

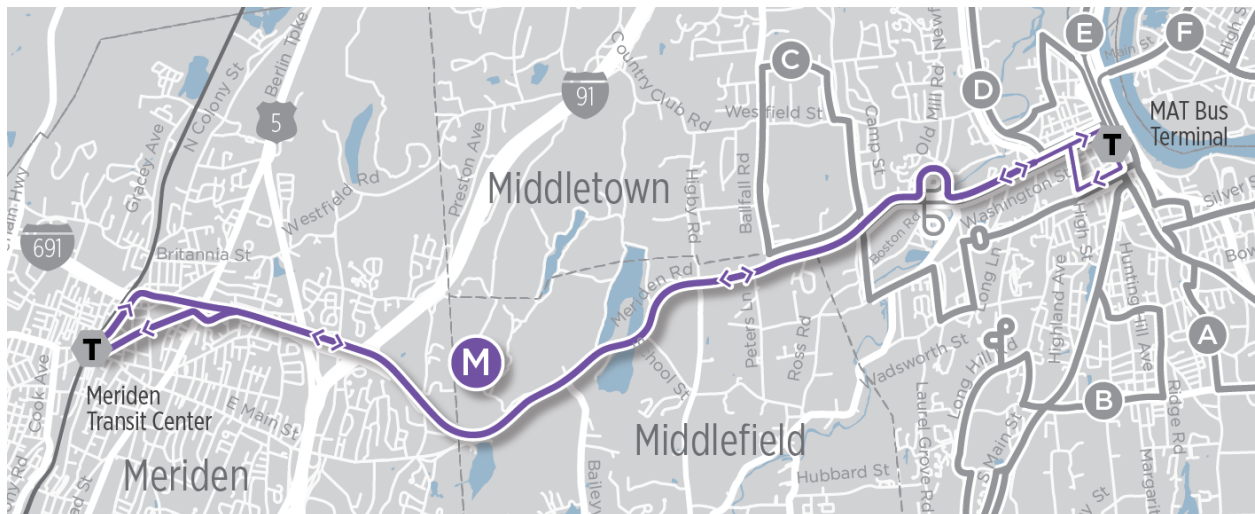
Middletown Area Transit (MAT)

M-Link

Route Overview

M-Link connects Middletown and Meriden, with service to Wesleyan University, Middletown Plaza/Washington Plaza, and Meriden Transit Center. The route operates bi-directionally between Downtown Middletown at the MAT Terminal and the Meriden Transit Center, and primarily travels along Route 66. M-Link's alignment changed in June 2019 to operate bidirectional service; it previously operated as a loop between the MAT terminal and Meriden Transit Center, and served parts of Cromwell.

Figure 1: M-Link Map



M-Link operates Monday through Saturday during daytime hours. Service operates from 6:00 AM until 7:05 PM, with trips operating every 50 minutes for much of the day. During weekday evenings, part of M-Link's alignment is served by Route I.

Table 1: Schedule Statistics

Service Day	Span of Service	Frequency (Minutes)	Daily Trips
Monday – Friday	6:00 AM to 7:05 PM	50	16
Saturday	6:00 AM to 7:05 PM	50	16

Middletown Area Transit, June 2019 Schedule

Connections to Other Services

M-Link begins and ends its trips in downtown Middletown at the MAT Terminal, where riders can connect to most other MAT routes. With the introduction of new route and schedule changes in June 2019, there is now a timed connection between the M-Link and other MAT routes at the downtown terminal, except for the M-Link's last two trips of the day. In addition,

M-Link riders also have opportunities connect to *CTtransit* bus routes, 9 Town Transit Route 644 Old Saybrook/Middletown and Route 645 Madison/Middletown, the Hartford Line commuter rail, and Amtrak (see Table 2).

