

Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan

PREPARED BY:

LEWIS COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT AND THE LEWIS COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE

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Executive Summary

The Lewis County Transportation Task Force has prepared the following plan to provide documentation of past and current efforts toward the creation of a public transit-human services transportation coordinated plan, and to provide the outline for future efforts to improve community mobility and quality of life for the residents of Lewis County. This Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan, hereafter referred to as the Plan, is specifically prepared in accordance with the regulations of the Federal Transportation, Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act -A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) mandate.

SAFETEA-LU requires the establishment of a "locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan" for all FTA programs for underserved populations: the Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities program (Section 5310); the Job Access and Reverse Commute program (Section 5316); and the New Freedom program (Section 5317). Under MAP-21 and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, Sections 5316, and 5317 are now combined under the Public Transportation in Nonurbanized Areas (Section 5311) program.

Introduction

Problem Statement

Lewis County is a rural county where low-income individuals without vehicles have difficulty accessing healthcare, human services programs, and retail stores to purchase essential goods and services. Additionally, low-income residents, without adequate transportation, are finding it difficult to obtain and maintain gainful employment and attend adult education programs.

Since the launch of Lewis County Public Transportation, the County has been able to solve many of the past transit issues faced by low-income residents with their affordable fixed route system and long-range connector route. Even with the addition of this rural public transit system, residents need easily accessible and efficient transportation to and from employment, healthcare and community events.

Purpose of the Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan

In May 1999, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced the Rural Transportation Initiative. The initiative was designed to ensure that rural areas and small communities share in the mobility, economic, and social benefits that many USDOT programs provide. It aims to increase the capacity of rural America to play a more integral role in the planning and decision-making that shape transportation systems. It also provides an array of technical assistance and grant programs to enable communities to plan, develop and improve air, surface, and water transportation infrastructure.

The objectives of the Rural Transportation Initiative are:

- To improve safety by reducing the human and material costs that are unintended consequences of the operation of the transportation systems in rural areas;
- Allow residents of rural areas and small communities access to the destinations and goods to attain their desired quality of life;
- Provide the transportation service that will afford rural areas and small communities the opportunity to reach their economic growth and trade potential;
- Enhance the social strength and cohesiveness of small communities and protect the natural environment of rural areas;
- Maintain the national security and border integrity necessary for the well-being of all Americans.

In February 2004, the Presidential Executive Order 13330 on the Coordination of Human Services Programs created an Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility to undertake departmental actions to minimize duplication among federally-funded human service transportation services, simplify customer access to transportation services, enhance cost effectiveness of service delivery and identify useful practices in coordinating human service transportation.

The Plan is a necessary requirement should the county seek funding through the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) programs, including Section 5310 -Elderly and Individuals with

Disabilities, Section 5316 – Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC), Section 5317 -New Freedom, and Section 5311 – Public Transportation in Nonurbanized Areas.

The purpose of the Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan is to identify methods to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, senior citizens and low-income individuals. The plan will assist in the coordination between and among transit providers and human service agencies.

The plan recommends strategies and identifies implementation priorities to improve the coordination of public transit and human service transportation in Lewis County.

Federal Transit Administration Funding Sources

Section 5310 – Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities Program

The Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities Program provides funding to assist private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. These funds are apportioned to the states annually by a formula that is based on the number of elderly persons and persons with disabilities in each state. The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) administers this program in New York State and an interagency review committee selects grantees. Capital assistance in New York State under this program is provided on an 80% Federal / 20% local share basis for the purchase of vehicles. Private, nonprofit agencies are eligible to receive funding and must demonstrate that they coordinate services for elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

Section 5311 – Public Transportation in Nonurbanized Areas

The Public Transportation in Nonurbanized Areas program was created to increase accessibility to health care, shopping, education, employment, public services, and recreation while also providing funding for the needed maintenance, route development and system improvements. This program provides formula funding to areas with populations of less than 50,000 people. Funds can be used for capital assistance, maximum Federal share of 80%, and operating assistance, maximum Federal share of 50%.

Mission and Vision Statements

***Mission:** To identify the existing transportation services, duplications in service, gaps in existing services and future transportation needs in Lewis County. This study will aid in the development of a responsible, consumer-focused Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan for Lewis County.*

***Vision:** Through the development and implementation of the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan, the transportation-disadvantaged of Lewis County will have greater access to health care, human services, employment, education, commerce, social and community services.*

Lewis County Transportation History

In 2004, representatives from five county human service agencies introduced a plan to consolidate human service transportation, in which the county would contract county transportation for the Department of Social Services (DSS), Lewis County Community Mental Health Clinic (CMHC), Lewis County Public Health Agency (PHA), Lewis County General Hospital Adult Day Health Care (ADHC), and the Office for the Aging (OFA) out to a transit vendor. Unfortunately, the necessary support was not available at the time and the planning to consolidate the administration of the transportation services provided by these agencies ceased.

In 2007, the Lewis County Transportation Task Force, a group of human service providers, began meeting to discuss the transportation needs within the county. The major concern at the time was the transportation of dialysis clients for treatment. As more people came to the table, transportation efficiency became a subject of interest.

The Lewis County Transportation Task Force invited the Lewis County Manager to a meeting in April 2008 to discuss transportation efficiency and needs. The County Manager, understanding the importance of transportation efficiency, asked the Lewis County Department of Economic Development and Planning to review the existing transportation programs in the county and identify the redundancies and gaps in service. The Lewis County Department of Economic Development and Planning now has a seat at the Transportation Task Force table and is coordinating the efforts of the Transportation Task Force.

Lewis County Public Transportation, LCPT, was launched in 2009 and was a direct outcome of the identified needs found in the 2009 Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan. This public transportation agency is administrated by the Lewis County Planning Department and the operations are contracted through Birnie Bus Service, Inc. Since its infancy, LCPT has provided access to a fixed route system that gives residents and visitors the ability to access other parts of the County. Over time, LCPT has added connector routes that provide access to and from cities like Utica, NY and Watertown, NY.

