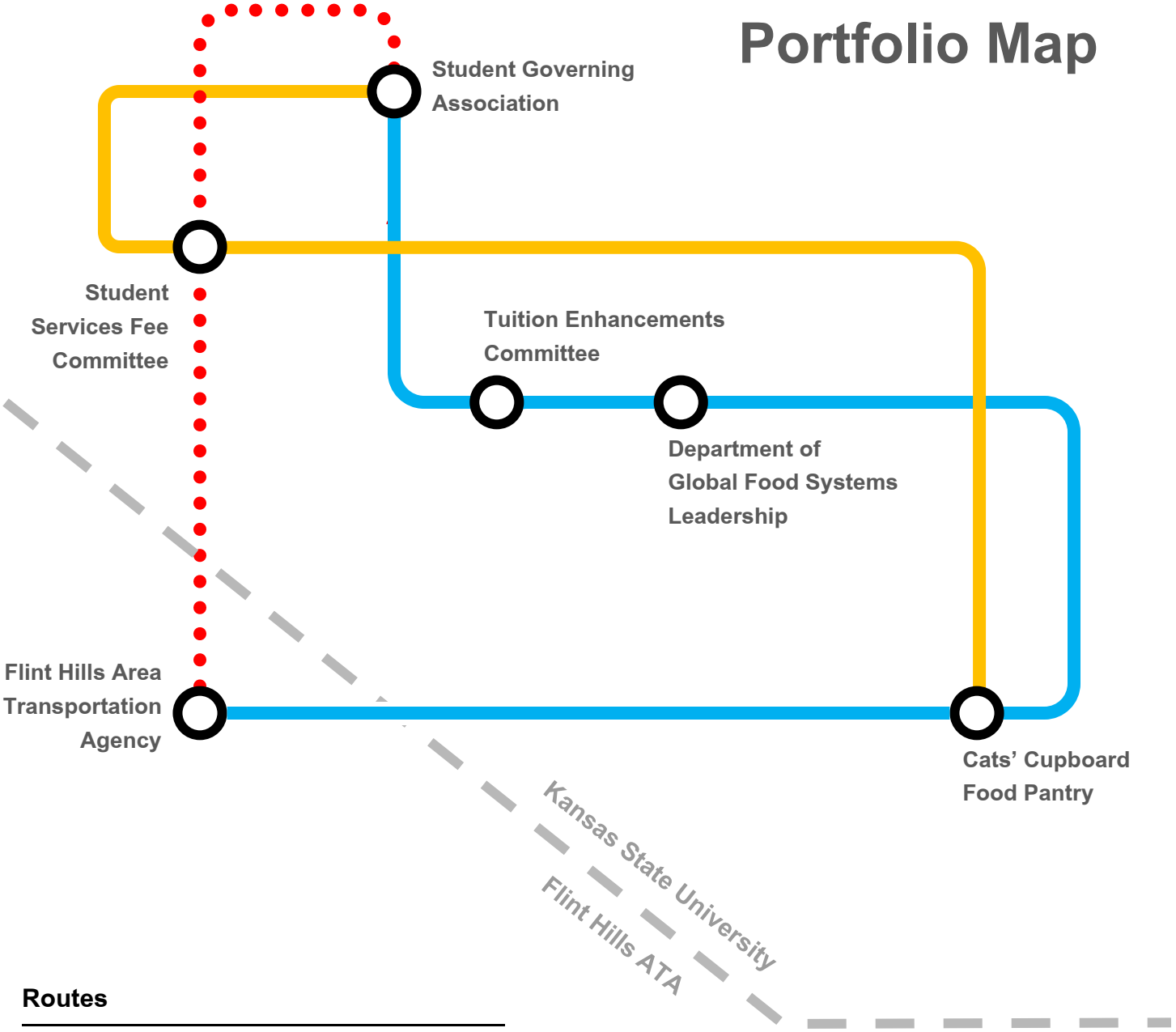
Portfolio Map



Routes

- Student Transportation Fee
- One-Time Allocation for Cats' Cupboard
- Free Bus Passes for Cats' Cupboard

