

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mississippi's rural and urban transit providers play an important role in offering needed mobility for many of the state's residents. This chapter presents an inventory of all public transit in Mississippi, including intercity bus and urban and regional transit systems. The operating characteristics of each type of service are analyzed and described, including service area, clientele, performance statistics and sources of federal, state and local funding.

## **PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICE IN MISSISSIPPI**

Public transit service in Mississippi can be divided into four categories of service:

- Urban transit service;
- Rural transit service;
- Elderly and persons with disabilities service; and
- Intercity service.

These categories duplicate the funding categories of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), which provides the majority of funding for public transit in the state. The MDOT Office of Intermodal Planning is responsible for administering these funds. In addition to these services, Mississippi State University provides a transit service around its campuses.

The sections below describe the existing transit services in the state.

## **URBAN TRANSIT SERVICE**

Based upon the 1990 Census, there are four urbanized areas within the state, three of which have public transit service. The three areas with service are:

- Jackson, served by Jatran;
- Biloxi/Gulfport, served by Coast Transit; and
- Hattiesburg, served by Hub Transit.

The one urbanized area without transit service is Pascagoula in Jackson County, which does not have rural service, although Coast Transit provides service to elderly and disabled riders under contract. Each of the three urban systems is described below.

### **Jatran (Jackson)**

The City of Jackson has a 2000 population of 184,256, a six percent decrease from 1990. Jackson is served by Jatran, which offers fixed route and ADA paratransit services. There are 15 fixed routes providing coverage throughout the city. Some routes have Saturday service, while no Sunday service is provided.

Jatran is operated under contract to the city by MacDonald Transit Associates. Transit service is part of the City Planning Department, Transportation Planning Division.

One major capital improvement is underway. The downtown Amtrak station is being renovated into a multimodal terminal that will house Amtrak, Jatran, Greyhound, taxis, and rural transit providers. This project has been planned for many years and the renovation work is underway. Upon completion, the Jatran transfer point will move from an on-street location with a few shelters to a covered waiting area with easy connections to Amtrak and Greyhound.

A second major capital project is in the planning stages. This project is the construction of a new maintenance facility for Jatran. It will be located on property currently owned by Greyhound. Greyhound will transfer the property to the City of Jackson in conjunction with the improvements at the multimodal station.

Jatran ridership has shown a declining trend over the past three years as shown in **Table 8-1**. Total ridership on the fixed-route and ADA service has shown a decline of 4.8 percent over the period. Miles of service offered have declined slightly, while revenue hours have increased. Operating expenses have increased by six percent over the period.

**Table 8-1  
JATRAN PERFORMANCE STATISTICS**

<b>Category</b>	<b>FY 1998</b>	<b>FY 1999</b>	<b>FY 2000</b>
Annual Passenger Trips	844,533	836,502	803,470
Annual Revenue Miles	1,265,502	1,253,105	1,247,547
Annual Revenue Hours	78,735	78,135	80,771
Peak Vehicles	34	34	35
Operating Expenses	\$3,794,644	\$3,713,843	\$4,021,532

Source: National Transit Database reports, fixed-route and ADA combined

Funding for Jatran’s operation comes from fares (16 percent) and local sources. No FTA funds are available for operating expenses since the metropolitan area population exceeds 200,000. No MDOT funds are available for operation, either. Jatran did receive federal funds for capital items in each of the past three years, but no funds were received from MDOT. MDOT has made “one-time” appropriations in the past for the local match portion of FTA funds. These appropriations have been made only to avoid the loss of FTA funds that had been earmarked for specific projects.

**Coast Transit Authority (Biloxi, Gulfport, Ocean Springs)**

Coast Transit Authority (CTA) provides transit service in Biloxi, Gulfport, and Ocean Springs along the Mississippi gulf coast. Eight fixed routes are provided, two of which only operate in the evening and weekends. Service is offered seven days per week. Complementary ADA service is also provided.

CTA provides one trolley service aimed at the tourist trade that patronizes the numerous casinos located along the beachfront. This service is provided approximately every 15 minutes throughout the day. Two specialized services are offered aimed at Keesler Air

Force Base and the Seabee Center personnel. These routes are designed to take base personnel shopping in the evenings and on weekends.

