

## Rural Transit

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### Introduction

Rural Nebraska is served by a variety of transportation services, including rural public transit, intercity bus service, Amtrak, and air service, as well as private vehicles. Despite this, many rural Nebraskans have no or limited access to transportation services. This report looks at some aspects of rural transit in Nebraska.

### Sources and Types of Funding

Table 1 shows that funds are available from the state and federal government to support a variety of transportation-related activities.

**Table 1. Sources and Types of Funding Available for Transportation-Related Activities**

Type of Entity	Type of Assistance Available	Fund Source	Direct Recipient of Federal and/or State Funds
Rural Demand Response	Operating & Non-operating Expenses	Federal 5311 and State	Nebraska Dept. of Roads
Rural Demand Response	Capital Vehicle Purchases & Capital Construction	Federal 5311	Nebraska Dept. of Roads
Intercity Bus	Operating Expenses	Federal 5311 and State	Nebraska Dept. of Roads
Non-profit Agencies in Rural Areas and Lincoln MPO Area	Operating Expenses & Capital Vehicle Purchases	Federal 5310	Nebraska Dept. of Roads
Small & Large Urbanized Areas (Omaha, Lincoln, Simpc-S. Sioux City, and Grand Island)	Planning Funds	Federal 5303 (Divided using a Population Formula)	Nebraska Dept. of Roads
Small Urban Cities	Operating Expenses	State	Nebraska Dept. of Roads
Large Urban Transportation Providers (StarTran and Metro)	Operating Expenses	State	Nebraska Dept. of Roads
Large Urban Transportation Providers (StarTran and Metro)	Operating Expenses & Capital Vehicle Purchases	Federal 5307	Urbanized Areas
Non-profit Agencies in Omaha MAPA Area	Operating Expenses & Capital Vehicle Purchases	Federal 5310	Metropolitan Area Planning Agency
Non-profit Agencies in Small Urbanized Areas (Grand Island and Simpc)	Operating Expenses & Capital Vehicle Purchases	Federal 5310	Nebraska Dept. of Roads

Source: Nebraska Department of Roads



The routes and stops of four of the providers are defined by a regular schedule with scheduled stops. Three providers have a regular schedule with scheduled stops but also accommodate additional stops on demand. Reservations must be made for additional stops and stops must be directly on the route between the scheduled stops. The additional stops may require an additional fee. There is usually a limited number of additional stops that can be made on each run in order to maintain the route schedule. The feeder service does not have a regular schedule or stops but provides services on demand.

**Table 2. Service Descriptions and Number of Counties Served by Intercity Bus Service Providers, Nebraska: 2014**

Service Provider	Service Description	Number of Counties Served
<b>Subsidized</b>		
Dashabout Shuttle Company	1. Omaha - Colorado 2. McCook - Omaha 3. McCook - North Platte 4. Grand Island - Columbus All routes accommodate additional stops on demand	21
K & S Express	1. Norfolk – Chadron Route accommodates additional stops on demand	8
Black Hills Stage Lines	1. Omaha – Lincoln – Grand Island – Kearney – Lexington – North Platte - Ogallala 2. Omaha – Fremont – North Bend – Schuyler – Humphrey – Madison - Norfolk	10
Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging	1. Hebron – Fairbury – Beatrice – Lincoln 2. Auburn – Nebraska City – Syracuse – Lincoln – Omaha	6
<b>Not Subsidized</b>		
Burlington Trailways	1. Ogallala – North Platte – Lexington – Kearney – Grand Island – Lincoln - Omaha	7
Navigator Airport Express	1. Kearney – Grand Island – York – Lincoln -- Omaha	4
Omalink	1. Omaha – Lincoln Route accommodates additional stops on demand	4
<b>Feeder Service</b>		
Ponca Express	On-demand service in Ponca Delivery Area	11

Source: College of Public Affairs and Community Service. (2014). *Assessment of Intercity Bus Services in Nebraska*.

Figure 1 shows the scheduled routes and stops for the seven intercity bus service. Some routes are covered by more than one provider. For example, Black Hills Stage Lines, Burlington Trailways, and Dashabout Shuttle Company cover the entire Interstate 80 route from Omaha to the Colorado border. As illustrated in Table 2, additional stops on many of the routes are available on demand.

**Figure 2. Routes of Intercity Bus Services, Nebraska: 2014**



Note: There are 12 first class cities that do not have scheduled stops and which are not on the routes of those providers that make additional stops.

