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TRB Webinar: Rural Accessibility to Economic Opportunities and Education

November 19, 2024

12:00 – 1:30 PM



PDH Certification Information

1.5 Professional Development Hours (PDH) – see follow-up email

You must attend the entire webinar.

Questions? Contact Andie Pitchford at TRBwebinar@nas.edu

The Transportation Research Board has met the standards and requirements of the Registered Continuing Education Program. Credit earned on completion of this program will be reported to RCEP at RCEP.net. A certificate of completion will be issued to each participant. As such, it does not include content that may be deemed or construed to be an approval or endorsement by the RCEP.



AICP Credit Information

1.5 American Institute of Certified Planners Certification
Maintenance Credits

You must attend the entire webinar

Log into the American Planning Association website to claim your
credits

Contact AICP, not TRB, with questions

Purpose Statement

This webinar will present guidance for defining and addressing these challenges. Presenters will investigate the drivers behind these challenges, such as limited funding, staff capacity, and stakeholder engagement as well as strategies for addressing them.

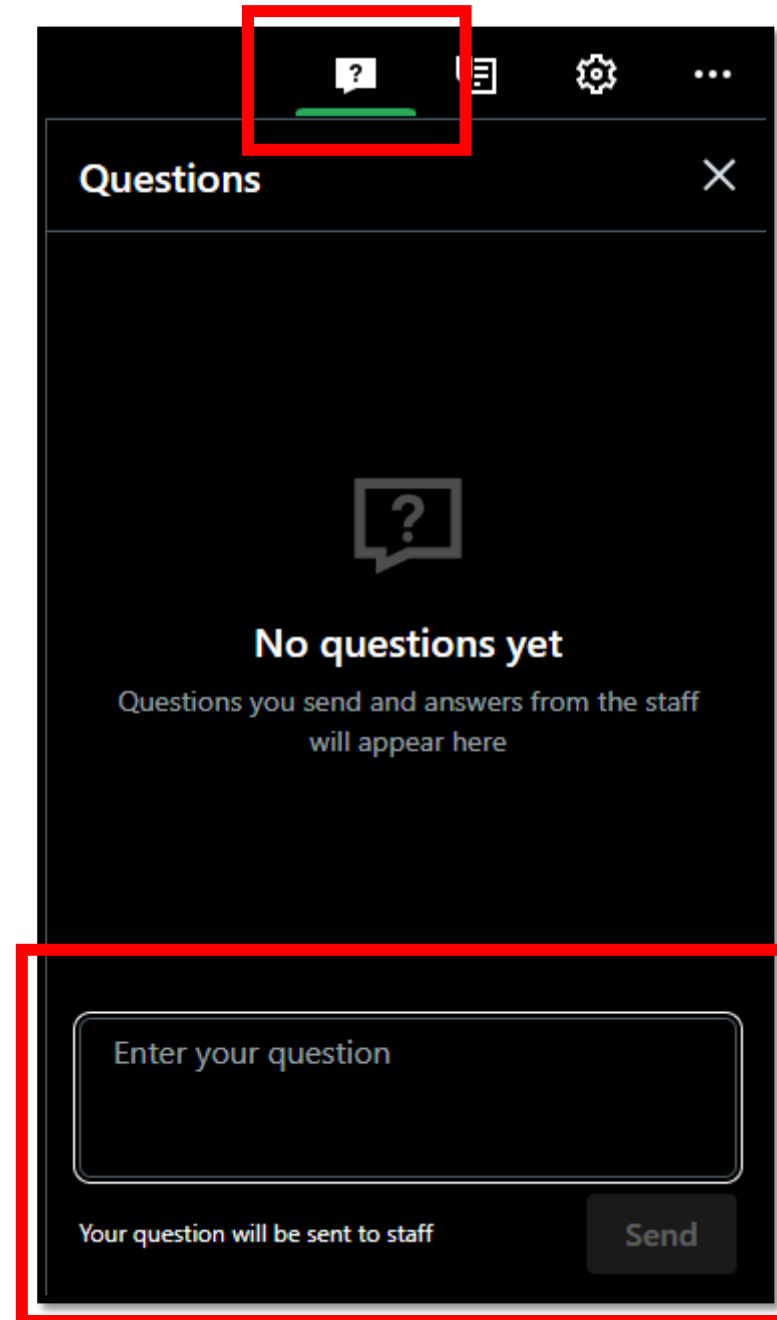
Learning Objectives

At the end of this webinar, you will be able to:

- Recognize the critical objectives for addressing access and connectivity challenges in rural communities
- Leverage the strategies for achieving objectives in the planning process
- Employ the guide, decision support tools, and implementation plan in the planning processes in their respective communities

Questions and Answers

- Please type your questions into your webinar control panel
- We will read your questions out loud, and answer as many as time allows



Today's Presenters



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Rural Accessibility to Economic Opportunities and Education

NCHRP Research Report 1059: Access to Jobs, Economic Opportunities, and Education in Rural Areas (NCHRP 08-131)