CTA has plans to construct two multimodal facilities, one in Biloxi and one in Gulfport. These facilities are under development, with construction anticipated to begin in the next few years. CTA is in the process of converting its fleet to hybrid electric buses as a way to help improve air quality in the region.

**Table 8-2** shows the recent performance of CTA. According to CTA officials, ridership is composed of approximately 60 percent locals and 40 percent tourists. The continued expansion of the casinos along the coast has contributed to the increased demand for transit services. Over the three-year period, total ridership increased by 25 percent, while revenue miles were essentially unchanged and revenue hours grew by only 2.2 percent. Costs have increased by 17 percent over the period.

**Table 8-2  
COAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY PERFORMANCE STATISTICS**

<b>Category</b>	<b>FY 1998</b>	<b>FY 1999</b>	<b>FY 2000</b>
Annual Passenger Trips	641,262	712,118	802,817
Annual Revenue Miles	1,420,215	1,341,132	1,424,554
Annual Revenue Hours	98,890	96,449	101,135
Peak Vehicles	35	39	37
Operating Expenses	\$3,146,033	\$3,083,480	\$3,690,844

Source: National Transit Database reports, fixed-route and ADA combined  
FY 2000 data supplied by Coast.

CTA is an independent transit authority authorized by the Mississippi legislature in 1970 according to Title 21, Chapter 27 of the Mississippi Code. Section 13 deals with the creation of, among others, a “commission formed for the purpose of establishing a motor vehicle transportation system for the transportation of passengers.” It is the only such authority in the state, although nothing prohibits the formation of additional authorities. No funding ability came with the authority designation. CTA receives its local funding from the three cities it serves plus Harrison County. Other cities in the area are eligible to receive services but have elected not to provide any funding for operations.

FTA funds are used for operations, with CTA receiving approximately \$2 million per year from this source when the Biloxi/Gulfport and Pascagoula funds are combined. FTA operational funding may be discontinued since the metropolitan area may exceed the 200,000 population threshold in the 2000 Census. FTA funds were also used for capital expenses during this time.

No MDOT funds were used for either operating or capital expenses. A limited amount of MDOT money has been available for the local match portion of capital expenses in the past, but only as “one-time” appropriations that were made to avoid losing FTA monies that had been earmarked for the region.

**Hub City Transit**

Hattiesburg transit system was renamed Hub City Transit in 2001. It operates a network of three fixed-route services and complementary ADA paratransit service. Service is provided Monday through Friday.

Hub City Transit is the Mass Transit Division of Hattiesburg's Urban Development Department. Funding for the system is through a 0.5 mil property tax assessment that is dedicated to the transit system.

Hattiesburg is in the process of renovating the downtown train depot into a multimodal facility. Besides Amtrak and Hub City buses, the town is trying to have Greyhound relocate its operations to the facility. This facility is also located on a high-speed rail route being considered for the state.

**RURAL TRANSIT SERVICE**

The Census Bureau classifies the majority of Mississippi as rural. Even the urbanized counties have portions that are considered rural. A network of 17 FTA funded providers offers rural transit service. These providers do not provide coverage of all areas of the state, but do cover 50 of the 82 counties (61 percent). **Table 8-3** lists the providers receiving FTA funding, the counties served, and the headquarters city for each provider.

**Table 8-3  
RURAL TRANSIT PROVIDER COVERAGE**

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Counties Served</b>	<b>Headquarters City</b>
Aaron Henry Community Health Services Center	Bolivar, Coahoma, DeSoto, Panola, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica	Clarksdale
Bolivar County Council on Aging	Bolivar, Sunflower, Washington	Cleveland
Choctaw Transit Authority	Leake, Neshoba, Newton	Philadelphia
Claiborne County Human Resource Agency	Claiborne	Port Gibson
Delta Regional Transit System	Washington	Greenville
Five County Child Development Council	Covington, Jefferson Davis, Lawrence	Prentiss
Hinds County Human Resource Agency	Hinds	Jackson
Lift, Inc	Calhoun, Chickasaw, Itawamba, Lafayette, Lee, Monroe, Pontotoc, Union	Tupelo
Madison County Human Resource Agency	Hinds, Holmes, Leake, Madison, Yazoo	Canton
Meridian Transportation Commission	Lauderdale	Meridian
Mississippi Valley State University Mass Transit	Carroll, Grenada, Holmes, Humphreys, Leflore, Montgomery, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Washington	Itta Bena

