Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan

**SEDA-COG &
Williamsport Area Metropolitan
Planning Organizations**

October 2024

Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan

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For:

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Introduction

This plan updates and amends the Coordinated Public Transit–Human Services Transportation Plan ("Coordinated Plan") of the SEDA-COG Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The plan was first developed in 2007 and most recently revised in 2019 on behalf of the SEDA-COG MPO and its local stakeholders with an interest in human service transportation programs. The SEDA-COG MPO serves as the regional transportation planning body for the eight counties of Clinton, Columbia, Juniata, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, and Union. The SEDA-COG MPO closely coordinates transportation planning activities with neighboring Lycoming County, which is served by the Williamsport Area Transportation Study (WATS) MPO. (See Figure 1 for a map of the planning area.) Since 2014, the SEDA-COG MPO and WATS MPO have developed a joint Coordinated Plan to satisfy planning requirements and use resources more efficiently. While this joint Coordinated Plan update considers all human service transportation needs, an emphasis is placed on transportation needs of low-income populations, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

This plan also fulfills a federal requirement first enacted in 2005 through the passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which stipulated that starting in Fiscal Year 2007, projects funded through three SAFETEA-LU programs—the Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC, Section 5316), the New Freedom Program (Section 5317) and the Formula Program for Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310)—are required to be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit–human services transportation plan. SAFETEA-LU guidance issued by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) described the plan as a "unified, comprehensive strategy for public transportation service delivery that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited income, laying out strategies for meeting these needs, and prioritizing services."

In July 2012, Congress enacted a new two-year federal surface transportation authorization, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), which retained many but not all coordinated planning provisions of SAFETEA-LU. Under MAP-21, JARC and New Freedom were eliminated as stand-alone programs, and the Section 5310 and New Freedom programs were consolidated under Section 5310 into a single program, Formula Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities, which provides for a mix of capital and operating funding for projects. This is the only funding program with coordinated planning requirements under MAP-21. However, FTA encourages continuation of the coordinated planning process as a best practice for project selection because it ensures the target population for these projects is included in the planning process.

In December 2015, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act was signed into law. The FAST Act authorized transportation funding through September 2020 and kept intact the established structure of the various highway- and public transportation-related programs. The Section 5310 program continued to focus on improving mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options. Section 3006(b) of the FAST Act created a discretionary pilot program for innovative coordinated access and mobility—open to 5310 recipients—to assist in financing innovative projects for the transportation-disadvantaged that improve the coordination of transportation services and non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) services, such as: the deployment

of coordination technology, projects that create or increase access to community, One-Call/One-Click Centers, etc.

The 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law had a profound impact on human services and transit planning nationwide through enhanced federal transit programs managed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Initiatives such as the All Stations Accessibility Program have received increased funding to upgrade rail systems for ADA compliance, significantly improving accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the Buses and Bus Facilities Program has prioritized investments in low- or no-emission vehicles, advancing sustainability goals while revitalizing bus fleets across urban and rural areas. This legislation also supports expansive transit projects like demand-responsive transit and commuter rail expansions through the Capital Investment Grants Program, aiming to bolster connectivity and reliability across diverse communities. Specifically, the Grants for the Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities program which funds transportation services planned, designed, and carried out to meet the special transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities. By integrating innovative technologies and emphasizing sustainability, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law serves as a commitment to equitable and efficient public transit systems, ensuring improved accessibility for users.

This plan is intended to meet the federal planning requirements as well as to provide SEDA-COG/WATS MPOs and their regional partners with a "blueprint" for implementing a range of strategies intended to promote and advance local efforts to improve transportation for persons with disabilities, seniors, and persons with low incomes. Furthermore, this plan aims to help create vibrant communities, enhance quality of life for residents, and attract and maintain a strong workforce. The Coordinated Plan is intended to keep a focus on action, evaluation, and accountability for public transit–human service transportation matters. The strategies in this plan inform and are integrated into the respective SEDA-COG/WATS MPO Long-Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs). Regional transit priorities using federal and state funds are also included on the respective MPO Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) that list projects to be funded over a four-year period.

Fully coordinated public transit–human service transportation for the region will require certain essential elements: (1) sustainable funding dedicated to the operation of the region's transportation solutions; (2) federal and state policies in support of transit planning; and (3) broad and inclusive involvement from partner agencies and other stakeholders. To best serve the region's needs for mobility services in the future, these partnerships will need to involve not only providers of public transit and human service transportation, but also private transportation providers, advocacy groups representing seniors and people with disabilities, medical and dialysis providers, faith-based groups, housing agencies, veterans' service providers, providers of support services to the working poor, etc.
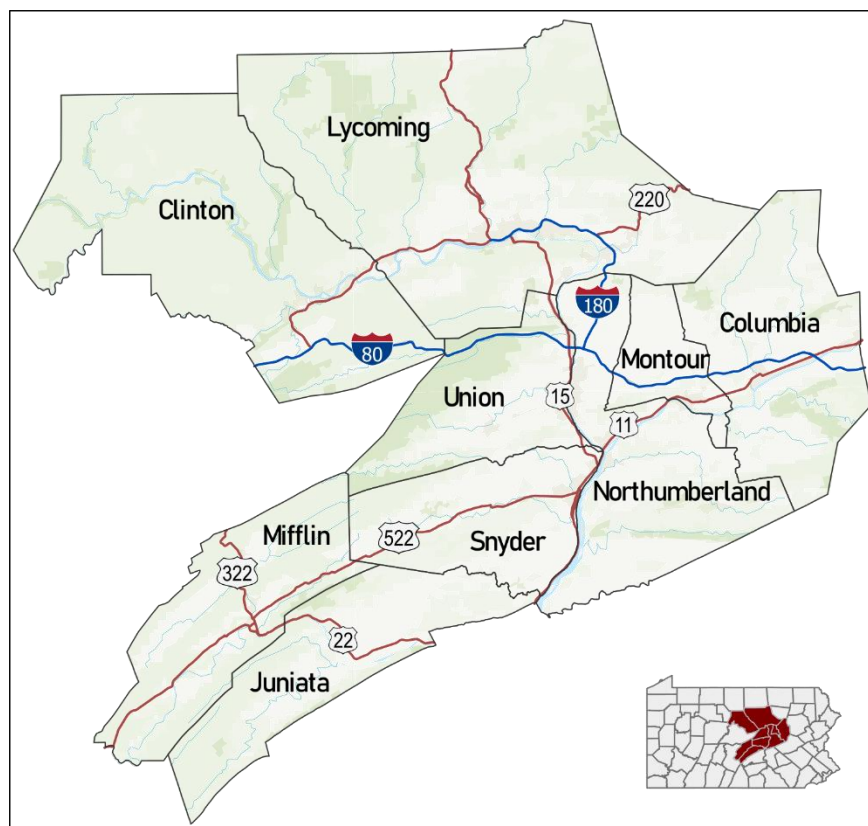
Coordinated Plan Requirements

The FTA provides specific guidelines for the preparation of a Coordinated Plan. The following are the four main elements required of the Coordinated Plan, per FTA Circular 9070.1G:

1. An assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private, and non-profit);
2. An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities and seniors. This assessment can be based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners or on more sophisticated data collection efforts, and gaps in service;
3. Strategies, activities, and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery; and
4. Priorities for implementation based on resources (from multiple program sources), time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified.

Essentially, the Coordinated Plan identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors, and people with low incomes; provides strategies for meeting local needs; and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation. A Coordinated Plan should maximize the transit programs' collective coverage by minimizing duplication of services. Further, a Coordinated Plan must be developed and approved through a process that includes participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public/private/non-profit transportation and human service providers, and other members of the public.

Public Transit–Human Service Transportation Committees

The SEDA-COG MPO has historically relied upon the Central PA Transportation Coalition (CPTC) for analyzing public transportation topics. The CPTC consisted of numerous public- and private-sector human service and transportation-related organizations in Central Pennsylvania. The service area included Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, Union, Centre, Clinton, Juniata, and Mifflin counties. The CPTC mission was to "advocate for meeting the regional needs for transportation so that area residents have alternative, accessible, efficient, and affordable means of travel." The SEDA-COG and Williamsport MPOs cooperated on facilitating the CPTC meetings and activities, but since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Coalition has gone dormant. The SEDA-COG MPO has relied on other ad-hoc transit work groups and public transportation engagement since 2020. The Williamsport MPO has also established a Transit Advisory Committee comprising WATS MPO members, transit providers, and various social service organizations. With participation from SEDA-COG MPO, this committee meets twice per year to provide input and recommendations on public transit issues and needs in Lycoming County. SEDA-COG MPO and WATS MPO staff provide the committee with status reports and comment opportunities during the Coordinated Plan update process. The WATS Transit Advisory Committee members assess the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors, and low-income residents; identify strategies and/or activities to address identified service gaps; and set relative public transportation priorities for implementation. As a more comprehensive, continuous, and coordinated transit planning process is executed, SEDA-COG and WATS MPOs will work to engage more representatives to serve on the committees and chart a course for improved public transportation in the region.

Federal Transit Programs

Below are descriptions of the federal transit programs applicable for this plan.

ENHANCED MOBILITY OF SENIORS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES PROGRAM (SECTION 5310)

The program aims to improve mobility for older adults and people with disabilities by removing barriers to transportation service and expanding transportation mobility options. This program supports transportation services planned, designed, and carried out to meet the transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities in all areas: large urbanized (over 200,000), small urbanized (50,000-200,000), and rural (under 50,000). Section 5310 funds are available for both traditional capital investment and non-traditional investment beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit services.

Traditional Section 5310 project examples include:
- Buses and vans
- Wheelchair lifts, ramps, and securement devices
- Transit-related information technology systems, including scheduling/routing/one-call systems
- Mobility management programs
- Acquisition of transportation services under a contract, lease, or other arrangement

Nontraditional Section 5310 project examples include:
- Travel training

- Volunteer driver programs
- Construction of an accessible path to a bus stop, including curb cuts, sidewalks, accessible pedestrian signals, or other accessible features
- Improvements to signage, or wayfinding technology
- Incremental cost of providing same-day service or door-to-door service
- Purchase of vehicles to support new accessible taxi, ride-sharing, and/or vanpooling programs
- Mobility management programs

As mentioned earlier, the Section 5317 New Freedom program was a formula grant program that provided funding for capital and operating expenses that support new public transportation services beyond those required by the ADA and designed to assist individuals with disabilities with accessing transportation services. New Freedom was formerly to be addressed specifically in Coordinated Plans, but it was repealed by MAP-21. Nevertheless, New Freedom activities are now an eligible project type under the Section 5310 program. A minimum of 55 percent of Section 5310 funds must be spent on traditional 5310 projects, while the remaining 45 percent may be spent on other projects, such as were eligible under the New Freedom program.

Federal/Local Matching Requirements: The Section 5310 federal share for eligible capital projects is up to 80 percent of the net cost of the activity (exceptions: vehicle acquisitions to support compliance with ADA or the Clean Air Act have an 85 percent and 90 percent federal match, respectively, for vehicle-related equipment and facilities). The federal share for eligible operating costs may not exceed 50 percent of the activity's net operating costs. Recipients may use up to 10 percent of their apportionment to support program administrative costs including administration, planning, and technical assistance. The local share of eligible capital costs shall be not less than 20 percent of the activity's net cost, and the local share for eligible operating costs shall be not less than 50 percent of the net operating cost. The local share may be provided from an undistributed cash surplus, a replacement or depreciation cash fund or reserve, a service agreement with a state or local service agency or private social service organization, or new capital. Some examples of these sources of local match include state or local appropriations; dedicated tax revenues; private donations; revenue from service contracts; transportation development credits; and net income generated from advertising and concessions. Non-cash share such as donations, volunteered services, or in-kind contributions is eligible to be counted toward the local match if the value of each is documented and supported, represents a cost which would otherwise be eligible under the program, and is included in the net project costs in the project budget.

Eligible Recipients: The eligible recipients include states (for all areas under 200,000 in population) and designated recipients for large urban areas chosen by the Governor of each state. Eligible subrecipients include states or local government authorities, private non-profit organizations, or operators of public transportation that receive a Section 5310 grant indirectly through a recipient. Private operators of public transportation are eligible subrecipients. The definition of "public transportation" includes shared-ride surface transportation services. Private taxi companies that provide shared-ride taxi service to the public or to special categories of users (such as seniors or individuals with disabilities) regularly are operators of public transportation, and thus eligible subrecipients. "Shared-ride" means two or more passengers in the same vehicle who are otherwise not traveling together. Similar to general public and ADA demand-response service, every trip does not have to be shared-ride in order for a taxi

company to be considered a shared-ride operator, but the general nature of the service must include shared rides.

URBANIZED AREA FORMULA PROGRAM (SECTION 5307)

This program provides grants to Urbanized Areas (UZAs) and to states for public transportation capital, planning, job access, and reverse commute projects, as well as operating expenses in certain circumstances. These funds constitute a core investment in the enhancement and revitalization of public transportation systems in the nation's urbanized areas, which depend on public transportation to improve mobility and reduce congestion. Examples of eligible activities include:

- Capital projects;
- Planning, engineering, design, and other technical transportation-related studies;
- Job access and reverse commute projects that provide transportation to jobs and employment opportunities for welfare recipients and low-income workers; and
- Operating costs in urbanized areas with populations less than 200,000.

A partial list of eligible Section 5307 projects includes:

a) Replacement or overhaul of buses;
b) Expansion of bus fleets;
c) Purchase and installation of service and support equipment;
d) Accessory and miscellaneous equipment such as mobile radio units, bus stop signs, supervisory vehicles, fareboxes, computers, and garage equipment;
e) Construction or rehabilitation of maintenance facilities;
f) Construction of other facilities (e.g., transfer facilities, intermodal terminals, and bus shelters);
g) Construction or renovation of intercity bus and intercity rail stations;
h) Capital support equipment, including computer hardware, software, bus diagnostic equipment, and other equipment that enhances operating efficiency;
i) Pedestrian access and walkways;
j) Bicycle access, including bicycle storage facilities and installing equipment for transporting bicycles on public transportation vehicles;
k) Signage;
l) Vehicles, equipment, and facilities to comply with ADA;
m) Crime prevention and security projects;
n) Studies relating to management, operations, capital requirements, and economic feasibility;
o) Late-night and weekend service;
p) Guaranteed ride home service;
q) Shuttle service;
r) Demand-responsive van service;
s) Ride-sharing and carpooling activities;
t) Expanding fixed-route public transit routes, including hours of service or coverage;
u) Promotion and marketing of transit use;
v) Subsidizing the purchase or lease by a non-profit organization or public agency of a van or bus dedicated to shuttling employees from their residence to a suburban workplace;
w) Supporting local car loan programs;

x) Implementing intelligent transportation systems (ITS), including customer trip information technology, vehicle position monitoring systems, or geographic information systems software; and

y) Supporting mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation.

The Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC) was a former formula grant program for projects that improve access to employment-related transportation services for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals, and that transport residents of urbanized and non-urbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities. JARC was formerly to be addressed specifically in Coordinated Plans, but it was repealed by MAP-21. Nevertheless, job access and reverse commute projects are now an eligible project type under the Urbanized Area Formula Program. Although the coordinated planning process is no longer required for job access and reverse commute projects, FTA encourages public transit systems in all areas to continue to participate in the coordinated public transit–human service transportation planning process to identify and develop job access and reverse commute projects for funding under Section 5307.

Federal/Local Matching Requirements: The Section 5307 federal share for eligible capital and planning projects is up to 80 percent of the net cost of the activity. The federal share may be 85 percent for the acquisition of vehicles and 90 percent for the cost of vehicle-related equipment or facilities (including clean fuel or alternative fuel vehicle-related equipment or facilities) for the purpose of complying with, or maintaining compliance with, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Clean Air Act. The federal share may not exceed 50 percent of the net project cost of operating assistance. The local share of eligible capital and planning costs shall be not less than 20 percent of the activity's net cost, and the local share for eligible operating costs shall be not less than 50 percent of the net operating cost. The local share may be derived from essentially any source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT).

Eligible Recipients: The eligible recipients include states and designated recipients for urbanized areas, which then suballocate funds to governmental authorities, including public transportation providers. A state is responsible for administering the program on behalf of all UZAs under 200,000 in population, or portions thereof that are located within its boundaries. A designated recipient is responsible for administering the program on behalf of a UZA with a population of 200,000 or more.

FORMULA PROGRAM FOR RURAL AREAS (SECTION 5311)

This program provides capital, planning, and operating assistance to states to support public transportation in rural areas with populations less than 50,000. Examples of eligible activities include:

- Capital projects;
- Planning;
- Job access and reverse commute projects that provide transportation to jobs and employment opportunities for welfare recipients and low-income workers;
- Operating assistance; and
- Acquisition of public transportation services, including agreements with private providers of public transportation.

A partial list of eligible Section 5311 projects includes:

a) Buses;
b) Vans or other paratransit vehicles;
c) Radios and communications equipment;
d) Passenger shelters, bus stop signs, park and ride lots, and similar passenger amenities;
e) Wheelchair lifts and restraints;
f) Vehicle rehabilitation, remanufacture, or overhaul;
g) Preventive maintenance;
h) Computer hardware or software;
i) Pedestrian and bicycle access to public transportation facilities;
j) Mobility management techniques;
k) Transportation plans, programs, studies, and designs; and
l) Job access and reverse commute projects.

