

Bus service supply, demand meet

Loveland's efforts to better meet community transit desires have been successful. Ridership during 2008 increased by 21 percent.

More buses, more routes and more destinations serviced more riders; a total of more than 135,000 passenger rides on the City's three regular (fixed) bus routes last year.

Major changes in the bus system were launched in August. A third Loveland bus route began and the two existing routes were modified. Overall, service was expanded to the north, south and east while at the same time making the routes more convenient for the riders.

The new Orange Route offers new, more direct north-south service. The Green and Blue routes were each revised and expanded a bit to serve east and west Loveland, respectively. All three buses meet at two central locations for passenger transfers.

And to misquote presidential candidate and newspaper editor Horace Greeley, the transit system now enables Loveland riders to "Go east, young man" into Horace's namesake community. The Loveland system connects at Centerra with the new 34 Xpress route into Greeley.

The FoxTrot bus to Fort Collins continues to run every hour, with its transfer station now at the Orchards Shopping Center.

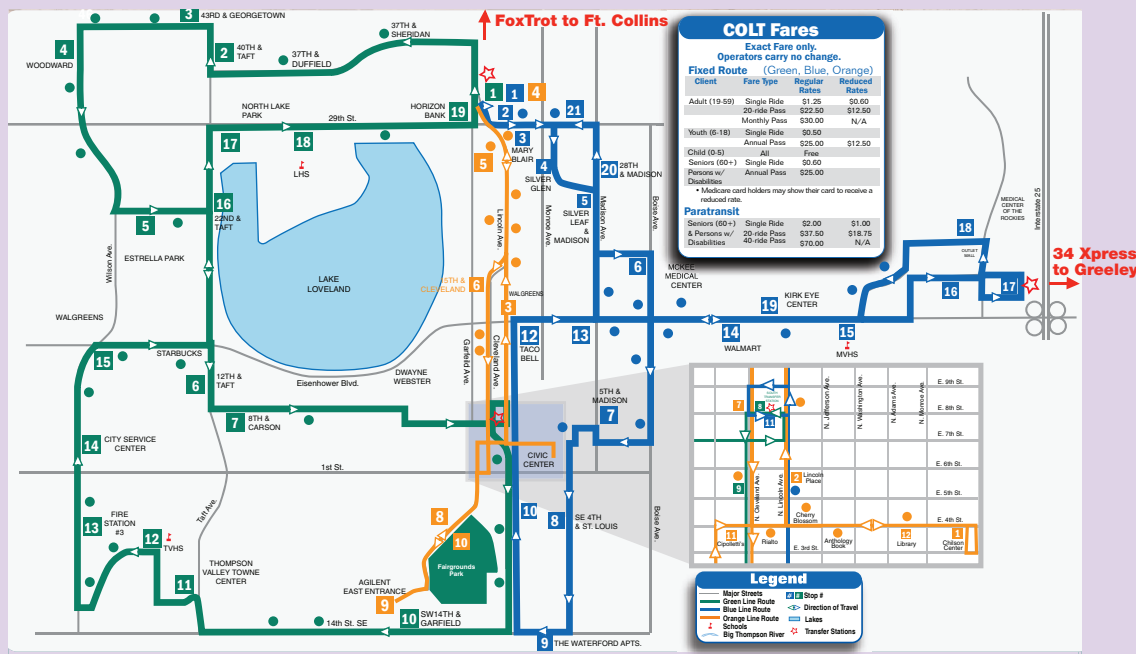
Even more of Loveland's most popular destinations—for work, play or

shopping—are served by the bus system. Medical visits, grocery shopping, recreation centers, schools and many other locations are available by bus.

Schools are especially popular because students who don't live far enough away to qualify for school bus service are frequent riders of City buses. Getting to and from class on a nonyellow bus is convenient, warm and very inexpensive.

In addition to the fixed route services, the City's Paratransit buses continue to be busy, providing door-to-door service for qualified riders. Almost

11,000 Paratransit trips were provided to senior citizens and persons with qualifying disabilities.



Bus rides a bargain for passengers

"Step right Up. Have I got a deal for you! 92 percent off on your transportation needs. That's right, just 8 cents on the dollar."

Sales of cars, motorcycles, scooters, bicycles and almost everything else that brings a person from Point A to Point B would skyrocket at discount prices like that. Yet that's the real deal for Loveland transit system customers...bus riders. The individual cost to riders when they reach into their pockets to pay the bus fare or buy a multi-trip bus pass is just a smidgen of the actual cost for the service. Out-of-pocket fares make up only 8 percent of the total cost of the City of Loveland Transit operating budget.

