
COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT –
HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN

SIERRA COUNTY

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Glossary of Acronyms

Acronym	Full
ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AoA	Administration of Aging
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CalWORKs	California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids
CDBG	Community Development Block Grants
CSBG	Community Services Block Grants
CTC	California Transportation Commission
CTSA	Consolidated Transportation Service Agency
DOF	Department of Finance
DOT	Department of Transportation
FAST	Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
FY	Fiscal year
JPA	Joint Powers Authority
LTF	Local Transportation Funds
MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21 st Century Act
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEMT	Non-Emergency Medical Transportation
OAA	Older American Act
PTS	Plumas County Transit
RTPA	Regional Transportation Planning Agency
RTC	Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County, Nevada
SAIPE	Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates
Section 5310	Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & People with Disabilities program
Section 5311	Formula Grant for Rural Areas Program
SGR	State of Good Repair
SSBG	Title XX Social Services Block Grant
SSTAC	Social Services Transportation Advisory Council
SCTC	Sierra County Transportation Commission
STIP	State Transportation Improvement Program
TANF	Temporary Assistance to Needy Families
TDA	Transportation Development Act
VA	Veterans Administration

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This document is an update to the 2015 Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan for Sierra County. Coordinated transportation is essential to keep people linked to social networks, employment, healthcare, education, social services, and recreation. Having access to reliable transportation can present a challenge to vulnerable populations, such as seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals. For these groups, a coordinated transportation plan is necessary to improve access, efficiency, and promote independence.¹

Projects selected for funding under Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 must be included in a coordinated public transit – human services transportation plan. According to the FTA, this Coordinated Plan should be a “unified, comprehensive strategy for public transportation service delivery that identifies the transportation needs of [three priority groups/transportation disadvantaged groups]: 1) individuals with disabilities, 2) seniors, and 3) individuals with limited incomes. This plan lays out strategies for meeting these needs and prioritizing services.” The plan should be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, nonprofit, and human services transportation providers; members of the public; and other stakeholders.

This plan is intended to meet coordinated-planning requirements as well as provide the Sierra County Transportation Commission and its partners a “blueprint” for implementing a range of strategies intended to promote and advance local efforts to improve transportation for persons with disabilities, older adults, and persons with low incomes.

1.2 Approach

Required elements of the Coordinated Plan include:

- Assessment of transportation needs for transportation disadvantaged populations (seniors, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes)
- Inventory of existing transportation services
- Strategies for improved service and coordination
- Priorities based on resources, time, and feasibility

With the 2015 Coordinated Plan as the starting point, this update was shaped by recent planning documents including Sierra County Transportation Commission (SCTC) and Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) meeting minutes. Stakeholders provided input through conference calls and written comments, the Transportation Commission meeting on February 24, 2021, and an online survey.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, outreach involved a series of virtual consultations and online surveys. The Transportation Commission meeting where the Sierra County Coordinated Transportation Plan was discussed was also held virtually in February 2021. This meeting was attended by Sierra County Transportation Commission members, representatives from Caltrans, and Center for Business and Policy Research (CBPS) staff.

Additionally, a short online survey accessible through a Survey Monkey link soliciting community input on community needs was shared with community outreach meeting attendees, to members of the public through the social media pages of community partners, and other key stakeholders. Survey questions were written after and informed by the February 2021 Transportation Commission meeting and focused on previously identified needs, input from

¹ Language taken from 2004 Executive Order: Human Service Transportation Coordination. Issued by George W. Bush, February 24, 2004.

stakeholders and community outreach meeting attendees, and Sierra County Transportation Commission staff feedback. The Survey link was live from March 02, 2021, to March 21, 2021. A total of six (6) survey responses were collected. These responses help inform the Unmet Transportation Needs discussed in Section 6 and Section 8 of this report

1.3 Funding for Public Transportation in Rural California

Transportation funding in California is complex. Funding for public transportation in rural California counties is dependent primarily on two sources of funds: 1) Federal Section 5311 funds for rural areas and 2) Transportation Development Act (TDA) funds generated through California sales tax revenues. These two funding programs are described later in this section.

Federal and state formula and discretionary programs provide funds for transit and paratransit services. Transportation funding programs are subject to rules and regulations that dictate how they can be applied for, used, and/or claimed through federal, state, and regional levels of government. Funds for human service transportation come from a variety of non-traditional transportation funding programs, including both public and private sector sources.

Federal transit funding programs require local matching funds. Each federal program requires that a share of total program costs be derived from local sources and may not be matched with other federal Department of Transportation funds. Examples of local matches, which may be used for the local share, include state or local appropriations, non-DOT federal funds, dedicated tax revenues, private donations, revenue from human service contracts, private donations, and revenue from advertising and concessions. Non-cash funds, such as donations, volunteer services, or in-kind contributions, may be an eligible local matching source; however, the documentation for this is extensive and usually not practical for rural agencies.

The following sections discuss different funding sources, some of which are new and some of which have been consolidated or changed from previous programs. The following sections discuss different funding sources, some of which are new and some of which have been consolidated or changed from previous programs.

Federal Funding Sources

FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program

This program provides formula funding to increase the mobility of seniors and persons with disabilities. Funds are apportioned based on each state's share of the targeted populations and are apportioned to both non-urbanized (population under 200,000) and large urbanized areas (population over 200,000). The former New Freedom program (Section 5317) is folded into this program. The New Freedom program provided grants for services for individuals with disabilities that went beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Activities eligible under New Freedom are eligible under the Section 5310 program. Section 5310 is reauthorized under the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) Act.

As the designated recipient of these funds, Caltrans is responsible for defining guidelines, developing application forms, and establishing selection criteria for a competitive selection process in consultation with its regional partners. State or local government authorities, private non-profit organizations, or operators of public transportation that receive a grant indirectly through a recipient are eligible recipients and sub-recipients for this funding. Projects

selected for 5310 funding must be included in a local coordinated plan. The following is an overview of the funding program:

- Capital projects, operating assistance, mobility management, and administration related projects are eligible.
- 20% of program funds must be used on capital projects that are public transportation projects planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when public transportation is insufficient, inappropriate, or unavailable.
- 50% may be used for operating assistance expenses and New Freedom-type projects:
 - Public transportation projects that exceed the requirements of the ADA.
 - Public transportation projects that improve access to fixed-route service and decrease reliance by individuals with disabilities on complementary paratransit.
 - Alternatives to public transportation that assist seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- Statewide Funding Formula
 - 60% to designated recipients in urbanized areas with populations over 200,000.
 - 20% to states for small, urbanized areas (under 200,000 population).
 - 20% to states for rural areas.
 - Up to 10% of funding is allowed for program administration costs by Caltrans due to state law.
- Funds are apportioned for urban and rural areas based on the number of seniors and individuals with disabilities.
 - Federal share for capital projects, including the acquisition of public transportation services is 80%.
 - Federal share for operating assistance is 50%.

The national apportionment for FTA Section 5310 in fiscal year (FY) 2019 was over \$278 million and increased to over \$288 million in FY 2020, with California receiving \$32.3 million.²

FTA Section 5311 Formula Grant for Rural Areas³

The Section 5311 program provides capital, planning, and operating assistance to support public transportation in rural areas with populations less than 50,000. The Section 5311 program, as amended under Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), combines the 5311 program and the repealed 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute program activities into one program. The goal of the program is to:

- Enhance the access of people in non-urbanized areas to health care, shopping, education, employment, public services, and recreation.
- Assist in the maintenance, development, improvement, and use of public transportation systems in non-urbanized areas.
- Encourage and facilitate the most efficient use of all transportation funds used to provide passenger transportation in non-urbanized areas through the coordination of programs and services.
- Assist in the development and support of intercity bus transportation.

² “Table 8: FY 2020 Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and People with Disabilities (Full Year)”
<https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/apportionments/table-8-fy-2020-section-5310-enhanced-mobility-seniors-and-people>.

³ “Table 9: FY 2020 Section 5311 and Section 5340 Rural Area Formula Apportionments, Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) Allocations, and Appalachian Development Public Transportation Assistance Program (Full Year)”
<https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/apportionments/table-9-fy-2020-section-5311-and-section-5340-rural-area-formula>.

Program goals also include improving access to transportation services to employment and employment-related activities for low-income individuals and welfare recipients and to transport residents of urbanized and non-urbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities.

Eligible projects under 5311 consists of planning, capital, operating, job access and reverse commute projects, and the acquisition of public transportation services. Under this program, the allocated federal funds may be used for a large percentage of most eligible projects, with the local share equaling:

- 20% for capital projects
- 50% for operating assistance
- 20% for ADA non-fixed-route paratransit service, with the federal share using up to 10% of a recipient's apportionment.

Funding is formula-based for rural areas and tribal transit programs.

- Rural Formula
 - 83.15% of funds apportioned based on land area and population in rural areas.
 - 16.85% of funds apportioned on land area, revenue- vehicle miles, and low-income individuals in rural areas.
- Tribal Transit Program
 - \$5 million discretionary tribal program.
 - \$30 million tribal formula program for tribes providing transportation.
 - Formula factors are vehicle revenue miles and the number of low-income individuals residing on tribal lands.

Eligible recipients include the following:

- States, Federally Recognized Indian Tribes
- Subrecipients: State or local government authorities, nonprofit organizations, operators of public transportation or intercity bus service that receive funds indirectly through a recipient.

Toll Credit Funds In lieu of Non-Federal Match Funds⁴

Federal-aid highway and transit projects typically require project sponsors to provide a certain amount of non-federal funds as a match to federal funds. Through the use of "Transportation Development Credits" (sometimes referred to as toll credits), the non-federal share match requirement in California can be met by applying an equal amount of Transportation Development Credit and therefore allow a project to be funded with up to 100% federal funds for federally participating costs. Caltrans has been granted permission by the FTA to utilize Toll Credits, and in the past has made credits available for FTA Section 5310, 5311, 5316, and 5317 programs. Local agencies may now use other federal funding to replace the required local match for both On-System Local Highway Bridge Program (HBP) projects and Highway Safety Improvement Program projects. With this option, toll credits can be applied to federal funding components in the project to achieve the 100% federal reimbursement rate.

⁴ "Use of Toll Credits in Lieu of Non-Federal Share Match for Local Assistance Federal-Aid Highway Projects"
<https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/local-assistance/documents/ob/2016/f0012533-ob14-03.pdf>.

Non-Traditional Transportation Program Funding

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Prior to MAP-21, apportionments of Transportation Enhancements were included in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for each region. MAP-21 replaced Transportation Enhancements with the Transportation Alternatives Program which is funded at 2% of the total of all MAP-21 programs with set-asides. Transportation Alternatives Program projects must be related to surface transportation but are intended to be enhancements that go beyond the normal transportation project functions. Eligible activities include Transportation Enhancements; Recreational Trails; Safe Routes to Schools program; and planning, designing, or constructing roadways within the right-of-way of former interstate routes or other divided highways.

In September 2013, California legislation created the Active Transportation Program (ATP). The ATP consolidates existing federal and state programs, including TAP, Bicycle Transportation Account, and Safe Routes to School into a single program with a focus to make California a national leader in active transportation.

Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST)⁵

The FAST Act was signed into law in 2015 and replaced the MAP-21 Transportation Alternatives Program. The FAST Act essentially built on the changes made through the TAP. The FAST Act offers Surface Transportation Block Grants for transportation alternatives.⁶ These set-aside funds include all projects and activities that were previously eligible under TAP, encompassing a variety of smaller-scale transportation projects. Eligible applicants include all entities that were eligible to apply for TAP funds. The FAST Act also allows nonprofit entities responsible for the administration of local transportation safety programs to apply. \$850 million in FAST Act funding per year was made available for FY 2018-2020.⁷

State Funding Sources

Transportation Development Act (TDA)

The California Transportation Development Act has two funding sources for each county that are locally derived and locally administered: 1) the Local Transportation Fund (LTF) and 2) the State Transit Assistance Fund (STA).

LTF revenues are derived from 1/4 cent of the 7.25 cent retail sales tax collected statewide. The California Department of Tax and Fee Administration returns the 1/4 cent to each county according to the amount of tax collected in each county. TDA funds may be allocated under Articles 4, 4.5, and 8 for planning and program activities, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, community transit services, public transportation, and bus and rail projects. Funding allocated from Articles 4 and 8 vary by county and support public transportation systems, research and demonstration, local streets and roads and projects, passenger rail service operations and capital improvements, and administrative and planning costs. Article 4.5 provides up to 5% of remaining LTF funds and supports community transit services for the disabled and those who cannot use conventional transit services.

