

# **PIONEER VALLEY COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN**



August 30, 2011

Prepared by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

## **Abbreviations**

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
Coordinated Plan	Coordination Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan
FRTA	Franklin Regional Transit Authority
GAO	Government Accountability Office
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems
JARC	Job Access Reverse Commute Funds (Section 5316)
MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
New Freedom	New Freedom Funds (Section 5317)
PVMPO	Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization
PVPC	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
PVTA	Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Transportation is a basic human need. It provides the mobility that people require to get to work, attend school or college, participate in government, visit friends and family, enjoy recreation and use public services to be productive members of the society.

The primary mode of transportation for most residents in the Pioneer Valley region is the automobile. More than 85% of commuters travel to work by car; in contrast, just 1.9% of commuters use transit to travel to their jobs (2005-2009 ACS). But recent surveys conducted by PVPC reveal that more than half of bus riders in the Pioneer Valley travel for purposes other than work--including food shopping, school, medical appointments and accessing human services. Significantly, this segment of the population is less able than the general population to drive themselves by car due to age, disability, or economic circumstances. In our region, the transit (fare-based) services used by transit-dependent residents are provided by the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA), local councils on aging, intercity bus carriers, taxi and shuttle companies, human service transportation providers and informal transportation operators. In addition, seniors and disabled persons in 14 outlying communities of the Pioneer Valley not served by PVRTA rely on van transportation provided by the Franklin Region Transit Authority (FRTA) and local councils on aging. As the costs of providing these services continues to rise, increased coordination among transit providers is needed to provide more effective transportation in the region.

This Coordinated Human Services Plan has been developed by the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVMPO) to improve public transportation service opportunities for transit-dependent residents of our region. The plan identifies strategies for maximizing the coverage areas and times, minimizing duplication of services, and facilitating the most cost-effective transportation possible with available resources.

### **1.1 What is the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan?**

Federal transportation legislation, as amended in 2005 by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users or "SAFETEA-LU," requires that projects selected for funding under the Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316) , and New Freedom (Section 5317) 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 Coordinated Plan is a guiding document that focuses on the coordination of transportation services for people who depend on public transportation. These people include older adults, persons with limited incomes, and people with disabilities. The Coordinated Plan identifies needs and discusses strategies to improve access to jobs, shopping, health care and recreational activities for these groups of people. The goals of the Coordinated Plan are to:

- Improve the quality and availability of transportation services to persons who need them the most and have no other transportation options.

- Promote inter-agency cooperation to provide needed transportation services in the most cost-effective way using existing resources when possible.

The Coordinated Plan discusses two general types of public transportation: 1) transit systems that are open to all persons, and 2) services that focus on individuals with specialized needs that cannot access the general public transit system, such as elderly people and those with disabilities. With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), public transit operators that provide fixed route service on a regular basis have been required to extend service to people with disabilities by both improving accessibility to the fixed route system and by providing comparable service using a curb-to-curb mode for people unable to use the fixed route system due to a disability.

## **1.2 SAFETEA-LU Requirements**

SAFETEA-LU requires that the Coordinated Plan provide guidance in allocating funding using the Sections 5310 (Elderly and Disabled Individuals), 5316 (Job Access-Reverse Commute), and 5317 (New Freedom) programs to address gaps and duplication of transportation services. Presidential Executive Order 13330, issued in February 2004 on the Coordination of Human Service Programs, created an interdepartmental Federal Council on Access and Mobility to undertake collective and individual departmental actions to reduce duplication among federally-funded human service transportation services, increase the efficient delivery of such services and expand transportation access for older individuals, persons with disabilities, persons with low-income, children and other disadvantaged populations within communities.

To fulfill these requirements, federally-assisted grantees involved in providing and funding human service transportation need to plan collaboratively to more comprehensively address the needs of the populations served by federal programs. In their report to the President on the Human Service Transportation Coordination, members of the Federal Council on Access and Mobility recommended that “in order to effectively promote the development and delivery of coordinated transportation services, the Administration (should) seek mechanisms (statutory, regulatory, or administrative) to require participation in a community transportation planning process for human services transportation programs.”

SAFETEA-LU created the requirement for metropolitan planning organization (MPO) regions to produce an initial locally-developed Coordinated Plan by 2007 as a condition of receiving funding for Sections 5310, 5316 and 5317 programs, which are directed at meeting the needs of older individuals, persons with disabilities and low-income persons. Coordinated Plans must be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation providers; public, private and non-profit human services providers; and participation by the public at large. Complete plans, including coordination with the full range of existing human services transportation providers, are required by Federal Fiscal Year 2008. These plans must be updated every three years.

## **1.3 The Regional Planning Commission's Role**

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) is designated by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) as the designated recipient of Section 5316 and

Section 5317 funds for the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Region. As such, PVPC is responsible for developing and implementing the Coordinated Plan within the region, including the use of a competitive process to select and prioritize JARC and New Freedom projects. MassDOT is the designated state recipient of Section 5310 funds, and PVPC staff works with MassDOT to ensure that Section 5310 funding is awarded and expended consistent with the Coordinated Plan.

#### **1.4 Plan Development Process**

This update to the Pioneer Valley Coordinated Human Services Plan was developed through outreach to transportation stakeholders in the region.

Foremost among these outreach efforts are quarterly meeting with paratransit van riders in the region. PVPC facilitates these meetings on behalf of PVRTA, which provides ADA and senior dial-a-ride service in 24 municipalities. During the past three years, more than 20 such meetings have been held and approximately 50 paratransit riders and human service providers have participated. PVPC staff also consults with the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA), which provides senior van service in 14 outlying communities.

Another important outreach effort that provides information on human services transportation needs are PVRTA bus rider meetings, which are held four times per year at public locations and at major bus terminals and transfer locations in the region. PVPC facilitates these open-house style event and records customer comments regarding service. During the past three years, more than 100 bus customers have participated in these bus rider meetings.

Outreach for this plan was also conducted in conjunction with public involvement activities for the 2012-2016 Update to the Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is updated every four years as required by SAFETEA-LU. The Coordinated Human Services Plan is required to be updated every three years by PVPC and was last updated in 2009.

The public outreach process involved engagement with a wide range of transportation stakeholders in the region. Transportation planning staff met with residents, elected officials, community based organizations, social service organizations, transportation agencies and businesses to identify issues of concern to transportation in general. These meetings also yielded important input on challenges that are unique to human services transportation needs in particular. These issues are incorporated in this update of the Coordinated Human Services Plan. During 2010-11, outreach for the RTP and Coordinated Human Services Plan included:

- Eight Public Informational meetings:

Springfield	May 4, 2010
Northampton	May 6, 2010
Chesterfield	May 11, 2010
Amherst	May 18, 2010
Ware	May 20, 2010
Westfield	May 24, 2010
Northampton	August 9, 2011
Springfield	August 18, 2011

- RTP Focus Group
 

Transit Stakeholders Focus Group	September 14, 2010
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- Meetings, presentations and/or interviews with transportation providers:
 

Springfield Health Disparities Project	May 7, 2010
Universal Community Voices Eliminating Disparities	June 14, 2010
Angels on Wheels	September 20, 2010
Springfield Department of Public Health	April 13, 2009
Stavros Center for Independent Living, Amherst	Ongoing 2009-2011
Mass. Institute for Transportation Coordination	June 2010
  
- Meetings, presentations and/or interviews with human services providers and public transportation stakeholders:
 

Food Bank of Western Mass	10/26/10
Target Hunger	10/26/10
Springfield YMCA	10/26/10
Valley Opportunity Council	10/26/10
Center for Healthy Communities	10/27/10
Salvation Army	10/27/10
Mass Public Health Association	10/27/10
Holyoke Food and Fitness Collaborative	10/27/10
Open Pantry Community Services	10/28/10
Springfield Partners for Healthier Communities	10/19/10
Springfield Partners for Community Action	10/28/10
Old Hill Neighborhood Council	10/28/10
Loaves and Fishes Kitchen	10/29/10
Martin Luther King Jr. Com. Center	10/29/10
Community Health Action Network	11/2/10
Springfield Technical Community College	11/2/10
Mason Square Community Health Center	11/3/10
Rails to Trails Conservancy	11/3/10
Springfield Planning Dept	11/3/10
Greater Springfield Senior Services	11/4/10
New England Farm Workers Council	11/4/10
Springfield Built Environment Task Force	11/4/10
University of Massachusetts	11/5/10
Northampton Public Transportation Committee	Monthly; ongoing
Amherst Public Transportation/Bicycle Committee	Monthly; ongoing
Alice Beal Elementary School	11/7/10
Mass. Society for the Prevention of Children (Springfield)	11/12/10
Mass. Society for the Prevention of Children (Holyoke)	11/12/10
Office of Housing at City of Springfield, Geraldine McCafferty	11/15/10
Massachusetts Senior Action Commission	March 11, 2010

The public involvement process remains an ongoing effort. PVPC continues to seek the active participation of public, private and nonprofit transportation providers, human services providers and the general public on issues related to transportation for human services.

