

ST. LUCIE LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD FOR THE TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED (LCB)

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, May 5, 2021
2:00 pm

Public Participation/Accessibility

This meeting will be publically accessible in person and by webconference subject to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidelines and the Governor's Executive Orders pertaining to the COVID-19 Pandemic in effect as of the date of the meeting.

Participation in Person: Public comments may be provided in person at the meeting. Social distancing and face mask requirements will be observed at the meeting.

Participation by Webconference: Using a computer or smartphone, register at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1090393792137164559>. After the registration is completed, a confirmation will be emailed containing instructions for joining the webconference. Public comments may be provided through the webconference chatbox during the meeting.

Written and Telephone Comments: Comment by email to TPOAdmin@stlucieco.org; by regular mail to the St. Lucie TPO, 466 SW Port St. Lucie Boulevard, Suite 111, Port St. Lucie, Florida 34953; or call 772-462-1593 until 2:00 pm on May 5, 2021.

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call/Self-Introductions
4. Comments from the Public
5. Approval of Agenda
6. Approval of Meeting Summaries
 - February 24, 2021 Regular Meeting
 - February 24, 2021 Public Hearing/Training Workshop
7. Action Items
 - 7a. **Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) Evaluation:** The annual evaluation of the performance and operations of St. Lucie County (the CTC) in the provision of demand response bus service.

***Action:** Approve the CTC Evaluation, approve with conditions, or do not approve.*

- 7b. Transit Route Optimization Study:** Presentation of the Draft Choices Report of the Transit Route Optimization Study.

Action: *Recommend acceptance of the Report, recommend acceptance with conditions, or do not recommend acceptance.*

- 7c. St. Lucie County Paratransit Plan:** Review of a plan that outlines the County's compliance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for complementary paratransit service including the eligibility process and procedures for complaints and grievances.

Action: *Approve the Paratransit Plan, approve with conditions, or do not approve.*

8. Discussion Items

- 8a. Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law:** Review of laws and regulations pertaining to Florida's Sunshine Law as it pertains to boards, committees, and their meetings.

Action: *Discuss and provide comments to Staff.*

9. Recommendations/Comments by Members

10. Staff Comments

11. Comments from the Public

- 12. Next Meeting:** The next St. Lucie LCB meeting is a regular meeting scheduled for 2:00 pm on Wednesday, August 25, 2021.

13. Adjourn

NOTICES

The St. Lucie TPO satisfies the requirements of various nondiscrimination laws and regulations including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Public participation is welcome without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, income, or family status. Persons wishing to express their concerns about nondiscrimination should contact Marceia Lathou, the Title VI/ADA Coordinator of the St. Lucie TPO, at 772-462-1593 or via email at lathoum@stlucieco.org.

Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact Marceia Lathou at 772-462-1593 at least five days prior to the meeting. Persons who are hearing or speech impaired may use the Florida Relay System by dialing 711.

Items not included on the agenda may also be heard in consideration of the best interests of the public's health, safety, welfare, and as necessary to protect every person's right of access. If any person decides to appeal any decision made by the St. Lucie TPO Advisory Committees with respect to any matter considered at a meeting, that person shall need a record of the proceedings, and for such a purpose, that person may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made which includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

Kreyol Ayisyen: Si ou ta renmen resevwa enfòmasyon sa a nan lang Kreyòl Ayisyen, tanpri rele nimewo 772-462-1593.

Español: Si usted desea recibir esta información en español, por favor llame al 772-462-1593.

**ST. LUCIE LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD FOR THE
TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED (LCB)
Public Hearing/Training Workshop**

Date: Wednesday, February 24, 2021

Time: 2:00 pm; immediately following the LCB Regular Meeting

Location: St. Lucie Public Schools Boardroom
9461 Brandywine Lane
Port St. Lucie, Florida

MEETING SUMMARY

1. Call to Order

Chairwoman Townsend called the meeting to order at 3:10 pm.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

As the Pledge had been conducted at the beginning of the preceding Regular Meeting, this agenda item was omitted.

3. Roll Call/Self-Introductions

Self-introductions had been made at the preceding Regular Meeting and were not repeated. The following members were present:

Members Present

Commissioner Cathy Townsend, Chair
Carolyn Niemczyk, Vice Chair
Deidre Butler
Ronda Cerulli
Dalia Dillon
Jim Dwyer

Representing

Elected Official, TPO-appointed
Elderly Community
Private Transportation Industry
Local Medical Community
FL Dept. of Elder Affairs
Children at Risk

Roje Gonzalez
 Malcom Harris-Gowdie (via phone)
 Jonathan Knight
 Bill Lindsey
 Stacy Malinowski
 Marty Sanders
 Shakera Smith

Local Mass Transit
 Disabled Community
 FDOT
 Citizen Advocate
 Economically Disadvantaged
 Public Education
 Vocational Rehabilitation

Others Present

Kyle Bowman
 Peter Buchwald
 Yi Ding (via phone)
 Marceia Lathou
 Rachel Harrison
 Patricia Auzenne (via phone)
 Lakeshia Brown
 Adolfo Covelli
 Murriah Dekle
 Steve Holmes (via phone)
 John Irvine (via phone)
 Tracy Jahn
 Anthony Johnson
 Maretha Lindsey
 Nelson Merchan-Cely (via phone)
 Cathi Petagno
 Anthony Rodriguez
 David Rodriguez
 Krystal Sims
 Peter Sobel
 Chris Stephenson
 Karen Tappin (via phone)

Representing

St. Lucie TPO
 St. Lucie TPO
 St. Lucie TPO
 St. Lucie TPO
 Recording Specialist
 ARA Bright Kidney Care
 MV Transportation, Inc.
 St. Lucie County
 St. Lucie County
 UZURV
 FCTD
 St. Lucie County
 MV Transportation, Inc.
 General Public
 Citizen Advocate
 St. Lucie County
 MV Transportation, Inc.
 COASL
 Stand Up for Independence
 Elderly Community
 Senior Resource Association
 General Public

4. **Opening Public Comment** – Ms. Sims requested assistance with transportation to and from her college classes. Ms. Jahn named several transportation options that would provide door-to-door service and indicated that she would help Ms. Sims get registered.

5. **Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (FCTD)/Local Coordinating Board (LCB) Overview**

Ms. Lathou began the presentation by identifying the persons who are served as part of the TD community and the types of services they receive before describing the FCTD's mission. She explained how the

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program is funded along with its organization at the local level and then transitioned to a discussion of the LCB's membership and duties. She concluded with a statement regarding the significance of the rider experience.

6. Transportation Disadvantaged (TD)/Coordinated Transportation Overview

Ms. Dekle began by acknowledging the efforts of various transportation partners during the previous year and thanking them for their support. She provided an overview of the Community Transportation Coordinator's (CTC) role in coordinating TD services within the County, identifying MV Transportation, Inc. as the primary service provider alongside several supporting providers, and explained how the CTC obtains funding. She then surveyed a number of highlights from the 2020 Annual Report, including upcoming service expansion, capital investments, and other improvements, and invited Mr. Covelli to continue. Mr. Covelli introduced Mr. Rodriguez, who briefly described his experience and qualifications before doing likewise for his colleagues Ms. Brown and Mr. Johnson. Mr. Rodriguez then provided details on the history and philosophy of MV Transportation, its various operations within Florida, and its accomplishments to date in St. Lucie County.

In response to Ms. Malinowski's question, Ms. Dekle described the location of the new bus route 8.

Chairwoman Townsend updated the members on the previously discussed bus service to the St. Lucie County Jail on Rock Road, indicating that the transit program had begun doing one pickup per day. She reminded the members of the option to donate money to the TD program during annual vehicle registration renewals and noted that St. Lucie County was the only Florida county to have imposed a tax solely for transit services.

Vice Chairwoman Niemczyk inquired about the previously referenced services for the developmentally disabled, and Ms. Dekle clarified that they were offered by UZURV as part of the Advantage Ride Program. Chairwoman Townsend then described the location of their local offices.

7. Closing Public Comment – Mr. Buchwald indicated that he was looking forward to working with the new members and noted the LCB's

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significant capacity to help the residents of St. Lucie County. He also commented on the importance of the Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU) in supporting the existing transit network.

Chairwoman Townsend remarked that the automated Tradition in Motion (TIM) trolley had recently begun operation and suggested the members ride it. Mr. Buchwald indicated that the trolley was currently funded privately and then expounded upon plans for the future Automated, Connected, Shared-Use, and Electric (ACES) network in St. Lucie County.

Chairwoman Townsend provided the members with her contact information.

8. Adjourn – The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Approved by:

Rachel Harrison
Recording Specialist

Commissioner Cathy Townsend
Chairwoman

ST. LUCIE LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD FOR THE TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED (LCB)

REGULAR MEETING

Date: Wednesday, February 24, 2021

Time: 2:00 pm

Location: St. Lucie Public Schools Boardroom
9461 Brandywine Lane
Port St. Lucie, Florida

MEETING SUMMARY

1. **Call to Order**

Chairwoman Townsend called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairwoman Townsend led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Roll Call**

Self-introductions were made, and an in-person quorum was noted.

* **MOTION** by Ms. Malinowski to approve select members' remote participation.

** **SECONDED** by Mr. Dwyer Carried **UNANIMOUSLY**

The following members were present:

Members Present

Commissioner Cathy Townsend, Chair
Deidre Butler

Representing

Elected Official, TPO-appointed
Private Transportation Industry

Ronda Cerulli
 Dalia Dillon
 Jim Dwyer
 Roje Gonzalez
 Malcom Harris-Gowdie (via phone)
 Jonathan Knight
 Bill Lindsey
 Stacy Malinowski
 Carolyn Niemczyk
 Marty Sanders
 Anna Santacroce
 Shakera Smith

Local Medical Community
 FL Dept. of Elder Affairs
 Children at Risk
 Local Mass Transit
 Disabled Community
 FDOT
 Citizen Advocate
 Economically Disadvantaged
 Elderly Community
 Public Education
 Citizen Advocate/User
 Vocational Rehabilitation

Others Present

Kyle Bowman
 Peter Buchwald
 Yi Ding (via phone)
 Marceia Lathou
 Rachel Harrison
 Patricia Auzenne (via phone)
 Lakeshia Brown
 Adolfo Covelli
 Murriah Dekle
 Steve Holmes (via phone)
 John Irvine (via phone)
 Tracy Jahn
 Anthony Johnson
 Maretha Lindsey
 Nelson Merchan-Cely (via phone)
 Cathi Petagno
 Anthony Rodriguez
 David Rodriguez
 Krystal Sims
 Peter Sobel
 Chris Stephenson
 Karen Tappin (via phone)

Representing

St. Lucie TPO
 St. Lucie TPO
 St. Lucie TPO
 St. Lucie TPO
 Recording Specialist
 ARA Bright Kidney Care
 MV Transportation, Inc.
 St. Lucie County
 St. Lucie County
 UZURV
 FCTD
 St. Lucie County
 MV Transportation, Inc.
 General Public
 Citizen Advocate
 St. Lucie County
 MV Transportation, Inc.
 COASL
 Stand Up for Independence
 Elderly Community
 Senior Resource Association
 General Public

Ms. Lathou explained a variety of housekeeping items related to the remote method of participation.

4. Comments from the Public – None.

5. Approval of Agenda

* **MOTION** by Ms. Niemczyk to approve the agenda.

** **SECONDED** by Ms. Dillon Carried **UNANIMOUSLY**

6. Approval of Meeting Summary

- August 26, 2020 Virtual LCB Meeting
- November 4, 2020 Regular LCB Meeting

* **MOTION** by Ms. Niemczyk to approve the meeting summaries.

** **SECONDED** by Ms. Dillon Carried **UNANIMOUSLY**

7. Consent Agenda Items

7a. 2021 Meeting Schedule: The dates and times of LCB meetings for 2021.

7b. 2020 Annual Operating Report (AOR): The results of the 2020 Annual Operating Report (AOR), which summarizes trip-related statistics for the coordinated system.

7c. By-Laws Update: The annual update of the By-Laws, which provide a framework for the operation of the LCB.

* **MOTION** by Ms. Cerulli to approve the Consent Agenda.

** **SECONDED** by Ms. Niemczyk Carried **UNANIMOUSLY**

8. Discussion Items

8a. Election of Vice Chairperson: Election of the vice chairperson for 2021.

Chairwoman Townsend invited the LCB secretary to conduct the elections.

* **MOTION** to nominate Carolyn Niemczyk to serve as Vice Chairwoman for the LCB for 2021.

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**** SECONDED** by Ms. Malinowski

There were no other nominations and the nominations were closed.

**** MOTION** to elect Carolyn Niemczyk to serve as Vice Chairwoman for the LCB for 2021. Carried **UNANIMOUSLY**

8b. Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP) Update:

The annual update of the TDSP, which includes a development plan, a service plan, and quality assurance components.

Ms. Lathou summarized several of the LCB's duties, identifying one of them as the approval of the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP). She noted several changes that had been made to the draft under consideration, which included updated statistics for St. Lucie County's TD population, and invited the County's Transit staff to continue the presentation. Mr. Covelli then enumerated the other significant changes that had been made in the course of the present year's update.

In response to Vice Chairwoman Niemczyk's question, Ms. Petagno clarified the changes made to the Transit holiday schedule and service eligibility requirements, directing her to specific segments of the TDSP's appendices for more details. Chairwoman Townsend further explained that a number of changes had been made to the TDSP in connection with the new service provider.

In answer to Ms. Santacrose's question, Ms. Petagno clarified the difference between Advantage Ride and paratransit and explained how a rider could obtain a medical qualification. Upon the request of several members, Ms. Petagno shared the new customer service phone number and elaborated upon the various transportation services offered by St. Lucie County Transit.

*** MOTION** by Vice Chairwoman Niemczyk to approve the TDSP Update.

**** SECONDED** by Ms. Dillon

A roll-call vote was conducted, with all members approving the TDSP Update.

8c. St. Lucie County Transit Title VI Plan: Review of the St. Lucie County Transit Division's guidance document to ensure

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nondiscrimination in the public transportation decision-making process.

Ms. Jahn explained the Title VI program as a requirement for receiving federal funds. She noted that the present Plan had been created with input from FDOT, the County's attorney, and the TPO before describing several of the Plan's components.

* **MOTION** by Ms. Cerulli to approve the Title VI Plan.

* * **SECONDED** by Vice Chairwoman Niemczyk

A roll-call vote was conducted, with all members approving the Title VI Plan.

8d. Advantage Ride Funding Support Letter: Request for LCB approval of a support letter for continued funding of the Advantage Ride program.

Ms. Dekle expressed her appreciation for the earlier request to describe the County's transit services before introducing her colleagues Mr. Holmes and Mr. Stephenson. She provided an overview of the Advantage Ride program along with the Transit Division's goals for its future funding and then invited Mr. Stephenson to continue. Mr. Stephenson noted his affiliation with the Senior Resource Association and explained how the organization had partnered with the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council to pioneer the Advantage Ride pilot program. He detailed the program's geographic range and funding sources, identified its target ridership, and concluded with an explanation of the application process.

In response to Vice Chairwoman Niemczyk's questions, Ms. Dekle reported on Advantage Ride's current ridership numbers, the amount of the initial grant funding, the destinations and types of trips available to riders, and the various methods that had been used to advertise the program to date. Vice Chairwoman Niemczyk further inquired about the trip needs of riders, and Mr. Stephenson indicated that approximately 1,500 rides had been provided since November 2020.

Ms. Santacroce initiated a discussion about potentially contacting case managers at New Horizons of the Treasure Coast and Okeechobee to provide assistance with the application process, a suggestion for which Chairwoman Townsend expressed support. Ms. Jahn then elaborated upon the definition of a developmental disability.

* **MOTION** by Vice Chairwoman Niemczyk to approve the support letter.

* * **SECONDED** by Ms. Malinowski

A roll-call vote was conducted, with all members approving the support letter.

9. **Discussion Items**

9a. By-Laws Update: A proposed amendment to the By-Laws to reduce the quorum requirement in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Ms. Lathou explained that the By-Laws provide a foundation for the operation of the LCB and are updated as needed. She noted the current requirement of nine members to constitute a quorum, a number equal to a majority of the overall membership, and indicated that other LCBs within the state had quorum thresholds set below a majority.

Discussion ensued regarding whether to reduce or maintain the quorum threshold, with most of the members supporting the latter. Vice Chairwoman Niemczyk expressed support for reducing the quorum or perhaps allowing more members to participate remotely in light of hardships caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, but Mr. Buchwald explained that state laws require an in-person quorum. He also noted the potential issue of having a minority speak for the majority if the quorum number were significantly reduced. Mr. Buchwald then recognized Ms. Lathou and Mr. Bowman for their efforts to assist the Board in achieving quorums thus far. Commissioner Townsend likewise praised the efforts of Ms. Lathou in her role as staff to the LCB.

9b. Transit Route Optimization Study: Progress to date on a study to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the fixed-route bus system.

Ms. Lathou explained the goals of the Study along with the rationale for undertaking it at the present time, identifying the discernment of the public's values as an important first step in improving the transit system. She described the two common transit goals of ridership and coverage as being in conflict and concluded with directions on how to take the Study's survey.

In answer to Vice Chairwoman Niemczyk's question, Ms. Lathou explained that Mr. Knight and his team would be administering the

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surveys at bus terminals and public libraries, among other places. Vice Chairwoman Niemczyk inquired about the possibility of administering them at senior centers, and Ms. Malinowski indicated that Mustard Seed Ministries would deploy them, offering also to reach out to the Salvation Army.

9c. Treasure Coast Connector Rebranding: Information on system rebranding and details for public input opportunities.

Ms. Petagno explained that the County's Transit Division had recently begun a rebranding project for the entire transit system to better distinguish the transit services available to the public. She presented the eight names being considered for the new brand and explained that derivative names for the various transportation services would be chosen once the overall system name had been selected, along with colors and logos. She concluded with a request for members to vote for their preferred name and directions on how to do so.

In response to Vice Chairwoman Niemczyk's inquiry, Ms. Petagno listed the various media outlets being used to market the naming initiative.

- 10. FDOT Comments** – Mr. Knight indicated that he was excited to share the members' recommendations with his team.
- 11. Recommendations/Comments by Members** – None.
- 12. Staff Comments** – Mr. Buchwald thanked the St. Lucie Public Schools staff and Board for the use of the meeting facility.
- 13. Comments from the Public** – In reference to agenda item 9c, Mr. Sobel recommended that a clearly descriptive name like "St. Lucie Metro" be chosen as the new brand rather than a more inventive one, citing the need for recognizability.
- 14. Next Meeting:** The next LCB meeting is a regular meeting scheduled for 2:00 pm on Wednesday, May 5, 2021.
- 15. Adjourn** – The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Approved by:

Rachel Harrison
Recording Specialist

Commissioner Cathy Townsend
Chairwoman

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AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

Board/Committee:	St. Lucie LCB
Meeting Date:	May 5, 2021
Item Number:	7a
Item Title:	Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) Evaluation
Item Origination:	Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged
UPWP Reference:	Task 3.8–Transportation Disadvantaged Program
Requested Action:	Approve the CTC Evaluation, approve with conditions, or do not approve.
Staff Recommendation:	<p>Approve the CTC Evaluation based on the CTC meeting or exceeding all FCTD standards during the reporting period.</p> <p>Set an annual percentage goal increase of one percent for the number of trips provided on the fixed-route system, dependent upon COVID-19 Pandemic economic recovery efforts beyond the control of the transit agency.</p>

Attachments

- TPO Staff Report
- CTC Evaluation

MEMORANDUM

TO: St. Lucie Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged (LCB)

THROUGH: Peter Buchwald
Executive Director

FROM: Marceia Lathou
Transit Program Manager

DATE: April 21, 2021

SUBJECT: **Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC)**
Evaluation

BACKGROUND

The LCB is required to conduct an annual evaluation of the operations and performance of the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC). The Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (FCTD) provides a workbook for this purpose.

The role of the CTC is to ensure that safe, quality, coordinated transportation is provided or arranged in a cost-effective manner to serve transportation disadvantaged persons. The St. Lucie Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) is the CTC for St. Lucie County.

The CTC evaluation consists of two parts: a qualitative analysis and a quantitative analysis. A demand response ride and a telephone survey of riders comprise the qualitative analysis. A quantitative analysis covering FCTD and local standards also was conducted. The results of the above analyses are documented in the attached CTC Evaluation.

As part of the CTC Evaluation, the LCB is required to establish an annual percentage goal increase for the number of trips provided within the public transit system. The LCB has a current goal of ten percent for the fixed route system.

ANALYSIS

The results of the rider survey indicate a high level of customer satisfaction with the demand response system. When asked "Rate the Transportation You Have Been Receiving," on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest, 19 percent of riders rated the service a "10" with the lowest rating being a "7". Approximately 44 percent of riders rated the service a "9". During the prior year survey 60 percent of riders rated the service a "10" with the lowest rating being a "5". For the current survey 19 percent of riders noted encountering a problem with a recent trip. During the prior year survey, 20 percent of riders reported encountering a problem with a trip. The current survey indicates a consistent level of customer satisfaction comparable to the prior year survey.

TPO staff conducted the On-Site Observation of the System on April 8, 2021. The result of the On-Site Observation indicates that the service is operated in a safe and efficient manner. The CTC is to be commended for ordering new buses that enhance the rider experience.

Based on the results of the CTC Evaluation as documented in the attached surveys and worksheets, the CTC met or exceeded all applicable FCTD standards during the review period.

Public Transportation Ridership Goal

The number of trips on the Treasure Coast Connector fixed-route system were analyzed. By the end of FY 18/19, a total of 661,097 trips were taken. By the end of FY 19/20, a total of 656,467 trips were taken. The result was an approximate one percent decrease. Of note is that the ridership decrease was due largely to the COVID-19 Pandemic. During the prior year CTC review period, fixed route ridership increased approximately 46 percent.

RECOMMENDATION

The LCB will continue to work with the CTC on strategies to enhance the rider experience and address rider concerns. Based on the results of the CTC evaluation, the following recommendations are provided for action by the LCB:

- Approve the CTC Evaluation based on the CTC meeting or exceeding all FCTD standards during the reporting period.
- Set an annual percentage goal increase of one percent for the number of trips provided on the fixed-route system, dependent upon COVID-19 Pandemic economic recovery efforts beyond the control of the transit agency.

