

**Tuscaloosa Area  
Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)  
&  
West Alabama  
Rural Planning Organization (RPO)**

***West Alabama  
Coordinated Public Transit Plan  
2024***

This document is posted at  
<https://www.warc.info/mpo-documents>

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# Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Members

## **Policy Committee**

### **Voting**

John Hinton- City of Northport Mayor  
Wallace McAdory - ALDOT West Central Region Engineer  
Walt Maddox - City of Tuscaloosa Mayor  
Rob Robertson - Tuscaloosa County Commission Chairman  
Dennis Stripling - WARC Executive Director

### **Non-Voting**

Rod Northam, West Alabama Rural Planning Organization, Policy Committee Chair  
Mark D. Bartlett, Federal Highway Administration  
Robert Green, Citizens Advisory Committee Chairman  
Katherine Parris, Technical Coordinating Committee Chairman  
Bradley B. Lindsey., Alabama Department of Transportation  
Yvette G. Taylor, PhD, Federal Transit Administration Region 4  
Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee Chairman

## **Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)**

### **Voting**

Julia Gable, University of Alabama Representative  
Zach Ponds, Tuscaloosa Planning Director  
Adriana Dunn, Region Preconstruction Engineer ALDOT West Central Region  
TSM&O Engineer ALDOT West Central Region  
Aaron Dawson, Federal Highway Administration  
Marty Hamner, Trucking Representative  
Scott Anders, County Engineer  
Robert B. Dees, ALDOT Bureau of Local Transportation  
Russell Lawrence, Tuscaloosa Co. Transit Authority Director  
Zane Davis, West Alabama Regional Commission  
Jeff Powell, Airport Manager  
Julie Ramm, Northport Planning Department  
Michael Gardiner, Director, Tuscaloosa City Engineer  
Lauren Benson Tuscaloosa Co. Planning Department  
Rhonda King, Federal Transit Administration  
Tera Tubbs, Northport City Engineer  
Elsa Tedla, Alabama Transportation Institute  
Railroad Representative  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Representative

### **Non-Voting**

Chairman, Tuscaloosa City Planning Commission  
Chairman, Northport Planning Commission  
Representative, Town of Brookwood  
Representative, Town of Coaling  
Representative, Town of Coker  
Representative, Town of Lake View  
Representative, Town of Moundville  
Representative, Town of Vance  
Representative, Alabama Department of Public Safety (Local Office)  
Representative, Northport City Police Department  
Representative, Tuscaloosa City Police Department  
Representative, Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Office

# Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Members (Continued)

## **Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)**

### **Tuscaloosa City**

Lenny Fulmer  
James C. (Jimmy) Hamner  
Randy McMaster  
Max Snyder  
Quinn Stewart  
Katherine Waldon  
Charlene Wilkinson  
Bob Woodman

### **Northport**

Max Davis  
Robert Green  
Glenn Griffin  
Jill Hannah  
Harry May  
Anthony Perkins  
Sam Phillips  
David Turner

### **Tuscaloosa County**

Jimmie Cain  
Brad Darden  
Alex Hainen  
David Hartin  
Jeremy Jones  
John Myers  
Brock Reynolds  
Joe Robinson

# West Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Members

## Policy Committee

### Voting

Charles Caddell, Bibb County Commission Representative  
Mike Freeman, Fayette County Commission Representative  
Tennyson Smith, Greene County Commission Representative  
Arthur Crawford, Hale County Commission Representative  
Jeff Long, Lamar County Commission Representative  
Jill Noland, Pickens County Commission Representative  
Wallace McAdory, West Central Region Engineer, Alabama Department of Transportation  
Dennis Stripling, Executive Director, West Alabama Regional Commission  
Bobbie White, Bibb County Mayors Representative  
Rod Northam, Fayette County Mayors Representative  
Latasha Johnson, Greene County Mayors Representative  
Jonathan Rossell, Hale County Mayors Representative  
Stanley Allred, Lamar County Mayors Representative  
Craig Patterson, Pickens County Mayors Representative

### Non-Voting

Mark D. Bartlett, Federal Highway Administration  
Bradley B. Lindsey., Local Transportation Engineer, ALDOT  
Debbie Handley, Technical Coordinating Committee Chairman  
Al Elbert, Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee Chairman  
Rob Robertson, Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Chairman

## Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)

### Voting

Bibb County Engineer  
Jarrod Milligan, Fayette County Engineer  
Willie Branch, Greene County Engineer  
Fred Powell, Hale County Engineer  
Matthew Rouse, Lamar County Engineer  
Clint Terry, Pickens County Engineer  
Adriana Dunn, ALDOT West Central Region Pre-Construction Engineer  
Robert B. Dees, ALDOT Bureau of Local Transportation  
Debbie Handley, Fayette and Lamar County Transit Provider  
Bobby Armstead, Greene and Hale County Transit Provider  
Brandy Shirley, Pickens County Transit Provider  
Shannon Taylor, Airport Representative  
Aaron Dawson, Federal Highway Administration  
Railroad Representative  
George Newman, Trucking Representative  
Abhay Lidbe, University of Alabama  
Representative, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Representative  
Zane Davis, West Alabama Regional Commission

### Non-Voting

Representative from each municipality in the study area  
Scott Anders, Tuscaloosa County Engineer  
Fayette City Engineer  
Russell Lawrence, Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority  
Brian Latham, District 51 (Fayette/Lamar) Engineer, ALDOT West Central Region  
Jonathan Anderson, District 53 (Pickens/Greene) Engineer, ALDOT West Central Region  
Sky Hallmon District 54 (Bibb/Chilton) Engineer, ALDOT West Central Region  
Greg King, District 55 (Hale/Perry) Engineer, ALDOT West Central Region

# West Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Members (Continued)

## Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)

### **Bibb County**

#### County Appointments

Phil Cottingham

Joanne Craighead

#### Municipal Appointments

Jerry C. Pow

Joseph Marchant

### **Fayette County**

#### County Appointments

Allen Dunavant

Willie Ivey

#### Municipal Appointments

Wanda Deavours

Bobbie Kemp-Driver

### **Greene County**

#### County Appointments

Philis Belcher

Judy Jarvis

#### Municipal Appointments

Julia D. Fuller

Iris Sermon

### **Hale County**

#### County Appointments

Mason Dyess

Tony Lee

#### Municipal Appointments

Jerry Elkins

Austin Long

### **Lamar County**

#### County Appointments

Wayne Baines

Al Elbert

#### Municipal Appointments

Wayne Christian

Lane Gilliam

### **Pickens County**

#### County Appointments

Brandon Garrison

#### Municipal Appointments

Marva Gipson

Rusty Tate

Prepared by the  
West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC)  
*Staff to the RPO*

**Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization**

**Resolution MPO 2019-15**

**Adopting the  
*West Alabama Coordinated Public Transit Plan 2019***

WHEREAS, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act (Pub. L. No. 114-94) requires the development of a coordinated human services transportation plan in order to be eligible for Section 5310 - Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program funds, and

WHEREAS, the West Alabama Rural Planning Organization and the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Transportation developed the *West Alabama Coordinated Public Transit Plan 2019*, and

WHEREAS, the Transit Committee, the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee, and the Technical Coordinating Committee of the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization have reviewed the plan and have passed recommendations in support of adopting the plan.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, this **26<sup>th</sup> day of August 2019**, that the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization does hereby adopt the *West Alabama Coordinated Public Transit Plan 2019*.

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MPO Chair

Attest:

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Process Coordinator

**West Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO)**

**Resolution RPO 2019-1**

**Adopting the  
*West Alabama Coordinated Public Transit Plan 2019***

WHEREAS, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act (Pub. L. No. 114-94) requires the development of a coordinated human services transportation plan in order to be eligible for Section 5310 - Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program funds, and

WHEREAS, the West Alabama Rural Planning Organization and the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Transportation developed the *West Alabama Coordinated Public Transit Plan 2019*, and

WHEREAS, the Transit Committee, the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee, and the Technical Coordinating Committee of the West Alabama Rural Planning Organization have reviewed the plan and have passed recommendations in support of adopting the plan.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, this **9<sup>th</sup> day of August 2019**, that the West Alabama Rural Planning Organization does hereby adopt the *West Alabama Coordinated Public Transit Plan 2019*.

\_\_\_\_\_  
RPO Chairman

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Process Coordinator

# **West Alabama Coordinated Public Transit Plan 2024**

## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this plan is (1) to determine transit gaps and coordination opportunities among publicly funded, human services transportation programs in west Alabama and (2) to develop strategies to address the identified gaps and coordination issues. This plan did not evaluate the internal operations of individual transit systems to determine improvement opportunities. Instead, it examined overall transit deficiencies and coordination issues for each county and the entire region. Since it is often impossible to distinguish between the specialized transit services (Section 5310, Section 5316, and Section 5317) and the more general transit services (Section 5307 - Urban Area and Section 5311 - Non-urbanized Area), this plan considers all forms of transit service regardless of funding categories. The plan will provide the Alabama Department of Transportation and the local entities with information to make decisions regarding the allocation of limited federal and local transit funds.

The *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU) required the development of a coordinated human service transportation plan in order to be eligible for three Federal Transit Administration programs (Section 5310 - Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities, Section 5316 - Job Access and Reverse Commute, and Section 5317 - New Freedom). The *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act* (MAP-21) and the subsequent *Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act* and *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA) extended the coordinated human service transportation plan requirement for the Section 5310 program. Under Map-21, the Section 5316 and 5317 programs were consolidated with the Section 5307, 5310, and 5311 programs. However, remaining pre-MAP-21 Section 5316 and 5317 funding must be allocated based on a coordinated human service transportation plan.

The current regulations specify that the plan must be based on input from public, private, and non-profit transportation providers; human services providers; and the general public. Required elements include (1) an assessment of available services, (2) an assessment of transportation needs, (3) strategies, activities, and/or projects to address gaps, needs, and efficiency improvements, and (4) priorities for implementation based on resources, time, and feasibility of implementation. Minimizing duplication of services to maximize collective transit coverage is a prime imperative.

The plan was developed by the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC). WARC used the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the West Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) to conduct the plan development process. WARC is the staff for the Tuscaloosa Area MPO and the West Alabama RPO.



The following sections list the transit needs, barriers to improving transit service, and recommended strategies that were identified during the development of this plan. The sections are divided between the seven counties in the west Alabama region. The final section covers the region as a whole.

## **Bibb County**

### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Night service
- Weekend service
- Service to rural areas of the county
- Additional public and private providers
- Service to other counties
- Additional shopping service
- Additional recreation service
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)
- Reliable scheduling method
- Communication between clients and drivers
- Coordination of client trips that originate at a common community and end at common destinations
- Qualified drivers

### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips
  - Out-of-county trips

### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

## Strategies

- Maintain current transit service (**High**)
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts (**High**)
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) (**High**)
  - Nights
  - Weekends
  - Rural areas of the county
  - Inter-county
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers (Additional funding required) (**High**)
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source (**High**)
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources (**High**)
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) (**Medium**)
- Improve current transit service (Additional funding may be required) (**High**)
  - Scheduling
  - Communication between clients and drivers/providers
  - Trip coordination
  - Driver training

## **Fayette County**

### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Weekend service
- Service to rural areas of the county including Bluff, Kirkland, and Wayside
- Additional public and private providers, including a Section 5311 provider
- Service to other counties including Tuscaloosa and Walker
- Shopping service
- Newer vehicles
- More frequent service
- Recreation service
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)

### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips

- Local trips
- Out-of-county trips

**Barriers**

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
  - Operating funds
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

**Strategies**

- Maintain current transit service **(High)**
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts **(High)**
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) **(High)**
  - Weekends
  - Rural areas of the county including Bluff, Kirkland, and Wayside
  - Inter-county
  - Shopping
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers, including a 5311 provider (Additional funding required) **(High)**
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) **(High)**
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source **(High)**
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources **(High)**
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) **(Medium)**

**Greene County**

**Needs Not Currently Addressed**

- Night service
- Weekend service
- Additional public and private providers
- Additional shopping service
- Additional recreation service
- Service to rural areas of the county
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)

### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips
  - Out-of-county trips

### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

### Strategies

- Maintain current transit service (**High**)
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts (**High**)
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) (**High**)
  - Nights
  - Weekends
  - Rural areas of the county
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source (**High**)
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources (**High**)
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) (**Medium**)

## **Hale County**

### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Night service
- Weekend service
- Additional public and private providers
- More frequent service
- Service for senior citizens who are less than 60 years old

- Service to Shelton State Community College (Tuscaloosa) and Wallace Community College (Selma)
- Service to large employers in Tuscaloosa
- Additional shopping service
- Additional recreation service
- Service to rural areas of the county
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)

#### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips
  - Out-of-county trips

#### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

#### Strategies

- Maintain current transit service (**High**)
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts (**High**)
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) (**High**)
  - Nights
  - Weekends
  - Rural areas of the county
  - Inter-county
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source (**High**)
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources (**High**)

- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) **(Medium)**

## Lamar County

### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Night service
- Weekend service
- Additional public and private providers, including a Section 5311 provider
- Service to rural areas of the county including Kingville, Cody, Detroit, and Beaverton
- Additional service in Millport and Sulligent
- Out-of-county service including Tuscaloosa and Columbus, MS
- Shopping service
- Recreation service
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)

### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips
  - Out-of-county trips

### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
  - Operating funds
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

### Strategies

- Maintain current transit service **(High)**
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts **(High)**
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) **(High)**
  - Nights

- Weekends
- Millport and Sulligent
- Rural areas of the county including Kingville, Cody, Detroit, and Beaverton
- Inter-county
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers, including a 5311 provider (Additional funding required) **(High)**
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) **(High)**
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source **(High)**
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources **(High)**
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) **(Medium)**

## Pickens County

### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Night service, including early morning and early evening times
- Weekend service
- Additional public and private providers
- Decreased call-in times
- Additional shopping service
- Additional recreation service
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)
- Out-of-county trips

### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips

### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients

- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

### Strategies

- Maintain current transit service **(High)**
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts **(High)**
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) **(High)**
  - Nights
  - Weekends
  - Rural areas of the county
  - Additional service to reduce call-in times
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers (Additional funding required) **(Low)**
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) **(Medium)**
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source **(High)**
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources **(Medium)**
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) **(Medium)**

## **Tuscaloosa County**

### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Night service
- Weekend service
- Holiday service
- Decreased fixed route headways
- Additional public and private providers
- City of Northport service
- Service to rural areas of the county including Brookwood, Holt, Peterson, Vance, Lake Tuscaloosa area, Duncanville, Taylorville, and McCalla
- Out-of-county service including Jefferson County and Bibb County
- Additional service for shopping, medical appointments, recreational activities, and church
- Decreased call-in times
- Decreased wait times
- Maintaining schedules (pick-up and drop-off times) demand response service and fixed routes
- Vehicles that will accommodate larger people
- Additional service from the UA campus to other areas of the community
- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) projects, including telephone notification
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Alternative fuel options
- Additional fixed route bus stop shelters



- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)

### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips
  - Out-of-county trips
  - Service for senior citizens who are less than 60 years old

### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Lack of financial support by the City of Northport
- Lack of financial support by Tuscaloosa County
- Dispersed population
- Large land area
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

### Strategies

- Maintain current transit service (**High**)
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts (**High**)
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) (**High**)
  - Nights
  - Weekends
  - Holidays
  - Reduce fixed route headways
  - City of Northport
  - Rural areas of the county including Brookwood, Holt, Peterson, Vance, Lake Tuscaloosa area, Duncanville, Taylorville, and McCalla,
  - Inter-county
  - Shopping, recreation, and church
  - Additional service to reduce call-times, wait times, and schedule delays
  - Additional service for senior citizens
  - Purchase or modify vehicles to accommodate larger people
  - Additional service from the UA campus to other areas of the community
  - Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) projects
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)

- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) **(Medium)**
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source **(High)**
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources **(High)**
- Support/Establish alternative fuel options for existing and future transit providers **(Medium)**
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) **(Medium)**

## West Alabama Region

### Needs Not Currently Addressed or Only Partially Addressed

- Additional inter-county service to connect rural residents with national bus service, Amtrak service, commercial air service, jobs, medical facilities, shopping opportunities, recreation facilities, education, and training opportunities; including west Alabama and out-of-region travel

### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Alabama Public Service Commission service area restrictions

### Strategies

- Maintain current inter-county transit service in Bibb, Greene, Hale County **(High)**
- Add inter-county transit service (Additional funding required) **(High)**
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers, where needed (Additional funding required) **(Medium)**
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) **(Medium)**
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source **(High)**
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources **(Medium)**
- Support efforts to modify the Alabama Public Service Commission service area restrictions **(High)**

## Continuing Efforts

After the adoption of this plan, the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and West Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) will monitor transit issues in the region to determine if this plan needs to be modified. Changes to existing transit conditions could require the addition, deletion, or re-prioritization of strategies or projects. Any necessary adjustments to the plan can be accomplished through amendments adopted

by the Policy Committees of the MPO and RPO. The joint MPO and RPO transit committee, which helped develop this plan, will meet as needed to assist in these efforts and to facilitate the implementation of the identified strategies.

The committees of the MPO and RPO will continue to meet on a regular basis. The MPO committees meet every other month, and the RPO committees meet once per quarter. The Section 5307 and 5311 providers in the region are voting members on the MPO and RPO technical coordination committees. At the meetings the committees discuss various transportation issues, usually focusing on federally funded projects, including transit programs.

Based on the current ALDOT contract, a summary report for this plan will be prepared in 2026 and 2027. If the federal planning requirements continue past 2022 and funds are available, the plan will likely be revised in 2029.

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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this plan is (1) to determine transit gaps and coordination opportunities among publicly funded, human services transportation programs in west Alabama and (2) to develop strategies to address the identified gaps and coordination issues. This plan did not evaluate the internal operations of individual transit systems to determine improvement opportunities. Instead, it examined overall transit deficiencies and coordination issues for each county and the entire region. Since it is often impossible to distinguish between the specialized transit services (Section 5310, Section 5316, and Section 5317) and the more general transit services (Section 5307 - Urban Area and Section 5311 - Non-urbanized Area), this plan considers all forms of transit service regardless of funding categories. The plan will provide the Alabama Department of Transportation and the local entities with information to make decisions regarding the allocation of limited federal and local transit funds.

## 1.2 Laws and Regulations

The *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU) required the development of a coordinated human service transportation plan in order to be eligible for three Federal Transit Administration programs (Section 5310 - Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities, Section 5316 - Job Access and Reverse Commute, and Section 5317 - New Freedom). The *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act* (MAP-21) and the subsequent *Fixing America's Surface Transportation* (FAST) Act and *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA) extended the coordinated human service transportation plan requirement for the Section 5310 program. Under Map-21, the Section 5316 and 5317 programs were consolidated with the Section 5307, 5310, and 5311 programs. However, remaining pre-MAP-21 Section 5316 and 5317 funding must be allocated based on a coordinated human service transportation plan.

The current regulations specify that the plan must be based on input from public, private, and non-profit transportation providers; human services providers; and the general public. Required elements include (1) an assessment of available services, (2) an assessment of transportation needs, (3) strategies, activities, and/or projects to address gaps, needs, and efficiency improvements, and (4) priorities for implementation based on resources, time, and feasibility of implementation. Minimizing duplication of services to maximize collective transit coverage is a prime imperative.

## 1.3 Agency Participation

The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) and the Alabama Association of Regional Commissions (AARC) agreed to develop 12 regional transit coordination plans in 2024. The AARC represents the 12 regional commissions that cover every county in the state. The 12 plans coincide with the commission districts. ALDOT agreed to fund 100 percent of the cost of the plans with pass-through Federal Transit Administration (FTA) money.

In west Alabama, the plan was developed by the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC), one of the 12 regional commissions. WARC used the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the West Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) to conduct the plan development process. WARC is the staff for the Tuscaloosa Area MPO and the West Alabama RPO.

The MPO is a cooperative effort of the West Alabama Regional Commission, the Tuscaloosa County Parking & Transit Authority (TCPTA), the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the City of Tuscaloosa, the City of Northport, and Tuscaloosa County. Each of these entities has membership on the various MPO committees.

The RPO process brings together the Alabama Department of Transportation with locally elected and appointed officials from the six RPO counties. The RPO policy committee consists of mayors, county commissioners, and officials from ALDOT and FHWA. The technical committee is composed of local engineers, local modal representatives, and ALDOT engineers. More detailed descriptions of the MPO and RPO can be found in Appendix I and J.

The MPO and RPO utilized a regional transit committee to guide the development of this plan. This committee was composed of all of the publicly funded transit providers in west Alabama, agencies that purchase transit service for their clients, and private transportation providers. In addition, the membership requirements for this committee were left open, so any interested group or individual could become a member. The transit committee membership is listed in Appendix A.

## **1.4 Time Frame**

As previously mentioned, this plan identifies current needs and strategies to address these needs. It does not attempt to forecast future needs and develop a related set of strategies. Based on these facts this plan is a short-range document. Unfortunately, many of the strategies will not be implemented in the near future due to the lack of financial support.

The original version of this plan was adopted in 2006 and revisions were prepared in 2008, 2011, 2015, 2017, and 2019. The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), the agency providing the funding, established the development cycle. The ALDOT contract required the plan to be revised in 2024/2025 and summary reports prepared in 2026 and 2027. Future federal regulations and ALDOT needs will determine the plan development schedule beyond 2027.

## **1.5 Development Process**

The development process began in January 2024 with a review of the 2019 plan. The WARC staff determined an initial set of changes that had taken place since 2019 and the status of any of the proposed strategies. Also, in January 2024, the WARC staff submitted three surveys to the transit committee. The surveys were written specifically



for transit providers, agencies that purchase transit service for their clients, or transit users. Some agencies are both providers and purchasers. In these cases, the agency completed both surveys. The transit providers and the purchasing agencies distributed the user surveys to their clients. Survey examples can be found in Appendix C. The survey results form the basis of the current transit conditions and needs sections of this plan.

The WARC staff compiled the survey results in February 2024. The transit committee and the WARC staff used the survey results to update the transit needs, barriers, and strategies reports for each county.

The WARC staff presented a draft version of this plan to the transit committee in March 2024. The committee recommended that the draft plan be submitted to the MPO and RPO for initial approval. The MPO and RPO approved the plan for public review in April and May 2024, respectively. After the public review period, the plan was adopted in its final version by the MPO on August 26, 2024, and the RPO on August 9, 2024.

## **1.6 Public Involvement**

The public was given several opportunities to participate in the development of the plan, review the plan inputs, and comment on the draft plan before its adoption. The draft plan or the inputs were discussed at the fiscal year 2024 MPO and RPO committee meetings. Copies of the plan inputs or the draft plan were available at these meetings and on the West Alabama Regional Commission website.

