



September 25, 2024

Public Meeting

NFTA-Metro Paratransit Expansion Study

Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, Inc.



Agenda

- 1 Introductions
- 2 Presentation
- 3 Question and Answer Session
- 4 Wrap-up





Study Presentation

Presentation

- 1 Study Overview
- 2 Study Findings
- 3 Expansion Analysis and Costs
- 4 Short-Term Expansion: Core Service Area
- 5 Summary
- 6 Discussion





PAL Study Overview

Paratransit Study Objectives

- Ensure that NFTA's complementary paratransit service (PAL):
 - Is efficient, making the best use of public funds
 - Meets customer needs today and in the future
 - Offers innovative services
 - Is equitable
 - Delivers excellent customer service
- Evaluate the feasibility and costs of expanding PAL service
- Develop a replicable model for paratransit service expansion in New York State



Study Progress

Existing Conditions & Peer Practices



- Tasks complete
- Report and technical memorandum available on the project website
www.nftametroparatransitstudy.com

Future Conditions



- Preliminary findings being presented today, addressing:
 - Future PAL demand
 - Service expansion analysis
 - Costs and implementation considerations

Recommendations



- In progress, addressing:
 - Existing PAL service improvements
 - Roadmap for future service

The study report with the consultant's recommendations will be completed this fall.



Study Findings

Existing Challenges with PAL Service

Operations

- Scheduling practices
- Technology issues
- Service monitoring practices

Improvements underway

Staffing

- Operator shortages
- Training and retention issues
- Work rule limitations

Fleet

- Aging fleet
- Market challenges in acquiring vehicles
- Limited maintenance capacity

The ongoing challenges cannot be resolved quickly. NFTA cannot consider service expansion without first addressing the challenges.



Expansion Analysis

Study Questions

Customer Needs

- Where do customers wish to travel?
- When do customers wish to travel?
- How do customers' wishes align with current PAL service?

Future Expansion

- How many more customer trips are likely?
- What are the costs and considerations of providing additional service and of covering a larger geographic area?

Interim Solutions

- Should NFTA change the hours when current PAL trips are possible?
- Should NFTA simplify the PAL service area?

Service Area Takeaways from Stakeholder Input



Confusion about the PAL service area



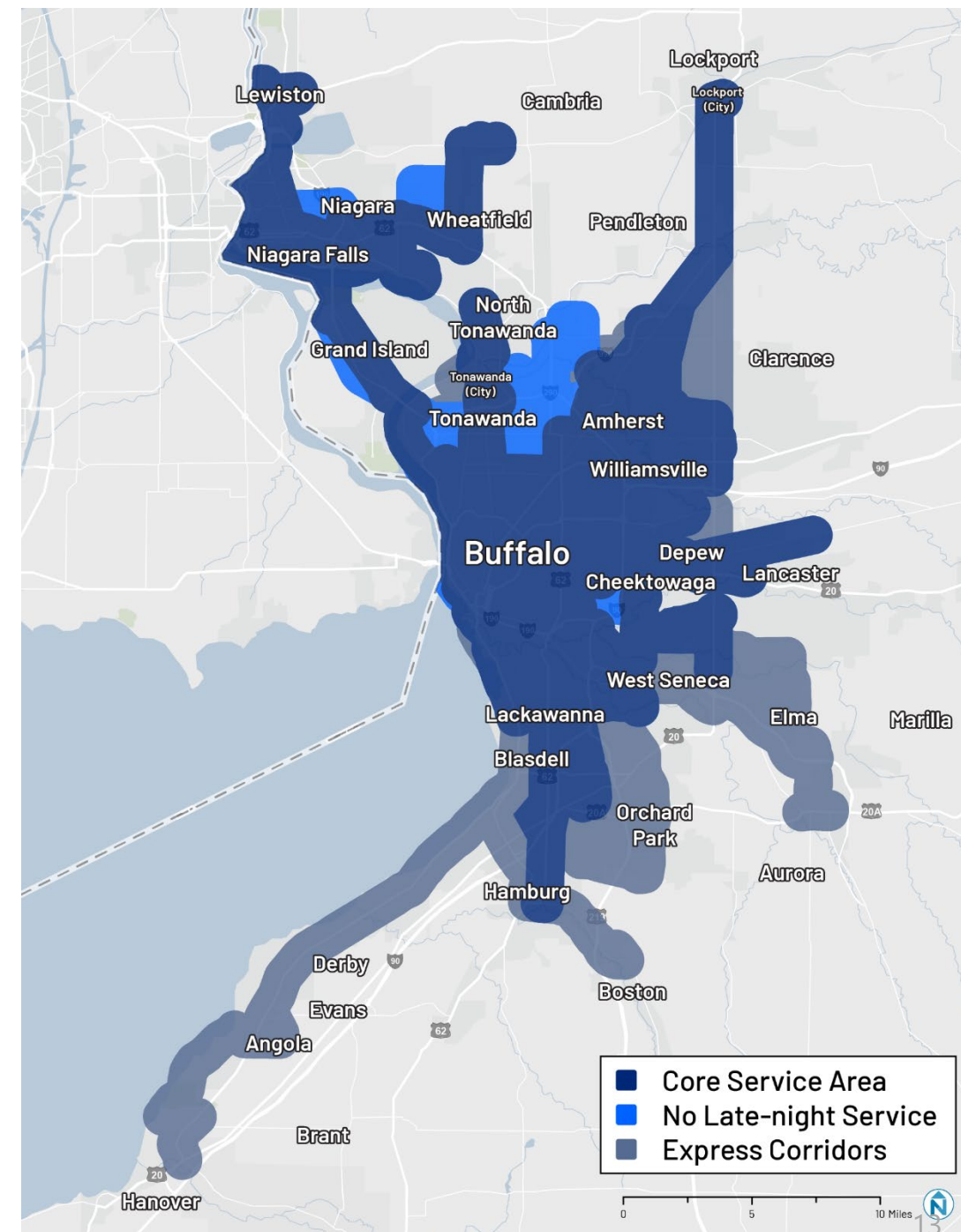
Less PAL service at night and on weekends



