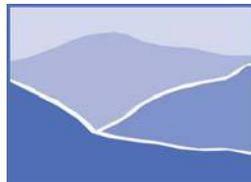


**Coordinated Public Transportation
And Human Services
Transportation Plan**

**Adopted
March 23rd, 2009**



**Southwestern Commission
Rural Planning Organization**

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I. Federal Regulatory Background

For more than twenty years, the federal government has been working to better coordinate human service transportation activities it funds.

In 1985, during an oversight hearing on Rural Transportation, Congress heard testimony prompted by concerns of the lack of federal coordination between programs, such as the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Transportation (DOT).

Aiming to better coordinate activities, the Secretaries of HHS and DOT signed an agreement establishing the Joint DOT/HHS Coordinating Council on Human Service Transportation (CCHST) in 1986. Since the CCHST's creation, the CCHST has concentrated efforts to identify barriers to coordinated transportation. At one time, the agencies identified sixty-four factors that transportation and human service representatives believed were barriers to transportation coordination. Barriers included uncertainty regarding federal responsibilities for transportation, fragmented accounting and reporting procedures, uncertainty in using resources for recipients other than program constituents, and prohibition against charging fares under the Older Americans Act.

To further support coordination, Congress included several provisions in its 1998 passage of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA –21), Public Law (PL) 105-178. Most notable was the provision to require Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC), predecessor program to today's JARC program, projects to be part of a coordinated public transit–human services transportation planning process. In February 2004, President George W. Bush released an Executive Order on Human Service Transportation Coordination to improve assistance to those who are transportation disadvantaged. The Executive Order aims to implement coordination of transportation services to operate in the most cost effective and time efficient manner possible.

Within the February 2004 Executive Order, the President established the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM).

The functions of the CCAM are to:

- Promote interagency cooperation
- Establish appropriate mechanisms to minimize duplication and overlap of federal programs and services so that transportation-disadvantaged persons have access to more transportation services
- Facilitate access to the most appropriate, cost-effective transportation services within existing resources
- Encourage enhanced customer access to the variety of transportation and resources available
- Formulate and implement administrative, policy, and procedural mechanisms that enhance transportation services at all levels

CCAM includes leadership from eleven federal departments:

- DOT
- HHS
- Labor
- Education
- Housing and Urban Affairs
- Agriculture
- Justice
- Interior
- Veterans Administration
- Social Security Administration
- National Council on Disabilities

In May 2005, the CCAM issued a report to the President with recommendations for breaking down federal barriers to transportation for all transportation-disadvantaged populations. The report detailed action plans for each of the eleven federal agencies who comprise the CCAM. Additionally, in 2005 the CCAM launched the United We Ride website, www.unitedweride.gov.

While it has been a long process, the federal government is working to strengthen its coordination requirements for human service transportation activities. In August 2005, Congress included coordination provisions in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), PL 109-059. SAFETEA-LU specifically added a coordination requirement to the newly created Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program (5310), Job Access Reverse Commute Program (5316), and New Freedoms Program (5317). FTA requires projects funded through the Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 Programs be derived from a locally developed Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP).

A CPT-HSTP identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes. It provides strategies for meeting local needs, and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation. A CPT-HSTP uses all available resources to supply transportation services efficiently and without redundancy in trips. Development of the CPT-HSTP must have the input and cooperation of transit agencies, social service agencies, community agencies, and the public.

In 2006, the CCAM issued two policy statements that take important steps to bring federal programs together to help people with disabilities, older adults, and lower income families get the transportation they need for their day-to-day mobility.

The CCAM policy statements focus on two key areas: (1) coordinated human service transportation planning and (2) vehicle sharing. These policies support communities and organizations receiving federal funding to plan transportation services together and to share resources. The policies were included as part of the recommendations in a 2005

report to the White House on Human Service Transportation Coordination. Each department on the CCAM will be taking actions to implement these policies.

II. Plan Approach

Projects funded through the Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316 - JARC) and New Freedom (Section 5317) programs require the development of a local, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan (CPT-HSTP), which should incorporate private and non-profit transportation and human services providers and the general public.

Completing the planning process required the participation of many organizations and agencies and the creation of a planning team. The following organizations comprised the planning team:

- Southwestern Commission Rural Planning Organization
- North Carolina Department of Transportation Public Transportation Division
- Cherokee County Transit
- Clay County Transportation
- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian (EBCI)
- Graham County Transit
- Jackson County Transit
- Macon Area Transit Services
- Swain Public Transit

The planning team met on November 10th 2008 to organize and plan the steering committee meetings in each of the six counties to gather input from key stakeholders. During the steering committee meetings in each of the counties the key stakeholders planned and organized the community input workshops. In the workshops, the stakeholders and the public identified needs and gaps in the current public transportation service areas. Ideas were also presented to improve the overall efficiencies of the systems. The results of the workshops are the foundation for the CP-HST which will guide the application and project selection process.

