

Vernon County Coordinated Public Transit- Human Services Transportation Plan 2024-2028

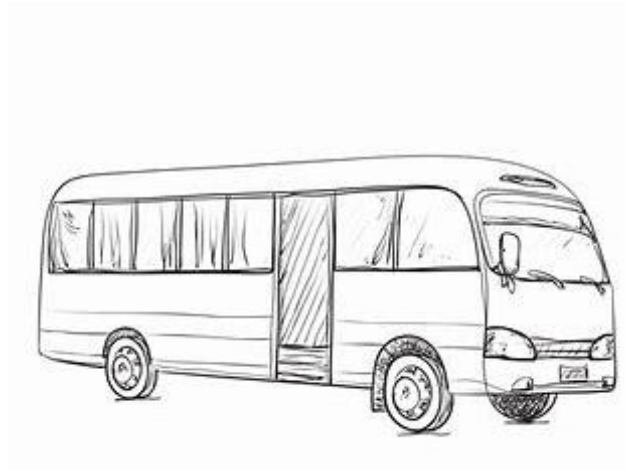


Prepared as part of a
Regional Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services
Transportation Plan for the Mississippi River Regional
Planning Commission Region

(COUNTIES SERVED: BUFFALO, CRAWFORD, JACKSON,
LA CROSSE, MONROE, PEPIN, PIERCE, TREMPPEALEAU,
AND VERNON)



Prepared by the Mississippi River Regional
Planning Commission – October 2023



Vernon County
Coordinated Public Transit- Human
Services Transportation Plan

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Introduction

Federal transit law (FAST ACT) requires that grantees under several state and federal transportation programs including the state Elderly and Disabled Transportation Program (s85.21), and the federal 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program are required to meet certain planning requirements in order to receive funding. The transit law requires that projects selected for funding under the various programs be “derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan” and that the plan be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers and participation by members of the public.

Vernon County continues to comply with the FAST ACT law as in 2006, 2008 and 2013 the county prepared plans meeting federal requirements. It is now required that the most recent 2019-2023 plan be updated. Vernon County is utilizing the services of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC) to update the plan. This plan has been updated following guidelines from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and will serve as the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (2024-2028) for Vernon County.

History of Coordinated Planning Process

A regional planning process was utilized to assist Vernon County in meeting the requirements of the Federal Transit Law (FAST ACT) for “Coordinated Public Transit-human Services Transportation Plans.” In the first years (2006-2008) of developing “Coordinated Public Transit-human Services Transportation Plans” for counties, individual public meetings were held in each county. However, meetings were poorly attended (in many cases 1 to 4 people would attend the countywide meetings) due to the region being comprised of rural sparsely populated counties even though extensive public outreach efforts (advertisements, emails, posters, etc.) were utilized. Based on the ineffective nature of the early coordinated public transit-human services transportation county meetings, a regional planning process was developed and utilized in subsequent Coordinated Public Transit-human Services Transportation Plan updates. The regional process has proven beneficial as the regional meetings have been attended by all counties in the region and numerous agencies, transportation providers and transportation advocates. Regional meetings have fostered communication between counties and agencies that in the past did not exist. At the regional meetings county specific breakout sessions are facilitated that focus on county specific needs and initiatives. Regional and individual county plans are prepared and approved as part of the public meeting and coordinated public transit-human services transportation planning process.



Organization of Planning Document

As in past years, the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan update for Vernon County has been prepared as part of a regional plan update process. Immediately following this section is the Vernon County Strategies, Activities and/or Projects Work Plan developed by Vernon County representatives that attended the required regional public-transit human services transportation coordination meeting on October 18, 2023. Also specific to Vernon County are needs and gaps that were developed by Vernon County representatives as part of the Assessment of Transportation for Transportation – Disadvantaged Populations of Vernon County. A map illustrating the distribution of the 65 years and older population for the county is also included. The Vernon County Health and Human Services Department is the agency overseeing the plan for the county.

In addition to the Vernon County “specific” coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan information, the remaining sections of the plan detail the Regional Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. The regional plan describes coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan requirements prepared/conducted at the region level such as the required public meeting, evaluation of regional/county demographic information, a regional transportation providers inventory, and regional/county plan goals and strategies. Updating the Vernon County plan through a regional process has proven beneficial to the county as such a process has improved communication between counties and aided in agencies seeing alternative ways of providing services to meet the needs of the transportation disadvantaged.



