1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................................................... 18
   What is a “Choices Report”? ............................................................................................................................ 19
   Why focus on buses? ............................................................................................................................................ 19
   Introducing the Network .................................................................................................................................... 20
   Center City, University City, and South Philadelphia .......................................................................................... 21
   Center City, West, and North Philadelphia ......................................................................................................... 22
   Southwest Philadelphia ......................................................................................................................................... 23
   Northwest and Upper North Philadelphia ........................................................................................................... 24
   North and Lower Northeast Philadelphia ........................................................................................................... 25

2 Is Transit Useful? Key Indicators ......................................................................................................................... 30
   Ridership Arises from Usefulness ........................................................................................................................ 31
   Frequency Comes First ......................................................................................................................................... 32
   Span: Is transit there when you need it? ............................................................................................................... 34
   Frequent Service Standards ................................................................................................................................ 36
   Connections ....................................................................................................................................................... 38
   Buses are Getting Slower....................................................................................................................................... 38
   On-Time Performance Is Poor ............................................................................................................................. 39
   Better Measures of Reliability .............................................................................................................................. 40
   Probability of Waiting at SEPTA ........................................................................................................................ 41
   All door boarding............................................................................................................................................... 42

3 Improving Speed and Reliability: The Role of City Leadership ............................................................................ 43
   Some Problems are Outside SEPTA’s Control .................................................................................................... 44
   Prioritizing Center City Streets ........................................................................................................................ 45
   Curb Management ............................................................................................................................................. 46
   Leadership in Other Cities .................................................................................................................................. 47
   Seattle ................................................................................................................................................................. 47
   New York City ..................................................................................................................................................... 47
   San Francisco ..................................................................................................................................................... 48
   Baltimore ............................................................................................................................................................. 49
   Philadelphia Experience ....................................................................................................................................... 50

4 Market Assessment ............................................................................................................................................... 51
   Development Patterns Matter ............................................................................................................................ 52
   Residents ............................................................................................................................................................. 54
   Jobs ...................................................................................................................................................................... 55
   Activity ............................................................................................................................................................... 56
# Table of Contents

- **5 Network Assessment** .......................................................... 66
  - System-wide Productivity ....................................................... 67
  - System-wide Coverage ........................................................ 68
  - The Grid Network ............................................................... 69
    - Transfers or Connections .................................................. 70
    - Barriers to Connections .................................................... 71
  - Duplicative Network Design ................................................. 72
  - Inconsistent Route Spacing .................................................. 73
  - Transfer Fees Encourage Longer Routes ................................ 74
  - Complex Patterns Make Routes Indecipherable ..................... 75
  - Route Productivity .............................................................. 76
    - Productivity of North-South Routes .................................... 77
    - Productivity of East-West Routes ....................................... 78
    - Productivity of Crosstown Routes ..................................... 79
    - Productivity of BSL Connector Routes ................................. 80
    - Productivity of MFL Connector Routes ................................. 81
  - Regional Rail Integration ....................................................... 83
  - Responding to Specialized Demands ..................................... 84
  - Circuitous Routing to Minimize Transfers ............................. 85
  - Legacy Elements .................................................................... 86
  - Trolley Modernization: Opportunities and Challenges ............. 87
    - The Girard Trolley: A Service or a Barrier? .......................... 88
- **6 More Service Without More Money: Strategies and Choices** .......... 90
  - More Service without More Money ...................................... 91
    - Remove Duplicative Route Segments .................................. 92
    - Remove Excess Peak Service ............................................ 92
    - Consistent Route Spacing ................................................ 92
    - Consistent and Wider Stop Spacing ................................... 93
    - Focus on All-Day Markets First ........................................ 94
    - The Ridership-Coverage Trade-off ..................................... 95
      - The existing balance of goals .......................................... 96
  - Network Redesign Process .................................................. 97
    - Network Concepts .......................................................... 96
    - What about the long term? ............................................... 96
- **Appendix** ......................................................................... 97
Table of Figures

Figure 1: Isochrone map of access by walking and transit from 4th Street and Oregon Avenue. ..........................................................8

Figure 2: Productivity graph indicates a ridership loss for SEPTA and most peers starting in 2013. ..............................................................9

Figure 3: Public transit, bicycles, and cars use progressively more road space to move the same number of people. ..........................................................10

Figure 4: A high-frequency grid provides convenient one-transfer connections between any two points. ..........................................................10

