Planner

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# Please take the Bus Operator Survey.

## Scan the QR code below!

# Citrus Connection Transit Development Plan Major Update

# Bus Operator Survey

***We Need Your Input!*** *As representatives of Citrus Connection, bus operators and route supervisors engage with bus riders daily. As ambassadors for Citrus Connection, you are a valuable resource for gathering insights into riders' needs and needed enhancements/changes to services. Your input will help inform the ongoing Transit Development Plan (TDP) Major Update, which will guide improvements to Citrus Connection over the next 10 years.*

***Please scan the QR code to take the survey online!***
*This survey is estimated to take 5-10 minutes. Please do NOT put your name or other identifying mark on the survey. If you complete a printed version of this survey, please return the survey to the secure box in the Breakroom at George Jenkins.*

***Please complete this survey by October 15, 2024.***

1. Please select the top 3 positive comments that you hear most frequently from riders. Riders say Citrus Connection is....
   - ☐ Safe
   - ☐ Convenient
   - ☐ Clean
   - ☐ Affordable
   - ☐ Frequent
   - ☐ Reliable
   - ☐ Other_____
     _____
2. Please select the top 3 most common challenges or complaints riders voice to you.
   - ☐ Need more frequent service
   - ☐ Need earlier/later service
   - ☐ Need more weekend service
   - ☐ Need better sidewalk connections
   - ☐ Need express service
   - ☐ Need regional connections
   - ☐ Bus doesn't go where I want
   - ☐ Bus is late
   - ☐ Other_____

**Please turn over to complete other side!**

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Polk Transportation Planning Organization

benesch

# Bus Operator Survey

3. How could technology be better utilized to improve efficiency or passenger experience? Please select the top 3 needed technology improvements.
   - ☐ Wi-Fi on the bus
   - ☐ Stop announcements on buses
   - ☐ Replace diesel-fueled buses with electric and other alternate-fuel vehicles
   - ☐ Traffic signal that gives the bus priority to go before traffic at busy intersections
4. Are you aware of any safety concerns or issues on specific bus routes? If so, please explain.

   _____

   _____
5. Based on what you hear and your own ideas, what service improvements are needed? This can be on any route, including ones that you don't drive.

   -Examples of service improvements include: adding new destinations/areas, improving service frequency, service start times and end times, new service types, etc.

| Route | Comment or Suggestion |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

6. Please add any additional comments to help improve public transportation services in Polk County.

_____

_____

_____

_____

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# TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# PUBLIC WORKSHOP

## WEDNESDAY
## November 6, 2024

**2PM to 4PM**

**Lakeland Public Library**

**100 Lake Morton Drive**
**Lakeland, Florida 33801**
(On Circulator Eastside Route)

*Can't attend?*

*Take the online survey!*

**Go to: https://arcg.is/1iW8yP1 or scan this QR code:**

***Please stop by and let us know how public transportation in Polk County should grow!***

*SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS*

*Any person requiring special accommodations to attend or participate, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, should contact Citrus Connection within at least three (3) business days before the meeting at (863) 534-5500. For Citrus Connection route and schedule information, please visit ridecitrus.com*

# Citrus Connection Transit Development Plan

## Discussion Group Workshops

*October 2024*

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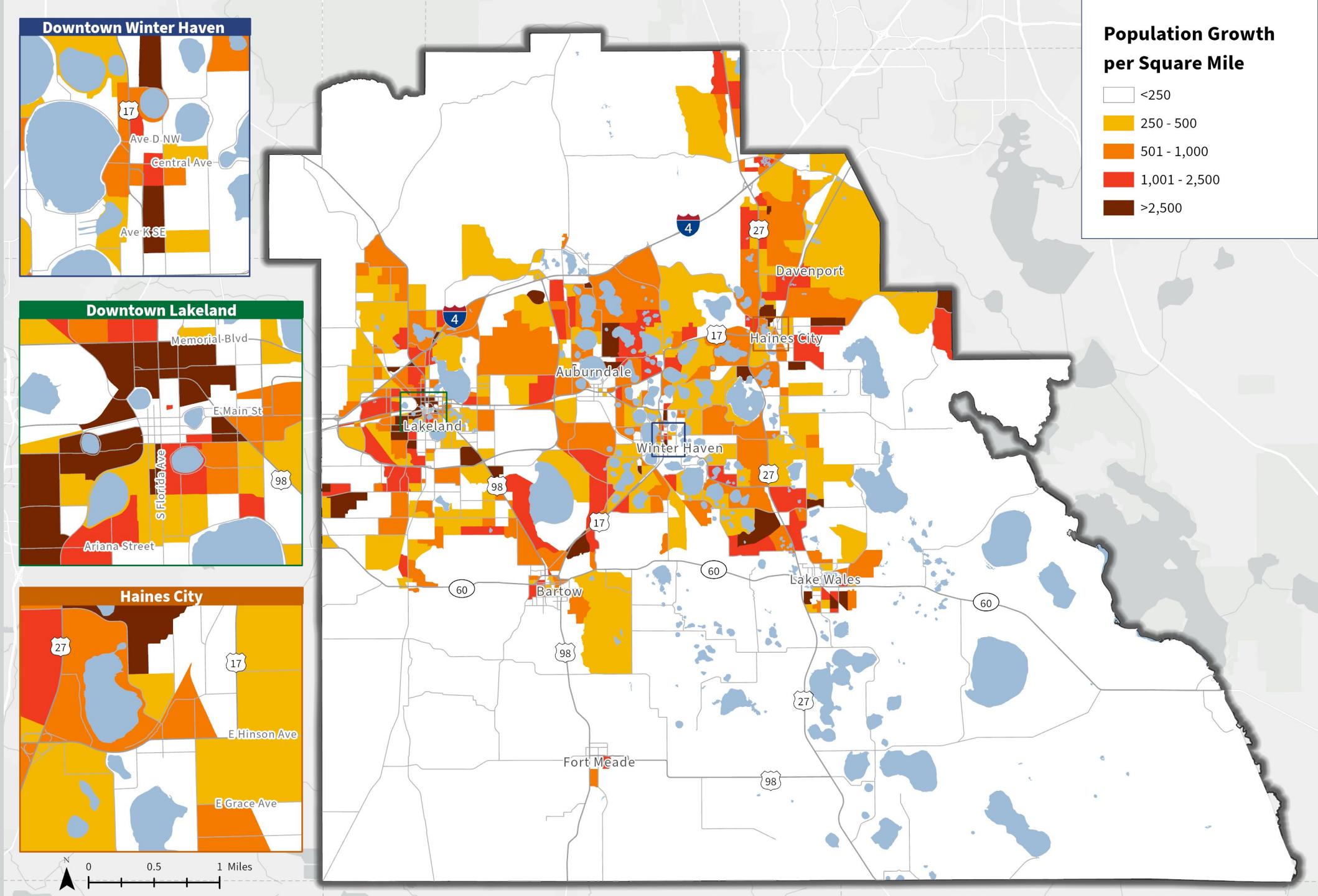
# Agenda

- Introduction
- What is a TDP?
- Existing Conditions Review
- Public Outreach
- Guided Discussion
- Next steps

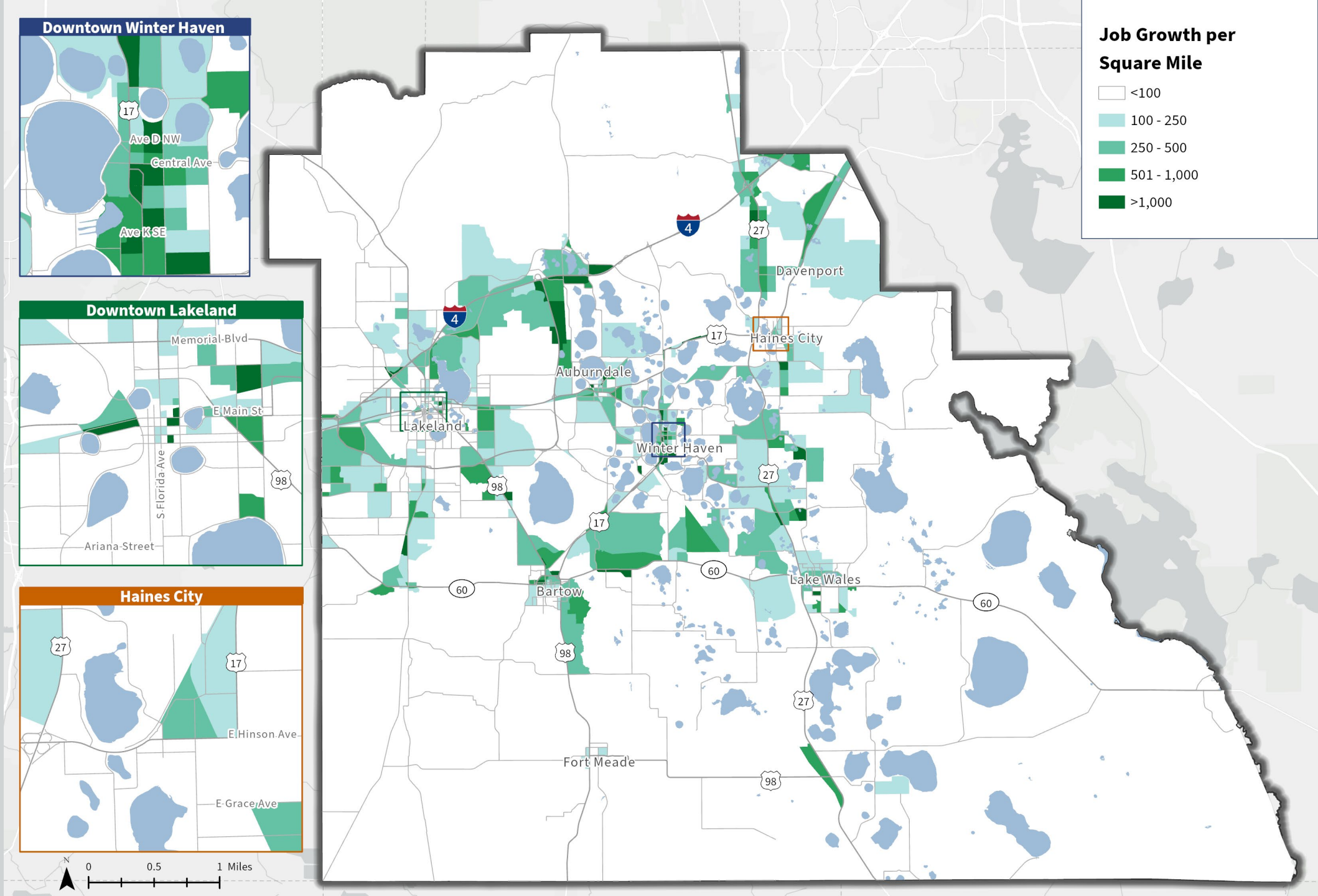
# What is a TDP?