CTC

EVALUATION WORKBOOK

Florida Commission for the



Transportation Disadvantaged

CTC BEING REVIEWED: _____

COUNTY (IES): _____

ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT: _____ **PHONE:** _____

REVIEW PERIOD: _____ **REVIEW DATES:** _____

PERSON CONDUCTING THE REVIEW: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION: _____

COMPLIANCE WITH CHAPTER 427, F.S.

Review the CTC monitoring of its transportation operator contracts to ensure compliance with 427.0155(3), F.S.

“Review all transportation operator contracts annually.”

WHAT TYPE OF MONITORING DOES THE CTC PERFORM ON ITS OPERATOR(S) AND HOW OFTEN IS IT CONDUCTED?

Is a written report issued to the operator? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If **NO**, how are the contractors notified of the results of the monitoring?

WHAT TYPE OF MONITORING DOES THE CTC PERFORM ON ITS COORDINATION CONTRACTORS AND HOW OFTEN IS IT CONDUCTED?

Is a written report issued? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If **NO**, how are the contractors notified of the results of the monitoring?

WHAT ACTION IS TAKEN IF A CONTRACTOR RECEIVES AN UNFAVORABLE REPORT?

IS THE CTC IN COMPLIANCE WITH THIS SECTION? ☐ Yes ☐ No

ASK TO SEE DOCUMENTATION OF MONITORING REPORTS.

COMPLIANCE WITH CHAPTER 427, F.S.

Review the TDSP to determine the utilization of school buses and public transportation services [Chapter 427.0155(4)]

“Approve and coordinate the utilization of school bus and public transportation services in accordance with the TDSP.”

HOW IS THE CTC USING SCHOOL BUSES IN THE COORDINATED SYSTEM?

Rule 41-2.012(5)(b): *"As part of the Coordinator's performance, the local Coordinating Board shall also set an annual percentage goal increase for the number of trips provided within the system for ridership on public transit, where applicable. In areas where the public transit is not being utilized, the local Coordinating Board shall set an annual percentage of the number of trips to be provided on public transit."*

HOW IS THE CTC USING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN THE COORDINATED SYSTEM?

☐ N/A

IS THERE A GOAL FOR TRANSFERRING PASSENGERS FROM PARATRANSIT TO TRANSIT?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If YES, what is the goal?

Is the CTC accomplishing the goal? ☐ Yes ☐ No

IS THE CTC IN COMPLIANCE WITH THIS REQUIREMENT? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

COMPLIANCE WITH 41-2, F.A.C.

Compliance with 41-2.011(2), Evaluating Cost-Effectiveness of Coordination Contractors and Transportation Alternatives.

“...contracts shall be reviewed annually by the Community Transportation Coordinator and the Coordinating Board as to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Transportation Operator or the renewal of any Coordination Contracts.”

1. IF THE CTC HAS COORDINATION CONTRACTORS, DETERMINE THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE CONTRACTORS.

Cost [CTC and Coordination Contractor (CC)]

	CTC	CC #1	CC #2	CC #3	CC #4
Flat contract rate (s) (\$ amount / unit)					
Detail other rates as needed: (e.g. ambulatory, wheelchair, stretcher, out-of-county, group)					
Special or unique considerations that influence costs?					
Explanation:					

2. DO YOU HAVE TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES? ☐ Yes ☐ No
 (Those specific transportation services approved by rule or the Commission as a service not normally arranged by the Community Transportation Coordinator, but provided by the purchasing agency. Example: a neighbor providing the trip)

Cost [CTC and Transportation Alternative (Alt.)]

	CTC	Alt. #1	Alt. #2	Alt. #3	Alt. #4
Flat contract rate (s) (\$ amount / unit)					
Detail other rates as needed: (e.g. ambulatory, wheelchair, stretcher, out-of-county, group)					
Special or unique considerations that influence costs?					
Explanation:					

IS THE CTC IN COMPLIANCE WITH THIS SECTION? ☐ Yes ☐ No

<i>Measurable Standards/Goals</i>	<i>Standard/Goal</i>	<i>Latest Figures</i>	<i>Is the CTC/Operator meeting the Standard?</i>
Public Transit Ridership Fixed Route: 10% annually	CTC	CTC	
	Operator A	Operator A	
	Operator B	Operator B	
	Operator C	Operator C	
On-time performance 90%	CTC	CTC	
	Operator A	Operator A	
	Operator B	Operator B	
	Operator C	Operator C	
Passenger No-shows 2 no-shows per 30-day period per passenger	CTC	CTC	
	Operator A	Operator A	
	Operator B	Operator B	
	Operator C	Operator C	
Accidents 1.5/100,000 miles Total = 0	CTC	CTC	
	Operator A	Operator A	
	Operator B	Operator B	
	Operator C	Operator C	
Road calls Miles between roadcalls - 17,590	CTC	CTC	
	Operator A	Operator A	
	Operator B	Operator B	
	Operator C	Operator C	
Complaints-1 per 1,000 trips	CTC	CTC	
	Operator A	Operator A	
	Operator B	Operator B	
	Operator C	Operator C	
Call-Hold Time: Call picked up by 3rd ring.	CTC	CTC	
	Operator A	Operator A	
	Operator B	Operator B	
	Operator C	Operator C	

ON-SITE OBSERVATION OF THE SYSTEM

RIDE A VEHICLE WITHIN THE COORDINATED SYSTEM. REQUEST A COPY OF THE MANIFEST PAGE THAT CONTAINS THIS TRIP.

Date of Observation:

Please list any special guests that were present:

Location:

Number of Passengers picked up/dropped off:

Ambulatory

Non-Ambulatory

Was the driver on time? ☐ Yes ☐ No - How many minutes late/early?

Did the driver provide any passenger assistance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Was the driver wearing any identification? ☐ Yes: ☐ Uniform ☐ Name Tag
☐ ID Badge ☐ No

Did the driver render an appropriate greeting?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Driver regularly transports the rider, not necessary

If CTC has a policy on seat belts, did the driver ensure the passengers were properly belted?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Was the vehicle neat and clean, and free from dirt, torn upholstery, damaged or broken seats, protruding metal or other objects?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is there a sign posted on the interior of the vehicle with both a local phone number and the TD Helpline for comments/complaints/commendations?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the vehicle have working heat and air conditioning?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the vehicle have two-way communications in good working order?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If used, was the lift in good working order?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Was there safe and appropriate seating for all passengers?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did the driver properly use the lift and secure the passenger?

☐ Yes ☐ No

CTC: _____ County: _____

Date of Ride: _____

Funding Source	No. of Trips	No. of Riders/Beneficiaries	No. of Calls to Make	No. of Calls Made
CTD				
Medicaid				
Other				
Other				
Other)				
Other				
Totals				

Number of Round Trips	Number of Riders/Beneficiaries to Survey
0 – 200	30%
201 – 1200	10%
1201 +	5%

Note: Attach the manifest

Responses to CTC Evaluation Phone Surveys – April 15-16, 2021

Total phone numbers attempted: 62

Total completed surveys: 16

Questions:

1. Did you receive transportation service on April 8, 2021?
2. Were you charged an amount in addition to the co-payment?
3. How often do you normally obtain transportation?
4. Have you ever been denied transportation services?
5. What do you normally use the service for?
6. Did you have a problem with your trip on April 8, 2021?
7. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being most satisfied) rate the transportation you have been receiving.
8. What does transportation mean to you?
9. Additional Comments

Responses:

Survey 1

1. Yes
2. No
3. Other
4. No
5. Medical, Life-Sustaining/Other
6. No
7. 9
8. It means everything; I'm handicapped.
9. It's great to get reminders about upcoming trips; it's very helpful.

Survey 2

1. Yes
2. No
3. 3-5 Times/Week
4. No
5. Medical (Alzheimer's Day Center)
6. No
7. 10
8. Transportation is super important for respondent's mental well-being.
9. Drivers are excellent. Everyone is very competent and empathetic.

Survey 3

1. Yes
2. No

3. 3-5 Times/Week
4. No
5. Medical (Alzheimer's Day Center)
6. No
7. 9
8. It's the respondent's independence.
9. There's a little inconsistency in timing, but the drivers are great.

Survey 4

1. Yes
2. No
3. 3-5 Times/Week
4. No
5. Medical (Alzheimer's Day Center)
6. No
7. 8
8. It means independence and help for the family.
9. Driver is really nice but timing is inconsistent.

Survey 5

1. Yes
2. No
3. 1-2 Times/Week
4. No
5. Medical, Life-Sustaining/Other
6. No
7. 9
8. It means independence and mobility.
9. n/a

Survey 6

1. Yes
2. No
3. 1-2 Times/Week
4. Yes: 1-2 Times; Space not available.
5. Medical
6. Yes: Late pick-up.
7. 7
8. I'm grateful for the transportation; it's much cheaper than a cab.
9. The timing is an issue; I'm either very early or late to appointments. Some drivers don't seem to know the area very well and have to use GPS.

Survey 7

1. Yes

2. No
3. 3-5 Times/Week
4. Yes: 1-2 Times; Space not available
5. Medical, Life-Sustaining/Other
6. Yes: Late return pick-up; length of wait = hour. (Large bus only carrying one person at a time.)
7. 7
8. It's the respondent's only mode of transportation; appreciate it.
9. Riders have to call at least 5 days ahead for a ride, which respondent didn't know, but they have fit respondent in before last-minute. They need to work out some bugs with communication.

Survey 8

1. Yes
2. No
3. Other
4. No
5. Medical
6. Yes: Late return pick-up; length of wait = 2+ hours. (Driver waited outside doctor's office rather than knocking on door.)
7. 8
8. n/a
9. No one told respondent to be ready at a certain time.

Survey 9

1. Yes
2. No
3. 3-5 Times/Week
4. No
5. Medical, Life-Sustaining/Other
6. No
7. 8
8. No other form of transportation.
9. n/a

Survey 10

1. Yes
2. No
3. 3-5 Times/Week
4. No
5. Medical
6. No
7. 8
8. It's the respondent's life; only transportation to dialysis.
9. Sometimes they'll overschedule and not be on time.

Survey 11

1. Yes
2. No
3. 3-5 Times/Week
4. No
5. Medical
6. No
7. 9
8. It means being able to get where I need to go.
9. Most of the drivers are very friendly, cooperative, and courteous. It's good that they call people when the bus is late.

Survey 12

1. Yes
2. No
3. 3-5 Times/Week
4. No
5. Medical
6. No
7. 9
8. The respondent doesn't drive, so it's the only way to get to the doctor.
9. All the drivers are very nice

Survey 13

1. Yes
2. No
3. 1-2 Times/Week
4. Yes: 3-5 Times; Space not available.
5. Medical
6. No
7. 10
8. n/a
9. n/a

Survey 14

1. Yes
2. No
3. 1-2 Times/Week
4. No
5. Medical, Life-Sustaining/Other
6. No
7. 10
8. It's the respondent's only way to get around; can't do without them.

9. Nice; good service.

Survey 15

1. Yes
2. No
3. 1-2 Times/Week
4. Yes: 6-10 Times; Space not available.
5. Medical
6. No
7. 9
8. It means getting to the doctor. The respondent has no other way to get around.
9. Drivers are all wonderful. One even missed dinner for me. One time a supervisor in a small minivan came to get me.

Survey 16

1. Yes
2. No
3. 3-5 Times/Week
4. No
5. Medical
6. No
7. 9
8. n/a
9. They're not on time all the time and I'm not always able to get home right away.

County: Saint Lucie
 CTC: St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners
 Contact: Murriah S. Dekle
 437 North 7th Street
 Fort Pierce, FL 34950
 772-462-3065
 Email: deklem@st.lucieco.org

Demographics	Number
Total County Population	312,947
Unduplicated Head Count	11,313



Trips By Type of Service	2018	2019	2020
Fixed Route (FR)	32,597	0	0
Deviated FR	0	0	0
Complementary ADA	0	0	0
Paratransit	206,574	175,752	134,349
TNC	0	0	0
Taxi	0	710	3,301
School Board (School Bus)	0	0	0
Volunteers	0	0	0
TOTAL TRIPS	239,171	176,462	137,650

Passenger Trips By Trip Purpose

Medical	41,504	47,469	39,584
Employment	49,340	10,860	8,370
Ed/Train/DayCare	63,765	47,522	27,932
Nutritional	7,728	7,655	6,232
Life-Sustaining/Other	76,834	62,956	55,532
TOTAL TRIPS	239,171	176,462	137,650

Passenger Trips By Revenue Source

CTD	44,771	40,494	33,660
AHCA	0	253	34,913
APD	53,823	52,412	697
DOEA	3,950	3,950	2,950
DOE	0	269	0
Other	136,627	79,084	65,430
TOTAL TRIPS	239,171	176,462	137,650

Trips by Provider Type

CTC	0	0	0
Transportation Operator	163,614	108,363	87,817
Coordination Contractor	75,557	68,099	49,833
TOTAL TRIPS	239,171	176,462	137,650

Vehicle Data	2018	2019	2020
Vehicle Miles	1,394,882	1,144,824	721,210
Roadcalls	26	60	41
Accidents	1	1	0
Vehicles	195	109	184
Drivers	138	145	110

Financial and General Data

Expenses	\$ 5,164,915	\$ 3,790,772	\$ 3,899,934
Revenues	\$ 5,106,513	\$ 3,790,772	\$ 3,899,929
Commendations	15	10	16
Complaints	9	11	1
Passenger No-Shows	2,424	3,015	3,304
Unmet Trip Requests	16,642	9,319	5,081

Performance Measures

Accidents per 100,000 Miles	0.07	0.09	0.00
Miles between Roadcalls	53,649	19,080	17,590
Avg. Trips per Passenger	20.36	37.82	12.17
Cost per Trip	\$21.60	\$21.48	\$28.33
Cost per Paratransit Trip	\$25.00	\$21.46	\$28.68
Cost per Total Mile	\$3.70	\$3.31	\$5.41
Cost per Paratransit Mile	\$3.70	\$3.31	\$5.45

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

Board/Committee:	St. Lucie LCB
Meeting Date:	May 5, 2021
Item Number:	7b
Item Title:	Transit Route Optimization Study Draft Choices Report
Item Origination:	Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
UPWP Reference:	Task 3.2 – Transit Planning
Requested Action:	Recommend acceptance of the Transit Route Optimization Study Draft Choices Report, recommend acceptance with conditions, or do not recommend acceptance.
Staff Recommendation:	Because the Transit Route Optimization Study Draft Choices Report evaluates the existing bus service, the public's preferences for future bus service improvements, and other relevant factors it is recommended that the Study's Draft Choices Report be recommended for acceptance by the TPO Board.

Attachments

- TPO Staff Report
- Transit Route Optimization Study Draft Choices Report

MEMORANDUM

TO: St. Lucie Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged (LCB)

THROUGH: Peter Buchwald
Executive Director

FROM: Marceia Lathou
Transit Program Manager

DATE: April 21, 2021

SUBJECT: Transit Route Optimization Study Draft Choices Report

BACKGROUND

One of the planning/policy recommendations identified in *Bus Plus*, the *St. Lucie County Transit Development Plan 2020-2029*, is the completion of a Comprehensive Operations Analysis. To implement this recommendation, Task 3.2 of the *FY 2020/21 – FY 2021/22 Unified Planning Work Program* (UPWP) includes a Transit Route Optimization Study to be completed with consultant assistance. The purpose of the Study is to analyze the potential to improve customer service and grow ridership on existing bus routes and new routes as identified in the Transit Development Plan.

ANALYSIS

The Transit Route Optimization Study will evaluate existing bus services provided by St. Lucie County's transit system and identify financially sustainable opportunities to optimize service, improve service quality, and meet the demands of the County's growing population.

The Transit Route Optimization Study is being completed in two phases. Phase I is being funded and managed by the TPO. This phase analyzes the bus network and has resulted in the attached Draft Choices Report of existing conditions and key insights. Phase I highlights the difficult value judgments that must be made in order to redesign a bus route network. When finalized,

the Choices Report will assist stakeholders in developing a shared understanding of opportunities and challenges, which will make it easier to collaborate on solutions.

Phase II of the Transit Route Optimization Study will be funded and managed by St. Lucie County. During Phase II, a design workshop and other public involvement tools will be used to develop two network alternatives. The purpose of the alternatives is to present and analyze two contrasting visions of the bus network that illustrate the difficult trade-offs that decision-makers face. Both network alternatives would be operable and fit within available resources.

Both phases of the Transit Route Optimization Study are being conducted by Marlin Engineering with Jarrett Walker + Associates as sub-consultant. TPO, St. Lucie County, and South Florida Commuter Services staff developed a survey for Phase I.

The primary purpose of the survey was to determine preferences for a bus system with more routes or a system with faster service. Approximately two-thirds of all of the respondents indicated that more bus routes were more important. Following is a summary of public participation efforts:

- In-person surveys conducted at three branch libraries
- Email blast announcing the survey to the TPO's email subscriber list
- In-person surveys conducted at bus terminals
- Online surveys available at websites and social media
- A presentation to the CareerSource Research Coast Board of Directors

Approximately 260 online surveys were collected. Following is a summary of selected results:

- Non bus riders 47%
- Which is most important to you?
 - More bus routes 75%
 - Faster bus service 25%
- Age 65+ 26%

Approximately 65 surveys at libraries were collected. Following is a summary of selected results:

- Non bus riders 80%
- Which is most important to you?
 - More bus routes 49%
 - Faster bus service 51%
- Age 65+ 40%

Approximately 75 surveys at bus terminals were collected. Following is a summary of selected results:

- Non bus riders 0%
- Which is most important to you?
 - More bus routes 56%
 - Faster bus service 44%
- Age 65+ 13%

Taking the above preferences into consideration and other factors, key findings of the Draft Choices Report are:

- St. Lucie County's current bus network spends about 40% of its resources on ridership and about 60% on coverage.
- When a transit agency can concentrate its service into fewer lines, that means longer walks for some people, but it also means higher frequency and therefore more ridership potential.
- Demand-Response service is a coverage solution that can be provided to places that get very little ridership.
- If St. Lucie County would like to pursue higher ridership, it can consider investing in expanded weekend service.
- In the long term, investments in more early-morning and night service, and expanded weekend service, would also be part of a higher-ridership strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

Because the Transit Route Optimization Study Draft Choices Report evaluates the existing bus service, the public's preferences for future bus service improvements, and other relevant factors it is recommended that the Study's Draft Choices Report be recommended for acceptance by the TPO Board.

TRANSIT ROUTE OPTIMIZATION STUDY ST. LUCIE COUNTY

Choices Report

March 2021



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1. Study Overview

What is the Transit Route Optimization Study?

One of the planning and policy recommendations identified in "Bus Plus", the St. Lucie County Transit Development Plan 2020-2029, is the completion of a Comprehensive Operations Analysis which led to the Transit Route Optimization Study.

This study will culminate in transit network alternatives for St Lucie County. The process of creating those alternatives involves both technical analysis and clear thinking about the County's values and goals for transit.

This report is the first step to update the St. Lucie County bus network. This document assesses the existing conditions and lays out key choices that arise for transit in St. Lucie County.

Do buses need to be full for transit to be "successful"? That depends on transit's purpose in the community.



What contributes to high transit ridership?

When we say ridership, we refer to the number of people getting on the bus. Most transit agencies consider high ridership an important goal. **IF** St. Lucie County wished to pursue high ridership, they would make decisions about what type of service to offer, when, and where.

Many factors outside of St. Lucie County's control can affect ridership, such as gas prices and the economy. Land-use and street design decisions made in the County also have an impact on ridership.

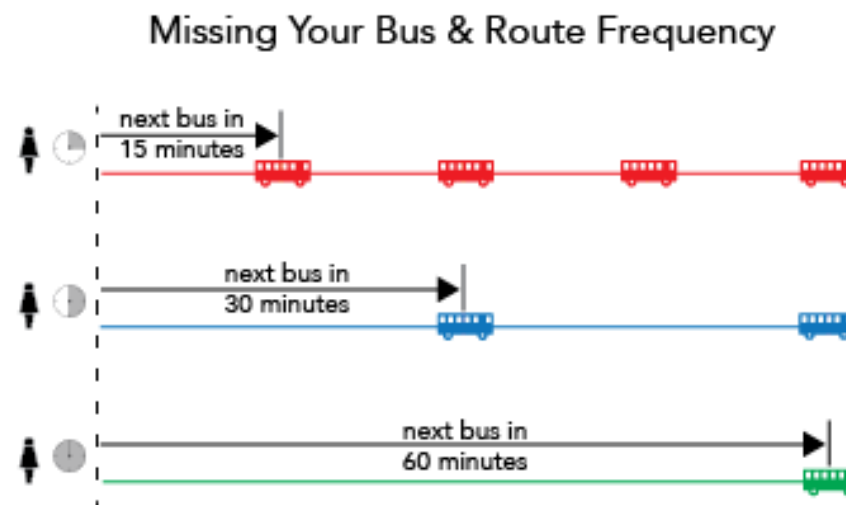
High transit ridership tends to arise on frequent, all-day and all-week service, in the places where street design and land use are conducive to transit.

Frequency

Frequent service means the bus is always coming soon, so people don't have to wait a long time. Better frequency is associated with high ridership. A bus that is coming every 30 minutes will be more useful to more people than a bus that is coming every 60 minutes, so more people will ride.

This is especially true when people are traveling short distances. Poor frequencies mean long waits, and waiting time can be much longer than riding time! An hourly bus route requires a rider to plan their life around the bus schedule.

Frequency and waiting time don't just happen at the beginning of a trip, they also happen at the end. If you have to be at a medical appointment at a certain time, a 60 minute frequency may force you to choose between being 40 minutes early or 20 minutes late. In addition, missing an infrequent bus can mean an extremely long wait, as shown in the graphic below.



With infrequent routes, missing a bus means an extremely long wait for the next one.

Indicators of high ridership potential

When looking at the geography, development and population of a County, a few factors have a big impact on ridership potential. They are Density, Walkability, Linearity, and Proximity.

Density

A place with many residents, employees, shoppers, students, and customers has high density.

The graphic on the right shows two identical bus routes. The route on the top is traveling in an area that has twice as many houses as the route on the bottom. All else being equal, places in St. Lucie County that have higher density are likely to get higher transit ridership than places that are less dense, regardless of who lives there.

