



# **Technical Memorandum #2: Gaps and Needs Analysis**

**Ulster County Transportation Council (UCTC)**

**June 2015**





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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Ulster County Transportation Council (UCTC) hired Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates and Susan Blickstein Consulting to update the 2010 Ulster County Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan (HSTCP).

The 2016 Ulster County HSTCP will include the following items:

- A literature review of recent coordinated transportation plans in New York State
- A demographic and economic profile of Ulster County
- An inventory of existing transportation service providers in the county
- A review of funding resources available for human service transportation in New York State
- A gaps and needs analysis including stakeholder and public input
- An analysis of potential and prioritized coordination strategies

As required by the FTA, the HSTCP process will include a varied and inclusive outreach process, which is documented in this technical memo. The outreach process detailed below convened County stakeholders, providers, transit users, and other related parties to understand the transportation gaps and needs related to the requirements of older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, and individuals with limited incomes.

## APPROACH

This technical memo is the second of three reports that will be prepared throughout the course of the project. In the first memo - the Existing Conditions report - the consulting team developed a demographic profile of the county, identified the major economic and service destinations, developed an inventory and summary of each available transportation provider, and provided a summary of the state and region's most recent coordination plans and best practices.

Building on the information gleaned from the first memo, this second technical memo documents the transportation gaps and needs identified in Ulster County. Additionally, it presents the qualitative data gathered as part of the project's stakeholder and community outreach. The outreach activities completed for this memo include the following:

- Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) meeting with employees of various human service organizations in Ulster County
- Focus group meetings targeted at older adults and persons with disabilities in the county
- Stakeholder interviews with organization staff who work closely with the targeted populations

## 2 GAPS AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

This section of the memo describes and analyzes the transportation needs, gaps, and overlaps in Ulster County.

- First, the transit needs index identifies geographic areas of high need within the County using composite data for the five transit dependent population groups, major destinations and employment locations, and existing transit routes. The resulting map shows where clusters of high-need populations live and travel to relative to existing transportation services.
- Second, the gaps and overlaps analysis identifies missing service and redundant service in terms of geography, eligibility, day and time, trip type, and accessibility, and presents information related to vehicle utilization and transportation costs. This analysis will be used in the next phase of the coordination plan update to identify opportunities for more coordinated services and more efficient use of existing transportation resources so that unmet needs may be addressed.

### TRANSIT NEEDS INDEX

The Transit Need Index is a relative measure that combines the proportion of each of the five population groups that indicate a higher than average likelihood to need, or rely on, public transportation. The five population groups include: households living in poverty, adults with disabilities, older adults over the age of 65, zero vehicle households and youth aged 18 or less.

The Transit Need Index was calculated by block group. In order to aggregate transit need across all subgroups, a score of 1 to 5 was assigned to each Census block group based on the concentration of each population subgroup in that zone. The highest possible score for a zone was 25, indicating the highest concentration of each of the five population subgroups. It is important to note that this index reflects relative need only; areas with higher concentrations of need reflect conditions in the study area and do not necessarily indicate need in absolute terms. The index also weights each characteristic equally.

It is important to remember that in some cases there may be double counting, as some demographic characteristics are highly correlated, such as age and disability. Nevertheless, the transit need index provides an indication of the relative need for transit throughout the market area.

Also shown on the transit needs index map (Figure 1) are major destinations and major employers, along with the Kingston Citibus and Ulster County Area Transit (UCAT) bus routes and one-mile paratransit corridor. These two additional layers help to explain where target population groups want to travel to and if they are able to utilize public transit to get there.

## Needs Findings

Results of this analysis are shown in Figure 1. Key findings include:

- The locations with the highest transit need based on the Transit Need Index are primarily located in Kingston. New Paltz and Saugerties also have locations that score relatively high on the Transit Needs Index.
- The greatest concentration of block groups with a transit need of 17 points or greater is found in the Midtown neighborhood of Kingston and a portion of Uptown Kingston. This indicates a high proportion of residents from several of the subgroups with a higher propensity for transit use. Kingston Citibus serves these locations.
- The majority of key destinations are located along existing bus routes, both in the major urban areas of Kingston, New Paltz, and Ellenville, and also in the more rural areas. There are only a few senior and subsidize housing locations in rural areas of Ulster County that are not accessible via public transit.
- As noted in Technical Memo #1, there are several employers that are not accessible to the fixed route system. For many individuals within the target populations, these employment locations are either not accessible or very expensive to access without assistance from human service organizations.
- Nearly all block groups with a Transit Need Index score of greater than six (meaning at least two subgroups live in the block group in greater densities than the general distribution of the subgroup across the county) fall within a half mile walk<sup>1</sup> of Kingston Citibus or UCAT bus routes. High need block groups (or portions of block groups) that fall outside this category include:
  - An area south of Saugerties near Mt. Marion.
  - An area south of New Paltz around Ardonia.
  - The western part of Marlboro.
  - An area west of Lloyd.
  - The far west of Wawarsing.
- Additionally, it is important to note that for people with disabilities who qualify for the paratransit system, the majority of the block groups with high transit propensity fall within the one-mile buffer area, further indicating sufficient access to public transit.

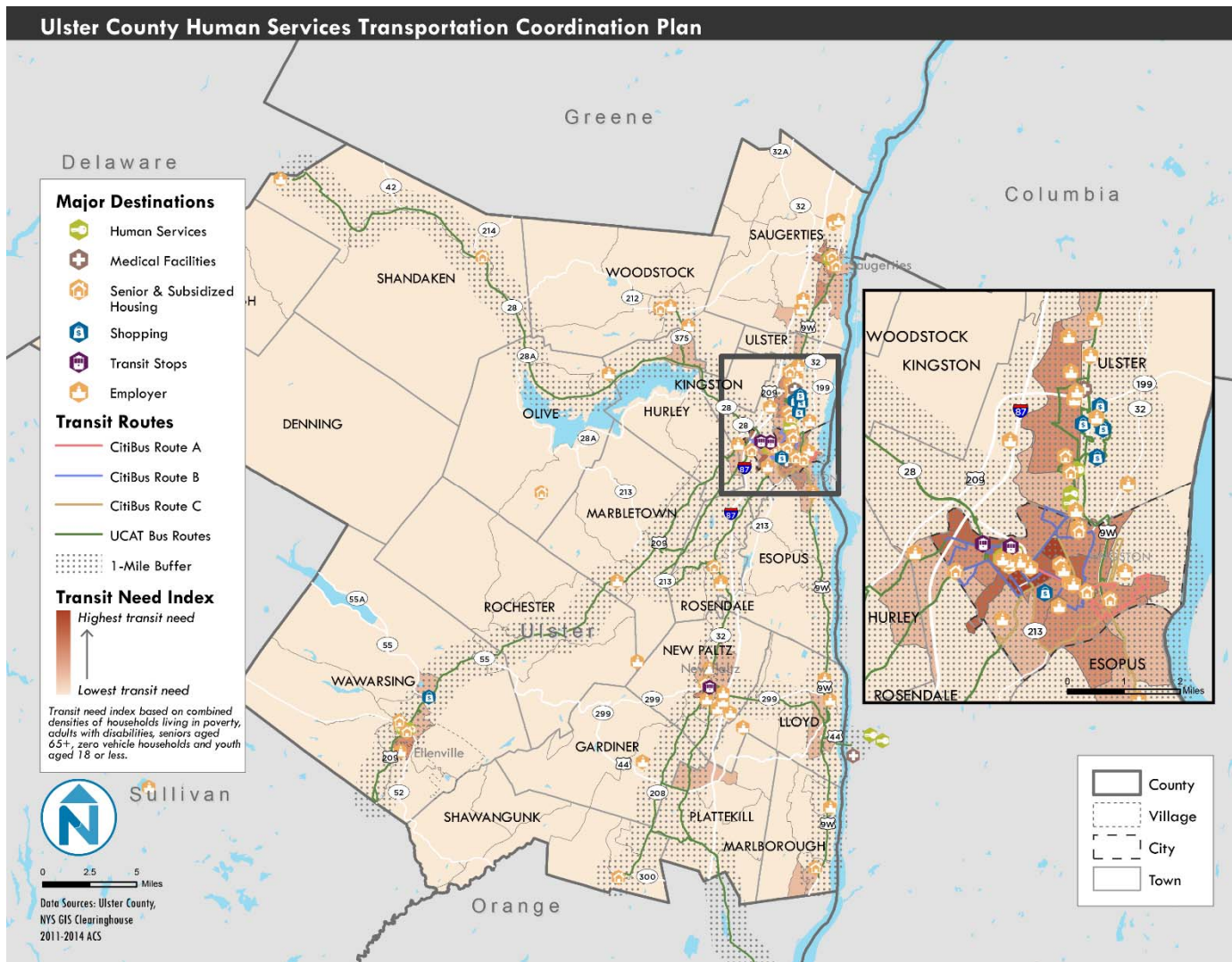
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<sup>1</sup> The half mile walkability of the block groups was estimated using the one-mile paratransit buffer.