Figure 5: A one-seat ride on a low-frequency route is usually slower than a high-frequency connection. ..........................................................10

Figure 6: Ridership and coverage goals produce very different networks. ..................................................................................................12

Figure 7: About 70% of the current network is focused on a ridership goal. A network redesign study would consider a different balance in how resources are split. ..........................................................13

Figure 8: An example of the possible decision space of concepts for transit in Philadelphia. ...............................................................................13

Figure 9: The City of Seattle Transit Master Plan took vague transit goals and turned them into specific actions and guidance for all departments. It also told a compelling story that motivated voter support for increased transit funding. ..........................................................14

Figure 11: Good network maps highlight frequent routes and show how all services fit together. This example from Washington DC’s WMATA shows subway in black, frequent buses in red, and less-frequent buses in blue. ........................................................................15

Figure 10: A San Francisco bus headsign explains where the route goes: along Geary Blvd to and at the VA Hospital. In gridded cities like Philadelphia many routes can be described this simply. ..........................................................15

Figure 12: Budget neutral strategies for increasing service. ..........................................................................................................................16

Figure 13: Annual riders by mode of travel and area—45% of annual rides occur on city buses. ...........................................................................19

Figure 14 (right) The road space required to move the same number of people using public transit, bicycles, and cars. ..........................................................19

Figure 15: Overview map of SEPTA network in Philadelphia. ..........................................................................................................................20

Figure 16: Map of SEPTA network—Center City, University City, and South Philadelphia. ...........................................................................21

Figure 17: Detailed map of SEPTA network in Center City. ..........................................................................................................................21

Figure 18: Map of SEPTA network—Center City, West, and North Philadelphia. ..........................................................................................22

Figure 19: Map of SEPTA network—Southwest Philadelphia. ..........................................................................................................................23

Figure 20: Map of SEPTA network—Northwest and Upper North Philadelphia. ..........................................................................................24

Figure 21: Map of SEPTA network—North and Lower Northeast Philadelphia. ..........................................................................................25

Figure 22: Map of SEPTA network—Far Northeast Philadelphia. .....................................................................................................................26

Figure 23: Total boardings by bus for SEPTA and peers, 2007–2017. SEPTA ridership has declined since 2013. ..................................................27

Figure 24: Investment—annual bus service hours provided by SEPTA and peers per capita, 2007–2017. Investment in SEPTA service has been relatively flat in the past decade. ..........................................................27

Figure 25: Relevance: passenger boardings by bus per capita for SEPTA and peers, 2007–2017. SEPTA’s ridership per capita is high compared to its peers, but has also been declining since 2013. ..........................................................................................................................28

Figure 26: Productivity: passenger boardings by bus per service hour for SEPTA and peers, 2007–2017. Flat investment and declining ridership has led to declining productivity since 2013. ..........................................................28

Figure 27: A 50% gas price cut in the second half of 2014 is likely the most significant reason for Philadelphia’s decline in ridership. ..........................................................................................................................29

Figure 28: Map of travel time isochrones for walking and transit from 4th St and Oregon Avenue. ......................................................................31

Figure 29: Frequency and productivity relate for SEPTA bus routes in Philadelphia. .........................................................................................32

Figure 30: Higher frequency is generally associated with higher productivity. Heat plot of routes in 23 North American cities and Philadelphia. .....................................................................................................................33

Figure 31: Frequency and span of service for the 20 SEPTA routes with the longest spans of frequent service. Only four routes have frequent service for 15 hours a day or more. .........................................................................................................................................................................................................................34

Figure 32: Frequency and span of service on Saturday and Sunday for the 20 SEPTA routes with the longest spans of frequent service. Most routes are not frequent on Sunday. .........................................................................................................................................................................................................................35

Figure 33: Frequent service standards in four North American cities. .....................................................................................................................36

Figure 34: Portland’s TriMet is one of many agencies that promotes the Frequent Network as a distinct product with bus stops (left) and a map (right). .....................................................................................................................36

Figure 35: Availability of frequent service at different times of day on weekdays and weekends. The frequent network shrinks significantly weekdays after 7 pm. .....................................................................................................................37

Figure 36: Scheduled bus speeds by time of day, 2014–2017. Bus speeds have declined since 2014 and average less than 12 mph during most of the day. ..................................................................................................................38

Figure 37: The high density of signals and stop signs along Routes 17, 23, 33, 45 and 47 are major factors in the slow speed of these routes. .................................................................................................................................38

