



# Transit Coordination Plan 2022

Board of Directors Adoption: May 2022

In Cooperation With:



OZARK SENIOR CENTER



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**OZARKS TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION**  
A METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

RESOLUTION FY2017-LCBT-001

**A RESOLUTION OF THE LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD FOR TRANSIT APPROVING THE TRANSIT COORDINATION PLAN**

We, the undersigned, do hereby attest that the Transit Coordination Plan has been approved by the Local Coordinating Board for Transit on March 16, 2017.

Signed, this 16<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2017:.

*Diane Gallion*

Chair- Diane Gallion

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# Special Thanks

## **Local Coordination Board for Transit**

Brandie Fisher, City Utilities Transit, Chair

Jeff Robinson, OATS, Inc

Bill Achor, Ozark Senior Center

Shelby Butler, Empower:Abilities

Haley Powell, SeniorAge

Linda Starr, SWI Industrial Solutions

Leslie McCafferty, Burrell Behavioral Health

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Eva Steinman, FTA Region 7

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# Background

Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO) identifies an increasing need to plan for and address the mobility needs of the Springfield Region. A network of transportation providers and human service agencies support the transportation system, however gaps in service exist due to constrained resources and limitations in fixed-route and demand response services. Given the lack of available funding, coordination can help reduce the strain on resources by effectively applying the assets of multiple agencies to common problems.

The OTO's *Transit Coordination Plan* (TCP) fulfills the federal requirements of a *Human Services Transportation Plan* (HSTP) enacted under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. This legislation builds upon three previous federal transportation bills: the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy of Users* (SAFETEA-LU) adopted in 2005, the *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act* (MAP-21) adopted in 2012, and the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation* (FAST) Act adopted in 2015.

The TCP is intended to identify needs and gaps in human service transportation services for seniors and

individuals with disabilities in the OTO study Region. The TCP will be used to guide the use of funds from the Section 5310 *Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities* Program.

## REQUIREMENTS

As outlined in the authorizing legislation, the Transit Coordination Plan must comply with the following five requirements:

1. An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and persons with limited incomes;
2. An inventory of available services that identifies areas of redundant service and gaps in service;
3. Strategies to address the identified gaps in service;
4. Identification of coordination actions to eliminate or reduce duplication in services and strategies for more efficient utilization of resources; and,
5. Prioritization of implementation strategies.

## PLANNING PROCESS

This planning process was led by the OTO's Local Coordination Board for Transit. This group met six times from

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# Background

## Traditional Projects

◊Capital Projects Designed to Meet the Special Needs of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

◊Vehicle Purchases are a common use of these funds

## Non-Traditional Projects

◊Projects that Exceed ADA Requirements

◊Projects that reduce dependence on paratransit services

◊Alternatives to Public Transit for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

February 2021 to May 2022 to (1) discuss the creation and administration of a survey, (2) identify needs, and (3) create and prioritize strategies and actions to meet the identified needs. Community outreach included a project website, social media outreach, and a survey made available to seniors and individuals with disabilities. The survey was distributed to these groups through mailings, posters, and discussed on a local senior radio show.

## PLAN ADOPTION

The Local Coordinating Board for Transit completed the development the Transit Coordination Plan on April 11, 2022. At this final meeting, the LCBT voted and referred the plan to the OTO Board of Directors for final adoption. Prior to the OTO Board of Directors meeting on May 19, 2022, the Transit Coordination Plan was made available for a 30-day public comment period. A legal ad was also published on April 18 in the Springfield News-Leader to advertise the comment period.

## SECTION 5310 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Section 5310 Program provides funding to help improve the mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities, by removing barriers to transportation services and expanding the transportation mobility options available. The Bipartisan Infrastructure

Law requires at least 55% of the Section 5310 Program to be spent on capital public transportation projects that are planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable. The FAST Act, the current federal transportation authorization, maintains the 55% requirement. These projects are referred to as Section 5310 Traditional projects.

The other 45% may be used for capital and operating projects that 1) exceed the requirements of the ADA, 2) improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance by individuals with disabilities on complementary paratransit, or 3) public transportation alternatives that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities with transportation. These projects are referred to as Non-Traditional projects.

## OTO PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The OTO's current Section 5310 program is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiated between the OTO, MoDOT, and City Utilities of Springfield. This MOU established:

1. CU as the designated recipient of Section 5310 funds
2. CU is responsible for managing its portion of Section 5310 funds

3. OTO as responsible for planning and project selection,
4. MoDOT as responsible for grant management for funds awarded to subrecipients other than CU

The grant management stipulation is specifically targeted toward the administration of vehicle purchases. Any changes to the structure of the OTO's project selection process included in this plan could result in the need to renegotiate the MOU.

## GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES

The OTO study area has a population of about 340,000 people covering 428 square miles. Greene County is the fifth-largest county in the state of Missouri and Christian County is among the fastest growing counties in the United States. The communities of Willard, Springfield, Strafford, Republic, Battlefield, Nixa, Ozark, and Fremont Hills are included in the study area, though Fremont Hills is not a member of the OTO. By the year 2045, the population of the OTO region is expected to reach about 490,000.

## DESTINATION 2045

*Destination 2045* is the Springfield Region's long-range transportation plan. The principles and strategies included in *Destination 2045* are carried out through a variety of short-range transportation plans and programs. All federally funded projects, including

Section 5310, must be consistent with the principles identified in *Destination 2045*.

## TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the short-term implementation element of *Destination 2045*. The TIP is the schedule of transportation improvements planned by various agencies in the Springfield Region. This document is updated every year and covers a four-year period. All projects selected for inclusion in the TIP must be consistent with the principles in the long-range transportation plan.

## **IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS**

Finding ways to maximize the region's existing funding is an important component of this planning. Coordinating transportation services or fully implementing a mobility management program are two important ways to ensure existing services are fully utilized.

## COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION

Coordinated transportation arises when agencies, jurisdictions, and nonprofit organizations work together to eliminate duplications to improve the quality of service and maximize transportation services for seniors,

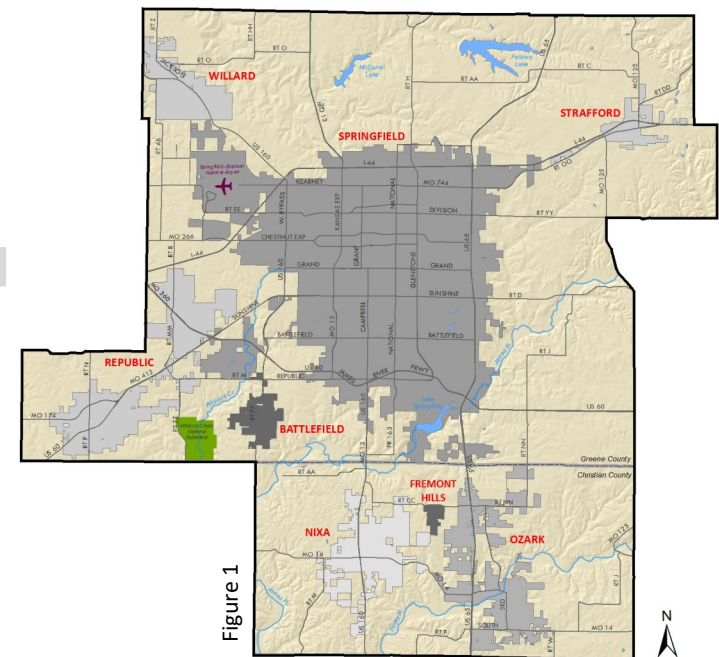


Figure 1

# Background

*“Mobility management involves the creation of staff resources to focus on the transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities, matching them with the available transportation resources”*

individuals with disabilities, and people with low-incomes. The benefits of coordinated transportation include:

1. Increased productivity: more trips or more passengers per trip
2. Increased efficiency: reduced costs
3. Enhanced mobility: increased access to jobs, health care, services, social events, etc.

There are many levels of coordination, examples ranging from:

1. Sharing information between agencies: this includes transportation providers, those who fund projects, and those with clients who have a transportation need.
2. Sharing resources across agencies, such as allowing the use of agency vehicles by other agencies during down time periods, jointly scheduling services or vehicles and drivers, purchasing contracts, maintenance facilities, etc.
3. Sharing rides and providing rides to clients of other agencies under cost-sharing agreements or purchasing rides on vehicles of other agencies.
4. Consolidating the delivery and management of transportation services.

Federal agencies have been working to remove program barriers to coordination, to develop policies that would incentivize coordination, and to provide resources to support these

efforts. Under the FAST Act, FTA announced a new discretionary pilot program, Section 3006(b), for innovative coordinated access and mobility, open to Section 5310 recipients and sub-recipients, to assist in financing projects for seniors and individuals with disabilities that improve coordination or transportation services and non-emergency medical transportation services.

## MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

Mobility management is an innovative approach for managing and delivering coordinated transportation services to customers, including individuals with disabilities and seniors. Changes in demographics, shifts in land use patterns, and the creation of new and different job markets require new approaches for providing transportation services, particularly for customers with transportation needs. Mobility management focuses on meeting individual customer needs through a wide range of transportation options and service providers.