Vernon County Strategies, Activities and/or Projects Work Plan

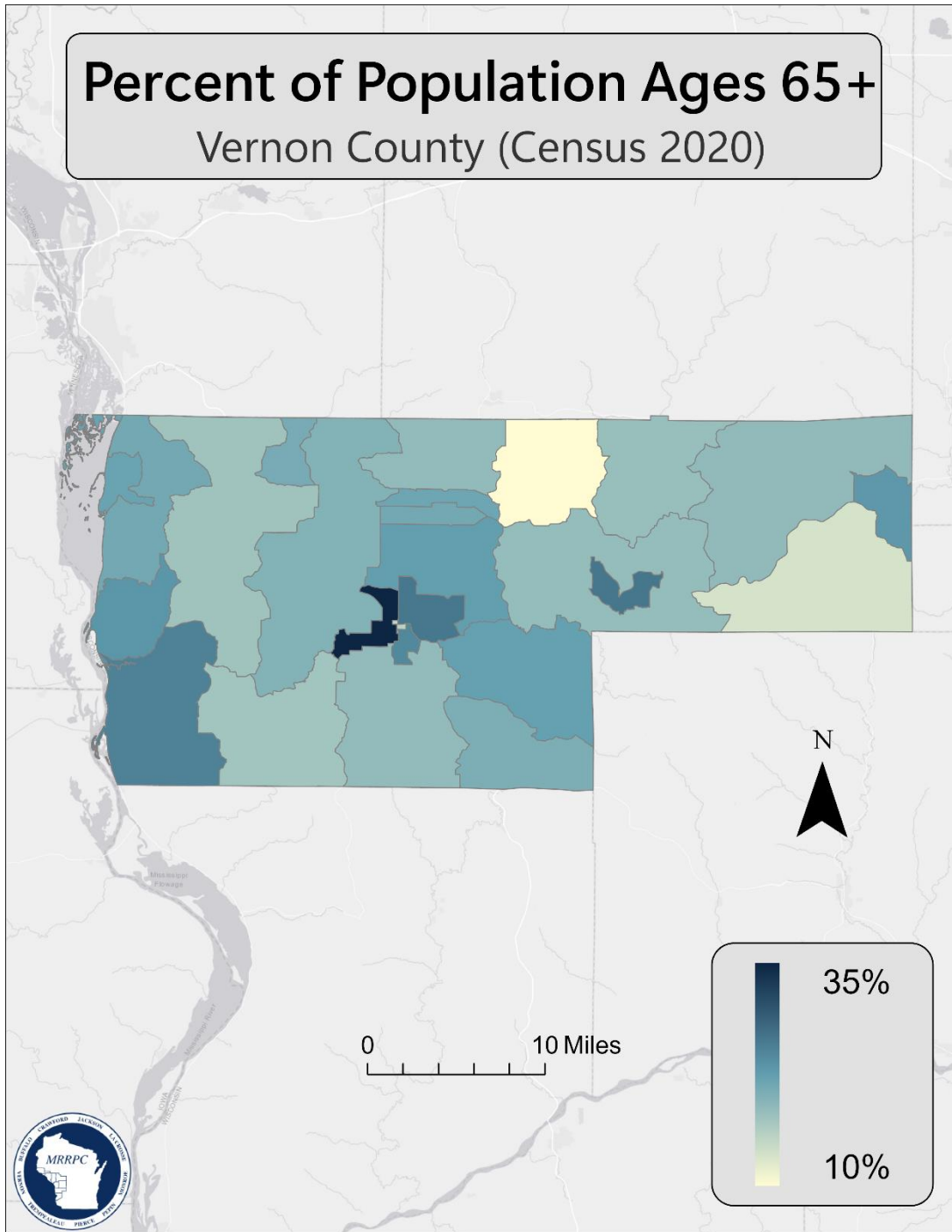
Priority of Goal	Strategy/Goal to support 5 year coordinated plan	Activities	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline/ Deadline	Roadblocks to Implementation
1	Coordinate, consolidate, and improve the marketing of transportation services.	<p>Partner with both the private and public sectors to recruit drivers, volunteers, and other service providers in the region.</p> <p>Find or develop outlets to inform the public, CBRF's, health care providers, businesses, and others about available transportation services.</p> <p>Seek incentives or rewards for drivers and volunteers from the communities they serve.</p>	All county agencies providing transportation services.	Duration of this plan.	<p>Seniors and other clients may have more limited access to information provided by technology.</p> <p>It is difficult to recruit drivers and other volunteers.</p> <p>Local newspapers are closing or reducing their production limiting the dissemination of information.</p>
2	Analyze and procure solutions for data management and scheduling of resources across the region.	<p>Establish partnerships and explore grant funding options with staff and provide a regional mobility management system.</p> <p>Create an opportunity for a single source resource that individuals can use to find transportation options in their counties. (Similar to or using the 211 system.)</p>	All county agencies providing transportation services.	Duration of this plan.	<p>All regional options would need to be included.</p> <p>Funding.</p> <p>Limited transportation options in rural areas.</p>
3	Strive to increase transportation funding and support by promoting the cost saving benefits of public transportation across a diverse population.	<p>Let our Local, State, and Federal Officials know that our services not only fill a need in the community but are more cost effective when compared to other transportation options.</p> <p>Communicate with local media and the communities about the value of our services.</p>	All county agencies providing transportation services.	Duration of this plan.	<p>Matching available funds with actual needs in the community.</p> <p>Lack of understanding on the part of elected officials as to the value of transportation options in the region.</p>



Priority of Goal	Strategy/Goal to support 5 year coordinated plan	Activities	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline/ Deadline	Roadblocks to Implementation
4	Increase traditional and nontraditional transportation options for the clients we serve.	<p>Increase nontraditional options including public/private partnerships, other service organizations, rideshare, vouchers, find your own driver, bike share, etc.</p> <p>Reach out to businesses, organizations, and others to see if they can provide some form of transit services or help fund services available.</p>	All county agencies providing transportation services.	Duration of this plan.	<p>Additional Funding.</p> <p>Resources to find and use the nontraditional options in the community.</p>
5	Reduce barriers at the federal and state level to procure transit vehicles in line with funding, vehicle availability and scheduled timelines.	<p>Communicate with State and Federal officials regarding current challenges.</p> <p>Collect and share information about available vehicles.</p>	All county agencies providing transportation services.	Duration of this plan.	<p>Federally mandated vehicle requirements for transit vehicles can make finding a vehicle difficult.</p> <p>Supply-chain shortages and long lead times are making it hard for providers to acquire federally approved vehicles.</p> <p>When vehicles are available the cost can be over what the grant allocated due to inflation and/or price increases.</p>



Vernon County Assessment of Transportation for Transportation – Disadvantaged Populations



Regional Plan Introduction

In August of 2005, Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation, Equity Act: A legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), reauthorizing the surface transportation act. As part of this reauthorization, grantees under several state and federal transportation programs including the state Elderly and Disabled Transportation Program (s85.21), and the federal 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program were required to meet certain planning requirements in order to receive funding. Subsequent Federal transit law including the FAST ACT (2015) continues to require that projects selected for funding under the various programs be “derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan” and that the plan be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers and participation by members of the public. The 2023 Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan update for MRRPC counties has been conducted on a regional basis through Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) *Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Planning* guidance. In the development of this plan all parties involved (regardless of county or agency affiliation) have worked together and have created the local/regional goals/strategies and the action steps included in the regional plan. It is intended that transportation activities conducted on a regional, county or agency level will be consistent and derived from the strategies/goals of this plan.



