

December 2020

Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan



RESOLUTION 2020-2

**Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan of the
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB)**

WHEREAS, the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) has contracted with the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) to draft the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan (HSCTP), for the counties of Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker; and

WHEREAS, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) requires that projects funded through the Federal Transit Administration's Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program (Section 5310) be derived from a locally developed plan; and

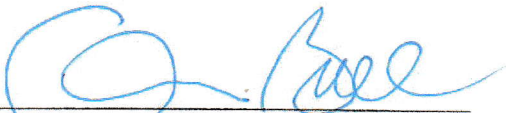
WHEREAS, the HSCTP is the instrument by which the RPCGB staff describes the current state and future plans for human services transportation planning; and

WHEREAS, RPCGB is responsible for providing staff and matching funds to administer the HSCTP.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, representing Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker counties, hereby adopts the FY 2020 Update of the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan as presented this 16th day of December, 2020.



Valerie Abbott, RPCGB Board Chair



Charles Ball, RPCGB Executive Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES.....	ii
FIGURES.....	ii
BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE	1
GOALS.....	3
STANDARDS FOR FUNDING.....	4
INVENTORY OF SERVICES.....	5
Fixed Route	5
On Demand	5
Demand Response	5
Interregional	5
Vanpool/Carpool.....	5
School Bus.....	5
Indirect Providers.....	6
Direct Providers	6
DEMOGRAPHICS	7
Blount County	9
Chilton County	10
Jefferson County	11
Shelby County	12
St. Clair County.....	13
Walker County	14
TRANSPORTATION NEEDS.....	15
Seniors.....	15
Disabled.....	15
Driver Training	15
TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS.....	16
Availability.....	16
In-County Only	16
Infrastructure	16
Public Awareness	16
Politics	16
Coordination	16
STRATEGIES.....	17

TABLES

Table 1: Cohort Comparison of Counties.....	7
Table 2: Population and Growth (2000-2018).....	7
Table 3: Demographic Comparisons for Blount County	9
Table 4: Demographic Comparisons for Chilton County	10
Table 5: Demographic Comparisons for Jefferson County	11
Table 6: Demographic Comparisons for Shelby County	12
Table 7: Demographic Comparisons for St Clair County.....	13
Table 8: Demographic Comparisons for Walker County	14

FIGURES

Figure 1: Map of Greater Birmingham Region.....	2
Figure 2: Zero Vehicle Households	8
Figure 3: Age 65 and Over.....	8
Figure 4: Poverty.....	8
Figure 5: Age 25+ No High School Diploma	8
Figure 6: Median Household Income.....	8
Figure 7: Population Growth (2000-2015).....	8

HUMAN SERVICES COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

To be eligible for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) program funds, including but not limited to Section 5310 (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities), proposed projects must be derived from a locally-developed human services coordinated transportation plan (HSCTP). The plan will guide the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) in decision-making regarding the allocation of funds.

The RPCGB serves six counties—Blount, Chilton, Jefferson, St. Clair, Shelby, and Walker (see Figure 1)—and developed its first plan in 2006. The plan’s purpose is to address mobility issues for transportation disadvantaged individuals. Many people mistakenly assume that transportation disadvantaged individuals comprise only those people with disabilities or people using wheelchairs. In fact, transportation disadvantaged includes those who are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation due to their age, income, health, or physical limitations.

While the HSCTP aims to improve quality, efficiency, and mobility of transportation services for all citizens in the Greater Birmingham area, it is specifically designed to improve services for transportation disadvantaged individuals by ensuring that communities coordinate transportation resources. Coordination enhances transportation access and facilitates the most appropriate and cost-effective transportation possible with available resources. In accordance with FTA guidelines, key elements of this plan include:

- Goals and Standards
- Inventory of Services
- Demographics
- Needs and Barriers
- Strategies to Address Needs

FIGURE 1
Map of Greater Birmingham Region



GOALS

HSCTPs are intended to improve coordination of transportation services. Additional goals specified herein are intended to be supportive of coordination and lay the foundation for that goal.

