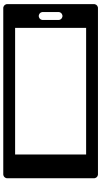


Community Engagement Report

Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) PROJECT: Developing a Tennessee Job Access Program

Draft Report – July 2023



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Acknowledgements

On October 7, 2020, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced that 25 projects in 17 states would receive a share of approximately \$8.5 million in funding through the Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Program. The HOPE Program supports projects that will improve transit services or facilities through planning, engineering, or development of technical, or financing plans for projects. The HOPE Program is specifically intended to help areas of persistent poverty, including increasing access to jobs and through enhanced transportation options.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) received funding through the HOPE Program to conduct a planning study to implement a coordinated statewide job access program for Tennessee. The objective of the TDOT program is to facilitate critical employment and job training access into and from persistent poverty areas, as well as encourage regional economic health. In this effort TDOT seeks to create a program that meets community needs and proposes innovative service delivery, and through the initial phase engaged key stakeholders from across Tennessee to obtain their input. This report summarizes the results of this community engagement, and also provides additional information to be considered with the job access program design and implementation.

Regional Assistance

The nine Human Resource Agencies (HRAs) across Tennessee provided assistance with the development of this report, particularly with community engagement activities and logistics. Input from a wide range of stakeholders was also a key component, and special thanks to those who participated in regional online focus groups. Their input was especially beneficial in the assessment of employment transportation needs and potential improvements through a statewide job access program.

Statewide Assistance

Input on job access needs and on the community engagement process was provided by a TDOT Office of Mobility and Accessible Transportation workgroup. This workgroup includes a variety of key agencies and organizations at the state level that work with and serve people with employment transportation needs and other mobility challenges.

The Tennessee Public Transportation Association (TPTA) assisted with community engagement efforts by hosting a workshop at their 2022 Conference and Expo. This interactive session provided the opportunity for participants to discuss employment transportation needs and issues in their communities, and to provide critical input on the statewide job access program that is included in this report.

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Chapter 1

Background

Introduction

The Tennessee Department of Transportation's (TDOT) Office of Mobility and Accessible Transportation received a federal grant to develop a statewide transportation plan that will facilitate employment access into and from Persistent Poverty Areas in the state, as well as encourage regional economic health. The goal of this Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Project is to have a fully developed plan for a statewide job access program, which could be used to:

- Create a state-funded transportation program
- Apply for competitive federal grant opportunities
- Serve as a model for agencies in the state to implement locally funded programs

The HOPE Job Access Project is specifically designed to address the needs of Persistent Poverty Areas through active community engagement and stakeholder input, and this report summarizes these outreach efforts and the results from this process. This report goes beyond the Persistent Poverty Areas, as engagement efforts and needs assessments were conducted on a statewide basis.

In addition to the results from outreach activities and the critical feedback from key stakeholders across Tennessee, this report also presents a demographic analysis and provides a discussion of other plans and studies relative to employment transportation in meeting the work-related travel needs of lower-income residents in the state.

Report Contents

Chapter 1 provides background information on the HOPE Project and a previous federal job access program, along with input received prior to the community engagement process.

Chapter 2 provides a review of recent plans and studies that include information on employment transportation needs and potential solutions.

Chapter 3 discusses the community engagement process that was used to obtain input from key stakeholders across the state.

Chapter 4 provides a review of the employment transportation resources that are currently available in Tennessee.

Chapter 5 contains the results from community engagement efforts and transportation needs identified through outreach activities.

Chapter 6 provides a demographic analysis of population groups who may need expanded employment transportation options.

Chapter 7 presents job access improvements identified by stakeholders through the community engagement process.

Chapter 8 discusses considerations and potential next steps in the development of a statewide job access program.

Previous Federal Job Access and Reverse Commute Program

A federal Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program was initiated in 1998 and provided funding for developing new or expanded transportation services that connect low income persons to jobs and other employment-related services. The program was established to address the unique transportation challenges faced by low-income persons seeking to obtain and maintain employment, recognizing at the time (and still current today) that many new entry-level jobs are located in suburban areas, and low-income individuals have difficulty accessing these jobs from their inner city, urban, or rural neighborhoods.

The federal JARC Program also responded to the reality that many entry level-jobs require working late at night or on weekends when conventional transit services were either reduced or nonexistent. Finally, the program was also designed to respond to employment-related trips that are complex and involve multiple destinations, such as the need to access childcare facilities.

Through subsequent legislation in 2012, the JARC Program was repealed with job access related activities consolidated into existing Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs that support transit services in urban and rural areas. As a result, while many job access activities may be eligible for federal transit funding, a dedicated program no longer exists to ensure these unique transportation needs are met. While this federal program is no longer in place, and a statewide job access program will need to take into account conditions and issues specific to Tennessee, the following elements of the previous federal program can be considered.

Eligible Recipients

States and other public bodies (typically the designated recipient of funding through other FTA programs in large urban areas) served as eligible recipients of the federal funds. Eligible subrecipients were private non-profit organizations, state or local governments, and operators of public transportation services including private operators of public transportation services.

Eligible Activities

The federal JARC Program provided funding for capital, planning and operating expenses for projects that transport low-income individuals to and from jobs and activities related to employment, and for reverse commute projects.

Coordinated Transportation Requirements

The federal JARC Program was one of three programs administered by the FTA that required projects selected for funding to be included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. The other programs are the current Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) Program and the previous New Freedom Program. FTA guidance defines a coordinated public transit-human service transportation plan as one that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors, and people with low-incomes; provides strategies for meeting those local needs; and prioritizes transportation services and projects for funding and implementation. There are four required plan elements:

- (1) An assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private and nonprofit).
- (2) An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities and seniors. This assessment can be based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners or on more sophisticated data collection efforts, and gaps in service.
- (3) Strategies, activities, and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, and opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery.
- (4) Priorities for implementation based on resources (from multiple program sources), time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified.

Matching Requirement

The non-federal (local or state) share of eligible capital and planning costs through the federal JARC Program was no less than 20% of the net cost of the activity, and the non-federal share for eligible operating costs was no less than 50% of the net operating costs. The program also allowed states that served as direct recipients to use up to 10% of their apportionment to support program administrative costs including administration, planning, and technical assistance, which was funded at 100% of the federal share.

Use of Other Federal Funds

A key aspect of the previous federal JARC program was that it helped to facilitate and encourage coordination efforts between transportation agencies and social service and workforce development organizations – both at the state and local levels. For instance, the program allowed matching funds to be derived from other federal programs (other than transportation programs). Potential sources of matching funds included a variety of federal employment training, vocational rehabilitation services, and social service programs.

Federal JARC Program Impact

In Tennessee and across the country, transportation providers used JARC Program funding to implement a variety of services and projects to fill gaps in service and expand access to jobs. In particular public transit systems used the program to increase their services through various expansions that involved:

- Extended morning or evening hours
- New or expanded weekend services
- More frequent services
- New service in unserved or underserved areas
- Additional demand response services
- Reverse commute service between urban areas and suburban employment locations

Current Conditions

While some transit systems were able to integrate activities previously funded by the JARC Program into services funded through other sources, many job access services were discontinued when the federal program was eliminated. Prior to the community engagement process, TDOT reported that many transit systems in Tennessee expressed interest and support for a statewide program through which they could implement services to meet specific employment transportation needs in their communities or regions. Overall feedback in advance of outreach efforts conducted for this report included:

- The previous JARC Program allowed transit systems to respond effectively to unique job access needs and to employment trips that were different, and often more challenging to meet than other trips provided by their agency (such as medical and shopping trips).
- Public transportation agencies have a strong desire to implement innovative services to accommodate workers with schedules that require late night and weekend services, but they are unable to do so within their current funding levels and as a component of their regular services.
- There are large employment centers and manufacturing plants that are located just outside the reach of urban transit systems, and therefore access to jobs at these sites is not available through public transportation.
- People with disabilities often rely on public transit service to specific locations and times that are no longer in place after the elimination of the federal JARC Program.
- A state job access program could serve as the forum and foundation for improved coordination between different state agencies that are involved with transportation, social service, and workforce development efforts.

This input is consistent with recipients of previous federal JARC Program funding from across the country. In 2017 the United States General Accountability Office (GAO) examined the impact of changes to the program on public transportation, and how transit providers have continued to fund and provide JARC activities since the 2012 statutory changes. A GAO report noted that some systems have had success in maintaining improvements such as service expansions and commuter bus routes, while others faced service and funding challenges in continuing JARC activities after the statutory changes in 2012. The GAO report also highlighted other transportation challenges that exist beyond the elimination of the federal program, and that include:

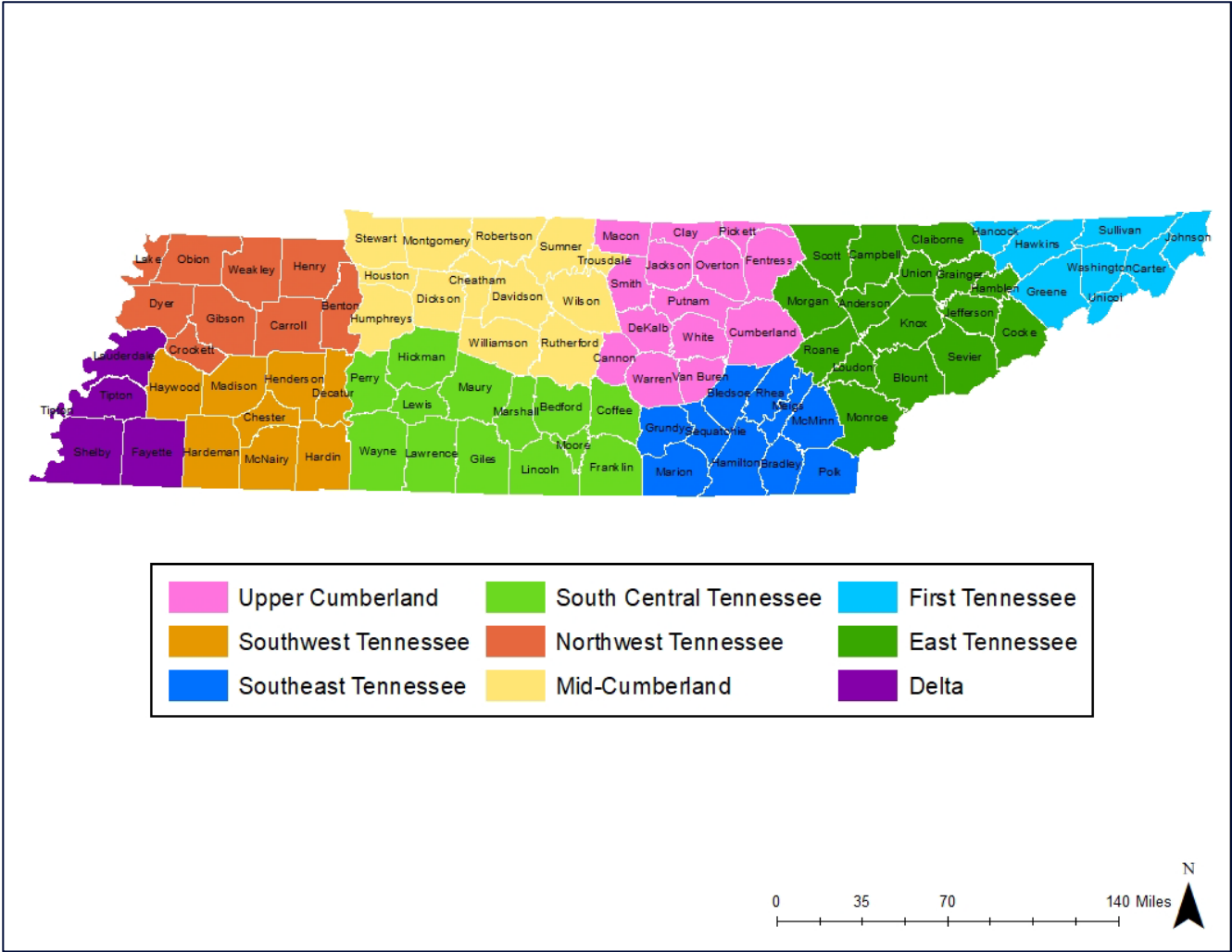
- Low-income transit users may live or work in areas that are not adjacent to heavily serviced transit areas, a situation that can make JARC activities more expensive to provide than other transit services.
- There are various service challenges due to factors such as the location of housing or employment characteristics of low-income individuals, i.e., working late-night hours or weekends.
- With the elimination of a dedicated job access funding program, transit systems reported challenges when now having to compete for funds against other public services.

Looking Ahead

This community engagement report now looks ahead, documenting input from a variety of stakeholders from across Tennessee on employment transportation needs and opportunities to expand access to jobs. It begins by recognizing that significant planning work has already taken place and discusses previous plans and studies that help to supplement the results from community engagement efforts. This is followed by a review of current employment transportation resources, and complimented by a demographic analysis that provides important data related to a job access program for the state.

While the HOPE Project is a statewide effort, outreach activities as well as the discussion of previous plans and studies, review of current employment transportation services, and assessment of demographics and land use, were conducted based on the nine Human Resource Agencies (HRAs) shown in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1: Tennessee Human Resource Agency Regions



Chapter 2

Previous Plans and Studies

Introduction

Recognizing that a variety of planning efforts have been conducted that include information on employment transportation needs and potential solutions, this chapter provides a high-level review of recent plans and studies that are relevant to the project. This review involved a variety of statewide, regional, and local plans and studies. Information from these plans and studies will be appropriately considered in the design and development of a job access program for Tennessee.

Key information from several statewide plans and studies is presented first, with specific relevance to employment transportation noted. This is followed by a discussion of common themes found in regional and localized plans, highlighting areas of these plans pertinent to the HOPE project and a statewide job access plan. Summaries of these plans, along with links to the full statewide, regional, and local documents, are provided in Appendix A.

Statewide Plans and Studies

Mobility and Accessible Transportation Strategic Plan

The Mobility and Accessible Transportation Strategic Plan includes the State of Tennessee's mission, goals, and priorities for supporting transportation services that provide mobility while making effective use of existing dollars and resources. This plan that resulted from a planning process led by TDOT OMAT provides a review of existing transportation services in Tennessee; a summary of unmet needs and gaps in access to transportation services; and a variety of goals, objectives, and action items for expanding mobility.

The plan identified a variety of OMAT strategic goals and objectives to make transportation more accessible for Tennesseans. While all goals and objectives have relevance to expanding employment transportation options, the following have specific significance to a potential statewide job access program:



Goal 1: Expand Access

- Oversee updates to regional Coordinated Transportation Plans with a focus on identifying local issues and solutions
- Develop Regional Transportation Advisory Boards (RTABs) in each region
- Ensure passenger transit is considered in non-transit planning and development efforts
- Establish effective methods of communication within the regions and counties

Goal 2: Service Solutions

- Use the Strategic Plan to conduct a regional assessment of barriers and opportunities
- Explore the effectiveness of service modes like electric vehicles, vanpools and microtransit for first/last mile or multi-jurisdictional trips

Goal 3: Collaboration

- Identify and maximize sustainable transit funding
- Expand sources of sustainable transit funding
- Nurture regional partnerships that fill identified gaps in transportation
- Expand trip sharing opportunities among providers

Goal 4: Technology Solutions

- Encourage technology that allows customers to choose their mobility option and schedule
- Identify technology that facilitates coordination between operators

Goal 5: Communication

- Establish and oversee a clearinghouse and moderator for transportation issues and solutions
- Develop the role for mobility management
- Support platforms that enable single source trip planning

In regard to employment transportation the plan notes the need for safe, reliable, affordable, and accessible options to access jobs, particularly entry level second and third shift opportunities that require early morning, late evening, and weekend hours. The plan reports that this gap is greatest in rural and suburban areas, as there are fewer providers that serve non-traditional work hours. It also notes that other significant unfilled gaps in mobility involve trips that require transportation services that cross jurisdictional boundaries, such as traveling from a rural to an urban area. While some services may help to meet these needs, the plan mentioned that often this may require the customer to transfer from one provider to another or use higher priced transportation options to complete the trip (i.e., taxi or on-demand service).

Expect Employment: 2022 Report to the Governor

The Employment First Task Force was created in 2013 and is tasked with identifying and removing barriers to employment for people with disabilities. This includes people with intellectual, developmental, sensory, and physical disabilities, as well as those who have a mental health diagnosis or substance abuse disorder. This task force is comprised of the following Tennessee state agencies and other partner organizations:

- Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities
- Department of Labor & Workforce Development
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Education
- Division of TennCare
- Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
- Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Department of Economic & Community Development
- Department of Health
- The Arc Tennessee
- Disability Rights TN



The Employment First Task Force is guided by a four-year strategic plan and reports their work annually in the Expect Employment Report. The 2022 report is the ninth annual report, with the focus on the first year of the strategic plan for 2021-2024. Specific areas involve:

- Service alignment
- Employer and community awareness
- Increasing transition readiness for students leaving high school

The new strategic plan has a new goal regarding the use of technology. The report noted the importance of this goal in light of the COVID pandemic that has brought about permanent changes in how technology is used in the workplace and in getting ready for employment.

The report discussed the results of a Vanderbilt Kennedy Center project conducted in 2021 through funding from the Council on Developmental Disabilities. The project studied how disability and professional communities across the state were finding the information they need and how programs could make that easier. More than 3,000 individuals with disabilities, family members, educators, providers, agency staff, and healthcare workers were surveyed over a year. In addition to the surveys, 26 focus groups with a selection of more than 100 stakeholders were held in order to obtain in-depth feedback. Some key findings from the survey pertinent for a possible job access program included:

- When participants were asked about the importance of finding or keeping a job, 59% of individuals with disabilities stated it was very important.

- When it came to knowing what programs or services in the community could help, 33% of individuals were unsure who could help when it came to finding or keeping a job. However, 44% of parents stated that they did not know who could help when it came to finding or keeping a job.
- Overall, when individuals with disabilities were asked what their biggest question or need was, employment was number one. Then when asked what type of information or help they are looking for, both individuals and families stated employment as their first need.

In addition, a variety of goals and strategies included in the full Employment First Strategic Plan have relevance for the HOPE Project and a potential statewide job access program:

- **Service Alignment Goal: Align service delivery systems and strengthen coordination at all levels for a seamless customer experience.**

Strategies to meet this goal involve expanding and updating interagency agreements to improve coordination and system improvements. This collaboration has been a hallmark of other job access planning and programming efforts in other states, and the program for Tennessee can be designed to support this strategy from the Employment First Strategic Plan.

- **Technology and Innovation Goal: Improve access to technology and enable its use to expand employment options.**

Strategies to meet this goal include expanding the availability of technology so that people can access services, and to increase awareness of technology resources. Technology has changed the way that people access transportation services, and a potential job access program can support these efforts by expanding availability and awareness of on-demand services through smartphones and other technology solutions.

- **Community Awareness Goal: Build awareness and shared commitment to Employment First for all Tennesseans.**

Strategies to meet this goal include developing cross agency awareness and state level partnerships. The potential job access program can be designed to encourage and support these efforts, and to help ensure that people are fully aware of the transportation services available to them.

2020 State Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Plan

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each state must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan (CSP) to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the state's workforce development system. The Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) is responsible for submitting the State of Tennessee's CSP and serves as the designated entity to receive funds under the WIOA, working in collaboration with the Tennessee Departments of Human Services (DHS), Economic and Community Development (TNECD), and Education (TNED).

The major content areas of the CSP include strategic and operational planning elements:

- The Strategic Planning Elements section includes analyses of the state’s economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities.
- The Operational Planning Elements section identifies the efforts to support the state’s strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the state has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support ongoing program development and coordination.

The Tennessee WIOA State Plan includes information on a variety of programs that support workforce development. This includes the **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program** that focuses on gaining self sufficiency by providing transportation, childcare assistance, education, job training, employment activities, and other supportive services. The TANF Program was a key component of national coordination efforts through the previous federal JARC Program and may serve as a potential opportunity for further collaboration through a potential state job access program.

Another program highlighted is the **Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** for seniors across the state. SCSEP fosters economic self-sufficiency through training, job placement, and guidance in unsubsidized jobs, and may also serve as another opportunity for coordination through the future job access program. The plan notes that Tennessee prides itself for being engaged in actionable partnerships to leverage resources across agencies and enhance customer performance outcomes and highlights a variety of partnerships and coordination with American Job Centers, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and local service providers and community stakeholders to assess needs and develop solutions for local transportation services.

In addition to the state plan there are draft regional plans for 2020-2022 developed by local Workforce Development Boards. These plans include needs assessments that in some cases note that rural areas continue to face transportation as one of its largest barriers, and that to combat these concerns there are need to explore new opportunities to expand employment transportation options. One noted is the opportunity to explore potential partnerships with rideshare programs that will expand mobility options for job seekers, while supporting local drivers seeking additional income.

Regional and Local Plans and Studies

In addition to the review of key statewide reports, a variety of previous plans and studies at the regional and local level were assessed to identify employment transportation needs and potential transportation improvements relevant to the HOPE project and to a Tennessee job access program. While needs and potential improvements vary from plan to plan since they focus on specific local communities or regions, common themes in these plans included the following:

- Expanded transportation services are needed that connect where people live and where jobs are located, including between urbanized areas and major employment sites located in suburban areas.
- There is a need to fill geographical service gaps or unmet needs by establishing employment shuttles, especially from rural areas to employment locations.
- More frequent services are needed on existing routes to expand opportunities to use current networks to access job opportunities.
- Expanded ridesharing programs that offer and support vanpooling and carpooling options are needed.
- There is a need to expand transportation options that increase access to jobs on mornings, evenings, and weekends.
- One-stop transportation call centers that coordinate services and can serve as a single point of contact on available transportation services are needed.
- Policies, programs, and partnerships to make transportation more affordable need to be identified and implemented.
- Greater transportation options are needed for adults who are pursuing additional education and/or training programs.