Agenda

01

Project Overview

02

Research Findings

03

Case Studies

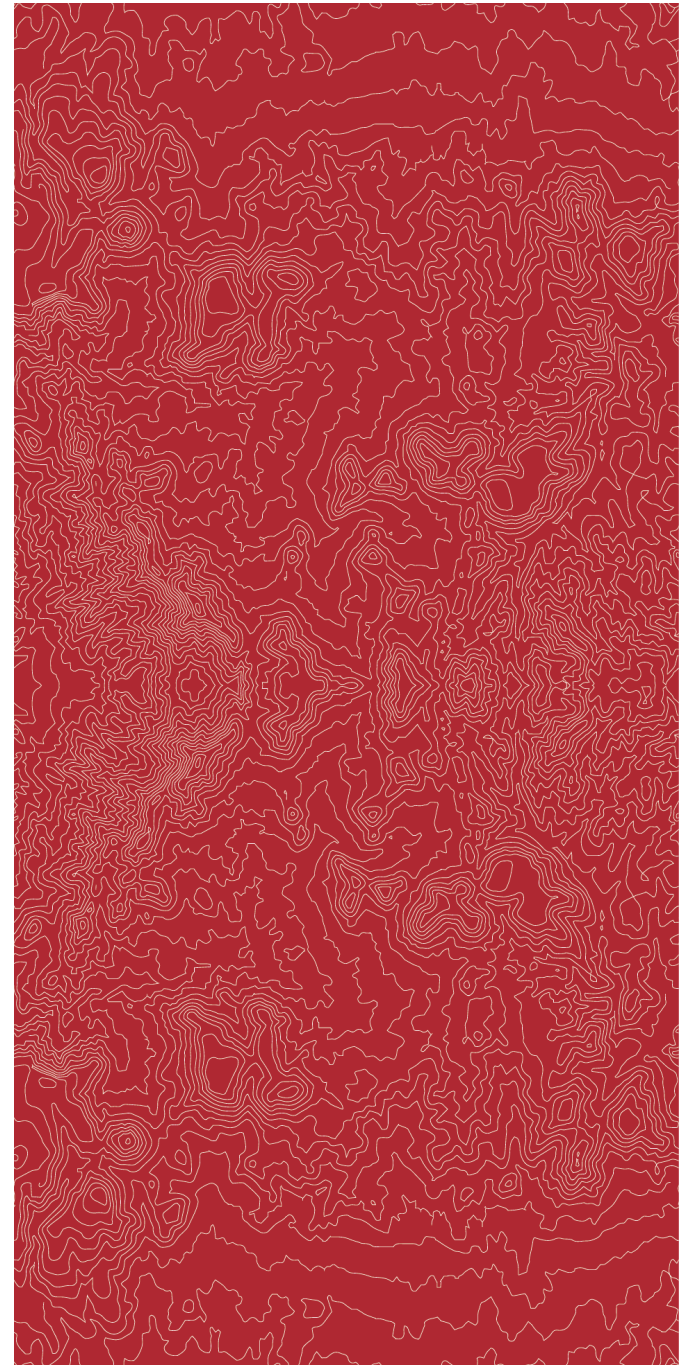
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Resource Documents

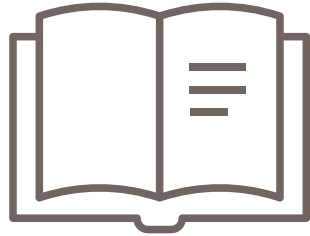
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Questions

Section 1: Research Overview and Key Findings

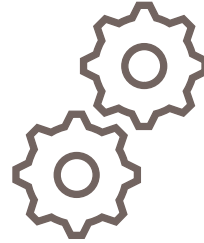


Research Products



A Guide

to define and address the unique accessibility challenges in rural communities



A Set of Decision-Support Tools

to assess accessibility needs within agencies' service jurisdictions and to recommend methods for addressing accessibility needs in a decision-making context



An Implementation Memo

to reference for descriptions of audiences and methods for disseminating the research findings

Research Methods

- Literature, resource, data, and tool review
- Interviews with:
 - State departments of transportation
 - Statewide planning organizations
 - Regional development organizations
 - Councils of governments
 - Rural transportation agencies
 - Rural chambers of commerce
 - Municipalities
 - A federal agency
- Follow up interviews to develop detailed case studies

