Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP)

July 2024

Prepared by

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WHAT TRANSPORTATION CAN BE.

HOCTC Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP)

Prepared for:

HOCTC
July 2024

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Section 1: Introduction and Policy Overview

This report documents the 2024 Herkimer-Oneida County Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) developed by the Herkimer-Oneida County Transportation Council (HOCTC), which is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for both Herkimer and Oneida Counties.

Report Organization

The report is organized into the following chapters:

Section 1 provides background information and an overview of the purpose and goals of the plan.

Section 2 provides an inventory of current transportation services in the region, focusing on public transit and human service transportation providers, who were key participants in the coordinated transportation planning process.

Section 3 assesses transportation needs in the region by examining current demographics and stakeholder feedback. It includes quantitative data (U.S. Census and American Community Survey) and qualitative data (input on needs from outreach participants and agency interviews).

Section 4 analyzes the supply and demand for transportation in the area to identify needs. The needs are then organized into actionable items and described.

Section 5 presents potential strategies to address each identified need and documents the prioritization process undertaken with stakeholders.

Section 6 includes the final recommendations and implementation plan.

Appendix A lists the members of the Transportation Coordination Committee (TCC) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Appendix B includes the presentation materials and meeting minutes from the TAC meetings.

Appendix C includes the Community Survey—Summary Statistics and Findings Technical Memorandum.

Appendix D includes the summary meeting minutes from the Agency Interviews.

Background

The HOCTC HSTP was developed to address the needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors, low-income populations, and other Herkimer-Oneida County residents with enhanced mobility needs. As a recipient of funding under the Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) Program, this document is required as a means of strategy development and prioritization that identifies the needs of those target populations within both Herkimer and Oneida Counties. This requirement was put forth under the Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU), signed into law on August 10, 2005, and re-authorized under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) on November 15, 2021. The requirements for procedures and spending under the Section 5310 Program have remained the same since the publication of the most recent circulars.

The Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program (5310) is a federal grant program overseen by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to improve mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities. The 5310 program requires funding recipients to develop an HSTP with human services transportation operators and clients. To be eligible for funding, projects must be directly included in the Coordinated Plan or must address a need or strategy included in the plan.

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) administers the 5310 program in New York. Based on the size of the focus populations in those communities, it allocates funding to large (over 200,000 people), small (50,000-200,000 people) urbanized areas, and rural areas (fewer than 50,000 people).

The 5310 program provides capital and operating funds for several expenses, further divided into "traditional" or "enhanced" projects. Eligible project types and the category for each are:

- Public transportation projects are planned, designed, and carried out to meet the unique needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when traditional public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable.
- Public transportation projects that exceed the requirements of Americans with
- Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.)—enhanced.
- Public transportation projects that improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance on complementary paratransit—enhanced.
- Alternatives to public transportation projects that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities with transportation—enhanced.

A minimum of 55% of 5310 funds must be spent on traditional projects, and up to 45% can be used for enhanced projects. The NYSDOT 5310 grant application further categorizes the activities into vehicle purchases, other capital purchases, mobility management, and operating assistance. Table 1 provides more information about the eligible projects within each category.

Table 1. *Project Type Summary*

Project Type(s)	Category	Eligible Activities
Vehicle purchase Other capital purchase	Traditional or enhanced	Purchase buses from NYS OGS adult bus contract
		Benches, shelters, & passenger amenities
		Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) planning and technology such as automatic vehicle location system (AVL), mobile data terminals (MDT), and/or a dispatch system
		Other vehicle types not on OGS adult bus contract to support shared-ride services
		Radio equipment
		Support facilities and equipment
		Vehicle rehabilitation and overhaul
	Traditional	Computer hardware and software
		Preventive maintenance
	Enhanced	Accessibility improvements to non-key stations and stops
		Vehicles or equipment designed to accommodate oversized mobility aids beyond ADA requirements
Mobility management	Traditional or enhanced	Coordination of services for 5310 target populations
		ITS planning and technology directly supporting a mobility management projects, such as a call center or a coordination and dispatch computer system
		Operation of transportation brokerage
		Support to plan and implement coordinated services
		Support of state and local coordination policy bodies and councils
		Travel training
Operating assistance	Traditional or enhanced	Transportation operating expenses for services provided to 5310 target populations
		Vouchers to support volunteer driver programs, taxi, or trips provided by human services agencies
	Enhanced	Accessible feeder services to commuter or intercity rail and bus where paratransit is not available
		Expanding ADA paratransit services

(source: https://www.dot.ny.gov/divisions/policy-and-strategy/public-trans-respository/2023%20 2024%20FTA%205310%20Program%20Guidance%20FINAL.pdf)

Grantees must supply a local share match for each program—20% for capital and mobility management projects and 50% for operating assistance.

In New York, organizations eligible to receive 5310 funds are limited to:

- Private non-profit corporations (traditional and enhanced projects),
- Public agencies where no private non-profits are readily available to provide the proposed service (traditional projects),
- Public agencies that the State has approved to coordinate services (traditional projects),
- All public agencies and operators of public transportation services (enhanced projects) and
- Indian Tribal Governments (traditional and enhanced projects).[1]

About $32 million will be allocated for the current (2024) 5310 funding solicitation in New York. Based on the federal formulas for 5310 funding allocation, the New York Metropolitan Area will receive $20.3 million, large and small urban areas $6.4 million and $2.6 million, respectively, and another $2.7 million distributed to rural areas. For HOCTS, 5310 funds were available in the 2024 solicitation, totaling $533,339. To distribute 5310 funds, NYSDOT solicits applications bi-annually and provides technical assistance and support to grant applicants by providing online webinars and the opportunity to review pre-applications with NYSDOT staff.

The following flowchart outlines the process for allocating and distributing Section 5310 Formula Grants, which are federal funds to enhance the mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities. The program follows a structured pathway for funding:

1. **Appropriated Amount**: Funds are initially appropriated and set aside, with a small percentage allocated to oversight appropriations.

2. **Apportioned Amount**: These funds are then apportioned based on urbanized area (UZA) population thresholds — with 60% for UZAs of at least 200,000 people, 20% for states with UZAs of less than 200,000, and another 20% for states for non-UZA areas.

3. **Local Distribution**: Within these categories, funds are further distributed according to the senior and disabled population in those areas. This ensures that areas with larger populations of seniors and individuals with disabilities receive a proportionate share of the funds.

4. **Application and Scoring**: The NYSDOT solicits applications from agencies, which are completed and submitted for scoring. Eligible applications are sent to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for scoring.

5. **Awards and Approvals**: NYSDOT reviews these scores and makes funding awards, notifying the agencies. Subsequently, NYSDOT requests that MPOs assign Transit Project Identification Numbers (PINs) for inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and approve the awards through local policy resolutions.

6. **MPO Review**: MPOs review the awards and bring resolutions to the appropriate committees for further review and approval.

7. **Entry into ESTIP**: Following MPO resolution approval, the awards are entered into the Electronic STIP (ESTIP).

8. **Final Steps**: NYSDOT then reviews and approves the MPO resolutions and awards, forwarding them to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for final approval and funding obligation.

This funding mechanism is designed to ensure a fair and needs-based distribution of federal funds to enhance the mobility of seniors and disabled individuals. It emphasizes public involvement and local decision-making through the MPOs.

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1   *https://www.dot.ny.gov/divisions/policy-and-strategy/public-transportation/specialized-transportation/5310/section%205310-application-material*

Section 5310 Formula Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

UZA=Urbanized Area

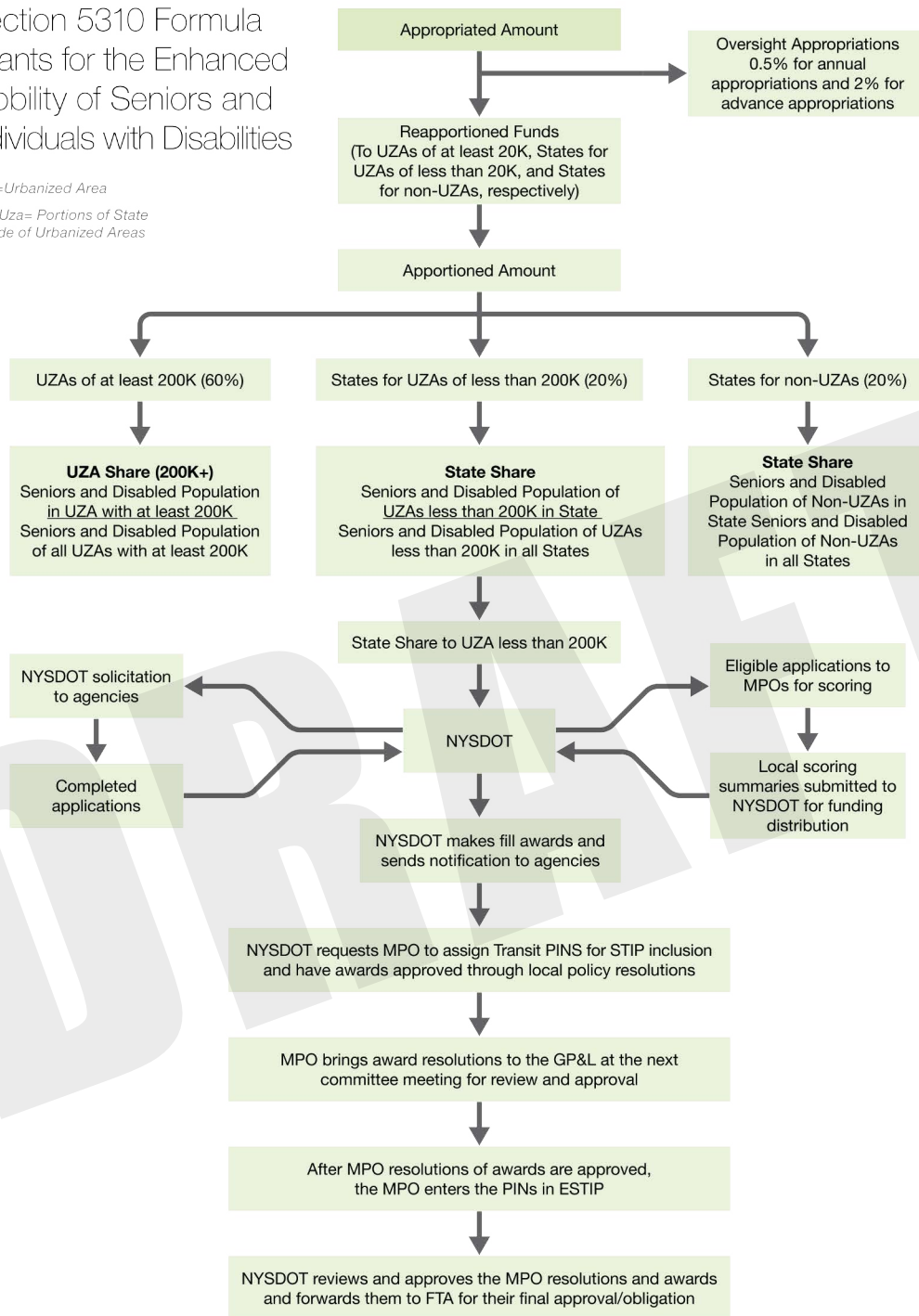*Non-Uza= Portions of State outside of Urbanized Areas*

Appropriated Amount

Oversight Appropriations 0.5% for annual appropriations and 2% for advance appropriations

Reapportioned Funds
(To UZAs of at least 20K, States for UZAs of less than 20K, and States for non-UZAs, respectively)

Apportioned Amount

UZAs of at least 200K (60%)

States for UZAs of less than 200K (20%)

States for non-UZAs (20%)

UZA Share (200K+)
Seniors and Disabled Population in UZA with at least 200K
Seniors and Disabled Population of all UZAs with at least 200K

State Share
Seniors and Disabled Population of UZAs less than 200K in State
Seniors and Disabled Population of UZAs less than 200K in all States

State Share
Seniors and Disabled Population of Non-UZAs in State Seniors and Disabled Population of Non-UZAs in all States

State Share to UZA less than 200K

NYSDOT solicitation to agencies

Eligible applications to MPOs for scoring

NYSDOT

Completed applications

Local scoring summaries submitted to NYSDOT for funding distribution

NYSDOT makes fill awards and sends notification to agencies

NYSDOT requests MPO to assign Transit PINS for STIP inclusion and have awards approved through local policy resolutions

MPO brings award resolutions to the GP&L at the next committee meeting for review and approval

After MPO resolutions of awards are approved, the MPO enters the PINs in ESTIP

NYSDOT reviews and approves the MPO resolutions and awards and forwards them to FTA for their final approval/obligation

Figure 1. *Section 5310 Formula Grant Funding Flowchart*

Overview of the Planning Process

This HSTP was developed between December 2023 and May 2024. The process included:

- HOCTC legal notice published 12/01/2023 to reconvene the Transportation Coordination Committee for purposes of the HSTP update.
- On December 7, 2023, the project Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), comprised of HOCTC Transportation Coordination Committee (TCC) members, held a kick-off meeting.
- The inventory of existing transportation services was compiled in January and February.
- The project website and online Survey went live on February 1, 2024.
- Five (5) in-person agency interviews were conducted from January 30 through February 1, 2024.
- A second TAC meeting was conducted on February 1, 2024, to review previous plan outcomes and observed gaps and needs.
- Two (2) virtual agency interviews were conducted on February 20 and February 22, 2024.
- Unmet needs, identified through the preceding steps, were compiled and analyzed in February and March.

- The third TAC met on March 28 to review and prioritize the identified gaps and needs and discuss the project prioritization criteria.
- Tabling event held May 23rd Herkimer County System of Care- Annual Wellness Fair- Public input regarding observed Gaps and Needs.
- Tabling event held May 29th 50 Forward Mohawk Valley-Senior Health Expo, Utica- Public input regarding observed Gaps and Needs.
- Strategies for meeting the unmet needs were developed and then presented at the fourth TAC meeting, which was held on May 30.
- The draft HSTP was prepared and sent to the TAC on July 11 for their review.
- The draft HSTP was made available for public comment on July 25, 2024.
- A virtual public meeting was held and recorded on August 6, 2024 10:00 am. – 11:00 am. Presentation of Final Plan.
- The draft HSTP public comment period closed on August 23, 2024.
- HOCTC adopted the final CPT-HSTP on September X, 2024.

Section 2: Existing Transportation Services

This chapter of the HOCTC HSTP summarizes the existing transportation services that serve the counties and organizations and programs that help those in need by covering the cost of transportation. Transportation services in Herkimer and Oneida Counties are provided by public transit systems, human service agencies/non-profit programs, and other private providers such as taxis or transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber or Lyft. This diversity of services is considered the "supply" side of mobility, which works in conjunction with the "demand" side of transportation services, which will be discussed in Section 3.

Public Transit Systems

CENTRO

Within the HOCTC region, CENTRO, a local division of the Central New York Regional Transit Authority (CNYRTA), operates as the primary provider of public transportation services, with a significant focus on serving the urbanized regions of Utica and Rome in Oneida County. The services cater to the transportation needs of the local population, offering comprehensive coverage, particularly in denser areas. The hub of CENTRO's operations in Utica is the CENTRO Transit Hub, located in downtown Utica. This facility is the main transfer point for numerous bus routes that traverse the city and surrounding areas. Additionally, it facilitates access to broader transportation networks through the Boehlert Transportation Center at Union Station, where passengers can connect to regional rail and bus services, including those offered by Amtrak and Greyhound. Rome's CENTRO services center around the Transit Hub at 207 W. Liberty Street. This station is the primary boarding and alighting point for CENTRO buses that navigate the city.

CENTRO's fare system in Oneida County is structured to accommodate a wide range of passengers, including cash fares, day passes, and the MAX Pass, which provides unlimited rides for a set period. Special fares are available for seniors, persons with disabilities, and children. Additionally, CENTRO provides the GoCentroBus app to streamline the fare payment process further, allowing riders to purchase passes and pay for rides directly from their mobile devices, thus enhancing the overall convenience and efficiency of public transportation in the region.

Fixed Routes

CENTRO operates 17 fixed bus routes in Utica and three fixed bus routes in Rome, including local routes serving urban areas and routes connecting rural areas to urban areas. Tables 2A and 2B lists CENTRO's fixed routes, general service area, and operating hours.

CENTRO's fixed routes make connections at two park-and-ride facilities in Oneida County, including:

- **Amtrak—Rome** is located at 6599 Martin Street, Rome. Centro and Amtrak serve this facility, which includes a sheltered waiting area with restrooms and 28 parking spaces.
- **Amtrak—Utica** is located at 321 Main Street in Utica. This facility is served by Centro, Lewis County Public Transportation, Trailways of New York, and Amtrak and allows for carpool parking. Amenities include a sheltered waiting area, restrooms, and parking spaces for 50 vehicles.

Fares for CENTRO fixed-route services are the same in Utica and Rome. One-way trips are $1.00, though several passes are available for purchase. Seniors, persons with disabilities, and children are also eligible for half-fare.

All CENTRO transit vehicles are equipped with lifts and ramps to accommodate customers who use mobility devices.

For the calendar year 2023, CENTRO services fixed route services operating in Utica had 614,293 riders, while Rome had 81,496 riders. Complementary paratransit services recorded 19,596 riders in Utica and 3,488 in Rome. Additionally, CENTRO launched a new microtransit service called MOVE in Rome in March 2024. MOVE aims to provide a flexible, on-demand transit solution to supplement existing fixed-route and paratransit services. Detailed updates and performance metrics for the service are expected to be released soon, providing information about its impact and effectiveness in meeting the community's transportation needs.The CENTRO fixed-route service area is shown in Figure 2.

LEGEND

━ Amtrak Service

━ Centro Bus Routes – Utica

━ Centro Bus Routes – Rome

⌇ Regional Trails

▨ Urban Areas

⬚ Counties

Map By Transpo Group

Utica Station

Rome Station

Oneida County

Herkimer County

For Graphical Representation Only

MILES
0   5   10

Figure 2. *Centro Fixed-Route Transit Services*

Table 2A. *City of Rome Centro Fixed Route Operating Hours*

Routes	Geography Served	Weekday Service Hours	Weekend Service Hours
2	Liberty Garden Apartments, Walmart, Centro Transit Hub	6:10 a.m. to 6:05 p.m.; every 30 minutes	Saturday 9:10 a.m. to 6:05 p.m.; every 30 minutes
5	South Rome Senior Center, Mohawk Acres, Centro Transit Hub	6:10 a.m. to 6:05 p.m.; every 30 minutes	Saturday; 7:20 a.m. to 5:40 p.m.; every 1-3 hours
6	MVCC, VA Clinic, Centro Transit Hub	6:10 a.m. to 6:05 p.m.; every 30 minutes	No weekend service

City of Rome

Beginning in March 2024, the City of Rome's fixed-route transit system consists of three routes, each operating Monday through Saturday with approximately 30-minute headways.

City of Utica

The City of Utica fixed-route system consists of 17 bus routes. Route frequencies vary by route, though all routes operate Monday through Friday. Select routes operate on Saturdays, and there is no fixed-route service on Sundays.

Paratransit

Local Call-A-Bus services, operated under CENTRO, constitute a portion of the public transportation services available to Utica and Rome residents. Open to individuals with disabilities who cannot use the regular route transit system and meet the criteria established by the ADA, Call-A-Bus provides curb-to-curb transportation service along the existing fixed routes. Service is available within 3/4 of a mile of the existing fixed routes and during the same hours as the fixed route service. The base fare for the Call-A-Bus service is $2.00 in both Utica and Rome. To schedule a pick-up, riders must call the local Call-A-Bus office and make a reservation at least 24 hours before. Rides may be scheduled up to 14 days in advance. Service is arranged on a first-come, first-served basis, and since specific timeslots can fill up, riders are encouraged to make reservations as early as possible. At this point, the dispatcher will try to accommodate the rider's requested pick-up time(s) and negotiate pick-up/drop-off times as needed. Vehicles will wait up to 5 minutes beyond the scheduled pick-up time if necessary. Figure 3 shows the Call-A-Bus service area.

For more information on this paratransit service, prospective riders are encouraged to contact CENTRO.

Table 2B. *City of Utica Centro Fixed Route Operating Hours*

| Routes	Geography Served	Weekday Service Hours	Weekend Service Hours
11	Whitesboro Garage, Centro Transit Hub	6:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.; every 60 minutes	Saturday 7:00 a.m. to 6:45 p.m.; every 60 minutes
12	Human Technologies Corporation, Centro Transit Hub	5:40 a.m. to 6:10 p.m.; varying headways between 15-30 minutes	Saturday; 6:30 a.m. to 6:45 p.m.; every 15-45 minutes
15	Mohawk Valley Community College (MVCC), Centro Transit Hub	5:45 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.; every 30 minutes	Saturday; 6:50 a.m. to 6:20 p.m.; every 60 minutes
111	Sangertown Square, Centro Transit Hub	5:20 a.m. to 11:35 p.m.; every 40-60 minutes	Saturday 6:30 a.m. to 6:40 p.m.; every 60 minutes
114	Consumer Square, Utica University, MVCC, Centro Transit Hub	7:30 a.m. to 11:45 p.m.; varying headways between 40 minutes to over 4 hours	No weekend service
20	Utica Business Park, Faxton St. Luke's Healthcare, Utica University, Centro Transit Hub	5:40 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; every 45 minutes	Saturday 7:15 a.m. to 6:25 p.m.; every 45 minutes
22	Armory Drive/Parkway E, Centro Transit Hub	5:40 a.m. to 7:05 p.m.; every 45 minutes	Saturday 6:30 a.m. to 6:25 p.m.; every 45 minutes
24	New Hartford Shopping Center, Sangertown Square, Centro Transit Hub	5:40 a.m. to 7:45 a.m.; varying headways between 60-75 minutes	Saturday 7:00 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 6:50 p.m.
124	New Hartford Shopping Center, Sangertown Square, The Orchard, K-Mart, Centro Transit Hub	7:30 a.m. to 11:40 p.m.; every 40-60 minutes	Saturday 7:00 a.m. to 6:40 p.m.; every 30 minutes
224	New Hartford Shopping Center, Sangertown Square, Kellogg Mall, Centro Transit Hub	6:00 a.m. to 7:10 p.m.; every 60 minutes	No weekend service
28	Riverside Center, North Utica Shopping Center, Briarcliff Avenue, Centro Transit Hub	5:55 a.m. to 6:45 p.m.; every 60 minutes	Saturday 7:20 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.; every 60 minutes
29	Riverside Center, Centro Transit Hub	5:45 a.m. to 6:10 a.m.; no headway—only one run	No weekend service
129	Riverside Center, North Utica Shopping Center, Bank of America, SUNY Polytechnic Institute, Centro Transit Hub	6:30 a.m. to 7:10 p.m.; varying headways between 30 and 80 minutes	Saturday; 6:50 a.m. to 6:55 p.m.; every 60 minutes
229	Riverside Center, Bank of America, SUNY Polytechnic Institute, Centro Transit Hub	8:00 p.m. to 11:05 p.m.; every 40 minutes	No weekend service
30	New Hartford Shopping Center, Sangertown Square, Centro Transit Hub	6:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.; varying headways between 50 and 140 minutes	Saturday 6:30 a.m. to 6:05 p.m.; every 120 minutes
31	Along Oneida Street at Genesee Street, Memorial Parkway, Higby Road, Centro Transit Hub	8:30 a.m. to 9:55 a.m.; every 45 minutes	No weekend service
131	Along Oneida Street at Genesee Street, Memorial Parkway, Higby Road, Elm Street, Centro Transit Hub	6:30 a.m. to 5:50 p.m.; varying headways between 60 and 150 minutes	No weekend service
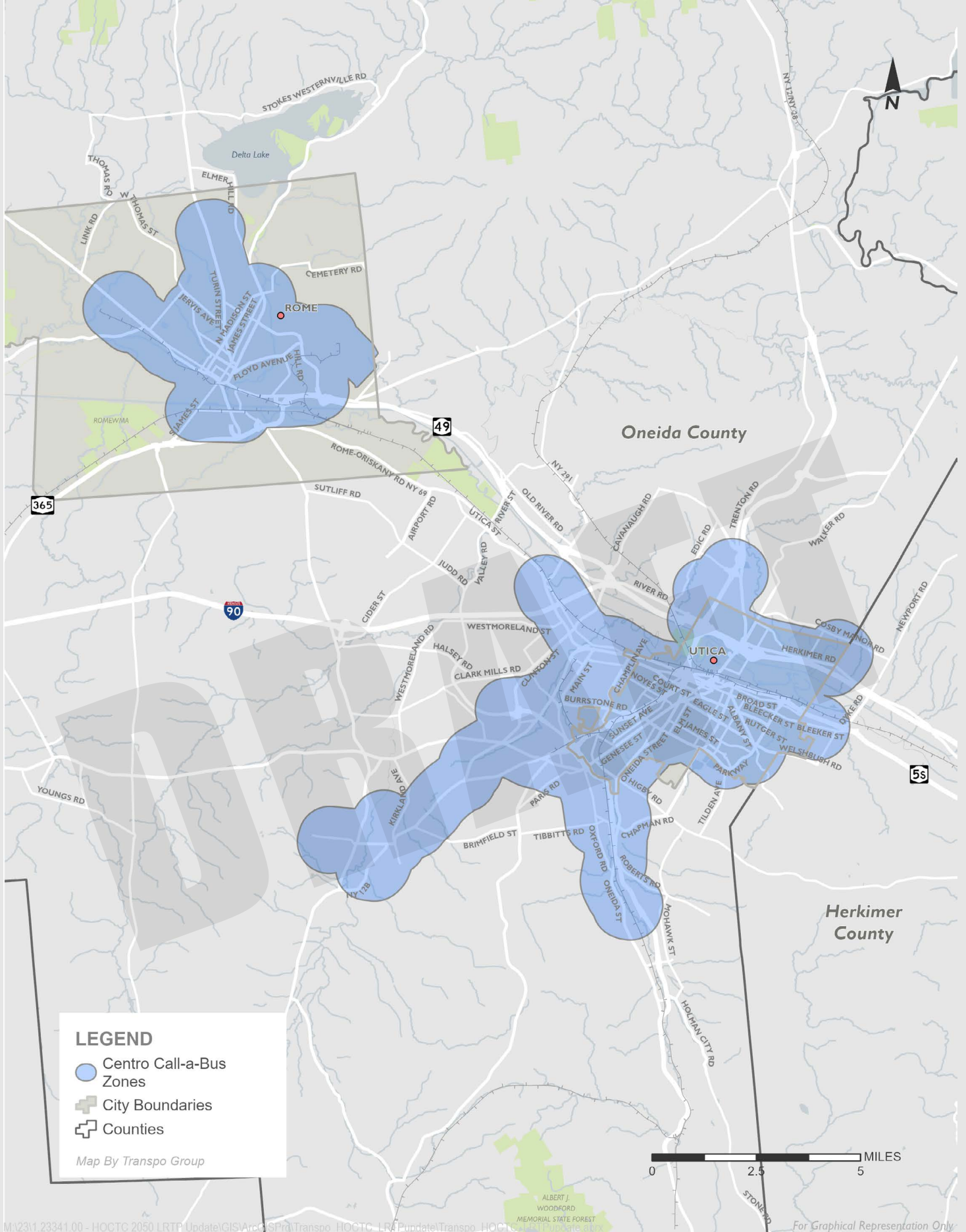
Figure 3. *Centro Call-A-Bus Service Area*

On-Demand Microtransit

The MOVE service, launched in early March 2024, is a noteworthy addition to CENTRO's transit services in Rome. This innovative microtransit solution marks a shift towards more flexible and efficient shared rides. Using app-based technology, MOVE dynamically matches riders moving in the same direction into a single vehicle, optimizing the travel experience by offering a more responsive and convenient alternative to traditional bus services.

Human Services Agencies and Non-Profit Programs

This section briefly describes human services agencies and non-profit programs that operate partially or entirely within Herkimer and Oneida Counties and that directly or indirectly provide transportation support.

50 Forward Mohawk Valley

With three locations in the HOCTC region, 50 Forward Mohawk Valley "provides programs and services to individuals 50+, empowering them to live healthy and vibrant lives." 50 Forward Mohawk Valley's transportation program—Way2Go—operates out of its Parkway Center. Through Way2Go, the agency provides mobility management services, funded through the Section 5310 program, for the identified populations of older adults, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with low incomes.

The agency provides non-emergency medical transportation for individuals who qualify through the Oneida County Office for the Aging. This service is provided through RSVP volunteers who use their vehicles and vehicles owned by 50 Forward Mohawk Valley. The agency also provides transport to agency members to and from their sites.

American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society (ACS) is a national non-profit organization supporting cancer patients and their families through several programs. The ACS Road to Recovery Program provides transportation for cancer patients in active cancer treatment to cancer-related medical appointments. Volunteers provide transportation, and riders must be ambulatory to be eligible for the service.

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Arc Herkimer

The Arc is a national organization with over 600 local chapters, including Herkimer and Oneida Counties. The Arc's mission is "Promoting and protecting the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes."

The Mission of ARC Herkimer is "Empowering people with disabilities and enriching lives throughout our community." Arc Herkimer empowers people with disabilities through seven programming divisions, including transportation. It offers door-to-door transportation for Arc clients and National Traffic Safety Institute (NTSI) Traffic Survival workshops to the public for a fee.

Arc Oneida-Lewis

The Arc NY is a state-wide organization with over 30 county-based chapters. The Oneida-Lewis Chapter covers Oneida and Lewis Counties. Its mission is to enable persons with developmental disabilities to achieve their potential through self-determined goals in partnership with the agency. The Oneida-Lewis Chapter provides leadership in the community to develop the necessary human and financial resources to fulfill this mission.

The Arc, Oneida-Lewis, offers various services for people from birth until the last stages of life. These services include community-based day habilitation, educational, employment, recreational, residential, respite, and prevocational services.

The Arc, Oneida-Lewis, provides door-to-door transportation services Monday through Friday during daytime hours. This service is provided to Day Programs using the organization's vehicles and drivers. They also provide a "Dial-A-Drive" program that provides door-to-door transportation for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (eligible for NYS OPWDD Family Support Services) to attend various pre-planned activities in the community between 5-9 p.m. most weekdays.

Catholic Charities Herkimer County

Catholic Charities of Herkimer County is an agency of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany. Catholic Charities recognizes human needs at all stages of life and responds to all persons regardless of race, creed, or lifestyle, emphasizing the economically poor and the vulnerable. Catholic Charities serves and empowers persons in need, advocates for a just society, and calls forth and collaborates with women and men of goodwill to fulfill its mission.

Catholic Charities Herkimer County (CCHC) has two transportation programs available. One is operated by CCHC staff using a vehicle that CCHC owns, and it provides non-emergency medical transportation for Herkimer County residents accessing Medicaid-covered health services. Eligible riders can choose CCHC when scheduling a ride through Medical Answering Services (MAS), which coordinates transportation services for Medicaid clients.

The RIDE (Retired Individuals Driving the Elderly) Program provides transportation for Herkimer County residents aged 55+ to medical appointments within and outside Herkimer County. The RIDE Program is overseen by RSVP staff and staffed by RSVP volunteers. RIDE volunteers provide the dispatching and transportation services for the program, and the volunteer drivers use their own personal vehicles. RIDE volunteers do not just provide transportation services—they provide companionship and assistance for riders getting into the doctor's office and waiting for their appointments. Reservations for RIDE services must be made at least 48 hours in advance.

Catholic Charities Oneida and Madison Counties

Catholic Charities facilitates transportation to Catholic Charities programming for individuals with mental illness who meet specific criteria set forth by the Oneida County Department of Mental Health.

Community Transportation Services

Community Transportation Services is a non-profit organization that "provides free rides for the elderly, disabled and disadvantaged persons in the Town of Webb and adjoining communities in need of and without access to transportation for medical, health and other necessary services." Reservations should be made at least one week in advance.

Copper City Community Connection

Copper City Community Connection "provides a social model adult daycare program for individuals with Alzheimer's, dementia, and other cognitive impairments. This program offers individuals

active cognitive training and social stimulation to minimize the impact of their conditions. The social adult day care program also allows the provider to work and take care of personal errands such as personal health, banking, shopping, etc." One of the supports offered through their social model adult daycare program is transportation to the center.

Disabled American Veterans Volunteer Transportation Network

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is a national non-profit organization that aims to "empower veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity." DAV's programs include a volunteer transportation network to transport disabled veterans to the VA. Rides are managed by local VA hospital service coordinators (HSC), including in Syracuse, NY. Disabled veterans can contact the Syracuse VA HSC to coordinate a ride; because volunteers provide the service, reservations should be made as far in advance as possible.

Herkimer County Department of Social Services

The Herkimer County Department of Social Services' mission is "to ensure the provision of temporary financial assistance and services necessary to sustain dependent and disabled persons and to assist recipients in achieving the greatest degree of independence possible." The department manages multiple programs, including adoption services and foster care, alternatives in long-term care, employment assistance, Medicaid assistance, and temporary assistance. The department provides limited direct transportation for individuals. Transportation needs are coordinated mainly with the Office for the Aging, Arc, and Valley Health Services.

Herkimer County Office for Aging/NY Connects

The Herkimer County Office for Aging "plans, funds, & delivers services to help individuals aged 60 and older. NY Connects provides information & assistance to individuals of any age on Long Term Services & Supports." Programs include caregiver support, discharge planning, home energy, and nutrition assistance. On weekdays, the Office, using the organization's vehicles and drivers, also provides

rides to individuals 60 and older; there is no fixed fare, but donations are suggested. Rides can be requested anywhere in the county. Reservations should be made at least one week in advance. In 2023, the program provided 6,112 rides.

Herkimer County Veterans Services Agency

Herkimer County Veterans Services Agency supports veterans and their families in obtaining medical, disability, pension, and education benefits from the US Department of Veterans Affairs and the NYS Department of Veterans Affairs. Services are available to all veterans and their families throughout the county.

They maintain one to two non-ADA accessible and six to eight accessible passenger vans that exclusively transport veterans to VA facilities. Two weeks' notice is required for this shared-ride service. Most trips are made to either the Rome VA clinic or the VA hospital in Syracuse.

Oneida County Office for the Aging and Continuing Care

The Oneida County Office for the Aging and Continuing Care's mission is to "serve as the lead planning, funding, and advocacy agency for older adults, individuals with disabilities, their families, and caregivers" in Oneida County. The office's programs include bill payment and expand in-home, legal, and social adult daycare services.

The office also coordinates with the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) to provide transportation for medical appointments for individuals aged 60 and older who are not receiving Medicaid benefits. This service cannot provide transportation for anesthesia or sedation procedures, and participants must be ambulatory.

Oneida County Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS)

The Oneida County DFCS "serves as the umbrella agency supporting the Office for Aging and Continuing Care, The Department of Social Services, Veterans' Services, and the Youth Bureau." Within the department, the employment division provides CENTRO bus passes to clients for transportation support, particularly for low-income individuals.

Retired Senior Volunteer Program

The Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is a program of Americorps that "pairs thousands of Americans aged 55 and older with organizations making change in communities across the country." Organizations apply to host RSVP volunteers, and program activities depend on the hosting organization. In the study area, several programs host RSVP volunteers. The two of interest in this plan are the transportation-related programs hosted by 50 Forward Mohawk Valley and Catholic Charities Herkimer County.

Katherine Luther Residential Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center

The Katherine Luther Residential Health Care & Rehabilitation Center on the LutheranCare campus provides skilled nursing services. LuthernCare is a member of Community Wellness Partners, a faith based, 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliation of LuthernCare and Presbyterian Homes & Services offering and empowering individual wellness through the provision of health and wellness services and housing and community services for older adults in Oneida County.

Community Wellness Partners (the affiliation of LutheranCare and Presbyterian Homes & Services) developed a Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) model: A health plan focused on the frail, disabled, complex elderly and designed to provide the entire continuum of care and services to frail seniors while enabling them to maintain their independence as long as possible.

