

2023 Tulare County Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction/Background

This plan is the latest iteration of the Tulare County Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, which aims to leverage existing human service transportation resources to the greatest extent practicable by encouraging close collaboration between local stakeholders. As both the state designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) and the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) serves as a designated recipient of state & federal transportation funding. TCAG is also the lead agency responsible for the development of a number of regional transportation plans, in keeping with the federal mandate that such plans are developed through a “comprehensive, cooperative & continuing process”.

This plan also addresses a provision of 49 U.S. Code § 5310, first introduced by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005, that requires projects funded by the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program to be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit–human services



transportation plan. Current FTA guidance for the Section 5310 program stipulates that the plan **“identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors, and people with low incomes; provides strategies for meeting those local needs; and prioritizes transportation services and projects for funding and implementation.”**

While the Section 5310 program provides valuable funding to public agencies and private non-profit groups serving the transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities, the benefits of coordinated planning extend further than just the funds disbursed under that program. Coordinated plans are also a useful vehicle for including target populations in the planning process and making sure that resources are used as efficiently as possible by eliminating duplication of services and filling service gaps. Thus, it is important to consider the projects and strategies forwarded in this document as part of a blueprint for delivering more effective and efficient human service transportation in Tulare County rather than simply a list of grant funding priorities.

Elements of the Plan

This plan addresses all the elements required of a coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan, including:

- An update of demographic profile of Tulare County, focusing on populations with specialized transportation needs.
- Updated inventory of transportation resources in Tulare County.
- A description of stakeholder involvement in the development of the plan.
- The most recent analysis of transportation needs and gaps; and
- A prioritized list of strategies to address the identified needs and gaps.

Plan Update Methodology

The methodology used to develop the original plan and the plan update included the following steps:

Review Recent Assessments and Best Practices: A review was conducted of recent local studies, which have examined transportation, health, and human services needs in the Tulare County, particularly those of low - income populations, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Findings were incorporated into the plan update.

Update Demographic Profile: An updated demographic profile of the region was prepared using data from the US Census Bureau and California Department of Finance, to determine the proportion and geographic distribution of the targeted populations. Accompanying and maps in this plan were prepared to summarize & display the demographic data.

Document Existing Transportation Services: This step involved documenting the range of public transportation services that already exist in the region. These services primarily include public fixed-route and shared ride services, private medical transportation companies, transportation services provided or brokered by local human services agencies, and transportation provided through health insurance programs such as Medi-Cal. Health care providers, insurers, and social services agencies were contacted to request information about any transportation services that they might provide.

Conduct Outreach: Development of the Coordinated Plan included stakeholder involvement and public participation via meetings, stakeholder interviews, and convening a Coordinated Plan Advisory Group to examine coordination issues in greater detail. Through these efforts, transportation gaps were identified or confirmed. Stakeholders provided input on existing barriers to coordination as well as possibilities for improvement. Since the original plan was developed, TCAG has relied on continuous public involvement through quarterly Social Service Technical Advisory Council (SSTAC) meetings, surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews.

Assess Needs and Gaps: The needs assessment provides the basis for recognizing where – and how – service for low-income populations, seniors, and persons with disabilities needs to be improved. Needs are based on both a quantitative demand analysis and a qualitative assessment of transit needs developed through the conduct of public outreach, stakeholder interviews, and surveys.

Identify and Prioritize Solutions: Following the identification of service gaps the planning process identified corresponding potential service solutions. The Coordinated Plan Advisory Group (CPAG) was used to identify and validate regional priorities, with the understanding that priorities may shift over time, and that certain improvement strategies should be broad enough for transit project applications to be deemed eligible by state and federal approval agencies. The strategies are documented in Chapter 6 and the Appendix A.

Demographic Profile

Demographic changes since the last coordinated plan update in 2019 were tracked using U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates, American Communities Survey 5 Year Estimates, and growth projections from the California Department of Finance. The County has a significant portion of residents who are likely to have greater transportation needs because they are potentially unable to drive due to age, disability, or income status. Approximately 10.3% of Tulare County's total population is 65 years or older, 11.5% of the overall population has some form of disability, and over 33.4% of the County's population is considered low – income. In addition, 5.1% of total households within Tulare County do not have access to a vehicle. Many of Tulare County's transportation-dependent residents live outside of the incorporated cities, posing an even greater transportation challenge given the sparse population in these areas.

Documentation of Existing Transportation Services

The 2007 Coordinated Plan created an inventory of agencies that provide social service transportation and collected basic information about the agencies' services. This inventory has been updated with each subsequent Coordinated Plan.

Needs Assessment/Transportation Gaps

Several key themes emerged from the outreach efforts, stakeholder consultation, and previous planning projects and surveys. These include:

Enhanced Fixed Route Services

For persons who can and do use the fixed route system, there is a need for additional service in rural and suburban areas, and for more direct service to key activity centers that traditional and non-traditional riders need to access. Residents also would like increased frequency to avoid long waits, more service across county lines, and extended service longer into the evening and on weekends.

Enhanced Transportation Services

There is a demand for enhanced services to and from outlying County areas into the largest cities (Dinuba, Tulare, Porterville and Visalia) to facilitate participation in social programs and access to medical care. There is strong interest in the potential for on-demand microtransit services to effectively connect these smaller communities to major population centers.

Enhanced Route Services in the rural areas

The effectiveness of existing transit services in rural areas is often severely limited by low service frequencies, lengthy travel times, and lack of direct connections to major destinations. The potential for on-demand microtransit to collect passengers from outlying unincorporated areas and bring them into cities should be explored. Microtransit service to transit centers in cities could enable fixed route services to focus on more productive (i.e., higher ridership) routes with higher frequencies.

Enhanced Paratransit Services

Paratransit users sometimes need a level of service above and beyond what is required by the ADA, such as service provided on the same day it is requested, where and when the fixed route service does not operate, or personal assistance. While these accommodations are made whenever possible, the availability of these enhanced services should be improved to the greatest extent possible.

Transit Alternatives

For those who need transportation where public transit (fixed-route, Dial-A-Ride or complementary ADA paratransit) is unavailable or unsuitable, alternatives are needed that enable people to live independently, such as ridesharing or volunteer-driver programs, or mobile programs that bring support services to people's homes or rural communities.

Information and Other Assistance

Improvements to public communications and information dissemination should be made so that the members of the public who need transportation services are aware of all the options available to them and how to use them. Likewise, there is a need to ensure drivers, dispatchers, and other transit personnel are sensitive to passenger needs, and know how to render assistance to those who need it on-board the vehicle.

Affordability and Access to Autos

Cost is the primary barrier to auto ownership for low-income individuals and families. Transit fares, especially monthly passes requiring high up-front costs, and certain transfer policies, were cited as expensive. The institution of progressive fare capping, allowing riders to pay for single-ride tickets until they have spent the equivalent cost of a monthly T-Pass is in the process of being implemented at the time of writing.

Pedestrian Access and Land Use Coordination

The need to improve accessibility to and from bus stops and transfer centers (sidewalks, curb cuts, curb ramps, crosswalks) was widely noted throughout the outreach meetings and in other recent planning documents. Meeting attendees also mentioned the need to better coordinate land use development with the provision of transit service, especially in lower-density communities. The location of housing and facilities serving people with disabilities or seniors in areas that are inaccessible by transit was also cited as a concern.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues

Walking & cycling are often important parts of the transportation equation, both as a link to transit and as practical modes of transportation. Safe routes for walking or riding a bicycle are an issue in many low-income communities. Specific concerns include fast traffic speeds near pedestrians; lack of crosswalks and signals; lack of sidewalks and curbing, particularly in unincorporated or rural areas; sidewalks that are in poor condition; lack of proper lighting creating safety issues especially at night; lack of adequate signage and a better way finding information for pedestrians and cyclists; and lack of bike lanes or areas to secure bicycles at stops and on transit vehicles.

Connectivity

The need for better connectivity between service providers was expressed, both for inter-and intra-county travel, whether using paratransit or fixed-route service. Recent consolidation of county transit services has brought some improvement but further changes, such as the reexamination of transfer times and locations between fixed routes, and closer coordination with transportation providers in adjacent counties, should be strongly considered. Customers also mentioned the need for more bus shelters and bus stops as well as other amenities at transfer sites. Some wheelchair users have difficulty making effective use of the fixed-route system due to accessibility barriers and the need to enhance accessibility of infrastructure such as shelters and stops.

Transit Experience

Issues related to the quality of transit amenities were raised, including bus shelters, bus stop seating in places where shelters cannot be installed, and lighting to promote safety at bus stops, especially at night.

Goals and Strategies to Enhance Human Service Transportation

Potential strategies are identified to address the gaps that emerged from the outreach process and review of prior plans. These suggested solutions are grouped into three main categories:

- Activities that better coordinate and consolidate transportation services and resources;
- Activities that enhance mobility; and
- Activities that strengthen communication, training, and organizational support.

These strategies represent categories of potential investments, which might be eligible for Federal Transit Administration funds subject to this plan, or other local sources of funding. See Chapter 6 and Appendix A.

Next Steps

The next steps in completing this planning process include the following:

Adopt the Coordinated Plan Update

Adopting this plan, to reflect the region's updated conditions, needs, strategies, and priorities will comprise the Coordinated Public update required under current federal guidance.

Support Allied Groups and Committees

TCAG should continue to support the activities of area groups and consult with them to clearly identify public transportation gaps and implement feasible solutions. Continued close coordination with transit operators, health care providers, social service agencies, and community-based organizations (CBOs) will be necessary to bring about capital equipment upgrades and enhanced service delivery.

Plan Update

Established TCAG practice has been to perform a coordinated plan update at least once every five (5) years. Because projects funded by transit programs subject to the coordinated planning requirement must be included in the plan, it may also be necessary to update or amend the list of priority strategies to coincide with future Section 5310 funding cycles, or other funding cycles specific to fund sources subject to this plan. A future update could also be required as a result of new transportation bill regulations.

Chapter 1. Introduction and Background

Background

This plan was developed by TCAG, which is both the RTPA and the Metropolitan Planning Organization MPO for the Tulare County.

In 2005 the passage of the SAFETEA-LU established a new transportation planning requirement for counties and regions. Federal authorization legislation of SAFETEA-LU linked two existing grant programs, 5316 – *Job Access and Reverse Commute* and 5310 – *Elderly and Persons with Disabilities* capital program, with a third initiative called 5317 – *New Freedom* program, through a Coordination Plan that was to be locally developed, at the county or regional level. Its intent was to identify the transportation needs and mobility challenges of three populations:



- Individuals with disabilities
- Older adults
- Persons of low income

The Coordinated Plan brings together human service organizations and public transit agencies to identify and meet mobility needs of older adults, persons with disabilities and persons living on low incomes. Building upon a history of coordination requirements within the 5310 program, the Coordinated Plan process

helps leverage and extend limited transportation resources by coordinating different and often separate systems. Specifically, the plan identifies strategies for coordinating services and for meeting mobility needs and gaps, while prioritizing these for implementation.

In 2012 new authorizing legislation, MAP- 21 included changes that impacted the Coordinated Plan. It repealed the programs of 5316 – *Job Access and Reverse Commute* and Section 5317 – *New Freedom*. It retained and strengthened the 5310 program, restating the requirement of the Coordinated Plan and providing for funding support for the strategies and projects recommended through the Coordinated Plan process.

The significant change introduced by MAP-21 that relates to the Coordinated Plan is that projects funded with 5310 dollars are “projects in the Coordinated Plan.” not simply derived from it as had been the case under SAFETEA-LU direction. Thus, it is necessary to ensure that many diverse voices are providing input to the plan and that identified projects are as comprehensive as possible, in anticipation of future grant cycles and to build responsive

coordinated projects.

The most recent federally authorized transportation bill, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), was signed into law in 2021 and retained the coordinated planning provisions of MAP-21.

Regarding *how* projects are included in the Coordinated Plan, current regulatory guidance states:

“FTA maintains flexibility in how projects appear in the coordinated plan. Projects may be identified as strategies, activities and/or specific projects addressing an identified service gap or transportation coordination objective articulated and prioritized within the plan.” (FTA Circular 9070.1G, pp. V-1)

Indicating also that projects are *“developed and approved through a process that include[s] participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human service providers and other members of the general public”*, this Coordinated Plan development process was designed to ensure a breadth of public involvement opportunities.

Coordinated Plan Requirements

FTA has provided specific guidelines for the preparation of the Coordinated Plan. The following are the four main elements required of the Coordinated Plan, taken from FTA Proposed Circular 9070.1G, which incorporates provisions of MAP-21:

- (1) An assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private, and non-profit).
- (2) An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities and seniors. This assessment can be based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners or on more sophisticated data collection efforts, and gaps in transportation services.
- (3) Strategies, activities, and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery; and
- (4) Priorities for implementation based on resources (from multiple program sources), time and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified.

At its core, the Coordinated Plan identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors, and people with low incomes; provides strategies for meeting those needs locally; and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation. A Coordinated Plan should maximize the transit programs collective coverage by minimizing duplication of services. Further, a coordinated plan must be developed through a process that includes participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of

public/private/nonprofit transportation and human services transportation providers, and other members of the public.

What is Coordinated Planning?

Coordinated planning describes the act of multiple organizations working collaboratively to further their mutual goals, achieving economies of scale, and extending the reach of their services. According to United We Ride, coordination makes the most efficient use of limited transportation resources by avoiding duplication caused by overlapping individual programs. It encourages the maximal utilization and sharing of existing community resources.



There are many levels of coordination, ranging from the basic sharing of training resources to the full integration of services. Examples of coordinated transportation include:

- Establishing feeder services to connect to fixed transit routes.
- Agreements between providers encouraging use of transit services.
- Identifying barriers to coordination in the current regulatory environment and advocating for change.
- Employing technology to find providers and schedule trips.
- Finding ways to group riders on the same vehicle even when they are sponsored by different funding agencies.
- Leveraging purchasing power for vehicles, fuel, maintenance, or training.
- Using school buses for community transportation or other eligible purposes.

Regardless of the type of coordination, it can involve the cooperation of:

Transportation providers — transit agencies, school districts, social service agencies, private providers, non - profit transportation programs.

Service providers — such as health care providers scheduling medical appointments based on transportation availability, targeted deployment of mobile health clinics, employers working to secure transportation for employees, non-profit housing developments offering transit passes to residents.

What does it mean to be ‘Transportation Disadvantaged’?

Transportation-disadvantaged people, otherwise known as individuals with special transportation needs, are those who are unable to transport themselves due to their age, income, or health condition. Their needs can vary greatly from person to person; an elderly



woman with an ambulatory difficulty might require door-to-door transportation & help boarding and debarking the bus, a person with a self-care difficulty may need to travel with a personal care attendant, people requiring dialysis need to be able to make regular clinic visits, residents living on a limited income might rely on public transportation to travel to and from work or school, and so on; it is important that the needs of all transportation disadvantaged people are

given proper consideration.

What are Special Needs in Transportation?

The personal automobile is the most common mode of transportation in the United States and Tulare County especially. However, for those with special transportation needs, driving a car is not always a viable option. Special needs transportation refers to any mode of transportation used by those defined as transportation-disadvantaged or with a special transportation need. This includes buses that have regular stops (i.e., fixed-route transit for the broader public, and schools), specialized services such as vans and taxis that pick-up people at the curb or door (i.e., demand response or dial-a-ride), rideshare services, volunteer driver programs, trains, or any federal, state, and local publicly funded transportation.

The different agencies providing these special transportation services largely fit into two categories: human service transportation and public transit services. These broad designations, however, do little to describe the variety of providers or the diversity of people they serve.

In this planning effort, the intent is to use the widest possible interpretation of special needs transportation. This includes transportation services funded and provided by the following:

- FTA.
- County and local human service departments including programs for the elderly, and disability populations.
- Public transit.
- School districts.
- For-profit and non-profit contractors.

Coordination Efforts in Tulare County

County Wide Transit Pass (T-Pass)

One successful example of cross-agency cooperation is Tulare County's T-Pass, a monthly transit pass honored by each of the County's five (5) public transit agencies. The T-Pass is currently sold at \$55 a month and allows pass holders to ride any transit service (except for demand response services and V-Line service to Fresno) an unlimited number of times over a 31-day period. Since its introduction in 2007 T-Pass sales and ridership have grown substantially.

Transit providers have indicated the need to increase the cost of the pass to keep up with rising costs of transit rides and agency monthly passes. At the same time, the cost of transportation often presents itself as a mobility barrier for low-income individuals. The Tulare County Health & Human Services Agency (HHS) purchases several hundred T-Passes each month from Tulare County Regional Transit Agency (TCRTA) and provides these to their clients so that they can travel to work and access vital human services without incurring a significant financial burden. Recent transit-oriented affordable housing projects have also entered into agreements with local agencies to provide transit passes to their residents.

The Greenline

The Greenline was established in July 2009 as a transit information hotline following the award of a JARC/New Freedom grant by Caltrans. The Greenline allows transit users to call the toll-free number with any questions or complaints regarding any transit service in Tulare County. The Greenline has proven to be a valuable resource and its usage has grown steadily since its introduction. The City of Visalia applied for 5310 program funds to maintain, expand, and promote The Greenline as part of the FY2018/19 and 2020/21 cycles. Expansion of The Greenline is intended to increase the accessibility of travel information and lay the groundwork for the development of a more comprehensive mobility management service in Tulare County.



