

Commonwealth Regional Council
Public Transit Connectivity Study
April 2012



Picture taken from JAUNT
Needs Assessment

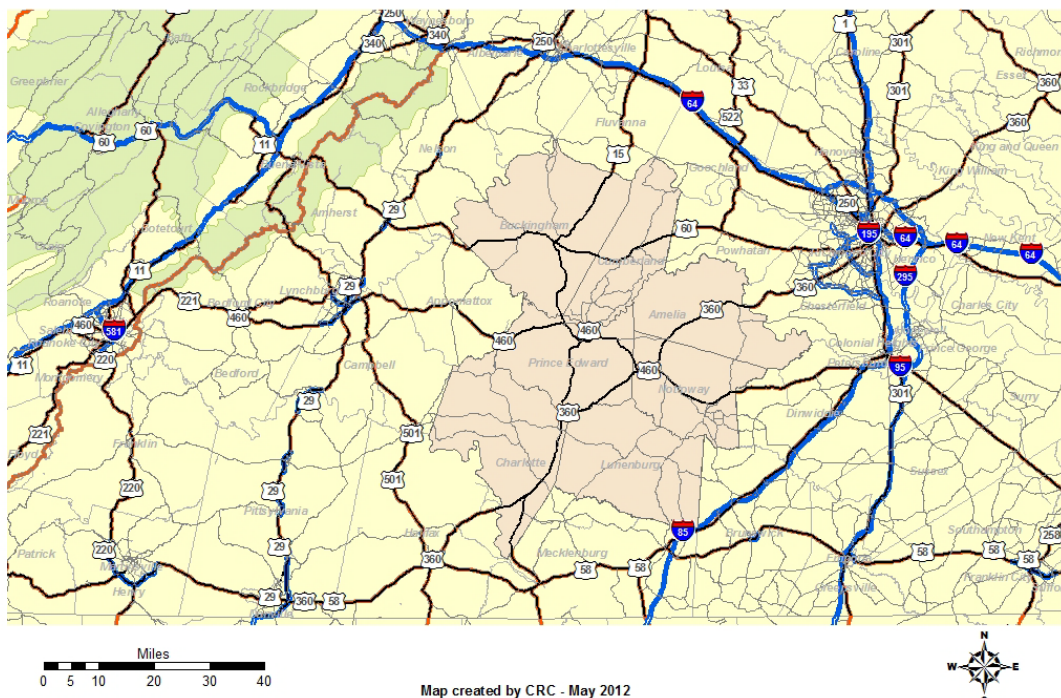


Background:

The Planning District 14 (PD 14) boundary covers the counties of Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Nottoway and Prince Edward in South Central Virginia (see Location Map below). The area is very rural in nature. Four-lane divided highways are the highest level of transportation infrastructure that crosses the region. There are no Interstates located in the region. Charlotte County boasts no traffic lights with Lunenburg County having only Primary Roads as the highest level of transportation infrastructure. The population of PD 14 is 104,609, with 15.8% of the population being 65 and over. According to a survey published for the Older Dominion Partnership by the Southeastern Institute of Research, Inc.¹ Fifty-five percent (55%) of PD 14 persons 65+ utilize special transportation for the disabled as a means of transportation. Sixty-five percent (65%) of persons 50-64 years of age also rely on special transportation for the disabled as a means of transportation.

This report will discuss the public transportation services available in PD 14 and will also discuss the connectivity of the available services to each other. The need and/or expansion for public transportation will also be examined based on available data.

Commonwealth Regional Council
Location Map



¹ 2011 Virginia Age Ready Indicators Benchmark Survey, Embargoed until November 15, 2011, Southeastern Institute of Research, Inc., www.olderdominion.org

Executive Summary:

In 2008, the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC) participated in the Coordinated Human Service Mobility Plan (CHSM) process conducted by the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). During this process, it became apparent that, while there are several Public Bus Transit services in the PD 14 area, there are areas underserved as well as opportunities for connectivity between service carriers. While the CHSM also included human service transportation and private transportation services, it noted the following identified strategies from stakeholders who participated in the Plan process:

1. Continue to support and maintain capital needs of coordinated human service/public transportation providers.
2. Expand availability of demand-response and specialized transportation services to provide additional trips for older adults, people with disabilities, and people with lower incomes.
3. Build coordination among existing public transportation and human service transportation providers.
4. Provide targeted shuttle services to access employment opportunities.
5. Expand outreach and information on available transportation options in the region, including the establishment of a centralized point of access.
6. Implement new public transportation services or operate existing public transit services on more frequent basis.
7. Establish or expand programs that train customers, human service agency staff, medical facility personnel, and others in the use and availability of transportation services.
8. Provide flexible transportation options and more specialized one-to-one services through expanded use of volunteers.
9. Expand access to taxi services and other private transportation operators.
10. Bring new funding partners to public transit/human service transportation.