The MPO and RPO committee meetings are open to the public, and the public is encouraged to participate. News releases for the meetings are sent to local media contacts, special interest groups, and to anyone who requests to be on the mailing list. The special interest groups include agencies or organizations that have contact with persons with disabilities, low-income individuals, minorities, and senior citizens.

The MPO also held a public review and seven public meetings regarding the draft plan. The review extended from May 2024 until August 2024. Anyone interested in the plan had the opportunity to visit the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) office during this period and review the document. The public meetings were held on July 11, 16, 18, 22, 23, 24, and 25, 2024. News releases were distributed detailing the public review and public meetings. Twenty-three people, not including MPO staff, attended the public meetings. No public comments were received. The public involvement materials are located in Appendix D.

The draft plan was placed on the WARC website on March 21, 2024 and paper copies were available at the WARC and by request. The public involvement activities associated with the plan are documented in Appendix D.

## 1.7 Format

This plan is divided into 11 chapters and includes 10 appendices. Chapter 1.0 is the introduction and provides background information and the development framework. The chapter provides a basic understanding of why and how the plan was produced.

Chapters 2.0 through 8.0 are devoted to one of the seven counties in the west Alabama region. The chapters describe the demographic characteristics, employment attributes, transit resources, transit needs, transit service barriers, and strategies to improve transit service in each county. Chapter 9.0 summarizes the information from the county chapters to the regional level and adds cross-county needs, service barriers, and improvement strategies.

The county chapters (2.0 - 8.0) contains a description of each agency or company that provides or purchases transit service. The transit provider descriptions are divided between public/non-profit agencies and private companies. When relevant, the appropriate Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding information is included in the descriptions.

Also, in Chapters 2.0 - 9.0, as part of the identification of geographic service gaps and possible coordination opportunities, potential high-transit use areas were mapped along with potential transit destinations. Census 2020 block groups were used as the base for these maps. The maps display a summary of disabled, elderly, and poverty populations taken from the *2018-2022 American Community Survey*. These groups are the traditional populations that depend on transit service.

Chapter 10.0 describes possible funding sources for the identified strategies. The chapter reviews federal, state, and local options. Chapter 11.0, the final chapter, includes the plan amendment process, MPO and RPO continuing efforts, and the probable plan update schedule.

The appendices provide additional background information related to the plan development. Appendix A includes a list of transit committee members who helped prepare the plan. Appendix B lists the individuals and agencies that received news releases regarding the transit planning effort. Appendix C includes examples of the surveys that were part of the assessment process. Appendix D provides items related to the public involvement activities, such as legal ads, news releases, comments, and responses. Appendix E is a list of proposed transit projects provided by the transit agencies in west Alabama. Appendix F is a standard transportation planning acronym list. Appendix G contains a trip summary table for agencies in west Alabama. Appendix H is a list of agencies that provide transit service in west Alabama. Appendix I includes a description of the Tuscaloosa Area MPO. Appendix J is a description of the West Alabama RPO.

## 2.0 Bibb County

### 2.1 Demographics and Geography

Based on a 2022 U.S. Census Bureau estimate, 22,251 people live in Bibb County. This is a slight decrease (41) from the number reported in the 2020 Census. The population density of the county is 36 people per square mile. According to the *2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS)*, there are 4,097 disabled people, 3,591 elderly individuals, and 4,297 people below the poverty line in the county.

Bibb County has a land area of 622 square miles. At its widest section, the county is 28 miles north-to-south and 32 miles east-to-west. Based on numbers calculated from U.S. Census Bureau's TIGER line files, there are 1,516 miles of roads in the county. The main north-south route is SR-5, and the main east-west route is US-82.

There are three areas of concentrated population in Bibb County. The largest of the three is the Brent-Centreville community in the south-central part of the county. The second concentration is the West Blocton community located in the north-central part of the county. The northern area of the county around Woodstock and along the Tuscaloosa County line is the third area of concentration. Figure 1 depicts these concentrations. These areas also contain the bulk of potential transit destinations including government offices, social service organizations, schools, medical facilities, and large employers. Figure 1 displays potential transit destinations and transit system routes. In addition, Figure 1 includes concentrations of people who are disabled, over 65, and in poverty.

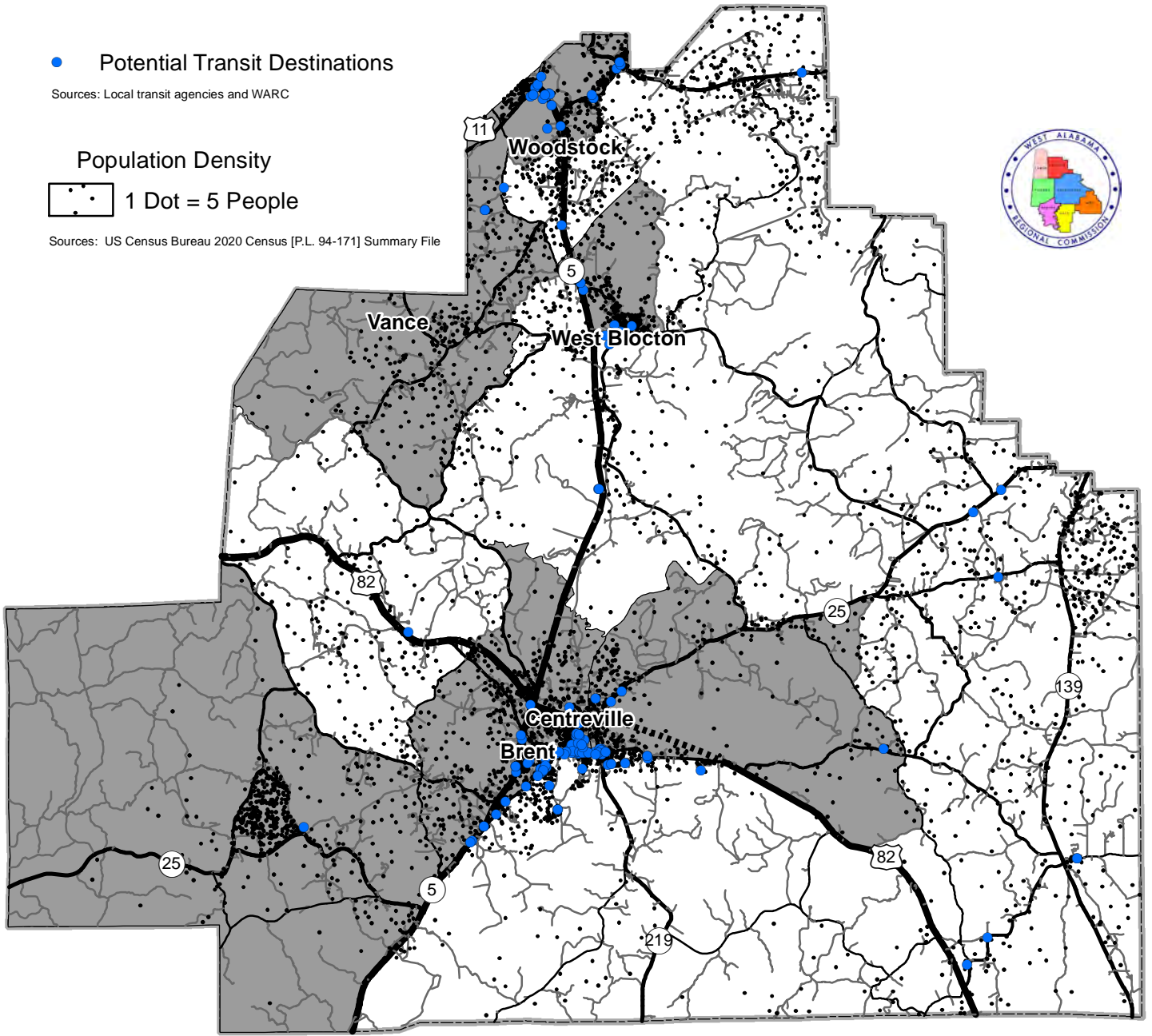
### 2.2 Employment

Based on figures from the *2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS)*, in 2022 Bibb County had 9,028 people in the labor force. Of this number 8,242 were employed and 786 were unemployed. The 2022 average unemployment rate, 8.7 percent, was above the national and state average. Major employers in the county include the Bibb County Schools, Cahaba Medical Care, MollerTech USA, LLC, Walmart Supercenter, and Bibb Medical. In Bibb County, there are approximately 700 businesses with 85 categorized as entry-level employers. Most of the employers, including major and entry-level employers, are located within the municipal limits.

Based on information from the *2009-2013 American Community Survey*, 48 percent of the employed workforce in Bibb County commutes out of the county to their job. Of this group, 94 percent are employed in Jefferson, Tuscaloosa, and Shelby County. Only 39 percent of the total workforce live and work in Bibb County. An additional 13 percent of the workforce commutes into Bibb County from another county.

# Bibb County

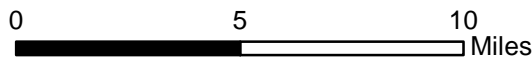
Figure 1



## Concentrations of People in Bibb County who are Disabled, Over 65, and in Poverty

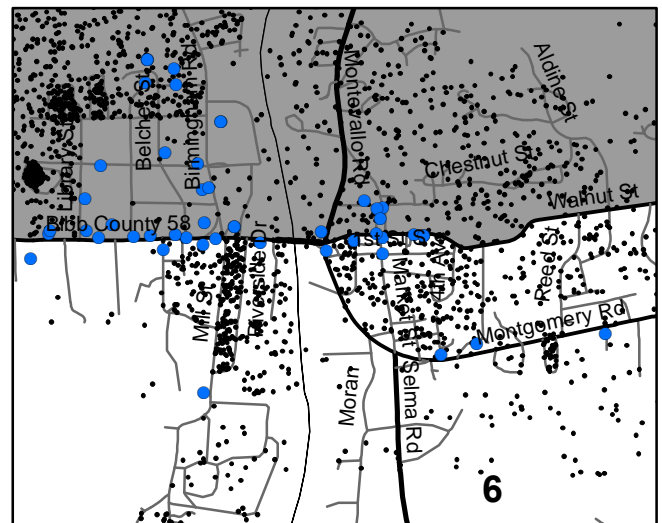
- Above Average
- Below Average

In Bibb County the average persons per block group who are over 65, disabled, and below the poverty level is 553 ( U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2018-2022, Table C21007, and WARC Calculation).



This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission 205 333-2990, January 2024. This map is not a survey product and should not be used for conveyance.

## Brent/Centreville



## 2.3 Transit Resource Assessment

This section contains a description of each agency or company that provides or purchases transit service in Bibb County. The agency descriptions are divided into public/non-profit and private. The public and non-profit agencies were grouped together because the non-profits are generally funded by public agencies or governments. Descriptions of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding categories used by the public and non-profit agencies are included in Chapter 10.

### Public and Non-Profit Systems

- **Alabama Department of Human Resources**

The Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) maintains an office in every county in Alabama. The DHR Family Assistance Division has an interagency agreement with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). Through that agreement, ALDOT identifies and secures transportation vendors across the state, which transport eligible persons to work and work-related activities and DHR provides matching funds to reimburse ALDOT for a portion of the expense. In west Alabama, DHR contracts with the South Mobile Area Regional Transit (SMART) and HELP, Inc., to provide transportation services for its clients.

- **Alabama Department of Mental Health**

The service area for the Alabama Department of Mental Health - Region II Community Services program includes Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County. In west Alabama the agency contracts with the ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo, the Arc of Tuscaloosa, and West Alabama Public Transportation to provide transportation service for their clients.

- **Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind**

The Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) provides transportation services to people who have vision and/or hearing loss. The AIDB has a regional center in Tuscaloosa. Their main office is in Talladega. The AIDB Center in Tuscaloosa serves Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County.

- **Alabama Kidney Foundation**

The Alabama Kidney Foundation purchases transit service for clients in all 67 Alabama counties. Their clients are limited to kidney patients who make \$1,000 or less per month. The transit service is funded by state appropriations and private contributions. The Foundation utilizes numerous transit providers throughout the state. The Foundation also reimburses client family and friends who provide transportation. The transit program operates from 5:00 a.m. till 6:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The Foundation is located in Birmingham, Jefferson County. The Foundation indicated that it would like to provide service to individuals who are above the \$1,000 threshold but are not able to due to funding limitations. The Foundation also indicated that the lack of transit service in rural areas is a problem.

- **Alabama Medicaid Agency**

The Alabama Medicaid Agency offers non-emergency transit service to full-covered Medicaid beneficiaries for Medicaid covered medical appointments. The agency provides Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to its clients to purchase transit service. The agency requires that public transit services be used instead of for-profit companies if the service meets the needs of its clients. However, the EBT cards can be used for reimbursement of private vehicle use. This is the most common use of the Medicaid non-emergency transportation program in Alabama. Most of the service is associated with recurring medical needs such as dialysis and chemotherapy.

The Alabama Medicaid Agency does not contract with transit providers. The Agency does maintain a registry of licensed transit providers for its clients. Registered providers in west Alabama include HELP, Inc., Kid One, Northstar EMS, and West Alabama Public Transportation.

- **AM-Serv EMS**

AM-Serv EMS is a private, non-profit transportation provider operating in Bibb County. The agency operates seven days a week, 24 hours a day and provides emergency and non-emergency transportation. The agency is located in Centreville and is associated with the Bibb County Medical Center.

- **Bibb County Department of Human Resources**

The Bibb County Department of Human Resources (DHR) purchases transportation service for some of its clients. The DHR provides social services to adults and children in the county.

- **Cahaba Medical Care Foundation**

Cahaba Medical Care Foundation is a non-profit located in Centreville. The company provides gas cards and transportation vouchers to clients. The vouchers are accepted by West Alabama Public Transportation and CV Transerv.

- **Indian Rivers Behavioral Health**

Indian Rivers Behavioral Health (IRBH) serves mental health, substance abuse, and intellectually disabled clients by providing mental health treatment, life skills training and residential support. The agency is located in Tuscaloosa. Its service area includes Bibb, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County. The agency provides transportation to its clients on a case-by-case basis and/or assistance with accessing public transit services. Generally, client-specific transportation is provided Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. However, Indian Rivers manages numerous residential facilities where transportation service is available to those individuals 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The agency serves over 6,000 people annually.

- **West Alabama Public Transportation**

The West Alabama Public Transportation (WAPT) agency is the largest transit provider in the State. WAPT utilizes FTA Section 5311, 5311(f), 5316, and 5317 grants to fund their service. The agency also maintains numerous contracts to provide specialized transportation to different agencies. The WAPT serves nine counties in West Alabama including Bibb, Greene, and Hale. The WAPT Administrative office is located in Demopolis in Marengo County. There are satellite offices in Bibb, Greene, and Hale County.

WAPT has no age or income limitations, and customer charges vary. WAPT transports clients for medical/dental services, recreational activities, personal business, employment, and other services. The WAPT 5311 service operates from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., depending on scheduling Monday through Friday and provides limited weekend service.

The service has several fixed routes but also offers demand-response routes. The WAPT averages over 360,000 passenger trips per year in their nine-county service area. The WAPT fleet consists of approximately 65 vehicles with capacities ranging from seven to 30 passengers. The fleet includes 12 wheelchair lift vehicles.

In Bibb County, WAPT contracts with the Alabama Kidney Foundation and the Alabama Department of Mental Health. WAPT is also on the Alabama Medicaid Agency transportation provider registry in Bibb County.

### **Private Systems**

- **CV Transerv - Bibb Medical Center**

The CV Transerv is a non-emergency transportation service provided by the Bibb Medical Center. The company serves nursing homes, clinics, and hospital patients in the Centreville area. In addition to local service, the company also provides transportation to Tuscaloosa and Clanton for dialysis treatments. The company operates seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The company has two wheelchair accessible vans. On average, the company transports between 14 and 20 people per week.

- **RushHour Transit**

RushHour Transit operates out of Tuscaloosa and provides service to all six counties in the west Alabama region and parts of Jefferson County. The company serves individuals, private schools, community service organizations, and employment staffing companies. The company has two transit vehicles, but currently does not offer wheelchair transportation.

- **South Mobile Area Regional Transit**

South Mobile Area Regional Transit (SMART) is a private provider operating in Bibb County. The company provides on-demand transportation services within a 200-mile radius of the county with trips routinely made to Tuscaloosa, Shelby,

Perry, and Jefferson County. SMART operates 24 hours a day, year-round and has two wheelchair accessible buses, one regular van, and two cars. The company charges by the mile. The company is an as-needed service provider for the DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa.

### **Current Coordination Efforts**

- In Bibb County, current coordination efforts include utilization of existing providers and contracts. These efforts address a previously identified transit gap. In many cases, an agency that needs transportation for its clients will use an existing provider rather than start a transit system. The transit purchasing agency can simply direct its clients to the providers or can enter into a contract with the provider. These mutually beneficial arrangements allow agencies that need transportation for their clients to take advantage of existing transit services. The transit purchasing agencies save money and time by using the existing providers. The providers gain revenue to support their operations. The Bibb County providers did not identify any cases of sharing transit resources.

#### Bibb County Contracts

- Alabama Department of Human Resources contracts with South Mobile Area Regional Transit company
- Alabama Department of Mental Health contracts with West Alabama Public Transportation
- Alabama Kidney Foundation contracts with West Alabama Public Transportation

## **2.4 Transit Needs**

Figure 1 displays the census block groups that have a higher than average population of disabled, elderly, and poor. These block groups roughly cover the northern third of the county, the area northwest of Centreville, and the southeast part of the county. This figure also locates possible transit destinations. As expected, most of the destinations are in the incorporated areas of Brent, Centreville, West Blocton, and Woodstock.

Surveys were provided to transit providers, social service organizations, and transit riders during January 2024. The staff and transit committee used the survey responses to develop a list of needs in the county. In March 2024, the transit committee verified these needs.

#### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Night service
- Weekend service
- Service to rural areas of the county
- Additional public and private providers
- Service to other counties
- Additional shopping service
- Additional recreation service



- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)
- Reliable scheduling method
- Communication between clients and drivers
- Coordination of client trips that originate at a common community and end at common destinations
- Qualified drivers

#### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips
  - Out-of-county trips

Based on the survey responses and committee discussions there does not appear to be any duplication of service in the county.

## **2.5 Transit Service Barriers**

The staff, working with the transit committee and using the survey responses, developed a list of barriers that prevent the needs from being addressed. These barriers are consistent across the rural counties in the region. The local agencies and governments have limited control over the barriers, which are often related to economic issues, personal choice decisions, and the nature of rural communities.

#### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

The challenge of the transit agencies and local governments is to find ways around these barriers. The funding to address every need will never be available. The economics of providing transit service to a small number of dispersed clients will never appeal to a for-profit business. Innovative ideas will be required if the needs are to be met.

## 2.6 Strategies to Address Needs and Barriers

The staff, working with the transit committee, developed the following strategies. Several of the proposals are related to maintaining the current level of service. These were included because the existing services are addressing gaps that previously existed. The strategies are general so as not to preclude any future projects. Many of the strategies indicate that additional funding will be required for implementation. In some cases, the additional funding could be a reallocation of existing funds or programs. New funding streams may not always be needed.

### Strategies

- Maintain current transit service **(High)**
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts **(High)**
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) **(High)**
  - Nights
  - Weekends
  - Rural areas of the county
  - Inter-county
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers (Additional funding required) **(High)**
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) **(Medium)**
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source **(High)**
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources **(High)**
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) **(Medium)**
- Improve current transit service (Additional funding may be required) **(High)**
  - Scheduling
  - Communication between clients and drivers/providers
  - Trip coordination
  - Driver training

The list of strategies includes an implementation priority (High, Medium, Low) assigned by the transit committee. The priority is based on available resources, time, and feasibility. The priority assigned does not have a direct correlation to the amount of support or the amount of need. It merely reflects the existing reality based on the ranking criteria. If circumstances change, a low or medium priority strategy could be implemented before one that was ranked as a high priority.

## 3.0 Fayette County

### 3.1 Demographics and Geography

Based on a 2022 U.S. Census Bureau estimate, 16,096 people live in Fayette County. This is a decrease of 225 from the number reported in the 2020 Census. The population density of the county is 26 people per square mile. According to the *2018-2022 American Community Survey*, there are 3,782 disabled people, 3,358 elderly individuals, and 3,543 people below the poverty line in the county.

Fayette County has a land area of 628 square miles. At its widest section, the county is 27 miles north-to-south and 30 miles east-to-west. Based on numbers provided by the Alabama Department of Transportation, there are 1,150 miles of roads in the county. The main north-south routes are US-43/SR-13 and US-43/SR-171. The main east-west route is SR-18.

There are three areas of concentrated population in Fayette County. The largest of the three is the City of Fayette in the west-central part of the county. The second concentration is the Town of Berry located in the southeastern part of the county. The City of Winfield in the north-central part of the county is the third area of concentration. Figure 2 depicts these concentrations. These areas also contain the bulk of potential transit destinations including government offices, social service organizations, schools, medical facilities, and large employers. Figure 2 displays potential transit destinations and transit system routes. In addition, Figure 2 includes concentrations of people who are disabled, over 65, and in poverty.

### 3.2 Employment

Based on figures from the *2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS)*, in 2022 Fayette County had 6,972 people in the labor force. Of this number 6,296 were employed and 672 were unemployed. The 2022 average unemployment rate, 9.6 percent, was higher than the national and state average of 4.4 percent. Major employers in the county include the Fayette County Schools, Fayette Medical Center, Walmart Supercenter, Interfor Corp., Ox Bodies, Inc. In Fayette County, there are approximately 700 businesses with 78 categorized as entry-level employers. Most of the employers, including major and entry-level employers, are located within the municipal limits.

Based on information from the *2009-2013 American Community Survey*, 38 percent of the employed workforce in Fayette County commutes out of the county to their job. Of this group, 65 percent are employed in Marion and Tuscaloosa County. Only 46 percent of the total workforce live and work in Fayette County. An additional 16 percent of the workforce commutes into Fayette County from another county.