College of the Sequoias Student Transit Pass Program

The provision of a transit pass to College of the Sequoias (COS) students was identified as an unmet transit need in spring 2010. That fall, COS Students voted to increase their student fees (\$5 for full time students, \$4 for part time students) to establish a semester long transit pass. COS Administration agreed to match \$0.40 to each student paying the fee. All students are required to pay the fee regardless of whether they ride the transit systems. Ridership data shows the substantial reach of the program. By Fall 2019, the program had provided nearly 2.5 million rides to local college students.

Table 1-1 COS Student Transit Pass Program Ridership

| Semester | Ridership |
|-------------|-----------|
| Spring 2017 | 99,489 |
| Summer 2017 | 9,493 |
| Fall 2017 | 128,279 |
| Spring 2018 | 111,683 |
| Summer 2018 | 12,415 |
| Fall 2018 | 123,381 |
| Spring 2019 | 104,984 |
| Summer 2019 | 11,164 |
| Fall 2019 | 109,430 |

Chapter 2. Project Methodology

As outlined in Chapter 1, the four required elements of a coordinated plan, as outlined by FTA Circular C 9070.1G, are: (1) an assessment of current transportation services; (2) an assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities & seniors; (3) strategies, activities and/or projects to address the identified transportation needs (as well as ways to improve efficiencies); and (4) implementation priorities based on funding, feasibility, time, etc. This chapter describes the steps that were undertaken to develop these elements of Tulare County's Coordinated Plan, as well as steps taken to create an updated plan in 2022-23.

Literature Search

A review was conducted of recent local studies that have examined transportation needs in Tulare County, particularly those of low-income populations, seniors, and persons with disabilities. The purpose of this step was to consider the findings emerging from these plans based on their targeted outreach efforts as a starting point for considering unmet transit needs.

A broader literature search also examined publications which investigated issues related to human services transportation more generally. This was done to identify innovative service models that have worked successfully elsewhere, particularly in other rural areas and small cities.

Demographic Profile

A fully updated demographic profile of the service area was prepared using data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey and projections from the California Department of Finance, to determine the local characteristics of the study area, and specifically the three priority population groups: persons with low incomes, persons with disabilities, and older adults.

Documenting Existing Services

This step involves documenting the range of public transportation services that already exist in the study area. These services include public fixed-route and demand response paratransit services, and transportation services provided or sponsored by social service agencies, insurance providers, or other entities. Information about public transit and paratransit was gathered from existing resources as specified in the report, and information about services provided by other social service agencies was collected through consultation with stakeholders.

Stakeholder Involvement

TCAG places a high value on participatory planning and employs a collaborative process to create its Coordinated Plan. During development of this Plan, TCAG sought the opinion and feedback of interested parties, including local transit agencies, various health and human service agencies, tribal governments, community-based organizations, and public at-large. A comprehensive stakeholder list was created that included 100 such entities located in or serving Tulare County. These stakeholders were contacted via direct mail inviting their participation in the plan update process. A transportation user survey was also included, which recipients were encouraged to share with their clients and peers.

A kickoff workshop was held by TCAG in September 2022 to provide a brief overview of the purpose of coordinated human services transportation planning and the contents of the 2019 Tulare County Coordinated Plan. Feedback was collected from all in attendance and those attendees who expressed interest in providing additional information through interviews, correspondence, and further meetings were invited to participate in a Coordinated Plan Advisory Group.

In addition, TCAG utilized public feedback and comments pertaining to public transit service collected over the last five years from such activities as the Unmet Transit Needs process and referred to recent transit planning documents, such as 2022 Visalia Short-Range Transit Plan.

Chapter 3. Demographic Profile

Population

While the eastern half of Tulare County is mountainous and sparsely populated, its western half is home to a combined population of nearly 500,000 persons dispersed across several small to medium-sized cities separated by vast agricultural lands. State Route 99 bisects the western half of the county and provides regional connections to Fresno to the north and Bakersfield to the south. Most of the county's population is situated east of US 99 and west of the Sierra Nevada foothills. The primary central cities of Visalia, Porterville, Tulare, Lindsay, and Exeter are connected by State Routes 63, 65, 137, 198 and County Route J20. The northern communities of Dinuba and Cutler-Orosi are connected by CR J40 and SR 63. The estimated populations of the 10 most populous communities in the county are listed below in Table 3-1.

According to 2020 U.S. Census, the current population of Tulare County is 473,117 persons. This is a roughly 7% increase over the population of 442,179 recorded by the 2010 US Census. Tulare County's largest city, and the County seat, is Visalia, with a 2020 Census population of 141,384. Other incorporated cities include Tulare (68,875 persons), Porterville (62,623 persons), Dinuba (24,563 persons), Lindsay (12,659 persons), Exeter (10,321 persons), Farmersville (10,397 persons), and Woodlake (7,419 persons). The populations for the 10 largest population centers in the County are listed below in Table 3-1.

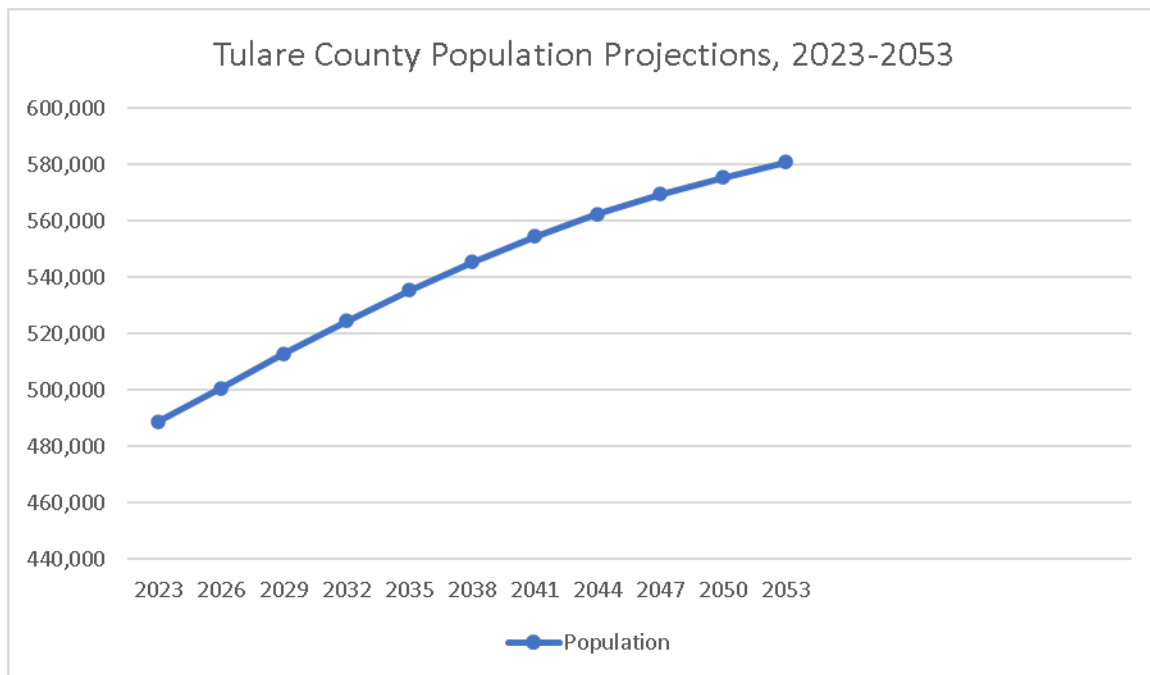
Table 3-1 Population of Primary Communities in Tulare County Source: US Census, 2020 Decennial Census

| City | Population |
|---------------|------------|
| Visalia | 141,384 |
| Tulare | 68,875 |
| Porterville | 62,623 |
| Dinuba | 24,563 |
| Lindsay | 12,659 |
| Cutler-Orosi* | 12,809 |
| Farmersville | 10,397 |

| City | Population |
|------------|------------|
| Exeter | 10,321 |
| Earlimart* | 7,679 |
| Woodlake | 7,419 |

According to July 2021 California Department of Finance projections, the overall population of Tulare County is expected to grow to 580,000 by 2053, based on current trends. Figure 1 shows projected population growth in the county through 2050.

Figure 1 Tulare County Population Projections, 2023-2053



Senior Age 65+

The geographic distribution of the County's senior population generally resembles that of its overall population. The largest concentrations of persons aged 65 and over occur in urbanized areas such as Visalia, Porterville, and Tulare. Other communities with notable concentrations of senior populations Three Rivers, Lemon Cove, Exeter, Lindsay, Springville, and Woodlake.

California has one of the lowest percentages of senior residents of all the 50 states. According to 2021 American Communities Survey 5-year estimates, only 14.4% of Californians are aged 65 or older. Tulare County is even younger; only 11.3% of its residents are 65 or older. This same survey estimated the number of county senior residents at 53,130. The relatively low proportion of seniors reflects the county's very low median age of 31.3. This is largely due to a large, continual influx of working-age immigrants with children. However, while the county's population is younger than that of the state and the nation, the number of seniors grew by approximately 13,000 between 2010 and 2021. As the population ages, the need for specialized transportation services will increase; currently nearly 21% of the County's population is between the ages of 45 and 64. Past research has indicated that one in five Americans aged 65 and older do not drive, and more than 50% of non-drivers aged 65 and older stay home on any given day due to lack of transportation resources. Consequently, the demand for transportation services meeting the needs of seniors can be reasonably expected to increase.

According to the California Department of Finance 2010-2060 (updated July 2021) projections, the number of seniors residing in Tulare County is expected to grow to approximately 94,000 by 2043, reaching nearly 17% of the total population. This would represent an increase of more than 30,000 persons aged 65 or older and a significantly higher proportion of seniors residing in the county than at any point in the past five (5) decades. Between 1970 and 2020, the percentage of County residents aged 65 or older remained steady, averaging around 10%. As the population grows older, it can be expected that there will be a corresponding rise in demand for accessible transportation and specialized transportation services like curb-to-curb and door-to-door services on-demand.

Figure 2 Tulare County Senior Population Estimate and Projections, 2020-2060

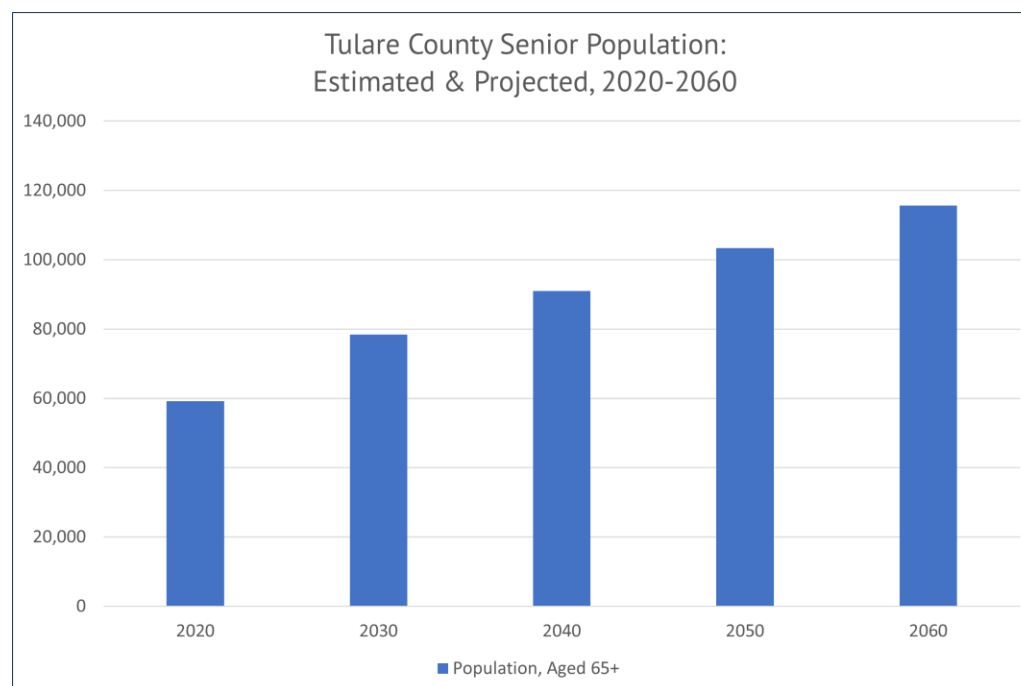
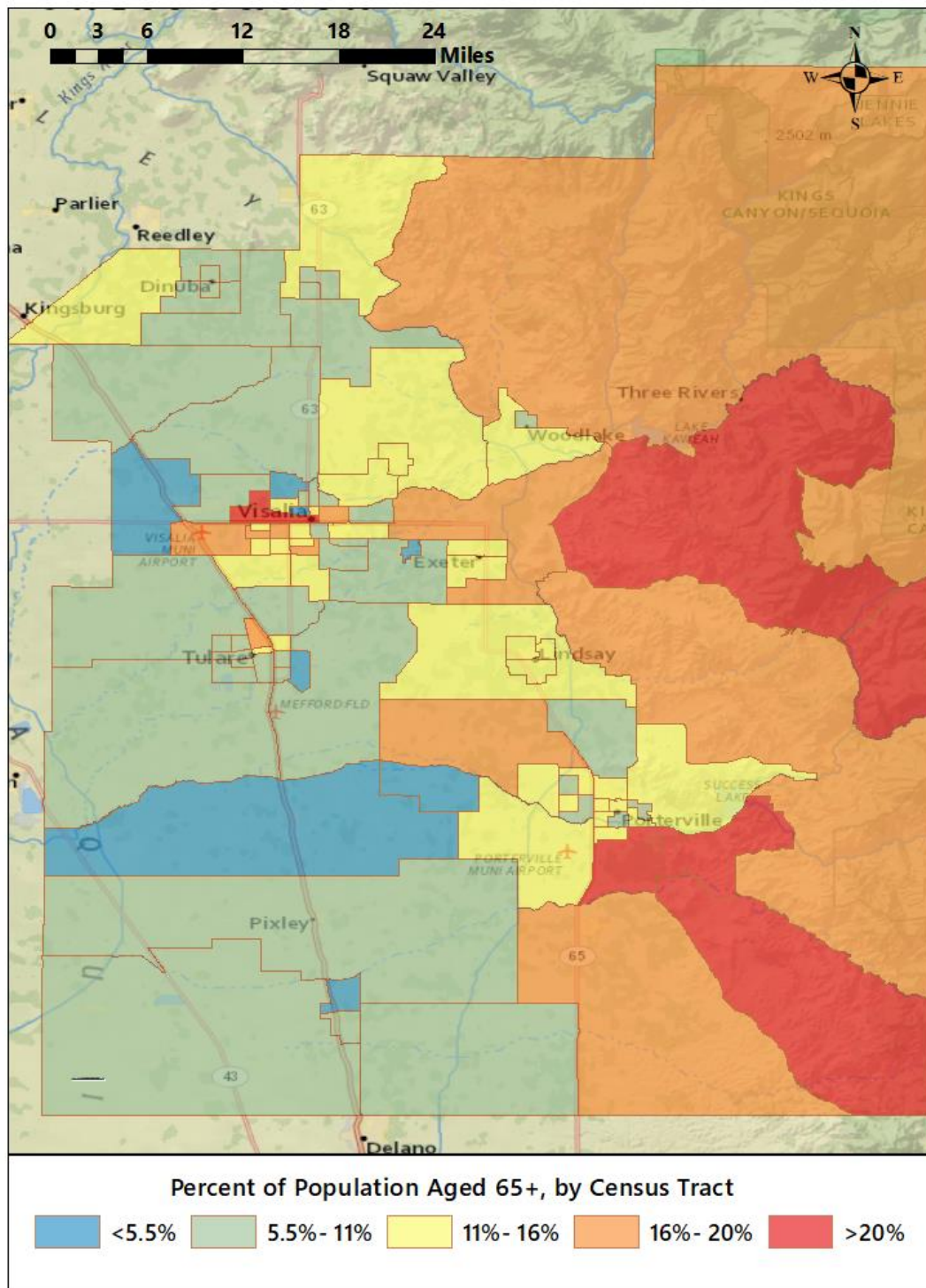


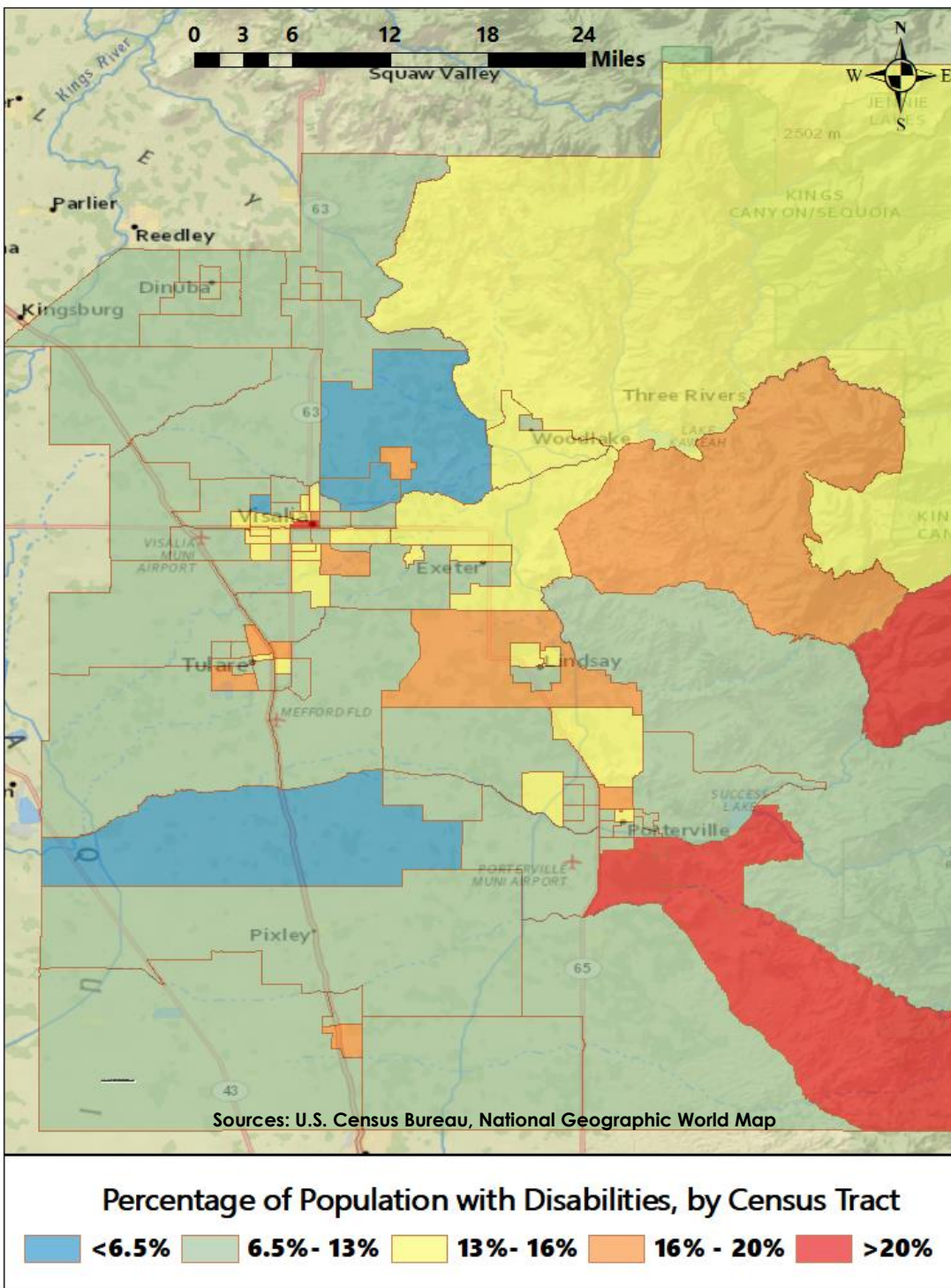
Figure 3 Population Density of Persons Aged 65+
Per American Community Survey, 2017-2021 5 Year Estimate
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Geographic World Map



Individuals with a Disability

The population distribution of persons with disabilities within Tulare County largely mirrors that of the senior population, with even greater concentration within the core of urban centers.