This study was put together to look at these issues relating to public transportation. In conducting this study one other issue also became apparent. Before this study was conducted, a district-wide map of Public Bus Routes was not available to localities. While each Public Bus System has a map of their service routes, one did not exist that displayed the interaction of all routes in the PD 14 region. Without a district-wide map showing the current routes and how they overlap/intersect, localities did not have the information available to provide information to their citizens on services available. Therefore, a GIS district-wide map was created to display all of the public bus transit routes currently available (see large and small scale map attached separately in Attachment 1).

A meeting of the regions Public Service Providers was conducted to gain input on services offered and potential expansion of services, as well as insight to constraints and funding issues. All of the service providers were represented at the meeting including: Farmville Area Bus (FAB), Prince Edward Rural Transit (PERT), Blackstone

Area Bus (BABS), Town & County Bus Transit System (TCBTS), Piedmont Area Transit (PAT) and JAUNT, Inc.

Transit Provider Input:

CRC staff met with Public Transit Providers on April 3, 2012. Transit Providers were provided a Map of existing service routes to review for accuracy. Transit Providers stated that funding is one of the main issues that they struggle with to maintain their service. Localities often don't realize how many citizens depend on the public transit service until funding is threatened to cease. Citizens then show up at meetings to plead for the funding to keep the service ongoing. Ridership trip destinations reported by the providers varied. FAB (& PERT) reported that most of their riders are shopping at the local grocery store or retail destination with the remaining ones being students. JAUNT reported that the majority of their riders (Buckingham) were using the system to travel to work locations. BABS (PAT & TCBTS) stated their riders are a combination of workers and shoppers.

Providers were asked if they provided on-demand response. All stated, that while they do not provide this service, they do occasionally go off line (within a mile or two) if requested to pick up a passenger. One Provider stated they will even stop if flagged down by a passenger. All agreed the only barrier to expanding is funding. While all of the counties in the PD 14 do have service, Charlotte County has a very limited service by TCBTS to the Southside Virginia Community College located on the southeast border of the county. BABS (Provider) indicated that Charlotte has been contacted in the past, but is not interested in expanding Public Transit services further into the county.

Ridership:

Operator	Total Ridership June 2010	Total Ridership June 2009	Percent Change
Blackstone Area Bus	1805	2071	-13%
Blackstone Area Bus (Town & County)	377	335	13%
Blackstone Area Bus (Piedmont Area Transit)	775	759	2%
Farmville Area Bus (includes PERT)	4587	4189	10%
JAUNT (Buckingham)	897	1225	-27%
Source: Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation Transit Ridership Report			

While the DRPT Ridership Report above shows for both BABS and JAUNT a decrease from 2009 to 2010, both service providers were contacted to address the issue. JAUNT stated that in 2010 one of the routes only ran 9 months out of the year. All routes are running throughout the year now with ridership in April of 2012 at 1202. BABS stated

they had no idea why the June 2010 figure dropped. Current ridership (May 2012) is at 2372.

Demographic Overview:

The PD 14 region is located in south central Virginia and includes the counties of Amelia, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Nottoway and Prince Edward. PD 14 localities are very rural in nature. The service area encompasses 2,818 square miles of land area with an average of 39 persons per square mile in comparison to Virginia's 202 persons per square mile. The population of PD #14 has grown by almost 8% from 2000 to 2010. The fastest growing county in the district is Prince Edward (18.5%), while Lunenburg lost population (-1.76%). The average median household income for the area is \$38,691² with the State of Virginia average at \$61,406. The area is relatively poor as well, 15.9% (average) of PD #14 persons are below the poverty level. The area is home to three institutions of higher learning; Southside Virginia Community College, Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College. The combined student population is reported at 13,900.

PD #14
encompasses
2,818 square
miles, with 39
persons per
square mile.