MAP-21 created a new eligible project category for "job access and reverse commute projects" under Section 5311. This category includes all types of projects that were formerly eligible under the Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute Program. Examples of eligible projects are listed as items (o) through (y) in the Section 5307 project listing starting on page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**.

Federal/Local Matching Requirements: The Section 5311 federal share for eligible capital and planning projects is up to 80 percent of the net cost of the activity. The federal share for eligible operating costs may not exceed 50 percent of the activity's net operating costs. The local share of eligible capital and planning costs shall be not less than 20 percent of the activity's net cost, and the local share for eligible operating costs shall be not less than 50 percent of the net operating cost. The local share may be derived from essentially any source other than the USDOT. Recipients may count non-cash shares such as donations, volunteered services, or in-kind contributions toward the local match only if the recipient formally documents the value of each non-cash share, and if this value represents a cost that would otherwise be eligible under the project.

Eligible Recipients: The eligible recipients include states and Indian tribes. Eligible subrecipients include state and local governmental authorities, non-profit organizations, operators of public transportation services, and intercity bus operators.

Project Solicitation and Award

Generally, solicitation and approval for the Section 5310, Section 5307, and Section 5311 program projects is conducted by PennDOT. SEDA-COG and WATS MPOs historically cooperated with PennDOT to promote the JARC/New Freedom program funding rounds, collect applications from area agencies, and provide funding recommendations to PennDOT. Since those programs have been repealed, the MPOs no longer participate to that extent. However, the MPOs are committed to active involvement with the consolidated Section 5310 program and in situations where PennDOT desires to include the MPO in project evaluations and collaborative transit asset management approaches.

Regarding Section 5310, PennDOT leads the development of the program of projects for FTA review and approval of grant funding. PennDOT ensures that local applicants and project

activities are eligible and in compliance with federal requirements, that private not-for-profit transportation providers have an opportunity to participate as feasible, and that the program provides for coordination of federally assisted transportation services. After FTA approves PennDOT's application, funds are available for state administration of the program and for allocation to individual subrecipients within the state. PennDOT has established selection criteria by which applications for Section 5310 program funding are reviewed and scored:

1. **Eligible Applicant and Eligible Project Type –** The applicant is a private, non-profit organization and has a proposed project that falls into one of the three eligible project types: vehicle replacement, fleet expansion, or new service. Vehicle replacement projects receive priority consideration for funding, providing all other selection criteria thresholds are met.

2. **Project Need and Justification –** The applicant provides sufficient and compelling evidence to demonstrate a need for the purchase or replacement of vehicles to provide service for seniors and/or individuals with disabilities that could not be provided through existing resources. Items of consideration include projected utilization of proposed vehicles, existing utilization of fleet, and existing age and condition of existing fleet.

3. **Positive Mobility Improvements –** The proposed service to be provided by 5310 vehicles will provide a positive benefit to the mobility of senior citizens and/or individuals with disabilities and provides a service that is necessary for the quality of life of those persons. The applicant demonstrates how the project is needed to fill an identified gap in transportation for senior citizens and/or individuals with disabilities that cannot be reasonably filled otherwise and meets the requirements and intent of the FTA Section 5310 program.

4. **Local and Regional Coordination –** The applicant has coordinated with the local county shared-ride coordinator to ensure the service is not duplicative (a support letter is required). Furthermore, the applicant has stakeholder support for the project. Stakeholders may include local non-profit human service organizations, the Area Agency on Aging, local public transit agencies, and local healthcare providers, among others.

5. **Technical and Maintenance Capability to Provide Transportation –** The applicant demonstrates sufficient experience in providing human services and/or transportation and has the technical and financial capacity to operate the service for the life of the vehicle. In addition, the applicant demonstrates a comprehensive vehicle maintenance plan to ensure proper operation and maintenance for the useful life of the vehicle.

6. **Organizational, Financial, and Grant Administration Capacity –** The applicant demonstrates sufficient financial wherewithal to implement the project and operate the service for the vehicle's life. In addition, the applicant demonstrates sufficient experience in grant administration and has the organizational capacity to expend grant funding and issue quarterly reports to PennDOT on a timely basis.

7. **Matching Funds –** The applicant has demonstrated that a 20 percent non-federal match is secured and committed to the proposed project.

The FAST Act required that Section 5310 projects selected for funding must be included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit–human services transportation plan. For purposes

of the Coordinated Plan, FTA is willing to consider that a project is a strategy, activity, or specific action addressing an identified service gap or transportation coordination objective articulated and prioritized within the plan. Therefore, individual projects for which Section 5310 funding is sought do not need to be specifically listed in the Coordinated Plan. However, regional applicants can ensure their project's eligibility by noting how it addresses an identified service gap, goal, or transportation coordination objective listed within the Coordinated Plan. Therefore, the gaps and priorities included in this plan are intended to be comprehensive; the plan can be amended if valid projects being submitted by applicants do not relate to a gap or priority listed in the plan.

Public Transportation: A Key Investment

Public transportation investments are vital for personal mobility, health, independence, employment, quality of life, and regional and community economic development. PennDOT's FY 2022-23 Public Transportation Annual Performance Report offers the following statistics:

- Pennsylvanians take 236 million trips per year on public transportation. In FY 2022-23, Pennsylvania transit agencies completed:
  - 4.5 million trips on community transportation curb-to-curb service for senior citizens at reduced fares subsidized by lottery funds; and
  - 284,800 trips on community transportation curb-to-curb service for persons with disabilities.
- 2.5 million Pennsylvanians are aged 65 or older and eligible for Senior Shared-Ride services.
- 3.8 million Pennsylvanians do not have a driver's license.
- An average of 64 percent of PA's fixed-route transit users and nearly 54 percent of shared-ride users say they have no other transportation option.
- Pennsylvania transit agencies procured $2.5 billion in goods and services from Pennsylvania companies from 2018–2023.
- Public transportation and passenger rail service in Pennsylvania supports nearly 39,000 jobs with $2.75 billion in employee compensation within the state.

Plan Development & Outreach

The development of this plan included outreach efforts to gather input from:

- Public transit providers
- Human service agencies
- Veterans and veterans groups
- Senior Citizens and senior citizen groups
- Persons with disabilities and groups who represent and work with persons with disabilities.

The outreach efforts included focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and a public survey to identify gaps in transit services. In addition, demographic, economic and travel pattern data was collected, mapped and analyzed.

All the data collected was analyzed and transportation needs and gaps were identified and summarized, followed by a proposed action plan to help address the identified needs and gaps.

Demographic Profile

This chapter describes current data related to the demographic characteristics of seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income residents in the SEDA-COG/WATS MPO area. These target populations are the primary beneficiaries of FTA programs covered by this plan. Data for minority, female householder with children, journey to work, and other characteristics are also provided herein, because they commonly correlate to transit dependency.

Identifying potential transit demand is critical in transit planning. Transit demand represents two major categories of passengers: captive riders and non-captive or "choice" riders. The captive riders are those persons that must rely on transit services. They include many senior citizens, people with disabilities, students, and people who do not have access to an automobile. The non-captive riders are those persons who have a choice either to use public transportation or to use a private automobile. Socioeconomic characteristics provide a sound basis for identifying these potential riders, especially the captive riders.

For most classifications on the following pages, data were gathered at the regional level, combining populations from each of the 9 counties, for either individuals or households, depending on the demographic factor. From there, the total number of persons in each demographic group is divided by the appropriate universe (either population or households) for the 9-county region, providing a regional percentage threshold for that population group. Any Census tract in **Appendix A** mapping that meets or exceeds the regional threshold level may be considered a sensitive tract for that characteristic.

As noted above, the detailed mapping by county and Census tract is provided in **Appendix A**.

Total Population

According to 2022 U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, 487,276 people live within the plan's nine-county region. Since 2013, the region's population has remained relatively stable or has slightly declined (Figure 2). The region experienced a 1.8 percent decrease in population between 2018 and 2022 while the Commonwealth saw a 1.6 percent increase during the same period.

Figure 2: Total Population
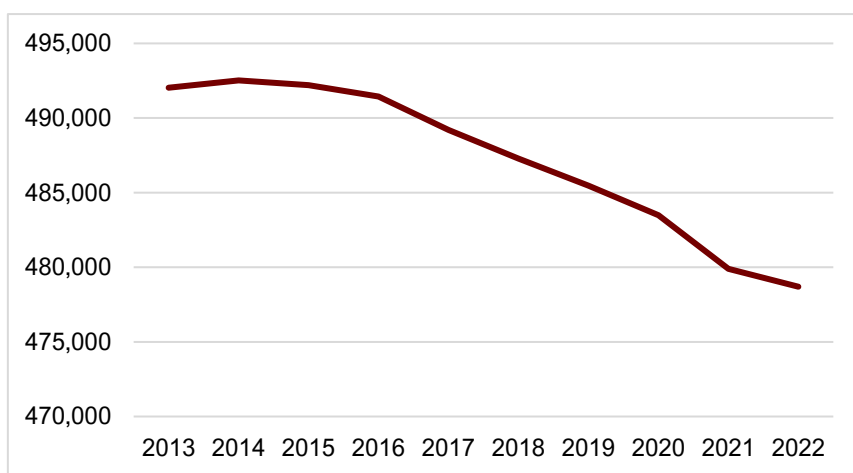
Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
ACS 5-Year Estimates (2013-2022)

Table 1: Five- and Ten-Year Population Change (ACS Data)

	5-Year Change		2018-2022 5-Year Change	10-Year Change		2013-2022 10-Year Change
	2018	2022		2013	2022	
Clinton	39,074	37,860	-3.1%	39,501	37,860	-4.2%
Columbia	66,220	64,924	-2.0%	67,021	64,924	-3.1%
Juniata	24,562	23,535	-4.2%	24,737	23,535	-4.9%
Lycoming	114,859	114,022	-0.7%	116,604	114,022	-2.2%
Mifflin	46,362	46,146	-0.5%	46,698	46,146	-1.2%
Montour	18,294	18,165	-0.7%	18,379	18,165	-1.2%
Northumberland	92,325	91,340	-1.1%	94,444	91,340	-3.3%
Snyder	40,466	39,797	-1.7%	39,711	39,797	0.2%
Union	45,114	42,908	-4.9%	44,932	42,908	-4.5%
Region	**487,276**	**478,697**	**-1.8%**	**492,027**	**478,697**	**2.7%**
Pennsylvania	12,791,181	12,989,208	1.6%	12,699,589	12,989,208	2.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Population Density

Public transportation is most efficient and effective in densely populated areas. The region's population density was 103 persons per square mile in 2022, lower than the statewide average of 290 persons per square mile. Northumberland County had the highest population density (about 200 persons per square mile) and Clinton County had the lowest (about 43 persons per square mile). The population densities of the remaining counties in the region were higher than the regional average except for Juniata and Lycoming counties (60 and 93 persons per square mile, respectively). The rather large land areas and considerable state forest/open space districts in several counties contribute to lower countywide population densities. Nevertheless, density can be an important factor for establishing public or human service transportation and/or determining the types of services to offer. Figure 3 depicts population density by Census tract. As would be expected, the highest population densities are in or surrounding the region's cities and boroughs.

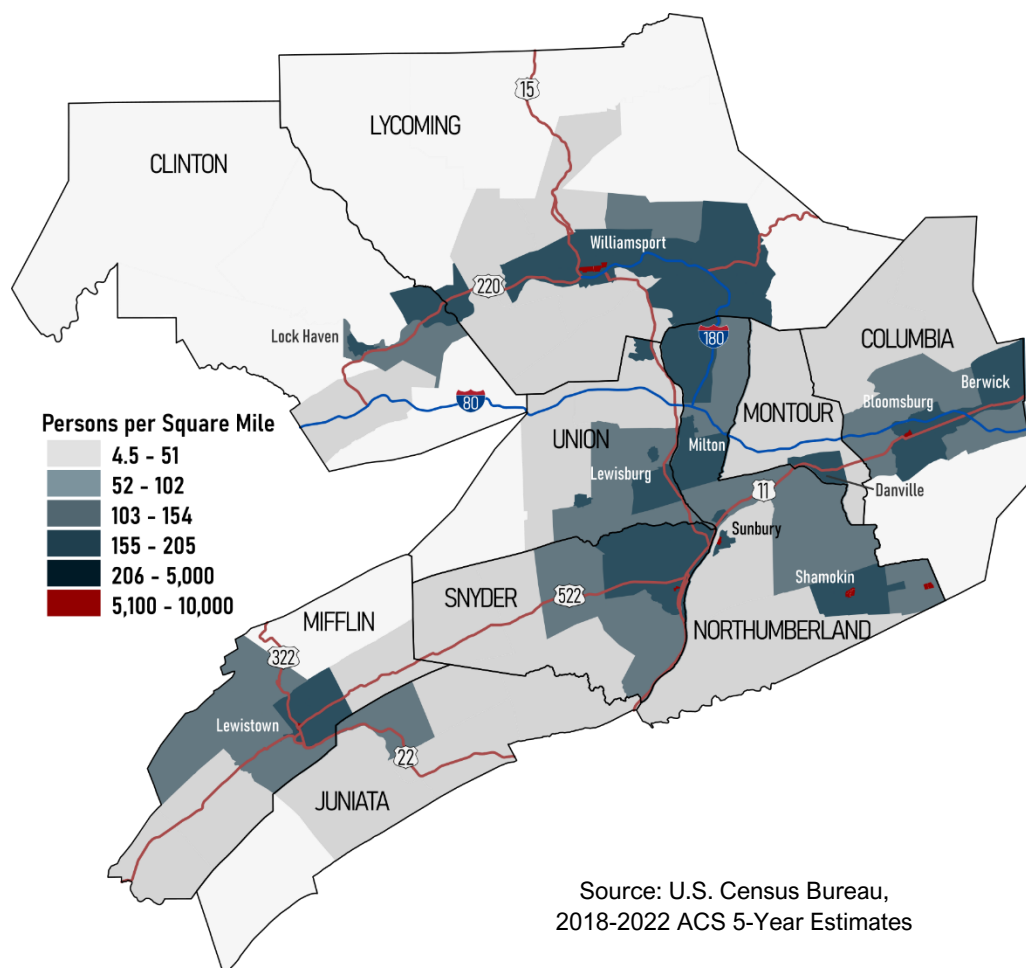Figure 3: Population Density by Census Tract, 2022

Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 2: Population Density by County

| | Population | | Land Area | | |
	Total	Percentage of Region	Total (Sq. Mi.)	Percentage of Region	Persons Per Square Mile
Clinton	37,860	7.9%	888.0	19.2%	42.6
Columbia	64,924	13.6%	483.2	10.4%	134.4
Juniata	23,535	4.9%	391.4	8.4%	60.1
Lycoming	114,022	23.8%	1,228.9	26.5%	92.8
Mifflin	46,146	9.6%	411.0	8.9%	112.3
Montour	18,165	3.8%	130.2	2.8%	139.5
Northumberland	91,340	19.1%	457.7	9.9%	199.6
Snyder	39,797	8.3%	328.8	7.1%	121.0
Union	42,908	9.0%	316.0	6.8%	135.8
Region	**478,697**	**100%**	**4,635.2**	**100%**	**103.3**
Pennsylvania	12,972,008	N/A	44,729.9	N/A	290.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Population 65 Years and Older

Persons 65 years of age and older are typically more reliant on public transportation compared to other age groups. It is also more common for these individuals to have limited income and experience challenges that limit their ability to operate a vehicle. Seniors accounted for 20.3 percent of the region's total population in 2022, indicating a slightly older composition than the statewide figure of 18.7 percent. Over the past decade, the region experienced a 15.6 percent increase in its senior population.

