

OTSEGO COUNTY COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN



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**ADOPTED BY THE OTSEGO COUNTY BOARD OF
REPRESENTATIVES ON SEPTEMBER 5, 2018
RESOLUTION #248-20180905**

Prepared by the Otsego County Planning Department
August 2018



Otsego County Coordinated Transportation Plan

Executive Summary

The Locally Developed Coordinated Plan is a requirement of SAFETEA-LU, a law guaranteeing funding to public transit agencies. The coordinated plan assesses existing transportation services, while establishing a road map for meeting identified needs.

The County operates the countywide public transportation system, facilitates the Transportation Coordinating Committee, and conducts outreach. With assistance from the Transportation Coordinating Committee, an inventory of available transportation services is listed in this plan with an assessment of notable gaps.

Otsego County's rural nature, low-income population, aging population, and prevalence of seasonal and off-hours employment each present unique transportation challenges and a variety of needs. To address those needs, the County has identified five (5) action items, summarized below:

1. Apply for funding programs to minimize local costs and expand or improve current transportation programs.
2. Enlist the concept of "Shared Mobility."
3. Develop and expand the local CDL driver workforce.
4. Address the issue of First Mile/Last Mile and other transportation gaps in Otsego County.
5. Pursue partnerships and/or improved coordination with neighboring counties and public transportation services.

These actions were prioritized based on a five-year timeline with a list of specific strategies to achieve them.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Need for a Coordinated Plan

The Locally Developed Coordinated Plan is a requirement of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). SAFETEA-LU was signed into law on August 10, 2005, guaranteeing funding for highways, highway safety, and public transportation.¹ As of October 1, 2006 a comprehensive plan and coordinated process that “includes transportation planning agencies, public and private transportation providers, non-profit transportation providers, human services providers, other government agencies that administer programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Workforce Investment Act, and Agency on Aging programs, and participation by the public” is required by both Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom (NF) programs.²

Locally, the coordinated plan provides an understanding of transportation in Otsego County as it currently exists, while establishing a road map for implementing improvements, new coordination opportunities, and meeting identified needs. In addition to the above mentioned programs, the Section 5310, Special Needs of Elderly & Individuals with Disabilities is a funding source utilized by agencies in Otsego County where the establishment of this plan is closely tied to the awarding of these funds. Public transportation agencies in Otsego County also benefit from funds provided by Section 5311, Public Transportation in Nonurbanized Areas and future transportation projects under this program can be informed by the goals laid out in this plan.

1.2 Required Elements of the Plan

The following five (5) components are required as part of the coordinated plan:

- An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and persons with limited incomes
- An inventory of available services that identifies areas of redundant services and gaps in services
- Strategies to address the identified gaps in services
- Identification of coordination actions to eliminate or reduce duplication of services and strategies for more efficient utilization of resources
- Prioritization of implementation strategies

1.3 The Planning Process

Otsego Express, Otsego County’s rural public transportation system, is housed in the County Planning Department. The Planning Department is responsible for contract management of the County’s public transportation contracts and partnerships, as well as securing the operating and capital funding to support the system. Currently, operation of Otsego Express is provided through contract by Birnie Bus Service, Inc. of Rome, New York. This contract will expire at the end of 2018, at which time a new contract will commence with whichever vendor is awarded the contract after a Request for Proposals.

Otsego Express and other transportation contracts are funded minimally by local taxpayer dollars and are primarily funded by the following sources:

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration “A Summary of Highway Provisions in SAFETEA-LU”

² N.Y.S. Department of Transportation website

- Section 5311 Operating & Capital Funding (Federal)
- State Transportation Operating Assistance or STOA (State)
- Accelerated Transit Capital (State)
- Local Partners' Shares of Contract Expenses (Local)

In addition to Otsego Express, the County Planning Department also hosts a Transportation Coordinating Committee, which has generally met on a quarterly basis and is expected to continue meeting as-needed or through the establishment of an online community via the website *Basecamp*. The list of invited organizations is ever growing, but the meetings are generally attended by representatives from human service agencies, other public and private transportation providers, NYSDOT, County service agencies, the Chamber of Commerce, and the local healthcare industry.

Meetings of the Otsego County Transportation Coordinating Committee	
September 28, 2015	May 10, 2017
November 20, 2015	August 24, 2017
April 7, 2016	
September 20, 2016	
February 8, 2017	

A handful of conferences were attended by the County Planning Department as well. These include the 2016 New York Public Transit Association conference in Albany, the 2016 Mobility Solutions Summit in Ithaca, the 2016 Getting There Conference in Binghamton, and the 2017 Transportation Camp in Ithaca.

In 2017, the County contracted with Mobility Management of South Central New York (MMSCNY) for support and development of rural transportation and mobility services in Otsego County. MMSCNY is a program of the Rural Health Network of South Central New York that assists individuals in need of assistance with transportation, both through coordination of information and financial assistance. The goals of the County's contract with MMSCNY are the following:

1. The creation of an inventory of transportation providers in Otsego County
2. Increased outreach and education about transportation in the County and the programs of MMSCNY
3. Identification and implementation of a project that will increase transportation services available or provided in Otsego County.

