

## INTERCITY TRAVEL

In addition to daily travel within the region, many Kansas City area residents travel to other regional and national destinations. While the automobile is the most common transportation mode for those traveling from place to place within the region, other modes are often used for intercity travel. Understanding the Kansas City region's connections to other metropolitan areas by bus, rail, air and automobile will help people make informed decisions about travel options. An efficient transportation network with strong intercity connections helps promote the economic vitality of the region by providing businesses with access to external markets and attracting visitors to the region.

### Intercity connections

The Kansas City region's geographic location is near the center of the contiguous United States. Kansas City is near seven other major metropolitan areas, including the major transportation hubs of Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Memphis. Intercity travel was examined using a 550-mile radius from Downtown Kansas City, Missouri. This radius is commonly used to define one day travel, or about an eight-hour driving distance. Two other major metropolitan areas — Denver and Milwaukee — were also included in the intercity travel analysis, as Kansas City has direct connections to Denver, and Milwaukee is just outside the 550-mile radius. Within the radius, 42 cities and metropolitan areas are identified as "connected" to the Kansas City metro area, either directly or with one to two connections/layovers when traveling by auto, bus, rail or airplane. These 42 cities comprise a population of just over 43 million.

### Connection links

The Kansas City metro area is connected to the 42 cities within the 550-mile radius by bus service, passenger rail and commercial air service. These three modes offer at least 90 connections each day — 42 direct connections and 48 indirect connections.

### Intercity bus connectivity

The Kansas City metro has direct and indirect bus service to the 42 cities, with at least 116 connections per day. Bus service provides direct connections to 23 cities, with 81 connections per day, and indirect

connections to 17 cities, with 35 connections per day. Three of the cities —Columbia, St. Louis and Chicago — have both direct and indirect bus service offered by multiple carriers.

**Travel times**

Bus travel times from the Kansas City metro to cities within the 550-mile radius can range from one to 23 hours. For destinations less than 250 miles away, bus travel times are similar to those associated with personal vehicle travel. For farther destinations (such as Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Minneapolis, Memphis, Dallas and Chicago) traveling by bus can increase travel time by about 40 percent compared to the auto.

**Travel costs**

Bus travel costs gradually increase as the distance from the Kansas City metropolitan area increases. Prices for travel to cities within the 550-mile radius can range from \$9 to \$112 for one-way tickets, and \$22 to \$224 for roundtrip tickets. For major metropolitan areas connected by national highways and interstates, bus ticket costs can be the lowest-cost option in many cases.

<b>42 Intercity destinations within a 550 mile radius.</b>	
<i>All cities and metro areas listed can be reached by bus, rail or air.</i>	
Ames, Iowa	Joplin, Missouri
Burlington, Iowa	Kirkville, Missouri
Champaign/Urbana, Illinois	Lawrence, Kansas
Chicago, Illinois	Little Rock, Arkansas
Colorado Springs, Colorado	Louisville, Kentucky
Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas	Madison, Wisconsin
Davenport, Iowa/Moline, Illinois	Manhattan, Kansas
Denver, Colorado	Memphis, Tennessee
Decatur, Illinois	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Des Moines, Iowa	Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota
Dodge City, Kansas	Nashville, Tennessee
Emporia, Kansas	Omaha, Nebraska
Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri	Oklahoma, City, Oklahoma
Fayetteville/Springdale/Rodgers, Arkansas	St. Joseph, Missouri
Garden City, Kansas	Salina, Kansas
Great Bend, Kansas	Shreveport/Bossier City, Louisiana
Harrison, Arkansas	Springfield, Missouri
Hays, Kansas	Texarkana, Arkansas/Texas
Indianapolis, Indiana	Topeka, Kansas
Jefferson City, Missouri	Tulsa, Oklahoma
Jonesboro, Arkansas	Wichita, Kansas

**Service gaps**

Bus connectivity offers comprehensive connections to intercity destinations, second only to automobile travel among the four transportation modes reviewed. Auto and bus travel have fewer service gaps compared to passenger rail and air travel. With rising fuel costs, increased fares and growing congestion, bus travel has seen a resurgence in activity over the last few years, with service expansion occurring throughout the U.S. at the fastest rate in four decades.

In addition to connections to the Kansas City metro, many medium and small cities in the Midwest have Greyhound bus service along routes that connect to other metro areas. The region might benefit by examining additional direct bus service to Kansas City International Airport, the Kansas City region's three Amtrak stations and seasonal destinations such as Branson, Missouri, and the Ozark Mountains.

