

# Mobility Solutions for a Changing World

Strategic Framework and Action Plan

2020-2024

Spring 2020





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3E GAMES



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# Strategic Framework

**Delaware County Transit (DCT), formerly DATA Bus, is in the process of transforming itself to provide mobility solutions for a rapidly changing world.**

This Strategic Framework and Action Plan outlines the steps DCT will take – using collaboration, innovative technology and business intelligence – to deliver high quality, citizen-centered mobility services.

## 2020-2024 Goal

*The desired future state:* DCT will be the mobility leader in Delaware County and a mobility partner to the surrounding region. It will provide useful, effective and efficient transit for Delaware County riders and become customer centric in its product design.

## Strategies

*The priority steps DCT will take to achieve the goal:*

### Strategy ①

Pilot new and improved services

### Strategy ②

Develop workforce transportation solutions

### Strategy ③

Increase coordination of human services transportation

### Strategy ④

Conduct a transit system redesign

### Strategy ⑤

Further develop professional capacity with Board oversight

## Mission

*The desired present state:* Delaware County Transit makes lives better by connecting people to their community through safe and reliable transportation.

## Values

*Fundamental beliefs:* Safety / Customer Experience / Accessibility / Efficiency / Responsible Stewardship / Communication / Flexible Leadership

# Rethinking Transportation

Transportation is undergoing a transformational shift in this digital age. New mobility models are emerging that are forcing all transportation providers – and new, private counterparts – to rethink how best to get people where they want to go.

**Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's** (MORPC) insight2050<sup>1</sup> research predicts three million people will live in Central Ohio by 2050. To prepare for this 50% growth, MORPC promotes more inward, transit-oriented development where sewer, water, streets and schools already exist. This creates more walkable places where it's easier for young and older adults to bike or take a bus to work, or to walk to a nearby restaurant or doctor's appointment. MORPC's findings indicate this also preserves land, energy, and is more fiscally responsible than less planned growth.

**Smart Columbus** is testing how connected cars and trucks, automated (self-driving) transit vehicles and smart apps can increase safety, connect pregnant moms with healthcare and improve access to jobs.<sup>2</sup>

Ohio's long-range transportation plan, Access Ohio 2045, envisions a more multimodal transportation system during the next 25 years.<sup>3</sup> **Ohio Department of Transportation** (ODOT) is working collaboratively with local communities to realize this vision.

ODOT's **DriveOhio** division is leading a number of hi-tech smart mobility initiatives to improve the safe movement of people and goods, including piloting automated transit shuttles in Columbus, Youngstown and rural areas.<sup>4</sup>

**OneDelaware**, a fund of the Delaware County Foundation, has developed a strategic guide for commercial development along the congested Route 23 corridor in Delaware County. In partnership with local governments and private employers, the Route 23 Strategic Guide calls for promoting commuting options like carpooling, employer shuttles and more transit.<sup>5</sup>

**It is within this context that Delaware County Transit (DCT) will collaborate and test best practices to see what works best for Delaware County residents and employers.**



<sup>1</sup>See [getinsight2050.org](http://getinsight2050.org) for research findings and recommendations

<sup>2</sup>See [Smart.Columbus.gov](http://Smart.Columbus.gov) for research under development

<sup>3</sup>See [Access.Ohio.gov](http://Access.Ohio.gov) for research findings and long range transportation plan recommendations

<sup>4</sup>See [Drive.Ohio.gov](http://Drive.Ohio.gov) for a summary of smart mobility initiatives

<sup>5</sup>See [OneDelaware.net](http://OneDelaware.net) for the Route 23 Strategic Guide

## Strategy 1

# Proposed New and Improved Services

Using funds awarded by the ODOT Office of Transit, DCT is considering three proposed pilots. The objectives are to improve customer experience and satisfaction, increase ridership and make fares more affordable for all Delaware County residents. This includes using innovative technology and new vehicles to improve operations and service quality. The lessons learned and community feedback received will inform the development of future mobility improvements.

## Proposed Pilot 1

### Reduce Fares for Demand Response Service

*Proposed start: July 1, 2020, with further proposed reductions in 2021*

#### Current Service

DCT offers demand response, curbside service that allows any Delaware County resident to call one day ahead to schedule a ride. DCT picks up customers and takes them to their specified destinations within the county during weekdays between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Trips to medical facilities outside of the county are also provided.