Stops

Student Governing Association (SGA)		Governing body of K-State students
Student Services Fee Committee		Sub-unit of SGA that manages student fees
Tuition Enhancements Committee		Sub-unit of SGA that allocates start-up funding for new programs
Department of Global Food Systems Leadership		K-State academic unit eligible for start-up funds
Cats' Cupboard Food Pantry		Pantry supported by the student health center, private donors, and SGA
Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency		Independent transit agency serving Manhattan and Junction City, KS

Recommendation Report on Campus Transit

ATA Student Advisory Board

Ethan Brown
Madeleine Carey
Payton Lynn
Nick Saia
Mia Wells
Raegan Linenberger
Gage Roberts

January 2023

Contents

Executive Summary 1

Background 2

- What is the ATA Student Advisory Board? 2
- Why Write a Report? 2
- What Are the Advisory Board's Goals? 2
- How Does ATA's Budget Function? 3

Inventory 4

- Why is ATA Important? 4
- What Problems Does ATA Face? 4
- How Can SGA Support ATA? 5

Findings 6

- What Should Govern Support Decisions? 6
- Why Does Transit Warrant Investment? 6
- Should Students Pay Bus Passes? 7

Recommendation 8

- What Steps Should be Taken? 8
- How Do These Steps Meet the Board's Goals? 8

References 9

Figures

Figure 1: FY23 Funding Sources 3

Figure 2: Pre-Pandemic ATA Comparison 3

Tables

Table 1: ATA Challenges 4

Table 2: Transportation Fees 5

Table 3: Allocation Options 5

Table 4: Response to Analysis Criteria 8

Executive Summary

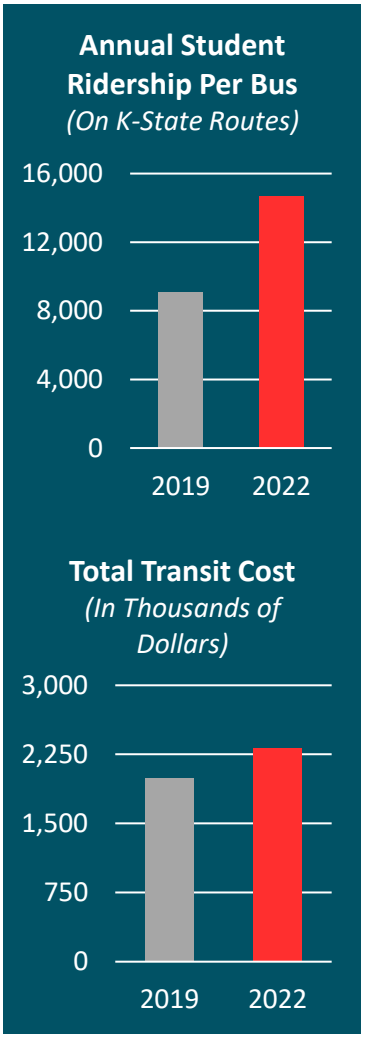
ATA Student Advisory Board

Background

The Kansas State University Student Governing Association (SGA), in coordination with the Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency (ATA), established the ATA Student Advisory Board.

The Board identified the following goals:

1. Increase ATA's engagement with and representation of students
2. Stabilize ATA's pool of KSU funding sources
3. Preserve free-to-ride bus service for students



Inventory

The Board crystallized the following problems faced by ATA:

CHALLENGES

- Driver shortages
- Increasing operational costs
- Lack of student engagement

CONSEQUENCES

- Elimination of free-to-ride service
- Decreased service capability
- Low ATA utilization

Findings

The Board identified the following KSU groups as most impacted by ATA:

Students in residence halls and university-sponsored housing

Students who cannot live within walking distance of campus

Students with accessibility needs

Students who cannot afford to maintain a car

The Board applied the following characterizations to potential outcomes:

DESIRABLE

- A return of on-demand service through the Student Access Center
- Exploration of new ATA programs
- Flexibility of financial support for ATA

UNDESIRABLE

- Implementation of a bus pass for students
- Attempted expansions of service capability with present knowledge
- Unsustainable funding packages

Recommendations

The Board recommends the following:

1. Increase ATA's engagement with and representation of students
2. SGA should provide a **$300,000** annual allocation to ATA

Background

What is the ATA Student Advisory Board?