How many people, jobs, and activities are near each potential transit stop?



+ Many people and jobs are within walking distance of transit.



- Fewer people and jobs are within walking distance of transit.

Indicators of high ridership potential

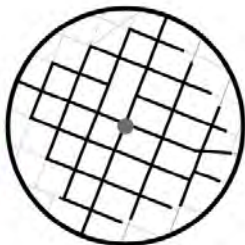
Walkability

To use transit, people need to be able to walk to the bus stop. The street design around a bus stop determines if people can reach the bus stop by walking.

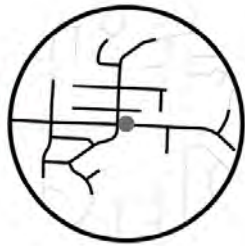
The graphic on the right shows two bus stops with a 1/4 mile circle around each. The gray lines are streets and the shaded lines are streets within 1/4 mile of the bus stop. The street network in the top example is a simple grid that allows many people to walk easily to the bus stop. The bottom example shows a disconnected street network where fewer places are within a 1/4 mile walk of the bus stop. Even though many people may live near this bus stop, some people have to walk a long distance to get there.

It is also important that people are able to cross the street to reach the bus stop. If a road is too dangerous to cross, people won't be able to ride transit in both directions. When they are dropped off on the opposite side of the street, they will be stuck.


Is it possible to walk between the stop and the activities around it?

+


The dot at the center of these circles is a transit stop, while the circle is a 1/4 mile radius.

-


The whole area is within 1/4 mile, but only the black-shaded streets are within a 1/4 mile walk.



+

It must also be safe to cross the street at a stop. You usually need the stops on both sides for two-way travel!

For example, along U.S. 1, there are many places where traffic signals with crosswalks are a mile or more apart. So bus stops in between these places put riders in unsafe situations, limiting access to opportunities.

St. Lucie County has walkable places with a well-connected street network like downtown Fort Pierce and places that are less walkable. It is easier for transit to attract ridership from walkable places, because people there can easily get to the bus.

Indicators of high ridership potential

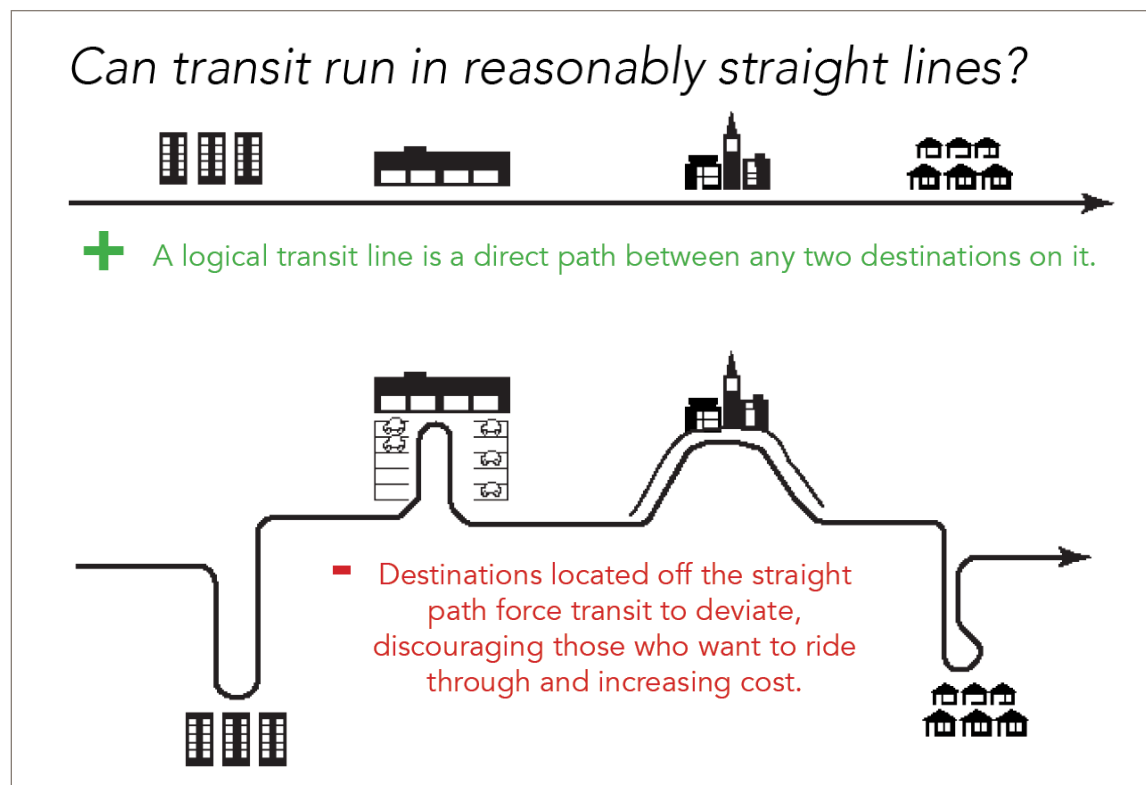
Linearity

The location of key destinations can determine how convenient transit is for many riders.

The graphic on the right shows four destinations aligned in different ways. In the town on the top, all destinations are located along the main road. Transit can serve all destinations with a straight line. People riding from one end to the other will find this service useful because they are always traveling towards their destination.

The town on the bottom has the same four destinations located far from the main road. To serve these places, a bus needs to drive away from the main road, get to the front door, and then drive back to the main road. If this is your destination, this is great for you. But if you are traveling between any other two points, you are traveling out of the way before getting where you want to go.

This can also happen if a road is too dangerous for people to walk across. For safety, a bus might have to deviate from the main road.



For example, Route 6 in St. Lucie West Boulevard deviates off of St. Lucie Boulevard into shopping centers, to Indian River State College, and other destinations that are just too far off the main road to be walkable from the direct and linear path along the main road.

Also, the route on the bottom example is much longer. For transit, this means that it is more expensive. Since St. Lucie County has a fixed budget for transit, having long or circuitous routes like this one means that the County can't provide as much frequency, and people will have to wait longer for the bus.

Indicators of high ridership potential

Proximity

In transit, distance is a major contributor to the cost of service. Connecting places that are far away is more expensive than places that are close to each other. Within a fixed budget, a more expensive route means that a bus can't come as frequently, so people have to wait longer. If waits are longer, less people are likely to find the service useful.

For example, new development on the western fringes of Port St. Lucie, like Tradition, are far away from the other major activity centers in the County. These new developments extend the distance the bus system must cover if the County wants to reach everyone. It also stretches the distance, and time, that people must travel to reach the new job centers, medical centers, and other services that may have moved to these new developments.

Does transit have to traverse long gaps?



Diagram illustrating a transit route with short distances between many destinations. The route is represented by a horizontal line with four stops. Above the second and third stops are icons representing destinations (buildings and houses). The text below the diagram states: + Short distances between many destinations are faster and cheaper to serve.



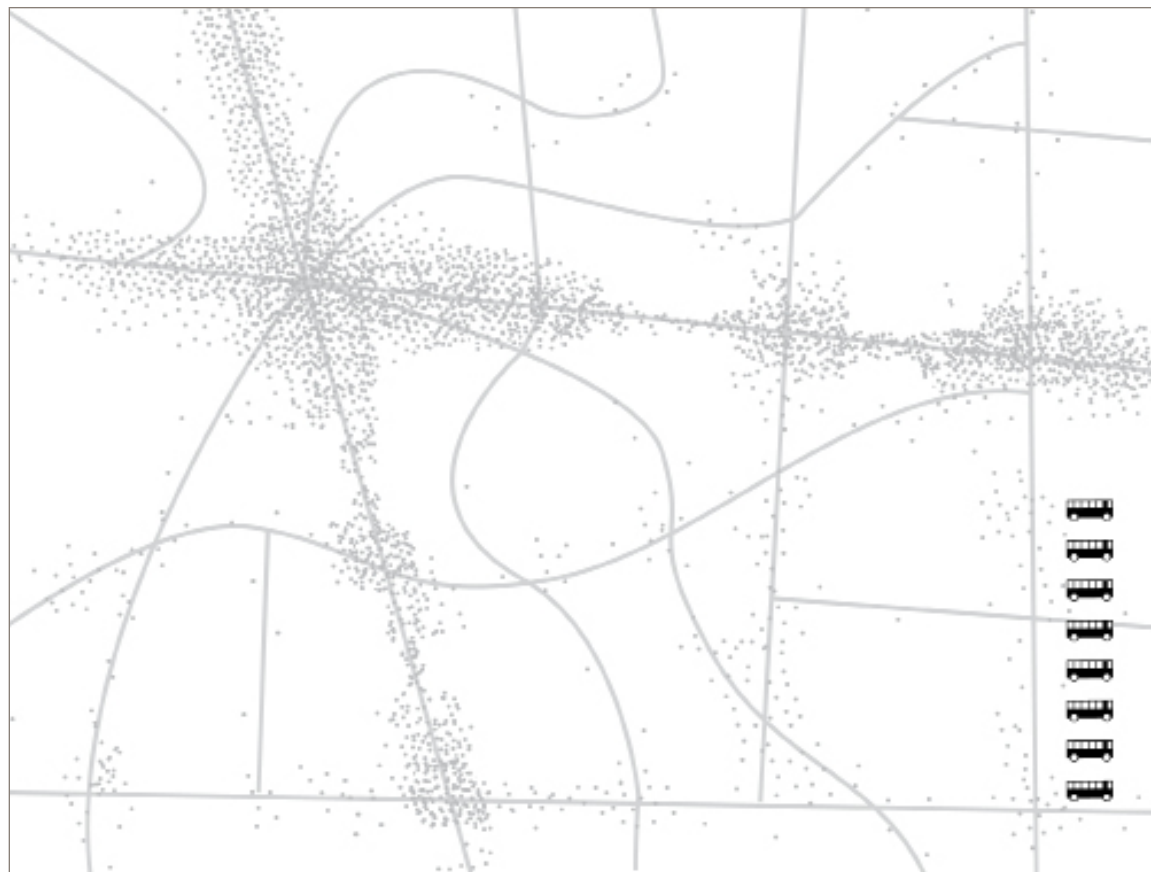
Diagram illustrating a transit route with long distances between destinations. The route is represented by a horizontal line with four stops. Above the second and third stops are icons representing destinations (buildings and houses). The text below the diagram states: - Long distances between destinations means a higher cost per passenger.

Conflicting goals

Throughout this report and this planning process we will use the word "IF" regularly to emphasize that different choices have different outcomes because different goals for transit lead us in different directions.

Imagine you are the transit planner for this fictional neighborhood. On the map to the right, the lines are roads and the dots are people and jobs. Places with more dots close together are places that more people want to travel to and from.

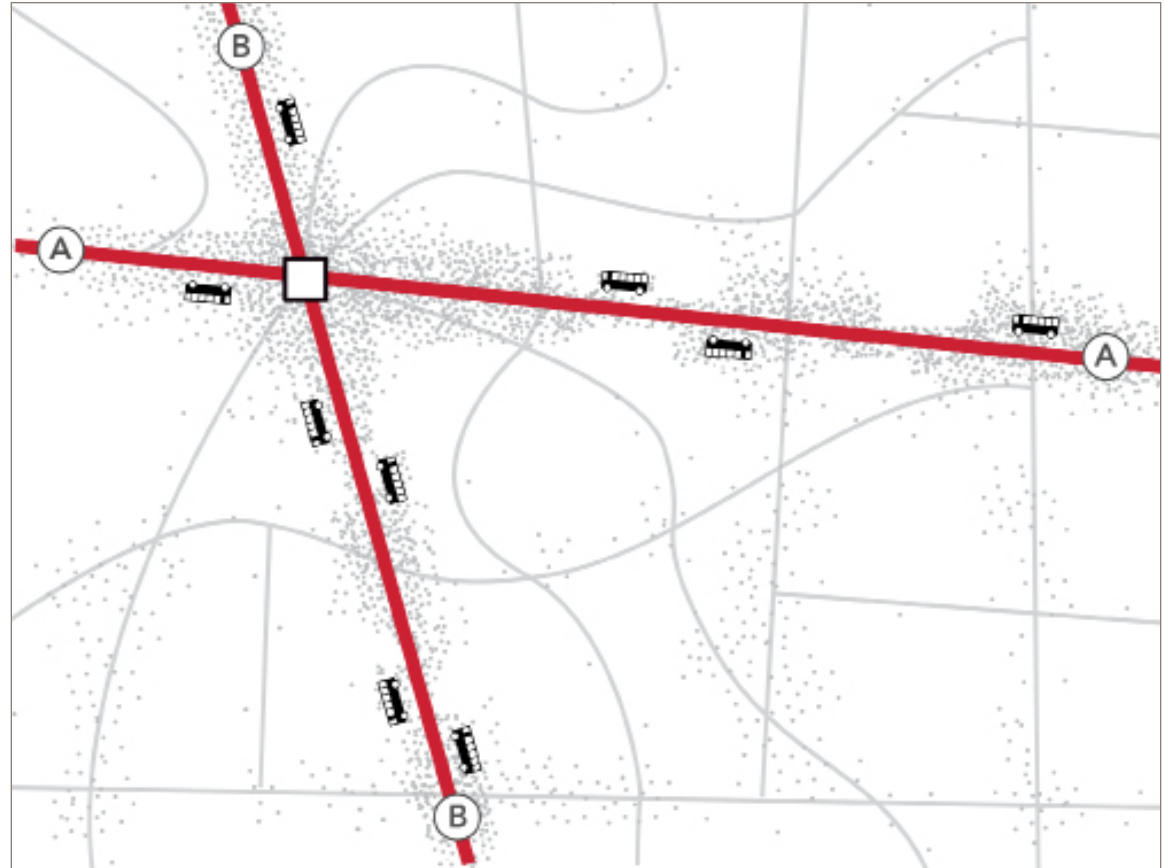
The buses in the picture are the resources the neighborhood has to run transit. Before you can plan transit routes, you must first decide: what is the purpose of your transit system?



Conflicting goals

If the goal is ridership...

...then all eight buses are focused on the busiest areas. Waits for service are short. Ridership is high because direct, frequent service is available in the places with the greatest travel demand, but some places have no service.

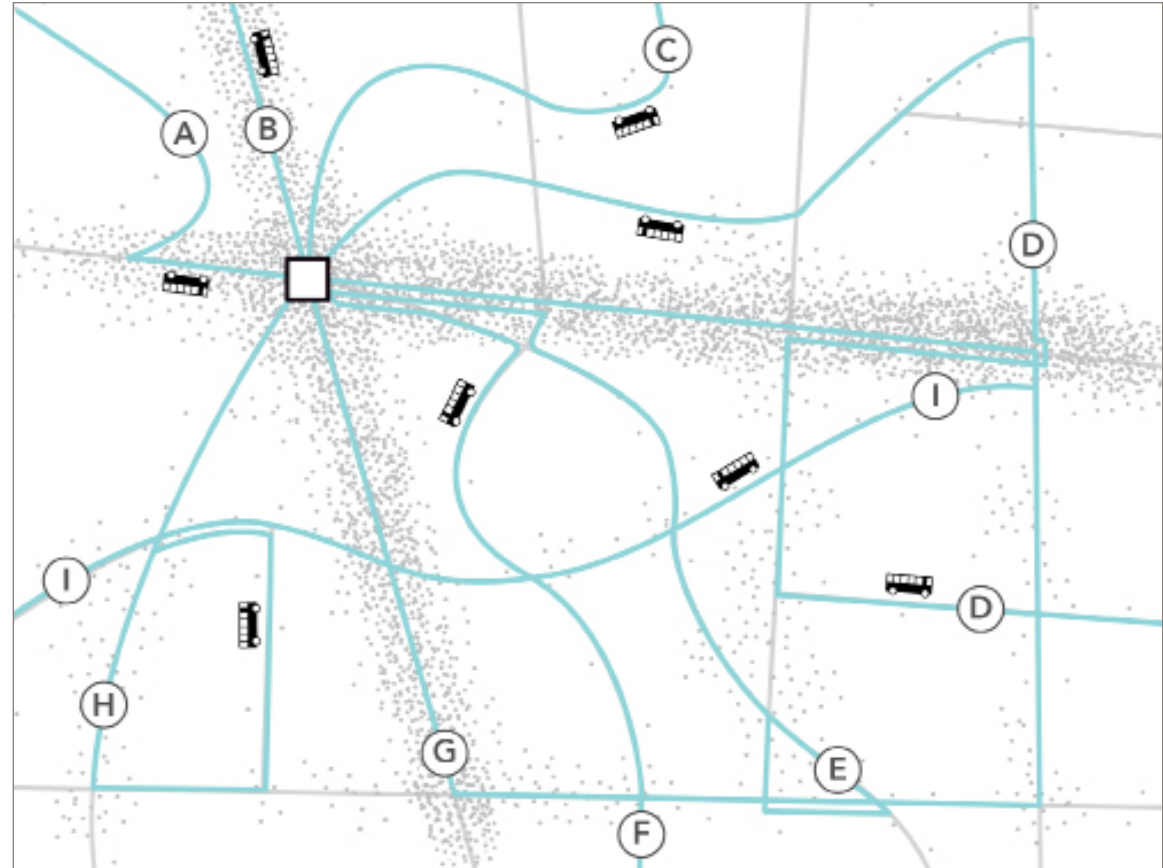


Conflicting goals

If the goal is coverage...

...then the eight buses are spread around so that each street has a route. Everyone lives near a stop, but every route is infrequent, so waits for service are long. Routes are looping and circuitous, so people spend a lot of time on the bus even when going a short distance. Fewer people can bear to wait or ride for so long, so ridership is low.

People with relatively few transportation options will ride but even low-income people will try to find other options when transit service is so infrequent and not very useful. Therefore, coverage-oriented service will even discouragelow-income residents and residents without vehicles from riding transit.



Conflicting goals

There are two basic sets of goals that transit can serve:

Ridership Goal

If a transit agency wanted to pursue **high ridership**, then it would put most routes in places that are dense, linear and walkable, as described by the indicators of high ridership on pages 6-9.

Density means that there are lots of people and activities near each bus stop, which means there are many potential riders for the service. If it is easy to walk in that area too, then many of those potential riders can actually get to the stop.

In a network designed for ridership, dense areas get very good service, with the next bus always coming soon. But when the agency focuses on making the high-ridership routes as useful as possible, it means it can't afford to run to a lot of other places.

Reasons to pursue a ridership goal include:

- Getting more riders
- Reduced vehicle trips
- Reduced emissions
- Less subsidy per ride

Coverage Goal

If the goal is **coverage**, the transit agency would spread its service out so that there's some service everywhere. But spreading it out means spreading it thin. Because there is such a huge area to serve with a fixed budget, none of the buses can come very often, which means that you have to plan your day around the timetable, which means that fewer people find them useful.

Some people who do use coverage services really need them, and will defend them. Other people may value having service available "just in case", even though they don't use it most of the time.

Reasons to pursue a coverage goal include:

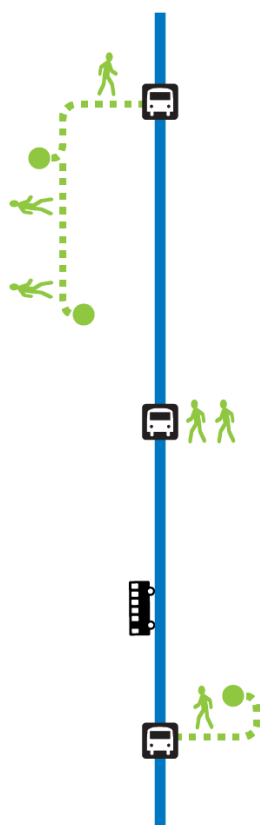
- "Access for all."
- Service for people with severe needs for transit, no matter where they live.
- Service near every voter, taxpayer, neighborhood, etc.

Demand-response service

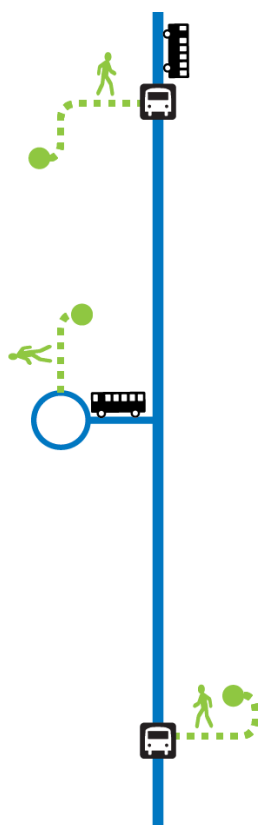
You may have heard about taxi-like services that pick you up when and where you request them, rather than running fixed routes. You may have heard about St. Lucie County running this type of service in Southwest Port St. Lucie. This type of service is often referred to as "micro-transit", "dial-a-ride", "On-Demand", or "Demand-Response".

The graphics below show how demand-response differs from fixed route transit. In fixed route transit, people walk to bus stops and buses arrive based on a predetermined schedule. Demand-response service can pick up riders where and when they request it.

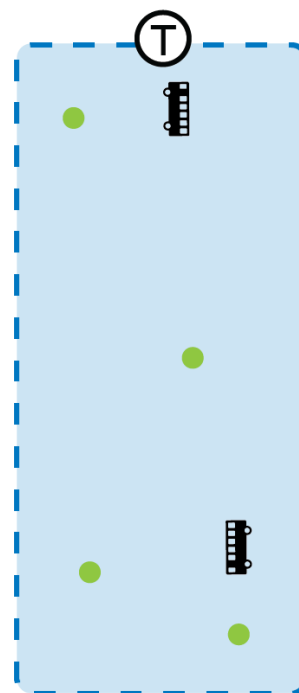
Demand response service is convenient for riders because it doesn't ask them to walk to a bus stop, and it often lets them travel at the time they prefer. But these features don't come free.



