

**CENTRAL MIDLANDS COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

# Human Service Transportation Coordination Plan Overview

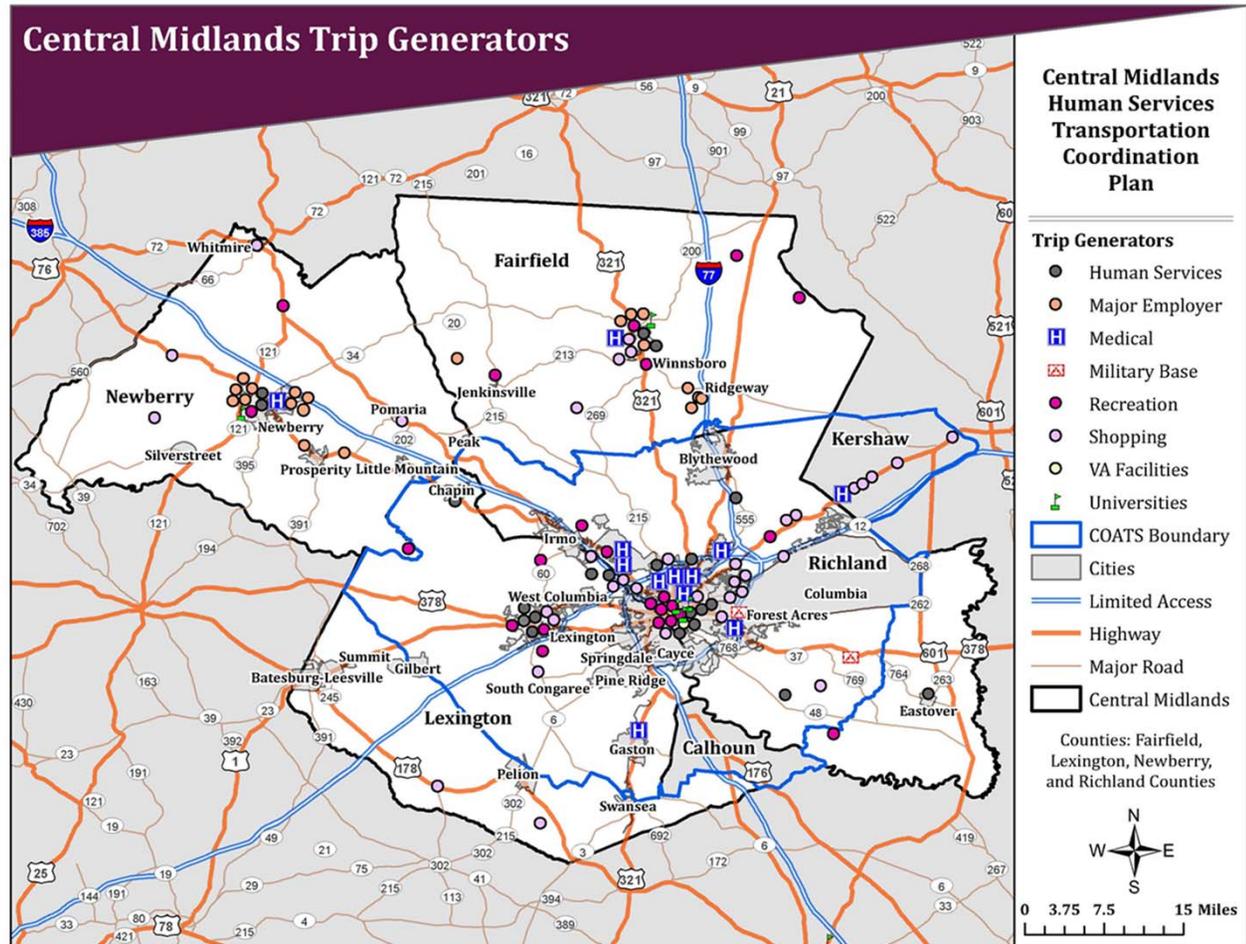


## Introduction



The intent of the HSTCP is to develop a coordinated approach for improving the network of transportation resources for older adults, individuals with disabilities, people with low incomes, and the general public in a manner that maximizes the use of existing resources and introduces new programs that will be most appropriate for addressing the needs identified by local stakeholders.

# Needs Assessment



Transportation is an essential service, and provides access to work, food, and health care.

