

# Appendix F - Local Coordinated Plan

## Western Piedmont Local Coordinated Public Transportation Plan Update



Prepared by:

Western Piedmont Council of Governments  
Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority  
and  
North Carolina Department of Transportation

Updated Plan Approved by:

Local Coordinated Plan Steering Committee, May 21, 2013  
Western Piedmont Transportation Advisory Board, May 21, 2013  
Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority Board, June 27, 2013  
Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority Board July 17, 2014

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## **SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose of the Plan**

The purpose of the Local Coordinated Public Transportation Plan is to identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and those with lower incomes, and to identify and prioritize strategies for meeting those needs. The primary reason for this goal is to promote transportation equity among those who may otherwise be transportation disadvantaged. This purpose also supports managing resources efficiently and effectively, fostering cooperation among agencies and organizations, and creating economic development opportunities.

### **Promoting Transportation Equity**

While transportation disadvantaged most obviously describes the physically impaired, it also can include those with mental disabilities, the elderly, as well as those who, because of personal or family economic circumstances, are unable to afford and maintain reliable personal transportation.

In order for these populations to enjoy the independent living and full participation in society that the general population has it is critical that they are provided transport that is suited to meet their needs. Such transportation options are as diverse as the populations they serve and the travel needs those populations have. This range of services may include public transit fixed-route service, specialized demand response, paratransit, ridesharing, taxi cabs, and volunteer drivers. The trip purpose itself can vary from access to employment, medical care, childcare, education, recreation, social visits, among many others.

### **Managing Resources Efficiently**

The cooperation that comes from a coordinated effort can serve to develop strategies that will address gaps in coverage as well as eliminate duplication of service. When possible, it can also allow for the sharing of resources.

The resultant increase of efficiency and the creation economies of scale can result in lower operating costs for many transportation providers, an important benefit given the often low amount of resources and funding available. Perhaps more importantly, coordination can increase the quality of life to those most in need of transportation by providing improved service at lower costs.

### **Creating Economic Development Opportunities**

Improving special needs transportation can create access to employment, job training, shopping, and other services for those who otherwise may not have such opportunities. Achieving the goals of the coordinated plan may therefore serve to promote self-sufficiency and equal opportunity for employment of individuals thereby contributing to the economic health of the entire community.

## **SECTION TWO: BACKGROUND**

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), the Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority (WPRTA), also known as “Greenway Public Transportation,” the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG), and interested stakeholders, developed a regional coordinated plan in 2009 that met the requirements of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and the Federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM). This plan was developed for the Counties of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba, including the Cities of Hickory, Newton, and Conover. The region also included the Census-designated Hickory Urbanized Area.

The projects funded under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) formula programs for Sections 5310, 5316 and 5317 had to be derived from a locally-developed coordinated plan, the coordinated plan also incorporated activities offered under other programs sponsored by federal, state, and local agencies. These programs included FTA’s Sections 5307 and 5311 programs, as well as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, Community Action (CAP), Independent Living Centers, and Agency on Aging (AoA) programs among others.

Development and content of locally-developed coordinated plans are intended to be specific to the needs and issues of each region. This coordinated plan was developed to address intra- and inter-regional needs and issues, and in a manner that allowed the providers, concurrent with regional Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) updates, to directly update the regional coordinated plan. Further, the coordinated plan was developed in a manner that allows the WPRTA and WPCOG to adapt and expand the plan to incorporate programs and initiatives specific to the region.

### **Locally-Developed Coordinated Plan**

Presidential Executive Order 13330 on the Coordination of Human Service Programs issued by the President on February 24, 2004, creates an interdepartmental Federal Council on Access and Mobility to undertake collective and individual departmental actions to reduce duplication among federally funded human service transportation services, increase the efficient delivery of such services and expand transportation access for older individuals, persons with disabilities, persons with low income, children and other disadvantaged populations within their own communities.

As a first principle to achieve these goals, federally assisted grantees involved in providing and funding human service transportation need to plan collaboratively to more comprehensively address the needs of the populations served by various federal programs. In their report to the President on the Human Service Transportation Coordination, members of the council recommended that “in order to effectively promote the development and delivery of coordinated transportation services, the Administration seek mechanisms (statutory, regulatory, or administrative) to require participation in a community transportation planning process for human service transportation programs.”

In August 2005, the President signed legislation consistent with this recommendation to reauthorize federal public transportation and federal highway programs that contained provisions to establish a coordinated human services transportation planning process. This legislation, the Safe, Affordable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), created a requirement that a locally developed, coordinated public transit/human service planning process and an initial plan be developed by 2007 as a condition of receiving funding for certain programs directed at meeting the needs of older individuals, persons with disabilities and low-income persons. The plan must be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation providers and public, private and non-profit human service providers and participation by the public.

In 2008 the Federal Transit Administration required a coordinated plan of local transit services in order to apply for funds from the Elderly and Disabled Individuals Transportation Program (FTA Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (FTA Section 5316) and New Freedom Program (FTA Section 5317).

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued three program circulars (FTA C9770.1F, FTA C9050.1, and FTA C9045.1) effective May 1, 2007, to provide guidance on the administration of the three programs subject to this planning requirement.

They stipulate that projects selected for funding under the Section 5310, JARC, and New Freedom programs be “derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan” and that the plan be “developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and participation by members of the public.”

This federal guidance specified four required elements of the plan, as follows:

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, older adults, and people with low incomes. This assessment can be based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners or on more sophisticated data collection efforts, and gaps in service;
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.

The three sources of funds subject to this plan under SAFETEA-LU and its continuing resolutions are intended to improve the mobility status of persons with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals, as described below.

### **Elderly and Disabled Program (Section 5310)**

The goal of these funds is to provide transportation services that meet the special needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities for who mass transportation services are unavailable, insufficient or inappropriate.

Funds can be used for the purchase of vehicles and related capital equipment and for operating costs. North Carolina is one of seven states approved to use up to one-third (1/3) of its annual apportionment of Section 5310 funds for operating costs. The Federal share of eligible capital costs may not exceed 80 percent of the net cost of the activity unless the capital cost is an ADA vehicle and then the Federal share cannot exceed 83 percent. The Federal share of eligible operating costs may not exceed 50 percent of the net cost.

Examples of eligible Elderly and Disabled Program projects include, but are not limited to:

- Buses and vans
- Radios and communication equipment
- Vehicle shelters
- Wheelchair lifts
- Computer hardware and software
- Transit related Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) or other technology
- Mobility Management Activities

### **Job Access and Reverse Commute Activities (Section 5316)**

The goal of Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC) is to improve access to transportation services to employment and employment-related activities for welfare recipients and low-income individuals, and to transport residents of urbanized and non-urbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities. Reverse commute projects can provide transportation services to suburban locations regardless of income.

The program requires coordination of Federally-assisted programs and services in order to make the most efficient use of Federal resources. Funds are available for capital, and operating expenses that support the development and maintenance of transportation services to jobs and activities related to employment. The Federal share of eligible capital costs may not exceed 80 percent of the net cost of the activity unless the capital cost is an ADA vehicle and then the Federal share cannot exceed 83 percent. The Federal share of the eligible operating costs may not exceed 50 percent of the net operating costs of the activity.

Examples of eligible JARC projects include, but are not limited to:

- Late-night and weekend service
- Guaranteed Ride Home Programs
- Vanpools or shuttle services to improve access to employment or training sites
- Car-share or other projects to improve access to autos
- Access to child care and training
- Mobility Management Activities

### **New Freedom Program (Section 5317)**

The purpose of the New Freedom Program is to encourage new services and facility improvements to address the transportation needs of persons with disabilities that go beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Projects must not have been operational on August 10, 2005 and did not have an identified funding source as of this date. FTA has expanded the type of projects it considers to be “beyond the ADA” and “new” and thus increased the types of projects

eligible for funding under the New Freedom program. Under this interpretation, new and expanded fixed route and demand responsive transit service planned for and designed to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities are eligible projects.

These funds should be used to expand the transportation mobility options available to persons with disabilities and further allow Americans with disabilities to be integrated in to the workforce and full participation in society. Lack of adequate transportation is a primary barrier to work for individuals with disabilities. New Freedom Program funds are available for capital and operating expenses. The Federal share of eligible capital costs may not exceed 80 percent of the net cost of the activity unless the capital cost is an ADA vehicle and then the Federal share cannot exceed 83 percent. The federal share of the eligible operating costs may not exceed 50 percent of the net operating costs of the activity.

Examples of eligible New Freedom Program projects include, but are not limited to:

- Expansion of paratransit service hours or service area beyond minimal requirements
- Purchase of accessible taxi or other vehicles
- Promotion of accessible ride sharing or vanpool programs
- Administration of volunteer programs
- Building curb-cuts, providing accessible bus stops
- Travel Training programs
- Mobility Management Activities

## **MAP-21**

In June 2012, Congress enacted a new two-year federal surface transportation authorization, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), which retained all of the coordinated planning provisions of SAFETEA-LU. Under MAP-21, JARC and New Freedom are eliminated as standalone programs, and the Section 5310 and New Freedom Programs are consolidated under Section 5310 into a single program (Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities), which provides for a mix of capital and operating funding for projects. This is the only funding program with coordinated planning requirements under MAP-21, beginning with Fiscal Year 2013 and currently authorized through FFY 2014.

### **MAP-21 Planning Requirements:**

This section describes the revised Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310), the only funding program with coordinated planning requirements under MAP-21, beginning with Fiscal Year 2013 and currently authorized through FY 2014.

At the current time FTA has yet to update its guidance concerning administration of the new consolidated Section 5310 Program, but the legislation itself provides three requirements for recipients. These requirements would apply to NCDOT Public Transportation Division in distributing any Section 5310 funds for which it might serve as designated as recipient under MAP-21:

1. That projects selected are “included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan”;

2. That the coordinated plan “was developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human service providers, and other members of the public”; and
3. That “to the maximum extent feasible, the services funded ... will be coordinated with transportation services assisted by other Federal departments and agencies,” including recipients of grants from the Department of Health and Human Services.