Table 2: Service Connections

Location	Connect To
MAT Terminal	9 Town Transit Route 644, 645 <i>CTtransit</i> Route 55
Meriden Transit Center	<i>CTtransit</i> Routes 561, 563, 564, 565, 566, 919 (Express) Hartford Line Amtrak

Ridership by Stop

Ridership data for Route M is available for the previous loop alignment of the route. On weekdays, M-Link's highest ridership stop was at the MAT Terminal, with 68 daily boardings and 78 daily alightings. Other high-ridership stops along the M-Link included:

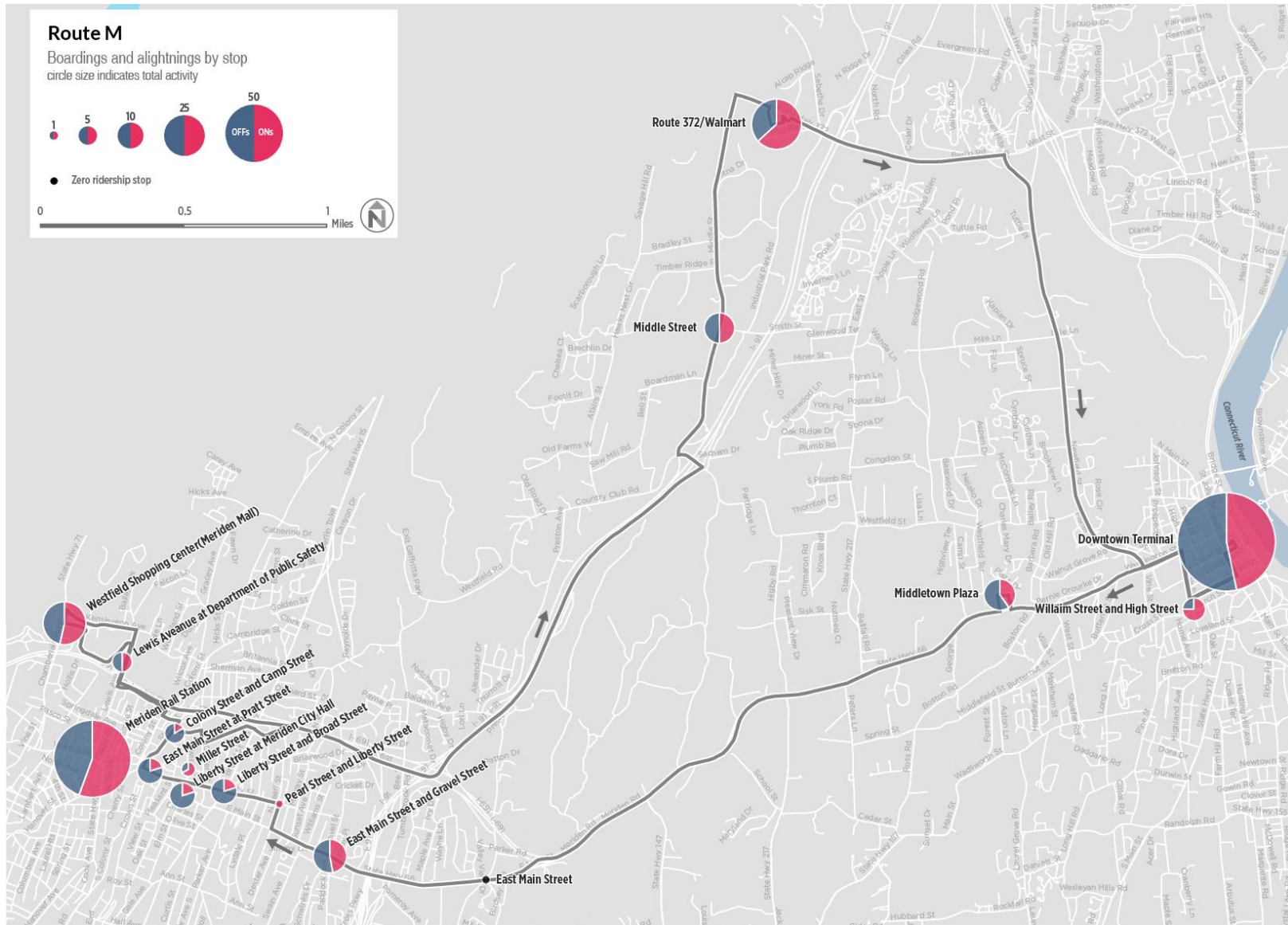
- Meriden Transit Center (50 boardings and 40 alightings), located in downtown Meriden and served by *CTtransit* bus routes, Hartford Line commuter rail, and Amtrak.
- Walmart in Cromwell (24 boardings and 14 alightings)

The Westfield Meriden Mall also has notable ridership, and stops serving commercial areas typically have higher ridership along the route.

