



Chicago Transit Authority

Bus Vision Project Framing Report


Chicago Transit Board Summary

September 11, 2024



The Bus Vision Project is a chance to rethink Chicago's bus network

- CTA has undertaken the Bus Vision Project to help understand how the current bus system is performing and how it may best be improved.
- First of its kind comprehensive analysis
- Context of much change over the last few decades
 - Population and land use—where people live, work, learn, play
 - Commute patterns—how and when people get to work
 - Emergence of ride-hail and micromobility (Uber, Lyft, bike-share, scooters)
 - Changes to bus service (mostly reductions due to funding)
- Analysis for Framing Report initially kicked off in 2020; pandemic impacted schedule and approach

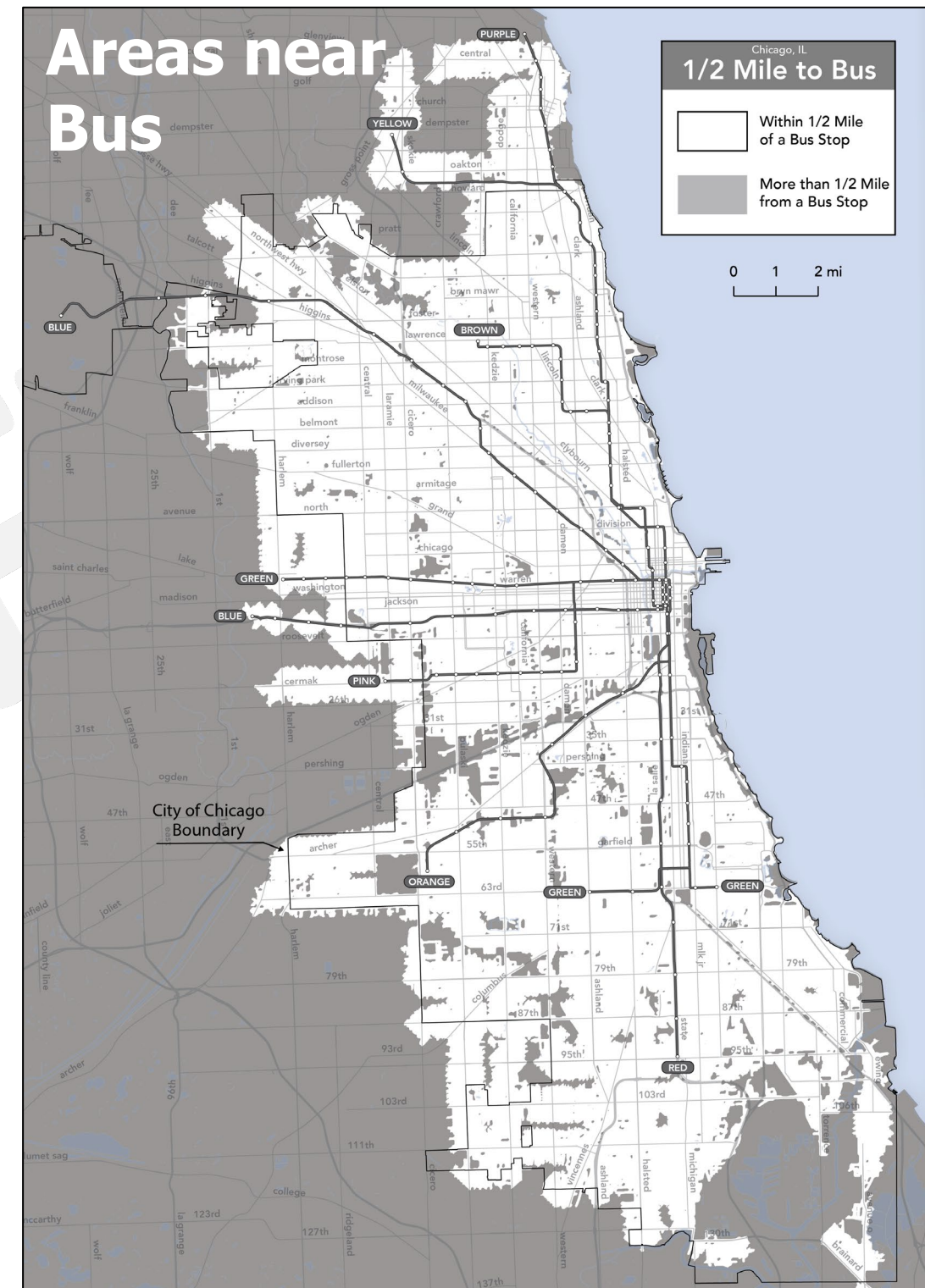
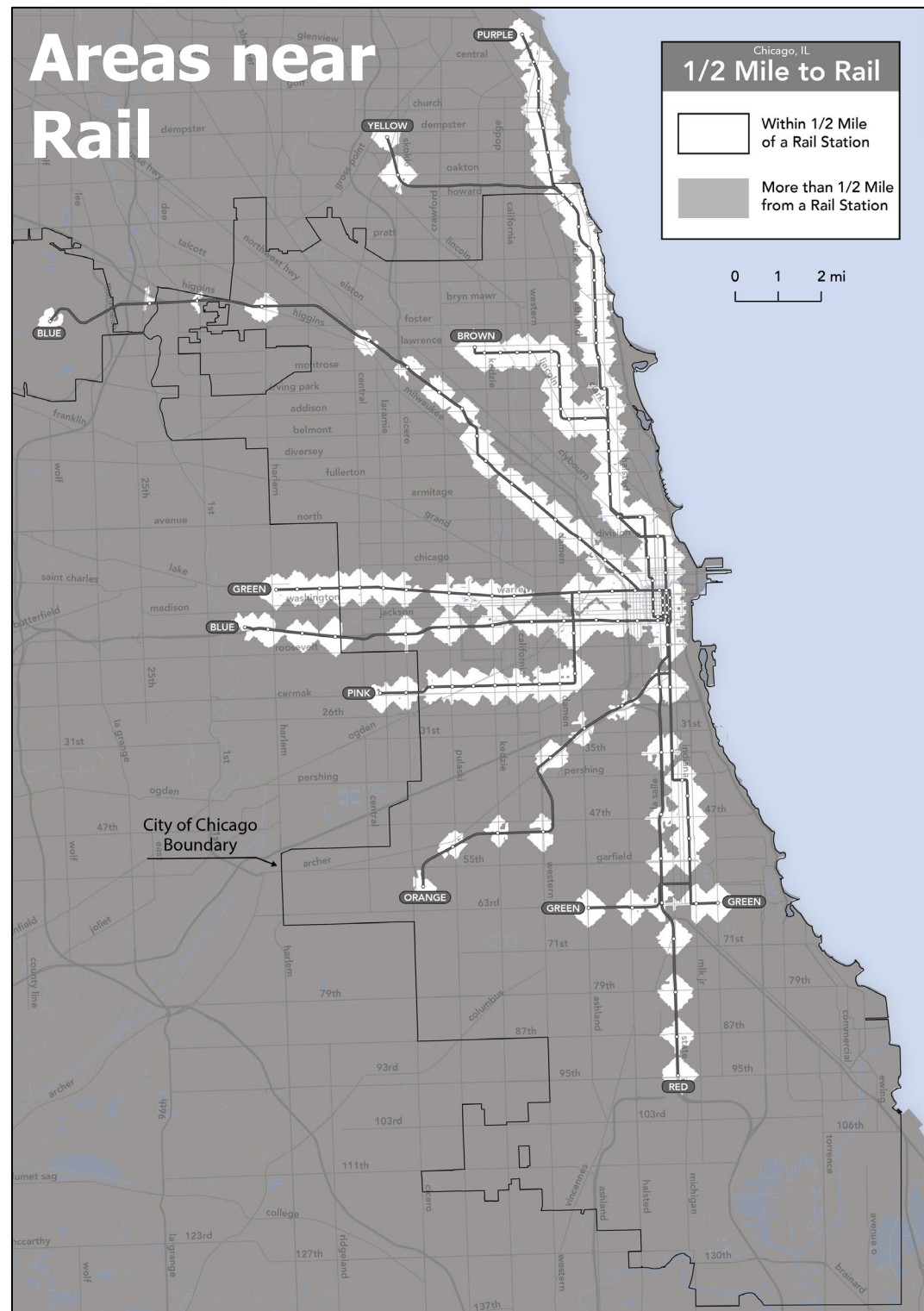


Framing Report analyzes the CTA bus network we have, tees up a public discussion of choices and tradeoffs

- How well does the CTA bus network serve the people of Chicago and surrounding communities?
- What goals and priorities should drive CTA's decisions about where and how often the bus operates?
- How could the bus network change and improve in the next 2-5 years and what would it take for possible improvements to become real?