Locality	2000 Population	2010 Population	% Change
Amelia	11,400	12,690	11.32%
Buckingham	15,623	17,146	9.75%
Charlotte	12,471	12,586	.92%
Cumberland	9,017	10,052	11.48%
Lunenburg	13,146	12,914	-1.76%
Nottoway	15,725	15,853	.81%
Prince Edward	19,720	23,368	18.5%
PD #14	97,102	104,609	7.73%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau			

Locality	Persons Below Poverty Level
Amelia	10.0%
Buckingham	19.0%
Charlotte	15.8%
Cumberland	16.1%
Lunenburg	16.3%
Nottoway	17.3%
Prince Edward	16.9%
PD #14	15.9%
Virginia	10.3%
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates	

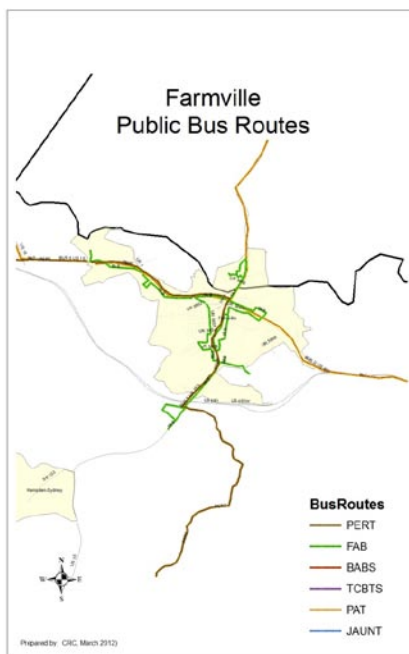
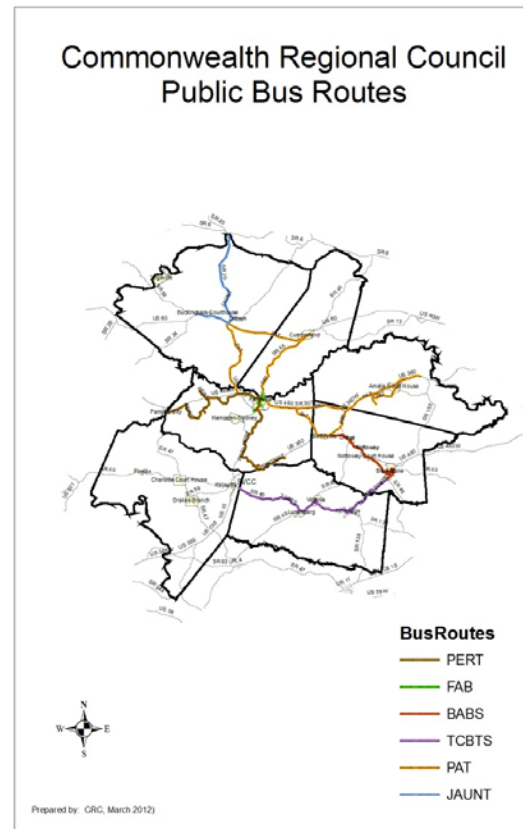
² Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey, Median Household Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2010 Inflation-adjusted dollars).

Current Transit System:

There are six (6) Public Bus Transit Routes available in PD 14, operated by three providers:

- Farmville Area Bus (FAB)
 - Prince Edward Rural Transit (PERT)
- Blackstone Area Bus System (BABS)
 - Town & Country Bus Transit System (TCBTS)
 - Piedmont Area Transit (PAT)
- JAUNT Inc.

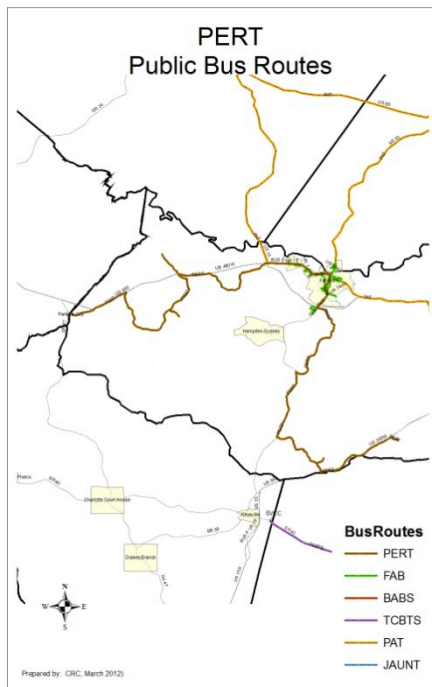
All seven counties of PD 14 have access to transit services. However, Charlotte County has limited service available to the Southside Virginia Community College Campus located in Keysville, Virginia. Services are provided by the Town & Country Bus Transit System (TCBTS) out of Lunenburg County. See map to right. (See Attachment 1 for a larger scale map)