⁵ "A Summary of Highway Provisions" <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/summary.cfm>.

⁶ Transportation Enhancements was replaced with Transportation Alternative Program, which was then replaced by FAST Act Surface Transportation Block Grants.

⁷ "Transportation Alternatives" <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/factsheets/transportationalternativesfs.cfm>.

Prior to approving TDA funds for purposes other than public transportation, specialized transportation, or facilities for bicycles and pedestrians, the Local Transportation Commission, sometimes referred to as the Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), conducts an annual unmet transit need process which includes a public hearing and assessment of transit. Commission staff and the local SSTAC review public comments received and compare the comments to the adopted definitions to determine if there are unmet transit needs, and whether or not those needs are “reasonable to meet.” Each RTPA is required to adopt definitions of “unmet transit need” and “reasonable to meet.” Any unmet transit needs that are reasonable to meet must be funded before funds can be allocated for streets and roads.⁸

STA are revenues derived from statewide sales taxes on gasoline and diesel fuels. Eligible recipients include public transit operators. STA funds are appropriated by the legislature to the State Controller's Office. The State Controller's Office then allocates the tax revenue, by formula, to planning agencies and other selected agencies. Statute requires that 50% of STA funds be allocated according to population and 50% be allocated according to transit operator revenues from the prior fiscal year. STA is allocated annually by the local transportation commissions based on each region's apportionment. Unlike LTF, they may not be allocated to other purposes. STA revenues may be used only for public transit or transportation services. STA funds will reach approximately \$692.25 million for FY 2021.

State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)⁹

The STIP is a biennial five-year plan adopted by the California Transportation Commission (CTC) for major capital projects of all types. State transportation funds under STIP may be used for state highway improvements, intercity rail, and regional highway and transit improvements. State law requires the CTC to update the STIP biennially, in even-numbered years, with each new STIP adding two new years to prior programming commitments. The current structure of the STIP was initiated by SB45 in 1997. The STIP is constrained by the amount of funds estimated to be available for the STIP period in the fund estimate, which is developed by Caltrans and adopted by the Commission every other odd year. The amount available for the STIP is then constrained by formulas for regional and interregional shares per Streets and Highways Code (Sections 164, 187, 188, and 188.8). Eligible recipients include cities, counties, transit agencies, transit operators, regional planning agencies, and CTCs. STIP funding is estimated to include \$2.6 billion for FY 2021-FY 2025, with \$569.4 million specified for new programming.

Social Services Funding Sources

This section summarizes a variety of social services funding sources. A portion of the budgets for these sources are used to fund transportation services for clients, patients, and other beneficiaries.

Older Americans Act (OAA)¹⁰

The Older Americans Act was signed into law in 1965 amidst growing concern over seniors' access to health care and their general well-being. The Act established the federal Administration on Aging (AoA) and charged the agency with advocating on behalf of Americans 60 or older. AoA implemented a range of assistance programs aimed at seniors, especially those at risk of losing their independence. Transportation is a permitted use of funds under the Act, providing needed access to services offered by the AoA, nutrition and medical services, and other essential services.

⁸ The concept of “unmet needs that are reasonable to meet” is discussed later in this report.

⁹ Language and information from this section was taken from the 2014 Report of STIP Balance County and Interregional Shares.

¹⁰ “Older Americans Act: Funding Formulas” <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RS22549.pdf>.

No funding is specifically designated for transportation, but funding can be used for transportation under several sections of the OAA, including Title III (Support and Access Services), Title VI (Grants to American Indian Tribes), and the Home and Community-Based Services program.

Title III(B) funds six programs including supportive services and senior centers. Funds may be used for capital projects and operations, and to purchase and/or operate vehicles and fund mobility management services. 73% of OAA appropriations go to Title III, which consisted of \$138 million in FY 2019 and \$137 million in FY 2020. Eligible recipients include State Units on Aging and Area Agencies on Aging. The state will match funding as listed below:

- 15% state match for Supportive Services and Senior Centers,
- 15% for Congregate and Home-delivered Nutrition Services, and
- 25% for National Family Caregiver Support Program

Title VI funds nutrition and caregiver support services to reduce the need for costly institutional care and medical interventions and responds to the needs of a culturally diverse Native American community.¹¹ Funds may be used for supportive and nutrition services and transportation services, including rides to meal sites, medical appointments, grocery stores, and other critical daily activity locations. Eligible recipients include Native American Tribal organizations, Alaskan Native organizations, non-profit groups representing Native Hawaiians where the tribal organization represents at least 50 Native elders aged 60 or older. \$34.2 million in grant funds for supportive and nutrition services and \$10.1 million for Native American caregiver programs were made available in FY 2019.

Regional Centers

Regional centers are nonprofit private corporations that contract with the Department of Developmental Services to provide or coordinate services for individuals with developmental disabilities. They have offices throughout California to provide a local resource to help find and access the many services available to individuals and their families. There are 21 regional centers with more than 40 offices located throughout the state. Regional Centers provide a number of support services, including transportation services. Transportation services are provided so persons with a developmental disability may participate in programs and/or other activities identified in their Individual Program Plan. A variety of sources may be used to provide transportation through public transit; specialized transportation companies; day programs and/or residential vendors; and family members, friends, and others. Transportation services may include help in boarding and exiting a vehicle as well as assistance and monitoring while being transported.

Medi-Cal

Medi-Cal is California's health care program for low-income children and adults. Medi-Cal will provide assistance with expenses for non-emergency medical transportation and nonmedical transportation trips. Eligible recipients include individuals who receive Medi-Cal through a managed care plan and who have exhausted other available transportation resources. Nonmedical transportation consists of transportation by private or public vehicle for those without transportation while non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) is defined as transportation by ambulance, wheelchair van, or litter van. Transportation providers submit applications to the California Health and Human Services Agency to participate as a provider in the Medi-Cal program. Transportation expenses constitute less than 1% of Medicaid expenses.

¹¹ "Services for Native Americans (OAA Title VI)" <https://acl.gov/programs/services-native-americans-oaa-title-vi>.

Title XX Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)¹²

The SSBG is a flexible source of funds provided by the Department of Social Services. States use SSBG funding to support a variety of social services for vulnerable children, adults, and families to achieve five broad goals, including: reduce dependency, achieve self-sufficiency, protect children and families, reduce institutional care by providing home/community-based care, and provide institutional care when other forms of care are not appropriate. SSBGs support programs that allow communities to achieve or maintain economic self-sufficiency to prevent, reduce, or eliminate dependency on social services. SSBGs fund a variety of initiatives organized into 29 service categories, including childcare, child welfare, services for persons with disabilities, transportation, case management services, and protective services for adults. Eligibility is determined by the State, and can include Child Welfare Services, Foster Care, Deaf Access, Community Care Licensing, California Department of Education Child Care, Department of Developmental Services programs. Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grants may also be transferred into SSBG grant programs. Title XX SSBG programs included \$1.7 billion in FY 2019 nationally.

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)¹³

The Community Services Block Grant is provided by the Department of Health and Human Services. CSBG is designed to assist low-income persons through different services: employment, housing assistance, emergency referrals, and nutrition and health. CSBG supports services and activities for low-income persons including the homeless, migrants, and the elderly that alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities. States, federally and state-recognized Native American tribes and tribal organizations, Community Action Agencies, and migrant and seasonal farmworkers' agencies are eligible for this funding. Portions of these funds can be used to transport participants of these programs to and from employment sites, medical and other appointments, and other necessary destinations. \$725 million in grants were provided in FY 2019 and reauthorization is currently pending.

Consolidated Health Center Program¹⁴

Consolidated Health Center Program funds are provided by the Department of Health and Human Services. They are used to offer access to health centers that provide comprehensive primary and preventative health care to diverse and medically underserved populations. Centers provide care at special discounts for people with incomes below 200% of the poverty line. Health centers can use funds for center-owned vans, transit vouchers, and taxi fares. Eligible organizations include all community-based organizations, including tribal-based and faith-based organizations that contribute to patients' health care.

Community Mental Health Services Block Grant

This program provided by the Department of Health and Human Services provides a flexible fund to support comprehensive, community-based mental health services for those with serious mental illnesses. Funds can be used for a variety of mental illness prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation services. This grant program includes mandatory set-asides for programs addressing the needs of those with early serious mental illness, children with serious mental and emotional disturbances, mobile crisis units, crisis stabilization beds, and crisis call centers. Grants are awarded for both the health services and supporting services including the purchase and operation of vehicles to transport patients to and from appointments. Additionally, funds can be used to reimburse those able to transport

¹² "SSBG Fact Sheet" <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/resource/ssbg-fact-sheet>.

¹³ "Community Services Block Grant" <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/825>.

¹⁴ "Consolidated Health Centers" <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/610>.

themselves. Eligible recipients include states, territories, and county mental health departments. Available national funds included \$723 million in FY 2020 and \$757.6 million in FY 2020.

Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant

The Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant Program was authorized to provide funds for the purpose of planning, implementing, and evaluating activities to prevent and treat substance abuse among targeted populations and service areas, including pregnant women and women with dependent children, intravenous drug users, tuberculosis services and early HIV/AIDS intervention. At least 20% of funds must be spent towards substance abuse primary prevention strategies. Transportation-related services may be broadly provided through reimbursement of transportation costs and mobility management. It is the largest federal program dedicated to improving publicly funded substance abuse prevention and treatment systems.¹⁵ Funds may be used to support transportation-related services such as mobility management, reimbursement of transportation costs, and other services. There is no matching requirement for these funds. Eligible recipients include states, territories, and tribal governments. Program funds included \$1.86 billion in FY 2020 nationwide and are anticipated to apportion \$254 million in FY 2021 for the State.¹⁶

Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)

This program provides subsidized childcare services to low-income families. Although the grant is not a direct source of transportation funds, services may be covered by voucher payments if childcare providers provide transportation. This can include driving the child to and from appointments, recreational activities, and more. Eligible recipients include states and recognized Native American tribes. There are no matching requirements for discretionary or mandatory funds; however, Medicaid has a matching rate for the remaining portion of mandatory funds. National funds totaled approximately \$5.2 billion in FY 2019 and will increase to \$7.7 billion in FY 2020.

Developmental Disabilities Projects of National Significance

The purpose of this program is to create and enhance opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to contribute to and participate in all facets of community life. Priorities include improving state employment policies and outcomes, collecting data and providing technical assistance, and to support national and state policy that enhances these goals. Projects are awarded for programs that are considered innovative and likely to have significant national impacts. This funding can be used towards a variety of short term (1-5 year) projects addressing critical issues affecting individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, mandatory set-aside for transportation assistance activities, training of personnel on transportation issues pertaining to mental disabilities, and reimbursement of transportation costs. Eligible recipients include state, local, public or private non-profit organizations or agencies. PNS funding totaled \$12 million nationally in FY 2018, including \$1 million for transportation assistance activities for older adults and people with disabilities.

Head Start

This program provides grants to local public and private agencies to provide comprehensive child development services to low-income children and families and promote school readiness from birth to age five, focusing on local needs. Funds may be used for program expansion and discretionary funds. Head Start programs provide

¹⁵ "Fact Sheet: Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant"
https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/sabg_fact_sheet_rev.pdf.

¹⁶ House Appropriations Bill 2020 Report.
https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/FY2020%20LHHS_Report.pdf.

transportation services for children either directly or through contracts with transportation providers. Program regulations require the Head Start makes reasonable efforts to coordinate transportation resources with other human services agencies in the community. Eligible recipients include local public and private non-profit and for-profit agencies. Matching requirements consist of a 20% grantee match through cash and in-kind donations. Head Start funds totaled \$10.1 billion in FY 2019 and increased to \$11.6 billion in FY 2020.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)/CalWORKs

TANF is the federal program that funds CalWORKs. TANF provides temporary cash aid to needy families, including supportive services such as job services, transportation, and childcare. Recipients are required to participate in activities that assist them in obtaining employment. Supportive services are provided to enable recipients to participate in these activities. States, federally recognized Native American tribes, and families defined as eligible in the TANF state plan can receive this funding. TANF funding totaled \$16.6 billion with \$3.7 billion allocated for California, approximately 2.9 billion of which was used to fund maintenance-of-effort expenditures. CalWORKs funding totaled \$4.86 billion in FY 2019 and \$5.25 billion in FY 2020.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)¹⁷

CDBG are funds from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development that are given to the state to disseminate among all eligible local governments. The CDBG program works to ensure decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable community members, and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses. Specifically, funds may be used for activities related to housing, real property, public facilities, economic development, public services.