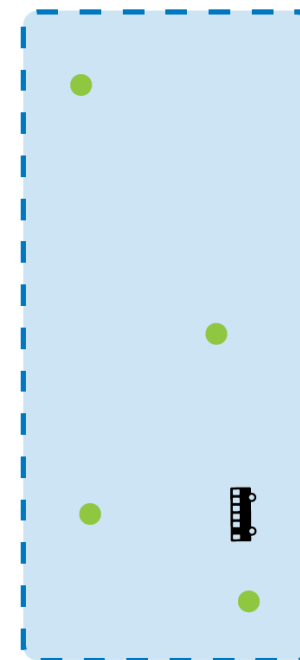
Fixed Route



**Fixed Route
with deviations**



**On-demand service
to a specific location**



**On-demand service
to anywhere**

Limitations

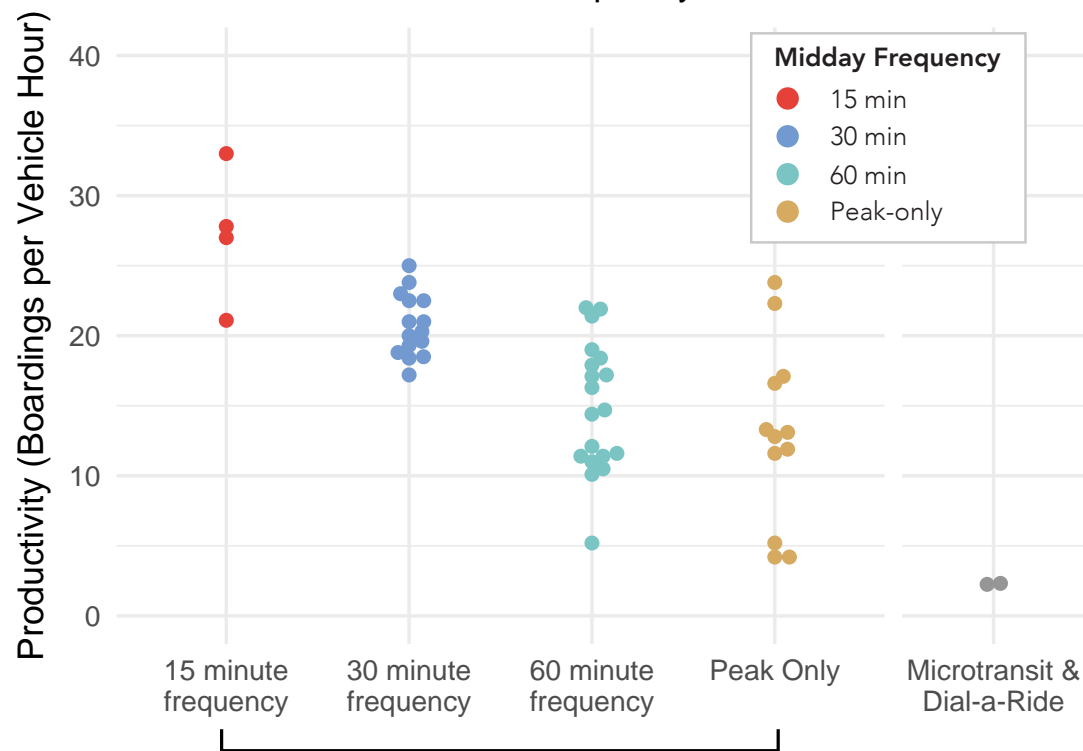
Demand-response trips can be more expensive, sometimes vastly more expensive, to provide than fixed route trips. This is why transit agencies are careful and thoughtful about where they offer demand-response service and how they control its costs.

The cost of a fixed route is steady over time. It does not go up immediately when more people ride it. As a result, when more people ride, it becomes less expensive to provide each ride.

In contrast, the costs of demand-response service can rise quickly as more people request trips. There is a low ceiling on how many rides per hour a demand-response vehicle can serve before an additional vehicle and driver need to be deployed. Almost no demand-response services are able to average more than 5 boardings per vehicle, per hour. If you think about what the vehicle has to do – driving around to each person's requested pick-up spot, then their requested drop-off spot, at the times they choose, not necessarily the most efficient times - then it's clear why it would be so hard to do this very many times in an hour.

The scatterplot at right shows data for each route at a real mid-sized transit agency. Each dot is a route, and its height on the graph shows its average number of

Higher Frequency Routes Have Higher Productivity Than Lower Frequency Routes



boardings per hour, per vehicle. Demand-response (all the way to the right) handles many fewer rides per hour than even the lowest-ridership fixed routes. This difference in potential ridership per vehicle, when comparing fixed routes to demand-response, is quite typical, because of the basic math of how the two types of services work.

2. Market and Needs

Market and needs assessment

This chapter presents maps that show basic demographic information in St. Lucie County.

Residents and Jobs

Density is one of the fundamental prerequisites for high transit ridership. The more people in the area around a bus stop, the more potential riders at that stop.

Residential density is important since most trips start or end at home, but employment density reveals places that are the destinations for many types of trips: not only commutes to work, but also trips to shopping, services and recreation.

Low-Income Residents

Transit is often asked to pay special attention to the needs of people in poverty, particularly when pursuing a coverage goal. People with limited incomes also have an added incentive to use transit, making them a potentially strong market for high ridership transit.

Senior Residents

Similar to people in poverty, seniors are another subset of the population transit is often expected to focus on, though seniors tend to be less segregated into certain neighborhoods and towns than are low income people.

Seniors also have extra incentives to use transit, because they are often unable or unwilling to drive

themselves places. Depending on where they are located, seniors can contribute to a strong market for high ridership transit.

Increasingly, seniors are also working past the traditional retirement age of 65 and need transportation to work just like younger residents.

Minority Residents

While information about people's income tells us something about their potential interest in or need for transit, information about minorities does not alone tell us how likely someone is to use transit.

However, avoiding placing disproportionate burdens on people of color, through transportation decisions, is essential to the transit planning process. Transit agencies are also required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to ensure that services they provide do not discriminate on the basis of race, color or national origin.

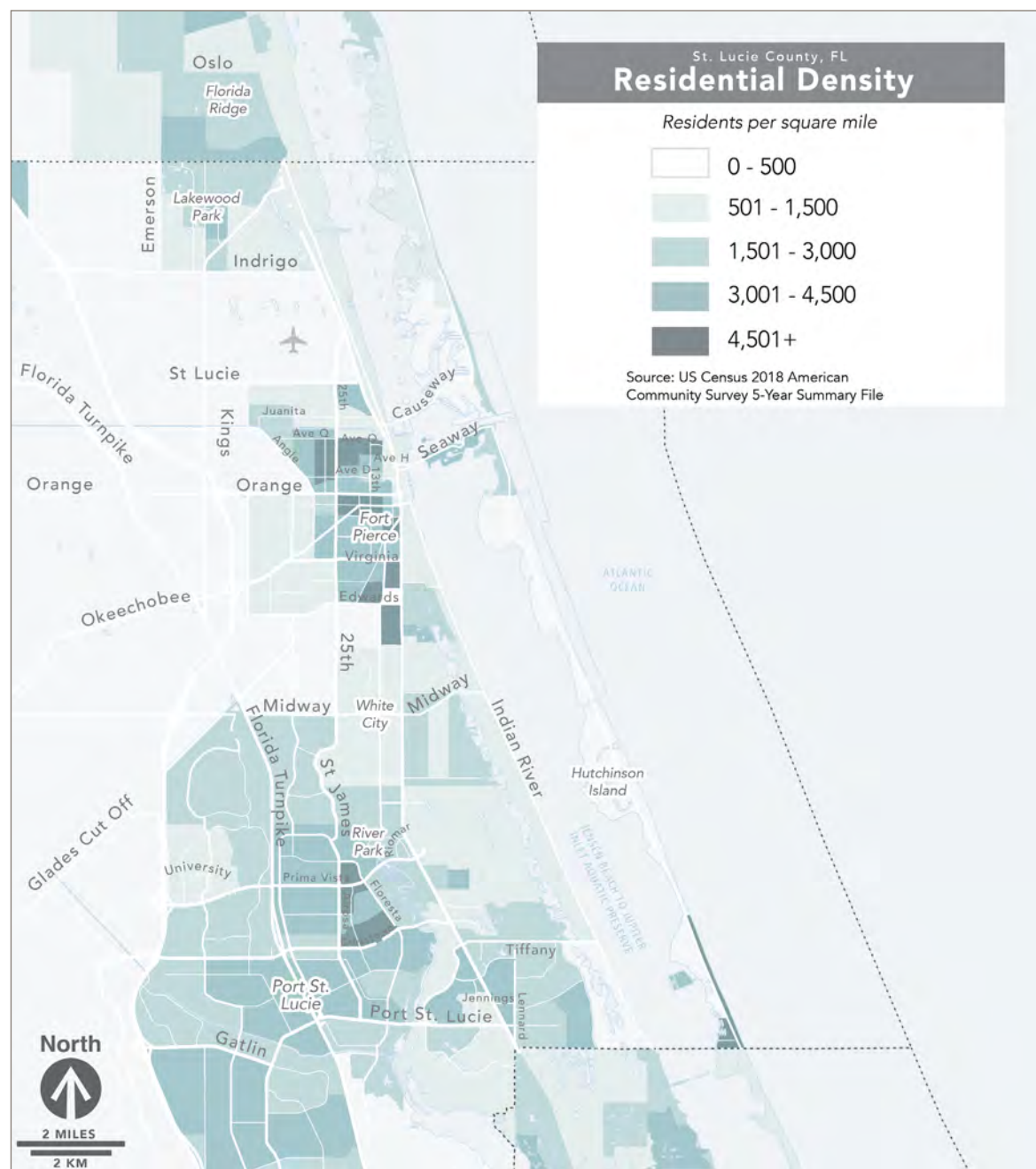
Equity-based transit goals are often articulated in terms of improving mobility or transit access for people of color, particularly in places where the existing development patterns and transportation network contribute to disparities in access to jobs and other opportunities.

Residential density

The places with high residential density in St. Lucie County are shown in darker shades.

The densest areas in the County are within Fort Pierce, particularly closer to downtown, and in the eastern parts of Port Saint Lucie. There are also higher-density communities on Hutchinson Island South and west of the Florida Turnpike, south of Midway.

Higher-density places in Fort Pierce are closer together and on more linear paths than in Port St. Lucie. This makes Fort Pierce's density easier to serve with efficient transit than Port St. Lucie's dispersed density.

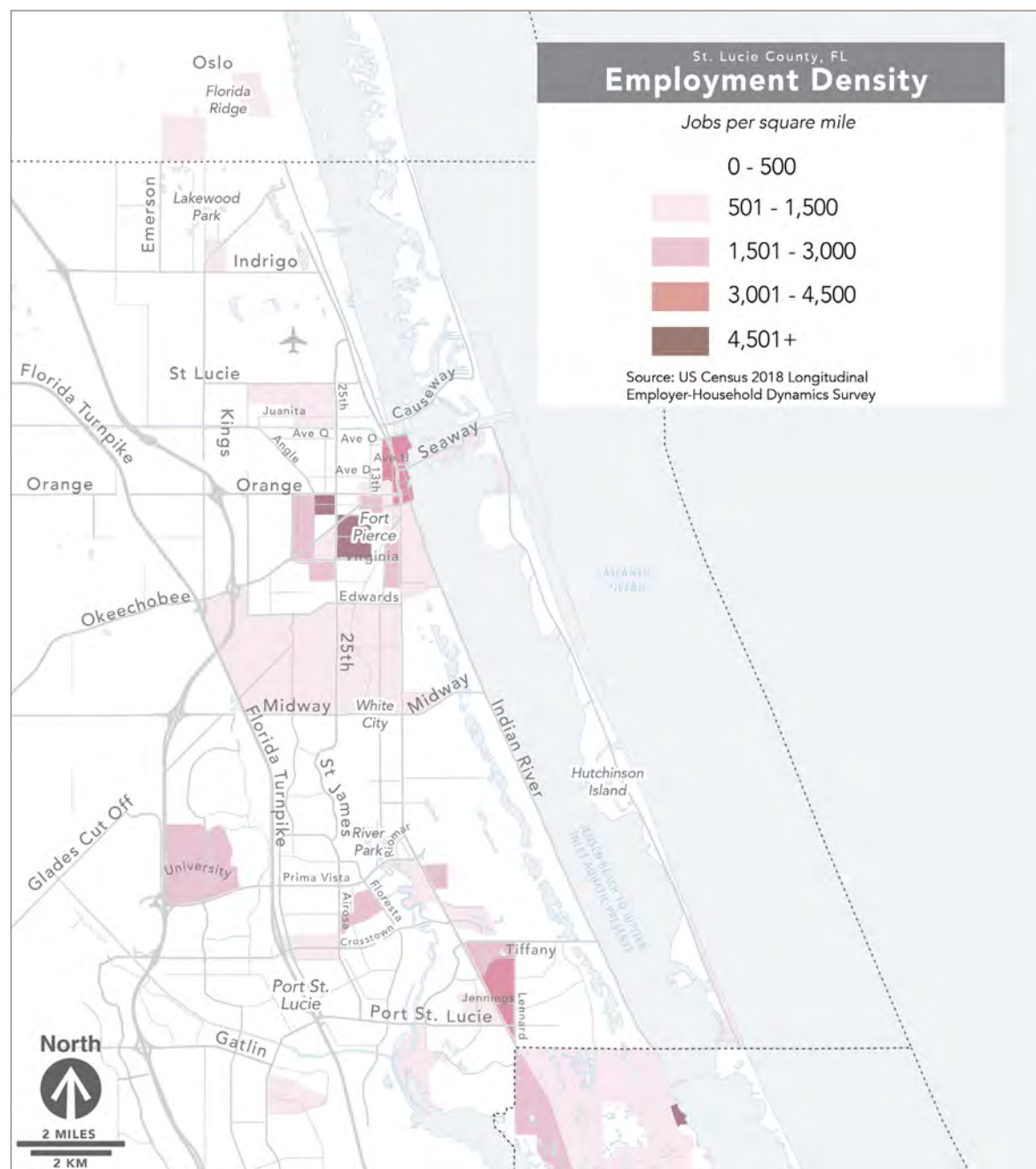


Job density

Places that have high employment density are often places where people go to for many reasons, not just work. Retail, restaurants, schools, medical services, and other activity centers are often visited by customers, students, and patients.

This map shows a very high concentration of jobs in central Fort Pierce and along U.S. Route 1 northeast of Fort Pierce. These job-dense areas are closer together. This makes them easier to serve with efficient transit.

The main job centers in Port St. Lucie are more widely dispersed and harder to serve efficiently with transit. The densest concentration of jobs is east of U.S. 1. near the St. Lucie medical center. There is a moderate concentration of jobs just north of St Lucie Boulevard and east of I-95 near the Indian River State College Pruitt Campus.

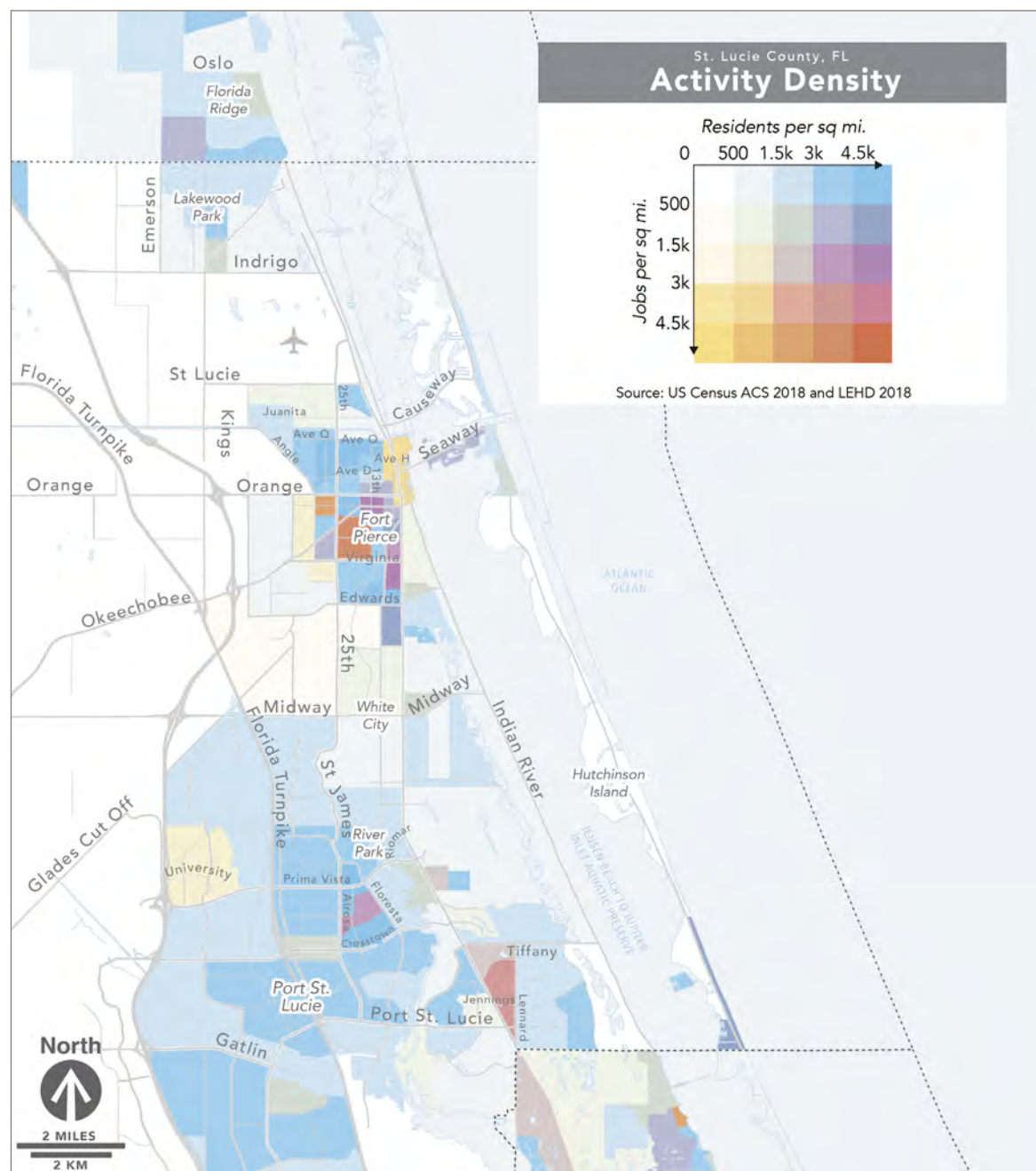


Activity density

If we combine residential density and job density, we get this map. Darker areas are denser and color indicates the land use. Yellow is jobs, blue is residents, and red is a combination of both.

Transit lines serving purely residential neighborhoods tend to be used in mostly one direction at a time—away from the residential neighborhood, towards jobs and services in the morning and vice-versa in the afternoon. In places that have a mix of residents and jobs, there is potential for two-way transit ridership throughout the day.

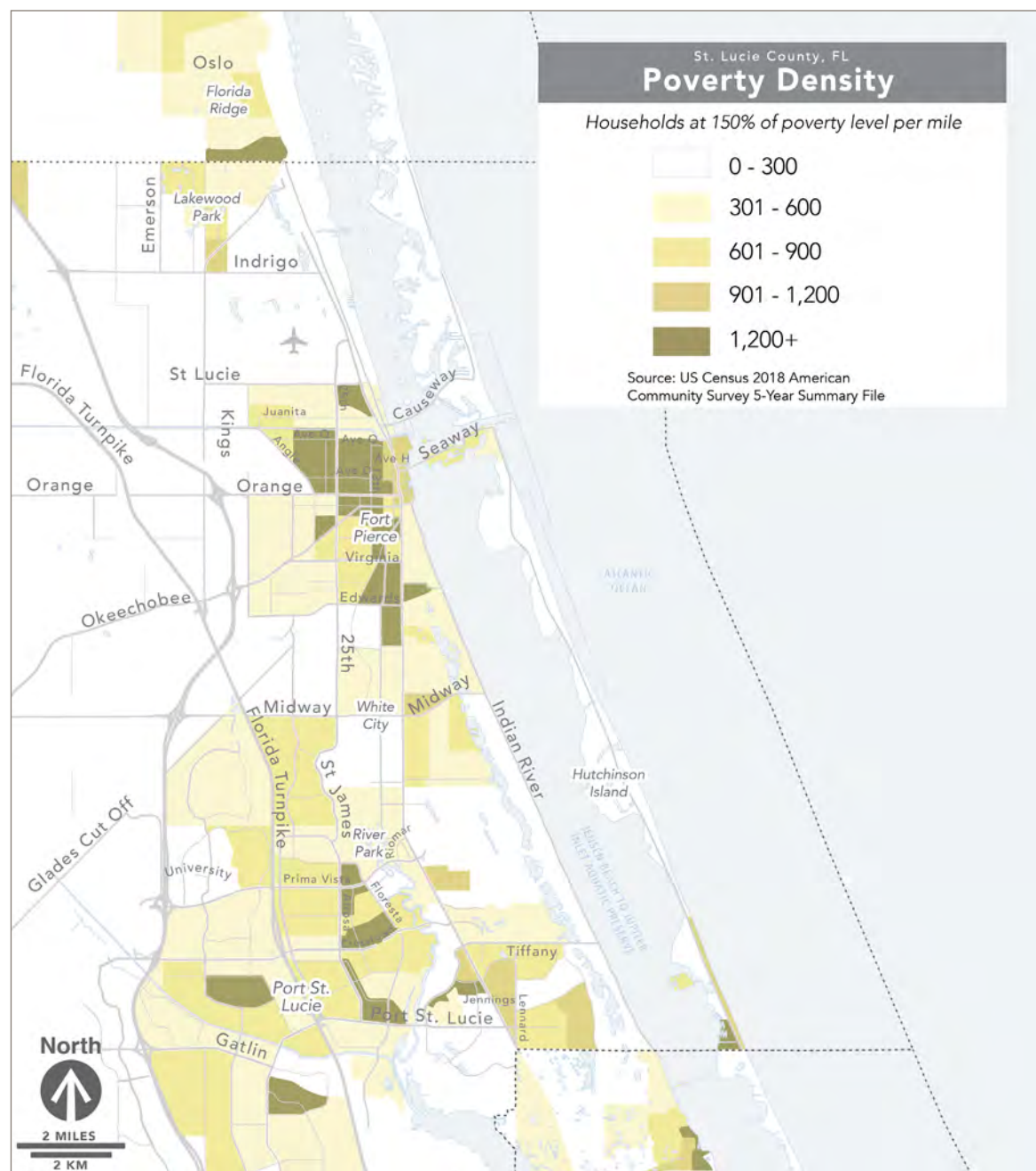
The highest mix of residential and commercial activity in the County is in central Fort Pierce and in the commercial area around the St. Lucie Medical Center.



