

# OMEGA REGIONAL COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION PLAN: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In partnership with:



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### **Online Reference Web Links**

Complete plan: <https://omegadistrict.org/programs/transit/regional/>

An interactive Origin-Destination Lines map can be found here: <https://arcg.is/1KXe5i>

An interactive Origin-Destination Points map can be found here: <https://arcg.is/1y8GS5>

An interactive Origin-Destination buffers map for the major Interstates I-77 and I-70 can be found here: <https://arcg.is/0jfrKS>

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# Regional Coordinated Public Transit/Human Services Transportation Executive Summary - Why do Regional Coordinated Transportation?

In 2018, the Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT) Office of Transit selected two regional planning agencies (one urban and one rural) to participate in a Regional Coordinated Public Transit/Human Services Transportation Pilot Program. The Ohio Mid-Eastern Governments Association (OMEGA) was selected to be the lead agency representing rural communities. OMEGA's planning area includes ten counties in eastern Appalachian Ohio. A Regional Coordinated Council (RCC) including representatives from agencies that either provide, contract, or are impacted by transportation, was established for the 10-county region. The RCC meets regularly to collaborate on challenges, address the needs from the public, and set goals and strategies.



The goal of the coordinated pilot program is to improve the transportation services for the public, especially seniors and people with disabilities, by cost-effectively increasing ridership and establishing best practices for coordination of transportation services in the region. Many challenges were identified to improve regional coordination especially related to limited funding and local match, trip billing across the region, and lack of set fees for out-of-region trips. Some of the top public unmet needs were extended service hours, more payment options, more employment transportation, and an easy fare/rate for regional mobility. Cost-allocation will be an important asset for the region by attempting to offer solutions for a more consistent fare rate structure. Currently, there is no consistent regional fare rate structure set. Many transportation providers receive funding from multiple agencies, all of which have different requirements and funding structures. In order for the regional providers to operate more resourcefully, a uniform cost-allocation process accepted by multiple agencies can offer options to manage tight budgets, coordinate longer trips, and provide more efficient service to the public. Also, the RCC will explore a consistent no-show & cancellation policy for the region.

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Fundamental to the Coordinated Transportation Plan process is the active and meaningful involvement of stakeholders. During the development of the Regional Coordinated Plan and in accordance with the Section 5310 program requirements, OMEGA included the following stakeholders, at minimum:

- Seniors
- Individuals with disabilities
- People with low incomes
- Veterans
- Unemployed
- Job seekers
- People that do not own vehicles
- People with limited English proficiency
- Students in a vocational school, college, or university
- Students with disabilities and transportation challenges
- Medicaid-eligible individuals
- People that live in areas with limited or no transportation service available
- Dialysis patients
- Public, private and non-profit transportation providers
- Human services agencies
- General public



The regional coordinated transportation plan was developed and motioned for adoption by the Regional Coordinated Council on *November 22, 2019*. The regional coordinated transportation plan was adopted by the OMEGA Executive Board on *December 10, 2019*. This Executive Summary includes a demographics overview of the region, available transportation resources, unmet transportation needs, challenges for coordinated transportation, and the goals, strategies, and projects to meet those needs.