Difficulty traveling on PAL in express corridors

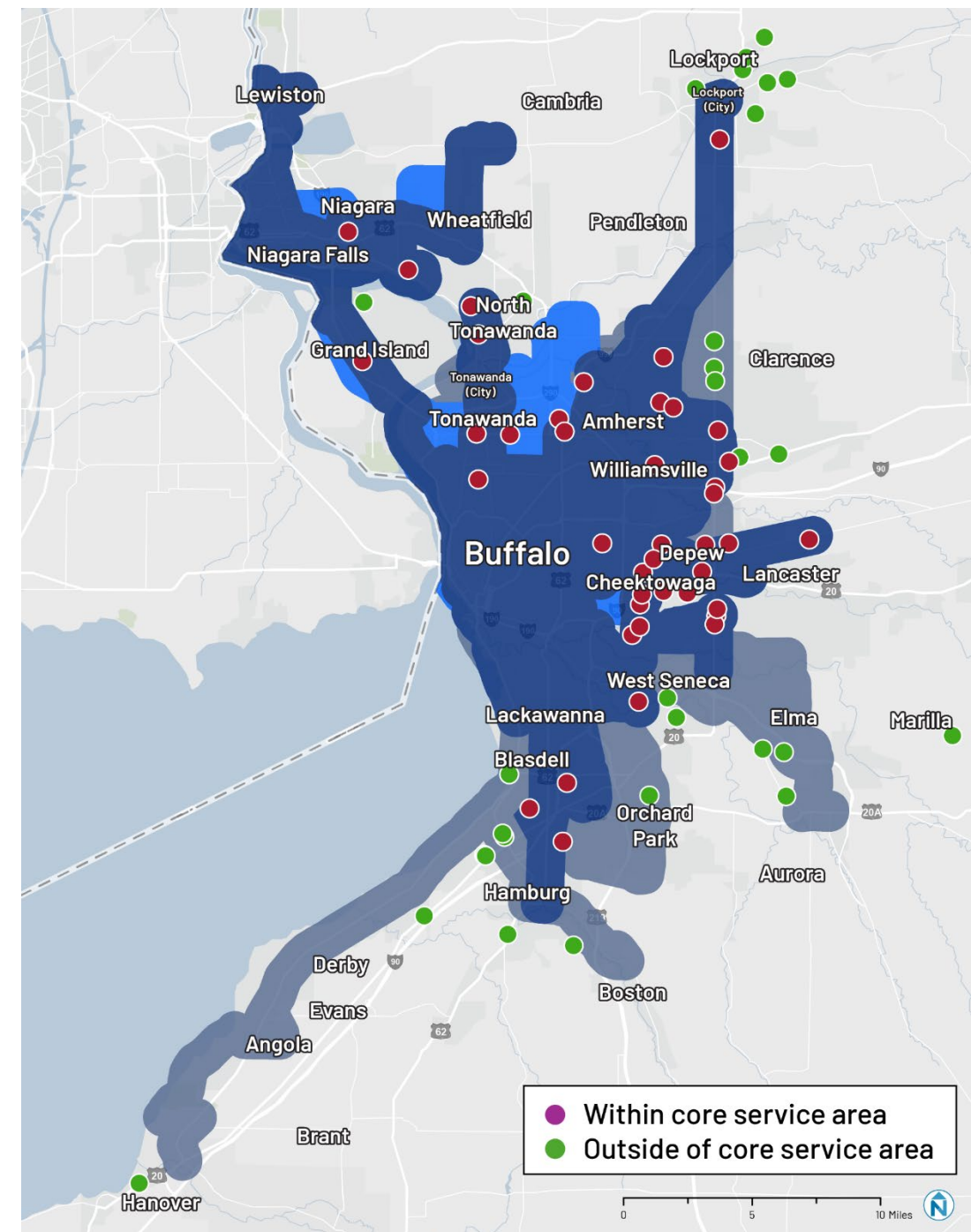
Current PAL Service

- Currently PAL service corresponds to fixed-route service, so when Metro Bus routes operate, PAL service is available within the 3/4-mile buffer.
- Less service is available at night and early in the morning on weekdays
- PAL service is also available along express routes, which means the maximum service coverage is during weekday peak periods.



