

# Washoe County Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan Update

## *Executive Summary*



Prepared for:

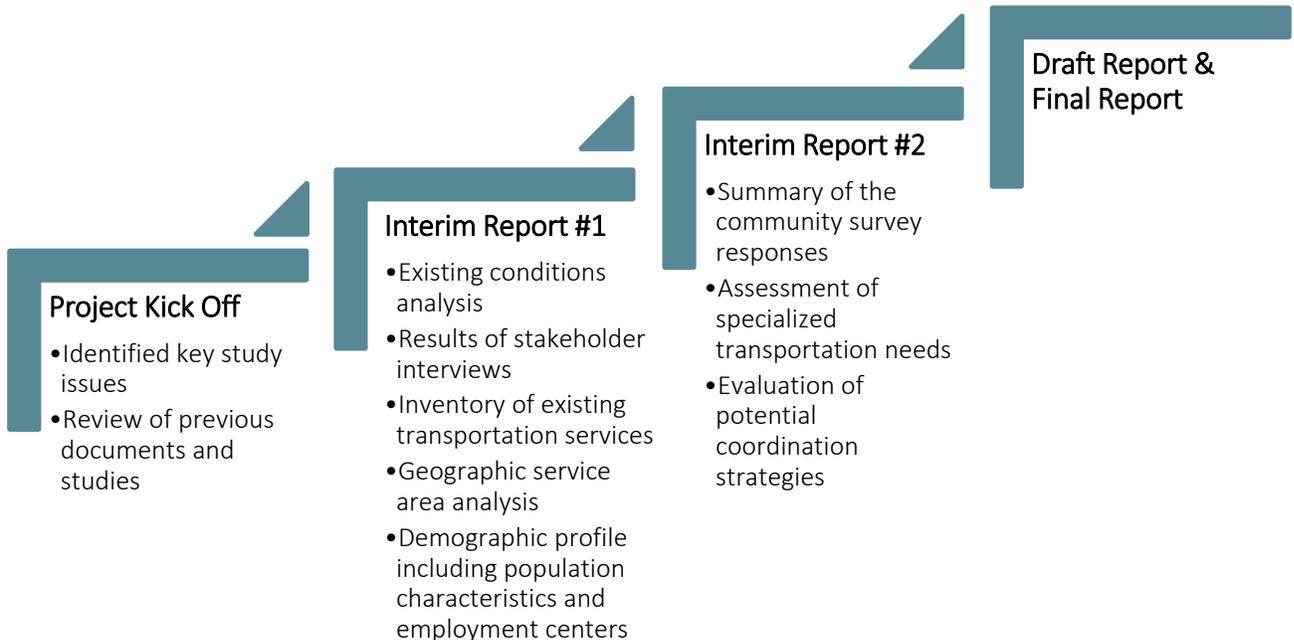


## INTRODUCTION

The Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County (RTC) has contracted with LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc. (LSC) to revise and update its Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan (CTP). This is an opportunity to identify unmet senior and disabled transportation needs, reduce duplication of services, and improve the coordinated transportation system for Washoe County, Nevada which includes the cities of Reno and Sparks. RTC’s last Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan was developed in 2015 and while the plan is due for an update every four years, this update is being completed in alignment with RTC’s 2050 Regional Transportation Plan.



The study began by developing an understanding of the local community and the existing transportation services in Washoe County. Two Interim Reports were prepared as part of the planning process. The information from the two Interim Reports was then integrated into a Draft Report for review and approval.



## STAKEHOLDER INPUT AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

Public input is an important part of developing a Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan that meets the needs of the community. While in-person meetings and open houses would have been the preferred method to obtain public feedback, due to Covid-19 restrictions telephone and virtual engagement platforms were used.

### Stakeholder Questionnaire and Interviews

One of the first tasks of this study was to identify and contact stakeholders. Using the list of stakeholders from the previous CTP as a starting point, stakeholders who represent the broad composition of human services agencies, non-profits, human service transportation providers, medical providers, veteran’s services, and

transportation network companies were contacted and asked to participate in the study. The stakeholder questionnaire asked participants to identify current and future unmet transportation needs, as well as existing coordination efforts and ideas for improving coordination.