**In 2019, DCT provided 9,547 demand response trips to the public.**

Trips out of the county are charged an additional \$6 per mile. Most trips are provided to eligible social service agency customers, like Delaware County Jobs and Family Services, through contracts between DCT and the agencies.

Currently, SourcePoint offers “Bus Bucks” to county residents 55 and older, which provides reduced fares for up to 8 one-way trips per month. Those fares range from \$2 for up to a five-mile trip and \$6 for a trip out of the county (two are allowed per month).

### Customer and Community Needs

Unfortunately, at least 80% of those who call for a demand response ride can't afford the current fare. Other Delaware County residents may be discouraged from even calling for a trip due to the high cost.

**Since DCT lost federal funding in 2014, fares have increased to \$11 for a five-mile trip and up to \$67 for a 25-mile trip.**

In 2013 before the fares were raised, 27,455 trips were provided. By 2019 trips provided dropped by 78%.

DCT estimates many of those lost customers, as well as residents in the 769 households in Delaware County without vehicles, would ride this service if fares were more affordable.

**“When it comes to those who do not qualify for paratransit, Bus Bucks or any other discounted demand response program, out of 10 inquiries, 10 would tell me that they could not afford our fares.”**

- DCT customer service representative

## Pilot Approach

This proposed pilot would reduce demand response fares for the general public over a two-year period. The pilot and first fare decrease would begin July 1, 2020, with additional fare reductions proposed in 2021. This phased, controlled approach enables DCT to hire more operators and purchase additional vehicles only as needed to meet increased demand.

Current Fares	
Average Distance	Current Fares
0+ to 5 miles	\$11.00
5+ to 10 miles	\$25.00
10+ to 15 miles	\$39.00
15+ to 20 miles	\$53.00
20+ to 25 miles	\$67.00
Out of county	\$6.00 per mile

Average Distance	Approved New Reduced Fares	Proposed Reduced Fares
	July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021	July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022
0+ to 10 miles	\$8.00	\$5.00
10+ to 20 miles	\$17.00	\$10.00
20+ miles in county	\$29.00	\$25.00
Out of county*	\$3.80 per mile	\$3.80 per mile

\*Out of county trips will be charged \$3.80 per mile from origin to destination.

## Communication and Engagement

DCT will communicate the fare reduction to existing riders through its website and social media, e-newsletter, a public hearing, and with printed information on its vehicles, at transit stops and at SourcePoint.

**New target riders include county residents who do not live near fixed routes or live in zero car households.**

DCT will alert and offer briefings to Age Friendly Delaware, medical providers, social services and other partner agencies, and market the reduced fares through targeted radio ads and social media.

## Key Performance Indicators

- Number, percent increase in service requests
- Number, percent increase in riders
- Customer satisfaction with experience (measured via surveys, calls, etc.)
- Cost per passenger
- Cost per revenue mile
- Passengers per revenue mile

## Proposed Pilot 2

### Saturday “Flex” Route Service

*Proposed start: September 1, 2020*

#### Current Service

DCT bus service travels four fixed routes from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. each weekday. The fare is \$1 per ride. There is currently no weekend service.

**In 2019, 49,616 trips were provided on weekday bus routes.**

#### Customer and Community Needs

One of the most requested services is to again offer Saturday service, which was eliminated due to budget cutbacks in 2018.

**When DCT last operated Saturday bus service there were 8,358 trips annually on three routes.**

Another frequent request is to reduce the travel time on bus routes and provide more direct service from a customer’s home to his or her destination and back again.

#### Pilot Approach

Transit systems in Mt. Vernon, Ohio and on the West Coast have found success in offering “flex” bus route service, where passengers who live within 3/4 of a mile of an existing bus route can call for a ride up to 15 minutes before the route start time. This then prompts the bus operator to deviate from the fixed route to pick up the customer(s) at the curb by their home. This provides a shorter, more direct ride for the customer.

Following this model, DCT would pilot three to four flex routes on Saturdays, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., starting September 1, 2020.

### Communication and Engagement

DCT will communicate the service to existing riders through its website and social media, e-newsletter, a public hearing, and with printed information on its vehicles, at transit stops and at SourcePoint.

DCT will alert and offer briefings to social service and other partner agencies, and market the reduced fares through targeted radio and social media ads.