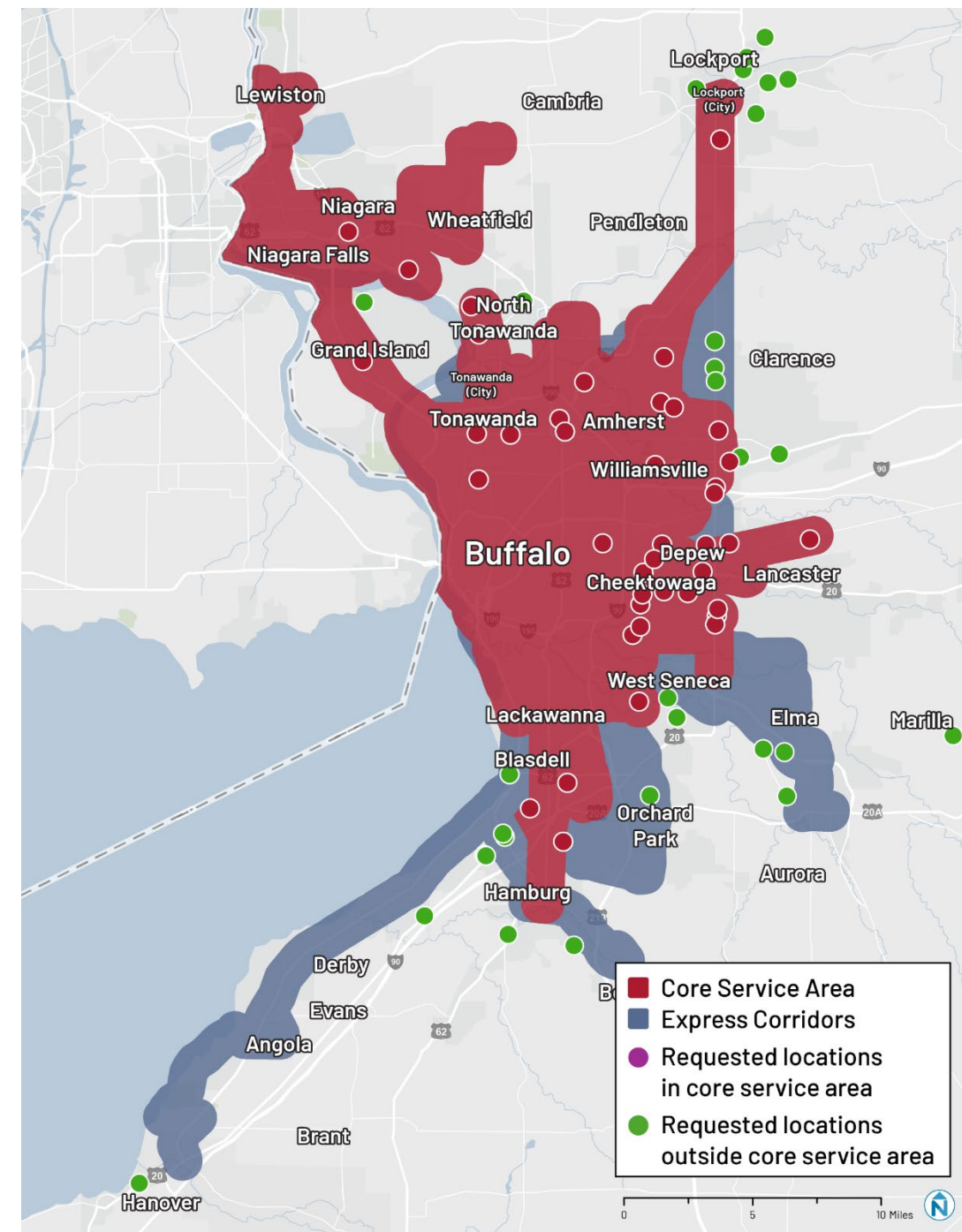
Requested Locations

- The study team mapped addresses provided by stakeholders, including
 - Locations within the core service area (red)
 - Locations outside the core service area (green)
 - Locations beyond NFTA's jurisdiction (not shown)
- Challenges for PAL customers can be complicated
 - Can use PAL to get somewhere but must leave early or not use PAL to return home
 - Want to make plans but must consult bus schedules or call NFTA to plan travel



