

2008 HUMAN SERVICES COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN

REGION 10
LEE COUNTY
RUSSELL COUNTY



Prepared By: Lee-Russell Council of Governments

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◇ INTRODUCTION

Background

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) act was passed by congress in August of 2005. SAFETEA-LU included important new requirements to coordinate transportation services.

1. Development of coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans at the local level to enhance transportation access, minimize duplication of Federal services, and encourage the most cost-effective transportation possible.
2. Participation of local human services providers in the planning and coordinating process because human service organizations work closely with the “transportation disadvantaged” and in many cases provide transportation for their clients.
3. Linking participation in coordination and funding from FTA by requiring that all grantees under the New Freedom Initiative, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and Elderly and Disable Transportation Program participate in coordinate transportation planning in order to receive funding.

The first Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan for Lee and Russell County was completed in the summer and fall of 2006. The plan included four general recommendations to begin the process of coordinating transportation in the region. First and most importantly, the group felt that additional funding for transportation services must be found. Secondly, transportation planning needed to include coordination of all existing transportation services. Third, a regional unified action plan for coordinating transportation services should be developed and the plan should include costs. Finally, a state-funded regional pilot of coordinated regional transportation should be implemented and evaluated.

Current Coordinated Transportation Planning Progress and Strategies

Since the fall of 2006 the region has made much progress toward coordinating transportation. Lee and Russell Counties were chosen to pilot coordination efforts in Alabama. Funding was provided to hire RLS and Associates to assist with the development of a regional action plan for coordination. Stakeholder meetings and interviews provided a wealth of data and specific information about transportation needs, gaps and duplications. Additionally, the meetings allowed transportation providers and human service organizations to get to know and understand each other.

The 5 Year Action plan was presented to stakeholders in the spring of 2008. The plan contained 5 major goals, 17 short and long term objectives, and 39 strategies to coordinate transportation in Lee and Russell County. Stakeholders rated the importance of each strategy and achieved consensus on both short and long term priorities for the region. This consensus provided the direction for this update of the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan.

The six over-arching strategies for coordinating transportation in Lee and Russell counties are listed below:

- Form a regional Coordinated Transportation Action Committee to become a forum for local transportation issues, networking, education and support.
- Increase public awareness of transportation options.
- Increase funding for transportation.
- Develop a coordinated approach to purchasing, vehicle maintenance, and driver training to maximize existing resources.
- Increase transportation options for citizens in rural areas of the region.
- Improve customer service and satisfaction.

◆ COUNTY SUMMARIES: LEE COUNTY

Geographic Information

Lee County is located in East Central Alabama, along the Chattahoochee River. At the county's eastern border is the State of Georgia. To the north, south and west of Lee County are the Alabama counties of Chambers, Tallapoosa, Macon, and Russell. The land area is 609 square miles. In 2000, the population density per square mile in Lee County was 189.

Lee County is bisected by Interstate 85 and lies midway between the capital cities of both Alabama and Georgia. Atlanta, Georgia is one hour northeast. Montgomery, Alabama is 45 minutes to the west. Lee County is convenient to Birmingham, the largest metropolitan area in Alabama, which is located 90 minutes northwest via state Hwy 280. Lee County maintains 611 miles of paved roads and 225 miles of dirt roads.

Population and Projected Growth

In 2006, according to the Alabama State Data Center, the population of Lee County was estimated to be 125,781. Lee County ranks as the 8th most populous county in Alabama. Between 1990 and 2000, the population of Lee County increased by 32.1%. Over the next 10 years the rate of growth is projected to be 19%. By 2025 the population should be nearly 180,000. Migration data from 2000-2006 shows a gain in Lee County of 10,689 due to immigration and natural increases.

The median age in Lee County is 29.2. The presence of Auburn University accounts for the larger than expected percent of the population between the ages of 20 and 25 in Lee County.

The major population areas of Lee County are in the cities of Auburn, Opelika and Smiths Station. Sixty-seven percent of the counties' population resides in these 3 cities. Thirty-three percent reside in the rural and/or unincorporated areas of the county.

Table 1: Lee County Population and Transit Dependent Percentages

	Lee County	Alabama
Total Population	125,781	4,599,030
Adults, 65+	8.5%	13.3%
Individuals With Disabilities	7.9%	11.3%
Persons In Poverty	18.9%	16.6%
Households without Vehicles	6.7%	7.3%

Adults Aged 65 And Over

Transportation and mobility are problematic for senior citizens, especially those who live in small urban and rural areas where public transportation options are limited. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), 20% of Americans over the age of 65 do not drive. In 2006, the US Census Bureau estimated there were 10,746 individuals over the age of 65 in Lee County. If 20% of these individuals do not drive, that means 2,149 senior citizens in the county are in need of transportation assistance.

Projections from the Alabama State Data center show the elderly population of Lee County growing to 18,400 by 2020. With Auburn and Opelika increasingly seen as desirable retirement locations, it seems certain that transportation services in the county will have difficulty meeting the additional demands for senior citizen transportation in the future.

Individuals with Disabilities

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual. For transportation planning purposes, the mere existence of a disability is not as important as the individual's capability to perform life activities, especially those outside the home. The 2000 United States Census included several questions about disabilities. However the category "outside the home disabilities" is generally considered to be the best indicator of individuals with disabilities who are actually in need of public transportation or paratransit services. The 2000 Census found 6,476 persons in Lee County with "outside of the home disabilities".

Another data source that provides information on disabled populations is the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The SIPP survey addresses limitations in functional activities, activities of daily living, and instrumental activities of daily living. SIPP provides an estimated count of the ADA eligible population. In 2000, the SIPP estimated this population to be 5,703 in Lee County.



Figure 1: Individuals with disabilities in Lee County call public transportation dispatch to access rides.

Persons and Families in Poverty

Persons who live below the poverty line experience difficulties maintaining reliable transportation. In Lee County, 16.1% of the population lives in poverty.

In May, 2008, the Alabama Department of Human Resources reported that 297 families in the county were receiving financial assistance, 4,416 households received food stamps, and 1,538 Lee County children were receiving or waiting for child care subsidies. Additionally, 156 individuals in the county were qualified to participate in the JOBS program. JOBS clients receive support to train for, attain, and maintain employment. Support services provided to JOBS clients include transportation to and from work and training classes.

Households Without Vehicles

The number of vehicles available to a housing unit is an indicator of the need for transportation services.

In 2000, 3,104 households in Lee County reported having no car. While this is a relatively low percentage of the households in the county, it is troubling that some of the higher concentrations of these households are located in the southwestern rural area of the county.

These households are far from health and social services, educational facilities, shopping centers, restaurants and pharmacies.

Labor Force

According to the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations, there were 63,619 employed citizens in Lee County in June, 2008. The unemployment rate was 4.7%.

Major employers in Lee County include: Auburn University, Benteler Automotive, Briggs and Stratton, East Alabama Medical Center, Jo-Ann Stores, Mando America Corporation, Masterbrand Cabinets, and Walmart Distribution Center.

Auburn University allows staff and faculty to use the Tiger Transit system to and from work. There are no other work transportation programs in Lee County at this time. The average commute time in Lee County was 20.6 minutes.

Fuel Prices

Fuel prices in the Lee County area reached an average high of \$3.97 for a gallon of regular gasoline in July, 2008. Nationwide, citizens are spending 4% of their after tax income on gasoline. This is the highest percentage since 1983. High fuel prices have a disproportional affect on households with lower incomes and fixed incomes. Households in rural areas also suffer more from higher gas prices since they must travel further to access services, employment, medical care, and supplies.

In many parts of the country, public transit ridership has increased as gas prices have risen. In Lee County demand-reponse ridership increased by 19% during the summer of 2008.

Common Destinations and Origins

Shopping areas (Walmart, Winn Dixie, Kroger, Colonial Mall, Tiger Town, Midway Plaza), medical facilities (East Alabama Medical Center, Medical Arts Complex, Health Department, Mental Health), local government services (city halls, county courthouse, post offices, libraries) social services (DHR) and higher education institutions (Auburn University, Southern Union Community College) are among the most popular destinations in Lee County.

Paratransit riders are most frequently taken to and from work and to doctor's appointments. Work locations vary from rider to rider.

◆ COUNTY SUMMARIES: RUSSELL COUNTY

Geographic Information

Russell County is located in East Central Alabama, along the Chattahoochee River. At the county's eastern border is the State of Georgia. To the north, south, and west of Russell County are the Alabama counties of Lee, Macon, Bullock, and Barbour. The land area is 641 square miles. In 2000, the population density per square mile was 77.6.

Russell County is bisected by US Highway 431. US Highway 280 passes through the northeastern corner of the county. The northern areas of the county have access to interstate 85 via the I-185 spur. Atlanta, Georgia is one hour northeast of Russell County. Montgomery, Alabama is one hour to the west. Russell County maintains 373 miles of paved roads and 199 miles of unpaved roads.