Figure 4: Percentage of Population Aged 65 Years or Older, 2013-2022

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates (2013-2022)

During the same time period, Snyder County experienced the highest percent increase of seniors in the region at 25 percent. This figure trends similarly with the state's percent change of 21.4 percent.
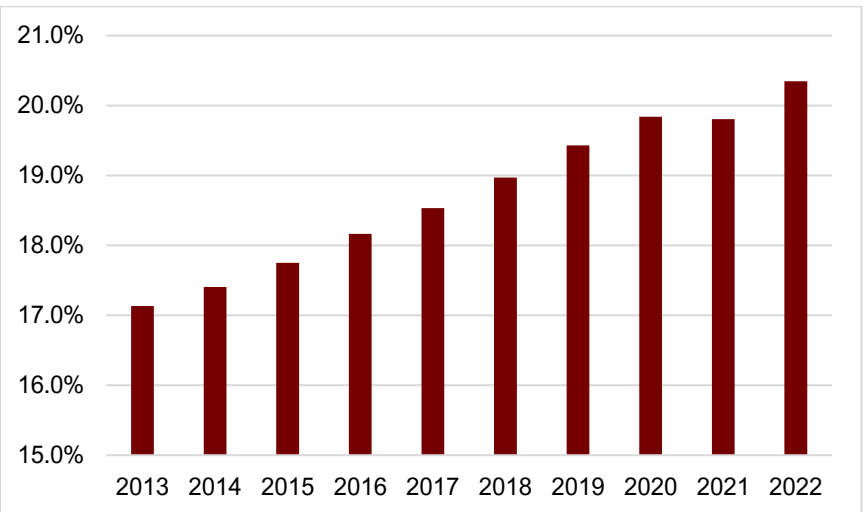
Figure 5: Population 65 Years and Older by Census Tract, 2022

Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates
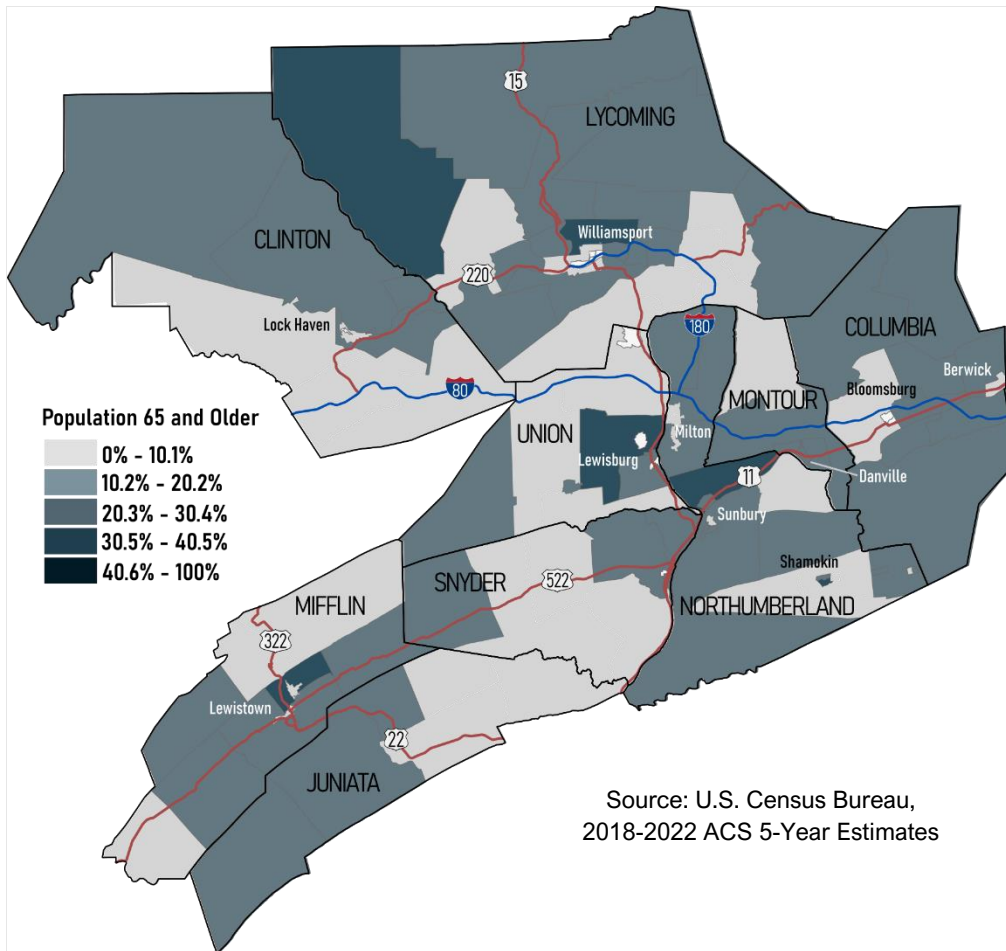
Table 3: Population 65 and Older, 2022

	Population 65+	Percent Population 65+
Clinton	7,311	19.3%
Columbia	12,945	19.9%
Juniata	4,839	20.6%
Lycoming	22,764	20.0%
Mifflin	9,980	21.6%
Montour	3,813	21.0%
Northumberland	19,725	21.6%
Snyder	7,891	19.8%
Union	8,138	19.0%
Region	**97,406**	**20.3%**
Pennsylvania	2,434,405	18.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Low-Income Population

Individuals with low incomes tend to rely more heavily on public transportation, because they may not be able to afford an automobile, or they may decide not to use their limited income for costly automobile ownership expenses. The 2022 ACS indicated that 56,368 residents in the region were living below the poverty level, which represents 12.5 percent of the total population for whom poverty status is determined. The largest percentage of low-income residents was in Mifflin County at 16.7 percent; the smallest was in Snyder County at 8.4 percent.

Table 4: Population Living Below the Poverty Level, 2022

	Population Below Poverty Level	Percentage Below Poverty Level
Clinton	4,771	13.1%
Columbia	9,313	15.3%
Juniata	2,082	9.0%
Lycoming	13,417	12.5%
Mifflin	7,571	16.7%
Montour	1,510	8.7%
Northumberland	10,872	12.4%
Snyder	3,101	8.4%
Union	3,731	10.8%
Region	**56,368**	**12.5%**
Pennsylvania	1,482,439	11.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 6: Low-Income Population by Census Tract, 2022

Population Below Poverty Level
- 0% – 6%
- 6.1% – 12.5%
- 12.6% – 20%
- 20.1% – 30.2%
- 30.3% – 49.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates
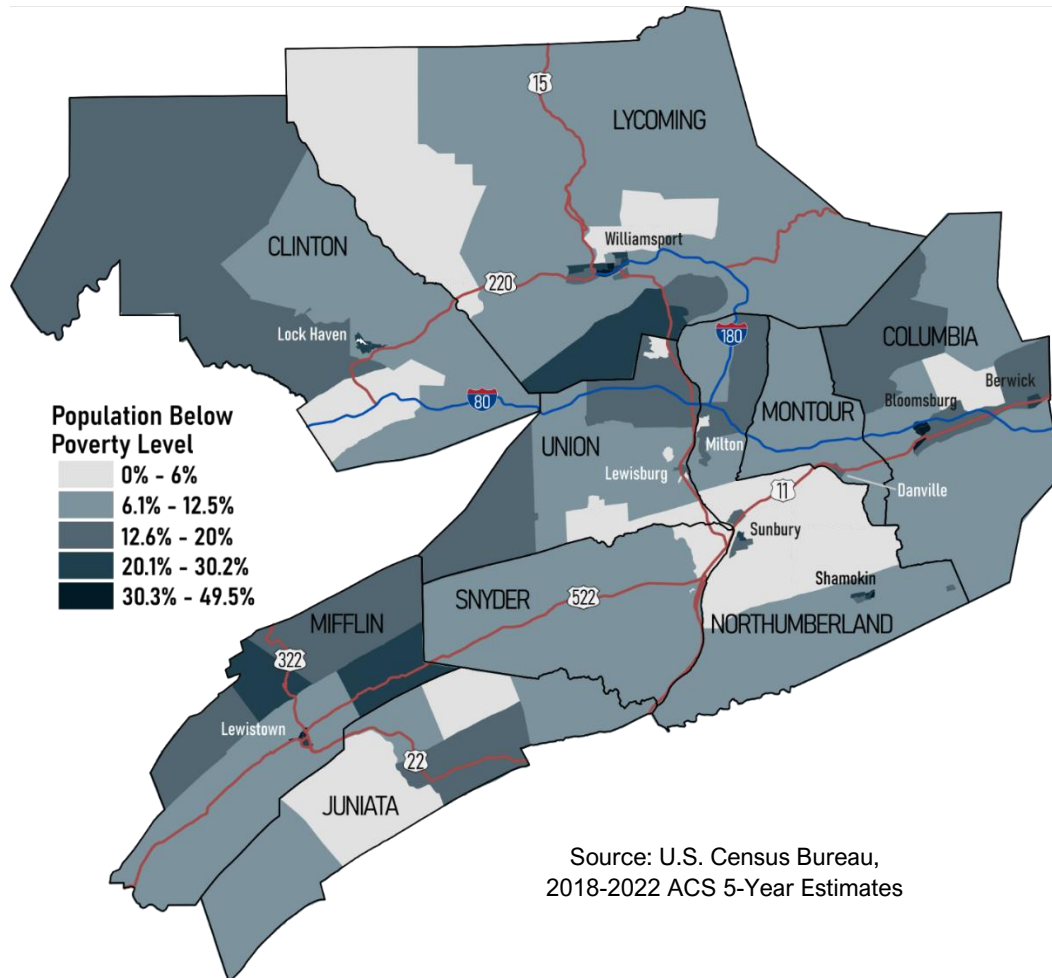
Individuals with Disabilities

As part of the ACS, a person is counted as having a disability if they report any of the six following disability types: hearing difficulty, vision difficulty, cognitive difficulty, ambulatory difficulty, self-care difficulty, or independent living difficulty. Persons with these disabilities could be less likely to drive and therefore more likely to be dependent on public transportation than the general population; they could also be eligible for discounted transit fares. Although the ACS disability designation does not automatically mean that the disability impacts an individual's mobility, it serves as an indicator of populations that may need additional transportation assistance.

In 2022, there were 71,006 individuals with disabilities living in the region—15.3 percent of the region's total civilian non-institutionalized population. Northumberland County had the highest proportion of individuals with a disability at 16.7 percent, and Juniata County had the lowest at 13.3 percent.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
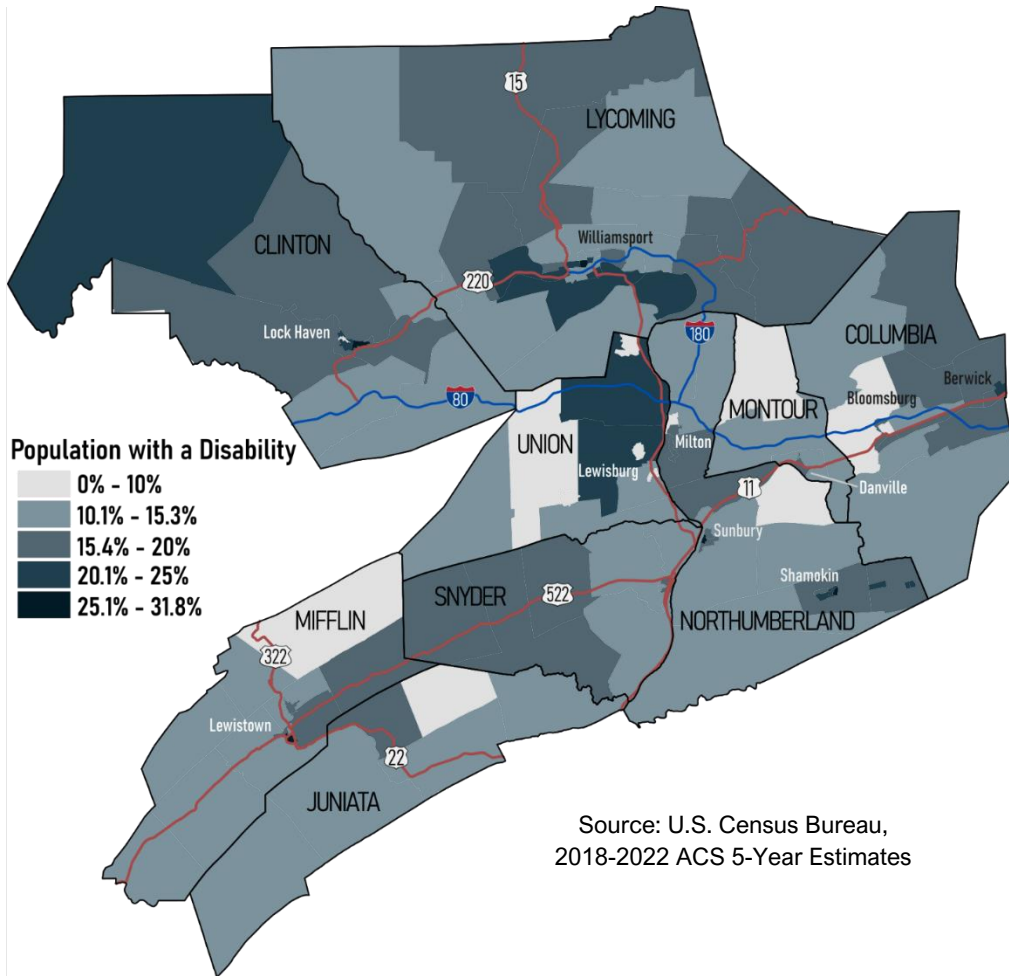2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 5: Total Civilian Non-Institutionalized Population Living with a Disability, 2022

	Population with a Disability	Percentage with a Disability
Clinton	5,993	16.0%
Columbia	9,193	14.3%
Juniata	3,101	13.3%
Lycoming	18,135	16.3%
Mifflin	6,453	14.2%
Montour	2,398	13.8%
Northumberland	14,704	16.7%
Snyder	5,852	14.9%
Union	5,177	13.5%
Region	**71,006**	**15.3%**
Pennsylvania	1,799,317	14.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Veterans

Many veterans, especially those with disabilities or mobility limitations, may face challenges in accessing services. Veterans may require specialized transportation services to reach healthcare facilities, veterans' centers, job training programs, and other essential services tailored to their needs. Those living in rural areas may have to travel long distances, amplifying barriers to these services that often have limited availability of appointments and service hours.

The 2022 ACS indicated that 29,932 residents in the region were veterans, which represents 7.8 percent of the total civilian population 18 years and over—a figure slightly higher than the state's percentage of 6.6 percent. The largest percentage of veteran residents was in Lycoming County at 9.1 percent; the smallest was in Snyder County at 5.5 percent. Of the 2022 regional veteran population, 31.7 percent had a disability and 6.5 percent were low-income.

Table 6: Veteran Population, 2022

	Percentage of Population that are Veterans	Percentage of Veterans with a Disability	Percentage of Veterans that are Low Income
Clinton	8.3%	33.9%	5.9%
Columbia	6.6%	31.1%	4.9%
Juniata	6.3%	39.4%	2.2%
Lycoming	9.1%	33.2%	5.4%
Mifflin	8.6%	34.8%	7.8%
Montour	7.7%	37.9%	8.3%
Northumberland	8.5%	26.5%	6.4%
Snyder	5.5%	32.6%	10.7%
Union	6.6%	26.9%	11.0%
Region	**7.8%**	**31.7%**	**6.5%**
Pennsylvania	6.6%	30.0%	6.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 8: Veteran Population by Census Tract, 2022

Veteran Population
- 0% – 3.8%
- 3.9% – 7.7%
- 7.8% – 11.6%
- 11.7% – 15.5%
- 15.6% – 100%
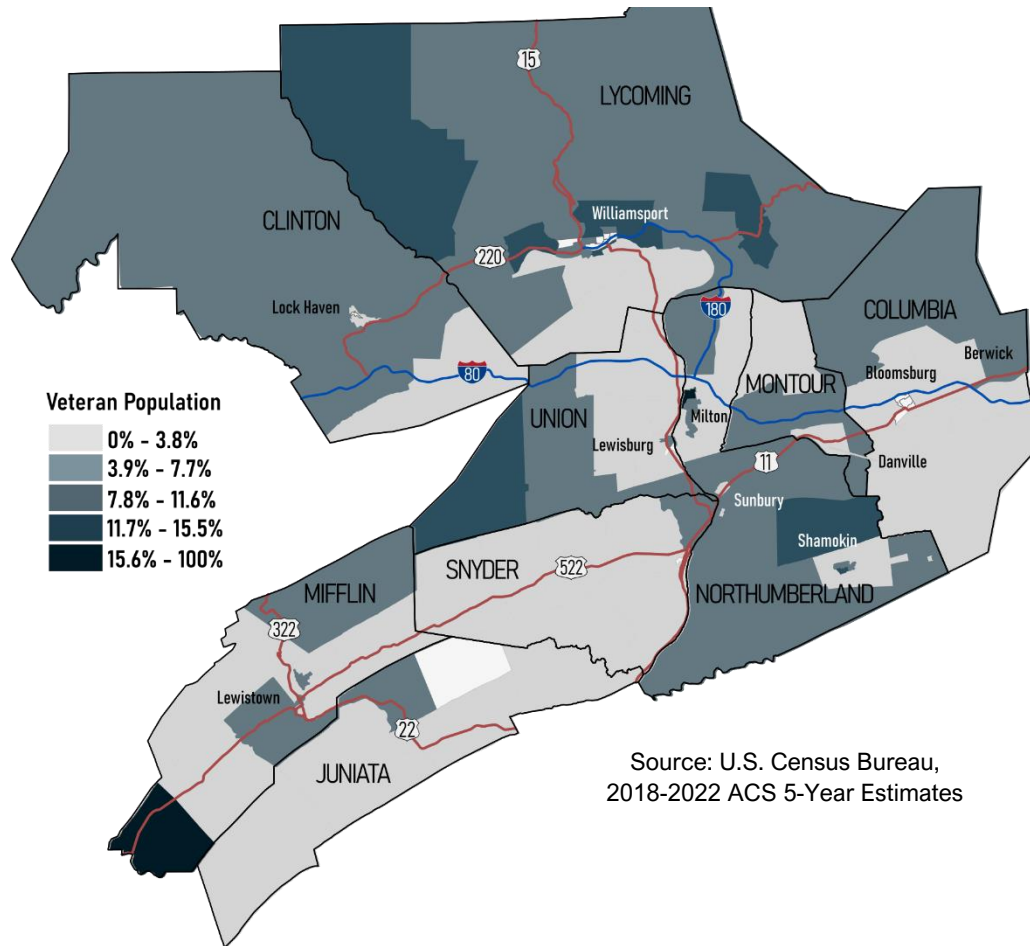
Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Vehicle Availability

Owning or having access to a vehicle directly relates to an individual's mobility choices. Households without at least one personal vehicle are more likely to depend on the mobility offered by public transit. People without access to a vehicle may rely on family, friends, or public transportation for trips that cannot be made on foot or by bicycle. Areas with significant urban populations often have a greater share of households without access to a vehicle than rural areas due to the availability of goods and services within walking distance and/or the availability of transit service.

While not owning a personal vehicle can be a lifestyle choice for residents of more urban areas, it can also be due to limiting factors such as low income or a disability. Especially in non-urban areas, carless households can be correlated with low-income households. Also, the SEDA-COG/WATS MPO area is home to significant Plain Sect populations, including Amish, Old Order Mennonites, and other religious groups that do not own motorized vehicles. These groups are not documented directly in Census counts but are typically reflected in data on households without vehicle access.