Service Area Modification

- Create a single PAL core area and simplified service spans for PAL service
- Offer enhanced service to locations requested both in core service area and in express corridors
 - Approximately 75% of locations requested would see a benefit

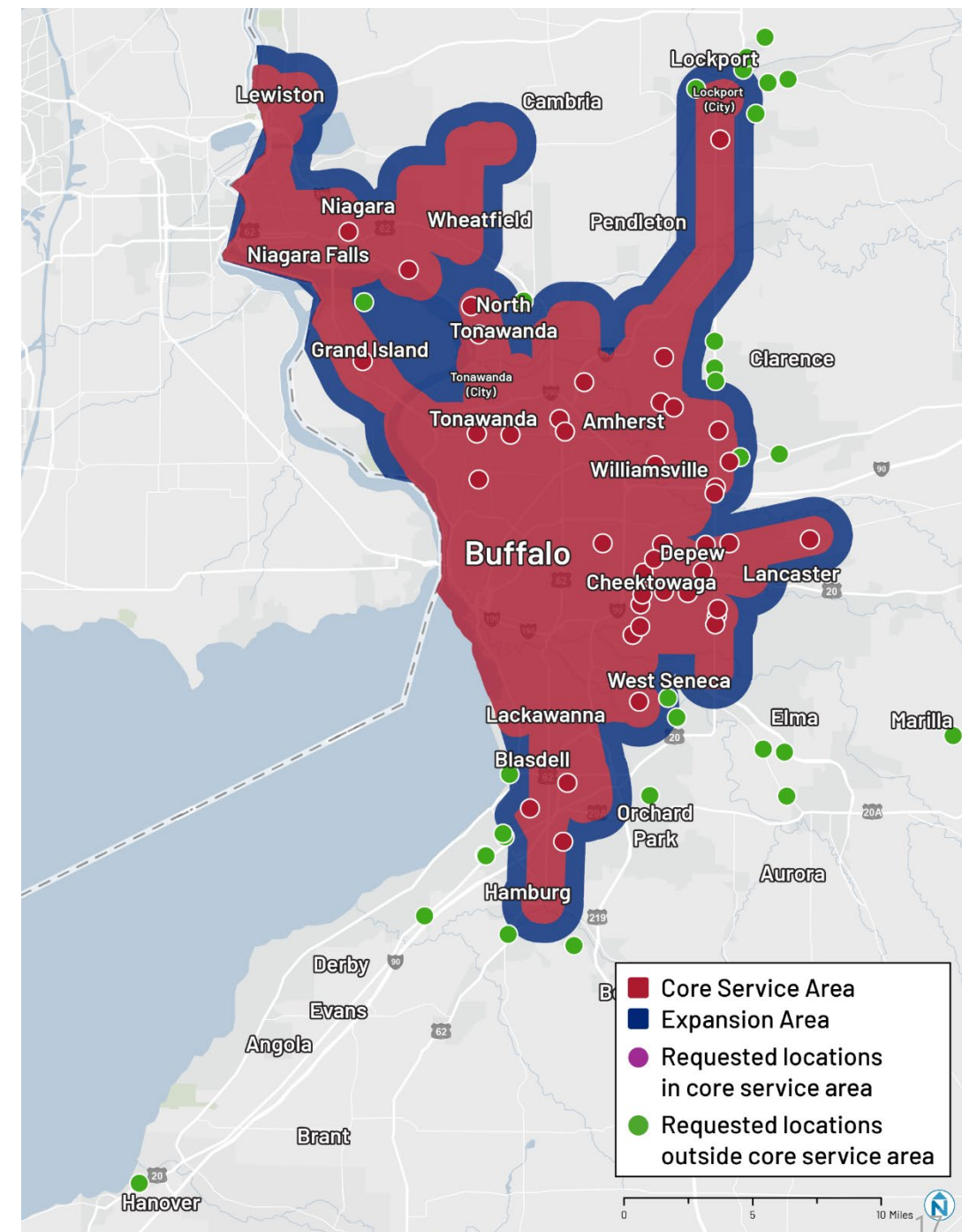




Expanding the Service Area

1.5-mile Buffer

- 0.75-mile buffer (core service area)
- 1.5-mile buffer (locations outside of core service area) adds 0.75 miles on each side of core service area
 - **Increases service area size from 262 square miles to 367 square miles (40% larger)**



Added Trips and Area, Hours, and Fleet

Trips and Area

- 30,500 added annual trips (16% increase)
- 105 added square miles (40% increase)

Hours

- 23,000 added hours of service (21% increase)

Fleet

- 14 added vehicles (21% increase)

To deliver additional PAL service with NFTA resources, NFTA would need to hire more drivers, acquire more vehicles, and increase maintenance capacity.

