NEW RTPO Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

October 2022

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NEW RTPO Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan
Chapter 1: Introduction

The Northeast Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NEW RTPO) requested an update to their Coordinated Public Transit-Human Service Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP). NEW RTPO, Tri-County Economic Development District (TEDD) and the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) recognize that an update was needed that focuses on strategies that help eliminate gaps in services and secure funding to improve mobility for residents in the Tri-County Region.

Planning efforts are directed toward effectively and efficiently increasing service to meet the needs of all riders with an emphasis on:

- Elderly persons
- Persons with disabilities
- Low income residents
- Zero car households
- Youths
- Veterans
- Non-English speaking residents (Title VI)

Potential services can include traditional fixed route, fixed schedule, flex route and paratransit services, while also including coordination strategies, such as mobility management, designed to improve service for customers.

This plan has been developed over the course of the past eight months, with input from many interested stakeholders through an open planning process with extensive stakeholder and public outreach.

Chapter 1 discusses background to the study, requirements and purpose of the process. Subsequent sections as required are as follows:

- **Chapter 2 –** Current Conditions – A review of existing services and a demographic analysis of the region.

- **Chapter 3 –** Gap Analysis – Builds upon the analysis in Chapter 2 and couples that information with the public and stakeholder outreach efforts to describe the areas of unmet transportation need in the region.

- **Chapter 4 –** Strategies and Prioritization – Describes regional strategies to meet the transportation gaps detailed in Chapter 3 and then prioritizes those strategies as required by WSDOT.

Purpose of the Coordinated Plan

The coordinated transportation planning requirements for the Section 5310 program administered by FTA and initiated in 2006, continue. The purpose of the Section 5310 program is to enhance mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities by providing funds for programs to serve the special needs of transit-dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services.

This Coordinated Plan is designed to meet the coordinated transportation planning requirements. The plan incorporates the four required elements (listed here) as well as additional requirements from WSDOT:

1) An assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private and nonprofit).

2) An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities and seniors. This assessment can be based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners or on more sophisticated data collection efforts, and gaps in service.

3) Strategies, activities, and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, and opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery.

4) Priorities for implementation based on resources (from multiple program sources), time and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified.

The purpose of this planning process was twofold. The first was to continue moving forward with implementation of existing coordinated efforts. The TAC approach to mobility and transportation choices calls for local planning and local decision making based on sound planning activities. The second purpose was to meet the requirements of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) rules regarding development of a coordinated transportation plan for any locale to receive funds from the FTA, a very important resource for funding.

Key Coordination Premise

Excellent public transportation is the best way to address and coordinate the majority of transit dependent and human service client transportation needs.

Experience and research across the country in both urban and rural areas tells us that scheduled public transit is the best way to provide coordinated transit service as most transit dependent and human service clients can ride fixed-route/scheduled service or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit. The best way to support the needs of human service agency clients, veterans, the transit dependent and Title VI populations as well as other priority groups of potential riders, is through excellent public transportation rather than expensive one-on-one specialized service (with exceptions).

When public transit systems are able to meet the majority of needs through the existing fixed-route/scheduled public transit network, then human service agency resources can be freed up to focus on the specialized needs of their most difficult to serve clients – true coordination.

Unique Needs in the NEW RTPO Area

Efforts to support or improve public transportation are supported by the TAC, human service agencies, and public transit systems as an essential element of coordinated transportation. Continuing with the need to build rural public transit, large portions of the service area are in need of more effective, scheduled transportation options.

> *Any coordination effort should start with building the public transit network*
> *and maximizing the use of higher productivity services such as*
> *on demand, fixed route services and fixed schedule services in this rural region.*

NEW RTPO Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

Chapter 2: Current Conditions

Introduction

This chapter summarizes population characteristics, major activity centers, and existing transportation services and resources in the region. The Northeast Washington region comprises Ferry, Pend Oreille and Stevens counties; and the reservations of three Tribes: the Colville Confederated, Kalispel and Spokane. In addition, this chapter summarizes organizations and programs that help those in need with covering the cost of transportation, as well as collaboration with emergency management agencies and plans.

The purpose of the Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP) is to identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes; provide strategies for meeting those local needs; and prioritize the strategies for funding and implementation. In addition, the plan will identify strategies and preferred alternatives for improving transportation coordination between public, private, and nonprofit transportation providers that receive public funding to serve these populations.

Partners to the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) for the coordinated planning processes include public transportation providers, non-profit human services agencies, local governments, tribes, health providers, large employers, consumers, and advocates.

Inventory of Transportation Service Providers

Public Transportation Providers

The following organizations and services provide a limited amount of public transportation within the Northeast region:

- Rural Resources – Commuter Bus, Dial-a-Ride and Volunteer Rides
- Colville Confederated Tribes – Colville Tribes Transit Program
- Spokane Tribe of Indians – The Moccasin Express
- Special Mobility Services
- WSDOT Gold Line

The fixed route and deviated fixed route services provided within the NEW RTPO planning area are displayed in Figure 2-1. Two of the tribal nations in the Tri-County region (Colville Confederate Tribes and Spokane Tribe) provide regularly scheduled fixed route and deviated fixed routes and stops. There are two non-profit organizations that provide fixed route services: Rural Resources and Special Mobility Services. Travel Washington provides intercity bus service between Kettle Falls and Spokane. Recently, fixed route service between Ione and Spokane was provided by the Kalispel Tribe's KalTran agency followed by Rural Resources. However, the service has been suspended. Currently, there are no direct connections between these tribal or nonprofit fixed route systems.

Figure 2-1: Fixed and Deviated Fixed Route Services in TEDD Service Area
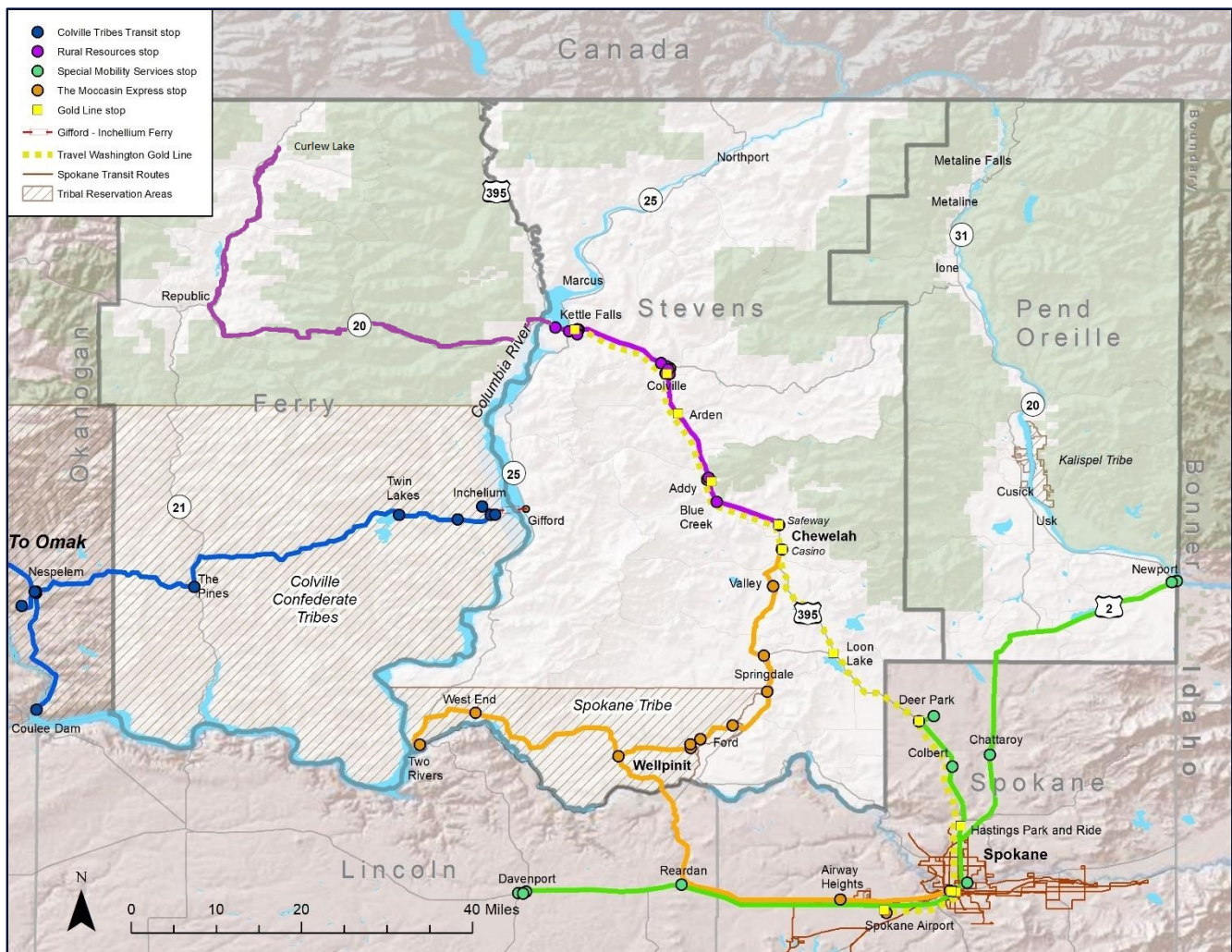
Rural Resources

Rural Resources Community Action is a non-profit organization transportation provider with a mission to assist people and communities to develop the skills, resources and services necessary to improve their general welfare. Based in Colville, Rural Resources provides an array of social services in the NEW counties of Ferry, Pend Oreille and Stevens counties and beyond, for people with low income, people experiencing homelessness, seniors, children, youth, people with disabilities, people with serious chronic conditions, caregivers, single parents, job seekers, veterans, victims of domestic violence and other crimes, and others in need. Rural Resources provides several types of transportation services in the NEW counties.

Commuter bus fixed route service is offered Monday – Friday between Kettle Falls, Colville and Chewelah along the Highway 395 corridor for morning and late afternoon commuters. The fare for this service is 50 cents each way. There are two round trips each morning and two round trips each afternoon between Kettle Falls and Colville; one round trip is made each morning and afternoon between Chewelah and Colville. Each trip includes stops such as a Walmart, the Rural Resources office, educational institutions and essential locations. For passengers traveling between Kettle Falls and Chewelah, transfers occur in Chewelah.

Dial-A-Ride (DAR) service is provided to people with disabilities, people who are too old or young to operate a vehicle, and people with low income in the tri-county area as well as for Veterans in very rural areas, as well as the general public. DAR service provides access from remote areas to basic necessities and services (including intermodal connections) in Colville, Kettle Falls, and Chewelah. To access this service, passengers schedule their ride by phone or through an app. Volunteer rides are provided for residents of Ferry, Pend Oreille and Stevens counties, primarily to and from medical and social services appointments in larger communities.

Van service operates in highly rural areas for veterans' medical transport. Van service is provided for veterans upon request in Ferry County, service between North Pend Oreille County, Newport and Usk, Monday – Thursday. A $0.50 donation is recommended for the Ferry County and Newport/Usk service. Table 2-1 displays the service days and fares for Rural Resources routes. Table 2-2 shows the Rural Resources consolidated grant projects funded by WSDOT between 2019 and 2023.

Table 2-1: Rural Resources – Service Days and Fares

Route/Service	Service Days	Fare
Kettle Falls – Colville	Monday – Friday	$0.50 one-way
Colville - Chewelah	Monday – Friday	$0.50 one-way
Dial-A-Ride	Monday – Friday	Suggested donation of $0.50 for local trips and $5.00 round trip for out of area trips.
Volunteer Driver Network	Monday – Friday	Donations accepted.

Table 2-2: Rural Resources – Recent Funding Sources Through FY 2023

WSDOT Funding Purpose	Amount
Provides capital support for the replacement of three ADA-accessible buses	$180,000
Sustains demand-response services for veterans and persons with special needs and volunteer transportation for medical and social services	$1,344,674
Sustains the commuter route service for transit dependent persons between Kettle Falls, Chewelah and Colville in Stevens County	$335,823

Colville Tribes Transit Program (CTTP)

The Colville Tribes Transit Program (CTTP) has deviated fixed route service Monday through Thursday, with limited Friday service, within the Colville reservation in Ferry County between Inchelium and Nespelem. Shuttles operate three shifts Monday – Thursday beginning at 5:25 a.m. with the last stop at 4:20 p.m. CTTP is a program of the Confederated Tribes Department of Transportation (CCTDOT).

CTTP also operates service between Nespelem, Coulee Dam and Omak (the largest municipality in Okanogan County) which is about 36 miles northwest of Nespelem. For this service, CTTP contracts with Okanogan County Transportation and Nutrition (OCTN). Service runs Monday through Friday with three round trips daily. Riders may be picked up at pre-arranged stops on Highway 155 by calling the agency before 5:00 p.m. the day before the ride is needed. Riders can transfer at the Omak / Okanogan Shuttle which runs north-south in Omak. Major stops in Omak include a Walmart, Wenatchee Valley Clinic and the Wenatchee Valley College.

In addition, CTTP operates the Inchelium-Gifford Ferry (The Columbia Princess) on Roosevelt Lake between Inchelium and Gifford, which are on opposite sides of the Columbia River. The free public ferry has average daily traffic of 227 cars. Ferries leave the Inchelium side at the top and bottom of every hour and leaves the Gifford side at 15 minutes past and 15 minutes to the hour. Schedules start at 6:30 a.m. from the Inchelium side and ends at 8:45 p.m. or 9:45 p.m. at Gifford depending on the season.

Veterans have access to a van operated through the Tribe's Veterans Department which is restricted to use for medical purposes. Service is provided between Inchelium and Nespelem, with connecting service to Omak or Coulee City Dam. Table 2-3 displays the service days and fares for Colville Tribes Transit's routes.

Table 2-3: Colville Tribes Transit – Service Days and Fares

Route/Service	Service Days	Fare
Inchelium - Nespelem	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday	$2.00 one-way / $3.00 round trip
Nespelem – Coulee Dam – Omak	Monday - Friday	Free
Inchelium – Gifford Ferry	Monday – Friday	Free

The Moccasin Express

The Moccasin Express (TME) is a tribal transportation agency operated by the Spokane Tribe of Indians. As of 2018, The Moccasin Express has been providing publicly available deviated fixed routes within the Spokane Tribe's Reservation and paratransit / dial-a-ride service to connect with other communities in the region. The Spokane Tribe has a population of approximately 2879 enrolled tribal members. The agency provides four main routes.

The West End Route makes ten round trips daily beginning at 5:00 a.m. and a last run at 7:15 p.m. between Wellpinit and Two Rivers with a stop at West End. The Ford Route makes ten round trips daily beginning at 4:45 a.m. and a last run at 7:15 p.m. between Wellpinit and Boardman. The Spokane Route makes four round trips daily beginning at 6:15 a.m. and a last run at 4:00 p.m. between Wellpinit and Spokane with stops including the Walmart and Intermodal Transit Center which connects with the Spokane Transit Authority (STA) City bus system which can take riders throughout Spokane including stops at major educational college campuses, North Spokane and Spokane Valley. Lastly, the Chewelah Route provides service between Wellpinit and Chewelah with stops at the casino and the Valley Market.

Dial-A-Ride service is provided for people travelling from Spokane reservation lands to surrounding communities and into Spokane. For Spokane residents, TME offers a publicly available vanpool program that provides an affordable commuting option for people living in the Spokane area and working on the reservation. Vans provided by the Tribe for this purpose are driven by volunteer commuters. Vanpool must begin or end in Spokane. The tribe would like to replace existing vanpool vehicles with smaller vans that are more manageable and economical for participants to use. For all routes, veterans are provided with fare-free service. Table 2-4 displays the service days and fares for TME routes. FY 2018 FTA Tribal Transit funding replaced some vehicles; there have been no tribal transit funds since then. However, the Spokane Tribe has received a few WSDOT grants for sustaining services and capital support between 2019 – 2023 as displayed in Table 2-5.