Figure 4 Density of Persons with Disabilities
Per American Community Survey, 2017-2021 5 Year Estimate



The US Census Bureau’s American Communities Survey estimates that 11.4% of the Tulare County population currently has some type of disability. The U.S. Census defines a disability as a significant limitation in sensory, physical, or mental functions, the ability to provide self-care, or the ability to function outside of one’s home. According to 2021 Census estimates, roughly half of this population was comprised of working-age adults between the ages of 18 and 64. Less than 16% of disabled persons aged 16 or older residing in the county were employed. Compared to the general population, disabled county residents were found to be nearly three times as likely to ride transit, and about twice as likely to walk or bike to work. While American Community Survey data does not indicate the precise mobility requirements of individuals reporting disabilities, estimates are available for the prevalence of each type of disability within the county. Table 3-2 shows the breakdown of the disabled population according to the type of disability reported. Table 3-3 shows the same breakdown for disabled seniors, showing the increased prevalence of disabilities among the senior population, which suggests that as the population ages the need for paratransit services will become even greater.

Table 3-2 Disabled Population by Disability Type, 2021

| Disability Type | Number of Persons | Prevalence |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Hearing Difficulty | 15,837 | 3.4% |
| Vision Difficulty | 11,439 | 2.5% |
| Cognitive Difficulty | 18,686 | 4.3% |
| Ambulatory Difficulty | 26,598 | 6.2% |
| Self-Care Difficulty | 10,158 | 2.4% |
| Independent Living Difficulty | 20,547 | 6.4% |
| All Disabled Persons* | 52,964 | 11.4% |

*Note: The total for all disabled persons reflects the fact that some persons reported having more than one type of disability. Therefore, the overall total is lower than the sum of all totals reported for each separate category.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2017-2021, 5 Year Estimate.

Table 3-3 Disabled Persons Aged 65+ by Disability Type, 2021

| Disability Type | Number of Persons | Prevalence |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Hearing Difficulty | 8,399 | 16.2% |
| Vision Difficulty | 4,325 | 8.3% |
| Cognitive Difficulty | 5,141 | 9.9% |
| Ambulatory Difficulty | 13,029 | 25.1% |
| Self-Care Difficulty | 4,433 | 8.6% |
| Independent Living Difficulty | 9,506 | 18.3% |
| All Disabled Seniors | 20,275 | 39.1% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2017-2021 5 Year Estimate.

Low-Income Individuals

Nearly 20% of Tulare County’s population lives below the poverty level according to the U.S. Census Bureau, significantly above the national average of 12.6%. The FTA defines low-income individuals as those individuals who earn at or below 150% of the poverty level. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines the poverty level as an annual income of \$27,750 for a family of four (2023 figure). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, fully one-third (33.4%) of the County’s population is considered low-income.

Table 3-3 Economic Indicators

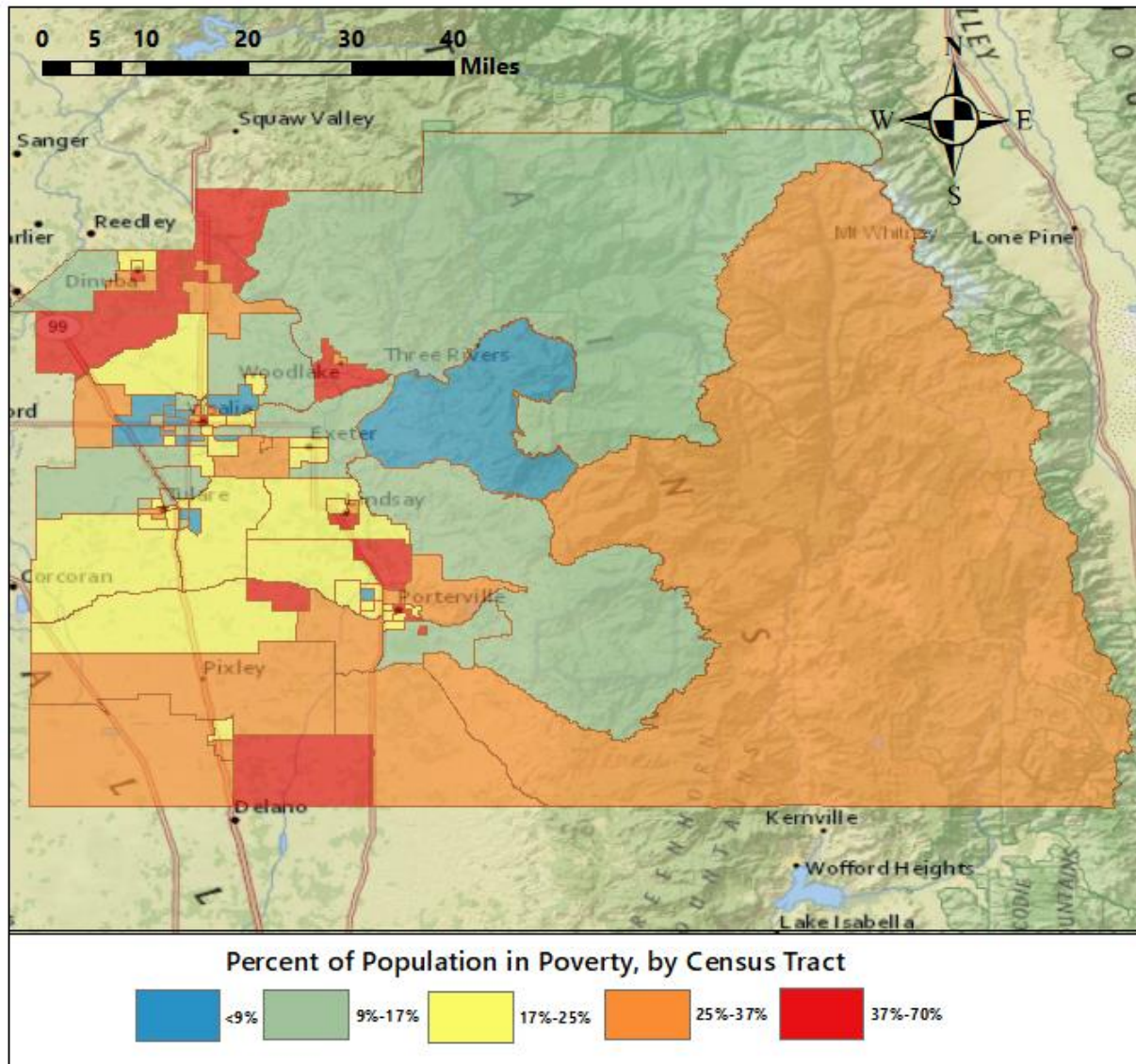
| | Tulare County | California |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Unemployment rate | 8.5% | 4.1% |
| Low-Income population | ~33.4% | ~20.0% |

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2017-2021, 5 Year Estimate.

The highest densities of individuals below poverty are found in the Northside neighborhood of north-central Visalia, the City of Dinuba south of El Monte Way, the west side of the City of Tulare between Bardsley and Cross Avenues, central Porterville, Farmersville, and Woodlake. In the case of many of these communities, the concentration of poverty is at least partly a

function of population density. Some of the highest rates of poverty can be found in sparsely populated rural communities away from the major urbanized areas. Considered in terms of poverty rates, the five most impoverished communities are: Terra Bella (75.8%), Richgrove(71.4%), Ducor (70.3%), Alpaugh (69.9%) and Yettem (65%).

**Figure 5 Population Density of Persons with Income <150% of Federal Poverty Level
Per American Community Survey, 2017-2021 5 Year Estimate**



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Geographic World Map

Zero-Vehicle Household Density

Income and access to vehicles are perhaps two of the greatest predictors of transit use when examining the demography of a region. While age and disability status are also factors which determine a person's transportation needs, the ability to afford a personal vehicle and to keep it in roadworthy condition is often the primary determinant of how likely an individual is to rely on public transportation, walking, cycling or some other alternative mode of travel. Adding to the difficulties is the fact that these characteristics often combine to produce substantial physical, financial, legal, and cultural limitations which generally preclude individuals from driving, leaving public transportation as a vital lifeline and the only practical option for many kinds of travel. Many low-income individuals are without a car (or at least a reliable car) to get them to and from jobs and or interviews, which often causes the cycle to perpetuate itself. Approximately 1 in 20 households in Tulare County do not have a vehicle available to them (see Table 3-5 below). While the proportion of county residents without access to their own vehicle has decreased significantly in recent years, there remains a significant need for cost-effective public transportation options. Figure 6 depicts the concentration of households within Tulare County without access to at least one vehicle.

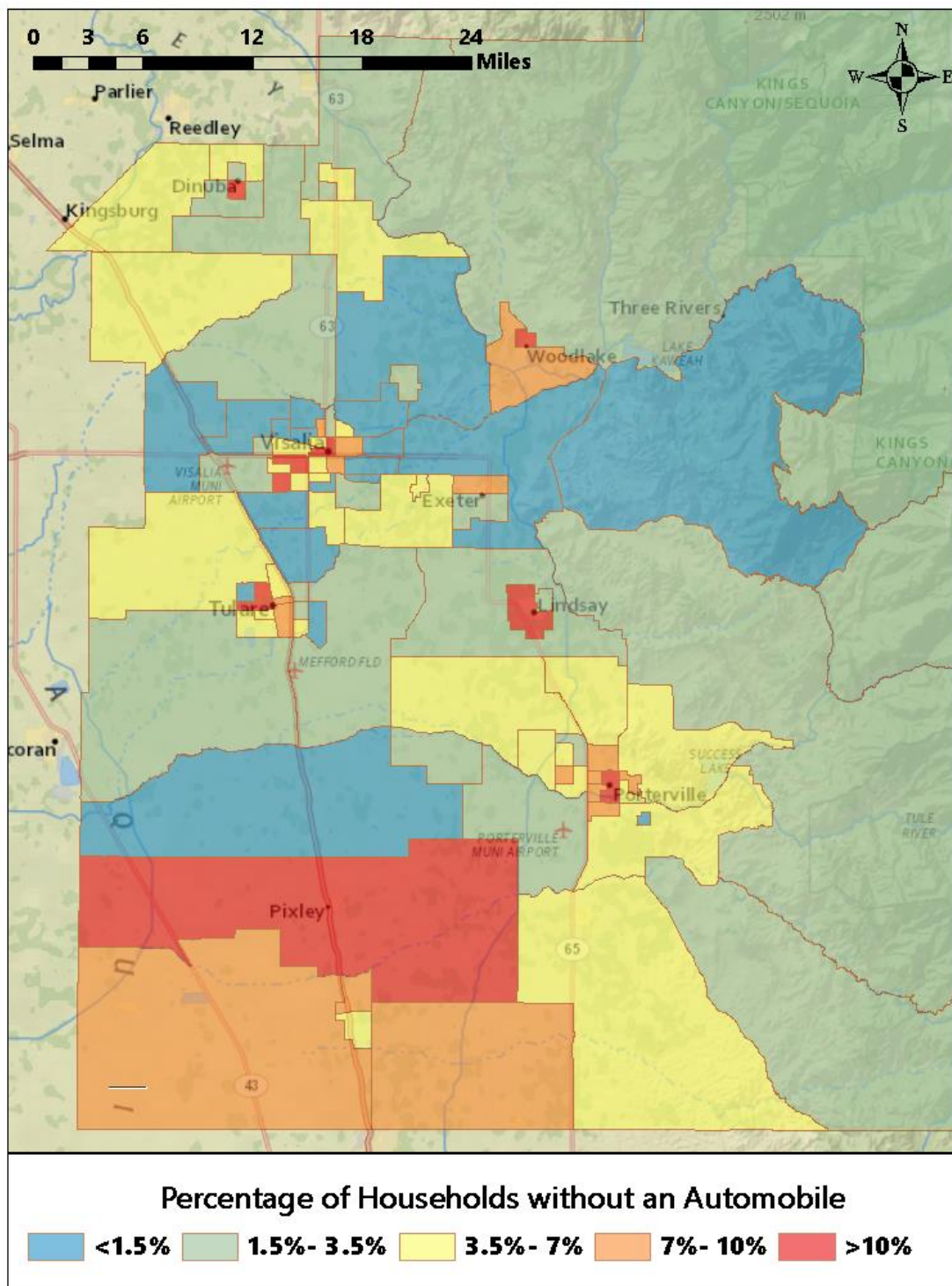
| Tulare County | |
|--|---------|
| Total Households | 139,631 |
| Households without a vehicle | 7,060 |
| Percent of Households without a vehicle | 5.1% |

Table 3-5 Household Vehicle Availability

As might be expected, households without vehicles within Tulare County are concentrated mainly in and around city centers. The cities of Visalia, Tulare, Porterville, Dinuba, and Lindsay all have Census Tracts in which more than 1 out of every 8 households does not have its own car. The first 3 of these 4 cities have relatively frequent and extensive fixed route transit services. The City of Lindsay is served by fixed route commuter service between the cities of Tulare and Porterville, with 12 weekday departures in each direction. On-demand microtransit has also been launched in the Porterville area (including Strathmore) and the City of Lindsay, with further expansion throughout the county anticipated soon. While these factors serve to reduce the negative outcomes associated with not owning a car many county households are still placed at a disadvantage due to their lack of a vehicle. This is particularly true in unincorporated communities, such as Pixley and Earlimart, both of which have

relatively high concentrations of households without cars and are further from major centers of employment and less frequently served by transit.

Figure 6 Households without a Vehicle (2017)



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, National Geographic World Map

Chapter 4. Transportation Resources

Tulare County area offers a variety of resources to meet the transportation needs of its citizens, including general public transit (both fixed route and demand-response), non-profit social services organizations that cater to the specialized needs of priority populations, and



private transportation providers, such as local taxi services and interregional bus service (Greyhound and FlixBus). Generally, the most frequent and varied public transportation is offered in the largest cities, with lower frequency commuter service connecting smaller rural communities scattered

throughout the county to major population and employment centers within the region. Human service transportation is provided by local transit, mental health organizations, health care providers, private medical transportation companies, special city/county programs for senior citizens, and disabled citizens programs.

Inventory Methodology

The transportation provider list was originally developed in 2007, by TCAG and TPG Consulting for the first edition of the Coordinated Plan. This list is periodically updated to reflect new transit and human services in Tulare County.

Transportation Providers – Agencies whose primary mission is the provision of transportation using federal and/or state resources.

Transportation Purchasers – Agencies whose ancillary mission is the provision of transportation; agencies who purchase transportation for their clients.

Transportation Providers

Tulare County Regional Transit Agency (TCRTA)

TCRTA operates fixed route (local and commuter), ADA paratransit, and on-demand (microtransit) services seven days a week, and additional dial-a-ride services from Monday through Friday. The TCRTA service area includes the cities of Dinuba, Exeter, Farmersville, Lindsay, Porterville, Tulare, Woodlake, the unincorporated areas of Tulare County, and the Tule River Reservation.

Local service consists of 16 routes that operate within the city boundaries of member agencies: 4 bus routes that serve Dinuba (routes D1-D4), 6 bus routes that serve Porterville (routes P1-P6), and 6 bus routes that serve Tulare (routes T1-T6). Additionally, service between Porterville and the Tule River Indian Reservation that was suspended at the onset of the covid pandemic is expected to be restored in the coming months, along with the introduction of on-demand transit service within the Reservation.



