

Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization

Pioneer Valley Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan



Prepared by the

**Pioneer Valley Planning
Commission**

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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

Abstract

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 Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) documents the MPO region’s unmet human-service transportation needs, describes the MPO region’s current transportation network, and provides ideas for improving transportation services. The Coordinated Plan is prepared by the MPO to allow organizations in the region to be eligible to receive funding in the Federal Transit Administration’s Section 5310 transit funding program. This program provides capital and operations funding for services for the elderly and persons with disabilities. The Coordinated Plan has four parts:

- Introduction and description of funding programs
- Demographic of the population served by the program
- Overview of existing transportation services in the region
- Transportation needs identified through public input and outreach to stakeholders
- Strategies for addressing needs and priorities

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1 Introduction to the Coordinated Plan and Funding

The Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (PVMPO) adopted the last Coordinated Public Transportation - Human Service Transportation Plan in 2011. This document is an update of that 2011 Plan and reflects changes in federal grant programs, as well as changes in the needs of the transportation disadvantaged populations in the Region.

The purpose of this 2015 update is to help improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with lower incomes in the Pioneer Valley Region through a better coordinated transportation system. This update provides a framework for the development of projects that will address the transportation needs of the target populations, by ensuring that public transportation and human service agencies coordinate transportation resources offered through multiple FTA programs. The needs identified in this Plan will be used to evaluate, and rank eligible projects for various federal transportation grants.

Three target populations are particularly relevant to this update include:

- Seniors (ages 65 and older)
- Low-Income Households
- Persons with Disabilities

Federal law requires that the coordinated public transportation - human service transportation plan (CPT-HSTP) be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human services providers and participation by the public. To assess the transportation needs for the targeted populations in the MPO region, this plan update analyzes available demographic data, analyzes changes since 2011, and reviews other available data and plans.

The Coordinated Plan was developed with the participation of representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human-services providers, as well as members of the public. Public input for the Plan was incorporated from the PTVA 2014 Comprehensive Service Analysis, the 2014 PVTA Paratransit Service Analysis, the 2014 Pioneer Valley Regional Coordinating Council Survey, and the 2014 Getting to Healthy: Improving Access to Care study for Cooley Dickinson Health Care, and focus groups sessions from the Regional Transportation Plan. Additional public planning forums to discuss the needs of the target populations in the region and strategies for meeting those needs are scheduled after the release of this draft document. Public input received at these discussions and by other means will be integrated into the final Coordinated Plan.

Primary findings of outreach to date include:

- The coordination and cooperation of transit services has improved.
- Several initiatives have successfully improved the delivery of services to targeted populations.
- Greater cooperation and coordination of human service and rural transit systems is needed.
- Outreach, education and training should continue to be an area of focus.
- The needs of transportation disadvantaged populations continue to grow in the region.

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 generally focuses on two 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.

1.1 Review of Federal Planning Requirements

Federal surface transportation funding legislation, the Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law on August 10, 2005. This legislation established the requirement for a locally developed, Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) to obtain funding for projects from Federal Transit Administration humans services transportation programs. These programs included: 1) Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310); 2) Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC, Section 5316); and 3) New Freedom (Section 5317). (The goal of the New Freedom grant program was to reduce barriers to transportation services and expand the transportation mobility options available to people with disabilities beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990). The Coordinated Plan is designed to improve transportation services for elderly individuals, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and to reverse commuters by maximizing collective coverage, minimizing duplication of services, and facilitating the most cost-effective transportation possible with available resources. MassDOT solicits projects for 5310 funding on a statewide basis and evaluates projects' consistency with the relevant MPO's Coordinated Plan.

Congress signed new surface transportation funding legislation, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), on July 6, 2012. This was a two-year authorization due to end on September 30, 2014, but funding and provisions have been extended until May 31, 2015. This legislation eliminated JARC as a stand-alone program, eliminated New Freedom as a stand-alone program, and incorporated New Freedom activities into the 5310 program. On June 6, 2014, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued the FTA C 9070.1G Circular, Guidance and Application Instructions: Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program Guidance and Application Instructions. According to the circular introduction, it is a reissue of guidance under 49 U.S.C. 5310 (SAFETEA-LU) that incorporates provisions of AP-21. The circular stipulates that a Coordinated Plan is still required for Section 5310 funding.

Before receiving a grant, each recipient (MassDOT) must certify that:

- Projects selected by the recipient are included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan
- The plan (described above) was developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers, and other members of the public
- To the maximum extent feasible, services funded under this section will be coordinated with transportation services assisted by other federal departments and agencies, including any transportation activities carried out by a recipient of a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services. This updated Coordinated Plan reflects the realities of current legislation. It documents the region’s human service transportation needs and provides ideas for improving transportation services.

1.2 MassDOT Community Transit Grant Program

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) **Community Transit Grant Program** is an annual competitive grant application process administered by the Rail & Transit Division (RTD) of MassDOT. The application process typically begins in mid-January or early February with applicant training sessions, followed by a one-month open application period during the month of February. Organizations interested in applying Federal funds (Title 49 USC Sections 5310, 5311 (f), and 5339) and State funds (Mobility Assistance Program) attend one of training sessions (including one online training session). Training covers the online application process and provides guidance on successful grant writing. Application and guidance documents are available at the Community Transit Grant Program webpage ([Community Transit Grant Website](#)). Applicants that are selected for awards are usually notified around the first week of April.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts (through RTD) provides financial assistance to eligible organizations through several programs to provide a state financial match to federally funded capital, operating, and planning projects. RTD distributes financial assistance through the **Mobility Assistance Program** (MAP) to provide transportation services to elderly persons and persons with disabilities as defined in Chapter 637 Sec. 13 of the Acts of 1983. In Massachusetts, the Mobility Access Program (MAP) is used to provide capital funds for accessible vehicles, computers, and communication equipment in this competitive selection process to eligible recipients.

Table 1: Past MassDOT Community Transit Grant (5310) Awards (FFY 2014 and 2015)

FFY 2015			Federal	RTA CAP	MAP	Local	
PVTA	114220	System ITS	\$100,662	\$25,216			\$126,078
		Subtotal	\$100,662	\$25,216			\$126,078
FFY 2014							
PVTA	111215	Purchase Replacement Vans (12)*	\$235,131		\$446,637		\$681,768
PVTA	114220	Systems (ITS)	\$232,942	\$58,236			\$291,178
Human Resources Unlmted	111215	Buy Replacement Van (1)	\$46,495			\$11,624	\$58,119
Human Resources Unlmted	111515	Vans (6)	\$278,971			\$69,743	\$348,714
		Subtotal	793,539	\$58,236	\$446,637	\$81,367	\$1,379,779

*Replacement Vans for this purchase were Type E as shown in Appendix A

Types of projects eligible for 5310 funding include:

- Public transportation capital projects planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable.
- Public transportation projects that exceed ADA requirements
- Public transportation projects that improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance on complementary paratransit
- Alternatives to public transportation projects that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities

2 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 also included the identification of racial and language demographics. This addition defines a more accurate demographic profile 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.

2.2 Identification of Senior Populations

The age distribution of the population within the Pioneer Valley region mirrors the aging population trends across the nation, and hints at some explanations for the type of slow population growth that has occurred over recent decades. Between 2000 and 2012, the region has seen decreases in all age groups except those 5-19 and those 45-64. This suggests a smaller population in its prime wage-earning years, yet a larger portion of the population in or approaching years of dependence on others. While many in the 45-64 year old age category are still fully in their careers, it will be important to note the large proportion of the population (27%) who are likely to move out of the labor force and into retirement within the next decade.

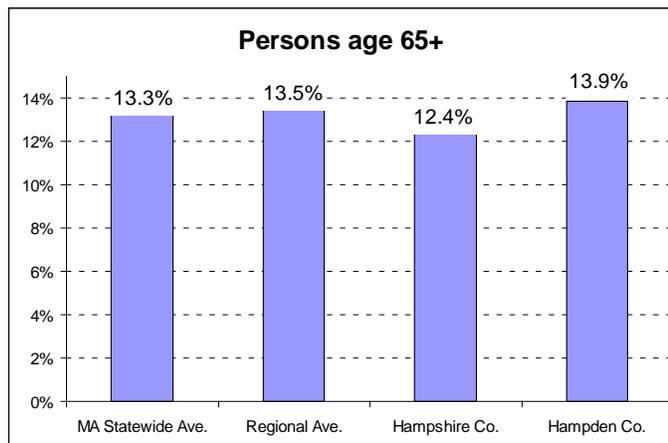


Figure 1: Census Blocks in which the Proportion of Persons Age 65+ Exceeds the Regional Average

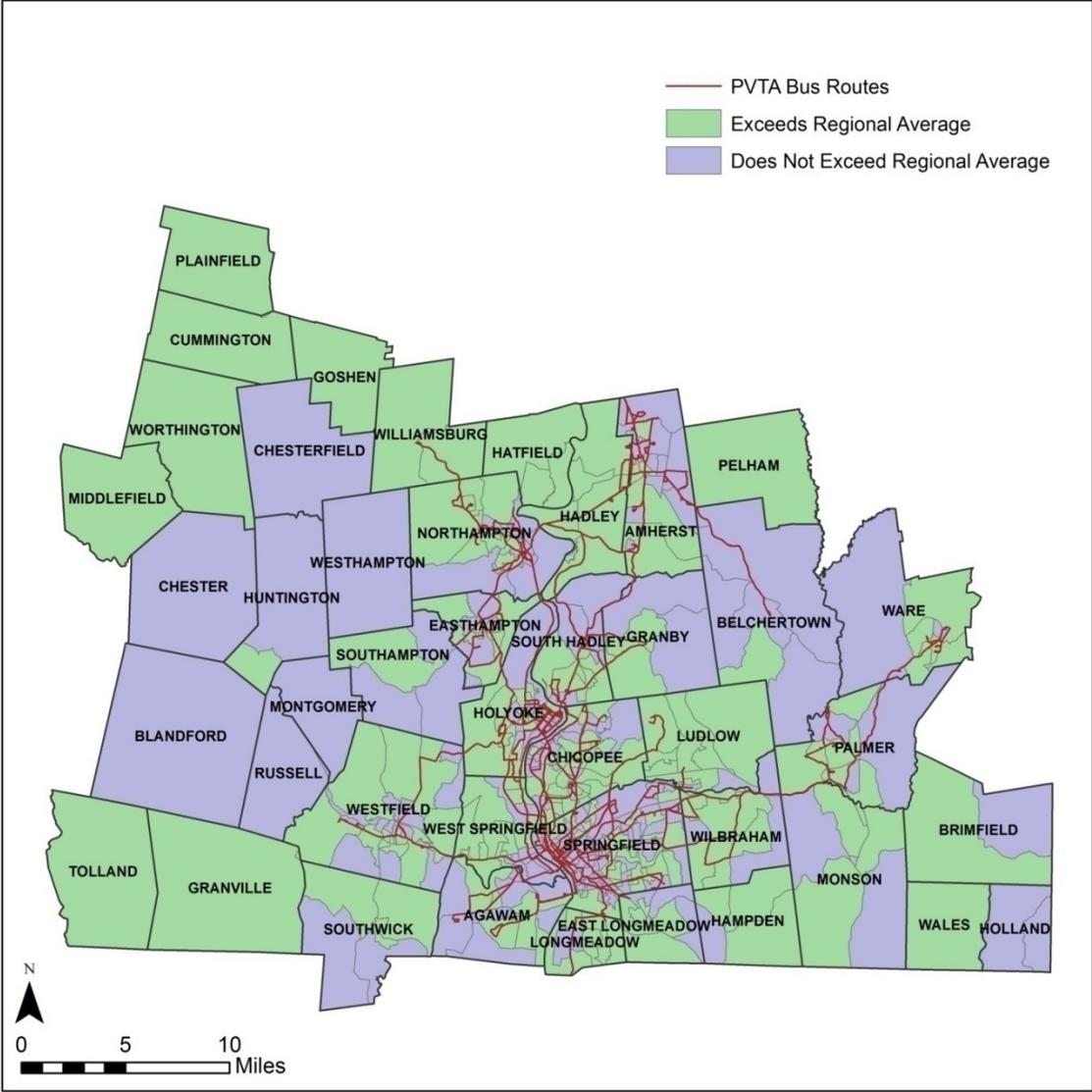
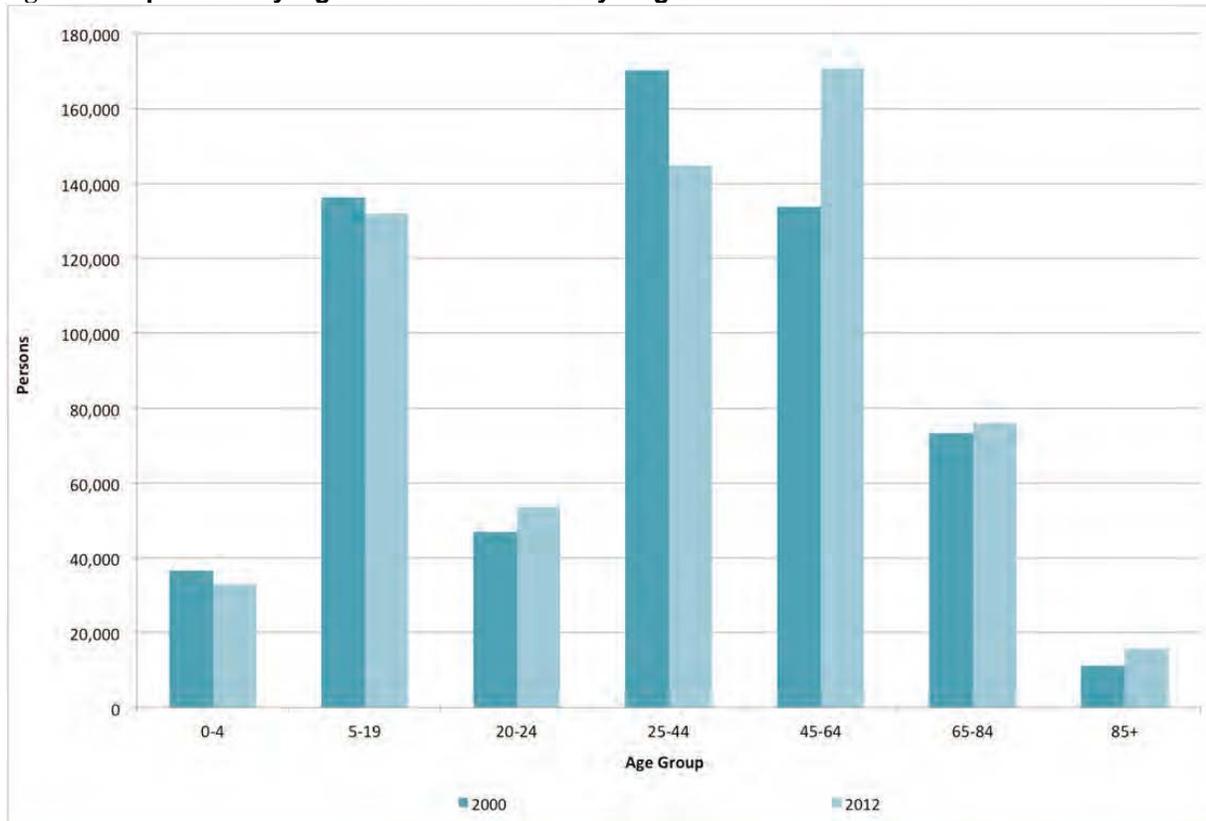


