North Central Pennsylvania Regional Public Transportation Needs Assessment

Analysis of Potential Transit Needs

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Prepared by

Gannett Fleming

Acknowledgments

North Central Rural Public Transportation Taskforce Representation:

Brush Valley Chamber of Commerce
Bucknell University
Central PA Workforce Development
Central Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce
Central Susquehanna Opportunities Inc.
City of Sunbury
Northumberland County Commissioners
Sunbury City Council
Pennsylvania Department of Community &
      Economic Development
Evangelical Community Hospital
Geisinger Health System
Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of
      Commerce
Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way
J. Kleinbauer. Inc.
King Coal Tours I LATS
LATS -Mount Carmel Borough
Lower Anthracite United Way
Lycoming County Planning Commission
McCann School of Business &Technology
Montour County Transit
Mt. Carmel Area School District
Mt. Carmel Borough

MTR Transportation
Northumberland County Planning
Northumberland County Transportation
      Department
Paul's Cab Service
PPL Services, Corp.
Project Coffee House
River Valley Transit
SEDA-COG
Shamokin Area Community Hospital
Shamokin Yellow Cab
Snyder County
STEP. Inc,
Sunbury Community Hospital
Susquehanna Health Rural Partnership
Susquehanna University
Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition
(SVWIT)
Telos Taxi
Union County Planning Department
Union Snyder Transportation Alliance
United Way of Columbia County

Task Force Contact: Mr. James Saylor,
Transportation Planner, SEDA-COG,
(570) 524-4491

Report Prepared by:
Gannett Fleming, Inc., Harrisburg, PA 17106, Ph 717-763-7211
Project Manager – Joseph L. Daversa, Senior Transportation Consultant

Introduction and Background

The North Central Pennsylvania Regional Public Transportation Needs Assessment was initiated to conduct a review of current transportation services, identify unmet transportation needs, and prepare a regional transit plan that supports regional and local goals and better satisfies transportation needs throughout the six-county region covering Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder and Union Counties. This report is one of a series of interim technical reports that document the approaches employed and preliminary findings for various tasks that collectively will be used to compile the final plan. Two previously issued reports covered the analyses of community characteristics and existing transportation services. The purpose of this report is to document the results of an analysis of transit demand for the study area.

The transit operators serving the study area are briefly described below and a detailed description of each operator, the services provided, ridership and financial information is included in "Existing Transit Services Report" prepared under an earlier task.

River Valley Transportation (RVT) – RVT provides fixed-route transit service in the Greater Williamsport area inclduing the City of Williamsport, the boroughs of Duboistown, Hughesville, Jersey Shore, Montgomery, Montoursville, Muncy, and South Williamsport, and the townships of Loyalsock, Old Lycoming, Piatt, and Woodward. The RVT system consists of 15 routes, which include several variations that result in a total of 21 unique route alignments in the system. The transit system primarily serves the City of Williamsport and adjacent communities, with 14 of the 15 routes emanating from the Trade and Transit Centre (T&TC) located in downtown Williamsport.

Lower Anthracite Transit System (LATS) – LATS operates ADA-accessible, fixed-route bus service over three distinct routes in the lower Northumberland County area in and between the City of Shamokin, Coal Township, and the boroughs of Kulpmont, Marion Heights, and Mount Carmel.

Montour County Transit – Montour County Transit provides door-to-door, demand responsive transit services including Senior Shared-Ride, Persons with Disabilities (PwD), Area Agency on Aging, Medical Assistance Transportation (MATP), Welfare to Work (W2W)/Job Access & Reverse Commute (JARC), and the general public. The service area includes Montour County (primary service area), Centre, Columbia, Dauphin, Luzerne, Northumberland, Snyder, and Union Counties. Regularly served destinations are the Geisinger Medical Center, the CMSU Service System, dialysis clinics, grocery stores, employment location, and social service agencies. Service hours are Weekdays – 5:00 AM to 4:00 PM; Saturday (dialysis only) – 5:00 AM to 11:00 AM.

Northumberland County Transportation Department (NCTD) – NCTD is a Department within Northumberland County's government structure and provides both directly operated and contracted door-to-door, demand responsive transit services including Senior Shared-Ride, Persons with Disabilities (PwD), Area Agency on Aging, Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP), Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MH/MR), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the general public. The primary service area is

Northumberland County and medical and group trips are provided up to 20 miles past the county line. Regularly served destinations include Geisinger Medical Center, Shamokin Hospital, Evangelical Hospital, Sunbury Hospital, Wal-Mart, Weis Market, and Susquehanna Valley Mall. Hours of operation are Monday through Saturday – 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

STEP Transportation – STEP is a Private, non-profit community action agency that provides both Directly operated and contracted, door-to-door services including Senior Shared-Ride, Persons with Disabilities (PwD), Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Welfare to Work (W2W)/Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and the general public. The STEP service area encompasses Lycoming, Clinton, Montour, and Union Counties; the system also provides MATP trips throughout the Commonwealth on an as needed basis. Regularly served destinations include the Geisinger Medical Center, the Eye Center of Central Pennsylvania, local MH/MR providers, Susquehanna Health System, dialysis units, senior centers, and the STEP Office of Aging. Services are operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year.

Union-Snyder Transportation Alliance (USTA) – USTA is a public, non-profit community action agency and provides both Directly operated, door-to-door transit services including Senior Shared-Ride, Persons with Disabilities (PwD), Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP), Welfare to Work (W2W)/Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and the general public. USTA's service area encompasses all of Union and Snyder Counties (primary area) and service is also provided to the Harrisburg, Hershey, and Lebanon areas in Dauphin and Lebanon Counties, State College Borough in Centre County, and Lewistown Borough in Mifflin County. Regularly served destinations include the Geisinger Medical Center, Evangelical Hospital, senior centers, dialysis clinics, grocery stores, and Suncom Industries. Hours of operation are Weekdays from 6:30 AM to 4:30 PM and dialysis service is also available prior to 6:30 AM.

MTR Transportation/K-CAB – MTR/K-Cab is a Private corporation that operates door-to-door, demand responsive service transit services in Columbia County including Senior Shared-Ride, Persons with Disabilities (PwD), Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP), Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MH/MR), Welfare to Work (W2W)/Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and the general public. Regularly served destinations include Geisinger Medical Center, FMC Dialysis, Berwick Hospital, and Bloomsburg Hospital. Regular service hours are Monday through Friday from 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM; Saturday from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

Approach

To ensure a comprehensive approach to this topic, the study team completed both (a) a quantitative analysis using actual data and demand estimation techniques that have been successfully employed in similar studies, and (b) a qualitative assessment of transit needs based on stakeholder outreach activities. Therefore, this report is comprised of two parts: The first part provides a quantitative assessment of the potential magnitude of transit travel in the region as it relates to forecast changes in population and transportation service levels. The second part supplements the quantitative analysis

with qualitative information gathered through a series of stakeholder interviews and focus group sessions. The stakeholder outreach encompassed a wide range of groups in the community affected by public transportation including but not limited to large employers, major medical and educational institutions, transit service providers, individuals who utilize transit services, and the general public.