Table 7 lists the number of households by county without a vehicle available, as reported for the 2022 ACS. On average, 9 percent of the region's households had no vehicle available. Montour County had the highest percentage of households with no vehicle available (10.3 percent). Further, Geisinger Hospital, a major employer, is at a walkable location in the urban core of the Borough of Danville, and Montour County has undertaken Walk/Bike to Work marketing efforts as part of their "Live Where You Work" Initiative discussed in the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Figure 9 illustrates which Census tracts are significant for concentrations of carless households. As would be expected, several tracts in the most urban areas of the region have the highest percentages of households lacking access to a vehicle.

Table 7: Households with Zero Vehicles Available

	Households with Zero Vehicles	Percent with Zero Vehicles
Clinton	1,413	9.5%
Columbia	1,882	7.3%
Juniata	702	7.9%
Lycoming	4,295	9.4%
Mifflin	1,840	9.9%
Montour	785	10.3%
Northumberland	3,685	9.8%
Snyder	934	6.5%
Union	1,304	9.2%
Region	**16,840**	**9.0%**
Pennsylvania	548,519	10.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 9: Vehicle Availability by Census Tract, 2022

Households without a Vehicle Available

- 0% – 4.4%
- 4.5% – 8.9%
- 9.0% – 13.4%
- 13.5% – 17.9%
- 18.0% – 100%
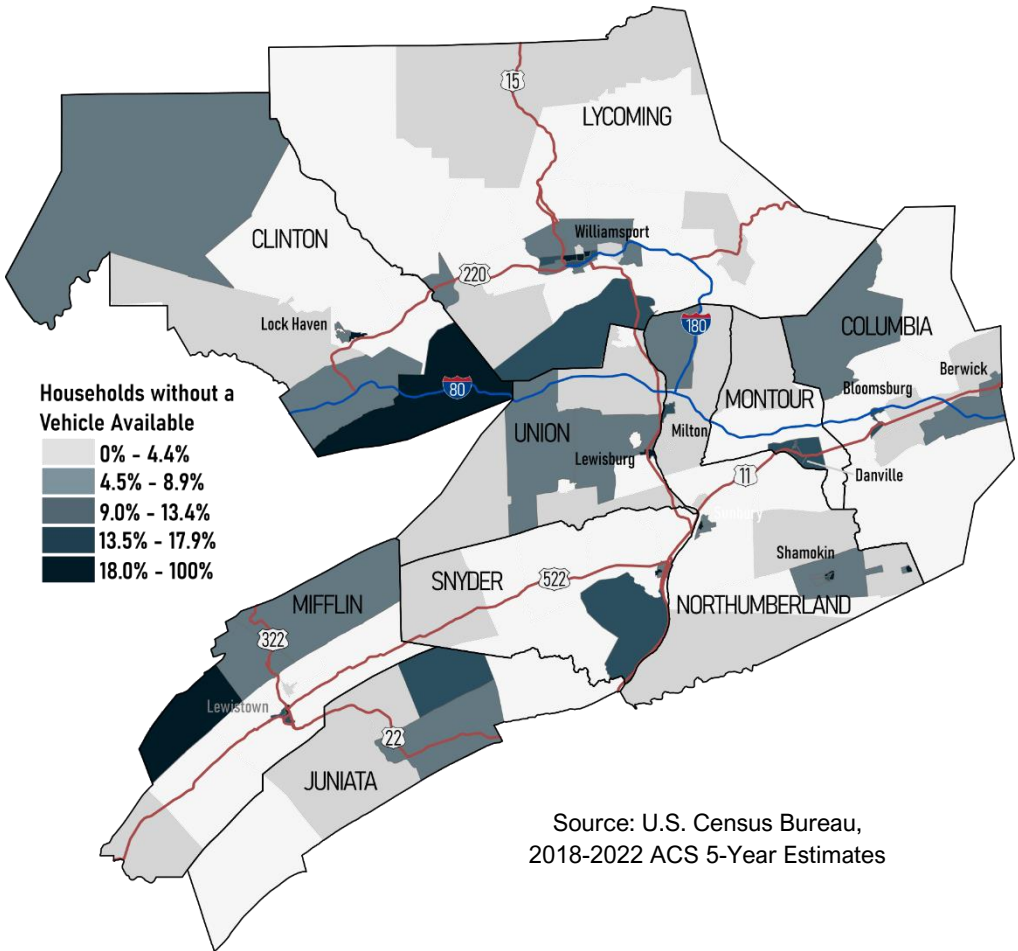
Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Limited English Proficiency Population

Executive Order 13166 on Limited English Proficiency (LEP) requires all federally funded agencies to make services more accessible to eligible persons who are not proficient in the English language. LEP persons are those individuals who do not speak English as their primary language, and who also have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. These language barriers affect a person's ability to obtain information about transportation services, navigate public transportation systems, understand signage, obtain a driver's license, and communicate their transportation needs to policymakers.

According to 2022 Census data, the region's LEP population percentage is 1.7 percent, compared to the statewide level of 4.5 percent. Lycoming County had the region's highest overall number of LEP persons (1,243).

As expected, some more urban tracts have among the highest percentages. However, several rural, large land area tracts also pop out with the highest LEP percentages. This is likely influenced by the Plain Sect communities, and higher incidences of German and Other West Germanic languages primarily spoken at home by these residents. Also, the margins of error are considerably high for the language data. The presence of the Lewisburg/Allenwood Federal Prisons in Union County represents special cases that likely skew the percentages for the Census tracts containing these correctional facilities.

Table 8: Limited English-Speaking Population, 2022

	Total Population	Primary Language Spoken at Home Other Than English and Speak English Less Than Very Well	
		Number	Percent
Clinton	35,812	492	1.4%
Columbia	62,111	544	0.9%
Juniata	22,171	792	3.6%
Lycoming	108,006	1,243	1.1%
Mifflin	43,184	1,044	2.4%
Montour	17,107	427	2.5%
Northumberland	86,783	1,114	1.3%
Snyder	37,710	844	2.2%
Union	41,012	1,306	3.2%
Region	**453,896**	**7,806**	**1.7%**
Pennsylvania	12,300,637	558,725	4.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 10: Limited English-Speaking Population by Census Tract, 2022
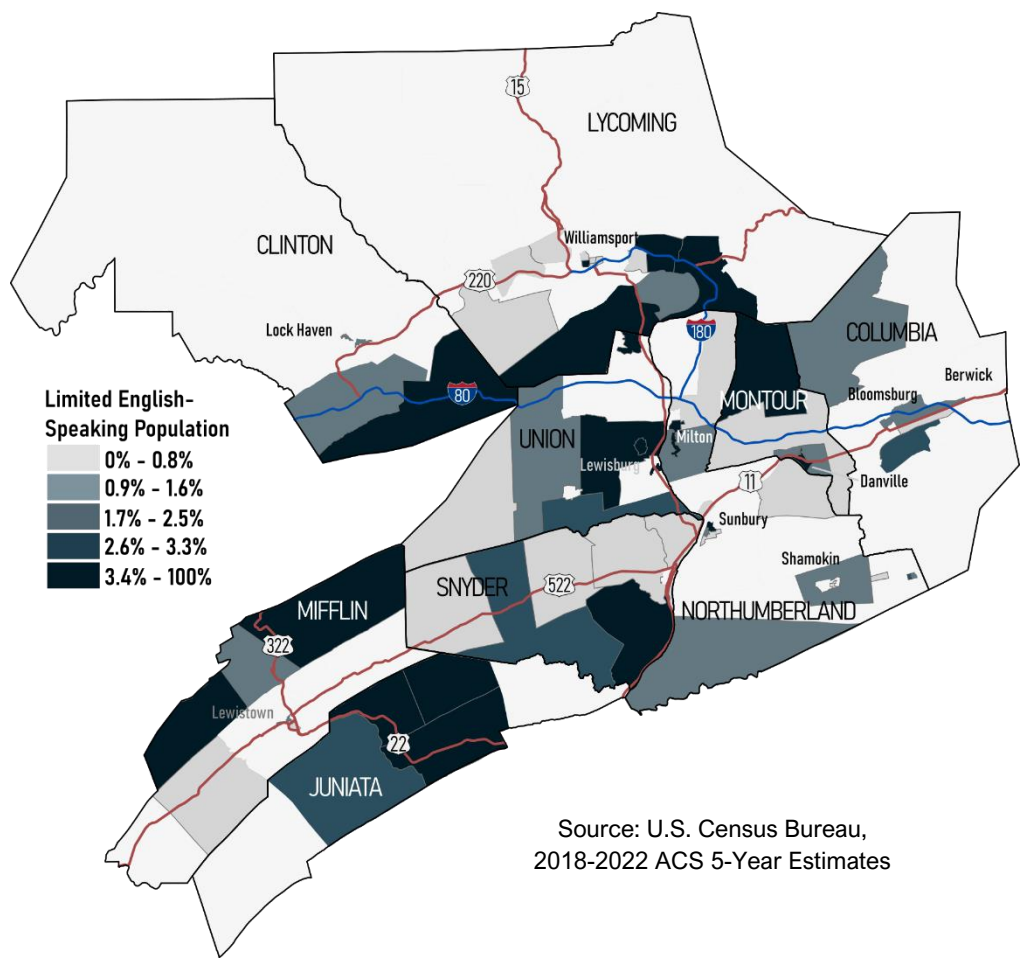
Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Female Head of Household with Children

Table 9 presents 2022 data on females heading a household with no husband present, and with at least one child under 18 years of age who is a son or daughter by birth, a stepchild, or an adopted child of the householder residing in the home. This factor was chosen for inclusion in this plan because there is a correlation between this characteristic and transit dependency. Lycoming County had the highest percentage in the region of female householders with no husband present and a child less than 18 years old (9.8 percent).

Table 9: Households Headed by Females with Children, No Husband Present, 2022

	Total Households	Female householder, no husband present, with own children under 18 years old	
		Number	Percent
Clinton	9,555	816	8.5%
Columbia	15,850	1,406	8.9%
Juniata	6,099	386	6.3%
Lycoming	28,974	2,833	9.8%
Mifflin	12,671	963	7.6%
Montour	5,099	425	8.3%
Northumberland	23,926	1,995	8.3%
Snyder	9,969	647	6.5%
Union	9,156	552	6.0%
Region	**121,299**	**10,023**	**8.3%**
Pennsylvania	3,277,894	307,072	9.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Non-Hispanic Minority Population

USDOT Order 5610.2(a) on Environmental Justice sets forth steps to prevent disproportionately high and adverse effects upon minority or low-income populations. In the order, "minority" means a person who is:

1. Black: a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa;
2. Hispanic or Latino: a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race;
3. Asian American: a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent;
4. American Indian and Alaska Native: a person having origins in any of the original people of North America, South America (including Central America), and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition; or
5. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

The U.S. Census Bureau does not include Hispanic or Latino as a racial category, because Hispanic is an ethnicity; persons of Hispanic origin can be of any race. The Census Bureau does,

however, consider two other categories in its race data: Some Other Race Alone and Two or More Races.

Table 10 presents 2022 data for the region's total non-Hispanic minority population: those that qualify as Black Alone, American Indian and Alaska Native Alone, Asian Alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Alone, Some Other Race Alone, or Two or More Races. The region's non-Hispanic minority population percentage was 5.9 percent, much lower than the statewide figure of 17.4 percent. Lycoming County had the region's highest overall number of non-Hispanic minority residents (10,202) and both Lycoming and Union County had the highest proportions (8.9 percent).

Figure 12 maps minority population density by Census tract. As expected, the urban Williamsport area tracts have among the highest percentages. The presence of the Lewisburg/Allenwood Federal Prisons in Union County and the Coal Township State Prison in Northumberland County represent special cases that likely skew the percentages for the Census tracts containing these correctional facilities.

Table 10: Non-Hispanic Minority Population

	Total Population	Total Non-Hispanic Minority Population	
		Number	Percentage
Clinton	37,860	1,495	3.9%
Columbia	64,924	3,224	5.0%
Juniata	23,535	703	3.0%
Lycoming	114,022	10,202	8.9%
Mifflin	46,146	1,757	3.8%
Montour	18,165	1,291	7.1%
Northumberland	91,340	4,599	5.0%
Snyder	39,797	1,174	2.9%
Union	42,908	3,823	8.9%
Region	**478,697**	**28,268**	**5.9%**
Pennsylvania	12,989,208	2,262,952	17.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 12: Non-Hispanic Minority Population by Census Tract, 2022

Non-Hispanic
Minority Population
- 0% – 2.9%
- 3.0% – 5.8%
- 5.9% – 8.8%
- 8.9% – 11.7%
- 11.8% – 100%
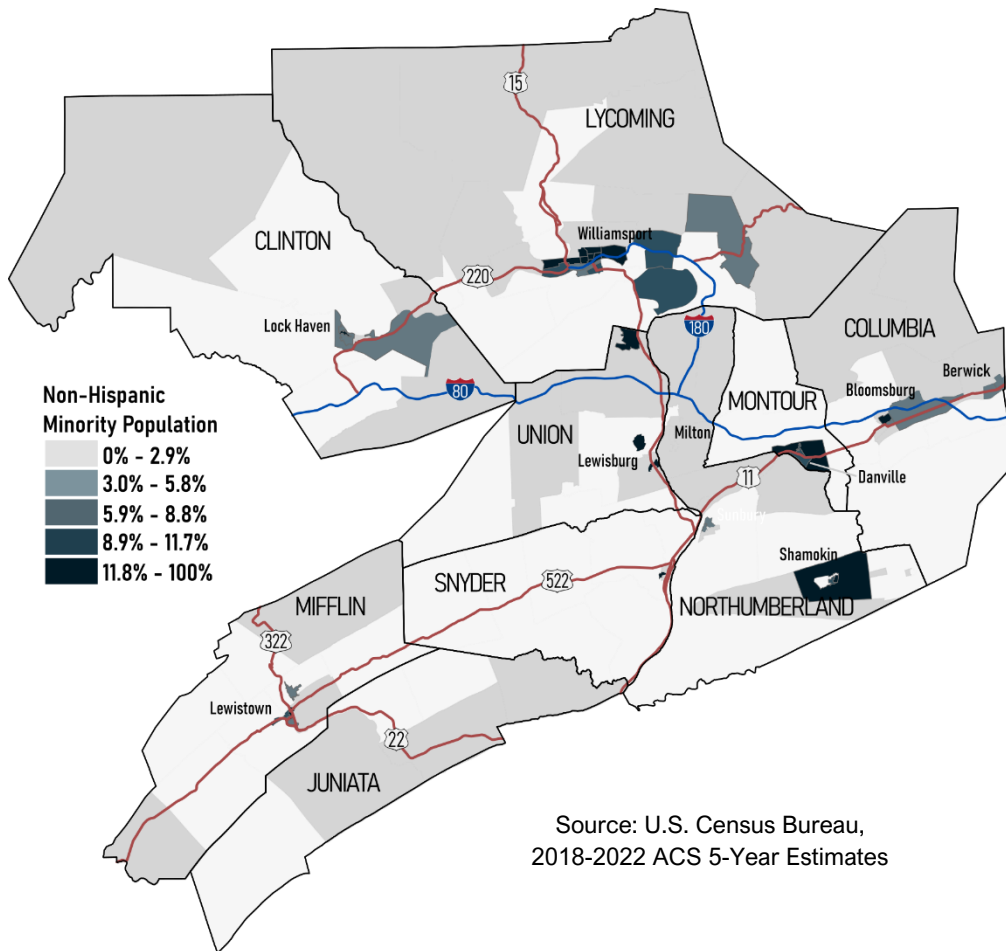
Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Hispanic or Latino Minority Population

As noted previously, the USDOT considers Hispanic or Latino to be a minority population, whereas the U.S. Census Bureau recognizes that Hispanic or Latino is technically an ethnicity, with persons of Hispanic origin possibly being of any race. Statistics associated with Hispanic-origin populations are used in numerous social justice programs and are vital in making policy decisions. There can be a correlation between Hispanic origin and transit dependency. In addition, Hispanic migrant or seasonal workers that sometimes reside in the area could be reliant on public transportation.

Table 11 presents 2022 data for the region's total Hispanic minority population: those individuals, regardless of race, that can be classified as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or of another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. The region's Hispanic minority population percentage was 3.1 percent, compared to the statewide level of 8.1 percent. Northumberland County had the region's highest overall number of Hispanic residents (3,879), while Union County had the highest percentage of Hispanic residents (5.6 percent).

Figure 13 maps Hispanic population concentrations by Census tract. As would be expected, the more urban tracts have among the highest percentages of Hispanic residents. The presence of United States Penitentiaries at Lewisburg and Allenwood in Union County, and the State

Correctional Institution at Coal Township in Northumberland County, represent special cases that likely skew the percentages for the Census tracts containing these correctional facilities.