Figure 2: Population by Age in the Pioneer Valley Region.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2012 1-Year-Estimates

2.3 Region Trends in Populations

Continuing an established trend, the region’s Hispanic and Latino population grew by 48.2% between 2000 and 2012, a rate of growth that was significant, though slightly lower than that of both the state and nation (see Table 2). While the rate of growth in the Hispanic and Latino population has been slightly slower than that of the state, at approximately 17% of the total population, the Hispanic and Latino population is actually slightly higher than that of the nation. In this sense, the Pioneer Valley region looks less like the rest of the state as a whole and more like nation-wide demographics. Conversely, the proportion of the Pioneer Valley region population identifying exclusively as White (81.3%) is closer to that of the state (80.1%) than to the nation (73.9 percent).

Table 2: Hispanic or Latino Population in the Pioneer Valley Region 2000-2012

	Hispanic or Latino Persons			% of Total Population		
	2000	2012	% Change	2000	2012	% Change
Pioneer Valley Region	74,409	110,301	48.2%	12.2%	17.6%	5.4%
Hampden County	69,197	102,369	47.9%	15.2%	22.0%	6.8%
Hampshire County	5,212	7,932	52.2%	3.4%	5.0%	1.6%
Massachusetts	428,729	673,885	57.2%	6.8%	10.1%	3.3%
United States	35,305,818	52,961,017	50.0%	12.5%	16.9%	4.4%

Table 3: Population by Race 2012

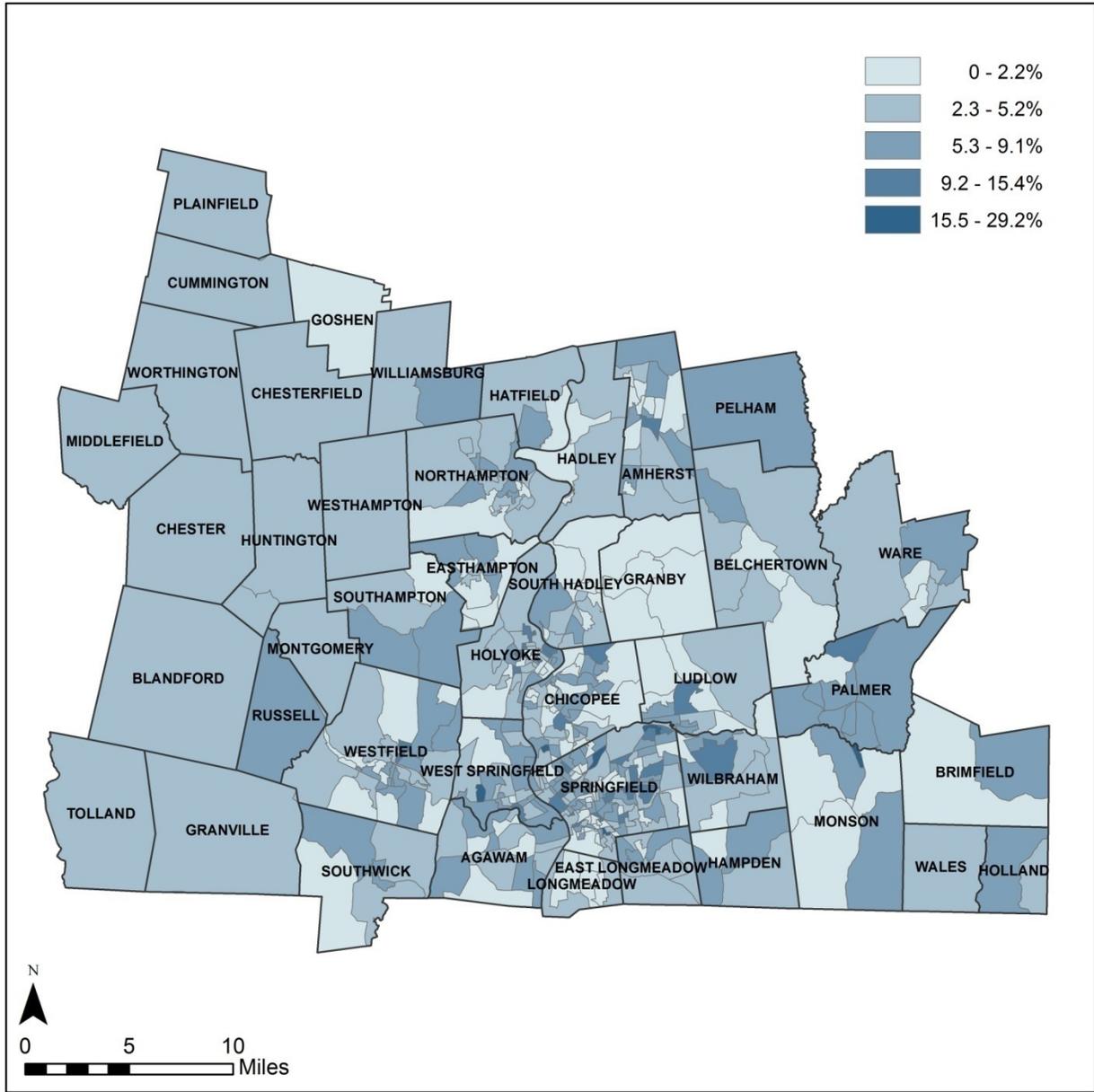
	White	African American	Native American	Asian	Pacific Islander	Other Races
Pioneer Valley Region	81.3%	7.0%	0.3%	2.8%	0.0%	8.6%
Hampden County	78.4%	8.6%	0.3%	2.2%	0.0%	10.5%
Hampshire County	89.8%	2.6%	0.1%	4.4%	0.2%	2.9%
Massachusetts	80.1%	7.1%	0.2%	5.7%	0.0%	6.8%
United States	73.9%	12.6%	0.8%	5.0%	0.2%	7.5%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 1-Year County Population Estimates.
Percentages add up to more than 100% because of ability to report more than one racial category. Because the U.S. Census Bureau considers Hispanic/Latino an ethnic category rather than a race category, all race categories include some people who are Hispanic or Latino and some who are not.*

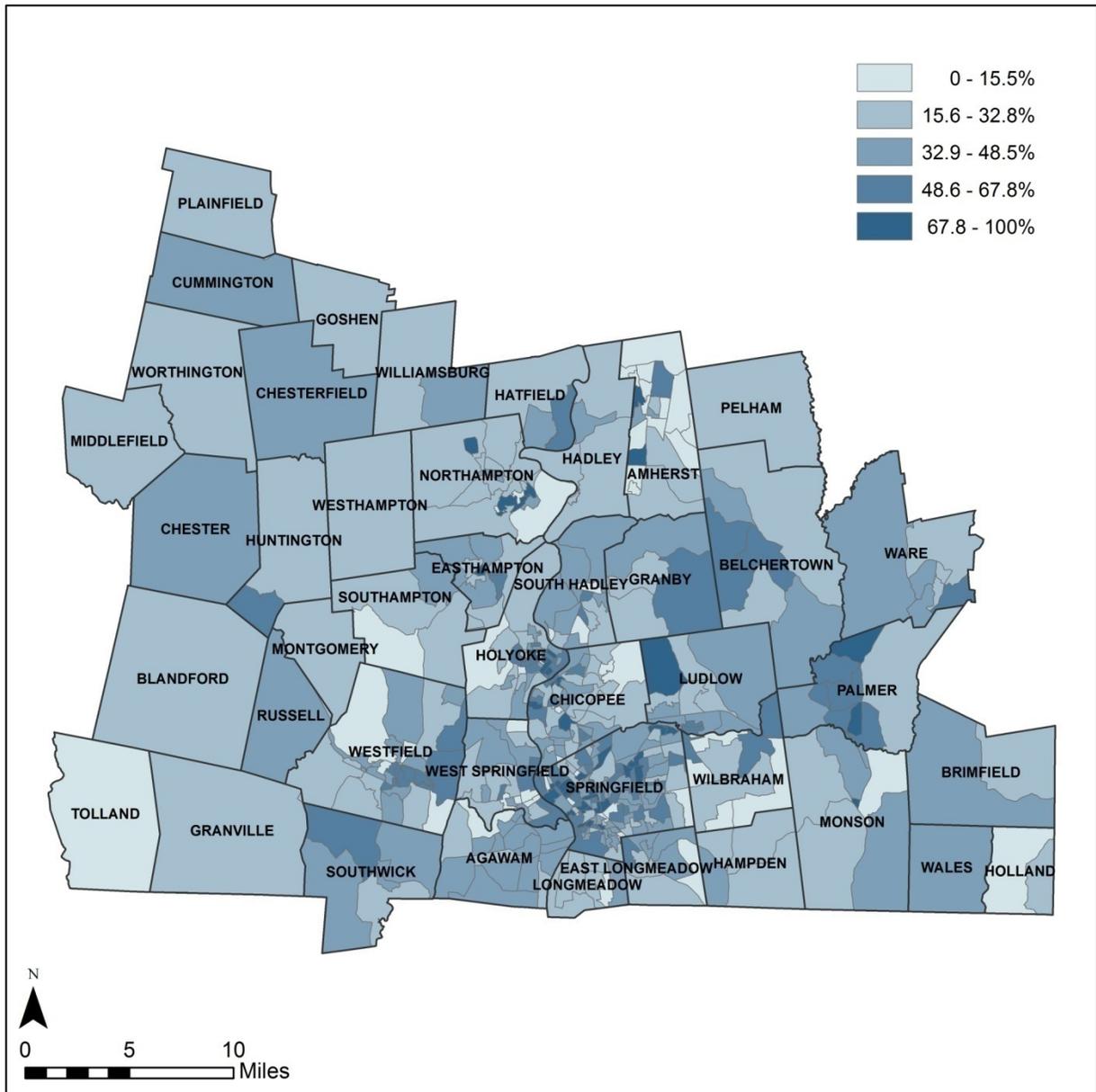
2.4 Identification of Persons with Disabilities Populations

In identifying “Persons with Disabilities” PVPC used 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 2015 update of this report used the American Community Survey block level estimates for this data.