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Counties Served</b>	<b>Headquarters City</b>
Natchez Transit System	Adams	Natchez
Northeast Mississippi Community Services	Alcorn, Marshall, Prentiss, Tishomingo	Booneville
Pearl River Valley Opportunity	Covington, Forrest, Jones, Lamar, Marion, Perry, Pike, Walthall	Columbia
Pilot Club of Starkville	Oktibbeha	Starkville
Simpson County Human Resource Agency	Simpson	Mendenhall
United Community Action Committee	Benton, Tippah	Ashland

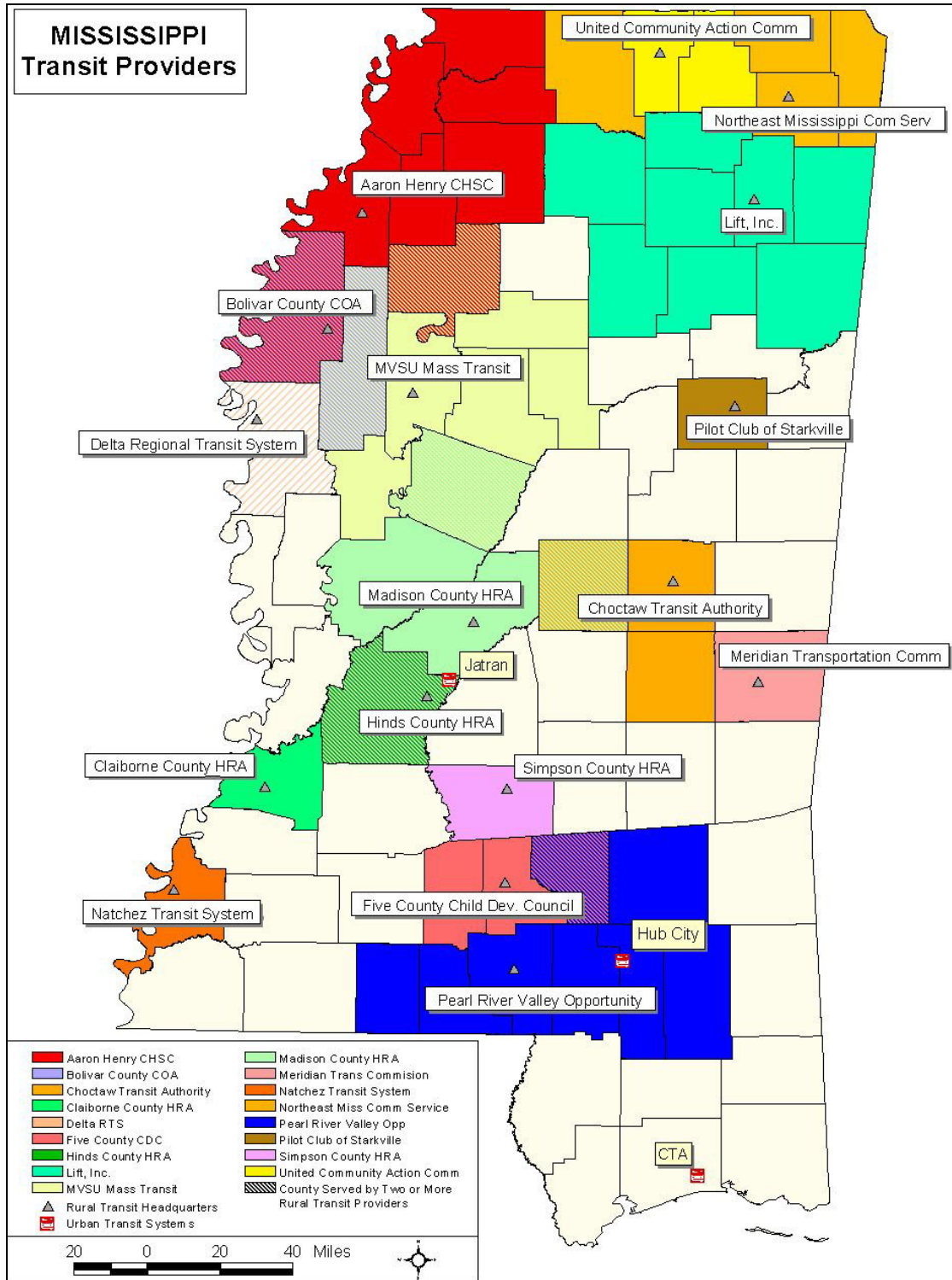
Source: MDOT reports

Seven counties have service by two or more providers, but in some cases the additional provider is serving trips originating in their home county. Madison County HRA, for example, serves Hinds County to the south, but only for trips that originate in Madison County.