Quantitative Transit Demand Analysis - Overview

Factors that influence travel behavior are complex. The approach used in this phase of the demand analysis assumes that travel relationships between transit system supply and demand can be quantified using empirical data. The quantitative analysis described in this section pertained only to demand responsive transportation systems operating in the six-county study area and their peers across Pennsylvania. This was due to the substantial differences in the nature of fixed-route and demand responsive services and transit users in urban versus rural areas. This was also deemed appropriate since the Williamsport area (served by River Valley Transit) and the Mount Carmel Area (served by Lower Anthracite Transit System) are both relatively well served in relation to the other urban and rural areas across the study area where latent demand is a more important issue. The qualitative analysis documented in the second half of this report encompassed both fixed-route and demand responsive services. As part of the current analysis, the service provided was quantified on a per capita basis and demand levels were also determined on a per capita basis. The data used to develop the travel demand relationship was:

- information compiled by Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's Bureau of Public Transportation (BPT) based on ridership and service level data collected from transit operators across the state, and

- population by county for the same period.

The information was compiled for peer communities in Pennsylvania as well as counties and service providers in the study area (Columbia, Montour, Lycoming, Northumberland, Snyder and Union). Based on empirical data, a linear relationship was established for the peer communities in which the ridership levels were directly proportional to service levels. When more service is operated, ridership levels increase; conversely, when service is reduced, ridership levels decrease. Since the relationship is defined on a per capita basis, future changes in population can be used to generate different service and demand levels.

Data Assembly

One of the most challenging aspects of the analysis was to create a database from which underlying travel relationships could be quantified. The data base was for all counties and operators within the Commonwealth. There were two primary sources of information as follows:

- **U.S. Census –** The American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, provides estimates of population for counties within the United States. In the current analysis, estimates were obtained for 2009. Combined with the area of each county, density was computed on a population per square mile basis.

The database also included more detailed information on the characteristics of the population. These measures were the percent of residents that were in each category of:

- elderly

- disabled, and

- low income.

Separate values were determined for each Pennsylvania County. The only comprehensive source of this type of detailed data is the 2000 U.S. Census. While the Census Bureau is updating the data on the characteristics of population, that process is focusing on larger population centers, with subsequent efforts to be directed to smaller communities such as those in the study area. In any event, it was felt that the 2000 values for percent elderly, percent disabled and percent low income would provided a reasonable estimate of 2009 population characteristics for the purposes of establishing travel relationships.

- **Legacy Reports –** All transit agencies and service providers seeking PennDOT funding annually submit a series of reports that provide information on operating statistics (e.g., hours, miles and vehicles), ridership and financial results (e.g., operating costs and fares paid by riders). Information is disaggregate in that some data is by program, such as Shared Ride and Persons With Disabilities. The data used for this report was for FY 2008/2009 which is the year ended June 30, 2009. At the time the analysis was performed, more recent information (i.e., FY 2009/2010) was not available.

The data base that was assembled was for all counties and operators in Pennsylvania and because of the nature of operations, further manipulation of the data was required. In those cases where an agency served more than a single county, the entry in the database for that operator was the data for the operator and the sum of the population statistics for the counties served. For example, Endless Mountain Transportation Authority (EMTA) serves Bradford, Sullivan and Tioga Counties and represented only a single "data point" in the analysis. The Legacy Report information for EMTA was entered in the database and it represented three counties. Within the study area, a similar situation exists with STEP Transportation for Lycoming and Clinton Counties as well as Union-Snyder Transportation Alliance (USTA) for Union and Snyder Counties.

There are several instances in Pennsylvania where a single operator serves more than one county. In the case of Centre County, this is a situation where a county has two operators which report separately to PennDOT. In this unique situation, the data point consisted of the population information for Centre County and the combined results from the individual Legacy Reports for Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) and the Centre County Office of Transportation (CCOT). There are numerous examples where service is provided by several operators under contract to an authority or county government; however, only a single Legacy Report is submitted which already contains the results of the combined operations of multiple providers.

Each of the data points consisted of information for each unique combination of operator and county. The information contained considerable data items, but only key variables were selected to support the macro-level demand analysis completed for this study. For purposes of establishing travel relationships, the database included the following:

- Trips per capita
- Service hours per capita
- Population density
- Percent senior citizens
- Percent disabled
- Percent low income

The dependent variable was the trips per capita while the other variables listed above were the independent variables that might explain the ridership levels on a per capita basis. The analysis was performed twice where the demand (i.e., trips) and level-of-service (i.e., hours) were computed for different estimates of population. These included total population and only population for "special needs" individuals (i.e., elderly, disabled and low income). As a forecasting tool, the former would be preferred since estimates of future total population are readily available from SEDA-COG.

Model Development

The previous discussion indicates the information sources and composition of the database. Initially, the database was stratified into two groups as follows: (1) the study area counties and operators and (2) systems and communities in the remainder of the state. The first group is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 – Study Area Operators and Counties

Operator	County
Montour County Transit	Montour
Northumberland County Transportation Department	Northumberland
STEP Transportation	Clinton, Lycoming
Union/Snyder Transportation Alliance	Union, Snyder
MTR Transportation/K-Cab	Columbia

The remainder of the state consisted of 60 counties and several dozen operators, although some reports consist of results for multiple operators. The next step in the data manipulation process was to eliminate those counties which were not true peers of the six counties comprising the study area. Typically, any county where the population density exceeded approximately 400 persons per square mile were not viewed as suitable peers for a primarily rural area. As might be expected, counties and operators that were eliminated from the peer group, based on density, were located in the relatively large metropolitan areas (e.g., Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Lehigh Valley and Wilkes Barre-Scranton were eliminated). The counties selected as peers had an average density of 177 persons per square mile, while the density for the six counties comprising the study area averaged 134 persons per square mile. The remaining data base consisted of 34 peer transit systems, some of which included more than a single county.

Regression analysis was performed in an attempt to quantify the relationship between trips per capita and factors that influence demand such as service levels, density, and percentages of transit dependent groups. As noted previously, the model calibration work was performed based on per-capita values including all persons and then only considering special needs population. The analysis suggested that a "better fit" of the 2009 database was achieved by using total population. Also, the existing travel demand (i.e., trips per capita) was best explained by the level of service (i.e., hours per capita). The other variables, such as density and percent seniors, disabled and low income were not correlated with demand levels. Similar results were noted during the conduct of the technical analysis performed as part of the Pennsylvania Transportation and Finance Reform Commission. It would appear that while many factors may influence demand, the single greatest determinant of transit utilization (at a given population) is the amount of service provided.