Planning Process

As previously mentioned, the 2023 coordinated public transit-human services transportation planning process was conducted regionally for the nine counties in the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission area. Peter Fletcher, the Transportation Planner, for the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission, facilitated the planning process update and public meeting activities. The coordination planning process initially required by SAFETEA-LU and subsequently the FAST ACT in



reality has been on going in the MRRPC Region over the past several years as local transportation coordinating meetings (county TCC's) regularly conduct meetings to discuss needs, gaps, as well as strategies and activities to reduce gaps and meet the transportation needs of the region. To formally meet the requirements of the Locally Developed Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Planning Process a regional meeting was conducted on October 18, 2023.

Public Meeting

On October 18, 2023, a regional public-transit human services transportation coordination meeting was held at Altra Federal Credit Union / Operations Center in Onalaska, WI.

The meeting notice was published in our regional newspaper and over 500 invitations were emailed to transportation providers, agencies, and advocates. Additionally, the MRRPC website provided meeting and plan information throughout the planning process as well as the opportunity for people to provide comments via email or other means (list of meeting invitees, participants, meeting notice, flyer, website, etc. is attached as Appendix A). Approximately 25 people attended the meeting and participated in the plan review and update process.

At the meeting, a review of the previous Coordinated Public Transit Plan was conducted, looking over issues from the past implementations and from new challenges being presented. The meeting facilitator then led a discussion focusing on identifying new goals or updating the previous goals, activities, and roadblocks to implementation. These updated goals were then sent to the counties in the region for final review and the assessment of the person or persons responsible. This was facilitated by the ADRC in each county with input from others in attendance or with an interest in the plan.

Once the revised goals, activities, roadblocks, and other plan updates were returned to the Mississippi Regional Planning Commission, they were incorporated into the new final plans.



Demographic Information (Region and County Information)

An important component of the planning process is the analysis of the region’s demographics and associated trends. The demographic information helps in assessing the individuals, groups and transportation-disadvantaged populations in the counties and region. Table 1 shows the region’s population trends and projections. From 1980 to 2020 the region’s population increased by 24.4% compared to 25.2% increase in the State and a 46.3% increase in the United States. The region’s population is projected to increase by 10.9% by 2040.

Table 1: Population Trends and Projections 1980-2040

County	1980 ⁽¹⁾	1990 ⁽¹⁾	2000 ⁽¹⁾	2010 ⁽¹⁾	2020 ⁽²⁾	2030 ⁽²⁾	2035 ⁽²⁾	2040 ⁽²⁾	% Chg 80-20	% Chg 20-40
Buffalo	14,309	13,584	13,804	13,587	13,317	13,470	13,380	13,000	-6.9	-2.4
Crawford	16,556	15,940	17,243	16,644	16,113	17,430	17,265	16,555	-2.7	2.7
Jackson	16,831	16,588	19,100	20,449	21,145	23,200	23,370	23,290	25.6	10.1
La Crosse	91,056	97,892	107,120	114,638	120,784	128,120	129,830	131,500	32.6	8.9
Monroe	35,074	36,633	40,896	44,673	46,274	52,950	53,970	54,410	31.9	17.6
Pepin	7,477	7,107	7,213	7,469	7,318	7,315	7,190	6,885	-2.1	-5.9
Pierce	31,149	32,765	36,804	41,019	42,212	46,125	46,475	46,825	35.5	10.9
Trempealeau	26,158	25,263	27,010	28,816	30,760	32,810	33,240	33,450	17.6	8.7
Vernon	25,642	25,617	28,056	29,773	30,714	35,300	36,150	36,520	19.8	18.9
MRRPC Reg.	264,252	271,389	297,246	317,068	328,637	358,750	362,905	364,475	24.4	10.9
State of Wis.	4,705,642	4,891,769	5,363,715	5,686,986	5,893,718	6,375,910	6,476,270	6,491,635	25.2	10.1
U.S.	226,542,199	248,709,873	281,421,906	308,745,538	331,449,281	NA	NA	NA	46.3	NA

Source: (1) U.S. Census Bureau; (2) Population Projections – WI Dept. of Administration – Demographics Services Center

Table 2 illustrates the region’s Age 65+ population and projects the future Age 65+ population out to the year 2040. As the information demonstrates, the region’s Age 65+ population will increase by 58.9% by the year 2040. Included on page 4 is a map of each county showing the Age 65+ population distribution by census tract.

