

**NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
PUBLIC TRANSIT – HUMAN SERVICES
COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION
PLAN**

OCTOBER 2007

**DEVELOPED BY:
NWA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
AREA PUBLIC TRANSIT AND HUMAN SERVICE AGENCIES
IN COOPERATION WITH:
US DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
AND
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION**

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Northwest Arkansas, is responsible for the comprehensive, continuing and cooperative transportation planning process as it relates to provision of coordinated public transit services to the elderly, persons with disabilities, and people with low income. The NWA Public Transit – Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan (Coordination Plan), developed through a collaborative effort with area public transit providers, human services agencies, key stakeholders, and the public, seeks to respond to the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)” requirements.

SAFETEA-LU

The federal transportation legislation, Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), passed by Congress in 2005 requires that projects for certain Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit – human services transportation plan.

The FTA programs that the Coordination Plan applies to are listed below:

- **Section 5310: Formula Grants for Special Needs of Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities**

The Section 5310 program was established in 1975 as a discretionary capital assistance program. In cases where public transit was inadequate or inappropriate, the program awarded grants to private non-profit organizations to serve the transportation needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

The goal of the Section 5310 program is to improve mobility for elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities throughout the country. Toward this goal, FTA provides financial assistance for transportation services planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special transportation needs of elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities in all areas – urbanized, small urban, and rural. The program requires coordination with other federally assisted programs and services in order to make the most efficient use of federal resources.

- **Section 5316: Job Access and Reverse Commute Program**

The Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Transportation Program was established in 1999 as part of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and was continued under SAFETEA-LU, passed by Congress in 2005, and is codified under 49 U.S.C. Section 5316.

The JARC program actually authorizes two kinds of grants: 1) Job Access grants that are aimed at developing new transportation services for low-income workers and/or filling in gaps in existing services and 2) Reverse commute projects that provide transportation to suburban jobs from urban, rural and other suburban

locations. Grantees are required to provide a 50 percent match for operating and a 20 percent match for capital projects.

The purpose of the JARC program is to provide a framework for the coordination and development of projects that will enhance transportation needs of two specific groups:

1. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients.
2. Low-income individuals (150 percent of poverty level).

- **Section 5317: New Freedom Program**

The primary objective of the New Freedom program is to provide “new public transportation services” and “public transportation alternatives beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990”. A new transportation service is any service or activity that was not operational before August 10, 2005 and did not have an identified funding source as of August 10, 2005, as evidenced by inclusion in the State Transportation Improvement Plan or the local Transportation Improvement Plan. A new project must meet ADA requirements.

II. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Coordination Plan is a locally developed, coordinated, public transit-human services transportation plan that has as its purpose:

- The identification of the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes,
- Provision of comprehensive strategies for meeting those local needs, and
- Prioritization of strategies for transportation services for funding and implementation.

The Coordination Plan also maximizes the human service programs’ collective coverage by minimizing duplication of services. Thus, the investment of applicable FTA program funds will be done in a cost-effective manner with optimal impact. The Plan then, becomes a framework for project creations that will utilize Section 5310, 5316 and 5317 funding.

The Coordination Plan is intended to be flexible, since the information in this Plan may change over time as federal and state guidelines change, and it is designed to be able to take advantage of any potential opportunities that may become available.

III. SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS

Basic Profile of Northwest Arkansas:

The Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers Metropolitan Statistical Area currently encompasses four counties including Benton, Madison, and Washington Counties in Arkansas and, also, McDonald County to the north in Missouri. The Northwest Arkansas Transportation Study Area (NARTS) consists of Benton and Washington County. For the purpose of the Coordination Plan, this demographic profile will consider the NARTS two-county area.

Geography:

Benton County contains a total of 880 square miles. Benton County has 846 square miles of land and 43 square miles of water, while Washington County contains 956 square miles including 6 square miles of water. The two counties are divided from north to south by the Old Missouri Road/Butterfield trail that runs along a major watershed divide. On the west, most of the watershed flows into the Illinois River, which flows into Oklahoma. Eastern water flows into the White River basin, which contains the 31,700-acre Beaver Lake.

Benton County:

Benton County registered a population of 153,406 in Census 2000. The U.S. Census estimates the population of Benton County to be 196,045 on July 1, 2006, a 27.8 percent increase from the 153,406 Census 2000 figure. This shows a rapid growth rate of 4.4 percent per year or 6, 832 people per year moving to Benton County since Census day, April 1, 2000.

Benton County contains 18 incorporated cities. All or part of five Benton County cities fell within the Census defined urbanized area in Census 2000, including the cities of Bethel Heights, Bentonville, Little Flock, Lowell, and Rogers. Bella Vista, incorporated on December 12, 2006 with a population of 15,632, could also be characterized as an urbanizing place. Most of the population of Benton County is located along the I-540 corridor. Siloam Springs, situated on the Oklahoma boarder, with an estimated population of 14,413, can also be seen as an urbanizing place.

Washington County:

Census 2000 counted a Washington County population of 157,715 people. The U.S. Census estimates the population of Washington County to be 186,521 on July 1, 2006, an 18.2 percent increase from the 157,715 Census 2000 figure. This shows a growth rate of 2.9 percent per year or 4,599 people per year moving to Washington County since Census day, April 1, 2000.

Washington County contains 13 incorporated cities. Seven of these cities fall within the urbanized area criteria. These cities include Elkins, Elm Springs, Farmington, Fayetteville, Greenland, Johnson, and Springdale. Similar to Benton County, the majority of residents live close to the I-540 corridor.

Population:

The following table shows the Population of the NARTS two-county study area by community.