Figure 38: A majority of SEPTA routes are not achieving the 80% on-time performance standard (conventional measure). For frequent services, this measure of on-time performance is not what matters. .................................................................................................................................39

Figure 39: Different ways of describing reliability. .................................................................................................................................................40

Figure 40: SEPTA’s frequent routes are performing relatively well by the headway reliability standard. But reliability is low in the afternoon. .................................................................................................................................................41

Figure 41: San Francisco’s all-door boarding reduced boarding time by ensuring that all doors are in use. Without all-door boarding, passengers must use the front door while the rear doors are idle. Photo: SFMTA .........................................................................................................................................42

Figure 42: Traffic congestion leads to bunching and delays on Route 33 on Market Street on a Friday afternoon. .................................................................................44

Figure 43: Congestion can double travel times on Route 33. .................................................................................................................................................44

Figure 44: On-street parking interferes with a bus stop on Route 47 at 8th and Norris Streets. ..........................................................................................44

Figure 45: East-west bus service in Center City is spread across five streets. ...........................................................................................................45

Figure 46: Peak bus volumes in the afternoon reach about 50 buses per hour around City Hall. ...........................................................................45

Figure 47: Peak bus volumes in the afternoon reach about 50 buses per hour around City Hall. ...........................................................................45

Figure 48: East-west bus service in Center City is spread across five streets. ...........................................................................................................45

Figure 49: Peak bus volumes in the afternoon reach about 50 buses per hour around City Hall. ...........................................................................45

Figure 50: Peak bus volumes in the afternoon reach about 50 buses per hour around City Hall. ...........................................................................45

Figure 51: Transit priority and bicycle lanes on Market Street in San Francisco. .................................................................................................48

Figure 52: Toolbox of approaches for improving speed and reliability from SFMTA MUNI Forward program. .....................................................................48

Figure 53: New and existing dedicated bus lanes in Baltimore. .................................................................................................................................49

Figure 54: Transit priority corridors in Baltimore. ..........................................................................................................................................................49

Figure 55: Example of a queue jump lane from Seattle. .................................................................................................................................................50

Figure 56: Example of MUNI Forward proposed improvements. .................................................................................................................................50

Figure 57: The Ridership Recipe—four geographic elements for achieving high ridership. .........................................................................................52

Figure 58: South Philadelphia, East of Broad Street—higher density, higher walkability, good linearity. .........................................................................................53

Figure 59: Andorra Shopping Center, Northwest Philadelphia—lower density, lower walkability, poor linearity. .........................................................................................53

Figure 60: Residential density is high across many areas of Philadelphia and is high by the standards of North American cities. .................................................................................................54

Figure 61: Job density is highest in Center City and University City. .................................................................................................................................55

Figure 62: Map of activity (residential and job) density in Philadelphia and surrounding counties. .................................................................................................56

Figure 63: North Philadelphia—good linearity and clear grid pattern of routes. .................................................................................................57

Figure 64: Morrell Park in Northeast Philadelphia—poor linearity in the street network requires inefficient, circuitous routing. .................................................................................................57

Figure 65: Bus boardings are highest at major transfer points in Philadelphia. .................................................................................................58