# Fayette County

## Figure 2

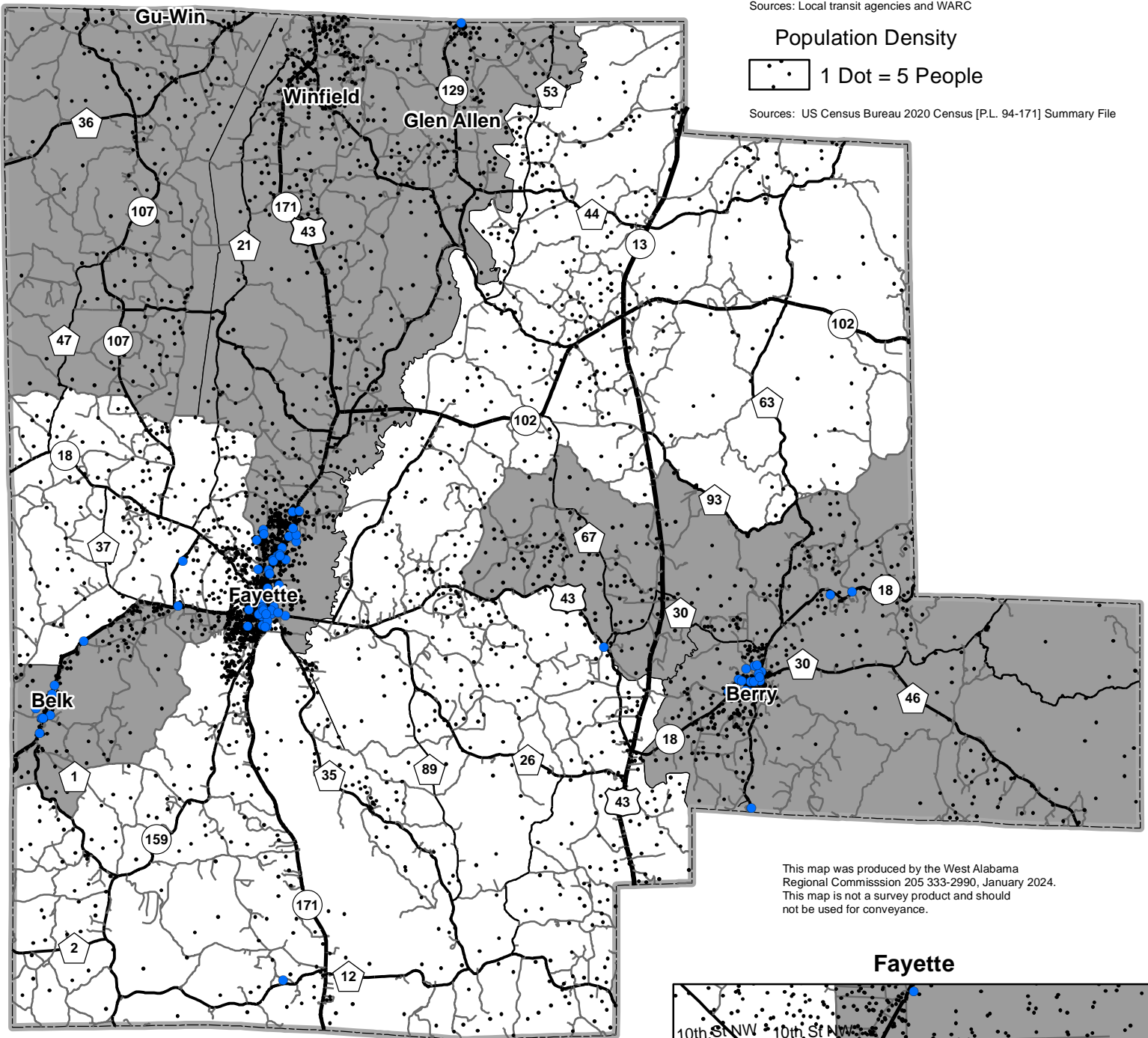
● Potential Transit Destinations

Sources: Local transit agencies and WARC

Population Density

1 Dot = 5 People

Sources: US Census Bureau 2020 Census [P.L. 94-171] Summary File



This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission 205 333-2990, January 2024. This map is not a survey product and should not be used for conveyance.

### Concentrations of People in Fayette County who are Disabled, Over 65, and in Poverty

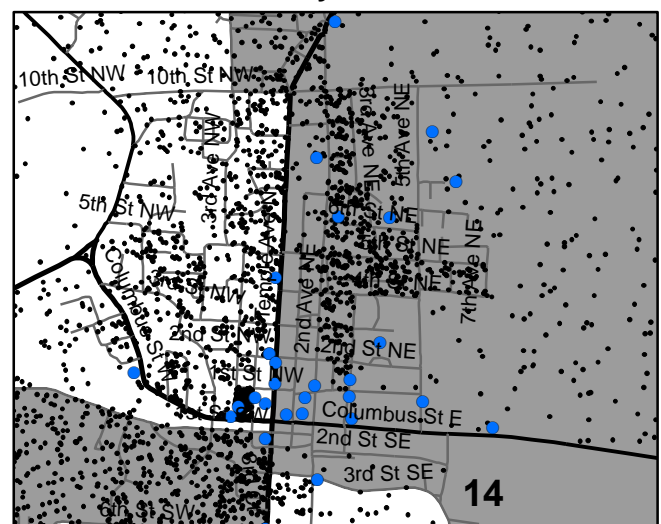
Above Average  
 Below Average

In Fayette County the average persons per block group who are over 65, disabled, and below the poverty level is 485 ( U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2018-2022, Table C21007, and WARC Calculation).



0 5 10 Miles

### Fayette



### **3.3 Transit Resource Assessment**

This section contains a description of each agency or company that provides or purchases transit service in Fayette County. The agency descriptions are divided into public/non-profit and private. The public and non-profit agencies were grouped because the non-profits are generally funded by public agencies or governments. Descriptions of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding categories used by the public and non-profit agencies are included in Chapter 10. The public and non-profit transit providers in Fayette County limit service to a small section of the population, usually associated with a particular government or agency service program. The general population does not have a public transit option.

#### **Public and Non-Profit Systems**

- **Alabama Department of Human Resources**

The Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) maintains an office in every county in Alabama. The DHR Family Assistance Division has an interagency agreement with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). Through that agreement, ALDOT identifies and secures transportation vendors across the state, which transport eligible persons to work and work-related activities and DHR provides matching funds to reimburse ALDOT for a portion of the expense. In west Alabama, DHR contracts with the South Mobile Area Regional Transit (SMART) and HELP, Inc., to provide transportation services for its clients.

- **Alabama Department of Mental Health**

The service area for the Alabama Department of Mental Health - Region II Community Services program includes Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County. In west Alabama the agency contracts with the ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo, the Arc of Tuscaloosa, and West Alabama Public Transportation to provide transportation service for their clients.

- **Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind**

The Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) provides transportation services to people who have vision and/or hearing loss. The AIDB has a regional center in Tuscaloosa. Their main office is in Talladega. The AIDB Center in Tuscaloosa serves Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County.

- **Alabama Kidney Foundation**

The Alabama Kidney Foundation purchases transit service for clients in all 67 Alabama counties. Their clients are limited to kidney patients who make \$1,000 or less per month. The transit service is funded by state appropriations and private contributions. The Foundation utilizes numerous transit providers throughout the state. The Foundation also reimburses client family and friends who provide transportation. The transit program operates from 5:00 a.m. till 6:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The Foundation is located in Birmingham, Jefferson County. The Foundation indicated that it would like to provide service

to individuals who are above the \$1,000 threshold but are not able to due to funding limitations. The Foundation also indicated that the lack of transit service in rural areas is a problem.

- **Alabama Medicaid Agency**

The Alabama Medicaid Agency offers non-emergency transit service to full-covered Medicaid beneficiaries for Medicaid covered medical appointments. The agency provides Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to its clients to purchase transit service. The agency requires that public transit services be used instead of for-profit companies if the service meets the needs of its clients. However, the EBT cards can be used for reimbursement of private vehicle use. This is the most common use of the Medicaid non-emergency transportation program in Alabama. Most of the service is associated with recurring medical needs such as dialysis and chemotherapy.

The Alabama Medicaid Agency does not contract with transit providers. The Agency does maintain a registry of licensed transit providers for its clients. Registered providers in west Alabama include HELP, Inc., Kid One, Northstar EMS, and West Alabama Public Transportation.

- **ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo Counties**

The ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo Counties (ARCFLM) provides transit service exclusively to their clients, individuals with developmental disabilities. The program makes frequent medical trips and weekly recreational trips. The ARCFLM provides transit service Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. till 2:00 p.m. but also offers 24-hour availability. The ARCFLM makes regular trips to Jasper, Northport, Tuscaloosa, Winfield, Guin, Hamilton, and Birmingham. The ARCFLM drivers serve as day habilitation and residential training assistants when they are not driving. The agency indicated that insurance problems would prevent any sharing of resources. The ARCFLM office is located in the City of Fayette, and its transportation service area includes Fayette, Lamar, and Marengo County. The agency uses FTA Section 5310 grants to purchase vehicles.

- **Fayette City**

The city of Fayette is in the process of establishing a 5311 program.

- **Fayette County Aging Program**

The FCAP provides transit service Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Due to contractual agreements and insurance, the FCAP service is limited to its AAA clients. The agency has used FTA Section 5309 and 5310 grants to purchase vehicles. The FCAP is located in the City of Fayette, and its service area covers Fayette County.

- **Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center**

The Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center (NWAMHC) is a comprehensive mental health program that offers adults and children outpatient services in Fayette, Lamar, Marion, Walker, and Winston Counties. NWAMHC operates day rehabilitation/day habilitation programs in Fayette and Winfield and adult mental illness residential services in Fayette and Berry. The center provides transit service exclusively to its consumers. Trips are provided for medical services, shopping, and recreation. In Fayette County, NWAMHC provides approximately 31,000 transit trips per year. NWAMHC is a non-profit agency and is located in the City of Jasper in Walker County. The center uses FTA Section 5310 grants to purchase vehicles.

### **Private Systems**

- **Fayette County Nursing Home**

The Fayette County Nursing Home is a private company that purchases transportation service for its clients. The company currently works with Northstar EMS (Fayette EMS) for medically related transportation.

- **Generations of Vernon**

Generations of Vernon is a private company that provides transit service to its clients. Its service area includes Fayette and Lamar County. The company has one wheelchair-accessible van and provides demand response service for medical and recreational purposes.

- **Northstar EMS**

The Northstar EMS (Fayette EMS) provides non-emergency service to hospital patients, nursing home residents, and dialysis patients. Northstar EMS operates year-round, 24 hours a day and serves Fayette, Greene, Hale, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa Counties. The EMS has an office in the City of Fayette. The company is owned by Northstar EMS located in Northport.

- **RushHour Transit**

RushHour Transit operates out of Tuscaloosa and provides service to all six counties in the west Alabama region and parts of Jefferson County. The company serves individuals, private schools, community service organizations, and employment staffing companies. The company has two transit vehicles, but currently does not offer wheelchair transportation.

### **Current Coordination Efforts**

- In Fayette County, current coordination efforts include utilization of existing providers and contracts. These efforts address a previously identified transit gap. In many cases, an agency that needs transportation for its clients will use an existing provider rather than start a transit system. The transit purchasing agency can simply direct its clients to the providers or can enter into a contract with the provider. These mutually beneficial arrangements allow agencies that need transportation for their clients to take advantage of existing transit services.

The transit purchasing agencies save money and time by using the existing providers. The providers gain revenue to support their operations. The Fayette County providers did not identify any cases of sharing transit resources.

#### Fayette County Contracts

- Alabama Department of Mental Health contracts with the ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo
- West Alabama AAA contracts with the Fayette County Aging Program

### **3.4 Transit Needs**

Figure 2 displays the census block groups that have a higher than average population of disabled, elderly, and poor. These block groups are generally east, north, and west of the City of Fayette, and surrounding the Towns of Berry, Glen Allen, and Winfield. This figure also locates possible transit destinations. As expected, most of the destinations are in the City of Fayette and to a lesser extent the Towns of Berry and Belk.

Surveys were provided to transit providers, social service organizations, and transit riders during January 2024. The staff and transit committee used the survey responses to develop a list of needs in the county. In March 2024, the transit committee verified these needs.

#### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Weekend service
- Service to rural areas of the county including Bluff, Kirkland, and Wayside
- Additional public and private providers, including a Section 5311 provider
- Service to other counties including Tuscaloosa and Walker
- Shopping service
- Newer vehicles
- More frequent service
- Recreation service
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)

#### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips
  - Out-of-county trips



Based on the survey responses and committee discussions, there does not appear to be any duplication of service in the county.

### **3.5 Transit Service Barriers**

The staff, working with the transit committee and the survey responses, developed a list of barriers that prevent the needs from being addressed. These barriers are consistent across the rural counties in the region. The local agencies and governments have limited control over the barriers, which are often related to economic issues, personal choice decisions, and the nature of rural communities.

#### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
  - Operating funds
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

The challenge of the transit agencies and local governments is to find ways around these barriers. The funding to address every need will never be available. The economics of providing transit service to a small number of dispersed clients will never appeal to a for-profit business. Innovative ideas will be required if the needs are to be met.

### **3.6 Strategies to Address Needs and Barriers**

The staff, working with the transit committee, developed the following strategies. Several of the proposals are related to maintaining the current level of service. These were included because the existing services are addressing gaps that previously existed. The strategies are general so as not to preclude any future projects. Many of the strategies indicate that additional funding will be required for implementation. In some cases, the additional funding could be a reallocation of existing funds or programs. New funding streams may not always be needed.

#### Strategies

- Maintain current transit service (**High**)
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts (**High**)
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) (**High**)
  - Weekends
  - Rural areas of the county including Bluff, Kirkland, and Wayside
  - Inter-county
  - Shopping

- Support/Establish additional transportation providers, including a 5311 provider (Additional funding required) **(High)**
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) **(High)**
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source **(High)**
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources **(High)**
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) **(Medium)**

The list of strategies includes an implementation priority (High, Medium, Low) assigned by the transit committee. The priority is based on available resources, time, and feasibility. The priority assigned does not have a direct correlation to the amount of support or the amount of need. It merely reflects the existing reality based on the ranking criteria. If circumstances change, a low or medium priority strategy could be implemented before one that was ranked as a high priority.

## 4.0 Greene County

### 4.1 Demographics and Geography

Based on a 2022 U.S. Census Bureau estimate, 7,629 people live in Greene County. This is a decrease of 101 from the number reported in the 2010 Census. According to the *2018-2022 American Community Survey*, there are 2,149 disabled people, 1,768 elderly individuals, and 2,504 people below the poverty line in the county. The population density of the county is 12 people per square mile.

Greene County has a land area of 646 square miles. At its widest section, the county is 43 miles north-to-south and 27 miles east-to-west. Based on numbers provided by the Alabama Department of Transportation, there are 637 miles of roads in the county. The main north-south route is SR-14/US-43. The main east-west route is I-20/59.

There are two areas of concentrated population in Greene County. The larger of the two is the City of Eutaw in the east-central part of the county. The second concentration is the Town of Forkland located in the southern part of the county. Figure 3 depicts these concentrations. These areas also contain the bulk of potential transit destinations including government offices, social service organizations, schools, medical facilities, and large employers. Figure 3 displays potential transit destinations and transit system routes. In addition, Figure 3 includes concentrations of people who are disabled, over 65, and in poverty.

### 4.2 Employment

Based on figures from the *2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS)*, in 2022 Greene County had 2,466 people in the labor force. Of this number 2,355 were employed and 111 were unemployed. The 2022 average unemployment rate, 4.5 percent, was slightly higher than the national and state average of 4.4 percent. Major employers in the county include the WestRock, Greene County Schools, Consolidated Catfish Producers, Greene County Health System, Love's Travel Stop. In Greene County, there are approximately 300 businesses with 44 categorized as entry-level employers. Most of the employers, including major and entry-level employers, are located within the municipal limits.

Based on information from the *2009-2013 American Community Survey*, 37 percent of the employed workforce in Greene County commutes out of the county to their job. Of this group, 85 percent are employed in Tuscaloosa and Marengo County. Only 41 percent of the total workforce live and work in Greene County. An additional 22 percent of the workforce commutes into Greene County from another county.

# Greene County

Figure 3

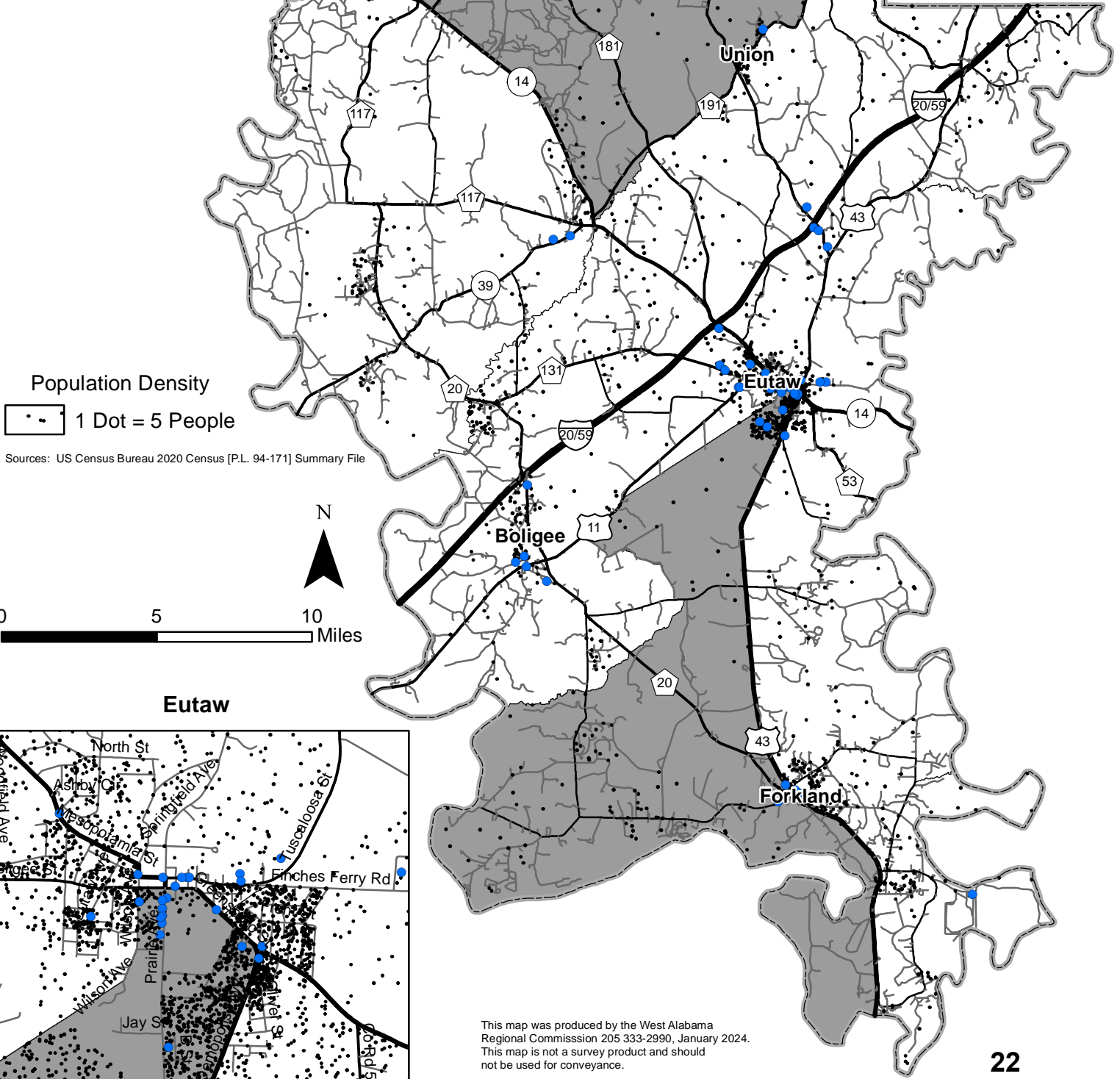
## Concentrations of People in Greene County who are Disabled, Over 65, and in Poverty

- Above Average
- Below Average

In Greene County the average persons per block group who are over 65, disabled, and below the poverty level is 503 ( U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2018-2022, Table C21007, and WARC Calculation).

- Potential Transit Destinations

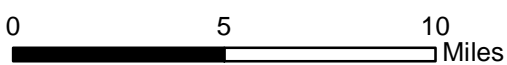
Sources: Local transit agencies and WARC



### Population Density

- 1 Dot = 5 People

Sources: US Census Bureau 2020 Census [P.L. 94-171] Summary File



This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission 205 333-2990, January 2024. This map is not a survey product and should not be used for conveyance.

### **4.3 Transit Resource Assessment**

This section provides a description of each agency or company that provides or purchases transit service in Greene County. The agency descriptions are divided into public/non-profit and private. The public and non-profit agencies were grouped because the non-profits are generally funded by public agencies or governments. Descriptions of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding categories used by the public and non-profit agencies are included in Chapter 10.

#### **Public and Non-Profit Systems**

- **Alabama Department of Human Resources**

The Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) maintains an office in every county in Alabama. The DHR Family Assistance Division has an interagency agreement with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). Through that agreement, ALDOT identifies and secures transportation vendors across the state, which transport eligible persons to work and work-related activities and DHR provides matching funds to reimburse ALDOT for a portion of the expense. In west Alabama, DHR contracts with the South Mobile Area Regional Transit (SMART) and HELP, Inc., to provide transportation services for its clients.

- **Alabama Department of Mental Health**

The service area for the Alabama Department of Mental Health - Region II Community Services program includes Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County. In west Alabama the agency contracts with the ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo, the Arc of Tuscaloosa, and West Alabama Public Transportation to provide transportation service for their clients.

- **Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind**

The Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) provides transportation services to people who have vision and/or hearing loss. The AIDB has a regional center in Tuscaloosa. Their main office is in Talladega. The AIDB Center in Tuscaloosa serves Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County.

- **Alabama Kidney Foundation**

The Alabama Kidney Foundation purchases transit service for clients in all 67 Alabama counties. Their clients are limited to kidney patients who make \$1,000 or less per month. The transit service is funded by state appropriations and private contributions. The Foundation utilizes numerous transit providers throughout the state. The Foundation also reimburses client family and friends who provide transportation. The transit program operates from 5:00 a.m. till 6:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The Foundation is located in Birmingham, Jefferson County. The Foundation indicated that it would like to provide service to individuals who are above the \$1,000 threshold but are not able to due to funding limitations. The Foundation also indicated that the lack of transit service in rural areas is a problem.

- **Alabama Medicaid Agency**

The Alabama Medicaid Agency offers non-emergency transit service to full-covered Medicaid beneficiaries for Medicaid covered medical appointments. The agency provides Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to its clients to purchase transit service. The agency requires that public transit services be used instead of for-profit companies if the service meets the needs of its clients. However, the EBT cards can be used for reimbursement of private vehicle use. This is the most common use of the Medicaid non-emergency transportation program in Alabama. Most of the service is associated with recurring medical needs such as dialysis and chemotherapy.

The Alabama Medicaid Agency does not contract with transit providers. The Agency does maintain a registry of licensed transit providers for its clients. Registered providers in west Alabama include HELP, Inc., Kid One, Northstar EMS, and West Alabama Public Transportation.

- **Community Service Programs of West Alabama**

CSPWA operates Head Start programs in six of the seven west Alabama counties.