The following stakeholders participated in the steering committee and public meetings:

- American Legion/VFW
- Cherokee Analenisgi Drug Court (EBCI)
- Cherokee Boys Club (EBCI)
- Cherokee Cancer Support (EBCI)
- Cherokee Community Health (EBCI – Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian)
- Cherokee County Transit
- Cherokee County Manager
- Cherokee County Division of Social Services
- Cherokee Dialysis Center (EBCI)

- Cherokee Education and Training (EBCI)
- Cherokee Employment Securities Commission, Joblink
- Cherokee Natural Resources and Construction (EBCI)
- Cherokee Transit (EBCI)
- Classic Swan
- Congressman Shuler’s Cherokee, Clay and Graham Representative
- Clay County Division of Social Services
- Clay County Managers Office
- Clay County Ministerial Association
- Clay County Progress
- Clay County Transit
- Clay Coalition for a Safe and Drug Free County
- Communities in Schools
- CTVRV
- Graham County Citizens
- Graham County Commissioners (3)
- Graham Revitalization and Economic Action Team
- Graham County Division of Social Services
- Graham County Emergency Management Services
- Graham County Health Department
- Graham County Senior Center
- Graham County Social Services
- Graham County Transit
- Graham County Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Graham County Veterans Office
- Graham County, Stanley Furniture
- Graham County IT/GIS
- Graham County Planning Department
- Graham County Recreation Department
- Hayesville, Clay County Mayors Office
- Healthy Carolinians of Macon County
- Home Health Rehabilitation
- Hope for Families
- Industrial Opportunities Incorporated
- Jackson County Citizens
- Jackson County Department on Aging
- Jackson County Transit
- Macon County Transit
- Macon County Chamber of Commerce
- Macon County Citizens
- Macon County Division of Social Services
- Macon County Public Library
- Macon County Senior Services
- Macon County Smoky Mountain Center

- Mountain Projects Incorporated
- NC Cooperative Extension
- NC Division of Services for the Blind
- NCDOT Public Transportation Division
- NC Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Pacesetters
- Region A Area Agency on Aging
- Region A Partnership for Children
- Seniors from the whole region
- Smoky Mountain Dialysis
- Southwestern Rural Planning Organization
- State of Franklin
- Swain County Citizens
- Swain County Commissioner
- Swain County Division of Social Services
- Swain County Economic Development
- Swain County Manager
- Swain County Senior Center
- Swain County Transit
- Stecoah Valley Center
- Town of Franklin
- Tri-County Community College
- Truitt Children’s Home
- Tsali Manor (EBCI)
- United Services Organization
- VOC (EBCI)
- Women’s Wellness Center (EBCI)
- WWII POWs
- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

III. Demographics

	median age 2007/2030*	% over age 65(2007)*	persons in poverty**	persons disabled***	houses no vehicles****
Cherokee	46.6/51.5	21.4%	3,679	2,293	869
Clay	50.0/54.9	23.9%	991	964	210
Graham	44.0/47.6	19.7%	1,546	764	281
Jackson	37.4/41.4	14.6%	4,576	2,638	986
Macon	46.6/47.3	22.5%	3,722	2,591	805
Swain	40.5/42.3	15.8%	2,320	1,286	357
NC	36.3/37.8	12.0%	12.5% 2003	685,749	7.5 %

*Estimates from Office of State Budget and Management

**Persons in poverty census 2000

***Persons age 16-64 with work disability census 2000

****Occupied units with no vehicles available census 2000

IV. Inventory of Public Transportation Service and Community Service

Cherokee County Services

Cherokee County Transit (CCT) is the coordinated public transportation service in Cherokee County. It was founded in 1980. Cherokee County is located in the Western Mountains of North Carolina and is bordered to the south by the State of Georgia and the west by the State of Tennessee. CCT provides transportation services from the populated areas to the most remote mountainous portions of the County. In addition, CCT often provides out-of-county medical trips to Asheville, Atlanta and Chattanooga. Also, there are connections to nearby counties, such as Graham, Clay and Macon for Cherokee County residents. The County has two towns; Murphy and Andrews. CCT has both a Transportation Advisory Board and a Steering Committee consisting primarily of representatives of the County and other affected agencies, while the latter also includes community and business representatives as well as the County's elected officials. Cherokee County Transit provides subscription and demand-response transportation services to major human service agencies in Cherokee County and surrounding areas, as well as to the general public residing within the county. Cherokee County has a large number of persons with disabilities, mobility and financial constraints; thus, the ability to connect with essential service is critical.

CCT requires a 24-hour advance reservation for local trips and a two-day advance notice for out-of-county general trips. CCT currently provides transportation services utilizing a fleet of 14 vehicles; services are provided Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

The fleet consists of:

- 4 - 6 passenger mini vans
- 2- 14 passenger conversion vans without lifts
- 1 - 14 passenger conversion van with 3-A track wheelchair stations
- 2 - 8 passenger lift vans, each with 2 wheelchair stations
- 2 - 9 passenger lift vans, each with 2-L track wheelchair stations
- 1 - 9 passenger lift van with 2-A track wheelchair stations
- 1 - 10 passenger lift van with 4-L track wheelchair stations
- 1 -12 passenger lift van with 2-A track wheelchair stations

Clay County Services

Mission Statement: Clay County Transportation's mission is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable transportation to all citizens of Clay County.

Clay County Transportation is a consolidated public transportation system funded by state, federal and local governments as well as revenues and contributions collected by the system. It became a community transportation system in 1998, prior to that limited human service transportation was provided, out of the Clay County Senior Center.

Clay County Transportation provides transportation for human service agencies, the elderly, people with disabilities, and the general public of Clay County. The fare for general public transportation is 10% of the cost of the trip. The remaining 90% is funded by a grant. Twenty four hour notice is required to book a trip. We provide daily trips to Asheville on a service called the Ridge Runner. Operating hours are Monday-Friday 8am-5pm (except for holidays). We also provide out of county medical, and airport trips to Atlanta (Monday-Thursday), Gainesville and Chattanooga. A notice of 2 business days is required for these out of county trips. All out of county appointments must be between 10am-2pm since we pick up people in other counties. This enables us to keep the fare low for Clay County citizens.