Figure 66: The new Boulevard Direct service on Roosevelt has many features of BRT service, such as wide stop spacing, that fits the land use pattern of the corridor. .................................................................................................59
### Table of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 66</td>
<td>Comparison of bus boardings on Roosevelt Boulevard and Frankford Avenue in Northeast Philadelphia</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 68</td>
<td>Median household income is lowest in West and North Philadelphia</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 69</td>
<td>Density of low-income residents is highest in Center City and South Philadelphia</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 71</td>
<td>Broad swaths of Philadelphia have high densities of zero vehicle households</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 70</td>
<td>Census block groups where median household incomes are low tend to be places with lower vehicle ownership</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 72</td>
<td>Density map of people by race or ethnicity in Philadelphia and surrounding counties</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 73</td>
<td>South and West Philadelphia have high densities of transit commuters</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 74</td>
<td>Bike and walk commuter density is highest in Center City and University City</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 75</td>
<td>At high density levels, a marginal increase in density has a smaller effect on transit demand because so many people walk or cycle</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 76</td>
<td>Productivity: passenger boardings by bus per service hour for SEPTA and peers, 2007–2017. Flat investment and declining ridership has led to declining productivity since 2013</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 77</td>
<td>People and jobs covered by transit in Philadelphia—most residents have access to some transit</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 79</td>
<td>A grid network covers South Philadelphia with consistent north–south and east–west routes creating easy connections</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 80</td>
<td>Comparison of radial and grid network structures</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 81</td>
<td>West Philadelphia has both radial and grid elements</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 82</td>
<td>A grid network provides a one-transfer trip between any two points</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 83</td>
<td>Routes 47 and 60 cross in North Philadelphia (in circle)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 84</td>
<td>Boarding activity where Routes 47 and 60 cross (in circle)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 85</td>
<td>Aerial imagery where Routes 47 and 60 cross</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 86</td>
<td>Riders who buy a pass transfer at a much higher rate than riders who use their travel wallet</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 87</td>
<td>In 2017, 32% of riders paid with cash or token and had to pay $1 to transfer</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 88</td>
<td>Route 1 duplicates service provided by many other routes and therefore has relatively few boardings</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 89</td>
<td>Route spacing is inconsistent between north–south and east–west routes.</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 90</td>
<td>Boarding on Route 23 (above) and the graph of boarding and alighting patterns (left) indicate a lot of turnover at the Broad/Erie Station</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 92</td>
<td>The schedule for Route 14 is incredibly hard to decipher</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 91</td>
<td>Many SEPTA routes have numerous patterns, making schedules and routes hard to follow</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 93</td>
<td>Map of Route 14 from SEPTA schedule. Several Route 14 patterns are barely visible in dark grey</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 94</td>
<td>Frequency is correlated with productivity on SEPTA bus routes and different route types have different productivity</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 95</td>
<td>Some north–south routes serving Center City have relatively low productivity</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 96</td>
<td>Routes 5, 25, 61 and 32 compete with higher frequency routes for riders and rarely provide unique coverage</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 97</td>
<td>Most east–west routes serving Center City have high productivity</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 98</td>
<td>Network structure in West Philadelphia</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 99</td>
<td>Most crosstown routes have high productivity</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 100</td>
<td>Half of BSL Connector routes have high productivity</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 101</td>
<td>Map of SEPTA network showing connections to the BSL at Olney and Fern Rock</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 102</td>
<td>Most MFL Connector routes have relatively low productivity</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 103</td>
<td>The road and transit network transitions to a more radial system in Northeast Philadelphia</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 104</td>
<td>Express routes have relatively low productivity</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 105</td>
<td>Boardings for Route 27 show that ridership is much higher in the peak direction</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 106</td>
<td>With better headways and fare integration, Regional Rail could provide more access within the city</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 108</td>
<td>The pattern of boardings and alightings shows that most people who ride Route 47M are going to Market Street, not the Italian Market</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 107</td>
<td>Routes 47M takes frequency from northbound service on 7th Street to reduce walking distance to destinations on 9th Street</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 109</td>
<td>Route 89 is an example of a highly circuitous route. The map shows low average-weekday-boardings</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 110</td>
<td>The network in the area of Port Richmond has many legacy elements that are difficult to fix</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 111</td>
<td>Trolley routes (red and gray dashed line) are primarily radial, to connect to Center City through the trolley tunnel</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 112</td>
<td>Trolley modernization will require platforms and other infrastructure to make trolleys ADA accessible</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 113</td>
<td>Without dedicated lanes, trolleys are more susceptible to unreliable conditions on the road than buses</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 114</td>
<td>As a trolley, Route 15 in West Philadelphia cannot reach 69th Street Transportation Center</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 115</td>
<td>Most routes have lower productivity in the peak than in the midday, suggesting excessive peak service</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 116</td>
<td>Budget neutral strategies for increasing service</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 117</td>
<td>Increasing spacing of north–south routes would free up resources to invest in areas of high potential ridership</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 118</td>
<td>Trade-off between stop spacing and travel time</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 119</td>
<td>Current stop spacing standards for SEPTA and peers</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 120</td>
<td>A high-frequency grid provides convenient one-transfer connections between any two points</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 121</td>
<td>Ridership and coverage goals produce very different networks</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 122</td>
<td>How existing service is tied to goals. A network redesign would remove duplication and excess peak service, and redeploy to serve the other goals, depending on local priorities</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 123</td>
<td>An example of the possible decision space of concepts for transit in Philadelphia</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 124</td>
<td>Division of service into duplication, ridership, and coverage categories</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>