

RPA 13-18

Passenger Transportation Plan



2024-29

Approved

RPA-13:

RPA-18:

Table of Contents

Introduction and Planning Process	1
Inventory	4
Area Profile	13
Population	13
Employment	20
Limited English Proficiency	25
Coordination Issues	27
Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic	27
Status of 2018 Priorities and Strategies	27
Public Input & General Assessment of Service, Management, Fleet, and Facility Needs	31
Needs, Gaps, and Barriers to Providing Service	31
Priorities and Strategies	36
Recruit, Train and Retain Drivers	37
Increase Transit Options	38
Update and Grow Transit Fleets	39
Increase Funding Opportunities	39
Exploratory or Long-Term Strategies	40
Financial Resources	42
Federal Funding Resources	43
State Funding Resources	45
Local Funding Resources	47
Other Funding Resources	48
Appendix	49
Appendix 1: SWITA Vehicle Inventory	49
Appendix 2: Human Services Fleet	54
Appendix 3: Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) Committee List	55
Appendix 4: TAG Minutes	56
Appendix 5: Ridership Survey	57
Appendix 6: Provider Survey	66

Introduction and Planning Process

The Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) is a long-term planning document for the regions of RPA-13 and RPA-18 in Southwest Iowa to promote coordinated transportation planning and create a needs-based project justification for all passenger transportation programs including public transit and human service transportation. RPA-13 is administered by the Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) and RPA-18 is administered by the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA). This region includes Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby Counties within the State of Iowa (see figure 1). This five-year plan is the result of a process to inventory the available transportation services, assess the transportation needs of the residents, explore the effectiveness of current services, and explore options to better meet the needs of the citizens of Southwest Iowa. The PTP is designed to promote joint, coordinated passenger transportation planning programs that further the development of the local and regional public transportation systems.

The main public transit provider in this region is Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA). SWITA is based in Atlantic and consists of 103 vehicles and 82 employees providing various services throughout the eight-county region.

The PTP was developed through guidance provided by the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT). The following groups provided input:

- RPA-13
- RPA-18
- Southwest Iowa Transportation Advisory Group (TAG)
- Humans Services Advisory Council (HSAC)
- Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA)
- Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO)
- Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT)

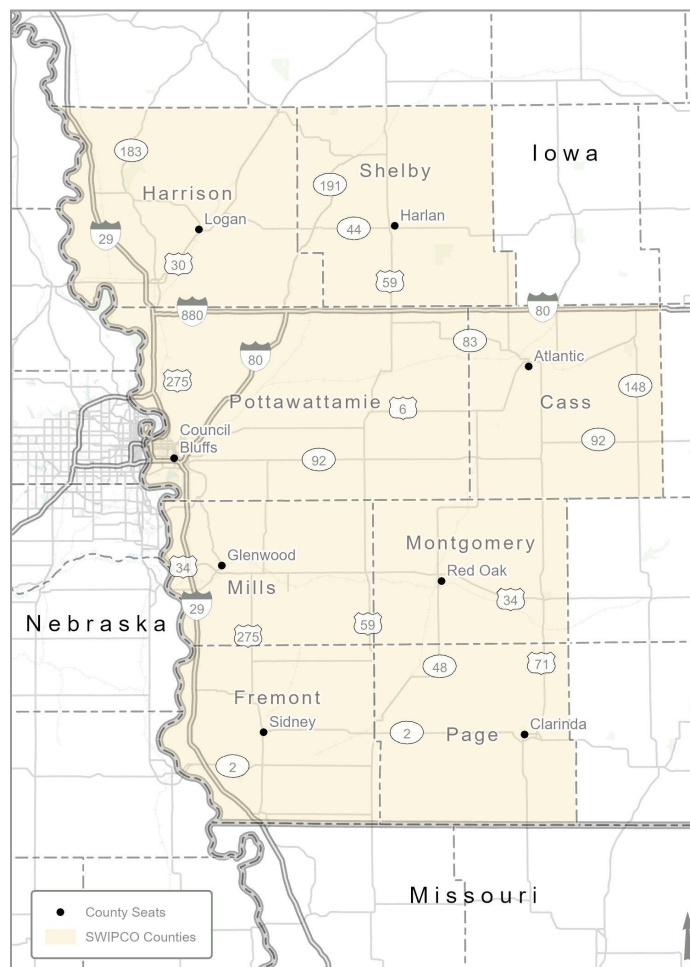


Figure 1: Map of all RPA-13 and RPA-18 Counties

Purpose of the Passenger Transportation Plan

The following goals were identified by the Iowa Department of Transportation as justification for Regional Planning Affiliations statewide to develop passenger transportation plans:

1. Improve transportation services
2. Increase passenger transportation coordination
3. Create awareness of unmet needs
4. Develop new working partnerships
5. Assist decision-makers, advocates, and consumers in understanding the range of transportation options available
6. Develop justification for future passenger transportation investments
7. Eliminate overlapping of services

The document is meant to provide a better understanding of the passenger transportation services provided and guidance for future decisions. It is designed to coordinate health and human service, transportation, and public transit to promote and further the development of the region's public transportation system. See figure 2 below for an overview of the planning process for this document.



Figure 2: The Passenger Transportation Plan planning process.

Outreach

In October 2022, a survey was sent to all member-organizations of the TAG and other human service agencies/organizations and private transportation providers in the region. The online surveys were distributed by e-mail and responses were collected electronically over a thirty day period. The survey was conducted in an effort to obtain private transportation provider inventory information and to identify transportation needs and gaps in service. The information collected from thirty (30) responding organizations was used in the development of this document and a more detailed discussion of the survey results is in Section IV Coordination Efforts and Issues. A sample survey can be found in Appendix 5.

A ridership survey was conducted by SWITA in March 2021 and was distributed both via email list and direct mail. The objective of this survey was to gauge the wants, needs, thoughts, feelings and beliefs of riders and potential riders within the Region. This survey was highly successful and received 378 responses from 105 current riders and 273 potential riders. A sample survey can be found in Appendix 6.

Preliminary Analysis

Regional demographic data was collected using a combination of American Community Survey (ACS) and Census data. Recorded survey responses were summarized based on common themes, and all preliminary data was presented to the Transportation Advisory Group (TAG). This information was used to inform needs and gaps within provided transportation services. More detailed analysis was then conducted following the TAG meeting on an as needed basis throughout the rest of the plan creation phase.

Transportation Advisory Group

SWITA, with guidance from the Iowa DOT, and RPA 13 & 18 have actively worked since the 2013 PTP to develop a Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) to speak for the needs of the rural areas that make up the constituencies. A current list of the TAG group is attached in the Appendix 3. The most recent TAG meeting was held on December 8, 2022 and the next is scheduled for March 2023. Typically, the TAG group will meet at least twice a year. Minutes of these meetings are also attached in the Appendix 4. In this December meeting members were presented base demographic and survey data, and used these points to develop key aspects of the PTP; Needs and Gaps, and Priorities and Strategies.

Draft PTP Creation

The Draft PTP was distributed to members of the TAG for their review, comments and concurrence. A Draft PTP was also submitted to SWITA, the Iowa Department of Transportation, and to the Federal Transportation Administration for review and comments. The RPA-13/SWIPCO website allows members of the public to view and comment on the Draft PTP also. Copies of the draft document were available at the office of the Southwest Iowa Planning Council in Atlantic and at the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency in Omaha. The final version of the Passenger Transportation Plan was drafted and submitted to the RPA-13 and RPA-18 Transportation Technical Committees for their recommendation to the Policy Boards of the RPAs. Following public meetings, the Policy Boards passed the Resolution shown on page one of this document approving the final version of the Passenger Transportation Plan.

Inventory

The following is a discussion of existing passenger transportation operations and agencies within the RPA 13 & 18 regions. For all tables listed below, ride counts indicate the total number of rides provided, not the total number of riders.

Types of Services

Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA)

Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) is the largest provider of transportation services in the region, and provides demand response, taxi service, Medicaid medical transportation, general medical transports, shopper routes to trade centers, and contracted services. These services are located throughout the RPA 13 & 18 regions. A breakdown of total rides and ride count types for fiscal year 2022 can be found in table 1 below.

Table 1: Ride counts by County of origin for FY2022.

	Total Rides	Disabled Rides	Elderly Rides	General Public
Cass	52,516	17,030	6,553	28,773
Fremont	3,081	2,265	621	164
Harrison	15,142	8,518	5,448	1,176
Mills	47,004	20,851	756	25,373
Montgomery	63,923	44,918	3,169	15,836
Page	15,417	2,655	7,332	5,430
Pottawattamie	243,943	164,352	2,687	76,904
Shelby	36,093	9,550	3,343	23,200

SWITA is managed by the Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) Policy Board. A Board of Supervisor and an additional nominated representative represent each county. One Board of Supervisor represents each Pottawattamie and Mills Counties, despite not being in the SWIPCO region in any other capacity. Three at-large representatives are also appointed to the board.

SWITA operates general public service 24 hours/7 days a week depending on driver availability. Office hours are 6:00am to 5:00pm Monday-Friday. SWITA observes the following federal

holidays and does not run service on New Year’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Friday after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day. The vast majority of SWITA vehicles are ADA accessible. The non-ADA accessible vehicles are used when no ADA accommodations are requested, typically for services such as work routes or student transportation.

SWITA Taxi Services

SWITA provides a taxi service which they fully manage and operate in six cities in RPAs 13 & 18 on the following days and hours of operation:

Atlantic	Mon – Sat: 7:00 a.m to 10:00 p.m; Sun: 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m
Glenwood	Mon – Fri: 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Harlan	Mon – Fri: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Missouri Valley	Mon – Fri: 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Red Oak	Mon – Fri: 7:30 a.m to noon and 1:00 p.m to 3:30 p.m.
Shenandoah	Mon – Fri: 8:30 to noon and 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The rate for taxi service is \$2.50 for the general public, and \$2.00 for clients aged 60+. Total rides for each of SWITAs taxi services are summarized below in table 2.

Table 2: Total rides provided in FY21 and FY22 for each of SWITA’s taxi services.

Fiscal Year	Ride Program	Rides
FY21	Atlantic Taxi	28,104
FY22	Atlantic Taxi	36,484

Fiscal Year	Ride Program	Rides
FY21	Shenandoah Taxi	2,616
FY22	Shenandoah Taxi	2,864

Fiscal Year	Ride Program	Rides
FY21	Harlan Taxi	8,880
FY22	Harlan Taxi	8,892

Fiscal Year	Ride Program	Rides
FY21	Missouri Valley Taxi	2,880
FY22	Missouri Valley Taxi	2,940

Fiscal Year	Ride Program	Rides
FY21	Red Oak Taxi	5,088
FY22	Red Oak Taxi	3,948

Fiscal Year	Ride Program	Rides
FY21	Glenwood Taxi	2,448
FY22	Glenwood Taxi	2,576

Summer Fun Bus

The Summer fun bus is operated in cities that are provided taxi services and operates as a “taxi for kids” service during summer break. K-12 students can purchase an unlimited summer pass for \$40.00 and schedule a ride to a location pre approved by a parent or guardian (i.e. the pool, library, summer camp, extra curricular activities, etc.). Rides are also open to the public at the adult rate of \$2.50 per ride. The service operates Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm.

SWITA Vanpooling

SWITA has provided vanpool services to professionals impacted by the closing of CDS Global's Red Oak location since April 2010 by leasing employees a vehicle to get from Page County to Harlan. In addition, SWITA extended taxi service hours in Red Oak to meet the needs of the community. Vanpool ride counts are shown in table 3 below.

Table 3: Ride counts for SWITA's CDS Van Pool ride program for FY21 and FY22

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Ride Program</u>	<u>Rides</u>
FY21	CDS Van Pool	453
FY22	CDS Van Pool	492

SWITA Employee/Student Commuter Services

Beginning in 2012, SWITA started to add routes to school and work for residents of the region. These routes pickup from a single location and drop off at a worksite or school, operating on an on demand basis. These routes now include transportation from Atlantic and Omaha/Council Bluffs to OSI (a food processing plant located in Oakland, IA with over 500 employees), paratransit service around Council Bluffs, transportation to Monogram Foods in Harlan, and transportation to 3HO, a packaging company in Lewis, IA. Currently, the routes for Menards are seasonal and do not operate as a full time work route. Most recently, work route rides have averaged 8,360 riders per month. SWITA has increased its capacity in order to accommodate the increased demand for employee transportation, incorporating two 33-passenger buses and two 40-passenger buses into the service rotation. Ridership numbers for work routes are located in table 4 below.

Table 4: Ride counts for work routes in FY21 and FY22

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Ride Program</u>	<u>Rides</u>		<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Ride Program</u>	<u>Rides</u>
FY21	Atlantic OSI	2,760		FY21	Monogram	6,108
FY22	Atlantic OSI	25,728		FY22	Monogram	7,296
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Ride Program</u>	<u>Rides</u>		<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Ride Program</u>	<u>Rides</u>
FY21	Council Bluffs OSI	34,464		FY21	3HO	3,420
FY22	Council Bluffs OSI	55,896		FY22	3HO	2,772

SWITA initiated a service with Iowa Western Community College (IWCC) in August of 2012 to transport students in the Design Technology Program from Council Bluffs to the Atlantic campus twice weekly. Ridership for this service is listed in table 5 below.

Table 5: Ride counts for the IWCC route in FY21 and FY22.

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Ride Program</u>	<u>Rides</u>
FY21	IWCC	828
FY22	IWCC	442

SWITA Service Rates

Service rates for SWITA rides vary based on the type of trip. Fares for each ride type are shown in table 6 below.

Table 6: SWITA fares by ride type

SWITA Rates (Medical / Special Trips)

Non-Medical	\$40.00/hour
Medical	\$30.00/hour

SWITA Taxi Service Fares

(Atlantic, Glenwood, Red Oak, Shenandoah, Missouri Valley & Harlan)

Age 60+	\$2.00/trip
General Public	\$2.50/trip

SWITA Student Transportation (not served by school buses)

(Atlantic, Glenwood, Red Oak, Shenandoah, Missouri Valley & Harlan)

Students	\$1.50/trip
----------	-------------

SWITA Fleet Inventory

In order to provide the services it does to the eight county region, SWITA must operate and maintain a robust fleet of vehicles capable of meeting various needs. SWITA currently operates with 66 buses, 32 minivans, and 5 cars. Of these vehicles, 63 buses and 19 minivans are ADA compliant. A full fleet inventory can be found in Appendix 1.



Health and Human Service Agencies

Health and human service agencies generally provide services to and from medical appointments, work, and/or community services during weekday hours for their clients. Other rides exist for transportation to social events, activities or shopping that may occur in evenings, on an “as needed” basis. The following chart lists services available through agencies that responded to the provider survey, or who were included in the previous plan update. These agencies provide transportation using agency-owned or leased vehicles, contracted transportation services, or volunteers/staff driving personal vehicles. Some agencies provide only service for persons with disabilities or persons 65 years of age (as noted below).

Table 7: Health and service agencies that provide transportation services in the region.

Agency	County	City	Type of Service
Amerigroup	Statewide	West Des Moines	Elderly/Disability
Bethany Heights	Pott	Council Bluffs	Elderly
Boost4Families	Pott	Oakland	Other
Carter Lake Senior Center	Pott	Carter Lake	Elderly
Cass Health	Cass	Atlantic	Disability/Public
Fair Oaks Residential Care	Page	Shenandoah	Elderly
Faith in Action Volunteers	Fremont	Other	Elderly/Disability
Gardenview Care Center	Page	Shenandoah	Medical
Goldenrod Manor Care	Page	Clarinda	Elderly
Good Samaritan Society	Montgomery	Villisca & Red Oak	Elderly
Iowa Voc Rehab Svcs.	Cass	Atlantic	Disability
Jennie Edmundson Hosp.	Pott	Council Bluffs	Medical
Manor of Malvern	Mills	Malvern	Medical
Nishna Productions	Page	Shenandoah	Disability
Page Co Passengers	Page	Clarinda	Other
REM	Cass	Atlantic	Disability
Salem Lutheran Homes	Shelby	Elk Horn	Elderly
Trivium Life Services	Harrison	Missouri Valley	Human Service
Waubonsie MHC	Page	Clarinda	Medical
WESCO Industries	Crawford/Shelby	Denison	Disabled/Elderly

Schools

School districts within the region provide fixed route transportation to rural students within their respective school districts who aren't served by school buses. The cost of this service per pupil varies with each school district, but is typically very expensive. The average cost per mile, ranges from \$1.48 to \$5.36.