BENTON & WASHINGTON COUNTY CITIES 2007 POPULATION/GROWTH ESTIMATES				
Based on dwelling unit permits (*Special Census Conducted)				
Community	CENSUS 2000 Population	POPULATION ESTIMATE Population	Population Increase	10 year Projection
AVOCA	423	496	73	632
BELLA VISTA*	15,632	22,899	7,267	31,147
BENTONVILLE*	19,730	30,672	10,942	42,264
BETHEL HEIGHTS	714	2,258	1,544	3,438
CAVE SPRINGS	1,103	1,616	513	2,304
CENTERTON*	2,146	7,631	5,485	11,894
DECATUR	1,314	1,692	378	2,154
ELKINS*	1,251	2,445	1,194	3,491
ELM SPRINGS	1,044	1,584	540	1,996
FARMINGTON*	3,605	4,848	1,243	6,953
FAYETTEVILLE*	58,047	68,924	10,877	84,938
GARFIELD	490	490	NR	599
GATEWAY	116	494	378	750
GENTRY	2,165	2,990	825	3,745
GOSHEN	752	980	228	1,213
GRAVETTE	1,810	2,382	572	2,960
GREENLAND	907	1,301	394	1,627
HIGHFILL	379	703	324	1,073
HUNTSVILLE**	2,046	2,289	243	2,697
JOHNSON	2,319	3,523	1,204	5,269
LINCOLN	1,752	2,125	373	2,522
LITTLE FLOCK	2,585	3,189	604	4,529
LOWELL	5,013	7,078	2,065	10,572
PEA RIDGE	2,346	4,312	1,966	5,920
PRAIRIE GROVE*	2,540	3,583	1,043	4,671
ROGERS*	38,829	51,990	13,161	68,288
SILOAM SPRINGS*	10,843	14,413	3,570	18,152
SPRINGDALE*	45,798	65,001	19,203	85,932
SPRINGTOWN	114	114	NR	182
SULPHUR SPRINGS	671	690	19	790
TONTITOWN	942	1,923	981	2,796
WEST FORK	2,042	2,356	314	2,803
WINSLOW	399	399	NR	433

** Boundary Change Population Certification: This figure represents the Census 2000

Population with the new boundary

NR = Not Recorded

Poverty, age, and disability:

According to Census 2000, Benton and Washington Counties had 15,201(10.1%) and 22,104 (14.6%) individuals living below the poverty level. The percentage of individuals living in poverty remained about the same (10.9% and 15.6%) for the two counties as recorded in the 2006 American Community Survey. Absolute numbers for poverty are not given in the American Community Survey. However, with the county growth rates cited above, it can be assumed that the total number of individuals living below the poverty level has increased accordingly.

Census 2000 recorded 21,973 people 65 years and over in Benton County and 15,596 in Washington County. The 2006 American Community Survey estimated this population to have increased to 23,976 and 17,542 for each of the counties.

Census 2000 recorded 27,926 or 19.1 percent of the total population of 140,766 as having a disability in Benton County. Washington County had 25,997 or 18.1 percent of a total 143,840 population recorded with disability status in Census 2000. In 2006 the American Community Survey showed these figures as increasing to 31,345 in Benton County and 26,979 in Washington County.

According to Census 2000, in Benton County 37.1 percent of the 65 years and over population held disability status. In Washington County, 44.5 percent of the 65 years and over population had a disability.

Socio-Economic Conclusions:

- Given the current population age profile of the two-county Northwest Arkansas Study Area (NARTS) it can be seen that the senior citizen population is increasing not only in absolute terms but, also, as a percentage of the overall total area population. Also, with the attractions of Northwest Arkansas such as Beaver Lake, clean air, and hospital expansion, an ongoing immigration in the retirement age group will likely continue.
- Disability rates on the whole are likely to increase due to advances made in the medical field that will increase life longevity and birth rate survival rates.
- By looking at the general trend between Census 2000 and the 2006 American Community survey it can be concluded that, given stable economic conditions, the percentage level of low-income persons will remain about the same over time. However, given the continuing growth trend of the general population, the absolute numbers of low-income persons will rise accordingly.

Currently, based on U.S. Census data, it is estimated that Benton and Washington Counties have between 80,000 and 100,000 people in the demographic groups of below poverty, having disabilities, and 65 and older. These demographic groups, that potentially have a higher need of transportation services, continue to grow, hence the need to address the transportation services for these groups will increase with time.

IV. PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Development of the Coordination Plan involved the participation of local transportation providers and service agencies, as well as other interested parties, who desired to become stakeholders in the transportation coordination process. Also participating in the process were the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department and NWARPC staff, who directed the process.

The Plan development process began with a meeting invitation to identified transit providers and human services agencies. A letter explaining SAFETEA-LU requirements, the Plan's purpose, and the date, time and place was sent to the following agencies:

Adult Development Center of Benton County	Benton County Sunshine School
Faith in Action, Fayetteville	Salvation Army Shelter, Bentonville
Ozark Regional Transit, Springdale	Razorback Transit, U of A
Area Agency on Aging, Harrison	Office of Human Concern, Rogers
Life Styles, Fayetteville	Bella Vista Courtesy Transportation
Arkansas Support Network, Springdale	United Way of Northwest Arkansas
Jones Center for Families, Inc., Springdale	Elizabeth Richardson Center, Springdale
City of Siloam Springs, Para-transit Dept.	Community Resource Group, Fayetteville
Decision Point, Springdale	Ozark Guidance Center, Springdale
Ark. Dept. of Health and Human Services	Health Dept. of Washington County
Youth Bridge, Fayetteville	Youth Bridge, Centerton
Ark. Highway and Transportation Dept.	Economic Opportunity Agency of Wa. Co.
Jefferson Lines, Minneapolis, MN	Ark. Workforce Center, Siloam Springs
Greyhound Bus Lines, Dallas, TX	Kerrville Bus Co., San Antonio, TX

The Initial Stakeholder Meeting was held August 2, 2007. The agenda included:

1. Role of Metropolitan Planning Organization
2. Coordination Planning – Cooperative Effort with AHTD
3. Explanation of the Coordination Plan
4. Inventory Analysis – The group was asked to complete an Inventory Data sheet.
5. Gaps in Services and Coordination Opportunities – General discussion on unmet needs/gaps in services and coordination opportunities.

The Second Stakeholder Meeting was held August 13, 2007. The agenda included:

1. Transit Needs/Gaps in Services – The group discussed, in depth, the needs/gaps identified in the previous meeting. A list was compiled.
2. Coordination Opportunities – The group discussed and listed coordination opportunities.
3. Public Input Meeting – The group set a date for a Public Input Meeting. They also discussed questions that could be used on a survey to be distributed at the Public Input Meeting.

A Transit Coordination Public Input Meeting was held August 29, 2007, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM, at the Jones Center for Families, Inc. Ozark Regional Transit and Razorback Transit had display tables featuring maps of routes, brochures, and staff members were on-hand to answer questions. 65 people signed in at the meeting. 63 surveys were completed. (For a summary of the results of the survey see the Appendix.)