**Figure 3: Census Block Groups-Individuals in the Pioneer Valley
Age 21-64 with Disabilities**



**Figure 4: Census Block Groups Individuals in the Pioneer Valley
Age 65+ with Disabilities**



2.5 Identification of Unemployed Populations

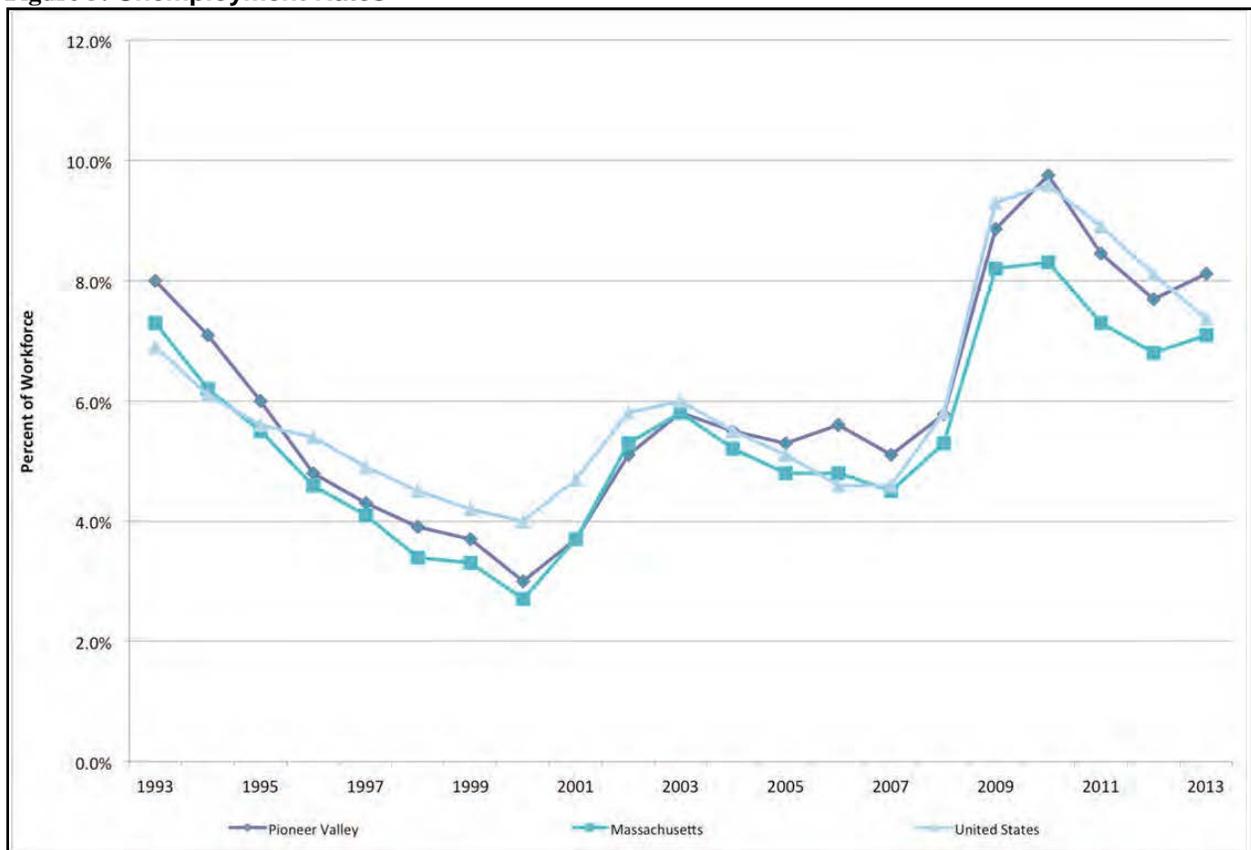
After experiencing the highest unemployment in ten years in 2010, the Pioneer Valley’s economy improved in 2011 and 2012. Unemployment rates lowered from 8.5% in 2011 to 7.7% in 2012; however, the number of employed people decreased from 287,960 in 2011 to 282,999 in 2012. The declining unemployment rate is more directly attributable to a smaller labor force which decreased from 314,556 to 306,602 between 2011 and 2012. While the unemployment rate has shown improvements in the past few years, the decline in labor force participation may

be due to people dropping out of the labor force because of a sluggish economy. Of course this cannot be assumed as the only cause of labor force reductions, as a declining labor force size could also be due to larger rates of retirement amongst a large population of older workers, among other factors.

In 2013, this trend appeared to reverse as the unemployment rate increased again to 8.1% while the total number of people employed also increased by nearly 2,000 people (Figure 13).

On the state level, unemployment rates also increased, while the nation experienced an overall decrease. Nation-wide, unemployment lowered to 8.1% in 2012 from 8.9% in 2011, and the Massachusetts rate fell from 7.4% to 6.7%. Still, comparing these rates to 2007 figures shows an increase in unemployment of 3.5% (nation-wide) and 2.2% (state-wide).

Figure 5: Unemployment Rates

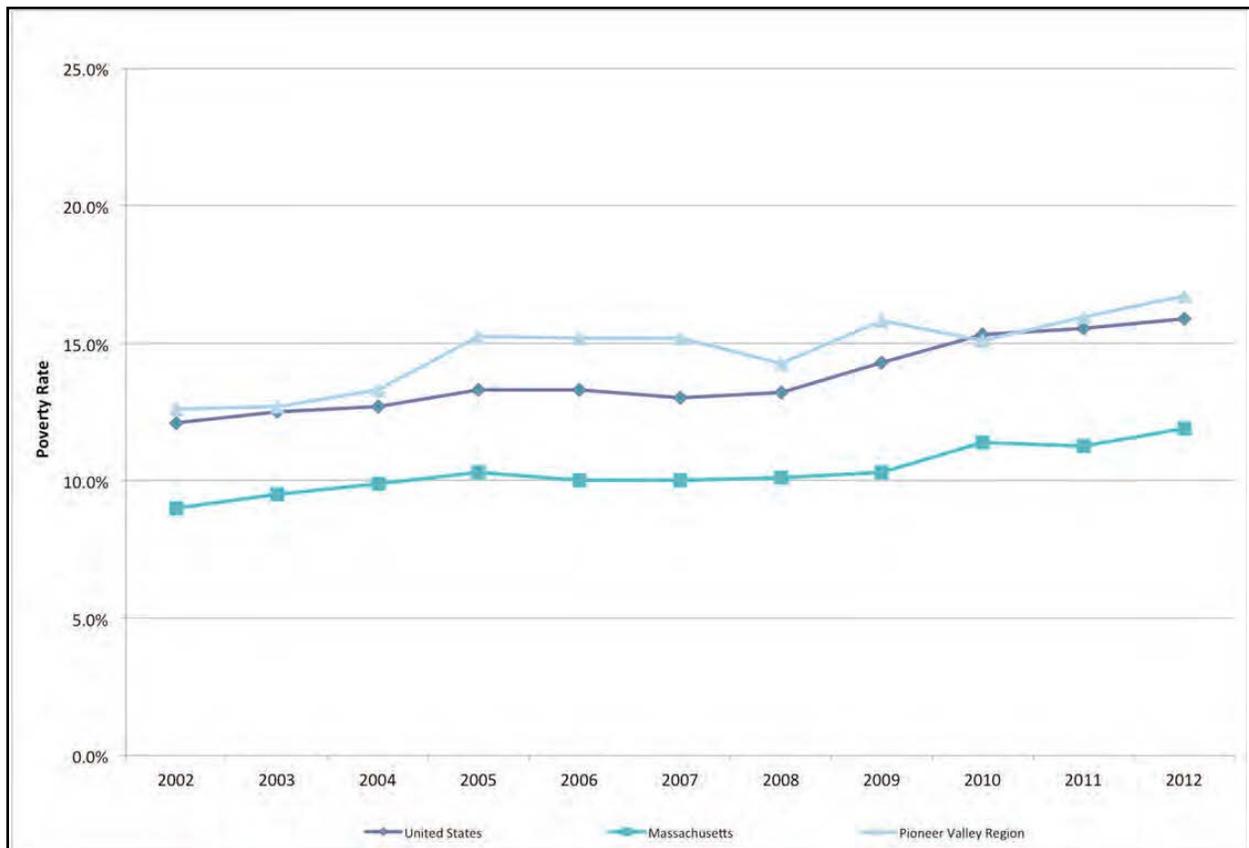


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, MA Office of Labor and Workforce Development, 2013

2.6 Identification of Low Income Populations

In the Pioneer Valley region, poverty rates of the general population have climbed from a low of 12.6% in 2002 to 16.7% in 2012 (as seen in Figure 9). Between 2005 and 2010, poverty rates hovered consistently around 15 percent, dropping slightly in 2008 but then increasing in 2009 to 15.8 and again in 2012 to 16.7 percent, a rate higher than has existed for over a decade. This rate continues to follow a decade-long pattern of exceeding Massachusetts' overall rate by several percentage points. In 2012, this difference was 5.9 percent. The poverty rate trends, and the per capita income growth patterns previously mentioned, suggest that the region did not share equally in the state's economic growth at the end of the 1990s, nor in the middle portion of the 2000s. While in 2010, for the first time in over a decade, the total poverty rate in the Pioneer Valley region was lower than that of the nation as a whole; the current 2012 rate is 1.9% above the national rate.

Figure 7: Poverty Rate in the Pioneer Valley Region, 2002-2012

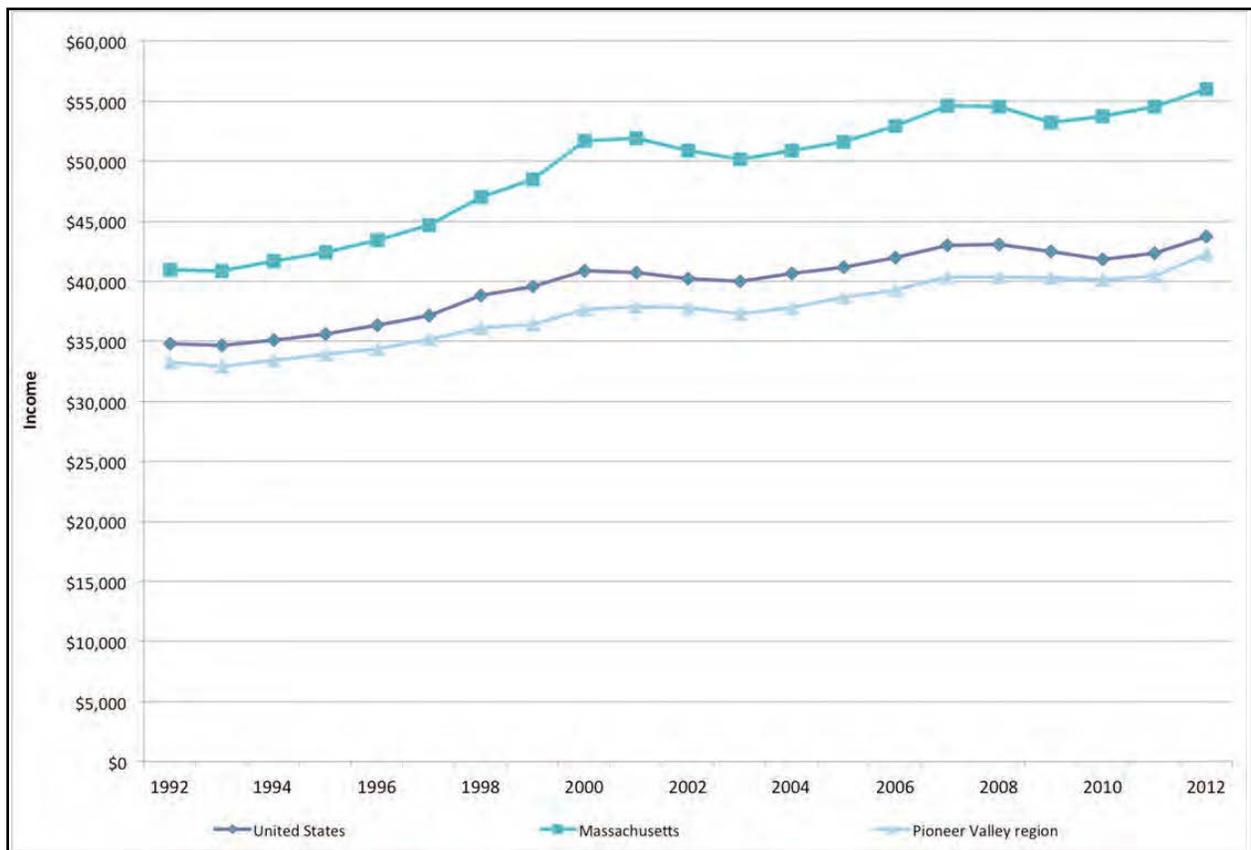


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), 2012
Note: Poverty rates displayed in this figure may differ slightly from other tables and figures as different data sources were required

Per capita income is a useful measure of economic growth because it controls for population change by measuring total income as it relates to population size. As can be seen in Figure 7, the

