



## MOBILITY VISION

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# Executive Summary

On August 10, 2005, the President signed the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU). SAFETEA-LU. This Act requires the establishment of a locally developed, coordinated public transit / human services transportation plan for all Federal Transit Administration (FTA) human service transportation programs: Section 5310 Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program; Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program and Section 5317 New Freedom Program.

Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. submitted a proposal for funding from the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) to conduct a regional transportation-planning project, which was approved. The Mountain Empire Regional Transportation Advisory Council (MERTAC ) was formed, and continues as a voluntary association of Public Transit, Human Service Agencies and various interested people and organizations, including invited representatives of local government, whose purposes are to plan for the coordination of people transportation activities and to develop a comprehensive regional mobility plan (RMP) for people. (See appendices for listing of MERTAC members.)

Road construction, maintenance, railroad freight operations and similar activities within the traditional purview of the Department of Transportation, as well as Zoning and Land Use Planning within the purview of local governments, are not within the scope of the Regional mobility plan development and will not be a part of the final Plan. Those functions remain with their existing agencies and are not affected by MERTAC, this RMP or these planning provisions of SAFETEA-LU pertaining to public transit and human service transportation programs.

Other than the initial CTAA Grant to develop the RMP, **there is no funding dedicated to MERTAC from any source, nor is any required, and no new funding is requested** from any source to implement the Regional Mobility Plan. While many agencies are mentioned in the RMP, the RMP is a product of the Transportation Advisory Council and reflects their collective vision, not necessarily the vision of any particular agency. **Support of the RMP and the principles and vision within does not obligate any agency or person to provide funds or resources.**

The RMP is not required to be adopted by any governing body, however, consideration and endorsement of the plan is desired if the governing body has no objections to the goals stated herein.

**In order for progress in any endeavor to be achieved, there must be a “vision” or a plan of action developed to create the steps to achieve the desired outcomes. Realizing that “visions” often take several years to ultimately reach fruition, the Mountain Empire Regional Transportation Advisory Committee presents its vision of the future developments needed to provide transportation services to people who are transportation dependent/disadvantaged and to those who would choose to utilize public transportation within the LENOWISCO region. Generally, a region should be no larger than a planning district.**

MERTAC collected existing information from agencies serving seniors, persons with disabilities, low-income families; from educational institutions and from the U.S. Census Bureau. A survey of transportation-disadvantaged persons and selected employers and their employees was conducted through proxy, mail, Internet and face-to-face interviews. The survey results were provided to MERTAC as part of its deliberation process and are included herein.

The Transportation Advisory Council listed seven policy goals that would guide any activities undertaken in support of this Regional Mobility Plan. These goals are:

- ü **Mobility**
- ü **Accessibility**
- ü **Reliability**
- ü **Efficiency**
- ü **Economy**
- ü **Equity**
- ü **Sustainability**

Recognizing that resources are limited, MERTAC defined the core transportation needs upon which the RMP should focus. These are:

- ü **Community activities** (public events of general interest, parades, historical reenactments, charitable events, public meetings, public worship services, etc.)
- ü **On-going needs and services** (bill paying, grocery shopping, nutritional needs, general shopping, Medicaid and non-Medicaid Medical visits and Pharmacy Prescription refill visits, etc.)
- ü **Recreation** (movies, theatre, physical fitness, quality of life activities, etc.)
- ü **Employment and Post-Secondary Education** (commute to work at service and retail business, service to industrial parks, transportation to Adult Education, Community College and University Education Centers, Workforce Investment Act Service Centers, etc.)

MERTAC then developed long-range goals and short range plans to meet the overall goal of a transportation system that operates twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week and functions as a truly Coordinated Health and Human Services Transportation and Public Transit System for the region.

While all goals are considered interrelated and important, long-range goals can be summarized as:

- ü A “One-Call” 24-7 Regional Transportation Center for and within Planning District 1- a central contact point for all people transportation needs
- ü Filling the funding gaps in existing transportation programs. (See Florida Model in the Appendices.)
- ü Maintain and enhance mobility through increasing trips for access to CORE services, support new start-ups and expansion of existing transportation providers
- ü Support coordination of referral services and Mobility Managers to assist Consumers
- ü Encourage monitoring of provider performance and new technologies like real time vehicle locator services
- ü Provide relevant training to providers, consumers and the public at large
- ü Support regional employers and workers with employment related transportation
- ü Support freedom of choice among consumers for transportation providers and consistent and equitable treatment of trip requests from consumers

- ü Support the creation of a self-sustaining and economically efficient transportation system to serve the LENOWISCO region

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## ***MERTAC Background***

On August 10, 2005, the President signed the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU). SAFETEA-LU. This Act requires the establishment of a locally developed, coordinated public transit / human services transportation plan for all Federal Transit Administration (FTA) human service transportation programs: Section 5310 Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities Program; Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program and Section 5317 New Freedom Program. Planning requirements become mandatory in FY 2007 as a condition of Federal assistance under these programs. JARC planning requirements existed previously and, accordingly, are effective immediately. It is probable that in future years that this requirement may be applied to other public transit and human service people transportation programs, but this is not a certainty.

Since Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. (MEOC), submitted the proposal to Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) for funding to conduct a regional transportation-planning project, it was logical that MEOC become the lead agency in developing and coordinating the planning process. Established in 1974, Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization with a Board of Directors and eight active Advisory Councils. MEOC serves the region as its Public Transportation Agency, Area Agency on Aging and Children's Advocacy Center and provides close to 40 different services to people of all ages in the region. For more information on MEOC, visit its web site at [www.meoc.org](http://www.meoc.org).

After obtaining the planning grant, Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. first created Mountain Empire Regional Transportation Advisory Council (MERTAC), a voluntary association of various interested people and organizations in the community. The purposes of MERTAC continue to be to develop a plan for the coordination of people transportation activities among the various service providers in the area and to develop a comprehensive regional mobility plan (RMP) to enhance the mobility of area residents. Other than the initial CTAA Grant to develop the RMP, there is no funding dedicated to MERTAC from any source, nor is any required.

Road construction, maintenance, railroad freight operations and similar activities within the traditional purview of the Department of Transportation are not within the scope of MERTAC nor the resulting RMP. Those functions remain with their existing agencies and are not affected by MERTAC or the planning provisions of SAFETEA-LU.

Organizations agreeing to serve on the MERTAC are listed in the appendices.

**MERTAC Mobility Vision**

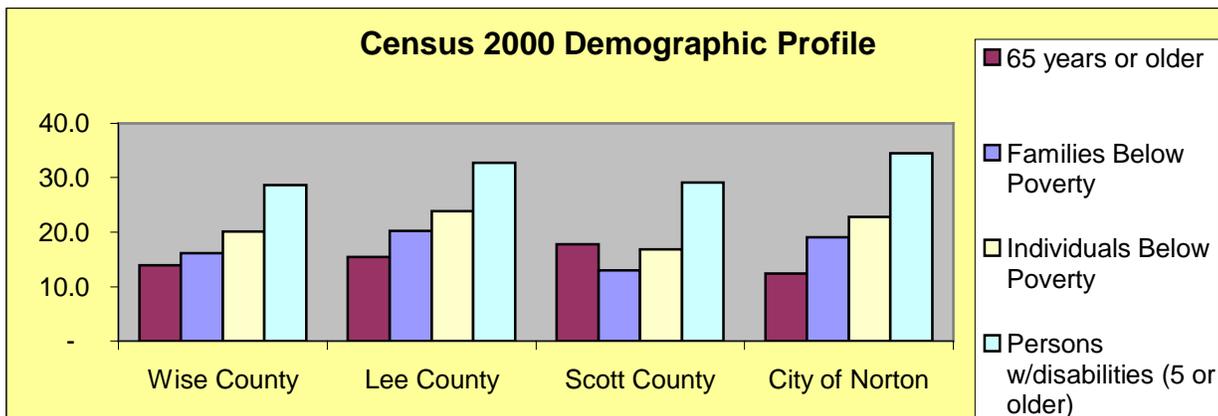
In order for progress in any endeavor to be made, there must be a “vision” or a plan of action developed to create the steps to achieve the desired outcomes. Realizing that a “vision” often take several years to ultimately reach fruition, Mountain Empire Regional Transportation Advisory Committee presents its vision of the future developments needed to provide transportation services to people who are transportation dependent/disadvantaged and those who would choose to utilize public transportation within the LENOWISCO region of Lee, Wise, Scott Counties and the City of Norton.

MERTAC’s Regional Mobility Plan (RMP) is the blueprint to provide transportation to diverse groups of people in our area who share transportation difficulties. While SAFETEA-LU mandates planning and coordination between certain human service and public transit programs, MERTAC is interested in transportation solutions for all people within the region who experience transportation problems. The long-term goal is to use the pooled resources of the stakeholders (as allowed by statute and regulation) contributed on a voluntary basis among the public and private sectors and the local community to provide an Intra-Regional Coordinated Transportation System that is able to provide transportation services to any citizen requesting a ride. The overarching goal would be to provide that service utilizing the most efficient means possible and that the requesting citizen would accomplish their objective by making one call to a coordinated system. One contact for many or all transportation needs is the ideal.

This one-call, coordinated system was selected by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) as the most efficient way to meet an increasing level of need with the limited resources available while also utilizing existing knowledge, skills and resources to the greatest advantage. The Plan’s vision for on-demand Intra-Regional Transportation reflects these facts:

- q 14.9% of the area’s population is over the age of 65 and this segment is expected to swell to nearly 30% of the region’s population by 2020
- q 19% of the region’s families are below poverty level and 21% of Individuals are below poverty level
- q 31.3% of the total population over five is disabled.

Historically, these populations experience the greatest difficulties in obtaining transportation since they tend to be the least able to safely and/or financially use personal automobiles for regular transportation, albeit for differing reasons within each group. This collection of subgroups is often referenced generically as the Transportation Disadvantaged.



Source: 2000 Census, US Census Bureau

The RMP will have a special focus on serving the transportation disadvantaged consisting of persons with disabilities; elderly and low-income families; those who do not have access to a personal automobile; those who are unable to safely operate an auto; and those who cannot afford to operate an automobile. Opportunities for educational and employment related transportation, while not abundant in our rural, low population density region, will also be pursued to the extent possible by Public Transit and are included as well in this plan.

MEOC, as the Area Agency on Aging and the Public Transit provider, will support programs designed to assist senior citizens and others with improving driving safety.

## ***Methodology and Data Sources***

### **Agencies Existing Data**

MERTAC members include most of the human service agencies and the one public transit provider for the region. As such, these agencies were already in possession of data relating to their own client population, which they shared with MERTAC. The Public Transit agency, also the Area Agency on Aging, had existing data on seniors, as well as current and historical Public Transit Ridership, which was provided to MERTAC.

### **Census Data**

Data from the 1999 and 2000 Census, as well as updated and projected data, was obtained from the Census Bureau's web site at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov), the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville web site, <http://www.coopercenter.org> and other public sources.

