St. Lawrence County Coordinated Transportation Plan for Mobility Services

Adopted May 6, 2019
St. Lawrence County
May 6, 2019
Operations Committee: 4-8-2019

RESOLUTION NO. 152-2019

ADOPTION OF THE ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN

By Mr. Denesha, Chair, Operations Committee

WHEREAS, St. Lawrence County regularly receives and administers Federal and State funds to operate a rural transit system, and

WHEREAS, as a condition of receiving these funds, the New York State Department of Transportation requires rural transit providers to prepare a Coordinated Transportation Plan, and

WHEREAS, the purpose of a Coordinated Transportation Plan is to assess the transportation needs for persons who are seniors, earn limited incomes, or have a disability; identify transportation gaps and duplication of services; and to prioritize goals and actions to address these gaps and duplicate services, and

WHEREAS, the St. Lawrence County Public Transit Task Force oversaw the creation of the Plan and provided input as it was prepared by the Mobility Manager of the County and the Planning Office, and

WHEREAS, hard copies of the draft Plan were distributed and posted on the Public Transit website, and

WHEREAS, a legally noticed public hearing was held on March 21st and March 25th to receive public comment on the draft Plan, and

WHEREAS, the Board of Legislators has duly considered the assessment, goals and actions in the draft Plan, and comments from the public,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Legislators adopts the St. Lawrence County Coordinated Transportation Plan, upon approval of the County Attorney, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that it be forwarded to the Department of Transportation, and as the Plan is implemented, it should be reviewed and modified as needed to account for the changing conditions of riders who utilize the rural transit services.

STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF ST. LAWRENCE

I, Kelly S. Pearson, Deputy Clerk of the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that I have compared this Resolution No. 152-2019 entitled "Adoption of the St. Lawrence County Coordinated Transportation Plan", adopted May 6, 2019, with the original record in this office and that the same is a correct transcript thereof and of the whole of said original record.

Kelly S. Pearson
Deputy Clerk
St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators
May 7, 2019
St. Lawrence County
Coordinated Transportation Plan for Mobility Services

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INTRODUCTION

St. Lawrence County’s Coordinated Transportation Plan was prepared to identify cost-effective approaches to address public transportation gaps; minimize the duplication of transportation services; and help improve the coordination of transportation services for persons with disabilities, older residents, individuals with lower incomes, and for college students. The Plan:

- Includes socio-economic data to help assess the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, minorities, college students, and persons with limited incomes.
- Inventories of existing services to determine whether redundant transportation services exist, and to identify gaps in service.
- Identifies goals and actions to address gaps in services; eliminate or reduce the duplication of services; and for more efficient utilization of resources.
- Describes how these goals and strategies will be prioritized to improve public transit services.

This Coordinated Transportation Plan was compiled with contributions from local mobility services, and transportation providers, including the Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. (VTC); St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging, The Arc of Jefferson and St. Lawrence NY; Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center; St. Lawrence Health System; United Helpers; First Student; the St. Lawrence County Department of Social Services; and the St. Lawrence County Planning Office.

The recommendations that follow are intended to: enhance transportation access for the community; minimize the duplication of transportation services; and provide more cost-effective service. This Coordinated Transportation Plan also prioritizes how Federal and State public transportation resources will be utilized by the County, the bus operator, and by project partners who serve on the County’s Public Transit Task Force.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Service Area

St. Lawrence County is the largest county in New York State. It is approximately 2,840 square miles and is the fifth largest county east of the Mississippi River. St. Lawrence County is predominantly rural and sparsely populated in comparison to its size. The American Community Survey reports a total population of 111,944 in 2016 which averages to a little over 39 people per square mile.

The southeast portion of the county includes the Adirondack Mountains, and is bordered to the north by Canada and the St. Lawrence River. The St. Regis Mohawk Reservation, commonly referred to by its Mohawk name - Akwesasne - neighbors the eastern border of the county. The reservation is bisected by the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and is also split by the US-Canadian Border.
The county is comprised of 32 towns, 11 villages, and one city. Five communities serve as the county’s population centers: Canton (the county seat), Gouverneur, Massena, Potsdam, and the City of Ogdensburg.

**Demographic and Economic Analysis**

The County Planning Office compiled the following statistical data to capture the socio-economic circumstances of its residents and associated public transportation needs.

*Population Over Time*

Like many New York rural counties, the population of St. Lawrence County has mostly been in decline since the later portion of the 20th century. The County’s population peaked in 1980 with 114,254 residents. Since then, the population has declined to 111,944 in 2010. By 2040, the Cornell Project on Applied Demographics projects the county’s population will continue to decline to 99,887.