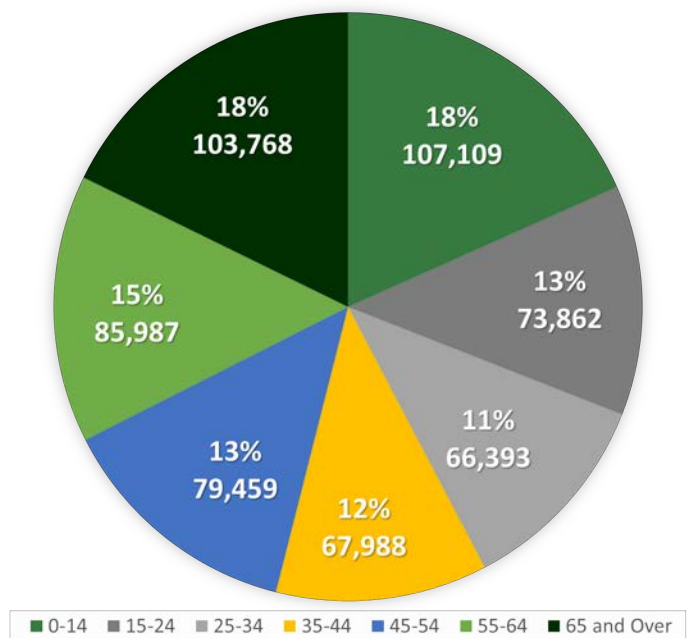


## AGE OF THE REGIONAL POPULATION

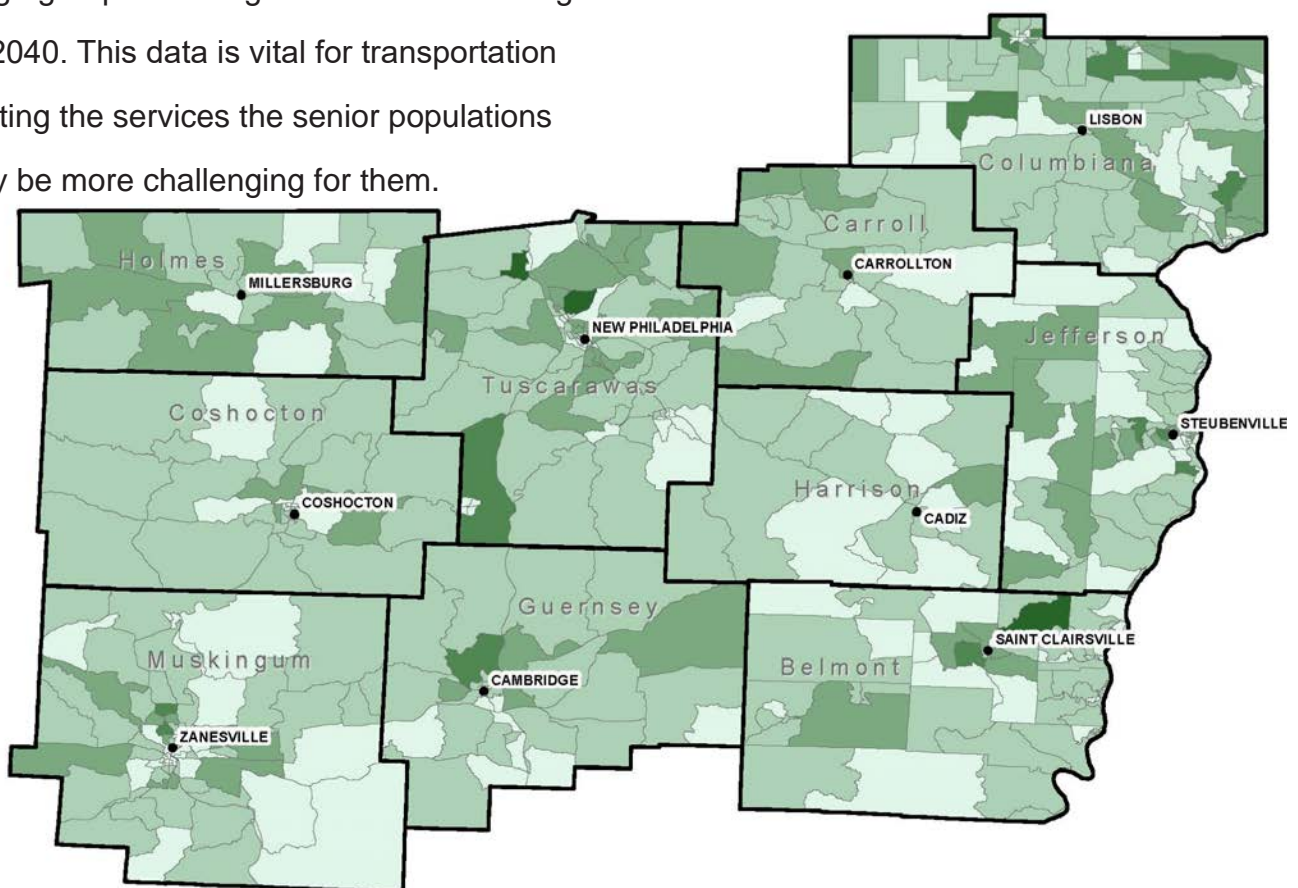
The two largest age groups in the OMEGA region are the 0-14 years old and 65 and over age group. Both age groups have an equal share in population at 18% each. A little more than half the population in the region, 54%, is younger than the age of 44 years old. Only a third of the overall population is age 55 years old or older and in the next 10 years will influence the growth of the senior age population. The senior population, age 65 years old and over, is projected to be the largest age group in the region in 2020 continuing through 2040. This data is vital for transportation since getting the services the senior populations seek may be more challenging for them.

### OMEGA Region Total Population by Age Group

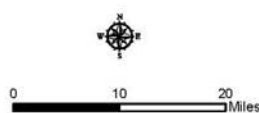
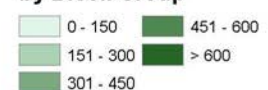
Total Population: 584,566