Where does the rest come from? Basically, City and federal funds. Federal monies pay more than half the cost with Loveland General Fund monies paying more than a third.

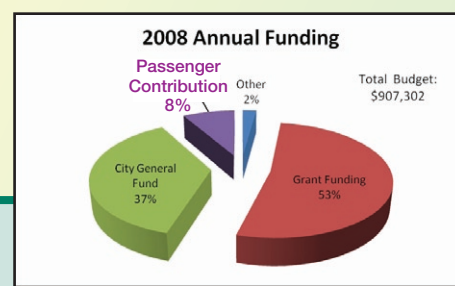
On a typical day, six buses are running 7-12 hour shifts. Three are the Blue, Green and Orange fixed route buses and three provide door-to-door Paratransit service for seniors and residents with disabilities.

During 2008, 135,917 total rides for fixed route and Paratransit were provided at a cost of \$907,302, resulting in an average cost of \$6.67 per rider. Doing the math, 8 percent of \$6.67 equals a 53-cent average fare paid by riders.

A more exact breakdown shows the average fixed route rider cost was \$5.49 while the Paratransit cost was \$28.69 – no, that's not a typo.

Actual fare costs vary widely. Different fixed route fares are offered for individual trips, multiple passes, students, seniors and others. Highest cost is \$1.25 for an individual ride, lowest cost is free for young children, and a popular option for students is a year-

long unlimited-ride pass for \$25. Paratransit fares have fewer options and cost a bit more, but still far below the actual cost. These costs range from \$2 to as low as \$.94 per ride with a multi-ride pass.



Bus fares

Adult (19-59)	\$ 1.25
	22.50 – 20-ride pass
	30.00 – Monthly pass
	.60 – Low Income
	12.50 – Low Income 20 Punch
Student (6-18)	\$.50
	25.00 – Annual Pass
	12.50 – Low Income Annual
Child (0-5)	Free
Seniors & Person with Disabilities Paratransit	\$.60
	2.00 Regular
	1.00 Low Income
	37.50 20-punch pass
	18.75 Low Income 20 Punch

Paratransit door-to-door without a meter

Loveland residents age 60 and older or residents with a qualifying disability can get door-to-door transportation service and there's never a meter running. For a flat rate of no more than \$2 per trip, a City of Loveland Transit Paratransit bus will take riders anywhere in Loveland.

Paratransit riders can reserve a ride up to 14 days in advance. At least one day's advance notice is highly recommended because the service is booked on a first come-first served basis. Unlikely but possible are sameday transportation requests that on rare occasions can be accommodated if a prior reservation is cancelled.

Individual or group rides are provided, depending upon time and destination. Group rides are provided several times a week to popular destinations such as the Chilson Senior Center, grocery stores and general merchandise stores.

Paratransit is frequently used by residents for transportation to medical appointments or dialysis treatments, but ride requests are not limited to special purposes. Rides within Loveland are provided for any reason; to visit family, lunch with a friend, downtown shopping, going to the movies, whatever.

Providing this type of service is a federal requirement for communities that provide fixed route bus service and receive funding from the federal government. The minimum requirement calls for paratransit service within ¾ miles of the fixed route system but Loveland exceeds this by providing service throughout the entire Loveland city limits. Six days a week, up to three Paratransit buses provide service about 12 hours a day.

Transit plan moving forward

The cities of Loveland and Fort Collins along with the Poudre School District are working on a Strategic Transit Plan for public transportation in the area. The three-tiered approach will offer suggestions ranging from simple modifications to current operations to major changes to be accomplished during the next 10 years or so.

Needless to say, many factors come into play. Perhaps none is larger than dealing with the program's wishes verses funding realities.

While the different government partners are working together to foster regional connections and program efficiencies, adoption of the plan and implementing its recommendations is not an all-or-nothing necessity. The cities can independently select whether or not they wish to or are able to move ahead with specific elements of the plan.

The plan is primarily a result of Fort Collins' 2002 transit plan and Loveland's 2004 plan. Many committee meetings and public input opportunities have occurred since the effort began last summer, with more to come as the plan proceeds toward review and approval by the Fort Collins and Loveland city councils this summer.

A professional consulting firm paid by both cities is preparing the plan.