Commuter service consists of 10 routes that operate within both incorporated and unincorporated areas of Tulare County. Routes C10, C20, C30, and C40 provide regional service between major cities within the County and to Kern County (C20). Routes C50, C70, C80, and C90 provide circulation within and between various Tulare County communities. Route 11X is an express bus service, jointly operated by TCRTA and the City of Visalia, that provides intercity service between the Tulare and Visalia transit centers. Finally, the Dinuba Connection (route DC) provides service between the Dinuba Transit Center and Reedley College in neighboring Fresno County.

ADA demand-response paratransit service is provided as a complement to local fixed routes, within the cities of Dinuba, Porterville, and Tulare. A deviated fixed route service is provided as a paratransit complement to commuter routes, which allows eligible riders to request a route deviation of up to three-quarters of a mile from a scheduled route. Both services are available to ADA-eligible individuals, as well as seniors (age 65+) and Medicare card holders. Next day reservations are required and are taken seven days a week. Reservations are accepted the day of the trip, provided there is room in the day's schedule to accommodate them. In addition to dial-a-ride, TCRTA offers a blended paratransit option for ADA-certified riders which allows them to request a deviation of up to three-quarters of a mile from the scheduled route. This service costs \$4.00 rather than the \$2.00 fare which is normally charged for a one-way trip on a fixed route.

TCRTA also provides additional Dial-A-Ride service to seniors, the disabled, and Medicare card holders in other areas of the County with limited commuter routes, or no fixed route service. These areas include the City of Lindsay, North County communities (including Cutler and Orosi), and South County communities (including Waukena, Tipton, Pixley, Teviston, Alpaugh, Allensworth, Earlimart, and Richgrove). General-public Dial-A-Ride service is provided in the City of Woodlake. Service hours vary by service area.

TCRTA's on-demand microtransit service is an accessible, curb-to-curb, shared-ride, ride-hailing service with a flexible on-call schedule allowing you to request a trip, as needed. This

service is open to the public with no certification necessary for use. On-demand also serves ADA passengers, but in the event the service is not suitable, passengers will be placed on traditional ADA paratransit service. On-demand currently only operates in the Lindsay/Porterville area but will be expanded throughout the County by 2024.

TCRTA's systemwide ridership was 651,146 in FY2021/22.

Coordination and Schedules:

TCRTA operates local fixed route and paratransit service in the cities of Dinuba, Porterville, and Tulare, Monday through Saturday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, and Sunday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Commuter fixed route (and corresponding route deviation) service is generally available on weekdays from 5:15 am to 8:15 pm, and on weekends from 8:30 am to 6:42 pm, but service hours vary by route.

TCRTA Dial-A-Ride service hours vary by service area (see table below).

TCRTA Paratransit/Dial-A-Ride Service Hours

| Service Area | Hours of Operation |
|---|---|
| Cities of Dinuba, Porterville, Tulare, and Woodlake | Monday-Saturday: 7:00 am to 7:00 pm Sunday: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm |
| City of Lindsay | Monday – Friday: 7:00 am to 9:00 am & 11:30 am to 3:00 pm |
| Cutler-Orosi | Monday – Friday: 10:45 am to 12:30 pm & 2:15 pm to 4:30 pm |
| Waukena | Monday – Friday: 7:00 am to 11:00 am & 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm |
| Tipton, Pixley, Teviston, Alpaugh, Allensworth, and Richgrove | Monday – Friday: 6:30 am to 4:30 pm |

TCRTA routes connect with Visalia Transit (VT), Fresno County Rural Transit Agency (FCRTA), Delano Area Rapid Transit (DART), and Kings Area Regional Transit (KART). TCRTA transfer points include Dinuba Transit Center, Porterville Transit Center, Tulare Transit Center, Woodlake (Whitney) Transit Center, Visalia Transit Center, Government Plaza, and Delano Transit Center in Kern County. Route 11X is jointly operated by TCRTA and the City of Visalia, providing express service between the two cities.

Operations:

TCRTA was formed in August 2020 through a joint-powers agreement between the County of Tulare and the cities of Dinuba, Exeter, Farmersville, Porterville, Tulare, and Woodlake to consolidate and streamline transit services in the county. Subsequently, the TCRTA Board approved the membership of the Tule River Indian Tribe of California to the agency at a special meeting held on August 24, 2022, bringing the total number of member agencies to nine.

The agency is led by an Executive Director, appointed by the Board. The Executive Director is currently assisted in administrative duties by a Transit Manager, a Finance Manager, a Grants Analyst, a Planning/Program Analyst, an Operations Analyst, and a Transit Coordinator. On-street operations and front-line customer service are provided through a contract with Transdev. Transdev is responsible for drivers; dispatching; customer service; service data collection; and the operation of TCRTA vehicles in accordance with all state and federal regulations. Transdev is also responsible for fleet cleaning, fueling, and the maintenance (of some) of the transit vehicles. Transdev's current contract is in effect through June 30, 2027.

The TCRTA fleet consists of 113 vehicles, 28 of which are electric. Seating capacities range from 14 to 32 on fixed route buses. All TCRTA vehicles are equipped with a wheelchair lift and securement system in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Visalia Transit

Visalia Transit operates 14 fixed routes, consisting of twelve local routes and two intercity express services. Intercity service to Tulare is operated in conjunction with TCRTA as Route 11X, while Visalia Transit operates its own direct service to Fresno under the 'V-Line' brand. The system operates seven days a week, with weekday service running between 6 a.m. and 9:30 p.m., and weekend service between 8 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Both fixed route and Dial-a-Ride service is provided within city limits as well as to Goshen, Farmersville, and Exeter. ADA certified riders can make reservations up to two weeks in advance. Requests for same day service from members of the public who are under 65 or do not have a disability are accommodated when space is available.



Nearly all routes begin and end at the Visalia Transit Center on the corner of East Oak Street and North Bridge Street. The Transit Center serves as a major hub: connections are offered with TCRTA Routes C10 and C30, which serve Tulare County communities to the north and east, as well as Kings Area Rural Transit (KART) Route K15 to Hanford. Amtrak Thruway Bus service provides a connection with San Joaquins rail service via Hanford and Greyhound Lines also offers direct service to Fresno, Bakersfield, and Los Angeles from Visalia Transit Center. Systemwide ridership in Visalia totaled 1,304,517 in 2019, consisting of 1,265,281 unlinked fixed route trips and 39,236 demand response passengers.

Coordination and Schedules:

Visalia Transit generally operates from 6:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and weekends between 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. The last weekday runs for Routes 8, 15 and 17 conclude slightly later, returning to the Transit Center between 10:00-10:30 p.m. V-Line service runs seven days a week, from 4:00 a.m. to 9:15p.m. Holiday schedules are largely coordinated together with TCRTA: except for Labor Day, when V-Line operates on its normal schedule and local Visalia Transit buses provide reduced hour service, all holiday closures are aligned with those of neighboring agencies.



The City of Visalia constructed a transit center in downtown Visalia that began operating in February 2004 and completed an expansion of the facility in 2011. Most of their routes meet at the transit center for transfers between routes and other systems. Other transfer points within the city include the Visalia Medical Clinic, northside Target, Government Plaza, and adjacent to shopping centers at the intersection of

Mooney Boulevard and Orchard Avenue. In addition to other Visalia Transit routes, connections are offered to and from TCRTA, KART, Amtrak and private operators such Greyhound and FlixBus. Visalia Transit and TCRTA have coordinated a transfer site at the Tulare County Government Plaza on Mooney Boulevard to provide connections between local Visalia routes and intercity commuter service to Tulare, Lindsay, and Porterville. Visalia and TCRTA have also partnered in providing an express route between Visalia and Tulare every 30 minutes with the Route 11x via State Route 99.

Operations:

Visalia Transit is currently operated by First Transit, which is responsible for dispatching, drivers, fare collection, maintenance of the buses and ridership data collection. The City entered a five-year contract with First Transit in October 2018. The Visalia Transit Division provides management of the system. The Transit Division staff consists of a Transit Manager, Senior Financial Analyst, Transit Management Analyst, Senior Accounting Assistant, Administrative Assistant, Community Outreach Coordinator, Senior Building Maintenance Technician, and two Office Assistants.. The Transit Division is responsible for providing the following services: planning, marketing, contract administration, report preparation, system design and staff liaison to the Transit Advisory Committee, TCAG, Caltrans and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

All Visalia Transit vehicles are equipped with wheelchair lifts. Seating capacities range from 30 to 37 passenger vehicles on fixed routes. The Visalia Transit Fleet consists of 52 vehicles. Of their active vehicles, nearly all are fueled by compressed natural gas (CNG). The City of Visalia acquired six (6) battery electric buses beginning in September 2018, and another four (4) in

2021, and these have been placed in revenue operation.

The Visalia Transit Dial-A-Ride is the primary paratransit component of the Visalia Transit system. This service is also available to the non-disabled members of the public who need transportation from areas too sparsely populated to warrant fixed route service. The current dial-a-ride fleet inventory consists of 11 wheelchair lift equipped vehicles that can accommodate up to 16 passengers. The Dial-A-Ride system operates the same hours as the fixed route system.

In May of 2006, the City of Visalia implemented the Sequoia Shuttle Service. The Shuttle provides service from Visalia to the Sequoia National Park. The shuttle operates seven days a week from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend. The shuttle includes stops at various locations in Visalia, Exeter and Three Rivers and terminates at the Giant Forest Museum in Sequoia National Park where the intra-park shuttle system is accessed. There are three routes within the park which include the Giant Forest, Moro Rock/Crescent Meadow and Lodgepole/Wuksachi routes.

Visalia Transit has developed a close working relationship with the City's Disability Advocacy Committee. This effort has led to several workshops with the City's Transit Advisory Committee and the Committee for the Handicapped meeting to discuss items affecting transit use by people with disabilities. This working relationship has helped Visalia Transit to better meet the needs of the community and comply with its regulatory mandates.

Altura Centers for Health

Altura Centers for Health operate five (5) clinics in the City of Tulare and a rural clinic in Woodville. Door-to-door transportation is available to patients and families to Altura clinic sites from up to 35 miles away.

Aria Community Health Center

Aria Community Health Center offers transportation services at its Dinuba location. Aria is currently in the process of expanding its transportation efforts.

Family HealthCare Network

Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) is a major Central Valley-based network of health care practitioners with dozens of sites in and near Tulare County. FHCN has a large transportation fleet and provides door-to-door services for patients, especially those who need services that are not available at the location closest to their homes. All vehicles are equipped with car seats for infants and toddlers.

Porterville Sheltered Workshop

The Porterville Sheltered Workshop is a non-profit organization serving seniors and people with mental and/or physical disabilities. It offers adult day care, independent living, behavioral



health, and work programs to over 800 clients in a roughly 700 square miles of southeastern Tulare County centered on the City of Porterville. Transportation to these programs is provided to clients, who must be referred through the Central Valley Regional Center. Approximately 22% of these clients must use a wheelchair lift when entering and exiting the vehicles. The Sheltered Workshop has a fleet of 15 cutaway buses, all of which are wheelchair accessible. The organization's 2020 program budget was \$7.7 million, with significant revenue support from the state through the Central Valley Regional Center.

CalVans

The California Vanpool Authority (CalVans) is a ride pool service that is tailored to the needs of commuters who cannot travel between home and work with local fixed-route or demand-



response service. The program in its current form grew out of a pilot project known as the Agricultural Industries Transportation Services (AITS) in Kings County, targeted at providing safer transportation options for farm workers. The CalVans program operates across multiple counties, with 101 vanpools serving commuters and 386 serving farm workers as of January 2023.

Currently, there are 38 vehicles that provide service to workers who live or work in Tulare County, a number that fluctuates slightly from month to month. Most of the vanpool activity in Tulare County is based out of Visalia, with more than 128,000 unlinked trips departing from that city in 2022. The primary employment destinations are correctional facilities in Corcoran and Delano, including California State Prison and Kern Valley State Prison (Figure 6-2). Presently approximately 90% of vanpools based in Tulare County serve correctional institutions. Other destinations include medical and agricultural employers, as well as other public agencies.

Míocar

Míocar is a membership-based carsharing service that allows members to pay to use zero-emission battery electric vehicles on a daily or hourly basis. Members pay a one-time \$20 application

processing fee and provide proof they are at least 21 years of age and hold a valid driver's license and credit card, debit card, or prepaid cash card. Once they are enrolled, they can book and use Míocar vehicles for either an hourly rate of \$4.00 or a daily rate of \$35.00. Roadside assistance, vehicle maintenance, and insurance are included in the program though drivers are responsible for a \$500 deductible in the event of an accident. Míocar has a fleet of Chevy Bolts, BMW i3s, and Chrysler Pacifica plug-in hybrid



minivans. Míocar in Tulare and Kern counties is the product of a collaboration between California Climate Investments, Self-Help Enterprises, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, Mobility Development, Calvans, UC Davis, Sigala Inc., and the Tulare County Association of Governments.

Vehicles are hosted at three (3) Self-Help Enterprises affordable housing sites in Tulare County: Visalia Highland Garden Apartments, Orosi Sand Creek Apartments, and Dinuba Sierra Village.

Transportation Purchasers

Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA)

The HHSA provides health and human services to Tulare County residents. They provide transportation reimbursement and monthly transit passes (T-Passes) to eligible clients. Clients must participate in an approved HHSA activity to qualify for transportation benefits. Tulare County Health Centers also operates its own transportation fleet.

Tulare County HHSA – Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging (KTAAA)

The KTAAA is a Tulare County HHSA program designed to empower seniors. KTAAA purchases public transportation services for clients who qualify for its Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP). Transportation is provided to seniors, and volunteers that work with seniors, to attend medical appointments and KTAAA sponsored events. Clients can receive transportation free of charge to participate in eligible activities. The program is available to individuals over 65 who are currently eligible for or receiving Medi-Cal benefits. In addition to providing transportation to seniors, the MSSP also brings critical services to seniors at home, reducing the need for some trips.

Tulare County HHSA – Department of Mental Health

The Tulare County HHSA – Department of Mental Health provides mental health services for Tulare County residents. They purchase transportation services for their clients and encourage them to use public transportation. Clients must participate in an approved activity at one of the agency's five clinics to be eligible for transportation assistance. Clinics are in Dinuba, Tulare, Visalia, and Porterville.

Tulare County HHSA – Tulare WORKS

The Tulare County HHSA – TulareWORKS provides services for CalWORKS participants within Tulare County. Transportation reimbursement is provided to low-income residents, people experiencing homelessness, youth, and persons with disabilities to access services designed to help support themselves and their health care needs. Clients must participate in approved activities to be eligible for reimbursements.

Anthem BlueCross

Anthem BlueCross offers no-cost transportation to its Medi-Cal beneficiaries for medical appointments, same-day urgent care, dental, behavioral health, and substance-use disorder appointments, and trips to pick up medication or supplies from the pharmacy. Enrollees

experiencing food insecurity can also arrange rides to grocery stores, farmers markets, food banks, and pantries to pick up food. Transportation is also available to housing and homeless services appointments through an Anthem care coordinator. Eligible trips can be reserved by phone or through an app created by their transportation vendor Modivcare. Anthem also offers reimbursements for volunteer drivers for eligible trip purposes. Patients must provide driver's license information, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance over the phone to confirm the eligibility of their volunteer driver or drivers. They will then be eligible for reimbursement according to the IRS mileage reimbursement level set by the IRS for business, which is 65.5 cents per mile driven as of January 2023. The patient cannot be reimbursed for their own driving but parents are eligible for mileage reimbursement for driving their children to appointments.

Health Net

Health Net is a managed care provider which administers Medi-Cal plans. Medi-Cal patients enrolled with Health Net can schedule a ride to the doctor, dentist, counselor, pharmacy, outpatient care facility, or back home at no other cost. Reservations can be made by either a toll-free phone number or through the Modivcare app provided by their transportation vendor of the same name.

Valley Medical Transport

Locally based provider of non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) to wheelchair-bound Medi-Cal patients and those who cannot enter and exit a vehicle without assistance.

