

7: TRANSIT

This chapter summarizes existing and future transit needs in the City of Richland. The following sections outline the criteria used to evaluate needs, strategies for implementing a transit plan and the recommended transit plan for the City of Richland. The needs, criteria and strategies were identified in working with the City's Technical Advisory and Steering Committees for the transportation plan. These committees provided input regarding the transportation system in Richland, specifically exploring transit needs. The method used to develop the transit plan combined citizen and staff input.

Needs

Fixed route transit service operates in Richland, and the routes cover most of the major streets in the central and southern developed areas. The exception is west of Leslie Road along Keene Road that has no fixed route services. In general, the buses arrive every 30 minutes during weekdays and on Saturdays, with no service on Sundays. A dial-a-ride service is available by appointment for patrons with disabilities. A transit taxi service is also available for areas not served by regular fixed routes bus service. Average ridership during weekdays on the fixed-route buses is about 1,500 patrons.

The most notable needs for transit service in Richland are the expansion of fixed route services in the southwest quadrant of the city, more frequent bus services during commute hours, and commute options for Hanford Site workers.

Criteria

The city's vision statement has a set of goals and policies to guide transportation system development in Richland (see Chapter 2). Several of these policies pertain specifically to transit needs:

Goal 1: The City will provide an efficient transportation network including road, rail, water and air, to serve existing needs and to accommodate new development.

- Policy 1 – The City will coordinate planning and operation of transportation facilities with programs to optimize multi-modal transportation programs.

Goal 2: The City will maximize the operating efficiency of its transportation system.

- Policy 3 – The City will actively coordinate the planning, construction, and operation of transportation facilities and programs that may affect the City with local, regional and state jurisdictions.

Goal 6: The City will encourage the use of transportation modes that maximize energy conservation, circulation efficiency and economy.

- Policy 1 – The City will support increased use of multi-modal transportation. This

- includes, but is not limited to, high occupancy vehicle lanes, bicycle trails, park-and-ride facilities, carpools, vanpools, buses and mass transit.
- Policy 2 – The City will coordinate planning efforts for non-motorized modes of travel with other jurisdictions and develop an integrated area-wide plan for non-motorized travel modes that ensures continuity of routes.
 - Policy 4 – The City will encourage new development to be pedestrian friendly and compatible with the public transportation system.

Strategies

Ben Franklin Transit is responsible for any changes in routes through their annual transit service plan process. In order for the City to have its transit needs assessed, the City can provide input to Ben Franklin Transit (BFT) through this process.

Several strategies were developed for the implementation of future transit facilities in Richland. These strategies were developed to provide the City with priorities in providing guidance to BFT since it is likely that the available funding will be insufficient to address all of the projects identified in the Transit Master Plan.

Strategy 1 - "Provide More Frequent Service in Peak Commute Periods"

This strategy focuses on decreasing the headways between buses during peak morning and evening commute periods. This action would increase operating costs for BFT. Without increased ridership (or potential for more ridership), BFT would not upgrade services. The most recent study¹ done for BFT does not recommended increased bus services on routes in Richland.

Strategy 2 - "Provide Express Routes to Regional Employment Centers"

This strategy is aimed at providing service directly from Tri-City transit centers to regional employment centers. This might include a few local stops followed by express service to a central transit shelter in the Hanford Site facilities (one or two stops at park & ride lots along the way).

Strategy 3 - "Provide Commuter Rail"

This strategy focuses on providing Commuter Rail through Richland along the Tri-City Railroad alignment. This allows greater connectivity to the regional transit network and to other nearby Cities such as Kennewick, Benton County, and the Hanford Site. Stations in the Richland area could be located near the Columbia Park Trail interchange, near Van Giesen Street or near Horn Rapids Road.

BFT conducted a regional study of alternative transit service options such as express bus and commuter rail as suggested above. The findings of their study² showed that the cost

¹ *Ben Franklin Transit Comprehensive Service Plan, Interim Report: Service Proposals*, Abrams-Cherwony & Associates, September 2003. No additional routes or changes in weekday bus headway were recommended for BFT in the City of Richland. The BFT Board has yet to act on these proposed recommendations.

² *Ben Franklin Transit Comprehensive Service Plan, Hanford Reservation Public Transportation Review*, Abrams-Cherwony & Associates, May 2003. Capital cost estimates for the Commuter Rail service included \$3.2 million per train station, plus \$17 to \$42 million in rail cars, depending on the frequency of operation.

associated with providing these new services would not be adequately supported by expected transit ridership increases. Other metropolitan areas with viable commuter rail services included Seattle-Tacoma, San Francisco, Chicago, New Jersey-New York – all areas much larger than the Tri-Cities area. The general recommendation of this study was to continue operations of the vanpool system and increase the fleet of vans as demand requires.

