

Chapter 7. Unmet Needs and Service Redundancies

Introduction

This chapter provides a comparative analysis of the supply of existing public transit and community transportation services with the perceptions of unmet needs expressed by a variety of sources and data collection efforts conducted as part of this study.

Methodology

Eight sources were consulted in preparing this subjective assessment of unmet transportation needs in the Lower Hudson Valley for older adults, persons with low income, and persons with disabilities. These sources included, but were not necessarily limited to:

- Input from the Lower Hudson Valley Study Advisory Committee (a group consisting of program and agency officials representing or serving as advocates for the target populations);
- Results from 13 key stakeholder in-depth interviews;
- Subjective spatial and temporal analysis of the coverage provided by existing public transit services in the three-county region;
- Geographic analysis of the locations/concentrations of the three target populations (see Chapter 5);
- Results from a series of subject questions on an online survey of transportation providers conducted throughout the NYMTC region;
- Input received from provider workshops held in each county;
- Input received from three community open houses held in each county; and
- Input received directly from consumers in a series of consumer focus groups held for each segment of the target populations. Information from all these sources was used to compile a summary assessment for each county in the Lower Hudson Valley (Putnam, Rockland, and Westchester counties).



Service Gaps and Unmet Needs by County

Westchester County

Existing Services

As indicated in Chapter 4 (see Figure 4-3), Westchester County is well served by the county's public transportation system, the Bee-Line and Metro-North. Service is provided seven days a week, with weekend and late evening service available. Additionally, the system's complementary paratransit service exceeds statutory requirements for service area coverage by providing service countywide during "core" service hours (6:00 AM to 7:00 PM). Outside these core times, the paratransit service area contracts to an area encompassing $\frac{3}{4}$ miles around the fixed-route service coverage, matching current regulatory requirements. Finally, additional private sector transportation resources augment the publicly provided network.

Older Adults and Bee-Line Coverage

A comparative analysis at the block group level of persons 65 years of age or greater and Bee-Line fixed-route coverage was undertaken. Seniors are clustered in the highest density areas in southern Westchester County in Yonkers, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Eastchester, Rye, and White Plains. This matches up well the density of fixed-route Bee-Line coverage in these communities.

In the more northern sections of Westchester County, lesser concentrations of seniors are found in Peekskill, Cortlandt, Mount Kisco, and in the Somers/North Salem area. While the Bee-Line route network appears to provide good north-south connections in the Peekskill and Cortlandt areas, east-west connections are much more minimal, limited to the Route 6 corridor.

There is more limited Bee-Line fixed-route coverage in the northeastern sections of the county. While these areas reflect the least dense concentrations of seniors, various stakeholders have cited lack of public transportation in these areas as a mobility problem. Comparison with absolute numbers (again mapped at the block group level) suggests that while densities are not great, there are sufficient absolute numbers of older adults in the towns and villages bordering Putnam County to verify the stakeholder opinions.

Low Income Persons and Bee-Line Coverage

Geographic mapping of the low income population shows the greatest concentrations (albeit fairly limited in Westchester County) in Yonkers, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle (western sections), and Rye.

As noted above, Bee-Line coverage is excellent in these areas. Few participants noted mobility limitations in this target population in the southern sections of the county.

Persons with Disabilities and Bee-Line Coverage

Persons with disabilities are clustered in the highest density areas in southern Westchester County in Yonkers, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Eastchester, Rye, Ossining, and White Plains. This matches up well the density of fixed-route Bee-Line coverage in these communities.

Lesser concentrations of persons with disabilities can also be found in the Mt. Kisco/Bedford area and along the east-west US 202 corridor in the northern sections of the county bordering Putnam County. While both areas are served by fixed-route service, service quantity is less than in the more densely populated southern sections of the county.

Summary

As with any macro level study, this block group level examination is not meant to substitute for a street level understanding of the proximity of bus stops and routes to specific individuals with disabilities, low income, or advanced age. Rather, this assessment is designed to provide a summary overview as to whether existing public transit services are located in areas with high relative and absolute concentrations of the target populations.