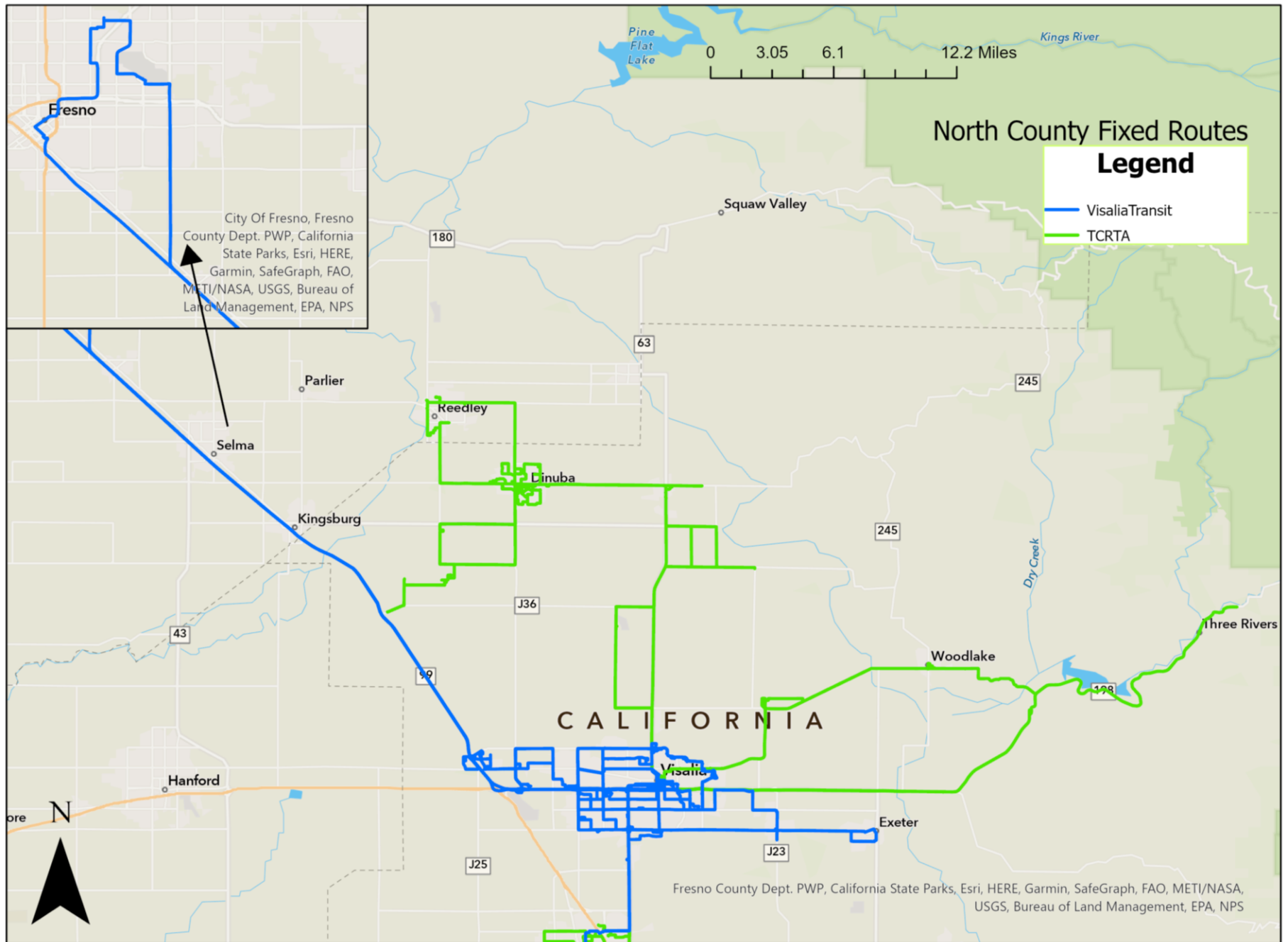
Table 4-1 Transportation Providers and Eligible Populations

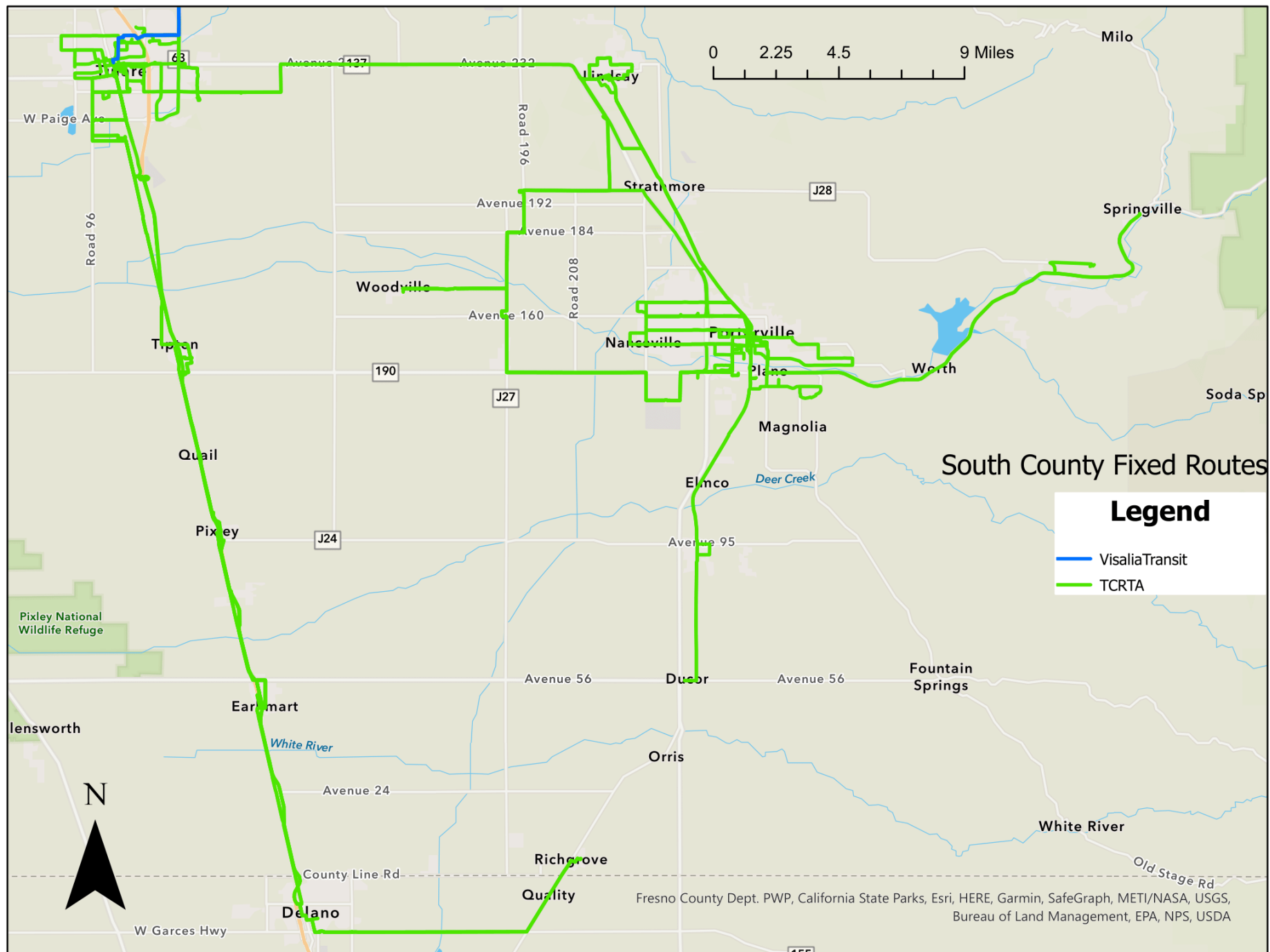
| Respondent | Type of Transportation Service | Area Served | Seniors | Disabled | Low-Income | General Public |
|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------|----------|------------|----------------|
| Tulare County Regional Transit Agency | Provider | Countywide | X | X | X | X |
| Visalia Transit | Provider | Citywide | X | X | X | X |
| Altura Centers for Health | Provider | Countywide | X | X | X | X |
| Family HealthCare Network | Provider | Fresno & Tulare counties | X | X | X | |
| Porterville Sheltered Workshop | Provider | Citywide | X | X | X | |
| Valley Medical Transport | Provider | Countywide | | X | | |
| Míocar | Provider | Tulare & Kern Counties. | X | | X | X |
| Tulare County HHSA | Purchaser | Countywide | X | | X | |
| Tulare County HHSA – Kings/Tulare Area Agency on Aging | Purchaser | Kings and Tulare Counties | X | X | X | |
| Tulare County HHSA – Dept. of Mental Health | Purchaser | Countywide | X | X | X | |
| Tulare County HHSA – Tulare WORKS | Purchaser | Countywide | X | X | X | |
| Tulare County Veterans Aging Services | Purchaser | Countywide | X | X | X | |
| Anthem BlueCross | Purchaser | Regional | X | X | X | |
| Health Net | Purchaser | Regional | X | X | X | |

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Transit System Maps for Tulare County

The following maps illustrate the areas within Tulare County served by existing public transportation providers. Currently intracity services to Visalia and nearby areas are provided by Visalia Transit, with all other transit services within the county being operated by Tulare County Regional Transit Agency (TCRTA).





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Chapter 5. Needs and Gaps

Current transportation needs and gaps in Tulare County were assessed using a variety of methods, including public surveys, consultation with stakeholders through the Coordinated Plan Advisory Group, and a review of other recent transit planning studies. This information was supplemented with new demographic data and projections from the U.S. Census Bureau and California Department of Finance.

Transportation Needs in Tulare County

100 local entities which serve the needs of the target populations were contacted and provided with a user survey that they were encouraged to share with their clients to identify the transportation needs of the populations in question. This initial outreach included social service agencies, transit agencies, health care providers, assisted living facilities, vocational schools and colleges, as well as private non-profit groups serving the needs of seniors, disabled persons and people experiencing poverty. Representatives of these organizations were also invited to provide their own feedback and to participate more actively in the planning process beginning with a workshop in August 2022.

Completed surveys were collected throughout August and September. In total, 62 survey responses were received. The county's transportation disadvantaged population was well represented in the survey sample. Just over half of respondents indicated that their most frequently used mode-of-travel was something other than a personal vehicle. The transportation challenges they reported can be broadly placed into one of the following four categories, each of which will be further explained later in this chapter:

- Spatial Gaps
- Temporal Gaps
- Transportation Costs
- Service Awareness

Spatial Gaps

The most common transportation related issue cited by both survey respondents and stakeholders was the limited availability of transportation services in some areas, especially in less populous rural communities. Typically, operational costs and poor economies of scale impose considerable limitations on the level of transit service that can feasibly be provided in more remote rural locations, leaving people in these communities with limited access to transit.

While some privately operated transportation services, such as non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) providers and Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), operate in these areas they are not always readily available to rural residents due to factors such as their inability to meet demand fully or the prohibitive cost of the services they provide. At least some form of fixed route service is available in each of Tulare County's 25 most populous communities, though some are served by as few as one departure and arrival per day. Areas with noted gaps in service include the North County areas East Oroshi, Yettem, Lemon Cove, Three Rivers and Seville, Central County areas of Poplar, Woodville, Springville and Tipton, and the South County areas of Alpaugh, Richgrove, Ducor and Terra Bella.

Survey respondents frequently expressed a need for additional/expanded routes in rural areas to provide more access to jobs and training in the urban areas of the County, and to provide youth and adults access to services and recreational activities not available in the rural areas.

Temporal Gaps

As noted above, transit schedules do not always correspond with the schedules or travel needs of residents. In the 2010s evening and weekend service was expanded significantly in response to comments received during the annual Unmet Transit Needs process. While this has reduced the number of temporal gaps significantly, it would be difficult to increase service frequencies or operating hours further using the resources currently available. Therefore, when making future service planning decisions, local agencies should make extensive use of the available analytical tools to determine how service can effectively serve the greatest possible number of people with the funds available. This should include factoring in the potential for transit ridership in the catchment area for each route; the most intensive service should be provided where the local population is most likely to make regular use of transit.

Tulare County transit agencies should maintain the longest operation hours feasible without threatening their ability to meet performance metrics adopted by the TCAG Board. Supplemental services which leverage partnerships with private transportation companies should also be considered, such as guaranteed ride home (GRH) programs that reimburse transit riders for the cost of an alternative forms of transportation in certain qualifying emergencies or when one leg of their trip falls outside of transit's operating hours. The potential for such a program to be effective increases as the concentration of commercial activity and particularly industrial employment increases throughout the region.

Transportation Costs

Transportation costs can be a disproportionate financial burden for people living on a fixed or limited income, especially if they need to purchase multiple fares for children or other family members. Public transit providers echoed these concerns about affordability but noted that fiscal constraints limit their ability to provide lower fares. The lack of affordable transportation between the urban and rural areas of the County was perceived as one of the greatest

transportation barriers for the senior, low-income, and disabled populations of Tulare County in previous editions of the Tulare County Coordinated Transportation Plan.

To address these concerns, Tulare County and TCAG launched the T-Pass in 2007. T-Pass holders can take unlimited rides on any of the county's fixed route transit services (except for V-Line and Sequoia Shuttle) over a one-day, seven-day, or 31-day period. While it was initially launched as a monthly pass program in which passes were issued for each calendar month, recent technology improvements have enabled the TCAG Board to adopt a fare schedule that includes 1-day, 7-day, and 31-day passes that are issued on a rolling basis. In addition to providing a cost savings to frequent transit riders, the T-Pass is also distributed by some social service agencies in Tulare County for the benefit of their clients. The College of the Sequoias (COS) provides a similar transit pass to its students for unlimited travel throughout the academic year. While these programs have been a great benefit, and T-Pass ridership as a proportion of overall transit ridership in Tulare County has steadily increased, the cost of transportation is still a barrier to many persons experiencing severe poverty. To address this important equity issue and make regional transit passes more accessible to the local population, fare capping is being introduced so that frequent transit riders who pay for one ride at a time will never be charged more than the cost of a 31-day T-Pass each month.

Service Awareness

Familiarity with the transportation services offered in Tulare County and how to make use of them is another area with room for significant improvement. While transit vehicles are a relatively frequent site in the relatively larger cities of Visalia, Tulare, and Porterville there are many smaller communities in the County that are served by transit less frequently and lack a transit center or hub where riders can obtain travel information. Currently transit centers exist in the cities of Dinuba, Porterville, Tulare, Visalia, and Woodlake. Other transit facilities are currently under development for the cities of Farmerville, Lindsay, and Exeter. While route information is usually posted at stops, it often becomes illegible after months of exposure to the elements. The Greenline toll-free countywide transit information hotline was established in 2009 to make transit information more readily accessible throughout Tulare County and create a more user-friendly experience for riders. The Greenline staff can provide travel information in both English and Spanish, as well as making paratransit reservations. Travel training and passenger education were previously noted as high priority areas and The Greenline represents a significant improvement in both. The outreach efforts attempted to make passengers more aware of the transportation resources available to them. TCAG continues to provide information on all Tulare County transit services across multiple platforms and media and strives to make travel information as accessible as possible. TCAG staff is also investigating the potential for a comprehensive mobility management service that can efficiently broker trips and match riders to the most suitable and cost-effective transportation options.

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Chapter 6. Coordination Opportunities

Coordinated Plan Advisory Group (CPAG)

TCAG recognizes the importance of input and consensus and employs a collaborative approach to its regular Coordinated Plan updates. Throughout development of this plan, TCAG sought the opinion and feedback of interested parties, including local transit agencies, social service agencies, tribal governments, non-profit organizations serving the needs of the target populations, and the general public.

Over 100 stakeholders were contacted by email and direct mail with a letter inviting their participation in the plan update process beginning with a kickoff workshop in August 2022. The stakeholders who responded were invited to offer additional feedback as members of a Coordinated Plan Advisory Group and were a valuable source of information during the development of the updated plan.

Over the course of three (3) public workshops, TCAG staff gained insight into the transportation needs and challenges that they had encountered themselves or had been informed of by their clients. During the meetings members were asked to reevaluate the priorities outlined in the 2019 Coordinated Plan. The CPAG suggested that these five (5) goals be retained, given that they remain relevant, and then reevaluated the relative priority given to each of the supporting strategies associated with each goal.

Goals and Strategies

The five goals detailed in the 2019 Coordinated Plan remain in place. These goals establish the desired outcomes for this iteration of the Coordinated Plan, which are:

Goal #1: Maintain and strategically expand public and human service transportation to the greatest extent that resources allow

Goal #2: Enhance mobility information and education.

Goal # 3: Formalize a mobility management function to better connect persons with the mobility services they need.

Goal # 4: Fill remaining mobility gaps with cost-effective services and self-help tools.

Goal # 5: Develop a more effective customer feedback and performance evaluation system to ensure that high quality service is maintained.

Goal #1 Maintain and Strategically Expand Public and Human Service Transportation

Tulare County has high levels of public and human service transportation relative to its modest population density, a testament to the commitment of TCAG and its local partners to providing the most comprehensive services that their resources allow. This is of paramount importance because many individuals currently rely on both public transportation and human service transportation to meet their mobility needs.

Strategy #1: Retain and Strategically Enhance Existing Public Transportation Services

While there remain gaps in the current range of transportation services, these existing services are a lifeline to a significant number of county residents. While ridership experienced significant declines due to increased rates of automobile ownership and the emergency of the global covid19 pandemic, the county's transit agencies continue to provide millions of rides each year. The existence of a robust public transit network also insulates the most economically vulnerable residents from drastic increases in fuel prices (such as those experienced in 2022) or economic downturns that might make it more financially onerous to own and operate a car. Therefore, it is important to make every effort to retain service at the highest level that the available financial resources and levels of ridership allow. If services must be reduced or consolidated, the service changes should be carefully evaluated for Title VI implications and to ensure that the current ridership continues to have their transit needs met.



The introduction of on-demand microtransit has the potential to help strike the right balance between service frequency and area coverage. It might be desirable to increase the frequency on higher-performing fixed routes and use microtransit to provide connecting 'feeder' service. Future transit plans should employ more in-depth analysis of travel patterns and social geography by examining demographic and traffic data.

Strategy #2: Retain, Support and Improve Human Service Transportation

Local public agencies are involved in human services transportation as purchasers as well as providers. Tulare County HHSA routinely purchases T-Passes to provide to clients so that they can travel to and from their appointments.

It is not only the ability to travel to medical or social services appointments which has a significant impact on quality-of-life for our most vulnerable residents. A recent study by the American Cancer Society has linked social isolation with a higher risk of death from all causes

combined and heart disease for all races studied, and with increased cancer mortality in white men and women. This is something that can easily be remedied by ensuring people are able to access various social programs and activities. Medi-Cal providers such as Anthem and Health Net offer complementary transportation to such activities for their enrollees.