Source: Ohio Development Services Agency, Office of Research; April 2018



#### Population 65 Years and Older by Block Group

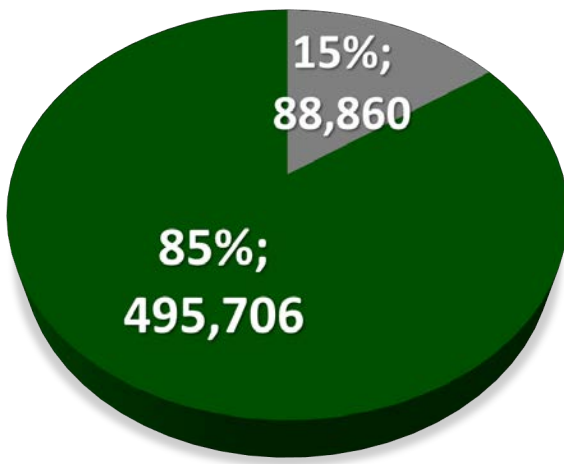


MAP 1: MAP OF POPULATION DENSITY OF INDIVIDUALS AGE 65 AND OLDER

## REGIONAL DISABILITY RATE

### OMEGA Region Disability Rate

State of Ohio Disability Rate - 13.9%

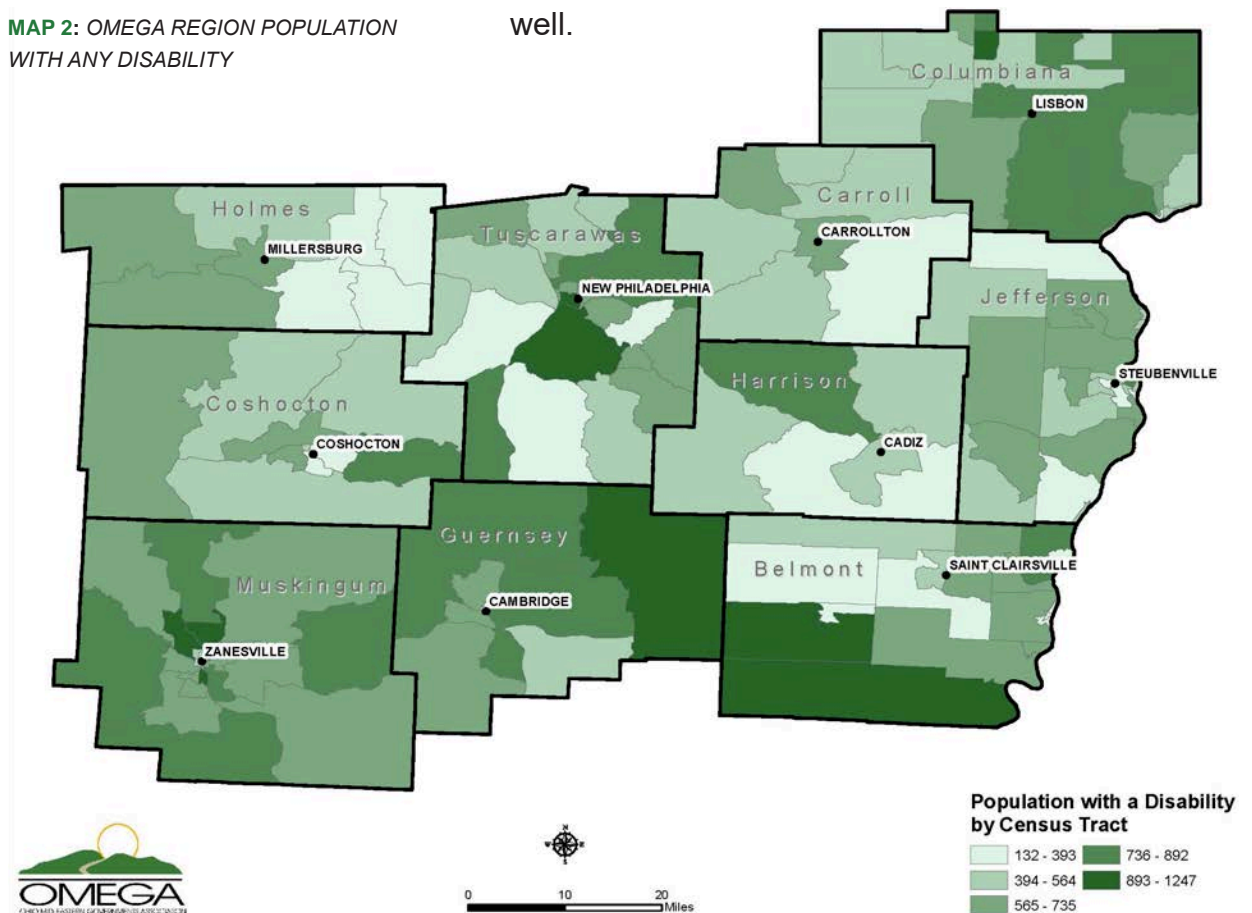


■ Persons with a Disability ■ Persons without a Disability

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The disability rate is very important regarding transit and human services transportation use. Many people with disabilities lack mobility to transport themselves and rely on other modes of transportation. Often, they rely on their family, friends, neighbors, or other public transit options. The current disability rate in the OMEGA region is 15%, which is slightly greater than the state of Ohio's disability rate at 13.9%. This means that 88,860 people who live in the region are living with a disability either mental, cognitive or physical that may require assistance with their transportation needs for their daily activities. As the population continues to age, the disability rate may increase as well.

**MAP 2: OMEGA REGION POPULATION WITH ANY DISABILITY**



## REGIONAL POVERTY LEVEL

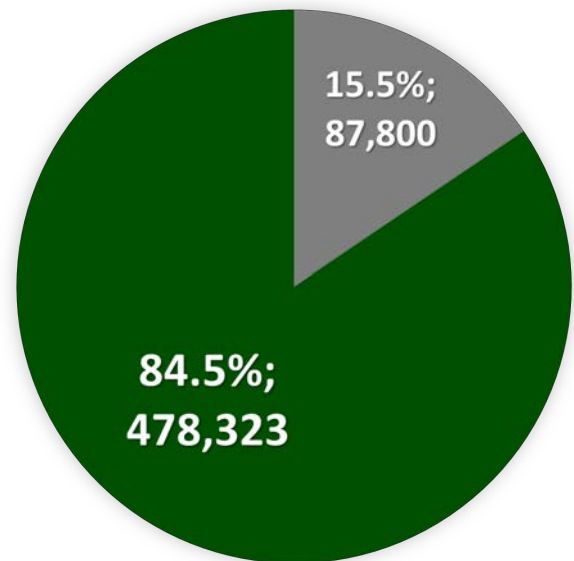
The federal poverty level for an individual is one person with an annual income of \$12,490 or less.

Individuals who live below the poverty level generally are unable to afford many services, especially transportation. Many of these individuals who live below poverty are unable to afford their own vehicles, and may have to rely on family, friends, or neighbors to help them meet their daily transportation needs. In the OMEGA Region, there are 87,800 individuals who live below the poverty level which equates to 15.5% of the total population.

This is similar to the individual poverty level in the state of Ohio of 15.4%. Connecting these individuals to employment opportunities in the region with more transit or transportation options may strengthen the regional economy.