In October of 2022, representatives from the Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency (ATA) spoke to a session of the Student Governing Association (SGA) Senate, identifying, among other concerns, a straining of ATA's resources and weakening of ATA's connection to students at Kansas State University.

This moment was the catalyst for a new focus within SGA on ATA's relationship to K-State. Members across SGA's branches and individuals outside of the organization found a desire to address challenges facing ATA, including but not limited to those presented at the October Student Senate session.

These students began the ATA Student Advisory Board—a body formed to explore opportunities between ATA, SGA, and K-State.

Why Write a Report?

The members of the Board bring different perspectives to a discussion on ATA; some recognized its importance to accessibility needs, while others saw its value to international and first-year students. Some recognized ATA's lack of resources, while others saw a disconnect between students and their transportation options.

The purpose of this document is to present a thorough and organized description of these perspectives.

The Board also sought to share its deliberation with a wider audience. Accordingly, this report serves to communicate the Board's objectives, analysis, and recommendations with SGA, ATA, and K-State University Administration.

What Are the Advisory Board's Goals?

The Board has identified the following goals as central to its analysis of potential recommendations:

Greater engagement with and representation of students by ATA

Stability of local funding sources for ATA's operation

Preservation of free ATA service for K-State students

How Does ATA's Budget Function?

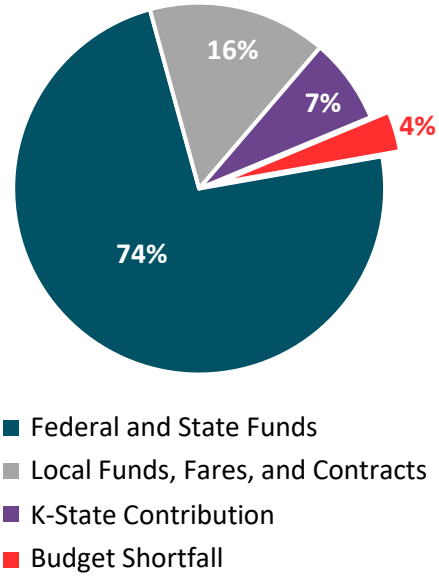
ATA operates through an agreement made between the State of Kansas, City of Manhattan, Riley and Pottawatomie Counties, and Kansas State University for the purpose of planning, managing, and operating a public transportation system as a direct recipient of Section 5307 Urban Formula Funds.

To receive these funds, ATA must provide an adequate level of "match" (non-federal) funding for its total budget. Unlike many other transit agencies, ATA draws its match from multiple sources—including the City of Manhattan and K-State—rather than a dedicated tax.

K-State's contribution is a combination of allocations from Housing and Dining Services (HDS) and Parking Services. In turn, the directors of these entities serve on ATA's governing board. Today, ATA faces greater pressure to meet its match. Budget shortages for local governments and K-State entities have made it more difficult for ATA to maintain service.