Under MAP-21, only Section 5310 funds are subject to the coordinated-planning requirement. Sixty percent of funds for this program are allocated by a population-based formula to large urbanized areas (See 49 U.S.C. Section 5310 (e)(2) / MAP-21 Section 20009).

### **SECTION THREE: PLANNING PROCESS OUTREACH/PARTICIPATION**

As the regional planning agency to the Hickory urbanized area and the rural areas of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties, the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) is the lead agency for the development of this Local Coordinated Plan. As the lead agency, WPGOG along with WPRTA organized a Local Coordinated Plan Steering Committee to get input on developing a coordinated plan. WPRTA and WPCOG formed the Steering Committee consisting of representatives from the following:

- Catawba County DSS
- Alexander County Emergency Medical Services
- Smokey Mountain Services LME
- Alexander County Smart Start
- WPCOG Area Agency on Aging
- Alexander County TAB Members
- Burke County Health Department
- Veteran Services
- Handi-Care
- Mental Health Partners
- Public Transportation User
- Caldwell County DSS
- Burke County TAB Members
- Caldwell County TAB Members
- Catawba County TAB Members
- Caldwell County Health Department
- Citizen with a Disability and Public Transportation User
- NCDOT-PTD Staff
- WPRTA Staff
- WPCOG Staff

#### **Coordination**

For the purpose of this plan, coordination is defined as “a process through which representatives of different agencies or client groups work together to achieve any one or all of the following goals: more cost-effective service delivery; increased capacity to serve the unmet needs; improved quality



of service; and, services which are more easily understood and assessed by riders.” Coordinating transportation means obtaining more results with existing resources through working with other individuals from different agencies, each with unique perspectives and goals.

## **Survey**

A survey was developed to solicit information to help identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and those with lower incomes, and to identify and prioritize strategies for meeting those needs. The survey was handed out by the steering committee, mailed to interested citizens and a survey link was placed on the WPRTA and WPCOG websites. The survey was filled out electronically through “Survey Monkey” or filled out and mailed back to WPCOG. We had a total of 150 surveys completed including 45 online surveys and 105 handwritten surveys.

## **Planning Workshop**

A Local Coordinated Planning Workshop was held on Tuesday, March 26, 2013 from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. at the Western Piedmont Council of Governments offices.

The workshop was sponsored by the Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority (WPRTA), Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Unifour Rural Planning Organization (RPO). The lead organization was the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG). There were 34 participants at the workshop.

Notice of the workshop was advertised to a comprehensive, diverse population from all geographic areas of the region by the steering committee, transportation advisory board, WPRTA staff and WPCOG staff. Notifications of the workshop were advertised by public notice, emails, flyers, mail outs, and word of mouth and identified on two websites.

The workshop included an overview of the Federal Circulars under SAFETEA-LU and MAP-21:

- 1) Section 5310 Elderly Individuals & Individuals with Disabilities Program
- 2) Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute Program
- 3) Section 5317 New Freedom Program (Beyond the requirements of ADA of 1990)

Under MAP-21, JARC and New Freedom are eliminated as standalone programs, and the Section 5310 and New Freedom Programs are consolidated under Section 5310 into a single program, Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities, which provides for a mix of capital and operating funding for projects.

An overview of the following maps was given:

- Current WPRTA Routes & Schedules
- Locations in each of the 4 counties of the Largest Employers and Business Parks
- 2010 Hickory Metro % of Households with No Automobile
- 2010 Hickory Metro % Age 65 and Older
- 2010 Hickory Metro Population Age 5+ Disabled

- 2010 Hickory Metro % Minority
- 2010 Hickory Metro % of Families Receiving Federal Poverty Assistance
- 2010 Commuter Patterns

These data are provided in Section 5 of this Coordinated Plan.

The purpose of the workshop was explained with the main focus on people with disabilities, seniors and low-income residents in the Unifour. The participants also learned about the “Coordinated Planning Process”. Strategies were then developed to identify the gaps and create potential projects to close the gaps. Priorities were set and established for implementation. The participants also reviewed current services offered by the WPRTA.

Individual groups of participants discussed among themselves the transportation needs for the target populations. Each group was assigned a facilitator and were instructed to create a list of needs and review it for the entire group. After all presentations there was a chance for everyone to vote, using red dots, no more than 2 votes per item per person. Each person had 5 votes. All items are listed in the final plan with the votes deciding the priority of the listing. Non-priority items are also listed.

Through the process of the workshop, participants identified transportation needs, provided strategies for meeting the local needs and prioritized transportation services for funding and implementation.

The results from the planning workshop are highlighted in Sections 6 and 7 of this Coordinated Plan.

## **SECTION FOUR: FEDERAL PROGRAMS AND REQUIREMENTS**

MAP-21 is anticipated to make substantial changes to some federal transit funding programs. While the full implications of these changes are still not known, new program provisions, project eligibility, and program availability is noted below to the extent currently possible.

### **FTA 5307 – Urbanized Area Formula Program**

The FTA Urbanized Area Formula Program (43 U.S.C. 5307) funding is apportioned annually to census defined urbanized areas for transit related expenses and transportation planning. The amount of funding made available is dependent on the population and population density of the area as well as ridership and system characteristics of public transportation in the region.

### **FTA 5310 – Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities**

The FTA Transportation for Elderly Persons and Person with Disabilities program provides funding directly to states for award to private non-profit organizations (and government agencies in cases where no such organizations exist) that provide transport to the elderly and the disabled. Only capital projects, such as vehicle purchases, are eligible for funding under this program, and all such projects require a 20% match.

To ensure that funded projects serve to fill gaps in providing service to these populations, FTA requires all 5310 projects to derive from a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan.

Under MAP-21, the 5310 program will also encompass all of the functions of the 5317 New Freedom program described below. It is also anticipated that operation funding may be available under 5310 with a 50% local share.

### **FTA 5311 – Formula Grants for Rural Areas**

The FTA Formula Grants for other than Urbanized Areas provides funding directly to states for award to agencies and organizations that provide public transportation to non-urbanized areas, i.e., rural or semi-rural places with populations less than 50,000. 5311 can also be used to fund intercity bus travel. Both capital and operating expenses are eligible under this program, the former requiring a 20% local match and the latter 50%. These funds are awarded by the state to operators in areas where traditional public transportation is insufficient, unavailable, or inappropriate. Under MAP-21, the 5311 program will incorporate all 5316 JARC functions previously awarded and administered by the state (i.e., outside of the urbanized area).

### **FTA 5316 – Job Access Reverse Commute**

The FTA Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program funds projects that facilitate work or employment related public transportation trips for the low-income population and/or provide reverse commuting opportunities (i.e., trips providing access for urban residents to suburban employment locations). Projects funded by JARC should address the challenges faced by low-income individuals obtaining and maintaining employment, such as late night and weekend trips, and complex multiple destination trips, for which traditional transit service may be inadequate. Capital, planning and operating projects are eligible for JARC, the former two requiring a 20% and the latter a 50% local match.

Under MAP-21, the JARC function will be moved into the 5307 Urbanized Area Formula funding program for urbanized areas and the 5311 Rural Program for non-urbanized areas.

### **FTA 5317 – New Freedom**

FTA New Freedom provides funding for projects that remove barriers to transit accessibility and mobility for the disabled. New Freedom funding is available for new public transportation projects and transportation alternatives that go beyond the minimum requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Both capital and operating projects are eligible for New Freedom funding, the former requiring a 20% and the latter a 50% local match.

Under MAP-21, the New Freedom function will be moved into the 5310 Transportation for Elderly and Disabled funding program described above.

### **Bus and Bus Facilities**

The FTA Bus and Bus Facilities program provides capital funding to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase bus and bus related equipment, as well as to construct bus related facilities. Funding amounts are allocated through a formula that considers population, vehicle revenue miles, and passenger miles. Eligible recipients include designated FTA recipients that operate fixed route

bus systems and public or private nonprofit organizations engaged in public and/or human services transportation. The Federal share for these projects is 80%. Under MAP-21, the Bus and Bus Facilities program replaces Section 5309.

### **Flexed Surface Transportation Program (STP)**

Surface Transportation Program is U.S. DOT funding provided to states and localities for projects on any roads that are not classified as minor local or rural collectors. States and MPOs have the option of transferring or “flexing” a portion of these funds for any projects that are eligible under FTA’s transit programs (with the exception of any FTA eligible operating assistance). Federal share for these projects is 80%.

### **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ)**

CMAQ is U.S. DOT funding available to areas with air quality non-attainment. Projects funded by CMAQ must contribute to the attainment of ambient air quality standards by reducing pollutant emissions from transportation sources. CMAQ funding may be used by all projects eligible under FTA programs including operating assistance for up to three years. CMAQ is also available for shared ride services and pedestrian/bicycle improvements.

### **Medicaid**

The Department of Health and Human Services’ Medicaid funds Non-Emergency, Non-Ambulatory Medical transportation (NEMT) through state Medicaid programs. Medicaid is by far the largest funder of specialized transportation both nationally and statewide. This program includes reimbursement payments for Friends and Family providers, municipal public transit providers, non-profit and for-profit providers. DHH certifies all vehicles in use by nonprofit and for-profit NEMT providers.

### **Financial Gaps**

Issues surrounding funding remain one of the primary obstacles to implementing coordinated human services transportation. As demand for public transportation rises in the region, the costs of fuel, maintenance, insurance, and other necessities have caused a similar rise in the cost of operating public and human services transportation. At the same time, grant funding for human services transportation has either not kept up with demand or may have even been reduced, as in the case of state Medicaid for non-emergency transportation funding.

In addition to securing grant funding, identifying a dedicated and recurring source of local match presents a challenge, particularly for smaller systems. Operating costs under many FTA programs require a fifty percent local match and in the case of larger providers or within certain grant programs operating costs may not be eligible at all. Ample funding for purchasing vehicles is poorly spent if those vehicles sit unused. Identifying potential sources of funding and matching opportunities and tracking how that funding is being used are both necessary to providing effective human services transportation in the region.