Bee-Line system route coverage is extensive and, overall, matches up well with block group maps indicating the geographic concentrations of the three target populations in Westchester County. The levels of service are higher in the southern sections of the county and this comparative analysis suggests and supports anecdotal evidence that service in the northern sections of the county (particularly in the northeast) may not be providing sufficient mobility options to all areas of the county or with sufficient frequencies to be a viable mobility alternative for the target populations.

Service Needs and Gaps

By comparing existing transportation services to the communities where members of target population groups live and travel, a series of unmet needs and gaps across Westchester County have been identified. The following is a summary of the key gaps and needs in transportation services within Westchester County:

- Consolidation of medical service providers is increasing the demand and distances the target population must travel to access care.
- The terrain of Westchester County presents challenges for the older driver and creates demand for transit alternatives.
- Many citizens in Westchester County rely on home healthcare. There is demand to get home healthcare workers to client locations; many of these workers are transit dependent.
- Participants in a community open house session commented that transportation needs of the target populations extend beyond town boundaries; it would be useful for towns to cooperate and agree that transportation was a regional issue.
- Existing paratransit programs, with service limitations, eligibility criteria, trip restrictions, etc., can work to limit, rather than expand, mobility.
- There is a need to expand the nature and type of transit information that is available to the target populations.
- Access to train stations by non-commuters is problematic due to limited parking and limited transit service connections.
- There are opportunities to expand use of taxi voucher programs in the county. Such programs may reduce demand on the paratransit program.

- Travel on traditional fixed-route transportation can be difficult if multiple routes serve the same bus stop. In addition, it is difficult for individuals with visual impairments to read the correct bus number or route sign.
- Installation of passenger amenities (shelters, benches, etc.) at existing Bee-Line bus stops may induce members of the target populations to make greater use of fixed-route services.
- Transit schedule information (for both fixed-route and paratransit services) could be written in a format that is more “senior friendly” for greater user comprehension.
- Several participants commented that transit disadvantaged persons living in the northern sections of the county do not have access to fixed-route public transportation (Salem area).
- There are many smaller villages and communities in Westchester County where additional transit services are necessary to afford mobility to the target populations. In some cases, seniors in particular require one-on-one attention or a level of passenger assistance that may exceed that currently provided by most paratransit providers.
- Transportation for Medicaid eligible individuals for trips that are not eligible for Medicaid reimbursement is a need in Westchester County.
- Advance reservation requirements for paratransit services is a detriment among the target population as they cannot often predict their mobility needs one week in advance.
- Volunteerism efforts are seen as an excellent way to meet some needs in the senior community, including transportation.
- Extended travel times on paratransit, due to the geographic size of the County, are known to be a problem. The existing paratransit program regularly exceeds its travel time standard.
- There is a need to increase capacity of the telephone reservation systems for county paratransit services.
- In some cases, neither fixed-route nor even paratransit is a workable mobility option. Fixed-route services may not be in close proximity of desired travel destinations of the target population and some persons with disabilities may not qualify for paratransit.
- Funding for alternative transit services is limited.
- There is a need for private sector taxi firms to operate accessible vehicles.

Rockland County

Existing Services

As indicated in a previous chapter (see Figure 4-5), Transport of Rockland (TOR) and the Tappan ZEEExpress provide good fixed-route service coverage in the east-west I-87/Route 59 corridor. Additionally, the system network affords good connectivity between West Nyack, Nyack, Spring Valley, Haverstraw Village, West Haverstraw, and Suffern. Service is available seven days a week and late evening service is available.

T.R.I.P.S. also offers a complementary paratransit service that is open not only to qualified individuals with disabilities, but also to seniors.

Older Adults and TOR Route Coverage

A comparative analysis at the block group level of persons 65 years of age or greater and TOR fixed-route service indicates a good match between the most densely populated block groups and TOR fixed-route coverage.

Concentrations of seniors are observed in Spring Valley, Kaiser, Suffern, and South Nyack. Another concentration is found in the Haverstraw/West Haverstraw area.

In terms of absolute numbers of older adults, there appears to be an even distribution of seniors, by block group, throughout the eastern sections of Rockland County (the western section is devoted to Harriman State Park).