Table 11: Hispanic or Latino Minority Population, 2022

	Total Population	Hispanic or Latino Minority Population (may be of any race)	
		Number	Percentage
Clinton	37,860	654	1.7%
Columbia	64,924	2,219	3.4%
Juniata	23,535	985	4.2%
Lycoming	114,022	2,573	2.3%
Mifflin	46,146	825	1.8%
Montour	18,165	517	2.8%
Northumberland	91,340	3,879	4.2%
Snyder	39,797	931	2.3%
Union	42,908	2,406	5.6%
Region	**478,697**	**14,989**	**3.1%**
Pennsylvania	12,989,208	1,055,108	8.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Figure 13: Hispanic or Latino Minority Population by Census Tract, 2022

Hispanic or Latino Minority Population
- 0% – 1.5%
- 1.6% – 3.0%
- 3.1% – 4.6%
- 4.7% – 6.1%
- 6.2% – 100%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau,
2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates
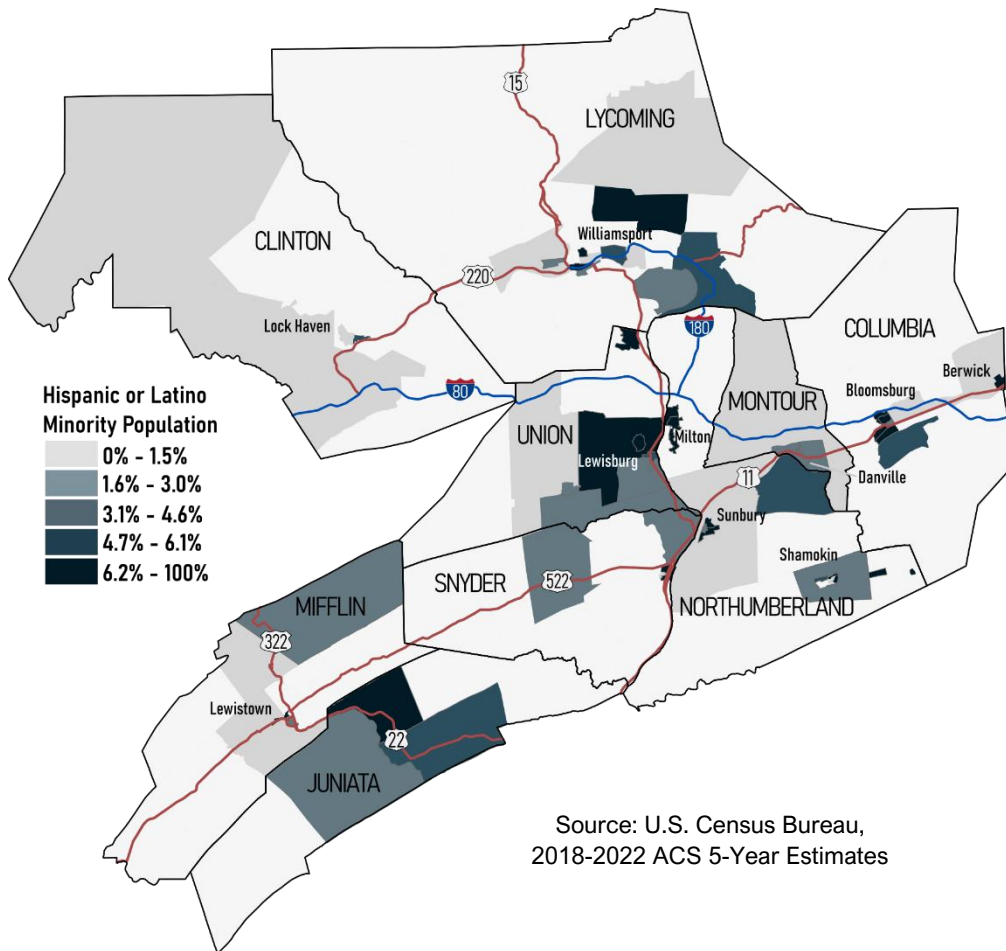
Means of Transportation to Work

Driving to work alone is, by far, the most common method of commuting for the region's workers, as it is for most Pennsylvanians. As of 2022, about 78 percent of the region's workforce (those workers 16 years and over) drove alone to work, and 71 percent of Pennsylvanians commuted via single-occupant vehicles. The region's carpooling and walk to work means also corresponded with the statewide percentages. However, only 0.5 percent of the region's workers used public transportation for traveling to work, while 4.3 percent of Pennsylvanians used public transportation for commuting. Just over 7 percent of the region's workforce worked from home with no commute, trailing behind Pennsylvania's average of 11.8 percent.

Mode choice data from the 2018-2022 ACS are summarized in Figure 14. The region's second-most-common mode was carpooling at 9.3 percent, followed by working from home (no commute) at 7.2 percent, and walking at 3.8 percent. Juniata County and Mifflin County saw high rates of carpooling (11.3 percent each), likely due to residents carpooling to major worksites located in the Harrisburg and State College urbanized areas. High carpooling rates may indicate areas where commuting costs and roadway congestion can be mitigated through public transportation use or more organized commuter services.

As mentioned, residents' use of public transportation (which by definition includes bus or trolley bus, streetcar or trolley car, subway, railroad, or ferryboat) as a means of travel to work is extremely limited in much of the region. Fixed-route, local transit service is only available in portions of Lycoming County and Northumberland County. If non-drivers are not using public transportation, they are finding other means of travel to their workplace destinations, such as rides with family or friends, or via human service transportation. As would be expected, use of public transportation as a means of getting to work is highest in those areas that are most urban, where access to service is the greatest, namely the City of Williamsport and surrounding areas.

Figure 14: Means of Transportation to Work, 2022
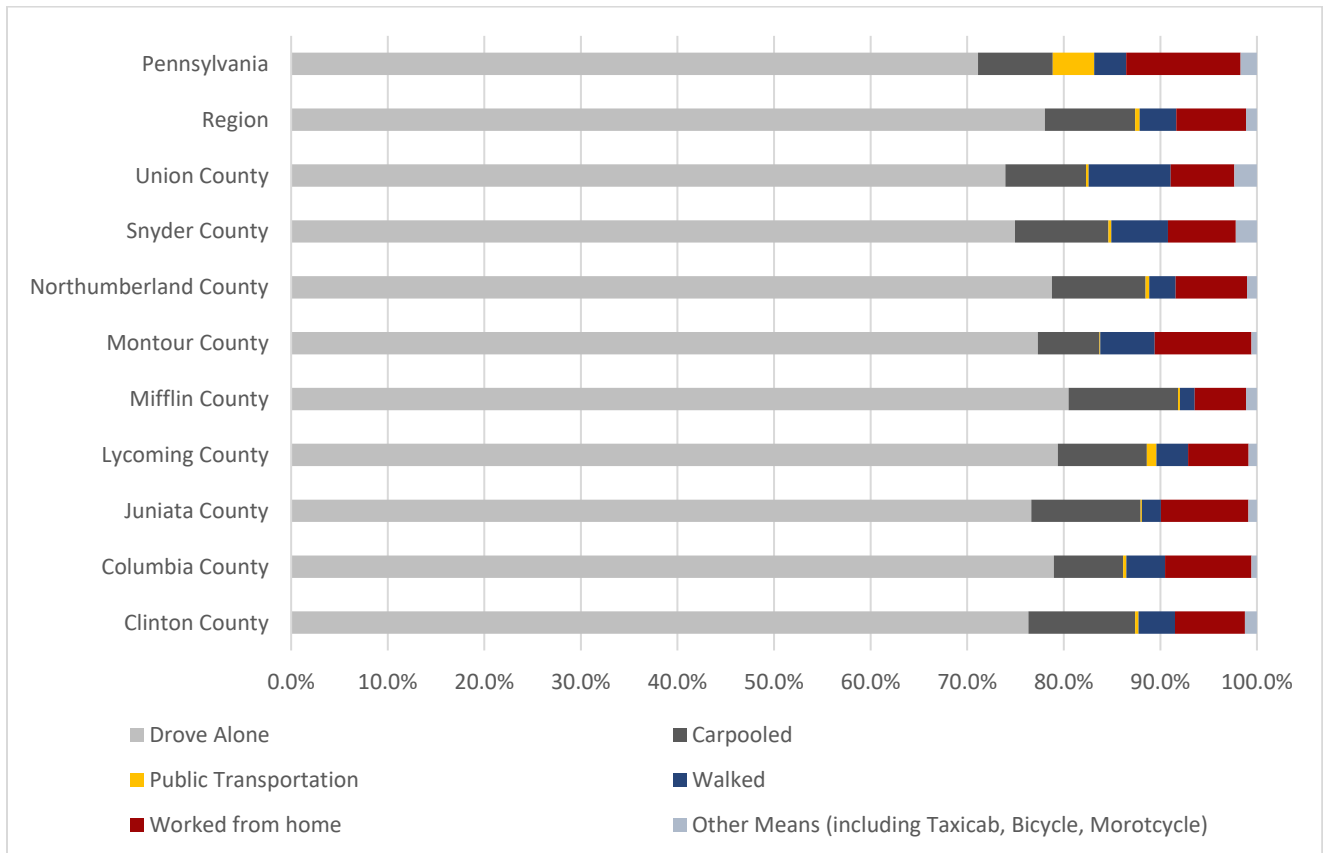
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Mean Travel Time to Work

Mean travel time to work (in minutes) is the average travel time that workers usually take to get from home to work (one way). The mean travel time to work varies somewhat throughout the region. As shown in the figure on the next page, workers who live in Juniata County have the longest average commute time, at 29.5 minutes, while workers who live in Montour County enjoy the shortest average commute time, at 16.8 minutes. The amount of time workers spend commuting is an important indicator of spatial distribution of workers' residences and their places of work. Commuting time shifts may provide insight into other important community characteristics such as changes in workforce participation rates, infrastructure upgrades, and shifts in availability and usage of different transportation modes.

Figure 15: Mean Travel Time to Work (in Minutes)
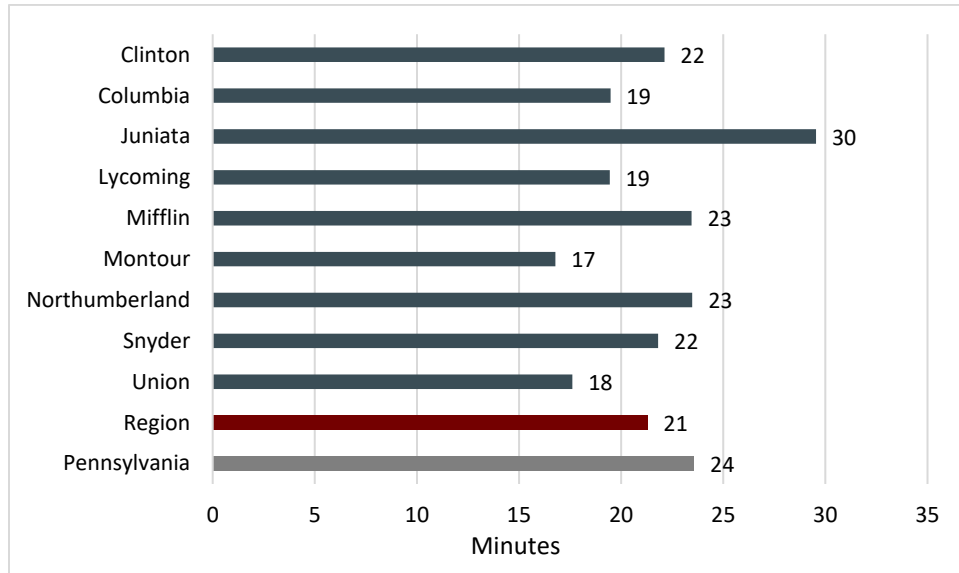
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2018-2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Employment

The need for and the nature of public transportation and human services in an area relates to the employment conditions. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer Household Dynamics (LEHD) Quarterly Workforce Indicators (QWI) data for the 1st quarter of 2023, employment in the region totaled 182,870 jobs. Table 12 shows the job numbers by county and their percentage of the regional total. Over half of the jobs in the region were in three counties: Lycoming, Northumberland, and Columbia.

Table 12: Employment Numbers by County, 1st Quarter 2023

	Jobs	Percentage of Regional Total
Clinton	11,684	6.4%
Columbia	24,815	13.6%
Juniata	6,463	3.5%
Lycoming	48,350	26.4%
Mifflin	15,698	8.6%
Montour	17,258	9.4%
Northumberland	26,953	14.7%
Snyder	15,477	8.5%
Union	16,172	8.8%
Region	**182,870**	**100%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, LEHD QWI for 1st Quarter 2023

The City of Williamsport in Lycoming County was the region's top employment center in 2021 (latest available Census data), with almost 20,000 jobs, followed by Montour County's Mahoning Township with 12,476 jobs, and Lycoming County's Loyalsock Township with 6,163 jobs. The top

10 municipalities, by jobs, are presented in Table 13. Together, these municipalities comprised 38.2 percent of the nine-county region's job totals. Overall, most of the top workplace destinations in the area are concentrated along the major transportation corridors, including US 11, US 15, US 220, I-80 and I-180. Major employment concentrations are a good indicator of land use patterns supportive of transit for work trips.

Table 13: Top 10 Municipalities by Employment, 2021

	Jobs	Percent of Region Total
Williamsport City (Lycoming, PA)	19,397	10.9%
Mahoning Township (Montour, PA)	12,476	7.0%
Loyalsock Township (Lycoming, PA)	6,163	3.5%
Bloomsburg Town (Columbia, PA)	5,407	3.1%
Milton Borough (Northumberland, PA)	4,649	2.6%
Kelly Township (Union, PA)	4,283	2.4%
Monroe Township (Snyder, PA)	4,219	2.4%
Sunbury City (Northumberland, PA)	3,947	2.2%
Berwick Borough (Columbia, PA)	3,870	2.2%
Lock Haven City (Clinton, PA)	3,347	1.9%
Region	**177,181**	**100%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Employment Statistics, 2021

Commutation Patterns

Commutation patterns vary widely among the 9 counties in the Plan region. Table 14 provides a breakdown of the top three commute destination counties for residents of each of the region's counties, using the latest available data (2016-2020 ACS Estimates). For all nine counties, the top commute destination was the residents' home county. Lycoming County, at 84.4%, leads the region in having the greatest share of resident workers employed within the county of residence. Juniata County, at 51.5%, had the lowest percentage of workers who worked in the county where they resided. Likewise, Northumberland and Montour Counties also export over 40% of their resident workers to employment destinations outside of the residence county. The journey to work numbers reveal that the single highest percentage export of resident workers to another county is the 16.9% of Clinton County residents commuting to work in Lycoming County; the highest total number is the 4,555 resident workers from Northumberland County commuting to Montour County for employment.

Resident County	Commuting County	2016-2020 ACS Estimates	
		Number of Commuters	Percent of Resident County's Commuters
Clinton County	Clinton County	11,504	66.1%
	Lycoming County	2,940	16.9%
	Centre County	1,649	9.5%
Columbia County	Columbia County	20,377	66.7%
	Montour County	3,975	13.0%
	Luzerne County	2,858	9.4%
Juniata County	Juniata County	5,871	51.5%
	Dauphin County	1,337	11.7%
	Mifflin County	820	7.2%
Lycoming County	Lycoming County	43,901	84.4%
	Clinton County	1,798	3.5%
	Union County	1,589	3.1%
Mifflin County	Mifflin County	15,353	70.2%
	Centre County	2,037	9.3%
	Huntingdon County	1,221	5.6%
Montour County	Montour County	5,129	59.5%
	Northumberland County	1,109	12.9%
	Columbia County	976	11.3%
Northumberland County	Northumberland County	21,178	52.1%
	Montour County	4,555	11.2%
	Union County	4,153	10.2%
Snyder County	Snyder County	12,225	62.3%
	Union County	2,341	11.9%
	Northumberland County	2,019	10.3%
Union County	Union County	10,976	62.7%
	Northumberland County	2,454	14.0%
	Snyder County	1,305	7.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 ACS Estimates, Special Tabulation: Census Transportation Planning Products Program

Figure 16 below illustrates data from Table 14 and the larger 2016-2020 ACS dataset, breaking down commuter flows by the following ranges: 500-1,000; 1,000-2,000; 2,000-3,000; and greater than 3,000. This figure graphically shows the interdependencies and relationships each county has with its counterparts in the region and surrounding counties with regard to the location of its respective workforce. The graphic shows that Northumberland and Montour Counties are major attractors for workers living in other counties, since they are the only counties that draw at least 500 commuters from 4 surrounding counties. As referenced earlier, there are heavy worker commuter flows from Northumberland County into Montour County, Columbia County into Montour County, and from Northumberland County into Union County.