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of service requests
- Number of Saturday riders
- Travel time
- Customer satisfaction with experience (surveys, calls, etc.)
- On-time performance
- Cost per passenger
- Cost per revenue mile
- Passengers per revenue hour

## Proposed Pilot 3

### Evening DASH, On-Demand Weekend

*Proposed start: Spring, 2021*

#### Current Service

DCT currently offers no weekend evening service.

#### Customer and Community Needs

Delaware visitors and residents who visit downtown area restaurants, micro-breweries and First Friday events on weekend evenings have difficulty finding parking and don't want to drink and drive.

**Main Street Delaware estimates that downtown Delaware retailers and businesses attract approximately 1.8 to 2 million visitors per year.**

#### Pilot Approach

DASH would provide new, on demand transportation within the city of Delaware that passengers would request through a mobile app. Surveys show Friday and Saturday evenings from 5:30 p.m. to midnight are the most requested times and days, so DASH would offer service during these times.

#### Communication and Engagement

DCT will communicate the service to existing riders through its website and social media, e-newsletter, a public hearing, and with printed information on its vehicles and at transit stops.

**New target riders live within Delaware City limits. DCT will work with the Delaware Chamber of Commerce and Main Street Delaware to identify and collaborate with interested downtown Delaware businesses.**

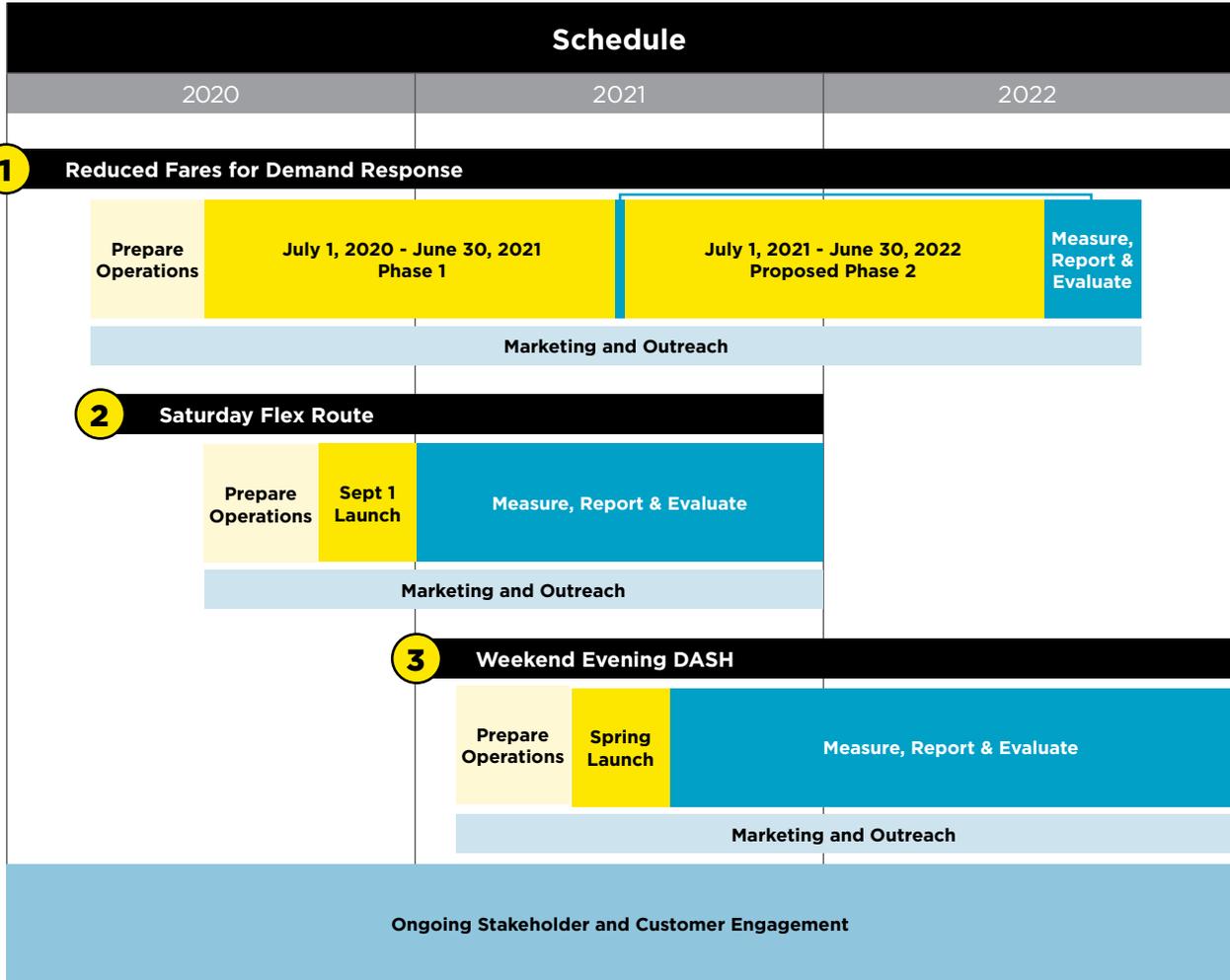
DCT will collaborate with these partners to market the service to their customers with signage at participating businesses, social media posts/ads and other promotion.