The annual CDBG appropriation is allocated between state and local jurisdictions and are called “non-entitlement” and “entitlement” communities respectively. Entitlement communities are comprised of central cities of Metropolitan Statistical Areas; metropolitan cities with populations of at least 50,000; and qualified urban counties with a population of 200,000 or more (excluding the populations of entitlement cities). Eligible recipients include state and local jurisdictions, where at least 70% must be used for activities that benefit entitlement communities and 30% must be used amongst smaller towns and rural counties. Administration costs in excess of \$100,000 must be matched. CDBG national funding totaled \$3.4 billion in FY 2020 with \$400 million apportioned for California.

Other Sources

This section summarizes a number of other transportation support sources.

Private and Non-Profit Foundations

Many small agencies that target low-income, senior, and/or disabled populations are eligible for foundation grants. Typically, these grants are highly competitive and require significant research to identify foundations appropriate for the transportation of the targeted populations.

Service Clubs and Fraternal Organizations

Organizations such as the Rotary Club, Soroptimists, Kiwanis, and Lions often pay for special projects. For transportation, they might pay for or help contribute toward the cost of a new vehicle.

¹⁷ “CPD Appropriations Budget/Allocations” https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/budget.

AB 2766 (Vehicle Air Pollution Fees)

California Assembly Bill 2766 allows local air quality management districts to level a \$2 to \$4 per year fee on vehicles registered in their district. These funds are to be applied to programs designed to reduce motor vehicle air pollution as well as towards the planning, monitoring, enforcement, and technical study of these programs. Across the state, these funds have been used for local transit capital and operating programs.

Traffic Mitigation Fees

Traffic mitigation fees are one-time charges on new developments to pay for required public facilities and to mitigate impacts created by or reasonably related to development. There are a number of approaches to charging developers; these fees must be clearly related to the costs incurred as a result of the development with a rational connection between fee and development type. Furthermore, fees cannot be used to correct existing problems or pay for improvements needed for existing development. A county may only levy such fees in the unincorporated area over which it has jurisdiction, while a city must levy fees within the city limits. Any fee program must have the cooperation of all jurisdictions affected.

Advertising

One modest but important source of funding for many transit services is on-vehicle advertising. Local transit agencies may enhance their efforts by pursuing an advertising program that could lead to discretionary revenue. However, it is important to consider that managing an advertising program requires staff time and can potentially overload vehicle aesthetics with excessive advertising.

Contract Revenues

Transit systems can also generate income from contracted services. Social service providers, employers, higher education institutions, and other entities may contract with local transit services. These contracted revenues can form important funding streams for local transit service agencies. This may involve subsidizing dedicated routes or contributing funds to the overall transit system.

Employer and Member Transportation Programs

Businesses and other local agents with workers, visitors, and/or members with transportation needs are sometimes willing to provide transportation to fill their needs. This may not be limited to employment sites but could also include transportation to recreational activities, shopping destinations, and medical appointments. These programs have their own buses and routes that may involve coordination of their transportation efforts with other transportation programs and services. For example, some vacation resorts or tribal casinos provide multi-purpose transportation services.

In-Kind

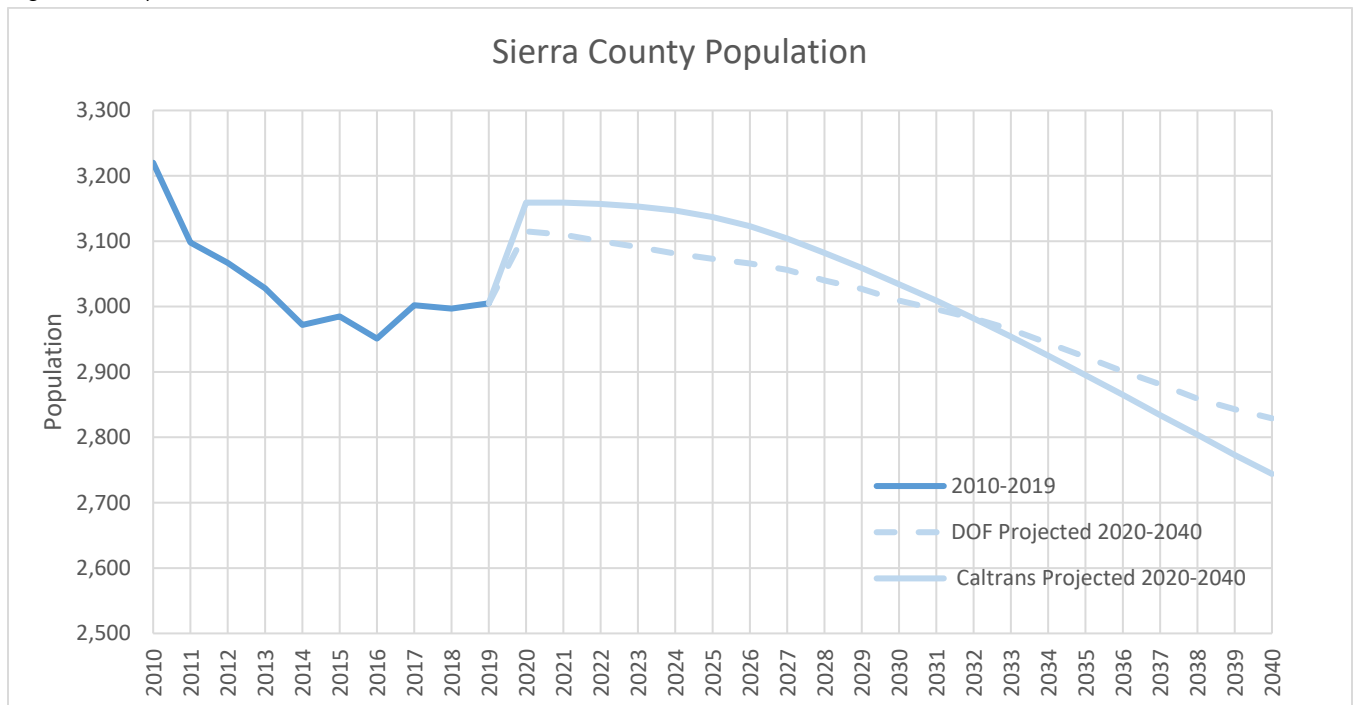
In-kind contributions can take many forms. Donations can range from financial contributions to the donation of a vehicle, a transit bench, and right of way for bus stops as well as contributions by local businesses in the form of featuring transit information and/or selling transit tickets.

2 Demographics Profile¹⁸

Sierra County is located in the Sierra Nevada foothills and mountain range. With a land area of 953 square miles, the County is bordered by the state of Nevada, and Plumas, Nevada, and Yuba Counties of California. The Sierra Valley, an area known for cattle ranching and farming, dominates the topography of Eastern Sierra County. Mountainous terrain and limited accessibilities cause Sierra County to be relatively isolated. The City of Loyalton is the only incorporated city in the county, while the county seat is Downieville.

2.1 Target Population Characteristics

Figure 1: Population Trendline 2020-2040



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates for the Resident Population for Counties.
 California Department of Finance, P-1. Vintage 2019 (2020.1.10) County Population Projections.
 California Department of Transportation, Vintage 2019 Long-Term Socio-Economic Forecasts by County.¹⁹

County Data

Nationwide, transit system ridership is drawn largely from various groups of persons who make up what is often called the “transit dependent” population. This category, also described as transportation disadvantaged, includes elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and low-income persons. In addition, veterans, members of households

¹⁸ The language and information from this section were taken from Sierra County’s 2015 Coordinated Plan-Human Services Transportation Plan and 2018 American Community Survey

¹⁹ Data from the Caltrans Long-Term Socio-Economic Forecast for Humboldt County is also referenced in this section. Note that the data from Caltrans and Department of Finance slightly differ from one another because of years the data represent as well as differences in the sources of data and methodology of calculation.

with no available vehicles, and passengers with limited English proficiency may have transportation needs that differ from the general public.

Sierra County has an estimated total population of 2,930, or less than 0.01% of California’s population, ranking it the second smallest county in the state. Figure 1 and Table 1 below provide population characteristics, including details of the key demographic groups for this report: seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income individuals. For comparison, the total population and percent of these demographic groups is also presented for California and the United States.²⁰

The population in Sierra County has been declining since its foundation during the Gold Rush. After a few decades of growth between 1960 and 2000, the population is projected to decline again in the coming decades.

Table 1: Target Population Characteristics

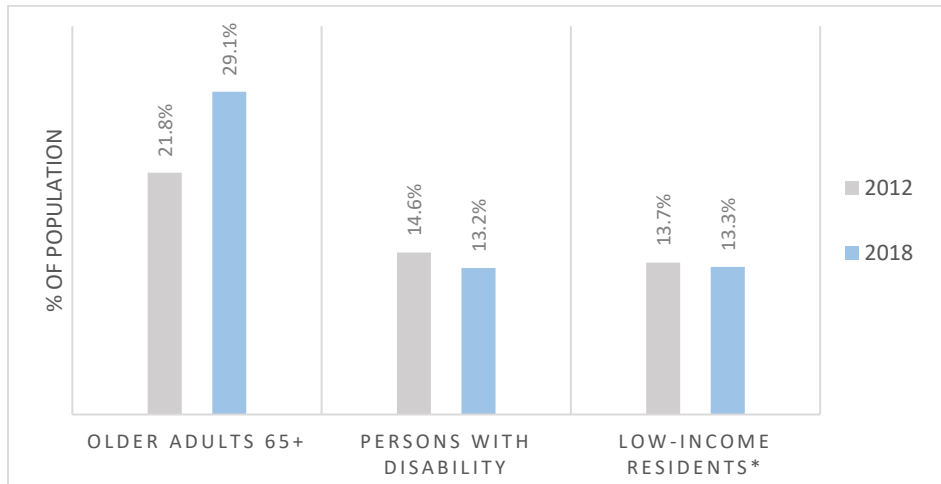
Area	Total Population	% persons aged 65+	% persons w/ disability	% poverty level	% veterans	% speak English less than “very well”
Sierra	2,930	29.1%	13.2%	13.3%	9.4%	0.6%
California	39,148,760	13.6%	10.4%	12.8%	5.4%	18.1%
United States	322,903,030	15.2%	12.6%	13.1%	7.5%	8.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey (ACS), 2018 5-year Estimate

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau: Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), 2018

Changes among Target Populations

Figure 2: Changes Among Target Populations



Source: U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey (ACS), 2012 and 2018 5-year Estimate

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau: SAIPE, 2012 and 2018

²⁰ Data from the State of California’s Department of Finance is also referenced in this section. Note that the data from the U.S. Census Bureau and Department of Finance slightly differ from one another because of years the data represent as well as differences in the sources of data and methodology of calculation.

Figure 2 provides information reflecting the changes among target populations in recent years. Since 2012, Sierra County’s older adult population has grown, while overall poverty levels have decreased.

Older Adults

To better understand how the older adult population in Sierra County is changing, refer to Table 2, which shows the total number of older adults (65 and older) in 2010 along with projections for every decade until 2060.

Using California’s Department of Finance population projection data, between 2010 and 2060, Sierra County’s population that is over the age of 65 is expected to decrease by about 2% (see Table 2). During the same time period, the population under the age of 65 is expected to decrease by 20%. By 2060, approximately 25% of the County’s population will be older adults. The only age group expected to have a net increase by 2060 is seniors over the age of 85, the population of which is expected to double.

Table 2: Population Projections for Older Adults

Age Group	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060	Population Change 2010-2060
Under 65	2,539	2,078	1,880	1,926	1,984	2,034	-19.3%
65-74 (Young Retirees)	410	572	483	269	251	323	-21.2%
75-84 (Mature Retirees)	209	343	435	379	215	208	-0.5%
85+ (Seniors)	75	122	211	255	242	146	94.7%
Subtotal Pop: Age 65+	694	1,037	1,129	903	708	677	-2.4%
% Older Adults	21.5%	33.3%	37.5%	31.9%	26.3%	25.0%	16.3%

Source: California Department of Finance, State and County Population Projections by Major Age Groups, January 2020

People with Disabilities²¹

According to the ACS, 13.2% of the non- institutionalized population of Sierra County population had a disability in 2018. This proportion is slightly higher than both the California and national average (see Table 1). In Sierra County, the top three disability issues for those disabled between ages 18 and 64 are ambulatory, independent living, and self-care difficulties. For those 65 and older, the top three disability issues are ambulatory, independent living, and hearing difficulties. 21.7% of the population that is 65 and older has a disability.

