

# **North Central Pennsylvania Regional Public Transportation Needs Assessment**

*Final Report*

---

**June 2011**

**Prepared by:**



***Gannett Fleming***



## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	v
<b>Introduction and Study Purpose .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Community Characteristics .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Study Area .....	6
Demographic Indicators .....	7
Employment Characteristics.....	12
Regional Travel Activity .....	15
Summary of Community Characteristics .....	16
<b>Existing Transportation Services.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Service Description .....	18
Fixed Route Systems .....	19
Demand Responsive Services .....	21
Taxi Companies.....	24
Intercity Bus Service.....	25
University Transportation Services .....	26
Review of Previous Planning Efforts .....	28
Summary of Existing Transportation Services.....	28
<b>Analysis of Potential Transit Needs.....</b>	<b>29</b>
Quantitative Transit Demand Analysis.....	30
Qualitative Assessment of Transit Needs .....	31
Stakeholder Interviews .....	31
Focus Groups .....	37
Common Themes from Interviews and Focus Groups .....	38
Summary of Analysis of Potential Transit Needs .....	38
<b>Alternative Transit Improvement Strategies .....</b>	<b>41</b>
Approach.....	42
Alternatives Considered .....	44
Ranking of Alternatives.....	45
<b>Implementation of Prioritized Strategies .....</b>	<b>55</b>
Regional Coordination Council (RCC).....	56
Evening and Weekend Service Expansion.....	61
Centralized Resource Directory .....	62
Local Community Routes with Deviation .....	65
Regional Public Transportation System.....	75
Funding.....	86
<b>Summary and Conclusions .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Appendix A: Focus Group Results.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Appendix B: Alternative Transit Improvement Strategies .....</b>	<b>109</b>

## **Table of Figures**

Figure 1 – Study Area .....	7
Figure 2: Population Density.....	10
Figure 3: Municipal Ranking of Transit Need .....	12
Figure 4: Major Employers and Transit Activity Centers .....	15
Figure 5 – Berwick – Bloomsburg – Columbia Mall Proposal .....	68
Figure 6 - Danville - Bloomsburg - Columbia Mall Proposal.....	69
Figure 7: Northumberland - Sunbury - Selinsgrove Proposal .....	70
Figure 8: Lewisburg - Milton - New Columbia Proposal .....	71
Figure 9: Berwick - Bloomsburg - Danville Proposal.....	78
Figure 10: Danville - Lycoming Mall Proposal .....	79
Figure 11: Lewisburg - Selinsgrove Proposal.....	80
Figure 12: Selinsgrove - Sunbury - Danville Proposal .....	81
Figure 13: Shamokin - Sunbury - Selinsgrove Proposal .....	82



## **Acknowledgements**

This report was produced as part of the North Central Pennsylvania Regional Public Transportation Needs Assessment study initiated by the North Central Pennsylvania Public Transportation Taskforce. The study was financed through a grant provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Center for Program Development and Management, with local matching funds provided by Lycoming County, Montour County, Northumberland County, Union County and the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way through a grant from Cherokee Pharmaceuticals.

### **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
- 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 Commissioners
- Northumberland County Planning
- Northumberland County Transportation Department
- Paul's Cab Service
- Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development
- PPL Services, Corp.
- Project Coffee House
- River Valley Transit
- SEDA-COG

- Shamokin Area Community Hospital
- Shamokin Yellow Cab
- Snyder County
- STEP. Inc.
- Sunbury City Council
- 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 (USTA)
- 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**

**Project Manager – Mr. Joseph L. Daversa, Senior Transportation Consultant,  
Ph 717-763-7211**

**Consultant Staff:**

- Walter Cherwony, P.E.
- Brian Funkhouser, AICP
- Chris Fry
- Matt Houtz, GISP
- Matt Sauers, AICP



## **Introduction and Study Purpose**

This document represents the final report of the North Central Regional Public Transportation Needs Assessment. This planning effort was initiated by the North Central Pennsylvania Public Transportation Taskforce (NCPPTT) and the SEDA-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) to review the current transportation services, evaluate their effectiveness, identify unmet needs and prepare a regional transportation plan that supports regional and local goals and better satisfies transportation needs throughout the six-county North Central Pennsylvania region. The study areas included Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder and Union Counties.

The study effort consisted of several distinct and sequential steps. At each stage of the process, findings were prepared on each of the following topics for discussion by the Taskforce:

- An inventory and analyses of existing transportation services
- Documentation of and community characteristics
- An assessment of transit needs and potential transit demand, based on both a quantitative demand analysis and a qualitative assessment of transit needs developed through the conduct of public outreach and stakeholder interviews.
- Alternative transit improvement strategies presented to the Taskforce for discussion
- Prioritized strategies selected for implementation through the Taskforce voting process

From this data collection and analysis effort, a series of transit improvement strategies were developed to remedy current deficiencies, exploit opportunities for the future, gain the support of key stakeholders and policy makers, and have the best chance for implementation. Based on this analysis, a diverse array of organizational and service level improvement strategies were suggested which ultimately led to the delineation of six transportation improvement strategies that were deemed as having the highest implementation priority for the region. The implementation timeframe of the prioritized strategies ranged from short-term to long-term, with the recognition that the implementation timeframes for these strategies are flexible and can vary depending on funding availability and local decisions.

The various planning inputs, the organizational and service improvement strategies as well as the preferred implementation strategies are presented in this final report document. During the course of the study, the following interim

reports were prepared that discussed each facet of the planning process in more detail:

- Community Characteristics Report – October 28, 2010
- Existing Services Report – January 5, 2011
- Analysis of Potential Transit Needs – January 2011
- Discussion Paper – Alternative Transit Improvement Strategies – February 3, 2011
- Discussion Paper – Implementation of Prioritized Strategies - March 8, 2011

The interim reports were submitted to the NCPPTT for review, comment and discussion at key milestones during the planning study. This method not only ensured the opportunity for comments and input on study findings as they became available, but also fostered a collaborative process between the consultant team, the NCPPTT, SEDA-COG, key stakeholders and the general public, which proved to be beneficial in addressing the region's transportation issues and goals in a comprehensive and consistent manner.

This final report document is organized based on the order of the interim reports submitted to the NCPPTT and SEDA-COG during the planning study. Accordingly, this report describes relevant issues and findings for the following areas:

- Community Characteristics
- Existing Transportation Services
- Analysis of Potential Transit Needs
- Alternative Transit Improvement Strategies
- Implementation of Prioritized Strategies
- Summary and Conclusions



## **Community Characteristics**

This chapter provides an overview of the demographic, socioeconomic, and land use characteristics of the study area to provide a quantitative assessment of the municipalities with the highest potential demand for public transportation services and/or enhanced transit services. Most of the information for this analysis was derived from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, SEDA-COG, and several state and federal agencies and organizations. A more detailed and comprehensive analysis was submitted to the Taskforce as an interim report under a separate cover.

The determination of transit need at the municipal level was derived from specific demographic indicators, including the resident population, population density, youth population, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, low income households, households without access to a vehicle, mode of travel, and employment. The municipalities were ranked by the numeric value of each indicator and an average rank was tabulated. Municipalities with the highest average rank were assumed to have the greatest relative need for public transportation services. All demographic indicators were based on the 2000 U.S. Census.

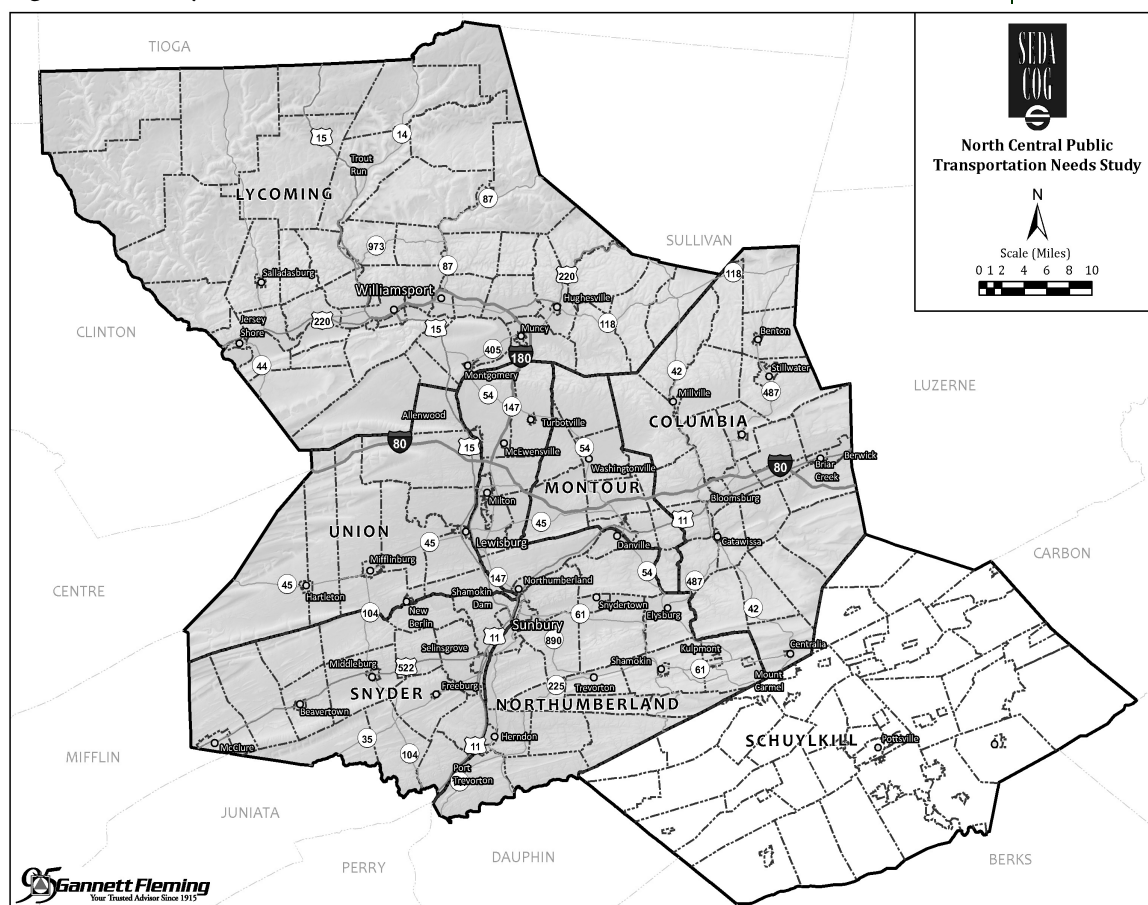
In addition, other factors were considered in assessing transit need including (a) the locations and concentrations of major employers and activity centers that serve as logical destinations for travel within the study area (i.e., major retail establishments and shopping centers, medical facilities, senior citizen facilities, subsidized housing, post-secondary institutions, government centers and social service agencies and organizations, etc.), (b) travel trends, and (c) planned or programmed roadway improvements that could impact the demand or delivery of public transportation services.

### Study Area

The study area encompasses a six-county area in the north central portion of Pennsylvania, a region known as the Valleys of the Susquehanna. The six counties include Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder and Union. The study area is largely rural with most of the population concentrated in urban and suburban municipalities located along major roadway corridors such as I-80, I-180, US 11, US 15, and PA 61. In total, the study contains 167 municipalities: one (1) town, three (3) cities, 40 boroughs and 123 townships. The study area is depicted in Figure 1 as the six darker-shaded counties.



**Figure 1 – Study Area<sup>1</sup>**



## Demographic Indicators

The most populous municipalities in the study area are generally clustered in specific areas, including the Greater Williamsport Area, the US 11 corridor between Berwick and Danville, the US 15 corridor between Lewisburg and Selinsgrove, and the PA 61 corridor in lower Northumberland County between Mt. Carmel Borough and the City of Shamokin. The City of Williamsport in Lycoming County is the largest municipality in the study followed by the Town of Bloomsburg in Columbia County and Loyalsock Township in Lycoming County. The 15 municipalities with the largest residential populations are listed in Table 1.

<sup>1</sup> Note: Schuylkill County was initially invited to be part of the study process, but declined.

**Table 1 - Resident Population by Municipality**

Municipality	County	Population
Williamsport	Lycoming	30,706
Bloomsburg	Columbia	12,375
Loyalsock Township	Lycoming	10,876
Berwick Borough	Columbia	10,774
Coal Township	Northumberland	10,628
Sunbury	Northumberland	10,610
Shamokin	Northumberland	8,009
Milton Borough	Northumberland	6,650
South Williamsport Borough	Lycoming	6,412
Mount Carmel Borough	Northumberland	6,390
East Buffalo Township	Union	5,730
Lewisburg Borough	Union	5,620
Old Lycoming Township	Lycoming	5,508
Selinsgrove Borough	Snyder	5,383
Danville Borough	Montour	4,897

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

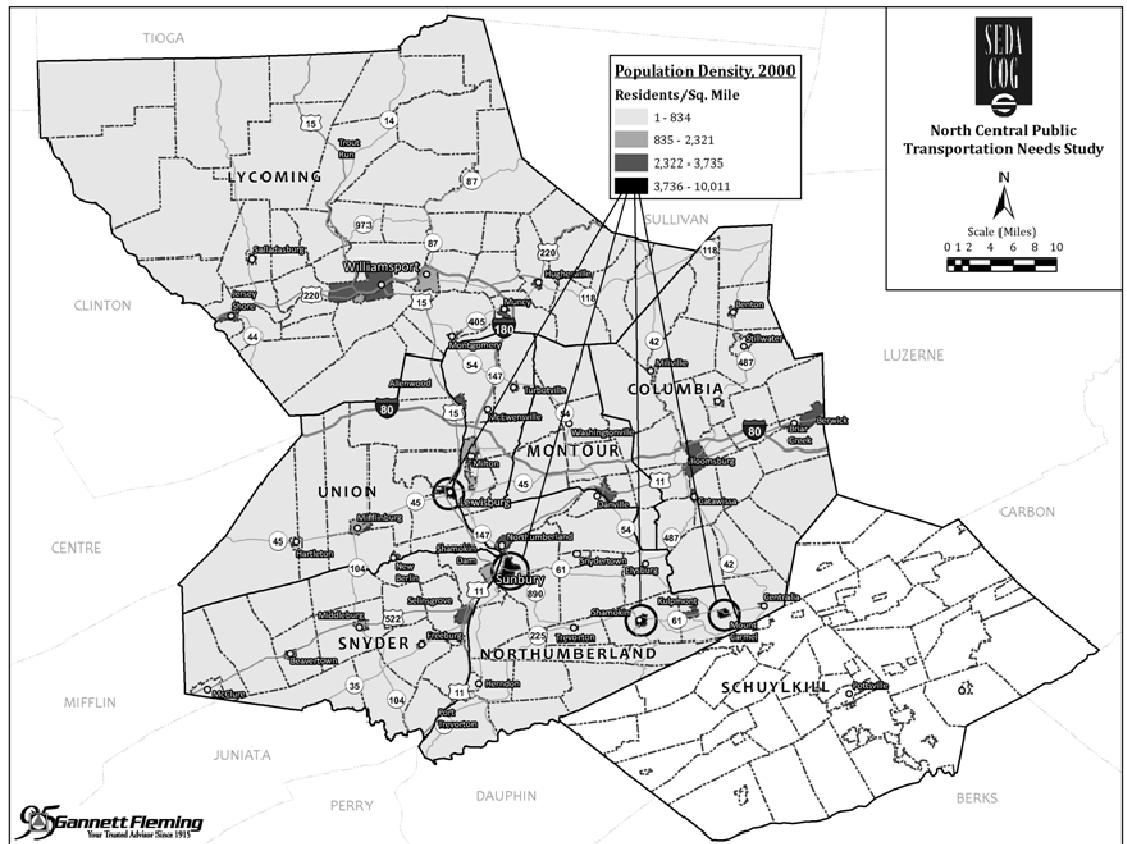
The municipalities with the greatest population density are generally clustered in the same areas of the study area where the largest populations reside, including the Greater Williamsport Area, the US 11 and US 15 corridors, and along PA 61 in lower Northumberland County. The most densely populated municipalities in the study area are cities and boroughs. This is to be expected, as these municipalities were historically built in much smaller lot increments than more recent development trends. Additionally, cities and boroughs are generally limited from annexing additional land, which constrains their land area and tends to increase their density. The 15 municipalities with the greatest population density are listed in Table 2. The population density for the entire study area is shown in Figure 2.

**Table 2 - Population Density by Municipality**

Municipality	County	Population
Shamokin	Northumberland	10,011
Mount Carmel Borough	Northumberland	9,128
Lewisburg Borough	Union	5,620
Sunbury	Northumberland	5,052
Jersey Shore Borough	Lycoming	3,735
Hughesville Borough	Lycoming	3,700
Marion Heights Borough	Northumberland	3,675
Berwick Borough	Columbia	3,475
Williamsport	Lycoming	3,450
Montgomery Borough	Lycoming	3,390
South Williamsport Borough	Lycoming	3,374
Muncy Borough	Lycoming	3,328
Kulpmont Borough	Northumberland	3,316
Watsontown Borough	Northumberland	3,221
Catawissa Borough	Columbia	3,178

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

**Figure 2: Population Density**



Other key demographic indicators are as follows:

- Many of the study area's senior citizens reside in Williamsport, Loyalsock Township, Berwick Borough, Coal Township and Shamokin.
- The highest concentrations of low income households are generally found in the urban areas where public assistance services are more readily available. There were five municipalities in the study area where approximately one-third of the households lived below the poverty line, including Shamokin (42.4%), Williamsport (35.9%), Bloomsburg (38.2%), Sunbury (33.5%), and Mount Carmel (31.6%).
- A total of 9.4 percent of housing units in the study area do not have access to a vehicle, with the greatest proportion of zero car households evident in the cities of Williamsport, Shamokin, and Sunbury.
- The municipalities with the highest percentages of residents with a disability are located in lower Northumberland County and include

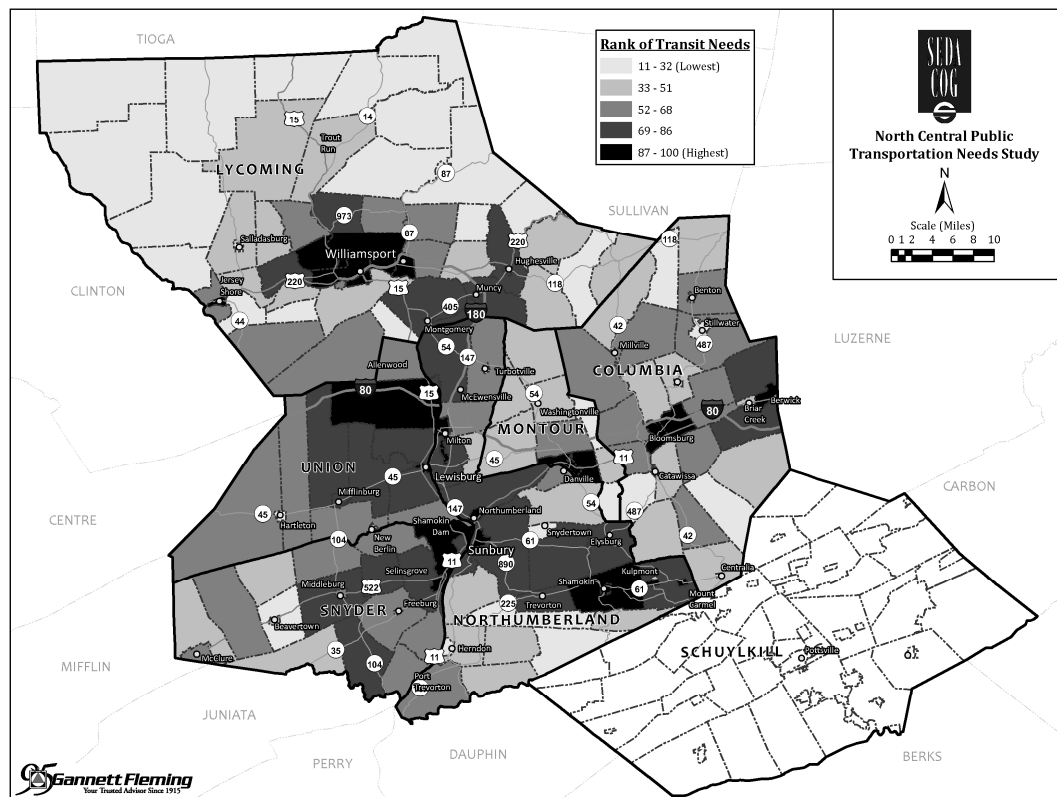
Mount Carmel Borough at 26.9 percent and the City of Shamokin at 26.4 percent. Danville Borough in Montour County is third, with 24.5 percent, which may be skewed due to the location of the state hospital. The City of Sunbury (22.7%) in Northumberland County and Berwick Borough in Columbia County (21.5%) round out the top five.

In general, transit-dependent population groups – senior citizens, low income households, zero car households, and persons with disabilities – are concentrated in the cities and boroughs throughout the study area. This is not surprising as these areas generally contain a disproportionate amount of the affordable housing units in the study area, provide a wider array of human service organizations and public assistance agencies, and provide a mixture of land uses that generally affords easier access to employment and essential services. In addition, Williamsport and the Greater Williamsport area in Lycoming County is served by the River Valley Transit (RVT) fixed route bus system, while the small urban areas in lower Northumberland County located along PA 61 are also provided fixed route bus service by the Lower Anthracite Transit System (LATS).

A composite index that took into account all of the above demographic factors was prepared as a means of identifying potential “transit hot spots” throughout the study area. The results are shown graphically on Map 3 with the areas of highest potential transit demand indicated as the darkest shaded areas.

As one would expect, the City of Williamsport and surrounding areas stand out when using the composite index approach. The other three most populous municipalities, Shamokin, Coal Township and Sunbury are also among the municipalities with the highest potential demand. Among the highest ranking townships are Loyalsock and Old Lycoming, which are near the City of Williamsport.

**Figure 3: Municipal Ranking of Transit Need**



## Employment Characteristics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, the labor force population in the study area increased by about 3.6 percent during a seven year period between 2000 and 2007. At the same time, the total population in the study area is estimated to have declined by nearly 10 percent. The increasing labor force participation rate coupled with a downward trend in the overall population indicates that there is a trend toward fewer persons in the study area who are not of working age.

The labor force population increased in five of the six counties from 2000 to 2007, with Columbia County exhibiting the largest labor force growth rate in absolute and relative terms. The overall size of the labor force within each county generally correlates with total population, with Lycoming County having the largest population of working age residents and Montour County having the lowest number of working age residents.

In 2007, over two-thirds of the jobs in the study area were located in three

counties – Lycoming (33.2%), Northumberland (19.2%), and Columbia (17.0%). Montour (10.1%), Snyder (9.9%), and Union Counties (10.6%) accounted for the remaining employment. The City of Williamsport in Lycoming County was the study area’s top employment center in 2007 with approximately 22,000 jobs. Mahoning Township in Montour County was second with 10,457 jobs followed by the City of Sunbury in Northumberland County with 6,953 jobs. Overall, the majority of the top workplace destinations in the study area are concentrated in and around the major population centers that are located along the major roadway corridors. The exception was Coal Township in Northumberland County which had an employment base of nearly 2,500 workers in 2007. Employment numbers generally drop-off significantly in the less densely populated municipalities in the outlying portions of the study area. The top 15 workplace destinations in the study area are listed in Table 3.