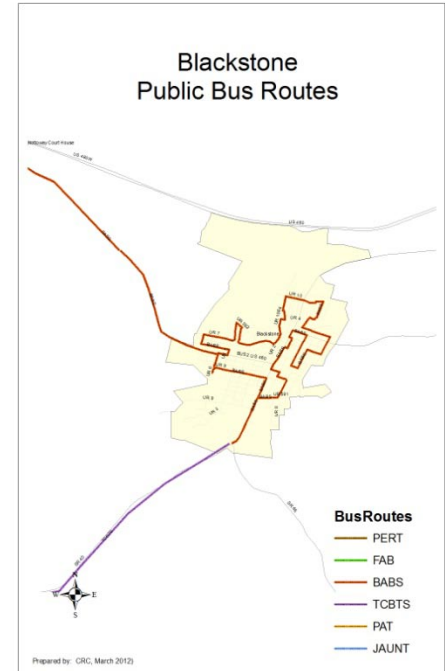
The Farmville Area Bus (FAB) is owned and operated by the Town of Farmville in conjunction with Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and Longwood University. FAB has two service lines. FAB provides the Blue Line which primarily serves the Town of Farmville residents on Monday through Friday, with limited service on Saturday. FAB also operates the Express Line and Lancer Express which serve mainly Longwood University students on Monday through Friday, with limited services on Saturday and Sunday (map to the left). PERT (map on following page) provides services outside the Town of Farmville with the Orange Line which serves the Meherrin/Green Bay area on Tuesday, Wednesday and Fridays. The Green Line provides services to the Pamplin/Prospect area of Prince Edward County on Mondays and Thursdays. The Farmville Area Bus also offers an ADA Paratransit Van Service in the Town of Farmville to provide door-to-door services for persons with disabilities. FAB fares

are .25¢, with children under 6 and senior citizens 60 and over riding free. The fares for

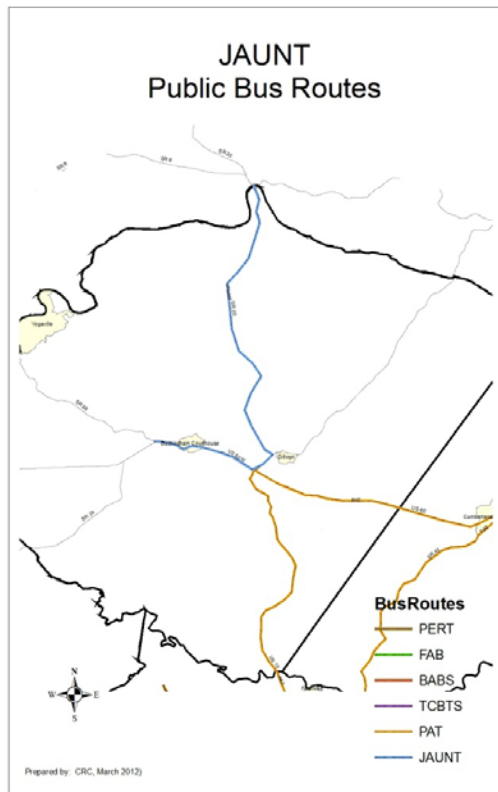
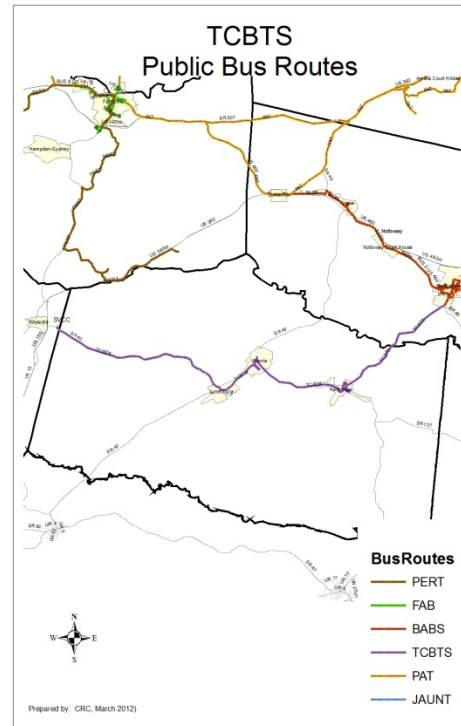
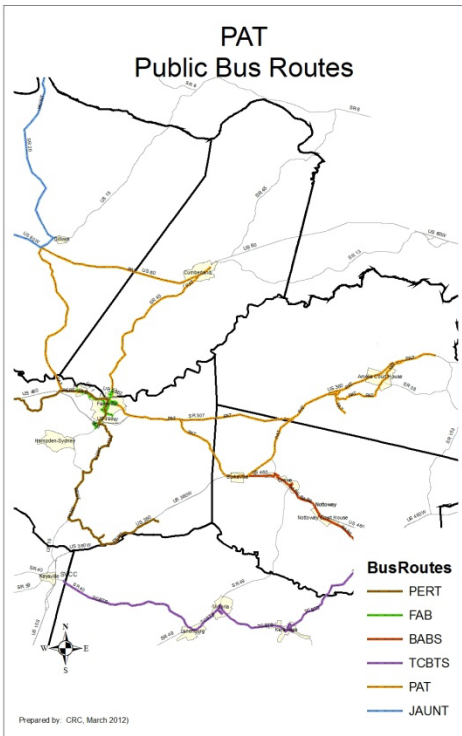
PERT are \$1.00 each way. Longwood University students ride free when showing their student ID. Student fares are paid through fees collected by the University.