Source: College of Public Affairs and Community Service. (2014). *Assessment of Intercity Bus Services in Nebraska*. Prepared by UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, June 2014

The current intercity bus service providers serve five of the nine metropolitan counties, 10 of the 20 micropolitan counties and 21 of the 64 rural counties. The one feeder service included in this study provides service to one additional micropolitan county and four additional rural counties. Metropolitan counties are those that are part of a metropolitan area. Micropolitan counties are those that include an urban area with a population of 10,000 to 49,999 plus surrounding counties that are linked through commuting ties.

A total of 41 of the 93 counties in Nebraska are served by the providers included in this study. These counties contain 84.0% of Nebraska's total population.

The current intercity bus service providers offer scheduled stops in 24 municipalities, and 16 of these are in first class city or larger municipalities with 5,000 population or higher. Four of the providers allow additional stops on the routes. These routes are along Interstate 80; portions of highways 34 (McCook to Grand Island), 83 (McCook to North Platte), 30 (Grand Island to Columbus), 275 (Norfolk to Holt County), and 20 (Holt County to Chadron), and throughout the Ponca Service Delivery Area. This provides service to an additional eight first class city or larger municipalities.

### **Areas lacking service**

There are 12 first class cities that do not have scheduled stops and which are not on the routes of those providers that make additional stops.

There are four metropolitan counties not served: Dakota, Dixon, Washington, and Saunders. There are nine micropolitan counties not served: Scotts Bluff, Banner, McPherson, Logan, Gosper, Clay, Howard, Stanton, and Pierce.

## Other Intercity Transportation Options

Other intercity transportation options for those who either do not drive or choose not to drive include being transported by relatives or neighbors, private for profit transportation services, Amtrak and airline service.

### Amtrak

Amtrak operates one long-distance train through Nebraska, the California Zephyr, which runs one train in each direction daily. Amtrak has stations in Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings, Holdrege and McCook. Table 2 shows that since 2007, the number of passenger boardings and alightings has been increasing in the three stations in non-metropolitan Nebraska. Collectively, these three stations accounted for nearly 12,000 boardings or alightings in 2013. This is an increase 31% since 2007.

**Table 2. Amtrak Passenger Boardings and Alightings, Nebraska: FY 2007-FY 2013**

City	Boardings and Alightings						
	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
Omaha	25,480	25,627	25,496	25,855	20,668	22,794	24,410
Lincoln	10,616	10,820	10,703	10,770	11,756	12,468	13,160
Hastings	4,085	4,096	4,073	4,084	4,839	5,358	5,865
Holdrege	1,715	1,678	1,671	1,695	1,623	2,296	2,335
McCook	3,205	3,189	3,173	3,175	2,939	3,540	3,638

Source: Amtrak State Fact Sheets, [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)

### Airline Service

Nebraska has nine airports with scheduled airline service, seven of which are outside of Lincoln and Omaha. Table 3 shows that between 2008 and 2012 passenger enplanements declined in Lincoln and Omaha but generally increased or remained steady in the other airports. The Grand Island airport exhibited the largest increase, as passenger enplanements in 2012 were more than seven times what they were in 2008. Despite this increase, these seven airport only accounted for 4.2% of Nebraska's passenger enplanements in 2012.

**Table 3. Passenger Enplanements at Airports with Scheduled Service, Nebraska: 2008-2012**

Airport location	Enplanements				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Omaha	2,136,880	2,083,973	2,097,958	2,047,055	2,018,738
Lincoln	163,177	142,507	139,532	135,647	135,085
Grand Island	7,961	20,136	37,101	47,167	56,138
Scottsbluff	10,680	9,221	9,864	9,912	10,356
Kearney	11,956	10,113	9,530	11,079	12,480
North Platte	10,288	7,924	8,391	10,962	10,962
McCook	1,848	1,677	1,993	1,810	1,623
Chadron	2,152	1,875	1,769	1,980	2,037
Alliance	1,786	1,395	1,416	1,730	1,594

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Aviation Administration. (2012). Passenger Boarding (Enplanement) and All-Cargo Data for U.S. Airport.