- 10-Year strategic plan for transit
  - Evaluated existing conditions
  - Integrates outreach for local input
  - Determines future needs
  - Outlines phased service and implementation plans
- FDOT requirement – Rule updated in July 2024
- Incorporates best practices

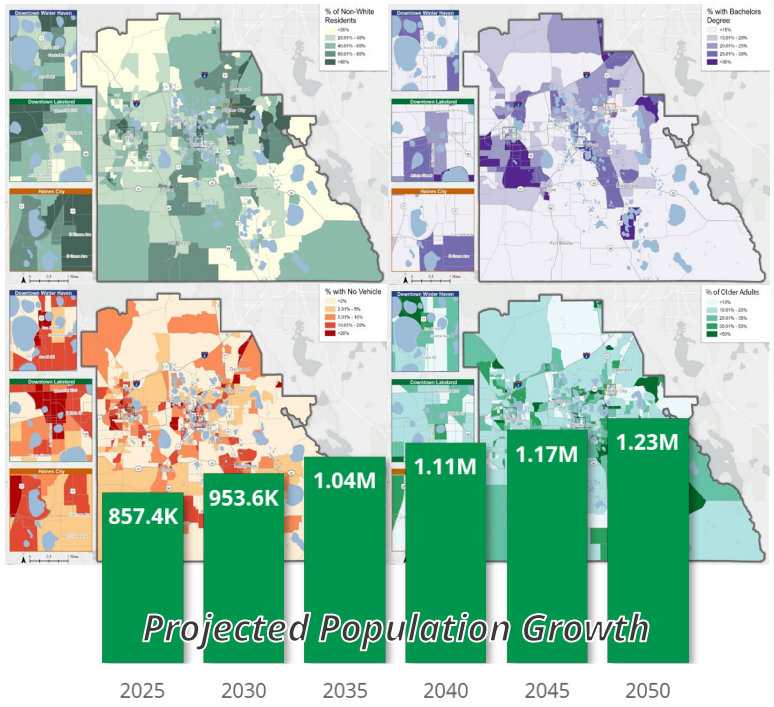
# Population Growth 2025 - 2050



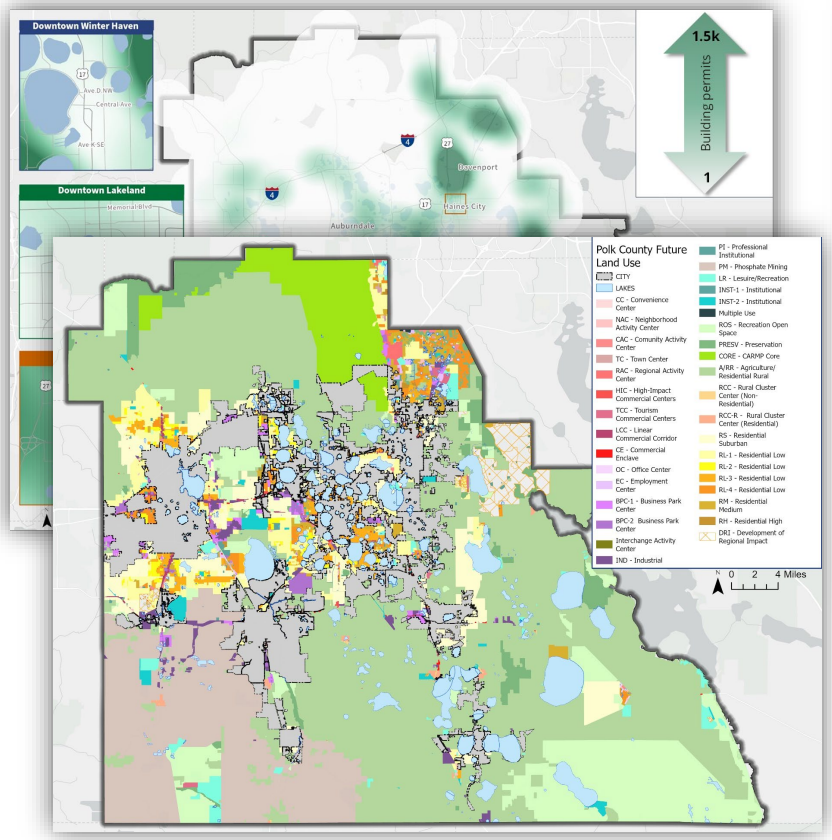
# Employment Growth 2025 - 2050



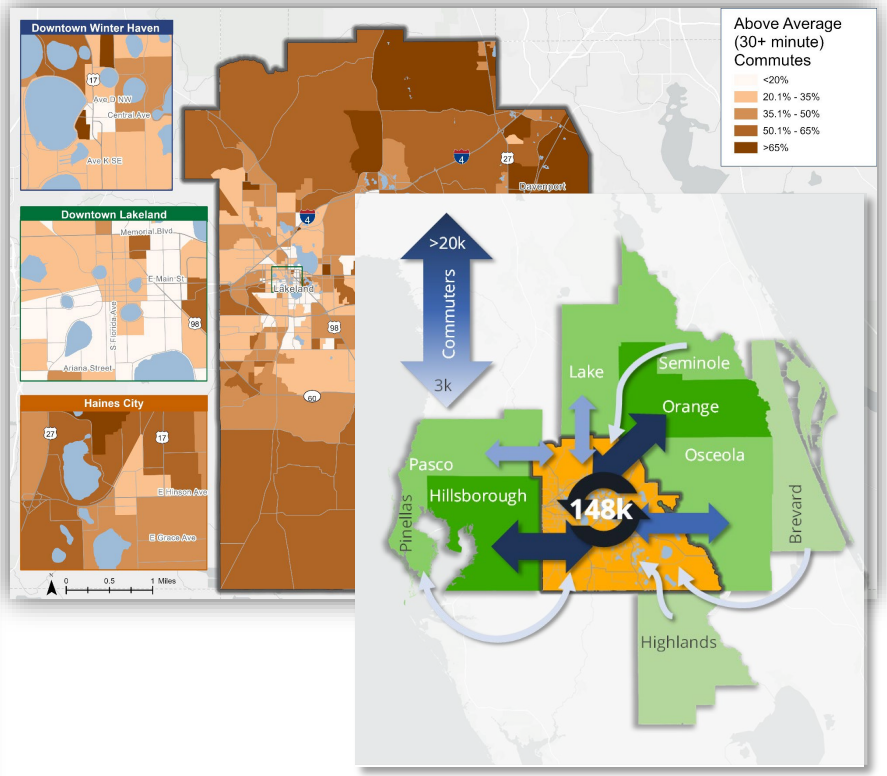
# Baseline Conditions




*Socio-Demographic Data*



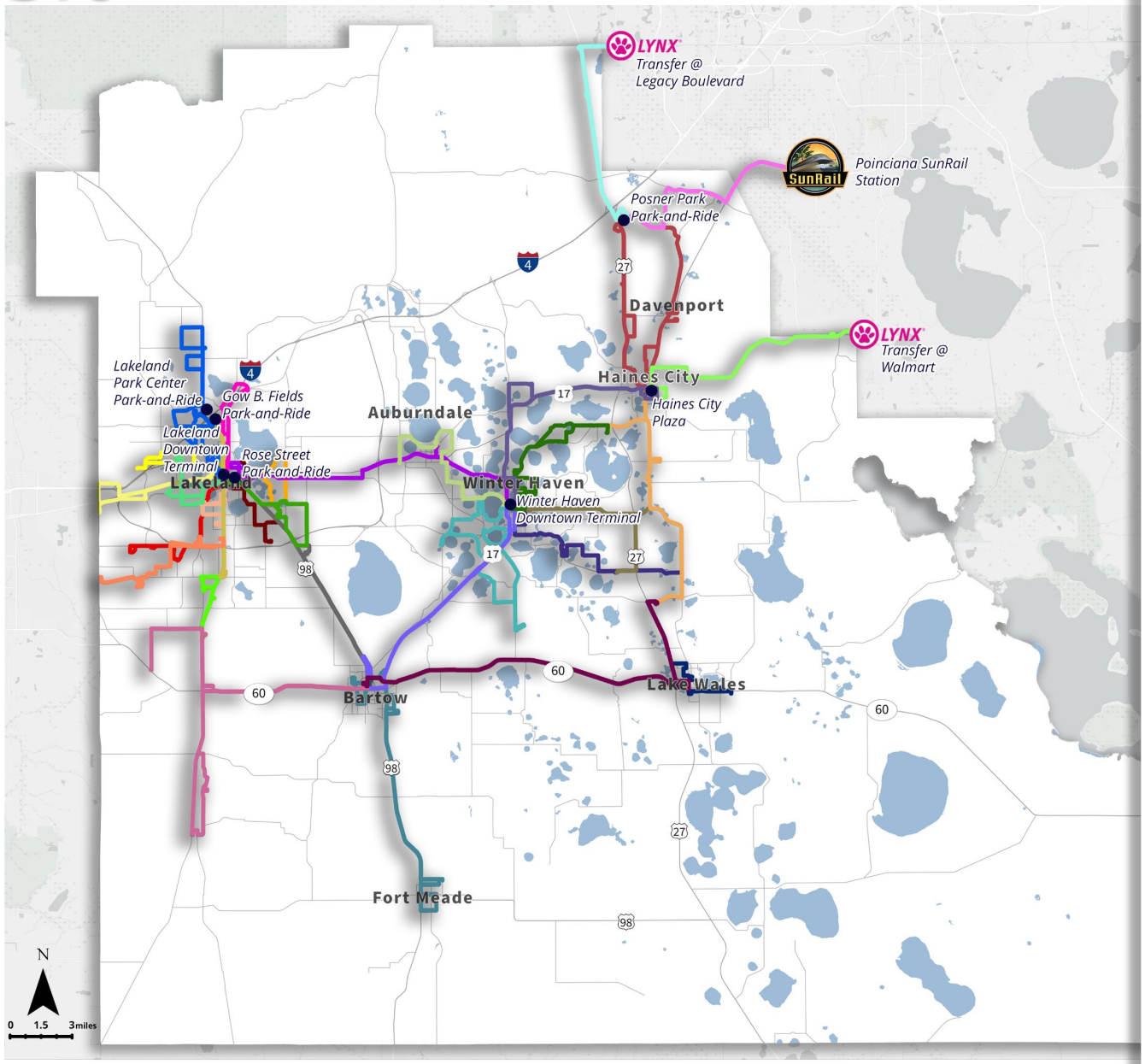

*Land Use and Development Hot Spots*




*Commuter/Travel Flow*

# Existing Transit Service

- 31 routes
  - East- 15 routes
  - West- 15 routes
  - 1 East-West Connector
- 3 Squeeze Services
- Monday-Saturday
  - One Sunday route
- $1.50 one-way fare