**Table 3 – Municipal Employment**

Municipality	County	Jobs
Williamsport	Lycoming	22,087
Mahoning Township	Montour	10,457
Sunbury	Northumberland	6,953
Bloomsburg	Columbia	6,465
Selinsgrove Borough	Snyder	6,291
Loyalsock Township	Lycoming	5,718
Berwick Borough	Columbia	5,203
Milton Borough	Northumberland	4,466
East Buffalo Township	Union	3,959
Kelly Township	Union	3,832
Scott Township	Columbia	3,824
Muncy Township	Lycoming	3,616
Montoursville Borough	Lycoming	3,564
South Centre Township	Columbia	2,975
Coal Township	Northumberland	2,490

Source: 2007 U.S. Census Bureau’s LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics

The number of jobs in the study area dropped by almost 10 percent between 2000 and 2007, with Lycoming County exhibiting the largest absolute drop in employment (-6,073) and Snyder County exhibiting the largest decline on a percentage basis (-18.6%). Montour County was the only county in the study area



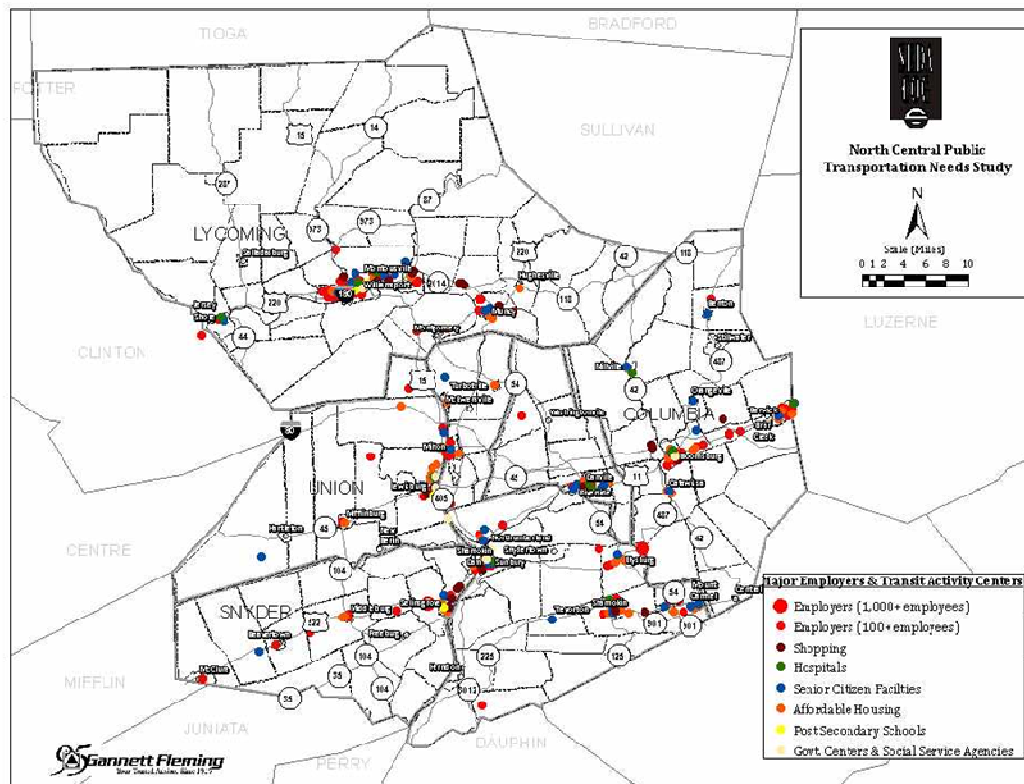
to experience employment growth during the seven year period; during this time period, the number of jobs in the county increased by approximately 28 percent. Employment change within the study area between 2000 and 2007 indicated that the municipalities with the largest numeric gains included significantly more suburban and rural townships than urban areas. The opposite was true in terms of employment decline, as ten of the top fifteen municipalities that lost jobs during the seven year period were urban areas versus five townships. Overall, countywide employment trends – positive or negative – are attributed to a select number of municipalities. For example, over one-third of the jobs that were added in Montour County between 2000 and 2007 occurred in Mahoning Township. In contrast, over three-quarters of the job losses in Lycoming County occurred in Williamsport and Muncy Township.

As is evident with population and employment patterns, the majority of major trip generators are concentrated in and around the older municipalities located along the study area's major roadway corridors. The City of Williamsport in Lycoming County contained the highest number of major employers and trip generators followed by the Town of Bloomsburg in Columbia County and Lewisburg Borough in Union County. The location and distribution of employers and major trip generators is shown in Figure 4.





**Figure 4: Major Employers and Transit Activity Centers**



## Regional Travel Activity

Travel demand in the study area, as measured by the PennDOT Bureau of Planning and Research, declined by less than one percent between 2003 and 2008 in contrast to the one percent increase in travel demand statewide. Increases in travel demand were greatest in Montour (5.2%) and in Union Counties (4.2%). Travel demand declined by nearly 5 percent in Lycoming County, while demand in the balance of the region remained fairly constant. Recent (but unofficial) traffic counts appear to indicate that travel demand in Lycoming County is increasing as a direct result of activity related to the drilling of Marcellus Shale. This is a relatively new phenomenon that has already introduced new demands and challenges on the region's highway network.

Over 90 percent of the study area's workers rely on the automobile as a means of transportation to work. Nearly 80 percent drive alone. Use of public transportation as a means of journey to work is less than 1 percent of the region's total, compared to the statewide rate of 5.2 percent.

Commutation patterns vary widely among the six study area counties. Two of the

study area's counties (Montour and Northumberland) send approximately 42 percent of their resident workforce to employment destinations outside the county of residence. Two other counties (Snyder and Union), export up to a third of their resident workforce to other counties. Lycoming County leads the study area in having the greatest share of resident workers employed within the county of residence, at nearly 88 percent. This is one of the highest such rates in the state. Within the Study area, the most significant journey to work numbers shows a large number of workers from Union County commuting to Northumberland County for employment. Likewise, Montour County also sees significant portions of its workforce traveling to Columbia and Northumberland Counties for employment.

The study area has a relatively small job deficit, based on the total number of resident workers (166,130) and workers overall that are employed within the study area (165,843). This deficit is greatest in Northumberland County (7,919) and in Columbia County (421). The remaining counties in the study area have more jobs than resident workers.

### **Summary of Community Characteristics**

The City of Williamsport and the Greater Williamsport area as a whole, represent the areas with the highest potential demand for public transportation services across all of the demographic indicators. This area is currently served by the River Valley Transit (RVT) fixed route bus system. The next three municipalities exhibiting the highest level of potential demand for transit are located in Northumberland County and include the cities of Shamokin and Sunbury and Coal Township. Other areas of higher relative potential transit demand include many of the older boroughs and cities situated along major travel routes throughout the study area, including US 11 and US 15.

## **Existing Transportation Services**

This chapter provides an overview of the local public transportation services and human service transportation programs available in North Central Pennsylvania, as well as other private transportation services – intercity bus and taxis – that are critical to ensuring mobility for transit dependent population groups, such as senior citizens, persons with disabilities and low income individuals. In addition, transportation services operated by three post-secondary schools in the study area were also described as they could provide a foundation for mobility options for the general public in the future. At this time, the transportation services operated by the local universities are open only to students, faculty and staff. A more detailed review of existing transportation services in the study area was submitted to the taskforce as an interim report under a separate cover.

Information about these services and programs were identified through a review of documents associated with the Pennsylvania Human Service Transportation Coordination Study, reports made available by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's Bureau of Public Transportation (BPT), inquiries made to the Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and private taxi companies, Russell's Official National Motor Coach Guide (for intercity bus services), and the Demand Responsive Transportation Provider Questionnaire that was sent to the five publicly-funded shared-ride/demand responsive systems operating in the study area. In addition, prior transportation studies and comprehensive plans for the region were reviewed to identify transit-related recommendations presented in those reports.

### Service Description

There are several types of public transportation services offered in the study area – fixed route, demand responsive, intercity, taxi, and college transportation services. Fixed route service is operated over designated routes according to a published schedule and is available to the general public. Demand responsive service is tailored to the date, time and location of trip requests received. Many demand responsive services are primarily oriented to specific social programs and primarily utilized by program clients such as the elderly, low income and persons with disabilities. The cost for using these client-oriented demand responsive services (also referred to as human service transportation) is subsidized by the client's sponsoring agency. Prior day reservation is typically required for these services to facilitate more efficient grouping of rides. While the Shared Ride Program is technically open to the general public, the cost to the user is often prohibitive since general public riders have no sponsoring agency

and must pay the full fare. Taxi service is also demand responsive service and is distinguished from human service transportation in that it is available to the general public and same-day trip requests are accommodated. Intercity bus service is typically operated by private companies and provides connections between communities and over longer distances. Intercity bus schedules are typically designed to attract longer distance travelers which often results in less attractive services for persons desiring to make shorter trips (such as within the study area). Lastly, the three universities in the study area – Bloomsburg University, Bucknell University, and Susquehanna University – offer various forms of transportation services to their students, faculty, and staff, including fixed route bus service, regional and long distance airport shuttle bus service, and car sharing programs.

In the Existing Transportation Systems Report, the fixed route and demand responsive systems in the study area were the primary focus of the study, and thus a detailed description of each system was provided in contrast to the other transportation services in the study area (i.e., taxis, inter-city bus, and college services) which were presented in a more of a summary type of detail.

All of the transportation services in the study area are summarized below and are organized by fixed route, demand response, taxis, inter-city bus and college transportation services.

### Fixed Route Systems

Fixed route bus operations are public transportation services operating along a fixed alignment and on an established schedule. Passengers can board and alight fixed route bus services at any bus stop along the established route. There are two fixed route systems in the study area and are as follows:

**River Valley Transportation (RVT)** – RVT is a unit of the City of Williamsport and provides fixed-route transit service throughout Lycoming County with the primary service area centered in the city and the Greater Williamsport Area as a whole. 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 bus system operates Monday through Saturday between 5:30 AM and 10:40 PM; however, most of the bus service ends by 7:00 PM, with RVT operating a “Super Nightline” route comprised of two buses that operate along an east and

west alignment between 7:00 PM and 10:40 PM. RVT does not operate Sunday service. In some instances, certain routes or route alignments operate weekday, Friday, or Saturday only service.

In the City of Williamsport and the Greater Williamsport Area, RVT operates service at a frequency of every 30 or 60 minutes. The frequency of service in the outlying communities in the service area generally consists of five or six trips per day at intervals ranging from one trip during the AM and PM peak periods to 120 minutes in the midday period and on Saturdays.

The base cash fare to ride a RVT fixed route bus is \$2.00. Transfers are issued free of charge for the next available bus and are valid for one hour from the time the transfer is issued. RVT also offers a variety of discounted fare programs and multi-ride options. These programs include discounted tokens, a reduced fare of \$1.00 for youths under the age of 17, and free transportation for riders age 60 or older. Discounted fare programs for students, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens are predicated on the rider meeting certain eligibility conditions and showing proper identification. By meeting these requirements students ride RVT buses for \$0.75 on school days between 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Persons with disabilities ride RVT for \$1.00 during off-peak periods. Senior citizens (60+) ride RVT for free anytime of the day under the sponsorship grant funding provided by PennDOT (65+) and the Bi-County Office of the Aging (60-64). In addition, students, faculty, and staff from Lycoming College and the Pennsylvania College of Technology Penn State also ride RVT for free anytime of the day under a contractual arrangement between RVT and the colleges. RVT offers unlimited and multi-ride passes ranging from one day to 31 days and priced.

ADA complementary paratransit service is provided by RVT Plus and is operated under contract by STEP Transportation, which is the Shared Ride provider serving Lycoming County. RVT certifies clients for the ADA service with STEP Transportation responsible for accepting reservations and providing transportation. The ADA service is available to individuals who are unable to ride RVT fixed-route service because of a disability; this service is available during the same operating hours as RVT and is required to be provided to locations within 3/4 of a mile of RVT bus routes.

RVT provided 1,297,400 passenger trips in FY 2008-09, an increase of 2.4 percent compared to the 1,266,700 trips provided in FY 2006-07. RVT is funded mostly with state and federal grants and passenger revenue.

**Lower Anthracite Transit System (LATS)** – LATS operates fixed-route bus service comprised of three routes that operate between the City of Shamokin, Coal Township, and the boroughs of Kulpmont, Marion Heights, and Mount Carmel in lower Northumberland County. The system is operated and administered by the Borough of Mount Carmel and funded mostly with state and federal grants and supplemented by passenger fares.

LATS operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:10 PM and operates one route on Saturdays between 9:00 AM and 12:25 PM. The system does not operate Sunday service. On weekdays, LATS operates between four and six trips per day, with the frequency of service ranging from every 75 minutes to 133 minutes. On Saturday, LATS provides three rounds trips at a frequency of every 75 minutes.

The base cash fare to ride LATS depends on the origin and destination (i.e., zone or distance based) with fares ranging from \$1.00 to \$2.25. Discounted fare programs are available for senior citizens (65+) and persons with disabilities by meeting certain eligibility conditions and showing proper identification. By meeting these requirements senior citizens (65+) can ride LATS for free anytime of the day with the trips paid for through grant funding provided by the Commonwealth. Persons with disabilities ride LATS for half-fare during the off-peak period. LATS does not offer any passes or multi-ride media to the general population.

ADA complementary paratransit service is operated under contract by the Northumberland County Transportation Department, which is the Shared-Ride provider serving Northumberland County. The ADA service is available to individuals who are unable to ride LATS fixed route service because of a disability; this service is available during the same operating hours as LATS and is required to be provided to locations within 3/4 of a mile of LATS bus routes.

The LATS fixed route system has provided about 55,000 passenger trips per year between FY 2006-07 and FY 2008-09, with overall ridership exhibiting a slight decline of less than one percent during this time period.

### **Demand Responsive Services**

Demand responsive transportation service is available in each county in the study area and refers to services in which the actual routing and schedule of the vehicles

is determined by passenger reservations and requests. Routing between origins and destinations varies on a daily basis according to trip requests received and there are no scheduled stops. Services are provided on a door-to-door basis and primarily cater to transit dependent population groups – senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and low income individuals – who receive subsidized or free fares through various state and federal specialized transportation funding programs as long as they meet certain eligibility requirements. In the case of a general public user, the service is not subsidized and the passenger must pay the full cost of the trip. Demand responsive transportation is used to provide access to daily needs, including but not limited to medical and shopping appointments, employment training, congregate meals, adult day care, and social outings. Users are required to schedule trips at least one business day in advance and must be willing to share their vehicle with other passengers.

There are five demand responsive systems in the study which are as follows:

- **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.

PennDOT, the Department of Public Welfare, and the Pennsylvania Department of Aging are responsible for oversight of the various state and federal specialized transportation funding programs that subsidize the vast majority of riders on the demand responsive systems.

These agencies contract with and fund the demand responsive systems in the study area, with the systems responsible for local management and the provision of service in accordance with program regulations, policies and service standards.

The five demand responsive systems carried a combined total of 477,455 passengers in FY 2008-09. The Shared Ride program accounted for almost 290,000 trips, or approximately two-thirds of the total. “Other” program trips (i.e., AAA, MATP, MH/MR, etc.) were second with 124,755 trips, followed by the PwD Program with 36,800 trips.

### **Taxi Companies**

The study area is served by several taxi companies that complement the services offered by the fixed route and demand responsive transportation systems. In many instances, the study area’s demand responsive providers subcontract various human service program trips to taxi companies. These include agency programs that come under the banner of human service transportation, including MATP, MH/MR, Aging (60-64), PwD, and others.

Five of the six counties in the study area are served by at least one taxi company. There is no taxi service based in Snyder County, however, there is a cab company based in Sunbury (Northumberland County) that serves select communities in the county, including Shamokin Dam, Selinsgrove and Hummels Wharf. Taxi service in Columbia County is provided by MTR Transportation/K-Cab, which is also the demand responsive provider for the county. With the exception of MTR Transportation/K-Cab, the number handicapped accessible vehicles operated by the taxi companies is limited.

## Intercity Bus Service

According to Russell's Official National Motor Coach Guide and the PennDOT Bureau of Public Transportation's FY 2008-09 Annual Report, there are a variety of intercity bus providers that serve the study area. A summary of these services are as follows:

- **Fullington Trailways** – This operator serves provides one round-trip per day to Williamsport and Hughesville in Lycoming County, as part of a route that operates between State College and Wilkes-Barre.
- **Susquehanna Transit Company/Susquehanna Trailways** – This intercity bus operator provides the highest-level of intercity bus service in the study area, with three routes between Williamsport and Philadelphia, Williamsport and Wilkes-Barre, and Harrisburg to Elmira, New York. Service from Williamsport includes 4 round-trips daily, while the Harrisburg – Elmira service includes two round trips daily. In addition to serving Williamsport, the routes also serve several other communities in the study area including, Allenwood, Berwick, Bloomsburg, Danville, Kulpmont, Lewisburg, Mt. Carmel, Port Trevorton, Selinsgrove, Sunbury, Shamokin Dam, Shamokin, and Trout Run.



**Other Intercity Bus Service** – In addition to the intercity bus service providers listed above, there are others that provide services that traverse the SEDA-COG region, but do not have stops in the study area (e.g., Greyhound stops in

Lewistown; Fullington stops in Lewistown and Mifflintown, etc.). Others, such as Megabus, provide intercity bus service in areas adjacent to the SEDACOG region, serving an axis between Philadelphia and Harrisburg to State College.

### University Transportation Services

The three post-secondary schools in the study area – Bloomsburg University in Columbia County, Bucknell University in Union County, and Susquehanna University in Snyder County – offer various forms of transportation services to their students, faculty, and staff, including fixed route bus service, regional and long distance airport shuttle bus service, and car sharing programs. A summary of the services available at the three universities is provided below.

- **Bloomsburg University** – The University operates fixed route bus service with dedicated stops along three routes that serve the campus area, downtown Bloomsburg, off-campus apartment complexes, and Wal-Mart. Bus service is primarily operated on weekdays between 7:30 AM and 9:30 PM; the exception is the Campus Loop which operates seven days a week with weeknight and Sunday service provided until midnight. Service frequencies range from every 10 minutes to approximately every 45 minutes depending on the day, time, and location served. Service between the University and Wal-Mart is limited to three round trips between 6:00 PM and 9:15 PM. The bus system is funded through student fees and is available to Bloomsburg University students only; however, the service is occasionally used by faculty and staff.
- **Bucknell University** – The University operates airport shuttle service, a car sharing program, and fixed route shuttle bus service between the campus area and downtown Lewisburg. The shuttle services are offered for transportation to the Harrisburg airport and train/bus station and the Williamsport, Philadelphia airports during the fall and spring break and the beginning and end of semesters. A shuttle to JFK airport in New York City also operates at the beginning and end of each semester. Reservations to access these services must be made in advance and are provided on a first come, first serve basis. These services are provided using private carriers using a combination of mini-vans, shuttle buses, and sedans.

A car sharing program is operated by Zipcar and consists of one Toyota Prius and one Honda Civic. The vehicles are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be rented on an hourly basis or for an entire 24 hour period through the Zipcar web site. The program is available to Bucknell students, faculty, and staff, as well as the general population not affiliated with the university. The use of the service requires a \$35.00 annual membership fee. Fuel and insurance costs are included in the rental rate.

The fixed route shuttle bus operates between the Bucknell campus and downtown Lewisburg, making various scheduled stops around the campus area, Wal-Mart, Weis Market, and the campus bookstore in downtown Lewisburg. The bus service is operated using one bus that operates three separate loop routes at different times of the day. The service is available Monday through Saturday from 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM and on Sunday from 12:00 PM to 6:00 PM. The shuttle bus is available to Bucknell students, faculty, staff, and their guests and is provided only when school is in session. There is no fare to ride the bus with the cost of the service paid for through student fees and other university funding sources. Bucknell contracts-out the operation of the service to Susquehanna Valley Limousine.

- **Susquehanna University** – The University operates three transportation services for its students, including a shuttle service to the Harrisburg airport and Harrisburg train station, a Saturday-only bus route between campus and local shopping centers, and a car sharing program. The shuttle service to Harrisburg is primarily operated before and after student breaks and is provided by Susquehanna Trailways. The Saturday bus service operates from 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM and serves the campus area and local shopping centers such as Wal-Mart, the Monroe Marketplace, and the Susquehanna Valley Mall. The service is available to Susquehanna University students only and is funded through student fees with the Susquehanna University Student Government Association responsible for administering the service. The bus only operates when school is in session.

Susquehanna University students, faculty, and staff have access to a car sharing program administered by Connect by Hertz. Two automobiles are available and can be rented hourly or for periods of

24 hours and greater through a web site administered by Hertz. The use of the service requires membership fees which range in price from \$50 annually to \$125 monthly. Gas and insurance costs are included in the rental rate.

### **Review of Previous Planning Efforts**

In addition to reviewing all existing transportation services, the following prior transportation studies were reviewed for recommendations that specifically address public transportation concerns:

- Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (February 2008)
- Columbia County Transportation Study (October 1998)
- Mifflin County Public Transportation Study (December 2002)
- Union/Snyder Fixed Route Public Transportation Feasibility Study (November 2004).

Also, comprehensive plans for Columbia, Lycoming, and Northumberland Counties were reviewed to identify transit-related recommendations.

### **Summary of Existing Transportation Services**

There are two fixed-route transit providers (serving the Williamsport and Mount Carmel areas) and five providers of human service transportation within the study area. In addition, there are several privately-operated transportation services (intercity bus, taxi service), and university-sponsored transportation programs ) that are available to the general public, or in some cases for specific populations such as students. Although much of the human service transportation is technically open to the general public, the fact that general public trips are not subsidized results in those services being used primarily by persons whose trips are sponsored through state and federal grants and social service agency funding. The collection of services provided are typical of the services offered in other areas of the Commonwealth, although the sizes of the systems and their individual operating characteristics vary according to demographics and local policies and practices.

## **Analysis of Potential Transit Needs**



This chapter documents the results of the analysis of transit demand that was completed for the study area.

To ensure a comprehensive approach to this topic, the consultant team completed both (1) a quantitative analysis using actual data and demand estimation techniques that have been successfully employed in similar studies, and (2) a qualitative assessment of transit needs based on stakeholder and public outreach activities. The first part provided 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 supplemented 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 use transit services, and the general public.

### **Quantitative Transit Demand Analysis**

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 report pertained only to demand responsive transportation systems operating in the 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 quantitative transit demand analysis was 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 of this analysis was 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. A detailed description of the data sets and model used in conducting this analysis is included in the Analysis of Potential Transit Needs report that was submitted as an interim report under a separate cover.

In general, the quantitative analysis indicated that at the county level, a large portion of the potential transit market in the study area is currently served and to attract new riders, the level of service will have to be increased. Further, increases in transit usage are not attributable to population gains since the study area is not expected to experience significant population increases. However, this finding does not mean that there are not localized opportunities for generating increased ridership through strategic service adjustments.

## **Qualitative Assessment of Transit Needs**

The second and more critical part of the transit demand analysis was to gather qualitative information through the conduct of stakeholder outreach activities that consisted of a (1) series of one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders in the study area, and (2) four workshop-style focus group sessions. All existing fixed route transit providers and human service transportation providers were interviewed. Other key stakeholders were identified by the NCPPTT 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.

## **Stakeholder Interviews**

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
- Smoley's Van Service

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.

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 Table 4 through Table 9.

**Table 4 - 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 5 - 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 6 - 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 7 - Opportunities and Concerns**

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 8 - 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 9 - 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 Groups

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.

The detailed results of the Focus Group process, by location, are presented in Appendix A.

### Common Themes from Interviews and Focus Groups

A comprehensive review of the final products, for both the one-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)

### Summary of Analysis of Potential Transit Needs

The qualitative feedback obtained through the one-on-one interviews and the focus group sessions provided valuable insight into the unmet transit needs within the study area. The identified needs were reduced to ten areas that



represented common themes from across all of the feedback sessions whether one-on-one interviews or group workshops. These common themes formed the foundation for identifying and evaluating potential service improvements in subsequent phases of the study.



## **Alternative Transit Improvement Strategies**

This chapter provides a description of the alternative transit improvement concepts that were prepared to address the needs identified in prior phases of the study. The intent of this chapter is to describe the wide range of alternatives, at the concept level, that was prepared for consideration and prioritization by the study task force.

It was important to focus available resources on the alternatives that are viewed as having the best chance of (a) addressing the highest priority needs, (b) gaining the support of key stakeholders and policy makers, and (c) being implemented. Therefore, taskforce guidance was requested regarding which items should be designated as a priority for potential inclusion in the Plan and for further analysis and development that included estimated costs and potential funding sources. The strategies that were not prioritized by the taskforce were not developed further. However, they were still included in this chapter of the report for possible reconsideration in the future if needs, regional priorities, institutional dynamics or funding prospects change.

### Approach

The alternative strategies were designed to remedy current deficiencies and exploit opportunities for the future. There was a conscious attempt to include a wide range of types of improvements encompassing:

- Short range (1-3 years), medium (3-6 years) and long range (beyond six years) both institutional matters and service-level improvements
- Traditional fixed route service, demand responsive service and other options that rely on making better use of private vehicles, and
- Varied geographic focus such as local, intra-regional and inter-regional.

There is some duplication in the alternatives since (a) the bolder initiatives (e.g. Establish a Regional Transportation Authority) may include discussion of service improvements that are also described as stand-alone alternatives, and (b) alternative approaches are offered to address certain identified needs such as for the US 11 and US 15 corridors. For the most part, the alternatives are not mutually exclusive and a mix of strategies was included in the plan. Each taskforce member was also provided a blank template to advance any additional proposals that they felt merited the consideration of the full taskforce.

The section below provides a brief explanation of the terms used to describe the alternatives.

**Category(ies):** Indicates whether the proposal deals with organization, coordination of services, service enhancement, new service, new program etc.

**Identified Need:** The basis for the proposal e.g. What is the need or the “problem” that the proposal is attempting to address?

**Discussion:** A concept-level overview of what is being proposed and, in some instances, giving examples of where this type of proposal has been implemented in other parts of the Commonwealth.

**Implementation/Time Frame:** The proposals have been categorized into three categories: short (1-3 years), mid (3-6 years) and long term (beyond 6 years). The assigned time frames reflect various factors including:

- Revisions to existing versus entirely new programs or services
- Institutional complexity including the number and type of entities involved and the likelihood of obtaining the necessary buy-in
- Lead time required to plan and properly execute a transition
- Whether new funding would be required and the relative amount of funds required.