Table 2-4: The Moccasin Express – Service Days and Fares

Route/Service	Service Days	Fare
West End Route: Wellpinit – West End – Two Rivers	Monday – Sunday	Free
Ford Route: Wellpinit – Ford – Boardman	Monday – Sunday	Free
Spokane Route: Wellpinit – Spokane	Monday – Sunday	Free
Dial-A-Ride	Monday – Sunday	Free

Table 2-5: The Moccasin Express – Recent Funding Sources Through FY 2023

WSDOT Funding Purpose	Amount
Sustains fixed route and paratransit services	$676,500
Provides capital support for the replacement of four vans for paratransit services	$122,000
Sustains the Moccasin Express general fixed-route operating services	$800,000

Special Mobility Services

Special Mobility Services (SMS) is a non-profit, regional Medicaid transportation broker for Ferry, Stevens, and Pend Oreille County. Under a grant from the Washington State Department of Transportation and with support from local communities, SMS provides intercity transportation in a three-county area (Pend Oreille, Spokane and Lincoln), linking rural communities in Eastern Washington including Newport, Deer Park, Davenport and Ritzville with Spokane. All services are open to the general public and require a 24-hour advance reservation as space is limited. Major pick-up/drop-off stops in Spokane, such as the Spokane International Airport and major Spokane hospitals, must be requested ahead of time and are subject to time constraints.

The 2019 NEW RTPO Addendum notes that an operational study of connections to Spokane from Pend Oreille County may be beneficial to refine schedules and streamline service. Service on the SMS shuttle between Newport and Spokane is convenient for commuters traveling from Spokane to Newport for work; however, service times are more challenging for residents in Pend Oreille County who may need access to jobs in Spokane. Table 2-6 displays the service days and fares for SMS routes. Table 2-7 shows a SMS consolidated grant project funded by WSDOT between 2019 and 2023.

Table 2-6: Special Mobility Services Service Days and Fares

Route/Service	Schedule	Fare
Deer Park – Spokane (via Highway 2)	Monday, Tuesday, Thursday	$2.00 one-way / $3.00 round trip
Deer Park – Spokane (via Hwy 395)	Monday - Friday	$2.00 one-way / $3.00 round trip
Davenport – Spokane	Monday - Friday	$2.00 one-way / $3.00 round trip
Ritzville – Spokane	Tuesday and Thursday	$2.00 one-way / $3.00 round trip
Newport – Spokane	Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday	$5.00 one-way
Deer Park Dial-A-Ride (Medicaid recipients only)	Monday - Friday	$1.00 one way, free for Medicaid passengers

Table 2-7: Special Mobility Services – Recent Funding Sources Through FY 2023

WSDOT Funding Purpose	Amount
Sustains the Newport community deviated fixed-route shuttle	$252,582

Travel Washington Gold Line

In the Tri-County area, the only designated intercity bus service is Travel Washington's Gold Line, which connects people in rural communities to city centers where they have access to broader regional national travel options. The Gold Line is operated under contract with a private bus company (currently Belair Charters via Central Washington Airporter) to connect communities within Stevens and Spokane Counties to Greyhound, Amtrak, downtown Spokane, and the Spokane International Airport. The route has twelve stops between Kettle Falls and the Spokane Airport. Travel Washington is the first public/private partnership model in the country for a rural intercity bus program.

While several other providers in the region also link cities and provide connections to Spokane, the Gold Line has a unique standing and purpose as the region's intercity carrier. The overarching purpose of intercity bus service is to connect people with other intercity transportation options for longer distance, typically overnight travel.

As a designated intercity bus service, Gold Line schedules are required to be coordinated with connecting Greyhound service in downtown Spokane. For the Gold Line, aligning with Greyhound service schedule takes priority over all other regional travel needs. For example, Gold Line's schedules and services cannot be adjusted to make the service more convenient for daily commuting and other everyday travel needs if connections with Greyhound will be impacted.

The Gold Line has two runs daily serving Kettle Falls, Colville, Addy, Arden, Chewelah, Chewelah Casino, Loon Lake, Deer Park, with connections to the North Spokane Park & Ride, Spokane Airport, Amtrak, Greyhound, Trailways, and Spokane Transit. The Gold Line runs 7 days a week. Fares are $5-$26 one way, and $9-$50 round trip. One child under two may ride for free. Children 11-years or younger receive a 25% discount off the adult fare. Some stops are by reservation only, while others require advance reservations, which may be made online, by phone or in person at a designated ticketing location.

There is interest in making Gold Line fares more affordable, possibly through a voucher program for low-income residents in the region. However, most Gold Line affordability concerns expressed by stakeholders are related to daily travel needs for which the Gold Line is not designed. Gold Line now offers $100 unlimited-use monthly pass for frequent riders.

Human Service Transportation Providers

Human services transportation options can be defined as transportation designed for specific populations, typically for access to medical services and other social service agencies and programs. Often these services come with eligibility requirements for riders. Examples in the Tri-County region include:

- Medicaid Transportation
- Veterans Transportation
- Transportation for Special Programs
- Volunteer Driver Networks

Below are some of the human service transportation providers in the Tri-County area.

Medicaid Transportation

Special Mobility Services (SMS) is the designated Medicaid Transportation Broker for northeastern Washington, operating under contract to the Washington Health Care Authority. SMS's role is to help Medicaid clients get transportation to health care appointments. The agency determines whether potential riders are eligible for Medicaid transport, and if so, finds the lowest cost transportation available for eligible riders. SMS provides some rides for Medicaid passengers using its own vehicles and drivers and has contractual agreements with Northeast Alliance Counselling Service and KALTRAN to provide Medicaid transport.

Kalispel Tribe's KALTRAN service

The Kalispell Tribe KalTran service is a Medicaid and Contract Health transportation provider for Pend Oreille and Spokane counties. This is a fare-free service open to the public with routes to Kalispel Reservation, Spokane, Ione, Cusick, 49° North Mountain Resort and Chewelah Casino. Scheduled pick-up and drop-off times vary throughout the week for most routes.

Transportation is provided to The Native Project in Spokane for Medicaid services to Native American clientele. Veterans have free on-demand transport in Cusick and Usk, including Medicaid transportation. Rides must be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance. Occasionally, same day pick-ups may be available at the dispatcher's discretion and unscheduled stops may be available. Passengers who need rides on Friday, Saturday or Monday must call by Thursday.

Previously, KalTran offered fixed route service between Ione and Cusick, commuter service between Newport and Cusick, and service to Metaline. These routes were discontinued in August 2019. While they were temporarily provided by Rural Resources two days a week, they have since been discontinued. The 2019 NEW RTPO Addendum notes that service on the SMS shuttle between Newport and Spokane is convenient for commuters traveling from Spokane to Newport for work; however, service times are more challenging for residents in Pend Oreille County who may need access to jobs in Spokane. In FY 2018, the FTA awarded $41,000 in Tribal Transit funding to replace vehicles, however there has been no tribal transit funds since then. Table 2-8 displays the service days and fares for KALTRAN routes. Table 2-9 shows KalTran's consolidated grant projects funded by WSDOT between 2019 and 2023.

Table 2-8: KalTran – Service Days and Fares

Route/Service	Schedule	Fare
Kalispel - Spokane	Monday - Thursday	Free
Kalispel – Ione	Monday - Thursday	Free
Kalispel - 49° North Resort - Chewelah Casino	Monday - Sunday	Free
Kalispel - Newport	Monday - Thursday	Free

Table 2-9: KalTran – Recent Funding Sources

Funding Purpose	Amount
Upgrade maintenance and storage facility (FY 2017)	$159,892
Replace vehicles (FY 2016)	$51,000

Veterans Transportation

Medical centers in Republic and Colville, as well as the Lake Roosevelt Health Clinics in Keller and Inchelium have VA-approved services available for veterans. Over time the number of VA-eligible medical treatments and services available in these rural clinics has been expanding. However, for some medical services veterans must travel to the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center in Spokane. Also, the Newport Hospital does not currently have VA-eligible services, so veterans in Pend Oreille County must currently travel to Colville or Spokane for medical needs.

Veterans Transportation Service

The Veterans Administration (VA) has implemented a Veterans Transportation Service (VTS) to help connect veterans who are visually impaired, elderly or immobilized due to disease or disability with the medical services they need. The transportation service is active at 45 medical sites around the United States, including Spokane; however, the regional coverage area for the Spokane VA Hospital is very large, extending across eastern Washington, northern Idaho and into northwestern Montana. To schedule a VTS ride, veterans must call two to four weeks in advance of their appointment dates, and rides are provided on a space-available basis.

Agencies in Stevens and Ferry counties have purchased vans to help address a significant veteran's transport need. In Stevens County, the van is operated by the Colville American Legion Post, under contract to Disabled American Veterans (DAV), a national veteran's advocacy and assistance group. DAV coordinates with the Spokane VA Hospital VTS office to schedule appointments and provide rides using the Stevens County van.

In Ferry County, Rural Resources operates a van for veterans' medical transport. Also, on the Colville Reservation, the Colville Confederated Tribes have a van and a driver available to all veterans. The van is operated through the Tribes' Veterans Department and is restricted to use for medical purposes only.

In Pend Oreille County, veterans needing transportation rely on the VTS van service, operating between Libby, Montana and the Spokane VA Hospital once a week. Passengers from Pend Oreille County are picked up and dropped off in Newport.

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) provides free van rides to and from Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center health care facilities to Veterans who don't have other transportation options. DAV provides service for veterans from Newport and Colville to Spokane VA Med Center.

Catholic Charities Volunteer Chore Services

Catholic Charities Volunteer Chore Services provides a wide range of household tasks and assistance that enable low-income elderly and disabled clients to remain in their own homes with dignity, safety, and a connection to their community. Assistance includes housework, laundry, transportation, shopping and various other independent living requests.

Transportation for Special Programs

A number of program-specific transportation options are provided in the region:

- Curlew Job Corps provides transportation for students ages 16-24 who are enrolled in the job corps program.

- Klondike Hills Assisted Living and Parkview Senior Living provide local transportation for residents of their communities.

- The Kalispel Tribe has a social services transportation program for study access to the Camas Learning and Early Learning centers, and medical patients.

- Two agencies in NEW RTPO's planning area (Moccasin Express and Rural Resources) manage networks of volunteer drivers who offer rides using their own private vehicles.

- Catholic Charities Volunteer Driver Service is open to seniors ages 60 and older who live independently, or people 18 and older who are low income and disabled.

- Rural Resources uses volunteer drivers to help fill gaps in dial-a-ride and fixed route coverage in Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties. The service is open to the general public with the restriction that trips cannot be for Medicaid transport.

Mobility Management Projects

Regional Mobility and Veteran Services (RM/VSC)

The RM/VSC provides the transit agencies that operate within Northeast Washington (Ferry, Pend Oreille, and Stevens counties) with greater coordination and marketability. The RMVSC performs coordination and outreach on behalf of the NEW RTPO members, keeps transit provider Google Transit data for trip planning up to date, focuses on initiatives related to regional transit, updates and expands regional marketing materials, searches for sustainable funding, develops rider training programs, and connects local veterans with veteran transportation options and services.

Population and Demographics

Regional Context

Northeast Washington comprising of Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties is known for its vast public lands, tribal cultures, outdoor recreational opportunities and highly rural nature. There are long travel distances between key population centers such as Colville, Republic and Newport. But multiple transit agencies and non-profit agencies provide transportation services to residents of this Tri-County area. Many residents make a daily commute to Spokane, the second largest city in Washington State. The region borders Okanogan County to the west, Idaho to the east, Spokane County in the southeast, Lincoln County to the south and Canada to the north. Major roads include State Highways 2 and 395, and County Highways 20 and 291. The Columbia River separates Ferry County and Stevens County while the Spokane River shapes the southern border of these counties.

Population Profile

The following section provides a population profile for the NEW (Northeast Washington) region, identifies and evaluates underserved population subgroups, and reviews the demographic characteristics pertinent to a Title VI analysis.

Historical and Recent Population Trends

As of the 2020 Decennial Census, the population of the NEW region was 67,024, a growth of nearly 5% since 2010. This represents a slower rate of growth in the last decade; growth has slowed overall compared to the 8.5% increase from 2000 to 2010. Stevens County has the largest population of all the counties with 46,445 residents and the highest rate of growth since 2010 (nearly 16%) in the region, while Ferry County is the least populated (7,178) in the Tri-County area and the only county with a slightly negative rate of growth since 2010 (about -1%). The historical population and recent population trends are depicted in Tables 2-10 and 2-11 respectively.

Table 2-10: Historical Populations for NEW Study Area

Time Period	Ferry	Pend Oreille	Stevens	NEW RTPO Regional Total	State of Washington
2000	7,260	11,732	40,066	59,058	5,894,143
2010	7,551	13,001	43,531	64,083	6,724,540
2020	7,178	13,401	46,445	67,024	7,705,281
% Change 2000 - 2010	4.0%	10.8%	8.6%	8.5%	14.1%
% Change 2010 - 2020	-5.2%	3.1%	6.7%	4.6%	14.6%
% Change 2010 - 2020	-1.10%	14.20%	15.90%	13.50%	30.70%

Source: 2010, 2020 Census

Table 2-11: Recent Population Trends for NEW Study Area

Time Period	Ferry	Pend Oreille	Stevens	NEW RTPO Regional Total	State of Washington
2015	7,652	12,968	43,548	64,168	6,985,464
2016	7,639	13,001	43,744	64,384	7,073,146
2017	7,568	13,066	43,858	64,492	7,169,967
2018	7,576	13,219	44,214	65,009	7,294,336
2019	7,578	13,377	44,655	65,610	7,404,107
% Change 2015-2016	-0.17%	0.25%	0.45%	0.34%	1.3%
% Change 2016-2017	-0.94%	0.50%	0.26%	0.17%	1.4%
% Change 2017-2018	-0.11%	1.17%	0.81%	0.80%	1.7%
% Change 2018-2019	0.03%	1.20%	1.00%	0.92%	1.5%
% Change 2015-2019	-0.98%	3.15%	2.54%	2.25%	6%

Source: 2015 - 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05

Major population centers in each county are as follows:

- Ferry County
  - o Republic (county seat) – 1,144 population
- Pend Oreille County
  - o Newport (county seat) – 2,010 population
- Stevens County
  - o Colville (county seat) – 4,673 population
  - o Kettle Falls-1,594
  - o Chewelah-2,645
 - o Wellpinit-756

Future Population Projections

Projections developed by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) presented in Table 2-12, estimate that overall, the NEW region's population will grow as opposed to the population growth rate of the state (60%).

Table 2-12: Future Population Projections for NEW Study Area

Time Period	Ferry	Pend Oreille	Stevens	NEW RTPO Regional Total	State of Washington
2010	7,551	13,001	43,531	64,083	6,724,540
2020	7,821	13,919	45,830	67,570	7,707,047
2030	7,951	14,493	48,441	70,885	8,399,102
2040	7,925	14,630	51,050	73,605	9,092,210
% Change 2020-2030	3.6%	7.0%	5.3%	5.4%	14.6%
% Change 2030-2040	1.6%	4.1%	5.7%	4.9%	9.0%
% Change 2040-2050	0.0%	0.1%	5.4%	3.8%	8.3%
% Change 2020-2040	1.3%	5.1%	11.4%	8.9%	18%

Source: OFM Final projections of the total resident population for the GMA, Medium Series 2010-2040.

Figure 2-2: Future Population Projections for NEW Counties
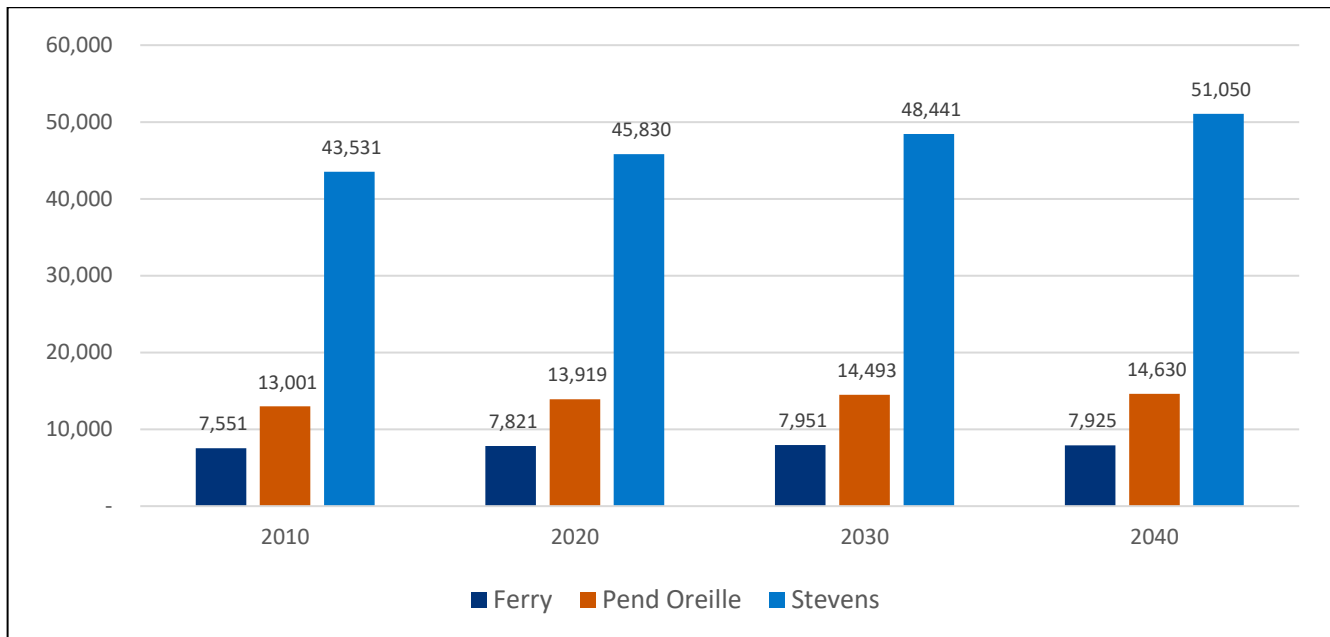
Population Density

Population density is often an effective indicator of the types of public transit services that are most feasible within a study area. While exceptions always exist, an area with a density of 2,000 persons per square mile will generally be able to sustain frequent, daily fixed route transit service. Conversely, an area with a population density below this threshold but above 1,000 persons per square mile may be better suited for flex route or microtransit services.