Low-income density

In St. Lucie County, the density of residents living below the poverty line seems to follow residential density patterns. By comparing the map at right to the map of all residential density on page 18, we can see that places that have high residential density also tend to have high low-income density.

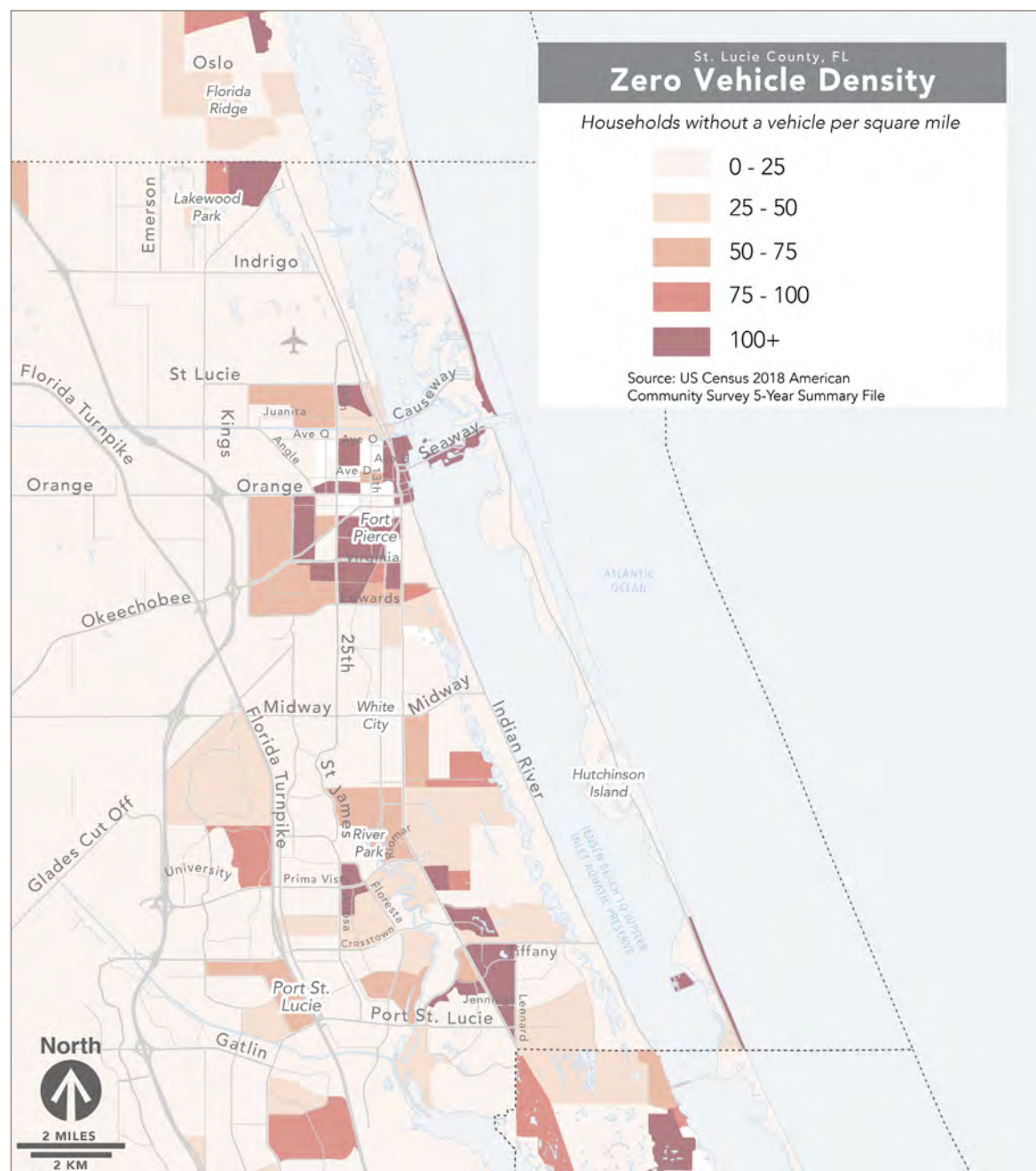
The highest concentrations of low-income residents are near central Fort Pierce, on Hutchinson Island South and in Port St. Lucie - along Port St. Lucie Boulevard, Airosa Boulevard and Crosstown Parkway. Most concentrations of low-income residents are near existing service today.



Zero-Vehicle Households

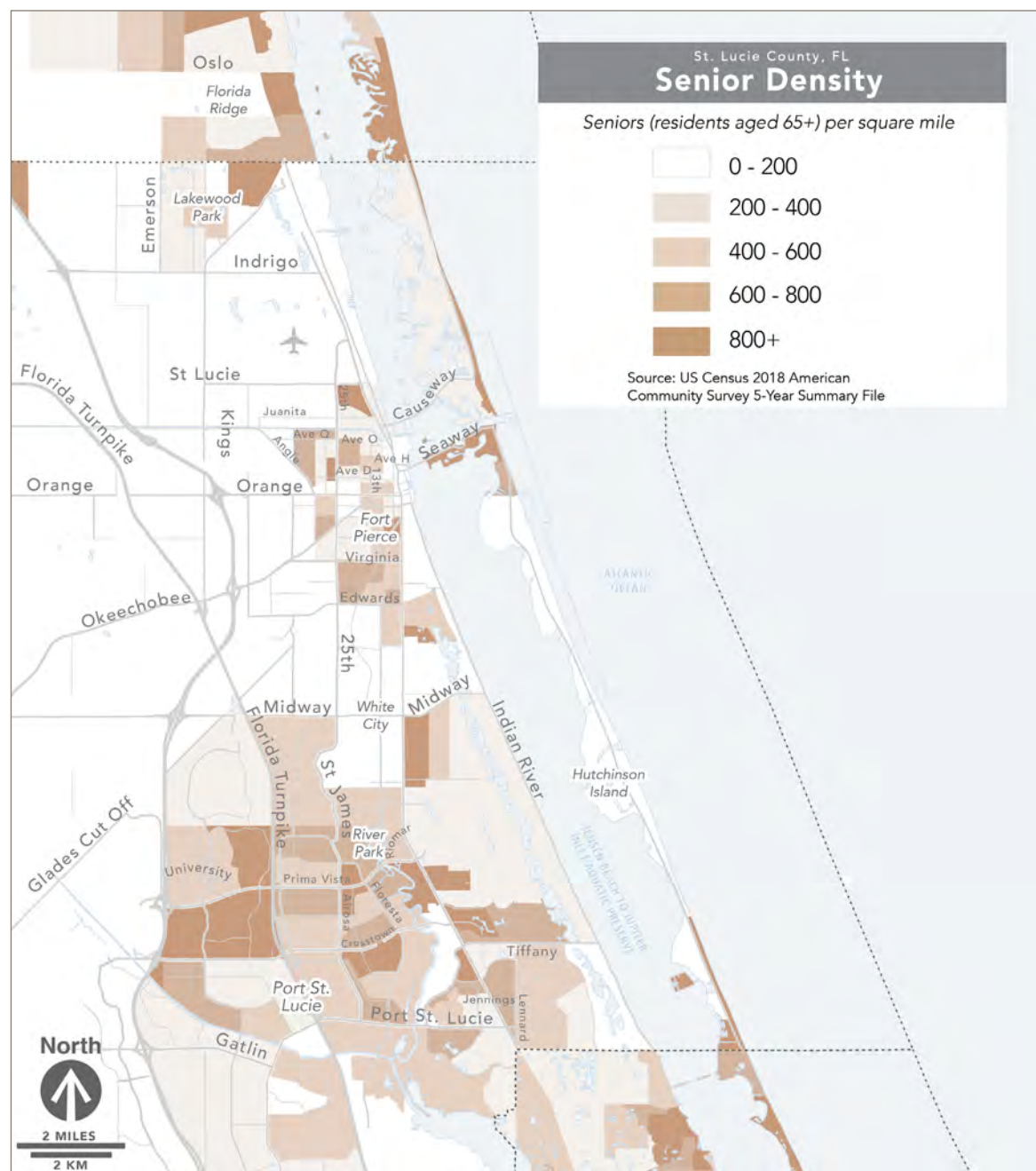
In St. Lucie County, the density of households without a vehicle closely mirror concentrations of low-income households on the previous page.

The highest concentrations of households without a vehicle are near central Fort Pierce, in northeastern Lakewood Park, in northern River Park, southeast of Glades Cut Off Road and in south Port St. Lucie.



Senior density

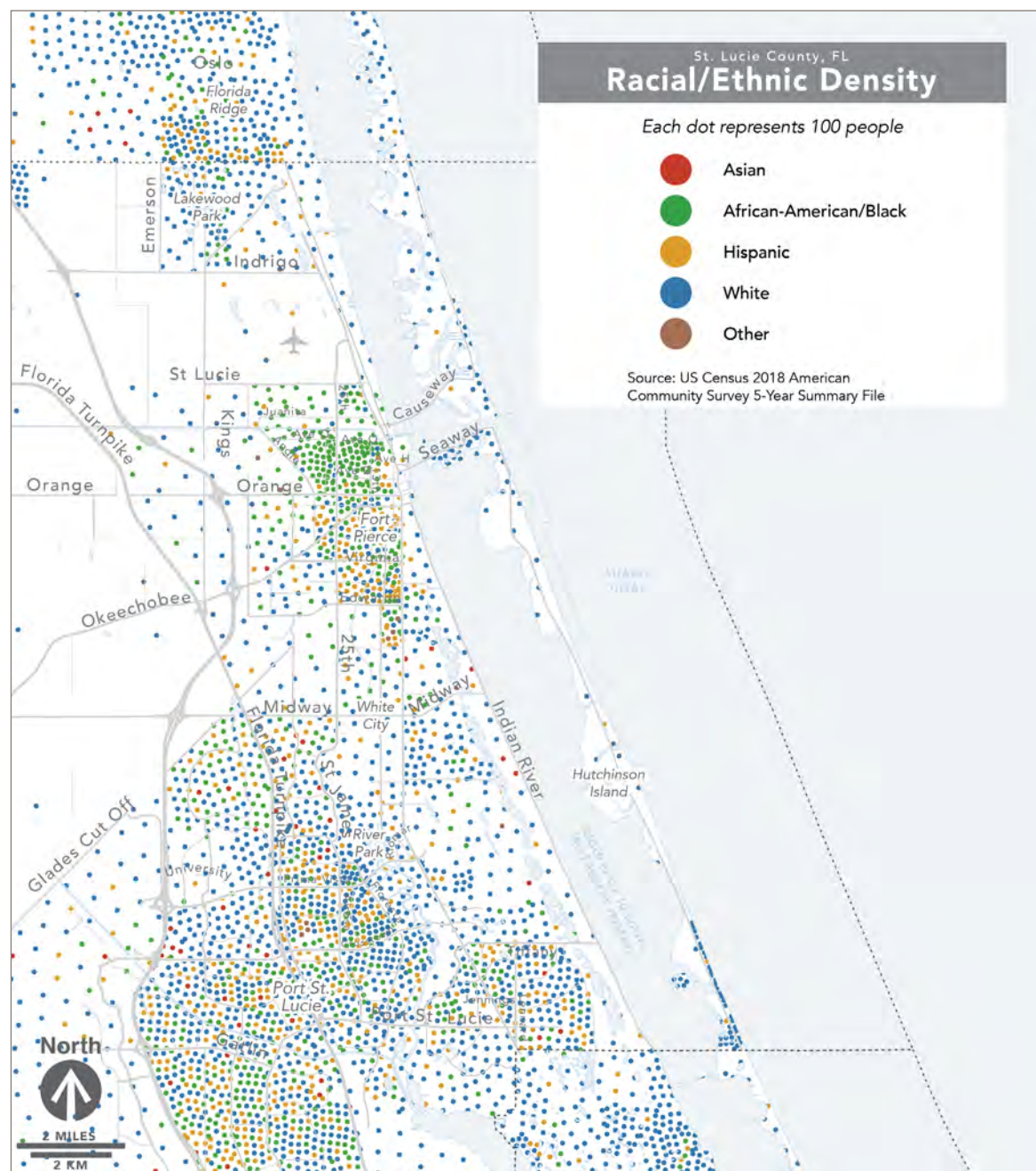
The density of seniors in St. Lucie County is quite similar to the density of all residents. However, there is a larger concentration in Port St. Lucie and in northeast Lakewood Park.



Civil Rights Assessment: Minority Residents

The map at the right shows where people of different races and ethnicities live in St. Lucie County. Each dot represents 50 residents. Where many dots are very close together, the overall density of residents is higher. Where dots of a single color predominate, people of a particular race or ethnicity make up most of that area's residents.

Information about people's income tells us something about their potential interest in or need for transit but information about ethnicity or race do not alone tell us how likely someone is to use transit. However, avoiding placing disproportionate burdens on minority residents, through transportation decisions, is essential to the transit planning process. It is also important to understand where large numbers of people of color live, so that public outreach during this project can be sensitive to language and cultural barriers.



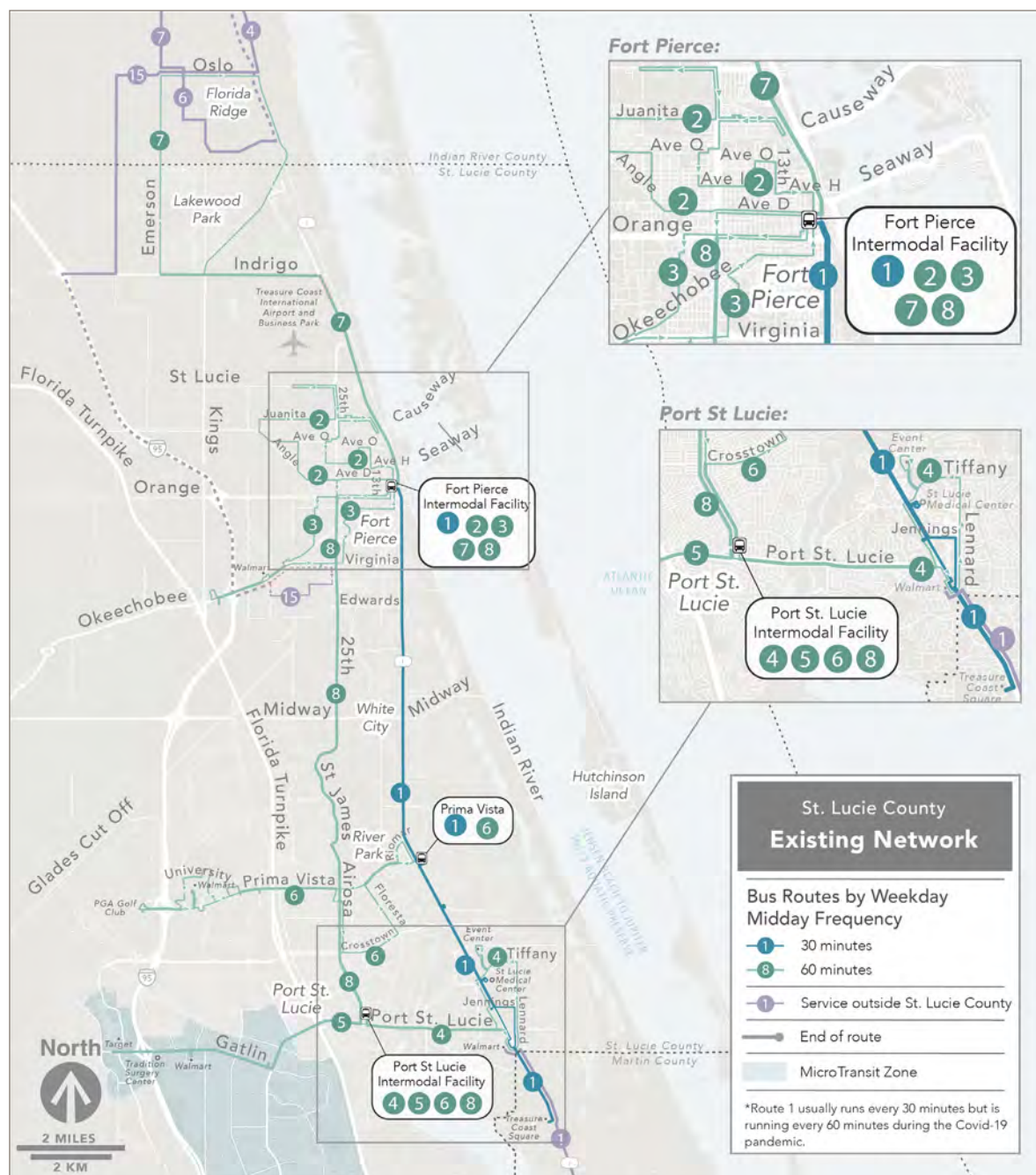
3. The Existing Transit Network

Where and when is service available?

Transit service in St. Lucie County includes eight routes. All routes except Route 1 have a frequency of 60 minutes.

The network includes many one-way loops and deviations. With these loops and deviations, St. Lucie County's service covers many parts of the County, but it not providing much service on each route. Many people have service every 60 minutes but in one direction only. If they want to go the other direction, they have to ride the route all the way around.

Transit service in the adjoining counties of Martin and Indian River are shown on this map and discussed further on page 32.



When does service run?

Service is provided on most routes Monday through Friday from 6:00am to 7:00pm and from 8:00am to 3:30pm Saturdays. Route #7 starts running an hour later and stops running an hour earlier than Routes #1-6. Route #8 is run as a peak express and stops running during the middle of the day.

This means that if a person needs to travel on these routes outside of the times when they run, they will not find service useful and need to use another mode or forgo their trip.

Weekday service ends at 8pm, Saturday service ends at 4pm, and no service is provided on Sundays. This pattern severely limits the potential for residents to rely on transit to reach retail and service sector jobs. For example, many retail businesses are busiest on Saturday and Sunday. Many restaurants are open late and all weekend. Most retail and restaurant workers have limited control over their schedules. They would have to own a car (or get rides from friends, or pay for taxis) because they couldn't rely on transit to get them to work when they needed it.



EXISTING NETWORK Route Frequencies and Spans of Service

ROUTES	WEEKDAYS	SATURDAYS
1 - Treasure Coast Mall / Fort Pierce Intermodal	6am - 8pm	8-noon, 1-4pm
2 - Fort Pierce Intermodal / Taylor Creek Commons	6am - 8pm	8-noon, 1-4pm
3 - Fort Pierce Intermodal / Okeechobee Rd	6am - 8pm	8-noon, 1-4pm
4 - PSL Community Center / Lennard Rd	6am - 8pm	8-noon, 1-4pm
5 - Gatlin / PSL Community Center	6am - 8pm	8-noon, 1-4pm
6 - First Data Field / PSL Community Center	6am - 8pm	8-noon, 1-4pm
7 - Intergenerational Rec Center / Fort Pierce Intermodal	7am - 6pm	No service
8 - PSL Community Center / Fort Pierce Intermodal	7-11am, 3-7pm	No service

Notes:

1. Route 1 usually runs every 30 minutes but is running every 60 minutes during the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. Routes that run on Saturdays so not operate between noon and 1pm for 1-hour driver breaks.

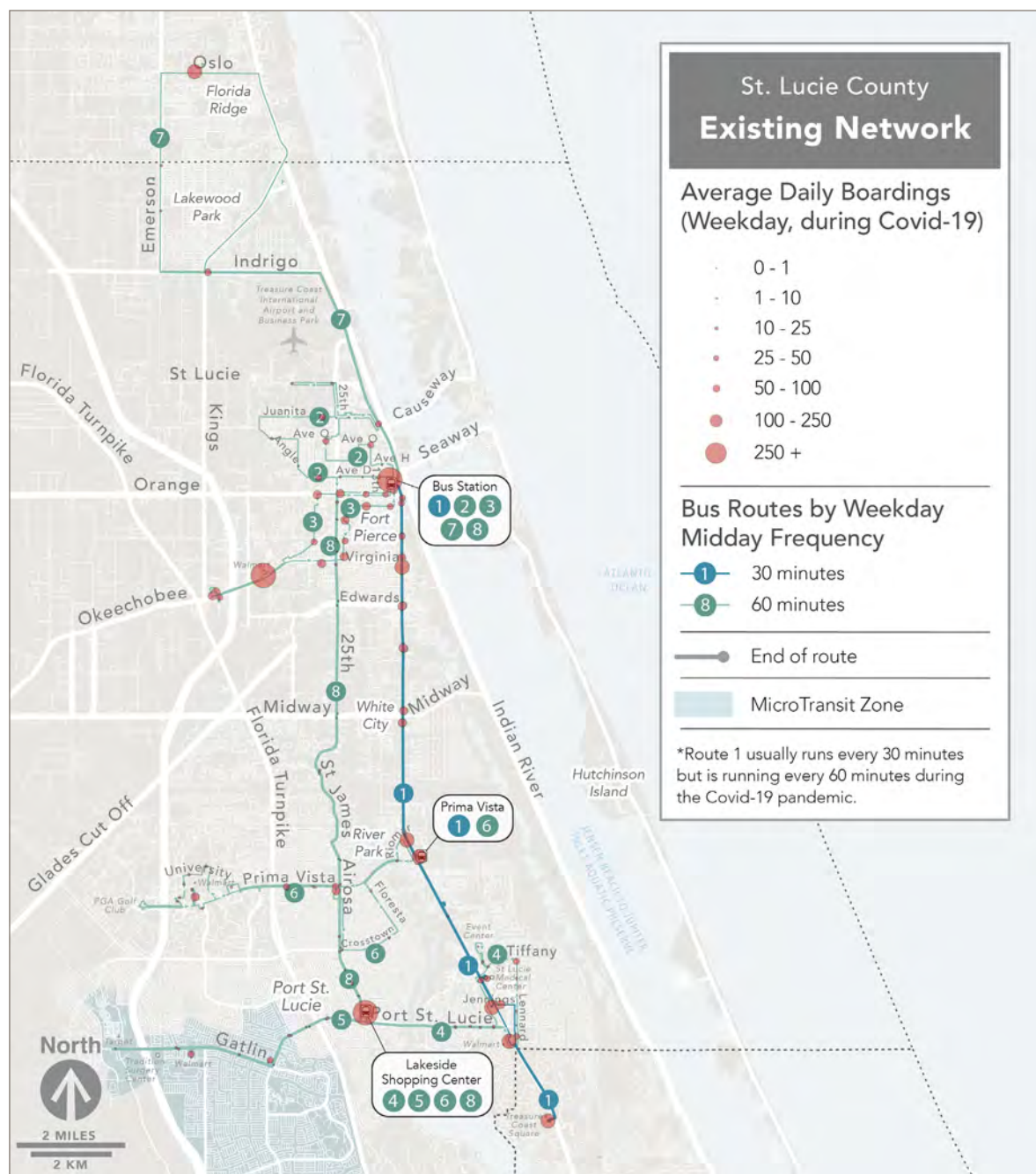
The bus comes every...