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Figure 1 Transit Need Index Map



## **SERVICE GAPS AND OVERLAPS ANALYSIS**

In a typical coordination or mobility management study, participants include one or more public transportation agencies, municipal transportation programs, a variety of human service transportation providers, and funding entities that may be purchasing, subsidizing, or contracting for client transportation services. When transportation services and their characteristics are represented together on a graphic or map, it is not unusual to find service gaps or overlaps in terms of the geographic areas, days and hours, or trip purposes that are served, or gaps in the options that are available to certain customer groups because of geographic, temporal, eligibility, or trip purpose restrictions. Reducing or eliminating service gaps through coordination or mobility management strategies can make additional resources available for addressing these gaps; showing transportation services and their characteristics together is an easy way to make them apparent.

In this section, the following conditions are examined to identify service gaps and overlaps:

- Vehicle utilization and cost to identify inefficiencies
- Days of the week, or hours during the day, when vehicles are not in use
- Service coverage and eligibility which shows service gaps and overlaps

The data used to compile this information is displayed in table form in Figure 2, and was collected through the provider survey and phone interviews.

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**Figure 2 Transportation Services of Ulster County Service Providers**

Organization	Population Groups	Geographic Area	Day	Hours	Wheelchair Accessible?	Trip Type
Always There Home Care	People with Disabilities	Ulster County	Monday-Friday	On-call	Yes	Program related
Family of Woodstock, Inc.	People with Disabilities Adults (ages 18-59) Older adults (ages 60+)	Ulster County	Monday-Sunday	On-call	Yes	All Trip Types
Gateway Industries	People with Disabilities Older adults (ages 60+)	Southeastern Ulster County	Monday - Sunday	6:45 AM - 4:30 PM	Yes	Employment Program related
Jewish Family Services of Ulster County	People with Disabilities Older adults (ages 60+)	Ulster County	Monday-Friday	6:00 am - 4:30 pm	No	All Trip Types
Kingston Citibus	General Public	Ulster County	Monday--Friday Saturday	6:30 am to 7:30 pm (M-F); 9:30 am-7:30 pm (Sa)	Yes	All Trip Types
The Arc of Ulster-Greene	People with Disabilities Adults (ages 18-59) Older adults (ages 60+)	Ulster and Greene Counties	Monday-Friday	6:00 AM - 10:00 AM; 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Yes	All Trip Types
Ulster County Area Transit	General public	Ulster County, Dutchess County to Metro-North, Orange County, Newburgh	Monday-Friday Saturday Sunday	5:00 AM - 10:30 PM (M-F); 8:00 AM - 8:00 PM (Sa); 8:00 AM - 7:00 PM (Su)	Yes	All Trip Types
Ulster County Office for the Aging	Older adults (ages 60+)	Ulster County	Monday-Friday	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM	Yes	Medical Shopping
Ulster County Veterans Services	Veterans: all ages and disabilities	Ulster County	Monday-Friday On call 24 hours per day, 7 days per week	7:30 AM - 3:30 PM On call 24 hours per day, 7 days per week	Yes	Medical only

## Geographic Area

The service areas of transportation providers included in this study overlap a great deal—nearly all of the providers serve Ulster County in its entirety.

Only two of the service providers surveyed stated that they provide transportation service outside of Ulster County. The Arc of Ulster-Greene provides transportation service to Greene County and Ulster County Area Transit (UCAT) provides transportation service for the general public to limited locations outside of Ulster County, including the Metro-North Station in Dutchess County and destinations in Orange County and the City of Newburgh. It should also be noted that Gateway Industries' geographic area is limited to the southeast region of Ulster County.

## Days and Hours of Service

The days and hours during which the providers offer transportation overlap significantly as well. The majority of providers operate from early morning until late afternoon or early evening.

Only two providers – UCAT and Gateway Industries – provide transportation on both Saturday and Sunday. A third provider, Kingston Citibus, operates Monday through Saturday only.

Additionally, several providers are “on call” for extended periods. Always There Home Care and Family of Woodstock, Inc. provides transportation on an on-call basis Monday-Friday for transporting their clients on a limited basis. Always There Home Care only transports clients to program-related activities, while Family of Woodstock transports clients for all trip types. Veterans Services also has “on call” transportation services 24 hours per day, seven days a week for special instances where a veteran needs to be transported and there are no other options.

## Trip Purpose

Many of the transportation providers offer transportation services to clients not only to and from program facilities, but also for other types of trips, such as work, medical appointments, and shopping. Kingston Citibus and Ulster County Area Transit offer public transportation for the general public for any type of trip. Other providers - Family of Woodstock, Jewish Family Services, and Arc of Ulster-Greene – offer transportation for any trip type, but only to their own clients. Always There Home Care restricts transportation services to program-related trips for their clients only. Gateway Industries provides both program-related and employment trips for their clients. Ulster County Office of the Aging offers transportation for medical appointments and shopping trips. Veteran Services only provides transportation for medical trips (with the exception of the on call service noted above).

## Client Populations/Eligibility

Another area of overlap among transportation providers is the client populations they serve:

- Family of Woodstock, Inc., Jewish Family Services of Ulster County, the Arc of Ulster-Greene and Ulster County Office for the Aging all serve older adults aged 60 or older.
- Always There Home Care, Family of Woodstock, Inc., Gateway Industries, Jewish Family Services of Ulster County, the Arc of Ulster-Greene and Ulster County Department of Social Services – Early Intervention and Preschool Services all serve individuals with disabilities.

## Vehicle Utilization

A major factor in the assessment of a transportation service is the extent to which vehicles are utilized during the day, or over the course of a week, in actual passenger service. The hours of vehicle utilization may be different, and in fact often are, from the hours within which service is advertised as being available. Unused vehicle time, or “downtime”, can be a resource for the provision of additional trips.

As shown in Figure 3, there are several organizations with vehicles that have significant downtime. Most noteworthy is the Arc of Ulster-Greene, which has 140 vehicles that are idle during the mid-day period from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and on the weekend. Additionally, both Gateway Industries and Ulster County Veterans Services end regular transportation service at 3:30 or 4:30, which means there are approximately 31 vehicles available for evening service. Gateway Industries’ 25 vehicles are also unused on Sunday.

Figure 3 Vehicle Utilization

Provider	Vehicles	Service Days	Service Hours
Gateway Industries	25	Monday-Saturday	6:45 AM - 4:30 PM
The Arc of Ulster-Greene	140	Monday-Friday	6:00 AM – 10:00 AM 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Ulster County Area Transit	32	Monday-Friday Saturday Sunday	5:00 AM – 10:30 PM 8:00 AM – 8:00 PM 8:00 AM – 7:00 PM
Ulster County Veterans Services	6	Monday-Friday Saturday Sunday	7:30 AM – 3:30 PM On-call 24 hours On-call 24 hours
Family of Woodstock	6	Monday-Sunday	On-call

Note: Provider vehicle data was only given by these five providers.

## Transportation Service Costs

Figure 4 presents a summary of annual one-way trips and total budget (operating and capital) for each of the providers for which that information was available as well as an analysis of cost per trip. As can be seen, many providers did not report on costs or level of service.

Cost per passenger trip varies among providers. Ulster County Area Transit reported the highest cost per trip at \$61 (which includes not only the cost of fixed route service, which is typically an efficient mode of transportation, but also the more costly ADA paratransit service), while Office for the Aging reported the lowest at \$10.36. The cost per trip for Office of Aging includes the volunteer driver program, which explains why it is very low. Ulster County Veterans Services costs about \$46 per trip.

Figure 4 Transportation Service Ridership and Cost

Organization	Annual One-Way Trips	Total Budget	Cost / Trip
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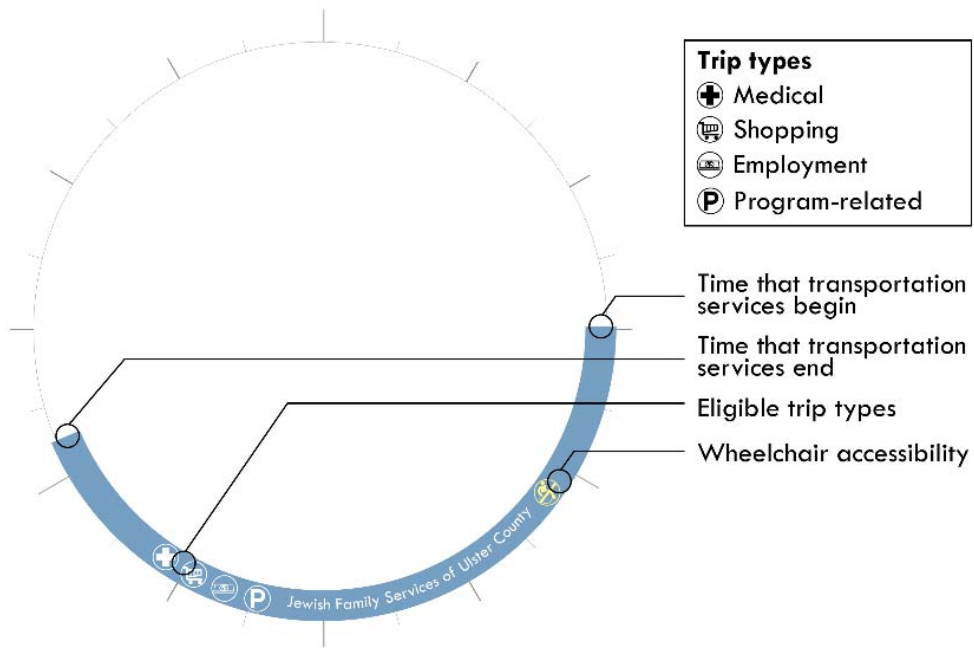
Family of Woodstock, Inc.(including volunteer drivers)	n/a	\$71,820	n/a
Gateway Industries	46,124	n/a	n/a
The Arc of Ulster-Greene	104,000	n/a	n/a
Ulster County Area Transit	103,116	\$6,326,467	\$61.35
Ulster County Office for the Aging (all transportation)	13,520	\$140,129	\$10.36
Ulster County Veterans Services	3,120	\$145,241	\$46.55
Jewish Community Services	1,560	n/a	n/a

Note: Annual trips is based on the annualization of estimated weekly trips.