### **“Region” Defined**

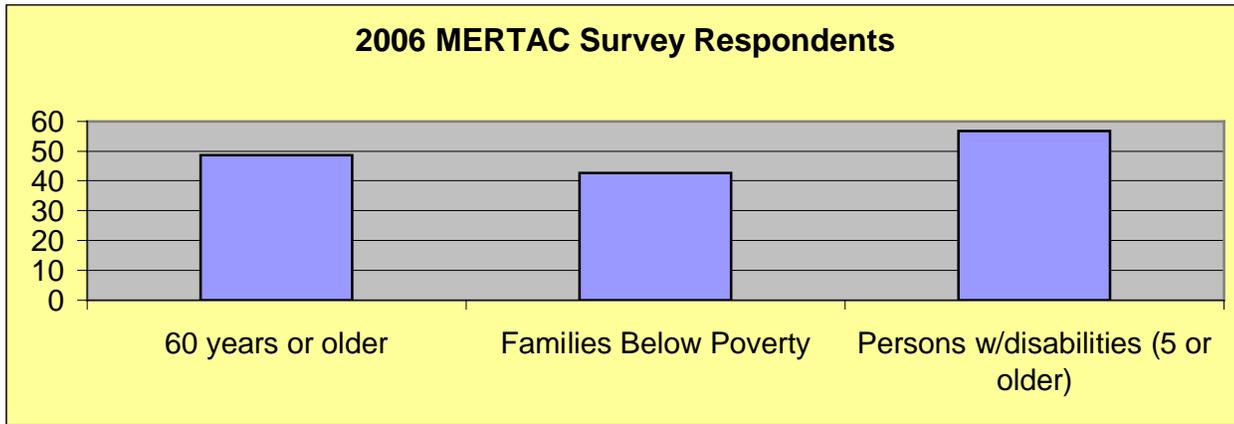
For purposes of this plan, “region” is defined as the area encompassed by a single planning district of the Commonwealth. Much of the regional (i.e. multi-jurisdictional) economic, infrastructure improvements and other cooperative activities within the Commonwealth have a long history of being conducted at this level for the sound reason that is a manageable size while enabling economies of scale, but remaining small enough that the local understanding of conditions and feasibilities is not lost.

### Regional Transportation Disadvantaged Survey

As part of this assessment, MERTAC began disseminating its “Regional Transportation Survey” throughout the LENOWISCO Planning District on May 3, 2006. Public information detailing the launch of the regional survey was released to all area media , posted on MEOC’s web site, publicized through the TAC member organizations and posted in The **Mountain Empire News**. The survey was first scheduled to be completes on July 17, 2006, but return of the survey was extended until August 1, 200, due to the large surveyor response and interest.

Eleven hundred and fifty-five surveys (1155) were completed through mail, Internet, and face-to-face “intercept” contacts. Surveys were also mailed out to several categories of MEOC Transit riders, including Senior Citizens, Cash Paying General Public Riders, Monthly Invoice General Public Riders, and Riders with Disabilities. The survey results indicated that:

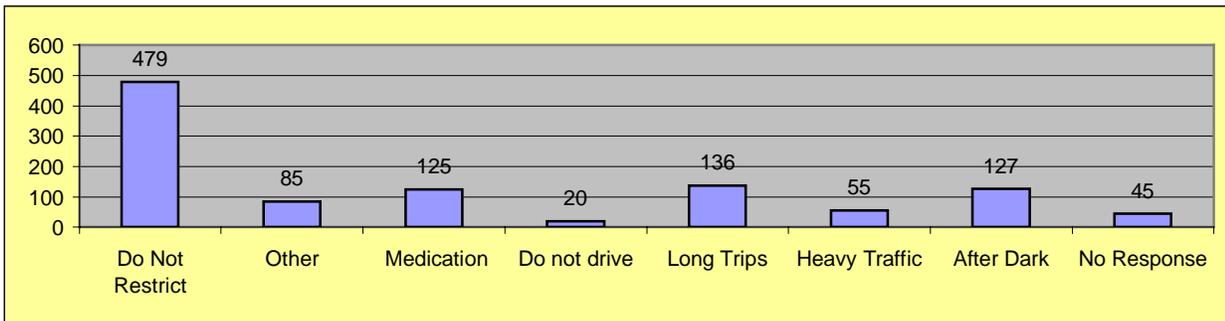
- q 48.7% of respondents were over the age of 60
  - q 42.6% were below poverty level and
  - q 56.8% were disabled.
- Note: Totals exceed 100% as some respondents were in multiple categories.



Additional information from the 1,155 surveys collected showed that:

- q 49.8% of respondents voluntarily restrict their driving

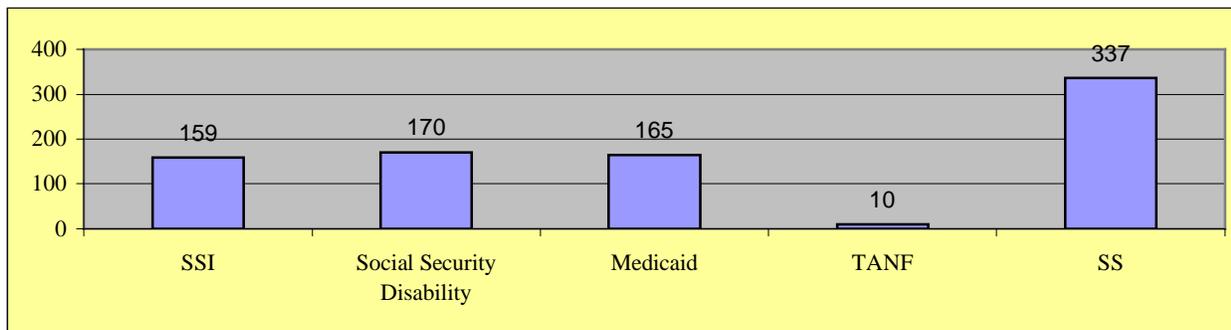
The series titled “Other” included short-term memory, doctor’s restriction, bad eyesight or blindness, cannot afford vehicle, age, and health.



Totals exceed 100% as some respondents were in multiple categories.

Note:

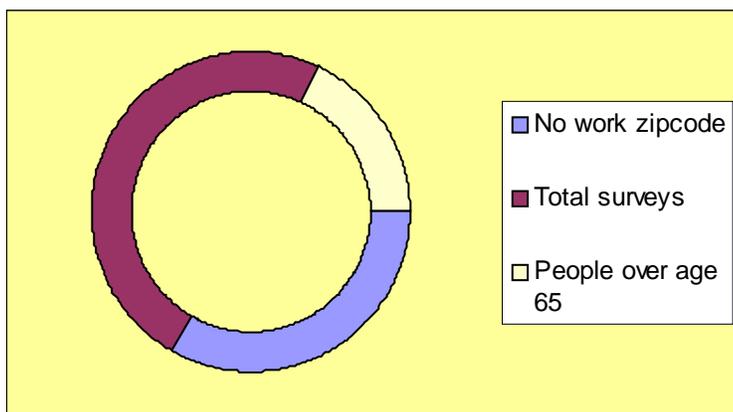
- q 73.3% receive some type of federal assistance, either SSI, Social Security Disability, Medicaid, TANF or Social Security



Note:

Totals exceed 100% as some respondents were in multiple categories.

- q 51.3% of survey respondents listed no “work zip code”. Since such a large number of respondents were elderly or disabled, this not necessarily an indication of unemployment.



Many Participants offered Personal Responses to the Survey and many of these are included in the Appendices.

### General Conclusions of the Transportation Disadvantaged

The data indicates that senior citizens, people with disabilities and people at and below the poverty level all perceive that there is a considerable lack of affordable transportation choices and availability in the region.

While Medicaid Transportation can meet some of the basic needs for travel to routine and urgent medical appointments for individuals who are medically indigent or disabled, it does not provide transportation for grocery shopping, paying bills, or even the most basic of recreational activities—simply getting out of the house and enjoying a walk in the park. Medicare only provides emergency ambulance transportation for senior citizens, making no provision for non-emergency transportation—not even the trip home after discharge from the hospital.

Transportation provided by human service programs—such as Aging, Mental Health, Mental Retardation, Centers for Independent Living, and so forth—are usually limited by available funding and required first priorities for federally mandated services required under these programs. These conditions leave very little, if any, funding for non-programmatic activities.

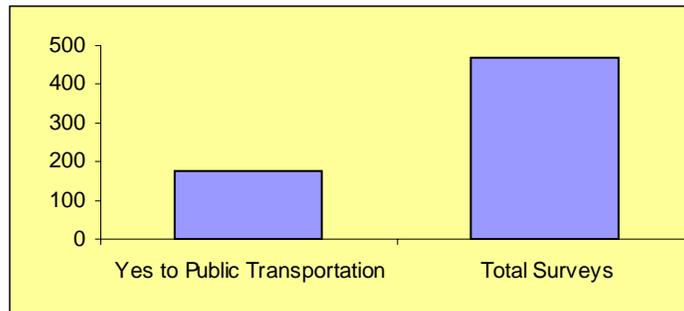
Public Transit within the region is provided by the Area Agency on Aging, Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. MEOC Transit is operated as a Demand Response service and provides the level of service most often required by senior citizens and persons with disabilities, although deviated fixed route, fixed route, and other services have and can be provided as funding is available and if these models are demonstrated to produce ridership..

All of MEOC's buses are open to the public of all ages. MEOC is an enrolled Medicaid Transportation Provider within PSA1 and has contracts with Frontier Health, Developmental Services, the Veteran's Administration the UMWA and other organizations for program related transportation services. MEOC also works under contract with the Medicaid Transportation Broker, LogistiCare, Inc. (LCI), to provide a weekday "Where's My Ride" and "Facility" non-emergency call center service for Medicaid Recipients in PSA1 whose assigned Medicaid Transportation Provider has not arrived on schedule. Through these fee-for-service activities and many other means, MEOC raises much of the fifty percent (50%) local match (around \$400,000 per year) required to provide Public Transit service to the general public.

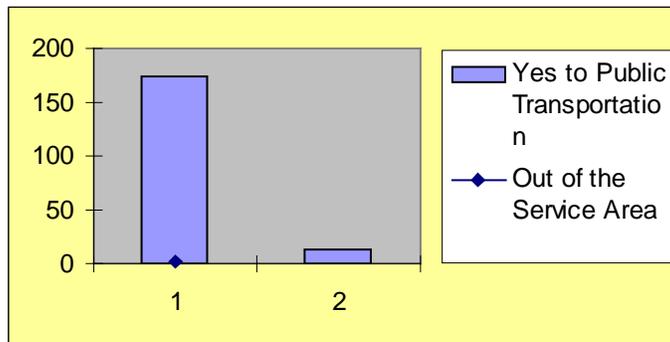
### ***Employer/Employee Transportation Survey***

As part of this assessment, MERTAC began administering a distinctly separate “Employer/Employee Transportation Survey” throughout the LENOWISCO Planning District on July 21, 2006. We contacted a sampling of employers likely to have a large number of employees at a single location. It was requested that they distribute surveys to their employees regarding their transportation to and from work. Through this method, MERTAC distributed 2,000 surveys to various employers including hospitals, factories, retail, local governments and educational facilities. The survey was completed August 31, 2006 with 24% of the distributed employee surveys returned. Compilation of this data continued through the end of November. The returned data revealed the following:

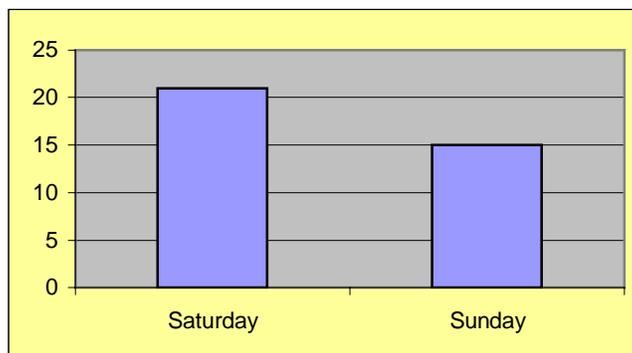
- q 37% of employees want public transportation, whether it is door to door or a park and ride service.