As noted in the Introduction for this chapter, summaries of these plans along with links to the full plan are included in Appendix A.

Chapter 3


Community Engagement Process

Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the community engagement efforts that were conducted to obtain input on employment transportation needs and potential improvements from key stakeholders across Tennessee. The project team worked collaboratively with TDOT, the nine HRAs, and other organizations to develop a broad outreach approach that provided the opportunity for a diverse group of stakeholders to be involved in this needs assessment. In particular, efforts were made to engage people who work directly with people with lower incomes and others who have limited transportation options. Overall, the objective of the outreach efforts was to obtain the needed information and data on employment transportation needs and existing resources that would provide the foundation to design and develop a possible statewide job access program.

Project Website

To assist in the community engagement process a project website was established at <https://tnjobaccessplan.com>. This website offered background information on the HOPE Project and details on the regional video focus groups discussed in the next section. The website also provided the opportunity for stakeholders to register for these outreach events.



Tennessee HOPE Project


Tennessee's Job Access Plan

Regions

Contact

Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone

Welcome to the website for the Tennessee Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone ("HOPE") Project. Through this project the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) Office of Mobility and Accessible Transportation is developing a statewide plan to help facilitate employment access into and from Persistent Poverty Areas, as well as encourage regional economic health. The goal of the HOPE Project is for a fully developed plan for a statewide Job Access Reverse Commute ("JARC") program, which could be used to create a state-funded plan, to apply for competitive federal grant opportunities, or as a model for agencies in the state to implement locally-funded programs.



Regional Video Focus Groups

The primary outreach method for the community engagement process involved video focus groups that involved a variety of stakeholders, confirmed employment transportation needs, and discussed potential strategies, projects, and services to expand access to jobs and employment related activities. These focus groups provided a convenient forum for group interaction, through which stakeholders could connect through on-line technology and not have to travel.

In coordination with the HRAs, nine video focus groups were scheduled and conducted based on the HRA regions. Table 3-1 provides a review of the on-line focus group regions and dates. As shown the focus groups were staggered at different times, recognizing that some stakeholders may work with multiple regions and therefore want to attend multiple events.

Table 3-1: Regional Focus Group Locations/Dates/Times

Region	Date	Time
Delta	October 13, 2022	9:00-10:30 AM
East Tennessee	October 11, 2022	9:00-10:30 AM
First Tennessee	October 12, 2022	11:00 AM -12:30 PM
Mid-Cumberland	October 11, 2022	1:30-3:00 PM
Northwest	October 11, 2022	11:00 AM -12:30 PM
South Central	October 12, 2022	9:00-10:30 AM
Southeast	October 13, 2022	11:00 AM -12:30 PM
Southwest	October 12, 2022	1:30-3:00 PM
Upper Cumberland	October 13, 2022	1:30-3:00 PM

The nine regional focus groups attracted 122 participants – representing a range of perspectives including people who use employment transportation, economic development agencies, human services agencies, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and the private industry. Table 3-2 on the next page provides details on the agencies and organizations that participated in the regional focus groups.

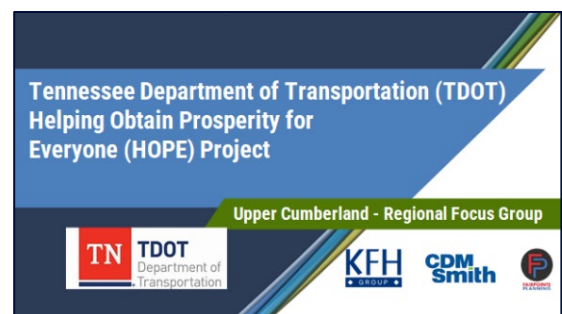


Table 3-2: Focus Group Participant Agencies and Organizations

A.C.T.I.O.N Coalition	Northwest Tennessee Development District
American Job Center	Northwest Tennessee Human Resource Agency
Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority	Obion County Chamber of Commerce
Chester County American Job Center	Office of Senator Bill Hagerty
City of Chattanooga	On Your Mask Transportation
City of Johnson	Recovery Resources
City of Somerville	Smith County
City of Troy	South Central Area Transit Service
Delta Human Resource Agency	South Central Tennessee Development District
Dekalb County	Southeast Tennessee Development
Developmental Services of Dickson County	Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency
Dyersburg State Community College	Southwest Human Resource Agency
East Tennessee Area Agency on Aging	Southwest Tennessee Community College
East Tennessee Development District	Southwest Tennessee Development District
East Tennessee Human Resource Agency	Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth
Employment and Community First CHOICES	Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development
Fayette County	Tennessee Department of Health
First Tennessee Development District	Tennessee Department of Labor & Workforce Development
Frontier Health	Tennessee Department of Transportation, Office of Mobility, and Accessible Transportation
Foster Grandparent Program	Tennessee Disability Pathfinder
Greater Memphis Workforce Development Board	Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)
Knoxville Regional TPO	The Arc Mid-South
Lakeway Transit	The Arc Tennessee
Lauderdale County	TMA Group
McNairy County American Job Center	TNSTEP
Memphis Area Transit Authority	Tyson Foods
Memphis Areas Association of Governments	Uplift Appalachia
Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization	Upper Cumberland Human Resources Agency
Mental Health & Development Services	Upper Cumberland Development District
Mid-Cumberland Human Resource Agency	Weakley County Economic Development Board
NET Trans	WeGo APAC

The focus groups began with background information on the HOPE project and a potential job access program for Tennessee. Key issues and project objectives discussed with participants included:

- The development of this statewide report to help facilitate employment access to and from Persistent Poverty Areas, as well as to encourage regional economic health
- The use of the report for the creation of a statewide JARC program, as well as the basis for applications for federal grant opportunities and as a model for agencies in the state to implement locally funded programs

The majority of each focus group's time was focused on obtaining input from participants on:

- Existing employment transportation services provided by their organization or agency (if applicable)
- Awareness of these transportation services in the region
- Strengths and weaknesses of current employment transportation services, and unmet transportation needs in the region
- Opportunities to improve employment transportation services in the region.
- Specific transportation services that would expand access to employment and job related resources

TPTA Conference

Working with the Tennessee Public Transportation Association (TPTA), the project team scheduled a session at TPTA's Conference & Expo on October 18, 2022. This interactive session provides the opportunity for participants to discuss employment transportation needs and issues in their communities, and to provide critical input on the potential job access program, also included in Chapter 5 of this report.



Transportation Workgroup

As part of the outreach efforts, a meeting was conducted with the TDOT OMAT Transportation Workgroup. In addition to TDOT, the workgroup consists of representative key agencies and organizations at the state level that work with and serve people with employment transportation needs and other mobility challenges. These agencies and organizations include:

- Commission on Aging and Disability
- Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Department of Environment & Conservation
- Department of Health
- Department of Human Services

- Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities
- Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
- Division of TennCare
- Tennessee Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- Tennessee Public Transit Association
- Disability Pathfinders
- The Arc Tennessee
- Blue Cross Blue Shield

This meeting provided the opportunity to obtain input from the workgroup on:

- Possible outreach efforts
- Employment transportation needs and issues
- Potential services or solutions
- Potential JARC Program Considerations

Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were scheduled and conducted with a variety of key stakeholders, through both individual and group discussions. Representatives from the following agencies and organizations provided their feedback on employment transportation needs and potential improvements through these discussions:

- Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Department of Human Services
- Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
- Division of Rehabilitation Services
- Tennessee Disability Pathfinder
- Tennessee Public Transportation Association

Interviews with any additional stakeholders will be added to future versions of this chapter.

Surveys

The results from recent surveys also provided important input on employment transportation needs, particularly results from the direct user surveys conducted by local or regional transit systems. Appropriate data and information was obtained, and incorporated into the employment transportation needs detailed in Chapter 5 of this report.

Chapter 4

Existing Employment Transportation Resources

Introduction

A variety of employment transportation services are available in Tennessee, provided through numerous public transit agencies, nonprofit human service organizations, and private transportation companies. These structured programs are supplemented by various informal services, such as carpools and vanpools organized by workers or employers.

Recognizing this vast multitude of employment transportation services, this chapter offers a review of existing transportation resources most likely to be a component of a statewide job access program. Particular focus is on public transportation services and other entities that were previously eligible for funding through the federal JARC Program. Therefore, while this section does not provide a full inventory of employment transportation in the state, it highlights key resources that when combined with the needs assessment detailed in upcoming chapters will help to identify gaps in service -- and improvements and expansions through the potential statewide program.

The process to identify these employment transportation resources included collecting information from key stakeholders through outreach efforts (discussed in the next chapter), previous plans and studies (that provide detailed transportation service inventories), and online research through Tennessee Disability Pathfinder, transportation provider websites, and other sources.

The overview of existing transportation resources begins with a discussion of several statewide resources, followed by a region-by-region review.

Statewide

- The Division of TennCare, Tennessee's Medicaid program, administers the Employment and Community First CHOICES program through its contracted Managed Care Organizations. This program is designed for people of all ages who have an intellectual and/or developmental disability. Services within the program include helping people with disabilities to learn skills, become employed, and live as independently as possible in the community. Services through this program were highlighted through some regional focus groups, as they vary around the state.

- MyRide TN is a volunteer transportation service that provides mobility for people who are 60 years of age or older, and who do not drive. While the program is designed primarily to serve trips for medical appointments and shopping, some regional stakeholders noted that in their areas MyRide TN provides trips to jobs and employment training locations. Some counties also operate independent volunteer transportation programs which provide specialized transportation for older adults, and while these are principally for medical and shopping trips some work trips may be provided.

Delta

Public transportation in the Delta region is provided by the Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) and Delta Human Resource Agency (DHRA). The following counties fall within the Delta Region:

- Shelby
- Fayette
- Tipton
- Lauderdale

- MATA provides fixed route transit service within the City of Memphis and parts of Shelby County outside the City of Memphis (Germantown, Lakeland, Bartlett areas). MATA also provides complementary paratransit (MATAPlus) within three-fourths of a mile of its fixed route service. MATA operates two types of on-demand transit (microtransit) in certain areas: (1) "Ready!," a service provided by MATA in partnership with technology provider TransLoc; and (2) "Groove On-Demand," a service in Downtown Memphis in partnership with technology provider Via.
 - Through their services MATA provides many employment and training/education trips. In the early 2000s, MATA provided JARC-funded service, though that program was discontinued when the federal funding program was eliminated. Most MATA service operates until late evening (10:00-11:00 p.m.) though some routes end service at 7:00 p.m. Service is provided seven days per week.
 - It was noted through the regional focus group that Memphis is not experiencing the changes to population that has been common to some larger urban areas. As a result, the Memphis central city has a higher level of residents with lower incomes relative to outlying areas, resulting in a large demand for reverse commute services for employment transportation from lower income neighborhoods to job opportunities in suburban areas.
- DHRA provides demand response transit service to the Census-defined rural areas of Fayette, Lauderdale, Shelby, and Tipton Counties. DHRA provides trips within the rural area as well as between rural areas and the urbanized areas of Memphis or Jackson.
 - DHRA provides employment trips as well, often on a subscription basis with a standing reservation. Some trips are funded through FTA Section 5311 funds, while others are supported by Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) funds through a contract with Tennessee Department of Human Services. Service is available 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays.

Other transportation resources in the Delta Region include:

- Shelby County Health Department Air Quality Improvement Branch partners with Commute with Enterprise to implement the Memphis Area Rideshare Program. It is estimated that that program runs around 35 routes, primarily serving the Veterans' Administration Hospital.
- FedEx, headquartered in Memphis, has run employee shuttles into Fayette County as well as to/from Cleveland, Mississippi.
- The Arc Mid-South, a non-profit organization serving people with developmental disabilities, does not provide transportation directly, but they do assist jobseekers in the community they serve with locating transportation resources.

East Tennessee

Public transportation in the East Tennessee region is provided by the East Tennessee Human Resource Agency (ETHRA). The following counties are served by ETHRA:

- | | |
|-------------|----------|
| ➤ Anderson | ➤ Knox |
| ➤ Blount | ➤ Loudon |
| ➤ Campbell | ➤ Monroe |
| ➤ Claiborne | ➤ Roane |
| ➤ Cocke | ➤ Scott |
| ➤ Grainger | ➤ Sevier |
| ➤ Hamblen | ➤ Union |
| ➤ Jefferson | |

- ETHRA provides door-to-door transportation services, with flexible schedules to meet specific customer needs. ETHRA also provides free transportation to qualifying individuals to and from their place of employment and education facilities. Eligibility for the Ride to Work program includes proof of income below the Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines. Clients are then responsible for informing the Job Access Program Manager of the date and time for pick-ups/drop-offs. Clients may participate in the Job Access Program at no cost for the first nine months. After nine months, participants must pay an amount equal to general public transportation fares and continue transportation based on ETHRA availability.
- Knoxville Area Transit (KAT) is the public transit provider within the City of Knoxville. Services includes fixed routes, paratransit service (The LIFT), and a free trolley:
 - KAT operates 23 bus routes that operate at various time spans and frequency. The system is conducting a comprehensive operational analysis, and an initial March 2022 report noted that low frequencies on Saturdays and limited services on Sundays make it less likely for transit to be useful for many retail and service sector workers. In August 2022 the system implemented a variety of service reductions due to an agency described continuing and worsening workforce shortage.

- Gatlinburg Mass Transit (Gatlinburg Trolley) operates 365 days a year, on three routes that vary depending on the season and special events. Winter hours are from 10:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Sunday through Thursday, and 10:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.
- Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC) Transportation provides demand response public transportation services access to community resources and services for Knoxville-Knox County residents. The transportation services provide access to employment and training 24/7, although with limited funding. Riders must schedule their trips no later than 11:00 a.m. the day before the appointment. CAC transit currently has a volunteer assisted transportation program that provides services to Knox County seniors and individuals with disabilities who require aid and assistance to travel safely.
- Pigeon Forge Mass Transit is the second largest rural transit provider in the United States based on the number of annual trips provided. The system operates five routes that provide service between 8:00 a.m. to midnight within the City of Pigeon Forge. The five routes include:
 - North Parkway
 - South Parkway
 - Gatlinburg Welcome Center
 - Dollywood
 - Wears Valley
- Lakeway Transit in Morristown, operated by ETHRA, provides three fixed bus routes throughout the City of Morristown. The routes provide access to grocery stores, doctor's appointments, work, and other various desired locations. The routes run from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

First Tennessee

Public transportation in the First Tennessee region is provided by Bristol Tennessee Transit, Kingsport Area Transit, Johnson City Transit, and NET Trans, a program of the First Tennessee Human Resource Agency. The NET Trans service area includes rural and some small urban services in the following counties:

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| ➤ Carter | ➤ Johnson |
| ➤ Greene | ➤ Sullivan |
| ➤ Hancock | ➤ Unicoi |
| ➤ Hawkins | ➤ Washington |
- NET Trans provides door-to-door demand response transportation with flexible schedules. Services operate Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with limited service on Saturdays.
 - Bristol Tennessee Transit provides fixed route service Monday through Friday from 6:15 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. in the City of Bristol. The system operates seven routes on an hourly basis in conjunction with Bristol Virginia Transit.

- Johnson City Transit (JCT) provides fixed route and complementary paratransit in the City of Johnson City. JCT's' BUCSHOT service provides access to education facilities, work, the library, etc., and is a free service for ETSU students and staff members. JCT also operates a Job Access program for low-income individuals, welfare recipients, and disabled individuals to access their places of employment or employment-related activities. The Job Access program provides service within the corporate city limits of Johnson City and is provided as supplemental to regular JCT fixed route bus services. The program provides service for clients whose trips are outside of fixed route operating hours, and/or who have pick-up and/or destinations within the corporate boundaries of Johnson City which are outside of the JCT fixed route service area. The Job Access program is available from 5:30 a.m. to midnight, Monday through Saturday.
- Kingsport Area Transit (KAT) operates six vehicles on fixed route service Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. and four vehicles for a Dial-A-Ride service during the same hours. The Dial-A-Ride (DAR) program provides curb-to-curb, next day transportation for Kingsport seniors aged 65 or older, residents with a permanent or temporary health-related condition, and qualifying residents with DAR Job Assist.

Mid-Cumberland

Public transportation services within the Mid-Cumberland region can primarily be broken into two categories, urban and rural.

- The urban area of Davidson County that includes Nashville is served by multiple transportation providers including WeGo, the Regional Transportation Authority (also managed by WeGo) as well as the TMA Group based in Franklin.
- The WeGo Emergency Ride Home service provides free emergency rides home for registered commuters who travel in Davidson, Cheatham, Dickson, Maury, Montgomery, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, or Wilson counties, who cannot ride home with their normal carpool, vanpool, train or express bus.
- WeGo Swipe and Ride program, which allows state employees who work in Nashville or Memphis to ride public transportation for free.
- WeGo's VanStar program, a vanpool program which can carry anywhere from seven to fifteen people from home to work.

Several of the counties include smaller cities that provide their own public transit. These include Franklin with the Franklin Transit Authority, the City of Murfreesboro with Rover, and Clarksville with the Clarksville Transit Authority.

- Franklin Transit Authority provides fixed route services, as well as prearranged curb-to-curb pick-up and drop-off service, Monday through Saturday.

- Murfreesboro Transit provides seven fixed routes within the city, Monday through Saturday.
- Clarksville Transit Authority provides both fixed route service and on-demand service.
- All of these urban communities with transit systems provide some level of employment related transportation, which varies by community moderate to robust.

Mid-Cumberland Human Resources agency (MCHRA) provides rural demand response transit services in the following counties:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| ➤ Cheatham | ➤ Rutherford |
| ➤ Dickson | ➤ Stewart |
| ➤ Houston | ➤ Sumner |
| ➤ Humphreys | ➤ Trousdale |
| ➤ Montgomery | ➤ Williamson |
| ➤ Robertson | ➤ Wilson |

- Although Davidson County is not included in its service area, MCHRA does transport residents from outside Davidson County to and from Davidson. MCHRA does not provide trips within or for residents of Davidson County.
- MCHRA provides rural transit for twelve counties surrounding Davidson. The service is open to all and must be scheduled 24 hours in advance for local trips (within a county) and 72 hours in advance for trips between counties. Trips are allotted on a first-come, first-served, basis with priority given to medical trips. These services are available for all trip purposes, which can include employment, however, there are an increasing number of medical-related trips, and it was noted in regional focus groups that using MCHRA for a daily work commute may be challenging.
- MCHRA offers a specific employment service through the Freedom to Work program for those with disabilities that meet certain eligibility requirements.

Other employment transportation services within the region includes:

- The TMA group, based in Franklin within Williamson County, provides and operates a car and vanpool program that primarily provides commute-to-work trips to major urban cores, such as Nashville. There are also several vanpools traveling to/from outlying communities such as Portland, Springfield, and Ashland city.

Northwest

The Northwest Tennessee Human Resource Agency (NWTTHRA) provides public transportation services to residents of all ages in nine Northwest Tennessee counties:

- Benton
- Carroll
- Crockett
- Dyer
- Henry
- Lake
- Obion
- Weakley

- Services are provided Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with limited services on Saturdays.
- NWTTHRA services are provided through demand-response transportation within the region, and that currently includes some employment transportation. Many of these trips are provided on a subscription basis, while other trips are individually scheduled. To the extent possible, requests for employment transportation are worked into NWTTHRA's transit schedule. Subscription trips are provided when capacity is available on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Given the agency's operating hours NWTTHRA typically only serves first shift workers who are dropped off at work around 7:00 a.m. and picked up no later than 5:00 p.m. While the agency does not maintain a waiting list for employment transportation, NWTTHRA indicated that it is likely that they have to decline some requests for employment trips due to limited service hours.
- Like many transit systems in Tennessee and across the country, NWTTHRA's capacity is currently constrained by the number of drivers they have been able to hire. The agency has a large number of vacancies that they have not been able to fill.

Through regional outreach efforts it was reported that at one point in the last several years Tyson Foods approached NWTTHRA about the possibility of working with them to provide employment transportation. Tyson polled their existing workers to see how many would be interested in transportation service in the second and third shifts, and there was not enough interest to justify transit service for these shift workers. It was noted during the regional focus group that although polled workers did not have interest in the service, this only included current workers and not potential employees. It is not known whether there are others who are prevented from working for Tyson due to lack of transportation.

St John's Community Developmental Services, OmniVision, and the Transportation Management Association (TMA) Group have also provided transportation.

- Nonprofit agencies provide employment transportation for members of the community with disabilities, including St John's Community Developmental Services and OmniVision. Transportation is built into their programs for persons with developmental disabilities and may include for employment purposes.

- TMA Group, based in Franklin, does not currently provide transportation demand management services in Northwest Tennessee, but they have done so in the past. The TMA Group, however, does work with employers to set up commuter benefits for employees.