Figures 1 and 2 present the distribution of the key variables, hours per capita and trips per capita, respectively for the peer systems. These charts underscore the wide variation in both supply and demand levels in the peer communities.

Figure 1 - Distribution of Hours of Service Per Capita
For Peer Systems
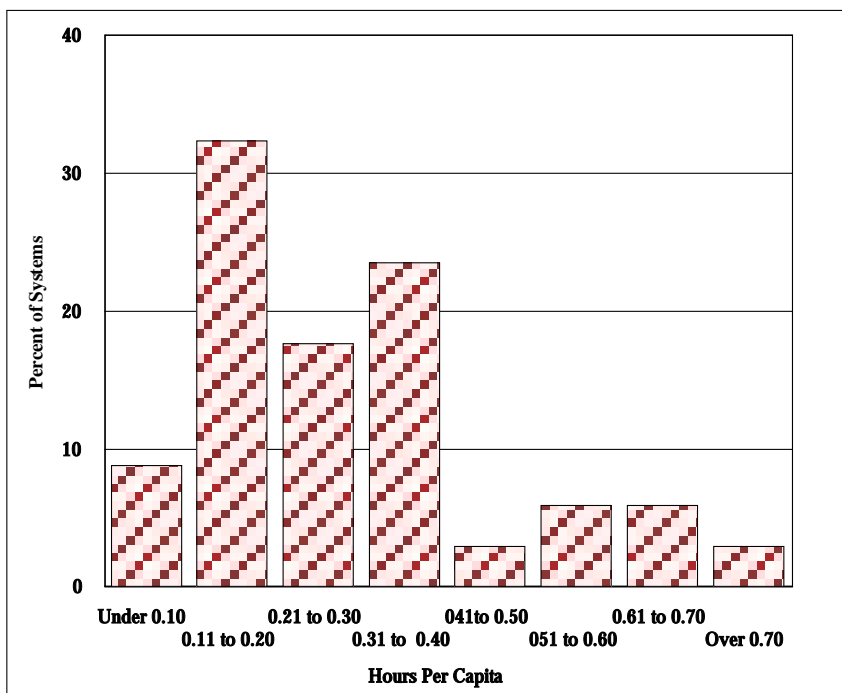
Figure 2 - Distribution of Trips Per Capita
For Peer Systems
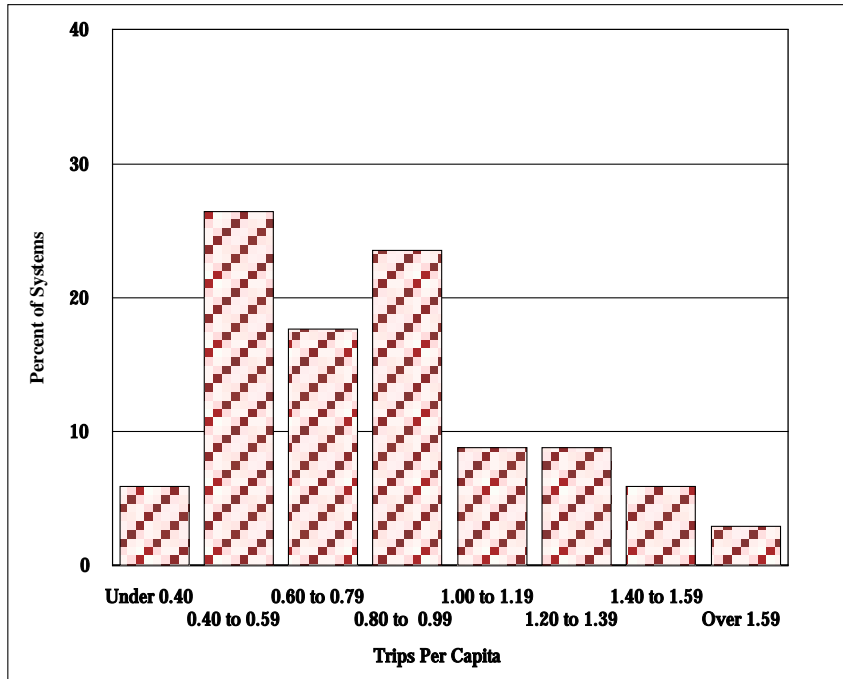
The calibrated relationship from the peer systems is depicted in Figure 3 which also indicates that the calibrated linear model is a relatively good fit of the 2009 empirical data. Moreover, the straight line explains 76 percent of the variation in the relationship between hours per capita and trips per capita.

Figure 3 - Transit Service and Demand Relationship
For Peer Systems
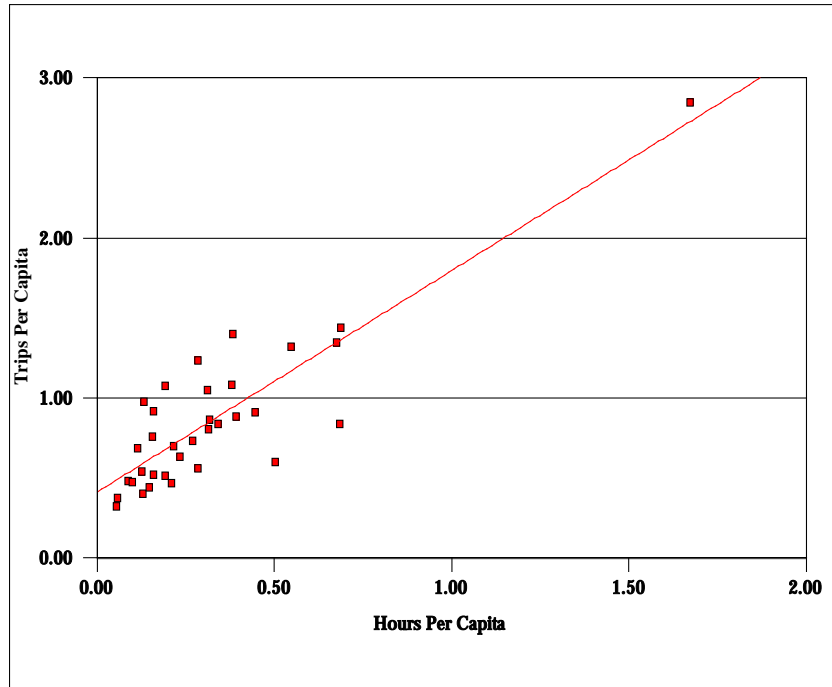
The straight line depicted in the chart is defined as:

Trips Per Capita = 0.41 + 1.38 * Hours Per Capita

In addition to being statistically valid, the relationship is logical in that greater service levels result in increases in ridership. Conversely, reduced service levels generate fewer riders. Another output of the process is the trips per hour which is merely the ratio of trips per capita to hours per capita. This productivity measure is important because it relates the amount of additional service required to induce new riders. As shown in Figure 4, greater service levels (hours of service) produce more riders (trips per capita) but as service levels increase, productivity (trips per hour) decreases.