**Parties Responsible:** This section indicates the key parties that would be responsible for implementation. It may include one or more existing agencies as well as new entities that may not currently exist.

**Probable Funding Implications:** A general assessment as to whether new funding would be required and the relative amounts that would likely be involved. Also important is the source of these funds in terms of local, state and federal programs. For the near term, funding at all levels of government is expected to be very constrained. Cost estimates and potential funding sources will be prepared in the next phase of work for the selected priority alternatives.

**Other Considerations:** This section provides additional information on the proposal that is not covered in the above categories, to help explain the proposal and/or the steps necessary to achieve implementation.

### Alternatives Considered

A total of 20 strategies were identified which ranged from relatively modest changes to major expansion of service. To an extent, there is some duplication in the strategies since the most ambitious proposals call for several services to be operated. To be sure that smaller scale projects are considered, some strategies called for a single enhanced or new service. The initial set of strategies presented to the taskforce is listed below. The assigned numbers are for reference only.

1. Regional Public Transportation System
2. Regional Coordination Council
3. Establishment of a Regional Transportation Broker
4. Transportation Management Association (TMA)
5. Evening and Weekend Service Expansion
6. Centralized Resource Directory
7. Improved Service Convenience
8. Taxi Subsidy Program
9. Accessible Taxi Vehicles
10. Carpool/Vanpool Services
11. Car Sharing Program
12. Previous Transportation Proposals
13. Intra-Regional Commuter Bus Service
14. Beyond-the-Region Subscription Commuter Bus Service
15. US 11 and US 15 – Regional Connecting Bus Service
16. Local Community Bus Routes with Deviation
17. General Public Rural Demand Responsive Service
18. PennDOT Human Service Transportation Coordination Pilot Project
19. Special Event/Special Purpose Transportation Service
20. Non-Motorized Options – Bicycling Programs

## Ranking of Alternatives

The alternatives listed above were discussed in a facilitated meeting of the NCPPTT at its regularly scheduled meeting of January 25, 2011. The meeting included a brief presentation on each alternative, voting by NCPPTT members (each was asked to identify their top five choices), group discussion on the voting results and selection of six alternatives for further development.

The results of the voting exercise are presented in Table 10. The intent of the voting exercise was not to make the final determination of which alternatives should be advanced for further analysis, but rather to inform that decision-making process. After much discussion of the voting results, the Taskforce chose the following alternatives to be advanced for further evaluation and inclusion in the plan.

- Alternative #1 Regional Public Transportation System
- Alternative # 2 Regional Coordination Council
- Alternative # 5 Evening and Weekend Service Expansion
- Alternative # 6 Centralized Resources Directory
- Alternative # 16 Local Community Routes with Deviation
- Alternative # 18 PennDOT Coordination Pilot Project

The chosen alternatives are those that received the highest number of Taskforce votes, with the exception of Alternative #18 – PennDOT Coordination Pilot Project. During the NCPPTT discussion, a number of members indicated that they didn't vote for that particular alternative since they believed that the Pilot Project was being advanced regardless of the outcome of the ranking of alternatives. The consensus among the Taskforce members was that they felt that the Pilot Project should definitely be included in the set of alternatives chosen for inclusion in the Plan.

Descriptions of each of the six alternatives chosen by the Taskforce follow in this section, while all proposed alternatives are described in Appendix B.

**Table 10 - Ranking of Alternative Service Improvement Strategies**  
(Alternatives Chosen for Inclusion in the Final Plan are Shaded)

Votes	Ref #	Strategy	Type of Strategy				Timeframe		
			Organ	Enhance	Expand	New	Short	Mid	Long
10	1	Regional Public Transportation System	✓	✓		✓			✓
10	2	Regional Coordination Council	✓				✓		
8	3	Regional Transportation Broker	✓					✓	
3	4	Transportation Management Assoc.	✓	✓	✓			✓	
12	5	Eve. and Weekend Service Expansion			✓		✓		
9	6	Centralized Resource Directory		✓			✓		
4	7	Improved Service Convenience		✓			✓		
3	8	Taxi Subsidy Program			✓		✓		
5	9	Accessible Taxi Vehicles		✓			✓		
6	10	Carpool/Vanpool Services		✓			✓		
1	11	Car Sharing Program				✓	✓		
0	12	Previous Transportation Proposals			✓	✓		✓	
4	13	Intra-Regional Commuter Bus Service				✓			✓
1	14	Beyond Reg. Subscript Commuter Bus				✓		✓	
6	15	US 11/15 Reg. Connecting Bus				✓		✓	
10	16	Local Comm. Routes with Deviation				✓			✓
5	17	Public Rural DR Service				✓			✓
6	18	PennDOT Coordination Pilot Project			✓		✓		
7	19	Special Events/Special Purpose				✓	✓		
0	20	Non Motorized-Bicycling		✓			✓		



## 1 – Regional Public Transportation System

**Category(ies):** Organizational/New Service /Service Enhancement

### Identified Need:

- Create a regional network of public transportation connections along major corridors, between various communities, and between population centers and major generators.
- Available and affordable public transportation service.
- More consistency across the region in policies, service levels, fares, etc.

**Discussion:** It is unlikely that the existing collection of individual operators serving individual counties or pairs of counties can successfully address all identified needs solely through coordination efforts. One example of how another predominantly rural region addresses this need is the Area Transportation Authority (ATA) which serves a 5,100 square mile, five-county region in North Central PA consisting of Elk, Jefferson, Potter, Cameron and McKean Counties (limited service is also operated into Clearfield County). ATA operates an array of service types including, demand responsive human service transportation, local fixed-route transportation and fixed-route with deviation service, and a network of regional connection services. The authority is financed through system fares and funds provided by FTA, PennDOT, the Counties and various third-party sponsors of certain types of trips. The system has been in operation for over 30 years with start-up funding provided through a federal demonstration program which no longer exists. Another example is the Endless Mountains Transportation Authority (EMTA) which serves Bradford, Tioga and Sullivan Counties. Other possible approaches would be (a) one county take the lead on creating and managing a multi-county system, and (b) hire a private broker to manage, administer and deliver some or all regional services under the sponsorship and oversight of a regional board.

**Implementation Timeframe :** Long-Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** A new regional body would likely have to be formed through local initiative. Governance is typically provided through a board appointed by the sponsoring entities. The sponsoring entities are typically responsible for providing local matching funds required to qualify for federal and state grant funding.

### Benefits:

- Needs of a regional nature get addressed
- Political boundaries, within the region, should become transparent to users.
- Consistency in service standards, levels of services, fares, amenities, etc.
- Potential efficiencies with a regional system
- Consistent with latest PennDOT directions

**Probable Funding Implications:** Considerable resources are already being expended that could be applied to a regional system. Some economies could be realized but a new network of regional connecting services would likely require additional funding to achieve.

**Other Considerations:**

- Requires the collaboration and cooperation among the counties and yielding of some control to the regional authority.
- Sharing of local funding responsibilities can be difficult to agree on.
- If one or more counties decide not to participate, it is not practical to operate a multi-county system serving non-contiguous counties.

## 2 – Regional Coordination Council (RCC)

**Category(ies):** Organizational/Coordination

**Identified Need:** Current and previous planning studies, as well as public input identified numerous issues impacting the ability of the existing demand responsive transportation systems from providing more efficient and effective regional service to transit dependent population groups and the general public. Greater coordination between the region's demand responsive systems in various functional areas – grants management, administration, procurement, public information, scheduling, reservations, operations, and funding – offers the potential for agencies to reduce costs, save resources and improve customer service.

**Discussion:** The existing public and human service transportation systems and various public and private transportation-related organizations within the six-county region could establish a Regional Coordination Council (RCC) to promote regional coordination strategies. The Council would be a voluntary organization and act in an advisory capacity with the transit systems retaining full control of their operations and decision making functions. While lacking direct authority, the RCC could perform several useful functions. It could convene regular meetings to improve communication among the counties, identify needs and opportunities, share information related to service planning, operations and funding, and provide an umbrella organization for human service transportation programs. A RCC could take many different forms since the number of agencies willing to participate as well as the functional areas that are coordinated may vary. Since the transit systems retain control of their organizations and can modify their services, offer new types of services, and/or expand the geographic area it serves, the RCC would provide a venue for resolving any conflicts and promoting coordination whenever possible. The North Central Pennsylvania Public Transportation Taskforce (NCPPTT) and/or the Pilot project work group could be used as a nucleus for the formation of the Coordination Council which would have a different mission than either of those groups.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** The NCPPTT could initiate the formation of the RCC and SEDA-COG could provide “in-kind” services such as meeting space and the provision of office supplies. However, the organizations that agree to participate in the Regional Coordination Council would enter into a cooperation agreement or memorandum of understanding that defined the goals and objectives of the council, funding roles and responsibilities of the participating organizations, management and operational principles, and any other appropriate rules and conditions. Once the goals and objectives of the Council have been clearly defined, working groups or committees could then be established to develop projects and/or action plans to address specific regional transportation priorities.

**Benefits:**

- Provide consistent regional service delivery standards to manage expectations and ensure that all clients/customers in the region are provided equitable service. This could be achieved through coordinating fares, scheduling, public information, eligibility criteria, customer service, etc.
- A RCC would be a suitable candidate to take the lead in developing a comprehensive transportation directory, standardizing and consolidating driver and staff training, discussing joint procurement opportunities, etc.
- A stand-alone organization that functions well has the potential to enjoy greater visibility of its actions and legitimacy of its position on transportation issues. An informal network or a committee within some other organization that is not created with the primary function of addressing transportation coordination may not have the same visibility or legitimacy.

**Probable Funding Implications:** No new funding required. It is assumed that existing agencies would commit to participate in the forum and that staff involvement, meeting-related travel and miscellaneous costs would be covered with existing staff and existing budgets.

**Other Considerations:**

- A RCC would not change the participating agencies’ structures or organization since they would continue to have primary responsibility for all functional areas. As a result, the ability of this model to make fundamental policy changes is limited to those areas which are informally negotiated between the agencies involved in the process.
- A RCC would be less effective if one or more existing demand responsive systems decide not to participate.

## 5 – Evening and Weekend Service Expansion

**Category(ies):** Service Expansion

**Identified Need:** A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions indicated the need to provide affordable general purpose transportation during evenings and on weekends.

**Discussion:** With the exception of the RVT and STEP systems in Lycoming County, none of the other existing transit systems in the region operate evening service. Further, LATS is the only system outside Lycoming County that operates service on Saturday, with this service providing only three round trips in the morning and early midday hours. The benefits of service expansion would provide transit-dependent groups as well as the general public access to more employment opportunities and more access to shopping and other essential services. Existing systems could offer contractual service to local universities, organizations or municipalities to provide evening and/or weekend service.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Transit Systems

**Benefits:**

- Increases the level of mobility in the region, which is one of the primary objectives of this study.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Would likely require additional local, federal and state financial assistance, which could be supplemented with farebox revenue.

**Other Considerations:**

- Lack of sufficient densities and demand to warrant service.
- Lack of funding to pay for additional service. For example, it may be difficult to obtain a local match to access federal funds.

## 6 – Centralized Resource Directory

**Category(ies):** Awareness/Customer Service

**Identified Need:** Increasing awareness of existing public and human service transportation services throughout the region.

**Discussion:** Input from the public outreach and stakeholder interviews indicated the need for improving the availability and quality of information that is provided to the public. In particular, there appears to be confusion on the part of the consumer in terms of services that are available, eligibility, how to access service, expectations of the services provided, etc. A lack of basic awareness and understanding is a barrier to people using and benefiting from public transportation. Since mobility needs are often regional in scope, this alternative would organize information regarding all available transit providers into a single place, where the rider or an agency representative could easily obtain essential information regarding eligibility, service hours, geographic coverage, etc. The information would be available in hard copy and web-based formats and would also be available via telephone. This directory could be developed out of the service inventories prepared as part of the coordinated plans recently prepared by the SEDA-COG and the Lycoming County Planning Commission, and could be among the first opportunities for the region to identify, understand and evaluate the variety of existing transportation services.

**Implementation Timeframe :** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Best practice models in the transit industry suggest that directories are most effective when prepared by a reliable organization with a regional scope and the ability to partner with transportation providers, municipalities and/or counties. At this time, the organization best suited for this role is likely SEDA-COG. Institutional alternatives that are proposed in this study, such as a Regional Coordination Council or a Transportation Management Association (TMA), would be well suited to lead the develop of a comprehensive resource directory.

**Benefits:**

- Improves access to both local and regional services through increased awareness and understanding.
- Enhances mobility options for transit-dependent population and the general public by increasing awareness of all available public and private transit services and human service agency transportation.
- Increases utilization of existing services with nominal additional investment.
- Increased visibility for public transportation and its benefits among elected officials and policy makers.
- Directories can be particularly useful in larger communities with a large number of public and private sector transportation resources.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Up to 80 percent of the cost of developing a transportation resource directory may be available through the Federal Section 5317 program, with the remaining 20 percent local match provided by local government, existing transit providers, and/or by local agencies and organizations.

**Other Considerations:**

- The entity responsible for developing the directory would need to commit to updating and maintaining the directory for a specified period of time.
- Care must be exercised to ensure that the directory or other materials are easy to use and understand, and that distribution channels and techniques maximize effectiveness.
- Directories only alert consumers to the availability of a service provider; consumers and/or agency representatives must still inquire about eligibility and arrange for services.

## 16 – Local Community Bus Routes with Deviation

**Category(ies):** New Service

**Identified Need:** A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions was the need for regularly scheduled public transportation service for the municipalities located along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors. This service is one alternative for providing access to retail areas and other essential services along the corridor.

- **Discussion:** Another route concept involves operating local community shuttle service using small vehicles in areas with the highest population and population densities to provide point-to-point service between residential areas and major activity centers. This service concept would also operate along a defined route on an established schedule but would deviate to pick-up or drop off passengers and then return to the defined route before the next marked bus stop. The last stop would always occur at the same pre-determined time. Passengers could board and alight anywhere on the route as long as the driver deems it safe to stop the vehicle. This type of service could reduce demand on the existing demand responsive services if the routes are easy to use for the elderly and persons with disabilities. The Area Transportation Authority (ATA) operates a similar type of service in communities with at least 5,000 persons and a population density of at least 2,500 persons per square mile. The municipalities in the region that meet this criteria and are not currently served by regularly scheduled public transportation include Berwick, Bloomsburg, Danville, Lewisburg, Milton, Selinsgrove, Sunbury, and Watertown. It is possible that these communities could be divided into two separate service areas that could be served on alternating weekdays. For example, the municipalities along US 11 served Tuesday and Thursday and the municipalities along US 15 served Wednesday and Friday. Many factors must be taken into account when designing route deviation service, including:

- Customer eligibility for deviated service (general public, persons with disabilities, other rider groups) Timing of requests for deviations (scheduled on the day prior to the trip, scheduled with minimal advance notice, given to the driver when the rider boards the vehicle).
- Accommodation of deviation requests (would the service accommodate all requests, accommodate requests with either deviation or paratransit service, accommodate requests only if possible without negatively affecting fixed route service quality).
- Area to be served by deviations (maximum distance or time from the route, all or only portions of the route, only to/from specific key sites). A deviation of three-quarters of a mile would satisfy ADA service regulations.
- The days and hours for deviated service (all days and hours that the route is in operation; only during certain times, such as off-peak hours; only on certain days, such as weekends).

**Implementation Timeframe:** Long Term but could be advanced incrementally

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Transit systems, local government, private sector

**Benefits:**

- Increases mobility options in the region for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public.
- Service operated less than five days per week does not serve work trip markets.
- Would serve many of the region's major activity centers (i.e., retail centers, post-secondary schools, etc.) and transit supportive residential areas.
- Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some costs could be offset through private sector contributions, and farebox revenue.

**Other Considerations:**

- Clearly marked and accessible bus stops would need to be designated and should ideally be equipped with a bus shelter, seating, and public information materials (i.e., route schedule, a listing of existing service providers, contact information, etc).
- Lack of sufficient demand to warrant service.
- Would require an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to be responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the service, which would include preparing and administering grants, quarterly reports, and oversight including ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices, vehicle maintenance and service quality.
- Service could be provided by the same entity or contracted to a private operator.

## 18 – PennDOT Human Service Coordination Pilot Project

**Category(ies):** Service Expansion

**Identified Need:** The public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions identified the need for existing demand responsive systems to improve coordination to medical facilities, particularly the Geisinger Medical Center in Danville.

**Discussion:** PennDOT is currently funding a project to improve human transportation coordination with goals including improving operational efficiency and customer service. The Pilot Project will focus on travel oriented to the Geisinger Medical Center but could be expanded to the other facilities/areas if the pilot project proves successful.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Existing transit systems and local government

### Benefits:

- Addresses several of the needs identified through the stakeholder outreach and public forums.
- Improves the efficiency and effectiveness of human service transportation associated with the region's largest attractor of this type of service.
- Could serve as validation of a model for future expansion throughout the region.
- PennDOT is supportive of the Pilot.

**Probable Funding Implications:** The Pilot Project is being funded 100% by PennDOT.

### Other Considerations:

- This project is an initial step in the process of developing a regional coordinated human service transportation system and addresses many of the barriers presently preventing more coordination in the region.
- The proposed Regional Coordination Council (RCC) would be ideally suited to take the lessons learned from this project and develop additional projects and action plans throughout the region.



## **Implementation of Prioritized Strategies**

This chapter presents the Regional Transportation Plan consisting of the five “high priority” improvement strategies selected by the Taskforce and the process required to move these projects towards implementation. (The Pilot Project is also considered to be part of the plan but is being advanced by other parties and is not detailed here.) A number of inter-related activities and decisions need to be addressed to begin implementing the strategies, such as determining the potential costs, organizational arrangements, operational characteristics, and funding sources of these proposals. It is important to note that each of the five strategies outlined below could stand on their own as an actionable strategy. More encompassing strategies, such as a Regional Public Transportation System, may be advanced in a fashion that incorporates some of the other discrete service proposals. In that instance, costs may need to be adjusted to account for any duplication.

### **Regional Coordination Council (RCC)**

The benefit of a regional coordination council would be to establish a framework for the progressive coordination of all public and human service transportation in the region and provide a forum in which projects, ideas, issues and opportunities can be discussed on an ongoing basis.

Improving the coordination of public transportation and human service transportation (HST) at the regional level has been identified as a major priority by the existing demand responsive systems and was cited as a major need during the conduct of the public outreach meetings and stakeholder interviews. Currently, the organization and delivery of public transportation services on a regional basis is being advocated at the state level by PennDOT and the federal United We Ride regulations requires that projects funded under the Section 5310-Elderly and Disabled, Section 5316-Job Access Reverse Commute and Section 5317- New Freedom programs be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.

The formation of a RCC could evolve from the North Central Pennsylvania Public Transportation Taskforce (NCPPTT) Committee with official recognition from county leaders. The NCPPTT includes many organizations that are typically represented on regional coordination councils – existing public transportation systems, organizations which arrange and/or fund transportation services, entities whose clients depend on transit services, and organizations that provide a regional transportation planning perspective (i.e., SEDA-COG). As a

result, the implementation of this recommendation will represent a continuation of a process that has already begun. In addition, current riders or their advocates and appropriate state agencies such as PennDOT, and the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) should also be represented. The RCC would be established through a voluntary agreement among the participating transit systems and organizations and act in an advisory capacity with the transit systems retaining full control over their operations and decision making functions. However, the governance of the RCC would be formalized to ensure the implementation of priorities and desired outcomes and promote effective decision making. This would include the following elements:

- By-laws to define how the RCC will be organized and operated, for example, in areas such as membership eligibility, organizational structure (i.e., Chair, President, Vice Chair, Secretary/Treasurer, sub-committees, etc.), voting and conflict resolution, meeting guidelines (i.e., frequency, agenda, quorum, etc.), accountability and the level of public participation. By-laws are important to define the roles and responsibilities of the RCC that are vital in building consensus to foster a task-oriented organization capable of effective decision making and follow-through. There are various organizational structures that could be implemented, including:
  - A conflict of interest policy signed by all RCC members to ensure any transactions or arrangements devised by the council do not benefit the private interests of a council member or members.
  - A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by RCC members that would define the expectations and mission of the council participants. A MOU is not a legally binding document but is more like a “good faith” agreement that all members of the RCC abide by to work towards achieving common goals. A MOU can also be used to formalize arrangements between RCC members who agree to take on certain responsibilities and also be designed to explain the ramifications if a member is unable to fulfill its responsibilities.

A preferred organizational structure for the RCC would comprise a Steering Committee of decision-makers with the authority to develop policy, provide overall direction and oversee implementation. The Steering Committee would establish specific action items to be addressed which would be completed by work groups or sub-committees working under the direction of the Steering

Committee. One of the first tasks that the RCC should undertake is the preparation of a work plan outlining the major projects that would be pursued in the first year. This work plan would then be updated annually to include new initiatives and a summary of progress on prior and ongoing coordination efforts.

The initial meetings of the RCC will need to focus on developing the organizational structure of the council, including by-laws, electing officers, approving the mission, goals and objectives, assigning responsibilities to subcommittees, developing a strategy to inform and involve the public of the RCC's activities, goals and plans. While a longer-term vision should be established by the RCC, the initial work plan for the RCC should be based on what can be accomplished in the first year, such as focusing on the elements of the PennDOT Human Service Transportation Pilot Project, or developing a centralized resource directory. This work plan would then be updated annually to include new initiatives and a summary of progress on prior and ongoing coordination efforts.

The level of complexity of a RCC in the region will largely depend on what type of role and responsibility the organization would assume. At a minimum, the RCC should share information, assess opportunities for coordination, and ensure that projects are included in a Coordination Plan. The RCC should also serve as the transit advisory group for SEDA-COG. All actions regarding public transportation that must be approved by SEDA-COG should be reviewed and recommended by the RCC.

However, in addition to being a suitable entity to lead the tasks outlined in the Human Service Transportation Pilot Project, the RCC would also be well suited to set priorities, identify and pursue funding opportunities and support projects of regional significance, including:

**Joint Purchasing** – Joint purchasing is an area in which there is an opportunity to promote coordination and more efficient use of existing resources. A working group or subcommittee could be established to identify opportunities for joint purchasing of services, vehicles, spare parts, garage and office equipment, fuel, insurance, audit services and technologies, etc. In order to ensure that the requirements of the different funding sources (i.e., local, state and federal) are met, joint purchasing policies could be developed and disseminated through the RCC. Standard boilerplates for solicitations could be developed to ensure that appropriate terms, conditions, and clauses are included. The areas that would need to be addressed for such procurements would include:

- Specification development;
- Principles for developing cost estimates;
- Policies and standards for various procurement methods (e.g., RFP, IFB and “piggyback” purchases off of a single contract);
- Evaluation criteria and vendor selection procedures;
- Protest procedures;
- Grant applications and cost sharing; and
- Contract administration.

**Fare Policy and Fare Structure** – The development of a regional fare policy and fare structure is an area where there could be opportunities for regional coordination. Such coordination could begin with an evaluation of existing fare policies and structures in order to determine what policy changes may enhance coordination on both an intra-county and inter-county level. Even in cases where agencies currently provide services free of charge to the eligible residents of their own county, this does not preclude developing a fare policy and structure in which these services are made available for a fee to those who are not currently eligible. In addition, it provides a mechanism for billing other agencies when one group transports clients of another. Depending on the extent to which such coordination is feasible, projects could be developed within the framework of the RCC to implement a region-wide fare payment system as has been done in other parts of the country.

**Scheduling and Service Delivery** – Through the structure of the RCC, a review and assessment of the specific needs for inter-agency and inter-county trips in the region could be conducted. As unmet needs are identified, action plans and projects could be developed that would address such needs. Although such coordination may start simply and perhaps utilize manual processes (e.g., sharing client databases and coordinating schedules via telephone), future efforts might include sophisticated technologies to facilitate multi-county or regional trip scheduling and dispatching. Such technologies may include:

- Collaboration on IT hardware and software standards;
- Advanced communication equipment (e.g., centralized phone lines, high speed data lines, and wireless technologies);
- Sophisticated scheduling software;
- Wide area and local computer networks;
- Automatic vehicle location devices; and
- Mobile data terminals.

The process could begin with improved coordination of scheduling and service delivery on a smaller scale such as within a county level or across two or more counties such as the arrangements currently in use by USTA and STEP. Once viable, coordinated reservations, scheduling, and dispatch functions are implemented at the county level, this model could be expanded and applied throughout the region and would require several additional functions, including:

- A central information center for trip reservations and customer service;
- Regional process for determining eligibility for different programs and services;
- Standard operating procedures for service delivery;
- Standard reporting mechanisms to ensure data consistency; and
- Reconciliation procedures for billing of client agencies and payments to service providers.