GOAL 1: Coordinate transportation within and across boundary lines

Coordination of regional transportation eliminates jurisdictional boundaries and seeks to provide quality service for its patrons. Multiple transportation providers or programs with different purposes, qualifications, and boundaries cause trips to be confusing, lengthy, inefficient, and sometimes impossible.

GOAL 2: Improve efficiencies by sharing resources and using collective purchasing power

Pooling resources allows for greater accessibility to more people and improves efficiencies. Sharing resources, such as fuel, garages, and maintenance facilities, will lower the cost of providing human service transportation.

GOAL 3: Increase availability of service, including expansion of capacity, service area, days/hours of service, and accessibility (sidewalks, ramps, etc.)

Increased availability and accessibility of transportation allows more people to travel for more trip purposes. Accessibility includes capital improvements, such as sidewalks, ramps, and bridges, as well as travel training, which enable people to walk or use mobility devices to access public transportation.

GOAL 4: Increase public awareness of mobility options and funding

More usage means more efficiency, and choice/competition encourages quality of transportation services. Public education of transportation options and funding is an ongoing process.

STANDARDS FOR FUNDING

The RPCGB ensures all applications for FTA Section 5310 funds comply with the standards set forth herein.

1. Proposed projects must seek to address service barriers and support one or more of the plan goals stated above.
2. Proposed projects must:
 - provide service to a broad range of people
 - expand service area, days, or hours of operations and/or
 - coordinate with another agency for provision of service. Coordination may include contracts for fuel, insurance, drivers, etc.
3. Applicants must identify a secure source for matching funds.
4. Applicants requesting vehicles must have at least one wheelchair-accessible vehicle in their fleet.
5. All agencies that receive funding to purchase vehicles must participate in efforts to coordinate the use of the vehicle(s) during down times and in emergency situations.

INVENTORY OF SERVICES

The Greater Birmingham area offers various resources to meet the transportation needs of its citizens, including fixed route public transit (and ADA complementary paratransit), on-demand and demand response public transportation, nonprofit agencies that transport clients, private transportation providers such as local taxi services, and interregional service via Greyhound and Amtrak. In addition, Uber and Lyft operate throughout Alabama.

Fixed Route

The Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority provides a fixed route transit service in the Birmingham area, with complementary ADA paratransit service within $\frac{3}{4}$ miles of the fixed route.

Walker County contracts with ClasTran to provide a deviated fixed route service within the City of Jasper.

On Demand

The City of Birmingham has contracted with Via to operate an on-demand shared-ride service in a limited service area. The program hires local drivers and provides accessible vehicles for riders with disabilities.

Uber and Lyft operate throughout the State of Alabama.

Demand Response

In the counties of Jefferson and Shelby, ClasTran operates curb-to-curb demand response service. ClasTran receives grant funding for capital equipment, administration, and operations under FTA Sections 5310 (urban) and 5311 (rural), along with local contributions for match.

Collat Jewish Family Services operates a door-to-door service for individuals who are over 60 or have a disability. Service is limited to a 5-mile radius of their location.

Blount, Chilton, and St. Clair counties have transportation primarily funded by the representative county government.

Interregional

Amtrak has train service between Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, and Anniston. There is only one trip in and out every day, making it nearly impossible to complete a round trip in a single day.

Greyhound bus serves 38 cities in Alabama with several routes, making it possible to complete a one-day round trip between Birmingham and many cities.

Vanpool/Carpool

CommuteSmart organizes the local vanpool and carpool program. CommuteSmart maintains a database to match riders, will provide a van, financial subsidy to riders, and other supporting services including a guaranteed ride home in case of emergency. Currently, there are 36 vanpools serving the Birmingham metropolitan area.

School Bus

School districts provide transportation to school for students of their own district who are in grades K-12. They may also transport children for education assistance programs, including children living outside district boundaries who need to access programs not available in their home district.

