INTRODUCTION

The SmartMoves Regional Transit and Mobility Plan envisions a Kansas City region with viable mobility solutions for empowered residents, successful businesses and vibrant communities. The plan seeks to build and sustain a thriving, innovative and competitive economy while ensuring that all people have an opportunity to thrive by providing equal access to jobs. To plan for this future, it is helpful to understand how the status quo — a regional workforce that depends heavily on personal vehicles — limits both economic vitality and access to opportunities.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment in Greater Kansas City was 3.1 percent as of December 2018. With this smaller pool of potential candidates, many area employers are having difficulty filling open positions. Unfilled positions and high employee turnover are a significant financial drain for businesses. A Center for American Progress' study puts the cost of vacancy, hiring and training at 16 to 20 percent of an employee’s annual salary.

In the Kansas City region, the logistics, warehouse and distribution, and light manufacturing industries are reporting difficulties with workforce transportation. Because these industries need space, they are often located far from high-density residential areas. The distance between buildings and round-the-clock shift times make these locations more difficult to serve by transit. For many employees at these locations, driving to work may be the most desirable or even the only choice due to a lack of bus service, shifts that do not match with bus schedules, burdensome travel times and long walks from bus stops. Businesses in these locations report difficulty in finding candidates to apply for open positions because of transportation challenges. These employers also report that transportation barriers result in new hires who are unable to continue working, employees arriving late and missing work and even employees losing their jobs.

For workers, vehicle ownership opens up a wide range of employment opportunities and gives drivers convenience and control. But vehicle ownership has its own challenges. Monthly payments, insurance, maintenance and fuel costs can eat up a sizable portion of a paycheck. Long commutes are known to have significant health impacts. Workers arrive late or miss work because of breakdowns. And for many, losing access to a car is the event that triggers serious job consequences, including the loss of employment.

In order to bridge the gap between job seekers with transportation barriers and the employers wishing to hire them, Mid-America Regional Council, in partnership with the Wyandotte County Community Health Improvement Project and other regional partners, distributed two sets of surveys. The Job Seeker Transportation Survey asked people looking for work how they plan to get to a job, what transportation challenges they have experienced and how those challenges affected their employment. The final question asks about their willingness to share rides to work. The Workforce Transportation Survey asked employers in five industrial areas about the negative business impacts resulting from employee transportation challenges, and which broad categories of solutions would be the most appealing to them.

The two surveys will provide guidance for a toolkit of potential solutions. These solutions may include coordinated efforts, such as an employer shuttle or vanpool, or actions individual employers can take, such as building a pool of potential carpool drivers or providing discounted taxi rides in case of vehicle breakdowns.
JOB SEEKER SURVEY

Transportation is one of many challenges facing job seekers on their path toward employment. Those who have no access to a vehicle are restricted to jobs they can get to by bus, bicycle or on foot. Sharing a household vehicle or depending on family, friends and neighbors for a ride can be unreliable, and vehicle breakdowns often cause employees to be late or miss work. Understanding the nature and extent of transportation challenges is vital to building a toolkit of practical and effective solutions.

The Job Seeker Survey asked individuals who are in the process of looking for work about their plans to get to a job, their transportation challenges, how those challenges affect their ability to find and keep a job, and their willingness to share a ride to work.

MARC received 1,065 survey responses. The survey was open Sept. 1 through Oct. 31, 2018. Although an online version of the survey was available, nearly all the surveys were completed on paper. Of the 1,065 surveys, 108 were incomplete.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Workforce Partnership Program — offices in Wyandotte, Johnson and Leavenworth counties
- Full Employment Council
- Veterans Administration
- Kansas City, Kansas School District
- Community Service League
- QPS Employment
- Goodwill of Missouri and Kansas
Question 1: What is your zip code?
The following shows the geographical distribution of survey responses.
Question 2: Do you own a vehicle?

726 respondents, or 68 percent, own a vehicle; 338 respondents, or 32 percent, do not. We do not know if the respondent may have access to a car they do not own, or if he or she is able to drive.

The percentage of job seekers in this survey who do not own a vehicle is significantly higher than the region as a whole, where 21.7 percent of households have either one or zero vehicles.

Vehicle ownership percentages vary by county, with Jackson and Wyandotte Counties reporting the highest percentage of job seekers who do not own a car.
Question 3: Which of the following best describes your plan to get to work?
This question asked job seekers to indicate which option they planned to use to get to work and which was their back-up choice. Respondents could choose as many or as few answers as they wished.