**Advocacy** – The next area in which there is potential for regional coordination is advocacy. Currently, there are five demand responsive systems, two fixed route systems, and a number of taxi companies, senior citizen facilities, and universities and non-profit organizations in the region that provide some type of transportation services. As a result, there are numerous areas in which these entities share common interests. As such, the Regional Coordination Council should identify and prioritize the issues that are most important to these entities and to attainment of regional goals. A vibrant regional advocacy program may include the following:

- Raising public awareness of public transportation needs in the region;
- Informing decision-makers and elected officials on transportation issues and trends;
- Create a better working relationship with PennDOT, the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) which administers the MATP program, and other funding agencies;
- Developing a centralized resource directory of all existing transportation services in the region, and Consolidating efforts to effect public policy and legislative changes that support regional needs.

**Scheduling and Communications Technology and Software** – A key determinant of agency costs are the utilization of drivers and vehicles. A combined scheduling approach could yield efficiencies that are not attainable with each agency or program scheduling trips for their clients. This should permit economies of scale and allow better exchange of information among

agencies. The desired outcome of such an approach is as follows.

- Agencies should ensure that when IT and communications technologies are procured, standards are consistent with the regional ITS architecture;
- To the extent possible, computer software and technologies should be interoperable throughout the region. It should be noted that PennDOT is promoting the use of uniform software by all state-supported demand responsive service providers to support the scheduling and dispatch functions.

Common software packages or compatibility of input and output files can encourage a coordinated approach to scheduling and data assembly. A regional communications system will be an essential tool for facilitating the coordination of services. This standardization would extend to the public transportation systems within the region. The acquisition of standard scheduling software, as advocated by PennDOT, could facilitate this process. Many of these activities could initially be accomplished by the RCC without major institutional changes to the current structure of the existing transportation services. Further, it is expected that only modest additional funding would be required to create a RCC, as it is assumed that the transit systems and participating organizations would cover meeting-related travel expenses and miscellaneous costs, with SEDA-COG or another public agency providing facilities for meetings or administrative activities. Based on work that the consultant team completed for a previous study, the cost of establishing a Regional Coordinating Council was estimated to be approximately \$2,000 per year, with the money used for postage, copies, meeting set-up, supplies, etc.

### Evening and Weekend Service Expansion

The analyses performed along with input provided by the public, regional stakeholders and the NCPPTT taskforce indicate that one of the deficiencies in the current network of public and human service transportation in the region is the lack of weekday evening and weekend service. This recommendation suggests that all demand responsive transportation systems in the region extend their weekday hours until at least 8:00 PM and operate between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM on Saturdays.

This suggested service span would require three of the five demand responsive systems in the region to increase their current service hours. The three systems

are as follows:

- The Northumberland County Transportation Department (NCTD);
- Montour County Transit (MCT); and
- The Union/Snyder Transportation Alliance (USTA)

Currently, NCTD operates between 6:00AM and 6:00PM on weekdays, but does provide Saturday service. MTR operates between 8:00AM and 4:00PM on weekdays with no Saturday Service. Similarly, only USTA operates a “day light” span of service (i.e., 6:30AM to 4:30PM) on weekdays.

STEP Transportation in Lycoming County would not be affected under this recommendation as the system operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nor would it affect MTR Transportation/K-Cab, Inc. in Columbia County which operates Monday through Saturday from 4:30 AM until 8:00 PM.

The operating impacts of this service improvement have been calculated using annual operating costs, revenue hours, and ridership statistics reported in FY 2008-09 PennDOT Legacy Reports. Assuming 255 weekdays (excluding holidays) and 52 Saturdays per year, the NCTD, Montour County Transit, and USTA transit systems, would need to add almost 3,300 revenue hours annually. Based on their prevailing cost structure, the additional annual operating expenses would be approximately \$157,000. Ridership increases for evening and Saturday service were assumed to attract riders at about 30 percent of the productivity level of the current service. The three systems would provide approximately 2,950 additional passenger trips per year during the expanded weekday evening and Saturday service hours. The additional cost of providing this service could be covered through an increase in the Shared-Ride fare structure. Individual fare increase requests would have to be submitted by USTA, Montour County Transit, and NCTD. The percentage increases for each would be approximately the incremental costs of the services as a percentage of their existing Shared-Ride costs.

### Centralized Resource Directory

The public outreach meetings and stakeholder interview sessions conducted as part of this study provided a general conclusion that public information regarding the existing transportation systems in the region is not widely available and does not provide sufficient information to inform the public about the



transportation services and programs available in the region. Further, there is no single source of information regarding the various public transportation systems in the region, so the overall quality and detail of information materials varies among the systems with River Valley Transit (RVT) having the most extensive and well designed public information materials in the region. The absence or lack of easy to understand public information sources could be negatively affecting ridership levels if potential users are unaware of the availability of transit services and the various subsidized transportation programs available for them to use, or lack of understanding of how to access those services.

Centralized public information directories are very helpful to consumers, human service agency staff, and advocates who need to find and/or arrange transportation for transit dependent population groups. This is particularly relevant in the region where riders may need to transfer between transit systems with different operating hours and service policies which can impact the convenience and accessibility for many riders.

The creation and publication of a centralized directory that is widely available and provides accessible information about available services in one place would encourage the use of existing services and increase mobility. This type of activity is often a first step in a broader effort to coordinate transportation services and could be a project for the newly created RCC or SEDA-COG. At a minimum, a PDF version of the document should also be available on-line and posted on websites maintained by key organizations in the region such as SEDA-COG, the United Way, local governments, etc. The directory should include all existing demand responsive and fixed route services in the region, as well as ADA, taxi, inter-city bus services, park-and-ride lots, and any other transportation options available to residents (i.e., carpool and vanpool programs, ridesharing, car sharing services, etc.).

Other key information that should be provided include service area, days and hours of service, rider and trip eligibility, fares, accessibility features, service policies, how to access the service, and a telephone number, web site and e-mail address for obtaining additional information on services. Contact information could initially be directed to each provider with a longer term goal of establishing a single telephone number or e-mail address where a customer could obtain information about all services offered in the region. This initiative would evolve based on the coordination activities that are undertaken in the region.

Resources will need to be devoted to data collection, marketing the existence of

the directory, and distribution throughout the region, especially to human service agencies, medical facilities and other public places. In addition, it may be a good idea to publish a version of the directory in local newspapers to widen the distribution and availability of the information.

The entity that takes the lead in developing, publishing, and distributing the directory must be prepared to commit time to updating and maintaining the directory on a regular basis. Another important component of the project will be the ability to seek and obtain support from private sector and institutional sources, in the form of donations and/or advertising, to underwrite some of the costs of updating and printing the directory.

Successful transportation directories in other areas have been developed by county planning departments, regional economic development organizations, and non-profit organizations. It is also conceivable that one of the local universities could assist in designing and creating the directory.

Implementation could likely occur in a six to twelve-month timeframe. It is recommended that the directory be updated annually or at six-month intervals, by verifying the contact information for each provider and then sending the current listing to the provider to identify any necessary changes.

The initial cost of developing a basic directory might range from \$25,000 to \$40,000 depending on the design selected and the extent of advertising. It is possible that SEDA-COG could assist in the design and development which might reduce the costs. Central resource directories facilitate enhanced access to services by the general public, including older adults, persons with low income, and persons with disabilities. This activity is permitted under the JARC and New Freedom programs as a mobility management strategy; JARC could pay up to 50 percent of the costs of developing the directory while the New Freedom program could fund up to 80 percent of the cost. PennDOT has a limited amount of discretionary funding for technical assistance and demonstrations, and preparation of a centralized resources directory may be a competitive candidate for funding under that program.

Links to directories that may be applicable to the region and illustrate the desired output of the process are shown below:

- [www.nh.gov/dot/programs/scc/documents/Region1-Grafton-CoosDirectory.pdf](http://www.nh.gov/dot/programs/scc/documents/Region1-Grafton-CoosDirectory.pdf)

- [www.ecicog.org/transportation](http://www.ecicog.org/transportation)

## Local Community Routes with Deviation

Previous planning studies prepared in the region, public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions conducted as part of this study, and input provided by the NCPPTT Taskforce, identified the need to provide regularly scheduled and affordable general public transportation service to the older urban municipalities in the central portion of the region that are located along the US 11 and US 15 corridors. The municipalities that were identified as candidates for bus service, included Berwick, Bloomsburg, Danville, Lewisburg, Milton, Northumberland, Selinsgrove, and Sunbury. In fact, the Community Characteristics report that was prepared as part of this study indicated that many of the previously-mentioned municipalities exhibit characteristics conducive to fixed route public transportation service (relative to other portions of the SEDACOG area, including relatively high population densities, transit supportive land use patterns, a disproportionate number of transit dependent residents, and high concentrations of transit generators and regional activity centers and attractions – affordable housing complexes, shopping centers and other essential services, major employers, educational institutions, and medical centers.

In response to the identified needs and input received, a relatively modest service plan was developed for implementing regularly scheduled fixed route bus service along the US 11 and US 15 corridors that would primarily target the older urban municipalities in the central portion of the region and located along the US 11 and US 15 corridors, such as Berwick, Bloomsburg, Danville, Lewisburg, Milton, Northumberland, Selinsgrove, and Sunbury. In addition, certain townships adjacent to these municipalities would also receive service such as South Centre, Scott and West Hemlock Townships in Columbia County; Cooper, Monroe, and Mahoning Townships in Montour County; Monroe Township in Snyder County; and East Buffalo, Kelly and White Deer Townships in Union County.

**Service Characteristics** – A total of four local community routes were developed that would initially operate only one weekday each week with only one route in-service each day. Each route would operate for an eight hour period, for example from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, and operate at a frequency of every two hours or four round trips per day. The running times of the routes are based on assumed average operating speeds. These running times would need to be confirmed with road tests using transit vehicles.

The four local community bus routes are as follows:

- Berwick-Bloomsburg-Columbia Mall
- Danville-Bloomsburg-Columbia Mall
- Lewisburg-Milton-New Columbia
- Northumberland-Sunbury-Selinsgrove

The routes are designed to provide “lifeline” service to residents who may have difficulty accessing essential services on a regular basis (i.e., shopping, pharmacy pick-ups, banking, socializing, and even medical appointments) as well as serve residents who are ineligible for subsidized transportation through state or federal programs but cannot afford the unsubsidized fare on the existing demand responsive systems.

The routes would operate on a designated alignment and adhere to an established schedule with specified stop locations at key points along the routes such as a major shopping center, residential complex, or neighborhood intersection. In areas along the routes which have not been designated as a regular or fixed stop, passengers can wait for the vehicle and “flag down” the bus as it approaches. Alternately, a prospective passenger could request, by phone, that a vehicle deviate from its regular route to pick-up the passenger and then return to the regular route. On the return trip, the passenger would inform the driver of the need to be taken to their destination.

Based on passenger requests, the vehicles would deviate off of their defined route alignment to make a passenger pickup or drop-off and then return to the route alignment before the next marked bus stop. This added feature – which is also referred to as “route deviation” or “flex-route” – offers a level of convenience for riders needing assistance or door-to-door service and may help alleviate some of the need for some trips on the existing demand responsive services. Further, if deviations were provided up to three-quarters of a mile from the defined route alignment, the service would satisfy ADA regulations on complimentary paratransit service without the need for a separate demand responsive service.

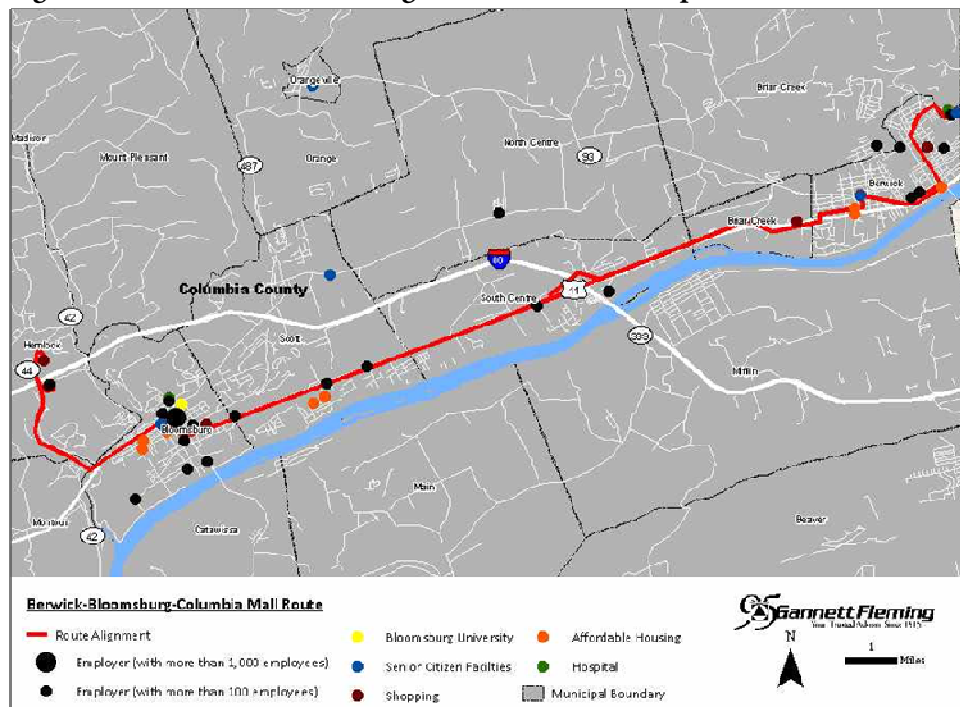
Passengers would have greater flexibility in their trip making in that they could opt to use these local bus services without the need to schedule an advanced reservation since they could meet the bus at a designated stop or somewhere along the route. This is in contrast to the demand responsive systems in the region, which require passengers to make a reservation one business day prior to

when the trip is needed. However, it is important to recognize that the operation of the route deviation component of the service would require advanced notice, which could be accommodated on a same-day basis or require an advance reservation the business day prior to when their community is scheduled to receive bus service. A major factor impacting route deviation service is having the proper software and equipment and having a sufficient number of personnel to receive, schedule and dispatch the route deviation requests.

It is important to recognize at the outset that the four route proposals described below do not have to be implemented at one time and can be brought into service incrementally in response to local priorities and as funding becomes available and demand is verified. Further, the route alignments presented here are illustrative and could be refined and modified as the project proceeds to implementation.

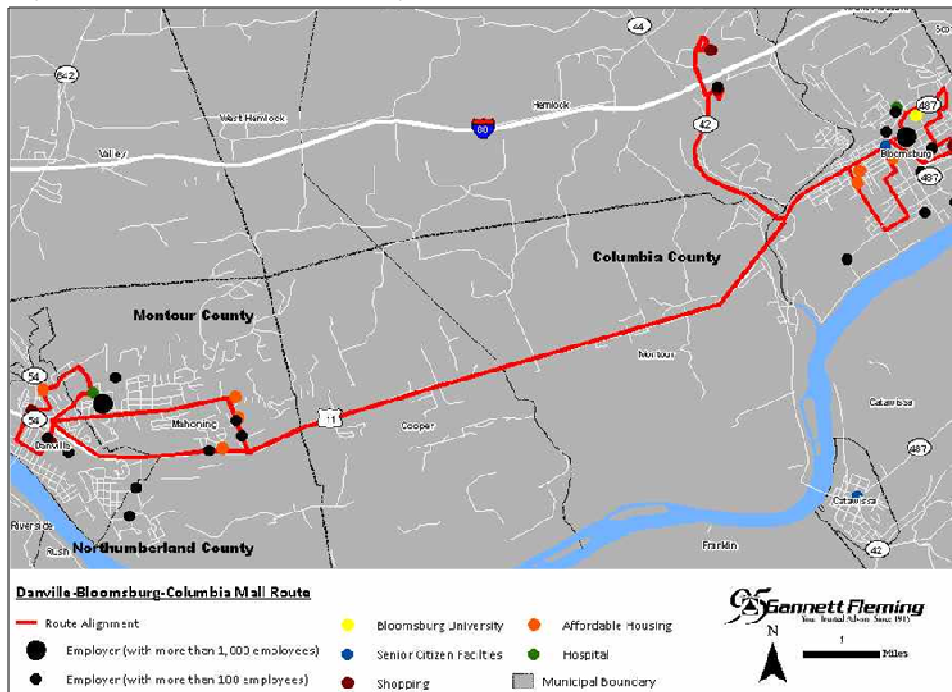
- **Berwick-Bloomsburg-Columbia Mall** – This route will operate entirely within Columbia County between Berwick Borough, Bloomsburg and the Columbia Mall in West Hemlock Township. The route is designed to provide Berwick area residents access to local services such as the Berwick Hospital and regional attractions including downtown Bloomsburg – Bloomsburg University and Bloomsburg Hospital – and the Wal-Mart and Columbia Mall in West Hemlock Township. The route primarily utilizes secondary roads such as US 11 and PA 42, but does operate on local streets in Berwick to serve affordable housing, grocery stores, banks and other services. The trip back to Berwick basically follows the same alignment with only the minor differences due to one way-traffic patterns on a small segment of US 11 and along a small segment in Berwick. This route would require the use of one vehicle. The proposed alignment of the route and the transit generators and activity centers served are depicted in Figure 5.

**Figure 5 – Berwick – Bloomsburg – Columbia Mall Proposal**



- Danville-Bloomsburg-Columbia Mall** – This route would operate in Columbia and Montour Counties connecting Danville Borough, Bloomsburg and the Columbia Mall in West Hemlock Township. The route is designed to provide residents along the route access to local services and regional attractions such as the Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, Bloomsburg University, Bloomsburg Hospital, and the Wal-Mart and the Columbia Mall in Hemlock Township. The route primarily utilizes secondary roads such as US 11 and PA 42, but does operate on local streets in Danville and Bloomsburg to serve affordable housing, grocery stores, banks and other services. The route alignment is basically the same in each direction. The exception is in Danville where westbound service into the borough travels on Woodbine Lane and Bloom Road while the eastbound service travels along US 11. Because of its length, this route would require the use of two vehicles. The proposed alignment of the route and the transit generators and activity centers served are depicted in Figure 6.

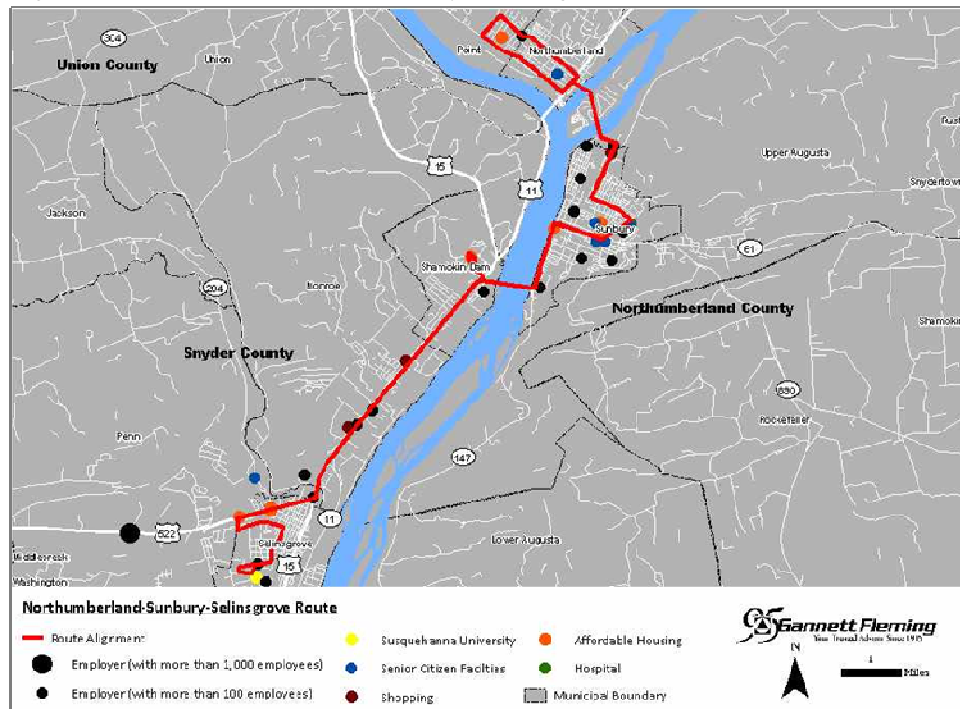
**Figure 6 - Danville - Bloomsburg - Columbia Mall Proposal**



- Northumberland-Sunbury-Selinsgrove** – This route will operate between Northumberland Borough and the City of Sunbury in Northumberland County using local streets and PA 61 and PA 147, then will continue southbound through Sunbury on State Route 61 and travel across the Susquehanna River via the State Street Bridge into Snyder County to serve Shamokin Dam Borough, Hummels Wharf, and Monroe Township via US 11. The route will enter Selinsgrove Borough using US 522 and will then circulate through the borough on local streets and terminate at Susquehanna University on University Avenue. The route will follow the same alignment back to Northumberland Borough. The route will provide residents along the route access to local services and regional attractions, such as the Sunbury Community Hospital, Wal-Mart, the Susquehanna Valley Mall and Susquehanna University. In addition, the route will also provide access to the numerous services located along the US 11 corridor in Snyder County and serve the Susquehanna Trailways intercity bus station on Market Street in Sunbury. This route would require the use of one vehicle. The proposed alignment of the route and the transit generators and activity centers served are depicted in Figure 7.



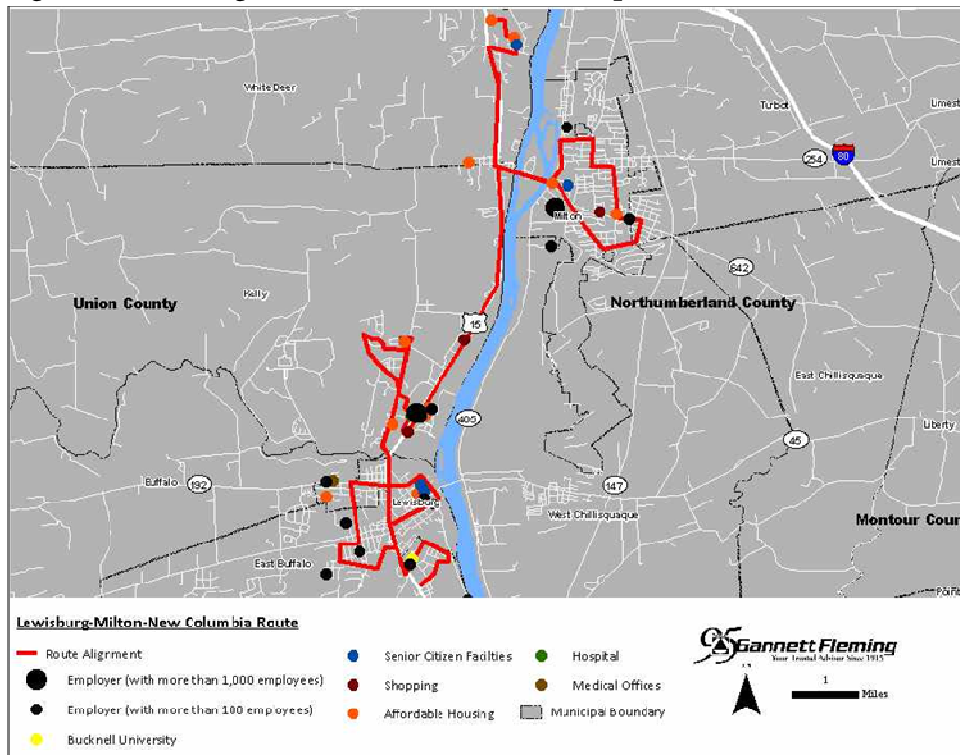
**Figure 7: Northumberland - Sunbury - Selinsgrove Proposal**



- Lewisburg-Milton-New Columbia** – This route would operate in Union and Northumberland Counties connecting Lewisburg Borough, Kelly Township, Milton Borough, and the community of New Columbia in White Deer Township via US 15. The route will circulate throughout the Lewisburg Borough area, continue northbound on US 15 into Kelly Township using local streets such as JPM Road and Hospital Drive, continue north on US 15 and circulate throughout the central portion of Milton Borough, then travel back to US 15 and continue north to serve New Columbia. The route will follow the same alignment back to Lewisburg. The route will provide residents along the route access to local services and regional attractions, including Wal-Mart, Bucknell University, the Evangelical Community Hospital, medical offices, and numerous other services located in downtown Lewisburg and along the US 15 corridor. This route would require the use of one vehicle. The proposed alignment of the route and the transit generators and activity centers served are depicted in Figure 8.



**Figure 8: Lewisburg - Milton - New Columbia Proposal**



**Operating Impacts** – The operating statistics of the local community routes have been calculated using an hourly rate of \$60.00, which is comparable to the average hourly cost of providing public transportation in the region. Since no operator has been identified, the actual costs would vary depending on whether the service is operated by one of the existing operators or a contractor. The unit cost of \$60.00 per hour seems a reasonable estimate for purposes of decision making.