## **2.0 REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS**

The Pioneer Valley region measures 1,179 square miles and includes major urban areas, suburban development and rural communities. The region is bisected by the Connecticut River and is bounded on the north by Franklin County, on the south by the State of Connecticut, on the east by Quabbin Reservoir and Worcester County, and on the west by Berkshire County.

The Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area includes the 43 cities and towns of Hampden and Hampshire Counties. The MPO region is home to 621,570 people (2010 US Census). Hampden County, measures 635 square miles and contains 23 municipalities focused on the Springfield-Chicopee-Holyoke urbanized area. Springfield, the third largest city in Massachusetts, is the region's cultural and economic center. It is home to several of the region's largest employers, including Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance, Baystate Medical Center, Mercy Hospital Incorporated, Solutia, Smith & Wesson, and Verizon. Hampshire County measures 544 square miles, with the major population centers of Northampton and Amherst, where University of Massachusetts main campus and its 30,000 students and staff are located.

### **2.1 Target Populations**

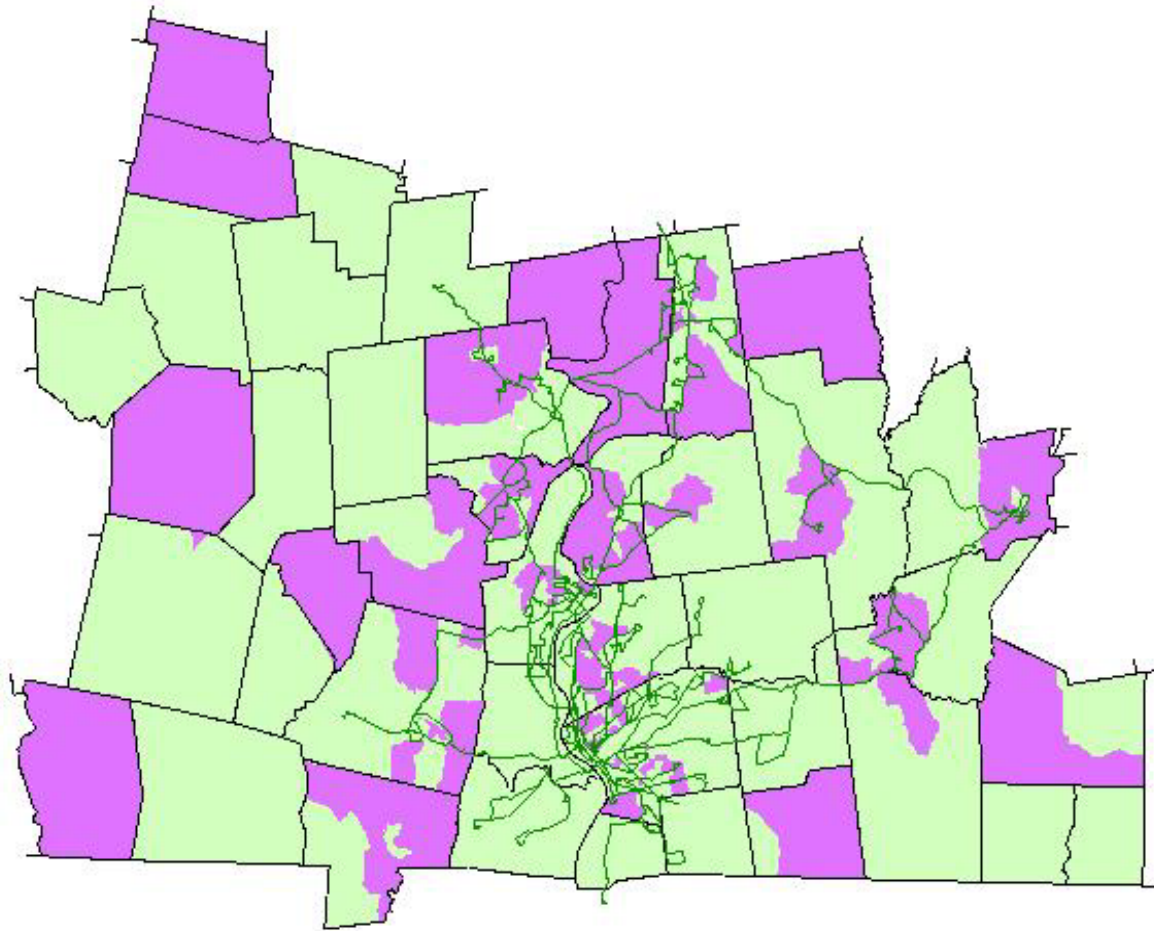
Seniors, people with disabilities, low incomes and the unemployed populations were the primary target groups to be examined for this plan. Understanding the distribution of these different population groups not only assists in improved coordination of transit services but also enhances efficient resource allocation. In identifying the target populations for the Coordinated Plan, PVPC borrowed the methodology used in the Region Transportation Plan to Identifying Minority and Low Income Populations for Environmental Justice and Title VI of Civil Right Act of 1964. This methodology involves developing demographic profiles of the Pioneer Valley Region that located socio-economic groups, including low-income and minority populations as covered by the Executive Order on Environmental Justice and Title VI Provisions.

The method used by this report to identify the target populations of seniors, people with disabilities and people with low incomes is as follows: In each census block group in the region, the proportion each of these three populations was compared to the proportion of the population average for the region as a whole. Census block groups in which the proportion of senior, people with disabilities or low-income residents exceeded that of the average percentage for that group the region are identified as a target population.

### **2.2 Identification of Senior Populations**

There are an estimated 84,094 seniors aged 65 and older living within the region, comprising 13.5% of the total population regionally (ACS 2006-2009 estimate). The proportion of persons aged 65+ in Hampshire County is 12.4% and in Hampden County it is 13.9%.

**Census Blocks in which the Proportion of  
Persons Age 65+ Exceeds the Regional Average**  
(ACS 2005-2009 estimate; shaded areas exceed regional average)



The estimated number of persons aged 65 and older (and therefore eligible for most dial-a-ride services) is 84,094, or 13.5% of the population.

**Persons Receiving Social Security Retirement and Disability Income**

	<b>Hampden County</b>	<i>Margin of Error</i>	<b>Hampshire County</b>	<i>Margin of Error</i>
Persons receiving Social Security Income (includes retirement and disability benefits)	<b>11.6%</b>	1.7%	<b>10.3%</b>	3.5%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey Estimate