Table 2: Population Projections Age 65+ 2020-2040

County	65+ 2020	65+ 2025	65+ 2030	65+ 2035	65+ 2040	% Increase 65+ 2020-2030	% Increase 65+ 2030-2040	% Increase 65+ 2020-2040
Buffalo	2,899	3,690	4,045	4,210	4,150	39.5	2.6	43.2
Crawford	3,777	4,985	5,540	5,695	5,525	46.7	-0.3	46.3
Jackson	3,877	5,625	6,350	6,790	6,970	63.8	9.8	79.8
La Crosse	19,274	25,950	28,840	30,370	30,990	49.6	7.5	60.8
Monroe	7,722	10,585	12,060	12,680	12,840	56.2	6.5	66.3
Pepin	1,619	2,135	2,360	2,520	2,505	45.8	6.1	54.7
Pierce	6,204	8,025	9,335	10,005	10,455	50.5	12.0	68.5
Trempealeau	5,356	6,720	7,500	7,910	8,020	40.0	6.9	49.7
Vernon	6,003	7,645	8,510	8,700	8,720	41.8	2.5	45.3
Region	56,731	75,360	84,540	88,880	90,175	49.0	6.7	58.9
Wisconsin	982,799	1,257,515	1,424,320	1,508,635	1,535,365	44.9	7.8	56.2

Source: Population Projections, WI Dept of Administration, Demographic Services Center



Table 3 illustrates the counties and regions median household income and poverty rates. In general, the counties in the region have median household incomes less than the state and nation. Poverty rates in four counties (Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, and Vernon) are higher than the state rate.

Table 3: Median Income and Poverty Rates of All Ages

County	Median Household Income 2021-2025	Persons Below Poverty 2021-2025 (%)
Buffalo	\$61,167	8.3%
Crawford	\$54,526	12.5%
Jackson	\$59,422	13.0%
La Crosse	\$49,603	12.2%
Monroe	\$63,061	10.3%
Pepin	\$63,015	8.9%
Pierce	\$78,341	9.2%
Trempealeau	\$64,336	7.3%
Vernon	\$57,933	14.9%
Region	\$61,267	N/A
Wisconsin	\$67,080	10.7%
Nation	\$69,021	12.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021-2025, ACS 5-year estimates

Table 4 shows a breakdown of percent of disabled persons in the region by two age categories, ages 18-64 and ages 65+. In the region there are about 18,160 disabled persons between the ages of 18-64. This is 9.3% of the total number of people between the ages of 18-64. In the region there are about 16,347 disabled persons over the age of 65. This is 29.5% of the total number of people over the age of 65. If we utilize the projection of the Age 65+ population for the region from Table 2 and multiply that by the region's current rate of disabled persons ages 65+ it can be projected that by the year 2040 the region will have about 26,600 residents that are Age 65+ and disabled.



Table 4: Disabled Persons in MRRPC Region

County	Total Number of Persons Ages 18-64	Number of Disabled Persons Ages 18-64	% of Disabled Persons Ages 18-64	Total Number of Persons Ages 65+	Number of Disabled Persons Ages 65+	% of Disabled Persons Ages 65+
Buffalo	7,570	734	9.6%	2,951	976	33.1%
Crawford	8,559	763	8.9%	3,628	1,023	28.2%
Jackson	11,458	1,476	12.9%	3,793	1,163	30.6%
La Crosse	76,137	6,057	7.9%	18,964	6,073	32%
Monroe	25,958	3,349	12.9%	7,450	2,509	33.7%
Pepin	4,069	397	9.8%	1,641	483	29.4%
Pierce	27,151	2,283	8.4%	6,006	1,505	25.1%
Trempealeau	17,214	1,394	8.1%	5,253	1,353	25.8%
Vernon	16,558	1,707	10.3%	5,762	1,262	21.9%
Regional Total	194,674	18,160	9.3%	55,448	16,347	29.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021-2025 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates

Table 5 shows the means of transportation people utilize to get to work. It is not surprising that within the region 77.7% of people drove to work alone and 0.3% drove through public transportation due to limited public transportation options available for workers. Seven counties within the region exceeded the state average percentage of carpoolers.

Table 5: Means of Transportation to Work

County	Workers 16 years and over	Car, Truck, or Van (Alone)	Car, Truck, or Van (Carpooled)	Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	Walked	Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, or other means	Worked at home
Buffalo	6,887	78.4%	7.6%	0.1%	4.7%	1.5%	7.8%
Crawford	6,987	75.6%	14.2%	0.9%	3.2%	1.5%	4.5%
Jackson	9,304	77.1%	10%	0.06%	3.9%	1.5%	7.4%
La Crosse	62,669	79.2%	7.1%	0.8%	3.6%	1.8%	7.5%
Monroe	21,819	77.6%	8.5%	0.2%	3.7%	2.5%	7.5%
Pepin	3,517	77.8%	6.5%	0%	2.6%	0.9%	12.2%
Pierce	22,661	77.4%	8.1%	0.1%	4.5%	0.8%	9.1%
Trempealeau	15,132	79.3%	7.7%	0.1%	3.1%	1%	8.8%
Vernon	13,592	76.7%	7.5%	0.5%	3.4%	2.7%	9.2%
MRRPC Region	162,568	77.7%	8.6%	0.3%	3.6%	1.6%	8.2%
Wisconsin	2,969,464	78.5%	7.4%	1.4%	2.7%	1.5%	8.5%
United States	155,284,955	73.2%	8.6%	4.2%	2.5%	1.8%	9.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021-2025 American Community Survey, 5-year estimate



Table 6 illustrates where people in the region work. La Crosse County had the highest percentage of residents working in their county of residence at 88.9% followed by Monroe County at 79.2%. Pierce County had the lowest percentage of residents working in their county of residence at 38.9% followed by Buffalo County at 42.2%. The data further substantiates the need for and importance of regional transportation coordination.