## **SECTION FIVE: TRANSPORTATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, OLDER ADULTS, AND PEOPLE WITH LOW INCOMES**

### **Population and Land Use**

The 2010 Census indicated that the population in the four-county area was 365,497 people, up 7 percent over the 2000 population of 341,851 people. State demographers have estimated that the rate of growth will slow over the next 20- year period, estimating that the 2020 population will be 374,131 (2.4% over the ten-year period), and the 2030 population will be 381,477 (2.0% over the ten- year period). Alexander and Catawba Counties are predicted to grow at a faster rate than Burke and Caldwell Counties.

Growth in the region has been affected by the closure of several major manufacturing plants in the area over the last ten years. The furniture and textile industries, which have historically been major employers in the region, have moved several facilities out of the country. The retail and service sectors are growing in the region and these sectors have replaced some of the lost manufacturing employment.

#### *Urbanized Area*

There is a Census-designated Urbanized Area in the Western Piedmont area. This Urbanized Area is somewhat unusual, as the population density found in some areas within its boundaries would not suggest an “urban” designation. The area has this designation because there are several small municipalities with contiguous borders that combine to have a population that is characterized as “urban” (212,195 people, as of the 2010 Census). There is also a significant level of commuting between jurisdictions, which is one of the determinants that the Census uses in its formula to designate urbanized areas. The urbanized area is significant for this project, as the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) allocates public transit funding to specific urbanized areas.

#### *Population Density*

The mean population density of the region is 223.2 people per square mile, with Catawba County having the most concentrated population (387.1 people per square mile) and Alexander County having the least concentrated population (143.1 people per square mile). Burke County has a density of 179.3 persons per square mile and Caldwell has density of 176.1 persons per square mile. Population density is an important demographic feature to study when planning transit services. Generally speaking, fixed-route transit can only be supported in areas with 1,500-2,000 people per square mile or more. Areas with lower densities call for more targeted services, such as deviated fixed-route or demand-response services. The current fixed-route service area exhibits areas of fixed-route density, as do areas of Lenoir and Morganton.

#### *Likely Transit Destinations*

Transit destinations can be defined as typical locations where transit riders would need to travel to on a regular basis, such as employment sites, medical service sites, social service centers, shopping centers, and major educational centers. In Alexander, Burke, and Caldwell Counties, these destinations are generally concentrated in the County seats of Taylorsville, Morganton, and Lenoir, respectively. The only significant deviation from this pattern is Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, which is located in Hudson. In Catawba County, these destinations are primarily located in Hickory, Newton, and Conover.

**Figures 1A-1D** provides a map showing the locations in each of the 4 counties of the largest employers and business parks.

#### *Employment Travel Patterns*

Employment travel patterns based on the 2006-2010 American Community Survey were compiled and analyzed by the WPCOG in 2013. This analysis showed that Catawba County is a significant employment destination for the three other study counties. These data provide another opportunity for the regionalization of public transit services. The following commuting patterns were indicated in the WPCOG analysis:

- From Alexander County - 5,034 commuters to Catawba County
- From Burke County – 7,434 commuters to Catawba County
- From Caldwell County – 7,299 commuters to Catawba County

**Figure 2** shows these commuting patterns.

#### *Demographics Indicating Transit Needs*

The need for transportation services in an area is a function of the demographic and economic characteristics of the population, their access to alternative forms of transportation (personally-owned cars and trucks), and their physical and mental abilities to operate a vehicle.

Need is a relative concept, rather than an absolute one, and so an examination of need must provide for a comparison between areas or population groupings. It may not include a figure for the number of trips “needed” by the population in that area or group, because such a figure is inherently subjective and dependent upon the definition of need. “Need” is likely to be much larger than “demand,” which is the number of trips likely to be taken at a particular fare and service level.

Accordingly, this analysis uses 2010 Census data to present relative need in the study area. Relative need is calculated by ranking each Census and the 2006-2010 American Community Survey with regard to the density and the percentage of the population in each of the following groups:

- Elderly persons 60-64 years of age
- Elderly persons 65 years of age and above
- Persons with disabilities, non institutional, aged 18-64
- Persons with incomes below the poverty level
- Households with no vehicle available for use

This information is analyzed in two ways. The density of persons in each of these categories has been ranked, and the rankings summed to provide an overall ranking for each Census Tract in the four counties. The high need areas in terms of people displaying transportation dependent characteristics are located in the Hickory area, Newton, part of Conover, part of Maiden, in the US 321-A corridor between Granite Falls and Lenoir, the northwest quadrant of Lenoir, in Morganton, along the US 70 Corridor in the vicinity of Valdese, along the Burke County/Catawba County border (north of Interstate 40), and in Taylorsville.

A similar analysis is performed using the same data, but calculating the percentage of the population in each of the categories for each Census tract, and then ranking the percentages and summing the rankings to produce an overall ranking of the percentages. This is done to determine if areas that have small populations might also have a high percentage of that population in need of

transportation services. This analysis shows a somewhat different pattern, with more of the rural areas showing needs, as would be expected. There are several areas that exhibit high transit needs based on the density and the percentage analyses, and these are: Morganton, Valdese, the northwest quadrant of Lenoir, along the Burke County/Catawba County border (north of Interstate 40), areas along the US 321-A Corridor between Granite Falls and Lenoir, portions of the Cities of Hickory, Newton, and Conover, Taylorsville, and Maiden.

### ***Specific Demographic Characteristics-Locations of Target Populations***

A series of maps have been generated to show the locations of people with disabilities, elderly people, and people with low incomes. These maps were presented and discussed at the workshop and are provided in **Figures 3 through 7**.

- 2006-2010 ACS Hickory Metro % of Households with No Automobile
- 2010 Census Hickory Metro Population 60-64 Years of Age
- 2010 Census Hickory Metro % Age 65 and Older
- 2010 Census Hickory Metro % Minority
- 2006-2010 ACS Hickory Metro % of Families Below Poverty Level

### ***Demand for Rural General Public Transportation***

Qualitative information gathered for the regional study indicated that there is a lack of community transportation services to address general public needs. While WPRTA receives RGP funds from the State and provides limited services using these funds, there is not a sufficient level of unrestricted funds to provide a significant level of rural general public transportation.

In order to try to quantify the unmet need for general public transportation for the “Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority Implementation Plan,” a model was used to predict the number of general public trips that could be expected given a particular level of service. The factors in the model include: senior population, people with disabilities, population residing in families with income below poverty, vehicle miles of service available, and size of County. For vehicle miles of service available, the most recent total miles for each of the four previously operating systems were used.

This model was only designed for rural areas, thus the WPRTA fixed-route service area was not included. The model predicted that there is a significant level of unmet demand for rural general public transportation in the region.

