

Executive Summary



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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The mission of the Farmington MPO is to provide a forum to develop an effective transportation system to move people and goods safely, economically, and efficiently while maintaining a high quality of life. This transit planning effort is an outgrowth of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for the region which establishes a 20-year vision for transportation within the Farmington MPO and helps to guide investments in all modes of transportation including highways, roads, bridges, buses, airports, bicycle, and pedestrian. This transit study was expected to achieve the following key outcomes:

- Determine the most feasible options for expansion of the system to meet existing and projected needs of the community.
- Determine if bidirectional, linear routes [route structure] would better serve the public than the existing loop system, and identify how to transition from the existing loop system to a bidirectional line route system.
- Determine optimum locations for a transit hub terminal in Farmington as well as other key locations in the MPO region.
- Determine feasible routes and schedule changes to improve service levels by 2015 and 2020.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Short-term recommendations focus on responding to customer and agency requests which can be accomplished within the existing budget. These changes include adding more stops to existing routes and pursuing a route restructuring that will provide more efficient, flexible, and direct travel options for those relying on public transportation. Bidirectional service without additional funding means that service will be made available to more customers throughout the region at a lesser frequency (60-minute rather than 30-minute).

Options for low-cost, incremental changes to strategically provide more hours of service and service to growing areas are provided in the event that economic conditions improve. No commitments are made or implied, as City Councils, the

County Commission, and MPO Policy committees all made it clear their near-term priorities were for budget-neutral solutions.

Longer-term solutions are those expected to be after 2015. They start with the incremental changes noted above if economic conditions do not permit it before 2015. They also include recommendations for all-day service between the four communities, a new route between Bloomfield and Aztec, and capital investments in additional shelters, new hubs, and bus pull-outs.

MEETING EXISTING AND PROJECTED NEEDS

The estimated 2010 US Census population for the four communities of Farmington, Aztec, Bloomfield, and Kirtland is 61,479. The estimated population for the metropolitan planning boundary is 105,100. The area is projected to grow 19 percent over the next 10 years to 127,100 in 2020. By 2035, the population is projected to grow 34 percent to 140,637. The data show that birth rates are expected to continue higher than average into the future, which means that the Farmington area will see relatively consistent proportions of elderly persons among population, rather than an overall aging of the population. In total, 15 to 20 percent of the population needs public transportation. This includes persons who, by poverty status, disability status, age, or households without cars, need public transportation.

Household survey data are not available to definitively confirm what percentage of the population is actually using public transportation. A future household survey should include questions which measure both the utilization and support for public transportation.

Demand estimates for various trip types (city fixed-route, commuter, and elderly/disabled) suggest that there are currently unmet needs. Peer transit system analyses suggest performance improvements could be made to serve more persons.

Performance improvements alone will not close the gap in unmet needs. Input from the public and stakeholders over the course of four rounds of meetings

(June, July, October, and November 2010) identified desires for changes to the current system. The identified changes were, in order of priority: (1) infill current routes with more stops, (2) provide bidirectional service or some alternative to the current one-way loops, and (3) expand service beyond current geographic and schedule limits.

ROUTE STRUCTURE

The study explored two different route structure options for regional service and four different route structure options for local Farmington service. By a two-to-one vote, the preference of the public and stakeholders at meetings was to move in the direction of linear, bidirectional routes, with stops on both sides of the road.