These disability statistics, which cover six disability types, were produced based on questions introduced to the ACS in 2008.²² Because of changes in questions, one must be cautious when comparing previous Census/ACS disability data.

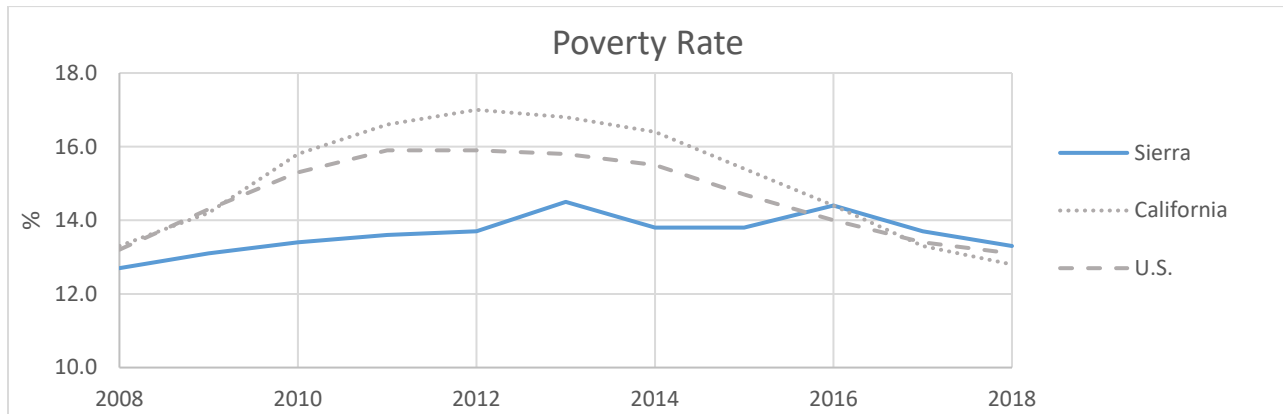
²¹ “Disability.” ACS. <https://www.census.gov/topics/health/disability/guidance/data-collection-acs.html>

²² For more information, please visit the Census Bureau’s page on Disability and American Community Survey at <https://www.census.gov/topics/health/disability/guidance/data-collection-acs.html>.

Low-Income Residents

According to the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) produced by the U.S. Census Bureau, 392 persons, or 13.3% of the population, in Sierra County live below the federal poverty level. In 2017, the Sierra County poverty rate slightly surpassed state and national rates, but has declined since then. State and national poverty levels are currently 12.8% and 13.1%, respectively.

Figure 3: Poverty Rate (2008-2018)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau: SAIPE, 2008-2018

Vehicle Access

The vehicle availability of Sierra County households is examined in Table 3. 2018 ACS data shows that the majority (94%) of households have access to one or more vehicles.

Table 3: Household Vehicle Availability

Households with:	
0 vehicle	5.4%
1 vehicle	30.5%
2 vehicles	37.5%
3 or more vehicles	26.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: ACS, 2018 5-year Estimate, Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units

Table 4 below summarizes the mode of transportation utilized by the working population. The majority (65%) of all workers are driving alone, while less than 1% utilize public transportation as a means of transportation to work.

Table 4: Means of Transportation to Work

Working population (16 years and over in households)	1,167
Travel to work by:	
Car, truck, van – drove alone	65.0%
Car, truck, van – carpooled	10.3%
Public transport	0.3%
Walked	3.0%
Taxi, motorcycle, bike, other	0.3%
Work at home	21.2%

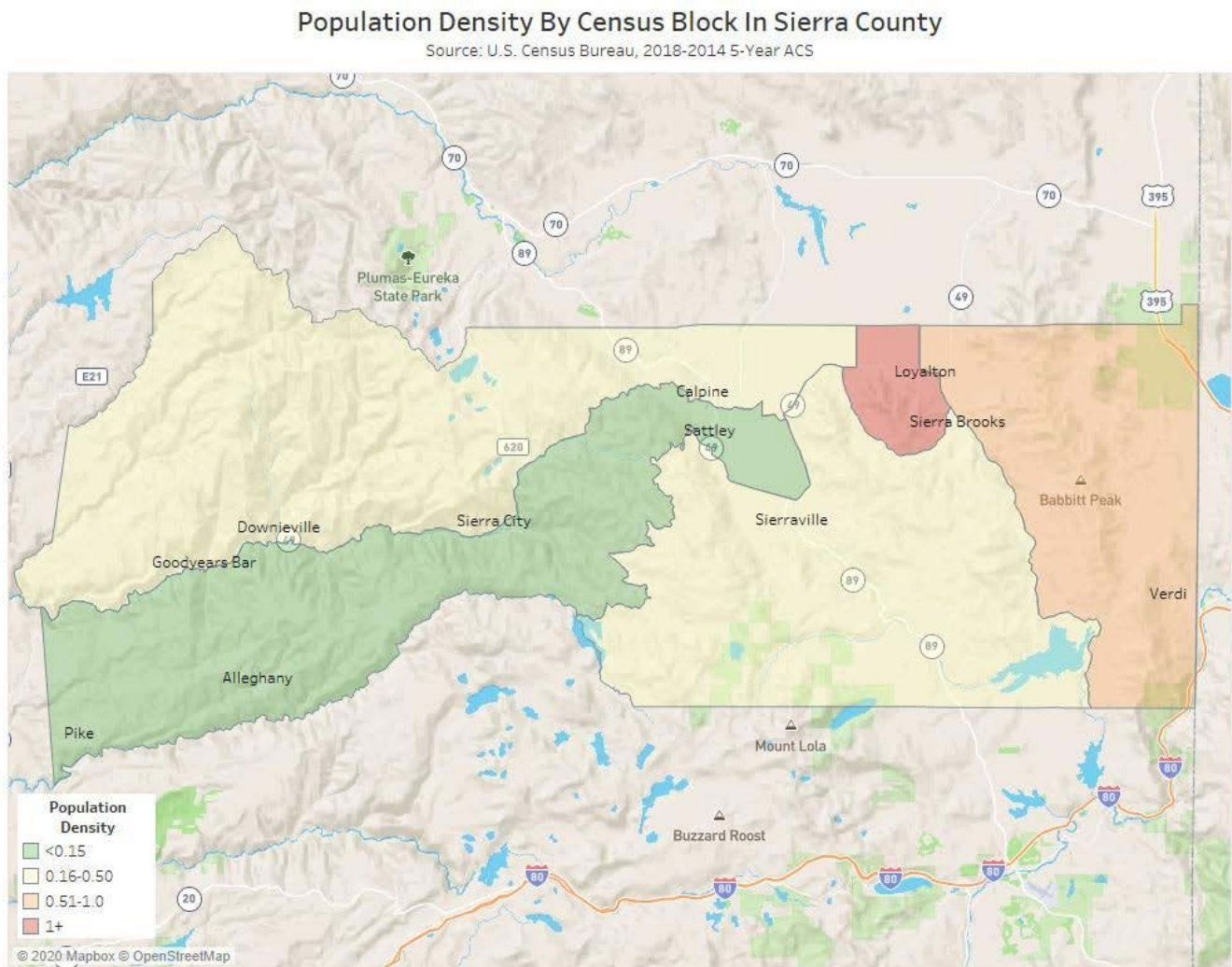
Source: U.S. Census Bureau: ACS, 2018 5-year Estimate, Means of Transportation to Work by Vehicles Available

2.2 Distribution of Transit Services and Persons

Sierra County has a population density of approximately 3.1 persons per square mile. For comparison, the population density for the state of California is 256 persons per square mile.

39% of the County's residents reside in Loyalton, the county's only incorporated city. Loyalton is located in the eastern portion of the county, where population density is generally higher.

Figure 4: Population Density



3 Existing Transportation Resources

This section documents the various transit providers and resources that serve Sierra County, including public, private, and social service providers. Particular focus is given to providers that meet the transportation needs of older adults, persons with disabilities, and persons of low income. The Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA) for Sierra County since 1972 is the Sierra County Transportation Commission.

3.1 Key Origins and Destinations²³

Common local trips include work, school, public assistance program offices, church, social events, and shopping.

Key destinations outside of Sierra County include:

- Shopping, recreation, other personal trips: Portola, Truckee, Quincy, Reno
- Medical trips: Truckee, Grass Valley, Nevada City, Reno, Roseville, Sacramento

3.2 Public Transit Service

Sierra County has no public fixed-route transit service.

3.3 Social Service Transportation

Two non-profits, Golden Rays Seniors and Incorporated Senior Citizens of Sierra County, offer demand response and scheduled services to seniors, persons with disabilities, and the general public in Sierra County. Both organizations provide a broad range of services for older adults and persons with disabilities. A minimum of three passengers is required for a scheduled trip; however, a special trip will be made for one passenger if the destination is a medical appointment.

Golden Rays Seniors

Golden Rays Seniors, based in Downieville, provides demand response and scheduled services in western Sierra County, primarily the communities of Sierra City, Downieville, and Goodyears Bar. They operate with one 9-passenger and one 6-passenger van, both of which are wheelchair accessible. Fares vary by destination, but are by donation for adults 55 years and older and for persons with disabilities. Fare is not optional for the general public.

There is service 5 days a week with scheduled monthly visits out of Sierra County. Scheduled trips include two trips a month to Reno, Grass Valley, and Nevada City. Golden Rays also provides regularly scheduled trips for the Lions Club, Women’s Republican Club, and to the Sierra Daycare Center. The most common usage is for medical trips.

Incorporated Senior Citizens of Sierra County

Incorporated Seniors of Sierra County, based in Loyalton, offers demand response and scheduled services in eastern Sierra County, primarily the communities of Calpine, Sierraville, and Loyalton. They operate with one 9-passenger and one 6-passenger van, both of which are wheelchair accessible.

Scheduled service includes a weekly trip to Reno and two to three recreational trips per month to various locations. Service is provided as needed to medical appointments, grocery store, post office, Senior Center, or skilled nursing facility. Other destinations include Portola, Truckee, Graeagle, Downieville, Quincy, Auburn, Sacramento, and South Lake Tahoe.

²³ This text paraphrased from the 2015 Sierra County Coordinated Plan

Sierra County Health and Human Services

The Sierra County Health and Human Services Agency has a Transporter Program for its clients. Drivers are hired by the county and paid by the hour to transport clients to necessary services in county cars. Typical trips include court appointments in Downieville, or mental health clinic appointments in Loyalton.

3.4 Private Service

Downieville Outfitters

Downieville Outfitters is a bike shop that sells and rents bikes and other merchandise, offers repair services, and runs a number of shuttles taking bikers uphill for recreational activities. The business also operates during winter and offers services for skiers and snowboarders.

Yuba Expeditions

Yuba Expeditions also serves the mountain biking community in Downieville. In addition to running a bike shop, Yuba Expeditions runs a shuttle service to high-mountain trails. Proceeds go towards trail conservation.

3.5 Interregional Transportation Service

Amtrak

Although there is no direct service in Sierra County, there are Amtrak train and bus services in Reno and Truckee.

Greyhound

Although there is no direct service in Sierra County, there is a Greyhound station in Reno.

Plumas Transit System

Plumas County Transit (PTS) provides fixed-route service, serving the communities of Portola, Quincy, Graeagle, and Chester. Deviated fixed-route service is also available for persons with disabilities. Although PTS does not directly serve Sierra County, Sierra County residents can make a connection in Portola with the help of other transportation services.

Nevada County

Although not directly served by Nevada County, Sierra County residents can make connections to services once they arrive in the County with the help of other services. Gold Country Stage provides fixed-route services in Nevada City and Grass Valley and extending to North San Juan, which is approximately thirteen miles from the Sierra County line. Truckee Trolley provides fixed-route services, while Truckee Dial-A-Ride provides demand-response.