Unsurprisingly, nearly all the car owners chose “drive my own vehicle” as their plan. Driving a shared vehicle was a distant second. For respondents with no vehicle, taking the bus was the most common response. Some respondents selected all options for their back-up plan. Bicycle was the least popular option. Interestingly, several respondents with no vehicle still selected “drive my own vehicle” indicating their aspiration to get a vehicle as soon as possible.
Question 4: Which of the following challenges, if any, have you experienced with getting to work in the past six months? Check all that apply.

Fifty-four percent of job seekers reported no transportation-related challenges, but 46 percent reported at least one challenge and many respondents reported multiple challenges with getting to work. When the responses are filtered for vehicle ownership, the challenges are significantly higher for those who do not own a vehicle.

- For vehicle owners, 71 percent reported no challenges, and of the challenges selected, vehicle breakdowns or losing access to a vehicle are most frequently reported.
- For job seekers with no vehicle, only 33 percent reported no transportation related challenges, which means 67 percent experienced one or more problems getting to work. Being unable to find a bus route was a challenge for 20 percent of these respondents and 17 percent reported that their bus ride was too long. If most of these job seekers are planning to take the bus to their future job, the difficulty with finding a suitable bus route will likely limit their options.

---

*Losing access to a vehicle has a major impact on a worker’s ability to find and keep a job.*
### All respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>All respondents</th>
<th>Respondents with a vehicle</th>
<th>Respondents without a vehicle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lost access to my vehicle or was unable to drive myself</td>
<td>158 15%</td>
<td>69 10.7%</td>
<td>87 27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle broke down</td>
<td>143 13%</td>
<td>97 15.1%</td>
<td>42 13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late or absent because someone else was using shared vehicle</td>
<td>39 4%</td>
<td>17 2.6%</td>
<td>20 6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to find a bus route</td>
<td>96 9%</td>
<td>28 4.4%</td>
<td>66 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus ride too long</td>
<td>81 8%</td>
<td>24 3.7%</td>
<td>56 17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could not bike or walk because of bad weather, illness or injury</td>
<td>75 7%</td>
<td>26 4%</td>
<td>43 13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed to leave early or stay late but could not get home</td>
<td>69 6%</td>
<td>20 3.1%</td>
<td>45 14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The person I ride with was not reliable</td>
<td>66 6%</td>
<td>20 3.1%</td>
<td>45 14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>570 54%</td>
<td>459 71%</td>
<td>103 32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>111 10%</td>
<td>55 8.5%</td>
<td>52 16.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Other” responses included personal challenges to driving such as:

- Vision problems.
- Pregnancy or injury.
- Vehicle problems such as no money for gas or no license.
- High-mileage car or car that is being repaired.
- Late or inconsistent bus service.
- Lengthy walk to work.
Question 5: Have any of the following happened to you in the past six months? Check all that apply.
This question asks about negative impacts on the job seeker’s employment history because of transportation challenges. Of all respondents, 60 percent reported no negative impacts, but 40 percent reported one or more. Separating the responses by vehicle ownership once again shows a significantly higher rate of negative job consequences for those without a car.

For job seekers with a vehicle, nearly 80 percent report no negative job consequences because of transportation problems. The most commonly reported issue is not applying for a job, followed by being late for work. Several respondents reported in the comments section that a prospective job was too far of a drive for their unreliable vehicle.

Only 42 percent of job seekers without a vehicle reported no negative job consequences. That means 58 percent reported one or more negative job impacts. Nearly one third of this group did not apply for a job and one in six reported losing a steady job because of transportation difficulties.

Seven percent of job seekers could be considered “contented bus riders” to the extent that they chose the bus as their plan to get to work, had no transportation related challenges, and reported almost no negative job impacts. Unsurprisingly, nearly all are residents of Jackson or Wyandotte Counties, where transit service is more likely to be available.

“My tags are expired, and I don’t have money to pay, but am still driving because I have no other means.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>All respondents (957)</th>
<th>Respondents with a vehicle (643)</th>
<th>Respondents without a vehicle (314)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not apply for a job</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed an interview</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late for work</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missed work</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to continue working new job</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost a steady job</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Other” responses to this question include:
- Placed on probation due to transportation problems
- Lost weekend assignment
- 5 a.m. bicycling too dangerous
- Irregular weather
- Car problems
- FEC Ride to Work funding ended
- Difficulty driving at night
- Distance is an issue and there is no back-up transportation
- Injury
- Vehicle was stolen
- Lost job due to being in jail for driving ticket
- Issues related to pregnancy and childcare.

Losing access to a vehicle has a major impact on a worker’s ability to find and keep a job. For the 15 percent of respondents who lost access to their vehicle, 77 percent of them reported at least one negative job impact, with most reporting two or more, including one-fourth who said they lost a steady job after losing access to their vehicle.
Question 6: How willing are you to travel to work with someone you don’t know, but who makes the same trip to work as you?