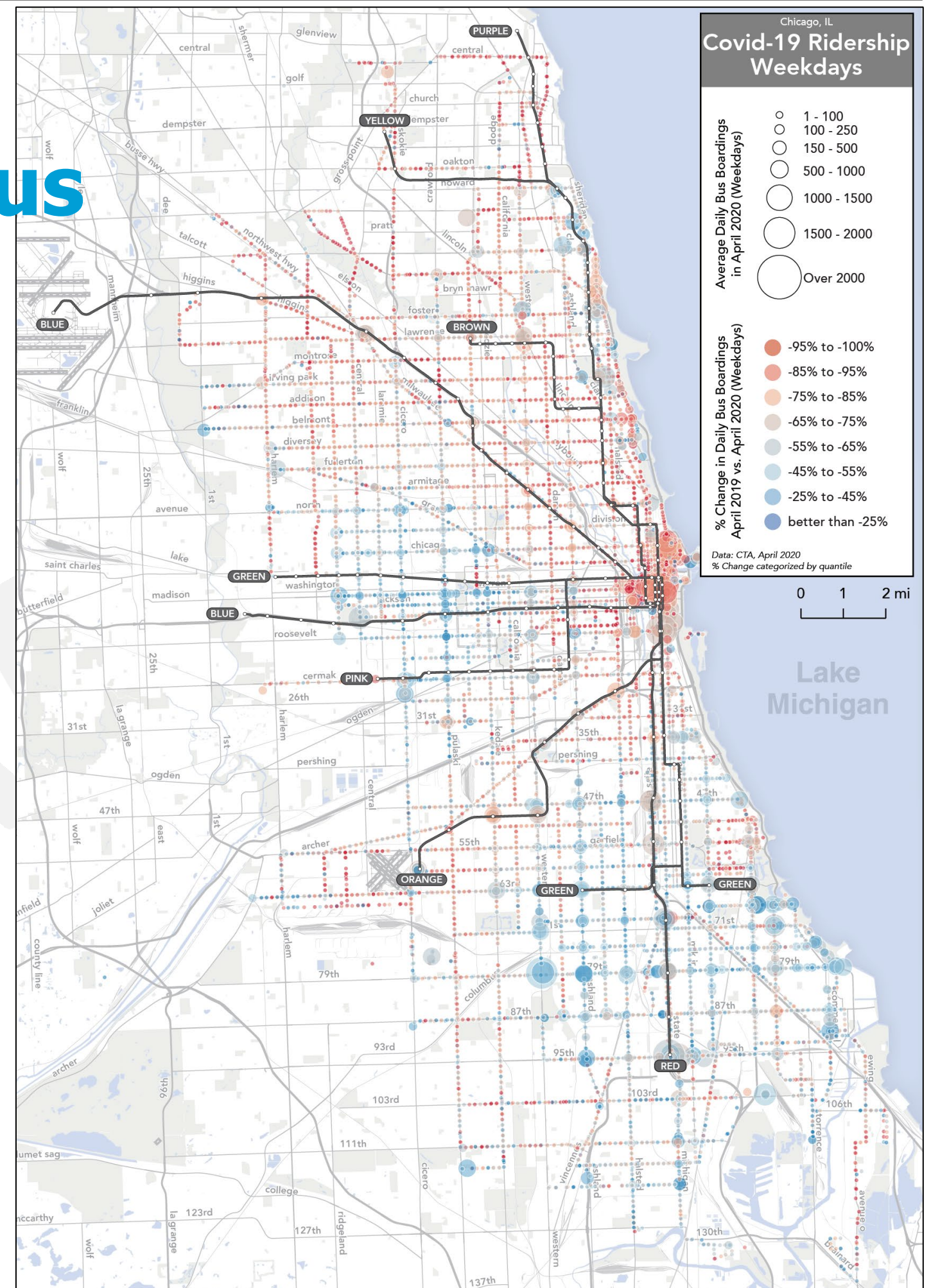
The bus is vital to Chicago.

It's ADA accessible.
It's affordable
It carries 60% of CTA ridership.
It serves ALL of Chicago



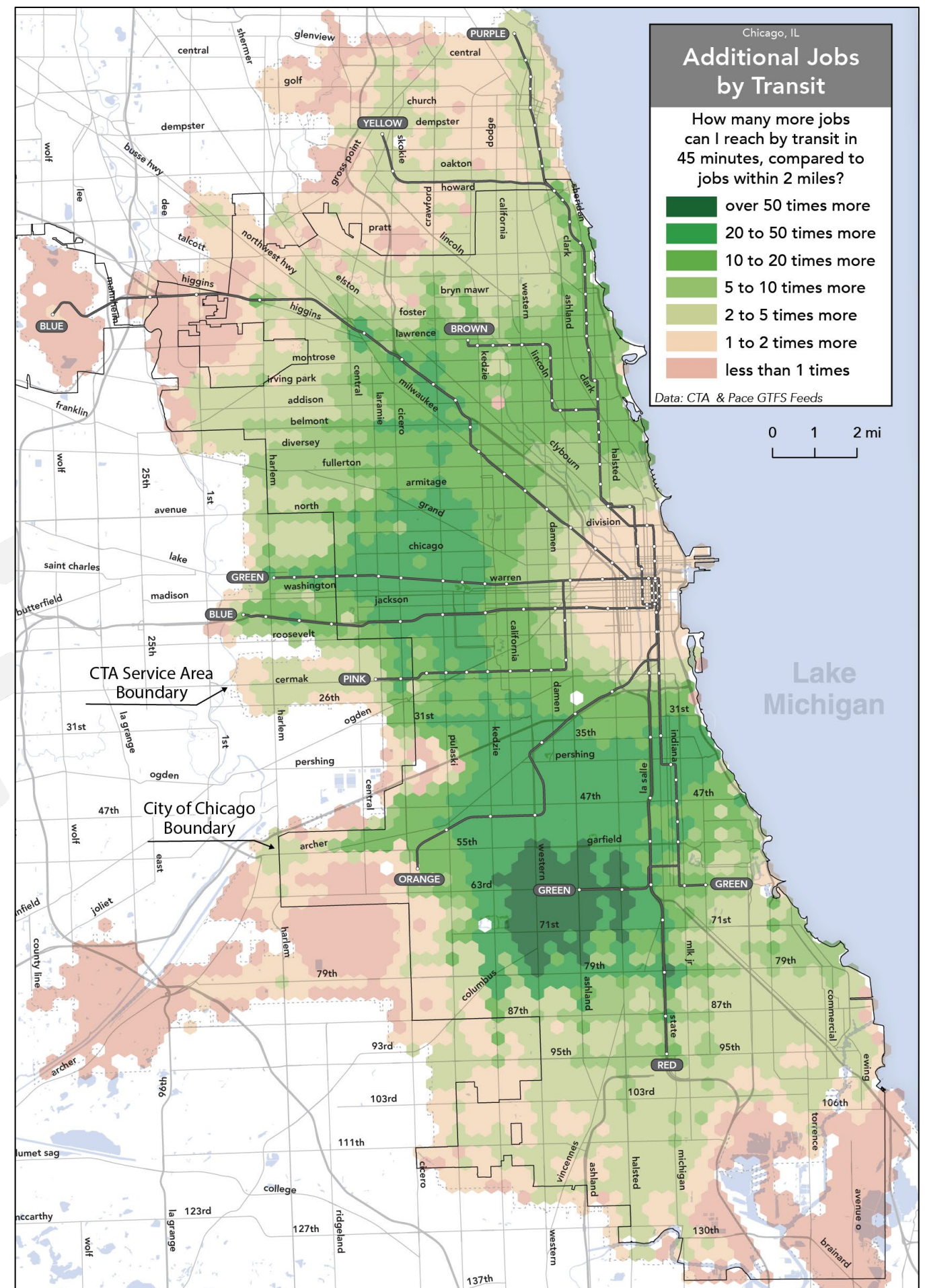
The pandemic has shown how essential bus service is to Chicago