The Third Stakeholder Meeting was held September 11, 2007. The agenda included:

1. Discussion of the Public Input Meeting and Survey Summary
2. Discussion of Unmet Needs/Gaps in Services (See tables below)
3. Discussion of Coordination Opportunities

Based upon previous planning sessions with key stakeholders, as well as the public comments from the Transit Coordination Public Input Meeting, the following presents an **un-prioritized** list of unmet needs/service gaps that must be addressed to meet some of the needs of transit dependent persons:

Un-prioritized Unmet Travel Needs/Service Gaps – August/September 2007

	Older Adults	People with Disabilities	People with Lower Incomes
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekend service • Evening service • 24/7/365 • Holiday and special events • Transportation from rural to urban • Transportation from small cities to larger cities • Need door to door service • In order to do volunteer work, need service that is safe and convenient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekend service • Evening and late hour service • Changes in shift time • 24/7/365 • Holiday and special events • Transportation from rural to urban • Transportation from small cities to larger cities • Need door to door service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekend service • Evening and late hour service • Early morning service • Transportation for employment overtime • Changes in employment shift time • 24/7/365 • Holiday and special events • Transportation from rural to urban • Transportation from small cities to larger cities
Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation from rural to urban • Transportation from small cities to larger cities • Transportation services must assist individuals with infirmities from home to van, on and off van, assist into medical facilities • Need door to door service • Service must be affordable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation from rural to urban • Transportation from small cities to larger cities • Transportation services must assist individuals with disabilities from home to van, on and off van, assist into medical facilities • Need door to door service • Service must be affordable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation from rural to urban • Transportation from small cities to larger cities • Service must be affordable

Un-prioritized General Needs and Gaps Impacting all Categories of Users:

- Lack of adequate funding to expand all types of transportation to serve all categories of users.
- Need to expand public transit to serve the entire region; often service is not provided in areas that might be more apt to use public transit
- Lack of a safe and interconnecting sidewalk, bike lane, trail system to move people to public transit routes
- Need more dial-a-ride availability
- Need more night and weekend service for shopping and education, as well as employment, medical and social services
- Need additional advertising or education on the availability of public transit
- More encouragement from city officials, and increased funding
- On a fixed route, bus at least every hour, with more on-time schedules
- More bus stops, clearly marked
- Informational kiosks at bus stops
- Less wait time for buses
- Route numbers on buses are not clearly marked
- Additional buses
- Improve safety in vehicles, i.e. seat belts, lifts, general equipment maintenance
- Need benches and/or shelters at bus stops and other points of pick up and drop off
- Proper curb ramps for disabled
- Need a coordinated evacuation plan for an emergency – nursing facilities, assisted living, and hospitals
- Part time drivers, and drivers with CDL
- Additional drivers
- Need driver training
- Drivers that speak Spanish or Marshallese
- Additional dispatchers and schedulers
- Need to identify specific destinations that need more services

The Fourth Stakeholders Meeting was held September 27, 2007. The focus of the meeting concerned the Draft Coordination Plan. The group finalized the Coordination Opportunities that would be included in the Plan and unanimously approved the Draft Coordination Plan to go forward to Public Comment.

A Public Comment period, for review of the Draft Public Transit – Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan (Coordination Plan), was held between October 15 and October 29, 2007.

The Stakeholders group formally adopted the Coordination Plan, on November 1, 2007. The Coordination Plan may follow the update cycle for the Northwest Arkansas 2030 Regional Transportation Plan.

V. AVAILABLE SERVICES OF CURRENT PROVIDERS

The availability of transportation services to the two-county region is dependent upon public, private and nonprofit providers. While the list below indicates providers who were contributors to this Plan, other services may be available that are not listed here.

Agency: Adult Development Center of Benton County

Service Area	Washington and Benton Counties
Total \$ Amount Spent on Client Transportation per Year	\$114,000
Type of Clientele: Disabled, Low-Income, Elderly	Adults with disabilities
Type of Service: Fixed Route or Demand Responsive	Fixed Route
Number and Average Fleet Age of Vehicles	Average age: 5.6 years
Number of Active FTA Vehicles Used	Six
Number ADA Accessible	Five
Average Seating Capacity per Vehicle	Average 18; Four are 21 passenger
Average Number of Riders per Day	85 to 90
Average Number of Riders per Vehicle per Day	18
Average Number of Days Operated Per Week	Five

Agency: Area Agency on Aging

Service Area	Baxter, Benton, Boone, Carroll, Madison, Marion, Newton, Searcy, Washington Co.
Total \$ Amount Spent on Client Transportation per Year	Contracted Service
Type of Clientele: Disabled, Low-Income, Elderly	Elderly
Type of Service: Fixed Route or Demand Responsive	Demand Response
Number and Average Fleet Age of Vehicles	Two vehicles; Average age: 3 years
Number of Active FTA Vehicles Used	One
Number ADA Accessible	One
Average Seating Capacity per Vehicle	13
Average Number of Riders per Day	18
Average Number of Riders per Vehicle per Day	Nine
Average Number of Days Operated Per Week	Five

Agency: Elizabeth Richardson Center

Service Area	Washington, Benton, and Madison Counties
Total \$ Amount Spent on Client Transportation per Year	\$200,000
Type of Clientele: Disabled, Low-Income, Elderly	Individuals with disabilities
Type of Service: Fixed Route or Demand Responsive	Combination
Number and Average Fleet Age of Vehicles	16 vehicles; average age: 6.3 years
Number of Active FTA Vehicles Used	6
Number ADA Accessible	9 vehicles with lifts
Average Seating Capacity per Vehicle	10.3
Average Number of Riders per Day	73
Average Number of Riders per Vehicle per Day	6.08
Average Number of Days Operated Per Week	5

Agency: Life Styles, Inc.

Service Area	Washington and Benton Counties
Total \$ Amount Spent on Client Transportation per Year	\$155,759
Type of Clientele: Disabled, Low-Income, Elderly	Individuals with disabilities
Type of Service: Fixed Route or Demand Responsive	Demand Response
Number and Average Fleet Age of Vehicles	4 vehicles; average age: 4.5 years
Number of Active FTA Vehicles Used	2
Number ADA Accessible	2
Average Seating Capacity per Vehicle	7.75
Average Number of Riders per Day	31
Average Number of Riders per Vehicle per Day	7.5
Average Number of Days Operated Per Week	7

Agency: Jones Center for Families, Inc.