- q 87% of the 37% live within our service area

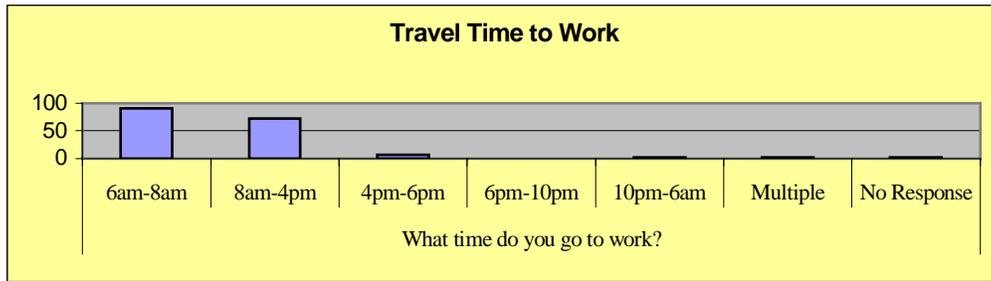


- q 13% of employee respondents need weekend transportation

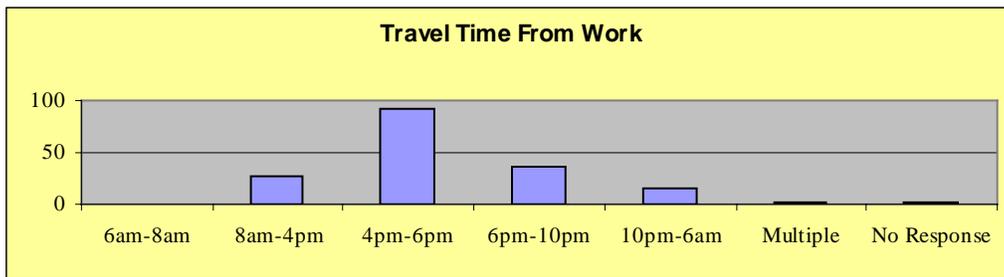


MERTAC Regional Mobility Plan

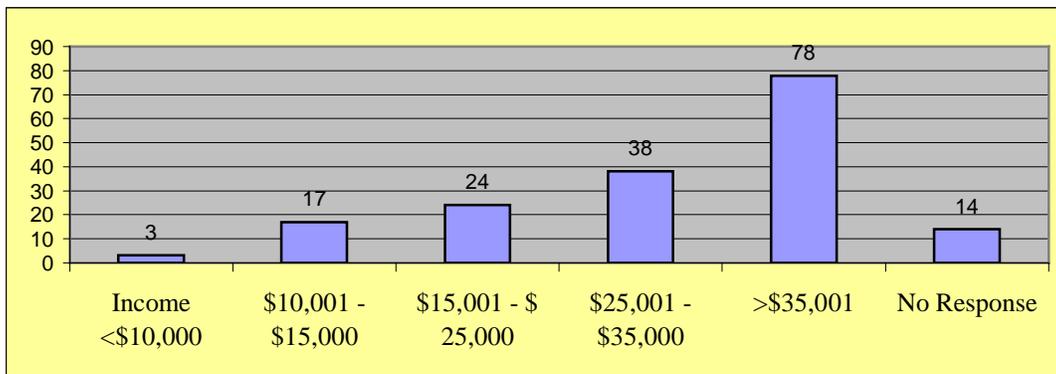
- q 52% of employee respondents need to be transported for work between 6 am – 8 am
- q 42% need transported for work between 8 am – 4 pm



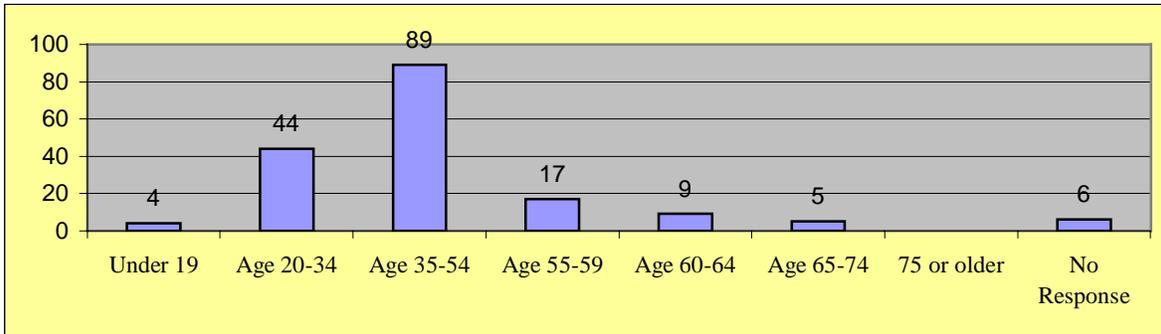
- q 54% of employee respondents need transportation from work between 4 pm – 6 pm
- q 21% need transportation from work between 6 pm – 10 pm, again, something for which there is no funding at this time.



- q 45% of employee respondents wanting transportation are in the over \$35,000 income range
- q 2% wanting transportation are in the under \$10,000 income range



- q 94% of employee respondents wanting transportation are between the ages of 19 and 65
- q 3% of employee respondents wanting transportation are over the age of 65
- q 3% of employee respondents wanting transportation are under the age of 19



### General Conclusions Employee Transportation

It would appear from the data that most respondent employees who desire transportation live within PSA 1. The data indicate a small number of people outside our area appear to be traveling here for employment.

From the data above, it appears that most employees desiring public transportation to and from work are in the middle-income bracket and are adult workers. While employers, government or the workers may have some interest in utilizing traditional commuter public transit services, neither is willing to provide the extra cost share to provide this type of transportation. For this reason, the TAC's decision is to continue to focus efforts on serving the more vulnerable and underserved portions of the region's population.

## Service And Funding Gaps

Several common themes emerged from the surveys and from discussions among MERTAC members. One theme was: MEOC, as the region’s Public Transit provider, should be the leader in identifying gaps in service and planning and implementing ways to fill these gaps. The second theme was: MEOC should take the lead role since there is a wealth of accumulated people transportation knowledge at MEOC that cannot be replicated elsewhere. The third theme is: Transportation partners must work actively in cooperation and collaboration with MEOC and assist with providing and locating funding to address transportation service gaps.

While many of these gaps and barriers in service have related issues in funding and regulation, these items are separated in the chart below for clarity’s sake.

### Service Gaps

Over the course of the planning process, the TAC identified a number of gaps in service. The Committee than prioritized these to the major areas listed below.

Item	Service Gap	Comment	Related Issues	Priority (1=High)	Key Players	TAC Strategies
SG1	Availability of Service	1) Saturday 2) Saturday After 5:00 p.m. 3) Friday After 5:00 p.m.	1) Taxi Availability 2) Public Transit Availability	1	Local Government; MEOC; Taxi Operators; Small Business Development Centers; Entrepreneurs; Churches; Schools; Civic Groups; Merchants	1) Service Subsidy 2) Ride Subsidy 3) Sliding Scale Fee 4) Set Fee 5) Promote New Taxi Service Start Ups 6) Medicaid Transportation Participation
SG2	Limited Taxi Services Available	1) Western Lee County 2) Scott County-Duffield; Dungannon	1) Medicaid Transportation Providers Participation 2) Rider Side Subsidy	1	Same as SG2 Key Players	1) Same as SG2 TAC Strategies
SG3	Service to Regional Medical Centers	1) Better Service to Kingsport Medical Centers 2) Start Service to Bristol Medical Centers 3) Start Service to Johnson City Medical Centers	1) See SG1 2) See SG2	2	Medical Centers; Participating Programs; MEOC; Local Government; Schools; Churches; Civic Groups	1) Same as SG2 and 2) Contact Medical Centers for Support 3) Use Smaller Vehicles 4) Use Subcontractors 5) Use Volunteers

**Barriers**

The TAC identified the following barriers operative in PSA 1 that could impact the success of the RMP..

<b>Item</b>	<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Related Issues</b>	<b>Priority (1=High)</b>	<b>Key Players</b>	<b>TAC Strategies</b>
B1	Public Transit Image	Redesign Bus Image	Advertise that Bus is Available to All	1	MEOC	1) Use Marketing Intern
B2	One Contact Point	1) Talk to Real Person 24/7	1) Shared Resources	1	MEOC; Individual Businesses; Individual Agencies; Individual Consumers	1) Voluntary Participation
B3	Land Use / Zoning/ Development	1) Proximity to CORE service areas affects level and cost of service to these facilities 2) Fixed Route Service Permitted in Zone	1) Future Fixed Route Services 2) Current Demand Response Service to Elderly, H/C and Low Income Housing Location	3	Local Government	1) Local government review of location of new housing and other facilities during the permitting process
B4	Public Transit and Other Regulations (i.e. School Bus, Church, IRS, etc.)	1) All Federal and State Regulations Applying to Public Transit Pass-Through to Subcontractors, like Taxies and Volunteers, with Full Force and Effect Making it Difficult for Them to be Paid from Public Transit Funds	1) Public Transit Provider Must Maintain Regulatory Compliance with Any Service Funded from Public Transit Funds 2) Other Agencies willing to Share Resources, like Vehicles, will still have to comply with their regulations and / or governing bodies.	1	Congress; Federal Transit Administration; Virginia Legislature; Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation; Other Governing Bodies	1) Maintain Compliance

## Funding Gaps

The TAC identified the following funding gaps that must be addressed in accomplishing the goals of the Regional mobility plan. The Transportation Advisory Committee felt that overall the funding gap presents the greatest obstacle to full realization of the Regional mobility plan. For clarity, this is broken down into discrete components to facilitate analysis and remedial action.

Item	Barrier	Comments	Related Issues	Priority (1=High)	Key Players	TAC Strategies
FG1	Deficit Funding of Public Transit Operations (FTA 5311 Program)	1) Federal Funds Reimburse Up To 50 Cents of Each Operating Dollar Spent, After Deduction of Fares and Certain other Revenues, Leaving 50% of Funds to be Raised Locally 2) State funds help, but cannot be used to fund Driver expenses.	1) Future Federal Funding Levels 2) Level of Service Provided Locally 3) Trips Cannot Be Limited By Purpose 4) Regulations Pass-Thru to Subcontractors (Taxi, etc.) 5) Capital Funding Currently Requires Only 20% Local Match	1	All Non-Federal Potential Sources of Funds; MEOC; All Interested Parties	1) Donations 2) Fund Raisers 3) Charter Service Revenues 4) Special Service Revenues 5) General State Funds 6) Dedicated State Funds 7) General Local Funds 8) Dedicated Local Funds
FG2	Non-Public Transit Funds for Subsidy of Taxi Rides and Volunteer Mileage	1) It May be Possible to Locate Grants that can be used to Subsidize Taxi Rides and Gas Vouchers for Volunteers	1) FTA Regulatory Compliance and Separation of Fund Accounting 2) No Permanent Source of Local Match Funds	1	Everyone	1) See FG1 Strategies 2) Private Foundation Grants TAC Strategies
FG3	Non-Public Transit Funding for Expenses of Shared Resource Use	1) Church Vans or School Buses used in Shared or Pooled Resource Venues will still have to be Insured, Fueled, and Maintained	1) Regulatory Compliance 2) Governing Body Compliance	2	Involved Parties in each Endeavor	1) See FG2 Strategies 2) Involved Parties in Each Endeavor

## Funding and Service Models

One funding method that the Federal Transit Administration found noteworthy was the Florida Model. In short, in this model the state of Florida required counties, cities and towns to designate a Transportation Coordinator for its jurisdiction. This could either be a person or an agency. Most jurisdictions decided to cooperate and form multi-county designations of a particular agency. Additionally, the state of Florida added \$1.00 to the cost of a motor vehicle registration (much like Virginia's original \$1 for Life) with proceeds to be distributed to the designated Transportation Coordinators to cover the costs of trips for people who had no other funding source to cover that cost. For example, if Medicaid or some other agency did not cover the trip costs, these funds were

to be used by the Transportation Coordinator for that purpose. See the “**Florida Plan**” Appendix for more information.