The majority of cities where schools are located are quite small, and in most instances the distance from home to school for students living within the city boundaries is only a matter of a few blocks. However, pre-school and very young elementary students are too young to walk by themselves, and lack school transportation options if their parents or caregivers are unable to transport them. Some parents believe that it is not safe for their children to walk to school and choose riding public transportation as a safer alternative. School districts often do not provide fixed route transportation options to students living within the city boundaries. This creates a transportation need for students living in-town.

To account for some of this gap, SWITA provides in-town busing service for the Atlantic, Glenwood and Harlan School Districts. Parents contract with SWITA directly to provide this service outside of the school district. This service currently serves 176 students. SWITA also provides in-town preschool transportation in Red Oak which serves an additional 28 students. These rides are coordinated through Boost 4 Families. These communities are the primary centers of population and commerce within the counties comprising this region, and have populations between 5,000 and 20,000 people.

Per fleet information provided by the Iowa Department of Education, the RPA 13 and 18 region school districts' fleets consist of 362 yellow buses and 223 small vehicles for a total of 585 vehicles, approximately 11 (2%), of which are ADA compliant. However, very few school districts provided information on ADA vehicle compliance, so the ratio of compliant vehicles may be under represented in table 8 below.



Table 8: School District Fleet Inventory

District Name	Yellow Buses	Small Vehicles	ADA Compliant
A-H-S-T	15	8	*
Atlantic	16	13	3
Boyer Valley	10	5	*
CAM	13	12	*
Clarinda	9	4	0
Council Bluffs	0	2	*
East Mills	12	8	0
Elk Horn-Kimballton-Exira	11	9	*
Essex	5	4	*
Fremont-Mills	8	7	0
Glenwood	27	13	2
Griswold	12	8	2
Harlan	23	12	*
IKM-Manning	17	10	*
Lewis Central	29	15	0
Logan-Magnolia	11	5	*
Missouri Valley	10	8	*
Nishnabotna	4	8	*
Red Oak	12	9	1
Riverside	12	5	2
Shenandoah	11	10	*
Sidney	6	10	1
South Page	6	6	*
Stanton	6	5	*
Treynor	12	5	*
Tri-Center	17	5	*
Underwood	15	4	*
Southwest Valley (Villisca)	15	10	*
West Harrison	11	7	0
Woodbine	8	4	*
Total	362	226	11

*ADA Modification information not provided

Passenger Rail Service

Amtrak maintains one scheduled passenger line in the region, with stops located directly adjacent to the region in Omaha, NE and Creston, IA but no stops within the region. Amtrak is a federally subsidized passenger rail provider serving the region. Amtrak's passenger rail network encompasses 24,000 miles stretched across 45 states, serving approximately 530 communities. Although predominantly serving urban centers throughout the Northeast, Midwest and West Coast, Amtrak also serves about 180 destinations in non-metropolitan communities. Amtrak provides train service to approximately 10 percent of the communities that have intercity bus service. There are no Amtrak stations located in RPAs 13 or 18.

Airports

There are no commercial airports within RPAs 13 & 18. The closest commercial airport is located in Omaha, Nebraska, which is approximately 80 miles from the furthest point in the RPAs. There are eight (8) basic-service, publicly owned airports located within the region (figure 3).

Air and Rail Coordination

As there are no commercial airports or railway stations within the region, these modes of transportation have not been a focus of the PTP process or the transit advisory group. SWITA occasionally provides transportation to Eppley Airfield in Omaha or to the Amtrak Station in Omaha.

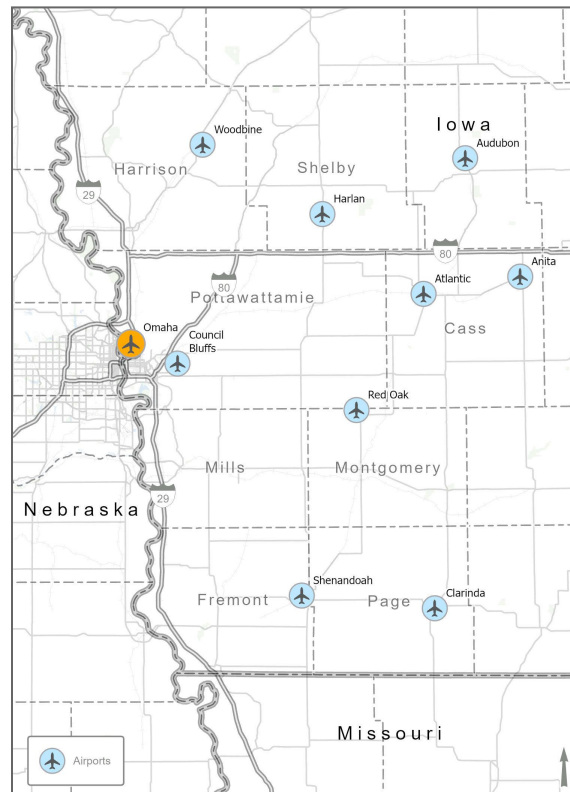


Figure 3: Local airports. Note that neither the Omaha nor Council Bluffs airports are located within the boundaries of Region 13 or 18.

Private Charter Operators

Windstar Lines is a private charter company headquartered in Carroll, Iowa with service primarily serving locations throughout the Midwest, with service extending to all 48 contiguous states and into Canada. Regions 13 and 18 are served by Windstar's Carroll, IA location. According to their website (www.gowindstar.com), Windstar Lines provides group transportation from all of their terminal locations to customers including tour operators, NCAA and Pro Sports, Shuttle Services, Bank Travel Clubs, military and government, church groups, employee commuter shuttles, schools and universities, corporate travel, weddings, entertainers and bands, emergency services, airports, resorts and casinos, family reunions, and scheduled service bus tickets. Their fleet consists of 21 passenger mini buses, 36 passenger luxury motorcoaches, 46 passenger sleeper motorcoaches, and 56 passenger luxury motorcoaches. Groups can charter by the hour, day, or multi-day. Prices are determined by the hours involved, miles, and additional fees such as parking, tolls, and relief drivers. Should Windstar decline a charter request, SWITA is able to assist with rates available upon request.

Area Profile

Data Source

Due to delays imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 decennial census data is not yet fully available. Data in this section including current population estimates, age breakouts, median and per capita income, zero-vehicle households, unemployment rates, and commuting times were retrieved from ACS 5-year estimates for 2016-2020. Any other data sources are indicated on their respective table or figure.

Population

The region consists of seventy-five incorporated communities and is largely rural with agriculture as the primary land use. According to the 2016-2020 ACS, the region's population is 116,818 (excluding Council Bluffs). Populations are shown by census tract in figure 4, with a by county population total shown in table 9. Urban areas consist of only six to seven percent of the land use in each county. The five largest cities or economic centers located within the region include Atlantic, Clarinda, Glenwood, Red Oak, and Shenandoah each having a population over the 5,000 minimum to be considered an urban area. The City of Council Bluffs is considered part of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and its population is not included in the RPA.

Table 9: Total population by County.

RPA-13		RPA-18	
Cass County	12,990	Harrison County	14,043
Fremont County	6,895	Mills County	15,023
Montgomery County	10,016	Pottawattamie County	31,102
Page County	15,205	Shelby County	11,544
Subtotal	45,106	Subtotal	71,712
Total Population: 116,818			

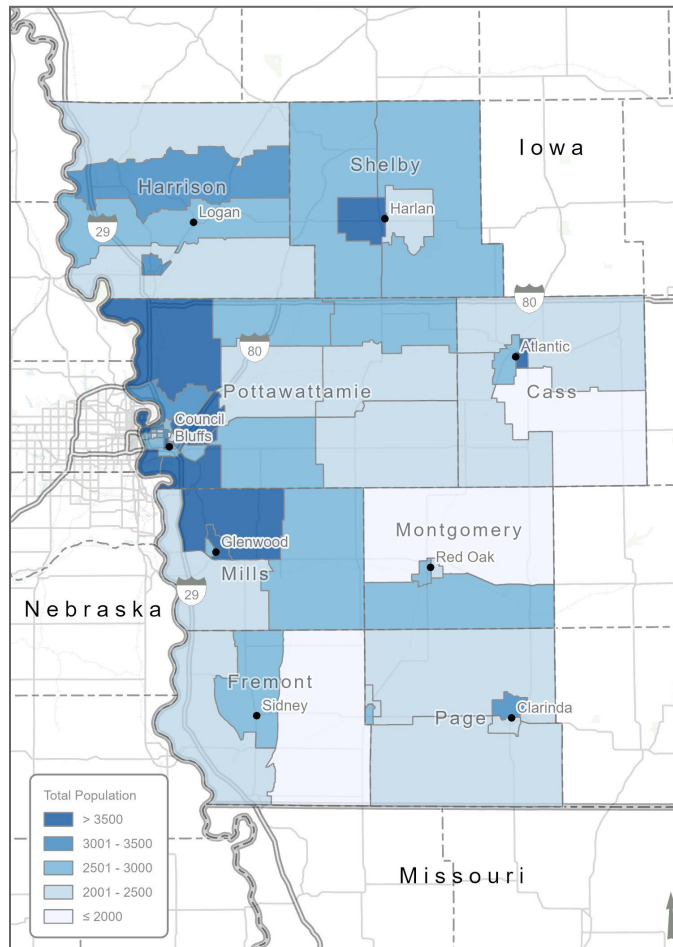


Figure 4: Populations by census tract.

Population Change

RPA-13 is the second smallest planning affiliation in the state with regards to population; Page County has the largest population of RPA-13's four counties with 15,205 residents and Fremont County has the smallest population with 6,895. The population in the RPA has declined steadily in each of the four counties over the past few decades and has not seen an increase since the 1980 census with the exclusion of Page County having seen a slight increase in the 1980 Census. The overall trend in each county, and the region as a whole, has been a steady population decline. RPA-18 has a significantly larger population, likely due to its proximity to the Council Bluffs-Omaha Metropolitan area. Mills and Pottawattamie Counties are the only counties in RPA-18 that have seen growth in population since 1980. Harrison and Shelby Counties show similar declining trends to RPA-13 counties. The overall declining population trend in the region creates an increasingly sparse population which makes public transportation more costly and harder to maintain.

Age

When comparing the changes in age groups from 2010 to 2020, it is clear the region's population is aging. Generally speaking, age groups 54 years old and younger tend to be decreasing while age groups 55 years and older are increasing. The largest increase was in the age group of 65 to 74 years old at nearly 29% while the biggest decrease was seen in the 45 to 54 years old range at -27% (figure 5).

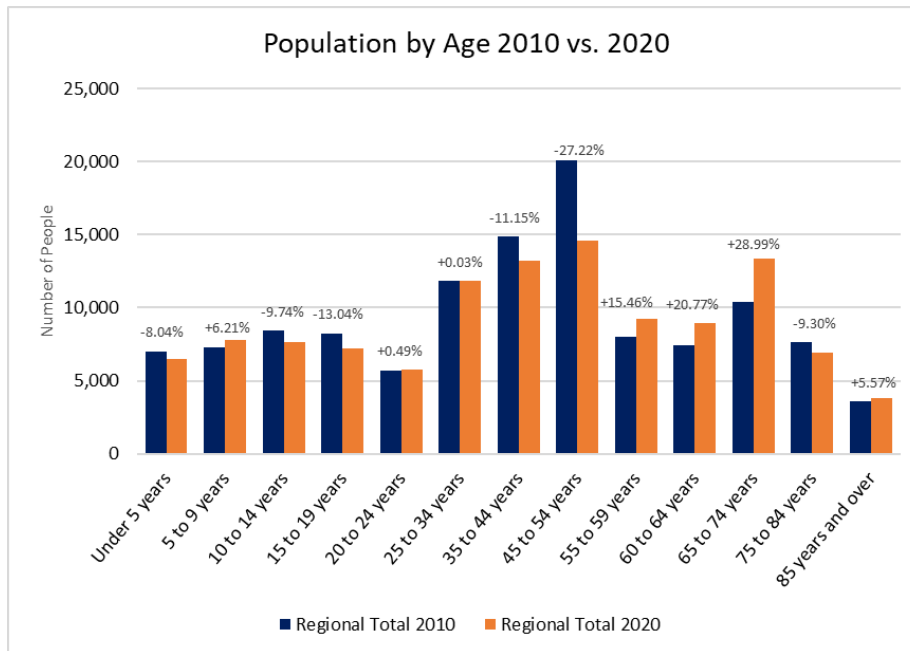


Figure 5: Population split by age group across the region for 2010 (blue) and 2020 (orange)

The population within the region is older and aging faster than the State of Iowa as a whole (figure 6). According to the 2016-2020 ACS, the State of Iowa has a median age of 38.3 years which was up 0.79% since the 2010 Census. Shelby County has the highest median age in the region at 46.5 years while Mills County saw the largest increase in median age since 2010 at 4.38%. A map showing the percentage population of each regional census tract over the age of 65 is shown in figure 7.

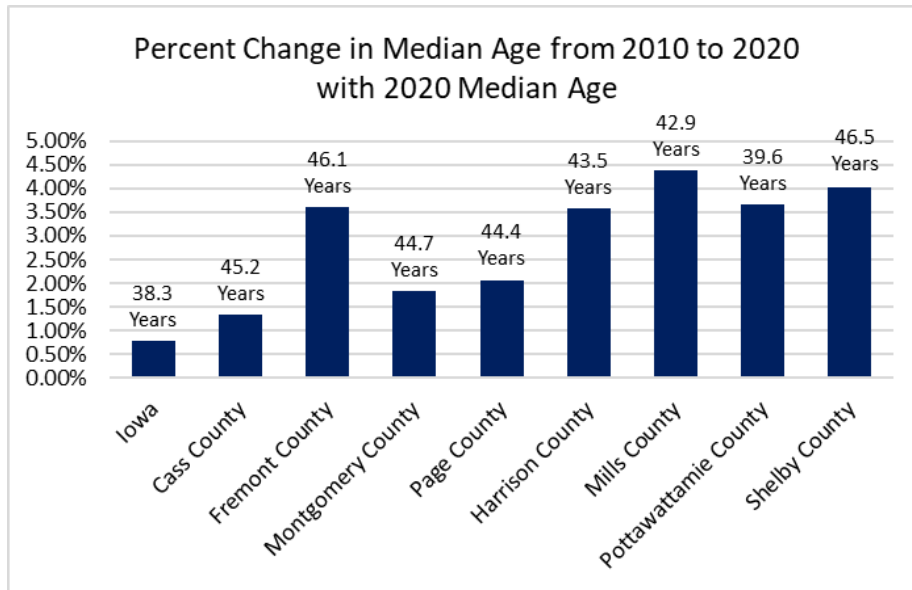


Figure 6: Percent change in median age from 2010 to 2020 by County. Iowa percent change is provided to show a comparison to the statewide average change.