The Blackstone Area Bus (BABS) is owned and operated by the Town of Blackstone in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation. BABS also manages and operates the Piedmont Area Transit (PAT) and the Town & County Bus Transit System (TCBTS). Service lines maintained by BABS within PD 14 include the BABS Line which provides service to the Town of Blackstone and the Crewe-Burkeville Express on Monday through Friday and also a limited day schedule on Saturdays (see map to right). PAT service routes include the Cumberland/Buckingham route and the Amelia/Prince Edward route on Monday through Friday (see map on next page). The TCBTS services routes include the Orange Line and Green Line which provides service to Kenbridge through Victoria onto Lunenburg Courthouse on Monday through Friday (see map on next page).



The Blackstone Area Bus also provides service lines outside PD 14 to include the counties of Brunswick and Dinwiddie. Bus fares for all of the BABS (service provider) lines are .50¢ per ride.



JAUNT was started by several human service agencies in 1975 who realized it would be more efficient and cost-effective for them to have their clients share rides. JAUNT then received a federal grant that made it possible to offer the services to the general public. JAUNT has grown and added additional programs such as Ride Share, commuter routes, intra-county routes in each rural county and night and weekend service to persons with disabilities in Charlottesville and Albemarle counties. In 1982, JAUNT, Inc. became a public corporation owned by five local governments: the City of Charlottesville, and the Counties of Albemarle, Louisa, Fluvanna and Nelson. JAUNT began providing service to Buckingham County in 2006 (see map to left). JAUNT provides a service line that begins west of Dillwyn at Duck's Corner Store (intersection of State Route 56 and Secondary Route 742) and continues to Dillwyn, then follows State Route 20 to Charlottesville, Virginia. The service is provided Monday through Friday. Fares are \$3.00 per trip.

Commuting Patterns:

An important indicator of the need for public transportation includes the availability of vehicles to commuters (see chart below). Eight percent of the occupied housing units in PD 14 do not have a vehicle available. Because the region is rural in nature, most citizens need to have access to a vehicle in order to travel to work. Commuters travel, on average 30 minutes to reach work in the District.³ The American Community Survey (ACS) reports commuting patterns for the district that includes the number of persons utilizing public transportation (see chart below). While public transportation (bus routes) is available in the district, the statistics report that a very small percentage of the population is utilizing this form of transportation.

