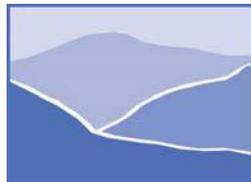


**Coordinated Public Transportation  
And Human Services  
Transportation Plan**

**Adopted  
May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013**



**Southwestern Commission  
Rural Planning Organization**

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## **I. Federal Regulatory Background**

For more than a quarter century, 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](http://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.

On July 6, 2012, President Obama signed into law the current transportation law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21). MAP-21 creates a steady and reliable source of funding for Federal Transit Administration grantees, while containing new reporting requirements. The legislation also consolidates certain transit programs to improve efficiency. The Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (Section 5316) was merged into Section 5311, Rural Area Formula Grants. Additionally, Section 5317, New Freedom Program, was consolidated into Section 5310, which was renamed Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities.

## **II. Plan Approach**

Projects funded through the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) and Rural Area Formula Grants (Section 5311) 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 Indians (EBCI): Cherokee Transit
- Graham County Transit
- Jackson County Transit
- Macon County Transit
- Swain Public Transit

The planning team met on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012, to organize and plan the public workshops in each of the six counties and the Qualla Boundary. 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 public meetings:

- Transit riders/users and their families
- Cherokee Commerce Department (EBCI)

- Cherokee County citizen
- Cherokee County Transit
- Cherokee Transit (EBCI)
- Clay County citizens
- Clay County Department of Economic Development
- Clay County Department of Social Services
- Clay County Manager
- Clay County Transportation (transit)
- Communities in Schools of Clay County
- Community Transformation Grant consultant
- Davita Dialysis Center
- The Franklin Press
- Graham County citizen
- Graham County Manager
- Graham County Health Department
- Graham County Senior Center
- Graham County Social Services
- Graham County Transit
- Industrial Opportunities Incorporated
- Jackson County Transit
- Macon County citizen
- Macon County Transit
- Macon County Senior Services
- Seniors from the whole region
- Smoky Mountain Times
- Southwestern Workforce Development
- Southwestern Rural Planning Organization
- Swain County Transit
- Tri-County Community College

### III. Demographics

	median age 2012/2032*	% age 65 or over, 2012*	persons in poverty**	persons disabled***	houses no vehicles****
Cherokee	49.0 / 51.7	24.0 %	4,893	2,293	638
Clay	50.2 / 51.0	24.8 %	1,967	964	199
Graham	44.3 / 42.7	20.3 %	1,966	764	258
Jackson	36.3 / 38.1	15.7 %	7,101	2,638	900
Macon	48.6 / 48.2	24.5 %	6,501	2,591	903
Swain	40.7 / 39.7	17.0 %	2,543	1,286	482
NC	37.9 / 39.6	13.3 %	1,618,597	685,749	234,435

\*Estimates from Office of State Budget and Management

\*\*Persons in poverty Census 2010

\*\*\*Persons age 16-64 with work disability Census 2000

\*\*\*\*Occupied units with no vehicles available Census 2006-2010 5-year estimate

### 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 15 vehicles; services are provided Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

The fleet consists of:

- 1 - 6 passenger Minivan
- 2 - 6 passenger All Wheel Drive CUV's
- 1 - 4 passenger Minivan with Wheelchair Ramp
- 1 - 18 passenger Lift Van with 2 Wheelchair Stations
- 2 - 10 passenger Lift Vans, each with 2 Wheelchair Stations
- 1 - 9 passenger Lift Van with 2 Wheelchair Stations
- 7 - 8 passenger Lift Vans, each with 2 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 15 vehicles, 9 of which are lift-equipped:

- 2 - 25-foot light transit vehicles (LTVs) with lifts
- 1 - ramp-equipped minivan
- 4 - lift vans
- 2 - 20-foot LTVs with lifts
- 2 - 20-foot LTVs without lifts
- 1 - crossover vehicle
- 3 - minivans

### **Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) Services**

Cherokee Transit is the public transportation system on the Qualla Boundary. Services, primarily for medical appointments, began in 1997. Regular routes on the Qualla Boundary were added in 2000, and crosstown loop route service commenced in 2004.

