

Chapter 6

Public Transit

6.1 Introduction

Public transit is an effective alternative to single-occupancy vehicle travel. Public transit is desirable for reducing congestion, which in turn reduces the need for roadway expansion projects and decreases vehicle emissions. Furthermore, transit provides travel opportunities to those for whom auto use is not a possible or preferred option.

Only 0.6 percent of the study area commuter trips are by transit. Therefore, investments to promote public transit to increase transit using commuter trips by a few percentage points can be a very effective travel demand management strategy.

6.2 Existing (2009) Transit Network and Providers

Residents of the Houma-Thibodaux metropolitan planning area are served by one urban public transportation provider, two rural public transportation providers, and four agencies that provide transportation for the elderly and disabled.

The urban agency, Good Earth, provides service in Houma and began operations on February 12, 1997. It is the only public bus service provider in the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Area. The fleet of eight (8) 30 ft buses runs along four (4) routes covering a large portion of the area. Approximately 42,500 people live within one-fourth mile of the routes. Service is provided weekdays from approximately 6:30 am to 6:30 pm and weekend service operates from approximately 8:30 am to 4:00 pm. A map displaying the existing transit routes is shown in Figure 6 - 1.

The transit fleet's low-floor design, which utilizes a simple ramp for entry, allows the elderly and handicapped to have full accessibility to the entire system. There are 282 bus stops located throughout the system, with 10 shelters and 100 benches to be placed in the near future at bus stops with high passenger volumes. To further accommodate passengers, all buses are equipped with a bike rack capable of carrying two bikes. Current daily ridership is about 500 passengers per day.







The rural public transportation providers are Terrebonne Parish Government/Council on Aging and Assumption Parish Police Jury/Council on Aging. Both these agencies receive section 5311 rural operating and capital assistance as well as section 5310 elderly and disabled capital assistance. The Terrebonne Parish Council on Aging also receives section 5309 capital assistance. Four agencies are funded solely by section 5310 to provide transportation services to the elderly and disabled. These agencies are Terrebonne ARC, Assumption ARC, Lafourche ARC, and Lafourche Council on Aging.

Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2035






**Figure 6-1
Good Earth Transit
Routes**

LEGEND

Routes

-  MLK
-  NSU-Thibodaux
-  North Bayou
-  Grand Caillou
-  South Bayou
-  Civic Center

Landmarks

-  Transfer Terminal
-  Hospital
-  Southland Mall
-  Civic Center
-  Nicholls State Univ

Source: Good Earth Transit



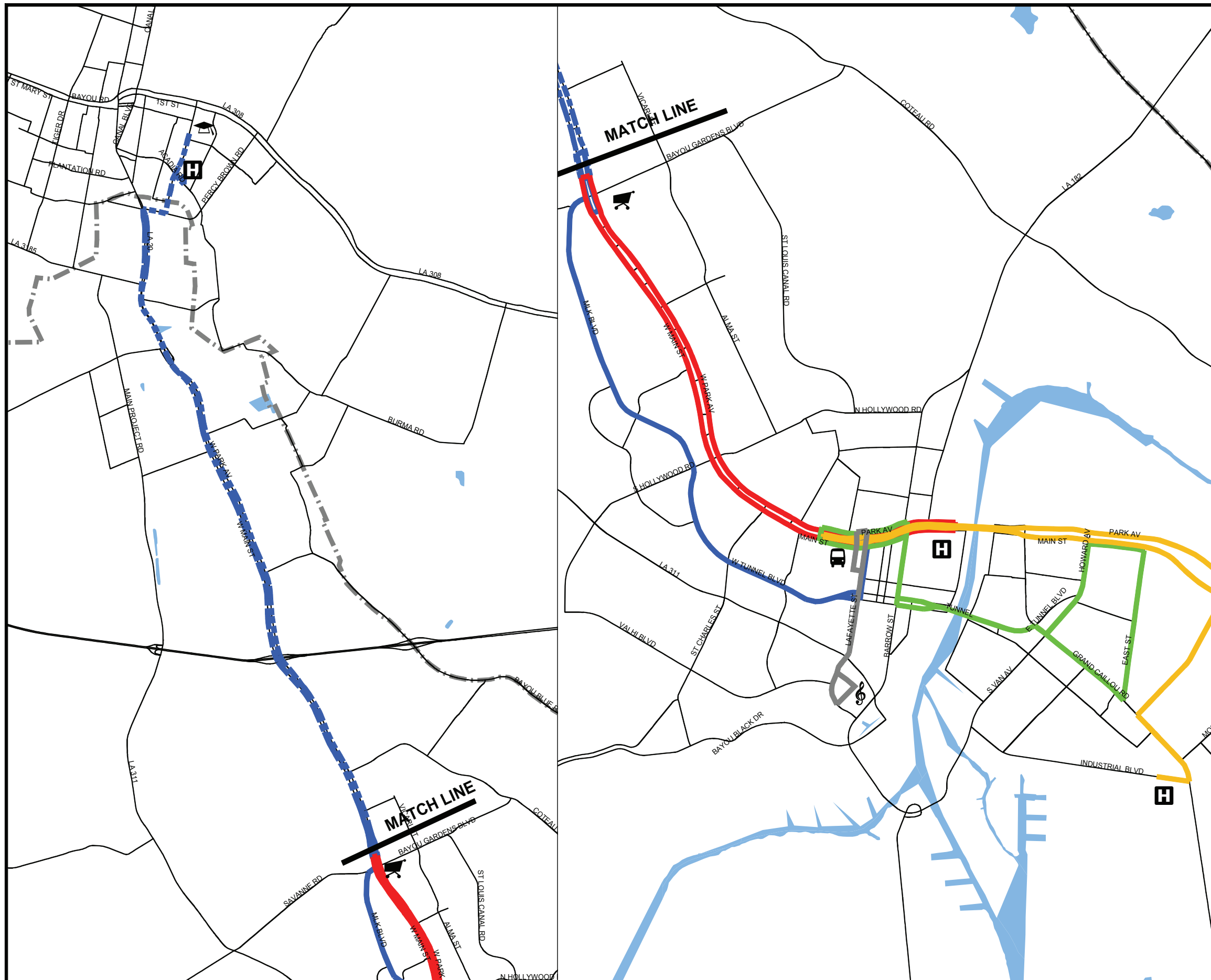
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6.2.1 Transit Sketch Planning Model