South Central

Employment transportation services within the South Central region are primarily rural, and provide connections to job opportunities in urban areas. The primary transportation option for all trips, including employment, is the South Central Tennessee Development District (SCTDD) which serves the following thirteen counties:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| ➤ Bedford | ➤ Lincoln |
| ➤ Coffee | ➤ Marshall |
| ➤ Franklin | ➤ Maury |
| ➤ Giles | ➤ Moore |
| ➤ Hickman | ➤ Perry |
| ➤ Lawrence | ➤ Wayne |
| ➤ Lewis | |

- SCTDD provides demand response public transportation to all thirteen counties in the region. The service is open to the general public and must be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance by calling the county's transportation office. Service is provided, at a minimum, Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in each county. These services are available for all trip purposes, which can include employment and to and from child daycare. SCTDD transports residents of the 13-county region to/from urban areas such as Nashville or Jackson as needed.
- SCTDD provides a fixed route, multicounty service, called the South Central Area Transit Service (SCATS) that starts and ends in Lawrenceburg, Perry, and Lincoln counties.
- SCTDD operates the Mule Town Trolley, a deviated fixed route service for Maury County and surrounding areas. The trolley system has grown to twelve vehicles that provide service on four regular routes that expand access from the Columbia metro area to Mt. Pleasant, and Spring Hill, along with integrating two regular fixed routes in the downtown Columbia area. The trolley operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Other employment related transportation services in the region include:

- The TMA Group provides and operates a car and vanpool program that primarily provides commute-to-work trips to major urban cores, such as Nashville. However, there are several vanpools traveling to/from outlying communities in Maury County to Davidson and Rutherford counties.
- It was noted through outreach efforts that an informal vanpool system is run by Tyson Foods employees to provide transportation to the plant location in Shelbyville.

Southeast

Transportation services within the Southeast region can primarily be broken into two categories, urban and rural.

- Urban transportation services in the Southeast region are provided by the Chattanooga Area Transportation Authority (CARTA) and within the Cleveland area by the Cleveland Urban Area Transit System (CUATS) which is operated by the Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency (SETHRA).
- Within Chattanooga, both free and affordable modes of transportation are available for work commute needs. The Downtown Electric Shuttle is a free and convenient way to get around downtown Chattanooga. The electric bus runs daily from the Chattanooga Choo Choo to the Tennessee Aquarium with stops in between. CARTA's fixed route bus service can transport people from North Chattanooga to the Tennessee-Georgia border, and Ooltewah, Tennessee. In addition, CARTA offers an on-demand shared ride zone service called CARTA GO that operates within and around the Cromwell, East Brainerd, Eastdale, and North Brainerd communities with a timed connection to the Eastgate/Hamilton Place fixed route.
- Within Cleveland, SETHRA operates the Cleveland Urban Area Transit System (CUATS), which operates 5 fixed routes within the City of Cleveland that operate from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The primary transportation option for all rural trips, including employment, is the Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency (SETHRA) which provides curb-to-curb rural public transportation service that covers the following counties:

- Bledsoe
 - Bradley
 - Grundy
 - Marion
 - McMinn
 - Meigs
 - Polk
 - Rhea
 - Sequatchie
- The service is open to the public and operates weekdays from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and trips should be scheduled 24 hours in advance for in-county trips and 72 hours in advance for out-of-county trips.
 - Schedules are built on a first-come, first-served basis and therefore reliability for daily work trips is challenging.

Southwest

Public transit service in the Southwest region is provided by Southwest Human Resource Agency (SWHRA) and by the Jackson Transit Authority (JTA). Southwest Human Resource Agency (SWHRA) provides demand-response transit in the eight-county region of Southwest Tennessee. SWHRA serves the following counties:

- Chester
 - Decatur
 - Hardeman
 - Hardin
 - Haywood
 - Henderson
 - Madison
 - McNairy
- SWHRA operates from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekdays, so trips are generally limited to first shift workers. There is not a limit to the number of individuals that can have a subscription reservation for transportation to employment. SWHRA does not have established arrangements with any employers, though at times the availability of the service is shared among employees, and they end up transporting multiple employees to/from a single employment site.
 - SWHRA reported that after the federal JARC Program ended, they have provided employment trips using Section 5311 funds for rural transportation.
 - Jackson Transit Authority (JTA) provides fixed route and complementary paratransit service within the city limits of Jackson. It was reported by JTA that many of the trips they provide are to/from employment sites and/or educational sites.

Upper Cumberland

The UCHRA Public Transportation program is operated by the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, and serves the following counties in the region:

- Cannon
- Clay
- Cumberland
- DeKalb
- Fentress
- Jackson
- Macon
- Overton
- Pickett
- Putnam
- Smith
- Van Buren
- Warren
- White

UCHRA Public Transportation operates a variety of different services:

- Connect Upper Cumberland that provides daily intercity bus services on I-40 and I-24 routes into Nashville and Murfreesboro.
- Go Upper Cumberland provides a deviated fixed-route service in Algood, Cookeville, McMinnville, and Crossville.
- A Job Access Program assists qualifying low-income individuals with transportation to and from their place of employment. The program also assists with transportation to and from childcare for all eligible dependents. Participants can utilize the Job Access Program at no cost for nine months. After the nine months, Job Access participants must pay an amount equal to the public transportation fares in that area/county.
- Pick Up Upper Cumberland is a new mobility on-demand service for trips within Cumberland and Putnam Counties.
- Ride to Recovery offers free transportation to desired recovery support services; treatment, meetings, mental health or probation appointments, and other recovery-related activities.
- Ride Upper Cumberland provides door-to-door service throughout the UCHRA service area.

Chapter 5

Employment Transportation Needs

Introduction

One of the key purposes of the community engagement process was to identify the transportation needs of low-income workers in Tennessee, including people seeking employment but facing challenges due to limited transportation options. As noted in Chapter 3, this process included input from a variety of stakeholders through regional video focus groups, individual interviews, and discussions with key agencies and organizations. This chapter discusses the results of these efforts, and the employment transportation needs and gaps identified through the outreach efforts.

Defining Employment Transportation

While the needs assessment of employment transportation services focuses on travel to and from work, it also includes transportation for interviews, job-related training, and job-related childcare needs.

During the community engagement activities, stakeholders were asked to provide their input on:

- Awareness of current employment transportation services, specifically by people with lower incomes who depend on these services to access jobs and employment-related opportunities
- Strengths and challenges of current employment transportation services in their region or statewide
- Unmet employment transportation needs and potential improvements that are needed to fill gaps in current services

This qualitative data, combined with the analysis of quantitative data such as low income populations, autoless households, and persistent poverty areas across the state detailed in Chapter 6, will provide a holistic needs assessment that can be used to identify potential improvements and support individual service projects that could be developed by local transit providers and agencies through a Tennessee job access program.

The review of employment transportation needs begins with a summary of overall issues identified through community engagement efforts, followed by specific regional needs.

Overall Employment Transportation Challenges and Issues

Through the focus groups and other outreach efforts across the state, stakeholders reported that low income individuals typically encounter a variety of barriers and challenges when seeking or retaining employment. These issues vary from one jurisdiction to another, largely based on transportation resources, travel distance to job opportunities, and other factors. Overall needs and issues include:

- A lack of personal transportation or access to a reliable vehicle for commuting to work
- A lack of public transportation that meets their work times or locations
- The need to work non-standard hours when transportation resources may be limited or non-existent
- Job opportunities that are not close to where they live
- The need to travel long distances to access higher paying jobs
- Limited access to affordable or accessible childcare
- The need to combine work trips with transportation to childcare
- Fares can be unaffordable for daily transportation to and from work

Specific public transportation challenges may involve:

- Limitations in public transit that make it difficult for low income workers to rely on these services to get to and from their jobs. This may include infrequent services, long travel times, and the need for multiple transfers to access employment locations.
- Transit services in urban areas that do not serve jobs located in outlying or suburban areas.
- Transit services that do not cross jurisdictional boundaries and limit access to jobs in another county/city.
- Limited public transportation services on evenings or weekends when many entry-level and service-type jobs are available.
- Extensive rural areas where public transit services are limited or not available to meet work hours.

While the major focus of the outreach efforts was to obtain insights into the transportation issues facing lower income individuals in Tennessee, the community engagement activities also provided the opportunity to obtain feedback from transportation providers, and particularly public transit operators, on the challenges they confront when trying to meet employment transportation needs. These included:

- Lack of funding or personnel to meet second and third shift job transportation needs.
- Current service constraints due to the difficulties of hiring sufficient drivers, as well as the ability to procure replacement or expansion vehicles due to manufacturing shortages.
- A high degree of turnover in the population needing job access transportation. It was noted that those who use job access type transportation services often are able to secure personal transportation after they are established in a job.
- Demand response transit systems have difficulty with integrating employment trips into their overall schedule while balancing job access needs with dialysis and other medical trips.
- High costs to provide transportation for one-way long trips to employment sites. The nature of these trips also results in the driver/vehicle being out of service for significant periods of time.

- Limited involvement of employers in commuter transportation programs.
- Challenges for transportation network companies (i.e. Uber, Lyft) to operate in rural settings.

Regional Review

This section provides a region by region review of specific employment transportation needs and issues that were identified by local stakeholders. This regional analysis is important, based on the regional approach to public transportation in Tennessee through the HRAs as well the regional nature of many work trips in the state.

It should be noted that some issues go beyond the needs of people with lower incomes, and are more specific to operational and administrative implications related to expanding transportation services through a job access program or other funding mechanisms.

Delta

Stakeholders in the Delta region noted that the Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) provides many employment and training/education trips. However, it was also mentioned that at one time MATA provided JARC-funded employment transportation service, which ended when the federal program was discontinued.

Also discussed by regional stakeholders is that Memphis is not experiencing population changes in the central city that other urban areas may be experiencing. The central city has a higher level of people with lower incomes relative to outlying areas, resulting in a large demand for reverse commute services leaving lower income neighborhoods in the city.

The following issues and employment transportation needs were also identified by regional stakeholders:

- MATA services that end between 10:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. limit access for people who work third shifts
- Delta Human Resource Agency (DHRA) services end at 6:00 p.m., limiting transportation options for second or third shift workers
- The availability of drivers is a constraint on transit agency capacity, as it has been difficult to hire and retain as many drivers as needed to operate services
- Many areas in Shelby County are not served by MATA
- In addition to a need for transportation to work, some individuals also need transportation to/from childcare services
- Limited access to private transportation services such as taxis, Uber, and Lyft due to few drivers, even if passengers are able to pay for the long trip
- Some Uber/Lyft drivers may not be willing to serve certain areas due to safety concerns

East Tennessee

East Tennessee stakeholders noted the East Tennessee Area Transportation Services (ETHRA) provides employment transportation options that could serve as the foundation for expanded services. For example, ETHRA has a Job Access Program that currently supports clients for the first nine months of employment. However, stakeholders mentioned that a lack of drivers has greatly affected the number of transportation requests that can be met.

The following main issues were identified by regional stakeholders:

- Many people need reliable transportation options for second and third shift jobs and weekend shifts; employment outside of standard work hours.
- Employers want flexible workers who can work any shift/time but do not always provide transportation options.
- Some clients currently utilize transportation services from the Employment and Community First CHOICES program, but many have difficulty paying for the services at some point.
- Current employment transportation services are unable to support the total number of job seekers and applicants, and expansion of current services is needed.
- There is a lack of marketing current services, as many individuals who need transportation may be unaware they can utilize current door-to-door services.

First Tennessee

Stakeholders in the First Tennessee region noted that while there are current employment transportation services, it is not enough to support current employment needs. It was noted that in addition to building up on the public transit services in the region that the MyRide volunteer driver program may be the basis for expanding employment transportation options.

Specific employment transportation needs and issues that were identified in the region include:

- Transportation options for incarcerated individuals who need to access employment programs
- Transportation options for weekend and second and third shift hours
- Safe places or locations for rider pickup/drop-offs
- Transportation options when work shifts suddenly change or when emergency situations arise
- Membership fees and lack of accessibility through the MyRide TN Program

Mid-Cumberland

The stakeholders in the Mid-Cumberland region felt that awareness of current services is generally limited and primarily spread through word of mouth via existing riders. However, they noted that while car and vanpool programs are promoted through social media outlets as a rideshare transportation option and as a reliability benefit to employers, they may not be fully understood by the people who may benefit from these transportation options.

Stakeholders agreed that providing existing transportation services was currently a challenge based on severe driver shortages and that any expansion of service would first require returning to existing staffing levels before expansion of additional work-related trips could be reliably accommodated. In addition, Mid-Cumberland Human Resources Agency (MCHRA) does not currently have the capacity to provide employment transportation for all of the residents who might wish to take advantage of this service.

Some of the other current issues that stakeholders identified include:

- The cost of transportation may be too high for lower-income workers.
- The variability of employee work schedules makes the use of public transportation challenging.
- Current transportation services are limited to workday hours (i.e., 6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.).
- There are transportation needs for service employees and those in factory shift worker positions.
- Many employees have legal and liability concerns when considering car and vanpool options.
- Transportation services for people with disabilities for work-related trips are limited.

Northwest

Participants in the Northwest region outreach efforts agreed that transportation to work is one of the biggest barriers to workforce development in the region and across the state. Specific issues and needs identified included:

- The need for greater coordination at the state and local levels on efforts to identify additional funding that supports additional transportation services and the ability for communities to come together to find transportation solutions on their own.
- Employers, especially manufacturing plants, are desperate for employees. Several plants with significant hiring needs were mentioned, including Tyson, Unilever, Stanley, Black and Decker, Williams Sausage, ERMCO, and Granges.
- It was noted that Tennessee has a goal of having 65% of state residents working, meaning that approximately a million additional people who are part of the long-term unemployed population would need to join the workforce. It is anticipated that many of these individuals would need assistance getting to and from a workplace.
- Many residents of the region may not be fully aware of the opportunity to receive transportation assistance through NWTHRA, and there needs to be marketing efforts to engage the workforce to make them aware of services. This was noted as being particularly important whenever potential new industries are considering the area for facility development.
- Younger populations need to become aware of options for transportation assistance as they prepare to enter the workforce.

South Central

Stakeholders in this region felt that overall awareness of South Central Area Transit Service (SCATS) services is sufficient based on the number of daily trips they provide. They also agreed that there is a good level of success in awareness of larger employers to available transit services and vanpool program opportunities, but there is always more outreach that can be done to increase ridership.

Some specific issues and needs identified by South Central region stakeholders included:

- A current challenge for SCATS services is the balancing act of providing public transportation trips alongside contracted medical trips that are paid through TennCare. There is a large demand for both types of trips and the contracted trips make up a significant portion of SCATS revenue. There are private service providers that share medical trips, however, none of those providers have mobility-device-accessible vehicles, therefore SCATS is the main transportation for those individuals. Overall, the large demand for medical trips puts a strain on the availability of non-medical services, and it was suggested that some consideration should be given to how these arrangements with TennCare and other private providers impact employment transportation.
- Other unmet needs within the region include the lack of transportation options on weekends since the current transit service is weekday only and only within limited hours, and that since medical appointments may be prioritized over others, work trips could be impacted which affects employee reliability and limits its appeal as a transportation option.
- Obtaining drivers and vehicles is a challenge for all transportation providers right now which puts a limit on capacity and the expandability of service.
- There are limited transportation options in the region, resulting in a need for use of high cost private transportation services.

Southeast

Regional stakeholders noted that the Chattanooga Area Transportation Authority's (CARTA) strength is its ability to provide service for all trip purposes, not just employment within Chattanooga. However, a challenge is the limited service to other communities within Hamilton County. Those areas currently lack affordable public transportation options. Though ride-sharing services are available, these can be expensive and cost prohibitive.

Other issues and needs identified by Southeast region stakeholders include:

- SETHRA in Rhea County transports passengers to/from the northern end of Hamilton County and supports the idea of specific funding for work related trips for all of the county.
- Current funding requirements may limit the ability for SETHRA to provide work trips to and within major employment centers in Chattanooga and Hamilton County.
- SETHRA has been impacted by the shortage of drivers and the lack of replacement vehicles.

- The previous JARC program had a large group of riders and could be expected to grow again should funding become available.
- Overall, the overall consensus is that there are many unmet employment transportation needs in rural communities and that a job access program with associated funding would be welcomed by residents and the HRAs and service providers.

Southwest

Stakeholders in the Southwest region noted an overall need for expanded employment transportation services in the region. Specific unmet needs include:

- There is a need for weekend and after-hours services to accommodate the needs of second and third shift workers.
- With the arrival of Ford and development of Blue Oval City, the need for employment transportation will significantly increase.
- While Southwest Human Resource Agency (SWHRA) is currently providing employment trips, it was noted that they are struggling with the lack of ability to purchase vehicles to provide these services and their overall capacity.
- The availability of drivers is also a constraint on SWHRA's capacity, as they are having difficulty attracting and retaining drivers.
- There are not currently any publicly sponsored programs to encourage employers to establish vanpool and then help employers implement vanpool programs.

Upper Cumberland

Through their discussion on unmet employment-related transportation needs in the region Upper Cumberland region stakeholders agreed that the overwhelming issue throughout the region was the lack of reliable transportation options for those who do not work standard working hours. Specifically, they noted that unmet employment needs involve:

- Transportation options for second and third shift employees.
- Vanpool/carpool options to help with employee retention and recruitment.
- Transportation options for individuals exiting incarceration who have employment opportunities.
- Lack of transportation options in northern counties makes it challenging to access job options throughout the region.

Chapter 6

Demographic Analysis

Introduction

The preceding chapter documented critical input from key stakeholders on employment transportation needs across Tennessee. This chapter provides an analysis of current and future population trends throughout the state that impact the need for ongoing and expanded job access services. The focus of this analysis is on the population groups that often rely on transportation services beyond a personal automobile, especially to get to work and work-related destinations such as job training and childcare. Data sources for this analysis include the 2010 U.S. Census and the American Community Survey (ACS) 2017–2022 five-year estimates.

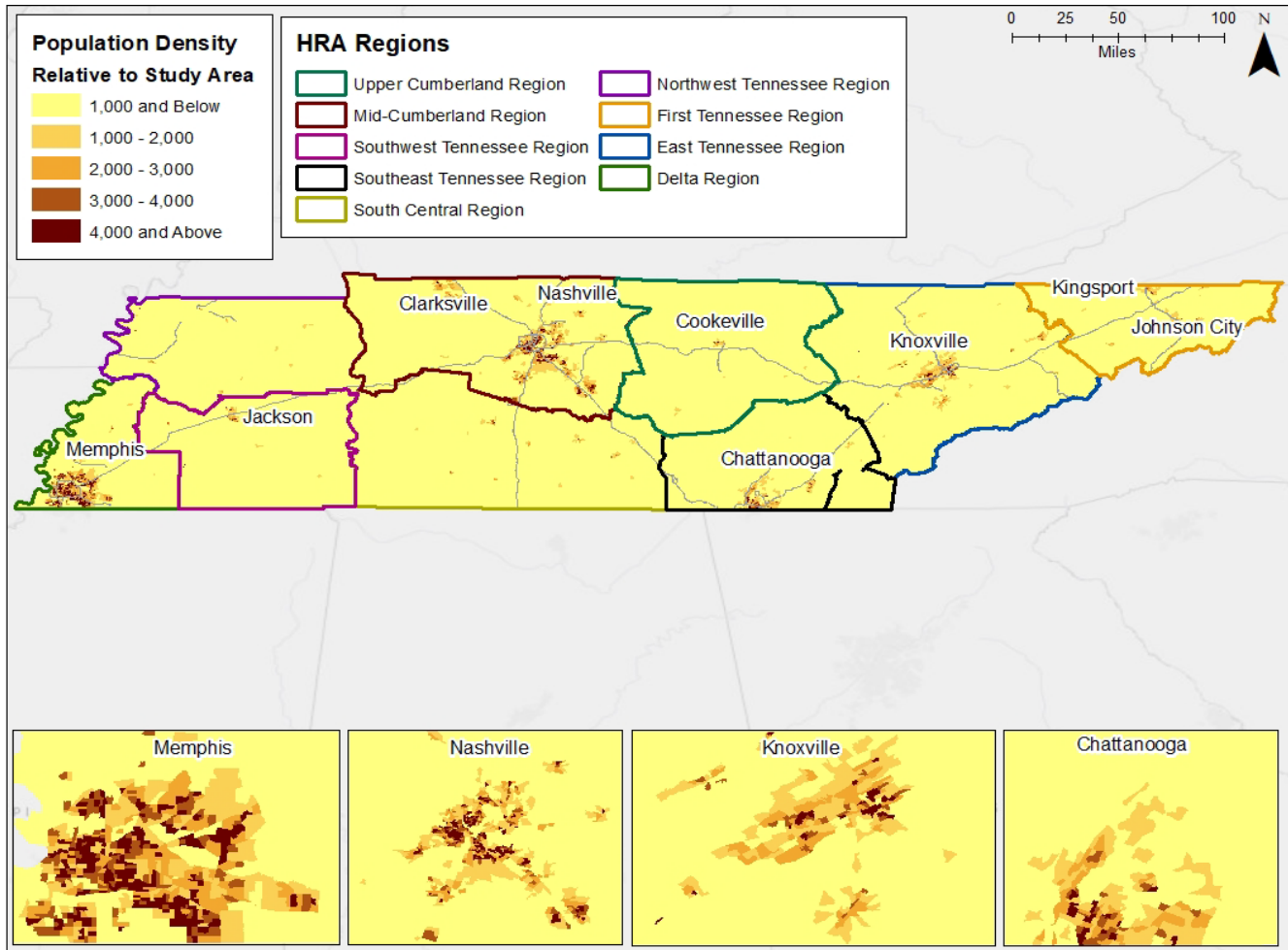
While many components of a demographic assessment in regards to job access services are interrelated, the analysis is segmented by:

- Population Density
- Population Groups Needing Greater Transportation Options
- Autoless Households
- Individuals with Disabilities
- Individuals Living Below the Poverty Level
- Persistent Poverty Areas
- Employment Travel Patterns

Population Density

Population density is often an effective indicator of the types of public transit services that are most feasible within a community or region. While exceptions always exist, an area with a density of 2,000 persons per square mile will generally be able to sustain frequent, daily fixed route transit service. Conversely, an area with a population density below this threshold may be better suited for deviated fixed route, demand response, or on-demand services.