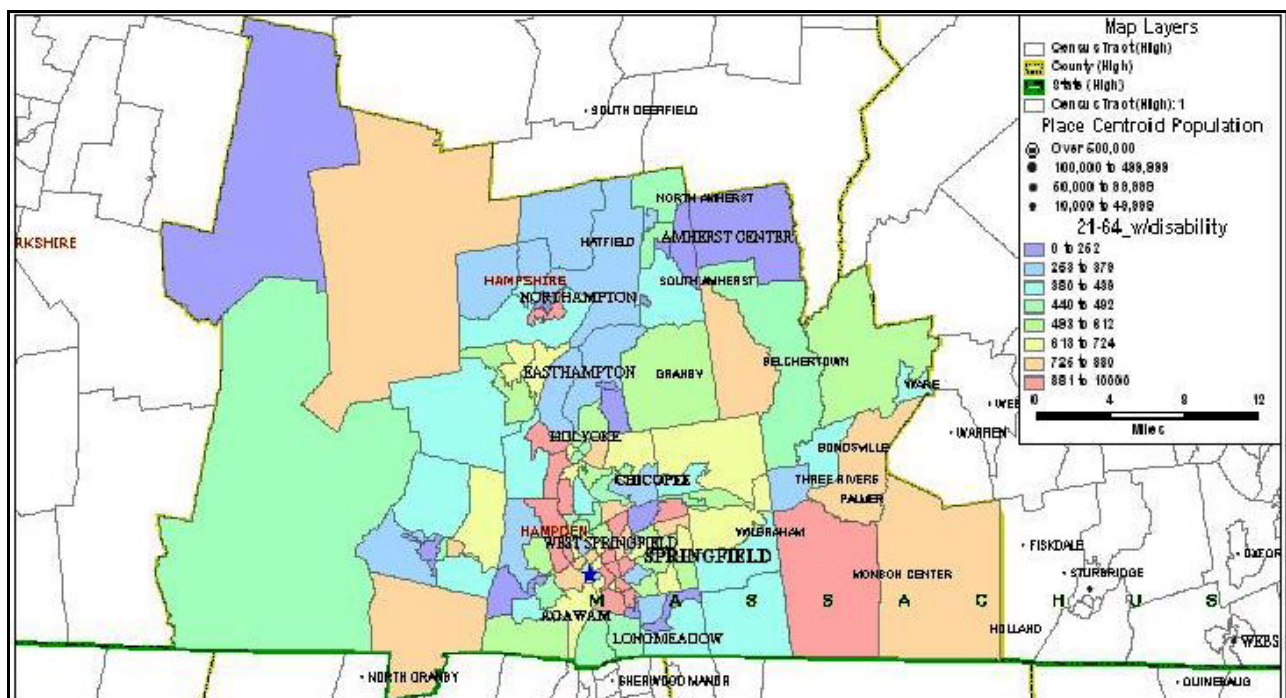


## 2.3 Identification of Persons with Disabilities Populations

In defining “Persons with Disabilities” target populations, PVPC examined thresholds used by similar MPOs. PVPC is using the Census definition of employed persons with a disability between ages 21-64. A more inclusive definition of people needing transportation services would also include age groups 5 and younger, and children age 5-17. However, because these age groups are not considered part of the workforce that typically needs daily transportation, they are not included in this analysis.

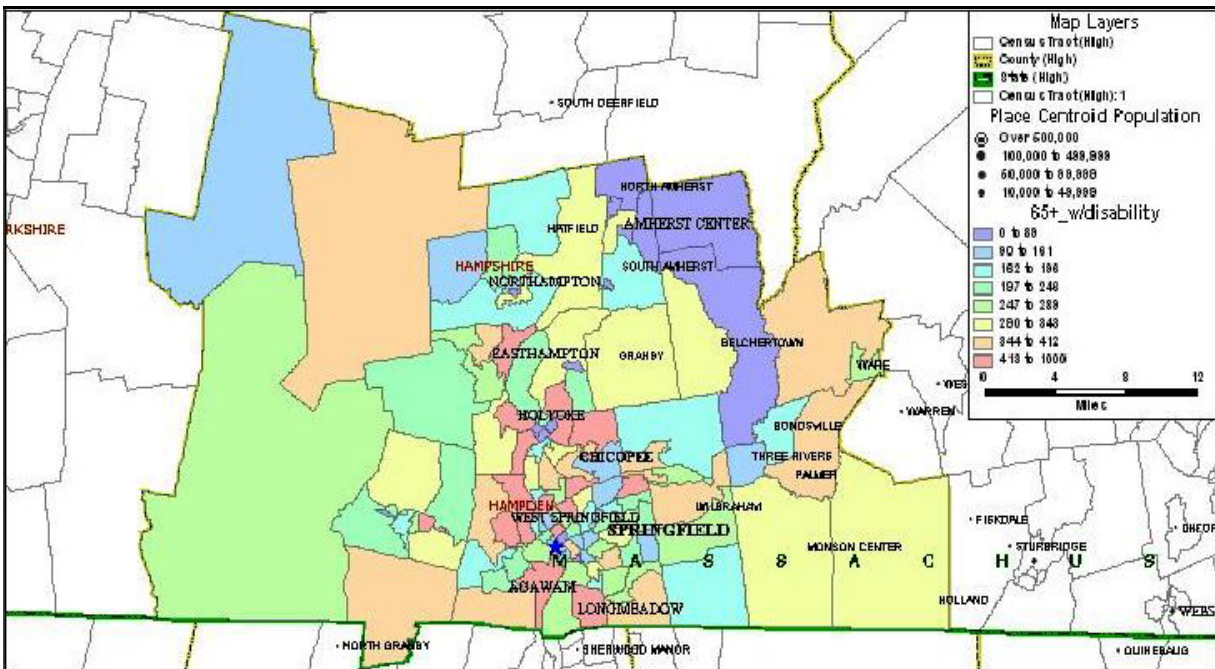
The 2009 update of this report used U.S. Census 2000 information for this analysis at the block level. Due to the U.S. Census' transition from collecting this data as part of the long form census in 2000 to rolling estimates as part of the American Community Survey, block level estimates for this data is not yet available in Massachusetts. Therefore, county level estimates for 2005-2009 are reported, along with the previous 2000 census data.

### 2000 Census Block Groups-Individuals in the Pioneer Valley Age 21-64 with Disabilities

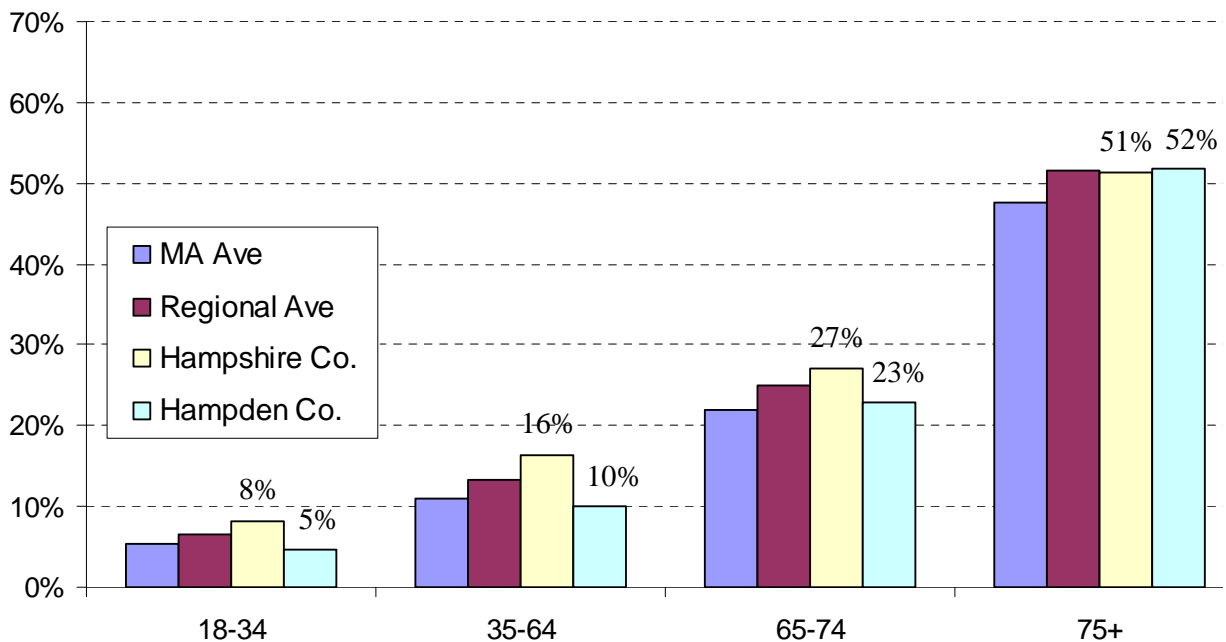


Persons with Disabilities block group is any block group in which the proportion of Persons with Disabilities exceeds that of the region as a whole (7%).

## 2000 Census Block Groups-Individuals in the Pioneer Valley Age 65+ with Disabilities



## 2005-2009 American Community Survey Estimate Persons with Disabilities by Age Group



Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey Estimate

## 2.4 Identification of Unemployed Populations

PVPC identified town unemployment rates using 2010 data on unemployment from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD). The rates are created through the Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) which are produced by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The LAUS program is a Federal-State cooperative effort in which monthly estimates of total employment and unemployment. The LAUS statistics produced average unemployment rates for Hampden and Hampshire counties individually. The weighted regional average unemployment rate for 2010 was 8.6%. Towns were compared to this weighted regional average; towns with unemployment exceeding the regional average are shown in red.