The PACE Center is the hub of operations and is located on the LutheranCare campus in Clinton, NY. It coordinates transportation to and from this hub for its target population.

Rome Memorial Hospital, Inc. d/b/a Rome Health

Rome Health is a healthcare system that provides access to a broad range of health care services from primary care to long-term care. Its 80-bed skilled nursing facility provides long-term care, short-term and respite care. The hospital transports residents/patients to medical appointments and social activities, with priority given to medical transportation.

Transportation is provided at no additional cost to the residents/patients that are mobility challenged. Most transportation is for travel in Rome, Utica and Syracuse, but can extend to Albany or Rochester for specialist appointments.

Senior Network Health

Senior Network Health Transportation, as an affiliate of the Mohawk Valley Health System (MVHS) provides transportation for the entities of the system. MVHS is comprised of two acute care hospitals, a two hundred and two bed skilled nursing facility, an Adult Day Medical Care Program, Senior Network Health a managed long term care plan, a cancer center and multiple primary care sites. Senior Network Health Transportation Department provides medical transportation to people who are chronically ill, elderly, and multicultural with prominent language barriers or disabled receiving services within MVHS that reside in Oneida and Herkimer counties.

The transportation department only coordinates and transports patients within MVHS, who are not charged a fare to utilize transportation services.

Senior Network Health is an alternative to traditional nursing home care. It is a managed long-term health care plan for individuals who need assistance with day-to-day health maintenance and support activities but want to live in the comforts of home with the caring faces of family and friends nearby.

Unlike traditional home care services, Senior Network Health is structured around personalized care management and an extensive number of community-based, long-term care services.

Senior Network Health services are provided at no cost to Medicaid eligible members, or they are available to a limited number of private pay participants. This managed long-term health care plan is covered by New York State Medicaid to support the option to better improve your health and well-being at home.

Other Providers

Intercity Bus and Rail Providers

The HOCTC region is connected to external areas through Utica by several intercity bus providers, including Ourbus, FlixBus, Greyhound (owned by FlixBus), and Trailways. Destinations include Albany, New York City; Syracuse, Buffalo, NY; and Boston, MA. Service between Utica and Ithaca, provided by Coach USA, was suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic and has yet to be reinstated. Birnie Bus continues to provide inter-city bus service (Four-County route) from Little Falls to Utica to Syracuse.

Amtrak offers services in Oneida County through a stop in Utica. Three lines serve the Utica station:

- Empire Service—between New York, NY and Niagara Falls, NY—twice/day
- Lake Shore Limited
    - Between New York, NY and Chicago, IL—once/day
    - Between Chicago, IL and Boston, MA—twice/day
- Maple Leaf—between Toronto, ON and New York, NY—once/day

Taxis, Rideshare, & Ride-hail

Taxis, ridesharing, and ride-hailing services are unique, especially in providing transportation to individuals with disabilities, seniors, and low-income populations. Their ability to provide curb-to-curb service is beneficial, especially in areas with limited public transportation. However, some riders may experience barriers, ranging from fare prices to physical accessibility to these transportation services. These services are described in more detail below:

Taxis

Herkimer County and Oneida County municipalities are serviced by several taxicabs, which offer advantages and disadvantages in providing transportation to individuals with disabilities, seniors, and low-income populations. On the one hand, taxis can provide reliable curb-to-curb between most locations. However, taxis are also more expensive than public transit,

and fares tend to vary noticeably, very often at the will of the taxi operator. Taxi services in the HOCTC region include ACE Taxi, City Cab, Courtesy Cab, and Oneida Taxi Service.

Uber & Lyft

In recent years, ride-hailing, primarily done through mobile apps (the most notable of which include Uber and Lyft), has become a popular means of getting around, especially in large metropolitan regions. Known as transportation network companies (TNCs), these mobile apps allow passengers to hail curb-to-curb rides, with payment taken care of through the apps. In 2017, the State of New York passed legislation allowing TNCs to be operated throughout the state. Previously, service was only available within New York City.

The operation of TNCs in Herkimer County and Oneida County presents multiple opportunities and challenges for providing transportation to residents. Conversely, TNCs are often cheaper and more reliable than taxis. Before a pickup occurs, passengers must first agree to the fare price and can also track their driver using an in-app GPS tracker. However, passengers must have a credit or debit card to use these apps since payment is automated, which may make it difficult for low-income and elderly populations to access these services. Additionally, as private entities, TNCs do not have to adhere to ADA regulations for their vehicles, making the service potentially inaccessible to some elderly and disabled populations. Lastly, TNCs are only as effective as the availability of drivers, which may pose challenges during early morning and nighttime hours and in rural areas.

Although TNCs still need to play a significant role in providing transportation to individuals with enhanced mobility needs, this could eventually change, especially as they expand beyond New York City into the rest of the state.

Rideshare

Ridesharing and carpooling in Herkimer County and Oneida County can be arranged through the 511 Rideshare website and mobile app. 511 Rideshare is a statewide initiative providing ride-matching, commuter, and traveler services.

Section 3: Existing Community Conditions & Public Engagement Activities

Needs for specialized transportation services in Herkimer and Oneida Counties were identified by reviewing demographics and travel patterns compared to available services and through an engagement program consisting of agency interviews, a community survey, and a series of tabling events. This section of the Herkimer-Oneida Counties HSTP presents the findings related to transportation needs from each of the above activities and concludes with a summary of unmet needs.

Geographic Context

Situated in central New York, the two counties combine to form the Utica-Rome Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The counties range from rural to urban in land use character and are located approximately 250 miles from New York City. They are bordered by Hamilton County, Fulton County, and Montgomery County to the east, Otsego County and Madison County to the south, Oswego County to the west, and Lewis County and St. Lawrence County to the north. A map of Herkimer and Oneida Counties is shown in Figure 4.
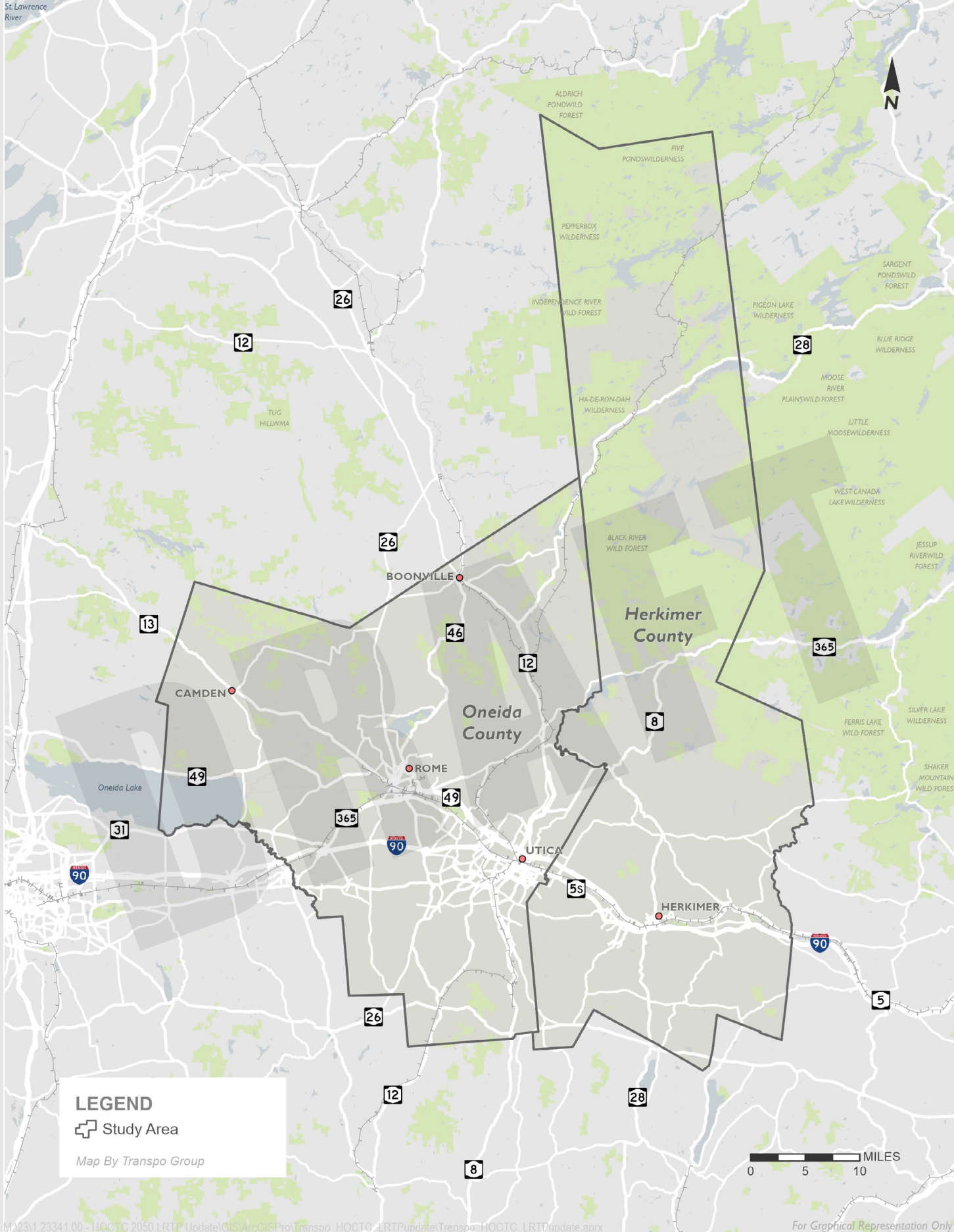
Figure 4. *Herkimer and Oneida Counties Map*

LEGEND
Study Area

Map By Transpo Group

While the two counties are geographically similar, Herkimer County has a much smaller population. This is due to the county's large amounts of rural, agricultural, and protected land. Oneida County contains 45 municipalities to Herkimer County's 30 municipalities, while the largest concentration of residents between the two counties is in Utica. The more densely populated areas of the counties are primarily located along the Mohawk River Valley corridor.

These geographic trends present opportunities and challenges in providing transportation to Herkimer and Oneida County residents with enhanced mobility needs. On the one hand, the two largest cities of Utica and Rome are located in Oneida County. However, these two cities are approximately 17 miles apart, while surrounding areas, especially north, south, and east, are less populated. Within these more isolated areas of the counties, accessibility can be a challenge. Regardless of location, demand for accessible transportation is evident throughout many portions of both Herkimer County and Oneida County. The following demographic profile further examines this demand by identifying specific populations across the two counties more likely to possess enhanced mobility needs.

Demographics

This section analyzes current and future population trends in Herkimer and Oneida Counties for this planning effort and the demographics of population groups that often depend on transportation options beyond an automobile. Data sources for this analysis include the 2020 U.S. Census and the American Community Survey (ACS) 2022 5-year estimates.

This demographic analysis and input from regional stakeholders and others through the provider and community survey activities inform the assessment of community transportation needs. The project team used this assessment as the foundation to develop strategies to meet identified needs, expand mobility, and generate recommendations to improve regional coordination.

Population Analysis

This section examines the current population and population density in Herkimer and Oneida Counties and discusses population projections for the region.

Total Population

Population density is critical when determining a community's most appropriate transportation mode. It often indicates the type of feasible public transit services within a study area. Typically, an area with a density of 1,000 persons per square mile will sustain some form of daily fixed-route transit service. An area with a population density below 1,000 persons per square mile may be a better candidate for some form of fixed-scheduled or demand-response services.

As shown in Figure 5, the densest portions of Herkimer County include Ilion, Herkimer, and Little Falls. Densities vary outside of these urban areas. In Oneida County, as mentioned previously, the two most densely populated areas are the cities of Utica and Rome. Specific locations surrounding the urban centers tend to be suburban, with densities of between 434 and 1,739 people per square mile. Rural densities, however, still make up a large portion of the counties.
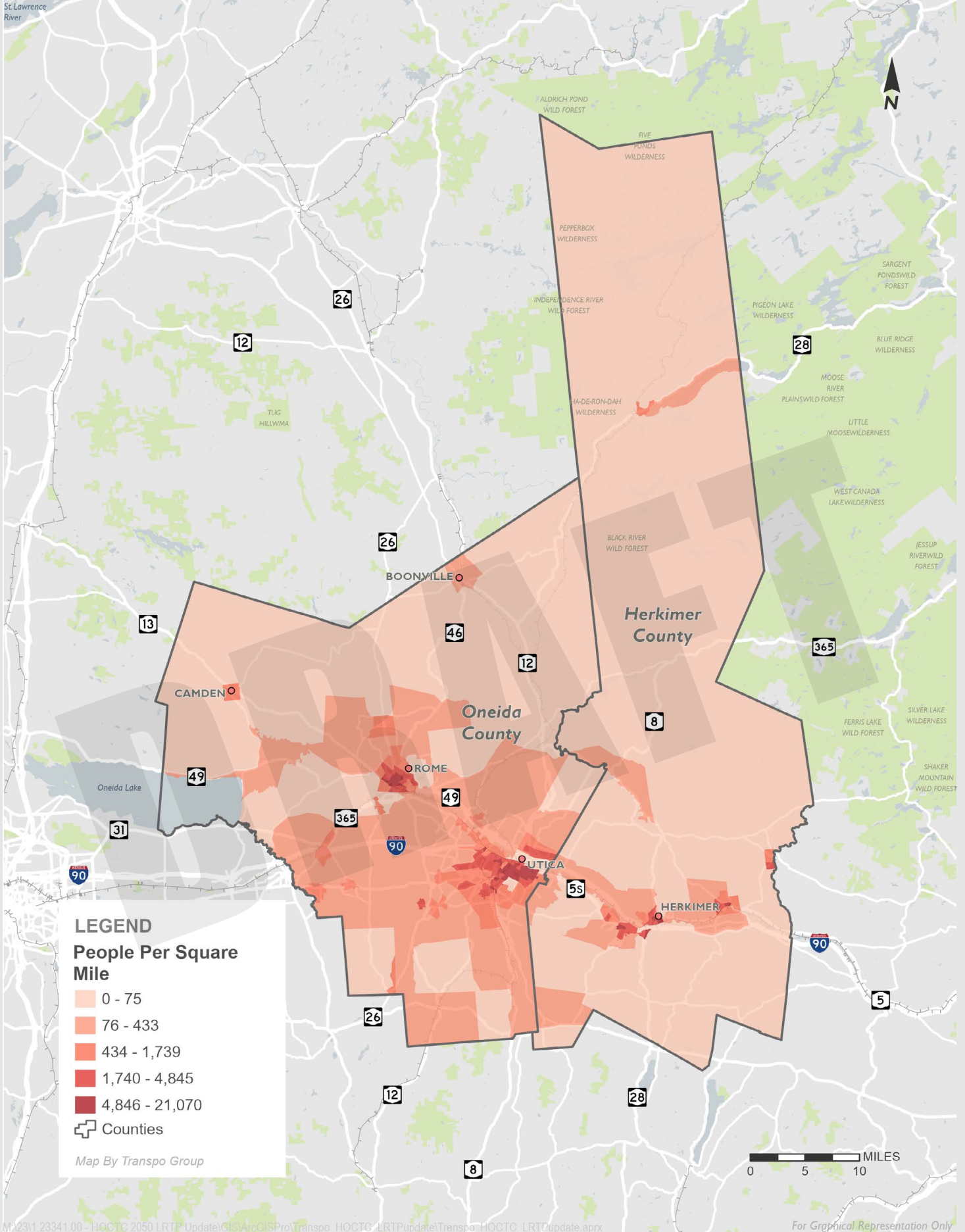
Figure 5. *Herkimer and Oneida Counties Population Density by Census Block*

Population & Employment Forecast

Population

The project team developed forecasts for future population and employment in the study areas. The population forecast for 2045 was developed through the following steps:

1. Base Year
    i. Assemble 2020 decennial Census (DEC) population data
    ii. Assemble American Community Survey (ACS) 2022 Block Group level households and population
    iii. Calculate the average annual growth rate by county from 2020 DEC to 2022 ACS
    iv. Apply average annual growth by the county to the year 2020 DEC to estimate the year 2023
2. Forecast year 2045
    i. Apply average annual growth factors from 2015 to 2020 from Cornell Study[1]

The 2023 base year population across the study area reflects a decrease of 0.49%, based on an increase of 0.39% in Herkimer County and a 0.73% decrease in Oneida County.

The population forecast for 2045 reflects deaths increasing, births decreasing, and net migration increasing.

Employment

The employment forecast for 2045 was developed through the following steps:

1. Base Year
    i. Use the Year 2021 Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) to develop base year block group level employment data; use historical trend (pre-pandemic) to factor from 2021 to the base year 2023
    ii. Review large employer sites & colleges to ensure correct allocation to each site's block group.
2. Forecast year 2045
    i. Develop overall regional employment growth trends based on historical data from 1990 to 2019 (pre-pandemic)[2]

Table 4 provides population and employment projections for Herkimer and Oneida Counties and a combined forecast for both counties in 2023 and 2045. In 2023, the total population of Herkimer is 60,191, while Oneida has a significantly larger population of 230,057. By 2045, the population is projected to decrease slightly in Herkimer County to 57,169 and decrease in Oneida County to 223,831. Collectively, the total population for the HOCTC region is forecasted to decrease by 3.19 percent from 2023 (290,248) to 2045 (281,000).

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1 https://pad.human.cornell.edu/counties/projections.cfm
2 https://dol.ny.gov/employment-projections

Table 4. *Herkimer and Oneida Counties Population and Employment Projections*

	2023			2024		
	Herkimer	Oneida	Total	Herkimer	Oneida	Total
Population & Households						
Residential Pop	59,055	218,527	277,582	56,105	212,670	268,775
Group Quarters Pop	1,136	11,530	12,666	1,054	11,161	12,225
Total Pop	60,191	230,057	290,248	57,169	223,831	281,000
Occupied Households	25,417	93,163	118,580	24,129	90,611	114,740
Employment						
Total Employment	15,306	97,843	113,149	15,305	97,767	113,072
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting	143	338	481	143	338	481
Mining	40	34	74	40	34	74
Utilities	18	413	431	18	413	431
Construction	606	2,352	2,958	606	2,350	2,956
Manufacturing	1,722	9,214	10,936	1,722	9,207	10,929
Wholesale Trade	747	2,230	2,977	746	2,229	2,975
Retail Trade	2,451	10,073	12,524	2,451	10,065	12,516
Transportation and Warehousing	530	3,291	3,821	530	3,288	3,818
Information	86	604	690	86	603	689
Financial Activities	398	7,124	7,522	398	7,119	7,517
Professional and Business Services	682	7,004	7,686	682	6,998	7,680
Education Services	2,503	11,641	14,144	2,503	11,632	14,135
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,020	22,248	24,268	2,020	22,231	24,251
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	108	633	741	108	632	740
Accommodation and Food Services	1,446	10,227	11,673	1,446	10,219	11,665
Other Services (Except Government)	485	2,583	3,068	485	2,581	3,066
Government	1,321	7,834	9,155	1,321	7,828	9,149

In terms of employment in 2023, Herkimer and Oneida have total employed populations of 15,306 and 97,843, respectively, with the two-county region totaling 113,149. By 2045, total employment is projected to remain basically the same in Herkimer County (15,305) and decrease minimally in Oneida to 97,767, with the two-county total slightly decreasing to 113,072. Both counties' major employment sectors include educational services, healthcare, and social assistance, with other industries, such as manufacturing, retail trade, and professional and business services, contributing to employment figures. However, the region as a whole will experience a slight reduction in employment in the information sector by 2045.
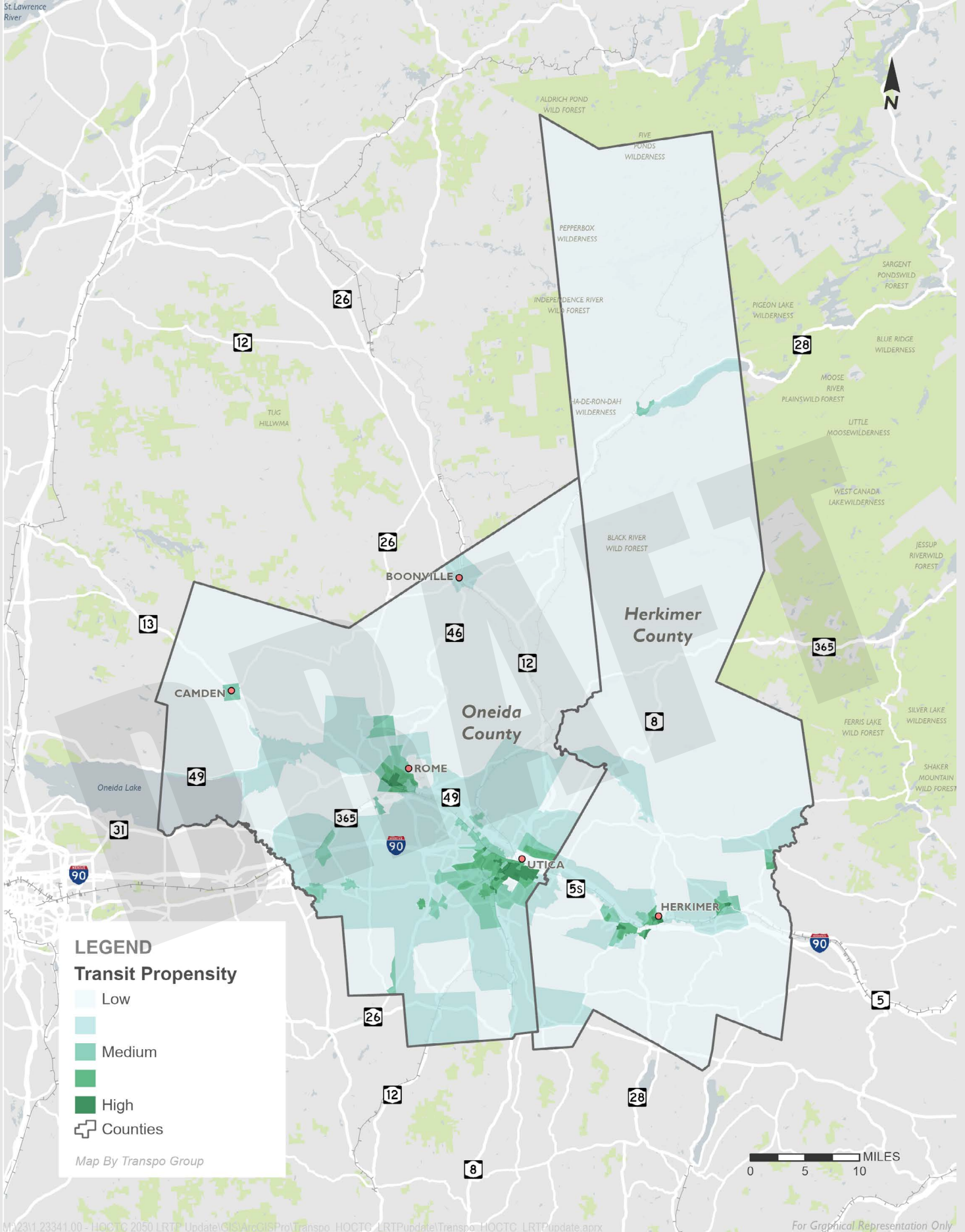
Figure 6. *Transit Propensity Index for Oneida and Herkimer Counties*

Communities with a Higher Propensity for Transit Utilization

Public transportation needs are partly defined by identifying the relative size and location of those segments within the general population that are most likely to depend on transit services. The following population groups are considered more likely to be transit-dependent and are described in this section:

- Populations 65 years and older
- Disabled populations
- People living without access to an automobile
- Veterans
- People with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- People living in households below the poverty line

Transit Propensity

Transit propensity is an index used to understand how likely the population in an area is to use transit services. Transit propensity is calculated based on select demographic characteristics that influence ridership. These characteristics include population density, total employment, the number of households without access to a car, and the number of service sector jobs within the census block group. Figure 6 displays the overall transit propensity for Herkimer and Oneida Counties by census block group.

Block groups with high scores have populations where factors that affect transit needs and access are compounded, such that a large portion of the population needs transit. Conversely, block groups with low scores may still have individuals or groups with transit needs, but more is needed to make up a significant share of the population.

Population groups relevant to Human Services Transportation are primarily located in and around the urban centers of the counties. Densities are also consistently higher than average in several more rural counties, including Salisbury Center, Newport, and Dolgeville in Herkimer County and Boonville and Barneveld in Oneida County.
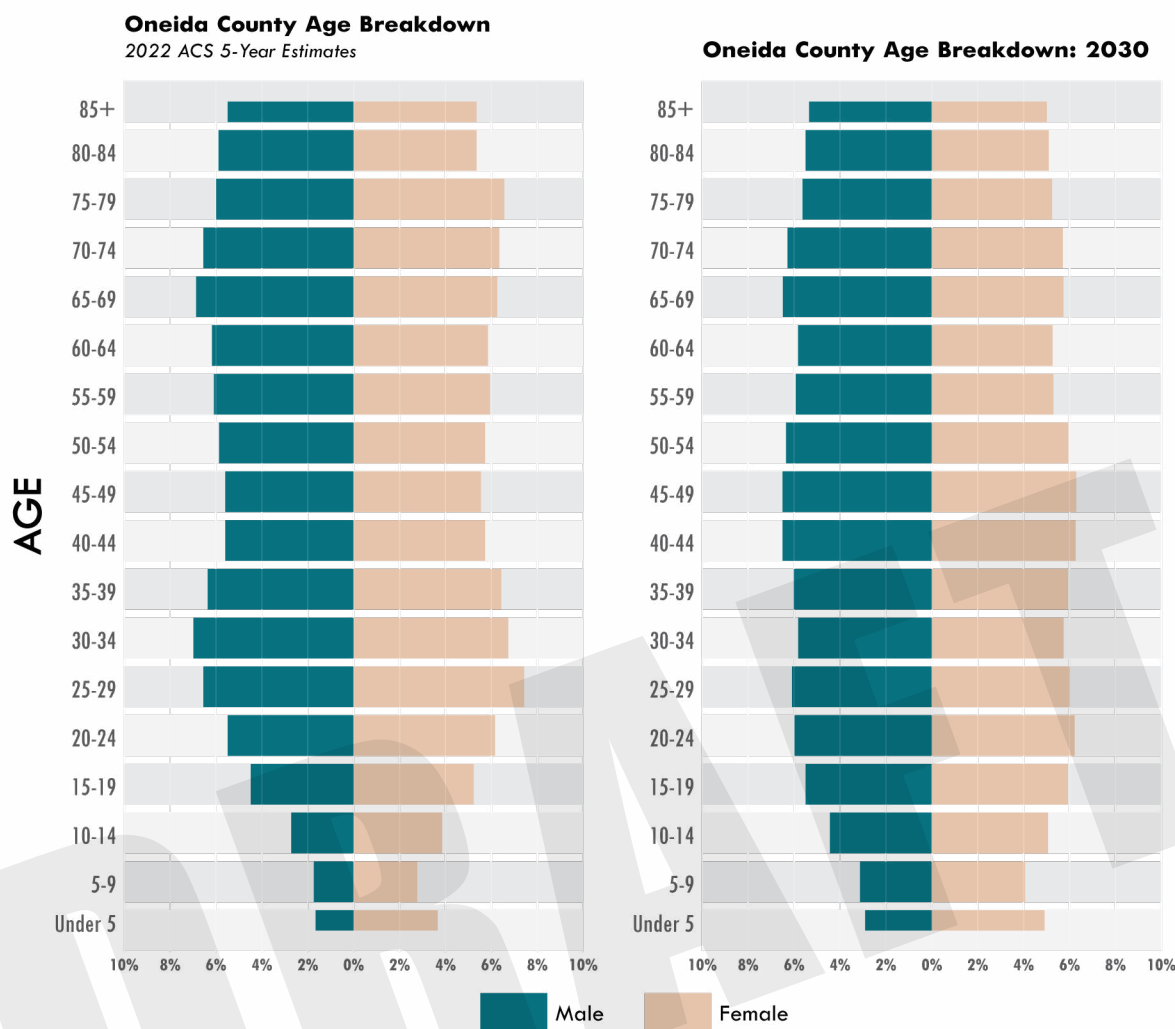
Oneida County Age Breakdown
2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Oneida County Age Breakdown: 2030

Figure 7. *Age Breakdown (2022 ACS) and Projected 2030 Age Breakdown of Oneida County*

Senior Adult Population

One of the socioeconomic groups that is more likely to be transit-dependent is the senior adult population, which consists of individuals ages 65 and older. Persons in this age group may begin to decrease their use of personal vehicles and rely more heavily on public transit. Factors such as fixed incomes from social security and Medicaid, increased medical needs, and reduced capabilities to operate automobiles make senior citizens a key population demographic likely to require enhanced mobility needs. As the population cohort pyramids in Figure 7 and Figure 8 show, the percentage of people aged 65 and older in both Herkimer and Oneida Counties is forecast to increase by 2030.
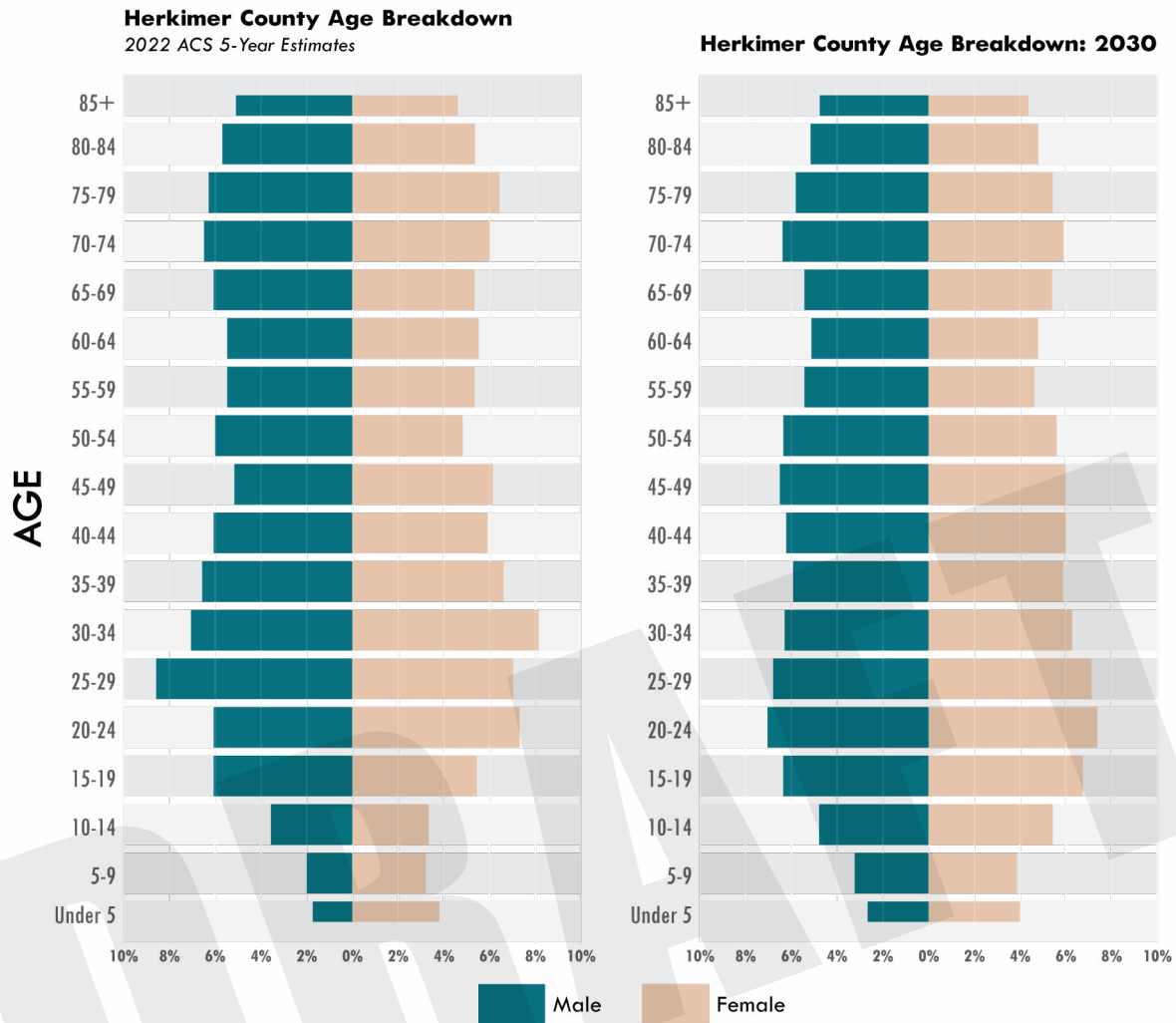
Herkimer County Age Breakdown
2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Herkimer County Age Breakdown: 2030

Figure 8. Age Breakdown (2022 ACS) and Projected 2030 Age Breakdown of Herkimer County