NFTA cannot expand the PAL service area until it addresses ongoing challenges with service delivery (vehicles, drivers, efficiencies).

Additional Resources Required

Operational Elements

- Cost per revenue service hour
 - Currently \$110
- New paratransit vehicles
 - Currently \$145,000
- Expanded maintenance capacity (see scenarios)

Additional Needs

- After addressing current needs,
 - Hire more operators
 - Acquire more vehicles
- Expand maintenance capacity

To estimate future costs of service expansion, the study team selected 2030.

Year 2030 Service Expansion Cost Estimate

Mid-Term Expansion Option: Renovate Existing NFTA Facilities

- \$10 million for operations, fleet, and construction
- Would result in increased costs to provide fixed-route service
- Zero-emission and electrification requirements may further increase costs

Long-Term Expansion Option: Construct New Facility

- \$95 million for operations, fleet, and construction of dedicated facility
- New facility would include maintenance and repair, fleet storage, control center (call taking, scheduling, and dispatching), and operations (supervisors, vehicle operators)

Under service expansion, annual operational and vehicle replacement costs for PAL service would increase by approximately **\$5 million per year**.



Alternative Service-Delivery Options

Alternative Service-Delivery Options

Models



- Dedicated providers who operate a minimum number of service hours on behalf of NFTA
- Non-dedicated providers such as rideshare companies or taxi companies who provide supplemental trips as needed

Requirements



- NFTA would need to hire contract managers to oversee service quality
- NFTA may have to use PAL vehicles and drivers to serve customers with wheelchairs

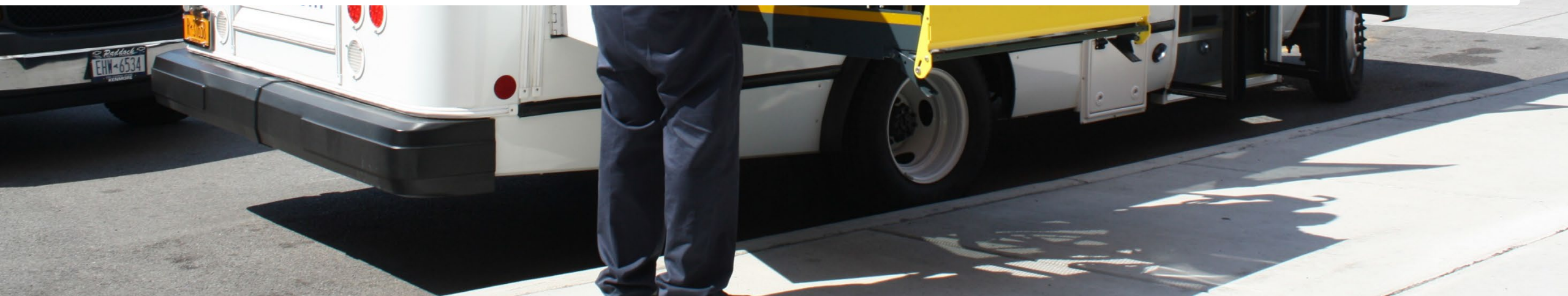
Challenges



- Providing consistent service quality and good customer service is more challenging
- NFTA's current labor agreement presents challenges in using outside contractors