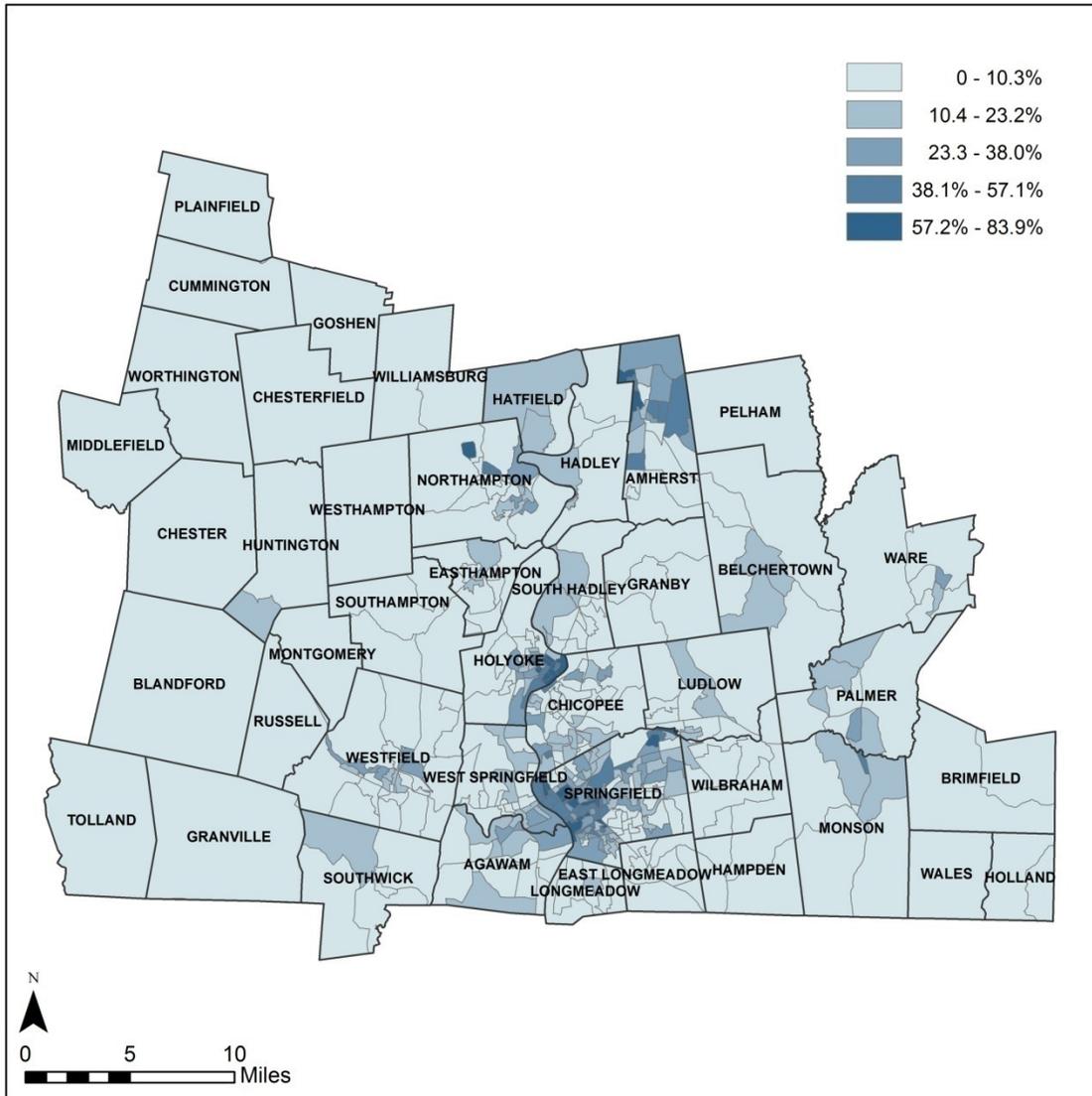
region's per capita income is significantly less than the per capita income for the Commonwealth and slightly below that of the nation. Much of the economic growth is the result of economic changes in the 1990s. In 1980, the difference between incomes in the Pioneer Valley and state, adjusting for inflation, was \$3,488 but in 2012 it was \$13,680. This difference exists despite significant regional growth, as evidenced by the 19% growth of per capita income between 1990 and 2012. However, in a comparable time period, Massachusetts incomes grew more than one third faster (25.8 percent). Since 2000, this trend has shifted and growth rates in the Pioneer Valley region have surpassed those of the state and nation: The region's per capita income gains have equaled 11.0% while gains have been a more moderate 7.6% statewide. According to 2008-2012 5-year estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, "real" per capita income rose between 2000 and 2012 in 15 Pioneer Valley region communities.

Figure 8: Per Capita Income (Adjusted to 2012 \$)



Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System, 1992-2012
 Note: For each new year, you need to change the formula for the adjusted income so the constant number is the same as the CPI for the most current year.
 This formula should be updated for all previous years as well.

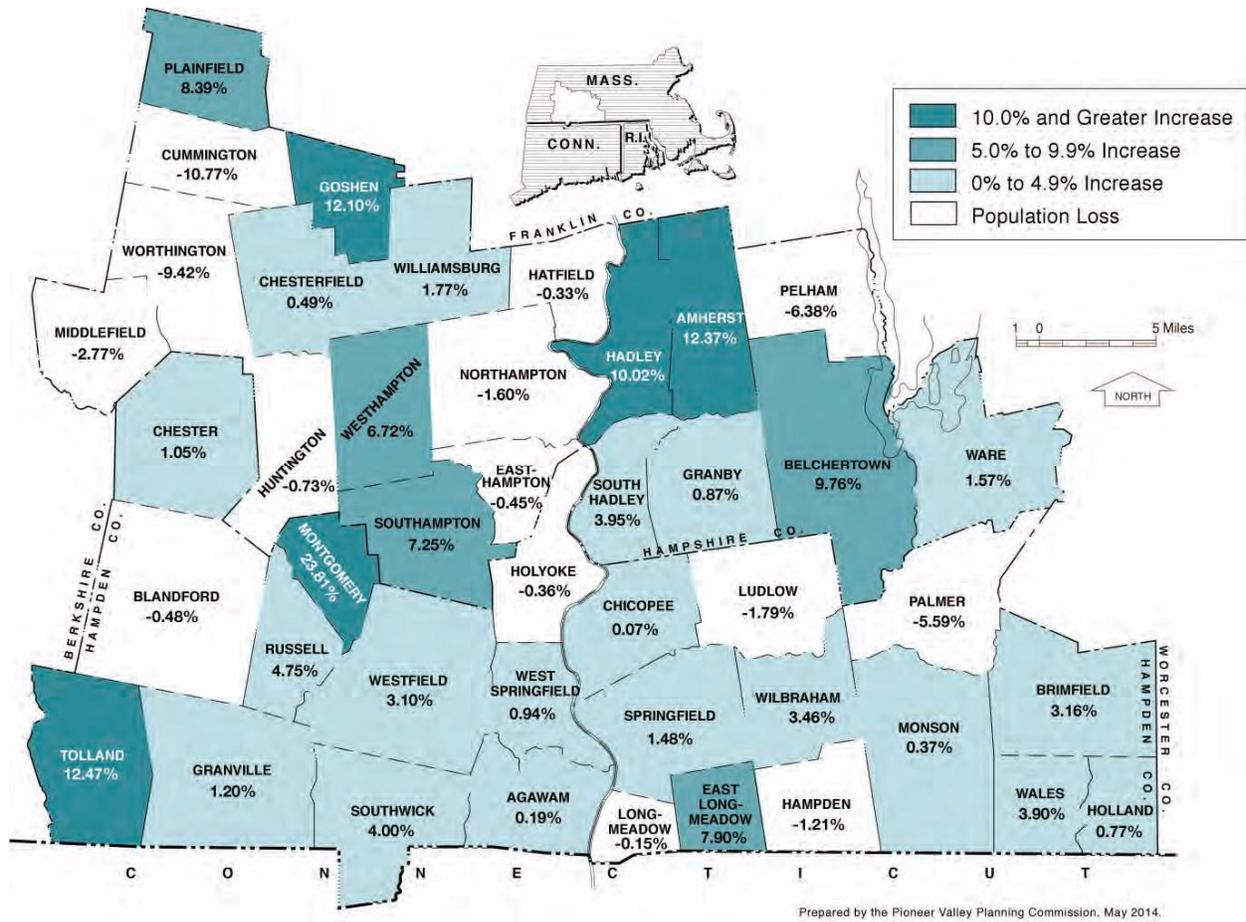
Figure 9: Individuals in the Pioneer Valley Below the Poverty Level



2.7 Changes in Population Size and Distribution

The region’s population increased only 1.9% between 2002 and 2012. Of that limited growth, a small amount occurred in the urban areas: Collectively, the population of Agawam, Chicopee, Holyoke, Springfield, Westfield, and West Springfield grew just over 1 percent between 2002 and 2012 and nearly a quarter of that growth occurred in Westfield alone. This departs only slightly from the trend during the 1990s when the region's three largest cities — Springfield, Chicopee, and Holyoke — all experienced population declines. There was some shift in this trend between 2002 and 2012, as all three cities experienced either stable population or slight growth instead of decline. At the same time, the last decade has seen Westfield surpass Holyoke as the city with the third largest population in the region.

Figure 10 : Changes in Community Poverty Rates 2000 to 2012



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000, American Community Survey 2008-12 5-Year Estimates

3 Overview of Existing Transportation Services

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 Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA)

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) serves 24 communities in western Massachusetts. The service area includes the cities of Springfield, Holyoke and Chicopee (see Figure 1), the college oriented communities of Amherst, Northampton and Westfield and rural communities such as Granby and Easthampton. The fixed route service area borders the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) to the north and Connecticut Transit (CT Transit) to the south.

PVTA transports about 50,000 riders each weekday and had an annual ridership of over 11 million passengers in FY2013. PVTA operates a mix of services, including bus routes and community shuttles that operate on fixed routes and schedules, as well as flexible services and paratransit service for persons with disabilities and older adults. The Authority is governed by an Advisory Board made up of one representative from each community in the region. The Board appoints an Administrator who is responsible for

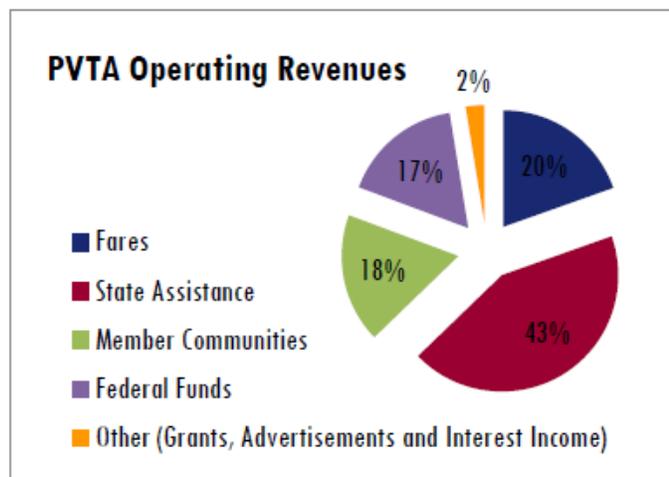
management of PVTA staff and operations.

PVTA also has an ADA and ridership committee that provides input to service design and operations. PVTA's annual operating budget was approximately \$27.8 million in FY2012. Capital expenditures are typically in the range of \$5-\$10 million.

PVTA operating costs are funded through a variety of sources, including fares (20%), grants and formula funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (43%), contributions from the Member communities (18%) and a variety of smaller sources, such as advertisement revenues, service contracts and interest income (see insert). Federal, state and local funds are also used to support capital projects, such as vehicles, but also passenger facilities such as Union Station. Federal participation in capital projects is typically higher and closer to 80% the Commonwealth typically contributes the remaining 20% of capital project costs.

PVTA also holds contracts with area educational institutions and other partner organizations. Colleges and universities are among the most important partners in PVTA's network; PVTA currently holds fare contracts with the Five Colleges Consortium (the University of

Figure 11: PVTA Operating Budget



Source: PVTA CSA Study Final Report 2014

Massachusetts, Hampshire College, Mt Holyoke College, Amherst College and Smith College), as well as Springfield Technical Community College (STCC), Westfield State University and Holyoke Community College (HCC). Colleges use these contracts to increase the amount of direct service provided to and from their campuses; the service, however, can be used by members of the general public traveling for any purpose. PVTA contracts with the local school districts in Holyoke and Springfield to operate “Helper” trips. The authority also contracts with the Hampden County Correctional Facility. In all cases, as mentioned, contract funds are used to augment the general public services and all routes and trips are open to all riders.

As a regional transit authority, PVTA provides service through a series of contracts with private transportation providers. Two operators – First Transit and the University of Massachusetts currently hold contacts for the fixed route service and a third operator – Hulmes Transportation – operates demand response services, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit service as well as the Easthampton, Palmer and Ware shuttles.

Figure 12: PVTA Service Area



Table 4: PVTA Member Communities

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

3.1a 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.