### Unemployment June 2011

	Total Workforce	Total Employed	Total Unemployed	% Unemployed
<b>Massachusetts</b>	3,525,200	3,251,400	273,800	<b>7.8</b>
<b>Regional Average</b>				<b>8.6</b>
<b>Hampden County</b>	228,589	206,832	21,757	<b>9.5</b>
<b>Hampshire County</b>	85,986	80,008	5,978	<b>7.0</b>
<i>Hampden County</i>				
Agawam	15,751	14,612	1,139	7.2
Blandford	751	697	54	7.2
Brimfield	2,108	1,914	194	<b>9.2</b>
Chester	719	655	64	<b>8.9</b>
Chicopee	28,300	25,630	2,670	<b>9.4</b>
East Longmeadow	8,182	7,618	564	6.9
Granville	934	865	69	7.4
Hampden	2,880	2,698	182	6.3
Holland	1,470	1,361	109	7.4
Holyoke	16,442	14,618	1,824	<b>11.1</b>
Longmeadow	7,724	7,263	461	6.0
Ludlow	11,186	10,223	963	<b>8.6</b>
Monson	4,844	4,432	412	8.5
Montgomery	426	400	26	6.1
Palmer	7,053	6,477	576	8.2
Russell	996	914	82	8.2
Southwick	5,254	4,856	398	7.6
Springfield	68,433	60,237	8,196	<b>12.0</b>
Tolland	256	242	14	5.5
Wales	1,103	1,008	95	<b>8.6</b>
West Springfield	14,649	13,379	1,270	<b>8.7</b>
Westfield	22,168	20,256	1,912	8.6
Wilbraham	6,960	6,477	483	6.9

Southampton	3,487	3,284	203	5.8
Ware	5,254	4,789	465	8.9
Westhampton	952	890	62	6.5
<i>Hampshire County</i>				
Amherst	17,652	16,279	1,373	7.8
Belchertown	8,236	7,738	498	6.0
Chesterfield	757	714	43	5.7
Cummington	503	467	36	7.2
Easthampton	9,520	8,855	665	7.0
Goshen	586	563	23	3.9
Granby	3,502	3,269	233	6.7
Hadley	2,549	2,359	190	7.5
Hatfield	1,977	1,865	112	5.7
Huntington	1,273	1,173	100	7.9
Middlefield	316	304	12	3.8
Northampton	16,617	15,570	1,047	6.3
Pelham	718	677	41	5.7
Plainfield	291	274	17	5.8
South Hadley	9,564	8,878	686	7.2
Williamsburg	1,565	1,429	136	8.7
Worthington	667	631	36	5.4

## 2.5 Identification of Low Income Populations

In defining “low income” target populations, PVPC examined different thresholds used by similar MPOs. While the term “minority” is clearly defined under the US Census, the term “Low income” is not defined. The definition of “low income” for the purpose is referenced through official federal definitions as “poverty.”

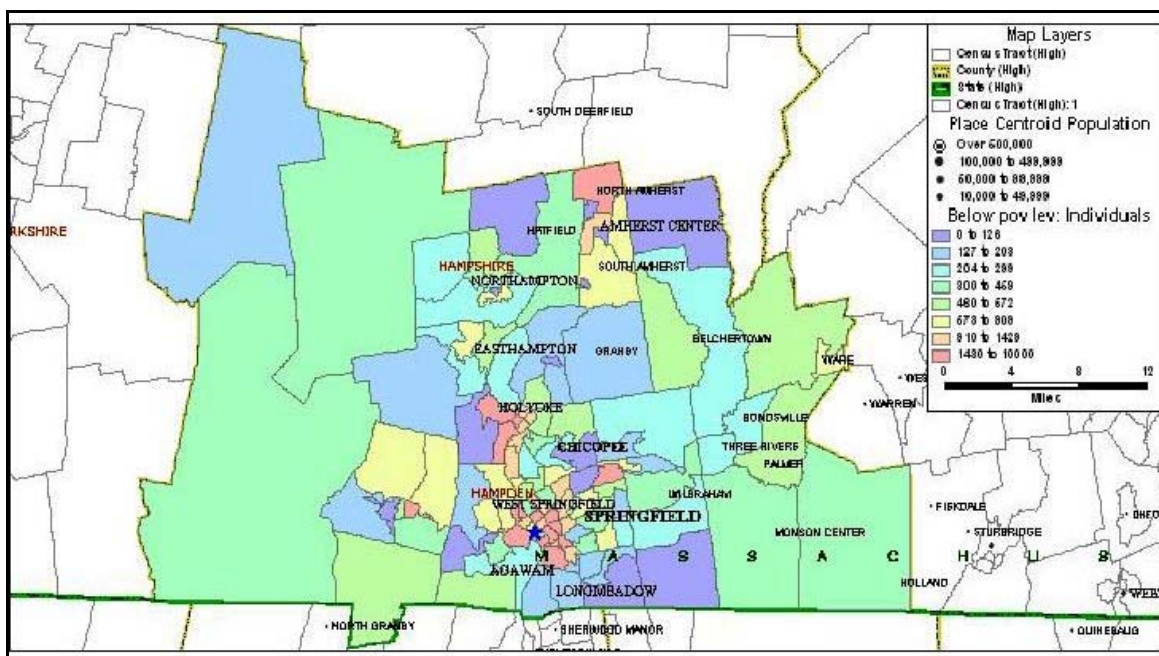
### Low-Income Definitions

Household Size	Federal Poverty Level
1 person	\$10,830
2 persons	\$14,570
3 persons	\$18,310
4 persons	\$22,050
5 persons	\$25,790

Source: 2010 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines  
*Federal Register*, Vol. 75, No. 148, August 3, 2010, pp. 45628–45629

In Hampden County, an estimated 75,120 people, or 16.6% of the county population have incomes at or below the federal poverty level. Persons under age 18 are the largest proportion of those in poverty, at 25.5%. In Hampshire County, 11.5% of the population is below the federal poverty level, with the greatest proportion being persons age 18 to 65, at 12.4%. (Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.) Block level income estimates from ACS 2005-2009 is still in the process of being released by U. S. Census and will be incorporated when available and reconciled with local data. The income analysis from the prior edition of this report is provided below.

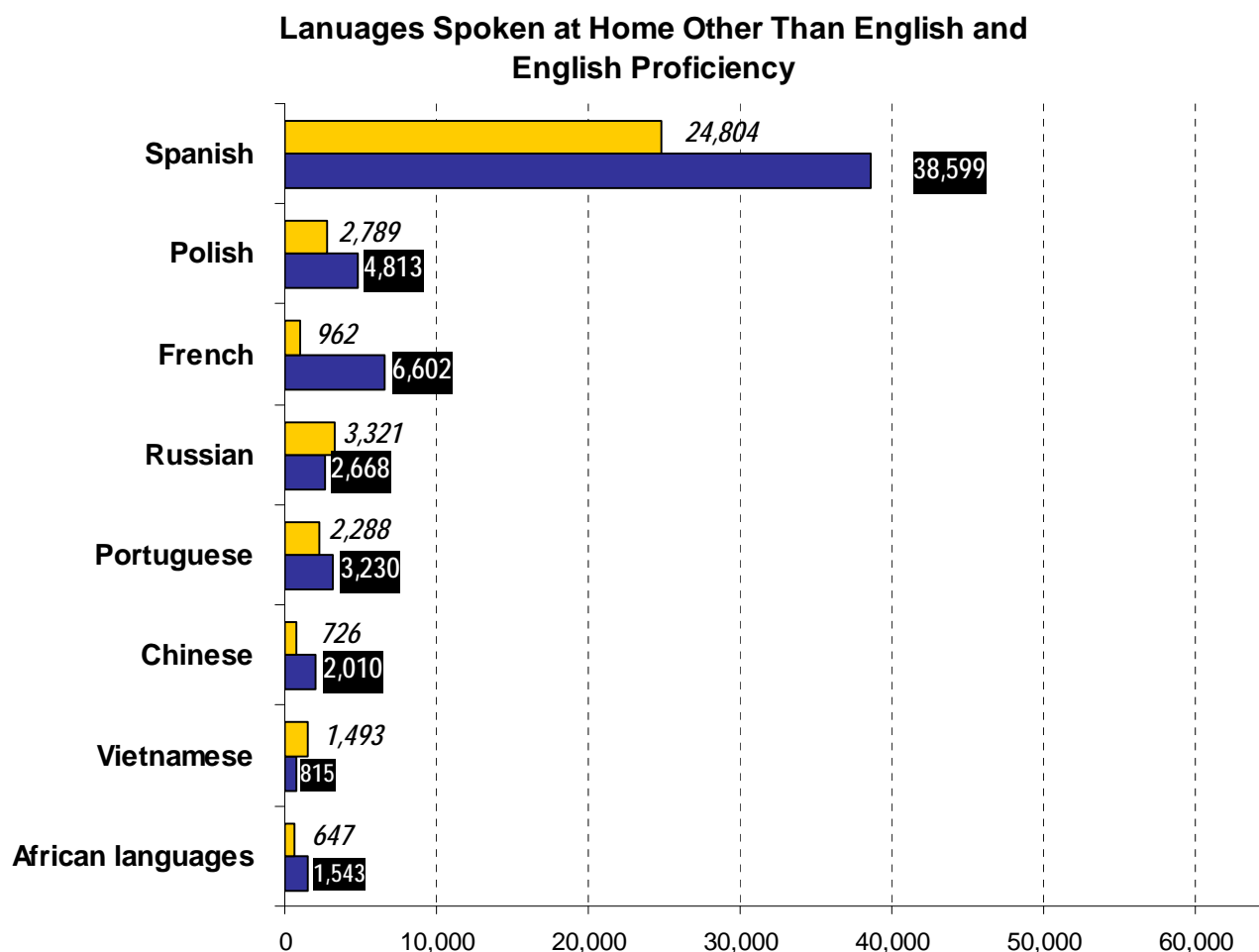
### 2000 Census: Individuals in the Pioneer Valley Below Poverty Level



A “Low-income” block group is any block group in which the poverty rate (percent of persons living below the Federal poverty line) is greater than that of the region as a whole (13.5%).

