

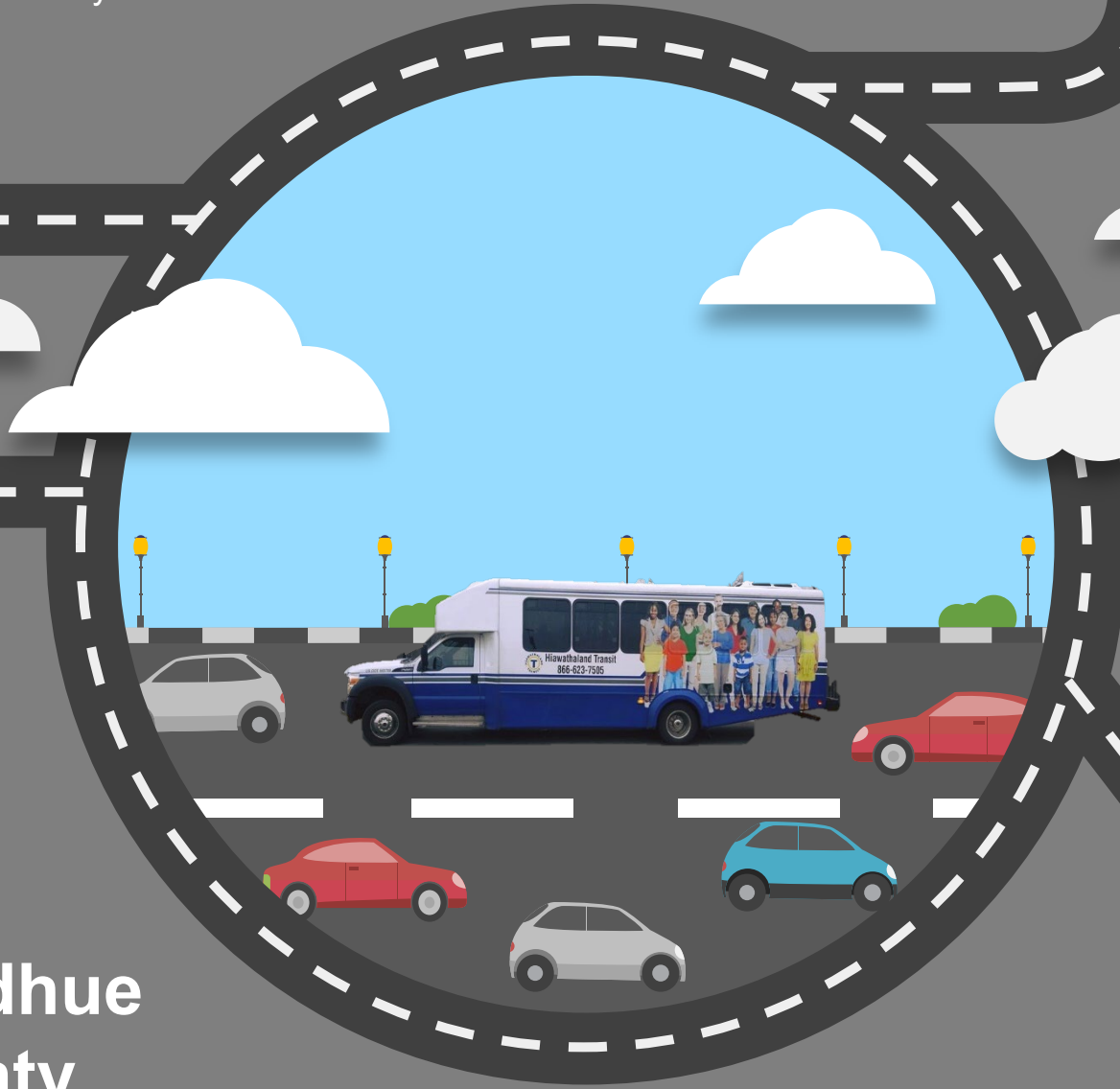
# Hiawathaland Transit

Sponsored by Three Rivers Community Action

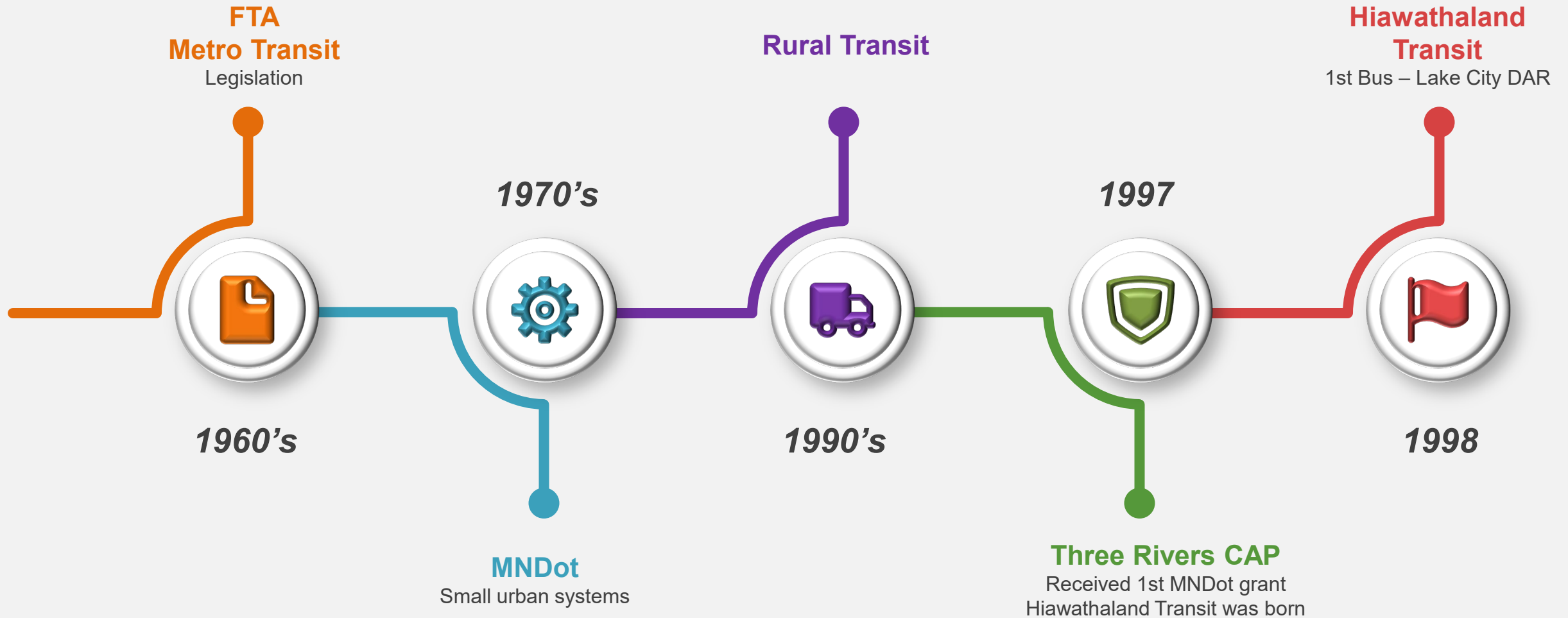
Rice  
County

Goodhue  
County

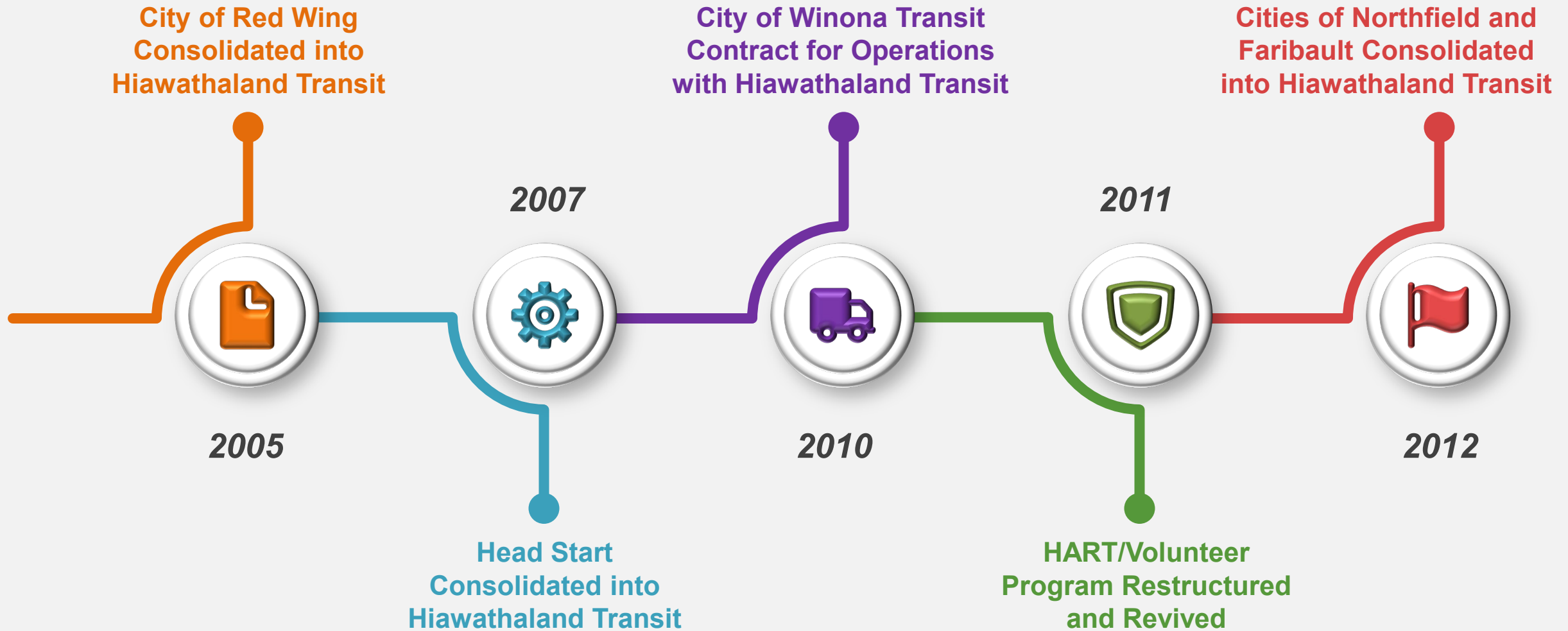
Wabasha  
County



# How We Started...



# And Grew...

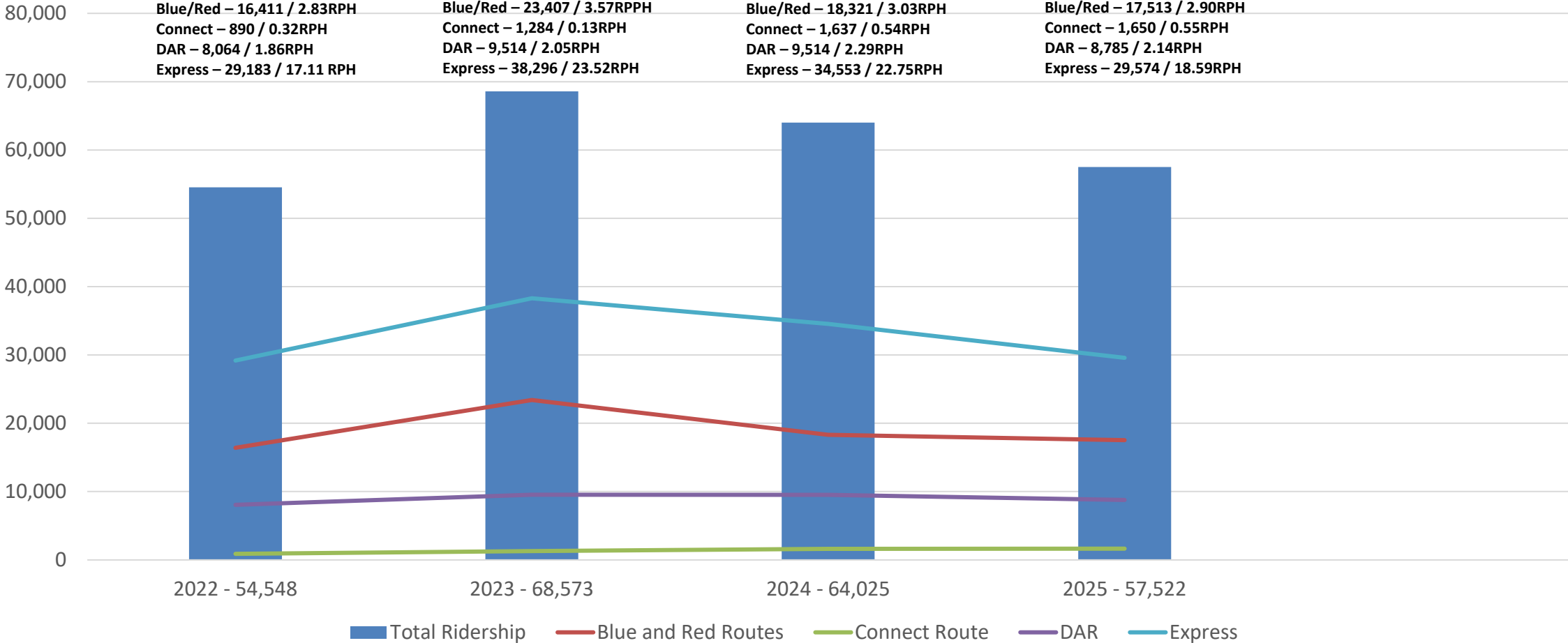


## Types of Services We Offer:

1. Deviated Routes
2. Dial-A-Ride

1. Deviated Routes: A service operating on a fixed route from which vehicles may deviate to pick up or drop off passengers. Requests for route deviations must be made by calling the dispatch office. We can deviate up to .2-miles.
  - *MnDOT standards = 8 rides per hour*
2. Dial-A-Ride: A demand-response service in which the vehicle is requested by telephone and routing is determined as requests are received. Origin-to-destination service with some intermediate stops is offered. Dial-A-Ride is a service that operates outside of the .2-mile radius of the deviated routes.
  - *MnDOT standards = 3 rides per hour*