Table 6: Place of Work

County	Worked in state of residence	Worked outside state of residence	Worked in county of residence	Worked outside county of residence	Worked in place of residence
Buffalo	75.4%	24.6%	42.2%	33.2%	7.8%
Crawford	93.5%	6.5%	68.8%	24.8%	4.6%
Jackson	98.9%	1.1%	67.7%	31.2%	7.4%
La Crosse	96.5%	3.5%	88.9%	7.6%	7.5%
Monroe	99.4%	0.6%	79.2%	20.1%	7.5%
Pepin	87.4%	12.6%	51%	36.4%	12.2%
Pierce	61%	38.9%	38.9%	22.1%	9.1%
Trempealeau	94.3%	5.7%	67.6%	26.7%	8.8%
Vernon	98.5%	1.5%	58.7%	39.8%	9.2%
Wisconsin	96.5%	3.5%	72.6%	23.9%	8.5%
U.S.	96.5%	3.5%	73.6%	22.9%	9.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021-2025 American Community Survey, 5-year estimate



Assessment of Available Transportation Providers/Services

A transportation services provider survey was mailed to transportation providers in the region. The survey was also made available to transportation coordination meeting participants. A total of 28 provider response forms detailing the transportation services provided were returned. Provider response forms are attached in Appendix D. The following table lists the transportation providers in the region. The chart illustrates the transportation programs available at the regional and county level.

Table 7: County/Multi-County Transportation Services Inventory

Name of Service Provider	How to Access Ride?	Type of Service	Service Area	Eligibility Restrictions	Days and Hours of Operation	Vehicles Used	Funding Sources in Addition to Fares
ADRC Crawford County	Call for each ride	Demand response	Crawford County Residents with destinations up to ~100 miles from office	First Come First Serve, Crawford County Residents, 60+ and/or disabled.	Mon-Fri 8:00am to 5:00pm	2 Accessible Busses and 4 Accessible Vans	5310, 85.21, county levy, and program income
ADRC of Jackson County	Call for each ride	Fixed route and demand response	Jackson County	Priority given to Jackson County Resident 60+ and/or disabled on fixed route shopping bus. 60+ and/or disabled and not on state health assistance for volunteer medical appointment driving.	Mon-Fri 8:00am to 4:00pm	1 Accessible Bus with lifts 3 Vans (1 Accessible)	85.21
ADRC La Crosse County	Call for each ride, First time riders must call the ADRC to determine eligibility and obtain authorization good for six months unless significant changes are made. Once authorized, riders scheduled own trips via Abby Vans	Demand response	La Crosse County	Riders must be in La Crosse County and 60 years of age or older or an individual with a disability, 18 years or older. The attendant/caregiver of an eligible individual may ride along at no charge.	Mon-Sat 7:00am to 6:00pm, Sun 7:00am to 2:00pm	Vehicles contracted with Abby Vans	85.21
ADRC Monroe County	Call for each ride	Demand response	Monroe County	Must be a Monroe County resident	Mon-Fri 8:00am to 4:00pm	2 Accessible Busses 4 Accessible Vans	5310 and 85.21
ADRC Pierce County	Call for each ride	Demand response	Pierce County	No restrictions	Mon-Fri 7:00am to 5:00pm	5 Vans (2 Accessible)	85.21, Older Americans Act, and Count Tax Levy
ADRC Trempealeau County	Call for each ride	Demand response	Trempealeau County	Transportation is Trempealeau County residents. Transportation is for individuals 60 years and older and/or a disability.	Mon-Fri 8:00am to 5:00pm	2 Accessible Busses and 6 Vans (4 Accessible)	5310 and 85.21
ADRC Vernon County	Fixed route or call for each ride	Fixed route and demand response	Residents of Vernon County can be transported within 100 miles of Viroqua	A senior or individual with a disability will have highest priority for transportation services.	Mon-Fri 7:00am to 5:00pm	1 Accessible Bus and 1 Accessible Van	5310, 85.21, and cash match
ADRC Buffalo and Pepin Counties Transportation Program	Call for each ride	Demand response	Buffalo and Pepin counties and surrounding areas	No restrictions, elderly and disabled are primary	Mon-Fri 6:00am to 5:00pm Sat-Sun 9:00am to 4:00pm	2 Accessible Busses and 5 Accessible Vans	5310, 85.21, private pay, family care agencies, and county tax levy



Name of Service Provider	How to Access Ride?	Type of Service	Service Area	Eligibility Restrictions	Days and Hours of Operation	Vehicles Used	Funding Sources in Addition to Fares
Abby Vans	Call for each ride	Demand response	All 9 Counties	None	Mon-Sat 7:00am to 6:00pm, Sun 7:00am to 2:00pm	150+ 36 Counties	
Bethel Home and Services	Call for each ride	Demand response	Vernon County	No restrictions		5 Vans	
Bullet Cab	Call for each ride	Demand response and non-emergency medical transportation	La Crosse County	Riders must be ambulatory.	24 hours a day 7 days a week	25 Vans	
Center for Independent Living Western Wisconsin	Call for each ride	Demand response	Barron, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Rusk, St. Croix	Must have a temporary or permanent disability, or be frail elderly, and have a transportation barrier.	Mon-Fri 8:00am to 4:00pm	2 Accessible Vans	
City of La Crosse MTU	Fixed Route	Fixed route	La Crosse, Onalaska, La Crescent, and the Town of Campbell	No restrictions	Mon-Thurs 5:00am to 10:00pm, Sat 7:00am to 7:00pm, Sun 7:00am to 6:00pm	24 Accessible Busses	5307 and 85.20
Coulee Region Taxi	Call for each ride	Demand response	City of La Crosse, French Island, Onalaska, Holmen, West Salem, Bangor, Coon Valley, Westby, Chaseburg, Stoddard, Genoa, and De Soto	No restrictions	Sun-Wed 7am to 10pm Thurs-Sat 7am to 2:30am		
Crawford County Opportunity Center	Fixed route	Fixed route	Crawford and Grant County	Human Service Vehicles	Mon-Fri 6:00am to 6:00pm	4 Accessible Busses and 2 Vans (1 accessible)	5310 and privately purchased and donations
Crawford County Veterans Service Office	Call for each ride	Demand response	Crawford County to VHA appointments	Must be a veteran and attending a VHA appointment	Mon-Fri 7:00am to 5:00pm		45.83 and VA 16.02
Drift Link	Call for each ride	Demand response	City of Onalaska, Village of West Salem, Village of Holmen	No restrictions	7 days a week from 6:00am to 7:00pm	16 Accessible Vans	5310 and 85.20
Groome Transportation	Fixed route but must reserve spot	Fixed route	Airport Shuttle, La Crosse to MSP	No restrictions	7 days a week from 6:00am to 9:00pm		
La Crosse County/ SMRT Bus	Fixed route	Fixed route	La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford and Monroe Counties	No restrictions	Mon-Fri 6:00am to 6:00pm	5 Accessible Busses and 2 Accessible Vans	5311, 85.20, Local Match, and Fare Box
Making A Way Transport	Call for each ride	Demand response	La Crosse, WI for Non-Emergency Medical Transportation	No restrictions	Mon-Sat 6:00am to 5:00pm	8 Vans	Some Services are contracted from other organizations
Morrow Memorial Home for the Aged	Appointments are given to transportation coordinator who sets up and coordinates all rides	A nursing home that takes residents to appointments and activities	Monroe county, La Crosse county, Vernon county, Jackson county	Must live in the Morrow Home Community	7 days a week 6:00am to 5:00pm	2 Accessible Busses and 1 Van	5310, Medical Assistance, Veterans Assistance, Specialized Medical Vehicle, and Private Pay
Onalaska / Holmen / West Salem Transit	Call for each ride or request ride online	Demand response	City Limits of Onalaska, Holmen, and West Salem	No restrictions	7 days a week from 6:00am to 7:00pm	12 Vans	