## Service Gaps and Overlaps

In order to show gaps in service visually, the graphics below show when services are available for certain population subgroups on weekdays and weekends. In addition to presenting the time these services are available, the graphics also show the eligible trip types and whether or not the service provides wheelchair-accessible vehicles. Figure 5 provides a key for understanding these graphics.

Figure 5 Service Gap Legend





### Older Adults

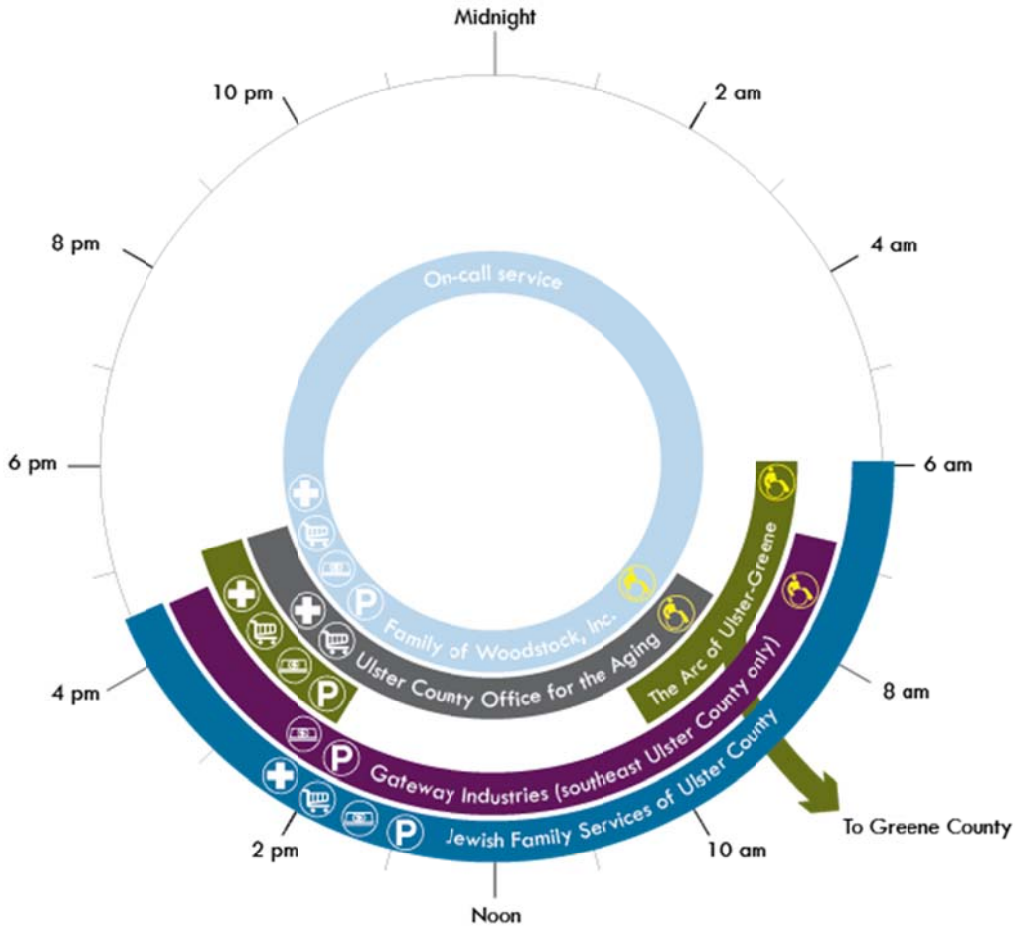
Figure 6 shows the availability of transportation services for older adults, aged 60 or older. Transportation services are available from Jewish Family Services of Ulster County, Gateway Industries and the Ulster County Office for the Aging from early morning to late afternoon. These providers offer all trip types (medical, shopping, employment and program-related).

In addition, the Arc of Ulster-Greene provides transportation services during the morning rush from 6:00 AM to 10:00 AM and again in the afternoon from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM. The Arc of Ulster-Greene also provides transportation service to Greene County.

Family of Woodstock, Inc. provides on-call services 24 hours a day for limited transportation for their clients only.

All of the providers use wheelchair accessible vehicles except for Jewish Family Services.

Figure 6 Availability of Services for Older Adults (Weekdays)



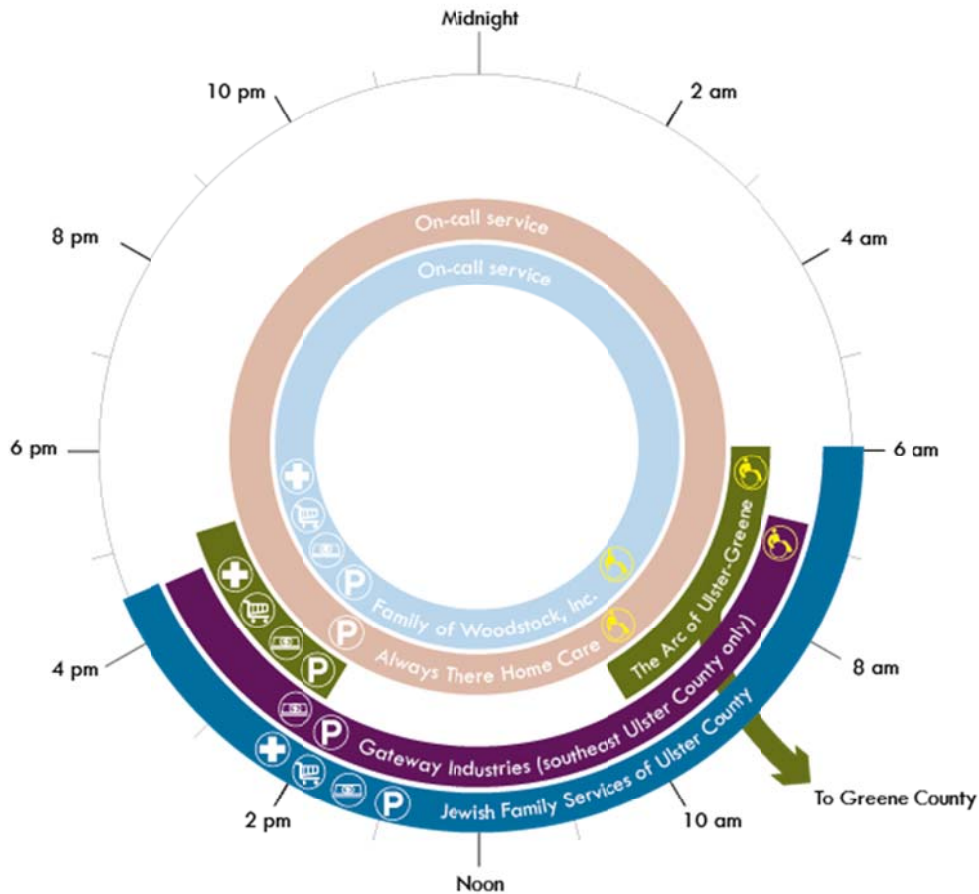
### Adults with Disabilities

Figure 7 shows the availability of transportation services for adults with disabilities. Jewish Family Services of Ulster County and Gateway Industries both provide transportation services throughout the day from early morning to late afternoon. The Arc of Ulster-Greene also provides transportation services in the morning from 6:00 AM to 10:00 AM and again in the afternoon from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM. The transportation services provided by these service providers cover all trip types.

In addition, Always There Home Care and Family of Woodstock, Inc. provide 24-hour on-call transportation services to adults with disabilities. Always There Home Care only provides this service for program-related trips.

Again, all the providers have wheelchair accessible vehicles except for Jewish Family Services.