The determination of future transit system needs in the HTMPO planning area requires the ability to forecast potential transit riders resulting from estimates of future population and employment. The objective of the transit planning process is to provide the information necessary for making decisions on when and where improvements should be made to the transit system to meet the forecasted transit ridership estimates.

Planning for the transit system started with the location of minority and low-income families and senior citizens by TAZ. To then evaluate transit service quality (since these are likely to be transit dependent populations), the study team identified the location of traffic generators including areas of employment, retail shopping, educational facilities, hospitals and medical offices.

To estimate the potential transit riders, a simple sketch planning model was developed. The transit sketch model considered two datasets; transit boarding information of the fixed routes provided by Good Earth and population and employment data within a quarter-mile distance of existing routes.

Using the database with the boarding data, a set of boarding on weekdays was developed. These boardings reflected the ridership on an average weekday and were broken down by the stop and route on which they were located. The average daily boarding for each stop by route was derived. These averages were then aggregated for the different routes in the transit system. The socio-economic data of each route's TAZs were aggregated as well. The average boardings per route and socio-economic data were used in a regression analysis at the route level to develop a model to estimate boardings by TAZ.

The results of the analysis revealed that the most important factors influencing the ridership of the transit system were households with no vehicles and the retail employment. The equation from the regression analysis showed:

$$\text{Estimated Boardings} = 0.194 * \text{HH_VEH0} + 0.0254 * \text{RET_EMP}$$

Where:

HH_VEH0 = households with 0 vehicles

RET_EMP= number of retail employees

The equation had an R-squared value of 0.76. The equation was then applied to each TAZ to estimate the expected boarding for all TAZs in the study area.

6.3 Needs Analysis of Transit Network

Using the transit sketch planning model and the forecast planning data, potential daily transit boardings by TAZ for year 2035 were developed. It is recommended that the TAZs which show projected potential