#### Key Performance Indicators

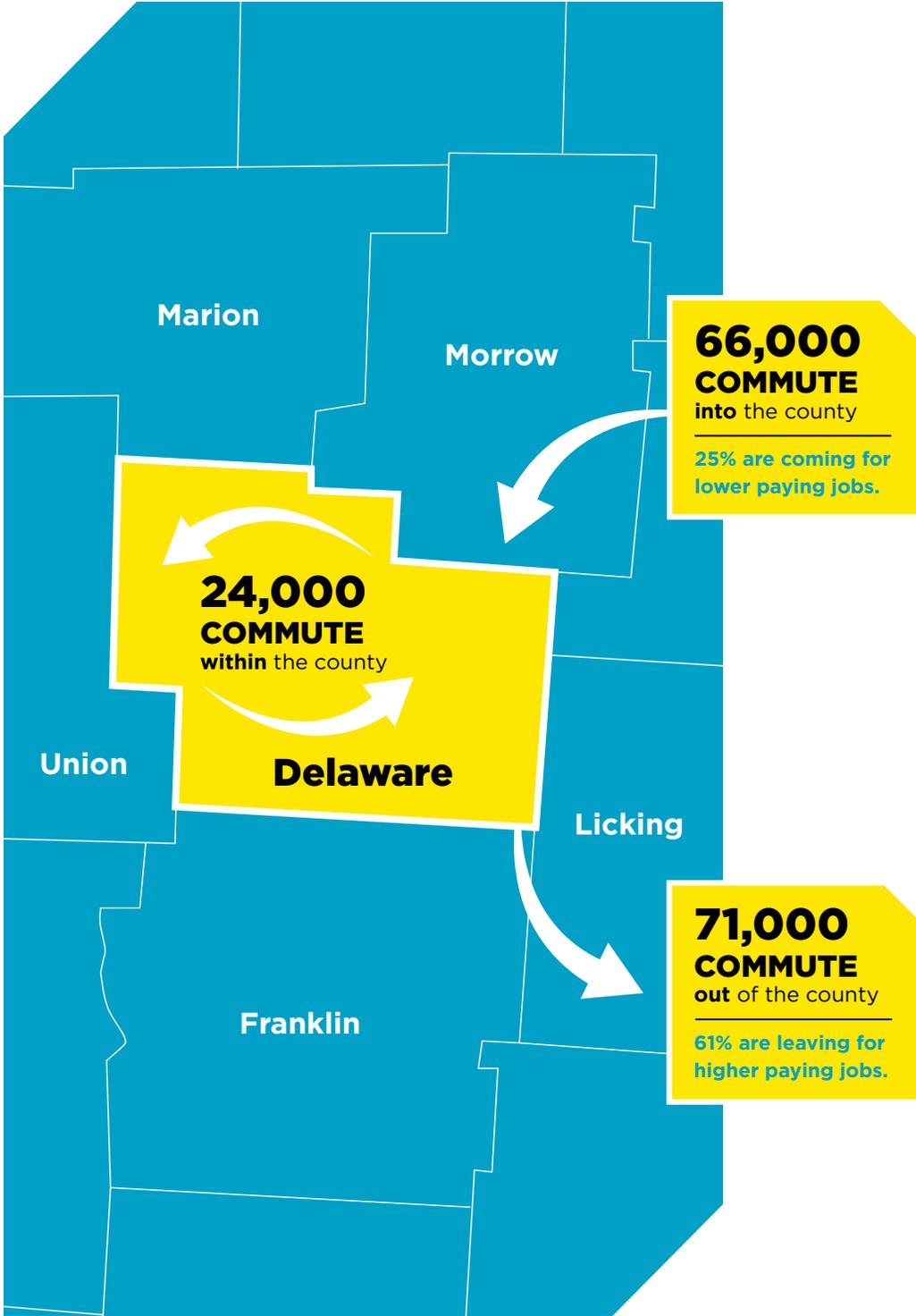
- Number of service requests
- Number of Friday and Saturday riders
- Travel time
- Customer satisfaction with experience (surveys, calls, etc.)
- On-time performance
- Cost per passenger
- Cost per revenue mile
- Passengers per revenue hour