Clay County Transportation has a number of vans that are equipped with wheelchair lifts to transport passengers with disabilities. We also welcome service animals. Please let us know, if you need one of these vans, when you book your trip. Attendants or relatives are welcome if you need assistance. All trips are on seat available basis.

The fleet consists of:

- 2 – Light transit vehicles (LTV) with lift and 2 wheelchair stations
- 6 - Lift vans, each with 2 wheelchair stations
- 2 - 14 passenger vans with no lifts
- 4 - Minivans with no lifts

Graham County Services

Graham County Transit is the only form of public transportation in Graham County. It was established in the 1990's. The system is operated by Graham County Transit and administered by Graham County Government.

Graham County has 292.067 square miles with a population of 8,000 it is a geographically isolated, Tier 1 county (economically distressed) with 27% Medicaid eligible. We have only one medical clinic in our county. Over half of our transports have to go out of county for services.

Graham County Transit is governed by a five member Board of Commissioners and also has an appointed advisory board that consists of a vast representation from our area; from providers of low income target area communities, human service agencies, veterans, seniors, elected officials, riders and the general public.

Graham County Transit provides transportation for human service agencies, the elderly, persons with disabilities, veterans and the general public of Graham County. It offers

demand response and subscription service. Our office hours are 7:00 am till 5:00 pm Monday-Friday, except state holidays. Requests for service must be made at least one business day in advance for in county trips and 48 hrs for out of county trips.

We currently go to dialysis in Cherokee Monday through Saturday, provide transportation to life sustaining services out of county on an as needed basis, Senior nutrition, medical appointments, veterans services etc. We also offer some limited after hours services. All services are based on availability of vans.

The fleet consists of:

- 1 - 21 passenger bus with no lift
- 4 - Lift vans, each with two wheelchair stations
- 3 - 7 passenger mini vans

Jackson County Services

Jackson County Transit is a fully coordinated Community Transportation System

The Transit is sponsored by Jackson County, as a section 5311 of the North Carolina Department of Transportation, under the Community Transportation Program. It was started in September of 1983 under the sponsorship of the Jackson County Council on Aging and evolved from a section 16B to a section 18. In 1996 the Transit was set up as a department of Jackson County.

The Transit is managed by a project director and has a transportation advisory board, consisting of 15 members, appointed and approved by the Jackson County Board of Commissioners and is under the over-all supervision of the County Manager. Staff is composed of the director, administrative assistant, dispatcher, five full-time drivers, and five part-time drivers.

A screening process, consisting of drug-alcohol testing, driving records, driving test and detailed background information is in place for all new employees. Once employed, training includes defensive driving, drug and alcohol training and sensitively training in the handling of our special needs clients.

Jackson County Transit provides transportation for human service agencies, the elderly, people with disabilities, and the general public of Jackson County. It offers deviated fixed routes, paratransit service, and a demand response service between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, except holidays. Requests for service must be made before 2pm prior to the scheduled trip except for The Jackson Trolley which operates Monday thru Friday from 7am until 6pm. This is a deviated fixed service that includes 11 fixed bus stops along the route. Limited service is available to Asheville, Waynesville, Franklin and Bryson City.

The fleet consists of:

- 4 - 25ft light transit vehicles
- 2 - Mini vans
- 4 - Lift equipped conversion vans
- 2 - Conversion vans
- 1 - Mini school bus

Macon County Services

Macon County Transit is the coordinated public transportation service in Macon County. It was established in 1997 through the consolidation of several county agencies' client transportation systems. The system is operated and administered by Macon County Government.

Macon County Transit provides transportation for human service agencies, the elderly, people with disabilities, and the general public of Macon County. It offers deviated fixed route, subscription routes, paratransit service, and demand response service between 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, except holidays. Requests for service must be made at least one business day in advance. Limited demand response service within the Macon County area is available between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. with at least two hours notice and based on space availability. Service is available to Sylva and Asheville daily if appointments are scheduled between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Macon County Transit operates using a fleet of 12 vehicles and serves the areas of Franklin, Highlands, and Nantahala.

The fleet consists of:

- 1 - 22ft LTV with lift and two wheelchair stations
- 7 - Lift vans, each with two wheelchair stations
- 1 - 12 passenger conversion van without lifts
- 1 - 12 passenger standard van
- 2 - 7 passenger mini van

Swain County Services

Current services are operated five days per week, from 5:30 am to 9:00 PM and provide general public transportation, daily public employment routes, out-of-county medical transportation - particularly to the VA in Asheville, to Charlotte, Chapel Hill & Durham, shuttle services to Western Carolina University and Southwestern Community College, a general public downtown loop in Bryson City, and other demand responsive transportation. The agencies currently participating with Swain Transit are as follows: Swain County Department of Social Services, State of Franklin Health Council, Focal Point on Aging, Median Behavioral Systems, Swain County Schools, after school day care program only, Vocational Rehabilitation, Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee, Webster Enterprise, Swain Co Disabled Veterans Association, Swain Co Community Corrections Program, 4 Square Community Action, Westcare Hospital Systems, Swain

Co. Joblinks/WIA, Southwestern Planning Commission, Swain Co. Family Resources, Southwestern Community College, Southwestern Child Development, Swain Co. Parks and Recreation, Swain Co. Cooperative Extension, Mountain Projects, Inc. and Angel Home Health.