To illustrate how important this model has been in Florida, Florida received the 2004 *United We Ride State Leadership Award* from Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta. In the same month, the U.S. Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) released its independent assessment showing that this Coordinated Transportation approach **saved the State of Florida \$41.26 million dollars in Medicaid benefits**. Further AHCA analysis showed that in the absence of this Coordinated Transportation system, Florida would have spent an additional \$22.22 million dollars!

Many models have been tried over the years in many places in the US and other countries. However, coordination and cooperation have always played an important role in any successful model concerned primarily with their clients’ safety and well-being. In transporting the elderly, the frail and persons with cognitive and physical disabilities, the for-profit model has usually fallen short of providing adequate care. However, the specific integration of for-profit, non-profit and government in the Florida Model have proven quite successful in serving the needs of the transportation disadvantaged as well as the financial necessity to deliver services in a cost effectively.

In order for the Florida model to be implemented in Virginia, there would have be an increased level of cooperation and coordination at the state level, as well as some specific actions by the Governor and/or General Assembly. One suggested and fairly quick way of promoting a test of this model would be by an Executive Order from the Governor directing all agencies providing transportation and/or that have transportation line items in their budgets to redirect those funds to a locally designated coordinator. The local transportation coordination system would then be directed to provide the consumers trip regardless of the mode (bus, taxi, van, stretcher van, or contract with other private providers).

## ***Coordination and Cooperation***

In low population density areas, it is likely that traditional public transit will never be able to meet all transportation needs. Nor is it likely that any single service agency will ever have the funding needed to meet all the needs of its clients, including transportation. This is why the regional service agencies have for many decades coordinated and cooperated with one another to better serve all their respective clients. A good illustration is Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Holston Mental Health (now Frontier Health) and Developmental Services, Inc. that have had informal transportation sharing relationships as far back as the early 1980's. Formal relations among these agencies date to the late 1980's and early 1990's. MEOC has also partnered with numerous other agencies in the region on Transportation, including the Departments of Social Services, Public Housing Authorities, and Mountain Empire Community College. MEOC has partnered twice with the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services in Pilot Projects and introduced the Transportation Brokerage Model in Virginia. While all these partnerships demonstrated the success of coordination, funding issues were often both the fuel for the ship and later the shoals upon which it foundered as funding sources and regulations continued to change. However, change is always an opportunity to work together for the benefit of all.

### **Existing Strengths**

The picture for regional people transportation is not all gloomy. The LENWISCO region has many pre-existing strengths to build upon and expand into new areas of opportunity. Using the same method of analysis for consistency, some are listed below.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Related Issues</b>	<b>Importance (1=High)</b>	<b>Key Players</b>	<b>TAC Strategies</b>
ES1	Existing Transportation Knowledge and a Track Record of Successful Cooperation	1) MEOC has been providing transportation services in PSA1 for 32 years and just completed a new Transit Operations Facility	1) See Appendices for more information on MEOC and Transportation; Historical Coordination Partners of note: Frontier Health, Developmental Services Inc, Junction Center for Independent Living, Virginia Medicaid	1	MEOC; Partner Agencies; Local Government; Public At Large	1) Utilize MEOC Knowledge and Resources for Technical, Operational and Administrative Support
ES2	Spirit of Cooperation	1) People in our Region are ready and eager to help one another		1	Everyone	1) Reach out to the Community
ES3	New Federal Mandate for Planning	5310, 5311, JARC and New Freedom Programs	1) SAFETEA-LU; 2) Planning should not become a Bureaucratic Process Devoid of Human Contact and Personal Communications	1	Public Transit; Human Service Transportation Providers	1) This Regional mobility plan; 2) The Planning Process

## ***Policy Goals***

The Mountain Empire Regional Transportation Advisory Council's Mobility Vision is to achieve a "One-Call", 24-7 Regional Transportation System. This One-Call system shall focus on providing non-emergency transportation to the general public with an emphasis on serving the elderly, disabled and low-income residents of Southwest Virginia. The Vision provides for the coordination of 24-7 Regional Transportation activities, the development of this Regional mobility plan (RMP) and the inclusion of local government support. To accomplish this vision, MERTAC has established these guiding goals and principles.

### **Seven Policy Goals**

At the core of the Regional mobility plan for mobility lie seven policy goals. Policy is the compass by which we set out course. Many specific actions will take place over the next decade or two, but the TAC feels that these seven guiding principles should always be foremost in our minds and be the compass by which we chart our course into the future of people transportation.

#### **Mobility**

Sustain and improve the mobility of persons with disabilities, elderly, low-income families, students, other transportation disadvantaged persons and the public at large by assisting them in arranging travel and providing travel to locations where CORE needs can be satisfied and quality of life activities conducted.

#### **Accessibility**

To provide a single, widely known contact point or "*Transportation Coordinator*" where Client Transportation, Public Transit and transportation for persons with disabilities and human services is understood, arranged and provided by whatever means are appropriate and available, while maximizing ease of use for Customers and benefits to the public at large.

#### **Reliability**

To assure that trip requests are properly processed, appropriately handled, scheduled, and delivered within stated parameters of the involved providers, and to support and encourage formation of reliability standards that are user friendly and relevant

#### **Efficiency**

To control and minimize to the extent practical, unit costs of administration and service, support and promote the development and adoption of appropriate on time and other performance measures among participating providers.

#### **Economy**

To support transportation initiatives which support economic development and which have positive economic impacts on the employers and employees of the region.

**Equity**

To promote access to transportation to people with transportation needs as well as to business, employers, agencies, institutions and programs that benefit from having those needs met. Access should be as widely available as funding permits to those within the region regardless of geographic sub-area or demographic group.

**Sustainability**

To support continued development of a system of coordinated transportation for the region and to support current and new funding sources to fill existing and future fiscal gaps in service.

## ***CORE Transportation Services***

The overall conclusion of the Transportation Advisory Committee is that transportation is a vital service to the community, not only to the transportation disadvantaged segments of the population, but to the public at large. The basic services people access through transportation are those that do not lend themselves to “home delivery”, but are very necessary for the continued physical and mental health of the individual and the family.

### ***Core Needs defined***

The TAC has defined the core needs requiring transportation of the individual to where the need can be physically met, especially for the target groups, to be:

- ü **C**ommunity activities (public events of general interest, parades, historical reenactments, charitable events, public meetings, public worship services, etc.)
- ü **O**n-going needs and services (bill paying, grocery shopping, nutritional needs, general shopping, Medicaid and non-Medicaid Medical visits and Pharmacy Prescription refill visits, etc.)
- ü **R**ecreation (movies, theatre, physical fitness, quality of life activities, etc.)
- ü **E**mployment and post-secondary Education (commute to work at service and retail business, service to industrial parks, transportation to Adult Education, Community College and University Education centers, Workforce Investment Act Service Centers, etc.)

## ***Measuring The Plan’s Success***

### **Long Range Goals**

While all goals are considered interrelated and important, “One-Call” 24-7 Regional Transportation to all geographic areas and demographic groups is considered to be the Plan’s top priority and its long-term goal. Establishing a central contact point for all people transportation needs and filling of the funding gaps in existing transportation programs are most crucial towards this end. (See implementation of the Florida Model above)

The following measures are identified in Table 1 with policy objectives that will help ultimately to achieve the Plan’s seven policy goals: Mobility, Accessibility, Reliability, Efficiency, Economy, Equity and Sustainability. Individual agencies should develop specific short range (one to three year) action plans that support these long-range goals. Agencies that choose to do so are encouraged to share these plans with the TAC.

**Table 1 – Policy Objectives**

**TABLE 1 – POLICY OBJECTIVES**

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>POLICY OBJECTIVES AND SUPPORTING TASKS</b> <b>(The following are not listed in any particular order.)</b>
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<b>A. MOBILITY</b>
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1. Sustain Mobility
  - a. MEOC should continue to provide coordinated Human Service Transportation and Public Transit services at the highest level permitted by available funding
  - b. Support the Adoption of Regional mobility plan by local governments
  - c. Maintain intra-regional coordinated transportation progress to date
  - d. Support the development of additional and alternative methods of providing local match funding to maintain existing transportation grants and programs.
  
2. Improve Mobility
  - a. Reach new riders, including employee commuter transportation for regional employers, especially in industrial parks and areas of job concentration
  - b. Increase trips for access to core services
  - c. Generate local match funds for targeted services
  - d. Encourage sharing of transportation resources among all providers
  - e. Support and encourage Inter-Regional transportation coordination
  - f. Encourage new start ups and expansion of existing transportation providers in the regional market
  - g. Encourage and support development of a “One-Call” centralized location for all transportation needs, inquiries and requests
  - h. Encourage and support development of coordination and referral services
  - i. Encourage and support development of transportation solutions both with and without governmental subsidy, both for-profit and non-profit
  - j. Encourage and support development of Mobility Managers to assist people with finding and utilizing mobility solutions.

<b>B. ACCESSIBILITY</b>
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1. Official designation of one contact point (“One-Call” Shopping) for all people transportation needs within the region.
2. Encourage and support development of Mobility Managers to assist people with finding and utilizing mobility solutions.
3. Educate providers and enhance awareness about Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for public and private transportation providers.
4. Educate the public about Public and Human Service Transportation in the region.

**TABLE 1 – POLICY OBJECTIVES - Continued**

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>POLICY OBJECTIVES AND SUPPORTING TASKS</b> (The following are not listed in any particular order.)
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<b>C. RELIABILITY</b>
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1. To encourage the adoption by transportation providers in the region of appropriate and compatible methods (electronic and manual) for tracking performance of trip requests, scheduling and assigning trips to the appropriate or requested provider and confirmation of deliverance of trips within stated performance parameters.
2. To encourage the adoption by transportation providers in the region of appropriate and compatible methods (electronic and manual) for Fleet Management activities, i.e. vehicle safety and performance, real-time vehicle location information and reliable and widely available two-way communication, which significantly improves fleet performance, capabilities and service to the customer.

<b>D. EFFICIENCY</b>
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1. Provide training to all types of transportation owners, managers and employees in relevant areas, such as basic accounting and financial analysis, insurance needs and requirements, fleet maintenance and management, communications, recordkeeping, safety, first aid and other knowledge applicable to the transportation industry.
2. Coordinate with the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), the Community Transportation Association of Virginia (CTAV), other recognized professional transportation organizations and Peer Networks for training, cooperation and technical assistance.
3. Promotion of on-time performance through the development and use of appropriate uniform standards, use of appropriate and compatible technologies, and fleet and trip analysis methods.

<b>E. ECONOMY</b>
-------------------

1. Support regional employers, especially in industrial parks and areas of job concentration, with employee commuter work shuttles.
2. Designation and development of Park and Ride lots including shuttle bus shelters in appropriate locations to facilitate core transportation, especially employment related.
3. Support regional planning and zoning activities and initiatives and projects that are “people transportation aware”.
4. Encourage new start-ups and expansion of existing transportation providers in the regional market.
5. Support coordination of services among agencies, consolidation of various activities into single agencies where reasonable and effective, and eliminate redundancies.

**TABLE 1 – POLICY OBJECTIVES - Continued**

<b>GOAL</b>	<b>POLICY OBJECTIVES AND SUPPORTING TASKS</b> <b>(The following are not listed in any particular order.)</b>
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<b>F. EQUITY</b>
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1. Educate and encourage the public about the use of public transportation and Mobility Managers.
2. Establish a system that ensures that ALL requests having the same eligibility are treated under the same set of guidelines.
3. Support establishment of a system of Freedom of Choice for Consumers among transportation providers.