- Bus retained more ridership than rail throughout the pandemic.
- Bus ridership's recovery continues to be stronger than rail.
- Compared to previous years, transit riders at height of pandemic were more likely to:
 - Not have access to a car
 - Have lower incomes
 - Hold essential jobs that can't be done remotely
 - Be Black

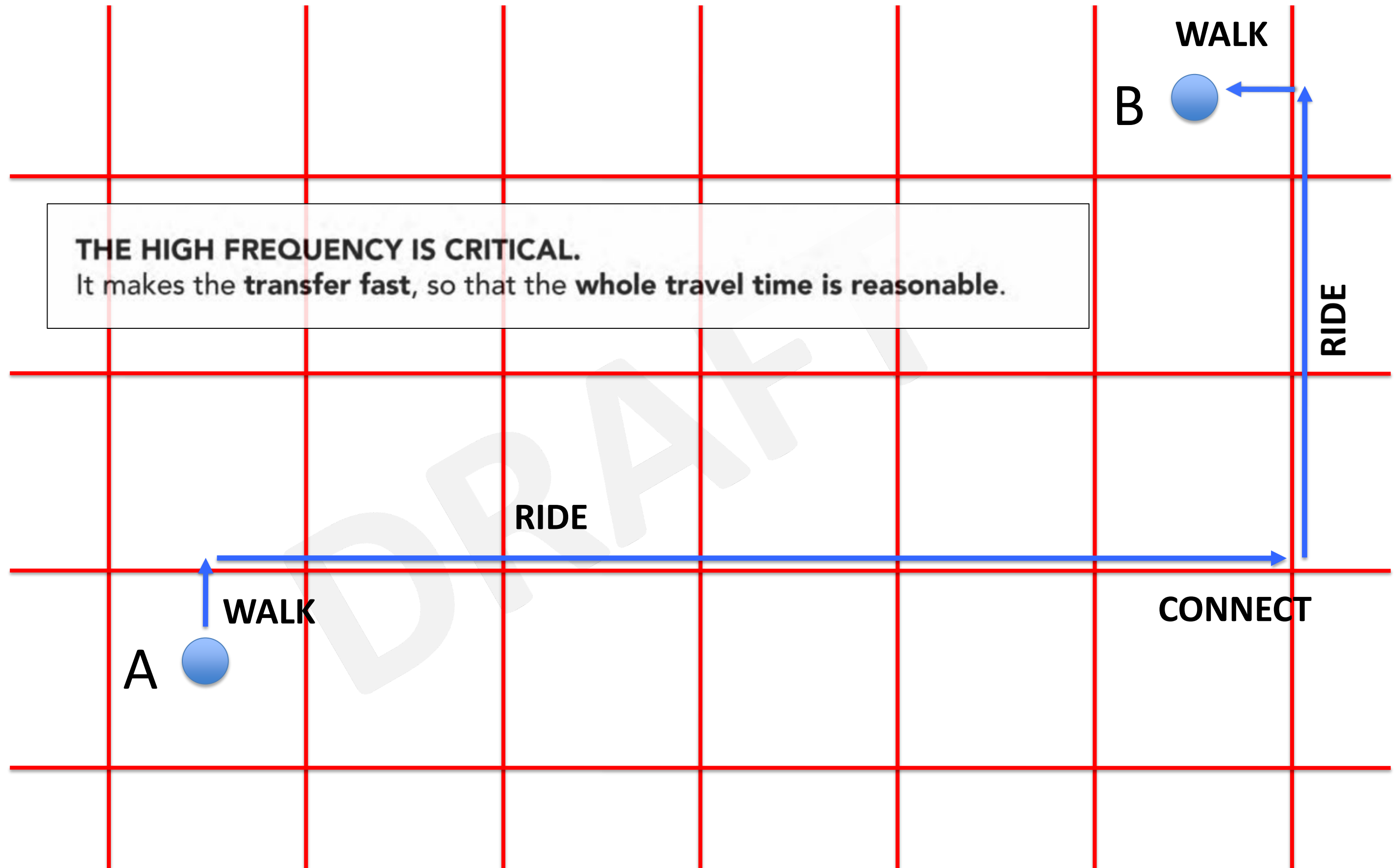


Bus service improves access to opportunity.

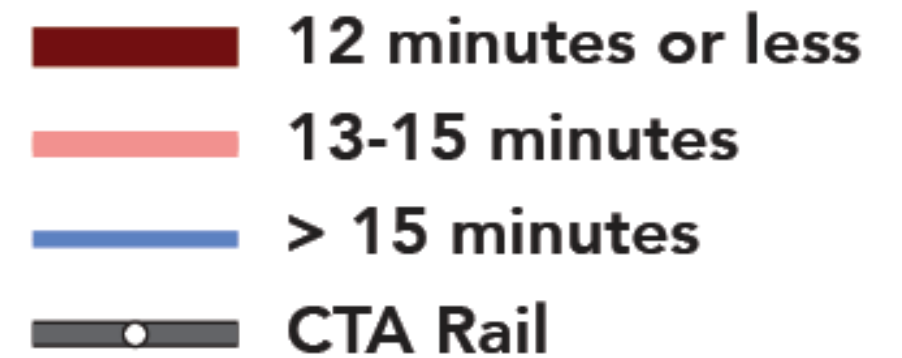
- Many neighborhoods are far from jobs, services and educational opportunities
- Bus service helps bridge the gap.
- **Transit multiplies the number of opportunities accessible from low-income areas many times over.**



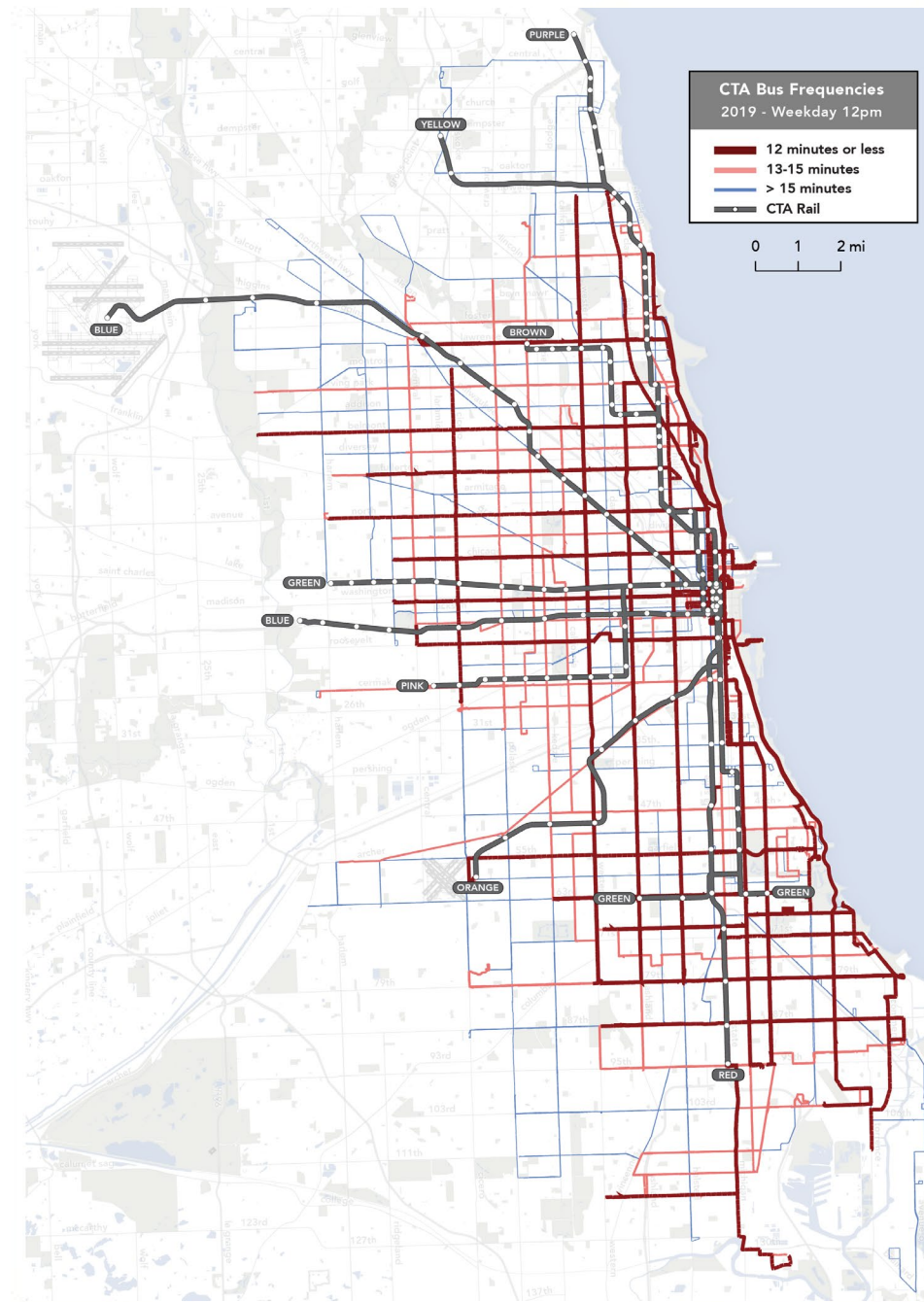
It achieves this using a frequent grid.