In 2012, Cherokee Transit transported over 69,000 passengers. Since 2010, 7,135 passengers have been transported with support from the New Freedom Program (Section 5317 in SAFETEA-LU) and 3,646 passengers have been transported under the Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310). Cherokee Transit employees 36 staff, including 24 drivers.

The following services are currently offered:

- Public Community Routes operate in the Big Cove/Soco/Birdtown areas each day and night. Three buses/vans from 6:30 am to midnight six days per week, excepting four major holidays. These runs include pick-up of clients for the Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee and the Tsali Manor Senior program, who are transported from their homes to the centers and back five days per week.
- Medical: transportation to medical appointments in Cherokee and towns outside of Cherokee. Services are also provided to the general public, via call-in, for appointments at Cherokee Family Support and the Departments of Social Services in Jackson and Swain counties. Restrictions are:
  - passengers reserve their ride three days in advance
  - passengers who are Medicaid-eligible must contact their social services
  - driver cannot act as an attendant
- Dialysis: provide transportation to the Seven Clans dialysis center six days per week.
- Town Loops (Mountain Trail and River Trail) operate from 7:00 am until midnight six days per week, linking hotels to the casino and other places of business around town.

The current fleet consists of 17 vans and 3 shuttle buses.

### **Graham County Services**

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

Graham County has 292.067 square miles with an estimated population of 8,800. It is a geographically isolated, Tier 1 (economically distressed) county with 27 percent of the population eligible for Medicaid. Only one medical clinic exists in the county. Over half of Graham County Transit's transports are out-of-county transports for medical 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. Office hours are 8:00 AM till 5:00 PM Monday-Friday, closed on state holidays. Requests for service must be made at least one business day in advance for in county trips and 48 hours for out of county trips.

Transportation to the dialysis center in Cherokee is offered Monday through Saturday; transportation to the Murphy dialysis center is offered Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Transportation to life-sustaining services (senior nutrition, medical appointments, veterans services, etc) out-of-county are provided on an as-needed basis. Graham County Transit also offers 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 AM and 5:00 PM Monday through Friday, except holidays. Requests for service must be made before 2:00 PM prior to the scheduled trip, except for the Jackson Trolley which operates Monday thru Friday from 7:00 AM until 5:00 PM. 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:

- 1 - 20-foot lift light transit vehicle (LTV)
- 2 - 25-foot LTVs
- 1 - 25-foot LTV with lift
- 2 - minivans
- 1 - ADA-equipped minivan
- 7 - lift-equipped 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 6:30 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, no later than 2:00 pm. Limited demand response, same day service within the Franklin area is available between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. with at least two hours notice and based on space availability. Daily service is available to Sylva on existing morning and afternoon routes, including a recently added stop at SCC and to Asheville if appointments are between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Macon County Transit operates using a fleet of 15 vehicles and serves the areas of Franklin, Highlands, and Nantahala.

The fleet consists of:

- 1 - 22-foot light transit vehicle with lift and two wheelchair stations
- 1 - 20-foot LTV with lift and two wheelchair stations (note: a second 20-ft LTV will be added during FY13 replacing one lift van)
- 7 - lift vans, each with two wheelchair stations (note: one lift van will be removed during FY13, replaced by the 20-ft LTV)
- 3 - 12-passenger conversion van without lifts
- 3 - 7-passenger mini vans

## Swain County Services

Swain Public Transit is a consolidated transportation system operating in Swain County, NC. Swain Public Transit offers subscription, demand/response, and deviated fixed routes to the general public and by contractual agreement with the following human service organizations:

- Southwestern Community College
- Swain County Department on Aging
- Swain County Department of Social Services
- Swain County Family Resources
- Swain County Extension Service / 4-H
- Swain County Veteran's Affairs Office
- 4 Square Community Action
- Vocational Opportunities of Cherokee
- Webster Enterprises
- Swain County Schools After School Program
- Swain County Health Department
- MedWest - Swain & Harris Regional Hospitals
- Jackson County Adult Day Care
- Swain County Joblink / Job Development
- Southwestern Planning Commission
- Cherokee Dialysis Center
- Sylva Dialysis Center

Services include general public transportation, daily public employment routes, out-of-county medical transportation – particularly to the VA in Asheville and to Charlotte, Chapel Hill and Durham – shuttle services to Western Carolina University and Southwestern Community College, a general public downtown loop in Bryson City, and other demand-responsive transportation.