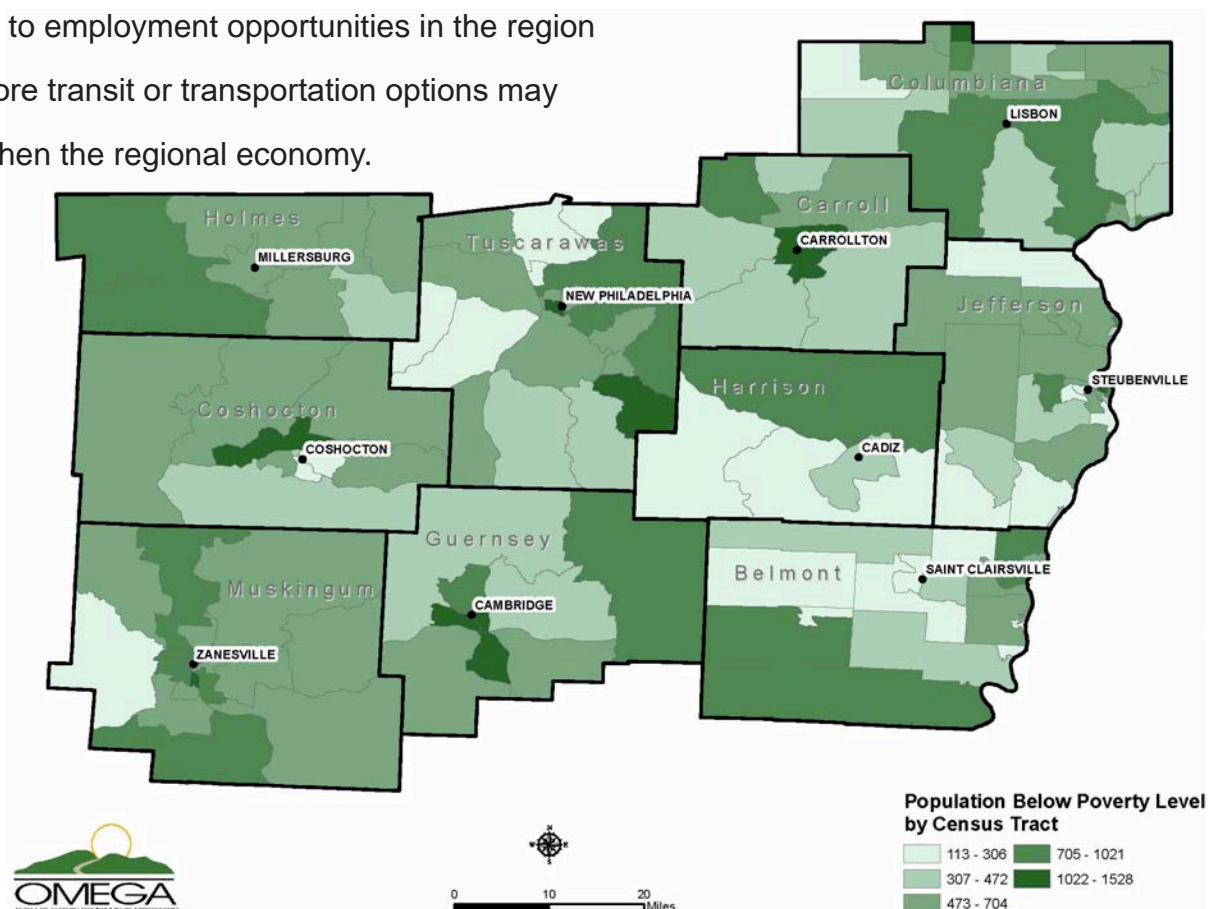
## OMEGA Regional Population Poverty Level