Population and Projected Growth

The 2006 population of Russell County was estimated to be 50,085 by the Alabama Data Center. Russell County is the 25th most populous county in Alabama. Between 1990 and 2000, the population of Russell County increased by 6.2 %. Population growth between 2000 and 2010 is projected to climb 4.5%. By 2010, the population is expected to reach 52,066. In 2015 the population is projected to be 53,147. By 2025 the population of Russell County will exceed 55,000. (See Table 1) Migration data from 2000-2006 shows a gain of 329 in Russell County despite out-migration due to natural increases.

The major population areas of Russell County are in the northeastern area of the county, in and adjacent to the county seat, Phenix City. Sixty-four percent of the counties' population is located in this urban and suburban area of the county. The remaining 36% live in the more rural areas of the county.

Table 3: Russell County Transit Dependent Populations

	Russell County	Alabama
Total Population	50,085	4,599,030
Adults, 65+	13.1%	13.3%
Individuals With Disabilities	11.4%	11.3%
Persons In Poverty	19.9%	16.6%
Households without Vehicles	8.4%	7.3%

Adults Aged 65 And Over

Transportation and mobility are problematic for senior citizens, especially those who live in small urban or rural areas where public transportation options are limited. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), 20% of Americans over the age of 65 do not drive. According to the 2000 US Census, there were 6,541 individuals over the age of 65 in Russell County. Using the information from AARP, over 1,300 senior citizens in the county were in need of transportation assistance in year 2000.

Projections from the Alabama State Data center show the elderly population in Russell County increasing to 8,228 by 2020. It seems certain that transportation services in the county will have difficulty meeting the additional demands for senior citizen transportation in the future.



Figure 2: Seniors in Russell County arriving at a Senior Center event on public transportation

Individuals with Disabilities

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual. For transportation planning purposes, the mere existence of a disability is not as important as the individual's capability to perform life activities.

The 2000 United States Census included several questions about disabilities. However, the category "outside the home disabilities" is generally the best indicator of individuals with disabilities who actually need public transportation or paratransit services. The 2000 Census found 4,839 persons in Russell County with "outside of the home disabilities".

Another data source that provides information on disabled populations is the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). The SIPP survey addresses limitations in functional activities, activities of daily living, and instrumental activities of daily living. SIPP provides an estimated count of the ADA eligible population. In 2000, the SIPP estimated this population to be 2,702 in Russell County.

Persons and Families in Poverty

Persons who live below the poverty line experience difficulties maintaining reliable transportation. In Russell County, 19.4% of the population lives in poverty.

The Alabama Department of Human Resources reported that in Russell County 321 families were receiving financial assistance, 4,004 households received food stamps, and 705 children were receiving or waiting for child care subsidies. Additionally, 202 individuals were qualified to participate in the JOBS program. JOBS clients receive support to train for, attain, and maintain employment. Support services include transportation to and from work and training classes.

Households without Vehicles

The number of vehicles available to a housing unit is an indicator of the need for transportation services. In 2000, 2,489 households in Russell County reported having no car. This was 12.6% of all the households in the county. Many of these households are located in Phenix City. However, it is troubling that one of the highest concentrations of these households was located in Hurtsboro a very rural town in southwest Russell County.

Labor Force

According to the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations, there were 21,487 employed citizens in Russell County in June, 2008. The unemployment rate was 7.2%, which is well above the state average of 4.7.

Major employers in Russell County include: Meadwestvaco, Boral Brick, Hughston Clinic, and IIG Minwool.

There are no employer transportation programs in Russell County at this time. The average commute time in Russell County was 24.6 minutes.

Fuel Prices

Fuel prices in the Russell County area topped \$3.80 per gallon of regular gas during the summer of 2008. Nationwide, citizens are spending 4% of their after tax income on gasoline. This is the highest percentage since 1983. High fuel prices have a disproportional affect on households with lower incomes and fixed incomes. Households in rural areas also suffer more from higher gas prices since they must travel further to access services, employment, medical care, and supplies.

In many parts of the country, public transit ridership has increased as gas prices have risen. In Russell County fixed route ridership increased by 19.5% during 2008. Amazingly, demand response service was up 60%.

Common Destinations and Origins

Major destinations include shopping (Walmart, K-Mart, Big Lots, Winn Dixie, Piggly Wiggly) medical facilities (Health Department, Women's Clinic, Regional Rehabilitation Hospital, Mental Health Center), social services (DHR) and higher education institutions (Chattahoochee Valley Community College, Troy State, PC Campus). Public transportation also connects with the Columbus Metra, the public transit system for adjacent Columbus, Georgia. The majority of doctor appointments for individuals in Phenix City and the surrounding area are located in Columbus, Georgia.

◇ AVAILABILITY OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN 2008

Achievement Center of East Alabama is a private non-profit serving 5 counties in east central Alabama. The Achievement Center has 4 vans in use and 3 older vehicles in reserve providing transportation to their clients. The clients of the Achievement Center have mental and physical challenges. The Achievement Center operates Monday-Thursday from 8:00 to 4:00. Vans begin picking up clients at 6:00 in the morning and bring them to their facility in Opelika. Clients are then transported home between 4:00 and 6:30 in the evening. The Achievement Center will also provide transportation to appointments and shopping during the day. There is no fee for service.

East Alabama Medical Center operates 5 retirement and assisted living facilities in Auburn, Alabama. There are 3 vans available to residents in the retirement and assisted living communities. Transportation is available from 8:00 to 5:00. Medical trips have priority although transportation for shopping and recreation is also available. Monthly fees for residents include services such as transportation.

East Alabama Mental Health is a public not-for-profit organization based in Auburn, Alabama. East Alabama Mental Health serves 4 counties including Lee and Russell. The organization has a fleet of 72 vehicles. Thirty of these vehicles are assigned to residential group homes throughout the service area and serve only the residents at the group home. Other vehicles are reserved for central office staff to provide services to individuals living with their families. The remaining vehicles are used to transport clients to and from the mental health facility for non residential substance abuse and day programs. The behaviors of the clientele require additional staff on each trip. East Alabama Mental Health also contracts with public transit and Johnson's Express to provide transportation for their clients.

East Alabama Services for the Elderly provides transportation for their clients, who are older adults, low-income Medicaid recipients, or 18 years or older with disabilities and are isolated at home. EASE picks up clients at their homes and transports them to their day treatment facility. One 15 passenger van operates 3 routes in Lee County. The agency can also transport clients from the day treatment facility to medical appointments or shopping. There is no fare for services but the agency is limited in the number of clients that can be served. The agency clients who need wheel chair accessible vehicles utilize LRPT.

House of Restoration Homeless Shelter is a faith-based program located in Russell County. The mission of the House of Restoration is to assist homeless individuals in achieving a healthy, independent, self-reliant life. The shelter transports clients to work, job training, medical and social service appointments, and shopping. House of Restoration has 3 vehicles: one van, one sedan, and a pickup truck. Transportation is available 7 days a week, usually between the hours of 6:00 am and 7:00 pm. There is no fee to clients for this service.

Johnson Express provides transportation to individuals with medical appointments. Currently, Medicaid and East Alabama Medical Center have agreements with Johnson's Express to provide transportation for their clients. Johnson's Express is a private not-for-profit organization. Six vehicles provide door to door service. Fares for clients who are not eligible for Medicaid reimbursement range are listed in Table 4.

Table 4: 2008 Johnson Express Fares

In-City	Out-of-County
\$25 for ambulatory passengers	\$.54 per mile plus \$35.00 base fare
\$35 for non-ambulatory passengers	\$1.00 per mile plus \$35.00 base fare

Lee-Russell Public Transit, operated by Lee-Russell Council of Governments, serves Lee and parts of Russell county with public transportation services. Currently, LRPT operates 23 buses. Traditional fixed routes operating within the cities of Auburn and Opelika were phased out in 2008 in favor of providing additional demand response curb-to-curb service. The new service is called Dial-A-Ride.

The Auburn Opelika Connection Dial-A Ride service is available Monday-Friday from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. This service is available within a 5-mile radius of both Auburn and Opelika's City Halls.

The Lee Metro Connection Dial-A-Ride service is available in most of western Lee County on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The eastern portions of Lee County, in a 10 mile radius from Opelika city limits, have access to Lee Metro transportation services on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The Lee Metro Connection service operates from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm.

LRPT also provides the Russell Metro Connection weekly demand response service in selected areas of Russell County. Transportation into Phenix City will be available from Bleeker/Smiths Station, Crawford/Ladonia, Hurtsboro/Hatchchubbee, Pittsview/Seale, and Fort Mitchell. The service area is a 2.5 mile radius from the major routes into Phenix City from these communities. Public transportation has never been available in any of these areas before.

Fares for LRPT are based on distance traveled. Fare cards are available and provide a 25% discount for passengers who purchase them. There are also discounts for senior citizens. LRPT also receives funding to provide Job Access Reverse Commute Services in Lee County. There is no charge to JARC clients for transportation. LRPT fares for service are listed in Table 5.

Maps of LRPT service areas and fares are located in Tab 7.