Rural General Public (RGP) service is available on all of our subscription routes if the route deviates no more than half a mile. RGP services are also available in the towns of Cherokee and Sylva. All service is accessible to persons with disabilities.

Swain Public Transit serves all of Swain County. Swain County is a rural county located near the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in western North Carolina. The ridership is comprised of the clients and consumers of the participating organizations and agencies and the general public. Destination points are at the discretion of the participating agency and include transportation services to points outside Swain County. In FY 2012, Swain Public Transit provided 44,000 passenger trips.

Swain Public Transit operating hours are Monday through Friday from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM; office hours are Monday through Friday from 7:00 AM to 3:00 P M. Swain Public Transit is closed on New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr Day, Good Friday,

Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day and the following day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day and the following day.

The fleet consists of:

- 4 - lift-equipped vans
- 2 - 1-passenger standard vans
- 1 - 20-foot lift van
- 2 - minivans
- 1- lowered floor wheelchair accessible minivan
- 1 - 24-passenger cutaway van

## **V. General Program Information**

FTA Sections 5310 and 5311 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. Enhanced Mobility of Seniors 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.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21), enacted in 2012, consolidated Section 5310 and the former New Freedom Program, which was Section 5317 in SAFETEA-LU. 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.

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 individuals with disabilities.

## **Examples of Projects**

Funds from the 5310 program are available for capital projects such as primarily funds for vehicles & equipment.

Additionally, under section 5310, “capital” includes the purchase of service and mobility management. Funds 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

## **b. Rural Area Formula Grants (5311)**

Section 5311 provides funding to states for the support of public transportation in rural areas. As of 2012, with the passage of MAP 21, the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program is incorporated into Section 5311 (formerly, JARC was a separate program – Section 5316 of SAFETEA-LU).

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.

MAP-21 authorized a total of \$630 million for Rural Area Formula grants, including JARC-related projects, for Fiscal Year 2013.

A 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)

## **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 as well as on the Qualla Boundary. If turnout was sufficiently large, participants in the workshop were divided into 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 quite consistent throughout the region. The following is a summary identified through the public workshops and other comments received throughout the planning process.

### **Capital Needs**

- New facilities in Cherokee County (headquarters), Jackson County (headquarters), and Graham County (tire / parts storage)
- Maintain / expand fleet
- Add to or upfit fleet to include alternative-fueled, green, or fuel-efficient vehicles
- Add bicycle racks to vehicles
- Technical upgrades: vehicle cameras, data collection, mobile tracking, better information technology equipment, etc
- Centralized pick-up / drop-off areas and/or bus shelters
- Mobility manager software and / or employee

### **Operating Needs**

- Expand advertising / marketing
- Voucher program for low-income riders
- Expand local fixed routes
- Regional coordination among county providers on inter-county and out-of-region trips
- Expanded employment transportation
- Expanded hours
- New tourist / recreation routes for seniors and general public
- Continue medical service transportation
- Funding and inter-county coordination for college transportation
- Increased operations funding
- Additional drivers

### **Other Needs**

- Direct billing between EBCI and Medicaid

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.

	<b>Cherokee</b>	<b>Clay</b>	<b>EBCI</b>	<b>Graham</b>	<b>Jackson</b>	<b>Macon</b>	<b>Swain</b>
New facilities	<b>X</b>			<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		
Maintain / expand fleet	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	
Alternative-fueled, green, or fuel-efficient vehicles	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Bike racks	<b>X</b>						<b>X</b>
Technical upgrades / IT			<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>			<b>X</b>
Pick-up areas or bus shelters				<b>X</b>			<b>X</b>
Mobility manager					<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
Advertising / marketing	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Voucher	<b>X</b>						
Expand local deviated fixed routes	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>		
Regional coordination	<b>X</b>				<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Expanded employment transportation		<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Expanded hours	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
New tourist / recreation routes		<b>X</b>			<b>X</b>		
Continue medical service transportation			<b>X</b>				
College transportation				<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	
Increased operations funding				<b>X</b>			<b>X</b>
Additional drivers							<b>X</b>
Direct Medicaid billing			<b>X</b>				