Figure 6-1 portrays the population density for the state of Tennessee at the census block group level. The highest population densities are concentrated around the urban areas, including Memphis, Nashville, Chattanooga, and Knoxville. Both Memphis and Nashville have a higher number of census block groups that are classified as having above 4,000 people per square mile.

Figure 6-1: Population Density in the Study Area

Population Groups Needing Greater Transportation Options

Public transportation needs are defined in part by identifying the relative size and location of those segments within the general population that are most likely to use transit services. This includes individuals who may not have access to a personal vehicle or are unable to drive themselves due to age or income status. Determining the location of these populations assists in the evaluation of current transit services and the extent to which the services meet community needs.

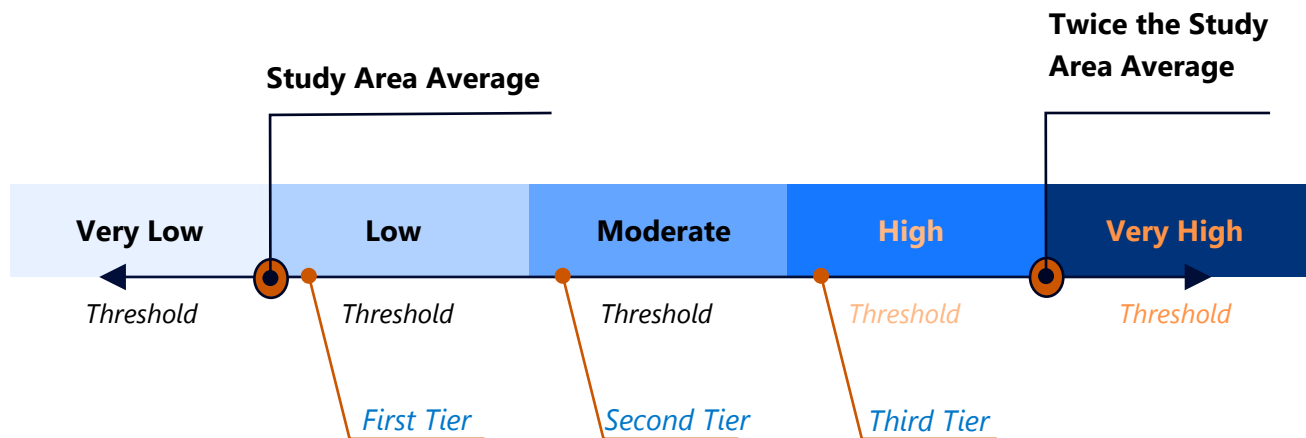
A Transit Propensity Index is used to provide an aggregate measure displaying relative concentrations of population groups who may need transit or other transportation options beyond a personal vehicle. Five factors make up this index calculation:

- Population density
- Autoless households
- Senior populations (ages 65 and older)
- Youth populations (ages 10-17)
- Below poverty populations
- People with disabilities

The factors above represent specific socioeconomic characteristics of residents in the state. For each factor, individual block groups were classified according to the prevalence of the vulnerable population relative to the county average. The factors were then put into the index equation to determine the relative amount for each block group.

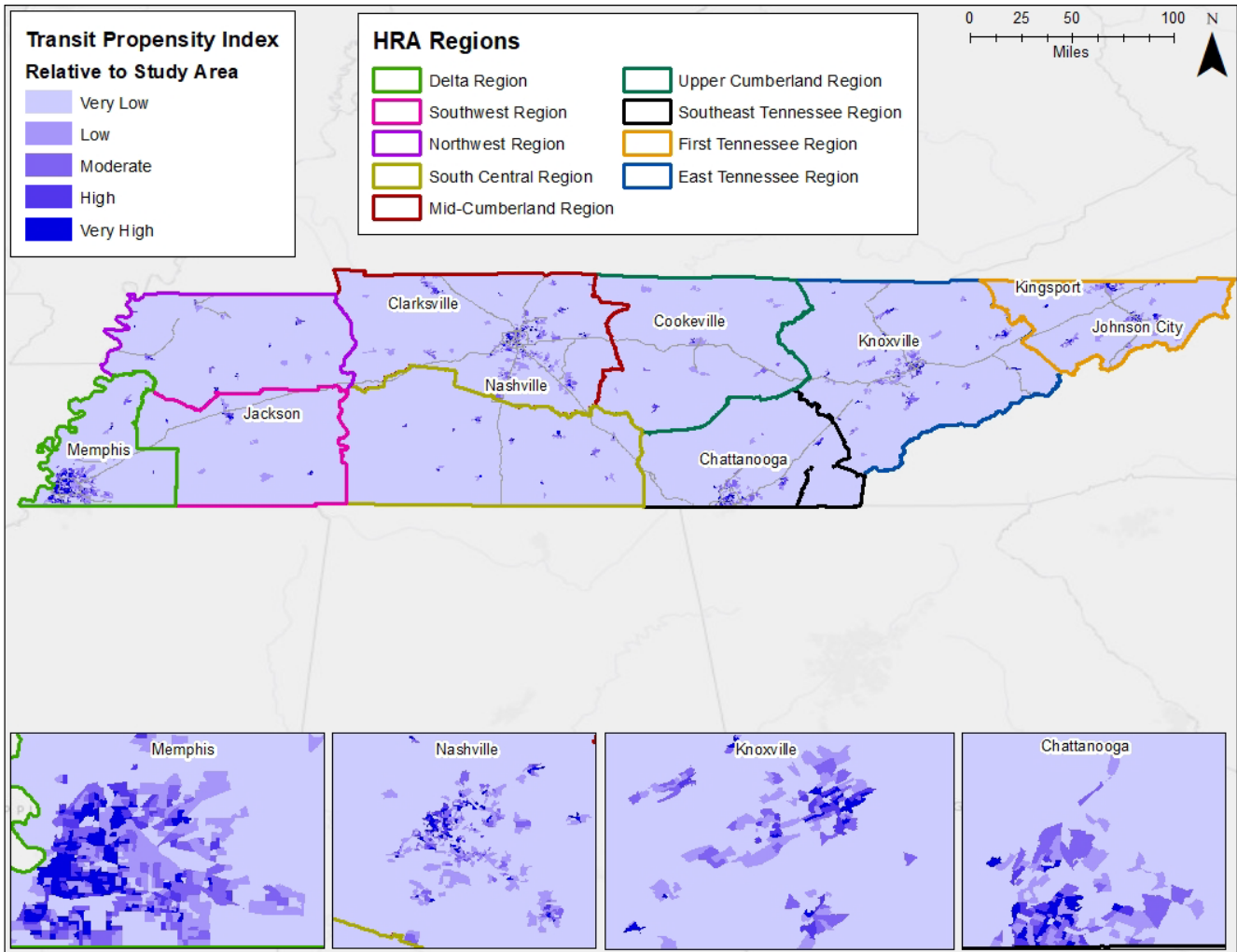
As illustrated in Figure 6-2 the relative classification system utilizes averages in ranking populations. For example, areas with less than the average for the index fall into the "Very Low" classification, where areas that are more than twice the average will be classified as "very high." The classifications low, moderate and high all fall between average and twice the average; these classifications are divided into thirds.

Figure 6-2: Transit Propensity Classification System



Shown in Figure 6-3, the Transit Propensity Index map matches the population density map. The areas that are classified as "Very High," are concentrated around the urban areas, including Memphis, Nashville, Knoxville, and Chattanooga. Memphis has the highest number of census block groups that are classified as "Very High". Therefore, the HRA regions that have the highest number of census block groups that are classified as having a "Very High Need" include the Delta Region, Mid-Cumberland Region, Southeast Tennessee Region, East Tennessee Region, and First Tennessee Region.

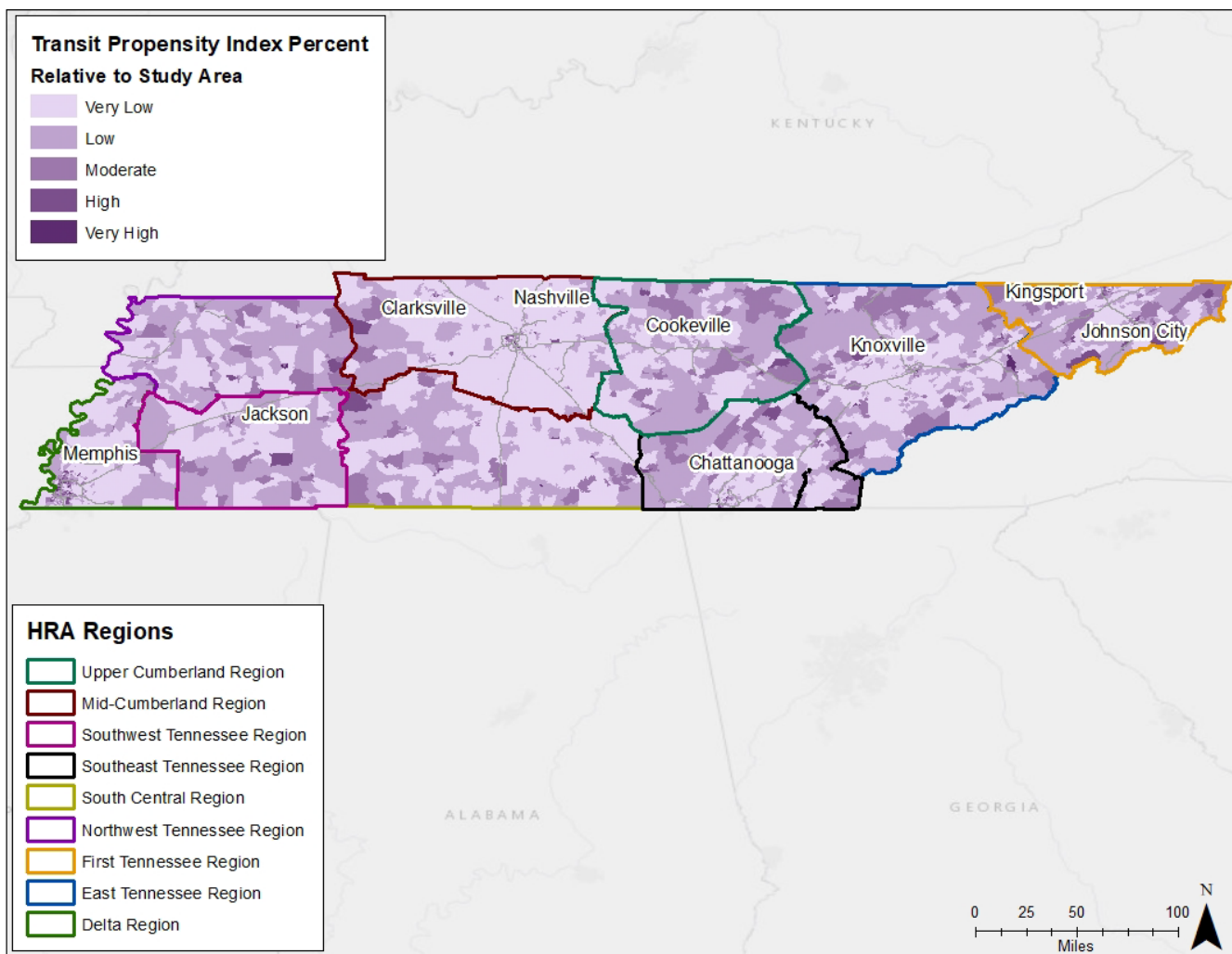
Figure 6-3: Transit Propensity Index



The Transit Propensity Index Percent provides a complimentary analysis to the previous measure. It is nearly identical except for the exclusion of population density. By showing the degree of need rather than the total amount of need, the Transit Propensity Index Percent shows where there is high transit need in areas with lower population densities. In other words, the Transit Propensity Index will show high need areas in areas with larger populations, and the Transit Propensity Index Percent will show high need in areas where people who need transportation options beyond a personal vehicle make up a larger portion of the total population, regardless of population size. This is particularly important when assessing employment transportation needs in the many rural areas of the state.

As shown in Figure 6-4, areas with “Very High Needs” are located near southern Memphis, Jackson, Nashville, Chattanooga, and Knoxville. Areas classified with a “High Need” or “Very High Need” are spread throughout the state more than in the Transit Index or population density maps. Therefore, when analyzing the Transit Index Percent map with the lens of employment-related transportation programs, many areas with high needs are located outside of the cities and urban areas.

Figure 6-4: Transit Propensity Index Percentage

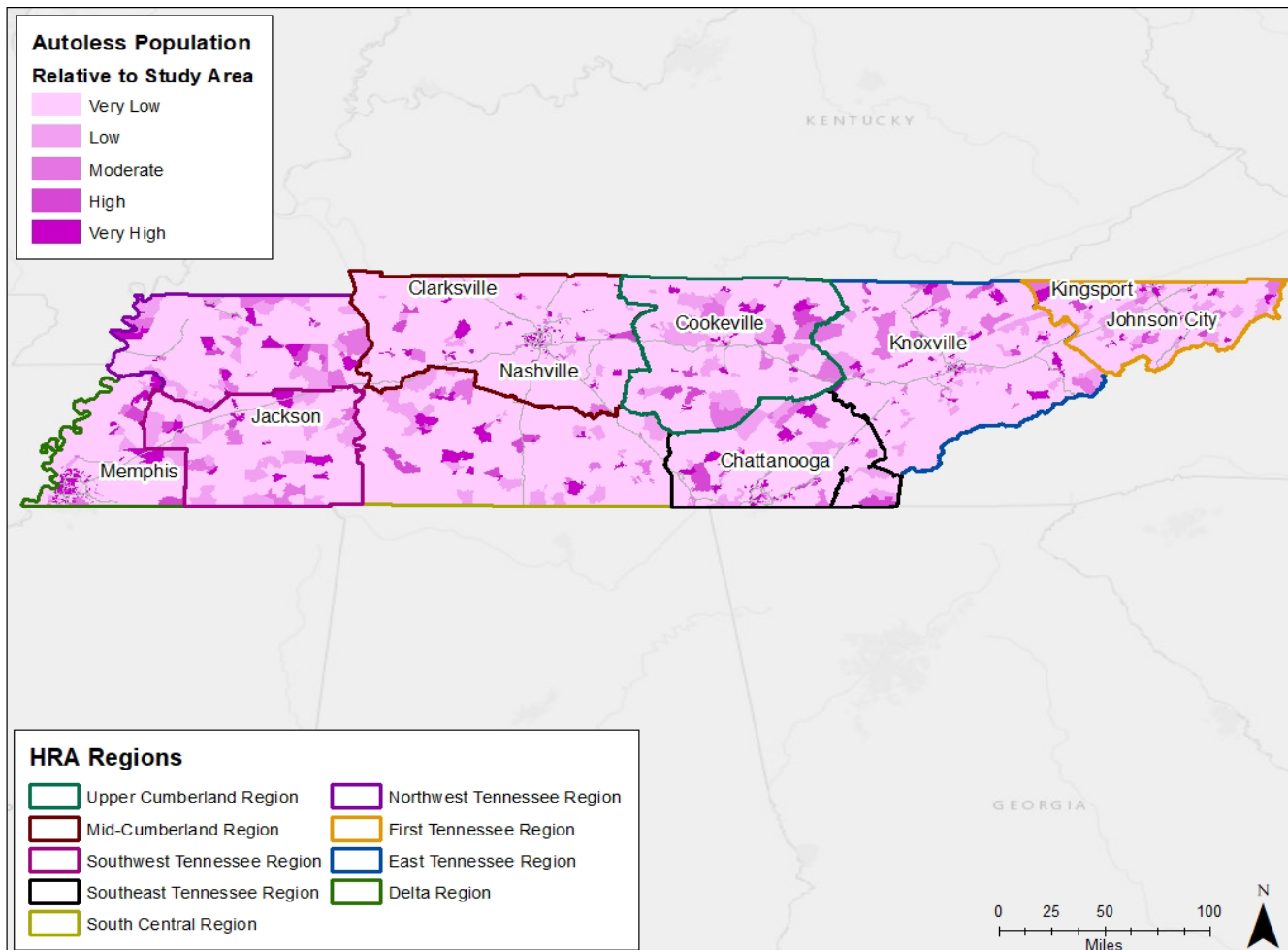


Autoless Households

Households without at least one personal vehicle are more likely to need safe, reliable, and affordable employment transportation options. Although autoless households are reflected in both the Transit Need Index and the Transit Need Index Percent measures, displaying this segment of the population separately is important when considering employment-related transportation programs in Tennessee.

Figure 6-5 displays the relative number of autoless households throughout the state of Tennessee. The areas of "Very High" needs are spread throughout the state and in each HRA region. Although there are several autoless households in the urban areas, there are a large number of autoless households with "Very High" needs spread throughout more rural areas of Tennessee, which highlights the need for employment-related transportation options.

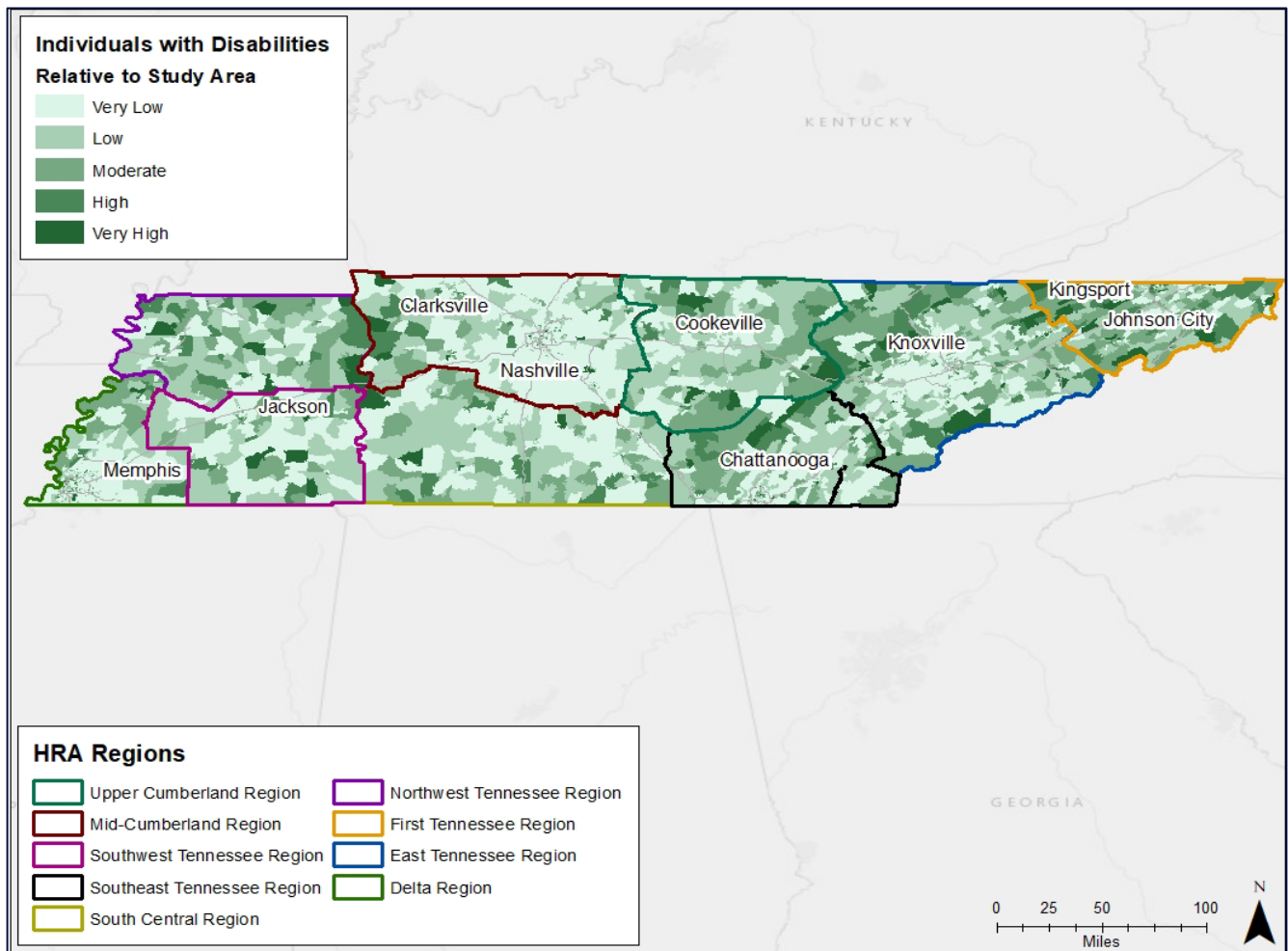
Figure 6-5: Autoless Households in the Study Area



Individuals with Disabilities

Individuals with disabilities may be unable to operate a personal vehicle and consequently are more likely to rely on public transportation or need mobility options beyond a personal vehicle. As shown in Figure 6-6, block groups with a relatively high percentage of persons with disabilities are spread throughout the state. Areas with “Very High” needs are in every HRA region. A large number of block groups are located in the Northwest Tennessee Region around Jackson.