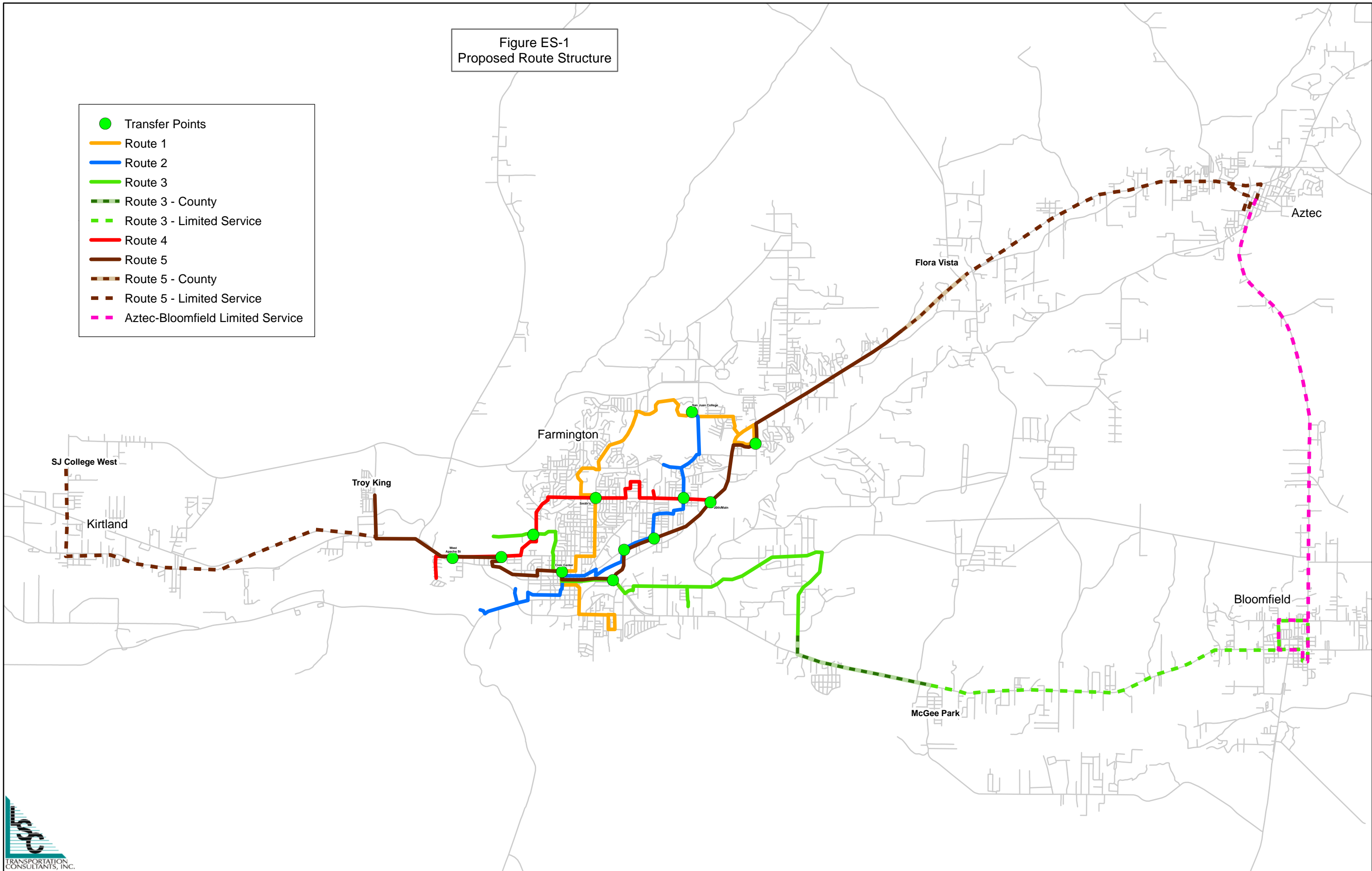
Regional service considered adding a new route or extending existing routes to accomplish the goal of all-day service expansion. This was compared to the current three-times daily service between Farmington and the communities of Aztec, Bloomfield, and Kirtland. Improving frequencies and extending service out from Farmington were clear preferences, and resulted in the route structure recommendation shown in Figure ES-1.

Local service options included: (1) single hub along 20th, (2) splitting the current Red and Green loops into linear pairs with the same endpoints, (3) moving further with restructuring of Option 2 into linear routes, and (4) a two-hub option with most routes beginning and ending at the Farmington Civic Center and Animas Valley Mall. The linear routes concept was the clear preference, with some of the ideas of the other concepts incorporated into the final configuration. The final configuration is shown in Figure ES-2.

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Figure ES-1
Proposed Route Structure