The County Planning Department is also an active participant of MMSCNY's bimonthly Advisory Committee meetings and MMSCNY regularly attends the County's transportation coordinating committee meetings and provides technical support to the County Planning Department in its endeavors to improve transportation in the County.

Delta Engineers were hired as a part of this contract to conduct a transportation services analysis of Otsego County. Their task was to survey the transportation services available in Otsego County and take a particular look at route coordination within public transit services. The results of their analysis are detailed further in Chapter 3.

1.3.1 Outreach

Throughout the process of drafting the Coordinated Plan, the County Planning Department conducted a series of outreach and information gathering meetings. The County used this as both an opportunity to share information about transportation services that are currently available, but also get a sense of what different groups perceive as issues in transportation.

Outreach Meetings	
March 8, 2017	Chamber of Commerce Transportation Workgroup
March 22, 2017	Leatherstocking DSRIP
April 28, 2017	Office for the Aging
June 30, 2017	The Otesaga (Regarding Transportation to Employment)
July 25, 2017	Opportunities for Otsego
October 19, 2017	Otsego County Chamber of Commerce
November 15, 2017	Otsego County Veteran's Affairs
November 21, 2017	Otsego County Department of Social Services
March 21, 2018	Leadership Otsego (Program of the Chamber of Commerce)

In addition to these meetings, a survey was conducted to address transportation to employment. The details of this survey can be found in Chapter 2.

The culmination of these efforts is this coordinated plan and the anticipated action items it details.

2.0 County Overview

Otsego County is one of the six counties in the Mohawk Valley Region created under the State's 2010 regional economic plan. The County is centrally located between Binghamton, Albany, and Syracuse and neighbored by Schoharie, Delaware, Chenango, Madison, Oneida, and Herkimer Counties. Otsego County is predominantly rural in nature with the exception of the City of Oneonta and the County's small villages.



Municipalities in Otsego County

The County is most notable for its tourist industry, agriculture, and its two universities: SUNY Oneonta and Hartwick College, both located in Oneonta. The Cooperstown area is the tourism hub of the County, home to the Baseball Hall of Fame, Farmer's Museum, Fenimore Art Museum, Otsego Lake, and several tourist accommodations. In nearby communities, there is the Fly Creek Cider Mill, several breweries and wineries, the Cooperstown Dreams Park, and many other attractions.