Reno, Washoe County, Nevada

Sierra County residents can utilize different transportation options in Reno once they arrive there with the help of other services. Reno has an extensive bus system called RTC RIDE, with its main terminal in downtown Reno and secondary terminals in Sparks and at Meadowood Mall in south Reno. RTC ACCESS provides paratransit services for persons with disabilities and older adults. RTC INTERCITY buses link Reno and Carson City.

Sierraville Dearwater Airport

Sierraville Dearwater Airport is a county-owned, public-use airport in Sierraville. Aircraft operations average at 23 departures/arrivals per week.

4 Coordination of Service

The various transportation providers and social service agencies in a county require coordination to compile information, avoid duplication of services, and cover as many community transport needs as they are able. The state legislature sought to address this need for coordination with 1979 Assembly Bill 120, named the Social Services Transportation Improvement Act. The bill allowed for the designation of a Consolidated Transportation Service Agency (CTSA) for each county. CTSA's are charged with improving the transportation quality for the county, particularly for transportation disadvantaged and dependent groups, by reducing inefficiencies and service gaps, and improving availability and cost-effectiveness. This can include identifying opportunities for agencies to share vehicles, eliminating duplicate routes, synchronizing schedules, and increasing awareness of specialized transportation.

The CTSA for Sierra County is the Sierra County Transportation Commission (SCTC).

During outreach for the previous Coordinated Plans, service providers and other stakeholders identified barriers that prevented coordination of services in Sierra County and would-be areas of interest for the Transportation Commission to address.

Barriers to Coordination

Funding and regulatory challenges: Providers are limited by both a lack of funds and restricted use of the funds they do obtain. For example, many organizations can only use their vehicles to transport their own clients, which reduces the opportunities for coordination. Jurisdictional issues provided additional coordination challenges.

Insurance concerns: Some senior centers and service clubs were reluctant to sponsor additional volunteer driver programs without sufficient insurance coverage.

Geography: The low density, distant population centers, isolated communities, and lack of cell phone reception in many areas create difficulties for coordination in the county.

Resource constraints: Previous Coordinated Plans identified resource constraints as the most significant barrier to coordination. The lack of staff, funding, time, and equipment limited efforts to pursue coordination. Resources were concentrated on maintaining existing transit services.

Rules, restrictions, regulations: Different organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions have different reporting, eligibility, insurance, training, and safety requirements. This variation limits the county's ability to coordinate.

Logistics: The combination of highly specific client needs, funding restrictions, and the small population create unique challenges for Sierra County.

Duplication of Services

There was no duplication of services identified in the previous Coordinated Plan, as the two main transit providers served different geographic areas of the county.

5 Progress on Coordination, Needs, and Strategies

This section discusses Sierra County’s progress in coordination, unmet needs, and priority strategies identified in previous Coordinated Plans.

5.1 Coordination of Service

Coordination between transportation and other service providers can increase populations served and awareness of resources, while reducing redundancy and costs for the county. Barriers to such coordination efforts were identified through the stakeholder engagement process for previous Coordinated Plans. While many barriers linger or are unfeasible to address, the county has made some progress on other coordination efforts, all of which are discussed here.

Barriers to Coordination

Resource constraints, funding restrictions, and geography remain barriers to coordination with little to no change. These barriers were identified in previous Coordinated Plans and remain classified as such because they are beyond the scope of a transportation agency or county to address.

Insurance concerns: The two main transit providers in the county, Golden Rays Seniors and Incorporated Senior Citizens of Sierra County, continue to pay their own insurance separately. Combining insurance would reduce costs but make coordination difficult, particularly because they are third party providers and not direct county services.

Variations in rules and regulations: Compliance with the Federal Highway Administration and Caltrans’ drug and alcohol requirements for driver safety has gotten more difficult. The county has had to update policies and go through audits, causing administrative work to become increasingly difficult in this regard.

Logistics: The director of Health and Human Services has improved outreach with the two main transit providers, by increasing programming and food delivery, and paying transit agencies to provide services to healthcare events. This coordination increases awareness of services between agencies and the public.

5.2 Gaps, Challenges, Unmet Transportation Needs

Due to a multitude of reasons including funding and staffing constraints and highly specific client needs, transportation providers are often unable to meet all of the needs in their communities. These unmet needs and their reasonability to meet are defined to meet Transportation Development Act (TDA) standards and guide local transportation commissions in developing or adjusting services. Exact definitions are provided in Section 6.

Reasonable to meet

Knowledge gap: Lack of awareness of existing services reduces ridership and can contribute to perceived unmet needs. Administration turnover in both major transit providers since 2015 has renewed internal motivation, leading to increased awareness and outreach.

Transportation training for riders: No progress has been made on this unmet need.

Daily living and seeking opportunities/social services: There was interest in coordinating senior center trips to assist with daily living needs for individuals on food stamps. There have been efforts on the East side for commodities pickups, with Health and Human Services paying transit for some of these services.

Unreasonable to meet

The unmet needs considered unreasonable to meet in the 2015 Coordinated Plan remain unresolved.

Commuter services and fixed route: This recommendation considered having a fixed route service on some days of the week and demand response on others. Riders would plan their trips to align with the schedule of services.

Increased connectivity inside and outside the county: Service expansion was recognized as likely unfeasible but still an important need.

Educational opportunities outside the county: Respondents identified a need for transportation services, scholarships, or financial aid to increase access to post-secondary education outside of the county.

Regular transportation for programs and services to assist with daily living: Related to service expansion, respondents expressed a desire for more regular transportation from different parts of the county.

Funding: Necessary funding is not always guaranteed.

Non-emergency medical transportation: Although already provided by the senior centers, NEMT was one of the most important needs brought up by the community, possibly due to gaps in awareness of existing services.

5.3 Priority Strategies

Priority strategies identified in the previous Coordinated Plan were outlined to address unmet transit needs and improve coordination while remaining feasible within funding, staffing, and sustainability restraints. The following is a discussion on the progress of the six previously identified priority strategies for Sierra County.

Strategy 1 – Maintain, evaluate, and strengthen transportation services: SCTC has maintained its level of service, which is crucial for many of the county’s residents. The two main transit providers have not expanded their demand response or scheduled trips, but awareness among the community has increased.

Strategy 2 – Multi-organizational approach to solutions: The stakeholders and involved parties have not changed since 2015. The SSTAC continues to meet annually, but public participation appears to be low. More communication between service providers is still needed.

Strategy 3 – Create/implement strategies from a marketing plan/assessment: Because senior citizens groups are both the operators and the target audience of the transportation services, coordination of outreach efforts has been rather intuitive. Working directly through the senior citizens groups is the best avenue for addressing gaps in knowledge about services.

Strategy 4 – Establish a Mobility Management staff position: This strategy remained from the 2008 Coordinated Plan and recommended that Sierra County staff a Mobility Manager position to oversee coordination efforts. Responsibilities could include improving outreach, assisting the two transit providers with coordination, organizing a volunteer driver program, and assisting riders with travel navigation. This position has not yet been created.

Strategy 5 – Support for a volunteer driver program: This strategy was also carried over from the 2008 Coordinated Plan. It proposed a volunteer driver program to increase mobility without implementing a fixed-route service. Volunteer drivers would be reimbursed for mileage costs, and low-income individuals would be helped with fees. SCTC needs the funding, staff, insurance, and a vehicle to implement this strategy.

Strategy 6 – Private vehicle access: Another way of increasing transportation access is by developing a program to help residents acquire private vehicles to use for work, school, and medical appointments. Some jobs and appointments are at night or on weekends, when the local demand response does not operate. A private vehicle program would increase independence of Sierra County residents. Again, SCTC needs the funding and staff in order to implement this program.

6 Unmet Transportation Needs

6.1 Evaluation Criteria

To qualify for Local Transportation Funds (LTF) under the Transportation Development Act (TDA), rural counties must hold a minimum of one annual public hearing for receiving comments on unmet transit needs. The Sierra County Transportation Commission has defined the following²⁴:

- *Unmet transit needs*: A lack of available transportation-related services supported by adequate and reasonable findings which restrict or prevent movement of people within Sierra County as identified in the Regional Transportation Plan. Due to Sierra County’s geographical diversity, the cost of transit services is much higher than in an urban setting, insufficient funding and constrictive funding parameters are a need that has been identified as an unmet need. Priority should be given to persons with disabilities and the elderly (defined as age fifty-five and older) who do not have available transportation or transit, due to physical or financial reasons, and to levels of local services not presently provided or which are not provided at a desirable level.
- *Reasonable to meet*:
 - a) Any transportation service that offers equitable access to all persons including the young, economically disadvantaged, elderly and persons with disabilities, that when evaluated against such criteria as equity, timing, feasibility, economy, community acceptance and cost effectiveness, that service can generate the required 10% fare box recovery match.
 - b) A transportation system, that when implemented, meets a ten percent (10%) fare box return and does not exceed a yearly total operating cost in transit funds of \$108,000.00. This amount is the total programmed by Sierra County Transportation Commission for operation of the transit services within Sierra County to be divided between the geographic areas of Sierra County – east and west.

Based on these definitions, the unmet needs identified through the outreach process are placed into two categories: reasonable to meet and unreasonable to meet.

6.2 Gaps, Challenges, Unmet Transportation Needs

Contemporary unmet needs were identified through stakeholder engagement, SSTAC meeting minutes on unmet transit needs, February 24, 2021 Sierra County Transportation Commission meeting, and a Coordinated Plan Outreach Survey using Survey Monkey that went live on February 26, 2021 and closed on March 21, 2021.

The Coordinated Plan Outreach Survey was distributed to community members and key stakeholders through a Survey Monkey link. The survey was available for twenty-one days. Six (6) responses were received. Survey questions centered on previously identified needs and needs discussed during the Sierra County Transportation Commission meeting held in early 2021. Respondents were asked whether they agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, or disagreed with some previously identified needs. Additionally, respondents were also given the space to provide additional needs not listed. Detailed information about questions asked and responses and comments received are available in Appendix A.

²⁴ Definitions taken from Sierra County Transportation Commission Resolution 2020-02.

Reasonable to meet

Lack of available after-school transportation for the school students who live outside of the communities: Sierra County does not have a fixed-route bus service only on-demand service. The current system works to provide needed transportation to the senior population; however, this system can exclude non-senior residents. Although the demand for and cost of adding a fixed-route bus service make it unfeasible, stakeholders have noted there are some needs that cannot be addressed with the current system. The lack of available after-school transportation for the school students who live in outside communities was noted in the May 12, 2020 SSTAC meeting as an Unmet Transit Need. 50% of respondents agreed there is a need to enhance after-school transportation for students living outside of the County's communities. A respondent also noted lack of available after-school transportation makes it difficult for students to participate in after school activities.

Difficult to integrate the services from Social Services due to confidentiality and other issues:

The Sierra County Health and Human Services Agency has a Transporter Program for its clients. Typical trips include court appointments in Downieville, or mental health clinic appointments in Loyalton. The combination of highly specific client needs, and funding restrictions issues make it difficult to integrate the service from Social Services

Increase community understanding about transportation services: The need for increased outreach to educate residents about transportation services in Sierra County has been identified as an unmet need. This need may be reasonable to meet and beneficial to both residents and service providers. 83% of survey respondents agree there is a need to increase community understanding about transportation services. A respondent noted some individuals are unaware vans are only for seniors, the connection the social service clients and the transit program is not clear, and that some users do not understand how the program/scheduling appointments work. These issues could be addressed through increasing outreach and education about available transportation services.

Unreasonable to meet

Lack of Fixed-Route Service: Although fixed-route service would be beneficial to some people, regular fixed route service may be too costly to implement, coordinate, and maintain. The need for fixed-route service in Sierra County was discussed in the May 12, 2020 SSTAC meeting. 67% of survey respondents agreed there is a need for a fixed-route service in Sierra County. While desirable, fixed routes would be very difficult to set up and are not feasible due to funding constraints.

Funding: Maintaining, sustaining and expanding transportation services depends on funding streams that are not in Sierra County's control. Additionally, funding is needed to purchase more vehicles and hire more drivers to meet the increasing transportation needs of the county. In the May 12, 2020 SSTAC meeting, stakeholders noted that, although a great program is being run with the recourses available, there is currently not enough transit available in the Sierra County. Funding is necessary to maintain and expand services to meet resident's needs. Additionally, the counties exclusive use of 5311 funds means they are ineligible for 5310 funding and are unable to change the funding structure due to constraints caused by the services that can be funded with 5311 funding.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sierra County has been granted funds that can be used to offset the cost created by the COVID-19 pandemic for the next two years. Although this funding is limited, it will be used to help fund the increased transportation cost for transit providers.