Name of Service Provider	How to Access Ride?	Type of Service	Service Area	Eligibility Restrictions	Days and Hours of Operation	Vehicles Used	Funding Sources in Addition to Fares
Pine Creek Transportation Service	Call for each ride	Demand response	Taylor, Blair, Whitehall, Black River Falls, Hixton, Oakdale, Tomah, Warrens, Osseo, Eau Claire, Hatfield, Sparta, Onalaska, Holmen, Arcadia, Winona, Fountain City, Rochester, Chippewa Falls, Eleva, Mondovi, Fairchild, La Crosse, Westby, and Cashton, Wisconsin.	No restrictions	7 days a week from 8:00am to 5:00pm	8 Vans	
Prairie du Chien Shared Ride Taxi Service	Call for each ride	Demand response		No restrictions	Mon-Fri 6:00am to 11:00pm, Sat 7:00am to 11:00pm, Sun 7:00am to 10:00pm	4 Accessible Vans	5311 and 85.20
River Falls Ride Share Taxi	Call for each ride	Demand response	City of River Falls and within 5 miles of city limits	No restrictions	Mon-Fri 6:00am to 8:00pm, Sat 8:00am to 6:00pm, Sun 8:00am to 3:00pm		
Shared Ride Taxi Service City of Tomah	Call for each ride	Demand response	10-mile radius of City of Tomah city limits	No restrictions	24 hours a day 7 days a week	12 Accessible Vans	5311
Viroqua Cab	Call for each ride or request ride online	Demand response	Within 1 mile of Viroqua City Limits and Westby City Limits, and destinations between the two.	No restrictions	7 days a week 6:00am to 9:00pm	4 Vans	
Shared Ride Taxi - Onalaska/Holman	Call for each ride	Demand response	Onalaska/Holman	No restrictions	Varies	Cabs	None
Shared Ride Taxi - Prairie du Chien	Call for each ride	Demand response	Prairie du Chien	No restrictions	Varies	Cabs	None
Shared Ride Taxi - River Falls	Call for each ride	Demand response	River Falls	No restrictions	Varies	Cabs	None
Shared Ride Taxi - Viroqua	Call for each ride	Demand response	Viroqua	No restrictions	Varies	Cabs	None
Shared Ride Taxi - Westby	Call for each ride	Demand response	Westby	No restrictions	Varies	Cabs	None
Prairie Maison Community Health Services Corporation - *Residents only		No Current Report					
Tomah VA Medical Center		No Current Report					
Trempealeau County Health Care Center		No Current Report					
Assisted Living of Durand		No Current Report					
Brookdale Senior Living - Residents only		No Current Report					
Buffalo County Dept. Health & Human Services		No Current Report					
Handishop Industries		No Current Report					
Jackson County Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers		No Current Report					



Name of Service Provider	How to Access Ride?	Type of Service	Service Area	Eligibility Restrictions	Days and Hours of Operation	Vehicles Used	Funding Sources in Addition to Fares
Jackson County Veterans Services		No Current Report					
La Crosse County Veterans Services		No Current Report					
New Freedom Transportation Program		No Current Report					
Pierce County Veterans Services		No Current Report					

Within the region there are two fixed route public transportation systems; La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU) and Scenic Mississippi Regional Transit (SMRT). The La Crosse MTU provides service to the City of La Crosse as well as bus routes to the adjacent communities of Onalaska, Town of Campbell (French Island), and La Crescent, MN. La Crosse MTU operates seven days a week. The SMRT Bus began service in December of 2012 and provides service to La Crosse County, Vernon County, Crawford County, and Monroe County serving sixteen cities and villages. SMRT buses run weekday routes between 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The region is also served by seven shared-ride taxi services. Share-ride taxi services operate in Tomah, Onalaska-Holmen, Westby, Viroqua, Black River Falls, Prairie du Chien, and River Falls.