Service Area	Washington County
Total \$ Amount Spent on Client Transportation per Year	\$2,008.45
Type of Clientele: Disabled, Low-Income, Elderly	Elderly, Disabled, and Low-Income
Type of Service: Fixed Route or Demand Responsive	Demand Response
Number and Average Fleet Age of Vehicles	1 vehicle; average age 5 years
Number of Active FTA Vehicles Used	1
Number ADA Accessible	1
Average Seating Capacity per Vehicle	11
Average Number of Riders per Day	Varies
Average Number of Riders per Vehicle per Day	Varies
Average Number of Days Operated Per Week	1

Agency: Northwest Arkansas Economic District

Service Area	Washington County
Total \$ Amount Spent on Client Transportation per Year	\$204,118
Type of Clientele: Disabled, Low-Income, Elderly	Elderly
Type of Service: Fixed Route or Demand Responsive	Demand Response
Number and Average Fleet Age of Vehicles	11 vehicles; average age: 5 years
Number of Active FTA Vehicles Used	5
Number ADA Accessible	1
Average Seating Capacity per Vehicle	13
Average Number of Riders per Day	85
Average Number of Riders per Vehicle per Day	11 vans at 7 sites; ridership varies from 3 to 25 per vehicle
Average Number of Days Operated Per Week	5

Agency: Office of Human Concern

Service Area	Benton County
Total \$ Amount Spent on Client Transportation per Year	\$154,798
Type of Clientele: Disabled, Low-Income, Elderly	Elderly
Type of Service: Fixed Route or Demand Responsive	Demand Response
Number and Average Fleet Age of Vehicles	9 vehicles; average age 6 years
Number of Active FTA Vehicles Used	4
Number ADA Accessible	0
Average Seating Capacity per Vehicle	13
Average Number of Riders per Day	74
Average Number of Riders per Vehicle per Day	9 vans at 3 sites; ridership varies from 3 to 13 per vehicle
Average Number of Days Operated Per Week	5

Agency: Ozark Regional Transit

Service Area	Benton, Carroll, Madison, Washington Counties
Total \$ Amount Spent on Client Transportation per Year	\$2.3 million
Type of Clientele: Disabled, Low-Income, Elderly	Elderly, Disabled, Low-Income, General Public
Type of Service: Fixed Route or Demand Responsive	Both
Number and Average Fleet Age of Vehicles	25 vehicles; average age 5 years
Number of Active FTA Vehicles Used	16
Number ADA Accessible	All
Average Seating Capacity per Vehicle	20, from 5 to 49 passengers
Average Number of Riders per Day	550
Average Number of Riders per Vehicle per Day	20 to 160
Average Number of Days Operated Per Week	5

Agency: City of Siloam Springs

Service Area	Siloam Springs city limits
Total \$ Amount Spent on Client Transportation per Year	Unavailable
Type of Clientele: Disabled, Low-Income, Elderly	Elderly, Individuals with disabilities
Type of Service: Fixed Route or Demand Responsive	Demand Response
Number and Average Fleet Age of Vehicles	1 station wagon, 12 years old; 1 van, 2 years old
Number of Active FTA Vehicles Used	None
Number ADA Accessible	Van only
Average Seating Capacity per Vehicle	4
Average Number of Riders per Day	8
Average Number of Riders per Vehicle per Day	1
Average Number of Days Operated Per Week	5

Agency: Razorback Transit, University of Arkansas

Service Area	City of Fayetteville
Total \$ Amount Spent on Client Transportation per Year	\$2,219,414
Type of Clientele: Disabled, Low-Income, Elderly	Elderly, Disabled, Low-Income, Students, General Public
Type of Service: Fixed Route or Demand Responsive	Fixed Route and Complementary Paratransit
Number and Average Fleet Age of Vehicles	21 buses; average age: 12.28 years 5 vans; average age: 4.6 years
Number of Active FTA Vehicles Used	All
Number ADA Accessible	All
Average Seating Capacity per Vehicle	Buses: 33 Vans: 12
Average Number of Riders per Day	Buses: 4,660 Vans: 32
Average Number of Riders per Vehicle	Buses: 338 Vans: 10
Average Number of Days Operated Per Week per Day	6 days per week for 9 months 5 days per week for 3 months Average of 5.75 days

VI. IDENTIFICATION OF HIGH PRIORITY UNMET TRAVEL NEEDS AND GAPS IN SERVICES.

Recognizing that funding for services is always at the forefront for provision of current services, as well as expansion of services, the following are **High Priority Unmet Needs/Gaps in Services** that impact elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and low income persons.

ACCESS

- To medical and health care services/facilities.
- To employment. Employment and return trip services are needed, especially addressing overtime work and shift changes.
- To education, shopping, and social services.

ADDITIONAL AND AFFORDABLE TRANSIT SERVICES

- To include weekends, evenings/nights, holidays and special events for all categories of users.
- Need additional door-to-door services for older and disabled people.
- To include more dial-a-ride availability.
- To include the entire two-county region
 - From rural areas to urban areas
 - From smaller cities to larger cities.

A LACK OF FORMAL COORDINATION BETWEEN PROVIDERS

- An open and continuous planning process between human service agencies and transit providers is necessary to optimize coordination of services.
- There is a need for a coordinated effort to disseminate comprehensive transportation service information, as well as answer the public's questions.

A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF VARIOUS TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMS

- Older persons, persons with disabilities and persons with low incomes do not fully understand the transportation services options that are available to them for the various trips they take.
- The general public is not fully aware of the availability of transit services.

COMMUNITY LEADERS AWARENESS OF TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

- There is a perception that many public officials and employers are often unaware of community needs when it comes to transportation services for transit dependent residents.
- Need a dedicated funding source to maintain and increase transit service.

PROVISION OF SAFE, CONVENIENT AND ACCESSABLE TRANSIT

- Need higher frequency of buses on existing routes to shorten wait time between buses.
- Need safe access to bus stops/transit routes.
- Need benches/shelters throughout the region.
- Need better identification of bus routes and schedules.

VII. OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE COORDINATION, ATTAIN UNMET NEEDS, AND CLOSE GAPS IN SERVICES

The ultimate purpose of the Coordination Plan is to provide comprehensive strategies, or opportunities, for meeting local needs and prioritization of those opportunities for ease in decision making toward actions to realize these opportunities. While the opportunities described below are in a prioritized manner, lower strategies may be advanced given the needs of individual agencies and project complexity.