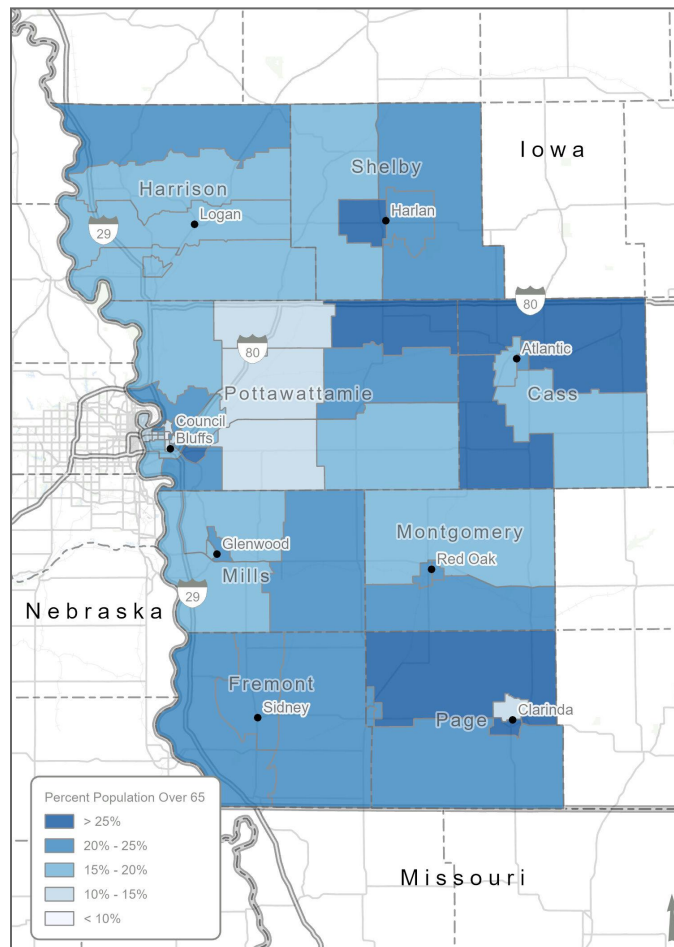


Figure 7: Percent population over 65 by census tract.

Income

The median income in the region is lower than that of the State of Iowa for all but two counties, Harrison and Mills (figure 8). This can be attributed to the fact that they border Pottawattamie County and likely have a large number of residents that commute to the Council Bluffs metro for work and higher wages. When looking at median per capita incomes, Montgomery, Harrison, Mills, and Shelby counties all have a higher median than the State of Iowa. As seen in the graph below, median household and per capita incomes have increased for all counties between 2010 and 2020. Median household incomes increased by an average of 29% while per capita income increased by an average of 39.6%. Contributing factors include the national push for a higher minimum wage, the desire to keep current employees during a worker shortage, and continued national inflation. While median earnings increased, so did the national inflation level at a rate of approximately 37% from 2010 to 2020 meaning prices are 1.37 times higher than those in 2010.

Even with the record inflation levels, the rate of those living below the poverty level fell throughout the region with the exception of Page County. The increase in poverty level for Page County can be attributed in part to the closure of the Eaton Corporation, a large employer in the area. Within the region, three counties, Cass (11.2%), Montgomery (12.5%), and Page (12.4%), have a higher percentage of people living below the poverty level than that of the State (11.1%). Figure 9 provides a map of census tracts showing percent population living below the poverty line.

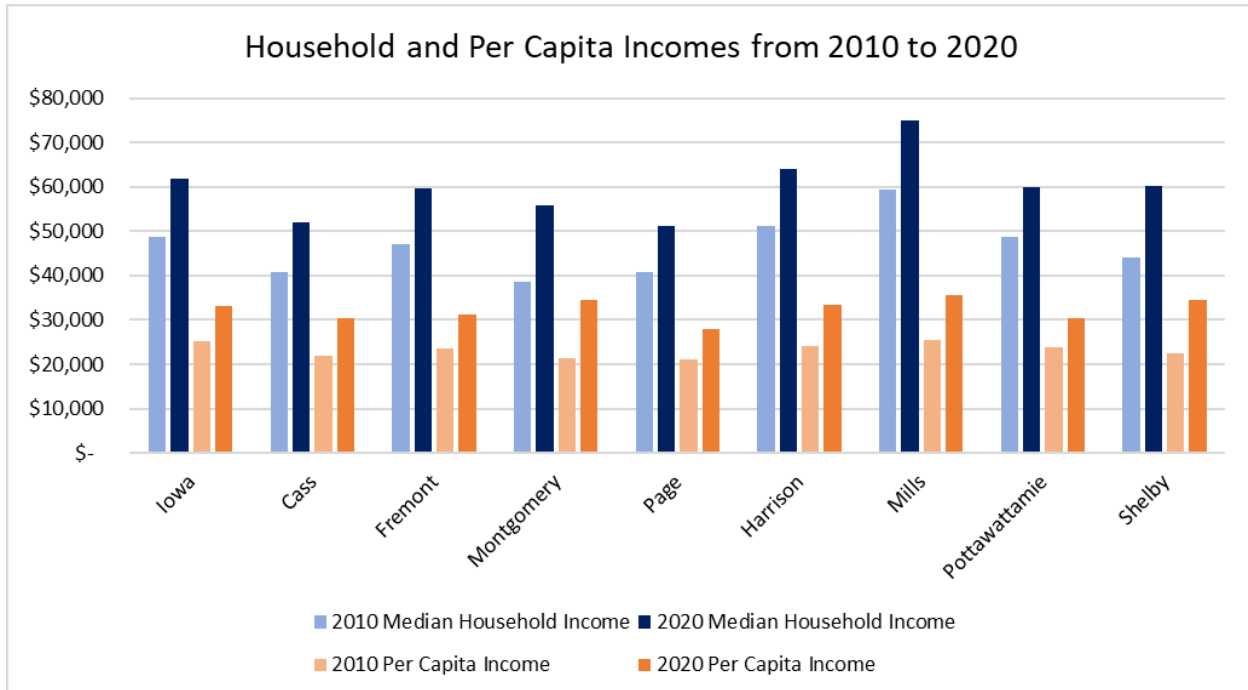


Figure 8: Household and per capita incomes for each county from 2010 (orange) and 2020 (blue)

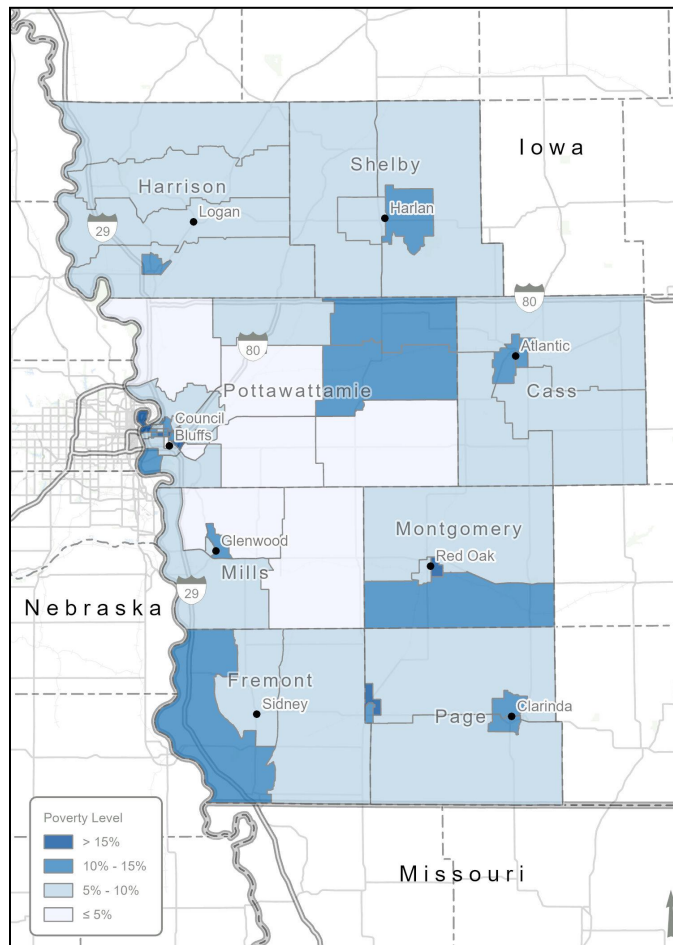


Figure 9: Map of census tracts showing percent population living below the poverty line.

Ethnicity

According to the 2016-2020 ACS, each county had between 93-97% of its total population being of white ethnicity, more than the State percent of 89.1%. This means that each county has 3-7% of its total population being of ethnic minority, including African American, American Indian or Alaskan native, Asian, or Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander. Additionally, less than 8% of the population from each county is of Hispanic/Latino descent. Pottawattamie has the highest percentage for Hispanic/Latino descent, which can largely be attributed to Council Bluffs. If Pottawattamie County is excluded, the remaining counties each have less than 4% of their population from Hispanic/Latino descent which is below the State's percentage of 6.2%. It is not uncommon for minority groups to be less connected to the community overall, leading to transportation barriers.

Zero-Vehicle Households

Throughout the region, residents are heavily dependent upon their own vehicle for transportation. Among workers over 16 years of age, 89.2% drive a vehicle to work and 81.0% drive alone. This is higher than the state percentage of 88.3% who drive a vehicle and 80.2% who drive alone. The average commute time for the region is 20.4 minutes, which is slightly higher than the State of Iowa but lower than the national average of 25.6 minutes. Geographic distribution of zero-vehicle households by census tract is shown in figure 10.

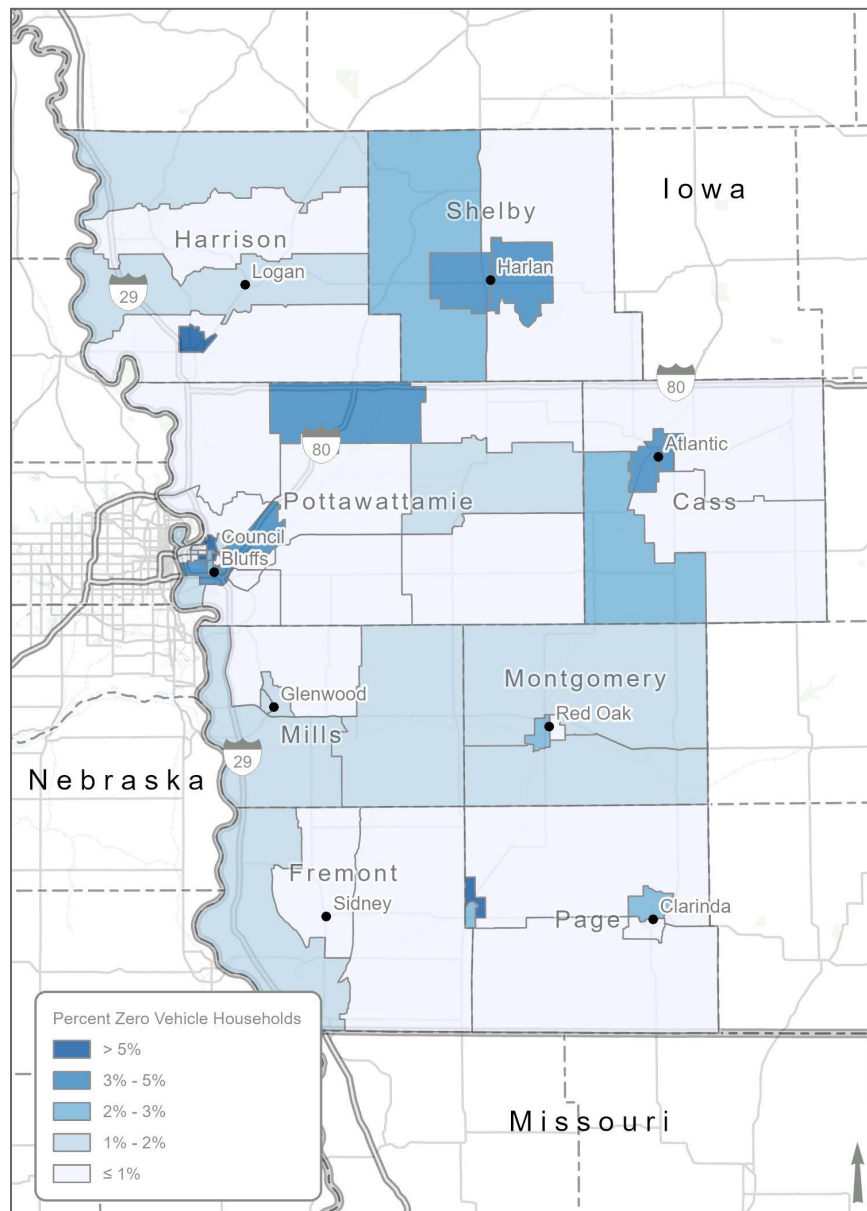


Figure 10: Map showing the percentage of zero-vehicle households per census tract.

Employment

There are six designated employment clusters in Southwest Iowa (figure 11). These clusters are located in Atlantic, Clarinda, Glenwood, Harlan, Red Oak, and Shenandoah, each with at least two firms employing over 250 employees and additional employers with over 100 employees. In addition, the City of Oakland has one employer with over 500 employees (table 10). Overall, there are approximately 130 employers with more than 50 employees.

Based on this information, the need for transportation services are great. To meet these needs, transportation services are greater in each of these clusters to assist as requested. Taxi services are provided in the six main employment clusters with additional services provided to employers in Shelby (Menards Warehouse), Red Oak (CDS VanPool), Harlan (Monogram), Oakland (OSI) and Council Bluffs (Iowa Western Community College). Efforts to expand assistance to businesses in the region continue.

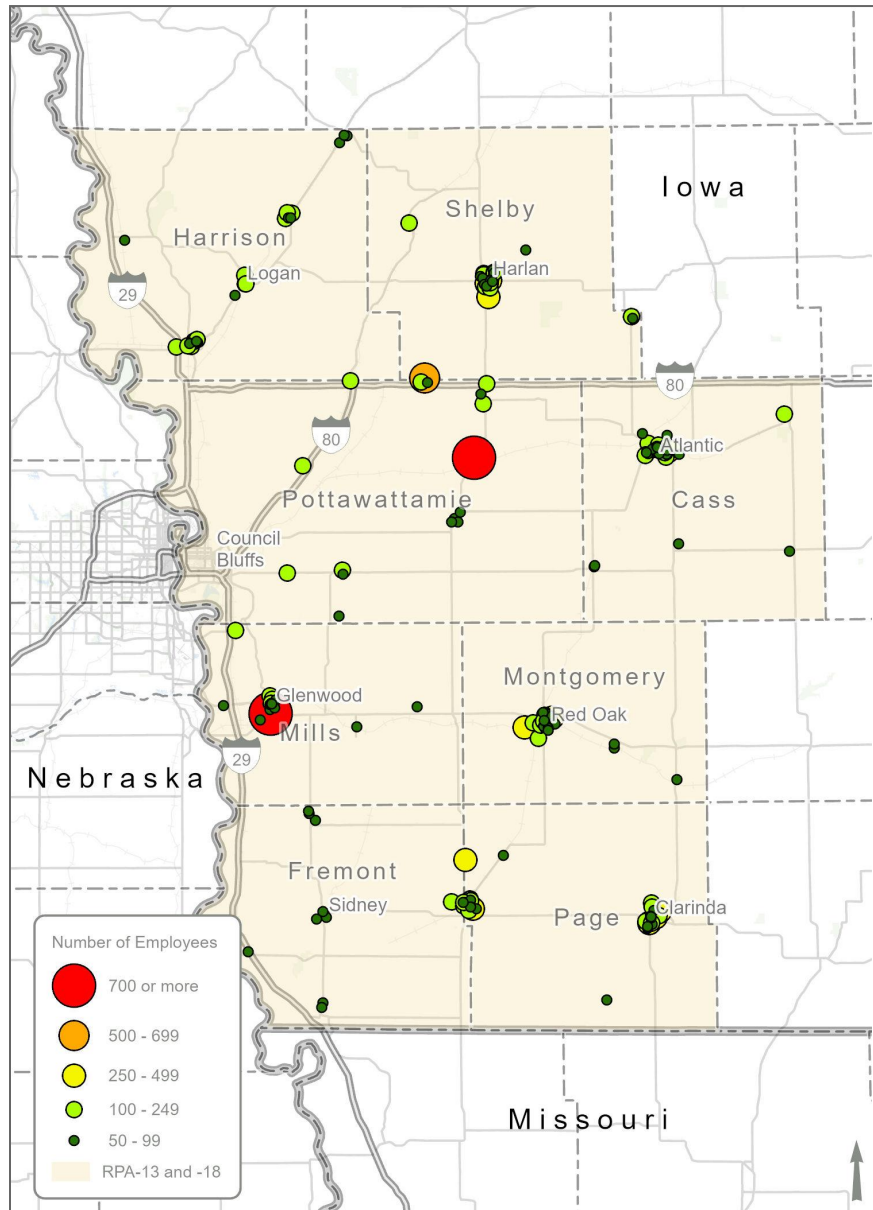


Figure 11: Map showing employment clusters across the region.¹

¹ Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2023). LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics Data (2002-2019) [computer file]. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program [distributor], accessed in 2022 at <https://lehd.ces.census.gov/data/#lodes>. LODES 7.5 [version]

Table 10: Major employers with over 100 employees².

