

Western Piedmont Local Coordinated Public Transportation Plan **Update**



Prepared by:

Western Piedmont Council of Governments
Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority
and
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Updated Plan Approved by:

Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority Board, August 19, 2021

Table of Contents:	Page
Section One: Introduction	3
Section Two: Background	4
Section Three: Federal Programs and Requirements	5
Section Four: Planning Process, Outreach, and Participation	7
Section Five: Transportation Needs	9
Section Six: Current Transportation Services and Resources	18
Section Seven: Unmet Transportation Needs	23
Section Eight: Recommendations	36

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the Local Coordinated Public Transportation Plan is to identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and those with lower incomes, and to identify and prioritize strategies for meeting those needs. The primary reason for this goal is to promote transportation equity among those who may otherwise be transportation disadvantaged. This purpose also supports managing resources efficiently and effectively, fostering cooperation among agencies and organizations, and creating economic development opportunities.

Promoting Transportation Equity

While transportation disadvantaged most obviously describes the physically impaired, it also can include those with mental disabilities, the elderly, as well as those who, because of personal or family economic circumstances, are unable to afford and maintain reliable personal transportation.

For these populations to enjoy the independent living and full participation in society that the general population has, it is critical that they are provided transport that is suited to meet their needs. Such transportation options are as diverse as the populations they serve, and the travel needs those populations have. This range of services may include public transit fixed-route service, specialized demand response, paratransit, ridesharing, taxi cabs, and volunteer drivers. The trip purpose itself can vary from access to employment, medical care, childcare, education, recreation, social visits, among many others.

Managing Resources Efficiently

The cooperation that comes from a coordinated effort can serve to develop strategies that will address gaps in coverage as well as eliminate duplication of service. When possible, it can also allow for the sharing of resources.

The resulting increase of efficiency and the creation of economies of scale can lower operating costs for many transportation providers, an important benefit given the often-low number of resources and funding available. Perhaps more importantly, coordination can increase the quality of life to those most in need of transportation by providing improved service at lower costs.

Creating Economic Opportunities

Improving special needs transportation can create access to employment, job training, shopping, and other services for those who otherwise may not have such opportunities. Achieving the goals of the Coordinated Plan may therefore serve to promote self-sufficiency and equal opportunity for employment of individuals, thereby contributing to the economic health of the entire community.

SECTION TWO: BACKGROUND

The 2021 Local Coordinated Plan (LCP) is an update to the original plan adopted in 2008, plus subsequent updates in 2013 and 2017. Enacted by Congress in 2005, SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users) required the development and continual update of a Coordinated Public Transportation-Human Services Plan. Such a plan remains a requirement under the FAST Act (Fixing America's Surface Transportation) of 2015. This plan update examines and addresses current and future transit needs of the Unifour region.

FAST Act legislation mandates that organizations receiving Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants adopt a "locally developed" Coordinated Public Transportation-Human Services Plan to obtain additional funds. This plan will allow organizations and entities within the Greater Hickory region to receive FTA Section 5310 (Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities) and 5307 (Urbanized Formula) funding grants. More information on these programs can be found throughout this document.

This plan was developed for the Counties of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba, including the Cities of Hickory, Newton, and Conover. The region also included the Census-designated Hickory Urbanized Area.

Development and content of locally developed coordinated plans are intended to be specific to the needs and issues of each region. This coordinated plan was developed to address intra- and inter-regional needs and issues, and in a manner that allowed the providers, concurrent with regional Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) updates, to directly update the regional coordinated plan. Further, the coordinated plan was developed in a manner that allows the WPRTA and WPCOG to adapt and expand the plan to incorporate programs and initiatives specific to the region.

Local Coordinated Plan

Federal law requires that projects selected for funding under the Enhanced Mobility for Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) Program be "included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan," and that the plan be "developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and other members of the public" utilizing transportation services. These coordinated plans identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes, provide strategies for meeting these needs, and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation.

The Local Coordinated Plan, as required by the FTA, must include the following:

- An assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private, and non-profit)
- An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities and seniors
- Strategies, activities, and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current service and needs, as well as opportunities to achieve effectiveness in service delivery
- Priorities for implementation based on resources, time, and feasibility

SECTION THREE: FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND REQUIREMENTS

On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed into law the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or "FAST Act." It is the first law enacted in over ten years that provides long-term funding certainty for surface transportation, meaning states and local governments can move forward with critical transportation projects, like new highways and transit lines, with the confidence that they will have a federal partner over the long term.

Congress establishes the funding for FTA programs through authorizing legislation that amends Chapter 53 of Title 49 of the U.S. Code. On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, reauthorizing surface transportation programs through Fiscal Year 2020. Congress has since extended FAST by continuing resolutions.

FTA 5307 – Urbanized Area Formula Program

The Urbanized Area Formula Funding program (49 U.S.C. 5307) makes Federal resources available to urbanized areas and to Governors for transit capital and operating assistance and for transportation related planning in urbanized areas. An urbanized area is a Census-designated area with a population of 50,000 or more as determined by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

The federal share is not to exceed 80 percent of the net project cost. The Federal share may be 90 percent for the cost of vehicle-related equipment attributable to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Clean Air Act. The federal share may also be 90 percent for projects or portions of projects related to bicycles. The federal share may not exceed 50 percent of the net project cost of operating assistance.

FTA 5310 – Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities

The purpose of 5310 is to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation. This program supports transportation services planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities in all areas – large urbanized (over 200,000), small urbanized (50,000-200,000), and rural (under 50,000). Eligible projects include both traditional capital investment and nontraditional investment beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services.

Formula funds are apportioned to direct recipients, to states for rural and small urban areas (small UZAs) and designated recipients chosen by the governor of the state for large urban areas (large UZAs); or state or local governmental entities that operate a public transportation service.

Direct recipients have flexibility in how they select subrecipient projects for funding, but their decision process must be clearly noted in a state/program management plan. The selection process may be formula-based, competitive, or discretionary. Subrecipients can include states or local government authorities, private non-profit organizations, or operators of public transportation.

FTA 5311 – Formula Grants for Rural Areas

This program provides capital, planning, and operating assistance to states and federally recognized Indian tribes to support public transportation in rural areas with populations less than 50,000, where many residents

often rely on public transit to reach their destinations. It also provides funding for state and national training and technical assistance through the Rural Transportation Assistance Program.

Bus and Bus Facilities

The Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities program (49 U.S.C. 5339) makes federal resources available to states and designated recipients to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities. Funding is provided through formula allocations and competitive grants. A sub-program provides competitive grants for bus and bus facility projects that support low and zero-emission vehicles.

Surface Transportation Block Grant – Direct Attributable (STBG-DA)

The Surface Transportation Program is U.S. DOT funding provided to states and localities for projects on any roads part of the Federal functional classification system that are not classified as minor local or rural collectors. States and MPOs have the option of transferring or “flexing” a portion of these funds for any projects that are eligible under FTA’s transit programs (except for any FTA eligible operating assistance). Federal share for these projects is 80 percent.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ)

CMAQ is U.S. DOT funding available to areas with air quality currently or recently in “non-attainment,” or not meeting national air quality standards. Projects funded by CMAQ must contribute to the attainment of ambient air quality standards by reducing pollutant emissions from transportation sources. CMAQ funding may be used by all projects eligible under FTA programs including operating assistance for up to three years. CMAQ is also available for shared-ride services and pedestrian/bicycle improvements.

SECTION FOUR: PLANNING PROCESS OUTREACH/PARTICIPATION

As the regional planning agency to the Hickory urbanized area and the rural areas of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties, the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) is the lead agency for the development of this Local Coordinated Plan. As the lead agency, WPGOG organized a Public Workshop to get input on developing the plan. The workshop was attended by representatives from the following:

- ❖ Transportation Advisory Board
- ❖ Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority
- ❖ Lenoir Housing Authority
- ❖ Burke Recovery/BSAN
- ❖ The Cognitive Connection
- ❖ Partners Health Management
- ❖ CCC&TI
- ❖ NCWorks
- ❖ Caldwell County Chamber of Commerce
- ❖ Council of Adolescents of Catawba County
- ❖ Town of Lenoir
- ❖ Town of Hildebran
- ❖ Burke County
- ❖ Frye Hospital
- ❖ WPCOG staff

Coordination

For this plan, coordination is defined as “a process through which representatives of different agencies or client groups work together to achieve any one or all of the following goals: more cost-effective service delivery; increased capacity to serve the unmet needs; improved quality of service; and services which are more easily understood and assessed by riders.” Coordinating transportation means obtaining more results with existing resources through working with other individuals from different agencies, each with unique perspectives and goals.

Survey

A survey was developed to solicit information to help identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and those with lower incomes, and to identify and prioritize strategies for meeting those needs. The survey was published online and advertised via Facebook as well as email. The survey was filled out electronically through “MetroQuest.” The survey was launched on June 2, 2021, and closed on August 3, 2021. Survey results begin on page 22.

Planning Workshop

Notice of the workshop was advertised to a comprehensive, diverse population from all geographic areas of the region by the steering committee, transportation advisory board, WPRTA staff and WPCOG staff. Notifications of the workshop were advertised by public notice, emails, flyers, mail outs, and word of mouth and identified online.

The 2021 Local Coordinated Plan (LCP) workshop was held July 20, 2021, from 2-4PM. Emma Stogner and Brian Horton of the WPCOG began the workshop by presenting the purpose and intentions of the Local Coordinated Plan. The presenters then gave a synopsis on relevant legislation, funding opportunities, current fixed route and demand response service, as well as a concise update on the area's demographics.

The workshop included an overview of the legislative updates under the FAST Act, and an overview of the following maps was given:

- Current WPRTA Routes & Schedules
- 2015-2019 Hickory Metro Percent/Total Households with No Automobile
- 2015-2019 Hickory Metro Percent/Total Age 65 and Older
- 2015-2019 Hickory Metro Percent/Total Minority
- 2015-2019 Hickory Metro Percent/Total Persons with a Disability
- 2015-2019 Hickory Metro Percent/Total of Families Below Poverty Level
- 2018 Commuter Patterns

The purpose of the workshop was explained with the focus on people with disabilities, seniors, and low-income residents in the Unifour region. The participants also learned about the “Coordinated Planning Process”. Strategies were then developed to identify the gaps and create potential projects to close the gaps. Priorities were set and established for implementation. The participants also reviewed current services offered by the WPRTA.

Staff divided attendees into four groups. Each group elected a scribe and WPCOG staff helped encourage discussion. Staff then asked the attendees to utilize a brainstorming technique to establish and advance talking points. The groups' respective scribe then recorded the attendees' talking points.

After the brainstorming exercise was complete, staff reviewed each talking point aloud amongst both groups. Attendees were given eight votes to cast to towards the issues they felt warranted the most attention.

Through the process of the workshop, participants identified transportation needs, provided strategies for meeting the local needs, and prioritized transportation services for funding and implementation.

SECTION FIVE: TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

Demographics

The 2019 American Community Survey indicated that the population in the four-county area was 366,678 people, remaining stable from the 2010 population of 365,497 people. According to the NC Office of State Budget and Management (NC OSBM), the region is estimated to grow to around 394,871 people by 2030, and to around 437,229 by 2050, growing at a rate of 7.7%, then 10.7%. Further, this growth is expected to be fueled by people emigrating to the region. Catawba County is expected to grow the most at 25.5% by 2050, with Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell following behind at 18.6, 10.1, and 17.5% respectively.

Urbanized Area

There is a Census-designated Urbanized Area in the Western Piedmont Area. This urbanized area is somewhat unusual, as the population density found in some areas within its boundaries would not suggest an “urban” designation. The area has the designation because there are several small municipalities with contiguous borders that combine to have a population that is characterized as “urban”. There is also a significant level of commuting between jurisdictions, which is one of the determinants that the Census uses in its formula to designate urbanized areas. The urbanized area is significant for this project, as the FTA allocates public transit funding to specific urbanized areas.

Population Density

The mean population density of the region is 220 people per square mile, with Catawba County having the most concentrated population (382 people per square mile) and Alexander County have the least concentrated population (141 people per square mile). Burke County has a density of 175 persons per square mile and Caldwell has a density of 173 persons per square mile. Population density is an important demographic feature to study when planning transit services. Typically, fixed-route transit can only be supported in areas with 1,500-2,000 people per square mile or more. Areas with lower densities call for more targeted services, such as deviated fixed-route or demand-response services. The current fixed-route service area exhibits areas of fixed-route density, as do areas of Lenoir.

Employment Travel Patterns

Employment travel patterns based on the 2018 LODES data were compiled and analyzed by the WPCOG. This analysis showed that Catawba County is significant employment destination for the three other study counties. Additionally, Mecklenburg County has become a popular commuting destination since the last LCP. These data provide another opportunity for the regionalization of public transit services. The following commuting patterns were indicated in the WPCOG analysis.