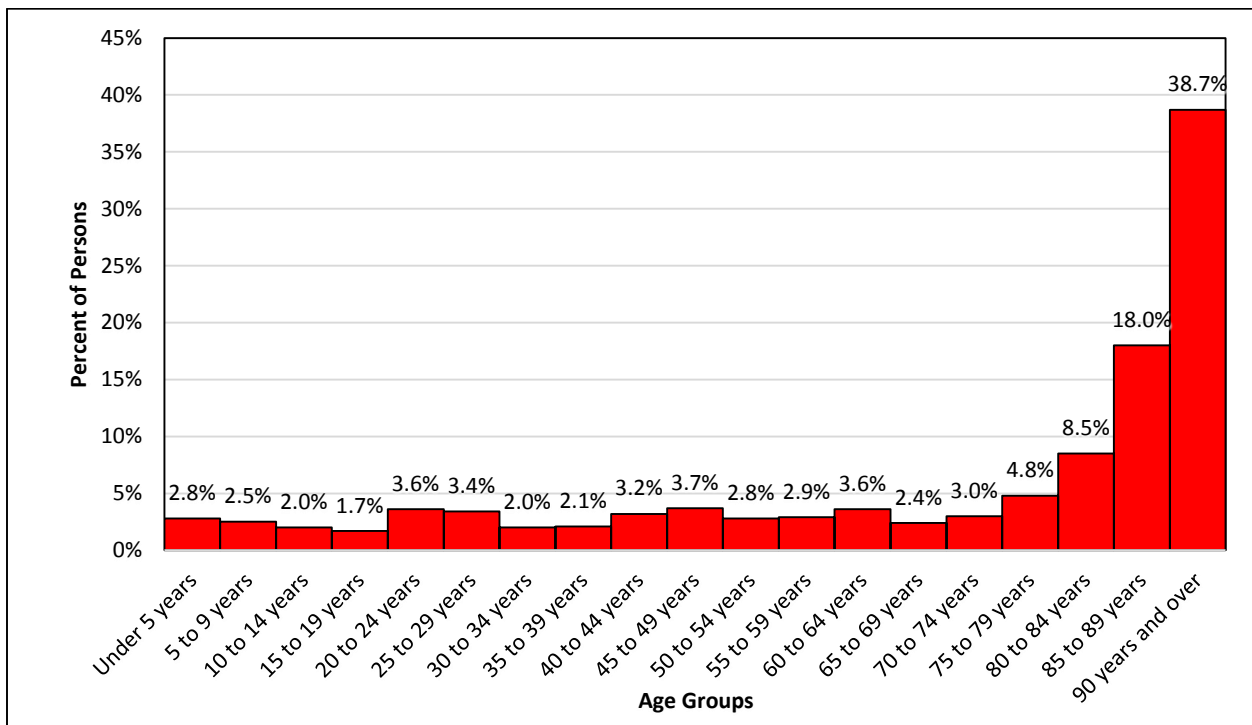
[http://www.faa.gov/airports/planning\\_capacity/passenger\\_allcargo\\_stats/passenger/](http://www.faa.gov/airports/planning_capacity/passenger_allcargo_stats/passenger/)

## Vehicle Access and Commuter Patterns

### Vehicle Access

The 2008-2012 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that statewide about 5.8% of the households have no vehicle available. Figure 3 illustrates that this varies considerably by age of people living in households. Until about age 80 years, the percentage of persons with no vehicle available in their household varies between 2% and 5%. After age 80, the percentage increases rapidly. For persons aged 90 years and over, the percentage with no vehicle available approaches 40%.

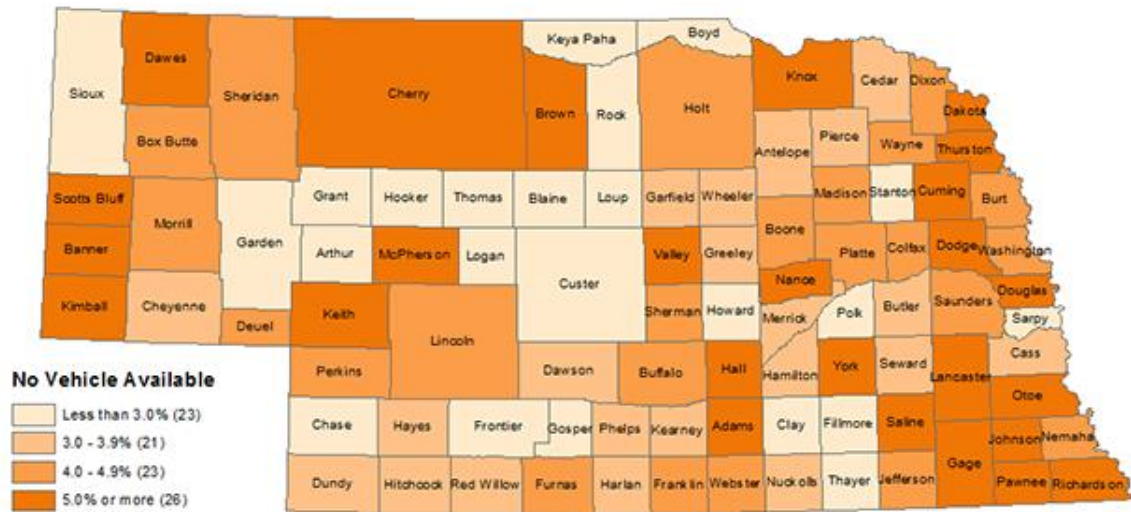
**Figure 3. Percentage of Persons Living in Households with No Vehicle Available by Age, Nebraska: 2008-2012**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata File; prepared by UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, June 2014.