Senior populations higher than average in concentration are primarily located along the I-90 corridor and in Rome, Herkimer, Boonville, and the very sparsely populated northern region of Herkimer County, centered around Old Forge. Notably, there are high concentrations of seniors around Camden and Utica but not within the centers themselves. One notable change since the previous plan is that northern Herkimer County was not previously identified as not having a "Very High" or "High" proportion of seniors, and the current data shows a high proportion of seniors.
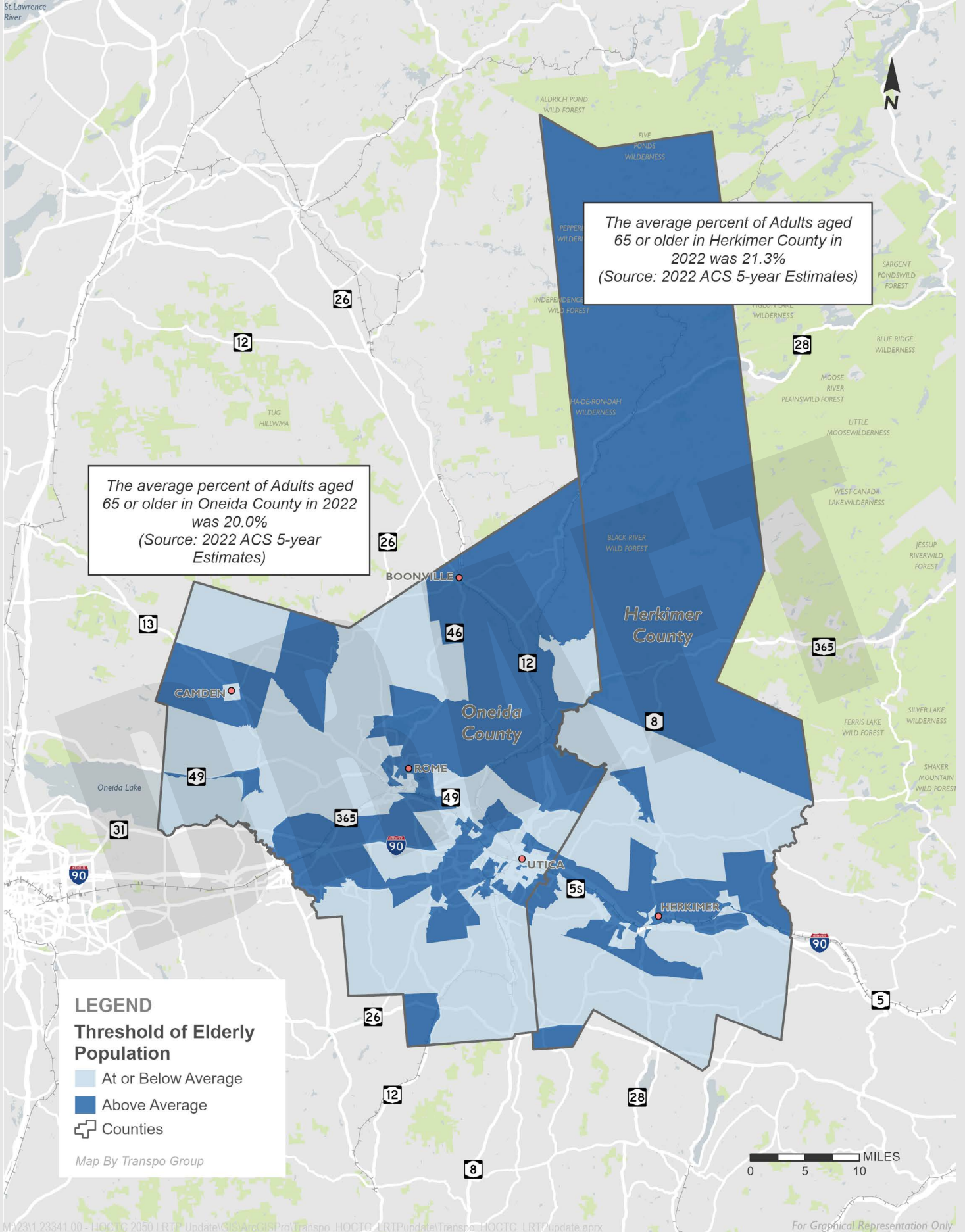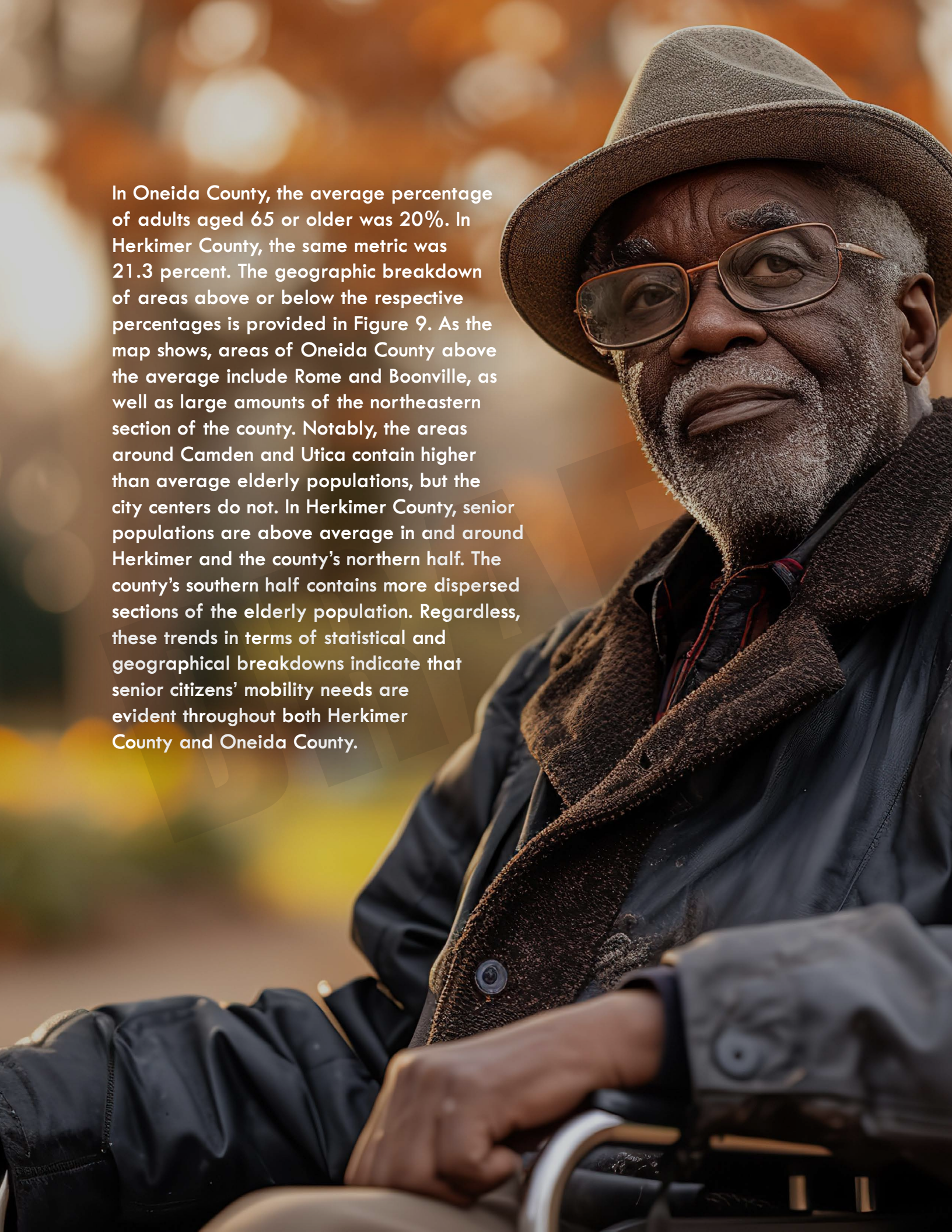
The average percent of Adults aged 65 or older in Herkimer County in 2022 was 21.3% (Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

The average percent of Adults aged 65 or older in Oneida County in 2022 was 20.0% (Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

LEGEND

Threshold of Elderly Population

- At or Below Average
- Above Average
- Counties

Map By Transpo Group

MILES
0   5   10

For Graphical Representation Only

Figure 9. *Senior Population by Census Block Group Compared to County-Wide Averages*

In Oneida County, the average percentage of adults aged 65 or older was 20%. In Herkimer County, the same metric was 21.3 percent. The geographic breakdown of areas above or below the respective percentages is provided in Figure 9. As the map shows, areas of Oneida County above the average include Rome and Boonville, as well as large amounts of the northeastern section of the county. Notably, the areas around Camden and Utica contain higher than average elderly populations, but the city centers do not. In Herkimer County, senior populations are above average in and around Herkimer and the county's northern half. The county's southern half contains more dispersed sections of the elderly population. Regardless, these trends in terms of statistical and geographical breakdowns indicate that senior citizens' mobility needs are evident throughout both Herkimer County and Oneida County.
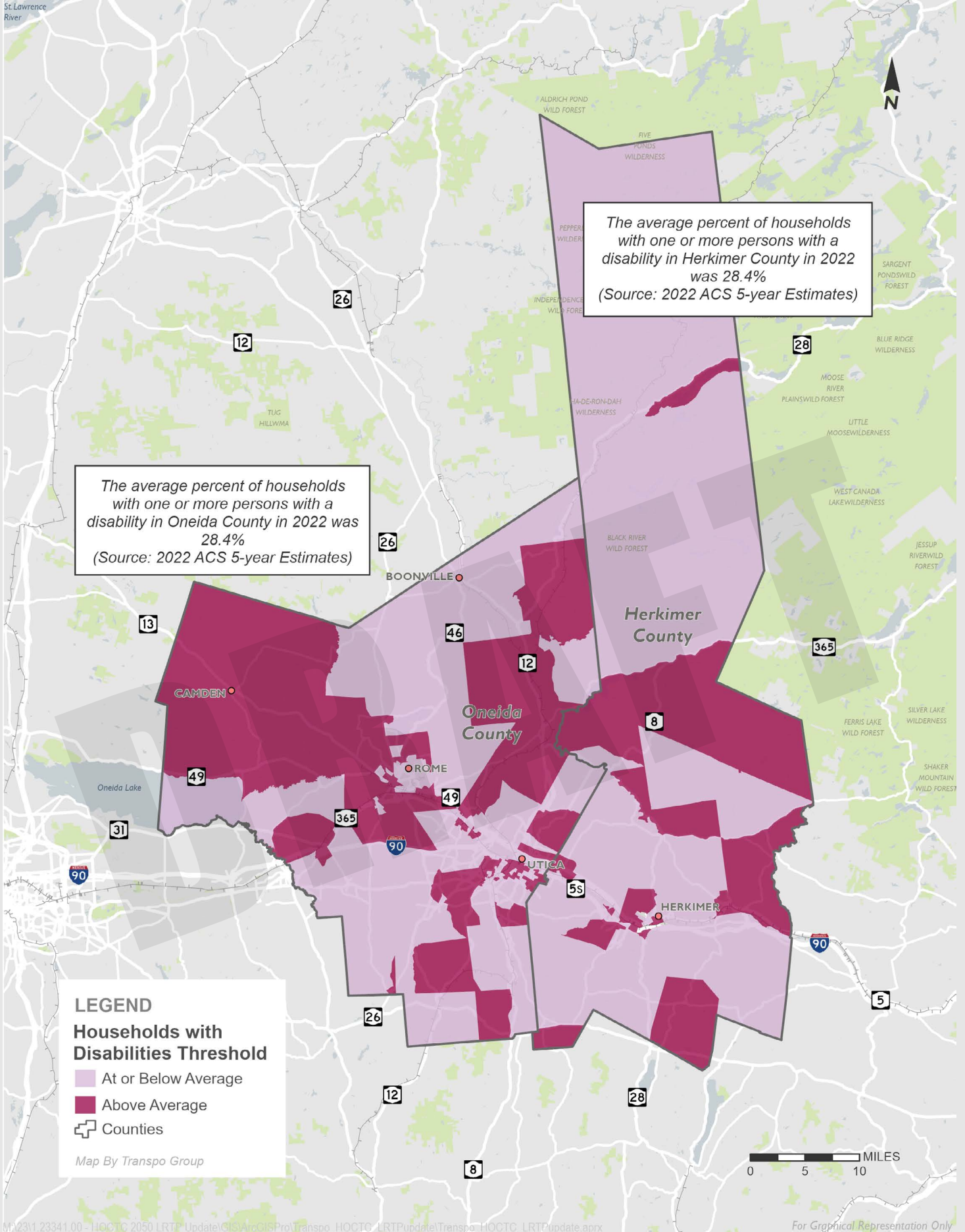
The average percent of households with one or more persons with a disability in Herkimer County in 2022 was 28.4%
(Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

The average percent of households with one or more persons with a disability in Oneida County in 2022 was 28.4%
(Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

LEGEND

Households with Disabilities Threshold

At or Below Average

Above Average

Counties

Map By Transpo Group

MILES
0   5   10

For Graphical Representation Only

Figure 10. *Households with People with Disabilities by Census Block Group Compared to County-Wide Averages*

Individuals with Disabilities

Figure 10 illustrates locations in the study area where the percentage of households with people with disabilities is higher than the county-wide average. Persons who have disabilities that prevent them from owning or make it more challenging to own and operate a personal vehicle often rely on public transit for their transportation needs. Areas with high or very high percentages of households with disabilities are distributed throughout the county. As shown in Figure 10, disabled populations are evident in both urban and rural portions of Herkimer County and Oneida County. The average percent of households with one or more persons with a disability was 28.4 percent for both Herkimer County and Oneida County. Areas with higher-than-average numbers of households with disabled persons include Camden, as well as portions around Rome, Utica, and Herkimer. However, higher disability rates are also evident in less urban areas in the south of each county, as well as central Herkimer County and northeastern Oneida County. These figures indicate that while demand amongst disabled populations is highest in urban areas, there is also noticeable demand in rural locations. The previous HSTP did not identify many areas throughout the counties as "Very High" or "High" concentrations for persons with disabilities.

Vehicle Access

Households without access to personal vehicles are more likely to use public transit for mobility. Displaying this segment of the population is important since most land uses in the study area are at distances too far for non-motorized travel. Figure 11 displays the relative percentage of households without vehicle access.

The northern portion of Herkimer County is very dispersed in population and includes above-average households with no access to a vehicle. In southern Herkimer County, areas around Newport, Middleville, and Salisbury Center are also above average.

In Oneida County, small pockets of above-average density are located around Utica, Rome, Camden, and Boonville. The previous HSTP identified Rome and Utica as "Very High" or "High" concentrations for areas without vehicle access.
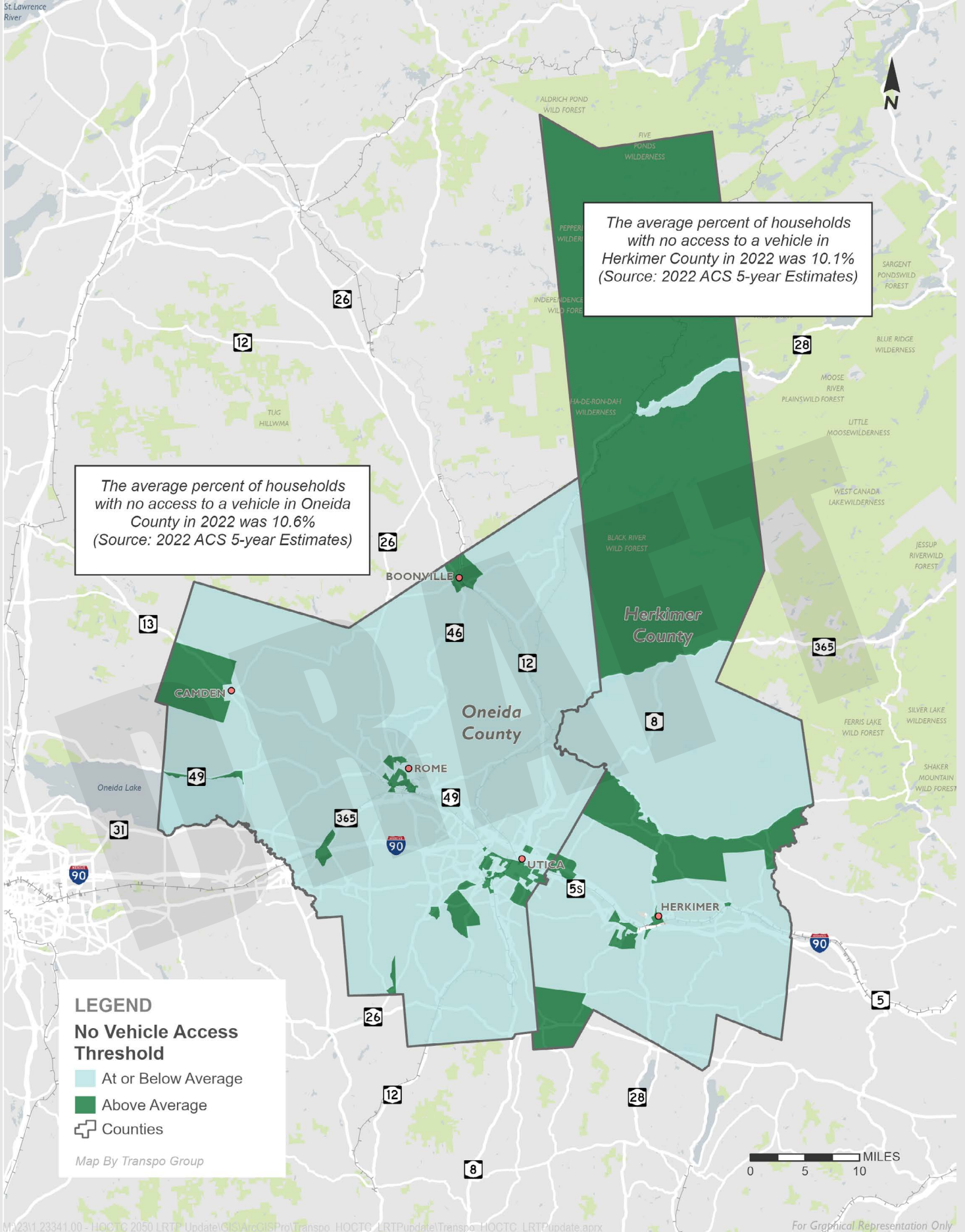
The average percent of households with no access to a vehicle in Herkimer County in 2022 was 10.1% (Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

The average percent of households with no access to a vehicle in Oneida County in 2022 was 10.6% (Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

LEGEND

No Vehicle Access Threshold

- At or Below Average
- Above Average
- Counties

Map By Transpo Group

MILES
0 5 10

For Graphical Representation Only

Figure 11. Households with No Vehicle Access by Census Block Group Compared to County-Wide Averages

The average percent of households in poverty in Herkimer County in 2022 was 11.9%
(Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

The average percent of households in poverty in Oneida County in 2022 was 13.2%
(Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

LEGEND

Threshold of Households in Poverty

At or Below Average

Above Average

Counties

Map By Transpo Group

MILES
0   5   10

For Graphical Representation Only
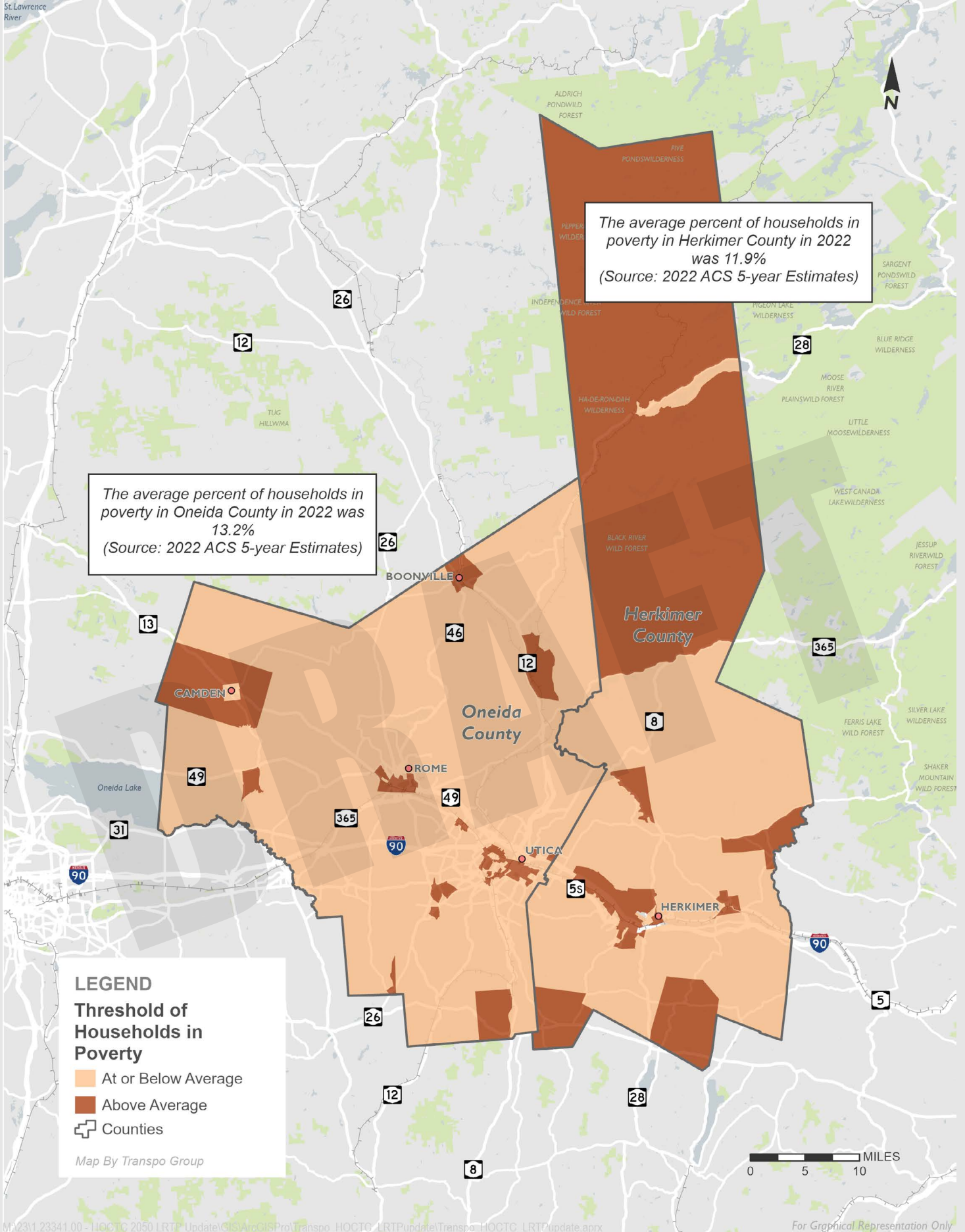
Figure 12. *Households in Poverty by Census Block Group Compared to County-Wide Averages*

Table 5. *2022 Median Income & Poverty Rates for Herkimer and Oneida Counties & Select Municipalities*

	Median Household Income	% Population Below Poverty Line
New York State	$81,386	13.6%
Herkimer County	$68,104	12.1%
Herkimer	$56,607	12.6%
Ilion	$71,556	10.6%
Oneida County	$66,402	14.4%
Rome	$56,901	17.0%
Utica	$48,212	28.2%

Below Poverty Population

An important group regarding transit dependency with Title VI implications is those earning less than the federal poverty level. This segment of the population may find it a financial burden to own and maintain a personal vehicle, thus relying on public transit as their primary means of transportation. As of 2022, Herkimer County's median income was just over $68,000, slightly lower than the statewide figure of about $74,000 but slightly higher than the Oneida County figure of $66,000. In Oneida County, the average percentage of impoverished households was 13.2 percent. In Herkimer County, the same metric was 11.9 percent. The geographic breakdown of areas above or below the respective percentages is provided in Figure 12.

Figure 12 shows that areas with more than the county-wide average of impoverished households include the sparsely populated northern portion of Herkimer County. In southern Herkimer County, above-average areas are located around Herkimer, as well as around West Winfield, Salisbury Center, and Newport. In Oneida County, above-average areas are dispersed around Camden, Rome, and Utica, as well as in Boonville and Remsen. The previous plan identified Utica, Rome, Little Falls, and northern Herkimer County as "Very High" and "High" concentrations for impoverished households.

Table 5 shows median income and poverty rates for New York State, Herkimer County, Oneida County, and several areas within the counties.

As shown in Table 5, each listed area reported lower median household incomes than New York State, with the lowest being in Utica. Utica also reported the highest population below the poverty line, at more than a quarter of the total population. Ilion had the highest median household income and the lowest percentage of people in poverty.

Although income and poverty rates are essential indicators of mobility needs, it is important to note that low-income individuals live throughout the region. Even areas considered higher income will contain lower-income individuals and families who may also live in poverty. It is important to consider such populations when assessing transportation needs and providing public and human services transportation.

Table 6. *Languages Spoken and Limited English Proficiency Population in Study Area*

	Herkimer		Oneida	
5 Years and up	57,346		218,329	
Language Spoken	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
English	54,381	89.40%	186,016	85.20%
Speak Non-English	2,983	5.20%	32,313	14.80%
Spanish	688	1.20%	10,683	4.90%
Indo-European languages	1,893	3.30%	8,515	3.90%
Asian/Pacific Island languages	401	0.70%	6,768	3.10%
Other	0	0%	6,332	2.90%
English Speaking Ability	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
"Very Well"	56,446	98.40%	206,539	94.60%
"Well" "Not Well" or "Not at All"	918	1.60%	11,790	5.40%

Source: American Community Survey, 2022 Five-Year Estimates, Table B16004

Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

In addition to providing public transportation for many demographic groups, it is also important to serve and disseminate information to people of different linguistic backgrounds.

Figure 13 and Table 6 show residents of Oneida and Herkimer counties predominately speak English. Of those individuals who speak other languages in the home, over 90% speak English very well. The most common language spoken other than English is Spanish.
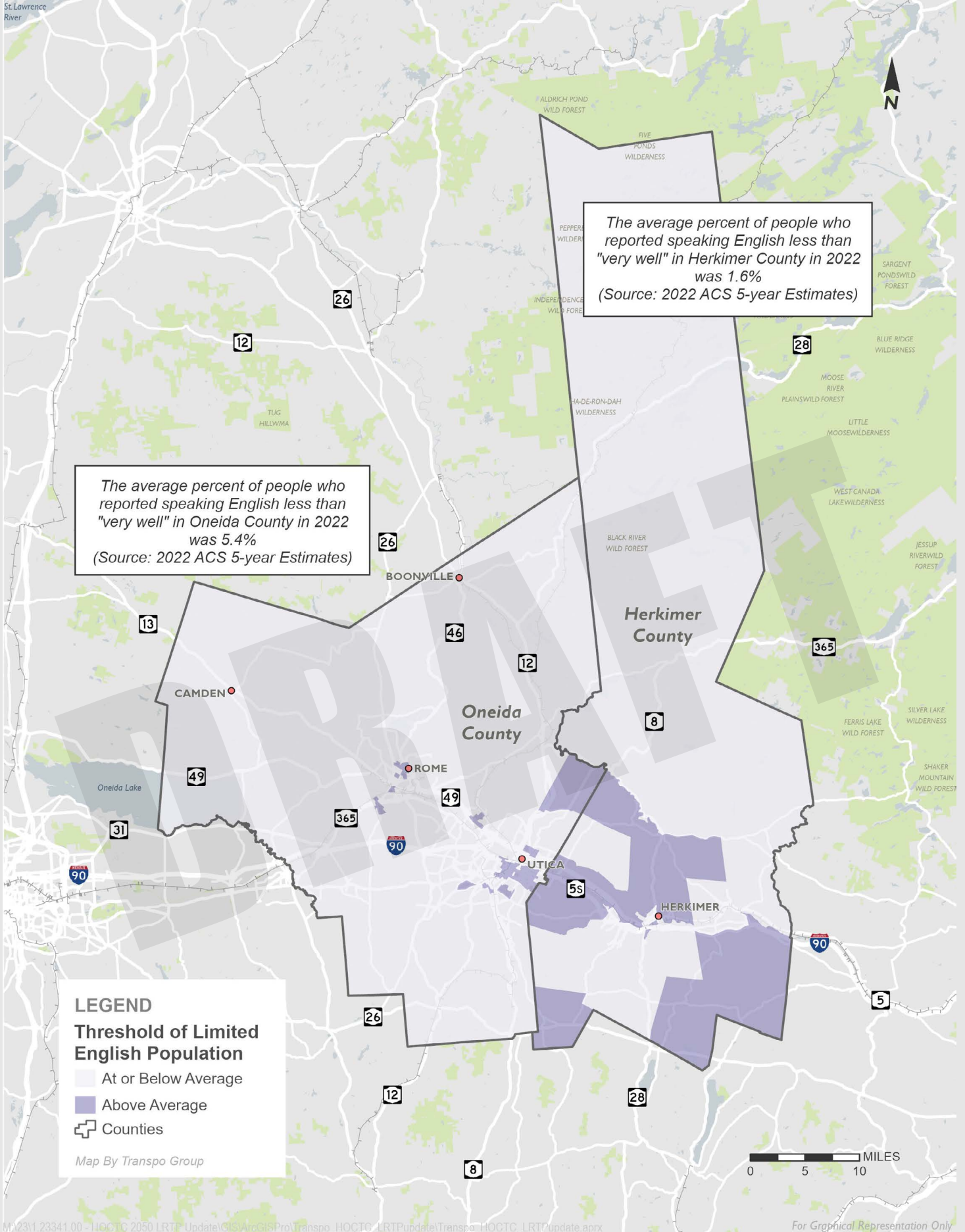
The average percent of people who reported speaking English less than "very well" in Herkimer County in 2022 was 1.6%
(Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

The average percent of people who reported speaking English less than "very well" in Oneida County in 2022 was 5.4%
(Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

LEGEND

Threshold of Limited English Population

- At or Below Average
- Above Average
- Counties

Map By Transpo Group

MILES
0   5   10

For Graphical Representation Only

Figure 13. *People with Limited English Proficiency by Census Block Group Compared to County-Wide Averages*

The percent of the population over 18 years old who were veterans in Herkimer County in 2022 was 7.7% (Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

The percent of the population over 18 years old who were veterans in Oneida County in 2022 was 7.5% (Source: 2022 ACS 5-year Estimates)

LEGEND

Threshold of Veteran Population

At or Below Average

Above Average

Counties

Map By Transpo Group

MILES
0   5   10

For Graphical Representation Only

Figure 14. *Veterans by Census Block Group Compared to County-Wide Averages*

Veterans

Veterans are also a potentially transit-dependent population due to the services they may access and the agencies they may visit. As shown in Figure 14, veterans within Herkimer and Oneida counties largely live in higher concentrations just outside of the more urban areas and throughout the rural areas of the counties.
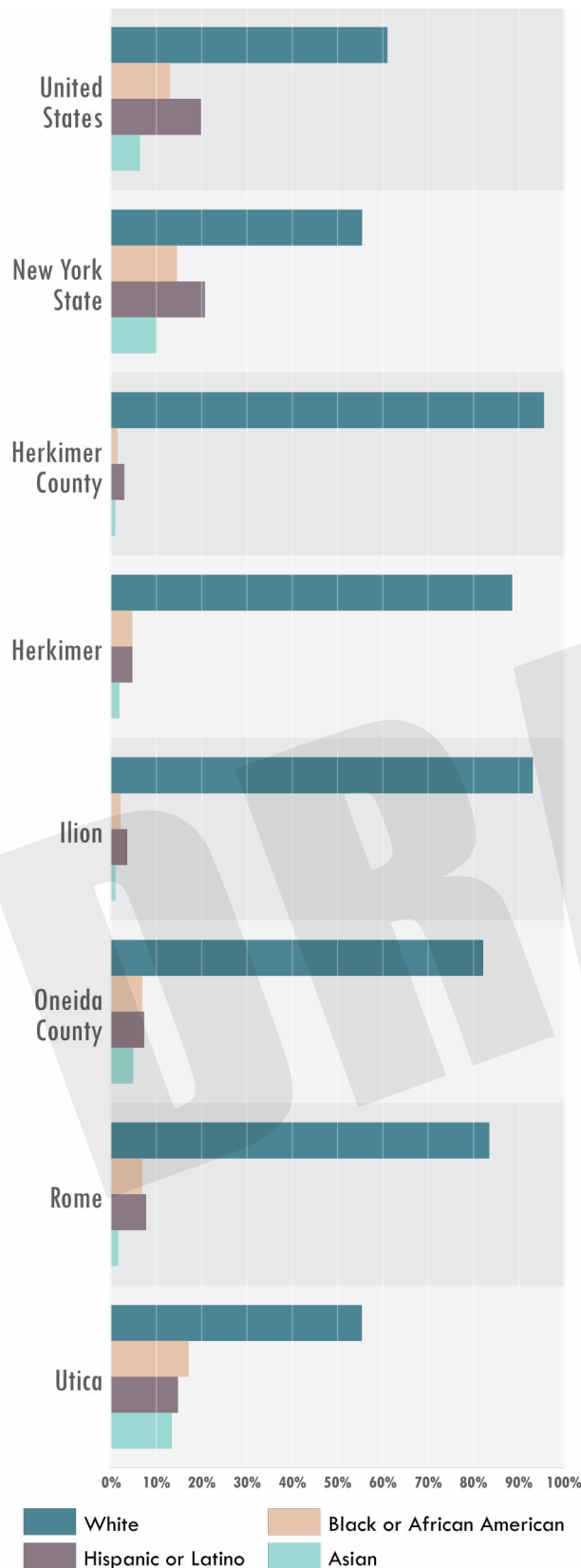
Ethnicity

In addition to age, ethnicity tends to be an important indicator of mobility needs. Since Black and Hispanic populations tend to have lower incomes than white populations, these populations can be assumed to have a higher demand for transportation services. Based on the 2020 Decennial Census, Figure 15 shows that in terms of ethnicity, Herkimer County and Oneida County are noticeably more homogenous than New York and the United States, with over 90 and 75 percent of the population identifying as white, respectively. In each county's more densely populated areas, including Herkimer, Ilion, and Rome, the white population makes up at least 79 percent of each area, except Utica, where the white population makes up approximately 52 percent. Utica's black or African American population is approximately 16 percent of its total, higher than the United States and New York State. Hispanic or Latino and Asian shares of the population are also highest in Utica, where they constitute approximately 14 and 13 percent, respectively.

Based on 2022 ACS 5-year estimates, the average number of non-white individuals in Oneida County was 20.3 percent. In Herkimer County, the same metric was 8.2 percent. Figure 15 provides a geographic breakdown of areas above or below the percentages. As shown in Figure 16, non-white populations are higher than average near the urban areas of counties such as Rome, Utica, and Herkimer.

Legend:
- White
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian

Figure 15. Ethnicity of Herkimer and Oneida Counties as Compared to Internal & External Figures (2020 Decennial Census)
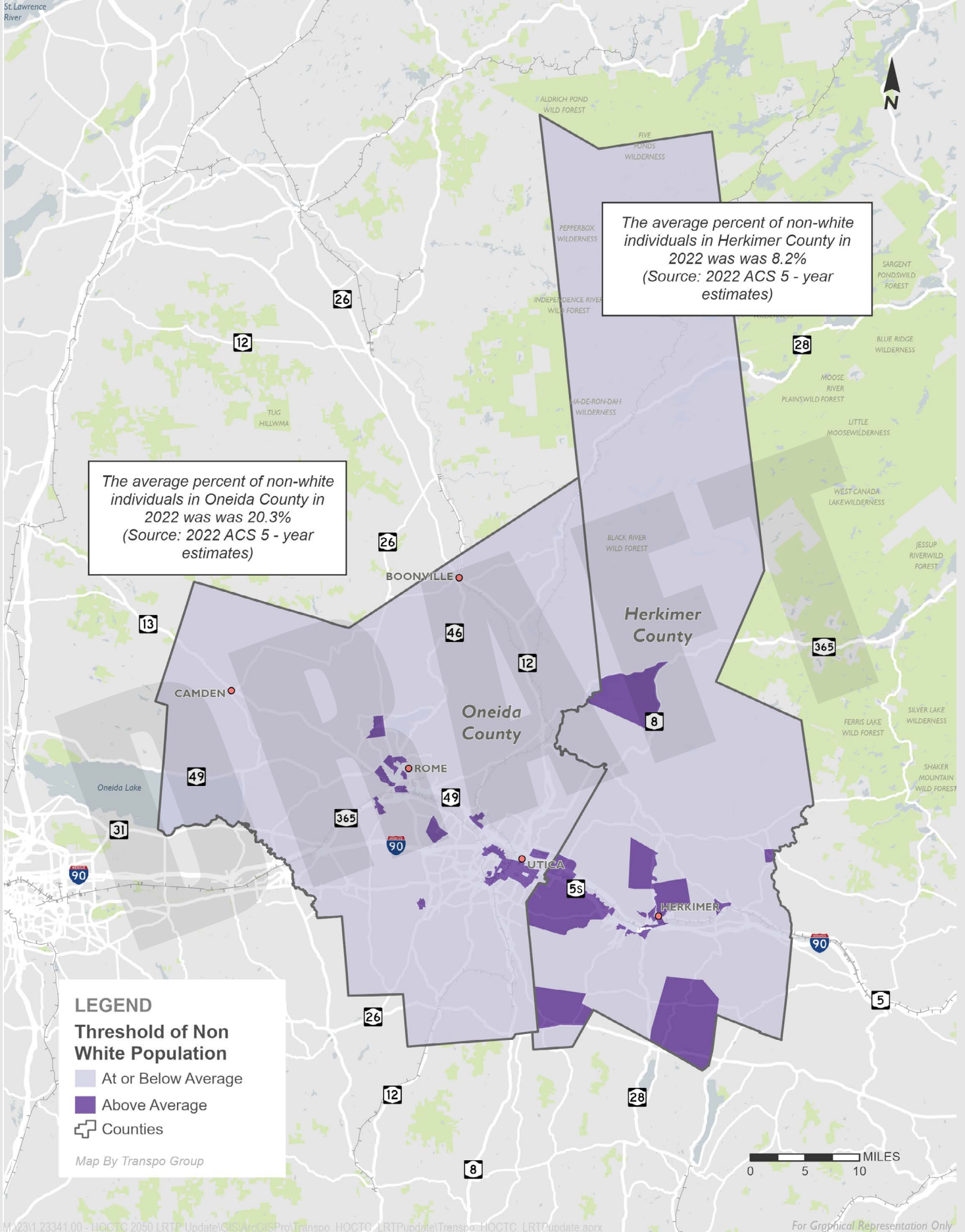
The average percent of non-white individuals in Herkimer County in 2022 was was 8.2%
(Source: 2022 ACS 5 - year estimates)

The average percent of non-white individuals in Oneida County in 2022 was was 20.3%
(Source: 2022 ACS 5 - year estimates)

Herkimer County

Oneida County

LEGEND

Threshold of Non White Population

- At or Below Average
- Above Average
- Counties

Map By Transpo Group

MILES
0   5   10

For Graphical Representation Only

Figure 16. *Non-White Population by Census Block Group Compared to County-Wide Averages*

Travel Patterns

Understanding travel patterns is a valuable dataset for identifying mobility opportunities that meet community needs, particularly in rural and small urban areas. Planners can identify service gaps and underserved areas in communities by analyzing where and how frequently people travel within them. Replica data was used as part of our efforts, a sophisticated tool that gives detailed, anonymized travel information. This data allows an understanding of travel behaviors and patterns across different population groups. The aggregate trip demand was filtered to isolate trips taken by older adults who do not have access to a vehicle. To better understand the travel patterns of people with disabilities, the locations of CENTRO paratransit destinations were assessed. Lastly, employment travel patterns were evaluated within Herkimer and Oneida counties and the region.