Research

Regional Geography and Demographics

It is essential to define the geography and demographics of Lewis County to understand the relationship they have with the transportation needs of the county. The Lewis County Transportation Task Force must consider geography, population centers and trends, socio-economic status, educational status, employment and vehicle ownership when planning, implementing and evaluating the Lewis County Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan.

Geography

Lewis County is centrally located in the northern section of New York State, north of Utica-Rome and east of Lake Ontario and Watertown. The county lies between the Tug Hill Plateau to the west, the Adirondack foothills to the east and the Black River Valley running north and south through the center. It is bordered by Jefferson County, St. Lawrence County, Herkimer County, Oneida County and Oswego County. The county seat, Lowville, is located 120 miles west/northwest of Albany, 90 miles northeast of Syracuse and 55 miles north of Utica-Rome.

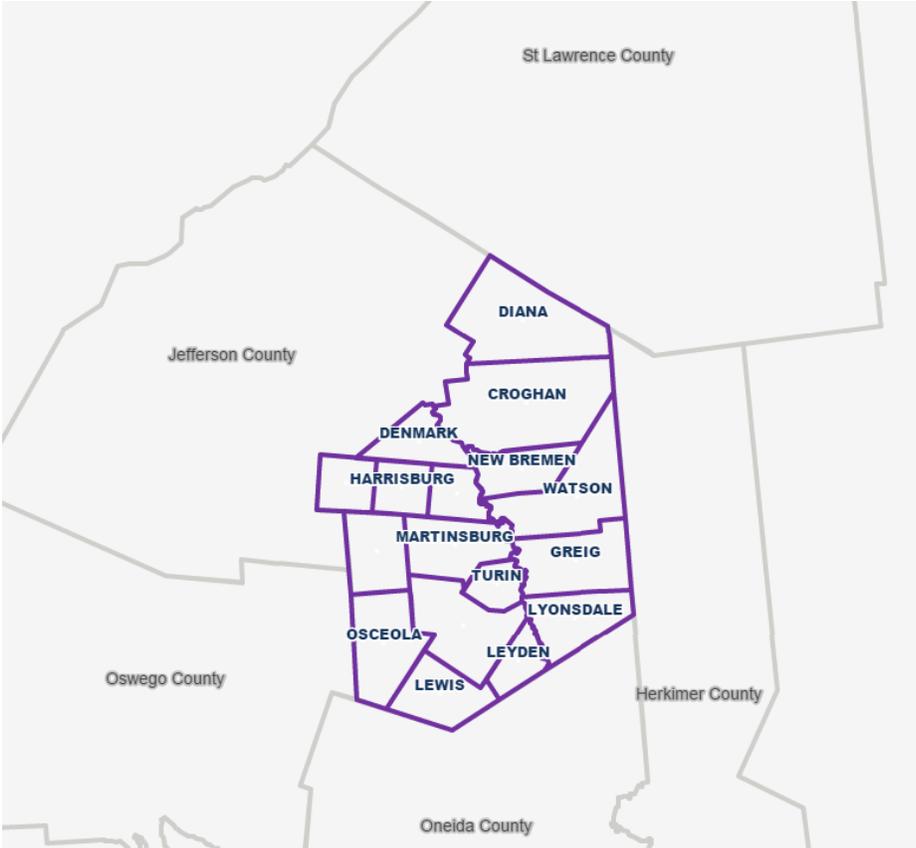
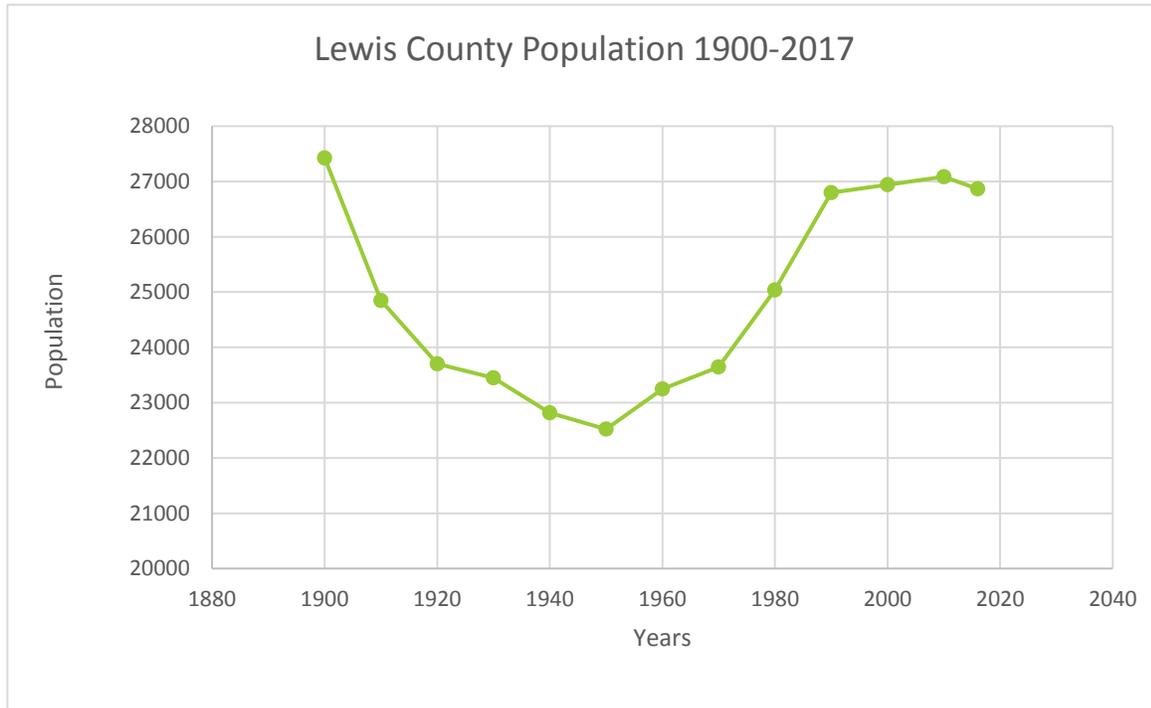


Figure 1. Lewis County and Surrounding Counties

Population

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the estimated population of Lewis County in July 2016 was 26,865. This is a slight decrease from the reported 2010 Census data of 27,087. Per the 2010 Census, the population density is 21.3 persons per square mile and Lewis County is the fourth least populated county in New York State. In fact, the County is one of only two in the state classified as "rural" by the federal government.