Transportation is provided for a wide variety of programs operated for each of the participating agencies listed above. In addition, a significant number of out-of-county trips are taken on a regular basis. In FY 2008, Swain Transit provided 68,728 passenger trips and is the only public transportation system in Swain County.

The fleet consists of:

- 4 - Lift vehicles with 2 wheel chair stations each
- 2- 12 passenger standard vans
- 2 - 6 passenger mini-vans
- 1 - 24 passenger LTV

V. General Program Information

FTA Sections 5316 and 5317 Programs require that projects be derived from a locally developed CPT-HSTP. This chapter discusses the specific goals, who can apply, examples of eligible projects, potential funding, and the Designated Recipient (DR) for the three programs.

For each program, FTA will publish the annual apportionment in the Federal Register following the enactment of the annual DOT appropriations act. Funds are available during the FY of apportionment plus two additional years. For example, funds apportioned in FY 2006 are available until the end of FY 2008 (September 30, 2008). FTA will add any un-obligated funds remaining at the end of the period of availability to the next year's program apportionment and will reapportion the funds among all the states.

a. Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program (5316)

The Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program has had a dramatic impact on the lives of thousands of welfare recipients and low-income families, helping individuals successfully transition from welfare to work and reach needed employment support services such as childcare and job training activities. JARC was established as part of TEA-21 to address the unique transportation challenges faced by welfare recipients and low-income persons seeking to get and keep jobs. With many new entry-level jobs located in suburban areas, low-income and/or welfare recipients have found it difficult to access these jobs from their inner city, urban and rural neighborhoods on a daily basis. Further, many entry-level jobs require working late at night or on weekends when conventional transit services in many communities are either reduced or non-existent. Finally, many employment-related trips are complex for low-income persons, often involving multiple destinations, including reaching childcare facilities and other services as part of the work trip.

Section 3037 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA–21) required that JARC project selection be made through a national competition based on statutorily specified criteria. FTA conducted competitions and selected projects for funding appropriated in FY 1999–2002. However, beginning in FY 2000, Congress also began designating specific projects and recipients to receive JARC funding in the conference reports accompanying the annual appropriations acts, and directed FTA to honor those designations with statutory language specifying that “notwithstanding any other provision of law, projects and activities designated [in the conference reports] shall be eligible for funding.” Each year, more projects were Congressionally designated until finally all JARC project funding was allocated to Congressionally designated projects and recipients. Although SAFETEA–LU repealed Section 3037 of TEA–21 and substituted the new provisions of 49 U.S.C. 5316, those projects designated by Congress under Section 3037 and not yet obligated remain available to the project for obligation under the terms and conditions of Section 3037.

With the passage of SAFETEA–LU, JARC funding is allocated by formula to States for areas with populations below 200,000 persons, and to designated recipients for areas with populations of 200,000 persons and above. The formula is based on the number of eligible low-income and welfare recipients in urbanized and rural areas. SAFETEA-LU authorized a total of \$727 million for JARC grants from Fiscal Years 2006 through 2009.

The formula-based program is intended to provide an equitable funding distribution to States and communities as well as stable and reliable funding in order to implement locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans. FTA continues to provide maximum flexibility to communities in designing plans and projects to meet the transportation needs of low-income people and welfare recipients.

Examples of Projects

Eligible projects may include, but are not limited to capital, planning, and operating assistance to support activities such as:

- Late-night and weekend service
- Guaranteed ride home service
- Shuttle service
- Expanding fixed-route public transit routes
- Demand-responsive van service
- Ridesharing and carpooling activities
- Transit-related aspects of bicycling (such as adding bicycle racks to vehicles to support individuals who bicycle a portion of their commute or providing bicycle storage at transit stations)
- Local car loan programs that assist individuals in purchasing and maintaining vehicles for shared rides
- Promotion, through marketing efforts, of the:

- Use of transit by workers with non-traditional work schedules
- Use of transit voucher programs by appropriate agencies for welfare recipients and other low-income individuals
- Development of employer-provided transportation such as shuttles, ridesharing, carpooling
- Use of transit pass programs and benefits under Section 132 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986
- Supporting the administration and expenses related to voucher programs
- Acquiring GIS tools
- Implementing ITS, including customer trip information technology
- Integrating automated regional public transit and human service transportation information, scheduling, and dispatch functions
- Deploying vehicle position-monitoring systems
- Subsidizing the costs associated with adding reverse commute bus, train, carpool van routes or service from urbanized areas and non-urbanized areas to suburban work places
- 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
- Facilitating the provision of public transportation services to suburban employment opportunities
- Supporting new mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation. Mobility management activities may include:
 - 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
 - Support for short-term management activities to plan and implement coordinated services
 - Support of state and local coordination policy bodies and councils
 - Operation of transportation brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies and customers
 - 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
- 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
- Operational planning for the acquisition of intelligent transportation technologies to help plan and operate coordinated systems inclusive of GIS mapping, GPS, 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 standalone capital expense)

b. New Freedom Program (5317)

The New Freedom Program is a new program authorized in Safe Accountable Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act, a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) to support new public transportation services and public transportation alternatives beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et. seq.). This program is codified at 49 U.S.C. 5317.