3.1b PVTA Paratransit Services

PVTA's paratransit service is provided to residents of PVTA's 24 member communities who, because of their disability, are certified by PVTA as ADA paratransit eligible, and to persons who are seniors (60 years of age and over). Service to ADA paratransit customers and senior customers is combined (that is, is not delivered separately), noting that (1) ADA paratransit service is provided beyond the minimally-required ¾ mile fixed-route corridors within the 24-member communities, but is limited temporally to the days and hours when fixed-route service is provided; and (2) senior (Dial-A-Ride) service is provided only during weekdays from 8:00 to 4:30. Also, additional ADA paratransit service extends to some other non-member communities that fall within the ¾ mile corridors. Fares range from \$2.50 to \$3.50 for all paratransit

customers and are twice the regular bus fare, as allowed by the ADA. Fares can be paid for in cash or with tickets from books of tickets sold by PVTA and at various senior centers.

By Massachusetts law, PVTA must retain a contractor or contractors to deliver service, i.e., PVTA cannot operate service with in-house employees, but PVTA can – and does – provide policy development and oversight and most of the support services and equipment. To deliver service, PVTA has retained Hulmes Transportation, which operates service out of its two facilities in Chicopee and Belchertown and out of PVTA’s facility in Northampton. PVTA also retains two First Transit-owned subsidiaries, the Springfield Area Transit Company (SATCO), based in Springfield, and the Valley Area Transit Company (VATCO), based in Northampton, to provide maintenance for the PVTA-owned vehicles and in-vehicle equipment.

Table 5: PVTA Paratransit Customer Ridership for the Past Three Fiscal Years*

Year	ADA Customer Trips	ADA Trip %	Annual ADA Change	DAR Customer Trips	DAR Trip %	Annual DAR Change	Total Customer Trips	Annual Total Change
FY 2012	192,434	71%	--	77,283	29%	--	269,717	--
FY 2013	199,068	74%	+3.4%	70,155	26%	-9.2%	269,223	-0.2%
FY 2014	206,696	76%	+3.8%	65,533	24%	-6.6%	272,228	+1.1%

* Additional “non-customer” passengers carried on these trips, and not reflected in the table above, include Personal Care Assistants (PCAs) and companions. These passengers add another 11% to the customer trip customer totals.

3.2 Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA)

The Franklin Regional Transit Authority provides fixed route and paratransit services in Hampden, Hampshire and Worcester Counties.

3.2a FRTA Fixed Route

FRTA operates six fixed routes, including three routes that connect to other transit systems outside of Franklin County; two of these routes connect to communities in the Pioneer Valley Region (and to the PVTA system):

- Route 31 operated between the Olver Transit Center in Greenfield and the Academy of Music in downtown Northampton via the communities of Deerfield, Whatley, and Hatfield. The current fare is \$1.50 and this route makes three trips in the morning and three trips in the afternoon. The routes operates Monday through Friday
- Route 23 operating between Olver Transit Center in Greenfield and the Haigis Mall on the University of Massachusetts campus in Amherst. The current fare for this route is \$1.50. The routes operates Monday through Friday with one trip down in the morning and one back in the afternoon.

3.2b FRTA Paratransit Service

There are 14 towns in the PVMPO region that are not members of the PVTA 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, Granville, Hatfield, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Plainfield, Russell, Southampton, Southwick, Westhampton, and Worthington. A total of XX,000 rides were provided on these services in FY2014.

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. FY2014 ridership for all these towns was approximately xx,000 trips; total cost of this service was \$XXX,000.

3.3 Executive Order 530 and Regional Coordinating Councils

In 2011 Gov. Patrick signed Executive Order 530 to examine and offer suggestions to improve/reform Community, Social Service and Paratransit transportation . The Order established a Commission of 16 members charged with making recommendations to improve transportation services used by persons with disabilities, low incomes, limited English proficiency, and seniors and visitors to the Commonwealth. . The Commission held public listening sessions across the state and based on the findings, developed over 60 recommendations ranging from making more wheelchair-accessible taxis available to facilitating paratransit transfers between transit regions. One recommendation of the report ([Executive Order 530 Final Report July 2012](#)) was to establish Coordinating Councils (RCCs) as part of a statewide initiative to improve service quality and increase efficiency.

In 2013, MassDOT and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) convened a Statewide Coordinating Council on Community Transportation to help with implementation of these recommendations. At the same time, MassDOT and EOHHS reached out to local organizations to form Regional Coordinating Councils around the state. The RCCs work on implementing the Executive Order 530 recommendations and other coordination efforts at the regional level and channel priorities up to the Statewide Council. Transportation providers, planners, human service providers, advocates and self-advocates, and other stakeholders work together to identify and address transportation needs in their region. While each Regional Coordinating Council is different and reflects local priorities they generally seek to:

- Identify unmet service needs
- Develop regional priorities
- Coordinate existing services to serve more people at the local level
- Report unmet needs to the appropriate government agency (i.e. MassDOT)
- Raise awareness of the important role community transportation services

Table 6: Regional Coordinating Councils in the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Region

RCC	Coverage Area	Contact	Meeting Schedule
Pioneer Valley	Agawam, Amherst, Chicopee, East Longmeadow, Easthampton, Granby, Hadley, Hampden, Hatfield, Holyoke, Longmeadow, Ludlow, Monson, Northampton, South Hadley, Springfield, West Springfield, Westfield, Wilbraham	Theadora Fisher, HST	Every 4 th Tuesday at the office of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Franklin County	Ashfield, Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Deerfield, Erving, Gill, Greenfield, Hawley, Heath, Leverett, Leyden, Monroe, Montague, New Salem, Northfield, Orange, Shelburne, Shutesbury, Sunderland, Warwick, Wendell, Whatley	Rachel Fichtenbaum, HST	Meeting dates/times vary. Meets in collaboration with Franklin Transit Advisory Committee
Hilltowns	Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Dalton, Florida, Goshen, Granville, Haydenville, Hinsdale, Huntington, Middlefield, Williamsburg	Theadora Fisher, HST	Group still forming, meeting dates and times vary

Figure 13: Pioneer Valley Regional Coordinating Council Meeting in 2014



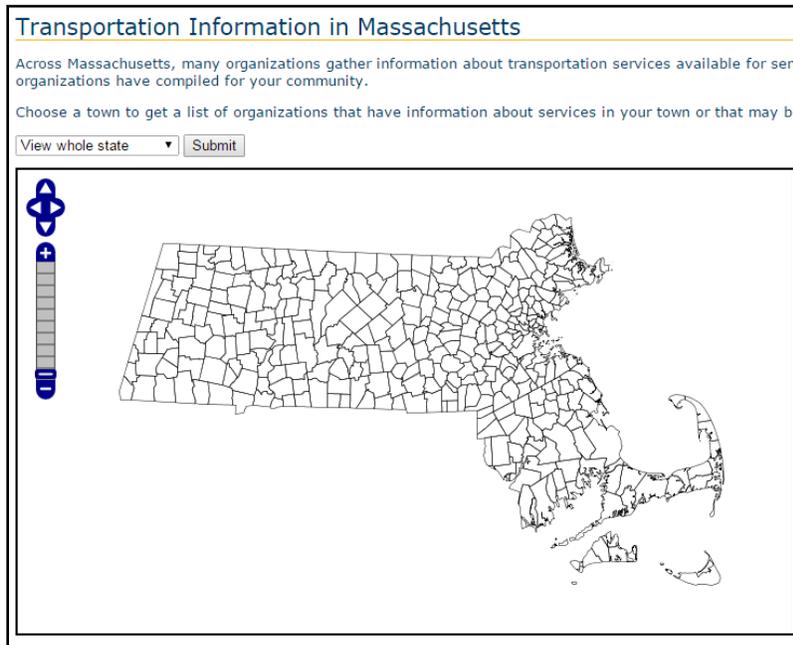
3.4 MassMobility Project

The MassMobility project provides free assistance to organizations to help coordinate with transportation services. The MassMobility project is coordinated by the EOHHS Human Service Transportation Office in cooperation with MassDOT is funded through a federal grant. The MassMobility project addresses barriers to quality of life for seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals across Massachusetts. MassMobility works to build coalitions and collaborative efforts, helps partnering organizations save money and serve more people, and

provides information on best practices and innovative strategies in community transportation. The EOHHS maintains a web for the project ([MassMobility](#)).

The new MassMobility online interactive map can help individuals find contact information for organizations in their city or town that can help them arrange a ride or connect with local transportation services. (http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/eohhs_hst/hst.html).

Figure 14: MassMobility Online Interactive Map



3.5 MassRides

MassRides is a private non-profit organization working with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). The MassRides Employer Partner Program helps businesses and their employees cut commuting costs, shorten travel times, and improve the quality of commutes. MassRides holds commuter events at a participating business's worksites to provide information to employees. Also, MassRides can help set up carpooling, vanpooling, preferential parking, transit, teleworking, flexible work hour programs, or other cost-saving programs, such as pre-tax payroll deductions of transit costs. NuRides has recently partnered with MassRides to offer rewards to people who take greener trips. It provides ride matching services for people who like to carpool to similar destinations.

3.6 Passenger Rail

As demand continues to grow for transportation options for intercity travel, passenger rail has gained support in both popularity and funding to become a viable alternative mode of travel in the Pioneer Valley in the near future. The Vermonter service runs one train/day in each direction between Washington D.C. and St. Albans, Vermont via Amherst and Springfield, MA. Recently,

improvements to the region's Connecticut River line were funded allowing the Vermonter to be rerouted to better serve the region's urbanized area with stops in Greenfield, Northampton, Holyoke, and Springfield MA. The project resulted in upgrades to the existing railroad ties and track along the line while improving the safety of at-grade crossings. This new service started on December 29, 2014. The Pioneer Valley Region and Connecticut have also been working toward the implementation of expanded passenger rail service between the three core cities of Springfield, Hartford, and New Haven.

3.7 Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Network / Complete Streets / Safe Routes to School

Bicycling and walking are popular transportation options in the Pioneer Valley. Historic town centers, vibrant central business districts and a variety of destination are within easy walking or bicycling distance from many residential neighborhoods. An expanding network of bikeways, sidewalks, and accommodating roadways provide residents with a variety of transportation alternatives. Many of the region's downtowns including Springfield, Holyoke, Northampton, and Amherst, offer easy accessibility to pedestrians and are supported by a strong transit network.

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority expanded its "Rack and Roll" bikes-on-buses program to the entire region. Now all fixed route buses in the PVTA fleet are equipped with frequently used racks, allowing cyclists to transport their bikes on public service transit lines throughout Hampden and Hampshire Counties.

Through the Pioneer Valley "Share the Road," program the PVPC has worked jointly with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) on the installation 380 bike related signs including "Share the Road" signs, "Bike Route" signs, "Connecticut River Walk" signs, as well as directional signs. The Pioneer Valley Share the Road Program also produced an educational video and public service announcement that was distributed through local cable access channels and via the internet.

The region has an ever expanding network of off-road facilities ranging from traditional bike paths to multi-use trails or linear parks. The PVPC assisted local municipalities on the installation of more than 300 bicycle parking racks throughout the region's urban cores with the capacity to secure more than 900 bicycles.

The PVPC also produced a series of instructional bike-rack installation videos to assist communities and nonprofit organizations which are available at the PVPC's video hosting site:

[PVPC Youtube](#)



Currently sixteen communities provide 80 miles of bicycle lanes, multi-use paths or "rail trails" in the region, while several

communities have similar projects in the design phase. In addition, the Pioneer Valley communities are active participants in “Baystate Bike Week” with dozens of activities hosted during the third week of May each year (<http://baystatebikeweek.org/>).

The Norwottuck Rail Trail is one example of the region’s commitment to bicycling and walking. The ten-mile Norwottuck Trail links together the communities of Northampton, Hadley, Amherst, and Belchertown, and facilitates travel to and from educational institutions, downtown commercial areas, major employment centers and residential neighborhoods. ,

Many communities in the Pioneer Valley have begun to address pedestrian safety and health related issues through the initiation of “Safe Routes to School Programs.” Safe Routes to School (SRTS) promotes healthy alternatives for children and parents in their travel to and from school. The program educates students, parents and community members on the value of walking and bicycling and provides funding for sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic calming measures. In 2014 ten of the Region’s 43 cities and towns had schools enrolled in the SRTS program including Amherst, Hadley, Holyoke, Longmeadow, Northampton, Palmer, Southampton, South Hadley, Springfield and Westfield.

3.8 Private Transportation and Service Providers

3.8a Private Medical Transportation

Some local medical practices are now beginning to offer transportation services to their clients. Transportation is provided through their own fleet of vehicles and drivers. One example of this type of service is Thayercare in Hadley, MA. Thayercare offers a complete day program for elderly and disabled persons. Transportation is provided through their fleet of 9 vehicles, including 4 vehicles that are equipped with wheelchair lifts. MassHealth reimburses Thayercare for the cost of the transportation at a fixed rate.

3.8b Zip Car

Zip Car is a membership based national car sharing service. Annual membership fees are \$60/year with an initial \$25 application fee. Members may reserve vehicles from the Zip Car fleet at a rate of \$8.50/hour or \$69/day. Six cars are currently available for rent to members in the study area. These cars are housed at Smith College. An additional 2 cars were recently added to the local Zip Car fleet. They are located in downtown Northampton in a parking lot directly behind the Northampton City Hall.