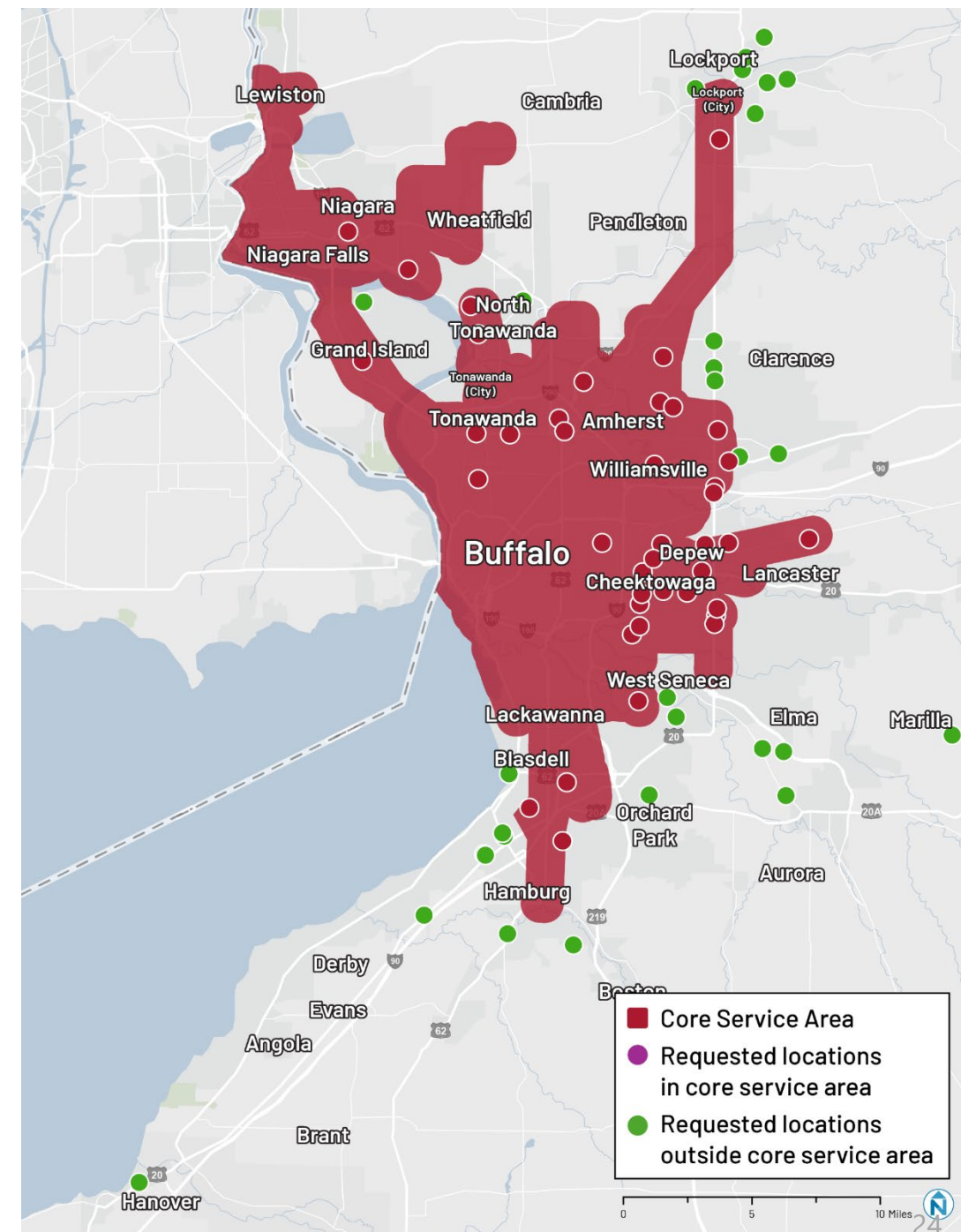


Core Service Area Expansion



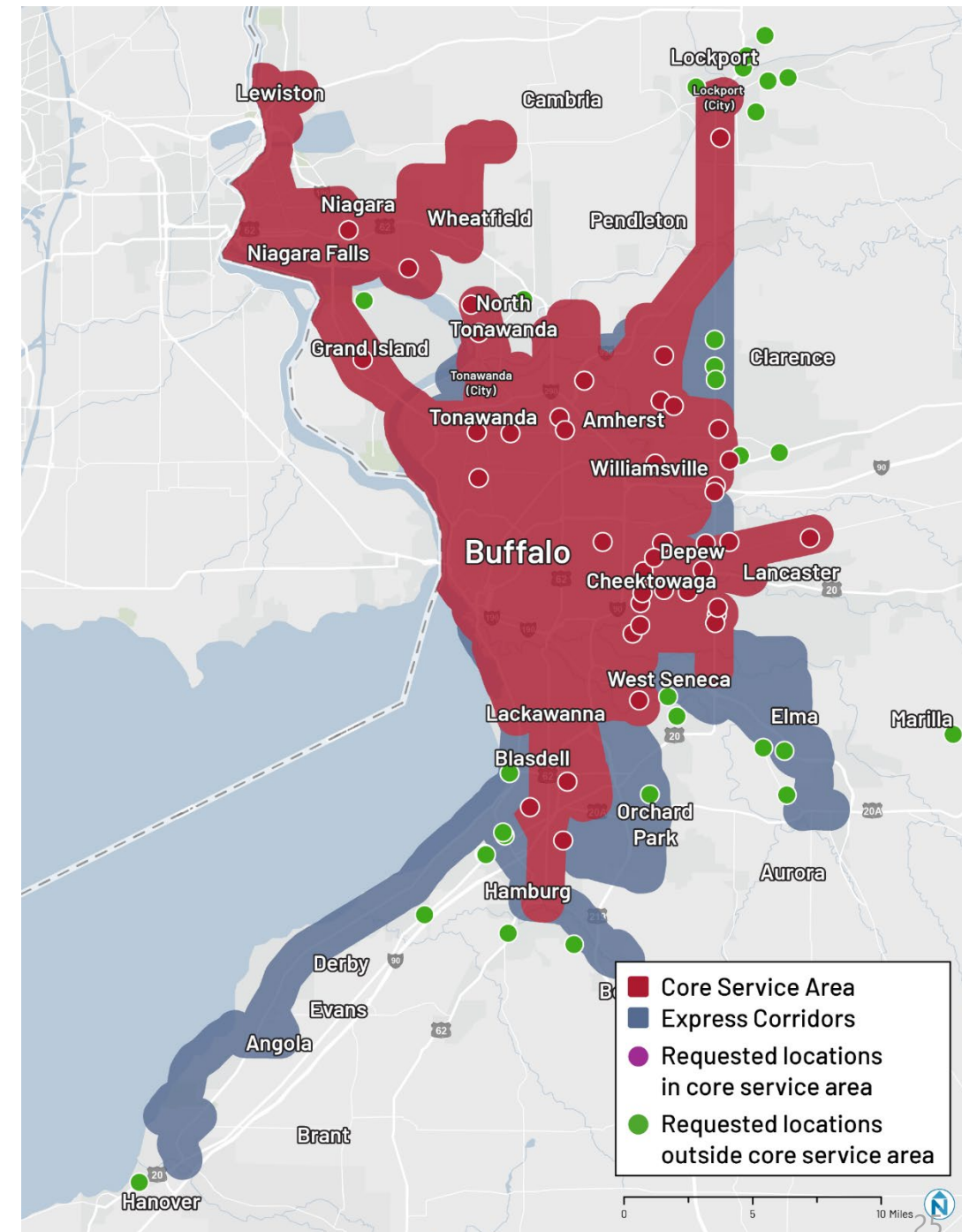
One Core PAL Service Area

- PAL customers will be able to travel throughout the core service area whenever **any** local Metro bus route is operating
- This means PAL service will be available across the core area on:
 - Weekdays from 4:30 a.m. to 1:30 a.m.
 - Weekends from 5:30 a.m. to 1:30 a.m.
- **Benefits**
 - A simplified schedule and service area will be easier to understand
 - PAL service will be more consistent, both geographically and by service span
 - More travel opportunities are available in the evening and on weekends