One potential gap is the area around New City/Clarkstown where there is a dense concentration of seniors with the only TOR transit service being provided by TOR Route 91. However, some of this service area is provided via the Clarkstown Mini Trans and Coach USA service.

Low Income Persons and TOR Route Coverage

The geographic concentration of persons with low income is rather pronounced in Rockland County. There are concentrations in New Square, Spring Valley, Nyack, and Haverstraw Village. All of these areas appear to be well served by Transport of Rockland.

In terms of absolute locations of low income persons, the patterns are similar. Spring Valley and Haverstraw show the highest absolute concentrations of low income persons; again these areas appear to be well served by TOR.

Persons with Disabilities and TOR Route Coverage

The highest concentrations of persons with disabilities are found in block group clusters in Spring Valley, Suffern, and Haverstraw. While absolute numbers of persons with disabilities show a more even distribution, these concentrations all appear to be in areas where TOR fixed-route service is operated.

Summary

The Transport of Rockland (TOR) fixed-route network does a good job serving all concentrations of persons with low income, older adults, and persons with disabilities. Some potential gaps exist in New City where there are concentrations of seniors and TOR service is more limited than in other parts of the County, however, some other local services fill these gaps.

Service Needs and Gaps

The unmet need and gaps in transportation services throughout Rockland County are similar to other areas of the Lower Hudson Valley. Following is a list of the primary transit gaps and needs facing Rockland County:

- An aging population is placing increasing demand on paratransit services. There is a need to train customers to use regularly scheduled fixed-route services where feasible to mitigate demand for paratransit services.
- Additional ongoing funding for transportation operations is a critical need.

- The vehicles available under Federally sponsored programs (e.g., the Section 5310 program where the state specifications limit the number and types of available vehicles) are sometimes not well-suited to local services in Rockland County.
- Generating the local match for new Federal grants is an obstacle.
- There is substantial need for transportation to/from dialysis centers within Rockland County.
- Community open house participants commented that there is a need for evening transit service.
- Existing public transit services need to improve on-time performance to enhance acceptance as a viable transportation option for the target populations.
- Door-to-door type paratransit services are essential to meeting the mobility needs of the target populations.
- There are decided peaking characteristics in human service agency transportation that make vehicle sharing difficult.
- When planning transit services for persons with disabilities in the Lower Hudson Valley, additional consideration must be given to the extended travel times this group must endure due to limited availability of services.
- It may be more practical to enhance existing services, rather than create new services, for persons with disabilities.
- Any projects that are funded through Sections 5316 or 5317 should be sustainable from a funding perspective.
- An existing program in Rockland County (the “Wheels to Work” Program) may be a good one for emulation under the JARC program. This program provides used vehicles and other related services to working New Yorkers, helping them obtain employment or keep a job giving them and their families a brighter future. In addition to providing cars, the program offers assistance with car repairs, auto insurance, registration and licensing fees, financial counseling, driver’s education, defensive driving courses and car maintenance training.
- The availability of transit information, or transit information in alternative/accessible formats, is limited at existing stops and shelters.

Putnam County

Existing Services

Putnam County Transportation fixed-route services are more limited than the levels of services found in the other counties in the Lower Hudson Valley. These service levels reflect the fact that Putnam County has the smallest population and lowest population densities in the region.

Most fixed-route service is found in the eastern section of the county, east of the Route 52 corridor, with a major focus on the Brewster area.

Putnam County Transit provides ADA paratransit services within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of any fixed-route and operates during the same days and hours as the fixed-route service.

Older Adults and Putnam Transit Route Coverage

A comparative analysis at the block group level of persons 65 years of age or greater and Putnam transit services was undertaken. The highest concentrations of seniors are found in Brewster, Carmel/Lake Carmel, the southwest corner of Carmel Township, and Cold Spring. The pattern for both absolute number of older adults and density of seniors in the county is similar.

Putnam County Transportation fixed-route coverage serves these key areas with the exception of Cold Spring. There is no fixed-route coverage in the western section of the county.

Low Income Persons and Putnam Route Coverage

The geographic concentration of persons with low income, particularly with respect to density, is most pronounced in the Brewster area, with a secondary concentration found in a small pocket in the Lake Carmel area, just west of I-84. Finally, another small concentration is found in Cold Spring.