Ridership levels were based on an assumed productivity level of 3.6 passengers per hour which is a conservative estimate for service in a rural community. For example, this value is compatible with results for the fixed route services operated by the Endless Mountain Transportation Authority (EMTA), which is a rural multi-county regional system north of Lycoming County with similar geographical and land use characteristics of the SEDA-COG region. A fare of \$1.50 per trip has been used to estimate potential revenue. The projected operating statistics and estimated revenue of the proposed local community bus routes is presented in Table 11. With one route requiring two vehicles and the other three needing only one, and each service operated one day a week this results in a total of 2,080 revenue hours annually. Using an assumed unit cost of \$60.00 per hour would result in annual costs of almost \$125,000. In addition,

another \$20,000 was added to operating costs to account for expenses related to printing system maps/route schedules, special promotions to introduce the new bus services, marketing, advertising and other service information to be distributed throughout the region.

The four bus routes could be expected to attract approximately 7,500 passenger trips per year. This would result in about \$11,000 in passenger revenue and would reduce the operating deficit to about \$134,000. The projections also suggest the system would achieve a farebox recovery rate of almost eight percent.

**Table 11 - Local Community Routes Operating Forecasts**

Operating Statistics	Impacts
Annual Revenue Hours	2,080
Annual Operating Costs	\$124,800
Marketing/Public Information	\$20,000
Total Operating Costs	\$144,800
Passenger Revenue	\$11,200
Farebox Recovery	7.8%
Operating Deficit	\$133,600

**Capital Impacts** – The implementation of the local community bus service will require capital expenditures in two areas, as shown in Table 12.

**Table 12 - Local Community Routes Capital Costs**

Budget Item	Number	Unit Cost	Total
Body-on-Chassis Vehicles	2	\$80,000	\$160,000
Bus Stop Signs	580	\$120	\$69,600
Total Capital Costs			\$229,600

The first area is for purchasing vehicles. It is recommended that body-on-chassis style vehicles be used, as this type of vehicle is better suited for carrying smaller numbers of riders and navigating neighborhood streets and narrow rural roads. An example of a body-on-chassis vehicle is shown in the accompanying image.

### Body-on-Chassis Vehicle Type (example)



The local community service will require a total of two vehicles based on the assumption that no more than two vehicles will be in service at a given time, as each route will operate on a separate day during the weekday period. No allowance for a spare coach has been provided since it is assumed that the operator (i.e., existing provider or contractor) would be able to provide a spare vehicle from their existing fleet. Accordingly, a total of \$160,000 would need to be expended to acquire a sufficient vehicle fleet to operate the service.

The second area is the placement of bus stop signs throughout the service area. The combined round trip mileage of the local community bus route system is approximately 145 miles.

It is recommended that an average of four bus stop signs be installed per mile which results in the need for about 580 signs. In planning for the expense of this program (i.e., sign production and installation), the region should assume a cost estimate of approximately \$120 per sign. This would result in a total estimated cost for the program of about \$70,000. The bus stop signs used throughout the service area should be of a consistent design and appearance. The sign should include the international bus stop symbol, and a telephone information number and even a website address. If applicable, a system logo should also be displayed on each bus stop sign. If the service is directly operated by an entity in the region, a facility will be needed to house personnel and store the vehicles. However, due to the limited resources required to operate the local community bus service, it is possible that personnel and the vehicles could be stationed at an existing facility in the region. If this was to occur, it would be preferable if the facility was as

centrally located as possible to reduce deadhead miles and hours. For example, the Montour County Transit facility located on Woodbine Lane near Danville Borough would be a good location.

Conversely, there would likely be no need for a publicly-owned facility if the service was contracted-out to a transportation management company, as this organization would likely use publicly owned vehicles and store them at a company owned site. While this arrangement would likely result in higher operating costs since the service provider would build the facility costs into the cost per hour, the estimated total cost (sum of operating and capital costs) should still be valid. From a local perspective, it would be advantageous to apply for grant funding for vehicle and facility costs rather than have those costs built into an operating contract with a service provider. This is due to the more favorable grant match ratio for capital costs (as little as 3 1/3% local funding for capital projects).

**Institutional and Organizational Arrangements** – An important consideration that must be decided upon is whether the service will be directly operated or contracted-out to a transportation management company. One possibility would be for the region to designate a “lead agency” to be responsible for the provision of the local community bus service. The lead agency would need to be a public organization legally capable of receiving and administering both state and federal funds. Under this arrangement, the local jurisdictions that would receive bus service would enter into an agreement with the lead agency that would address issues such as the services to be provided, the terms of payment for services, fare structure, vehicle equipment, marketing, etc. The lead agency would be responsible for ensuring that the operation and administration of the service is in compliance with federal, state, and local laws. As noted previously, if the service was directly operated, it is possible that personnel and the vehicle fleet could be stationed at an existing facility in the region. Another option would be for the lead agency to administer the service, but contract out the operation to a transportation management company who would be responsible for vehicle storage. Again, it is important to recognize that the implementation of service can be an incremental process as funding, demand and other resources become available. Further, the creation of a Regional Coordination Council (RCC) comprised of existing transit systems, key decision makers, community stakeholders and the general public, could be an influential entity to move the concept of general public fixed route transportation forward. The RCC would be well suited to work-out the technical issues, operational and institutional arrangements to implement the service.

## Regional Public Transportation System

In addition to the need for local community bus service along the US 11 and US 15 corridors in the central portion of the region, the general public, community stakeholders, and the NCPPTT also identified the need to develop a regional network of bus routes along major corridors to connect population centers and major activity centers in the region. A regional public transportation system would serve the same areas as the local community bus service but would be expanded north into Lycoming County and south into lower Northumberland County. Further, the span of service would be greater than the local plan and this represents an ambitious program of public transportation.

**Service Characteristics** – A total of five regional bus routes were developed that would operate Monday through Friday for a twelve hour span, for example from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM. This would allow riders to use the bus service to access work and school trips and other types of trips that typically cannot be provided with weekly service operated by the local community bus routes. The regional system would consist of five routes which are as follows:

- Berwick-Bloomsburg-Danville
- Danville-Lycoming Mall
- Lewisburg-Selinsgrove
- Selinsgrove-Danville
- Shamokin-Selinsgrove

The routes would operate on a designated alignment and adhere to an established schedule with specified stop locations at key points along the routes such as a major shopping center or local intersection. In areas along the routes which have not been designated as a regular or fixed stop, passengers can wait for the vehicle and "flag down" the bus as it approaches. Alternately, a passenger on board one of the vehicles can request to be dropped off anywhere along the defined route. The driver makes the decision as to whether or not the requested stop is safe, and may choose an alternate, nearby place to stop if the requested stop is not safe.

Given the round trip mileage of the proposed regional bus routes, it is possible that the regional bus service would not provide route deviation service like that is a feature of the proposed local community bus service. Accordingly, complimentary ADA paratransit service would have to be provided along the regional routes and be available during the same hours; however, some of these trips could be handled by existing paratransit providers. Alternatively, it may be

possible to implement a flex routing scheme where buses would deviate from the primary alignment. In general, the regional public transportation system would be designed in a similar manner as the local community service. The differences would be service farther north to Muncy Township in Lycoming County and service farther south to Shamokin in lower Northumberland County; route extensions in Danville and Selinsgrove to serve PennDOT-maintained park-and-ride facilities; a route linking Union and Snyder Counties via US 11/15 corridor; and minor route realignments and new linkages to support a connected regional transportation network.

**Transfer Points** – To facilitate regional travel opportunities on the proposed regional bus routes, two transfer points have been proposed where routes would intersect and riders could transfer from one vehicle to another. One of the transfer points would be within or in close proximity to the Geisinger Medical Center in Danville Borough since the Medical Center and Borough would be directly served by three of the five regional routes and Geisinger is one of the major activity centers in the region. A transfer point in this location would also be convenient for the demand responsive systems, as the Geisinger Medical Center is one of their primary destinations and would allow their riders the ability to access fixed route bus service. Since the exact location of the transfer point has not been determined, this report uses the PennDOT-maintained park-and-ride facility located approximately 1.5 miles north of Danville near the intersection of PA 642 and Church Hill Road in Valley Township. If a more appropriate location is later identified, the routes would have to be adjusted accordingly.

Another transfer point is suggested along the northern portion of the US 11/15 corridor in Snyder County, perhaps somewhere near Shamokin Dam Borough, near the State Street Bridge, to provide a connection with the Selinsgrove routes and the Shamokin route coming from Northumberland County. This transfer point would provide riders from Northumberland County to access to the US 15 corridor in Union County and the US 11 corridor in Columbia and Montour Counties. It would also allow riders in the region access to the population centers along PA 61 in lower Northumberland County.

In addition, the proposed Danville-Lycoming Mall route would connect with River Valley Transit (RVT) at the Lycoming Mall to offer riders access into Williamsport and Lycoming County, while the proposed Shamokin-Selinsgrove route would connect with the Lower Anthracite Transit System (LATS) to provide riders living in the population centers along the PA 61 corridor access to

the Selinsgrove and the region as a whole. The proposed regional public transportation system and the RVT and LATS systems would need to coordinate their schedules to facilitate convenient transfer opportunities for riders.

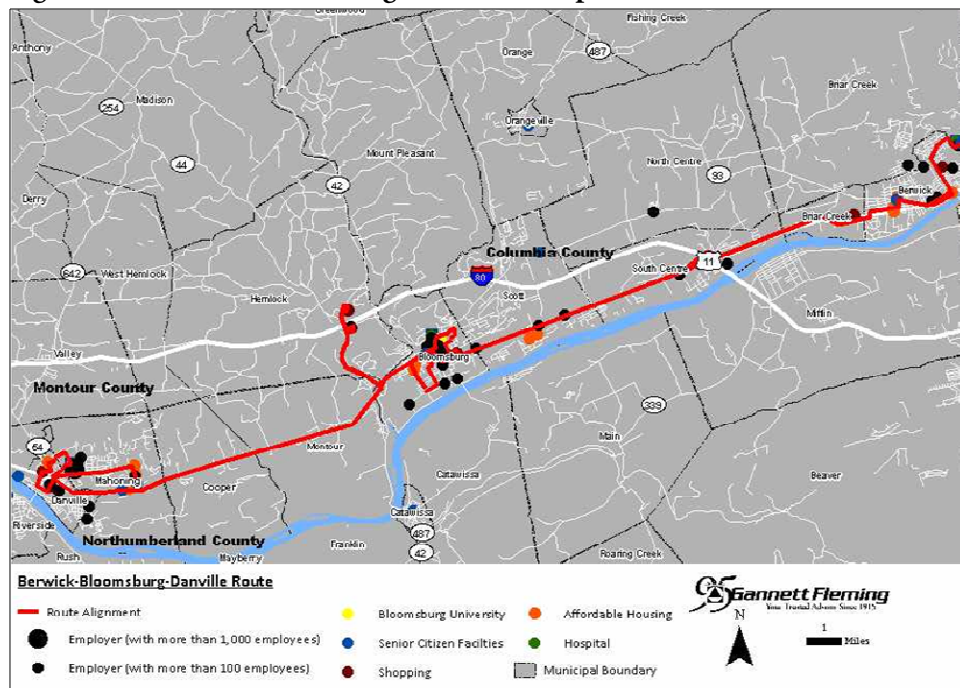
It is important to recognize that the regional bus system proposals described below do not have to be implemented at one time and can be brought into service incrementally as funding becomes available and demand is verified. Further, the proposed alignments are preliminary and would be likely be adjusted as the plan moved towards implementation. For example, the running times would need to be confirmed with road tests using transit vehicles. However, they do indicate the scale and magnitude of a regional bus system and permit an estimate of the necessary financial resources.

- **Berwick-Bloomsburg-Danville** – This route would be a combination of the two local community bus routes proposed to operate along the US 11 corridor between Berwick, Bloomsburg, the Columbia Mall and Danville (refer to Figure 5 and Figure 6) and would operate bi-directional service along US 11 at a frequency of every 90 minutes using three vehicles. The designated stops and activity centers served by the two local community routes would stay the same. The only change would be Berwick residents and residents living along US 11 west of Bloomsburg would now be provided with fixed route bus service into Danville. The proposed alignment of the route and the transit generators and activity centers served are depicted in Figure 9.





**Figure 9: Berwick - Bloomsburg - Danville Proposal**

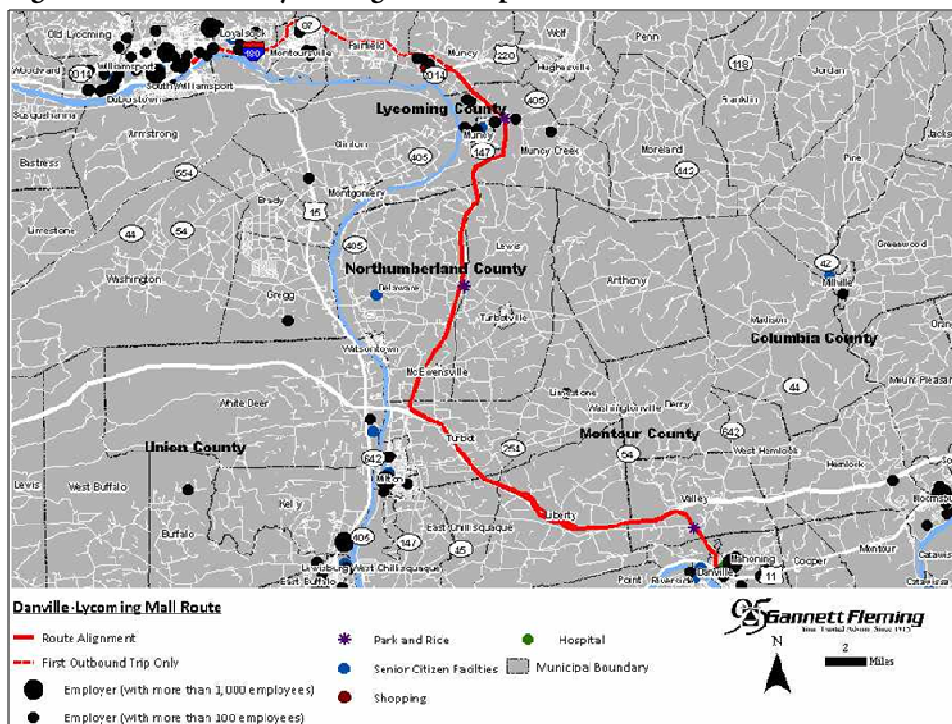


- Danville-Lycoming Mall** – This route would operate primarily between a PennDOT park-and-ride facility in Valley Township (Montour County) and the Lycoming Mall in Muncy Township in Lycoming County. However, the first round trips of the day would operate between Montour County and the River Valley Transit (RVT) transfer center (i.e., Trade and Transit Centre) in Williamsport, as the Lycoming Mall and other local services do not open for business until around 9:00 AM. The rest of the trips during the day would operate between Montour County and the Lycoming Mall. The primary route alignment would depart from the park-and-ride facility and travel south on PA 642 into Danville to serve the Geisinger Medical Center, turn around and leave Danville, then travel north on PA 642, west on I-80, north on I-180 – and serve a PennDOT park-and-ride facility off Exit 5 in Delaware Township in Northumberland County and another PennDOT park-and-ride facility off Exit 13B in Muncy Borough in Lycoming County – to the Lycoming Mall located off Exit 15 in Muncy Township. At the Lycoming Mall, riders could transfer to a RVT bus to access Williamsport and the Greater Williamsport Area. As noted previously, for this transfer to be convenient for passengers, the two systems would have to coordinate schedules. The route would operate the same alignment back to Danville. The first trip of the day would operate along the same alignment to the park-and-ride facility in Muncy Borough, at which



point the route would continue north on I-180 to the Trade and Transit Centre located at the intersection of Pine and West Third Street in Williamsport. This trip would operate the same alignment back to Danville. The route would operate one round trip between 6:00 AM and 9:00 AM, and then operate every two hours for the remainder of the day. One vehicle would be required to operate both variations of this service. The proposed alignment of the route and the transit generators and activity centers served are depicted in Figure 10.

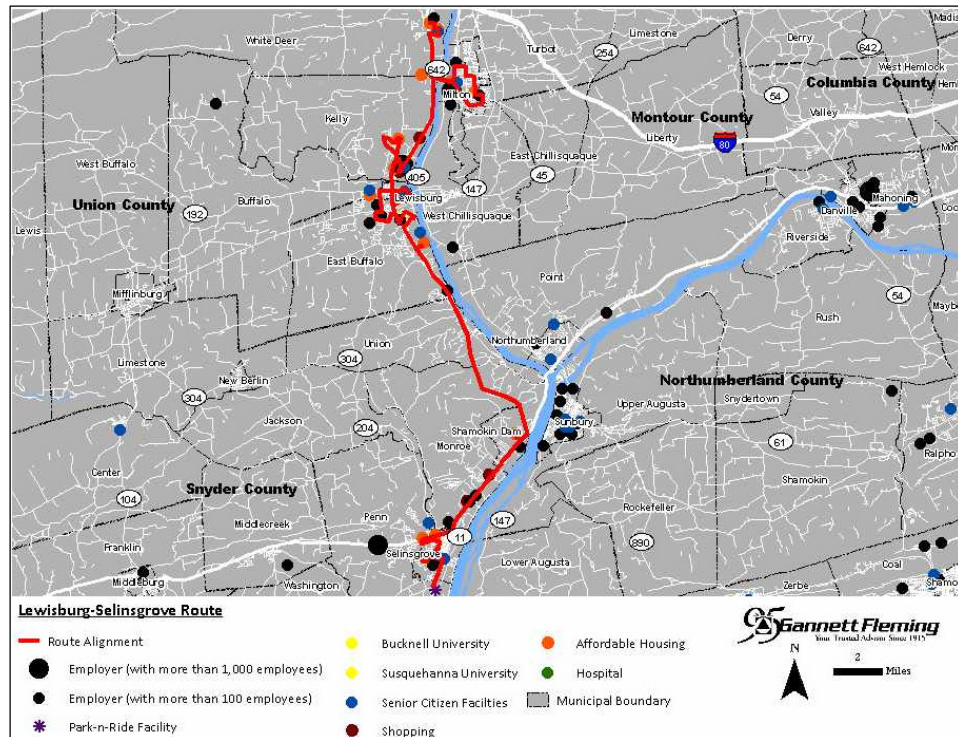
**Figure 10: Danville - Lycoming Mall Proposal**



- Lewisburg-Selinsgrove** – This route would operate between Union and Snyder Counties via the US 11/15 corridor and use the routing of the proposed Lewisburg-Milton-New Columbia community bus route (refer to Figure 8) and the alignment operated as part of the proposed Northumberland-Sunbury-Selinsgrove community bus route (refer to Figure 7). The only difference in Snyder County would be that instead of the alignment terminating at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove Borough, the alignment would be extended approximately 1.5 miles south to a park-and-ride facility located in Selinsgrove at the intersection of Market Street and PA 35. The route would follow the same alignment back and forth between Union and Snyder Counties. This route would operate at a frequency of every 90 minutes and require the use of three

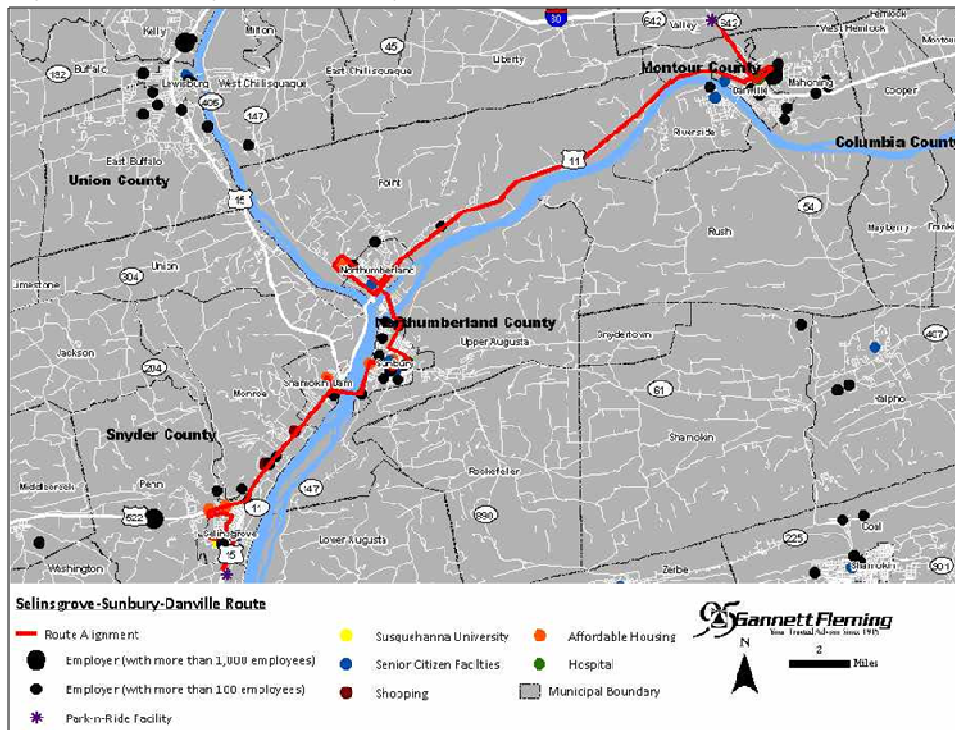
vehicles. The proposed alignment of the route and the transit generators and activity centers served are depicted in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Lewisburg - Selinsgrove Proposal**



- Selinsgrove-Sunbury-Danville** – This route would operate from the park-and-ride facility in Selinsgrove and follow the same routing as the proposed Northumberland-Sunbury-Selinsgrove community bus route (refer to Figure 7) up until the route serves Northumberland Borough, at which point the route would travel north on US 11 into Danville to serve the Geisinger Medical Center and terminate at the PennDOT park-n-ride facility on PA 642 in Valley Township (Montour County). The route would operate along the same alignment back to the park-and-ride facility in Selinsgrove. This route would operate every 90 minutes and require the use of two vehicles. The proposed alignment of the route and the transit generators and activity centers served are depicted in Figure 12.

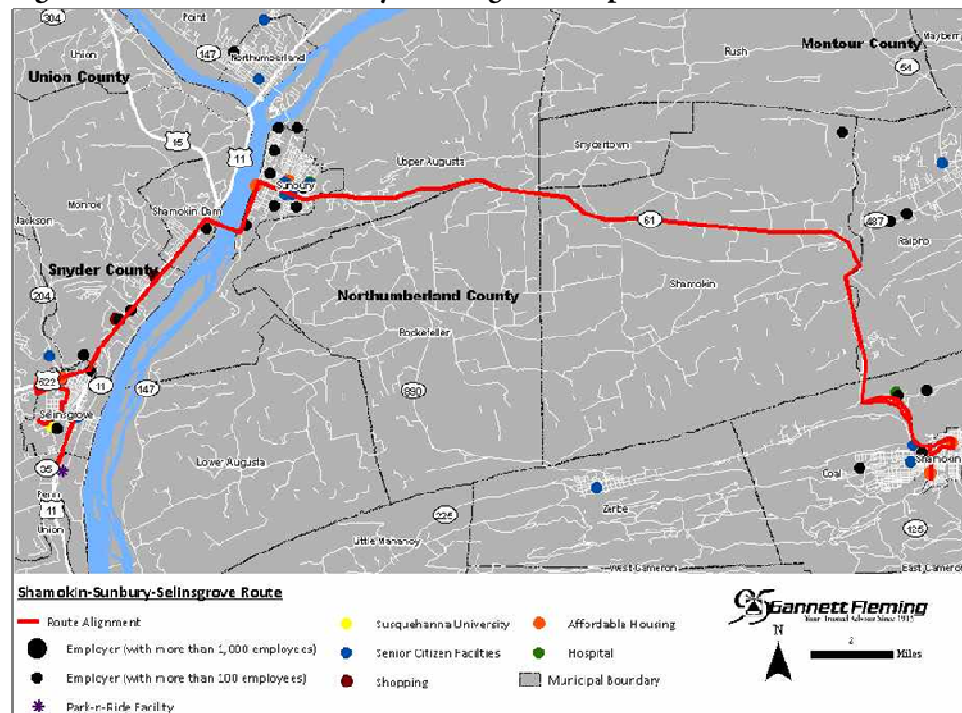
**Figure 12: Selinsgrove - Sunbury - Danville Proposal**



- Shamokin-Selinsgrove** – This route would operate between the City of Shamokin in Northumberland County and Selinsgrove Borough in Snyder County. The route would operate for a short period in Shamokin to serve affordable housing units and could transfer with the Lower Anthracite Transit System (LATS) in Shamokin to offer riders along the PA 61 corridor access to Selinsgrove and the regional services. As noted previously, for this transfer to be convenient for passengers, the two systems would have to coordinate schedules. After leaving Shamokin, the route would travel north on PA 61 to the Shamokin Area Community Hospital, then continue along PA 61 through Sunbury and across the State Street Bridge into Snyder County, where the route would follow the proposed regional alignment along US 11/15 to the Selinsgrove park-and-ride facility. The route would operate along the same alignment back to Shamokin. This route would operate every 90 minutes and require the use of two vehicles. The proposed alignment of the route and the transit generators and activity centers served are depicted in Figure 13.