Indirect Providers

Indirect providers bring services to a person's home, so a trip is not needed. They may also transport certain people under certain circumstances. These organizations generally focus on a specific client group, for example:

- Grocery stores and pharmacies that make home deliveries
- Hot meal delivery services
- Personal services, companion, and in-home care
- Hospitals and medical clinics
- Residential long-term care facilities and group homes
- Senior and community centers
- Churches and faith-based organizations
- Child and adult care facilities
- Job training/employment development services
- Social service agencies

Direct Providers

Direct transportation providers are private organizations whose primary purpose is to transport people. They contribute to overall community mobility and include:

- Taxicabs and private drivers
 - Jason's Van Service (Walker County)
 - King Cab
 - Moovmo
 - Need-A-Ride
 - Silver Cab
 - Uber and Lyft (throughout Alabama)
 - Yellow Cab
- Nonprofit
 - ClasTran
 - Collat Jewish Family Services
 - Kid One
- Nonemergency medical
 - Medical Transport of Alabama
 - Careavan Transport
- Airport shuttles
 - Groome Transportation

DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic indicators help determine the likelihood of residents to be dependent on others for transportation. Typical indicators are age 65 and over, no vehicle in the household, no high school education, and poverty. At the time of this update, the most recent population data available was from the 2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. The combined population of the six-county region makes up 23% of the state's population. Jefferson is the most populous county, having 14% of the state's population.

Graphics and tables of demographic cohorts follow, each showing a comparison of all six counties (Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 2 through 7). The figures visually demonstrate the array of differences among the counties. Each county's demographic data are individually reviewed and presented later in this section.

TABLE 1: Cohort Comparison of Counties

Cohort	Blount	Chilton	Jefferson	Shelby	St Clair	Walker
Zero Vehicle Households	4.1%	4.9%	7.7%	2.9%	3%	5.7%
Population 65+	17.8%	13.3%	15%	14.3%	15.9%	18.6%
Poverty	14.4%	18.6%	17%	8.4%	13.2%	19.7%
25+ No High School Diploma	19.8%	17.8%	12.4%	7.9%	15.2%	19.1%
Median Household Income	\$48,695	\$45,182	\$51,979	\$75,761	\$54,887	\$60,293
Population Growth 2000-2018	13%	11%	-3.3%	47.4%	34.9%	-8.8%

TABLE 2: Population and Growth (2000-2018)

County	Population 2000	Population 2010	Population 2018 (est.)	Growth 2000-2018
Blount	51,024	57,322	57,645	13%
Chilton	39,593	43,643	43,930	11%
Jefferson	662,047	658,466	659,892	-3.3%
Shelby	143,293	195,085	211,261	47.4%
St. Clair	64,742	83,593	87,306	34.9%
Walker	70,713	67,023	64,493	-8.8%
Region	1,031,412	1,105,132	1,124,527	9.0%
State	4,447,100	4,633,360	4,864,680	9.4%