Lewis County is comprised of 17 towns and 9 villages. Much of the county's population is located along the Black River Valley. The Village of Lowville is the population center, and in 2010, it had a population of 4,982. Table 1 shows that the population trend of Lewis County is beginning to decline.



*Table 1. Lewis County Total Population from 1950 to 2017.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

The American Community Survey showed that in 2015 the median age of Lewis County to be 41.4 years. The trends show a significant increase in the median age from 1990 to the present, as well as a large increase in the population 65 or over during the same period. Table 2 details the percentage of the population by age group.

AGE GROUP	2000	% OF TOTAL	2010	% OF TOTAL	2015	% OF TOTAL
0-19	8,206	30.4	7,367	27.2	6,972	25.7
20-24	1,366	5.1	1,515	5.6	1,652	6.1
25-44	7,588	28.2	6,269	23.1	6,204	22.9
45-64	6,074	22.5	7,860	29.0	7,893	29.1
65 +	3,710	13.8	4,076	15.1	4,403	16.2
TOTAL	26,944	100.0	27,087	100.0	27,124	100.0

Table 2. Comparison of Lewis County population by age group over 15-year period.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The county is sparsely populated in the Tug Hill and Adirondack Foothills regions of the county and more densely populated in the Black River Valley and northern reaches of the county.

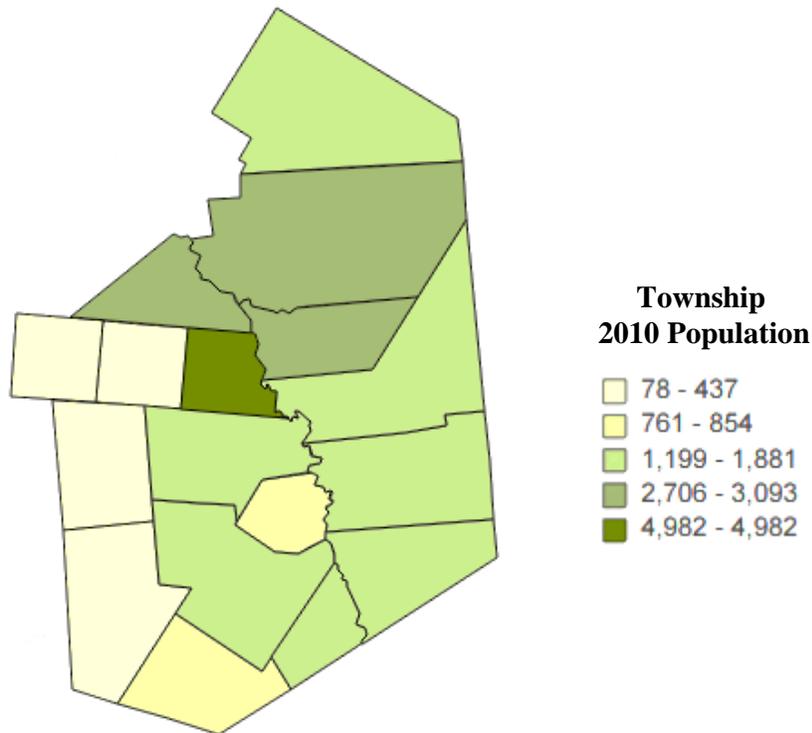


Figure 2. Population of Lewis County townships.

Source: 2010 Census.

Socio-Economic Status

Lewis County Residential Income		
	Population	Percent
Households	10,539	100
Less than \$10,000	642	6.1
\$10,000-\$14,999	620	5.9
\$15,000-\$24,999	1,062	10.1
\$25,000-\$34,999	1,274	12.1
\$35,000-\$49,999	1,695	16.1
\$50,000-\$74,999	2,118	20.1
\$75,000-\$99,999	1,370	13.0
\$100,000-\$149,999	1,284	12.2
\$150,000-\$199,999	274	2.6
\$200,000 or more	200	1.9
Median Household Income	\$49,819	

Table 3. Lewis County Household Income.
Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015

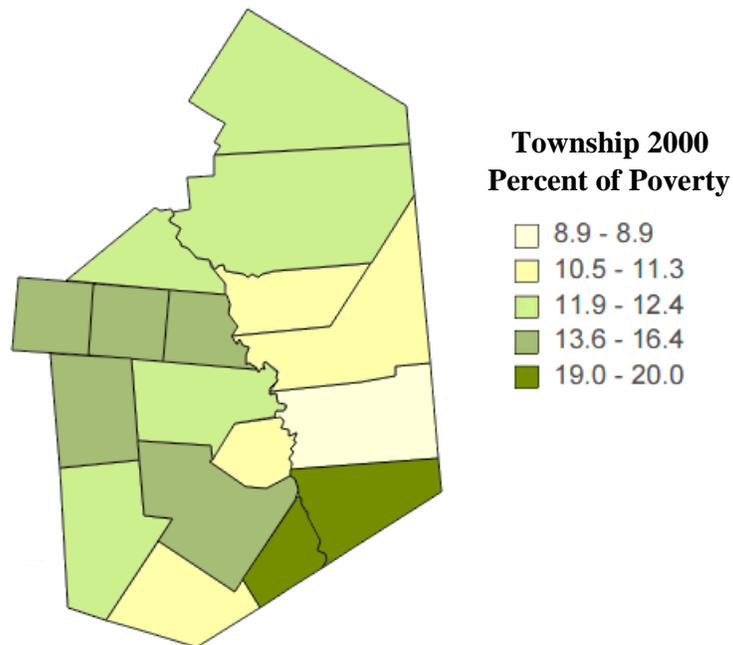


Figure 3. Geographic representation of poverty in Lewis County Townships.