Figure 7 Availability of Services for Adults with Disabilities (Weekdays)

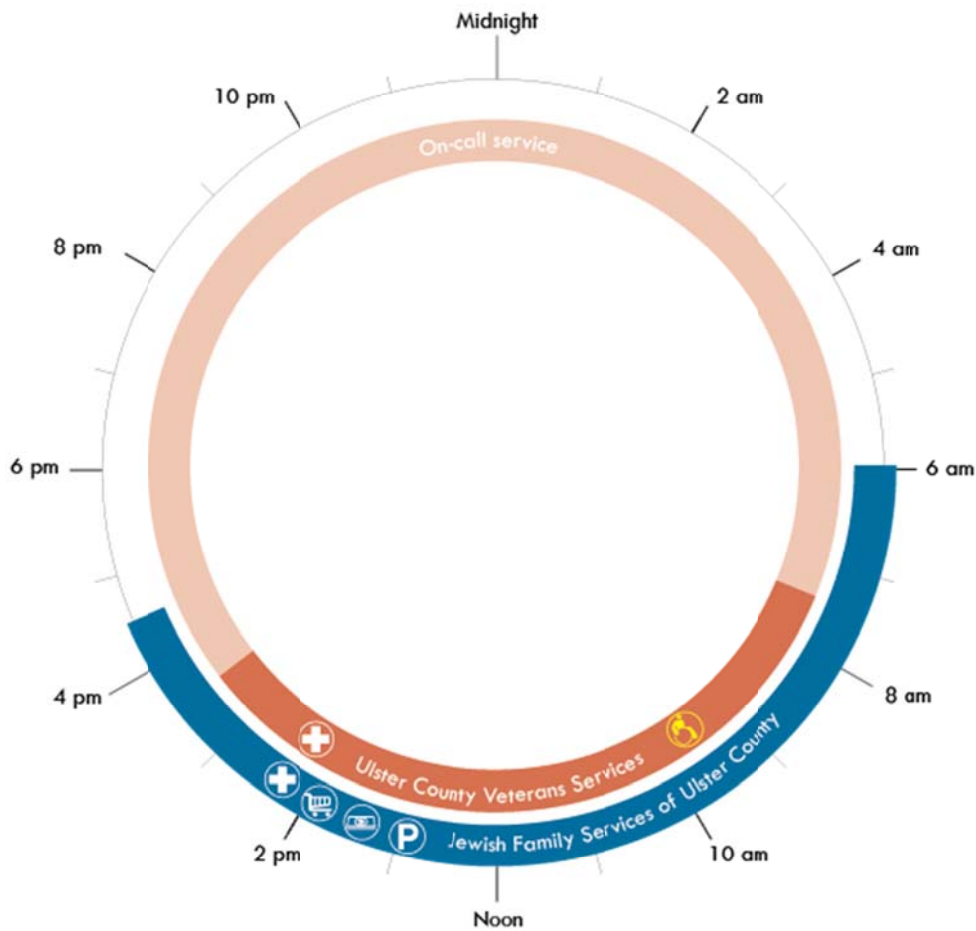




## Veterans

Figure 8 shows when transportation services are available for veterans in Ulster County. Jewish Family Services of Ulster County provides transportation services for veterans from the early morning to the late afternoon, covering all trips types. They do not, however, provide wheelchair-accessible transportation. Ulster County Veterans Services also provides transportation services throughout the day, but with shorter regular hours than Jewish Family Services of Ulster County and for only medical-related trips. Ulster County Veterans Services also provides a 24-hour on-call service on a limited basis and wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

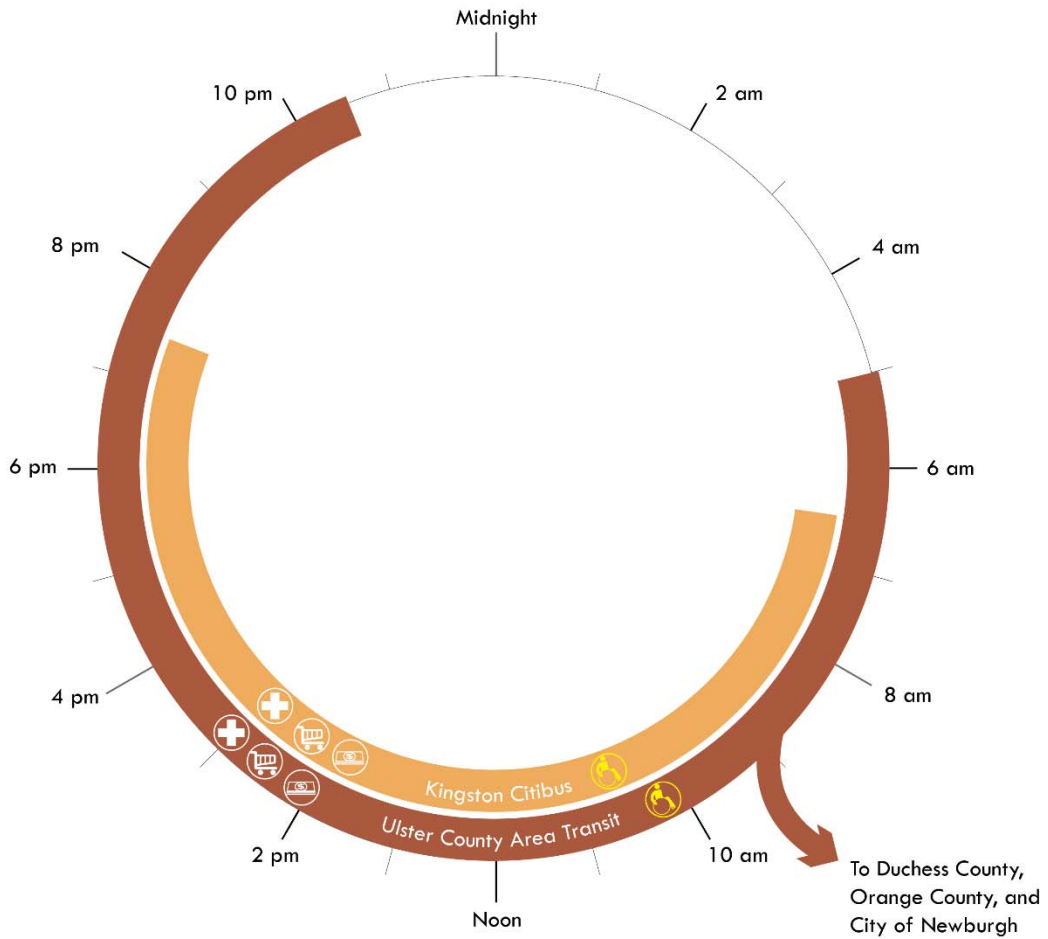
Figure 8 Availability of Services for Veterans (Weekdays)



### General Public

Figure 9 shows the availability of transportation services for the general public from the two transportation providers in Ulster County: Ulster County Area Transit (“UCAT”) and Kingston Citibus. Both offer transportation service that is open to all and therefore is not limited by trip types. UCAT is available on weekdays from 5:00 AM to 10:30 PM. Citibus is available from 6:30 AM to 7:30 PM. Both operate wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

Figure 9 Availability of Services for General Public (Weekdays)



### Weekend Service

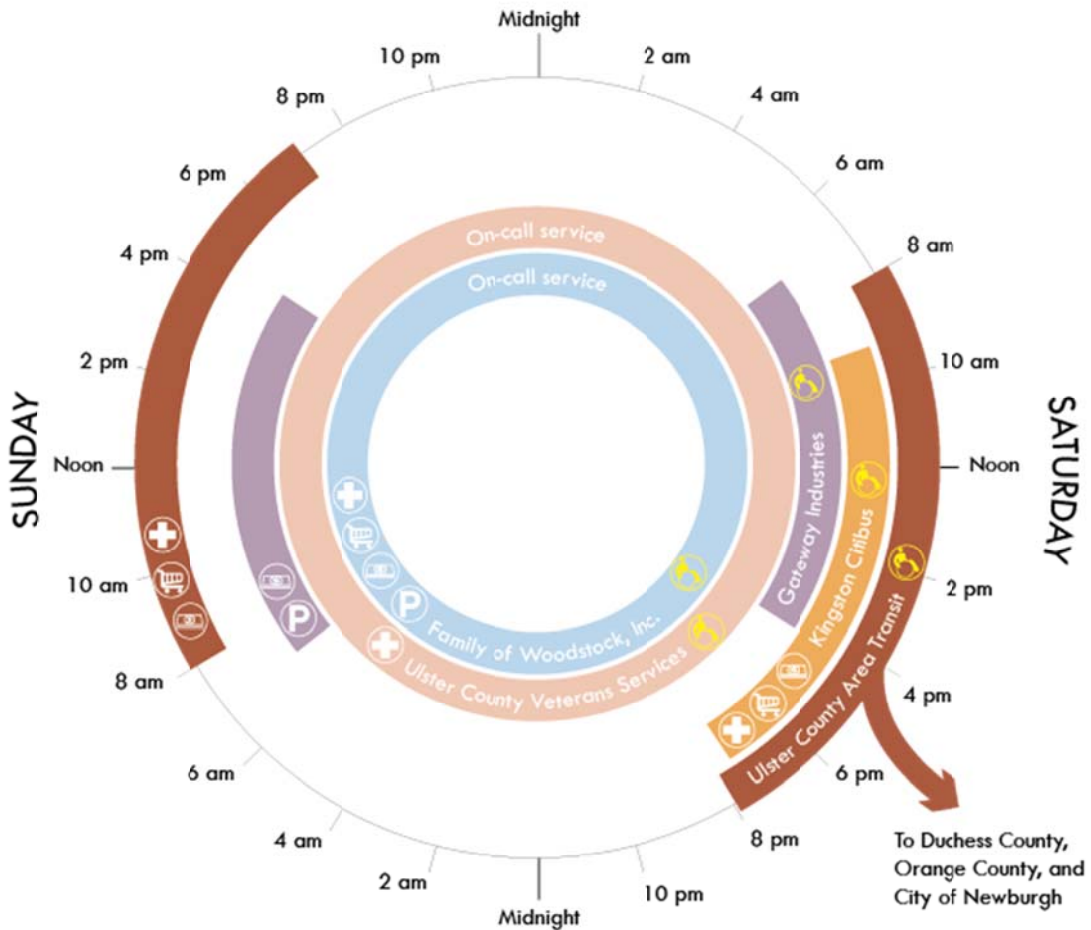
Availability of transportation services on the weekend in Ulster County is limited to only a few providers (Figure 10). On Saturdays, UCAT and Citibus both operate on a shorter schedule than during the weekday. Both offer service from mid-morning through the evening. Gateway Industries also provides transportation service on Saturdays during the same hours they offer on weekdays.