Given the disproportionate impacts of travel expenses on vulnerable populations, and evidence that suggests inability to secure transportation is a critical factor behind many missed social service and health appointments, it is also of critical importance that these services continue to be supported and sustained in Tulare County.

Strategy #3: Continue to utilize FTA 5310 grant funding for procurement of vehicles and associated capital equipment by non-profit and public agencies serving mobility needs of low income, seniors and disabled persons.

Given the extensive network of both public and privately operated human service transportation, and the wide geographic area that these services must cover, it is recommended that public agencies and not-for-profit groups providing transportation to seniors and persons with disabilities seek FTA Section 5310 grant funding to aid in the procurement of new and replacement vehicles as well as associated capital equipment such as communications technology and computers that facilitate the smooth operation of human service transportation.

Caltrans issues a Call for Projects for the 5310 program on a biennial basis. The selection process differs slightly depending on whether the entity applying for funding is part of a large urbanized area or located within a small urban or rural area. Applications for Traditional 5310 Projects, which are capital expenses, are scored by the region's MPO/RTPA if located within a large, urbanized area. Each large urbanized area receives its own formula funding allocation. Small urban and rural projects are awarded on a competitive, statewide basis by Caltrans. TCAG aids its member agencies and local partners who wish to apply for 5310 Funding but are unfamiliar with the program guidelines or lack the staff resources to do so.

Strategy #4: Retain, Support and Expand Vanpool Program

The California Vanpool Authority (CalVans) is a ridesharing service that is tailored to the needs of commuters whose travel patterns cannot be readily accommodated by fixed route or demand response transit services. The program in its current form grew out of a pilot project known as the Agricultural Industries Transportation Services (AITS) in Kings County, targeted at providing safer transportation options for farm workers. The CalVans program operates approximately 350 vanpools across 17 counties.

Currently, there are 38 vehicles that provide service to workers who live or work in Tulare County. Most vans in Tulare County run out of Visalia. The primary employment destinations are correctional facilities in Corcoran, Avenal and Coalinga, including California State Prison and Pleasant Valley State Prison. In total over 90% of vanpools starting or ending in Tulare County serve correctional institutions. Several state, medical, and agricultural employers are also served by vanpools. Calvans continues to expand its fleet and leverage its existing relationships to make vanpools more readily available to low-income workers in the region.

Since 2016, transit agencies in Tulare County have maintained an agreement with Calvans to establish a vanpool voucher program for vanpools traveling to or from Visalia, Tulare, or Porterville. The goal is to double the number of vanpools reported in Tulare County over the next few years. In turn Calvans provides reports of vanpool mileage and ridership. The cost for the program will be offset by the additional Federal 5307 formula funds allocated to the Visalia UZA that can be attributed to the reporting of vanpool ridership.

Goal #2 Enhance Mobility Information and Education

Lack of awareness of the services available and unfamiliarity with using public transportation are themselves a major barrier to mobility for seniors, persons with disabilities and people of limited financial means. Unlike traveling by private vehicle, use of public transportation can require a considerable amount of forethought, planning and coordination by the rider. This includes:

- Understanding which transportation services are available, when they operate and how to access them;
- Scheduling appointments and arranging activities around the availability of transportation;
- Identifying the most practical connection(s) when direct service to the desired destination is not available

These represent significant challenges for transportation disadvantaged individuals – a population characterized by limited literacy, a high incidence of limited English proficiency and lack of cultural familiarity. Even for well-educated individuals, such as social service providers and human service agency personnel, being unfamiliar with public transit can make it difficult to take full advantage of the services that are available. Presently there is no single, comprehensive resource that will help transportation disadvantaged residents or social service workers to easily navigate the full range of transportation services offered and determining the best means to get to their destination. While The Greenline can provide a wide range of travel information and make reservations for public agency paratransit, it does not currently function as a mobility manager or transportation broker. Some specialized transportation options, such as those provided by health care centers, are not incorporated into The Greenline. This means that staff might not always be able to direct callers to the most suitable transportation option for their trips.

The difficulties are even greater if a traveler must rely on a mixture of both public transportation and privately operated human service transportation, because the information on these services is not compiled in a single, highly visible place.

As a result of the difficulty in obtaining complete and up-to-date information, services are underutilized, and some people may not be aware of all the options available. This not only makes it harder for the transportation disadvantaged population to commute to work or access other valuable social services, but it undermines the health and viability of the existing transportation services through lost ridership.

Given the already wide range of mobility services available in Tulare County, the least expensive coordination strategies that can be implemented involve closing the “information gap” so that transportation disadvantaged individuals and the social service agencies that work with this population are aware of and have easy access to information about these services.

As a result of the factors described above, lack of familiarity and inability to quickly obtain travel information has often hindered public transit from reaching its maximum potential.

To bridge the information gap, we recommend the following strategies:

Strategy #5: Develop technology platforms that will provide access to comprehensive information about local transportation options and programs

Strategy #6: Continue to utilize and expand The Greenline call center and incorporate information on other forms of transportation, such as non-emergency medical transportation

Strategy #7: Provide comprehensive route/schedule information at bus stops, particularly for low- frequency routes.

Strategy #5: Develop technology platforms that will provide access to comprehensive information about local transportation options.

Reading transit maps and schedules can be challenging to transit riders and social service providers alike. Automated trip planners are an effective tool for overcoming this barrier. For planning transit trips, both simple one system trips and those that require inter-system coordination, Google Maps offers a common platform that is familiar to most people. It allows an individual to easily switch between driving, transit, biking and walking directions and to zoom in on the map to see the exact location of bus stops. The 2015 Coordinated Plan called for making fixed route transit routes and schedules for all the county’s transit agencies available through Google Maps. All the County of Tulare’s fixed route transit services have since been incorporated into Google Maps’ GTFS feed.

Real-time travel data is also incredibly useful when planning a trip. In 2022, TCAG staff worked with the California Integrated Travel Project (a California Department of Transportation initiative) to develop a low-cost solution for real-time GTFS capability that could be deployed across the county's entire transit fleet.

Strategy #6: Continue to utilize and expand the 'Greenline' call center.

While making countywide transit trip planning easier will address some needs, it will not resolve the special transportation challenges faced by many transportation-disadvantaged populations whose needs can be highly individualized. Some people may require more detailed information or personalized assistance.

To address this, as well as general transit customer service needs, the county launched The Greenline Call Center (877-GO-GREEN) to provide readily accessible public transportation information to the public, especially for those travelers who do not have a computer or smartphone. Callers can obtain information both the county's transit agencies, as well as Kings Area Rural Transit (KART) in neighboring Kings County and Greyhound Bus services. In addition to providing an easy to reach venue for obtaining information or addressing complaints the Greenline reduces the burden on transit dispatch staff by directing calls to staff that is dedicated to these customer-facing functions.

Currently The Greenline operates Monday-Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm and Saturdays from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm. While the call center is not staffed on Sundays, callers who dial in after hours will be greeted with a message that provides The Greenline's hours of operation and offers a choice of being transferred to a transit agency dispatcher. Typically transit agency hours of operation are slightly longer than those of The Greenline.

In January 2023, the most recent month for which complete data is available, The Greenline received 757 calls. More than 42% of these calls were for route information, with Bus Location inquiries being the next largest category at approximately 22% followed by Trip Planning at around 16%. General information was the fourth most common categories. While usage of The Greenline has fluctuated over the past few years, it remains an important resource- particularly when schedule changes are implemented.

It is important to note that The Greenline is not well equipped to directly place Dial-a-Ride reservations or estimate arrival times once the reservation has been made. Presently requests of this nature are forwarded to the dispatcher for the respective demand response service, though the recently launched on-demand microtransit service does enable call center staff to make a trip reservation and provide an estimated time of arrival.

The City of Visalia operates The Green line and in FY 2021 submitted a Section 5310 (Expanded) grant application for the purposes of maintaining and expanding the service. Allocation of additional resources to The Greenline will allow for more comprehensive travel information services. For

example, callers who require non-emergency medical transportation can be provided information on alternative services for which they are eligible if local fixed route transit or Dial-a-Ride cannot fully meet their needs. This can be as simple as asking a few screening questions to determine eligibility for complimentary shuttle services such as those offered by Family Healthcare Network, Adventist Health and Medi-Cal recipients on an Anthem or Health Net administered plan. However, it is important to note that this higher level of service is more akin to a mobility management function than an information hotline.

The Greenline will remain a valuable resource, particularly in the weeks following route or schedule changes, but ultimately it might be necessary to establish a county mobility manager to provide some of the higher-level functions described above.

Strategy #7: Provide comprehensive route/schedule information at bus stops, particularly for low frequency routes.

Bus stops can also be a very effective channel for conveying transit information. While resources available online or over the phone are extremely valuable, there are some county residents who lack cell phones or internet access. Many of these residents are in rural unincorporated communities with infrequent transit service. Due to the relatively long headways typical on rural routes, missing the bus can mean waiting more than an hour longer or even that travelers might not be able to reach their destination for the remainder of the day.

In such areas, it is important to provide route and schedule information at key bus stops so that travelers can readily find this information even if they do not have a smartphone or standard mobile phone. Such signage would also make it easier for riders to familiarize themselves with new routes or schedules following service changes. In addition to being valuable to people who use transit routinely, posting fixed route schedules can also increase public awareness of the services that are offered. Bus stops with service that operates less than every 2 hours should have posted information about the times when the stop is served. Such signage would ideally include the following elements:

- Route name
- Route destinations shown on a simple line map with a “You Are Here” indicator
- Days the route operates
- Departure times for the specific route
- Fares to major cities
- Phone number
- Bilingual text. Place names and times are designed to be clear without requiring close reading.

This type of information panel can be easily created and customized in Microsoft Publisher or other simple desktop publishing software. It can then be printed on a color printer, laminated and placed in a standard legal sized schedule holder that is readily available on the market. These can be mounted on existing signposts. When there is a service change, the insert can be quickly and easily replaced at minimal expense.

As solar powered LED signage becomes cheaper, it creates a potential to provide more expansive travel information in the medium-term future. The most heavily used rural transit stops could benefit from the installation of such signage if it were to become affordable. The ability to provide up-to-the-minute information about a bus will be enhanced with the adoption of real-time GTFS capabilities across the county's transit fleet. Knowing when to expect your bus and whether it is running on schedule is particularly helpful in cases where the bus stops have very little shelter from the sun or other elements and few, if any, amenities.

Goal #3 Formalize a Mobility Management Function to Better Connect Persons with Mobility Services they need.

Mobility management is defined by the National Resource Center for Human Service Transportation Coordination as “a process of managing a coordinated community-wide transportation service network comprised of the operations and infrastructure of multiple trip providers in partnership with each other.” Mobility management is an eligible capital expense under several FTA programs, including Section 5307, 5310, 5311 and 5318.

Many resources exist to guide the development of mobility management services, including the FTA's Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility Issues (CCAM) and the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). It would be prudent to make use of these to formulate a comprehensive mobility management program. While The Greenline presently performs some functions that partly overlap with mobility management, additional functions- such as making travel reservations- would need to be added to make this a reality.

Objectives and Purpose

The Tulare County Mobility Management program should aim to meet the following objectives:

- Develop strategies to educate and inform the culturally and linguistically diverse population of Tulare County about available transportation services, including public transit's fixed-route and on-demand services, rideshare and vanpool services and key specialized transportation programs that serve transit disadvantaged populations.
- Devise strategies that will work, or can be successfully adapted, in both rural and urban areas of Tulare County.
- Involve local communities, addressing the needs of geographically or culturally isolated persons to promote and expand the use of available transit resources.

- Use data collected through mobility management to support planning for enhancement and/or targeted expansion of existing transit, ridesharing and other mobility services.
- Proactively provide the resources to inform social service agency staff who work with transportation disadvantaged individuals of the mobility services available in Tulare County. Regular updates should be given to social workers, particularly when service changes are about to be implemented.

In order to achieve the objectives outlined above, and to respond to the market research findings, the following strategy is recommended:

Strategy #8: Appoint a Countywide Mobility Manager

It is proposed that a full-time Countywide Mobility Manager be appointed to ensure that there is at least one individual who can devote themselves fulltime to matching travelers to the most appropriate mode of transportation for their trips.

This person or entity appointed to this role would be responsible for implementation and monitoring progress of the strategies recommended in the Coordination Plan.

It is anticipated that an application for Section 5310 funding for the planning, development and implementation of mobility management will be sought once such an appointment is made. Federal funds can be used to cover up to 80% of the total project cost for capital projects, and up to 50% of the total operating cost when applying for operating assistance. Non-cash shares, including in-kind contributions, can be counted towards the required match provided certain criteria are met and the value of these contributions are properly documented. The lead agency's indirect expenses related to mobility management could, conceivably, be counted towards the 20% local match.

Funds have already been budgeted to hire a consultant to work with TCAG and other stakeholders to develop a detailed mobility management plan. It is expected that through this planning process, organizational roles will be defined and an operational framework for mobility management will be developed.

Goal #4 Fill Remaining Mobility Gaps Cost-Effective Services and Facility Improvements

There are two strategies recommended to address this goal:

Strategy #9: Develop a Volunteer Driver Reimbursement Program

As mentioned previously, many of the most deprived communities in the county are in rural areas outside of core urban areas. These communities typically lack many of the services or conveniences that are available within cities, meaning that transportation is usually an important lifeline for their residents. Unfortunately, the economics of providing transit in a low density, dispersed rural environment are challenging. While Tulare County Regional Transit Agency (TCRTA) does provide fixed route and demand response service to most of these communities the headways and travel times are often so long that it is not an attractive option to those who have another means of reaching their destination. Some of the smallest and most isolated communities in the county have no transit service at all.

A volunteer driver reimbursement program could serve as an effective supplement, affording much greater flexibility and independence to rural residents. Such a program would fill both spatial and temporal gaps and provide an alternative means of travel for persons whose needs cannot always be effectively met by transit due to lack of service in their community, time constraints or disabilities which necessitate additional assistance.

Basic Program Description

The volunteer driver, mileage reimbursement model presented here is adapted from the TRIP program operated in Riverside County by the Independent Living Partnership (ILP), which has served as a template for numerous effective programs across the nation. The ILP offers technical assistance for entities which wish to establish a similar program.

Creating a volunteer driver reimbursement program for Tulare County will ideally start by identifying the sections of the population who are eligible to participate. Given the greater coverage of fixed route transit and soon to be introduced on-demand microtransit in the county's larger cities, such a program would ideally be aimed at seniors and people with disabilities living in rural, unincorporated areas.

Enrolled participants are assisted in finding a volunteer driver via program materials that provide pointers on "how to ask for a volunteer driver." Where this program is jointly run with a Mobility Manager, the mobility manager may be able to refer program participants to active community organizations from which a driver can be sought and additional tips on how to ask for assistance.

Figure 9 on the next page shows the basic program elements: the sponsoring organization(s), the enrolled riders and volunteer drivers that participating riders recruit themselves. The mileage reimbursement is paid to the enrolled rider who, in turn, pays the driver who has agreed to provide them transportation. The strength of this model is that it does not require that a standing pool of volunteers to be maintained, something that is particularly difficult in low-income communities where volunteerism is not practical or economically feasible.

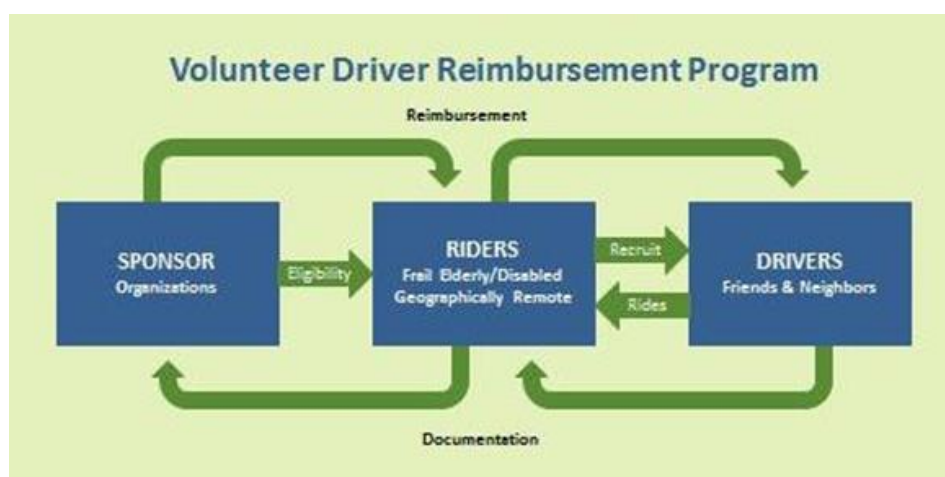


Figure8 Volunteer Driver Reimbursement Program Diagram

This program model is very scalable to the level of available funding. Mileage reimbursements and the enrollment of participants can be “budgeted” by the number of miles available for reimbursement, as well as by the number of enrolled persons. Mileage reimbursements, tentatively proposed at about \$0.52 per mile, can be kept at a manageable level by limiting trip eligibility to the most critical purposes or setting maximums for how many trips each enrollee can take in each month. In setting the mileage reimbursement rate of \$0.52 is purposefully kept below the 2023 IRS reimbursement rate of \$0.655 for business travel and above the \$0.22 per mile IRS rate for medical and moving purposes. It is meant to cover the operating costs of fuel and maintenance for the volunteer driver, considering the seasonal and periodic fluctuations in fuel prices. Theoretically the rate can be set anywhere below \$0.655 per mile but a lower rate could make recruiting volunteers more difficult, and a higher rate could limit the number of people who are able to be served with the funds available.