### Figure 1A

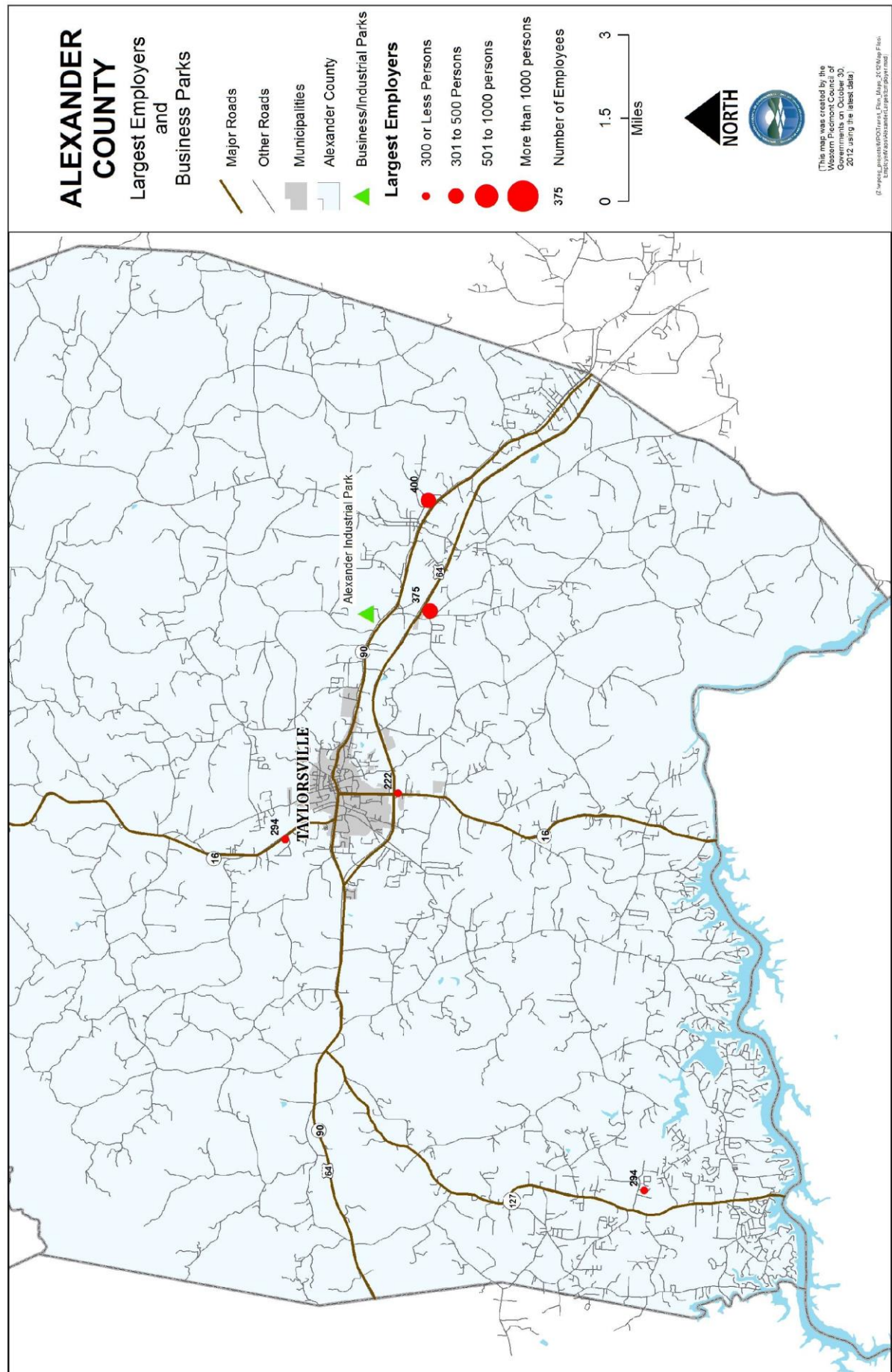




Figure 1B

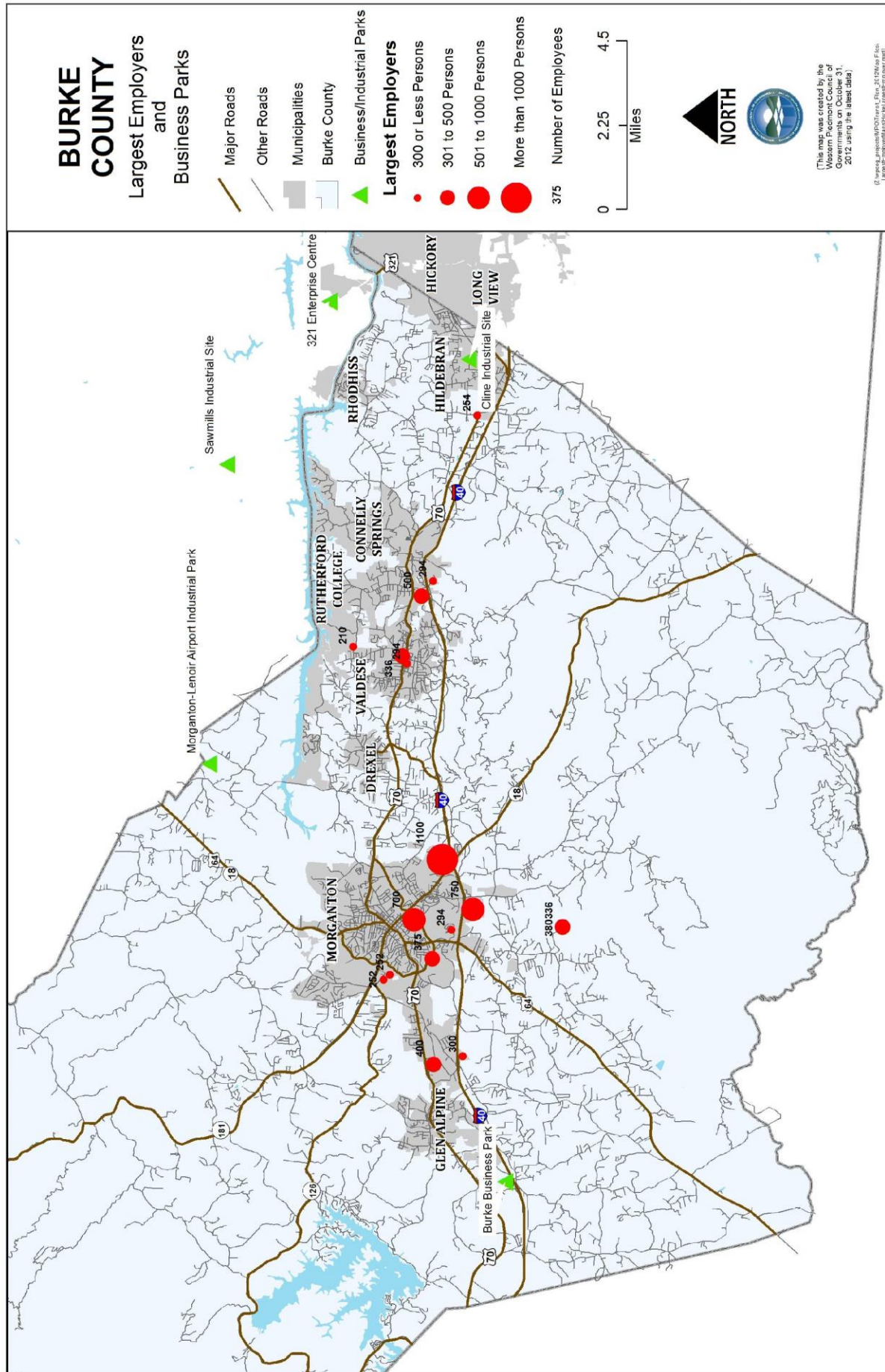
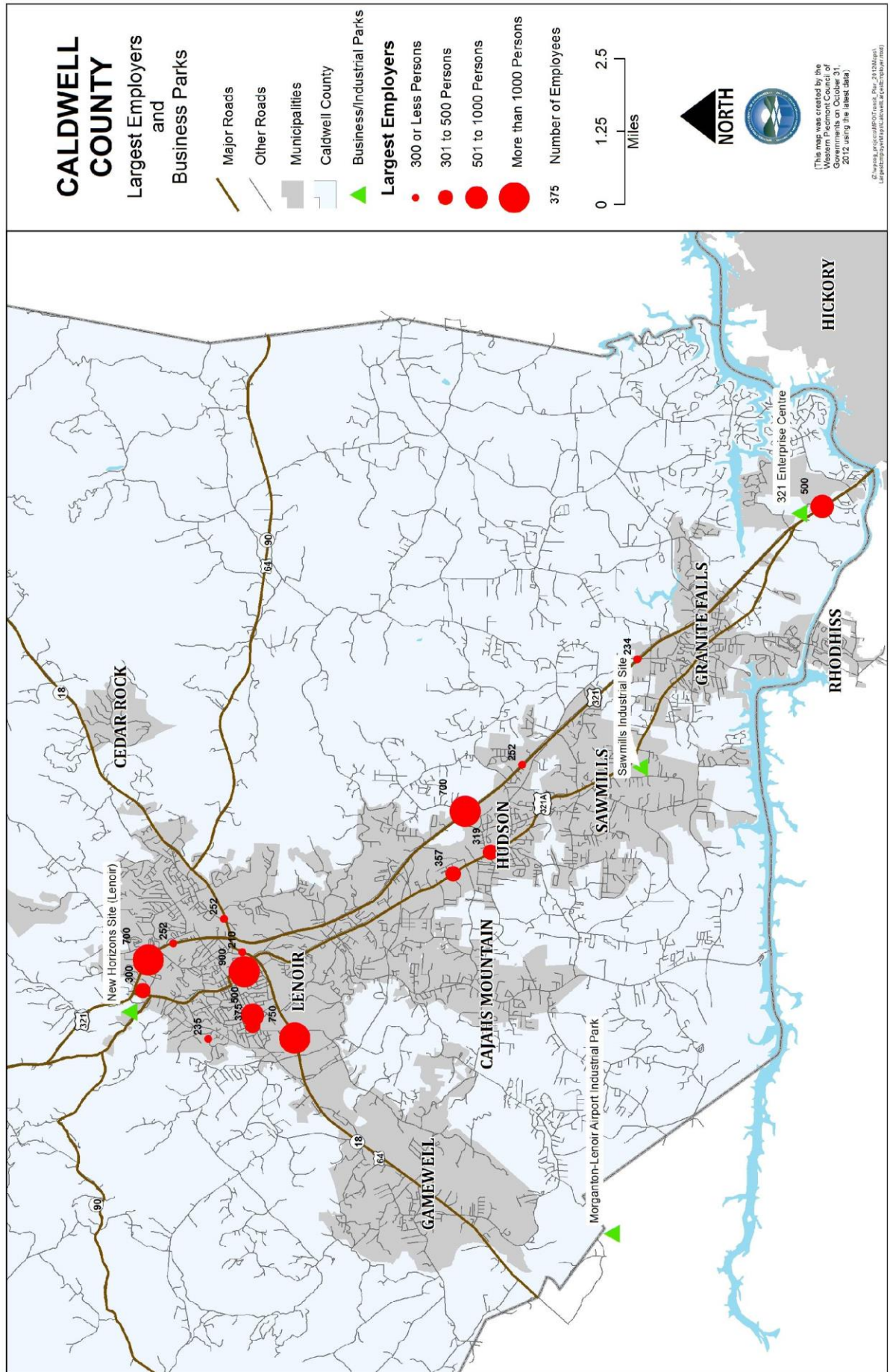