Travel Patterns for Older Adults with No Vehicle Access

Evaluating travel patterns for older adults, particularly those with no vehicle access, is essential because it ensures that the transportation needs of one of the most vulnerable segments of the population are met. Older adults often rely on public and community transportation to access essential services such as healthcare, grocery stores, and social activities, critical to their independence and quality of life. Without a clear understanding of their travel patterns, mobility planning could overlook this demographic's specific needs and preferences, leading to service gaps that can exacerbate isolation and reduce access to necessary resources.

For this analysis Replica data was filtered to isolate the travel patterns of older adults (65

and over) without access to a personal vehicle, illustrated in Figure 17. Replica is a travel pattern dataset that provides detailed insights into how people move within communities, typically using aggregated and anonymized mobile location data to model travel behaviors and patterns. Several vital patterns are observed in the figure:

- **Concentration of Trips**: The most notable travel patterns are concentrated around urban centers, specifically Rome, with many trips highlighted in green and yellow. This suggests a moderate to high demand in these areas, indicating that older adults in these localities actively travel despite lacking personal vehicle access.

- **High-Demand Corridors**: There are corridors of high trip demand, such as those red lines, suggesting frequent travel along key routes, including I-90 and other parallel east-west connections. The red lines, which represent the highest number of trips, are shorter in duration and concentrated within Rome and Herkimer. These trips are likely for local medical or daily shopping trips and highlight a localized demand for additional services to support the mobility needs of older adults.

- **Lower-Density Areas**: The areas with blue and green lines suggest moderate to lower trip demand. However, these trips often occur in more rural areas or neighborhoods where older adults are more dispersed and often choose to have less frequent travel needs because of cost and service availability.

- **Regional Connectivity**: The travel patterns extend beyond individual cities, connecting different urban centers across the counties shown. This indicates a need for regional transportation solutions to accommodate seniors' inter-city travel.

- **Geographic Gaps**: Significant areas lack marked lines, which may signify a lack of data, genuinely low demand, or areas currently underserved by public transit options.
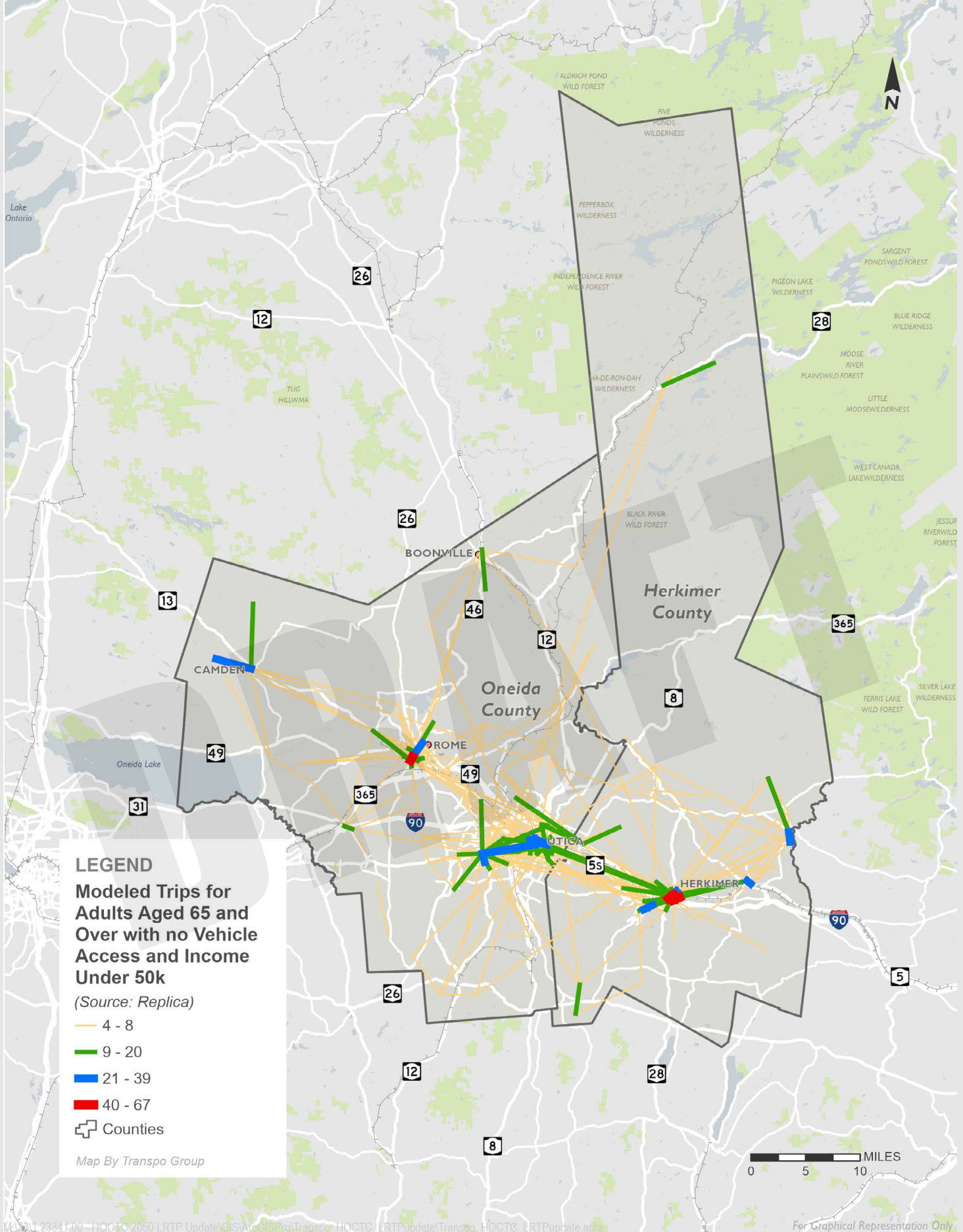
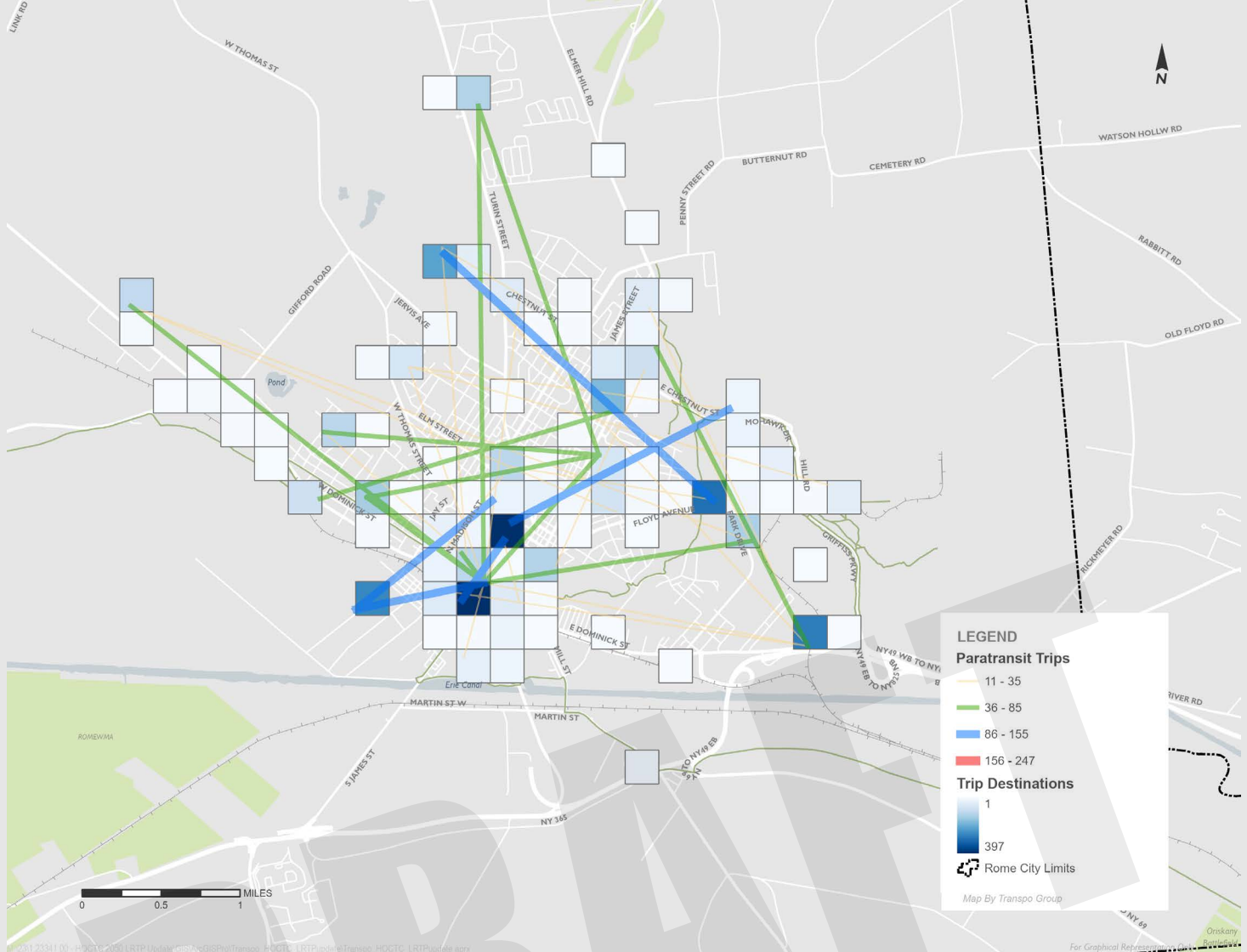**Figure 17.** *Estimated Trip Demand for Older Adults with No Vehicle Access*

Figure 18. *Top Rome Paratransit Origin-Destination Pairs and Trip Destinations*

Destinations of Paratransit Passengers

CENTRO provided data on frequent paratransit trip origins and destinations for the 12 months, dated June 1, 2021, through May 31, 2022. To protect rider privacy, trip origins and destinations were combined into "bins," represented by the squares shown in Figure 18 (Rome) and Figure 19 (Utica). The color of each bin represents how many paratransit trips ended in that area, while the lines connecting bins represent major paratransit origin-destination pairs. The top paratransit destinations in Rome include:

- Multi-family housing (Delta Luxury Apartments) and trailer home (Shady Grove Trailer Park) locations,
- Medical facilities (Rome Memorial Hospital and American Renal Associates),
- Shopping locations (Walmart and Mohawk Acres),
- YMCA/YWCA of Rome,
- Copper City Community Connection, and
- Mohawk Valley Community College.
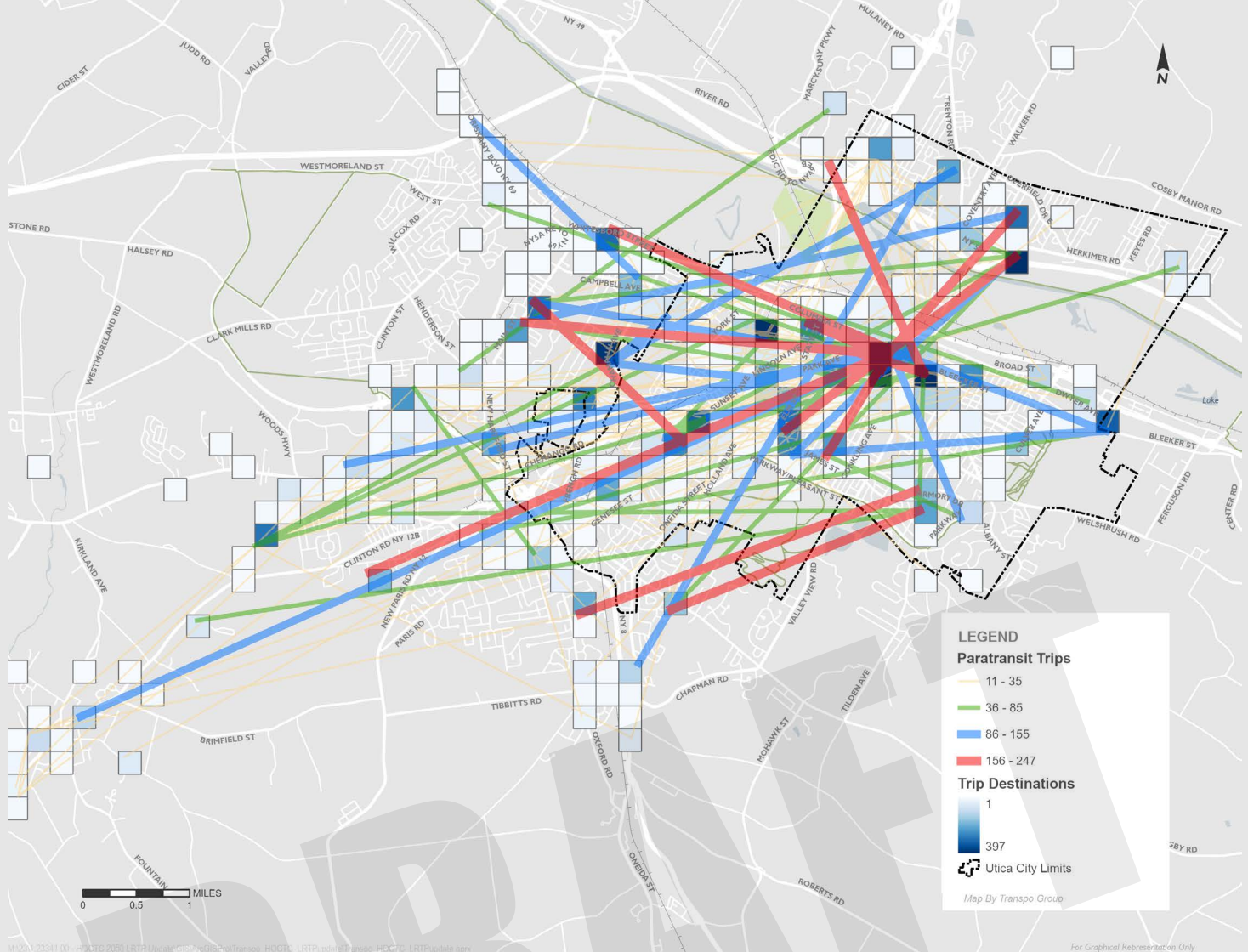
Figure 19. *Top New Hartford and Utica Paratransit Origin-Destination Pairs and Trip Destinations*

The top paratransit destinations in New Hartford and Utica include:

- Multi-family housing (Village Point Apartments and Candlewyck Apartments), senior living (Meadows Senior Living), and assisted living locations (The Link at Sunset),
- Medical facilities (Mohawk Valley Health System clinics, St. Lukes Hospital[1] and Slocum Dickson Medical Group, shopping and pharmacy locations (Walmart, Walgreens, and Riverside Center Shopping Mall),
- Recreation (FT Proctor Park),
- Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CABVI) program offices, health and wellness center, and
- Education and training destinations (Mohawk Valley Community College and BOCES Information and Technology Center).

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1   *St. Luke's Hospital in Utica closed on October 29, 2023, with some services still operating on its campus, such as the Rehabilitation and Nursing Center. Wynn Hospital, also located in downtown Utica, began operations on the same date, consolidating services from the former Faxton St. Luke's and St. Elizabeth Medical Centers.*

Table 7. *Journey to Work Patterns*

	Herkimer		Oneida	
Workers 16 Years and Older	28,312		100,768	
Employment Location	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
In State of Residence	28,114	99.3%	100,210	99.4%
In County of Residence	14,610	51.6%	88,185	87.5%
Outside County of Residence	13,504	47.7%	12,025	11.9%
Outside State of Residence	198	0.7%	558	0.6%
Means of Transportation	**Number**	**Percent**	**Number**	**Percent**
Car, Truck, or Van: drove alone	23,104	81.6%	82,230	81.6%
Car, Truck, or Van: carpooled	2,442	8.6%	8,576	8.5%
Public Transportation	252	0.9%	1,073	1.1%
Walked	1,178	4.2%	3,957	3.9%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, other	261	0.9%	897	0.9%
Worked at Home	1,075	3.8%	4,035	4.0%

Source: American Community Survey, 2022 Five-Year Estimates, Table B08130

Employment Travel Patterns

It is beneficial to account for the commuting patterns of residents intra- and inter-regionally. Table 7 presents the results of the Census Bureau's Journey to Work data, which provides the location of employment (in-county vs. out-of-county and in-state vs. out-of-state) and means of transportation to work. Residents of Oneida typically work in their county of residence, while just over half of the working residents of Herkimer stay in the county for work. Most (81.6%) residents in both counties drive alone to work. Approximately one percent of residents in the study area use transit for commuting. Next to the personal automobile, carpooling/vanpooling is the most common commute type at ~8.5% across the study area.

Public Engagement Activities

Agency/Community Engagement

The project team conducted six group interviews to understand the current gaps and need for accessible, efficient, and coordinated transportation services for seniors, people with disabilities, and vulnerable populations such as refugees and those with mental health issues. The agencies interviewed included organizations serving and representing older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes, including Herkimer County Veterans' Services Agency, Oneida County Workforce Development Program, Oneida County Mental Health/Substance Abuse Services, Herkimer County Department of Social Services, Oneida County Department of Family and Community Services Offices of Employment and Daycare, and The Center in Utica. Appendix X contains summaries of each interview, and Table 8 lists the interviewees, the meeting date, and any critical gaps or needs raised during the meeting.

Table 8. *Key Themes from Agency Engagement*

Interviewee	Interview Date	Key Themes
Oneida County Department of Family and Community Services Offices of Employment and Daycare	01/30/2024	Lack of coverage in rural areas affecting access to employment locations.
Oneida County Department of Mental Health – Substance Use Services	01/30/2024	Inefficiency of Medicaid cab services and the lack of direct origin-to-destination services and transportation availability to standing appointments, such as methadone clinics or dialysis centers.
Herkimer County Veteran's Services Agency	01/31/2024	Lack of ADA-accessible transportation, non-VA facility transport for veterans, services to recurring appointments, and to VA facilities in Syracuse.
Oneida County Workforce Development Program	01/31/2024	Transportation accessibility, particularly to bus stops and work locations (last-mile connectivity)
The Center Utica (Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees)	02/20/2024	Lack of public transportation options for employment during off-hours, especially for second shift and night-shift workers.
Herkimer County Department of Social Services	02/22/2024	Absence of a local fixed route bus system, leading to limited public transportation within Herkimer County.

Overarching themes discussed across agency interviews include:

- Transportation accessibility is a significant issue, especially in rural areas with limited public transit coverage, affecting employment opportunities and access to essential services.

- There is a persistent shortage of drivers, which affects the consistency and reliability of transportation services.

- Many are hindered by the lack of ADA-accessible vehicles and transportation services to non-VA-approved facilities for veterans.

- Innovative solutions, such as on-demand transportation options and technology-driven scheduling systems, are potential strategies for improving service accessibility and efficiency.

- Coordination among different agencies and service providers could be enhanced to utilize available resources better and address transportation gaps more effectively.

- There is a need for additional flexible and responsive transportation solutions that can cater to off-hour employment needs, such as second and night shifts, where public transportation is currently lacking.

The most prominent gaps and needs identified across the interviewed agencies include:

- Public transportation coverage needs to be improved in rural communities.

- The geographic spread of rural populations poses a challenge to service individuals effectively.

- Limited regional transportation, especially across county lines.

- There is a need for transportation services that cater to regular and recurring appointments beyond medical-focused destinations.

- A fixed-route bus system is noticeably absent in Herkimer County compared to Oneida County's CENTRO services.

- Driver shortages lead to inconsistencies in service availability and delivery.

- High transportation costs make particular services, like Uber and Lyft, impractical for the senior and lower-income populations.

- The costs of private transport options like Uber and Lyft are prohibitive for many in need.

- Volunteer and informal transportation arrangements are hindered by insurance and liability issues.

- Public transportation options during off-hours and outside urban centers need to be improved, creating barriers to employment.

Agency interviews highlight the need for more accessible and coordinated transportation services tailored to the targeted communities' schedules and life circumstances. The summaries emphasized the importance of flexibility in transit solutions and a systemic approach to leveraging technology, improving agency coordination, and addressing driver shortages to close these gaps.

Public Survey

A Community Survey was conducted between February 1 and March 1, 2024. Survey responses were collected digitally from the project website and in hard copy upon request by respondents and from Oneida County agencies such as 50 Forward Mohawk Valley, the People First Agency, the Housing Authority in the City of Utica. In total, 93 respondents completed surveys. A memorandum detailing the community survey statistics and findings is included in Appendix X. Survey respondents who completed the survey in hard copy are more representative of the groups that are the focus of this planning effort, suggesting while technology may play a role in improving mobility, it is crucial to also focus on bridging the digital divide for seniors, individuals with disabilities and lower-income populations.

The survey included categorical questions examining zip code, age, annual income, employment status, and veteran status. The categorical questions identified that:

- The vast majority of respondents are located in Oneida County.
- The most frequently reported age range was 50-59.
- The most common annual income category reported was 'Above $60,001'.
- Most respondents are employed.
- Most respondents are not veterans.
- Most respondents are not disabled but reported difficulty walking, climbing stairs, and "other" difficulties.
- Most respondents have a driver's license and access to a personal vehicle.
- The most common transportation option used regularly was "Personal Automobile."

Open-ended questions highlighted the following themes, pointing to the need for more flexible, dependable public transportation options that accommodate various schedules and routes. There is also an implicit need for transportation options that fill in the gaps when personal vehicles are unavailable, whether due to financial constraints, maintenance issues, or personal choice. The following summarizes recorded needs:

- **Accessibility and Connectivity:** Difficulties related to accessing transportation services, including lack of connection to sidewalks or other multimodal facilities.
- **Affordability Issues:** Concerns over the cost of private transportation and vehicle maintenance.

- **Service Availability:** More extended service hours for public transportation and better coordination of schedules are needed.
- **Infrastructure:** Lack of adequate bike infrastructure and safe pathways for non-car travel.
- **Door-to-Door Service:** There is a significant need for door-to-door service, especially for individuals with disabilities or health issues.
- **Weekend and Evening Service:** Public transportation availability is in demand on weekends and evenings.

Additionally, respondents provided several suggestions for improving mobility and public transportation accessibility. A summary of the potential recommendations includes:

- **Door-to-Door Service:** This is frequently mentioned, indicating a strong need for direct transportation services that pick up and drop off passengers at their desired locations.
- **One Place to Call for Transport:** Passengers need a centralized communication system to arrange all their transportation needs.
- **Online Access to Information:** Access to transportation schedules, booking options, and information online is a recurring theme.
- **Lower-Cost Transportation Services:** Cost is a barrier for some respondents, suggesting that more affordable transportation options are needed.
- **Service Availability on Weekends:** Respondents are concerned about a lack of transportation services on Saturdays and Sundays, which presents an opportunity for service expansion.

Tabling Events

3rd Annual Wellness Fair Summary

The Herkimer County System of Care organized the 3rd Annual Wellness Fair, which took place on May 23, 2024, at ARC Park in Herkimer, NY. The event aimed to inform the public about the Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) update and solicit feedback on transportation needs and gaps. It featured several agencies involved in the mental health community, with attendees, primarily children, participating in a passport activity to visit each booth. Staff and driver shortages, a lack of service options, and the need for employer-focused transit were among the major identified gaps. Attendees also expressed concern about the unreliability of local bus services and the need for improved emergency bus procedures, better transit options for students and their guardians, and increased support for disabled people and foster care families.

Senior Health Expo Summary

The Senior Health Expo occurred on May 29, 2024, at 220 Memorial Pkwy, Utica, NY, coinciding with National Senior Health and Fitness Day. The event, organized by 50 Forward Mohawk Valley, aimed to empower people over the age of 50 to live healthier lives. The Herkimer Oneida Counties Transportation Council (HOCTC) attended to learn about seniors' transportation needs. The major issues identified were staff and driver shortages, a lack of centralized information, and unreliable bus services, particularly the Bernie Bus. Seniors expressed a desire for affordable, on-demand transportation and increased service awareness. Attendees also expressed a need for more evening bus options and better signage at confusing stops.

Section 4: Needs Identification

The previous section outlined the methodology for gathering data, including surveys, public meetings, and stakeholder interviews, and the identified service gaps and barriers to mobility. These gaps and barriers, when left unaddressed, can significantly impact the lives of community members.

By examining existing transportation options and comparing them to the observed gaps and needs, the assessment has identified several vital needs requiring attention and improvement:

- Geographic availability of services, particularly in underserved rural areas.
- Driver shortages that limit the capacity to meet current demand.
- A lack of flexible service options that can adapt to varied and sometimes unpredictable needs.
- Insufficient publicly available transportation services result in gaps in coverage.
- Limited service hours, including a lack of weekend services and restricted access to essential activities and services.

This section summarizes five themes ("Needs") that emerged from the sources of information on unmet transportation needs in Herkimer and Oneida Counties. While there are many specific individualized needs for transportation services, these general needs summarize the overarching needs of those with mobility challenges within the study area.

Need #1
Staff & Driver Shortages

Limited staff and availability of drivers (CDL certified) to deliver services to those in need.

- Lack of available drivers (CDL certified)
- There is a need for additional staff to facilitate and coordinate transportation for those with mobility challenges.
- Drivers must be better prepared to deliver services to older adults and people with disabilities. This includes understanding best practices for providing support, handling conflict, and picking up and dropping off locations that may pose challenges.

Need #2
Geographic Availability of Services

Transportation services are not available in the geographic areas where they are needed.

- Limited rural services are available.
- Lack of available services across county lines (regional trips).
- Lack of centralized bus service in Herkimer County's northern and southern areas makes travel challenging for those without a private vehicle.
- The need for smaller buses that can handle the terrain of rural areas.

Need #3
Lack of Service Options

Limited transportation options for those who depend on mobility services (emphasis on older adults, people with disabilities, and those with healthcare needs).

- Over-reliance on ARC and Office of Aging, who have limited fleet and resources for significant needs.
- Paratransit services are unable to meet the needs of all individuals, particularly those with disabilities.
- Limited availability of ADA-accessible vehicles.
- Need for additional non-emergency medical transportation options.
- Lack of safe and accessible infrastructure for walking and biking.

Need #4

Lack of Centralized Transportation Information/Coordination

Information about travel options must be done across agencies, which makes it difficult to find all available services.

- Limited coordination amongst agencies leads to redundant or inefficient services.
- Users have difficulty understanding what services are available.
- There is a need for a 'mobility manager' or a dedicated individual who can coordinate across agencies, streamline information sharing, and ensure efficient service delivery. This role would involve overseeing the planning, implementation, and evaluation of transportation services and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders.
- Need for Employer-Focused Transit Options

Need #5

Transportation Options Need to be Improved for Those Relying on Transit to Work.

- Service hours don't align well with those relying on transit to get to/from work (no evening service).
- Potential opportunities for employer shuttles to provide options for those who cannot drive.
- Due to rising insurance costs, private transit shuttles have become too expensive. Therefore, coordination with employers and service agencies is needed.

Section 5: Development, Prioritization, and Evaluation of Strategies

In collaboration with participants in the interview sessions, the project team identified potential solutions to the identified needs and other HST improvements they would like to see in Herkimer and Oneida Counties. The most identified solutions included technology to support coordination, providing more flexible on-demand and demand-response transportation services, establishing a regional mobility management program or coordinator for all human services transportation populations, identifying and implementing best practices and lessons learned from other successful HST programs, and enhancing rider education and outreach.

Identified Needs Strategies

Need #1
Staff & Driver Shortages

1.A Develop and implement the joint strategy for recruiting and retaining paid and volunteer drivers. When executed effectively, this strategy can address the current driver shortages and ensure the continuity of our transportation services.

1.B Identify shared driver training and credentialing needs to determine opportunities for joint/coordinated training programs.

1.C Develop an incentive-based training and hiring program.

- Pay for participant CDL training with the agreement that the participant works for the area HST program for a specified time.

1.D Incentivize and certify advanced driver training for serving ADA-eligible riders, riders with mental health needs, and older adults. Make this available for existing and new drivers certified through an incentive program.

Need #2
Geographic Availability of Services

2.A Pilot a microtransit program to fill first and last-mile connections.

2.B Pilot zone-based microtransit services in low-density and rural areas that are difficult to serve with traditional fixed-route services.

2.C Develop a framework for a coordinated program for out-of-county medical transportation services.

- Convene relevant transportation and healthcare representatives.
- Identify processes and policies that need to be aligned to support cross-jurisdictional transfers.
- Identify key transfer points.
- Develop a plan for piloting a coordinated program.

2.D Establish a user-side subsidy or voucher program to allow riders in rural areas to use taxis or transportation network companies (TNCs such as Uber or Lyft).

2.E Coordinate with CENTRO to explore opportunities to expand the MOVE microtransit pilot beyond Rome to other parts of Oneida and Herkimer Counties.

Need #3
Lack of Service Options

3.A Support sustainability, stability, and enhancement of effective programs through funding and efforts that reduce administrative and technological burdens.

3.B Extend service zone for paratransit riders, above and beyond ADA requirements.

3.C Enhance service offerings to provide non-emergency medical transportation options for individuals who do not qualify for Medicaid.

3.D Enhance service offerings to provide more flexible options for individuals who do not qualify for paratransit but cannot use or do not have access to fixed-route services.

3.E Increase the number of ADA-accessible vehicles available across the full range of HST services.

3.F Establish a user-side subsidy or voucher program to allow riders in rural areas to use taxis or transportation network companies (TNCs such as Uber or Lyft).

3.G Coordinate with CENTRO to explore opportunities to expand the MOVE microtransit pilot beyond Rome to other parts of Oneida and Herkimer Counties.

3.H Expand fixed route or hybrid services in Herkimer County.

3.I Identify and prioritize investments in safe and ADA-accessible pedestrian and biking infrastructure to improve connectivity to transit options.

Need #4

Lack of Centralized Transportation Information/Coordination

4.A Establish a mobility coordination committee (as a sub-group of the TCC) where all agencies with shared human services clients meet regularly to identify challenges and develop solutions.

4.B Identify joint marketing efforts and methods to communicate information to passengers.

4.C Establish a mobility manager position to fill the role of improving communication and coordination between services and programs.

4.D Develop a transportation guide as a public education tool with information on all transportation services.

4.E Work with the TCC to explore the feasibility of a regional coordinated information and referral service/program, centralized dispatch system, and one-stop shop for information, including coordinating with 211 and other partners.

4.F Improve static and real-time traveler information for fixed-route services.

4.G Leverage translation services that are available through the Center through the use of improved technology.

Need #5

Transportation Options Need to be Improved for Those Relying on Transit to Work.

5.A Support the development of coordinated vanpool programs – either directly by employers or through assistance from CENTRO.

5.B Pilot zone-based microtransit services before/after the end of fixed-route services to allow access to work for those whose shifts start and end outside of service hours.

Strategies Evaluation

The TAC reviewed and discussed potential strategies at the May 30, 2024, TAC meeting. They were asked to assess and prioritize these strategies. The TAC's ranked and prioritized strategies were then evaluated and refined by HOCTC personnel. The table below presents a refined list of prioritized strategies. It is critical to note that strategies ranked "Low" in priority are no less valuable than those ranked "High" or "Medium." The priority ranking identifies which strategies should be pursued first. Furthermore, some specific implementation actions associated with the strategies may be less expensive or have a shorter implementation timeline than the overall strategy. Therefore, pursuing these actions in a shorter timeframe may be beneficial, even for strategies that rank "Low."

It should be noted that the presented strategies were intentionally designed to be open-ended, with the possibility of overlap, support, or eventual bundling. They are intended to provide potential project sponsors with ideas and insights into the types of projects that the TAC and HOCTC would prefer to see. These strategies aim to address the identified gaps and needs effectively and should be used to guide future project applications. Understanding these core values and priorities allows project sponsors better to align their proposals with the goals of closing gaps and meeting identified needs.

Table 8. *CHSTP Strategy Priorities*

Strategy Number	Strategy	High	Med	Low
1.A	Joint driver recruitment strategy		X	
1.B	Joint/coordinated training programs		X	
1.C	Incentive-based driver training and hiring program		X	
1.D	Incentive-based advanced driver training for serving ADA-eligible riders, riders with mental health needs, and older adults		X	
2.A	First and last mile microtransit	X		
2.B	Low-density and rural zone-based microtransit	X		
2.C	Out-of-county medical transportation coordination			X
2.D	Rural taxi or TNC user-side subsidy or voucher program		X	
2.E	Expansion of existing microtransit pilot	X		
3.A	Sustainability, stability, and enhancement of effective existing programs		X	
3.B	Extended service zone for paratransit riders		X	
3.C	Enhanced NEMT service offerings		X	
3.D	More flexible options for non-ADA-eligible individuals	X		
3.E	Increased number of ADA-accessible vehicles	X		
3.F	Rural taxi or TNC user-side subsidy or voucher program		X	
3.G	Expansion of existing microtransit pilot	X		
3.H	Expanded fixed route or hybrid services in Herkimer County	X		
3.I	Investments in safe walking and biking infrastructure	X		
4.A	Mobility coordination committee	X		
4.B	Joint marketing efforts and methods			X
4.C	Mobility manager position	X		
4.D	Transportation guide with information on all transportation services		X	
4.E	Feasibility study of a regional coordinated information, referral service/program, booking, and dispatch system		X	
4.F	Improved static and real-time traveler information for fixed-route services		X	
4.G	Translation of available services through the use of technology (the Center).		X	
5.A	Coordinated vanpool programs			X
5.B	Zone-based microtransit services before/after the end of fixed-route services to allow access to work		X	

Section 6: Recommended Action Plan and Refined Project Evaluation Process

Recommended Action Plan

The Recommended Action Plan describes more detailed and localized approaches to consolidating and implementing the highest prioritized strategies that address identified goals and needs. The Action Plan categorizes planning-level costs and outlines a broad implementation timeline. Costs are classified into three categories: capital, operational, and labor. Capital costs include expenses for vehicles, technology, and hardware. Ongoing expenses include maintenance, driver salaries, insurance, and recurring software subscriptions, which include turnkey microtransit services. Labor costs are divided into two categories: personnel costs, which account for the time and salaries of full-time, part-time, and volunteer employees, and institutional/organizational costs, which cover the time and coordination efforts of the agencies or departments involved. All cost information provided in this section is at a general planning level. No actual dollar amounts are included. The figures presented are designed to provide a general idea of the required level of investment.

The timeline for implementing these strategies is divided into four phases: micro (0-6 months), short (6 months to 1 year), medium (1-2 years), and long (3+ years). Each phase contains detailed descriptions of the steps required to advance the implementation process. The plan also goes into greater detail about preferred strategies, considers local context, and presents a package of strategies that can be implemented effectively. This comprehensive approach addresses all aspects of the project, from initial setup and capital investments to ongoing operational and labor requirements, resulting in a smooth and efficient implementation process.