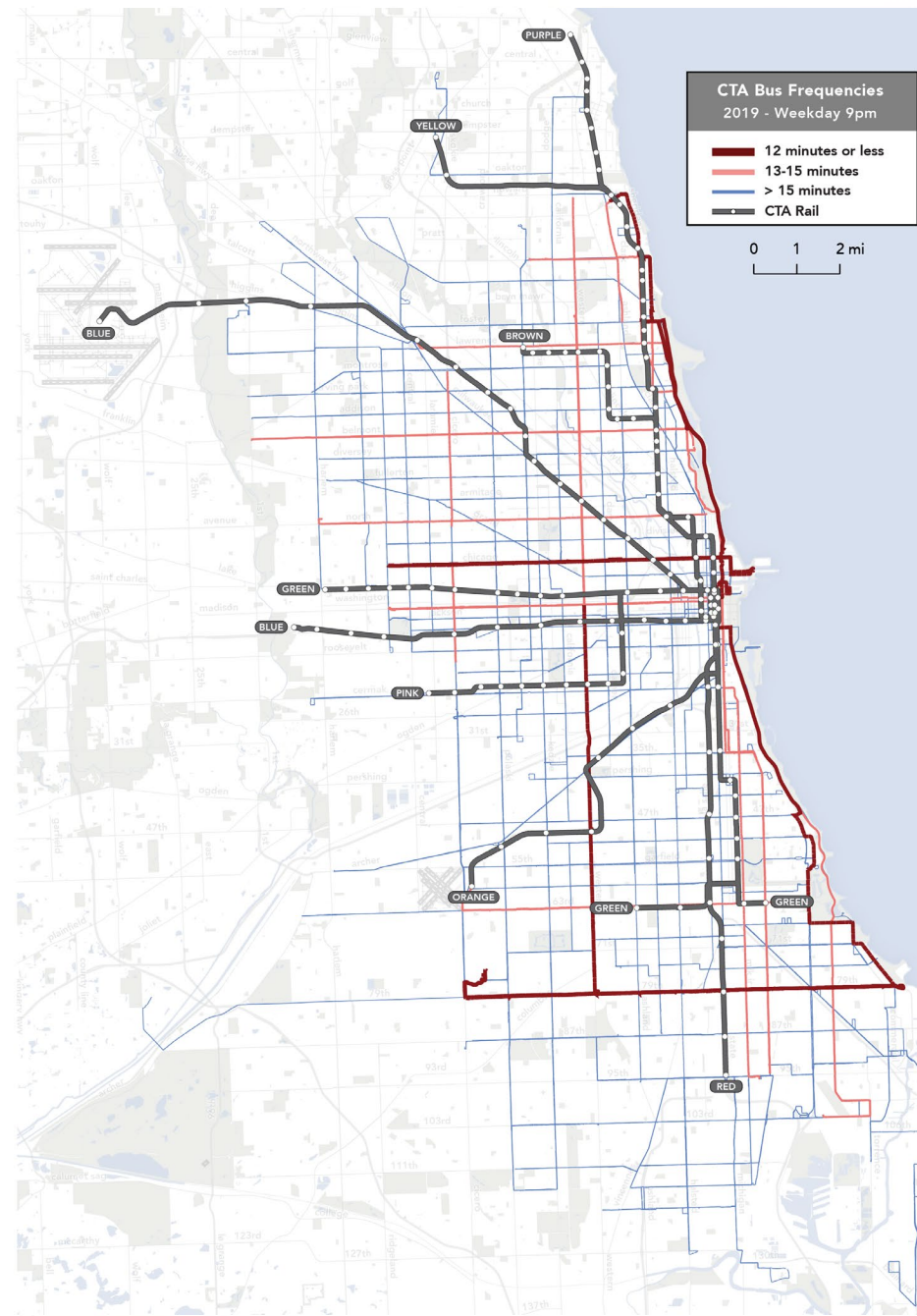
The grid doesn't function as well in the evening.