Strategy 4 - “Provide Bus Shelters/Improved User Amenities”

This strategy focuses on installation of bus shelters and other user amenities along bus routes in Richland. The need for bus shelters at bus stops, as well as other user amenities, should be evaluated in conjunction with any new commercial or residential development adjacent to a transit street. Typical daily boarding thresholds of 35 patrons or more could be used to support installation of a covered bus shelter and bench. One highly valued user amenity is “real time” bus schedule information at major bus stops, indicating how long it would be before the next bus arrives at a particular stop. This type of tracking system requires on-board bus GPS units, and a centralized control process.

Strategy 5 - “Provide More Local Transit Service”

This strategy focuses on providing more transit service on local routes (typically near where people live), rather than primarily on arterials and collectors. An assessment of existing transit route coverage in Richland was done comparing current and future placement of transit services in relationship to land use densities that would be supportive of transit use. The land use data from the travel demand forecast model was utilized in this assessment. A one-quarter mile “buffer” was established around each transit stop and compared to the adjacent land use. The existing conditions indicate that about 86 percent of the land area in Richland with density supportive of transit use would be within one-quarter mile of a transit stop (Figure 7-1). Future transit coverage would remain the same as existing, and the same transit supportive land area in Richland would be served (Figure 7-2). This does not specifically address the frequency of some of the transit services or the destinations (which would require coordination with BFT for this strategy to be effectively implemented).

Strategy 6 - “Provide Access to Commercial Areas”

This strategy focuses on providing access to locations where people choose to do their shopping. Commercial areas in the greater Richland area might include Columbia Center Shopping Mall, shopping centers along George Washington Way, and the shopping centers along Gage Boulevard.

Strategy 7 - "Provide Park & Ride Lots"

This strategy provides park & ride lots at locations where concentrated transit demand exists or where it is desirable for BFT to stop.

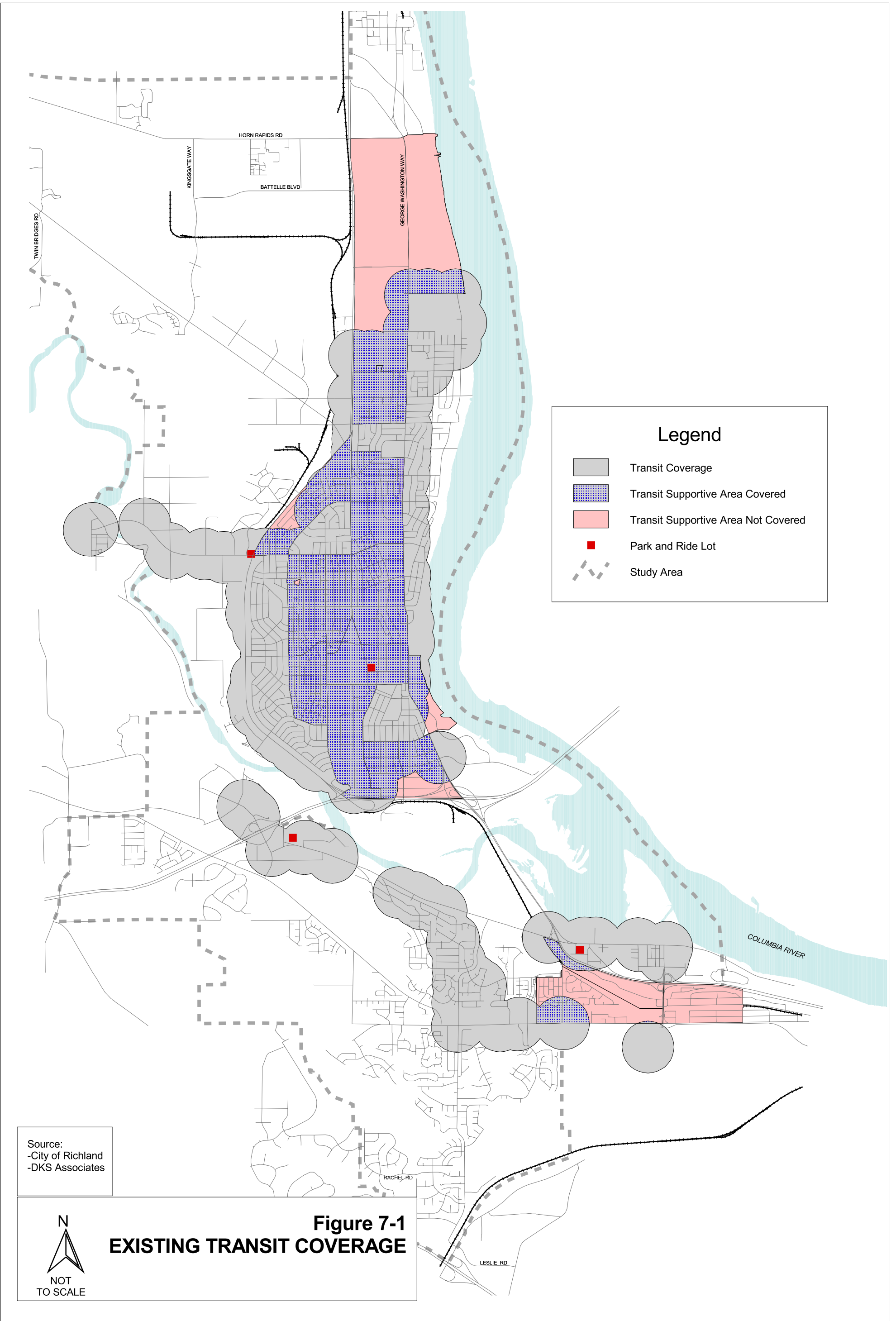
Strategy 8 - "Provide Access to Activity & Service Centers"