Mobility Coordination Committee

Establishing a Mobility Coordination Committee would improve communication and coordination between agencies. This committee will serve as a forum for representatives from various transportation-related entities to discuss, agree on initiatives, share critical information, and coordinate their efforts. The ultimate goal is to break down agency silos, improve service coordination, and ensure resource efficiency, resulting in better transportation services for the community. The Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council (HOCTC) will lead the committee, including members of TCC's current Human Services Transportation Planning Technical Advisory Committee. This ensures that experienced individuals familiar with the region's transportation challenges and opportunities are involved. During the first three months, the committee could meet monthly to lay a solid foundation and address any immediate coordination issues. After the initial phase, the committee should hold quarterly meetings. This frequency will maintain momentum while allowing enough time to implement discussed initiatives and resolve ongoing projects. By forming this committee, HOCTC hopes to foster a collaborative environment where agencies can work together to achieve common goals, ensuring that the community benefits from a well-coordinated and efficient transportation system.

Relation to Other Action Items

Establishing a Mobility Coordination Committee can support the development of a Joint Driver Training and Recruitment program by providing a framework for local providers to coordinate. The Committee can support the development of new and expanded microtransit services through needs identification.

Costs

Capital

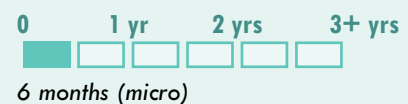Low — High

Operational

Low — High

Personnel

Low — High
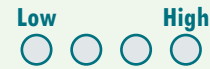
Include individuals to lead the committee, develop agendas, and manage the overall committee progress.

Institutional/Organizational

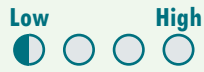Low — High

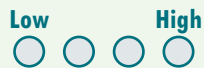*Includes staff time for committee facilitation and participation*

Timeline

0 — 1 yr — 2 yrs — 3+ yrs

6 months (micro)

Mobility Manager Position

Costs

Capital

Low   High

◑ ○ ○ ○

Operational

Low   High

○ ○ ○ ○

Personnel

Low   High

● ● ● ○

Includes the cost of filling the Mobility Manager role

Institutional/Organizational

Low   High

● ● ○ ○

With a Mobility Manager in place, agencies will still need to invest some time in coordination efforts with the Mobility Manager.

Timeline

0   1 yr   2 yrs   3+ yrs

6-12 months (short)

Creating a Mobility Manager position seeks to centralize oversight and coordination of regional transportation services. This role is critical for managing and coordinating services across multiple agencies, acting as a single point of contact, and facilitating communication and resource sharing. The primary goal is to improve transportation service management coordination and to serve as a central resource for both agencies and the general public.

The Mobility Manager role can be structured in one of two ways. It could be a part-time position with the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council (HOCTC), providing direct access to HOCTC resources and personnel, allowing for seamless integration with existing initiatives. Alternatively, the role could be delegated to a private mobility consultant with expertise in evaluating and coordinating regional mobility. This option would provide specialized knowledge and an outside perspective, potentially offering innovative solutions and best practices from other regions.

The Mobility Manager's initial responsibility will be to lead the newly established Mobility Coordination Committee. The Mobility Manager will oversee these efforts, ensuring improved communication and collaboration among the participating agencies.

As the primary point of contact, the Mobility Manager will facilitate communication among various agencies, ensuring that all parties are aligned and informed about transportation initiatives and services. This position will also require evaluating existing transportation services, identifying gaps and overlaps, and coordinating efforts to streamline and improve service delivery. By doing so, the Mobility Manager will help optimize available resources, ensuring that transportation services are delivered as efficiently as possible.

Another critical task for the Mobility Manager will be to establish a central repository of transportation services. This repository will function as a comprehensive database of available services, which can then be transformed into a searchable mobility hub website. This website will provide a user-friendly platform for the public to easily find information on available transportation options, increasing accessibility and convenience.

## Relation to Other High-Priority Strategies

This strategy supports the success of the Mobility Coordinating Committee and may reduce the coordination needs of the other strategies.

Joint Driver Recruitment and Training Program

This strategy aims to pool resources, share best practices, and provide comprehensive training programs, such as incentives for new drivers and advanced training for those who serve ADA-eligible passengers as professional CDL drivers. Workforce Development and CENTRO should lead the initiative, with local agencies providing additional support. The strategy is intended to maintain a steady supply of qualified CDL drivers, improve service reliability, and meet the community's expanding transportation needs. As identified through agency interviews and articulated by TAC members, the transit industry faces significant driver shortages, impacting service reliability and the ability to meet increasing demand for transportation services. A collaborative effort among local transit agencies is essential to address this issue. By pooling resources and expertise, agencies can develop a robust recruitment and training program that attracts and retains qualified drivers.

Establishing a centralized recruitment effort is an essential component of this strategy. By coordinating the efforts of various local transit agencies, the program can better reach potential candidates and streamline the hiring process. This approach enables the creation of a larger, more diverse pool of applicants who can be evaluated and trained to meet the specific requirements of public transportation. The emphasis on collaborative efforts also allows for sharing innovative recruitment techniques and best practices, making the overall process more efficient and effective.

In addition to recruitment, the program prioritizes training, especially in areas that require specialized skills, such as driving for ADA-eligible riders. Comprehensive training programs could be developed, including New York State Commercial Drivers License (CDL) certification and other required qualifications. These programs aim to provide drivers with the skills required to handle a wide range of transit scenarios, ensuring a high level of service for all passengers. The emphasis on advanced training improves service quality and increases driver confidence and competence, allowing them to be more effective in their roles. The program ensures compliance with state regulations and standards by requiring drivers to obtain and maintain their New York State CDLs.

The initiative includes various incentives to retain drivers and reduce turnover to make public transportation driving positions more appealing. These incentives may include competitive pay, benefit packages, traditional working hours, and opportunities for advancement. By addressing both the immediate need for qualified drivers and the long-term goal of retaining them, the strategy seeks to build a stable and dependable workforce. This comprehensive approach is critical for ensuring the quality and dependability of transit services, which ultimately benefits the entire community.

Costs

Capital

Low — High
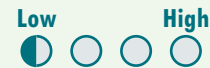
This may include the purchase of software to help manage shared resources

Operational

Low — High

Includes the cost of incentives for drivers and providing training

Personnel

Low — High

May eventually include a part-time staffer to manage and deliver the program

Institutional/Organizational

Low — High

Identifying coordination opportunities (cataloging personnel and vehicle resources, training needs, and facilitating discussions between agencies), developing the training program

Timeline

0 — 1 yr — 2 yrs — 3+ yrs

18-24 months (mid)

Relation to Other High-Priority Strategies

Driver recruitment and training are critical to the reliability and sustainability of existing services and the ability to expand the current microtransit pilot to provide first and last-mile microtransit services in the future.

Expansion of Existing Microtransit Pilot

💵 Costs

Capital

Low   **High**

●●●○

Includes the purchase of at least two new vehicles

Operational

Low   **High**

●●●●

Includes the cost of operating the new services and monitoring performance

Personnel

Low   **High**

●●○○

Includes the cost of at least two new drivers

Institutional/Organizational

Low   **High**

●●○○

Includes the cost of coordination with local agencies

📅 Timeline

0	1 yr	2 yrs	3+ yrs

■■■□□

1-2 years (medium)

0	1 yr	2 yrs	3+ yrs

■■■■■

3+ years (long)
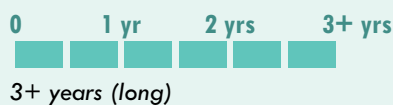
Expanding the current MOVE microtransit pilot program, such as CENTRO's initiative in Rome, could significantly improve public transportation coverage, particularly in underserved rural and low-density communities. This expansion could implement a zonal structure, each zone serving as a local microtransit circulator. These zones, strategically defined to include rural communities in Herkimer and Oneida counties, could provide flexible, demand-responsive transportation within their boundaries and to specific key destinations outside of them. Population density, geographic barriers, and the distribution of essential services will determine the proposed zones, ensuring comprehensive coverage and optimal service delivery. Potential zones should be tailored to meet the specific transportation needs of Herkimer and Oneida County residents.

For example: within each zone, the microtransit service will serve as a local microtransit "circulator," allowing seamless transportation between local destinations. Key destinations within each zone will concentrate on essential services like grocery stores, other shopping destinations, medical facilities, and government offices. Additionally, the service will provide connectivity to specific locations outside each zone, allowing residents to access services that are not available in their immediate area. For example, residents of rural parts of Herkimer or Oneida County could travel to a medical facility or shopping center in Utica or Herkimer, increasing their access to critical resources.

With assistance from HOCTC and other human service agencies, CENTRO should lead this expansion effort to ensure seamless integration and operational efficiency. The operational framework will include increasing the vehicle fleet, implementing advanced dispatch and routing technology, obtaining funding from state and federal grants, and fostering partnerships with local businesses and organizations. Community engagement will also be critical, with outreach initiatives to inform residents about the new services and collect feedback for continuous improvement. This expansion is expected to provide numerous benefits, including improved accessibility for rural residents, increased transportation flexibility, and support for local economic development by facilitating access to job opportunities and boosting local businesses. The initiative will ultimately benefit rural communities by lowering transportation barriers and improving the quality of life for residents in Herkimer and Oneida counties.

Relation to Other High-Priority Strategies

The Mobility Coordination Committee and the creation of a mobility management position may be valuable resources in determining the most effective way to set up new microtransit services.

Current Project Evaluation Process

The current process for projects to be eligible for 5310 funding is as follows:

- In the fall, HOCTC emails all TCC members about projects that propose to use 5310 funding.
- The applicants write up the projects and submit them to HOCTC.
- HOCTC revises Appendix 1 of the HSTP, which goes through the adoption process.
- The updated HSTP reflects the new projects submitted by TCC members, making those projects eligible for 5310 funding.

When the applicants respond to the NYSDOT call for projects, the applicants cite the HOCTC HSTP. NYSDOT determines whether the project is eligible and sends projects back to HOCTC for evaluation. HOCTC, following the NYSDOT requirements for the review committee, puts together a committee (which may include external representatives such as DOT Region 2 staff and Office of Aging staff). The HOCTC committee reviews and scores projects and submits these evaluations to NYSDOT. NYSDOT sends HOCTC suggestions about what should be funded according to NYSDOT criteria. HOCTC has one last opportunity to review these NYSDOT recommendations and provide further input to NYSDOT based on HOCTC's preferences and priorities.

The current process does not include project screening for HOCTC-specific criteria, including potential localized issues, and only looks at NYSDOT criteria.

NYSDOT criteria vary by project type but include those related to:

- Primary purpose
- Customer demographics
- Performance measures
- Public participation and coordination
- Past performance in the 5310 program

Refined Project Evaluation Process

To better reflect the unique needs of the area served by HOCTC, HOCTC is employing an updated evaluation process for projects requesting 5310 funding. The updated process is as follows:

- HOCTC will identify a standing evaluation committee. This committee may be a sub-group of the TCC or a stand-alone committee.
- HOCTC will send out a call for 5310 projects. This call will be shared with TCC members but not limited to TCC members. The call will include all evaluation criteria against which the projects will be scored, including NYSDOT and HOCTC criteria.
- The HOCTC evaluation committee will evaluate each submitted project against the established criteria. Based on that score, projects will be given a score and priority.
- The HOCTC evaluation will share the project evaluation outcome with project applicants, allowing applicants to revise the proposed project. The committee will re-score revised projects. (Optional step)
- HOCTC will revise Appendix 1 of the HSTP to include projects and their priority categories. This revision goes through the adoption process.

Next, as with the current process, when the project applicants respond to the NYSDOT call for projects, the applicants will cite the HOCTC HSTP as evidence of eligibility. NYSDOT will have access to the project priority category in the HOCTC HSTP. When NYSDOT sends the projects back to HOCTC for evaluation, the HOCTC evaluation committee will determine if there have been any substantive changes since the project's inclusion in Appendix 1 and re-score, if necessary, before submitting the project evaluations back to NYSDOT.

This new process will allow HOCTC to ensure that the projects submitted for 5310 funding respond to the needs and opportunities identified in the HSTP while still meeting the NYSDOT requirements.

Evaluation Criteria for Prioritizing Projects

While each of the strategies identified above would help improve travel options and experiences for people using human services transportation in the HOCTCs area, some may be more effective or feasible than others. To help prioritize these strategies and provide guidance for future project evaluation, the project team developed and refined evaluation criteria in coordination with the project's TAC and HOCTC staff.

The project team provided example evaluation criteria to the TAC and asked the TAC to rank the prioritization criteria. Because these criteria were not finalized or included key performance measures considered by the federal 5310 program and NYSDOT, the activity aimed to better understand the TAC's local priorities. Among criteria related to program purpose and outcomes, the TAC ranked example criteria as follows:

1. Serves special needs, populations, and areas of high transit dependence

2. Serves regional needs, including connections to HOCTC region from other counties

3. Utilizes innovation processes, programs, and tools that improve efficiency and effectiveness

4. Serves bi-county needs, including connections between Herkimer and Oneida counties

5. Serves local needs, includes trips entirely within Herkimer or Oneida counties

6. Coordinate and collaborate with other organizations, locally and regionally

7. Financial sustainability of the project, resulting cost savings from the project, leveraging of other funding sources

The weights accompanying each criterion in Table 9 reflect the TAC priorities. The primary purpose of the Coordinated HSTP is to identify and document the transportation needs of key populations. To coordinate investments to meet those needs, all projects considered for 5310 funding should address the need identified in Section X, even if the project is outside the specific strategies mentioned in Section Y.

As discussed further in Section 6, these criteria guide strategy prioritization. In the future, the HOCTC HST Evaluation Committee will use these criteria to score and rank local project submissions.
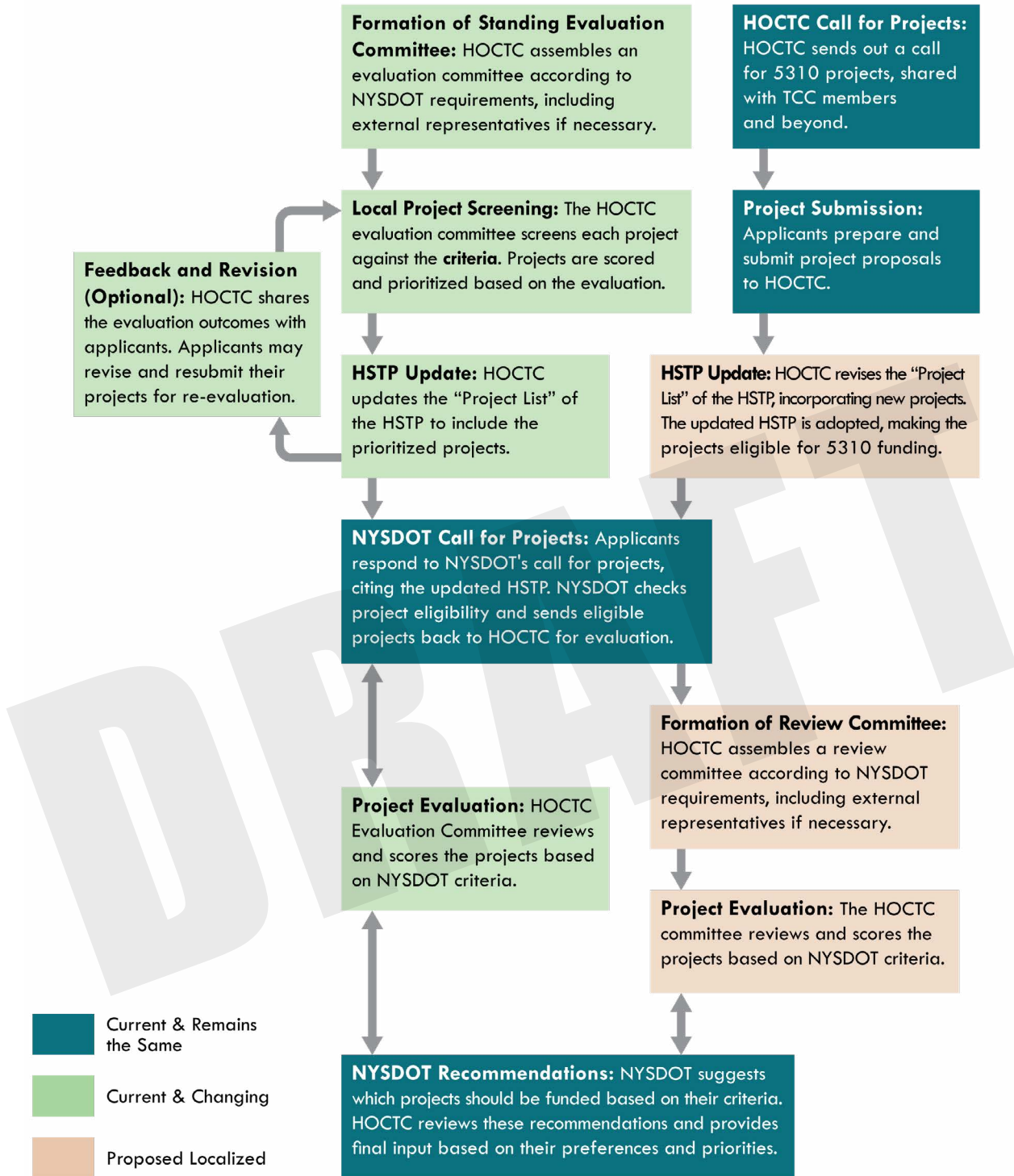
Formation of Standing Evaluation Committee: HOCTC assembles an evaluation committee according to NYSDOT requirements, including external representatives if necessary.

HOCTC Call for Projects: HOCTC sends out a call for 5310 projects, shared with TCC members and beyond.

Local Project Screening: The HOCTC evaluation committee screens each project against the **criteria**. Projects are scored and prioritized based on the evaluation.

Project Submission: Applicants prepare and submit project proposals to HOCTC.

Feedback and Revision (Optional): HOCTC shares the evaluation outcomes with applicants. Applicants may revise and resubmit their projects for re-evaluation.

HSTP Update: HOCTC updates the "Project List" of the HSTP to include the prioritized projects.

HSTP Update: HOCTC revises the "Project List" of the HSTP, incorporating new projects. The updated HSTP is adopted, making the projects eligible for 5310 funding.

NYSDOT Call for Projects: Applicants respond to NYSDOT's call for projects, citing the updated HSTP. NYSDOT checks project eligibility and sends eligible projects back to HOCTC for evaluation.

Formation of Review Committee: HOCTC assembles a review committee according to NYSDOT requirements, including external representatives if necessary.

Project Evaluation: HOCTC Evaluation Committee reviews and scores the projects based on NYSDOT criteria.

Project Evaluation: The HOCTC committee reviews and scores the projects based on NYSDOT criteria.

Current & Remains the Same

Current & Changing

Proposed Localized

NYSDOT Recommendations: NYSDOT suggests which projects should be funded based on their criteria. HOCTC reviews these recommendations and provides final input based on their preferences and priorities.

Figure 20. *Current & Localized 5310 Project Process*

Table 9. *Project Evaluation Criteria and Weights*

Category	#	Criteria	Evaluation Guidance	Weight
	1	Fills need(s) identified in NYSDOT 5310 application	How well does the project perform against NYSDOT performance measures?[1]	15
Needs Addressed by Project	2	Fills need(s) identified in planning process for coordinated public transit-human services public transportation plan	Refer to needs assessment for coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. (Section 1 and 4)	20
	3	Serves special needs populations and/or areas of high transit dependence	Refer to maps of persons with disabilities, seniors, youth, households without vehicles, low-income populations, minority populations and transit dependency needs index. (Section 2)	15
	4	Serves regional needs, including connections to other counties	How well does the project address regional needs? (Section 4; Goal #2 and 3)	10
	5	Serves bi-county needs	How well does the project address bi-county needs? (Section 4; Goal #2 and 3)	10
	6	Serves local needs; includes trips entirely within Herkimer County or Oneida County	How well does the project address local needs? (Section 4; Goal #2 and 3)	10
Efficiency and Effectiveness	7	Uses innovative programs, processes and tools that improve efficiency and/or effectiveness	Score the application based on the service or programs proposed innovation could be technological or other innovation. (Section 4; Goal #4)	10
	8	Coordinates and/or collaborates with other organizations, locally and/or regionally.	Evaluate the project based on documented coordination with and/or support from other organizations. (Section 4; Goal #1 and 4)	5
	9	Improves financial sustainability, results in cost savings, or leverages other funding sources and volunteer support	Evaluate the application using this cost related criterion.	5

1   https://www.dot.ny.gov/divisions/policy-and-strategy/public-transportation/specialized-transportation/5310

Appendix A: HSTP TAC List

First Name	Last Name	Agency
Anita	Eannace	People First
Art	Plantz	The Arc Oneida-Lewis Chapter
Ashley	Paciello	ACCES-VR
Eunice	Beaton	Katherine Luther Residential Health Care & Rehabilitation Center (a member of Community Wellness Partners)
Brian	Patterson	Oneida Nation
Bryan	Ehlinger	Valley Health Services
Cassie	Winter	Rome Memorial Hospital (d/b/a Rome Health)
Brenda	Diass	Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CNYRTA)/Centro
Lenora	D'Apice	Katherine Luther Residential Health Care & Rehabilitation Center (a member of Community Wellness Partners)
Dave	Peters	The Arc Oneida-Lewis Chapter
Dean	Jones	The Arc Herkimer
Dona	Kishimoto	The Center
Edward	Klesse	Oneida County Office for the Aging
EJ	Moses	Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CNYRTA)/Centro
Emily	Ofalt	Oneida County Department of Mental Health
James	Goveia	NYS Department of Transportation Region 2
Jesse	Bergevin	Oneida Nation
John	Edwards	Sitrin Health
Julie	Byrne	Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
June	Hanrahan	Oneida County Office for the Aging
Joseph	Kaczor	NYS Department of Transportation Region 2
Kari	Johnson	50 Forward Mohawk Valley
Kathy	Fox	Herkimer County Office for the Aging
Kelly	Walters	50 Forward Mohawk Valley
Kevin	Crosley	The ARC Herkimer
Laura	Misita	Oneida Nation
Linda	Biata	Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CNYRTA)/Centro
Lisa	Mastracco	Resource Center for Independent Living Herkimer
Lisanne	Divine	The Center
KC	Martin	Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CNYRTA)/Centro
Maureen	Petrie	Catholic Charities Herkimer
Michael	Lamb	The Arc Herkimer
Michael	Romano	Oneida County Office for the Aging
Nancy	Levy	Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped
Ray Anthony	Mungo	MV Health System
Rae	Maxson	Catholic Charities Herkimer
Sara	Miller	MV Health System
Sean	Miri	Oneida County Department of Mental Health
Sharon	Heyboer	NYS Department of Transportation Region 2
Steve	Bulger	Ican - Integrated Community Alternatives Network
Susan	Streeter	Copper City Community Connection
Tara	Spraker	Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CNYRTA)/Centro
Allie	Tomasi	Presbyterian Home
Vin	Veter	The Arc Oneida-Lewis Chapter
Fanyu	Wang	NYS Department of Transportation Region 2

Appendix B: TAC Meeting Presentations

DRAFT

What is a Human Service Transportation (HST) or Coordinated Plan?

Human Services Transportation Plan

- Required for use of Federal Section 5310 Funding
- Focused on Older Adults, Persons with Disabilities, and Lower Income Populations
- Covers all areas of Herkimer and Oneida Counties
- Maximizes Resources Through Coordination Among Stakeholders

Coordinated Planning Process

Data Collection & Analysis

- Demographic characteristics
- Current human services transportation inventory

Public Information & Outreach

- Stakeholder/Passenger Listening Sessions
- Agency Interviews
- Online Survey
- Draft Plan Public Meeting

Needs & Gaps Assessment

- Synthesize data and public outreach
- Document existing needs
- Identify gaps

Project List, Evaluation, & Plan

- Develop project list to address needs and gaps
- Evaluate criteria for project prioritization
- List enables submission for NYSDOT 5310 program

What is the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)?

Roles of TAC Members

CONNECTORS   GUIDES   BROADCASTERS   REVIEWERS

- Subsidiary of the LRTP TAC
- TAC Meetings (*virtual/in-person*):
  - Meeting #1 – Project Kick-Off
  - Meeting #2 – Needs & Gaps
  - Meeting #3 – Project List & Evaluation

Outreach & Engagement

Collaboration on Plan Development

COLLABORATIVE EFFORT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Leverage past planning efforts   Develop a series of technical papers that can be incorporated into eventual plan

Churches   Veteran Groups   Shared-Use Vehicles (Uber/Lyft)

Assisted Living Homes   Public Transit

Task Objectives
- Gather critical community feedback in a variety of formats to ensure that all populations and stakeholders are represented during the development of the plan
- Clearly share project information with the public

Task Work Steps
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – 3 meetings
- In-person Listening Sessions – 3 sessions
- Agency Interviews – 5 interviews
- Online Platform and Community Survey
- Draft Plan Public Meeting

Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis
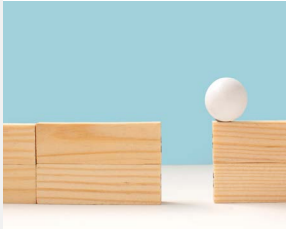
Task Objectives
- Develop a complete picture of service gaps and needs for all users, particularly those with disabilities, low-income, or seniors, based on the qualitative and quantitative data collection efforts

Task Work Steps
- Evaluate the previously completed CTP-HSTP to identify progress made on recommendations
- Summary of unmet transportation needs identified from outreach efforts and data review

Project Evaluation List

Task Objectives
- Identify and prioritize projects that will address the mobility needs of Herkimer and Oneida Counties' underserved populations based on the identified gaps and needs

Task Work Steps
- Develop a refined list of existing and new projects and provide key project details such as meeting needs, effectiveness, and relative cost
- Develop project evaluation and prioritization criteria

Evaluation Process

Funding

Needs

Community Priorities

Gaps

Plan Preparation and Presentation

Task Objectives
• Develop a CPT-HSTP Plan that goes above and beyond federal requirements while improving mobility options for seniors, people with disabilities, and Herkimer and Oneida Counties' residents.

Task Work Steps
• Develop draft CPT-HSTP Plan for County review, including all items from previous Tasks included within the report or attached as Appendices
• Post the draft Plan for public input
• Finalize the CPT-HSTP Plan

QUESTIONS?

Next Steps

- Inventory of existing 5310 funded providers and services
- Collect updated socio-economic/demographic datasets
- Develop community survey
- Agency Interviews
- Stakeholder/passenger listening sessions

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Boehlert Center at Union Station
321 Main Street, Utica, NY 13501
Phone: 315.798.5710 E-mail: transplan@ocgov.net
Director: Dana R. Crisino, AICP

Minutes for February 1, 2024
Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council
Transportation Coordination Committee Meeting
Oneida County Department of Planning Conference Room

Administered by: Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council (HOCTC) MPO

Call to order at 9:02 AM made by Julie Richmond, HOCTC

1. Welcome and Introduction
Julie Richmond welcomed everyone and introductions were completed.

Agency Members Present

Kathy Fox	Director, Herkimer County Office for the Aging
Bren Daiss	Director of Special Projects and Planning, Centro
Susan Streeter	Copper City Community Connection
Lisanne Divine	Traffic Safety Manager, The Center – Utica
Sharon Heyboer	Project Manager, NYSDOT Region 2
Ray Anthony Mungo	Transportation Supervisor, Senior Network Health MVHS
Kelly Walters	Executive Director, 50 Forward Mohawk Valley
Ashley Paciello	Integrated Employment Specialist 2, ACCES-VR
Dave Peters	The Arc Center
Dana Crisino, MBA, AICP	Director, HOCTC
Julie Richmond, MPA	Transportation Program Manager, HOCTC
Barb Hauck	Principal Planner, HOCTC
Adam Palmer, MBA	Associate Planner, HOCTC
Amy Heiderich	Senior Planner, HOCTC
Christopher Titze, AICP/PP	HSTP Task Lead, Transpo Group

2. **MPO Director's Report,** presenter: Dana Crisino, Director, HOCTC
   - Safe Streets for All (SS4A) is a safety action plan that gives a baseline analysis of the local roads that fall under state-level roads. The plan will identify hotspots and safety issues on these local roads throughout Oneida and Herkimer Counties.
     - The goal is to analyze to build an implementation strategy which is educational, engineering changes, or the community features around where accidents are happening.
     - Additional Federal Funds are available for the implementation of projects for the road system within Herkimer and Oneida Counties. This project is meant to be layered upon and to be able to deliver safety upgrades throughout the two-county region.

1

- The plan has a 12-month timeframe until completion and approval. HOCTC is hoping to go in for implementation funding in 2025.
- Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is a 20-year planning document that is the foundation for the MPO.
  - This is updated every five years; the planning window is 2025-2045.
  - The Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) is rolled into the LRTP, using the same consultants.
  - The LRTP includes everything involved in and around transportation such as where people are moving to and from.
  - Many people have seats on committees and public engagement will be coming up soon with workshops and other activities.
  - The will need to be completed for 2025.

3. **Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities,** presenter: Barb Hauck, Principal Planner, HOCTC
   - HOCTC is in the process of reviewing the 5310 applications to Appendix I of the HSTP. These are due to the Department of Transportation by February 5, 2024. The projects do need to be in Appendix 1 of the Coordinated Plan, so anyone who submitted a project already is set.
   - NYSDOT in Albany determines initial eligibility. Administered by NYSDOT the scoring and ranking are completed by the MPO review committee that Barb Hauck is facilitating. The rules are dictated by the NYSDOT for procedures with a short turnaround.
   - Once the committee scores the requests, they get submitted to the DOT. The DOT has its criteria to try to fund everyone.
   - The HSTP is in the process of being updated with completion by September 2024 for the GP&L meeting for a vote.
   - HOCTC would want the TCC to review at least 30 days before this.
   - Due to the update, the 5310 applications for 2025 will be due in June of 2024 so they can be included in the updated HSTP. This is earlier than usual.
     - HOCTC will be sending information about the 5310 applications soon.

4. **HSTP Coordinated Plan Update** presenter: Julie Richmond, Transportation Program Manager, HOCTC
   - Chris Titze and his team are updating the HSTP for the timeframe of 2025-2028 and will be coordinating with the TCC.
   - The list of TCC and TAC meetings was sent out. HOCTC will get attendance and membership information from the December 2023 meeting to compare with current membership and send the meeting information to whoever didn't get it.
   - The consultant, Transpo Group, in coordination with HOCTC has been conducting targeted one-on-one stakeholder interviews. Summaries for those will be available at the next TAC meeting.
   - The next TAC meeting will be held on March 28, 2024.
   - Review of the TAC roles and responsibilities:

2

- The HSTP is a locally developed plan
- Communication with community members
- Agency connectors between agencies and the consulting team and broadcasters for the plan
- Assist with public engagement and be reviewers of the plan
- The project website can be found here: https://oneida-county-hstp-transportation-hoccpp.hub.arcgis.com/
  - The website will become public-facing when the survey materials are complete. This will be shared with the TCC to distribute to other agencies.
    a. If anyone requires a hard copy, these will be made available as well.
- There will be a draft by the May 30, 2024, final TAC meeting to wrap this plan up by the June meeting.
- Calendar invites will be sent out two weeks prior to the meeting with an agenda.
- There will be no July meeting but after this break, a draft of the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update will be sent to TCC members for review and comment.
- HSTP agency targeted interviews are in process. Where possible, we tried to get the two sister agencies that represent Oneida and Herkimer Counties to interview together.
- Transpo Group is also analyzing data for the existing conditions report.
  - These will be available for the March 28, 2024 meeting.

5. **Open Forum for Committee and Discussion**
   - **TCC/HSTP Project Steering Committee (PSC) Membership**
     - A list of current active and inactive TCC members was distributed and attendees were asked to review the list and add any person or agency that is not being represented. Please fill in any needs or gaps in terms of contacts to add. Also, anyone that no longer holds the position listed can be deleted.
   - **Activity #1 – Needs and Gaps**
     - Comments will be incorporated into the HSTP update and will not be limited to what is on paper
     - Of the 12 identified needs and gaps in the 2021-2024 HSTP, none of the needs have been met, some are in progress, and most are still unmet, with several being more prominent than others.
     - Comments:
       a. The 5310 process is rigorous and difficult for smaller organizations to complete. Agencies would like someone else to purchase their vehicles. It would be easier to have a larger agency apply and supply the vehicles to the smaller agencies. There was agreement among agencies.
       b. Recruiting volunteer drivers is an ongoing issue that all agencies are trying to manage, even if there are available vehicles to use.

3

The volunteers are 55+ and it is more difficult to recruit post-COVID. The need for volunteers is the biggest issue for some agencies.

c. There is also an issue with not having enough paid drivers.

d. Uber and Lyft were suggested as a contracting process with a voucher system for both rural and urban areas. This can provide more flexibility for the agency and rural clients.

e. There is an issue of ADA compliance with Uber and Lyft. If someone is wheelchair-bound, they would need assistance with their wheelchair transport and getting into and out of the car in many cases.

f. There are services available that there is a person on the ride as well, but not easy to find the services. The client needs to be able to select a language group.

g. There was not much concern for consolidating bus maintenance and other services. Centro is working on consolidating Utica and Rome bus services.

h. There is a new program called Go-Go Grandparent that trains drivers to assist the aging population. The service is not readily available in this area.

- **Activity #2 – Strategies and Priorities for Implementation**
  - Comments will be incorporated into the HSTP update and will not be limited to what is on paper

    a. The Center would like to see more multilingual resources and education in the transportation sector.

    b. Smaller buses and vans for employees to be transported to their places of employment in addition to having reliable transportation at the beginning and end of shifts for larger employers.

    c. Biking within the cities needs to be made safer, providing a bike to an individual if they reside in and work within city limits.

    d. One employer had everyone scheduled on one of two 12-hour shifts and hired cabs to transport them, but it didn't work out.

    e. There should be a central location for busing for certain employers

    f. There is one company that is half a mile off the bus route, and they need assistance in getting the bus to go that extra half mile to get employees to work on time.

    g. There is an issue of missing sidewalks that make it unsafe to get places, especially for elderly people or anyone in a wheelchair. DOT is addressing the connectivity of sidewalks, especially close to medical facilities, Burrstone Rd. is an example.

    h. There needs to be a connection once a rider gets off the bus that is ADA compliant

4

          i. Trees next to sidewalks will raise the sidewalk 3"-6" over time, causing difficulty for wheelchairs and creating unsafe walking space.

6. **Adjournment**
   - The next meeting is March 28, 2024, and it will be a TAC meeting with the consulting team. They will be integrating input from the activities at this meeting with transportation needs and gaps identified by the Transpo Group.
   - Reminder about the website and survey

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

_____

Respectfully submitted by Amy Heiderich

5

Coordinated Planning Process

Project Schedule

Existing Transportation Services

Public Transportation Services
- Fixed-Route Service
  - Centro in Utica
    - Weekday service with select routes operating Saturday.
  - Centro in Rome
    - Service Monday through Saturday.
- Local Call-A-Bus
  - Centro in Utica & Rome
    - Consistent hours with fixed-transit service.
- Taxi, Rideshare & Ridehail
  - Various taxi companies
  - Uber/Left/other TNCs
  - 511 Rideshare

Existing Transportation Services

Human Service Transportation
- Office for the Aging
  - Herkimer
    - Operates 3 vehicles on weekdays for Medicaid transportation
    - Provided 6,112 rides in 2023.
  - Oneida
    - No direct services in Oneida County.
    - Reliant on Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) for medical appointments which provides approximately 35 trips per month.
    - Uber/Lyft or private carriers with ADA-accessible vehicles recommended as alternatives where available.
- Department of Social Services
  - Herkimer
    - Limited transportation for individuals, more reliant on Medicaid transportation.
- Arc Herkimer
  - Provides ADA-accessible buses and vans for door-to-door trips.
- Veterans' Services Agency
  - Herkimer
    - Maintains 1 to 2 non-ADA accessible 6-8 passenger vans that exclusively transport veterans to VA facilities.

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Existing Demographics

Overall, population groups relevant to Human Services Transportation are largely located in and around the urban centers of the county.