## **VII. Needs Assessment in the Long Range Horizon**

Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTP) in the six western counties have either been completed recently, or the planning process is underway or set to begin before the end of 2012 (Cherokee County is underway, Graham is scheduled to begin soon, Clay and Swain plans were adopted in 2012, Macon was adopted in 2011, and Jackson in 2010). Also, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians has recently completed an update, with transit elements, to its Long Range Transportation Plan. NCDOT's planning has evolved from simple bridge and highway thoroughfare plans to CTPs. Previously, thoroughfare plans identified the existing and proposed highway network needed to handle existing and future-year traffic. The CTP is a five-year, 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 an area's transportation plan, adopted local land development plan, and community vision. Some of the priorities listed in these plans also appear in Section VIII of this document, in addition to information received at public workshops held in each of the six counties and the Qualla Boundary.

**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**

<b>OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
	<b>LEVEL OF PRIORITY</b>	<b>PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand advertising.	High	6 Months
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Develop transit voucher program for low-income riders	Medium	1 to 2 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand deviated fixed-route public service routes (trips, destinations, and/or hours), including in Andrews and between Andrews and Murphy per 2013 CTP.	High	1 to 2 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Work with other transit systems to implement regional coordination for out-of-county trips for the general population and veterans.	Medium	2 to 3 Years
<b>CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
New transit facility including vehicle maintenance area.	Medium	1-2 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand fleet.	Medium	1-2 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Add propane-fueled vehicles to fleet, or upfit existing vehicles to use propane fuel.	Low	2 to 3 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Add bicycle racks to vehicles.	Medium	1 to 2 Years

**Clay County**

<b>OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
	<b>LEVEL OF PRIORITY</b>	<b>PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Add tourist route to Qualla Boundary.	High	6 Months to 1 Year
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand evening hours.	High	1 to 3 Year
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Add deviated fixed route on US 64.	High	6 Months to 1 Year
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand employment transportation service.	Medium	1 to 2 Year
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Develop / expand marketing plan	Low	1 to 2 Year
<b>CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Upfit some vehicles to use propane fuel.	Medium	1 to 3 Year

**Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians**

<b>OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
	<b>LEVEL OF PRIORITY</b>	<b>PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand trips and staff, including a mobility coordinator, for in- and out-of-town medical service trips, with a priority on life-sustaining treatments, and develop direct-billing system with Medicaid.	High	6 Months to 1 Year
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Improve advertising and promotion, including but not limited to outreach in the Snowbird community and a Smartphone “app.”	High	6 Months
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand number of community runs.	Medium	1 to 3 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Offer more shopping trips, and at different times.	Medium	6 Months
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Offer ride-share program for commuters from Snowbird community to Cherokee.	Medium	1 to 5 Years
<b>CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Modernize fleet and fleet management with green and alternative-fuel vehicles with bike racks and GPS, more bus stops, paperless information management, and a dispatching software system.	High	1 to 3 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand fleet for in- and out-of-town medical service trips, with a priority on life-sustaining treatments.	High	6 Months to 1 Year

**Graham County**

<b>OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
	<b>LEVEL OF PRIORITY</b>	<b>PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Obtain funding to expand dispatch and operational services and hours for job transportation, college transportation, and other unmet needs.	High	1 Year
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Obtain funding for scheduling software	Low	2 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Develop centralized pick-up/drop-off areas throughout county.	Medium	2 Years
<b>CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Modernize fleet by adding tracking/GPS systems for vans and clients; and smaller, greener, more fuel-efficient vehicles, including lift-equipped vehicles.	High	1 Year
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Construct storage facility for tires and other vehicle parts and supplies.	Medium	3+ Years

**Jackson County**

<b>OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
	<b>LEVEL OF PRIORITY</b>	<b>PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Build new route for Webster Enterprises (local nonprofit offering vocational training and employment to people with disabilities).	High	1 Year
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand trip services to general Jackson County community, including Saturday service and/or evening service.	Medium	3+ Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand marketing by utilizing new or alternative media.	High	Ongoing
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Add dedicated daily connector routes to outlying communities.	Medium	2 to 3 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand services to seniors for social and recreational activity trips, coordinated with the Aging Department.	Medium	2 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Work with other transit systems to implement regional coordination for out-of-county trips.	High	1 Year
<b>CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Improve future headquarters (will likely move in this fiscal year) in Dillsboro.	High	6 Months
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Add Mobility Manager software and position to help meet needs of aging, disabled, and employee populations.	High	1 Year