This strategy focuses on providing transit access to destinations such as community centers, hospitals, schools, churches, etc. Table 7-1 summarizes the strategies in terms of meeting the transportation goals and policies of Richland.

In addition, operating costs were estimated from \$1.8 to \$6.4 million annually. Ridership targets assumed 80,000 to 380,000 annually, depending on quality and frequency of services.

Table 7-1: Transit Facility Strategies Comparisons

Strategy	Policies				
	1-1	2-3	6-1	6-2	6-4
1. Provide More Frequent Service in Peak Commute Periods	□	□	□	□	●
2. Provide Express Routes to Regional Employment Centers	□	■	■	□	□
3. Provide Commuter Rail	□	■	■	□	○
4. Provide Bus Shelters/Improved User Amenities	□	●	●	●	□
5. Provide More Local Transit Service	●	□	□	●	□
6. Provide Access to Commercial Areas	●	●	●	●	□
7. Provide Park & Ride Lots	□	□	□	□	●
8. Provide Access to Activity & Service Centers	●	●	●	●	□
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fully meets criteria □ Mostly meets criteria ● Partially meets criteria ○ Does not meet criteria 					



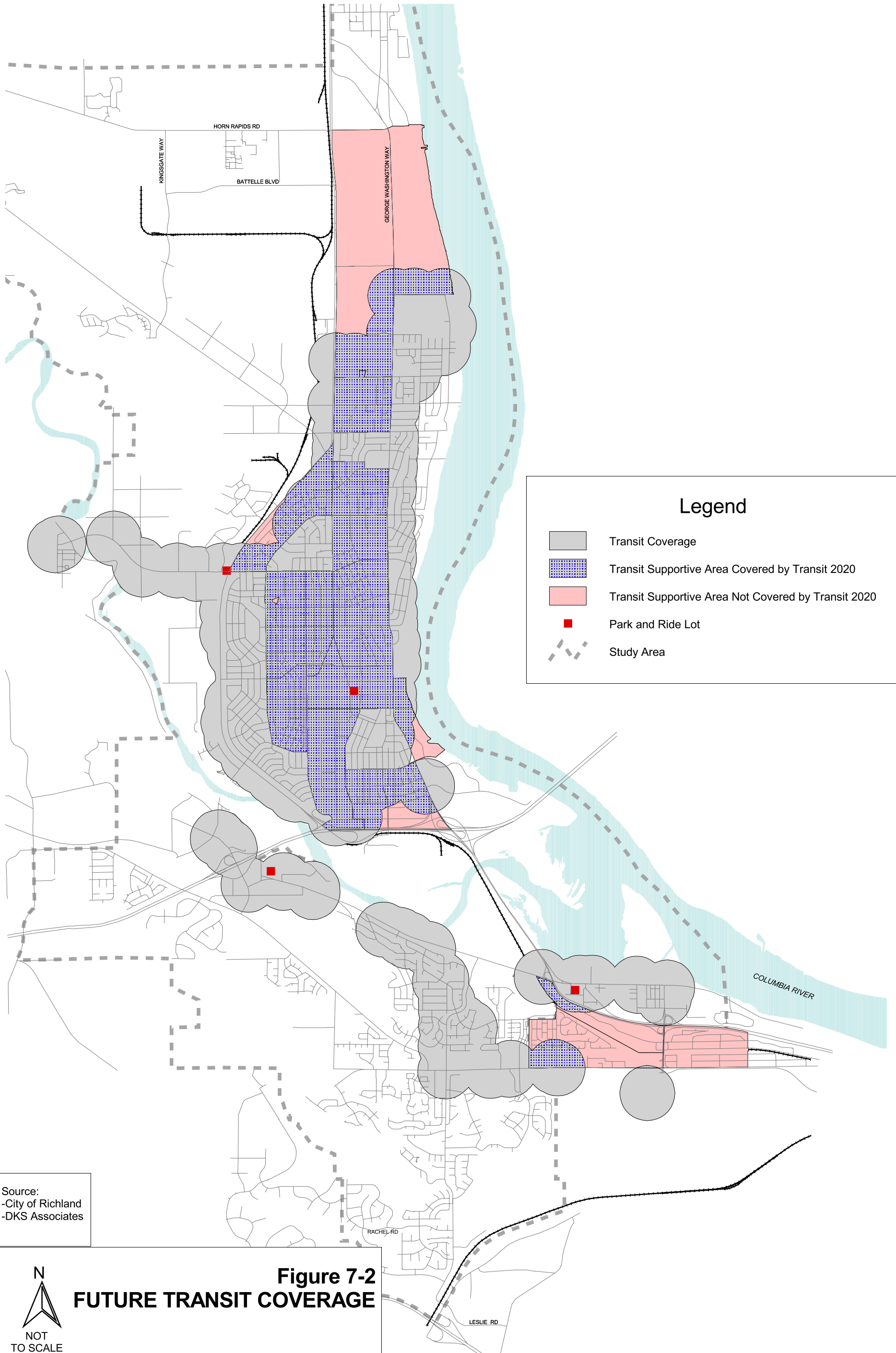
Legend

- Transit Coverage
- Transit Supportive Area Covered
- Transit Supportive Area Not Covered
- Park and Ride Lot
- Study Area

Source:
-City of Richland
-DKS Associates

Figure 7-1
EXISTING TRANSIT COVERAGE





Legend

- Transit Coverage
- Transit Supportive Area Covered by Transit 2020
- Transit Supportive Area Not Covered by Transit 2020
- Park and Ride Lot
- Study Area

Source:
-City of Richland
-DKS Associates

Figure 7-2
FUTURE TRANSIT COVERAGE



Recommended Transit Plan

Public Transit

Proposed transit projects are summarized in Table 7-2. Transit projects were determined based on strategies listed above and project feasibility.

Table 7-2: Potential Transit Projects

Rank	Project	Description
1	Provide Transit Amenities at Major Transit Stops	Provide shelters, information kiosks, etc along key transit routes in Richland with land use development. Focus on development of “SMART” bus stops. Expand park and ride lots where demand exceeds existing capacity.