- **Greene County Commission**

The Greene County Commission provides transit service for senior citizens to the West Alabama Area Agency on Aging (AAA) nutrition centers in Eutaw and Forkland. The service is provided through a contract with the AAA. The County has two vans that were purchased with federal funds dedicated to seniors.

- **Kid One Transport System, Inc.**

Kid One Transport System, Inc. is a non-profit transit provider that operates in numerous Alabama counties, including Greene. Kid One provides medical trips for children, 19 and under and expectant mothers. The agency generally operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. The Kid One office is located in Birmingham in Jefferson County. Kid One has utilized Section 5310 and 5317 funds in the past.

- **West Alabama Area Agency on Aging**

The West Alabama Area Agency on Aging (AAA) serves senior citizens in west Alabama. The AAA contracts with the Greene County Commission to provide transit service to its nutrition sites in Greene County.

- **West Alabama Mental Health Center**

The West Alabama Mental Health Center provides mental health and substance abuse treatment. It has offices in five counties including Greene and Hale County. It contracts with West Alabama Public Transportation to transport between 30 and 42 patients a day in these two counties.

- **West Alabama Public Transportation**

The West Alabama Public Transportation (WAPT) agency is the largest transit provider in the State. WAPT utilizes FTA Section 5311, 5311(f), 5316, and 5317 grants to fund their service. The agency also maintains numerous contracts to provide specialized transportation to different agencies. The WAPT serves nine counties in West Alabama including Bibb, Greene, and Hale. The WAPT Administrative office is located in Demopolis in Marengo County. There are satellite offices in Bibb, Greene, and Hale County.

WAPT has no age or income limitations, and customer charges vary. WAPT transports clients for medical/dental services, recreational activities, personal business, employment, and other services. The WAPT 5311 service operates from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., depending on scheduling Monday through Friday and provides limited weekend service.

The service has several fixed routes but also offers demand-response routes. The WAPT averages over 360,000 passenger trips per year in their nine-county service area. The WAPT fleet consists of approximately 65 vehicles with capacities ranging from seven to 30 passengers. The fleet includes 12 wheelchair lift vehicles.

In Greene and Hale County, the WAPT has contracts with the West Alabama Mental Health Center. These contracts do not prevent WAPT from serving other segments of the population. WAPT is also on the Alabama Medicaid Agency transportation provider registry. The intercity bus transportation is also available (connector to Greyhound Bus Stations).

### **Private Systems**

- **E&C Taxi Service**

E&C Taxi Service provides demand response service in Greene, Hale, Tuscaloosa, and Jefferson County. The company currently serves Medicaid clients. E&C operates Monday through Saturday from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and on Saturday from 11:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. The company does not own a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

- **Greene County Ambulance Service**

The Greene County Ambulance Service is located in Eutaw. In addition to emergency trips, the company provides non-emergency trips to hospitals and other medical facilities. The company requires 24-hour notice for non-emergency trips. The company does not serve wheelchair clients.

- **Greene County Nursing Home**

The Greene County Nursing Home is a 72-bed facility located in Eutaw. The facility owns a wheelchair-accessible van and two cars that are used to transport clients to medical appointments. In addition, WAPT serves between two and five of the nursing home residents a month.

- **Greyhound Bus Line**

The Greyhound Bus line has four stops in the West Alabama region. These stops are not stand-alone bus stations but are generally housed with small businesses. The stops and associated businesses are listed below:

- Eutaw, gas station
- Greensboro, gas station
- Moundville, community center
- Tuscaloosa, gas station

The stops offer limited service and tickets can only be purchased at the Tuscaloosa location.

- **Northstar EMS**

Northstar EMS serves Fayette, Greene, Hale, Pickens, Tuscaloosa, and Jefferson County. The company provides emergency and non-emergency trips. The company operates Monday through Saturday, 7:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. The company has contracts with several nursing homes and medical facilities in the area. This company does not provide wheelchair service. This company is on the Alabama Medicaid transportation provider registry.

- **RushHour Transit**

RushHour Transit operates out of Tuscaloosa and provides service to all six counties in the west Alabama region and parts of Jefferson County. The company serves individuals, private schools, community service organizations, and employment staffing companies. The company has two transit vehicles, but currently does not offer wheelchair transportation.

### **Current Coordination Efforts**

- In Greene County, current coordination efforts include utilization of existing providers and contracts. These efforts address a previously identified transit gap. In many cases, an agency that needs transportation for its clients will use an existing provider rather than start a transit system. The transit purchasing agency can simply direct its clients to the providers or can enter into a contract with the provider. These mutually beneficial arrangements allow agencies that need transportation for their clients to take advantage of existing transit services. The transit purchasing agencies save money and time by using the existing providers. The providers gain revenue to support their operations. The Greene County providers did not identify any cases of sharing transit resources.

#### Greene County Contracts

- Greene County Nursing Home contracts with West Alabama Public Transportation
- West Alabama AAA contracts with the Greene County Commission



- West Alabama Mental Health Center contracts with West Alabama Public Transportation

#### **4.4 Transit Needs**

Figure 3 displays the census block groups that have a higher than average population of disabled, elderly, and poor. These block groups generally cover the southwest part of the county, south of I-20/59 and west of US-43. This figure also locates possible transit destinations. As expected, most of the destinations are in the City of Eutaw and to a lesser extent the Towns of Boligee and Forkland.

Surveys were provided to transit providers, social service organizations, and transit riders during January 2024. The staff and transit committee used the survey responses to develop a list of needs in the county. In March 2024, the transit committee verified these needs.

##### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Night service
- Weekend service
- Additional public and private providers
- Additional shopping service
- Additional recreation service
- Service to rural areas of the county
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)

##### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips
  - Out-of-county trips

Based on the survey responses and committee discussions there does not appear to be any duplication of service in the county.

#### **4.5 Transit Service Barriers**

The staff, working with the transit committee and the survey responses, developed a list of barriers that prevent the needs from being addressed. These barriers are consistent across the rural counties in the region. The local agencies and governments have limited control over the barriers, which are often related to economic issues, personal choice decisions, and the nature of rural communities.

## Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

The challenge of the transit agencies and local governments is to find ways around these barriers. The funding to address every need will never be available. The economics of providing transit service to a small number of dispersed clients will never appeal to a for-profit business. Innovative ideas will be required if the needs are to be met.

## **4.6 Strategies to Address Needs and Barriers**

The staff, working with the transit committee, developed the following strategies. Several of the proposals are related to maintaining the current level of service. These were included because the existing services are addressing gaps that previously existed. The strategies are general so as not to preclude any future projects. Many of the strategies indicate that additional funding will be required for implementation. In some cases, the additional funding could be a reallocation of existing funds or programs. New funding streams may not always be needed.

## Strategies

- Maintain current transit service (**High**)
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts (**High**)
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) (**High**)
  - Nights
  - Weekends
  - Rural areas of the county
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source (**High**)
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources (**High**)
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) (**Medium**)

The list of strategies includes an implementation priority (High, Medium, Low) assigned by the transit committee. The priority is based on available resources, time, and feasibility. The priority assigned does not have a direct correlation to the amount of

support or the amount of need. It merely reflects the existing reality based on the ranking criteria. If circumstances change, a low or medium priority strategy could be implemented before one that was ranked as a high priority.

## 5.0 Hale County

### 5.1 Demographics and Geography

Based on a 2022 U.S. Census Bureau estimate, 14,513 people live in Hale County. This is a decrease of 272 from the number reported in the 2020 Census. According to the *2018-2022 American Community Survey*, there are 3,624 disabled people, 2,764 elderly individuals, and 3,613 people below the poverty line in the county. The population density of the county is 23 people per square mile.

Hale County has a land area of 644 square miles. At its widest section, the county is 36 miles north-to-south and 24 miles east-to-west. Based on numbers provided by the Alabama Department of Transportation, there are 804 miles of roads in the county. The main north-south route is SR-69. The main east-west route is SR-14.

There are three areas of concentrated population in Hale County. The largest of the three is the City of Greensboro in the south-central part of the county. The second concentration is the City of Moundville located in the northern part of the county. The Town of Akron in the west-central part of the county is the third area of concentration. Figure 4 depicts these concentrations. These areas also contain the bulk of potential transit destinations including government offices, social service organizations, schools, medical facilities, and large employers. Figure 4 displays potential transit destinations and transit system routes. In addition, Figure 4 includes concentrations of people who are disabled, over 65, and in poverty.

### 5.2 Employment

Based on figures from the *2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS)*, in 2022 Hale County had 5,902 people in the labor force. Of this number 5,433 were employed and 450 were unemployed. The 2022 average unemployment rate, 7.6 percent, was higher than the national and state average of 4.4 percent. Major employers in the county include the Hale County Schools, Westervelt Company, West Alabama Mechanical Inc., Moundville Health & Rehab. In Hale County, there are approximately 1,000 businesses with 97 categorized as entry-level employers. Most of the employers, including major and entry-level employers, are located within the municipal limits.

Based on information from the *2009-2013 American Community Survey*, 46 percent of the employed workforce in Hale County commutes out of the county to their job. Of this group, 79 percent are employed in Tuscaloosa and Marengo County. Only 43 percent of the total workforce live and work in the county. An additional 11 percent of the workforce commutes into Hale County from another county.

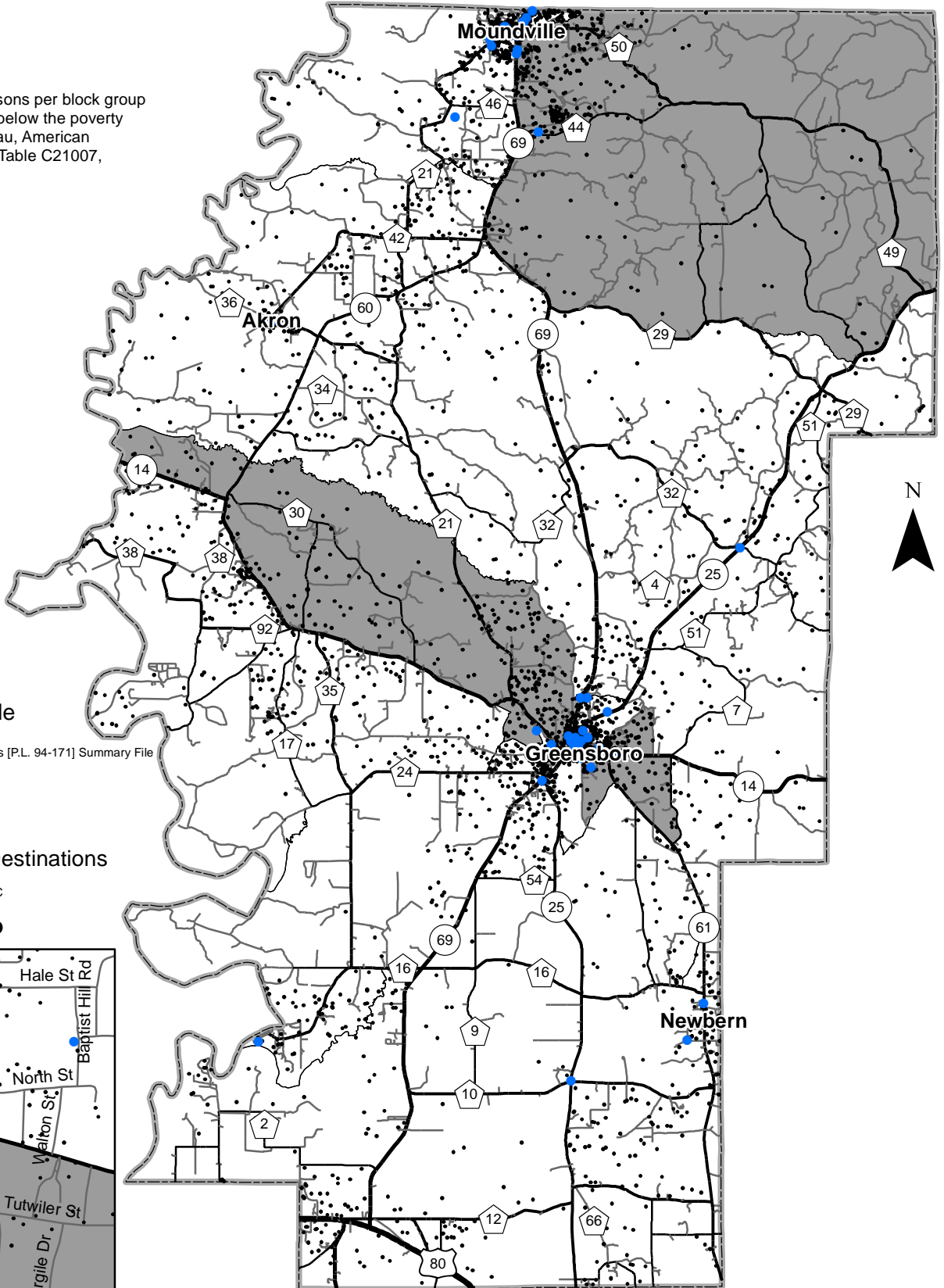
# Hale County

Figure 4

## Concentrations of People in Hale County who are Disabled, Over 65, and in Poverty

- Above Average
- Below Average

In Hale County the average persons per block group who are over 65, disabled, and below the poverty level is 556 ( U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2018-2022, Table C21007, and WARC Calculation).



### Population Density

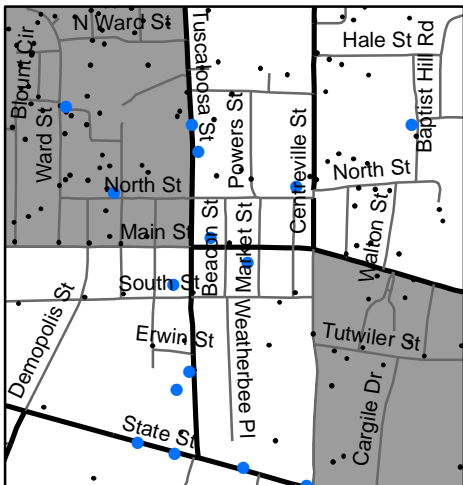
1 Dot = 5 People

Sources: US Census Bureau 2020 Census [P.L. 94-171] Summary File

### ● Potential Transit Destinations

Sources: Local transit agencies and WARC

### Greensboro



0 5 10 Miles

This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission 205 333-2990, February 2024. This map is not a survey product and should not be used for conveyance.

### **5.3 Transit Resource Assessment**

This section provides a description of each agency or company that provides or purchases transit service in Hale County. The agency descriptions are divided into public/non-profit and private. The public and non-profit agencies were grouped because the non-profits are generally funded by public agencies or governments. Descriptions of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding categories used by the public and non-profit agencies are included in Chapter 10.

#### **Public and Non-Profit Systems**

- **Alabama Department of Human Resources**

The Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) maintains an office in every county in Alabama. The DHR Family Assistance Division has an interagency agreement with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). Through that agreement, ALDOT identifies and secures transportation vendors across the state, which transport eligible persons to work and work-related activities and DHR provides matching funds to reimburse ALDOT for a portion of the expense. In west Alabama, DHR contracts with the South Mobile Area Regional Transit (SMART) and HELP, Inc., to provide transportation services for its clients.

- **Alabama Department of Mental Health**

The service area for the Alabama Department of Mental Health - Region II Community Services program includes Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County. In west Alabama the agency contracts with the ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo, the Arc of Tuscaloosa, and West Alabama Public Transportation to provide transportation service for their clients.

- **Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind**

The Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) provides transportation services to people who have vision and/or hearing loss. The AIDB has a regional center in Tuscaloosa. Their main office is in Talladega. The AIDB Center in Tuscaloosa serves Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County.

- **Alabama Kidney Foundation**

The Alabama Kidney Foundation purchases transit service for clients in all 67 Alabama counties. Their clients are limited to kidney patients who make \$1,000 or less per month. The transit service is funded by state appropriations and private contributions. The Foundation utilizes numerous transit providers throughout the state. The Foundation also reimburses client family and friends who provide transportation. The transit program operates from 5:00 a.m. till 6:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The Foundation is located in Birmingham, Jefferson County. The Foundation indicated that it would like to provide service to individuals who are above the \$1,000 threshold but are not able to due to funding limitations. The Foundation also indicated that the lack of transit service in rural areas is a problem.

- **Alabama Medicaid Agency**

The Alabama Medicaid Agency offers non-emergency transit service to full-covered Medicaid beneficiaries for Medicaid covered medical appointments. The agency provides Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to its clients to purchase transit service. The agency requires that public transit services be used instead of for-profit companies if the service meets the needs of its clients. However, the EBT cards can be used for reimbursement of private vehicle use. This is the most common use of the Medicaid non-emergency transportation program in Alabama. Most of the service is associated with recurring medical needs such as dialysis and chemotherapy.

The Alabama Medicaid Agency does not contract with transit providers. The Agency does maintain a registry of licensed transit providers for its clients. Registered providers in west Alabama include HELP, Inc., Kid One, Northstar EMS, and West Alabama Public Transportation.

- **Community Service Programs of West Alabama**

The Community Service Programs of West Alabama (CSPWA) contracts with West Alabama Public Transportation to provide transportation for 90 Head Start students in Greene and Hale County. CSPWA operates Head Start programs in six of the seven west Alabama counties.

- **West Alabama Mental Health Center**

The West Alabama Mental Health Center provides mental health, mental retardation, and substance abuse treatment. It has offices in five counties including Greene and Hale County. It contracts with West Alabama Public Transportation to transport between 30 and 42 patients a day in these two counties.

- **West Alabama Public Transportation**

The West Alabama Public Transportation (WAPT) agency is the largest transit provider in the State. WAPT utilizes FTA Section 5311, 5311(f), 5316, and 5317 grants to fund their service. The agency also maintains numerous contracts to provide specialized transportation to different agencies. The WAPT serves nine counties in West Alabama including Bibb, Greene, and Hale. The WAPT Administrative office is located in Demopolis in Marengo County. There are satellite offices in Bibb, Greene, and Hale County.

WAPT has no age or income limitations, and customer charges vary. WAPT transports clients for medical/dental services, recreational activities, personal business, employment, and other services. The WAPT 5311 service operates from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., depending on scheduling Monday through Friday and provides limited weekend service.

The service has several fixed routes but also offers demand-response routes. The WAPT averages over 360,000 passenger trips per year in their nine-county service area. The WAPT fleet consists of approximately 65 vehicles with capacities ranging from seven to 30 passengers. The fleet includes 12 wheelchair lift vehicles.

In Greene and Hale County, the WAPT has contracts with the West Alabama Area Agency on Aging and the West Alabama Mental Health Center. These contracts do not prevent WAPT from serving other segments of the population. WAPT is also on the Alabama Medicaid Agency transportation provider registry. The intercity bus transportation is also available (connector to Greyhound Bus Stations).

### **Private Systems**

- **Colonial Haven Care and Rehab Center**

The Colonial Haven Care and Rehab Center is a long-term care and rehabilitation facility located in Greensboro. Its service area includes Hale County. The company purchases transit service from the Hale County EMS and Northstar EMS. The company uses Medicaid to fund its transit purchases.

- **E&C Taxi Service**

E&C Taxi Service provides demand response service in Greene, Hale, Tuscaloosa, and Jefferson County. The company currently serves Medicaid clients. E&C operates Monday through Saturday from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and on Saturday from 11:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. The company does not own a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

- **Greyhound Bus Line**

The Greyhound Bus line has four stops in the West Alabama region. These stops are not stand-alone bus stations but are generally housed with small businesses. The stops and associated businesses are listed below:

- Eutaw, gas station
- Greensboro, gas station
- Moundville, community center
- Tuscaloosa, gas station

The stops offer limited service and tickets can only be purchased at the Tuscaloosa location.

- **Hale County EMS**

The Hale County EMS is an ambulance service serving Hale County. Its office is located in Greensboro. The company provides emergency and non-emergency trips for local nursing homes, hospital, and other medical facilities. The company does not serve wheelchair clients.



- **Moundville Health and Rehab**

The Moundville Health and Rehab (MHR) office is located in Moundville. Its service area includes Hale and Tuscaloosa County. The MHR purchases transit service from private providers. The MHR uses Medicaid to fund its transit purchases.

- **Northstar EMS**

Northstar EMS serves Fayette, Greene, Hale, Pickens, Tuscaloosa, and Jefferson County. The company provides emergency and non-emergency trips. The company operates Monday through Saturday, 7:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. The company has contracts with several nursing homes and medical facilities in the area. This company does not provide wheelchair service. This company is on the Alabama Medicaid transportation provider registry.

- **RushHour Transit**

RushHour Transit operates out of Tuscaloosa and provides service to all six counties in the west Alabama region and parts of Jefferson County. The company serves individuals, private schools, community service organizations, and employment staffing companies. The company has two transit vehicles, but currently does not offer wheelchair transportation.

### **Current Coordination Efforts**

- In Hale County, current coordination efforts include utilization of existing providers and contracts. These efforts address a previously identified transit gap. In many cases, an agency that needs transportation for its clients will use an existing provider rather than start a transit system. The transit purchasing agency can simply direct its clients to the providers or can enter into a contract with the provider. These mutually beneficial arrangements allow agencies that need transportation for their clients to take advantage of existing transit services. The transit purchasing agencies save money and time by using the existing providers. The providers gain revenue to support their operations. The Hale County providers did not identify any cases of sharing transit resources.

#### Hale County Contracts

- Colonial Haven Care and Rehabilitation Center contracts with Hale County EMS and Northstar EMS
- Moundville Health and Rehab contracts with Northstar EMS
- West Alabama AAA contracts with WAPT
- West Alabama Mental Health Center contracts with WAPT

## **5.4 Transit Needs**

Figure 4 displays the census block groups that have a higher than average population of disabled, elderly, and poor. These block groups generally cover the northern two-thirds of the county, excluding the area northwest of Greensboro. This figure also locates possible transit destinations. As expected, most of the destinations are in the

City of Greensboro and the City of Moundville and to a lesser extent the Towns of Akron and Newbern.

Surveys were provided to transit providers, social service organizations, and transit riders during January 2024. The staff and transit committee used the survey responses to develop a list of needs in the county. In March 2024, the transit committee verified these needs.

#### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Night service
- Weekend service
- Additional public and private providers
- More frequent service
- Service for senior citizens who are less than 60 years old
- Service to Shelton State Community College (Tuscaloosa) and Wallace Community College (Selma)
- Service to large employers in Tuscaloosa
- Additional shopping service
- Additional recreation service
- Service to rural areas of the county
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)

#### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips
  - Out-of-county trips

Based on the survey responses and committee discussions there does not appear to be any duplication of service in the county.

### **5.5 Transit Service Barriers**

The staff, working with the transit committee and the survey responses, developed a list of barriers that prevent the needs from being addressed. These barriers are consistent across the rural counties in the region. The local agencies and governments have limited control over the barriers, which are often related to economic issues, personal choice decisions, and the nature of rural communities.

## Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

The challenge of the transit agencies and local governments is to find ways around these barriers. The funding to address every need will never be available. The economics of providing transit service to a small number of dispersed clients will never appeal to a for-profit business. Innovative ideas will be required if the needs are to be met.

## **5.6 Strategies to Address Needs and Barriers**

The staff, working with the transit committee, developed the following strategies. Several of the proposals are related to maintaining the current level of service. These were included because the existing services are addressing gaps that previously existed. The strategies are general so as not to preclude any future projects. Many of the strategies indicate that additional funding will be required for implementation. In some cases, the additional funding could be a reallocation of existing funds or programs. New funding streams may not always be needed.

## Strategies

- Maintain current transit service (**High**)
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts (**High**)
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) (**High**)
  - Nights
  - Weekends
  - Rural areas of the county
  - Inter-county
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source (**High**)
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources (**High**)
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) (**Medium**)

The list of strategies includes an implementation priority (High, Medium, Low) assigned by the transit committee. The priority is based on available resources, time, and

feasibility. The priority assigned does not have a direct correlation to the amount of support or the amount of need. It merely reflects the existing reality based on the ranking criteria. If circumstances change, a low or medium priority strategy could be implemented before one that was ranked as a high priority.

## 6.0 Lamar County

### 6.1 Demographics and Geography

Based on a 2022 U.S. Census Bureau estimate, 13,727 people live in Lamar County. This is a decrease of 245 from the number reported in the 2010 Census. According to the *2018-2022 American Community Survey*, there are 3,068 disabled people, 3,006 elderly individuals, and 2,107 people below the poverty line in the county. The population density of the county is 23 people per square mile.

Lamar County has a land area of 605 square miles. At its widest section, the county is 37 miles north-to-south and 20 miles east-to-west. Based on numbers provided by the Alabama Department of Transportation, there are 1,196 miles of roads in the county. The main north-south route is SR-17. The main east-west routes are US-278 and SR-18.

There are four areas of concentrated population in Lamar County. The largest of the three is the City of Vernon in the south-central part of the county. The second concentration is the City of Sulligent located in the north-central part of the county. The Town of Millport in the southern part of the county is the third area of concentration. The fourth area is the Town of Kennedy in the southeastern corner of the county. Figure 5 depicts these concentrations. These areas also contain the bulk of potential transit destinations including government offices, social service organizations, schools, medical facilities, and large employers. Figure 5 displays potential transit destinations and transit system routes. In addition, Figure 5 includes concentrations of people who are disabled, over 65, and in poverty.

### 6.2 Employment

Based on figures from the *2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS)*, in 2022 Lamar County had 5,674 people in the labor force. Of this number 5,381 were employed and 284 were unemployed. The 2022 average unemployment rate, 5.0 percent, was higher than the national and state average of 4.4 percent. Major employers in the county include Bolzoni-Auramo Inc., Lamar County Schools, Marathon Equipment Company, Max Home, and Weyerhaeuser Company. In Lamar County, there are approximately 500 businesses with 63 categorized as entry-level employers. Most of the employers, including major and entry-level employers, are located within the municipal limits.

Based on information from the *2009-2013 American Community Survey*, 33 percent of the employed workforce in Lamar County commutes out of the county to their job. Of this group, 38 percent are employed in Mississippi and 45 percent work in Fayette and Marion County. Only 51 percent of the total workforce live and work in the county. An additional 15 percent of the workforce commutes into Lamar County from another county.

# Lamar County

Figure 5

## Concentrations of People in Lamar County who are Disabled, Over 65, and in Poverty

● Potential Transit Destinations

Sources: Local transit agencies and WARC

■ Above Average

□ Below Average

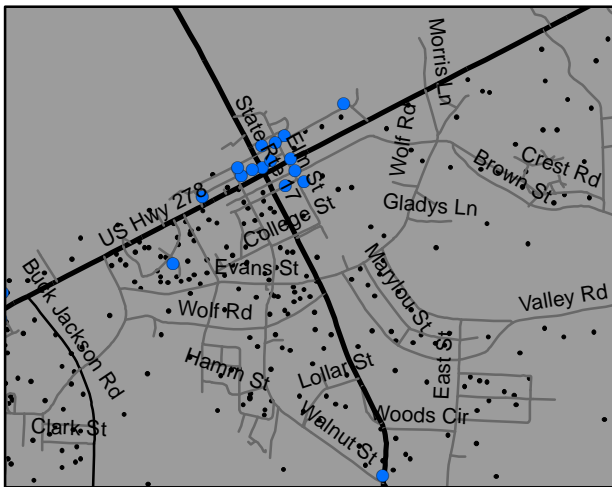
In Lamar County the average persons per block group who are over 65, disabled, and below the poverty level is 505 ( U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2018-2022, Table C21007, and WARC Calculation).

### Population Density

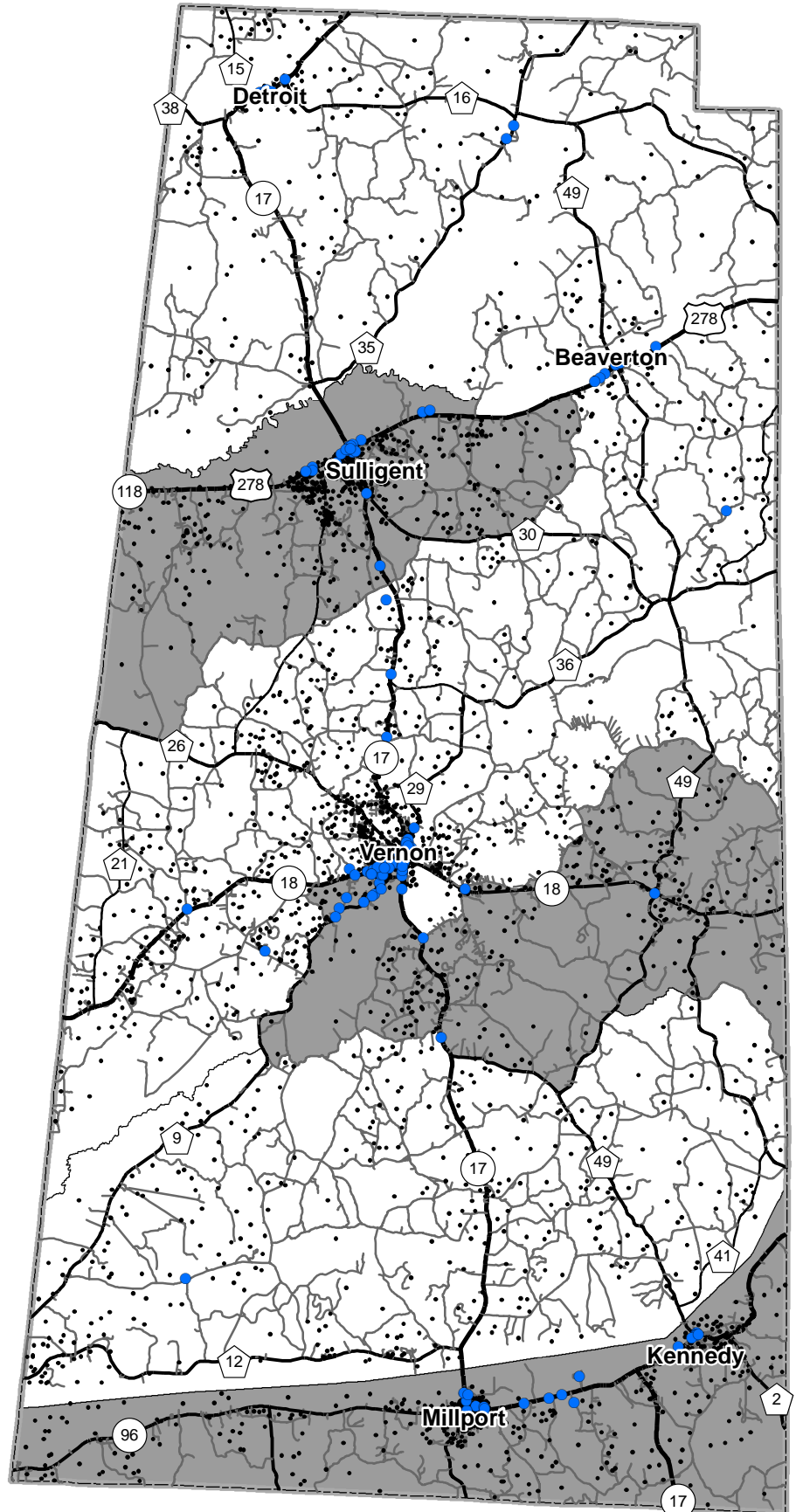
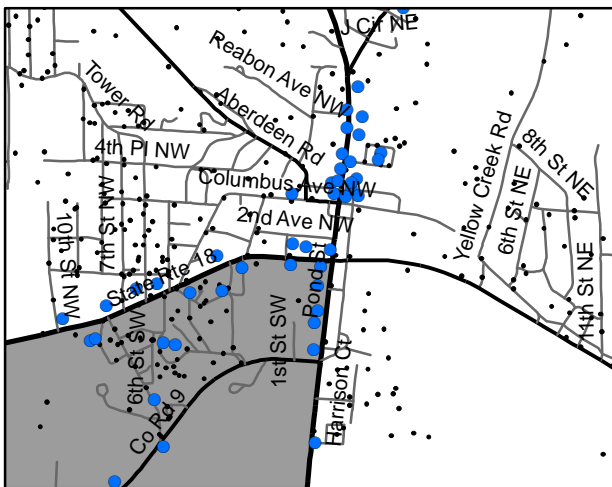
□ 1 Dot = 5 People

Sources: US Census Bureau 2020 Census [P.L. 94-171] Summary File

### Sulligent



### Vernon



This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission 205 333-2990, January 2024. This map is not a survey product and should not be used for conveyance.

### **6.3 Transit Resource Assessment**

This section provides a description of each agency or company that provides or purchases transit service in Lamar County. The agency descriptions are divided into public/non-profit and private. The public and non-profit agencies were grouped because the non-profits are generally funded by public agencies or governments. Descriptions of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding categories used by the public and non-profit agencies are included in Chapter 10. The public and non-profit transit providers in Lamar County limit service to a small section of the population usually associated with a particular government or agency service program. The general population does not have a public transit option.

#### **Public and Non-Profit Systems**

- **Alabama Department of Human Resources**

The Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) maintains an office in every county in Alabama. The DHR Family Assistance Division has an interagency agreement with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). Through that agreement, ALDOT identifies and secures transportation vendors across the state, which transport eligible persons to work and work-related activities and DHR provides matching funds to reimburse ALDOT for a portion of the expense. In west Alabama, DHR contracts with the South Mobile Area Regional Transit (SMART) and HELP, Inc., to provide transportation services for its clients.

- **Alabama Department of Mental Health**

The service area for the Alabama Department of Mental Health - Region II Community Services program includes Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County. In west Alabama the agency contracts with the ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo, the Arc of Tuscaloosa, and West Alabama Public Transportation to provide transportation service for their clients.

- **Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind**

The Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) provides transportation services to people who have vision and/or hearing loss. The AIDB has a regional center in Tuscaloosa. Their main office is in Talladega. The AIDB Center in Tuscaloosa serves Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County.

- **Alabama Kidney Foundation**

The Alabama Kidney Foundation purchases transit service for clients in all 67 Alabama counties. Their clients are limited to kidney patients who make \$1,000 or less per month. The transit service is funded by state appropriations and private contributions. The Foundation utilizes numerous transit providers throughout the state. The Foundation also reimburses client family and friends who provide transportation. The transit program operates from 5:00 a.m. till 6:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The Foundation is located in Birmingham, Jefferson County. The Foundation indicated that it would like to provide service

to individuals who are above the \$1,000 threshold but are not able to due to funding limitations. The Foundation also indicated that the lack of transit service in rural areas is a problem.

- **Alabama Medicaid Agency**

The Alabama Medicaid Agency offers non-emergency transit service to full-covered Medicaid beneficiaries for Medicaid covered medical appointments. The agency provides Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to its clients to purchase transit service. The agency requires that public transit services be used instead of for-profit companies if the service meets the needs of its clients. However, the EBT cards can be used for reimbursement of private vehicle use. This is the most common use of the Medicaid non-emergency transportation program in Alabama. Most of the service is associated with recurring medical needs such as dialysis and chemotherapy.

The Alabama Medicaid Agency does not contract with transit providers. The Agency does maintain a registry of licensed transit providers for its clients. Registered providers in west Alabama include HELP, Inc., Kid One, Northstar EMS, and West Alabama Public Transportation.

- **ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo Counties**

The ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo Counties (ARCFLM) provides transit service exclusively to their clients, individuals with developmental disabilities. The program makes frequent medical trips and weekly recreational trips. The ARCFLM provides transit service Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. till 2:00 p.m. but also offers 24-hour availability. The ARCFLM makes regular trips to Jasper, Northport, Tuscaloosa, Winfield, Guin, Hamilton, and Birmingham. The ARCFLM drivers serve as day habilitation and residential training assistants when they are not driving. The agency indicated that insurance problems would prevent any sharing of resources. The ARCFLM office is located in the City of Fayette, and its transportation service area includes Fayette, Lamar, and Marengo County. The agency uses FTA Section 5310 grants to purchase vehicles.

- **Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center**

The Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center (NWAMHC) is a comprehensive mental health program that offers adults and children outpatient services in Fayette, Lamar, Marion, Walker, and Winston Counties. NWAMHC operates a specialized child program in Vernon, out-patient, and day rehabilitation programs in Vernon, and two adult mental illness residential programs in Sulligent. The center provides transit service exclusively to its consumers. Trips are provided for medical services, shopping, and recreation. In Lamar County, NWAMHC provides approximately 20,000 transit trips per year. NWAMHC is a non-profit agency and is located in the City of Jasper in Walker County. The center uses FTA Section 5310 grants to purchase vehicles.



## Private Systems

- **Generations of Vernon**

Generations of Vernon is a private company that provides transit service to its clients. Its service area includes Fayette and Lamar County. The company has one wheelchair-accessible van and provides demand response service for medical and recreational purposes.

- **RushHour Transit**

RushHour Transit operates out of Tuscaloosa and provides service to all six counties in the west Alabama region and parts of Jefferson County. The company serves individuals, private schools, community service organizations, and employment staffing companies. The company has two transit vehicles, but currently does not offer wheelchair transportation.

## Current Coordination Efforts

- In Lamar County, current coordination efforts include utilization of existing providers and contracts. These efforts address a previously identified transit gap. In many cases, an agency that needs transportation for its clients will use an existing provider rather than start a transit system. The transit purchasing agency can simply direct its clients to the providers or can enter into a contract with the provider. These mutually beneficial arrangements allow agencies that need transportation for their clients to take advantage of existing transit services. The transit purchasing agencies save money and time by using the existing providers. The providers gain revenue to support their operations. The Lamar County providers did not identify any cases of sharing transit resources.

### Lamar County Contracts

- Alabama Department of Mental Health contracts with the ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo

## 6.4 Transit Needs

Figure 5 displays the census block groups that have a higher than average population of disabled, elderly, and poor. These block groups generally cover the northwest corner of the county, the area west of Sulligent, the area southeast of Vernon, the area northwest of Millport, and the area south of the Luxapallila Creek. This figure also locates possible transit destinations. As expected, most of the destinations are in the Cities of Vernon, Sulligent, and Millport and to a lesser extent the Towns of Detroit, Beaverton, and Kennedy.

Surveys were provided to transit providers, social service organizations, and transit riders during January 2024. The staff and transit committee used the survey responses to develop a list of needs in the county. In March 2024, the transit committee verified these needs.

### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Night service

- Weekend service
- Additional public and private providers, including a Section 5311 provider
- Service to rural areas of the county including Kingville, Cody, Detroit, and Beaverton
- Additional service in Millport and Sulligent
- Out-of-county service including Tuscaloosa and Columbus, MS
- Shopping service
- Recreation service
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)

#### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips
  - Out-of-county trips

Based on the survey responses and committee discussions there does not appear to be any duplication of service in the county.

### **6.5 Transit Service Barriers**

The staff, working with the transit committee and the survey responses, developed a list of barriers that prevent the needs from being addressed. These barriers are consistent across the rural counties in the region. The local agencies and governments have limited control over the barriers, which are often related to economic issues, personal choice decisions, and the nature of rural communities.

#### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
  - Operating funds
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

The challenge of the transit agencies and local governments is to find ways around these barriers. The funding to address every need will never be available. The

economics of providing transit service to a small number of dispersed clients will never appeal to a for-profit business. Innovative ideas will be required if the needs are to be met.

## 6.6 Strategies to Address Needs and Barriers

The staff, working with the transit committee, developed the following strategies. Several of the proposals are related to maintaining the current level of service. These were included because the existing services are addressing gaps that previously existed. The strategies are general so as not to preclude any future projects. Many of the strategies indicate that additional funding will be required for implementation. In some cases, the additional funding could be a reallocation of existing funds or programs. New funding streams may not always be needed.

### Strategies

- Maintain current transit service **(High)**
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts **(High)**
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) **(High)**
  - Nights
  - Weekends
  - Millport and Sulligent
  - Rural areas of the county including Kingville, Cody, Detroit, and Beaverton
  - Inter-county
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers, including a 5311 provider (Additional funding required) **(High)**
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) **(High)**
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source **(High)**
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources **(High)**
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) **(Medium)**

The list of strategies includes an implementation priority (High, Medium, Low) assigned by the transit committee. The priority is based on available resources, time, and feasibility. The priority assigned does not have a direct correlation to the amount of support or the amount of need. It merely reflects the existing reality based on the ranking criteria. If circumstances change, a low or medium priority strategy could be implemented before one that was ranked as a high priority.

## 7.0 Pickens County

### 7.1 Demographics and Geography

Based on a 2022 U.S. Census Bureau estimate, 17,334 people live in Pickens County. This is a decrease of 1,789 from the number reported in the 2020 Census. The increase is due to a federal prison being counted in the 2020 Census. According to the *2018-2022 American Community Survey*, there are 4,169 disabled people, 3,617 elderly individuals, and 3,864 people below the poverty line in the county. The population density of the county is 19 people per square mile.

Pickens County has a land area of 882 square miles. At its widest section, the county is 38 miles north-to-south and 28 miles east-to-west. Based on numbers provided by the Alabama Department of Transportation, there are 1,136 miles of roads in the county. The main north-south route is SR-17. The main east-west route is US-82.

There are five areas of concentrated population in Pickens County. The largest of the five is the City of Aliceville in the south-central part of the county. The Town of Gordo in the west-central part of the county is the second area of concentration. The third concentration is the Town of Reform located in the north-central part of the county. The Town of Carrollton, the county seat, is the fourth largest area of concentrated population. Carrollton is located in the center of the county. The final area is located in the Town of Pickensville, west of Carrollton on the state line. Figure 6 depicts these concentrations. These areas also contain the bulk of potential transit destinations including government offices, social service organizations, schools, medical facilities, and large employers. Figure 6 displays potential transit destinations and transit system routes. In addition, Figure 6 includes concentrations of people who are disabled, over 65, and in poverty.

### 7.2 Employment

Based on figures from the *2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS)*, in 2022 Pickens County had 7,363 people in the labor force. Of this number 6,945 were employed and 388 were unemployed. The 2022 average unemployment rate, 5.3 percent, was higher than the national and state average of 4.4 percent. Major employers in the county include the Lavender, Inc., Pickens County Schools, FCI Aliceville, Buchanan Hardwoods, and Aliceville Manor. In Pickens County, there are approximately 600 businesses with 75 categorized as entry-level employers. Most of the employers, including major and entry-level employers, are located within the municipal limits.

Based on information from the *2009-2013 American Community Survey*, 46 percent of the employed workforce in Pickens County commutes out of the county to their job. Of this group, 65 percent are employed in Tuscaloosa County and 28 percent work in Mississippi. Only 45 percent of the total workforce live and work in the county. An additional 9 percent of the workforce commutes into Pickens County from another county.

# Pickens County

Figure 6

## Concentrations of People in Pickens County who are Disabled, Over 65, and in Poverty

● Potential Transit Destinations

Sources: Local transit agencies and WARC

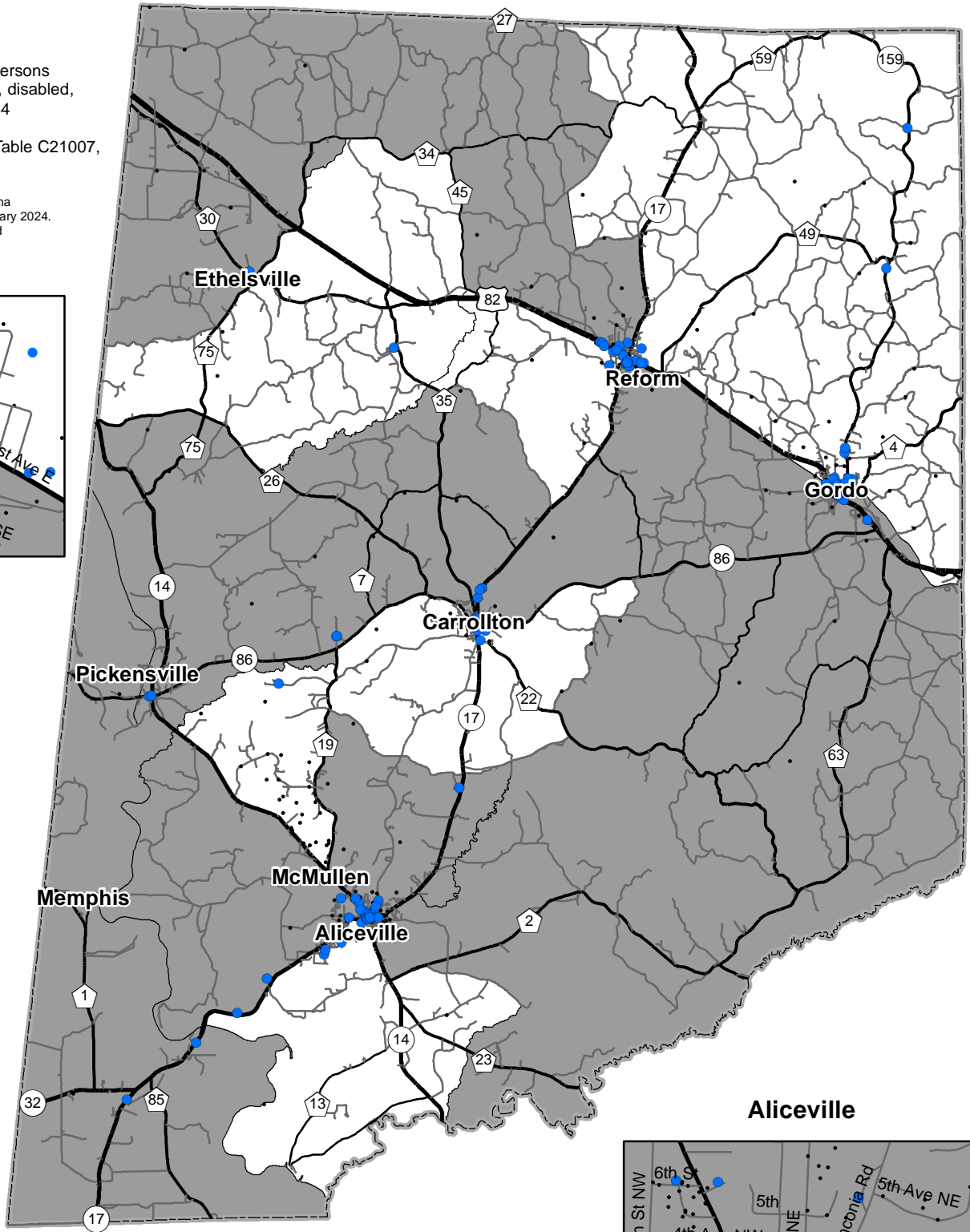
■ Above Average  
□ Below Average

In Pickens County the average persons per block group who are over 65, disabled, and below the poverty level is 534 (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2018-2022, Table C21007, and WARC Calculation).