From Alexander County – 3,956 commuters to Catawba County
From Burke County – 5,703 commuters to Catawba County
From Caldwell County – 6,554 commuters to Catawba County
From Catawba County – 6,345 commuters to Mecklenburg County
From Unifour Region – 10,321 commuters to Mecklenburg County

Demographics Indicating Transit Needs

The need for transportation services in an area is a function of the demographic and economic characteristics of the population, their access to alternative forms of transportation (personal vehicles and trucks), and their physical and mental abilities to operate a vehicle.

Need is a relative concept, rather than an absolute one, and so an examination of need must provide for a comparison between areas or population groupings. It may not include a figure for the number of trips “needed” by the population in that area or group, because such a figure is inherently subjective and dependent upon the definition of need. “Need” is likely to be much larger than “demand,” which is the number of trips likely to be taken at a particular fare and service level.

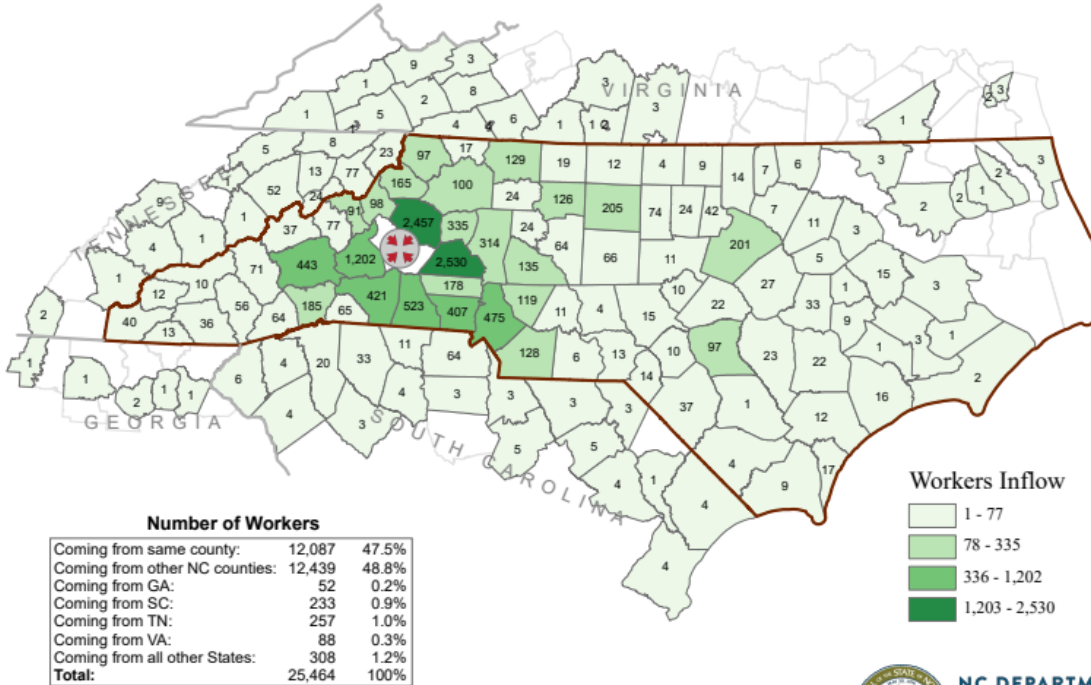
Accordingly, this analysis uses 2015-2019 American Community Survey data to present relative need in the study area. Relative need is calculated by ranking each Census and the 2015-2019 American Community Survey regarding the density and the percentage of the population in each of the following groups:

- Elderly persons 60-64 years of age
- Elderly persons 65 years of age and above
- Persons with disabilities, non-institutional, aged 18-64
- Persons with incomes below the poverty level
- Households with no vehicle available for use

This information is analyzed in two ways. The density of persons in each of these categories has been ranked, and the rankings summed to provide an overall ranking for each Census Tract in the four counties. The high need areas in terms of people displaying transportation dependent characteristics are in the Hickory area, Newton, part of Conover, part of Maiden, in the US 321-A corridor between Granite Falls and Lenoir, the northwest quadrant of Lenoir, in Morganton, along the US 70 Corridor in the vicinity of Valdese, along the Burke County/Catawba County border (north of Interstate 40), and in Taylorsville.

A similar analysis is performed using the same data but calculating the percentage of the population in each of the categories for each Census tract, and then ranking the percentages and summing the rankings to produce an overall ranking of the percentages. This is done to determine if areas that have small populations might also have a high percentage of that population in need of transportation services. This analysis shows a somewhat different pattern, with more of the rural areas showing needs, as would be expected. There are several areas that exhibit high transit needs based on the density and the percentage analyses, and these are: Morganton, Valdese, the northwest quadrant of Lenoir, along the Burke County/Catawba County border (north of Interstate 40), areas along the US 321-A Corridor between Granite Falls and Lenoir, portions of the Cities of Hickory, Newton, and Conover, Taylorsville, and Maiden.

Workers Commuting into Burke County, North Carolina



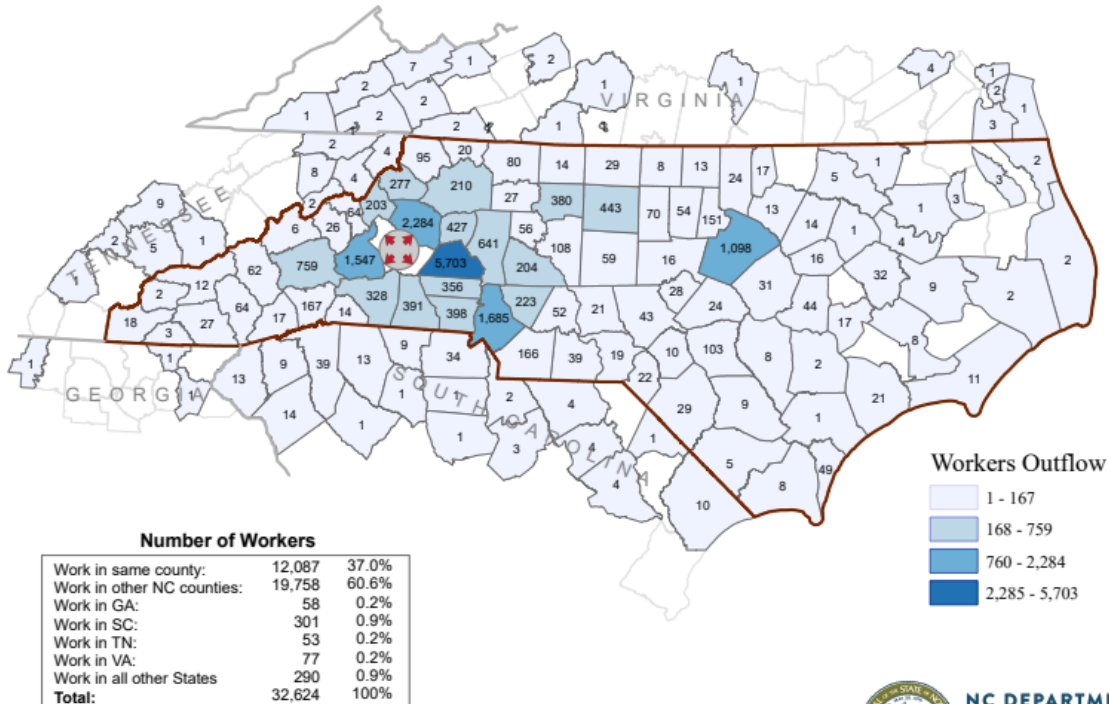
Data Source: US Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LODES, 2018.
Map Created in March, 2021

60 Miles



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ANALYSIS

Workers Commuting out of Burke County, North Carolina



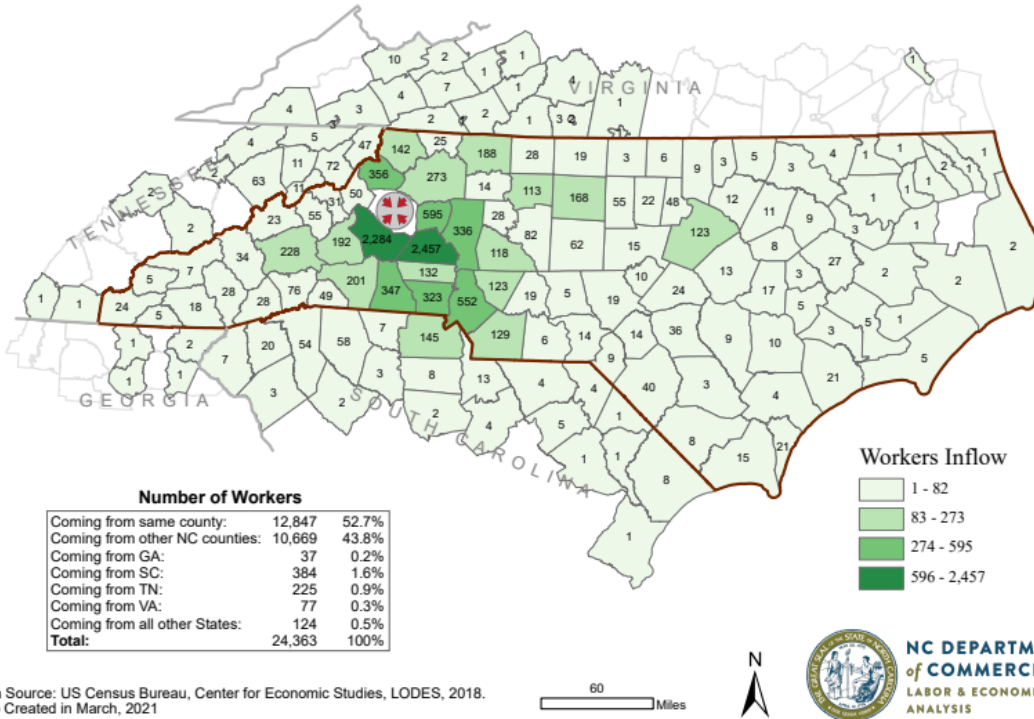
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70 Miles

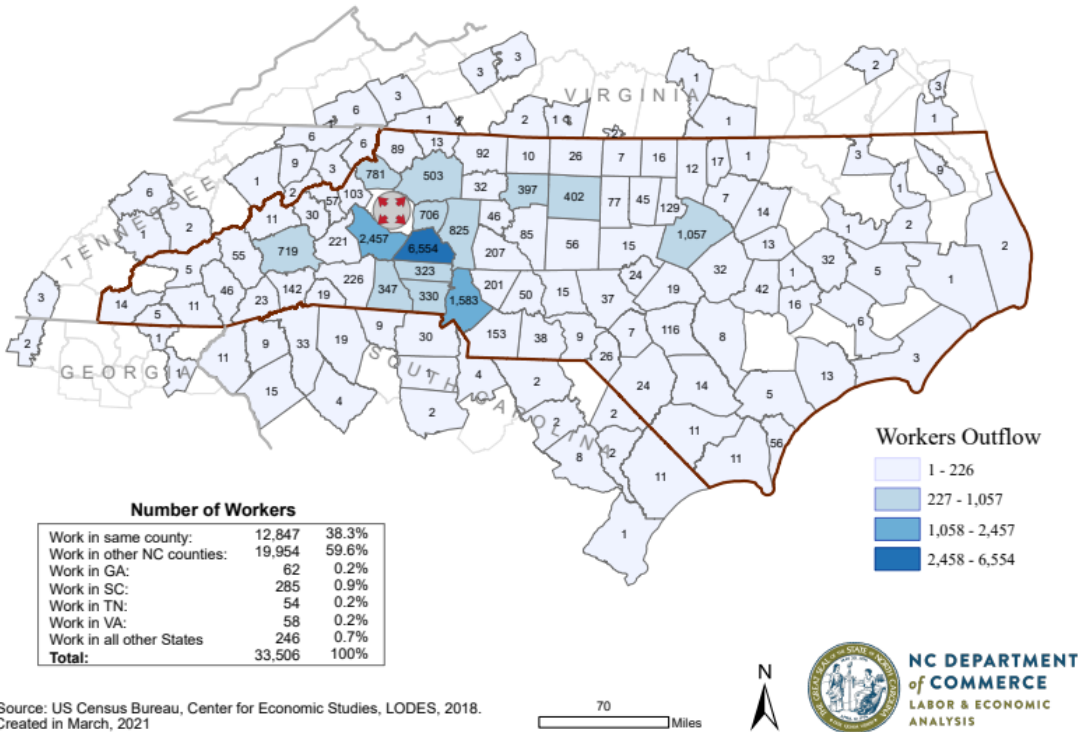


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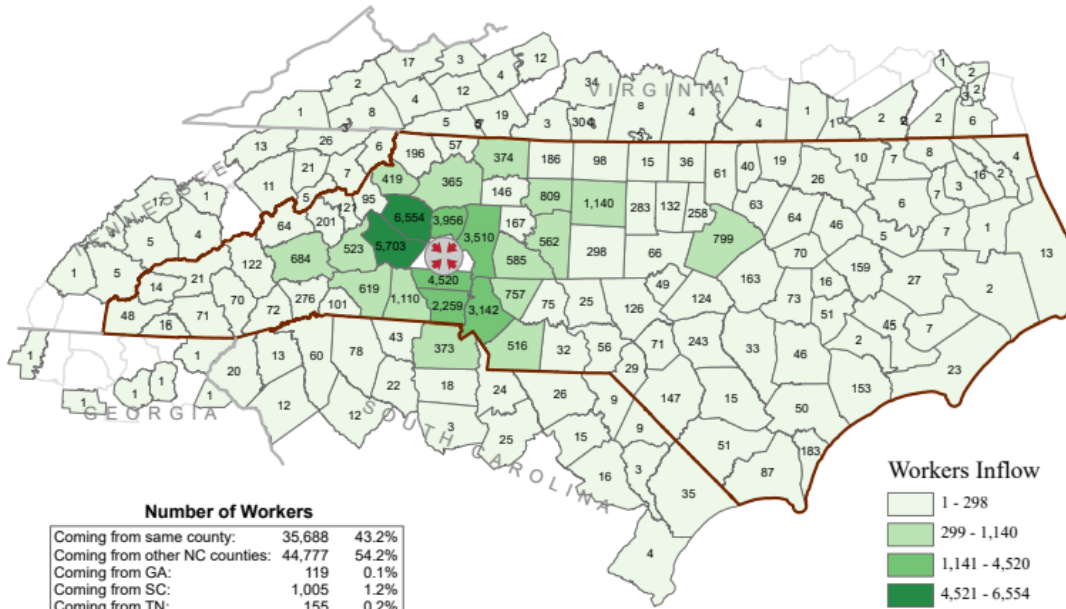
Workers Commuting into Caldwell County, North Carolina