2	Improve Pedestrian Connections to Transit Facilities	Construct sidewalks, crosswalks, etc. adjacent to transit routes and facilities (i.e. park-and-ride lots, bus stops, etc.). Within one-quarter mile of bus stops, focus on enhancing pedestrian access. Give priority to improvements within the designated Pedestrian District.
3	Decrease Headways	Provide more frequent transit service during peak commute periods.
4	Provide More Local Service	Provide services along Keene Road and in the southwestern part of the City (i.e. Leslie Road south of Gage, Kennedy Road) and the Stevens Drive area north of SR 240. Expand fixed-route services, as development requires. Time additional transit service to coordinate with major road extensions or street improvements.
5	Signal Priority/Preemption	Equip signals throughout the City of Richland with priority/pre-emption capabilities. This system could increase adherence to transit schedules as buses that are behind schedule receive “priority” at signalized intersections. Currently the City of Kennewick has a signal priority/pre-emption system in place.

Complementing Land Use Actions

Consider requirements in the City of Richland Development Code that provides approval criteria related to public transit. The following provisions are recommended:

- a. Provisions within the plan shall be included for providing for transit if the development proposal is adjacent to existing or proposed transit route;
- b. The requirements for transit facilities shall be based on:
 - The location of other transit facilities in the area; and
 - The size and type of the proposal.
- c. The following facilities may be required after City and BFT review:
 - Bus stop shelters;
 - Turnouts for buses; and
 - Connecting paths to the shelters.

The code provision should define adjacent as having a bus stop within 500 feet of the property.