## 2.6 Identification of Limited English Proficient (LEP) Populations

The Pioneer Valley MPO’s Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan, adopted September 2009, identifies the number, proportion and location of people in the region who do not speak English well. This information is essential in determining the accommodations and information services for successful human services transit providers.



Source: American Community Survey 2005-2009 Five-year Estimate

A town-by-town breakdown is provided on the following page, with municipalities in which the LEP proportion of the local population exceeds that of the region as a whole (1.24%) are shown **in bold**.



## Municipal Number and Proportion of LEP Residents

	Total residents who speak English "not well" and "not at all"	% of Total Population 5+ yrs old who speak English "not well" or "not at all"
Agawam	243	0.9%
<b>Amherst</b>	<b>751</b>	<b>2.2%</b>
Belchertown	51	0.4%
Blandford	2	0.2%
Brimfield	9	0.3%
Chester	4	0.3%
Chesterfield	3	0.3%
<b>Chicopee</b>	<b>1,863</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
Cummington	2	0.2%
East Longmeadow	135	1.0%
Easthampton	113	0.7%
Goshen	0	0.0%
Granby	36	0.6%
Granville town	0	0.0%
Hadley	71	1.6%
Hampden	10	0.2%
Hatfield	4	0.1%
Holland	6	0.3%
<b>Holyoke</b>	<b>3,512</b>	<b>9.6%</b>
Huntington	13	0.6%
Longmeadow	101	0.7%
Ludlow	945	4.7%
Middlefield	0	0.0%
Monson	55	0.7%
Montgomery	0	0.0%
Northampton	317	1.1%
Palmer	124	1.0%
Pelham	1	0.1%
Plainfield	5	0.9%
Russell	17	1.1%
South Hadley	154	0.9%
Southampton	0	0.0%
Southwick	35	0.4%
Springfield	9,378	6.7%
Tolland	3	0.7%
Wales	13	0.8%
Ware	70	0.8%
<b>West Springfield</b>	<b>1,289</b>	<b>4.9%</b>
<b>Westfield</b>	<b>1,206</b>	<b>3.2%</b>
Westhampton	6	0.4%
Wilbraham	47	0.4%
Williamsburg	4	0.2%
Worthington	5	0.4%
<b>Region Total/Ave.</b>	<b>20,603</b>	<b>1.24%</b>

Source: Census 2000

## SECTION 3 AVAILABLE SERVICES, ANALYSIS OF GAPS AND NEEDS

This section describes the available transit resources in the region and offers an analysis of the gaps and unmet mobility needs of transit-dependent residents.

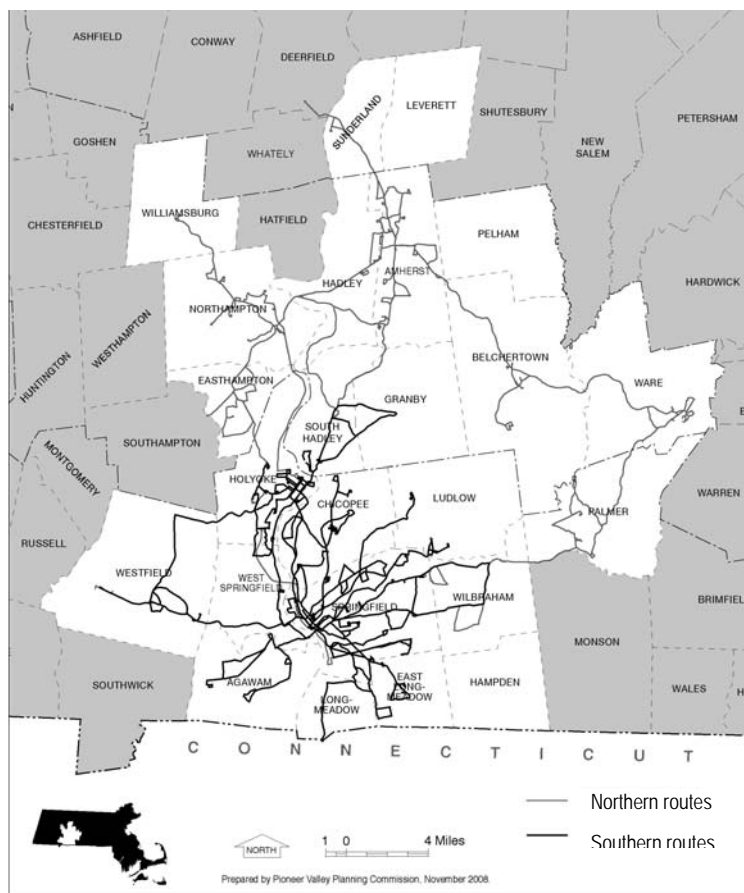
### 3.1 Transit System Overview

The following sections describe the transit services available in the Pioneer Valley.

#### 3.1.1 Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA)

PVTA is the regional transit authority for the Pioneer Valley. It was created in 1974 to consolidate public transportation in the region. Today, PVTA provides service on 44 scheduled bus routes and on-demand paratransit van service in 24 communities with a total population of 573,699 (2010 U.S. Census).

**PVTA Service Communities and Scheduled Routes**



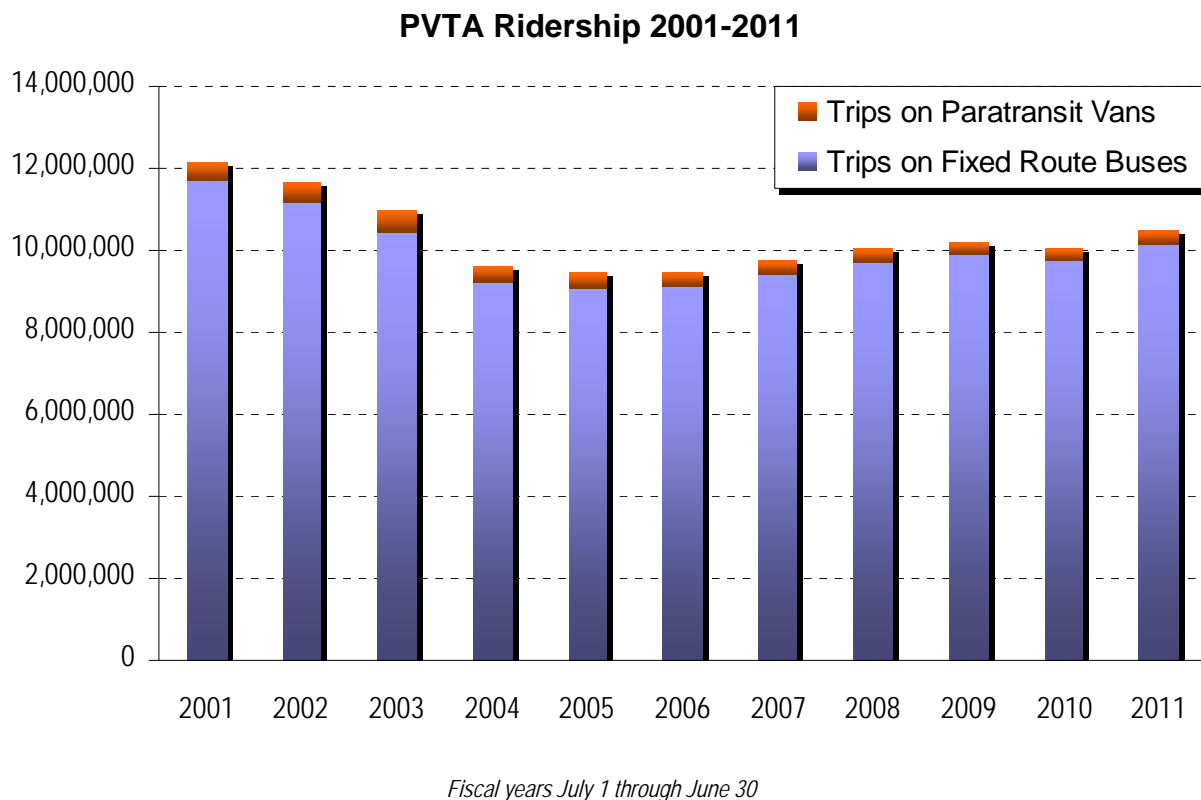
Agawam	Granby	Ludlow	Sunderland
Amherst	Hadley	Northampton	Ware
Belchertown	Hampden	Palmer	West Springfield
Chicopee	Holyoke	Pelham	Westfield
Easthampton	Leverett	South Hadley	Wilbraham
E. Longmeadow	Longmeadow	Springfield	Williamsburg



PVTA's funding comes from federal, state and local governments; passenger fares; and advertising. The authority's operating budget in FY2011 was \$35.6 million. The 24 member cities and towns of PVTA contribute an annual assessment based on the level of service received. Significantly, passenger fares cover only about 18% of the total cost of the service.