![St. Lawrence County Population Over Time](image)

*Source: Decennial Census for St. Lawrence County*

Correspondingly, the population of the county has been slowly growing older. The share of population over 65 reached 16.8% in 2010, and is expected to grow to 19.3% by 2020. As the population ages, their transportation needs will change as older drivers will be less likely able to drive on their own, and will increasingly rely on transportation services that are provided by friends, family members and service organizations.
As shown in the following table, population trends differ among the county’s five largest communities. The “blue collar” belt of Ogdensburg and Massena are seeing their populations decline quickly as they face regional small-town challenges with de-industrialization, while the “white collar” belt of Potsdam and Canton are seeing their populations, fueled by colleges, remain stable or even grow. Interestingly, Gouverneur has seen its population grow, most likely due to the presence of a state prison and the increase of military population from nearby Fort Drum in Jefferson County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Canton</th>
<th>Gouverneur</th>
<th>Massena</th>
<th>Ogdensburg</th>
<th>Potsdam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>10,348</td>
<td>6,710</td>
<td>16,021</td>
<td>14,554</td>
<td>16,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>11,568</td>
<td>6,629</td>
<td>14,856</td>
<td>12,375</td>
<td>17,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>11,120</td>
<td>6,985</td>
<td>13,826</td>
<td>13,521</td>
<td>16,822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>10,369</td>
<td>7,418</td>
<td>13,121</td>
<td>12,460</td>
<td>15,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>10,995</td>
<td>7,085</td>
<td>12,883</td>
<td>11,128</td>
<td>16,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>-20%</td>
<td>-24%</td>
<td>-2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Decennial Census Data

There are also changes in the family composition of the population in the county that largely reflect national demographic trends. The bar graph below shows the county is seeing a slow decrease in the number of married-couple families, and small growth in female-headed households as well as a larger increase in the number of non-family households. As will be shown later, single-parent female-headed households face a much higher poverty rate, and are thus more vulnerable to housing instability and poor living conditions.
Racial Diversity

While the overall racial makeup of the county’s population is largely white, its college towns over the past few decades have slowly grown more diverse. As shown in the following table, enrollment totals at area universities are significantly more diverse than the surrounding towns. SUNY Potsdam and SUNY Canton are the most diverse schools, with 62.4% and 66.3% of student enrollment, respectively, who are white. This is compared to 93.1% of the county population in 2015 that was white.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Two or More</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Non-Resident Alien</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUNY Potsdam</td>
<td>3,696</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarkson</td>
<td>4,384</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNY Canton</td>
<td>2,464</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following map shows the most diverse areas are found in the college towns of Canton and Potsdam, and in the Town of Massena, which is immediately proximate to the Akwesasne.
Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects people from discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in the delivery of federally funded programs, which includes transportation services. In January 2019, the NYS Department of Transportation’s Office of Civil Rights determined St. Lawrence County’s Program Plan for Title VI of the US Civil Rights Act is complete, and has satisfied the Department’s Title VI Program Checklist. This checklist includes: adoption of the County’s Title VI Public Participation Plan by way of resolution; public posting of the County’s Public Participation Plan on the County website; scheduling the public hearing in a location that is accessible to persons with physical disabilities; offering to provide special accommodations for persons who are hearing impaired, or who need English translation services in order to participate; and reporting that no Title VI complaints, investigations or lawsuits were filed against the County within the past year.

Poverty Rates

Countywide, there are different poverty rates by race and familial type. It is important to note, however, that due to the small sample size for racial minorities in the county, poverty data by race is problematic as they include large margins of error that in some instances are greater than the sample size, and are not statistically significant. It is for this reason poverty rates by race are not included in this Plan.

Significant disparities are found in poverty rates by family type. As the following figure shows, the poverty rate for married families is 7.3%, while the poverty rate for female-headed households is 33.2%. This figure reveals one in every three female-headed households in the
county lives in poverty. In addition, female-headed households also experience greater levels of poverty than male-headed households (25.3%).

The following chart shows small yet significant differences in the poverty rates in different geographic locations. Of the most populous towns in the county, Gouverneur has the highest percentage of individuals in poverty at 25.8%, followed closely by Ogdensburg and Massena. Slightly lower are Potsdam and Canton, at 19.7% and 18.9% respectively.
The following map depicts poverty rates by census tract in the county and show areas with the highest poverty rates are in: Oswegatchie, the southern portion of Massena, Gouverneur, and the northeastern portion of the Village of Potsdam.

**Poverty Rates by Census Tract in St. Lawrence County**

Not surprisingly, median household income follows similar trends as poverty rates. As shown in the following chart, the college towns of Canton and Potsdam have a median household income that is significantly higher than in the communities of Gouverneur, Massena, and Ogdensburg.

The median income by family type is also reflective of the trends related to poverty rate with female-headed households having less than half the income of married couple families and
notably less than male-headed households. With these disparities in poverty rates and income, female-headed households are particularly more limited in the resources they can commit to personal transportation.

![Median Income by Family Type, St. Lawrence County, 2015](image)

**Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates**

**Unemployment Rates**

Like many communities across the Northeastern United States, St. Lawrence County’s employment base has endured decades of decline as jobs have moved overseas or to other parts of the US. This trend has had a particularly devastating impact on communities that had a large manufacturing sector who are now coping with unemployment rates that are substantially higher than state and national averages. Of the population centers, the unemployment rate in 2015 was highest in Massena and lowest in Potsdam.

![Unemployment Rate by Town, 2015](image)

**Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates**
Access to Personal Transportation and Commute Times

The following chart shows there is a significantly higher rate of households without cars in Gouverneur, Massena, and Ogdensburg than in the rest of the county; this mirrors poverty rates by population center. Areas with higher poverty rates and limited access to personal vehicles suggest residents in these areas struggle the most with accessing adequate transportation to travel to and from work; attend medical and human service appointments; to shop for groceries; visit community facilities; and, participate in public events.