Employs 500-999 Workers		Employs 100-249 Workers (cont)	
Employer Name	City	Employer Name	City
OSI Group LLC	Oakland	EZ Way	Clarinda
Employs 250-499 Workers		Good Samaritan Society Red Oak	Red Oak
Employer Name	City	Griswold Community School Dist	Griswold
Atlantic Community School Dist	Atlantic	H & H Trailers	Clarinda
Lisle Corp	Clarinda	Hendrickson Enterprises	Hamburg
Mahle Engine Components	Atlantic	Henningsen Construction Inc	Atlantic
Montgomery County Meml Hosp	Red Oak	Heritage House A Wesleylife	Atlantic
Myrtue Medical Ctr	Harlan	Hy-Vee	Clarinda
NSK Corp	Clarinda	Hy-Vee	Harlan
Panama Transfer Inc	Panama	Hy-Vee	Red Oak
Shenandoah Medical Ctr	Shenandoah	Hy-Vee	Shenandoah
Shenandoah Outpatient Clinic	Shenandoah	Liddell Laboratories	Woodbine
Western Engineering Co	Harlan	Monogram Prepared Meats LLC	Harlan
Employs 100-249 Workers		Parker Hose Products	Red Oak
Employer Name	City	Parker-Hannifin Corp	Red Oak
A M Cohron & Son Inc	Atlantic	Perfection Learning Corp	Logan
Ahst Community School District	Avoca	Red Oak Greenhouse	Red Oak
Azria Health Longview	Missouri Valley	Shelby County Cookers LLC	Harlan
Carry-On Trailer	Missouri Valley	Sidney Community School Dist	Sidney
CDS Global	Harlan	Sullivan Supply	Dunlap
CHI Health Missouri Valley	Missouri Valley	Tommy Gate Co	Woodbine
Clarinda Academy	Clarinda	Tri-Center Community Sch Dist	Neola
Clarinda Regional Health Ctr	Clarinda	Walmart Supercenter	Shenandoah
Connect A Dock Inc	Atlantic	Walmart Vision & Glasses	Atlantic
Elm Crest Retirement	Harlan		

² Source: <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/employer-database>

Unemployment Rate

Areas of unemployment remain highest (above 10%) in western Mills and Fremont Counties, and northern Harrison County. Other areas of higher unemployment exist within the communities of Red Oak and Shenandoah (figure 12).

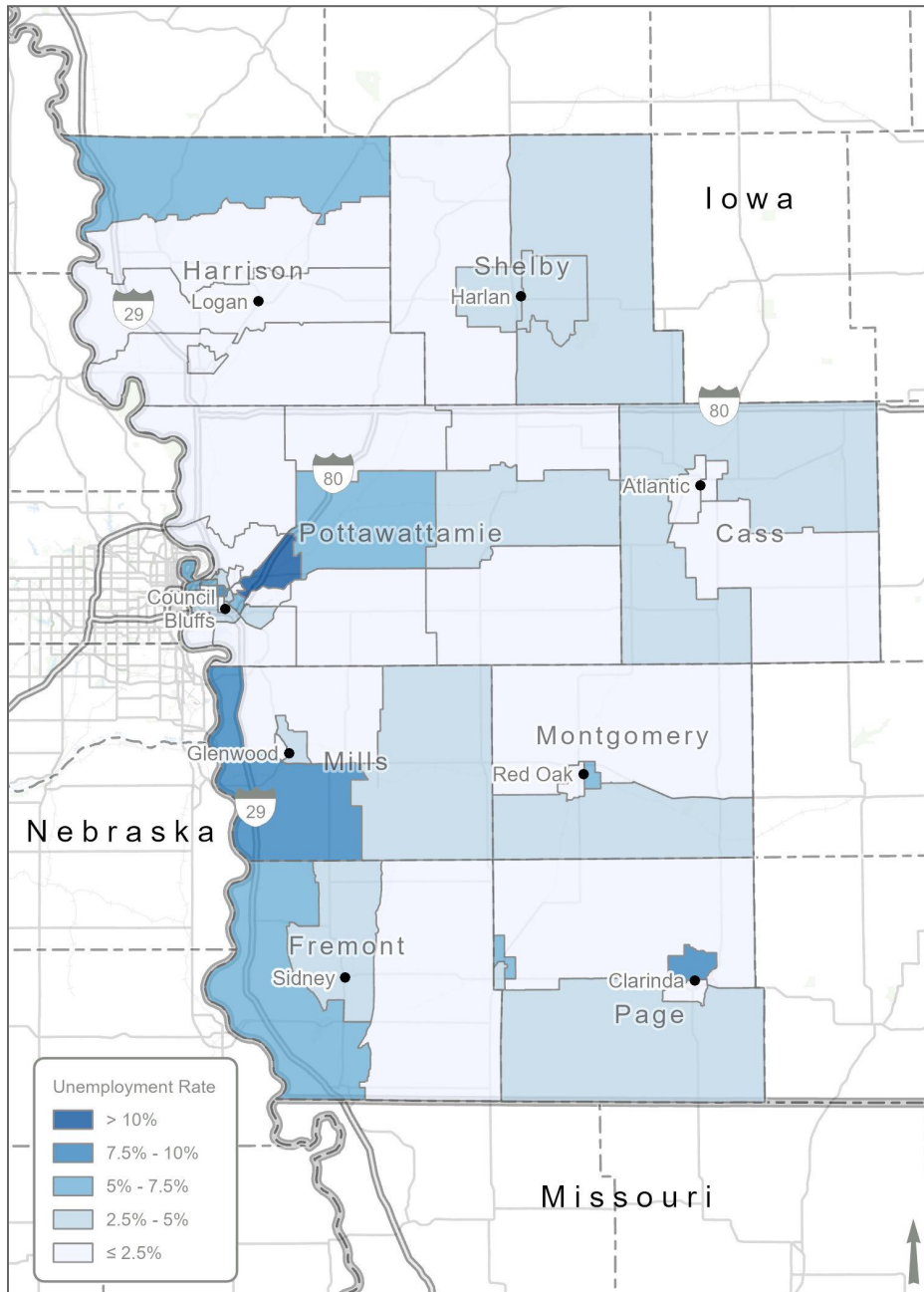


Figure 12: Map showing the percent employment rate by census tract.

Commuting

Larger commuting times exist primarily in the western portion of the combined region, mostly due to a larger percentage of the population commuting into the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area than in counties further eastward. This phenomenon is shown in figure 13 and table 11.

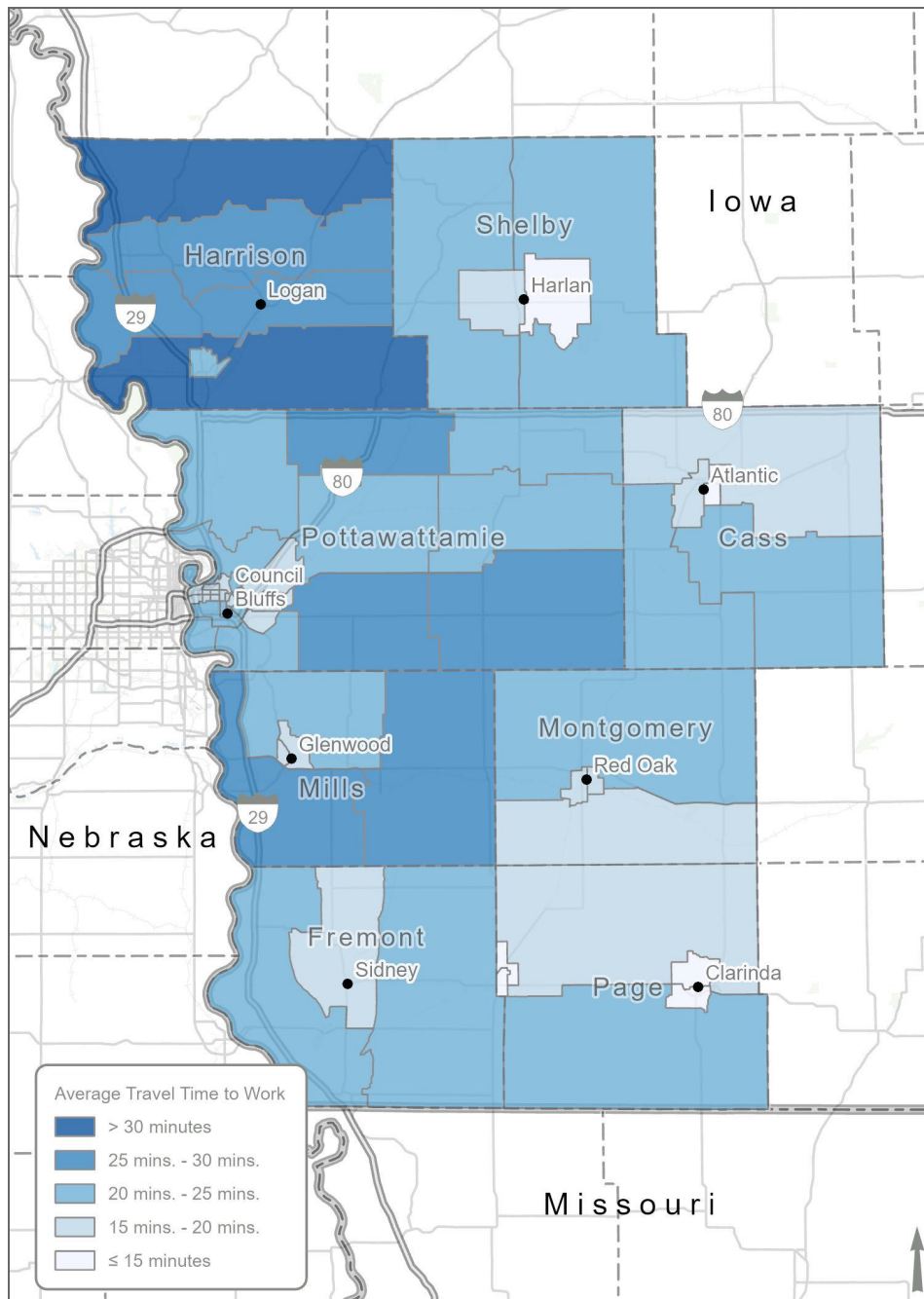


Figure 13: Map showing the average travel time to work by census tract.

Table 11: Worker inflow (people who live outside the county but come in for work) and outflow (people who live in the county but work elsewhere) and stationary workers (people who live and work in the same county) in 2019. Data taken from On the Map, U.S. Census Bureau.

County	Worker Inflow	Worker Outflow	Local Workforce
Cass	2,548	2,989	3,366
Fremont	1,265	2,230	877
Harrison	1,497	4,552	2,339
Mills	1,881	5,336	1,857
Montgomery	2,447	2,599	3,198
Page	1,876	2,311	2,231
Pottawattamie	19,740	28,661	18,149
Shelby	2,768	2,619	2,904

Limited English Proficiency

Identifying persons with limited English proficiency ensures that language barriers to transportation service can be addressed. As defined in Executive Order 13166, LEP persons are those who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. RPA-13 and RPA-18 have always worked informally to meet the needs of LEP individuals; the following analysis gives a more detailed view of the LEP population in the region and ways to assist that population. This LEP analysis will utilize the framework of the U.S. DOT's four-factor LEP analysis, which considers the following elements:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons in the region who may be served by public transportation or are likely to encounter a public transportation program, activity, or service.
2. The frequency with which LEP persons encounter public transportation programs, activities, or services.
3. The nature and importance of programs, activities, or services provided by public transportation providers to the LEP population.
4. The resources available to public transportation providers and overall costs to provide LEP assistance.

RPAs 13 & 18 do not have many populations with limited English proficiency. The overall total percentage of the population with limited English is 6.74% for the entire region, with Shelby County having the largest with 2.14% of the total population over 5 years old. Because the population of LEP is small, there are no large concentrations of limited English speaking individuals outside of the Council Bluffs area (table 12).

Table 12: The number and percentage of people over 5 years in age for each county in both RPAs that speak another language and do not speak English well.

	RPA-13				RPA-18				Regional Total
	Cass	Fremont	Montgomery	Page	Harrison	Mills	Pottawattamie	Shelby	
Speak Only English	12,042	6,406	13,057	13,874	9,320	14,085	28,431	10,613	107,828
Speak another language, but speak English "very well"	150	77	164	283	89	262	383	220	1,628
Speak another language, but speak English "well"	32	32	12	71	3	51	129	209	539
Speak another language and speak English "not well"	55	10	17	15	16	61	128	38	340
Speak another language, and speak English "not at all"	59	0	1	15	0	0	61	0	136
Total	12,338	6,525	13,251	14,258	9,428	14,459	29,132	11,080	110,471
Percentage that speak another language and speak English less than "very well"	1.18%	0.64%	0.23%	0.71%	0.20%	0.77%	1.09%	2.23%	0.92%

RPA and SWITA staff have assessed the frequency with which staff and drivers have, or could have, contact with LEP persons. This includes documenting phone inquiries and surveying drivers. Staff and drivers have had very little to no contact with LEP persons. To date, no requests have been made for interpreters or for translated documents in the service area.

Importance of Programs

There is no large geographic concentration of any type of LEP individuals in the Southwest Iowa region. The overwhelming majority of the population (108,843 of 116,818 people, or 93%) speak only English, or speak another language but speak English less than "very well". As a result, there is a lack of social, service, professional, and leadership organizations within the SWITA service areas that focus on outreach to LEP individuals. Services provided by SWITA that are most likely to encounter LEP individuals are the on-demand system that serves the general public and the dial-a-ride system which serves primarily senior and disabled persons.

Resources Available

SWITA has considered its available resources that could provide LEP assistance, including how much a professional interpreter and translation service would cost on an as-needed basis, which of their documents would be the most valuable to be translated if the need should arise, and taken an inventory of available organizations that SWITA could partner with for outreach and translation efforts. The amount of staff and vehicle operating training that might be needed

have also been considered. Based on the needs and costs identified by the four-factor analysis, SWITA has developed the following guidelines for identifying and assisting LEP persons.

How SWITA staff may identify an LEP person who needs language assistance:

1. Examine records to see if requests for language assistance have been received in the past, either at meetings or over the phone, to determine whether language assistance might be needed at future events.
2. When SWITA sponsors an event, have a staff person greet participants as they arrive. By informally engaging participants in conversation, it is possible to gauge each attendee's ability to speak and understand English.
3. Have Language Identification Flashcards on transit vehicles to assist vehicle operators in identifying specific language assistance needs of passengers. If such individuals are encountered, vehicle operators will be instructed to try to obtain contact information to give to the transit system manager for follow-up. Dispatchers and schedulers may also be instructed to obtain contact information from LEP individuals they encounter, either in person or over the phone. A growing population of Pacific Islanders in Atlantic may indicate a need for Chuukese translated materials in the future.
4. Vehicle operators and other front-line staff, such as dispatchers, may be surveyed annually on their experience concerning any contacts with LEP persons during the previous year.