Every employee driving their own vehicle to work typically has between one and four empty seats. Multiplied over an entire business park, that equates to thousands of potential rides to work for current or future employees, especially those with no other commute options or who are interested in saving money on their commute. One way to get people to jobs is to identify current employees who are willing to give rides to coworkers and reduce barriers to make this an easy and attractive practice. An employment center with a robust carpool culture and a secure mechanism for ride matching, verification and payment will have a competitive hiring advantage.

The response to question six was positive for job seekers with and without a vehicle.

The 420 vehicle owners who indicated they were very or somewhat willing to share a ride together have the potential capacity to transport between 400 and 800 other employees who live near them and work similar hours.

Job seekers without a vehicle could provide vehicle owners with financial support to help them pay for vehicle costs. Even a small contribution of five dollars per day means an extra $100 per month for the driver.

Mid-America Regional Council’s RideshareKC program has a free, public access ride-matching platform used to identify potential carpool partners. Potential technology upgrades can facilitate payments between riders and drivers. Robust reporting capabilities provide metrics on usage and assist with employer or other incentives for carpool drivers.
One factor that appears to make drivers more willing to explore options and share rides is when these drivers experience first-hand what it is like when driving alone is not an option.

For one group of survey respondents — approximately 36 percent of the vehicle owners — driving alone seems to be working out for them. They planned to drive their own car and had no designated back-up plan. Eighty percent of these reported no transportation related challenges or negative job impacts. This group of “contented drivers” had the lowest reported willingness to share a ride — 48 percent of contented drivers were willing to share, compared to 60 percent of all vehicle owners who were willing or somewhat willing to share.

But of the vehicle owners who reported at least one transportation related challenge, 84 percent also reported at least one negative job impact. These “unfortunate drivers” had a much higher willingness to share a ride than the contented driver group – 77 percent selected “very willing” or “somewhat willing” to share.
WORKFORCE TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

Employers in the light industrial, logistics, warehousing and hospitality industries report a broad range of challenges related to employee transportation. Understanding the scope and nature of these challenges is the first step toward building effective solutions that employers will support.

The Workforce Transportation Survey was distributed to 112 employers in:

- The Edwardsville and Fairfax industrial areas in Wyandotte County, Kansas.
- The Interstate 29 Corridor and Riverside industrial areas in Platte County, Missouri.
- Lee’s Summit, Missouri.

The Wyandotte, Platte and Lee’s Summit Economic Development Councils distributed the surveys electronically through an email link. Mid-America Regional Council received 34 completed responses and five incomplete responses.

**Question 1: What is the name of your company?**
Names and street addresses of individual companies are not included in this report.

**Question 2: What is the address of your company?**
The surveys were distributed in the geographical areas where employers had expressed a need for transportation solutions. Limiting the geography for the pilot survey creates the necessary density to propose shared mobility solutions like carpooling, vanpooling or an employer shuttle.

- Edwardsville – 9 responses
- Fairfax district – 11 responses
- Interstate 29 corridor – 12 responses
- Riverside – 3 responses
- St. Joseph – 1 response
- Lee’s Summit – 1 response

**Question 3: In the past 12 months, how often has your company experienced the following problems with recruitment and retention?**

This question asks about transportation challenges throughout the employment pipeline. The responses to Question 3 in the Job Seeker Transportation Survey echo these results. The broad range of issues reported by both employers and job seekers points to a need for a variety of solutions. For example, a shuttle that connects to the transit network could make an employment center attractive to a much larger pool of job seekers. Hiring managers could provide candidates with vouchers or bus passes to get to an interview or help new hires find a carpool partner. Emergency back-up transportation can prevent employees from being late, missing work, or using sick days or vacation days when they experience the short-term loss of a vehicle. Employers report losing otherwise excellent
employees because of ongoing transportation challenges, especially if other circumstances such as unreliable childcare or health issues compound the challenges.

Taking a closer look at the characteristics of the employers, those with no nearby transit stops are much more likely to report frequent problems with finding candidates to apply for their jobs. However, employers near transit report a higher frequency of all the other challenges. Employers in the hospitality industry reported the most severe problems, as they tend to see shifts change frequently, or require unscheduled overtime. This makes sense considering that a worker who depends on a bus route cannot switch to a different shift unless there is also bus service at the new time.
1. Employees who depend on transit may not be able to work late night shifts.

QUESTIONS 4-8: WORKPLACE FACTORS THAT HELP OR HINDER ALTERNATIVES TO DRIVING ALONE

Individual employer responses to questions four through seven will be used as a starting point to coordinate cooperative solutions.