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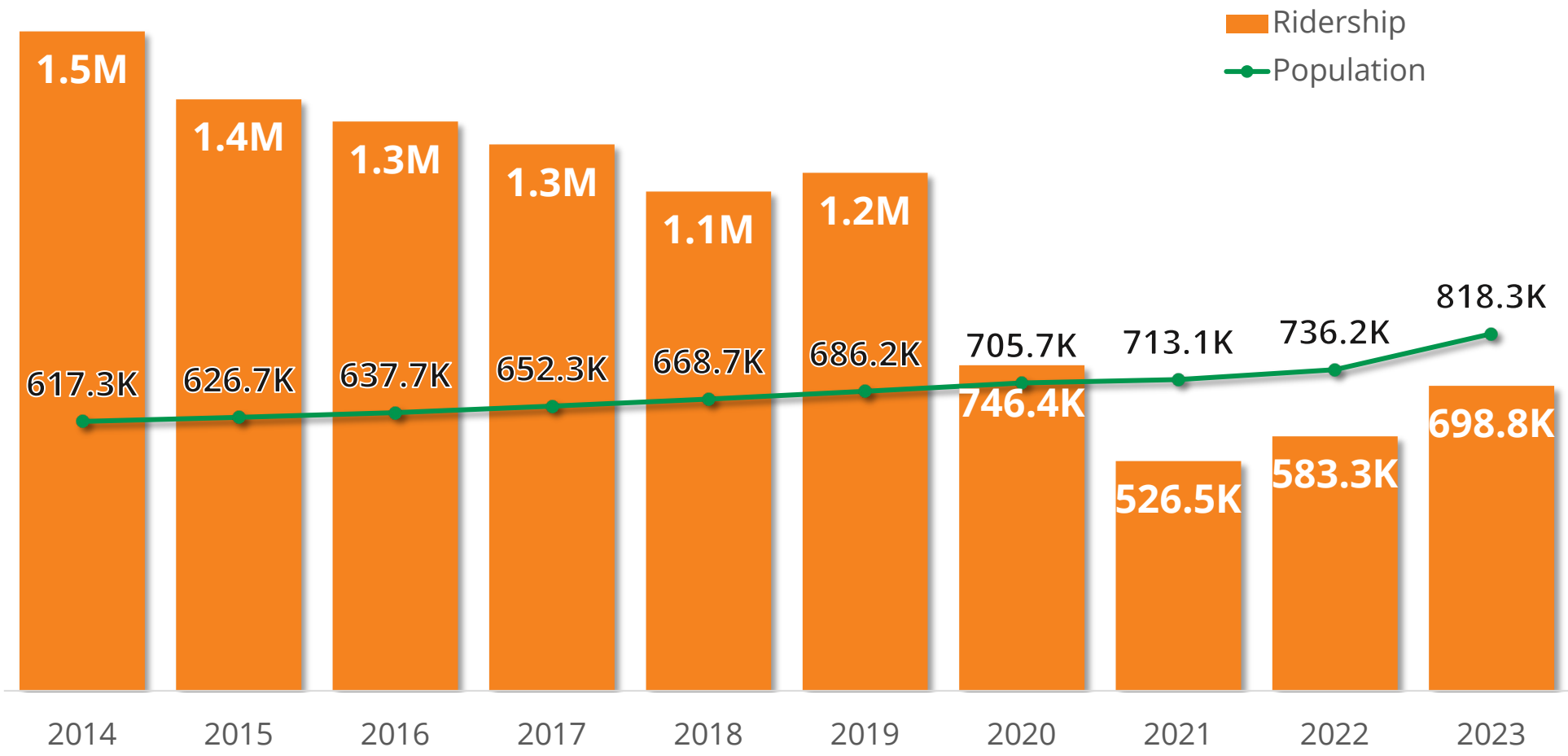
**East Routes**

- 15
- 16X
- 17X
- 18X
- 19X
- 20X
- 21X East
- 22XW
- 25
- 27X
- 30
- 40/44
- 50
- 60
- Lake Wales Circulator

**West Routes**

- Blue Line
- Circulator East
- Circulator West
- Coral Line
- Gold Line
- Green Line
- Lemon Line
- Lime Flex Line
- Orange Line
- Peach Line
- Pink Line
- Purple Line
- Red Line
- Silver Line
- Yellow Line
- 21X West

# Ridership & Population




*Source: Citrus Connection, NTD, and American Community Survey (ACS) 2018-2022 5-Year Estimates*

# Public Outreach

| 25 Stakeholder Interviews | 2 Open House Public Workshops | 3 Discussion Group Workshops | 1 Public Input Survey | 1 Bus Operator Survey | LRTP Coordination – Workshops & Surveys | Website & Social Media Outreach |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Ongoing*** | ***Next Week!*** | ***Ongoing*** | ***Ongoing*** | ***Completed*** | ***Ongoing*** | ***Ongoing*** |

# Guided Forum Discussion

# Guided Forum Discussion

Transit Today

- What is your view on the role of transit in Polk County?
  - Is it to transport workers, elderly, low income, individuals with disabilities, tourists, attracting choice riders, to prevent congestion, to reduce emissions, to create economic opportunities?

- What is the level of awareness and support for Citrus Connection in the community?
  - Have the levels of awareness and support changed (increased or decreased) since 2020?

# Guided Forum Discussion

Transit Today

- How well do you feel Citrus Connection responds to the needs and feedback of the community?
  - Are new avenues needed to ensure proper feedback and communication to Citrus Connection?

- Is information about Citrus Connection easily accessible in the community?
  - If not, where should transit information be available and in what forms?

# Guided Forum Discussion

- Where is the growth and development occurring in Polk County? How can transit best respond to these trends?

- What should the priorities and goals for Citrus Connection to serve in the next 5 to 10 years?

# Guided Forum Discussion

- Is more regional transportation needed to connect Polk County with surrounding areas?

- How can Citrus Connection better support regional travel and reduce traffic congestion?

# Guided Forum Discussion

- What type of connections should be made to the next planned SunRail station in Polk County?
  - From where should the service connect?

- What are your thoughts on a Brightline stop in Polk County?

# Guided Forum Discussion

- Would you support additional funding for Citrus Connection by increasing bus fares, sales tax, or property tax, etc.?

- How do you think private-public partnerships can enhance Citrus Connection services?
  - To which entities should Citrus Connection reach out?

# Guided Forum Discussion

- What are the most critical improvements you would like to see in Citrus Connection services in the next 10 years?

- Is there a need for more park and ride lots?
  - In conjunction with SunRail and Brightline services?
  - Express bus or BRT services to local and regional destinations?

# Guided Forum Discussion

- Are there specific communities or neighborhoods that are underserved by Citrus Connection?

- What role do you think Citrus Connection should play in the future development of Polk County?

# Guided Forum Discussion

- If you could pick one thing to change about Citrus Connection, what would it be?
- What is your vision for transit in the next 10 years? Next 25 years?
- What are the major strengths and weaknesses of Citrus Connection?

# What is Next?

- Review and incorporate your input
- **Spread the word about the survey!**
- **Attend the public workshops!**
  - **Next week! November 6th 2PM – 4PM**
  - **Lakeland Public Library**
- Develop transit needs
- Prepare TDP priority projects and schedule of projects

**Please scan and take the survey!**

Polk Transportation Planning Organization

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# Citrus Connection Transit Development Plan

## *What is Citrus Connection?*

Citrus Connection operates 31 routes, with 15 routes dedicated to serving the eastern part of Polk County and 15 routes covering the western part of Polk County. Additionally, one route connects the East and West. The Squeeze shuttles serve Bartow, Lakeland, and Lake Wales.

## *What is the Citrus Connection Transit Development Plan?*

A Transit Development Plan (TDP) is being developed by the Polk County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) in collaboration with Citrus Connection to serve as a guide for the future of public transportation in Polk County from 2026 to 2035. It will represent the County's vision to promote transit growth and improvement over the next decade.

## *Why Do We Need Your Input?*

Public participation is an important part of developing the 10-Year TDP, and numerous public outreach activities will support the plan, including stakeholder interviews, discussion groups, open house public workshops, online surveys, and web and email outreach.