Identified unmet transportation needs included:

- Lack of Affordable Transportation
- Need for Door-to-Door or Door-through-Door Service
- Limited Service Area
- Lack of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles
- Advanced Reservation Requirements
- Limited service hours (need for 24/7 service)

Identified coordination issues included:

- Lack of information about services
- Difficulty matching resources with needs of the passenger
- Agencies are focused on their own clients and services

The 2015 Coordinated Transportation Plan identified a number of client services transportation gaps through discussions in public meetings and from other sources. Upon comparison, many of the issues raised by the public as part of the 2015 CTP still remain, including:

- Affordability of transportation
- Expanded service area boundaries and service hours
- Need for additional help to/from the vehicle
- Reservation requirements
- Need for a centralized information directory

## Community Transportation Survey

As part of an effort to obtain input from Washoe County residents and stakeholders, an online community survey was created. The survey was publicized and distributed through a variety of means, and a total of 155 survey responses were received. Key findings from the survey included:

- Nearly 62 percent of respondents are not able to drive and do not possess a driver's license.
- Approximately 65 percent of those surveyed do not have a personal vehicle available for their use.
- Approximately 48 percent of respondents find themselves not having a reliable form of transportation when needed.
- About 36 percent of respondents indicated that they have a mobility limitation that limits their ability to walk to or board a vehicle without assistance.
- Respondents were given a list of current transportation options and asked to select all of the services that they currently use. Taxis, Uber, and Lyft services are used the most frequently (48 percent), followed by RTC ACCESS paratransit services (42 percent), and RTC RIDE fixed-route services (30 percent).

- ➔ Respondents were asked to indicate the primary purpose for travel when they are unable to find a ride. Approximately 59 percent of respondents stated that they most consistently find themselves without a ride to go shopping, followed by 58 percent who need a ride to and from medical appointments.
- ➔ Respondents were asked to indicate what deters them from using transportation services such as RTC, rideshareing, and other services. Approximately 42 percent of respondents answered that services are too expensive followed by 40 percent who mentioned that they cannot walk far enough to access services, 33 percent who said they are apprehensive or fearful of using the services, and 28 percent who answered that they have personal access to transportation through family.

## POTENTIAL COORDINATION STRATEGIES

Building upon the positive coordination efforts recognized by stakeholders, specific strategies to enhance coordination and improve transportation services based identified unmet needs were developed. The following lists the advantages and challenges associated with each potential coordination strategy.

Local Coordinating Council	Microtransit	Subsidized Transportation Network Companies	Expand RTC's Washoe Senior Ride Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advantages:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forum for setting service and coordination priorities</li> <li>• Key stakeholders develop recommendations to RTC for 5310 program funding</li> <li>• Resolve coordination issues</li> <li>• Identify and overcome barriers to coordination</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Challenges:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires an organization to be responsible for forming and administering the LCC</li> <li>• Requires participation by all funding agencies and transportation providers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advantages:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller vehicles to serve lower passengers per hour</li> <li>• Lower operating cost than traditional transit</li> <li>• Effective when connecting to regional services</li> <li>• Serves everyone, not limited to elderly or individuals with disabilities</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Challenges:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not effective in very low-density areas or longer trips</li> <li>• Many examples have low productivity and high cost per passenger-trip</li> <li>• May require alternate means of scheduling trips</li> <li>• Fare payment must allow for seamless transfers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advantages:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be cost-effective depending on density and trip lengths</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Challenges:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost-effective in areas with sufficient demand</li> <li>• May require additional paratransit service</li> <li>• May require alternate means of scheduling trips</li> <li>• Potential regulatory issues in contracts with private companies including drug and alcohol testing</li> <li>• Lack of accessible vehicles</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Advantages:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expands service beyond the area served by RTC ACCESS</li> <li>• Opportunity to use lowest cost option</li> <li>• Provides flexibility for users</li> <li>• Taxis have a fleet of accessible vehicles</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Challenges:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires contracts with taxi companies and TNCs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

### Expand RTC SMART TRIPS Program

- **Advantages:**
  - Provides additional opportunities for people with disabilities
  - Provides access to employment
  - May be a lower cost option for commuters with a disability
- **Challenges:**
  - Limited to commute trips
  - May require new accessible vehicles
  - Depends on multiple people with similar commutes

### Volunteer Drivers

- **Advantages:**
  - Low cost option for difficult to serve trips
  - Flexibility in scheduling rides
- **Challenges:**
  - Relies on having sufficient number of volunteers
  - Potential insurance issues
  - May need coordinator for scheduling rides

### Nonprofit Transportation Providers

- **Advantages:**
  - Provides options to meet range of needs
  - Opportunity to schedule rides on most cost-effective provider
- **Challenges:**
  - Possible insurance issues for shared trips
  - Functions best with a one-call center
  - Nonprofit agencies must serve passengers for multiple programs

### Vehicle Sharing

- **Advantages:**
  - Reduces total number of vehicles required
  - More efficient use of vehicles
  - May reduce costs
- **Challenges:**
  - Reduces total number of vehicles required
  - More efficient use of vehicles
  - May reduce costs