Mobility management involves the creation of staff resources to focus on the transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities, matching them with the available transportation resources. Mobility managers apprise the public about available transportation options, allowing them to make better decisions. The mobility managers role can go beyond trip

referrals or booking, and can include working to increase the availability of services and improving their efficiency, effectiveness, and quality. Mobility management activities eligible for funding include:

1. Operating transportation brokerages to coordinate service providers, funding resources, and customer needs.
2. Coordinating transportation services for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes.
3. Supporting local partnerships that coordinate transportation services.
4. Staffing for the development and implementation of coordination plans.
5. Providing travel training and trip planning activities for customers.
6. Developing and operating traveler call centers to coordinate travel information, manage eligibility requirements, and arrange customer travel.

7. Planning and implementing the acquisition and purchase of intelligent transportation technologies to operate a coordinated system.

## CONCLUSION

The OTO's *Transit Coordination Plan* (TCP) fulfills the federal requirements of a *Human Services Transportation Plan* (HSTP) enacted under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The planning process for the TCP was led by the OTO's Local Coordination Board for Transit. This group met six times from February 2021 to May 2022 while developing this plan. The TCP will help guide funding decisions for the OTO's allocation of Section 5310 funding. This program provides funding to help improve the mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities, by removing barriers to transportation services and expanding the transportation mobility options available.

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# Regional Profile

The OTO covers a geographical area of about 428 square miles in the Springfield region. The municipalities within the MPO area include the cities of Battlefield, Fremont Hills, Nixa, Ozark, Republic, Springfield, Strafford, Willard and the northern half of Christian County and a large portion of Greene County.

This regional profile includes important demographic characteristics and information on transit services available to residents of the OTO planning area. The OTO planning area has many regional transit assets. City Utilities, OATS, and several human service agencies provide transit services in the OTO planning area. Within Springfield, residents are served by fixed route and paratransit services. Outside of Springfield OATS and several human services provide transportation services.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

An understanding of the population makeup is vital for determining transit needs in an area such as the Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO). This section analyzes three key populations: seniors, individuals with limited incomes, and individuals with disabilities. Within the seven member communities in the OTO planning area,

there are just over 37,300 individuals with at least one disability. Additionally, the population of seniors over 65 has increased 24% since 2010. City-level median household incomes in 2015 within the OTO planning area range from just over \$36,800 to just over \$61,000.

## OLDER ADULTS

Older adults may experience a loss of independence as they age. Vision may fade, reaction times may slow, or arthritis may make driving physically painful. If these conditions occur, older adults can become dependent on public transportation. Table 1, on the next page, shows each jurisdiction's senior population in 2010, 2014, and 2019. Nixa, Springfield, Strafford, and both Greene and Christian counties have more than 15% of their respective populations above the age of 65, with Greene County having the highest percentage. Nixa has the highest percentage change in senior population from 2010 to 2015, with more than a 40% increase.

Within the OTO planning area, senior aged populations are concentrated in census tracts in southeastern Springfield, as shown in Figure 2. Other tracts with high percentages of seniors

*"... there are over 37,300 individuals with at least one disability."*



# Regional Profile

Distribution of the Region's Seniors

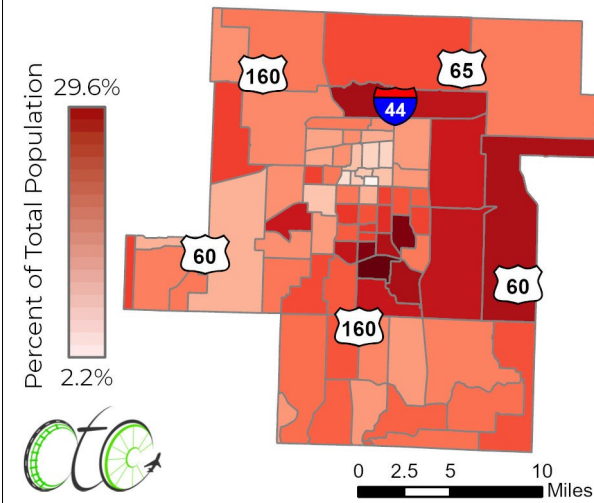


Figure 2

Distribution of Minority Individuals Within the Region's Senior Population

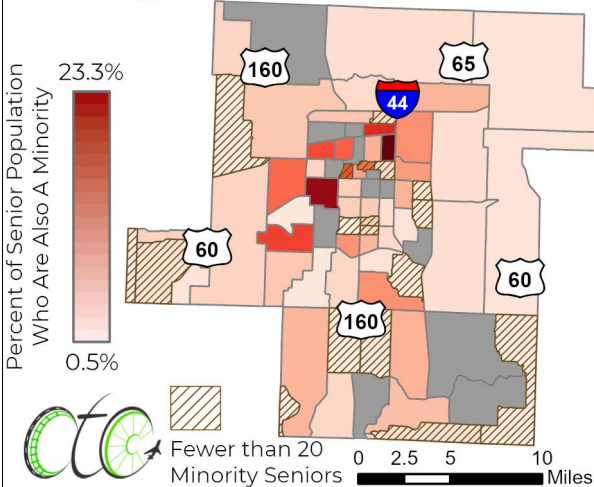


Figure 3

can be found in northern Springfield and on the eastern edge of the OTO area. Figure 2 reveals that several census tracts in the OTO planning area have no seniors of minority races. Many minority seniors are located within the City of Springfield.

Seniors within the OTO planning area have limited access to public transit services. Traditional public transit, specifically fixed route buses, do not extend to communities with high concentrations of seniors, such as Strafford or unincorporated Greene County, or census tracts along the periphery of Springfield. Seniors in these areas rely on services such as OATS, that offer daily or weekly service, rather than hourly.

## INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

An individual with a disability may be unable to drive a personal vehicle and thus be dependent on public transportation. A visual or ambulatory impairment may prevent a person from physically driving a vehicle, while a cognitive impairment may prevent an individual from making the complex decisions needed to drive on today's busy streets. A total of 37,303 people living in the OTO's seven cities have at least one form of disability, which is approximately 16% of the combined municipal population. The cities of Nixa, Springfield, and Willard each have over 15% of their population with some form of disability as shown in Table 2. The City of Battlefield has the lowest percentage of individuals with disabilities, only 8.6%.

Table 1: Population Age 65 and Over

| Jurisdiction | 2010   |         | 2014   |         | 2019   |         | Percent Change from 2010 - 2019 |
|--------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|---------------------------------|
|              | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |                                 |
| Battlefield  | 487    | 8.7%    | 697    | 12.1%   | 674    | 10.8%   | 38.4%                           |
| Nixa         | 2,340  | 12.3%   | 2,379  | 12.0%   | 3,292  | 15.3%   | 40.7%                           |
| Ozark        | 1,791  | 10.1%   | 2,553  | 13.9%   | 2,248  | 11.4%   | 25.5%                           |
| Republic     | 1,582  | 10.7%   | 1,644  | 10.8%   | 1,998  | 12.3%   | 26.3%                           |
| Springfield  | 23,121 | 14.5%   | 24,025 | 14.8%   | 26,172 | 15.7%   | 13.2%                           |
| Strafford    | 292    | 12.4%   | 274    | 12.2%   | 334    | 15.9%   | 14.4%                           |
| Willard      | 541    | 10.2%   | 583    | 10.8%   | 561    | 10.2%   | 3.7%                            |
| Christian CO | 9,464  | 12.2%   | 10,621 | 13.3%   | 13,040 | 15.2%   | 37.8%                           |
| Greene CO    | 38,593 | 14.0%   | 40,976 | 14.6%   | 46,663 | 16.1%   | 20.9%                           |

Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2010 Table P12. 2010-2014 American Community Survey Table SO 101, 2015-2019 American Community Survey Table SO 101



The City of Springfield has the highest percentage of individuals with ambulatory and independent living disabilities, 9.1% and 6.9% respectively. Residents with disabilities in Springfield are the only residents in the region with access to regular paratransit service offered by Springfield's City Utilities.

Figure 4 shows the spatial distribution of individuals with disabilities in the OTO planning area. There appears to be a concentration of disabled individuals in northwest and southeast Springfield. Figure 5 shows the spatial distribution of individuals of minority races with disabilities. Up to 29.2% of disabled residents in area census tracts are minority individuals, as shown in Figure 5. These minority residents seem to be concentrated in western and central Springfield.

## INDIVIDUALS WITH LIMITED INCOMES

Income also has effects on transportation related activities. Users of public transportation systems rely on transit fares to be affordable and generally do not use private vehicles as a daily transportation option.

City-level median household incomes in 2015 within the OTO planning area range from just under \$37,000 to just over \$61,000. The City of Battlefield has the highest median household income at \$61,373, while the City of Springfield has the lowest at \$36,856. When comparing counties, Greene County has a lower median household income at \$46,086, with Christian County at \$60,645.