Figure 4 – Supply, Demand and Productivity Relationships
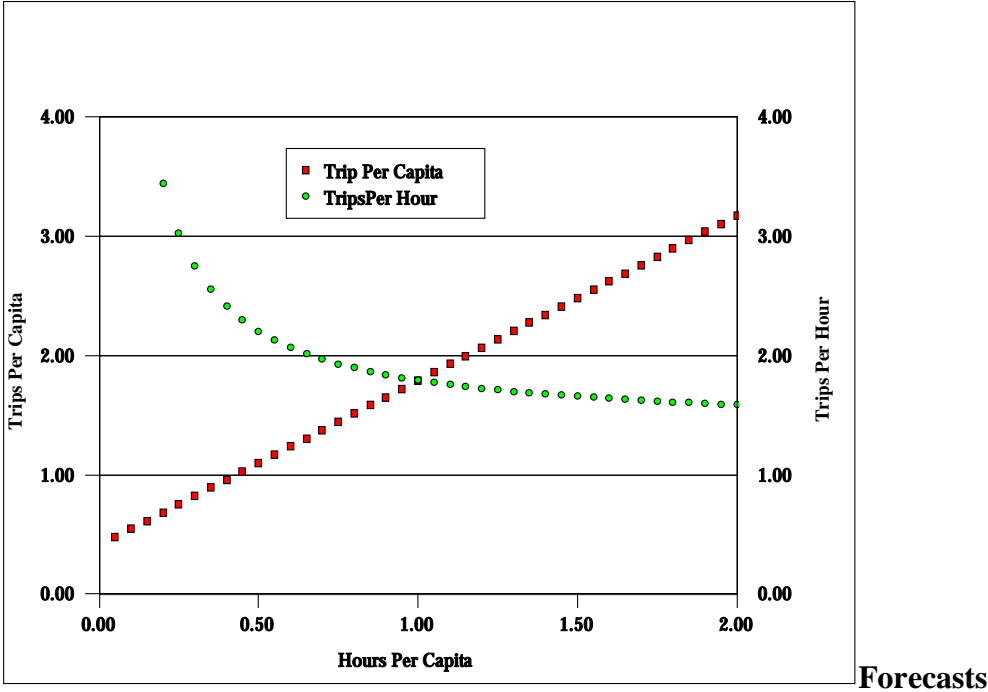
Forecasts

The concluding step of the demand forecasting process was to apply the relationship calibrated from peer counties and operators in Pennsylvania. A two-step process was followed in which changes in travel were estimated based on (1) population changes and (2) changes in the level of transit service.

Population Forecasts

In a recently prepared report titled "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy", the SEDA-Council of Governments prepared population estimates for the 11-county region. While forecasts were prepared in five year increments to 2030, only the forecasts through 2020 were used in the current analysis based on guidance received from the Study Task Force at the project kick-off meeting regarding the planning horizon for this study. The population values for 2010 are very nearly the same as those used in the empirical data base for 2009.

These results are shown in Table 2 for current and future conditions. To provide a context for the anticipated changes in population, population for 2000 is also presented.

Table 2 – Population Trends

County	2000	2010	2020	% Change 2010-2020
Columbia	64,151	64,454	67,053	4.03%
Lycoming	120,044	115,866	113,105	-2.38%
Montour	18,236	17,275	16,977	-1.73%
Northumberland	94,556	93,197	92,861	-0.36%
Snyder	37,546	38,294	39,025	1.91%
Union	41,624	46,414	50,018	7.76%
Total	376,157	375,950	379,039	0.82%
Percent Change	--	-0.06	0.82	

As the exhibit indicates, population declined slightly in the six county study area between 2000 and 2010. During the next decade, this trend is reversed, although the expected gain in population is less than one percent. During this same period, Pennsylvania population is expected to increase by about 2.6 percent. Between 2010 and 2020, three counties are expected to experience population gains (i.e., Columbia, Snyder and Union) while the other three (i.e., Lycoming, Montour and Northumberland) will continue to experience population declines. These results would clearly suggest that, at the macro level, increased travel demand will not be attributable to increasing population.

Demand Forecasts

Prior to applying the forecasting process at the county level, the results for STEP and USTA needed to be disaggregated. The 2009 hours and trips for STEP were allocated to Clinton and Lycoming Counties on the basis of population. Similarly, the results for Snyder and Union Counties were disaggregated using the 2009 population for each county. Employing this method resulted in maintaining the observed hours per capita and trips per capita for each county.

To measure the impact of different service levels in 2020, the formula calibrated on 2009 peer data was applied to three scenarios. The first assumed that 2020 hours of transit service per capita remained unchanged from 2009. This initial test situation implies no service expansion on a per capita basis. Two service expansion schemes were tested which assumed 25 and 50 percent increases in service hours per capita in 2020 in comparison to 2009 values. The hours per capita values are presented in Table 3 for each county and scenario.

<center>**Table 3 – Transit Service Hours Per Capita**</center>

| County | 2009 | 2020 Different Service Level Expansions | | |
		0 %	25 %	50%
Columbia	0.595	0.595	0.744	0.892
Lycoming	0.230	0.230	0.288	0.345
Montour	0.321	0.321	0.402	0.482
Northumberland	1.575	1.575	1.969	2.362
Snyder	0.564	0.564	0.705	0.846
Union	0.564	0.564	0.705	0.846

The service hours in 2009 was based on the Legacy Reports submitted by transit operators for 2009, while the hours for the three scenarios for 2020 were computed based on population and the assumption regarding hours per capita. The resulting service hours for the three scenarios are shown in Table 4.

<center>**Table 4 – Transit Service Hours**</center>

| County | 2009 | 2020 Different Service Level Expansions | | |
		0 %	25 %	50%
Columbia	38,733	39,888	49,860	59,832
Lycoming	26,879	26,020	32,525	39,029
Montour	5,694	5,457	6,821	8,185
Northumberland	143,798	146,239	182,799	219,358
Snyder	21,721	22,006	27,508	33,009
Union	24,563	28,205	35,256	42,307
Total	261,388	267,815	334,768	401,722

To apply the model for these service level growth scenarios, the calibrated model was used with both current and future hours per capita to determine a growth rate in trips per capita. This value was then applied to the current trips per capita to establish the expected trips per capita under each scenario (Table 5).

<center>**Table 5 - Trips Per Capita**</center>

| County | 2009 | 2020 Different Service Level Expansions | | |
		0 %	25 %	50%
Columbia	1.013	1.013	1.182	1.350
Lycoming	0.965	0.965	1.070	1.175
Montour	1.486	1.486	1.679	1.872
Northumberland	1.589	1.589	1.923	2.257
Snyder	1.119	1.119	1.303	1.486
Union	1.119	1.119	1.303	1.486

The forecast trips (Table 6) were computed by multiplying the expected trips per capita times the estimated population in 2020. Clearly, the assumed service levels have a far greater impact on trips than population which cannot be varied as a matter of policy. Population may have a negative or positive impact on trips, depending on expected changes in population for each county. In view of the minor changes in forecast population during the next decade, changes in trips will have to be generated through strategic adjustments in service levels. This observation is not intended to suggest that these levels of service expansion are warranted. Rather, it is included here to illustrate the approximate number of trips that should be expected if the alternative levels of service could be provided.