**Exhibit 8-1** on the following page illustrates the service areas of the rural providers and notes where urban services are also located.

The types of service offered by the rural providers vary. Most providers operate a traditional demand-response rural service. There are exceptions to this rule, however. Three areas are the focus of commuter trips. The Aaron Henry CHSC and Bolivar County COA serve the Tunica area, which has several casinos on the Mississippi River. The Parchman area, which houses the state penitentiary, is served by these two providers and the MVSU Mass Transit system. Jackson is served by the Hinds County HRA, Madison County HRA, and Simpson County HRA. **Table 8-4** lists the type of service provided, the categories of riders, and the days per week service is offered for each provider.

Exhibit 8-1  
URBAN AND RURAL TRANSIT SERVICES



**Table 8-4  
RURAL SERVICE BY PROVIDER**

Name	Type of Service	Ridership Base	Days of Service
Aaron Henry CHSC	Fixed-route, demand-response, commuter, medical	General, E&D, social services, other	7
Bolivar County COA	Demand-response, commuter, medical	General, E&D, social services, other	5
Choctaw Transit Authority	Fixed-route, demand-response	General, E&D, other	5
Claiborne County HRA	Fixed-route, demand-response	General, E&D, social services, other	5
Delta Regional Transit System	Fixed-route, demand-response, commuter	New system	7
Five County CDC	Point-deviation, head start	General, E&D, social services, other	5
Hinds County HRA	Fixed-route, demand-response, commuter	General, E&D, social services	5
Lift, Inc	Fixed-route, demand-response, medical	General, E&D, social services, other	5
Madison County HRA	Demand-response, commuter	General, E&D	5
Meridian Transportation Comm.	Fixed-route, ADA	General, E&D, other	6
MVSU Mass Transit	Fixed-route, commuter	General, E&D, other	7
Natchez Transit System	Flexible route, point-deviation, demand-response	General, E&D, social services, other	6
Northeast Mississippi CS	Flexible route, demand-response	General, E&D	5
Pearl River Valley Opportunity	Demand-response, commuter	General, E&D, social services	5
Pilot Club of Starkville	Fixed-route, demand-response, medical	General, E&D	5
Simpson County HRA	Fixed-route, demand-response, commuter	General, E&D	5
United CAC	Demand-response, medical	General, E&D, social services	5

Source: MDOT reports

The Meridian and Natchez providers operate a more traditional urban-type service, with regular routes and schedules primarily within the city. Natchez also provides point-deviation and demand-response services in Adams County.

The size of the rural providers varies from one provider that carries 10,000 riders per year to two providers with more than 200,000 annual riders. Data on the ridership, service levels and cost of the rural systems are shown in **Table 8-5**.

**Table 8-5  
FY 2000 PERFORMANCE DATA**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Passengers</b>	<b>Vehicle Hours</b>	<b>Revenue Miles</b>	<b>Fleet Size</b>	<b>Operating Cost</b>
Aaron Henry CHSC	209,605	50,037	1,359,362	20	\$663,879
Bolivar County COA	29,628	9,886	306,635	14	\$212,161
Choctaw Transit Authority	34,987	6,330	147,919	13	\$87,260
Claiborne County HRA	37,832	6,015	416,479	6	\$120,856
Delta Regional Transit System	No data, new system				
Five County CDC	100,970	10,804	90,270	8	\$73,139
Hinds County HRA	80,904	8,716	163,084	7	\$122,675
Lift, Inc	22,006	16,199	446,045	11	\$466,405
Madison County HRA	27,890	7,168	119,638	9	\$73,025
Meridian Transportation Comm.	52,194	10,961	165,788	7	\$158,860
MVSU Mass Transit	48,432	7,695	241,819	12	\$159,696
Natchez Transit System	48,693	9,651	121,679	14	\$132,389
Northeast Mississippi CS	56,270	19,735	255,193	16	\$209,979
Pearl River Valley Opportunity	274,220	45,801	588,874	32	\$539,648
Pilot Club of Starkville	36,886	10,152	136,960	7	\$186,287
Simpson County HRA	43,370	16,570	422,963	12	\$201,615
United CAC	10,715	5,367	115,747	4	\$63,255

Source: MDOT reports

The majority of these providers have additional vehicles funded by FTA under the Section 5310 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program. The only exceptions are Claiborne County HRA, Meridian Transportation Commission, and MVSU Mass Transit.