Need for Volunteer drivers and Paid Drivers: Stakeholders have noted that there is an increased need for volunteer drivers and paid drivers for NEMT services. The senior population in Sierra County relies heavy on transportation service for medical appointments and would benefit from increased non-emergency medical services.

Increased out-of-county connectivity: The need to connect to surrounding communities to access shopping, recreation, medical offices, etc. is always a need for rural communities; this is especially true for Sierra County residents. 83% of survey respondents agreed there is a need for increased out-of-county connectivity. Additionally, a respondent noted fixed-route that connects with fixed-routes in nearby counties would help address connectivity needs for Sierra County residents and also free up the 5311 Van for other necessary rides. However, it should also be noted a fixed-route system is not currently feasible for Sierra County.

Out-of-County non-emergency medical transportation: This is a need for Sierra County residents who may need transportation for cancer treatments, dialysis, physical therapy, or other non-emergency medical appointments. A majority of Coordinated Plan Outreach Survey respondents agreed there is a need to expand non-emergency medical transportation to destinations outside the county.

7 Priority Strategies

7.1 Evaluation Criteria

A number of factors were utilized to develop and identify strategies that would address unmet transit needs in the community. Three main themes and a series of questions related to those themes were taken into consideration when developing a list of strategies. These criteria were used to process, analyze, and interpret data collected from surveys, public outreach, and conversations with stakeholders.

1) Unmet needs: Does the strategy address transportation gaps or barriers?

This question also brought up additional concerns for consideration.

Does the strategy:

- provide service in a geographic area with limited transportation options?
- serve a geographic area where the greatest number of people need a service?
- improve the mobility of clientele subject to state and federal funding sources (i.e. seniors and individuals with disabilities)?
- provide a level of service not currently provided with existing resources?
- preserve and protect existing services?

2) Feasibility: Can this strategy be feasibly implemented given the timeframe and available resources?

Other questions for consideration:

- Is the strategy eligible for MAP-21 or other types of grant funding?
- Does the strategy result in efficient use of available resources?
- Does the strategy have a potential project sponsor with the operational capacity to carry out the strategy?
- Does the strategy have the potential to be sustained beyond the grant period?

3) Coordination: How does this strategy build upon existing services?

Additional concerns for consideration:

- avoid duplication and promote coordination of services and programs?
- allow for and encourage the participation of local human service and transportation stakeholders?

7.2 New Priority Strategies

The following is a list of strategies for Sierra County and region to pursue until the next coordinated plan. Not all strategies directly connect with reasonable to meet unmet needs but are strategies to help maintain and improve services and help address other gaps and issues given current circumstances. If additional resources become available, projects connected to unmet needs not addressed in these priority strategies should be pursued; these projects can be derived from the discussion on gaps, challenges, and unmet needs in Section 6.

Strategy 1 – Maintain, evaluate, and strengthen transportation services

While there are transportation needs that are not being met, existing services are a lifeline for some people. In this time of decreasing budgets and increasing competition for federal and local grant funding, it is important to first and foremost protect and improve existing levels of service from decreased funding. Before attempting to increase or expand service to other areas, Sierra County transit providers should be sure that funds exist for the forecasted future

to maintain the current level of services provided. Survey respondents mentioned their appreciation of transit services and their dependence on services to meet their needs. In addition to maintaining and sustaining existing services, it is also important to evaluate services to make sure they are as efficient and productive as they can be given the conditions related to operating transit services in the county. Evaluating transportation services will allow for service modifications and other solutions that would maximize resources and improve mobility. Because of Sierra County's small population, regulatory challenges, and resource constraints, the county does not qualify for or have the capacity to apply for some funding sources. For example, the senior center staff work especially hard to coordinate and provide transit service but could use additional resources to sustain services. Resources are crucial for maintaining and delivering services. Support is needed for capital equipment, including resources to maintain, repair, and/or purchase new equipment, vehicles, and transit infrastructure as well as support for staff/consultant salaries, monitoring and evaluation, grant writing, resources for office spaces, route modifications, and other support related to providing services. This strategy also calls for the purchase of new or replacement vehicles for different agencies to provide various transportation services, the development of bus stops with shelter from the elements, and the development of accessible features at existing bus stops. Modifying services with existing resources is another activity within this strategy that may improve services. For example, instead of operating 8 hours in one stretch, transit providers perhaps can break up services in multiple segments over the day.

Strategy 2 – Multi-organizational approach to solutions

This strategy calls for maintaining and establishing more communication, connections, and collaboration among various stakeholders inside and outside the county (i.e. community development, health and human services, other government agencies, non-profits, and private businesses) to come up with solutions to transportation and other related issues by coordinating services, sharing information and resources, and applying for funding. This can be done by the creation of an email list serv, holding a meeting once or twice a year, or inviting each other to existing meetings to help others stay in the loop and establish coordination opportunities. Members of the public and various stakeholders may not be able to commit to joining a committee like SSTAC but participation in an occasional meeting would be more realistic. This strategy requires a leader (individual(s) and/or organization(s)) to coordinate meetings, manage contact lists, and communicate with stakeholders. Having an agency or mobility management staff position be a central coordinator and leader could improve coordination and transportation services. Another recommendation for this strategy is increased support (i.e. financial and staff) for a position in an existing agency to strengthen its capacity as a transit provider and coordinator/mobility manager. In addition, the individual or agency in charge of this endeavor will have to actively engage in outreach to make the initiative meaningful. This strategy can also be folded into the mobility management position.

Strategy 3 – Create/implement strategies from a marketing plan/assessment

This strategy calls for the creation and implementation of a marketing plan about different services offered. Marketing and outreach can also take shape through improved communication between various stakeholder groups. Gaps in knowledge about services lead to perceived unmet needs and other issues and can be a barrier to mobility. Another recommendation includes putting a sign or advertisement on the bus letting the general public know that the senior center transportation programs are open to them as well.

Strategy 4 – Establish a Mobility Management staff position

The implementation of a Mobility Management or Transit Specialist position, which could be a part time or full-time position, has the potential to address multiple unmet transit needs, improve mobility, and consolidate multiple strategies through this position's work. This position, which should be housed in an existing agency, could coordinate all existing services, maximize current transportation resources, work with various stakeholders and update them on various issues, and provide potential riders with a comprehensive set of service and schedule related information in person, on the phone, or online. The following are proposed tasks for this position:

- Increase efficiency of existing transportation services through evaluative methods

- Improve traveler information on all available transportation services
- Provide marketing and outreach through printed materials, a website, telephone, and/or verbal information for in person visits
- Provide trip planning and travel navigation assistance
- Oversight and implementation of a transportation voucher program
- Provide vehicles and drivers for scheduling of special group transportation
- Coordinate transportation activities with different organizations and agencies
- Coordinate a volunteer driver program
- Participate in and assist to convene coordination meetings/workshops
- Oversee a senior driver safety training program
- Organize training opportunities for vehicle maintenance for car owners who have limited means

Another possibility for this strategy is to provide additional resources and support to existing transportation providers to do mobility management/coordination tasks as the county is small and number of agencies is small.

Strategy 5 – Support for a volunteer driver program

Fixed route service is too costly and not practical for a county like Sierra County, where the population is small and spread out and long distances need to be covered to access services and opportunities. Support for a volunteer driver program could be a better alternative by supplementing current transit services. This strategy calls for financial support for vehicles, staff time, insurance, mileage, and/or stipends. Long distances over rough terrain and weather need to be covered to reach various destinations, which can cause wear and tear on vehicles. Some volunteers might not have vehicles or may not want to use their vehicles, which is why this strategy calls for the purchase of vehicles to be owned and operated by an agency. Resources for mileage and stipends are important means to sustain the program and prevent volunteer burnout.

Strategy 6 – Private vehicle access

This strategy calls for the establishment of a private vehicle program focused on improving mobility for low-income individuals. Providing fixed route service beyond business hours and days is not feasible in a small county like Sierra County. It may be cost effective to develop a program that helps low-income individuals acquire and maintain vehicles through loans or grants. A number of private vehicle strategies exist nationwide and may be useful examples. Because many job opportunities are far from where people live, many low-income workers have difficulty accessing jobs, training, government services, childcare, and more because of inadequate transportation. In addition, many minimum wage jobs require working evening or weekend hours, making accessing public transit impossible in areas where transit services have limited schedules. Access to affordable transportation for low-income workers, elderly residents, and individuals with disabilities can make the trip to work, school, and medical appointments possible. Transportation access can also foster self-sustainability, promote independence, and lead to other positive outcomes.

8 COVID-19

This section discusses changes made to transportation and social services caused by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2019 and 2020.

COVID-19 Specific Needs

The following are some COVID-19 specific needs that have been identified.

Increased Cleaning and Temperature Checks: Golden Rays Senior Citizens conducts thermos testing prior to loading and cleans the vehicles at the beginning and end of runs. Their larger bus is used for two or more parties who are not associated. The minivan is used for groups of two or more who are in the same family. Drivers wear masks, and vehicles are isolated when not in use.

Incorporated Seniors continues transport for picking up medications, attending medical appointments, and delivering food and other commodities. They follow all protocols for cleaning, masks, gloves, and hand sanitizers.

Social Services and Behavioral Health continues to provide transportation for medical appointments and medications. There are not as many drivers because some are in vulnerable populations, and they were given the option to stop working during the pandemic.

Decreased Ridership: It is important to note that although the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected ridership, ridership has continued among the transit-dependent population like seniors.

Funding: SCTC received an allocation of funds specific for COVID-19 purposes directly related to loss of revenue as a result of the pandemic and can be used for the next two years. With the increased cost associated with providing safe transportation during the COVID-19 pandemic, funds will be used to continue providing service to those in need.

Food/ delivery and Prescription pick-ups: The need for food/ grocery delivery and prescription pick-up service was identified as a COVID-19 specific need, specifically for vulnerable populations who depend on transit to get groceries and prescriptions normally and may be unable to leave their homes due to reduced hours of operation or over a fear of the pandemic. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the senior population was already the most in need of transportation services in Sierra County. With the complications created by the pandemic such not filling busses to capacity to allow for social distance, more trips are needed throughout the day to service the same population. Additionally, because Sierra County is unable to use 5310 funding, they are unable to provide any service that does not involve transporting passengers. This means seniors need to be physically present to pick up food/groceries or prescription medication because Sierra County is unable to provide food or prescription delivery using 5310 funding as other counties did during the pandemic. Relying primarily of 5311 funding has worked to support the transportation needs of a small rural county like Sierra in the past; however, it should be noted the COVID-19 pandemic has created greater needs and issues that cannot be funded under the current funding structure.

Appendix A: Sierra County Coordinated Plan Outreach Survey Materials

Sierra County Coordinated Plan Outreach Survey

Welcome and thank you for taking the time to participate in this short survey!

The Sierra County Transportation Commission is currently updating the region’s Coordinated Public and Human Services Transportation Plan. This plan is important because it facilitates funding and serves as a guide to promote and advance local social service transportation.

We are encouraging the community to provide input on the plan and share thoughts on social service transportation needs in Sierra County. You can read the draft of the current plan by clicking [here](#).

Your participation is very important in helping identify transportation needs in the community, but participation in this survey is completely voluntary.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the consultants assisting with this project:

Suleyma Vergara-Tapia, at svergaratapia@pacific.edu or

Thomas Pogue, at cbpr@pacific.edu.

The following is a list of needs currently identified by the community. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of these needs:

1. There is a need for fixed-route service(s) in Sierra County.

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

Please use the space below to comment on your response.

2. There is a need to enhance after-school transportation for students living outside the County's communities.

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

Please use the space below to explain.

3. There is a need improve community understanding about available transportation services.

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

Please use the space below to explain.

* 4. There is a need for increased out-of-county ("inter-city") connectivity.

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

Please use the space below to explain.

*If Agree:

5. There is a need for additional out-of-county non-emergency medical transportation.

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

Please use the space below to comment on your response.

6. There is a need for additional out-of-county transportation for shopping.

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

Please use the space below to comment on your response.

7. There is a need for additional out-of-county transportation for entertainment activities.

- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree

Please use the space below to comment on your response.