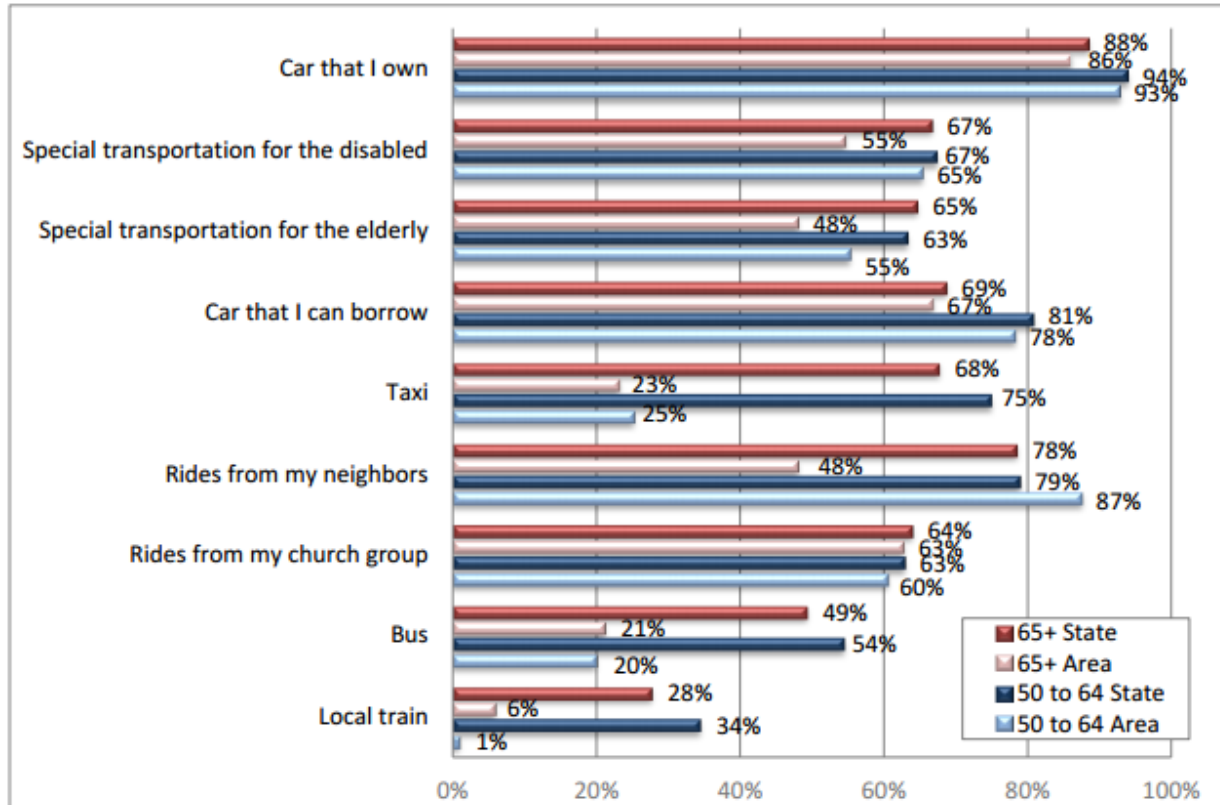
Locality	Occupied Housing Units	No Vehicles Available	Percent
Amelia	4,901	141	2.9%
Buckingham	4,859	604	12.4%
Charlotte	4,415	406	9.2%
Cumberland	3,969	411	10.4%
Lunenburg	4,515	339	7.5%
Nottoway	5,607	682	12.2%
Prince Edward	7,314	425	5.8%
PD 14	35,580	3,008	8%
Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, Selected Housing Characteristics (Based on Occupied Housing Units)			

Locality	# of Commuters	Utilized Public Transportation (excluding taxicab)		Walked To Work		Reached Work By Other Means	
Amelia	5,551	17	.3%	22	.4%	55	1%
Buckingham	3,810	0	0	42	1.1%	249	6.5%
Charlotte	4,697	27	.6%	33	.7%	229	4.9%
Cumberland	4,002	0	0	33	.8%	163	4.1%
Lunenburg	4,736	34	.7%	69	1.5%	113	2.4%
Nottoway	6,644	45	.7%	225	3.4%	373	5.6%
Prince Edward	9,289	81	.9%	543	5.8%	396	4.3%
Source: 2006-2010 ACS, Selected Economic Characteristics-Commuting to Work. Total commuters includes workers 16 years and over.							

³ Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey, Selected Economic Characteristics, Mean Travel Time to Work.

The following is an excerpt from the *2011 Virginia Age Ready Indicators Benchmark Survey* that provides additional input on the needs of persons 50 and over in the PD14 region:

Figure 38: Available Transportation Options

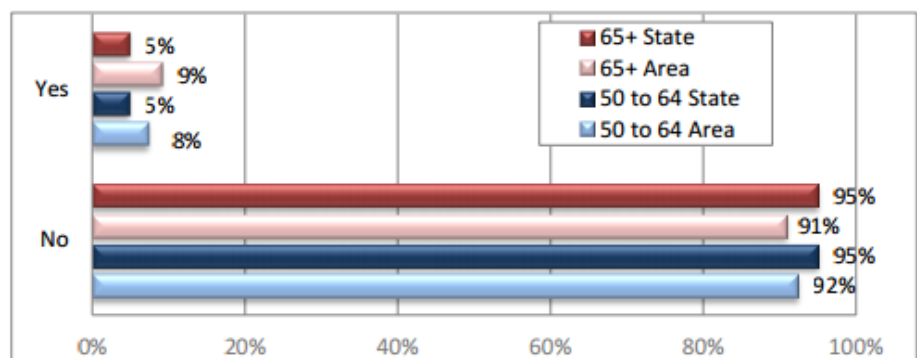


Q54. Which of the following forms of transportation is available to you? (n=200)

It is very apparent that the people who live in the PD14 region are very accustomed to traveling by utilizing less traditional means of transportation. As noted above, 78% of persons 50 to 64 borrow a vehicle to travel, with 87% of the same age group using rides from neighbors to reach their destination. However, as noted below, the same age

groups indicate they do not need more available options for travel. It is apparent that there is a need to educate the public about Public Transportation options and the need for them in the region.