Table 6 - Trips

| County | 2009 | 2020 Different Service Level Expansions | | |
		0 %	25 %	50%
Columbia	65,940	67,907	79,226	90,545
Lycoming	112,748	109,144	121,046	132,948
Montour	26,319	25,223	28,498	31,774
Northumberland	145,051	147,513	178,534	209,555
Snyder	43,122	43,688	50,840	57,991
Union	48,765	55,995	65,100	74,336
Total	441,945	449,470	523,304	597,138

The application of the formula derived from the 2009 database indicates the magnitude of change in travel activity depending on the service provided. As noted previously, the increase in trips does not occur at the same rate as hours. The gains in transit trips occur at a lower rate than the increase in hours of service. The net effect of this level of elasticity is that the system productivity (i.e., trips per hour) declines with the service expansion (Table 7).

Table 7 - Trips Per Hour

| County | 2009 | 2020 Different Service Level Expansions | | |
		0 %	25 %	50%
Columbia	1.702	1.702	1.589	1.513
Lycoming	4.195	4.195	3.722	3.406
Montour	4.622	4.622	4.178	3.882
Northumberland	1.009	1.009	0.977	0.955
Snyder	1.985	1.985	1.848	1.757
Union	1.985	1.985	1.848	1.757

In essence, a large portion of the potential transit market is currently served and to attract new riders, the level of service will have to be increased. This, of course, is a generalization that holds at the level of analysis applied here (county level), but that does not rule out the identification of localized opportunities for generating increased ridership through strategic service adjustments. Further, each of the Counties has differences in their characteristics which also vary by municipality. Those

situations and the corresponding needs can best be identified through other techniques such as the qualitative input that is discussed in later sections of this report.

Summary of Quantitative Demand Analysis

The discussion above is intended to view the transportation system from a macro level and draw conclusions regarding potential transit demand based on current relationships. Using empirical information on population, its characteristics and service levels, a travel relationship was established that related the system supply or service levels (i.e., service hours per capita) to demand (i.e., trips per capita). The calibrated relationship for the base year (i.e., 2009) was the basis for estimating future transit potential. Combined with the anticipated population, ridership potential was established based on assumed service levels. The objective at this stage is to understand the factors that influence travel and then gauge the magnitude of future travel that might be expected based on shifts in those factors. This demand estimation review only represents one element of the planning process. Other important considerations include the characteristics the six county study area, which was reviewed in a previous technical report, and qualitative input from stakeholders which is discussed below.

Qualitative Assessment of Transit Needs

The purpose of the stakeholder outreach activities that are documented in this section is to complement the above quantitative analyses with qualitative information gathered through (1) a series of one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders, and (2) four group sessions. All existing fixed route transit providers and human service transportation providers were interviewed. Other key stakeholders were identified by the North Central Transportation Task Force and prioritized for one-on-one interviews. The focus group sessions, which were held at strategically-determined locations across the region, were widely advertised and open to the general public. The approach and results for both the interviews and focus groups are described in the following sections.

Stakeholder Interview Process

The stakeholder interviews were conducted either over the telephone or on-site at the interviewee's office or facility. A total of 18 organizations were invited to take part in the process and a total of 26 individuals participated in the interview sessions. The organizations that participated in this outreach effort included:

> Lower Anthracite Transit System (LATS) – Mt. Carmel Area
> Montour County Transit
> MTR Transportation/K-Cab – Columbia County
> Northumberland County Transportation Department (NCTD)
> River Valley Transit (RVT) – Williamsport Area
> STEP Transportation/Lycoming County
> Union/Snyder Transportation Alliance (USTA)
> Bloomsburg University
> Northumberland County Senior Centers
> Lycoming/Clinton County Office of Aging

Geisinger Hospital
Evangelical Hospital
Shamokin Area Hospital
Susquehanna Health Systems
Cherokee Pharmaceuticals
Luzerne Community College
McCann School of Business
Northumberland County Area Vocational and Technical School

At the request of the Task Force, the owner of Smoley's Van Service was also contacted to discuss his suggestions for service improvements.

While the stakeholder interview process provides flexibility to tailor the questions to individual circumstances, a list of topics was developed prior to the conduct of the interviews to provide a systematic process for addressing key topics and obtaining the type of information that will support identification of alternative improvements and preparation of a transit improvement plan. The interview "template" provided an outline of issues to be discussed and in some cases led to the discussion of other topics. The topics included:

- Organizational support (financial or non-financial) currently provided to public and/or human service transit providers or transit users
- Opinion of Existing Services
- Transit Needs and Desired Improvements
- Opportunities/Challenges Facing Public and Human Service Transportation Providers that Could Impact the Ability to Meet Mobility and Quality of Life Needs in the Region
- Appropriate Types of Public Transportation Service(s) for Urban, Small Urban, and Rural Areas
- Role for Public Transportation in the Region
- Transit and/or Transit-Related Improvement Priorities
- Planned Changes or Trends
- Adequacy of Funding and Equitable Distribution Throughout the Region

The interviews with representatives from the transportation providers also included a topic related to transportation administration and operations, while the interviews conducted with the representatives from the other organizations included a topic related to their knowledge and awareness of existing transportation services in the region.

Stakeholder Interview Results

A series of consistent themes emerged from the nineteen interviews and were summarized into six categories. The responses are further sub-categorized as having primarily policy, program, or service implications, which also is an indication of the level at which resolution of the item would likely have to occur. In some instances, a comment/suggestion was designated as being relevant for more than one of these three sub-categories. The results are presented, by topic, in Tables 8 through Table 13.