To comply with state law that prohibits regional transit authorities from directly operating transit services, PVTA contracts with three private operating companies: First Transit operates bus routes based in Springfield and Northampton; UMass Transit Services operates bus routes based at the University of Massachusetts serving the Amherst area; and Hulmes Transportation operates all paratransit van services, as well as community mini-bus shuttles in Belchertown, Easthampton, Palmer and Ware. PVTA's operators employ 375 fulltime drivers and maintenance staff, and 198 part time drivers.

Ridership is the number of trips provided in a given period (as distinguished from individual "riders," who typically make multiple trips during the same period). PVTA ridership information is presented below.



### 3.1.1a PVTA Fixed Scheduled Routes

Capital and service improvements for fixed routes implemented by PVTA during the 1970s-1990s resulted a ridership peak of nearly 13 million in 1985. However, state-imposed budget reductions in 2002 necessitated deep service cuts, eliminating nearly one-fifth of bus service, including many Sunday trips. Ridership fell during following two years to about 9 million rides. Since 2006, ridership has recovered to approximately 10 million rides per year, even though funding has not been restored to pre-2002 levels (when annualized for inflation).

Surveys of PVTA bus riders find that approximately half of PVTA customers use the bus to commute to work or school. The remaining trip purposes are shopping, attending social and recreational events, and medical appointments. Nearly three-quarters of riders report earning less than \$20,000 per year; three of every five riders say they do not own a car; and four of five riders say they have no other way to make their trip than using PVTA.

PVTA's bus fleet consists of 161 vehicles that are air conditioned and equipped with wheelchair lifts or ramps. PVTA also owns 144 lift-equipped vans for paratransit service. Under Massachusetts law, transit authorities may not directly operate transit services. Therefore, transit authorities must contract with private operators. PVTA currently contracts with First Transit Corp., University of Massachusetts Transit Service, and Hulmes Transportation Services, Inc. for fixed route service. UMass Transit provides service to UMass Amherst and the surrounding Five College area. First Transit serves all other communities with the exception of Belchertown, Easthampton, Palmer and Ware which are served by Hulmes Transportation.

### 3.1.1b PVTA Paratransit Services

Paratransit is door-to-door van service that is scheduled on "on-demand" by the rider, usually by telephone or through a community service agency or council on aging. Vans are equipped with wheelchair lifts and other special equipment to insure the safety of disabled riders. As the average age of the region's residents continues to rise, the need and demand for paratransit mobility will also go up. Paratransit fares typically cover 10% of the service cost. This section describes the three types of paratransit van service that PVTA provides to residents of its 24 member communities. Total ridership for all three types of services is presented below.

#### PVTA Annual Paratransit Ridership

Fiscal Year	Annual Rides	% Change
2000	416,078	+12.0%
2001	462,683	+11.2%
2002	527,698	+14.1%
2003	548,363	+3.9%
2004	407,430	-25.7%
2005	373,622	-8.2%
2006	373,448	-0.0%
2007	299,529	-20.0%
2008	308,787	+3.0%
2009	308,323	-0.0%
2010	317,733	+3.0%

*Fiscal years July 1 through June 30 Source: PVTA*

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Service** -- Federal ADA law requires that public transit providers offer paratransit service that is comparable to their scheduled bus service to disabled customers who are unable to use regular buses. Customers must be eligible to use the service, and an application is required. Trips must be scheduled at least one day in advance. ADA paratransit is available only within three-quarters of a mile of a scheduled regular bus route, and the trip must start and be completed during the same hours that the nearest regular bus route operates. The fare is \$2.50, \$3.00, or \$3.50 per ride, depending on pickup and drop off locations.
- **Senior Dial-A-Ride Service** -- PVRTA also provides van service to people age 60 and over in its 24 member communities. This service is operated on a space-available basis Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Fares are \$2.50, \$3.00 and \$3.50 per ride depending on the pickup and drop off locations. Tickets are available from local senior centers and the PVRTA Information Center in \$0.50 or \$2.50 denominations and discounts are often available.

### **3.1.2 Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) Paratransit Services**

In addition to PVRTA, the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) offers service in the PVMPO region. These are described below.

#### **3.1.2a FRTA Fixed Route**

FRTA provides two fixed routes that operate into the PVMPO region: the Valley Route between Greenfield and Northampton via Route 5, and a Greenfield/Montague to UMass Route. These two routes operate only Monday through Friday and the UMass service is limited to one trip down in the morning and one back in the afternoon.

#### **3.1.2b FRTA Paratransit**

There are 14 towns in the PVMPO region that are not members of the PVRTA service area that contract with the Franklin Region Transit Authority (FRTA), based in Greenfield, for paratransit van service through their local councils on aging. These towns are: Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Plainfield, Russell, Southampton, Southwick, Westhampton, and Worthington. A total of 10,200 rides were provided on these services in FY2010.

Because these communities are located in the furthest western and southern portions of the PVMPO region, they are not within the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile buffer of any fixed route bus service in the region and therefore no ADA paratransit service is available. Senior dial-a-ride service is offered for persons age 60 and older through municipal senior centers. In some cases, pre-certification of eligibility is required. Days, hours of operations, fares and service frequency vary by town. The FRTA paratransit fare within the same town is \$1 per ride; to an adjacent town is \$1.50; and to any town beyond that is \$2. FY2010 ridership for all these towns was approximately 10,200 trips; total cost of this service was \$124,000.

### **3.1.3 Mobility Assistance Program (MAP)**

Many municipal councils on aging and other human services agencies in the Pioneer Valley provide transportation for their clients. The scale and scope of these services varies. However, all are vital transportation services that frequently fill in gaps in the larger transportation system. Many of these programs receive capital funding assistance, primarily assistance in the purchasing of vehicles, from the Mobility Assistance Program administered by MassDOT.

### **3.1.4 Taxis and Shuttles**

Van shuttles serve an important segment of the region's transportation market by serving destinations for which demand maybe relatively frequent; or involve passengers with special needs or schedule requirements. Commercial shuttle operators include Valley Transporter, which focuses on service to and from airports and rail stations in New England. Service to Bradley International is provided hourly from most locations the Pioneer Valley. Service to Boston, Providence, and New York is also provided, though not on a scheduled basis. Non-profit organizations are also operate shuttles, typically for their clients. Examples include municipal councils on aging, day care providers and social service agencies.

There are more than 20 taxi companies operating in the region. Approximately half of these companies are based in Springfield, with another 9 operating in the Amherst/Northampton area, and one company each in Easthampton, Holyoke and Chicopee. Taxi companies provide a vital link in the transportation system by offering mobility during times and at locations where other transportation is not available.

### **3.1.5 Informal Taxi and Shuttle Services**

In addition to the taxi and shuttle services described above, a more informal network of transportation providers exists serving primarily urban neighborhoods in Springfield. These include licensed and other carriers focusing on transporting elderly and disabled customers who do not use PVTA's paratransit service because: 1) their destinations and/or requested hours of service are outside the ADA service area; 2) they do not wish to apply for ADA eligibility to use the PVTA paratransit service; or 3) they require or desire more personal care than PVTA paratransit vehicle operators are allowed to offer (i.e., walking assistance into medical offices, help with shopping, waiting during appointments).

Significantly, one operator reported offering weekly trips to a local farmers market so that residents could obtain fresh produce, which is not conveniently available in some areas of Springfield.

In addition, some informal taxi/shuttle operators offer seasonal summer service for youths employed at the Six Flags Amusement Park in Agawam, following the cancellation of PVTA service to the park.