**Table 2: Disabilities Across Jurisdictions**

| Jurisdiction | Total population with disabilities |       | With a hearing difficulty |      | With a vision difficulty |      | With a cognitive difficulty |      | With an ambulatory difficulty |      | With a self-care difficulty |      | With an independent living difficulty |      |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-------|---------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|-----------------------------|------|-------------------------------|------|-----------------------------|------|---------------------------------------|------|
|              | Total                              | %     | Total                     | %    | Total                    | %    | Total                       | %    | Total                         | %    | Total                       | %    | Total                                 | %    |
| Battlefield  | 535                                | 8.6%  | 166                       | 2.7% | 57                       | 0.9% | 215                         | 3.4% | 190                           | 3.0% | 55                          | 0.9% | 144                                   | 2.3% |
| Nixa         | 3,373                              | 15.7% | 1,166                     | 5.4% | 693                      | 3.2% | 1,419                       | 6.6% | 1,562                         | 7.3% | 564                         | 2.6% | 1,436                                 | 6.7% |
| Ozark        | 2,041                              | 10.5% | 544                       | 2.8% | 476                      | 2.4% | 938                         | 4.8% | 921                           | 4.7% | 482                         | 2.5% | 708                                   | 3.6% |
| Republic     | 2,205                              | 13.7% | 606                       | 3.8% | 367                      | 2.3% | 939                         | 5.8% | 1,156                         | 7.2% | 351                         | 2.2% | 620                                   | 3.9% |
| Springfield  | 28,071                             | 17.1% | 8,401                     | 5.1% | 5,577                    | 3.4% | 13,173                      | 8.0% | 14,881                        | 9.1% | 6,545                       | 4.0% | 11,340                                | 6.9% |
| Strafford    | 231                                | 11.4% | 69                        | 3.4% | 45                       | 2.2% | 105                         | 5.2% | 110                           | 5.4% | 40                          | 2.0% | 63                                    | 3.1% |
| Willard      | 847                                | 15.5% | 219                       | 4.0% | 145                      | 2.7% | 348                         | 6.4% | 315                           | 5.8% | 72                          | 1.3% | 137                                   | 2.5% |
| Christian CO | 11,625                             | 13.6% | 3,841                     | 4.5% | 2,272                    | 2.7% | 4,613                       | 5.4% | 5,691                         | 6.7% | 2,143                       | 2.5% | 4,394                                 | 5.2% |
| Greene CO    | 42,985                             | 15.0% | 13,379                    | 4.7% | 8,472                    | 3.0% | 19,134                      | 6.7% | 22,452                        | 7.9% | 9,335                       | 3.3% | 16,190                                | 5.7% |

Source: 2015-2019 ACS Table, S1810

Figure 4

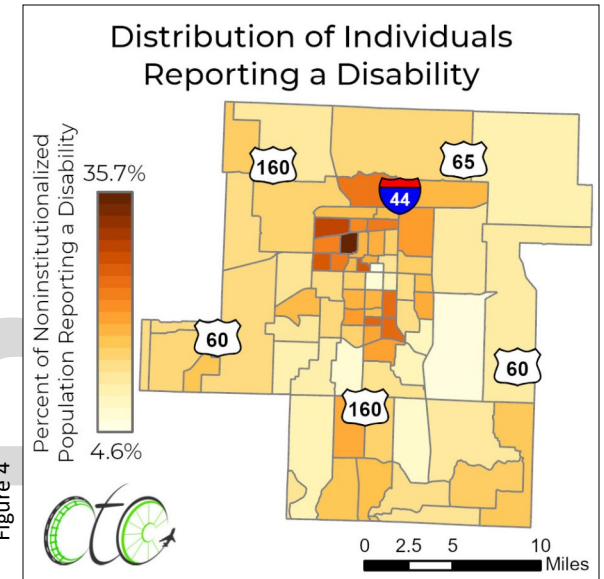
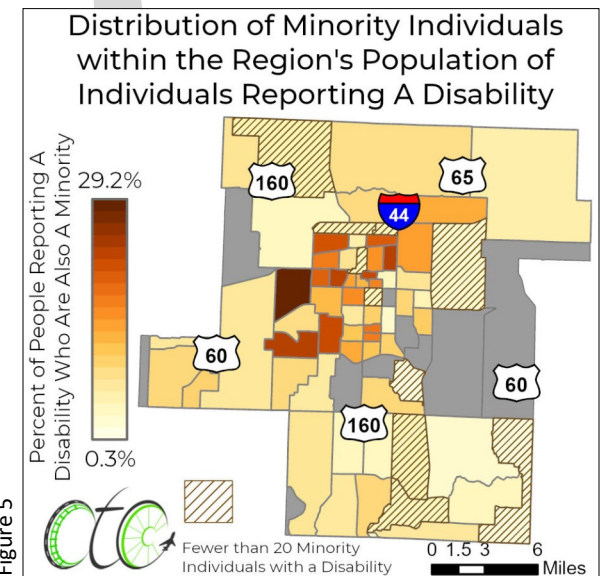


Figure 5



# Regional Profile

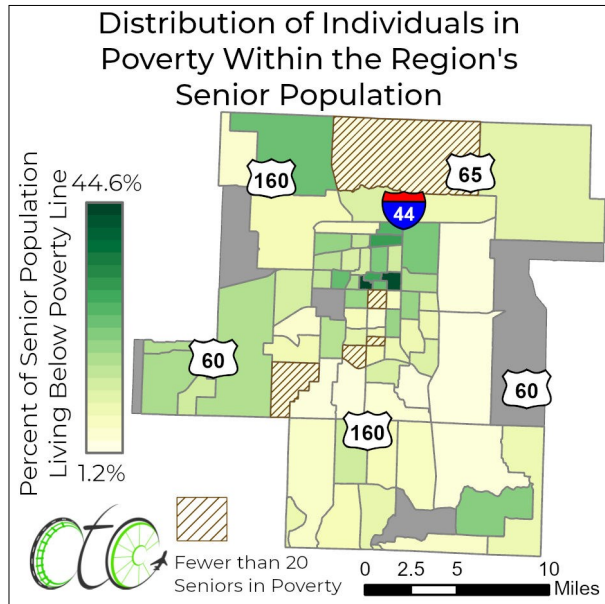


Figure 6

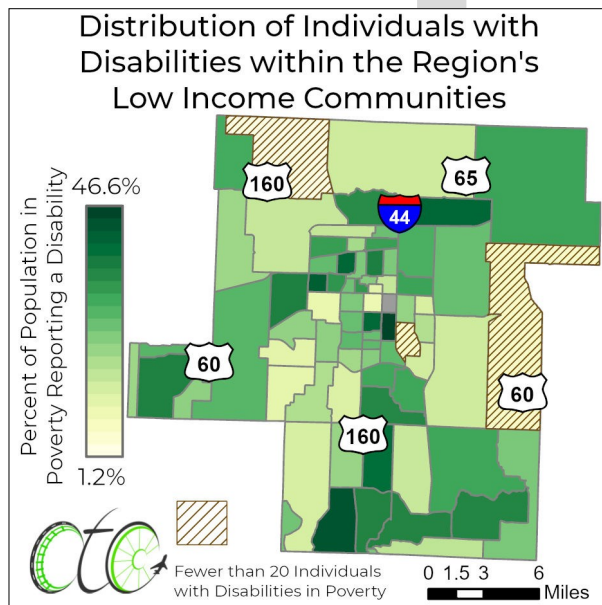


Figure 7

The federal poverty guidelines are generated annually and are based on family size and composition. Poverty is defined as a family's total income being less than the family's threshold. Low-income individuals and families are more likely to seek public transportation or other alternatives to the automobile.

As seen in Table 3, at least 12 percent of residents in Republic, Springfield, Strafford, and the entirety of Greene County have an income below the poverty level in 2019. Republic and Springfield have the highest percentage of elderly persons with an income below the poverty level.

The spatial distribution of seniors and individuals with disabilities below federal poverty levels are shown in Figures 6 and 7. Current data suggests no seniors are living below federal poverty levels in four census tracts.

There does appear to be concentrations of low income seniors in northern Springfield. Individuals with disabilities living below federal poverty levels are prevalent throughout the OTO planning area. There are no clear patterns to where these individuals live. Providers of public transportation will have to offer services throughout the region to serve these low income residents.

## REGIONAL TRANSIT ASSETS

The OTO planning area has many regional transit assets. City Utilities provides fixed-route and paratransit services to Springfield residents. OATS Southwest Region offers a wide range of general public and specialty transportation services to 17 counties in Southwest Missouri. Area universities

**Table 3: Income Characteristics in 2019**

| Jurisdiction | Median Household Income | Total Population |                     |                       | Age 65 and Over |                     |                       |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
|              |                         | Total            | Below Poverty Level | % Below Poverty Level | Total           | Below Poverty Level | % Below Poverty Level |
| Battlefield  | \$61,373                | 6,228            | 476                 | 7.6%                  | 674             | 15                  | 2.2%                  |
| Nixa         | \$58,402                | 21,437           | 1,965               | 9.2%                  | 3,227           | 234                 | 7.3%                  |
| Ozark        | \$55,774                | 19,071           | 2,132               | 11.2%                 | 2,130           | 231                 | 10.8%                 |
| Republic     | \$55,964                | 15,977           | 1,910               | 12.0%                 | 1,854           | 290                 | 15.6%                 |
| Springfield  | \$36,856                | 156,333          | 35,831              | 22.9%                 | 24,914          | 3,076               | 12.3%                 |
| Strafford    | \$45,811                | 2,001            | 264                 | 13.2%                 | 289             | 22                  | 7.6%                  |
| Willard      | \$61,188                | 5,464            | 384                 | 7.0%                  | 510             | 56                  | 11.0%                 |
| Christian CO | \$60,645                | 84,672           | 8,433               | 10.0%                 | 12,857          | 1,013               | 7.9%                  |
| Greene CO    | \$46,086                | 277,987          | 45,603              | 16.4%                 | 45,023          | 4,184               | 9.3%                  |

Data Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey, Table B17001, S0101, S1903

and human service agencies also provide valuable transportation services.