8. Please use the space below to further describe any needed out-of-county transportation from Sierra County

*If neither agree nor disagree or Disagree:

9. Are there any important social service destinations that are not accessible because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Yes
- No

Please use the space below to explain further.

10. Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed social service transportation needs?

- Yes
- No

Please use the space below to explain further.

11. Use the space below to include any questions/comments/concerns

12. (Optional) If you would like your participation to be noted in the report, please fill out the form below with your details as you would like them to appear.

Name

Title

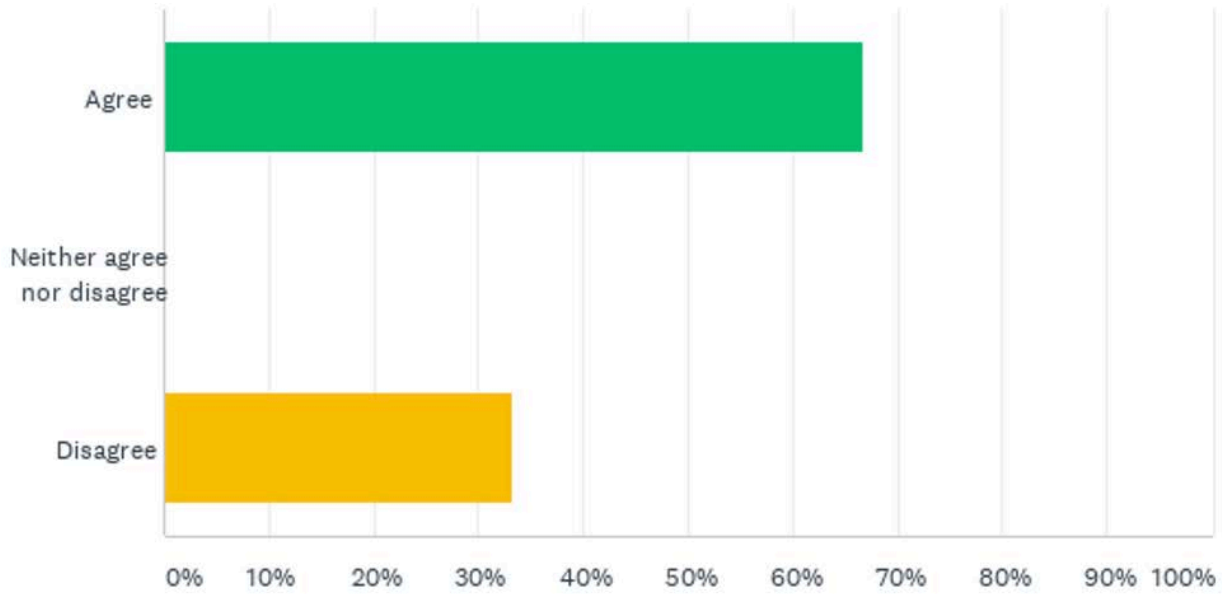
Company/ Organization

Sierra County Coordinated Plan Survey Results

Total Results: 6

Q1: There is a need for fixed-route service(s) in Sierra County.

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



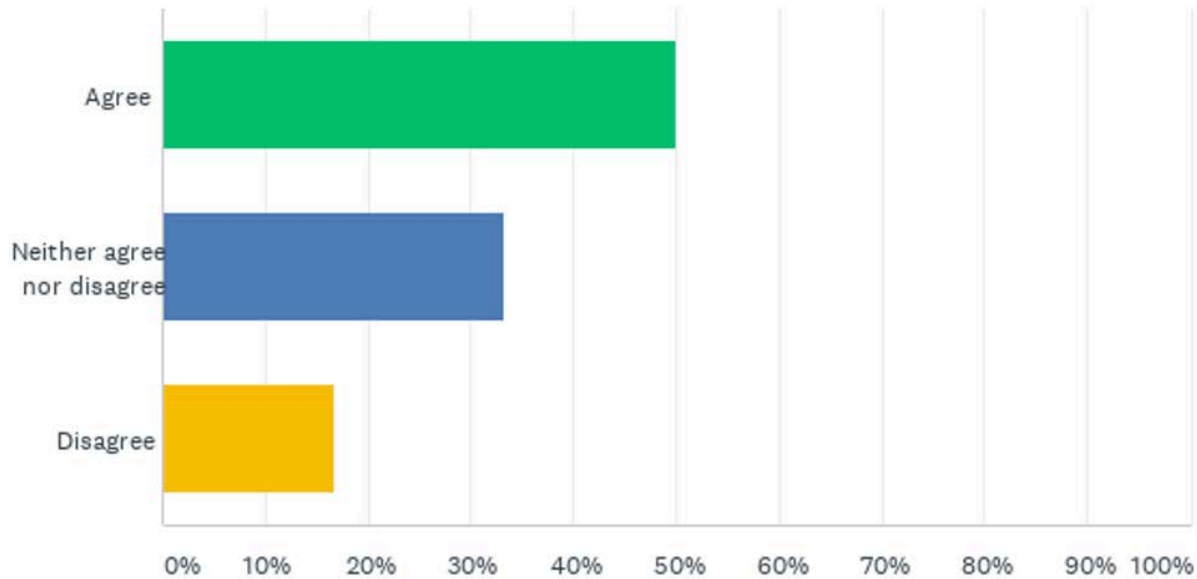
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agree	66.67%	4
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	33.33%	2
Total Respondents: 6		

Comment(s):

- Even just within the communities for those who are otherwise on foot within a couple mile radius. It is hard to carry home groceries or continue walking the mile home as your knees age out.

Q2: There is a need to enhance after-school transportation for students living outside the County's communities.

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



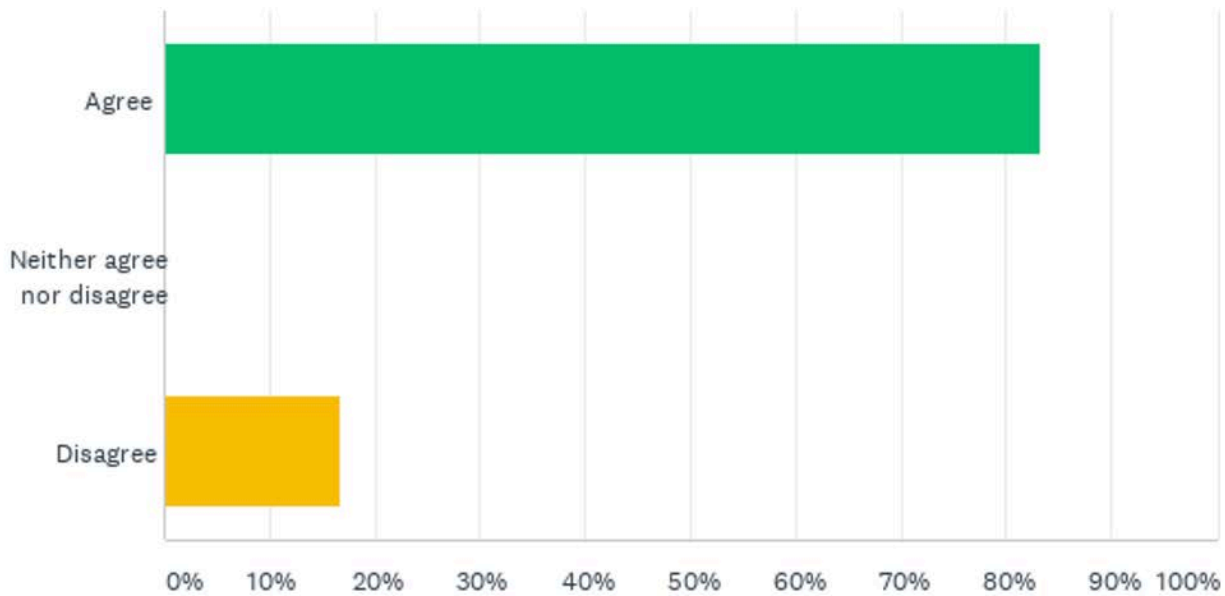
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agree	50.00%	3
Neither agree nor disagree	33.33%	2
Disagree	16.67%	1
Total Respondents: 6		

Comment(s):

- This depends on the year and the enrollment. Some outlying areas are hard, and students have had to find a gracious family to stay with in town in order to participate in after school activities including sports, drama, and so forth.

Q3: There is a need improve community understanding about available transportation services.

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



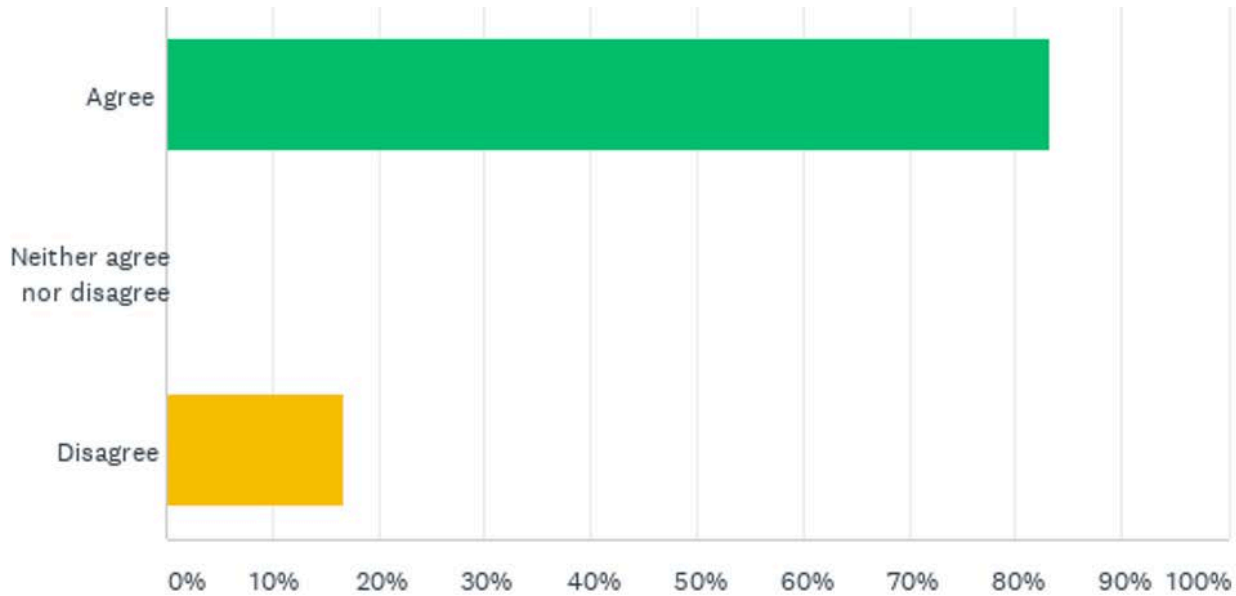
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agree	83.33%	5
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	16.67%	1
Total Respondents: 6		

Comment(s):

- A number of people who need rides do not understand that the vans are necessary just for "seniors" or so forth. Also, the connection between social services clients and the transit program is not clear, for instance, if a Medi-Cal patient has a planned ride, but the ride doesn't show up (this does happen) will social services then contact and fund a ride on the transit van if it is available? Also, occasionally there is a rider who wants to be the "only" passenger and wants an exclusive chauffer for the day, they need to be educated as to how that won't work.

Q4: There is a need for increased out-of-county ("inter-city") connectivity.