<b>G. SUSTAINABILITY</b>
--------------------------

1. To continue to support the creation of a self-sustaining and economically efficient transportation system to serve the region.
2. To continue the existing system of coordinated transportation for the region.
3. To use new and existing technologies, strategies and programs to support continuing transportation activities in the region.
4. To support the continuance of existing funding sources and seek new funding sources to fill existing as well as future fiscal gaps in service provision.
5. Support establishment of a state or regional funding mechanism or earmark funding source to assist transportation agencies in meeting local match needs for state and federal transportation grants.

**Short range plans and activities**

The TAC discussed and reviewed the last several decades of progress on people transportation by the various agencies within the region; and indeed, in the three planning districts west of Roanoke through guest speaker visits from the transportation agencies in those districts. Using history as a teacher and our stated Policy Goals as our compass, the TAC determined and agreed upon the plans and activities for the next one to three years. These plans are detailed in Table 2. To a large extent, these plans necessarily involve MEOC as the largest transportation provider and the only Public Transit provider in the region as recognized by the Commonwealth and the governing bodies of Lee, Scott and Wise Counties and the City of Norton, Virginia.

Many of the activities listed in Table 2 are only the first, or in many cases the 10<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>, step in a process that will indeed take many years to attain fruition. Adoption and active support of an effective service delivery model and dedicated funding mechanisms for providing matching funds, as in the Florida Model discussed in the Appendices, can shorten this time frame.

**Table 2 – Short Range Plans**

TABLE 2 – SUB-ACTIVITIES BY OBJECTIVE & TASK

OBJECTIVE & SUPPORTING TASKS	SUB-ACTIVITIES
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**A. MOBILITY**

1.A.1. Sustaining Mobility

- a. Continue to cooperate and work with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), the Virginia Department for the Aging (VDA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Frontier Health, LogistiCare, Inc., Medicaid, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Health and Retirement Funds, the Veteran’s Administration and other state and federal agencies, regional and local organizations, governing bodies and private organizations to deliver the best affordable mix of transportation services.
- b. Investigate FTA Charter Exemption status and associated operational changes and schedule of fees necessary to make such an action practicable, including a market assessment of the projected demand for such services at the FTA mandated Fully Allocated Cost Recovery price.
- c. MEOC staff and MERTAC members will present this draft plan to local governing bodies by January 2007, seeking endorsement so that FTA JARC, 5310 and New Freedom federal funding may be sought in FY08 and beyond, especially to fund “Mobility Mangers” to assist individuals with meeting their transportation needs.
- d. MEOC shall continue to seek local match revenues for existing services through the use of contributions, fee for service revenue, and contributions from local governments and organizations.
- e. Run advertisements with content explaining where to call for various transportation services within the region and contact medical facilities, doctor’s offices, clinics and pharmacies regarding patient information concerning public and private transportation that may be available. This also supports the “one call does it all” concept and supports a re-emerging private taxi industry in the region.

TABLE 2 – SUB-ACTIVITIES BY OBJECTIVE &amp; TASK

OBJECTIVE & SUPPORTING TASKS	SUB-ACTIVITIES
1.A.2. Improving Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Work with the Virginia Employment Commission, Workforce Investment Board (WIB), Industrial Development Authorities (IDA) and Major Employers to follow up the results of the Employer and Employee Surveys of Summer 2006 to determine specific geographic concentrations of employees requiring transportation and employers or others interested in providing the local match necessary to provide this service.</li> <li>b. Inform and educate employers, employees and the public about tax breaks for employers for employee use of public transportation.</li> <li>c. Explorer JARC opportunities with District III Governmental Cooperative, Four County Transit, MEOC Transit, the WIB, Major Employers and others for a three Planning District wide Pilot JARC Employment Transportation Project.</li> <li>d. Pursue the endorsement of this RMP so that MEOC may make application for at least one Mobility Manager position in FY08 to assist individuals and individuals with disabilities to arrange and obtain appropriate travel through compliant providers and volunteers.</li> <li>e. Survey results showed more medical and core need trips are needed (See Appendices). Conduct a follow-up survey of users to determine more specifically the days and hours and types of additional service needed in order to plan for the best way to meet such needs with existing and future potential resources. MEOC will contract grocery stores to pursuer customer education about transportation resources.</li> <li>f. Offer to local community sponsors and town and county governments additional days or hours of transportation services, demand responsive or route deviation, for residents of their community in return for sponsorship of non-federal local match required to fund such additional services.</li> <li>g. Follow up the Summer 2006 Survey results from churches with existing underutilized community transportation resources and those desiring such resources, with MEOC acting as an arms length broker to match potential users with potential suppliers.</li> <li>h. Make additional contacts with Kingsport Area Transportation Service (KATS), Bristol City Transit, District III Transit and Four County Transit to explore opportunities for enhancing Inter-Regional transportation.</li> <li>i. Educate and inform the public and policy makers about support for the adoption of liability protection for volunteer drivers.</li> <li>j. Educate and inform the public and policy makers about adoption of uniform transportation provider regulations and licensing.</li> <li>k. Host a regional meeting for existing providers concerning service expansion.</li> <li>l. MEOC can offer to other interested providers and agencies to be their “One-Call” center for transportation needs.</li> <li>m. Publish on the MEOC web site (<a href="http://www.meoc.org/transportation">www.meoc.org/transportation</a>), for those agencies, organizations and individuals who agree, a transportation resources directory where those with transportation to offer and those in need of transportation can publish their information and contract points (schools, churches, non-profit organizations, individuals, etc. - see Appendices 2 Vehicle Inventory)</li> <li>n. MEOC will seek FTA charter exemption authorization in order to be able to provide transportation to persons and groups without regard to age or disability who can afford to pay full cost of service without subsidy.</li> <li>o. MEOC shall contact educational institutions and programs about sponsorship of specific routes, offer pass programs per semester at special rates, and inform students and adult learners of existing transportation resources.</li> </ul>

TABLE 2 – SUB-ACTIVITIES BY OBJECTIVE &amp; TASK

OBJECTIVE & SUPPORTING TASKS	SUB-ACTIVITIES
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## B. ACCESSIBILITY

- 1.B.1 Designation of One Contact Point (“One-Call center”) for all transportation
- a. In 1990 the local governing bodies designated MEOC as their Public Transportation Authority (see Appendices). MEOC has and will continue to utilize state Public Transit funds and available local matching funds that become available in order to further serve the general public of Planning District 1 with Public Transit service.
  - b. In 1997 MEOC was designated the Medicaid Broker and Provider of Last Resort for Planning District 1 by the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) as part of a brokerage pilot project. This project lasted three years and three months at which time DMAS took the project statewide, resulting in a single statewide broker within 12 months, LogistiCare, Inc (LCI). MEOC continues and will continue to work with LCI in operating a Where’s My Ride line and other services in Planning District 1. It is worth noting, however, that the number of private taxi operators and the number of vehicles available in the region has substantially declined since that time. If a methodology similar to the Florida Model were adopted for the region, these funds would be directed to the locally designated transportation coordination center.
- 1.B.2 Through the endorsement of this RMP by the governing bodies, MEOC will apply in FY08 for funding for at least one Accessibility Manager.
- 1.B.3 MEOC will continue to work with the Disability Services Board and the Junction Center for Independent Living, the designated ADA information resource centers for the region, to follow ADA requirements in operation of its transportation service and support their efforts in ADA activities in general.
- 1.B.4. Educate and Encourage the Public about the use of Public Transportation
- a. Redo design of bus to include more information regarding the system
  - b. Creation and distribution of a “Ride Guide”
    - a. Use of the internet
    - b. Billboards

## C. RELIABILITY

- 1.C.1. Track Performance, Assignment, Scheduling and Confirmation
- a. MEOC Staff is familiar with many scheduling programs on the market today, and will be changing its own scheduling software in FY07.
  - b. MEOC will make both for-profit and non-profit providers in the region aware of the annual CTAV sponsored Software Expo and endeavor to bring as much of this information as possible to the local area via video conferencing at MEOC.
  - c. MEOC will conduct training on performance measures for its own Transit employees and offer this training to other providers in the region.
- 1.C.2. Fleet Performance Management and Two-Way Communication
- a. MEOC will make both for-profit and non-profit providers in the region aware of the annual CTAV sponsored Software Expo and endeavor to bring as much of this information as possible to the local area via video conferencing at MEOC.

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- b. MEOC will conduct training on fleet maintenance practices and fleet performance measures for its own Transit employees and offer this training to other providers in the region.
- c. MEOC has already offered fleet maintenance services to other non-profit providers in the region, and in fact is doing maintenance and repairs for Junction Center for Independent Living, Inc. and some state vehicles.

**TABLE 2 – SUB-ACTIVITIES BY OBJECTIVE & TASK**

<b>OBJECTIVE &amp; SUPPORTING TASKS</b>	<b>SUB-ACTIVITIES</b>
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**D. EFFICIENCY**

- 1.D.1. To Provide Training in Various Basic Areas of Knowledge Relevant to Transportation
  - a. MEOC will host public training seminars for owners, managers and employees of local and regional transportation providers.
- 1.D.2. CTAA, CTAV and Peer Network Training
  - a. MEOC will correspond with CTAA, CTAV and others for training materials and assist in making materials available to regional transportation providers.
- 1.D.3. On-Time Performance
  - a. MEOC will offer contracted order taking, scheduling and dispatching to other transportation providers within the region.

**E. ECONOMY**

- 1.E.1. Employee commuter work shuttles
  - a. Contact Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and area employers to pursue potential and interest in employee work shuttles to enhance economic attraction of the area.
  - b. Support further joint venture and human transportation contracts among existing agencies
  - c. Continue to offer ourselves as partners to new organizations such as adult daycare, child care, and assisted living as their contracted transportation and/or public transit provider
- 1.E.2. Park and Ride Lots for Shuttle Bus
  - a. Identify need and location for Park and Ride lots by conducting feasible study in conjunction with employers, employees, existing trips, and trip potential in underserved areas and areas serving employers needs for employee transportation.
- 1.E.3. MEOC will work closely with the LENOWISCO Planning District Commission and other planning bodies in the region to encourage awareness of people transportation issues in such activities as low income, elderly and disabled housing projects.
- 1.E.4. MEOC will work with agencies and individuals to assist them in researching and evaluating people transportation ventures in PSA1.
- 1.E.5. MEOC will continue to support consolidation and coordination of services wherever practicable.

**TABLE 2 – SUB-ACTIVITIES BY OBJECTIVE & TASK**

<b>OBJECTIVE &amp; SUPPORTING TASKS</b>	<b>SUB-ACTIVITIES</b>
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**F. EQUITY**

- 1.F.1. Support adoption of this RMP so that funding can be sought in FY08 for Mobility Managers.
- 1.F.2. Support establishment a System that ensures ALL requests for transportation are treated under the same, appropriate, set of guidelines.
  - a. Support a single transportation agency to administer rules within a region.
  - b. Support a clear written program with guidelines from each funding source supporting transportation
  - c. Support establishment of a performance review process for this regional system.
- 1.F.3. Support establishment of Freedom of Choice by users among transportation providers on the part of the consumer.
  - a. The established One-Call point dispatchers must be knowledgeable of the rules of various funding sources and availability of local providers and provision networks.
  - b. Creation of a guide by provider of trip so caller would have Freedom of Choice by providers who have stated they would accept services with appropriate funding

**G. SUSTAINABILITY**

- 1.G.1. Creation of Self-Sustaining and Economically Efficient Transportation System
  - a. MEOC and the TAC shall act as facilitators of human transportation related services, education, and activities by hosting training events, videoconferences by acting as an advisory authority on these issues
  - b. MEOC and the TAC shall act as coordinators of human transportation related services, education, and activities by continuing as the recognized regional transportation coordinating authority
  - c. MEOC shall be willing to assume new programs and responsibilities that might be offered which further the goal of sustainable transportation in the region, much as it does now in performing taxi inspections for LogistiCare and acting as a resource of information and referral for other transportation providers.
  - d. MEOC would support the establishment of State Coordination and Funding Programs as many states, like Florida, have done for transit. (See Appendices).
  - e. MEOC would support the establishment of regional funding programs for transit and that a “region” should be no larger than a planning district.