The New Freedom Program grew out of the New Freedom Initiative introduced by the Bush Administration under Executive Order 13217, “Community-Based Alternatives for Individuals with Disabilities,” on June 18, 2001. The Order states: “The United States is committed to community-based alternatives for individuals with disabilities and recognizes that such services advance the best interests of the United States” and calls upon the Federal government to assist States and localities to swiftly implement the decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Olmstead v. L.C.*

Executive Order 13217 directed six Federal agencies, including the Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Housing and Urban Development and the Social Security Administration to “evaluate the policies, programs, statutes and regulations of their respective agencies to determine whether any should be revised or modified to improve the availability of community-based services for qualified individuals with disabilities.” The Departments of Transportation and Veterans Affairs, the Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management, though not named in the Executive Order, also joined in the implementation effort. Together, these agencies formed the Interagency Council on Community Living under the leadership of the DHHS.

Individuals who are transportation-disadvantaged face different challenges in accessing services depending on whether they live in urban, rural, or suburban areas. The geographic dispersion of transportation-disadvantaged populations also creates challenges for human service programs hoping to deliver transportation for their passengers.

Over the years, in response to these challenges, Federal, State and local governments, and community-based organizations created specialized programs to meet particular transportation needs. At the Federal level alone, there are at least 62 separate programs, administered by eight Federal departments, and even more agencies, that provide special transportation services to individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes. Most of these are human service programs that fund limited transportation services to provide eligible participants with access to particular services, such as job training, health care, senior centers, or rehabilitation programs.

President Bush included funds for the New Freedom Program in the annual budget request to Congress since FY 2003; however, it was not until the enactment of SAFETEA–LU that funding was authorized by Congress. Funding was first appropriated for the transportation provision in Fiscal Year 2006. The New Freedom Program is intended to fill the gaps between human service and public transportation services previously available and to facilitate the integration of individuals with disabilities into the workforce and full participation in the community.

Examples of Projects

Funds from the 5317 program are available for new services that are not required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which may include service, equipment or facility enhancements that exceed the minimum ADA obligations.

- Paratransit service area beyond 3/4 mile
- Paratransit hours beyond fixed-route hours
- Cost to change from next-day to same-day
- Cost to change from curb-to-curb to door-to-door for all riders
- Escorts or door-through-door service
- Vehicles and equipment designed to accommodate mobility aids larger and heavier than “common” wheelchairs.
- Additional wheelchair securement locations on buses
- New “feeder” service to commuter stations
 - Accessibility improvements to stations that are not key stations: Accessible path, elevator, ramp or detectable warnings, signage or wayfinding technology
 - Travel training
 - Public transportation alternatives: Accessible taxi, ridesharing, vanpool, voucher, volunteer driver and aide programs, mobility management and coordination programs

Mobility Management Activities may include:

- Travel training
- Consists of short-range planning and management activities for improving coordination
- Excludes operating public transportation services
- Is a capital expense (80/20)
- Short-term management activities
- Coordination bodies and councils
- Transportation brokerages
- Travel training and trip planning/navigators
- One-stop transportation call centers
- Planning for ITS

c. Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (5310)

The Section 5310 program was established in 1975 as a discretionary capital assistance program. In cases where public transit was inadequate or inappropriate, the program awarded grants to private non-profit organizations to serve the transportation needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities. FTA (then the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA)) apportioned the funds among the States by formula for distribution to local agencies, a practice made a statutory requirement by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). In the early years of the program, many of the subrecipient non-profit agencies used the vehicles primarily for transportation of their own clients. Funding for the Section 16(b)(2) program, as it was then known, ranged between \$20–35 million annually until the passage of ISTEA, when it increased to the \$50–60 million range. ISTEA also introduced the eligibility of public agencies under limited circumstances to facilitate and encourage the coordination of human service transportation. Increasingly, FTA guidance encouraged and required coordination of the program with other Federal human service transportation programs. In lieu of purchasing vehicles, acquisition of service in order to promote use of private sector providers and coordination with other human service agencies and public transit providers was made an eligible expense under ISTEA. Other provisions of ISTEA introduced the ability to transfer flexible funds to the program from certain highway programs and the flexibility to transfer funds from the Section 5310 program to the rural and urban formula programs.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA–21) enacted in 1998, reauthorized the Section 5310 program. TEA–21 increased the funding levels for the Section 5310 program but made no significant program changes. In 2005, Congress enacted SAFETEA–LU. SAFETEA–LU introduced the requirement that projects funded with 5310 funds be derived from a locally developed, coordinate public transit-human services transportation plan; removed the flexibility that funds can be transferred to Section 5311 for Section 5311 program purposes during the fiscal year apportioned, if funds were not needed for Section 5310 program purposes; introduced a seven State pilot program that allows selected States to use up to one-third of the funds apportioned to them for operating assistance; and allowed transfers to Section 5307 or 5311, but only to fund projects selected for Section 5310 program purposes.

Title 49 U.S.C. 5310 authorizes the formula assistance program for the special needs of elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities. FTA refers to this formula program as “the Section 5310 program.” FTA, on behalf of the Secretary of Transportation, apportions the funds appropriated annually to the States based on an administrative formula that considers the number of elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities in each State. These funds are subject to annual appropriations.

Title 49 U.S.C. 5310(a)(1) authorizes funding for public transportation capital projects planned, designed and carried out to meet the special needs of elderly individuals and

Examples of Projects

Funds from the 5310 program are available for capital projects such as primarily funds for vehicles & equipment. Under section 5310, “capital” also includes the purchase of service and mobility management.

VI. Needs Assessment

A facilitated public workshop process was utilized in collecting perceived needs, gaps and barriers in the current public transportation systems in each of the six western counties of North Carolina. Participants in the workshop were divided into random groups to foster the cross pollination of ideas between different agencies and populations. The groups then spent time identifying the gaps, needs and barriers. One person from each of the groups reported out to the facilitator who displayed the items on large post-it notes. An opportunity was provided to all of the participants to ask questions for clarification of the items listed. All participants were accommodated who had difficulty with any portions of the planning process.