FIGURE 2: Zero-Vehicle Households

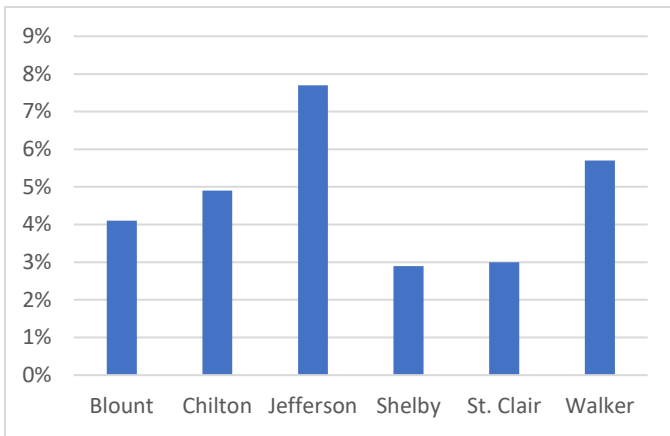


FIGURE 3: Age 65 and Over

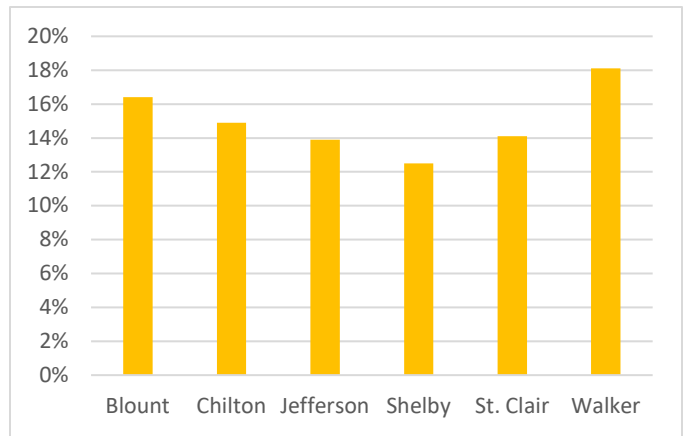


FIGURE 4: Poverty

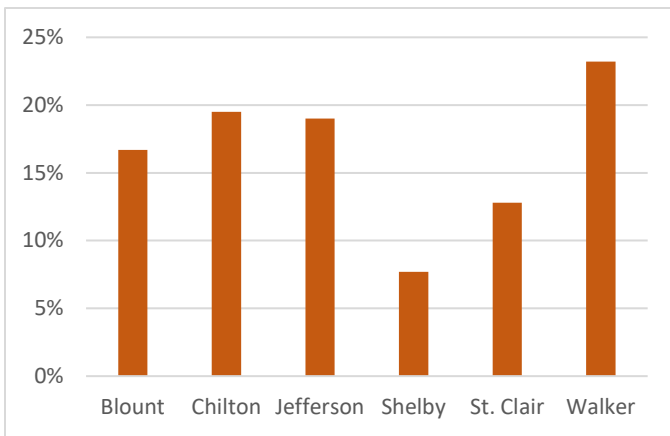


FIGURE 5: Age 25+ No High School Diploma

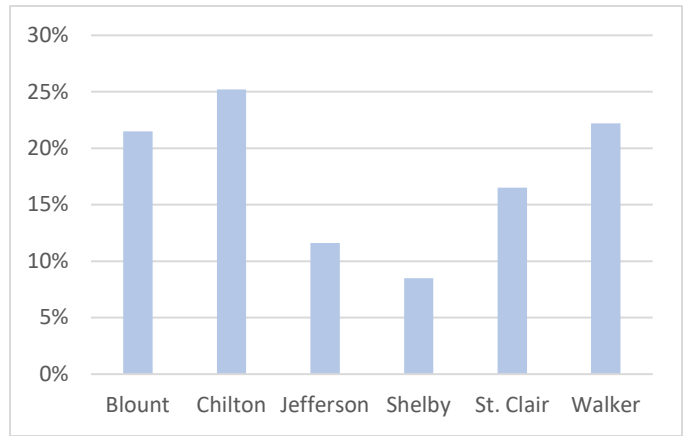


FIGURE 6: Median Household Income

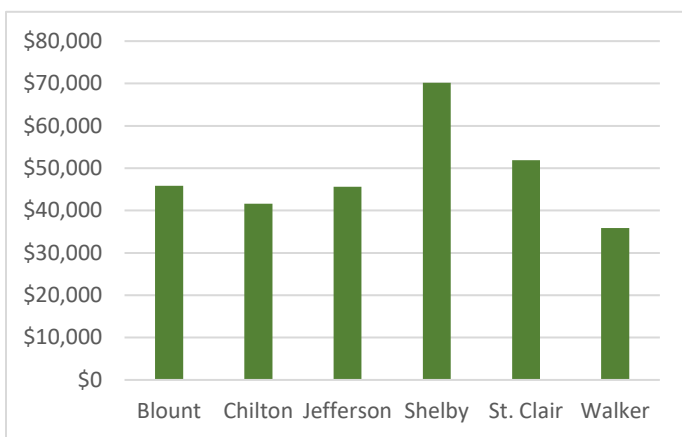
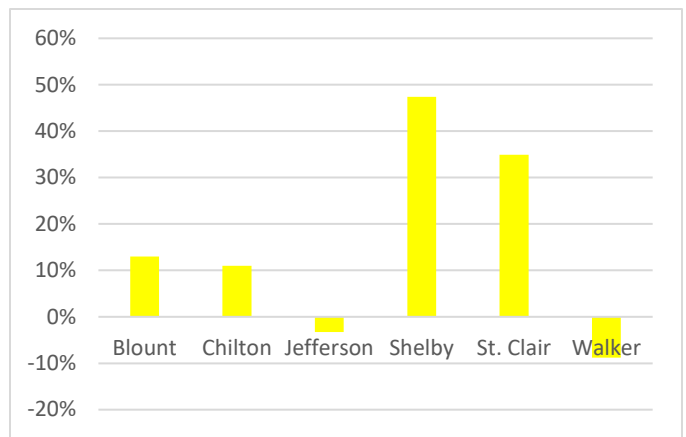