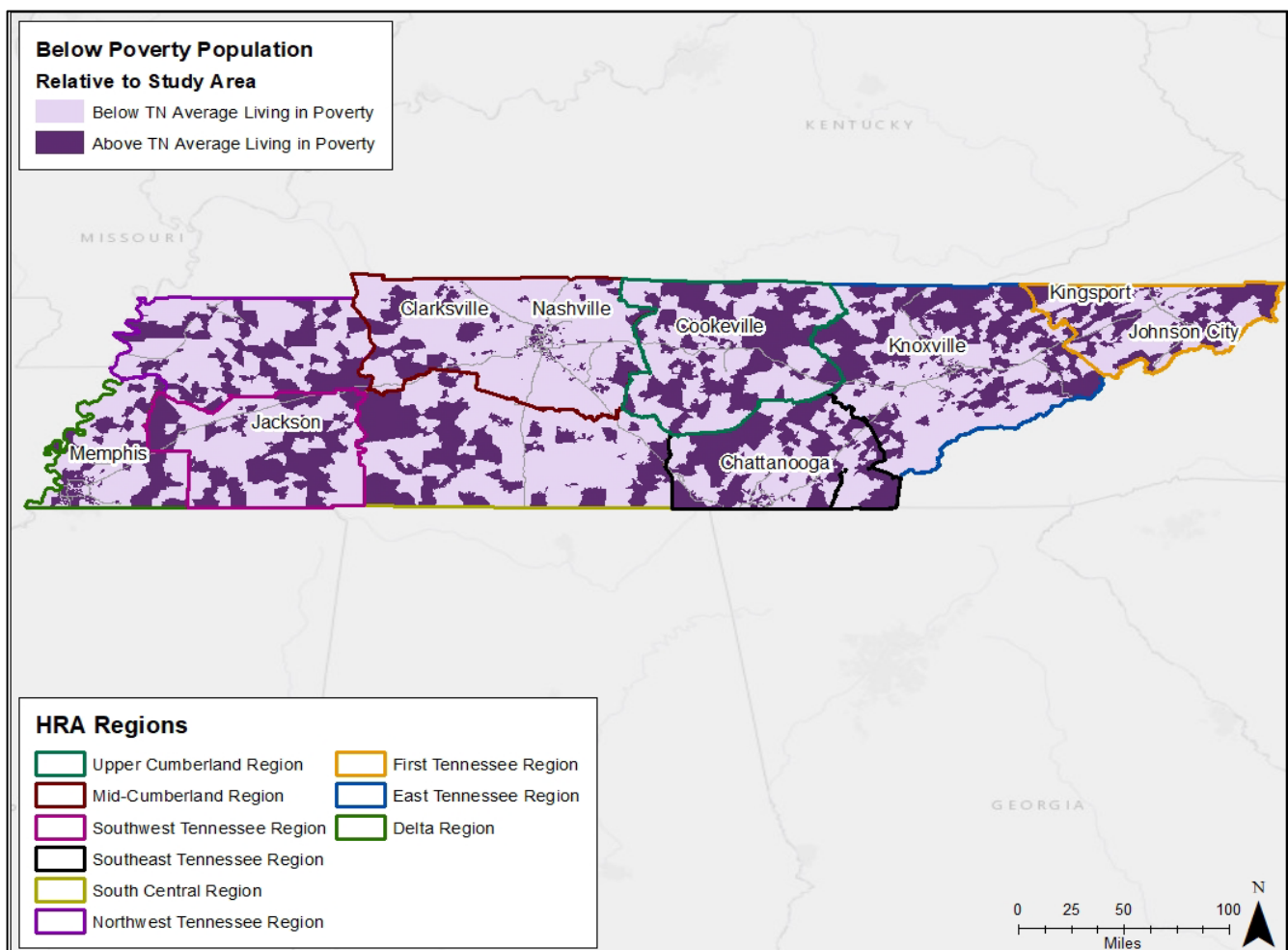
Figure 6-6: Individuals with Disabilities in the Study Area



Individuals Living Below the Poverty Level

Figure 6-7 shows the percentage of individuals who earn less than the federal poverty level per block group in Tennessee. Block groups where the percentage of individuals living below the federal poverty level is above the average for Tennessee (17.5%), are coded as "Above Average," indicating a relatively high level of poverty. These individuals face financial hardships that may make the ownership and maintenance of a personal vehicle difficult. In such cases, they may be more likely to depend on public transportation or other transportation options. The block groups that have a relatively high level of poverty are greatly dispersed throughout the state. Therefore, it can be concluded that the individuals in less urban settings that fall below the poverty line would benefit from an employment-related transportation program.

Figure 6-7: Individuals Living Below Poverty in the Study Area



Areas of Persistent Poverty

An Area of Persistent Poverty is defined for the RAISE grant program by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. A location is considered an Area of Persistent Poverty if:

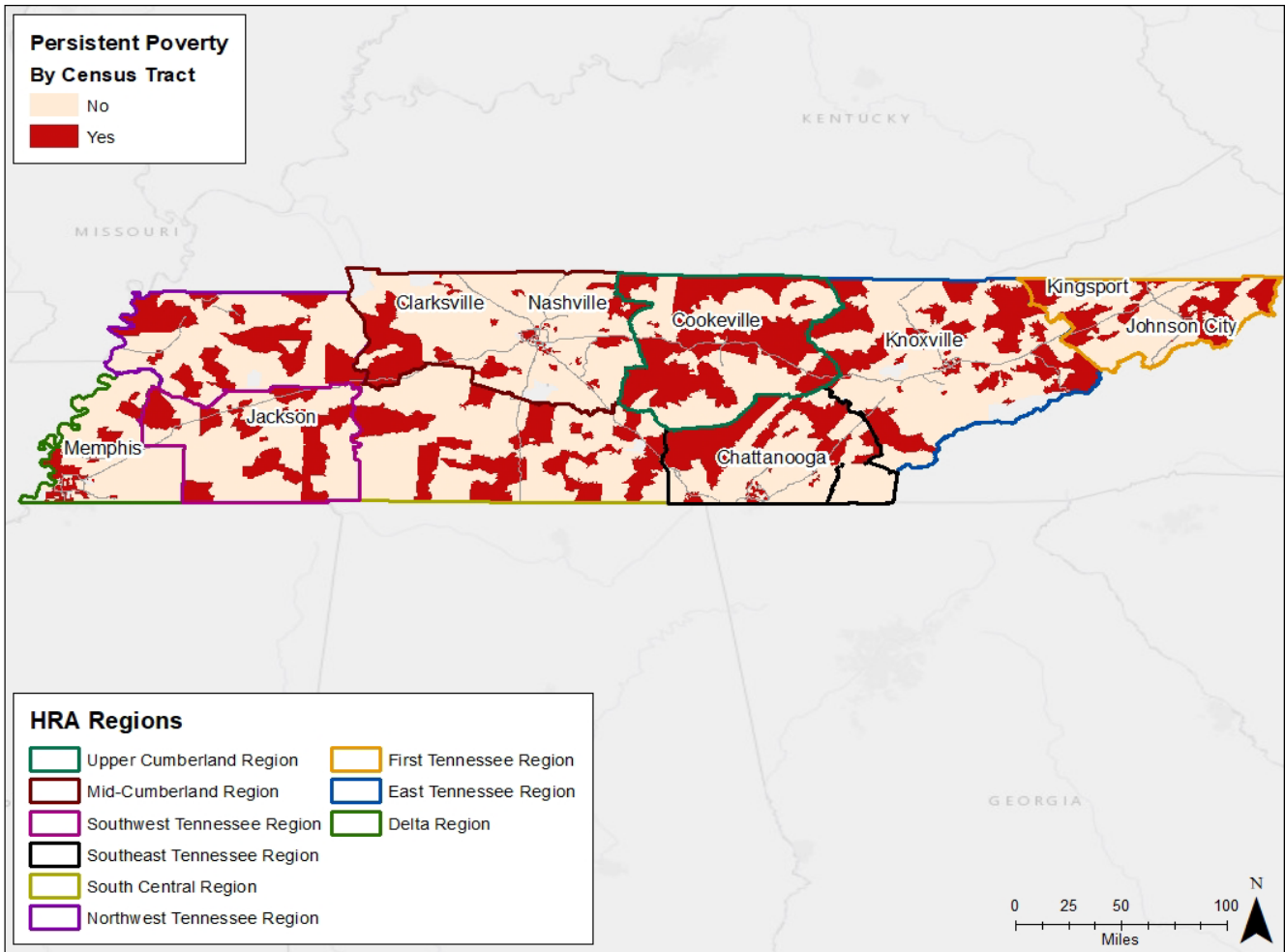
- The county consistently had greater than or equal to 20 percent of the population living in poverty in all three of the following datasets: (a) the 1990 decennial census; (b) the 2000 decennial census; and (c) the 2021 Small Area Income Poverty Estimates.
- The Census has a poverty rate of at least 20 percent as measured by the 2014-2018 five-year data series available from the American Community Survey of the Bureau of the Census.
- The location is in any territory or possession of the United States.

Within the state of Tennessee, there are 41 counties that are categorized as an Area of Persistent Poverty:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Benton County | 22. Hickman County |
| 2. Bledsoe County | 23. Jackson County |
| 3. Campbell County | 24. Johnson County |
| 4. Carroll County | 25. Lake County |
| 5. Carter County | 26. Lauderdale County |
| 6. Claiborne County | 27. McNairy County |
| 7. Clay County | 28. Meigs County |
| 8. Cocke County | 29. Morgan County |
| 9. Decatur County | 30. Obion County |
| 10. DeKalb County | 31. Perry County |
| 11. Dyer County | 32. Pickett County |
| 12. Fentress County | 33. Putnam County |
| 13. Grainger County | 34. Rhea County |
| 14. Grundy County | 35. Scott County |
| 15. Hamblen County | 36. Sequatchie County |
| 16. Hancock County | 37. Shelby County |
| 17. Hardeman County | 38. Union County |
| 18. Hardin County | 39. Warren County |
| 19. Hawkins County | 40. Wayne County |
| 20. Haywood County | 41. Weakley County |
| 21. Henry County | |

As shown in Figure 6-8, these 41 counties each had a number of census tracts that were classified as an Area of Persistent Poverty. Although there are areas within the urban areas, there are large areas of persistent poverty in the more rural areas of Tennessee, especially in the Mid-Cumberland Region.

Figure 6-8: Areas of Persistent Poverty in the Study Area



Employment Travel Patterns

One source to understanding employee travel patterns is the Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer Household Dynamics (LEHD) dataset. Figures 6-9 and 6-10 illustrate the results of this analysis:

- Shown in Figure 6-9, as of 2019 the top five employment destinations for the state of Tennessee residents include Nashville-Davidson Metropolitan Government (balance), Memphis City, Knoxville City, Chattanooga, and Franklin City. While people live and work throughout the state, this map highlights the lack of employment in rural areas, with a major focus on many jobs in more urban areas.
- Figure 6-10 shows where Tennessee workers live, and the top five residence areas include Nashville-Davidson Metropolitan Government (balance), Memphis, Knoxville, Chattanooga, and Murfreesboro. The map shows some major residential areas in more rural areas, especially in the South Central Region and the Northwest Region, which highlights a need for an employment-related transportation program to reach jobs located in more urban areas.

Figure 6-9: Where Tennessee Workers Are Employed

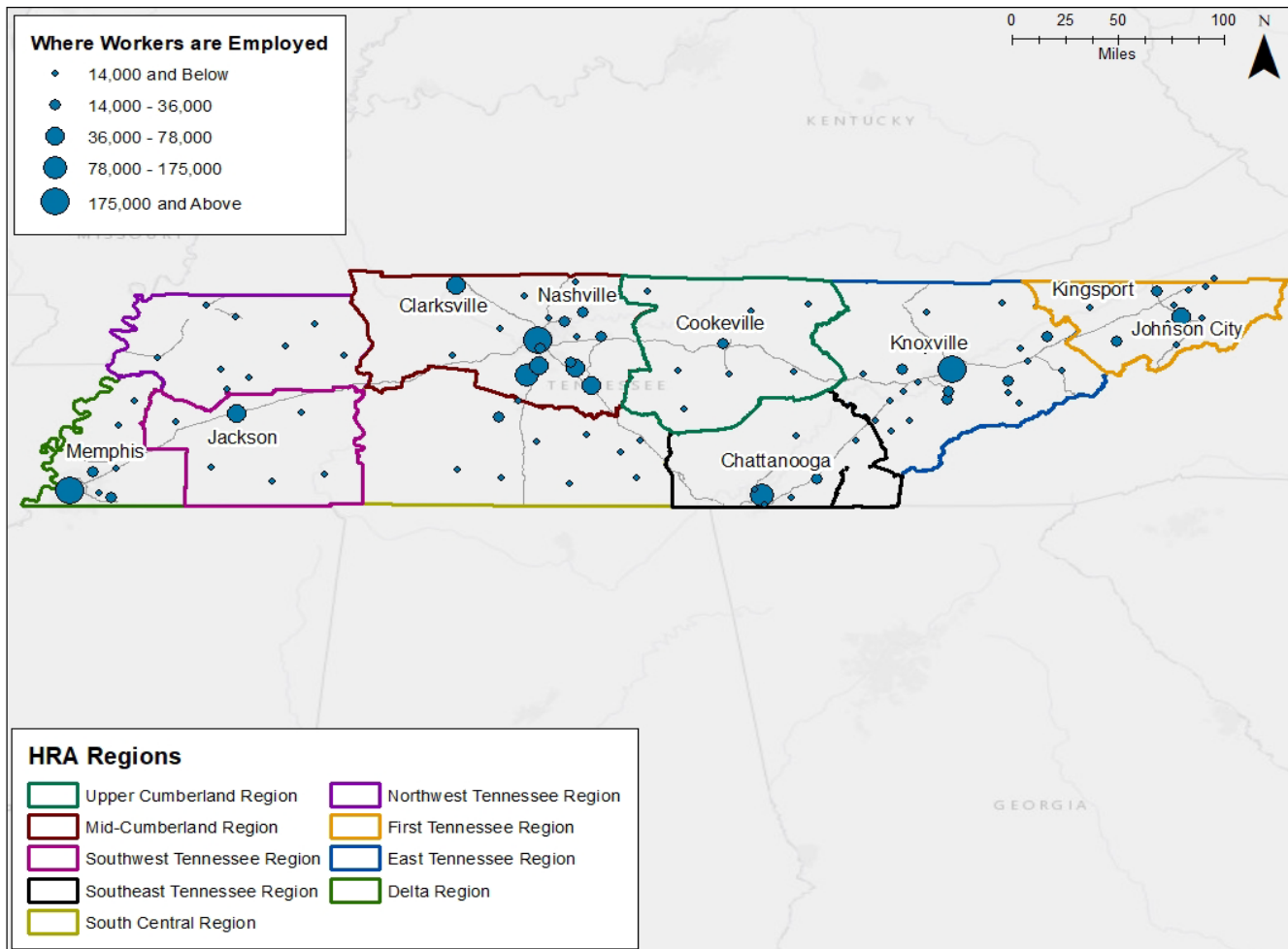
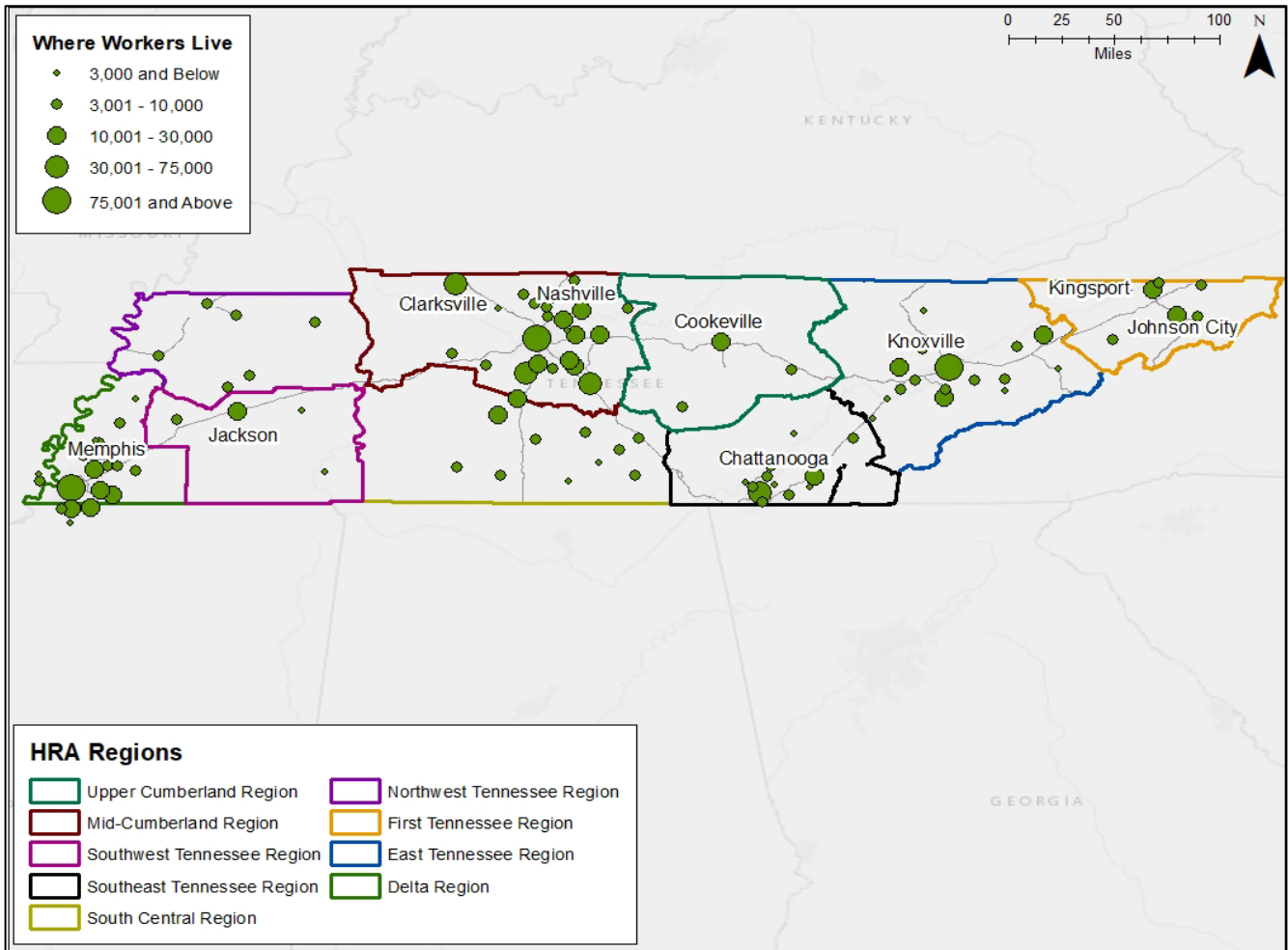


Figure 6-10: Where Tennessee Workers Live



Chapter 7

Potential Job Access Improvements

Introduction

Through the outreach and community engagement efforts, key stakeholders were asked to provide their input on opportunities to improve employment transportation services, and on specific transportation services that would expand access to employment and job-related resources. The review of previous and current plans, existing transportation resources, and demographics also offered information on needed service improvements that would expand access to jobs in the state.

This chapter summarizes the potential improvements identified through this process and considers the varying needs and potential job access services that would be needed across the state. These potential improvements can serve as the basis for the development and design of a job access program for Tennessee, though specific service improvements designed to meet local community needs would be identified during a competitive job access program application process that will be developed and finalized through future steps in the planning process.

Some potential job access improvements are beyond the projected scope of an employment transportation program administered and funded through TDOT but may still support access to jobs in Tennessee. Therefore, the identified improvements are segmented by:

- Potential Job Access Program Services and Projects
- Coordination Opportunities
- Potential Improvements Beyond a Job Access Program

Potential Job Access Services and Projects

The following services and projects were identified through the community engagement process and other needs assessment activities. It is anticipated that these improvements would be eligible through a Tennessee job access program. While a variety of services were identified, the overriding focus of these improvements was on expanding services that would increase access to employment opportunities. They are segmented by:

- Expanded Public Transit Services
- Expanded Demand Response Services
- Implementation of On-Demand Microtransit Services
- Expanded Support for Rideshare Programs
- Targeted Shuttle Services
- Voucher and Other Subsidy Programs

Expanded Public Transit Services

Stakeholders across the state expressed the need for expanded fixed route and demand response public transit services to meet employment transportation needs, particularly late-night and weekend service for people needing to access jobs during non-traditional work times. While operating costs would increase as a result of any expansion, these efforts would provide opportunities to build upon existing public transit networks and meet multiple unmet needs while taking advantage of existing organizational structures.

Expanded public transit services through a job access program would help to connect workers with employment opportunities that require early morning, late night, and weekend hours, while making efficient use of existing transportation structures and networks.

While needed improvements vary from one community or region to another based on current public transit service levels, the following improvements were noted:

- Extended morning and evening service hours on current fixed route services to meet earlier and later work shifts, especially second and third shift jobs
- Expanded weekend services through existing transit systems
- Expanded geographic services to meet new employment centers such as plants, industrial parks, and distribution centers
- Increased frequency and capacity of existing transit services
- Greater connectivity to other transit services or other transportation providers, and to major employers

Expanded Demand Response Services

In addition to expanded services through existing fixed route transit services, stakeholders expressed the need for expansion of more specialized demand response services operated by the HRAs to connect workers with employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas of the state. These services do not operate over a fixed route or on a fixed schedule. In many cases, these expansion efforts would involve extended service hours on weekdays and implementation of weekend services. It was also mentioned that these expanded demand response services are needed for workers who may need to access different locations for their jobs over the course of the day, or who need to combine work trips with transporting their children to daycare locations.