Question 4: What are the shift times at your workplace?

Responses range from traditional office hours to round-the-clock variable shifts. One third of respondents reported only a single, morning-to-afternoon shift. Sixty percent started a second shift in the afternoon that continued until evening. Fifty-six percent reported third shift overnight hours and 68 percent reported weekend hours. Late evening and night shifts are typically the most difficult for workers who do not have their own vehicle.
Question 5: Which of the following best describes the flexibility of shift start and end times?
Flexible start and end times allow workers to coordinate more easily with carpool partners and with people they depend on for a ride. A flexible work schedule can allow an employee to take a bus that might be close but an imperfect fit for their shift start time.
Question 6: Which of the following best describes the variation in your employees’ daily work schedules?

Commuters with regular work schedules have an easier time using shared transportation options to get to work. These may involve taking the bus, carpooling with neighbors or colleagues, getting a ride from a family member, vanpooling or sharing a single car among workers in a household. Highly variable schedules decrease the ability of an employee to use these options. Employers who reported that their shifts change frequently were more likely to report frequent problems with workforce recruitment and retention.
Question 7: Which of the following best describes your company’s use of mandatory overtime?

Unscheduled overtime decreases the ability of employees to use commute options such as transit, carpool or vanpool. Carpool partners may be reluctant to wait and if the employee misses the last bus it may be difficult or expensive to get home another way. RideshareKC offers a Guaranteed Ride Home program as a safety net for occasional unscheduled overtime, up to two trips per year.

![USE OF MANDATORY OVERTIME](image)

- Rarely or never: 8%
- Occasionally: 29%
- Frequently: 63%
Question 8: Is there an indoor location at or near your workplace where employees can wait for transportation before or after their shift?

A safe and comfortable indoor waiting area such as a break room or lobby can make waiting for the bus or a carpool partner more attractive. Standing outside in the rain and cold after a full shift at work does not contribute to high employee satisfaction.
Question 9: How likely is your company to do the following to help employees get to your workplace?

The final question attempts to understand the employer’s appetite for various solutions. However, the survey respondents may not necessarily be the decision makers and therefore may be unable to say for sure which solutions company leadership would support.

9A: Adjust shift times or allow flexible work hours to better match with available transportation options

Rigid start times can make it very difficult for employees to rely on transit, family members or carpool partners. For example, an employee may not be able to take a bus that arrives five minutes after the start of a shift, and instead must take an earlier bus. This situation can result in dramatically increased travel time. The same holds for the end of a shift.

9B: Actively promote transportation options to current employees and new hires

Employers who actively promote existing bus service may increase ridership, increasing the likelihood that the bus route will continue to serve that location. Encouraging employees who can drive to sign up as carpool drivers on RideshareKC.org increases the supply of potential carpool partners.

9C: Provide incentives or subsidies to employees who participate in transportation programs. For example, subsidizing employee vanpool fees or bus passes

Discounted or free bus passes are an easy, pre-tax commuter benefit. Vanpooling is an efficient and flexible way to get employees to work. Four to twelve employees meet up to ride to work in a van provided by Enterprise with a subsidy from the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority. Employees pay a low monthly fee, which covers van rental, fuel, maintenance and tolls. Several regional employers provide vanpool benefits for their workforce. Enterprise can perform an analysis of employee home addresses to find clusters of potential vanpoolers.

9D: Contribute financially to collective solutions such as an employee shuttle

Employee shuttles come in many sizes and configurations from a full-size bus to a van that relays riders from a bus stop or mobility hub.
How likely is your company to do the following to help employees get to your workplace?

- Adjust shift times
- Promote options
- Provide incentives or subsidies
- Contribute financially to collective solutions

**Likelihood Options:**
- very likely
- somewhat likely
- not likely
- don't know
The survey responses show a significant mismatch between the perceived urgency of workforce transportation challenges reported by employers, and their willingness to implement many of the proposed solutions — with the exception of promoting existing options. This may be a good starting place, but without significant and coordinated buy-in, workforce transportation is likely to remain a difficult issue for these employers.

Conclusion
Greater Kansas City has a strong culture of driving and car ownership. The bias toward single-occupant driving is a hard nut to crack even for cities with robust support for transit. A workforce that depends almost entirely on driving is vulnerable to sudden spikes in the price of fuel or unavailability of affordable, reliable vehicles. This is especially true for low wage earners.

Transportation remains the single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, responsible for 28.5 percent of all emissions in the United States (EPA, 2016). The regional air quality is coming close to non-compliance status for ozone pollution. An efficient transportation system with many choices creates opportunities to shift away from single-occupant driving, which will contribute toward the goal of a green, connected and resilient region.