# Methodology

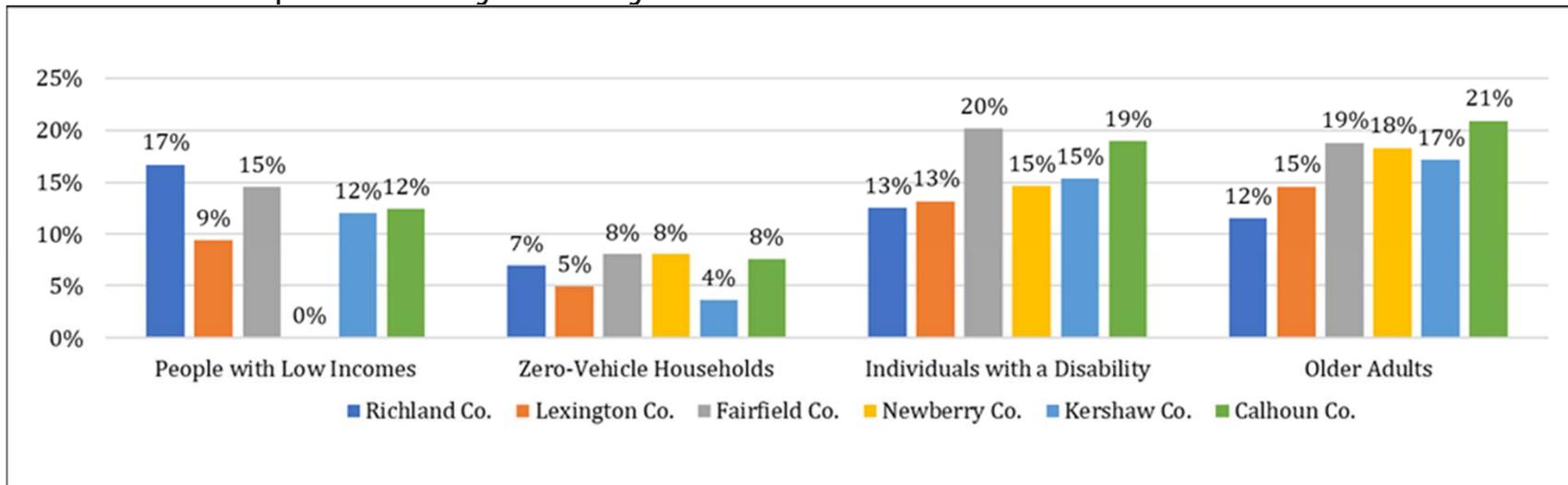
To understand the role of public and human service transportation in the area, the study looked at the characteristics of the region, the services available and asked the people what they were missing in terms of getting where they need to go. The study documents the following:

- Demographic and socio-economic conditions
- Inventory of transportation resources
- Direct input through Survey, Public Meetings, and Focus Groups from:
  - Older adults,
  - Individuals with disabilities,
  - People with low incomes,
  - Human service agency representatives, and
  - General public
- Unmet Needs Assessment

# Demographics

Age, Mobility limitations, and Income are the primary factors that determine a person's available transportation options.