## CITY UTILITIES

City Utilities is the primary fixed-route transit operator in the OTO planning area. Fixed-route service is provided within the City of Springfield seven days a week. City Utilities also offers a demand response paratransit service for those who cannot ride the fixed-route bus due to a disability or health condition. CU Transit operates both day and night routes, as well as on weekends and holidays.

City Utilities has 28 fixed-route buses and six paratransit buses, as well as over 100 shelters and 170 benches. Hours of operation for transit in Springfield are Monday through Saturday 6:00 a.m. to 6:35 p.m., while night service is 6:10 p.m. to 11:10 p.m., Sundays are 7:10 a.m. to 11:10 p.m., and holidays are 8:10 a.m. to 6:10 p.m. The paratransit hours are the same as the fixed-route. City Utilities operates 365 days a year. There are 12 day routes, seven Saturday and evening routes, and four Sunday and holiday routes. There is also an app and web-based map called “Where’s My Bus?” available so riders can select their route and see the location of the bus. These resources help riders better plan their transit trips.

Beyond operating the transit system, City Utilities has partnered with the City of Springfield to build sidewalks along bus routes and to construct ADA accessible bus stops. Using their

Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) and formerly New Freedom funding, this partnership has allowed for improved access along several major routes and near critical facilities.

## MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

Missouri State University contracts with a private provider for regular shuttle service in and around the MSU campus. This service is available to the public at no charge. The MSU routes run days and evenings, with limited service when school is not in session.

MSU has multiple multi-modal parking facilities and transfer stations located across campus. The shuttle connects with downtown Springfield to service the University’s expansion into the downtown area.

## OATS, Inc

OATS is a private, not-for-profit transportation provider serving 87 counties in Missouri. The OATS Southwest region includes Barry, Barton, Christian, Dade, Dallas, Douglas, Greene, Jasper, Lawrence, Newton, McDonald, Ozark, Polk, Stone, Taney, Webster, and Wright counties. OATS provides demand response and nonemergency medical transportation to the general public for essential shopping, nutrition, medical, business, education, recreation, and employment. Schedules and fares vary by service area and service type.

*“Beyond operating the transit system, City Utilities has partnered with the City of Springfield to build sidewalks along bus routes and to construct ADA accessible bus stops.”*

# Regional Profile

*In FY 2016, OATS provided transportation services to 4,665 individuals across their 17-county Southwest Region, supplying a total of 229,030 one-way trips. Greene County had the highest number of users with 30% of the total ridership, serving 1,418 individuals in FY 2016. In the Southwest region, approximately 19% of the trips were for medical purposes, 23% for employment purposes and 24% for essential shopping.*

## INTER-CITY SURFACE TRANSPORTATION

The OTO region is currently served by two inter-city bus companies, Greyhound Lines, Inc., which serves over 2,400 destinations in North America and Jefferson Lines, which has stops in fourteen states and twenty stops in Missouri, including Springfield. There are 31 cities with Greyhound locations in Missouri, including Springfield, Kansas City, and St. Louis. Hollister, near Branson, is also served by Greyhound. The Greyhound bus stop in Springfield is on the western edge of Springfield at I-44 and Chestnut Expressway. Greyhound's service to Jefferson City, Kansas City, and St. Louis provides a connection to Amtrak service. Jefferson Lines uses the same stop as Greyhound in western Springfield.

## HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS

Within the OTO planning area, several human service providers offer transportation services. Area sheltered workshops, Christian County Enterprises and SWI Industrial, offer transportation to and from work and to offsite jobsites. Burrell Behavioral Health and Arc of the Ozarks offer transportation to clients receiving services, such as youth residential treatment environments, individualized supported living units, substance abuse treatment centers, and adults looking to better integrate into the independent living environment. The Council of Churches of the Ozarks runs Daybreak Adult Daycare. Daybreak clients are provided transportation to the facility and recreational field trips. The region's Human Service Transportation Providers offer a vital service to the elderly and disabled population.

## PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS

There are a number of private transportation providers in the OTO planning area. These include taxi companies, such as AB Taxi Service or Blue Express Taxi, charter services, such as J Howard Fisk Limousines, LTD, and companies specializing in non-emergency medical trips, such as Medi-Transit of Springfield, Inc. or Eldercare



Transit Service, and specialty transportation providers, such as Ability Transportation or the Ozark and Nixa senior centers.

## TRANSIT CATCHMENT AREA

Within the OTO planning area, transit providers serve many residents. Some residents have hourly service while others have service a few days a week. Additionally, some local providers offer regional services from outside the OTO planning area to Springfield. All these services combine to create a varied transit environment. Five OATS weekly express services increase the number of

people with transit access into Springfield, possibly creating a new population in need of transit service within the city.

## FIXED-ROUTE ACCESS

Residents living within the City of Springfield are the people in the OTO planning area with access to traditional fixed-route transit service, as seen in Figure 8. By charter, CU can only provide service within the city limits of Springfield. Many residential areas commonly considered “in Springfield” are not eligible to receive fixed-route transit service. According to the 2019 OTO Performance Measure report, 83%

*“According to the 2019 OTO Performance Measure report, 83% of housing units in the CU service area are within 1/4 mile of a bus stop.”*

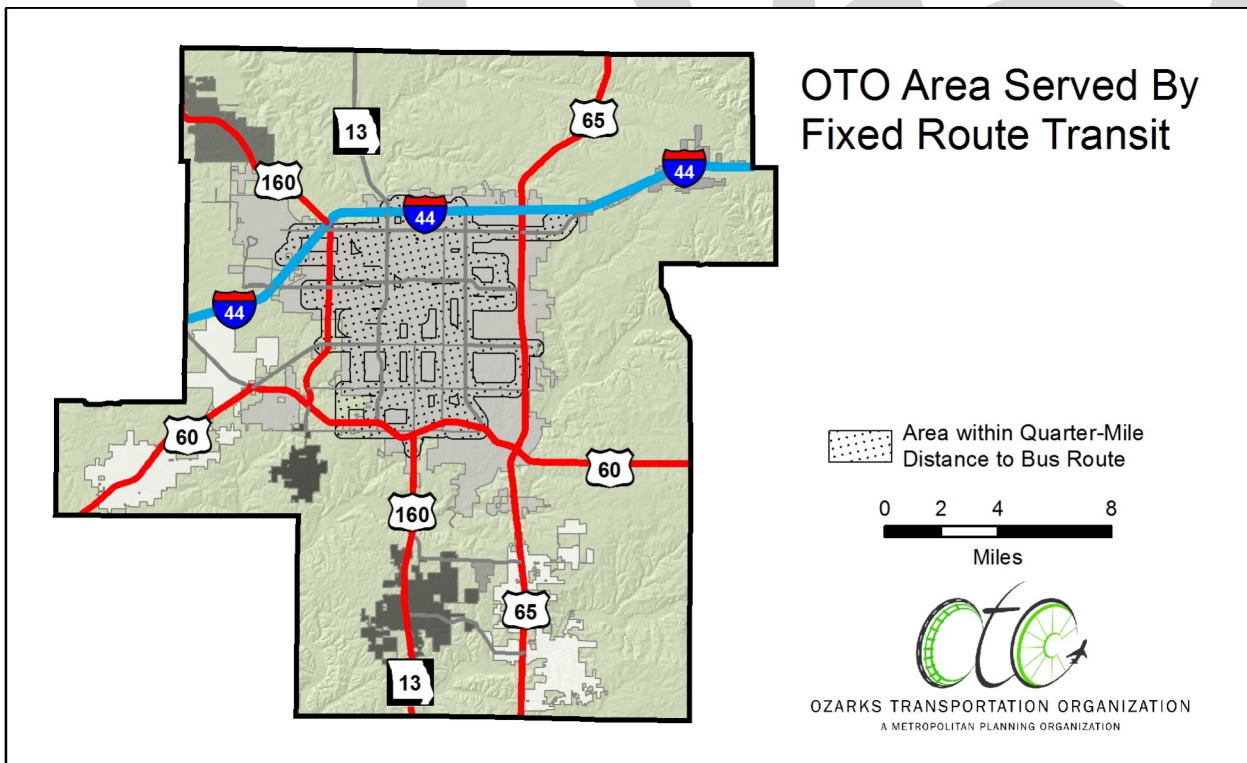
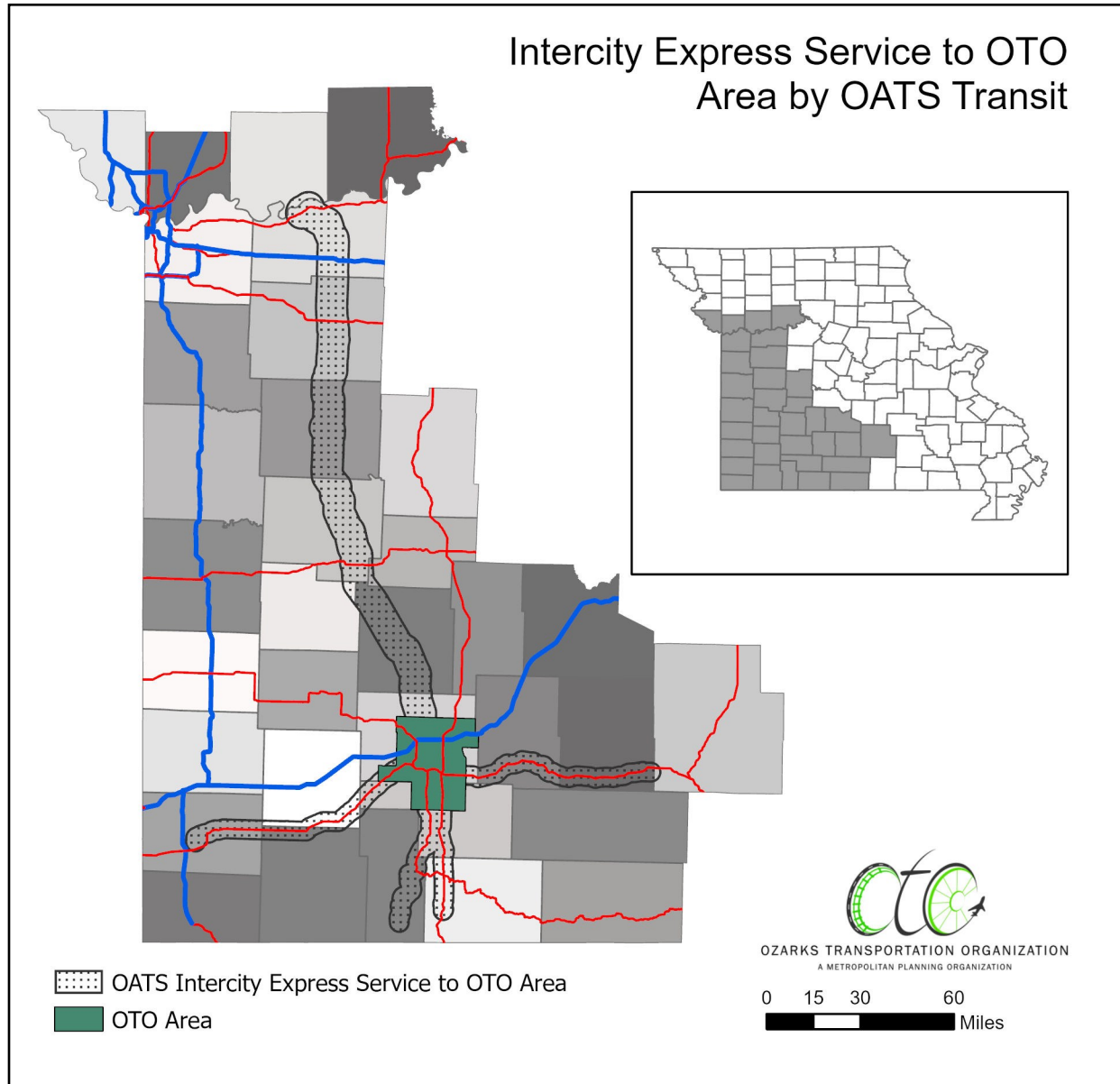