 30 minutes  60 minutes

Where are people riding transit?

This map shows the average number of people getting on buses daily in December 2020. Larger dots indicate more people using that bus stop. While overall ridership in December 2020 was lower due to the COVID-19 pandemic, looking at this data allows us to compare different routes and different bus stops to one another.

There are many people using transit along U.S. 1 and in the higher-density areas around Fort Pierce and Port St. Lucie. There is very little ridership along Route 8 between River Park and Fort Pierce.



Productivity

When we assess ridership, it is important to actually measure *productivity*.

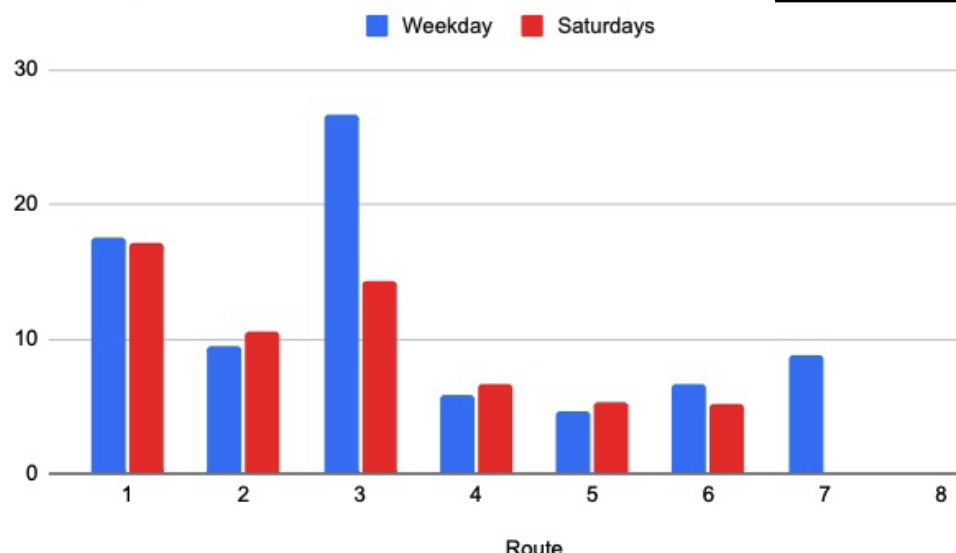
Productivity is ridership relative to the amount of service provided.

$$\text{Productivity} = \frac{\text{Ridership}}{\text{Cost}} = \frac{\text{Boardings}}{\text{Service Hour}}$$

Routes 1 and 3 have the highest productivity at over 15 boardings per service hour. More productive routes have a lower operating cost per boarding. These routes are productive because they serve more dense, linear corridors.

Route	Weekday Productivity (boardings per service hour)	Saturday Productivity (boardings per service hour)	Weekday Cost per Boarding	Saturday Cost per Boarding
Route 1	17.5	17.2	\$5.96	\$6.09
Route 2	9.5	10.5	\$11.04	\$9.93
Route 3	26.7	14.3	\$3.93	\$7.32
Route 4	5.8	6.6	\$17.92	\$15.75
Route 5	4.6	5.3	\$22.68	\$19.66
Route 6	6.6	5.2	\$15.87	\$20.27
Route 7	8.8	n/a	\$11.93	n/a
Route 8	0.8	n/a	\$136.40	n/a
Microtransit	2.5	2.4	\$19.81	\$21.21

Weekday and SAT



1. This assumes that Route 1 was running at a 60-minute frequency in December

2. This productivity assumes that December had 22 operational weekdays

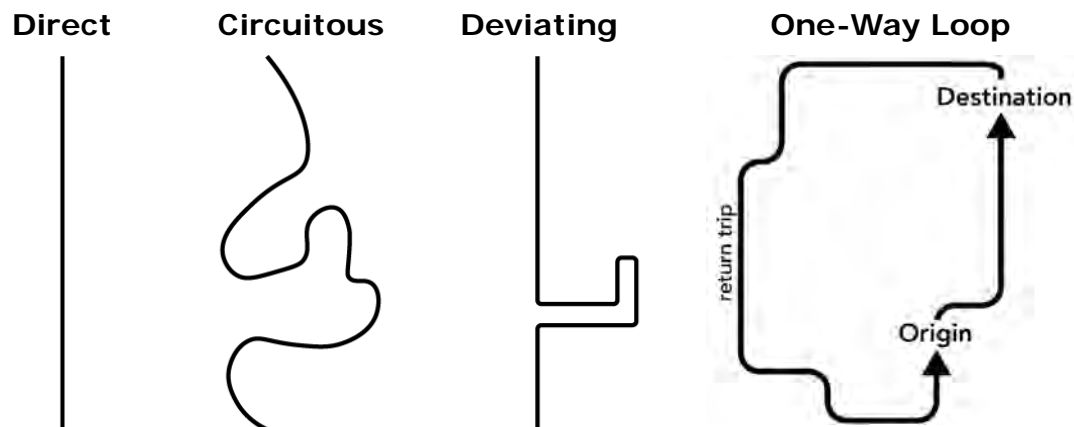
Route 8 has the lowest weekday productivity. Less productive routes have a higher operating cost per boarding. The 8 has low productivity because it doesn't follow the ridership recipe. It doesn't run frequently or serve many dense, walkable places that are close together along a linear corridor.

Deviations and one-way loops

Many routes in St. Lucie County deviate from the main road to reach the front door of certain destinations. This is partly due to unsafe conditions for pedestrians to cross the main road. This may be essential to get people to and from the destination. However, people riding through have to spend extra time as they are taken out of direction when they are trying to get somewhere.

This is part of the reason that linearity is one of the four geographic indicators of high ridership potential, as described on page 8.

Another factor that limits the usefulness of service and adds complexity to the network is the prevalence of one-way loops. In a one-way loop, the way you go from A to B is different from the way you go from B to A. For this reason, one-way loops are harder for new and infrequent riders to understand.



Most critically, every round-trip someone makes using a one-way loop requires that they ride all the way around the whole loop. If your trip going there was short, then your trip coming back is going to be long. This is the very opposite of linear and direct service, and it makes some transit trips in St. Lucie County extremely time-consuming.

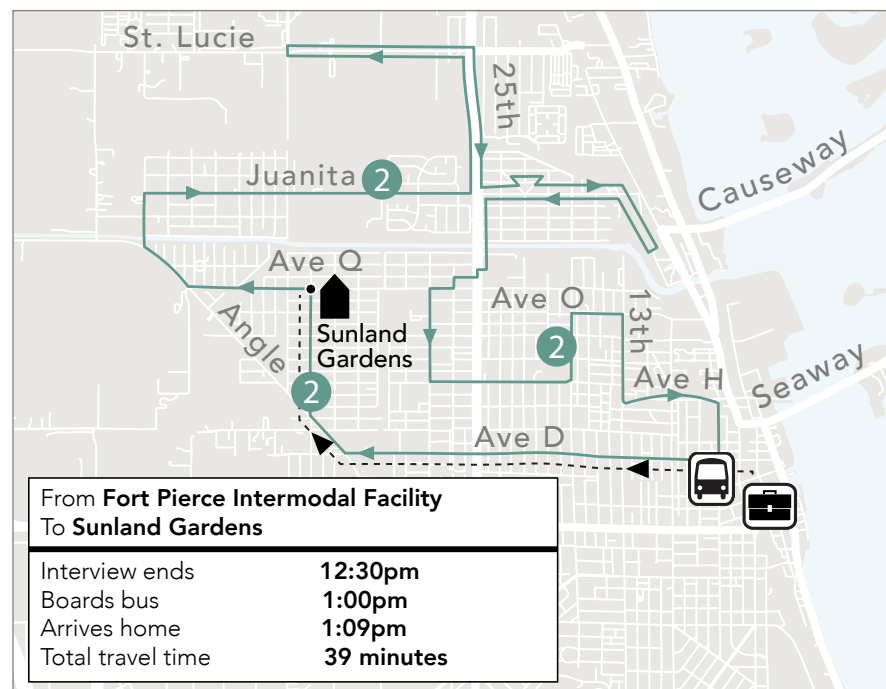
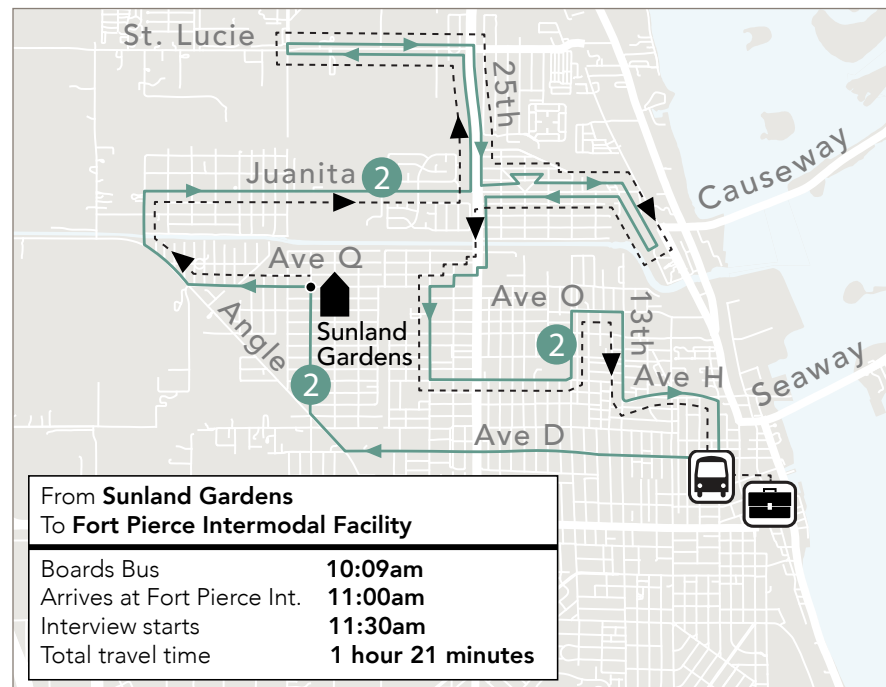
Travel time example

In St. Lucie County, Route 2 is one-way for nearly its entire distance. This affects the time it takes to travel in each direction differently.

Imagine that Susan lives in Sunland Gardens, near the corner of Avenue Q and 39th Street. She has a job interview 3 miles away, near the Fort Pierce Intermodal Facility. This would be a 3 mile, 1-hour walk, or a trip on Route 2. Her interview starts at 11:30am and her bus can get her there at 11:00am or 12:00 noon, so she has to get there 30 minutes early or be 30 minutes late.

She plans ahead and takes the bus at 10:09am. Her bus takes her away from her destination - west on Avenue Q and northwest on Angle. The bus then drives to the airport and back, then to Taylor Creek Commons before looping back and driving through residential neighborhoods towards the Fort Pierce Intermodal Facility. Including the time she has to wait for the interview to start, Susan's trip took 1 hour and 21 minutes. The top map on the right shows this trip.

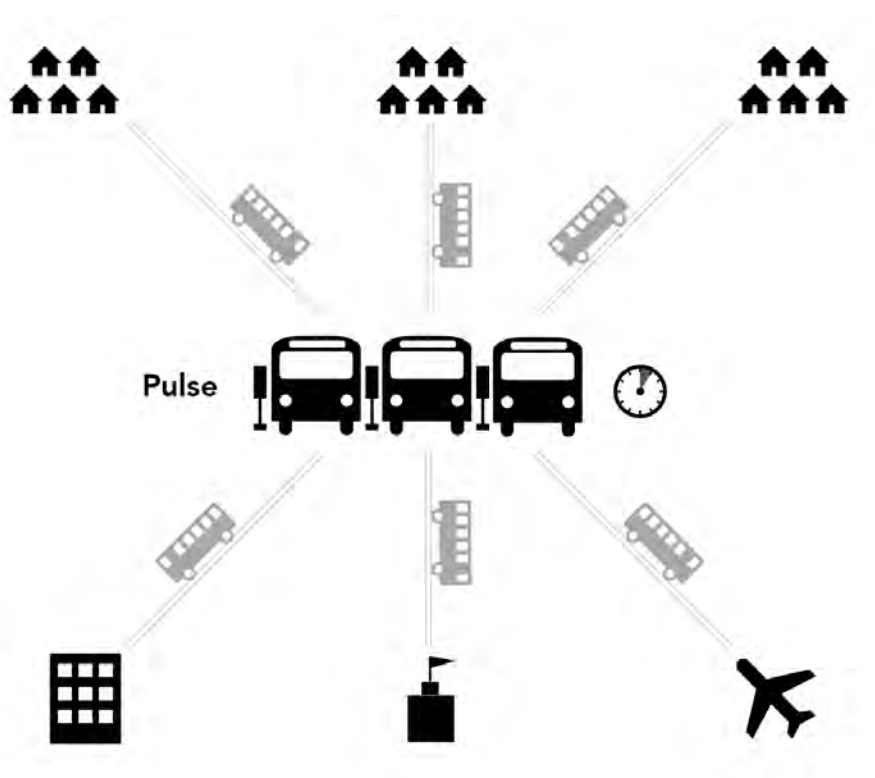
Susan doesn't control when her interview will end, so if she is done at 12:30pm, she will have to wait 30 minutes for the next bus home. Luckily, the return trip is shorter. She boards the bus at 1:00pm and gets home at 1:09pm. Susan's trip back home took 39 minutes. The bottom map on the right shows this trip.



Pulsing

Connecting between routes—often called transferring—is an integral part of a transit network. If people cannot connect between routes, they can only travel in one dimension along a single route. If they can connect to other routes, they can reach more places throughout the County. Some pulsing is happening in St. Lucie County, such as at the Fort Pierce Intermodal Center, but some adjustments could make the pulse even more effective.

To better facilitate connections between routes St. Lucie County could schedule in a 5-minute window for riders to make a timed transfer. Currently, routes #1, #2, #3 and #8 meet at the Intermodal Center on the hour each hour. However, if one bus is delayed reaching the center, passengers on that bus will have to wait another hour for their connecting bus. Instead, several buses could meet at a location at 55 minutes past each hour and depart five minutes later. These five minutes allow passengers to connect between routes easily and prevent small delays from disrupting timed connections.



A pulse is an excellent way to create a network out of a set of low frequency routes, because it makes transfers less difficult and risky than they would be if they happened at random.

Pulses are critical to ensuring that low-frequency networks work but can be easily "broken" in two ways: if routes are asked to cover more distance or forced to move more slowly (worsening traffic delays), they may no longer be able to reliably arrive at the pulse location on-time. Pulses are worth protecting and agencies should create their schedules to accurately reflect travel times.

Network Challenges

Span

While most routes in St. Lucie County operate 14 hours a day on weekdays, all routes stop running by 4pm on Saturdays and no routes run on Sundays. This makes the bus network difficult to use for evening trips on Saturdays and impossible to use on Sundays.

Connectivity to Route 1

All the routes that serve the north half of the County meet at with a timed connection at the Fort Pierce Intermodal Center. In the southern half of the County, only Routes 4, 5, 6, and 8 meet in a timed connection at the Port Saint Lucie Intermodal Center. Route 1, one of the most productive and frequent routes in the County, only meets Route 4 in Port Saint Lucie. This means that someone who wants to get from most places along U.S. 1 to Tradition must transfer twice, and one of those transfers will be untimed, and therefore likely a long wait.

Changing Route 1 to serve the Port Saint Lucie Intermodal Center might be possible, and would improve connectivity within the County, but it would mean losing the direct connection to Treasure Coast Square.

Intermodal Facility Location

The Fort Pierce Intermodal facility is located next to, rather than in, downtown Fort Pierce. This means that

anyone trying to reach the commercial center of Fort Pierce will have a long walk or need to transfer to the #1 or the #3. A location for timed transfers that was closer to central Fort Pierce would minimize walking for those whose origin or destination is central Fort Pierce.

Inter-County Connections

Martin County to the south and Indian River County to the north both operate bus routes that enter St. Lucie County. Currently, neither system has timed connections with St. Lucie County's system but inter-County coordination could create timed connections and shorten travel times for trips between counties.

Martin County operates a route along U.S. Route 1 every 35 minutes that runs alongside St. Lucie County's Route 1 past Treasure Coast Square and travels as far north as the Walmart. The 35 minutes frequency prevents a timed connection being possible with St. Lucie County's Route #1.

Only Indian River County's Route 15 enters St. Lucie County. St. Lucie County Route 7 goes into Indian River County to touch Routes 4,6,7, and 15 at the Intergenerational Recreation Center on Oslo Rd.

4. Key Choices

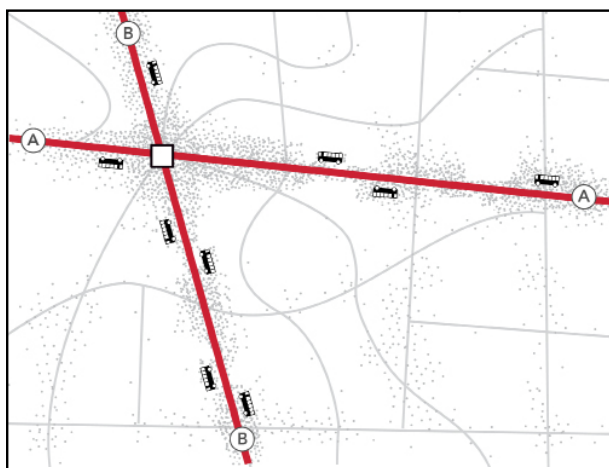
Ridership vs coverage

One of the most important, but difficult, decisions that have to be made is whether St. Lucie County wants to have a system designed for high ridership, high coverage, or something in between.

A simpler way to answer this question is: how much of the transit budget should be allocated to pursue high ridership? The remaining budget would be used to provide coverage in places where few people will ride, but those who do ride need the service badly.

The fictional neighborhood below shows what a transit network could look like if it were focused on maximizing ridership or maximizing coverage. These two networks are on opposite ends of a spectrum.

St. Lucie County's current network spends about 40% of its resources on ridership and about 60% on coverage. Should the County maintain the current balance between investing in high-ridership services and providing wide coverage?



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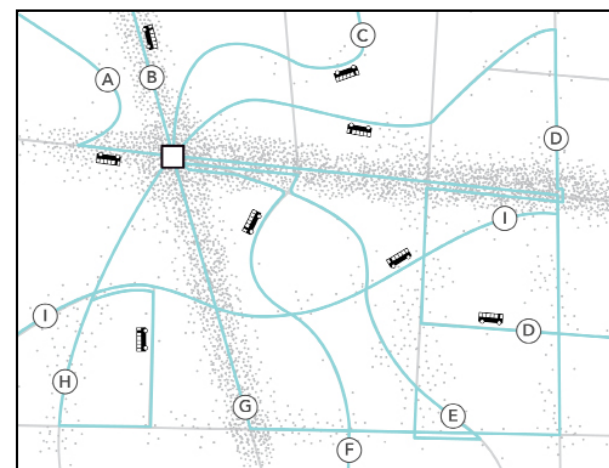
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**Existing
Network**



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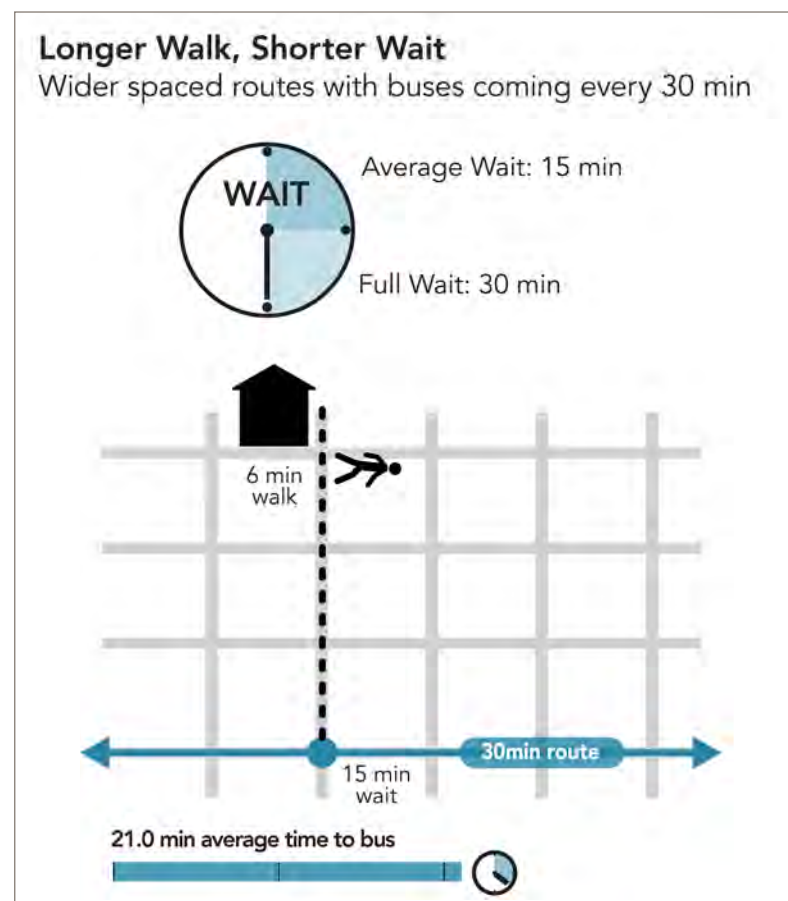
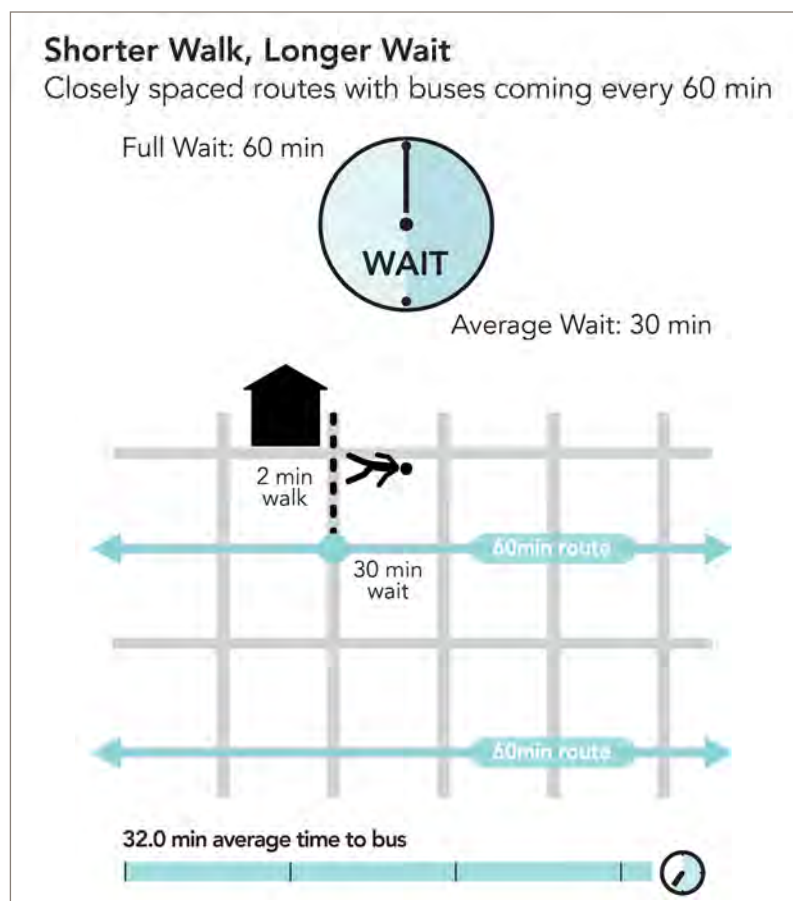
Maximum Ridership

Maximum Coverage

Walking vs waiting

Another way to think about the question of ridership and coverage is to think specifically about how far a person should have to walk to reach a bus stop, and how long they should have to wait, on average, before the next bus comes. Walking and waiting are important to consider on their own, because both of these activities add time and inconvenience to any transit trip, and different people have a wide variety of preferences regarding each.