Percent of Population by County



## Demographics

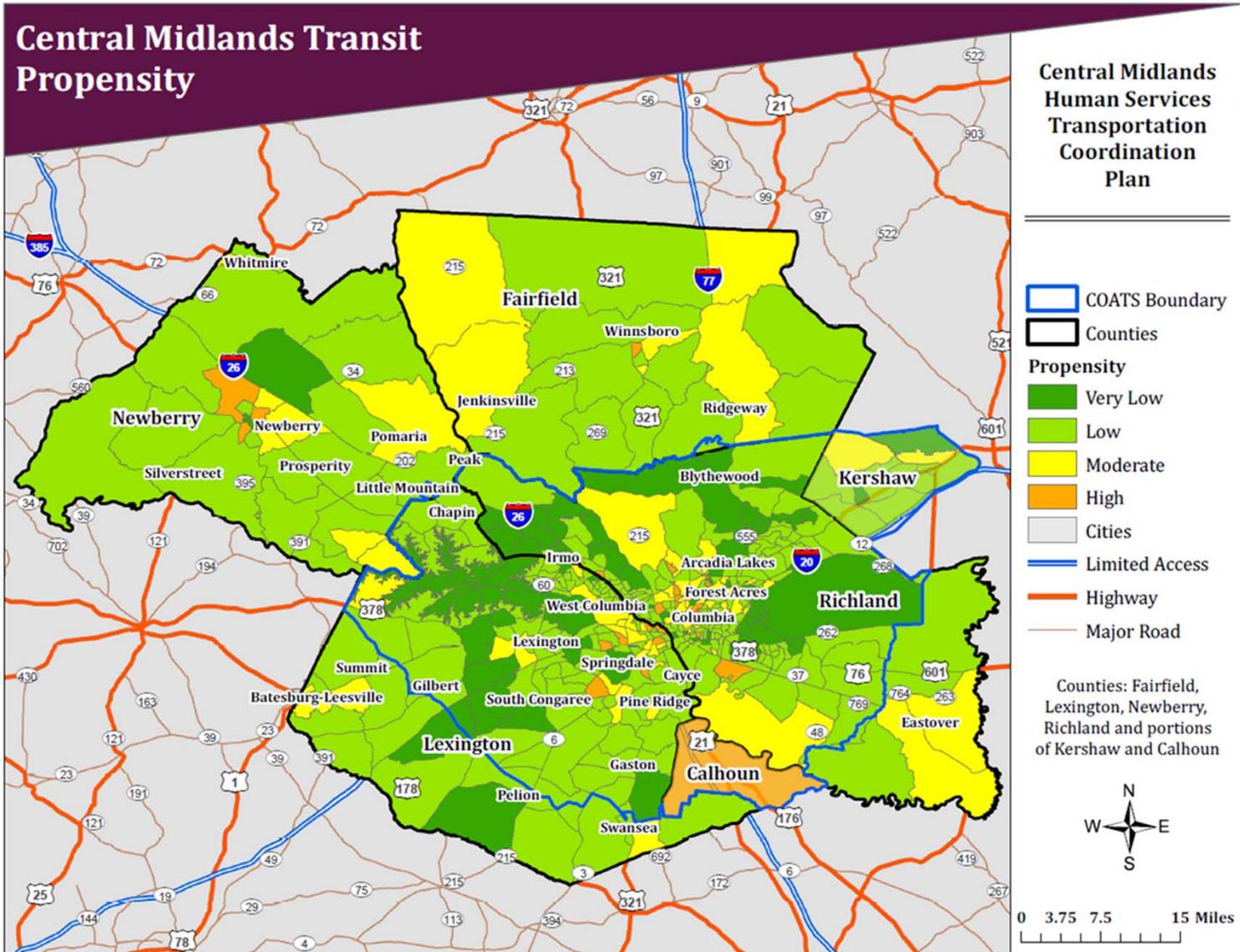
In the most densely populated communities of urban areas, bus service that operates on a fixed schedule is the most efficient way to address day-to-day transportation demand. In the least densely populated areas, door-to-door or curb-to-curb demand response transportation service, using smaller vehicles, is typically more appropriate for transporting passengers efficiently and cost-effectively

Analysis of demographic data provides a prediction of where trips are likely to originate, called Trip or Transit Propensity. The following map shows high trip propensity in:

- Areas near the Richland and Lexington County lines
- Eastover and Southern Columbia in Richland County
- Newberry and Pomaria in Newberry County
- Winnsboro and Jenkinsville in Fairfield County
- Northern Calhoun County

