

**Phase II Transportation Gaps Analysis Report
for the
Local Coordinating Council (LCC) for Human Services Transportation
Serving Jefferson County**

Executive Summary

In 2015 the LCC conducted research with the objective to quantifiably determine the existence of service gaps in transportation for Jefferson County's older adults, persons with disabilities and low-income populations and to make recommendations for addressing the anticipated demand growth as the population ages.

The Research

The LCC developed a survey to establish a clear image, like a Venn diagram, of the overlap between the characteristics of transportation services currently offered, and existing need. The survey targeted:

- Those who provide transportation;
- Those who serve populations requiring transportation, including human service agencies and residential facilities;
- Those who work most directly with the target populations (e.g., case managers);
- Members of the target populations about their needs; and
- Individuals needing transportation who may not be affiliated with any social service agencies.

The research investigated:

- The incidence of both geographic and service gaps;
- The possibility of a demand gap that exists in spite of a supply overage (e.g., idle vehicles); and
- The range and extent of any identified unmet services needs.

Questions were designed to gather information from those who provide transportation to create a profile of the characteristics of current service provision and capacities (hours of service, number of vehicles, drivers, etc.) and from all populations included in the study about both perceived and actual need.

The Results

The response rate to the survey was a remarkable 52% (typical rates are 10-15%). This statistic alone is a valuable indicator as respondents are often motivated to participate in surveys on topics of particular relevance and impact. If there was any doubt about the intensity of feeling surrounding the issue of unmet transportation needs, the results confirm what were previously only suspicions as an overwhelming 91% of respondents (both agencies and providers) indicated that their clients have unmet human services transportation needs. This statistic carries increased impact when viewed in conjunction with the identification of the primary areas of need: 76% of respondents require transportation for medical appointments and 55% for trips to agencies/social services providers and, equally importantly, 47% of personal-trip services which are pivotal for community connection, wellness and an enhanced quality of life. Transportation for the most basic and essential services is unmet.

The research explored the factors in why gaps in service exist and concluded that:

- The gaps aren't the result of inefficiencies on the part of the paratransit providers, but rather are due to limitations in operational capacity. Providers expressed a willingness to expand services but are limited by access to necessary funding, or are restricted by silo funding that limits the most efficient use of resources. At current funding levels, providers are unable to increase capacity to match current demand, much less to prepare for the growing 'silver tsunami'. In a nutshell, ridership needs are not being met because of capacity issues, and capacity is a function of funding.
- RTD service cuts and rate hikes in Jeffco are profoundly detrimental to low-income populations.

The survey results provide solid statistical evidence, and powerfully persuasive validation of what providers and those who work with the target populations have long observed: transportation needs among the elderly, people with disabilities and low-income individuals:

- Are unaffordable (public transit fares will be increasing in January 2016); and
- Far outstrip the current capacity of accessible community-based providers.

The Conclusion

The research has effectively and conclusively achieved its objective to explore the simple hypothesis of whether or not the mobility needs of vulnerable populations in Jefferson County are currently being met. Time and again, the results provide strong empirical evidence of extensive gaps and vast unmet need. This gap widens with stagnant available funding.

In simplest economics, demand far outstrips supply.

The report uses the data to develop strategies and propose solutions for addressing the gaps in service. Identifying and implementing solutions is by no means the sole responsibility of the LCC, but rather a task for the community at large. It is essential that everyone, especially community leaders and elected officials, continue to:

- Hold a strong, clear view of human services transportation as a basic need – something that the community pays for in the same way it pays for utilities.
- Evaluate how best to grow as a community and to provide for the transit needs of our vulnerable populations.
- Recognize that the mobility needs of a large portion of our community are not being met - that there are those in our community who are entirely dependent upon transportation alternatives for *all* of their mobility needs, for everything from medical appointments to personal and quality of life trips.
- Understand that the issue will not go away, will not be easily resolved, and will continue to grow at an unprecedented rate.

These results will inform and assist community discussions for exploring strategies toward the development of a viable mobility plan to close gaps and address as many needs as possible for as many people as possible.

Questions? Contact Susan Franklin, Jefferson County Aging Well Project Manager at sfrankli@coljefferson.co.us.

To access electronic copies of the Phase II Gaps Analysis Executive Summary and the full Phase II Gaps Analysis report, please visit <http://jeffco.us/human-services/aging-well-project/resources/>.