Figure 1C





### Figure 1D

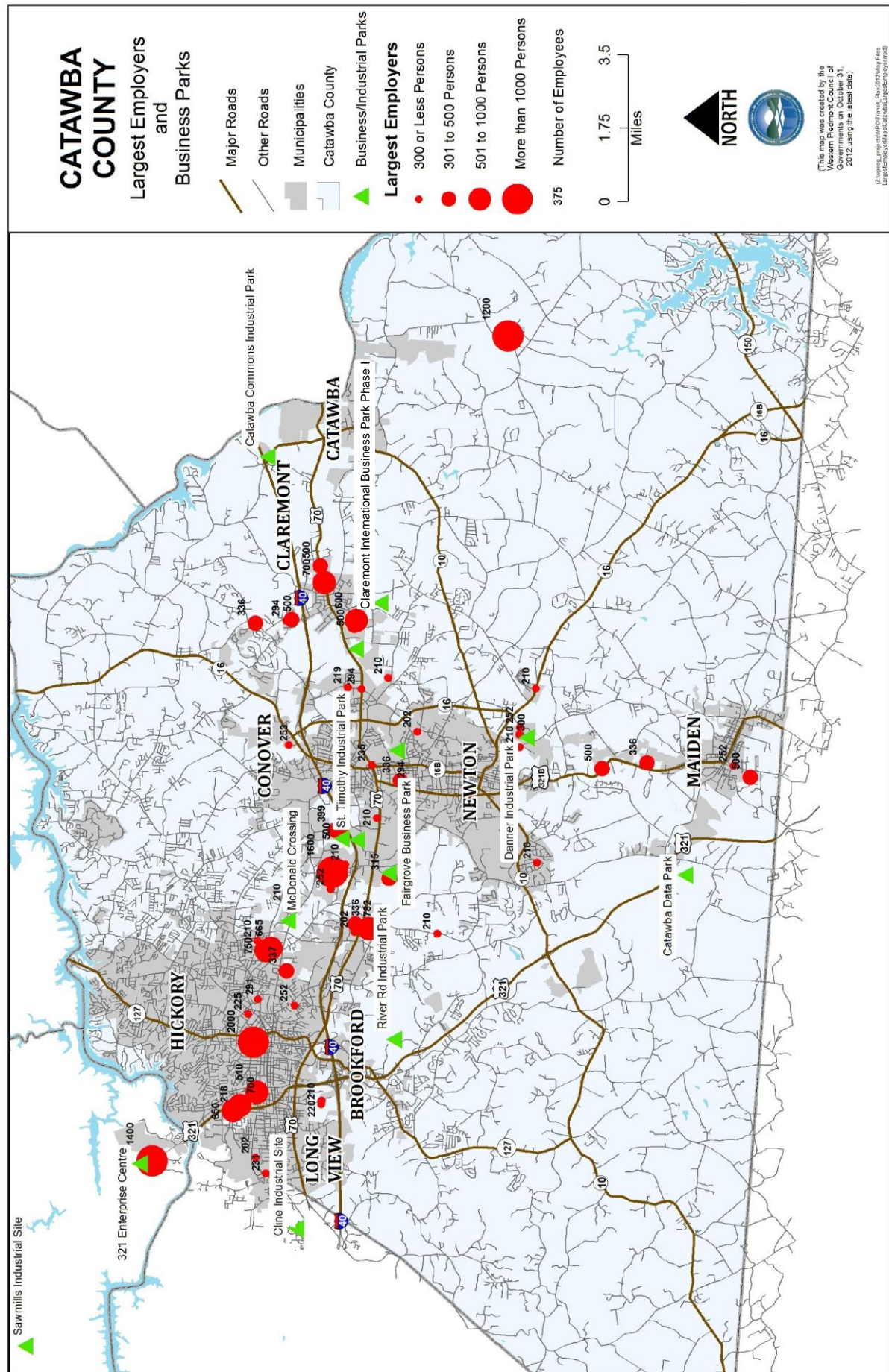
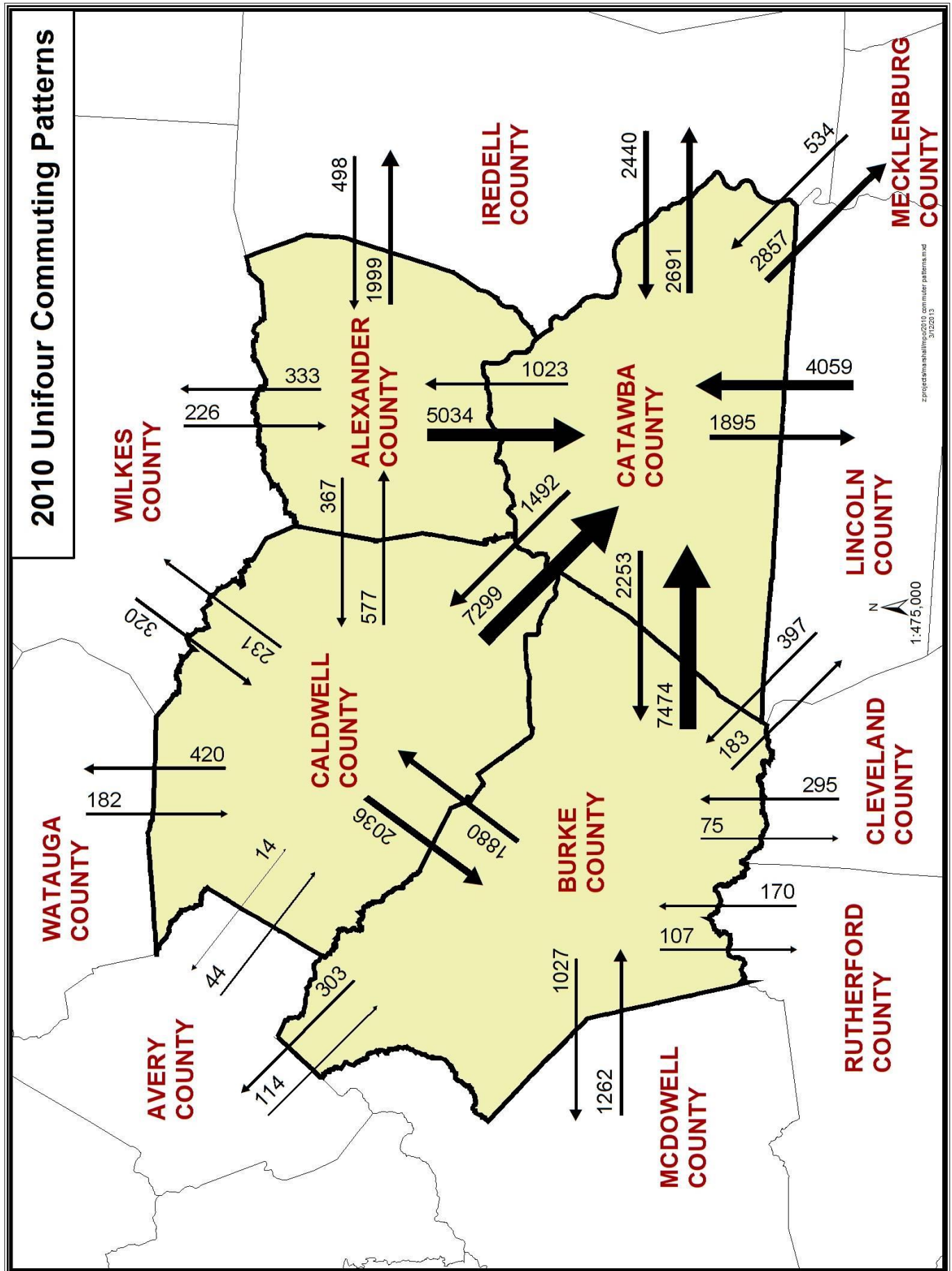