- Densities are also consistently higher than average in several more rural areas of the counties including around:
  - Herkimer County
    - Salisbury Center
    - Newport
    - Dolgeville
  - Oneida County
    - Boonville
    - Barneveld

Elderly Population

- Populations higher than average in concentration largely located along the I-90 corridor, as well as in Rome, Herkimer, Boonville, and the very sparsely populated northern region of Herkimer County, centered around Old Forge.
- Percentage of people aged 65 and older in both Herkimer and Oneida is forecast to increase by 2030.
- Notably, there are high concentrations of seniors around Camden and Utica, but not within the centers themselves.
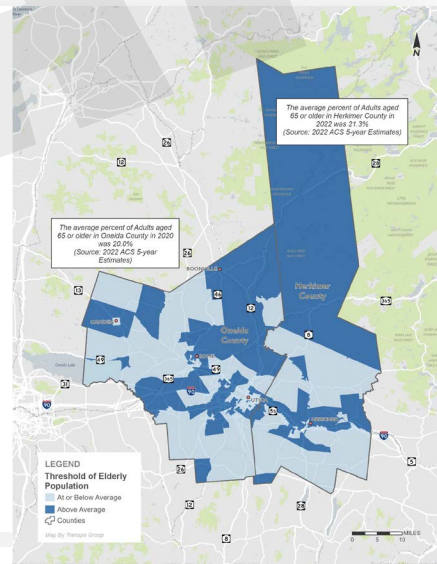
Origin-Destination Travel Patterns

- Seniors with no access to vehicles and income under $50,000 traveling in and around Rome, Utica, Herkimer, and Camden.
- Mainly shorter trips along the I-90 corridor.
- Some trips between Utica and Herkimer.
- Similar O-D travel patterns were observed without income limits applied.
- Most trips either originate or end in more urban areas of the counties.
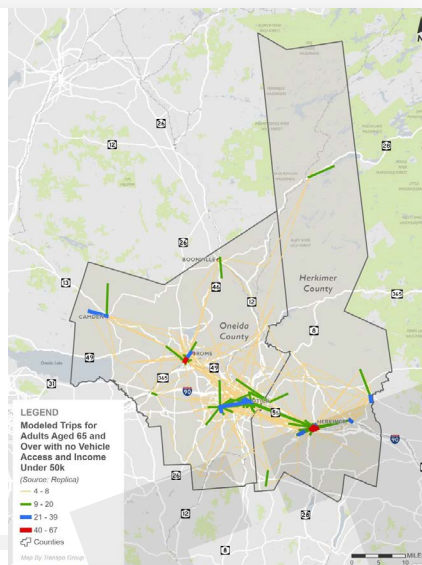
Disabled Population

- Disabled populations dispersed in both rural and urban portions of the counties.
- Areas with higher than average metrics include Camden as well as around Rome, Utica, and Herkimer.
- More rural communities with above average disabled population include Barneveld and Woodgate in Oneida County as well as areas around Jordanville and Dolgeville in Herkimer County.
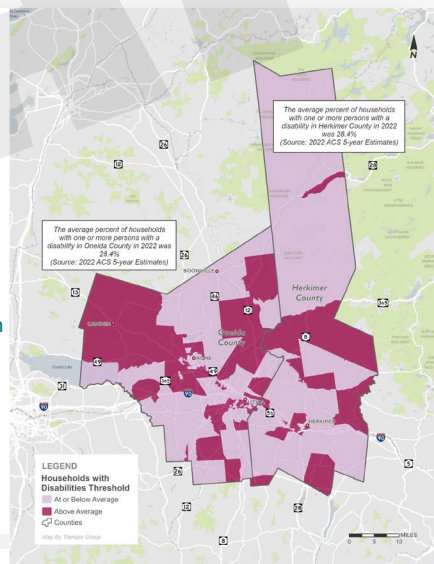
No Personal Vehicle Access

- The northern portion of Herkimer County is very dispersed in terms of population and includes above average households with no access to a vehicle.
- In southern Herkimer County, areas around Newport, Middleville, and Salisbury Center are also above average.
- In Oneida County, small pockets of above average density are located around Utica, Rome, Camden, and Boonville.
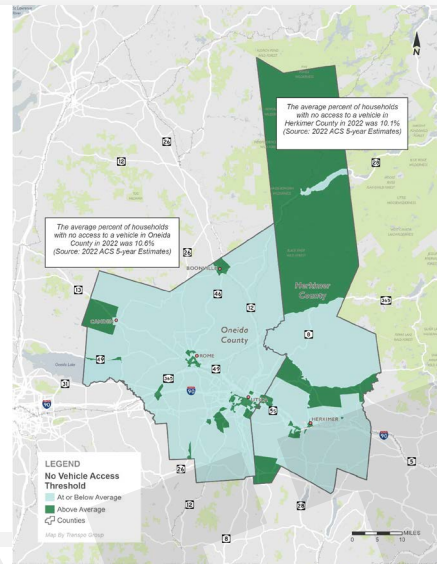
Households in Poverty

- The sparsely populated northern portion of Herkimer County continues to be above average in this metric.
- In southern Herkimer County, above average areas are located around Herkimer, as well as around West Winfield, Salisbury Center, and Newport.
- In Oneida County, above average areas are dispersed around Camden, Rome and Utica, as well as in Boonville and Remsen.
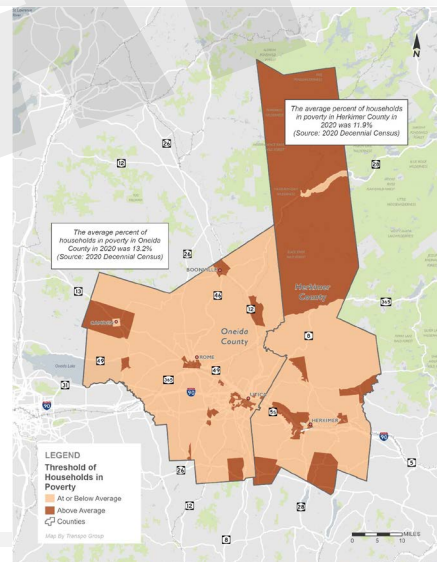
Agency Interviews

Participants

o Herkimer & Oneida County Office for the Aging
o Herkimer County Department of Social Services
o Herkimer County Veterans' Service Agency
o Oneida County Department of Family and Community Services Offices of Employment and Daycare
o Oneida County Department of Mental Health Substance Use Services
o Oneida County Workforce Development Program
o The Center Utica

Agency Interviews

Key Findings

o Rural areas face challenges with limited options
o Limited transportation options/accessibility for people with disabilities, seniors, and those with recurring medical appointments
o Limited regional transportation/connectivity
o Driver shortages raise additional challenges
o Limited options for employees using transit to get to work

Online Public Survey

Survey Results

o 93 Responses collected
o Vast majority of respondents located in Oneida County
o Most frequently reported age range was 50-59
o Most common annual income category was 'Above $60,001'
o Most respondents are employed
o Most respondents are not veterans
o Most respondents are not disabled
o Most respondents have a driver's license and access to a vehicle
o The most common transportation option was 'Personal Automobile'

Online Public Survey

Key Findings

o Difficulties related to accessing transportation services, and connectivity to other services/needs
o Extended service hours and better coordination of schedules
o Significant need and interest in door-to-door service, especially for those with disabilities or health issues
o Significant demand for weekend and evening transit service
o Cost is a barrier for some respondents

Gaps & Needs
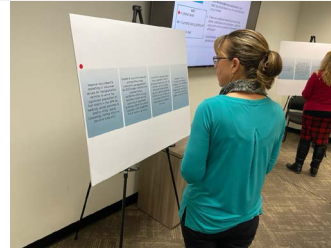
TAC Meeting 1B
- Meeting to discuss needs identified in the previous HSTP
- Dot Activity
  - Red – This need is unmet.
  - Blue – Progress has been made on this need.
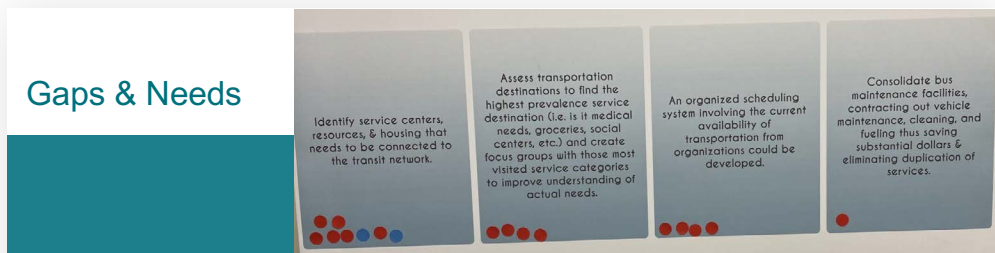 - Green – The need is met.


Gaps & Needs
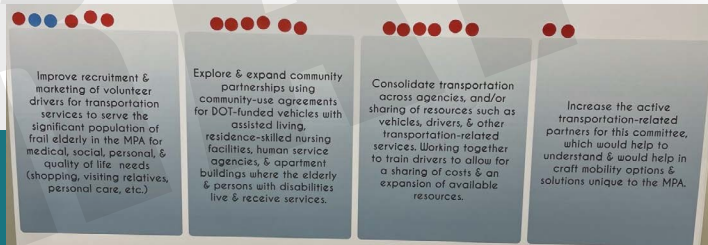
TAC Meeting 1B
- Progress made on improving recruitment and marketing of volunteer drivers.
- Expanding community partnerships and consolidating transportation still of high need.
- Still some need for increasing active transportation-related partners.

Gaps & Needs

TAC Meeting 1B
- Some progress on new connections to the transit network, though largely still in-need.
- Identifying highly desirable destinations and developing a scheduling system of high need.
- Some focus still needed on consolidating maintenance facilities.

Gaps & Needs
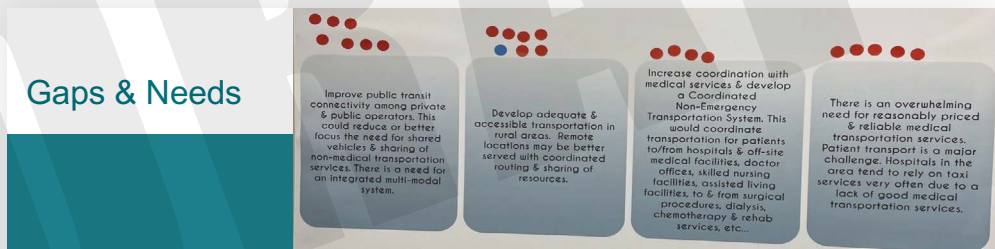
TAC Meeting 1B
- Some progress made on developing transportation services in rural areas, though still an area of high need.
- Improving connectivity between operators as well as improving medical transportation services still largely unmet.
- Developing a Coordinated Non-Emergency Transportation System still an unmet need.

Gaps & Needs
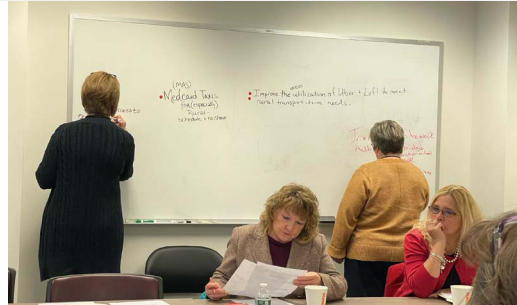
TAC Meeting 1B
- Need for Medicaid taxis and improving the utilization of Uber/Lyft to meet rural transportation needs identified at the meeting.
- No green dots placed amongst strategies.

Observed Gaps & Needs

Compiled from feedback across both 'data' and 'people' perspectives:

People Perspectives:
- Online Survey
- Agency Interviews
- TCC Meetings

Data:
- Supply-side operations
- Trip pattern data
- Demographic information

Identify common set of needs & gaps

Observed Gaps & Needs

#1 - Geographic Availability of Services

Transportation services are not available in the geographic areas where they are needed.

- Limited rural services available
- Lack of available services to cross county lines (regional trips)
- Lack of centralized bus service in Herkimer County's northern and southern areas makes travel challenging for those without a private vehicle

Observed Gaps & Needs

#2 – Lack of Service Options

Limited transportation service options for those who depend on mobility services (emphasis on the elderly, people with disabilities, and those with healthcare needs).

- Over-reliance on ARC and Office of Aging, who have limited fleet and resources for large need
- Paratransit services are unable to meet the needs of all individuals, particularly those with disabilities
- Limited availability of ADA-accessible vehicles
- Need for additional non-emergency medical transportation options

Observed Gaps & Needs

#3 – Lack of Centralized Information/Coordination

Information about travel options must be done across agencies, which makes it difficult to find all available services.

- Limited coordination amongst agencies leads to redundant or inefficient services
- Users have difficulty understanding what services are available
- Need for 'mobility manager' or someone who can coordinate across agencies

Observed Gaps & Needs

#4 – Staff & Driver Shortages

Limited staff and availability of drivers (CDL certified) to deliver services to those in need.

- Lack of available drivers (CDL certified)
- Need for additional staff to facilitate and coordinate transportation for those with mobility challenges
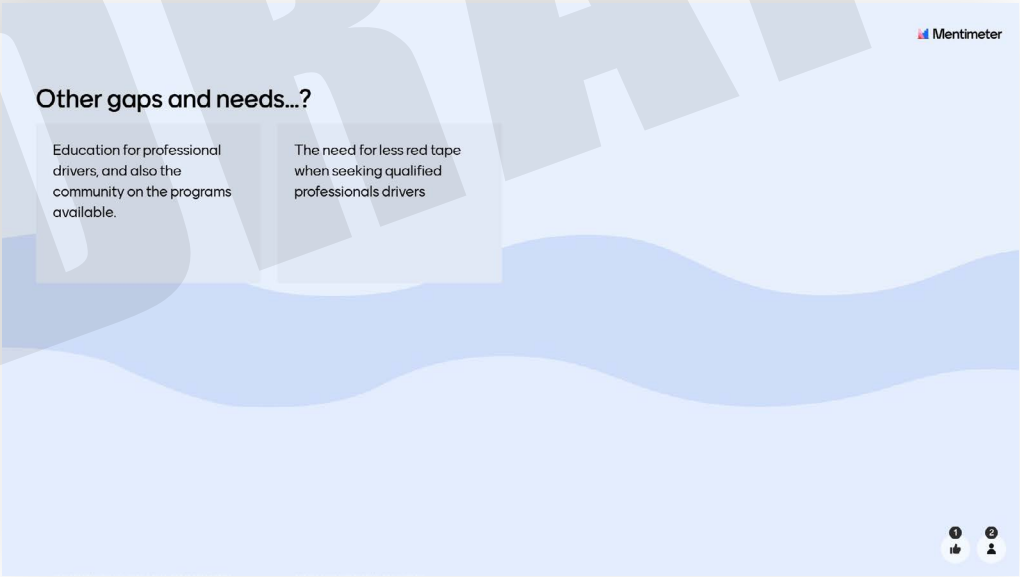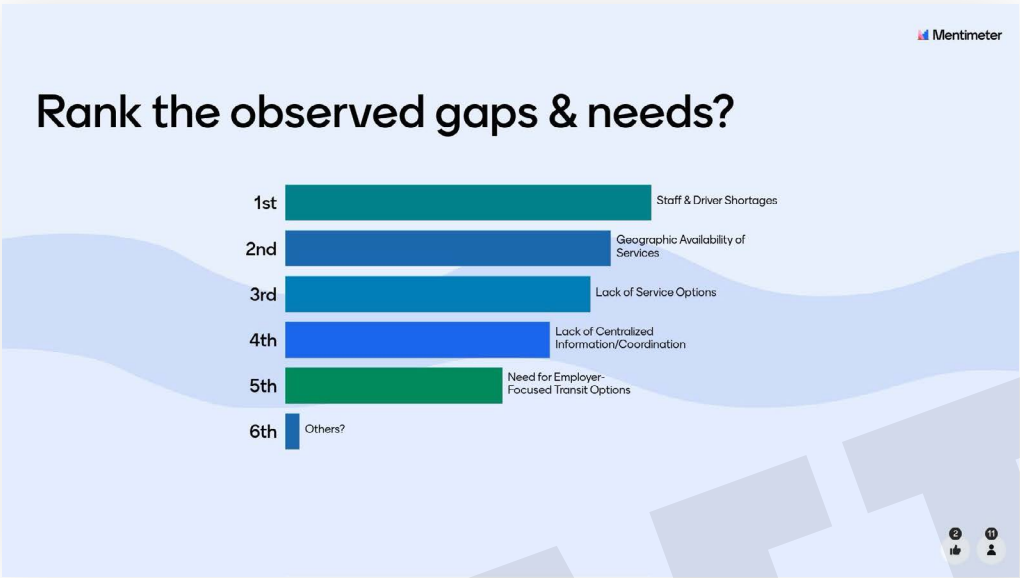
Observed Gaps & Needs
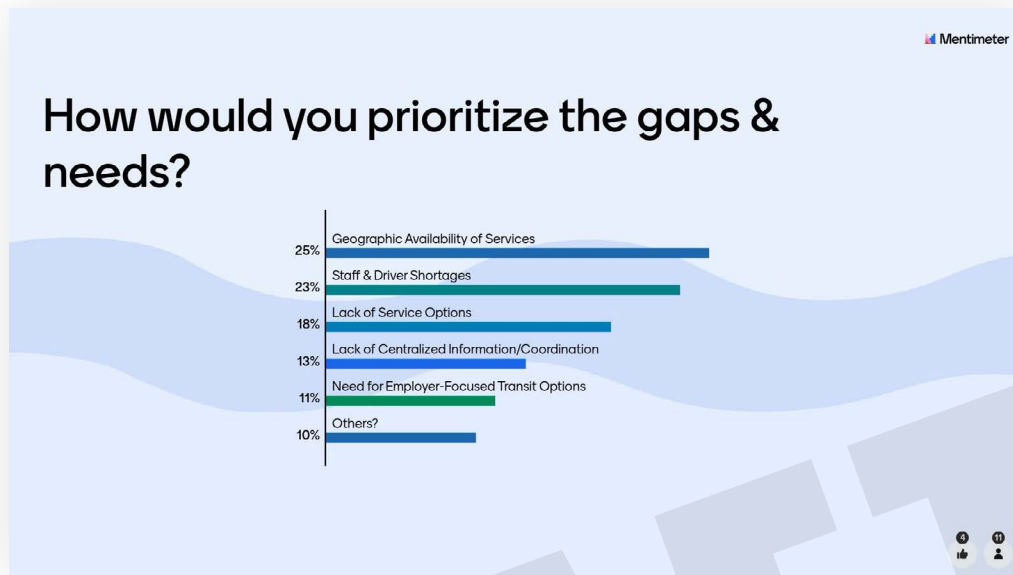
#5 – Need for Employer-Focused Transit Options

Transportation options are lacking for those who rely on transit to get to work.

• Service hours don't align well with those who rely on transit to get to/from work (no evening service)
• Potential opportunities for employer shuttles to provide options for those who cannot drive alone
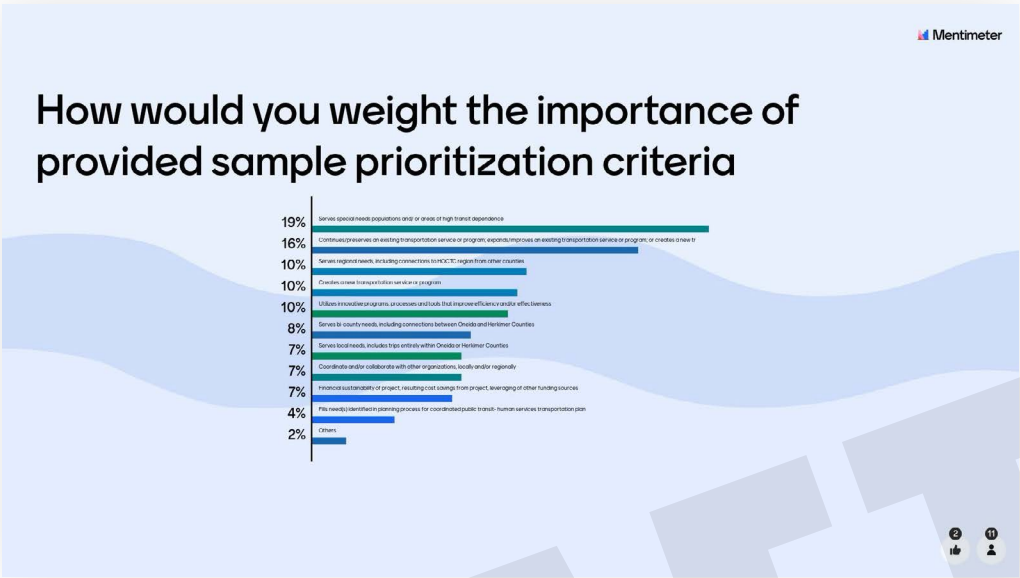
Previous HSTP Transportation Needs List	Proposed Gaps & Needs
Improve public transit connectivity.	**Geographic Availability of Services** Transportation services are not available in the geographic areas where they are needed.
Assess transportation destinations to find the highest prevalence service destination. Create focus groups to improve understanding of needs.	**Lack of Service Options** Limited transportation service options for those who depend on mobility services (emphasis on the elderly, people with disabilities, and those with healthcare needs).
Develop adequate & accessible transportation in rural areas.	**Lack of Centralized Information/Coordination** Information about travel options must be done across agencies, which makes it difficult to find all available services.
Promote reasonably priced & reliable medical transportation services.	**Staff & Driver Shortages** Limited staff and availability of drivers (CDL certified) to deliver services to those in need.
Improve recruitment & marketing of volunteer drivers.	**Need for Employer-Focused Transit Options** Transportation options are lacking for those relying on transit to work.
Explore & expand community partnerships.	
Consolidate transportation across agencies, and/or sharing of resources.	
Increase active transportation-related partners.	
Identify service centers, resources, & housing that need to be connected to the transit network.	
Increase coordination with medical services & develop a Coordinated Non-Emergency Transportation System.	
Develop an organized scheduling system.	
Consolidate bus maintenance facilities and maintenance operations.	

Rank the observed gaps & needs?

- 1st — Staff & Driver Shortages
- 2nd — Geographic Availability of Services
- 3rd — Lack of Service Options
- 4th — Lack of Centralized Information/Coordination
- 5th — Need for Employer-Focused Transit Options
- 6th — Others?

Other gaps and needs...?

Education for professional drivers, and also the community on the programs available.

The need for less red tape when seeking qualified professionals drivers

How would you prioritize the gaps & needs?

Geographic Availability of Services	25%
Staff & Driver Shortages	23%
Lack of Service Options	18%
Lack of Centralized Information/Coordination	13%
Need for Employer-Focused Transit Options	11%
Others?	10%

Sample Prioritization Criteria

Prioritization Criteria	Evaluation Instructions
Continues/preserves an existing transportation service or program; expands/improves an existing transportation service or program	Determine how well the project type proposed meets criterion and score application for that project type
Creates a new transportation service or program	Determine how well the project type proposed meets criterion and score application for that project type
Fills need(s) identified in planning process for coordinated public transit- human services transportation plan	Refer to needs assessment for coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan
Serves special needs populations and/ or areas of high transit dependence	Refer to maps of persons with disabilities (physical or mental), seniors, youth, households without vehicles, low-income populations, minority populations and transit dependency needs index
Serves local needs, includes trips entirely within Oneida or Herkimer Counties	Evaluate the application on how well it proposes to address local needs
Serves bi-county needs, including connections between Oneida and Herkimer Counties	Evaluate the application on how well it proposes to address HOCTC needs
Serves regional needs, including connections to HOCTC region from other counties	Evaluate the application on how well it proposes to address regional mobility
Financial sustainability of project, resulting cost savings from project, leveraging of other funding sources (such as donations or volunteer support)	Evaluate the application using this cost related criterion
Coordinate and/or collaborate with other organizations, locally and/or regionally	Evaluate the application based on documented coordination and/or collaboration with other organizations
Utilizes innovative programs, processes and tools that improve efficiency and/or effectiveness	Score the application based on the service or programs proposed innovation - could be technological or other innovations

How would you weight the importance of provided sample prioritization criteria

Any questions on what's been discussed today?

No questions from the audience!

Incoming questions will show up here so that you can answer them one by one.

Next Steps

- Finalize identified gaps and needs
- Develop and prioritize strategies
- TAC Meeting #3 – End of May
- Write a draft and final Coordinated Plan
- Public Review Meeting – End of June

Thank You

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Boehlert Center at Union Station
321 Main Street, Utica, NY 13501
Phone: 315.798.5710 E-mail: transplan@ocgov.net
Director: Dana R. Crisino, AICP

Minutes for March 28, 2024
Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council
Transportation Coordination Committee Meeting
Oneida County Department of Planning Conference Room

Administered by: Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council (HOCTC) MPO

Call to order at 9:03 AM made by Julie Richmond, HOCTC

1. Welcome and Introduction
Julie Richmond welcomed everyone, and introductions were completed.

Agency Members Present

Bren Daiss	Director of Special Projects and Planning, Centro
Lisanne Divine	Traffic Safety Manager, The Center – Utica
Sharon Heyboer	Project Manager, NYSDOT Region 2
Ray Anthony Mungo	Transportation Supervisor, Senior Network Health MVHS
Ashley Paciello	Regional Business Service Coordinator, ACCES-VR
Dave Peters	Assistant Director of Facilities, The Arc Center
Art Rapp	Manager, Oneida County Workforce Development
Eunice Amidon	Transportation Supervisor, Community Wellness Partners
Dona Kishimoto	Coordinator, Services to Older Refugees, The Center
Emily Ofalt	Director of Adult Mental Health, Oneida County Office of Mental Health
Julie Richmond, MPA	Transportation Program Manager, HOCTC
Barb Hauck	Principal Planner, HOCTC
Adam Palmer, MBA	Associate Planner, HOCTC
Amy Heiderich	Senior Planner, HOCTC
Christopher Titze, AICP/PP	HSTP Task Lead, Transpo Group

This meeting is the second Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting for the Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) update. The meeting was conducted by Chris Titze from Transpo Group.

2. **HSTP Overview, presented by Julie Richmond** – The TCC serves as the TAC for the HSTP update. This meeting will be devoted to the HSTP update which focuses on seniors, disabled, and veteran populations. Although the Section 5310 program specifically targets the elderly and individuals with disabilities, the veteran population can overlap with these two target groups. The planned adoption of this update for the HSTP is in the third quarter of 2024. This plan will be a standalone

1

document as well as incorporated into the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). The LRTP will look at the larger public transit needs, beyond the targeted populations of the HSTP.

3. **Prioritizing Gaps and Needs –** The HSTP targets elderly and disabled populations. It is an enhancement program for transportation and a blueprint for Section 5310 grant applications for 2025-2028. Data collection and analysis have been completed to understand the needs and gaps. The information was synthesized. Now the TAC is being asked to assist with prioritization. After this meeting, the goal is to formalize the gaps and needs to establish strategies and recommendations into a timeline of short, mid, and long term. These will be the genesis of the project's needs moving forward. At this time, the project is about 50% complete. There will be a third meeting in May to get input on the draft document. The strategies and approach will be presented. Weighting criteria for projects will be discussed to address different project needs accordingly.

4. **Existing Transportation Services** – This is the second chapter of the plan. From the supply side, data was collected from available human service agencies and a survey was available. Organizing all services independently, including times of service, fares, and fleet composition. In addition, the demand side examines what people need. This is being done in alignment with the LRTP update to share data and not duplicate work.

5. **Existing Demographics -** Most of the population is around urbanized areas, the unique thing is the densities around rural areas with the size and expanse of the rural areas.
    *   **Elderly Population -** It is a challenge to figure out how to serve this expansive area, especially since the senior population is aging in place within the rural areas and the population is growing. The origin-destination data from Replica verifies that seniors are living outside of urban areas and traveling, regardless of income.
    *   **Disabled Population –** Census data shows that the disabled population is dispersed somewhat evenly between rural and urban areas. There is a challenge with the expanse of areas that need to be covered for people with disabilities.
    *   **Vehicle Access –** There are pockets within Herkimer and Oneida Counties where there is above average lack of access to a vehicle. Notably, the northern portion of Herkimer County has a higher-than-normal lack of access to a vehicle, creating a need for services.
    *   **Households in Poverty –** The northern portion of Herkimer County tends to be higher than average. Oneida County sees higher poverty rates around the cities and in some more densely populated rural areas.

6. **Agency Interviews** with Herkimer and Oneida Counties Offices for the Aging and Social Services, Herkimer County Veterans' Service Agency, Oneida County Workforce Development and Office of Mental Health, and The Center Utica.
    *   Transportation options and access are limited as the primary issue.
    *   Centro has ADA accessibility, but this is an issue with most other services.
    *   Reliable transportation to standing appointments was also mentioned as a serious issue and the limited access to cross counties.

2

- The lack of drivers was a consistent issue that is an issue nationwide. Salary discrepancy was discussed as a primary hindrance to retaining drivers. Finding ways to incentivize drivers to stay was discussed but hasn't been shown successful. In addition, volunteerism is on the decline nationwide.
- Employees are a unique group to bring into an HSTP but many employees that rely on public transportation have a disability. Paratransit services are typically not available to bring clients to and from employment. There is no transportation available to those who work the second or third shift. This makes it difficult to retain employment.

7. **Survey Results –** There were 93 participants, primarily from Oneida County who experienced scheduling issues and a lack of connectivity due to a lack of drivers. There was also an issue of cost mentioned. There was a need for micro-transit door-to-door services. People also would like more hours and services available to them, significantly weekends and evening hours. Survey results were indicative that a majority of respondents did not represent the target core population, (e.g., many respondents owned a vehicle), but the target population responses that were received tracked with other findings.

8. **February 1, 2024, "TAC Meeting 1B" –** In the dot activity, no one placed green dots indicating that a need from the current plan has been met. The previous 12 strategies/needs have been configured down to five determined needs in hopes of better being able to identify the strategies needed to solve the gap.

9. **Observed Gaps and Needs –**
    - Geographic availability of services was identified as a gap due to the lack of available services in Herkimer County and rural services.
    - Lack of service options – The ARC and Office of the Aging are being overutilized and have a limited fleet. Places will prioritize medical appointments over a needed trip to the grocery store and find that paratransit, even when calling ahead is unreliable. One specific issue for not-for-profit services is the lack of ADA-compliant buses. Going to the doctor can become an issue when transit will drop the person off and not pick up for several hours.
        - Centro – Identified a gap being filled in the City of Rome with Move Service that just began and has been very successful so far with an average of a 12-minute total service from origin to destination. This micro-transit service has the potential to become very successful, while still maintaining fixed routes to and from the busiest areas of Rome.
    - Lack of Centralized Information/Coordination – It is labor-intensive to locate information and coordinate routes, so often the public will give up. One solution could be a mobility manager for the region. This person could work in a not-for-profit, government, or an affiliated agency. There could be a caseworker for mobility position formed to alleviate strain on other agencies.
        - Catholic Charities in Oneida County provides transportation services for people with mental illness and is not used as much as it should. The County does give the program money through State funding. Anyone with mental health issues can use this service. It may be beneficial for this program to become involved with the HSTP to expand.

3

- Staff and Driver Shortages – There is a lack of available CDL drivers and a lack of available people to coordinate transportation.
- Need for Employer-Focused Transit Options – This is unique in that this is a need to be addressed by the LRTP but is still relevant to the HSPT conversation. The Center places more than 500 people per year in employment. While not everyone has a disability, some do and cannot get hired without reliable transportation, especially if the employer or employee is outside the cities of Utica and Rome. Whereas anyone working with ACCESS-VR does have a disability. There is potential for cost-sharing with The Center, for example. The paratransit service is available not for employment and the personal shuttle service becomes too expensive with insurance.
- The needs list can change but probably do not want more than six total needs. A lot of the previous list can be identified as strategies versus needs.

10. **Discussion** - One of the reasons for barriers is behavioral when the drivers do not have any experience, training, or education in dealing with passengers who have mental health issues. People can be dropped off with no indication of where to go within the building. This could provide an opportunity for drivers to assist with the proper education. A mobility manager would step in for this situation.

11. **Mentimeter discussions –**
    - Typically, language barriers would not be considered as a part of the HSTP but can be written in since this has an impact more in this area.
    - It has been found that federal funding has been difficult for not-for-profits due to all the restrictions.
    - Other gaps and needs identified were education for drivers and ease of hiring drivers.
    - The goal is to align strategies with gaps that have been established.
    - The strategies/needs from the current plan need to be developed into a prioritization approach. Each need can have 2-3 strategies. This process will assist the MPO in scoring and awarding funding effectively.
    - One specific need identified was that Herkimer County only has a medical clinic with nowhere else to go. In the northern portion of Herkimer County, there are very few healthcare services available.

12. **Adjournment**
    - The next meeting is on April 25, 2024, and the third TAC meeting for the HSTP is on May 30, 2024.
    - The draft plan will be open for a 30-day public review and comment period. HOCTC is open to suggestions from the TAC as to how to best make the plan available to the public but, at a minimum, will follow normal procedure and issue a legal notice in the local newspaper, post the draft to the HSTP website, and have a hard copy available for review in the Oneida County Planning office. Additional hard copies for review will be made available upon request.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Amy Heiderich

4

RURAL TRANSIT SYSTEM
Consultant Contract: 2025-2028

**Coordinated Public Transit
Human Services Transportation Plan
for Herkimer and Oneida Counties**

**TAC Meeting #3
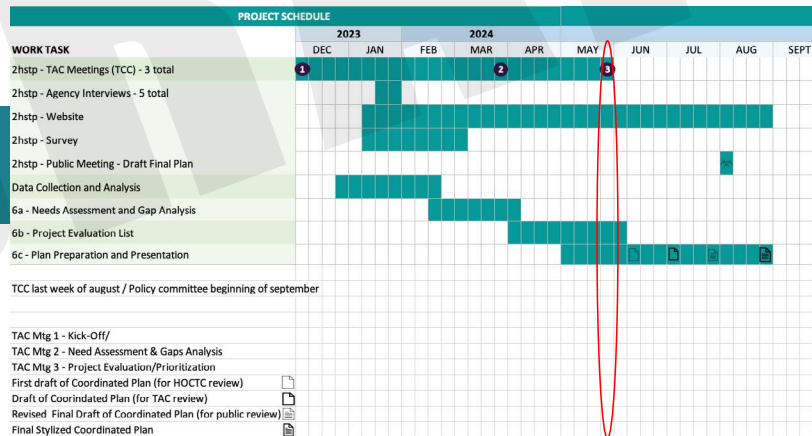May 30, 2024**

AGENDA

- Project Schedule
- Review Outcomes from Last Meeting
  - Goals and Objectives Ranking
  - Proposed Project Prioritization Criteria
- HSTP Strategies:
  - Present Draft Strategies and Evaluation
  - Unpacking Highest Ranking Strategies
- Project Evaluation Process
- Next Steps

Coordinated Planning Process
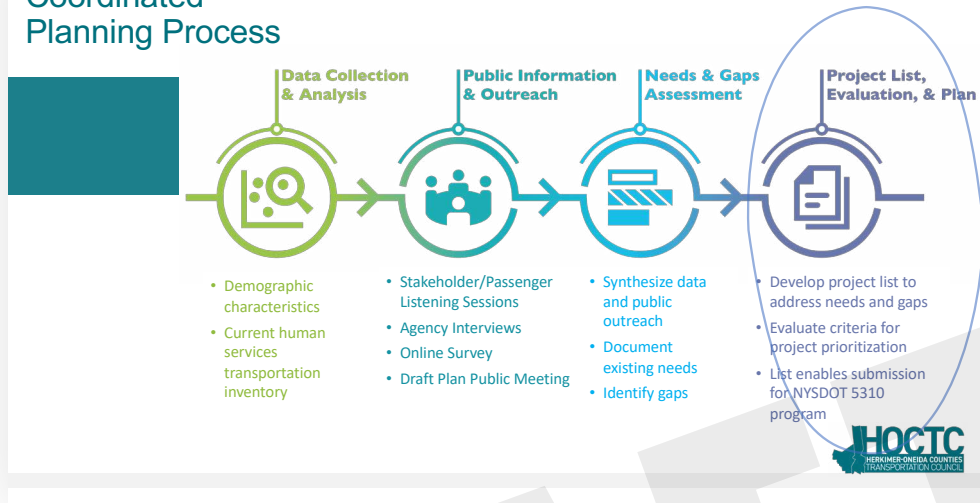
Project Schedule

Proposed Gaps & Needs

Geographic Availability of Services
Transportation services are not available in the geographic areas where they are needed.