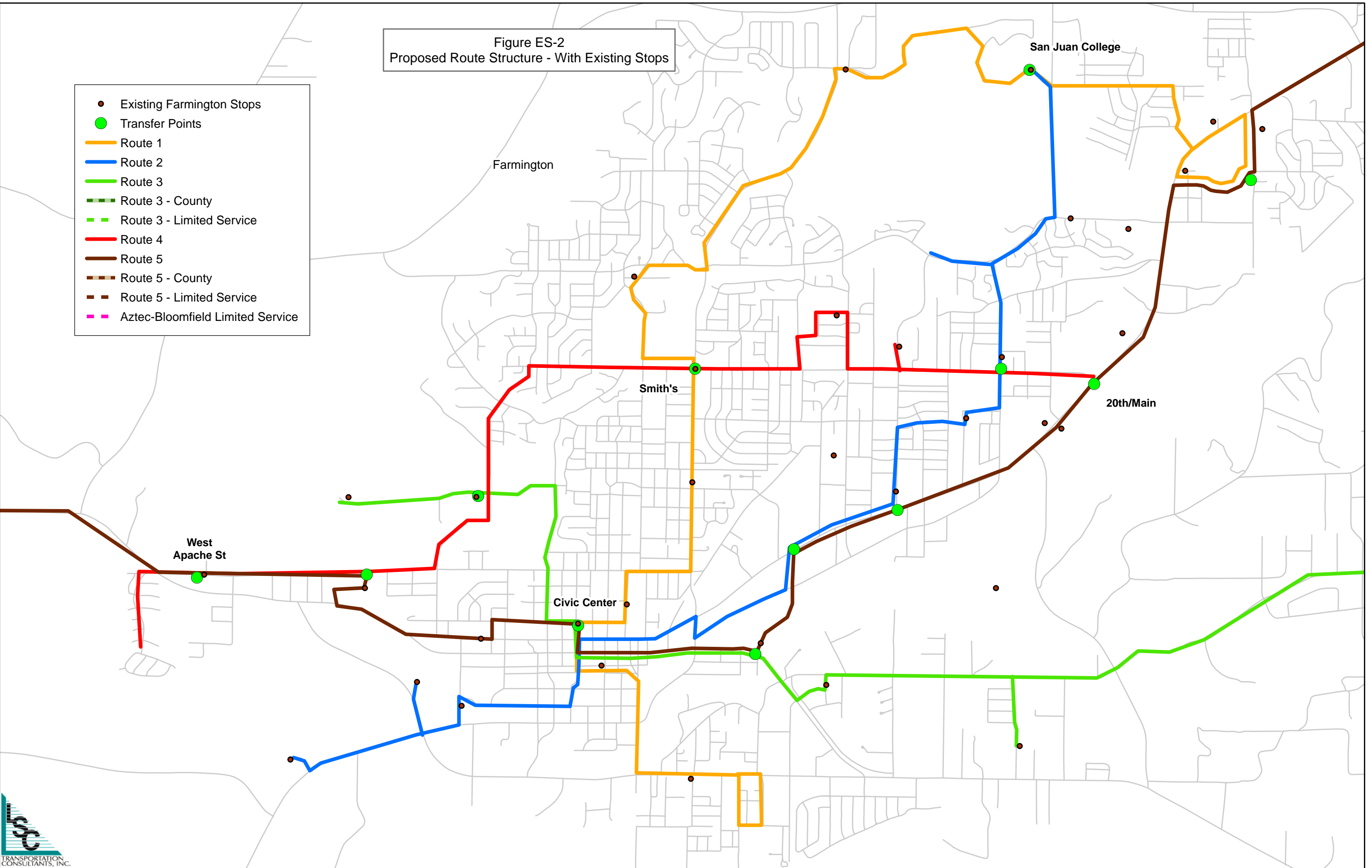
- Transfer Points
- Route 1
- Route 2
- Route 3
- Route 3 - County
- Route 3 - Limited Service
- Route 4
- Route 5
- Route 5 - County
- Route 5 - Limited Service
- Aztec-Bloomfield Limited Service



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Figure ES-2
Proposed Route Structure - With Existing Stops

- Existing Farmington Stops
- Transfer Points
- Route 1
- Route 2
- Route 3
- Route 3 - County
- Route 3 - Limited Service
- Route 4
- Route 5
- Route 5 - County
- Route 5 - Limited Service
- Aztec-Bloomfield Limited Service



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TRANSIT HUBS AND TRANSFERS

Based on the final route configuration, the transit hub strategy emphasizes the following actions:

- System configuration supports a distributed system of transfers.
- Two existing locations will continue to be important: Civic Center and 20th near Butler.
- One new location has been identified as important: 20th/Main.
- Investments should be made to focus public resources into publicly owned rights-of-way.
- Smaller, incremental investments in transfer facilities—such as shelters, lane markings, traffic signal coordination, and pedestrian treatments—will be sufficient to support a successful transit system.
- Transfer facility investments should be made in a coordinated fashion with traffic, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements, both for budgetary efficiency and to minimize construction-based inconvenience to the public.
- Service coordination with Navajo Nation Transit at Kirtland, American Plaza (Farmington), and Bloomfield has the potential to offer more regional and interregional travel options for residents of the region and should be pursued.

SERVICE CHANGES BEFORE AND AFTER 2015

Based on budget discussions with the public, stakeholders, and elected officials, actions which are budget-neutral will be undertaken between now and 2015. Actions requiring additional funding are expected to be after 2015.

Actions that require additional funding have been identified in small increments. If short-term economic conditions improve, some of them, such as additional shelters, may be implementable sooner than 2015. The incremental nature of these options also lends itself to phased implementation after 2015.

Phasing options and schedule evaluations have been completed and provided to support contracted transit managers and local staff in making these decisions. A financial plan is also included which considers the various options as well as the effects of inflation over time.