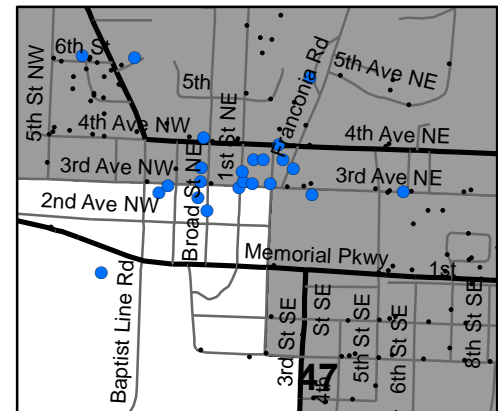
This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission 205 333-2990, January 2024. This map is not a survey product and should not be used for conveyance.



Gordo



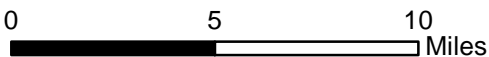
Aliceville



### Population Density

□ 1 Dot = 5 People

Sources: US Census Bureau 2020 Census [P.L. 94-171] Summary File



### **7.3 Transit Resource Assessment**

This section provides a description of each agency or company that provides or purchases transit service in Pickens County. The agency descriptions are divided into public/non-profit and private. The public and non-profit agencies were grouped because the non-profits are generally funded by public agencies or governments. Descriptions of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding categories used by the public and non-profit agencies are included in Chapter 10.

#### **Public and Non-Profit Systems**

- **Alabama Department of Human Resources**

The Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) maintains an office in every county in Alabama. The DHR Family Assistance Division has an interagency agreement with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). Through that agreement, ALDOT identifies and secures transportation vendors across the state, which transport eligible persons to work and work-related activities and DHR provides matching funds to reimburse ALDOT for a portion of the expense. In west Alabama, DHR contracts with the South Mobile Area Regional Transit (SMART) and HELP, Inc., to provide transportation services for its clients.

- **Alabama Department of Mental Health**

The service area for the Alabama Department of Mental Health - Region II Community Services program includes Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County. In west Alabama the agency contracts with the ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo, the Arc of Tuscaloosa, and West Alabama Public Transportation to provide transportation service for their clients.

- **Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind**

The Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) provides transportation services to people who have vision and/or hearing loss. The AIDB has a regional center in Tuscaloosa. Their main office is in Talladega. The AIDB Center in Tuscaloosa serves Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County.

- **Alabama Kidney Foundation**

The Alabama Kidney Foundation purchases transit service for clients in all 67 Alabama counties. Their clients are limited to kidney patients who make \$1,000 or less per month. The transit service is funded by state appropriations and private contributions. The Foundation utilizes numerous transit providers throughout the state. The Foundation also reimburses client family and friends who provide transportation. The transit program operates from 5:00 a.m. till 6:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The Foundation is located in Birmingham, Jefferson County. The Foundation indicated that it would like to provide service to individuals who are above the \$1,000 threshold but are not able to due to funding limitations. The Foundation also indicated that the lack of transit service in rural areas is a problem.

- **Alabama Medicaid Agency**

The Alabama Medicaid Agency offers non-emergency transit service to full-covered Medicaid beneficiaries for Medicaid covered medical appointments. The agency provides Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to its clients to purchase transit service. The agency requires that public transit services be used instead of for-profit companies if the service meets the needs of its clients. However, the EBT cards can be used for reimbursement of private vehicle use. This is the most common use of the Medicaid non-emergency transportation program in Alabama. Most of the service is associated with recurring medical needs such as dialysis and chemotherapy.

The Alabama Medicaid Agency does not contract with transit providers. The Agency does maintain a registry of licensed transit providers for its clients. Registered providers in west Alabama include HELP, Inc., Kid One, Northstar EMS, and West Alabama Public Transportation.

- **HELP Inc.**

HELP Inc. is the designated Section 5311 provider in Pickens County. The agency is located in Carrollton, the county seat. The agency provides transit service Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. till 4:00 p.m. The agency has a fleet of five vehicles, with all five being wheelchair accessible.

HELP Inc. has a contract with the West Alabama Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to transport AAA clients to the Aliceville, Carrollton, and Reform AAA senior centers. The contract does not prevent the agency from serving other segments of the population.

The agency provides approximately 15,000 passenger trips per year to the general public, without age or income limitations. Transportation is provided for medical appointments, shopping, pharmacy visits, and other personal business and activities. A modest fare is charged for the service.

- **Indian Rivers Behavioral Health**

Indian Rivers Behavioral Health (IRBH) serves mental health, substance abuse, and intellectually disabled clients by providing mental health treatment, life skills training and residential support. The agency is located in Tuscaloosa. Its service area includes Bibb, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County. The agency provides transportation to its clients on a case-by-case basis and/or assistance with accessing public transit services. Generally, client-specific transportation is provided Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. However, Indian Rivers manages numerous residential facilities where transportation service is available to those individuals 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The agency serves over 6,000 people annually.

- **West Alabama Area Agency on Aging**  
The West Alabama Area Agency on Aging (AAA) serves senior citizens in west Alabama. The AAA provides transportation to its senior clients and provides transportation to the AAA senior centers. The AAA contracts with HELP, Inc. to provide transit service to its elderly clients in Pickens County to three of the AAA senior centers.

### **Private Systems**

- **Arbor Woods Health and Rehab**  
The Arbor Woods Health and Rehab (AWHR) is a private nursing facility that provides and purchases transit service for its clients. The facility is located in Reform and serves 81 clients. The AWHR has one van to transport clients for medical and recreation services and also purchases service from Northstar EMS (Pickens County Ambulance Service). The AWHR uses Medicaid to fund its transit purchases.
- **Northstar EMS**  
Northstar EMS (Pickens County Ambulance Service) serves Fayette, Greene, Hale, Pickens, Tuscaloosa, and Jefferson County. The company provides emergency and non-emergency trips. The company operates Monday through Saturday, 7:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. The company has contracts with various nursing homes and medical facilities in the area. This company does not provide wheelchair service. The EMS has an office in the Town of Carrollton.
- **REACH**  
The REACH program, located in Carrollton, offers transportation to its clients. REACH is a youth alternative treatment program that is part of the Pickens County Juvenile Court.
- **RushHour Transit**  
RushHour Transit operates out of Tuscaloosa and provides service to all six counties in the west Alabama region and parts of Jefferson County. The company serves individuals, private schools, community service organizations, and employment staffing companies. The company has two transit vehicles, but currently does not offer wheelchair transportation.

### **Current Coordination Efforts**

- In Pickens County, current coordination efforts include utilization of existing providers and contracts. These efforts address a previously identified transit gap. In many cases, an agency that needs transportation for its clients will use an existing provider rather than start a transit system. The transit purchasing agency can simply direct its clients to the providers or can enter into a contract with the provider. These mutually beneficial arrangements allow agencies that need transportation for their clients to take advantage of existing transit services. The transit purchasing agencies save money and time by using the existing



providers. The providers gain revenue to support their operations. The Pickens County providers did not identify any cases of sharing transit resources.

#### Pickens County Contracts

- Arbor Woods Health and Rehab contracts with Northstar EMS
- West Alabama AAA contracts with HELP, Inc.

### **7.4 Transit Needs**

Figure 6 displays the census block groups that have a higher than average population of disabled, elderly, and poor. These block groups generally cover the northern quarter of the county, the area northwest of Pickensville, the area north and west of Aliceville, and the southeastern part of the county. This figure also locates possible transit destinations. As expected, most of the destinations are in the Cities of Aliceville, Reform, Gordo, Carrollton, and to a lesser extent the Towns of Pickensville, Ethelsville, and Memphis. HELP Inc. provides demand response service to all of Pickens County.

Surveys were provided to transit providers, social service organizations, and transit riders during January 2024. The staff and transit committee used the survey responses to develop a list of needs in the county. In March 2024, the transit committee verified these needs.

#### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Night service, including early morning and early evening times
- Weekend service
- Additional public and private providers
- Decreased call-in times
- Additional shopping service
- Additional recreation service
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)
- Out-of-county trips

#### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips

Based on the survey responses and committee discussions there does not appear to be any duplication of service in the county.

## 7.5 Transit Service Barriers

The staff, working with the transit committee and the survey responses, developed a list of barriers that prevent the needs from being addressed. These barriers are consistent across the rural counties in the region. The local agencies and governments have limited control over the barriers, which are often related to economic issues, personal choice decisions, and the nature of rural communities.

### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

The challenge of the transit agencies and local governments is to find ways around these barriers. The funding to address every need will never be available. The economics of providing transit service to a small number of dispersed clients will never appeal to a for-profit business. Innovative ideas will be required if the needs are to be met.

## 7.6 Strategies to Address Needs and Barriers

The staff, working with the transit committee, developed the following strategies. Several of the proposals are related to maintaining the current level of service. These were included because the existing services are addressing gaps that previously existed. The strategies are general so as not to preclude any future projects. Many of the strategies indicate that additional funding will be required for implementation. In some cases, the additional funding could be a reallocation of existing funds or programs. New funding streams may not always be needed.

### Strategies

- Maintain current transit service (**High**)
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts (**High**)
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) (**High**)
  - Nights
  - Weekends
  - Rural areas of the county
  - Additional service to reduce call-in times
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers (Additional funding required) (**Low**)
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)

- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source (**High**)
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources (**Medium**)
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) (**Medium**)

The list of strategies includes an implementation priority (High, Medium, Low) assigned by the transit committee. The priority is based on available resources, time, and feasibility. The priority assigned does not have a direct correlation to the amount of support or the amount of need. It merely reflects the existing reality based on the ranking criteria. If circumstances change, a low or medium priority strategy could be implemented before one that was ranked as a high priority.

## 8.0 Tuscaloosa County

### 8.1 Demographics and Geography

Based on a 2022 U.S. Census Bureau estimate, 234,387 people live in Tuscaloosa County. This is an increase of 7,351 from the number reported in the 2010 Census. According to the *2018-2022 American Community Survey*, there are 30,522 disabled people, 32,274 elderly individuals, and 36,862 people below the poverty line in the county. The population density of the county is 177 people per square mile.

Tuscaloosa County has a land area of 1,325 square miles. At its widest section, the county is 42 miles north-to-south and 45 miles east-to-west. Based on numbers provided by the Alabama Department of Transportation, there are 2,493 miles of roads in the county. The main north-south routes are US-43 and SR-69. The main east-west routes are I-20/59 and US-82.

In Tuscaloosa County, most of the population is concentrated in and around the Cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport. These cities are located in the central part of the county. The towns of Lake View, Brookwood, Vance, and Coaling in the eastern part of the county have smaller concentrations of population. The Town of Coker, west of Northport, also has a small concentration of population. Figures 7 and 8 depict these concentrations. These areas also contain the bulk of potential transit destinations including government offices, social service organizations, schools, medical facilities, and large employers. Figures 7 and 8 display potential transit destinations and transit system routes. In addition, Figures 7 and 8 includes concentrations of people who are disabled, over 65, and in poverty.

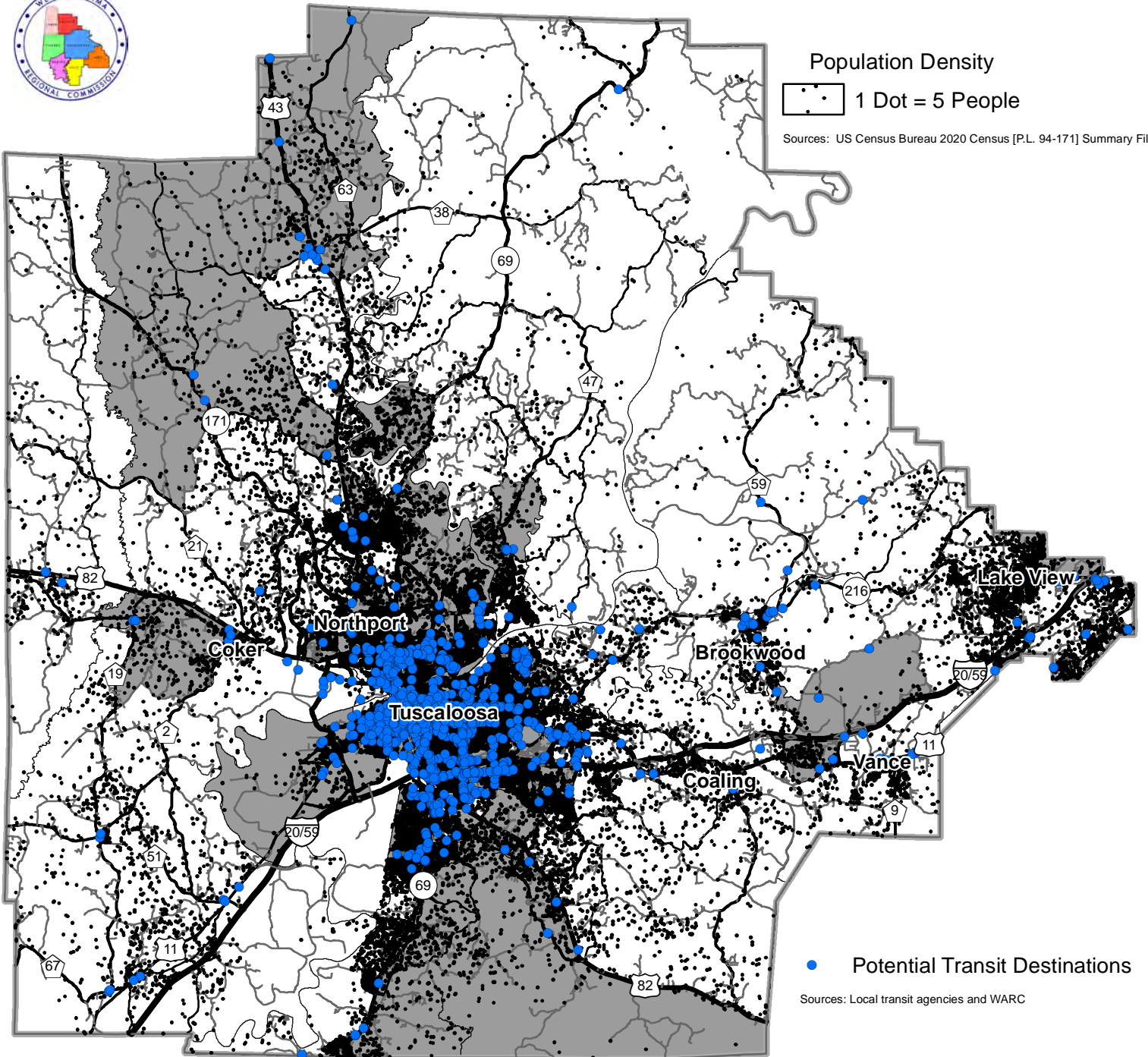
### 8.2 Employment

Based on figures from the *2018-2022 American Community Survey (ACS)*, in 2022 Tuscaloosa County had 117,033 people in the labor force. Of this number 110,684 were employed and 6,012 were unemployed. The 2022 average unemployment rate, 5.2 percent, was higher than the national and state average of 4.4 percent. Major employers in the county include the University of Alabama, Mercedes-Benz USA International, Inc., DCH Health System, Tuscaloosa County Schools, and Tuscaloosa City Schools. In Tuscaloosa County, there are hundreds of businesses that are considered entry-level employers. Most of the employers, including major and entry-level employers, are located within the municipal limits.

Based on information from the *2009-2013 American Community Survey*, 8 percent of the employed workforce in Tuscaloosa County commutes out of the county to their job. Of this group, 59 percent are employed in Jefferson County. The majority of the total workforce, 77 percent, lives and works in Tuscaloosa County. An additional 15 percent of the workforce commutes into Tuscaloosa County from another county.

# Tuscaloosa County

Figure 7

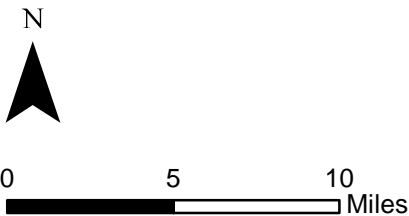


This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission 205 333-2990, February 2024. This map is not a survey product and should not be used for conveyance.

## Concentrations of People in Tuscaloosa County who are Disabled, Over 65, and in Poverty

- Above Average
- Below Average

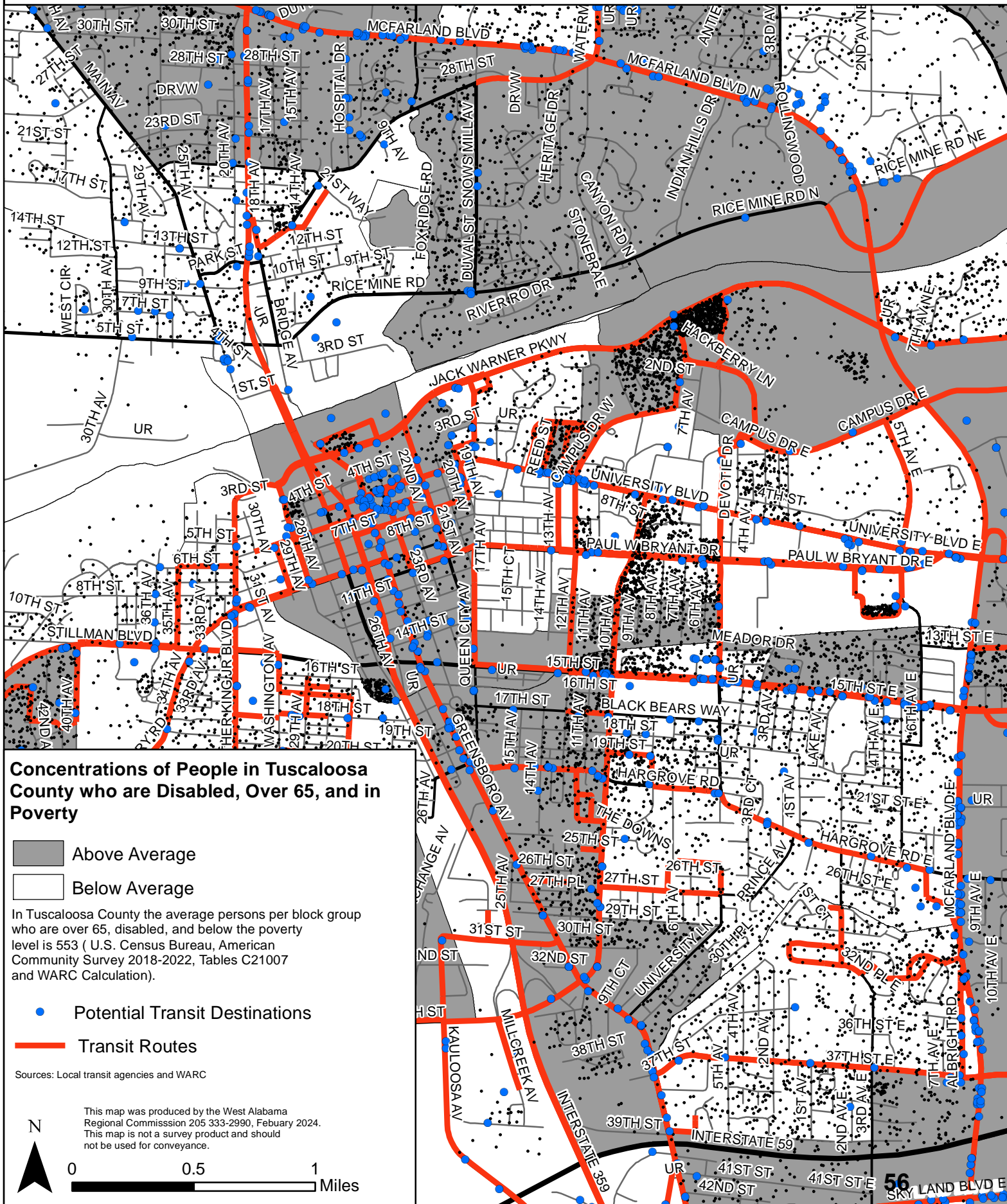
In Tuscaloosa County the average persons per block group who are over 65, disabled, and below the poverty level is 553 (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2018-2022, Table C21007, and WARC Calculation).





1 Dot = 5 People

Sources: US Census Bureau 2020 Census [P.L. 94-171] Summary File



### Concentrations of People in Tuscaloosa County who are Disabled, Over 65, and in Poverty

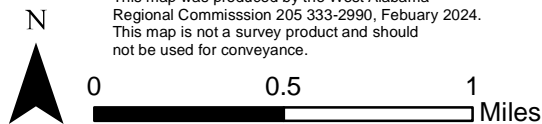
- Above Average
- Below Average

In Tuscaloosa County the average persons per block group who are over 65, disabled, and below the poverty level is 553 ( U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2018-2022, Tables C21007 and WARC Calculation).

- Potential Transit Destinations
- Transit Routes

Sources: Local transit agencies and WARC

This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission 205 333-2990, February 2024. This map is not a survey product and should not be used for conveyance.



### **8.3 Transit Resource Assessment**

This section provides a description of each agency or company that provides or purchases transit service in Tuscaloosa County. The agency descriptions are divided into public/non-profit and private. The public and non-profit agencies were grouped because the non-profits are generally funded by public agencies or governments. Descriptions of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding categories used by the public and non-profit agencies are included in Chapter 10.