***Appendices***

## **Organizations Serving on MERTAC:**

### **The Junction Center**

The Junction Center for Independent Living is a non-profit, non-residential program, which provides services to persons with disabilities, their families, and their community.

### **Frontier Health**

Frontier Health is the region's largest provider of behavioral health, developmental disabilities and vocational rehabilitation services. They are a private, not-for-profit organization with more than 85 programs in two states.

### **Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. / Mountain Empire Transit**

Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. transit department is the officially recognized Public Transit and Coordinated Human Services Transportation provider for the planning district.

### **LENOWISCO Planning District Commission**

LENOWISCO Planning District Commission was the critical link between professional transportation planning staff and local land use planning, zoning, economic development, roads and highway construction interests.

### **Mountain Empire Community College**

Mountain Empire Community College is a two-year college serving residents of Lee, Scott, Wise, and Dickenson counties, as well as the City of Norton.

### **HIS Ministries**

His Ministries provides a drug and alcohol referral service, a teen center, substance abuse education, and outreach to needy families through mission projects.

### **Scott County Department of Social Services and Administrator's Office**

Local Government located in the service area.

### **Mountain Empire Community College Americorps**

The AmeriCorps program is a national service movement, funded by the Federal Government, which engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in providing service to the community. AmeriCorps enrollees provide services to address the most critical problems in our nation's communities.

### **AARP**

AARP is a membership organization dedicated to enhancing the experience of aging through advocacy, information, and services. Formerly known as American Association of Retired Persons.

### **Kid's Central**

Kids Central, Inc. is the region's Head Start Program which maintains an enrollment in excess of 400 families whose incomes fall below the Federal Poverty Index and includes prenatal children through age 4.

### **LENOWISCO Disability Services Board**

LENOWISCO Disability Services Board provided a liaison and input into the planning process for persons with physical and sensory disabilities. This body is a regional planning board appointed by local governments to plan, foster and develop programs for persons with physical and sensory disabilities.

**Survey Tools**

**Mail Survey to Existing Rider Groups: Seniors; Persons with Disabilities; General Public**



**Transportation Survey**

The purpose of this survey is to improve transportation for the residents that live in the Counties of Lee, Scott and Wise and the City of Norton. **This information is confidential** and will be used for statistical purposes to report transportation problems. Do not provide any personal information that might identify you. Please answer the following questions based on your experience with transportation, whether that be public transportation or something else that gets you where you need to go. Please return this survey by June 30, 2006.

<b>1.CHECK THE BOX THAT MOST APPLIES FOR EACH</b>	Personal Vehicle	Public Transit (MEOC Bus)	Family and Friends	Car/ Van Pool	Walk/Bike	Taxi	N/A
My MAIN source of transportation							
2 <sup>nd</sup> source of transportation							
3 <sup>rd</sup> source of transportation							
If I had to replace my main source of transportation I would replace it with							

<b>2. CHECK THE BOX THAT APPLIES</b>	1-5 years	1-10 years	1-20 years
My main source of transportation will continue for the next			

<b>3. CHECK THE BOX THAT MOST APPLIES</b>	After Dark	Long Trips	Medication	Heavy Traffic	Other	N/A
I restrict my driving due to medical or health condition due to						

<b>4. CHECK THE BOX THAT MOST APPLIES FOR EACH</b>	Work	Medical Appointments	Run Errands	Weekend / Holiday Travel	Recreational Activities & Events	Visit Family And Friends	Education/ School
#1 reason for transportation							
#2 reason for transportation							
#3 reason for transportation							

<b>5. CHECK THE BOX THAT MOST APPLIES</b>	6am – 8 am	8am - 4pm	4pm – 6pm	6pm – 10pm	10pm – 6am
My main source of					

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transportation is used most during which time period					
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6. CHECK THE BOX THAT MOST APPLIES	Everyday	Monday - Friday	Saturday	Sunday
My main source of transportation is used most on which day(s)				

7. Please check agree, disagree or does not apply

<b>The main source of transportation I use:</b>	Agree	Disagree	Does Not Apply
Is reliable			
Is too expensive			

8. Please check agree, disagree or does not apply

<b>I would use public transportation more if:</b>	Agree	Disagree	Does Not Apply
I knew it was available in my area			
I knew how the system worked			
I knew what services were available			
I knew people of all ages could ride the bus			
Trips were shorter			
I felt safe and secure			
It was easy to schedule trips			
It were more accessible to people with disabilities			
It was available on Saturdays			
It was available on Friday evenings			

9. Please check agree, disagree or does not apply

	Agree	Disagree	Does Not Apply
Current transportation is \$.75 for seniors/children, \$1.50 all others per boarding. Do you think this is too little?			
Do you think it would be fair to increase prices in light of fuel cost? If you checked agree, how much? _____			

10. CHECK THE BOX THAT APPLIES	SSI	Social Security Disability	Medicaid	TANF	Social Security	Retirement
Are you eligible or do you receive any of the following?						

11. CHECK THE BOX THAT APPLIES	Under 19	20-34	35-54	55-59	60-64	65-74	75 or older
Age?							

12. CHECK THE BOX THAT APPLIES	<\$10,000	\$10,000-15,000	\$15,000-25,000	\$25,000-35,000	>\$35,000
Total annual household income					

13. What radio station do you listen to most? \_\_\_\_\_
14. What newspaper do you read most? \_\_\_\_\_
15. What TV station do you watch most? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Home Zip Code? \_\_\_\_\_.
17. Work Zip Code? \_\_\_\_\_.
18. Gender: \_\_ Male \_\_ Female
19. Number of Adults in Household including yourself? \_\_\_\_\_.
20. Number of Children in Household? \_\_\_\_\_.
21. Do you or anyone in your household have a disability? \_\_ Yes \_\_ No
22. Do you speak any other language other than English? \_\_ Yes \_\_ No  
If yes, which language or languages?

23. Today's Date:    /    /   

24. Please Add any Comments or Suggestions:



**Respondent Comments from Transportation Survey**

I feel it is great for the older generation who doesn't have transportation.
It is good to have the transportation for the ones that need it. I will use it if I need to.
My mother in law who is 92 would love to have transportation available so as not to have to drive.
I would use this source of public transportation if I were older and did not have a personal vehicle readily available. however, public transportation for me is several years down the road. (I hope).
I would love to see more public transportation available. I know it is difficult in rural areas to have routes.
Need more publicity about transit system in local newspapers
I appreciate transit very much. I don't know what I'd do without them. My driver (Mark) is very nice and dependable.
I have no automobile. I wish you would please go to Johnson City (Mountain Home Veteran's Hospital) Johnson City, TN, even with a group, I would be happy to pay more money. I am a disabled Veteran, with appointments at the Veteran's Hospital in Mountain Home, Johnson City. Saturday and Sunday service? Could you please extend your pick-up to back home to 6 pm?
Thank's so much.
I am thankful for MEOC's transportation for our seniors! It really helps them! Without MEOC a lot of seniors would have a hard time shopping/traveling.
MEOC transit is a great system! I have used it in the past to transport my father to and from Dr.s appts and will use them anytime I feel it is needed for him because he is disabled and in a wheel chair. Being able to transport him in his chair is wonderful and so much easier in one of the buses.
Due to the fuel prices at this time, it would be a wonderful idea to make MEOC accessible to all. Even though this is a rural area, we do need public transit. I know for the City of Norton if there were transit stops placed in Norton, it would make it a lot easier for people to get around, especially now that Walmart has moved further away and other businesses.
Will need a ride to college soon.
Wish the van would run on Saturday for special local events.
We are blessed. I'm so thankful we have MEOC transportation.
It's easy to schedule. I ride about 3-4 days a week. Everyone is very nice and helpful to me. I have been riding about 7-8 years. Thank you so much for your services.
We need transportation – MEOC
Have regular trips for food, shopping, it would save gas.
I wonder if I could get my rides cost down any lower than 1.50 each way
A sliding scale fee for transportation may help. Thank you for taking me to dialysis!
I know many women in other communities who never learned to drive; they have so much trouble getting around. I am so glad to live in an area where transportation is available should I need it.

I think that everything is going up due to high gas prices and that it is hard for people on a fixed income to make it. It is good to have a second chance of transportation to lean on and this sounds great.

I live in Lee Co, if I could get a ride to work 3 days out of the week it wouldn't cost me so much or if I have car trouble I could get to work all 4 days without trouble.

Need bus that goes to bus depot and airport at least twice daily.

Run MEOC trans buses on Sat and Sun to special events in the region.

I wished that the Transit bus would run on Saturdays or Sundays, to take people that didn't have transportation to church, and to the grocery store or to let visit family and friends.

Sure would like this to be available in my area, if only one day a week would be good. Thank you.

Disabled son transports me. If something should happen to him I would need a ride.

Need transportation.

Need transportation really bad.

This service is badly needed for the community.

Could really use the transportation in our area.

I think MEOC transit is a good thing for our rural area and should be more widely available.

I know people that live in BSG that need a ride to church on Sundays.

On the 1st of the month I have to pay for 5 or 6 stops, Dr., gro, drugstore, dollar store for personal items, bank, PO, pay bills, this cost me around \$5 or more each Friday I shop gro. It would be hard for me to pay more for transportation because of my limited income.

I think public transportation is a necessity to many people who can no longer drive. Many people do not have family or friends who are able to or willing to transport someone. To me it would be very frustrating to need or want to go someplace and no one would be available to assist me.

I have my own car, should if need repair I would call for help to get my errands taken care of.

I think our seniors and children need the best possible transportation at the lowest price. We need to take care of our young and our elderly above all else.

Get this help started "soon" I need help grocery shopping.

Would like to see a MEOC van come from Coeburn to Duffield area.

Would like to be able to use transportation to do grocery shopping and other errands. Needs to be provided more hours in the day.

Thank you for serving our area! My family and friends provide transportation for me but others are not so blessed. Grocery shopping seems to be a major problem for Senior Citizens without transportation, Maybe you could map out 2 or 3 regular runs with designated pickup drop off areas at certain hours/ days for a certain fee.

### Employer Listing for Employer Survey

\* = Employer replied to letter and requested survey forms for employees (and students in case of MECC).