The region as a whole is generally very low density with block groups mostly less than 100 people per square mile. Population densities this low typically warrant transportation services that are demand response (dial-a-ride) oriented. Areas with the highest population densities are in Colville, Kettle Falls, Chewelah, and Newport. The southeast corner of Stevens County near Spokane also has above average density for the region. Colville is the only city or town with a block group that has a density above 1000 people per square mile. Colville is currently served by both Rural Resources and Travel Washington's Gold Line route. Figure 2-3 portrays the population centers of the NEW region while Figure 2-4 displays the NEW region population density at the census block group level.
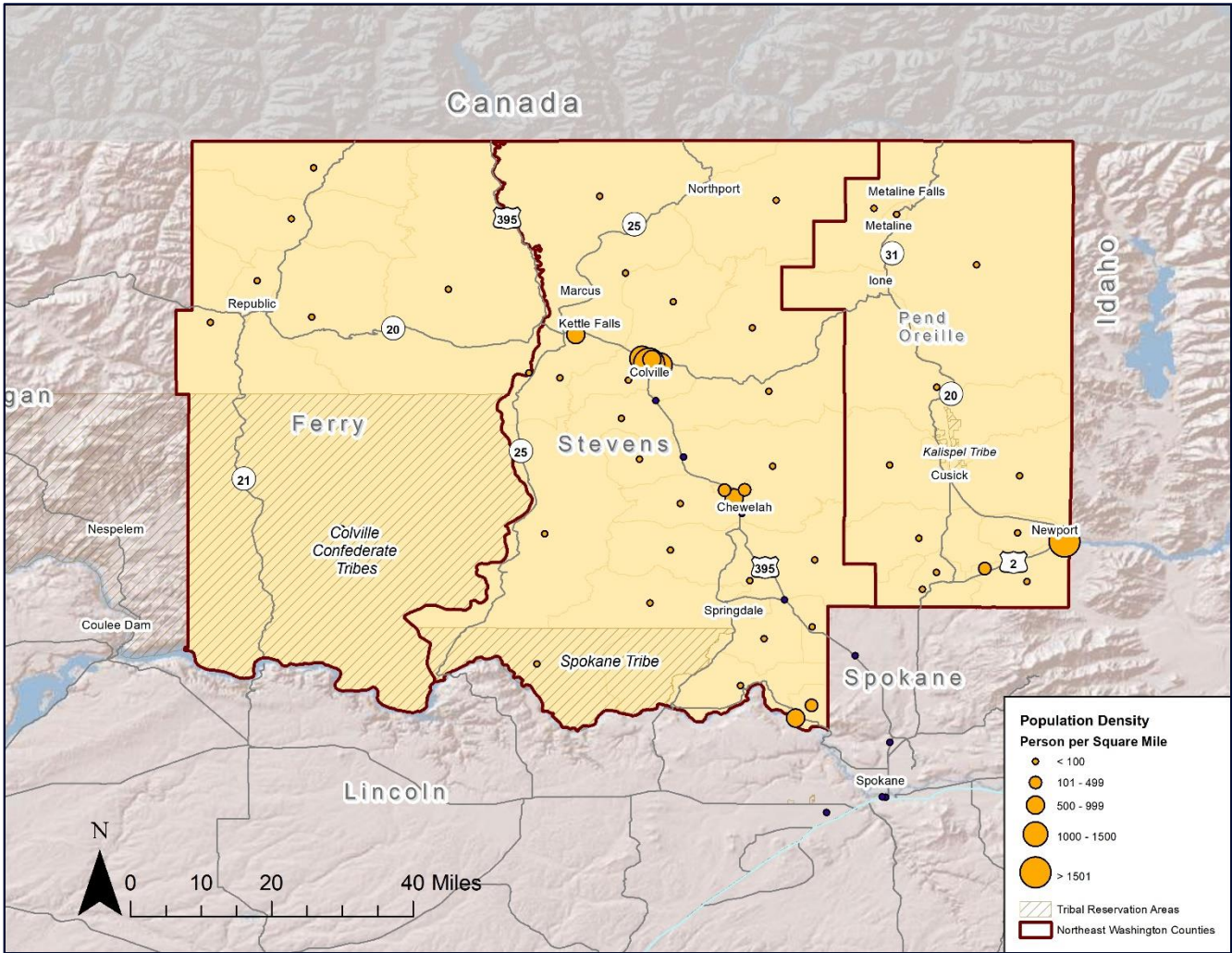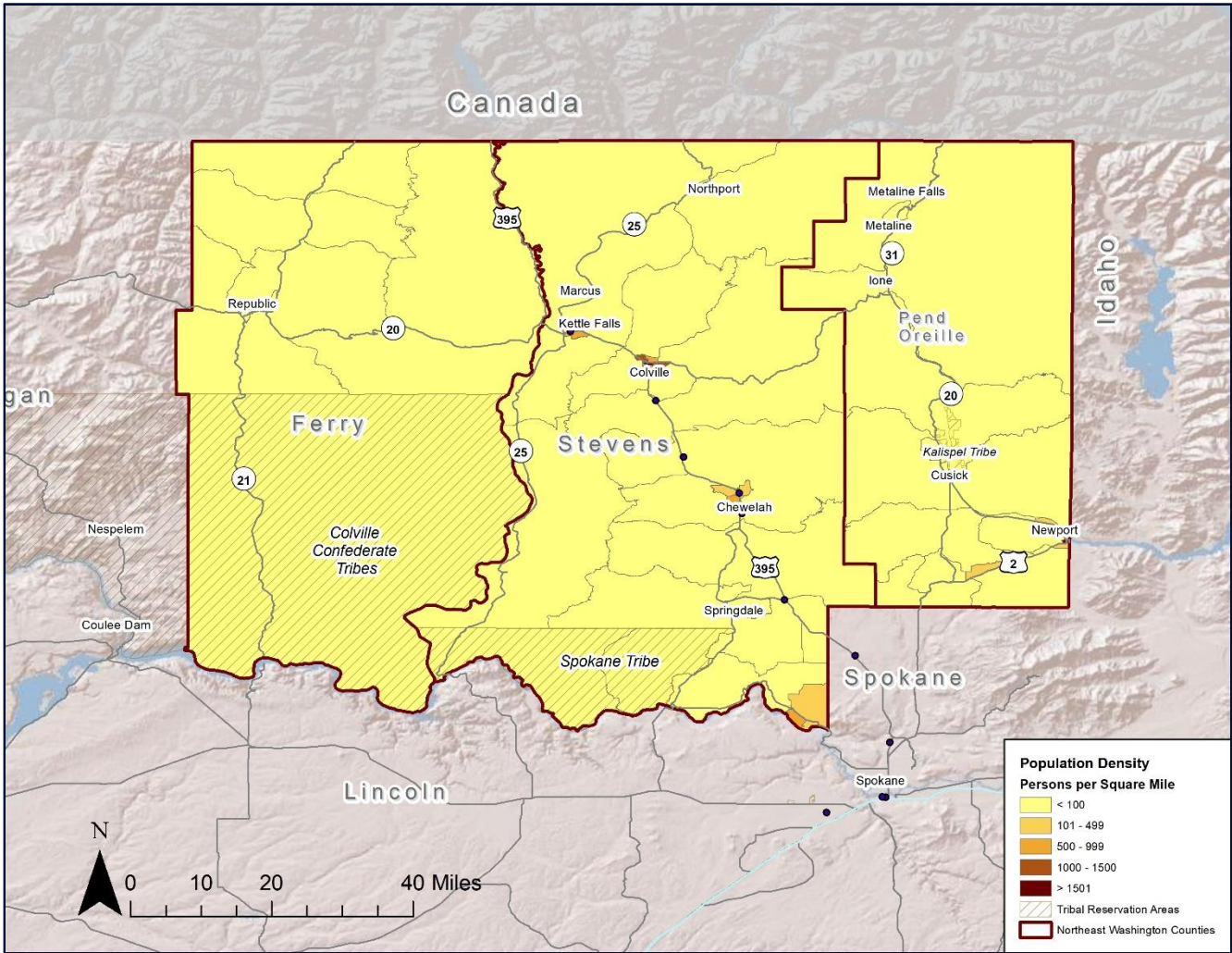
Figure 2-3: NEW Region Population Centers

Figure 2-4: NEW Region Population Density

Transit Dependent Populations

Public transportation needs are defined in part by identifying the relative size and location of those segments within the general population that are most likely to use transit services. These transit dependent populations include individuals who may not have access to a personal vehicle or are unable to drive themselves due to age or income status. Determining the location of these populations assists in the evaluation of current transit services and the extent to which the services meet community needs.

The Transit Dependence Index (TDI) is an aggregate measure displaying relative concentrations of transit dependent populations. The TDI aggregates census data of people and households per block group that represents specific socioeconomic characteristics from the 2019 American Community Survey's Five-Year Estimates. Five factors make up the TDI calculation:

1. Autoless Households
2. Senior Population (ages 65 and older)
3. Youth Populations (ages 10 to 17)
4. Below Poverty Populations
5. Individuals with Disabilities

For each factor, individual census block groups were classified according to the prevalence of vulnerable populations relative to the study area average. The factors were then put into the TDI equation to determine the relative transit dependence of each block group. Table 2-13 and Figure 2-5 explain what each TDI score means:

Table 2-13: TDI Score Definitions

TDI Score (Needs)	Meaning
Very Low	Less than and equal to the service area's average
Low	Above the average and up to 1.33 times the average
Moderate	Above 1.33 times the average and up to 1.67 times the average
High	Above 1.67 times the average and up to two times the average
Very High	Above two times the average

Figure 2-5: Transit Dependent Populations Classification System
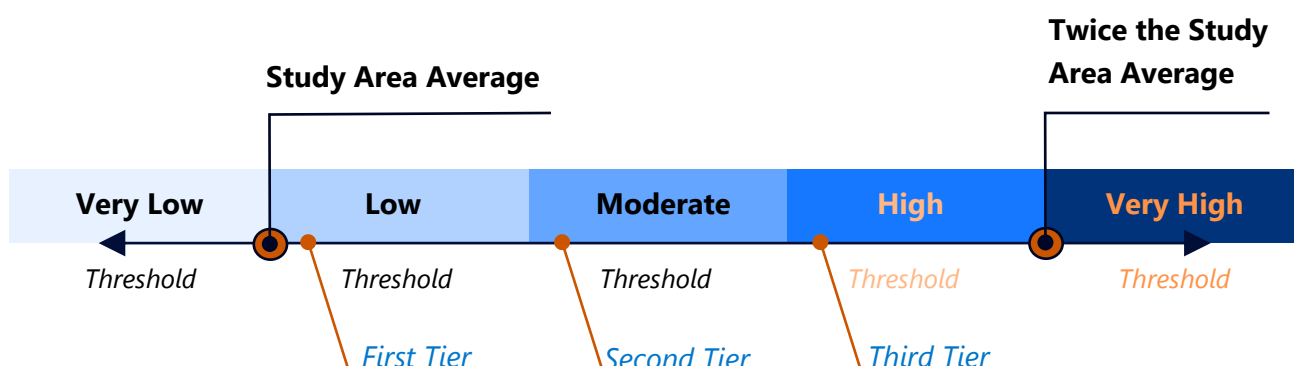
Transit Dependent Populations by Density (TDI)

Similarly to the population density, the areas of highest need for transit services are in the same places that had the densest population. There is also a moderate transit need primarily in the area west of Wellpinit where the Spokane Tribe resides. The transit dependent population by density is displayed in Figure 2-6.

Transity Dependent by Percent (TDIP)

The Transit Dependence Index Percent (TDIP) provides a complimentary analysis to the TDI measures. The measure is identical to the TDI but excludes population density, highlighting areas that might have low population density but which as a percentage of the population, have a higher transit dependence. While displaying by percent of the population, it becomes evident that there is a more moderate transit dependence in Chewelah and near Metaline Falls relative to the study area. All other areas generally have a low or very low TDIP score. The transit dependent population by percent is displayed in Figure 2-7.

Autoless Households

Those who do not have vehicles either because they cannot afford one or because they cannot keep one within proximity of where they live generally rely more on public transport as a convenient alternative to get to work, shopping, social, etc. There are relatively high to very high concentrations of those without a vehicle in Ferry County, especially near Republic, and Stevens County near the larger towns and throughout the Spokane Tribe. The only block groups with low or moderate concentrations are in Pend Oreille County. Populations of autoless households are displayed in Figure 2-8.

Older Adults

Older adults (65+) may scale back their use of personal vehicles as they age or may not be able to drive themselves, so will have greater reliance on access to public transportation, getting to and from medical appointments and social activities. In each county, there are a couple of block groups with a moderate concentration of older adults, and a higher concentration around Chewelah in Stevens County. The concentration of the older adult population is displayed in Figure 2-9.