Figure 2







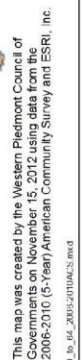






Figure 6

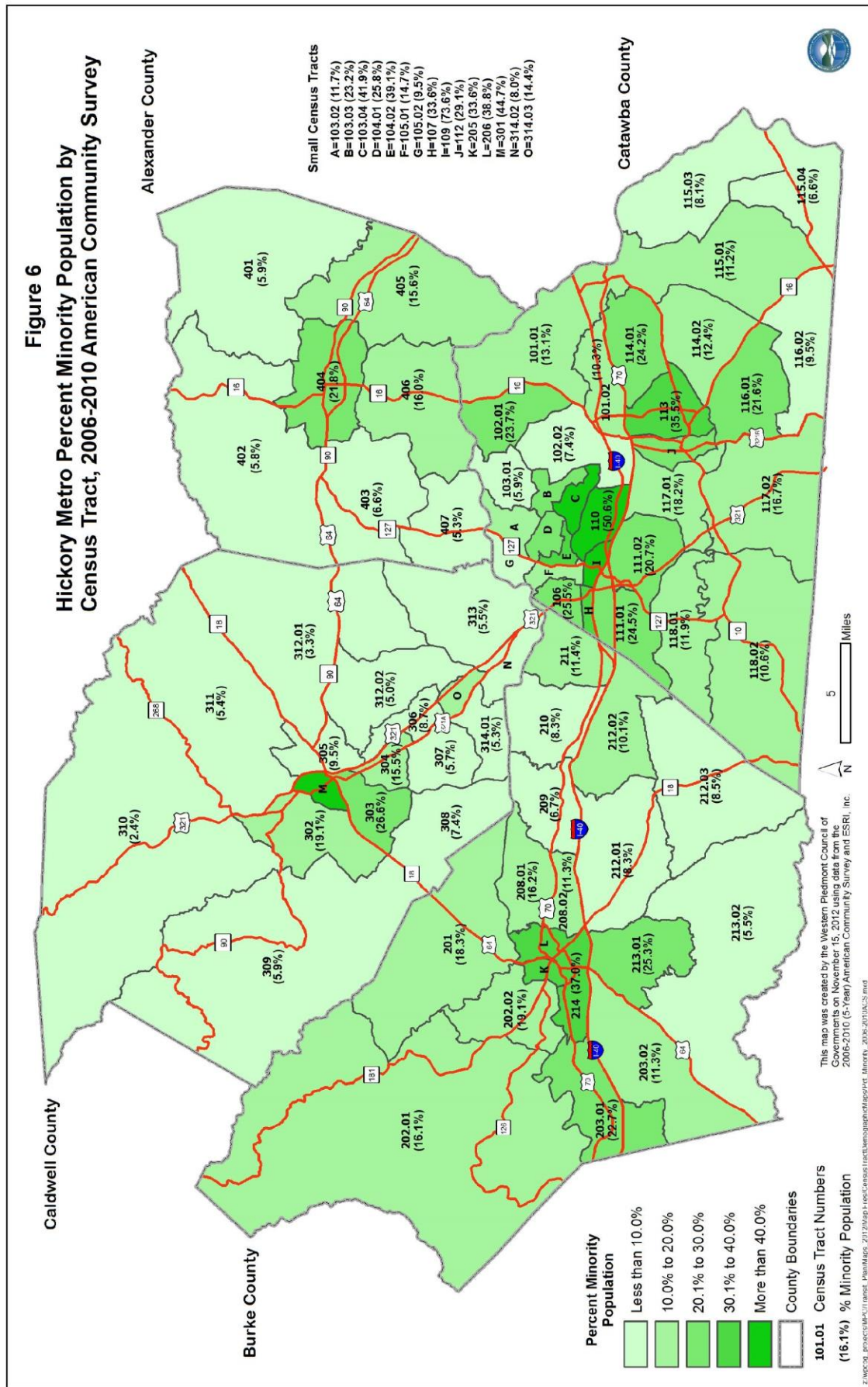
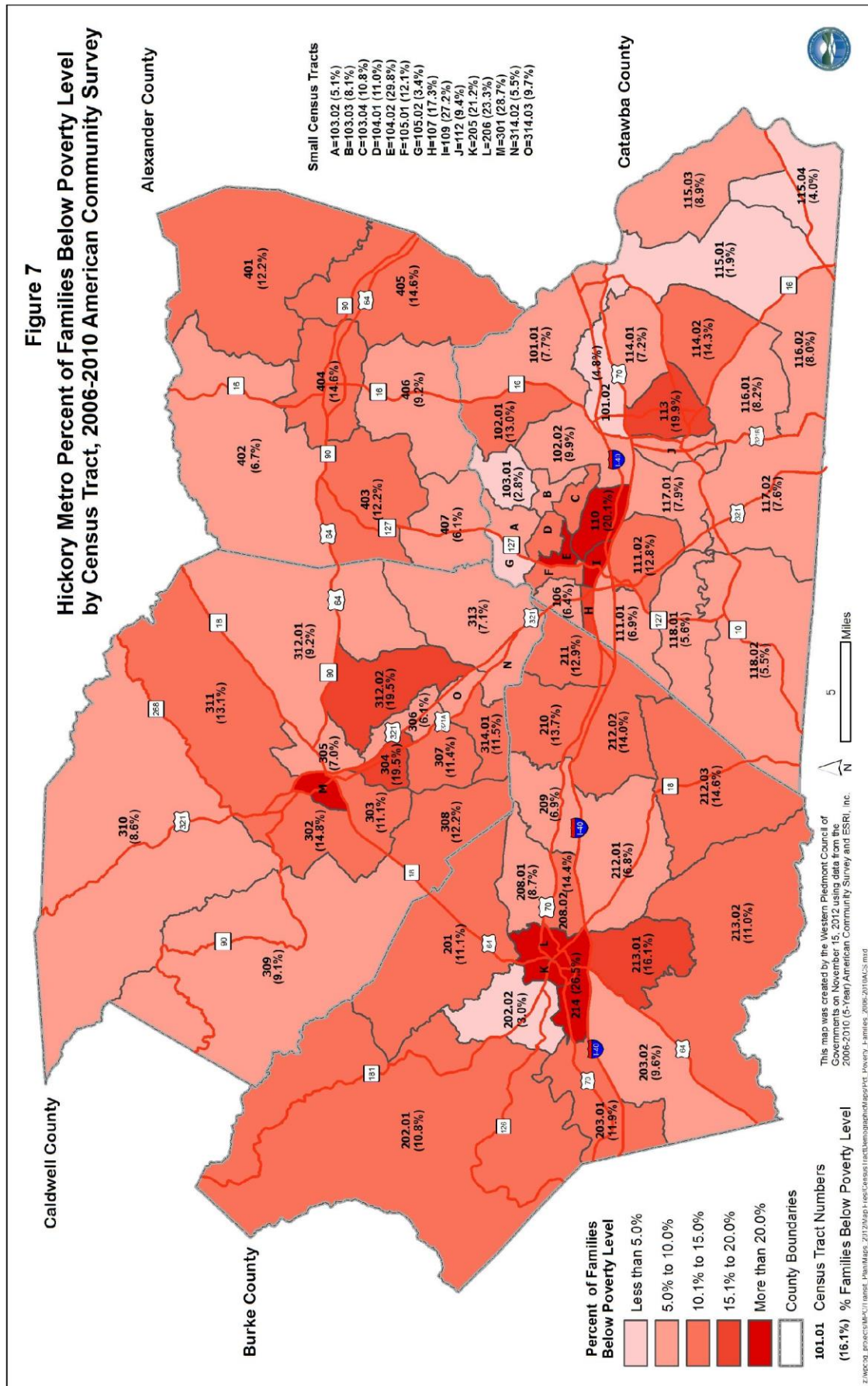




Figure 7



## **SECTION SIX: CURRENT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND RESOURCES**

### **History of Public Transit in the Unifour Area**

Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority was formed on July 1, 2008. The Authority is the result of the merger of Piedmont Wagon, and the transit systems of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties.

The Authority is governed by the Board of Directors which consists of the City Managers of Hickory, Newton and Conover, NC and the County Managers of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba Counties. The Executive Director manages the daily operation of the Authority with the assistance of the WPRTA staff.

The Authority operates Demand Response and Fixed Route Bus transportation services in the counties of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, and Catawba, North Carolina. Demand Response service represents about 69% of the transportation services while Fixed Route services account for 31% of the remaining operations.

Demand Response Service is operated in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties. Dial-A-Ride service is available to approved subscribers and general public who call and prearrange a time to be picked-up and transported to and from a pre-determined destination within the service area. Medical trips are provided to specialized care facilities outside of the four county areas on specific days. Flex route service is offered in Alexander and Catawba counties. This service is both Fixed-Route service and Dial-A-Ride service. Passengers may access the bus at a designated bus stop along the route or call for a pick up or drop off within 3/4 of a mile of the bus route by calling the business day before the trip. WPRTA also provides contracted transportation service to agencies within the service area.

Fixed Route Bus Service is operated in the cities of Hickory, Newton, and Conover along a specific route offering repetitive service on a fixed schedule. Passengers may board and exit the buses at bus stops along the established route. Passengers may transfer between buses at various locations along bus routes and at the Greenway Transit Center located at 285 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW in downtown Hickory. The Transit Center also serves as an Information and Ticket sales office.

### **Mission Statement and Goals**

The mission of the Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority (WPRTA) is to enhance the quality of life in the region by delivering safe, convenient and more environmentally efficient transportation solutions.

Transportation services provided shall be designed to maintain and encourage the use of public transportation and shall contribute to the economic vitality of the community, the conservation of natural resources and the protection of the environment.

The goals of WPRTA are as follows:

1. Provide cost effective transportation services which optimize the utilization of personnel, vehicles, and other resources.
2. Provide transportation services which meet the mobility needs of the community, within available financial resources.
3. Develop funding options which assure the continued stable operation of transportation services at a public subsidy level acceptable to the community.
4. Develop policies which assure, as much as possible, that transit services are designed and operated to encourage maximum utilization by the community. Service should be provided first in areas where the greatest potential for use exists.
5. Promote the use of public transportation services within the community. This includes both providing adequate and up-to-date information on services available and aggressively marketing the transit system.
6. Expand public transportation to new areas of the community as demand estimates and population densities indicate that service will be sufficiently utilized within established service standards.

#### **Currently Available Public Transportation Services Offered by WPRTA**

- Urban fixed route transit services in the Hickory, Newton & Conover (H/N/C) area. **(Figure 8)**
- Fixed route transit service in Taylorsville.
- ADA complementary paratransit service.
- Limited rural and urban general demand response service in each of the four counties.
- Non-emergency medical transportation for seniors and the general public.
- Human service agency transportation for the following programs:
  - DSS employment transportation programs in Alexander, Burke, and Catawba Counties:
  - DSS Employment transportation in Caldwell County using ROAP funds
  - DSS Medicaid transportation program
  - Burke Literacy
  - Adult Day Care
  - Developmentally Disabled groups
  - Home and Community Care Block Grant Programs
    - Elderly passengers
- General and Medical demand response transportation.
- Private transportation providers operate in Burke County, providing trips brokered by WPRTA.

### Other Human Service Transportation Providers

	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Telephone #</b>
1	Catawba County Department of Social Services	3030 11 <sup>th</sup> Avenue Dr. NE, Hickory, NC	(828) 695-5600
2	Caldwell County Department of Social Services	2345 Morganton Blvd., Lenoir, NC	(828) 426-8200
3	Burke County Department of Social Services	700 East Parker Road, Morganton, NC	(828) 438-3500

