

Chapter 1: Introduction

COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION
PLAN

FRENCH BROAD RIVER MPO & LAND OF SKY RPO

PURPOSE

This Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP, also known as Locally Coordinated Plan) was developed to serve both the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization planning area as well as the Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization planning area, covering the counties of Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania in Western North Carolina.

A locally-developed Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan is required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for the programming of Section 5310 funding and to meet mobility management goals established in 2005 with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and continued in 2012 with Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) as well as the most recent Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST Act).

Input from local community transportation advisory boards as well as the general public

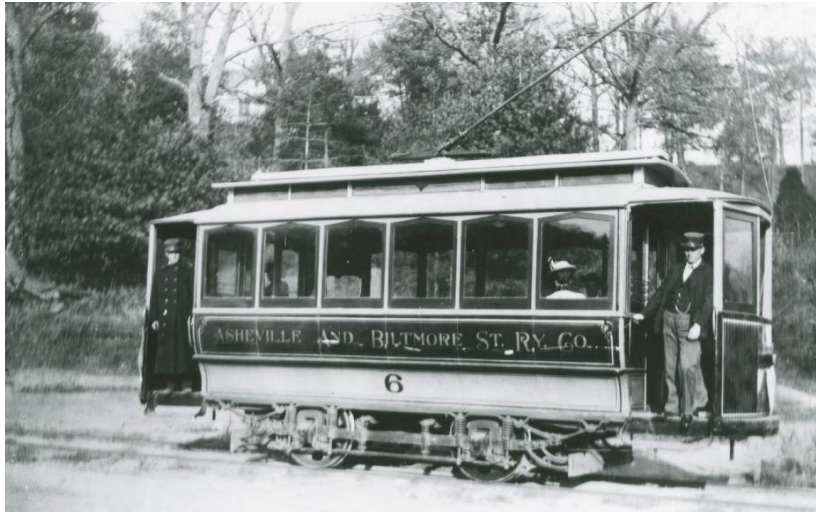
¹ Mountain Xpress, September 12, 2017. "Tuesday History: Asheville Streetcar Takes a Farewell Tour." Accessed at

helped to identify mobility and accessibility challenges facing our communities and our region as well as general strategies that can be utilized to help address these challenges.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the majority of Americans did not use a personal automobile to get to their destinations. Instead, private transit providers and streetcar systems were big business and took people where they needed to go, or close to it. Since World War II, the rate of personal automobile ownership has skyrocketed and the private transit systems that were once a central part of many cities collapsed. In Asheville, the streetcar system that was in operation since 1889, took its last trip in 1934.¹ Bus systems were expected to replace the streetcar systems, but those faced many challenges.

<https://mountainx.com/news/Tuesday-history-ashevilles-street-cars-take-a-farewell-tour-sept-6-1934/>.



Asheville Streetcar Number 6 ca. 1910. Image courtesy of Pack Memorial Library, North Carolina Collection; Published in the Mountain Xpress on September 12, 2017.

By the 1960s, many private transit operations had ceased operations or were taken over by local governments. In 1964, the Urban Mass Transit Act was adopted to provide financial support for continuing transit services.

Transportation in the latter-half of the twentieth century was marred by limited transportation services. Many human services programs found that clients were unable to find transportation services and the accepted practice was for each agency to provide its own transportation

assistance- either by providing vans, rides, or vouchers for bus tickets or gasoline. This often led to several agencies providing similar transportation services with different eligibilities.

In some states, agencies worked together to coordinate transportation services provided for the benefit of their clients and for the general public. Where this has been done, overall costs declined and levels of service have increased compared to places that maintained a more agency-independent approach.

In recognition of these efficiencies, the federal government incorporated a number of mandates for cooperation between transit providers and human service agencies. Since 2005, federal transportation legislation has required that projects applying under some federal transit programs need to be identified in a Locally-Developed, Coordinated Public Transit- Human Services Transportation Plan in an effort to encourage the kind of coordination and collaboration that results in greater costs efficiencies and more effective services.

LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

There have been several federal programs that are used by both urban and rural transit systems to help fund both general public/fixed route and human service transportation services. In 1998, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) was passed which required that transit projects funded under the Job Access and Reverse Commute program (JARC or Section 5316) of the federal law be part of a Locally Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. Subsequent federal legislation expanded the requirement to include the Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program (Section 5310) as well as the New Freedom program (Section 5317).

