Citrus Connection
2025 Transit Development Plan Update

Executive Summary

October 2025

CitrusConnection
PROGRESS IN MOTION

Polk Transportation Planning Organization

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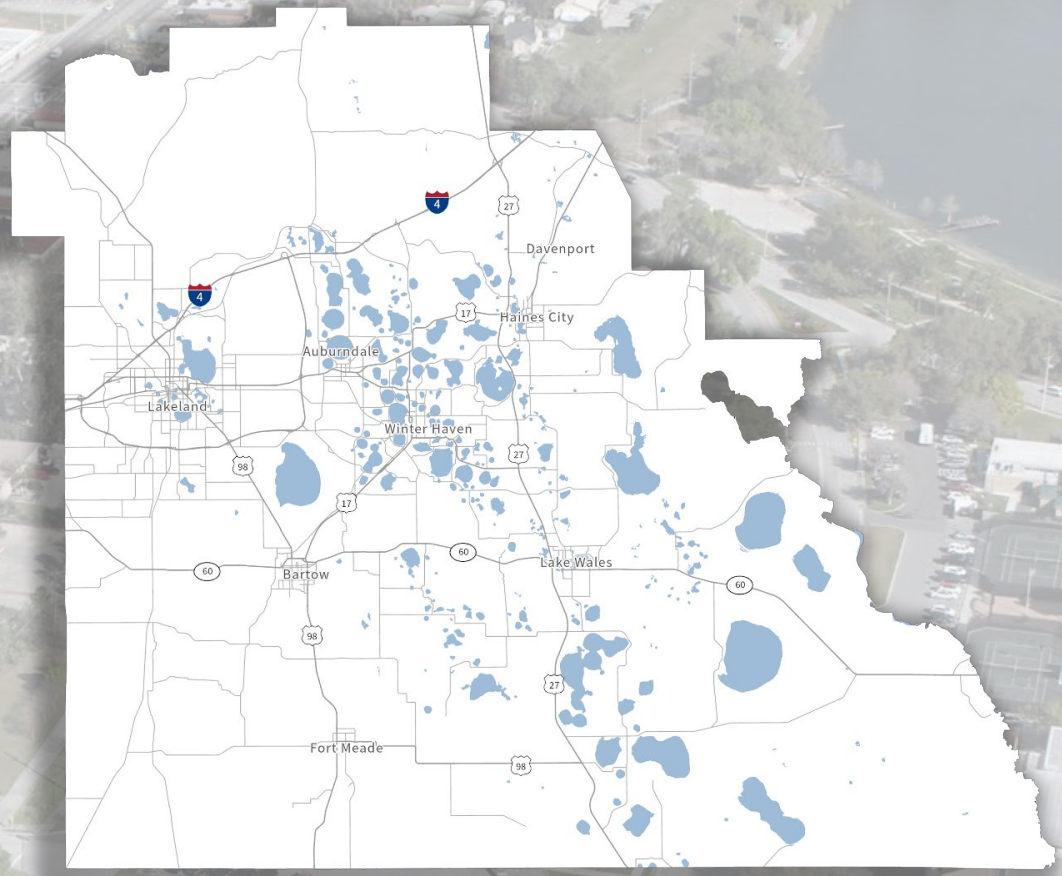
What is the Citrus Connection Transit Development Plan?