Workers Commuting out of Caldwell County, North Carolina



Workers Commuting into Catawba County, North Carolina



Number of Workers

Coming from same county:	35,688	43.2%
Coming from other NC counties:	44,777	54.2%
Coming from GA:	119	0.1%
Coming from SC:	1,005	1.2%
Coming from TN:	155	0.2%
Coming from VA:	316	0.4%
Coming from all other States:	549	0.7%
Total:	82,609	100%

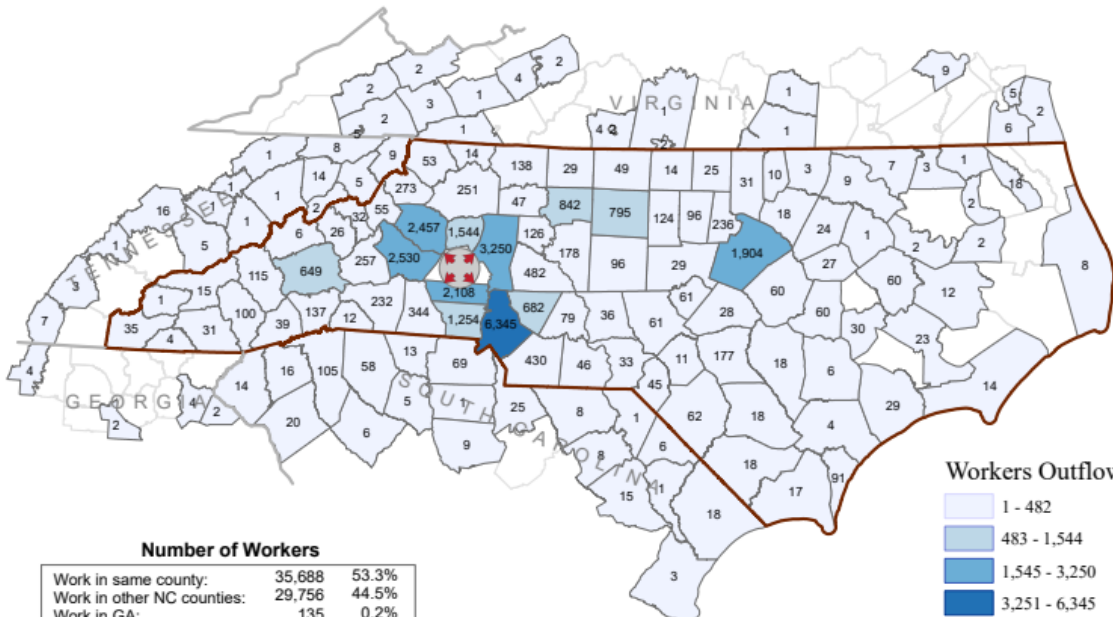
Data Source: US Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LODES, 2018.
Map Created in March, 2021

60 Miles

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NC DEPARTMENT of COMMERCE
LABOR & ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Workers Commuting out of Catawba County, North Carolina



Number of Workers

Work in same county:	35,688	53.3%
Work in other NC counties:	29,756	44.5%
Work in GA:	135	0.2%
Work in SC:	604	0.9%
Work in TN:	113	0.2%
Work in VA:	115	0.2%
Work in all other States:	516	0.8%
Total:	66,927	100%

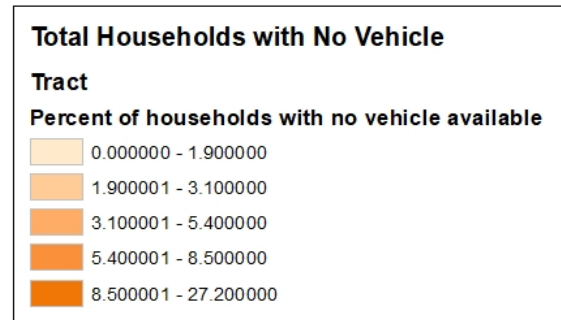
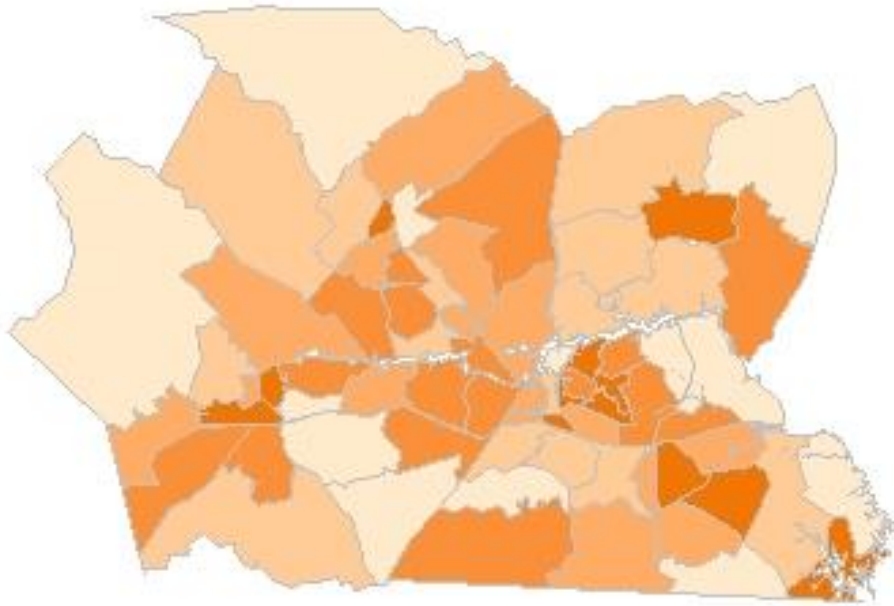
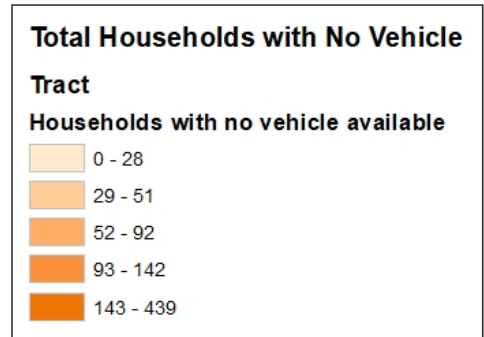
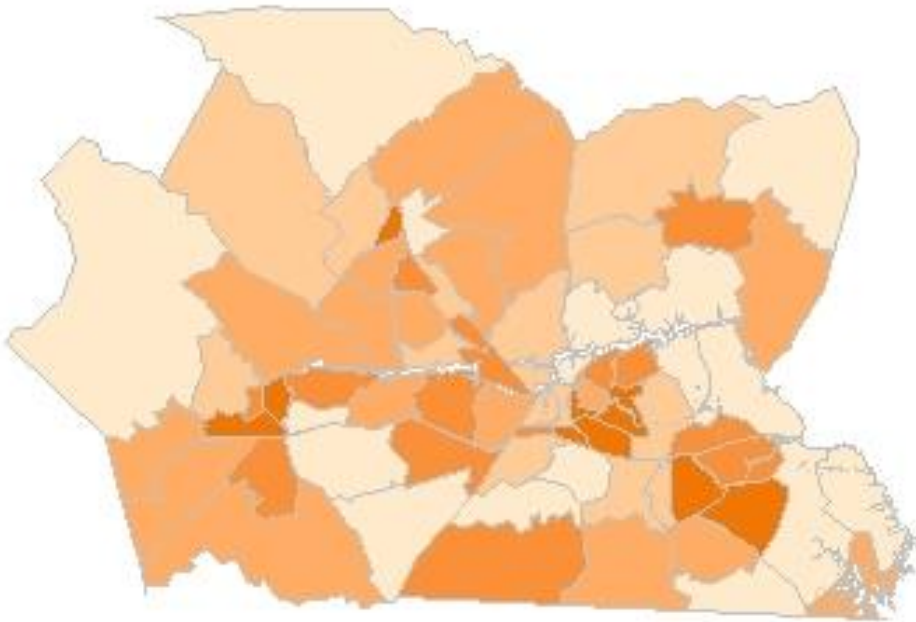
Data Source: US Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LODES, 2018.
Map Created in March, 2021