Ridership by Trip

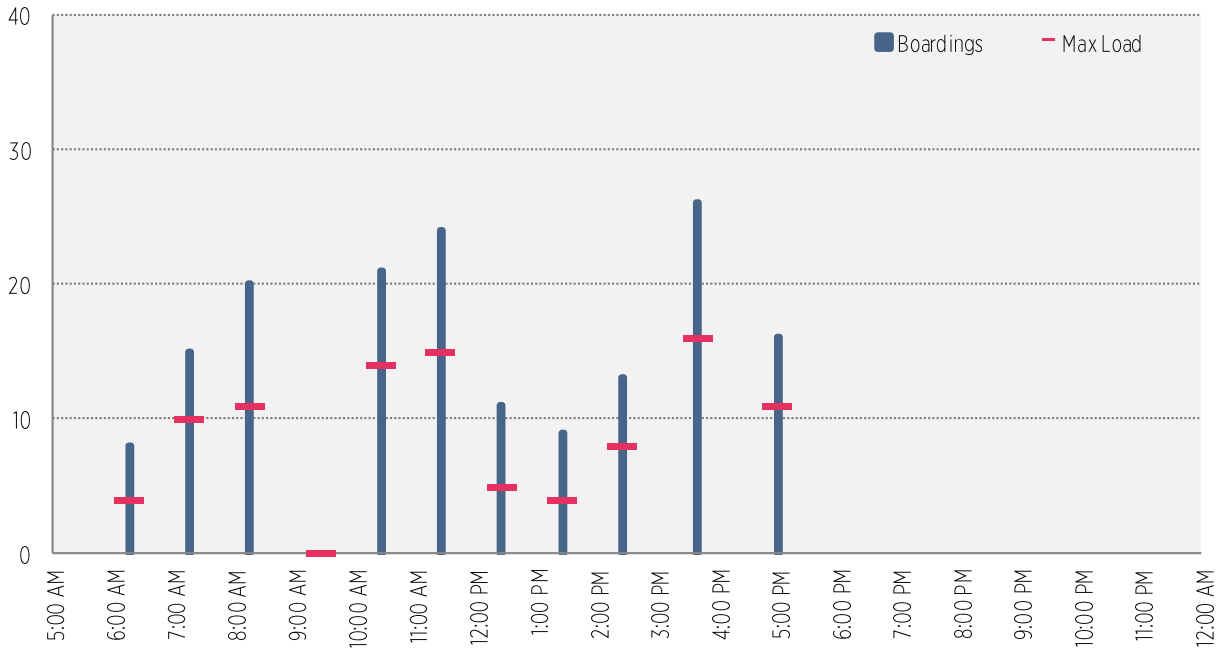
On weekdays, M-Link ridership is highest during the 3:40 p.m. trip, with 26 boardings and a maximum load of 16 passengers. Ridership also meets or exceeds 20 passengers on the 8:15 a.m. trip (20), 10:25 a.m. trip (21), and 11:25 a.m. trip (24). There is a period of lower ridership between noon and 3 p.m., when trips carry nine to 13 passengers. On Saturdays, ridership ranges from 6 to 21 passengers. The first trip of the day is the outlier with six passengers. The trip with the second lowest number of boardings has 15 boardings. The maximum load of vehicles does not reach the total number of boardings for any trip with boardings.