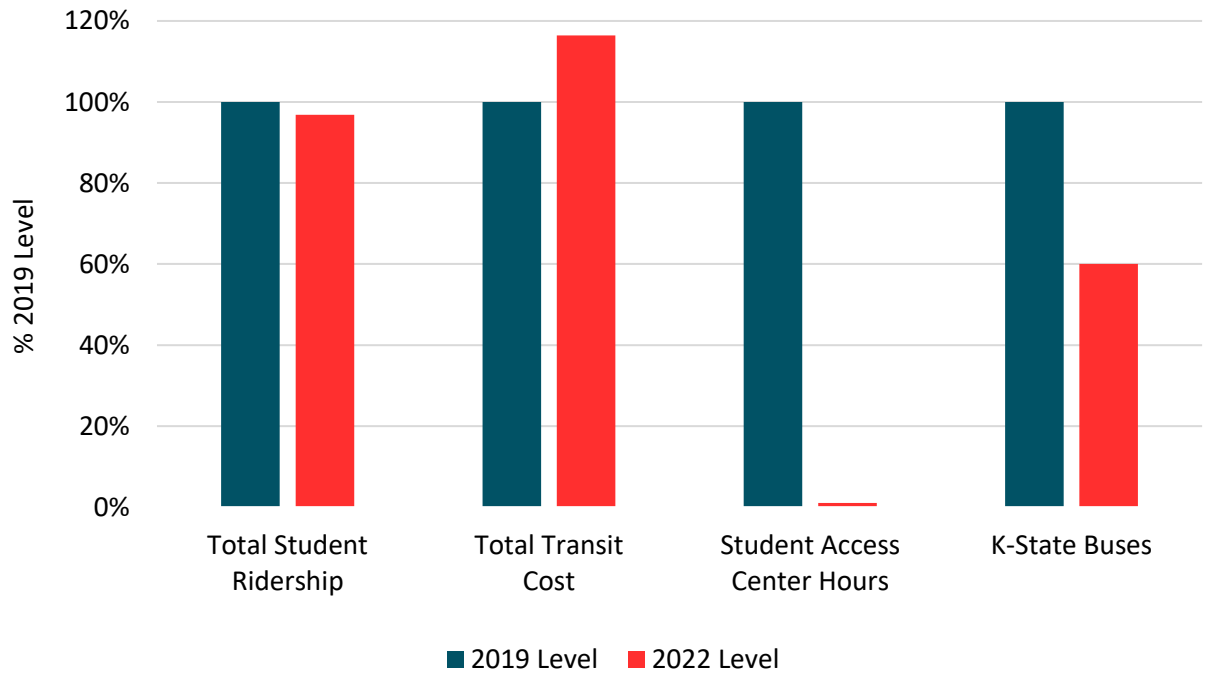
Figure 1: FY23 Funding Sources

(Excluding Capital Grants)



Though student ridership is comparable to pre-pandemic levels, costs are increasing, students have fewer buses available, and ATA no longer provides on-demand service through the Student Access Center. If trends continue, ATA believes that students may lose the ability to ride for free.

Figure 2: Pre-Pandemic ATA Comparison



Inventory

Why is ATA Important?

The Board believes that ATA serves a critical function for K-State in the following objectives:

1. ***Accessibility***

   The ATA fleet is 100% ADA accessible. This means that all students can use an efficient and dependable form of transportation to meet their needs.

2. ***Equity***

   ATA buses most often provide rides for those who need them. That may include students who do not own a car, students in residence halls, or international students in the Jardine community. Regardless of why a student chooses ATA, they can do so at zero additional cost.

3. ***Mobility***

   ATA buses allow all students to reach campus, buy groceries, or get home if other ways to do so are not available. ATA buses also allow students to explore housing options farther from campus without the fear that they would be unable to walk, bike, or park.

What Problems Does ATA Face?

The Board characterizes two broad challenges facing ATA:

Table 1: ATA Challenges

CHALLENGE	RESOURCES	ENGAGEMENT
What factors contribute to this challenge?	- Decreasing contributions to ATA - Increased operational costs - High demand for drivers	- Lack of consistent communication between ATA and student leaders - Limited advertisement of ATA to students
What sub-challenges does this include?	- Driver shortages - Need for increased fee revenues - Need to cut operating costs - Delay of fleet modernization	- Lack of student representation within ATA's governing authorities - Lack of student awareness regarding transportation options
What are the consequences?	- Reduced range and frequency of service - Cancelled bus routes - Elimination of free service - Inability to expand service	- Limited utilization of ATA buses by students - Low appetite for addressing challenges faced by ATA

How Can SGA Support ATA?

An immediate point of interest for the Board was the suggestion of a student transportation fee. Similar fees are common at comparable institutions.

Table 2: Transportation Fees

SCHOOL	PER SEMESTER FEE
KU	$87.25
WSU	$9.00
Mizzou	$16.80
Iowa State	$105.10
OSU	$30.00

Instead of assessing a separate cost, K-State has a unique opportunity to support ATA through existing financial infrastructure: the Student Services Fee (SSF). Today, the SSF supports other valuable resources such as the Lafene Health Center and the Student Union.

SGA is responsible for the management of the SSF, which is approximately $480 per student, per semester. This responsibility includes the power to add and remove funding recipients when necessary. All decisions are subject to the approval of the Student Senate, Student Body President, K-State University Administration, and the Kansas Board of Regents.