Table 8 – Role of Public Transit in the Region

Role of Public Transit in the Region	Policy	Program	Service
Provide mobility for transit-dependent population groups to access services			
Provide mobility for transit-dependent population groups to access services, maintain independence, and improve their quality of life	✓		
Provide transportation service to employment and educational facilities		✓	
Serve senior citizens needing access to medical appointments			✓

Table 9 – Transportation Administration and Operations

Transportation Administration and Operations (transit provider responses only)	Policy	Program	Service
Operating costs are increasing for insurance, vehicle maintenance, fuel, and fringe benefits		✓	
It is becoming harder to recruit and retain drivers due to the pay scale and the lack of full-time employment opportunities		✓	
Facilities need to be upgraded and/or expanded		✓	

Table 10 – Human Service Transportation

Human Service Transportation	Policy	Program	Service
Services should be made available and be affordable for persons ineligible for subsidized transportation through agency programs	✓		
Improve marketing and better educate the public about how to access and use the existing services		✓	
Formalize coordination among providers by addressing functional areas related to inter-county transfers, insurance, billing, fare structure, scheduling, etc	✓	✓	
Expand hours of service (evenings and weekends)		✓	
Relax eligibility requirements and provide same-day service for demand responsive transportation	✓	✓	
More coordination with medical providers for scheduling	✓	✓	
Demand responsive systems generally do a good job with limited resources		✓	
Ensure drivers are properly trained to handle riders with special needs		✓	

Table – 11 Opportunities and Constraints

Opportunities and Constraints	Policy	Program	Service
The rural character of the region limits opportunities for new fixed route bus services		✔	✔
The senior population is driving at increasingly later ages and uses demand responsive services as a last resort		✔	
Most residents would not use public transit due to: the need to make multiple stops throughout the day, free parking, and longer travel time compared to driving	✔	✔	
Additional funding is required to provide new or expanded service	✔	✔	
Taxi companies operating in the region do not use wheelchair accessible vehicles	✔		
Taxi fares are very expensive, especially for lower income individuals	✔		
Local politicians are aware of transportation issues and do what they can to support service	✔		
It is unlikely that a regional transportation system can be successful when local governments in the region are reluctant to share services and/or consolidate services	✔		

Table 12 – Service Improvement Suggestions

Service Improvement Suggestions	Policy	Program	Service
Expand hours of service (evenings and weekends)		✔	✔
Create carpool/vanpool services and use publicly owned land (i.e., PennDOT property) for park and ride facilities	✔	✔	
Provide fixed route bus service between region's population centers, such as Bloomsburg, Danville, Lewisburg, Northumberland, Selinsgrove, Milton, Middleburg, Mifflinburg, and Sunbury		✔	
Provide special fixed route bus services to access major shopping areas, large employers, and medical centers		✔	
New bus routes should operate along the region's major corridors such as US-11 and US-15		✔	
Increase service into rural areas using affordable taxi services, carpool/vanpool programs, peak period fixed route bus service		✔	
Any new service must to be given enough time to succeed	✔	✔	
RVT and LATS should serve rural areas with smaller buses		✔	
Create a regional transportation system to maximize resources used by the individual transit providers	✔	✔	

Table 13 – Planned Changes and Trends

Planned Changes and Trends	Policy	Program	Service
Senior citizens are remaining at home rather than entering senior care facilities		✔	✔
Population in the region is aging		✔	
Population and employment in the region are in decline		✔	
Marcellus Shale gas development is raising housing prices in Lycoming County and providing a boost to the Williamsport area economy; unsure if this industry will impact public transportation. Industry is increasing traffic and volume on Lycoming County roadways	✔		
Increasing number of residents commuting to jobs in Harrisburg		✔	
Growing number of residents from the Philadelphia and New York areas attracted by the lower cost of living		✔	

Focus Group Process

Four focus group sessions were held during the week of November 8, 2010 in the following communities:

- Williamsport
- Lewisburg
- Danville
- Shamokin

Handouts, including a summary of previously-completed tasks and a series of worksheets, were provided to the focus group participants and were used during the conduct of facilitated brainstorming, group discussions, and consensus building. Results of the brainstorming were recorded on flip charts and in all but the Danville session, participants were asked to vote for the suggestions recorded on the flip charts that they felt were the most compelling and important to consider as part of plan development. In addition, each participant was asked to complete a series of questions included in the handouts and the completed handouts were collected and used during the compilation of results.

Focus Group Results

The results of the Focus Group process, by location, are presented in Table 14 through Table 21. The materials copied to flip charts and subject to the "voting" process are listed in the top table for each session. The second table for each location lists additional thoughts that were copied from the completed handouts collected from participants. Although a conscious effort was made to not include ideas from the handouts that were already represented in the materials gathered from the flip charts, in some cases similar but slightly different thoughts will be apparent.

Table 14 – Williamsport Focus Group
(Group Discussion/Voting)

Votes	Group Discussion/Voting - Williamsport	Policy	Program	Service
8	Expansion of Service Hours	✔		
7	More Public Outreach		✔	
6	Expansion of Service in Rural Areas – particularly for youth		✔	✔
4	Accessible Cabs	✔		
3	Driver – Better "Management" of Bus	✔		
3	Carpooling		✔	
3	Better Accommodations for PWD	✔		
3	Automated Web/Phone Trip Planner		✔	
2	Reduced Fares	✔		
2	Flexible Service for Special Events			✔
2	Park & Ride – Gas Drillers Need This		✔	
1	Improving Demand Responsive Transportation		✔	
1	Sunday Service	✔		
1	Service to/from Williamsport Airport			✔
0	Frequent Jersey Shore Route			✔

Table 15 – Williamsport Focus Group
(Distinct Comments and Suggestions)

	Selected Suggestions From Individual Worksheets That are Distinct from Group Discussion Items (Williamsport)			
N/A	More Coordination with Medical Providers for Scheduling		✔	
N/A	An Organization or Group that Meets Consistently to Discuss Transportation Related Issues. Group must be made up of all Partners (Riders, Human Service Providers, Medical Providers, Transportation Providers)	✔		
N/A	Pupil Transportation Website		✔	
N/A	Flexible Service – Schools, Parent Access, After School Activities, School District Employees		✔	
N/A	Create Interconnectivity Between River Valley and Susquehanna Trailways			✔
N/A	Educate Drivers to Create More Safe Conditions	✔	✔	
N/A	Longer Service Times into the Night to Promote Employment Especially for PWD	✔		
N/A	Limited Holiday Service	✔		
N/A	Benches, Shelters, etc. at Labeled Bus Stops		✔	
N/A	There is Little to No Service in Rural Communities - Often Where the Needs are Greatest		✔	✔
N/A	Rural Areas Served More at "Central" locations Throughout the Counties		✔	
N/A	More Incentives to Ride (Discounted Price, etc.)	✔		
N/A	Provide the Shuttle Service Between One Service Provider & Another (i.e., River Valley Shuttle to Lewisburg or Bloomsburg)		✔	✔
N/A	Gift Certificate Options for People to Purchase for Others	✔		
N/A	Allow Kids & Parents to Ride Together or Even Siblings (HST Issue)	✔		
N/A	Bike Racks on River Valley Buses		✔	
N/A	Williamsport to Lock Haven to State College Service			✔

	Selected Suggestions From Individual Worksheets That are Distinct from Group Discussion Items (Williamsport)			
N/A	Williamsport to Harrisburg Service			✔
N/A	Capture the College Ridership and Technical Business Schools		✔	

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Table 15 – Williamsport Focus Group (Continued)
(Distinct Comments and Suggestions)