**Figure 13: Shamokin - Sunbury - Selinsgrove Proposal**



**Operating Impacts** – The operating statistics of the regional public transportation system have been calculated using a similar approach to that followed for the local route proposals. An hourly rate of \$60.00 which is comparable to the average hourly cost of providing public transportation in the region has been assumed. A productivity level of 5.0 passengers per hour was assumed for regional services due to the longer service hours and the ability to use the service for a wider variety of purposes such as employment and school trips. A fare of \$1.50 per trip has been used to estimate potential revenue. The projected operating statistics and estimated revenue of the proposed local community bus routes is presented in Table 21. Assuming 255 operating days per year, a total of 33,600 annual revenue hours would be operated at a cost of approximately \$2 million. In addition, another \$50,000 was added to operating costs to account for expenses related to printing system maps/route schedules, special promotions to introduce the new bus services, marketing, advertising and other service information to be distributed throughout the region.

The five regional bus routes could be expected to attract approximately 168,000 passenger trips per year. This would result in about \$252,000 in passenger revenue and would reduce the operating deficit to about \$1.8 million. The projections also assume the system would achieve a farebox recovery rate of approximately 12 percent.

**Table 21 – Regional Public Transportation System Operating Forecasts**

Operating Statistics	Impacts
Annual Revenue Hours	33,600
Annual Operating Costs	\$2,016,000
Marketing/Public Information	\$50,000
Total Operating Costs	\$2,070,000
Passenger Revenue	\$252,000
Farebox Recovery	12.2%
Operating Deficit	\$1,818,000

**Capital Impacts** – The implementation of the Regional Public Transportation system will require various capital expenditures, as shown in Table 22. The first area is for purchasing vehicles.

It is recommended that body-on-chassis style vehicles be used, as this type of vehicle is more efficient for carrying smaller numbers of riders and is better designed to navigate neighborhood streets and narrow rural roads compared to larger buses like the ones operated by River Valley Transit.



**Table 22 – Regional Public Transportation System Capital Costs**

Budget Item	Number	Unit Cost	Total
Body-on-Chassis Vehicles	13	\$80,000	\$1,040,000
Bus Stop Signs	1,340	\$120	\$160,800
Admin & Operations Facility	1	\$3,500,000	\$3,500,000
Information Kiosks	8	\$1,000	\$8,000
Passenger Waiting Shelters	4	\$6,000 purchase \$2,000 installation	\$32,000
Total Capital Costs			\$4,740,800

The estimated cost of a body-on-chassis bus is \$80,000 and the regional system will require a total of 11 vehicles plus two spares for the purpose of switching the

vehicles for regular maintenance and/or in the event of a mechanical breakdown during the service period. Accordingly, a total of approximately \$1 million would need to be expended to acquire a sufficient vehicle fleet to operate the service.

The second item is the placement of bus stop signs throughout the service area. The combined round trip mileage of the local community bus route system is approximately 335 miles.

It is assumed that an average of four bus stop signs will be installed per mile which results in the need for about 1,340 signs. In planning for the expense of this program (i.e., sign production and installation), the region should assume a cost estimate of approximately \$120 per sign. This would result in a total estimated cost for the program of about \$160,800. The bus stop signs used throughout the service area should be of a consistent design and appearance. The sign should include the international bus stop symbol, and a telephone information number and even a website address. A system logo should also be displayed on each bus stop sign.

If the regional bus service is directly operated by an entity in the region, a facility will be needed to house personnel and store the vehicles. Assuming full implementation of service, the region would need a facility of approximately 10,000 square feet. The cost to construct a transit operations facility of this size would be about \$3.5 million. The need for a facility as well as its overall size would depend on if the regional bus service is directed operated by an entity in the region or contracted-out to a transportation management company. Some agencies own the vehicles and the operating/maintenance base and make it available to a contractor for a nominal amount. An alternate approach would be to contract with a service provider and they would have to make arrangement for facilities, however, it is likely that their operating costs would be higher than the assumed \$60 per hour. Regardless of who operates the service, it would be advantageous to apply for capital grant funding for a publicly-owned facility to lessen the required local share of total costs.

The regional public transportation system should also purchase at least eight information kiosks to be placed at key stops and four bus shelters to be located at the transfer points. The shelters should be furnished with a system map and, preferably, with the timetable for the routes which serve the transfer points. The installation of shelters and kiosks will improve the image of the transit system and also serve to establish a greater transit presence in the region. These amenities also make riding the system more convenient. The price of a kiosk is

estimated to be approximately \$1,000. The purchase of a bus waiting shelter is approximately \$6,000 with an additional \$2,000 for installation. In total, these capital amenities would cost \$40,000.

Full implementation of the regional public transportation system would require an investment of approximately \$ 6.6 million.

**Institutional and Organizational Arrangements** – An important consideration that must be decided upon is whether the service will be directly operated or contracted-out to a transportation management company. One possibility would be for the region to designate a “lead agency” to be responsible for the provision of the regional public transportation system. The lead agency would need to be a public organization legally capable of receiving and administering both state and federal funds. Under this arrangement, the local jurisdictions that would receive bus service would enter into an agreement with the lead agency that would address issues such as the services to be provided, the terms of payment for services, fare structure, vehicle equipment, marketing, etc. The lead agency would be responsible for ensuring that the operation and administration of the service is in compliance with federal, state, and local laws. As noted previously, if the regional service was directly operated, a facility would be needed to house personnel and store the vehicles.

Another option to consider would be for the region to create a stand-alone public transportation authority that would focus only on delivering public transportation services and be administered by a professional team of transit managers to ensure reliable and high quality service.

This may be in contrast to the lead agency which may have other responsibilities in addition to transit, or may not have the expertise to operate regional fixed route public transportation service.

Under the Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Act, government officials from the six counties in the region could adopt a resolution to create a public transportation authority. The authority would be an independent government unit governed by a Board of Directors, with at least one representative from each of the participating counties required to sit on the board. Additional board members would likely be added to ensure the board is proportional to areas and ridership being served. Eligible board members would be required to be residents or conduct business in the six-county area and represent the interest of transit riders. In many instances, board members are appointed to staggered terms to ensure there is no dramatic turnover in leadership from year to year.

An Executive Director would be hired to administer the authority with oversight provided by the Board of Directors. The transit authority would also employ other personnel at some point such as a Fiscal Officer and Operations Manager. As with the “lead agency” approach, the actual management and operations could be directly operated or contracted-out to a transportation management company.

There are several rural multi-county public transportation authorities in Pennsylvania, including the Area Transportation Authority (ATA) which is comprised of six counties in the north central portion of the state, and the Endless Mountains Transportation Authority (EMTA) located north of Lycoming County and comprised of Bradford, Sullivan, and Tioga Counties. In both instances, these transit authorities oversee human service and general purpose demand responsive services, as well as fixed route and deviated fixed route services. Again, it is important to recognize that the implementation of service can be an incremental process as funding, demand and other resources become available. Further, the creation of a Regional Coordination Council (RCC) comprised of existing transit systems, key decision makers, community stakeholders and the general public, could be an influential entity to move the concept of general public fixed route transportation forward. The RCC would be well suited to work-out the technical issues, operational and institutional arrangements to implement the service.

### Funding

Securing adequate matching funding for transit service expansion (and in the current environment, preserving existing services) is a challenge and is a major reason why many previous service proposals within the study area were not implemented. Public transportation in Pennsylvania is generally financed with passenger fares and a combination of state, federal and local funding. Although the respective shares from these sources vary by program and occasionally by project, state funds typically represent the largest source of operating funds while the federal government usually provides the largest contribution toward capital projects such as vehicles and facilities. The words “generally”, “typically” and “usually” are intentionally used here since there are a variety of circumstances that can lead to deviations from the norm on any particular project. The following is a summary of the most commonly used sources of funding for transit projects in Pennsylvania.

**Federal Transit Assistance Programs** – Most federal transit assistance



programs are administered by the Federal transit Administration (FTA) within the U.S. Department of Transportation. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also provides financial assistance for certain clients but those funds are generally channeled to the FTA and state-supported transportation service providers rather than used to support stand-alone programs.

- **Section 5310 (Elderly and Persons with Disabilities)** – This program provides capital funding for capital projects that improve mobility for senior citizens and people with disabilities. Eligible 5310 recipients must be either private non-profit organizations or a public body designated as a Coordinator of local transit services. Section 5310 funds support capital projects such as the purchase of vehicles and communications equipment. Section 5310 distributes the funds to states, based on a statutory formula, with each state receiving funding based on its relative share of the elderly and disabled population of all states. PennDOT formed an interdepartmental taskforce which is responsible for reviewing all applications and determination grant awards. The Section 5310 program provides up to 80 percent of the project costs with local sources required to pay for the remaining 20% share. No state funding is provided under this program. FTA requires recipients of Section 5310 funds (i.e. States) to certify that projects selected for funding are derived from a locally-developed human service transportation coordination plan.
- **Section 5311 (Non-Urbanized Area Formula Transit Assistance)** – This program supports public transportation in rural and small urban areas (e.g. anywhere outside designated urbanized areas). Both demand-responsive and fixed-route services are eligible and a portion of the funding (15%) is designated specifically for intercity bus service. Within the study area, the Lower Anthracite Transportation System (LATS), Fullington Trailways and Susquehanna Trailways are all current recipients of Section 5310 funding on a pass-through basis from PennDOT. The program is designed to increase access to essential services, assist in the maintenance, development, improvement, and use of public transportation systems, encourage and facilitate coordination of programs and services, and support the participation of private transportation providers in the delivery of services in rural areas. Section 5311 funds are allocated to each state by a statutory formula that considers non-urbanized population and land area relative to those same measures for all states. Section 5311 funding used to fund operating

deficits is available on a 50 percent federal/50 percent non-federal matching ratio. The 50% non-federal share of the operating deficits is financed through a combination of state and local matching funds which varies somewhat by project. For capital projects, the federal share is generally 80 percent total project costs and state and local shares are typically 16 2/3% and 3 1/3% respectively.

- **Section 5316 ( Job Access and Reverse Commute)** – This program provides capital and operating assistance for transportation services designed to address the needs of welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals that are not met by other transportation services. JARC-funded services can include new shuttle routes that serve employment sites, expanded demand-responsive service in low density employment areas, and extended evening and weekend service hours to serve employees whose shifts do not coincide with public transportation services that are otherwise available. The purchase of vehicles to operate these services, bus stop improvements (such as waiting shelters and upgraded lighting at job site bus stops) and other capital projects that support the program's goals may also be eligible for funding. The JARC program also supports transportation options outside of a transit system's typical scope of operations. For example, guaranteed ride home programs that reimburse passengers for alternate transportation home in case of personal emergencies (most commonly taxi rides) may be funded. Voucher programs that enable low-income individuals to purchase rides through human service or taxi providers and loan programs that allow individuals to acquire automobiles for ridesharing purposes are also eligible projects. Federal funds can pay up to 80 percent of capital expenses and 50 percent of operating expenses, with non federal sources required to provide the remaining share of costs. Recipients may use up to 10 percent of their apportionment to support program administrative costs including administration, planning, and technical assistance, which may be funded at 100 percent Federal share. As with the Section 5310 program, projects funded through the JARC program must be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. Funding for this program was formerly allocated on a competitive basis, but currently the funds are distributed to urbanized areas and to states based on a formula. For non-urbanized areas, the funds allocated to the states are distributed to local service providers on a discretionary basis.

- **Section 5317 (New Freedom)** – This program is designed to reduce transportation barriers for people with disabilities to enter the workforce and participate as productive members of society. The program provides funds for accessible services that exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Eligible recipients include private non-profit organizations, State or local governments, and operators of public transportation services including private operators of public transportation services. New Freedom funds could be applied to expanding complimentary demand responsive service beyond the ADA-mandated  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile on either side of fixed-routes, extension of service hours, and the provision of same-day service, and voucher programs for persons with disabilities. However, New Freedom funds cannot be used to expand the coverage, hours or days of general-public service. Eligible capital projects under the New Freedom program include vehicle accessibility improvements, such as the purchase of wheelchair lifts that can accommodate larger or heavier mobility aids than those required by ADA. In addition, treatments to remove accessibility barriers to bus stops, such as construction of ADA-compliant sidewalks, curb cuts and pedestrian signals may also be eligible for funding. Federal funds cover 80 percent for capital projects and planning activities and 50 percent for operating costs, with non-federal sources required to provide the remaining share of costs. Funding for this program is on a formula basis. As with the Section 5310 and 5316 programs described above, projects funded through the New Freedom program must be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.
- **Surface Transportation Program (STP)** – Funding from this program is initially allocated to states for highway improvements. Federal legislation permits these funds to be “flexed” to FTA for transit improvements. Such transfers must be approved by the local metropolitan planning organization (MPO) or Regional Planning Organization (RPO) and PennDOT and may be spent on capital projects related to many modes of transportation, including public transportation and pedestrian and bicycle facilities that enhance access to transit service. Given overall transportation needs and the current transportation funding situation in Pennsylvania, competition for these funds is keen and there is often considerable local resistance to flexing the funds to transit projects.

- **The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)** – The ARC is a regional economic development agency that represents a partnership of federal, state, and local government, and is composed of the governors of the 13 Appalachian states including Pennsylvania. Each year ARC provides funding for several hundred projects in the Appalachian Region, in areas such as business development, education and job training, telecommunications, infrastructure, community development, housing, and transportation. For example, in FY 2010 SEDA-COG received \$123,000 from ARC to invest in technical assistance. The broad scope of this agency may provide opportunities to fund certain transit-related projects.
- **Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP)** – Funding from this program is intended for education, staff development and technical assistance for rural transit operators. Although this program does not fund operational or capital expenses, there is no federal requirement for a local match. With the emphasis on greater coordination and customer service, this is a program that offers potential benefits in the region. In Pennsylvania, this program is operated through the Pennsylvania Transportation Resource Network (PennTRAIN), which provides training and technical assistance to public and community transportation systems throughout the state.
- **JobLinks** – This program is funded by the FTA and Department of Labor and administered by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). Funding is available for pilot projects for a period of one year on a 50:50 matching grant basis. Funds may be used for a range of approaches to improving employment transportation, including coordination of demand response service, and specific fixed-route services targeting workers.
- **Older Americans Act, Title III** – This program is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and supports agencies and organizations that provide home and community based care for the elderly, as well as leverages resources from other federal, state and local entities. One of the permitted uses of the funds (of Title III B: Supportive Services) is transportation for eligible person 60 years of age or older. Preference is given to minorities and those with low incomes. The Pennsylvania Department of Aging administers Title III-B funding in the state.

**State Transit Assistance Programs** – Transit assistance programs in Pennsylvania are administered by PennDOT's Bureau of Public Transportation. These programs generally focus on public transportation service to the general public, but there are also programs that target certain populations such as seniors and workers.

- **Act 44 Capital and Operating Assistance** – Over the years, the Commonwealth has instituted various programs to provide operating and capital assistance to transit agencies. These programs were largely restructured and consolidated by Act 44 of 2007. A portion of the transit funding contemplated under Act 44 was to be derived from the tolling of I-80 which has not occurred and appears to be unlikely in the near future. This results in a significant reduction in state transit funding – particularly for service expansion and new initiatives. Capital and operating assistance funds are allocated on a formula basis which includes revenue hours, revenue miles, passengers and senior citizen passengers. Operating assistance is based on matching ratios that require new local grant recipients to contribute 15 percent of the state amount. Many existing systems are well below 15% and are currently in a transition period where the agencies will be required to increase their local share annually until the 15 percent requirement is satisfied. As noted earlier, federally-supported capital projects are typically funded on a 80% Federal 16 2/3% State, 3 1/3% local basis.
- **Act 44 Discretionary Funding** – A portion of Act 44 transit assistance is allocated to PennDOT for transit planning, technical assistance and demonstration projects. These grants are awarded on a discretionary, competitive basis where there are generally more needs/requests than are affordable under current allocations. Match requirements are set by PennDOT on a project-by-project basis with maximum a state share of up to 100%. One of the emphasis areas for use of these funds has been support of transportation coordination initiatives.
- **Shared Ride** – This program provides considerable funding and supports an extensive network of services across the Commonwealth. Service is provided on an advance reservation basis and must be open to the general public, although only senior citizens are eligible for subsidized fares which make the service very expensive for the general public. For persons over 65, PennDOT pays 85 percent of the fare with the

remainder paid by the rider or their agency sponsor. In some areas, local Area Agencies on Aging subsidize the fare for persons in the 60-64 age group under the Aging Services Block Grant Program described below.

- **Persons with Disabilities Program (PWD)** – This program is oriented to rural areas of the Commonwealth to provide improved access and mobility for persons with disabilities. This would include persons with disabilities that do not meet the age requirement for the Shared Ride program but are unable to drive because of a disability. Similar to the Shared Ride Program, it is an advanced reservation service with a major portion of the cost assumed by PennDOT.
- **Welfare to Work (W2W)** – Similar to the federal Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program, the Welfare to Work (W2W) Program targets low-income or unemployed individuals. PennDOT administers these two programs in a coordinated fashion with the intent of supporting supplemental public transit services that are designed to provide low-income individuals with improved access to employment and related activities where existing transit is unavailable, inappropriate, or insufficient.
- **Medical Assistance Transportation Program** – The MATP Program provides non-emergency medical transportation for Medicaid-eligible clients. The program is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) using funding from both the State and Federal governments. DPW contracts with local agencies which may provide transportation service directly or through contracts with other providers (frequently the Shared Ride provider). Paratransit service is the most common type of service provided, but other forms of transportation assistance are also supported including mileage reimbursement and use of fixed-route public transportation. Trips must be arranged via the least costly method of transportation that is available. MATP usually reimburses contracted paratransit providers on a per-live-mile basis.
- **Aging Services Block Grant (ASBG)** – The Aging Transportation Services Block Grant Program is administered at the State level by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging (PDA). This funding source is often used to support lower fares for persons age 60-64 that use the Shared Ride program services.

- **The Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MH/MR) Transportation**  
– This program is administered at the state level by DPW's Offices of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, and generally by the County Offices of Mental Health and Mental Retardation at the local level. The county MH/MR offices either provide service to their clients directly or contract with other private or public service providers (often the Shared Ride provider) to meet their clients' transportation needs.
- **Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative (PCTI)** – This program is funded and administered by PennDOT and is a competitive funding program to support and encourage local transportation projects that include pedestrian friendly, multimodal, mixed-use development; improve regional connectivity; or enhance existing transportation networks. The types of projects appropriate for funding are included in the Smart Transportation Guidebook published by PennDOT in March 2008. This program has recently allocated almost \$25 million to fund 41 planning and construction projects throughout the Commonwealth. Transit related projects among this list include \$100,000 to the Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) to study a method of providing universal transit access to the residents within the greater State College area; the Transportation Management Association of Chester County received \$128,000 to plan improvements to infrastructure and multi-modal access along the Route 29 corridor in the Great Valley area.

**Local Funding** – Most of the federal and state transit programs listed above require a local match. Funds can be provided by government, non-profit and private organizations. Typically, this amount is paid for by municipalities and/or counties. Private sector interests such as local chambers of commerce and visitor bureaus could be approached for funding and/or to elicit support for transit. These types of organizations may be able to play a key role in approaching major employers, local colleges and other major activity centers to pay for some portion of transportation costs to access additional customers or better serve their employees. The human service transportation pilot project sponsored by PennDOT, in collaboration with the Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, is an example of a private/public partnership that could improve the financial stability and provision of human service transportation in the region.

Foundation and non-profit organization support (i.e., United Way) helped launch the North Central Pennsylvania Public Transportation Task Force and is potentially a vital source of transit funding in the region. A key to securing

foundation or charitable organization funding will be the ability to identify other sources of funding to match foundation commitments. In addition, foundations tend to show a preference for financially supporting pilot projects or offering matching funding, but are often unwilling to fund ongoing operating costs. Accordingly, local foundations could help to offset initial start-up costs of additional or newly created services over the next few years, with the assumption that a more stable financial situation at the state and federal levels will emerge by that time.



## **Summary and Conclusions**

This report presents an array of public transportation improvements designed to address public transportation needs and human service transportation needs identified during the course of this study. The proposals address a broad range of topics including institutional and organizational approach, human service transportation needs, gaps in general public transit service, and enhancement of customer-oriented support services (e.g. Transportation Services Directory). Implementation of these proposals would significantly enhance mobility and quality of life for many residents of the region who may not have access to private means of transportation.

The discussion of potential funding sources illustrates that fact that financing options are as varied as the types of improvements. While there are numerous programs available to fund public transportation, it should be recognized that there is significant competition for the funding that is available. Also, the available grant programs almost universally require local matching funds which can be a challenge in the current economic environment.

As was noted in the interim reports produced as part of this needs study, previous transit studies for the region, or for select communities within the region, have advanced a number of recommendations that were never implemented. It is highly likely that a major reason for the lack of a strong record of implementation is the difficulty in garnering the necessary funding to launch new or expanded services. An important lesson that can be learned from previous studies and the lack of implementation is that identifying service gaps and potential solutions is just one step along the journey of improving transportation service and quality of life for the areas' residents. The next steps, including publicizing and advocating for the identified needs and opportunities, will likely shape whether this effort leads to real improvements. As those discussions advance, an incremental approach is recommended whereby initial efforts focus on the less costly, more doable improvements. As projects are advanced and the benefits realized, even a modest initial record of success can have a significant impact on the willingness of policy makers and funding agencies to support more ambitious projects. This building block approach and the corresponding results could be the key for differentiating this study effort from past attempts to advance improvements to transit services throughout the region.

## **Appendix A: Focus Group Results**

Table 13 through Table 20 present the detailed results of the focus group process, by location. The materials copied to flip charts and subject to the “voting” process are listed in the first 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 13 - Williamsport Focus Group (Group Discussion/Voting)**

Votes	Planned Changes and Trends	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 14 - Williamsport Focus Group (Additional Comments and Suggestions from Worksheets Distinct from Group Discussion Items)**

Selected Suggestions	Policy	Program	Service
More Coordination with Medical Providers for Scheduling		✓	
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)	✓		
Pupil Transportation Website		✓	
Flexible Service – Schools, Parent Access, After School Activities, School District Employees		✓	
Create Interconnectivity Between River Valley and Susquehanna Trailways			✓
Educate Drivers to Create More Safe Conditions	✓	✓	
Longer Service Times into the Night to Promote Employment Especially for PWD	✓		
Limited Holiday Service	✓		
Benches, Shelters, etc. at Labeled Bus Stops		✓	
There is Little to No Service in Rural Communities - Often Where the Needs are Greatest		✓	✓
Rural Areas Served More at “Central” locations Throughout the Counties		✓	
More Incentives to Ride (Discounted Price, etc.)	✓		
Provide the Shuttle Service Between One Service Provider & Another (i.e., River Valley Shuttle to Lewisburg or Bloomsburg)		✓	✓
Gift Certificate Options for People to Purchase for Others	✓		
Allow Kids & Parents to Ride Together or Even Siblings (HST Issue)	✓		
Bike Racks on River Valley Buses			

Selected Suggestions	Policy	Program	Service
Williamsport to Lock Haven to State College Service		✓	
Williamsport to Harrisburg Service			✓
Capture the College Ridership and Technical Business Schools		✓	
No Transit Boundaries – No County Lines	✓		
Inter-City, Inter-County Services Especially Between Health Providers & Hospitals (Susquehanna Health, Geisinger, Lewisburg)			✓
Expand Partnership with Schools		✓	
Shuttle Service to and From the Games on Friday & Saturday Nights			✓
More Wheelchair Space on Buses	✓		
River Valley & STEP Partner for a Fixed Route to the Hospital			✓
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	✓	✓	
Increase/Development of the “Park and Ride” Option from Rural/Outlying Areas to the More Metro Areas		✓	✓
Use Fixed Route Public Transportation to Transport Students to/from School	✓		
Make Routes More Easily Understandable to the 1st Time Rider		✓	
Improve the Route Guide Given to People		✓	

**Table 15 - Lewisburg Focus Group (Group Discussion/Voting)**

Votes	Group Discussion/Voting – Lewisburg	Policy	Program	Service
13	Move Toward Rail <sup>2</sup>	✓		
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 ;V 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)			✓

<sup>2</sup> 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.