On Sunday, only UCAT and Gateway Industries provide service, during their normal operating hours.

Family of Woodstock, Inc. and Ulster County Veterans Services both offer 24-hour, on-call transportation services throughout the weekend, but on a limited basis.

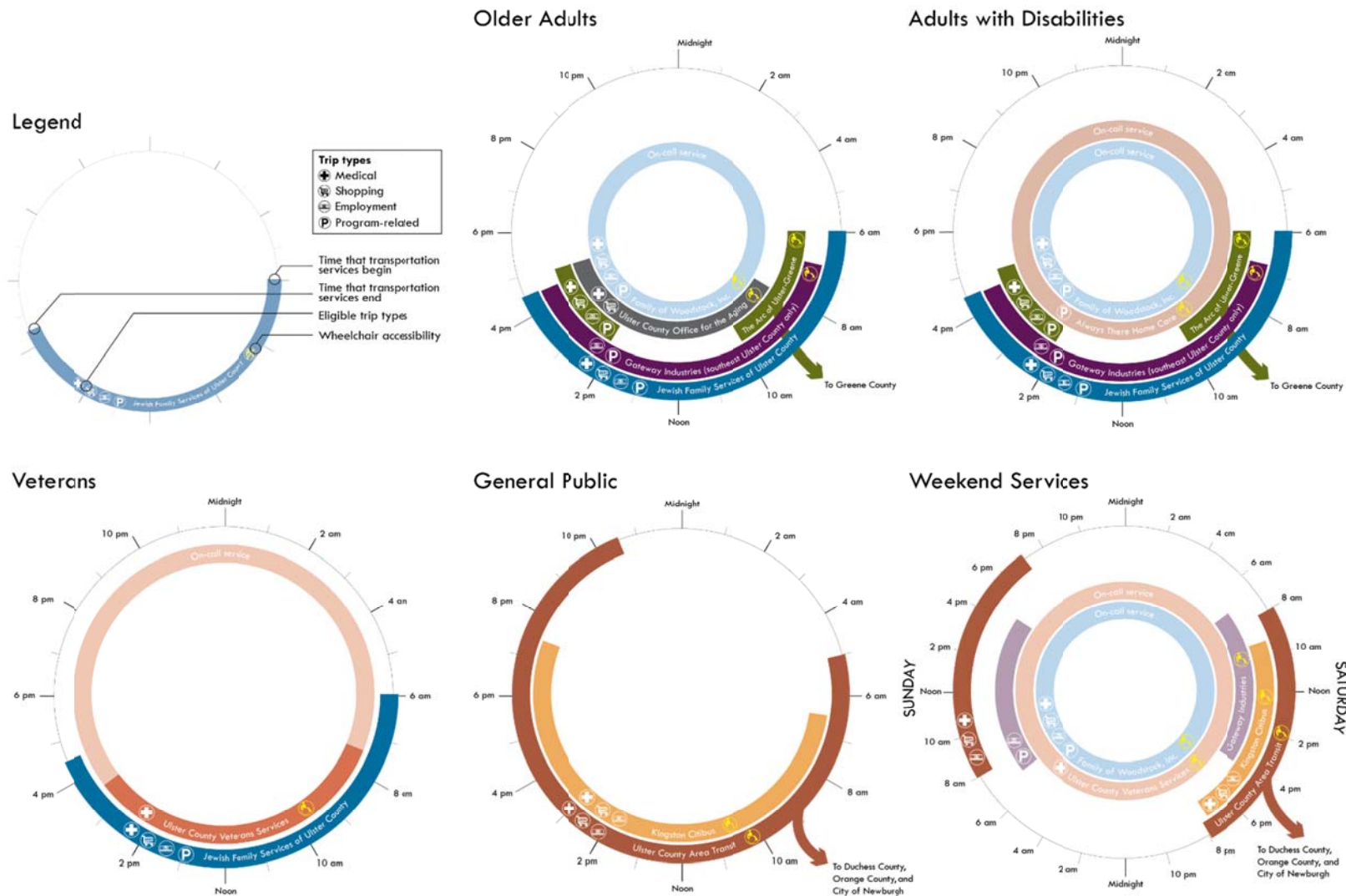
All the providers who operate on the weekend provide wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

Figure 10 Availability of Transportation Services (Weekends)



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Figure 11 Availability of Transportation Services by Population Group (All Weekday Service except Where Noted)



## Overall Gaps and Overlaps Findings

Service gaps and overlaps are shown above in individual graphics and also above in Figure 11 concurrently. Analysis of the availability of transportation groups with higher propensity towards transit shows that there are significant disparities among population groups in terms of when services are available, where they live and travel to, and what types of trips are eligible.

- Older adults and people with disabilities are fairly well-served by the existing service providers, *as long as they are clients of the service provider* (i.e. they are eligible for program-related trips). Older adults who are not clients of human service providers are limited to trips provided by the public transit operators and the Office of Aging, which only offers service until 4:30 PM and only serves medical trips and limited shopping trips. People with disabilities who are not clients of human service providers are limited to the public transit operators, which have limited service areas.
- Family of Woodstock, Inc. and Always There Home Care offer 24-hour, on-call transportation, but only for their clients and only on a very limited basis.
- Transportation services for veterans is limited to only two providers, which operate both daily scheduled and 24-hour, on-call service, but only provide a total of less than 5,000 trips per year. In addition, Ulster County Veterans Services' transportation is only available for medical trips. Ulster County Veterans Services' 24-hour, on-call service is open to any veteran in the county, but is available only on a limited basis.
- Weekend transportation service is limited in Ulster County outside of services for UCAT and Citibus which both operate on a reduced schedule (and limited service areas). Sunday service is very limited and is not available in Kingston, since Citibus does not operate on that day. Twenty-four hour, on-call services are available for veterans through Veterans Services and for clients of Family of Woodstock, Inc., but on a very limited basis.
- Wheelchair-accessible vehicles are generally available for all population groups, except for the older adults, people with disabilities, and veterans who are clients of the Jewish Family Services. However, as noted in Technical Memo #1 many of these vehicles are very old and frequently break down meaning that frequently a provider's wheelchair accessible vehicles may be out of service when an individual needs to utilize them.

## 3 STAKEHOLDER AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

### METHODOLOGY

Stakeholder and public outreach is undertaken as part of human services transportation coordination plans to better understand the challenges, needs and barriers of current services as experienced by target populations (older adults, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and other transit-dependent individuals).

For this HSTCP, several outreach activities were taken on:

- **Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) Meeting:** The Ulster County HSTCP Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) meeting was held on Wednesday, May 18<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Ulster County Business Resource Center, 1 Development Court, Kingston, NY. Attendees included staff from Medical Answering Services, Gateway Community Industries, Resource Center for Accessible Living, Institute for Family Health, and RUPCO. The purpose of this meeting was to gather information about transportation services provided by each organization and collect insights into the transportation gaps and needs of their clients. Ulster County Transportation Council (UCTC) assisted with recruiting staff from relevant organizations and agencies. The notes and attendees from the SAG meeting are shown in Appendix A.
- **Focus Group Meetings:** Two focus groups were held on May 18th, one generally targeting older adults and a second targeting people with disabilities. The focus group guide, including key questions raised at each group, is included in Appendix B. UCTC assisted with recruitment of individuals by distributing e-mails and flyers to the various stakeholder organizations involved in the project and asking them to recruit participants. Notes from these meetings are found in Appendix C.
  - The **first focus group meeting**, held the morning of May 18th at Milton's Harvest's community room in Milton New York, drew 16 participants, including 15 women, one man and one person with a visual disability. Several human service agencies also attended as observers. Key findings from this focus group include a range of information challenges and barriers to accessibility throughout the County and to Newburgh/Poughkeepsie.
  - The **second focus group meeting**, held the afternoon of May 18th at the Ulster County Business Resource Center in Kingston, NY, drew seven participants, with a mix between people with physical disabilities and older persons without disabilities. Key findings from this focus group illustrate significant overlap between the issues identified at the earlier focus group.