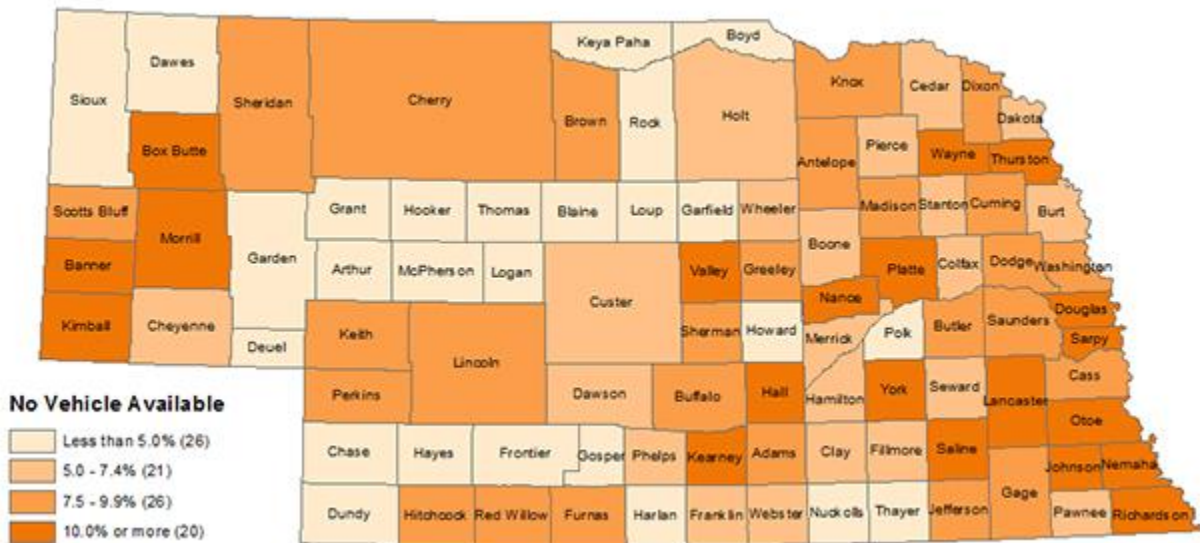
Figure 3 presents data for persons living in households. However, at the county level, data are available only for households. Figures 4 and 5 on the following page present data for all households and for households with a householder aged 65 years or older. Looking at Figure 4 shows, that in 29 counties, 5% or more households do not have access to a vehicle. Figure 5 shows, that in 29 counties, 9% or more of households with a householder aged 65 years or older do not have access to a vehicle. Comparing Figures 4 and 5 to Figure 1 shows that many of the counties with relatively high percentages of households with no vehicle available are also counties with no rural public transit.

**Figure 4. Percent of Households with No Vehicle Available, Nebraska: 2008-2012**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community 2008-2012 Survey 5-Year Estimate; prepared by UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, June 2014

**Figure 5. Percent of households with Householder Aged 65 years or older with No Vehicle Available, Nebraska: 2008-2012**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community 2008-2012 Survey 5-Year Estimate; prepared by UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, June 2014