**Your participation and input are needed so we can learn more about the public transportation needs in Polk County.**

## *Scan your phone here to take the survey!*

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# Public Input Survey

1. **Have you or a member of your household used Citrus Connection, the public transportation service in Polk County?**
   - ○ Yes, I have used Citrus Connection
   - ○ No, I have never used Citrus Connection
   - ○ I did not know public transportation was available in Polk County
2. **Do you think there is a need for additional/improved transit services in Polk County?**
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No
3. **How much awareness is there in Polk County about Citrus Connection's services?**
   - ○ High
   - ○ Moderate
   - ○ Low
   - ○ I am unsure
4. **Please rate the ease of access to a Citrus Connection bus stop from your home or work.**
   - ○ Easy
   - ○ Neutral
   - ○ Difficult
   - ○ I do not know
5. **If you use Citrus Connection's services now or decide to use them in the future, where would you go using it?** (Select up to THREE)
   - ○ Work
   - ○ Shopping
   - ○ Social/Recreational
   - ○ Education/College
   - ○ Medical
   - ○ Religious
   - ○ To get to/from a major airport (Tampa or Orlando)
6. **What should Citrus Connection consider as top improvements for the next 10 years?** (Select up to THREE)
   - ○ More frequent bus service (which route or routes?_____)
   - ○ Regional express (to where?_____)
   - ○ SunRail to Polk County
   - ○ Brightline service through Polk County
   - ○ Direct connections/feeder services to future rail stations
   - ○ App-based on-demand microtransit (where?_____)
   - ○ More weekend service
   - ○ Earlier & later weekday service
   - ○ More open-air community shuttles like the Squeeze in Lakeland, Lake Wales, and Bartow (where?_____)

7. **What is your top capital/technology improvements for the next 10 years?**
    - ○ Wi-Fi on the bus
    - ○ Stop announcements on buses
    - ○ Improve bus stop amenities (shelters, bike storage, etc.)
    - ○ Replace diesel-powered buses with electric and other alternate-fuel vehicles
    - ○ Other (please specify) _____
8. **If you are currently employed, has your work commute changed since the pandemic?**
    - ○ Nothing has changed, I still commute to work 5 (or more) days per week
    - ○ I work from home occasionally, but commute at least 3-4 days per week
    - ○ I work from home most of the week and commute only 1-2 days per week
    - ○ I now work from home all of the time
9. **My age is…**
    - ○ 17 years or under
    - ○ 18 to 24 years
    - ○ 25 to 40 years
    - ○ 41 to 60 years
    - ○ Over 60 years
    - ○ Prefer not to answer
10. **My gender is…**
    - ○ Male
    - ○ Female
    - ○ Non-binary
    - ○ Other_____
    - ○ Prefer not to answer
11. **Zip code of my…**
    - ○ Residence is_____
    - ○ Work/School is (if applicable)_____
12. **My race/ethnic group is…**
    - ○ American Indian/Alaska Native
    - ○ Asian
    - ○ Black/African American
    - ○ White/Caucasian
    - ○ Other_____
    - ○ Prefer not to answer
13. **I am…**
    - ○ Not Hispanic/Latino
    - ○ Hispanic/Latino
    - ○ Prefer not to answer
14. **My total household income for 2023 was…**
    - ○ Less than $25,000
    - ○ Between $25,000 - $44,999
    - ○ Between $45,000 - $74,999
    - ○ $75,000 or greater
    - ○ Prefer not to answer

# Encuesta de Aporte Publico

1. **¿Alguna vez han acudido usted o algún miembro de su hogar a los servicios de transporte público del condado Polk, Citrus Connection?**
   - ○ Si, he(mos) acudido a Citrus Connection
   - ○ No, nunca he(mos) acudido a Citrus Connection
   - ○ No sabía que hay transporte público en el condado de Polk
2. **¿Crees que hay una necesidad para agregar/mejorar los servicios de transporte público en el condado Polk?**
   - ○ Si
   - ○ No
3. **¿Cuánto conocimiento hay en el condado de Polk acerca de los servicios de Citrus Connection?**
   - ○ Mucho
   - ○ Poco
   - ○ Suficiente
   - ○ No estoy seguro/a
4. **Por favor, califique la facilidad de acceso a la parada de autobús de Citrus Connection más cercana de su casa o lugar de empleo.**
   - ○ Facil
   - ○ Dificil
   - ○ Neutro
   - ○ No estoy seguro/a
5. **5. Si acude a los servicios de autobús, o decide usarlos en un futuro, ¿adónde iría? (Seleccione hsata TRES OPCIONES)**
   - ○ Trabajo
   - ○ De Compras
   - ○ Actividades sociales o de recreación
   - ○ Centro Educativo/Universidad
   - ○ Citas Medicas
   - ○ Actividades Religiosas
   - ○ Aeropuerto de ida o regreso (Tampa u Orlando)
6. **¿A cuáles mejorías debería de darle prioridad Citrus Connection en los próximos 10 años? (Seleccione hasta TRES OPCIONES)**
   - ○ Servicio de autobús más frecuente (cual ruta/s?_____)
   - ○ Mas conexiones directas en la región (hacia donde?_____)
   - ○ SunRail al condado de Polk
   - ○ Servicios de Brightline a traves del condado de Polk
   - ○ Rutas directas o de suministro a futuras estaciones de tren
   - ○ Transporte de puerta a puerta a demanda del cliente accesible por aplicación móvil (¿hacia dónde? _____)
   - ○ Mejorar servicios los fines de semana
   - ○ Servicio de semana en horarios mas tempranos o mas tarde
   - ○ Mas transporte pequeños al aire libre como “the Squeeze” en Lakeland, Lake Wales, y Bartow (adonde? _____)

7. **¿A cuáles mejoras de tecnología o capital le daría prioridad en los próximos 10 años?**
   - ○ Wi-Fi en el autobús
   - ○ Anuncios de paradas en los autobuses
   - ○ Mejoras de comodidades que existen las paradas de autobús (garitas, instalaciones para almacenar bicicletas, etc.)
   - ○ Reemplazar buses de combustible tipo diesel con buses eléctricos u otras tecnologías alternativas al diesel
   - ○ Otro (especifique por favor) _____
8. **Si en estos momentos esta empleado/a, ¿Cómo ha cambiado su rutina laboral a causa de la pandemia?**
   - ○ No ha cambiado, siempre tengo que entrar al trabajo 5 (o más) veces a la semana
   - ○ Trabajo desde mi casa varias veces a la semana y entro al trabajo 3-4 días por semana
   - ○ Trabajo desde mi casa varias veces a la semana y entro al trabajo 1-2 días por semana
   - ○ Ahora trabajo desde mi casa todos los días
9. **¿Qué edad tiene?**
   - ○ Menos de 17 años
   - ○ 18 a 24 años
   - ○ 25 a 40 años
   - ○ 41 a 60 años
   - ○ Mas de 60 años
   - ○ Prefiero no decir
10. **Mi género es ...**
   - ○ Masculino
   - ○ Femenino
   - ○ Non-binary
   - ○ Otro genero_____
   - ○ Prefiero no responder
11. **El Código ZIP de su...**
   - ○ Casa es _____
   - ○ Trabajo/Escuela es (opcional) _____
12. **¿Cuál es su raza?**
   - ○ Indio Americano/Nativo de Alaska
   - ○ Asiático
   - ○ Negro/Afroamericano
   - ○ Blanco
   - ○ Otra raza/etnia _____
   - ○ Prefiero no responder
13. **El Código ZIP de su trabajo/Escuela es (opcional)**
   - ○ No Hispano/Latino
   - ○ Hispano/Latino
   - ○ Prefiero no responder
14. **Mi ingreso anual 2023 es de...**
   - ○ Menos de $25,000
   - ○ $25,000-$44,999
   - ○ $45,000-$74,999
   - ○ Mas de $75,000
   - ○ Prefiero no responder

# Citrus Connection Transit Development Plan (TDP)

*Major Update*

## Stakeholder Questionnaire Guide

### Questionnaire

#### *Transit Today*

1) What is your view on the role of transit in Polk County?
   a. Is it to transport workers, elderly, low income, individuals with disabilities, tourists, attracting choice riders, to prevent congestion, to reduce emissions, to create economic opportunities?
2) What is the level of awareness and support for Citrus Connection in the community? Have the levels of awareness and support changed (increased or decreased) since 2020?
3) How well do you feel Citrus Connection responds to the needs and feedback of the community? Are new avenues needed to ensure proper feedback and communication to Citrus Connection?
4) Is information about Citrus Connection easily accessible in the community? If not, where should transit information be available and in what forms?

#### *Where Do We Want to Go*

5) Where is the growth and development occurring in Polk County? How can transit best respond to these trends?
6) What should the priorities and goals for Citrus Connection to serve in the next 5 to 10 years?
7) Is more regional transportation needed to connect Polk County with surrounding areas?
8) How can Citrus Connection better support regional travel and reduce traffic congestion?
9) What type of connections should be made to the next planned SunRail station in Polk County? From where should the service connect?
10) What are your thoughts on a Brightline stop in Polk County?
11) Would you support additional funding for transit by increasing bus fares, sales tax, or property tax, etc.?

a. *If interviewing an elected official*- In your capacity as an elected official, is there a willingness in the community to consider additional local funding for transit? If so, what type of local funding (increased bus fares, sales tax, property tax, etc.)?

12) How do you think private-public partnerships can enhance Citrus Connection services? To which entities should Citrus Connection reach out?
    a. For context, Citrus Connection has a program called Universal Access Program (UAP), in which it partners with major employers and schools, via a contract, to provide employees, students, faculty with free access to public transit services, by using their employee or student identification.

***How Do We Get There***

13) What are the most critical improvements you would like to see in Citrus Connection's services in the next 10 years?
14) Is there a need for more park and ride lots?
    a. Possibly in conjunction with SunRail and Brightline services?
    b. Express bus services or BRT to local and regional destinations?
15) Are there specific communities or neighborhoods that are underserved by Citrus Connection?
16) What role do you think Citrus Connection should play in the future development of Polk County?

***Final Thoughts***

17) If you could pick one thing to change about Citrus Connection, what would it be?
18) What is your vision for transit in the next 10 years? Next 25 years?
19) What are the major strengths and weaknesses of Citrus Connection?