Table 5: 2008 LRPT FARES

Service	0-5 Miles	5-10 Miles	10-15 Miles	15-20 Miles	20+ Miles
Demand Response	\$2.00	\$3.00	\$4.00	\$5.00	\$6.00

PEX (Phenix City Express), operated by Lee-Russell Council of Governments, provides fixed route and paratransit services in Phenix City. PEX is funded by the City of Phenix City and USDOT and does not provide services outside of the city limits of Phenix City.

PEX operates 6 buses on two fixed routes Monday-Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. Paratransit services to all disabled individuals are also available inside the city limits of Phenix City and to adjoining Columbus, Georgia for medical appointments. PEX fares for services are listed in Table 6.

A map of PEX fixed routes is located in Tab 7.

Table 6: 2008 PEX FARES

Service	Adult Fare	Seniors	Disabled	Children	Under 5
Fixed Route	\$1.00	.50	.50	.75	Free
City Demand Response	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00	\$2.00
Columbus, GA Demand Resp.	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00	\$3.00

St. Patrick's Catholic Church is a faith-based organization in Phenix City, Alabama. The church provides a strictly parish-based volunteer transportation program. Volunteer's personal vehicles are used to provide transportation.

Tiger Transit, operated by Auburn University, serves the students, faculty and staff of the university with 48 buses which travel fixed routes throughout Auburn and the eastern part of the county and on campus. Twelve routes are external, 7 routes are internal. The service operates from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday. Night transit provides limited service on campus and one way service to off campus destinations until 10:00 pm. Students are assessed for Tiger Transit each semester as a part of their tuition payment. There are no "fares" in addition to the tuition assessment.

Taxi Services

Freedom Cab is based in Phenix City and serves Russell and Lee counties in Alabama, as well as the Columbus Georgia area. It is a private, for-profit company and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Tiger Taxi is based in Auburn, Alabama and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Their fleet consists entirely of 7 passenger vans. Flat rates to destinations such as Birmingham and Atlanta are available. There are also fares based on mileage and the number of passengers.

I-85 Express provides van shuttle service 5 times each day to the Hartsfield International Airport in Atlanta, GA from the Auburn-Opelika area. A flat rate is charged for the trip.

◆ SOURCES OF REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING IN 2008

Provider	Client Fares/ Contracts	FTA 5307	FTA 5310	FTA 5311	Grants	JARC	Local Gov't	Medicaid Waiver	State Allocation	Student Tuition	VA
Achievement Center	X		X								
East Alabama Medical Center	X										
East Alabama Mental Health									X		
East Alabama Services for Elderly			X								
House of Restoration					X						X
Johnson's Express	X							X			
Lee-Russell Public Transit	X	X	X	X		X	X				
Phenix City Express	X	X		X		X	X				
St. Patrick's											
Tiger Transit										X	
Freedom Cab	X										
Tiger Taxi	X										
I-85-Express	X										

◇ POPULATIONS SERVED AND VEHICLE INVENTORY IN 2008

Provider	General Public	Own Clients Only	Disabled	Elderly	Low Income	Handicap Access	Total Vehicles	CDL Bus Trolley	CDL Van	Non CDL Van	Cars
Achievement Center		X	X			yes	7		2	5	
East Alabama Medical Center		X		X		yes	3		3		
East Alabama Mental Health		X	X			yes	72				
East Alabama Services for Elderly		X		X		yes	1	1			
House of Restoration		X	X	X	X	no	3			1	2
Johnson's Express	X		X	X	X	yes	7			5	2
Lee-Russell Public Transit	X		X	X	X	yes	23				
Phenix City Express	X		X	X	X	yes	6	6			
St. Patrick's		X				no	All volunteer				
Tiger Transit		X				no	48	48			
Freedom Cab	X					no	6				
Tiger Taxi		X				no	7			7	
I-85-Express	X					no	5			5	

◇ THE COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

During the winter and spring of 2008, discussions with local transportation stakeholders were conducted by the independent consulting group RLS and Associates. The intent of the discussions was to determine what actions should be taken to overcome the gaps, duplications and unmet transportation needs of the region.



Figure 3: Citizens look at proposed changes to rural transportation in the region as part of the planning process.

One of the most important achievements of the planning process was the development of relationships between social service agencies and transportation providers in the region. In the course of the discussion, stakeholders came to consensus on current transportation services they wanted to preserve and eliminate. They also were able to agree on services they hoped to achieve and changes they wished to avoid. This consensus provided the foundation for the goals and strategies of this plan.

The following list details the consensus on preservation, elimination, achievement, and avoidance:

Preserve:

- Successful fixed route and demand response services
- Passenger relationships so that citizens are comfortable requesting trips and using the transportation options available to them
- Sufficient quantity of wheelchair-accessible vehicles
- Individual agency missions while developing one shared mission for transportation coordination

Eliminate:

- Negative attitudes and misperceptions about the tangible results of coordination
- Inefficient driver and vehicle down time
- Unnecessary bureaucracy

- Barriers to communication and coordination between agencies

Achieve:

- Better utilization of existing resources by sharing schedules, vehicles, staff and information
- Access to additional funding by sharing grant writing capabilities and taking a cooperative approach to meeting transportation needs
- Service to rural areas and small outlying communities
- Reduced individual operating costs through joint purchasing and scheduling
- Affordable transportation to mental health appointments
- Evening and Saturday transportation options
- Affordable transportation for lower income individuals who do not qualify for Medicaid or senior service transportation
- Easier application for Medicaid services
- Transportation agreements with providers in Columbus, GA
- A fleet of smaller more energy efficient vehicles
- A centralized call center for scheduling and dispatching
- Designated lead organization to assist with coordination

Avoid:

- Creating another layer of bureaucracy adding excessive paperwork, meeting time and work to already busy employees
- Commitment without follow-through

◇ 2008 RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Establish a Coordinated Transportation Advisory Council (CTAC)**

The region is supportive of the general concept of transportation coordination. However, there is hesitancy among many of the organizations in knowing what commitment they can and should make to the effort.

It was decided that coordinated transportation needed a forum for education, information, networking and support. The formation of a Coordinated Transportation Advisory Council, built upon the relationships begun during the transportation planning process, would make the process of actual coordination easier and more comfortable for all parties. The group would have formal bylaws, officers, and regular meetings. Memorandums of Understanding would be signed with all participating groups.

As groups become more familiar with each others services and needs, natural opportunities for sharing rides, filling gaps, and avoiding duplication will become apparent.

- **Increase public awareness of transportation options in the region**

During the coordinated transportation planning process it became evident that even transportation providers in the region were not aware of each others services, clientele, operating hours, or capacity. Consequently, transportation providers had difficulty referring calls from the public or social service agencies to each other appropriately. Social service agencies with clients needing transportation became frustrated trying to find rides.

Gathering detailed information about transportation services in the region, keeping it current and making it available to each other and the public is an essential component of coordinating transportation. The CTAC plans to develop an informational booklet that can be widely distributed throughout the community and accessed on line. The CTAC also hopes to have a single transportation information and referral line citizens can call.

- **Seek additional funding for transportation services**

Transportation services can only be provided at the level to which they are funded. During the last year the cost of fuel and insurance has risen enormously, straining transportation budgets which were already inadequate to meet the needs of citizens. Future goals include a central call center, increased service to rural areas of the region, as well as expanding service days and hours. Achieving these goals will require additional funding.

Fortunately, many of the organizations participating in the coordinated transportation planning efforts have grant writing expertise and/or extensive knowledge of state, local and national funding sources. It is the intention of the group to utilize these skills to bring more dollars to the coordination effort in the future. JARC and New Freedom, as well as less traditional sources, will be accessed.

- **Improve opportunities for transportation in rural areas**

Although the region has many transportation providers, transportation options outside the cities of Auburn, Opelika, and Phenix City has been very limited. This is very concerning. Households in rural areas are more affected by increasing fuel costs since they must travel longer distances to work, shopping and medical care. Further, in Lee and Russell Counties, higher concentrations of households without access to vehicles are found in the rural areas.

Efforts to improve transportation to rural areas include the commitment of Lee Russell Public Transit to eliminate metropolitan based fixed routes and move to county-wide demand response systems. Future goals include the development of van pool programs with local employers and researching the feasibility of bringing more social service and medical service to the rural communities via a monthly or quarterly “health fair” system.

- **Better utilize existing funding**

Coordinating transportation can take many forms. Transportation providers in the region share the frustration of insufficient funding to cover the rising cost of providing transportation. There is high interest in finding ways to maximize funding by sharing driver training, procurement of fuel, tires, and preventive maintenance. Saving money with joint purchasing can free up dollars to provide more rides for more people.

- **Improve customer service and satisfaction**

To be successful, coordinated transportation must meet the needs of customers. Transportation must be able to take people where they want to go, when they want to go. Further, from beginning to end the experience should be a pleasant one for the riders, the transportation providers, and any human service organizations who may be involved in the process.