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	Selected Suggestions From Individual Worksheets That are Distinct from Group Discussion Items (Williamsport)			
N/A	No Transit Boundaries – No County Lines	✔		
N/A	Inter-City, Inter-County Services Especially Between Health Providers & Hospitals (Susquehanna Health, Geisinger, Lewisburg)			✔
N/A	Expand Partnership with Schools		✔	
N/A	Shuttle Service to and From the Games on Friday & Saturday Nights			✔
N/A	More Wheelchair Space on Buses	✔		
N/A	River Valley & STEP Partner for a Fixed Route to the Hospital			✔
N/A	Partnerships with the End Destinations (Medical Centers, Shopping Locations, etc.) to Learn the Needs of the Public and Better Adapt to Focus on Public Transit	✔	✔	
N/A	Increase/Development of the "Park and Ride" Option from Rural/Outlying Areas to the More Metro Areas		✔	✔
N/A	Use Fixed Route Public Transportation to Transport Students to/from School	✔		
N/A	Make Routes More Easily Understandable to the 1st Time Rider		✔	
N/A	Improve the Route Guide Given to People		✔	

Table 16 – Lewisburg Focus Group
(Group Discussion/Voting)

Votes	Group Discussion/Voting - Lewisburg	Policy	Program	Service
13	Move Toward Rail (note: Lewisburg was the only focus group session in which the facilitator did not instruct the participants that they should not vote more than once for any one item. It was observed that most of the 13 votes for this item came from a few participants rather than 13 different participants.)	✓		
6	Better Marketing of Current Services		✓	
5	River Corridor Spine Service			✓
4	Affordability	✓		
4	Bike Lanes / Bike Connectivity with Transit	✓	✓	
4	Expanding Fixed Route is First Step to Rail	✓		
4	Major Employers	✓	✓	
4	Major Shopping Area Connections		✓	✓
3	Car Share Programs at Destinations Supporting Van Pooling		✓	
3	Link Transit Planning with Comprehensive Planning	✓		
3	More Information / Advertising		✓	
2	Connectivity Between Rural and Larger Areas – Region / Beyond	✓		
2	Consider Existing Rail Corridors – Preserve	✓		
2	Electric Vehicles	✓		
2	Expanded Fixed Route Services		✓	
2	Expanded Hrs. 24/7	✓	✓	
2	Public-Private Partnerships (More Employer Involvement)	✓	✓	
2	Targeting High Attraction/Destinations		✓	
2	Transit Hubs with Direct Links		✓	✓
1	"Loop" Quadrangle – Lewisburg to Selinsgrove, Middleburg to Milton, Possible Van Service – Allenwood Loop			✓
1	Airline Shuttle Connection			✓
1	Best Practices / Benchmarks/ Open to New Ideas (mind-set)	✓		
1	Bloomsburg Demand Responsive Service			✓
1	Integration with Inefficient School Bus System (Best Practices – Bolder, CO)	✓		
1	Intra and Inter-regional River System Service (Williamsport to HBG)			✓
1	Milton-Lewisburg Service			✓
1	Mobility for College Students Using Public Transportation			✓
1	Park & Ride – Regionally		✓	
1	Public Transportation to State Parks & Like Destinations		✓	
1	Reasonable Cost	✓		
1	Service for General Public – Currently Discounted Services are for PWD, Low Income	✓		
1	State DOT Operating Subsidy	✓		
1	University Connectors – Students, Cultural Events		✓	✓
1	Van Pooling Expanded – Lewisburg – Danville		✓	✓
0	All Vehicles PWD Equipped	✓		
0	Approach H.R. Depts. of Major Employers	✓		
0	Bias for Innovation, Problem-Solving	✓	✓	
0	Demand Responsive Coordination with Fixed Rate		✓	
0	Different Scales of Vehicles		✓	
0	Proposed New Highway in Relation to Public Transportation Efficiency	✓		
0	Park & Ride Car/Bus for travel to/from – HBG		✓	✓

Table 16 – Lewisburg Focus Group (Continued)
(Group Discussion/Voting)

Votes	Group Discussion/Voting - Lewisburg	Policy	Program	Service
0	Positioned for Peak Oil Prices	✔		
0	Real-Time Ride-Share Matching (Technology Element)		✔	
0	Regional Destinations – HBG, NYC, Ithaca, PSU			✔
0	Shamokin Spine			✔

Table 17 – Lewisburg Focus Group
(Distinct Comments and Suggestions)

	Selected Suggestions From Individual Worksheets That are Distinct From Group Discussion Items (Lewisburg)			
N/A	Fixed Route with Focus on High Demand Times & Locations		✔	
N/A	Provide Complete Trips Through Coordination of Modes (van, rail, etc.)		✔	
N/A	Financed Through Boroughs, Communities, or Entities Benefiting from the Services	✔		
N/A	Bus to the Mall (Susquehanna – Wal-Mart Area, Williamsport Area			✔
N/A	Multi-County Organization/Management	✔	✔	
N/A	Trips to Williamsport, Mall, Danville, State College			✔
N/A	24/7 Taxi Type Service for Smaller Communities such as Bloomsburg		✔	
N/A	PUC should not Allow Monopolies that do not Provide 24/7 Service	✔		
N/A	Formal Ride Share (different from carpooling as ad hoc)-Start With Major Employers		✔	
N/A	Service for School Children	✔		
N/A	Transportation Between Hubs – Lewisburg, Selinsgrove, Williamsport, Bloomsburg, Harrisburg			✔
N/A	Use Transportation Management Companies	✔	✔	
N/A	Bring Transportation to our College Students		✔	✔
N/A	Coordinate Human Service Transportation Systems to Run More Efficiently – Need to be Expanded to Evening & Weekends	✔	✔	

Table 18 – Danville Focus Group
("voting" was not done at the Danville Focus Group)

Votes	Group Discussion/Voting - Danville	Policy	Program	Service
N/A	Expanded Transit Services = Expanded Jobs	✔		
N/A	Better Networking Across Counties	✔	✔	
N/A	Transit Security Focus Given Rise in Gangs, etc.	✔	✔	
N/A	Bloomsburg/Danville – Fair Week Transit Focus, Hourly Service			✔
N/A	Replicate Columbia – Montour Vo-Tech Model		✔	
N/A	Municipal Piece (starting with education) – Council Reps. at Task Force Meetings	✔		
N/A	Community Functions / Annual Events Better Linked with Transit		✔	✔
N/A	Major Focus on Transportation Collaboration	✔		
N/A	Need Transit Service Linkages Between Communities			✔
N/A	Bloomsburg University at Sunbury – Project – Need Transit service			✔
N/A	Expand Car Pooling		✔	
N/A	Berwick – Danville Service			✔
N/A	Route 11 Corridor Service – Berwick – Selinsgrove (Raceway)			✔
N/A	Expand Service to General Public	✔	✔	
N/A	Offer Students Incentives to Ride	✔	✔	
N/A	Target Post Secondary Schools as a Network for Services (e.g., Penn-TEC) Community		✔	✔
N/A	The Plan Needs a Regional Focus and Proposed Solutions	✔		