FIGURE 7: Population Growth 2000-2015



Blount County

Blount County covers 651 square miles, mostly rural, having an average density of 89 people per square mile. Cities include Oneonta (county seat), Hayden, Allgood, Nectar, Blountsville, Locust Fork, Cleveland, Susan Moore, Snead, Rosa, and Highland Lake. The county is known for its picturesque covered bridges and Rickwood Caverns, which has limestone formations and an underground pool.



For the most part, Blount County falls within the median range of the demographic data in the six-county region. Notable exceptions are seen in education and population age 65 and over. Nearly 20% of Blount County’s population age 25 and over has no high school diploma, and nearly 18% of the population is 65 or over. However, the median household income is in line with the state.

Blount County’s 2018 estimated population was 57,645, growing 13% since 2000. This is very healthy when compared to the region and state at 9% and 9.4%, respectively. The Birmingham urbanized area (UZA) has expanded into a portion of Blount, which is partially responsible for the county’s healthy growth rate.

TABLE 3: Demographic Comparisons for Blount County

Cohort	Blount	Region	Alabama
Zero Vehicle Households	4.1%	4.7%	6.2%
Population 65+	17.8%	15.8%	16.1%
Poverty	14.4%	15.2%	17.5%
25+ No High School Diploma	19.8%	15.4%	14.2%
Median Household Income	\$48,695	\$56,133	\$48,486
Population Growth 2000-2018	13%	9.0%	9.4%



Chilton County

Chilton County covers 701 square miles and is the most rural county in the region with an average density of 63 people per square mile. Cities include Clanton (county seat), Jemison, Maplesville, and Thorsby. The county is known for its peaches and other produce. Chilton County’s 2018 estimated population was 43,930, but its growth rate is good, having an 11% increase since 2000.



In the six-county region, Chilton County has the lowest population of 65+ and ranks second highest in poverty and educational attainment.

Chilton is located the farthest from Birmingham and services offered in the metropolitan area. In fact, residents in Chilton County are about halfway between Birmingham and Montgomery. The location, combined with the demographic factors, indicate an increased need for transportation assistance.

TABLE 4: Demographic Comparisons for Chilton County

Cohort	Chilton	Region	Alabama
Zero Vehicle Households	4.9%	4.7%	6.2%
Population 65+	13.3%	15.8%	16.1%
Poverty	18.6%	15.2%	17.5%
25+ No High School Diploma	17.8%	15.4%	14.2%
Median Household Income	\$45,182	\$56,133	\$48,486
Population Growth 2000-2015	11%	9.0%	9.4%



Jefferson County

Jefferson County covers 1,119 square miles, mostly urban, having an average density of 590 people per square mile. Birmingham is the most populous city in Jefferson County, with 212,021 people out of the total Jefferson County population of 659,892. Jefferson County offers a healthy choice of services and amenities. Because of its geography, it also offers unique and plentiful recreational opportunities that are not usually available within a city.

Jefferson County is the largest county in the six-county region and the most populous county in the state. Like many other major metropolitan areas, its growth rate has declined for the past 20 years. However, the latest population estimates indicate nominal growth since 2010.



Jefferson County has the highest percentage of zero vehicle households (7.7%) in the region. Jefferson County has a fixed-route transit system, but the service area is limited and the frequency of service is poor. Other transportation services are available, but a gap in transportation services remains and many residents have unmet transportation needs.