Weekdays at Noon

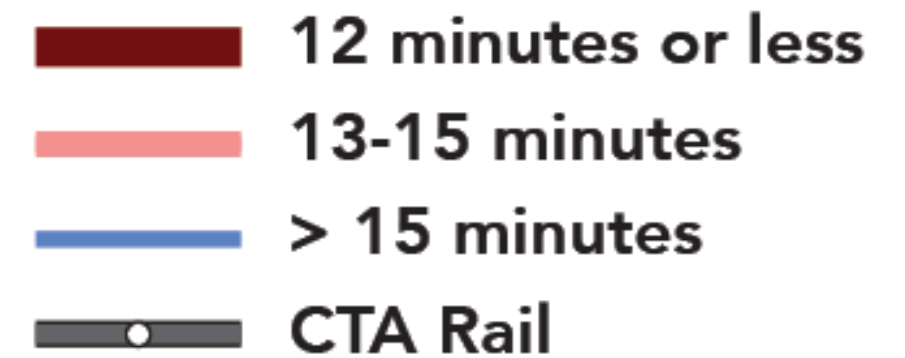


Weekdays at 9 PM

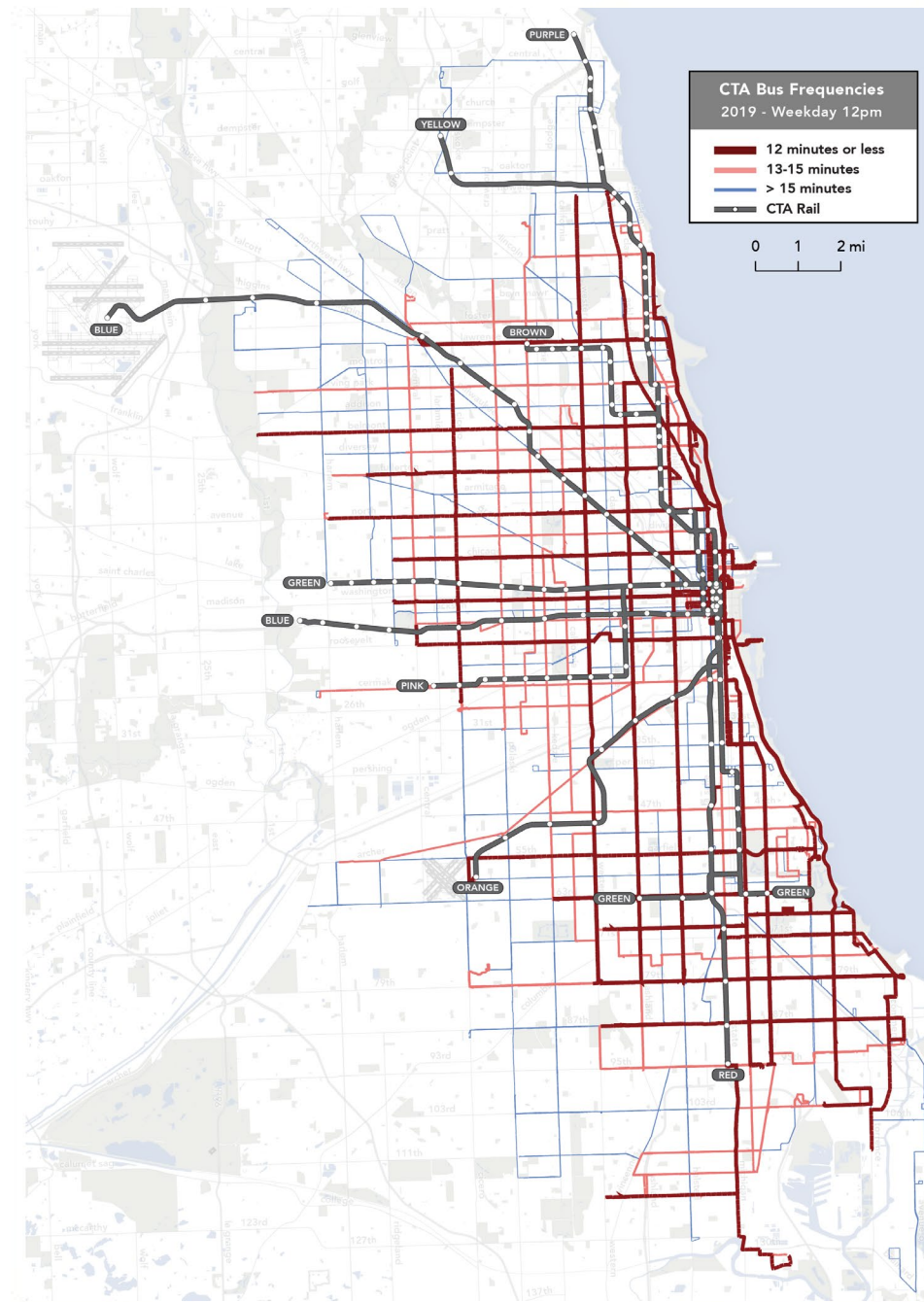


- Most evening frequencies are too low for fast grid connections.
- Low income people are especially like to travel evenings.
- Evening service supports daytime ridership.

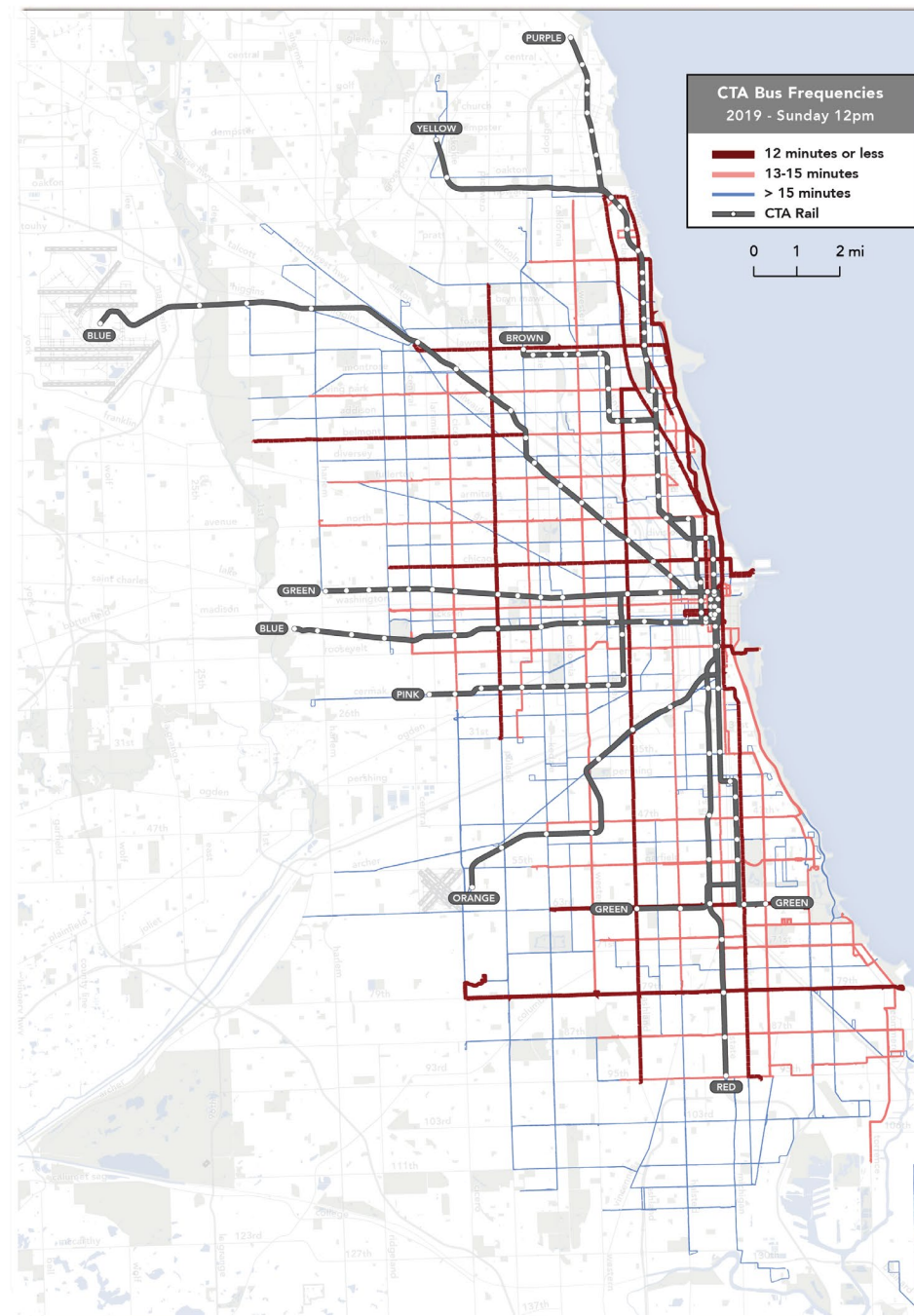
The grid doesn't function as well on weekends.