In 2004, a presidential Executive Order was signed to improve the public and human service transportation coordination of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with lower incomes to create the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility. This council includes representatives from the US Department of Transportation, Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Veterans Affairs, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, Interior and Justice, the Social Security Administration, and

the National Council on Disability. This council works to provide recommendations to simplify customer access to transportation, reduce duplication of transportation services, and streamline federal rules and regulations that may impede the delivery of services.

In 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law President George W. Bush. The legislation mandated that any projects applying for funding under Sections 5310, 5316, and/or 5317 needed to be identified in a Locally Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan.

In 2012, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) was signed into law by President Barack Obama. The law continued requirements that projects be identified in a locally-developed Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP), but consolidated a number of programs under the Federal Transit Administration. The Job Access and Reverse Commute program (Section 5316) was consolidated into the Urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5307). The New Freedom

Program (Section 5317) was consolidated into the Section 5310 Program.

In 2015, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) was signed into law by President Barack Obama. The law continues the regulations and programs related to developing Coordinated Public Transit- Human Services Transportation Plans but plans to increase funding for public transit, in general, as well as specific programs that could be used to implement strategies from this plan.

Currently, there is one funding programs that requires projects be identified in the Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan:

Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310)- this program funds programs and projects aimed at improving mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options. The Asheville Urbanized Area directly receives 5310 funds that agencies, local governments, and transit providers may apply for through the French Broad River MPO and the City of Asheville. Rural areas

of the region must apply for Section 5310 funds through NCDOT.

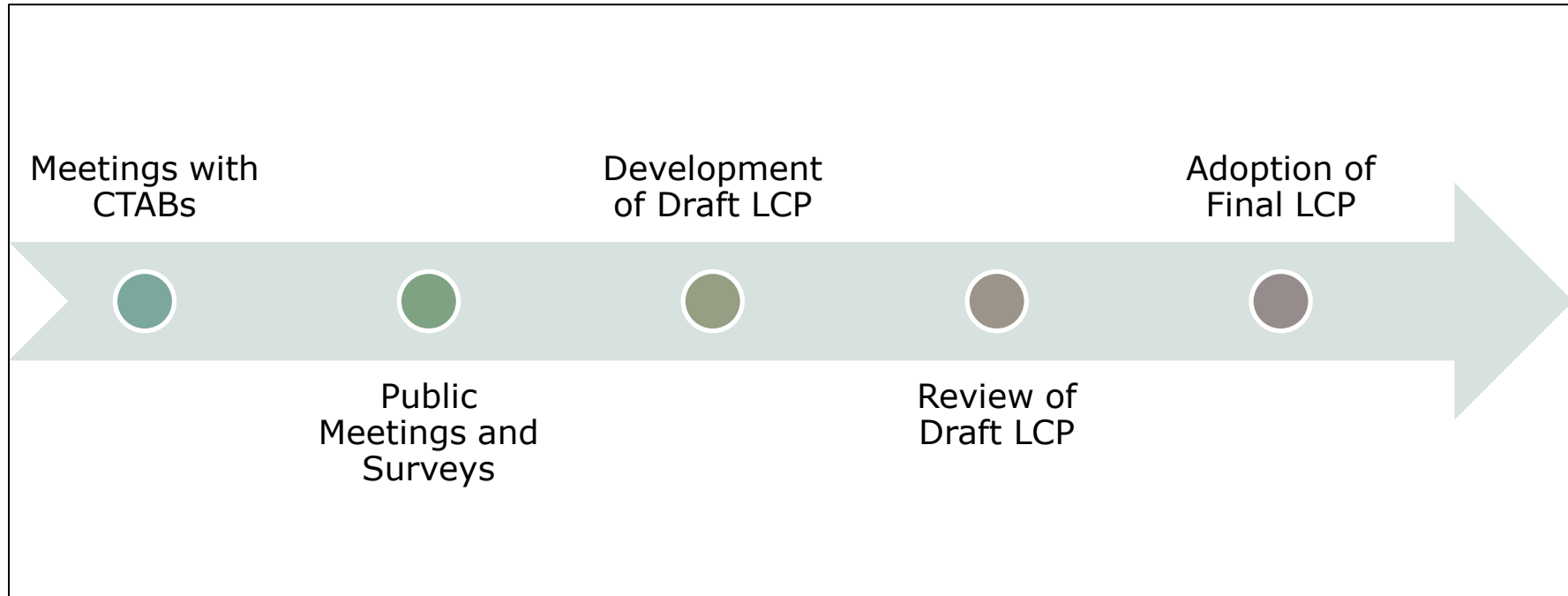
Additional funding programs exist, under which specific projects are not required to be identified in the Coordinated Public Transit -Human Services Transportation Plan. Those funding programs may also be used towards implementing some of those strategies identified in the CPT-HST Plan:

Urbanized Area Formula Grant (Section 5307)- this program provides funding for public transportation capital, planning, as well as limited operating assistance in certain circumstances, in urbanized areas.