Youth

The youth population (ages 10-17) has higher concentrations in Pend Oreille County and Stevens County. They are typically too young to drive themselves or do not have a vehicle to operate, so rely on public transportation to get to school, social activities and possibly work. Higher concentrations of youth are found near Kettle Falls, Chewelah and Newport. The concentration of the youth population is presented in Figure 2-10.
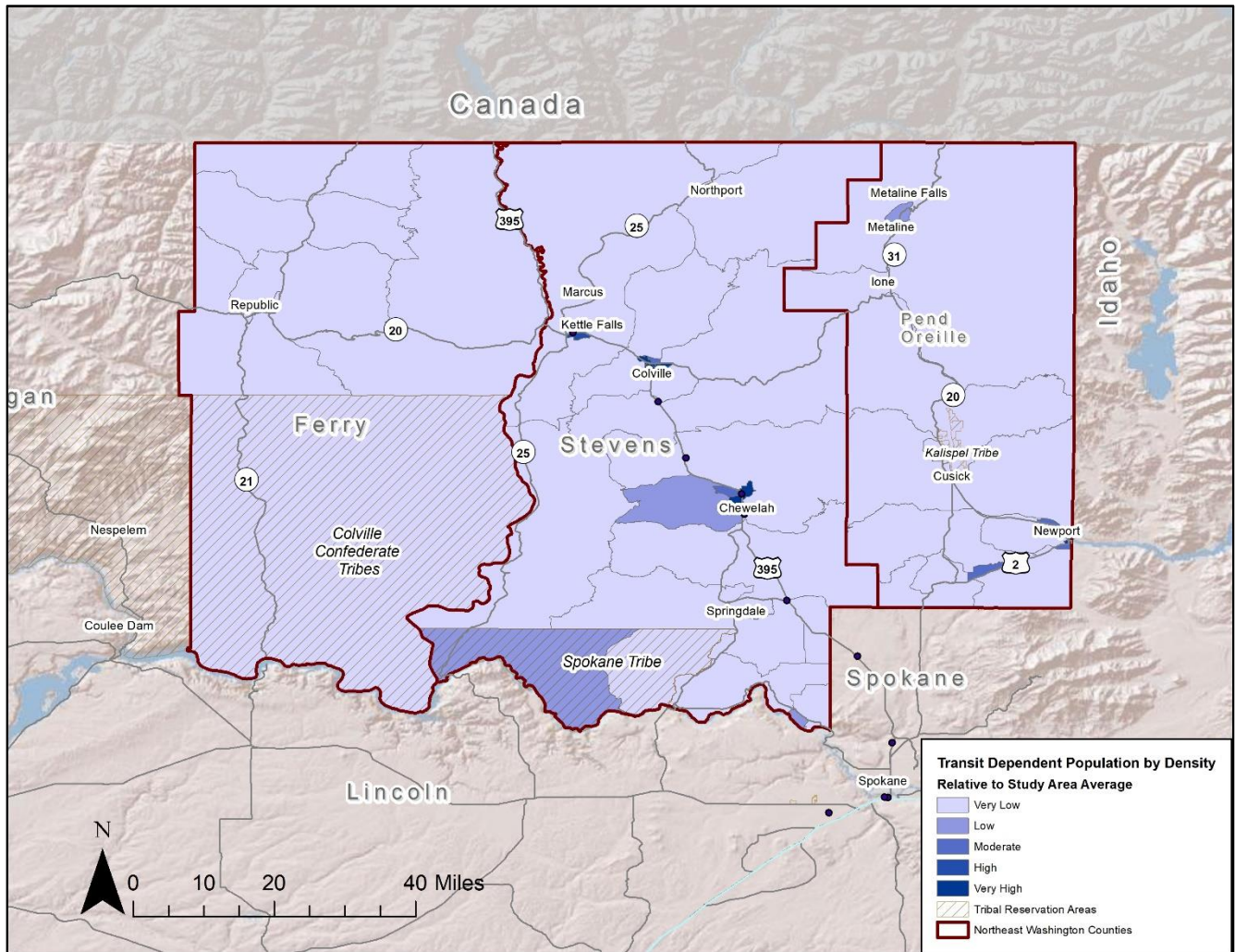
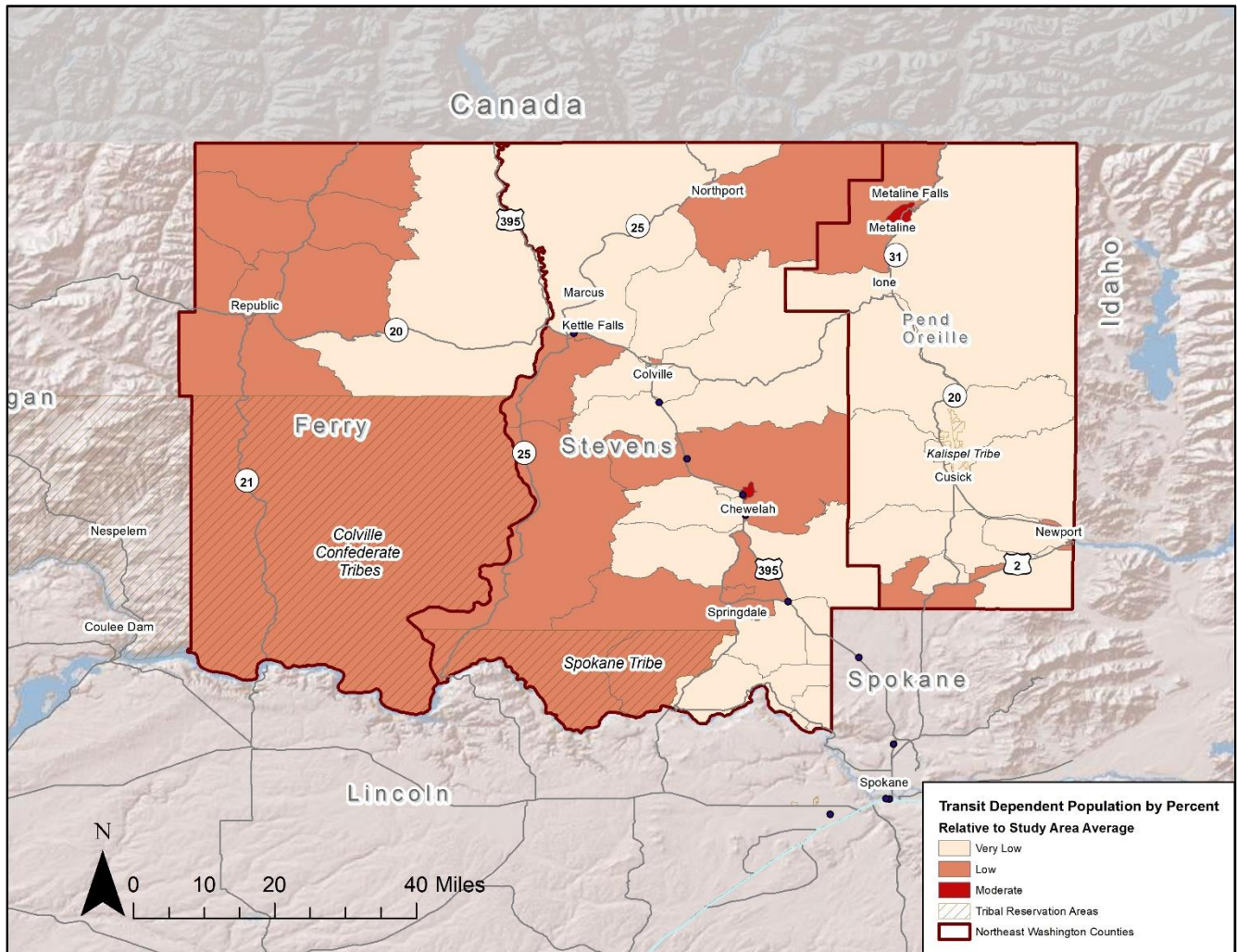**Figure 2-6: Transit Dependent Population by Density**

Figure 2-7: Transit Dependent Population by Percentage
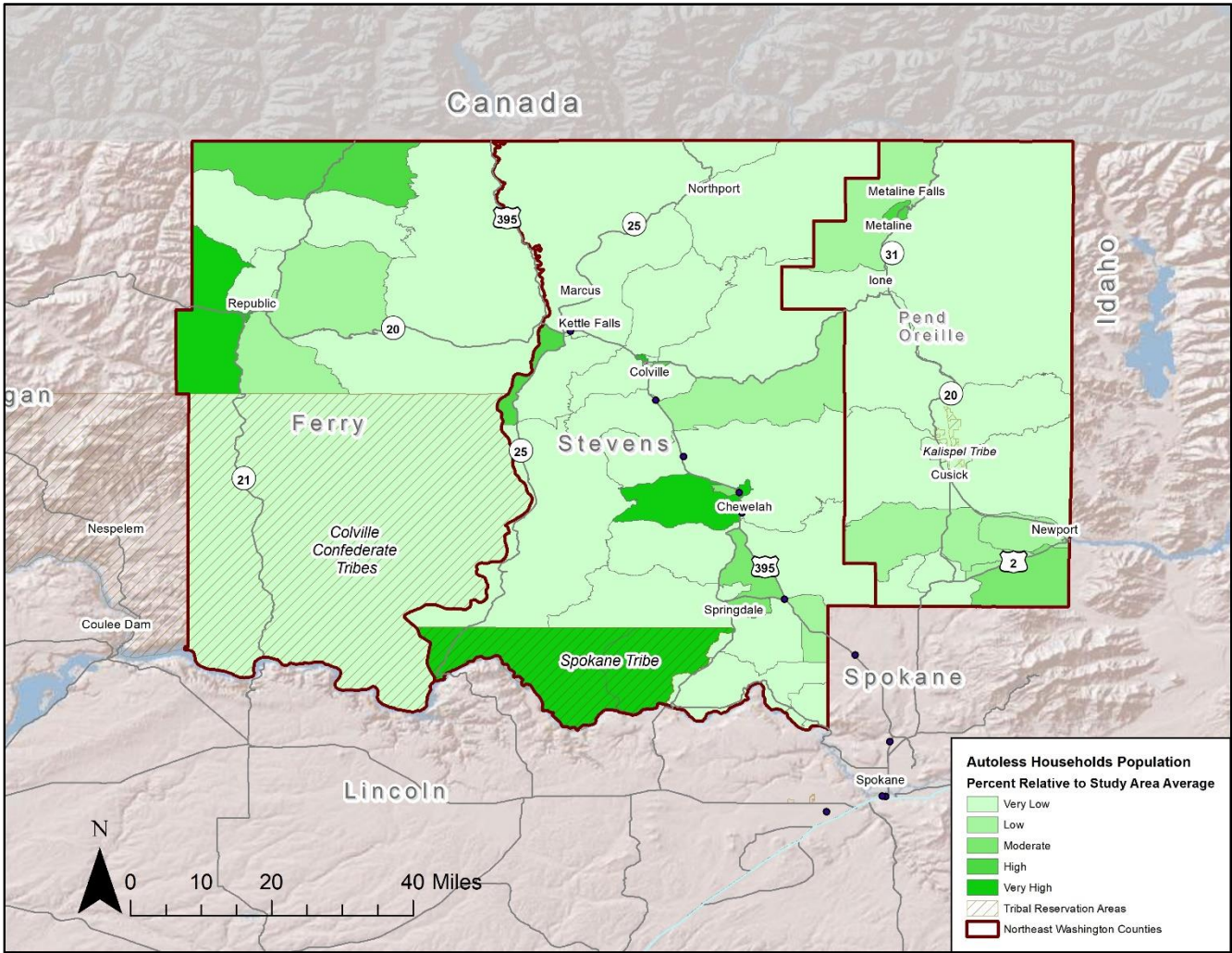
Figure 2-8: Autoless Households Population

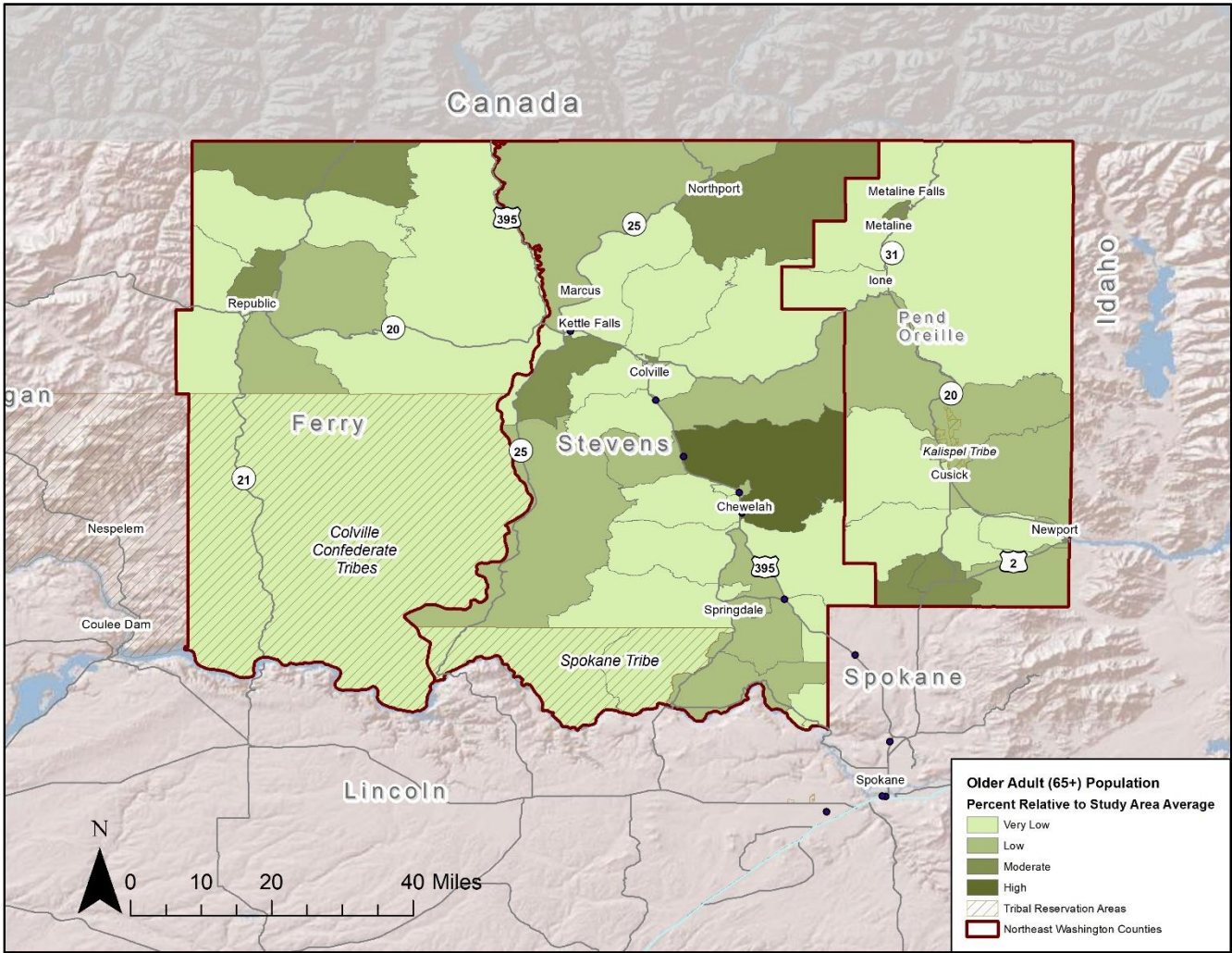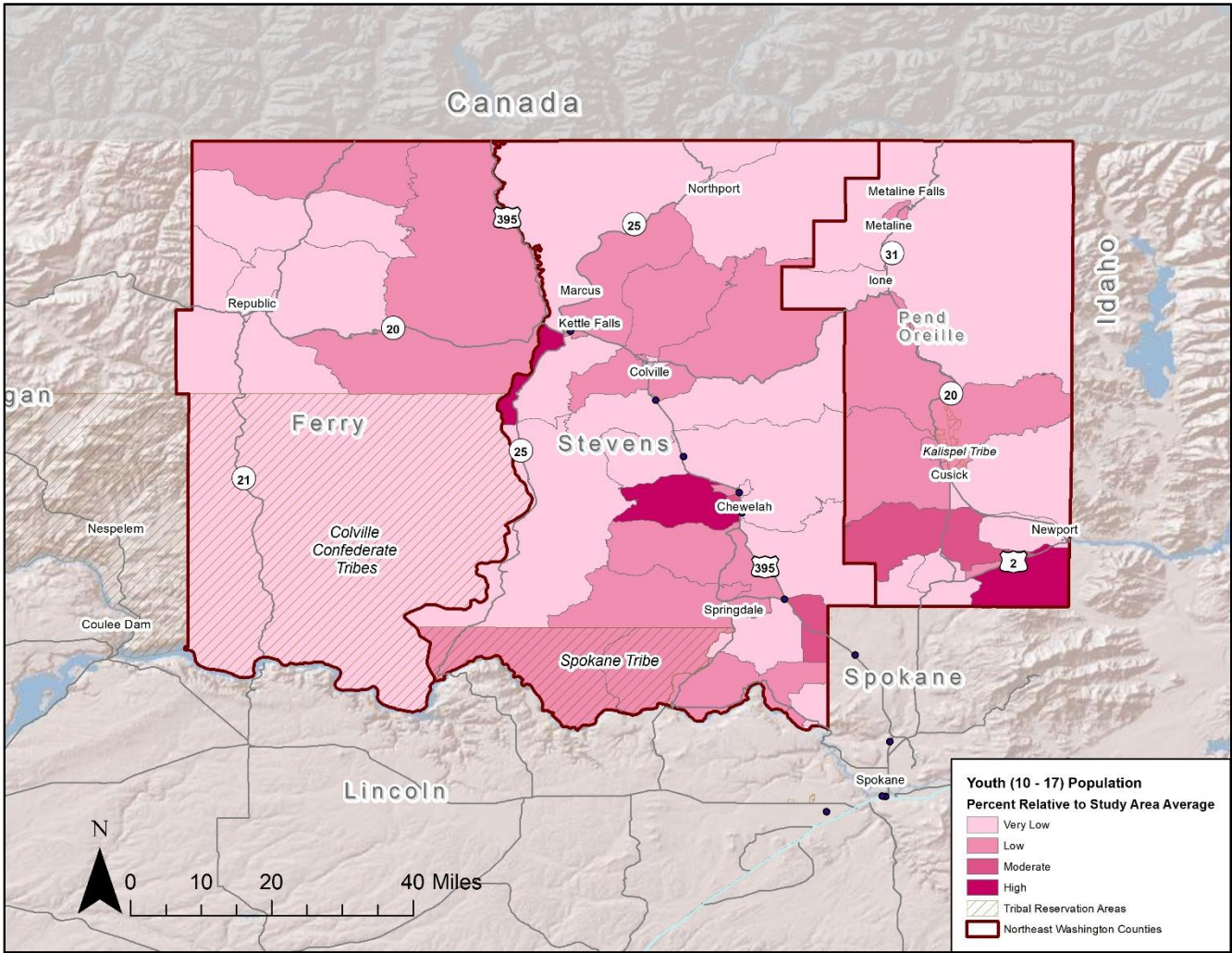**Figure 2-9: Older Adult Population**

Figure 2-10: Youth Population

Individuals with Disabilities

Individuals with disabilities may be unable to drive themselves where they need to go, therefore relying on public transit to get them to doctor's appointments, jobs, social activities, etc. Those who live in the area are more highly concentrated in areas in Ferry County (east of Republic), near Chewelah and in the Spokane Tribe in Stevens County, and near Metaline in Pend Oreille County. The concentration of populations of individuals with disabilities is displayed in Figure 2-11.