Two rural locations have received FTA earmarks in FY 2001 for multimodal facilities – Brookhaven in Lincoln County and Picayune in Pearl River County. Neither of these towns has general public service currently available, although both are served by a Section 5310 Elderly and Disabled provider. The definitions of these projects are still being developed, but will likely involve Amtrak and Greyhound, which have stations in both towns.

**ELDERLY AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TRANSPORTATION**

MDOT funds 53 grantees using “pass-through” funds from the FTA Section 5310 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program. This program funds the purchase of vehicles and requires a 20 percent local match. No supplemental MDOT funds are provided.

All 82 counties have at least one recipient under this program. Many counties have several recipients. Hinds County has the most recipients with seven, followed by Washington County with six recipients and Bolivar and Covington Counties with four recipients.

**INTERCITY BUS SERVICES**

Greyhound or its affiliated companies primarily provide intercity bus service. Delta Bus Lines in Greenville operates Route # 777. These two companies provide service to 79 cities and towns in 53 counties. **Table 8-6** lists the 12 routes and the cities each serves. All routes operate daily, but not all trips on a route serve all listed cities.

**Table 8-6  
INTERCITY BUS SERVICES**

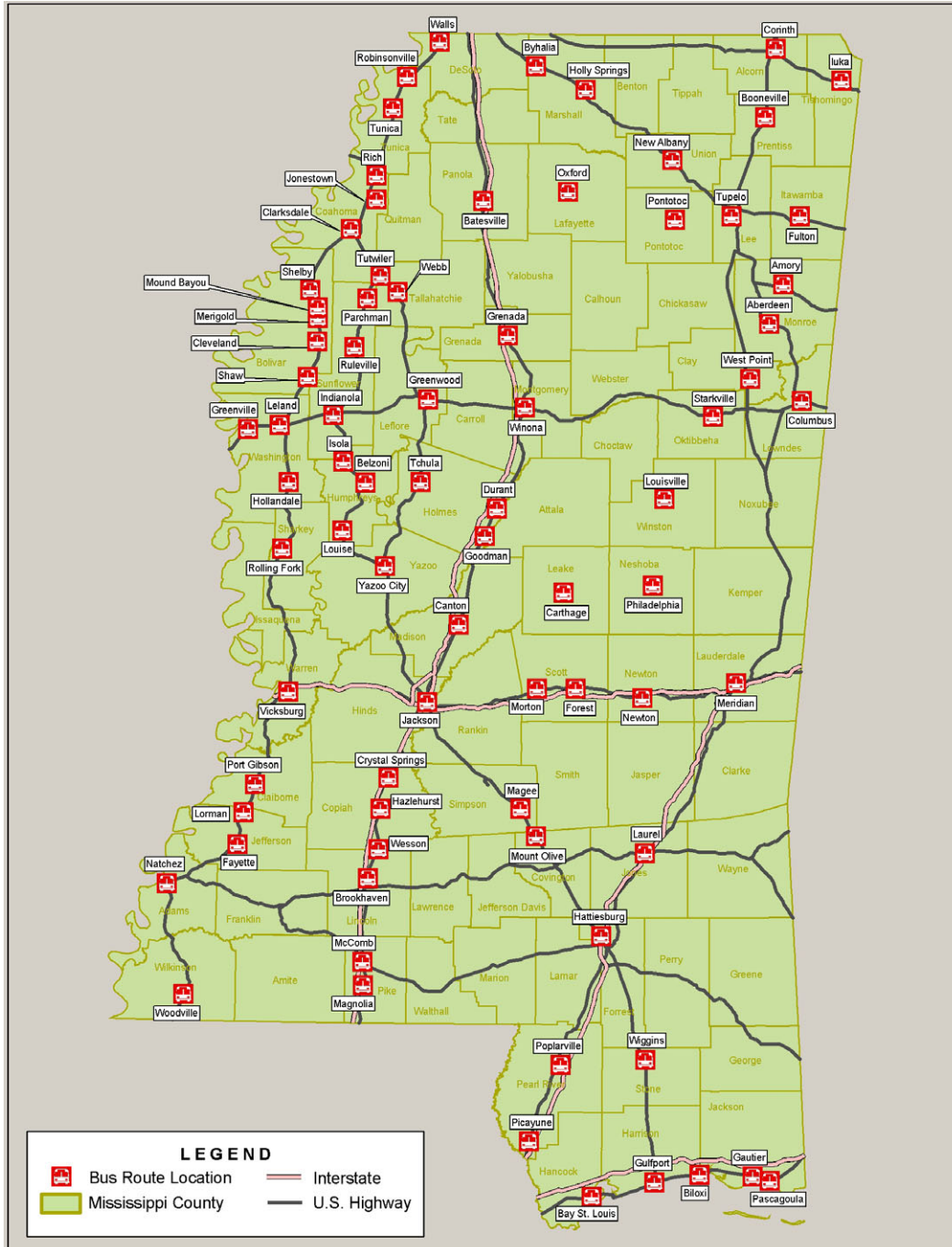
<b>Route</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Destination</b>	<b>MS Cities Served</b>
267	Paducah, KY	Jackson, MS	Aberdeen, Booneville, Canton, Carthage, Columbus, Corinth, Jackson, Louisville, Philadelphia, Starkville, Tupelo, West Point
418	Jacksonville, FL	New Orleans, LA	Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, Gautier, Gulfport, Pascagoula
425	New Orleans, LA	Atlanta, GA	Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, Gautier, Gulfport, Meridian, Pascagoula
431	Birmingham, AL	New Orleans, LA	Hattiesburg, Laurel, Meridian, Picayune, Poplarville
432	Atlanta, GA	Dallas, TX	Columbus, Greenville, Greenwood, Indianola, Starkville, Winona