With the creation of the new SWITA website, a translation feature powered by google has also been integrated and provides translation of the full website into numerous languages.

Coordination Issues

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

SWITA has made great progress towards the 5 goals identified in the 2018 plan update, however, the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic caused some unforeseen challenges to transit providers in the RPA-13 and RPA-18 regions that had impacts on these goals, and have influenced the priorities and strategies identified in this 2024 update of the PTP.

Many transit providers who participated in the provider survey conducted for this plan, indicated that their service level dropped due to the pandemic, either by a reduction in route frequency (10.3% of respondents), the number of routes (17.2% of respondents) or both route frequency and the number of routes (17.2%). over half of respondents indicated that their service level did not change due to the COVID-19 pandemic (55.2%). Ridership declined for 62.1% of respondents between 2020 and 2021. Of these respondents, 34.5% have yet to see ridership numbers rebound in 2022.

The pandemic also influenced the workforce of drivers, as well as the vehicle supply chain. These specific challenges and needs are discussed and expanded upon further in this chapter as we address specific needs and gaps in transit service.

Status of 2018 Priorities and Strategies

2018 Passenger Transportation Plan Goals	Goal Met	Somewhat	Not Met
Expand Work Routes	✓		
Increase awareness through marketing	✓		
Increase partnerships with human service agencies and businesses		✓	
Improve driver training	✓		
Maintain fleet quality		✓	

Over the last 5 years, SWITA has made great progress towards all of the 5 goals outlined in the 2018 PTP update. Specific achievements are outlined below.

Expand Work Routes

Work routes in the 2018 PTP update included those to Menards and Iowa Western Community College (IWCC). Although the Menards route now only runs seasonally, SWITA has added five additional work routes to the network since 2018, and continues to forge new partnerships with large employers in the region in an effort to provide employment based transit services. These new routes include;

Uptown Staffing / OSI

Uptown Staffing provides temporary and permanent staffing opportunities for approximately 200 employees per day, and is based out of the city of Council Bluffs. OSI is a food processing plant located in Oakland, IA with over 500 employees.

SWITA provides round trip transportation to employees of Uptown Staffing and OSI from Omaha and Council Bluffs to Oakland seven days a week. The bus leaves Uptown Staffing in Omaha at 4:30 a.m. and then Uptown Staffing in Council Bluffs at 5:00 a.m. The bus leaves OSI for Council Bluffs and Omaha in the afternoon between 3:15-3:45 p.m. Pickup in Atlantic going to OSI is at 5:00 am. Rides are open to the public. Fares on this route are \$3.50 each way.

Monogram Foods

Monogram Foods is a meat packing plant with over 100 employees located in Harlan, IA. SWITA provides round trip transportation between Omaha/Council Bluffs and the Monogram Foods plant in Harlan, IA from Monday to Friday. Rides are open to the public. Fares on this route are \$4.00 each way.

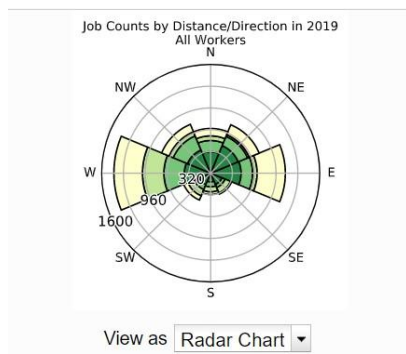
3HO

3HO is a packaging company in Lewis, IA that employs primarily disabled individuals. This route operates from 9:30am to 3:15pm at \$3 one way per rider.

Evaluation of new commuter routes

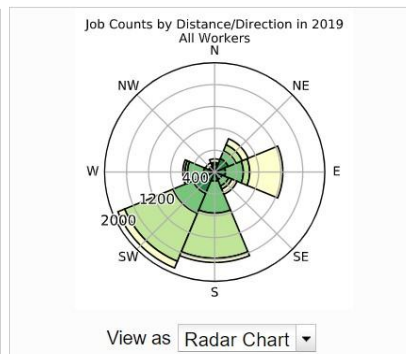
By examining commuter patterns, trends can be seen that could lead to the creation of additional routes. While the exact location of employment isn't known, the following graphs depict the direction and distance employees travel from their home to their place of employment. Throughout the region, repeating trends showing large numbers of employees traveling towards the Omaha/Council Bluffs metro can be seen. This is consistent across all 7 Counties in the region. Three examples are shown in the charts below:

Cass County



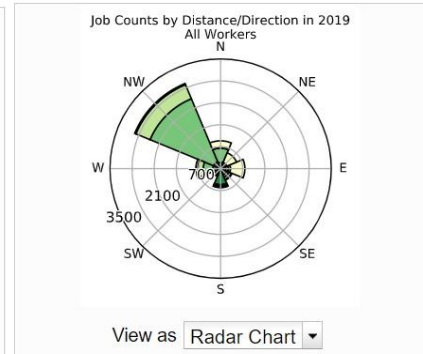
Jobs by Distance - Home Census Block to Work Census Block			2019		
	Count	Share		Count	Share
Total All Jobs	5,797	100.0%			
Less than 10 miles	2,445	42.2%			
10 to 24 miles	1,212	20.9%			
25 to 50 miles	798	13.8%			
Greater than 50 miles	1,342	23.1%			

Harrison County



Jobs by Distance - Home Census Block to Work Census Block			2019		
	Count	Share		Count	Share
Total All Jobs	6,891	100.0%			
Less than 10 miles	1,626	23.6%			
10 to 24 miles	1,931	28.0%			
25 to 50 miles	2,137	31.0%			
Greater than 50 miles	1,197	17.4%			

Mills County



Jobs by Distance - Home Census Block to Work Census Block			2019		
	Count	Share		Count	Share
Total All Jobs	7,193	100.0%			
Less than 10 miles	1,876	26.1%			
10 to 24 miles	3,218	44.7%			
25 to 50 miles	942	13.1%			
Greater than 50 miles	1,157	16.1%			

Increase Awareness Through Marketing

SWITA launched their new website, SWITA.com in August of 2022. The goal of this new website is to better reach communities and riders who can utilize public transportation. Many in the region assume that SWITA services are only available to the elderly or disabled, though services are available to all. The new website includes information about all of SWITA's services, including Student Transportation, Medical Transportation, Taxis, Work Routes, Summer bus service for K-12, and Special Trips. The website also features a bill pay portal, a ride request form, and a translation button powered by Google Translate that provides a translation of the website into numerous languages.

SWITA also maintains a social media presence through [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/swita) and [twitter](https://twitter.com/switaco), though presence on twitter is managed under the SWIPCO handle.

Increase partnerships with human service agencies and businesses

SWITA was able to increase their partnerships with human services agencies and businesses in part through their “Forward Program”. This program partners with Human Service Organizations to enable provisions of rides using their own vehicles for residents with disabilities. This helps to meet demand for people going to work on hours outside of taxi operations periods. SWITA helps to subsidize these rides to assist with the overflow on taxi services.

Additional partnerships have been forged with human services agencies such as Trivium Life Services and Nishna Productions. SWITA continues to work to establish partnerships with local human service agencies.

Improve driver training

Additional driver training requirements were added at the federal level to passenger transportation in February 2022, requiring Entry Level Driver Training (ELDT) prior to obtaining a CDL license. In addition, existing drivers with CDL licenses must now go back and complete ELDT training in order to drive passenger transport vehicles. This has put a significant strain on transportation agencies by reducing the pool of drivers who are currently able to drive passenger vehicles.

This also imposes a challenge regarding the provision of ELDT training and the ease for existing drivers to access training opportunities given the rural nature of the region and limited local training location options. SWITA has stayed ahead of the curve by providing CDL and ELDT training to drivers in the Region, and the State is providing a framework to allow SWITA to perform CDL testing for drivers and provide CDL certifications in the future. This certification and testing program is on track for implementation in April of 2023 and will increase ease of access to training opportunities for drivers. However, currently SWITA’s ELDT and CDL training is performed by two individuals at the agency, and this new program will additionally strain an already limited workforce.

Maintain fleet quality

Although supply chain issues have made purchasing new vehicles challenging (further detail provided below), SWITA has been able to place orders for new vehicles well in advance of replacement needs, and keeps a stockpile of parts and other maintenance supplies on hand for needed repairs. However, new vehicles are desperately needed but currently, there is a 1-2 year waitlist.

Public Input & General Assessment of Service, Management, Fleet, and Facility Needs

To help assess current levels of service, management needs, and fleet and facility needs, public input was collected through a combination of surveys and a strategic planning session conducted with the SWITA Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Details of input efforts are as follows.

Provider Survey

In an effort to identify transportation deficiencies and barriers transportation agencies in the region are experiencing when providing transit services to their clients, a survey was distributed to 55 agencies representing school districts, human service agencies, private non-profits, transit agencies, and other State agencies throughout the region. Thirty responses were received, with twenty-two of those responses being from schools or school districts.

Rider Survey

SWITA also distributed a survey to riders within the region in March 2021. Surveys were distributed online, and through direct mail, with a provided incentive of a \$5 gift card to Amazon or Walmart. A total of 375 responses were received, though 273 (73%) came from non-riders. These non-riders gave valuable insight into why they may not ride.

TAG strategic planning session

The results of the provider survey were then discussed with the TAG at a PTP strategic planning session to verify and discuss needs, gaps, and barriers to providing service. Area profile information, and results from the rider survey were also incorporated into goals development.

Needs, Gaps, and Barriers to Providing Service

The Provider Survey identified several key unmet needs (figure 14) and barriers (figure 15) to providing service to the region. All agencies that indicated their clients had no unmet transportation needs were schools or school districts. The top unmet client needs were service area limitations and driver shortages. The top barriers agencies experienced to provide service were drivers, and vehicles. Given the low population spread over a region the size of Connecticut, combined with the limited availability of resources in equipment, staffing, and funding, addressing these deficiencies is always a challenge. Success depends on coordinated planning efforts and maximized use of existing resources to address transportation deficiencies.

The key needs and gaps identified through public input, internal discussions with SWITA management, and from the TAG strategic planning session are outlined below.

1. Employment and workforce transit options
2. Expanded routes and hours of operations
3. Accessible vehicles (bariatric, wheelchair, etc.)
4. Affordability of service for clients

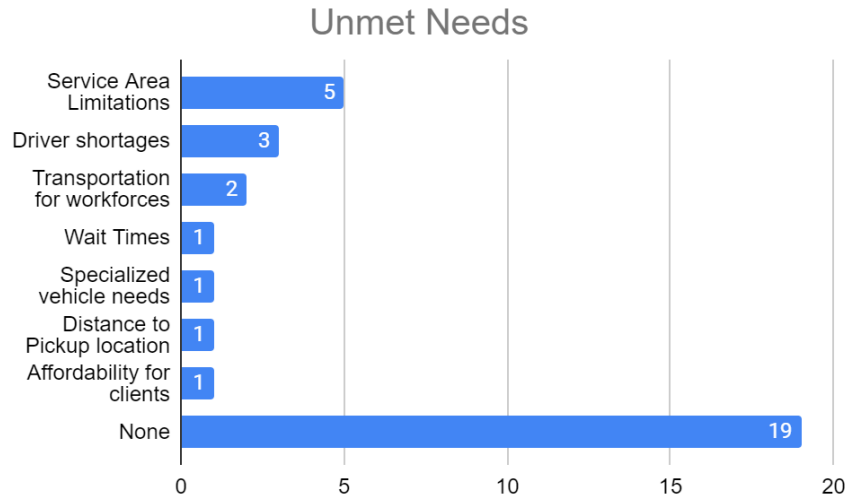


Figure 14: Responses to survey question “What unmet transportation needs do your clients have”. Open form responses were grouped into categories. 30 total responses were provided from the survey. Many responses addressed multiple categories of unmet needs.

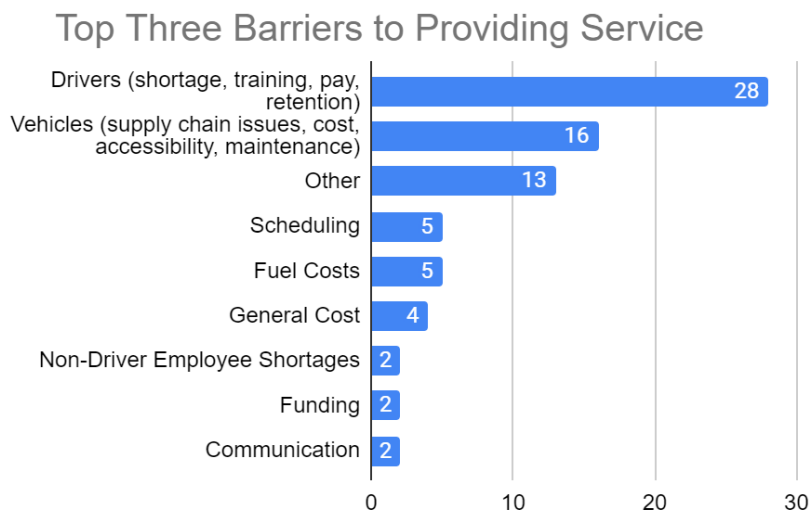


Figure 15: Responses to survey question “Are the main barriers you currently face in coordinating transportation for your clients”. Open form responses were grouped into categories. 30 total responses were provided from the survey. Many responses addressed multiple barrier categories.

Needs and Gaps in Service

Hiring, training and retaining drivers

The primary barrier identified by nearly all survey respondents related to drivers. This included driver recruitment, training, pay, and retention. Many **drivers** close to retirement left the workforce earlier than expected due to threats posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to workforce shortages.

This combined with **new Entry-Level Driver Training requirements** put forth by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has made finding qualified drivers to replace those who have left the workforce challenging. New training requirements have created a barrier to entry in hiring drivers for passenger vehicles, including school buses, or in allowing experienced drivers with CDL training to transition to driving passenger vehicles.

Ability to serve peak transportation needs

Of the 29 PTP survey respondents that provide transportation services, 79.3% indicated that they are currently able to meet their peak transportation service demands. The six agencies who indicated they are unable to meet peak transportation service demands represent all agency types from State agencies, to human service agencies and schools or school districts, and expressed highly varied challenges. All but two agencies use paid staff, some in combination with volunteers or subcontractors, whereas two agencies use exclusively subcontractors.

Almost all are experiencing the challenges associated with hiring, training, and retaining drivers given the current workforce shortfalls and increased training and certification requirements.

Pooling or collaborating transportation resources

Transit agencies in the region do not seem particularly interested in pooling transportation resources. Only 10.3% of survey respondents indicated they currently have agreements with other agencies to pool transportation resources, and of the 89.7% who do not pool resources, 51.7% stated they would not be interested in pooling resources, and 44.8% stated they may be interested. Only 3.4% (n = 1) stated that, yes, they would be interested in pooling resources.

Needs and Gaps in Management

SWITA management continues to see strong demand for transportation services. However, often requests for services are for one off trips or for very small routes that are not necessarily economically feasible. Increased awareness of the available services, as well as their cost would assist management in coordinating these various needs into viable routes. Highly variable reimbursements for disabled transportation for Medicaid clients is also a concern of management, and strong support for public transit as an economical first choice for Medicaid transportation needs to be communicated to stakeholders and decision makers. Staffing is often a concern, with a high turnover rate for drivers, though more aggressive recruitment has helped reduce this issue. Additionally, there is a growing demand for high volume work routes but staffing shortages combined with a lack of available vehicles at the times needed make the increase in routes difficult.

Needs and Gaps in Fleet & Facilities

Supply chain issues

Supply chain issues, manufacturing delays, and inflation brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic have increased the difficulty of acquiring **new vehicles** over the last two years. Whereas prior to this timeframe, funding was a major barrier to acquiring new vehicles and ensuring updated fleets, the case is now that funding is available, but there are no vehicles to spend it on.