![Chart of Percent Households with No Vehicles Available by Location, 2015](chart.png)

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

As the largest county (in geographic area) in the state, most St. Lawrence County residents rely on personal car travel. For residents who own a vehicle, commute times in the county can be lengthy. Towns with the highest commute times include Clare, Russell, Hermon and Edwards as they primarily serve as bedroom communities to the county’s population centers.
Access to Health Care and Insurance

There are five hospitals in the county: Gouverneur Hospital, Massena Memorial Hospital, Claxton-Hepburn Medical Center in Ogdensburg, Canton-Potsdam Hospital in Potsdam, and Clifton-Fine Hospital in Star Lake. Residents in the eastern portions of the county can also access hospital care in the Franklin County towns of Tupper Lake and Malone.
As a whole, 93.4% of adults in St. Lawrence County have health insurance, compared to the State average of 91.5%. The map above reveals zip codes in the county with the highest percentage of uninsured residents are in the towns of DeKalb, Lawrence, DePeyster, Macomb and Colton.

**Persons with Disabilities**

St. Lawrence County has a disproportionate share of the population that is disabled. 15.5% of the population of the county has a disability, compared with 12.2% of the population of the United States and 11.1% of the population of New York State total. The share of the population with disabilities will likely increase as the population of the county continues to grow older. Across the county, the percentage of the population that is disabled varies widely, with 20.2% of the population in Massena having a disability compared to 10.6% of the population of Potsdam.

Source: https://www.policymap.com/maps
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Percent of Population in Census Tract with a Cognitive Disability

Percent of Population in Census Tract with a Physical Disability
INVENTORY OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Currently there are 39 different transportation services that operate in the county. The type and count for each category include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Transit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Transportation Provider</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi Service</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair Service</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretcher Service</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambulatory</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A complete listing of these services with contact information is appended at the end of this report.

**Current Level of Public Transit Service**

Presently the County’s bus system operates 19 routes. With the exception of Route #67 which includes stops at SUNY Potsdam (which runs daily), most county routes run Mondays through Fridays, while four routes offer weekly or bi-weekly service. In 2018, the County’s bus system provided 50,922 one-way trips to riders, with the monthly volume of ridership ranging from 2,756 riders in February to 6,882 riders in October. Due to the size of the county, the public buses traveled a total of 583,192 miles. The increase in ridership and mileage during the second half of 2018 are primarily due to adding four new routes, creating the Ogdensburg shuttle, and the opening of buses that transport The Arc clients (which use Formula 5310 and NYS Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities [OPWDD] monies) to accommodate public transit passengers (which is funded with Formula 5311 monies).

In addition to bus service, St. Lawrence County riders can utilize “First Mile Last Mile”, a connector service that delivers public transit riders to and from a designated bus stop to locations that are at least ¾ mile away. Due to the limited number of designated stops in relation to the geographic size of St. Lawrence County, public transit riders often must complete the first and last portion of their trip on their own. In some of these instances, readily accessing a designated bus stop is a challenge and inhibits potential passengers from utilizing the County’s bus service. First Mile Last Mile was instituted to provide riders with easier access to designated bus stops and therefore increase ridership on the public transit system. The program relies on a fleet of volunteers who drive their personal vehicle to transport bus riders. The service is coordinated by Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. who serves as the dispatcher and schedules these rides in advance.

Between April and December 2018, First Mile Last Mile provided 885 one-way trips for transit riders, which accounts for 2% of the total number of bus trips in 2018. The fleet of volunteer
drivers who participated in the program drove 20,069 miles to deliver transit riders to/from a designated stop to their final destination.

**Ridership Characteristics**

In 2018, nearly 2/3rds of First Mile Last Mile riders were between 21 and 40 years old. Thirty-two percent were between the ages of 31 and 40, while 31% were between 21 and 30.

![First Mile Last Mile Age Group 2018](image)

More than half (56%) of the passengers who utilized First Mile Last Mile said the primary purpose of their trip was to access their place of work, followed by 21% who were traveling to access education and training services.

![First Mile Last Mile Trip Type 2018](image)
Assessment of Bus Fleet

The County’s current fleet consists of 16 transit buses. Of these, one bus (#229) which came into service in 2013, has reached the end of its useful life as it surpassed a five-year threshold for operation purposes, and has accrued over 150,000 miles. All other buses came online between 2017 to 2019 and are currently in service.

The County does not currently satisfy a State requirement to have 20% of the total fleet to consist of spare vehicles in the event a bus breaks down and is out of service. There are two challenges faced by the County’s bus operator - The Arc of Jefferson and St. Lawrence - with the regular inspection, and maintenance and repair of the County’s bus fleet. Currently The Arc transports buses outside the area for required Class B inspections at a DOT-certified site. The absence of a nearby Class B inspection site accelerates mileage accrual on the buses as they travel outside the area for inspections, and takes a bus out of service when no spare buses are available to run a route. The organization’s existing service garage also does not meet requirements for on-site DOT fleet inspections that are conducted every six months. The limited capacity of The Arc’s service garage hinders the fleet’s ability to consistently sustain a 75% passing rate for the DOT’s biannual inspections.