The ultimate goal of the CTAC is to develop a centralized call center for information, referral, scheduling and dispatching. However there are many action steps that have to occur before this goal is realized. These include: surveying public transit customers and human service agency clients to better determine their needs; implementing hands-on passenger training for new riders and training human service personnel on public transportation; cross training drivers on the varying needs of passengers; as well as marketing existing and new service to the general public, employers and the media.

On the following pages priorities and action steps for these recommendations are listed. Timelines are also included for many of the action steps. However, actual implementation could vary from the stated timelines.

PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR COORDINATION

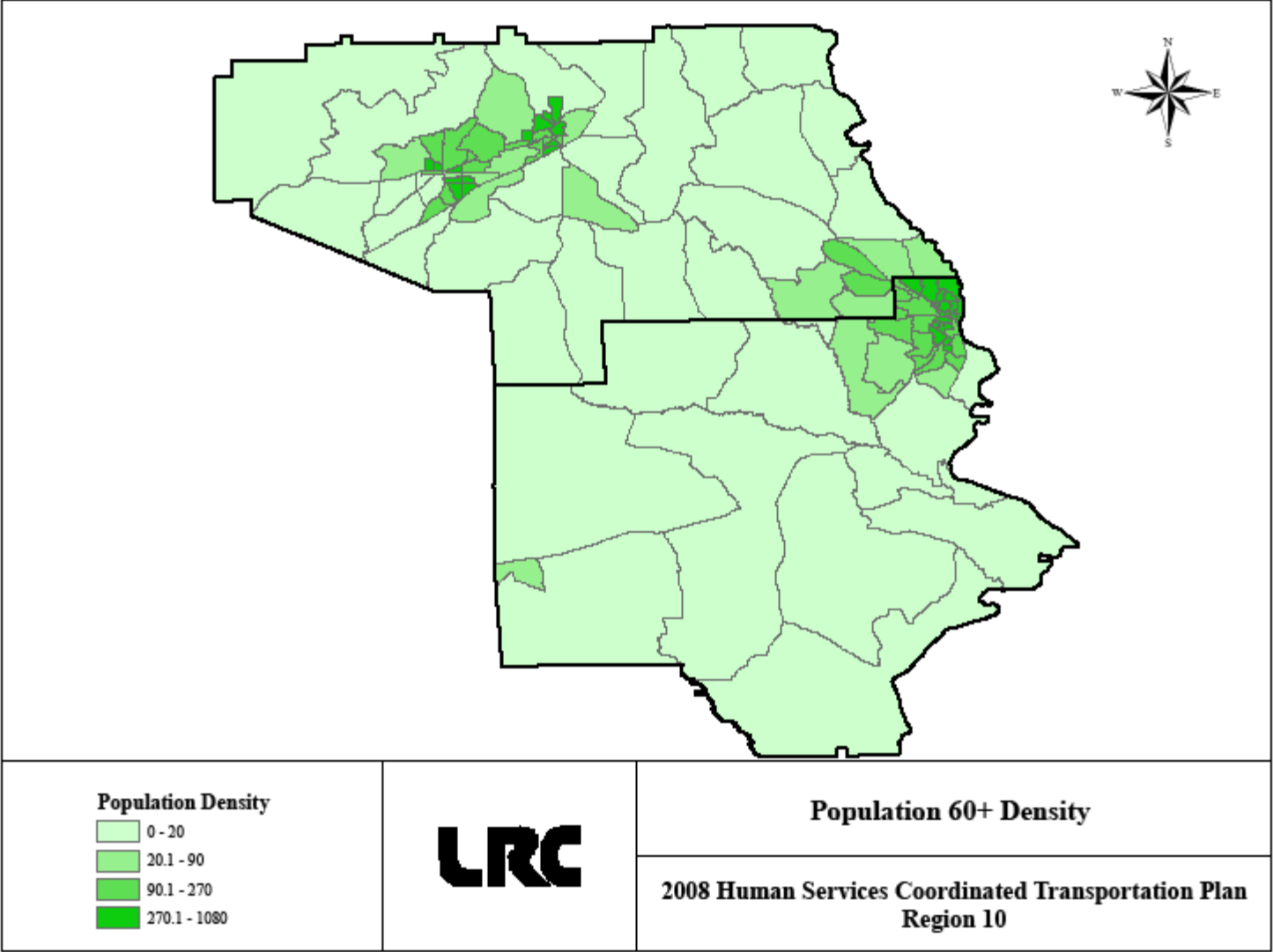
Strategy	Priority	Action Steps	Time Frame
Form a Regional Coordinated Transportation Advisory Council (CTAC) to become a forum for local transit issues, education and support.	High	Invite transportation providers and human services agencies to serve on the CTAC.	Summer, 2008
		Develop and approve bylaws.	Summer, 2008
		Elect officers.	Summer, 2008
		Develop and sign memorandum of understanding, formalizing commitment to the group with each participating organization.	Fall, 2008
		Hold quarterly meetings.	Ongoing
Develop an informational brochure on public transportation options in Lee and Russell County and distribute it throughout the community.	High	Gather current information from all transportation providers.	Fall, 2008
		Utilize the expertise of CTAC members regarding format, layout and distribution strategies.	Winter, 2009
		Produce the brochure.	Spring, 2009
		Place brochure information on the web for consumers.	Spring, 2009
		Distribute brochures throughout the community.	Ongoing
		Keep information current.	Ongoing
Increase transportation funding in the region.	High	Submit proposals for JARC funding.	Summer, 2008
		Pool grant-writing expertise to submit grants to local, state and national foundations and programs.	Spring, 2009; Ongoing
		Promote the use of employer/employee tax benefits to pay public transportation costs.	Fall, 2009

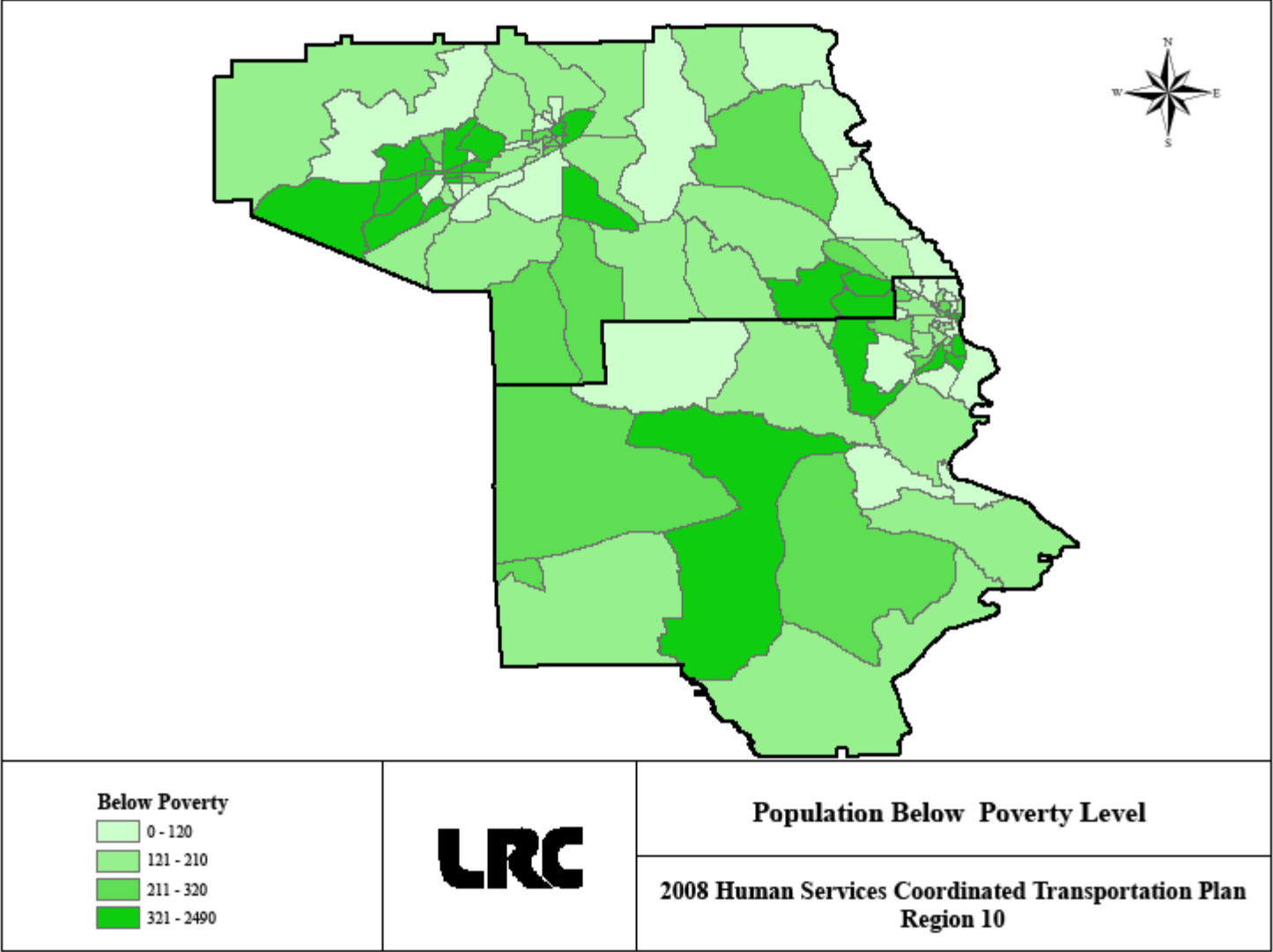
Strategy	Priority	Action Steps	Time Frame
Develop a coordinated approach to purchasing, training and maintenance to reduce costs and maximize resources.	Medium	Develop a shared list of mandatory driver training and hiring requirements.	Spring, 2009
		Implement a training schedule for new hires/existing employees of partner organizations.	Fall, 2009
		Share procurement of tires, fuel, and preventive maintenance items.	Fall, 2009
		Develop uniform preventive vehicle maintenance standards.	Fall, 2009
		Explore possibilities of lowering insurance costs by working with a common provider.	TBA
		Collaboratively, secure maintenance services for all providers.	TBA
		Utilize common maintenance/repair/cost tracking software.	TBA
Improve transportation options for citizens in rural Lee and Russell Counties.	High	Implement a demand response feeder service from rural areas to Phenix City bus stops.	Fall, 2008
		Implement service expansions between rural areas and Auburn, Opelika, Phenix City.	Fall, 2008
		Establish locations in rural communities for monthly one-stop health/social service center.	TBA
		Implement demand response feeder service to the one-stop health/social service center.	TBA
		Meet with the business community about van pool options.	Winter, 2009
		Research the feasibility of developing vanpool programs.	Spring, 2009
		Determine the need for regional employment related transportation into Columbus, GA.	TBA