CitrusConnection
PROGRESS IN MOTION

Polk Transportation Planning Organization

**1. Have you or a member of your household used Citrus Connection?**

- ○ Yes, I or a member of my family have used Citrus Connection
- ○ No, I or a member of my family have never used Citrus Connection
- ○ No, I was not aware that public transit is available in this area

**2. If you use Citrus Connection's services now or decide to do so in the future, for what purpose(s) would you use it? Select up to three.**

- ○ Work
- ○ Shopping
- ○ Social/Recreational
- ○ Education/College
- ○ Medical
- ○ Religious
- ○ Travel to/from an airport (Tampa, Orlando, or Lakeland)

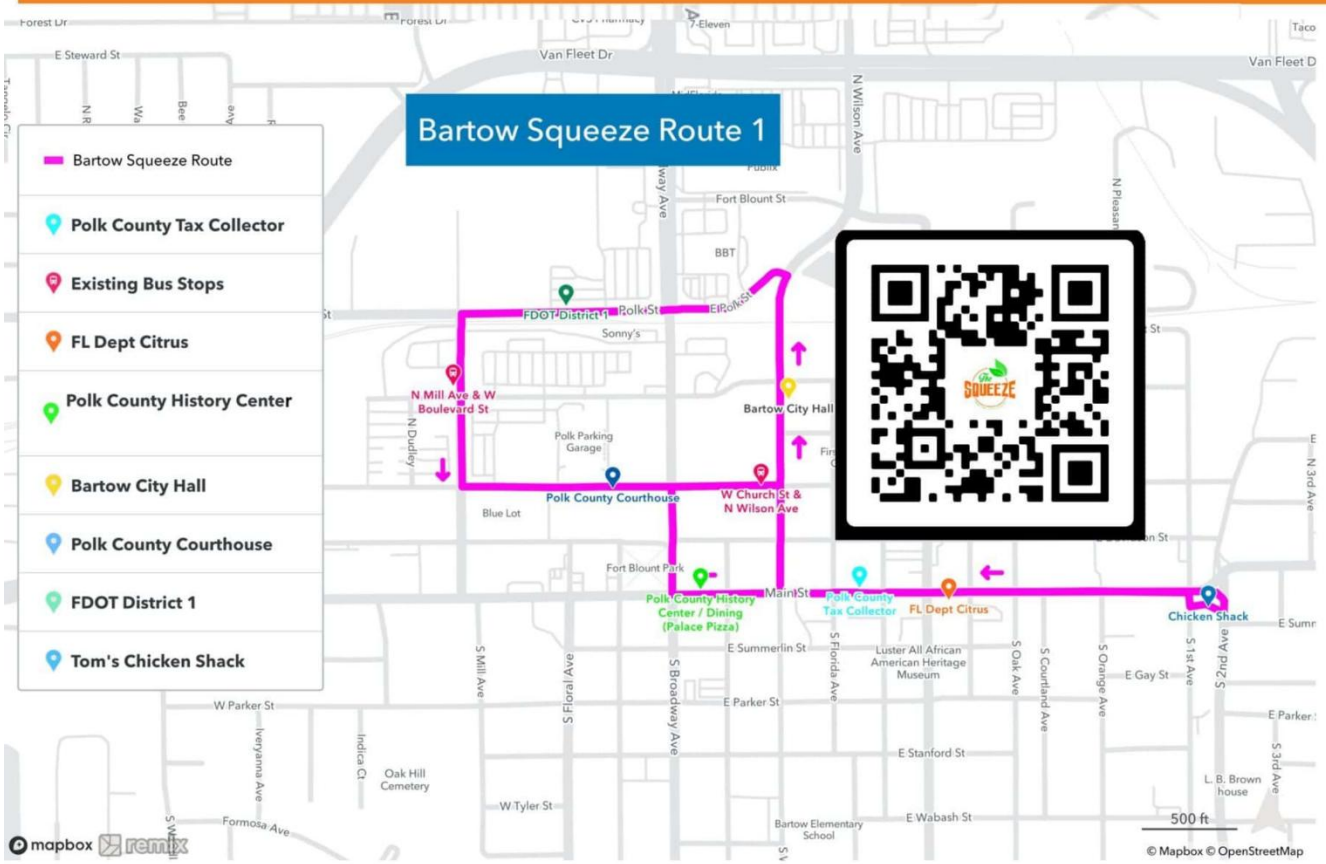
**3. Rank the following transit priorities for the next 10 years:**

- ___ Rapid transit on US 98 & Florida Avenue (bus every 15 minutes or less)
- ___ Peak-hour commuter express to SunRail stations via I-4 and US 27
- ___ Bus every 30-minutes on major corridors
- ___ Later bus service hours
- ___ SunRail Stations in Haines City & Lakeland
- ___ Regional bus connection to Tampa
- ___ Connection to Lakeland Airport
- ___ More weekend service
- ___ App-Based Microtransit service

# Appendix B. Existing Service | Squeeze

**Figure B-1: Citrus Connection Network | Bartow Squeeze**

## BARTOW SQUEEZE




**Monday-Friday**
**10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

The SQUEEZE
CitrusConnection

**Service every 10 minutes serving stops on Church Street, Main Street, Polk Street, Wilson Avenue, Mill Avenue, Boulevard Street & South Broadway**

CRA BARTOW · Bartow Economic Development Council · Main Street Bartow · chamber Greater Bartow

**Figure B-2: Citrus Connection Network | Downtown Lakeland Lunch Squeeze**

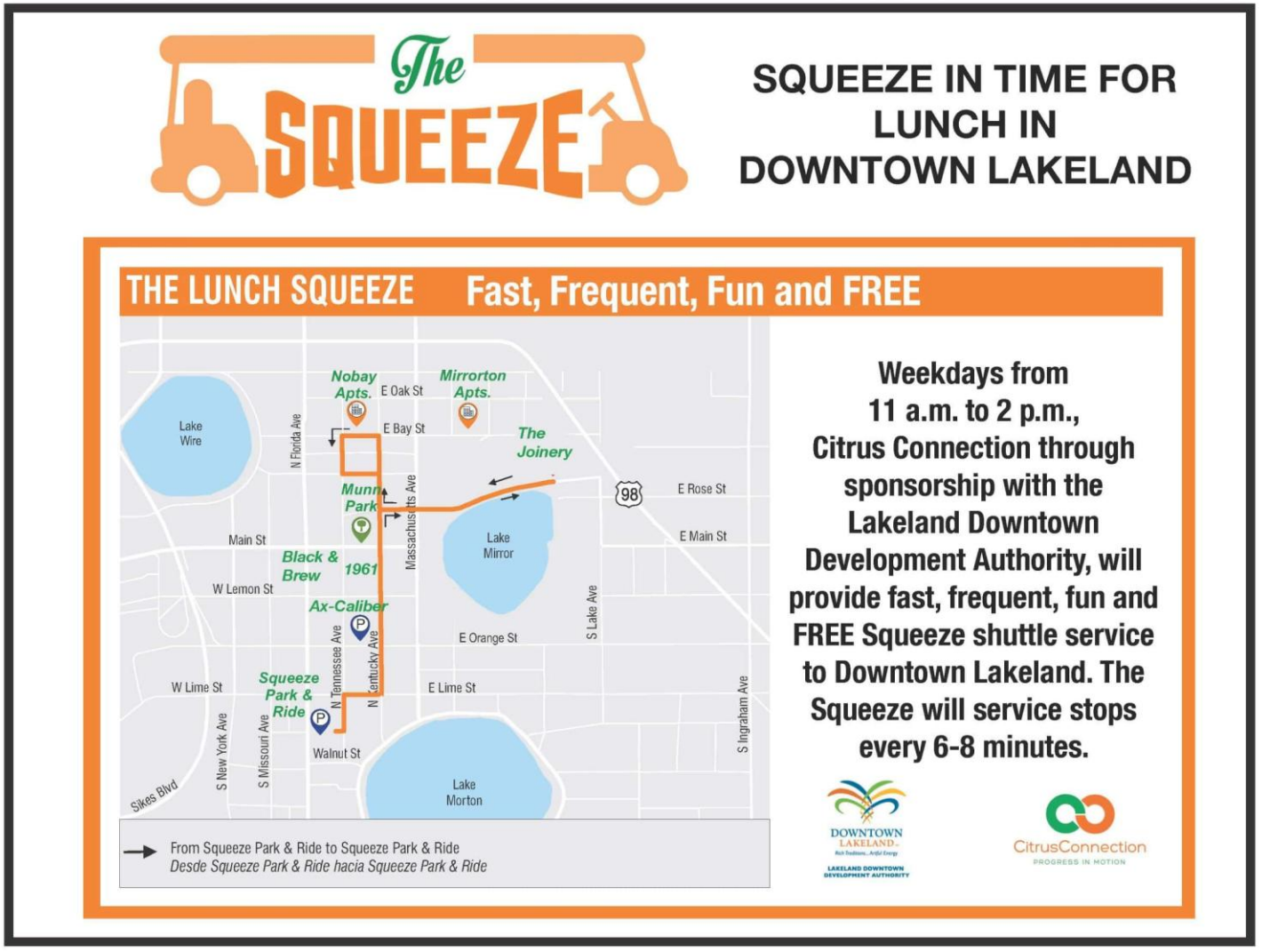


Figure B-3: Citrus Connection Network | Downtown Lakeland Squeeze | Day and Night

# THE SQUEEZE - DAY SERVICE

EFFECTIVE AUGUST 06, 2022/EFECTIVO AGOSTO 06, 2022

| SATURDAY | Depart The Usonian House | The Joinery | Arrive SpringHill Suites |
|---|---|---|---|
| | WESTBOUND | | |
| | --- | --- | --- |
| | 8:25 | 8:35 | 8:50 |
| | 8:50 | 9:00 | 9:15 |
| | 9:15 | 9:25 | 9:40 |
| | 9:40 | 9:50 | 10:05 |
| | 10:05 | 10:15 | 10:30 |
| | 10:30 | 10:40 | 10:55 |
| | 10:55 | 11:05 | 11:20 |
| | 11:20 | 11:30 | 11:45 |
| | 11:45 | 11:55 | **12:10** |
| | **12:10** | **12:20** | **12:35** |
| | **12:35** | **12:45** | **1:00** |
| | **1:00** | **1:10** | **1:25** |
| | **1:25** | **1:35** | **1:50** |
| | **1:50** | **2:00** | **2:15** |
| | **2:15** | **2:25** | **2:40** |
| | **2:40** | **2:50** | **3:05** |

| SATURDAY | Depart SpringHill Suites | The Joinery | Arrive The Usonian House |
|---|---|---|---|
| | EASTBOUND | | |
| | 8:00 | 8:10 | 8:25 |
| | 8:25 | 8:35 | 8:50 |
| | 8:50 | 9:00 | 9:15 |
| | 9:15 | 9:25 | 9:40 |
| | 9:40 | 9:50 | 10:05 |
| | 10:05 | 10:15 | 10:30 |
| | 10:30 | 10:40 | 10:55 |
| | 10:55 | 11:05 | 11:20 |
| | 11:20 | 11:30 | 11:45 |
| | 11:45 | 11:55 | **12:10** |
| | **12:10** | **12:20** | **12:35** |
| | **12:35** | **12:45** | **1:00** |
| | **1:00** | **1:10** | **1:25** |
| | **1:25** | **1:35** | **1:50** |
| | **1:50** | **2:00** | **2:15** |
| | **2:15** | **2:25** | **2:40** |
| | --- | --- | --- |

→ From SpringHill Suites to The Usonian House
*Desde SpringHill Suites hacia Casa Usonian*

→ From The Usonian House to SpringHill Suites
*Desde Casa Usonian hacia SpringHill Suites*

Figure B-4: Citrus Connection Network | Downtown Lakeland Squeeze | Day and Night