Major Transportation Service Providers

There are five major transportation service providers in St. Lawrence County that own or lease a fleet of vehicles, and either employ paid drivers or maintain an organized workforce of volunteer drivers who provide transportation services on a fixed, or on-demand schedule. Two of these providers receive Section 5310 Formula funding to transport its riders, and are so noted below:

✦ These organizations have also identified upcoming short-term investments they intend to use with 5310 monies.

The Arc of Jefferson and St. Lawrence NY ✦
Attn: Rena Ryan, Operations Center, 6 Commerce Lane, Canton, NY 13617
Tel: (315) 386-2600 Email: info@slcnypublictransit.com
The Arc is a non-profit membership association that provides services to persons with intellectual and other developmental disabilities to help them achieve personal growth and independence. The organization provides transportation service to 242 clients per day with Federal Formula 5310 funding and Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) Supported Employment Services (SES) funding, and is the designated operator of the County’s Public Transit system.

→ Upcoming 5311 Investments: In the short term, the County plans to order two buses with recently awarded Formula 5311 funding. One bus would be ordered to replace bus #229, and one bus would be ordered to assume the operation of the SUNY Canton’s shuttle service. The County also currently has a pending Modernization and Enhancement Program funding application which would fund 10 new buses, four of which would be used to set aside spares. The remaining six would replenish a portion of the fleet as they reach the end of their useful life, or they will be used to help create college connectors for riders to access Clarkson University and St. Lawrence University campuses. Lastly, the County is preparing a request
to the NYS DOT to purchase a bus that would be used to establish a new Massena shuttle service.

→ **Upcoming 5310 Investments:** Over the next two years, The Arc plans to replace four 5310 buses that will approach retirement based on accrued miles and the date the vehicles went into service.

**First Student**  
*Attn: Ariel Shembry, 721 Hall Rd, Lisbon, NY 13658*  
*Tel: (315) 393-4784  Email: ariel.schembry@firstgroup.com*  
First Student is a school transportation provider that transport students to and from school and school sponsored activities. Presently First Student is under contract with three school districts in the county: Ogdensburg City School District (1,646 Pre-K to grade 12 students in 2018), Gouverneur Central School District (1,544 students), and Lisbon Central School District (586 students).

**Premier Coach Company, Inc.**  
*Attn: Ken Eurto, 946 Route 7 South, Milton, VT 05468*  
*Tel: (802) 655-4456*  
Premier Coach operates a facility in Potsdam that houses eight coach buses. The business focuses on providing charter services to the Associated Colleges in St. Lawrence County (St. Lawrence University, Clarkson University, SUNY Canton, and SUNY Potsdam), as well as to other clientele in northern New York.

**United Helpers**  
*Attn: Rick Pirie, 100 Ford Street, Ogdensburg, NY 13669*  
*Tel: (315) 393-3072 ext. 246  Email: rjpirie@unitedhelpers.org*  
United Helpers provides a variety of home and health care services as well as supportive, disabled housing assistance, and transportation services to their patients. In the Canton area, United Helpers manages three facilities that serve 182 persons and utilizes a fleet of five vans and one bus. The organization's campus in Ogdensburg serves 181 residents and uses two buses. The organization also operates 17 residential sites, day habilitation offices and supportive houses throughout the county that assist 131 persons and utilizes a fleet of 18 wheelchair accessible vehicles, 22 caravans or sedans (which include vehicles that are used by case managers to meet with clients), and one bus that is operated with Formula 5310 and OPWDD monies.

→ **Upcoming 5310 Investments:** Due to the age of their fleet, the geographic size of the county, and the number of clients they serve, United Helpers will request Section 5310 funds to replace and expand its fleet. Over the next two years, United Helpers intends to apply for 5310 funding to purchase one replacement, and one new van/bus in 2019-2020, and two new vans/buses in 2020-2021, for a total of four new vehicles. These new vehicles will have varying seating configurations and will be used to continue to provide transportation services for their clients.
Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. (VTC)
Attn: Sam Purington, PO Box 515, 6587 US Route 11, Canton, NY 13617
Tel: (315) 714-2034
VTC provides charitable rides to persons who have no other means of travel to attend medical and dental appointments, or to shop for groceries at least once a month. VTC also coordinates and provides transportation services for human service agencies with a fleet of more than 225 volunteer drivers who use their own vehicles and receive mileage reimbursement. VTC serves as the Mobility Manager for St. Lawrence County, and is under contract to operate the “First Mile Last Mile program,” a door to door transportation service for riders when a designated stop is more than ¾ of a mile from the traveler’s destination. In 2018, VTC provided 885 one-way rides to passengers through St. Lawrence County’s First Mile Last Mile Program and traveled a total distance of nearly 20,000 miles.

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Volunteer Transportation Network
Attn: Edward J. Rogers, VA Medical Center, 800 Irving Ave, Syracuse, NY 13210
Tel: (315) 425-4353
The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Volunteer Transportation Network owns seven passenger vans that are used by volunteer drivers in the county: three are based in Ogdensburg, two are in Massena, and two are in Potsdam. In 2018, the organization provided 1,089 rides to veterans in St. Lawrence County to the VA medical center in Syracuse, a 23% decrease in total ridership in 2017, which is primarily attributed to a declining availability of volunteer drivers.