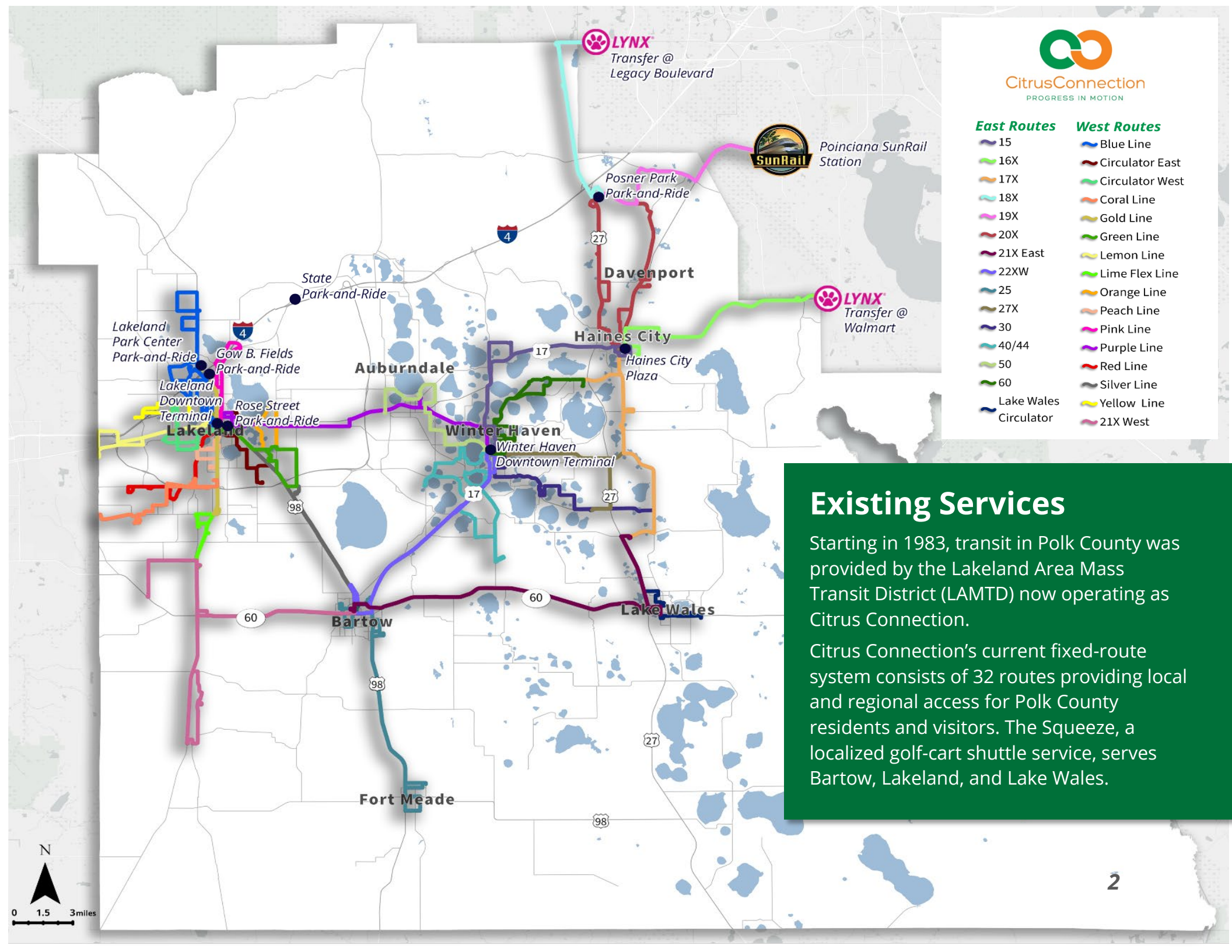
This Transit Development Plan (TDP) is led by the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) in collaboration with Citrus Connection, Polk County's transit service provider.

The TDP is consistent with the requirements of the State of Florida Public Transit Block Grant Program, enacted by the Florida Legislature to provide a stable source of funding for public transportation. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requires recipients of Block Grant Program funds, such as Citrus Connection, to prepare a major TDP update every five years. This requirement helps to ensure that the transit services being provided and planned for are consistent with the community's mobility needs.

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]



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



Existing Services

Starting in 1983, transit in Polk County was provided by the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD) now operating as Citrus Connection.

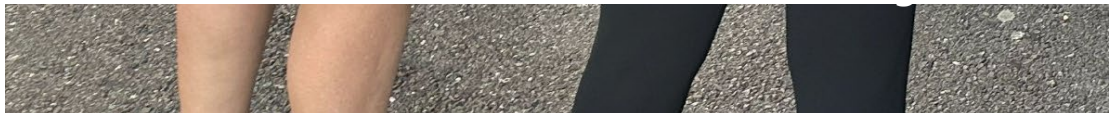
Citrus Connection's current fixed-route system consists of 32 routes providing local and regional access for Polk County residents and visitors. The Squeeze, a localized golf-cart shuttle service, serves Bartow, Lakeland, and Lake Wales.