ATA Representatives developed proposals for varied allocation packages from the SSF. The following displays what these packages would provide to students, assuming at least a $145,000 contribution from HDS and Parking Services:

Table 3: Allocation Options

ANNUAL ALLOCATION	PER SEMESTER STUDENT COST	CAPABILITIES OFFERED
$245,000	$8.17	- Maintained free-to-ride service for students on and off campus - Maintained level of service capability
$300,000	$10.00	- Maintained free-to-ride service for students on and off campus - Maintained level of service capability - Demand-Response for Student Access Center on campus
$375,000	$12.50	- Expanded free service capability (longer hours, new routes, etc.) - Demand-Response for Student Access Center on campus - New Amenities (bus shelters, benches, etc.)
$450,000	$15.00	- Expanded free service capability - Demand-Response for Student Access Center on AND off campus - New amenities AND new transit options (EVs, Micro-transit)
$500,000	$16.67	- Expanded free service capability - Demand-Response for Student Access Center on AND off campus - New amenities AND new transit options

Findings

What Should Govern Support Decisions?

Board discussion on the provided options crystallized the following points:

1. ***Service is Hard to Expand***

   Expanding service capacity—such as longer operating hours—is difficult. To be effective, many service changes must be reflected across the whole of ATA's system. The Board concluded that the relatively high cost-to-return ratio made such expansion a low priority.

2. ***New Programs Require More Research***

   More research is needed to justify "progressive" expenses; that is, untested services, routes, or transit options. Though these expenses may be valuable, an understanding of how students may utilize them is limited at this time. The Board concluded that, until further evidence was collected, these expenses could not be recommended.

3. ***SGA Should Maximize Flexibility***

   ATA may be faced with further financial pressure from inflation and wage increases. The Board concluded that, at any allocation level, a one-year contract should be established.

4. ***New Opportunities Should be Pursued***

   Potential new programs—such as shuttles for K-State home football games or on-demand airport service for international students—deserve exploration. Both the Board and ATA representatives acknowledged that greater coordination between ATA and SGA could present new opportunities. The Board concluded that a student member should be represented on ATA's board.

Why Does Transit Warrant Investment?

The ultimate question in front of the Board: is an investment worth what it will cost students? Student ridership per bus is even higher today than it was under pre-pandemic levels. In the past year, campus ridership has increased by 6,058 rides, or 32%.

Public transit is beneficial to the community—it reduces demand for campus parking and is dramatically safer than car travel.

90%

Decrease in accident risk using public transit vs driving (APTA, 2021)

ATA is also becoming more efficient: when adjusted for inflation (Adapted from BLS, 2023), cost per hour of service decreased by 7.5% and cost per rider decreased by 3.9% from fiscal year 2020 to fiscal year 2023.

Should Students Pay Bus Passes?

ATA offers bus passes for $30 per month. The Board considered the bus pass alternative by asking: why would a student *need* to use the bus? The following reasons were identified:

1. ***They Are an International or First-Year Student***

   Students who do not have a car readily available need a way to get around Manhattan. Jardine, Kramer, and Derby living communities feature bus stops served by multiple routes.

2. ***They Cannot Afford a Car***

   Owning and maintaining a motor vehicle is a significant expense, even without the added price of a parking pass. ATA allows students to save on transportation costs.

3. ***They Need Accessible Transportation***

   Students with disabilities already face significant added costs to achieve the same standard of living. For students who are unable to drive, ATA provides an accessible and reliable means of travel without such added costs.

4. ***They Cannot Live Near Campus***

   Rent is expensive, even in Manhattan. For many students, it is a significant challenge to find quality housing within walking distance of campus. ATA service extends the range of "walkable" living options.

28%

Additional cost of living, as a proportion of total income, associated with a disability (Goodman et al., 2020)

$3,851

Cost, per year, of owning an automobile—excluding insurance and loan payments (AAA, 2020)

The Board believes that these students should not be obligated to pay higher prices for a basic need. From a student cost perspective, transit is by far the most prudent option.

It is also worth noting that free-to-ride service is convenient. Students are more encouraged to utilize ATA when there is no extra cost imposed upon them.

Like any SSF line item, ATA would be available to all students and used by some. By charging every student, a higher overall quality of service can be maintained. SGA uses this philosophy to support the recreational, health, entertainment, and even legal needs of students;

why should transportation be different?

Recommendation

What Steps Should be Taken?