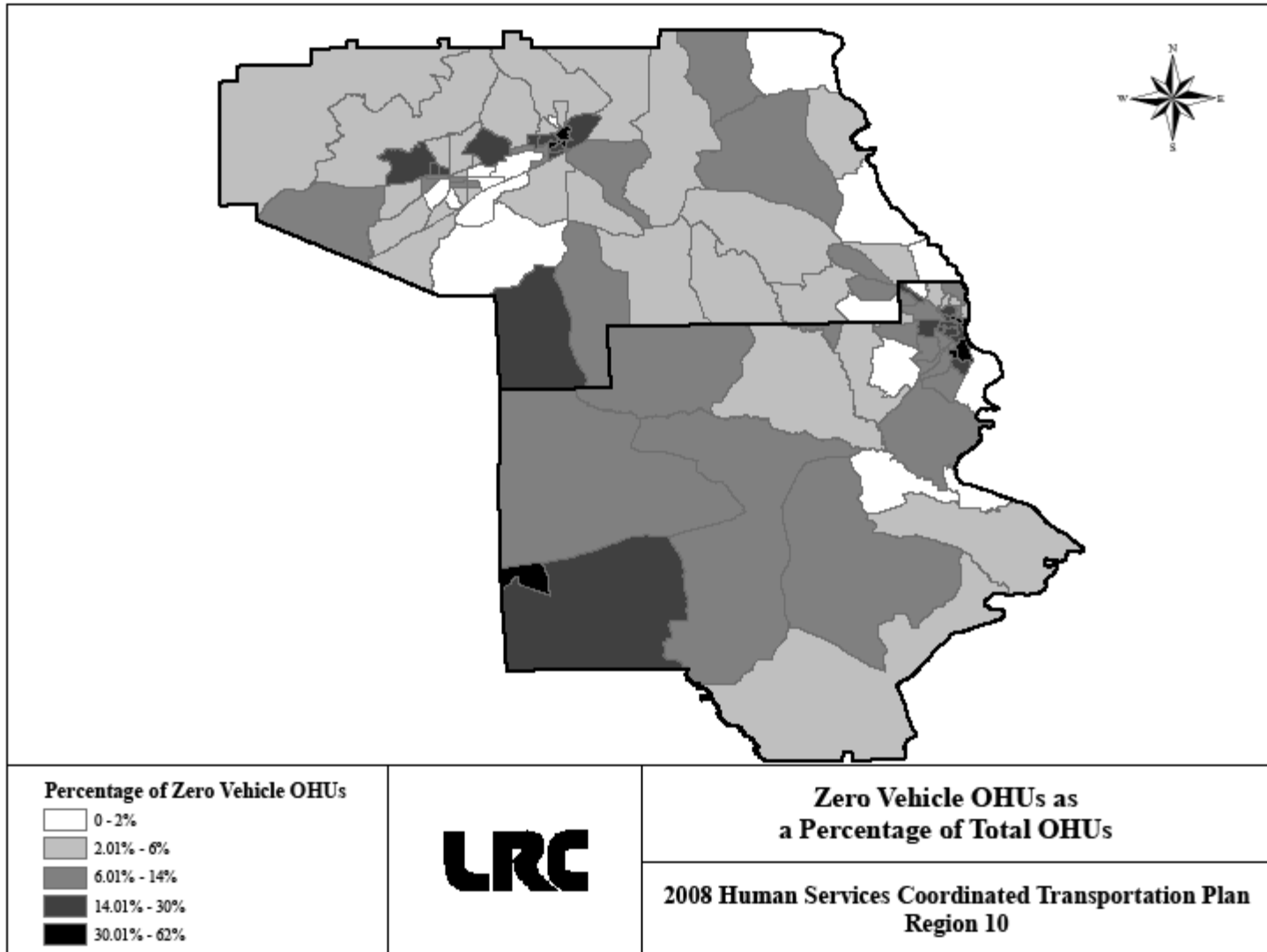
Strategy	Priority	Action Steps	Time Frame
Improve customer service and satisfaction.	Medium	Survey existing customers to determine their needs.	Ongoing
		Implement hands-on passenger training and education activities.	Summer. 2009
		Cross train drivers on the specific needs of customers from different agencies.	Summer, 2009
		Market existing and new service to the general public, to employers, and to the media.	Ongoing
		Update the Coordinated Transportation Action Plan on an annual basis.	Ongoing
		Create an annual report for the coordinated transportation program.	Fall, 2009
		Create a centralized call center for information, referral, scheduling and dispatching.	2011