The stated perceived needs, gaps and barriers were consistent throughout the region. The following is a summary identified through the public workshops and other comments received throughout the planning process.

Capital Needs

- Additional vehicles for enhancing or expanding services
- GIS/GPS locational software
- Scheduling software
- Communications equipment
- Mobility Manager

Operating Needs

- Additional Operating Staff
- Extended hours of service
- Extended employment transportation
- Door thru door services
- Weekend Service and Holidays
- Fare subsidies and or vouchers
- Special needs attendants
- Extend veterans services
- Increased flexibility in scheduling

Other Needs

- New central facility for Cherokee and Graham counties

Figure 1 below provides a breakdown of the perceived needs of each system in Region A. Appendix B gives a complete list by county as they were prioritized by the attendees of the respective workshops.

	Cherokee	Clay	EBCI	Graham	Jackson	Macon	Swain
Expand Fleet Vehicles	X	X		X	X	X	X
Weekend Service	X	X		X	X	X	X
GIS/GPS & Software scheduling	X	X	X	X			X
Evening/Night Service		X		X	X	X	X
Additional drivers (FT or PT)	X			X	X		X
Door thru door service	X		X			X	X
New/Additional Routes		X	X	X		X	
Expand employment transp		X		X	X		
Mobility Manager		X	X		X		
Attendant			X		X		X
Fare subsidies/Fare Free	X		X				
Transit facility	X			X			
Fixed route service	X			X			
In-county vehicle maintenance	X						
Park & Ride	X						
Extended/Enhanced Vet. Transp		X		X			
Incidental Services (i.e. meals)		X					
Dedicated Routes			X				
Vouchers			X				
Additional Admin staff					X		
Operations funding					X		
Marketing/Awareness						X	
Communication Equipment							X
Driver Training/education							X

VII. Needs Assessment in the Long Range Horizon

Community Transportation Improvement Plans (CTIP) in the six western counties and the Qualla Boundary were completed in Spring 2008. These are five year plans that focus on improvements and short and long term goals of the system. These plans include capital and operations planning. Some of the priorities listed in these plans are listed in Section IX of this document in addition to information received at public workshops held in each of the six counties and the Qualla Boundary. Since these plans were completed, NCDOT's planning has evolved from simple bridge and highway thoroughfare plans to Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTP). Previously, thoroughfare plans identified the existing and proposed highway network needed to handle existing and future year traffic. The CTP is a multi-modal plan that identifies the entire existing and future transportation system and includes highways, public transportation, rail, and bicycle facilities needed to serve the anticipated travel demand. The CTP is more environmentally and community friendly. It strengthens the connections between and area's transportation plan, adopted local land development plan, and community vision. Jackson County's CTP should be completed by summer of 2009. Macon County should be underway by March of 2009. The other counties will follow upon completion of the above referenced plans. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians has recently completed an update to its Long Range Transportation Plan with transit elements.

VIII. Strategies and Priorities for Implementation

Each table below represents strategies with a priority level and projected implementation time frames for each of the six counties and the Qualla Boundary.

Cherokee County

OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES		
	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION
STRATEGY:		
Fare Subsidies for low income & disabled public	High	1 to 2 Years
STRATEGY:		
Continuing education for drivers centering on special needs populations	Medium	2 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
More advertising subsidies for promotion through marketing efforts	Medium	2 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Work with other transit systems to implement regional coordination for workforce Park and Ride service	Medium	2 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Offer more services out-of-county without time restrictions	Medium	2 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Offer door-thru-door service with trained attendant	Low	3+ Years
CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY:		
Increase fleet size as new or expanded services are added - seek to purchase energy efficient all wheel drive vehicles	High	As Needed
STRATEGY:		
GIS/GPS communications and software scheduling capabilities	High	1 Year
OTHER NEEDS STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY:		
Purchase transit facility to procure additional grant money	High	1 to 3 Years

Clay County

OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES		
	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION
STRATEGY:		
Expand service hours to offer out of county employment route.	Medium	2 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Add Saturday service	Low	3+ Year
STRATEGY:		
Start 2 nd route to Tri-County Community College and Industrial Opportunities, in Cherokee County, for employment.	High	1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Start a 2 nd dialysis route, to Cherokee County dialysis center.	High	2 to 3 Years
CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY:		
Procure a lift equipped minivan, to transport to the VA and other long distance destinations. This would decrease costs and make the trip more comfortable for the passenger. It would also increase safety, due to wind issues on high profile vans, in the mountainous terrain.	High	1 to 2 Years
STRATEGY:		
Additional vans, to be used for employment routes.	High	1 to 2 Years

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian

OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES		
	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION
STRATEGY:		
Implement regular shopping trips out of town for the elderly and disabled	High	6 Months to 1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Implement voucher service for elderly and disabled residents for medical appointments	High	6 Months to 1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Hire medical manager	High	1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Work with other transit systems to implement regional coordination for workforce Park and Ride service	Medium	2-3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Develop marketing and advertising methods for new services	High	6 Months
CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY:		
Increase fleet size as new or expanded services are added - seek to purchase energy efficient vehicles	High	As Needed
STRATEGY:		
Purchase security camera systems for vehicles	High	6 Months to 1 Year