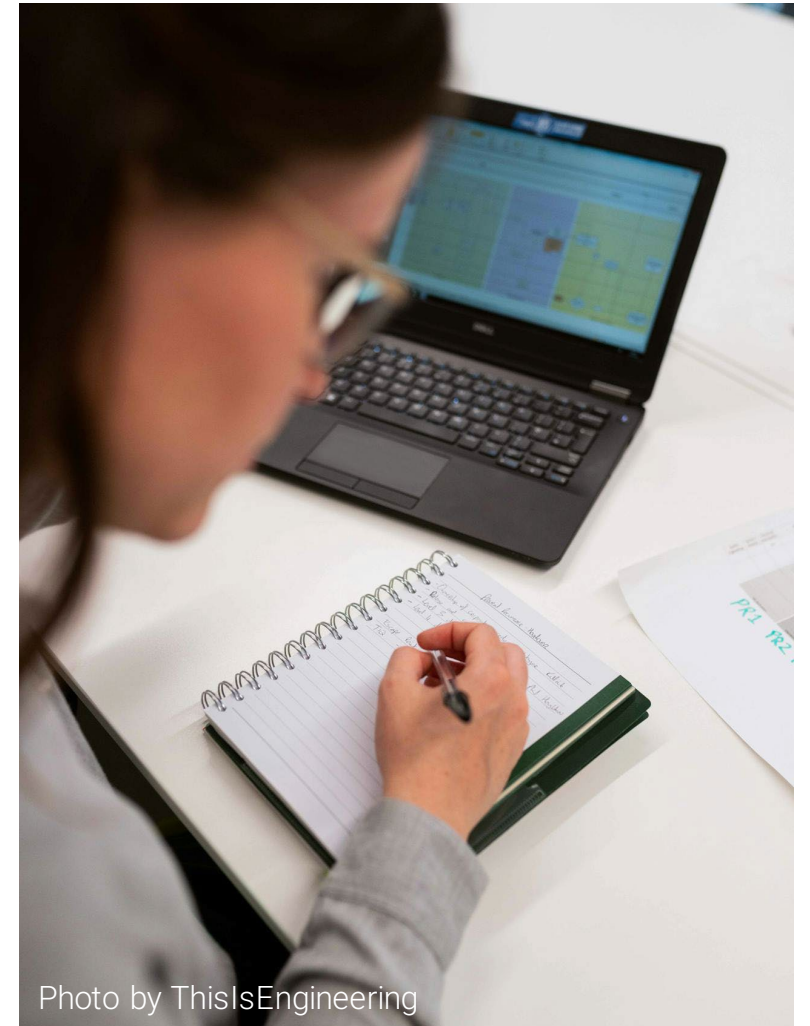
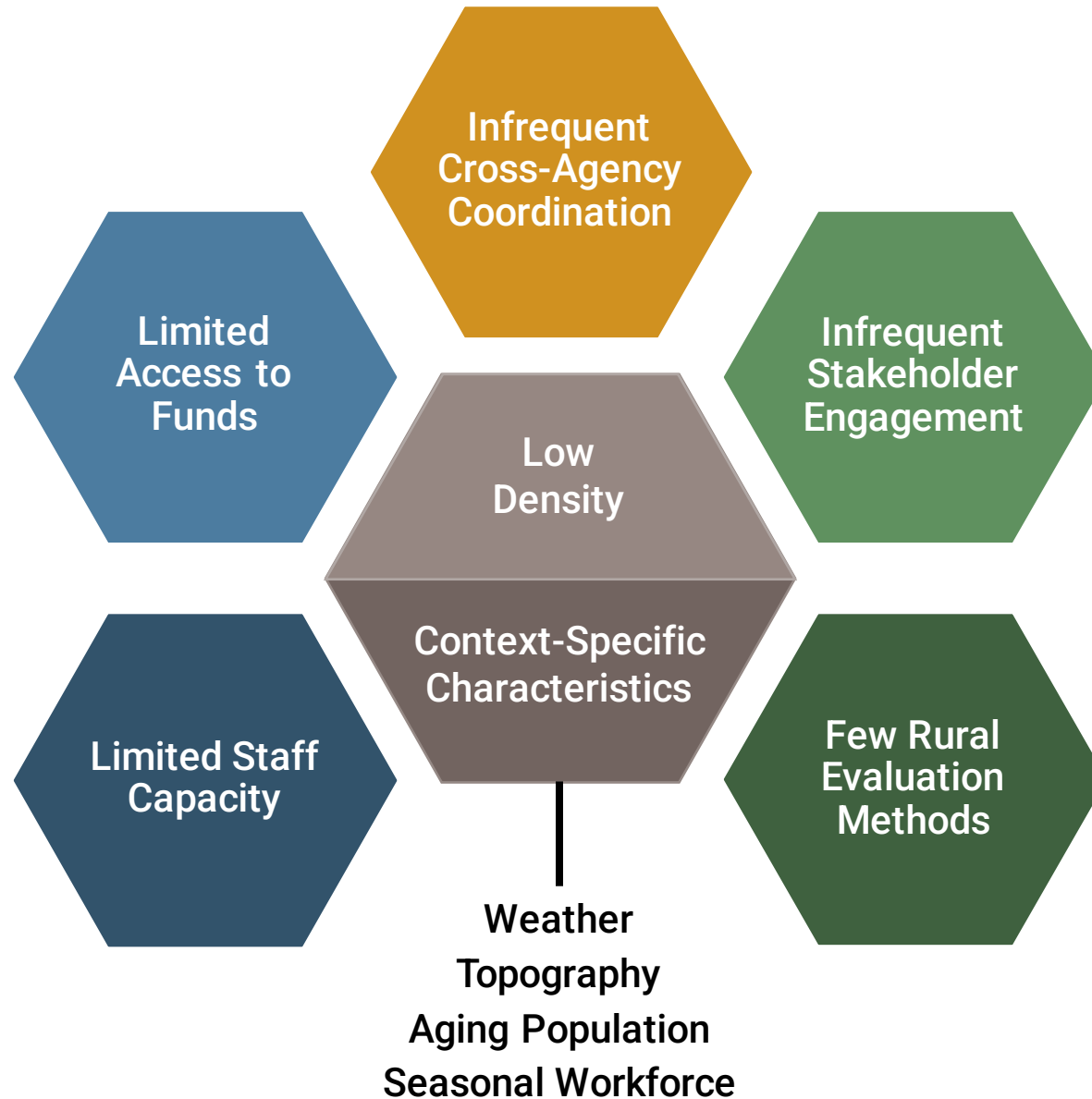


Photo by ThisIsEngineering

Common Dimensions in Rural Access Needs

Population Groups	Destination Categories	Modes
Disabilities	Employment	Passenger Vehicles
Aging	Education	Transit and Related Services
Adolescents	Health Care	Cycling
Low Income	Social Services	Walking

Challenges Faced in Rural Areas



Strategies to Address Critical Objectives

Infrequent Cross-Agency Coordination

- Formalize Partnerships
- Pool Resources
- Coordinate Across Boundaries
- Connect Planners and Providers

Infrequent Stakeholder Engagement

- Coordinate In-Person and Virtual Engagement

Few Rural Evaluation Methods

- Use Access Measures
- Quantify Economic Impacts
- Use Indicators of Need
- Re-Structure Scoring Systems