- A **third focus group** will be held later in summer 2016 with transportation providers after initial strategies and recommendations are developed.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** In addition to the SAG meeting and focus group meetings, stakeholder interviews were undertaken with agencies and/or individuals who work closely with targeted populations. The three stakeholder interviews were completed in June 2016 based on input from UCTC. The three stakeholders interviewed are as follows. Notes from the stakeholder interviews are found in Appendix D. Two additional stakeholder interviews will be held late summer 2015 to garner feedback on various transportation coordination opportunities and strategies.
  - Marge Gagnon, RN, Rose Women's Care Service Community Resource Center
  - Keith Bennett, Deputy Director, Ulster County Veteran Services Agency
  - Anthony Mignone, Chief Operating Officer, RCAL, and two staff members who assist with coordinating transportation for medical purposes and for work trips, Melissa Rappleyea and Hillary Nichols

## FINDINGS

This section documents the findings from each of these outreach efforts organized into common themes.

### General Challenges and Issues

- **Trip types:** The focus group attendees noted that they need transportation for several different trip types: medical appointments, employment, education, and shopping. They want additional expanded trip types and/or hours of service for food shopping, social events for older adults, and educational opportunities at BOCES, libraries, and other places that offer adult education courses. Stakeholders also noted that certain types of health related appointments (such as appointments with case managers, trips to RCAL and Family of Woodstock, health education programs) are not eligible for medical transport, and, in some cases (such as appointments with social workers/case managers).
- **Alternative modes:** Although many focus group attendees want to utilize taxis; they noted that taxis are prohibitively costly. They also noted that the volunteer driver program, Neighbor to Neighbor through the Office of Aging, does not have volunteers in the Route 28A corridor area. Plus the Neighbor to Neighbor program requires a month's notice in order to reserve a trip, which is usually too much lead time. Stakeholders suggested that Ulster County develop a voucher system for last mile/first mile connections in order to address the area beyond the fixed route system and the additional mile for paratransit service. Additionally, stakeholders mentioned that Uber (and companies like Uber) are a concern because of issues related to service animals, insurance, and accessibility.
- **Medicaid Transportation:** Stakeholders noted that Medicaid taxis are unreliable at times, and frequently show up late causing a missed appointment. Stakeholders added that the Medicaid forms for out of County transport take too long to process.
- **Service in outlying areas:** Focus group attendees noted that service is needed in outlying areas, such as along the Route 28A corridor. Stakeholders added that transportation within Kingston, within New Paltz, and Kingston to Saugerties is generally acceptable. However, the outlying parts of the County, and connectivity between outlying



areas and the more urban centers, are very challenging issues, particularly when it comes to transportation to employment for people with disabilities. Stakeholders added that UCAT should have a stop at Ulster Gardens, which is a residential facility for people with low income and people with disabilities.

- **Affordability:** Stakeholders thought it was important to make a distinction between the needs of older adults with reasonable means/resources and those in Section 8 housing. It is also important to address the needs of senior, low-income populations. Some people within this population group cannot afford the price of a bus pass.
- **Travel to Poughkeepsie/Newburgh and Albany:** Focus group attendees noted that they need to travel to Poughkeepsie/Newburgh and it would be useful if the UCAT and Poughkeepsie bus schedules were coordinated. One attendee thought that there should be free transfers between/among various Ulster County, Kingston Citibus, and Poughkeepsie City Bus services. Stakeholders noted that people would also like to travel to Albany for trips other than to medical appointments.
- **Transportation for Veterans:** Stakeholders noted that the Ulster County Veterans Service Agency can only provide limited medical trips. Senior veterans are less likely to use public transit and may not be aware of the transportation services for which they are eligible. Providing clear, consolidated information on transportation options specifically for veterans would be very helpful. At least 75% of the county's veterans are 65+ years old, so they are also older adults. Many do not use computers or e-mail or smart phones; information should be available where veterans receive services. Additionally, it is important to note that veterans need to be taken care of by other veterans. Ulster County Veterans Service Agency is working on assembling a volunteer veteran driver corps via partnership with a non-profit to address additional desired trip types.

## **Challenges with the Fixed Route/Paratransit System**

- **ADA Paratransit:** Older adults want to age in place, but many live outside of areas with regular transit service and outside the one mile ADA paratransit boundary. Moreover, stakeholders thought that the paratransit eligibility form could be made more concise and could be improved so that the physician signing off sees the entire form, rather than just the last page. Stakeholders also mentioned that people who are Medicare-eligible, but not paratransit-eligible will call an ambulance for a trip to an emergency room, rather than a scheduled appointment with a doctor; frequently local organizations have to pay for the ambulance fee in these cases.
- **Bus shelters:** Focus group attendees noted that there should be more bus shelters and all bus stops should be cleared of snow. Walking to bus stops is difficult; some streets and intersections are not pedestrian-friendly and weather can make it even more challenging. Most bus shelters are not wheelchair-accessible.
- **Bus accessibility:** Focus group attendees requested that buses kneel for easier access.
- **Coordination:** Stakeholders noted that there is no coordination between county and city buses.
- **Hours of operation:** Stakeholders noted that extended hours of UCAT transit/paratransit service that coincide with social events for older adults/persons with disabilities is very important. Limited hours of paratransit service is also a challenge for those who rely on that service for work commutes and work in the retail/service sectors.



- **Centralized dispatch:** Stakeholders thought that a centralized dispatch system with live people answering, coordinating and scheduling a variety of trip types would be very helpful.
- **Routing and scheduling:** Stakeholders noted that due to its hub and spoke system design, some UCAT fixed route trips are very time-consuming. In addition, service is not frequent enough; trips for grocery shopping and appointments could take all day. People want to go to Walmart, Bel Air, BOCES, and Shandanken.

## Issues Related to Accessibility

- **Wheelchair-accessible vehicles:** Focus group attendees noted that not all wheelchairs are the same size; some require a high roof. A universally-accessible vehicle would address this and providers should inquire about specific accessibility needs when scheduling trips.
- **Infrastructure:** Focus group attendees thought that audio-enabled intersection signals should be more widely installed and need to be maintained. Walking to UCAT bus stops is difficult as many streets and intersections are not pedestrian-friendly and weather exacerbates these conditions.
- **Shopping bags:** Focus group attendees noted that traveling with shopping bags is very difficult. Van service to Shop Rite or Hannaford in Milton would be extremely helpful for older adults. Stakeholders agreed that transportation for food shopping is a vital service in Ulster County.
- **Transportation Information:** Focus group attendees pointed out that some older adults do not use the internet and some do not have computers, so posting current information at senior housing facilities is very important.
- **Travel training:** Stakeholders noted that many older adults need travel training assistance and/or assistance on using smart phones and the UCAT App. Those with cognitive disabilities also need more travel support, particularly when schedules, stops, and fares change.

## Lack of Clear, Consistent Information

- **UCAT Information:** Focus group attendees had several comments about UCAT's lack of clear information:
  - UCAT bus schedules' readability is problematic because font size is an issue for the sight impaired. The schedules cannot be read by screen readers and there are no text descriptions of routes/schedules.
  - There is also a lack of posted schedules at bus stops.
  - There should be UCAT maps, one for each bus route, with names of cross streets and legibility for older adults on the UCAT website.
  - There is confusion about what the one mile service area means for paratransit; this information needs to be more user-friendly on the website and in printed information.
  - Additionally, connector routes between UCAT/Citibus are hard to find on the website, or in any UCAT/Citibus information, including connections to Poughkeepsie City Bus.

- Moreover, an on-line trip planner would be helpful. Stakeholders concurred that an online scheduling tool for paratransit for eligible residents would be very helpful as the current phone menu is difficult for some and it is hard for users to speak directly to a dispatcher.
- **Centralized Information:** Focus group attendees pointed out that it takes many phone calls to assemble information about various transportation options. Information should be centralized and more readily accessible. Transportation information, including eligibility for services, cost, and schedules needs to be centralized and more user-friendly. Stakeholders agreed that transportation information should be centralized with information on all relevant options/programs/providers, along with information on routes, eligibility, and cost. A comprehensive trip planning tool that integrates UCAT, Kingston Citibus, Poughkeepsie bus, and other local services would be very useful.

## PROVIDER FEEDBACK

As documented in Technical Memo #1, transportation providers in Ulster County also provided feedback about the challenges, gaps, needs, and overlaps in the transportation network. Below is a recap of the information gathered for TM #1. This information was submitted via the provider survey and/or through phone interviews.

- **Transportation to employment:** A top concern for service providers is connecting the ride-to-work populations – including the unemployed and working poor – to employment opportunities.
- **Transportation to medical services:** Many providers are interested in expanding service for passengers accessing medical services. Few funding sources exist to directly subsidize transportation service for certain populations of people with disabilities.
- **Upgrade vehicle fleets:** Vehicle fleets among providers are aging and some are overdue for upgrades. Many vehicles have upwards of 200,000 miles on them, which is not surprising in a rural area like Ulster County.
- **Coordinated public transportation service:** Greater coordination between city and county public transit service would create better service for customers county-wide, taking pressure off of providers to fill gaps in service for their clients. Providers indicated a need for more coordination of service schedules and addressing gaps in service between the city and county services.
- **Increasing frequency:** Some providers would like to increase the frequency of their services with additional trips added during current service hours.
- **Transportation outside of the county:** Transportation providers noted that riders would like to travel outside of Ulster County to neighboring counties for medical services, especially in situations where a person lives on the border of Ulster County and the nearest hospital or medical facility is in an adjacent county. Poughkeepsie and Vassar were mentioned as having medical facilities that are frequently requested by Ulster County residents as destinations where they wished they could travel.