Votes	Group Discussion/Voting – Lewisburg	Policy	Program	Service
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		✓	✓
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 16 - Lewisburg Focus Group (Comments and Suggestions from Individual Worksheets Distinct from Group Discussion Items)**

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

Table 17 - Danville Focus Group<sup>3</sup>

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

<sup>3</sup> Voting was not done at the Danville focus group meeting

**Table 18 - Danville Focus Group (Comments and Suggestions Distinct from Group Discussion Items)**

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



Table 19 - Shamokin Focus Group (Group Discussion/Voting)

Votes	Group Discussion/Voting	Policy	Program	Service
7	Longer Hours of Service (e.g., Mt. Carmel – Shamokin)	✓	✓	
5	Service to Special Events (unique rural aspect) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evening Service</li> <li>• Northumberland County Fair</li> <li>• Farmers Markets</li> <li>• Job Fairs/Careerlinks</li> <li>• River Festival</li> <li>• Heritage Festival Shamokin</li> <li>• Shamokin Downtown Christmas</li> </ul>		✓	✓
4	Wider Coverage of Service Geography	✓	✓	
3	Better Marketing & Communication of Services/Fares ;V 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mt. Carmel to Shamokin and Frackville</li> <li>• VA Center in Pottsville</li> <li>• Coal Twp./Shamokin – Selinsgrove Mall</li> </ul>			✓
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			✓

## Regional Public Transportation Needs Assessment

Votes	Group Discussion/Voting	Policy	Program	Service
	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		✓	✓
	Better Links Between Communities			
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geisinger</li> <li>• Sunbury-Selinsgrove</li> <li>• Kulpmont</li> <li>• Lewisburg – Mifflinburg</li> <li>• Milton</li> <li>• Cross-River Routes</li> <li>• Northumberland Borough Mid-Rise</li> <li>• Watsontown – Williamsport</li> <li>• Mt. Carmel – Bloomsburg</li> </ul>		✓	
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	✓		
0	Expanded Access for PWD		✓	
0	Expanded Park & Rides		✓	
0	Sunbury – no Fixed Route Service			✓

**Table 20 - Shamokin Focus Group (Comments and Suggestions Distinct from Group Discussion Items)**

Selected Suggestions	Policy	Program	Service
Park & Ride for Major Employers Carpooling		✓	
Map of Major Activity Centers - Missed Luzerne County Community College, Berwick 500+ Streets (Berwick Area), LCCC 600+ Student (Shamokin Area)			
Evening and Weekend Service	✓		
Better Access to Neighboring Cities/Counties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mt. Carmel to Bloomsburg</li> <li>• Benton to Bloomsburg, Mt. Carmel, Sunbury, Danville, Frackville</li> </ul>			✓
USTA, Only One Parent May Accompany Child With Appt. - Sibling w/o Appt. must be Babysat	✓		
Hospitals (Geisinger, Sunbury, Evangelical) for All Clients – Not Just Seniors and PwD	✓		
Blend Fixed Routes w/Pupil Transportation		✓	
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.			✓
Transportation from Shamokin or Coal Twp. to Sunbury for County Employees			✓
Allow for Business Advertisements on the Vehicles	✓		
General Public Transportation Should not be Limited to those who Qualify Financially	✓		
User-Friendly Website Detailing Routes, Prices, Times, etc.	✓		

## **Appendix B: Alternative Transit Improvement Strategies**

This appendix presents the description of each of the alternative improvement strategies that were presented to the Study Taskforce for ranking.

## 1 – Regional Public Transportation System

**Category(ies):** Organizational/New Service /Service Enhancement

### Identified Need:

- Create a regional network of public transportation connections along major corridors, between various communities, and between population centers and major generators.
- Available and affordable public transportation service.
- More consistency across the region in policies, service levels, fares, etc.

**Discussion:** It is unlikely that the existing collection of individual operators serving individual counties or pairs of counties can successfully address all identified needs solely through coordination efforts. One example of how another predominantly rural region addresses this need is the Area Transportation Authority (ATA) which serves a 5,100 square mile, five-county region in North Central PA consisting of Elk, Jefferson, Potter, Cameron and McKean Counties (limited service is also operated into Clearfield County). ATA operates an array of service types including, demand responsive human service transportation, local fixed-route transportation and fixed-route with deviation service, and a network of regional connection services. The authority is financed through system fares and funded provided by FTA, PennDOT, the Counties and various third-party sponsors of certain types of trips. The system has been in operation for over 30 years with start-up funding provided through a federal demonstration program which no longer exists. Another example is the Endless Mountains Transportation Authority (EMTA) which serves Bradford, Tioga and Sullivan Counties. Other possible approaches would be (a) one county take the lead on creating and managing a multi-county system, and (b) hire a private broker to manage, administer and deliver some or all regional services under the sponsorship and oversight of a regional board.

**Implementation Timeframe :** longer term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** A new regional body would likely have to be formed through local initiative. Governance is typically provided through a board appointed by the sponsoring entities. The sponsoring entities are typically responsible for providing local matching funds required to qualify for federal and state grant funding.

### Benefits:

- Needs of a regional nature get addressed
- Political boundaries, within the region, should become transparent to users.
- Consistency in service standards, levels of services, fares, amenities, etc.
- Potential efficiencies with a regional system
- Consistent with latest PennDOT directions

**Probable Funding Implications:** Considerable resources are already being expended that



could be applied to a regional system. Some economies could be realized but a new network of regional connecting services would likely require additional funding to achieve.

**Other Considerations:**

- Requires the collaboration and cooperation among the counties and yielding of some control to the regional authority.
- Sharing of local funding responsibilities can be difficult to agree on.
- If one or more counties decide not to participate, it is not practical to operate a multi-county system serving non-contiguous counties.

## 2 – Regional Coordination Council (RCC)

**Category(ies):** Organizational/Coordination

**Identified Need:** Current and previous planning studies, as well as public input identified numerous issues impacting the ability of the existing demand responsive transportation systems from providing more efficient and effective regional service to transit dependent population groups and the general public. Greater coordination between the region's demand responsive systems in various functional areas – grants management, administration, procurement, public information, scheduling, reservations, operations, and funding – offers the potential for agencies to reduce costs, save resources and improve customer service.

**Discussion:** The existing public and human service transportation systems and various public and private transportation-related organizations within the six-county region could establish a Regional Coordination Council (RCC) to promote regional coordination strategies. The Council would be a voluntary organization and act in an advisory capacity with the transit systems retaining full control of their operations and decision making functions. While lacking direct authority, the RCC could perform several useful functions. It could convene regular meetings to improve communication among the counties, identify needs and opportunities, share information related to service planning, operations and funding, and provide an umbrella organization for human service transportation programs. A RCC could take many different forms since the number of agencies willing to participate as well as the functional areas that are coordinated may vary. Since the transit systems retain control of their organizations and can modify their services, offer new types of services, and/or expand the geographic area it serves, the RCC would provide a venue for resolving any conflicts and promoting coordination whenever possible. The North Central Pennsylvania Public Transportation Taskforce (NCPPTT) and/or the Pilot project work group could be used as a nucleus for the formation of the Coordination Council which would have a different mission than either of those groups.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** The NCPPTT could initiate the formation of the RCC and SEDA-COG could provide “in-kind” services such as meeting space and the provision of office supplies. However, the organizations that agree to participate in the Regional Coordination Council would enter into a cooperation agreement or memorandum of understanding that defined the goals and objectives of the council, funding roles and responsibilities of the participating organizations, management and operational principles, and any other appropriate rules and conditions. Once the goals and objectives of the Council have been clearly defined, working groups or committees could then be established to develop projects and/or action plans to address specific regional transportation priorities.

**Benefits:**

- Provide consistent regional service delivery standards to manage expectations and ensure that all clients/customers in the region are provided equitable service. This could be achieved through coordinating fares, scheduling, public information, eligibility criteria, customer service, etc.
- A RCC would be a suitable candidate to take the lead in developing a comprehensive transportation directory, standardizing and consolidating driver and staff training, discussing joint procurement opportunities, etc.
- A stand-alone organization that functions well has the potential to enjoy greater visibility of its actions and legitimacy of its position on transportation issues. An informal network or a committee within some other organization that is not created with the primary function of addressing transportation coordination may not have the same visibility or legitimacy.

**Probable Funding Implications:** No new funding required. It is assumed that existing agencies would commit to participate in the forum and that staff involvement, meeting-related travel and miscellaneous costs would be covered with existing staff and existing budgets.

**Other Considerations:**

- A RCC would not change the participating agencies' structures or organization since they would continue to have primary responsibility for all functional areas. As a result, the ability of this model to make fundamental policy changes is limited to those areas which are informally negotiated between the agencies involved in the process.
- A RCC would be less effective if one or more existing demand responsive systems decide not to participate.

## 3 – Establishment of a Regional Transportation Broker

**Category(ies):** Organizational/Coordination

**Identified Need:** Similar to a Regional Transportation Authority, a centralized broker system could respond to policy changes and would be well positioned to expand service and meet new and emerging travel needs. This alternative would establish consistent operating and service standards with transportation service managed by a professional team of transit managers.

**Discussion:** Under a brokered system, a single organization would handle all reservations for demand responsive trips and prepare schedules for daily vehicle runs based on efficiency and other criteria. The broker would also be responsible for scheduling, procurement, contract management, customer registration, record keeping and accounting, service standards and customer service. There are also different options for the establishment of the broker. The counties could procure the services of an outside party, through and IFB or RFP, to act as the broker. Alternatively, one of the existing demand responsive systems could assume the responsibility of the broker either under contract with, or through designation by the counties. In some instances, one agency can play the role of broker/manager and service provider.

**Implementation Timeframe :** Mid Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Existing transit systems and local government

### Benefits:

- More effective voice in securing funds since it would serve a number of groups and constituencies.
- Improves service delivery through consistent operating and service standards.
- Regional transit needs are addressed.
- Create efficiencies and lower costs through competitive bidding and by assuring the scheduling of the least costly, most appropriate method of transportation for a client. Cost savings could translate into increased service.
- A broker with strong ties to local medical and human service providers can be valuable in promoting coordinated service for clients.
- Consistent with latest PennDOT directions.
- Transfers a substantial portion of the budgetary risk to the broker.
- 

**Probable Funding Implications:** Considerable resources are already being expended that could be applied to a regional transportation broker. Although certain economies are expected to be realized, it is likely that some combination of local, state, and federal funding will be required to plan for and effect a transition. Local funding can include in-kind grants from area social service agencies and other non-profit organizations that could benefit from a brokered system.

**Other Considerations:**

- Requires multiple agencies/organizations to champion the broker concept and the support of local elected officials.
- Concerns over service quality, loss of control and client contact.
- If implemented, requires project management and oversight, cost allocation/reimbursement models and service delivery standards.
- A transition plan would be required and transition costs would be incurred.
- The transition could be a phased process to minimize risks and potential disruptions.
- If an outside party is hired as the broker, the lack of knowledge regarding the local environment and human service providers will result in a “learning curve” as that knowledge is acquired.
- Customers will potentially be dealing with new parties and practices which can be confusing for certain types of clients and/or impose more of a burden on their caregivers.

## 4 – Transportation Management Association (TMA)

**Category(ies):** Organizational/Service Expansion/Service Enhancement

**Identified Need:** Public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions identified a number of ideas to improve the availability and delivery of transportation services in the region. Several of these suggestions included developing alternative transportation services and support facilities (i.e., vanpools/carpools, employment transportation, ridesharing, park and ride facilities, car sharing, etc.) as well as increasing awareness of existing transportation services and improving the availability of overall quality of the information that is provided to the public.

**Discussion:** Ensuring that the public has easy access to timely and accurate information about available transportation services is an essential component of maximizing mobility and service utilization. This is particularly important in the region where transportation service is provided by a variety of organizations with different policies and procedures, service hours, and service areas. The creation of a Transportation Management Association (TMA) could provide a clearinghouse for information on existing services, as well as market, manage, and even implement various transportation services to address specific mobility needs. As an autonomous organization, a TMA has the ability to develop services that local governments may be unwilling or unable to provide. The services provided by a TMA can be designed according to the needs and expectations of the area in which it serves. An important role of a TMA would be to establish and oversee various transportation demand management concepts to increase transportation options, help provide basic mobility, and increase transportation affordability. Concepts include carpool/vanpool matching programs, car sharing, employer services, guaranteed ride home, trip planning, a single source of information, and improved marketing. A good example of a successful local TMA is the non-profit Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership that includes business groups, transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) representing Adams, Berks, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry and York counties. Commuter Services is an information clearinghouse on available transportation services and programs, and provides alternative transportation services to meet mobility needs.

**Implementation Timeframe :** Mid Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** A TMA is typically a public-private partnership created by a consortium of local municipalities, government organizations, business groups, transit agencies, major institutions (i.e., colleges and medical centers) and large employers to address transportation issues and encourage the use of alternative transportation options in a given area.

### Benefits:

- A TMA can assist employers in establishing commuter benefit programs that provide employees with subsidies and tax breaks that apply to work-related trips taken on public transportation. The Qualified Transportation Fringe Benefit program governed under Section 132[f] of the IRS Code provides a tax incentive to employers for employees who commute to work on a publicly or privately owned or operated transit vehicle. Commuter benefits offered by an employer are exempt from withholding and employment taxes and are not reported as taxable wages on

the employee's W-2 form. They are also deductible as an employer-provided benefit from the employer's gross profit. Businesses can set aside an employee's pre-tax income amount, up to a maximum of \$230 per month, for commuting expenses on a qualified vehicle.

- A stand-alone organization has the potential to enjoy greater visibility of its actions and legitimacy of its position on transportation issues. An informal network or a committee within some other organization that is not created with the primary function of addressing transportation may not have the same visibility or legitimacy.

**Probable Funding Implications:** TMA membership fees, local funding, PennDOT (i.e., Pennsylvania Community Transportation Initiative), federal grants, in-kind contributions and payment for services rendered. A non-profit TMA has access to a greater variety of funding opportunities. For example, it may be necessary to be a nonprofit corporation in order to apply for various grants. Further, corporations' in-kind contributions and payment for services rendered to recognized nonprofit organizations may qualify as a tax deductible expense.

**Other Considerations:**

- Would require a private sector "champion" who believes in the need for a TMA and who can use its influence to expand its membership. An initial committee or board is also needed to get the TMA started.

Challenge to promote member interest and TMA services, document the TMA's effectiveness, maintaining stable, ongoing funding and developing and maintaining services. Groups considering forming a TMA in the region would likely need to conduct preliminary planning to identify the existing conditions under which a TMA would be formed, assess the applicability of the TMA concept to local conditions, and perform preliminary organizational, service, and financial planning.

## 5 – Evening and Weekend Service Expansion

**Category(ies):** Service Expansion

**Identified Need:** A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions indicated the need to provide affordable general purpose transportation during evenings and on weekends.

**Discussion:** With the exception of the RVT and STEP systems in Lycoming County, none of the other existing transit systems in the region operate evening service. Further, LATS is the only system outside Lycoming County that operates service on Saturday, with this service providing only three round trips in the morning and early midday hours. The benefits of service expansion would provide transit-dependent groups as well as the general public access to more employment opportunities and more access to shopping and other essential services. Existing systems could offer contractual service to local universities, organizations or municipalities to provide evening and/or weekend service.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Transit Systems

**Benefits:**

- Increases the level of mobility in the region, which is one of the primary objectives of this study.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Would likely require additional local, federal and state financial assistance, which could be supplemented with farebox revenue.

**Other Considerations:**

- Lack of sufficient densities and demand to warrant service.
- Lack of funding to pay for additional service. For example, it may be difficult to obtain a local match to access federal funds.



## 6 – Centralized Resource Directory

**Category(ies):** Awareness/Customer Service

**Identified Need:** Increasing awareness of existing public and human service transportation services throughout the region.

**Discussion:** Input from the public outreach and stakeholder interviews indicated the need for improving the availability and quality of information that is provided to the public. In particular, there appears to be confusion on the part of the consumer in terms of services that are available, eligibility, how to access service, expectations of the services provided, etc. A lack of basic awareness and understanding is a barrier to people using and benefiting from public transportation. Since mobility needs are often regional in scope, this alternative would organize information regarding all available transit providers into a single place, where the rider or an agency representative could easily obtain essential information regarding eligibility, service hours, geographic coverage, etc. The information would be available in hard copy and web-based formats and would also be available via telephone. This directory could be developed out of the service inventories prepared as part of the coordinated plans recently prepared by the SEDA-COG and the Lycoming County Planning Commission, and could be among the first opportunities for the region to identify, understand and evaluate the variety of existing transportation services.

**Implementation Timeframe :** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Best practice models in the transit industry suggest that directories are most effective when prepared by a reliable organization with a regional scope and the ability to partner with transportation providers, municipalities and/or counties. At this time, the organization best suited for this role is likely SEDA-COG. Institutional alternatives that are proposed in this study, such as a Regional Coordination Council or a Transportation Management Association (TMA), would be well suited to lead the develop of a comprehensive resource directory.

**Benefits:**

- Improves access to both local and regional services through increased awareness and understanding.
- Enhances mobility options for transit-dependent population and the general public by increasing awareness of all available public and private transit services and human service agency transportation.
- Increases utilization of existing services with nominal additional investment.
- Increased visibility for public transportation and its benefits among elected officials and policy makers.
- Directories can be particularly useful in larger communities with a large number of public and private sector transportation resources.

---

**Probable Funding Implications:** Up to 80 percent of the cost of developing a transportation resource directory may be available through the Federal Section 5317 program, with the remaining 20 percent local match provided by local government, existing transit providers, and/or by local agencies and organizations.

---

**Other Considerations:**

- The entity responsible for developing the directory would need to commit to updating and maintaining the directory for a specified period of time.
  - Care must be exercised to ensure that the directory or other materials are easy to use and understand, and that distribution channels and techniques maximize effectiveness.
  - Directories only alert consumers to the availability of a service provider; consumers and/or agency representatives must still inquire about eligibility and arrange for services.
-

## 7 – Improve Service Convenience

**Category(ies):** Enhance Existing Services

**Identified Need:** Improving public information, marketing, and passenger amenities to increase awareness and utilization of services.

**Discussion:** Input received from the public outreach effort indicated that some of the existing transit systems, particularly LATS, should become more user friendly in terms of the quality of public information materials provided to the public, overall availability and quality of passenger amenities and more options for payment of fares. Examples may include improving the readability and comprehension of route and schedule brochures, adding properly marked signage and passenger amenities at dedicated bus stops, and ensuring that bus stop locations can be safely and easily accessed by all members of the community. The former is fairly easy to accomplish and could entail adopting best practices of peer transit systems in revising various materials such as published route and schedule information that is more user-friendly for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. For example, using large, bold fonts and color coded maps with contrasting primary colors indicating the different routings would be beneficial. This might also be a candidate for cooperation with a marketing professor/grad student from a local college or university that would produce multiple benefits including practical experience for students, establishing a cooperative relationship between the provider and the educational institution, better understanding of available transit services among college students, and no or low-cost to the transit system.

Some transit systems place adhesive stickers denoting a bus stop on the back of other municipal signs (i.e., no parking, etc.), or use plastic wraps that are placed around utility poles. These bus stop sign suggestions are relatively inexpensive to install and easy to remove if funds for more permanent signs became available. Providing passenger amenities and accessibility improvements is more expensive and presents a higher degree of difficulty due to funding constraints and the need to cooperate with local government. Passenger amenities at dedicated bus stops should include benches, shelters, and lighting. Accessibility improvements may include removing barriers on sidewalks, improving or adding sidewalks, adding curb cuts, or adding pedestrian crossing and signals. Fare payment methods could be expanded to include multi-ride tickets and/or monthly passes which would be more convenient for passengers while decreasing driver distraction and potentially providing a more stable revenue stream for the system.

**Implementation Timeframe :** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Many of the comments regarding public information and passenger amenities were directed towards LATS in lower Northumberland County. Accordingly, LATS and Northumberland County would be responsible for making these changes.

**Benefits:**

- Improvements in consumer comprehension of available services will encourage

greater levels of transit utilization by seniors, persons with disabilities and the general public.

- Accessibility improvements will increase mobility and travel options, especially for populations served by LATS in lower Northumberland County.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Costs are expected to be relatively minor and could be covered through the operating budget or possibly through a modest grant from PennDOT coupled with local matching funds or in-kind services.

**Other Considerations:**

- Transit systems such as LATS do not control rights-of-way and lack authority to make improvements.
- Physical improvements are expensive and require commitment from local authorities.
- Transit shelters or bus stop signs could potentially be procured through a piggyback purchase arrangement with a larger transit authority.

## 8 – Taxi Subsidy Program

**Category(ies):** Service Expansion

**Identified Need:** Provision of evening, weekend, and same-day paratransit service that is generally not provided by existing demand responsive systems.

**Discussion:** A sponsoring entity (transit provider, human service agency, TMA, etc.) would establish an agreement with a taxi company or companies to provide subsidized transportation service to eligible individuals through the use of vouchers. This program could be restricted to agency clients or program participants, but could also be made available to the general public if a source of funding is available for that purpose. The rider would pay a nominal fare and the sponsoring entity would provide a subsidy toward the fare. If the taxi fare for the trip is more than the passenger fare plus the subsidy, the rider would be responsible for the balance. After the trip is served, the sponsoring entity would reimburse the taxi company for the subsidized portion of the trip. Another option under this model could be to allow the rider to travel to any origin and destination point within a defined geographical area for a nominal fare. The sponsoring entity would then pay the taxi company the difference between the set fare and the meter price.

These strategies could utilize taxi services to fill gaps in service hours – especially in the evenings and on weekends – and could also offer the potential to provide same-day service. A greater reliance on taxi services can offer a cost-effective way to address a variety of trip needs, particularly where fixed route bus service is impractical or during times when demand is low.

**Implementation Timeframe :** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** human service agencies, transit providers, TMA, etc. Providers or some other entity would have to enter into an agreement with the taxi companies, provide oversight and quality assurance and handle grant administration functions.

### Benefits:

- Effective for evening and weekend service and for unanticipated travel needs.
- Effective in low density areas or during times when demand is low.
- Provide same-day service.
- Increases mobility options in the region for transit-dependent population groups and potentially for the general public.
- Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions.
- Can be advanced incrementally.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Would require new funding since these services are not currently being provided.

### Other Considerations:

- Would require good communication between sponsoring entities and taxi operators
- Lack of accessible taxi vehicles
- Limited taxi coverage
- Taxi companies may be unwilling to participate.

## 9 – Accessible Taxi Vehicles

**Category(ies):** Service Enhancement

**Identified Need:** The need for accessible taxi vehicles was identified during the public outreach effort and stakeholder interviews. Accessible taxi services could supplement existing demand responsive systems by providing an option for passengers with disabilities, particularly individuals who use wheelchairs.

**Discussion:** Under this alternative, existing demand responsive transit systems could purchase accessible vehicles (i.e., ramp-equipped low-floor minivans) using FTA funds and local grants and lease them to taxi operators; or purchase vehicles with FTA funds and have the taxi company/taxi companies pay the local match. Accessible taxi vehicles would be an important component of the taxi subsidy alternative described above or could be implemented independent of a taxi subsidy program.

**Implementation Timeframe :** Short Term, depending on funding availability and sources

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Human service agencies, transit providers, TMA, taxi companies, etc.

**Benefits:**

- Would complement taxi subsidy program but could be advanced independently.
- Increase mobility options by expanding the number of accessible vehicles in the region.
- Could help fill in service gaps during the hours when existing providers do not operate.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some local costs could be offset if taxi companies agree to provide all or part of the local match.

**Other Considerations:**

- Taxi companies may not be interested in the program.
- Some type of local match will be required to access Federal or state programs.
- The entity applying for grant funds will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate maintenance practices, insurance and eligible uses of the vehicles are being adhered to.

## 10 – Carpool/Vanpool Services

**Category(ies):** Service Enhancement

**Identified Need:** Public outreach and stakeholder interview feedback indicated the need to provide transportation services to employment and educational facilities in the region, with participants suggesting carpool and vanpool services and utilizing existing park and ride facilities as part of this program. These models can also address mobility needs in low density areas where conventional fixed route bus service and general public demand responsive transit service are not financially feasible. Carpool and vanpool matching programs could be part of a larger transportation demand management program organized by the establishment of a TMA, or could be advanced by other appropriate organizations such as SEDA-COG.

- **Discussion:** Carpooling is among the easiest and most flexible ways to share a ride. Carpoolers either pay a pre-established weekly or monthly fee or share actual costs plus parking fees. Carpool riders typically establish rules and etiquette to sustain the carpool partnership, such as timely notifications of absences and whether to eat or drink in the car. Formal arrangements, such as online carpool matching services, could be administered by a large employer or major institution (i.e., medical center or university), SEDA-COG, or a newly created Transportation Management Association (TMA). The Geisinger Medical Center in Danville recently implemented a carpool program for employees. The program is based on a computer program in which employees enter their home ZIP code, their work shift and how many miles they are willing to drive to meet up with a ride. The program then presents potential matches with contact information, at which point the employees are responsible for organizing the carpool, paying for fuel, and working out other details related to changes in work schedules or emergencies. The computer program also allows employees to calculate the cost savings to ridesharing. As an added benefit, employees using carpools are afforded preferred parking at the medical facility. In total, over 300 employees have signed-up looking to share rides. Vanpools are generally comprised of groups of 7–15 people to commute to work on a prearranged basis by van, with one of the riders agreeing to be the primary driver and 1–2 others serving as back-up drivers. Vanpool riders may meet at one designated location or at specified pick-up and drop-off stops along the way. The number of passengers, length of trip, insurance, gas, parking fees, and third-party fees, if applicable, will determine the actual cost per passenger. The driver usually travels for free and may also have access to the van on nights and weekends. Participants may all work at the same location or at nearby locations. There are three types of vanpool arrangements available:
  - Employer-sponsored or operated vanpool programs in which the employer purchases or leases the vans and is responsible for overall program administration. Insurance is usually obtained through the company's regular fleet policy.
  - Individually owned and operated vanpools in which the driver owns and maintains the van and coordinates the daily operation of the vanpool; rider fares are used to

cover the purchase and maintenance costs.