Magic Mart  
1490 Park Avenue NW  
Norton, VA 24273  
ATTN: Kay Dingus

Town of Pennington Gap  
131 Constitution Road  
Pennington Gap, VA 24277  
ATTN: Linda K. Crusenberry

Burger King  
900 Gilley Avenue East  
Big Stone Gap, VA 24219  
ATTN: Manager

Town of Coeburn  
403 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Coeburn, VA 24230  
ATTN: Loretta Mays

Wise Co. Dept of Social Services\*  
P.O. Box 888  
Wise, VA 24293  
ATTN: Tom Stanley

Burger King  
602 Trent Street NE  
Norton, VA 24273  
ATTN: Manager

Nickelsville Medical Center\*  
102 Meade Avenue  
Nickelsville, VA 24271  
ATTN: Brandi Lawson

Sykes Enterprises\*  
1000 Sykes Blvd  
Wise, VA 24293  
ATTN: Amy Meade

Burger King  
231 US Hwy 23 S  
Weber City, VA 24290  
ATTN: Manager

Town of Wise\*  
P.O. Box 1100  
Wise, VA 24293  
ATTN: Beverly Owens

Midpaco Papers  
121 Kingsport Press Road  
Church Hill, TN 37642  
ATTN: Christina

Burger King  
Highway 58 Riverside Drive  
St. Paul, VA 24283  
ATTN: Manager

Ridge Crest Manor Nursing Home\*  
Rebecca Rhoten/Dennes Bower  
P.O. Box 280  
Duffield, VA 24244

U. S. Penitentiary Lee County  
P.O. Box 900  
Jonesville, VA 24263  
ATTN: Eilane Marques

Red Onion State Prison\*  
1080 H. Jack Rose Hwy.  
Pound, VA 24279  
ATTN: Renee Conley

Holston Medical Group PC\*  
P.O. Box 88  
Duffield, VA 24244  
ATTN: Glenda Kern

Parks Belk\*  
P.O. Box 3429  
Wise, VA 24293  
ATTN: Kimberly Bartone

Pay Less Supermarkets  
P.O. Box 390  
Coeburn, VA 24230  
ATTN: Alan Atwood

Days Inn  
375 Wharton Lane  
Norton, VA 24273  
ATTN: Tiffany L. Hamilton

Norton Community Hospital, Inc.  
100 15<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Norton, VA 24273  
ATTN: Valeri Colyer

Heritage Hall  
2045 Valley View Drive East  
Big Stone Gap, VA 24219  
ATTN: Lisa Gilliam

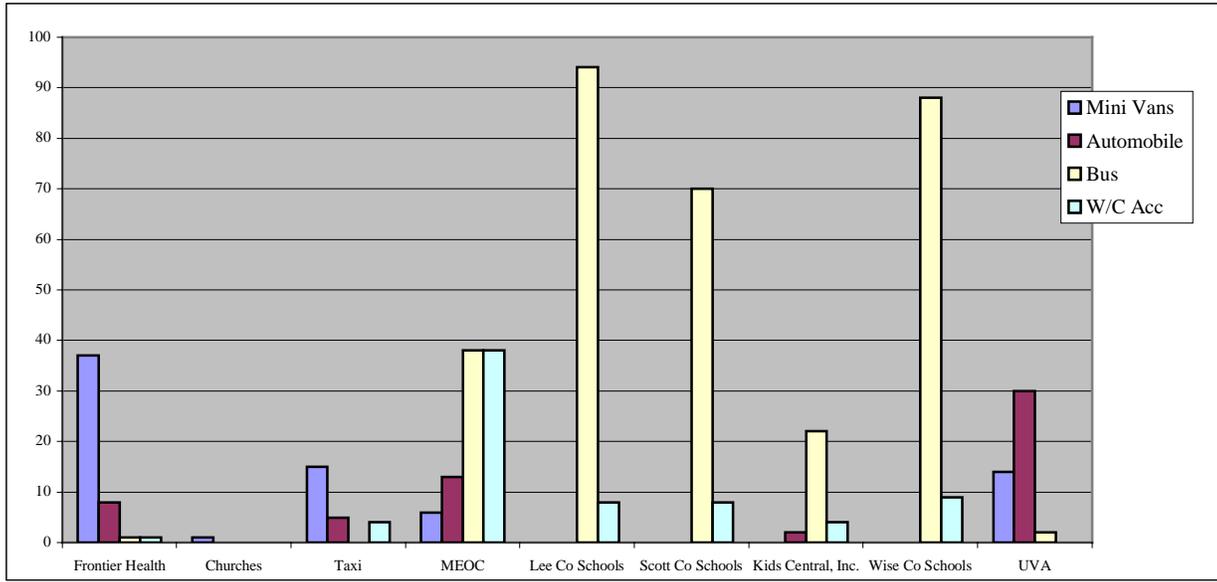
Town of Jonesville\*  
P.O. Box 190  
Jonesville, VA 24263  
ATTN: Marcie Ridings

Food City  
210 US Highway 23N  
Weber City, VA 24290  
ATTN: Malysa Sallee

Norton Dept of Social Services\*  
P.O. Box 378  
Norton, VA 24273  
ATTN: Kay Leffler

MECC\*

### Regional Vehicle Inventory



**Inventory and Description of Existing Taxi Services**

<b><u>Provider Name</u></b>	<b><u>Base City</u> service area</b>	<b><u>Services</u></b>
<b>Beacon of Life</b>	Duffield/St. Paul Lee, Wise, Scott, Norton	Taxi & Ambulance
<b>Barnette's Cab</b>	<b>BIG STONE GAP</b> , surrounding areas in Wise County	Taxi
<b>Coeburn Taxi</b>	<b>COEBURN</b> , Wise, Russell, Dickenson	Taxi
<b>Donna's Taxi</b>	<b>CLINTWOOD</b> , Dickenson/Pound	Taxi
<b>Emergystat Ambulance</b>	<b>NORTON</b> , Wise, Lee, Scott Co. Dickenson Co. Kingsport, Tazewell, Buchanan & Washington Counties	Taxi & Ambulance, W/C Van, Stretcher Van
<b>J&amp;B Taxi</b>	<b>LEBANON</b> , Russell, Buchanan, parts of Washington, Lee & Scott Counties	Taxi
<b>MEOC</b>	<b>BIG STONE GAP</b> , Wise, Scott, Lee, City of Norton	<b>Public Transit Buses, W/C Buses</b>
<b>Southwest Taxi</b>	<b>COEBURN</b> , Wise, Russell, Scott	<b>Taxi</b>
<b>Tri County Cab</b>	<b>COEBURN</b> , Wise, Russell, Scott, Dickenson	<b>Taxi &amp; W/C Van</b>

**Meoc Transit**

EVERYBODY says change the design of the lettering and artwork on the buses so everyone does not think you have to be elderly, and by default an MEOC Client, to ride.

(Below: First design modification in nine years was implemented in 2006.)



## LogistiCare And Medicaid

LogistiCare, Inc. is the company chosen by the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (Medicaid) to be the statewide Medicaid Transportation Broker for the Commonwealth. (<http://www.dmas.virginia.gov>)

Medicaid is an important contributor to the economy of Southwest Virginia. Fee for Service payments to Medical Providers By Locality (does not include transportation costs) in PSA 1 are excerpted from a DMAS report ([http://www.dmas.virginia.gov/downloads/Stats\\_05/Chapter\\_08/PAYLOC-05.pdf](http://www.dmas.virginia.gov/downloads/Stats_05/Chapter_08/PAYLOC-05.pdf)) and shown below:

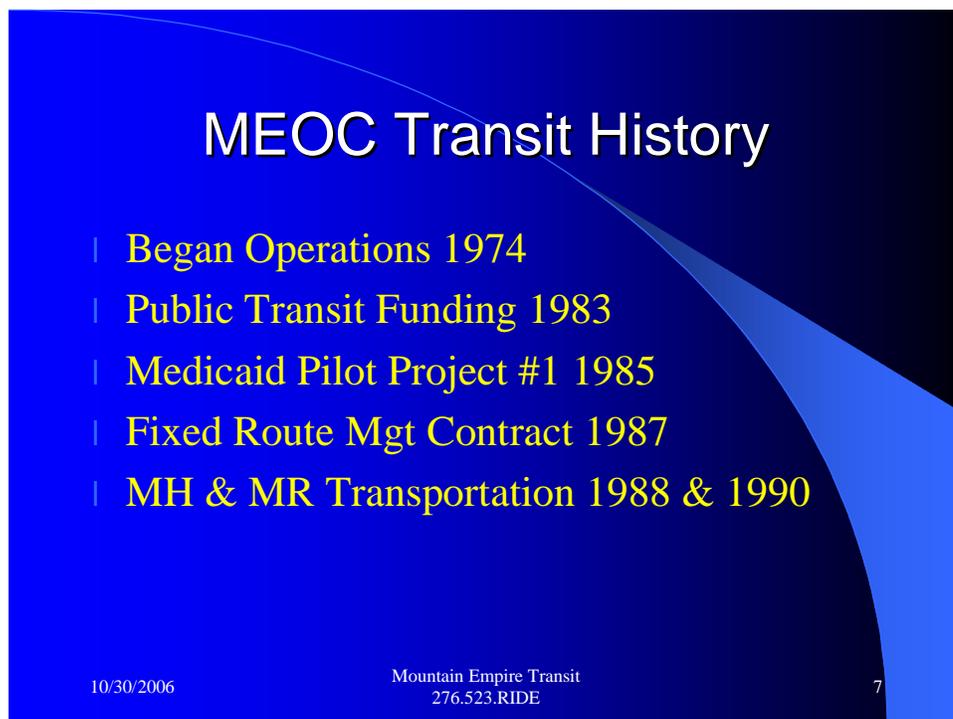
	1997	2005
Lee	17,264,317	31,018,251
Norton	3,564,905	6,311,074
Scott	12,402,844	23,135,149
Wise	25,993,448	47,824,866

The following is from the LogistiCare Website (<http://www.logisticare.com>)

“We’re LogistiCare. Our clients range from state government agencies, managed care organizations and hospitals to transit authorities and school boards. Their customers include Medicaid and Welfare-to-Work populations, commercial and senior members, special-needs students and ADA Para transit riders.

But we’re not a transportation company. We don’t drive buses and we don’t fly planes. Our interests align with those of our clients as we utilize our technology and expertise to offer a complete outsourcing solution to manage and unlock the value of local transportation companies. Our efforts result in increased healthcare access and enhanced quality of life for our clients’ customers.”

**MEOC Transit Milestones**

A blue slide with a white title and yellow list items. The background features a dark blue curved shape on the right side.

## MEOC Transit History

- | Began Operations 1974
- | Public Transit Funding 1983
- | Medicaid Pilot Project #1 1985
- | Fixed Route Mgt Contract 1987
- | MH & MR Transportation 1988 & 1990

10/30/2006 Mountain Empire Transit 276.523.RIDE 7

A blue slide with a white title and yellow list items. The background features a dark blue curved shape on the right side.

## Transit History

- | 2-way Radios and Computerized Trip Scheduling 1991
- | Founding Member CTAV 1992
- | Virginia Rural Transit System of Year 1995
- | Medicaid Pilot Project #2 –CAPITATED Brokerage 1997
- | FTA Administrator’s Award 2003
- | Transit Facility Completed 2005

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## Florida Plan

A report prepared for the Joint DHHS/DOT Coordinating Council by Ecosometrics, Inc. in 1995 examined five state models for dealing with non-emergency Medicaid transportation programs. While the focus of this study was non-emergency Medicaid Transportation (NET), one model contained in the study, the Florida Model, highlights the benefits of Coordinated Transportation to all consumers, not just Medicaid.

In essence, the model, dating to 1990 in Florida, involves defining the “transportation disadvantaged”, providing a revenue source and administration for distribution of the funds and mandatory statewide coordination of trips among all state and local agencies accomplished at the county and multi-county level.

### Statutory Design

The Florida Model created a statewide coordinated system of transportation agencies under the jurisdiction of the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. Under this statute, persons eligible for service, the responsibilities of the Commission and requirements of all state funded and local departments for participation in the coordinated system are defined. Some relevant excerpts from the Florida statute are:

#### **427.011 Definitions.--**

(1) "Transportation disadvantaged" means those persons who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activities, or children who are handicapped or high-risk or at-risk as defined in s. 411.202.