Figure 16: Commutation Flows
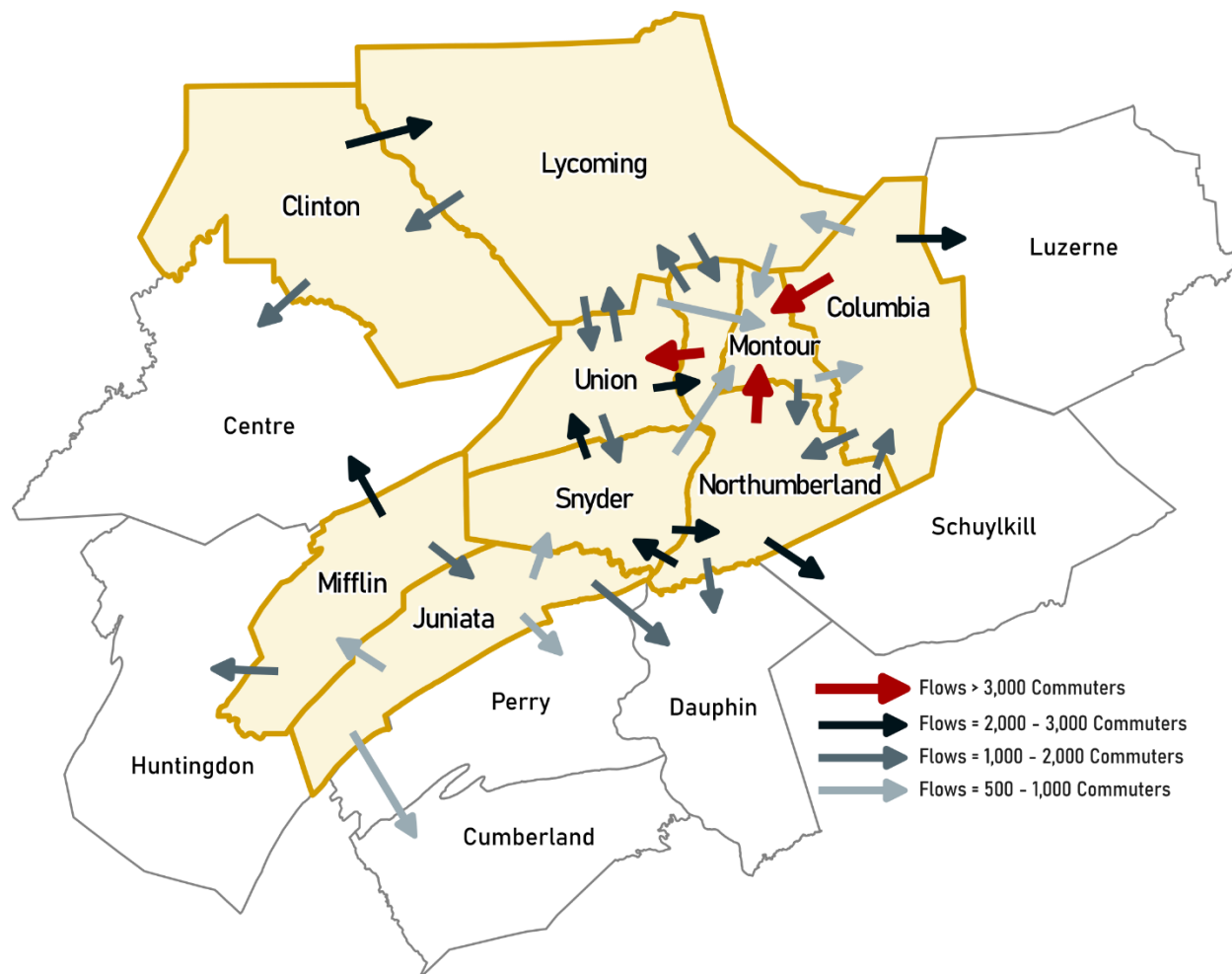
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 ACS Estimates, Special Tabulation: Census Transportation Planning Products Program

Within the plan area, there are several major business and community activity centers. These centers serve as logical destinations or generators for many transportation trips. These attractions include medical centers, large retail establishments and shopping centers, senior citizen facilities (i.e., nursing/retirement homes and senior centers), post-secondary schools, government centers, and public social service agencies. Table 15 uses the PA Department of Labor & Industry's Center for Workforce Information & Analysis to identify major employers by county. Comparing these employer locations to the areas exhibiting higher transit-dependent characteristics (discussed

earlier in this profile) can indicate the likely travel patterns and destinations for persons using public transportation to meet mobility needs.

Table 15: Major Employers, 2nd Quarter 2023

Rank	Employer	Rank	Employer
Clinton County		**Columbia County**	
1	First Quality Products Inc	1	Geisinger System Services
2	First Quality Tissue LLC	2	PA State System of Higher Education
3	Keystone Central School District	3	Wise Foods Inc
4	PA State System of Higher Education	4	The Webstaurant Store
5	Wal-Mart Associates Inc	5	Dollar Tree Stores Distribution Ctr
6	NexTier	6	Big Heart Pet Brands
7	Truck-Lite Co LLC	7	Met Express Inc
8	Clinton County Commissioners	8	Kawneer Company Inc
9	State Government	9	Geisinger-Bloomsburg Hospital
10	Nutek Disposables Inc	10	Wal-Mart Associates Inc
Juniata County		**Lycoming County**	
1	Master Woodcraft Cabinetry LLC	1	The Williamsport Hospital
2	Empire Kosher Poultry Inc	2	State Government
3	Juniata County School District	3	Pennsylvania College of Technology
4	Champion Modular Inc	4	Susquehanna Physician Services
5	Plain & Fancy Custom Cabinetry LLC	5	Williamsport Area School District
6	State Government	6	West Pharmaceutical Services Inc
7	Pennian Bank	7	Weis Markets Inc
8	Sanitation Solutions Plus	8	Lycoming County
9	Weis Markets Inc	9	Lycoming Engines
10	Juniata County Commissioners	10	CS Group Payroll Services LLC
Mifflin County		**Montour County**	
1	Geisinger-Lewistown Hospital	1	Geisinger Medical Center
2	Mifflin County School District	2	Geisinger System Services
3	Standard Steel LLC	3	Geisinger Clinic
4	Philips Ultrasound Inc	4	Geisinger Health Plan
5	Trinity Plastics Inc	5	State Government
6	Geisinger Clinic	6	Great Dane LLC
7	Wal-Mart Associates Inc	7	Danville Area School District
8	First Quality Retail Services	8	GTI Pennsylvania LLC
9	Overhead Door Corp	9	Geisinger HealthSouth Rehab Hospital
10	Valley View Haven	10	United States Gypsum Company

Northumberland County	
1	Weis Markets Inc
2	Knoebels Amusement Resort
3	State Government
4	Conagra Foods
5	Northumberland County
6	Furman Foods Inc
7	Watsontown Trucking Co Inc
8	Geisinger Medical Center
9	Wal-Mart Associates Inc
10	Central Susquehanna IU

Snyder County	
1	State Government
2	Wood-Mode LLC
3	Susquehanna University
4	National Beef Packing Company
5	Selinsgrove Area School District
6	Professional Building Systems Inc
7	Conestoga Wood Specialties
8	Wal-Mart Associates Inc
9	Midd-West School District
10	United Cerebral Palsy of Central PA

Union County	
1	Bucknell University
2	Evangelical Community Hospital
3	Federal Government
4	Evangelical Medical Services
5	Wal-Mart Associates Inc
6	Miracle Recreation Equipment Co
7	Ritz-Craft Corporation
8	Mifflinburg Area School District
9	Elkay Wood Products Company
10	White Deer Run Incorporated

Source: PA Department of Labor & Industry's Center for Workforce Information & Analysis, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2nd Quarter 2023; Federal and State Government Entities Aggregated

Existing Transportation Services

The SEDA-COG/WATS MPO region is served by a variety of public transportation services, including fixed-route, demand-responsive, intercity bus, and taxi services. Providers for these services are listed in <mark>Error! Reference source not found.</mark> Table 16. Assessing existing public transportation resources is fundamental to developing a coordinated public transit–human services transportation plan. A list of known current transportation providers (public, private, and non-profit) was compiled to shape a picture of what public transportation services are currently available. Most of the transportation services provided in the SEDA-COG MPO region are shared-ride/demand-responsive, primarily serving the needs of seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income users. Fixed-route transit systems serve urban areas and towns in more heavily populated rural areas. In addition, Amtrak has a station stop in Lewistown, Mifflin County, making passenger rail service available to the region's population. Fullington Bus offers stops in the region on its intercity bus service. Since the previous report, several local taxi companies have ceased service, leaving the area with two taxi companies offering limited service. There is no evidence of any Transportation Network Company (TNC) (e.g., Uber, Lyft) playing a significant role in meeting transportation needs outside of Williamsport.

Table 16: Regional Service Providers

Provider Name	Service Type	Service Area
River Valley Transit	Fixed-route	Clinton; Lycoming
Lower Anthracite Transit System	Fixed-route	Northumberland – Shamokin to Mt. Carmel
rabbittransit	Shared-ride/demand-responsive service	Columbia; Montour; Northumberland; Snyder; Union
Stop Hopper (rabbittransit)	Scheduled microtransit	Bloomsburg/Danville; Lewisburg/Milton; Selinsgrove/Sunbury
STEP, Inc.	Shared-ride/demand-responsive service	Lycoming; Clinton
Call A Ride Service, Inc.	Demand-responsive	Juniata; Mifflin
Greyhound	Intercity bus	Mifflin
Fullington Trailways (operating on behalf of Greyhound)	Intercity Bus Service	Clinton; Columbia; Lycoming; Mifflin; Montour; Northumberland; Snyder; Union
Amtrak	Passenger rail	Mifflin

FIXED-ROUTE SERVICES

Fixed-route service is that which is operated over designated routes according to a published schedule and is available to the general public. Passengers can board and disembark at any bus stop along the established route. There is currently only one fixed-route service in the SEDA-COG MPO region—the Lower Anthracite Transit System (LATS), operated by the Borough of Mount

Carmel. Three of the SEDA-COG MPO region's universities (Bucknell, Bloomsburg, and Susquehanna) operate small campus-based fixed-route systems. In the WATS MPO region, River Valley Transit Authority (RVTA) is the fixed-route transit provider serving the Williamsport area.

SHARED-RIDE/DEMAND-RESPONSIVE SERVICES

All parts of the region are served by shared-ride, or demand-responsive transportation, where the route and destination are determined by passenger request. Shared-ride service provides local door-to-door transportation for persons not served by fixed-route providers and for persons who cannot use fixed-route service. Shared-ride service is open to the general public and operates within an established geographic service area and within established days and hours of service. In most cases passengers must reserve a trip at least one day in advance. The shared-ride provider charges a fare for each trip. The fare is paid by the passenger, by a sponsoring program, or by a combination of the passenger and a sponsoring program. There are federal, state, and local programs that make shared-ride service affordable for people who need shared-ride service to access medical services, shopping, education, and social activities.

Human service agencies and programs contract with shared-ride providers to provide special services beyond the parameters established for the general public. This is non-public service for which the operator is reimbursed on an hourly or distance basis rather than according to the public fare structure.

INTERCITY BUS SERVICE

Intercity bus service is typically operated by private companies and provides connections between communities and over longer distances. Intercity service schedules are typically designed to serve longer-distance travelers, which often results in less-attractive short-distance service (such as within the plan area). Greyhound offers a subsidized Harrisburg to Pittsburgh intercity route that serves Lewistown in Mifflin County; however Fullington Trailways provides intercity bus service between State College and Wilkes-Barre, State

Figure 17: Greyhound Bus (allianceok.com, 2024)

College and Harrisburg, State College and Pittsburgh, Williamsport and Philadelphia, and Williamsport and Easton on behalf of Greyhound. Of special note is Fullington's State College to Harrisburg Early Morning Bus. The route runs along Route 322 with stops in Lewistown, Mifflintown, and Thompsontown. Although many of the intercity routes connect parts of the region with common work destinations, the Early Morning Bus route is a prime example of an alternative poised to provide commuter service.

Further information about the routes and communities served can be found on the carriers' websites, or through the PennDOT Bureau of Public Transportation website. In addition to the state-sponsored intercity bus service, private contractors offer routes through the region. The

most prominent example is the Megabus service. Although Megabus routes may pass through the region (to stops in State College, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, New York, etc.), routes have yet to be scheduled to points within the region. Trip availability varies and can be identified by contacting Megabus directly or via http://us.megabus.com.

TAXI SERVICE AND TNCS

Taxi service is also demand-responsive, being hailed or called by customers for same-day trip requests. Taxi service is available in a small portion of the area with very limited days and hours of service. Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), such as Uber and Lyft, are also demand-responsive and function similarly to taxis. TNCs do not operate reliably in most of the SEDA-COG and Williamsport MPO areas.

PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

The Amtrak *Pennsylvanian* travels daily between New York City and Pittsburgh via Philadelphia and passes through Mifflin and Juniata counties. Amtrak service can be accessed from the Lewistown Station with connections to nationwide destinations. PennDOT plans to initiate a second daily train trip and to invest in infrastructure along this route which would allow faster, more comfortable, and more convenient service. Improvements for the Lewistown Station are planned to accommodate the additional service and enhance access for individuals with disabilities. The SEDA-COG MPO supports the planned improvements and potential multimodal connections to the Lewistown station.

VANPOOL PROGRAMS

Vanpool programs, primarily through Commute with Enterprise, are another option to serve the region's commuters. A vanpool is typically a group of five or more riders with common work commutes that join to save time, money, and reduce stress on the way to work. Enterprise provides a flexible fleet of recent-model vehicles, maintenance and roadside assistance, administrative support, optional Guaranteed Ride Home program, and additional benefits. As of June 2024, Enterprise has three vanpools serving the SEDA-COG/WATS MPO region and continues to promote this reliable and eco-friendly commuting option.

Vanpool programs complement existing transit infrastructure and can reach people who are not currently served by traditional public transportation. Vanpools can help connect area residents to longer-distance workplaces in Harrisburg, State College, Hazleton, and other job centers. They can also offer convenient transportation for employees of large employers located within the nine-county region. The Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA), through CATACOMMUTE, also partners with Commute with Enterprise to operate approximately 38 vanpool groups that begin or end in the State College/Bellefonte areas. As of June 2024, nine CATACOMMUTE vanpools have an origin in Mifflin County or Clinton County. PennDOT continues to emphasize the importance of vanpools, and it has strengthened that commitment through the Pennsylvania Vanpool Incentive Program, a grant program that provides a financial incentive to create new vanpools by subsidizing vanpool user fees for a three-year period.
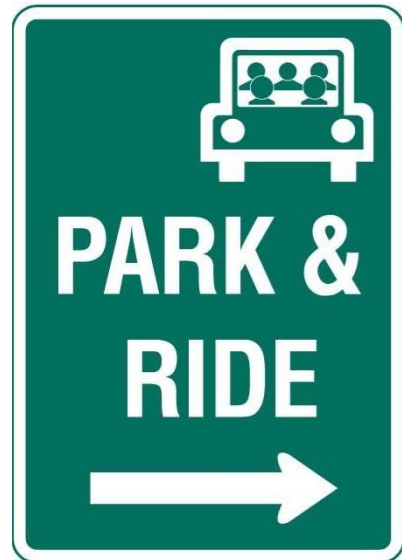
OTHER SERVICES

Other groups provide relevant services that do not fall neatly within the preceding categories. These include additional services for medical transportation provided by agencies for the aging,

nursing homes, and health care providers; charter transportation services provided by private companies; and car-sharing services. Private non-profit providers of demand-responsive services can be difficult to inventory, since many are simply a van provided by a living facility, church, or social service agency to allow clients access to their facilities or other services. Living Independence for the Elderly (LIFE) Geisinger is one such service that offers transportation to participants to/from day health centers and outside medical appointments. Although a reasonable effort to capture and update these services is included in each planning activity, no effort is assured to identify all participants.

PARK-AND-RIDE LOTS

Park-and-ride lots are locations where drivers can park their vehicle when participating in carpools/vanpools or using public transportation for a portion of their trip. Travelers must make their own arrangements for transportation to and from the lots. A park-and-ride facility must be easily accessible and convenient for the greatest number of potential users, and the availability of convenient parking facilities can directly influence commuters' willingness to try transit services or carpool/vanpool alternatives.

Nine official park-and-ride facilities in the region are owned and maintained by PennDOT; six of these lots are located in Lycoming County. New park-and-ride lots are being constructed as part of two major projects in the region: the Central Susquehanna Valley Transportation project and the SR 54 & SR 642 Intersection Safety Improvement project in Montour County. Due to high carpooling rates and potential safety issues with unofficial park-and-ride areas adjacent to US Route 22/322, PennDOT undertook a commuter parking feasibility study for several interchanges along US 22/322 in Juniata County, which identified eight areas of interest for park-and-ride facilities. Funds are still being sought for design and construction of a park-and-ride lot at one or more of the Juniata County locations, along with consideration of a park-and-ride lot off US 15 near New Columbia.

Transit Operator Profiles

The transit operators serving the region are briefly described below. A detailed description of each operator, the services provided, ridership and financial information can be requested from the operators or PennDOT.

FIXED-ROUTE OPERATORS

River Valley Transit Authority (RVTA) – RVTA provides fixed-route transit service in the Greater Williamsport area, including the City of Williamsport; the boroughs of Duboistown, Hughesville, Jersey Shore, Montgomery, Montoursville, Muncy, and South Williamsport; and the townships of Loyalsock, Old Lycoming, Piatt, and Woodward. RVTA was originally an office of the City of Williamsport but is now a municipal transportation authority. It is funded from state and federal grants with local matching funds and passenger revenue. The RVTA system consists of 19 routes, which include several variations in terms of operations, ridership, revenue, and performance. In

2022, RVTA provided nearly 1.3 million total passenger trips; senior citizen ridership totaled more than 200,000 passenger trips.

The RVTA system operates Monday through Saturday from 5:30 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. However, most bus service ends by 7:00 p.m., with a "Super Nightline" route comprised of two buses serving an east and west alignment that operate between 7:00 p.m. and 11:45 p.m. RVTA does not operate Sunday service.

The base cash fare to ride an RVTA fixed-route bus is $2.00; children aged five and under ride for free when accompanied by a fare-paying adult. Transfers are issued free of charge for the next available bus and are valid for one hour from the time the transfer is issued. All RVTA transit vehicles have electronic validating fareboxes that count passengers as they board and pay fares, thus assisting RVTA in providing more detailed analysis on the performance of each route. A variety of discounted fare programs and multi-ride options are available which lower the cost per ride. These programs include discounted tokens (four tokens for $5.00), $1.00 for youths under the age of 17, and free transportation for riders 60 or older. Discounted fare programs for students, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens are predicated on the rider meeting certain eligibility conditions and showing proper identification. Persons with disabilities ride RVTA for $1.00 on weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. and ride for free on Saturdays and designated holidays. Senior citizens (60+) ride RVTA for free any time of the day. Fares for riders aged 65 and older are covered under the Lottery-funded Free Transit Program for Senior Citizens, and fares for riders ages 60 to 64 are sponsored by the Bi-County Office of the Aging. In addition, students, faculty, and staff from Lycoming College and the Pennsylvania College of Technology ride RVTA for free any time of the day under a contractual arrangement between RVTA and the colleges.