Major Transportation Service Purchasers

The primary transportation service purchasers in St. Lawrence County consist of nine organizations that purchase transportation services for their clientele from a public transit provider, private bus company, taxi service, or non-profit service organization.

Countywide:
The Arc of Jefferson and St. Lawrence NY - In addition to providing bus transportation for their clients through 5310 grants awarded by the State Department of Transportation, the Arc of Jefferson and St. Lawrence NY also purchases vouchers for their clients to ride the County's public bus system, and refers clients to the First Mile Last Mile program administered by VTC.

St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging - The Office for the Aging (OFA) provides services and advocacy for county residents who are 60 years and older. The Office purchases transportation services for its clients through an annual contract with the Volunteer Transportation Center. In 2018, VTC's volunteer drivers provided 6,701 one-way trips for OFA seniors and traveled a total distance of 188,979 miles. In 2018, The Arc also provided transportation services to 1,018 Office for the Aging clients with Formula 5310 bus service.

St. Lawrence County Department of Social Services - In 2013, the New York State Department of Health required all non-emergency Medicaid transportation services be managed by Medical Answering Services (MAS). MAS approves all Medicaid-covered medical trips and the appropriate mode of transportation that may be used per NYS Medicaid guidelines. Various levels of eligible transportation include: self-transportation; VTC; St. Lawrence
County Public Transit; taxi; volunteer drivers and ambulette. Self-transportation is the default approval unless a Medicaid recipient can show they cannot transport themselves or need assisted transport. The County’s Department of Social Services purchases bus tokens and passes, and utilizes the First Mile Last Mile program for their clients.

*United Helpers* - In addition to providing direct transportation services for their clients, United Helpers secures transportation services through a contract with Volunteer Transportation Center. In 2018, VTC provided 1,249 trips to persons receiving assistance from human service agencies, for a total distance of 34,420 miles traveled. This figure includes rides provided to Renewal House clients.

*Renewal House* - Renewal House assists victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and secures transportation services for their clients through the Volunteer Transportation Center. The number of rides provided to Renewal House clients in 2018 is included in the total trips provided by VTC to United Helpers above.

**In Canton:**

*SUNY Canton* - With 3,200 undergraduate students, SUNY Canton is one of five universities in the county. The campus operates a shuttle service to transport students to destinations in the Village of Canton, and additional student transportation services are secured through a contract with the Volunteer Transportation Center. SUNY Canton’s athletic teams are transported to athletic events through a contract with Premier Busing. The County anticipates that it will absorb SUNY Canton’s shuttle service as a part of the County’s Public Transit system within the next year.

*St. Lawrence University* - SLU has an undergraduate enrollment of just under 2,500 students, and the University owns and maintains a fleet of vehicles to transport students to and from campus. The Saints athletic teams are transported to sporting events through a contract with Premier Busing.

**In Potsdam:**

*SUNY Potsdam* - SUNY Potsdam’s enrollment includes 3,450 undergraduates and 250 graduate students. SUNY Potsdam’s students are transported primarily through a Potsdam shuttle service that is under the County’s Public Transit system. In 2017, the service provided a total of 22,630 rides. The Potsdam Bears athletic teams are transported through a contract with Premier Busing.

*Clarkson University* - Clarkson is home to 4,300 undergraduate and graduate students who receive shuttle services through a contract with The Arc of Jefferson and St. Lawrence NY. In 2017, the service provided 4,000 rides in a 10-month cycle. Clarkson’s athletic teams are transported to sporting events through a contract with Premier Busing.

**COLLECTING STAKEHOLDER INPUT**

To identify transportation gaps and duplication of services in St. Lawrence County, the County’s Mobility Manager gathered input from: public transit riders, major transportation service providers, major transportation service purchasers, and stakeholder organizations who serve on
the County’s Public Transit Task Force. The following approaches have, or will be used to gather feedback:

1. Conduct six to eight Public Transit Task Force meetings throughout the year to identify and discuss public transportation needs and contribute to the preparation of this plan.
2. Participate in meetings with human service committees, local non-profit organizations, employment agencies, high schools and colleges, and attend senior fairs and other public forums throughout the county to hear concerns and issues concerning transportation.
3. Ride the County’s public transit buses to listen to rider's issues and concerns.
4. Conduct ridership surveys.
5. Monitor resident comments from email messages, posts on social media accounts, and in suggestions left on the County’s public transit website.

Public Transit Task Force

There are 27 representatives serving on the County’s Public Transit Task Force who regularly participate in the meetings which began in earnest in September 2017. The composition of the Task Force consists of service agencies, and interested persons who help residents who depend on human/social services and may not have the ability or resources to own and operate a personal vehicle. These stakeholders regularly participated in Transit Task Force meetings throughout the year, and engaged in thoughtful discussion with the Mobility Manager about transportation gaps and challenges residents face, and identified possible solutions that could be implemented in St. Lawrence County.