Limited Staff Capacity

- Offer Training and Support
- Leverage Tools and Datasets

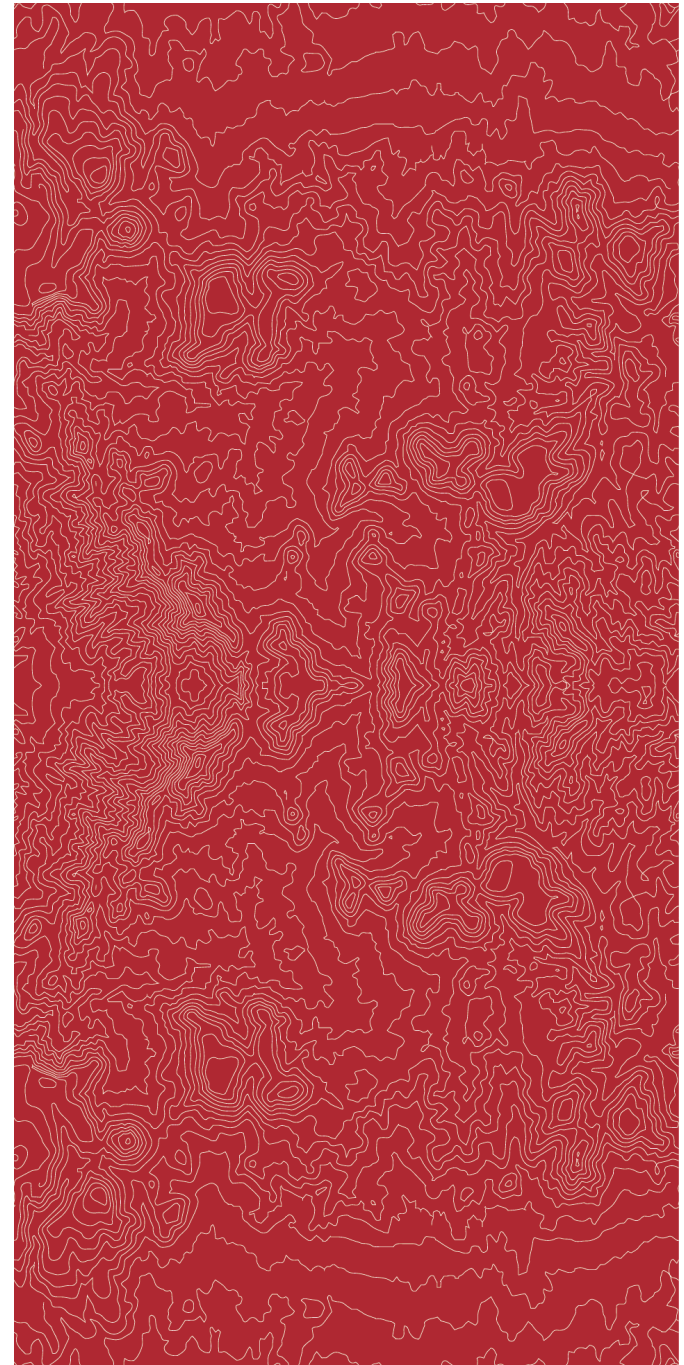
Limited Access to Funds

- Utilize Fund Braiding
- Coordinate Fund Use
- Form Public-Private Partnerships
- Right-Size Investments

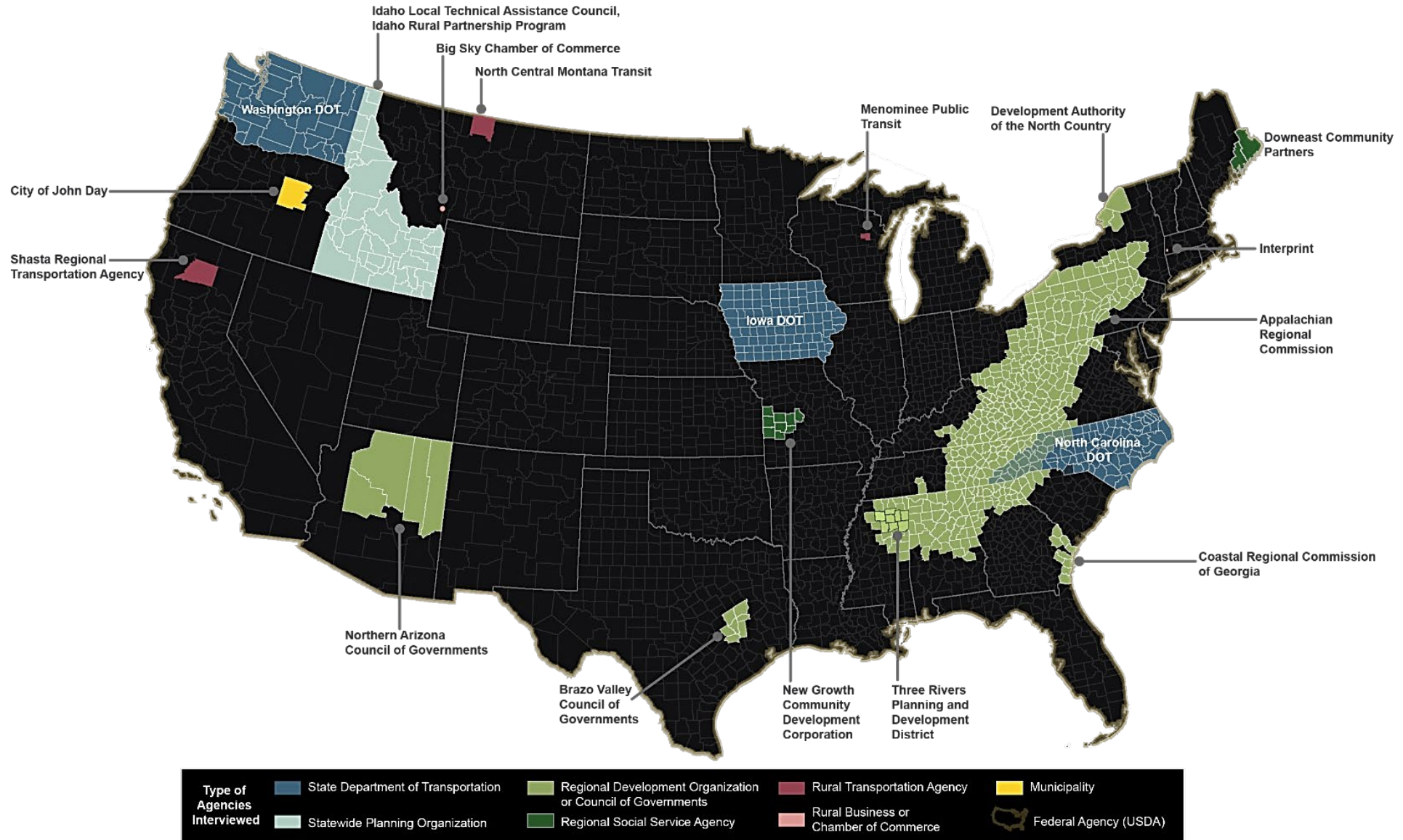
Planning Process



Section 2: Insights from Case Studies and Interviews



Agency Interviews



Case Studies



Idaho:
Strengthening Rural
Access through
Partnerships



Iowa:
Addressing the
Challenge of
Providing Rural
Public Transit



Downeast Maine:
Improving Access to
Medical and Social
Services



North Carolina:
Statewide
Approach to Rural
Transportation
Investments



**Menominee
Regional Public
Transit:**
Expanding Service
to Meet Regional
Needs

Common Challenges

- Low population, job, and social service density
- Context-specific challenges (such as topography, seasonal work, or concentrations of transportation need)
- Crossing jurisdictional boundaries
- Challenges to inter-agency coordination and stakeholder outreach
- Few evaluation methods
- Limited staff capacity
- Limited funding



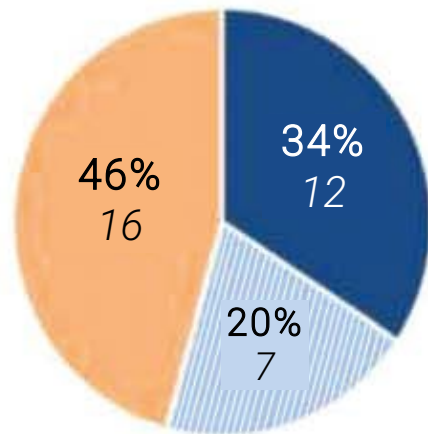
Photo by Tom Fisk

Iowa:

Addressing the Challenge of Providing Rural Public Transit

Figure 3.1: Transit agencies by type

Transit Agencies by Type

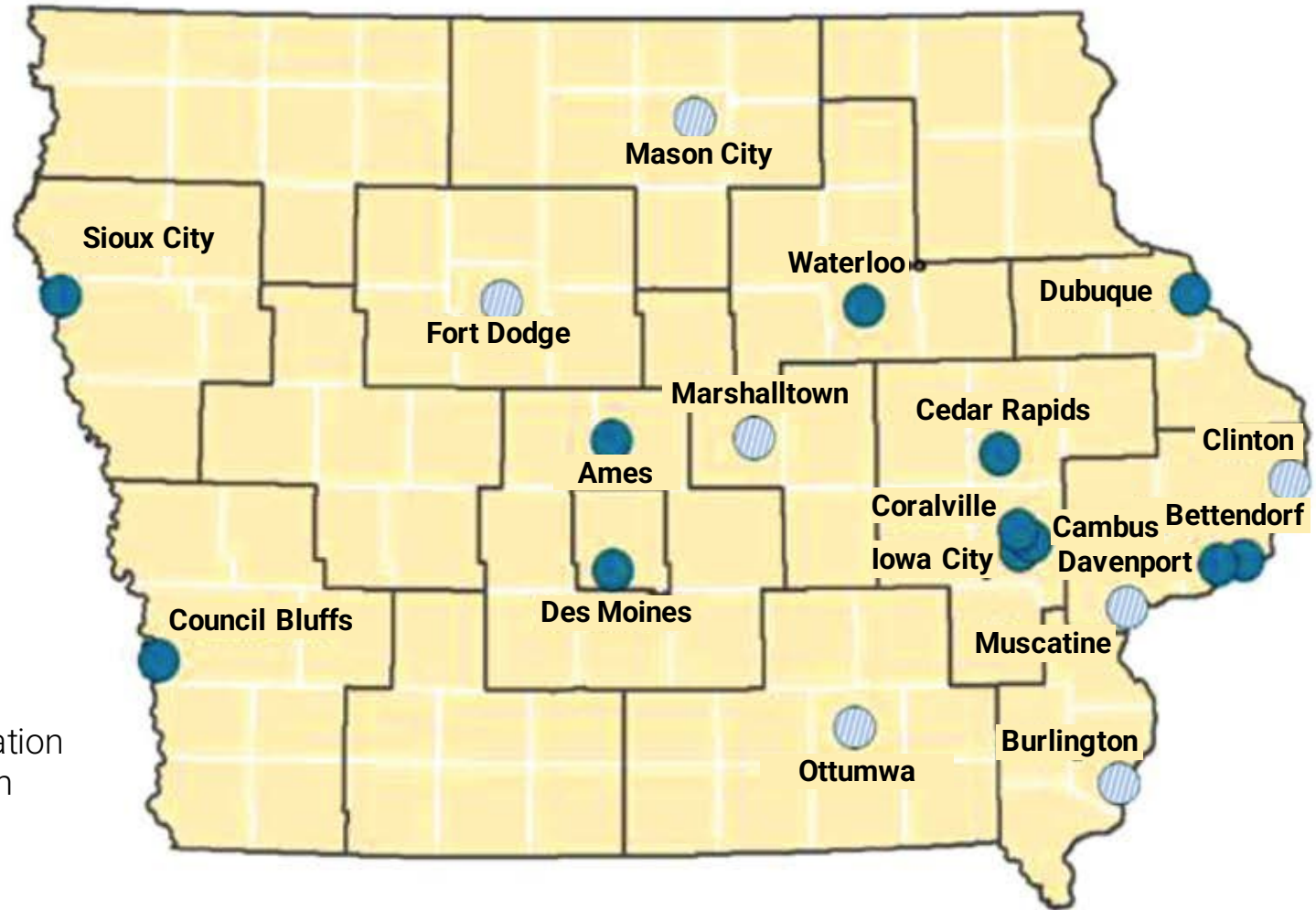


■ Large Urban ■ Small Urban ■ Regional

Large Urban: greater than 50,000 population

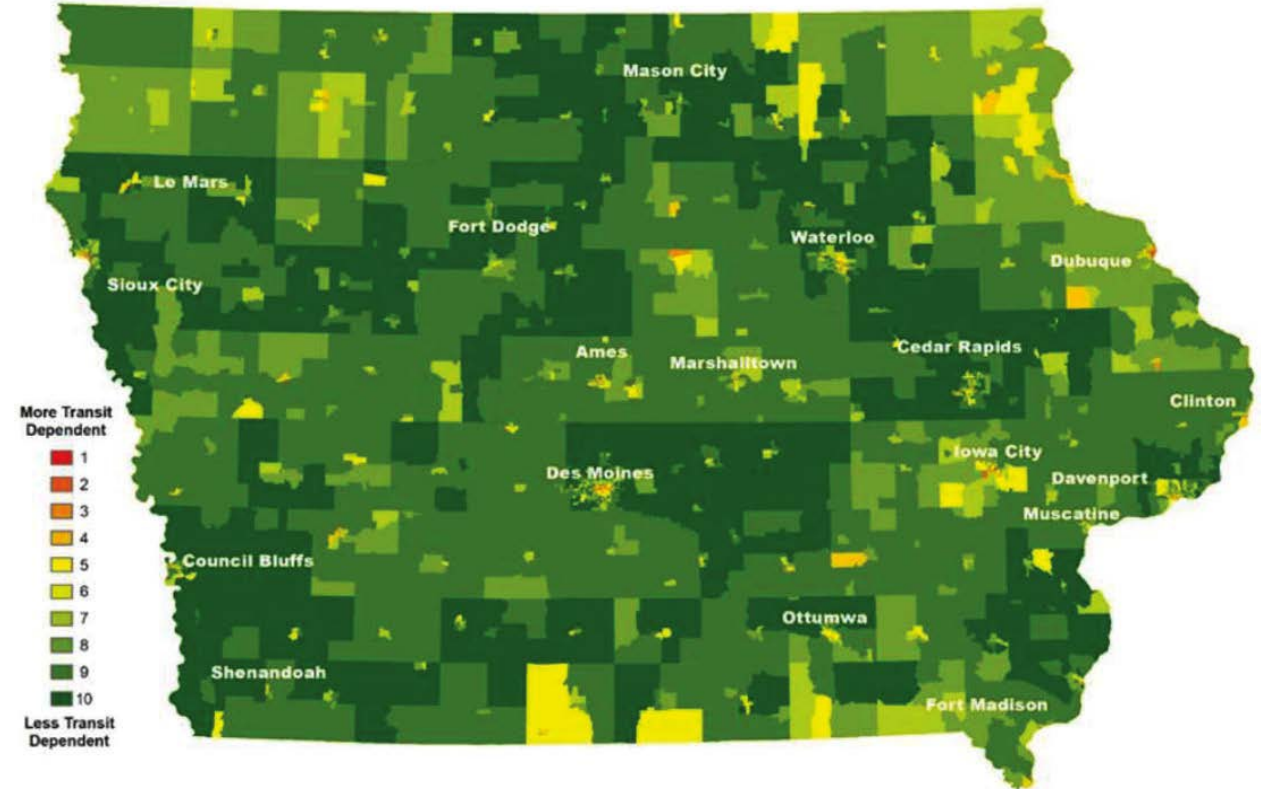
Small Urban: 20,000 – 49,999 population

Regional: Rural areas outside Urban



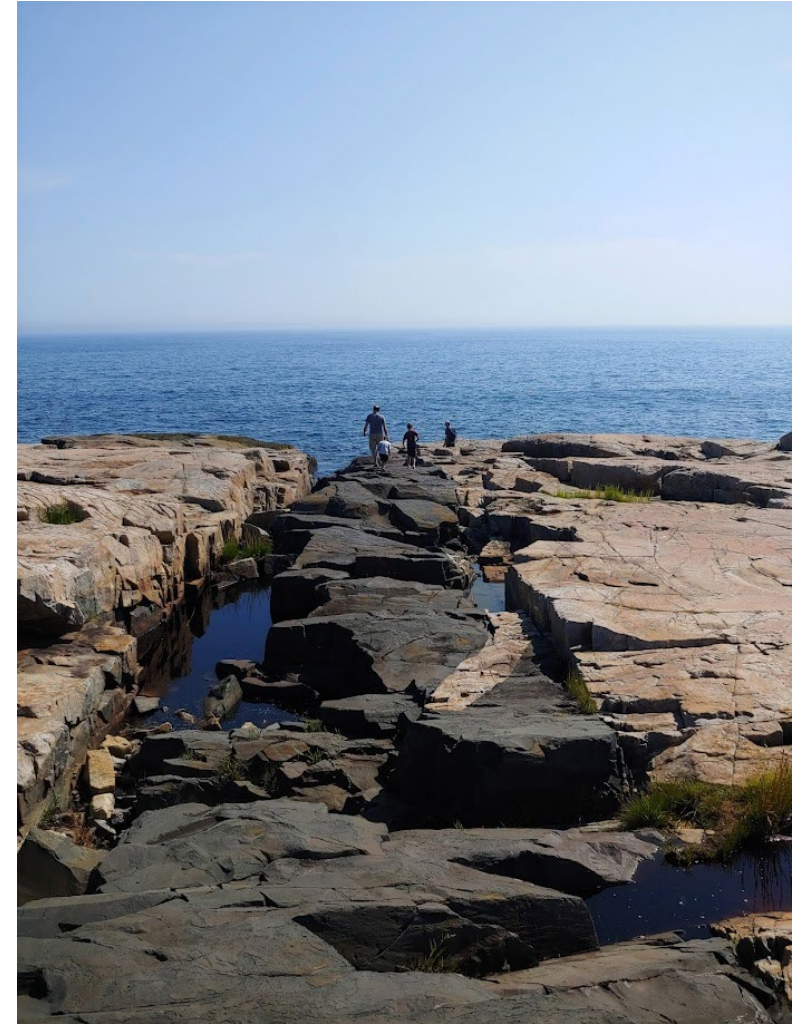
Iowa: Strategies for Success

- *Iowa Public Transit 2050 Long Range Plan*
- Public input and agency dialogue
- Measuring transit dependency
- Statewide & Regional Long-Range Plans: Focus on Multimodal Access
- Iowa Transportation Coordination Council



Downeast Maine: Improving Access to Medical and Social Services

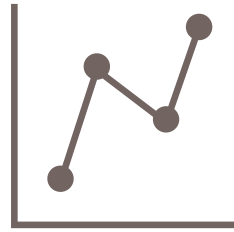
- Scenic beauty along the coast and inland
- Tourism provides economic opportunity
- Income disparity is a regional challenge
- Multiple transportation providers offer a continuum of services:
 - Downeast Community Partners (demand response)
 - Downeast Transportation, Inc. (deviated fixed route)
 - West's Transportation (intercity)
 - Friends in Action, Island Connections (volunteer transportation)



Maine: Strategies for Success



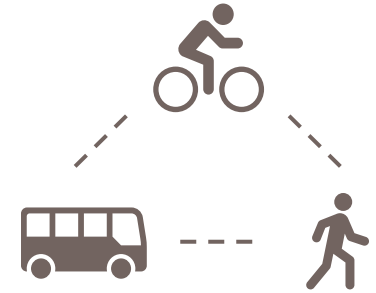
Establishing
the Locally Coordinated
Plan