**Macon County**

<b>OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
	<b>LEVEL OF PRIORITY</b>	<b>PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Work with other transit systems to implement regional coordination for out-of-county trips.	High	Ongoing
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand marketing.	Low	Ongoing
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Extend evening hours and offer weekend service.	High	3+ Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand employment transportation services.	High	1 Year
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Add / improve service on SR 1310 Wayah Rd and on SR 1538 Buck Creek Rd.	Medium	3+ Years
<b>CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Hire a Mobility Manager.	High	1 to 2 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Maintain or expand fleet size as future needs require.	High	Ongoing
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Upfit some vehicles to accept propane fuel.	Medium	2 to 3 Years

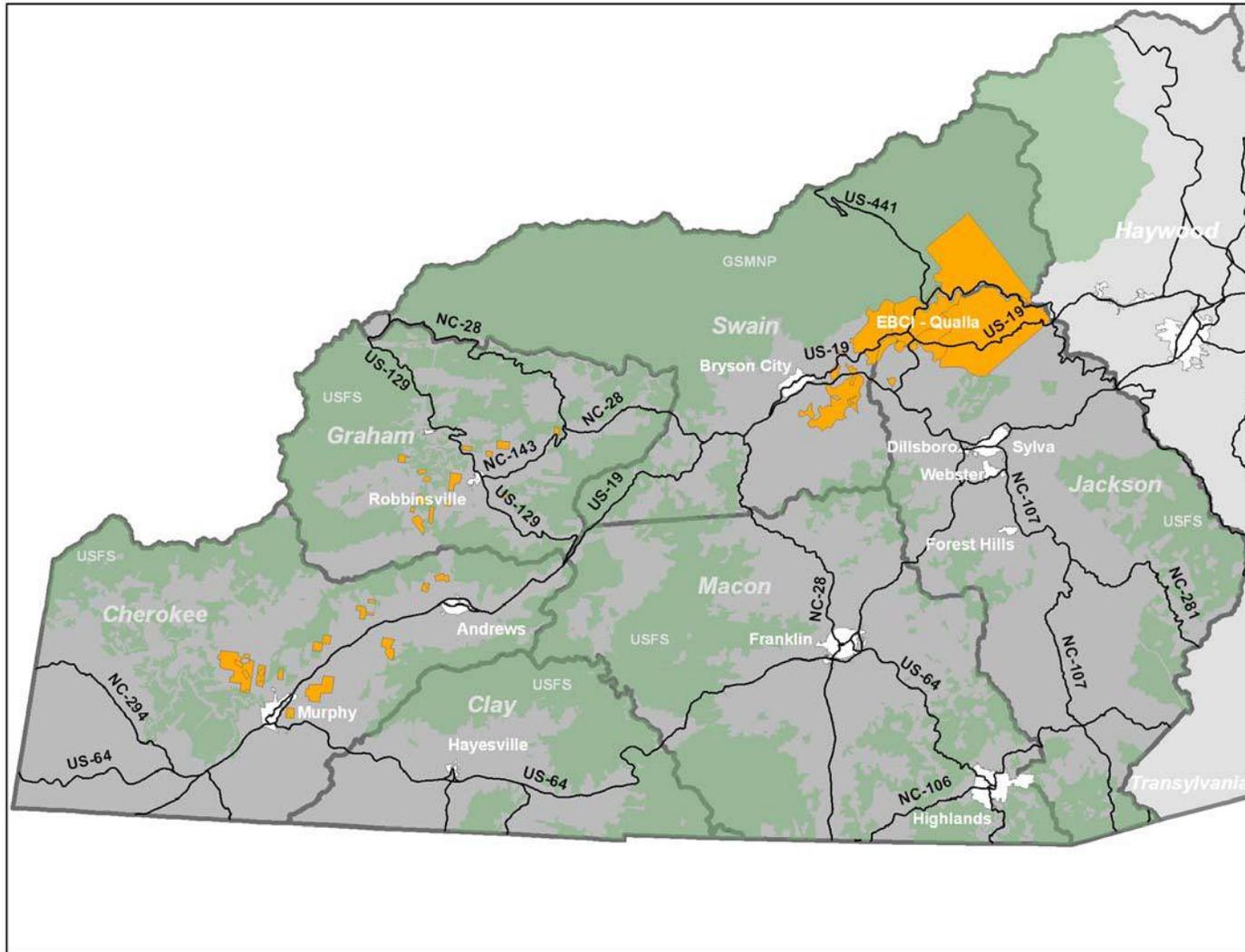
**Swain County**

<b>OPERATING NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
	<b>LEVEL OF PRIORITY</b>	<b>PROJECTED IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand/increase operating budget.	High	1 Year
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Add inter-county coordinated services and marketing.	High	1 Year
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand employment transportation.	Medium	1 to 3 Years
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Expand driver staff and add late night and Saturday service.	Medium	1 to 3 Years
<b>CAPITAL NEEDS STRATEGIES</b>		
<b>STRATEGY:</b>		
Modernize infrastructure and vehicles through energy-efficient vehicles, bike racks on vehicles, bus shelter construction, more sophisticated Information Technology equipment, and Smart Phone “app” for website.	Low	3+ Years

**IX. Update Interval**

The Southwestern Commission RPO CPT-HSTP is scheduled to be updated every three years. The next update will begin in November of 2015.

## 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 three 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. Expand advertising
2. Transit voucher program
3. New facility including vehicle maintenance area
4. Expand vehicle fleet
5. Alternative fuel vehicles (propane)
6. Add bike racks
7. Expand deviated fixed route public service routes (trips, destinations, hours, etc)
8. Regional coordination – general population and veterans