Figure 8

Figure 7

# Regional Profile



of housing units in the CU service area are within 1/4 mile of a bus stop. Regionally, that number is 45%. Over the last few years, housing growth has occurred away from fixed-route bus routes, resulting in a declining percentage of housing units near a bus stop. Fixed-route service is not offered to the Springfield-Branson National Airport.

## OATS INTERCITY EXPRESS ROUTES

While OATS has historically provided connections from outlying counties to Springfield, it also has intercity deviated fixed-route service from Lawrence, Newton, Stone, Taney, and Wright counties to Springfield, as shown in Figure 9. The primary purpose of these trips is for medical appointments. OATS is currently traveling to various clinics throughout Springfield. An idea has been raised to take these passengers to the CU Transit Center so connections can be made to existing fixed-route bus routes. If OATS and CU choose to work together in the future, a new subset of transit user may be created. These users from surrounding rural communities, will not be familiar with CU's transit system, or Springfield as a whole, so special efforts will have to be made to ensure successful integration.

## CHRISTIAN COUNTY SERVICE

OATS has recently entered into an agreement with CC-Links, the Christian

Figure 9

County's Senate Bill 40 Board, to provide service to the county's disabled residents. OATS will also supplement this service for individuals with disabilities with the creation of a rural route to serve the general population. The primary purpose of this service will be to provide employment-priority trips in Christian County.

## SUMMARY

Within the seven communities in the OTO study area, there are just over 37,300 individuals with at least one disability. Additionally, the population of seniors over 65 in individual OTO

communities have increased between 4% and 41% since 2010. The OTO planning area has many regional transit assets. City Utilities provides fixed-routes and paratransit services to Springfield residents. OATS Southwest Region offers a wide range of general public and specialty transportation services to 17 counties in Southwest Missouri. Area universities and human service agencies also provide valuable transportation services. Within the OTO planning area, transit providers serve many residents. Some residents have hourly service while other have service a few days a week.

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# Needs Assessment

Outreach was a critical component of this planning process. Seniors, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes were targets of a transit-user survey. Equally as important, the needs and long-term plan of area human service agencies and transportation providers were targeted with separate surveys. Results from the user survey, as well as the transportation provider and human service agency surveys, will guide the development of Strategies and Actions for this Transit Coordination Plan.

Two common themes continue to be found in the user survey results of the current planning process and the planning process in 2017. Users continue to express a desire to travel spontaneously and have greater flexibility in scheduling their trips. These themes helped the region understand the results of the 2017 TCP surveys, and these themes continue to provide beneficial insights for the current survey.

The human service agencies and transportation providers shared needs related to funding, expanding services to meet existing demand, and expanding transportation related infrastructure. Capital was another

important need shared by these agencies.

## USER NEEDS

Seniors, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes were targets of a transit-user survey. The LCBT's key implementation tool for the Transit Coordination Plan is the Section 5310 program, a program focused on these three groups of individuals. These groups were targeted through mailings, social media posts, an in-person site visit, and a guest appearance on a radio show targeted at area seniors. The outreach resulted in the identification of two key themes: spontaneity and flexibility. The involvement process, survey results, themes, gaps, and needs will be discussed below.

## INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Outreach efforts were designed to engage with seniors, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. A survey was the primary engagement tool, available digitally and in print. Surveys, or links to digital surveys, were made available or advertised:

- via a press release announcing the beginning of the survey period

## OUTREACH

- ◇ **61** Completed User Surveys
- ◇ **3** Completed Human Service Agency Surveys
- ◇ **2** Completed Transportation Provider Surveys

# Needs Assessment

- at the CU Transit Center as part of CU's Rider Appreciation Day during Communities in Motion Week
- on CU fixed route buses
- on several OATS routes
- at the Ozark Senior Center
- in a postcard mailed to active registered users of Access Express
- shared on Facebook by the OTO and Empower:Abilities, the region's independent living resource center
- during a guest appearance on Prime Time, a weekly radio show hosted by SeniorAge, the local Area Agency on Aging

A total of 61 surveys were completed.

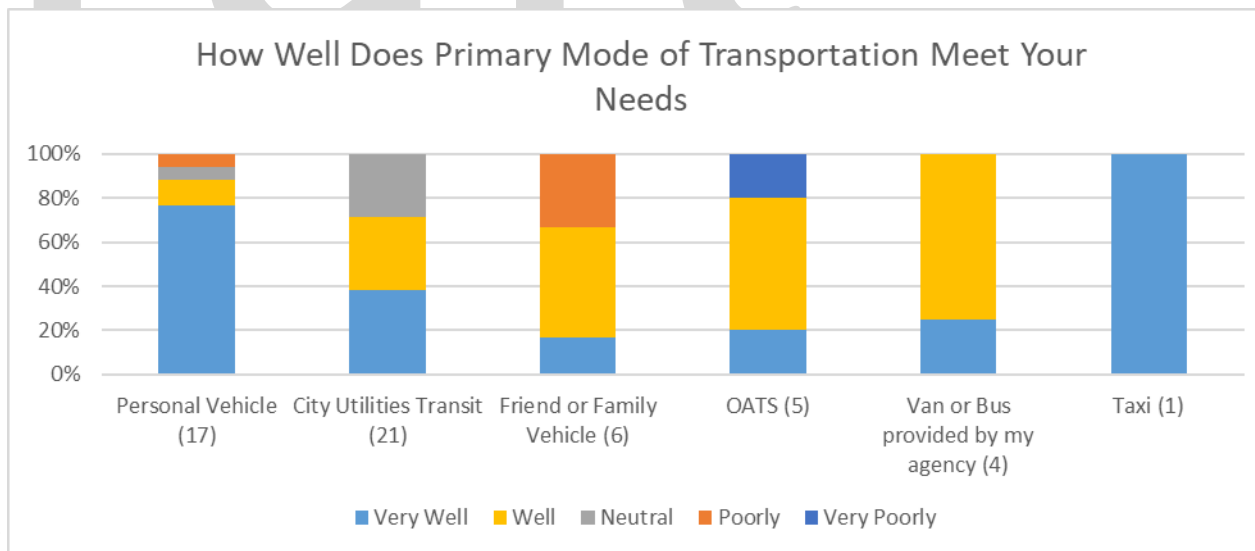
## SURVEY RESULTS

Understanding who completed this survey is important to understand the results. Fifty-two percent of respondents did not have a valid driver's license, and sixty-seven percent were unable to drive themselves to their desired destinations.