Like the observations for older adults, Putnam County Transportation fixed-route coverage serves key concentrations of low income individuals with the exception of Cold Spring. Additionally, there may be temporal issues in service availability, as service ends at 9:00 PM.

Persons with Disabilities and Putnam Route Coverage

The highest concentration of persons with disabilities is found in the Lake Secor, with lesser concentrations found around Brewster, the southeast side of Lake Carmel, the Putnam Lake area, and Cold Spring.

Existing fixed-route coverage is in-line with observed concentrations of persons with disabilities. The exception again occurs in the western section of the county near Cold Spring.

Summary

Structural fixed-route coverage of the Putnam County Transportation system is aligned well with the general and absolute concentrations of persons with low income, older adults, and persons with disabilities in the eastern part of the county. With little transit service in the western part of the county (other than a seasonal trolley service in Cold Spring), there are concentrations of the target populations without access to transit service.

Service Needs and Gaps

Putnam County is the most rural of the three Lower Hudson Valley counties. Many of the service gaps and needs revolve around there not being enough services available to suit the needs of the sparse population. Following is a list of the main transportation gaps and unmet needs in Putnam County:

- Many users who do not require paratransit services are using the demand-response service rather than the accessible fixed-route system. This creates excessive demand and generates some denials of service on the existing paratransit system.
- There is a demand for paratransit services beyond the ¼ mile boundary surrounding existing Putnam County Transportation fixed-routes.
- Many Putnam County residents need to travel to White Plains in Westchester County.

- A community open house participant commented that smaller vehicles would be less expensive to operate for public transit services within Putnam County.
- There are many seniors and persons with disabilities who need to travel to medical facilities in Westchester County. One participant indicated that it can take as many as three or four transfers to make the trip. This extends the total travel time to an entire day for a short appointment. The Office of Aging provides some service to Mount Kisco, but this service is reserved for older adults.
- Generating the local match for new Federal grants is an issue. Specifically, local financing to match Federal grant awards is difficult to obtain, creating possible obstacles to utilization of Section 5316 and Section 5317 funds.
- Many persons with disabilities in Putnam County do not have access to paratransit services because they live/travel to origins/destinations beyond the statutory $\frac{3}{4}$ mile boundary of existing fixed-route services.
- Residents in the western portions of Putnam County do not have access to public transportation services.
- There is a need for qualitative improvements within the scope of existing paratransit services provided by Putnam County Transportation.
- Population densities in Putnam County will require unique solutions that will differ from other strategies developed in the NYMTC plan.
- Expansion of existing public transportation services would mitigate the need for agency staff to step in and provide client transportation services.
- Improved frequency of service on fixed-route service would enhance consumer use of this mode and would work to reduce demand on the paratransit program.
- There is an identified need to transport veterans in Putnam County to regional VA hospitals.
- Several open house participants noted that taxicabs can be an additional mobility resource, but fares can be prohibitive for extensive use by the target populations.
- The Route 9 corridor has many individuals who need transit, but do not have access to this service.

Consumer Focus Groups

In early December 2008 and early January 2009, a series of 30 focus groups were held in each county throughout the NYMTC study area for each of the three target populations.

These focus groups provided a wealth of consumer suggestions for improvements in services for older adults, persons with low income, and persons with disabilities in the Lower Hudson Valley. A summary of key results for each group, by county, is provided in Figure 7-1.