# Proposed Pilot Schedule

The three pilots would be launched and operated starting 2020 and 2021. Based on lessons learned, the pilots could continue as introduced, evolve or be completed in 2023.



# Delaware County Commuter Patterns



Source: US Census, 2017, All Jobs Category, courtesy of OneDelaware's Route 23 Strategic Guide.

## Strategy 2

# Workforce Transportation Solutions

DCT will continue its collaboration with Delaware city and county economic development officials, local employers, COTA and OneDelaware to understand employment transportation needs and develop innovative methods to address them.

The Route 23 Strategic Guide produced by OneDelaware reports there are 97,000 employees in Delaware County. Sixty-six thousand of those jobs are filled with workers commuting into the county, and 25% of those come for lower paying jobs. Twenty-four thousand people live and work within Delaware County.

### Current Service

While commuters can use DCT's demand response and fixed route bus services to get to work, convenient access is limited.

**Twenty-nine percent of DCT fixed-route trips are work-related. Four percent of demand response trips are for work.**

### Customer and Community Needs

Because so many people are already employed, Delaware County employers have difficulty finding workers to fill open positions. For those looking for jobs, however, the job pay does not necessarily cover housing, transportation and childcare costs.

**According to data released in 2019 by Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Central Ohio's unemployment rate was 3.8%; Delaware County's rate was the lowest at 3.4%.**

### Approach

Working with various localities and employers, DCT has identified these specific areas where employers need workers, and where workers need better access to these jobs: the Rt. 23 and 33 corridors, Tanger Mall and the I-71 and Rts. 36/37 area, and the Polaris area. DCT will explore public-private partnerships with the city of Delaware, Delaware County, COTA and employers to test transportation options.

DCT will also continue its leadership in convening a Regional Coordination Committee of transit agencies, workforce development professionals, MORPC and ODOT. This group is determining how best to coordinate and facilitate travel for people who need a ride to and from work in Delaware and surrounding rural counties.

Additionally, DCT is a member of the US 33 Corridor Plan Steering Committee, which is assisting ODOT in developing a vision to meet current and long-term mobility needs in Union and Logan counties.

### Key Performance Indicators

- Secure funding
- Number of employer participants
- Number of participating workforce riders
- Contribution to economic development  
(See *My Economic Impact Tool* at [apta.com](http://apta.com))

## Strategy 3

# Human Services Transportation Coordination

DCT will work with MORPC, ODOT and local agencies to deploy innovation human services transportation solutions that improve service to all those most in need, in the most cost effective way. The lessons learned and community feedback received will inform the development of future mobility improvements.

### Current Service

For the purpose of this strategy framework, human services transportation is defined as transportation for any trip purpose except for work related purposes.

As shown in the tables below, the majority of non-work transportation provided by DCT is for medical, shopping and social destinations.

DCT has already made progress toward meeting its goal to be the mobility leader in Delaware County. As Delaware's Mobility Manager, DCT advises residents how to access affordable transportation options from a variety of partners – and also connects them to social services that will increase their level of self-sufficiency.

### Customer and Community Needs

Medical transportation is one of the most challenging to provide cost-efficiently because it is typically by appointment and can be for farther

distances. This makes it difficult for dispatchers to group trips and reduces efficiencies in the transit system. For example, the fewer passengers riding the transit vehicle at any one time, the more the operating cost per passenger increases.

### Approach

DCT will build on DelawareMobility.com and work with MORPC, ODOT, medical facilities, social service agencies and Age Friendly Delaware to seek more coordination of appointments to improve the efficiency of human services transportation. DCT will also seek public-private partnerships to fill gaps in mobility services.