433	Atlanta, GA	Memphis, TN	Amory, Byhalia, Corinth, Fulton, Holly Springs, Iuka, New Albany, Oxford, Pontotoc, Tupelo
435	Memphis, TN	New Orleans, LA	Batesville, Brookhaven, Canton, Clarksdale, Crystal Springs, Durant, Goodman, Greenwood, Grenada, Hazlehurst, Jackson, Magnolia, McComb, Parchman, Robinsonville, Ruleville, Tchula, Tunica, Tutwiler, Webb, Wesson, Winona, Yazoo City
436	Jackson, MS	Mobile, AL	Biloxi, Gautier, Gulfport, Hattiesburg, Jackson, Magee, Mt. Olive, Pascagoula, Wiggins
437	Birmingham, AL	Dallas, TX	Forest, Jackson, Meridian, Morton, Newton, Vicksburg
446	Atlanta, GA	New Orleans, LA	Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, Gautier, Gulfport, Pascagoula
460	Mobile, AL	New Orleans, LA	Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, Gautier, Gulfport, Pascagoula
777	Memphis, TN	Baton Rouge, LA	Belzoni, Clarksdale, Cleveland, Fayette, Greenville, Hollandale, Indianola, Isola, Jackson, Jonestown, Leland, Lorman, Louise, Merigold, Mound Bayou, Natchez, Port Gibson, Rich, Robinsonville, Rolling Fork, Shaw, Shelby, Tunica, Vicksburg, Walls, Woodville, Yazoo City

Source: Russell's *Official Bus Guide*, July 2001

Jackson has the highest level of service available, with 41 daily trips being provided. Meridian has the next highest level of service with 36 daily trips, followed by Biloxi and Gulfport with 35 daily trips. Pascagoula has 26 daily trips and Bay St. Louis and Gautier have 24 daily trips each. No other city or town has more than 20 daily trips.

Exhibit 8-2 illustrates the cities served by intercity bus services.

**Exhibit 8-2  
CITIES WITH INTERCITY BUS SERVICE**



**MAJOR CITY SERVICE**

According to the 2000 Census, there are 11 cities in Mississippi whose population is greater than 25,000. The population level will be classified as a “Medium Urban Cluster” if they meet the density requirements of the new classification scheme. **Table 8-8** shows the population change by city/town. Growth has been uneven among the cities with Gulfport and Southaven growing at approximately three percent annually on average over the past 20 years, while Jackson, Meridian and Pascagoula have been losing almost one percent per year.