Answered: 6 Skipped: 0



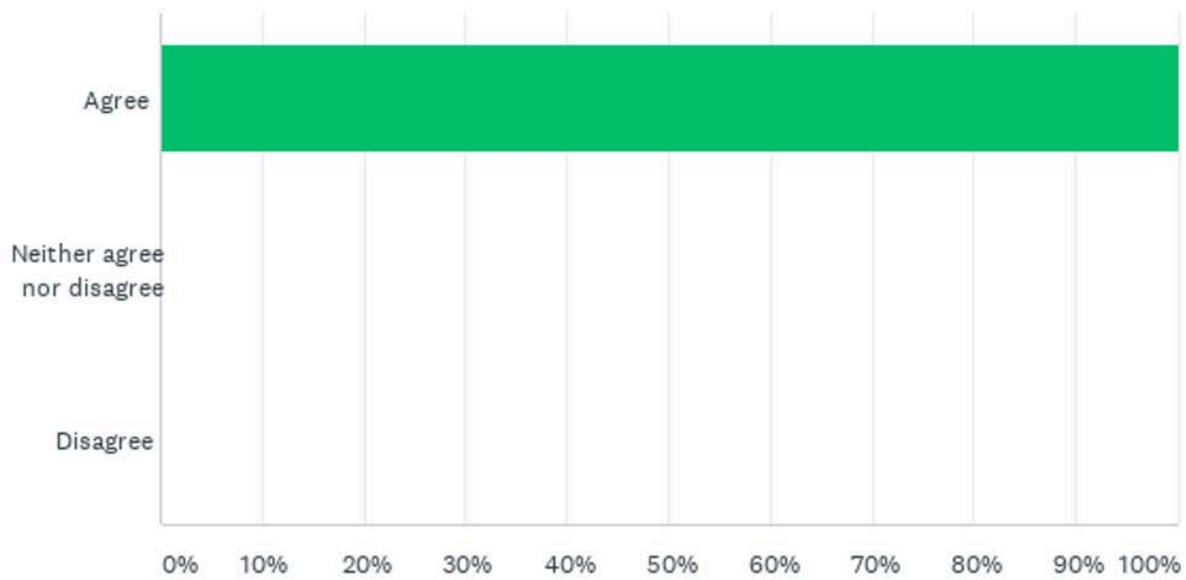
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agree	83.33%	5
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	16.67%	1
Total Respondents: 6		

Comment(s):

- There are always needs to access the other communities peripheral to our communities in Sierra County, medical, groceries, lawyers, and so forth. If there was a fixed route that connected with fixed routes in the next county, it could be that it would address some needs in the community and have the benefit of freeing up some of the 5311 Van for other necessary rides.

Q5: There is a need for additional out-of-county non-emergency medical transportation.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 2



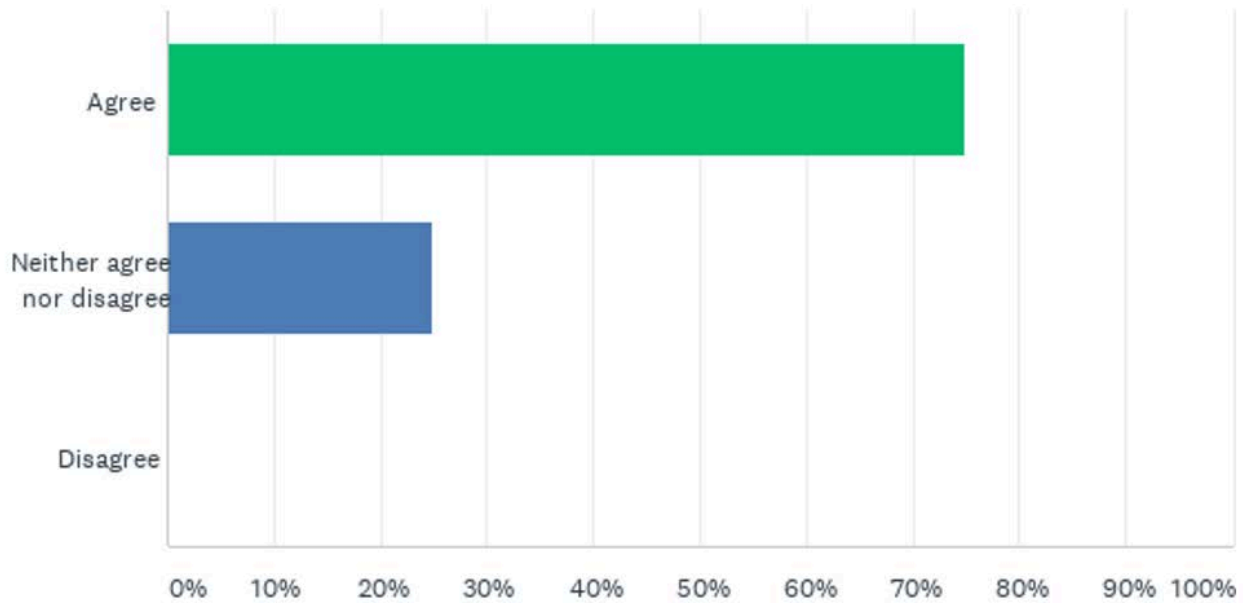
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agree	100.00%	4
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 4		

Comment(s):

- Cancer treatment, dialysis, physical therapy, dental, eyes, it goes on and on.

Q6: There is a need for additional out-of-county transportation for shopping.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 2



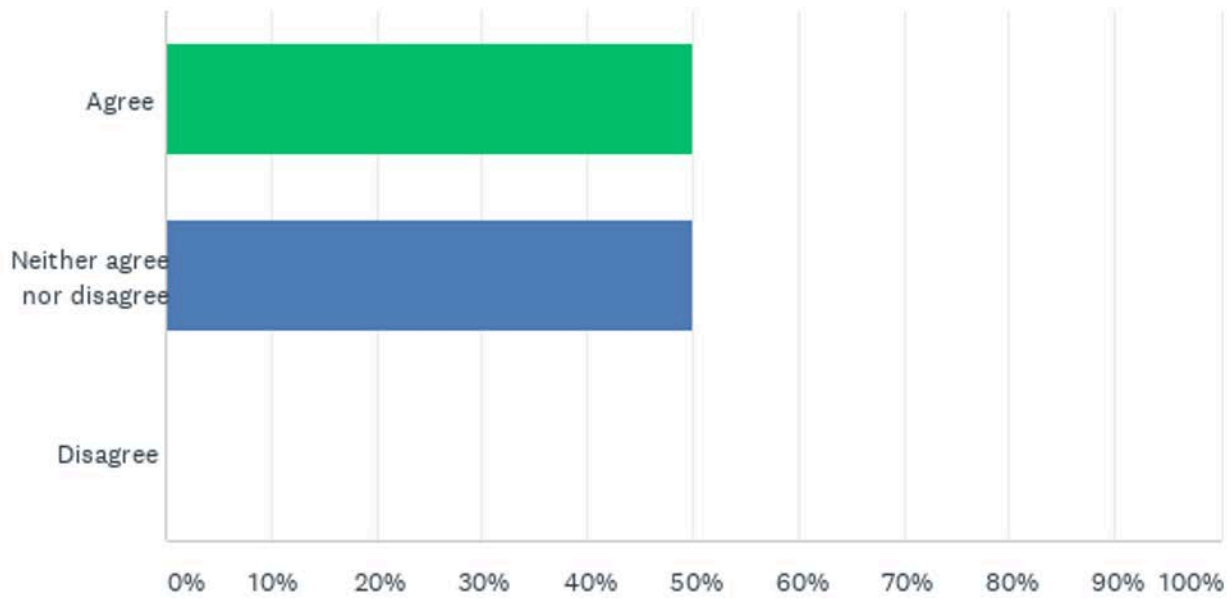
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agree	75.00%	3
Neither agree nor disagree	25.00%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 4		

Comment(s):

- The Medi-cal drivers...when driving a client out for an appointment can't stop for groceries. There isn't enough service to cover everyone's needs.

Q7: There is a need for additional out-of-county transportation for entertainment activities.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Agree	50.00%	2
Neither agree nor disagree	50.00%	2
Disagree	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 4		

Comment(s):

- When COVID releases, arts, culture, dining, leisure is something that isn't accessible to certain populations.

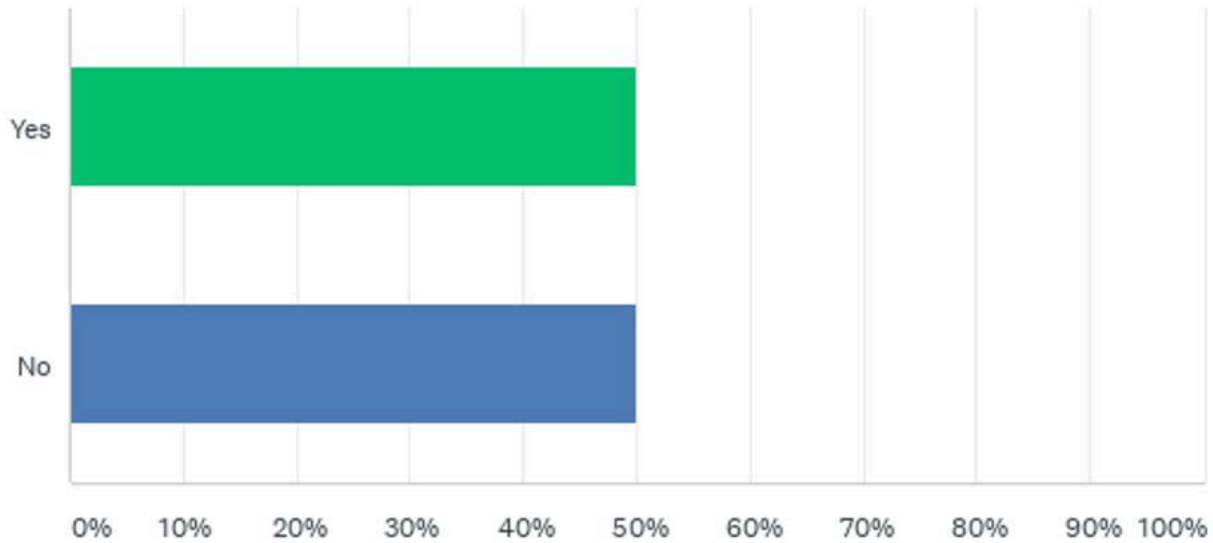
Q8: Please use the space below to further describe any needed out-of-county transportation from Sierra County.

Comment(s):

- Rides home from the hospital post emergency; rides home from jail; rides to visit out of county.

Q9: Are there any important social service destinations that are not accessible because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 2



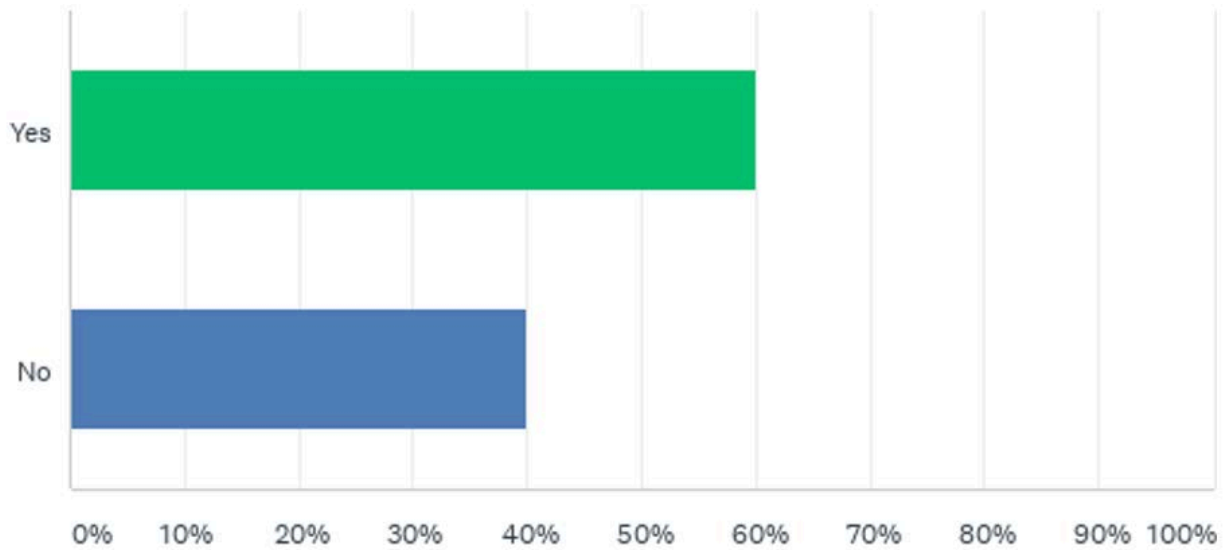
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	50.00% 2
No	50.00% 2
Total Respondents: 4	

Comment(s):

- COVID-19 has affected everything.

Q10: Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed social service transportation needs?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	60.00% 3
No	40.00% 2
Total Respondents: 5	

Comment(s):

- I'm not positive but this is likely true due to the social distancing & mask rules

Q11: Use the Space below to include any questions/comments/concerns.

- I'm concerned about the constraints between the 5310 program and 5311 programs. It would be good if there could be a bridge to combine these funding sources to make for a very robust transit situation in Sierra County and other rural jurisdictions.