# Central Midlands Transit Propensity

## Central Midlands Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan

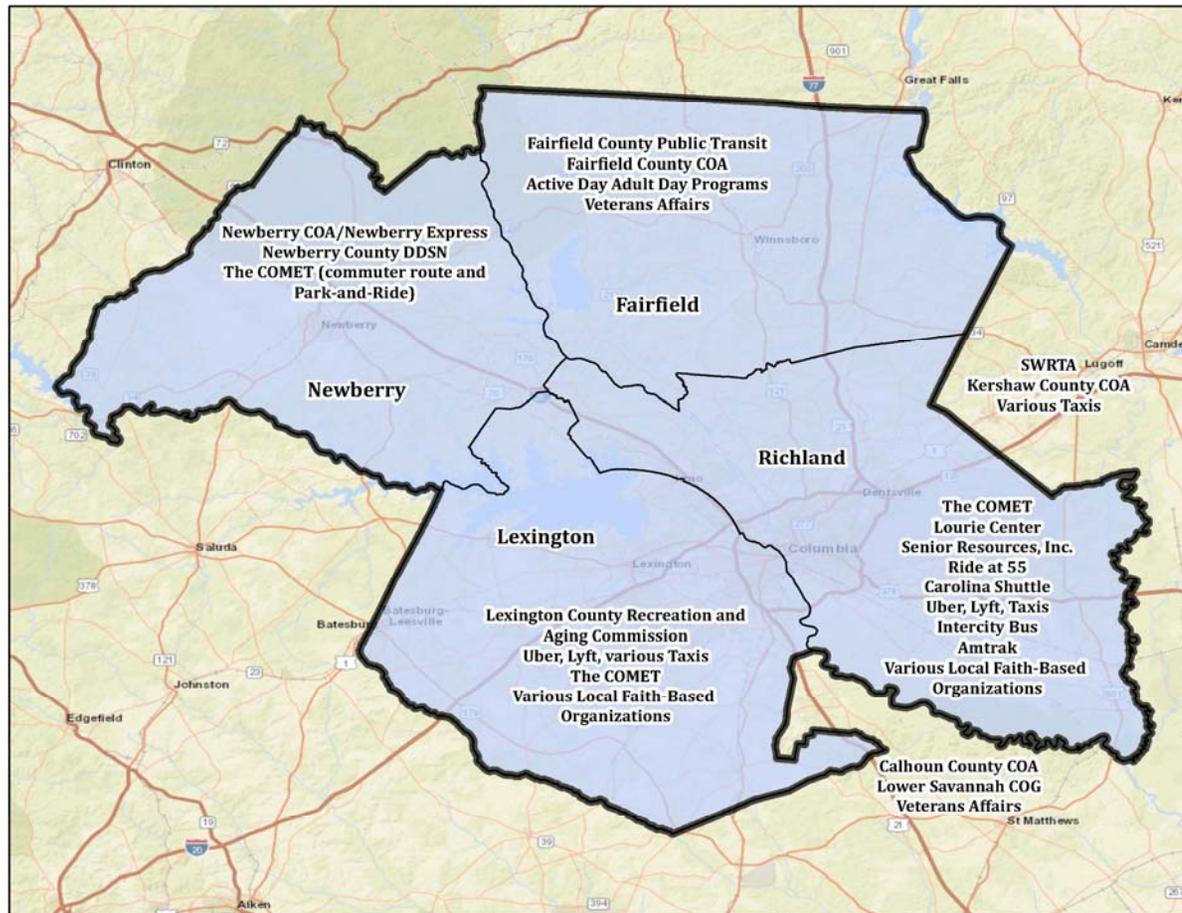


# Inventory

The following types of transportation are available in the study area, for trips that are not completed with a personal vehicle or by a friend or family member.

- Public fixed route (Comet Bus) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit (Dial-A-Ride, aka DART)
- Demand response public transportation
- Human service agency routes and demand response services (specialized services for clients – Seniors, Individuals with Disabilities)
- Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT)
- Veterans transportation
- Park-and-Ride
- Volunteer transportation
- Transportation Network Companies (Uber, Lyft)
- Taxis
- Cycling
- Inter-city Bus and Rail

# Transportation Providers in Study Area



## Inventory Findings

The Columbia metropolitan area has the most extensive network of mobility options during weekdays, evenings and weekends.

Rural areas of the region have a smaller variety of mobility options and more limited days and hours of access to service, compared to Columbia.

All of the specialized transportation services for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and people with low incomes have eligibility requirements, service area boundaries, and specific days and hours of operation.

In most cases, these agencies work independently from one another with the exception of formal transfer points with The COMET or SWRTA to facilitate regional transportation options.

# Needs Assessment – Public Input

Surveys, Public Meetings, Focus Groups

- **148 Surveys** returned, completed by older adults
- **3 outreach** events; Senior Citizen Day @ Fairgrounds, Council on Aging Senior Expo in Winnsboro, Seeds of Hope Farmer's Market Nutrition Program in Columbia
- **9** Study specific **Public Meetings** and Focus Groups, with **193 participants**

Survey – Almost **40% do not drive**

How current transportation needs are met:

- 61% drive a personal vehicle
- 18% use human service agency transportation (ex. Senior Center van)
- 17% rely on friends or family members

Walking and Biking are options for a small percent of people in Richland and Fairfield Counties

23% of survey respondents have a mobility limitation that requires them to use a device such as a wheelchair, walker, or cane to get around

## Needs Assessment Findings



Connectivity between public transportation services is lacking in many parts of the region which makes multi-county trips difficult or impossible. Similarly, there are spatial gaps in coverage for public transportation routes within single counties which leave the most rural areas without access to services.