State of Ohio Average - 14.9%



■ Percent Below Poverty Level ■ Percent Above Poverty Level

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

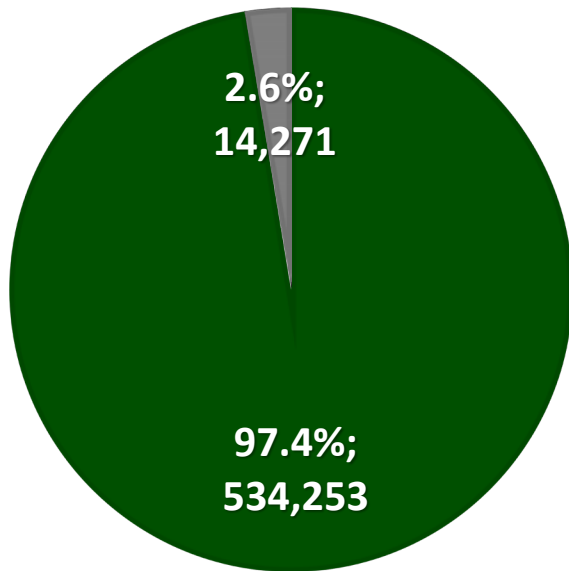


MAP 3: OMEGA REGION POVERTY LEVEL BY INDIVIDUAL



## REGIONAL ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

### OMEGA Region Limited English Proficiency

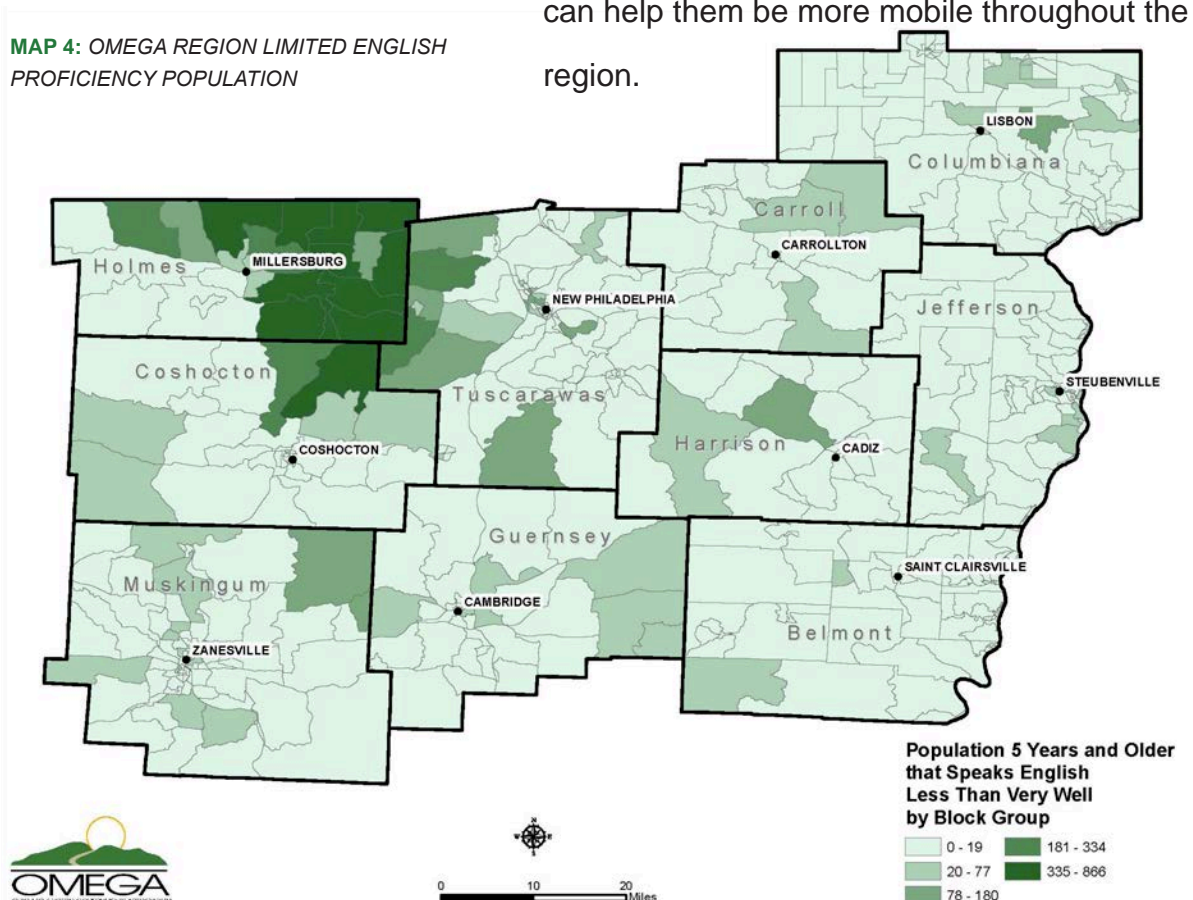


■ Percent Speak English "Very Well" ■ Percent Speak English "Less than Very Well"

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The age for determining English language proficiency is 5 years old and over and in the OMEGA Region, that total population is 548,524. There are 14,271 individuals in the region, 8,158 who live in Holmes County, that are considered to speak English less than very well. This equates to 2.6% of the total population aged 5 years and over and is slightly higher than the 2.4% in the state of Ohio. The presence of a growing Amish population, especially in Holmes County, is unique for the region. Populations that have limited English proficiency may benefit from bilingual and other language services that can help them be more mobile throughout the region.

MAP 4: OMEGA REGION LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY POPULATION



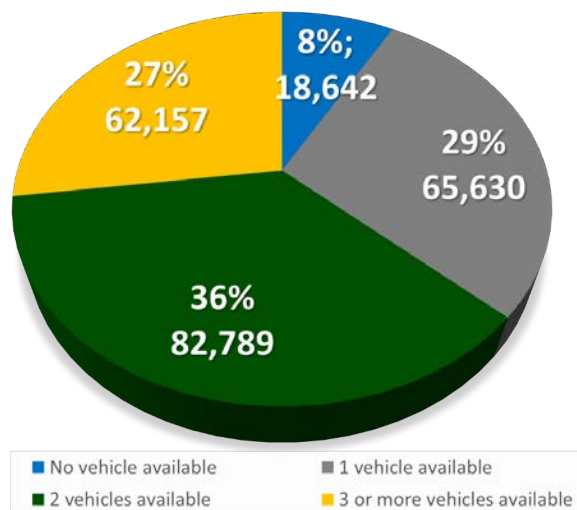


## REGIONAL ZERO-VEHICLE COUNT

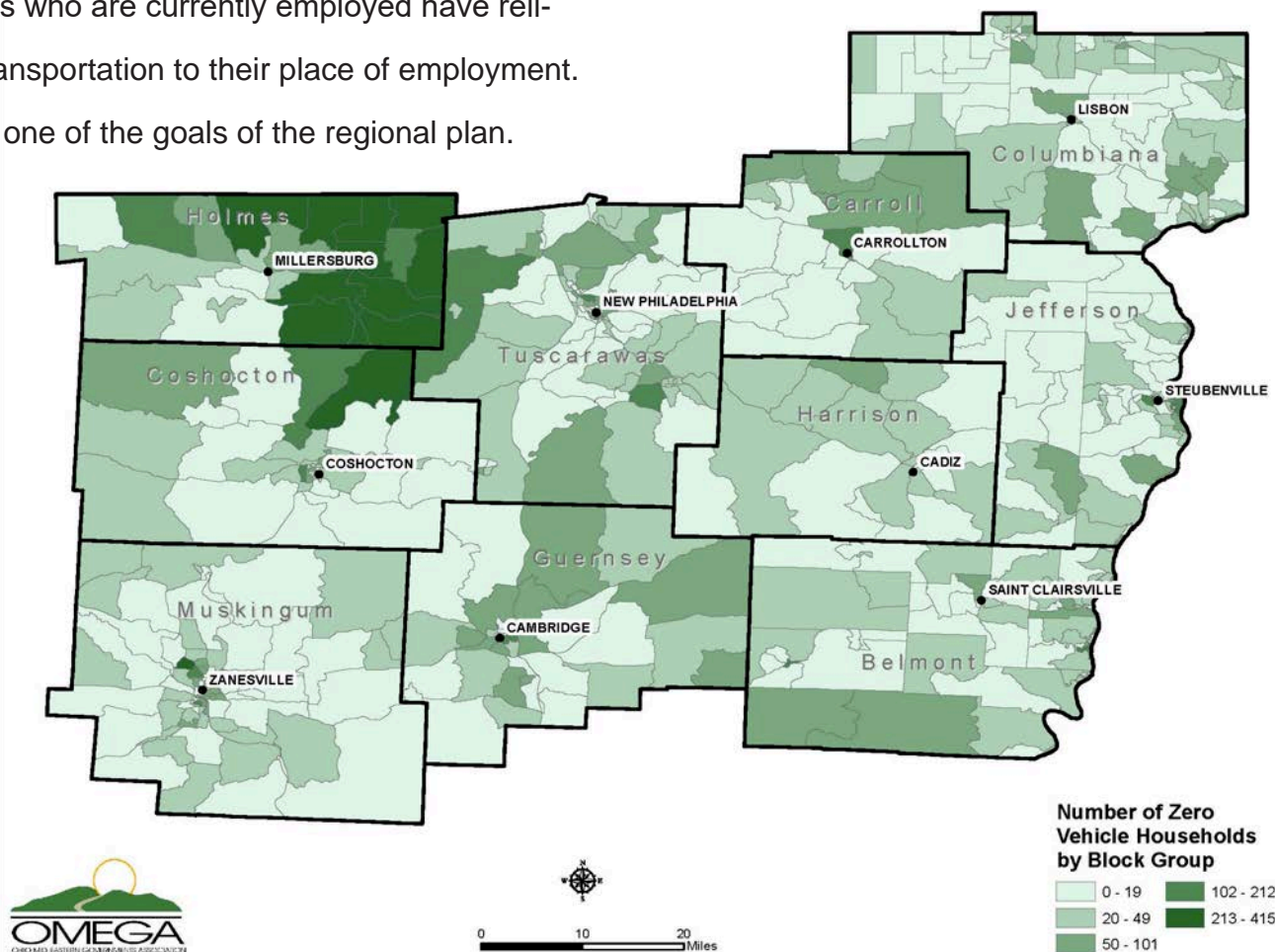
There are 229,247 occupied housing units in the OMEGA region. Approximately 8% of the total households in the OMEGA region do not own a vehicle or have access to a vehicle for their personal use. Often, people who don't own a vehicle have to rely on family, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Not owning a vehicle may be due to financial circumstances that inhibits the household from being regularly mobile. The households with no vehicles in the region may benefit from more available transportation services. The most important piece of the zero-vehicle puzzle is that persons who are currently employed have reliable transportation to their place of employment. This is one of the goals of the regional plan.