All counties in the region either sponsor and/or operate programs (volunteer drivers, mini-buses, etc.) that provide transportation services to elderly and disabled residents. A portion of funding for the operation of the county transportation services comes through State of Wisconsin 85.21 funding. The transportation services are primarily operated by Aging and Disability Resource Centers or Human Services Departments. The transportation services provide door to door service for medical appointments, shopping, and social activities.



The region is also served by numerous specialized transportation providers. Specialized transportation providers primarily provide transportation to consumers that are disabled or need personal assistance to get to medical appointments or employment opportunities.

In assessing the available services, the challenge that continually faces the counties and transportation providers is “space.” The region for the most part is very rural and providing transportation services to a rural area is challenging and expensive. Based on initial analysis, it appears that the number of vehicles and seats on the vehicles is not a significant issue. The challenge remains serving a rural area. It is apparent that in the future to better address the “spatial challenge” coordination of transportation services is vital in order to meet the increasing transportation needs of the region’s population.



Needs and Gaps

At the public-transit human services transportation coordination meeting, a general discussion among meeting participants focused on identifying service gaps and needs for disadvantaged populations in the counties and the region. We identified some specific needs and systemic gaps in the system that we used to develop a new set of goals and activities moving forward.

First, we found that our requests and programs were perceived by many as expensive and without a clear understanding of the services we provide. We identified some specific examples of cost savings and benefits to the community. We discussed the diverse populations we served from elderly to handicapped but more importantly across socioeconomically, ethnically, and racially diverse populations. We identified that our services were often the only way certain individuals could get to medical appointments, jobs, shopping and other needed services. It was pointed out that many providers benefited from available transit without direct participation in the system.

As we request funding in the future, we agreed we should make hospitals, retailers, elected officials, employers, and others aware of the services we provide. It was also pointed out that even when funding was available, often vehicles were not. There are Federal requirements for transit vehicles that make acquiring an appropriate unit complicated. This becomes more complex when inflation and demand pushes the cost of a vehicle beyond the amount allocated in the original grant. We hope to work together as a region to address these issues by sharing information and working with suppliers.

It remains a challenge to make our clients aware of all the potential services available to them. We also are finding it more difficult to find drivers and volunteers available for the services we provide. We identified these issues as a need to work with our communities to both promote our services and solicit individuals to help staff our systems. We addressed the option of using some more creative ways to deal with these issues as well.

Finally we discussed that often our services cross county lines. This is especially true when providing services to regional medical facilities, places of work, or larger retail outlets. We have only one fixed route system that covers multiple counties, but we are aware of several services that do often make longer trips for just one or two people. We identified the need for a regional mobility manager working across the counties and with both public and private providers to collect, coordinate, and disseminate transit information within the region to increase the number of users and improve systemic efficiency. These services and information could all ultimately find their way into a user-



friendly single source outlet. The newly adopted 211 system was used as an example and as a potential provider for this outlet.

From these discussions we identified five new goals moving forward for inclusion in our County Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan for 2024-2028. Each county reviewed, prioritized, and assigned entities or individuals to these goals and activities.

The goals identified were:

1. Strive to increase transportation funding and support by promoting the cost saving benefits of public transportation across a diverse population.
 - Let our Local, State, and Federal Officials know that our services not only fill a need in the community but are more cost effective when compared to other transportation options.
 - Communicate with local media and the communities about the value of our services.
2. Reduce barriers at the federal and state level to procure transit vehicles in line with funding, vehicle availability and scheduled timelines.
 - Communicate with State and Federal officials regarding current challenges.
 - Collect and share information about available vehicles.
3. Coordinate, consolidate, and improve the marketing of transportation services.
 - Partner with both the private and public sectors to recruit drivers, volunteers, and other service providers in the region.
 - Find or develop outlets to inform the public, CBRF's, health care providers, businesses, and others about available transportation services.
 - Seek incentives or rewards for drivers and volunteers from the communities they serve.
4. Analyze and procure solutions for data management and scheduling of resources across the region.
 - Establish partnerships and explore grant funding options with staff and provide a regional mobility management system.



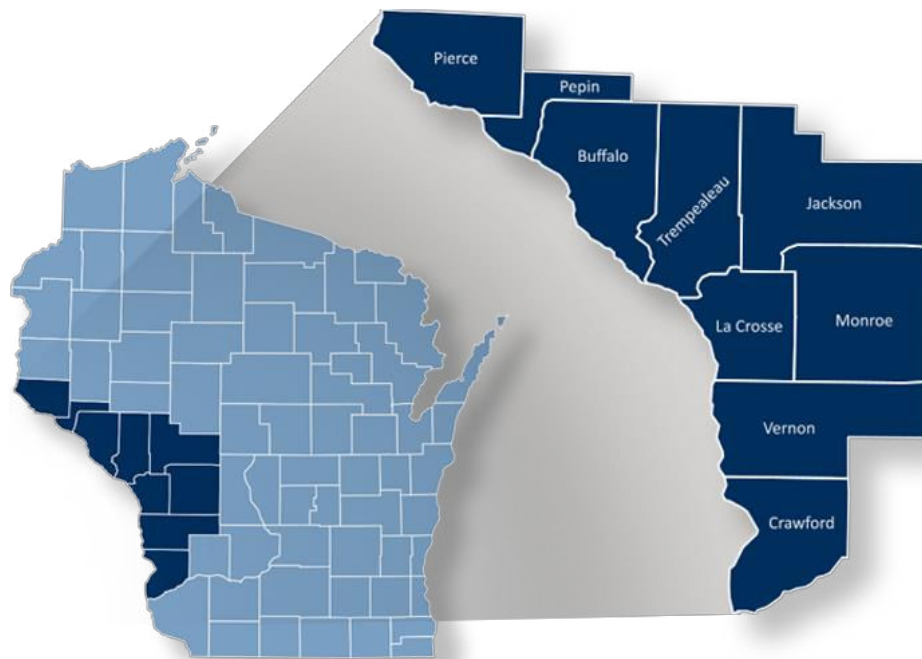
- Create an opportunity for a single source resource that individuals can use to find transportation options in their counties. (Similar to or using the 211 system.)
5. Increase traditional and nontraditional transportation options for the clients we serve.
- Increase nontraditional options including public/private partnerships, other service organizations, rideshare, vouchers, find your own driver, bike share, etc.
 - Reach out to businesses, organizations, and others to see if they can provide some form of transit services or help fund services available.