Through deliberation, the Board determined the following:

1. ***The ATA Student Advisory Board recommends that Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency establish one ex-officio position of the Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency Board, reserved for a designee of the Kansas State University Student Body President.***
2. ***The ATA Student Advisory Board recommends that the Student Governing Association adopt the Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency as a line-item of the Student Services Fee through a one-year contract allocation of $300,000.***

How Do These Steps Meet the Board's Goals?

The following displays each recommendation with respect to the identified goals:

Table 4: Response to Analysis Criteria

GOAL	RECCOMENDATION 1	RECCOMENDATION 2
Representation & Engagement	Early on, the Board identified a need for a student position on ATA's board. Such a position would make communication with SGA more frequent, more informed, and more effective.	The impact of student support on student buy-in is self-evident. Campus services that benefit from the SSF hear student voices and respond to student needs. A consistent financial relationship between SGA and ATA adds a heft that a student representative alone cannot.
Funding Stability	A student board position enables SGA to anticipate and address potential financial challenges. This includes both external factors on ATA and the contribution of HDS and Parking Services.	Typically, SSF contracts are established for three-year periods. Barring extraordinary circumstances, ATA would receive a relatively stable year-over-year allocation. This smaller allocation package reduces the likelihood that SGA would need to make sudden changes.
Free ATA Service	The Board's insistence on free-to-ride service shaped the utilization packages presented by ATA. An SGA representative on ATA's board perpetuates free service as a priority.	This funding level is sufficient to preserve—and even insulate—free-to-ride student service. Additionally, this funding level extends such service to those who utilize the Student Access Center program.

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[4] Databases, Tables & Calculators by Subject—CPI for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved January 10, 2023. https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CUUR0000SA0L1E?output_view=pct_12mths

Kansas State University
Student Governing Association
Student Services Fee Committee

Division of Academic Success & Student Affairs
Cats' Cupboard Fee Proposal
February 26, 2023

Cats' Cupboard has existed on campus since 2017 when the Student Governing Association allocated initial funding from the Student-Centered Tuition Enhancement to support basic food and hygiene for students. After 6 years located in a small space in Fairchild Hall, and because of the very generous gift from David and Tracy Lockton to renovate the vacant (former) ecumenical building on Denison Avenue, Cats' Cupboard opened an 8,000 square foot facility in August 2023. The gift was completely dedicated to the capital project costs leaving approximately $100,000 in a facility reserve.

This new facility has provided a completely different opportunity to help K-State address food insecurity which so many students experience *(economic and social conditions of limited or uncertain access to adequate food – USDA)*. In the most recent National College Health Association survey conducted on campus in 2021, 39.9% of all students identify as experiencing food insecurity.

As expected with a location that is both visible and easily accessible – the number of students accessing the pantry has grown significantly. Fairchild Hall averaged 50-70 visits a day and at 1021 Denison Avenue well over 200 come in each day and several days have exceeded 300 visitors. With this growth, also comes the associated challenges of a much bigger operation, new expenses, and responsibilities for a stand-alone facility.

Below is a high-level overview of the dramatic changes both in service to the university and the operational costs.

General Overview of Monthly Growth/Expenses:

	Fairchild Hall	1021 Denison Ave
Average Monthly Visits	1,362	3400+
Personnel Costs	$15,500	$23,000
Facility Expenses	$1150	$9,500
Food & Hygiene	$8,350	$17,500
Monthly Total Costs	**$25,000**	**$50,000**

Currently, the only direct funding sources for Cats' Cupboard include:

- Lafene Health Services – Director salary and benefits; telecom; outside services of trash, cleaning, pest; copier rental; marketing; accounting ($110,000)
- SGA Educational Operating Fund – Student Wages ($40,000)
- Foundation Endowment of Director Position beginning in 2026 will eventually be allocated to cover the annual lease payment ($50,000)

To sustain the food pantry at a similar operating size in the future, new sources of revenue are essential. Currently, there are on-going efforts to identify external grants, explore new partnerships/sponsors, and continue to work closely with the Foundation. The single most important operating expense – food inventory – has no specific funding source(s).