Staff & Driver Shortages
Limited staff and availability of drivers (CDL certified) to deliver services to those in need.

Lack of Service Options
Limited transportation service options for those who depend on mobility services
(emphasis on the elderly, people with disabilities, and those with healthcare needs).
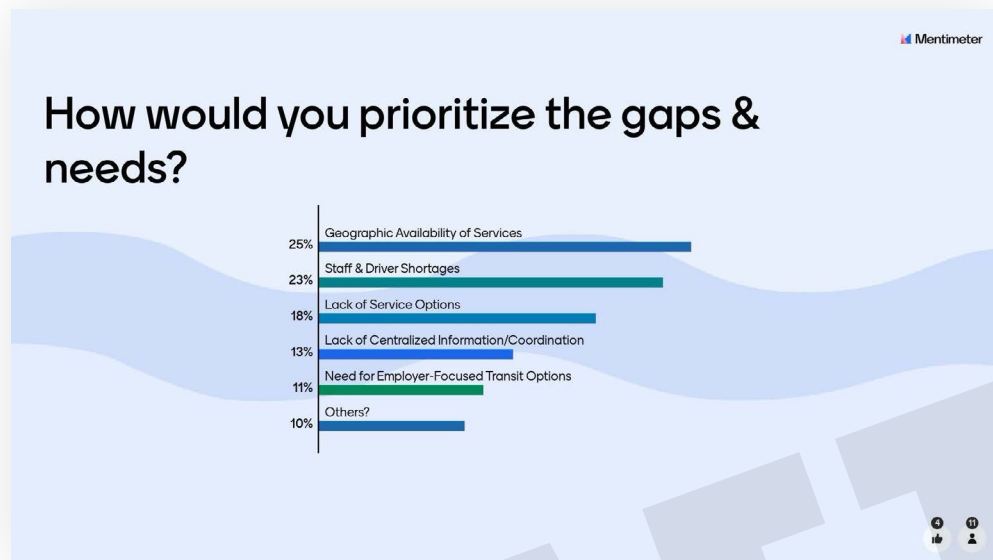
Lack of Centralized Information/Coordination
Information about travel options must be done across agencies, which makes it difficult to find all
available services.

Need for Employer-Focused Transit Options
Transportation options are lacking for those relying on transit to work.

How would you prioritize the gaps & needs?

25%	Geographic Availability of Services
23%	Staff & Driver Shortages
18%	Lack of Service Options
13%	Lack of Centralized Information/Coordination
11%	Need for Employer-Focused Transit Options
10%	Others?

SAMPLE EVALUATION & PRIORITIZATION CRITERIA

Prioritization Criteria	Evaluation Instructions
Continues/preserves an existing transportation service or program; expands/improves an existing transportation service or program	Determine how well the project type proposed meets criterion and score application for that project type
Creates a new transportation service or program	Determine how well the project type proposed meets criterion and score application for that project type
Fills need(s) identified in planning process for coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan	Refer to needs assessment for coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan
Serves special needs populations and/ or areas of high transit dependence	Refer to maps of persons with disabilities (physical or mental), seniors, youth, households without vehicles, low-income populations, minority populations and transit dependency needs index
Serves local needs, includes trips entirely within Ulster County	Evaluate the application on how well it proposes to address local needs
Serves regional needs, including connections outside Ulster County	Evaluate the application on how well it proposes to address regional mobility
Financial sustainability of project, resulting cost savings from project, leveraging of other funding sources (such as donations or volunteer support)	Evaluate the application using this cost related criterion
Coordinate and/or collaborate with other organizations, locally and/or regionally	Evaluate the application based on documented coordination and/or collaboration with other organizations
Utilizes innovative programs, processes and tools that improve efficiency and/or effectiveness	Score the application based on the service or programs proposed innovation - could be technological or other innovations

Potential Strategies

Strategies to Close Gaps & Needs
1: Paid and Volunteer Staff & Driver Shortages

- Develop and implement the joint strategy for recruiting and retaining paid and volunteer drivers. When executed effectively, this strategy can address the current driver shortages and ensure the continuity of our transportation services.

- Identify shared driver training and credentialing needs to determine opportunities for joint/coordinated training programs.

- Develop an incentive-based training and hiring program.
  - Pay for participant CDL training with the agreement that the participant works for the area HST program for a specified time.

- Incentivize and certify advanced driver training for serving ADA-eligible riders, riders with mental health needs, and older adults. Make this available for existing and new drivers certified through an incentive program.

Strategies to Close Gaps & Needs
Need 2: Geographic Availability of Services

- Pilot a microtransit program to fill first and last-mile connections.

- Pilot zone-based microtransit services in low-density and rural areas that are difficult to serve with traditional fixed-route services.

- Develop a framework for a coordinated program for out-of-county medical transportation services.
  - Convene relevant transportation and healthcare representatives.
  - Identify processes and policies that need to be aligned to support cross-jurisdictional transfers.
  - Identify key transfer points.
  - Develop a plan for piloting a coordinated program.

Strategies to Close Gaps & Needs
Need 2: Geographic Availability of Services

- Establish a user-side subsidy or voucher program to allow riders in rural areas to use taxis or transportation network companies (TNCs such as Uber or Lyft).

- Coordinate with CENTRO to explore opportunities to expand the MOVE microtransit pilot beyond Rome to other parts of Oneida and Herkimer Counties.
- HERKIMER COUNTY RURAL AREAS – pilot for area focused service

Strategies to Close Gaps & Needs
Need 3: Lack of Service Options and Supportive Infrastructure

- Support sustainability, stability, and enhancement of effective programs through funding and efforts that reduce administrative and technological burdens.

- Extend service zone for paratransit riders, above and beyond ADA requirements.

- Enhance service offerings to provide non-emergency medical transportation options for individuals who do not qualify for Medicaid.

- Enhance service offerings to provide more flexible options for individuals who do not qualify for paratransit but cannot use or do not have access to fixed-route services.

- Increase the number of ADA-accessible vehicles available across the full range of HST services.

Strategies to Close Gaps & Needs
Need 3: Lack of Service Options and Supportive Infrastructure

- Establish a user-side subsidy or voucher program to allow riders in rural areas to use taxis or transportation network companies (TNCs such as Uber or Lyft).

- Coordinate with CENTRO to explore opportunities to expand the MOVE microtransit pilot beyond Rome to other parts of Oneida and Herkimer Counties.

- Expand fixed route or hybrid services in Herkimer County.

- Identify and prioritize investments in safe and ADA-accessible pedestrian and biking infrastructure to improve connectivity to transit options.

Strategies to Close Gaps & Needs
Need 4: Lack of Centralized Information/Coordination

- Establish a mobility coordination committee (as a sub-group of the TCC) where all agencies with shared human services clients meet regularly to identify challenges and develop solutions.

- Identify joint marketing efforts and methods to communicate information to passengers.

- Establish a mobility manager position to fill the role of improving communication and coordination between services and programs.

- Develop a transportation guide as a public education tool with information on all transportation services.

Strategies to Close Gaps & Needs
Need 4: Lack of Centralized Information/Coordination

- Work with the TCC to explore the feasibility of a regional coordinated information and referral service/program, centralized dispatch system, and one-stop shop for information, including coordinating with 211 and other partners.

- Improve static and real-time traveler information for fixed-route services.

- Leverage translation services are available through the Center, and translation technology is improved.

Strategies to Close Gaps & Needs
Need 5: Need for Employer-Focused Transit Options

- Support the development of coordinated vanpool programs – either directly by employers or through assistance from CENTRO.

- Pilot zone-based microtransit services before/after the end of fixed-route services to allow access to work for those whose shifts start and end outside of service hours.
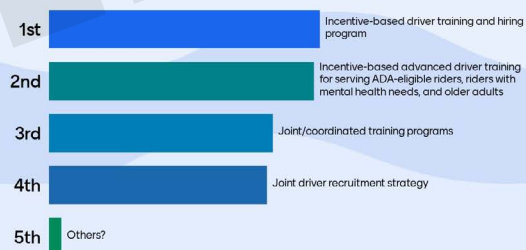
Rank the strategies to address shortages in paid and volunteer staff and drivers

Other strategies to address shortages in paid and volunteer staff and drivers?

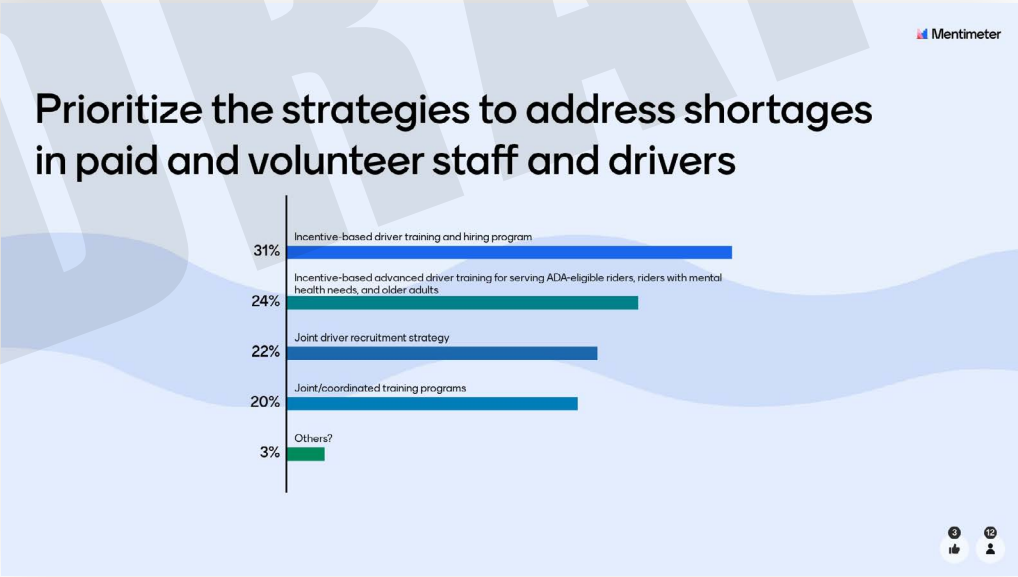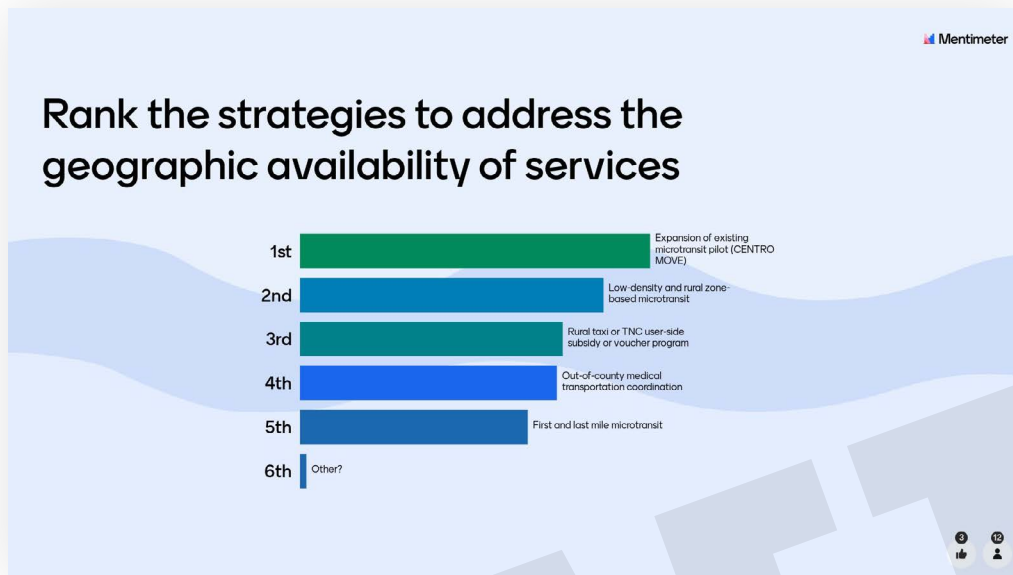Encourage employers to contribute to training programs and regular transportation for employees to an employer.

Prioritize the strategies to address shortages in paid and volunteer staff and drivers

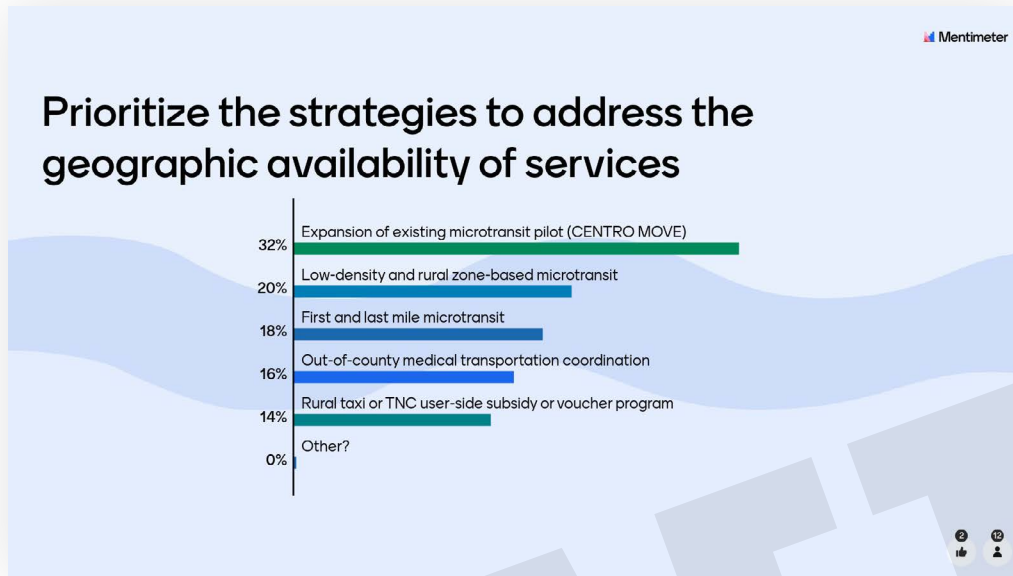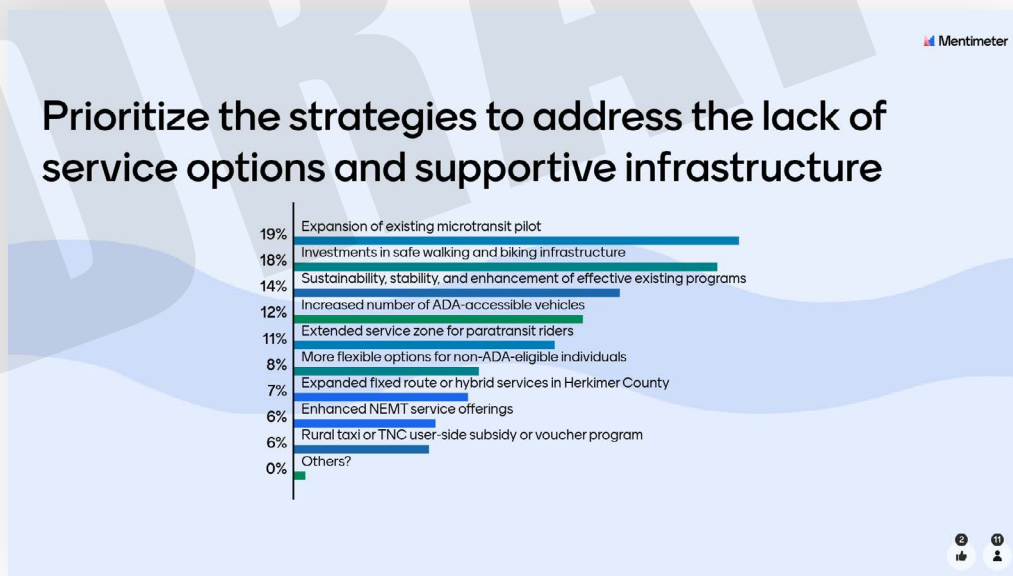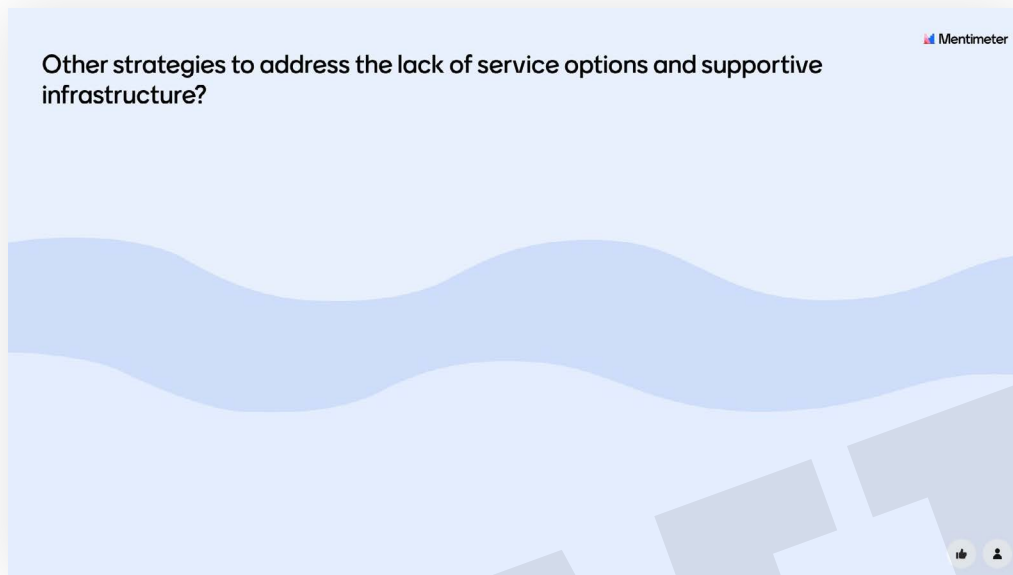|	
31%	Incentive-based driver training and hiring program
24%	Incentive-based advanced driver training for serving ADA-eligible riders, riders with mental health needs, and older adults
22%	Joint driver recruitment strategy
20%	Joint/coordinated training programs
3%	Others?

Other strategies to address the lack of service options and supportive infrastructure?

Prioritize the strategies to address the lack of service options and supportive infrastructure

%	Strategy
19%	Expansion of existing microtransit pilot
18%	Investments in safe walking and biking infrastructure
14%	Sustainability, stability, and enhancement of effective existing programs
12%	Increased number of ADA-accessible vehicles
11%	Extended service zone for paratransit riders
8%	More flexible options for non-ADA-eligible individuals
7%	Expanded fixed route or hybrid services in Herkimer County
6%	Enhanced NEMT service offerings
6%	Rural taxi or TNC user-side subsidy or voucher program
0%	Others?

Rank the strategies to address lack of centralized information/coordination

Rank	Strategy
1st	Improved static and real-time traveler information for fixed-route services
2nd	Mobility manager position
3rd	Mobility coordination committee
4th	Transportation guide with information on all transportation services
5th	Feasibility study of a regional coordinated information, referral service/program, booking, and dispatch system
6th	Translation of available services through the use of technology (the Center).
7th	Joint marketing efforts and methods
8th	Others?

Other strategies to address the lack of service options and supportive infrastructure?

Other strategies to address employer-focused transit options?

Prioritize the strategies to address employer-focused transit options

Zone-based microtransit services before/after the end of fixed-route services to allow access to work
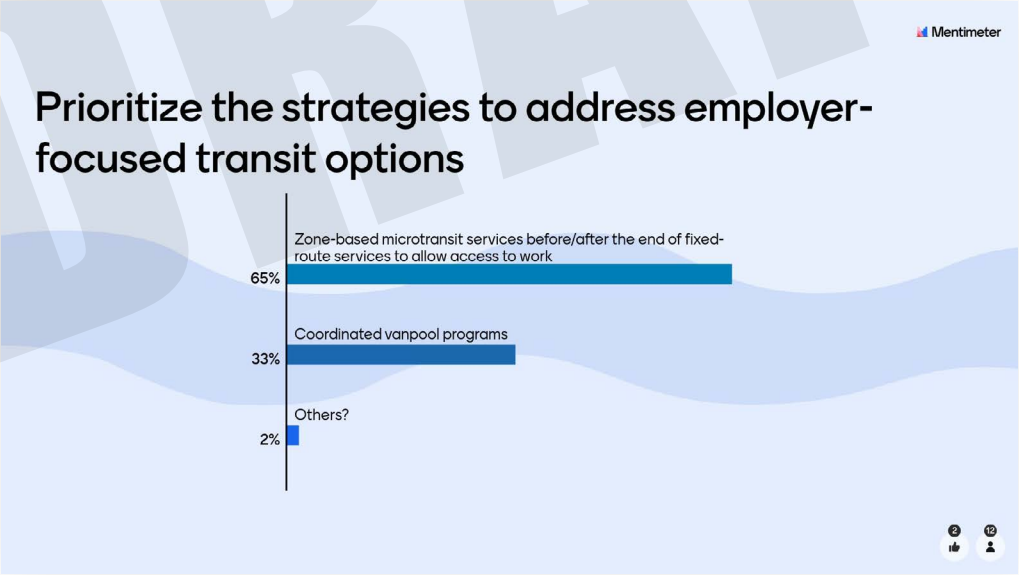
65%

Coordinated vanpool programs

33%

Others?

2%

Any questions on what's been discussed today?

0 questions
0 upvotes

Unpacking Prioritized Strategies

Project Evaluation Process

Current & Localized 5310 Project Process

LEGEND
Current & Remains the Same
Current & Changing
Proposed Localized

HOCTC Call for Projects: HOCTC sends out a call for 5310 projects, shared with TCC members and beyond.

Project Submission: Applicants prepare and submit project proposals to HOCTC.

HSTP Update: HOCTC revises the "Project List" of the HSTP, incorporating new projects. The updated HSTP is adopted, making the projects eligible for 5310 funding.

Formation of Standing Evaluation Committee: HOCTC assembles an evaluation committee according to NYSDOT requirements, including external representatives if necessary.

Local Project Screening: The HOCTC evaluation committee screens each project against the **criteria**. Projects are scored and prioritized based on the evaluation.

HSTP Update: HOCTC updates the "Project List" of the HSTP to include the prioritized projects.

Feedback and Revision (Optional):HOCTC shares the evaluation outcomes with applicants. Applicants may revise and resubmit their projects for re-evaluation.

Local Project Screening Criteria

Category	#	Criteria	Evaluation Guidance	Weight
Needs Addressed by Project	1	Fills need(s) identified in planning process for coordinated public transit-human services public transportation plan	Refer to needs assessment for coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.	25
	2	Serves special needs populations and/or areas of high transit dependence	Refer to maps of persons with disabilities, seniors, youth, households without vehicles, low-income populations, minority populations and transit dependency needs index.	20
	3	Serves regional needs, including connections to other counties	How well does the project address regional needs?	15
	4	Serves bi-county needs	How well does the project address bi-county needs?	10
	5	Serves local needs; includes trips entirely within Herkimer County or Oneida County	How well does the project address local needs?	10
Efficiency and Effectiveness	6	Uses innovative programs, processes and tools that improve efficiency and/or effectiveness	Score the application based on the service or programs proposed innovation - could be technological or other innovation	10
	7	Coordinates and/or collaborates with other organizations, locally and/or regionally.	Evaluate the project based on documented coordination with and/or support from other organizations.	5
	8	Improves financial sustainability, results in cost savings, or leverages other funding sources and volunteer support	Evaluate the application using this cost related criterion.	5

Current & Localized 5310 Project Process Cont.

NYSDOT Call for Projects: Applicants respond to NYSDOT's call for projects, citing the updated HSTP. NYSDOT checks project eligibility and sends eligible projects back to HOCTC for evaluation.

Formation of Review Committee: HOCTC assembles a review committee according to NYSDOT requirements, including external representatives if necessary.

Project Evaluation: The HOCTC committee reviews and scores the projects based on NYSDOT criteria.

NYSDOT Recommendations: NYSDOT suggests which projects should be funded based on their criteria. HOCTC reviews these recommendations and provides final input based on their preferences and priorities.

Project Evaluation: HOCTC Evaluation Committee reviews and scores the projects based on NYSDOT criteria.

LEGEND
- Current & Remains the Same
- Current & Changing
- Proposed Localized

Next Steps

- Wrap up draft Coordinated Plan
- Submit the Plan to TAC for final review and comment
- Finalize Coordinated Plan and distribute for public review
- Public Review Meeting: mid – July
- Submit final Plan to HOCTC – August 26

Thank You

Appendix C: Community Survey: Summary Statistics and Findings

DRAFT

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WHAT TRANSPORTATION CAN BE.

MEETING SUMMARY

Date:	March 1, 2024	**TG:**	1.23160
To:	Amy Heiderich, HOCTC		
From:	Chris Titze, Transpo Group		
Subject:	Community Survey – Summary Statistics and Findings		

This memorandum summarizes the statistics and findings from the Community Survey, which was open to the public between February 1st and March 1st, 2024. Survey responses were collected digitally from the project website and in hard copy upon request by respondents and from Oneida County agencies such as 50 Forward Mohawk Valley, the People First Agency, and the Housing Authority in the City of Utica. In total, 93 respondents completed surveys. The following provides a summary statistic of responses across multiple-choice questions and summary findings from open-ended questions.

For the categorical questions such as location, age, annual income, employment status, and veteran status:

- The vast majority of respondents are located in Oneida County.
- The most frequently reported age range was 50-59.
- The most common annual income category reported was 'Above $60,001'.
- Most respondents are employed.
- Most respondents are not veterans.
- Most respondents are not disabled, though they reported difficulty walking and climbing stairs and "other" difficulties.
- Most respondents have a driver's license and access to a personal vehicle.
- The most common transportation option used regularly was "Personal Automobile."

Open-ended questions highlighted the following themes, but overall, they point to a need for more flexible, reliable public transportation options that accommodate diverse schedules and routes. There's also an implicit need for transportation options that fill in the gaps when personal vehicles are not an option, whether that's due to financial constraints, maintenance issues, or personal choice:

- **Accessibility and Connectivity**: Difficulties related to accessing transportation services, including lack of connection to sidewalks or other multimodal facilities.
- **Affordability Issues**: Concerns over the cost of private transportation and vehicle maintenance.
- **Service Availability**: More extended service hours for public transportation and better coordination of schedules are needed.
- **Infrastructure**: Lack of adequate bike infrastructure and safe pathways for non-car travel.
- **Door-to-Door Service**: A significant need for door-to-door service, especially for individuals with disabilities or health issues.
- **Weekend and Evening Service**: A demand for public transportation availability on weekends and evenings.

Additionally, respondents provided several suggestions for improving mobility and public transportation accessibility. A summary of the potential recommendations includes:
- **Door-to-Door Service:** A frequent mention indicating a strong need for direct transportation services that pick up and drop off passengers at their desired locations.

- **One Place to Call for Transport**: The need for a centralized communication system where passengers can arrange all their transportation needs.
- **Online Access to Information**: Access to transportation schedules, booking options, and information online is a recurring theme.
- **Lower-Cost Transportation Services**: Cost is a barrier for some respondents, suggesting that more affordable transportation options are needed.
- **Service Availability on Weekends**: Respondents are concerned about a lack of transportation services on Saturdays and Sundays, which presents an opportunity for service expansion.

Summary of Categorical Questions

This section summarizes the categorical questions presented in the survey and a comprehensive overview of the responses.

1. What is your age?
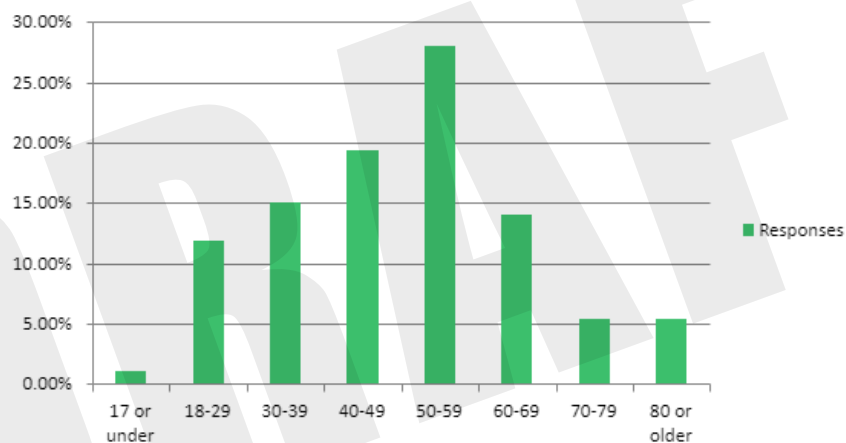
Figure 1. Age of Respondents

As shown in Figure 1, the largest number of respondents fall into the 50-59 age group, with the smallest number falling into the 17 or under age group.

2. What is your annual income?
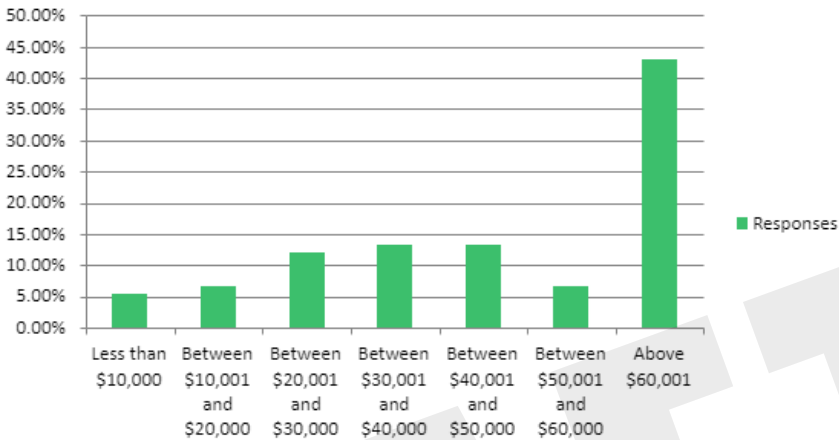
Figure 2. Annual Income of Respondents

As shown in Figure 2, the largest number of respondents (43 percent) make over $60,001 per year and the smallest make less than $10,000 per year.

3. Are you currently employed?

Most (85 percent) of respondents are currently employed.

4. Which county do you live in?

The vast majority (95 percent) of respondents live in Oneida County. 4 percent of respondents live in Herkimer County, and 1 percent of respondents indicated that they live in a different county.

5. Where do you live in Herkimer County? Please select your town.

Of the four respondents who live in Herkimer County, three live in German Flatts and one lives in Herkimer.

6. Where do you live in Oneida County? Please select your town or city.
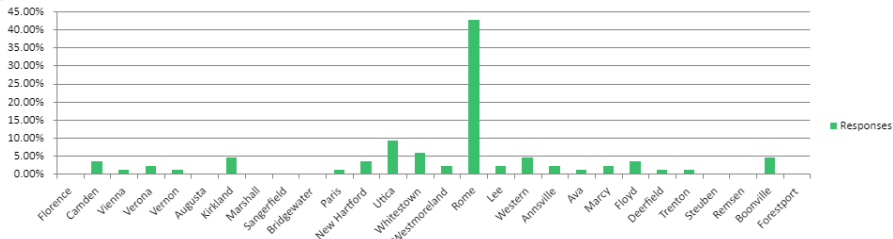
Figure 3. Oneida County Respondent Location

As shown in Figure 3, respondents are highly concentrated in Rome, with the next highest number of individuals living in Utica. Other locations throughout the county represent a relatively even distribution.

7.   Are you a veteran?

64 respondents are not veterans, although 26 respondents opted to skip this question. 3 respondents indicated that they are veterans.

8.   Do you have any disabilities? Select all that apply.
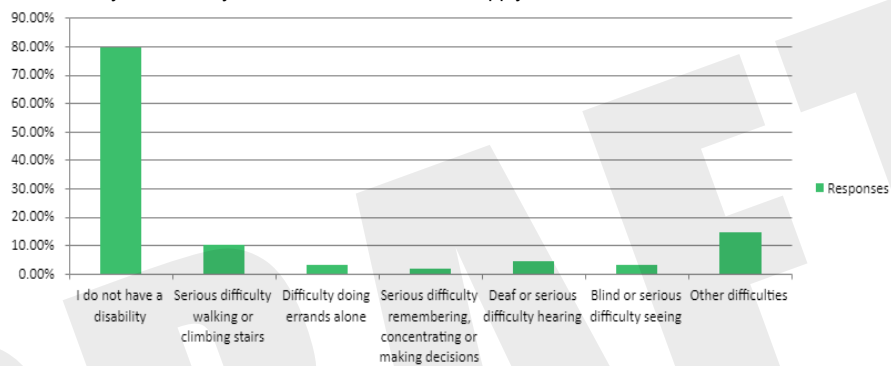
Figure 4. Disability Status of Respondents

Note that Question 8 allowed respondents to select multiple options, which is why the sum of the categories is larger than the total number of respondents. As shown in Figure 4, 79 percent of respondents indicated that they are not disabled. Of respondents who did indicate that they had a disability, the most common selections were serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs, or other difficulties/disabilities.

9.   Are you able to drive and have a current license?

The majority (81 percent) of respondents are both licensed and able to drive.

10. Do you have access to a personal vehicle that you drive?

The majority (79 percent) of respondents both have access to a vehicle and personally drive the vehicle.

11. How many vehicles are in your household?
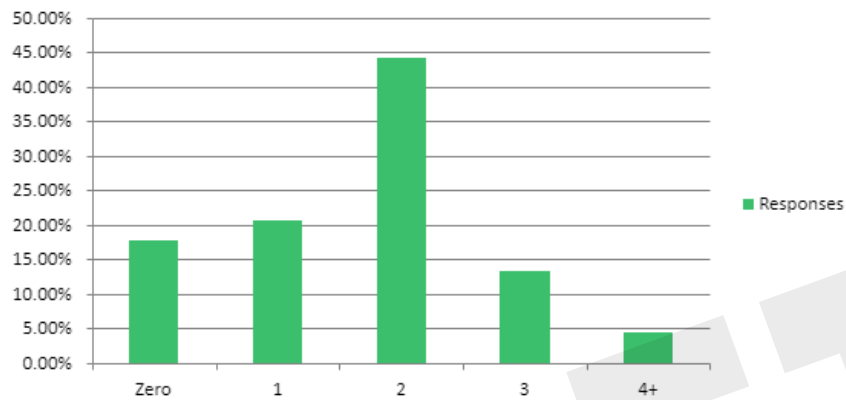
Figure 5. Household Vehicle Quantity

As shown in Figure 5, the largest number of respondents indicated that two vehicles are present at their household. The two other significant groups indicated that there was either one or no vehicles in the household, with the smallest number having four or more vehicles at the household.

12. Do you own a smartphone?

The vast majority (93 percent) of respondents owns a smartphone.
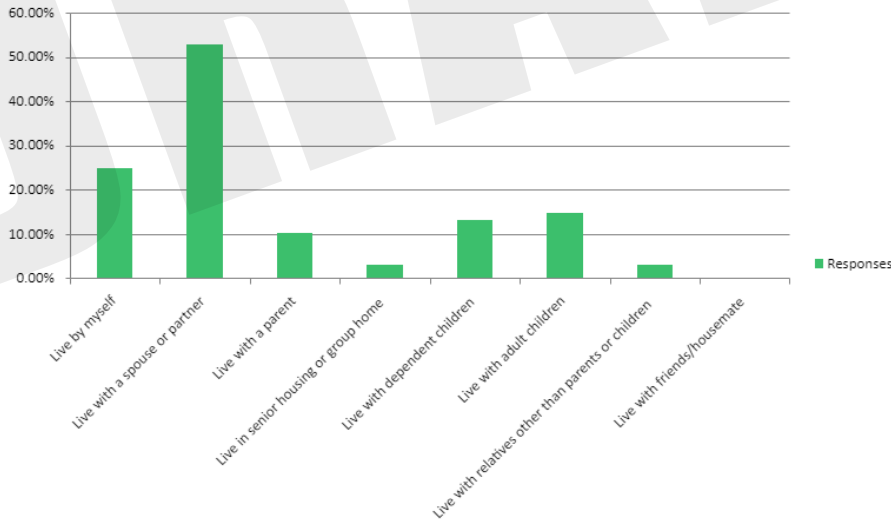
13. Which best describes your household?