Title VI Demographics Analysis

As part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal subsidies. This includes agencies providing federally funded public transportation. The following section examines the minority and below poverty populations of Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties. The transportation providers serving the NEW region are not required to evaluate its service and fare changes under Title VI because it does not meet the FTA thresholds regarding urbanized area (UZA) population and the number of vehicles operated in peak service.

Minority Population

It is important to ensure that areas with an above average percentage of racial and/or ethnic minorities are not disproportionately impacted by any proposed alterations to existing public transportation services. Out of the 17 block groups with an above average concentration of minorities (above 14.8%), nine are in Stevens County, five are in Ferry County and three are in Pend Oreille. The concentration of populations of individuals with disabilities is displayed in Figure 2-12.

Low-Income Population

The second socioeconomic group included in the Title VI analysis represents individuals who earn less than the federal poverty level. These individuals face financial hardships that may make ownership and maintenance of a personal vehicle, including the costs of gas and car insurance, difficult. In such cases, they may be more likely to depend on public transportation which provides a reliable and safe passage throughout the counties. Out of the 28 block groups with an above average concentration of low-income populations (above 15.2%), sixteen are in Stevens County, five are in Ferry County and seven are in Pend Oreille. The concentration of population living below the poverty line is shown in Figure 2-13.

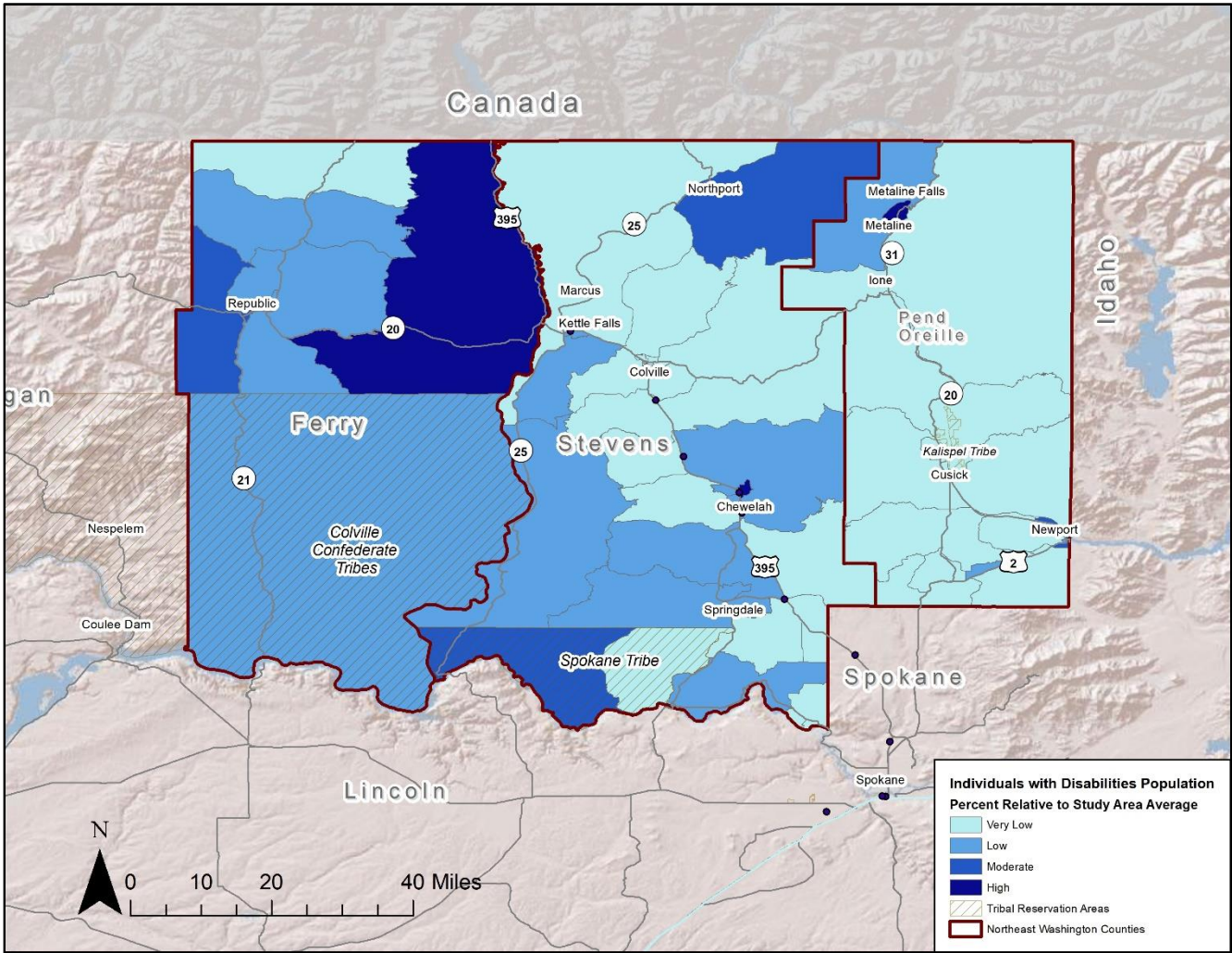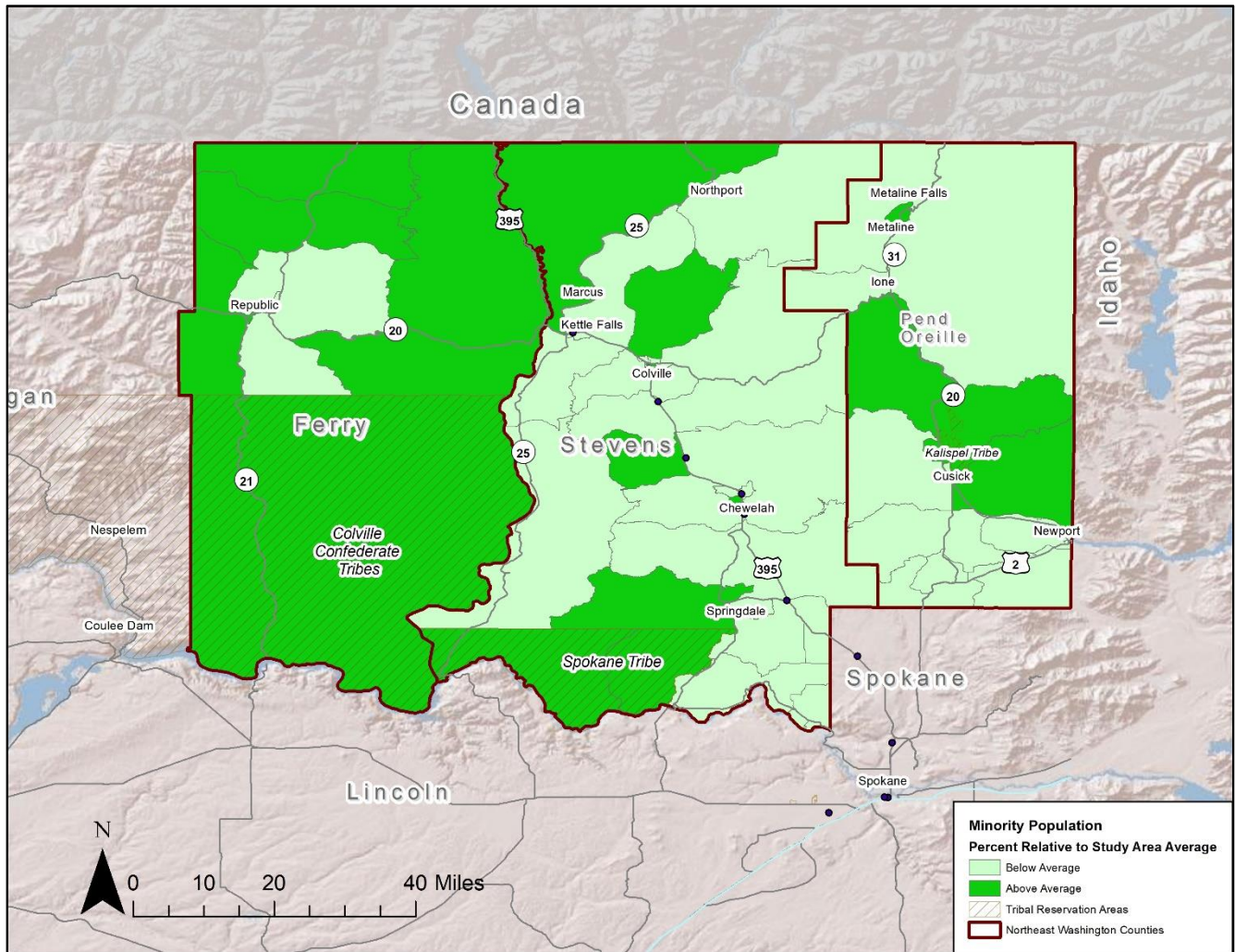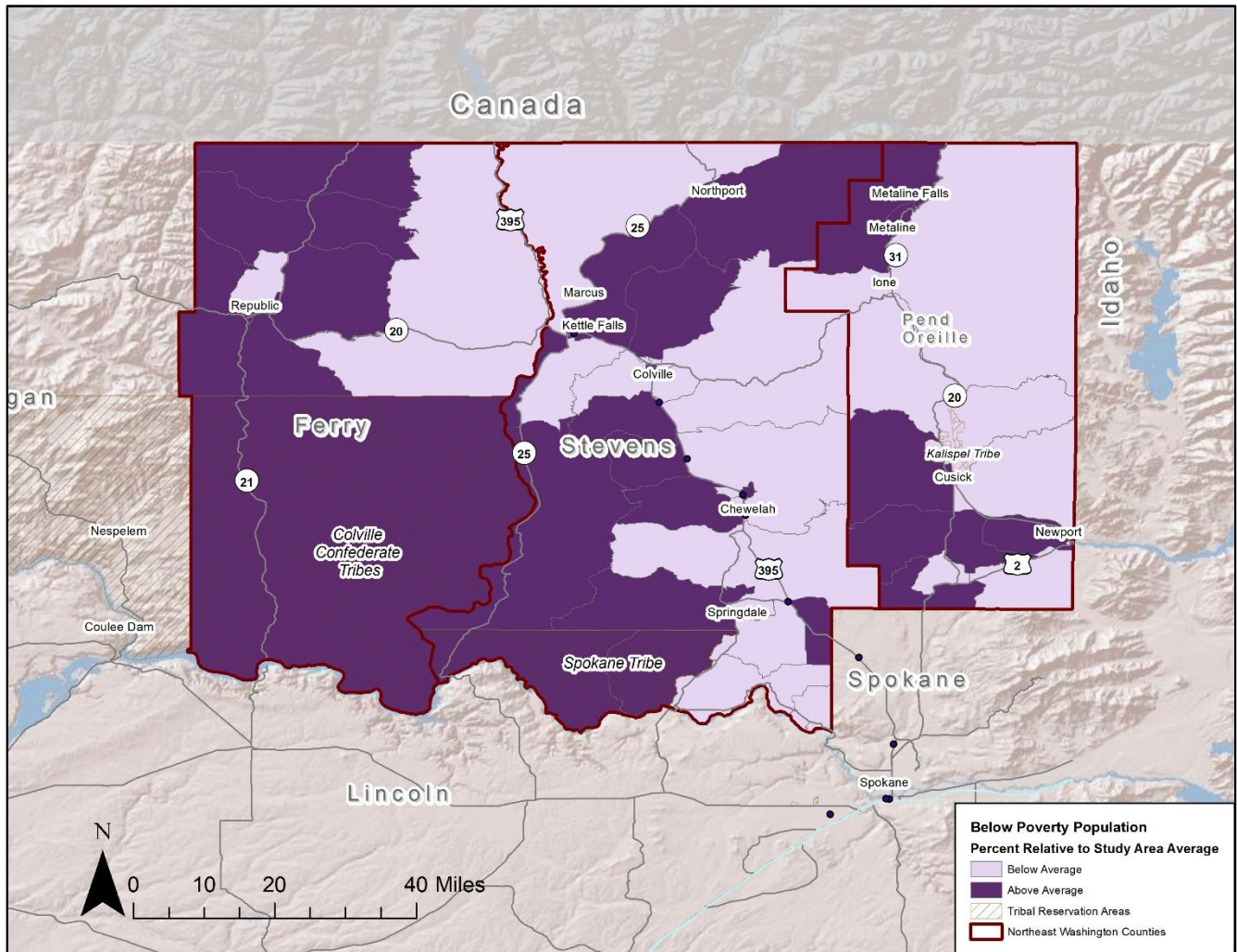## Figure 2-11: Individuals with Disabilities Population

Figure 2-12: Minority Population

Figure 2-13: Low-Income Population

Land Use Profile

Common Origins and Destinations (Trip Generators)

Identifying land uses and major trip generators in the study area complements the above demographic analysis by indicating where transit services may be most needed. Trip generators attract transit demand and include common origins and destinations such as high-density housing, medical facilities, educational facilities, human service agencies and shopping destinations or groceries. Common trips are made to larger towns within the three counties as well as to Spokane, the second largest city in Washington State, just outside of the study area. While two major employers were listed (Chewelah and Kalispel Casino), other trip generators also serve as local employers. The rural nature of the study area, due to the Colville National Forest, limits new developments and where residents live.

Figure 2-14: Trip Generators in NEW Region
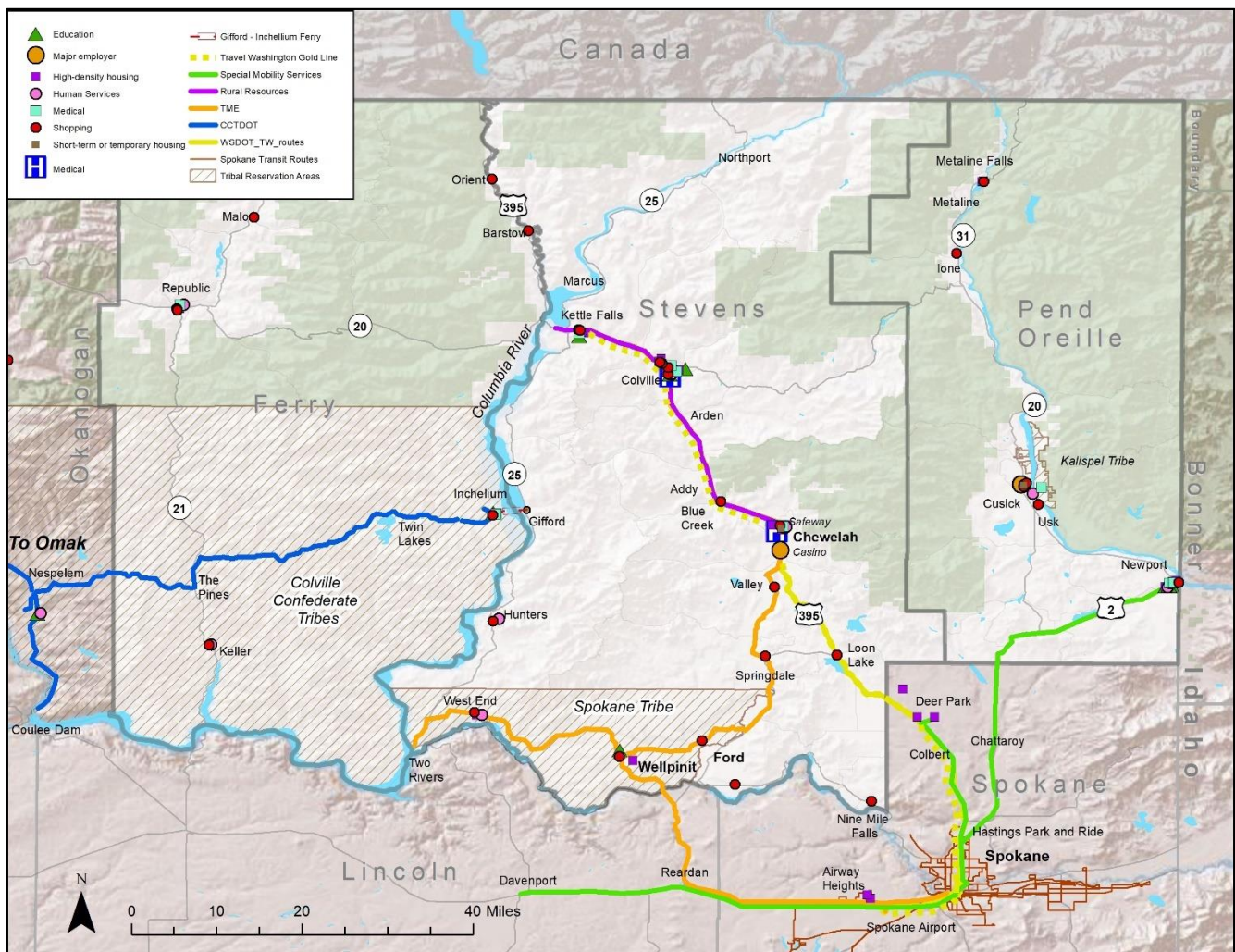
Human Service Agencies

Human service agencies help residents in areas such as aging, mental health, food assistance and general social services. Given the range of services and assistance these agencies provide, transit can be an important transportation option for individuals in need of human services. Due to the rural nature of the Tri-County region, these agencies tend to concentrate in a handful of areas such as Colville, Chewelah and Newport. However, there are some towns with agencies that are not adjacent to the fixed route transit system such as Republic, Keller and Hunters. Food banks are essential agencies in some regions where food access can be minimal or not easily accessed. Rural Resources Community Action has offices in Newport, Republic, Colville and Ione. The individual agencies are listed in Appendix A.

