



City of Hibbing Public Transit Report

August 2025

Prepared by Arrowhead Transit

Purpose of This Report

This report provides a comprehensive overview of Hibbing’s Dial-A-Ride public transit system over the past 24 months—comparing historical data from the City of Hibbing (2023 through July 2024) with current outcomes under Arrowhead Transit (August 2024 through July 2025). It is designed to help the City Council evaluate service progress, performance efficiency, and rider impact.

Timeline & Transition Milestones

- July 1, 2024: City of Hibbing and Arrowhead Transit jointly announce service transition.
 - August 1, 2024: Arrowhead Transit becomes the official public transportation provider.
 - November 2024: Systemwide fare change announced.
 - January 1, 2025: Fare structure takes effect.
 - March 30, 2025: Final date for ticket exchange.
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Ridership Overview

| Provider | Time Period | Total Trips | Monthly Average |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| City of Hibbing | Jan–Dec 2023 | 20,590 | 1,716 |
| City of Hibbing | Jan–July 2024 | 9,532 | 1,362 |
| Arrowhead Transit | Aug 2024 – Jul 2025 | 38,363 | 3,197 |



Arrowhead Transit has more than doubled the average monthly ridership compared to city-run service. Early 2024 data indicated a downward trend that reversed following the transition.

Monthly Ridership by Classification (May–July 2025)

| Classification | May 2025 | June 2025 | July 2025 |
|----------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Adult | 1,971 | 2,029 | 2,011 |
| Elderly | 560 | 470 | 579 |
| Disabled | 409 | 337 | 331 |
| Non-Ambulatory | 213 | 169 | 152 |
| Child | 70 | 94 | 140 |
| Student | 9 | 5 | 25 |
| Total | 3,232 | 3,104 | 3,238 |

Adult riders continue to be the majority group, but July data shows a notable increase in both elderly and child passengers—likely influenced by seasonal factors and expanded outreach. Student ridership, while still under 1%, saw a modest increase, potentially tied to summer programming and MN North engagement.

Classification Trends (Aug 2024 – Jul 2025)

- Adults account for approximately 83.6% of riders early in the transition and remain the largest group.
- Elderly riders increased from less than 1% in late 2024 to over 18% by July 2025.
- Non-ambulatory ridership has grown gradually over time.
- Student ridership remains below 1%, representing an area for further outreach.



Efficiency and Reporting Improvements

- Arrowhead Transit introduced detailed monthly classification reporting.
 - Continued weekend DAR service (Saturday and Sunday) has been maintained and is now reported consistently.
 - Fare change and ticket exchange implemented without loss of ridership.
 - Online scheduling and customer app are under development for launch by October 1, 2025.
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Evaluation of City-Operated Service (2023–Mid 2024)

- City-provided Dial-A-Ride service was operationally steady in 2023 but experienced a 21% decline in monthly ridership by early 2024.
 - Total trips from January–July 2024 dropped to 9,532.
 - The system lacked classification tracking and performance data by service type.
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Areas of Measurable Progress

- Increased monthly ridership from ~1,300 to over 3,100.
 - Introduction of performance-based metrics and reporting by rider classification.
 - Improved response time and scheduling coordination via updated dispatching.
 - Expanding student outreach through MN North partnership.
 - Digital scheduling platform and customer-facing app launching by end of 2025.
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Seasonal Trends by Rider Classification

- Adult riders remain the dominant group but decreased as a share of total trips by spring.
- Elderly ridership increased significantly from late 2024 through spring 2025.



- Disabled and non-ambulatory riders rose steadily after January 2025.
- Child and student usage saw small increases during school breaks and summer.

Weekend Service Trends and Student Access Equity

Weekend ridership has remained operationally viable. While summer months show modest declines, outreach efforts are planned for fall 2025 to promote growth. A new partnership with Minnesota North College – Hibbing Campus aims to expand access for transportation-disadvantaged students. Survey data shows:

- 63% do not own a car
- 63% receive Pell Grants
- 38% rely on public transit
- 25% are first-generation college students

These indicators underscore the importance of transit as academic and economic infrastructure.

Community Feedback and Rider Experience

Rider feedback in Hibbing has been positive. Passengers cite greater schedule consistency, more flexibility in booking, and a dependable daily service. Many now rely on Dial-A-Ride for recurring needs such as work, appointments, or errands.

Remaining Barriers and Planned Improvements

While overall experience has improved, payment limitations remain a challenge for some riders. Arrowhead Transit is addressing this through a new dispatch and customer service system launching by October 1, 2025. Riders will be able to schedule trips online, and a customer-facing app is set for release between late 2025 and early 2026.

These tools will improve access, tracking, and efficiency while offering a modern transit experience.



Community Awareness and Public Perception

Awareness is growing. Arrowhead Transit has worked to reshape the local perception of public transit—not as a service solely for the elderly, disabled, or low-income residents, but as Hibbing’s citywide transit system available to all.

The agency is also building a distinct identity from AEOA, while maintaining integrity and trust among core ridership populations. Public messaging has emphasized the value of transit as an inclusive, community-supported resource.

Institutional Engagement and Public Buy-In

In rural Minnesota, public transit often faces the assumption that it exists only for specific demographics. Arrowhead Transit is addressing this through ongoing engagement. In other cities, collaboration with employers, developers, and service providers has led to measurable impacts: increased grant funding, improved access to housing, and economic development.

The goal is to replicate this progress in Hibbing, positioning transit as a foundational piece of public infrastructure.

Next Steps and Opportunities

- Monitor youth and student ridership and explore targeted partnerships.
- Assess bus stop infrastructure needs.
- Continue producing quarterly performance reports for city review.
- Consider expanding service coverage or frequency based on data.
- Evaluate impact of digital tools on accessibility and user experience.

Conclusion

Arrowhead Transit appreciates the opportunity to serve the City of Hibbing. Our team remains committed to transparency, performance, and ensuring access to public transportation for all Hibbing residents. We look forward to ongoing collaboration with city staff and council leadership.