#### **Public and Non-Profit Systems**

- **Alabama Department of Human Resources**

The Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) maintains an office in every county in Alabama. The DHR Family Assistance Division has an interagency agreement with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT). Through that agreement, ALDOT identifies and secures transportation vendors across the state, which transport eligible persons to work and work-related activities and DHR provides matching funds to reimburse ALDOT for a portion of the expense. In west Alabama, DHR contracts with the South Mobile Area Regional Transit (SMART) and HELP, Inc., to provide transportation services for its clients.

- **Alabama Department of Mental Health**

The service area for the Alabama Department of Mental Health - Region II Community Services program includes Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County. In west Alabama the agency contracts with the ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo, the Arc of Tuscaloosa, and West Alabama Public Transportation to provide transportation service for their clients.

- **Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind**

The Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) provides transportation services to people who have vision and/or hearing loss. The AIDB has a regional center in Tuscaloosa. Their main office is in Talladega. The AIDB Center in Tuscaloosa serves Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County.

- **Alabama Kidney Foundation**

The Alabama Kidney Foundation purchases transit service for clients in all 67 Alabama counties. Their clients are limited to kidney patients who make \$1,000 or less per month. The transit service is funded by state appropriations and private contributions. The Foundation utilizes numerous transit providers throughout the state. The Foundation also reimburses client family and friends who provide transportation. The transit program operates from 5:00 a.m. till 6:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The Foundation is located in Birmingham, Jefferson County. The Foundation indicated that it would like to provide service to individuals who are above the \$1,000 threshold but are not able to due to funding limitations. The Foundation also indicated that the lack of transit service in rural areas is a problem.

- **Alabama Medicaid Agency**

The Alabama Medicaid Agency offers non-emergency transit service to full-covered Medicaid beneficiaries for Medicaid covered medical appointments. The agency provides Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to its clients to purchase transit service. The agency requires that public transit services be used instead of for-profit companies if the service meets the needs of its clients. However, the EBT cards can be used for reimbursement of private vehicle use. This is the most common use of the Medicaid non-emergency transportation program in Alabama. Most of the service is associated with recurring medical needs such as dialysis and chemotherapy.

The Alabama Medicaid Agency does not contract with transit providers. The Agency does maintain a registry of licensed transit providers for its clients. Registered providers in west Alabama include HELP, Inc., Kid One, Northstar EMS, and West Alabama Public Transportation.

- **Arc of Tuscaloosa County**

The Arc of Tuscaloosa County provides transit services for adults with intellectual disabilities and other disabilities including physical and mental disabilities. The Arc office is located in the City of Tuscaloosa, and its service area is Tuscaloosa County. The agency serves individuals 21 and older. The Arc currently operates a fleet of 15 vehicles with three more planned, most of which were purchased with FTA Section 5310 funds.

The Arc offers day programs and an employment program. The Arc transportation services are provided daily, Monday through Friday, 249 days a year, for the clients attending day programs. This includes transportation to and from their homes to programs for community and independent skills training.

The Arc operates the 26 demand response routes from Monday through Friday. Between 6:00 a.m. and 1:00 or 2:00 p.m. transportation is provided for mobile crews, enclaves, and for travel to community sites for training. Once a week the Arc transports a work crew at 4:00 a.m. The Arc provides daily, random trips for employment, shopping, grooming, and volunteer activities. The Arc averages about 45,000 annual trips per year. The Arc drivers also serve as direct care providers for the agency clients.

- **Arts 'n Autism**

Arts 'n Autism is an after- school, early intervention, day, and summer camp program that provides services for individuals with autism in Tuscaloosa and surrounding counties. The program is housed in the City of Tuscaloosa, and its transportation area is primarily Tuscaloosa County. In the summer, vans are sometimes used for trips within a 100 miles radius of Tuscaloosa. In 2023, the program served 207 students in a new program BBD (Beyond the Blue Door) and ILEAP (both early intervention), After School (Pre-K-12), Scouting (3rd-9th



grades), LIFEE (Learning Independence for Education and Employment), and Summer Camps (ages 3-young adult). Arts 'n Autism operates two ALDOT buses and one ALDOT van purchased with 5317 funds and a privately donated SUV & van for the transportation services. Transportation is provided for after school pick-up from 16 area schools, weekly field trips/activities, job training, and college classes for LIFEE students. The vehicles operate 220 days per year, Monday through Friday 8:30-5:30 p.m. The program further contracts with the Tuscaloosa City Board of Education and utilizes Purchased Transportation through a ALDOT 5310 grant.

- **Crossing Points (University of Alabama)**

The Crossing Points Program provides post-secondary transition education to adults with intellectual disabilities. The program has a van that is used to transport participants to educational, employment, and recreational functions. The program is a collaborate effort between the University of Alabama and the Tuscaloosa City and County School Systems.

- **DCH Regional Medical Center**

The DCH Regional Medical Center is a publicly owned hospital in Tuscaloosa. The Center purchases transportation for clients on a limited basis. The Center maintains a contract with Alabama Sterling Limo-Cab. In addition, South Mobile Area Regional Transit (SMART) is an as-needed service provider for the Center.

- **Eagles' Wings, Inc.**

Eagles' Wings, Inc. (EWI) is a non-profit organization that provides day habilitation and residential services to people, 21 years of age and older, with cognitive, physical, or medical disabilities. The services offered at this time are Day Habilitation, Community Day Habilitation, Employment Small group, and Residential Services. Service is from 7:30 a.m. till 2:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. EWI operates six high top vans, one modified van and seven minivans purchased with FTA Section 5310 funds. EWI currently provides transportation services to 33 individuals. The individuals are transported to and from their homes or a designated pick-up location daily. Trips, including those to parks, gardens, scenic locations, and places of employment, are scheduled daily. Eight of the 33 individuals EWI serves live at Eagles' Pointe, the residential component of Eagles' Wings, Inc. Therefore, their transportation needs are geared toward personal choice, community experience, and community activities.

- **Easterseals West Alabama**

Easterseals West Alabama is located in Tuscaloosa and utilizes Section 5316 grants and funds from the funds from the United Way of West Alabama, Alabama Department of Human Resources, and Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services to provide transit service in Tuscaloosa County. The program provides work- or work-related trips, exclusively. To be eligible, clients must have income below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. The program uses three mini-vans, which are wheelchair accessible, to provide transit service. The program

operates from Monday through Friday, 4:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Annually, approximately 13,000 trips are provided by Easterseals.

- **FOCUS on Senior Citizens**

FOCUS on Senior Citizens of Tuscaloosa County, Inc. provides door-to-door transit service to elderly and disabled individuals ages 50 and above in Tuscaloosa County. FOCUS has a contract with the West Alabama Regional Commission Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to transport clients to four senior activity centers as well as provide transit service for medical, legal, social services appointments. FOCUS operates \*six vehicles that were purchased with FTA Section 5310 grants, and the agency provides an average of ~30,000 trips per year. The transportation office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

\*FOCUS has paid for 4 more vans, one dating back to 2022. They are still waiting to receive these 4 new 5310 grant vans.

- **Indian Rivers Behavioral Health**

Indian Rivers Behavioral Health (IRBH) serves mental health, substance abuse, and intellectually disabled clients by providing mental health treatment, life skills training and residential support. The agency is located in Tuscaloosa. Its service area includes Bibb, Pickens, and Tuscaloosa County. The agency provides transportation to its clients on a case-by-case basis and/or assistance with accessing public transit services. Generally, client-specific transportation is provided Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. However, Indian Rivers manages numerous residential facilities where transportation service is available to those individuals 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The agency serves over 6,000 people annually.

- **Kid One Transport System, Inc.**

Kid One Transport System, Inc. is a non-profit transit provider that serves numerous Alabama counties, including Tuscaloosa. Kid One provides medical trips for children, 19 and under, and expectant mothers. The agency generally operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. The Kid One office is located in Birmingham in Jefferson County. Kid One has utilized Section 5310 and 5317 funds in the past.

- **Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority**

The Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority is the designated Section 5307 agency in Tuscaloosa County. The Authority is located in the City of Tuscaloosa. Since the City of Tuscaloosa and the University of Alabama are the only local governments providing matching funds, the Authority only provides service within the city limits of Tuscaloosa.

The Authority operates seven fixed routes in the City of Tuscaloosa. The fixed route service operates from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The routes begin in the Tuscaloosa Central Business District (CBD) at the Intermodal

Facility, extend outward, and return to the CBD to form a series of loops. The Intermodal Facility is the only terminal for the fixed route system.

The Authority also maintains a demand response system for elderly and disabled individuals. The Authority takes requests for this service and schedules trips on a first-come-first-served basis. The service covers the City of Tuscaloosa portion of the Tuscaloosa Urban Area. The service is provided between the hours of 5:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Authority uses a fleet of handicapped accessible vans for this system.

The Authority has a contract to provide specialized transit service to clients of the Easter Seals West Alabama. The Authority also has a contract with the City of Tuscaloosa to provide transit service to a group of elderly and disabled individuals from a public housing development to an exercise and education program.

The Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority is the designated Section 5311 provider for Tuscaloosa County, but the Authority does not provide rural transit service because of the lack of financial support.

- **Tuscaloosa County Parks and Recreation Authority**

The Tuscaloosa County Parks and Recreation Authority (PARA) provides transit service to its recreation program participants. The service is limited to the days and times of the various program schedules. Some of the PARA vehicles are wheelchair accessible. The PARA drivers perform other tasks at the agency when they are not driving.

- **United Cerebral Palsy of West Alabama**

The United Cerebral Palsy of West Alabama (UCP) provides transit service to its clients with cerebral palsy and other disabilities. The clients include elderly and low-income individuals. UCP is located in Northport, and its service area includes all of the west Alabama counties. However, UCP only offers transit service in Tuscaloosa County. Its day-program transit service operates from 7:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The agency uses four vans that each has ten seats and two wheelchair spaces. The vans were purchased with FTA Section 5310 funds. UCP also utilizes FTA Section 5317 New Freedom grants matched with United Way of West Alabama funds. The UCP drivers serve as direct support professionals and are not available to drive for other agencies.

- **University of Alabama**

In 2007, the University of Alabama created the Crimson Ride transit system. The University started the system with the use of student fees. The University also received some FTA Section 5309 grants for capital purchases. The Crimson Ride transit system maintains eleven on-campus routes and eleven off-campus routes providing the campus area with 24-hour coverage when the University is

open. The eleven off-campus routes support twelve apartment complexes, operating from 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM, Monday through Friday, during the fall and spring semesters. The eleven on-campus routes operate from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM, Monday through Friday, during the fall and spring semesters. Based on ridership demand, five to two-night routes operate between 7:00 PM and 7:00 AM, Monday through Friday, with 24-hour operations on Saturday and Sunday during the fall and spring semesters. The system operates from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM, Monday through Friday, during the summer term. The Crimson Ride transit system operates a shopping shuttle on Sundays from 1 PM to 6:00 PM during the academic year. In addition to these routes, the University contracts with the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority to provide service from the Intermodal Center in downtown Tuscaloosa to the University campus. Riding the University Shuttle buses for students, faculty, staff, and visitors is free. Transdev operates the system under a university contract.

- **Veterans Administration Medical Center**

The Veterans Administration Medical Center (VA) provides transit service for its clients with mental health issues in Tuscaloosa County. The VA service operates from 5:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The program is limited to disabled veterans who need transportation to VA activities, job interviews, and job assignments. The VA purchases its vehicles from the GSA Fleet Service program using VA funds. The VA staff indicated that many of their clients use the fixed route system operated by the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority. However, the lack of night and weekend service by the Transit Authority creates problems.

- **West Alabama Area Agency on Aging**

The West Alabama Area Agency on Aging (AAA) serves senior citizens in west Alabama. In Tuscaloosa County, the AAA provides transportation to its senior centers through a contract with FOCUS on Senior Citizens.

- **Whatley Health Services, Inc.**

Whatley Health Services, Inc. is a non-profit community health center that provides primary health care services to medically underserved residents in west Alabama. The center has a van that is used to transport clients to appointments at the center. The transportation service is limited to twice per week per client.

#### Private Providers

- **A1 Taxi Service**

A1 Taxi Service serves Tuscaloosa County.

- **Ambassador Limousine Service, Inc.**

Ambassador Limousine Service, Inc. generally serves Tuscaloosa and Jefferson County. The company provides limousine service and has a limited ability to serve wheelchair clients.

- **Crown Limousine Service**

Crown Limousine Service generally serves Tuscaloosa and Jefferson County but will transport anywhere. The company has nine vehicles but cannot serve wheelchair clients. The company charges by the hour, with rates dependent on the vehicle used. The company has no contracts with other agencies at this time.

- **Dunn's Taxi**

Dunn's Taxi provides service in Tuscaloosa County.

- **E&C Taxi Service**

E&C Taxi Service provides demand response service in Greene, Hale, Tuscaloosa, and Jefferson County. The company currently serves Medicaid clients. E&C operates Monday through Saturday from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and on Saturday from 11:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. The company does not own a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

- **Greyhound Bus Line**

The Greyhound Bus line has four stops in the West Alabama region. These stops are not stand-alone bus stations but are generally housed with small businesses. The stops and associated businesses are listed below:

- Eutaw, gas station
- Greensboro, gas station
- Moundville, community center
- Tuscaloosa, gas station

The stops offer limited service and tickets can only be purchased at the Tuscaloosa location.

- **Groome Transportation**

At this time, we are only running trips to Tuscaloosa during times of heavy travel. Periods of service will focus on students traveling to and from school, school breaks, and holiday periods. We hope to provide daily service, so check back with us for updates.

PEAK DATES:

Jan 1 - 11, Mar 8 - 11, Mar 15 - 17, May 3 - 5, Aug 10 - 24, Oct 30 - Nov 3, Nov 22 - 24, Nov 29 - 1, Dec 13 - 15

- **Lee's Taxi**

Lee's Taxi serves Tuscaloosa County.

- **Life Care Ambulance**

Life Care Ambulance serves Tuscaloosa County. The company has a contract with the VA Medical Center.

- **Lyft**  
 Lyft is a smartphone-based taxi company that provides service in Tuscaloosa County. With the Lyft App, anyone can summon a driver to their location. Riders have the option to choose the type of vehicle. The cost is based on the type of vehicle, miles driven, and time. The minimum fare is \$4.20, and the maximum is \$200. Payment is through the Lyft App with charges to a debit or credit card.
- **Moundville Health and Rehab**  
 The Moundville Health and Rehab office is located in Moundville. Its service area includes Hale and Tuscaloosa County. The MHR purchases transit service from private providers. The MHR uses Medicaid to fund its transit purchases.
- **Northstar EMS**  
 Northstar EMS serves Fayette, Greene, Hale, Tuscaloosa, Pickens, and Jefferson County. The company provides emergency and non-emergency trips. The company operates Monday through Saturday, 7:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. The company has contracts with several nursing homes and medical facilities in the area. This company does not provide wheelchair service. This company is on the Alabama Medicaid transportation provider registry.
- **Radio Cab**  
 Radio Cab generally serves Tuscaloosa and Jefferson County. The company operates year-round, 24 hours a day. The company has five to six vehicles and eight to 10 drivers. The company provides limited wheelchair service. Radio Cab has a contract through the Veterans Administration.
- **RushHour Transit**  
 RushHour Transit operates out of Tuscaloosa and provides service to all six counties in the west Alabama region and parts of Jefferson County. The company serves individuals, private schools, community service organizations, and employment staffing companies. The company has two transit vehicles, but currently does not offer wheelchair transportation.
- **South Mobile Area Regional Transit**  
 South Mobile Area Regional Transit (SMART) is a private provider operating in Bibb County. The company provides on-demand transportation services within a 200-mile radius of the county with trips routinely made to Tuscaloosa, Shelby, Perry, and Jefferson County. SMART operates 24 hours a day, year-round and has two wheelchair accessible buses, one regular van, and two cars. The company charges by the mile. In addition, the company is an as-needed service provider for the DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa.

- **Sterling Limo**  
Sterling Limo provides taxi service to the Tuscaloosa area. The company maintains a contract with DCH Regional Medical Center. The company owns three taxis and three limousines. The company does not serve wheelchair clients.
- **Tuscaloosa Charter Service**  
Tuscaloosa Charter Service provides service throughout Alabama. The company can serve wheelchair clients. The company has a contract with the Arts 'n Autism program. Tuscaloosa Charter owns 11 vehicles.
- **Uber**  
Uber, a smartphone-based taxi company, provides service in Tuscaloosa County. With the Uber App, anyone can summon a driver to their location. Riders have the option to choose the type of vehicle. Payment is through the Uber App with charges to a debit or credit card. Prices vary based on the current demand and driver availability.

### **Current Coordination Efforts**

- In Tuscaloosa County, current coordination efforts include utilization of existing providers, contracts, and sharing of transit resources. These efforts address a previously identified transit gap. In many cases, an agency that needs transportation for its clients will use an existing provider rather than start a transit system. The transit purchasing agency can simply direct its clients to the providers or can enter into a contract with the provider. These mutually beneficial arrangements allow agencies that need transportation for their clients to take advantage of existing transit services. The transit purchasing agencies save money and time by using the existing providers. The providers gain revenue to support their operations.

### Tuscaloosa County Contracts

- Alabama Department of Human Resources contracts with South Mobile Area Regional Transit company
- Alabama Department of Mental Health contracts with the Arc of Tuscaloosa
- Alabama Kidney Foundation contracts with Northstar EMS
- Arts 'n Autism contracts with Tuscaloosa Charter Service and the Tuscaloosa City School Board
- City of Tuscaloosa contracts with the Transit Authority
- DCH Regional Medical Center contracts with Alabama Sterling Limo-Cab
- Moundville Health and Rehab contracts with Northstar EMS
- Veterans Administration Medical Center contracts with Life Care Ambulance
- West Alabama AAA contracts with FOCUS

- The Arc of Tuscaloosa, FOCUS on Senior Citizens, and the United Cerebral Palsy of West Alabama have an agreement to share vehicles for special events and when an agency has a vehicle out of service. The agreement also includes the YMCA, the Boy Scouts, the Tuscaloosa County PARA, a local mental health association, the Cancer Society, and the American Heart Association.
- As part of a cooperative agreement, the United Cerebral Palsy of West Alabama transports clients daily for Arts 'n Autism.
- The 2008 update of this plan recommended that a centralized routing project be undertaken. The project was to feature a calling center that would allow potential transit clients in Tuscaloosa County to make one telephone call to schedule a trip regardless of who will provide the trip. The call center would then determine the best agency to provide the trip and make the necessary arrangements to facilitate the trip. The Easter Seals agency volunteered to lead the project with ARC, UCP, FOCUS, and the Transit Authority agreeing to participate.

During the fall of 2009, Easter Seals performed a two-week simulation of the proposed project. Easter Seals used their licensed routing software and trip logs from all of the participating transit agencies to run the simulation. The simulation revealed that the project had the potential to reduce the use of two transit vehicles on most days but that the cost to implement and operate the program, including additional software licenses and personnel, would outweigh any cost savings. The use of counselors as drivers at several of the transit agencies limited the possible coordination opportunities.

## **8.4 Transit Needs**

Figures 7 and 8 display the census block groups that have a higher than average population of disabled, elderly, and poor. These block groups generally cover the areas north and west of Northport, the eastern tip of the county, the area along SR-216, and most the southern part of the county. The figures also locate potential transit destinations. As expected, most of the destinations are in the Cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport and to a lesser extent the Towns of Brookwood, Vance, and Lake View.

The transit routes of the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority, the Arc of Tuscaloosa County, the University of Alabama, Eagles Wings, and United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) are also included on Figures 7 and 8. The Transit Authority and UCP routes generally cover the City of Tuscaloosa south of the Black Warrior River. The University routes are confined to the campus. The Arc and Eagles Wings routes cover the Cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport and in some cases extend into the rural part of the county. These routes serve the highlighted block groups in the urbanized area of the county. However, the highlighted block groups in the rural parts of the county are not covered by the existing routes.

Surveys were provided to transit providers, social service organizations, and transit riders during January 2024. The staff and transit committee used the survey responses



to develop a list of needs in the county. In March 2024, the transit committee verified these needs.

#### Needs Not Currently Addressed

- Night service
- Weekend service
- Holiday service
- Decreased fixed route headways
- Additional public and private providers
- City of Northport service
- Service to rural areas of the county including Brookwood, Holt, Peterson, Vance, Lake Tuscaloosa area, Duncanville, Taylorville, and McCalla
- Out-of-county service including Jefferson County and Bibb County
- Additional service for shopping, medical appointments, recreational activities, and church
- Decreased call-in times
- Decreased wait times
- Maintaining schedules (pick-up and drop-off times) demand response service and fixed routes
- Vehicles that will accommodate larger people
- Additional service from the UA campus to other areas of the community
- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) projects, including telephone notification
- Additional accessible vehicles
- Alternative fuel options
- Additional fixed route bus stop shelters
- Education of general public (services available, how to use, application process, operations times, costs, contact information)

#### Needs Met or Partially Met with Current Service

- Daytime, Monday through Friday Service
  - Medical trips
  - Work trips
  - Vocational training trips
  - Shopping trips
  - Recreation trips
  - Local trips
  - Out-of-county trips
  - Service for senior citizens who are less than 60 years old

The Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority, the Arc of Tuscaloosa, Easter Seals West Alabama, FOCUS on Senior Citizens, and United Cerebral Palsy of West Alabama indicated that there is some duplication of transit service in the county. All of the agencies have agreed to work together to reduce the duplication of services when economically feasible.

## 8.5 Transit Service Barriers

The staff, working with the transit committee and the survey responses, developed a list of barriers that prevent the needs from being addressed. The local agencies and governments have limited control over the barriers, which are often related to economic issues, personal choice decisions, and the nature of rural communities.

### Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Lack of financial support by the City of Northport
- Lack of financial support by Tuscaloosa County
- Dispersed population
- Large land area
- Training required to manage some clients
- Aides required for some clients
- Drivers sometimes serve as social workers and are not available to drive for other agencies

The challenge of the transit agencies and local governments is to find ways around these barriers. The funding to address every need will never be available. The economics of providing transit service to a small number of dispersed clients will never appeal to a for-profit business. Innovative ideas will be required if the needs are to be met.

## 8.6 Strategies to Address Needs and Barriers

The staff, working with the transit committee, developed the following strategies. Several of the proposals are related to maintaining the current level of service. These were included because the existing services are addressing gaps that previously existed. The strategies are general so as not to preclude any future projects. Many of the strategies indicate that additional funding will be required for implementation. In some cases, the additional funding could be a reallocation of existing funds or programs. New funding streams may not always be needed.