#### Intercity passenger rail connectivity

The Kansas City metro area is directly or indirectly connected by passenger-rail service to 25 of the cities and metropolitan areas within the 550-mile radius. Seven cities have direct connections to Kansas City, with service offered 11 times per day, and 11 cities have indirect connections with 24 daily options.

#### Travel times

Rail travel times gradually increase with distance from the Kansas City point of origin, ranging from 1.25 to 7.5 hours for direct connections within the 550-mile radius, and 5.5 to 28 hours for connecting service. In most cases, passenger rail travel times are about 60 percent longer than auto and bus travel times. In some cases, travel times can be 100 to 400 percent longer.

#### Travel costs

Compared to bus and air travel, passenger rail fares vary greatly. Some passenger rail route fares are slightly higher than bus travel, but comparable. Many passenger rail routes are less expensive than air travel, although some are only slightly lower. Rail fares for travel to different-sized cities and towns do not vary as much as they do with bus or air travel.

#### Service gaps

National passenger rail ridership has risen over the last few years, but there have been few improvements to passenger rail connections in the Kansas City region. Passenger rail has the largest gaps in service of the four travel modes reviewed, primarily due to the cost of building and owning or leasing fixed infrastructure. Kansas City's passenger-rail connectivity to faster-growing metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Dallas Fort Worth and Memphis has remained generally the same.

Kansas City has no passenger rail connectivity to other growing metropolitan areas such as Omaha, Des Moines, Tulsa and Oklahoma City. While improvements to Kansas City-to-St. Louis rail service have been a priority for the region, evaluation of connectivity to and between other Midwest/Great Plains areas would be beneficial. There has been active interest in the establishment of service between Kansas City and Oklahoma City for several years, and activities related to this possible expansion should be monitored. It could also benefit the Kansas City metro to evaluate seasonal passenger rail connectivity to Branson and the Ozark Mountains.

#### Intercity commercial air connectivity

The Kansas City region is directly connected by commercial air service to 6 cities in the 550-mile radius, with 158 connections per day, and indirectly connected to an additional 20 cities, with 43 options per day. Kansas City also has direct international flights to Cancun, Mexico and Toronto, Canada.

#### Travel times

Commercial flight travel times increase with distance from the Kansas City area and range between 30 to 90 minutes for direct connections. Air travel with additional connections may take between 2.5 to 13

hours. In most cases, air travel times decrease exponentially compared to other travel modes as distance increases — by as much as 700 percent.

#### Travel costs

Air travel costs are determined more by the time of day, day of week, distance, amenities (e.g., first class, business class or coach), cost of fuel, cancelled or overbooked flights, delays, luggage and other factors. Airline fares to some cities are comparable to bus and passenger-rail costs, but overall airline tickets are more expensive. Airline fares to smaller cities with regional or municipal airports are, on average, more expensive than fares to major metropolitan areas.

#### Service gaps

Nonstop flights from Kansas City to intercity destinations are becoming less common. Kansas City International Airport offers direct flights to Minneapolis-St. Paul, Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth and Denver.

Over the last year, direct commercial airline service has been eliminated to smaller metros, including Omaha, Tulsa, Little Rock and Columbia. Service to large metros such as Chicago, Denver, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Dallas-Fort Worth has remained relatively stagnant.

#### Intercity auto connectivity

The Kansas City region is served by four major interstate highways that allow a user to reach a wide range of destinations:

- Interstate 35: Minneapolis-St. Paul, Des Moines, Wichita, Oklahoma City, Dallas-Fort Worth and San Antonio are directly accessible. (Houston can easily be reached by following Interstate 45 south from Dallas.)
- Interstate 70: Denver, Topeka, Lawrence, Columbia and St. Louis are directly accessible. Chicago, Memphis, Colorado Springs and Cheyenne can be reached using other highways that connect to I-70.
- Interstate 29: Omaha, St. Joseph and Sioux Falls are directly accessible.
- Interstate 49: Joplin and Fayetteville are directly accessible.

The flexibility of interstate travel makes it the most convenient form of travel for Kansas City residents seeking direct connections to intercity destinations. Carpooling can reduce auto travel costs dramatically.

#### Travel times

Auto travel times to reach destinations in the 550-mile radius gradually increase with distance from the Kansas City metro, ranging from 45 minutes to 12 hours.