Graham County

OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES		
	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION
STRATEGY:		
To procure permanent facility and in house garage maintenance facility	High	6 Months to 1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Extend After hours dispatch and service	High	1 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Implement a Work Force Park and Ride Service	Medium	3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Expand current service to provide additional Veterans Services.	High	1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Implement In-town fixed route Shuttle service	Medium	3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Group shuttles to sports activities and events	Medium	3 Years
CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY:		
Expansion of Energy efficient all wheel drive vehicles, minivans	High	2 Years
STRATEGY:		
GPS/GIS software capabilities	Medium	1 Year

Jackson County

OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES		
	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION
STRATEGY:		
Extend services to the new Jackson County Senior Service Building	High	1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Add Saturday service	Medium	3+ Years
STRATEGY:		
Extend evening hours	High	2 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Offer services to Southern Jackson County	Medium	2 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Work with other transit systems to implement regional coordination for workforce Park and Ride service	Medium	2 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Offer more services out-of-county without time restrictions	Medium	2 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Offer door-thru-door service with trained attendant	Low	3+ Years
CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY:		
Increase fleet size to accommodate new or expanded service	High	As needed
STRATEGY:		
Seek to purchase bus shelters for our deviated fixed route which serves the elderly and disabled	High	1 to 2 Years

Macon County

OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES		
	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION
STRATEGY:		
Develop Mobility Manager position for passenger and community education and awareness	High	1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Extend service hours to evening	High	2 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Add weekend service	High	2 to 3+ Years
STRATEGY:		
Create additional routes to serve outlying communities, local colleges, and support services for human service agencies	Medium	1 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Extend service between Franklin & Asheville by removing service time restrictions	Medium	2 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Add routes that serve the Franklin to Highlands area for medical and employment purposes	Medium	1 to 3 Years
STRATEGY:		
Offer door through door service with attendant to assist passengers	Low	3+ Years
CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY:		
Increase fleet size as new or expanded services are added - seek to purchase energy efficient	Medium	As Needed
STRATEGY:		
Purchase and install shelter areas for deviated fixed route service, especially in areas that serve elderly and disabled passengers	Medium	1 to 2 Years
Develop a marketing and awareness plan that includes campaign on transit awareness and benefits of transit	High	1 Year