IMPROVING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Duplicate Transportation Services

Based on the organizational missions the two 5310-funded agencies in the county, a duplication of transportation services is not known to exist between The Arc and United Helpers. The Arc’s services are primarily aimed to assist persons (of any age) with physical and/or developmental disabilities achieve life skills and independence. United Helpers, meanwhile, provides residential-based health care, case management and housing services to the elderly, and to persons with mental health issues and/or physical disabilities.

As for duplication in private transportation services, the vastitude of St. Lawrence County, fuel costs tied to mileage, and the county’s economy are significant factors affect the success of a commercial operation. Unless sufficient revenue is generated to cover transportation costs, these market forces and the geography lead to the cessation of a transportation service. The most relevant example is the anticipated absorption of SUNY Canton’s shuttle service as a County Public Transit function. As such, there are no known duplicate private transportation services operating in the county.
Known Transportation Gaps

1. Low-income persons, and persons with disabilities have difficulty seeking and maintaining employment due to limited transportation options to get to and from work.

2. Other than the SUNY Potsdam route (#67), the County bus system does not offer weekend service.

3. There is limited bus service in Massena (including Akwesasne) and Gouverneur.

4. There are limited transportation options to connect residents to institutions of higher learning for education and employment opportunities. This includes Akwesasne for employment opportunities, BOCES and the five area colleges.

5. There is a lack of connectivity between institutions of higher education and neighboring communities to give students the opportunity to participate in community activities and events.

6. St. Lawrence County residents who have no means of personal transportation and are seeking Social Security Disability Benefits and Independent Medical Assessments (IMAs) must travel out of the county for evaluations.

7. The installation of enhanced technology, and advanced scheduling and dispatch software, would greatly improve transportation efficiency and coordination.

8. A simple, rider-interface is needed to access multiple transportation systems and connections. Riders would benefit from a one-call, one-click centralized source for transportation information and referral.

9. For the next 20 months, the County’s aging bus fleet will be eligible to retire, and there is an insufficient number of spare buses when 20% should be readily available.

10. The installation of bus stop features (i.e. benches, lighting, heat, solar powered bus shelters) would increase the safety and comfort of riders.

11. Increase ridership by improving multi-modal access to bus stops (e.g. sidewalks, crosswalk, and bike lanes)

12. The $2.00 bus fare is a financial hardship for some riders.

13. Public-private coordination of services, including use of taxicab and ambulette services, is minimal or absent.


15. The county does not have a centralized or coordinated regional transfer point between transportation modes and providers.

16. Accessing sufficient resources to maintain existing service levels, and to expand public transportation services to meet the needs of individuals across the county.
Resources Available

The following transportation resources are available to help address the county’s transportation gaps and assist with the implementation of the County’s Coordinated Transportation Plan:

- **Accelerated Transit Capital (ATC) Program** - Administered by the New York State Department of Transportation, ATC funds may be used to rehabilitate, restore and modernize public transit assets with a minimum service life of 10 years. Eligible projects include: vehicle rehabilitation and/or replacement, fleet enhancement, deployment of new technologies, passenger amenities and maintenance facilities.

- **Section 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas** - Provides capital, planning, and operating funds to states to support public transportation in rural areas with populations less than 50,000, where many residents often rely on public transit to reach their destinations.

- **Section 5310 Formula Grants for Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities** - Formula funding to states for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities.

- **Statewide Mass Transportation Operating Assistance (STOA)** - The New York State Department of Transportation distributes about $3.0 billion annually in STOA to approximately 130 transit operators. Over the past five years statewide ridership has increased by about 13%; it is estimated that more than 70% of these trips are work-related.

- **Modernization and Enhancement Program (MEP)** - Administered by the New York State Department of Transportation, the Public Transportation Modernization and Enhancement Program apportions $61.4 million in State funding to counties, cities, and regional authorities to upgrade and enhance public transportation services.

- **Supportive Employment Services (SES) Funds** - The New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities offers funding to support the needs of individuals to obtain and maintain paid competitive jobs in the community.

- **Other Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) / New York State (NYS) Grant Programs** - Other programs may be accessed depending on community need and funding availability.

Prioritizing Implementation

The following questions will be used by the County, its Mobility Manager, and by the bus operator to help prioritize the advancement of public transportation goals and actions to ensure available resources are utilized in a cost-effective and responsible manner:

- How significant is the gap that can be addressed with public transportation?
- Does the strategy improve or expand the County’s existing bus service?
- What resources are available to implement the strategy?
- Has the strategy been successful elsewhere?
- How quickly can the strategy be implemented?
- How does the anticipated impact compare to the level of the investment required?
- How much will it cost, and what resources will be used to sustain the outcome?
- Does the strategy leverage cost-effective public-private partnerships?
- Would the strategy likely be pursued as part of other public- or private-sector activities?
- Will the strategy have strong market acceptance among target groups and geographic areas?
- Will the strategy have political support for implementation?
- Are there secondary benefits that are achieved by implementing the strategy?