Weekdays at Noon



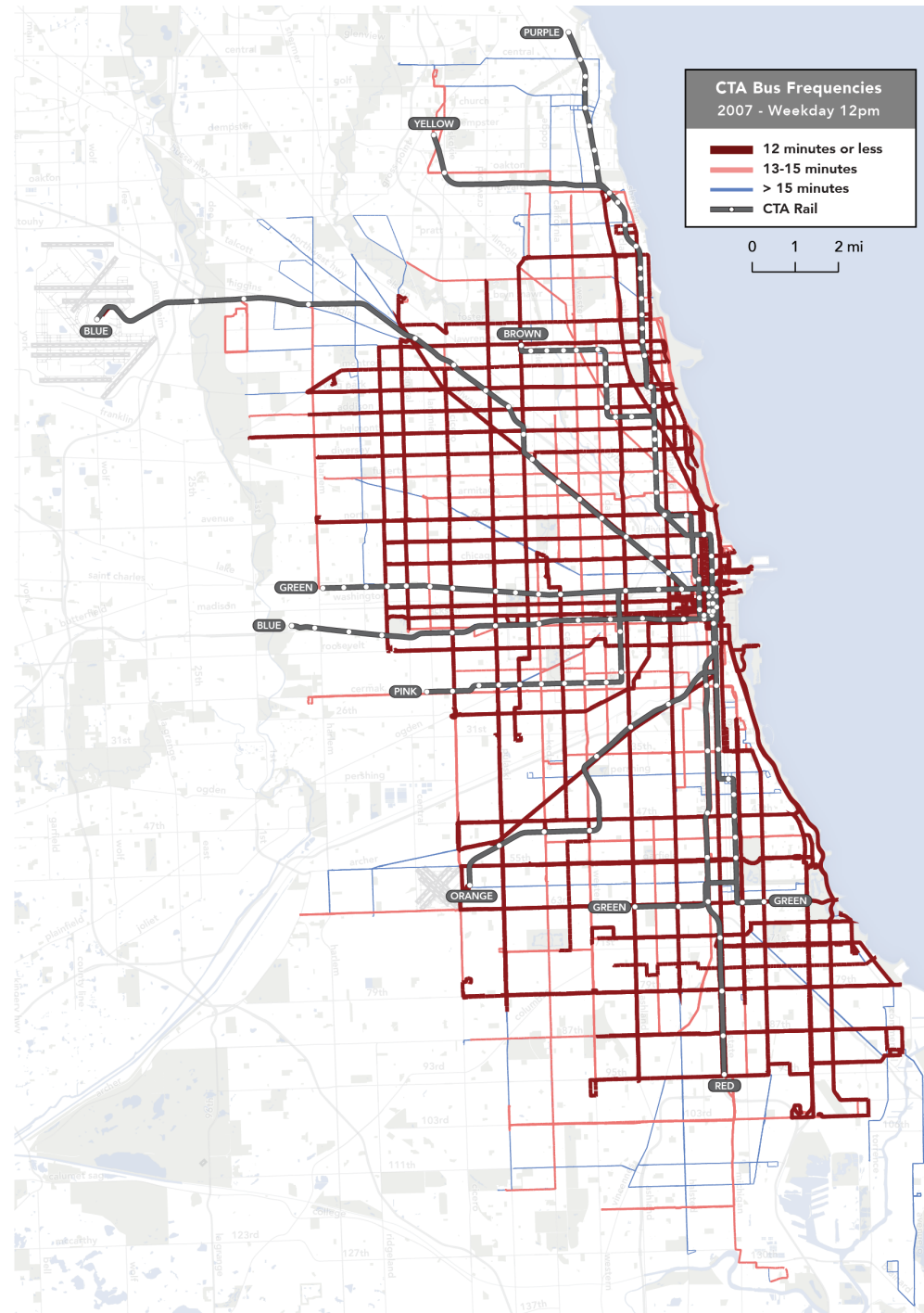
Sundays at Noon



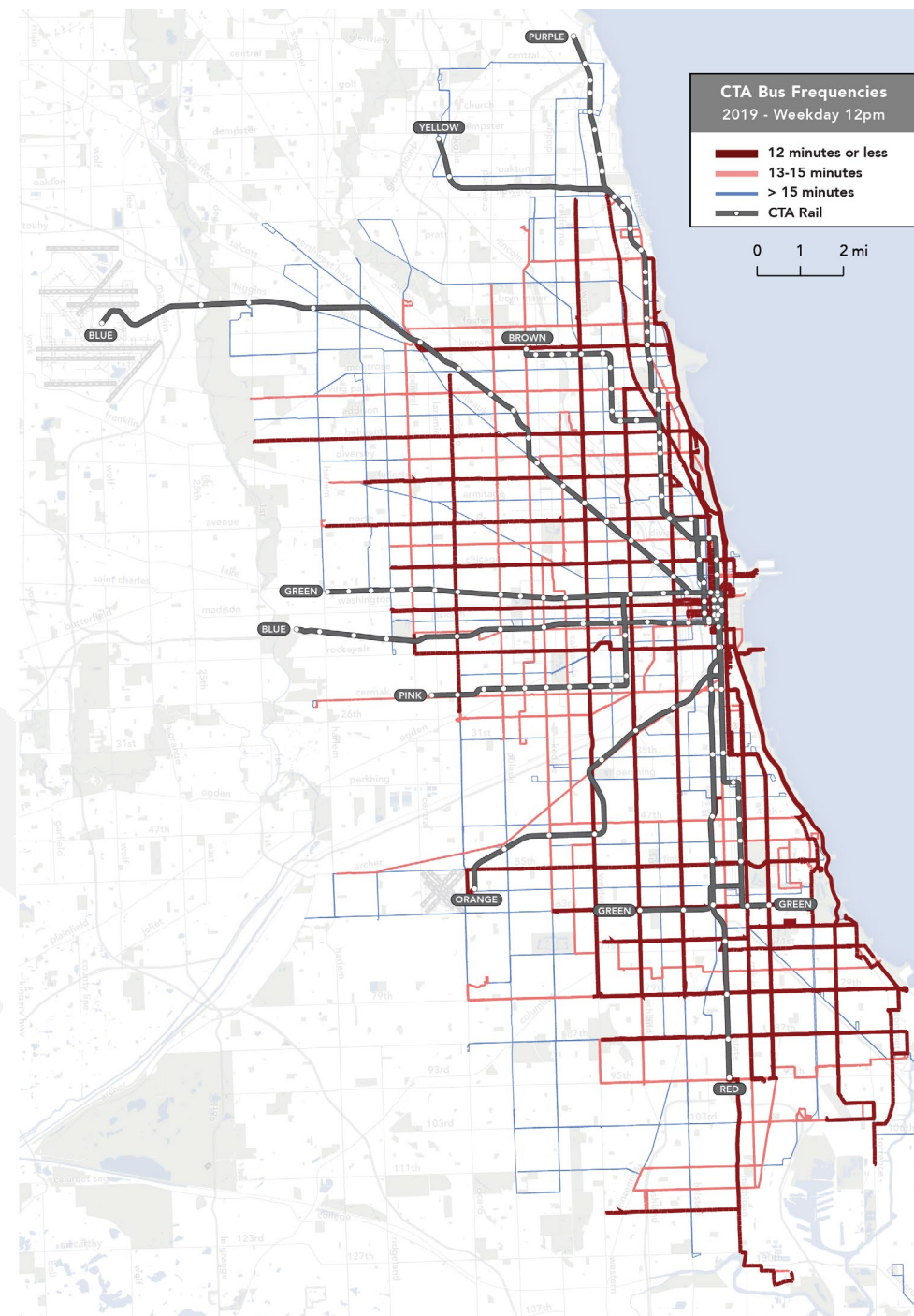
- In 2019, the average CTA service area resident using transit could access 10% fewer places and 20% fewer job locations on Sundays than on weekdays in 45 minutes or less.
- Less Frequency = Less Access