# Northfield Ridership



# MnDOT Updates – Transition to Formula-Based Funding - SUMMARY

## Funding Outlook

- Starting in 2027, MnDOT is transitioning to Formula-Based Funding
- Rural transit systems are projected to experience a 2-6% funding decrease
- Hiawathaland Transit will need to adjust services across the system to absorb a funding decrease
- Expansion of services will require additional investment from MnDOT

# Route Information & Service Changes

## Service Expansion

- New transit service can only be introduced when MnDOT opens formal service expansion opportunities
  - Currently, **no expansion opportunities are available**
  - When available, MnDOT requires:
    - Completion of **unmet needs assessment**
    - **Community engagement**, including public meetings
    - Documentation demonstrating demand for expanded service
- All expansion requests must be approved through the MnDOT funding process
- The typical timeline is approximately **2 years of planning and approval, with implementation occurring in year 3**

## Service Modifications (within existing levels)

- Adjustments to existing service are permitted within current funding levels
- For example, underperforming routes may be restructured or replaced if there is **documented community need**
- All service changes require MnDOT review and approval

# Route Information & Service Changes - continued

## Express Route Service

- The Express Route is currently **approved and funded for school-year operations only**
- Expanding to **year-round (12-month) service** would require additional funding.
  - If the City of Northfield is interested in expanding this service, further discussions would be needed to evaluate **costs and funding options**

# Route Planning Process

## Key Considerations for Transit Route Redesign

### Ridership & Demand

- Analyze current ridership patterns and trends
- Identify high-demand corridors and underserved areas
- Review origin-destination data and trip purposes

### Equity & Access

- Evaluate impacts on historically underserved populations
- Ensure compliance with Title VI and equity goals
- Consider access to essential destinations (jobs, healthcare, education)

### Service Efficiency & Productivity

- Assess performance metrics (riders per hour, cost per trip)
- Identify underperforming routes for potential restructuring
- Balance coverage vs. productivity goals
- Timing considerations – time per round

### Community Engagement

- Conduct public outreach and surveys
- Incorporate feedback from riders, non-riders, and community partners
- Provide multilingual and accessible engagement opportunities

### Operational Feasibility

- Evaluate staffing, fleet availability, and facility capacity
- Consider route timing, scheduling, and on-time performance
- Review roadway conditions and infrastructure constraints

## Connectivity & Integration

- Maintain or improve connections to key destinations and transfer points
- Consider first/last-mile solutions (bike, pedestrian)
- Consider regional transit and mobility options, if available

## Financial Impacts

- Assess cost implications and available funding
- Ensure alignment with funding requirements (MnDOT)
- Evaluate trade-offs between expanding vs. reallocating service