Fifty-six percent of those surveyed reported having a disability, and 40% are over the age of 65. Of those with reported disabilities, 60% had a physical disability and 29% had a visual disability. Eighty two percent of those who responded to the survey live within a city (Springfield, Nixa, Battlefield, etc.), with 55% living in Springfield. Citizens of Battlefield, Ozark, Republic, Springfield, and Strafford, along with citizens of smaller communities surrounding the OTO area, completed the User Survey.

Overall, respondents were satisfied with their primary and secondary modes of transportation. Many respondents expressed appreciation for existing services and had positive things to say about transit drivers. For the six modes of transportation reported as a primary means of travel, between 65 and 100% of respondents reported that their specific primary mode met their needs 'well' or

Figure 10



'very well', as shown in figure 10. While most respondents felt their secondary mode of transportation also met their needs, there was more dissatisfaction expressed when compared with their primary modes. Responses of 'neutral', 'poorly', and 'very poorly' were more

common on the questions related to secondary modes of transportation.

Seniors, individuals with disabilities, and persons with limited incomes found a common set of destinations difficult to visit, as seen in figure 11. Some destinations, including 'work', 'school/

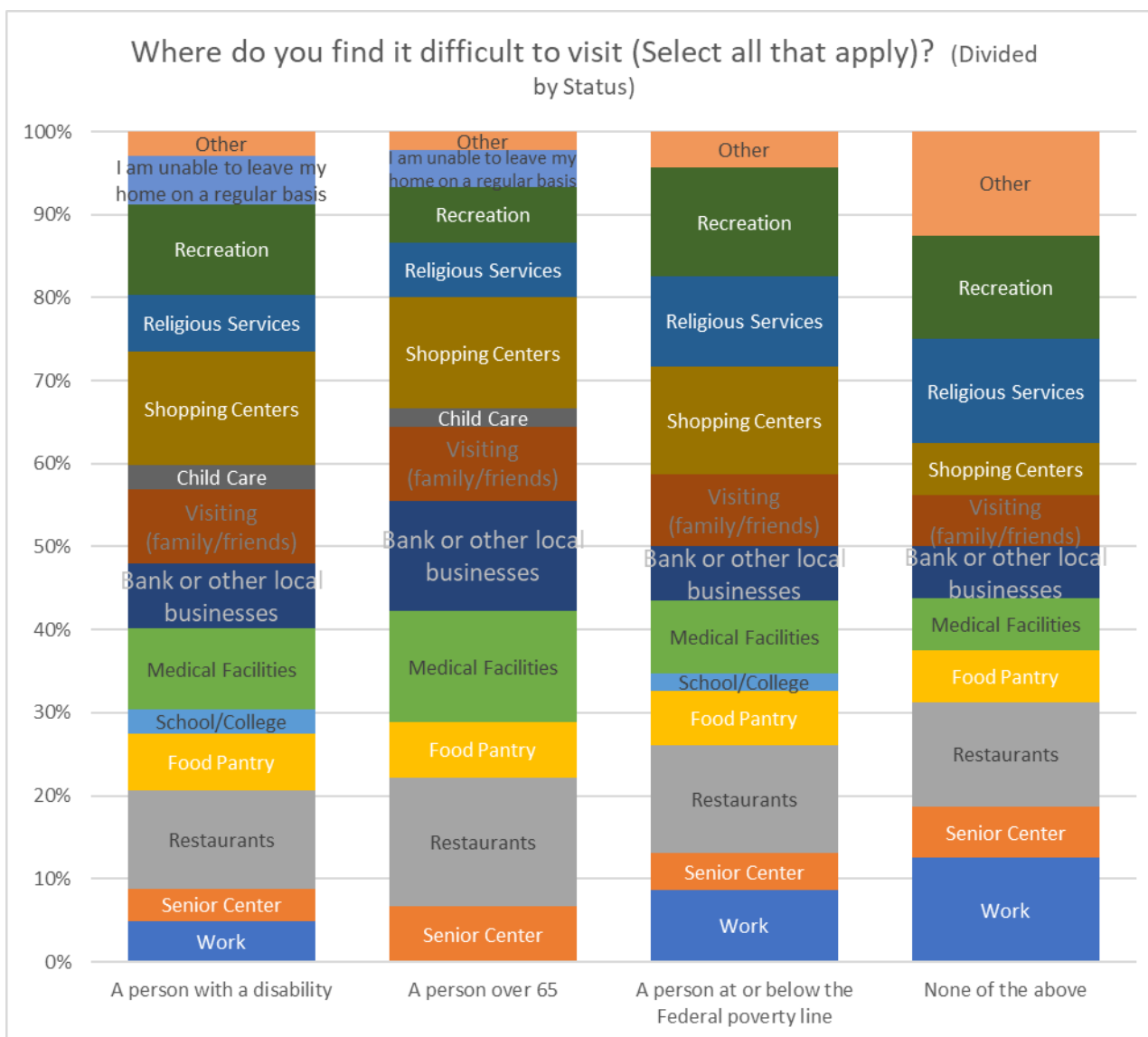


Figure 11

# Needs Assessment

## Themes

*Spontaneity*

*Flexibility*

college', 'child care', were not selected by members of every population group. Given the limited number of overall responses, we should be careful not to read too much into this exclusion of certain categories. These groups face very similar challenges, but we can also assume each population has unique challenges.

Overall, users of area transportation services are satisfied with their basic ability to travel in the region. They recognize the limits of their mobility and are happy to have choices. All primary modes of transportation were viewed in a positive or neutral way. Users simply wanted to see services expanded or improved.

## UNDERSTANDING THEMES

The two themes identified in the 2017 Transit Coordination Plan, spontaneity and flexibility, continue to accurately reflect the needs expressed in the current user survey. The ability to travel spontaneously and build flexibility into one's travel plans are benefits of traveling in a personal car that do not extend to those seniors and individuals with disabilities traveling by transit in the Ozarks. These common themes will help ensure a stable focus for the region's Section 5310 funding programs.

**Spontaneity:** People responding to the User Survey continue to desire the ability to travel spontaneously. Transportation providers have limited schedules in many parts of the region

and may require a few days' notice to secure a ride. In 2017, one user spoke of not using Access Express in over two years because of the large lead times needed to secure a trip. In the current survey, a respondent spoke of the challenges of traveling on Sundays due to service limitations. Picking spontaneous destinations is another issue common to the two surveys. Users wanted to go to casinos, garage sales, Silver Dollar City, fairs, or bingo in the 2017 survey. In the current survey, people mention beauty shops, nail salons, and generically reference destinations outside of Springfield. The need to travel outside of the metro area, or spontaneously travel to specific small businesses is a common challenge to people without a personal car.

**Flexibility:** Another theme found in both User Surveys is flexibility. Both surveys included anecdotes of people dealing with time-based scheduling limitations. In the current survey, one respondent shared the need to secure last-minute transportation after a planned medical procedure extended beyond regular service times. In 2017, one respondent spoke of the need to call multiple times a week to schedule trips for his son's daily trips to the Developmental Center of the Ozarks (DCO) because of limitations on scheduling future trips.

Challenges related to travel spontaneity and flexibility are not unique to the Ozarks. These are challenges common

to all people who lack a personal automobile in all but a select few of America's largest cities. However, these universal challenges do mean that a common set of solutions can be deployed to improve people's lives.

## IDENTIFYING SERVICE GAPS

Five service gaps are identified in the current User Survey. These service gaps limit transit users' ability to travel spontaneously and with flexibility, two important themes found in the user survey. Three of the five service gaps identified here overlap with those identified in the 2017 Transit Coordination Plan. This highlights the long-term nature of challenges faced by transit users. By addressing these service gaps, OTO residents will be able to live life on their own terms.

**Inter-city Connections:** Rural residents indicated a lack of connections to urban communities and regional residents indicated a need for connections to communities outside of the region. Inter-city connections would provide the opportunity to access Southwest Missouri's many recreational destinations.

**Trip Scheduling:** Users expressed a need to schedule both long-term and short-term trips. Because of the limited operating schedules and first-come-first-served nature of reservations, it is difficult to secure a trip on short-notice and most policies prevent making trips too far into the future. Once a trip is

secured, users also wanted improved flexibility in scheduling return trips. The ability to call for pick-up rather than schedule ahead of time was desired. Scheduling trips to medical appointments was mentioned by several respondents.

**Hours of Service:** Many survey respondents referenced challenges associated with existing hours of operations. Some individuals ran into issues when medical appointments lasted longer than expected and caused return trips to fall outside existing service hours. Other individuals expressed a desire to travel during the evenings or during the weekends, times when some transit providers are closed.

**First- and Last-Mile Connections:** Transit users must often walk to access transit services and to access their final destinations. Complete sidewalk networks, sheltered bus stops, and accessible entrances help transit users safely, comfortably, and efficiently navigate their communities. Survey respondents mentioned sidewalk gaps, adverse weather conditions, and challenges entering homes and businesses as obstacles faced when traveling throughout the region.