ADA complementary paratransit service is provided by River Valley Transit Plus, which is operated by STEP Transportation under contract to RVTA and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This service is available to individuals who are unable to use accessible fixed-route transportation because of a disability. Rides are available during the same operating hours as the fixed-route service, with comparable fares. Service must be provided to locations within ¾ of a mile of the RVTA routes. RVTA certifies clients as eligible for the paratransit service. STEP Transportation is responsible for accepting reservations and providing transportation. The ADA paratransit service fare is twice the RVTA base fare.

Lower Anthracite Transit System (LATS) – LATS operates ADA-accessible, fixed-route bus service over three routes in the lower Northumberland County area in and between the City of Shamokin, Coal Township, and the boroughs of Kulpmont, Marion Heights, and Mount Carmel. The system is operated and managed by the Borough of Mount Carmel. It is funded mainly by state and federal grants and local matching funds. Revenue is also generated by passenger fares. In 2022, LATS provided more than 20,000 total passenger trips; senior citizen ridership totaled almost 9,000 passenger trips.

The LATS service operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Saturday service runs between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Recently, LATS has worked with its bus operator (Catawese Coach) to establish a new service route to Knoebel's Amusement Park that runs mostly during the week and on some

weekends during park operations. During the spring and fall, LATS also operates a Saturday route to the Susquehanna Valley Mall in Selinsgrove and the Monroe Marketplace in Shamokin Dam. In late 2023, LATS expanded its fleet with plans to create a Sunbury Route bringing passengers from Mount Carmel and Shamokin into Sunbury.

The base cash fare to ride a LATS fixed-route bus depends on the origin and destination (i.e., zone or distance-based), with fares starting at $1.00. Discounted fare programs are available for senior citizens (65+) and persons with disabilities by meeting certain eligibility conditions and showing proper identification. Senior citizens ride LATS for free with the trips paid for through the Lottery-funded Free Transit Program for Senior Citizens. Children up to the age of four ride free; children between the ages of five and ten ride for $0.50 per trip (all children must be accompanied by a fare-paying adult passenger). LATS also offers frequent-rider passes and monthly passes for a discounted rate. ADA complementary paratransit service in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is available to individuals who are unable to use the LATS accessible fixed-route buses because of a disability. Rides are available during the same operating hours as the fixed-route service with comparable fares. Service is available within ¾ of a mile of the LATS routes. Responsibility for service delivery has been contracted to rabbittransit, which is the shared-ride provider serving Northumberland County.

DEMAND-RESPONSIVE (SHARED-RIDE) OPERATORS

Each shared-ride operator provides service for any trip purpose (e.g., medical, shopping, senior centers, etc.). Most of the trips provided by the systems are subsidized or are provided at no charge to program clients. Shared-ride services are open to the general public; however the full general public fare is relatively high, which discourages use by unsubsidized passengers. Various levels of coordination are occurring among the demand-responsive systems in the plan area, with each of the systems coordinating cross-county trips with at least one other provider. Coordination among the systems typically involves transferring passengers at county borders, or at specific areas or major destination points.

Call A Ride Service, Inc. (CARS) – CARS is a private, non-profit organization that provides door to-door demand-responsive transit services to any resident of Mifflin County or Juniata County. Program services cover Senior Shared-Ride, Persons with Disabilities (PwD), Area Agency on Aging, Medical Assistance Transportation (MATP), and the general public. Regularly served

Figure 18: CARS Van (MJRSC - THE CARE NETWORK, 2021)

destinations are senior centers, hospitals, dialysis clinics, grocery stores, employment locations, and social service agencies. Service hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., although CARS recently started offering some evening and Saturday services for dialysis patients. Passenger fares are distance-based, with discounted or free fares provided to program clients, and the full fare charged to the general public. In 2024 CARS will provide on average more than 3,000 trips per month.

rabbittransit – The Susquehanna Regional Transportation Authority (SRTA) is known locally as rabbittransit and provides shared ride services for an 11-county area in central Pennsylvania that includes Adams, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, Union and York Counties. In the SEDA-COG MPO region, the Commissioners of Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, and Union Counties appointed rabbittransit as their Shared Ride Coordinator to reduce costs, streamline operations, reduce artificial county line barriers, and take advantage of technological advancements.

Figure 19: Rabbittransit Van

Origin-to-destination demand responsive transit service is provided by rabbittransit to any resident of Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, or Union Counties. Program services cover Senior Shared Ride, Persons with Disabilities (PwD), Area Agency on Aging, Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP), Mental Health/Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (MH/IDD), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA and PwD), Veterans Transportation and the general public. Registration through an application process is required. rabbittransit uses subcontractors for some trips if necessary.

Regularly served destinations include Geisinger Medical Center and other area hospitals, dialysis centers, VA medical centers, grocery stores and food banks, Walmarts, social service agencies, senior centers, shopping centers, and employers. Passenger fares are distance based, with discounted or no-cost-to-rider fares provided under various programs to eligible individuals. Full fare rates apply to those individuals who are not sponsored by a program.

In FY2023 rabbittransit provided nearly 154,000 total passenger trips within the 5-county area; senior citizen ridership totaled more than 63,000 passenger trips.

Beyond its regular shared ride service, rabbittransit launched a transportation pilot brokerage project in 2018 with funding from Geisinger to assist patients who face transportation challenges in attending medical appointments. This pilot has since matured into a comprehensive value-added service program covering a 50-mile radius around Geisinger's Danville hospital, and a 25-mile radius around Geisinger's Scranton hospital.

Since April 2018, rabbittransit has been providing origin-to-destination transportation for patients that come through a referral process initiated by community health assistants, social workers, patient navigators, etc. Approximately 66% of total trips were focused on medical necessity. Recently, there has been a notable increase in demand, with 34% of trips now including requests for food access and social services.

Trips suitable for other shared ride providers within the program's scope of service are overseen by rabbittransit's Mobility Management (4Ride) team, with subcontractors brought in as required.

The transportation data gathered aids in expanding necessary services and optimizing the efficiency of the public transit system.

rabbittransit – Stop Hopper – rabbittransit's Stop Hopper service is an app-driven, on-demand, origin-to-destination shuttle service that operates in 3 zones in the SEDA-COG area: Bloomsburg to Danville, Lewisburg to Milton, and Selinsgrove to Sunbury. This microtransit service allows users to request and schedule rides within a specific zone using the Stop Hopper smartphone app. The app provides an estimated pick-up time, tracks rides in real-time, and provides an alert for vehicle arrival. In FY2023, Stop Hopper provided nearly 31,000 trips. Planning efforts for future expansion and addition of more microtransit zones in identified areas are underway.

Figure 20: STEP Van

STEP, Inc. – STEP Transportation is a program within the Lycoming-Clinton Counties Commission for Community Action, a private, non-profit community action agency. Door-to-door shared-ride service is available through STEP Transportation to residents of Clinton and Lycoming counties. Program services cover Senior Shared-Ride, Persons with Disabilities (PwD), Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Welfare to Work (W2W), and the general public. The STEP service area encompasses Lycoming, Clinton, Centre, Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, and Union counties; the system also provides MATP trips throughout Pennsylvania as needed. STEP recently launched three Designated Stop Program public service routes in Clinton County: Mill Hall to Lock Haven, Renovo to Lock Haven, and Lock Haven to Jersey Shore and Williamsport. Other regularly served destinations include Geisinger Medical Center, the Eye Center of Central Pennsylvania, UPMC Susquehanna Health System, dialysis units, senior centers, and the STEP Office of Aging. Services hours are Monday through Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. with varying hours for Designated Stops. Passenger fares are distance-based, with discounted or free fares provided to program clients, and the full fare charged to individuals without program sponsorship. In 2024 STEP reported providing approximately 7,000 trips per month.

Transportation Needs Assessment and Gaps

This section documents the public transportation needs identified through analysis and outreach completed in 2024, including:

- **Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings:** Meetings were held with transportation providers, human service agencies, veterans' groups, senior citizen groups, healthcare providers, persons with disabilities, and tribal nations.
- **Passenger Experience Interviews:** Individual rider interviews were conducted with senior citizens, veterans, and persons with disabilities across the transportation providers to help capture individual trip experiences.
- **Public Survey**: An online public survey was conducted to gather input from the general public, including transit riders.

Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings

An important step in developing this Coordinated Plan was to meet and gather input from key stakeholders who are involved in delivering transportation or are agencies/providers who work with senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and/or veterans on a daily basis. Stakeholders who depend on public transportation to provide their clients with access to the services they offer are integral to understanding current transportation options as well as the challenges, unmet needs, and service gaps that confront their clients. The planning team invited individuals to focused meetings of the following categories:

- Area Agencies on Aging and human service agencies
- Healthcare providers and nursing homes
- Persons with disabilities
- Veterans
- Tribal nations
- Transportation providers

A set of questions was developed to guide the meetings (see Appendix D: Agency & Rider Interview Guide). Over two dozen people participated in the meetings, and several written responses were received from people unable to participate in the discussion. No one from a tribal nation attended the stakeholder meetings. The following summarizes the findings from the meetings with area agencies on aging and human service agencies, healthcare providers and nursing homes, agencies representing persons with disabilities, agencies representing veterans, and transportation providers.

Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) and Human Service Agencies

The planning team conducted one online meeting with representatives of Area Agencies on Aging and human service agencies. In addition, two representatives of the Union-Snyder Area Agency on Aging provided written answers to the interview questions. These agencies refer clients to transportation providers and assist with the cost of transportation because transportation is necessary for clients to access services. Some agencies also provide transportation directly. The following summarizes input from this stakeholder group.

1. The current shared-ride service has been essential to everyday life for many living in this area.
2. The addition of the local microtransit scheduled service through Stop Hopper has been a game-changer because people have a regular service they can use, and it costs less than shared-ride.
3. Shared-ride service is affordable if a person qualifies for a program that pays a significant portion of the fare, but otherwise the service is unaffordable for most people. Stop Hopper fares are affordable for these individuals.
4. Low-income individuals struggle with all living costs. Without considerable financial assistance, they cannot afford a car, which limits employment options and can make it impossible to climb out of poverty. PennDOT's Welfare to Work Program previously helped with car purchase expenses, but no longer does so.
5. There are no Uber or Lyft drivers and only very limited taxi service in the region.
6. rabbittransit has improved communication since it took over service in the region and tries to be a problem-solver.
7. Persons with disabilities have trip requests that are not eligible for the PwD program— out of service area, ineligible destinations within the service area, and travel times outside of public service. In some cases, STEP can take people to work, but cannot make the return trip if after 5 p.m.
8. Shared-ride service that does not require a prior-day reservation is not available in all counties, but there are requests for same-day service in those counties.
9. Long wait times, particularly for return trips, make people reluctant to use shared-ride.
10. Volunteers using shared-ride complain of early/late pickups, dropped rides, careless drivers, long call center waits, and illogical routes.
11. There is no dedicated funding for veterans' transportation. There are programs for veterans' healthcare transportation, but only local programs.
12. Healthcare options in many counties are limited, requiring long-distance travel for medical appointments.
13. Seniors often need escorts for more than just medical appointments.
14. There is a desire for evening and weekend service, an expansion of the Stop Hopper routes, and long-distance (e.g., Baltimore) options.
15. Registration that depends on technology is difficult for elderly persons who do not regularly use smartphones or computers. Some people have very limited, if any, access to Internet service.

Key Takeaways

- Shared-ride fares are high and trips that are not sponsored by a program are unaffordable for most individuals.
- Stop Hopper is affordable.
- Same-day service is needed.
- Long wait times for return trips are a challenge.
- Veterans need transportation sponsorship for non-medical appointments.
- Long-distance service for medical appointments as well as evening and weekend service are needed.

Healthcare Providers and Nursing Homes

The planning team conducted two online meetings with representatives of healthcare providers and nursing homes. One of the meetings was with these stakeholders in general and the other was with dialysis providers, who face specific challenges associated with patient transportation to these essential treatments, which must be regular and frequent. These entities help patients to register for transportation services. Some of the agencies have a vehicle that they use to transport patients. If the agency does not have a vehicle that can accommodate a patient, they enter subcontract arrangements. Some have subcontracts with an EMS and pay a mileage fee to secure transportation. If a person arrives at a hospital by ambulance and needs a way home, they will help the patient to find a way home. The following summarizes input from this stakeholder group.

1. rabbittransit drivers are kind to patients, work hard, and deserve gratitude.
2. STEP and rabbittransit have staffing (driver) challenges that limit reliability.
3. Agencies without a vehicle are entirely dependent on outside vendors.
4. There is only one bariatric-equipped vehicle (able to safely transport extremely heavy people) in the area. Everyone who needs a bariatric-equipped vehicle is competing for that one vehicle. The cost of using a bariatric-equipped vehicle is high and there is no reimbursement from Medicaid/Medicare.
5. There are no options to travel between Shamokin and Danville.
6. People on Medicaid must travel to DuBois for dental care. It is difficult to arrange transportation for such a long-distance trip.
7. rabbittransit eliminated Saturday service when COVID-19 hit. For dialysis, which is scheduled three times weekly, that reduced availability for those who depend on public transportation to a Monday/Wednesday/Friday schedule (the Tuesday/Thursday/Saturday schedule is not feasible due to the lack of Saturday transportation), effectively making only half of the dialysis schedule available.
8. Dialysis centers open at 5 or 5:30 a.m. Because of staffing shortages, rabbittransit has tried to push back the first drop-off to 7:30 or 8 a.m. However, at that time the dialysis center is an hour or two into the first four-hour session of the day.
9. While dialysis patients scheduled first in the morning are picked up for a return trip without extensive waiting time, the patients in the following sessions often wait very long periods of time for a return trip. rabbittransit has scheduled pick-up times and cannot adjust those times for patients who are finished early or must stay a bit longer at the dialysis center.
10. rabbittransit holds regular meetings to communicate with dialysis centers and other agencies that use its service. Dialysis centers provide information on patients and trips but often do not see the actual transportation service results.
11. The availability and use of technology is spotty and depends on the location and age of the individual.

Key Takeaways
- Vehicles (and staff) equipped for bariatric transport are needed.
- Patient transportation is an ongoing struggle for dialysis centers.
- Long-distance service for medical appointments is needed.
- Long wait times for return trips are a challenge.
- Scheduling for long-distance medical trips should be more flexible with will-call return trips.

Representatives of Persons with Disabilities

The planning team conducted two online meetings with representatives of persons with disabilities. In addition, two agencies responded to the interview questions in writing. Most agencies representing persons with disabilities do not own vehicles but do facilitate transportation for their clients. Central Susquehanna Sight Services and North Central Sight Services own vehicles and provide transportation for essential errands. They encourage their clients to use local public transportation services. They also facilitate trip planning and knowledge of travel options for clients. These agencies participate in transportation planning meetings and in an Office of Vocational Rehabilitation statewide task force addressing transportation issues. The following summarizes input from this stakeholder group.

1. STEP works well for North Central Sight Services clients.
1. Central Susquehanna Sight Services' clients report difficulties scheduling rabbittransit trips, long wait times for appointments and return trips, and circuitous routing which passes the drop-off location multiple times.
2. There were mixed responses about availability, access to, and use of technology and the Internet.

Key Takeaways

- Long wait times for return trips are a challenge.

Veterans

The planning team conducted two online meetings regarding transportation for veterans. One was with county offices on veterans' affairs and the other was with the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. These offices assist veterans with finding transportation to medical appointments. When there are no other options—particularly in the case of long-distance trips to Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals, a county director of veterans' affairs may use a county vehicle to transport and accompany a veteran to and from an appointment as a last resort. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs supports counties by identifying resources that can help veterans. It also works with STEP and rabbittransit to identify problems and solutions. The following summarizes input from this stakeholder group.

1. County directors report using county-owned vans on average 10 times a month to transport veterans to long-distance medical appointments because:
   a. rabbittransit only goes to Lebanon and Wilkes-Barre on certain days of the week.
   b. rabbittransit does not go to clinics that are not in the downtown area of Williamsport, Bloomsburg, or Pottsville
2. The need for an advance reservation is a problem.
3. Long wait times for return trips make veterans reluctant to use rabbittransit shared-ride service.
4. In Shamokin/Mt. Carmel the LATS bus takes people to the grocery store and Walmart. In other areas there is no fixed-route service and no way to get to a grocery store or Walmart.
5. Many individuals cannot afford cab service. Individuals who are under 65 and have no disability cannot afford full-fare rabbittransit shared-ride. Shared-ride service is affordable if the individual qualifies for a sponsoring program, but many do not.