TABLE 5: Demographic Comparisons for Jefferson County

Cohort	Jefferson	Region	Alabama
Zero Vehicle Households	7.7%	4.7%	6.2%
Population 65+	15%	15.8%	16.1%
Poverty	17%	15.2%	17.5%
25+ No High School Diploma	12.4%	15.4%	14.2%
Median Household Income	\$51,979	\$56,133	\$48,486
Population Growth 2000-2018	-3.3%	9.0%	9.4%



Shelby County

Shelby County covers 810 square miles with a mix of urban and rural areas. The average population density is 261 people per square mile. Shelby County is home to Oak Mountain State Park, Alabama’s largest state park, covering nearly 10,000 acres.

Located south of Jefferson County, Shelby County has experienced a population increase of 47.4% since 2000. The Hispanic population has nearly tripled since 2000, from 2.0% of total population to 5.7%. As a comparison, the Hispanic population in the State of Alabama increased from 1.7% in 2000 to an estimated 4.2% in 2018.



Compared to the region, Shelby County ranked the lowest in every demographic cohort measured except population 65+ (second lowest), meaning it has the least transportation need. However, Shelby County’s rapid growth rate may have future ramifications regarding transportation dependency, considering its corresponding rapid employment rate. Most notable is Shelby County’s high median household income of \$75,761.

TABLE 7: Demographic Comparisons for Shelby County

Cohort	Shelby	Region	Alabama
Zero Vehicle Household	2.9%	4.7%	6.2%
Population 65+	14.3%	15.8%	16.1%
Poverty	8.4%	15.2%	17.5%
25+ No High School Diploma	7.9%	15.4%	14.2%
Median Household Income	\$75,761	\$56,133	\$48,486
Population Growth 2000-2018	47.4%	9.0%	9.4%



St. Clair County

The 2018 population for St. Clair County was 87,306. It has consistently experienced the second-highest growth rate in the region. But with 654 square miles, St. Clair County remains largely rural, having an average population density of 133 people per square mile. Interstates 59 and 20 pass through the county, encouraging convenient development expansion from Jefferson County. Since 2010, the southernmost portion of St. Clair County has been included in the Birmingham urbanized area, and growth in this area is expected to continue.



St. Clair is the only county in Alabama with two county seats—one in Ashville and one in Pell City. Using the demographic indicators, St. Clair County ranked fifth in the region for overall transportation need. These are positive indicators from an economic standpoint.

TABLE 6: Demographic Comparisons for St. Clair County

Cohort	St. Clair	Region	Alabama
Zero Vehicle Households	3%	4.7%	6.2%
Population 65+	15.9%	15.8%	16.1%
Poverty	13.2%	15.2%	17.5%
25+ No High School Diploma	15.2%	15.4%	14.2%
Median Household Income	\$54,887	\$56,133	\$48,486
Population Growth 2000-2018	34.9%	9.0%	9.4%



Walker County

Walker County covers 805 square miles and is largely rural. It has a population of 64,493 and a density of 80 people per square mile. Jasper is the county seat and is in the center of the county. Walker County is consistently losing population. It lost 3.8% since 2010 and 8.8% of its population from 2000-2018. Approximately 20 percent of Walker County’s total population is in Jasper. Coal and timber are major resources.

In the six-county region, Walker has the highest overall score for transit dependency cohorts. It is important to note the very high percentage of poverty. Also notable is Walker County’s median household income of \$35,843, the lowest in the region.



TABLE 8: Demographic Comparison for Walker County

Cohort	Walker	Region	Alabama
Zero Vehicle Household	6.0%	4.7%	6.2%
Population 65+	18.1%	15.8%	16.1%
Poverty	23.2%	15.2%	17.5%
25+ No High School Diploma	22.2%	15.4%	14.2%
Median Household Income	\$35,843	\$56,133	\$48,486
Population Growth 2000-2015	-6.8%	9.0%	9.4%



TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

To get widespread input, discussions were held with a diversity of representatives, including local politicians, agency employees, the public, transportation providers, caregivers, and individuals who are transportation disadvantaged. Information gathered was used to develop this plan. Similarities were seen across counties regarding needs, barriers, and solutions.

Seniors

Except for Chilton County, every county in the region has experienced an increase in their population age 65 and over since 2010. Shelby County has the highest increase of 3.7%. As health care improves and Baby Boomers age, transportation for seniors is a vital concern. Seniors rely on their automobiles to enable preservation of their independence. In the Greater Birmingham area, there are few, if any, viable alternatives to the private automobile. This can compel people to drive when they are not able, endangering the lives of themselves and others.