Cats' Cupboard FY24 Projected Budget

Staff (3 FTE and student wages)	$257,000
Facility Lease	$50,000
Operating Expenses	$76,000
Food Inventory	**$150,000**
Food Voucher	$20,000
TOTAL	**$553,000**

Example average food cost/week:

Fruits	(apples, oranges, bananas, etc.)	$400.00
Vegetables	(onion, carrots, potatoes, etc.)	$600.00
Dairy	(milk, eggs, butter, etc.)	$580.00

Kansas State recently adopted the Okanagan Charter, becoming the 22nd institution in the U.S. to become a health promoting university. The mission and purpose of Cats' Cupboard to provide access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food and support that promote health, success, well-being for a food secure future is in perfect alignment. Studies typically reveal that food insecure students: experience greater challenges with academic performance, career planning, time management, and faculty engagement. Additionally, food insecure students are more likely to experience psychological distress, loneliness, anxiety and lower scores on flourishing and resiliency. Student Governing Association were the first group to officially provide RESOLUTION 22/23/08 Supporting the Okanagan Charter which specially called for *"beyond reaffirming the importance of health as a central value, would prompt KSU to submit proposals to address charter aims and accelerate existing relevant university initiatives".*

Cats' Cupboard is committed to working diligently to build a sustainable operation and would like to propose an initial Student Service Fee Allocation of $150,000, which is the amount in the budget allocated to food inventory. Presently, the average number of items students take when they visit is between 12-15 with a consumer market value of approximately $30.00. The Foundation has just made the commitment to developing a matching campaign to leverage a potential student annual contribution. $300,000 would make a significant impact to ensure we remain operating at a similar level, leaving a much smaller gap to close with different external resources/partnerships/grants.

Without a full year of operating in the new location it is a challenge to estimate future costs. Another notable variable was the significant inventory Cats' Cupboard started with given a GEER Grant from the Kansas Board of Regents which was completely dedicated to the purchases of food and personal care items. Any additional resources will continue to be prioritized for the provision of food items with a top priority of nutrient rich-healthy food options for all students.

CATS CUPBOARD
STUDENT SERVICES FEE REQUEST $150,000.00

To the Tuition Enhancements Committee:

This proposal seeks to address food security challenges through transportation access. Please accept this letter as documentation of our proposal development process, as well as supporting information for our application.

Background

Food Access

Food security is a well-recognized concern at K-State, in its own community and globally. Riley County has the highest rate of food insecurity in the state of Kansas, and the National College Health Assessment from the American College Health Association found in 2022 that nearly 40% of K-State students experience food insecurity.

A 2023 survey by Global Food Systems Leadership (GSFL) students found that 4% of K-State students cite transportation as a cause of food insecurity.

Public Transportation

The Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency (ATA) is a regional bus service that serves Kansas State University and the surrounding community. ATA offers a variety of services, including demand-response shuttles, a city-wide route system, and a campus loop.

In fall 2018, ATA eliminated bus fares on city-wide routes for students, faculty, and staff. This change provided no-cost transportation service six days per week to Manhattan's major grocery stores, including Dillons, Hy-Vee, and Walmart. In response, ridership more than doubled—from 20,000 rides/semester to 48,000 rides/semester—on the city-wide system.

In an early 2023 survey, ATA found that more than half of riders on its city-wide routes were affiliated with K-State. Nearly one quarter of surveyed K-State riders named "groceries" as their trip purpose. In fall 2023, ATA (citing budget cuts and increased labor costs) re-instituted these fares.

Past Programs

In 2013, ATA offered a "shopping shuttle" that took K-State students from campus to Manhattan's major grocery stores. This service was paused in 2020 and, because of budget and labor shortages, is unlikely to resume in the near future.

ATA offers to connect those in need to community organizations with free bus passes; however, these are provided on a case-by-case basis and are not advertised to the Manhattan community.

Request

Funding

We request $10,000 for 10,000 one-day bus passes.

Our calculation follows these assumptions:

1. A student will use the bus to reach a grocery store once every two weeks.
2. ATA will offer a half-fare rate of $1 per one-day pass.

We estimate a population of 640 students that could become more food secure through transportation. Therefore:

$$640 \text{ students} \times \frac{1 \text{ bus pass per student}}{2 \text{ weeks}} \times \frac{16 \text{ weeks}}{\text{semester}} \times \frac{2 \text{ semesters}}{\text{year}} = 10{,}240 \text{ bus passes per year}$$

Timeline

In FY25, Student Centered Tuition Enhancements funding would go toward a contract between ATA and GFSL. On a monthly basis, ATA would distribute passes to GFSL, which would be offered at no charge in the Cat's Cupboard facility.