Access to fresh food and nutrition programs is improving but remains a challenge, particularly from outlying communities.



Transportation to medical and wellness appointments is an ongoing challenge, particularly for trips into Richland and Lexington Counties from the surrounding areas.

## Needs Assessment Findings



Access to transportation is limited in Kershaw, Calhoun, Newberry, Fairfield, and Lexington Counties where individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes do not have access to public transit routes or demand response services. Human service agencies and private taxi services are working to fill those gaps. However, eligibility restrictions or the cost of passenger fares create gaps in access for people who do not qualify for agency programs and/or cannot afford private transportation.



Sustainable funding is needed to support and expand public, non-profit, and human service agency transportation for older adults, individuals with disabilities, people with low incomes, and the general public. Public and human service agency funding for transportation is derived from a combination of Federal, State, and Local resources. Passenger fares also make up a portion of public transportation budgets.

## Needs Assessment Findings



Specialized transportation services including vehicles that are wheelchair accessible and drivers/staff with experience and expertise to safely transport mobility devices are a highly valuable resource in the community. However, eligibility requirements can be confusing and often exclude individuals who need additional assistance or have a non-traditional mobility device because drivers and staff do not have adequate training or vehicles are not properly equipped. Also, the hours of service for specialized transportation providers are often limited to weekdays and do not include evenings and weekends. Weekday schedules limit the mobility options and independence for individuals who require specialized transportation services.



Travel Training and outreach education about transportation options are improving but need to continue to expand, particularly in Lexington, Fairfield, Calhoun, and Kershaw Counties.

## Goals and Strategies



Transportation providers are each working within their own limited resources to benefit the most people possible. The general concept of coordinated transportation and strategies for improving access to information and resources has widespread support throughout the region.

## Coordination Goals

Providers are **aware of the impact** that gaps in access have on the people who need transportation the most. The goals outlined here come from the needs identified through public input. The strategies were generated in discussion with agencies and providers who would be involved.

Opportunities for improving coordination must nurture a **trusting relationship**, clarify objectives and costs, and guide coordination in ways that maintain the capacity of existing providers.

## Coordination Goals

Seven (7) Goals were created, and are described in the following slides.

Strategies:

- **Level 1 Strategies** can be implemented in incremental steps or with as few as two organizations
- **Level 2 Strategies** require more partnerships and address significant challenges
- **Level 3 Strategies** require comprehensive coordination or consolidation of resources from multiple organizations into a single entity

# Goal #1 Establish a Regional Coordinated Transportation Framework

## Level 1:

Sustain the existing public transportation and FTA Section 5310 funded programs.

## Level 2:

Establish a Regional Coordinating Council for public and human services transportation

Establish Coordinated Community Transportation Councils in counties or groups of counties throughout the region

## Goal #2 Enhance Access to Food and Medical Services in Unserved Communities

### Level 1:

Establish tele-health centers

### Level 2:

Support complete access to food pantries, meals, or schools

### Level 3:

Coordinate medical appointment times with transportation availability

## Goal #3 Maximize Local Match through Purchase of Service Agreements and Contracts

### Level 1:

Increase purchase of service agreements with public and human service agency transportation providers

### Level 2:

Increase public transportation service in Calhoun, Kershaw, Lexington and Newberry County

## Goal #4 Create a Coordinated Volunteer Driver Program

### Level 1:

Create a Volunteer Transportation Working Group(s)

### Level 2:

Organize a Volunteer Driver Program(s)

## Goal #5 Expand Regional Connectivity and Local Transportation Service

### Level 1:

Implement a pilot route for the general public in Newberry County.

Coordinate feeder services to connect with The COMET and SWRTA from outlying communities

### Level 3:

Expand public transit services into Lexington County

Expand public transit services in the COATS Urbanized Area including portions of Calhoun and Kershaw Counties

## Goal #6 Improve Public and Human Service Agency Transportation Information

### Level 2:

Improve transportation information sharing with the public and access to transportation services through mobility management

### Level 3:

Create a One-Call/One-Click Application or Call Center for coordinated ride sharing and multi-county trips

## Goal #7 Continue and Expand the Regional Travel Training Program

### Level 1:

Continue the existing travel training program for The COMET

### Level 2:

Establish a rural travel training program

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