Disabled

The disabled population is diverse, ranging from minor to severe and infant to elderly. It does not discriminate among race, age, income, or education. In many cases, an inability to drive is the only thing that interferes with leading a relatively normal lifestyle. Even if there is adequate public transit and individuals are physically able to negotiate it, they may not be able to get to/from bus stops, due to lack of sidewalks or other features that interfere with accessibility. Great strides have been made since the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, but there remains much room for improvement.

In addition to identifying population groups that may be likely to need transportation assistance, there are also trip purpose needs, as identified in the discussions. The most urgent needs are for life-sustaining activities, such as food and medical (including prescriptions, rehabilitation, and day care).

Of course, there are other trip purpose needs including employment, education, general personal business, and social activities. Because of limited resources, effort is usually concentrated on providing transportation for life-sustaining activities. But being homebound may lead to depression and poor health. When people experience a higher quality of life, it is beneficial for everyone.

Driver Training

Many disabilities are not visually apparent. Drivers need training on how to effectively assist passengers and how to react (or not react) to certain behaviors. Traveling independently can be confusing. It is important to make every passenger feel comfortable and help them reach their destination safely, without incident.

TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS

People were asked to identify barriers to transportation. Funding was only mentioned a few times and was not at the top of the list.

Availability

The barrier that participants cited most often was availability of transportation, which includes service area, hours of operation, and dependability. Public transportation service is limited, even in Jefferson and Shelby counties, where some public transit exists. Many people are unable to use Section 5310 demand response service, due to capacity constraints and eligibility criteria.

Of concern in Blount, St. Clair, and Walker counties is the ability to get to and from other counties, especially since the bulk of medical and social services are in Jefferson County. People are denied services for which they are eligible because they cannot access facilities.

Infrastructure

Sidewalks and bike lanes are often nonexistent, making it necessary to walk and ride in streets or in other areas not designed for pedestrians or cyclists. For individuals living within a few miles of a town or grocery store, walking or biking is an obvious and convenient choice. But on a two-lane road where vehicles are traveling over 55 miles per hour, it is not feasible.

Public Awareness

Many people are unaware that public transportation is available in their county whether they are eligible. Hence, there is a need for public education and marketing. Public awareness leads to increased efficiencies and overall effectiveness. Other benefits of increased access to jobs and shopping is an increased tax base and overall public health.

Additionally, the public needs to be educated about overall funding of transit. Most people are unaware of how much public transportation costs and how it is funded.

Coordination

Another barrier is the lack of interest in sharing resources. There is a prevailing “what-comes-here-stays-here” mentality. Jurisdictions as well as agencies may be hesitant to share resources because they are worried about not getting their fair share. However, sharing resources increases funding efficiencies and allows more people to access more services.

STRATEGIES

The following strategies will be used to address the transportation needs and barriers indicated above.

1. Enforce Standards for Funding for FTA Sections 5310. Only applications requesting capital equipment for projects that serve a broad range of people, expand service area, hours, and/or days of operation, and/or engage in coordinated contracts will be funded.
2. Develop a task force to assist applicants with collaboration and sharing of resources to increase efficiencies.
3. Coordinate service across county lines.
4. Assist the Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority in service development and route adjustment.
5. Develop ways to expand services. In the urbanized area, this may include specialized service, express buses, and bus rapid transit.
6. Begin a public awareness campaign regarding available services and advocate for designation of funding.
7. Identify and reduce duplication of services.
8. Work with employers to participate in CommuteSmart, the local ridesharing program.
9. Encourage a central call center for Jefferson and Shelby counties.
10. Assist with the formation of volunteer programs to provide transportation services.
11. Look for partners to promote the benefits of public transportation services.
12. At a minimum under FTA Section 5310, sustain current levels of service, including vehicle replacement, where appropriate.
13. Other strategies or proposed projects not listed herein will be considered for funding if they demonstrate concurrence with stated Goals and movement toward resolution of Needs and/or Barriers.