Lewis County Household Income						
	2000		2010		2015	
	Households	% Total	Households	% Total	Households	% Total
Under \$25,000	4,905	39%	2,707	25%	2,317	22%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	3,820	31%	3,501	33%	2,971	28%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	2,434	20%	2,283	21%	2,114	20%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	839	7%	1,182	11%	1,369	13%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	315	2%	780	7%	1,289	12%
Over \$150,000	155	1%	308	3%	479	5%
Total	12,468	100%	10,761	100%	10,539	100%

*Table 4. Lewis County Household Income over 15-year period.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

Educational Status

Educational Institutions	
Public School Districts	Private Institutions
Beaver River Central School District	Crystal Light Mennonite School
Copenhagen Central School District	River Valley Mennonite School
Harrisville Central School District	Hope Mennonite School
Lowville Academy & Central School District	
South Lewis Central School District	

Table 5. Public and private educational institutions in Lewis County.

Educational Attainment		
	Population	Percentage
Population 25 years and older	18,500	100
Less than 9 th grade	560	3.0
9 th grade to 12 th grade, no diploma	1,476	8.0
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	8,375	45.3
Some college, no degree	3,056	16.5
Associate degree	2,223	12.0
Bachelor's degree	1,610	8.7
Graduate or professional degree	1,200	6.5
Percent high school graduate or higher		89
Percent bachelor's degree or higher		15.2

*Table 6. Educational attainment statistics for Lewis County residents age 25 and older.
Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015*

Employment

Per the 2011-2015 American Community Survey, approximately 37.5% of employed Lewis County residents, over the age of 16, traveled outside of the county for employment. The average travel time for residents commuting to work was 24.5 minutes. The primary destinations were Watertown, Utica and Rome.

Occupation		
	Population	Percent
Employed Civilian Population	11,966	100
Management, professional, and related occupations	3,506	29.3
Service occupations	2,072	17.3
Sales and office occupations	2,202	18.4
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	459	3.8
Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	1,687	14.1
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	2,040	17.1

*Table 7. Occupational breakdown of Lewis County Civilian Workforce.
Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015*

Major industries providing employment to Lewis County residents are educational, health and social services (26.4%), manufacturing (12.0%), retail trade (10.7%), agriculture, forestry and fishing/hunting (6.6%) and construction (11.7%). Private wage and salary workers make up approximately 64.3% of the workforce, while 35% is divided between government workers and self-employed workers. The remaining 0.7% are unpaid family workers.

Industry		
	Population	Percent
Employed Civilian Population 16 years and over	11,966	100
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	786	6.6
Construction	1,400	11.7
Manufacturing	1,431	12.0
Wholesale trade	200	1.7
Retail trade	1,285	10.7
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	478	4.0
Information	149	1.2
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	275	2.3
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management service	747	6.2
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	3,159	26.4
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	713	6
Other services, except public administration	452	3.8
Public administration	891	7.4

*Table 8. Industry breakdown of Lewis County Civilian Workforce.
Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015*

Vehicles

Approximately 6.1% of occupied housing units in Lewis County do not have access to a personal vehicle. Nearly 31% of those households have only 1 vehicle.

Vehicles Available		
	Population	Percent
Occupied Housing Units	10,539	100
None	643	6.1
1	3,225	30.6
2	4,405	41.8
3 or more	2,266	21.5

*Table 9. Vehicles available per Lewis County household.
Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015.*

Methodology

Lewis County, with the support of the Lewis County Transportation Task Force, researched the transportation needs in the county. This research was divided into two separate categories:

- (1) Existing transportation services
- (2) Long-range transportation vision

The existing transportation services portion of the research is defined as identifying the existing transportation programs in the county, redundancies of services, gaps in services and potential needs. The long-range transportation vision involved research into what other rural counties, similar in geography and demographics, are doing with planning and implementing transportation systems. Knowing that a "one-size fits all" model does not work with transportation, Lewis County wanted to learn about successful programs in New York State.

Outreach

In August 2017, the Lewis County Transportation Task Force sent transportation update requests to various human services providers in the county, requesting detailed information regarding the needs of their clients, customers and employees. The following organizations supplied the Transportation Task Force with updated information:

- Lewis County Office for the Aging
- Lewis County General Hospital Adult Day Health Care
- Lewis County Public Transportation
- Lewis County Public Health
- Lewis County Department of Social Services
- Transitional Living Services
- Credo Community Center
- The Work Place

- The ARC, Oneida Lewis Chapter
- Northern Regional Center for Independent Living
- Mountain View Prevention Services
- Literacy of Northern New York
- Lewis County Opportunities
- Central New York DSO
- Lewis County Head Start
- Brookside Senior Living
- Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc.

Results from Research

The Lewis County Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan identifies the existing transportation services, redundancies within those services and gaps of those services. This information is outlined in the following sections.

Existing Public Transportation

Lewis County Public Transportation

Operated by Birnie Bus, Inc.

6591 State Route 12

Lowville, NY 13367

315-376-6508

Birnie Bus, Inc. is contracted by Lewis County Public Transportation to manage and coordinate transit service. Lewis County Public Transportation (LCPT) offers transportation to all residents and visitors of Lewis County. There are currently 8 fixed routes that run Monday – Friday, a Utica College Connector Route that runs Monday – Friday during the school year and Tuesday/Thursday during school breaks, a JCC Connector Route that runs Monday – Friday year-round and an Old Forge Seasonal route that runs from mid-June – Labor Day Weekend. In addition to the set routes, LCPT also offers a Dial-A-Ride service that is open to the public and arrangements are made by the rider through Birnie Bus, Inc. Fares are double the rate for this service. Non-emergency medical transportation is provided Monday – Friday via the LCPT Demand Response/Medical Van and is available only to Medicaid clients by appointment only.