Some operators use lift-equipped vans, while others use unmarked mini-vans. At least three such carriers have been identified in Springfield, and it is estimated that several more are in operation (though they do not wish to be identified).

### **3.2 Gaps and Needs for Human Services Mobility in the Pioneer Valley**

Outreach conducted for this 2012 Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, as well as public participation for the 2012-2016 update to the Regional Transportation Plan (see pp.4-5) identified the following gaps and needs in the region's human services transportation system:

- Lack of secure funding for human services transportation.
- Insufficient service frequencies to meet weekday demand for commuting to work and school, especially in the UMass Amherst area.
- Lack of evening and weekend bus and ADA paratransit van service throughout the region.
- Lack of cross-town bus service in the Springfield and Holyoke areas.
- Lack of express bus routes on heavily traveled corridors, especially between Holyoke and Springfield.
- Lack of north/south public transit connections between principal destinations in Hampshire County and Hampden County.
- Need for improved public safety in general, and at the Springfield Bus Terminal in particular.
- Need for improved bus stop amenities, especially shelters.
- Need for community shuttle services.
- Need for improved outreach to people with limited proficiency speaking English (LEP).
- Need for travel training to help more people understand how to use all public transit services.
- Need for transportation to/from child care facilities.

These needs and gaps are discussed in the following sections.

#### **3.2.1 Secure funding for public transportation that focuses on human services needs.**

The consensus among human services transportation stakeholders is that greatest challenge in providing reliable and needed public and human services transportation services in the Pioneer Valley is the lack of sufficient operating funds. Without a secure and continuing funding sources for operations, transit service providers in the region are not able to meet all human services transportation needs.

Federal operating support through the 5310, 5316 and 5317 programs offer 80% towards capital expenses, while operating expenses are funded at 50%. State and local funding is required to match to these funds in order to be received. In addition State Contract Assistance (SCA), which is nearly half of the PVRTA budget, has increased at 1% or less over the past five years while costs have increased at a much higher rate. Estimated SCA support is expected to remain level for the coming 2-3 fiscal years, which therefore results in a net reduction in support as fuel prices and other costs of operating transit services continue to rise.

To assess the gaps and needs for public and human services transportation in Pioneer Valley, PVPC relies on stakeholder meetings on transportation and established working relationship with

the regions transportation providers. This is an ongoing process that identifies additional needs and gaps in the system and incorporates them in this plan through updates and amendments.

### **3.2.2 Increase transit use for work and school commuting.**

As living and employment patterns have changed over the past 20 years, transit systems have had difficulty reacting to the evolving needs of their passengers. The PVTA and other transportation providers will need to introduce innovative new services that complement existing service and provide competitive travel options across the service area.

In addition PVTA and other transit providers should seek out the opportunity to increase the use of fixed route and paratransit service by the targeted communities in this Coordinated Plan through outreach. One method for this outreach is to increase travel training for passengers who are using transit services for the first time. A large portion of riders in the Hampshire County area are students attending one of the Five College Institutions (UMass Amherst, Amherst College, Hampshire College, Smith College and Mount Holyoke College). The PVTA system in Hampden County also serves students of Springfield and Holyoke area colleges (Springfield Technical Community College, American International College, Western New England College, and Holyoke Community College) but student ridership in this area is significantly less than in the UMass Amherst area. PVTA has begun an outreach initiative to Springfield and Holyoke area colleges to increase ridership and reduce these students dependence on automobiles as their main commuting method.

### **3.2.3 Maintain and expand night and weekend service**

PVTA has been successful in maintaining Sunday and late night service which was added in 1999 and 2000 as a result of Welfare to Work efforts. Maintaining these services should be a regional priority as it provides vital transportation for people going to work and school. Despite the relatively good service span for many routes, service is not available to many locations for 2nd and 3rd shift workers. Fixed-route service may not always be feasible, particularly for 3<sup>rd</sup> shift workers, but other types of service are needed.

### **3.2.4 Increased Cross-Town Service**

Opportunities exist in Holyoke and Springfield to improve transit service by better matching the needs to get to and from jobs, education and childcare with the services provided. PVTA has considered extending the hours of service on the primary routes servicing these communities and seeks to convert to community routes to provide more responsive service as a FlexVan route. FlexVan service uses smaller transit vehicles that are able to provide more responsive and customer focused service to passengers.

### **3.2.5 Limited Stop Express and Commuter Routes**

To open employment and educational opportunities to all residents throughout the region, PVTA sees a need to add a number of limited stop express and commuter routes. These services, when combined with the existing routes will provide for travel times that are competitive with cars. They will further provide new services to support PVTA's Transit Centers and ongoing regional development projects. This service has already been successfully implemented along Sumner Avenue in the City of Springfield, and is currently being studied for the Route 9 corridor between Northampton and Amherst.

### **3.2.6 Better North South Connections**

To further open employment and educational opportunities between the Urban Core and the academic institutions in the Five College area, PVTA has considered a direct connection between UMass in Amherst and Holyoke. A main pulse point for the PVTA has been Veterans Park in Holyoke, MA. This point has a limited number of routes that allow riders to transfer from northern to southern system. PVTA partnered with Peter Pan, the State and Federal Government to construct a state of the art Intermodal Center to improve conditions at this pulse point. This transportation center allows passengers to wait indoors as well as providing space for a child care facility, classroom space for Holyoke Community College and retail space for a café or store in the near future.

### **3.2.7 Improved safety for those using transit**

Behavior problems and safety concerns are an ongoing problem on some PVTA bus routes and at some of the bus transfer points, particularly the Springfield Bus Terminal. Pioneer Valley Transit Authority has developed a safety plan to address these issues. PVTA has cameras installed on all buses for security and review purposes. PVTA monitors security personal activity by spot checking on a weekly basis at the main terminal in Springfield. There are occasional disturbances at transfer points and on buses involving five college students in the northern system.

### **3.2.8 Improved accessibility and amenities at bus stops**

Many bus stops outside the central service area lack bus pads, which makes it difficult for non-ambulatory persons to use the fixed-route system. Benches are an important amenity for the elderly to rest while waiting for the bus. Only 11% of PVTA bus stops have benches, 37% of them are maintained by PVTA. Bus pads provide an area to load passengers who require the assistance of a wheelchair, bus stops lacking these amenities can present a challenge to these passengers. Only 13% of PVTA bus stops have these bus pads. However, many times riders who require the assistance of wheel chairs utilize the sidewalk. Fortunately, 86.5% of bus stops are accessible by sidewalk.

### **3.2.9 Local Community Shuttle Service**

Many suburban communities within the pioneer valley lack service. A number of suburban communities cannot properly support local Metro fixed-route bus service, but could support other types of transit service such as community shuttles. The communities of Belchertown, Ware and Palmer have their own community shuttles which provide transportation for residents traveling within the community to access retail, medical facilities and work.

### **3.2.10 Limited English Proficiency**

Riders who are unable to communicate effectively in English and their primary language is not English are faced with multiple challenges from using the bus system. These passengers are not able to ask questions to bus drivers and are unable to navigate the various bus routes, which prevents them from being able to successfully use the bus system. The number of LEP persons exceeds 1,000 in at least five of the 24 PVTA communities: Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield, West Springfield and Westfield. This threshold is significant with respect to safe harbor provisions of LEP program efforts. The region has a variety of languages spoken including but not limited to Spanish and Russian. The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority is attempting to respond to these riders by the employment of bi-lingual supervisor at the Holyoke Intermodal

Facility. Holyoke possesses a substantial population of Spanish speaking individuals and this service provided by the PVRTA will enable more of these riders to access the system. The PVRTA also trains their bus drivers (new and existing drivers) to address the needs of LEP persons and helps drivers learn key phrases in Spanish and other languages for better communication with non English speakers.

#### **3.2.11 Lack of Mobility Training**

Surveys and interviews indicate that more people would access existing transit services if they were trained how to do so. Training for people of all ages with disabilities, would provide increased independence for these individuals into the future. Unfortunately, the transit authorities do not have funding for training. PVRTA is now developing videos for rider training purposes.

#### **3.2.12 Child care transportation**

Even if transit is paid for, it is difficult for parents who do not have a car to arrange to drop off children on their way to work and pick them up on the way home. Coordinating child care and employment transportation is an obstacle for many people trying to transition from welfare to work. Locating child care at transit centers or at employment centers is one option.