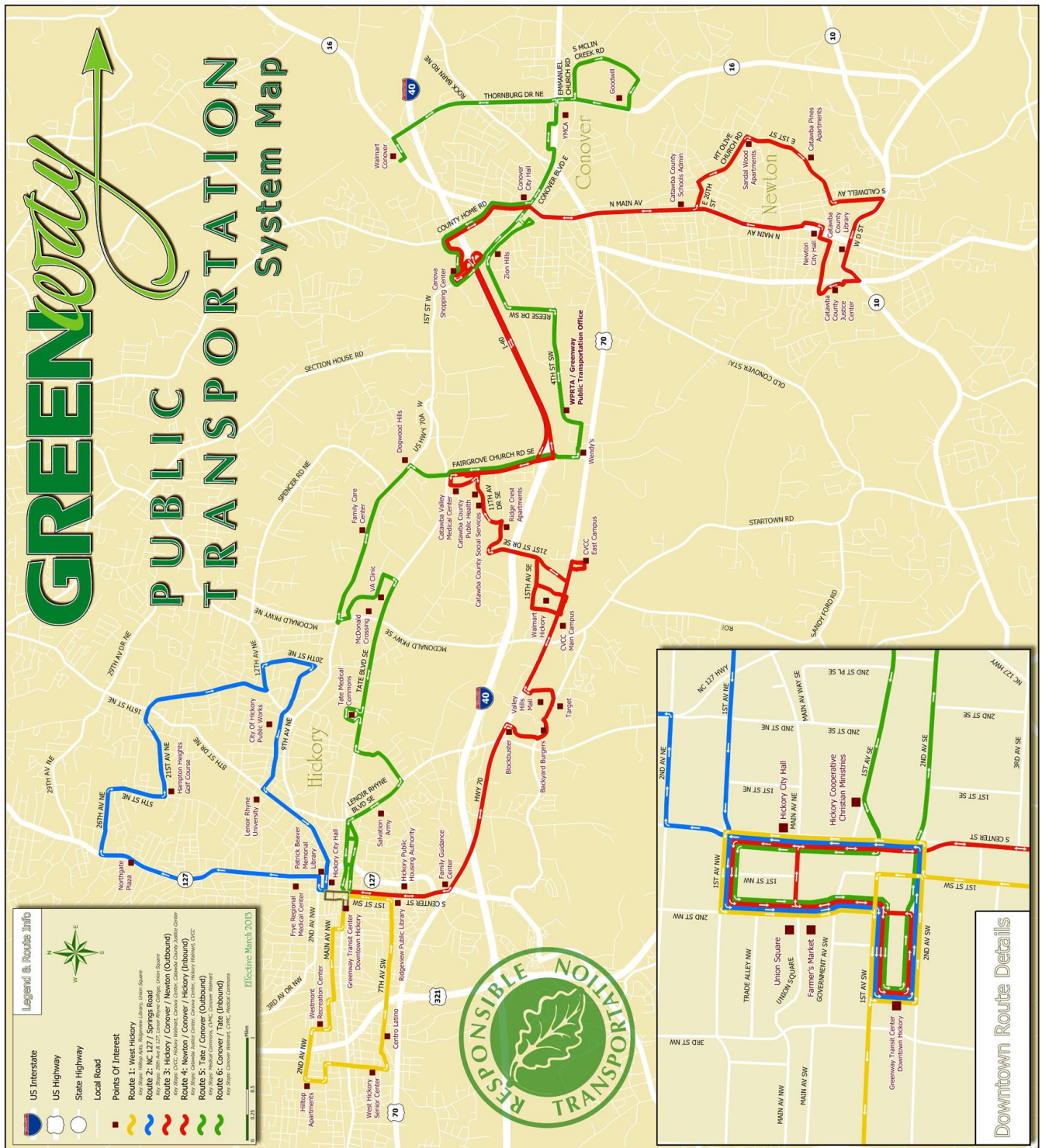
### Private Transportation Providers

The following private transportation providers currently operate in the region:

	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Telephone #</b>
1	Ace Cab	385 E. Fleming Dr, Morganton, NC	(828) 437-6767
2	City Cab	216 Avery Ave, Morganton, NC	(828) 437-2594
3	Diamond Cab	604 1 <sup>st</sup> Ave SW, Hickory, NC	(828) 322-5555
4	Handi-Care Inc.	304 S. Main St, Drexel, NC	(828) 437-8429
6	Yellow Cab	117 1 <sup>st</sup> Ave SW, Hickory, NC	(828) 322-1133
7	Burke Christian Tours	4643 Hwy 16 S, Maiden, NC	(828) 465-3900
8	Catawba Valley Medical	409-B S. Sterling St, Morganton, NC	(828) 437-8808
9	Medical Transportation	400-B E. Concord St, Morganton, NC	(828) 438-5003
10	Caldwell Opportunities	1617 SW College Ave, Lenoir, NC	(828) 757-5680
11	Specialized Transportation	2380 Industrial Park Rd, Lincolnton, NC	(828) 441-2000
12	Abby Cab	PO Box 700 Granite Falls, NC	(828) 313-2229
13	Premier Transportation	910 Tate Blvd SE Suite 108 Hickory, NC	(828) 327-2012



Figure 8



## **SECTION SEVEN: UNMET TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND ISSUES**

Workshop participants identified a number of primary and secondary unmet transportation needs in the Western Piedmont Region. Subsequently, members of the WPRTA Transportation Advisory Board also expanded on the needs identified by the workshop participants as part of their continuing review process.

To address some of the unmet needs two grants were submitted using the 5310 Transportation for Elderly Persons and Person with Disabilities program under SAFETEA-LU. So far, the projects have been approved by the NCDOT Board of Transportation. These projects were applied for through PACE and the Catawba County Department of Social Services.

### Project Description:

PACE @ Home, Inc. submitted a grant application for \$206,350 to NC Department of Transportation, Section 5310, and Targeted Transit Assistance Program for Elderly and Disabled individuals. The \$206,350 grant requires a 10% local match. PACE @ Home, Inc. will provide the match utilizing current PACE @ Home, Inc. operating funds.

The funds will be used to purchase handicap accessible vans will allow PACE @ Home to offer services to additional eligible individuals and provide all participants with shorter travel times. PACE estimates transporting 33,280 annually unduplicated one way trips during the project period.

The specific needs of PACE participants is greater than the general elderly population because of their frailty and lack of financial resources. Services available to this group currently are 'curb to curb'. This is insufficient and inappropriate for PACE eligible individuals who because of their skilled level of care status require 'door to door' transportation at a minimum.

### Catawba County Department of Social Services Description:

Catawba County Department of Social Services submitted a grant application for \$500,000 to NC Department of Transportation, Section 5310, and Targeted Transit Assistance Program for Elderly and Disabled individuals.

The project will allow seniors, who have no other means of transportation, to attend the congregate nutrition program, have access to essential shopping, medical appointments, pharmacy, banking and other essential services. Catawba County Social Services intends to contract with Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority (WPRTA) to provide transportation services utilizing 5310 grant funds. The \$500,000 grant requires a 10% local match. Social Services will provide the match utilizing current local funding allocated for senior transportation.

Approximately 175-250 individuals will receive transportation each year for the period of the grant (July 2013-June 30, 2015). Many of the seniors will utilize transportation for multiple purposes and a large percentage of the target population will utilize transportation multiple times per week. Providing transportation will allow older adults the opportunity and the choice to remain active and involved in the community.

## **Unmet Transportation Needs Identified in the 2013 Workshop**

- Transport to Essential Services for Homeless Seniors, Disabled and Low Income Persons:
  - Nutrition Sites
  - Medical Facilities
  - Pharmacies
  - Grocery Stores
- Consolidated Circulator Routes within Counties
- Medical Transportation for Elderly
- Personalized Transportation Attendants for Frail/Special Needs Passengers (Possible Volunteers)
- Greenway Representation on:
  - Aging Coalition of Catawba County
  - Continuum of Care Meetings
  - Children's Agenda
- Reduced Fares for the Elderly, the Homeless and Disabled Passengers
- Park & Ride Lots in Larger Towns
- Expand Rural Caldwell County Service to Highway 268
- Educate Service Providers to Educate their Clients
- Fixed Route/Deviated Fixed Route Service in Caldwell County for:
  - Community College
  - Municipal Offices
  - DSS
  - Public Health Offices
  - Wal-Mart
  - Granite Falls
  - Along US 321 Corridor
- A Reduced Fare on Van Service for Disabled Persons
- Educating Passengers Regarding Services
- Access to Nutrition Programs
- Combine Van Services in Rural Locations
- Transportation Assistance enroute for Elderly and Disabled Passengers in All 4 Counties
- Expanded Taylorsville Route
- Educate Public regarding General Public Funds
- Special Service to Regional Shopping Destinations
- Longer Service Hours
- Awareness of Transportation Resources for All Age Groups
- More Locations to Purchase Passes
- Transportation to/from Hickory VA Clinic for Alexander, Burke & Caldwell Counties
- Bus Stops in the Rural Minority Communities (Alexander County)
- Public Meetings
- County to County Service
- Provide Better Communication to passengers regarding the new Social Security Office
- Medical Transportation for Ages 15-17 without Adult
- More Bus Stops on Streets that have Heavy Traffic
- Sunday Bus Service

- Vouchers for Caldwell Community College Riders, purchased by CCC&TI for their Students
- Bus Route to Serve Lenoir-Rhyne Blvd/Springs Road/Highway 70 Area
- Fixed Routes to Essential Services in all 4 Counties
- Additional Routes and Services, more Frequent
- Marketing

The WPRTA Transportation Advisory Board and WPRTA Board of Directors identified additional unmet needs in the WPRTA service area at their respective meetings. The following unmet transportation service/unmet needs were identified to the following locations and added to the LCP on July 17, 2014.

- Community College and Universities
- Shopping Centers
- Municipal offices
- Government agencies and services
- Non-profit agencies and services
- Mental health
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Day Health Programs
- Adult Daycare
- Adult Life Program
- Employment
- Education and Training
- Senior Centers
- Veteran Services

### **Unmet Transportation Needs Identified in the 2013 Online Survey**

- Greater frequency of service.
- Expanded hours of service.
- New destinations.
- Service between Caldwell County and Alexander County.
- Adding services from locations such as Collettsville, King's Creek, and Happy Valley to frequently visited destinations such as Department of Social Services, county offices, Caldwell Community College, grocery stores, and Caldwell Memorial Hospital.
- Expansion of Dial-a-Ride service and hours into Catawba County from other counties.
- Expansion of services in the rural parts of Catawba County to places with Hickory, Newton, and Conover.
- Commuter service from Burke County to Caldwell County.
- Service provided to George Hildebrand and Chesterfield.
- A stop located at Catawba Ridge Senior Villas.
- Service to Fred's, Mighty Dollar, and J&S Cafeteria (after 11:00am). In addition, a service to Food Lion, McDonalds, Hobby Lobby in the Viewmont area of Hickory.
- New service to Rose's Department Store and the West Hickory area.



- A transitional housing facility for women in Valdese.
  - Service along Springs Road especially at or near the major mobile home parks.
  - Service along County Home Road.
  - Service along Springs Road to NC Route 16 and further north.
  - A focus on services to mental health facilities.
  - A van service along NC Route 268.
  - Regular service in Claremont.
  - A shuttle bus from Lenoir-Rhyne University to downtown and Viewmont in Hickory.
  - Service along the US 321 corridor connecting Granite Falls, Sawmills, Cahah's Mountain, Hudson, Lenoir, Happy Valley/Patterson, Oak Hill and King's Creek. In addition, add stops at the public libraries in Granite Falls, Hudson, and Lenoir. Also include add service to the Wal-Marts, Caldwell County Hospital, and Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute.
  - Add service to Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Mulberry Recreation Center, and the Department of Social Services.
  - Add stops at the Lenoir-Rhyne University campus, the new Hollar Mill project, Union Square in downtown Hickory, and the Viewmont area in Hickory.
  - Park and ride lots throughout the counties.
  - Service to regional farmer markets.
- 
- Add service to community colleges in the region that currently are not covered.
  - More transit services in the southern part of Catawba County.
  - Improved communication.