Existing Human Service Transportation

Lewis County Office for the Aging

7514 South State Street

Lowville, NY 13367

315-376-5313

The Office for the Aging (OFA) offers transportation services to anyone who is over the age of 60. Services covered under this transportation program include medical/dental appointments and grocery shopping. Once OFA approves the registrant's application, it is then forwarded to the Volunteer Transportation Center (VTC) in Watertown. From there, VTC will contact the participant to explain the program and schedule a driver for their upcoming appointment. The participant deals directly with VTC for any future appointments. Currently there are approximately 212 registered participants with the program. During calendar year 2016, for OFA eligible trips, VTC logged 63,853 volunteer miles (1,968 trips) for its' clients. OFA receives funding through the Older Americans Act Title IIIB and New York State Office for the Aging.

Lewis County Public Health Agency
7785 North. State Street, Suite 2
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-5453

Public Health contracts with Birnie Bus Service to provide pick-up/drop-off service to Lewis County children who are in the Pre-School Program. To qualify for the Pre-School Program, children must be between the ages of 3 and 5 and have a disability. The pre-school children are bussed to United Cerebral Palsy in Rome, Kelberman Center in Utica, Benchmark Family Services in Watertown, Gouverneur Central School in Gouverneur and Jefferson Rehabilitation in Watertown.

Public Health funds the transportation program through funds received from the New York State Department of Education. The 2017/2018 contract with Birnie Bus states that the cost of the first child on a bus is \$333.54 per day and every additional child on that bus is \$47.57 per day.

Lewis County General Hospital (LCGH)
7785 N. State Street
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-5200

The Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) program at LCGH offers door-to-door transportation to and from the ADHC facility at LCGH. The transportation occurs in the morning and afternoon. The service is provided to approximately 20 people ages 18 and over with disabilities or other specific medical needs. There are two drivers, one full-time and one part-time and two vans that carry three wheelchair riders and 10 seated riders. The vans are owned by LCGH.

Additionally, the nursing home located at the hospital uses the vans for transportation of the nursing home residents to and from activities in the region. There are approximately 160 residents in the nursing home.

The budget for these programs in 2018 is \$65,800 for salaries and approximately \$25,500 for operating expenses.

Department of Social Services (DSS)
5274 Outer Stowe Street
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-5703

In 2013 The New York State Department of Health required that all non-emergency medical transportation be managed by the Medical Answering Services (MAS) a change from the local DSS managing trips. MAS approve all Medicaid covered medical trips and the appropriate mode of transportation per the NYS Medicaid guidelines. Medicaid guidelines allow for recipients to be reimbursed for tolls, parking, meals, and lodging as necessary. Various levels of transportation utilized include; self; volunteer (VTC), public transit (Lewis County Public Transportation), taxi and ambulette. Self-transportation is the default approval unless a Medicaid recipient can show they cannot transport themselves or need assisted transport.

Lewis County also provides transportation for those involved in the Services Program areas of Child and Adult Protective, Child and Adult Preventive, PINS Diversion and Foster Care. DSS staff use county vehicles to transport children and/or parents for parental visitation and other reasons. Foster children are not to travel independently. Volunteer drivers are sometimes used for transportation of the parent and/or child. DSS has 11 vehicles for approximately 24 DSS staff to make home visits. The cars may be used to transport clients, but the primary focus of the transportation must fall under the reason DSS is involved with the client (Child Protective, Foster Care, Adult Protective, PINS).

In 2016, Medicaid had a gross expenditure of \$887,000 in Medical Transportation on behalf of Lewis County Medicaid recipients. Additionally, Lewis County DSS paid \$54,970.81 to the Volunteer Transportation Center for 2,312 transports totaling 78,619 miles and provided in addition to services that the caseworkers use county vehicles for.

*Transitional Living Services of Northern New York
7550 South State Street
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-5450*

Transitional Living Services (TLS) assists clients with arranging transportation through Lewis County Public Transportation, Medicaid Transportation (MAS) and Volunteer Transportation (VTC) however, clients can schedule the rides on their own. Programs and/or services include, but are not limited to, case management, psychosocial club, family support services, clinic services, advocacy, child and family clinic plus (CFC+), and mentally ill/chemical abuser (MICA) services. If time and circumstance allows, Case Managers have the ability to transport clients in agency vehicles.

Currently, TLS has 5 agency vehicles and their 2017 transportation budget is \$34,599.96.

*The Arc, Oneida Lewis Chapter, NYSARC
P.O. Box 126
Turin, NY 13473
315-348-5372*

The Arc in Lewis County operates its own vehicles, contracts with independent drivers and reimburses their staff for personal vehicle use, to provide adequate transportation for its clients. Transportation is provided to places of employment in Lewis County and neighboring counties. A fare is charged to the customers/clients that utilize this transportation. The one vehicle that Arc owns seats eight, but is not handicapped accessible.

Lewis County Head Start
P.O. Box 206
Lowville, NY 13367
315-346-7531

Lewis County Head Start provides transportation services through arrangements with Beaver River Central School, Lowville Academy & Central School, Copenhagen Central School and South Lewis Central School Districts. Approximately 70 four-year-old children living on regular bus routes ride school buses with other students, often including their own brothers and sisters. LCHS reimburses staff for the use of their personal vehicles and reimburses parents for mileage to attend Head Start activities.

Head Start receives funding through the Department of Health and Human Services to operate the program.

Central New York Development Services Offices
7020 State Route. 12
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-1700

The Central New York Development Services Offices (CNYDSO) offers assistance to their disabled clients for the purposes of medical appointments and community outings (movies, shopping, visits to the zoo) throughout Lewis County and extends to surrounding counties and metropolitan areas. Transportation is provided through the operation of 13 DSO-owned vehicles (a combination of wheelchair vans and Town & Country vans); staff who use their personal cars for client transportation are reimbursed at the current IRS rate of \$0.535/mile.

CNYDSO is a state funded government agency and their vehicles are provided by the Central New York Transportation Department.

The Work Place
5274 Outer Stowe Street
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-5800

The Work Place does not provide any supportive services specific to transportation but their office does try to provide clients and visitors with the Lewis County Public Transportation schedule. They work with community partners to assist Work Place visitors in need of transportation assistance, such as referral to Lewis County Opportunities' transportation program or leveraging Salvation Army funds so that available money can be targeted towards transportation.