Translating
transportation needs
into funding analysis



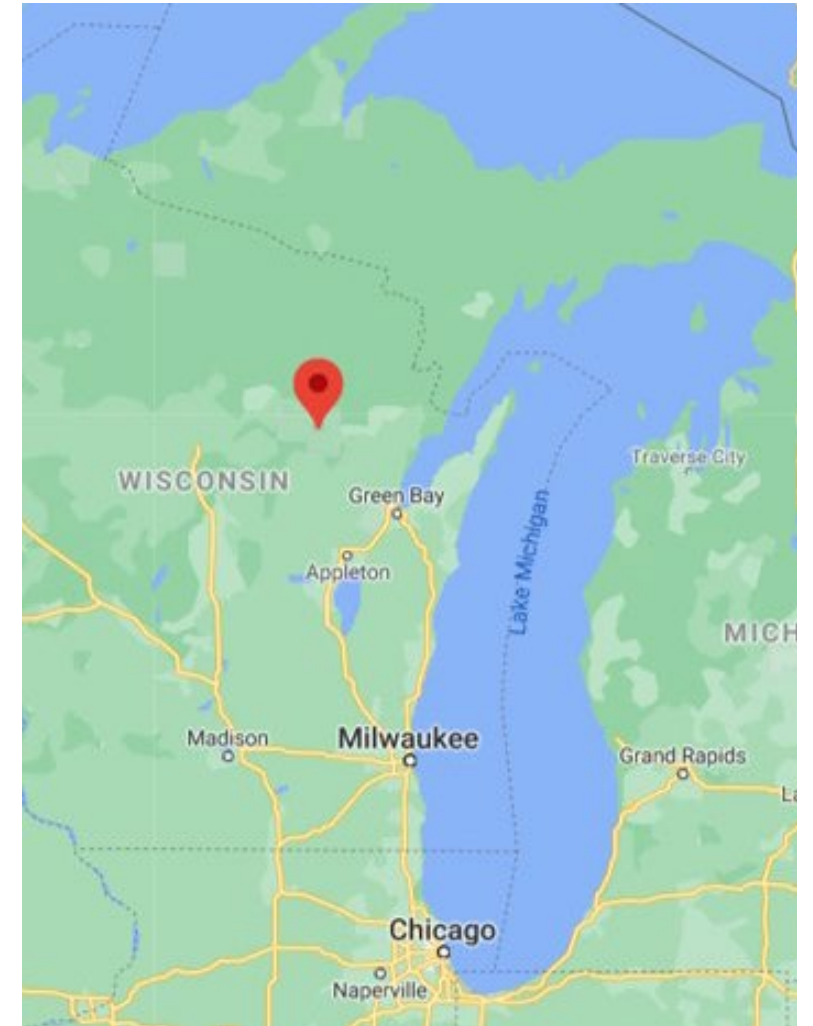
Leveraging
variety of funding
sources



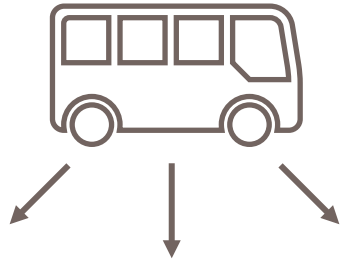
Prioritizing
limited resources and
connecting multiple
modes

Menominee Regional Public Transit: Expanding Service to Meet Regional Needs

- Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin is served by Menominee Regional Public Transit
- Established in 1982 to primarily serve the 235,000-acre reservation in northeast Minnesota
- Over 90% of Menominee Reservation residents use MRPT for some trips
- Over time, MRPT expanded service into two more counties and to connect to daily to metro regions outside the area



Menominee Nation: Strategies for Success



Leverage

the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plans into partnerships to support service expansion



Partner

with health and human service agencies



Use

the right approaches for the populations being served when providing information and asking for input

Section 3: Using the Report Tools and Resources



Tools & Guidance Documents

Coordination

- Cross Agency Coordination Self-Assessment

Engagement

- Community Engagement Worksheet
- Community Engagement Tools & Techniques Spreadsheet

Evaluation

- Evaluation Process Worksheet
- Evaluation Tools & Data Guidance Spreadsheet

Capacity

- Staff Capacity Self-Assessment
- Skill-Building Resource Guide

Funding

- Funding Strategies & Financing Mechanisms Worksheet
- Federal Transportation Funding Resource Guide

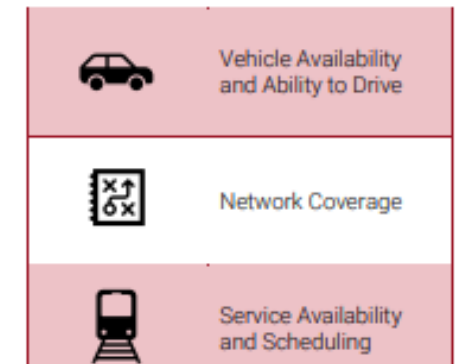
Tools & Guidance Documents: Evaluation Process



Step 1: Establish a Common Understanding of Accessibility

Accessibility refers to the ability of people and businesses to access desired activities, services, and goods with their available transportation options.¹ Describe accessibility in your own words. Does your organization define accessibility in a similar way? How do you think members of your community think about accessibility?

How broad of an issue is accessibility in your region? Use the graphic below to think about the ways accessibility varies and the barriers that need to be addressed. For instance, is vehicle availability a major impediment to improved accessibility in your region? How about geometry characteristics like mountainous roads or tight turns?



Source: Adapted from Access in Appalachia: Concept and Methodologies (2020).

Tools & Guidance Documents: Evaluation Tools & Guided Reference Sheet

Qualitative Tool	Description
Rural Health Information Hub, "Am I Rural?" Tool	Tool that determines whether your community is considered rural according to various designations. Useful for identifying grant opportunities and satisfying eligibility requirements.
Rural Health Information Hub, Rural Transportation Toolkit	Variety of resources and tutorials for funding, implementing, and evaluating transportation programs in rural communities.
Rural Health Information Hub, Access to Care for Rural People with Disabilities Toolkit	Resources and tutorials for implementing rural programs that expand access for people with disabilities. Includes modules on implementation, evaluation, funding, and dissemination, among others.
Rural Health Information Hub, Approaches to Increase Access to Foods	Resources and tutorials for implementing programs that expand access to healthy food in rural areas.
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Smart Growth Self-Assessment for Rural Communities	Helps communities identify gaps in their policies, plans, codes, and zoning regulations through fillable forms with a series of "Yes" or "No" questions. Communities begin with the Revitalize Village and Town Centers section, which gives a baseline indication of smart growth development policies within the jurisdiction. Subsequent sections cover topics relevant to rural accessibility.