Figure 40: Transportation Availability



Q56. Do you feel you need transportation more often than it is available to you? (n = 200)

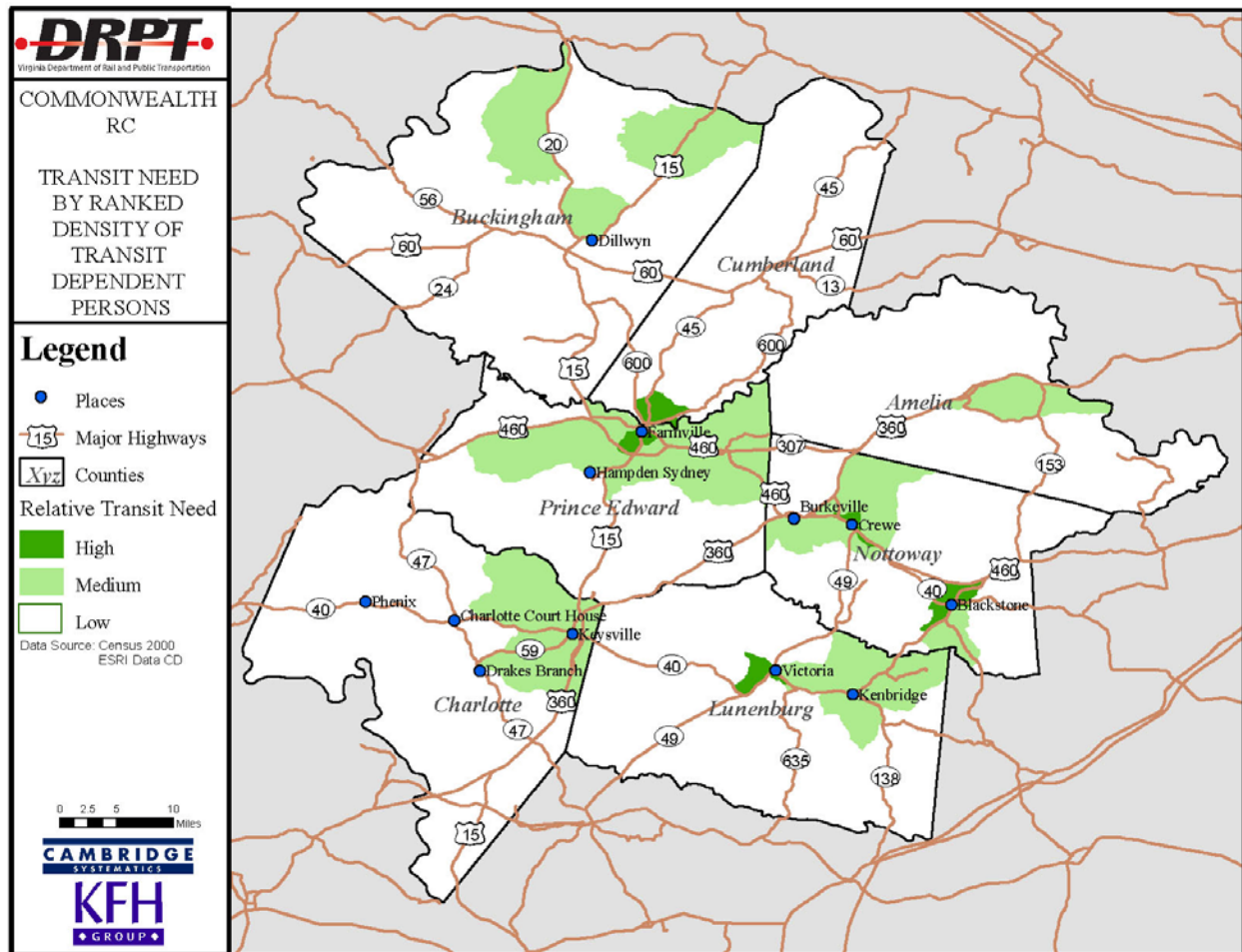
The CRC's 2035 Rural Long Range Transportation Plan states, concerning Public Transportation: *"The review of disadvantaged population groups determined that other than in Farmville, Blackstone and southern Buckingham and Cumberland counties, there is limited access to public transportation for these populations. There are several census tract block group areas which had a high portion of one or more transportation disadvantaged groups according to the 2000 Census. These block groups had higher percentages of a particular group than their respective county's percentages. The expansion of fixed-route transit service in the southern portion of the region along the principal arterials would provide better mobility and access to and from these areas and populations."*