Major 2010 Service Cut Weakened the Grid

2007 Weekday noon



2019 Weekday noon



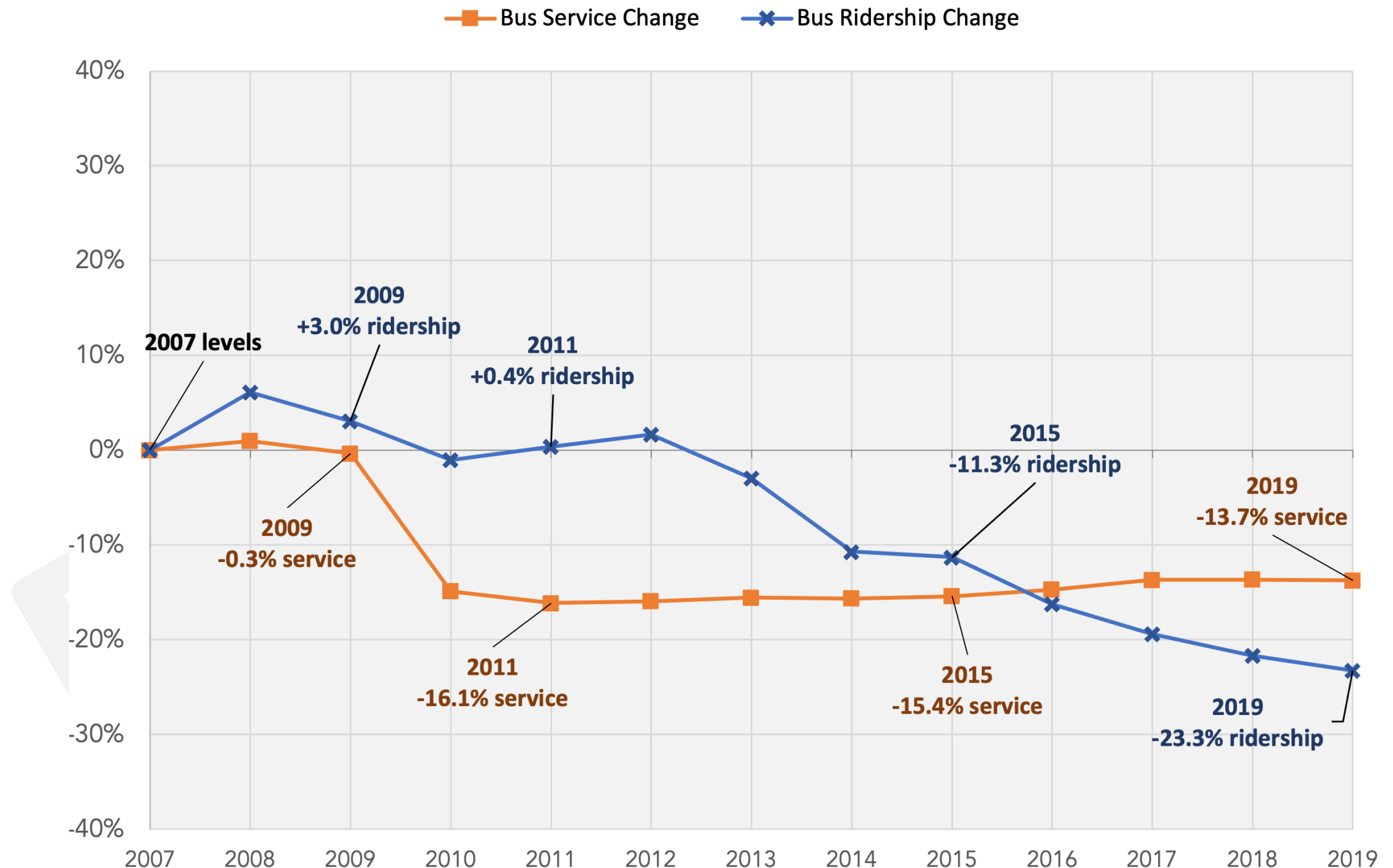
- In Spring 2010, CTA cut bus service 16% and rail service 10% due to recessionary budget shortfalls.
- This reduced access to opportunity by weakening the grid.
- This service was never restored.

Bus ridership declined over the 2010s.

- 14% less bus service in 2019 than in 2007
- 23% fewer rides over same period

CTA Bus Service Levels and Ridership - 2007 to 2019

Source: Chicago Transit Authority; NTD 2018.



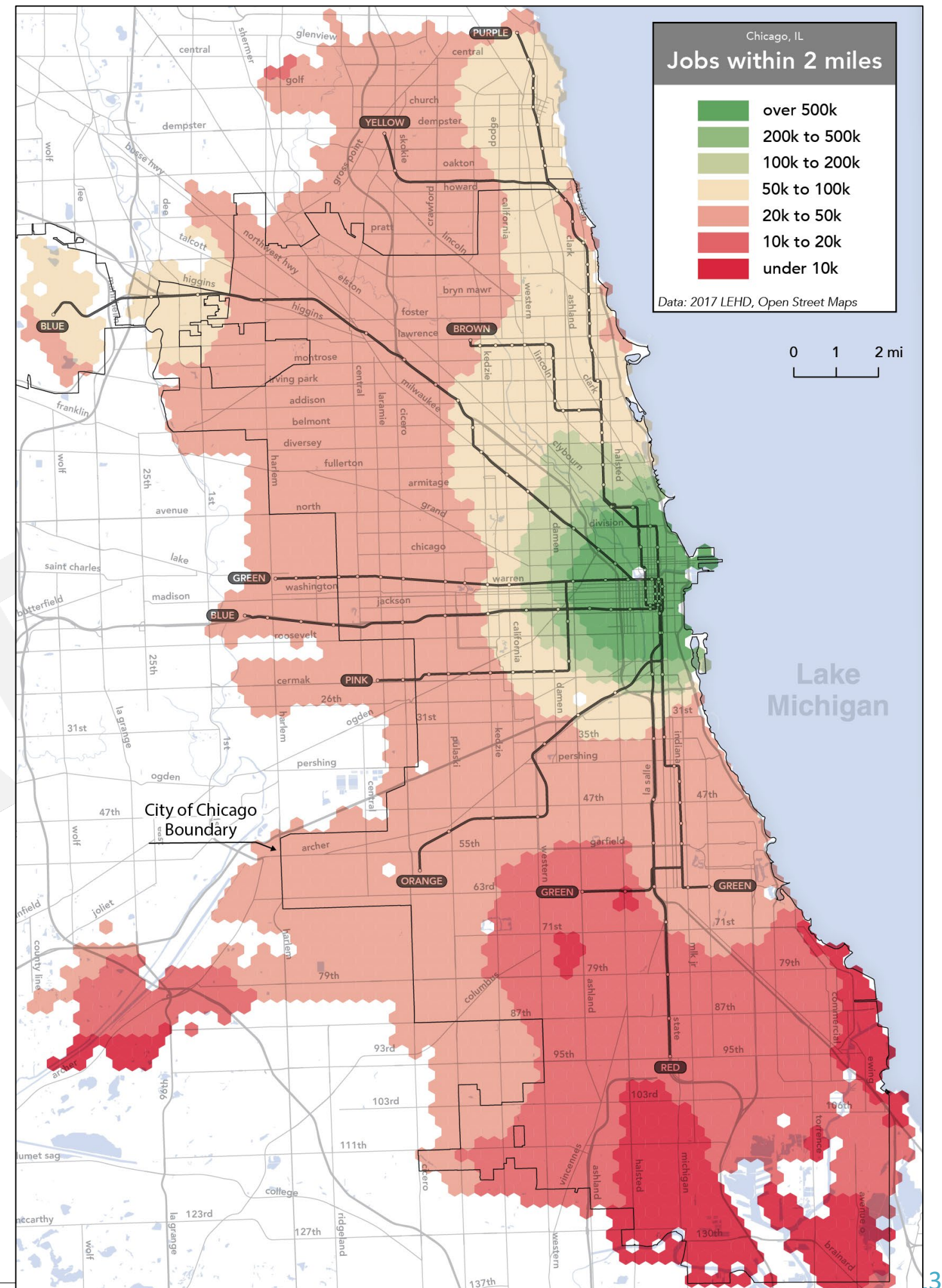


Access to Opportunity by Race

| How far can people reach within 45 minutes by transit if they are... | Area Reachable (sq. miles) | Average Distance (miles) | No. of Residents Accessible | No. of Jobs Accessible |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| "Average" Resident (for comparison) | 30.7 | 3.9 | 426,000 | 136,000 |
| Low Income (below 150% federal poverty) | 32 | 4 | 427,000 | 151,000 |
| White (non-Hispanic) | 28.9 | 3.8 | 501,000 | 265,000 |
| Asian | 29.6 | 3.8 | 483,000 | 445,000 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 31.7 | 4 | 435,000 | 130,000 |
| Black or African-American | 31.7 | 4 | 369,000 | 91,000 |