## 4 CONCLUSION

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Transportation Gaps and Needs

Overall, analysis into transportation gaps and needs in Ulster County show significant disparities among the population groups in terms of when services are available, where they live and travel to, and what types of trips are eligible. The main issues include:

- A lack of transportation services available for target populations outside of program-based human service providers that only transport for program or medical trips with limited hours.
- A dearth of services available in the evening and on the weekend outside of the fixed route and paratransit service, which is limited geographically.
- A deficiency of transportation for veterans, especially those living in rural areas and who need to travel for non-medical purposes.

#### Stakeholder and Public Outreach

The stakeholder and public outreach portion of this HSTCP project included a meeting with the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG), two focus group meetings targeting older adults and people with disabilities, and three stakeholder meetings with relevant human service organizations and agencies. The outcome of this outreach is the identification of major themes in terms of transportation gaps and needs for the target populations, including:

- Challenges with the Fixed Route/Paratransit System related to accessibility, coordination, hours of operation, bus shelters, and dispatch and scheduling.
- A lack of transportation in outlying areas and connections outside the county to Poughkeepsie and Newburgh.
- Issues related to accessibility related to infrastructure, information, travel training, wheelchair accessible vehicles, and shopping bags.
- A lack of clear information especially on the UCAT and Citibus websites.
- Limited options for veterans and for individuals who need to travel for non-medical trips.
- Vehicles that are very old and have very high mileage, plus a deficient in wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The next steps in developing the HSTCP include the following:

- Building on the data and analysis collected in the existing conditions report and this gaps analysis report, the next step is to develop a list of potential mobility management strategies, collecting additional data if necessary, and prepare strategy summary sheets.
- Simultaneously, the project team will develop a report identifying current federal funding sources utilized in the State of New York, as well as national best practices in obtaining adequate transportation funding.
- After the list of strategies has been identified and with the funding sources in mind, the next step is to discuss potential strategies with the Technical Advisory Committee, the Stakeholder Advisory Group, and the general public in upcoming meetings and a public workshop.
- Additionally, the project team will vet the mobility management strategies with an additional focus group, made up of transportation providers, and will conduct two relevant stakeholder interviews to obtain feedback on the strategies.

# Appendix A Stakeholder Advisory Group Notes

## Ulster County HSTCP SAG Meeting Notes

The Ulster County HSTCP Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) meeting was held on Wednesday, May 18<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Ulster County Business Resource Center, 1 Development Court, Kingston, NY.

The meeting agenda was provided in advance of the meeting.

### Attendees

Name	Organization
SAG Members	
Michael McLaurin	Medical Answering Services
Mark Holochuck	Gateway Community Industries
Keith Gurgui	Resource Center for Accessible Living (RCAL)
Anthony Mignone	Resource Center for Accessible Living (RCAL)
Michelle Houghtaling	Institute for Family Health
Kim Mapes	RUPCO
Michael Berg	Institute for Family Health
UCTC Staff	
Brian Slack	Ulster County Transportation Council (UCTC)
David Staas	Ulster County Transportation Council (UCTC)
Dennis Doyle	Ulster County Transportation Council (UCTC)
Consulting Team	
Patti Monahan	Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates
Susan Blickstein	Susan G. Blickstein (SGB)

### Discussion

The discussion began with an overview of the project from Dennis Doyle from UCTC and Patti Monahan from Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates. Patti and Susan Blickstein described the community outreach process, including focus groups and stakeholder interviews.

The transportation providers who were present at the meeting provided an overview of their services.

- Gateway Industries has a few “fixed route” services that transport the same individuals to programs during the week. They contract with First Student for the majority of the trips. They transport about 125 individuals Monday through Friday. The residential facilities also have vehicles. Transportation is provided to Gateway programs such as sheltered workshops and day hab and to work locations. Citibus has a stop at Colonial Gardens.

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- RCAL does advocacy work for people with disabilities through its 14 divisions. Through a contract with ACCES-VR, RCAL provides employment services for people with mental disabilities. Individuals participating in that program may have transportation through their case managers. RCAL's nursing home transition and diversion program, and its health homes, provide a means for individuals to live in their communities rather than in nursing homes. Clients of that program utilize Medicaid cabs and case managers to access medical appointments.
- Medical Answering Services (MAS) coordinates NEMT for Ulster County. There is a 24/7 call center. They utilize local providers to provide NEMT and also provide bus passes. A lot of new providers are being added; up to several per week. They can onboard new providers in about three months. Dennis Doyle added that since the state took over NEMT, UCAT Medicaid trips have dropped by about 50%.
- RUPCO has six care coordinators that can transport clients to relatively urgent medical appointments using their own vehicles.
- Family of Woodstock operates four shelters and two residences; each has a car, van, or SUV to transport residents.
- The Ulster County Office of Aging oversees the RSVP program (taking it over from SUNY); the program is run by volunteers.

Additionally, attendees identified several transportation gaps, including:

- The fixed route / paratransit service area is limited;  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile is not enough. (Note: The ADA service area in Ulster County is a one mile boundary around the fixed route system.)
- There is no coordination between county and city buses.
- Ulster Gardens is a residential facility for people with low income and people with disabilities. UCAT doesn't serve Ulster Gardens.
- Some people may not be able to afford a bus pass; staff of some organizations, such as the Institute for Family Health, are not allowed to transport clients
- Uber and companies like Uber are a big concern now because of issues related to service animals, insurance, and accessibility.
- People who are Medicare eligible, but not paratransit-eligible will call an ambulance for a trip to an emergency room, rather than a scheduled appointment with a doctor, and IFH pays for it.
- Due to its hub and spoke system design, some trip are very time-consuming to make using UCAT. In addition, service is not frequent enough; trips for grocery shopping and appointments could take all day. People want to go to Walmart, Bel Air, BOCES, and Shandanken.
- There is no way to get to Albany for trips other than medical appointments.
- United Way doesn't conduct a needs survey anymore, because responses never changed; transportation was always reported as a top need.

Participants suggested several potential solutions to transportation gaps:

- RCAL would like to see a pool of funding made available for hiring paratransit vans for people outside of the 1-mile ADA corridor
- There are ARCs in seven counties; they might be able to provide service.

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- Dennis asked if one provider could provide transportation for outgoing trips and another provider to provide return trips. This is being discussed with ARC. They want to group trips to doctor's offices.

# Appendix B Focus Group Guide

## MEMORANDUM

To: Ulster County Planning/Nelson Nygaard Consulting  
From: Susan G. Blickstein, AICP/PP, PhD  
Date: April 12, 2016; revised May 13, 2016  
Re: Focus Groups for Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan

Focus groups are undertaken as part of human services transportation coordination plans to better understand the challenges, needs and barriers of current services as experienced by target populations (older adults, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and other transit dependent individuals). To achieve input from target populations, two focus groups are planned at this time (note: a third focus group will occur after strategies have been developed to test those concepts).

One of the focus groups will target disabled persons, though it is inevitable that there will be overlap as some disabled persons will likely be older adults and/or people living on limited incomes.

The second focus group will target older adults. Again, there will be some overlap as some older adults will likely have physical or cognitive disabilities, and/or live on limited incomes.

Ideally, each focus group would attract eight to no more than fifteen attendees, and last around 90 minutes.

The topics/issues explored with focus group attendees are as follows:

- I. Introductions
  - a. Name?
  - b. Where do you live?
  - c. Do you live alone?
  - d. Do you work/go to school/volunteer? If so, where? How do you get there?
  
- II. Needs Assessment
  - a. Where do you travel?
    - i. Develop a list of all the places people in the group go
    - ii. Prioritize the list to briefly identify top locations
  - b. What are the major reasons you normally travel (such as doctor's appts, work, shopping, education/training, obtain services, socialize, etc.)?



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- c. How do you usually travel?
  - i. What options are available? (ADA paratransit service, UCAT, Kingston City bus, others?).
  - ii. How do you decide how to travel?
  - iii. How is your experience with travel different on weekdays? Evenings? Saturdays? Sundays?
- d. Let's talk about recent trips you wanted to make, but could not, or you had trouble with.
  - i. What problem did you encounter? Explain what happened.
  - ii. Which locations are easiest to travel to? Why?
  - iii. Which locations are difficult to get to? Why? (long distance, hard to understand, multiple transfers, costs too much, service frequency, short service hours, etc.)
- e. Any there other locations that are not on the list that are difficult to travel to?
- f. How do you feel about the number, location, and condition of bus stops, shelters that you use?
- g. Are there any improvements that would make travel easier? (additional benches, bus stops that are accessible to wheelchair users, lighting, a covered place to wait/sit, more shelters?)
- h. Concerns (if not already discussed above)
  - i. When thinking about making a trip/traveling somewhere, what are some of the reasons you decide not to travel?
  - ii. What are some of your frustrations with using transit/commuting/driving/finding a ride?
  - iii. Is information on transportation options accessible and easy to understand?
  - iv. Do you have any concerns about personal safety/security?
- i. How do you usually get information about transportation services? Which methods do you prefer?
  - i. Printed schedules or information
  - ii. Internet
  - iii. Television (public access channels)
  - iv. Senior centers
  - v. Newspapers (which ones?)
  - vi. Telephone transit providers
- j. Any suggestions for improvements to address the identified concerns?