### One-Call/One-Click Center

- **Advantages:**
  - Single point of contact for users
  - Could enhance opportunities for regional connections
  - Basic capability for operating a call center exists in the region
  - RTC is currently the primary operator of paratransit services and could continue to provide the 'core' of services
  - Other providers could serve individuals with higher level of needs
  - Improved operational efficiency
  - Cost savings could be used for enhanced services
- **Challenges:**
  - Technology must be implemented for all providers
  - Requires detailed cost analysis for each provider
  - Requires mixing of passengers on vehicles

### Expand RTC ACCESS Service Area

- **Advantages:**
  - Uses existing service operated by RTC
  - RTC has existing call center capability for reservations and scheduling
- **Challenges:**
  - Would increase demand and costs for RTC ACCESS paratransit
  - Would reduce RTC ACCESS productivity and increase average cost per passenger-trip
  - Could require increased capacity with additional vehicles
  - Requires an in-person evaluation to confirm qualifications
  - Would not serve seniors without disabilities. Would only serve people eligible for RTC ACCESS service who have completed the certification process.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Chapter X of the report presents the implementation plan, which consists of three primary goals supported by the input provided by participants, including the general public, private and public entities, participating organizations, and local stakeholders.

### Goal #1: Create a Local Coordinating Council

The first priority goal is to create a Local Coordinating Council (LCC). The LCC should have representation from RTC, each human services transportation provider, other human services agencies which serve people with transportation needs, local governments, and consumers. The LCC would have two primary functions. The first would be to facilitate coordination of transportation services, which may include identifying barriers to coordination and developing approaches to overcome the barrier, identifying opportunities to improve coordination, identifying service enhancements, and implementing the



### Goal #2: Enhance Mobility and Accessible Transportation Options

Community input and the assessment of transportation needs identified ongoing issues and gaps in transportation service. These include the affordability of transportation for users, areas of Washoe County with limited transportation options, and the need for assistance for many users. Enhanced mobility options may include expansion of microtransit, extension of RTC RIDE service to new areas, and specialized transportation services. One of the roles for the LCC is to identify specific activities to enhance mobility and determine the priorities for funding enhanced services. RTC will continue to work with local



### Goal #3: Establish a One-Call/One-Click Center

The primary recommendation in this plan is to form a one-call/one-click center. The center would provide a consolidated call reservation, scheduling, and dispatch function. It would also provide a central resource for customers' information about matching trip needs with available services so the customer can identify the best option for their trip. Implementation will require development of a user portal for online access to transportation services. All transportation services should be integrated into the one-call center. be made through the web portal or by telephone call to the one-call center. Depending on needs and eligibility, the individual would be scheduled on the most appropriate service. The scheduling/dispatch software should allow all vehicles operated by all transportation providers to be available for scheduling trips. By having access to all vehicles, there is a potential for gains in productivity and opportunities to enhance services.



### Implementation Timeline and Potential Costs Summary

Table ES-1 outlines a potential implementation timeline for the goals and strategies. Of course, each step is dependent upon a number of factors including funding cycles and available local match to draw down Federal funds. Table ES-2 presents potential annual costs by year.

Table ES-1: Implementation Timeline					
Goals and Objectives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
<b>Goal #1: Establish a Local Coordinating Council</b>					
1.1: Develop LCC Membership					
1.2: Establish the LCC Structure, Mission, and Mobility Goals					
1.3: Lead Coordinated Efforts to Address Mobility Goals					
<b>Goal #2: Enhance Mobility and Accessible Transportation Options</b>					
2.1: Encourage Enhanced Transportation Services					
2.2: Provide Funding for Enhanced Transportation Services					
<b>Goal #3: Establish a One-Call/One-Click Center</b>					
3.1: Identify the Functions to be Included in the Center					
3.2: Identify a Lead Agency					
3.3: Develop a User Portal for Online Access					
3.4: Integrate Transportation Services into the Center					

Table ES-2: Potential Costs by Year					
Goals and Objectives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Goal #1: Establish a Local Coordinating Council					
	\$8,000 to \$20,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Goal #2: Encourage Mobility and Accessible Transportation Options					
Enhanced Services	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Goal #3: Establish a One-Call/One-Click Center					
Initial Start-UP		\$70,000 to \$100,000			
Staffing (Annual Costs for 2 FTEs)			\$60,000 to \$100,000	\$60,000 to \$100,000	\$60,000 to \$100,000
Expanding to Include Online Access				\$50,000 to \$200,000	\$10,000
Project Management					\$50,000 to \$100,000
<b>Total Annual Cost:</b>	<b>\$508,000 to \$520,000</b>	<b>\$575,000 to \$605,000</b>	<b>\$565,000 to \$605,000</b>	<b>\$615,000 to \$805,000</b>	<b>\$625,000 to \$715,000</b>