*"I am interested in tools that support **qualitative assessment** of rural accessibility and connectivity needs"*

Tools & Guidance Documents: Evaluation Tools & Guided Reference Sheet

Tools/data to evaluate accessibility in a rural context

- Enable the user to estimate network-based accessibility or provide datasets derived from network-based accessibility estimates
- Sources for accessibility/connectivity tool input data
 - **Network datasets** (GTFS, OpenStreetMap, Here, Inrix, TomTom)
 - **Destination datasets** (Homeland Infrastructure Foundation, Natl Center for Education Statistics)

Tools/datasets to incorporate demographic, economic, and land use data into access/connectivity needs assessments

- **Demographic datasets** (AARP Livability Index, CARES Map Room, CDC Social Vulnerability Index)
- **Economic datasets** (Headwaters Economics Economic Profile System, CORI Rural Opportunity Map)
- **Transportation and land use datasets** (incl. BTS Open Data Catalog, H+T Affordability Index, U.S. EPA Smart Location Mapping, U.S. HUD Location Affordability Index)

Tools to estimate economic impacts and benefits (REMI PI+, TREDIS, EconWorks)

Tools & Guidance Documents: Federal Transportation Funding Resource Guide

Funding sources are continually in flux, programs and eligibility change frequently.

This resource can help agencies learn where to look for updated funding program information.

Program	Federal, Tribal or State Eligibility	Local Eligibility	Federal Match	Funds Eligible for Transfer to Other Federal Programs	More Information
Surface Transportation Block Grant Program	●	●	80% Federal (90% Interstate System) Sliding Scale	●	FHWA STBG Fact Sheet

- Planning programs
- Road and bridge design, construction, reconstruction or rehabilitation
- Public transportation service on bus, vans, passenger ferries & passenger rail
- Bicycle, Pedestrian and Active Transportation Facilities
- Mobility Management (FTA)
- Broadband
- Federal Discretionary Funds



Thank you!

Today's Presenters



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Upcoming events for you

November 21, 2024

TRB Webinar: Empowering
Emergency Preparedness for
Individuals with Sensory Disabilities

December 12, 2024

TRB Webinar: Recruitment &
Retention to Support Transit Workers'
Mental Health

<https://www.nationalacademies.org/trb/events>



Register for the 2025 TRB Annual Meeting!

*January 5 – 9, 2025
Washington, D.C.*

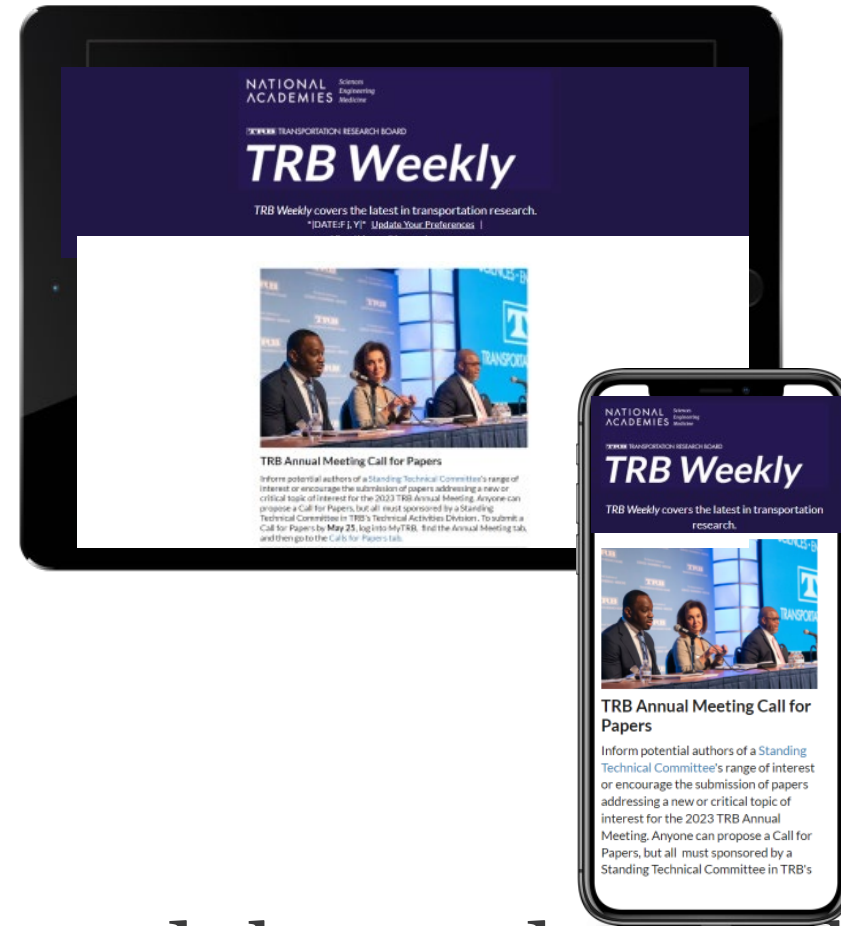


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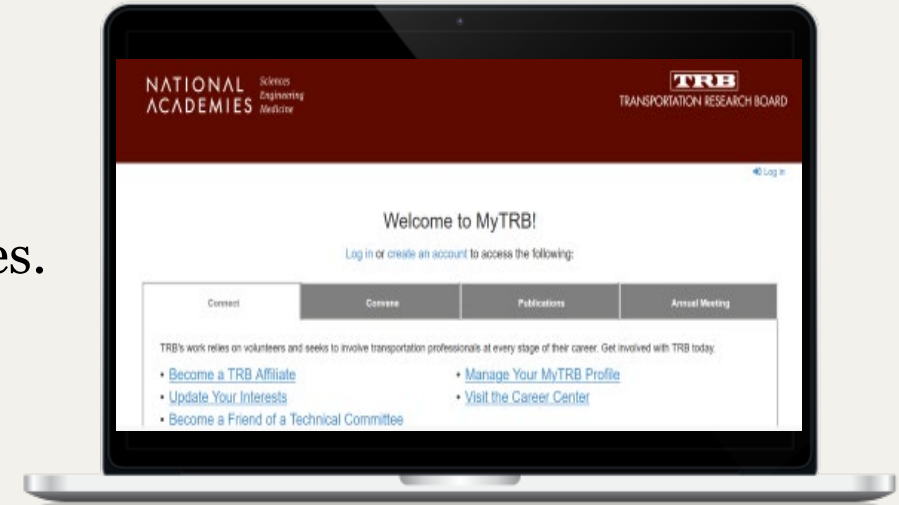


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