For example, a young and fit person in a hurry might want to walk over a half-mile to a bus stop if the bus is always coming soon. An older or disabled person might prefer to have a bus stop much closer to their front door, even if it means they need to memorize the bus schedule or risk waiting a long time. When a transit agency can concentrate its service into fewer lines, that means longer walks for some people, but it also means higher frequency and therefore more ridership potential.



Providing coverage with demand-response

Demand-Response service is a coverage solution that can be provided to places that get very little ridership. However, the most we should expect each demand-response vehicle to handle, on average, is five trips per hour. This means that even a very low productivity fixed-route moving 6 passengers per hour probably could not be completely replaced with demand-response without either driving away some of the existing riders or using more vehicles.

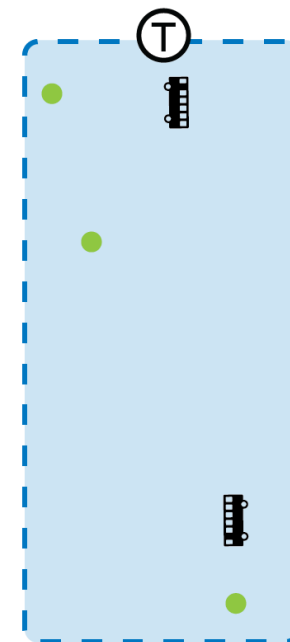
However, it is possible to switch to demand-response in this situation, and use more vehicles, without spending more budget. This becomes possible only if the demand-response service is cheaper to operate.

For example, imagine that fixed-route service in an area handles an average of 6 passengers per hour. We replace it with demand-response service that can handle about 3 trips per vehicle, per hour, on average. If we want to serve all existing customers, then we would have to deploy about twice as many hours of demand-response vehicle time as we had of fixed-route vehicle time.

But perhaps the demand-response service can be operated at one-half the cost of the fixed-route service. If that's the case, then this could be a budget-neutral change. (As long as there aren't other capital costs like vehicles or technology that need to be covered.)



Fixed Route



Demand-Response

This kind of a change could cause some people concern because doubling the number of vehicles on the road, and possibly driving longer distances, to move the same number of people, contributes to congestion and emissions. However, there are also social benefits to providing this quality of coverage, because people's experiences riding demand-response transit can be so much better.

[Continued on next page]

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There is another caution about demand-response, which is that as it grows in popularity, the agency may get stuck with increasing costs. In the example above, if twice as many vehicles can handle the old fixed routes' ridership, but more people *really like* the demand-response, perhaps now 9 people per hour request trips. Now the number of vehicle hours that needs to be provided actually triples.

Many transit providers have adapted their demand-response services to manage this demand, and protect themselves from growing costs. They can do this by charging a higher fare, or negotiating with people about when they make their trip (so that they can pair trips together), or requiring advanced reservations. There is a trade-off between low cost-per-rider to the transit agency and promising short wait times that customers would like. Successful demand-response programs set clear policies about this trade-off. If the County wants to guarantee short wait times, it is likely to see overall costs increase significantly. To minimize costs, the County may have to increase promised wait times.

There may be potential for replacing parts of St. Lucie County's transit network in certain parts of the County with demand-response. With further analysis, St. Lucie County will better understand if the costs and benefits make providing coverage in this way feasible.

All-day, all-week service

High ridership tends to arise from all-day, all-week service. Many people that work in service jobs have shifts that are not Monday to Friday, 9 to 5. They have shifts throughout the week at different times of the day. If a person has to be at work before or after transit service is provided, they are not likely to find transit useful. In addition, people who work or go to school during the week value having a chance to do their shopping or visiting by transit on weekends.

In the past decade transit ridership has decreased in most of the US. Yet in a few cities, total ridership has grown or at least held steady as the transit providers shifted resources to remain competitive. Quite a bit of the increase in ridership in these cities has been the result of shifting investments towards weekends.

If St. Lucie County would like to pursue higher ridership, they can consider investing in weekend service, likely starting with Saturdays. In the long term, investments in more early-morning and night service, and Sunday service, would also be part of a higher-ridership strategy.

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

Board/Committee:	St. Lucie LCB
Meeting Date:	May 5, 2021
Item Number:	7c
Item Title:	St. Lucie County Paratransit Plan
Item Origination:	Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC)
UPWP Reference:	Task 3.8–Transportation Disadvantaged Program
Requested Action:	Approve the Paratransit Plan, approve with conditions, or do not approve.
Staff Recommendation:	Because the St. Lucie County Paratransit Plan meets the service criteria of the ADA, it is recommended that the Paratransit Plan be approved.

Attachments

- TPO Staff Report
- CTC Staff Report
- St. Lucie County Paratransit Plan

MEMORANDUM

TO: St. Lucie Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged (LCB)

THROUGH: Peter Buchwald
Executive Director

FROM: Marceia Lathou
Transit Program Manager

DATE: April 21, 2021

SUBJECT: **St. Lucie County Paratransit Plan**

BACKGROUND

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public transit agencies that provide fixed-route service to provide “complementary paratransit” service to people with disabilities who cannot use the fixed-route bus service because of a disability. In general, ADA complementary paratransit service must be provided within 3/4 of a mile of a bus route, at the same hours and days, for no more than twice the regular fixed route fare. The eligibility determination process for ADA complementary paratransit is developed by the transit system in consultation with the local community.

ANALYSIS

St. Lucie County’s Transit Division has developed an ADA paratransit plan that provides information pertaining to eligibility, service area and response time for the paratransit service. Included are an estimate of ADA paratransit demand, an assessment of current services and planned modifications, and a five-year budget for ADA paratransit service. The plan also includes the application and certification process, administrative appeals process, and a policy for attendants as they relate to ADA paratransit service eligibility.

RECOMMENDATION

Because the St. Lucie County Paratransit Plan meets the service criteria of the ADA, it is recommended that the Paratransit Plan be approved.

TO: Members of the Local Coordinating Board

THROUGH: Diana Wesloski, Community Services Department Director MSO (For D.W. 4/15/21)

FROM: Murriah Dekle, Transit Division Director MSO

DATE: April 14, 2021

SUBJECT: St. Lucie County Paratransit Plan and Eligibility Application

Background:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 requires any transit operator providing fixed route public transit service to develop and submit a plan for the implementation of complementary paratransit service. Previously, St. Lucie County's contracted provider developed and submitted the Paratransit Plan. In St. Lucie County, the Board of County Commissioners is the designated Community Transportation Coordinator. As such, the Transit Division has prepared a Paratransit Plan in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Federal Regulations, title 49, Section 37-121-133. This plan must be submitted for approval by the Florida Department of Transportation according to the requirements of the ADA.

Analysis:

The Paratransit Plan assesses six criteria to ensure that the complementary paratransit service is in compliance with ADA requirements. The plan also outlines eligibility criteria for ADA paratransit service. A new paratransit eligibility application and procedure is included in Appendix B of the plan. The new paratransit eligibility application gathers more specific information regarding the needs of applicants which can help identify modifications or travel training that can be provided to assist riders in accessing fixed route services. This information can also help when determining eligibility for other programs such as Advantage Ride, or Direct Connect.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends Board approval of the St. Lucie County Paratransit Plan and Eligibility Application that was developed in January, 2021.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

ST LUCIE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Paratransit Plan

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SECTION 1: PURPOSE

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 any transit operator providing fixed route public transit service is required to develop and submit a plan for the implementation of complementary paratransit service. This plan is to be written and administered according to the provisions of the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 49, Section 37.121 – 133. The Treasure Coast Connector (TCC), a regional fixed route system was implemented on June 3, 2002. According to the requirements of the ADA, a plan must be submitted for approval by The Florida Department of Transportation.

Complementary paratransit service or other special service is necessary for eligible persons whose origins and destinations are within corridors with a width of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile on each side of a fixed route bus service who cannot access the service due to some disability. Within the core service area, service shall be provided to small areas not inside any of the corridors, but which are surrounded by corridors. The complementary paratransit service must provide a level of service comparable to the fixed route bus service. Due to jurisdictional boundaries, service will be provided only within the boundaries of St. Lucie County except for the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile radius of the fixed route in Martin County.

Complementary paratransit service may be provided by on call bus service or paratransit feeder service to an accessible fixed route where such service enables the individual to use the fixed route bus system for their trip.

The ADA Complementary Paratransit plan is submitted by:

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Contact person:	Murriah Dekle, Transit Division Director

SECTION 2: DESCRIPTION OF FIXED ROUTE BUS SERVICE

A description of the fixed route bus service is provided in this section, including a description of the service area, route structure, days and hours of service, fare structure, potential ridership, number of fixed route vehicles and accessibility of vehicles and routes for persons with disabilities.

Description of Service Area

St. Lucie County is located along the southeast coast of Florida and is bordered by Indian River County to the north, Okeechobee County to the west, and Martin County to the south. According to the 2010 Census, St. Lucie County's total area is 688 square miles; 572 square miles consist of land area and 116 square miles of water area. The incorporated areas of St. Lucie County include the municipalities of Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie, and St. Lucie Village. These communities represent the County's largest concentration of urban development. The major transportation network consists of two limited access roadway corridors: I-95 and the Florida Turnpike. Major north-south thoroughfare roads include US 1, SR A1A, and 25th Street. Major east-west roads include SR 70 (Okeechobee Road), SR 68 (Orange Ave), St. Lucie West Blvd, Port St. Lucie Blvd, and Crosstown Parkway.

Route Structure, Days and Hours of Service

The Treasure Coast Connector bus service consists of eight fixed routes. Two Treasure Coast Connector routes provide regional transit connections with Martin and Indian River Counties' transit systems. Routes 1,2,3,4,5 and 6 operate from 6am to 8pm Monday through Friday, and Saturday from 8am to 12pm and 1pm to 4pm. Route 7 operates from 7am to 6pm Monday through Friday only. Route 8 is an express route that operates from 6am to 11am and from 3pm to 6pm Monday through Friday only. There is no fixed route bus service on Sundays.

- **Route 1 (TCC)** was initiated in 2002. Route 1 begins near Downtown Fort Pierce at the Ft. Pierce Intermodal Facility located at North 8th Street and Avenue D. This route terminates at the Treasure Coast Mall in the Jensen Beach section of Martin County. Route 1 is the systems most heavily used bus route and it connects with every Treasure Coast Connector bus route except Route 5.
- **Route 2** began service in 2005. Route 2 connects commercial and residential areas in North Fort Pierce with the route commencing and ending at the Ft. Pierce Intermodal Facility providing immediate connections to Routes 1, 3, 7 and 8.

- **Route 3** was implemented concurrently with Route 2, serving South Fort Pierce. Route 3 connects densely developed suburban-urban residential areas with important community shopping and governmental service centers including Walmart and the Florida Department of Health. Route 3 commences and terminates at the Ft. Pierce Intermodal providing immediate connections to Route 1, 2, 7 and 8.
- **Route 4 (City of Port St. Lucie Trolley)** began operating in 2006 serving the downtown St. Lucie Boulevard and City Center areas. Route 4 serves as a transit connector for many important Port St. Lucie destinations, including the County Annex Building, Town Center, PSL Community Center and City Hall complex. Accordingly, the Port St. Lucie Trolley has its own unique bus stop signage and bus façades demonstrating the importance of this bus route to the City. Route 4 connects with Routes 1, 5, 6 and 8.
- **Route 5** commenced operations in 2009 adding fixed route bus service along SW Gatlin and SW Port St. Lucie Boulevards. Route 5 is designed to connect the rapidly developing Tradition Planned Unit Development with the Port St. Lucie City Hall and Community Center serving residential, municipal government, and community shopping destinations. Route 5 connects with Routes 4, 6 and 8.
- **Route 6** also began operating in 2009. Route 6 connects important major activity centers along the Prima Vista Boulevard/St. Lucie West Boulevard corridor including community shopping centers, recreational areas, library and community resources, and medical services. Route 6 connects with Routes 1, 4, 5 and 8.
- **Route 7** began operating in 2015. Route 7, begins and ends at the Ft. Pierce Intermodal Facility, and extends into adjacent Indian River County providing an immediate connection to their GoLine transit system. Route 7 connects with Route 1, 2, 3 and 8.
- **Route 8** is the newest Treasure Coast Connector bus route and is a pilot service established through the Florida Department of Transportation Service Development funding program. Route 8, begins and ends at the Ft. Pierce Intermodal Facility, and ends at the Port St. Lucie Intermodal Facility. Route 8 connects with Route 1, 2, 3 and 7 at the Fort Pierce Intermodal Facility and Route 4, 5 and 6 at the Port St. Lucie Intermodal Facility.

Fare Structure

There is currently no cost for the fixed route and paratransit system.

Population Served

The service area population served by the fixed route bus service and selected demographic and journey-to-work characteristics of this population were estimated for each route based on data available from the U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program (V2019). Table 1 summarizes the population served within ¼ mile and ¾ mile of bus routes. One-quarter mile is the generally accepted walking distance for fixed route bus service and ¾ mile is the service area required for the ADA paratransit plan.

Table 1
Service Area Population

Route/Corridor	Service Area Population (1/4 Mile)	Service Area Population (3/4 Mile)
Treasure Coast Connector	55,780	158,210
Fort Pierce North	20,926	46,060
Fort Pierce South	6,200	18,300
Port St. Lucie	30,309	101,230

Table 2
Service Area Demographic Information

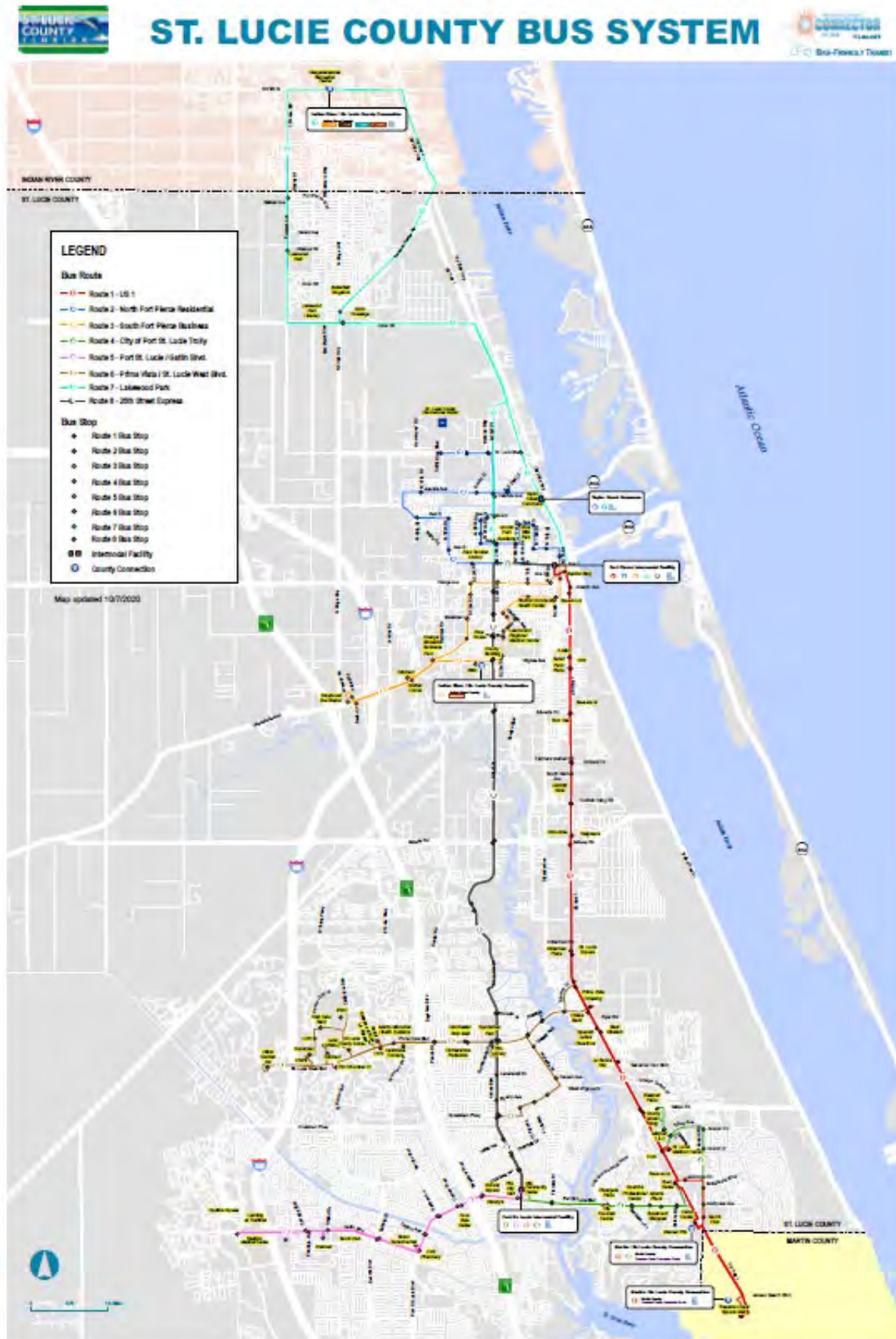
City/County ACS 2015-2019	St. Lucie County	City of Fort Pierce	City of Port St. Lucie
Total Population	328,297	46,103	201,846
% Persons age 65 years and over	24.7%	17.9%	20.5%
% Persons with Disabilities (under age 65)	9.1%	10.2%	8.4%
% Persons in Poverty	10.5%	29.4%	9.0%

Number of Fixed Route Vehicles

Sixteen (16) buses are available for fixed route service in St. Lucie County. These buses have a seating capacity of 26 people, a standing capacity for 18 people with at least 2 slots for wheelchairs.

Accessibility of Vehicles and Routes

All vehicles used in the provision of fixed route bus service are ADA accessible. Stops have been located for complete accessibility and safety.



SECTION 3: DESCRIPTION OF PARATRANSIT SERVICE

This section provides information pertaining to eligibility, service area and response time for the paratransit service.

Inventory of Service Provided by Submitting Agency and Other Agencies

St. Lucie County contracts with a transit service provider. The provider uses an advanced reservation service. Reservations are received at least 24 hours in advance. The dispatchers assign routes and schedule buses. Subscription trips are accepted by passengers for ongoing, regularly scheduled trips. This service operates Monday through Friday from 7am to 6pm and Saturdays from 8am to 4pm.

ADA Complementary Paratransit Service Criteria and Assessment of Compliance

Complementary paratransit service must be characterized by a level of service that is comparable to that provided on the fixed route bus system. Comparable paratransit service is defined in the ADA with six criteria. These criteria are defined below, along with an assessment of St. Lucie County's compliance with the criteria.

1. Service Area – The entity shall provide complementary paratransit service to origins and destinations within corridors with a width $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile on each side of each fixed route. The corridor shall include an area within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile radius at the ends of each fixed route.

St. Lucie County BOCC's contracted transportation agency provides paratransit service throughout St. Lucie County between the hours of 7am to 6pm Monday through Friday and Saturdays from 8am to 4pm, except for holidays. The paratransit service also serves the Martin County area to the Treasure Coast Mall. St. Lucie County BOCC's paratransit service is in compliance with this criterion.

2. Response Time – The entity shall schedule and provide paratransit service to any ADA paratransit eligible person at any requested time on a particular day in response to a request for service made one day before, up to the end of the business day.

St. Lucie County BOCC's paratransit service provider requests advanced reservations at least one day in advance of the requested reservation. Reservationists are available Monday through Friday between the hours of 8am and 5pm.

As necessary the ADA paratransit provider will negotiate pickup times with riders to accommodate previously scheduled trips or to avoid capacity constraints. To encourage multi-passenger trips and increase overall system efficiency, the paratransit provider negotiates pickup times to the maximum extent possible.

St. Lucie County BOCC's contracted provider will pick up ADA eligible persons not more than one hour before or one hour after their desired departure time. St. Lucie County BOCC's paratransit service is in compliance with this criterion.