- Third-party vanpooling programs in which a private company or organization purchases or leases vans and then offers them to vanpooling groups for a fee that covers the cost of program administration, vanpool promotion, vehicle amortization, operating expenses and van maintenance. One such company is VPSI Inc. which is an international commuter transportation and mobility management company.

## **Implementation Timeframe :** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** A single vanpool program can be coordinated by an employer, while larger and more complex vanpool arrangements are often handled by an outside organization, such as a TMA or an existing organization such as SEDA-COG. The responsibilities for administering a comprehensive vanpool program would include applying for and managing grant funding, recruiting riders, approving and training drivers, determining routes, collecting monthly fees, developing marketing materials and publicizing the program, and monitoring and maintaining the program. The administering agency could choose to limit their role. For instance, they could agree to perform all of the facilitation roles but leave financial matters to the participants; or alternatively could simply market the program to private employers and provide technical assistance and sample documents to interested employers.

## **Benefits:**

- Increases mobility options in the region for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public.
- Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions. Provides alternative ride-sharing services to under-served areas and serves as a means of assessing the potential for traditional types of public transportation service.
- Improves access to regional services and employment opportunities.
- Provides mobility options for non-drivers, lower income residents (Welfare to Work), and the general public.
- Vanpools provide a more cost effective means of serving mid-range and long-distance commuters compared to conventional transit service.

Less costly to public agencies than providing public transit service.

**Probable Funding Implications:** A ride matching and carpool program, which is relatively inexpensive to implement, should be undertaken first to determine demand and possible interest in developing more formal vanpool arrangements. The carpool program used by the Geisinger Medical Center could serve as a test case; the institution may even be willing to provide guidance for organizations or groups interested in establishing carpool programs of their own.

## **Other Considerations:**

- Increases travel time and lacks flexibility in accommodating changes to working



times/ patterns. This could be addressed through a guaranteed ride home arrangement with a local taxi company.

- Reliability of the informal arrangements made between individuals which can result in passengers or drivers occasionally not showing up for pre-arranged trips.
- There must be a monetary incentive (e.g., high gas prices or restricted parking availability) and a sufficient number of persons with reasonably similar origins and destinations.
- Potential difficulty in collecting payments from riders.
- Potential for continuing turnover in ridership.

Volatility in market forces such as gas prices and employment trends.

## 11 – Car Sharing Program

**Category(ies):** New Service

**Identified Need:** Public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions indicated the need to provide mobility for transit-dependent population groups to access employment opportunities, services, and maintain independence. There was also a need to provide transportation services to employment and educational facilities in the region. A car sharing program could be a stand-alone program or part of a larger transportation demand management program organized by a TMA or other appropriate organization.

• **Discussion:** Car sharing is intended for occasional trips when a car is needed. The program allows individuals to use a pool of automobiles for a small annual fee and payment by the hour. Cars are reserved by phone or on-line and picked up from a designated parking space and returned to the same spot once the trip is complete. The hourly fee includes fuel and insurance costs. Car sharing programs can be for-profit, non-profit, or cooperative organizations and can have widely different objectives, business models, use of technology, and target markets. In most instances, car sharing programs typically share the following features:

- An organized group of participants that pay an annual fee to become members.
- One or more shared vehicles.
- A decentralized network of parking locations (“pods”) stationed close to homes, workplaces and/or transit stations.
- Usage booked in advance.
- Rentals for short time periods.
- Self-accessing vehicles.

**Implementation Timeframe :** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Car sharing programs can be run by local governments, transit agencies, employers and businesses, universities and private-for-profit companies. Bucknell University in Lewisburg and Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove currently operate car sharing programs on their campuses for students and faculty.

**Benefits:**

- Increases mobility options in the region for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public.
- Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions.
- Cheaper than owning an automobile.
- Lessens parking demand.
- Provides an additional mobility option.
- Complements taxi service which is better suited to one-way trips.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Would be self-financed through membership and rental fees. May require nominal funding for start-up and program oversight.

**Other Considerations:**

- Understanding car-sharing.
- Sufficient members to allow for reasonable user charges that fully cover program costs.
- Regulatory obstacles such as securing dedicated parking spaces.
- Works best in areas with relatively high densities; as a result, the implementation of this program may be best suited for select areas in the region such as Williamsport, certain municipalities along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors, or on college campuses.

## 12 – Previous Transportation Proposals

**Category(ies):** Service Expansion/New Service

**Identified Need:** A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions reiterated the need, identified in previous studies, to expand the availability of public and human service transportation service in the region, particularly along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors.

**Discussion:** Over the last decade a number of transportation planning studies and county comprehensive plans have been undertaken that either identified possible mobility concepts and/or made recommendations on specific services. Key findings or recommendations developed as part of planning documents included:

- The identification that a regional fixed route system would provide the greatest benefit to riders but would also exhibit the highest cost.
- The recommendation for fixed route service between Berwick, Bloomsburg, and Danville and expanding the availability of the Bloomsburg University Shuttle to the general public.
- A recommended plan for individual fixed route bus services in Lewisburg and Selinsgrove, with another route designed to connect the two municipalities.
- Exploring the feasibility of developing deviated fixed route bus service using the service model operated by the Endless Mountains Transit Authority (EMTA); and
- Explore the potential for transit service between Milton, Sunbury, and Lewisburg.

Based on data compiled from the Community Characteristics report, the logic of these routes are still valid from the perspective of service area characteristics and places served. However, the challenges that prevented their implementation are likely still present.

**Implementation Timeframe :** Mid to Long Term, but could be advance incrementally

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Transit systems and local government

**Benefits:**

- Increases mobility options in the region for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public.
- Addresses unmet needs cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions.
- The bus routes developed in the Union & Snyder Counties Fixed Route Public Transportation Feasibility Study were fully developed, making these route proposals ready for implementation.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some costs could be offset through private sector contributions, and farebox revenue.

**Other Considerations:**

- Lack of funding to pay for new bus routes. It may be difficult to obtain a local match even if Federal and state funding sources are available.
- Lack of sufficient demand to warrant service. The most recent fixed route bus service provided in the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridor area was eliminated in 2004 because of low ridership and the inability to obtain funding.
- Would require designation of an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to manage and administer the services, which would include preparing grants, quarterly reports, and ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices and vehicle maintenance.

## 13 – Intra-Regional Commuter Bus Service

**Category(ies):** New Service

**Identified Need:** A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions was the need for general public transportation service to access major employers and post-secondary institutions along the along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors.

**Discussion:** This transit service option would provide bus service during the weekday morning and afternoon peak periods between a limited number of strategically located bus stops (i.e., park and ride facilities) and major employment sites in the region, such as Bloomsburg, Danville, Lewisburg, and Williamsport. Conceptually, this service could consist of two minibuses that begin from opposite ends of the region – for example, one vehicle starting from the park and ride facility near Benton in Columbia County and the other vehicle starting from the park and ride facility in Hughesville in Lycoming County – and operate inbound along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors to serve major employment sites and/or municipalities with a high number of jobs. The two routes would terminate at the Geisinger Medical Center in Danville and then turn around and operate in the outbound direction back to their point of origin. A third vehicle operated by LATS would begin inbound service at a designated stop in Lower Northumberland County and operate northbound on Route 54 to Danville, at which point the route would turn around and operate along the same alignment back to lower Northumberland County. Based on the distances traveled by each vehicle, it is likely that the routes would operate limited peak period service, such as one or two round trips in the morning and again in the afternoon. To maintain convenient service and reduce the travel time, the routes would serve a limited number of designated stops. The services would be scheduled to arrive at the Geisinger Medical Center at approximately the same time so that passengers could transfer to another route for broader access to points throughout the region.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Long Term, but could be advanced incrementally

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Transit systems and local government

### Benefits:

- The three routes would provide direct access to the Geisinger Medical Center – one of the largest employers in the region. Passengers could also transfer to another route to travel to other locations.
- In the long term, the service could be expanded to evenings and weekends to accommodate workers employed during second and third shifts, or workers employed in industries that do not operate according to the typical eight hour weekday work period.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some costs could be offset through, private sector contributions, and farebox revenue. JARC funding may be available if the focus of the service is on work trips.

**Other Considerations:**

- Clearly marked and accessible bus stops would need to be designated and should be equipped with a bus shelter, seating, and public information materials (i.e., route schedule, a listing of existing service providers, contact information, etc).
- Passengers that need to transfer between routes to reach their destination could not likely rely on services for work commutes due to the travel times involved.
- Lack of sufficient demand to warrant service. Driving is faster and parking is generally easy to find and free.
- Would require designation of an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to be responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the service, which would include preparing grants, quarterly reports, and ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices and vehicle maintenance.

## 14 – Beyond-the-Region Subscription Commuter Bus Service

**Category(ies):** New Service

**Identified Need:** The Community Characteristics report indicated that although most commuters in the region are employed in their county of residence or an adjacent county, the number of jobs in the region is in decline. Further, the loss of employment was a common theme noted throughout the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions. As a result, it is likely that employment centers in Dauphin County (i.e., Harrisburg), Centre County (i.e., State College), and Williamsport will become more prominent commuting destinations for the region's commuting labor force population.

**Discussion:** This alternative proposes operating inter-county commuter bus service during the weekday peak period between strategic park and ride facilities in the region and major employment centers such as Harrisburg and State College. To expedite service and increase rider convenience, the routes would ideally operate express service from the park and ride facilities or provide a limited number of stops at key locations in the region. This service could be operated on a subscription basis where a passenger receives a reserved seat by paying a weekly or monthly fare in advance. A subscription bus is usually started only when a sufficient number of passengers have committed to the service to ensure cost effective service. The service would likely operate one trip in the morning and one return trip in the afternoon.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Mid Term, but could be advanced incrementally

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Subscription service could be organized by employers, employees, or one of the existing transit systems in the region, with the transit system providing the vehicle and a driver paid an hourly rate or by shift. A private contractor could also operate the service.

### Benefits:

- Provide transit-dependent individuals and the general public with improved access to major employment destinations.
- Could be a more cost effective means of commuting than driving alone, especially if gas prices rise as they did in 2008.

**Probable Funding Implications: Requires new funding.** Financed through rider fares, private sector contributions, and possible state and federal operating assistance. Subscription services are generally not eligible for public transit grant programs.

### Other Considerations:

- The park and ride facilities should be paved and provide a safe waiting area for passengers. The waiting area should have a shelter, seating, and a list of existing transit services with their telephone number and/or e-mail address.
- Unpredictable market forces that influence demand such as gas prices and employment trends. Could be more costly and less flexible than car pooling or van pooling.



- May increase travel time compared to private automobile and lacks flexibility in accommodating changes to working times/ patterns. This could be addressed through a guaranteed ride home arrangement with a local taxi company.
- Would require designation of an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to be responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the service, which would include preparing and administering grants, quarterly reports, and oversight including ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices, vehicle maintenance, and quality assurance.
- A private operator could be contracted to provide the service but would have to use ADA accessible vehicles.

## 15 – US 11 and US 15 – Regional Connecting Bus Service

**Category(ies):** New Service

**Identified Need:** A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions was the need for some form of regularly scheduled public transportation service to operate between the population centers located along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors. This service is one alternative to provide access to employment sites, retail areas, and other essential services.

- **Discussion:** The Community Characteristics report indicated that several communities located along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors – Berwick, Bloomsburg, Danville, Sunbury, and Selinsgrove, among others – were among the highest ranking municipalities in the region in terms of transit need. However, because the overall size of each municipality is rather small and the distance between the municipalities along the two corridors is fairly significant, it is difficult and costly to operate conventional fixed route bus service in this area of the region. However, it is apparent from population and land use patterns that a linear route(s) linking various municipalities and activity centers along the corridors is appropriate. This route would use small vehicles and primarily operate along a defined alignment on an established schedule like regular fixed route bus service, but would also deviate to pick-up or drop off riders by request and then return to the defined route before the next marked bus stop. Passengers could board and alight anywhere on the route as long as the driver deems it safe to stop the vehicle. This type of service could reduce demand on the existing demand responsive services if the routes are easy to use for the elderly and persons with disabilities. Initially, this service could be operated on select weekdays depending on the area being served. For example, on Tuesday and Thursday, the route would serve the US 11 corridor between Berwick and Sunbury; then on Wednesday and Friday the route would operate between Danville and the population centers located along US 15 such as Lewisburg and Selinsgrove. Many factors must be taken into account when designing route deviation service, including:
  - Customer eligibility for deviated service (general public, persons with disabilities, other rider groups). Timing of requests for deviations (scheduled on the day prior to the trip, scheduled with minimal advance notice, given to the driver when the rider boards the vehicle).
  - Accommodation of deviation requests (How to provide deviation requests without negatively affecting fixed route service reliability).
  - Area to be served by deviations (maximum distance from the route, all or only portions of the route, only to/from specific key sites). A deviation of three-quarters of a mile would satisfy ADA service regulations.
  - The days and hours for deviated service (all days and hours that the route is in operation or only during certain times).

**Implementation Timeframe:** Mid Term but could be advanced incrementally

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Transit Systems, local government, private sector

**Benefits:**

- Increases mobility options in the region for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public.
- Would link many of the region's major activity centers (i.e., retail centers, post-secondary schools, etc.) and transit supportive residential areas.
- Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some costs could be offset through private sector contributions, and fares.

**Other Considerations:**

- Clearly marked and accessible bus stops would need to be designated and should be equipped with a bus shelter, seating, and public information materials (i.e., route schedule, a listing of existing service providers, contact information, etc). If park and ride facilities are utilized, these lots should be paved.
- Services operated than five days per week do not serve the work trip market.
- Lack of sufficient demand to warrant service.
- Would require designation of an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to be responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the service, which would include preparing and administering grants, quarterly reports, and oversight including ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices, vehicle maintenance, and quality assurance.
- Operation could be handled by the same entity or contracted to a private operator.

## 16 – Local Community Bus Routes with Deviation

**Category(ies):** New Service

**Identified Need:** A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions was the need for regularly scheduled public transportation service for the municipalities located along the U.S. 11 and U.S. 15 corridors. This service is one alternative for providing access to retail areas and other essential services along the corridor.

• **Discussion:** Another route concept involves operating local community shuttle service using small vehicles in areas with the highest population and population densities to provide point-to-point service between residential areas and major activity centers. This service concept would also operate along a defined route on an established schedule but would deviate to pick-up or drop off passengers and then return to the defined route before the next marked bus stop. The last stop would always occur at the same pre-determined time. Passengers could board and alight anywhere on the route as long as the driver deems it safe to stop the vehicle. This type of service could reduce demand on the existing demand responsive services if the routes are easy to use for the elderly and persons with disabilities. The Area Transportation Authority (ATA) operates a similar type of service in communities with at least 5,000 persons and a population density of at least 2,500 persons per square mile. The municipalities in the region that meet this criteria and are not currently served by regularly scheduled public transportation include Berwick, Bloomsburg, Danville, Lewisburg, Milton, Selinsgrove, Sunbury, and Watsontown. It is possible that these communities could be divided into two separate service areas that could be served on alternating weekdays. For example, the municipalities along US 11 served Tuesday and Thursday and the municipalities along US 15 served Wednesday and Friday. Many factors must be taken into account when designing route deviation service, including:

- Customer eligibility for deviated service (general public, persons with disabilities, other rider groups) Timing of requests for deviations (scheduled on the day prior to the trip, scheduled with minimal advance notice, given to the driver when the rider boards the vehicle).
- Accommodation of deviation requests (would the service accommodate all requests, accommodate requests with either deviation or paratransit service, accommodate requests only if possible without negatively affecting fixed route service quality).
- Area to be served by deviations (maximum distance or time from the route, all or only portions of the route, only to/from specific key sites). A deviation of three-quarters of a mile would satisfy ADA service regulations.
- The days and hours for deviated service (all days and hours that the route is in operation; only during certain times, such as off-peak hours; only on certain days, such as weekends).

**Implementation Timeframe:** Long Term but could be advanced incrementally

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Transit systems, local government, private sector

**Benefits:**

- Increases mobility options in the region for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public.
- Service operated less than five days per week does not serve work trip markets.
- Would serve many of the region's major activity centers (i.e., retail centers, post-secondary schools, etc.) and transit supportive residential areas.
- Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some costs could be offset through private sector contributions, and farebox revenue.

**Other Considerations:**

- Clearly marked and accessible bus stops would need to be designated and should ideally be equipped with a bus shelter, seating, and public information materials (i.e., route schedule, a listing of existing service providers, contact information, etc).
- Lack of sufficient demand to warrant service.
- Would require an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to be responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the service, which would include preparing and administering grants, quarterly reports, and oversight including ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices, vehicle maintenance and service quality.
- Service could be provided by the same entity or contracted to a private operator.

## 17 – General Public Rural Demand Responsive Service

**Category(ies):** New Service

**Identified Need:** A general finding from the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions was the need for affordable general purpose public transportation in the rural areas of the region for individuals who do not qualify for subsidized transportation through agency programs.

- **Discussion:** As an alternative to trying to operate conventional fixed-route service in the rural areas where the density is low and travel patterns are dispersed, there are various models of general purpose demand responsive services that cost less than fixed route service while maintaining mobility within the community. Further, service capacity can easily be increased or decreased as demand changes. For example, a demand-responsive feeder service could be operated in which passengers make a prior day or same day reservation to be picked up at their door and taken to a transfer point to access the existing RVT and LATS systems or the proposed services, such as the US 11 and US 15 corridor service and/or the community bus service. Another example is Demand Response Direct service which is a combination of fixed route and demand responsive service. Under this model, a transit vehicle would operate on a demand responsive basis within a defined geographical area for a particular amount of time and would then operate on a fixed route basis to a particular destination. In the reverse, the route would leave the terminal point, operate on a fixed route basis until it reached the demand responsive zone and would then operate on a demand responsive basis within the zone for a given period of time. Passengers in the defined geographical area could board or alight at any requested location in the geographical area with a reservation. Passengers traveling to and from locations along the fixed route portion could board at any bus stop. It is possible that the region could be divided into separate service areas and served on alternating weekdays. An example is the Area Transportation Authority's (ATA) Call-A-Bus service, which is an entirely demand responsive service that operates in zones covering the system's six county service area. The rider is charged per zone traveled. The service requires a prior day advance reservation and is available to anyone who wants to use the service.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Long Term but could be advanced incrementally

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Existing service providers and local governments, or a new entity.

### Benefits:

- Provides an affordable mobility option for individuals residing in rural areas who don't qualify for subsidized transportation through agency programs.
- Less expensive than operating conventional fixed route bus service. Using defined trip parameters (i.e., certain day or geographical area) provides the opportunity to group trips and provide more cost effective service
- Addresses an unmet need cited in the public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions.

**Probable Funding Implications:** Would require additional local, state and federal funding assistance. Some costs could be offset through farebox revenue.

**Other Considerations:**

- Clearly marked and accessible bus stops would need to be designated for any fixed route components of the service and should ideally be equipped with a bus shelter, seating, and public information materials (i.e., route schedule, a listing of existing service providers, contact information, etc).
- Service operated less than five days per week does not address work trip markets.
- Would require designation of an entity(s) with multi-county focus and authority to be responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the service, which would include preparing and administering grants, quarterly reports, and oversight including ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices, vehicle maintenance, and service quality.
- Service could be provided by existing entities or contracted to a private contractor(s).

## 18 – PennDOT Human Service Coordination Pilot Project

**Category(ies):** Service Expansion

**Identified Need:** The public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions identified the need for existing demand responsive systems to improve coordination to medical facilities, particularly the Geisinger Medical Center in Danville.

**Discussion:** PennDOT is currently funding a project to improve human transportation coordination with goals including improving operational efficiency and customer service. The Pilot Project will focus on travel oriented to the Geisinger Medical Center but could be expanded to the other facilities/areas if the pilot project proves successful.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Existing transit systems and local government

### Benefits:

- Addresses several of the needs identified through the stakeholder outreach and public forums.
- Improves the efficiency and effectiveness of human service transportation associated with the region's largest attractor of this type of service.
- Could serve as validation of a model for future expansion throughout the region.
- PennDOT is supportive of the Pilot.

**Probable Funding Implications:** The Pilot Project is being funded 100% by PennDOT.

### Other Considerations:

- This project is an initial step in the process of developing a regional coordinated human service transportation system and addresses many of the barriers presently preventing more coordination in the region.
- The proposed Regional Coordination Council (RCC) would be ideally suited to take the lessons learned from this project and develop additional projects and action plans throughout the region.



## 19 – Special Event/Special Purpose Transportation Service

**Category(ies):** New Service

**Identified Need:** The public outreach and stakeholder interview sessions identified the need for some type of transit service to be available for special events in the region or to be available during certain times of the year such as the holiday season, summer fairs or when the local colleges are in session.

**Discussion:** Special event transportation service is often designed to accommodate particular market segments attracted to a special event or certain destinations using either fixed routes or deviated fixed routes. Service could link major activity centers (i.e., shopping centers or college campuses) with nearby parking facilities to mitigate traffic congestion, or could involve making existing college transportation shuttle buses open to the public during the fall and spring semesters through a cost sharing agreement between the colleges and the municipalities or activity centers desiring service. Another possibility could be to operate bus service between various municipalities at certain times of the year as an economic development tool to attract residents and visitors back to the region's traditional downtown business districts. This service could be made more attractive and distinguished by operating rubber-tire, trolley replica vehicles.

Special event services operated by River Valley Transit (RVT) could serve as potential models. These services include: the Williamsport Trolley (July through August), Williamsport Crosscutters Baseball (Friday nights after baseball game), and the Lycoming County Fair (operates during Lycoming Fair in Hughesville).

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** A public-private partnership that would distribute responsibilities for designing, operating and financing the service.

**Benefits:**

- Addresses an unmet need identified through the stakeholder outreach and public forums.
- Could be a useful economic development tool to help local merchants and older downtown business districts in the region, especially during the holiday season or special events that bring large numbers of visitors to the area.

**Probable Funding Implications:** A combination of local, state, and federal funding could be pursued along with significant contributions from local institutions and the private sector, such as local visitor bureaus. In addition, passenger fares could be utilized to help offset operating costs.

**Other Considerations:**

- Specialized nature of service would not be suited for work trips.
- Would require designation of an entity(s) to be responsible for administration of the service, which would include preparing and administering grants, quarterly reports, and oversight including ensuring compliance with various government agencies in terms of reporting practices, vehicle maintenance, and service quality.
- Service could be provided by existing entities or contracted to a private contractor(s).

## 20 – Non-Motorized Options – Bicycling Programs

**Category(ies):** Service Enhancement

**Identified Need:** Access to transportation could be enhanced if opportunities for bicycling from origin to destination, or to reach a bus stop was available. Further, intermodal connections and the development of bike paths and pedestrian trails will be reflected in the long range transportation plan currently being developed by SEDA-COG.

**Discussion:** The integration of public transportation and bicycling can include the installation of bike racks on all public transit vehicles and installation of bike racks for parking; signage to identify shared bike/auto-routes and to remind motorists to be aware of cyclists; educational and promotional activities; and infrastructure improvements such as widening roadway shoulders, designated bike lanes, installation of bike racks, and traffic calming measures. River Valley Transit (RVT) has bike racks on some of the buses in their fleet.

Another could include developing bike-sharing programs serving the region's college campus areas. Bike-sharing is becoming increasingly common at colleges and universities throughout the United States and can be designed in a variety of ways to suit local needs. For example, a person with a campus identification card could access a bike at kiosks placed throughout campus. A bike could be rented at one location and returned to a different bike kiosk located somewhere else on-campus or even somewhere off-campus. This program could be free and paid for through student fees or could be designed to charge users by the minute or hour the bike is in use.

**Implementation Timeframe:** Short Term

**Parties Responsible for Implementation:** Local colleges or agencies such as SEDA-COG or a newly formed TMA.

### Benefits:

- Bicycling is inexpensive and provides mobility options for people who do not have an automobile or access to public transportation.
- Planning for bicyclists is supported by PennDOT and is included as a component of the Transportation and Land Use Toolkit prepared by PennDOT in 2007.
- Consistent with SEDA-COG's long range transportation plan.

**Probable Funding Implications:** A combination of local, state, and Federal programs could be pursued to assist in bicycle infrastructure improvements. The costs of establishing a bike sharing program would be relatively modest and be paid for by the participating colleges and/or local municipalities.

### Other Considerations:

- Physical improvements to infrastructure are expensive and require commitment from local authorities.
- Bike-sharing is best suited to college campuses and/or within specific municipalities where activity centers and residential areas are clustered together.
- A temperate climate comprised of hot summers and cold winters can affect the convenience of bicycling as a viable transportation mode during these time periods.