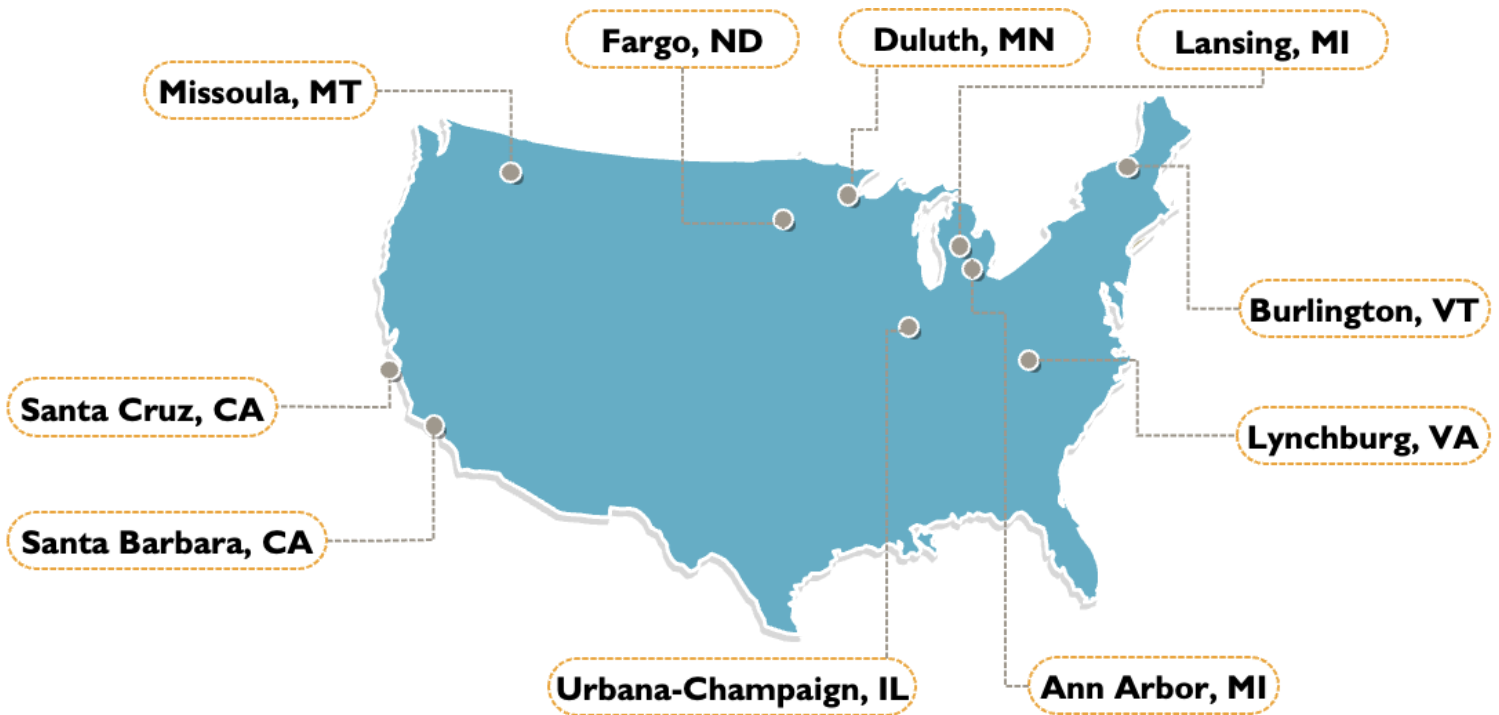


# PEER CITIES UPDATE



# PURPOSE

The TJPDC is compiling a list of peer cities for the RTP for the purpose of comparing best practices and identifying opportunities for a spring speaker series.

Peer cities were identified using a number of criteria. Preference was given to localities with comparable population sizes, climates, government structures, and educational institutions. TJPDC also utilized the Chicago Federal Reserve's Peer City Identification Tool.

This tool compares cities across four categories: equity, resilience, outlook, and housing. Six of the 10 cities identified in our compilation of peer cities is also classified as a peer city of Charlottesville in at least one metric by the Chicago Fed.

This memo highlights work being undertaken in a selection of peer cities identified earlier this summer by the TJPDC. Additional work being undertaken by local transit agencies and contact information for each can be found in a spreadsheet available upon request from the TJPDC.

## Missoula, Montana

In 2015, Mountain Line in Missoula initiated a three-year demonstration of project of zero-fare service. This was made possible due to investments made by local and county governments, as well as partnerships with local businesses and organizations.

By the end of 2017, transit ridership had increased by 70 percent. Ridership gains have been crucial in Mountain Line securing federal grant dollars to purchase new electric busses and upgrade transit facilities.

In 2020 voters in Missoula approved a mill levy increase by wide margins to raise \$3 million a year. This will go toward expanded weekend service, increased route frequency, and will strengthen the zero-fare program. Indirectly, it will signal community support for Mountain Line in the federal grants application process, and will likely create about 25 jobs.

The local transportation district previously got a mill levy proposal approved by voters in 2013 that increased bus frequency and improved services for seniors and residents with disabilities. (Missoula Current, 2020)

# CHAMPAIGN-URBANA, ILLINOIS

The Champaign-Urbana Mass transit District (MTD) will return to charging fares to riders in August. monthly and daily prices will remain the same, but annual passes will be dropping in price by over 25%. This may provide insight for what Charlottesville and CAT can expect to happen to ridership and revenues when they return to charging fares on their busses.

Additionally, the Champaign-Urbana MTD covers driver shortages by training all staff members, regardless of their position, on driving their fleet of busses. People who are analysts and planners are now also picking up shifts. (WCIA, 2021)

# DULUTH, MINNESOTA

Duluth could provide insight into challenges that may arise with a fleet that is increasingly composed of electric busses. In 2015 the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA) won a grant to pilot a program to buy electric busses and see how they operated in Duluth's cold-weather climate and hilly terrain. Within months of delivery in 2018, the busses had to be taken offline due to a number of problems. The busses, manufactured by Proterra, experienced braking systems that failed on Duluth's hilly terrain.

Furthermore, the busses were fitted with longer-life batteries so as to avoid having to stop and charge during the day. The long-lasting batteries experienced problems with the cold weather draining them faster than expected, leading to many busses becoming unable to complete a full shift. The batteries also take hours to fully recharge.

In order to maintain warmth for the batteries, diesel-powered heating systems were installed. While this largely rectified the problem, it meant that the busses were no longer emissions-free. (Duluth Monitor, 2020)

# Other Peer City Highlights

**Santa Barbara and Santa Cruz, California**, through a State of California portal, have easily accessible information to employee wages and benefits.

Rural areas around **Burlington, Vermont** are seeing efforts to combine Green Mountain Transit and Mount Mansfield USD bus service. This hybrid model is already in effect for the Burlington School District. This model is aimed at eliminating duplication of services. (Burlington Free Press, 2021)

**Ann Arbor, Michigan's** city council recently approved new zoning ordinances aimed at increasing density and transit-oriented developments along transit corridors. (The Michigan Daily, 2021)

Former North Dakota State students in **Fargo, North Dakota** started a ride share service to fill the transit gap left on weekend nights to safely get university students to entertainment districts for low-costs. (Valley News Live)

**Lansing, Michigan** has a unified city-university transit service with dedicated routes to the campus.

**Lynchburg, Virginia's** main transit service, GLTC, has a sub-route A and sub-route B on its most popular route. Its busses travel in opposite directions. This would be like having a new trolley route for CAT that goes by the rotunda to the west, in addition to its current route which takes it west by the hospital.