As demonstrated in Chapter III, Selected Demographics, demand for transportation services will continue to increase for the elderly, low-income and disabled population groups in the two-county region. **To best address the identified unmet needs and gaps in services, funding from Section 5307, Section 5310, Section 5311, Section 5316, and Section 5317 programs should be used to enhance transportation services for public, private and nonprofit establishments providing transportation services when the public transit system can not provide needed service.**

Additional opportunities exist for providing increased coordination and services within the two-county region to address unmet needs and gaps. While delivery of services is somewhat different between public, private and nonprofit providers, there does exist the opportunity to offer coordination of some services.

Through stakeholder participation and public input, the following opportunities were identified and ranked, in order of priority:

- 1.**

 - ❑ **Due to current unmet needs, maintaining existing levels of service is essential.**
 - Purchase replacement vehicles.
 - ❑ **Improve access and provide additional, affordable transportation services.**
 - Develop additional local funding sources.
 - Utilize all applicable funding sources.
 - Purchase vehicles to expand services.
 - Provide new services to expand access to health facilities, employment, education, shopping and social services.
 - Provide new services to expand affordable service to include weekends, evenings/nights, holidays and special events.
 - Provide new services that would include more door-to-door services, as well as more dial-a-ride services.
 - Provide new services to include the entire two county region, especially between rural and urban, and from smaller cities to larger cities.

2.

- **Build a local coalition of interested parties for transportation services.**
 - Conduct surveys of providers and users to evaluate service effectiveness and efficiency.
 - Evaluate policies related to drivers, insurance, etc.
 - Evaluate land use policies, with regard to location of human services offices relative to the clients they serve.
 - Develop a plan, involving input from the coalition, elected officials, and the public, to improve services.
 - Include pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure needs into general street plans and designs.
 - Encourage transit oriented design.
 - Adopt the plan.
 - Possible inclusion in the Long Range Transportation Plan.
 - Encourage local elected officials and community leaders to support the plan.
 - Develop an informational package for elected officials that could be presented by human services agencies, in conjunction with public transit providers.
 - Use the coalition as a “unified voice” to push for increased funding for transportation services provided by public, private and nonprofit providers.
 - Once funding is identified, develop a cohesive plan for implementation.
 - Continue stakeholder meetings to assess the impact of the Plan.

- **Develop a coordinated local system to provide transportation information to public transportation dependent persons and the general public.**
 - Increase advertising, via television, newspaper, radio, other media targeted to Spanish speaking persons.
 - Develop a brochure (in English and Spanish) that includes transportation information.
 - Develop a web site that is accessible to all local communities, that includes transportation information.
 - Develop a “one number” system that will direct people to the specific agency or governmental assistance department that they require.
 - Ensure that informational kiosks are placed strategically along transit routes.
 - Develop a joint education program to promote the availability of transportation services.

3.

- **Provide more efficient and effective service delivery.**
 - Evaluate existing and future needs of public transportation dependent persons.
 - Review routes and schedules of all providers relative to origin and destination, especially where there are high concentrations of public transportation dependent persons.
 - Identify connection points among providers to better utilize equipment.
 - Eliminate duplication of services.
 - Increase service frequency by adding vehicles, to assure shorter waits.

- **Provide a better quality of life for public transportation dependent persons.**
 - Install benches and/or shelters throughout the two county region.
 - Clearly mark bus stops and routes.
 - Encourage riders to use safety features, such as seat belts.

4.

- **Coordinate an approach for the development of model contracts or agreements for public, private and nonprofit providers. These may cover provision of:**
 - Transportation provider training;
 - Quality, low cost driver training on an annual basis, including defensive driving, CPR, and basic first aid;
 - Shared drivers;
 - Commercial Driver License and drug/alcohol compliance;
 - Vehicle utilization;
 - Mechanical needs and fueling;
 - Risk management insurance and liability;
 - Shared ridership.

- **Coordinate services with emergency response agencies.**
 - Involve emergency response agencies in the coalition.

5.

□ Innovative considerations for coordination activities.

- Research new programs and ideas that could enhance transportation services.
- Research the use of technology, including Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the NWA Travel Demand Model, and other technological systems that could prove useful in coordinating operations, scheduling rides, and providing route information to improve quality of services for transportation dependent persons and the general public.
- Research educational opportunities for transportation services providers to train operators and drivers to be sensitive to the needs of their customers/clients, especially seniors, the disabled with special needs, and non-English speaking persons.

CLOSING

While it is clear that there are many unmet needs in the two-county region, it is equally clear that there are opportunities to address these needs in very fundamental ways, such as the funding provided in the Section 5307, 5310, 5311, 5316, and 5317 programs. Additionally, as demonstrated above, other, more innovative opportunities exist to aid transportation dependent persons.