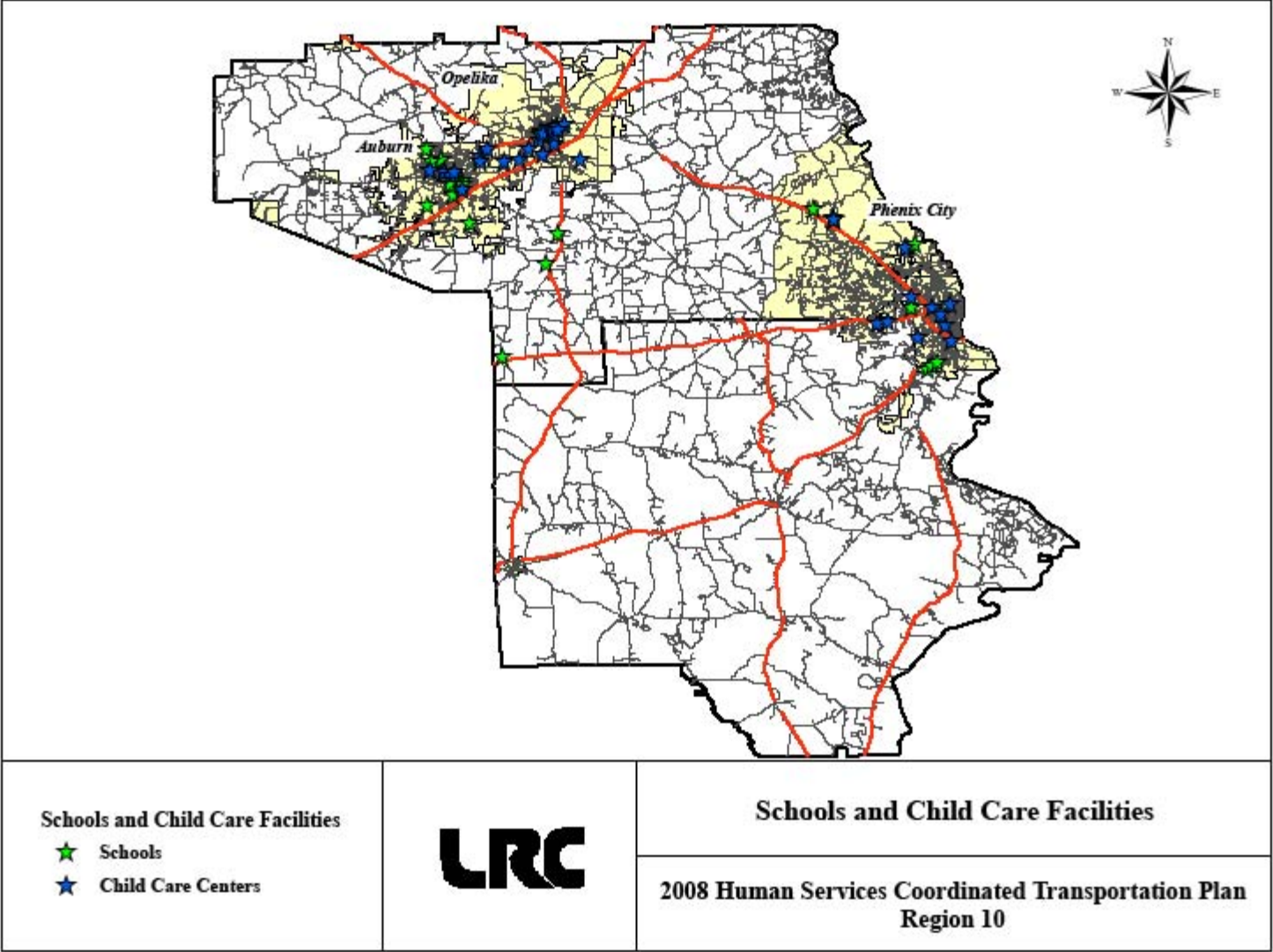
◇ **MAPS**

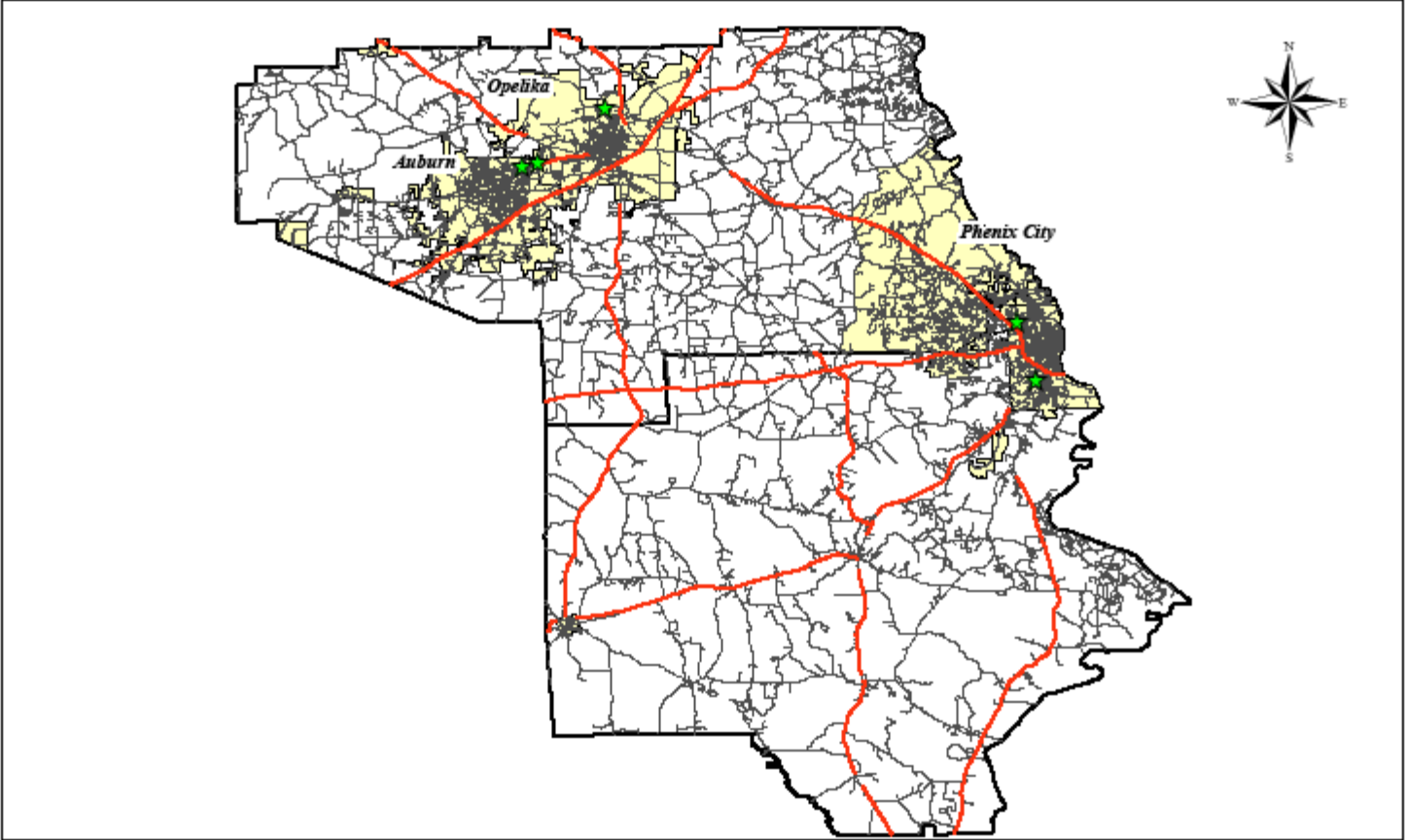
- **Population Density of Seniors 60+**
- **Population Below Poverty**
- **Zero Vehicle Occupied Households**
- **Schools and Child Care Facilities**
- **Senior Centers and Assisted Living Facilities**
- **Shopping Centers and Restaurants**
- **Lee-Russell Public Transit Service Days**
- **Lee-Russell Public Transit Fare Zones**
- **PEX Public Transit Routes**