**Service Frequency:** Respondents expressed a desire for more frequent transit services during existing hours of service. This included shorter times between buses and having buses run in both directions on existing fixed route loops. Respondents also mentioned the

| 2017 USER IDENTIFIED SERVICE GAPS                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Inter-city Connections</b>                                                    |
| <b>Trip Scheduling</b>                                                           |
| <b>Hours of Service</b>                                                          |
| Access to special events/<br>destinations                                        |
| Veterinarian Trips                                                               |
| 2022 USER IDENTIFIED SERVICE GAPS                                                |
| <b>Inter-city Connections</b>                                                    |
| <b>Trip Scheduling</b>                                                           |
| <b>Hours of Service</b>                                                          |
| First- and Last-Mile                                                             |
| Service Frequency                                                                |
| *Service gaps shown in <b>BOLD</b> are common between the 2017 and 2022 surveys. |

# Needs Assessment

*A lack of intercity connections, and limited hours of service and service frequency... limit user's ability to travel spontaneously and flexibly.*

limited daily capacity of demand-response services. Enhanced frequency makes it easier to travel to multiple destinations in a single day and reduces exposure to inclement weather.

## SUMMARY

Two key themes and several service gaps have been identified from the user survey. Transit users want to travel spontaneously and have scheduling flexibility when traveling. A lack of intercity connections, and limited hours of service and service frequency, amongst other issues, limit user's ability to travel spontaneously and flexibly. Addressing the five gaps identified in this survey is critical to improving transit service in the Ozarks. These themes and gaps align closely with the results of the 2017 survey, lending support to these conclusions.

## HUMAN SERVICES AND TRANSPORTATION PROVIDER NEEDS

A diverse range of human service agencies and transportation providers were targeted for outreach. The agencies targeted include nursing homes, area agencies on aging, autism support organizations, sheltered workshops, state mental health offices, and employment focused organizations. Transportation providers included taxis, charter companies, public transportation providers, senior centers that offer transportation services, non-

emergency medical transportation providers, among others. The overall response to this survey was low, but the input was useful. A total of five agencies and transportation providers responded. The involvement process, survey results, themes, and needs will be discussed below.

## SURVEY PROCESS

Regional human service agencies and transportation providers were sent letters to solicit participation. Two surveys were created to reach out to these groups. The "human service agency" survey was aimed at organizations that did not own or provide transportation services. The survey focused on how they assisted their clientele with transportation needs. The "transportation provider" survey was aimed at local transportation companies and human service agencies that provide transportation services. The survey focused on how they assist their clientele and about the size and condition of their transportation fleet. The letters were sent to organizations included on the OTO Master Provider list, which contains human services agencies and transportation providers. It is updated as OTO staff learn of new providers around the region, as members of the LCBT provide input, and as letters are returned undeliverable. Two transportation providers and three human service agencies completed the survey.



## SURVEY RESULTS

Of the two transportation providers completing the survey, one is a Private Non-Profit Transit provider, and one is a Public Transit provider. Both providers are struggling with staffing issues, timely vehicle acquisition, and resources to expand services. These agencies are also concerned by the continued growth of the senior population and their ability to coordinate services to meet the transportation needs of this growing population

Three human service agencies completed this survey. The agencies surveyed provide services for those who have disabilities, older adults, and those with income restrictions. They reported working with transportation providers, coordinating connections, and covering some of their clients transportation costs.

## IDENTIFYING NEEDS

The provider and agency surveys show there is a need to grow transit services. Agencies report their clients living outside Springfield need expanded service areas to better access essential services and clients within Springfield need more efficient access to a wide range of destinations within Springfield. Transportation providers report rising capital costs, limited funding, and growing demands for service as their biggest challenges.

Additional needs were identified by members of the LCBT. Accommodating the growing number of senior caregivers, in addition to the overall growing senior population, will be a challenge for transportation providers. Transportation providers will also need to find ways to better coordinate services to more efficiently utilize the full capacity of existing buses and vans. Members of the LCBT also identified the long wait times associated with federally supported vehicles as a major problem. Staffing challenges during this tight labor market were another issue identified by the committee. Committee members also identified a need for human service agencies to continue finding partnership opportunities to control rising costs.

## SUMMARY

Human service agencies and transportation providers recognize a continued demand for existing transit services and a growing need for more regional services. Some regional and intercity services are being added but demand far exceeds the region's ability to expand.

## **REGIONAL NEEDS**

The results of the three surveys complement each other. The general satisfaction with available services revealed in the user survey corresponds with the high demand suggested by agencies and transportation providers.

| HUMAN SERVICE AGENCY IDENTIFIED NEEDS |
|---------------------------------------|
| Regional Service                      |
| Partnerships to Control Costs         |

| TRANSPORTATION PROVIDER IDENTIFIED NEEDS           |
|----------------------------------------------------|
| Timely Vehicle Acquisition                         |
| Rising Costs                                       |
| Staffing                                           |
| Resources to support growing service opportunities |
| Senior Population Growth                           |
| Service Coordination                               |

## Needs Assessment

The high demand also limits providers' ability to add a wide range of new recreational or one-time event destinations desired by users. Financial and staffing constraints are also important limiting factors in expanding services in the OTO area. The surveys also reveal a need to expand transit-

associated pedestrian infrastructure. This infrastructure provides important first- and last-miles connections as transit users travel between bus stops and their destinations. Strategies and specific action items to address these gaps will be addressed in the following section.

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# Strategic Framework

Four strategies have been identified for the 2022 Transit Coordination Plan's strategic framework. This framework will guide the types of action items included in this plan. The strong relationship between the framework and the needs/themes will ensure future LCBT actions improve transportation opportunities in the OTO planning area. Strategies were identified for the framework by looking at past policies, the current needs survey, and drawing on the institutional knowledge of the LCBT. These four strategies include:

1. Education and Advocacy
2. Improve mobility services and infrastructure
3. Expand mobility services and infrastructure
4. Regionalize service

This section explores these strategies.

## EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

Education is an important component of any effort to improve transportation in the OTO planning area. The Ozarks is home to a wide range of transportation providers. Many providers target specific populations, so it is important provider information is available in an organized way. Additionally, there are many

community groups, including the Community Partnership of the Ozark's (CPO) *Let's Go Smart: Transportation Collaborative*, that are focused on the transportation needs of people who do have, or choose not to use, an automobile. Partnering with these existing groups will magnify the impact of each individual group and help reduce duplication of programs. Finally, the challenges associated with a growing senior population, including increased demand for public transportation services, will require consistent funding that grows over time. This strategic framework will include actions that address this education and advocacy.

## IMPROVE MOBILITY SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The region must continue to find and capitalize on opportunities to improve existing transit services. This could include replacing aging rolling stock, making trip reservations more flexible, or improving transit stops and sidewalk infrastructure. Many of these opportunities were mentioned in survey responses and by members of the LCBT. Similarly, finding new sources of operating funds will help reduce the cost burden on local tax boards and

*"Many providers target specific populations, so it is important provider information is available in an organized way."*

# Strategic Framework

*“Truly regional service will make it possible for people outside of Springfield to effectively travel without an automobile.”*

families paying for transportation out of pocket. This strategic framework will include actions that promote this improvement of existing services and infrastructure.

## EXPAND MOBILITY SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Residents and community leaders want to expand the scope of existing transportation services and see new services added. To support this desired growth, new rolling stock must be purchased, facilities expanded, and sponsors for these new programs found. The introduction of a formal mobility management program would also allow the region to expand services through better coordination. The LCBT and the OTO especially recognize a need for programs and service enhancements that make it easier to get to work. This strategic framework will include actions that facilitate these expansions to existing mobility services and infrastructure.

## REGIONALIZE SERVICES

The needs assessment revealed a strong desire to have more transit services available between our region's seven cities and a higher level of service in communities outside of Springfield. While technically an expansion of services offered, the clear need requires deliberate action. Truly regional service will make it possible for people outside of Springfield to effectively travel without an automobile. This strategic framework will include actions that facilitate this regionalization of services.

## **SUMMARY**

Taken together, these four strategies create a framework for addressing the service gaps identified in the needs survey and the needs identified by members of the LCBT. Multiple specific actions will be identified to help implement each strategy. These actions will be discussed in the following section.



# Actions and Implementation

The 2022 Transit Coordination Plan will guide transit improvements through its action items and its implementation matrix. The section outlines concrete actions and responsible parties for implementing each action. Together, these actions and implementors form the core of the Transit Coordination Plan.

## ACTIONS

The strategic framework guided the identification and organization of action items. All action items address a need or gap identified in the needs assessment. Some actions involve the LCBT, while others represent staff-level investigation and action. Overall, the implementation of these actions will result in markedly better mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

### EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

The OTO should continue to update and distribute its transit providers brochure to educate residents about the services available and eligibility requirements. This is a low-cost action with a significant impact. Additionally, the OTO should continue to support and participate on the CPO's *Let's Go Smart: Transportation Collaborative*. This group has buy-in from many

community organizations and represents an efficient way for the OTO and the LCBT to advocate for positive change to the region's transportation system for non-drivers. Finally, the region must identify ways to educate and advocate to maintain existing funding and for new funding for programs benefiting seniors and individuals with disabilities. The expected growth in the senior population will strain existing programs if current funding is not maintained and new sources found to meet future demand.