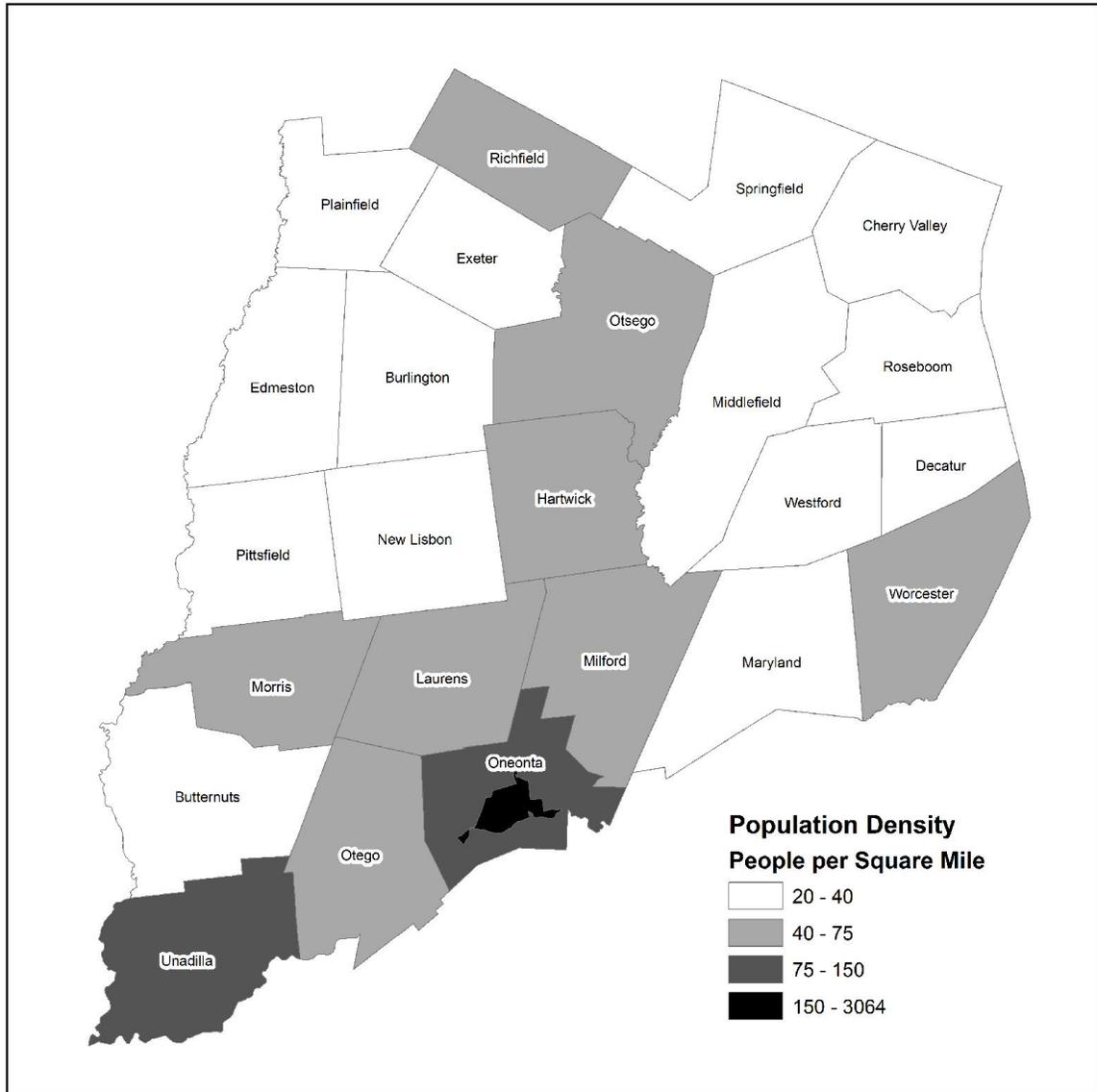
2.1 Population

Otsego County's population was 62,259 as of the 2010 Census and is estimated to have decreased to 60,097 in 2016.³ The table below shows the population trends for Otsego County and its municipalities since the 2000 Census.

Municipality	2000 Population	2010 Population
Otsego County	61,676	62,259
Burlington	1,085	1,140
Butternuts	1,792	1,786
Cherry Valley (T)	1,266	1,223
Cherry Valley (V)	592	520
Cooperstown	2,032	1,852
Decatur	410	353
Edmeston	1,824	1,826
Exeter	954	987
Gilbertsville	375	399
Hartwick	2,203	2,110
Laurens (T)	2,402	2,424
Laurens (V)	277	263
Maryland	1,920	1,897
Middlefield	2,249	2,114
Milford (T)	2,938	3,044
Milford (V)	511	415
Morris (T)	1,867	1,878
Morris (V)	591	583
New Lisbon	1,116	1,114
Oneonta (T)	4,994	5,229
Oneonta (C)	13,292	13,901
Otego (T)	3,183	3,115
Otego (V)	1,052	1,010
Otsego	3,904	3,900
Pittsfield	1,295	1,366
Plainfield	986	915
Richfield	2,423	2,388
Richfield Springs	1,255	1,264
Roseboom	684	711
Springfield	1,350	1,358
Unadilla (T)	4,548	4,392
Unadilla (V)	1,127	1,128
Westford	784	868
Worcester	2,207	2,220

³ United States Census Bureau Annual Estimates of the Resident Population 2016 Population Estimates

Otsego County's population density is approximately 59 people per square mile based on the 2016 population estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau. The map below shows the County's population density by municipality.



Otsego County Population Density (Village populations included in Towns)

2.2 Target Populations in Otsego County

2.2.1 Aging Population

Otsego County's aging population continues to grow. It is estimated that 18% of the County's population was 65 years of age and older in 2015. This is higher than the national percentage of 14.1% and is an increase from the 2006 Otsego County estimation of 15.3%.⁴ Many of Otsego County's veterans are part of the aging population. Of the estimated 4,836 veterans in Otsego County, nearly half are 65 years of age or older. Additionally, over 60% of Otsego County's population of individuals with disabilities is aged 65 or older.⁵

There are several residential facilities and subsidized apartments for older adults in Otsego County, most of which are located in the Oneonta and Cooperstown vicinities. Many of these facilities have their own vehicles to provide their residents with rides to various outings. However, many older adults choose to continue living at home.

The County Office for the Aging conducted a Needs Assessment Survey in 2015. The responses were collected as a random sample of individuals 45 years of age or older. When asked about the importance of transportation to medical appointments, out-of-county medical appointments, the grocery store, other errands, and driving their own car, more than half of the respondents in each category said that these matters were important, but not a concern for them. The results may suggest that these individuals have mostly been successful at meeting their transportation needs. However, the County Planning Department has found in its experience with surveys that it is often challenging to get responses from the individuals who have the most need.

As the County's population ages, special consideration must be made in order to address access to affordable transportation for medical appointments, shopping, prescriptions, and more. This is especially an issue as driving abilities decline while individuals still reside at a distance from goods and services. Many may rely on friends and family members, but there are additional options for transportation in the County.

The County Office for the Aging has a driver available on a first come, first serve basis. This driver provides rides to 50-60 individuals per year.

For veterans, the County provides transportation to the Albany VA Hospital Tuesday through Friday, transporting approximately 3-5 veterans per day. Most of the veterans using this service are 65 years of age or older. Recently, policies have changed to allow veterans to access medical coverage with pre-approval from providers outside the VA. The Otsego County Veterans Affairs office predicts that transportation needs for veterans will change when more begin to opt for local care instead of traveling to Albany. In particular, there may be an increased need for inter-county transportation to medical centers that are outside the veteran's county.

Private transportation companies also exist in the County, though they can be cost prohibitive for some, especially for those who need rides to medical appointments and do not qualify for Medicaid.