3.8c Peter Pan Bus Lines

Peter Pan Bus Lines offers regular service to Northampton, Amherst, Holyoke, and Springfield Massachusetts.

3.8d Uber

Uber is a ridesharing application available in many major cities in the United States. The Uber Smartphone application connects riders to drivers in over 70 cities. Drivers register with the company and advertise their availability to provide rides through the smartphone app. Similarly, people looking for a ride can request one through the smartphone app. The pricing structure is similar to metered taxis, but is billed completely through credit cards via the smartphone app. Uber is not currently available in the Pioneer Valley Region, but could be in the future.

3.8e Ambulance and Other Medical Vehicles

Many different municipal, private, hospital based and volunteer ambulance services transport patients to the local area hospitals. In addition, many first responder agencies (police and fire departments) do not transport patients, but provide direct emergency medical services in the community. There is the potential for the misuse and overuse of ambulance services to transport patients to routine medical appointments. Many insurance providers only reimburse ambulances for their service if they transport a patient to the hospital.

3.8f Taxis and Shuttles

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.

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. 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.

3.8g Valley Transporter

The Valley Transporter provides passenger transportation to regional train stations and airports. Advance reservations are required, but door-to-door service can be provided either via a shared van or exclusive ride. Charter service can be booked on an hourly basis.

3.8h 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.

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).

4 Identification of Unmet Needs for Human Mobility Services

Stakeholder Outreach

This update to the Pioneer Valley Coordinated Plan was developed through outreach to a wide range of transportation stakeholders in the region that included representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human-services providers, as well as members of the public. Public input for the CHST was incorporated from the PTVA 2014 Comprehensive Service Analysis, the 2014 PVTA Paratransit Service Analysis, the 2014 Pioneer Valley Regional Coordinating Council Survey, and the 2014 Getting to Healthy: Improving Access to Care study for Cooley Dickinson Health Care. Additional opportunities for public comment are scheduled after the release of this draft document and at the scheduled MPO public meeting.

One of the most significant outreach efforts is the quarterly meeting with paratransit van riders in the region. PVPC facilitates these meetings on behalf of PVTA, which provides ADA and senior dial-a-ride service in 24 municipalities. In 2014 PVTA coordinated a Comprehensive Paratransit Service Analysis that included extensive public outreach. Meetings were held with paratransit riders and human service providers. 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 PVTA 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 events and records customer comments regarding service.

Outreach for this plan was also conducted in conjunction with public involvement activities for the 2016-2020 Update to the Pioneer Valley Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is updated every four years as required by SAFETEA-LU.

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. Public input received at these discussions and by other means will be integrated into the final Coordinated Plan.

4.1 Needs Identified in the PVTA Fixed Route Comprehensive Service Analysis

The Massachusetts Transportation Finance Act of 2013 requires regional transit authorities to develop a comprehensive regional transit plan. In 2014 PVTA retained a consulting team of Nelson\Nygaard and ASG Planning to prepare a Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA). The objective of the CSA was to conduct a detailed review of existing transit services, identify strengths and weaknesses, and develop recommendations to improve service for existing riders and attract new riders. The plan was coordinated with PVPC and involved consultation with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) local employers, business associations, labor organizations and transit authority riders.

CSA Stakeholder and Community Input

The study team brought the service options to riders, members of the public and stakeholders in December 2013. This included four public meetings (Northampton, Holyoke, Springfield and Amherst); and three drop in sessions. Another outreach tool was the CSA project page hosted on the PVRTA website. Recommendations identified through the public and stakeholder input process included:

- Restore service along Belmont Street in southwestern Springfield
- Restore service between the Springfield Bus Terminal and East Longmeadow Big Y
- Operate express service from Amherst to Springfield daily
- Re-route some services connecting to HTC via the Holyoke Flats to increase and improve local connections
- Connect Route 31 (service to Boulders Apartments) with shopping centers on Route 9 without traveling into downtown Amherst.
- Operate Route 32 (Atkins Corner to UMass) year-round when Five Colleges Routes are not available.
- Serve the Survival Center, YMCA and Congregation B'nai Israel in downtown Northampton

Riders and other residents of the PVRTA service were also surveyed in 2013. An online survey was posted on the PVRTA website and paper surveys were distributed at bus hubs; paper surveys were also distributed to senior centers in the study area. The online survey was available in Spanish and English and paper copies were available in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. A total of 609 people responded.

Key findings:

- 70% of respondents do not always have access to a private vehicle. These “transit dependent” individuals are mainly clustered in Springfield, but also found throughout the service area.
- Most PVRTA riders reported having a good understanding of how to use PVRTA services, and most get information about the system through traditional sources, such as printed maps and schedules. Students were the most likely to use web-based information.
- In terms of service improvements, respondents identified fast and direct service as the most important, followed closely by improved service frequency. More bus stops and early morning service were ranked the lowest among the variables analyzed.
- Transit dependent riders ranked increased service frequency slightly higher than faster and direct service. More bus service on weekend days was also a high priority.
- Students ranked increased bus frequency as the highest priority, followed by fast and direct service. Students also prioritized more weekend day service. Student priorities were consistent with transit dependent riders.

Key Findings of the CSA Market Analysis

A key part of the CSA involved understanding the demand and market for transit services in PVTA's service area. The Pioneer Valley Region is changing. The market analysis examined the underlying demographic and socioeconomic conditions in the PVTA service area, as they relate to the demand and need for transit services. The findings of this market analysis indicate the following:

- Population and employment are overwhelmingly located in the Springfield area, including Springfield itself, West Springfield, Chicopee, and Holyoke. This area is the core of the PVTA market area, and can support the most significant levels of transit service. The clustering of jobs and population in close proximity make this area a strong market for transit service.
- Employment is particularly clustered in Springfield, Holyoke, Northampton, and at UMass
- Amherst. There are fewer jobs outside of these communities and they are generally more dispersed.
- Most large employment sites are served by fixed-route transit service. A few sites within the service area are not served, such as Hasbro Games and the Wing Memorial Hospital.
- Transit-dependent groups of low income individuals, individuals without access to a vehicle, and minorities generally cluster in areas with higher population density overall. Therefore, providing effective service to areas with higher population density also benefits transit dependent riders.
- Older adults do not exhibit the same level of clustering or patterns as other transit dependent groups and tend to be more dispersed throughout the PVTA service area. This makes individuals in this group more difficult to serve with fixed-route transit.
- The students at UMass Amherst are a strong market for transit; Amherst is densely populated and students have several characteristics that are consistent with transit dependent groups, including lower incomes, and less access to vehicles than the population as a whole.
- A challenge facing PVTA market is the geographic size of the service area and the relative isolation of several member communities. , some of which are strong markets for transit such as Northampton, Amherst, and Westfield, and to a lesser extent, East Hampton and South Hadley. While these communities may be able to support moderate levels of transit service on their own, they are difficult to effectively integrate into the PVTA system, since they are separated from the core market by corridors with very low transit demand. Depending on the size and needs of the riders, however, express services may be appropriate in some cases.
- Westfield has relatively less fixed-route transit service as compared with other communities with similar characteristics.
- Much of PVTA's service area does not support even moderate levels of fixed-route transit service. Many of the outlying communities are rural in character and lack

sufficient population and employment density to support transit service. However, some of these communities — Ware is a good example — may have sufficient demand for some type of limited service. For these, alternative service strategies such as flex service or limited stop express service may be feasible.

4.2 PVTA and FRTA Service Coordination Needs

The UMass campus and downtown Northampton are both service hubs for the PVTA system and offer connections to a variety of other transit routes that bring travelers to local and regional destinations. PVTA's 2014 Comprehensive Service Analysis offered the following recommendations regarding coordination between the two systems:

- **FRTA Route 31 should be extended to meet PVTA Route 31 in Sunderland.** This connection will allow people from Greenfield to get to/from the UMass campus. PVTA Route 31 has very frequent service departing from Sunderland center making transfers between routes convenient. Another opportunity would be to realign PVTA Route 31 so a portion of the trips would be scheduled to meet FRTA Route 31 at the Whately/South Deerfield Park and Ride lot.
- **Schedule FRTA Route 31 so it arrives in Northampton on the hour.** Arriving on the hour will facilitate connections to Holyoke, Hadley and Amherst and destinations within Northampton.

4.3 RTP Focus Group Needs Assessment

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. Other gaps and needs in the region's human services transportation system include:

- Lack of secure funding for human services transportation.
- Insufficient service frequencies to meet weekday demand for commuting to work and school in some location.
- Need for additional evening and weekend bus and ADA paratransit van service throughout the region.
- Need for more cross-town bus service in the Springfield and Holyoke areas.
- Need for more express bus routes on heavily traveled corridors.
- Need for more 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.

Need to 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 populations. 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. Continued outreach to Springfield and Holyoke area colleges is needed to increase ridership and reduce these students dependence on automobiles as their main commuting method.

Maintain and expand night and weekend service

Maintaining and expanding Sunday 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 3rd shift workers, but other types of service are needed.

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. Extending the hours of service on the primary routes servicing these communities and converting more community routes to FlexVan service should be considered. FlexVan service uses smaller transit vehicles that are able to provide more responsive and customer focused service to passengers.

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.

Better North South Connections

PVTA has improved connections between UMass in Amherst and Holyoke. To further open employment and educational opportunities between the Urban Core and the academic institutions similar service expansion is needed.

Improved safety for those using transit

Perception of safety is a significant deterrent in attracting customers. While PVTA has cameras installed on all buses for security, PVTA should continue efforts to monitor personal activity and address safety concerns at Terminals.

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.

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.

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.

Lack of Mobility Training

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.

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.

4.4 Needs Identified in the PVTA Paratransit Service Analysis

In 2014 the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) retained a consulting team composed of Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates and ASG Planning, to evaluate the way in which its

paratransit service is contracted and delivered, to assess service and cost performance, and to develop strategies to improve service efficiency and other shortcomings identified in the study.

Pioneer Valley Transit Authority wanted to better understand the strengths and shortcomings of its ADA paratransit and senior Dial-A-Ride services, and identify ways to improve service.

The study included a customer survey, stakeholder interviews, and two sets of public outreach meetings in June and November 2014. In addition, special analyses were conducted to assess the productiveness of the current run structures; what services are provided to ADA paratransit customers over and above what is minimally required; and how demand for the service might change in the future.

The study identified immediate, mid-term, and longer-term recommendations, some of which were implemented mid-study. The recommendations pertained to customer communication, confirmation calls, the scheduling, dispatching and travel training functions, driver relations, and future procurements/contracts. Nelson\Nygaard also estimated the increased demand for PVTA's paratransit that would result from the new casino in Springfield, and suggested ways to fund and serve that additional demand.

Overview of PVTA Paratransit Services (Sourced from the PVTA 2014 Paratransit CSA)

Key Observations of the 2014 Study Include:

- There was a modest increase in over-all customer trips from FY 2013 to FY 2014.
- While ADA paratransit ridership has increased steadily over the last three years, senior ridership has been declining, which makes sense given the fairly level capacity of the system. One explanation for the growth in ADA ridership is as follows. As many seniors grow older, they also become ADA paratransit-eligible, and there is a built-in incentive for these seniors to apply for ADA paratransit service: PVTA is obligated to serve ADA paratransit customers without a pattern of denials, whereas non-ADA seniors requesting service can be denied if there is no capacity to accommodate the trips.
- The FY 2014 ratio of ADA trips to senior DAR trips was about 3 to 1.
- Average hold time for customers calling to make trip reservations or inquiries for the last three years has been fairly stable, decreasing only slightly from 1:59 in FY 2012 to 1:56 in FY 2013 to 1:55 in FY 2013. The industry target – and PVTA's contractual target – is to achieve no more than a 2:00 minute average hold time.
- The denial rate for ADA paratransit trips was 0.01% in FY 2013 and 0.04% in FY 2014, or approximately 1 denial every 3 weekdays on average, and also noting that these trips were not denied outright but involved negotiated pick-up times beyond the one hour time frame allowed by the ADA.
- The on-time performance (OTP) of PVTA paratransit is exceptional. From a detailed analysis of a week's worth of raw data (from the week of April 27, 2014), it was determined that the on-time performance ranged from a low of 94.2% to a high of 97.6%, and averaged 96.4%, which the better than the industry standard of 90% to 92%.

- Ride Time: PVTA’s contractual target is to ensure that a minimum of 96% of the trips have a ride time that is under 60 minutes in duration. Over the last three fiscal years, the percentage of trips with ride times under 60 minutes has averaged over 97%. From a random sample of days over the past three years, the average ride time for each day ranged from 17.72 minutes per trip to 21.19 minutes per trip.