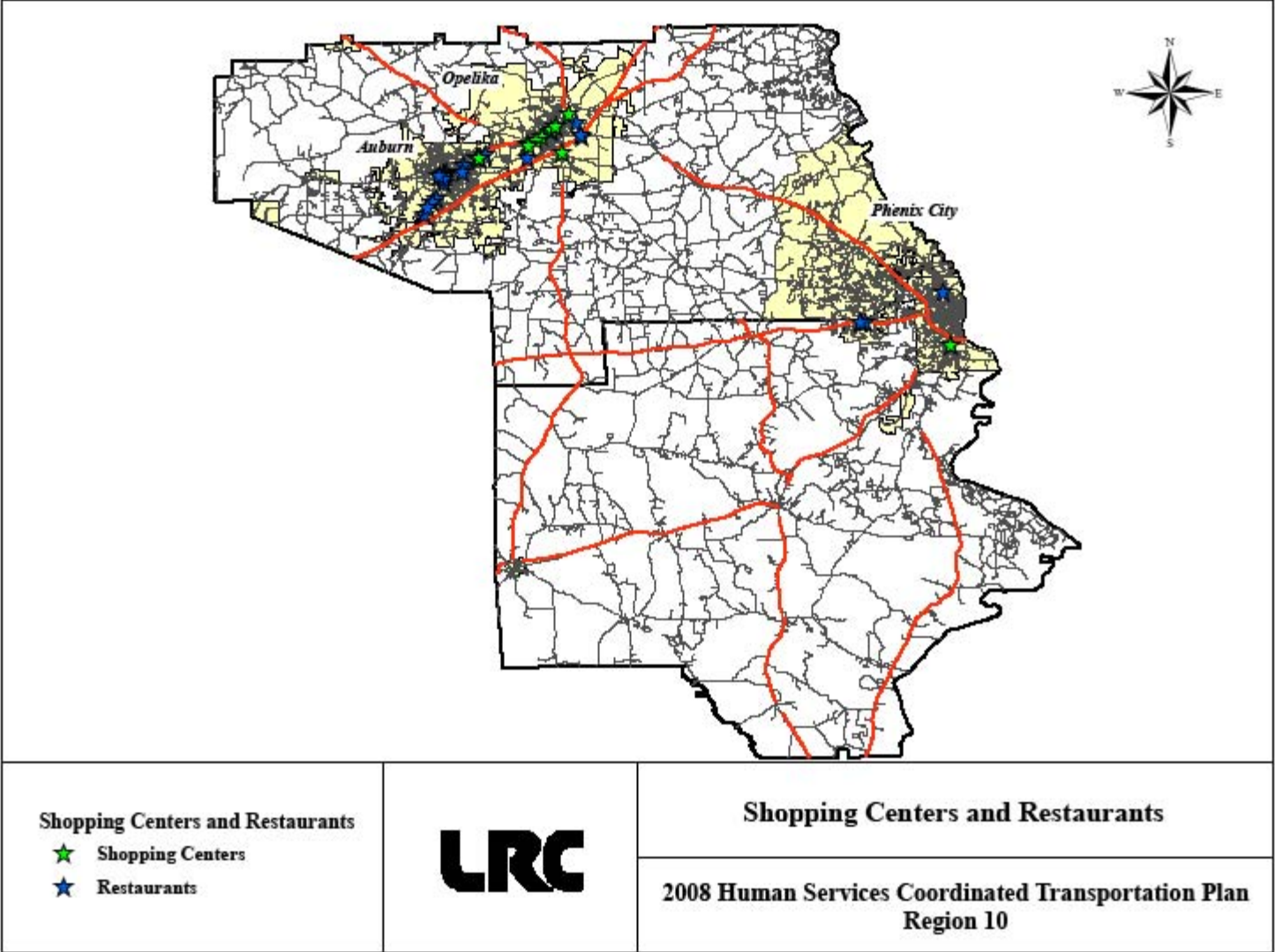


★ Senior Centers/Assisted Living



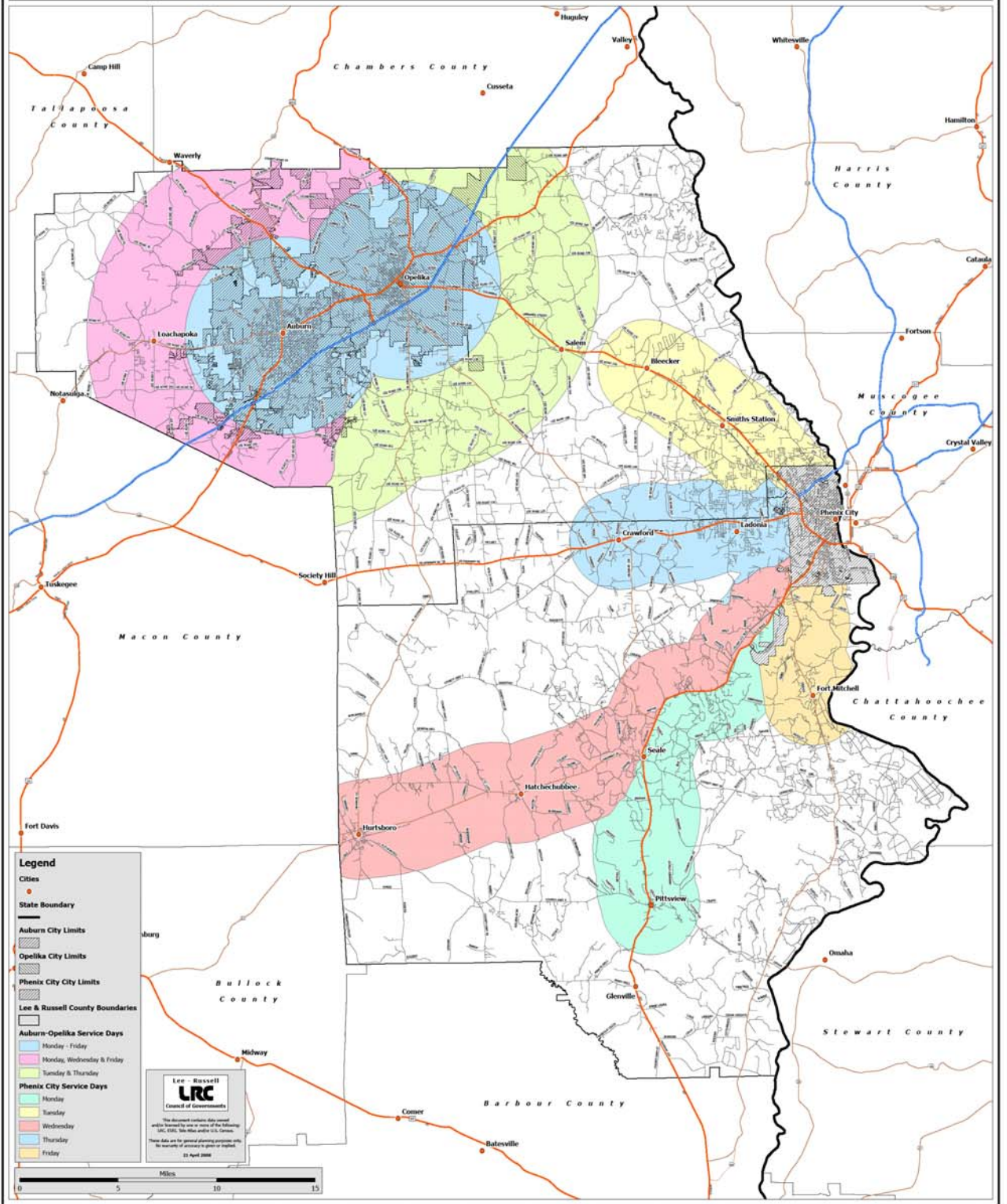
Senior and Assisted Living Centers

**2008 Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan
Region 10**

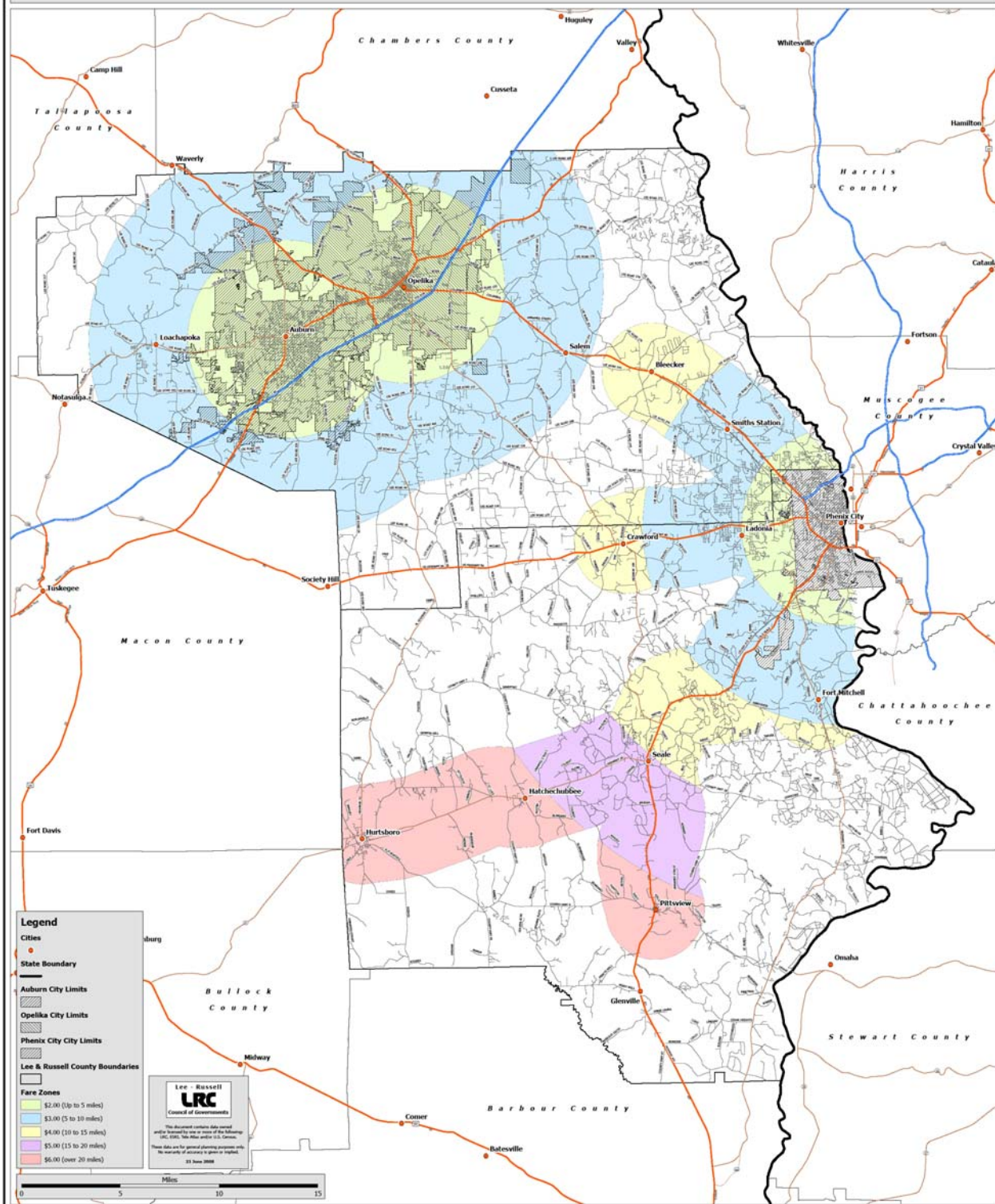


LEE-RUSSELL PUBLIC TRANSIT

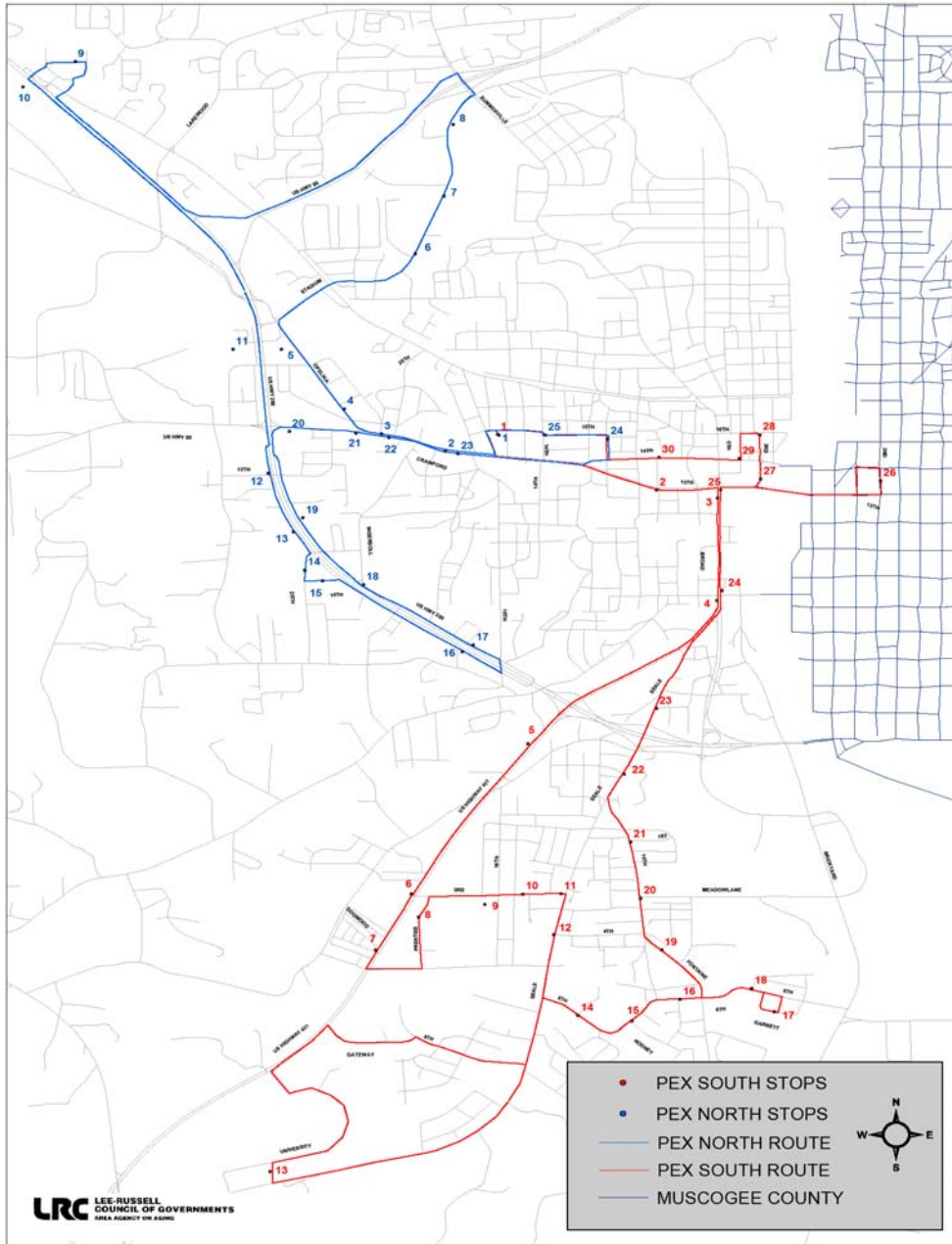
Service Days



LEE-RUSSELL PUBLIC TRANSIT Fare Zones



PEX PUBLIC TRANSIT ROUTES



◇ **COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

- **Proposed By Laws**
- **Membership**
- **Action Plan Priority Survey: Results**

**Lee-Russell Counties
Coordinated Transportation Advisory Council
Proposed By-Laws**

Article I: Name

The name of the group shall be Coordinated Transportation Advisory Council (CTAC)

Article II: Mission

The mission of the Coordinated Transportation Advisory Council is to effectively provide more transportation options to more of our transportation disadvantaged citizens in Lee and Russell counties.

Article III: Purpose

- Cooperation: To create a climate for cooperation, sharing information and resources and meeting together periodically.
- Coordination: To foster common understanding of mobility needs in the community, develop advocacy and deliver services in an integrated manner.
- Communication: To publish and disseminate information pertaining to coordinated public and human services transportation and to develop and maintain a database of member organizations and resources.
- Education-To increase mutual awareness and understanding of each organization and their transportation associated needs.
- Outreach: To conduct proactive efforts to bring new members to the CTAC and encourage representation throughout Lee and Russell Counties.
- Plan Development: To participate in updating the Lee-Russell Coordination Transportation Plan and assist with establishing priorities for the United We Ride Coordination effort.
- Advocacy: To advocate on the local, state and national level for the programs and legislation that will effect coordinated transportation services in Lee and Russell counties.

Article IV: Membership

Membership in the Coordinated Transportation Advisory Council (CTAC) shall be on a voluntary basis by any municipalities, human service agencies, businesses, transportation providers and consumers, and any other organization wishing to participate in the coordinated transportation effort.

Active membership is defined as, at a minimum:

- Attending and actively participating in at least 2 meetings of the CTAC and attending and/or supporting outreach efforts.
- Responding in a timely manner to requests for data and information
- Assisting and participating in updating the Lee-Russell Coordination Transportation Plan
- Each participating member organization will have one vote. Each organizational member's vote can be cast by his/her representative or alternate.

Article V: Officers:

Officers for the Coordinated Transportation Advisory Council (CTAC) shall be elected by a majority vote of members present. The offices to be elected are Chair and Vice-Chair and whose duties shall be customary for such types of office. Terms of office shall be for one year, with the eligibility for re-election. The meeting for the purpose of election shall be held with the first regular meeting of the fiscal year, which begins October 1 of each year. Lee-Russell Council of Governments shall act as Secretary with the duties of sending meeting announcements, distributing minutes and agendas and assuring that accurate records are maintained.

Article VI: Meetings

Meetings shall be held quarterly and at the discretion of participating members. Meetings will also be held at an agreed upon time and place.

Article VII: Committees

Committees shall be formed on an ad hoc basis when specific situations dictate the need for said committee. Committees shall be staffed on a voluntary basis.

Article VIII: Amendments

These By-Laws shall be amended by a majority vote of members present. All participating members will be notified of any changes.