Fewer rely on public transportation, though both systems in the County offer discounted rates for seniors. While public transportation is more robust in the City of Oneonta, it is more challenging for the County system to reach everyone in a cost-effective way. Another barrier to public transportation use for older adults is fear of the unknown. Many have never used public transportation before and may not consider it to be an option for them. However, there are

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau 2015 estimates

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau 2015 estimates

opportunities for older adults. Mobility Management of South Central New York provides travel training to older adults and has worked with a group in Otsego County to navigate Oneonta Public Transit, the City's public transportation system.

2.2.2 People with Disabilities

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that as of 2015 individuals with disabilities make up 12.7% of Otsego County's total population. This compares to the United States' estimated proportion of 12.4%. Of the approximately 7,739 individuals with disabilities in Otsego County, more than 60% are aged 65 or older.

Many transportation providers in Otsego County have wheelchair accessible vehicles, including private taxi companies with medi-vans, ambulette services, and bus routes with wheelchair lifts. People with disabilities in Otsego County span a broad range physical and mental ability. Many individuals are able to manage their mobility independently by utilizing these existing services to coordinate their transportation needs. Others find rides from friends or family, or utilize programs that are locally available to assist them in coordinating their mobility.

The cost of transportation can prove to be a barrier for some. Medicaid pays for transportation to medical appointments for individuals with disabilities who qualify, but it does not cover other types of trips. Private transportation is especially expensive in a rural area like Otsego County where the trips are longer.

In the City of Oneonta, Oneonta Public Transit will provide paratransit curb-to-curb service in the City for a \$2.00 fare with an additional \$1.00 charge for service in the Town of Oneonta within a ¼ mile radius of the City's fixed route service. The County public transportation system, Otsego Express, will deviate up to ¾ miles from the fixed route for an additional \$2.00 on top of the \$1.00 fare. Wheelchair service is always available with both systems.

The County is home to a few organizations that assist individuals with disabilities, ranging from day services to residential facilities. In most cases, these organizations can address transportation for their clients as needed and often maintain their own fleet of vehicles.

The ARC of Otsego County (ARC Otsego) offers an extensive transportation system for its clients via a fixed-route service. This service runs five days a week to transport individuals from their homes to ARC Otsego's various programs. If an individual in need of transportation does not live on a fixed route, ARC Otsego will work with them and their family to arrange a pick-up location. Three of these fixed routes are open to the public as part of Otsego Express and this partnership continues to be successful. In addition to their fixed route service, ARC Otsego maintains a fleet of vans and cars to transport individuals during program hours.

Pathfinder Village, located in Edmeston, is a residential and day services community for people who have Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities. Pathfinder Village maintains a fleet of vehicles to transport their clients and residents.

Springbrook, a residential and day services organization, is based in Oneonta but has a few locations around the Otsego County area. Their programs for people with disabilities range from early childhood to adulthood.

2.2.3 Low Income Individuals

In Otsego County, 25.2% of families earn less than \$35,000, which is around 150% of the federal poverty level for a family of four and is a measure of low income. An estimated 32.2% of individuals with disabilities in Otsego County lived at less than 125% of the poverty level in 2015.

It is estimated that 16.5% of individuals in Otsego County were considered below the poverty level in 2015. This is higher than the national estimate of 15.5%.⁶

Otsego County's population of those 16 years of age and older was estimated to be comprised of 52,428 individuals in 2015. The unemployment rate for that population was 7.1%.⁷

Living in Otsego County on a low income can be a challenge due to its rural nature. People often live isolated or at a distance from employment centers, goods, and services. Vehicle ownership may be a challenge for some and public transportation is not able to reach those outside of a town center or main intersection. Private transportation, like a taxi, can be used for some purposes, but is not likely to be an affordable long-term solution.

For those that can get to a bus stop, both Otsego Express and Oneonta Public Transit offer low cost transport to Otsego County buildings where individuals can access assistance and other services, as well as transportation to some of the larger retail centers for both shopping and employment.

2.2.4 Employment

Employers in the County

Employment in Otsego County is primarily focused in the following sectors:

Top 5 Employment Sectors	Number of Employees
Health care and social assistance	6,104
Retail trade	3,188
Accommodation and food services	2,635
Finance and insurance	1,137
Educational services	1,117

Source: U.S. Census 2015 Business Patterns

The above table is a reflection of the County's strong healthcare, tourism, and higher education industries. The Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown and the A.O. Fox Memorial Hospital in Oneonta, along with their periphery clinics, make up the healthcare industry in the County. Tourist accommodations and attractions in Cooperstown and the large retail area along Southside Oneonta are some of the stronger contributing factors to the number of employees in retail trade and accommodation and food services. New York Central Mutual is one of the County's larger employers, likely contributing to the high number of employees in finance and insurance. Lastly, Otsego County is home to two institutions of higher learning: SUNY Oneonta and Hartwick College.

Many Otsego County residents find employment outside the County. Some of these larger employers are Chobani and Golden Artist Colors, in Chenango County, and ACCO Brands and Amphenol, in Delaware County.

Leadership Otsego, hosted by Otsego County Chamber of Commerce, is a six-month program attended by young and mid-career professionals from various businesses and organizations all across Otsego County. This program "develops the leadership potential of participants and builds a solid foundation of informed citizens by exploring the resources, opportunities, challenges, and issues affecting Otsego County."⁸ The Otsego County Planning Department was fortunate to

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau

⁸ Otsego County Chamber of Commerce Leadership Otsego 2018 Application

have the opportunity to engage this group in order to better understand transportation in the County from the perspective of our local professional leaders.