### OMEGA Region Zero-Vehicle Households

Total Occupied Housing Units: 229,247



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



MAP 5: OMEGA REGION HOUSEHOLDS WITH ZERO-VEHICLES

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## REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PROVIDERS

### AVAILABLE REGIONAL RESOURCES FOR TRANSPORTATION

There are 71 transportation service providers or human service agencies that provide or contract transportation services within the OMEGA Region. The public served includes seniors, people with disabilities, zero-vehicle households, low income individuals, unemployed, veterans, Medicaid-eligible individuals, people with a low english proficiency, and others. A very important and valuable resource to coordinated transportation in the region are the Mobility Managers. They help connect the public to the transportation service providers in a non-biased service and are a valuable resource for information and travel training



### REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SERVICE VEHICLES

In order to analyze transit and transportation service in the region, OMEGA requested information and data about the vehicles of the providers. Of the 71 transportation service providers, 59 reported data compiling a list of a total of 504 vehicles. Approximately 60% of the vehicles are wheelchair accessible. The average age of the vehicles recorded and reported in the inventory is 6.36 years. All reported vehicles were ranked between 1 (Poor) and 5 (Excellent) to indicate vehicle conditions. The average ranking for vehicles in the region was 3.86, which is narrowly below “good” meaning most of the fleets in the region require frequent repairs. The average service days for the vehicles reported is 5.73 days in a week, with little weekend service but still slightly more than a regular work week.

Regular maintenance and a sustainable funding mechanism are an on-going challenge for many transportation service providers in the region. Since the public is being served and transported by the coordinating service agencies, the conditions of the vehicles need to be sufficient for passengers to ride with space for handicap access and wheelchair capacity. The longer the vehicles are in service the mileage increases, and increased maintenance is required to keep the vehicles in service. More funding may be necessary to keep pace with service demand.

A major indicator for vehicle maintenance is mileage. Odometer readings were only reported for 312 vehicles or 62% of all recorded vehicles in the region. This does not account for all vehicles serving

the public in the region. The total reported mileage in the region is 38,328,443 miles with an average of 122,848 miles per vehicle. The majority of the vehicles reported in the region have over 100,000 miles with an average age of 6.36 years. Each vehicle has a demand of nearly 20,000 miles a year which requires good and regular maintenance and stable funding just to keep a well-maintained fleet in service for the public.

Each vehicle almost drives around the world in one year. For the 312 vehicles reported, in their service lifetime, they have traveled around the world 1,539 times and have completed 80 round-trips to the moon. The average lifetime service mileage per vehicle is nearly five trips around the world. Two vehicles can make the trip to the moon with their average service mileage.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICE STATISTICS	COUNT
TOTAL VEHICLES	504
WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE VEHICLES	303
WHEELCHAIR SEAT ESTIMATED TOTAL	569
TOTAL VEHICLES REPORTED	312
AVERAGE VEHICLE AGE (Years)	6.4
AVERAGE VEHICLE CONDITION (1 - 5)	3.9
AVERAGE VEHICLE SERVICE DAYS (Per week)	5.7
TOTAL VEHICLE MILES	38.3 Million
AVERAGE MILES PER VEHICLE	122,850