70 Miles

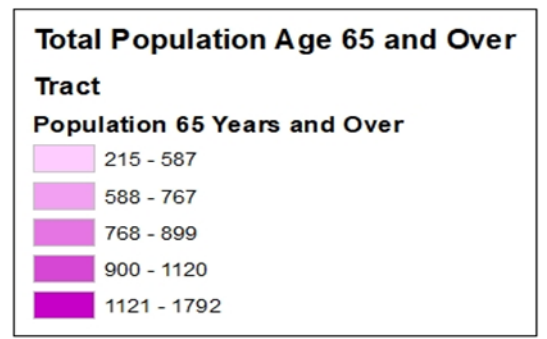
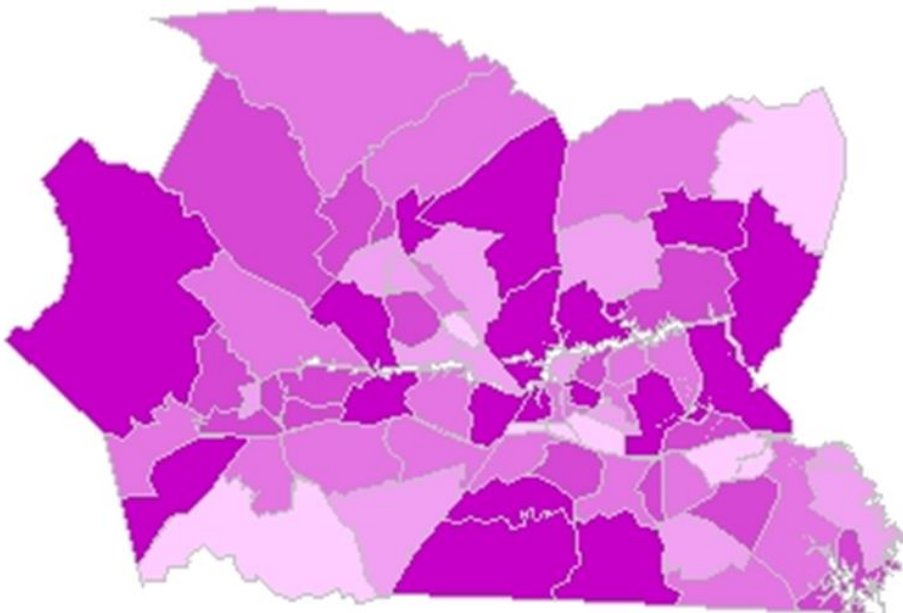
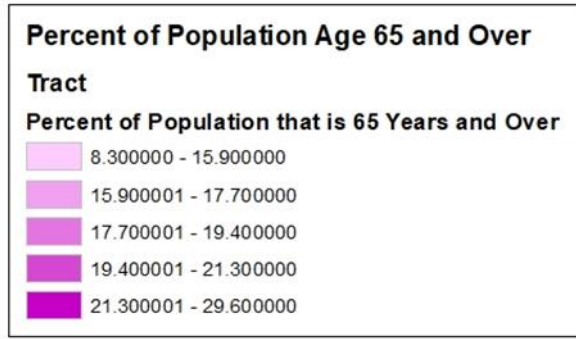
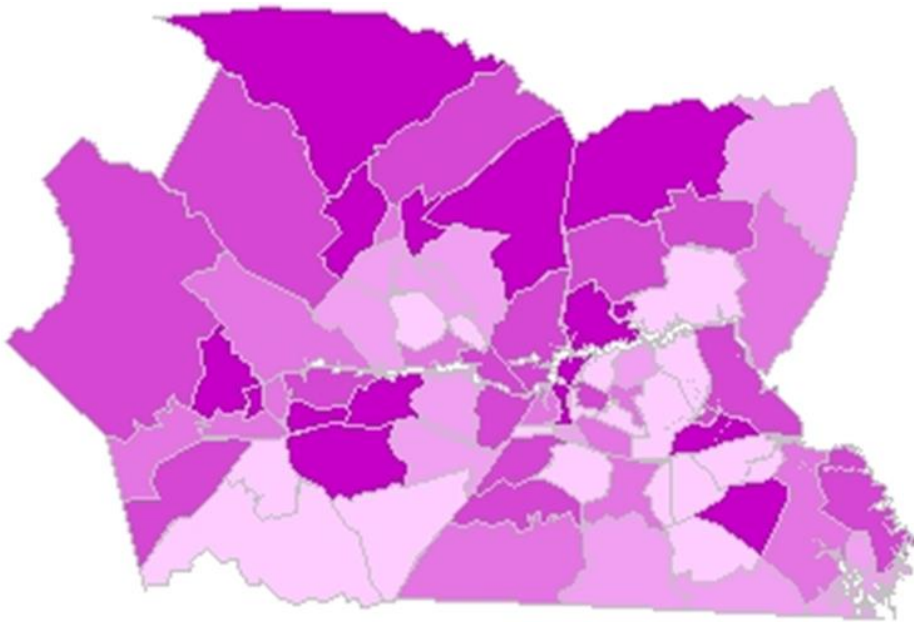
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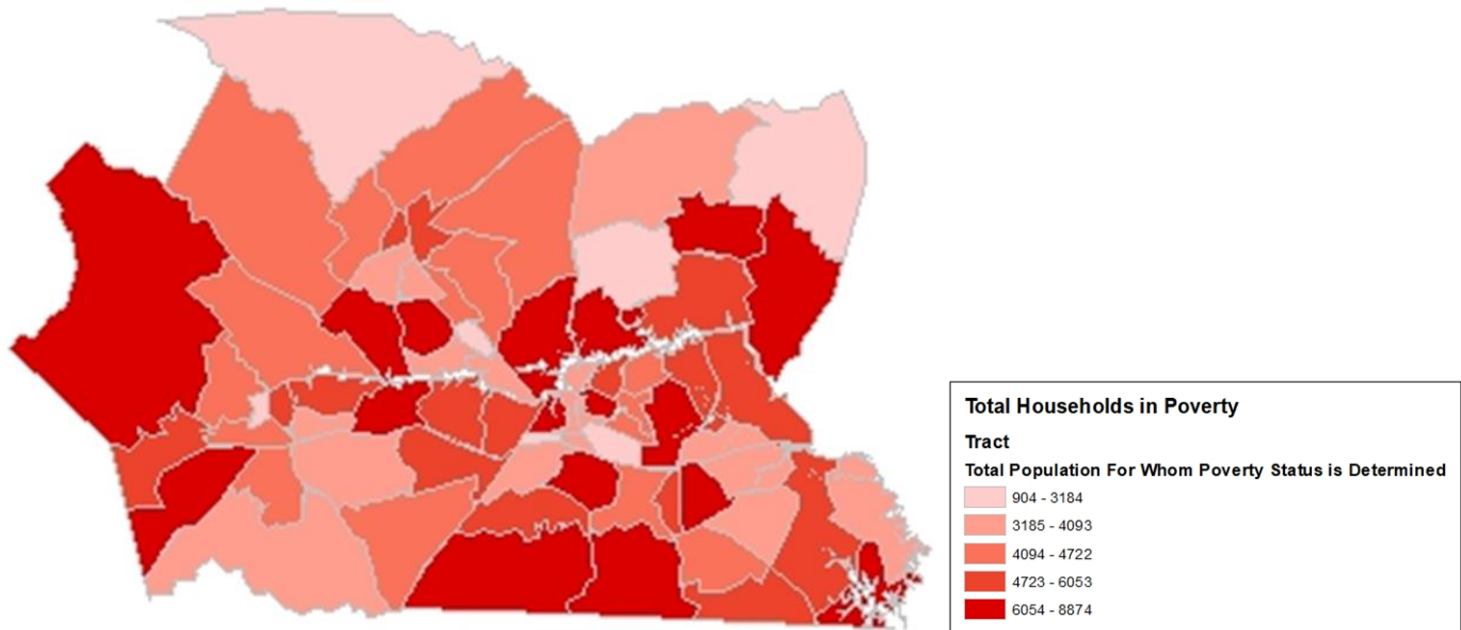
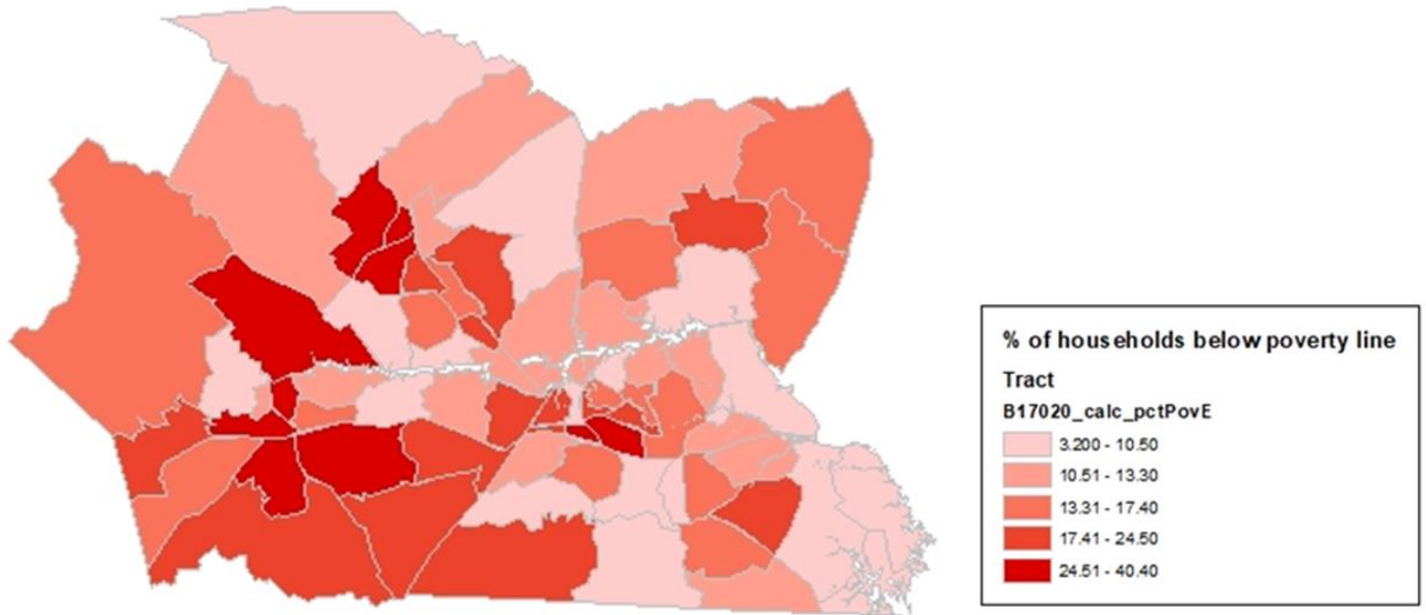
Percent of/Total Households with No Vehicle



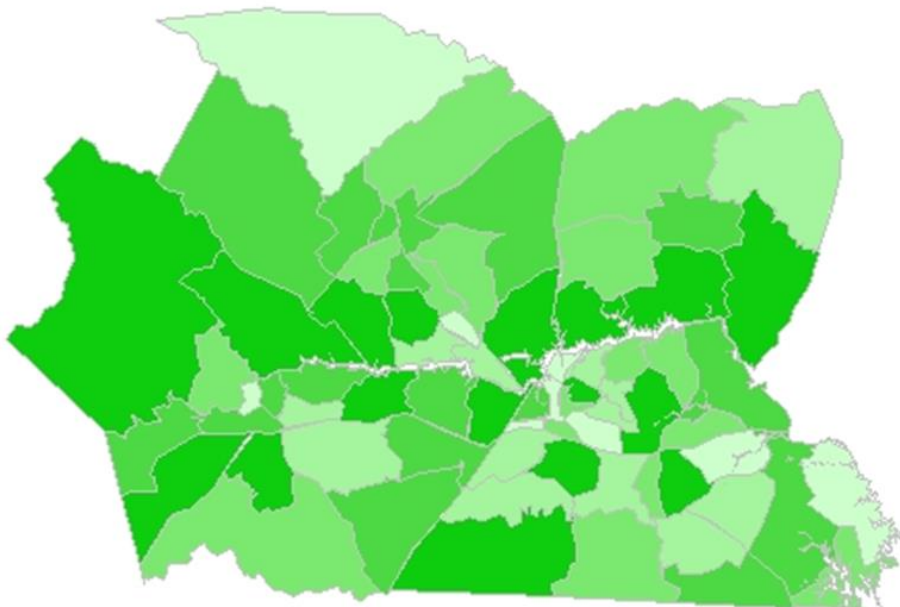
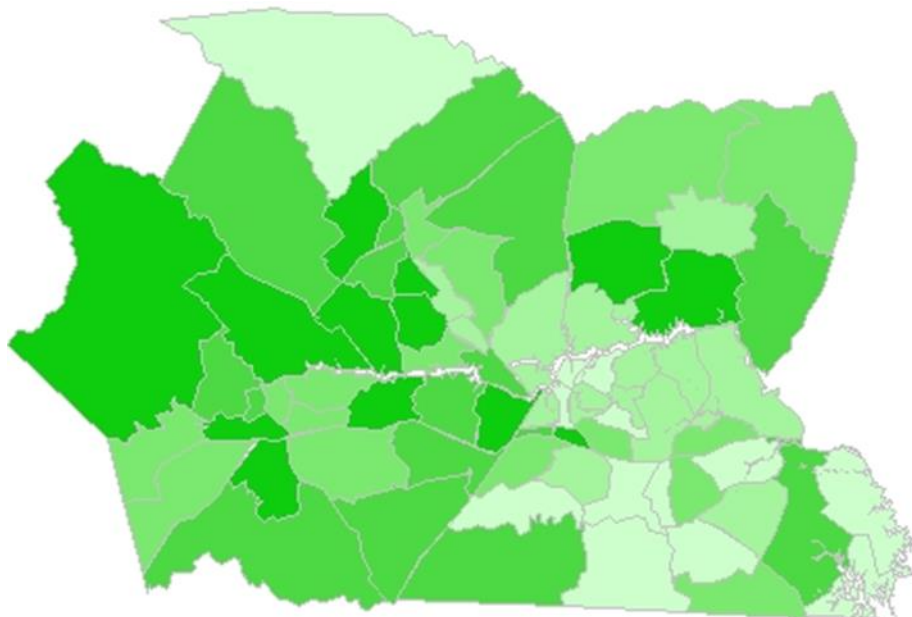
Percent of/Total Population Age 65 and Over



Percent of/Total Households Below the Poverty Line



Percent of/Total Persons with Disabilities



SECTION SIX: CURRENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND RESOURCES

History of Public Transit in the Greater Hickory Region

Consolidation of public transportation operations for Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties to form the Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority (WPRTA) took place in July 2008. Before this consolidation, community transportation was provided separately by each county. In Alexander County, community transportation was provided by Alexander County Transportation (ACT); in Burke County, by the Burke County Transit Administration (BCTA); in Caldwell County, by the Caldwell County Area Transit System (CCATS); and in Catawba County, by the Piedmont Wagon Transit System (PWTS). The only areas of the four counties that had fixed route transit at the time of the 2008 consolidation were the Catawba County cities of Hickory, Newton, and Conover, which was provided by the PWTS.

Following an extensive study and implementation process, on July 1, 2008, the Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority officially came into being and became the first combined rural and urban regional transit authority in the State of North Carolina. The transit authority was the result of the consolidation of four independent community transportation providers in each of the respective counties. Officials in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba counties, along with the municipalities of Hickory, Newton, and Conover, passed resolutions to create the Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority.

Mission Statement and Goals

The mission of the Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority (WPRTA) is to enhance the quality of life in the region by delivering safe, convenient, and environmentally friendly transportation solutions.

Transportation services provided shall be designed to maintain and encourage the use of public transportation and shall contribute to the economic vitality of the community, the conservation of natural resources, and the protection of the environment.