**Goals and Strategies**

*Improve and sustain the operations of existing routes and services*

1. Expand the capacity of the operator’s bus maintenance and service garages, as their existing bays are too small to readily accommodate the County’s newer, larger buses.
2. Decrease the operator’s fuel expenses by examining the opportunity to refuel the County’s bus fleet at the County Highway Department.
3. Adopt maintenance and service protocols so that the County’s bus fleet consistently passes DOT safety inspections.
4. Increase the pool of qualified candidate drivers for the operator to hire by establishing a referral system with SUNY Canton’s CREST Program for employee-candidates to enroll and complete a seven-week Class A Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) training program that begins April 2019.
5. Regularly apply for and successfully administer grant funds that support the County’s public transportation system, which include:
   - Section 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas
   - STOA (State Transportation Operating Assistance)
   - Modernization and Enhancement Program (MEP) Supplemental Funding
   - Supportive Employment Services (SES) Grant
   - Other Federal and State grants as they become available
6. Secure additional revenue through the sale of advertising space on the interior and exterior of public transit buses.
7. Work with human services organizations to create Travel Training Transportation Educators to inform public transit users on the availability of transit options.
8. Broaden representation on the St. Lawrence County Public Transit Task Force by including members of the private business sector, academia, and county residents.

*Increase ridership by installing amenities on existing buses and at stops*

1. Install bike racks on all buses serving existing routes and market this amenity to potential riders.
2. Install free Wi-Fi and phone charging stations on all buses and market these amenities to riders.
3. Integrate route and real-time arrival information into mobile applications, with an emphasis on applications that can be used by people with visual disabilities.
4. Assign bus stops with a stop name or identifier (destination/cross street, or numbered/lettered identifier); route number; route map; schedule; and clear indication of stop location and position. Bus route identification signs must comply with ADA requirements.
5. Provide an alternative to visual display boards; audible announcements are preferred over braille and other methods required for finding the display. Consider station/street noise and environmental characteristics during implementation.

6. Identify and coordinate public transit infrastructure needs (for example, accessible curb cuts at bus stops, benches, shelters, etc.) with municipalities throughout the county.

7. Investigate partnership opportunities to install way-finding signs for pedestrians and motor vehicle drivers; installing ADA-compliant pedestrian infrastructure; and creating a bicycle infrastructure to connect riders to the transit system.

8. Regularly apply for, and administer grant funds to purchase new buses, solar-powered bus shelters, benches, and other enhancements at public transit stops.

Increase ridership through outreach and education

1. Meet with civic and community-based organizations, social services agencies, hospital facilities/healthcare providers, etc. to disseminate information about public transportation services in St. Lawrence County.

2. Sponsor “Lunch & Learn” events at senior functions, university functions, at public housing complexes, and to large employers to inform potential riders about public transit services.

3. Conduct St. Lawrence County Public Transit Task Force meetings to collaborate with multiple human service providers and organizations to promote increased access to public transportation services.

4. Publish and distribute pamphlets, posters and flyers about St. Lawrence County Public Transit services for public posting in visible locations.

5. Create a mobile-friendly website for riders to purchase tickets/passes, navigate route maps and schedules.

6. Incorporate a trip planner into the transit website that includes walk and bike routes to access bus stops.

7. Provide route information that is clear, understandable, and accurate to make it easier for passengers to understand their travel options. List key information about route frequency, running times throughout the year, and accessible destinations to allow riders to make well-informed decisions about travel and routes of St. Lawrence County Public Transit.

8. Use social media contests to increase awareness about St. Lawrence County Public Transit and its services.

9. Remove barriers to utilizing public transit by providing travel training to individuals and agencies on an as-needed basis about ride scheduling and trip planning to identify suitable transportation services.

10. Identify and contact organizations that provide transportation to disadvantaged populations who are not regularly referring clients to transit service.

11. Pursue funding sources to subsidize fares for low-income riders who cannot afford the $2 one-way bus fare. Work with area medical providers to secure a stream of funding to underwrite these rides.
Increase ridership by regularly assessing public transit routes for efficiency and sustainability, and by altering routes and schedules as needed.

1. Conduct an annual ridership survey to determine rider satisfaction, and to improve scheduling and bus routes.
2. Regularly review ridership, mileage data and GPS records of public transit buses to refine bus routes and timetables.
3. Improve transportation connections between St. Lawrence County Public Transit stops and Jefferson, Franklin and Essex Counties to capture more riders.

Expand the First Mile Last Mile (FMLM) Program to promote the use of existing routes

1. Obtain input and feedback from human service agencies to identify potential locations for riders who are not within walking distance of a public bus stop.
2. Identify FMLM locations to increase access to bus services so that disadvantaged populations (low income, minorities, and persons with disabilities) can have increased access to job centers, education and training facilities, and human service agencies.
3. Increase senior transportation options for cultural, social, education activities and non-emergency medical appointments.
4. Increase the pool of volunteer drivers through improved coordination efforts between human service agencies and transportation providers.
5. Pursue and administer grant funding to support expansion of the First Mile Last Mile Program to increase the number of trips provided through the service.