Employment Opportunities in Transportation

There is a national shortage of CDL drivers⁹ and its effect on Otsego County has been confirmed by several local organizations and companies who are struggling to find qualified candidates to drive their buses and trucks. Stringent medical requirements, failure to pass a drug test, and the prohibitive costs to obtain the license have all been noted as possible reasons for the shortage. If the shortage is not resolved, public transportation, school transportation, and the movement of goods will have an ever-increasing need for qualified drivers in the years to come.

In 2017, transportation network companies like Uber and Lyft received the green-light to begin operating in Upstate New York. There has been some discussion in Otsego County about its impacts on public transportation and taxis. While taxi companies might feel some of the effect, the general consensus between transportation providers and mobility management organizations is that the impact of these companies on smaller cities and rural communities will be minimal.

Getting to Employment

In 2015, the U.S. Census estimated the following breakdown of means of transportation to work for workers 16 years and over:

Drove alone	81.7%
Carpooled	9.5%
Public Transportation	1.8%
Walked	9.0%
Bicycle	0.5%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	0.8%
Worked at home	6.2%

The vast majority of workers drive alone to work, with 65.9% of households owning up to 2 vehicles.

In 2017, the County Planning Department, along with MMSCNY and the Otsego County Chamber of Commerce, met with one of the larger hospitality employers in Cooperstown to discuss issues of transportation for employees. The meeting identified the need to gather more information about how people get to work in Otsego County. With assistance from MMSCNY, the County Planning Department conducted an online “transportation to employment” survey. The results are summarized on the following page.

⁹ <http://www.npr.org/2015/12/14/459348786/trucking-shortage-drivers-aren-t-always-in-it-for-the-long-haul>

Otsego County Transportation to Employment Survey Summary (2017)

Number of respondents: 109

- 100% of respondents were employed

- 10% of respondents noted that their access to transportation has impacted their ability to obtain employment

- Respondents use the following modes of transportation to get to work (multiple options could be chosen):
 - Own vehicle, by themselves – 94.5%
 - Carpool – 5.5%
 - Rely on rides from family or friend – 5.5%
 - Public Transportation – 3.67%
 - Taxi – 1.83%
 - Other (walk) – 3.67%

- Nearly half of all respondents do not currently use public transportation to get to work, but would consider it. When asked why they do not currently use it, the top responses were: they feel that using the bus would cause them to give up the freedom a personal vehicle provides, they are too far away from a bus stop, the bus schedule doesn't fit with their work schedule, and that their own car is required as part of their employment.

- Nearly half of all respondents do not currently carpool, but would consider it. Their main reasons for not carpooling are: they have commitments before and after work which prevent them from carpooling, they don't know anyone they work with who also lives close to them, and that they prefer the alone time.

- When asked where they live versus where they work, the general pattern of responses indicated that many live in smaller periphery communities in order to travel to a few employment centers, such as Oneonta or Cooperstown. The average one-way trip to work for respondents is 15 miles.

These results indicated that, while most choose to drive alone, workers are willing to consider alternative means to transportation if public transportation availability were to better meet their schedules and carpooling options were facilitated (i.e. the employer offers to pair up workers who live near each other). Unemployed individuals for whom transportation is a barrier to employment would benefit from these changes, as would the employer whose applicant pool could increase as a result.

The Leadership Otsego participants were asked a modified subset of these questions. When asked about transportation and employment, half of the group of thirty Leadership Otsego participants shared that their employer had lost a good employee because that employee no longer had access to reliable transportation. Eighty percent (80%) of that group noted that their employer is on an existing bus route, while few actually use public transportation, noting their reason was that they have their own car or other reliable means. The participants were also challenged to ask their bus-riding coworkers why they use public transportation for which the three most popular reasons were affordability (either to save money or because that was the only affordable option), avoidance of driving during hazardous winter conditions, and to be more "green"-oriented. The prevalence of carpooling was mixed dependent on the nature of their work. Generally, the responses by the Leadership Otsego participants confirmed the findings in the Transportation to Employment Survey.

Tourism, Retail, Healthcare, and Other "Off-Hours" Employment

Otsego County's tourist industry is mostly focused on baseball and primarily located around Cooperstown. In addition to a wealth of seasonal and tourism-related jobs, service and hospitality careers are prevalent. Many work shifts are predominantly composed of night and weekend hours, and in many cases the employment opportunity is seasonal.

Throughout the County, service and retail employment prevails. Rotating night and weekend shifts is common with this type of employment. Those who work in the County's health care facilities often work shifts that are 10-12 hours long and many of those are nights and evenings.

Public transportation in the County does not currently provide comprehensive service that accommodates employees with these types of work schedules. Weekend routes are especially limited. Carpooling can be challenging for employees who have rotating shifts at odd hours. Without a tangible solution, these challenges will remain as long as these types of jobs are still prevalent in the County.