Table 19 – Danville Focus Group
(Distinct Comments and Suggestions)

	Selected Suggestions From Individual Worksheets That are Distinct From Group Discussion Items (Danville)			
N/A	Need Shuttle Service to get Veterans to VA Hospital in Wilkes-Barre			✔
N/A	Offer Same Day - Call & Demand Rides	✔	✔	✔
N/A	If You Don't Fall Under a Program, Service is Very Expensive!	✔		
N/A	Nothing for the General Public & Middle Class Families		✔	
N/A	Need Sunday Service & Evening Service	✔	✔	
N/A	Bus Circuit Between Sunbury/Northumberland/Selinsgrove Areas			✔
N/A	We have no way to get our Students to Work if they get a Job on Co-Op Program			✔
N/A	Offer Transit Passes	✔	✔	
N/A	Major Employer Donations	✔		
N/A	Encourage Employers to Promote Carpooling via an Incentive Program		✔	

Table 20 – Shamokin Focus Group
(Group Discussion/Voting)

Votes	Group Discussion/Voting - Shamokin	Policy	Program	Service
7	Longer Hours of Service (e.g., Mt. Carmel – Shamokin)	✔	✔	
5	Service to Special Events (unique rural aspect) • Evening Service • Northumberland County Fair • Farmers Markets • Job Fairs / Careerlinks • River Festival • Heritage Festival Shamokin • Shamokin Downtown Christmas		✔	✔
4	Wider Coverage of Service Geography	✔	✔	
3	Better Marketing & Communication of Services/Fares – Website for example		✔	
3	City to City Expansion		✔	✔
3	Greater Use by Employees – Sunbury, Coal Township, Shamokin)	✔	✔	
2	Bus Passes for LATS and Better Promotion			
2	Bus Shelters - Lighting and Safety		✔	
1	Regions/Municipalities Cooperate Together	✔		
1	Close Fixed Route Service Gaps • Mt. Carmel to Shamokin and Frackville • VA Center in Pottsville • Coal Twp./Shamokin – Selinsgrove Mall			✔
1	Customer Service - Well Trained Friendly Drivers		✔	
1	Greater Advertisement, Promotion, Marketing		✔	
1	Holiday Service – County Did Not Operate on Veterans Day But Services are Still Open and Needed	✔	✔	
1	Holiday Service – County Trans. No Service on 11/11, but Services Needed are Open	✔	✔	
1	Service to Business Locations – Downtown Communities, Wal-Mart / Malls (Coal)			✔
1	Smaller Buses Replacing Older Fleet	✔		
1	Use of Public Transportation by a Wider Slice of Community	✔		
1	Weekend Service – Mt. Carmel-Shamokin		✔	✔
0	Better Links Between Communities • Geisinger • Sunbury-Selinsgrove • Kulpmont • Lewisburg – Mifflinburg • Milton • Cross-River Routes • Northumberland Borough Mid-Rise • Watsontown – Williamsport • Mt. Carmel – Bloomsburg		✔	
0	Expanded Public Transportation for Students and University Special Events			
0	Increased Use by Students	✔	✔	
0	More Regionalization in Service Delivery	✔	✔	
0	Ready to Align with Changing Economy	✔		

Table 20 – Shamokin Focus Group (Continued)
(Group Discussion/Voting)

Votes	Group Discussion/Voting - Shamokin	Policy	Program	Service
	Expanded Access for PWD		✓	
	Expanded Park & Rides		✓	
	Sunbury – no Fixed Route Service			✓

Table 21 – Shamokin Focus Group
(Distinct Comments and Suggestions)

	Selected Suggestions From Individual Worksheets That are Distinct From Group Discussion Items (Shamokin)			
N/A	Park & Ride for Major Employers Carpooling		✓	
N/A	Map of Major Activity Centers - Missed Luzerne County Community College, Berwick 500+ Streets (Berwick Area), LCCC 600+ Student (Shamokin Area)			
N/A	Evening and Weekend Service	✓		
N/A	Better Access to Neighboring Cities/Counties • Mt. Carmel to Bloomsburg, Sunbury, Danville, Frackville • Benton to Bloomsburg, Mt. Carmel, Sunbury, Danville, Frackville			✓
N/A	USTA, Only One Parent May Accompany Child With Appt. - Sibling w/o Appt. must be Babysat	✓		
N/A	Hospitals (Geisinger, Sunbury, Evangelical) for All Clients - Not Just Seniors and PwD	✓		
N/A	Blend Fixed Routes w/Pupil Transportation		✓	
N/A	Need on-Demand Transportation to All Hospitals and Doctors & Dentists from Shamokin/Coal Township to Danville and Lewisburg and Sunbury, Mt. Carmel, Selinsgrove, Trevorton, Elysburg, etc.			✓
N/A	Transportation from Shamokin or Coal Twp. to Sunbury for County Employees.			✓
N/A	Allow for Business Advertisements on the Vehicles	✓		
N/A	General Public Transportation Should not be Limited to those who Qualify Financially	✓		
N/A	User-Friendly Website Detailing Routes, Prices, Times, etc.	✓		

Common Themes from Interviews and Focus Groups

A comprehensive review, of the final products of both the on-on-one interviews and the four focus groups sessions, was performed to identify recurring thoughts and common themes regarding unmet needs and suggestions for improvement. The items listed below were mentioned the most often and/or attracted the highest number of individual votes during the focus group meetings. There is no particular significance to the order in which the items are listed - the numbering is for reference only.

1. Affordable Service to the General Public

2. Expand Service Hours (applies to both public and private service providers)

    a.   evenings

    b.   weekends

3. Service to Special Events throughout the Region (fairs, festivals, etc.)

4. Service to Major Generators (retail/commercial, employment sites, hospitals, universities, medical and social services, etc.)

5. Link Major Communities via Transit (numerous city pairs mentioned as well as "spine services" along major corridors)

6. Better Marketing of Available Transportation Services, Improved Public Outreach and Stronger Consumer Orientation

7. Better Communication/Collaboration Between Transportation Operators And Service Providers (Such Medical Offices and Social Service Agencies) to Achieve Improved Transportation Efficiency and Customer Service.

8. Blur Jurisdictional Boundaries/Improve Coordination Among Providers

9. Formal Ridesharing in Various Forms (van/car, park-and-ride, etc.)

10. Capital Equipment Issues (use smaller buses where appropriate, provide bus shelters, taxis should be accessible for persons with disabilities)

Planned Use of the Findings

The qualitative feedback obtained through the one-on-one interviews and the focus group sessions will be used along with the quantitative analyses to identify options for improving public transportation and human service transportation in the regions. The options will be analyzed as to their ability to address unmet needs, their estimated costs, the prospects for obtaining adequate funding and sustainability of any new services.