Expansion of demand response services through a job access program would allow transit systems to meet more specialized employment transportation needs identified in their communities or regions, particularly for people in rural areas with limited mobility options.

Similar to the expansion of other public transit services, needed demand response improvements vary from region to region. Rural transit operators also face the challenge of integrating employment transportation into an overall schedule that includes medical, shopping, and other trip purposes. Through the community engagement process, some rural transit systems stressed that they need to allot trips on a first-come, first-served, basis with priority given to medical trips. Therefore, service expansions for employment transportation through demand response services may need to include not only increased service hours, but also additional vehicles and drivers to expand capacity.

Implementation or Expansion of On-Demand Microtransit Services

In the past several years an increasing number of public transit providers have begun operating services with an on-demand, e-hailing component. These microtransit services use smaller vehicles and mobile technology to provide dynamic routing, similar to the services provided by transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft. The Shared-Use Mobility Center (SUMC) defines microtransit as a technological evolution of dial-a-ride and paratransit and refers to services with flexible routes and schedules and on-demand availability. SUMC notes that microtransit services require professional drivers who are usually employed through a purchased transportation arrangement with a vendor or employed directly by a transit agency.

Implementation or expansion of on-demand microtransit services through a job access program can help to meet a variety of employment transportation needs in both urban and rural areas, while making greater use of current technology.

Through microtransit services, customers use a smartphone application (app) to schedule and pay for a ride within a specific geofenced zone. Microtransit service can provide more flexibility to customers than traditional fixed route service or demand response services, as riders can individualize service by selecting both their pick-up and drop-off locations while dynamic routing capabilities allow drivers to quickly adjust pick-up locations to provide more efficient service. This specialized service can be ideal for individualized work trips that are outside general public transit hours or geographically outside a public transit service area.

Several on-demand services have been implemented in Tennessee as discussed in Chapter 4. The expansion of microtransit services has the potential to meet a variety of employment transportation needs in the state:

- In larger urban areas microtransit services can serve as a first mile/last mile mobility option that connects to an area's broader high frequency transit network. Microtransit can also be a viable alternative to fixed route transportation options in residential neighborhoods that are challenging to reach with larger buses or as a replacement for lower performing fixed routes.

- In small urban and rural areas microtransit can provide more flexibility to customers than traditional scheduled routes or in advance scheduled demand response service. It is also well suited for short-range trips within small towns and cities with a population of at least 3,000, and with significant destinations such as employment needs and connections to other transit systems. In particular, microtransit services provide flexibility in well-defined corridors or zones of operation that include warehouses, distribution centers, commercial subdivisions, or strings of office parks that may be challenging to serve through traditional public transit services.

Through community engagement efforts stakeholders expressed support for microtransit services, in particular noting that rural communities lack access to an on-demand type of transportation like Uber or Lyft. Some mentioned that these services may be an opportunity to create an affordable program that could be managed through the local HRAs. It was also noted by some stakeholders that it may also provide an employment opportunity for people seeking a flexible driver position through a new on-demand shared-ride type of service.

Expanded Support for Rideshare Programs

There are various vanpool and carpool programs in place across Tennessee, and stakeholders supported the assessment of opportunities to expand these services to meet more employment transportation needs. This approach may be particularly helpful and effective for access to second and third shift jobs at major employers. Ridesharing can be useful in areas that are not well served by public transit and can serve as an important mobility option for non-drivers or people without access to a personal vehicle, particularly in small towns and rural areas. These programs also provide the opportunity to design services specific to a community or employer based on local input and participation in the program design. Stakeholders mentioned that carpool programs can offer incentives for people with vehicles to provide transportation to other workers at the same facility.

Rideshare programs supported through a job access program can be particularly helpful and effective for connecting workers with second and thirds shift employment opportunities at major employers.

Subsidies are sometimes needed to support efforts to initiate or expand vanpool programs, as costs at the outset may be beyond what initial participants can afford or be willing to pay. There are a variety of examples across the country that can be used to design a subsidy program that would connect people who would like to start a vanpool with leasing companies and identify subsidies to assist with vehicle maintenance and other costs associated with vanpool formation. In addition, rideshare programs typically include a guaranteed ride home service so that workers feel comfortable using a vanpool as their primary travel mode, knowing that they have transportation in case of they need to leave work earlier or later than expected.

Through the community engagement efforts, there were multiple suggestions that the successful expansion of rideshare services would be dependent on working with large employers around the state. Stakeholders also recommended that the expansion of rideshare programs be further explored in conjunction with educating employers about commuter benefits and promoting provision of rideshare services as a means of boosting employee retention. These programs may also serve as the foundation for greater coordination with workforce development agencies on the use of non-DOT funds to plan and implement rideshare services.

Targeted Shuttle Services

Through the community engagement efforts, some regions expressed the need for shuttle services to specific major employers. Some examples included shuttle service between Memphis and Jackson to Blue Oval City when the Ford plant begins operation, and between park-and-ride locations in various parts of the state and key employers. Additionally, specific industrial parks may have significant numbers of entry-level jobs that could be served by targeted shuttle services. There are also resorts with concentrated job opportunities that could potentially be served via targeted shuttle services. The implementation of targeted shuttle services, just like the expansion of rideshare services, can also provide a mechanism for expanded employer partnerships.

Targeted shuttle services through a job access program can be designed to connect potential workers with concentrated areas with significant number of employment opportunities.

An important component of the previous federal JARC program was support for reverse commute services and subsidizing the costs associated with operating routes or services from urbanized areas to suburban workplaces. Some of these services are in place in Tennessee, but community engagement efforts identified a need to build upon these services and to provide expanded access from more populated areas where people with lower incomes may live to major job sites in outlying areas.

Voucher and Other Subsidy Programs

For individuals with lower incomes the expense of employment transportation, particularly when interviewing for or just starting a new job, can be cost prohibitive. Stakeholders expressed support for the expansion of voucher and subsidy programs, and various efforts can be considered that would help to offset user costs and expand access to jobs while helping to ensure the use of existing public and private operators.

Voucher and subsidy programs through a job access program can help workers, particularly low-income individuals, with transportation expenses – while making greater use of existing services and resources.

A job access program could support the administration and expenses related to voucher programs, and through which vouchers could be used as an administrative mechanism for payment to providers of various transportation services. Vouchers can provide low-income individuals with the flexibility to purchase rides through a variety of options, including:

- Mileage reimbursement as part of a volunteer driver program (discussed in the next section)
- Access to taxi services, micromobility, or other private transportation services
- Costs related to trips provided by a human service agency

Coordination Opportunities

One of the other hallmarks of the federal JARC program was that it spurred coordination efforts between transportation, social services, workforce development, and other agencies at the state and local levels. Through the community engagement process, stakeholders discussed a variety of opportunities to improve coordination through a potential Tennessee job access program, including:

- Identifying opportunities to consolidate state and federal funds administered through different state and regional agencies to support employment transportation projects or services.
- Facilitating greater connectivity between local and regional transportation providers and workforce development areas and American Job Centers.
- Helping transit agencies with driver recruitment and retention efforts, so that they in turn can provide employment transportation services for the broader community.
- Increasing marketing and outreach efforts to ensure workers and employers are fully aware of available transportation options.
- Exploring opportunities to more fully utilize commuter and tax benefits available to employers.
- Facilitating discussions with human resource managers from major employers to discuss employee transportation issues and potential solutions.
- Identifying cross-eligibility between different employment programs, and the possible use of income-based programs as a component of the potential job access program.
- Developing a 'blueprint' for small communities to start their own ride-sharing-style job access program. This program could help address some of the larger issues like the cost of a vehicle, insurance, and software as well as the mechanics of how to operate the service effectively. Additionally, the state could work on guidelines for establishing a broker in the region to handle and coordinate working with leaders, the community, and coordinating the funding.

Additional Opportunities

Through the community engagement process, stakeholders also provided input on opportunities to improve access to jobs in Tennessee that are eligible for funding through current TDOT programs or beyond the scope of a job access program. However, these are important considerations related to employment access and workforce development in Tennessee, and include:

- **Expansion of Mobility Management Efforts** - In recent years coordination efforts have focused on mobility management, a term that has come to represent a transportation strategy that focuses on customers, their needs, and the meeting of those needs through the coordinated use of a variety of providers. The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) defines mobility management as an approach to designing and delivering transportation services that starts and ends with the customer and encourages innovation and flexibility to reach the "right fit" solution for customers.

In addition to coordination between different providers mobility management activities also include efforts to market available transportation services, and to ensure people seeking jobs are fully aware of their transportation options. Through the community engagement process, stakeholders often reported the need for improved marketing of existing services.

- **Volunteer Driver Programs** - While volunteer driver programs are typically designed to serve older adults and to provide trips primarily for medical appointments and shopping, some stakeholders mentioned the opportunity to use the volunteer driver model to help meet employment transportation needs. This would build upon the premise of volunteer programs, in that some trips are better handled through more specialized services. In addition, the rural nature of much of the state and the geographic makeup of many regions present the need for multiple transportation options.

However, volunteer driver programs may have service limitations that impact feasibility. For example, availability of accessible vehicles is often limited or nonexistent, and trips provided through volunteer programs may be limited to one county. It may also be challenging to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of volunteer drivers to provide reliable employment transportation that may require two round trips per day for five days per week.

The National Volunteer Transportation Center (NVTC) reports that a recent trend for these programs is multi-passenger rides. They note that while historically volunteer transportation services have tended to function as one vehicle-one passenger operations, more programs are looking at opportunities to provide multiple-passenger rides—especially useful in rural areas with long distance travel requirements when more than one passenger is traveling to a single destination.

There is the opportunity to build upon current volunteer driver programs in the state, following the example of currently operating services such as the Knox CAC program discussed in Chapter 4. Knox CAC's Volunteer Assisted Transportation Program is dedicated to providing accessible and affordable transportation services to persons who require aid and assistance to travel safely. An important component is determining an entity with the administrative capacity and willingness to

manage a volunteer driver program. These functions include recruiting and retaining volunteers; assessing insurance needs and liability concerns; and developing policy and procedures. There are a variety of volunteer programs across the country that can be used as possible examples for this service improvement and are highlighted through the NVTC website. This website also provides numerous resources to support the planning and implementation of volunteer driver programs.

- **Car repair programs.** Some people with lower incomes may have a car available for their use, but it may be inoperable. Stakeholders reported seeing many people that would have personal transportation for accessing jobs but need a simple repair, such as the replacement of a single part, to operate their vehicles. With long trip distances and dispersed population, sometimes a repaired automobile is the most cost-effective way to provide a person with access to employment opportunities and community services. A variety of models are available that could be used as examples in developing a vehicle repair program. Overall, it was highlighted that while a variety of transportation options are needed, often car ownership is a critical one and especially vital in rural areas.
- **Improved connectivity between land use planning and transportation access.** Stakeholders mentioned the importance of ensuring connectivity between land use and future development with transportation services, as the locations of major employers and other job opportunities have a tremendous impact on the ability of public transit providers to serve these locations. Therefore, it is vital that transportation providers are involved at the outset of the development process -- and can provide their input on potential service implications, infrastructure needs such as bus shelters and sidewalks, and other land use considerations. This connectivity can also support opportunities to incorporate biking and other alternative travel options into the community transportation network and greater access to employment opportunities. Some stakeholders stressed that land use decisions that are made today impact the accessibility of employment in the future.
- **Improved access to high-speed internet.** Stakeholders also expressed the need for continued efforts to increase the ability for people to work remotely and to access employment opportunities that feature online job functions, particularly in rural areas. One strategy to increase employment without increasing the need for transportation would be to provide high-quality internet access to rural communities. In conjunction with this effort would also involve reaching out to large employers to facilitate remote work from these less populated areas.
- **Additional recovery programs.** Some stakeholders expressed the need for expanded programs for people reentering the workforce. While a broader issue that goes beyond transportation, from a mobility standpoint it was mentioned that individuals in substance abuse treatment may be required to maintain employment. Therefore, they may need individualized transportation services to reenter the workforce.










Chapter 8

Job Access Program Considerations and Next Steps

Introduction

Through the community engagement process, stakeholders across Tennessee identified a variety of employment transportation needs that could be addressed through a job access program. This important input was supplemented by a demographic analysis that highlighted areas of the state with high needs, as well as specific population groups that need expanded work-related transportation options.

Through this holistic approach, various considerations in the design of a job access program were identified and can be incorporated into one that helps Tennesseans find and keep a job, especially in areas with limited employment opportunities. While services will be designed by local decision makers, as job access solutions in more urbanized areas will be different from possible transportation improvements in lower density rural areas, potential benefits from a job access program include:

-  **Connecting job seekers to employment opportunities beyond where they live and where current transportation services are NOT available.**
-  **Ensuring transportation services to major employment sites located in suburban and rural areas.**
-  **Expanding employment transportation in rural areas and Persistent Poverty areas, where current services are limited.**
-  **Increasing transportation options that allow potential workers to access jobs that require early morning, late night, and weekend hours when transportation resources may be limited or nonexistent.**
-  **Providing transportation services that allow for multiple trips, such as combining daycare and work trips.**
-  **Implementing new services that respond to cross-jurisdictional travel needs and help to balance any mismatch between counties and regions that have more workers than jobs and others that have more job opportunities than workers.**
-  **Expanding employment transportation accommodations for those with disabilities, who may not be able to utilize a personal vehicle.**
-  **Providing improved consistency and convenience through expanded transportation services that decrease the overall time spent traveling to and from employment centers.**
-  **Expanding employment transportation options for individuals who live in autoless households.**

Program Considerations

Chapter 7 detailed services and projects that were identified through the community engagement process that could be eligible through a Tennessee job access program. Looking ahead, this would lead to a variety of future considerations in the design and development of this program. These considerations include:

- **Modeling after the Federal JARC Program.** Through discussions with transit operators around the state, many systems noted familiarity with the previous federal JARC Program. The JARC program provides an excellent framework for a Tennessee job access program, including useful information in developing and determining eligible recipients, funding apportionments, eligible activities, matching requirements, and coordination requirements. Appendix B provides the eligible projects that were included in the previous federal JARC Program guidelines, and that can be considered in developing the Tennessee program.
- **Coordinating with Transportation Planning Efforts.** One of the key aspects of the federal JARC program was the requirement that recipients of these funds needed to certify that selected projects were derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan, developed through a process that included representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation and human service providers, participation by the public, and representatives addressing the needs of low-income individuals.

With the elimination of the federal JARC Program, this requirement was no longer applicable. However, it is still in place for the federal Section 5310 Program. There are a variety of coordinated transportation plans in place around the state, and they provide an opportunity to ensure projects funded through a job access program are designed to build upon and incorporate needs and potential improvements that have already been locally identified.

A planning consideration that should be taken into account is that the Section 5310 program is focused on transportation services for older adults and people with disabilities. Future updates to coordinated transportation plans may need to include a renewed effort to ensure that the planning process fully captures the needs of people with lower incomes, and that these plans are fully in line with a Tennessee job access program.

The state job access program should be coordinated with other appropriate plans and studies, particularly with local transit plans that include specific service improvements that would expand employment transportation in local communities. Coordination with existing plans could include:

- Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plans
- Rural Planning Organizations
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- Economic Development Plans
- Urban Transit Provider Plans

- **Supporting Coordination Across Different State Agencies.** Another hallmark of the federal JARC Program was that it encouraged coordination between different state agencies. Funding through social service, employment training, workforce development, vocational rehabilitation, and other programs were potential sources for the required match, and these different sources of federal funding could be combined to support employment transportation services. The Tennessee job access program should be designed in such a way to facilitate coordination and maximize transportation programs located in different departments, with the intent to ensure a value-added program that leverages existing resources and funds services that are convenient, user friendly, and easy to navigate by job seekers.
- **Developing a Process for Project Evaluation and Selection.** An important component of a job access program will be how funding applications will be evaluated, and projects and services selected through a competitive process. This will be a particularly important consideration, as it is expected that funding requests may exceed program funding levels.

Looking at other states that have implemented similar job access programs, the ultimate project selection is typically made by the state-level agency that administers the JARC Program through a statewide competitive application process. Other considerations include a competitive allocation process that allows regional selection of projects within available funding. In this case appropriate regional entities can be involved in the selection process, though the final selection would be at the state level. Other JARC Program considerations include if funding should be allocated by urban and rural areas, and if there should be minimum or maximum award amounts.

- **Providing Program Flexibility.** The JARC Program will need to include parameters on allowable projects and permissible services to be funded, primarily focused on the potential improvements discussed in Chapter 7 of this report. However, it will be important that it allows local communities and regions the ability to develop services and projects that best fit their needs and responds most effectively to employment transportation challenges and mobility gaps in their area – plus it recognizes their specific knowledge of local issues and needs. In this way services funded through the job access program can be most effective in providing transportation services and solutions to targeted populations and specific employment centers in their communities.

While this flexibility is important and was noted by stakeholders through the community engagement process, it presents challenges for TDOT with the administration of a competitive program and how best to evaluate different services and projects in various parts of the state. These details will be an important component in the final design and development of the Tennessee JARC Program. Taking this into account, along with input through the community engagement process, considerations for the final design include:

- A two-year period grant cycle to allow for appropriate planning and implementation timeframes. This is consistent with a similar job access program in Maryland. More information on the Maryland JARC Program that discusses the grant cycle and other key items is included in Appendix C.

- Current subrecipients of federal Sections 5307, 5311, or 5303/5304 funding as eligible funding recipients. This would help to ensure funding through the job access program is fully coordinated with other resources and managed by entities familiar with the administration of similar funding programs.
- A funding ratio that involves monies from different levels, though that maintains local match as a lower percentage than state share.
- Similar to the previous federal JARC Program, the focus for the Tennessee job access program would be on low-income individuals (defined as one whose family income is at or below 150 percent of the poverty line). However, job access program funded services would not be limited to this population group. This would help to ensure full coordination with current services and resources, and also eliminate any additional administrative responsibilities related to a specific rider eligibility process.
- Services funded through the job access program, particularly in persistent poverty areas, should be made available to passengers at free or reduced fares.

Next Steps

Following completion of this Community Engagement Report, the next steps for the HOPE Project involve the design and development of specifics for a Tennessee job access program, as well as the estimated cost and economic impact of the program.

Appendix A

Additional Information - Previous Plans and Studies

Appendix A

Additional Information - Previous Plans and Studies

Introduction

As noted in Chapter 2 a variety of planning efforts have been conducted that include information on employment transportation needs and potential solutions related to a statewide job access plan. This appendix provides links to the statewide plans discussed in Chapter 2, along with summaries and as available links to local plans by region.

Mobility and Accessible Transportation Strategic Plan

<https://www.tn.gov/tdot/multimodal-transportation-resources/omat.html>

Expect Employment: 2022 Report to the Governor

<https://www.tn.gov/didd/for-consumers/employment--first/task-force.html>

2020 State Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Plan

<https://www.tn.gov/workforce/contact-the-department0/boards---commissions/boards---commissions-redirect/state-workforce-development-board/state-plan.html>

Delta

Tennessee Department of Transportation. Blue Oval City Transit Study

In relation to this region, as well as the Southwest Tennessee region discussed later in this section, TDOT is conducting a feasibility study of various options for transporting employees to and from the future Ford "Blue Oval City" site in Haywood County. The possibility of fixed route transit between Memphis and Blue Oval City is an area of focus for the study.

Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization. Livability 2050: Regional Transportation Plan

The Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) developed Livability 2050, the region's long range transportation plan, in compliance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and FTA requirement in 2019. The plan was updated in 2022. The plan treats access to employment as a key feature of "livability." The plan addresses transportation improvements across all modes within the MPO's planning area. Access to work via transit is addressed for the population in general as well as Environmental Justice communities and for persons with disabilities.

City of Memphis. Memphis 3.0: Transit Vision Report

The Memphis 3.0 Transit Vision Report was developed in conjunction with the larger Memphis 3.0 comprehensive planning project. The Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) and Innovate Memphis partnered to examine MATA's network and provided short- and long-term recommendations. The plan envisions a network of high-frequency transit implemented in the near term and expanded in years to come. Implementation of the short-term recommendation would significantly expand the number of jobs located within a half mile of frequent transit service.

Greater Memphis Labor and Workforce Development Board. Program Year 2020 – 2022 Local Plan for the Greater Memphis Region

The Greater Memphis Labor and Workforce Development Board (GMLWDB) developed their 2020-2022 local plan in compliance with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements, coordinating multiple state and local programs supporting jobseekers. The plan identifies transportation as one of several supportive services available to job seekers through American Job Centers (AJCs) and partnering agencies. It notes that availability of transportation is especially a barrier to employment in rural counties. Transportation assistance through AJCs takes the form of reimbursement payments, gas cards, bus passes, or pre-paid cards. To receive assistance individuals must demonstrate need, participate in WIOA approved training and/or services, and submit a weekly Attendance Verification Form.

Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization. Memphis Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan

The Memphis MPO prepared Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP) in 2016 to cover the Greater Memphis Region, including both the Memphis MPO area and the West Memphis MPO area. The purpose of the CPT-HSTP is to create a better transit system for transportation disadvantaged populations. This study area covers five counties in Arkansas, five counties in Mississippi, and ten counties in Tennessee, with almost 80% of the population of the study area residing in and around Memphis, Tennessee.

There are currently multiple coordination attempts throughout the study area, and specifically in Tennessee. Coordination allows service providers to reduce costs, grow services and improve customer service relations. This plan lists five coordination examples in the Tennessee study area. For example, the Delta HRA has partnerships with TennCare to provide free rides to eligible recipients. These relationships amongst agencies lay groundwork for addressing the existing service gaps and unmet needs.