3.0 Assessment of Available Transportation Services

3.1 Identification of Service Providers

Mobility Management				
Name	Location	Contact	Services Provided	Cost
Mobility Management of South Central NY	Vestal, NY	1-855-373-4040 www.rhscny.org/programs/mmscny	Get There Call Center Connection to Care Trip planning, education, and referral services	Free or minimal cost-share
Public Transportation				
Name	Location	Contact	Services Provided	Cost
Otsego Express	County-wide	1-800-388-9853 www.otsegoexpress.com	9 routes operated throughout Otsego County, with stops in West Winfield, New Berlin, and Sidney	\$1.00 Adult \$0.50 Seniors Free Under 6 \$2.00 Route Deviation \$1.00 Senior Deviation \$30.00 Monthly Pass
Oneonta Public Transit (OPT)	Oneonta, NY	607-432-7100 www.optrides.com	Routes throughout Oneonta with connections to Otsego Express, Oneonta-Cooperstown route	\$1.25 Adults \$0.75 Seniors \$0.50 Student 5-18 \$2.00 Commuter Increased fares for Cooperstown route

Schoharie County Public Transportation	Schoharie County	518-234-0952 www.schohariecountypublictransit.com	Some routes provide service to Cooperstown	\$1.20 Adults \$0.60 Senior Free Under 5 \$1.00 Route Deviation \$0.50 Senior Deviation Increased fares for commuter routes
Cooperstown Trolley	Cooperstown, NY	607-432-4705 cooperstownny.org/trolley-system	Summer seasonal loop between three lots in the Village of Cooperstown with stops at several attractions	\$2.00 All Day Pass Free Parking at Trolley Lots
Private Transportation				
Name	Location	Contact	Services Provided	Cost
A&D Transport Services	Otsego, Delaware, Chenango, Herkimer, Fulton, Montgomery, Broome, Oneida, Schoharie Counties	607-433-1726 www.adtransportservices.com	Private transportation and Medicaid transportation service across the service area	Varies based on client, areas services, and vehicles utilized
S&P Mobility	All points in and between Chenango, Delaware, and Otsego Counties	607-293-6848 spmobility.net	Specializes in elder and wheelchair transit in a DOT certified and inspected Ambulette	\$50 pick-up fee each way plus \$4.00/mile
Circle of Life	Herkimer, Otsego, Schoharie, and Delaware Counties	607-538-1734 circleoflifenyork.com	Paratransit providing door to door care and will assist from inside the home or facility to the vehicle	Wheelchair \$75 plus \$5.00 per mile; Stretcher \$150 plus \$5.00 per mile
ABC Taxi & Airport Transportation	Otsego County destinations with transport to airports in greater area	607-437-5267 cooperstown-airport-transportation.com	Taxi services in and around Otsego County; Airport shuttle services to Otsego County	Varies

Other Transportation Services				
Name	Location	Contact	Services Provided	Cost
Otsego County Veterans' Affairs	Otsego County	604-547-4224 www.otsegocounty.com/depts/vet	Transportation for Veterans only from locations east of Route 205 in Otsego County to the Albany VA Medical Center	None
Otsego County Office for the Aging	Otsego County	607-547-4232 www.otsegocounty.com/depts/ofa	First come, first serve transportation for medical appointments for NEMT and shopping for those 60 and over, Staff person has additional functions such as assess for HDM and provide assistance accessing benefits and services to those being transported	Suggested contributions
Catholic Charities of Delaware, Otsego, and Schoharie	Delaware, Otsego, and Schoharie Counties	607-432-0061 www.charitiesccdos.org	Provides transportation vouchers in the form of gas cards and bus passes to low-income individuals to access employment and other necessary services	None
Bassett Medical Center	Cooperstown and surrounding area	607-547-6805 www.bassett.org/medical/locations/hospitals/bassett-medical-center	Shuttle between hospital and satellite parking lots for employees only	None
Cooperstown Dreams Park	Cooperstown, NY	704-630-0050 www.cooperstowndreamspark.com	Shuttle for tournament families only between the Dreams Park and downtown Cooperstown	None
Pathfinder Village	Edmeston, NY	607-965-8377 x118 pathfindervillage.org	Private residential facility transportation for Pathfinder Village residents only	Charges to family members only

The previous table is an indication of the many transportation and assistance options available to Otsego County residents. The County is fortunate to have public transportation, cab, and paratransit options available considering the rural nature of Otsego County. That being said, some transportation issues still persist.

Non-emergency medical transportation for non-Medicaid recipients is often cost prohibitive, especially for those with regular standing appointments. It should also be noted that there are no organized volunteer transportation services available in the County at this time. Based on anecdotal information, most volunteer transportation occurs within smaller networks, such as a church, where other members of that same group volunteer to assist one another. The Otsego County Office for the Aging is working towards an organized volunteer driver network through partnership with Mobility Management of South Central New York and other non-profit agencies. The Office for the Aging would recruit volunteers while their partnership organizations would handle training, reimbursements, insurance, and other operations-related tasks.

There are other notable gaps in transportation in Otsego County. While public transportation is an affordable option, it cannot meet the needs of all individuals in the County. In many cases, there is not a bus stop within reasonable distance and the times simply cannot accommodate all schedules.