The goals of WPRTA are as follows:

1. Provide cost effective transportation services which optimize the utilization of personnel, vehicles, and other resources.
2. Provide transportation services which meet the mobility needs of the community, within available financial resources.
3. Develop funding options which assure the continued stable operation of transportation services at a public subsidy level acceptable to the community.
4. Develop policies which assure, as much as possible, that transit services are designed and operated to encourage maximum utilization by the community. Service should be provided first in areas where the greatest potential for use exists.
5. Promote the use of public transportation services within the community. This includes both providing adequate and up-to-date information on services available and aggressively marketing the transit system.
6. Expand public transportation to new areas of the community as demand estimates and population densities indicate that service will be sufficiently utilized within established service standards.

Currently Available Public Transportation Services Offered by WPRTA

Currently Available Public Transportation Services Offered by the Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority

- Urban fixed route transit services in Hickory, Newton, and Conover
 - Americans with disabilities (ADA) complementary $\frac{3}{4}$ mile paratransit service
- Flex route service in Taylorsville, including a $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile deviation zone
- Flex route service in Morganton, Drexel, Valdese, and Rutherford College, including a $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile deviation zone
- Rural and urban general demand response service in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties
 - DSS Medicaid transportation program
 - Vocational Rehabilitation Service
 - Burke Literacy
 - Caldwell Family Resource Center
 - Burke Council on Alcoholism
 - Adult Day Care
 - Developmentally disabled groups
 - Home and Community Care Block Grant Programs that service elderly passengers
- General and medical demand response transportation
- Private transportation providers operate in Burke County, providing trips brokered by WPRTA
- Department of Social Services Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) programs

Other Public Human Service Transportation Providers

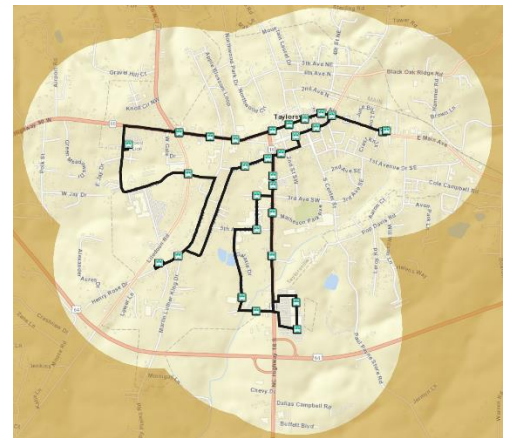
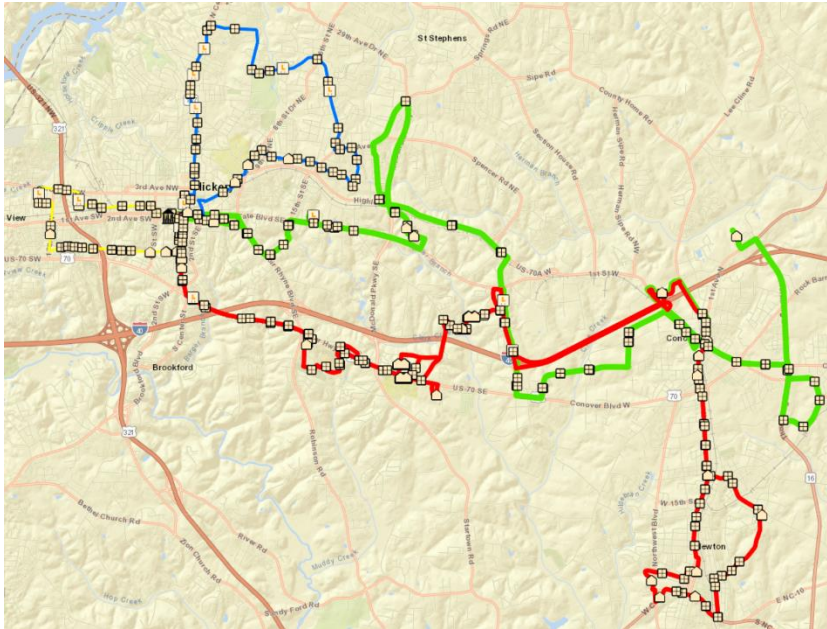
- Catawba County Department of Social Services
- Caldwell County Department of Social Services

Private Transportation Providers:

- Abby Cab
- Ace Cab
- Burke Christian Tours
- Catawba County Medical Transportation
- Catawba Valley Medical Services
- Handi-Care
- Hickory Hop
- Lyft
- Medivan
- Premier Transportation
- PACE
- Uber
- Yellow/Diamond Cab

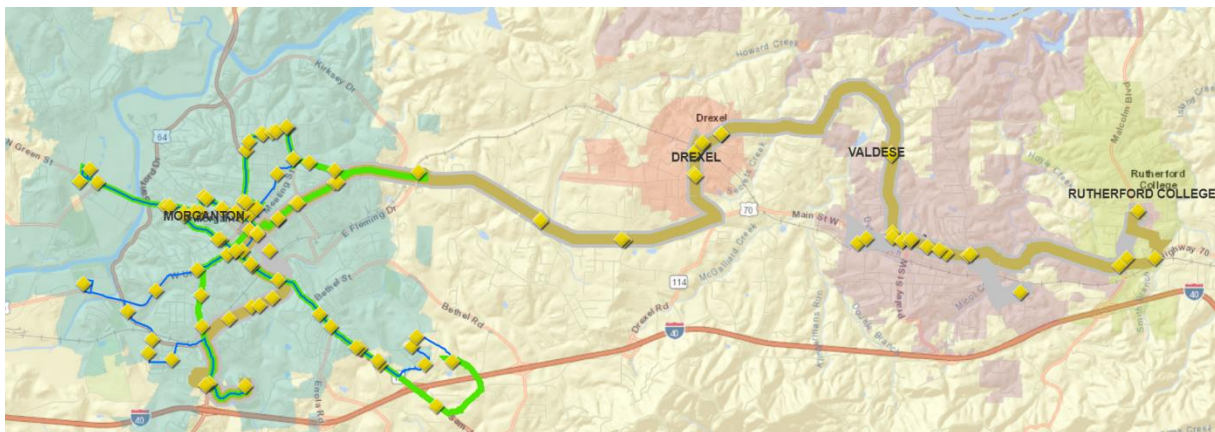
Current WPRTA Routes

Catawba



Alexander

Burke



Planned Route Changes

Burke

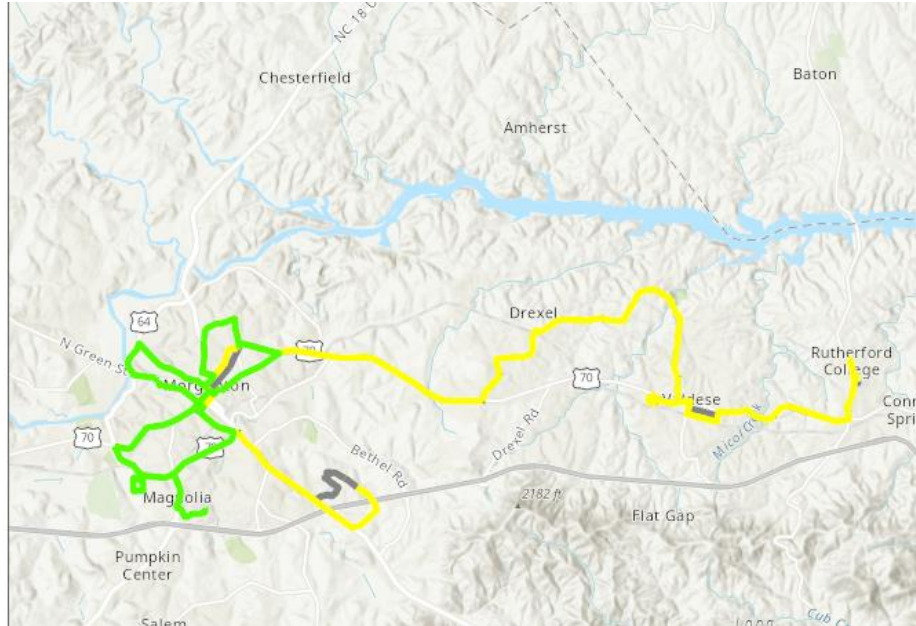
Morganton Route New



Valdese Inbound New



Valdese Outbound New



Catawba

Hickory_Fixed_Route_2020_New

View Route 1



View Route 2



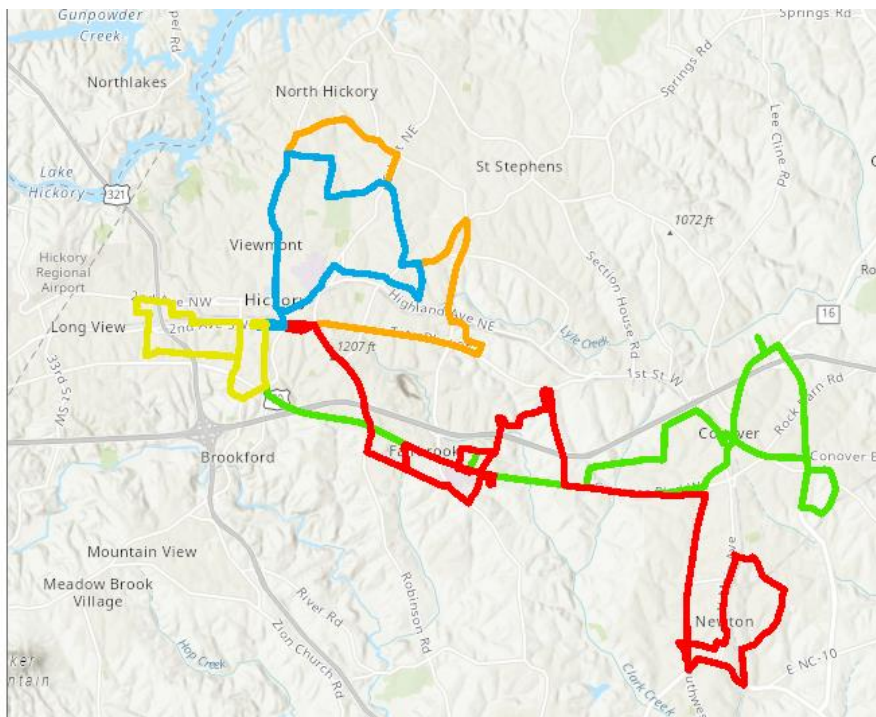
View Route 3 & Route 4



View Route 5 & Route 5



View Route 7



SECTION SEVEN: UNMET TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND ISSUES

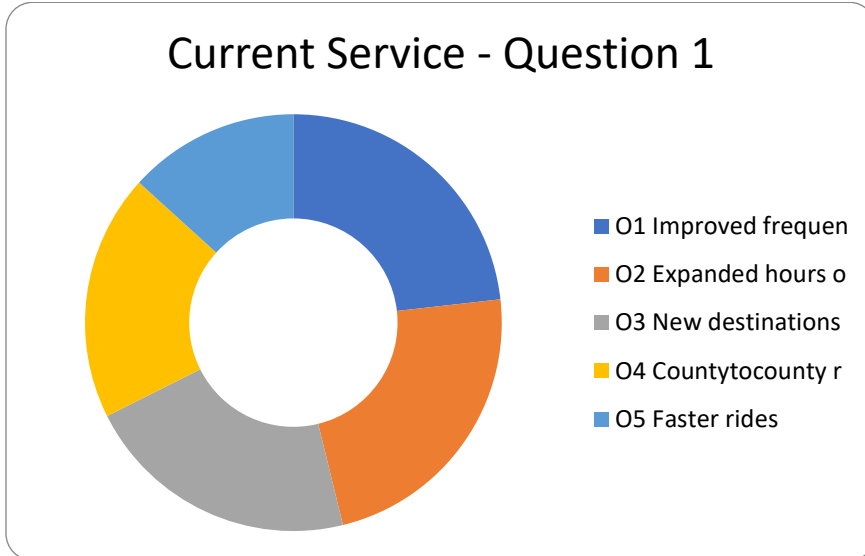
Workshop participants identified several unmet transportation needs in the Western Piedmont Region. The participants were asked to brainstorm transportation needs in the area. Upon completing these tasks, each attendee was given eight votes to cast towards their priorities. The results are shown below:

Idea/Objective	Number of Votes
App to plan bus route and tap touch	12
Alternative payments options, such as credit card, tap pay, etc.	8
Policy change - build transportation vouchers into EBT system	6
Online application for disadvantaged populations and include referral program to life skills program	6
Narcan and CPR training for drivers	6
Caldwell County transit hub	6
Bike racks at transit hubs	6
Free Fare Day/Free time slot	4
Increase routes and frequency	4
Partner with businesses ex. Have business validate tickets	4
TV ads at government offices	4
Flex Route in Caldwell County	4
Fliers/advertising at visible locations	3
Make service in Caldwell County initially free	3
Weekend services	2
Software for disadvantaged populations	2
Expand input access	2
County-to-county connections	1
More medical destinations	1
Shelters at bus stops	1
Discounts for disadvantaged populations	
Organizations can buy bus passes in bulk	
Public Service Offices	
Alternate forms of transportation for those banned from the bus or for any other reason	
Add bike racks to stops	
Extended routes in Valdese	
Extended routes in Connelly Springs	
Extended routes in Glen Alpine	
Extended routes in Salem	
Extended routes in Bethlehem	
Nonprofit advertising discounts	
Incentives for residents to ride the bus	
Fixed route service in Hildebran	