High-Density, Short-Term or Temporary Housing

Multi-unit housing, mobile home parks, senior housing, subdivisions of town homes, and subsidized housing for low-income families and individuals under the Section 8 Program of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 are considered high-density housing for the purpose of this report. High density housing is found in the region's larger towns such as Kettle Falls, Colville, Chewelah, and Newport, as well as near Deer Park (on the Travel Washington route near the border of Stevens and Spokane County.) High-density housing locations are listed in Appendix A.

Educational Institutions

Community college branches and institutions that provide public or private education above the ninth grade are noted. The region is home to a few branches of Spokane Community College including in Newport, Colville and Inchelium. Educational institutions are listed in Appendix A.

Medical Facilities

There are only four hospitals in the region, at least one in each county: Providence St. Joseph's (Chewelah) and Providence Mount Carmel (Colville) in Stevens County, Newport Hospital & Health Services in Pend Oreille County and Ferry County Memorial Hospital. There are several smaller clinics located in the region as well. There is a need for residents of Stevens and Pend Oreille to travel to Spokane for specialized medical care. Medical facilities are listed in Appendix A.

Groceries or General Stores

Grocery stores, from Walmart Supercenters to small markets, in addition to general or convenience stores which provide groceries, were identified. Grocery stores were identified because some region's residents may be dependent on grocery stores that are not easily accessible. In addition to the larger towns, grocery destinations were found in some smaller towns along the fixed transit routes or where other trip generators are found. Groceries are particularly limited or scarce in Ferry and Pend Oreille counties. Groceries and general stores are listed in Appendix A.

Employment Travel Patterns

In addition to considering the locations of major employers, it is also important to account for the commuting patterns of residents working inside and outside of the counties in the NEW RTPO region. According to 2020 ACS five-year estimates, Ferry County has the highest percentage of residents working in the county (74.3%) while the lowest percentage is in Pend Oreille County (57.3%), where about 18% of workers are employed in Spokane, or Spokane Valley to the south. Overall, the number of workers employed outside their county of residence in the NEW Region (about 6,871 workers or 29.6% of all workers), is about twice as many as the Washington State average of 15.4%. The vast majority of NEW RTPO residents (above 80%) drive alone to work, which is a little higher than the state average of 70%. Journey to work patterns are provided in Table 2-14.

Another source of data that provides an understanding of employee travel patterns is the Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) dataset. As of 2019, the top six employment destinations (by county and by place) for each county's residents in the NEW Region are provided in Table 2-15 and 2-16 respectively.

Spokane County attracts a high number of employees living in the region. For Pend Oreille County, there are slightly more residents who work in-county overall (32%) compared to those who work in Spokane County (26%). For Stevens County, there is a similar pattern, with about 39% of residents who work in-county overall, and 32% working in Spokane County.

There are some notable places where NEW Region residents are employed, many of whom require travel outside their home county. For Stevens County, the top work destination is Spokane (19%) followed closely by Colville (18%). The other Stevens County residents that work in Spokane County are employed in Spokane Valley (6%), the largest suburb of Spokane, and a city of about 102,000 people. For Ferry County, the top work places are Republic (20%) followed closely by Colville in Stevens County (18%), and then Spokane (6%). About 11% of workers are employed in Okanogan County to the west and 12% of workers are employed in Stevens County to the east. For Pend Oreille County, about 5% of residents are employed in Idaho to the east (including Priest River, Sandpoint and Oldtown in Idaho).

Table 2-14: Journey to Work Patterns for NEW Region

	Washington		Ferry		Pend Oreille		Stevens	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total 16 years or older	3,629,152		2,516		3,891		16,759	
Location of Employment								
Work in state of residence	3,523,907	97.10%	2,458	97.70%	3,249	83.50%	16,508	98.50%
In county of residence	2,965,017	81.70%	1,869	74.30%	2,230	57.30%	11,245	67.10%
Outside county of residence	558,889	15.40%	589	23.40%	1,019	26.20%	5,262	31.40%
Worked outside state of residence:	105,245	2.90%	58	2.30%	642	16.50%	251	1.50%
Means of Transportation to Work								
Car, truck, or van - drove alone	2,528,438	69.67%	1,551	61.65%	3,644	93.65%	13,610	81.21%
Car, truck, or van - carpooled	353,428	9.74%	358	14.23%	539	13.85%	1,331	7.94%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	218,379	6.02%	9	0.36%	7	0.18%	111	0.66%

Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0802

Table 2-15: Top 6 Counties for Work for the Residents of NEW Region

Ferry County (Origin)	
Employer Location	**Percent**
Ferry County, WA	35.5%
Stevens County, WA	12.0%
Okanogan County, WA	10.6%
Spokane County, WA	10.3%
King County, WA	6.0%
Grant County, WA	3.6%
Others	22.0%

Pend Oreille County (Origin)	
Employer Location	**Percent**
Pend Oreille County, WA	31.8%
Spokane County, WA	26.3%
Bonner County, WA	7.7%
King County, WA	6.1%
Kootenai County, ID	3.3%
Stevens County, WA	2.8%
Others	22.0%

Stevens County (Origin)	
Employer Location	**Percent**
Stevens County, WA	38.8%
Spokane County, WA	32.3%
King County, WA	5.2%
Ferry County, WA	2.0%
Yakima County, WA	1.7%
Grant County, WA	1.6%
Others	18.4%

Source: Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2019.

Table 2-16: Top 6 Places for Work for the Residents of NEW RTPO Region

Ferry County	
Location	**Percent**
Republic	19.7%
Colville	7.1%
Spokane	5.6%
Coulee Dam	4.5%
Spokane Valley	2.5%
Seattle	2%
Others	58.6%

Pend Oreille County	
Location	**Percent**
Spokane	12.7%
Newport	11.3%
Spokane Valley	4.8%
Seattle	2.4%
Priest River, ID	1.7%
Colville	1.4%
Others	65.7%

Stevens County	
Location	**Percent**
Spokane	18.7%
Colville	18%
Spokane Valley	5.9%
Chewelah	3.8%
Kettle Falls	2.2%
Seattle	2%
Others	49.4%

Source: Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2019.

Emergency Management

As part of the coordinated planning process WSDOT requires documentation of how passenger transportation entities in the planning region are engaged emergency management efforts. Each county in the region has an emergency management plan that includes planning for transportation of effected areas. The NEW RTPO has also drafted emergency management resolutions and a memorandum of understanding for the transportation providers in the region based on past coordinated planning activities. Below is a summary of emergency management planning as it related to passenger transportation entities in the region:

- NEW RTPO
  - The New RTPO has a drafted memorandum of understanding (MOU) for emergency management which dedicated RTPO as a primary point of contact for regional emergency management responses and keeping a roster of transportation services (including public transit providers) that are willing to participate in emergency situations. In addition, the RTPO will coordinated with county emergency management staff and regional providers when emergencies occur. This MOU also declares that all parties will:
    - Promptly respond to emergency manager requests for information about transportation services and capabilities for emergency and disaster planning and response;
    - Participate in emergency preparedness planning and response efforts without expectation of financial remuneration;
    - Share in any reimbursement opportunities that may be available following emergency response efforts according to the level of resources provided.

- Ferry County
  - Ferry County has a detailed Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan that details transportation infrastructure and service processes in case of an emergency. The county has MOUs with the School District and Rural Resources (wheelchair accessible vehicles) to provide emergency transportation services when needed.

- Pend Oreille County
  - Pend Oreille County has a Hazard Mitigation Plan which details emergency management planning and response activities. In the past the county had coordinated with KALTRAN, but that entity no longer provides public transit services. The Hazard Mitigation Plan indicated that many low-income people may be stranded because they have no personal transportation, and no mass transit (especially during emergencies) is available.

- Stevens County
  - Stevens County has a detailed Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and a Hazard Mitigation Plan. These plans describe in detail how the county will coordinated with Rural Resources and other transportation providers in the area if emergency transportation is needed.

Technology

For a variety of reason sophisticated transit technology is not used in this region. All of the public transit providers in the region use paper manifests and schedule trips over the phone without advanced scheduling software. In addition, transportation providers use radio as the primary source of communication and dispatch. The stakeholder outreach process (detailed in Chapter 3) did not reveal many technology needs in the region amongst transportation providers. This is due to two primary reasons:

- **Rural Context**: many of the more advanced transit technologies rely on mobile networks that are not reliable in many of the rural areas in the region.

- **Small Systems**: the public transit providers in the region do not have large fleets, pools of vehicle operators or range of services that require significant technology to assist in operations. The providers in the region are able to provide timely and consistent service using paper manifests and tracking vehicles through radio communication.

Summary of Overall Current Conditions

The rural nature of the Tri-County area including the Colville National Forest, Columbia River and Pend Oreille River heavily influences where roads and towns are built, and as a result how and where transit is used.

Food access in particular for transit-dependent residents may be a challenge so small markets or general stores as well as food banks throughout the Tri-County area play an essential role for the region's residents.

The vast majority of Northeast Washington residents (80%) drive alone to work and Spokane County is a common destination for work, medical, travel and other needs, especially for residents of Pend Oreille County and Stevens County.

Stevens County is home to the most residents, trip generators, and employers in the area, and about 50% of residents work in-county, compared to the 60-70% of residents in Ferry County and Pend Oreille County who work out-of-county. A significant number of residents from Pend Oreille County and Ferry County travel or commute long-distances to Colville in Stevens County or to Spokane or Spokane Valley.

While there is transit access connecting residents from the NEW region to Spokane, there are no transit options connecting Pend Oreille residents to Idaho to the east (about 4% of whom are employed there) and limited access (provided by Colville Confederated Tribes) connecting Ferry County residents to Okanogan County to the west (about 11% of whom are employed there). Another consideration is that residents in Ferry and Pend Oreille counties (which have one general hospital each) may need to travel longer distances to adjacent counties for more specialized medical services.

NEW RTPO Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan
Chapter 3: Gap Analysis

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the needs in the region based on the existing transportation resources and regional demographics detailed in the previous chapter. In addition, this chapter details the stakeholder outreach effort to identify unmet needs in the region. This analysis will examine:

1. Geographic locations of needs – areas where there is little or no service.
2. Targeted populations in need – including specific groups transit dependent populations, as well as persons with limited English proficiency who may lack access to information about service availability.
3. Underserved areas – which may only be served for a limited days per week or month, for for which demand for service exceeds available capacity.
4. Trip purpose (medical, shopping, etc.) – for example, Medicaid-eligible persons have access to transportation for medical services, but in some cases there may be no way for that person to get to the grocery store for basic necessities.
5. Type of transportation service or support – some trip purposes and population groups may have a high need for demand response service, while others may need fixed route services. Improved pedestrian facilities, travel training, vanpools, and other transportation needs will be assessed.
6. Human service needs – often in support of their programs.

The first section will examine the findings in Chapter 2 to describe a more quantitative analysis of unmet need. This will be followed by summary of the outreach process to support the needs analysis through documentation of needs described by the regional stakeholders. The final section will summarize the regional needs to be addressed in the final chapter of this plan which will detail strategies for the region.

Geographic and Demographic Needs Analysis

The NEW RTPO planning region is defined by its rural context. Providing transportation services in such a rural environment presents several challenges including long trip distances and low densities making it difficult to reach customers in need and group trips to improve productivity. Figure 3-1 details the percentage of the population (by census block group) that have characteristics indicative of transit dependency (low income, no personal vehicle, disability, over 65 and between the ages of 10 and 17). These demographic indicators are overlaid with the public transit routes in the region.

Figure 2-1: Geographic and Demographic Gap Analysis
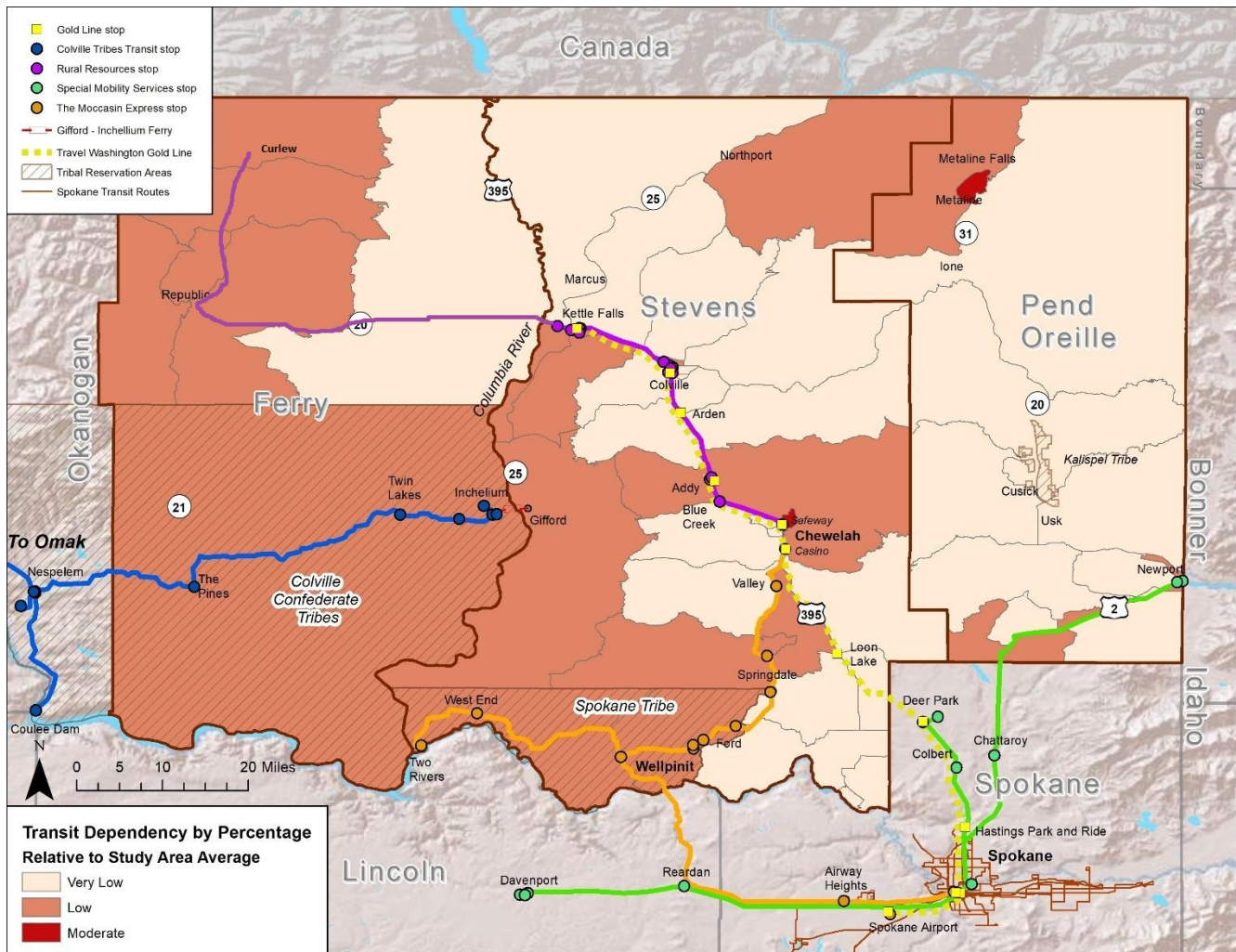
As shown in Figure 3-1 the region has relatively good coverage considering the rural nature of the study area. There are two specific areas that show unmet need:

- Northern Ferry County: this area, for the most part, is extremely rural. As a result, there is no meaningful public transit service in the area. The Town of Republic is not currently served by public transit despite a significant percentage of the population of the area in one or more of the transit dependent categories.