Inflation

Inflation costs have also made acquiring vehicles more difficult. In 2022, transit agencies throughout the State of Iowa had purchase contracts canceled by suppliers who indicated they would no longer be able to provide vehicles at the previously negotiated price due to inflation costs. Iowa DOT is currently working with suppliers to remedy these contract issues and help ensure future availability and funding to account for the increase in cost of vehicles due to inflation.

Of the 30 respondents to the PTP survey, 28 indicated that they provide transportation services using their own agency or company vehicles, and 16 indicated that vehicles, (supply chain issues, cost accessibility, or maintenance issues), were one of their top three barriers to providing service.

SWITA Fleet Expansion

SWITA continually works to maintain and expand its fleet. This has allowed them a bit more flexibility than smaller agencies in the region, however, SWITA is still waiting on delivery of several of these vehicles. SWITA currently has fifteen vehicles that will need to be replaced in FY24, fourteen in FY25, sixteen in FY26, and seventeen in FY27 for a total of seventy-three (73) vehicles over the next 5 years. These replacement timelines are based on current useful life measurements as promoted by Iowa DOT, though SWITA rarely runs into useful life issues with vehicles.

In order to maintain a high-quality fleet, SWITA continues to replace approximately fifteen (15) buses per year. This is necessary for safety upgrades, maintenance cost reduction, and efficiency of vehicles. Funds used to replace these buses are typically FTA5339 or local funds. Other health and human service providers outline this as a concern as their own fleets continue to deteriorate. Replacement of vehicles tends to be past their intended use dates with many continuing to fix broken buses for longer than expected to reduce costs.

Approximately 90% of the SWITA fleet is equipped with surveillance to monitor the safety of the driver and passengers. SWITA will continue to update its surveillance equipment and add to new vehicles as funding becomes available. In 2017, SWITA purchased tablets and installed in all buses for the purpose of digital scheduling for all transit vehicles. SWITA continues to upgrade and replace tablets and software as necessary.

In 2011, SWIPCO constructed a fleet storage facility to house approximately 20 buses. This facility continues to add to the life of the buses, vans, and cars ensuring limited outdoor exposure. The SWIPCO building was expanded in 2014 to add a wash bay for the SWITA fleet.

In 2019 SWIPCO purchased a vehicle storage facility at 3236 Nebraska Avenue in Council Bluffs to centrally store and maintain vehicles serving the western portion of the service area.

Priorities and Strategies

Several priorities were identified from the provider survey and the TAG strategic planning session. These priorities are built to address the identified needs and gaps in regional transportation as identified in section III and are as follows;

1. Recruit, Train, and Retain Drivers
2. Increase transit options through more routes, affordability, and accessibility
3. Update or Increase vehicle fleets
4. Increase funding opportunities

Priority	Gaps and Needs	Strategies
Recruit, Train, and Retain Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Driver shortage ● Training needs ● Wages not competitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SWITA training efforts ● Continue to explore additional benefits for drivers ● Increase amount of full-time drivers
Increase Transit Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited routes ● Limited hours ● Limited connection with private ridesharing and taxi services ● Too expensive for some clients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expansion of employer specific route options ● Collaborate with taxi and ridesharing services
Update and Grow Transit Fleets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Supply chain issues ● Inflation ● Accessible vehicles (wheelchair, bariatric) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Iowa DOT renegotiating contracts ● Preparation and readiness for electric vehicle transitions
Increase Funding Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Client affordability ● Driver wages ● Fuel Costs ● Inflation and vehicle costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pursue recurring federal funding opportunities ● Pursue recent funding opportunities from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill

Recruit, Train and Retain Drivers

Enhance SWITA Training Opportunities

Historically, SWITA has helped prospective drivers secure their CDL on their own. The State of Iowa is working to allow SWITA to offer testing and certification for CDL and is on track to be able to provide this testing service in April of 2023. SWITA is currently exploring options for space in which to provide closed course driver training as a part of this certification. It is worth noting that this service has the potential to tax existing SWITA staff if additional personnel are not available to provide testing.

Continue to explore additional benefits for drivers

Hiring for drivers has become challenging as worker shortages have persisted since the COVID-19 pandemic. Increasing new benefits (insurance, wages, etc.) would provide more robust hiring capabilities for SWITA. SWITA provides paid time off to drivers and full-time drivers receive health insurance and other benefits.

Increase amount of full-time drivers

Due to increased training requirements for drivers within the SWITA network, ensuring this training is utilized to its most potential includes ensuring that a larger number of these drivers are full-time. However, because many SWITA drivers are looking for part-time employment, hiring full-time drivers is a challenge for SWITA. Additional benefits and more steady hours will encourage more full-time hires.

Increase Transit Options

Expand Employer-based Routes

SWITA has added several employer-based routes since the last PTP update, and will continue to work on collaborating with the region's larger employers and employment centers to provide employment transit services to employees. As noted in the demographic profile, a large number of out-of-county commuters commute into the Omaha- Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area, where service can be enhanced. However, the majority of commuters without vehicles are actually commuting out of the metro to employment in the rural area.

Often in these partnerships, the route is subsidized by the employer. SWITA is currently in conversation with the ConAgra food processing plant in Council Bluffs to determine if there is a need for employee transit services to this facility. Routes that would offer pickup and dropoff for multiple employers whose employees live along the same route would greatly increase transit options to employees, however, employers have been reluctant to cooperate on such initiatives mainly due to differing schedules. SWITA will continue to work with employers and drive the creation of new routes to help reduce the existing gap in transit routes to work.

Collaborate with taxi and ridesharing services

SWITA has a cooperative agreement with Bluffs Cab in Council Bluffs. Common rideshare platforms have no presence outside of the Omaha/Council Bluffs metro. As the prevalence of ridesharing services increases in the region, utilizing these services could provide a missing link in areas where demand for other SWITA transportation services are not high enough to meet the service threshold.

Update and Grow Transit Fleets

Iowa DOT Contract Renegotiation

Supply chain issues, manufacturing delays, and inflation resulted in contract cancellations from suppliers of Iowa DOT's statewide vehicle procurement program as vehicles could no longer be provided at the previously negotiated prices established in December 2021. Iowa DOT has since requested price adjustments from all vendors, establishing new price ceilings, and has proposed a shortfall funding assistance program to help cover the difference in vehicle cost to transit agencies (as discussed in the [Iowa DOT Memorandum](#) released November 8, 2022).

SWITA continues to monitor this development and plans to make use of the shortfall assistance program as it is relevant to new vehicle purchases.

Readiness for Electric Vehicle Conversion

SWITA has begun initial conversations on electric vehicle fleet conversion, which would take place in coming decades. While few plans have been solidified, it is generally anticipated that the first phase of electric vehicle conversion would include a fleet of 3-4 vehicles which would operate primarily in Council Bluffs and Atlantic, due to electric charge ranges still not being reliable enough for rural routes. The second phase of electric vehicles would begin to see more rural settings once electric vehicle ranges would increase.

Increase Funding Opportunities

Pursue recurring federal and state funding opportunities

In addition to regular formula funding which SWITA receives, numerous competitive funding opportunities are available for SWITA and other transportation providers from the Federal Transit Administration and the Iowa Department of Transportation. Many of these funding opportunities are competitive, so utilizing the staff capacity at RPA 13 and RPA 18 would be needed for some smaller agencies to put together successful bids for the funding awards.

Pursue recent funding opportunities from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) passed \$1.7 trillion in funding for transportation projects nationwide. Locally there are many grant opportunities in which transportation providers, both SWITA and other non-profit organizations, are eligible. Pursuing these grants, and utilizing the RPA 13 and 18 staff will be crucial in receiving these funding awards.

Exploratory or Long-Term Strategies

The following strategies could be utilized in the future if more funding or demand exists. Also, coordinating the efforts of various different planning functions (particularly land use and transportation) could supplement the work of each effort.

Coordinate Community Development Planning Efforts

Within the RPA-13 and RPA-18 regions, successful Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Economic Development Authority (EDA) Grants have provided assistance to community infrastructure, local business startups and main street revitalization efforts. Collaborating between these planning efforts and with transportation planning efforts in the RPA functions could enhance the functionality of community development and provide more local employment opportunities which do not require expansive commuter services.

Broadband Internet Collaboration

Needs for transportation to the workplace could be reduced by the potential of remote work. However, much of the region consists of areas where internet access has been inadequate for the purpose of telecommuting, telehealth, or modern commerce. Current initiatives in Southwest Iowa are enhancing the reach of broadband internet access to these areas. By collaborating with these efforts, more job opportunities could be created or enhanced locally, providing easier transportation solutions within local communities. Currently, many riders who take advantage of transportation services in the region are employed in positions that are exclusively in-person (i.e. factory workers, etc.) which may limit the impact of broadband on transportation needs in the region.

Full Electric Vehicle Rollout

The availability and reliability of electric vehicles has increased rapidly since the last update of this planning document in 2018. Current electric vehicle strategies above note a few exploratory options for electric vehicle options within communities. As technology advances, preparedness by RPA 13-18 staff could ensure that conversion to electric vehicles could be done more rapidly as technology and production capacity allows and advances in the coming decades.

Broader Commuter Transit Expansion

Locally and nationally, efforts to expand regional transportation have been proposed to provide more non-single occupancy vehicle options to persons traveling locally or regionally. These examples include expansion of commuter rail service between the Omaha and Des Moines Metropolitan Areas, enhancement of charter bus services, and expanded vanpooling options through public and private carriers which are currently implemented in other regions of the country.

Communities like Atlantic have strong commuting patterns to both the Omaha and Des Moines Metropolitan Areas, and could directly benefit from these services if they become viable options and funding is available, though expanding on the existing SWITA service is the most viable and immediate option.

Financial Resources

RPA's 13 and 18 take advantage of many funding sources. Main programs utilized are 5311 funds, STA, Passenger Revenues, and Contract Revenues. Section 5311 is typically utilized to subsidize the transit system and fleet upgrades. Rates are reviewed annually to determine what is reasonable and cost effective for passenger paid rides and contract services. SWITA is eligible for Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) money, however has never been awarded. RPA-18 has utilized STBG funds in the past to help defray the cost of SWITA vehicle purchases to reduce congestion on Highway 6. 5310 funds have also been distributed by RPA-18 to SWITA to purchase vehicles to enhance mobility for seniors and the disabled.

Local funds are provided by contributions made by cities and counties that support SWITA services. Each county served (Harrison, Shelby, Pottawattamie, Cass, Mills, Montgomery, Fremont, and Page) provides \$6,000 each in their own general fund dollars to SWITA. The cities of Red Oak, Harlan, Missouri Valley, Glenwood, and Shenandoah contribute \$5,000 each to support taxi service in their communities. Atlantic pays \$8,000 because of higher utilization of taxis in that community.

SWITA State and Federal Funding Breakdown	
State Transit Assistance 8419 Public Transit Assistance Fund 566 Transit Operations	\$766,513.62
5311 8418 FTA - Non-Urban Formula (5311) 566 Transit Operations	\$1,191,970.00
5311 CRRSAA 8418 FTA - Non-Urban Formula (5311) 566 Transit Operations	\$1,035,117.00
5311 CARES 8418 FTA - Non-Urban Formula (5311) 566 Transit Operations	\$273,295.00
5311 RTAP 8418 FTA - Non-Urban Formula (5311) 562 Transit Training	\$3,882.00
Total State & Federal Funds	\$3,270,777.62

5311 Funding Projection	
FY2024	\$2,312,708
FY2025	\$2,400,000
FY2026	\$2,450,000
FY2027	\$2,500,000
FY2028	\$2,550,000

STA Funding Projection	
FY2024	\$775,168
FY2025	\$775,000
FY2026	\$825,000
FY2027	\$850,000
FY2028	\$850,000

Federal Funding Resources

The following chart shows all federal funding sources available to transportation service providers and related entities from the federal government. Some of the primary sources of funding remain the 5311 - Formula Grants for Rural Areas; and 5339(a) - Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Formula Program.

Accelerating Innovative Mobility	Competitive
Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) for Transit Buses Demonstration and Automated Transit Bus Maintenance and Yard Operations Demonstration Program	Competitive
All Stations Accessibility Program	Competitive
American Rescue Plan Act of 2021	Competitive
Areas of Persistent Poverty Program	Competitive
Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Grants Program (formerly TIGER)	Competitive
Bus Exportable Power Systems	Competitive
Capital Investment Grants - 5309	Competitive
Community Project Funding/Congressionally Directed Spending	Competitive
Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities - Section 5310	Formula
Enhancing Mobility Innovation	Competitive
Expedited Project Delivery Pilot Program - Section 3005(b)	Competitive
Flexible Funding Programs - National Highway Performance Program - 23 USC 119	Formula
Flexible Funding Programs - Surface Transportation Block Grant Program - 23 USC 133	Formula
Formula Grants for Rural Areas - 5311	Formula
Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Formula Program - 5339(a)	Formula
Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program	Competitive

Helping Obtain Prosperity for Everyone Program	Competitive
Human Resources & Training - 5314 (b)	Formula
Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Grants	Competitive
Integrated Mobility Innovation	Competitive
Low or No Emission Vehicle Program - 5339(c)	Competitive
Metropolitan & Statewide Planning and NonMetropolitan Transportation Planning - 5303, 5304, 5305	Formula
Mobility, Access & Transportation Insecurity: Creating Links to Opportunity Research and Demonstration Program	Competitive
Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning – Section 20005(b)	Competitive
Public Transportation COVID-19 Research Demonstration Grant Program	Competitive
Public Transportation Emergency Relief Program - 5324	
Public Transportation Innovation - 5312	Competitive
Real-Time Transit Infrastructure and Rolling Stock Condition Assessment Research and Demonstration Program	Competitive
Redesign of Transit Bus Operator Compartment to Improve Safety, Operational Efficiency, and Passenger Accessibility (Bus Operator Compartment) Program	Competitive
Route Planning Restoration Program	Competitive
Rural Transportation Assistance Program - 5311(b)(3)	Formula
Safety Research and Demonstration Program	Competitive
Standards Development Program	Competitive
State of Good Repair Grants - 5337	Formula
Technical Assistance & Standards Development - 5314(a)	Formula
Transit Cooperative Research Program - 5312(i)	Competitive
Transit Worker and Rider Safety Best Practices Research Project	Competitive
Zero Emission Research Opportunity (ZERO)	Competitive

State Funding Resources

GRANT OR PROGRAM	ELIGIBLE PROJECTS
Bus and Bus Facilities (Section 5339)	Public Transit Agency
City Bridge Program	Road, Street and Bridge
Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Program (CMAQ)	Public Transit Agency
County Highway Bridge Program	Road, Street and Bridge
County-State Traffic Engineering Program (C-STEP)	Traffic Safety and Engineering
DOT/DNR Fund	Trails and Enhancement
Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310)	Public Transit Agency
Federal Lands Access Program	Road, Street and Bridge, Trails and Enhancement
Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311)	Public Transit Agency
Highway Safety Improvement Program – Local	Traffic Safety and Engineering
Highway-Railroad Crossing Safety Program	Rail, Road, Street and Bridge
Highway-Railroad Crossing Surface Repair Fund	Rail, Road, Street and Bridge
Intercity Bus Assistance (Section 5311(f))	Intercity Bus Companies, Public Transit Agency
Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP)	Rail, Road, Street and Bridge, Transit
Iowa LTAP Work Zone Sign Package Program	Road, Street and Bridge
Iowa's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	Trails and Enhancement
Linking Iowa's Freight Transportation System (LIFTS) Program	Economic Development, Aviation, Rail
Living Roadway Trust Fund	Trails and Enhancement

Pedestrian Curb Ramp Construction	Traffic Safety and Engineering
Public Transit Infrastructure Grant (PTIG) Program	Public Transit Agency
Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Program	Rail
Railroad Revolving Loan and Grant (RRLG) Program	Economic Development, Rail
Recreational Trails Program (Federal)	Trails and Enhancement
Recreational Trails Program (State)	Trails and Enhancement
Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) - Immediate Opportunity projects	Economic Development, Road, Street and Bridge
Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) - Local Development	Economic Development, Road, Street and Bridge
State Aviation Program	Aviation
State Transit Assistance	Public Transit Agency
Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program	Road, Street and Bridge; Transit and Trails and Enhancement
Traffic Engineering Assistance Program (TEAP)	Traffic Safety and Engineering
Traffic Safety Improvement Program (TSIP)	Traffic Safety and Engineering
Urban-State Traffic Engineering Program (U-STEP)	Traffic Safety and Engineering

Local Funding Resources

Passenger Revenues

Fees paid by passengers are the most common sources of local support for transit services. These can be received in the form of fares (usually known as farebox receipts) or prepaid fares from passes, ticketing, or fares billed to passengers after a ride. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires that all passenger revenues be subtracted from the total cost of operating transit service to identify a net operating cost, before eligibility of federal support of operations can be calculated. The current farebox recovery rate for SWITA passenger revenues is approximately 10.7%.