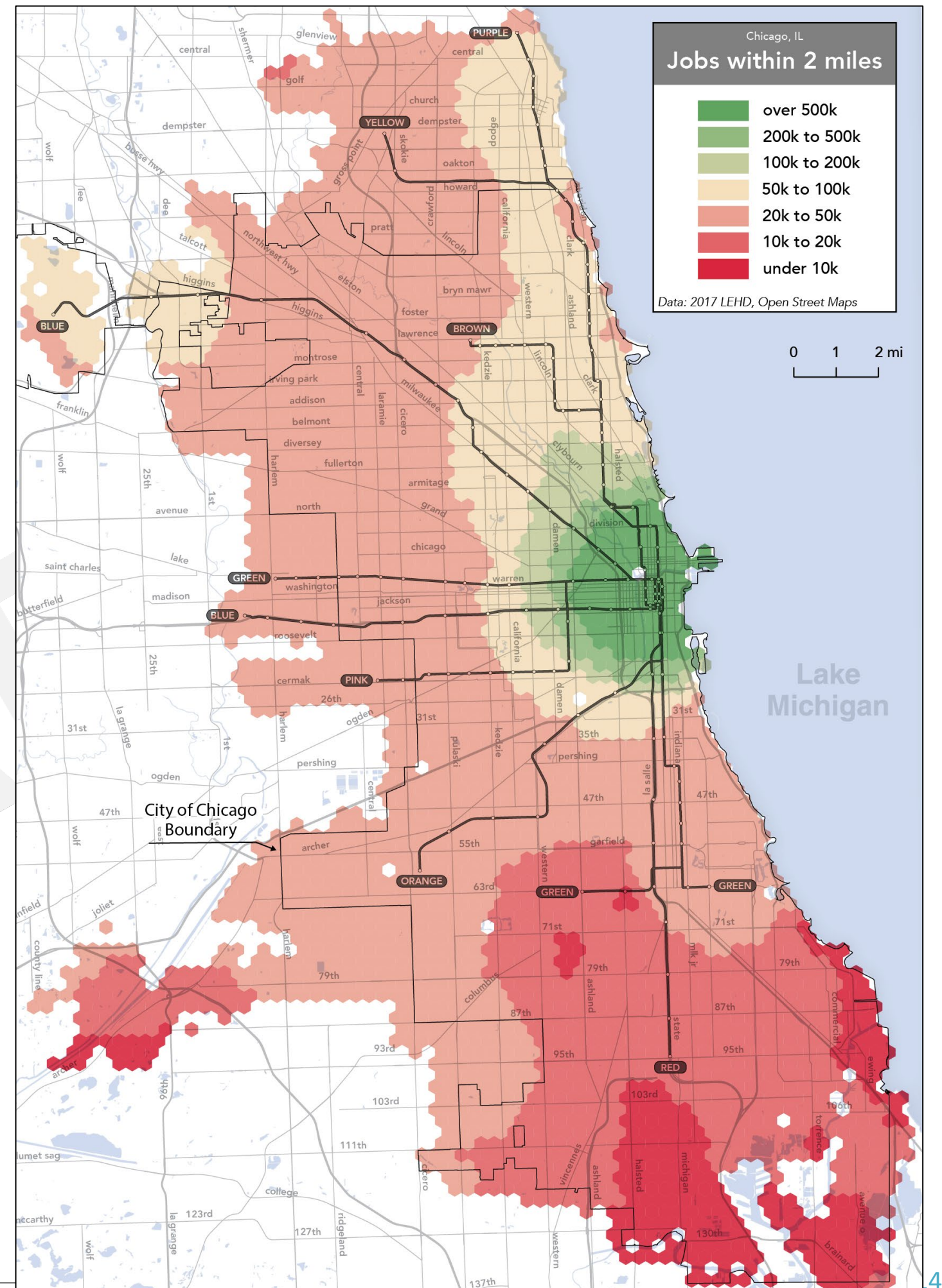
Chicago's inequity of access can't be solved by transit alone.

- The predominantly Black and Latino parts of the city are further from opportunities.
- Many are also in areas with lower density and poor walkability, both barriers to ridership.
- This is a land use and development problem, rooted in historic discrimination.



So there is a tradeoff between equity and ridership.

- Mainly Black and Latino areas need more transit per person to access the same level of opportunity.
- So their service is more expensive per passenger.
- If the only goal is ridership, this service is hard to justify.



Major changes to bus service will require new funding, trade-offs or both.

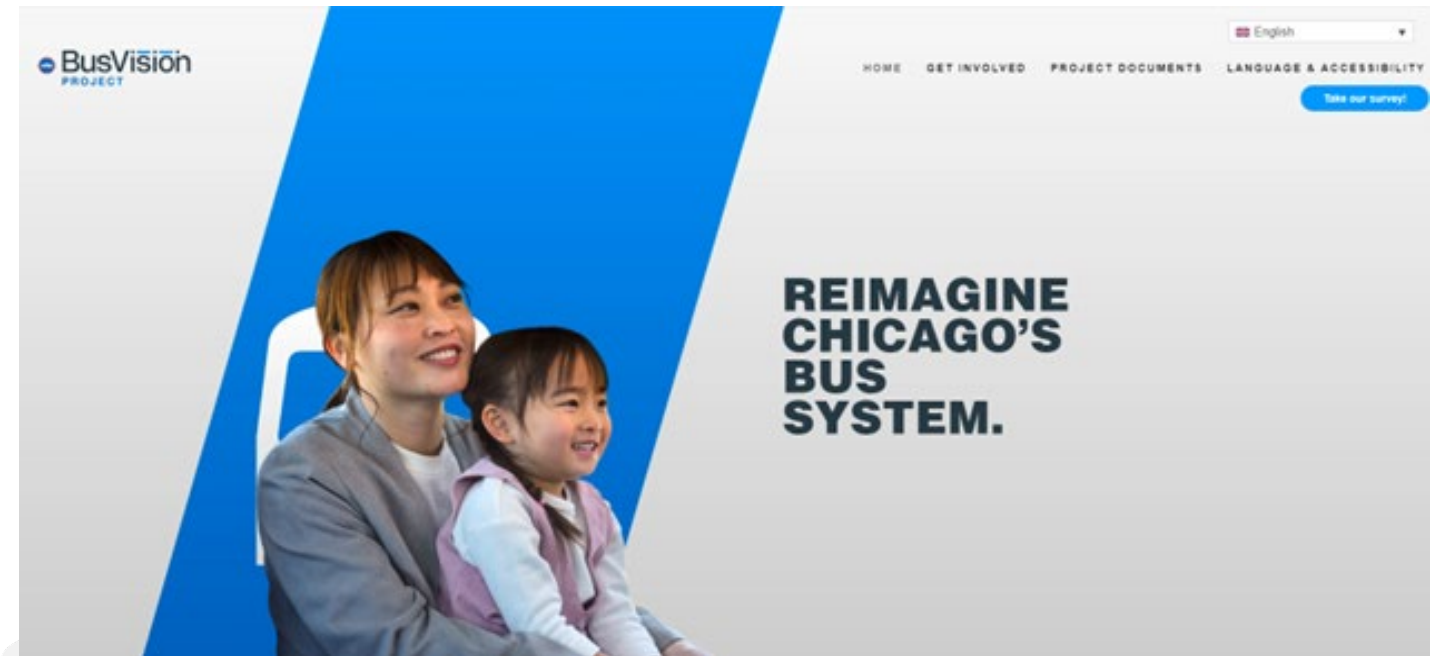
- **Without new funding** CTA will face a painful choice between ridership and equity.
 - Today, public funding carries a 50% farebox recovery requirement.
 - This is unusually high by US standards, requires an extreme focus on ridership.
 - You can't address equity needs of disadvantaged areas if this is the measure.
- **To improve equity**, the options are to either:
 - Change the performance standard, or
 - Expand funding.

Speed, however, is good for all goals.

- **Chicago's local buses are very slow.**
- **Faster service is**
 - less expensive to operate, because we pay for transit by time, not distance.
 - good for ridership
 - good for equity, because they expand access to opportunity from the distant, disadvantaged areas.
- **Improving speeds** requires reallocating street space and building new infrastructure to give buses priority..

CTA has just begun the public conversation about Bus Vision

- **Launched at beginning of July**
 - Website with Framing Report, key takeaways, and survey
 - 1600+ survey responses so far
 - 600+ signed up for contact list
- **Austin Town Hall Farmers Market "pop-up"**
- **Engaging with Transportation Equity Network to reach community groups**



Next Steps



- **Fall 2024**
 - 2 more pop-up events at community outdoor markets and project team staff on CTA's Community Connections at 4+ events in different communities
 - Social media, poster and digital signage on system, email promotion through Ventra
- **Late 2024/early 2025**
 - Planning for additional engagement, including online and in-person public meetings and community roundtables
- **Late 2025**
 - Bus Vision Recommendations Report Issued



Questions?