Jobs Access Reverse Commute (Set-Aside of Section 5307 in the French Broad River MPO Region) The Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program was established to address the unique transportation challenges faced by welfare recipients and low-income persons seeking to obtain jobs and job training. JARC program was combined into the Section 5307 and 5311 funding categories with the passage of the MAP-21 legislation in 2012. JARC activities are eligible for funding under FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307) and the Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311) programs. The French

Broad River MPO has set aside 10% of Section

It should be noted that many of the



5307 funding allocated to Asheville Urbanized Area for Jobs Access Reverse Commute purposes and has most recently upheld this set-aside in February of 2017.

Formula Grants for Rural Areas (Section 5311)- this program provides capital, planning, job access and reverse commute projects, and operating assistance in rural areas.

transportation providers in our region operate in both the urbanized and rural areas.

PLANNING PROCESS

The current update of the CPT-HSTP, or the Locally Coordinated Plan was developed by French Broad River MPO and Land of Sky RPO staff in coordination with Community Transportation

Advisory Boards with additional input solicited from the public.

In September 2014, "Community Connections: Transportation Options for All Ages" event was held in Asheville, targeting community members and stakeholders from across the five-county region, to start the conversation about the mobility and accessibility needs of all age groups and what can be done to improve transportation options in our region.

As the next step in the 2017 Locally Coordinated Plan development, staff began to review goals and strategies from the 2012 FBRMPO LCP (CPT-HSTP) and 2009 Land of Sky RPO LCP with Community Transportation Advisory Boards (CTABs) in each of the five counties.

As part of the review process, FBRMPO and LOSRPO staff attended CTAB meetings; gave a brief presentation explaining the purpose of the Locally Coordinated Plan and an outline of next steps in the planning process. Maps with socio-economic data were also on hand for review

Stakeholders were given a list of needs identified in previous plans and asked what strategies were no longer applicable and what strategies needed

to be added to the list. As needs were reviewed and discussed, additional input was captured to be included in the needs list as necessary.

Public meetings were then coordinated with each county's stakeholder group to determine locations that would be best suited for public accessibility.



Image: Community Connections Event Held in September 2014 to Discuss Transportation Options and Issues

Public meetings were staffed by MPO/RPO staff and in some cases staff representing local transit services. Materials provided at each meetings consisted of socio-economic data maps; posters

of needs identified in previous plans with sticky dots to place on top five needs and easel pads to capture needs not identified in previous plans or other public comments.

Online surveys were also made available in Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, and Transylvania counties. The surveys were made available through survey monkey and requested that participants indicate what strategies they thought are most important to improving transportation options.

The outcomes of these meetings as well as input collected through surveys were used to prioritize recommended strategies for the 2017 Locally Coordinated Plan.

BOUNDARIES AND BARRIERS

While this plan is developed for the five-county region that includes Buncombe, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, and Transylvania counties, it is important to note that the responsibility for implementation of projects at this time falls on individual local governments, non-profits, or transit providers that often operate within specific political or geographic service boundaries. There

are four types of boundaries that can impact planning and coordination of services:

- **Political Jurisdiction**- The county, city, and town boundaries within the region play a major part in planning and implementing many of the strategies laid out in this plan.
- **Urbanized Areas**- The Urbanized Area Boundaries are determined by the US Census Bureau, based on population density. These boundaries play a critical role in transportation funding as the boundaries can factor into the amount of allocated funds and the types of funds available.
- **Metropolitan Planning Organization**- The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is designated for transportation planning in urbanized areas over 50,000. MPO planning area boundary typically includes an area larger than the urbanized area, to account for the areas where the population is anticipated to grow over the next 20 years.
- **Rural Planning Organization**- Established in 2000 by the State of North Carolina, Rural Planning Organizations (RPO) assist in the coordination of

transportation planning in areas not covered by Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

This plan was developed by both the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization because while the boundaries of those planning organizations may determine available funding, the challenges and strategies required to face those challenges cross those boundaries and will need to have a coordinated effort to address mobility concerns.