### Strategies

- Maintain current transit service (**High**)
- Maintain current transit contracts and coordination efforts (**High**)
- Expand current transit service (Additional funding required) (**High**)
  - Nights
  - Weekends
  - Holidays
  - Reduce fixed route headways
  - City of Northport
  - Rural areas of the county including Brookwood, Holt, Peterson, Vance, Lake Tuscaloosa area, Duncanville, Taylorville, and McCalla,
  - Inter-county
  - Shopping, recreation, and church

- Additional service to reduce call-times, wait times, and schedule delays
- Additional service for senior citizens
- Purchase or modify vehicles to accommodate larger people
- Additional service from the UA campus to other areas of the community
- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) projects
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) (**Medium**)
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source (**High**)
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources (**High**)
- Support/Establish alternative fuel options for existing and future transit providers (**Medium**)
- Develop education/outreach programs (Additional funding may be required) (**Medium**)

The list of strategies includes an implementation priority (High, Medium, Low) assigned by the transit committee. The priority is based on available resources, time, and feasibility. The priority assigned does not have a direct correlation to the amount of support or the amount of need. It merely reflects the existing reality based on the ranking criteria. If circumstances change, a low or medium priority strategy could be implemented before one that was ranked as a high priority.

## 9.0 West Alabama Region

### 9.1 Demographics and Geography

Based on a 2022 U.S. Census Bureau estimate, 325,937 people live in the west Alabama region. This is an increase of 4,677 from the number reported in the 2020 Census. According to the *2018-2022 American Community Survey*, there are 51,411 disabled people, 50,378 elderly individuals, and 56,794 people below the poverty line in the region. The population density of the region is 61 people per square mile.

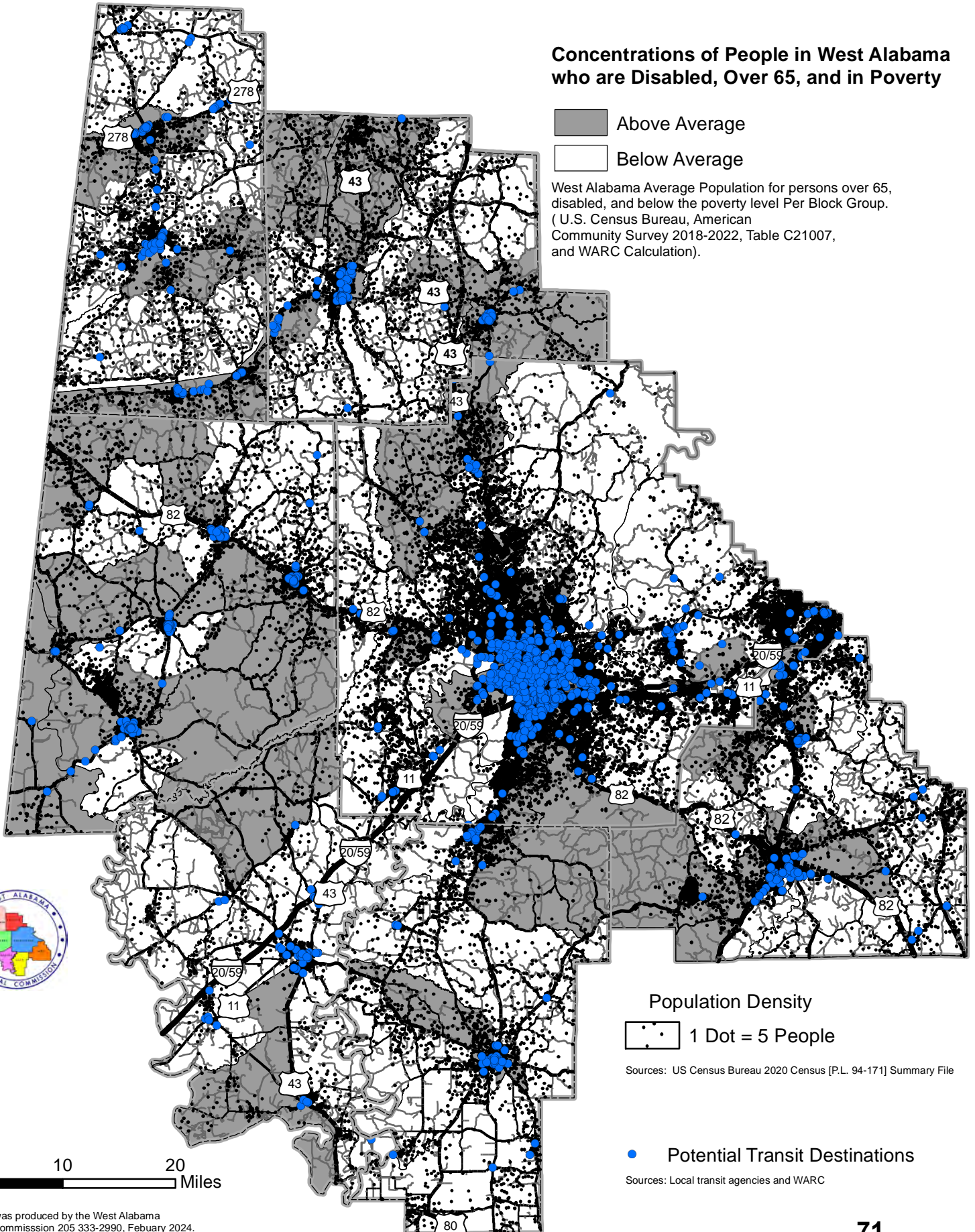
The region has a land area of 5,352 square miles. At its widest section, the region is 100 miles north-to-south and 85 miles east-to-west. Based on numbers provided by the Alabama Department of Transportation, there are 8,304 miles of roads in the region. The main north-south routes are SR-17, US-43, SR-69, and SR-5. The main east-west routes are SR-18, US-82, and I-20/59.

The population of the region is concentrated in the Cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport in Tuscaloosa County. Outside of these communities, there are 22 municipalities where the population is concentrated, but at lower levels. These areas are located along the major roads that cross the region. Figure 9 depicts these concentrations. These areas also contain the bulk of potential transit destinations including government offices, social service organizations, schools, medical facilities, and large employers. Figure 9 displays potential transit destinations and transit system routes. In addition, Figure 9 includes concentrations of people who are disabled, over 65, and in poverty.

### 9.2 Employment

Based on figures from the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations, in 2022 the region had 154,438 people in the labor force. Of this number 145,336 were employed and 8,703 were unemployed. The 2022 average unemployment rate in west Alabama was 4.4 percent, which matched the national and state average. Major employers are concentrated in Tuscaloosa County. However, each county has at least a few businesses that employ more than 50 people. In the region, there are hundreds of businesses that are considered entry-level employers. Most of the employers, including major and entry-level employers, are located within the municipal limits.

Based on information from the *2009-2013 American Community Survey*, 18 percent of the workforce in the region commutes out of their home county to their job. About 67 percent of the total workforce live and work in their home county. An additional 15 percent of the workers commute into one of the counties in the region. Tuscaloosa County attracts thousands of workers from Bibb, Fayette, Hale, Jefferson, and Pickens County. Thousands of workers also commute from Bibb and Tuscaloosa County to Jefferson County every day. During this time frame, Lamar and Pickens County had almost 1,800 people travel to Mississippi for work.



0 10 20 Miles

This map was produced by the West Alabama Regional Commission 205 333-2990, February 2024. This map is not a survey product and should not be used for conveyance.

### 9.3 Transit Resource Assessment

This section includes a list of each agency or company that provides or purchases transit service in West Alabama County. The lists are divided into private-for-profit and public or non-profit. The public and non-profit agencies were grouped because the non-profits are generally funded by public agencies or governments. Descriptions of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding categories used by the public and non-profit agencies are included in Chapter 10.

#### Private For-Profit Companies that Provide or Purchase Transit Service in West Alabama

Agency Name	Type of Transit Agency	West Alabama Counties Served
A1 Taxi Service	Provider	Tuscaloosa
Ambassador Limousine Service	Provider	Tuscaloosa
Arbor Woods Health and Rehab	Provider & Purchaser	Pickens
Colonial Haven Care and Rehabilitation Center	Purchaser	Hale
Crown Limousine	Provider	Tuscaloosa
CV Transerv	Provider	Bibb
Dunn's Taxi	Provider	Tuscaloosa
E&C Taxi Service - Formerly E&C Transport	Provider	Greene, Hale, Pickens, Tuscaloosa
Fayette County Nursing Home	Purchaser	Fayette
Generations of Vernon	Provider	Fayette, Lamar
Greene County Ambulance Service	Provider	Greene
Greene County Nursing Home/Medical Center	Provider & Purchaser	Greene
Greyhound Bus Lines	Provider	Greene, Hale, Tuscaloosa
Hale County EMS	Provider	Hale
Lee's Taxi	Provider	Tuscaloosa
Life Care Ambulance	Provider	Tuscaloosa
Lyft	Provider	Tuscaloosa
Moundville Health and Rehab	Purchaser	Hale, Tuscaloosa
Northstar EMS	Provider	Fayette, Greene, Hale, Pickens, Tuscaloosa
Radio Cab	Provider	Tuscaloosa
REACH	Purchaser	Pickens
RushHour Transit	Provider	Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, Tuscaloosa
Scuttle Shuttle	Provider	Tuscaloosa
South Mobile Area Regional Transit (SMART)	Provider	Bibb, Tuscaloosa
Sterling Limo, Formerly Alabama Sterling Limo-Cab	Provider	Tuscaloosa
Tuscaloosa Charter Service	Provider	Tuscaloosa
Uber	Provider	Tuscaloosa

**Public Agencies and Non-Profit Companies  
that Provide or Purchase Transit Service in West Alabama**

Agency Name	Type of Transit Agency	West Alabama Counties Served
Alabama Department of Human Resources	Purchaser	Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, Tuscaloosa
Alabama Department of Mental Health, Region II Community Services	Purchaser	Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, Tuscaloosa
Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (Tuscaloosa Regional Center)	Provider & Purchaser	Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, Tuscaloosa
Alabama Kidney Foundation	Provider	Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, Tuscaloosa
Alabama Medicaid Agency	Purchaser	Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, Tuscaloosa
Am-Serv	Provider	Bibb
ARC of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo, Inc.	Provider	Fayette, Lamar
ARC of Tuscaloosa County	Provider	Tuscaloosa
Arts n' Autism	Provider & Purchaser	Tuscaloosa
Bibb County Department of Human Resources	Purchaser	Bibb
Cahaba Medical Care Foundation	Purchaser	Bibb
Community Service Programs of West Alabama	Purchaser	Greene, Hale
Crossing Points (University of Alabama)	Provider	Tuscaloosa
DCH Medical Center	Purchaser	Tuscaloosa
Eagles Wings	Provider & Purchaser	Tuscaloosa
Easter Seals West Alabama	Provider & Purchaser	Tuscaloosa
Fayette County Aging	Provider	Fayette
FOCUS on Senior Citizens of Tuscaloosa County	Provider	Tuscaloosa
Greene County Commission (Senior Centers)	Provider	Greene
HELP Inc.	Provider	Pickens
Indian Rivers Mental Health	Provider & Purchaser	Bibb, Pickens, Tuscaloosa
Kid One Transport System, Inc.	Provider	Greene, Tuscaloosa
Northwest Alabama Mental Health Center	Provider	Fayette, Lamar
RSVP of Tuscaloosa and Hale County (FOCUS)	Provider	Hale, Tuscaloosa
Tuscaloosa County Parking & Transit Authority	Provider	Tuscaloosa
Tuscaloosa County Parks and Recreation	Provider	Tuscaloosa
United Cerebral Palsy of West Alabama	Provider	Tuscaloosa
University of Alabama	Provider	Tuscaloosa
Veterans Administration Medical Center (Tuscaloosa)	Provider	Tuscaloosa
West Alabama Area Agency on Aging	Purchaser	Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, Pickens, Tuscaloosa
West Alabama Mental Health Center	Purchaser	Greene, Hale
West Alabama Public Transportation (West Alabama Health Services, Inc.)	Provider	Bibb, Greene, Hale
Whatley Health Services, Inc.	Provider	Tuscaloosa

Please see the appropriate county chapter for a description of the agencies.

## **Current Coordination Efforts**

- Currently, there are no regional coordination efforts in west Alabama.

## **9.4 Transit Needs**

In west Alabama, there are limited inter-county transportation options. A reliable method to transport people from the rural west Alabama counties to Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, Selma, Meridian, Mississippi, or other economic hubs is needed. This is especially true in Fayette, Lamar, and Pickens County. The hub communities offer national travel options (air, rail, and bus), employment opportunities, medical facilities, educational institutions, shopping, and recreation. Rural residents have to travel to these hubs for at least some of their needs.

West Alabama Public Transportation provides service from Bibb to Tuscaloosa and from Greene and Hale to the Selma. However, the other rural counties do not have access to a similar service. A public or private service could address this need.

The Greyhound Bus Line operates four stops in the West Alabama region (Greene, Hale, and Tuscaloosa County) and has facilities in Birmingham and Selma. Amtrak has stations in Tuscaloosa, Birmingham, and Meridian, Mississippi. The closest commercial air service is located in Birmingham, Meridian, and Columbus, Mississippi.

Some of the transit gaps reviewed in the previous chapters could be addressed by eliminating or reducing the Alabama Public Service Commission regulation that prevents publicly funded systems from picking up riders in counties they pass through because they are not the designated transit provider for that county. Many of the rural transit providers transport their clients to appointments in larger communities such as Tuscaloosa. This regulation denies transit service to potential clients that live in unserved areas of counties, such as rural Tuscaloosa County. If this rule could be changed some of the identified transit gaps could be addressed.

### Needs Not Currently Addressed or Only Partially Addressed

- Additional inter-county service to connect rural residents with national bus service, Amtrak service, commercial air service, jobs, medical facilities, shopping opportunities, recreation facilities, education, and training opportunities; including west Alabama and out-of-region travel

## **9.5 Transit Service Barriers**

The staff, working with the transit committee and the survey responses, developed a list of barriers that prevent the needs from being addressed. These barriers are consistent across the rural counties in the region. The local agencies and governments have limited control over the barriers, which are often related to economic issues, personal choice decisions, and the nature of rural communities.



## Barriers

- Lack of funding (local, state, federal, private)
- Small client base limits opportunities for profits
- Cost of for-profit service
- Dispersed population
- Alabama Public Service Commission service area restrictions

The challenge of the transit agencies and local governments is to find ways around these barriers. The funding to address every need will never be available. The economics of providing transit service to a small number of dispersed clients will never appeal to a for-profit business. Innovative ideas will be required if the needs are to be met.

## **9.6 Strategies to Address Needs and Barriers**

The staff, working with the transit committee, developed the following strategies. Several of the proposals are related to maintaining the current level of service. These were included because the existing services are addressing gaps that previously existed. The strategies are general so as not to preclude any future projects. Many of the strategies indicate that additional funding will be required for implementation. In some cases, the additional funding could be a reallocation of existing funds or programs. New funding streams may not always be needed.

## Strategies

- Maintain current inter-county transit service in Bibb, Greene, Hale County **(High)**
- Add inter-county transit service (Additional funding required) **(High)**
- Support/Establish additional transportation providers, where needed (Additional funding required) **(Medium)**
- Support/Establish alternate transit options where transit service is not available or cost prohibitive, such as car/vanpools and transportation stipends (Additional funding required) **(Medium)**
- Support efforts to establish a state transit funding source **(High)**
- Support efforts to combine and/or leverage funding sources **(Medium)**
- Support efforts to modify the Alabama Public Service Commission service area restrictions **(High)**

The list of strategies includes an implementation priority (High, Medium, Low) assigned by the transit committee. The priority is based on available resources, time, and feasibility. The priority assigned does not have a direct correlation to the amount of support or the amount of need. It merely reflects the existing reality based on the ranking criteria. If circumstances change, a low or medium priority strategy could be implemented before one that was ranked as a high priority.

# 10.0 Funding Opportunities

This chapter provides a basic description of common transit funding programs. These programs provide most of the transit funding in west Alabama and are likely to be the prime sources for future transit service. Each program and sub-program feature a unique set of restrictions that hinder cooperation and coordination. However, without the programs very few, if any, public transit options would be available.

## 10.1 Federal

### Administration on Aging Congregate Nutrition Services

- The Administration on Aging Congregate Nutrition Services is restricted to elderly individuals. Locally, it is administered by the Area Agency on Aging Department at the West Alabama Regional Commission. The program provides transit service to local nutrition centers.

### Federal Transit Administration

Relevant Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding categories are listed below with a brief description.

- **Section 5307 (Urban Area)**

This FTA program provides funding to census designated urbanized areas with a population of 50,000 or more. These funds are intended to be used for general public transit service (no qualifications are placed on riders). However, specialized transit service can be provided with these funds to address the needs of persons with disabilities that would involve rider qualifications.

These funds can be used for planning, capital purchases, and operating expenses. Under the *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act* (Map-21), job access and reverse commute projects are also eligible activities. Planning and capital projects generally require a 20 percent local match. Operating funds require a 50 percent local match.

There is only one urbanized area in west Alabama. It encompasses the Cities of Northport and Tuscaloosa. The Section 5307 funds that are dedicated to the Tuscaloosa Urbanized Area are distributed by the Federal Transit Administration directly to the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority, the designated recipient.

- **Section 5310 (Formula Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities)**

This FTA program is intended to address the transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities. In Alabama, the funding is distributed to the Alabama Department of Transportation who then distributes the funds based on a competitive grant program. The funds are generally limited to capital purchases, which require a 20 percent local match. MAP-21 combined the

Section 5317 (New Freedom) program with the 5310 program. Eligible 5317-type projects now can be funded with this program.

- **Section 5311 (Non-urbanized Area)**

This FTA program provides funding for areas with a population fewer than 50,000. These funds are intended to be used for general public transit service (no qualifications are placed on riders). In Alabama, the funding is distributed to the Alabama Department of Transportation who then distributes the funds based on a competitive grant program.

The funds may be used for capital purchases, operating expenses, and administrative costs. Under Map-21, job access and reverse commute projects are also eligible activities. The local matching requirements are generally 20 percent for capital and administrative expenses and 50 percent for operating expenses. Government agencies, transit operators, and non-profit agencies are eligible recipients.

- **Section 5316 (Job Access and Reverse Commute)**

Under MAP-21 this program was combined with the 5307 and 5311 programs. However, Alabama has not used all of the funds made available under the previous transportation bill. The program will remain open until the remaining funds are exhausted.

The purpose of this FTA program is to provide job-related transportation services to welfare recipients, low-income individuals, and reverse commuters. In Alabama, the funding is distributed to the Alabama Department of Department of Transportation (ALDOT) who then distributes the funds based on a competitive grant program. Eligible program charges include planning, capital purchases, operating expenses, and administrative costs. The local matching requirements are generally 20 percent for planning, 20 percent for capital projects, and 50 percent for operating expenses.

- **Section 5317 (New Freedom)**

Under MAP-21 this program was combined with the 5310 program. However, Alabama has not used all of the funds made available under the previous transportation bill. The program will remain open until the remaining funds are exhausted.

The purpose of this FTA program is to provide additional transportation options to persons with disabilities. In Alabama, the funding is distributed to the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) who then distributes the funds based on a competitive grant program. The funds may be used for planning, capital purchases, operating expenses, and administrative costs. The local matching requirements are generally 20 percent for planning, 20 percent for capital projects, and 50 percent for operating expenses.

- **Section 5339 (Bus and Bus Facilities)**

The 5339 program provides capital funding for new and replacement buses, related equipment, and facilities. The funds are limited to capital purchases and generally require a 20 percent local match. Designated recipients, sub-recipients, and states are eligible for these funds. This program had previously been labeled Section 5309.

### **Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation Program**

- The Medicaid Non-Emergency Transportation Program is limited to full-covered Medicaid beneficiaries. Transit service is restricted to Medicaid covered medical appointments. The program is managed by the Alabama Medicaid Agency. Clients use Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to retrieve funds. The program allows the use of public or private transportation options.

### **Medicaid Waiver Program**

- The Medicaid Waiver Program is limited to non-institutionalized individuals three and older who have been diagnosed with intellectual disabilities or with related conditions. The program is focused on providing personal care transportation, day habilitation service, and residential habilitation service. This program is managed by the by the Alabama Medicaid Agency.

## **10.2 State**

Alabama is one of a few states that do not provide any funding for transit service. State law prevents fuel taxes from being used for anything except for road maintenance or construction. In addition, the bulk of the state general funds are earmarked for specific programs.

## **10.3 Local**

The funding supplied by the local sources is generally used to match the federal grants reviewed in this chapter. Of the 44 local governments in the west Alabama region only four support transit service in their community. In many cases, the local transit providers could not survive without the social service contracts.

- **Fayette County Commission**

The Fayette County Commission provides local matching funds to the Fayette County Aging Program.

- **Greene County Commission**

The Greene County Commission provides local matching funds and in-kind services to provide transportation to the Greene County AAA nutrition centers.

- **Pickens County Commission**

The Pickens County commission provides local matching funds to HELP, Inc.

- **City of Tuscaloosa**  
The City of Tuscaloosa provides local matching funds to the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority. The City also provides funds to numerous non-profits that provide transit service.
- **United Way of West Alabama**  
The United Way of West Alabama provides funds to the ARC of Tuscaloosa County, Arts 'n Autism, Easter Seals West Alabama, FOCUS on Senior Citizens, and United Cerebral Palsy of West Alabama. In some cases, the funds may not be used for transportation services.
- **University of Alabama**  
The University of Alabama uses student fees to operate the campus transit system, Crimson Ride. In the past, student fees have also been used to match FTA Section 5309 Capital Grants. The grants were used to build parking decks and bus stops. The University also provides matching funds to the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority for the University Shuttle route.
- **Contracts with Social Service Agencies**  
Many of the transit providers in the region maintain contracts with social service agencies. The contracts ensure that the clients of the social service agency are provided transportation. The contracts also eliminate the need for the social service agency to develop or expand a transit program. In addition, the arrangement provides a local match for federal grants that are utilized by the transit provider.

## 11.0 Continuing Efforts

After the adoption of this plan, the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and West Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) will monitor transit issues in the region to determine if this plan needs to be modified. Changes to existing transit conditions could require the addition, deletion, or re-prioritization of strategies or projects. Any necessary adjustments to the plan can be accomplished through amendments adopted by the Policy Committees of the MPO and RPO. The joint MPO and RPO transit committee, which helped develop this plan, will meet as needed to assist in these efforts and to facilitate the implementation of the identified strategies.

The committees of the MPO and RPO will continue to meet on a regular basis. The MPO committees meet every other month, and the RPO committees meet once per quarter. The Section 5307 and 5311 providers in the region are voting members on the MPO and RPO technical coordination committees. At the meetings the committees discuss various transportation issues, usually focusing on federally funded projects, including transit programs.

Based on the current ALDOT contract, a summary report for this plan will be prepared in 2025 and 2026. If the federal planning requirements continue past 2027 and funds are available, the plan will likely be revised in 2028.