Figure 7-1 Summary of Focus Group Comments

Issue Categories	Putnam	Rockland	Westchester
Persons with Disabilities			
<p>Existing Services, Needs, and Gaps</p>	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paratransit and fixed-route critical to keeping them independent • Too difficult to get to New York City • Too difficult to travel throughout county and into Westchester County <p>Fixed-route:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of missing the last bus and being stranded, esp. from White Plains • System works well • Does not have enough geographic coverage • More would use it if it extended further into the county • Lifts often did not work <p>Paratransit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most pleased with system • Drivers that were sensitive to their various needs and on time • Currently the system ends at 6 or 7 in the evening • Lack of information about the system 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not in various formats to reach a large audience • Streets connecting to transit locations need priority for ped. safety improvements • Can't travel to points in Rockland, NJ, Brooklyn, and Woodbury Commons <p>Fixed-Route Transit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No accessible information in bus shelters • TOR buses to be overcrowded • Bus operators insensitive to special needs • Some drivers don't know to provide verbal info to people with visual impairments • Transfer points should have better shelters, benches, and route information • Limited geographic area • Can't get to Nyack College, Haverstraw Bay Park, Stony Point, Colonie Hospital • Insensitive drivers <p>Paratransit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally pleased with system • Calls directed to machine instead of real person • Longer calls more expensive for those on pay phones • Don't call back after leaving message • Difficult to get in system b/c full of regular subscriptions (don't require a call) 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough information about services; very difficult to use if aren't familiar • No maps in alternative formats for people with visual impairments • Difficult-to-reach destinations: Westchester Mall, Galleria Mall, Elmsford <p>Fixed-route:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public transit takes up to 2 or 2.5 hours for a trip that is 40 minutes by car • Specific routes mentioned: 42, 55, 7 and 40 buses • In northern Westchester, some routes have 1-hr headways • Usually transfers from these buses to subway in the Bronx are seamless • No audible information or stop announcements; key stop announcements are not enough • If a visually-impaired persons misses a stop, has to cross the street and locate the other stop • Bus stops and curbs need tactile warning strips for the visually impaired <p>Paratransit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always accommodate requests and the service is usually on time • Difficult because system is divided into north and south • North-South TransCenter offers poor conditions for waiting

Issue Categories	Putnam	Rockland	Westchester
Persons with Disabilities			
Existing Service Needs and Gaps <i>(cont'd)</i>	Taxis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most could not afford taking taxis • Many could not use taxis due to lack of accessible vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More buffer time given for pick-ups • Difficult to get out of doctor's appointments on time, and they have trouble getting a second bus to come for them if they missed their first • Can't go out to dinner or movies because the buses stop running at 7 pm • Difficult to get people with disabilities into T.R.I.P.S. system and to work on time • Inconvenient, inflexible schedule Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarkstown Mini-buses and Couch buses were generally good • Mandatory Couch driver training about needs of persons with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited Sunday service and not enough evening service • Can't get to Mt. Kisco • Phone reservations take a very long time; often they can't understand you • Switching to batching instead of on-time pickups, which may affect their on-time performance • Insensitive drivers; don't know how to use equipment in vehicles • Drivers talk on cell phones, listen to radio and drive badly • Drivers get lost going to various places in county • Afraid to complain about drivers because of repercussions • Little driver accountability Taxis: No cabs that's provide service late at night
Strategies	General: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend hours, days of operation, (currently no service on Sunday) • Expand geographic area of service • Increase frequency of service • Create better travel connections between counties • Keep the cost of the services as low as possible • More outlets for information for those without access to computers (telephone books, newspaper ads) 	General: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend hours of service, especially during the summer months • Extend the days of operation to cover the weekend • Expand geographic area of service • Create more outlets for general information about transportation options • Transportation information package distributed with new telephone books • Audible information kiosks in large transportation hubs 	General: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible information – audible button, accessible pedestrian technologies • Public service announcement asking everyone to be nice • Accessible fixed-route system more important than coordinating paratransit with other counties Fixed-route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make bus stops physically findable • Real-time next bus arrival information • Audible announcements – automatic annunciators that can announce stops in any language

Issue Categories	Putnam	Rockland	Westchester
Persons with Disabilities			
Strategies <i>(cont'd)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve pedestrian access to bus and transit stops, including snow removal and accessible sidewalks Paratransit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional services such as regular trips to shopping centers • Pay closer attention to pedestrian access to the paratransit system 	Fixed-route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More specific information at bus stops about various routes and schedules • Improve pedestrian safety around bus stops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better bus stops for waiting – better snow removal • Driver training