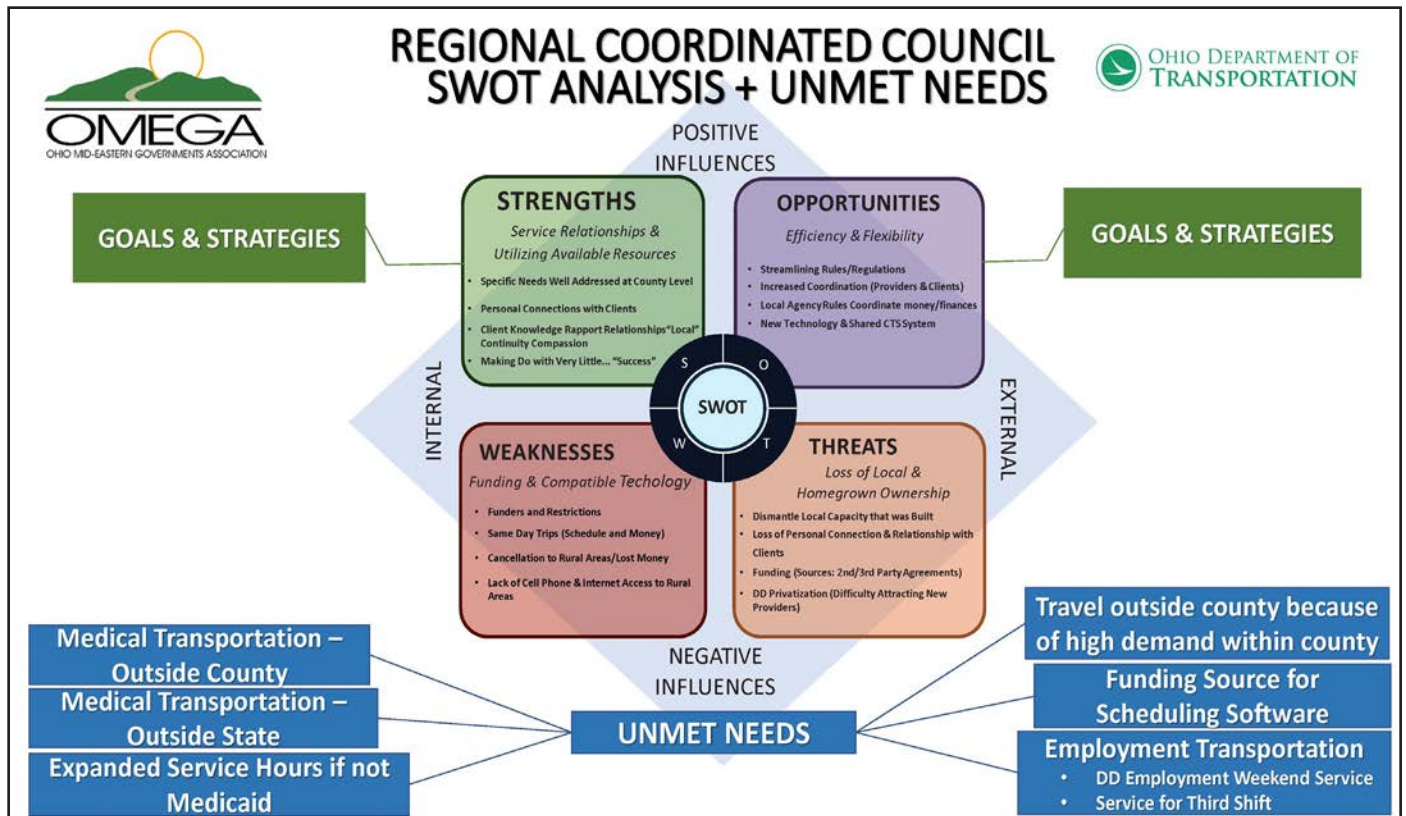


# REGIONAL PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

## REGIONAL COORDINATED TRANSPORTATION UNMET NEEDS & CHALLENGES

The Regional Coordinated Council (RCC) met regularly over the span of two years. In the initial meeting, the RCC developed the SWOT analysis regional planning purposes. There was a total of five regional public workshops. OMEGA and stakeholders collected unmet needs and votes in person from the public. The table is a record of these needs. There were five more needs that were recorded from public comments on public surveys: More Frequent Trips, Evening Transportation Service, Akron/Canton Airport Service, Bus Stop Shelters, and Day & Seasonal Passes. In total, OMEGA received 1,209 responses from the public.

Rank	Unmet Need Description
1	More Weekend Service
2	More Travel Service & Payment Options
3	More Efficient Employment Transportation
4	Expand Other Types of Transportation Service
5	Improve & Increase Bus Service
6	Expand Non-Medicaid Service Hours
7	Offer Transfers & Improve City Connections
8	Increase Medical Transportation Outside County & State
9	Easy Fare/Rate for Low Income Individuals
10	Simplify Public Information (i.e. brochures)
11	Local Area Hospitals Closing Causing Longer Trips



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Several challenges to regional coordinated transportation and unmet transportation needs were identified by the RCC as well as members of the public. The challenges the stakeholders identified were limited funding, securing local match funds, limited resources and technology, limited broadband services, and insufficient marketing just to name a few.

## **REGIONAL COORDINATED PLAN FOR ACHIEVING SHARED GOALS**

Five goals were established to guide the Regional Coordinated Transportation Plan and to identify strategies that can be used to achieve the goals:

- 1. Increase Ridership for all Transportation Service Providers in the Region.***
- 2. More Efficient Out-of-County and Out-of-Region Transportation Service.***
- 3. Reduce Denials and No-Shows in the Region.***
- 4. Cost-Effective Vehicle Replacement for Regional Transportation Service Providers.***
- 5. Increase Employment Transportation Options for Jobseekers and Employees.***

## **PROJECTS FOR THE REGION**

Transportation service providers and mobility managers identified 37 projects to meet the goals and strategies. Funding for operations, capital improvements and mobility management will be needed.

Five project categories were prioritized in the following order:

- 1. Mobility Management***
- 2. Vehicle Replacement/Procurement***
- 3. Operations (Expansion, Capital improvements)***
- 4. Technology***
- 5. Regional Initiatives (Education, Training)***

## **PROPOSED STAKEHOLDER REGIONAL PROJECTS**

The following table is a summary of the categorized projects that were identified by the stakeholders to meet the transportation needs of the region. Projects in each category are listed alphabetically by agency.