3. Fares - The fare for a trip charged to an ADA paratransit eligible user of the complementary paratransit service shall not exceed twice the fare that would be charged to an individual paying full fare (without regard to discounts) for a trip of similar length, at a similar time of day, on the entity's fixed-route system, except for social service organizations or agency trips.

The fare for an ADA complementary paratransit trip is free of charge. The contracted paratransit provider does not charge for Personal Care Attendants or Service Animals to ride with an ADA eligible person. St. Lucie County BOCC's paratransit service is in compliance with this criterion.

4. Trip Purpose Restrictions - The entity shall not impose restrictions or priorities based on trip purpose.

St. Lucie County BOCC's paratransit service provider does not impose restrictions or priorities based on trip purpose.

5. Hours and Days of Service - The complementary paratransit service shall be available throughout the same hours and days as the entity's fixed route service.

Advance reservation ADA complementary paratransit service is available Monday through Friday, except holidays, from 6am to 8pm and Saturdays from 8am to 4pm. The Fixed Route system runs the same days and hours. The paratransit system accepts reservations up to fourteen (14) days in advance. St. Lucie County BOCC's paratransit service is in compliance with this criterion.

6. Capacity Constraints - The entity shall not limit the availability of complementary paratransit service to ADA paratransit eligible individuals by any of the following: (1) restrictions on the number of trips provided to an individual, (2) waiting lists for access to the service, (3) any operational pattern or practice that significantly limits the availability of service to ADA paratransit eligible persons. Subscription trips may not absorb more than fifty percent of the number of trips available at any given time of day, unless there is a non-subscription capacity.

St. Lucie County BOCC's paratransit service is in compliance with this criterion since the availability of complementary paratransit service to ADA paratransit eligible individuals is not limited for any reason, including those listed above.

SECTION 4: COMPLEMENTARY PARATRANSIT SERVICE PLAN

The complementary paratransit service plan is presented in this section. Included are an estimate of ADA paratransit demand, an assessment of current services and planned modifications, and a five-year budget for ADA paratransit service.

POTENTIAL ADA PARATRANSIT DEMAND AND COST PROJECTIONS

The potential demand for ADA paratransit service was projected using geographically referenced data from the paratransit scheduling software. The projected demand is considered potential, since this methodology identifies the number of trips that could potentially be ADA paratransit eligible if there were no agency to sponsor the trip.

A sample of trips for the month of November 2020 was evaluated to estimate the potential demand for ADA paratransit service. The total number of paratransit trips in November 2020 was 4,254.

Of these trips, the origins and destinations of the 4,254 trips were matched by zip code areas related to the fixed route, along with a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile buffer around the routes. The procedure indicated that 2,046 trips were characterized by an origin and destination that was within the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile buffer. The trip database also indicates whether the rider has a disability. Using this information, it was determined that 3,423 trips, or nearly 80% percent were taken by individuals with a disability, as determined by St. Lucie County BOCC's eligibility process. A summary of the data and assumptions is provided in Table 3.

This percentage was then applied to the annual number of paratransit trips provided in FY 2020, as indicated in the "FY 2019/2020 Annual Operating Report" submitted to the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. The procedure resulted in the estimation of 97,806 ADA paratransit eligible potential trips for FY 2020/2021. Due to a decrease in Paratransit trips over the past 5 years and an increase in Fixed Route and other alternative programs the annual estimate was decreased by 9% percent annually to project demand from 2021 to 2025. The 2019 Annual Operating report indicated the cost per paratransit trip as \$28.68, which allows for the projection of potential annual costs associated with potential ADA paratransit demand. Potential ADA paratransit demand and cost projections are provided in Table 4. The results indicate that potential demand decreases from an estimated 97,806 in 2021 to 67,701 in 2025 while the cost associated with these trips decreases from more than \$2,800,00.00 in 2021 to more than \$2,200,000.00 in 2025.

Table 3
Data and Assumptions for Projecting ADA Paratransit Demand

Total Paratransit Trips (November 2020)	4,254
Number of trips zip coded	4,254
Estimated number of trips within ¾ mile	2,046
Estimated number of trips for individuals with a disability	3,423
Estimated percent of trips for individuals with a disability	80%
Annual Paratransit Trips (SFY 2019/2020)	134,349
Estimated Annual Trips for individuals with a disability (SFY 2019/2020)	107,479

Table 4
Projected Potential Demand and Costs for ADA Paratransit Service

Year	Demand	Cost/Trip	Cost
2021	97,806	\$29.54	\$2,889,189.20
2022	89,003	\$30.41	\$2,706,581.20
2023	80,993	\$31.32	\$2,536,700.70
2024	73,704	\$32.26	\$2,377,691.00
2025	67,071	\$33.23	\$2,228,769.30
Total	408,577		\$12,738,931.00

ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SERVICES AND PLANNED MODIFICATIONS

Section 3 of this plan included a compliance assessment for St. Lucie County BOCC as it relates to the six ADA paratransit service criteria. Since St. Lucie County BOCC's contracted provider has been operating the paratransit system to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The following six service criteria: service area, response time, fares, trip purpose restrictions, hours and days of service, and capacity constraints, were all in compliance.

SECTION 5: ADA PARATRANSIT SERVICE ELIGIBILITY

This section includes the application and certification process, administrative appeals process, and a policy for visitors as they relate to ADA paratransit service eligibility.

Complementary paratransit service or other special service is necessary for eligible persons whose origins and destinations are within corridors with a width of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile on each side of a fixed route bus service that cannot access the service due to some disability. Within the core service area, the entity also shall provide service to small areas not inside any of the corridors but which are surrounded by corridors. The complementary paratransit service must provide a level of service comparable to the fixed route bus service. Due to jurisdictional boundaries, St. Lucie County BOCC's contracted provider will provide service only within the boundaries of St. Lucie County and within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of the fixed route located in Martin County.

Complementary paratransit service may be provided by on call bus service or paratransit feeder service to an accessible fixed route where such service enables the individual to use the fixed route bus system for their trip.

The following are ADA paratransit eligible:

- Any individual with a disability, permanent or temporary, who is unable, as a result of a physical or mental impairment (including vision impairment), and without the assistance of another individual (except the operator of a wheelchair lift or other boarding assistance device), to board, ride or disembark from any vehicle on the system which is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.
- An individual is eligible with respect to travel on an otherwise accessible route on which the boarding or disembarking location which the individual would use is one at which boarding or disembarking from the vehicle is precluded.
- An individual using a common wheelchair is eligible if the individual's wheelchair cannot be accommodated on an existing vehicle.
- Any individual with a disability who has a specific impairment-related condition which prevents such individual from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location on such system.
- The interaction of architectural barriers, not under the control of the public entity providing fixed route service, and environmental barriers with an individual's specific impairment-related condition, preventing the individual from traveling to a boarding location or from a disembarking location.

Individuals accompanying an ADA paratransit eligible individual shall be provided services as follows:

- One other individual accompanying the ADA paratransit eligible individual shall be provided service.
- If the ADA paratransit eligible individual is traveling with a personal care attendant, service shall be provided to one other individual in addition to the attendant who is accompanying the eligible individual.
- A family member or friend is regarded as a person accompanying the eligible individual, and not as a personal care attendant, unless the family member or friend registered is acting in the capacity of a personal care attendant.
- Additional individuals accompanying the ADA paratransit eligible individual shall be provided service, provided that space is available for them on the paratransit vehicle carrying the ADA paratransit eligible individual and that transportation of the additional individuals will not result in a denial of service to ADA paratransit eligible individuals.
- In order to be considered as “accompanying” the eligible individual, the other individuals shall have the same origin and destination as the eligible individual.

APPLICATION AND CERTIFICATION PROCESS

In order to determine whether a trip is sponsored or non-sponsored, eligibility must be determined. At the time of registration, a client completes an application (please see application attached). Upon obtaining this information, a determination of client eligibility is made in accordance with the data collected. If a client’s trips are eligible for sponsored service, that information is entered into the reservation system for future reference.

The application will be provided in accessible user-friendly formats. The application is required to be filled out and returned to the address provided to determine eligibility. There are three categories of eligibility as follows:

- UNCONDITIONAL status is assigned to individuals who are determined unable to ever independently use the fixed route, even with training.
- TRANSITIONAL status is assigned to individuals who are determined capable of using accessible fixed route busses but cannot do so presently because of temporary disability.
- CONDITIONAL status is assigned to persons who are able to use the fixed route buses most of the time, but would, under certain circumstances and certain trips, be prevented from independently using fixed route buses.

Within twenty-one (21) days of receiving the application a determination of client eligibility is made in accordance with the data collected. If a determination is not made within 21 days, an applicant shall be treated as eligible and provided service until determination is made. St. Lucie County BOCC’s Transit Division shall notify the applicant of eligibility by phone, or in writing. The determination letter shall include the name of the eligible individual, the name and telephone number to schedule trips, an expiration date for eligibility and any conditions or limitations on the individual’s eligibility. If the applicant is determined ineligible, St. Lucie

County BOCC's Transit Division shall provide the applicant with reasons for the finding. A copy of the Appeal process shall be included with this letter.

RECERTIFICATION PROCESS

Paratransit Riders will be notified by phone or in writing when their eligibility is due to expire. The eligibility specialist will complete a phone interview with the rider to update information in the scheduling software. Individuals who have a permanent disability or who are over age 65 will not need to provide an updated application. Certification for these individuals will be automatically renewed once their information is updated in the scheduling software. Riders that are under 65 years of age and only have a temporary disability will need to complete an updated paratransit application and medical verification form. Riders who are unable to be contacted by phone will be sent an application for renewal.

ADA PARATRANSIT APPEAL PROCESS

The ADA requires that transportation providers establish a process for persons to appeal decisions if they are denied access to paratransit service. St. Lucie County BOCC has established an appeals procedure for persons whose applications for paratransit eligibility are denied or for persons who have received suspension notices for other reasons.

An individual may file an appeal when St. Lucie County BOCC denies paratransit service for any of the following reasons:

- Denial of eligibility
- Suspension resulting from excessive no-shows
- Suspension for seriously disruptive behavior

St. Lucie County BOCC's Transit division will inform an applicant or current customer of a decision to deny eligibility status or to suspend service by letter. Individuals have 180 days from the date of the letter informing them of an eligibility denial or service suspension to request an appeal. Requests for appeal must be sent in writing to the St. Lucie Transportation Planning Organization at the following address:

St. Lucie Transportation Planning Organization Office
Coco Vista Centre
466 SW Port St. Lucie Blvd., Suite 111
Port St. Lucie, FL 34953

Once the request for an appeal is received, the Grievance Committee will convene. The Grievance Committee will issue a final written decision within 30 days of the grievance hearing.

Except as provided below, St. Lucie County BOCC will not provide service to individuals who are pursuing an eligibility grievance. However, if the Grievance Committee has not made a decision within 30 days after the hearing, temporary service will be provided. This temporary service will continue until a decision on the grievance is reached.

Upon appeal for a No-show suspension, Paratransit service will be provided pending the appeal; suspension of service will not begin until the appeals process is complete. If a decision is not made within 30 days of the completion of the appeal hearing, the individual appealing the suspension shall be granted service until a final decision has been reached.

Persons requesting an appeal will be notified in writing of the time, date and location of the appeal hearing. Individuals are encouraged to attend the appeal hearing although attendance is not mandatory. If individuals requesting appeals cannot attend, they may have another person(s) represent them at the hearing. If the individual or a designated representative is not present at the appeal hearing, the Appeal Panel will base its' decision on the documentation submitted by St. Lucie County BOCC.

Passengers who exhibit behavior that St. Lucie County BOCC documents as being seriously disruptive will be suspended from receiving paratransit services until the Grievance Committee reviews the suspension. The ADA does not require a transportation provider to offer an appeal process if a customer is suspended because of seriously disruptive behavior.

Passengers who exhibit behavior that is violent or illegal will be denied paratransit services. An Appeals Panel will review an incident of violent or illegal behavior upon request but will only act to verify that such behavior occurred. Verification of violent or illegal behavior will result in denial of paratransit service.

SERVICE COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Any consumer concerns involving timeliness, vehicle condition, quality of service, personnel behavior, and other operational policies is considered a complaint. Any complaint, verbal or written, will be researched to determine its validity. Complaints can be accepted by a member of St. Lucie County BOCC's Transit Division at 772-462-1778 ext. 4. Complaints can also be accepted in written format by sending an email to covellia@stlucieco.org or completing a complaint form online at SLCRide.org. In most cases, a staff member from the Transit Division will resolve the complaint immediately. While some complaints can be resolved through speaking with the consumer, others will require research. The following steps should be followed for all valid complaints.

Critical issues include, but are not limited to, physical, verbal, or substance abuse, and any life-threatening situations (reckless driving, client abandonment, accident/incidents). The

complaint must contain the following data: Customer's name, telephone number, and/or address, the nature of the complaint (service, policy, vehicular), and occurrence date if available. In addition, the phone number and address of the person making the report is to be included.

If there is a resolution of the complaint when the client receives the initial response, the file will be closed.

If a resolution to the complaint cannot be reached through the initial response, the customer must be contacted within two business days to update them on the status of the complaint and follow up with research of this matter.

The complaint should be resolved within ten working days. Responses may be verbal or in writing depending on the severity of the complaint. A maximum of twenty working days is acceptable if there are extenuating circumstances.

If the customer is satisfied with the resolution, the file will be closed. However, if the customer is not satisfied, then the complaint will be referred for further investigation. If St. Lucie County BOCC is unable to resolve the complaint, the customer will be advised of the formal grievance procedures.

LCB GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Section 1: General- The following procedures are established to provide regular opportunities for grievances to be brought before the Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged (LCB) Grievance Committee.

A complaint and grievance are required to have two steps. Complaints are defined as any documented customer concern involving public transportation timeliness, vehicle condition, quality of service, personnel behavior, and other operational policies under the Transportation Disadvantaged program. Grievances are defined as unresolved complaints.

Filing a complaint locally with St. Lucie County BOCC is always the first step in the problem-solving process. If the complaint is not resolved to the customer's satisfaction, generally the next step would be to file a grievance with the LCB. Before hearing the grievance, the LCB Grievance Committee shall determine whether the information supplied by the Grievant constitutes an acceptable grievance and formally accept the grievance. Once a grievance has been heard by the LCB Grievance Committee, and the LCB, then the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (FCTD) would consider hearing the grievance if unresolved.

All communications, of all parties, must be in writing, hand delivered, and date stamped or sent by certified mail return receipt requested. The St. Lucie Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) staff will provide assistance with filing grievances upon request.

Section 2: Filing a Grievance – Should an interested party wish to file a grievance regarding service from the Transportation Disadvantaged Program, a grievance must be filed in writing to the Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged (LCB). Upon request of the Grievant, the LCB shall provide information on filing a grievance. The Grievant must demonstrate or establish a clear violation of a specific law, regulation, or contractual arrangement, copies of which may be obtained from the CTC.

St. Lucie TPO Office
Coco Vista Centre
466 SW Port St. Lucie Blvd., Suite 111
Port St. Lucie, FL 34953

The grievance shall include:

- The name of the Grievant and address where the Grievant can be located.
- A statement of grounds for the grievance made in a clear and concise manner, supplemented by supporting documentation.
- The date of the alleged violation upon which the grievance is based which shall be no more than 180 days before the date of the receipt of the grievance at the St. Lucie TPO office.
- An explanation of relief desired by the Grievant.
- Grievance must be hand delivered or sent certified mail return receipt requested; and
- Copies of all grievances and back up documentation shall be supplied to all interested parties, including the operator/broker, in a timely manner.

Section 3: Grievance Committee – According to the FCTD *Local Coordinating Board and planning Agency Operating guidelines*, the LCB shall appoint a Grievance Committee to serve as a mediator to process and investigate service complaints and grievances from agencies, users, potential users of the system, and the CTC in the designated service area to make recommendations to the LCB. The LCB shall establish procedures to provide regular opportunities for issues to be brought before the grievance Committee and to address them in a timely manner. Members appointed to the Grievance Committee shall be voting members of the LCB.

In December 2007, the LCB approved a motion to allow the LCB Grievance Committee to also serve as the Grievance Committee for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) plan developed by St. Lucie County BOCC.

Section 4: Grievance Process – Once a grievance has been received the Grievance Committee shall meet, consider acceptance of the grievance, consider the grievance if accepted, and issue its recommendation within thirty days of the date the grievance was filed. The Grievant and all other affected parties shall be notified in writing of the date, time, and place of the Grievance Committee meeting where the grievance shall be heard. This written notice shall be mailed at least ten working days in advance of the meeting. A written copy of the recommendation made by the grievance Committee shall be presented to the LCB at its next regularly scheduled meeting and mailed to all the parties involved within ten working days of the date of the issuance of the recommendation. Effort will be made to safeguard the privacy and rights of all persons involved.

Section 5: Appeal to the LCB – The recommendation of the Grievance Committee may be appealed in writing by the Grievant to the LCB, within fifteen working days from the date when the Grievance Committee issued its recommendation.

Once an appeal has been received, the LCB shall meet and issue its recommendation within thirty days of the date the appeal was filed. The Grievant and all other affected parties shall be notified in writing of the date, time, and place of the LCB meeting where the appeal shall be heard. This written notice shall be mailed to all parties involved within ten days of the date the LCB issued its recommendation.

At all meetings of the LCB, the presence in person of a majority of the voting members shall be necessary and sufficient to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 6: Notification of Meetings to Hear Grievances – The LCB shall send notice of the scheduled meeting to hear the grievance in writing to the Grievant and other interested parties. The notices shall clearly state:

- Date, time, and location of the meeting.
- Purposes of the meeting and a statement of issues involved.
- Procedures to be followed during the meeting.

Section 7: Written Recommendation – Written recommendations shall include the following:

- A statement that a meeting was held, involving all parties, representatives, and witnesses. That all were given an opportunity to present their position, demonstrating the violation of a specific law, regulation, or contractual agreement.
- A statement that clearly defines the issues discussed.

- A recommendation and reasons for the recommendation based on information presented; and
- A recommendation to improve the provisions of a cost efficient and effective service based on investigation and findings.

Appeal to the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (FCTD) –

All appeals of the LCB grievance decisions must be submitted to the FCTD in writing. The Grievant may begin this process by contacting the FCTD through the CTD Helpline at (800) 983-2435 or via mail at: Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged; 605 Suwannee St., MS-49; Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450 or by email at www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd. Upon request of the Grievant the FCTD will provide the Grievant with an accessible copy of the FCTD's Grievance Procedures.

Notification of Grievance Procedures – Rider brochures or other documents provided to the users or potential users of the system shall provide information about the complaint and grievance process which include the publishing of the FCTD TD Helpline service for use when local resolution has not occurred. All materials shall be made available upon request by the citizen.

Section 8: Additional Recourse - Apart from the above grievance processes, aggrieved parties, with proper standing, may also have the recourse through the Chapter 120, F.S. administrative hearings process or the judicial court system.

Section 9: Amendments – The LCB Grievance Procedures may be amended by a majority vote of members present if a quorum exists.

POLICY FOR VISITORS

For purpose of this section, a visitor is an individual with disabilities who does not reside in St. Lucie County. St. Lucie County BOCC shall treat a visitor as ADA eligible for its complementary paratransit service who presents documentation that they are ADA eligible from the jurisdiction in which they reside. The eligibility will be available for any combination of 21 days within a 365-day period.

SECTION 6: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Section 6 reviews opportunities for public comment on the ADA Paratransit Service Plan. Significant issues raised by public comment are identified along with the St. Lucie County BOCC's planned response to these issues.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Opportunities for public comment were available through a formal public hearing conducted as part of the ADA Paratransit Plan on the following day/times/locations:

- St. Lucie County Community Services Public Meeting December 18, 2020 at 9 AM.
- St. Lucie County Local Coordinating Board Meeting on May 5, 2021 at 2 PM.
- St. Lucie County BOCC meeting- TBD

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES RAISED BY PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

Board/Committee:	St. Lucie LCB
Meeting Date:	May 5, 2021
Item Number:	8a
Item Title:	Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law
Item Origination:	Florida Statutes
UPWP Reference:	Task 5.1-Public Participation, Education & Outreach
Requested Action:	Discuss and provide comments to Staff.
Staff Recommendation:	Discuss and provide comments to Staff.

Attachments

- TPO Staff Report
- TPO Attorney Staff Report

MEMORANDUM

TO: St. Lucie Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged (LCB)

THROUGH: Peter Buchwald
Executive Director

FROM: Marceia Lathou
Transit Program Manager

DATE: April 21, 2021

SUBJECT: **Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law**

BACKGROUND

Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law, known as the Sunshine Law, applies when two or more members of the same elected or appointed public board or committee meet to discuss or take action on any matter which may foreseeably come before them in their official capacity.

ANALYSIS

The TPO Attorney will present an overview of the Sunshine Law.

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss and provide comments to Staff.

**INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM
ST. LUCIE COUNTY, FLORIDA**

TO: Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged

FROM: Heather Young, Assistant County Attorney

C.A. NO.: 21-0508

DATE: February 22, 2021

SUBJECT: **Sunshine Law - Open Meeting Requirements**

The Local Coordinating Board for the Transportation Disadvantaged is subject to Florida's Sunshine Law, including the open meeting requirements. Under the Sunshine Law, meetings of local government boards and committees must be noticed in advance, open to the public, and minutes of the meeting must be taken. Unless otherwise prescribed by statute or the entity's operating rules, the notice should be posted a minimum of seven (7) days prior to the meeting. A meeting occurs whenever two (2) or more members of a board meet, whether formally or informally, to discuss matters which might come before the body for action in the foreseeable future. This prohibition extends to conversations conducted in person or through other means including telephone, email, and social media such as Facebook or Twitter posts. Accordingly, members should refrain from such discussions unless they occur in a properly noticed meeting held in a location open and accessible to the public. In addition, members should be careful to not use "Reply All" when responding to any group emails sent to members of the Local Coordinating Board.

There are penalties associated with violation of the Sunshine Law. A member of a covered entity who *knowingly* commits a violation is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree which may result in imprisonment of up to sixty (60) days. In addition, a member who commits an *unintentional* violation may be prosecuted for a noncriminal infraction and be subject to a civil penalty of up to five hundred and 00/100 dollars (\$500.00).

If you have any questions regarding the Sunshine Law, please do not hesitate to contact the County Attorney's Office at (772) 462-1441.

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