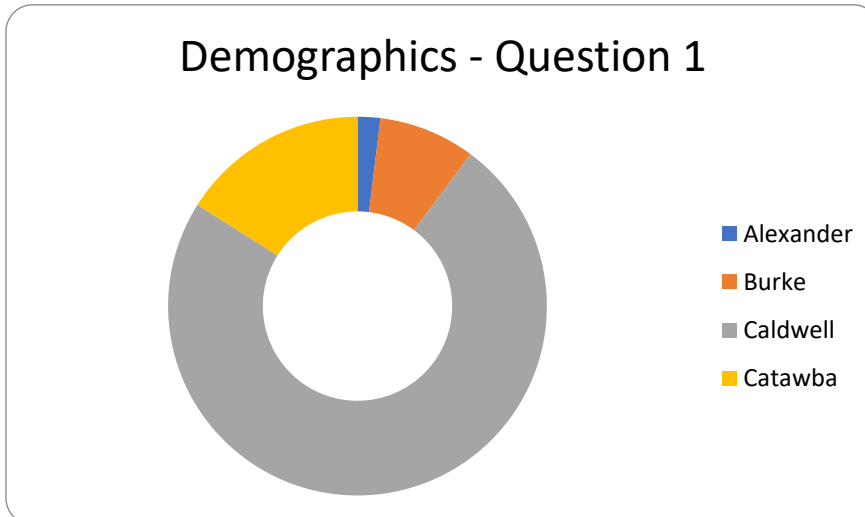
Survey Recap

In addition to the LCP workshop, a survey was also posted online using MetroQuest, and was live from June 2, 2021, to August 3, 2021. There was a total of 206 participants whose feedback is listed below:

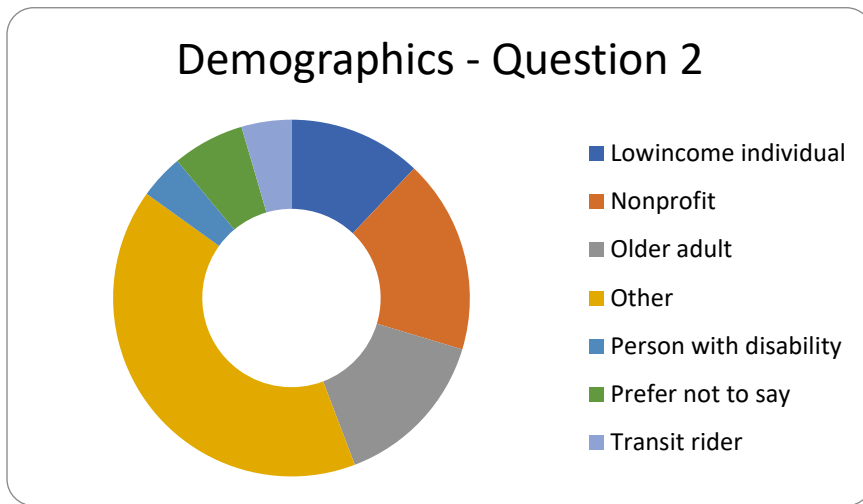
What improvements would you like to see to current service? Check all that apply.



Which county do you live in?



Which stakeholder group do you identify with?



What kind of transportation service is needed in your county which is not currently provided?

I believe our clients would greatly benefit from a "helping appointment" bus route that goes between major providers of helping services in our area.
Ride from work
Weekend Transportation
Door to door for older adults.
Newton Walmart
More opportunities for the homeless to get transportation to and from work. Right now, they have to go to a certain spot and cannot always access it even then.
There is Greenway, but I keep hearing from people who attempt to use it say that it is not very convenient.
out of town medical transport for people without Medicaid cab service transportation to and from work transportation to and from Social Security, DSS, Health Dept, DMV, grocery stores, drug stores etc.
Transportation for those without a vehicle to get to and from stores and restaurants.
Bus system.
Bus
Regional transportation that is affordable. Many medical services aren't available except in Hickory or Boone, but there isn't a way to get there.
One that has more routes
Evening access
Transport Veterans to and from doctor appointments
Transportation for medical and mental health appointments for those with no income and no insurance.
grocery shopping, doctors visits
grocery shopping, doctors visits, personal visit, medicine/pharmacy

Low cost, easily accessible, from outer communities into towns like Lenoir and Hickory. With more bus stops at or near frequently visited businesses.
Would love to see a bus route in Caldwell County - as well as expanded, community-oriented routes in Catawba.
Not sure if "needed," but rail would be nice.
Any type of public transportation . . . none provided.
Transportation for low-income individuals to local shopping and education facilities.
I work at Lenoir Housing Authority in Lenoir, NC Our residents are in dire need of transportation. We have a large amount of seniors and people with disabilities that need transportation to the store for groceries, medication, or other household items. There is none here unless you are going to a doctor's appointment.
Bus transit system that covers the whole county.
Bus
Bus
bus
Public transportation, not just schedule a ride
We desperately need a route in Caldwell County to help aide low-income families to get to work, drs, college, etc.
Regular Bus Routes, Non-Emergency Services, Elderly Services, underserved services.
Transportation to medical visits
Transportation to / from medical appointments
Better and safer way to ride bicycles / safer walking / more sidewalks / more traffic lights for safe crossing / slower speed limits given the lack of sidewalks
Public transit would be good for our county
Anything - cabs, buses, uber, Lyft ...
Bus service for those who cannot drive.
I work for the Community College and deal with individuals who would want to take continuing education classes (esp. Nurse Aide I) but cannot because they don't have transportation and taxi/
I rely on friends and family because the cost of a car is too much. I would like to get on a bus and have stops along a route that are within walking distance to food and shops.
Routine transit routes for community members in Caldwell County.
Bus service between the cities/towns in Caldwell County
Bus system that runs from Walmart to Walmart with stops at the community college and doctors offices. Multiple clean energy bus routes.
Helping people who doesn't have transportation to get to work, school, doctor's appointments, etc... fixed route, recurrent, dependable, affordable transportation
Service to and from all day long
A system that transports people from Happy Valley area to Hickory shopping and Medical Services areas. I have seen people in wheelchairs pushing themselves in the grass and in the road on 321 on days in the 90 degree summer heat.
A regular bus route and more medical vans for transport to doctors appointments.
Regular bus or other transportation for community college students who do not have their own transportation

I rail line but I understand my county may not have a need for that much public transit (although I would love it)
Easier access to greenway transportation, they have finally established a percentage route for me, but it was a long process. And help getting to and from work especially late in the evening
Uber
Light rail
We need buses for community college students.
Transportation to educational campuses (CCC&TI).
Consistent public transportation that families without transportation can use to meet health and dental needs of families and meet daily needs such as shopping for food or going to the laundry services.
bus system
Caldwell County needs regular transportation routes from residential areas to the community college to help low-income citizens receive the job and career training
CATS needs to offer more time slots and more pickup locations
public transportation
I do not understand how our public transportation works. I would love to see an infrastructure that has regularly rotating buses with a schedule like the kind used in larger cities.
Greenway Transportation
not certain what is available
I have many clients who have no transportation for general things like grocery shopping, library, DSS office, laundry mat, food pantry and such. A daily round trip to these general places would greatly help families I serve. Our area does not always have sidewalks. Walking for these families can be dangerous, especially with small children. Please consider providing free transportation.
Public transportation for students. Not just greenway
Transportation to work
I don't know what type of transportation service is currently available.
I am unaware of what is currently provided.
Public Transportation - Regular Bus Transportation, taxicab service, and Uber drivers
It would be nice to have enough vans so we would not have to stay during the day so students could have a ride.
Regular, consistent transportation to places of business, places of employment, and places of residence.
Higher number of routes or vehicles. Families report that they call, and ridership is full.
People in our community need transportation access for personal needs.- Parents to school meetings, doctor appointments, etc.
Affordable transportation for low-income individuals, especially students of the community college
Uber-type on-demand individual transportation options
Free or low-cost buses for the elderly and handicapped. Also, low-income.
Timely rides to local appointments; transportation for daily tasks
Busing system that can transport people around the city to utilize community resources to medical visits, grocery store, therapy visits, recreation centers etc.
Bus
Transportation for low-income families and the elder at a reasonable rate.

Affordable
Transportation to and from Charlotte airport and Asheville airport. Transportation to and from nearest bus station. Transportation to and from major hospitals.
Transportation to medical providers.
Widespread bus transit
transportation to and from CCCTI adult education and college classes.
County bus system for ANY persons, no matter their income level, disability status, age range, etc.
Public
public trans.
Public transportation for students and parents for afterschool activities and parent meetings.
Vans or buses for elderly people or people who can't drive or do not own a vehicle.
bus station /cab service
Relatives sometimes
Low cost or free transport for health visits to patients of low income
For doctor appointments
Any! There is very little available to those who cannot plan ahead. We need easier access and set routes running daily.
special needs transportation
The greenway bus helps out a lot in our county as many of the students at CCC&TI are lower income.
Taxi/bus
We pay the transportation cost for our clients to reach our center. Unfortunately, many choose not to use the current transportation because of convenience. It is hard for them to schedule a ride. They are sometimes transient themselves and don't know where they will be or they just don't plan that far in advance. Others, schedule the transport but it is unreliable. A scheduled bus route that runs our county having pre-determined stops would be helpful.
Busses. More options for transportation.
On demand
daily public transportation not just for medical. Transportation to and from stores.
Bus service
Specifically transportation to the Community College
Not certain but I meet students who need use public transit.
I drive myself places that would be my transportation to get around places.
Regular and reliable bus routes for disadvantaged who need transportation to doctor, work, school.
Taxi service/Uber/Lyft options for those that may not be close enough to bus routes or bus stops if we did have them.

Please use this space to list other improvements you would like to see.

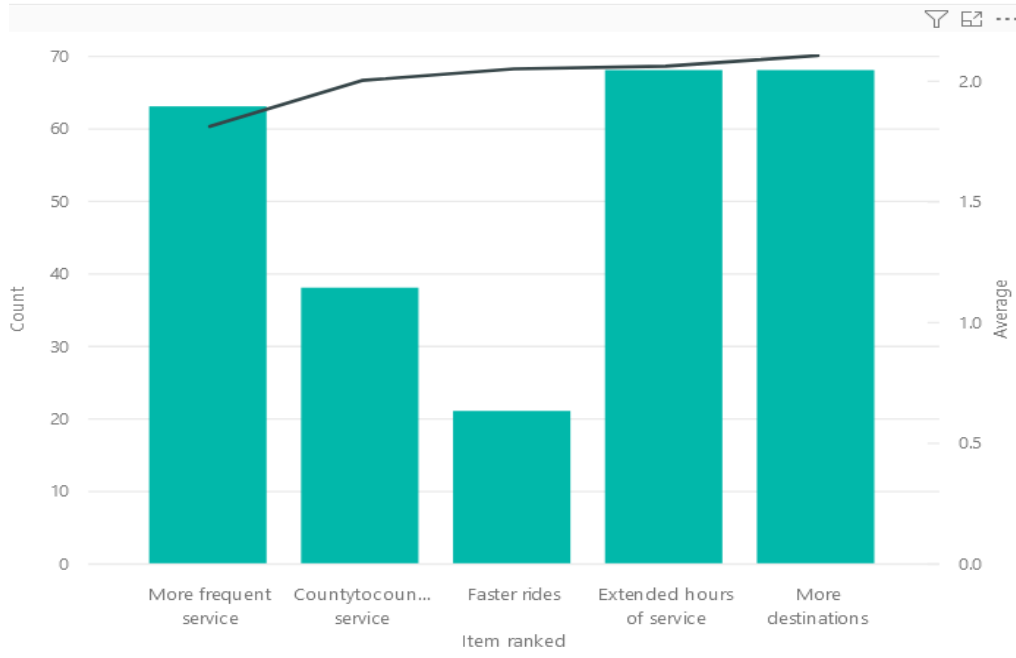
A general route that would constancy run, stores, parks, and it needed to be free or at a lost cost.
Expand routes and hours of service
Affordable, new destinations
The type of service like the Applectart in Watauga County
More affordable
Communication regarding resources that are currently available.
There is a Hickory Hop to the airport from Caldwell County, and a call-for-assistant passenger van, but besides those two, I'm not familiar with any other "public" transportation options in Caldwell County. I was called to assist someone who came to Caldwell County's courthouse for a legal matter and they couldn't even find an Uber driver to get them back to Hickory.
Other transportation opportunities for students at the college
Free transportation, a daily round trip, more information and easily accessible advertisement.
Easy to locate bus station pick up area with covered area to wait.
user friendly services
Anything in the form of public transportation Would be an improvement
I know folks have to plan well in advance to ride, but is there a way to have bus stops or stations as highly populated places and at key businesses where potential students could gather to ride and return to said location.
No appointments
Overall, public transportation in our county is practically non-existent considering demand level. We have a chronic need for transportation for some of the most vulnerable citizens of our county and it keeps them from getting better jobs, higher education, and to take care of daily errands (groceries, banking, etc).
Pick up and drop off to the Community College.
Is not needed. Busses running empty
We just desperately need a service in Caldwell County
A regular bus line
Current transportation is limited to none.
There is only medical transportation in Lenoir that I am aware of. There needs to be a route here.
All of the above - no public transportation in Caldwell County.
NEED SERVICE FOR CALDWELL
Less wait time for those waiting to be picked up
At the very least, a coordinated connection from county to county, so a public transit center on major traffic arteries like 321 joining each county to the next. Express service from county seats, or medical, shopping, or entertainment hubs during appropriate hours would be helpful.
Greater access to low-income areas and to be able to have destinations out in the county that serve the community rather than just in city and town centers.
I know some people have had to wait a while to get picked back up from appointments
Bus route for Caldwell County
easier access and navigation of getting approved for Medicaid Transport and Greenway services
More bus stops and all the above
more services

Do you have any concerns that were not asked about?