#### Travel costs

Auto travel costs were analyzed using the IRS reimbursement rate (currently 56 cents per mile) to calculate total auto operation costs. Auto travel costs increase with the distance from Kansas City, and can range from \$20 to \$331 for one-way trips. Many factors can impact auto travel costs, such as the time of day, day of week, travel distance, cost of fuel, fuel efficiency (factoring wind and topography), congestion, vehicle weight, delay from crashes and construction zones, and more.

### Service gaps

Without a detailed examination of congestion and roadway condition, gaps in service for automobile connectivity to intercity destinations prove difficult to qualify and quantify. Development of the I-49 corridor from New Orleans through central and northern Louisiana, western Arkansas and western Missouri using existing U.S. 71 highway infrastructure is a good example of mitigating future gaps in service for autos and truck traffic related to freight activity through the Midwest.

Potential future gaps in service — such as general traffic congestion, roadway conditions and travel behavior — could be resolved with strategic, sustainable land use and development.

### Hyperloop

Hyperloop is a proposed surface transportation technology that would use magnetic levitation in low-pressure pipelines to propel pods containing passengers and or freight at airline speeds between metropolitan areas. In 2018, Kansas City area engineering firm Black and Veatch completed an initial feasibility study for a potential hyperloop route between the Kansas City and St. Louis metropolitan areas in Missouri, to be developed as a public-private partnership. This effort was followed by a governor-appointed panel to further examine the details of its funding and construction, including the potential of a national certification track in Missouri to demonstrate the technology for passenger and cargo travel.

Much work remains to develop and demonstrate this technology and any associated projects involving the Kansas City region, so MARC, state and local governments and other stakeholders should continue to monitor and provide appropriate policy support for this potential new mode of intercity travel.

### Regional and state involvement

The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) supports passenger rail service for the Kansas City-St. Louis corridor and continues to improve the reliability and travel time between the two metros. As part of the Midwest Regional Rail System, the Kansas City-St. Louis corridor is eligible for federal high-speed rail program funding as a component of the Chicago-hub network. Since 1996, this group of nine state departments of transportation has worked to plan and implement a 3,000-mile, high-speed rail system with Chicago as its central hub.

MoDOT has expressed the need for Missouri to develop, over time, a high-speed rail project that would provide faster rail service on the existing Union Pacific line. Capacity improvements are being made incrementally as funding becomes available and as planning and design work with Union Pacific is completed.

Kansas supports efforts to study the potential for state-supported passenger rail, and the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) is planning for the future. KDOT completed the Amtrak Expansion Feasibility Study in March 2010 as a foundation for future expansion of state-supported passenger rail. This study evaluated the potential costs of state-supported, intercity passenger rail between Kansas City, Oklahoma City and Fort Worth. It identified infrastructure, capital and operating costs necessary to start and support the service. KDOT's comprehensive service development plan augments the findings of the Amtrak Expansion Feasibility Study.

The KDOT rail plan includes passenger, freight and short-line rail components. The plan is required to seek federal grants for passenger rail service. This updated plan positions KDOT to develop a passenger-

rail program if it is authorized and funded and to make the state eligible to apply for other federal grants if it implements expanded passenger rail.

#### Future needs and opportunities studies

While Connected KC 2050 identifies future regional transportation investments based on the best understanding of current needs, there are additional system considerations that require further study. Potential future studies of intercity connectivity that provide an opportunity to employ strategies outlined in the Connected KC 2050 framework include:

- Kansas City-Liberty Corridor — Future study of existing interchanges of I-35 from I-29 to MO-92 (Study origin — Preliminary Transportation Needs Assessment).
- Lansing Bypass Study — Future study corridor for highway capacity improvements. (Study origin — K-7 Study).
- Lawrence Alternatives Analysis — Future alternatives analysis for transit options (Study origin — Kansas City Rail Commuter Rail Study).
- U.S. 169 Alternatives Study — Future study for highway capacity improvements (Study origin — MoDOT).
- Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas I-435 Study — A study of I-435 from I-70 north to Leavenworth Road. This study will also include the I-70 and 110th Street interchange.
- Amtrak Passenger Service Development Plan — A comprehensive service development plan that will build on the findings of the Amtrak Expansion Feasibility Study.
- Hyperloop - environmental, operational and design studies for connections to Columbia and St. Louis, Missouri and other future connections.