Credo Community Center
7714 Number Three Road
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-5958

Credo Community Center, Inc. is a non-profit, Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, OASAS, approved entity, dedicated in the provision of treatment services for the addiction of alcohol and substance abuse. They do not provide transportation; however, assist clients in securing appropriate transportation through VTC, as needed.

Lewis County Opportunities
8265 State Route 812
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-8202

Lewis County Opportunities is an organization dedicated to working with people in need to promote a higher quality of life in our community. We provide supportive programs for families and the community. Lewis County Opportunities owns multiple vehicles for a variety of Human Service work and response functions. None of the agency vehicles are handicapped accessible. Actual consumer transportation is reserved to the Victim Service program using one vehicle that seats up to six people. Transportation for Victim Services consumers is provided by advocates to destinations including the Lewis County Courthouse, Lewis County General Hospital, law enforcement offices, and area shelters. The transportation offered through Lewis County Opportunities is funded through specific vehicle cost lines in grants such as Community Services Block Grant, VAWA, OVS, and FFV. Transporting of consumers outside of Victim Services Department is not common, but could be authorized depending upon circumstances as applicable to various grant work scopes.

In the event an agency vehicle is not available; Lewis County Opportunities reimburses employees for the use of their personal vehicles as necessary when transporting consumer or for other work-related tasks.

Brookside Senior Living Community
5701 Brookside Circle
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-4333

Brookside Senior Living Community is a resident community for seniors. Brookside provides transportation to the residents for the purpose of medical and dental appointments, grocery shopping and to the pharmacy.

Literacy of Northern New York
7640 North State Street
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-8188

The Literacy of Northern New York provides tutoring and training to Lewis and Jefferson County residents. While they do not receive any funding for transportation, they do reimburse staff for the use of their personal vehicles when a client is unable to get transportation to the tutoring site. Transportation to the Literacy of Northern New York office and to area libraries is the most common transportation destination. Because there is no funding for the transportation of clients, Literacy of Northern New York has relied on non-reimbursed volunteer drivers and on occasion, utilized the services of the Jefferson County Volunteer Transportation Center.

Mountain View Prevention Services
7714 Number Three Road
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-2321

Mountain View Prevention Services is non-profit, private agency dedicated to the prevention of alcohol and substance abuse. They do not provide transportation, but sometimes drive to client's homes for consultations because the client is unable to secure transportation. They have also assisted clients in securing transportation, as needed.

Northern Regional Center for Independent Living
7632 North State Street
Lowville, NY 13367
315-376-8696

Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (NRCIL) is a disability rights and resource center that promotes community efforts to end discrimination, segregation, and prejudice against people with disabilities. NRCIL works with community partners to create an accessible, inclusive society. Through NRCIL, people discover choices to live more independently, with enhanced dignity.

NRCIL serves people with disabilities and their families in Jefferson and Lewis counties. NRCIL serves people of all ages and disabilities. Also works with public officials, service providers and businesses that require technical assistance in responding to the needs of persons with disabilities. Services to individuals and families are provided free of charge.

NRCIL does not provide transportation, but does make home visits to consumers that are unable to secure transportation. Also assists individuals to find transportation and access all community supports.

Redundancies in Services

With the mitigation of previously identified transit redundancies, there are now few surpluses in the existing human services transportation system in Lewis County. Currently, the Medicaid transportation is handled by Medical Answering Services, LLC, also known as M.A.S., which alleviates most of the redundancies that were identified in the 2009 Lewis County Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. Since Medicaid transportation services are now under one roof, there is no overlap, in regard to Medicaid patients, between agencies such as the Office for the Aging, the Department of Social Services or Transitional Living Services. Lewis County General Hospital's Adult Day Health Care program does provide transportation to Medicaid clients that could otherwise be covered by M.A.S. if needed.

With the establishment of the Lewis County Public Transportation system, there are little to no redundancies in regard to public transit. Agencies such as The Arc, Oneida-Lewis Chapter, Upstate Cerebral Palsy, Birnie Bus, Inc and Lewis County Public Transportation have joined efforts to share services, equipment and costs of transit to and from areas throughout the county, such as Lowville to Boonville, and outside of the county, such as Lowville to Utica. While public transportation is used as a rule by agencies and organizations within the County, many of them are dependent on internal transportation budgets to fill in the transit gaps that leave many residents astray.

Unmet Needs

Through discussions with human service providers, the Lewis County Transportation Task Force has identified gaps in the current services: employment transit, healthcare/treatment transit and social transit.

With recent unemployment rates exceeding 7.1% and 6.1% of Lewis County households without a vehicle, it is obvious that the lack of transportation has a direct impact on our resident's ability to pursue, land and maintain a job. Prospective employees are not the only entities suffering from the lack of transportation. Expanding manufacturing companies, such as Kraft Heinz are in constant need of workers but recognize the transportation barrier that is in their way.

Since the establishment of the universal Medical Transportation system, managed by the M.A.S, it has been hard for our human service agencies to find a voice for their clients. Though we have mitigated the redundancy of Medicaid transportation by centralizing the service, there needs to be increased diligent communication and program education between our agencies and M.A.S. representatives to alleviate client frustrations and Non-Emergency Transportation service providers.

Additionally, residents in Lewis County are interested in transportation to shopping centers, medical clinics, banks and post offices, hair salons, farmer's markets and community centers. It would be beneficial, not only for Lewis County residents, but for the local economy to expand and coordinate established transportation services to accommodate these destinations.

Lewis County Transportation Goals

To provide affordable and easily accessible transportation to all Lewis County residents so that they can thrive financially, recreationally and healthily.

In support of the overall desired mission, the Lewis County Transportation Task Force has identified three supporting goals in which they plan to focus their primary efforts.

1. Increase the availability of dependable and efficient transportation for those employed or seeking employment inside and outside the County.
2. Increase the awareness of services and procedures provided by the Medical Answering Service.
3. Increase the accessibility of transportation to and from community events sought by all County demographics.