- PVTA’s complaint ratio has ranged from 3.5 to 4.6 complaints per 10,000 trips over the last three years, but still well below the industry target of no more than 10 complaints per 10,000 trips.
- Accident Frequency Ratio: The industry standard for preventable accidents is 1.0 preventable accident per 100,000 (total) vehicle miles. PVTA’s preventable accident frequency ratio has ranged from 0.89 to 1.11 over the last three years, and averaged 0.99, which is within the target goal.
- No-Show and Missed Trip Rates: The FY 2014 percentage of no-shows (at 2.6%) and missed trips (at 0.05%) are within acceptable ranges. The industry standards for these metrics are no more than 5% for no-shows and no more than 0.05 % for missed trips.
- The percentage of total cancellations is generally considered to be high if over 15%. With total cancellations at twice that rate, it is suspected that customers are still making “placeholder reservations” and then cancelling. While the advance cancellations do not affect the scheduling process, the same-day cancellations do. As some of the scheduling processes and practices are improved, it is hoped that PVTA will see a reduction of this rate.

Table 7: FY 2013 breakdown of cancellations

	Number of Cancellation	Percent of Cancellation	Percent of 269,223 Customer Trips
Advance Cancellation	46,085	56%	17.1%
Same-Day Cancellations	31,235	38%	11.6%
Late Cancellations	5,058	6%	1.9%
Total	82,378	100%	30.6%

CUSTOMER SURVEY

Paratransit customers were surveyed in June of 2014. A total of 478 surveys were completed. The overall perception of the PVTA paratransit system was positive, as reflected in table X.

Table 8: Paratransit customers were surveyed

Category	2011	2014
Customer satisfaction with overall quality and value of service decreased	95%	89%
Satisfaction with the safety of service increased	94%	97%
Satisfaction with ADA eligibility process increased	64%	86%
Satisfaction with driver courtesy increased	94%	95%
Satisfaction with van cleanliness increased	91%	92%
Satisfaction with van arriving within 20 minute window decreased	89%	83%
Satisfaction with helpfulness of reservation staff decreased	91%	87%

Study Recommendations

The Study divided recommendations based first on the division of responsibilities (PVTA vs. Hulmes), and then based on immediacy.

Recommendations for PVTA

Immediate (current fiscal and contract year)

- Customer Notices –PVTA should adopt a written plan that details (a) what general information about the program should be made available and via what media; (b) examples of policy changes that would trigger public meetings, customer letters, seat drops, website changes, announcements when customers are on hold, and other *accessible* communication mechanisms; (c) the dates on which a specific policy change becomes effective; and (d) time periods by which the above actions must be accomplished. PVTA should also provide some information in large print as well as in a format that can be used by speech recognition software. In the preparation of this plan, PVTA should seek suggestions from customers via customer focus groups, e.g., persons with visual impairments including those who are computer-literate and use screen-readers as well as those who are not computer-literate. PVTA should also consider announcing refresher messages or policy changes on the telephone system (when customers are on hold) as well as the use of social media.
- Customer Feedback Follow-Up – When a customer provides feedback that results in a disciplinary action, re-training, training curricula addition or adjustment, etc., PVTA should send the customer an explanation of the issue and the response by PVTA.
- Scheduling – Speed Settings -- PVTA/Hulmes should experiment with decreased speed settings within a test database, comparing the results with actual travel times that are identified by dispatchers and drivers as realistic. Once a speed setting appears to mirror actual travel times, drivers and dispatchers should “sign-off” on the change.
- Scheduling – Zone Reduction -- PVTA/Hulmes should also experiment with changing the size of the zones, per those suggested by Hulmes’ schedulers, with a test database to first see whether that change has a positive impact.

- Scheduling – Wheelchair Passenger LIFO Analysis -- PVTA/Hulmes should perform an analysis on circuitous routing that results from Last-In/First Out (LIFO) limitations, and if a pattern emerges, to explore whether the assignment of a different vehicle type would alleviate these limitations.
- Automated Confirmation Calls – PVTA should reduce the length of confirmation calls by eliminating redundant information. **PVTA has already completed this task.**
- Arrival Calls – PVTA has been testing the use of arrival calls with a subset of customers to test their effectiveness. Arrival calls are activated by the driver when the van is approximately five minutes from the house. The use of arrival calls should be made available to the entire customer base. PVTA’s IVR system and ADEPT’s customer profile can accommodate a secondary contact, if a customer wishes to use two different telephone numbers for confirmation calls and arrival calls, respectively. Prior to activating arrivals calls for all customers, an information blast should go out to all customers informing of this new offering and suggesting that a cell phone number be used for the arrival calls (if the customer does have a cell phone) as at least 50% of the arrival calls will be away from the house. (Related driver training on arrival calls should also be performed by Hulmes.)
- Expand Dispatching Staff - PVTA and Hulmes need to collectively determine whether a different approach to dispatching is affordable under the current contract, or perhaps warrants an amendment. The dispatchers need to be “freed” from some of the more mundane parts of their current job, thereby enabling them to spend more time proactively identifying and addressing problems in the future. To do this, they each need one or more dispatching assistants who can take over the jobs of communicating with the drivers by voice (for example, in response to a no-show call) and communicating with customers (e.g., Where’s my ride? calls).
- Travel Time Analysis – PVTA should periodically undertake an analysis to ensure that actual travel times for ADA paratransit trips comply with the FTA definition for excessive travel times.

Mid-Term (beginning next fiscal/contract year up until the next procurement cycle)

- Arrival Calls – Currently, arrival calls are activated manually by drivers. PVTA should explore opportunities to automate this function based on the real-time location of the vehicles.
- Same-Day and Late Cancellations – A number of other recommendations documented here in (including reducing the length of confirmation calls and improvements to the scheduling process) should also have a direct or indirect effect on reducing cancellations. PVTA should continue to monitor cancellations by type to determine whether these actions had that desired effect.
- Service Monitoring and Eligibility Determination Staff – Currently, one administrative person is dedicated to each of these functions. Both managers would benefit from a shared analyst to assist with their respective responsibilities, and for department coverage when these managers are in the field. The Paratransit Manager would also greatly benefit from a second computer monitor. Among other things, this could be used to display the location of vehicles – in real time, or at times associated with certain events being

reviewed – as well as to display reports in ADEPT while the manager enters data from these reports into spreadsheets for trend analyses on the other monitor.

- Travel Training Staff – Currently, PVTA’s two travel trainers focus on providing intensive one-on-training, and are providing such training to 5 to 7 customers at any given time. It is recommended that PVTA expand its travel training program, with the hiring of new staff, to expand the types of travel training offered. In particular, it is recommended that PVTA expand its travel training program to include more group training, targeting seniors and veterans, for example, as well as the possibility of training agency liaisons so that they are more familiar with PVTA’s fixed-route services and travel training program. It is also possible that agency partners could possibly share the cost of this staff expansion._

Long-Term (reflected in the next service provider RFP)

- Contractual Target for Preventable Accidents. In its next RFP, PVTA should consider revising its contractual standard of 10 preventable accidents per year to an accident frequency ratio of 1 preventable accident per 100,000 (total) miles, an industry standard, as the number of accidents is more a function of miles travelled.
- ADA Minimum Service Area - In the next procurement cycle, PVTA may wish to consider scaling back to the ADA minimum service area if the follow-up analysis involving a more statistically relevant data set unveils that significant savings would result.
- Service Model - The specific recommendation is to design the next RFP to include North and South zones, and to allow proposers to bid on the North zone only, the South zone only, or both the North and the South Zone as one (for example, with one call center and multiple operational facilities, much like Hulmes does at present). In this way, PVTA will be able to determine from the technical and cost proposals whether or not there are any inherent advantages in moving to a two carrier, zoned system. If PVTA elects to pursue the multi-carrier design, it can subsequently explore whether there are any inherent advantages to centralizing reservations, scheduling, and dispatching in the following procurement cycle.

Recommendations for Hulmes Transportation

Immediate

- Driver Re-training -- Hulmes should formalize its re-training program, and indicate the actions or events which trigger re-training, including a pattern of complaints about a specific driver or a specific shortcoming among many drivers. There may also be a need, from similar “triggers” to revise the initial and on-going driver training. One area of training or re-training that may be needed, based on rider comments, is providing assistance to customers with visual impairments, noting that PVTA has produced a training video that addresses the appropriate way for drivers to relate to passengers with visual impairments.
- Run Structure Adjustments -- By using more part-time and split shifts, Hulmes can create a run structure that better mirrors the demand profile, and in particular, reduced the oversupply of service during the mid-day.
- Scheduling Practices - Effective immediately, schedulers should (1) manually schedule together – and anchor -- standing order trips that have the same O-D and are at the same time; and (2) re-

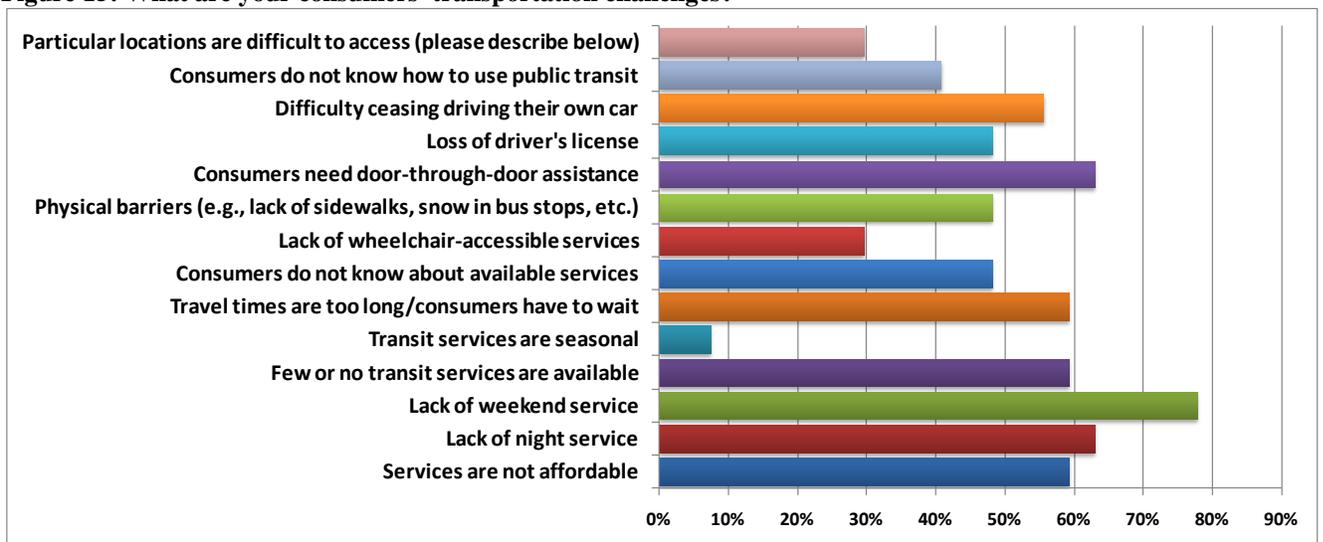
schedule the obvious cases where schedulers identify “tweaks” to the schedule that after the last batch has been completed. From there, it would make sense to strategically schedule and anchor group (many-to-one) trips, dialysis trips, and perhaps employment trips leaving other standing orders trips to the batch scheduling process, and noting that employment trips need be anchored only at the workplace drop-off location (and return trip pick-up location.) This recommendation was given to PVTA as a mid-study finding, and **PVTA has since implemented it** via meetings with Hulmes management.

- Dedicated Dispatch “AVL” Monitors - One of Hulmes’ dispatchers demonstrated how long it takes to pull up a map with real-time information on vehicle locations, clearly demonstrating why these maps are not used in practice. Separate monitors for each dispatch pod need to be provided and dedicated to this map, so that the dispatch assistants can check on the real-time location in response to the driver no-show requests and same-day customer “where’s my ride?” requests.
- Driver Feedback - Hulmes should institute regular opportunities for driver feedback to reservations and scheduling.
- Driver Retention - One area where management appears to fall short is driver retention efforts. More can be done in the way of driver appreciation, especially given that most drivers appear to be revered by customers. Driver appreciation starts with improving communication – praising in public, disciplining in private, and more formal and frequent communications with drivers. And it continues with not renegeing on promises. If breaks are scheduled, they should be honored (driver should not routinely lose their break (or have their break greatly reduced) because they are also doing trips meant for another (uncovered) run.) Paratransit driving is a challenging profession, and those who have found this vocation usually have done so because they feel they are making a difference.
- Driver Shortage - The dearth of drivers and the inability to cover runs – in the off-season – is of major concern. A significant “finder’s fee” should be offered to drivers and other staff who find applicants that are hired and remain employees in good standing for a certain period. Hulmes may also need to re-visit its wages and fringe benefit package for drivers if it is unable to fully cover its runs.
- Utility Cleaners - Hulmes should hire “utility cleaners” to clean the inside and outside of the vehicles.