**427.013 The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged; purpose and responsibilities.--**The purpose of the commission is to accomplish the coordination of transportation services provided to the transportation disadvantaged. The goal of this coordination shall be to assure the cost-effective provision of transportation by qualified community transportation coordinators or transportation operators for the transportation disadvantaged without any bias or presumption in favor of multioperator systems or not-for-profit transportation operators over single operator systems or for-profit transportation operators. In carrying out this purpose, the commission shall:

- (14) Consolidate, for each state agency, the annual budget estimates for transportation disadvantaged services, and the amounts of each agency's actual expenditures, together with the annual budget estimates of each official planning agency, local government, and directly federally funded agency and issue a report. (*Author Note: This makes full disclosure of transportation funds by agencies mandatory.*)
- (15) Prepare a statewide 5-year transportation disadvantaged plan which addresses the transportation problems and needs of the transportation disadvantaged, ... and which ensures that the most cost-effective and efficient method of providing transportation to the disadvantaged is programmed for development.
- (17) Review, monitor, and coordinate all transportation disadvantaged local government, state, and federal fund requests ... without delaying the application process. Such funds shall be available only to those entities participating in an approved coordinated transportation system or entities that have received a commission-approved waiver to obtain all or part of their transportation through another means. ...
- (27) Ensure that local community transportation coordinators work cooperatively with regional workforce boards established in chapter 445 to provide assistance in the development of innovative transportation services for participants in the welfare transition program.

Each agency in the state providing transportation for its clients is required to follow certain procedures for utilizing the Coordinated Transportation System, as shown here via statute excerpts. The important role of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (in Virginia's case this would be the equivalent of our Regional Planning District Commissions) is also recognized in giving them the power to recommend which agency shall be the single Community Transportation Coordinator for their area.

**427.0135 Member departments; duties and responsibilities.--**Each member department, in carrying out the policies and procedures of the commission, shall:

- (1)(a) Use the coordinated transportation system for provision of services to its clients, unless each department meets the criteria outlined in rule to use an alternative provider.
- (b) Subject to the provisions of s. 409.908(18), the Medicaid agency shall purchase transportation services through the community coordinated transportation system unless a more cost-effective method is determined by the agency for Medicaid clients or unless otherwise limited or directed by the General Appropriations Act.

#### **427.015 Function of the metropolitan planning organization or designated official planning agency in coordinating transportation for the transportation disadvantaged.--**

- (2) Each metropolitan planning organization or designated official planning agency shall recommend to the commission a single community transportation coordinator. However, a member department may not serve as the community transportation coordinator in any designated service area. The coordinator may provide all or a portion of needed transportation services for

## MERTAC Regional Mobility Plan

the transportation disadvantaged but shall be responsible for the provision of those coordinated services. Based on approved commission evaluation criteria, the coordinator shall subcontract or broker those services that are more cost-effectively and efficiently provided by subcontracting or brokering. ...

- (3) Each metropolitan planning organization or designated official planning agency shall request each local government in its jurisdiction to provide an estimate of all local and direct federal funds to be expended for transportation for the disadvantaged. ...

Local agencies are also required to coordinate transportation services with the Community Transportation Coordinator.

### **427.016 Expenditure of local government, state, and federal funds for the transportation disadvantaged.--**

- (1)(a) All transportation disadvantaged funds expended within the state shall be expended to purchase transportation services from community transportation coordinators or public, private, or private nonprofit transportation operators within the coordinated transportation system,

The crucial role of the Community Transportation Coordinator agency is shown by the powers granted it.

### **427.0155 Community transportation coordinators; powers and duties.--**Community transportation coordinators shall have the following powers and duties:

- (1) Execute uniform contracts for service using a standard contract, which includes performance standards for operators.
- (2) Collect annual operating data for submittal to the commission.
- (3) Review all transportation operator contracts annually.
- (4) Approve and coordinate the utilization of school bus and public transportation services in accordance with the transportation disadvantaged service plan.
- (5) In cooperation with a functioning coordinating board, review all applications for local government, federal, and state transportation disadvantaged funds, and develop cost-effective coordination strategies.
- (7) In cooperation with the coordinating board and pursuant to criteria developed by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, establish priorities with regard to the recipients of nonsponsored transportation disadvantaged services that are purchased with Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund moneys.
- (8) Have full responsibility for the delivery of transportation services for the transportation disadvantaged as outlined in s. 427.015(2).
- (9) Work cooperatively with regional workforce boards established in chapter 445 to provide assistance in the development of innovative transportation services for participants in the welfare transition program.

Lastly, local Coordinating Boards exist to help maintain focus on local and regional issues and enhance communication with and attentiveness to local needs on the part of the Transportation Coordination agency.

### **427.0157 Coordinating boards; powers and duties.--**The purpose of each coordinating board is to develop local service needs and to provide information, advice, and direction to the community transportation coordinators on the coordination of services to be provided to the transportation disadvantaged.

The Florida model is quite comprehensive in also mandating the cooperation of school systems in making transportation resources available. By Statute, detailed information, by a specific date each year, must be provided to the Transportation Coordinator including actual bus schedules and routes, vehicle inventory lists, passenger capacity of each vehicle, garage location and more. In part, the Statute reads:

### **427.0158 School bus and public transportation.--**

- (1) The community transportation coordinator shall maximize the use of public school transportation and public fixed route or fixed schedule transit service for the transportation of the transportation disadvantaged.
- (2) The school boards shall cooperate in the utilization of their vehicles to enhance coordinated disadvantaged transportation by providing the information as required by this section and by allowing the use of their vehicles at actual cost upon request when those vehicles are available for such use and are not transporting students. ...

[http://www.flsenate.gov/statutes/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&URL=Ch0427/ch0427.htm](http://www.flsenate.gov/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&URL=Ch0427/ch0427.htm)

While such sweeping measures as mandating school bus participation in a coordinated transportation system may not be possible in every state, it is easy to see that Florida is serious about getting the most “bang” for its transportation bucks. (In Virginia, especially Southwest Virginia, the three coordinated transportation agencies --MEOC, AASC and District III-- are already the Public Transit providers as well.)

In February 2004 Florida received the *United We Ride State Leadership Award* from Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta (copy attached). In the same month the U.S. Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) released its independent assessment showing that this Coordinated Transportation approach saved the State of Florida \$41.26 million dollars in Medicaid benefits. Further AHCA analysis showed that in the absence of this Coordinated Transportation system, Florida would have spent an additional \$22.22 million dollars! (Copy attached.)

## Funding the Model

Of course, all this transportation must be funded. Funding in Florida comes from a \$1.50 annual motor vehicle registration fee. Actual Florida Code excerpts show the details. (It is worth remembering that in Virginia there is already a \$4.00 fee added to vehicle registrations specifically for Virginia EMS and the Rescue Squad Assistance Fund. Florida is running an entire statewide coordinated transportation system for \$1.50 per registration.) One model for Virginia to consider would be to add a fee to motor vehicle moving violation convictions dedicated solely to coordinated transportation funding.

### 320.03 Registration; duties of tax collectors; International Registration Plan.--

(9) A nonrefundable fee of \$1.50 shall be charged on the initial and renewal registration of each automobile for private use, and on the initial and renewal registration of each truck having a net weight of 5,000 pounds or less. Such fees shall be deposited in the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund created in part I of chapter 427 and shall be used as provided therein, except that priority shall be given to the transportation needs of those who, because of age or physical and mental disability, are unable to transport themselves and are dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, or other life-sustaining activities.

(Authors Note: In 2000, Florida attempted to further strengthen the Fund with an additional \$2 million annual appropriation, however, this did not pass.)

### <sup>1</sup>427.0159 Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund.—

(4) Funds deposited in the trust fund may be used by the commission to subsidize a portion of a transportation disadvantaged person's transportation costs that is not sponsored by an agency, only if a cash or in-kind match is required. Funds for non-sponsored transportation disadvantaged services shall be distributed based upon the need of the recipient and according to criteria developed by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged.

## Lessons to be Learned

Coordination of service is the key to cutting costs, containing future expenditure growth rates and enhancing service to the various sectors of the population comprising the “transportation disadvantaged”, as well as the public at large.

Access for transportation disadvantaged consumers; their sponsoring agencies and the public is simplified by making a single agency responsible for contact, coordination and actual transportation in a countywide or multi-county area.

Multi-County areas are not so large as to allow the Coordinator to loose touch with the individuals in the community it serves. The largest such Coordinator being four counties.

(<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/ctd/a%20Web%20Page%20layout/1%20contacts/d%20CTCs.htm#1>) In the case of Southwest Virginia, District III is a little larger than that, however, it is mostly very low population density counties.

The Coordinator has the duty to utilize the most cost effective means of provision and is specifically empowered to broker, subcontract and directly provide transportation, as it deems most efficient and effective. (This is in fact how MEOC operated from the mid-90s to the institution of statewide Medicaid brokering.)

Checks and balances are provided through the oversight of the local steering committee and required annual reporting to the Transportation Disadvantaged Commission. Thus the Coordinator can focus on delivering the most transportation to the most people. In Florida, Coordinated Transportation SAVES THE STATE A LOT OF MONEY!

## How the Model Could Help Southwest Virginia

Providing transportation of people in rural Southwest Virginia is a difficult task at best. The same holds true for any rural area. Unfortunately, rural areas tend to have a disproportionate share of transportation disadvantaged people. In a urban area with typical mass transit, the poor, handicapped, elderly, those in poor health or with chronic conditions prohibiting driving or making driving hazardous to themselves or the traveling public have many readily available alternatives. Fixed route buses, light rail, subway, Para transit, charitable and membership organizations are there to fill the need.

In rural areas, Southwest Virginia being no exception, there are no high population density trip generators to support the traditional mass transit modes. Most rural counties in Virginia don't even have public transit. Planning Districts I, II, and III are fortunate in having three agencies that already provide some public transit in addition to their other membership transportation services. In essence, we already have much of what Florida had to create by statute from scratch.

The one thing we do not have, which Florida did provide from the beginning, is the funding mechanism to “fill the gaps” in all the other funding sources.

## Other Potential Sources Of Revenues

Additional funding to meet the critical operational and capital needs of rural public transit in Virginia must come with two additional provisos—authorizing legislation:

- a. must state that such funds are eligible for use as capital or operating funds at the discretion of the local recipient agency, and
- b. must state that such funds are eligible as local match for all local, state and federal transportation grants at the discretion of the local recipient agency.

These two points are absolutely crucial to meeting the needs and alleviating the existing problems caused by deficit funding on the public transit side, lack of real coordination on the part of federal and state officials and “gap funding” caused by Medicaid and other payments for transportation being fixed by the issuing agencies without regard to actual costs. In short, these funds are needed to “fill the gap” left by every single funding source from public transit to all human services transportation—everyone wants someone else’s money to pay for the balance of the cost of “their” transportation. Nobody wants to pay what it actually costs.

### Waste Tires

Information from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/wastetires>) shows that the existing \$.50 retail fee on waste tires generated \$2,559,994 in FY03. The 2003 General Assembly increased this fee to \$1 effective July 1, 2003, reverting to \$0.50 in 2006. Using DEQ’s own numbers, a \$0.50 fee on waste tires would generate roughly \$2.5 million annually for Virginia’s rural transit operators.

Even using all currently existing 44 public transit providers listed in the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation database (<http://www.drpt.virginia.gov/locator/allproviders.aspx>), a \$0.50 fee would yield an additional \$58,000 per operator in revenues. Using the operators serving some portion of a rural area (22), this would be \$116,000 per operator. Using just the rural providers (9), this would be \$284,000 per operator.

### Motor Vehicle Registrations

Currently the Commonwealth levies a \$4 annual fee (§ 46.2-694.A.13) for Emergency Medical Services purposes. A similar annual fee could be levied for public transit, rural transit or coordinated transit. This could be a significant source of revenue. According to the 2000 Census, Virginia have approximately 2.7 million registered vehicles. At \$1 per registration that’s \$2.7 million or approximately \$61,000 for each of the 44 public transit operators listed by Virginia DRPT. At the \$4 per registration that Rescue Squads receive that would be nearly a quarter million dollars per operator. This would go along way towards meeting the needs.

## Possible One-Call Numbers

The “One-Call” phone number could be prefixed by any available toll-free designation:

- q 800
- q 888
- q 877
- q 866

- q The “One-Call” phone number could be
- q ONE-CALL 663-2255
- q 4MY-RIDE 469-7433