I only recently learned that I can call when I need a ride to a doctors appointment. I'm still not fully clear on how it works. You need to make this more public.
Concerning low-income individuals, finding funding sources to subsidize related costs for ridership. Though options might be available it does not good to those who are priced out of the service.
More funding for transit - but this is an issue for elected officials. :)
Why does Caldwell not have public transportation.
No more people than rides, better off paying for a cab
Low-income individuals struggle with transportation. Caldwell County offers nothing for them.
As I mentioned before, lack of transportation is a key
As I mentioned before, lack of transportation is a major obstacle for a large and vulnerable part of our county's population. The lack of transportation keeps them from seeking resources such as continuing their education post high school, limit job options, make going to the grocery store, medical appointments, etc.
Availability thru out the day
I am happy this survey has been sent out to see the need for transportation in our area! Because there is indeed a need.
The public library should be a pitstop as well on the transportation line.
One of the main contributors to poor health in Caldwell County is the lack of transportation to keep dr. visits or dental visits. This impacts adults and children alike. A consistent mode of transportation is needed to help families in Caldwell County.
Cost of rides for zero income or uninsured individuals.
The current fee for the Greenway Public Transportation fee for low-income people is expensive. I spoke with a person that was charge \$5 per one-way trip within Caldwell County
I have families who don't go to the doctor because they have a hard time scheduling with Medicaid transportation. When a child is sick we encourage families to use primary care. When they need to be seen that day or the next day they are unable to use Medicaid transportation due to the scheduling 3 days in advance policy.
Ease of access to scheduling and pick-up/drop-offs
Affordability
Any plans for serving the general public? I have used public transit for years in other cities and believe we should have easily accessible options for all to use when necessary. Covered bus stops and better visibility/awareness of bus stop locations will help increase ridership.
There are so many folks that could really use the educational services that CCC&TI provides, in turn enhancing employability and further learning opportunities, but have no transportation to and from campus.

The Local Coordinated Public Transportation Plan strives to identify transit needs as well as prioritize them. Please rank your transit needs by personal priority.

Priorities by both responses and average rank.

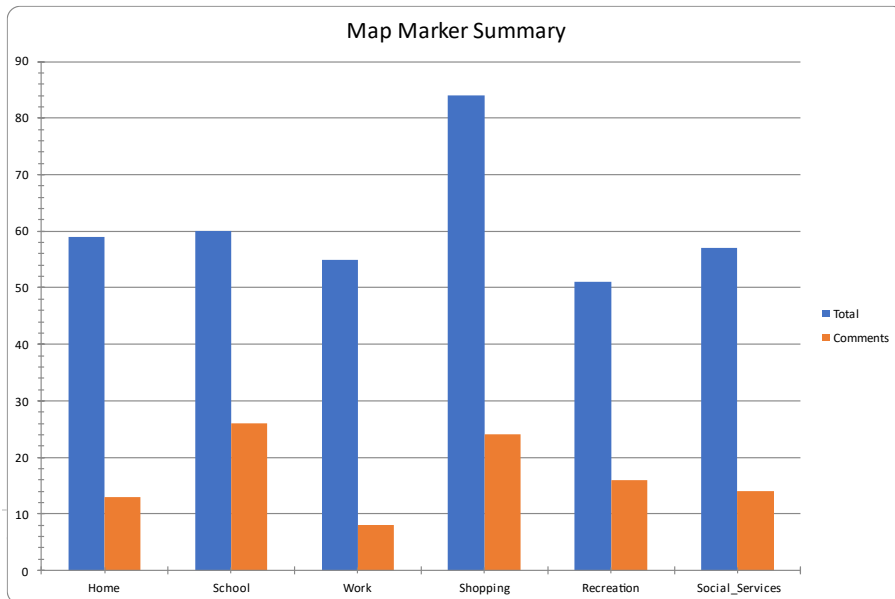


* Note that the highest rank is 1, so small rankings and averages are better than high ones.

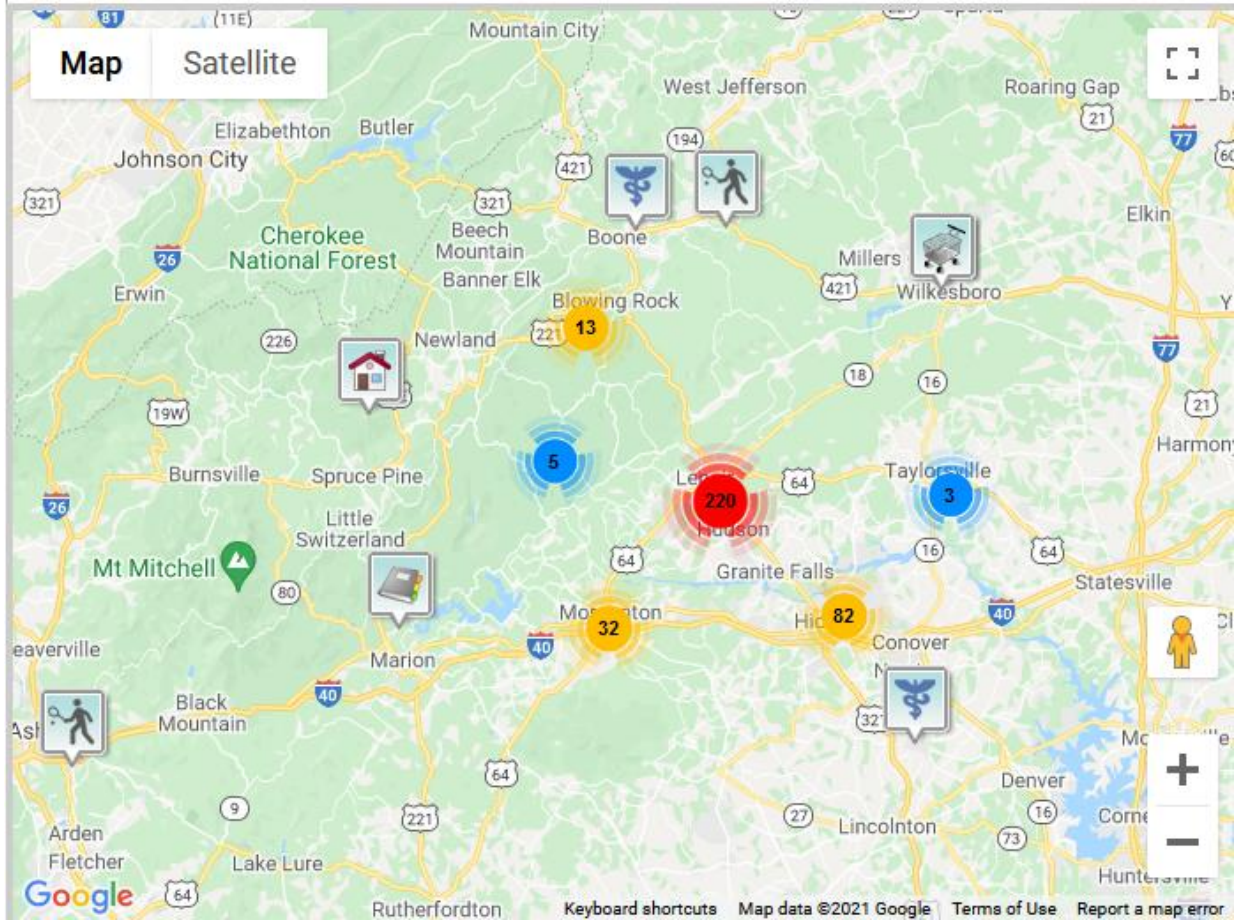
Suggest another.

- Weekends like Saturday
- Start a consistent route and service in Caldwell County
- Public transportation: Rural and Urban bus routes; Taxi / Uber / Lyft for those that need it.

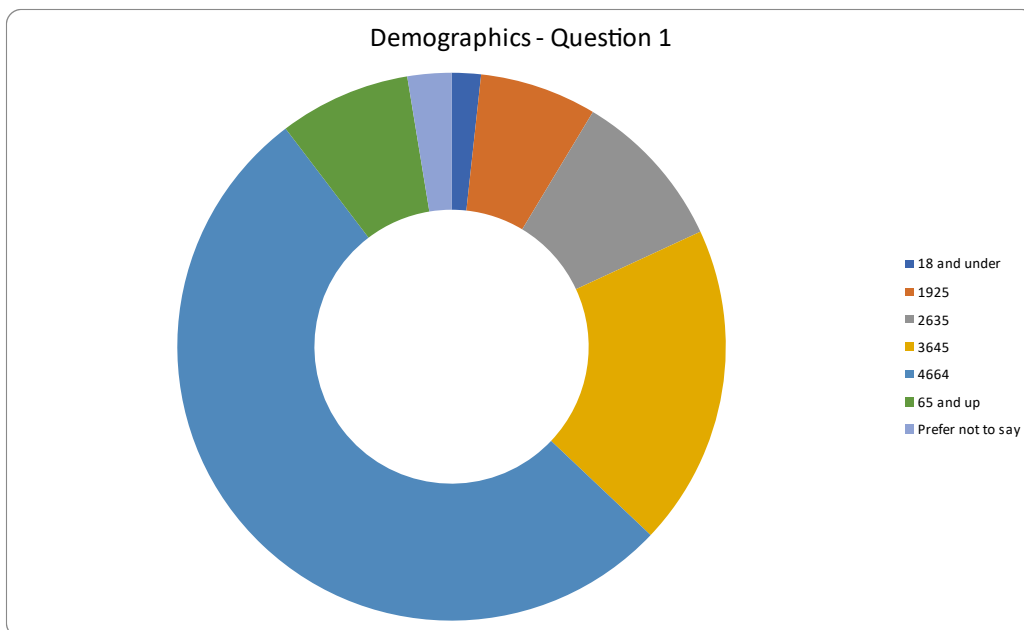
Where do you want to go? Please drag and drop at least 3 markers on the map.



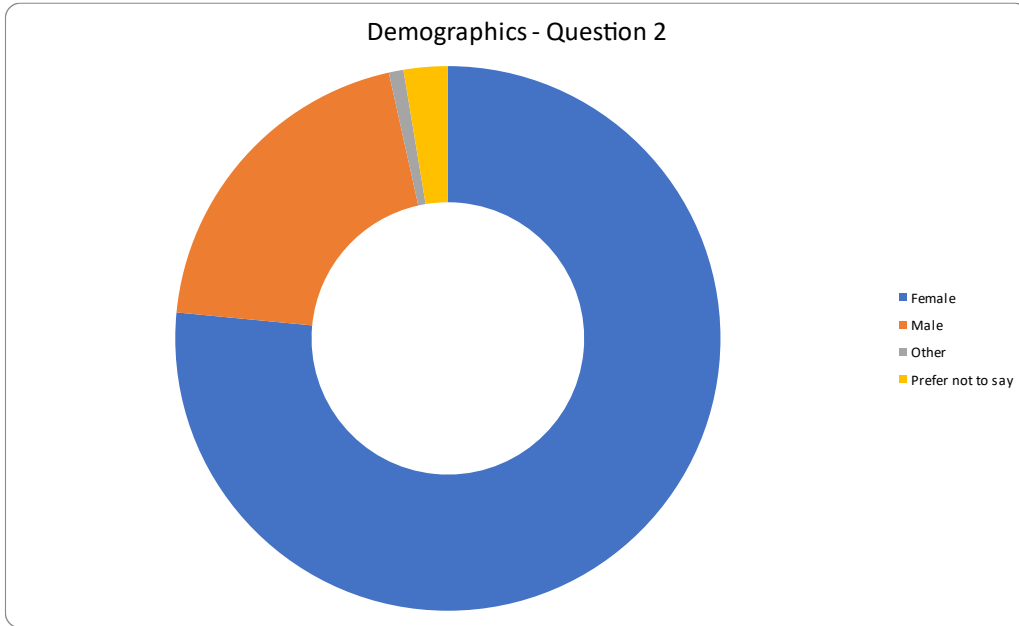
A map showing the distribution of map markers by type.