GFSL will track utilization of bus passes to shape future requests. GFSL, as well as other student and community food security organizations such as the Food Security Scholars and the Riley County Farm Council, can be used to market this program.

Sustainability

There is a clearly demonstrated commitment in the K-State community for food security. Over the long term, these passes could be funded directly by Cat's Cupboard or their philanthropic network. If sufficient demand is demonstrated, the cost of these passes could also be incorporated into K-State's existing funding agreement with ATA.

Impact

This proposal targets high need groups: differently abled students, low-income students, international students, and others for whom vehicle ownership may be a significant barrier to food security.

A "grocery access guarantee" through ATA builds upon the philanthropic, university, and student investment in Cat's Cupboard. Cat's Cupboard is an incredible service; however, it is designed to supplement—not replace—shopping trips. This proposal allows students in need to achieve complete food security without a transportation cost.

This proposal does not require investments in infrastructure or other permanent purchases. The Direct benefit to students is easy to estimate and can be precisely tracked. Our solution is simple, easy to scale, driven by data, and consistent with K-State's values—thank you for your consideration.

10 May 2024

Casey Lauer
Associate Vice President for Facilities
Kansas State University
106 Power Plant
1100 N Martin Luther King Jr. Drive
Manhattan, KS 66506

Casey,

I wanted to thank you and Ethan for inviting me to participate in the Transportation & Mobility focus group of the Next-Gen K-State Campus Master Plan.

It is evident that the planning vision developed with K-State 2025 had a substantial impact on the look and feel of campus today. It means very much that you sought to include me in this process.

I am writing to follow up on discussion in the focus group. Anecdotally, I know how commonly parking frustrates students. I imagine that the folks from SmithGroup have potent data to say the same. From my perspective, discussion on this problem orbits supply.

As I understand it, though, our current supply of parking cannot be maintained with the revenues collected by K-State Parking Services. Sooner or later, just to keep the ship afloat, the price of parking passes must be raised, not considering inflation. Is this correct?

I also know how commonly parking pass prices frustrate students. One question seemed absent from the focus group discussion: are students *willing to pay more* for more parking?

I am glad to see that the parking survey frames certain luxuries of parking—proximity to the destination or guaranteed availability—as factors that change the price point. I think a dynamic pricing approach based on location or exclusivity has merit.

However, that solution is only effective to the extent that students want cheap parking *or* convenient parking. If students simultaneously believe that they are overcharged and underserved by parking—especially if parking is operating in deficit—I would argue that an alternative is necessary.

In fact, many students attempt to secure an alternative on their own. The east campus neighborhood has continued to develop despite a shrinking student population. This indicates to me that there remains significant demand to walk to campus, rather than face the pains of parking.

As I expressed during the focus group, I am partial to public transportation as a solution. I can accept that other institutions are better suited for a bus system than K-State; but even here, public transportation is an indisputably less expensive pathway to front-door, always available service.

I say this because the price of driving to campus, from a student perspective, is not only a parking pass. It is also fuel, maintenance, insurance, and any of the other costs that come with car ownership. Maintenance is especially significant. What other line-item on a student's budget can suddenly demand several hundred dollars? How many students, out of the thousands that drive every day, have a rainy-day fund for their vehicle?

Even if it is cheaper for K-State Parking Services to give every student a parking space instead of free bus rides at ten-minute headways, students will spend more.

Cars are expensive. There are many reasons to choose a car, but, because of their weight and geometry, they are objectively the least efficient option on a per-student basis. K-State's parking problem derives from this reality. Any other mode requires less, if any, storage. Less asphalt, and less land. Convenient parking or affordable parking? Students cannot have both; they will be dissatisfied with only one. I believe that they deserve a different choice.

Again, I want to say that I am deeply grateful for the chance to contribute to transportation and mobility at K-State. To the extent that we can put our thumb on the scale of student mode share, it is my hope that we encourage students to use cheaper, safer, and more sustainable options on a daily basis.

Thank you,

Nick Saia
Student