### **Specific Comments from 2013 Survey**

- Our county desperately needs an affordable, dependable, expanded public transportation system with regular routes like the AppleCART in Boone. People with no licenses need to be able to have options to get to the places to which they need to go and those who cannot afford cars still need to get to work and to the college for training. That would be something worth paying higher taxes for.
- Please consider reduced rates for students (including adult education students). Please consider regular routes to/from Caldwell Community College and Mulberry Recreation Center. Please consider the vehicles utilized being environmentally responsible. Please consider making the routes WIDELY accessible THROUGHOUT Caldwell County. Please consider Park 'n' Ride areas. Please consider reduced rates for regular riders, (i.e. a 3-day pass or 4-day pass). Please consider connecting Caldwell County routes with Hickory routes.
- A scheduled plan for transport i.e. bi-weekly of a daily trip would be greatly appreciated. Also several folks need transport to a senior mornings out program held in Claremont need transportation in order to attend. We reside at Cline Village in Conover which is still the city limits and no scheduled trips unless we plan on a 7-8 days ahead call to make arrangements for transport. It would be nice if i.e. Mon & Thurs 10:00 pick-up and return 12:00 for at least to the local Wal-Mart. The senior mornings out program is an enjoyable event but only a very few can attend because there is no transport to Claremont. This could be arranged for

daily or bi-weekly trips. Cline Village residents need transportation to at least these two areas. Thank you for your consideration to this request.

- It was a great help when the extension bus ran to Hickory and then was suddenly cut off. I want to help women get their lives re-established into the community but need help of public transportation in order to accomplish this. We all need to work together to provide hope to the hopeless. Thank you for any and all you will do in this matter.
- Transportation is one of the most important needs we have in our community. Greenway has provided a much needed service and the fact that funding cuts could impact this service is disturbing. For individuals with disabilities as well as the elderly population, public transportation provides them with the means to get out in the community without being dependent on others. Many individuals with disabilities have no primary support system and would be isolated without transportation. Many communities who currently have no public transportation use other resources such as emergency personnel, ambulances, local emergency departments, etc. to meet their needs. The cost to the community to serve these individuals far exceed the cost of public transportation. We are very fortunate to have Greenway in our community but could still benefit from additional services (more fixed routes) to meet more of the needs in our small rural towns.

## **SECTION EIGHT: RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES, POTENTIAL PROJECTS, AND IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES**

### **Recommended Strategies and Potential Projects**

Recommended strategies and potential projects were derived from two major sources: the 2008 WPRTA Implementation Plan and the 2009 and 2013 Coordinated Planning Workshops. This section documents these strategies and projects.

While the WPRTA Implementation Plan was not primarily a service planning study, some logical service expansion ideas were discussed during development of the Plan. These concepts are based on the configuration of the urbanized area, coupled with the current demand for human service agency-based trips. The funding flexibility currently permitted for Federal Section 5307 transit providers in small urban areas would allow the introduction of deviated fixed-route services in the two urbanized corridors that do not currently have regular route service. Human service agency-based trips can be provided along these routes and the revenues derived from the agencies can be used as local match for the federal funds.

These corridors include the Lenoir to Hickory Corridor along US 321-A and the Morganton to Hickory Corridor along US 70. These corridor routes would have a fixed schedule with specific pick-up points, with some additional time added to the schedule for deviations. In order to make this service cost effective, it is proposed that these routes be based on the current human service agency demand for service in these corridors, with the current human service riders scheduled on these routes.

Other new services that could be developed in the region were cited in the 2009 Local Coordinated Transportation Plan and were reinforced in 2013 Local Coordinated Transportation Plan workshop and surveys. Possible future service includes the following:

- Corridor service from Taylorsville to Hickory (NC 16 and NC 127)
- Corridor service from Taylorsville to Statesville (US 64 and NC 90)
- Circulator service in Morganton
- Circulator service in Lenoir
- Additional specific employment transportation service with extended hours/days of service
- Additional rural general public demand response/other modes of service delivery
- Additional human service contractual trips
- Additional urban general public demand response/other modes of service delivery
- Additional group type trips to support senior and disabled transportation to destinations such as congregate meals, group shopping, dialysis and more

### **Implementation Priorities**

In addition to identifying the region's transportation needs and what activities to coordinate, the Local Coordinated Plan Steering Committee also considered its priorities and how to implement them.

As indicated by the facilitators at the planning workshop, one goal of the planning process was to examine public transportation services that are provided within the four counties of Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba. The needs and activities identified by the Steering Committee in terms of their priorities demand certain actions that are essential in the implementation of the Local Coordinated Public Transportation Plan. Actions that require little funding or have already begun should be part of the first phase of implementation. Others may require more time to implement because they require federal and state participation.

Below is a list of action items.

### **WPRTA Education and Outreach**

In an effort to meet some of the identified needs, it is necessary to provide information and coordinate with stakeholders: the Departments of Social Services and other human service agencies, such as, Exodus House, Centro Latino, and faith based organizations and, indeed, the NC Department of Transportation-Public Transportation Division, on how best to address these needs. Local businesses are also important. The implementation of the fixed route service in Taylorsville is a successful outcome of WPRTA education and outreach efforts with the elected officials of the town.

### **Promote Community Outreach and Marketing**

WPRTA should utilize outreach techniques in order to better engage the public for the continued development and implementation of the coordinated planning process. Some techniques include a once-a-year open house for the general public and inviting representatives from the public to Transportation Advisory Board meetings. The latter may also involve training participants about the technical and policy issues surrounding transportation and transit planning.

### **Identify opportunities to increase funding for human service transportation to meet some of the specific needs that are identified in the plan**

The Transportation Advisory Board can develop a common message regarding the need to enhance human service transportation in the region and to identify specific methods to communicate these needs to decision makers. For example, it may prove helpful to develop fact sheets and other educational materials to inform local Boards of Commissioners and City and Town Councils of regional human service coordination goals, including the need for additional funding. It could also be beneficial to coordinate visits to elected officials to present the materials in person. A long-term strategy could also consist of identifying and seeking future opportunities, which have the potential for a dedicated funding to support human service transportation services and programs.

Some grant programs, such as (1) Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Sections 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (Section 5316) and the New Freedom Program (Section 5317), may also be available to assist in implementing programs to support the region's coordination goals. The WPRTA should seek out such opportunities and prepare grant applications.

WPRTA should research and document potential funding opportunities for human services transportation and transportation related activities. They will also work with local, state, and federal agencies to discover or create matching opportunities for federal transportation grants, and assist determining the most effective use of these funds. Given the changing funding landscape at the state and national level, and the simultaneously increasing costs and need for public transportation, this activity should be ongoing in nature.

### **Implement travel training programs**

Promote the development of programs that raise awareness among individuals of the transportation options that are available to them, and instruct them as to how to access and navigate the transportation system. Such a program can include published materials, classroom style sessions, and volunteer travel escort partners.

### **Identify opportunities for pooling or sharing human service transportation agency funding across the service area**

Transportation funds are received by a multitude of human service agencies located within the service area. Developing better communication and coordination of this funding would maximize the availability of funding to the community. Referral of clients to other appropriate agencies for transportation funding is important for optimization of all available transportation funds.

### **Facilitate schedule coordination at major connections**

Improved schedule coordination could make connections easier to plan and potentially reduce wait times for riders. WPRTA should continue to work with operators to refine timetables and coordinate route schedules.

### **Maintain GIS database of demographic data**

WPCOG will continue to maintain data on the population with the regional planning area. In addition to obtaining such data from traditional sources WPCOG will seek opportunities to expand its demographic databases through pursuing and building data sharing partnerships.

### **Maintain GIS database of regional employment and activity centers**

WPCOG will continue to utilize existing datasets work with partner agencies (primarily municipal planning departments) to develop geographic databases of current and future land uses in order to better understand regional employment and activity centers.

### **Inventory conditions and install amenities at and around transit stops that encourage pedestrian and bicycle access**

An inventory of current conditions and a geographic assessment of deficiencies are required to ascertain priorities toward improving pedestrian and bicycle access. Other similar inventory efforts should be encouraged and undertaken. These and comparable efforts should be utilized to identify priority locations for the installation of pedestrian and bicycle accessibility amenities. Improvements should be installed or facilities retrofitted in collaboration with municipal agencies.

### **Conduct an evaluation of programs activities on an annual basis; report findings to the Transportation Advisory Board**

Collect data and monitoring the coordination activities. The resulting information should be compared to the expectations developed as a short-term strategy. It is also important to document a more qualitative assessment of coordination activities to assess barriers that may have prevented successful program implementation, lessons learned or strategies that have been proven especially effective. The results of this evaluation should be shared with relevant stakeholder groups and future work should be modified to meet revised expectations.

### **Expand or adjust service in underserved or inappropriately served areas or time periods**

Efforts should be made to identify gaps or deficiencies in the fixed route system and strategies developed to supplement or adjust to a service level more appropriate to the needs of the transportation disadvantaged population. Data and surveys can inform decisions as to where service should be added or extended to better serve, for example, group housing or workplaces for the disabled, medical facilities for the elderly, or employment centers with opportunities for the training or hiring of low-income persons.

### **Adjust fleet sizes and/or operations where existing service is inappropriate**

Work to identify and secure the funding necessary to allow transit operators or demand service providers to purchase new vans or paratransit vehicles or supplement operations in order to more appropriately meet the needs of their customers. Such resources, however, should only be directed toward expansions of service that decrease identified regional gaps in service and won't contribute to duplicative service between agencies.

### **Implement mobility management technologies**

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technologies that assist in regional trip planning and coordinated service delivery include such online system mapping and trip planning, automatic vehicle location, electronic fare payment and collection systems, communications equipment, and computer aided dispatch. The TAB can assist service providers in determining the need for such technologies and the best means to finance technology projects. The council can also assist in facilitating the inter-agency coordination required for their success and ensure their appropriate implementation in the context of region-wide mobility management.