### IMPROVE MOBILITY SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Several actions have been identified in an effort to improve existing services. Section 5310 funding will be an important source of funding for replacing high mileage rolling stock. Maintaining reliable equipment will help ensure consistent transit service is available. This funding can also be used to improve aging, non-compliant sidewalks, and improve accessibility at bus stops. Infrastructure improvements might also be made through the implementation of walkability programs or ADA-Transition plans. While funding for changes is not available through the

#### Strategies

Education and Advocacy  
Improve mobility services and infrastructure  
Expand mobility services and infrastructure  
Regionalize service

# Actions and Implementation

Section 5310 program, the LCBT will support any effort to implement same-day, will-call return trip, or other flexible methods of trip scheduling.

The region will also look for potential sources of operational funding. This might include directing one-time allocations to operations or identifying new partnerships as sources of long-term funding. There may be a time the LCBT considers directing some Section 5310 funding to operations, such as continued shortages of new transit

vehicles or budget shortfalls associated with rising wages. There is strong support for maintaining a focus on vehicle purchases with Section 5310 funds, but there may be situations where operational funding may be more critical.

Finally, the OTO will also seek to identify ways to improve the timely delivery of replacement vehicles awarded with Section 5310 funding.

These actions would improve mobility services and infrastructure in the Ozarks

| Table 4: Action Items by Strategy            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategy                                     | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Education and Advocacy                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue distribution of OTO's transit provider brochure</li> <li>Support local initiatives that encourage ridesharing and non-motorized transportation in partnership with the CPO's <i>Let's Go Smart: Transportation Collaborative</i></li> <li>Support existing and expanded funding for elderly and disabled service and transportation programs</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Improve Mobility Services and Infrastructure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Section 5310 funding for replacement vehicles</li> <li>Improve facilities and infrastructure used by transit riders and other non-motorists for first- and last-mile trips, including accessibility improvements</li> <li>Support policy changes allowing same-day, will-call return trip, or other flexible methods of trip scheduling</li> <li>Identify sources of short- and long-term operational funding for transportation services, including possible future use of Section 5310 funds.</li> <li>Identify ways to improve the timely delivery of replacement vehicles awarded with Section 5310 funding</li> </ul>                                                         |
| Expand Mobility Services and Infrastructure  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Section 5310 funding for new vehicles</li> <li>Expand the network of facilities and infrastructure used by transit riders and other non-motorists for first- and last-mile trips, including accessible connections</li> <li>Investigate and support implementation of vanpools and other employment-related transportation programs</li> <li>Investigate and support implementation of higher frequency transit services along key transportation corridors</li> <li>Support and assist efforts to implement a formal mobility management program in the region</li> <li>Identify ways to improve the timely delivery of new vehicles awarded with Section 5310 funding</li> </ul> |
| Regionalize Services                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate and support implementation of higher frequency transit services between communities</li> <li>Investigate and support implementation of regular transit services within communities throughout the OTO area</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

and would address service gaps identified in the needs assessment

## EXPAND MOBILITY SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Several actions have been identified to expand existing services and infrastructure. The Section 5310 program will be an important source of funding for adding new rolling stock to the region's vehicle inventory. This funding can also be used to expand the region's sidewalks and expand transit coverage. While beyond the scope of the Section 5310 program, action will be taken to investigate and support employment related transportation, such as vanpools or other forms of ridesharing. The Community Foundation of the Ozarks (CFO) has recently launched a 'Let's Get To Work' fund to support access to employment. Identifying ways for the LCBT to support this initiative will be important. Additionally, the OTO will investigate and support the implementation of higher frequency transit services along key transportation corridors. The OTO will also look for ways to support and assist efforts to implement a formal mobility management program in the region. Finally, the OTO will also seek to identify ways to improve the timely delivery of new vehicles awarded with Section 5310 funding. These actions would expand mobility services and infrastructure in the Ozarks and would

address service gaps identified in the needs assessment.

## REGIONALIZE SERVICES

In addition to the expansion discussed above, there needs to be special attention paid to the regionalization of existing services. Human service providers and transit users all expressed a desire to travel between communities more easily. OATS offers some services between and within our communities, but there are opportunities to increase frequency, expand eligibility, and add destinations. To this end, the OTO will investigate and support implementation of higher frequency transit services between and within our communities. These new regional services could be funded with a mix of FTA grants, new funding commitments from OTO member communities, and partnerships with existing county senior and developmental disability tax boards.

## SUMMARY

The purpose of this Transit Coordination Plan is to guide regional action towards enhancing mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities. The actions identified here will provide concrete steps towards addressing the mobility obstacles identified during our public outreach. The actions were developed in light of the complex nature of transit funding and operation, and the OTO's role within the region.

# Actions and Implementation

| Table 5: Implementation Matrix               |                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                       |          |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Strategy                                     | Action                                                                                                                                                                  | Responsible Agency                                    | Priority |
| Education and Advocacy                       | Continue distribution of OTO's transit provider brochure                                                                                                                | OTO                                                   | Medium   |
|                                              | Support local initiatives that encourage ridesharing and non-motorized transportation in partnership with the CPO's <i>Let's Go Smart: Transportation Collaborative</i> | OTO, LCBT, Service Agencies, Transportation Providers | Medium   |
|                                              | Support existing and expanded funding for elderly and disabled service and transportation programs                                                                      | OTO, LCBT, Service Agencies, Transportation Providers | Low      |
| Improve Mobility Services and Infrastructure | Continue Section 5310 funding for replacement vehicles                                                                                                                  | LCBT                                                  | High     |
|                                              | Improve facilities and infrastructure used by transit riders and other non-motorists for first- and last-mile trips, including accessibility improvements               | OTO, LCBT                                             | High     |
|                                              | Support policy changes allowing same-day, will-call return trip, or other flexible methods of trip scheduling                                                           | LCBT, Transportation Providers                        | Low      |
|                                              | Identify sources of short- and long-term operational funding for transportation services, including possible future use of Section 5310 funds.                          | OTO, LCBT                                             | Low      |
|                                              | Identify ways to improve the timely delivery of replacement vehicles awarded with Section 5310 funding                                                                  | OTO                                                   | High     |
| Expand Mobility Services and Infrastructure  | Continue Section 5310 funding for new vehicles                                                                                                                          | LCBT                                                  | High     |
|                                              | Expand the network of facilities and infrastructure used by transit riders and other non-motorists for first- and last-mile trips, including accessible connections     | OTO, LCBT                                             | High     |
|                                              | Investigate and support implementation of vanpools and other employment-related transportation programs                                                                 | OTO, Human Service Agencies                           | Medium   |
|                                              | Investigate and support implementation of higher frequency transit services along key transportation corridors                                                          | OTO, Transportation Providers                         | Medium   |
|                                              | Support and assist efforts to implement a formal mobility management program in the region                                                                              | OTO, Transportation Providers                         | Low      |
|                                              | Identify ways to improve the timely delivery of new vehicles awarded with Section 5310 funding                                                                          | OTO                                                   | High     |
| Regionalize Services                         | Investigate and support implementation of higher frequency transit services between communities                                                                         | OTO, Transportation Providers                         | Medium   |
|                                              | Investigate and support implementation of regular transit services within communities throughout the OTO area                                                           | OTO, Transportation Providers                         | Low      |

## IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Transit Coordination Plan will involve the direct action of the LCBT and the cooperation of partner organizations. The LCBT will continue project selection for Section 5310 funds. Partner organizations will be responsible for creating and funding plans to improve and expand mobility services. Individual communities must develop plans to improve and expand their sidewalk networks. Transit providers must seek creative partnerships to maximize every dollar available for projects benefiting seniors and individuals with disabilities. The OTO can utilize the wide range of federal funding programs available to it to support this implementation and the formation of creative partnerships. A coordinated effort is needed to improve the transportation options available to seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Table 5, shown on page 38, describes the expected implementation of the 2022 Transit Coordination Plan. Each action is associated with one of the four strategies. A responsible party and a priority level have also been established for each action. This table will guide LCBT action in the next five years.

## RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

Responsible agencies have been identified for each action included in the Transit Coordination Plan. The LCBT is responsible for several actions. These actions center on the Section 5310

funding program. The OTO will be responsible for updating the transit providers brochure, improving timeliness of vehicle delivery, and providing staff support for most TCP actions. Transportation Providers, like OATS and CU Transit, will be responsible for evaluating their internal policies. Finally, all human service agencies, transportation providers, including the LCBT itself, will be responsible for educating local and state leaders on funding needs. All agencies involved in this planning effort play an important role in the implementation of the TCP.

## PRIORITIZATION

A simple prioritization method was used in this planning process. High priority actions are directly related to the OTO's allocation of Section 5310 funding. The administration of this program is a critical responsibility of the LCBT. As a result, these actions are high priorities. Medium priority actions relate to known community priorities or priorities found in other OTO plans. These actions are important to the region and bear a direct relationship to the LCBT's focus on enhancing mobility for seniors and individuals with disability. By joining with the broader region, the LCBT's efforts will be multiplied. The remaining actions are given a low priority. These actions still represent important steps towards enhancing mobility for seniors and individuals and disabilities, but they lack the direct Section 5310 funding or



# Actions and Implementation

broader community support of the high and medium priority actions.

## **SUMMARY**

The implementation of the Transit Coordination Plan is dependent on the cooperation of all partner organizations.

TCP actions will help address many of the issues identified the needs assessment, and the subsequent regional cooperation will build social capital. Ultimately, seniors, individuals with limited incomes, and individuals with disabilities will have access to improved mobility services.

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OZARKS TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION  
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