- Kalispel Tribe: KALTRAN formerly provided transit services on tribal lands for residents but those services have been discontinued. Kalispel tribal members currently do not have public transit services.

Stakeholder Outreach

As part of the coordinated transportation planning process stakeholder outreach activities were conducted. Engagement of stakeholders helps assess transportation needs in the region. For this planning effort a variety of meetings and interviews were conducted.

The NEW RTPO has a transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has monthly meetings that are open to the public. These meetings discuss transportation topics related to the region. Throughout this planning process the planning team attended six TAC meetings in total.

In addition to the public TAC meetings the planning team conducted interviews with several entities to assess unmet transportation needs in the region. These entities included:

- NEW RTPO
- Rural Resources
- Spokane Tribe
- Colville Confederated Tribes
- Kalispel Tribe
- Special Mobility Services

Below is a summary of input and findings from the meetings and interviews organized by theme. These findings include regional transportation issues and descriptions of unmet transportation need.

Coordination

- Rural Resources has been working with the Colville Confederated Tribes to find a way to connect Inchelium to Colville to connect with other routes – 1.5 hour route.

- In the past there was coordination with the Kalispel Tribe with the Rural Resources service in

Pend Oreille County, but the Tribe decided to focus their funding elsewhere.

- Rural Resources provides the hub and is the ticket agent.

- Rural Resources also coordinates with Special Mobility Services in Pend Oreille County. SMS transports Pend Oreille County residents to Spokane four days a week.

- Veteran transportation services are siloed and efficiencies could be made by coordinating and comingling other transportation customers with veterans.

- There are limited opportunities for collaboration simply because of the geography. The transportation providers in the region are spread far apart, and there is limited funding.

- With the previous Gold Line contract operator, DSHS was able to purchase monthly passes to provide service to people with low income. Regional providers do not even know who to contact at the current contractor to purchase such passes if they are still available. As the Gold Line ticket vendor, Rural Resources sells paper tickets, and wishes they were more able to buy tickets for human service agencies, jail release, etc.

Emergency Management

- Transportation providers participate in developing emergency plans. Rural Resources is included in the Stevens County plan.

- Rural Resources participates in emergency response efforts. For example, they have assisted in evacuating residents away from wildfire areas. They also evacuated residents from a nursing home which had received bomb threat. As a human service agency hub for the three-county area, Rural Resources provides shelter, food, and other essential community services.

- The Spokane Tribe has assisted in emergency transportation services due to wild fires and coordinates with Stevens and Ferry County in emergency management planning.

Technology

- Because there are gaps in internet/cell coverage across this very rural region, GPS technology would not work well for regional transportation providers. Regional transit agencies use a manifest system and rider data is uploaded after drivers complete their service for the day.

- The radio communication for the Spokane Tribe is used by multiple departments in the tribe and can sometimes result in communication congestion over the network.

- The Governor's mandate for green vehicles by 2030 may not be feasible in the tri-county area given there is insufficient infrastructure to support electric vehicles. Currently there are only two charging stations for electric vehicles, both in Colville, for the 6,000 square mile area. The additional expense for these types of vehicles is also a concern since this means higher local match needed. Technicians to service electric vehicles is another gap. Currently, mechanics are already challenged to maintain wheelchair lifts and bicycle racks.

Fares

- The Gold Line fare needs to be affordable for riders with low income. Currently it is too expensive for many people who rely on public transit.

Accessibility

- At a recent town hall meeting on ADA, mostly attended by consumers, transportation was discussed as a big issue for people with disabilities.

- Housing is another need. People who are unable to afford housing in the more populated areas, where there are services, may be able to afford housing further out but then lack transportation.

Service Span

- Transportation service is needed earlier in the morning, later in the evening, weekends, holidays. Current hours of operation preclude commuting to full-time employment. If people get a job, they have no means of transportation. There are no taxis, Uber or Lyft in the area.

- Residents of Pend Oreille County are pretty well served for basic needs 4 days a week, but not for getting to important special events such as funerals or weddings on the weekends.

- Service should operate throughout the day until 7 pm, so full-time employees can get to and from work. Service should also be operated on Saturdays.

Funding

- State-level funding decisions should ensure equitable services across the state in rural areas, so that rural residents are able to get town at least on a minimum frequency, whether that is once a month, once a week, or daily.

- Continue to support existing services as long as these services are successful. Current transit services are just scratching the surface of what is needed in all three counties.

- Rural areas compete for grants from WSDOT with the densely populated western part of the state, and funding does not seem to be distributed equitably. Grants in the large urbanized areas may support enhancements to already well-served areas, while remote rural residents may lack any transportation at all because there are no grant awards to support it.

- New service to connect Colville to Republic and back to connect with the Gold Line. During the last WSDOT application cycle, Rural Resources applied for a grant to fund this new route, but the application wasn't selected.

- Additional expansion vehicle(s) would also be needed to implement this new route. An accessible 4-wheel drive vehicle would make it possible to cross Sherman Pass in the winter.

- Local match is usually a challenge for any grant. None of the counties or cities/towns provide matching funds.

- The Northeast region is one of the few regions in Washington State that lacks a Public Transportation Benefit Area (PBTA) that could receive tax revenues (in the mid-1990s voters in the region strongly rejected a measure establish a PBTA). For the 2021-2023 biennium, CARES grant money from the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) funded two replacement vehicles at 100%, and a third replacement was matched by other funds from the AAA.

- The regions first priority should be to sustain current levels of service which includes replacing vehicles that are beyond their useful lives, and they have been able to do this. To expand services, expansion vehicles would also be needed, and hence significantly more local match money.

- There are not enough vehicles in service across the provider network to meet demand for services.

Infrastructure

- Many rural roads are unpaved and winter conditions can make even the highways undriveable without a 4 wheel drive vehicle. (Colville Confederated Tribes were able to get federal money to procure accessible 4 wheel drive buses.)

- There are gaps in internet/cell coverage across this very rural region. Because of this, GPS technology would not work well for regional providers.

- Impact of COVID-19

- COVID vaccination is a hot topic in the tri-county area. Rural Resources shares office spaces with Washington Employment Security Department and requires their drivers to be vaccinated to match State employee requirement. There was pushback to this as well as the masking requirement. Rural Resources lost some paid drivers, and the number of volunteer drivers dropped from 22 to 8.

- Enforcing the mask mandate was challenging to regional transportation providers.

- Ridership dropped, but fares and donations are not a significant source of revenue for most providers in the region.

Geographic Location of Services

- A major need is connectivity to the Gold Line and the Apple Line for residents in remote areas of the tri-county region. Transporting Ferry County residents from Republic to the Apple Line would fill a regional gap.

- Residents of Stevens and Ferry Counties are not getting everywhere they need to go. Ferry County residents who live off the main road in the Danville area are particularly hard to serve, and they may be unable to get to the main pick-up area.

- New service from Republic to connect with the Apple Line a two day a week as a pilot project would also improve connectivity for Ferry County residents.

Trip Purpose

- The Colville Confederated Tribes have been adding to their service center in Inchelium. This includes services for victims of domestic violence, families and increases needs/demand to access this center.

- The Kalispel Tribe, whose reservation is within Pend Oreille County, transports their elders as well as providing Medicaid transportation, but there is little other transportation services for tribal residents in the area.

- People who live in the Inchelium area who are not Medicaid eligible or tribal members are challenging to serve because of the distances/expense involved to transport them to medical facilities and even pharmacies.

- Rural residents should be able to get into town at least on once a week to go grocery shopping, etc.

- People should be able to age in their homes rather than being forced to move to when they can no longer drive because there are no transportation services in their area due to lack of funding.

- To provide transportation to as many people as possible, Rural Resources limits volunteer rides to once a week and encourages riders to combine shopping trips with their rides to and from medical appointments.

Public Surveys

A public survey was conducted as part of this coordinated transportation planning effort. A total of 30 surveys were completed in full addressing transportation services and unmet needs in the region. This section summarizes the responses to the survey.

Figure 3-2: Survey Question 1

Q1 What is your primary mode of transportation? Please check only one.
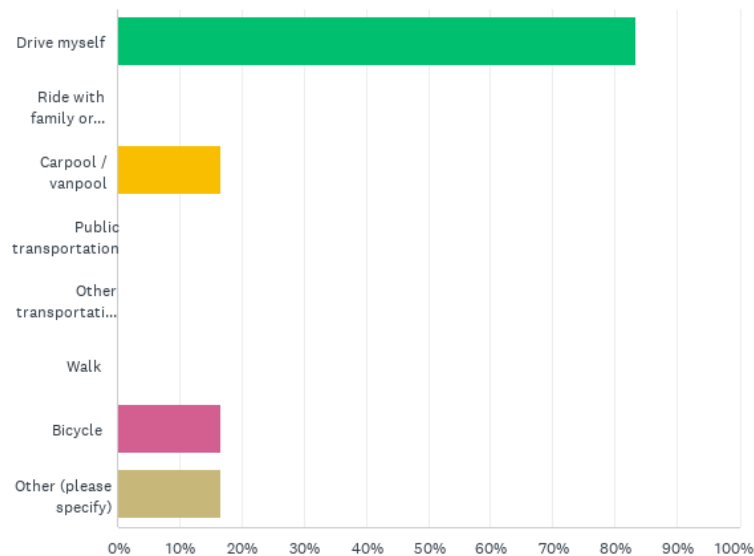
The first question of the survey asked participants about their primary mode of transportation. The vast majority of respondents were independently mobile and used a personal vehicle to get around, typical of many rural areas.
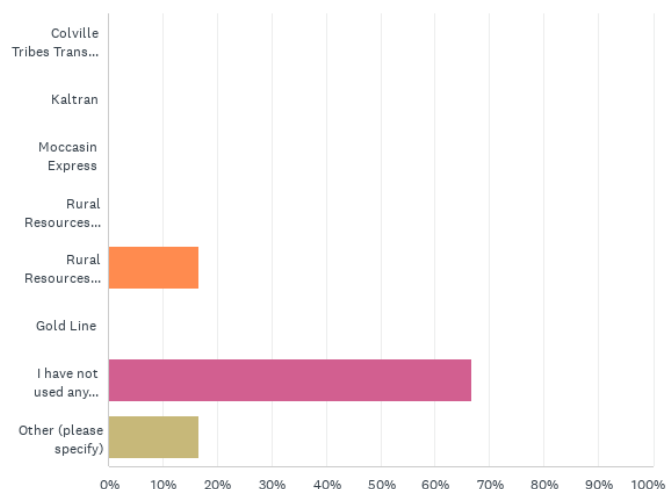
Figure 3-3: Survey Question 2

Q2 Are public transportation services available in your community?
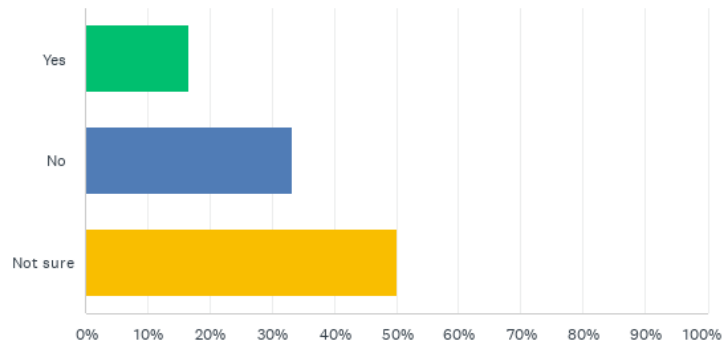
The next question gaged weather or not transportation services were available in respondent communities or weather or not they are aware of the services that are available. Approximately 50% of all respondents were not sure if transportation services are available in their community which indicates a need for geographic service expansion and/or effective marketing and outreach to educate community members about the services available to them.

Figure 3-4: Survey Question 3

Q3 Which of the following public transportation services in the region have you used within the past six months? Please check all that apply.

The majority of respondents had not used any public transit services in the last six months though roughly 20 percent have used Rural Resources for at least one trip.

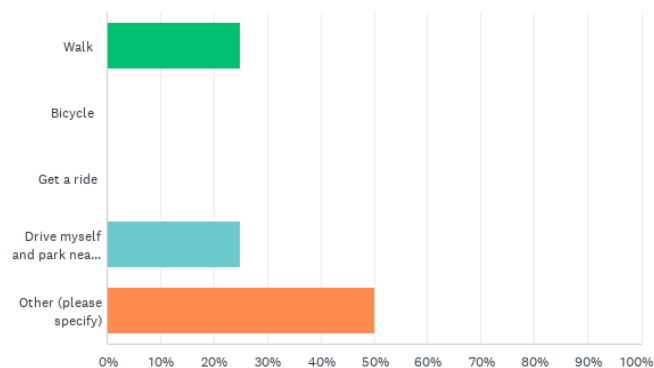**Figure 3-5: Survey Question 4**

Q4 How often do you ride the transportation services checked in the previous question?
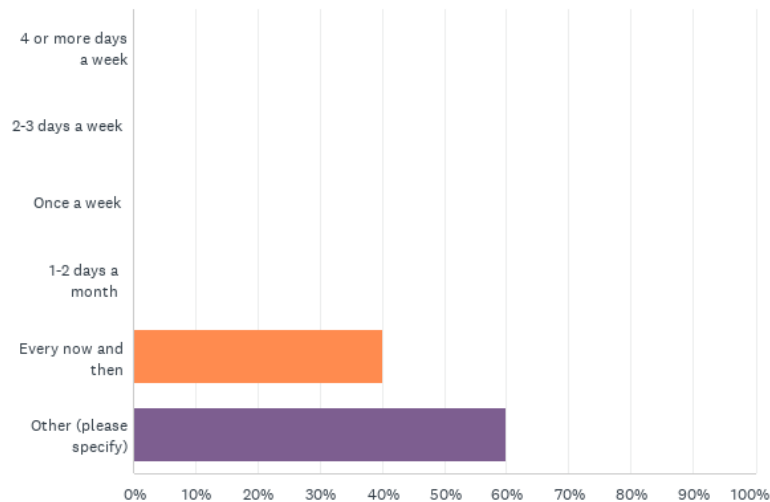
As noted in previous responses, public transit services are not used consistently by respondents with 60 percent saying that they did not use transit at all and the other 40 percent stating that they only use transportation services occasionally.
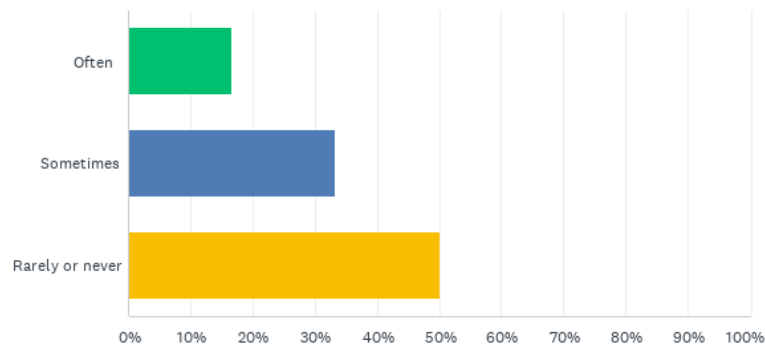
Figure 3-6: Survey Question 5

Q5 If you take the bus, how do you usually get to and from the bus stop?