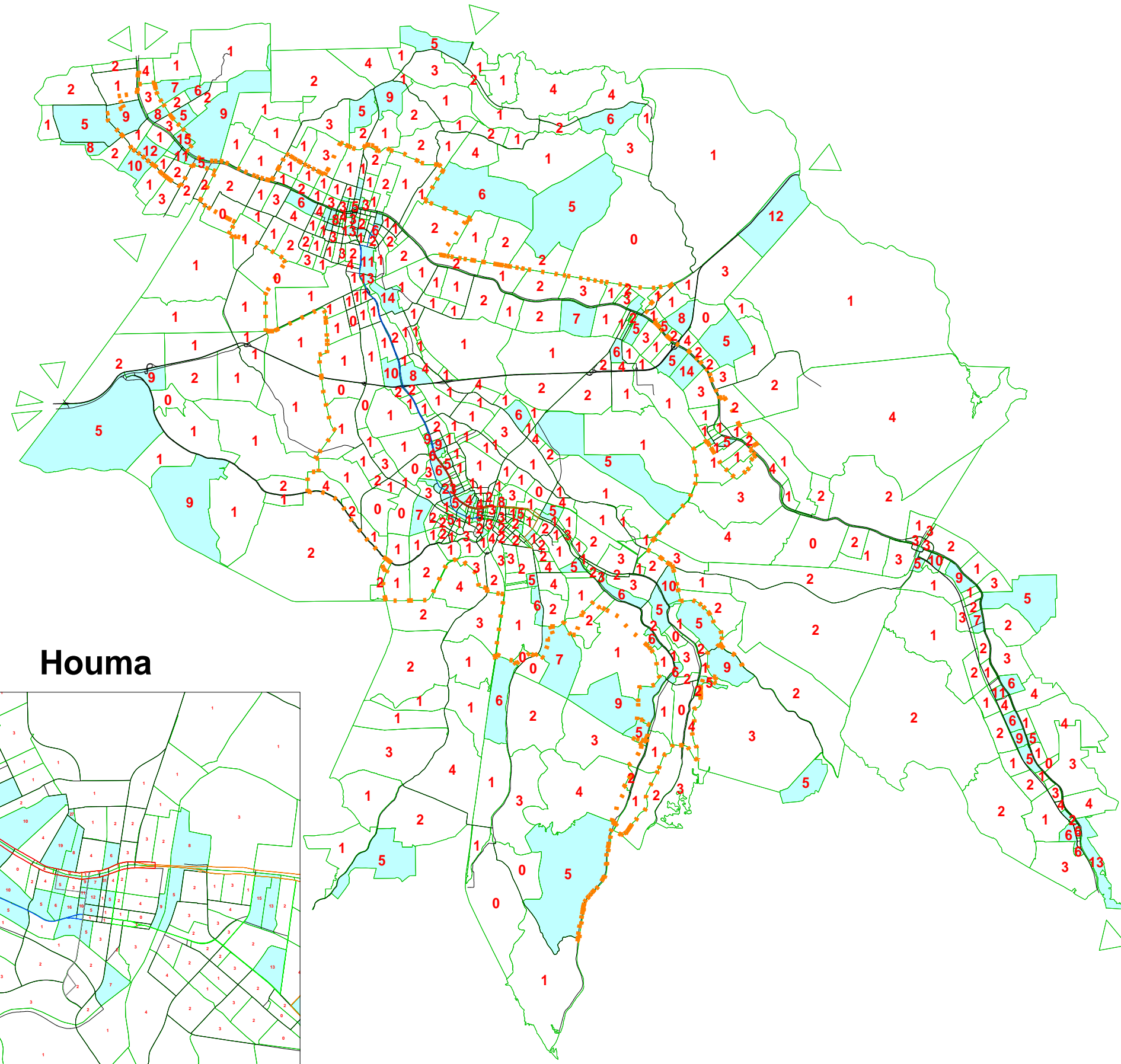
transit boardings of greater than or equal to five (5) but are not serviced by any exiting fixed transit route would be considered deficient. The estimated potential transit boardings by TAZ in year 2035 are shown in Figure 6-2.

Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2035

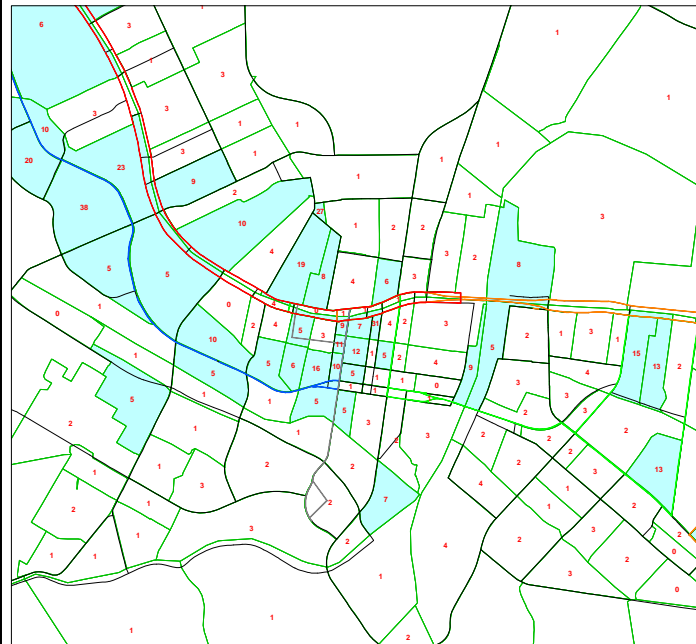
Figure 6-2
Projected 2035 Transit Ridership

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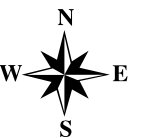
- Map layers**
- 2000 Urbanized Area
 - TAZ
 - Streets
 - Blue Route
 - Blue Route Addition
 - Gray Route
 - Green Route
 - Orange Route
 - Red Route
- Boarding Selection**
- 5 or More Boardings
- 0 3 6 9
Miles



Houma



Source: NSI



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6.4 Potential Transit Projects

As mentioned previously, the only fixed route transit system in the study area is operated by Good Earth transit in the city of Houma with one route extending to Nicholls State University in the Thibodaux. Good Earth Transit indicated that it is currently considering the initiation of a loop route in Thibodaux, which would connect with the Houma/Nicholls route resulting in a circulator route for Thibodaux and connectivity between the urban areas.

The deficiency analysis also indicated a need for a fixed route connecting Houma, Matthews/Raceland and Thibodaux. Additionally, there is a potential for a new route along LA 1 from Larose to Golden Meadow. Currently, there are no identified funding sources for these new routes. Furthermore, because these proposed routes cross local jurisdictional boundaries, inter-governmental agreements will be required with the identification of a service provider.