Issue Categories	Putnam	Rockland	Westchester
Seniors			
<p>Existing Service Needs and Gaps</p>	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking is dangerous due to lack of sidewalks Difficult to get to White Plains or Stewart Airports Better service to senior nutrition site in Kent More widespread information about transit Easier to go to Poughkeepsie, Dutchess Co. than eastern Putnam Co. Taxi fares are too high <p>Fixed-route:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of benches in bus shelters <p>Paratransit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western Putnam has no PART service Seniors do not know how to apply for the service Some depend on Dutchess or Westchester medical facilities, but cannot get there on PART <p>MetroNorth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty getting to the station, since cabs are too expensive 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destinations difficult to reach include: New Jersey locations, especially in Bergen County, Westchester County, especially White Plains, airports, New York Feel trapped on Sundays when no transit service is available <p>Fixed-route:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doesn't go where they need to go, so they use T.R.I.P.S. Difficult to get to stops because of the terrain <p>Paratransit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A "lifeline" needed to get around Isn't always available; capacity constraints force planning up to 2 weeks ahead Dispatcher not available on Saturdays <p>Taxis:</p> <p>Too expensive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Back up for TRIPS where no bus service is available <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of bus to NYC has diminished due to the difficulty in getting to the stops 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> White Plains lacks a town transit loop, which would make accessing train station, hospital, off-route neighborhoods easier Lack of information about services Many participants would not know how to get to important destinations, such as relatives' homes, church, etc, without a car <p>Buses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bee-Line runs well and often If Bee-Line connected easily to NYC services, more people would take it Big buses can't be filled, resulting in less frequent service Express bus to NYC from White Plains does not have enough parking nearby or other means of accessing it Express bus to the city should stop in more places than just White Plains <p>Paratransit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you drive, you do not qualify for paratransit <p>Taxis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No taxi companies in Rye Brook, only 4 in nearby Port Chester Port Chester cabs do not allow Rye Brook seniors to use senior discount available in Port Chester Greenwich (Connecticut) Hospital is an expensive cab ride home

Issue Categories	Putnam	Rockland	Westchester
Seniors			
Existing Service Needs and Gaps <i>(cont'd)</i>			Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rye Brook Senior Center can only run bus 3 days/week due to funding • Manhattan hospitals are expensive to get to and to park near • Interest in volunteer driver programs, but questions about liability Metro-North: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking is difficult at stations • Accessing stations by other than a car is difficult
Strategies	General: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information and outreach about transportation services: to churches, service clubs • Ads on TV • More sidewalks Fixed-route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More amenities at bus stops • Expand service area, including schools • Use low-floor buses Taxis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsidized taxi service Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flex service/community circulator like Cold Springs Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of information • Expand paratransit service area coverage beyond the requirement • Use flyers in the mail to reach the homebound • PART should establish a "Shopping Shuttle" 	Fixed-route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to serve more destinations with greater frequency • TOR Loop 3 Bus should serve Airmont Gardens more frequently Paratransit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand service hours to Sundays • Telephone dispatcher should be available whenever T.R.I.P.S. service is operating Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older Driver Wellness classes, though they may encounter resistance from some • Casual carpool organized at senior retirement complexes/communities Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand T.R.I.P.S. so that it has more weekend (add Sundays) and evening hours 	General: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better information dissemination, including the internet and Channel 12 • Improve access to train stations Fixed-route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More fixed-route service • Local circulators or community bus routes • Direct NYC express bus (especially for medical trips) Paratransit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paratransit to serve older adults Taxis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cab service discount (like in Port Chester)

Issue Categories	Putnam	Rockland	Westchester
Seniors			
Strategies <i>(cont'd)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an emergency phone number for seniors for “mobility emergencies” • Set up transfer points for taxis and paratransit services to feed buses • Information from the DMV when seniors renew their licenses • Operate a separate paratransit system for medical trips • Use utility bills to get the word out about transportation options • Provide information on how to “flag down” a PART bus • Provide better information on the “on call” route deviation service operated by PART • Provide a CD or DVD with information on how to use PART • Provide travel training at senior centers • Set up a “bus buddy” system • Improve pedestrian access to bus and transit stops, including snow removal and accessible sidewalks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOR should increase service to Airmont Gardens • Establish a Mobility Manager so that seniors can learn their options once they can no longer drive • T.R.I.P.S. needs more capacity generally – it is “really overloaded” • If the insurance issue can be resolved, volunteer driver programs would be great 	