Figure 6. Houshold Living Status

5

As shown in Figure 6, most respondents either live by themselves (25 percent) or with a spouse or partner (53 percent). The other response categories make up a relatively even distribution with those living with adult children making up the next largest group.

Summary of Transportation-Oriented Questions

This section summarizes the transportation-oriented questions presented in the survey and a comprehensive overview of the responses.

14. Which of the following transportation options do you use regularly? Select all that apply.
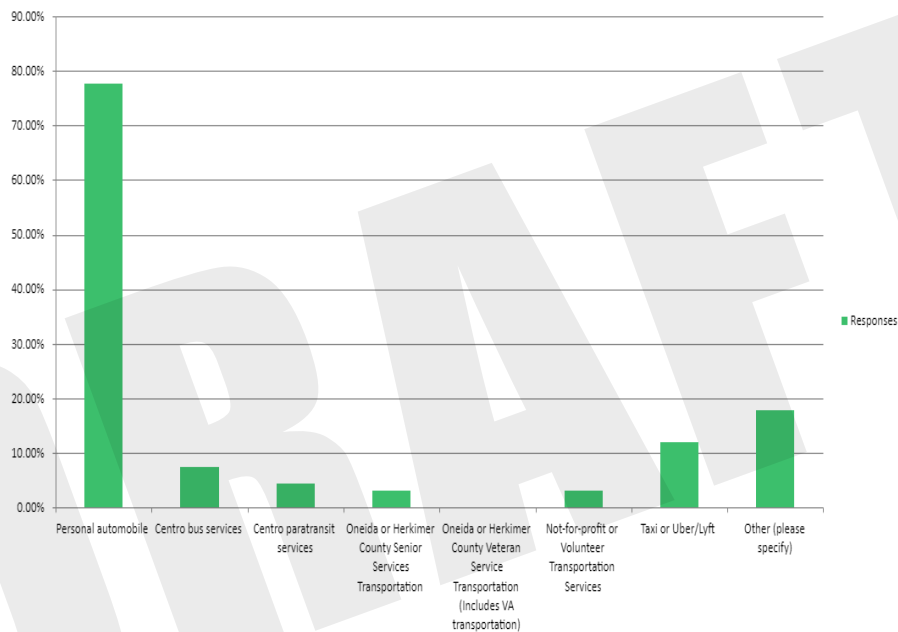
Figure 7. Transportation Options

Note that Question 14 allowed respondents to select multiple options, which is why the sum of the categories is larger than the total number of respondents. The most common response involved the use of personal automobiles, with taxi/Uber/Lyft and "Other" making up the next largest categories. Of the "Other" responses, these included the use of friends, family, or coworkers for transportation.

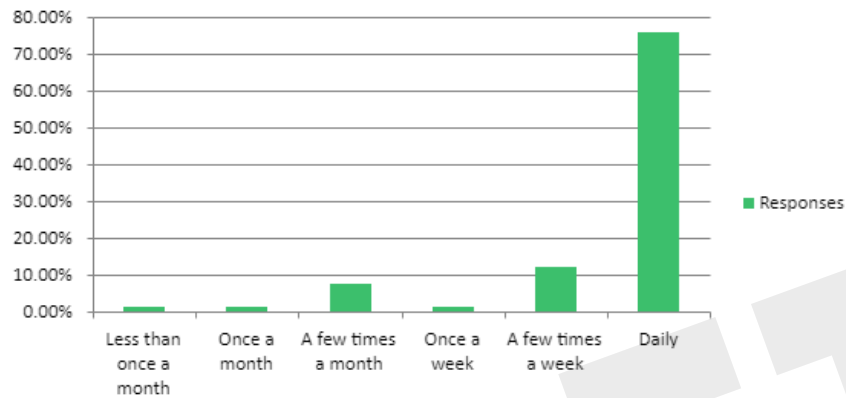15. How often do you make a trip outside of your home?

Figure 8. Trip Frequency of Respondents

As shown in Figure 8, the two largest groups of respondents made trips either daily or a few times per week, the most frequent options available. The next largest group makes trips a few times per month.

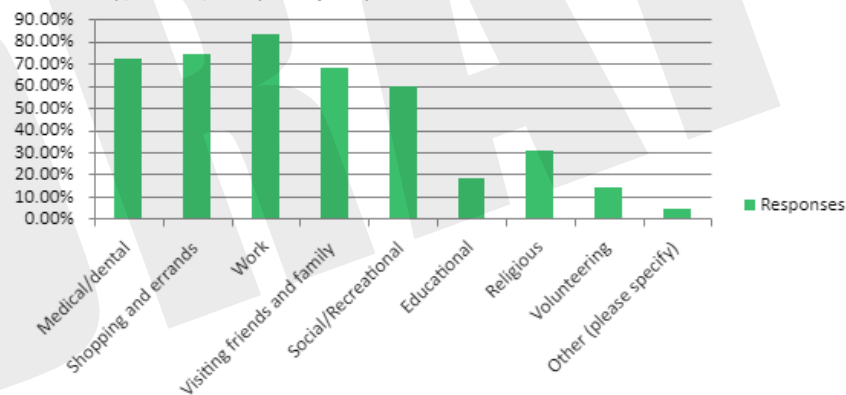16. What types of trips do you regularly make?

Figure 9. Trip Types

Note that Question 16 allowed respondents to select multiple options, which is why the sum of the categories is larger than the total number of respondents. The top five categories are well distributed, with the largest categories including work (54 responses) and shopping and errands (48 responses). The smallest category was "Other", with specific responses including traveling to veterinary appointments and to the senior center.

17. How often do you miss a trip or are unable to make a trip you would like to take?
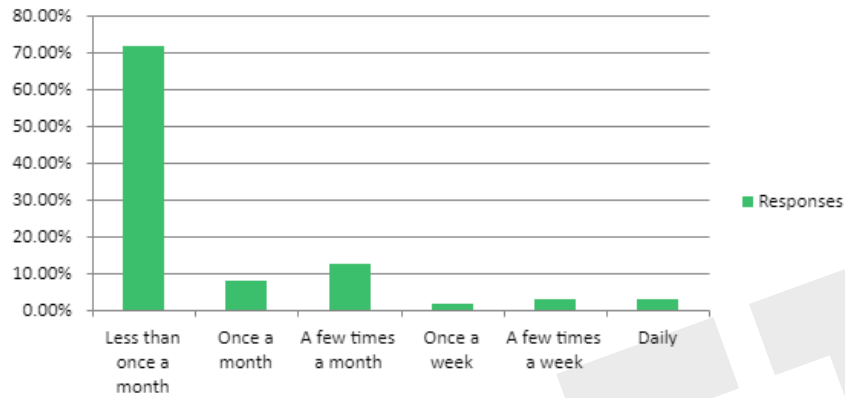
7

Figure 10. Missed Trip Frequency

As shown in Figure 10, the majority (72 percent) of respondents miss trips less than once per month. Other categories are relatively evenly distributed, with the lowest number of people selecting once per week.

18. When you miss or are unable to make a trip, what are the most frequent reasons?
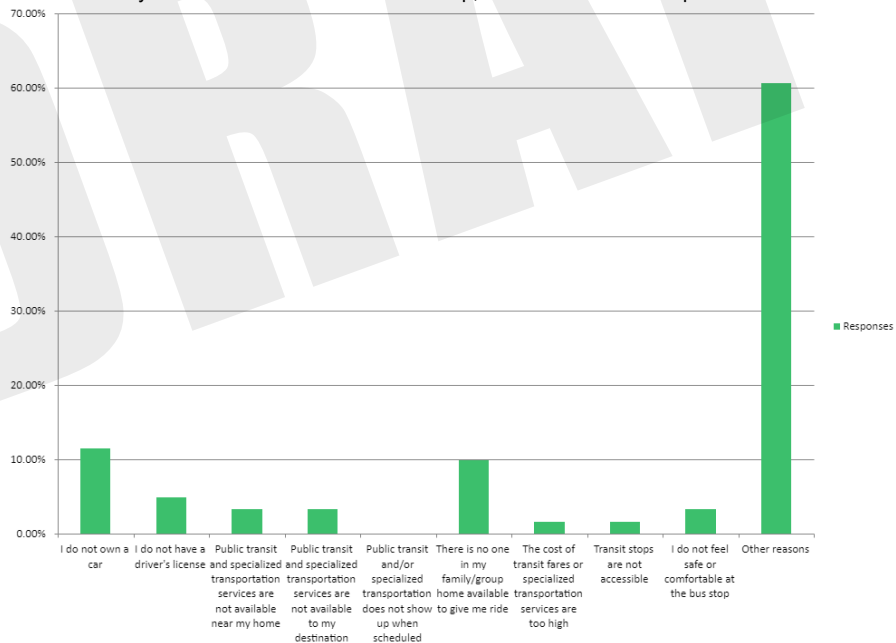

Figure 11. Missed Trip Reason

Note that Question 18 allowed respondents to select multiple options, which is why the sum of the categories is larger than the total number of respondents. The largest group indicated that trips are missed for "Other" reasons. The next largest responses included not owning a car, and not having a driver available in their family or group home.

19. What would make it easier to use transportation services for the trips you need or want to make? Select your top 3.
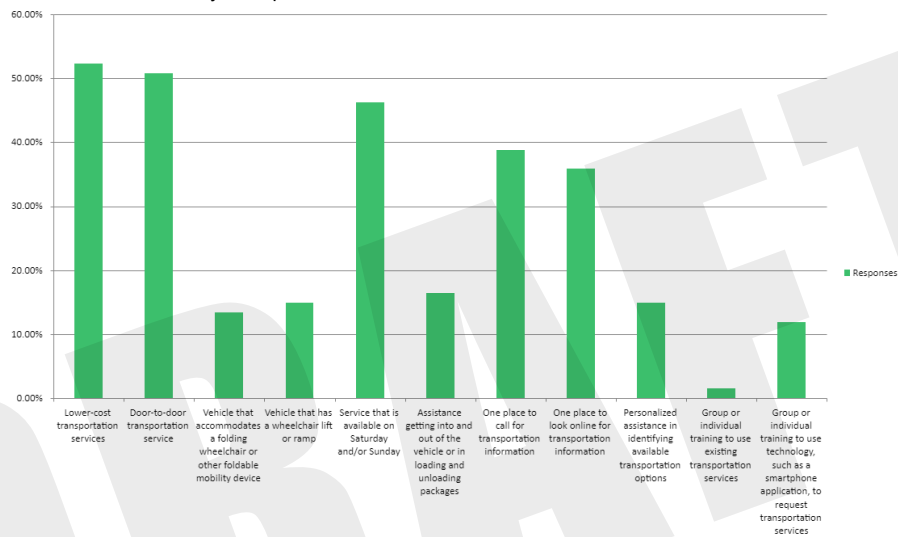

Figure 12. Potential Improvements to Transportation Services

Note that Question 19 allowed respondents to select multiple options, which is why the sum of the categories is larger than the total number of respondents. The largest selected responses were offering lower-cost transportation services, followed by offering door-to-door transportation service. Other large categories included implementing weekend service and having one place to call and look online for transportation information.

20. How do you access information about transportation options? Select all that apply.
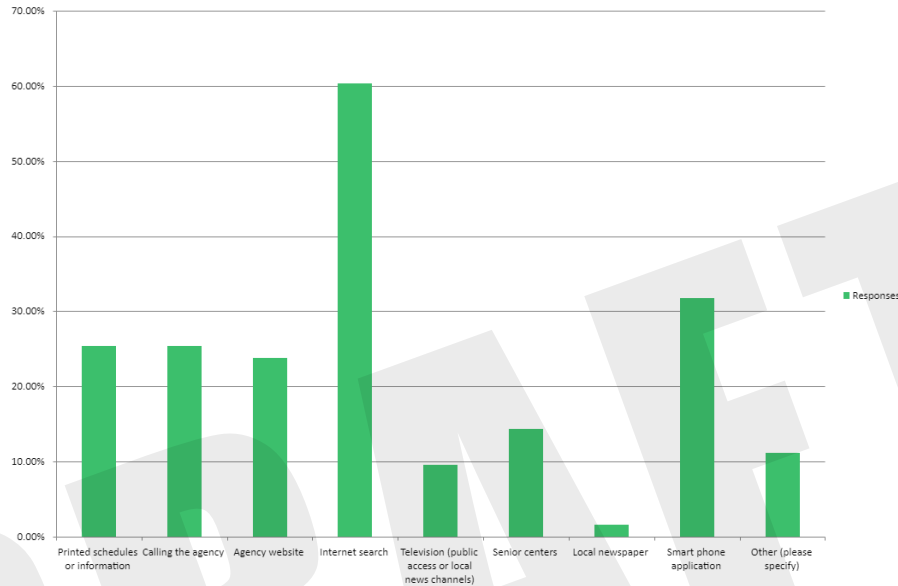

Figure 13. Accessing Transportation Information

Note that Question 20 allowed respondents to select multiple options, which is why the sum of the categories is larger than the total number of respondents. The largest number of responses involved searching the internet (38 responses). Using smart phone applications was another frequently selected response. About a quarter of all respondents either call or research the agency directly to access transportation information. The least-selected option was reading the local newspaper.

Summary of Open-Ended Questions

This section summarizes the open-ended questions presented in the survey and a comprehensive overview of the responses.

21. Is there a local or regional destination or destinations that are especially hard for you to travel to?

Respondents shared that areas of interest included generic locations such as the grocery store, theaters, or other commercial locations. There were also responses indicating the transportation to and within Utica is of interest, and some respondents don't like to drive in Utica due to traffic.

22. Do you have any other information or suggestions for improvements that you would like to share?

Respondents shared that expanding service hours to include later in the evening as well as providing service on the weekends is highly desirable. Multiple comments also made note of difficulty managing the expense of service and connecting transit to sidewalks or other multimodal features. Providing door-to-door service also appears to be a large focus for respondents.

23. Would you like to be added to a project email notification list to be notified about any future meetings, surveys, or other information related to the HOCTC Human Services Transportation Plan?

Of the 93 respondents, 9 indicated that they would like to be added to the notification list.

Appendix D: Agency Interview Meeting Summaries

MEETING SUMMARY

Date:	January 30, 2024	**TG:**	1.23160
To:	Amy Heiderich, HOCTC		
From:	Chris Titze, Transpo Group		
Subject:	Agency Interview Meeting Summary - Oneida County Department of Mental Health - Substance USe Services		

Meeting Attendees
- Sean Miri (Oneida County Mental Health / Substance Abuse)
- Amy Heiderich (HOCTC)
- Adam Palmer (HOCTC)
- Chris Titze (Transpo Group)

Summary of Main Points

This meeting was an agency listening session focused on understanding the mobility needs of Oneida County, particularly focusing on the experiences of Oneida County Mental Health / Substance Abuse clients. The meeting occurred on the morning of January 30, 2024. The following summarizes the main points expressed by meeting participants:

- Discussion focused on the 5310 program to enhance mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities and the requirement of a coordinated plan updated at least every five years.
- A significant emphasis was placed on locally developed plans, involving agencies and individuals as participants to identify community transportation needs.
- The meeting highlighted issues with current transportation services, including late pickups, early arrivals leading to missed treatment appointments, and challenges with Medicaid cab services.
- There was a notable discussion on fraud issues, inefficiencies in the Medicaid cab service, and the need for a more efficient setup for Medicaid cab appointments.
- The meeting covered transportation needs across various demographics, focusing on primary care appointments, substance use clinics, and mental health clinics, specifically highlighting the need for timely and respectful transportation services.
- There was an acknowledgment of transportation challenges for individuals living in rural areas, pointing out the disparity in access compared to urbanized areas.
- The potential for innovative solutions, such as mobile medication units and more tech-savvy transportation booking options, was discussed to improve service accessibility and efficiency.

Identified Gaps & Needs in Mobility and Access to Transportation Services

- Identified transportation issues included the inefficiency of Medicaid cab services, lack of direct origin-to-destination services, and the challenge of coordinating transportation across county lines for rural residents.
- The discussion revealed a need for more centralized and efficient ways to manage and book transportation services, particularly for those reliant on Medicaid and those facing physical and mental health challenges. The discussion led to the identification of some agencies that own transport vehicles.

Potential Recommendations to Improve Mobility
- Recommendations included exploring technology-driven solutions, such as apps or centralized call centers, to streamline transportation booking and management.
- The concept of a mobility manager or transportation specialist was suggested as a means to centralize knowledge and coordination of transportation services across the county, making it easier for consumers to navigate available options.

Additional Considerations
- The meeting underscored the importance of breaking down silos between various service providers and agencies to improve coordination and efficiency of transportation services.
- There was an acknowledgment of the broader impact of transportation challenges, extending beyond just medical appointments to include employment, social services, and emergency preparedness.
- The potential use of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) SIM mapping to identify gaps and improve communication among county stakeholders was discussed as a complementary effort to transportation planning.

Meeting Conclusions:
The meeting concluded with an understanding of the critical role of efficient, coordinated transportation services in supporting the health, well-being, and mobility of vulnerable populations in Oneida County. The discussion pointed towards the necessity of innovative, technology-driven solutions and the centralization of information and resources through roles like a mobility manager to address the identified gaps and improve transportation access for all residents, particularly those in rural areas and those facing mental health and substance use challenges.

2

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WHAT TRANSPORTATION CAN BE.

MEETING SUMMARY

Date:	March 7, 2024	**TG:**	1.23160
To:	Amy Heiderich, HOCTC		
From:	Chris Titze, Transpo Group		
Subject:	Agency Interview Meeting Summary - Oneida County Department of Family and Community Services Offices of Employment and Daycare		

Meeting Attendees

- Phil Martini (Oneida County Office of Employment and Daycare)
- Amy Heiderich (HOCTC)
- Adam Palmer (HOCTC)
- Chris Titze (Transpo Group)

Summary of Main Points

This meeting was an agency listening session focused on understanding the mobility needs of Oneida County, particularly focusing on the experiences of clients of the Oneida County Office of Employment. The meeting occurred in the afternoon of January 30, 2024. The following summarizes the main points expressed by meeting participants:

- The meeting focused on understanding how agencies in Oneida County interact with transportation and identify gaps in mobility and access to public transportation.
- The Office of Employment provides Centro bus passes to clients for transportation support, particularly for low-income individuals.
- The greatest transportation need identified is the lack of coverage in rural areas, which affects access to employment locations.
- There is a shortage of transportation services for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those who do not qualify for Medicaid transportation.
- The refugee population in Oneida County is willing to travel longer distances for employment opportunities.
- Employment destinations like Chobani and Keymark are outside the urban core, and transportation to these locations is challenging.
- There is a decline in centralized employment, making it difficult to provide efficient transportation solutions.
- The use of Uber and Lyft is cost-prohibitive for many clients.
- Travel training and mobility management are potential solutions, but budget constraints have previously limited these services.
- Third-shift employment is not a significant issue as clients tend to find jobs within accessible hours.
- Oneida County holds a job fair every month and there has been no discussion of ride-sharing programs at these events.
- Local employers contend with transportaiton and daycare as their primary consistent issues with employees.

Identified Gaps & Needs in Mobility and Access to Transportation Services
- A notable lack of drivers, contributing to service inefficiencies.
- Insufficient coordination among agencies, leading to redundant services and underutilization of available resources.
- Coverage issues in rural areas, limiting access to public transportation.
- A need for targeted travel training and mobility management to educate clients on utilizing public transportation effectively.
- Paratransit services are not meeting the needs of all individuals, especially those with disabilities.
- The primary gap in mobility and access to public transportation is the lack of coverage in rural areas.
- There is a need for more transportation services for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals who do not qualify for Medicaid transportation.
- Collaboration with employers for transportation solutions is minimal, and most employers expect employees to find their own way to work.

Potential Recommendations to Improve Mobility
- Implement other types of transportation services that are practical for rural communities, such as shared ride programs.
- Consider leveraging federal dollars for a singular travel training program that could assist a broader range of individuals, including seniors and those with disabilities.
- Explore the use of technology applications to facilitate same-day transit options like microtransit to enhance service coverage, especially in rural areas.
- Engage employers in discussions about transportation programs and the potential for shared funding of shuttle services.
- Travel training and mobility management could be beneficial, but there is a need for funding and resources to implement these programs.
- Technological advancements to foster better coordination among existing transportation services.
- Comprehensive community outreach to identify and directly address mobility needs across Oneida County.
- Establishment of a centralized or shared dispatch system to optimize service efficiency and accessibility.

Additional Considerations
- The refugee population is a unique demographic willing to travel further for employment, which could influence transportation strategies.
- The decentralization of employment locations poses a challenge to creating efficient transportation solutions.
- Budgetary constraints and staffing resources have historically limited the ability to provide travel training and other supportive services.
- There is a need for a coordinated plan to efficiently use transportation resources and leverage them for the benefit of the general public as well.

Meeting Conclusion:

The meeting highlighted critical transportation challenges in Oneida County, particularly in serving rural communities, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. The discussions emphasized the need for innovative approaches and better coordination to improve mobility. Proposed solutions focused on leveraging technology, exploring new service models like micro-transit, and enhancing community engagement to address the identified gaps effectively. The dialogue underscored the importance of a collaborative effort among stakeholders to develop and implement strategies that cater to the diverse transportation needs of Oneida County's residents.

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MEETING SUMMARY

Date:	March 7, 2024	**TG:**	1.22142
To:	Amy Heiderich, HOCTC		
From:	Chris Titze, Transpo Group		
Subject:	Agency Interview Meeting Summary - Herkimer County Veterans' Services Agency		

Meeting Attendees
- Richard Louis (Herkimer County Veterans' Services Agency)
- Amy Heiderich (HOCTC)
- Adam Palmer (HOCTC)
- Chris Titze (Transpo Group)

Summary of Main Points

This meeting was an agency listening session focused on understanding the mobility needs of Herkimer County, particularly focusing on the experiences of Herkimer County Veterans' Services Agency clients. The meeting occurred on the morning of January 31, 2024. The following summarizes the main points expressed by meeting participants:

- The purpose of the Plan update and core elements of an HSTP, such as identifying existing services, examining gaps in needs from both a qualitative and quantitative standpoint, and developing strategies to enhance mobility and access to transportation, were explained.
- Herkimer County Veterans' Services Agency maintains 1 to 2 non-ADA accessible 6 to 8 passenger vans that exclusively transport veterans to VA facilities. Two weeks' notice is required, and service is multi-passenger and, for the most part, travel to the Rome VA clinic or main VA hospital in Syracuse.
- Veterans face challenges in getting transportation, particularly to non-VA-approved facilities, and the rigidity of existing transportation services that require advanced scheduling.
- A significant gap identified is the lack of ADA-accessible transportation and a driver shortage, which were exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on services like traveling nurses.
- The importance of having readily available transportation options for veterans requiring regular services like dialysis indicates a need for more flexible and responsive transit solutions.
- The conversation touched upon issues like regional restrictions that prevent crossing into other counties, the reliance on volunteers, and the potential need for better coordination of transportation resources within Herkimer County.
- The lack of drivers is a continuous struggle, and a suggestion to use the workforce from the closing Remington Arms for potential retraining as drivers was provided. The challenge of retaining new drivers in public transportation versus more lucrative trucking jobs was acknowledged.

Identified Gaps & Needs in Mobility and Access to Transportation Services

- Lack of ADA-accessible and non-VA facility transportation for veterans.
- Shortage of drivers leads to challenges in providing consistent transportation services.
- Limited regional transportation that does not cross county lines, creating barriers for veterans needing to travel to different regions.

- Need for transportation services that accommodate regular and recurring appointments instead of medical-focused VA destinations exclusively.

Potential Recommendations to Improve Mobility
- Establishing a transportation department or a mobility management entity within each county to fill in the gaps and coordinate resources more effectively.
- Exploring micro-transit and shared-use transit options for same-day transportation services.
- Use of technology to enhance transportation services and provide real-time scheduling options.
- Leveraging federal funding for recruiting and retraining drivers, including those from the closing Remington Arms facility.

Additional Considerations
- Importance of engaging with various service providers to understand their capacity and willingness to take on additional transportation services.
- Exploring partnerships with neighboring counties to address cross-county transportation challenges.
- The discussion emphasized the need for strategic, collaborative efforts to address transportation gaps and to design solutions that are responsive to the changing needs of veterans and other populations with limited mobility.

Meeting Conclusions:
Better communication and information regarding transportation options across counties are needed. Strategies for improving transportation for veterans should include more flexibility, real-time scheduling capabilities, and leveraging technology for same-day service.
An acknowledgment that current transportation services are stretched thin and that any federal funding should consider the unique needs of the veteran population, including those not seeking services at VA facilities. Additionally, it was mentioned that funding is available for broadband or cellular coverage, an issue many Herkimer County residents face.

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MEETING SUMMARY

Date:	March 7, 2024	**TG:**	1.23160
To:	Amy Heiderich, HOCTC		
From:	Chris Titze, Transpo Group		
Subject:	Agency Interview Meeting Summary - Oneida County Workforce Development Program		

Meeting Attendees
- Art Rapp (Oneida County Workforce Development Program)
- Amy Heiderich (HOCTC)
- Adam Palmer (HOCTC)
- Chris Titze (Transpo Group)

Summary of Main Points
This meeting was an agency listening session focused on understanding the mobility needs of Oneida County, particularly focusing on the experiences of Oneida County Employment and Training clients. The meeting occurred on the afternoon of January 31, 2024. The following summarizes the main points expressed by meeting participants:

- The meeting presented the purpose of the Human-Service Transportation Plan (HSTP) update and its goal of enhancing transportation, mobility, and access for seniors and individuals with disabilities in Herkimer and Oneida Counties.
- A discussion on mobility strategies shifting to finding more efficient coordination methods than just purchasing vehicles with the use of technological solutions playing a significant role.
- Transportation is a major concern, and access to affordable and effective transportation services is critical to successful employment placement and often is the barrier to stable employment. The agency has limited resources to assist with transportation services.
- Addressing labor shortages in the transportation industry, particularly for commercial driver's license (CDL) holders, is crucial for workforce development and the desire to improve regional transportation services.

Identified Gaps & Needs in Mobility and Access to Transportation Services
- Major gaps include transportation accessibility for individuals with disabilities, especially when reaching bus stops and navigating to work locations.
- The rural areas in Oneida and Herkimer Counties face significant challenges in public transportation coverage, affecting employment opportunities. Clients that live and work along a bus route have a much higher probability of finding and retaining employment.
- There's a lack of funding and resources to address transportation issues for workforce development programs directly.
- Even if public transportation is located near an employer, approximately only 50 percent of clients know how to use the available systems.
- Labor shortages in the transportation industry, particularly for commercial driver's license (CDL) holders, are crucial for workforce development and the region's transportation system.

- The lack of accessible and affordable transportation options in the late evening or during "third shift" hours limit the ability to place people in good jobs. For those who work those hours, it's often an additional financial burden due to reliance on more expensive alternatives, such as taxis or ride-sharing services.

Potential Recommendations to Improve Mobility
- Exploring the use of technology and app-based solutions for coordinating rides and improving service efficiency.
- Developing targeted transportation services for major employers and areas with significant employment opportunities.
- Considering the procurement of vehicles for specific programs targeting individuals with disabilities and addressing operational challenges.
- Implementing travel training programs to help individuals understand and use public transportation effectively.
- Investigating the possibility of leveraging CDL training programs to address the shortage of drivers for public transportation.
- Mobility management and/or travel training programs would help individuals understand available services and how to use them and assist in scheduling transportation.
- Explore opportunities for leveraging regional workforce development nonprofits as potential partners for receiving vehicles in the plan.
- Explore TDM programs (company-provided shuttle services) promoted by regional employers, such as Chobani and Walmart, that have successfully transported personnel.

Additional Considerations
- The necessity of local, state, and federal funding mechanisms to support proposed solutions.
- The importance of employer involvement and potential for employer-sponsored transportation solutions.
- Potential for hybrid transportation systems that combine fixed-route and demand-responsive services to serve rural areas better.
- Addressing the technological divide and ensuring that solutions are accessible to all targeted populations, including those with limited tech savvy.

Meeting Conclusions:
The meeting underscored the complex challenges facing Herkimer and Oneida Counties in improving mobility for vulnerable populations, especially to employment locations in rural regions. Innovative solutions and coordination among various entities will be required to enhance transportation access. Future steps include gathering more data on employment centers and potential ridership and exploring funding opportunities for recommended strategies.

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MEETING SUMMARY

Date:	March 7, 2024	**TG:**	1.23160
To:	Amy Heiderich, HOCTC		
From:	Chris Titze, Transpo Group		
Subject:	Agency Interview Meeting Summary – The Center Utica (Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees)		

Meeting Attendees
- Lisanne Divine (The Center Utica)
- Jennifer Vanwagoner (The Center Utica)
- Amy Heiderich (HOCTC)
- Adam Palmer (HOCTC)
- Chris Titze (Transpo Group)

Summary of Main Points

This discussion was an agency listening session aimed at better understanding area mobility requirements, with an emphasis on The Center Utica's services and staff experiences.
"The Center" in Utica, also known as The Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees (MVRCR), is a non-profit organization that helps refugees, immigrants, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals integrate into the community. The Center offers a variety of programs to help its clients improve their well-being and achieve economic independence. These services include relocation aid, language and job training, education, legal advice, and guidance through health care, housing, and other important services. The meeting took place on the afternoon of February 20, 2024. The following highlights the major points voiced by meeting participants.:

- The meeting focused on updating the coordinated plan for Herkimer and Oneida Counties, specifically concerning the 5310 program targeting seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- The discussion covered the services provided by the Center, including resettlement assistance, employment, and education services for refugees and immigrants, highlighting transportation as a critical component across services.
- There's a notable gap in transportation for employment, particularly for second-shift and night-shift workers, for whom public transportation is not available.
- Suggestions were made for smaller, on-demand transportation options and better coordination among agencies that might have transportation resources available but are underutilized.
- An ongoing survey is collecting data from clients at the Center to better understand transportation needs and barriers.

Identified Gaps & Needs in Mobility and Access to Transportation Services
- There is a lack of public transportation options for employment, especially during off-hours and in locations outside urban centers.
- High transportation costs, such as for Uber and Lyft, make them impractical solutions.
- Insurance costs and liability issues hinder volunteer and informal transportation arrangements.

Potential Recommendations to Improve Mobility

- Exploring smaller, on-demand vehicles for transportation to employment centers.
- Enhancing coordination among agencies to share transportation resources.
- Investigating employer-sponsored transportation options, as some employers previously subsidized transportation but stopped due to management changes.
- Potential for categorizing Uber and Lyft drivers by spoken languages to assist the multilingual community.

Additional Considerations

- The discussion also touched on the challenges related to CDL driver training and retention, with suggestions for incentives to keep drivers serving local needs after obtaining their license.
- The meeting underscored the importance of creative and flexible transportation solutions to meet the community's diverse needs, including refugees and immigrants, who may have different expectations and willingness to use shared transportation options.

Meeting Conclusions:

The meeting highlighted the pressing need for innovative solutions to improve mobility for vulnerable populations in Herkimer and Oneida Counties, especially refugees, immigrants, and LEP individuals. It concluded with a discussion on leveraging surveying efforts to inform the HSTP update better and explore innovative transportation solutions tailored to the specific needs of Herkimer and Oneida Counties' residents.

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MEETING SUMMARY

Date:	March 7, 2024	**TG:**	1.23160
To:	Amy Heiderich, HOCTC		
From:	Chris Titze, Transpo Group		
Subject:	Agency Interview Meeting Summary – Herkimer County Department of Social Services		

Meeting Attendees

- Tim Seymour (Herkimer County Department of Social Services)
- Adam Palmer (HOCTC)
- Chris Titze (Transpo Group)

Summary of Main Points

This meeting was an agency listening session focused on understanding Herkimer County's mobility needs, particularly focusing on the experiences of Herkimer County Department of Social Service clients. The meeting occurred on the afternoon of February 22, 2024. The following summarizes the main points expressed by meeting participants:

- The meeting focused on updating the HSTP, which is associated with the 5310-funding program and aims to enhance mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities. The plan assesses existing transportation services, identifies gaps, and improves options.
- Primary challenges include the geography of Herkimer County, which complicates transportation, especially in rural areas located in the northernmost part of the county, and the concentration of the population along the Thruway corridor.
- There's a need for more coordinated transportation services, especially for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- Office for the Aging provides most elderly transportation with a fleet of small buses and vans.
- ARC handles transportation for people with disabilities.
- There are no internal bus systems, like the CENTRO services in Oneida County, which suggests a need for improved public transportation options within Herkimer County.
- Significant transportation challenges exist for accessing major employment centers.

Noted Transportation Services

- Private Transit in Webb: Multi-purpose transportation is available in Webb, a tourist-heavy town.
- Office for the Aging Transportation: Primarily provides transportation using small buses and vans.
- Disability Transportation: Largely facilitated by ARC.
- Valley Health Services and Medicaid: Inquiries about Medicaid transportation services were noted.
- Social Services: Limited direct transportation for individuals, relying on Medicaid transportation for immediate personal needs.
- Medicaid (115 waivers) Transportation: Observations on the prevalence of Medicaid transportation taxis, though their specific roles were unclear.

Identified Gaps & Needs in Mobility and Access to Transportation Services

- The geographic challenges of Herkimer County include a dispersed population heavily concentrated along the Thruway corridor and limited access in northern, more rural areas.
- The absence of an internal bus system similar to Oneida County's CENTRO contributes to limited transportation in both the southern and northern parts of Herkimer County.
- There is a significant reliance on the Office for the Aging for elderly transportation, with a fleet mainly comprising small buses and vans but no comprehensive system to serve the community's broader needs.
- Limited transportation options for people with disabilities, primarily facilitated by ARC and certain healthcare facilities, indicate a need for more coordinated and accessible services.
- Employment transportation challenges, specifically mentioning Tractor Supply in Schuyler as a major employer without structured bus services, highlight an opportunity for targeted transit services to support employment access.

Potential Recommendations to Improve Mobility

- Evaluate opportunities for better coordination among existing transportation providers to optimize resource allocation.
- Explore the potential of a micro-transit system along the valley corridor and to the north (Old Forge area), enhancing services for residents in northern areas to access southern amenities.
- Leveraging technology for transportation service improvements, the successful adoption of electronic document submission indicates the population's readiness to embrace digital mobility solutions.
- Developing targeted transit services to connect major employment centers with residential areas, potentially through micro transit or enhanced demand-responsive transportation.
- Considering the implementation of a mobility manager or coordination council to navigate and educate the public on available transportation services, bridging the divide between different areas of the county and across county borders.
- Actively engaging with community agencies and service providers to collaboratively identify needs, prioritize recommendations, and effectively utilize available funding to address identified gaps.

Additional Considerations

- Acknowledged the challenges in establishing volunteer transportation services, mainly due to liability concerns and driver availability.
- Emphasized the importance of community engagement and inter-county coordination in addressing transportation needs.
- There is potential for increased use of technology and apps to improve service access and coordination, referencing recent developments in electronic document submission to DSS as an indicator of digital adoption among the population.
- Emphasized the need for a regional approach to transportation planning transcending county borders, suggesting a unified perspective for Herkimer and Oneida counties.

Meeting Conclusions:

The conversation underscored the importance of locally developed, collaborative approaches to transportation planning that actively involve all stakeholders, from service providers to the

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communities they serve, to address the unique mobility challenges faced by Herkimer County and similar rural areas.

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