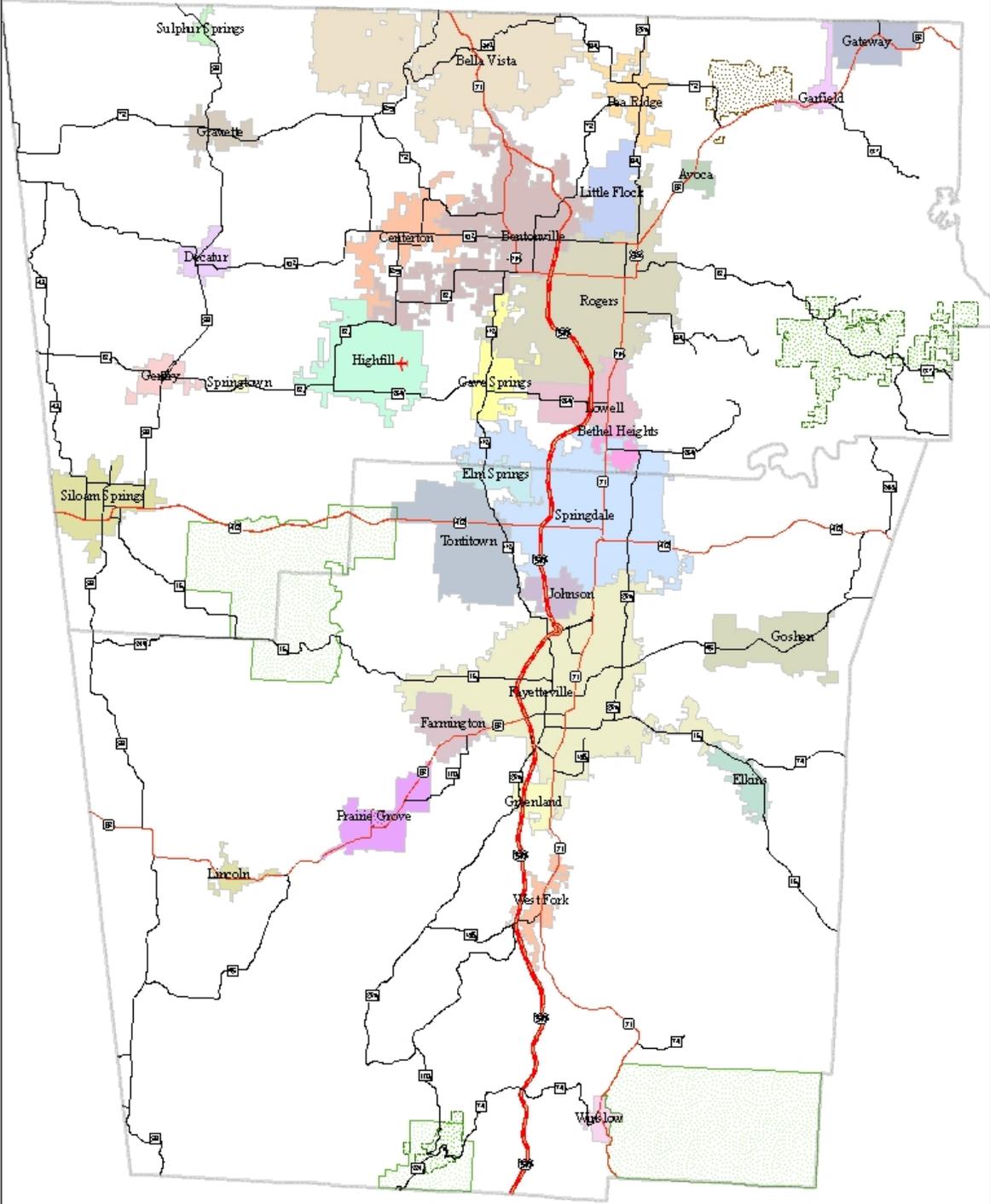
Nonetheless, the opportunities offered in the Coordination Plan require a significant investment of time, research, technical assistance and funds to implement, thus stakeholders will have to meet on a regular basis over time to assure implementation. The stakeholders involved in the development of the Coordination Plan have expressed interest in continued meetings, and to move forward in an advisory role to facilitate implementation of the Plan opportunities, as well as identification of new unmet needs and gaps in services.

It is only with the continued assistance of local, state and federal officials, as well as the stakeholders and interested groups, that the Coordination Plan will become a reality, and older persons, individuals with disabilities, low income persons, and the general public will experience an improvement in transportation services.

APPENDIX

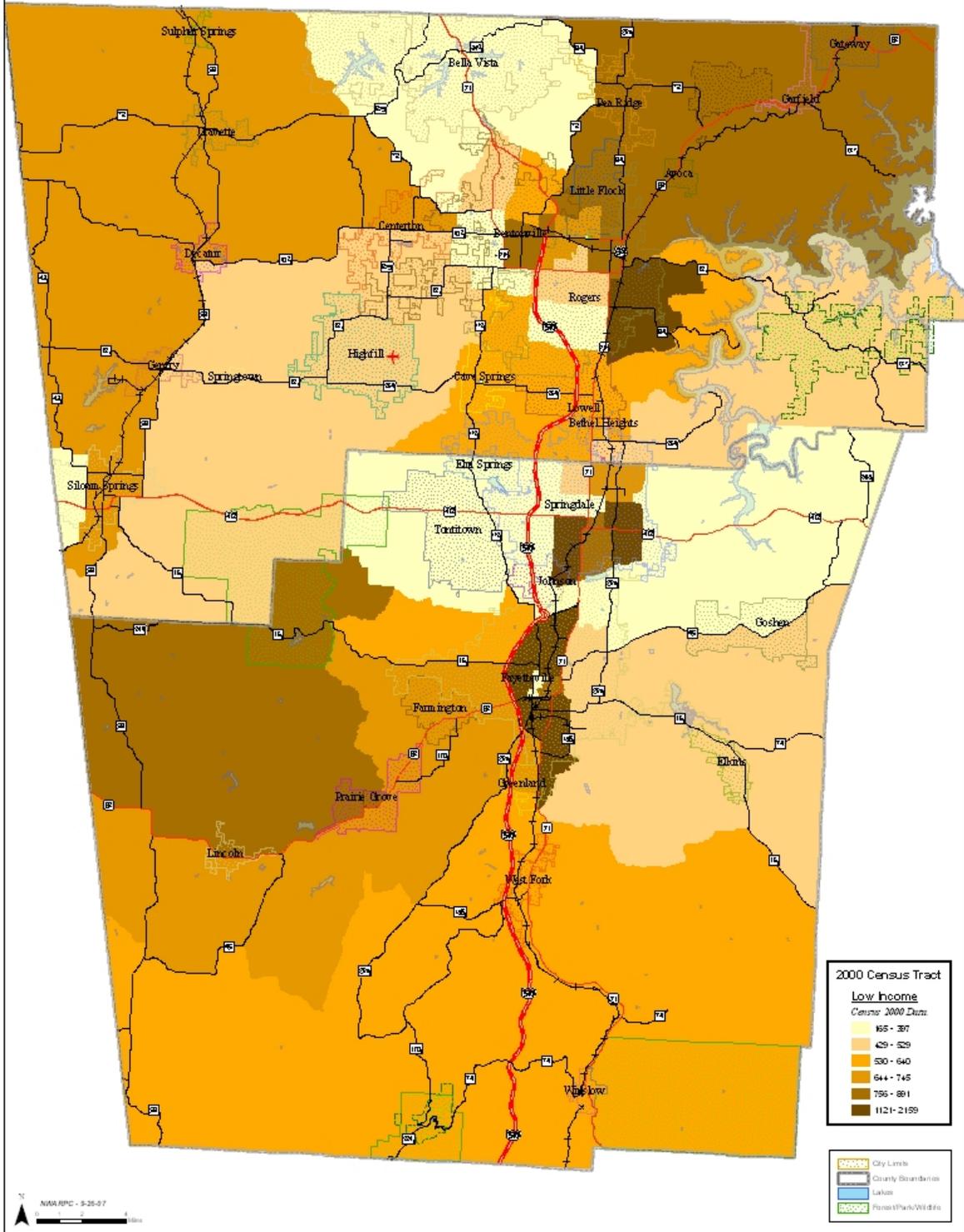
**TWO-COUNTY MAP
SELECTED DEMOGRAPHICS
LOW INCOME MAP
PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY SUMMARY**