## Phasing & Implementation

- Plan for a clear transition timeline
- Consider phased rollouts vs. systemwide changes
- Allow time for operator training and public communications

## Communication Strategy

- Develop clear, rider-friendly materials explaining changes
- Provide advance notice and trip planning support
- Use multiple channels (digital, print, in-person outreach)

## Performance Monitoring

- Establish metrics to evaluate success post-implementation
- Monitor ridership, reliability, and customer feedback
- Be prepared to adjust as needed

# City of Northfield & Hiawathaland Transit Partnership Opportunities/Ideas

## Marketing & Outreach Collaboration

- Coordinate joint marketing and outreach efforts to increase transit awareness and ridership
- Partner on community campaigns that position transit as a **primary mobility option**

## Community Events & Promotions

- Collaborate on **Transit Days** and other community events
- Offer **free or discounted fare promotions** to encourage trial and adoption
- Host **Rider Appreciation Days** to recognize and engage current riders

## Communications Support

- Partner on print and digital outreach
- Leverage City communication channels to amplify transit messaging

## Employer & Economic Development Partnerships

- Work with local employers through City economic development offices to:
  - Promote commuter benefits
  - Encourage transit use among employees (potential City Employee Transit Days)

## Equity & Accessibility Initiatives

- Co-host multilingual rider workshops to improve system accessibility
- Provide education on:
  - How to navigate the transit system
  - Fare policies and safety practices
- Build trust and expand access among historically underserved communities

# Miscellaneous information/questions

## **Is a third route viable?**

- Based on current ridership levels, it would be difficult to justify the need for a third route at this time

## **Can the hospital be added to an existing route (e.g., Blue Route)?**

- Adding the hospital would result in significant increases in travel time, impacting overall route efficiency and reliability

## **Can service be extended beyond 6:00 PM?**

- Dial-A-Ride services are available until 9:00pm, Monday-Friday
- Service expansion of routes may be considered as future funding opportunities become available and if ridership growth supports the need

## **Why doesn't the City of Dundas contribute financially to transit service?**

- City contributions are requested for local share of new bus purchases (although we have recently changed the process to an MOU) and not for daily operations.
- There are no buses currently reserved solely for service in Dundas
  - Trips originating in Dundas are typically for destinations in Northfield
  - Trips to Dundas originate in Northfield and are primarily for employment (e.g., Kwik Trip, Menards) or medical services (e.g., DaVita Dialysis)
  - Any change to funding structure would require further discussion and alignment on service goals
- We are willing to have conversations with Dundas to determine their interest in offering transit services

# Miscellaneous information/questions - continued

## **Are there gaps or missing stops on the Express Route?**

- Current data indicates that primary users (e.g., college students) utilize the service for shopping and downtown destinations
- The most frequently requested and utilized destinations are already served by the existing route

## **Can you provide an update on payment technology?**

- Yes. We transitioned to a new dispatch software platform last year
- This platform includes a mobile app (Passenger Portal) that will support:
  - Online trip requests
  - Digital payment options
  - Ability for passengers to see the bus location in real time, pertaining to their scheduled ride
- Full implementation is anticipated by the end of this year

THANK YOU



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# MnDOT Updates – Transition to Formula-Based Funding – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Beginning in 2027, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) will transition to a formula-based funding model, replacing the traditional operating grant application process. While agencies will still be required to submit annual budgets and complete the application process, the methodology used to determine grant allocations will change.

Funding will be distributed based on a combination of **system size** and **performance metrics**:

- **System Size (50% total weighting)**

- 50% Vehicle Revenue Hours (VRH)
- 30% Vehicle Revenue Miles (VRM)
- 20% Operating Expenses (OE)

- **Performance (50% total weighting)**

*Operational Performance*

- 25% Service Efficiency (OE/VRH)
- 25% Service Productivity (Unlinked Passenger Trips (UPT)/VRH)

*Coverage Metrics*

- 30% Service Availability (VRH per capita)
- 20% Transit Access (based on Census data / Transit Needs Index (TNI))

To support a smooth transition, safeguards have been incorporated to minimize significant funding fluctuations that could create financial challenges for transit agencies.

Overall, rural transit agencies are projected to experience an approximate **2.6% decrease in funding** under the new formula.