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of service requests
- Travel time
- Customer satisfaction with experience (surveys, calls, etc.)
- On-time performance
- Passengers per revenue hour

### 2019 DCT Passenger Trip Demographics

Demographic	% of Fixed Route Trips
Youth - Age 0 to 18	2%
Typical - Age 19 to 54	22%
Silver - Age 55 to 64	13%
Gold - Age 65+	25%
Disabled	18%
Personal Care Assistant and No Charge Passenger	14%
Other - Age Not Identified	4%

### 2019 DCT Passenger Trip Purposes

Purpose	% of Demand Response Trips	% of Fixed Route Trips*
Adult Daycare	10%	0%
Education	1%	5%
Medical	66%	16%
Service Appointment	7%	3%
Shopping	6%	48%
Social	7%	13%
Work	4%	29%

\* Percentages do not equal 100% due to passengers reporting multiple trips.

## Strategy 4

# Transit System Redesign

DCT and its Board aspire to conduct a transit system redesign starting in 2021. This will be a top to bottom look at the Delaware County transit network to make sure it meets the needs, priorities and values of the people who live and work in Delaware County.

### Customer and Community Needs

The strategies outlined in this framework will provide DCT an opportunity to reduce fares, test new service concepts and increase local and regional collaboration to further address gaps in mobility. The pilots would give DCT an opportunity to build more professional and operational capacity to meet growing demands for services.

**DCT and its Board aspire to conduct a holistic, resident and customer-driven transit system analysis and redesign starting in 2021.**

This will enable Delaware County residents, employers and agencies to reimagine mobility services that build on pilot successes and lessons learned.

### Approach

A comprehensive transit redesign is a large undertaking. It requires extensive staff effort supported by national transit planning and local public involvement expertise.

DCT will work with ODOT and MORPC to seek grant funds for this effort. Once underway, DCT's redesign effort will convene residents, businesses, local governments, social service agencies and others to ensure everyone has a voice in shaping Delaware County's mobility future.

### Key Performance Indicators

- Grant application submission
- Grant funds secured
- Scope development

## Strategy 5

# Professional Management with Board Oversight

DCT has a professional staff and Board committed to delivering safe, convenient and affordable mobility services to Delaware County residents. With Board oversight and involvement, DCT will continue to build staff capacity and business intelligence.

### Current Status

In just the past year, DCT has launched a new name and logo, put new vehicles in service and implemented new scheduling technology.

The Board has established new committees and review processes, and the diverse skillsets and relationships each member brings ensures multi-faceted oversight.

### Customer and Community Needs

As noted in its values, DCT is committed to being responsible stewards of public funds and the public's trust. The strategies outlined here are being developed with Board oversight and will include detailed budgets, schedules and implementation plans with key performance indicators. These will be reported regularly at Board meetings and online at [DelCoTransit.com](http://DelCoTransit.com).

### Approach

This Strategic Framework and Action Plan summarizes the ideals that DCT will continually strive to achieve.

The mission, vision, values and overall goal to become the county's mobility leader are expected to be realized over several years.

These strategies are the priority steps DCT will follow in the short term – for the next two to three years – to develop a sustainable service delivery and funding model. The plan will be reviewed regularly as circumstances warrant, and plan elements may be modified, added or substituted if needed.

### Key Performance Indicators

- Monthly financial and key performance reporting
- Number of professional development hours
- Staff retention
- Growth in number of people served
- Increased effectiveness using FTA performance indicators<sup>6</sup>

### Administration

Denny Schooley, **Executive Director**

Ginny Berry, **Community Relations and Marketing Specialist**

Grant Bias, **Safety, Security and Training Manager**

Crystal James, **Operations Director**

Tonya Layman, **Mobility Manager**

Ed Pierson, **Facilities, Assets and Technology Manager**

Tina Smith, **Controller, HR Coordinator**

### Delaware County Transit Board

Boots Sheets, **Chair**

Fred Johnson, **Vice-Chair**

David Black, **Treasurer**

Jacob Fathbruckner, **Secretary**

Roger VanSickle

Becky Cornett

Richard Schrock

<sup>6</sup>[transit.dot.gov/PerformanceManagement](http://transit.dot.gov/PerformanceManagement)



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