Benton and Washington Counties



POVERTY, AGE, DISABILITY STATUS, AND COMMUTING PATTERNS			
Census 2000 Beaton County		2006 American Community Survey Beaton County	
POVERTY STATUS IN 1999 (below poverty level)		PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES AND PEOPLE WHOSE INCOME IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS IS	
Families	3,205 (X)	All families	8.70% +/-2.2
Percent below poverty level	(X) 7.3	With related children under 18 years	13.50% +/-3.7
With related children under 18 years	2,406 (X)	With related children under 5 years only	13.90% +/-8.8
Percent below poverty level	(X) 11.2	Married couple families	5.00% +/-1.5
With related children under 5 years	1,289 (X)	With related children under 18 years	5.90% +/-2.8
Percent below poverty level	(X) 14.3	With related children under 5 years only	0.00% +/-3.4
Families with female householder, no husband present	1,055 (X)	Families with female householder, no husband present	31.00% +/-3.8
Percent below poverty level	(X) 23	With related children under 18 years	42.50% +/-12.3
With related children under 18 years	944 (X)	With related children under 5 years only	56.90% +/-24.4
Percent below poverty level	(X) 29	All people	10.90% +/-2.0
With related children under 5 years	514 (X)	Under 18 years	16.40% +/-4.5
Percent below poverty level	(X) 44.1	Related children under 18 years	15.50% +/-4.5
Individuals	15,201 (X)	Related children under 5 years	18.00% +/-6.9
Percent below poverty level	(X) 19.1	Related children 5 to 17 years	14.50% +/-4.5
18 years and over	9,461 (X)	18 years and over	8.80% +/-1.5
Percent below poverty level	(X) 8.6	18 to 64 years	3.40% +/-1.8
65 years and over	1,554 (X)	65 years and over	6.10% +/-1.9
Percent below poverty level	(X) 7.3	People in families	3.90% +/-2.2
Related children under 18 years	5,542 (X)	Unrelated individuals 15 years and over	21.40% +/-4.2
Percent below poverty level	(X) 13.8	Selected Economic Characteristics: 2006	
Related children 5 to 17 years	3,743 (X)		Estimate Margin of Error
Percent below poverty level	(X) 13		
Unrelated individuals 15 years and over	3,325 (X)		
Percent below poverty level	(X) 20.1		
Median household income (dollars)	40,281 (X)	Median household income (dollars)	45,543 +/-2,635
DISABILITY STATUS OF THE CIVILIAN NONINSTITUTIONALIZED POPULATION		DISABILITY STATUS OF THE CIVILIAN NONINSTITUTIONALIZED POPULATION	
Population 5 to 20 years	34,815 100	Population 5 years and over	179,334 +/-784
With a disability	3,015 8.7	With a disability	31,345 +/-2,633
Population 21 to 64 years	84,584 100	Population 5 to 15 years	30,378 +/-945
With a disability	16,968 20.1	With a disability	2,143 +/-395
Percent employed	60.8 (X)	Population 16 to 64 years	125,396 +/-927
No disability	61,596 73.3	With a disability	18,617 +/-1,852
Percent employed	79.2 (X)	Population 65 years and over	23,560 +/-567
Population 65 years and over	21,367 100	With a disability	3,865 +/-1,439
With a disability	7,323 31.1		
Census 2000 Beaton County		2006 American Community Survey Beaton County	
Total population	153,406 100	Total population	196,045 -----
SEX AND AGE		SEX AND AGE	
Male	75,696 49.3	Male	98,235 +/-797
Female	77,720 50.7	Female	97,810 +/-797
Under 5 years	11,616 7.6	Under 5 years	15,613 +/-759
5 to 9 years	11,423 7.4	5 to 9 years	16,394 +/-1,483
10 to 14 years	11,301 7.4	10 to 14 years	12,424 +/-1,300
15 to 19 years	10,473 6.8	15 to 19 years	12,827 +/-1,434
20 to 24 years	3,169 6	20 to 24 years	12,778 +/-759
25 to 34 years	21,310 14.3	25 to 34 years	23,976 +/-637
35 to 44 years	23,177 15.1	35 to 44 years	27,740 +/-591
45 to 54 years	18,193 11.9	45 to 54 years	25,121 +/-400
55 to 59 years	7,417 4.8	55 to 59 years	9,236 +/-1,078
60 to 64 years	6,754 4.4	60 to 64 years	9,960 +/-1,084
65 to 74 years	12,193 8	65 to 74 years	12,553 +/-487
75 to 84 years	7,682 5	75 to 84 years	8,512 +/-719
85 years and over	2,092 1.4	85 years and over	2,911 +/-682
65 years and over	21,973 14.3	65 years and over	23,976 +/-556
Median age (years)	35.3 (X)	Median age (years)	34.4 +/-0.3
COMMUTING TO WORK	57,259 80.7	COMMUTING TO WORK	
Workers 16 years and over	3,196 12.9	Workers 16 years and over	34,017 +/-2,881
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	148 0.2	Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	73,049 +/-3,216
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	1,400 2	Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	14,301 +/-1,384
Public transportation (including taxicab)	663 0.9	Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	0 +/-257
Walked	2,316 3.3	Walked	1,325 +/-611
Other means		Other means	1,536 +/-544
Worked at home	19.5 (X)	Worked at home	3,806 +/-1,106
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	19.5 (X)	Mean travel time to work (minutes)	20.8 +/-1.3
Source: Census 2000		Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey	

Low Income Map



PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY SUMMARY

PUBLIC INPUT MEETING

Jones Center for Families, Tuesday, August 28, 2007, 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan
Questionnaire

1. How would you rate the overall transit services in NWA? (Circle one)

Very poor (5)
Poor (8)
Satisfactory (17)
Good (14)
Very good (11)

2. What transit services do you currently use?

ORT (19)
ORT Fixed Route (9)
ORT Demand Response (5)
Razorback Transit (7)
LifeStyles Vans (2)
Taxi (5)
None (13)
No Response (13)

3. Are those transit services meeting your needs?

Yes (16)
No (15)
No Response (13)

Could be better/Not really/Not quite/I guess/Mostly/Somewhat/Sometimes/For now/Rarely
(1) (1) (2) (1) (4) (3) (1) (1) (1)