**Lee and Russell County Coordinated Transportation Advisory Council
Summer 2008**

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SURVEY RESULTS: 2008 UNITED WE RIDE ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES

Members of the Coordinated Transportation Advisory Council were asked to rate the importance of each of the strategies from the Technical Memorandum prepared by RLS and Associates. Surveys were returned by representatives from the following groups: Russell County Department of Health, Russell County DHR, Alabama Department of Rehabilitation, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Achievement Center, Johnson's Express, Area Agency on Aging, and LETA/PEX Public Transit.

For each strategy respondents circled a number from 1-5. A rating of 1 meant the strategy was not important. A rating of 5 meant the rating was very important. Scores for each strategy were tallied. The highest rated strategy scored 39 points. The lowest rated strategy scored 27.

Respondents were also asked to circle 3-5 strategies they believed were both important and could be achieved in the next 12 months. Twelve of the 33 strategies on the survey were selected as priority strategies. However, no single strategy received more than 2 first year priority votes. Priority votes are shown with an asterisk beside the appropriate strategy.

<u>Objective/Strategy</u>	<u>Score</u>
Develop a central call number (toll free) for transportation information, referral.**	39
Gather current information from all transportation providers.**	38
Collaboratively, research and submit grants for transportation-related funding.**	36
Assemble a brochure of service information and distribute it to the public. *	36
Create a centralized call center for information, referral, scheduling and dispatching.	36
Implement rural Mobile One-Stop Centers improving access to community resources.	36
Establish locations in rural communities for monthly one-stop health/social service center.	35
Create a detailed shared database on existing transportation vehicles and resources.*	35
Implement service expansions between rural areas and Auburn, Opelika, Phenix City.	35
Develop a regional Transit Advisory Committee (TAC).**	34
Develop a list of mandatory driver training and hiring requirements.	34
Implement demand response feeder service to the one-stop health/social service center.	34
Use a 5310 vehicle for work trips in rural communities, Opelika, Auburn, and Phenix City.	34
Implement a demand response feeder service from rural areas to Phenix City bus stops.	33
Implement a training schedule for new hires/existing employees of partner organizations.	32
Place transportation information on the web for consumers.*	31
Share procurement of tires, fuel, and preventive maintenance items.*	31
Pool insurance purchases to lower the cost of insurance. *	31
Initiate a Rural Vanpool Program to meet employment needs of people with low incomes.*	31

<u>Objective/Strategy</u>	<u>Score</u>
Coordinate hands-on passenger training and education activities.*	31
Share grant-writing responsibilities and resources.*	30
Research the feasibility of developing a Rural Vanpool Program.	30
Develop uniform preventive vehicle maintenance standards.	30
Collaboratively, secure maintenance services for all providers	30
Apply for Section 5316-JARC funds to support a Rural Vanpool Program.	29
Utilize common maintenance/repair/cost tracking software.	29
Update the Coordinated Transportation Action Plan on an annual basis.	29
Create an annual report for the coordinated transportation program.	28
Promote the use of employer/employee tax benefits to pay public transportation costs.	28
Market evening service to the general public and to employers.	28
Establish an employment feeder service to connect Phenix City and Columbus Transit.	28
Determine the need for regional employment related transportation into Columbus.	27
Establish point-deviation route between Opelika and Phenix City connected to fixed route.	27