Further statements were also identified in the Commonwealth Regional Council (PDC 14) Coordinated Human Service Mobility Plan:

Coupled with the need to identify service gaps is the need to identify corresponding strategies intended to address service deficiencies. Based on the assessment of demographics and potential destinations, and especially the unmet transportation needs obtained from key local stakeholders in the region, a preliminary list of strategies was generated. These "strategies" differ from specific projects in that they may not be fully defined – projects would require an agency sponsor, specific expenditures, etc. The strategies were then presented at the second workshop for input and ownership. The workshop participants endorsed the following strategies, as listed below:

- 1. Continue to support and maintain capital needs of coordinated human service/public transportation providers.*
- 2. Expand availability of demand-response and specialized transportation services to provide additional trips for older adults, people with disabilities, and people with lower incomes.*
- 3. Build coordination among existing public transportation and human service transportation providers.*
- 4. Provide targeted shuttle services to access employment opportunities.*
- 5. Expand outreach and information on available transportation options in the region, including the establishment of a centralized point of access.*
- 6. Implement new public transportation services or operate existing public transit services on more frequent basis.*
- 7. Establish or expand programs that train customers, human service agency staff, medical facility personnel, and others in the use and availability of transportation services.*
- 8. Provide flexible transportation options and more specialized one-to-one services through expanded use of volunteers.*

10. Bring new funding partners to public transit/human service transportation.



(CHSM, June 2008, Figure 7. - Transit Need by Ranked Density of Transit Dependent Persons)

Conclusions: It is apparent, that while public transportation is available throughout most of PD 14, only a small percentage of the population is utilizing it. There is also an indication that the public needs to be educated on the availability of public transportation. As cited earlier, many residents that do not have access to a vehicle themselves are depending on neighbors, church groups or borrowing a vehicle for transportation rather than using public transportation. There are also obvious underserved areas in the region that do not have access to public transportation at all. This has resulted from localities not having the funding available to offer the service to localities and not thinking the service is necessary. All of the public service providers of public transportation currently serving the region would expand if localities would support an expansion financially.

Fares ranged from .50¢ to \$3.00 per ride. Very few public transportation providers break even on cost and are heavily subsidized through Federal, State and local funding. Public transportation is perceived to be a service that is provided through taxpayer dollars. Fares could be raised in some cases to provide additional funding to support an expansion. Current providers could be encouraged to contact DPRT to receive additional funding to expand routes in areas that are currently unmet; however local support would also be necessary to fulfill this venture.

Education seems to be a key component to expanding and utilizing public transportation in PD 14. One suggestion is for DPRT to hold an educational workshop in the region to educate citizens and local government representatives on the need for public transportation and the funding sources available to begin or expand a program. A survey of the region's citizens could be conducted to gather information on whether the citizens are aware of current public transit routes and whether they would utilize public transit if offered. This would be a big undertaking but would be beneficial in determining the need for public transit in the region. The data would also be useful to the current providers in determining marketing initiatives and also future expansions.

JAUNT conducted the *Buckingham Transportation Needs Assessment*⁴ in December of 2010. The Assessment did conduct a survey on a very small scale (39 surveys were received from various sources). The Assessment identified possible solutions; one that seemed to be regional in nature would be to offer a feeder service that would connect citizens with current JAUNT lines to other public service providers. Another mentionable regional solution was to create a One-Call center to coordinate calls for rides from service providers in the region. There are many suggestions in the Assessment on ways to expand their service into other counties.

There are also three (3) institutions of higher learning in PD 14 with only Longwood University utilizing the full potential of public transportation. A meeting of the three institutions, DPRT and the public service providers may also merit expansion of services in the future.

⁴ Buckingham County Public Transportation Needs Assessment, December 2010, by: JAUNT, Inc.

ATTACHMENT 1
(See separate Insert for Large Scale Map
of Public Bus Routes)