Issue Categories	Putnam	Rockland	Westchester
Persons with Low Income			
<p>Existing Service Needs and Gaps</p>	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gas prices limit travel because no other options are available • Travel outside county to medical specialists is very difficult (to Westchester Medical Center, the Bronx, etc.) • Travel to popular destinations difficult: Brewster Community Outreach Center, Putnam Family Services, ShopRite, Putnam Plaza, food pantries in Brewster and Mahopac • No sidewalks, bus shelters • Office for the Aging services don't run late enough <p>Fixed-route:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used when gas is too expensive • Buses take too long to Brewster from Carmel • End too early in the evening – before some shifts are over • Limited geographic area – does not go to Putnam Valley, Kent Cliffs • Long, difficult journeys to Dutchess Co, Valhalla, Peekskill • Hail system difficult on rural roads • No schedules in buses <p>Paratransit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not well-known – should be more information available 	<p>Fixed-route:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circuitous routing and cumbersome transfers • Unreliable and late • Few bus stops, just a hail system • No sidewalks and poor street lighting • For 10-20-minute car trips, buses can take 1 or 1.5 hours <p>Taxis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very inconvenient, expensive and time-consuming • No meters, just zone fares • Drivers try to charge more than zone fare listed on cab • Service is bad, drivers drive badly and many don't have insurance <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express bus service across the Tappan Zee Bridge to Westchester is no longer as inexpensive and direct as it used to be. It now requires a transfer • Medicaid cab company often late 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Plains is easy to get around in on foot, but Westchester is not • Walking, especially at night, feels unsafe, especially in Mt. Vernon • Areas with good employment opportunities that are difficult to reach: Stamford or Fairfield, CT, Armonk, Nyack, Brooklyn, Putnam County and Mount Kisco <p>Fixed-route:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must have exact change on buses • Time-consuming and too many stops, buses often late • Transit in NYC is unsafe • Fares too high, and not enough locations to purchase electronic fare cards • Buses do not operate late enough or enough on the weekends • Buses uncomfortable, loud and unpleasant to ride in <p>Taxis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too expensive • Don't feel safe • Taxis charge a trunk fee to take packages, do not have posted rates, and taxi policies are not specified. <p>Metro-North:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable, but expensive • Weekend schedule not frequent enough <p>Driving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking in Manhattan is difficult • Freeway signs confusing
<p>Existing Service</p>	<p>Taxis:</p>		

Issue Categories	Putnam	Rockland	Westchester
Persons with Low Income			
Needs and Gaps <i>(Cont'd)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive • Only option for getting kids to after-school programs • Only option for after-hours Metro-North access • No meters, only zone fares Metro-North: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No way to get to/from station at night – very difficult for those who work in the city 		
Strategies	Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of service hours – evening, Saturdays, Sundays • Better/more direct bus service – to Valhalla, SE train station, Peekskill • Better bus signs/shelters/sidewalk access • Taxi subsidy system • Brewster Community Center outreach transportation • Low income fare on PART • Kent Cliffs – PART route • Centralized information directory of community transportation services • Improve pedestrian access to bus and transit stops, including snow removal and accessible sidewalks 	Fixed-route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make buses more frequent and regular • More bus stops, shelters and signage Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community bus route, when the idea was suggested and explained • More direct bus routes to major destinations • Better bus signage and shelters 	General: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend span into evening hours • Improve weekend and night service quality to accommodate late-shift workers Fixed-route: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More frequent bus service Taxis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better regulation and enforcement of fares • Need to be able to flag a taxi • Add safety belts and infant seats • Enable use of credit cards or tokens Metro-North: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More frequent service Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worker transit pass program paid for by major employers • Major employer shuttles or jitney services at bus/train terminals during peak

Summary of Key Findings

Overview

There are existing public transportation networks in all three counties in the Lower Hudson Valley. Clearly, in Westchester and Rockland counties, these networks are extensive and generally provide countywide services. Additionally, these services also provide extensive paratransit services in their respective jurisdictions and, in each case, the paratransit services exceed the statutory requirements imposed on public agencies by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). During “core” services hours, the Westchester County paratransit system provides services throughout the county, far exceeding the ¾ mile surrounding each fixed-route requirement imposed by the ADA. In Rockland County, the paratransit system serves individuals with disabilities *and* seniors. In both cases, county services are supplemented by public transit services operated by smaller towns and villages.