Contract Revenue

Human service agencies, local communities and private business entities often pay a portion or full cost of certain rides for a public transit operation, whether it be for clients, patients or customers. Such subsidies are classified as contract revenues and are included in local match requirements for federal projects.

Local Taxes

Municipal Transit Levy

Iowa law authorizes municipalities to levy up to 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ cents per \$1,000 of assessed taxable property in order to support the cost of a public transit system. Most larger communities in Iowa levy support for their urban transit systems. A number of smaller communities use this authority to generate funding used to support services contracted from their designated regional transit system. However, the amount raised by this tax in most communities would be less than the administrative burden to implement it.

General Fund Levy

The cost of supporting transit services is an eligible use of general fund revenues for all Iowa governments and is the primary source of funding to support transit for counties who have no transit levy option, in addition to cities who do not use their transit levy.

Trust and Agency Levy

The Trust and Agency Levy can be used by cities and counties to support employee benefit plans.

Other Local

Student Fees

Mandatory student fees established by a college or university are similar to a tax levy that all members of an institutional community contribute.

Advertising Revenues

Sale of on-board advertising or advertising space in other media distributed by the transit agency to provide additional revenue for the transit agency.

Other Funding Resources

Fringe benefit package

Qualified transportation benefits may be provided as part of an employer fringe benefit package. These benefits assist with vanpooling costs or for purchases of transit passes, which can be excluded from employee wages up to allowed limits. Transit agencies often reach out to employers to encourage more transit ridership through this service.

Appendix

Appendix 1: SWITA Vehicle Inventory

Buses

Description	ADA Compliant	Equipment Type	Vehicle Class Size
2007 FORD EL DORADO	N	LDB	176
2008 FORD EL DORADO	Y	LDB	138
2008 FORD EL DORADO	Y	LDB	138
2008 FORD EL DORADO	Y	LDB	138
2008 FORD EL DORADO	Y	LDB	138
2008 FORD EL DORADO	Y	LDB	138
2010 FORD EL DORADO	Y	LDB	176
2010 FORD ELDORADO	Y	LDB	176
2011 Ford EIDorado	Y	LDB	176
2011 Ford EIDorado	Y	LDB	176
2011 Ford EIDorado	Y	LDB	176
2012 Eldorado	Y	LDB	176
2012 Ford Eldorado	Y	LDB	176
2012 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176
2012 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176
2012 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176
2012 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176
2013 Ford Eldorado	Y	LDB	176
2013 Ford Eldorado	Y	LDB	176
2014 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176

2014 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176
2014 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176
2014 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176
2015 Eldorado Aero Tech	Y	LDB	176
2015 Eldorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2015 Eldorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2015 Eldorado Aerotech	N	LDB	176
2016 Ford/E450 Cutaway	Y	LDB	176
2016 Ford/E450 Cutaway	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado 176 WB ADA bus	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 EIDorado Aerotech	Y	LDB	176
2017 Ford Goshen Coach	Y	LDB	176
2017 Ford Goshen Coach	Y	LDB	176
2019 2019 Eldorado	Y	LDB	176
2019 2019 EIDorado	Y	LDB	176
2019 2019 Eldorado	Y	LDB	176

2019 2019 EldoradoLD bus	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 Ford Glaval	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 FORD GLAVAL	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 FORD GLAVAL	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 FORD GLAVAL	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 FORD GLAVAL	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 FORD GLAVAL	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 FORD GLAVAL	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 FORD GLAVAL	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 FORD GLAVAL	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 FORD GLAVAL	Y	LDB	176
2021 2021 Ford Glaval Universal 12+2	Y	LDB	158
2021 2021 Glaval Universal	Y	LDB	158
2016 AeroElite 320 33 passenger	N	MDB	M32
2018 2018 Freightliner Glaval 40 Passenger	Y	MDB	M40
2021 2021 Freightliner Glaval Legacy	Y	MDB	M40

Vans

Description	ADA Compliant	Equipment Type	Vehicle Class Size
2004 Chrysler Town and Country	N	MV	NA
2006 Ford Freestar Se	N	MV	NA
2007 Dodge Grand Caravan SE	Y	MV	NA
2009 2009 CHEVY VAN	N	MV	NA
2010 Chrysler Town and Country	N	MV	NA

2010 DODGE CARAVAN ADA	Y	MV	NA
2010 DODGE CARAVAN ADA	Y	MV	NA
2012 KIA Sedona	N	MV	NA
2013 2013 Dodge Gr Caravan	N	MV	NA
2014 2014 Dodge Gr Caravan	N	MV	NA
2014 GMC Acadia	N	MV	NA
2015 2015 Dodge gr Caravan	N	MV	NA
2015 2015 Dodge Gr Caravan	N	MV	NA
2015 2015 Dodge Gr Caravan	N	MV	NA
2015 MV-1 Deluxe	Y	MV	NA
2015 MV-1 DX	Y	MV	NA
2015 Toyota Sienna	N	MV	NA
2016 Braun(DODGE) Minivan	Y	MV	NA
2016 Dodge ADA minivan	Y	MV	NA
2016 Dodge ADA minivan	Y	MV	NA
2016 minivan	Y	MV	NA
2016 MV-1	Y	MV	NA
2016 Nissan Quest	N	MV	NA
2019 2019 ADA Dodge Grand Caravan	Y	MV	NA
2019 2019 ADA Dodge Grand Caravan	Y	MV	NA
2019 2019 ADA Doge Grand Caravan	Y	MV	NA
2019 2019 ADA Doge Grand Caravan	Y	MV	NA
2019 2019 Dodge caravan ADA	Y	MV	NA
2019 2019 Dodge caravan ada	Y	MV	NA
2019 2019 Dodge Gr Caravan	Y	MV	NA
2019 2019 Dodge Gr caravan	Y	MV	NA
2019 2019 Dodge Grand Caravan	Y	MV	NA

Cars

Description	ADA Compliant	Equipment Type	Vehicle Class Size
2011 2011 Dodge Durango	N	S	NA
2012 Chevrolet Malibu LS	N	S	NA
2012 Ford Taurus	N	S	NA
2014 2014 Chevrolet Impala gray	N	S	NA
2014 2014 Chevy Impala silver	N	S	NA

Appendix 2: Human Services Fleet

Human Services Fleet

Agency	City	Vehicle Type	Condition	Seating Capacity
Crest Services	Harlan	3 -- minivans	Good	6
Faith in Action Volunteers	Sidney	2 – minivans (1 wc*) 3- car	Good	5 3
Children’s Square*	Council Bluffs	10 – minivans (in 2018)	Good	7
		2 - cars (in 2018)	Good	5
Partnership for Progress	Atlantic	6 - minivans	Fair to poor	6
Park Place RCF/PMI	Atlantic	2 - minivans	Poor	7
Waubonsie Medical	Clarinda	3 – minivans 1- car	Fair Fair	5 3
Jennie Edmundson Hosp*	Council Bluffs	1 – minivan (wc)* (in 2018)	Good	9
		1 – light duty bus (in 2018)	Good	8
Bethany Heights	Council Bluffs	1 – light duty bus	Good	15
Elm Crest Retirement	Harlan	1 – car	Good	2
		1 – light duty bus (wc)*	Good	15
Manor of Malvern	Malvern	1 – minivan	Fair	5
Trivium Life Services	Council Bluffs/ region	44 – minivans 4 - cars	Good to poor Fair	Between 7-12 5
Garden View Care Cent.	Shenandoah	1 – minivan (wc)*	Fair	5
		1 – maxi van	Fair	10
Nishna Productions, Inc.	Shenandoah	50 – cars and vans*	Fair-Excellent	5-15
Good Samaritan	Villisca	1 – light duty bus (wc)* 1 - minivan	Fair Fair	14 6

* - Wheelchair accessible

** Vehicle information not provided

Appendix 3: Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) Committee List

Name	Agency	Name	Agency
Shawn Duff	ASI	S. Sprinkel	League of Human Dignity
Aaron Pierson	Bluffs Taxi	Rich Surber	Lutheran Services
	Boost4Families	Court Barber	MAPA
	Casino Cab	Carlos Morales	MAPA
Deb Schuler	Cass County Community Service	Lindsey Button	MAPA
Pat Bogdanski	CAV	Travis Halm	MAPA
Ann Grober	CB Public Works	Ashley Flater	Micah House
Erin Hudson	Concerned Inc	Jen Daniel	New Hope
Ashley Parker	Connections	Monica Bartlett	Nishna Productions
Kelly Butts	Connections	Sherri Clark	Nishna Productions
Sherri McDonald	Connections	Chuck Smith	Park Place
	Country Cab	Debi Redmon	Pott County G Assistance
	Crest Home	Kim Brown	REM
Kristin Haar	DOT	Lisa Mills	REM
Joe Drahos	DOT	Lonnie Maguire	Shelby County Health
Joe Drahos	DOT	Shelley Welter	Shelby County Health
Sharon Yahnke	Faith in Action		Shelby County Veterans
Kimberly Kolakowski	FAMILY, Inc.	Billie Butler	SWI Mental Health Center
	Fremont County Veterans	Danelle Bruce	SWI MHDS
Lance Brisbois	Golden Hills RCD	Sus Watson	SWI MHDS
Mike Oehler	Harrison County General Assistance	Brent Dillinger	Trivium Life Services
John Jeanetta	Heartland Family Services	Brooke Rhodes	Trivium Life Services
Lisa Picker	Heartland Family Services	Clint Sargent	Trivium Life Services
Kendalyn Huff	Heartland Management Alliance	Jen Eggen	Trivium Life Services
Amy D-Wines	Iowa Coalition for Integrated Empl	Matt Smith	Trivium Life Services
Gloria Graves	Iowa Dept for the Blind	Scott Smith	Trivium Life Services
Roxanne Cogil	Iowa Epilepsy Services	Alyson Peters	Voc Rehab
Derek Laney	Iowa Focus	E Sokolowski	Voc Rehab
LeAnn Moskowitz	Iowa Medicaid HCBS	Julie Bergeson	Voc Rehab
	Iowa School for the Deaf	Sally Prange	Voc Rehab
Lance Brisbois	Iowa West Foundation	S Bernal	Voc Rehab
Brian Dennis	Iowa Workforce Development	D Richardson	VODEC
Elizabeth Waigand	Iowa Workforce Development	Steve Hodapp	VODEC
Randall McQueeny	Iowa Workforce Development	Mark Stromer	VODEC
Ann Pross	IWCC	Clay Adams	WESCO
Kathy Kay	League of Human Dignity	Starla Webb	WESCO
Lora Young	League of Human Dignity	Ivy Nielsen	W Cent'I Community Action

Appendix 4: TAG Minutes

TAG MEETING

December 8, 2022 11:30 am

AGCC (102 W 29th street Atlantic, IA 50022)

OR via ZOOM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89097049071>

Meeting ID: 890 9704 9071

Minutes

1. Lander called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.
2. Introductions. Introductions were made. Attendees were: Alexis Meyers, director of Independent Living; Becca Willenburgh, Iowa Works; Janelle Bruce, Southwest Iowa MHDS; and Sherri Clark, Nishna Productions. Danielle Briggs, Tammy DeBord, Mindy Jensen, and Mark Lander with SWIPCO/SWITA. Lindsey Button and Travis Halm with MAPA/RPA 18.
3. Regional Planning Affiliates 13 and 18 discussion for the 2023 Passenger Transportation Plan.
 - Halm gave an overview of the plan and its purpose.
 - Briggs presented information on the demographic changes to the region.
 - Button shared an overview of the survey responses.
 - Discussion of other feedback included:
 - i. Unmet needs of clients.
 - ii. Barriers when trying to schedule transportation.
 - iii. Long term goals for transportation for your clients.
 - iv. What should be the top priorities of the RPA regions for the next five years.
4. Lander closed the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Next meeting---March 2023

SOUTHWEST IOWA PLANNING COUNCIL

Transit Advisory Group (TAG) Meeting

March 23, 2023, 11:30 a.m.

Atlantic Golf and Country Club (102 W. 29th St., Atlantic, IA)
OR via Zoom

Minutes:

Call to Order: Mark Lander called meeting to order at 11:34am

Roll Call: Introductions were made and those in attendance included: Ingrid Stukerjurgan, Retired and Senior Volunteer Program; Danielle Bruce, SW IA Mental Health Disability Region; Lindsey Button, MAPA; Travis Halm, MAPA; Mark Lander, Transit Director SWITA; Mindy Jensen, Communications Coordinator SWIPCO / SWITA

Discussion:

Travis Halm with MAPA presented information on the Passenger Transportation Plan for RPA-13 and RPA-18 2024 – 2029.

Mark Lander discussed the Summer Fun Bus which will be starting again soon. Lander shared that the Summer Fun Bus will be available in all taxi towns: Atlantic; Glenwood; Harlan; Red Oak; Shenandoah. These services will be available from 7am to 5pm on Monday through Friday. The cost is \$1 per ride or \$40 for the full summer. Lander shared that Harlan had the highest numbers last year and Atlantic had strong ridership also. Lander stated that although this service was not as popular in the other cities, he hopes to get the word out more this year so that there will be increased ridership in those cities also. Lander also noted that he has had a lot of requests for this service to come to Council Bluffs also but SWITA doesn't have the drivers available for this right now, but the hope is that SWITA will be able to offer this in the future. .

Mark Lander discussed workforce transportation and van pools and stated that these are showing additional growth over the past year.

Mark Lander also discussed the potential for electric vehicles to soon be used at SWITA. Lander shared that SWITA already has one grant for 3 electric vehicles to be purchased and is currently looking at another grant. He shared that this is still considered only a pilot program as the plan is not to replace all SWITA's vehicles with electric vehicles but simply see how these vehicles work for SWITA routes.

Future meeting dates:

June 22nd, 2023, 11:30 AM

September **** Date TBD will take place at SWIPCO annual meeting.

Appendix 5: Public Comment

A public comment period was held from February 1, 2023 to March 2, 2023. One item of public comment was received related to SWITA routes in Council Bluffs. The comments were addressed to the sender, as most items were clarified or addressed in the plan.