Goal 1: Increase the availability of dependable and efficient transportation for those employed or seeking employment inside and outside the County.

Goal 2: Increase the communication and knowledge of services provided by the Medical Answering Service.

Goal 3: Increase the accessibility of transportation to and from community events and centers sought by all.

Action Plan

Recommended Actions

The Lewis County Transportation Task Force, LCTTF, has focused their discussions on the transportation needs for all county residents, especially for those in need of transportation to employment, healthcare/treatment, and community events throughout the County and beyond. Though there are other transit needs that the LCTTF identified, these three areas of need seem to resonate the most with agencies and residents. After breaking up into focused committees, members of the LCTTF were able to identify specific actions that could bridge those gaps.

By providing those who lack the transportation necessary to pursue employment with a reliable means of efficient transportation for their work schedules, Lewis County could reduce the August 2017 5.3% unemployment rate and provide employers with the workforce that they need. In order to appropriately assess the prospective employee transit needs, the LCTTF suggests the following:

1. Survey residents and employers throughout the community to define schedule needs.
2. Integrate existing transportation services and equipment that have the ability to serve resident needs for shifts that have greater attendance or truancy problems.
3. Work with organizations to discuss possible cost-sharing options of a transit service for their current and prospective employees.

Although the move to a universal Medicaid transportation system has reduced redundancies, agencies and organizations within Lewis County have expressed frustration with the inefficient service provided to their clients. Recently, healthcare and treatment patients, physicians and clinicians have voiced concerns about the waiting periods for transportation pick-ups, after hour transportation availability and overall understanding of the Medicaid Transportation system as a whole. After pulling together representatives from such agencies and from the Medical Answering Service, the LCTTF subcommittee was able to identify the following ways to improve Medicaid transportation:

1. Agencies and organizations, with the help of M.A.S representatives, will educate employees and clinicians on the program and how it works.
2. An increase in communication between such human service agencies and the M.A.S. representatives will reduce the frustrations that all three parties are currently experiencing.
3. Provide adequate shelters for riders to safety and comfortably wait for their assigned transportation at high volume treatment, healthcare and human service offices.

With the local aging population on the rise, many residents are finding it more and more difficult to access fresh groceries, wellness centers and community events on their own. Sadly, many of our Lewis County residents cannot depend on family members and friends to provide transportation to their essential medical appointments and services let alone these life perks. Through the collaboration of human services agencies such as Lewis County Public Health, The ARC, Oneida Lewis-Chapter and Lewis County Public Transportation, the LCTTF recommended the following transit ideas:

1. Utilize off-duty Lewis County Public Transportation fleet vehicles, specifically during the Old Forge seasonal route, to offer communities quick access to nearby farmer's markets.
2. Add wellness and fitness centers to the Lewis County Public Transportation's Village Loop route.

- Educate both the public and human service agencies on the benefits and services that Lewis County Public Transportation already offers while also building routes that meet the needs of those who cannot rely on others for transportation.

Implementation

Lewis County human service agencies, organizations and school districts have been actively involved as members of the LCTTF and are willing participants of coordinated human service transportation. They are ready and willing to join efforts to provide residents with access to employment, healthcare/treatment facilities as well and community events.

The LCTTF has identified implementation needs. Some of these needs are currently being met while others will need to be focused on as the county moves forward with the action items identified above. The needs identified are:

Identified Needs	Status
Public Involvement	In Progress
Coordination among individuals and agencies committed to transportation coordination	Met
Ensure that participating agencies are fully vested in the success of the program	Met
Generate support from local officials	Met
Open communication between human services providers and MAS	In Progress
Educate customers/clients/clinicians on Medicaid transportation	In Progress
Install public transportation bus stop markers to identify established pick up points	In Progress
Participation from employers throughout the county	In Progress

Table 10. Transportation needs of Lewis County and status of progress.

Future development and/or expansion of transit service will consider regional relationships. Lewis County will work with neighboring counties and their existing public transit service when planning transportation efforts. The adjoining transit services are:

Jefferson County

Watertown CitiBus

544 Newell Street

Watertown, NY 13601

(315) 785-7772

<http://www.citywatertown.org/index.asp?NID=110>

CitiBus offers transportation with five daily routes throughout the City of Watertown. The service operates Monday through Saturday from 7:00 am to 6:15 pm. The base fare is \$1.50 per rider while children under 12 are \$0.50. Coupon books are available for 10, 20 and unlimited monthly rides at discounted rates. A para transit bus is available for those passengers who are not able to ride on regular buses.

Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc.
203 North Hamilton Street
Watertown, NY 13601
(315) 788-0422
<https://volunteertransportationcenter.org/>

Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc., (VTC), is a 501(c) 3 non-profit established by the United Way in 1993 with a goal to improve health and wellness for the community by ensuring those with no other means of transportation are able to keep medical and dental appointments, receive life sustaining treatments such as chemo therapy and renal dialysis, and go grocery shopping at least once a month. These charitable rides are provided at no cost to the rider. This program allows VTC clients to maintain their own residence thus providing them with a sense of independence fostering self-confidence and self-esteem. VTC provides comprehensive coordination of trips to maximize ride sharing. VTC does not duplicate public transportation, however fills in the gaps when traditional fixed route or paratransit routes cannot meet the need. Door through door transportation is provided by 250+ volunteer drivers using their own vehicles who in turn receive \$0.445 per mile (for charitable programs) for transporting clients across Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties. Mileage reimbursement is based on miles traveled, not the number of passengers. Volunteer proximity to clients makes it possible to keep non-passenger mileage to a minimum. The success of the program is attributed to the coordination of transportation activities with other human service and government agencies in the county. In 2016 for charitable rides volunteer drivers provided 2,877 one way trips, traveling 102,976 miles of transportation to clients in Lewis County. Part of the funding for this service is provided by utilizing title III funds from OFA, \$10,500 annually in addition to fundraising of \$52,000 for volunteer driver trips assisting seniors, persons with disabilities, and anyone else needing a ride to Medical appointments and grocery shopping. For all trips including human service contracts i.e. Medicaid transportation, in 2016 volunteer drivers provided 7,455 one way trips traveling 254,547 miles for Lewis County residents. Coordination of all volunteer rides are handled by the VTC – making sure that if multiple people can ride in the car for a trip, they do. Starting 2018 VTC will be seeking to provide no cost to the rider wheelchair service, due in large part to the 5310 grant submitted in 2017.