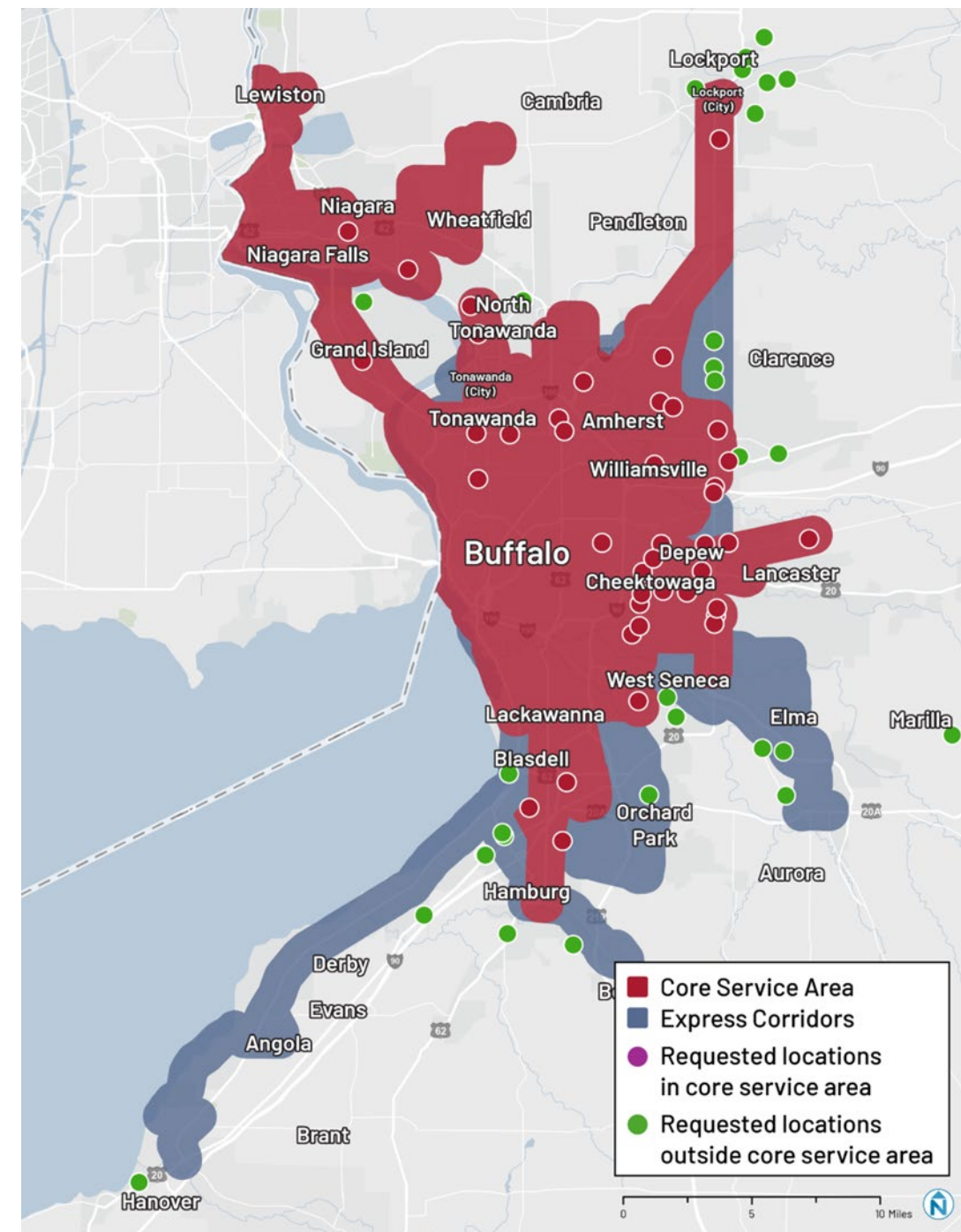
Extended Express Hours

- Regardless of an express route's peak commuter schedule, PAL customers will be able to travel on non-holiday weekdays to and from locations within 0.75 miles of express routes as follows:
 - From 6 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.
 - From 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
- **Benefits**
 - Simplifies the schedule
 - Increases opportunities for PAL customers to complete a round trip within the service period, particularly in the afternoon/evening



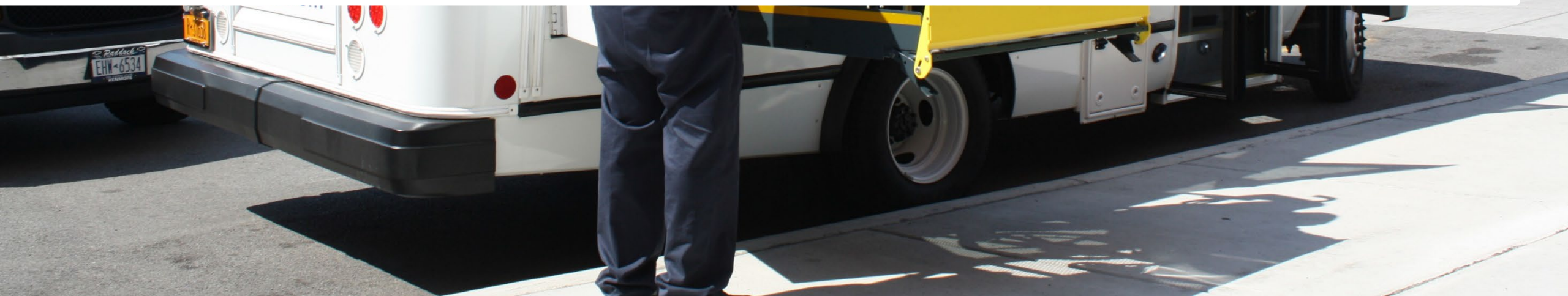
How These Changes Will Help

- PAL service will be available over a greater geographic area
- PAL service spans will be longer during evenings and on weekends in the core area and during weekday peaks in the express corridors
- PAL service area will be easier to understand





Summary



Key Takeaways



In the short term, NFTA is proposing to invest and expand existing PAL service – geographically and by span of service – by offering customers a simplified core service area.



Challenges remain with existing PAL service delivery: improvements are underway, but staffing, fleet, and maintenance challenges will take much longer to resolve.



Service expansion is not possible today. If by 2030, NFTA can address its ongoing driver shortage, acquire more vehicles, and expand maintenance capacity, future expansion will require at least \$10 million in the first year, not including funding for subsequent years, inflation escalation, or current costs to operate PAL service.



An alternate service delivery model—using private contractors for supplemental PAL service—could enable service expansion to occur sooner, but customer service and quality control concerns and current labor agreements present challenges for this option.



Discussion

Thank you!



Bill Schwartz, AICP bschwartz@nelsonnygard.com