Increase ridership through new routes and service

1. Add wellness, hospital, community health centers, cultural hubs, parks and recreation and fitness centers to St. Lawrence County Public Transportation’s schedule.
2. Establish shuttle service in Massena (including Akwesasne in Franklin County) and in Gouverneur.
3. Develop and implement a plan to help St. Lawrence County residents travel to Social Security required medical and psychological evaluations that are scheduled outside of the county.
4. Solicit advertisements and sponsorships from area businesses to help underwrite bus stops and transportation expenses.
5. Examine FMLM ridership data and rider survey responses to identify potential locations for expanded bus service.
6. Create a College Connector Route in collaboration with all five Colleges (SUNY Canton, SUNY Potsdam, Clarkson University, St. Lawrence University and the Wanakena Ranger School) to promote increased access to each campus for education and employment opportunities, and to attend cultural and recreational activities.
7. Develop and implement a bike/e-bike share program to connect cyclists to public transit services.
8. Pursue and administer grant funds to establish electric car charging stations to connect drivers to bus stop locations and reduce carbon emissions.
9. Establish more centralized and coordinated regional transfer points between transportation modes and providers.
10. Establish county-level Multi-Modal Transportation and Call Center, with central dispatching program, contract with local volunteer programs and private providers to offer demand response service outside public transportation service area, establish sustainable funding stream for Call Center and services.

11. Develop, implement and secure funding for Regional Mobility Management to include, but not limited to, St. Lawrence, Jefferson, and Lewis, and other counties in the future.

12. Develop partnerships with local counties to develop and implement inter-regional connections beyond the county, including the Canadian border.
St. Lawrence County Public Transit Task Force Directory

A

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Village of Gouverneur
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Phone: (315) 714-2034 - Fax: (315) 788-8021
Contacts: Christine Richardson & Sam Purington
christine@volunteertransportation.org
sam@volunteertransportation.org
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<tr>
<td>The Arc of Jefferson and St. Lawrence</td>
<td>6 Commerce Lane</td>
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<td>NY</td>
<td>(315) 386-2600</td>
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<td>Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc.</td>
<td>6587 USH 11</td>
<td>Canton</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>(315) 714-2034</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Volunteer Transportation Network</td>
<td>VA Medical Center 800 Irving Ave</td>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>(315) 425-4353</td>
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<td><strong>TAXI</strong></td>
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<td>Canton Taxi</td>
<td>1949 SH 68</td>
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<td>(315) 528-0720</td>
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<td>Potsdam Taxi</td>
<td>123 Market St</td>
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<td>Frary's Funeral Home/Taxi</td>
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<td>G-Mans Taxi</td>
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<td>Green Cab/STL</td>
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<td>500 State St</td>
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<td>NY</td>
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<td>431 State St #83</td>
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<td>2134 SH 420</td>
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<td>Moira Taxi Corp</td>
<td>1129 USH 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Country Transportation Services</td>
<td>26000 USH 11 STE PMB 137</td>
<td>Evans Mills</td>
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<td>(315) 955-4589</td>
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<td>Northstar Taxi</td>
<td>PO Box 142</td>
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<td>S.E.A.T.S</td>
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<td>SR Med Cab</td>
<td>925 Ford St</td>
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<td>(315) 854-5981</td>
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<td>Stagecoach ADK</td>
<td>PO Box 687</td>
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<td>Foothills Medical Transport</td>
<td>6458 E Martinsburg Rd</td>
<td>Lowville</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>(315) 777-5435</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mackay Services</td>
<td>21 Park St</td>
<td>Canton</td>
<td>NY</td>
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### WHEELCHAIR

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<td>580 S. Woods Rd</td>
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<td>(518) 651-9983</td>
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<td>Garner Funeral Home</td>
<td>10 Lawrence Av</td>
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<td>(315) 265-5350</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gouverneur Rescue Squad</td>
<td>1024 W USH 11</td>
<td>Gouverneur</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>(315) 783-7199</td>
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<td>500 State St</td>
<td>Carthage</td>
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<td>(315) 408-7963</td>
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<td>(315) 386-8513</td>
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<td>Seaway Valley Med Trans</td>
<td>202 North Main St</td>
<td>Massena</td>
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<td>(315) 764-9133</td>
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<tr>
<td>WeCare Transport Services</td>
<td>35A Smithfield Blvd #261</td>
<td>Plattsburgh</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>(518) 651-7499</td>
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### STRETCHER

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<td>Gouverneur Rescue Squad</td>
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<td>Seaway Valley Med Trans</td>
<td>202 North Main St</td>
<td>Massena</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>(315) 764-9133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WeCare Transport Services</td>
<td>35A Smithfield Blvd #261</td>
<td>Plattsburgh</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>(518) 651-7499</td>
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### AMBULANCE

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<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tr>
<td>Canton Rescue Squad</td>
<td>77 Riverside Dr</td>
<td>Canton</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>(315) 386-4613</td>
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<tr>
<td>County Ambulance</td>
<td>175 Waconah</td>
<td>Pittsfield</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>(413) 499-2527</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gouverneur Rescue Squad</td>
<td>1024 W USH 11</td>
<td>Gouverneur</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>(315) 287-1321</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lamoille Ambulance Svc</td>
<td>93 Lower Main St</td>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>VT</td>
<td>(800) 639-2082</td>
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<tr>
<td>RB Lawrence Ambulance</td>
<td>5747 USH 11</td>
<td>Canton</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>(877) 577-2262</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seaway Valley Ambulance</td>
<td>202 North Main St</td>
<td>Massena</td>
<td>NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Varin's Ambulance Service</td>
<td>15 Flanagan Dr</td>
<td>Plattsburgh</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>(518) 561-4793</td>
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