Strategies, Activities and/or Projects to Address Gaps and Needed Services

The following five year “Regional Strategies, Activities and/or Projects Work Plan” was developed based on the Regional Transportation Coordinating Committees past efforts, public/participant input from the planning meeting conducted as part of the 2023 plan update, and information gathered from individual county “Strategies, Activities and/or Projects Work Plans” developed at the meeting. Both a Regional “Strategies, Activities and/or Projects Work Plan” and County “Strategies, Activities and/or Projects Work Plans” were prepared as part of the planning update process. The regional “Strategies, Activities and/or Projects Work Plan” focuses on activities and programs that when implemented will improve transportation coordination on a regional level looking across county lines and agency boundaries.

It is important to point out that roadblocks to implementation of the strategies have been identified. For the strategies to be successful the roadblocks will have to be overcome. In numerous cases the roadblocks are not locally controlled, meaning that in order for local regional coordination to be truly successful rules, policies, and requirements of numerous non-regional entities will have to be modified or changed.



Regional Strategies, Activities and/or Projects Work Plan

Strategy/Goal to support 5 year coordinated plan	Activities	Roadblocks to Implementation
<p><i>Strive to increase transportation funding and support by promoting the cost saving benefits of public transportation across a diverse population.</i></p>	<p>Let our Local, State, and Federal Officials know that our services not only fill a need in the community but are more cost effective when compared to other transportation options.</p> <p>Communicate with local media and the communities about the value of our services.</p>	<p>Matching available funds with actual needs in the community.</p> <p>Lack of understanding on the part of elected officials as to the value of transportation options in the region.</p>
<p><i>Reduce barriers at the federal and state level to procure transit vehicles in line with funding, vehicle availability and scheduled timelines.</i></p>	<p>Communicate with State and Federal officials regarding current challenges.</p> <p>Collect and share information about available vehicles.</p>	<p>Federally mandated vehicle requirements for transit vehicles can make finding a vehicle difficult.</p> <p>Supply-chain shortages and long lead times are making it hard for providers to acquire federally approved vehicles.</p> <p>When vehicles are available the cost can be over what the grant allocated due to inflation and/or price increases.</p>
<p><i>Coordinate, consolidate, and improve the marketing of transportation services.</i></p>	<p>Partner with both the private and public sectors to recruit drivers, volunteers, and other service providers in the region.</p> <p>Find or develop outlets to inform the public, CBRF's, health care providers, businesses, and others about available transportation services.</p> <p>Seek incentives or rewards for drivers and volunteers from the communities they serve.</p>	<p>Seniors and other clients may have more limited access to information provided by technology.</p> <p>It is difficult to recruit drivers and other volunteers.</p> <p>Local newspapers are closing or reducing their production limiting the dissemination of information.</p>
<p><i>Analyze and procure solutions for data management and scheduling of resources across the region.</i></p>	<p>Establish partnerships and explore grant funding options with staff and provide a regional mobility management system.</p> <p>Create an opportunity for a single source resource that individuals can use to find transportation options in their counties. (Similar to or using the 211 system.)</p>	<p>All regional options would need to be included.</p> <p>Funding.</p> <p>Limited transportation options in rural areas.</p>
<p><i>Increase traditional and nontraditional transportation options for the clients we serve.</i></p>	<p>Increase nontraditional options including public/private partnerships, other service organizations, rideshare, vouchers, find your own driver, bike share, etc.</p> <p>Reach out to businesses, organizations, and others to see if they can provide some form of transit services or help fund services available.</p>	<p>Additional Funding.</p> <p>Resources to find and use the nontraditional options in the community.</p>



Strategies, Activities and/or Projects Work Plan

A Vernon County “Needs and Gaps” and “Strategies, Activities and/or Projects Work Plans” were developed using the goals established for the region (illustrated on page 2). The county “Strategies, Activities and/or Projects Work Plans” will serve as a guide for Vernon County to follow when implementing transportation coordination efforts at the county level to address service gaps and needs. This plan also outlines our commitment to work “across borders” with other providers in the region.

Other Observations

We also discussed the need for an easily accessible single source for scheduling transportation. While beyond the scope of any individual county or service provider we want to continue to work on this issue as a region. The “211 System” was mentioned as an example or even a potential resource for this service.

In the past the region has developed our SMRT Bus regional transportation service, a dynamic, integrated, and coordinated transportation network that provides access to jobs, recreation, shopping, and other opportunities for residents within the region.

Identification of Priorities

Participants at the October 18, 2023 meeting returned the goals and activities worksheets with their individual priorities and primary responsible parties included. Those results were incorporated into the final plan on page 2 of this document.

Conclusion

Regional transportation coordination is an important aspect of planning and actual practice in our nine-county region and Vernon County. It is apparent that a regional strategy and cooperation among the providers in individual counties is needed, especially in getting to health care and hospital facilities in the area. We also found that it is important to explore public private partnerships to meet the need of our customers. We were also able to create and share ideas at our regional meeting and identified a need to continue this conversation on a regular basis. The solution to best utilizing federal and state funds is to communicate with our customers, other service providers, and each other.