Transportation disadvantaged populations often face challenges such as getting to medical appointments, reaching their place of employment, shopping and attending to personal errands. This study prioritized each state's service gaps and unmet needs into high, moderate, and low priorities across five categories: information and awareness, geographical, time-based, client-based, and service quality. For Tennessee, the highest priority was a lack of early morning services (time-based) and lack of sufficient service for persons with disabilities and lack of dialysis transportation (client-based). Also of high priority was a lack of sufficient public information regarding available services (information and awareness).

To address service gaps and unmet needs within the study area, this CPT-HSTP identified both short-term and long-term strategies. For Tennessee, short-term strategies include:

- Exploring creating a mobility coordinator position for the region
- Evaluating existing services for persons with disabilities and identify areas of expansion
- Explore expanding transit, paratransit, and service agency hours to include early morning and evening service
- Enhance planning activities and public education efforts

<https://memphismpo.org/plans/livability-2050-regional-transportation-plan>

<https://www.memphis3point0.com/>

www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/workforce/documents/wfs/2020GreaterMemphisLocalDRAFTPlan.pdf

[https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tdot/multimodaltransportation/coordinated-plans/Coordinated%20Plan Memphis Region.pdf](https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tdot/multimodaltransportation/coordinated-plans/Coordinated%20Plan%20Memphis%20Region.pdf)

<https://memphismpo.org/sites/default/files/documents/resources/projects/greenprint/bus-transit-to-workplaces-study.pdf>

East Tennessee

ETHRA Human Services Coordination Plan

The purpose of the East Tennessee Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan is to maximize existing public transit services, increase the efficiency of those services, and secure additional funding for these services. The Coordinated Transportation Plan utilized a stakeholder questionnaire, as well as a transportation resource survey. The results from the transportation resource survey revealed that most respondents utilized a personal vehicle, ETHRA services, and ride sharing as their current way of traveling around the ETHRA region. Most respondents who use the bus and van services for ETHRA use these services on Mondays. Saturday had the lowest utilization for the bus and van services of the respondents. When respondents were asked the purpose of the trips, a majority of respondents (close to 50%) stated that they use the services to get to work. Although work was mentioned within the surveys, there were no strategies discussed related to employment transportation.

Rural Regional Transportation Plan: East Tennessee North Rural Planning Organization

The Rural Regional Transportation Plan was created to examine the current and future conditions of the transportation roadway network in the East Tennessee North Rural Organization. The main goals for the region include:

- Improving safety throughout the region
- Providing multimodal options

It was found that most commuters within the East Tennessee North RPO travel to Anderson County for work. The county with the most commuters leaving for work somewhere else in the region is Campbell County, followed by Claiborne and Morgan County.

Rural Regional Transportation Plan: East Tennessee South Rural Planning Organization

The Rural Regional Transportation Plan was created to examine the current and future conditions of the transportation roadway network in the East Tennessee South Rural Organization. The main goals for the region include:

- Improving safety throughout the region
- Providing multimodal options

The plan discusses the lack of formal ridesharing programs in the East Tennessee South RPO but mentions the neighboring Knoxville Smart Trips TDM Program.

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tdot/multimodaltransportation/coordinated-plans/ETHRA%20Coordinated%20plan.pdf>

First Tennessee

Johnson City Urbanized Area Coordinated Public-Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

The study area for the plan included the Johnson City Urbanized Area, including jurisdictions of Bluff City, Elizabethton, Johnson City, Jonesborough, part of the Town of Unicoi, and parts of Carter, Sullivan, and Washington Counties. There are many different providers available within the study area, including Johnson City Transit (JCT), NET Trans, Dawn of Hope, Frontier Health, Johnson City Senior Center, Jonesborough Senior Center, TennCare Transportation, Tennessee Department of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation, and FTAAD MyRide TN.

The plan noted that the study group utilized a public survey that was advertised through local news media, social media, and postings in public places and on buses. A major finding through the public survey was that approximately 46% of the respondents needed a ride and don't have one, specifically when going to work. Overall, a majority of respondents were unaware of the transportation options in the study area.

Through the plan NET Trans indicated that access to jobs on weekend and evenings was a current gap in services. Individuals who were recently released from jail or prison, people on probation, and individuals in recovery programs are some who lack transportation resources that would help them toward gainful employment and stable housing. A major goal that came out of the study was to identify new funding sources to sustain and expand JCT's Job Access Program, service expansions for access to jobs and college, and implementing shared-ride, demand response or shuttle services for access to employment-designed around shift work.

Tri-Cities Region Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan

The purpose of the Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for the Tri-Cities Region is to create a better transit system for transportation disadvantaged populations, including older adults, persons with disabilities, and persons with low income. The Tri-Cities region is comprised of ten counties: Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington Counties. One of the geographical service gaps or unmet needs includes limited access to employment facilities on the periphery of urban areas. Another area with service gaps is due to a lack of provider and agency participation in coordination, especially when it comes for employment-related and medical-related agencies. Another gap in service that affects employment includes lack of night and weekend service, especially for individuals working evening or night shifts. Both the geographical and time-based service gaps were identified as high priority.

Some of the short-term strategies that came out of the plan include expanding service hours to include weekday early morning and evening service, expanding service hours to include weekend service, and

exploring the development of a one-stop transportation call center to coordinate services. Some of the long-term strategies include evaluating the costs of various modes of transportation and identify ways to make transportation more affordable through policies, subsidies, partnerships, and adjustments.

It was determined that within the Johnson City area, a job access service was provided to low-income individuals, welfare recipients, and persons with disabilities for employment-related trips. Northeast Tennessee Rural Public Transit provides job access services for employed-related and childcare trips for eligible customers with a focus on linking rural areas with job opportunities. Within the Bristol Tennessee area, the current job access program is available for Tennessee residents.

<https://jcmppo.org/coordinatedplan.html>

[Coordination Plan Tri-Cities Region.pdf \(tn.gov\)](#)

Mid-Cumberland

nMotion Transit Plan

The Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and the Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee (MTA) engaged in a regionwide public discussion to improve regional mobility. The recommendations resulting from the nMotion planning process aim to:

- Improve access to opportunity for those with limited auto availability
- Expand the range of competitive travel options for all Middle Tennesseans
- Simplify and integrate various means of transportation to develop a seamless, connected system to provide Middle Tennessee with the maximum travel flexibility
- Prioritize major transit investments in transit-supportive areas
- Significantly increase ridership, especially in target markets

Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP)

The Human Services Transportation Plan developed by TDOT in coordination with GNRC, provides insight into unmet needs and gaps for transportation of seniors and people with disabilities. The study area for this plan included all counties within the Mid Cumberland area. Although transportation to employment was not considered as part of this planning effort, the HSTP provides insight into existing urban and rural transportation services, including private transportation providers, though these services are for-profit and not specifically available to the general public. Since the development of this plan, GNRC has now taken responsibility for updating and maintaining this plan and is currently expected to begin the planning process to update the HSTP.

Regional Transportation Plan - Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC)/ Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Regional Transportation Plan sets forth regional goals and objectives, identifies transportation needs across short to long-term timeframes and prioritizes investments by local governments, TDOT, and transit agencies that will utilize federal transportation funding. The long-term vision includes:

- Reimagined Corridors with Integrated Technology
- Expanded and Modernized Transit Options
- More Active and Walkable Communities

The core strategies of the plan recognize that transportation is an issue too complex for any one organization or governmental agency to address alone. Accordingly, the region will need to work together, across jurisdictional boundaries to address existing and emerging transportation challenges. The strategies are broad and include:

- Adopt a Fix-it-First approach that reinvests in existing infrastructure
- Focus short- and mid-term investments on complete streets and the deployment of new technologies to improve safety, traffic operations, and traveler information
- Increase coordination between transportation and economic development decisions to better align public and private investment
- Engage the public in new and innovative ways, including creative placemaking, to enhance community buy-in and to minimize impacts of construction on neighborhoods
- Establish consensus to fund and implement projects of regional significance including multi-modal upgrades to key corridors and major improvements to the aging interstate loop around downtown Nashville

Area Plan on Aging and Disability – Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC)

GNRC serves as the Area Agency for federal funds through the Older Americans Act for the Mid-Cumberland region. The Area Plan on Aging and Disability is a detailed statement of the manner in which an Area Agency is developing a comprehensive and coordinated community-based system throughout its planning area for all services authorized under the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) and state-funded programs. There are multiple program areas the OAA, including Supportive Services, Nutrition Services, Disease Prevention, Family Caregiver Support and Ombudsman and Elder Abuse. Transportation of senior adults, over the age of 60, is a component of the Supportive Services program, however, eligibility to participate in OOA programs is required.

One of GNRC's roles in the planning process is to procure and coordinate the provider network and connect individuals to services, including transportation services. GNRC regularly conducts Area Plan surveys of seniors to identify gaps and needs. One of the top needs is Transportation, which has been identified as one of the top three challenges faced by the Area Agency on Aging and Disability in its 2022 Plan. The plan established the following goals for its senior transportation component:

- Collaborative – Partner with state and local transportation service providers and volunteer transportation programs in the region.
- Diverse – Seek out and support additional volunteer transportation programs throughout the region.
- Streamlined – Work with GNRC's Community and Regional Planning Department to advocate for the needs of older adults and adults with disabilities with the goal to improve access to existing transportation options and services.
- Data-Driven – Work with GNRC's Community and Regional Planning Department to evaluate data related to older adults and transportation access.
- Anticipatory – Participate in efforts to coordinate transportation for older adults and adults with disabilities, developing systems that will serve older adults for years to come.

Clarksville Metropolitan Planning Area 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The Clarksville MPO planning area includes Montgomery County in Tennessee and Christian County across the border in Kentucky. Local governments within this study area include the City of Clarksville and Oak Grove in Tennessee, as well as the City of Hopkinsville in Kentucky. Fort Campbell, which resides both in Montgomery County, Tennessee and Christian County, Kentucky, provides for its own transportation planning, however its impact on travel and roadway needs is considered as part of the MPO planning process. The major focus of transit related needs in the plan is on improving the Clarksville Transit System (CTS) fixed route services and ADA paratransit service, The Lift. The overall goals of the plan are:

- Provide a safe transportation system.
- Provide a well-maintained transportation system.
- Provide a multimodal transportation system.
- Provide a reliable transportation system by reducing travel delay times and improving mobility.
- Develop an economically and environmentally sustainable transportation system that provides equitable participation and benefits across the diversity of the MPA.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) – Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC)

The Greater Nashville Regional Council is designated as the region’s economic development district by the State of Tennessee and the U.S. Economic Development Administration. GNRC manages the CEDS process. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a federally required document that serves as a regional blueprint for creating a stronger, more diverse economy. It is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development and is the result of a regionally owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of the greater Nashville area.

The CEDS provides information to serve decision-makers as they determine the region’s economic development goals and appropriate plans for action. It allows business and government leaders throughout the region to set priorities for investments in both physical and human capital to solidify how the area as a whole will adapt to a constantly changing global economy.

A key element of this plan is a focus on workforce development, which can include a focus on employment transportation. The Strategic Goals of the current plan are:

- **Goal 1. Prepared and Aligned** - The key to a strong economy is a workforce that has the necessary education and training to meet current and future employment needs.
- **Goal 2. Invested and Competitive** - Competitive regional economies foster the attraction, expansion, and retention of businesses and promote an entrepreneurial spirit.
- **Goal 3. Coordinated and Connected** - The economy must be built upon sound infrastructure that moves people, goods, energy, and resources efficiently throughout the market.
- **Goal 4. Vibrant and Livable** - Resilient and thriving regions intentionally plan for economic growth that strikes a balance with conservation and preservation and aims to improve the quality life for all residents.

Nashville Region Vital Signs Survey Report – Nashville Chamber of Commerce

The Nashville region is recognized for its economic vitality and quality of life. The Region’s Vital Signs report is a collaborative process that is led by the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, which looks to identify what’s working in the region as well as forecast emerging issues and challenges, while seeking to develop regional solutions. The Chamber’s Research Center leads the data collection and coordinates with the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization through GNRC as the lead partner.

The Vital Signs survey received over 3,100 responses from residents of the Clarksville and Nashville MSAs in September and October of 2021. The analysis also includes a Vital Signs Action Team, which is composed of regional business and community leaders, who participate in a yearlong discussion about priority setting and action.

Vital Signs 2021 focuses on the primary challenge facing Middle Tennessee, and the nation, as the economy recovers from COVID – the lack of available, qualified workforce and the barriers that Middle Tennesseans face in joining the labor force and finding work. Understanding the issues around workforce, based on quantitative data and Middle Tennesseans’ opinions on challenges and solutions, is the work of Vital Signs 2021. The key focus of the 2021 Vital Signs report was to identify barriers that Middle Tennesseans face in joining the work force and finding work. The following areas are highlighted so they may be addressed by elected officials and business leaders to continue the prosperity of the Middle Tennessee region:

- Workforce – Aiding Middle Tennesseans in securing needed training, education or certification to compete and thrive in the evolving workforce.
- Childcare - Providing childcare that is high quality, affordable, and accessible for Middle Tennesseans.
- Housing - Addressing housing affordability – creating housing that is affordable across incomes and proximate to work.
- Transportation and Infrastructure - Tackling transportation challenges including onerous commutes given Middle Tennessee’s limited transit options.

Connect Downtown

Connect Downtown is a current joint project of the Nashville Department of Transportation (NDOT), WeGo Public Transit, the Nashville Downtown Partnership, and the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) to improve mobility and address traffic congestion in the downtown core. This effort will identify projects, programs, and policies to better manage Downtown’s increasing congestion and make it easier for people to get around via all modes of transportation. As downtown Nashville serves as a key destination, even for rural transportation, and particularly for employment, the results of this effort will have an impact on improving overall transportation within the region.

<https://www.gnrc.org/194/Regional-Transportation-Plan>

https://www.gnrc.org/DocumentCenter/View/2788/Area-Plan-on-Aging-and-Disability_FY-2023-to-2026

<http://www.cuampo.com/metropolitan-transit-plan/>

<https://www.gnrc.org/DocumentCenter/View/1034/Coordinated-Human-Services-Transportation-2016?bidId=>

<https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/tdot/long-range-planning-home/longrange-oct/rural-regional-transportation-plans.html>

<https://www.gnrc.org/286/Economic-Development-Strategy>

<https://www.nashvillechamber.com/public-policy/vital-signs>

<https://www.nashville.gov/departments/transportation/plans-and-programs/downtown-traffic-project>

Northwest

Tennessee Human Resource Agency. Northwest Tennessee Region Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan

Northwest Tennessee Human Resource Agency (NWTTHRA) developed this Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP) with support from TDOT in 2016. It covers the nine-county area of the Northwest region. NWTTHRA served as the lead organization while multiple state departments, local housing agencies, and nonprofits served as stakeholders. This plan evaluated the existing services and current service gaps and unmet needs of the transportation disadvantaged populations: older adults, persons with disabilities, and persons with low income.

The plan notes that transportation disadvantaged populations often face challenges such as getting to medical appointments, reaching their place of employment, shopping and attending to personal errands. This study prioritized service gaps and unmet needs into high, moderate, and low priorities across five categories: information and awareness, geographical, time-based, client-based, and service quality. The highest priority was both a lack of weekday early morning and evening services and a lack of weekend services (time-based). Also of high priority was a lack of routes for veterans to Memphis or Nashville areas (geographical) and lack of funding to improve technology systems (service quality). Moderate priority included lack of coverage in rural areas (geographical), lack of rider assistance (client-based), and lack of funding to maintain or expand services (service quality).

To address service gaps and unmet needs within Northwest Tennessee, this CPT-HSTP identified both short-term and long-term strategies. It notes that NWTTHRA will monitor transportation issues across this study area and determine how the strategies outlined may apply to ongoing planning efforts. The plan noted that changes to existing transit conditions could require changes to future strategies.

West Tennessee Regional Labor and Workforce Development Board. West Tennessee Program Year 2020 – 2022 Regional Plan

The 2020-2022 Regional Plan represents the 21 counties of the Workforce Development Area, which includes the Southwest, Northwest, and Greater Memphis Labor and Workforce Development Areas and their respective Boards. The plan details coordination among multiple state and federal programs through American Jobs Centers (AJC) in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) The plan includes an analysis of economic conditions, employer needs, and the regional workforce within the study area.

Although the plan primarily addresses employment and population trends and job creation, transportation is discussed as a challenge to individuals both in the work force and not in the workforce. The plan noted that in rural counties a lack of transportation is one of the top barriers to employment for those served by AJCs. To mitigate this obstacle, the plan suggested partnerships with transportation network companies (e.g., Uber, Lyft, etc.) and rural transit such as Northwest Tennessee Human Resource Agency (NWTTHRA), Southwest Human Resource Agency (SWHRA) and Delta Human Resource Agency (DHRA).

Northwest Local Workforce Development Board. Program Year 2020-2022 Local Plan for the Northwest Workforce Development Area

This local plan was developed within the framework of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), administered by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The Northwest Tennessee Workforce Board (NWTNWB) and Tennessee Department of Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation Program are charged with the goal to enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and other individuals. The Board enters into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with American Jobs Centers (AJC) to identify the roles and responsibilities of each partner, ensure all partner programs operate in a mutual manner to refer service programs, and establish methods of referral in what they call their One-Stop Service Delivery System.

Section 9 of the MOU notes that the greatest barrier for many AJC customers is the lack of transportation. Mass public transportation is not available in Northwest Tennessee. However, transportation services are available through various community agencies such as NWTHRA. To enhance the provision of transportation services, the Regional Planning Council promotes sharing of best practices for replication elsewhere.

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tdot/multimodaltransportation/coordinated-plans/CoordinationPlan_Northwest_Region.pdf

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/workforce/documents/wfs/2020WestTNRegionalDRAFTPlan.pdf>

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/workforce/documents/wfs/2020NorthwestLocalDRAFTPlan.pdf>

South Central

Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan South Central Tennessee

The Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for the counties that make up the South Central Tennessee Development District service area involved active participation from the public and local agencies that provide transportation for the general public, older adults, and individuals with disabilities. The public survey was advertised in local newspapers, on the project website, and local key stakeholders were invited to post a flyer announcing the survey for their clients, guests, and peer agencies. Overall, a majority of respondents of the survey stated they either do not have service or are unaware of any available services. Only 25% of respondents stated that there is some difficulty getting to their place of work. Two stakeholder meetings were held to focus on the goals from the previous Coordinated Plan and any progress that was made toward reaching those goals.

Regional Transportation Plan - Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC)/ Metropolitan Planning Organization

The mission of the Greater Nashville Regional Council is to assist local communities and state agencies in the development of plans and programs that guide growth and development in the most desirable, efficient, and cost-effective manner, while ensuring the continued long-term livability of the region. GNRC serves seven counties, which includes Maury county in the South Central region. GNRC also serves as the administrator for the Metropolitan Planning Organization which develops the Regional Transportation Plan for Davidson, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson counties coordinates. In addition, GNRC coordinates with TDOT and the Clarksville Urbanized Area MPO to ensure full collaboration in the development of the Tennessee Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Clarksville Urbanized Area Long Range Transportation Plan.

The Regional Transportation Plan sets forth regional goals and objectives, identifies transportation needs across short to long-term timeframes and prioritizes investments by local governments, TDOT, and transit agencies that will utilize federal transportation funding. The long-term vision includes:

- Reimagined corridors with integrated technology
- Expanded and modernized transit options
- More Active and walkable communities

The core strategies of the plan recognize that transportation is an issue too complex for any one organization or governmental agency to address alone. Accordingly, the region will need to work together, across jurisdictional boundaries to address existing and emerging transportation challenges. The strategies are broad and include:

- Adopt a fix-it-first approach that reinvests in existing infrastructure
- Focus short- and mid-term investments on complete streets and the deployment of new technologies to improve safety, traffic operations, and traveler information
- Increase coordination between transportation and economic development decisions to better align public and private investment
- Engage the public in new and innovative ways, including creative placemaking, to enhance community buy-in and to minimize impacts of construction on neighborhoods
- Establish consensus to fund and implement projects of regional significance including multi-modal upgrades to key corridors and major improvements to the aging interstate loop around downtown Nashville

Area Plan on Aging and Disability – Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC)

The mission of the Greater Nashville Regional Council is to assist local communities and state agencies in the development of plans and programs that guide growth and development in the most desirable, efficient, and cost-effective manner, while ensuring the continued long-term livability of the region.

Service providers were surveyed, and it was concluded that transportation was one of the top three most pressing changes to be made in order to improve daily life for older adults.

Nashville Metropolitan Planning Area 2045 Regional Transportation Plan

The Nashville MPO, or the Greater Nashville Regional Council (GNRC), planning area includes Maury County in South Central Tennessee, along with six other counties. As the Nashville metropolitan area continues to grow, the Regional Transportation Plan will serve as a guide for transportation improvements and investments over the next 20 plus years. The overall goals of the plan are:

- Maintain a state of good repair
- Improve roadway safety for all users
- Mitigate congestion to keep region moving
- Increase access to economic opportunity
- Minimize disruptive impacts of projects
- Align with local, state and national policies

<https://www.gnrc.org/194/Regional-Transportation-Plan>

https://www.gnrc.org/DocumentCenter/View/2788/Area-Plan-on-Aging-and-Disability_FY-2023-to-2026

<https://online.flippingbook.com/view/1030522283/>

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tdot/multimodaltransportation/coordinated-plans/SCTDD%20Coordinated%20Plan.pdf>

Southeast

Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency

High priority needs identified in the previous Coordinated Plan include scheduled work routes that were coordinated within the ten counties, door-to-door scheduled work routes for individuals with disabilities, and weekend, evening, and holiday transportation services. Two stakeholder meetings were utilized to gain a better understanding of the goals from the previous plan that had been reached or not. Input from outreach efforts indicated that:

- Many respondents are unaware of the transportation options available.
- In regard to jobs, most of the jobs are within the county of residence but may require shift work that begins or ends outside public transportation hours of operation.
- Current public transportation services in rural areas may not be robust enough to meet the demand for daily demand response work trips and the demand for medical transportation and other trip needs.

Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan For the Cleveland Urbanized Area

The Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan For the Cleveland Urbanized Area utilized a stakeholder survey to gain understanding on current unmet needs in the community. Of the survey respondents, only a small number stated that they provide employment services to their clients. Some of the unmet needs include services on weekday evenings, especially when it comes to maintaining second and third shift jobs. Within the workshop, it was noted that many Cleveland area residents have limited employment opportunities or have difficulty maintaining a job due to lack of transportation. Vanpool was mentioned as a less expensive way to create employment transportation services.

A major unmet need that was identified was the need for extended evening hours of service, in order to better serve the following populations:

- People who work second and third shifts
- Adults who are pursuing additional education and/or training
- Adults who are receiving counseling
- Both adults and youth who do not otherwise have access to fitness and recreational programs, and organized sports

Although several strategies were recommended, relevant strategies include:

- Operate longer service hours to provide better services to attract working patrons, particularly those working evening retail service hours
- Develop a route that provides continuous service along Lee Highway, north and south of the city, with connections to downtown Cleveland and the transfer hub
- Create a ridesharing program to support both ridesharing within the Cleveland area and ridesharing for trips to Chattanooga
- Develop a "look-up" tool to match riders to the appropriate service area
- Get more involved with major employers, the Chamber of Commerce, and staffing agencies

2045 Regional Transportation Plan Update | 2040 Regional Transportation Plan – Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency

The Chattanooga-Hamilton County / North Georgia Transportation Planning Organization (CHCNGA TPO) is the Federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the CHCNGA TPO's Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundary comprised of all of Hamilton County, Tennessee; Catoosa County, Georgia; and the northern portions of Dade and Walker Counties in Georgia. The 2045 Update and 2040 Regional Transportation Plan establishes regional transportation priorities and performance framework for the next 20+ years. The goals of this plan are:

- Build and maintain safe and healthy communities
- Connect communities to recreational, social and economic opportunities in the region by providing multimodal travel options to activity and economic centers

- Grow economic opportunity through strategic investment in critical regional infrastructure

The RTP included a robust public input process that engaged a broad range of stakeholders and community members from throughout the region, including public transit and human services transportation providers and users.

2019 Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) - Chattanooga-Hamilton County/North Georgia Transportation Planning Organization (TPO)

The CHSTP is a transportation planning document that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors, and people with low incomes. The focus of this plan is to:

- Identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors, and people with low incomes
- Provide strategies for meeting those needs
- Prioritize transportation services and projects for funding and implementation using the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities federal funding program

To maintain and update the CHSTP, the TPO convenes a committee of stakeholders from across the region to review and process the Section 5310 projects for selection of funding. The Human Services Transportation Committee meets quarterly to engage in these discussions and includes representatives from nearly two dozen distinct public, private, and nonprofit agencies in the TPO area as well as representatives of seniors and individuals with disabilities.

The Human Services Transportation Committee has identified the following strategies to help address the identified gaps in current services:

- Continuation of Job Access services
- Avoid duplication of effort and resources by coordinating Medicaid transportation with public transportation
- Continue to support the Mobility Management and coordination efforts between CARTA and Care-A-Van and STHRA with expansion to other agencies and areas as requested and needed
- Extend service in areas that currently have no public transportation, particularly East Ridge and Red Bank
- Extend the hours of bus service
- Establish funding for transportation for indigents without other resources; e.g., fund monthly bus passes
- Purchase wheelchair accessible taxis
- Improve intercity-intercounty transportation coordination, including paratransit, and consider the accessibility of drop-off points in this coordination
- Improve pedestrian access to bus stops
- Identify rural transportation opportunities

Rural Regional Transportation Plan (2019) – Southeast Regional Planning Organization (RPO)

The Southeast RPO Rural Regional Transportation Plan (RRTP) examines the current and future conditions of the transportation roadway network in the Southeast Rural Planning Organization region. The Southeast RPO consists of nine counties: Bledsoe, Bradley, Grundy, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Polk, Rhea, and Sequatchie counties. There are two Metropolitan Planning Organizations in or adjacent to the RPO: The Cleveland MPO and the Chattanooga-Hamilton County/North Georgia Transportation Planning Organization (CHCRPA). The Cleveland MPO includes most of Bradley County and portions of McMinn County. The CHCRPA includes all of Hamilton County and portions of Dade, Walker, and Catoosa Counties in Georgia. The cities of Chattanooga and Cleveland are both adjacent to the RPO, attributing to the residential, commercial, and industrial development of the RPO area and contributing to workplace commuting.

The RRTP was led by the Tennessee Department of Transportation, Long Range Planning Division, the University of Tennessee Center for Transportation Research, and the Southeast Tennessee Development District. Main goals of this plan include the need to improve multimodal access in areas particularly in town and around schools through better sidewalk connectivity and safer roads for bicycle travel. The plan recommends that RPOs continue to collaborate with TDOT, the development districts, and additional state agencies in their transportation planning, as well as apply for all relevant grants and planning programs that cater to this plan.

2045 Regional Transportation Plan Update (2021) – Cleveland Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The Cleveland MPO planning area includes the cities of Cleveland, Charleston, Calhoun, a large portion of Bradley County and a small portion of McMinn County. The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is a 20+ year multimodal strategy and capital improvement program to guide effective investment of public funds in transportation facilities. Specifically, the plan focuses on managing congestion, increasing regional mobility options, and conforming to national air quality standards. The goals of this plan include:

- Improve the safety and security of all transportation system users and reduce fatalities and severe injuries on the system
- Provide healthy, convenient, and equitable transportation choices for those communities that are underserved or traditionally underrepresented
- Enhance the existing network to include a healthy balance of pedestrian, bicycle, transit and roadway connectivity
- Improve the reliability of the movement of people and goods across the region in support of time-sensitive freight movement and logistics
- Maintain and enhance existing transportation infrastructure assets in a good state of repair

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2022 - Southeast Tennessee – Northwest Georgia Economic Development District (SETD)

The Mission of the SETD is to elevate the region by caring for its people, building its workforce, and developing its economy. The CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. It provides an assessment of where the Southeast region is today, a vision for the future, and a plan for how to get there. The components of the Southeast Tennessee CEDS are:

- A regional profile, providing data on the region's economy, population, infrastructure, and environment
- A SWOT analysis, identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of our region
- A strategic direction, establishing the vision and specific goals for the region
- An action plan, providing the steps and strategies for achieving the region's vision
- An evaluation framework, which will establish and track the region's performance in reaching the established goals

The Action Plan of the CEDS focuses on eight goals. These are:

- Goal 1: Prepare Workers for Jobs in Growing Fields
- Goal 2: Improve the Health and Wellbeing of the Region's Population
- Goal 3: Maintain and Expand the Region's Infrastructure
- Goal 4: Build Economic Resilience through Innovation and Diversification
- Goal 5: Build Community Resilience through Smart Planning and Investment
- Goal 6: Restore and Protect the Region's Environment
- Goal 7: Utilize Placemaking Strategies to Improve and Revitalize our communities
- Goal 8: Ensure that All Residents have a Safe Place to Live

From a transportation focus, Goal 3, Maintain and Expand the Region's Infrastructure includes improved east-west transportation access and plans for non-vehicular traffic via multi-modal connections.

Chattanooga-Hamilton County/North Georgia Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan

The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Transportation Planning Organization Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan discusses current existing programs that focus on employment transportation options within the study area. Catoosa Trans-Aid is a public transportation service available for residents of Catoosa County that provides services for medical, shopping, and work-related trips. Dade County Transit provides trips for GED classes and work-related trips, if they are within established routes. Some programs that were mentioned that provide employment-related transit to individuals with mental disabilities include AIM Center's Transitional Employment Program.

The TPO conducted a community survey, both on paper and online, that aimed to gain a better understanding of current needs within the existing transportation services. However, within the survey results, an increase in transportation options for work-related trips was not of importance to respondents.

<https://chcrpa.org/project/2045-rtp/> (Website)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1e0PtFWISnWrklApDigTFjhhmuGeN7GhX/view> (Update)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-Mc3eaZnCgSFsZ0nxuonChEXpCQNUuR/view> (2040 Plan)

<https://chcrpa.org/coordinated-public-transit-human-services-transportation-plan/>

<https://www.sedev.org/rpo/>

<https://clevelandtn.gov/404/Long-Range-Transportation-Plan>

<https://ceds2022-setdd.hub.arcgis.com>

Southwest

Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan Southwest Human Resource Agency

The Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for the Southwest Human Resource Agency utilized the current list of inventory and services to understand the current unmet needs. Two stakeholder meetings, as well as a public survey, were utilized to gain current unmet needs from the public. Out of 82 survey respondents, 40 respondents indicated they have a mobility limitation that limits their ability to walk to a bus stop and/or board a vehicle without assistance. The plan noted the creation of Blue Oval City, which is coming to Stanton in 2025, which will bring 6,000 new jobs to the area.

Tennessee Department of Transportation. Blue Oval City Transit Study

TDOT is conducting a feasibility study of various options for transporting employees to and from the future Ford “Blue Oval City” site in Haywood County, a \$5.6 billion investment by Ford expected to generate 5,760 full-time jobs on site and 27,000 jobs overall (direct and indirect). The study explores connections between the urban areas of Memphis and Jackson and the site, but it also considers access to the site from twelve surrounding counties: Shelby, Fayette, Hardeman, Chester, Madison, Haywood, Tipton, Lauderdale, Dyer, Crockett, Gibson, and Madison. Transit modes under consideration include passenger rail, commuter express bus, on-demand transit, and other options.

Southwest Human Resource Agency and Jackson Transit Authority. Madison County, Tennessee Human Services Transportation Plan

The Jackson Transit Authority (JTA) and Southwest Human Resource Agency (SWHRA) combined efforts to formulate the Madison County, Tennessee Coordination Plan. Other agencies attended public meetings and contributed to the formulation of this plan. The Coordination Plan briefly identifies various types of transportation challenges, gaps, and unmet needs.

SWHRA provides demand response transportation service to rural areas of Madison County as well as the other seven counties in the Southwest Region. JTA provides fixed route bus service within the City of Jackson. Northwest Tennessee Human Resource Agency (NWTHRA) provides demand response service from the Northwest region area into Jackson/Madison County, but not within Madison County. Other individual agencies that provide transportation services at large or to their respective residents are Madison Haywood Development Services (MHDS), TennCare, and the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency.

Employment was identified as one of the top destinations for JTA and SWHRA passengers, along with medical, educational, shopping, and recreational destinations.

Southwest Labor and Workforce Development Board. Program Year 2020–2022 Local Plan for the Southwest Workforce Development Area (2020)

The Southwest Local Workforce Development Board (SWLWDB) developed this local plan within the framework of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), administered by the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Regional plans developed under the WIOA are designed to coordinate the workforce development efforts of state agencies, local partners, and private sector contractors that operate American Job Center (AJC) facilities. There is an AJC facility in each of the eight counties in the Southwest region.

Transportation is identified as one of the support services needed to expand access to employment in the region. The plan states that the Southwest Local Board has developed and maintained policies and procedures to direct issuance of and coordination of transportation and other support services, and that support service assistance is determined based on each individual’s need, current situation, and funding availability. It notes that transportation assistance provided by the Southwest LWDB can be in the form of gas cards, travel reimbursement for employment trips, or financial assistance with vehicle repair.

<https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/workforce/documents/wfs/SouthwestFinalLocalPlan.pdf>

Upper Cumberland

Upper Cumberland Region: Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan

The purpose of the Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan was to create a better transit system for transportation disadvantaged populations. The study area is comprised of fourteen counties: Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, and White.

One of the geographical service gaps or unmet needs includes establishing employment shuttles from rural areas. Some strategies and activities to address employment needs include:

- Reviewing and expanding service to key activity centers currently underserved by transit
- Reviewing service to the Nashville area and assess the possibility of additional services as needed
- Exploring service to include holiday service

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tdot/multimodaltransportation/coordinated-plans/CoordinationPlan_UpperCumberland_Region.pdf

Appendix B

Federal JARC Projects

1. ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES. Funds from the JARC program are available for capital, planning, and operating expenses that support the development and maintenance of transportation services designed to transport low-income individuals to and from jobs and activities related to their employment and to support reverse commute projects.

In the conference report accompanying SAFETEA-LU, the conferees stated an expectation that FTA would “continue its practice of providing maximum flexibility to job access projects that are designed to meet the needs of individuals who are not effectively served by public transportation, consistent with the use of funds described in the *Federal Register*, Volume 67 (April 8, 2002)” (H.R. Report 109–203, at Section 3018 (July 28, 2005)). Therefore, eligible projects may include, but are not limited to capital, planning, and operating assistance to support activities such as:

- a. Late-night and weekend service;
- b. Guaranteed ride home service;
- c. Shuttle service;
- d. Expanding fixed-route public transit routes;
- e. Demand response van service;
- f. Ridesharing and carpooling activities;
- g. Transit-related aspects of bicycling (such as adding bicycle racks to vehicles to support individuals that bicycle a portion of their commute or providing bicycle storage at transit stations);
- h. Local car loan programs that assist individuals in purchasing and maintaining vehicles for shared rides;
- i. Promotion, through marketing efforts, of the:
 - (1) use of transit by workers with non-traditional work schedules;
 - (2) use of transit voucher programs by appropriate agencies for welfare recipients and other low-income individuals;
 - (3) development of employer-provided transportation such as shuttles, ridesharing, carpooling; or
 - (4) use of transit pass programs and benefits under Section 132 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986;
- j. Supporting the administration and expenses related to voucher programs. This activity is intended to supplement existing transportation services by expanding the number of providers available or the number of passengers receiving transportation

services. Vouchers can be used as an administrative mechanism for payment to providers of alternative transportation services. The JARC program can provide vouchers to low-income individuals to purchase rides, including (1) mileage reimbursement as part of a volunteer driver program, (2) a taxi trip, or (3) trips provided by a human service agency. Providers of transportation can then submit the voucher to the JARC project administering agency for payment based on pre-determined rates or contractual arrangements. Transit passes for use on fixed route or Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) complementary paratransit service are not eligible. Vouchers are an operational expense which requires a 50/50 (Federal/local) match;

- k. Acquiring Geographic Information System (GIS) tools;
- l. Implementing Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), including customer trip information technology;
- m. Integrating automated regional public transit and human service transportation information, scheduling and dispatch functions;
- n. Deploying vehicle position-monitoring systems;
- o. Subsidizing the costs associated with adding reverse commute bus, train, carpool van routes or service from urbanized areas and nonurbanized areas to suburban work places;
- p. Subsidizing the purchase or lease by a non-profit organization or public agency of a van or bus dedicated to shuttling employees from their residences to a suburban workplace;
- q. Otherwise facilitating the provision of public transportation services to suburban employment opportunities;
- r. Supporting new mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation. Mobility management is an eligible capital cost. Mobility management techniques may enhance transportation access for populations beyond those served by one agency or organization within a community. For example, a non-profit agency could receive JARC funding to support the administrative costs of sharing services it provides to its own clientele with other low-income individuals and coordinate usage of vehicles with other non-profits, but not the operating costs of the service. Mobility management is intended to build coordination among existing public transportation providers and other transportation service providers with the result of expanding the availability of service. Mobility management activities may include:
 - (1) The promotion, enhancement, and facilitation of access to transportation services, including the integration and coordination of services for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals;

- (2) Support for short term management activities to plan and implement coordinated services;
- (3) The support of State and local coordination policy bodies and councils;
- (4) The operation of transportation brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies and customers;
- (5) The provision of coordination services, including employer-oriented Transportation Management Organizations' and Human Service Organizations' customer-oriented travel navigator systems and neighborhood travel coordination activities such as coordinating individualized travel training and trip planning activities for customers;
- (6) The development and operation of one-stop transportation traveler call centers to coordinate transportation information on all travel modes and to manage eligibility requirements and arrangements for customers among supporting programs; and
- (7) Operational planning for the acquisition of intelligent transportation technologies to help plan and operate coordinated systems inclusive of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, Global Positioning System technology, coordinated vehicle scheduling, dispatching and monitoring technologies as well as technologies to track costs and billing in a coordinated system and single smart customer payment systems (acquisition of technology is also eligible as a stand-alone capital expense).

Appendix C

Maryland JARC Program Information

FY 2023-FY 2024
MARYLAND JOBS ACCESS AND
REVERSE COMMUTE PROGRAM

Grant Application Overview

INTRODUCTION

During the 2018 session, the Maryland General Assembly enacted legislation that established the Maryland Jobs Access Reverse Commute Program. Fiscal Year 2023 and Fiscal Year 2024 will be the second two years of five years of funding for this program. The Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA) will continue to administer the program.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

The Maryland Jobs Access Reverse Commute (MD-JARC) grant program is modeled after the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant program, Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC). By using transportation services, this program is designed to connect targeted populations with employment areas that have experienced significant growth.

PROGRAM GRANT CYCLE

The second grant cycle for this program will be for a two-year period from FY 2023 through FY 2024. The program will begin on July 1, 2022, and last through June 30, 2024.

ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS

Eligible MD-JARC grant recipients include:

- Private Non-Profit 501c3 organizations
- Local Transit Systems, and
- One or More Employers/Corporations (that implement a job access and reverse commute project/program)

Regardless of funding, the recipient must be able to provide the services for more than two (2) years.

DISTRIBUTION OF GRANT AWARDS

A total of \$2 million state funds over five years was allotted for the MD-JARC program; no more than \$400,000 per year is to be used for this program. Seventy percent (70%), or \$280,000 per year is to be used in the urbanized areas, while thirty percent (30%), or \$120,000 per year is for the rural areas. For FY 2023 and FY 2024, there will be a total of \$800,000 available for the two-year period.

The MDOT MTA will award grants based on funding availability, the number of eligible applications received, and the quality of the proposed projects. Minimum award amount will be \$10,000 each year of the grant cycle.

The grant application will be distributed among five geographic areas and must be endorsed by one of the following Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) or Regional Coordinating Body (RCB) areas to be endorsed prior to final submission to the MDOT MTA:

Baltimore Metropolitan Area

Baltimore Metropolitan Council

- Baltimore County
- City of Baltimore
- Harford County
- Carroll County
- Anne Arundel County
- Howard County
- Queen Anne's County

Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

- Montgomery County
- Prince George's County
- Frederick County

Southern Maryland

Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland

- Calvert County
- Charles County
- St. Mary's County

Eastern Shore

Mid-Shore Regional Council

- Cecil County
- Kent County
- Caroline County
- Talbot County
- Dorchester County
- Somerset County
- Wicomico County
- Worcester County

Western Maryland

Tri-County Council for Western Maryland

- Garrett County
- Allegany County
- Washington County

MATCH REQUIREMENTS

Cash match is required. For this operating grant there is an 75/25 (state/local) split. No more than ten percent (10%) can be used for administrative fees.

TARGETED POPULATIONS

The targeted populations for this grant are as follows:

1. Reside in low income areas (see maps at <http://www.taminc.org/Office-of-Local-Transit-Support>)
2. Have limited or no access to use of a personal vehicle; and
3. Reside in an area that has limited access to fixed route services.

If you have a project that serves a targeted population and if you can make a case for the project, please provide appropriate justification.

TARGETED EMPLOYMENT AREAS

A targeted employment area is one that has experienced significant growth in employment opportunities in sectors including construction, manufacturing, logistics, warehousing, retail trade or the service industry. You are encouraged to work with your local economic development agency to identify targeted employment areas and the appropriate employment sectors. *If you have a project for a future targeted employment area and if you can make a case for the project in that targeted employment area, please provide appropriate justification.*

PERMISSIBLE MD-JARC PROJECTS

Allowable projects will provide transportation services and solutions to targeted populations that serve targeted employment centers.

Projects may include:

- Extension of service hours on local fixed route systems
- Vanpool subsidy program(s)
- Employer-provided transportation services
- Demand response and/or deviated fixed route service

Projects not permissible for this grant:

- Ride-matching services
- Mobility Management
- Commuter Assistance programs
- For-hire vehicle or transportation network services
- Carpool services
- Volunteer driver programs

APPLICATION EVALUATION

Each MD-JARC application will be scored up to a maximum of 100 points, based upon the score for each of the following six criteria:

1.	Ability to determine and reach the targeted population, those that reside in a low-income area and have limited or no access to public transit and have limited or no use of a personal vehicle.	15 Points
2.	Ability to determine the appropriate targeted employment centers which has experienced significant growth in employment opportunities in sectors of construction, manufacturing, logistics, warehousing, retail trade or the service industry, etc.	15 Points
3.	Projected number of participants in the project.	10 Points
4.	Marketing and outreach to attract participants in the project.	15 Points
5.	Ability to sustain project/services for more than three (3) years.	20 Points
6.	Ability to coordinate proposed transportation project both internally and externally.	25 Points

	Total	100 Points
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MD-JARC Project Evaluation Committee

A committee comprised of representatives from several MDOT MTA departments will review and evaluate the endorsed applications and make funding recommendations to the MDOT Secretary for funding.