Comparative analysis of existing route coverages with the residential concentrations of the individual population groups suggest that public transportation does a good job in serving the target groups. Even small gaps, however, can prove problematic to some individuals.

While clearly seen as a valuable service (based on consumer focus groups), existing public transit service in Putnam County is more limited, reflecting the fact that this county contains the lowest population and population density in the entire study area. No public transit services (other than a seasonal trolley service) are available in the western portions of Putnam County.

Based on inventory results, it is clear that human service agencies in Westchester and Rockland County rely heavily on the network of public transportation as the primary source of mobility for clients. Particularly in Westchester County, many human service organizations depend on public transportation for client mobility needs. Gaps in this network are particularly acute for organizations that have clients outside the route network. While there is no formal or ongoing human services/public transportation coordination efforts in any of the counties in the Lower Hudson Valley, there are multiple examples of informal coordination (information/referral) and several circumstances where agencies have initiated more formal coordination between the organizations.

As a result of the more limited public transportation service in Putnam County, there are relatively greater levels of human service agencies that directly operate transportation services in the county. Nevertheless, this finding also creates potential opportunities for agency coordination in Putnam County.

Barriers to Coordination

One common theme emerged throughout the Lower Hudson Valley with respect to obstacles to improving transit services for older adults, persons with low income, and persons with disabilities – there is a lack of funding for operations.

Examples of other barriers voiced during the study and outreach process:

- Program eligibility criteria and other restrictions (e.g., ADA eligibility, Medicaid trip purpose restrictions) represent a barrier to mobility and greater levels of coordination.

- Limitations in the level of passenger assistance provided by some public transportation demand responsive systems may not be sufficient to meet the needs of the target populations. Demand-response system policies that expand the level of passenger assistance or do not impose limited vehicle wait/dwell times at pick-up locations may be needed to effectively serve some members of the target populations.
- Inter-county trips are possible on public transportation, but may require multiple transfers resulting in exceedingly long travel times.
- Lack of access to, or understanding of, existing information on the available transit services hinders access to this mode by the target populations.
- Use of paratransit services by individuals who can otherwise use accessible fixed-route transportation was cited in all three counties as placing excessive demands on the paratransit system, possibly excluding some users/trips who truly need paratransit service.
- While plentiful in some areas of the Lower Hudson Valley, taxicabs lack accessibility to some persons with disabilities and may be too expensive for other members of the target populations.
- Specific geographic areas within the Lower Hudson Valley (northern sections of Westchester County, western sections of Putnam County) have proven difficult to serve in a cost effective manner using existing service delivery models.
- Consumers, advocates, and agency representatives have all cited temporal issues regarding the availability of both fixed-route and demand-response services (e.g., late evening and weekend service).
- Sustainability of potential JARC and New Freedom projects is an issue as these programs do not ensure long-term, continuous project funding.

Opportunities for Coordination

Despite the obstacles to coordination noted above, there may be many avenues to improve and/or expand services in the Lower Hudson Valley. Among the potential options that have been voiced by LHV Stakeholder Advisory Committee members, transportation providers, and consumers are the following:

- Improve access to, and the understandability of, existing information on both fixed-route and demand-response transportation services.
- Create incentives or other benefits to encourage the development of accessible and affordable taxicab services.
- Augment existing paratransit services with taxicab subsidy/voucher programs.
- Develop strategies and incentives to encourage those individuals who are capable of using fixed-route transportation to use this mode instead of paratransit services.
- Create more centralized information regarding the available of transportation services. Throughout the Lower Hudson Valley, it was repeatedly found that the burden for compiling information on existing services fell to individuals at each respective agency or advocacy group.

- Improve sidewalks, passenger amenities, and create accessible pathways at selected locations to improve passenger convenience in accessing accessible fixed-route transportation.
- Explore implementation of the “family of services” concept where multiple service delivery models are coordinated through a Mobility Manager to more effectively serve geographically isolated individuals.
- Expand paratransit services to meet projected increases in demand and changing demographics in the Lower Hudson Valley.