Also shown in **Table 8-8** are the transit service providers. Not all of the cities have transit service. Of the 11 cities, only five have a traditional fixed-route service and another two cities are served by rural providers.

Three cities have no general public transit services available – Vicksburg, Pascagoula and Columbus. These cities do have elderly and disabled service and intercity bus or rail service available, but they do not have any connecting city bus service.

**Table 8-8  
TRANSIT SERVICE IN MAJOR CITIES**

City/Town	1980 Population	2000 Population	Annual Change	Service Provider
Jackson	202,895	184,256	-0.5%	Jatran
Gulfport	39,676	71,127	3.0%	Coast Transit
Biloxi	49,311	50,644	0.1%	Coast Transit
Hattiesburg	40,829	44,779	0.5%	Hub City Transit
Greenville	40,613	41,633	0.1%	3 rural providers
Meridian	46,577	39,968	-0.8%	Meridian Trans. Sys.
Tupelo	23,905	34,211	1.8%	Lift, Inc.
Southaven	16,441	28,977	2.9%	Aaron Henry CHSC
Vicksburg	25,434	26,407	0.2%	None
Pascagoula	29,318	26,200	-0.6%	None
Columbus	27,503	25,944	-0.3%	None
Mississippi	2,520,770	2,844,658	0.6%	

**FEDERAL FUNDING LEVELS**

Federal funding for public transportation in Mississippi has been increasing over the past three years as shown in **Table 8-9**. The Section 5307 Urbanized Formula Funds has increased overall by 13 percent over the period, while the Section 5311 Nonurbanized Area Formula Funds has increased by 15.5 percent and the Section 5310 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program by 14.6 percent.

**Table 8-9  
FEDERAL FUNDING LEVELS**

<b>Program</b>	<b>FY 2001</b>	<b>FY 2000</b>	<b>FY 1999</b>
§ 5307 Urban Area	\$4,371,759	\$4,154,421	\$3,869,437
<i>Jackson</i>	\$1,885,428	\$1,806,204	\$1,710,793
<i>Biloxi-Gulfport</i>	\$1,539,359	\$1,453,849	\$1,336,479
<i>Hattiesburg</i>	\$479,773	\$453,122	\$416,541
<i>Pascagoula</i>	\$467,199	\$441,246	\$405,624
§ 5311 Rural Area	\$4,362,349	\$4,091,281	\$3,775,797
§ 5310 Elderly & Disabled	\$905,187	\$854,719	\$790,171
§ 5309 Bus Capital	\$10,051,697	\$5,161,087	\$5,458,750

The Section 5307 Urban Formula Funds are allocated to the specified urban areas. Since Pascagoula has no general public transit service, its formula funds are allocated to Coast Transit for use in its area.

The Section 5309 Bus Capital Program is tied to specific projects and is not determined by a formula, which explains the year-to-year variation. In FY 2001, a number of capital projects were selected for funding.

Additional federal money is appropriated each year for planning purposes, and funds in the above categories can be carried over for up to a three-year period. Total federal expenditures in any given year are therefore not equal to the amounts shown above.

**SUMMARY**

Of the four urbanized areas within the state, three have public transit service. The one urbanized area without transit service is Pascagoula in Jackson County, which also does not have rural service, though Coast Transit, a separate independent transit authority serving the Biloxi/Gulfport area, provides service to elderly and disabled riders under contract. Jatran and Hub City are both managed by their respective city governments.

A network of 17 FTA funded providers offers rural transit service. These providers do not provide coverage of all areas of the state, but do cover 50 of the 82 counties (61 percent). Most rural providers offer demand-response service similar to a taxi operation, while some offer the traditional fixed-route service. Ten of the 17 operators have multi-county operations, while the remainder operate within a single county.

Mississippi has both intercity bus service available. Greyhound and Delta Bus Lines (with a single route) operate 12 routes that provide service to 79 cities and towns in 53 counties.

Of the 11 cities whose populations are more than 25,000, only five have a traditional fixed-route service and another three cities are served by rural providers. Three cities -- Vicksburg, Pascagoula and Columbus -- have no general public transit services available. No MDOT monies are provided for public transit services on a regular basis, though there have been some "one-time" appropriations for capital facilities primarily when there is a danger of losing federal monies due to the lack of local matching funds.