# THE SQUEEZE - NIGHT SERVICE

EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 17,2021/EFECTIVO DICIEMBRE 17, 2021

FRIDAY - SATURDAY

| Depart The Usonian House | The Joinery | Arrive SpringHill Suites |
|---|---|---|
| WESTBOUND | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 4:25 | 4:35 | 4:50 |
| 4:50 | 5:00 | 5:15 |
| 5:15 | 5:25 | 5:40 |
| 5:40 | 5:50 | 6:05 |
| 6:05 | 6:15 | 6:30 |
| 6:30 | 6:40 | 6:55 |
| 6:55 | 7:05 | 7:20 |
| 7:20 | 7:30 | 7:45 |
| 7:45 | 7:55 | 8:10 |
| 8:10 | 8:20 | 8:35 |
| 8:35 | 8:45 | 9:00 |
| 9:00 | 9:10 | 9:25 |
| 9:25 | 9:35 | 9:50 |
| 9:50 | 10:00 | 10:15 |
| 10:15 | 10:25 | 10:40 |
| 10:40 | 10:50 | 11:05 |

| Depart SpringHill Suites | The Joinery | Arrive The Usonian House |
|---|---|---|
| EASTBOUND | | |
| 4:00 | 4:10 | 4:25 |
| 4:25 | 4:35 | 4:50 |
| 4:50 | 5:00 | 5:15 |
| 5:15 | 5:25 | 5:40 |
| 5:40 | 5:50 | 6:05 |
| 6:05 | 6:15 | 6:30 |
| 6:30 | 6:40 | 6:55 |
| 6:55 | 7:05 | 7:20 |
| 7:20 | 7:30 | 7:45 |
| 7:45 | 7:55 | 8:10 |
| 8:10 | 8:20 | 8:35 |
| 8:35 | 8:45 | 9:00 |
| 9:00 | 9:10 | 9:25 |
| 9:25 | 9:35 | 9:50 |
| 9:50 | 10:00 | 10:15 |
| 10:15 | 10:25 | 10:40 |
| --- | --- | --- |

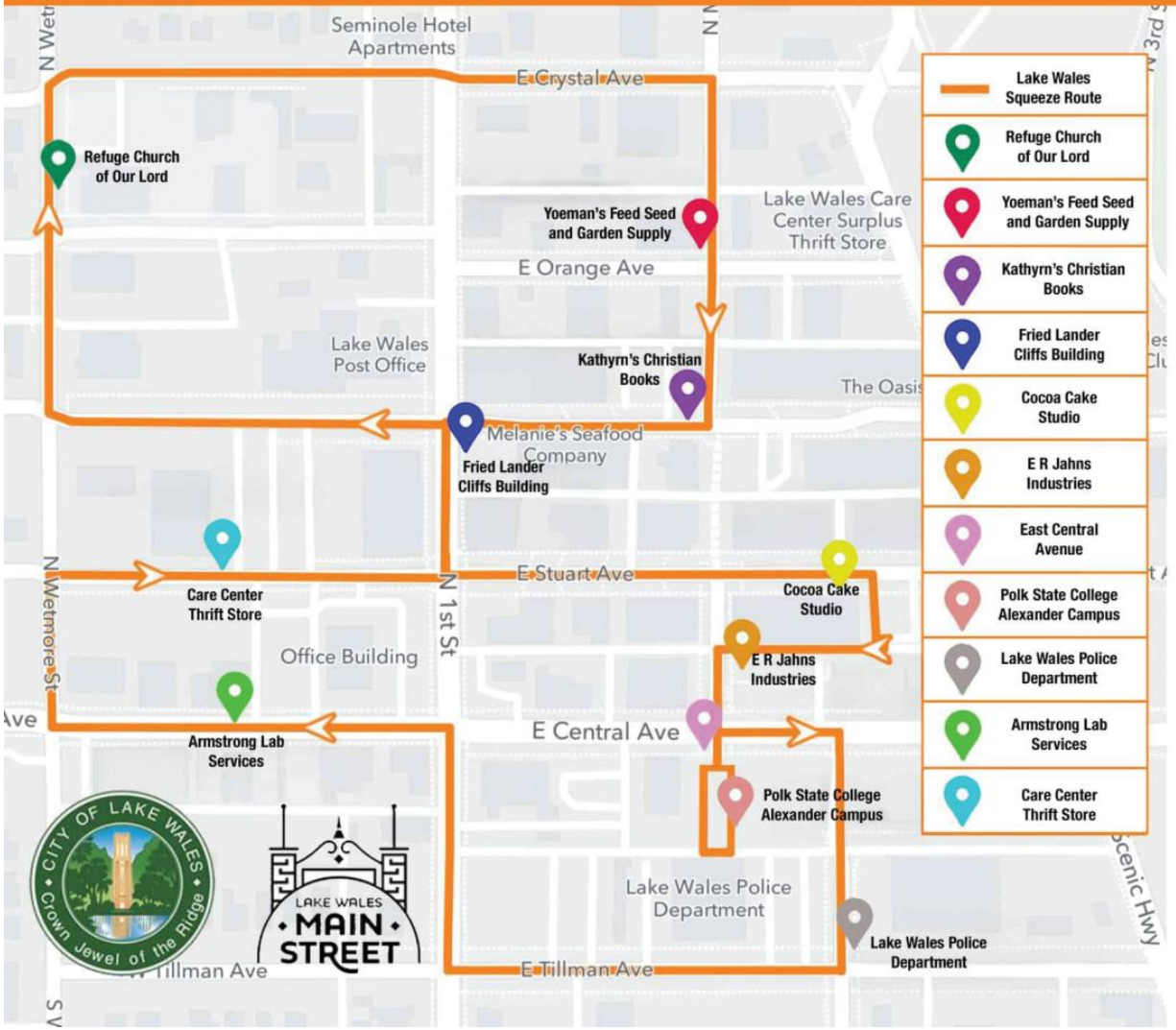
→ From SpringHill Suites to The Usonian House
*Desde SpringHill Suites hacia Casa Usonian*

→ From The Usonian House to SpringHill Suites
*Desde Casa Usonian hacia SpringHill Suites*

**Figure B-5: Citrus Connection Network | Lake Wales Squeeze**

# LAKE WALES SQUEEZE

MARCH 2025




## Proudly Serving Lake Wales

**Weekdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

The SQUEEZE

CitrusConnection

**Citrus Connection provides frequent, fun and free Squeeze shuttle service to Downtown Lake Wales.**

# Appendix C. Other Transportation Providers

**Table C-1: Other Transportation Providers**

| Other Transportation Providers |
|---|
| Affordable Transport, Inc. |
| Affordable Transportation |
| Airport & Local Taxi |
| All Generations Transport Service |
| Alliance for Independence |
| Amen Taxi |
| America's Taxi |
| Angel Taxi Cab |
| Beyond Transport |
| Big Herb's Taxi & Shuttle |
| Caring with Class Van Service |
| Checker Cab |
| D & D Taxi |
| Davenport Taxi |
| Freedom Medical Transport |
| H & H Transport |
| Imperial Cab |
| Independent Community Transport |
| Integrity Medical Transportation |

**Table C-1: Other Transportation Providers (Continued)**

| Other Transportation Providers |
|---|
| Magic Shuttle |
| Medical Transport Services |
| Noah's Ark (ROAR) |
| Orlando Cab Company |
| Orlando Transportation Solutions |
| Peace River Center |
| Polk County Taxi |
| Polk Training Center |
| Stellar Transportation and Compassionate Transportation |
| Sunrise Community of Polk County |
| Trinity Non-emergency Transport, Inc. |
| Yellow Cab |

# Appendix D. Trend and Peer Analysis

**Table D-1: Citrus Connection Trends | 2019-2023 | General Indicators**

| Indicator/ Measure | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | % Change (2022–2023) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Passenger Trips** | 1,187,030 | 774,569 | 558,237 | 613,383 | 764,190 | 24.6% |
| **Service Area Population*** | 686,218 | 708,009 | 724,777 | 724,777 | 819,629 | 13.1% |
| **Service Area Size (sq. miles)** | 77 | 77 | 77 | 77 | 77 | 0.0% |
| **Revenue Miles** | 1,465,800 | 1,654,747 | 1,858,524 | 1,790,750 | 2,084,113 | 16.4% |
| **Revenue Hours** | 89,311 | 99,561 | 109,995 | 109,890 | 128,447 | 16.9% |
| **Total Operating Expense** | $9,563,218 | $10,163,061 | $11,496,123 | $13,050,903 | $15,206,287 | 16.5% |
| **Vehicles Operated in Max. Service** | 30 | 39 | 41 | 41 | 44 | 7.3% |

*Source: FTIS and Citrus Connection*

**Service Area Population Source: ACS 5-Year Estimates*

**Table D-2: Citrus Connection Trends | 2019-2023 | Effectiveness Measures**

| Indicator/ Measure | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | % Change (2022–2023) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Revenue Miles per Revenue Hour** | 15.90 | 16.62 | 16.90 | 16.30 | 16.23 | -0.4% |
| **Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour** | 12.87 | 7.78 | 5.08 | 5.58 | 5.95 | 6.6% |
| **Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile** | 0.81 | 0.47 | 0.30 | 0.34 | 0.37 | 7.0% |

*Source: FTIS and Citrus Connection*

**Table D-3: Citrus Connection Trends | 2019-2023 | Efficiency Measures**

| Indicator/ Measure | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | % Change (2022–2023) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Operating Expense per Capita** | $13.51 | $14.35 | $15.86 | $18.01 | $18.55 | 3.0% |
| **Operating Expense per Passenger Trip** | $8.06 | $13.12 | $20.59 | $21.28 | $19.90 | -6.5% |
| **Operating Expense per Revenue Mile** | $6.52 | $6.14 | $6.19 | $7.29 | $7.30 | 0.1% |
| **Operating Expense per Revenue Hour** | $103.71 | $102.08 | $104.51 | $118.76 | $118.39 | -0.3% |

*Source: FTIS and Citrus Connection*

**Table D-4: Citrus Connection Peer Analysis | 2022**

| Indicator/Measure | Citrus Connection % from Peer Mean | Assessment |
|---|---|---|
| **General Performance Indicators** | | |
| **Passenger Trips** | -17.2% | Could improve |
| **Service Area Population** | 65.6% | Good |
| **Revenue Miles** | 15.8% | Good |
| **Revenue Hours** | 14.9% | Good |
| **Total Operating Expense** | 5.4% | Could improve |
| **Vehicles Operated in Max. Service** | 25.0% | Good |
| **Effectiveness Measures** | | |
| **Revenue Miles per Revenue Hour** | 1.5% | Good |
| **Passenger Trips per Revenue Hour** | -27.5% | Could improve |
| **Passenger Trips per Revenue Mile** | -29.2% | Could improve |
| **Efficiency Measures** | | |
| **Operating Expense per Capita** | -48.1% | Good |
| **Operating Expense per Passenger Trip** | 22.5% | Could improve |
| **Operating Expense per Revenue Mile** | -12.7% | Good |
| **Operating Expense per Revenue Hour** | -10.7% | Good |

*Source: FTIS*

# Appendix E. Relationship Review to Other Plans

## *Polk County Comprehensive Plan*

Provides general guidance on development, public facilities, and future land use in Polk County. Using future population projections and other data, a future land use map and associated and public facilities policies were created to respond to the state's growth-management mandate. An update to the current Comprehensive Plan is underway; however, existing policies to support transit aim to:

- Provide fixed-route transit services to all high transit potential areas at a specific level of service for all members of the community.
- Reduce the number of crashes per vehicle miles traveled (VMT) through roadway and right-of-way development.
- Coordinate with adjacent land developments to provide infrastructure that provides elements of safety and level of access for pedestrians.
- Designate responsible agencies to evaluate a development proposal's impact on the goals within the Transportation Element of the plan.