### **Clay County**

1. Expand employment transportation service
2. Expand evening hours
3. Expand/develop marketing plan
4. Upfit some vehicles to run on propane fuel
5. Run deviated fixed route on US 64 (tied w/ #4)
6. Tourist route to Qualla Boundary

### **Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians**

1. Medical service
2. New vans – handicapped-accessible, smaller vehicles
3. Advertising/promotion
4. VA Hospital trips (tied with #3)
5. More access days for out-of-Cherokee trips
6. More community runs
7. Direct billing with Medicaid
8. Vehicles cameras, data collection, more technical assistance
9. Automatic vehicle locators – “GPS Hero”
10. More shopping trips, different times (#’s 5 thru 10 all tied: 1 vote each)

### **Graham County**

1. Expand evening/afternoon transit services

2. Mobile tracking/GPS systems for vans & clients
3. Funding for job transportation
4. Tire/parts storage facility
5. Funding for college transportation
6. Centralized pick-up/drop off areas
7. Add “green” vehicles to fleet (tied w/ #6)
8. Smaller, lift-equipped buses (tied w/ #6)
9. Additional operations funding

### **Jackson County**

1. Facility improvements at Dillsboro lot (new HQ)
2. Mobility manager software & employee – help meet aging/disabled pop. needs
3. Build new route for Webster Enterprises
4. Marketing – alternative/new media
5. Regional coordination with other counties
6. Additional services for seniors for activity (social/recreational) trips – coordinate with Aging Department
7. Dedicated daily connectors to outlying communities
8. Expand trip services to general Jackson County community (Saturday service, evening service)

### **Macon County**

1. Coordination with other counties for inter-regional transportation needs
2. Maintain or expand fleet size as future needs require
3. Expand employment transportation services
4. Hire Mobility Manager
5. Extend evening hours and offer weekend service
6. Convert some vehicles to liquefied propane
7. Expand marketing
8. Coordinate with Swain County on getting students to and from Swain and Macon campuses of Southwestern Community College

### **Swain County**

1. More operating funding
2. Inter-county coordination and marketing specific to that service
3. Expand employment transportation, both distance & riders
4. Late night and Saturday service
5. Additional drivers
6. More sophisticated Information Technology equipment
7. Bus shelters at existing benches
8. Energy-efficient vehicles
9. Bike racks on vehicles
10. Smartphone “app” for website