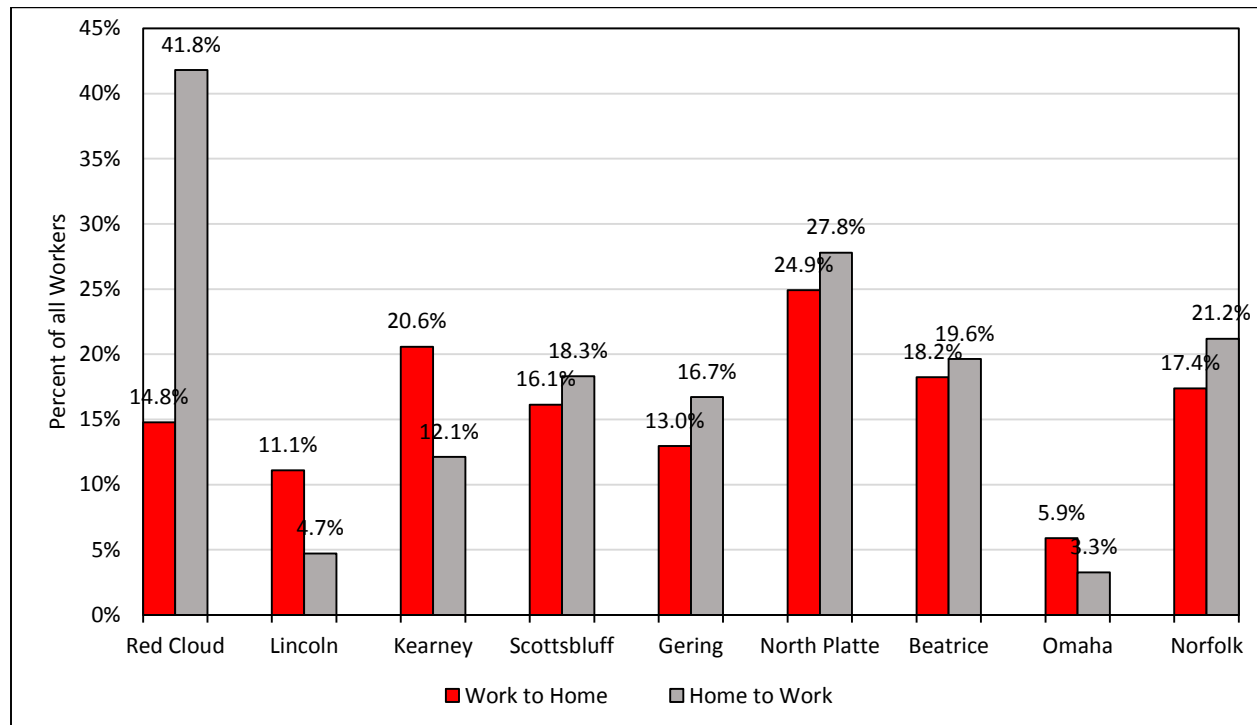
**Commuter Patterns**

Figure 6 shows that many workers in Nebraska live considerable distances from where they work. In fact, 41.8% of the people who live in Red Cloud and are employed, work more than 50 miles from their residence. North Platte is interesting because about one-fourth of the people working in North Platte

live more than 50 miles from their work, and about one-fourth of the workers living in North Platte live more than 50 miles from their job.

Although the percentages may not be as large, Omaha and Lincoln have sizeable numbers of workers who live more than 50 miles from where they work. For Omaha, there are 17,345 workers, and for Lincoln, the number is 16,816 workers who live more than 50 miles from where they work.

**Figure 6. Workers with 50 Miles or More between Place of Work and Place of Residence as a Percentage of All Workers, Nebraska: 2011**



**Definitions:**

Work to Home--People who work in named city but live elsewhere.

Home to Work--People who live in named city but work elsewhere.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD, June 2014; prepared by UNO Center for Public Affairs Research, July 2014

**Summary and Conclusions**

Census data indicate that individuals in Nebraska who are low income, elderly, or disabled are less likely to have access to a vehicle to reach critical services such as medical care. Currently, many Nebraska residents lack access to community public transportation in any form, while intercity bus transportation is severely limited across the majority of the state. To begin to address these concerns, enhanced communication, coordination, and connectivity between transit providers such as planning agencies, cities and counties, and public or private non-profit organizations is a crucial first step. In addition, promising mobility management strategies, such as the coordination of existing transportation services with Medicaid transportation, should also be explored and considered. Enhancements such as expanded on-demand transit service throughout the state, additional feeder routes to the state’s larger



metropolitan cities, and greater access through intercity bus routes are also critical steps to addressing the transportation needs of Nebraska's underserved populations.

## References

Amtrak Fact Sheets, [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)

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