Oswego County
Oswego County Opportunities
239 Oneida Street
Fulton, NY 13069
(315) 598-4717
<https://www.oco.org/>

Oswego County Public Transit (OPT) offers fixed routes, non-emergency medical transportation, Call-N-Ride and Medicaid transportation. There are currently 13 fixed routes throughout the county. The fare for public transit is \$1.50 per one-way trip. Seniors have a reduced rate of \$0.75 per one-way trip, but must show their Medicare card and photo identification. Children ages 6-9 are charged \$0.75 per one-way trip and children ages 5 and under rider for free when accompanied by an adult. OPT does offer riders monthly passes for \$45 and route deviations are twice the normal fare.

Oswego County Opportunities Call-N-Ride service provides curb-side pick-up to seniors ages 60+ and persons with special needs fast and free transportation. This service is funded in part by the Oswego County Office for the Aging and Exelon.

St. Lawrence County

St. Lawrence NYSARC

6 Commerce Lane

Canton, NY 13617

(315) 386-2600

<http://www.slnysarc.org/public-transit>

St. Lawrence County's public transportation system is operated by St. Lawrence NYSARC. The system has 200 vehicles that travel nearly 2 million miles annually and their buses are fully accessible. While children under 3 ride for free, one-way trips are \$2 and discounted passes are available for 20 rides, 30 rides and 40 rides for \$36, \$53 and \$68, respectfully.

Oneida County

Oneida County Rural Transit

Utica Terminal

2245 Dwyer Ave

Utica, NY 13501

(315) 797-4933

<http://www.birniebus.com/routes.php>

Oneida County Rural Transit (OCRT) contracts Birnie Bus to operate their public transportation system that includes fixed weekday and weekend routes. They offer services throughout Utica and Rome while also providing transportation from Oneida County to the Syracuse area. Children, senior citizens and the disabled are charged half fares and OCRT will deviate from the route up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to those who cannot get to a scheduled stop.

Utica / Oneida County Centro

15 Elizabeth St

Utica, NY 13501

(315) 797-1121

https://www.centro.org/service_schedules/service-area-oneida-county

The Utica/Oneida County Centro service is one piece of the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority that provides public transportation for Onondaga, Oswego, Cayuga, and Oneida counties while also serving the cities of Syracuse, Oswego, Fulton, Auburn, Rome and Utica. Centro has a fleet of 237 vehicles, 625 employees and transports approximately 33,500 riders each day. A variety of routes are offered and include fixed routes, inter-city connection routes, shopper services, paratransit services and handicap accessible vehicles.

Conclusions

Expanding and coordinating established transportation programs will provide the following benefits:

- Outreach to all members of the public, especially those who are looking for dependable transportation to employment and community events.
- Unification of all members of the public, including disabled, senior, children and low-income individuals.
- Support the self-sufficiency and independence of all residents of the county.
- Utilize existing transportation funds for the most effective and efficient human services transportation.

The county human service providers and other agencies have recognized the need for expanding and coordinating transportation efforts. This plan outlines the redundancies that have been alleviated since the previous Plan and the unmet needs of transportation in the county and details an action plan to coordinate the existing efforts with the inclusion of those individuals who have gone underserved. Coordinated public transit and human service transportation will make the existing programs more effective and will foster additional mobility within the county and region by providing service to individuals who have not benefited from transportation service in the past.

Lewis County Transportation Task Force Members

Aileen Martin	Northern Regional Center for Independent Living (NRCIL)
Alvin Aldrich Jr.	Foothills Medical Transport
Anna Platz	Lewis County Public Health
Ashley Waite	Lewis County Public Health
Brad Schwarting	The ARC, Oneida-Lewis Chapter
Casandra Buell	Lewis County Public Transportation & Lewis County Planning Department
Chris Baker	Lewis County Office for the Aging (OFA)
Frank Doldo	Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. (VTC)
Frank Pace	Lewis County Planning Department
Jennifer Jones	Lewis County Department of Social Services (DSS)
John Reel	NYSDOT
Kristen Bidwell	Mountain View Prevention Services
Laura Hacker	NYSDOT
Leah Schneider	Credo Community Center, Inc.
Leslie Regan	Medical Answering Service (MAS)
Lisa Bain	Lewis County General Hospital Residential Care Facility
Lisa Hetzner	The Work Place
Lizzie Widrick	Mountain View Prevention Services
Mackenzie Bellinger	Lewis County General Hospital Residential Care Facility
Margaret Grant	Lewis County General Hospital Residential Care Facility
Megan Pfendler	Transitional Living Services (TLS)
Melissa Kenealy	Birnie Bus, Inc.
Roberta Zehr	Lewis County Department of Social Services (DSS)
Sam Purington	Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. (VTC)
Scott Mathys	Lewis County Opportunities

Supportive Members & Agencies

Amy Green	Lowville Academy Central School (LACS)
Caitlyn Smith	Kraft Heinz
Cheryle Shenkle-O'Neill	Snowbelt Housing
Deborah Tate	Literacy of Northern New York (LNNY)
Frank Monnat	Beaver River Central School (BRCS)
Jane Lehman	Brookside Senior Living Facility
Justin Astafan	Lewis County Search & Rescue
Mike Hanno	South Lewis Central School (SLCS)
Patricia Fralick	Lewis County Community Services
Phil Hathway	District 1 Lewis County Legislator
Robert Finster	Harrisville Central School (HCS)
Ryan Piche	Lewis County Manager
Scott Connell	Copenhagen Central School (CCS)