## *City of Lakeland Comprehensive Plan*

Produces a 10-year blueprint to guide future growth of the city using future population projections, existing land uses and analyses on investing in public facilities. The plan aims to utilize the city's budget to provide facilities to residents based on its financial ability to do so. The main transit associated goals are within the "Safe and Convenient Mobility Options" chapter and specific transit-oriented goals include:

- Adopting a Vision Zero Goal, aiming to eliminate transportation fatalities and serious injuries.
- Providing a list of "constrained" corridors that should focus on multimodal redevelopment, rather than road widening.
- Supporting Citrus Connection in providing routes throughout the Lakeland area and implementing sufficient park-and-ride opportunities for regional commuters between Tampa and Orlando.

## *City of Winter Haven Comprehensive Plan*

Produces goals, objectives, and policies to guide development over the next 10 years based on the expectation of continued growth within the city. The plan designates future land use across the city and provides chapters on goals associated with various public facilities and infrastructure. Within this plan, multimodal infrastructure projects are explored as a tool to allow for improvements from the TPO. The

Capital Improvements section of the plan includes 16 multimodal projects to be implemented between 2023-2027 at a price of $20 million.

### *City of Bartow Comprehensive Plan*

Establishes mobility and multimodal goals in agreement with the County's goals and plans. An update to the current Comprehensive Plan is underway; however, existing policies to support transit aim to:

- Providing safe and efficient multimodal system.
- Goal of 60-minute transit service throughout city.
- Implementing transit-supportive land use policies such as mixed-use developments and higher residential densities within ¼ mile to existing and planned transit routes.
- Encouraging large employers to develop commuter assistance programs.
- Coordinating with Polk County to expand transit services.
- Supporting and implementing plans for park-and-rides and encouraging sheltered stops.

### *Lakeland Area Alternatives Analysis – US-98 Bus Rapid Transit Feasibility Study*

Proposes near-, medium-, and long-term options for accomplishing the best transit scenario by the year 2045. Increasing frequency, implementing components such as TSP, pedestrian and bicycle improvements, branded BRT stations, and a dedicated BRT lane north of Griffin Road are needed to complete the best scenario. The study defines increments of 10-year intervals to outline significant investments needed for success in creating BRT services. This process requires actions relating to land development, external investment, policy changes, and funding availability. The required infrastructure for the project prompts attention in local, regional, and state level planning documents to ensure the vision for BRT services and dedicated transit lanes aligns with surrounding developments. Connections between future high speed rail developments and the proposed BRT advancements should also be considered to provide the maximum usability of services and result in the most possible relief of increasing traffic congestion in the area.

### *Lakeland Intermodal Study*

Considerations for future land use must be evaluated and prioritized for implementing the intermodal center. The study presents the proposed site locations for the construction of the intermodal center in Lakeland and each site's specific attributes in relation to its potential usage. To ensure success in this potential development, future advancements must be considered in relation to the placement and connectivity of the intermodal center that this study

supports. Site location is highly dependent on the potential for TOD potential and redevelopment opportunities, additional investments in transit services are also required to provide the level of service needed to justify the consolidated location converging multiple mass transportation options. Downtown West Option B (near the RP Funding Center between Lemon and Main Streets) was selected as the best choice. Citrus Connection and the City of Lakeland passed resolutions to show their support.

### *East Polk Transit Maintenance Facility Siting Analysis*

The 13 candidate sites yielded from this analysis provide insight into the development needs that will be required to support expanding transit facilities into eastern Polk County. Access, proximity, adjacent land use, site buildability, expansion potential, and acquisition were considered. Following an official site selection, further developments can be considered to meet the growing needs and additional capabilities of transit services in the area.

### *Feasibility of Premium Transit*

Outlines transit demand factors throughout Polk County alongside projections through the year 2045. Attention to areas of growth within the next two decades and the means of expanding transit services is vital to successful implementation. Candidate corridors provide potential areas for consideration in premium transit services, while the recommended corridors include Lakeland to Lake Wales, Lakeland to Mulberry, and Lakeland to SunRail corridors. Prioritization of potential service routes is established regarding transit needs is outlined in the report and suggests implementation strategies and scenarios. Operation and capital cost estimates are detailed for further consideration of the proposed services.

### *2045 Polk County LRTP (Momentum)*

Discusses and addresses congestion, an evolving road network, transit, coordination, and the possibility for increased transit demand. The identified transit needs include the following:

- Anticipated projects include constructing a park-and-ride lot on North US-98, implementing SmartCard payment systems, and operating new buses.
- Increase frequency, hours of service, and days of service on routes Gold, Pink, Green, Purple, Orange, Blue, Silver, Yellow, 22XW, 30, 40/44, and 50.
- Add Haines City/Eagle Ridge Mall, Lakeland/Florida Polytechnic, Auburndale/Florida Polytechnic fixed-routes and Lakeland/Bartow, Lakeland/Winter Haven, Lakeland/SunRail, Lakeland/TIA, Lakeland/MCO express routes.
- Add circulators in Mulberry, Bartow, Lake Wales, North Lakeland, and Haines City.
- Add call-and-ride service in Fort Meade, Frostproof, Ridge, Poinciana, Davenport, and Winter Haven.

### *Polk County TDSP*

Provides a framework for delivering accessible, affordable, and coordinated transportation services to underserved communities and provide access to essential services. The document goals are to:

- Enhance availability of transportation services to meet mobility needs of transportation disadvantaged people.
- Provide transportation disadvantaged services in a cost-effective and efficient manner.
- Improve public awareness of the Transportation Disadvantaged program.
- Provide transportation services in a safe and reliable manner.
- Ensure program accountability by collecting and reporting system and provider data in an accurate and timely manner.

## *Polk Unified Planning Work Program*

The Polk County TPO UPWP details transportation planning projects and programs scheduled county over a two-year period. The current UPWP, covering July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2026, outlines the estimated level of effort for each initiative. These include:

- Developing a Northeast Polk County Subarea Study to determine transportation needs of the specific area.
- Extending SunRail commuter rail service into Polk County population centers.
- Providing strategies at eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries within a Vision Zero Action Plan.
- Updating the county's TDP.

## *Polk Transportation Improvement Plan*

The Polk County TPO's TIP lists all cost-feasible projects scheduled over the next five years. Updated annually to allocate funding, the current TIP covers fiscal years 2024/25–2028/29. It includes:

- Regionally significant projects, such as an intersection improvement at exit 38 on I-4, lane additions on CR-557 between US-17 and I-4, and the construction of the Central Polk Parkway.
- A financial plan including the five-year funding summary for all TPO projects, with proper funding sources:
    - Federal - $627 million
    - State - $1.25 billion
    - Toll/Turnpike - $1.14 billion
    - Local - $153 million

## *Polk County SunRail Extension (Transit Concept and Alternatives Review [TCAR] Study)*

The study explores extending SunRail commuter service into Polk County, focusing on the existing rail line from downtown Lakeland to the Poinciana SunRail Station. It includes a travel market assessment to evaluate potential station locations. The study ultimately recommends a phased construction approach for the route between Lakeland and Poinciana, with the first phase connecting Haines City to Poinciana with stations in Loughman and Davenport. Following the study's completion, the Haines City to Poinciana connection remains the top consideration for SunRail's expansion into Polk County.

### *Polk Transit Vision 2032 TDP*

The most recent TDP for Polk County was completed in 2022, serving as a 10-year plan to address transit and mobility needs, project costs and revenues, and reaffirm the community's transit goals, objectives, and policies. It begins with an analysis of baseline conditions and a review of existing transit services to gain a comprehensive understanding of current operations. The plan also summarizes the public involvement process and contextual research on the planning environment of the Polk TPO to identify transit needs. These analyses produced a list of system-wide needs and recommendations for the next decade of service. Key outcomes of the 2022 TDP include proposals for premium transit options, such as BRT and express services, alongside enhancements to local services. The plan also highlights capital improvement projects designed to strengthen the transit system and provides a cost and revenue summary to assess feasibility.

### *Polk Transit Vision 2032: 2024 APR*

The Polk Transit Vision 2032: 2024 APR was completed to track progress toward the TDP goals, update objectives and financial plans changed since the TDP's last update and evaluate new recommendations for the TDP. The report highlights changes in five of the seven service improvement projects and seven of the twelve capital, policy, and technology improvements. It also introduces updated service goals. These include ensuring safe travel for all users, increasing transit customers, reducing environmental impacts, coordinating with regional and neighboring agencies, and raising awareness of the service. Additionally, the report updates financial plans to evaluate and allocate funding for projects planned in the upcoming year. New or revised improvements include:

- The TIGERTOWN Express pilot route, connecting park and rides to Joker Marchant Stadium, was implemented.
- Lakeland Hills Boulevard Medical Corridor Project, which is a shuttle service to reduce congestion during construction on SR-33.
- The Lake Wales circulator was created from Route 35 segments.
- New Squeeze Lake Wales and Bartow services were implemented in May and August, respectively.
- Schedule adjustments were made to the Gold, Silver, Blue Line 2, Blue Saturday, and Peach lines to improve on-time performance.
- Saturday service returned to the Green and Orange lines.
- Consolidation of route patterns on Route 21X West. Route 21X East also was adjusted to match the changes on Route 21X West.