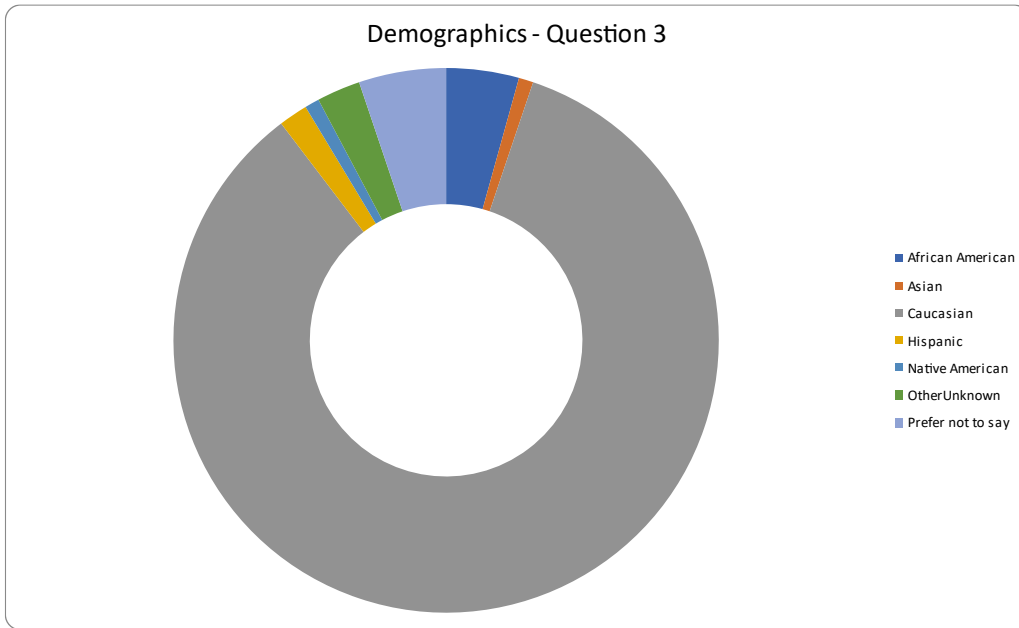
How old are you?



What is your gender?



Please specify your ethnicity.



Any final thoughts?

Thanks!
To Greenway, thank you for providing service to those in need.
Senior citizens in Caldwell County need a bus route. Many cannot access services they need because of transportation issues
With adequate transportation to get people to where they want to go for work, leisure, shopping, worship, cultural experiences, etc. the investment in this service will be another way in which the county will be able to draw future residents and with it additional revenue to continue to invest in the livelihood of Caldwell County.
Transportation is the key to access for so many important needs
Expanded advertisement regarding routes, stops, schedules needed.
BADLY ASSIST FOR HOMELESS
Love the Re-Route efforts; hope the Burke routes are sustainable and receive adequate funding; Alexander van service seems good; hope Caldwell service increases.
This subject has been a topic of conversation for over 20 years.
This would be excellent help for our community
To better the service we need longer hours. For parents we have school age children some of the schools need to be added to the routes. The bus may be the only way they can get a sick child
We need a route so desperately. I hear often from our low-income families that they are unable to do so many things because of lack of transportation.
I do not personally have need for transportation but have family members who do.
I'm thankful that I do not need transportation services but so many of our residents do. Thank you for your service to them!
This is a very important issue to address in our county and I hope that we can make it widely available to our community.
doctor not listed, not enough counties for doctors and hospitals, should include Winston Salem and charlotte, Levine cancer center, VA doctors, churches etc..
We need a bus system like the apple cart in Watauga
I believe it would be very beneficial to those who need transportation to work and school.
Need to get those under-employed, under-trained, and under-educated, to the community college for training and education, so they can then get employment and then afford their own transportation and contribute to the tax base.
Needs to based on all ages and needs
Thank you for sending out this survey. I hope it helps to improve our public transportation services in and around our area. It is always eye opening to see parents pushing strollers down HWY 321 so far from town or even people in wheelchairs trying to get around from North 321 are to South 321 area.
Thank you for the opportunity to complete this survey!
Transportation options Doug be offered to help with school transport
Transportation services are desperately needed in Caldwell. Families need a way to get their children to Early Head Start @ 609 Harper Ave. and Head Start. These parents also need to get to college for GED and AA degrees. Many of the families we serve need transportation to grocery stores, laundry mats, doctors, and dentist. Being to access the resources in Caldwell County can improve the physical and mental health of the community. I was surprised there was not an option to choose the hospital/medical offices as a route. Just as a note, 609 Harper Ave. is a great mid-point as we are just

a few blocks from the hospital, courthouse, government offices, and some doctor offices. It would be a great place for a central bus route.
Thank You.
This survey is confusing.
I have had to rely on others for transportation to school and work pick up times around their schedule. I now have a car but understand what students are going through
Thank you for addressing this critical factor in growing our community.
Need capability of going county to county such as doctor's offices for appointments
Watauga Co should be considered please especially since there is a CCCTI campus in Boone
Thank you for considering expanding your services to meet more people's needs.
Need transport to school.
Transportation is a huge must in Lenoir. Families need it for several reasons. All surrounding areas have transportation and more and then here is Lenoir.
I saw a homeless man and thought about how he could receive a Pell grant to gain job skills and education, but my mom said, "how would he get there every day?" EXACTLY!! There are jobs and classes and doctors and enrichment activities that every local citizen deserves access to!

SECTION EIGHT: RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended Strategies and Potential Projects

Recommended strategies and potential projects were derived from two major sources: the 2008 WPRTA Implementation Plan, plus the 2013, 2017, and 2021 Coordinated Plan Workshops. This section documents these strategies and projects.

While the WPRTA Implementation Plan was not primarily a service planning study, some logical service expansion ideas were discussed during development of the Plan. These concepts are based on the configuration of the urbanized area, coupled with the current demand for human service agency-based trips. The funding flexibility currently permitted for Federal Section 5307 transit providers in small urban areas would allow the introduction of deviated fixed-route services in the two urbanized corridors that do not currently have regular route service. Human service agency-based trips can be provided along these routes and the revenues derived from the agencies can be used as local match for the federal funds.

These corridors include the Lenoir to Hickory Corridor along US 321-A and the Morganton to Hickory Corridor along US 70. These corridor routes would have a fixed schedule with specific pick-up points, with some additional time added to the schedule for deviations. In order to make this service cost effective, it is proposed that these routes be based on the current human service agency demand for service in these corridors, with the current human service riders scheduled on these routes.

Other new services that could be developed in the region were cited in the 2009 Local Coordinated Transportation Plan and were reinforced in 2013, 2017, and 2021 Local Coordinated Transportation Plan workshops and surveys. Possible future service includes the following:

- Corridor service from Taylorsville to Hickory (NC 16 and NC 127)
- Corridor service from Taylorsville to Statesville (US 64 and NC 90)
- Circulator service in Morganton (implemented in 2018)
- Circulator service in Lenoir
- Connectivity between Hildebran and Hickory
- Additional specific employment transportation service with extended hours/days of service
- Additional rural general public demand response/other modes of service delivery
- Additional human service contractual trips
- Additional urban general public demand response/other modes of service delivery
- Additional group type trips to support senior and disabled transportation to destinations such as congregate meals, group shopping, dialysis and more

Implementation Priorities

In addition to identifying the region's transportation needs and what activities to coordinate, the Local Coordinated Plan Steering Committee also considered it priorities and how to implement them.

As indicated by the facilitators at the planning workshop, one goal of the planning process was to examine public transportation services that are provided within the four counties of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba. The needs and activities identified by the workshops and surveys in terms of their priorities demand certain actions that are essential in the implementation of the Local Coordinated Plan. Actions that require little funding or have already begun should be part of the first phase of

implementation. Others may require more time to implement because they require federal and state participation.

The following sections detail action items by type of activity.

WPRTA Education and Outreach

In an effort to meet some of the identified needs, it is necessary to provide information and coordinate with stakeholders: the Departments of Social Services and other human service agencies, such as, Exodus House, Centro Latino, and faith based organizations and, indeed, the NC Department of Transportation-Public Transportation Division, on how best to address these needs. Local businesses are also important. The implementation of the fixed route service in Taylorsville is a successful outcome of WPRTA education and outreach efforts with the elected officials of the town.

Promote Community Outreach and Marketing

WPRTA should utilize outreach techniques in order to better engage the public for the continued development and implementation of the coordinated planning process. Some techniques include a once-a-year open house for the general public and inviting representatives from the public to Transportation Advisory Board meetings. The latter may also involve training participants about the technical and policy issues surrounding transportation and transit planning.

Identify opportunities to increase funding for human service transportation to meet some of the specific needs that are identified in the plan

The Transportation Advisory Board can develop a common message regarding the need to enhance human service transportation in the region and to identify specific methods to communicate these needs to decision makers. For example, it may prove helpful to develop fact sheets and other educational materials to inform local Boards of Commissioners and City and Town Councils of regional human service coordination goals, including the need for additional funding. It could also be beneficial to coordinate visits to elected officials to present the materials in person. A long-term strategy could also consist of identifying and seeking future opportunities, which have the potential for a dedicated funding to support human service transportation services and programs.

Some grant programs, such as Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310), may also be available to assist in implementing programs to support the region's coordination goals. The WPRTA should seek out such opportunities and prepare grant applications.

WPRTA should research and document potential funding opportunities for human services transportation and transportation related activities. They will also work with local, state, and federal agencies to discover or create matching opportunities for federal transportation grants, and assist determining the most effective use of these funds. Given the changing funding landscape at the state and national level, and the simultaneously increasing costs and need for public transportation, this activity should be ongoing in nature.

Implement travel training programs

Promote the development of programs that raise awareness among individuals of the transportation options that are available to them, and instruct them as to how to access and navigate the transportation

system. Such a program can include published materials, classroom style sessions, and volunteer travel escort partners.

Identify opportunities for pooling or sharing human service transportation agency funding across the service area

Transportation funds are received by a multitude of human service agencies located within the service area. Developing better communication and coordination of this funding would maximize the availability of funding to the community. Referral of clients to other appropriate agencies for transportation funding is important for optimization of all available transportation funds.

Facilitate schedule coordination at major connections

Improved schedule coordination could make connections easier to plan and potentially reduce wait times for riders. WPRTA should continue to work with operators to refine timetables and coordinate route schedules.

Maintain GIS database of demographic data

WPCOG will continue to maintain data on the population with the regional planning area. In addition to obtaining such data from traditional sources WPCOG will seek opportunities to expand its demographic databases through pursuing and building data sharing partnerships.

Maintain GIS database of regional employment and activity centers

WPCOG will continue to utilize existing datasets work with partner agencies (primarily municipal planning departments) to develop geographic databases of current and future land uses in order to better understand regional employment and activity centers.

Inventory conditions and install amenities at and around transit stops that encourage pedestrian and bicycle access

An inventory of current conditions and a geographic assessment of deficiencies are required to ascertain priorities toward improving pedestrian and bicycle access. Other similar inventory efforts should be encouraged and undertaken. These and comparable efforts should be utilized to identify priority locations for the installation of pedestrian and bicycle accessibility amenities. Improvements should be installed or facilities retrofitted in collaboration with municipal agencies.

Conduct an evaluation of programs activities on an annual basis; report findings to the Transportation Advisory Board

Collect data and monitoring the coordination activities. The resulting information should be compared to the expectations developed as a short-term strategy. It is also important to document a more qualitative assessment of coordination activities to assess barriers that may have prevented successful program implementation, lessons learned or strategies that have been proven especially effective. The results of this evaluation should be shared with relevant stakeholder groups and future work should be modified to meet revised expectations.

Expand or adjust service in underserved or inappropriately served areas or time periods

Efforts should be made to identify gaps or deficiencies in the fixed route system and strategies developed to supplement or adjust to a service level more appropriate to the needs of the transportation disadvantaged population. Data and surveys can inform decisions as to where service should be added or extended to better serve, for example, group housing or workplaces for the disabled, medical facilities for the elderly, or employment centers with opportunities for the training or hiring of low-income persons.

Adjust fleet sizes and/or operations where existing service is inappropriate

Work to identify and secure the funding necessary to allow transit operators or demand service providers to purchase new vans or paratransit vehicles or supplement operations in order to more appropriately meet the needs of their customers. Such resources, however, should only be directed toward expansions of service that decrease identified regional gaps in service and won't contribute to duplicative service between agencies.

Implement mobility management technologies

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies that assist in regional trip planning and coordinated service delivery include such online system mapping and trip planning, automatic vehicle location, electronic fare payment and collection systems, communications equipment, and computer aided dispatch. The TAB can assist service providers in determining the need for such technologies and the best means to finance technology projects. The council can also assist in facilitating the inter-agency coordination required for their success and ensure their appropriate implementation in the context of region-wide mobility management.