Public Outreach

Public involvement was a key part of the TDP and provides critical information for developing the 10-year transit needs in the community, including perceptions on and expectations for local and regional transit services.

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

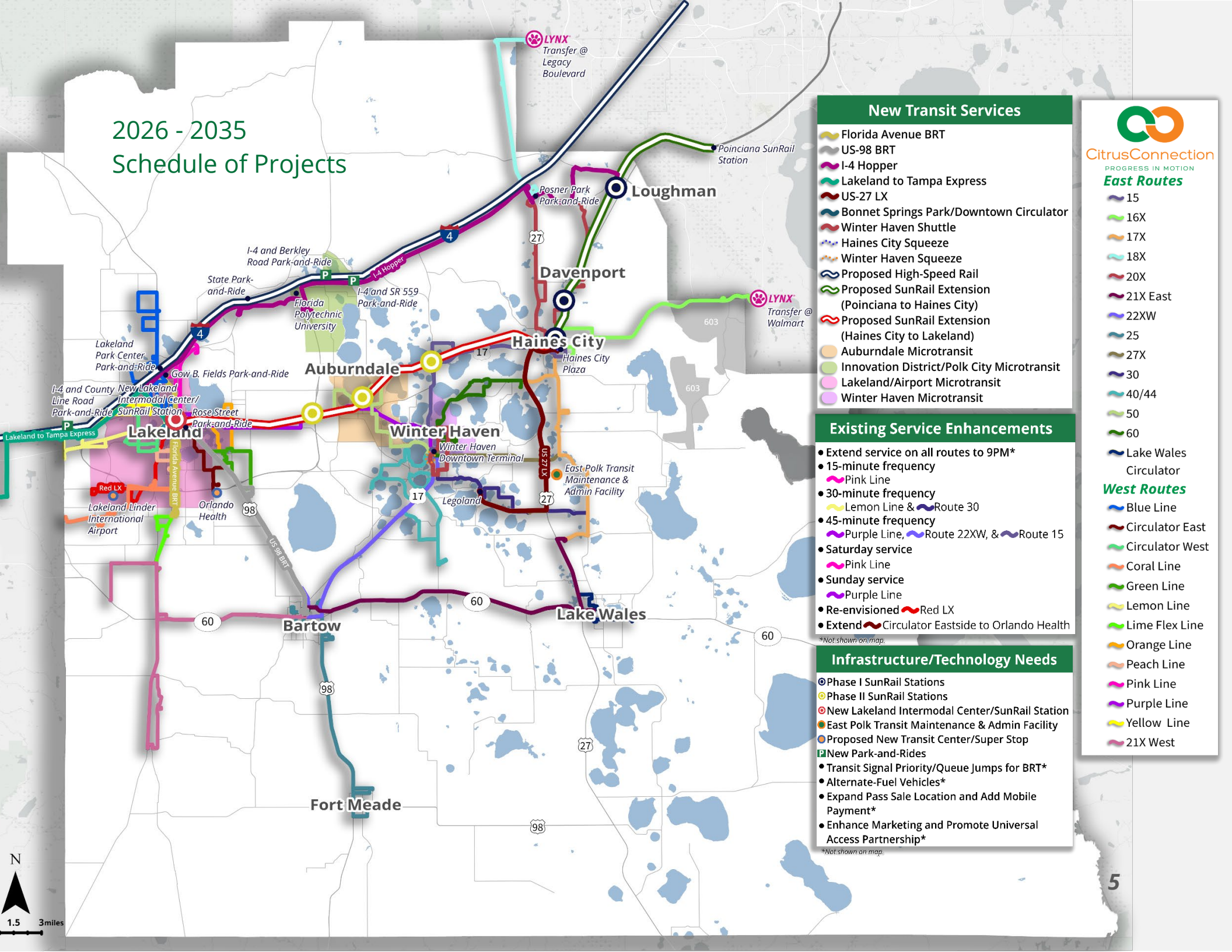
Throughout the outreach process, more than 1,300 people were engaged through surveys, email and web outreach, public workshops, discussion groups, stakeholder interviews, and grassroots outreach.