4. Are there times and days you need transportation and can't get to where you want to go? (Brief explanation)

Yes (18)
No (13)
Days: Saturday, (6)/Sunday, (1)/Weekends, (7)/Thursday and Friday, (1)/Holidays, (1)
Times: Evenings, 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm, (6)
Late Afternoon, (1)
Early Morning, (1)
Bus every hour, (1)
No Response (17)

Comments:

- Home after work from the Mall – 10:00 pm
- When husband takes only car to work, can't go anywhere
- Need dial-a-ride to Centerton to see parents
- Home Depot on New Hope Rd, (2)
- I plan ahead, so no problem with times or days, (2)
- Not really
- I need a ride to work or home
- Need service to hospital to work – on weekends and holidays

- No service in our part of town
- Parents must pick me up after work and on weekends

5. Has a lack of transportation prevented you from getting to one of the following?
(Circle one or more)

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Employment, (18) | Educational, (11) |
| Health Care, (16) | Community Services, (7) |
| Shopping, (21) | |
| Other: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get home • Church • Weekend Community Events | |

6. Do you think the area needs more public transportation?

- | | |
|-------------|------|
| Yes | (50) |
| No | (3) |
| No Response | (4) |

If Yes, what would you like to see? (Circle one or more)

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| More Fixed Routes, (35) | Night Service, (35) |
| Weekend Service, (42) | Commuter Express, (7) |
| Lower Fares, (8) | Less Wait Time for Buses, (20) |
| Other: | |

- Fares are reasonable
- Cover more area
- To special events, like arts and crafts fairs, farmers market, Christmas shopping and parade
- To Promenade Shopping Mall
- Run on holidays
- More dollar ride buses
- Some kind of ticket or card with the number of the bus on it, so the driver and rider can be sure it's the correct bus to be on
- Only if it could be done is such a way so less people would drive and more would ride the bus
- More bus stops
- 30 minutes is too long for people with disabilities
- More, in some places
- More on-time schedules

7. Do you rely on only one agency for transit service?

- Yes (25)
- No (19)
- No Response (15)

Would you be willing to ride with a different/additional agency, if they were going where you want to go?

- Yes (48)
- No (1)
- No Response (15)

Comment:

- Yes, if I didn't have to change buses

8. Are there additional things you would like us to know to improve transportation services in our community?

The following are comments received on the questionnaire, and through phone conversations. They are in no particular order and they are typed just as they were written.

- Go to more areas in Springdale and Rogers.
- The area needs a coordinated evacuation plan for an emergency – nursing facilities, assisted living, and hospitals.
- Fayetteville to XNA.
- Seat belts for wheelchairs that are not necessarily in the back of the bus.
- Most folks don't even know the transit system exists.
- Advertise.
- People who want to ride the bus don't know the routes.
- More encouragement from city officials/more advertising.
- More backing from city leaders.
- Additional routes to and from outlying areas (Elkins, Wedington, Goshen, Greenland) at key times, like rush hour.
- Park and ride.
- This is the way of the future.
- Bus riding will take the stress off of our already broken roads.
- The poor of our area really need this; for the disabled it is the only answer.
- When children have a doctor's appointment, the mother needs to be picked up and then go to the school.
- People on ADA should not be questioned when asking for dial-a-ride.
- Routes needed for later in evening.
- Saturday service is badly needed, so families can do things together when school is out.
- More drivers need to be hired.
- More buses need to be provided.
- Money spent appropriately.
- Drivers, dispatchers, and schedulers need extra help, more raises, and respect.
- Study Hawaii bus service and see how we can bring that to our area and more areas in our state.

- A better, more well rounded schedule, for the homeless and single mothers to get jobs and try to get up.
- Provide service on Campbell Street in Springdale.
- We need light rail transportation.
- I would like to get to Pinnacle Hills and be able to stop at more places.
- Clearly mark bus stops – Change signs when the bus changes its stopping place.
- Need stops with places to sit and wait.
- It needs to be more advertised. Most people do not even know that it exists.
- Senior taxi has a long waiting time.
- More phone operators as I have trouble getting through to make an appointment. And if I have to leave a message, most of the time there is no call back because the operators are so busy.
- Please try to do something about people needing to use the seat belts that are on each seat. Surely it would help with your liability insurance, as well as the safety of passengers.
- Lack of transportation is a big barrier in the NWA community for low income.
- More dial-a-ride in Rogers area.
- An additional route in Rogers to library, Neighborhood Market, employment office.
- Fix the bus lifts.
- Should not take from 11:30 am to 6:15 pm to go to an appointment.
- City of Lowell really need the bus to continue going to Fayetteville, Rogers and Pinnacle Hills.
- Stop on Apple Blossom (Lowell/Bethel Heights).
- Route to New Hope Road, Rogers.
- Need more dial-a-ride.
- Give the drivers and staff a raise. They are doing a great job.
- Need more dial-a-ride vans.
- If you are on a routine, you only had to call to check if services were not needed for that day. Not having to call the week ahead every week.
- A sign post with a map with routes on it.
- They need cards with the bus number on the side of the bus – need to say “going to and from”.
- They need more pick up areas in the city.
- Go to Greenland.
- Accessible schedules (Jones Center staff willing to fill).
- Covered areas.
- Extended routes west would be nice.
- Start mass transit or stagecoaches!
- Where is public support for transit? Need state support of mass transit and cities’ financial support.
- Make service free to all – skip the bike stuff.
- Covered bus stops.
- More stop points, more routes.
- More routes.
- Earlier and later service.
- 15 minutes between buses.
- Users at the Jones Center speak highly of the drivers.

- Much, much more funding. It's impossible to meet our growing community needs with a small funding base.
- People work miracles all the time, but local and federal funding for regional transportation is a joke. Cut the war and fund transportation.
- Late hours.
- Maintain the roads.
- Add commuter lanes and bus lanes.
- Additional service.
- Light rail.
- Bike lanes.
- More advertising.
- Need light rail.
- More dispatchers to handle overload of calls. Those who rely on the ORT are more than weekday (10 hours per day) residents of this county. We are unable to get out to enjoy opportunities at night and weekends.
- Stops at Willow Heights in Fayetteville need to be added to route and Morgan Manor needs to be more than a deviation.
- Sometimes it takes 1, 2, or 3 hours wait outside for a bus to come on a deviation, even though I call 20 minutes after wait.

Comments from people who called on the phone:

- Need additional people to answer the phones at ORT – the line is always busy, and if you leave a message, no one calls you back.
- Keep the demand response vehicles on time and don't over schedule the vehicles and drivers.
- I work at a local hotel, need weekend, before and after hour service.