Implementation of a new volunteer driver mileage reimbursement program is a cost-effective means to increase the number of people whose transportation needs are effectively met, particularly in economically disadvantaged and isolated areas.

Strategy #10: Facilitate Improved Pedestrian and Bike Access to Transit Services

The availability of transit service within reasonable walking distance is not the only factor which determines whether the local population are able to easily make use of it. In many cases access to bus stops and transit center is hindered by the lack of sidewalks, sidewalks which are not ADA accessible, or barriers created by development which does not take the needs of transit riders fully into account.

This is particularly the case for seniors and people with disabilities. One study performed by Transportation Research Board of the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine found that 70% of all senior transit riders in a low-density retirement community in Florida lived within 1/8 mile of a transit stop, and 90% were traveling to destinations within 1/2 mile of a bus stop. Another study by the University of Florida found that the provision of pedestrian-only routes near transit stops in American cities increased the effective service or 'capture' areas for those transit stops by up to 20%.

It is important, therefore, to provide a low stress and barrier-free environment for pedestrians and cyclists to travel to and from transit stops.

While portions of the county have a well-developed network of bike and pedestrian trails, this is not the case in every neighborhood or community. Additionally, there are some obstacles that are created by patterns of development, for example: a fractured street grid interrupted by an at-grade railroad crossing or the construction of walls surrounding subdivisions which allow only for a very limited number of ingress/egress points and block the most direct path to the nearest transit stop.



With respect to seniors and people with disabilities more specifically factors such as outdated pedestrian signals, poorly configured crosswalks and curb ramps which are too steep to be easily traversed by people in wheelchairs or those who have difficulty walking. These issues should be examined thoroughly to formulate plans for enhancing access to transit facilities and increase the catchment area of transit services. Recommendations stemming from these studies should be incorporated into land use design standards.

While these projects are not strictly transit or human services transportation focused, they are nonetheless an important factor to consider when addressing the transportation needs of seniors & people with disabilities. Such improvements could also improve ridership and the practical value of transit to these populations, increasing the impact of each dollar invested in paratransit or social services transportation.

Goal #5 Sustain and Enhance the Customer Feedback and Performance Monitoring System to Ensure High Service Quality Delivery

Disadvantaged populations rely on public and human services transportation far more than the general population to get to the places they need to go. There need to be continued efforts to provide an effective customer feedback and performance monitoring system to ensure that mobility services are delivered reliably and to a high standard.

There are two specific strategies recommended for the goal to sustain and enhance the customer feedback and performance monitoring system to ensure high service quality delivery:

Strategy #11: Collect More Survey Data Relating to Service Quality, Transfers between Transit Routes and Modes.

Because seniors, people with disabilities and financially disadvantaged individuals rely on transit to a greater degree than most other demographics, it is reasonable to assume that these groups would be well represented in a survey of existing transit riders. Surveys should be employed routinely to collect feedback from the existing ridership base, with questions designed to invite responses that would inform transit planning decisions in a meaningful way.

Particular attention should be given to satisfaction with available transfer options for travelers making trips that cannot be completed by a single transit route. Rider feedback should be sought on the location of the transfer(s), accessibility and ease of navigating the transfer site(s), and the timing of any connections made with other fixed-route transit services. These issues are of great importance to seniors and people with disabilities and any improvements made in this area are also likely to benefit the broader public.

As on-demand microtransit and other new travel modes are made available across the county, surveys should also assess whether these provide satisfactory first mile and last-mile connections for fixed route transit.

Data should be collected about the average wait times between buses at transfer points to the greatest extent possible. In addition to other performance metrics used to measure the overall health of the transit system, a target should be established for maximum wait times between transfers and progress towards this goal reported.

Chapter 7. Funding and Implementation

This section summarizes the recommended Coordination Plan goals and strategies proposed to address the needs and gaps outlined within this plan.

The five goals and thirteen strategies developed in the preceding chapter are reiterated here in summary form for two reasons. Appendix B, which follow, summarizes a complex program of projects by which the mobility needs of Tulare County's transportation disadvantaged can be addressed. The table can be used in at least two ways:

- It can be used by policy makers, agency heads, planners and key stakeholders with a summary list of goals and strategies in the Coordinated Plan.
- It can be used by Section 5310 applicants to identify how their proposed project is "in" the Coordinated Plan, a requirement in regulation for making any given project eligible for Section 5310 funding.

Prioritized Goals and Strategies to Address Information and Mobility Gaps

Based on the mobility needs of the transportation disadvantaged population in Tulare County, there are five specific goals of the Coordinated Plan:

Goal #1: Maintain and strategically expand public and human service transportation to greatest extent resources allow.

Goal #2: Enhance mobility Information and education.

Goal #3: Formalize a mobility management function to directly connect persons with the mobility services they need.

Goal #4: Fill remaining mobility gaps with cost-effective services and facility improvements.

Goal #5: Develop a more effective customer feedback and performance system to ensure that high service quality is maintained.

Each of these goals is supported by strategies, or proposed projects and activities, which are intended to provide a more detailed blueprint for how they can be achieved. The Coordinated Plan Advisory Committee ranked each of these strategies according to priority. This ranking, along with a brief description of each goal and strategy, is included in Appendix B.

Seeking Section 5310 Funding

Finally, the primary dedicated funding source by which some of these strategies may be realized is the FTA's Section 5310. The Section 5310 program has two components: traditional and expanded. Traditional 5310 grant funding is available for service expansion and replacement vehicles and related capital expenses such as communications equipment and computer hardware. Expanded 5310 grant funding is available for most mobility management related activities, including both capital expenses associated with the development and implementation of mobility management programs and operating expenses.

Eligible Activities

Program guidelines requires that 55% of the funds available shall be used for “traditional Section 5310 projects”, namely those public transportation capital projects planned, designed and carried out to meet the specific needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, unavailable or inappropriate. The regulations make it clear that this 55% is a floor and not a ceiling and that entities can spend more than the 55% on traditional FTA 5310 projects.

Additionally, up to 45% of available funds can be spent for projects that will: (1) exceed the ADA minimum requirements, (2) improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance by individuals with disabilities on ADA-complementary paratransit, or (3) provide transportation alternatives that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities with transportation. While these projects must be targeted to older adults and persons with disabilities, they may also be used by the general public.



All projects that are selected for funding under the Section 5310 program must be “included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.”

Eligible Capital Expenses

At least 55% of funds shall be used to support rolling stock and related equipment items that include:

- Acquisition of expansion or replacement buses or vans and related testing, inspection and acceptance costs.
- Vehicle rehabilitation and overhaul.
- Preventative maintenance.
- Radios and communications equipment.
- Vehicle wheelchair lifts, ramps and securement devices. Other categories of eligible capital expense include:
- Purchase and installation of benches, shelters and other passenger amenities.

- Support facilities and equipment for Section 5310-funded vehicles that may include extended warranties, computer hardware and software, transit related intelligent transportation systems, dispatch systems, fare collection systems.
- Leasing of equipment when a lease is more cost effective than a purchase.
- Acquisition of transportation services under contract, lease or other arrangement.
- Finally, mobility management and coordination programs are an eligible capital cost. Mobility management functions may enhance transportation access for populations beyond those immediately targeted by a single agency or organization. Mobility management activities may include:
 - Promotion, enhancement and facilitation of access to transportation services including the integration and coordination of services for individuals with disabilities, seniors and low-income individuals.
 - Support for short-term management to plan and implement.
 - Support of state and local coordination policy bodies and councils.
 - Operation of transportation brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies and passengers.
 - Provision of coordination services, including employer-oriented transportation management organizations, customer-oriented travel navigator and neighborhood travel coordination activities such as travel training and trip planning.
 - Development of one-stop transportation traveler call centers.

Eligible Operating Expenses

Up to 45% of available funds may be used for operational costs of projects that address the purposes identified above including meeting special needs of seniors and persons with disabilities, projects that exceed the requirements of the ADA and enhance paratransit beyond the minimum requirements of the ADA, improve accessibility, or provide additional transportation alternatives for seniors and persons with disabilities.

This latter category of alternative transportation can include purchasing vehicles to support accessible taxis, supporting the administration and expenses related to voucher programs for transportation offered by human services or supporting volunteer driver and aid programs.

Fund Matching Requirements

For eligible capital projects, both traditional vehicle-related projects and mobility management projects, the match shall be 80% Federal dollars and 20% local funds.

For eligible operating projects, the match shall be 50% Federal dollars and 50% local funds.

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Appendix A: Inventory of Transportation Services

The following table presents an inventory of Tulare County's public transportation programs, providing additional detail for the public operators, human service agencies and inter-regional carriers related to service area, fares, span of service and transfers, and other general information.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS

| Service | Service Description | Reservations or Information | Service Area | Days and Hours of Service | Eligibility | Fare | Transfers/ Policies | Vehicles | Trips |
|------------------------|--|---|---|---|---------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Visalia Transit | | | | | | | | | |
| Fixed Route | <p>Visalia Transit operates fourteen fixed routes, consisting of regular local routes, an intercity route jointly operated with Tulare County Regional Transit Agency (TCRTA) and V-Line service from Visalia to Fresno.</p> <p>Visalia Transit operates routes at 15,30-,45- or 60-minute headways, resulting in a combination of timed and unaligned connections</p> | <p>For information contact: The Greenline at: 1-877-404-6473 Online: VisaliaTransit.com</p> | <p>City of Visalia and surrounding area. Express services to cities of Tulare, Fresno.</p> <p>Most routes begin and end at the Visalia Transit Center on the corner of East Oak Street and North Bridge Street.</p> <p>Routes 12 and 16 begin and end at the shopping center at Mooney Blvd & Orchard Ave.</p> <p>Route 17 begins and ends at Visalia Medical Clinic.</p> | <p>Monday-Friday 6:00 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Weekend 8:00 a.m.-6:30 p.m.</p> <p>VT does not operate on New Year's Day, Easter Sunday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.</p> <p>Limited-service hours of 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. are operated on Presidents Day, Labor Day, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.</p> <p>V-Line operates on its regular schedule on all limited-service holidays.</p> | General Public, ADA and Seniors | <p>Fares one-way General.....\$1.75 Seniors (60+)/Disabled/Medicare card holder.... \$0.85</p> <p>General All-day pass: \$3.50 Senior/disabled day pass: \$2.50 7-day general pass: \$14.00 7-day senior pass: \$7.50 General Monthly Pass \$50.00 Senior/Disabled Monthly Pass: \$30.00 Monthly T-Pass.... \$55.00 (All county fixed routes) Monthly T-Pass sold after the 16th of each month.... \$30.00</p> | <p>Visalia Transit connects with TCRTA, Greyhound, KART, FlixBus and Amtrak.</p> <p>Visalia Transit accepts transfers from TCRTA on all routes a North Target, Visalia Transit Center, Government Plaza, and Tulare Transit Center.</p> <p>V-Line service connects with Fresno Area Express (FAX) buses at Courthouse Park and CSU Fresno.</p> | 26 Buses in Maximum Service | FY 2020 982,000 Unlinked Trips |

| Service | Service Description | Reservations or Information | Service Area | Days and Hours of Service | Eligibility | Fare | Transfers/ Policies | Vehicles | Trips |
|---------------|---|-------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Dial - A-Ride | Visalia Transit (VT) provides a supplemental service called Dial-A-Ride; a curb-to-curb para-transit service on a shared-ride/demand-response basis to locations within the city limits of Visalia, Goshen, Farmersville, and to/from Exeter. | For information: 559-713-4750 | Visalia Transit (VT) provides Dial-A-Ride service between, and within the city limits of Visalia, Goshen, Exeter, and Farmersville. | Dial-A-Ride operates Monday-Friday from 6 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. and on weekends from 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. No service on holidays when fixed route is not operating | General Public, ADA and Seniors | Fares one-way. General..... \$4.00 ADA/Seniors/Disabled/Medicaid re card holder.... \$2.25 First 2 children/6 & under...FREE ADA/Seniors/Disabled/Medicaid re card holder monthly pass...\$75.00. ADA/Seniors/Disabled/Medicaid re card holder 10-ride punch pass ...\$22.50. General 10-ride punch pass.... \$40.00 | ADA reservations may be made up to two weeks in advance; all General Public or Non-ADA passengers are limited to same day service request. Same day service requests are scheduled depending on availability for fastest response plan trips between 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.-8:45 p.m. For tips on riding VT Dial-A-Ride please refer to the Dial-A-Ride ADA Program manual or call 559-713-4100 for a copy. | 7 vehicles in Maximum Service | FY 2020: 31,370 Unlinked Trips |

| Service | Service Description | Reservations or Information | Service Area | Days and Hours of Service | Eligibility | Fare | Transfers/ Policies | Vehicles | Trips |
|---|---|---|------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Tulare County Regional Transit Authority | | | | | | | | | |
| Fixed Route | TCRTA operates 26 fixed routes TCRTA provides intracity (local) fixed-route transit service in the cities of Dinuba, Porterville, and Tulare and rural commuter routes which connect smaller communities to cities in Tulare County, the City of Reedley in neighboring Fresno County, the City of Delano in neighboring Kern County, and an intercity route jointly operated with Visalia Transit. | For information contact: The Greenline at: 1-877-404-6473 Reservations: 559-372-2290 or 1-800-431-9711 Online: RideTcaT.org gotcrtat.org tularecog.org | Tulare County, Reedley, and Delano | Local fixed route services operated from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday – Saturday and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sundays. Commuter fixed routes generally run from 5:15 a.m. to 8:15 p.m. on weekdays and on weekends from 8:30 a.m. to 6:42 p.m. Schedules vary by route. | General Public, ADA and Seniors | Local Fares one-way General.....\$1.50 Seniors (60+)/Disabled/Medicare card holder.... \$0.75 Military/Veteran...\$0.75 Children 12 & under...FREE Commuter Fares one-way. General.....\$2.00 Seniors (60+)/Disabled/Medicare card holder.... \$1.00 Military/Veteran...\$1.00 Children 12 & under...FREE T-Pass 31-Day General...\$55.00 31-DayReduced...\$35.00. | TCRTA connects with Visalia Transit, FCRTA, Delano Area Rapid Transit, Greyhound, KART, and Amtrak. TCRTA does not issue transfers on local routes. One free transfer is allowed between local and commuter routes. TCRTA accepts Visalia Transit passes for one transfer only at bus stops where TCRTA buses directly connect with VT buses. | 26 Buses in Maximum Service | FY 2021/22 651,146 Unlinked Trips |

| Service | Service Description | Reservations or Information | Service Area | Days and Hours of Service | Eligibility | Fare | Transfers/ Policies | Vehicles | Trips |
|-------------|--|--|---------------|---|--|--|---|----------|---|
| Dial-a-Ride | <p>TCRTA provides Paratransit Dial-A-Ride curb to curb paratransit service on a shared ride demand response basis within the cities of Dinuba, Lindsay, Porterville, and Tulare, and to select rural communities & locations in Tulare County.</p> <p>General Dial-A-Ride service is provided within the City of Woodlake.</p> <p>Deviated fixed route Paratransit service is provided on all commuter routes.</p> | <p>For reservations contact: 559-372-2290 or 1-800-431-9711</p> <p>Next day reservations are required and are taken seven days a week.</p> | Tulare County | <p>Tulare County Cities of Dinuba, Porterville, and Tulare: Monday-Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.</p> <p>City of Lindsay: Monday-Friday 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.</p> <p>City of Woodlake: Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m.</p> <p>Cutler-Orosi: 10:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 2:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.</p> <p>Waukena: 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.</p> <p>Tipton, Pixley, Teviston, Alpaugh, Allensworth, and Richgrove: 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.</p> <p>Deviated fixed route Paratransit service schedules vary by route.</p> | <p>General Public*, ADA and Seniors</p> <p>*City of Woodlake service only.</p> | <p>ADA/Senior/Medicare Card Holder...\$3.00 Personal Care Attendant...FREE</p> | <p>No transfers. ADA reservations may be made up to two weeks in advance. ADA certification is available by contacting TCRTA's Transit Coordinator at 559-972-2467.</p> | | <p>FY 2021/22 25,169 Unlinked Trips</p> |

| Service | Service Description | Reservations or Information | Service Area | Days and Hours of Service | Eligibility | Fare | Transfers/ Policies | Vehicles | Trips |
|--------------|---|--|--|---|---------------------------------|--|--|----------|--|
| Microtransit | TCRTA microtransit is an on-demand accessible transit service provided by TCRTA. Rides can be booked during operating hours through the Uber app or by phone. | For reservations contact: 559-791-7800 or use TCRTA mobile app | City of Porterville, Strathmore, City of Lindsay. Service will be expanded throughout county by 2024. | Monday-Saturday from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. | General Public, ADA and Seniors | General.....\$5.00 Rides Beginning or ending at Transit Center.... \$4.00 | Reduced fare if trip begins or ends at a transit center. | | FY 2021/22 31,578 Unlinked Trips |

| PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|--|---|---|---------------------|----------|-------|
| Service | Service Description | Reservations or Information | Service Area | Days and Hours of Service | Eligibility | Fare | Transfers/ Policies | Vehicles | Trips |
| Porterville Sheltered Workshop | PSW is a social service agency that provides a variety of services to developmentally disabled residents. They provide service to all of Tulare County, Northern Kern, Southern Fresno and Eastern Kings County. They offer services to persons with mild to profound disabilities. They provide work training assistance with finding employment and independent living skills training. | Currently all passengers are referred by the Central Valley Regional Center. | PSW buses pick up passengers at their residence and offer transportation to a set of destination in Porterville and Lindsay. | Monday - Friday 5:30 am - 5:30 pm | Porterville Sheltered workshop (PSW) serves adults with developmental disabilities. | PSW provides service to adults with developmental disabilities in Southeast Tulare County. All riders must be referred through the central valley regional center. PSW shuttle is free for charge for all eligible passengers. The Regional Center provides vouchers for their clients. | | 25 | |
| Family HealthCare Network | Family HealthCare Network provides door-to-door transportation for patients | Patients requiring transportation can book transportation when scheduling an appointment. | Countywide, Hanford | Monday-Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. (last pickup at 4:15 p.m.) | Family HealthCare patients. | | | | |
| Altura Centers for Health | Altura offers door-to-door transportation for patients, to and from appointments. | Call or text: 559-686-9097 | Up to 35 miles from clinic. Clinics are in City of Tulare, Woodville. | | | | | | |

| Service | Service Description | Reservations or Information | Service Area | Days and Hours of Service | Eligibility | Fare | Transfers/ Policies | Vehicles | Trips |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|---------------------|----------|-------|
| Anthem BlueCross Medi-CAL | Anthem BlueCross provides complementary transportation to Medi-Cal enrollees for health appointments & for other wellness-related purposes. Members can also request mileage reimbursement for rides to appointments provided by friends or family members. | For Reservations: Call 1-877-931-4755 toll-free or use Modivcare app. Mileage reimbursements can also be arranged through this phone number. | Regionwide | Transportation can usually be arranged if Anthem is contacted at least five (5) business days before appointment | Low-income, seniors, persons with disabilities | N/A | N/A | | |
| King/Tulare Area Agency (KTAAA) | A “one stop shop” for satisfying the needs of senior, the KTAAA also focuses on their families and loved ones, including connecting families with adult day care agencies, providing occasional respite from the caregiving task, and helping to arrange a power of attorney for a frail parent. | Information on these and numerous other issues is always available: 1800-321-2462 and on the website www.ktaaa.org | Kings and Tulare Area | | | Information, referrals, and assistance are provided free of charge. Some of the programs that are funded or other services we refer you to may have small charges associated with their services, depending on your income level. In addition, KTAAA runs a Multipurpose Senior Services Program which also reimburses the cost of transportation provided by vendors. | | | |
| CSET | CSET operates seven senior centers throughout Tulare County. Locations are Cutler, Earlimart, Exeter, Goshen, Lindsay, Porterville, and Woodlake | 1-800-321-2462 | Cutler-Orosi, Earlimart, Exeter, Farmersville, Goshen, Lindsay, Woodlake, Porterville | Porterville Senior Center 782-4725 Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Cutler-Orosi Senior Center 528-6108 Mon, Wed- Fri 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Farmersville Senior Center 559-667-2702 Monday- Friday 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. | 60+ years of age | Donations accepted | | | |

| OTHER INTERCITY AND REGIONAL SERVICES | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| Service | Service Description | Reservations or Information | Service Area | Days and Hours of Service | Eligibility | Fare | Transfers/ Policies | Vehicles | Trips |
| California Vanpool Authority (CalVans) | | | | | | | | | |
| CalVans | The project, which began in 2001 with one van, was originally established as an offshoot of Kings Area Rural Transit. CalVans has grown to include more 87 vans especially designed for farm workers. | For more information contact: 866-655-5444 www.calvans.org | | Vehicles are operated by members of the vanpool and travel times vary depending on participant work schedules. | General Public | Vanpools costs are incurred monthly and include fees for van lease, fuel, insurance, maintenance, and administration. These costs are shared equally across participants of the vanpool. | | 584 active vanpools in California and Arizona. | 214,579 unlinked trips departing from Tulare County, 2020. |
| Disabled American Veterans (DAV) | | | | | | | | | |
| DAV - medical transportation | DAV operates a fleet of vehicles around the country to provide free transportation to VA medical facilities for injured and ill veterans. | Tulare County VA office contact: 559-684-4960 | Tulare County and surrounding communities. | Per request | The veteran is required to give the VA a notice of the need for transportation. | Free | | 2,856 vehicles Nation wide | |
| HealthNet Medi-CAL | Health Net provides complementary transportation to Medi-CAL patients for health appointments & wellness activities. | For Reservations call ModivCare at: 1-855-253-6863. Have health plan member ID ready. | Regionwide | Reservations can be made between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday | Low-income, seniors, persons with disabilities | N/A | Please do not call more than 30 days before an appointment. | | |

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Appendix B: Coordinated Plan Strategies/ Strategy Priorities

Tables below summarize the three levels of priority for each of the goals with associated strategies. Details of each of these goals and strategies are provided in Chapters 5 and d 6.

| STRATEGY | OBJECTIVE & PURPOSE | POTENTIAL PROJECTS |
|--|--|--|
| Goal 1 – Maintain and strategically expand public and human service transportation as resources allow | | |
| 1. Retain and strategically enhance existing public transportation services. | <p>A very high proportion of the current transit ridership in Tulare County rely on transit as their primary means for getting from place to place. Therefore, it is desirable to maintain the longest operating hours and highest route frequencies possible so that transit riders can complete their trips in a reasonable length of time.</p> <p>In order to minimize the impacts of potential service cuts, it is recommended to pursue strategies such as increasing choice ridership, increasing frequencies on higher-performing routes, and using route planning software to analyze the impact of any service reductions to vulnerable populations.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct Strategic Service Evaluations and planning studies to formulate proposals for increasing the overall productivity & long-term viability of transit through reduction in travel times, improved linkages with major trip generators, and service which meets the County's transportation needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Launch CrossValley Corridor bus service. ▪ Implement recommendations of Transit Development Plans and transit-focused studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce both wait and travel times for riders. ▪ Improve the directness of travel and consider relocating transfer points on key routes. ▪ Secure funding devoted to maintaining and strategically improving service levels within the public transportation network. |
| 2. Retain, support and improve human service transportation. | <p>The availability of specialized human services transportation has a major impact on the ability of vulnerable populations to access the care & services they need. Consequently it is crucial to support and sustain the existing human service transportation options provided in Tulare County.</p> <p>It is also recommended that more partnerships, such as the one between TCRTA and Sierra View Medical Center to utilize TransPORT to provide patients with rides to and from the hospital, be explored. Working relationships with health & social services providers should be built up in anticipation of a more formal agreement on mobility management.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnerships between public transit operators and health care entities to provide transportation to patients. ▪ Secure grants to support agency transportation where these can preserve and extend the reach of existing services. ▪ Develop user-friendly informational materials for paratransit and non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT). ▪ Secure 5310 funds devoted to maintaining and improving agency operations – e. g. computer hardware and automated dispatching software. |

| STRATEGY | OBJECTIVE & PURPOSE | POTENTIAL PROJECTS |
|--|---|--|
| Goal 1 – Maintain and strategically expand public and human service transportation as resources allow | | |
| 3. Continue to utilize FTA 5310 grant funding for procurement of vehicles and related equipment by non-profit and public agencies serving mobility needs of low income, seniors and disabled persons. | <p>Due to the competitive nature of the FTA 5310 program, as implemented by Caltrans, local public agencies and non-profit groups should continue to provide strong justification for the acquisition of replacement & expansion vehicles, related equipment and service enhancements.</p> <p>5310 applications are scored according to criteria that include the number of passenger trips provided by the applicant per hour, the proportion of riders who need to use a wheelchair lift, the projected daily mileage of the vehicle, and whether the applicant shares the vehicle with other entities providing human services transportation.</p> <p>TCAG will continue to support the efforts of local partners to secure 5310 funds for these purposes.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit vehicle-based projects to both replace vehicles that have reached the end of their useful lives and to expand the human services transportation fleet. • As funds allow, submit vehicle-based projects that meet or exceed ADA complementary paratransit services. |
| 4. Retain, support and expand vanpool program | <p>Given the low density and wide geographic distribution of jobs in the region, vanpools have proven to be a valuable transportation asset.</p> <p>CalVans provides economical transportation for many itinerant workers and long-distance commuters who live and work within the county. Ridership data is reported to FTA, generating additional 5307 urban area formula funding for local transit operations.</p> <p>Due to the direct and indirect benefits which the vanpool program provides, ongoing support for its operations is encouraged.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Add more vanpools for low-income workers over the next five years. ▪ Continue to build upon existing partnerships and take advantage of existing available incentives. ▪ Invest available funding back to vanpool program by having public entity purchase vanpools over a five-year period to reduce rider monthly costs. |

Goal 2 – Enhance mobility information and education.

| STRATEGY | OBJECTIVE & PURPOSE | POTENTIAL PROJECTS |
|---|---|--|
| 5. Develop technology platforms that will provide access to detailed information about local transportation options. | <p>Communicate the full range of transportation services and programs that are offered in Tulare County to transportation-disadvantaged populations and the social service agencies that serve them.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce Realtime-GTFS data to all Fixed Route transit services based in Tulare County ▪ Develop a ‘Mobility as a Service’ model that will assist riders by matching them to the most appropriate transportation options. |
| 6. Continue to utilize and expand the ‘Green Line’ call center. | <p>The ‘Green Line’ call center provides easy access to information on public transit services throughout Tulare and Kings counties with a single phone call.</p> <p>Currently the ‘Green Line’ can provide travel information for all public transportation agencies in Tulare County, as well as Kings Area Rural Transit (KART) as well as common carriers like Greyhound and Amtrak.</p> <p>While the establishment of a consolidated transportation services agency (CTSA) that will assume some of these duties is anticipated during the life of this plan, Green Line staff should be provided with a list of useful resources such as the phone numbers that Medi-Cal patients can call to reserve non-emergency medical transportation.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor call center utilization. ▪ Increase data reporting to inform and guide program managers and partners. ▪ Incorporate information about Green Line into outreach materials targeted at high priority populations. ▪ Increase communication between local providers to ensure that Green Line information is current and accurate. |

Goal 2 – Enhance mobility information and education.

| STRATEGY | OBJECTIVE & PURPOSE | POTENTIAL PROJECTS |
|---|--|---|
| 7. Provide comprehensive route/schedule information at bus stops, particularly for low-frequency routes. | <p>Bus stops are an obvious place to look for information about local transit services. All bus stops served by fixed-route transit should have route and schedule information posted and maintained so that it is always clearly legible.</p> <p>This is particularly important in rural areas where service is more infrequent and the wait times between buses is longer.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide detailed route and schedule information at all Tulare County bus stops. ▪ Add Realtime-GTFS capabilities to all transit vehicles in Tulare County. |

GOAL 3 – Formalize a mobility management function to better connect persons with the mobility services they need.

| STRATEGY | OBJECTIVE & PURPOSE | POTENTIAL PROJECTS |
|--|---|--|
| 8. Designate a countywide Mobility Manager. | <p>Mobility management is a consolidated approach to transportation that aims to reduce wait times for travelers and increase service utilization by managing demand and providing a single point-of-service for information, travel planning, and reservations.</p> <p>Introducing mobility management in Tulare County has strong potential to reduce wait times and out-of-pocket transportation expenses for social services clients and medical patients. A mobility manager would also become familiar with regional travel trends and demand patterns, which will be useful when planning future transit services.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and adopt Mobility Management plan. ▪ Designate entity that will serve as Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA). ▪ Seek 5310 program funding for technical assistance to develop enhanced mobility management capacities, operating costs and/or purchase of related capital equipment. |

GOAL 4 – Fill remaining mobility gaps with cost-effective services and self-help tools.

| STRATEGY | OBJECTIVE & PURPOSE | POTENTIAL PROJECTS |
|---|--|---|
| <p>9. Develop a volunteer driver reimbursement program.</p> | <p>Volunteer driver reimbursement programs are low-cost transportation initiatives that can improve mobility of those Tulare County residents where there are no transit services or for those whose travel needs are too specialized to be easily served by public transit.</p> <p>Many rural communities often rely on informal networks of volunteer drivers. The creation of a reimbursement program for volunteer drivers has the potential to increase the size of the volunteer driver pool and compensate drivers for fuel costs and wear-and-tear on their vehicles.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify a lead organization for development and promotion of a volunteer driver reimbursement program and include a visit to (or from) the national TRIP model in Riverside County. ▪ Prepare and submit a Section 5310 grant to develop a Tulare County volunteer driver reimbursement program. ▪ Promote and market the program through its sponsor organization(s) & the newly designated countywide Mobility Manager. |
| <p>10. Facilitate improved pedestrian and bike access to transit services.</p> | <p>Even in communities where transit is available, the difficulty or perceived difficulty in traveling to the nearest bus stop can significantly impact ridership. One study which examined transit ridership among low-density neighborhoods with high proportions of senior residents found that roughly 70% of elderly riders lived within 1/8th mile of the bus route and that overall transit usage within this walking distance was three (3) times higher than when walking distances were up to ¼ mile.</p> <p>The removal of barriers that hamper the movement of pedestrians and cyclists, both perceived and actual, should be seriously studied. Transit planners should work with land use planners to ensure the needs of transit users are properly considered during development review.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Install amenities such as benches, shelters, safety lighting and refuse bins at more bus stops, with priority given to high volume stops. ▪ Replace outdated crosswalk signals and reconfigure dangerous crosswalks. ▪ Encourage new residential developments to provide direct and convenient pedestrian routes to nearby transit stops by keeping physical obstructions and walking distances to a minimum. ▪ Install continuous sidewalks in high pedestrian traffic areas to calm traffic and make it easier for wheelchair users to cross roadways. |

GOAL 5 – Develop a more effective customer feedback and performance system to ensure that high service quality is maintained.

11. Collect more data relating to service quality and transfers between transit routes and modes.

Poorly timed or inconvenient transfers can significantly add to the amount of time that it takes to complete a trip on public transit and seriously hinder potential ridership.

Especially considering that a large proportion of transit riders are seniors and people with disabilities, this can impose significant hardship on people of limited financial means.

Increased data collection on transfers between transit routes and travel modes can provide valuable insights into average wait times, travel patterns, and rider satisfaction.

- Survey fixed-route transit riders regarding the location of transfer points and the ease of navigating the facilities.
- Monitor average wait times for “first/last mile” connections between TransPORT and fixed route transit.
- Establish target maximum wait times for transfers

| GOAL | Strategies | Priority | Status |
|--|---|---|--|
| Goal 1 – Maintain and strategically expand public and human services transportation as resources allow. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Retain and strategically enhance existing Public Transportation Services. 2. Retain, support and improve Human Service Transportation. 3. Continue to utilize FTA 5310 grant funding for procurement of replacement and expansion vehicles by non---profit and public agencies serving mobility needs of low income, seniors and disabled persons. 4. Retain, support and expand Vanpool program. | <p>Critical</p> <p>Critical</p> <p>High</p> <p>Medium</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fixed route transit services were expanded significantly during the 2010s. Despite steep declines in ridership at the start of the covid pandemic, most services have been retained. 2. Tulare County HHSA continues to provide transit passes to clients. Dial-A-Ride continues to be available to ADA certified riders and, in some cases, the general public. 3. FTA 5310 funding was obtained by both public agencies and non-profit groups during the most recent Call for Projects. Projects funded include Green Line operations and purchase of paratransit buses & computer equipment. 4. Tulare County continues to work closely with the California Vanpool Authority. Calvans currently operates nearly 40 vanpools from Tulare County. Partnerships include the Miocar electric car share and vouchers for Visalia & Porterville residents who are vanpool users. |
| Goal 2 – Enhance mobility information and education. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Develop technology platforms that will provide access to comprehensive information about local transportation options. 6. Continue to utilize and expand the “Green Line” Call Center | <p>Critical</p> <p>High</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. TCRTA’s website features a trip planner which includes information from all public transit agencies within the county. All fixed route schedule information has been uploaded to Google Transit. 6. The Tulare County Green Line continues to provide travel information for all transit agencies in Tulare County as well as Kings Area Rural Transit (KART). The service is available 9 hours per day, 6 days a week. |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Goal 2 – Enhance mobility information and education. (cont.) | <p>7. Provide route/schedule information at the bus stop, particularly for low---frequency routes.</p> | <p>Medium</p> | <p>7. Route and schedule information has been provided at all Visalia Transit & Porterville Transit bus stops. TCRTA has added or replaced information placards at dozens of rural stops throughout their system since 2019.</p> |
| Goal 3 – Formalize a mobility management function to better connect people to the mobility services they need. | <p>8. Designate a countywide mobility manager.</p> | <p>Critical</p> | <p>8. While the Green Line does perform some of the more elementary mobility management functions, a consolidated transportation services agency (CTSA) has not been designated and comprehensive mobility management capacity has not yet been developed.</p> |
| Goal 4 – Fill remaining mobility gaps with cost-effective services and self-help tools. | <p>9. Develop a volunteer driver reimbursement program.</p> <p>10. Facilitate improved pedestrian and bike access to transit services.</p> | <p>Medium</p> <p>High</p> | <p>9. To date no publicly sponsored volunteer driver program has been established in Tulare County. Local Medi-Cal patients with Anthem and Health Net can obtain mileage reimbursements for volunteer drivers making qualifying trips.</p> <p>10. Recently completed Complete Streets projects, crosswalk improvements, and circulation studies have made a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists and identified future safety improvements.</p> |

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| <p>Goal 5 – Develop a more effective customer feedback and performance evaluation system to ensure that high quality service is maintained.</p> | <p>11. Report transit inter---system connectivity measures annually in Productivity Evaluation Report</p> | <p>Medium</p> | <p>11. TCRTA conducted an extensive outreach campaign beginning in 2022. TCAG is currently reviewing transit performance metrics and plans to establish appropriate performance targets for each type of service.</p> |
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