- Continued coordination to realize the new Lakeland Intermodal Center.
- A site for the East Polk Transit Maintenance and Administrative Facility was selected. Coordination with Polk County on logistics for realizing the facility continues.

### *Polk TPO Strategic Plan*

Establishes strategy to provide transportation infrastructure that supports mobility, vitality, and job creation in area alongside potential application of 20-minute city planning methods to increase these elements further. Identify areas to monitor and assess feasibility of enhancements and developments, such as intercity transit options, additional maintenance facilities (East Polk County), implementation of premium transit corridors, and high ridership corridors/stops for enhanced facilities and transit resources.

## *Regional Plans*

### *HART TDP | 2022*

A countywide strategic 10-year plan for improving transit in Hillsborough County, focusing on service enhancements, regional connection, technology upgrades, and multimodal integration to meet transportation demand. The 10-year plan includes a regional connection from Dover to Lakeland.

### *Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority (d.b.a. LYNX) TDP | 2022*

There currently are two regional transit connections between Osceola County and Polk County via Marigold Avenue and Irlo Bronson Memorial Highway. Continuing coordination between Citrus Connection and LYNX will be needed to continue the success of the regional service. A need for a flex route that connects the Four Corners area to the Disney area was identified in the 20-year vision.

### *Lake County TDP | 2023*

The Lake County TDP is a countywide strategic 10-year plan for improving transit in Lake County, focusing on service enhancements, regional connection, technology upgrades, and multimodal integration to meet growing transportation demand. Currently, LakeXpress connects to Citrus Connection with two routes, Route 55 and South Lake Express. The conversion of Route 55 to an on-demand service was indicated as a transit need.

### *West Central Florida Regional Long Range Transportation Plan 2045 | 2021*

The Sun Coast Transportation Planning Alliance (SCTPA) supports local, regional and statewide projects that improve access to transportation opportunities in the west central Florida region. Its West Central Florida Regional Long Range Transportation Plan (RLRTP) 2045 guides the transportation process in west central Florida, including the Pinellas, Hillsborough, Hernando/ Citrus, Pasco, Polk, Sarasota/Manatee T/MPOs. The document highlights the need for regional cooperation for better connectivity. Each T/MPO lists major transportation and infrastructure projects of regional significance along with population and job projections. Relevant policies and recommendations include the following:

- Enhancing transit service in Polk County.
- Potential BRT service in Lakeland and Winter Haven.

### *Tampa Bay Economic Development Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) | 2023-2027*

The U.S. Economic Development Administration contracts with each designated Economic Development District (EDD) to develop and maintain a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). EDDs are required to fully update the CEDS every five years with the assistance of regional stakeholder involvement and may elect to update the CEDS on an annual basis. The Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC) is Tampa Bay's EDD and presents this document as the first CEDS of the 2022 cycle. TBRPC will continue to update this document annually with current data, and refreshed stakeholder input.

In the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threat (SWOT) analysis, a lack of transit connectivity, specifically regionally, was an identified weakness. The document highlights a goal to promote a regional multimodal transportation system for people, goods, and services that includes transit, highways, seaports, airports, rail modes, broadband services, and multi-use trail planning and development.

## State and Federal Plans

### FDOT District One Districtwide Bus Rapid Transit Feasibility Study | 2024

FDOT conducted a study to determine the feasibility and readiness of BRT corridors in five counties within District One. Twelve corridors were selected to evaluate potential BRT implementation. The evaluation determined that none of the 12 prospective BRT corridors in District One are ready for a Transit Corridor and Project Evaluation (TCPE) study in the short term if considering Capital Investment Grants (CIG) as the funding source. The following are relevant findings from the study for this TDP:

- Florida Avenue, US-98, and segments of US 92 were identified as potential BRT corridors in Polk County.
- Increasing job density adjacent to the potential BRT corridors is seen as key to increasing ridership potential.
- Florida Avenue BRT was considered the most feasible corridor for implementation at the time of the study.
- In the interim, increasing frequency on the existing routes was considered the best option to strengthen ridership on potential BRT corridors.

### State of Florida Transportation Disadvantaged 5-Year/20-Year Plan | 2007

To accomplish cost-effective, efficient, unduplicated, and cohesive TD services within its respective service area, the plan includes the explanation of the Florida Coordinated Transportation System, five-year report card, Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability Review, and a strategic vision and goals, objectives, and measures.

The long-range strategic vision includes developing a universal cost-effective transportation system with a uniform funding system and services that are designed and implemented regionally throughout the state.

### 2055 Florida Transportation Plan (Ongoing)

Florida's long-range transportation plan, as required by state and federal law, supports the development of state, regional, and local transit services through a series of related goals and objectives, emphasizing new and innovative approaches by all modes to meet needs today and in future. The FTP intends to connect communities, policies, and programs across Florida. The 2055 Florida Transportation Plan update is ongoing, with the expected adoption in November 2025. The 2055 Florida Transportation Plan goals include the following:

- Safer travel for all users
- Secure & agile transportation system
- Efficient & reliable movement of people and freight
- Enhance & preserve communities and natural resources
- Support robust economic competitiveness

### *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act | 2021*

Signed into law on November 15, 2021, this public law reauthorizes and expands federal funding for the nation's surface transportation infrastructure including transit systems and rail transportation networks. It maintains strong commitment to safety and authorizes federal funding to advance public transportation through safety, and modernization. Highlights of the funding reauthorization include:

- A record $33.5 billion for transit capital and operating assistance in urbanized areas and $4.6 billion to support rural transit systems.
- Funding dedicated to repairing and upgrading existing infrastructure, increasing accessibility, expanding service areas, and upgrading buses to zero-emissions models.
- Increase in funding to meet transportation needs for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Providing $12 billion in partnership grants for intercity rail service.

### *Implications to Public Transportation of Emerging Technologies | 2016*

This white paper explores possible consequences for public transportation from introducing new technologies such as autonomous vehicles, connected vehicles, and other innovations that impact efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and overall demand for transportation.

# Appendix F. List of Priority Projects Evaluation and Ranking Matrix

**Table F-1: List of Priority Projects Evaluation and Ranking Matrix |Service**

| Rank | Improvements | Survey Results | Public Input | Priority Transit Corridors Access and Connectivity | Transit-Supportive Land Use & Urban Design Interface | Likelihood of Securing Funding | Anticipated Benefits to Customers | Connections to Local/Regional Hubs | Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Florida Avenue BRT | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 6.6 |
| **2** | US-98 BRT | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 6.6 |
| **3** | Lakeland – Tampa Express | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 5.7 |
| **4** | 15-minute Frequency on Pink Line | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5.6 |
| **5** | 30-minute Frequency on Lemon Line | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5.6 |
| **6** | 30-minute Frequency on Route 30 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5.6 |
| **7** | Extend weekday service until 9PM | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 5.6 |
| **8** | US-27 LX | 3 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5.5 |
| **9** | Bonnet Springs Park/ Downtown Circulator | 3 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5.4 |
| **10** | I-4 Hopper | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 5.4 |
| **11** | Convert Red Line to Limited Express | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 5.3 |
| **12** | 45-minute Frequency on Purple Line | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5.2 |
| **13** | Lakeland – Haines City Express (Pre-SunRail) | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5.2 |
| **14** | Winter Haven Squeeze | 3 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| **15** | 45-minute Frequency on Route 15 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4.9 |
| **16** | 45-minute Frequency on Route 22XW | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4.9 |
| **17** | Extend Circulator Eastside to Orlando Health | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 4.8 |
| **18** | Winter Haven Shuttle | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 4.8 |
| **19** | Haines City Squeeze | 3 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4.4 |
| **20** | Lakeland/Airport microtransit | 1 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3.7 |

**Table F-1: List of Priority Projects Evaluation and Ranking Matrix |Services (continued)**

| Rank | Improvements | Survey Results | Public Input | Priority Transit Corridors Access and Connectivity | Transit-Supportive Land Use & Urban Design Interface | Likelihood of Securing Funding | Anticipated Benefits to Customers | Connections to Local/Regional Hubs | Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **21** | Haines City – Posner Express (Pre-SunRail) | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3.6 |
| **22** | Saturday service on Pink Line | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3.5 |
| **23** | Sunday service on Purple Line | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3.5 |
| **24** | Innovation District/Polk City microtransit | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3.1 |
| **25** | Auburndale microtransit | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3.1 |
| **26** | Winter Haven Microtransit | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3.1 |

**Table F-2: List of Priority Projects Evaluation and Ranking Matrix |Capital**

| Rank | Improvements | Survey Results | Public Input | Priority Transit Corridors Access and Connectivity | Transit-Supportive Land Use & Urban Design Interface | Likelihood of Securing Funding | Anticipated Benefits to Customers | Connections to Local/Regional Hubs | Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Lakeland Intermodal Center PD&E Study | N/A | N/A | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7.0 |
| **2** | Lakeland Intermodal Center/SunRail Station | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7.0 |
| **3** | Expand Pass Sale Locations/Mobile Payment/Fare Options | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6.4 |
| **4** | Additional/Enhanced Facilities and Bus Stop Infrastructure | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6.2 |
| **5** | East Polk Transit Maintenance & Administration Facility | 7 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 6.2 |
| **6** | Transit Signal Priority | 7 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5.8 |
| **7** | Queue Jumps | 7 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4.4 |
| **8** | Proposed New Transit Center/Super Stop | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 4.0 |
| **9** | Expand Transit Marketing/UAP | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3.9 |

**Table F-2: List of Priority Projects Evaluation and Ranking Matrix |Capital (continued)**

| Rank | Improvements | Survey Results | Public Input | Priority Transit Corridors Access and Connectivity | Transit-Supportive Land Use & Urban Design Interface | Likelihood of Securing Funding | Anticipated Benefits to Customers | Connections to Local/Regional Hubs | Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **10** | I-4 and County Line Road Park-and-Ride | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3.4 |
| **11** | I-4 and Berkley Road Park-and-Ride | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3.4 |
| **12** | I-4 and SR 559 Park-and-Ride | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3.4 |
| **13** | Alternate-Fuel Vehicles | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3.2 |