### **3.3 PRIORITIZATION OF HUMAN SERVICES MOBILITY NEEDS AND PROJECTS**

The prioritization of needs and projects for the Coordinated Plan is based on the public outreach described in Section 1.4. It also reflects many of the needs identified during the development of the 2012-2015 update to the Regional Transportation Plan. The needs most directly related to human services and the likely funding sources (JARC 5316, New Freedom 5317 and/or Elderly & Disabled 5310) are summarized below.

#### **3.3.1 High Priorities**

##### **Focus Area & Likely Funding Source(s)**

- Maintain and improve the coverage of night and weekend services: JARC
- Improve existing fixed route and paratransit transit coverage: JARC
- Promote the use of fixed route services by seniors and people with disabilities through new and enhanced services: JARC; New Freedom
- Improve travel training of existing and potential transit passengers: New Freedom
- Improve marketing and outreach using multiple sources (Internet, newspaper, etc.): E&D; JARC; New Freedom
- Promote local livability, public health and access.
- Support community based mobility to sources of healthy foods.

#### **3.3.2 Medium Priorities**

##### **Focus Area & Likely Funding Source(s)**

- Enhance inner city bus service connecting major cities within and outside the region: JARC; New Freedom
- Provide additional paratransit service in rural areas: E&D; New Freedom
- Improve outreach efforts at medical facilities E&D; JARC; New Freedom

#### **3.3.3 Low Priorities**

##### **Focus Area & Likely Funding Source(s)**

- Expanded transportation service from rural communities to urban centers, JARC, New Freedom
- Medical facilities E&D; New Freedom

Using these priorities as a guide, staff developed project screening and evaluation criteria to be used as part of the competitive bid process for selecting projects that meet the priorities outlined above. Because PVPC is the designated recipient of Section 5316 and 5317 funding, projects will be selected by PVPC staff for those funding categories. MassDOT is the designated recipient for Section 5310 funds and will select projects using those program funds.

## **SECTION 4 FUNDING SOURCES**

This section describes the three federal grant programs under which funds for the gaps and needs identified may be available: Section 5310 Elderly and Disabled Funding; Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute Funds; and Section 5317 New Freedom Funds.

### **4.1 Elderly & Disabled Funding (Section 5310)**

The Section 5310 program was established in 1975, prior to the inception of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. At that time grants were given to private non-profit organizations to serve elderly/disabled persons where public transportation services were lacking. The goal of the program was to improve mobility for elderly and disabled individuals, not just in the Central Massachusetts region but throughout the nation.

Section 5310 funds are apportioned by a formula based on the number of elderly and disabled according to the latest available U.S. census data to each state. The chief executive officer of each State designates an agency with the requisite legal, financial and staffing capabilities to receive and administer Federal funds. In Massachusetts, the Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is the official Section 5310 designee. MassDOT distributes funds based on a competitive process to sub-recipients, which can include private non-profit organizations, public bodies that certify no non-profit corporations or associations are available to provide service in the area, and public bodies approved by the State to coordinate services for the elderly and disabled such as a public transit provider (e.g. Regional Transit Authority). The Federal share of eligible capital costs may not exceed 80% of the net cost of the activity and revenue generated from service contracts etc. can provide the 20% match. Ten percent (10%) of the State's total fiscal year apportionment may be used to fund program administration costs at 100% Federal share.

#### **4.1.1 What is allowed with Section 5310 Funding?**

- Capital expenses to support transportation services to meet the needs of elderly and disabled persons, (i.e., buses, vans, communication equipment).
- The lease of equipment when a lease is more cost effective than to purchase.
- Contract for transportation services, which in this case capital and operating costs associated with contracted service are eligible capital expenses.
- Technology- new technologies.
- Transit related ITS (Intelligent Transportation Systems)-mobility management and coordination programs.
- Public bodies approved by the State to coordinate services for elderly/disabled individuals such as a public transit provider.

#### **4.1.2 What is not allowed with Section 5310 Funding?**

- Operating Expenses - except when contracting for transportation services.

### **4.2 Job Access Reverse Commute Funds (Section 5316)**

The Section 5316 program was created as a allocated program under SAFETEA-LU to help develop transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and low income individuals to and from jobs and to develop transportation services for residents of urban centers

and rural and suburban areas to suburban employment opportunities. Emphasis is placed on projects that use mass transportation services.

Prior to being an allocated program, JARC was designed as a discretionary program under the previous federal transportation bill, TEA-21. JARC funding is divided into two categories: Job Access and Reverse Commute. Job Access funds are designed to serve eligible low-income individuals whose family income is at or below the poverty level with transportation projects to urban, suburban, or rural areas to and from jobs, job-training and education programs. Reverse Commute funds are designed to provide transportation from urban, rural and other suburban locations to jobs in suburban locations. Projects using JARC funding require a 50% local match for operations and a 20% local match for capital projects from other non-US DOT funding. Sources of federal matching funds include grants including Health and Human Service funds, Department of Labor funds, Department of Education funds, state funds, or private funds.

#### **4.2.1 What is allowed with Section 5316 Funding?**

- Grants can be used for vehicle purchases, facility construction, and operations.
- Promoting transit vouchers for welfare recipients and low-income individuals purchased by appropriate agencies.
- Promoting employer-provided transportation and targeted marketing and advertising to increase awareness among welfare recipients and low-income communities of transportation options.
- Adding late night and weekend services for workers with nontraditional schedules.
- Providing a guaranteed ride home service.
- Starting a shuttle service.
- Extending or rerouting bus services to go further into low-income neighborhoods or suburban areas with employment opportunities.
- Providing an “on-call” van service, and sponsoring ridesharing and carpooling activities.
- Expanding existing bus, van or train routes, and subsidizing the purchase or lease of a van or bus for shuttles to and from the suburban worksites for private employers, public agencies, or nonprofit organizations.

#### **4.2.2 What is not allowed with Section 5316 Funding?**

- Funds cannot supplant existing sources of funding. Grants will not cover the expenses of purchasing transit passes, construction of childcare centers and employment support facilities at transit hubs.

#### **4.3 New Freedom Funds (Section 5317)**

The New Freedom formula grant program aims to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the work force and full participation in society. The New Freedom formula grant program seeks to expand the transportation mobility options available to persons with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. New Freedom funds are apportioned among the recipients by formula. The formula is based on the ratio that the number of individuals with disabilities in each such area bears to the number of individuals with disabilities in all such areas. The number of disabled individuals in an area is determined according to the latest available U.S. census data for individuals with disabilities over the age of five.

New Freedom funds may be used to finance capital and operating expenses. The Federal share of eligible capital costs may not exceed 80% of the net capital costs of the program. The Federal share of the eligible operating costs may not exceed 50% of the net operating costs of the activity. Recipients may use up to 10% of their apportionment to support program administrative costs including administration, planning, and technical assistance, which may be funded at 100% Federal share. The local share of eligible capital costs shall be no less than 20% of the net cost of the activity, and the local share for eligible operating costs shall be no less than 50% of the net operating costs. All of the local share must be provided from sources other than Federal DOT funds. Some examples of sources of local match which may be used for any or all of the local share include: State or local appropriations; other non-DOT Federal funds; dedicated tax revenues; private donations; revenue from human services contracts; toll revenue credits; and net income generated from advertising and concessions. Non-cash share such as donations, volunteer services, and in-kind contributions is eligible to be counted toward the local match. The value of any non-cash share shall be documented and supported, represent a cost which would otherwise be eligible under the program, and be included in the net project costs in the project budget. Up to 10% of funds may be used for planning, administration and technical assistance, with program administration costs funded at 100% Federal share.

#### **4.3.1 What is allowed with Section 5317 Funding?**

- Enhancing public transportation services beyond minimum requirements of the ADA including expanding hours and level of service.
- Making improvements to transit and intermodal stations that are not key stations.
- Establishing feeder services.
- Establishing travel training programs.
- Purchasing vehicles for new accessible taxi, ride sharing, and/or vanpooling programs.
- Supporting the administration and expenses related to new voucher programs for transportation services offered by human services providers.
- Supporting new volunteer driver and aide programs.
- Supporting new mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human services agencies providing transportation.

#### **4.3.2 What is not allowed with Section 5317 Funding?**

- A recipient carrying out a program of operating assistance under this section may not limit the level or extent of use of the Government grant for the payment of operating expenses.

#### **4.4 Other Funding Programs**

Other federal and state funding programs are used to fund transportation service for various types of programs. As identified by the GAO study, a number of federal agencies provide transportation funding at various levels for various populations. Many of these programs could be used as matching funds to the three programs listed above. State contract assistance is also provided to each regional transit authority in the Commonwealth and can also be used as a match to the programs above. Other sources may include non-profit funds, community assessments, special taxes, and/or private funds.