Many travel between Otsego County and its neighboring counties for work, shopping, and medical appointments. Inter-county transportation is currently limited to some stops in Delaware County and Herkimer County by Otsego Express, and transportation into Cooperstown by Schoharie County Public Transportation. Chenango County, Madison County, and Oneida County also have public transportation via bus, yet Otsego County does not actively coordinate with any of these systems. Delaware and Herkimer Counties do not currently have public transportation services.

The Otsego County Transportation Service Analysis conducted by Delta Engineers affirms the need for better coordination. In this analysis, a partial duplication of service was noted between Otsego Express' Route 1 and Oneonta Public Transit's Cooperstown Route. It was suggested these routes better coordinate and possibly be modified to reduce overlap.

3.2 Identification of Unmet Needs

The following unmet needs were identified through a combination of efforts, including Transportation Coordinating Committee meetings, outreach to local agencies and organizations, survey data, and reports such as the Opportunities for Otsego Annual Report.

3.2.1 Purchase and Replace Handicap Accessible Vehicles

Many Otsego County agencies have a need for handicap accessible vehicles, but they either lack such a vehicle or are in need of replacements for their existing fleet. The Otsego County Office for the Aging currently only has an SUV or sedan available for its transportation program; neither of these vehicles are accessible. Other agencies such as the ARC Otsego, Otsego Express, and Oneonta Public Transit, will need to replace aging buses in their fleet, all of which need to be accessible. This is especially important in a rural county like Otsego, since many residents live outside of the county's population centers. It is important that handicap-accessible vehicles are available to those who live in isolated parts of the county.

3.2.2 Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) for Individuals without Medicaid

There are individuals in Otsego County who are unable to drive themselves, but do not have someone they know to drive them to their medical appointments. This can especially be challenging for those with regular standing appointments. Many of the private transportation options available are only cost effective for the occasional appointment, but can be cost prohibitive for those with regular appointments. Without some form of assistance, NEMT trips can often be expensive.

3.2.3 Transportation for Non-Medical Purposes

Medicaid only covers transportation to medical appointments, but one's health expands beyond only getting to medical appointments. The Center for Disease Control lists economic stability, education, social and community context, health and healthcare, and neighborhood and the built environment as the social determinants of health.¹⁰ Access to food, social activities, and pharmacies, for example, all contribute to these determinants and cannot be accessed without transportation in Otsego County. This issue affects both Medicaid recipients and non-Medicaid recipients. While public transportation can assist many in accessing these goods and services, it is not able to access all parts of the county and weekend service is limited.

3.2.3 Aging Population

As previously stated in Chapter 2.0, nearly twenty percent of Otsego County's population is aged 65 and older. This is likely to increase as the County's large middle aged population grows older. An increase in the need for senior care facilities and senior housing will bring a need for transportation from these facilities to medical appointments, shopping, and other needs. Many older adults will also choose to stay in their homes, but may lose their ability to drive themselves. These individuals will also require transportation options and may need additional training or assistance to become familiar with their options, such as navigating public transportation or working with a volunteer driver program if one should exist.

3.2.4 CDL Driver Shortage

Several area employers and transportation providers have noted their struggle to find qualified individuals with a Commercial Driver's License (CDL). This issue limits the growth and expansion of public transportation and transportation options for schools and businesses, for example. For potential drivers, the cost and difficulty to obtain a CDL has been noted by area employers to be

¹⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/>

prohibitive for otherwise qualified individuals. Training is available, but cannot always be offered due to low enrollment. Affordable training tied to a means for connecting employers with potential drivers is needed in Otsego County.

3.2.5 Service gaps in Public Transportation

It is not cost effective for public transportation to access all possible locations in Otsego County, but the need for transportation options in the County's remote areas still persists. People are generally "comfortable" walking to a bus stop if it is within a quarter mile of their home or destination.¹¹ When their homes are too far away from a bus stop or the walk is unsafe or uncomfortable (no sidewalks, narrow road shoulders), the problem of "First Mile/Last Mile" persists.¹² The "First Mile/Last Mile" problem refers to instances where public transportation is outside of a comfortable walking distance to the nearest bus stop. Individuals who live well outside their community's population center may therefore find that accessing the nearest bus stop on a regular basis is challenging. There is a need to consider whether mobility could be accessed using a variety and combination of transportation options to reach their destination.

Otsego County residents do not always work, go to medical appointments, or shop in Otsego County. Some of the area's largest employers are in nearby Chenango and Delaware Counties. Likewise, there are residents from neighboring counties who travel to Otsego County for the employment, medical appointments, or shopping. For instance, Oneonta is the one of the larger municipalities in the area and many who live in neighboring counties travel to Oneonta for goods and services. Currently, the only Otsego County public transportation routes with stops outside the County are Otsego Express Route 6, which stops in Sidney (Delaware County), and Route 2, which stops in West Winfield (Herkimer County). Schoharie County Public Transportation has stops in Cooperstown, mainly to access Bassett Hospital. However, there are far more instances of the need for inter-county connectivity than what is currently covered.

3.2.6 Transportation to Employment

While transportation to employment is a general concern in Otsego County, there are two particular concerns when it comes to getting to work. Seasonal employment and "Off-Hours" work schedules (nights and weekends), even for year-round employment, are prevalent for Otsego County's tourist attractions, hospitals, manufacturers, retail, and for baseball camp-related work. This especially includes youth employment. It can be challenging to work for these employers without have personal transportation. Public transportation is limited during "off-hours" and many of the alternatives are not cost effective. If a cost-effective option could be developed, job opportunities could increase for unemployed individuals and employers could expand their pool of potential applicants.