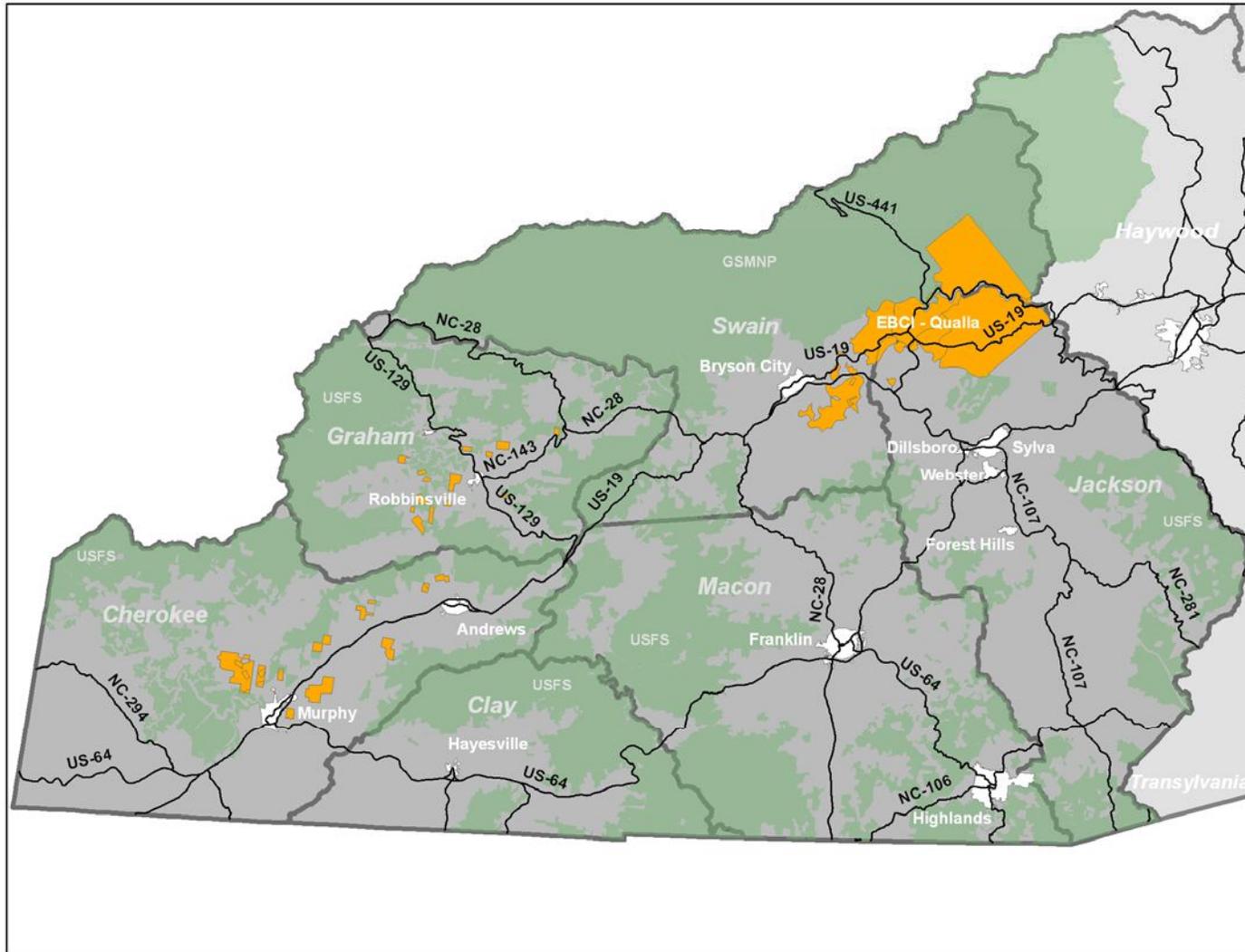
Swain County

OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES		
	LEVEL OF PRIORITY	PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION
STRATEGY:		
Develop Mobility Manager position for passenger and community education and awareness	High	1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Add attendants on routes that serve the elderly and disabled to help with medical appointments, shopping and other services that will enable them to remain in their home	High	1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Offer door-thru-door service	High	1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Increase driver hours to full time	High	1 Year
STRATEGY:		
Add scheduling software to enable efficient use of vehicles and to increase dispatch hours	Medium	1 to 2 Years
CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY:		
Increase fleet size as new or expanded services are added – seek to purchase energy efficient vehicles	High	As needed
STRATEGY:		
Purchase and install shelter areas for deviated fixed route service, especially in areas that serve elderly and disabled passengers	Medium	1 to 2 Years
OTHER NEEDS STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY:		
More in depth driver training ie EMT training	Medium	1 to 3 Years

IX. Update Interval

The Southwestern Commission RPO CPT-HSTP is scheduled to be updated every three years. The next update will begin November of 2011.

Appendix A. Map of Southwestern Rural Planning Organization



Appendix B – Public Workshop Information by County

Attendees at the workshops were given the opportunity to list transportation needs. Using the list generated at the workshop, attendees prioritized the list using the dot-vote method. All attendees who had special needs were accommodated for in all processes. Participants were given five dots to choose which issues they felt were the most important to them. They were given the option to place all of the dots on one issue, or spread the dots between numbers of issues. The list below identifies the top ten issues for each of the six counties and the Qualla Boundary where the workshops took place.

Cherokee County

1. Expansion of energy efficient all wheel drive vehicles
2. GIS/GPS communications and software scheduling capabilities
3. More full time drivers
4. Door-through-door service
5. In-county maintenance for vehicles (tied w/ #4)
6. Saturday service
7. Fare subsidies for the low income and disabled public
8. Central Transit facility
9. Park and Ride
10. Murphy trolley style fixed service

Clay County

1. Extend veterans support
2. Night and weekends service
3. Partnering w/ the Meals-On-Wheels programs (tied w/ #2)
4. Expand workforce transport
5. Murphy dialysis route
6. GIS/GPS communications and software scheduling capabilities (tied w/ #5)
7. Expansion of energy efficient all wheel drive vehicles (tied w/ #5)
8. Sunday church shuttle (stated not federally allowed)
9. After school transport for kids in extra curricular activities
10. Mobility Manager

Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

1. Dedicated urgent services non-emergency medical van with an attendant
2. Door thru door service with attendant
3. Fare subsidies for medical trips
4. Dedicated vehicle for cancer patients that runs 6 days per week with attendant
5. Universal fare-free senior pass
6. Senior attendant (tied with #5)
7. Expand public route with additional service and frequency (tied with #5)
8. GIS/GPS locational technologies with dedicated dispatcher (tied with #5)

9. Daytrip assistance for people with disabilities
10. Voucher system for tribal and non-tribal members

Graham County

1. New secure central transit facility
2. Expand and provide additional VA services (tied w/ #1)
3. Expansion of energy efficient all wheel drive vehicles, minivans
4. Group shuttles
5. After school hours service
6. Extend workforce transit to Stanley Furniture
7. On-call driver 24/7
8. After hours dispatch 24/7
9. GPS/GIS software capabilities (tie w/ #8)
10. Robbinsville In-town fixed shuttle

Jackson County

1. 3 regular vans, 3 lift vans (1 – Cashiers, 1 – Senior Center, 1 – Adult daycare)
2. More staff, 6 full-time drivers, 1 mobility, 1 – attendant, 2 – Admin)
3. Operations funding
4. Nights and weekends service (tied w/ #3)
5. Small all-wheel-drive energy efficient vehicles
6. Regular van for Medicaid transport and full-time driver
7. Conversion van w/ lift and trained attendant
8. More capacity to serve children to aid workforce
9. Regional coordination for workforce transport (tied w/ #8)
10. Add electric vehicle and supporting infrastructure (tied w/ #8)

Macon County

1. Night and weekends service
2. Additional energy efficient vehicles
3. Add outlying feeder services
4. Fixed dedicated Southwestern Community College route
5. Mental health support (tied w/ #4)
6. After school activity service w/ monitor (tied w/ #4)
7. Marketing and awareness support
8. Franklin to Asheville route (tied w/ #7)
9. Door-through-door service with attendant (tied w/ #7)
10. Franklin to Highlands (5p.m. to 9 p.m.) free clinic service

Swain County

1. Attendants for special needs
2. Before and after hours dispatch

3. Added full time drivers
4. All wheel drive energy efficient vehicles
5. Door through door services (tied w/ #4)
6. On call 24/7 driver and dispatch, 1 for Qualla area
7. Additional administration support
8. Scheduling software
9. Rescue type communication equipment
10. Continuing education for drivers, special needs in particular