Approximately one quarter of the respondents walk to a bus stop to access transit services and another quarter park and ride. The other half of the respondents do not access transportation services for any reason.
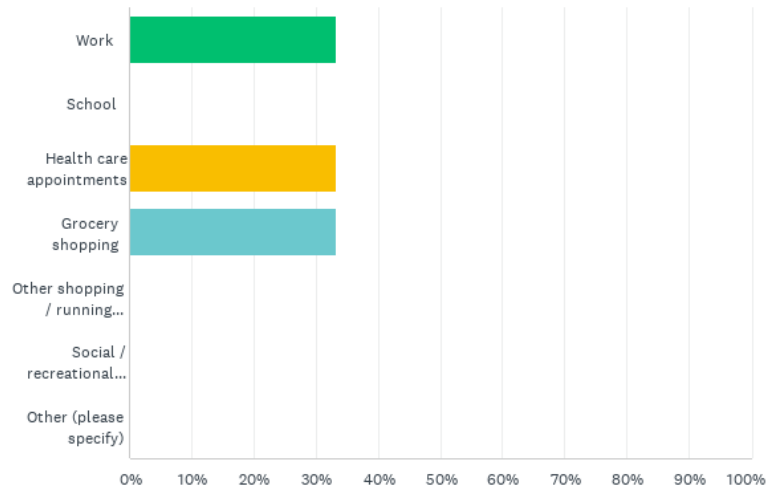
Figure 3-7: Survey Question 6

Q6 How often do you experience difficulty finding transportation to get to or from someplace you need to go?

Half of the respondents were able to access transportation services when they need. Twenty percent often experience difficulty in finding transportation service and another 30 percent sometimes have difficulty.

Figure 2-8: Survey Question 7

Q7 If you checked "Often" or "Sometimes," for which types of destinations/trip purposes do you have difficulty finding transportation? Please check all that apply.

Of those that have issues finding transportation services the trip purpose they need transportation for includes employment, shopping and medical transportation.

Figure 2-9: Survey Question 8

Q8 Do you think there is a need for additional or improved public transportation in the region?
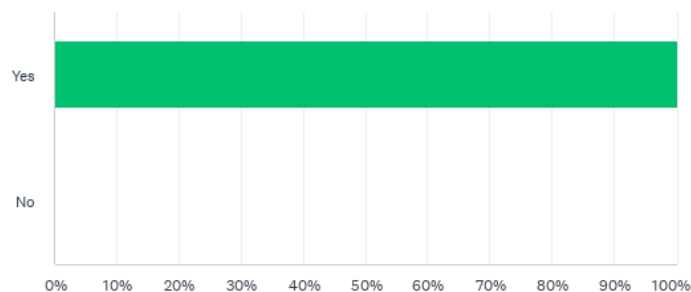

All 30 respondents indicated a need for additional transportation services in the region.

Survey question nine asked respondents to identify places that need expanded transportation services. Locations provided include:

- Newport
- Colville
- Kettle Falls
- Chewelah
- Curlew
- Republic
- Spokane

Figure 2-10: Survey Question 10

Q10 Please indicate the three most important things that you think are needed to improve schedule availability of public transportation services in your community (Check up to 3):
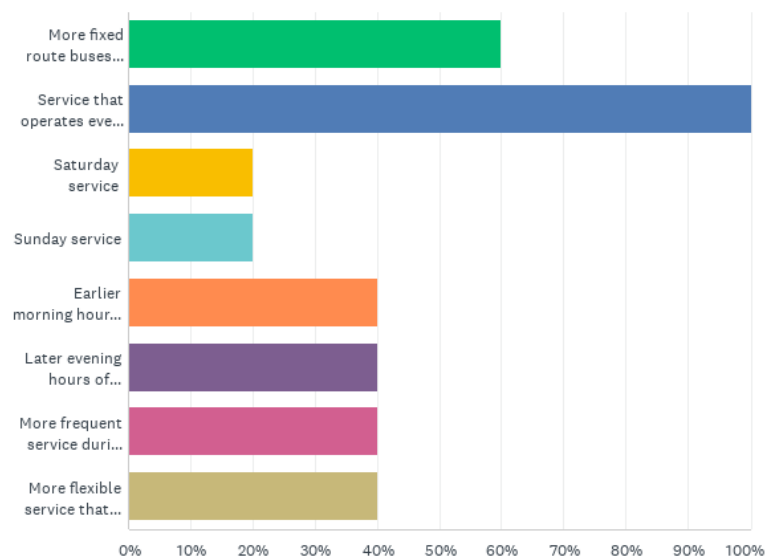
Question 10 asked respondents to identify areas of improvement for transportation services in the region. The two most selected options were services that operate every day of the week and more fixed route buses running on a set route or schedule.

Question 11 asked respondent to select the top three areas in the region that need service expansion. The top three selections were:

1. Colville

2. Republic
3. Service to shopping centers

Figure 2-11: Survey Question 12

Q12 What other types of improvements are need to public transportation services in your community? Please check what you feel are the three most important things in this list (Check up to 3):
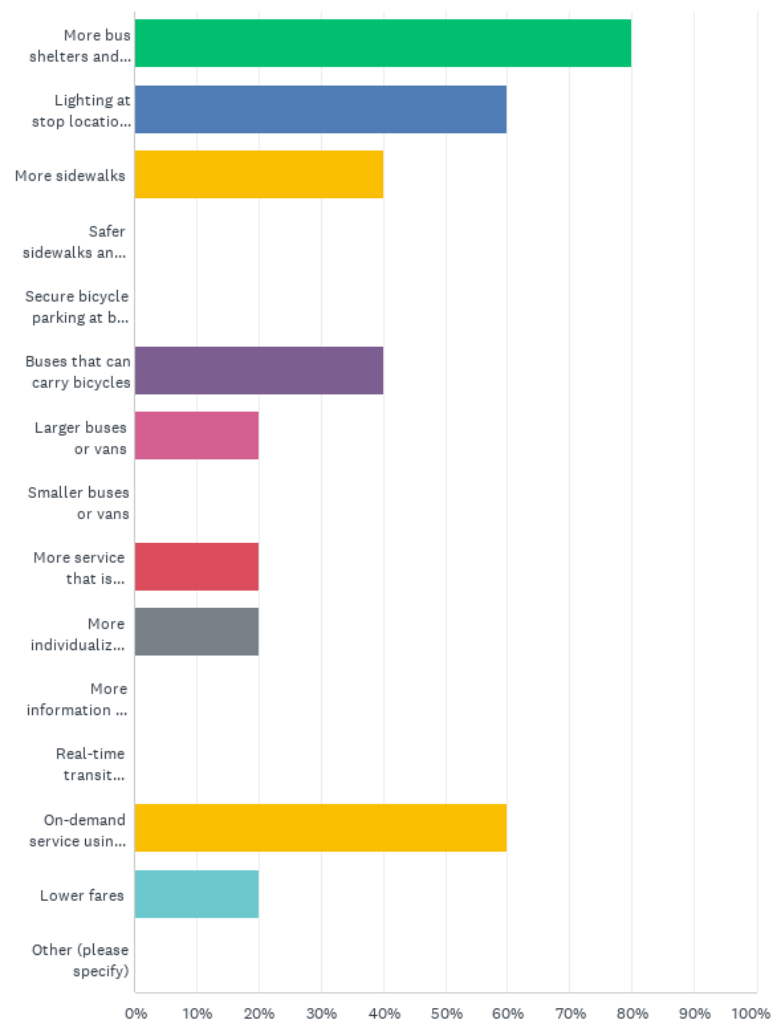
Question 12 asked respondents to identify other transportation improvement needed in the community. The top responses were: more bus shelters at bus stops, lighting at bus stop locations and on-demand transit services using a mobile application.

Gap Analysis Summary

Though the analysis of demographics, the inventory of existing services and the stakeholder outreach themes emerged as they relate to unmet transportation need. The data and responses from stakeholders and the community show that there are existing and future needs in the following categories:

1. Sustaining Existing Services
2. Expanding Existing Services (both geographically and service spans)
3. Creating New Services (to access currently unserved areas)
4. Enhancing Marketing and Connectivity
5. Facilitating Community Access to Existing Services
6. Increased Coordination
7. Sustainability

These categories are the basis for the strategies presented in the following chapter.

NEW RTPO Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan
Chapter 4:
Strategies and Prioritization

Introduction

This section presents a wide range of organizational, operational, financial/sustainable, and coordination strategies to move the NEW RTPO region forward. The Regional Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), serving as the project advisory committee, voted on the most appropriate strategies for inclusion in this plan and ranked them according the WSDOT guidelines. The focus of this chapter will be on the following:

- Organizational and coordination strategies
- Operating strategies for the future
- Sustainability and financial strategies
- Strategy Prioritization

Coordination Doesn't Just Happen

Coordination does not simply happen because it may be a good idea. Coordination requires:

- Trust between the coordinating entities
- Leadership
- An appropriate political environment
- A business arrangement/plan that works for all

When these requirements are aligned, coordination can happen. Without trust, however, coordination may be minimal.

Strategies

This section describes the strategies for this planning effort. The following section will rank each strategy on a level of importance based on the recommendations of the TAC.

Sustain Existing Services

The public and stakeholder outreach process identified the issue of sustaining existing services as something that is of paramount importance to the region. Strategies under this category include:

1. Fund operations of existing services: it is important to ensure funding of existing services so that needed service levels in the region do not decline.
2. Maintain bus fleets to ensure a state of good repair: as part of sustaining service levels it is important to ensure that vehicle fleets are in a state of good repair so that services can be reliable, safe and comfortable.
3. Conduct planning and support tasks to maintain services: transit development planning, asset management planning and mobility management tasks all support existing service (as well as potential service).

Expand Existing Services

This planning process identified the need to expand existing services to better accommodate residents. These expansions can be in regards to the span of service (time and day) or the coverage of service (geography). Strategies under this category include:

1. Increase coverage or services (expand existing routes or demand response coverage areas): some services may need to reach a little further to connect to other services or to reach communities that are currently unserved.
2. Increase the span of services: stakeholders noted that some services could better serve the community if they ran earlier in the mornings, later in the evening or on days of the week that currently have no service.
3. Develop ways to connect services in Inchellum: this is a community where the potential to connect different services should be explored and implemented.
4. Increase the frequency of service (headways): More frequent service can make riding transit more attractive to choice riders and more appealing to existing customers as it provides additional travel options.

Create New Services

New services can help currently unserved areas connect to the regional transportation network providing more mobility and a better quality of life for residents. Strategies for this category include:

1. Implement new routes to serve Republic: this area currently has no service and residents with mobility limitations have no way to access the Gold Line or the Apple line.
2. Implement service to connect with Kalispel Tribe, northern Pend Oreille County to Spokane: with the reduction in KALTRAN services this is an area identified as in need of transit services.

Enhance Services

Existing service may need enhancements to improve regional connectivity or to improve awareness within the community as to what transportation options are available to residents. Strategies in this category include:

1. Improve connections between providers: transportation agencies should work to overcome jurisdictional barriers so that customers can travel between providers with ease.
2. Improve marketing and rider information: it was noted in the outreach process that many residents are unaware of the transportation options in their community. Improved marketing can help increase ridership and productivity of transit service in the region.

Facilitate Access to Services

Capital and infrastructure improvements, increased information dissemination as well as improved mobility management activities can all help residents access existing transportation services when they otherwise might not have been able to. Specific strategies include:

1. Reduce financial barriers for the Gold Line for low-income residents not able to afford trip and the current price: the Gold Line is too expensive for many lower income residents. Reduced fare passes supplied to human service agencies and other regional transportation partners would allow some residents to expand their range of mobility in the community.
2. Improve knowledge of available transportation options to targeted users, agencies, groups and communities that support special needs populations through sustained mobility management and outreach: assisting the residents who are in need of transportation services the most in understanding what services are available and how to use those services will improve their access to goods and services throughout the region and in turn improve their quality of life.
3. Work with local and regional jurisdictions to improve roadway infrastructure that supports transit access: in rural areas roadways are not conducive to transit service. Other areas may need improvements to bus stop infrastructure. Transportation providers should work with local and regional entities to improve infrastructure to help support transit.
4. Develop transit connection hubs/transfer locations in rural towns in key locations for connections between providers: improving regional connectivity is much easier when there is a safe dedicated location for providers to make connections.
5. Improve mobility management activities that assist transit customers in planning cross jurisdictional trips using multiple providers: these activities can include trip planning services or travel training.

Coordinate Services, Support Functions and Planning

Coordination and planning is essential to maintaining and improving services in the region. Cooperative efforts to improve connectivity, reduce customer costs, overcome jurisdictional boundaries and find new

sources of revenue are an important part of improving transportation in the region. Coordination strategies include:

1. Continue coordination activities amongst providers to improve connections amongst services: providers should continue efforts to make regional and cross jurisdictional connections.
2. Cooperatively operate and fund cross-jurisdictional services: in order to make cross jurisdictional trips agencies will have to work together to decide who operates or funds these services.
3. Coordinate with veteran organizations and Medicaid transportation to improve and comingle services and improve productivity and mobility: much of the veteran and Medicaid transportation services in the region are siloed. Comingling services can reduce costs and improve productivity amongst providers.
4. Pursue opportunities to help offset individual transportation costs through coordinated fares, subsidized passes or voucher programs: reducing the cost of transportation for those that rely on transit the most will increase ridership. Coordinating fares on connecting services will also improve the customer experience making trip planning and payment easier.
5. Implement a sponsorship program to help leverage local and private matching funds: Appendix B describes a potential sponsorship program that can help agencies leverage local and private sector funding more effectively.

Promote Environmental Sustainability

That State of Washington has made the environmental sustainability of public transit a priority mandating that transit fleets be electric within the next decade. In order to meet this objective regional transportation providers will need additional support from state and federal funding partners. Strategies in this category include:

1. Work with Federal, State and regional entities to build and implement electric vehicle infrastructure: this includes the necessary charging stations in the communities served in the region.
2. Seek funding for mechanic training on electric vehicles: current maintenance staff in most rural areas are not equipped with electric vehicle expertise.

Strategy Prioritization

As part of this planning effort each individual TAC entity was given a list of the strategies (described above) and asked to give a weighted vote on their top ten strategies. The votes we tallied and the top 25 percent were deemed high priority, the next 25 percent deemed medium priority and the bottom 50 percent was designated lower priority[1] (Strategies that tied in voting were considered part of their respective ranking category). Table 4-1 shows the strategy priorities for the region.

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[1] This activity satisfies the WSDOT A, B and C categorization of strategies and projects for the coordinated planning process.

Table 4-1: Prioritized Strategies

Strategy Category	Strategy	High Priority (A)	Medium Priority (B)	Low Priority (C)
Sustain Existing Services	Fund Operations of Existing Services	X		
	Maintain bus fleets to ensure a state of good repair	X		
	Maintain and build adequate capital reserves to fund fleet replacement	X		
	Conduct planning and support tasks to maintain service			X
Expand Existing Services	Increase coverage or services (expand existing routes or demand response coverage areas	X		
	Increase the span of services (earlier, later and days of the week)		X	
	Develop ways to connect services in Inchellum			X
	Increase the frequency of service (headways)			X
Create New Services	Implement new routes to serve Republic		X	
	Implement service to connect with Kalispel Tribe, northern Pend Oreille County to Spokane		X	
Enhance Service	Improve connections between providers	X		
	Improve marketing and rider information		X	
Facilitate Access to Services	Reduce financial barriers for the Gold Line for low income residents not able to afford trip and the current price		X	
	Improve knowledge of available transportation options to targeted users, agencies, groups and communities that support special needs populations through sustained mobility management and outreach	X		
	Work with local and regional jurisdictions to improve roadway infrastructure that supports transit access		X	
	Develop transit connection hubs/transfer locations in rural towns in key locations for connections between providers.		X	
	Improve mobility management activities that assist transit customers in planning cross jurisdictional trip planning using multiple providers.			X
Coordinate Services, Support Functions and Planning	Continue coordination activities amongst providers to improve connections amongst services	X		
	Cooperatively operate and fund cross-jurisdictional services			X
	Coordinate with veteran organizations and Medicaid transportation to improve and comingle services and improve productivity and mobility.		X	
	Pursue opportunities to help offset individual transportation costs through coordinated fares, subsidized passes or voucher programs			X
	Implement a sponsorship program to help leverage local and private matching funds.			X
Promote Environmental Sustainability	Work with Federal, State and regional entities to build and implement electric vehicle infrastructure			X
	Seek funding for mechanic training on electric vehicles			X