Figure 2: Ridership by Stop



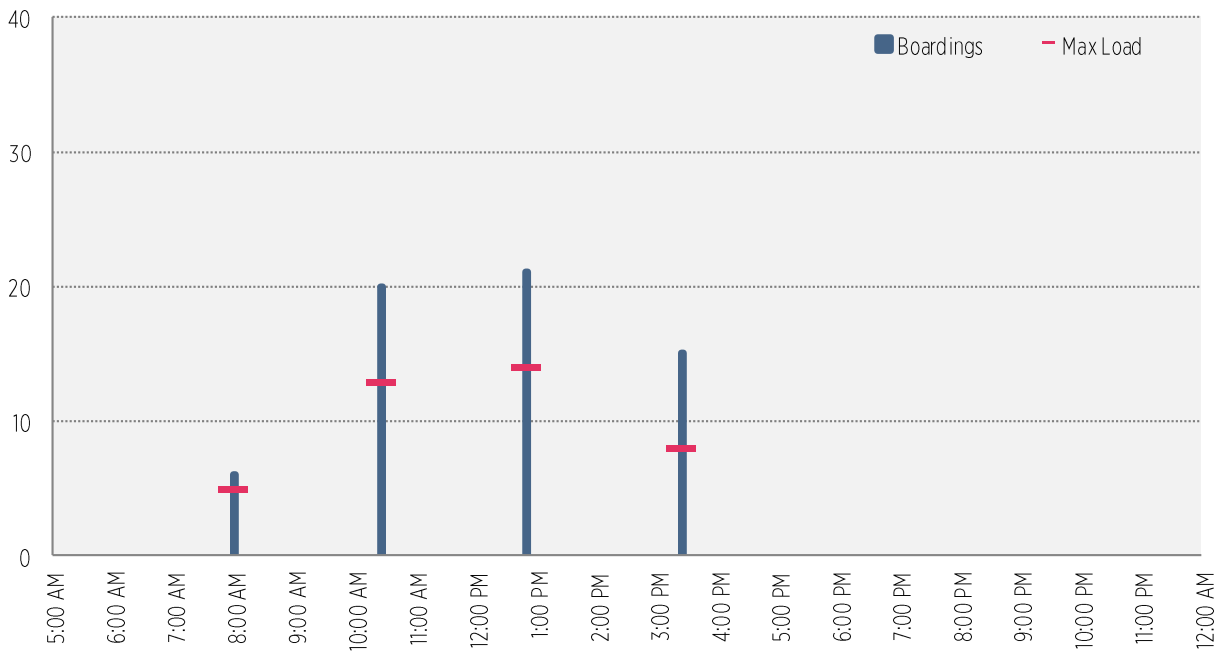
Source: Middletown Area Transit, 2017 M-Link Ridership Data

Figure 3: Ridership by Trip - Weekday



Source: Middletown Area Transit, June 2019 M-Link trips

Figure 4 Ridership by Trip - Weekend



Source: Middletown Area Transit, June 2019 M-Link trips

Service Performance

On weekdays, M-Link carries an average of 73 passengers per day, or 5.6 passengers per revenue hour (see Table 3). In terms of productivity, M-Link performs below the MAT average for riders per revenue hour and riders per trip. On Saturdays, M-Link carries an average of 40 daily passengers, well below the average ridership MAT's other Saturday routes. However, the route performs above average in terms of productivity.

Table 3: Productivity Statistics

	Average Weekday Ridership	Riders per Revenue Hour	Riders per Trip
M-Link	73	5.6	4.6
MAT Average	95	8.7	7.5

	Average Saturday Ridership	Riders per Revenue Hour	Riders per Trip
M-Link	40	10.0	10.0
MAT Average	71	8.8	8.8

Middletown Area Transit, June 2019

Service Improvement Opportunities

In June 2019, MAT introduced significant changes on the M-Link route, including a revised alignment and schedule. The previous M-Link operated as a large one-way loop, serving the Westfield Meriden Mall and traveling as far north as the Cromwell Walmart in between the Meriden Transit Center and downtown Middletown, requiring riders to travel the full 25-mile alignment to complete a round trip. The new alignment is focused on connecting downtown Middletown and the Meriden Transit Center and operates along the same alignment (CT 66 and I-691) both eastbound and westbound. This makes service more consistent and convenient for riders and makes the route easier to understand.

Service changes also include an updated schedule, with service frequency of 50 minutes instead of 60 minutes and timed to pulse with MAT's other local routes. The M-Link has previously experienced issues with on-time performance; however, the route's streamlined and shortened alignment may alleviate this and help the route maintain on-time performance even with more frequent service.

Opportunities to strengthen the M-Link are listed below and are included for discussion purposes only. Some suggestions may be contradictory, as there is usually more than one approach to improving a route. No specific changes are recommended at this time.

- Expand service hours on weekdays and Saturdays.** On weekdays, adding an earlier trip (5:00 a.m. or 5:15 a.m.) and an additional evening trip (at 7:05 p.m.) would allow riders to connect with earlier and later *CTrail* trains at Meriden Transit Center. More frequent and later service on Saturdays would also give riders more opportunity to use *CTrail* and other connecting *CTtransit* services.