# Appendix C Focus Group Meeting Notes

## Senior Focus Group Meeting

Milton's Harvest (senior housing complex), Milton, NY

May 18, 2016

### Attendees

- 15 female, 1 male participants
  - 1 female participant was not an older adult, and was blind
- Several observers from human service agencies

### Communities of residence and usual mode of travel

- New Palz—volunteers for an organization; people have questions about transportation. Has own car
- New Palz – still drives (2)
- Golden Hill (Golden Hill Nursing & Rehabilitation Center, 99 Golden Hill Dr, Kingston); has car (3)
- Golden Hill, no car. Has Medicaid transportation to medical appointments (2)
- Milton's Harvest, has never driven (3)
- Milton's Harvest, drives; has tried Neighbor to Neighbor, but requires a month's notice. When low on gas, uses Office for the Aging service to go to medical appointments.
- Lady getting information for Rosedale Seniors about transportation
- Elizabeth (blind participant)—New Palz, never drove, uses public transportation, including Loop bus in New Palz
- Gentleman getting information for others in his senior housing complex; drives
- A number of people rely on friends and family for rides, but would prefer to have options

### Destinations and trip purposes (current and desired)

- Highland – medical appointments
- Poughkeepsie—especially for medical appointments
- NYS
- Medical, grocery shopping, laundry
- Metro North train station
- Shopping—stores on 9W; Adams (Newburgh/Kingston), Stop & Shop (New Paltz, Kingston 9W), ShopRite (New Paltz), Hannaford (Route 9W) (Target, Kohl's -- Kingston, Poughkeepsie, Newburgh)
- New Windsor
- Newburgh (doctor)

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- BOCES, Marlborough Library, and other places for college courses or adult ed classes
- Kingston—dinners and other events for seniors
- Downtown New Palz

**Obtaining information about transportation options**

- Need more information
- UCAT website bus schedules can't be read by a screen reader (UCAT dispatchers will read schedules over the phone); text descriptions of routes and schedules would help
- Iphone app for real-time bus information that can be used by riders with vision impairments
- Several use the internet, but not all have computers
- UCAT is on Facebook
- Posted schedules at bus stops would be useful
- Kingston Citibus website is not user-friendly—Connector routes are hard to find, no mention of Poughkeepsie Citibus (check to make sure this applies to Citibus only and not UCAT website - UCAT WEBSITE DOES NOT LINK TO POUGHKEEPSIE CITIBUS)
- Highlight 'bus of the month'; guide to what's available along the route
- Posting information at senior housing facilities
- Online trip planner
- Maps, one for each bus route, with names of cross streets and legible for seniors

**Comments about UCAT fixed route service**

- Need more bus shelters
- Waiting for bus in bad weather is difficult
- Bus stops need to be kept clear of snow
- Walking to stops is difficult—streets and intersections not pedestrian-friendly (narrow, no sidewalks, very busy intersections—especially 299) and weather makes it worse
- Traveling with shopping bags is difficult
- Either not all buses kneel, or not all operators use the kneeling feature
- Need audio accessible intersection signals to be installed and maintained
- Bus service in Poughkeepsie is much better
- Coordination of bus schedules between Ulster County and Poughkeepsie services
- Comments line would be useful
- Would like free transfers
- ShopRite has a senior shopping day on Tuesdays – very popular. Van service to deliver orders later would be extremely helpful.

**Other comments**

- Taxi services are prohibitively expensive
- Taxis in New Palz transport service dogs; not sure about companies in Kingston

- UCAT should provide transportation to public meeting later in the project
- What do we hope to get out of this meeting? None of the comments offered are new.
- Will recommendations in the coordinated plan be implemented?

## **Focus Group Meeting with People with Disabilities**

**Ulster County Business Resource Center, Kingston, NY**

**May 18, 2016**

### **Attendees**

- Four female participants—two older without disabilities, one with vision impairment, one with unspecified disability
- Three male participants—two wheelchair users and one with a mental disability
- Several observers from human service agencies

### **Communities of residence and usual mode of travel**

- North Hurley, off 28A; drive now, but didn't always and won't in the future (2, no disabilities)
- Lake Katrine, parents drive accessible van; part of RCAL nursing home diversion program
- \_\_\_\_\_ (legally blind participant); uses UCAT, uses paratransit for shopping on Tuesday (is this a Rural Route?) NOTE -- I LOOKED AT RURAL ROUTE ON UCAT WEBSITE, I THINK THIS IS PROBABLY PARATRANSIT
- Napanoch, drives, has used UCAT
- Saugerties, drives now or gets rides from a friend; looking for information about options for the future for herself and her brother
- People rely on friends and family for rides, but would prefer to have options
- People are thinking about options for the future when they can no longer drive

### **Destinations and trip purposes (current and desired)**

- Medical appointments
- Work
- School (Ulster)
- Shopping
- Kingston for medical appointments and shopping

### **Obtaining information about transportation options**

- Schedules are hard to read for people with vision impairments—large print would help (check UCAT website for information about accessible formats)
- One participant had to make many calls to get information about all available options

**Comments about UCAT fixed route service**

- Walking to stops is difficult—streets and intersections not pedestrian-friendly (narrow, no sidewalks, very busy intersections—especially 299) and weather makes it worse
- Bus stops at Tech Center, crosses Neighborhood Road which is not pedestrian-friendly; much better to go down Neighborhood Road
- Bus shelters are not wheelchair-accessible
- Service is needed in 28A area
- One wheelchair user likes the wheelchair securement system

**Comments about ADA paratransit service**

- Much confusion about what 1-mile corridor means
- Not all origins and destinations are within the ADA service area
- UCAT Max with designated stops? What is this?
- Not all wheelchairs are the same size—some riders need a really high roof. A universally accessible vehicle would be good. Providers should ask about accessibility needs when booking trips.

**Other comments**

- Taxis are prohibitively expensive
- No Neighbor to Neighbor volunteers in the 28A area
- Add to outreach lists – aging in place groups that meet in Kingston, Woodstock, Saugerties, maybe other communities
- Everyone wants to age in place
- Eligibility for service is a concern—income, disability; schedules and timing
- Medicaid transportation is not an option for some residents

# Appendix D Stakeholder Interview Notes

To: Ulster County Planning/Nelson Nygaard Consulting  
From: Susan G. Blickstein, AICP/PP, PhD  
Date: June 6, 2016  
Re: Stakeholder Interviews for Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan

Stakeholder interviews are undertaken as part of human services transportation coordination plans to better understand the challenges, needs and barriers of current services from the perspective of those who provide services to targeted populations (older adults, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and other transit dependent individuals).

To obtain input from service providers within the County, three stakeholder interviews are planned at this time (note: two additional interviews will occur after strategies have been developed to test those concepts).

The three stakeholders interviewed as part of the needs analysis phase of the project are as follows:

1. Marge Gagnon, RN, The Rose Women's Care Service Community Resource Center PO Box 1093, Highland, NY, 1-845-706-6459, [rwscrc@aol.com](mailto:rwscrc@aol.com).
2. Keith Bennet, Deputy Director, Ulster County Veteran Services Agency (845) 340-3190 [kben@co.ulster.ny.us](mailto:kben@co.ulster.ny.us).
3. Anthony Mignone, Chief Operating Officer, RCAL, Inc. 727 Ulster Avenue, Kingston, NY 12401, 845-331-0541 ext. 16, [amignone@rcal.org](mailto:amignone@rcal.org).

The topics/issues explored with each stakeholder interview:

- III. Position, past experience, and current organization, including organization's role in coordinating transportation for targeted populations.
  - a. Types of transportation services coordinated
  - b. Locations of your facilities where transportation services are required for clients to receive your services
- IV. Needs Assessment
  - a. Locations/major trip purposes (where/why) for the majority of your clients?
  - b. How is travel arranged and who are the providers?
    - i. What options are available? (ADA paratransit service, UCAT, Kingston City bus, others?).

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- ii. How do you decide how to arrange travel?
- iii. How is your experience coordinating travel different on weekdays? Evenings? Saturdays? Sundays?
- c. Common issues/concerns from your clients?
  - i. Problems/barriers.
  - ii. Locations in the County that are the easiest to arrange travel? Why?
  - iii. Difficult locations? Why? (long distance, hard to understand, multiple transfers, costs too much, service frequency, short service hours, etc.)
  - iv. Do you hear about any concerns about personal safety/security?
- d. Any specific issues about the number, location, and condition of bus stops, shelters that your clients use?
- e. Are there any improvements that would make travel easier? (additional benches, bus stops that are accessible to wheelchair users, lighting, a covered place to wait/sit, more shelters that are ADA/wheelchair accessible?)
- f. Is information on transportation options accessible and easy to understand for your clients?
- g. How do you usually get information about transportation services to your clients? Which methods do you/they prefer?
  - i. Printed schedules or information
  - ii. Internet
  - iii. Television (public access channels)
  - iv. Senior centers
  - v. Newspapers (which ones?)
  - vi. Telephone transit providers
- h. Any suggestions for improvements to address the identified concerns?