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT			
Agency	County	Project Description	Cost Estimate
BHJ-MPC	Jefferson	Ohio Mobility Management Program	\$80,000
CCCTA	Coshocton	Ohio Mobility Management Program	\$71,836
National Church Residences	Belmont	Ohio Mobility Management Program	\$54,000
SEAT	Muskingum	Ohio Mobility Management Program	\$80,000
Tuscarawas County Senior Center	Tuscarawas	Ohio Mobility Management Program	\$70,000

VEHICLE REPLACEMENT/PROCUREMENT			
Agency	County	Project Description	Cost Estimate
CAA of CC/CARTS	Columbiana	Buses for Deviated Fixed Route Shuttle	\$555,000
CAA of CC/CARTS	Columbiana	Fleet Replacement (15% per year)	\$215,000
Carroll County Transit	Carroll	Carroll County Transit Grant Funds	\$573,845
CCCTA	Coshocton	Vehicle Fleet Maintenance	\$51,400
CCCTA	Coshocton	Replacement LTV Vehicle	\$63,441
CCCTA	Coshocton	Expansion MMV	\$41,323
Guernsey County Senior Center	Guernsey	Coordinated Transportation Program	\$654,000
Horizons Rural Public Transportation	Tuscarawas	Vehicle Replacement	\$182,397
National Church Residences	Belmont	5310 Vehicle Replacement Plan	\$195,000
Society of Equal Access/	Tuscarawas	Van Replacement	\$595,000
Tuscarawas County Senior Center	Tuscarawas	Replacement Van, Capitalized Maintenance	\$101,000

OPERATIONS			
Agency	County	Project Description	Cost Estimate
CAA of CC	Columbiana	Coordinated Medical Route	\$55,000
CAA of CC	Columbiana	Make the Connection Shuttle - Phase 2 & 3	\$65,000
CAA of CC/CARTS	Columbiana	Renovate current CARTS Operations Building	\$506,000
CCCTA	Coshocton	Operating Assistance	\$837,728
Harrison County Public Transit	Harrison	Additional Funding for Affordable Transportation	\$600,000
Holmes County BoDD	Holmes	Low Income Housing Fixed Route - Pilot	\$12,500
Horizons Rural Public Transportation	Tuscarawas	Tuscarawas County Resident Transportation	\$1,200
National Church Residences	Belmont	St Clarisville Public Transit Loop Expansion	\$174,000
National Church Residences	Belmont	Low Income Housing Shuttle - Pilot	\$164,000
SEAT	Muskingum	Community Health Worker	\$25,000

TECHNOLOGY			
Agency	County	Project Description	Cost Estimate
CAA of CC	Columbiana	Comprehensive Phone System	\$69,000
National Church Residences	Belmont	Regional Software	\$153,000
National Church Residences	Belmont	On-Demand Mobile App	\$40,000 to \$70,000
Prime Time Office on Aging	Jefferson	Paratransit Scheduling Software	\$17,600



REGIONAL INITIATIVES			
Agency	County	Project Description	Cost Estimate
All	All	OHIORides	\$1,200
All	All	Regional Fare Structure	TBD
All	All	Regional Workshops: Safety, Vehicle Maintenance, Inspection, Driver Training, Employment Screening, No-Show-Cancellation, Employment Transportation, Marketing	TBD
CAA of CC	All	Sub-Regional Call Center-Eastern Border North	\$150,000
CAA of CC	All	Sub-Regional Call Center-Eastern Border South	\$155,000
National Church Residences	All	Sub-Regional Call Center - Pilot	\$112,000
National Church Residences	Belmont & Monroe	Regional Connectivity - SR 800	\$151,400
SEAT	All	Regional Call Center (MOMS)	\$125,000

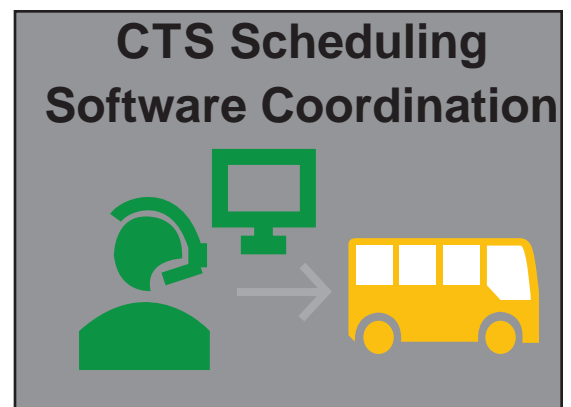


During the planning process, many stakeholders began implementing their own pilot projects.

These include:

- *CTS Scheduling Software Collaboration*
- *Mid-Ohio Mobility Solutions/Regional Call Center*
- *Columbiana County Deviated Fixed Route Shuttle:*

*“Make the Connection”*



## ***Thank you to our Partners and Stakeholders for their help and continued support of this plan:***

Area Agency on Aging, Region 9	Holmes County Planning Commission
Belmont College	Horizons Rural Public Transit
Belmont County JFS	JeffCo Services
Belmont-Harrison Career Center	Jefferson County Board of DD
BELOMAR	Jefferson County Veteran Services
BHJ-MPC	Muskingum County JFS
Carroll County JFS	Muskingum Valley ESC
Carroll County Senior Center	National Church Residences
Carroll County Transit	Neffs Fire Department
Carroll, Harrison, Guernsey, Tuscarawas County MM	ODOT District 11
CARTS	ODOT Office of Transit
Checker Cab/ASI	Ohio DoDD – Employment First Program
Coleman Services Inc.	PrimeTime Office on Aging - Jefferson County
Columbiana County Mobility Manager (CAAofCC)	Quality Care Partners
Coshocton County Coordinated Transportation Agency	South East Area Transit (SEAT)
Coshocton County DJFS	Senior Services of Belmont County
CTS Software	Society for Equal Access/ILC
EORTA/OVRTA	Starlight
Guernsey County Senior Citizens Center	Steel Valley RTA
Harrison County Transit	The ABCD Inc.
Harrison County CIC	TranSmart USA
Harrison County EMS	Tuscarawas BoDD
Harrison County Engineer	Tuscarawas County JFS
Holmes County Board of Developmental Disabilities	Tuscarawas County Senior Center



**Provide a pathway to enhance community and economic growth in our region.**