4.5 Pioneer Valley Regional Coordinating Council Transportation Needs Assessment

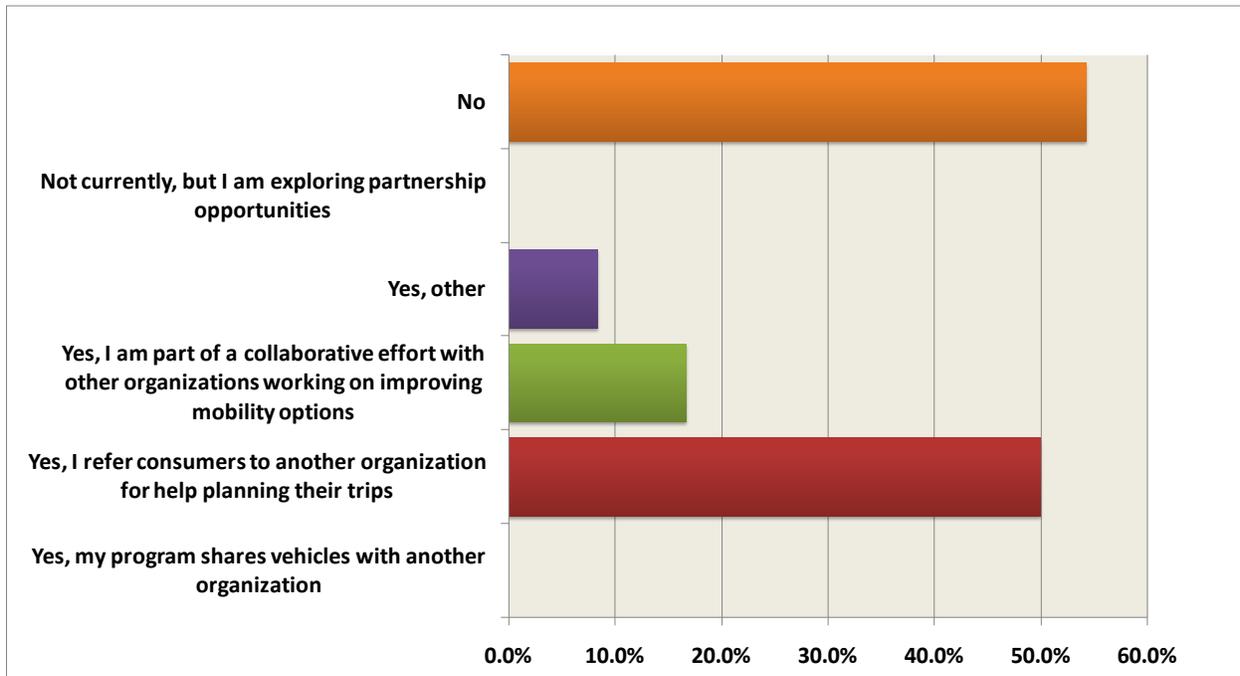
In 2014, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Human Service Transportation Office assisted the PVRCC in developing a survey to identify transportation barriers for seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals in the Greater Springfield Metropolitan Area. The Transportation Needs Assessment Survey was distributed to organizations and service providers. The survey had strong representation from Senior Center and Councils on Aging among other groups and clearly documented challenges facing these organizations including; finding & training volunteers, finding substitute drivers, lack of capacity, and unrealistic expectations from families and consumers. The survey also identified numerous issues facing consumers including a need for weekend service, inability to provide trips for basic needs, and a need for door-through-door service, among others.

Figure 15: What are your consumers' transportation challenges?



In addition to identifying transportation problems and challenges for organizations, the survey revealed opportunities for better coordination and cooperation. While 50% of respondents make referrals to transportation providers, or to other agencies for help with transportation issues none of the respondents reported sharing vehicles with another organization, and some don't partner at all on transportation issues.

Figure 16: Do you work with others on transportation issues?



4.6 EOHHS Human Service Transportation Office Goals

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) comprises 15 agencies that collectively deliver and administer most of the Commonwealth’s health and human services. The Office supports the health and well-being of residents through services that include Medicaid, nutrition assistance, mental health, public health, and transitional assistance. EOHHS provides services to approximately 1.5 million of the Commonwealth’s most vulnerable populations. The EOHHS Human Service Transportation (HST) Office works to ensure access to care and to help individuals live in their community of choice.

HST Mission: To promote access to health and human services, employment and community life by managing a statewide transportation brokerage network for eligible consumers and by providing technical assistance and outreach strategies in support of local mobility and transportation coordination efforts especially for transportation-disadvantaged Massachusetts residents.

The 2015 goals of the HST Office are (from the HST web site):

1. Continue to work collaboratively with MassHealth to transition Day Hab and Early Intervention Transportation Requests to PT-1’s for processing by MassHealth’s Customer Service Center in April 2015.
2. Work collaboratively with MassHealth, service providers, programs and the Brokers to implement changes in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) which will require the addition of

a National Provider Identification (NPI) number of the authorizing provider on any service claims submitted for processing. (July 2015) This work will include:

- Identifying the NPI numbers of the authorized providers on the 200,000 active PT-1's currently in use.
 - Verifying that prescribing providers are certified by MassHealth to Order/Refer/ Prescribe transportation services
 - Working with Brokers to modify their software to capture the NPI numbers on claims prior to submission for payment.
3. Engage with EOHHS agencies to identify and support any opportunities to provide additional transportation services through the HST Brokerage.
 4. Continue to partner with MassDOT on implementing Executive Order 530 report policy recommendations via the Statewide Coordinating Council on Community Transportation (SCCCT) and Regional Coordination Councils (RCCs).
 5. Lead the technical assistance team to assist RCCs across the state and collaborate with MassDOT to support local mobility management and coordination efforts.
 6. Continue implementation of the federal grant for a robust mobility management information network (i.e., MassMobility) by:
 - Broadening and deepening communication and outreach
 - Continuing to support existing transportation coordination efforts and developing relationships with key stakeholders in new regions of the Commonwealth to facilitate formation of additional RCCs
 - Hosting three to four regional volunteer driver program forums across the state to bring together peers for information sharing and networking support for existing programs and to foster development of new volunteer driver initiatives
 - Developing a long term sustainability plan for integrating mobility management in health and human services.

4.7 Getting to Healthy: Improving Access to Care -- a study for the Cooley Dickinson Health Care (CDHC) Healthy Communities Committee

In 2014 Cooley Dickinson contracted with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) & United Way Hampshire County (UWHC) to explore the dynamics of transportation and health care and to recommend strategies to promote better quality of life and health outcomes. United Way of Hampshire County engaged a total 487 individuals in identifying the health access challenges they face, including but not limited to transportation challenges. Targeted in this process were community members who were elderly, physically disabled, limited in English proficiency, mentally ill, addicted to substances, and low-income. Participants were asked to reflect not only on how transportation and other barriers have affected their access to health services at Cooley Dickinson Hospital and in physicians' offices, but also how these factors have affected their access to related health services and activities that would support them in leading a healthy life.

4.8 Criteria for Evaluation of Proposals

Proposals to address the above service gaps should have affirmative answers to the following questions in order to receive consideration for funding:

1. Does the proposal address a need in current service provisions as defined in the Pioneer Valley Coordinated Plan?
2. Can the proposal be achieved with the given technical capacity of the project sponsor?
3. Does the proposal serve a population and geographic area of need?
4. Does the proposal outline the operating, capital, and administrative costs?
5. Does the proposal outline the source of matching funds?
6. Does the proposal make use of available resources and leverage resources to the extent possible?

4.9 MassDOT Priorities for Funding

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation Community Transit Program identifies the following funding priorities with respect to service:

1. Providing a compelling case for the need for the service;
2. Lay out a realistic plan for collaborating with other organizations to leverage the resources we are providing to the greatest extent possible;
3. Commit yourself to performance reporting that demonstrates the effectiveness of your service.

4.10 Examples of Projects and Strategies for Addressing Transportation Needs

The following project ideas and strategies can be used to address transportation needs of elderly individuals and people with disabilities and to improve coordination of services. The examples cited below are not intended to limit the approach taken to meet the goals of the funding program. All eligible proposals will be considered for funding.

- Maintain and improve the coverage of night and weekend services
- Improve existing fixed route and paratransit transit coverage
- Promote the use of fixed route services by seniors and people with disabilities
- Improve travel training of existing and potential transit passengers
- Expanded transportation service from rural communities to urban centers
- Purchase accessible vehicles
- Expansion of paratransit service beyond the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile required by the ADA
- Implementation of same day service
- Providing escorts or assisting riders to or through the door of their destination
- Taxi reimbursement for (accessible) taxis
- Purchase of accessible taxis
- Purchase of ITS or other computer or hardware systems
- Travel training
- Supporting mobility management and coordination programs

- Purchase radios and communication equipment
- Install vehicle shelters
- Purchase wheelchair lifts and restraints
- Improve marketing and outreach
- Promote local livability, public health and access.
- Support community based mobility to sources of healthy foods.
- Enhance inner city bus service connecting major cities within and outside the region:
- Provide additional paratransit service in rural areas
- Improve outreach efforts at medical facilities
- Rehabilitate, manufacture, or overhaul vehicles
- Undertake preventive maintenance
- Implement vehicle procurement, testing, inspection, and acceptance costs
- Lease equipment when more cost-effective than purchasing
- Acquire transportation services under a contract, lease, or other arrangement
- Introduce new technology into public transportation
- Extend hours to meet nontraditional work schedules
- Increase service frequency
- Increase weekend service
- Increase service coverage
- New or expanded routes
- Paratransit services beyond the ADA requirements
- Expand service boundaries
- Improve accessibility of existing services
- Improve amenities (shelters, maps, signs, non-English signs)
- Improve access to stations/stops
- Improve driver training
- Improve communications
- Improve scheduling systems
- Provide travel training and trip planning/counseling resources
- Provide one-on-one travel counseling
- Develop volunteer driver programs
- Coordinate services to share vehicles
- Modify eligibility requirements to allow passengers to ride in the same vehicle

Appendix A: Type E Van Specification

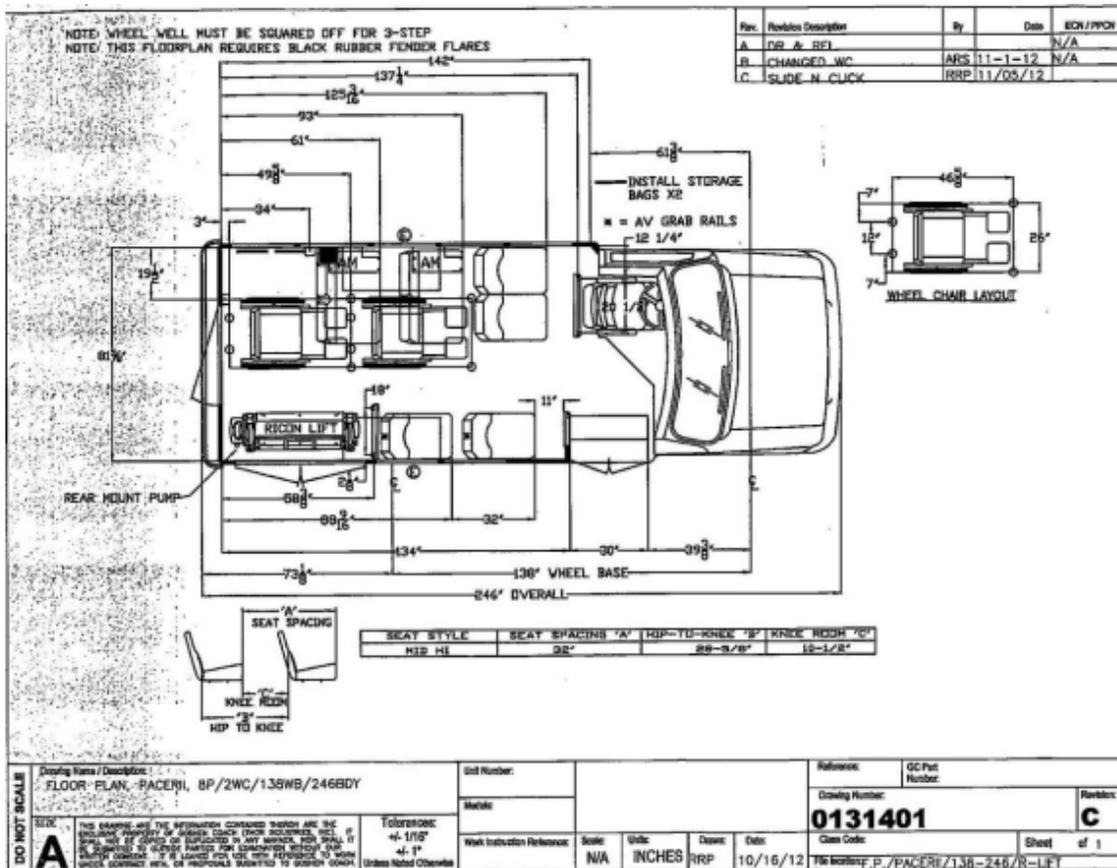
Type E

Type E vehicles meet the following specifications:

- Capacity:** 8-passenger
- Body Design:** Body-on-chassis, single rear wheel
- Wheelchair Accommodation:** Two or more wheelchair positions
- Total Cost:** \$56,814
- 80% Split :** \$45,451
- 20% Split :** \$11,363



TYPE E



Driver's License Req.: Class D

Appendix B: MAP-21 Section 5310 Fact Sheet

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