This list of needs is not exhaustive. There are many unique transportation situations which exist across the County. Based on the information available, the above list contains some of the most prevalent transportation challenges faced by Otsego County.

¹¹ <https://blog.transloc.com/blog/eliminating-public-transits-first-mile-last-mile-problem>

¹² <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/rethinking-first-last-mile-transit-driven-complete-streets-webinar-recap/>

4.0 Action Items

These action items were developed based on the identification of unmet needs in the previous chapter. They reflect the goals and input from various organizations, businesses, and agencies in Otsego County.

- Item #1: **Apply for funding programs** such as 5311, Accelerated Transit Capital, and 5310 when applicable **to minimize local costs and expand or improve current transportation programs**. These include both operating costs and the costs of capital purchases, such as handicap-accessible vehicles.
- Item #2: Seek out, develop, and support projects which **enlist the concept of “Shared Mobility”** to tackle transportation issues regarding NEMT for Non-Medicaid individuals, getting to work, seasonal and off-hours employment, and transportation for older adults. Shared Mobility is the idea that transportation can be shared and accessed as needed, instead of solely operating under the ideology of “one car for every person”. This includes, but is not limited to: coordinated carpooling and ridesharing programs; van-pooling programs; volunteer driver networks; car-sharing.
- Item #3: **Develop and expand the local CDL driver workforce** and connect drivers with employers. Consider concept of shared drivers between employers.
- Item #4: **Address the issue of First Mile/Last Mile and other transportation gaps in Otsego County**. This includes promoting and supporting the services offered by Mobility Management of South Central New York; Catholic Charities of Delaware, Otsego, and Schoharie Counties; United Way of Delaware & Otsego Counties’ Opportunities for Otsego; and other non-profit organizations. This also includes identifying those private transportation companies that are willing to fill gaps when applicable.
- Item #5: **Pursue partnerships and/or improved coordination with neighboring counties and public transportation services** by reviewing stops and times to consider coordinating schedules and developing partnerships for routes in counties where an existing public transportation system is not available, but a need for inter-county transportation has been identified

5.0 Strategies

The following table lists a 5-year projected time-frame for implementing specific strategies to address the action items detailed in this plan. This chart may be modified over the 5-year duration to reflect progress and/or unanticipated changes to the plan. It is the goal of the County to achieve these efforts through coordination and partnerships with other agencies.

Action Item	Description	Strategy	Priority (1 – higher to 3 – lower)	Timeframe
1	Apply for funding programs to minimize local costs and expand or improve current transportation programs.	Purchase handicap-accessible vehicles and replace older vehicles in transportation fleets by applying for state and federal grants.	1	Every year as applicable
1	Apply for funding programs to minimize local costs and expand or improve current transportation programs.	Monitor grant opportunities with respect to the other action items listed in the plan and support and assist those applications.	2	Every year as applicable
2	Enlist the concept of “Shared Mobility.”	Work with MMSCNY and local employers to implement van-pooling or a similar project.	2	1-2 years
2	Enlist the concept of “Shared Mobility.”	Promote the region-specific 5-1-1 page for carpooling across Otsego County via social media, website, and local employer outreach.	3	<1 year
2	Enlist the concept of “Shared Mobility.”	Support the formation of a local volunteer driver network.	2	3-5 years
3	Develop and expand the local CDL driver workforce.	Quantify the shortage across county employers and identify employment sectors with the most need.	1	1 year
3	Develop and expand the local CDL driver workforce.	Work with local driver training programs to promote CDL training.	1	1-2 years
3	Develop and expand the local CDL driver workforce.	Work with local workforce and employment agencies to create a local driver/employer pool to connect drivers to employers and vice-versa.	1	2 years
4	Address the issue of First Mile/Last Mile and other transportation gaps in Otsego County.	Create a transportation directory for Otsego County, including mobility management services and other service agencies.	2	<1 year

Action Item	Description	Strategy	Priority (1 – higher to 3 – lower)	Timeframe
4	Address the issue of First Mile/Last Mile and other transportation gaps in Otsego County.	Promote the use of the Mobility Management of South Central New York Get There call center.	2	1 year
4	Address the issue of First Mile/Last Mile and other transportation gaps in Otsego County.	Assess the County public transit routes using route data and the report by Delta Engineers to expand, edit, and improve current public transportation offerings.	2	3-5 years
5	Pursue partnerships and/or improved coordination with neighboring counties and public transportation services.	Inventory existing systems in neighboring counties and note whether they have potential to connect with Otsego County systems.	3	<1 year
5	Pursue partnerships and/or improved coordination with neighboring counties and public transportation services.	Establish relationships with neighboring public transportation systems to examine the feasibility of improving connectivity between systems.	2	1-2 years
5	Pursue partnerships and/or improved coordination with neighboring counties and public transportation services.	When applicable, investigate the feasibility of routes that cross into counties that do not have public transportation if a partner in cost-sharing can be identified.	2	On-going