Public Transit Feedback

5 messages

philtaylor1@cox.net <philtaylor1@cox.net>
To: transportation@mapacog.org

Sun, Feb 5, 2023 at 10:52 AM

I saw the article in this morning's Nonpareil asking for feedback on the PTP. A handful of thoughts/comments/questions from the parent of a 21-year-old special needs child who attends the Trivium DayHab program in CB:

- Thank you, thank you, thank you. While there's always room for improvement in everything, we are so thankful there are people like you and organizations in like MAPA, SWITA, etc. to assist individuals and families who don't have any other real options.
- Is there a way to learn about the details within the proposals without having to read 80+ pages? And an opportunity to ask questions so those of us who use the programs have a better understanding of options, rights, costs, etc. ?
 - And a way to include human services/Iowa Medicaid reps so they can help bridge the gap between services and funding?
- Is there a way to get our name on an email list so we hear about surveys, forums, opportunities for feedback, etc. surrounding the PTP ideas, performance, proposals, etc. ?
 - For example, we had no idea about this:
 - Outreach In October 2022, a survey was sent to all member-organizations of the TAG and other human service agencies/organizations and private transportation providers in the region. The online surveys were distributed by e-mail and responses were collected electronically over a thirty-day period. The survey was conducted in an effort to obtain private transportation provider inventory information and to identify transportation needs and gaps in service. The information collected from thirty (30) responding organizations was used in the development of this document and a more detailed discussion of the survey results is in Section IV Coordination Efforts and Issues. A sample survey can be found in Appendix 5.
- Long drive times/full vans. We investigated using SWITA to transport our son to Trivium every Monday-Friday, but he would have been on a packed van for multiple hours both to Trivium and coming home. That wasn't feasible from a safety (sickness passes quickly around these packed buses) nor quality of life standpoint for our family or our son.
 - Need to find a way to cut down on ride times and lowering the maximum capacity for each van.
- We're extremely comfortable using the city of CB's STS buses and SWITA, etc. in terms of how safe we feel about the drivers of those vans and buses. We are much more nervous about using a private taxi service when that's the only option.
- For safety reasons, is there a way to have cameras on vans/buses that family can access to check on our loved ones?
- Need more ADA compatible transportation options.
- I could not disagree more with the goal below being a middle/low priority. In our opinion and experience, special needs individuals and families need significantly more transportation options, and less confusion about what services are available, resources to pay for them, etc.
 - That may not mean more partnerships with human services agencies, but somehow you've got to get directly to the families who need/use non traditional transportation.

Increase partnerships with human service agencies and businesses		✓		
---	--	---	--	--

- Again, thank you, thank you, thank you for all you do for families with special needs kids and adults.

Thanks-

Phil and Kim Taylor

Appendix 6: Ridership Survey

1. Where do you currently live?
 - Cass County, Iowa
 - Fremont County, Iowa
 - Harrison County, Iowa
 - Mills County, Iowa
 - Montgomery County, Iowa
 - Page County, Iowa
 - Pottawattamie County, Iowa
 - Shelby County, Iowa
 - Nebraska
 - Other Iowa county, please specify: _____
 - None of the above [Programming note: Discontinue survey]
 -
2. [If Pottawattamie County] Do you live in...
 - Council Bluffs
 - A rural area
 - Another city/town
3. What is your age?
 - Under 18 [Programming note: Discontinue survey]³
 - 18-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-64
 - 65-74
 - 75 or older
 -
4. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?
 - Employed full time, working 32 or more hours per week
 - Employed part time, working less than 32 hours per week
 - Not employed, looking for work
 - Not employed, NOT looking for work (e.g., homemaker, student, etc.)
 - Retired
 - Disabled, not able to work
 - Other, please specify: _____

³ Message: We're sorry, you must be 18 or older to participate. We invite you to have a parent or guardian complete the survey on your behalf.

5. What languages are spoken in your home? *Check all that apply.*
- English
 - Spanish
 - French, Haitian or Cajun
 - German or other West Germanic languages
 - Russian, Polish or other Slavic languages
 - Korean
 - Chinese
 - Vietnamese
 - Other Asian and Pacific Island language
 - Arabic
 - Other, please specify: _____
6. What is your approximate average household income?
- Less than \$25,000
 - \$25,000-\$49,999
 - \$50,000-\$74,999
 - \$75,000-\$99,999
 - \$100,000-\$149,999
 - \$150,000 or more
7. Have you, your child(ren) and/or a dependent adult in your care traveled using Southwest Iowa's public transportation system (SWITA) one or more times within the last 12 months? *Check all that apply.*
- I have** ridden SWITA
 - My **child(ren)/dependent adult** has ridden SWITA
 - I have not** ridden SWITA, nor has my child(ren) or a dependent adult in my care
8. [If Q7=I have not...] Have you traveled using SWITA in the past? *Check all that apply.*
- Yes, I have traveled using SWITA
 - Yes, my child(ren) and/or a dependent adult in my care has traveled using SWITA
 - No, I have never traveled using SWITA, nor has my child(ren) or a dependent adult in my care
9. On average, how many times per month do you ride SWITA?
- Daily
 - Multiple times a week
 - Weekly
 - Multiple times a month
 - Once a month
 - Less than once a month
 - Other, please specify: _____

10. What are your reasons for riding SWITA? *Check all that apply.*

- Travel to/from work
- Medical/dental appointment
- Shopping/personal business
- Entertainment, visiting, recreation, etc.
- Other, please specify: _____
-

11. Which of the following statements describe you? *Check all that apply.*

- I am not able to drive/don't have a driver's license
- I am able to drive/have a driver's license, but don't have a car available for my personal use
- I could drive myself but prefer to ride SWITA
- My insurance covers the cost of riding SWITA
- I require a vehicle with a lift and I don't have one
- None of the above

12. How do you **most often** schedule your trip?

- I call the SWITA office to make an appointment
- I call the SWITA driver directly
- I register for recurring rides with the office
- I register through my work
- My insurance or provider schedules the trip for me
- Other, please specify: _____

13. How easy or hard is it to schedule your trip?

[Sliding scale: Very hard - Average - Very easy]

Comments:

14. Overall, how satisfied are you with your riding experience?

[Sliding scale: Very dissatisfied - Neutral - Very satisfied]

Comments:

[If Q7 = My **child(ren)/dependent adult** has ridden SWITA]

Please note: In the following questions, the “rider” refers to any child(ren) and/or dependent adult(s) in your care that ride SWITA to get to/from their destination.

15. Is the rider: *Check all that apply.*

- Under the age of 18?
- Over the age of 60?
- Disabled?
- Other, please specify: _____

16. On average, how many times per month does your rider utilize SWITA to get to/from their destination?

- Daily
- Multiple times a week
- Once a week
- Multiple times a month
- Once a month
- Less than once a month
- Other, please specify: _____

17. Where is your rider's destination? *Check all that apply.*

- Work
- School (K-12)
- Pre-school or day care
- Medical/dental appointment
- Shopping/personal business
- Entertainment, visiting, recreation, etc.
- Other, please specify: _____

18. Why do you choose SWITA to transport your rider? *Check all that apply.*

- Transporting him/her doesn't fit in my schedule
- I don't have a car available for my personal use
- His/Her insurance covers the cost of riding SWITA
- School transportation is not offered where I live
- My rider requires a vehicle with a lift and I don't have one
- Other, please specify: _____

19. How do you **most often** schedule the trip for your rider?

- I call the SWITA office to make an appointment
- I call the SWITA driver directly
- I register for recurring rides with the office
- I register through my work
- My insurance or provider schedules the trip for me
- Other, please specify: _____

20. How easy or hard is it to schedule the trip?

[Sliding scale: Very hard - Average - Very easy]

Comments:

21. Overall, how satisfied is your rider with the riding experience?

[Sliding scale: Very dissatisfied - Neutral - Very satisfied]

Comments:

[If Q7 = I have ridden OR Q7 = My child(ren)/dependent adult has ridden]

22. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
The temperature is comfortable on the bus/vehicle.						
The bus/vehicle is clean.						
The ride is smooth.						
The driver is polite.						
It is easy to get on/off the bus/vehicle.						
Pick up/drop off is timely.						
Fares are affordable.						

23. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Stron g l y d i s a g r e e	Disagr e e	Neut r a l	Agr e e	Stron g l y a g r e e	Uns u r e
I/my dependent feel safe with the other passengers.						
The driver drives in a safe manner.						
SWITA has implemented appropriate cleaning practices and policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19.						

24. If it was available, how likely would you be to schedule a trip online or using an app?

[Sliding scale: Not at all likely – Neutral – Very likely]

25. Are there any public transportation services that you'd like SWITA to provide that they are not currently providing?

[Comment box]

[If Q7 = **I have not** ridden SWITA, nor has my dependent child/adult]

26. Why haven't you ridden SWITA? Or, if you've ridden SWITA in the past, why did you stop riding? **Select your top three reasons.**

- Public transportation is not as fast as my personal vehicle
- Concerned that I'll be limited to a fixed schedule
- Need access to my vehicle during the day for my job
- Prefer to drive alone
- Have additional side trips such as dropping off/picking up children, events, shopping, etc.
- Public transportation is not available near me
- I don't think I am eligible to ride SWITA
- Other, please specify: _____

27. Would you ride SWITA if... **Select up to three.**

- It took less time
- They picked up closer to my home/school
- It were clearly the less expensive transportation option
- The travel times were more reliable
- The buses/vehicles were cleaner
- The hours of operation were extended
- The vehicles were more comfortable
- None of the above
- Other, please specify: _____

28. Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements. Public transportation...

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Unsure
... helps the environment.						
... reduces traffic congestion.						
... saves me money.						
... frees up time.						
... is safer.						
... saves vehicle wear and tear.						
... is available to everyone.						

29. How likely would you be to utilize each of the following SWITA services, if available in your area?

	Very un lik el y	Unlik e ly	Somewh at likely	Likely	Very l i k e l y	Unsu r e
Bus service						
Taxi service						
Work route transportation						
Child transportation to/from school (K-12)						
Child transportation to/from pre-school/day care						
Student transportation to/from summer activities						

30. Are there any public transportation services that are not listed above that you would be likely to use, if offered?

[Comment box]

[ALL respondents]

31. In an average week, which of the following social media sites do you visit the **most frequently**? *Check all that apply.*

- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- I am not on social media
- Other, please specify: _____

32. In an average week, which of the following communication channels do you use **most frequently** to get information? *Check all that apply.*

- Internet
- Newspaper
- Broadcast TV/Cable (CBS, NBC, ABC, ESPN, HGTV, Bravo, etc.)
- Streaming TV (Netflix, Hulu, YouTube TV, etc.)
- Broadcast Radio (AM/FM radio station)
- Streaming Radio (Spotify, Pandora, etc.)
- YouTube
- Direct mail (postcards, letters, printed newsletters, etc.)
- Emails sent to me (promotional emails, email newsletters, etc.)
- Other, please specify: _____

Appendix 7: Provider Survey

Provider Survey - RPA 13-18 Passenger Transportation Plan

The following survey will guide the Passenger Transit Plan update of 2023 by providing RPAs 13 and 18 an inside look at the number of transportation providers and agencies utilizing transportation services to transport clients and residents throughout the region. This survey largely focuses on transportation providers, however, information from agencies who do not provide transportation is equally important in gauging the existing level of service within the region, coupled with current and future needs and gaps.

The following survey should take between 15-20 minutes to complete. Transportation providers are requested to also complete a separate vehicle inventory for the PTP.

* Required

1. What is the name of your agency? *

2. What is the best classification of your agency? *

Mark only one oval.

- State agency
- Transit agency
- Human service agency
- Private non-profit
- Private for-profit
- Employment Agency
- Other: _____

3. Who does your agency serve? (Check all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

- Persons over 65 (elderly)
- Persons with disabilities
- Economically or socially disadvantaged persons
- Persons under 18 (children/teen)
- General public
- Other: _____

4. What geographic area does your organization provide services within? *

5. What are the main transportation needs of your clients? (Check all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

- Medical/pharmacy
- Shopping
- Employment
- School/educational resources
- Social
- Religious services
- Recreation
- Legal (Court/probation)
- Other: _____

6. What unmet transportation needs do your clients have? *

7. What are the main barriers you currently face in coordinating transportation for your clients? *

8. Which best describes the level of transportation services you provide your clients? *

Mark only one oval.

- We provide significant transportation services
- We provide some transportation services
- We provide no transportation services *Skip to question 40*

Transportation Services

9. What geographic area do you provide transportation-specific services in? *

10. Who do you provide transportation to?

Mark only one oval.

- Publicly available
- Clients only
- Individuals meeting certain demographic qualifiers
- Individuals receiving Medicare or Medicaid
- Individuals meeting other criteria
- Other: _____

11. What types of transportation services do you provide for your clients? *

Mark only one oval.

- Door-to-door
- Curb-to-curb
- Enter residence
- On demand paratransit
- Scheduled (fixed) routes
- Transfer service to other transportation provider
- Other: _____

12. What types of trips do you provide? (Check all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

- Medical/pharmacy
- Shopping
- Employment
- School/educational resources
- Social
- Religious services
- Recreation
- Legal (Court/probation)
- Other: _____

Vehicles and Drivers

13. How do you provide transportation services? *

Check all that apply.

- We operate our own agency/company vehicles
- We contract with a transportation services provider
- We distribute transit agency passes or discounted passes to clients
- Volunteers provide and operate vehicles
- We use personal vehicles
- Other: _____

14. If your agency/company operates vehicles to provide transportation services, which of the following apply? (Check all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

- We use agency/company vehicles
- We lease vehicles
- Employees use personal vehicles
- Volunteers use personal vehicles
- We do not operate vehicles
- Other: _____

15. Who operates vehicles used to provide transportation? (Check all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

- Paid Staff
- Subcontractors
- Volunteers
- We do not operate vehicles
- Other: _____

16. How many transportation-related staff do you employ? *

Scheduling

17. What days of the week do you provide transportation service? *

Check all that apply.

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday
- Sunday

18. What are the hours of transportation service you provide? *

19. How many rides (example: one passenger with one pick-up and one drop-off) do you average per day? *

Mark only one oval.

- Less than 10
- 10-19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or more

20. What are your peak transportation service times each day? *

Check all that apply.

- Weekday Early Morning (4am-7am)
- Weekday Morning (7am-11am)
- Weekday Midday (11am-2pm)
- Weekday Afternoon (2pm-5pm)
- Weekday Evening (5pm-8pm)
- Weekday Late (8pm-Midnight)
- Weekend
- Other: _____

21. Are you currently able to meet your peak transportation service demands? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

22. Where does the funding for transportation services provided by your agency originate? (Check all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

- Federal grant(s)
- Medicaid funding
- State grant(s)
- County funding
- City funding
- Rider fares
- Philanthropic grants
- Other: _____

23. What are your annual operating costs for transportation services? *

24. What are your annual capital costs for transportation services? *

25. How do you charge riders for transportation service? (Check all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

- Per mile
- Per trip
- Set weekly/monthly rate
- Voucher
- Included in other services
- Sliding scale per trip
- Sliding scale per mile
- Other: _____

Coordination

26. Do you currently have a centralized dispatch center? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
- Contracted
- Other: _____

27. Do you maintain a database of clients receiving transportation services? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

28. Do you currently have agreements with other agencies to pool transportation resources *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

29. If you answered "no" to the previous question, would you be interested in developing agreements to pool agency transportation resources? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Maybe

30. What types of coordinated transportation activates would you be interested in pursuing in the future? *

Check all that apply.

- Joining a network of service providers
- Centralized fueling/charging
- Centralized scheduling
- Centralized operations
- Vehicle sharing
- Joint vehicle purchasing
- Contracting to provide or purchase transportation services
- Joint training programs
- Other: _____

31. Does your agency intend on integrating electric vehicle technology into your fleet in the next five years? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No
 Maybe

32. Did the changes in Medicaid funding affect how your agency provides transportation service? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
 No

33. If yes, how did Medicaid funding changes affect how your agency provides transportation service?

34. Has hiring and/or retention of drivers been an issue for your agency? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, historically
- Yes, recently (since COVID-19)
- Both of the above (Was a problem, but COVID-19 has made it more challenging)
- No

35. Has your agency had difficulty acquiring new vehicles in the last 2 years? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes - funding issues
- Yes - supply issues
- No
- Other: _____

36. Did you experience a reduction in ridership in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

37. Have your ridership numbers rebounded in 2022? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

38. Did your service level change due to the COVID-19 pandemic? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes - decrease in route frequency
- Yes - decrease in number of routes
- Yes - decrease in both route frequency and number of routes
- No

39. Has your service level rebounded in 2022? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

Priorities and Goal Setting

40. Please list the top three barriers you currently face in coordination of transportation resources? *

41. What are your top three long term goals for transportation service you provide? *

42. What should be the top priorities for regional transportation coordination in the RPA 13 and 18 regions over the next five years? *