Schedule of Projects

Transit needs were identified and developed without consideration of funding constraints and reflect the true unimpeded needs of the community. The improvements were identified using information gathered through various data collection, analytical, and outreach efforts conducted for the TDP. The needs development process is essential to ensure Citrus Connection effectively addresses the community's current and future mobility needs. The list of improvements, referred to as the Schedule of Projects, shown on the next page reflect transit needs in Polk County. These needs were identified using careful review of community outreach and vision, data and analyses, direction from the TDP plan and policy direction, along with a review of the land use and corridor assessment.

- **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.



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
- 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.

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PROGRESS IN MOTION

East Routes

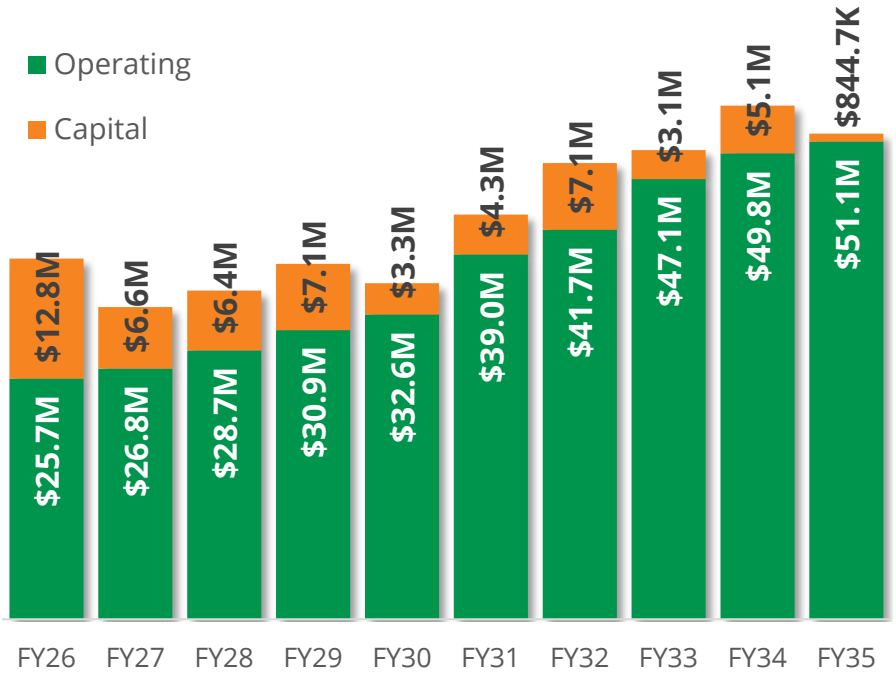
- 15
- 16X
- 17X
- 18X
- 20X
- 21X East
- 22XW
- 25
- 27X
- 30
- 40/44
- 50
- 60
- Lake Wales Circulator

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

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. 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 network 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. The next page shows the recommended timeline for implementation.



Recommended Timeline

Improvement

Convert Red Line to Limited Express
Extend Circulator Eastside to Orlando Health
Bonnet Springs Park/ Downtown Circulator
Auburndale Microtransit
Winter Haven Shuttle
Winter Haven Squeeze
Winter Haven Microtransit
US-27 LX
30-minute Frequency on Lemon Line
Lakeland – Tampa Express
45-minute Frequency on Purple Line
15-minute Frequency on Pink Line
I-4 Hopper
Lakeland/Airport Microtransit
Extend weekday service until 9PM
30-minute Frequency on Route 30
Florida Avenue BRT
Sunday service on Purple Line
Innovation District/Polk City Microtransit
US-98 BRT
Saturday service on Pink Line
Lakeland – Haines City Express
45-minute Frequency on Route 15
45-minute Frequency on Route 22XW
Haines City Squeeze
Haines City – Posner Express (Pre-SunRail)

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. 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.

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