6. Some veterans have been forced to cancel doctor appointments when shared-ride is not available, family and friends cannot help, and the county cannot get them to the appointment.
7. There is a need for evening service for veterans who want to and need to work during those hours.
8. A circulating bus or a shuttle bus service is needed for trips to the grocery store, the clinic in Shamokin, etc. Regularly scheduled service would help to avoid long wait times.
9. There is a gap in reaching long-distance appointments.
10. Commonwealth Regional Program Outreach Coordinators for Military and Veterans Affairs work with counties, county coalitions, and transportation providers.
    a. STEP has funds from a local non-profit to transport Lycoming County veterans. There are efforts underway to raise funds to expand to serve Clinton County veterans.
    b. Columbia, Northumberland, Montour, Union, and Snyder counties have formed a coalition to address challenges with residents getting to medical appointments. For example, the veteran's offices specifically identified that rabbittransit does not go from Snyder County into Northumberland County. Identifying strategies to address these cross-county gaps is a goal of the coalition and rabbittransit.
    c. There is another coalition of Lycoming and Clinton counties, and there are discussions with stakeholders in Mifflin and Juniata counties about a coalition.
11. Transportation problems stem from service availability, the cost of service, and the location of medical facilities. Transportation providers do not cross multiple county lines.

Key Takeaways

- Shared-ride fares are too high for any trip that is not sponsored by a program.
- Same-day service is needed.
- Long wait times for return trips are a challenge.
- Long-distance service for medical appointments as well as evening and weekend service are needed.

Transit Providers

CARS, rabbittransit, STEP, and LATS were represented in one online meeting for transportation providers. They provide shared-ride and fixed-route transportation services in the region. They also manage transportation programs—Free Transit Program for Senior Citizens, Shared-Ride Transportation Program for Senior Citizens, Shared-Ride Program for Persons with Disabilities, Medical Assistance Transportation Program, and myriad other state and local programs—which offer discounted or free fares for many passenger categories. Transit providers communicate with passengers, human service agencies, and medical providers in numerous ways. In addition to daily conversations with passengers (including taking and resolving complaints), they coordinate local advisory councils, conduct customer service surveys, and participate in planning activities. The following summarizes input from this stakeholder group.

1. Driver availability and overall capacity make providing service a challenge.
2. While it is possible to provide longer-distance trips, sending a driver across county lines removes that driver from the area for a long period of time and often impacts local trips. For longer-distance trips, sometimes gaps are filled by subcontractors, but not always.
3. Transit providers in the region coordinate service for trips across county lines.

4. Transit providers receive requests for service from individuals whose sponsoring program does not support the trip destination or they request service that is out of the service area or outside of established days and hours of service.
5. To meet MATP requirements, rabbittransit must travel to Hershey Medical Center as requested (rather than limiting days to consolidate trips). Taking a driver and vehicle outside of the local service area every day reduces local trip availability and scheduling options, resulting in long wait times for return trips.
6. Transportation providers must respond to:
    a. Medical appointments running late
    b. Driver availability
    c. Weather conditions
    d. Traffic conditions
    e. Accidents

    All of these impact scheduling and travel times and result in complaints from passengers, medical staff, family, and nursing home staff.
7. The Shared-Ride Program for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) limits eligible destinations and allows no program assistance with the co-pay. Individuals using PwD do not understand when a trip destination makes their trip ineligible for the reduced fare. And fare increases are borne most heavily by these individuals since no part of the 15% co-pay is permitted to be subsidized.
8. Stop Hopper is especially helpful to low-income individuals because the fares are subsidized and alternative services that are not just fixed route and shared-ride to meet needs, coordinate services, and be affordable. Hybrid, customized services are the future of public transportation.
9. In this large geographic area, there are varying degrees of Internet access. The use of technology is heavily dependent on age (the lower the age, the greater the use) and Internet connections.
10. Program sponsorship covers the cost of some trips for low-income individuals, but not all. MATP-eligible individuals have free service to medical appointments but cannot afford a trip to the grocery store. Veterans can usually get free service to medical appointments, but unless they are over 65 or have a disability, other trips are not sponsored and are too expensive.
11. People who use shared-ride often need an escort. If there is no program that provides an escort, the person cannot take a trip on their own.

Key Takeaways

- Driver availability is a major challenge.
- Long-distance trips are needed, but difficult to provide.
- Multiple variables beyond the transportation provider's control affect routes, schedules, wait times, and travel times.
- Individuals using shared-ride service need assistance with fares to afford trips/service.
- Microtransit offers an opportunity for scheduled service and low or free fares.
- Many individuals using shared-ride service require escorts to ride.

Passenger Experience Interviews

A way to glean an understanding of the true passenger experience of people with disabilities, senior citizens, and veterans in using public transportation/shared-ride or other means of transportation to meet their daily transportation requirements is to conduct direct interviews with individuals. The planning team conducted one-on-one interviews with eight individuals about their transportation needs, experiences, and the challenges they face in getting their transportation needs met in the region. The individuals were identified through the stakeholder focus group meetings described in the previous section of this report. Each individual volunteered to be interviewed with the understanding that their identity would be kept anonymous in the report. An interview guide (see **Appendix D**) was developed to help ensure consistent discussion topics.

The following summarizes highlights from each interview.

MS. A – 93-YEAR-OLD SENIOR CITIZEN

Ms. A is a 93-year-old residing in Lewisburg without a car. She uses both rabbittransit shared-ride and Stop Hopper to meet her travel needs. She has used shared-ride service for more than 18 years. She learned about shared-ride service from friends and about Stop Hopper from the newspaper. Being a senior, she pays only 15 percent of the fare on shared-ride. She rides free on Stop Hopper, which is very important to her—she is on a fixed income and every penny counts. She only uses a cane for stability. Ms. A has a smartphone, an iPad, a Kindle, and a computer with Internet service. Recently she has been able to use Find My Ride and makes reservations through her smartphone.

Ms. A uses shared-ride to go to doctor appointments and Stop Hopper to return home rather than wait a long time for a return trip. She also uses shared-ride for travel to longer-distance destinations. Stop Hopper takes her to the grocery store, Walmart, and other in-town destinations. She appreciates the Stop Hopper driver helping her with groceries.

Ms. A finds making reservations usually easy and quick. She appreciates the calls in advance of the vehicle's arrival. She likes the drivers, appreciates their assistance, and feels safe with them. Ms. A likes having an account from which her shared-ride fares are drawn rather than paying on the vehicle. Shared-ride normally gets her to doctor appointments on time. She likes the fact that Stop Hopper allows her to make doctor's appointments later in the day.

Ms. A Key Takeaways

- Ms. A would appreciate more communication when the vehicle is late.
- Ms. A believes that the newspaper and word of mouth are the most effective ways to spread information about the service.
- Ease of payment through an account with the transit provider is important.
- She believes Stop Hopper provides an important service and believes local officials should support the service to ensure that it continues.

MR. B – 22-YEAR-OLD UNIVERSITY STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY

Mr. B is a 22-year-old Susquehanna University student residing in Lewisburg and unable to drive a car. He has used rabbittransit shared-ride for the past two years to get to college classes. He learned of the service from his older brother who also used rabbittransit to get to the university. Because he has a disability, Mr. B pays only 15 percent of the fare; the state PwD program pays the remainder of the fare.

Mr. B has a smartphone and a laptop computer with Internet service. He uses Chrome and Find My Ride. He has a standing order and can make changes easily by emailing rabbittransit. He uses Find My Ride to know when the vehicle is coming.

Mr. B feels safe with the drivers. The rides are comfortable depending on the age of the vehicle. Occasionally he waits 30 minutes for a return trip but feels that is reasonable. Sometimes the route is longer, picking passengers up in Northumberland and Sunbury before returning to Lewisburg, but he does not mind.

Mr. B knows that he can use rabbittransit for other purposes but has other means of transportation except for the university commute. Without rabbittransit he would have to live on campus and incur much higher costs to attend the university.

He pays $3.75 for a one-way trip. He has an account with rabbittransit from which they draw down his fare and he does not have to have correct change or pay on the vehicle.

Mr. B Key Takeaways

- It would be nice to have Internet access on the vehicle.
- Mr. B is very appreciative of the service. rabbittransit provides an invaluable service and he believes local elected officials should support public transportation.

MR. C – 84-YEAR-OLD VETERAN

Mr. C is an 84-year-old veteran living in Lewistown, Mifflin County, and has used CARS for about two years. He uses an electric wheelchair and a four-wheel scooter. As a senior citizen over 65, the Pennsylvania Lottery pays 85 percent of Mr. C's fare for shared-ride transportation. The VA pays the 15 percent co-pay for Mr. C's medical trips and Mr. C pays the co-pay for other trips. Mr. C has a smartphone and an iPad.

Mr. C was aware of CARS and the transportation service before he registered. He registered when he felt he needed transportation assistance. Registration was easy. He has no difficulty reserving a trip—the phone is answered quickly, and it takes no longer than five minutes to make the reservation.

Mr. C appreciates the call from CARS that lets him know the vehicle is on the way. He makes sure he is ready and waiting. The driver is helpful and careful about securing his wheelchair. He feels safe with the driver and the ride is comfortable.

Mr. C calls CARS when his appointment ends, then waits for the vehicle. He does not mind waiting. Sometimes there are stops between his pick-up and drop-off, but he does mind being on the vehicle a longer time.

The cost of a CARS trip is not a factor in Mr. C's decision to travel.

Mr. C is pleased with the CARS service. He has encouraged a friend to use the service.

Mr. C Key Takeaways

- Mr. C would like to decide to go to Walmart today and be able to request a same-day CARS trip.
- Mr. C should have more information about available services. He would also like to visit a grandson who lives 10 miles away, but he has never requested a trip to that destination.

Mr. C believes the location is too far for CARS. He would like to meet a friend for breakfast but does not know if CARS will provide that service.

- Mr. C believes CARS is doing all that it can to provide a good service.

MR. D – 62-YEAR-OLD PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

Mr. D is a 62-year-old person with a disability who lives in Lewistown, Mifflin County. He was made aware of CARS through his dialysis center about three years ago. Because he is a person with a disability, the Pennsylvania Shared Ride Program for Persons with Disabilities pays 85 percent of his shared-ride fare and Mr. D pays the 15 percent co-pay. He uses a cane. Mr. D has a smartphone and a laptop but does not use the laptop.

Mr. D uses CARS primarily for dialysis three times a week and for other medical appointments. He likes the service because it takes him where he needs to go, but he is inconvenienced by long waits for return trips. When he completes dialysis at 9:15 a.m., he usually arrives home at 10:15 after waiting 20 to 30 minutes for the return vehicle.

Mr. D has no difficulty making a reservation. He has a standing order for dialysis. He appreciates the automated call letting him know the vehicle is on the way. Today he received that call after he boarded the vehicle.

Mr. D is usually waiting at the door for the vehicle. He boards without assistance. He feels safe with the drivers. He has heard passengers complain that the vehicle should take a different route. There are sometimes stops between pick-up and drop-off—sometimes they are on the way and sometimes they are not.

Mr. D's overall experience with CARS is good. He believes they do everything they can to let people know about the service. He does not encourage family or friends to use the service because people like to be independent as long as possible.

Mr. D Key Takeaways:

- Long wait times for return trips are an inconvenience.
- Mr. D believes local elected officials should support public transportation.

MS. E – MOTHER OF TWO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. E is a mother of two children with disabilities. The family lives in Williamsport. She uses RVTA to travel within Williamsport and STEP for long-distance medical appointments in Lewisburg, Muncy, and Danville. The Medical Assistance Transportation Program pays the full fare for transportation to her children's medical appointments. Ms. E has a smartphone and a computer with Internet access.

Ms. E finds making reservations easy, but sometimes chooses the call-back option rather than waiting on hold.

She appreciates the evening-before call confirming trip times and updating the schedule. She receives another call about 10 minutes before the vehicle is scheduled to arrive and makes every effort to be ready early. She finds the drivers very nice and safe. Overall the ride on the shared-ride vehicle is comfortable.

It is problematic that for a 10 a.m. appointment in Danville, the pickup is at 6 a.m. She must entertain the children in a waiting room for several hours and then wait until 12:30 p.m. for a return

trip. There is no will-call option for return trips. When they travel to Danville for a dental appointment, she often waits an hour to an hour and a half for a return trip.

Ms. E Key Takeaways:

- Long wait times and inflexibility on return trips from Geisinger are difficult. Will-call for return trips would be appreciated.
- The RVTA service in Williamsport works well except that she cannot use it to get to Sunday church services.
- Ms. E strongly believes that local elected officials should support public transportation services.

MRS. F – SENIOR CITIZEN

Mrs. F is a senior citizen living in the Williamsport/Loyalsock area. She does not drive, and her husband has health issues. She uses RVTA and STEP since 2005 for longer trips. Mrs. F rides free on RVTA through the Pennsylvania Lottery-funded Free Transit Program for Senior Citizens. Her STEP rides are primarily subsidized by the Lottery with STEP paying the 15 percent co-pay for some and Mrs. F paying the 15 percent co-pay for the remainder of the trips. She needs no mobility aids and uses no technology.

Mrs. F learned about STEP transportation from a neighbor. She also has a neighbor who takes her grocery shopping and a daughter who also helps with transportation.

Mrs. F chooses between RVTA and STEP based on her destination. Her hairdresser is in Muncy which is not on a STEP route. RVTA does not serve Danville, so for doctors and Geisinger appointments, she uses STEP. Around Williamsport she uses RVTA.

While Mrs. F is ready and waiting for very early pickups when she travels to Danville, other passengers are not, adding unnecessarily to travel time. Drivers are safe and helpful.

Mrs. F sometimes experiences call wait times when making a reservation in the afternoon, but STEP will call back. The reservation process itself is quick.

Mrs. F is pleased with transportation in Williamsport. She does not know what she would do without STEP. There are no taxis.

Mrs. F Key Takeaways:

- She would like to receive an evening-before call. She is ready early and annoyed by passengers who are not—it adds travel time.
- Routes are sometimes circuitous. One trip from Danville took four hours and they drove by her complex many times before her drop-off.
- Long wait times and inflexible return times from Danville are difficult. Will-calls for return trips would be appreciated.
- The cost of the service is a concern. When she started using STEP, trips only cost $0.65, but the cost is much higher now.
- Paying with exact change on the vehicle is difficult. STEP needs a better payment plan.
- Mrs. F believes local elected officials should support transportation.
- Taxi and/or weekend service is desired.

MRS. G – 90-YEAR-OLD SENIOR CITIZEN

Mrs. G is over 90 and lives in Montoursville. She uses RVTA and has used STEP for eight to ten years. Mrs. G rides free on RVTA through the Pennsylvania Lottery-funded Free Transit Program for Senior Citizens. Her STEP rides are primarily subsidized by the Lottery with STEP paying the 15 percent co-pay for some trips and Mrs. G paying the 15 percent co-pay for the remainder of the trips. She needs no mobility aids and uses no technology.

Mrs. G learned about STEP from the newspaper and initially received help with taxes. Through that contact with STEP, she learned of the transportation services from information on the STEP bulletin board.

Mrs. G chooses between RVTA and STEP based on her destination. She uses RVTA for trips in Williamsport and STEP for trips to Lewisburg, Muncy, and Danville. She also rides her bicycle. Mrs. G finds some customer service agents unkind. She tries to help them with scheduling and tells them about long wait times for return trips. She states that sometimes they refuse to take her calls.

The drivers are the best part of STEP.

Mrs. G Key Takeaways:

- Long wait and travel times for return trips are difficult. She has waited an hour and a half for a return trip from the doctor. Now instead of waiting she walks to the RVTA bus stop for a quicker ride home.
- Mrs. G believes RVTA should provide more information on their service. She knows (but others may not) that before 2 p.m. the frequency is every 15 minutes, but after 2 p.m. the frequency is hourly. People using the service for the first time fear the bus will not come for them.

MS. H – SENIOR CITIZEN

Ms. H is a senior citizen living in Bloomsburg, Columbia County. She moved to Bloomsburg from a rural area seven years ago when she lost sight in one eye and could no longer drive. When she first moved to Bloomsburg she used K Cab. Now Ms. H uses rabbittransit twice weekly to access the senior center and doctor appointments. Ms. H's rabbittransit trips are primarily subsidized by the Pennsylvania Lottery-funded Free Transit Program for Senior Citizens, with Columbia/Montour Area Agency on Aging paying most of the 15 percent co-pay. Ms. H pays $0.75 for each one-way trip to the senior center or doctor. Her daughter takes her grocery shopping. She uses a cane and has a smartphone but does not know how to use it.

Ms. H has a standing order for senior center trips. For other trips she makes a reservation. It is quicker to make reservations in the afternoon.

Ms. H appreciates the evening-before call with arrival time information. The day-of call gives her time to leave her apartment and be waiting outside for the vehicle.

Ms. H likes the drivers. They are courteous and help her as she uses the steps with her cane. They make sure everyone is seatbelted before driving and they drive carefully. While there are stops along the way, they are reasonable and not overly time-consuming.

Ms. H encourages others in her apartment building to use rabbittransit.

Ms. H Key Takeaways:

- Long wait times for return trips are difficult.
- She believes the service is valuable and that local elected officials should support it.

Public Survey

A public survey was developed and conducted as part of the planning process to gather input from the general public, transit riders, seniors, veterans, low-income individuals, and people with disabilities about their transportation needs and the challenges that they face with transportation. A set of survey questions was developed and tested. Most questions were multiple choice or involved selecting priorities from lists. The survey questions are provided in **Appendix C.** The survey was primarily conducted as an online survey in Microsoft Forms. A survey kit was developed that included email communications, QR code links, and flyers that could be posted or distributed to people to complete the surveys. The survey was distributed with the survey kit to the following groups to distribute via email and social media:

- SEDA-COG and WATS
- County offices
- Transit providers
- Human service agencies
- Senior centers
- Veterans' offices
- Other related groups

The survey was opened on May 7, 2024 and was closed on June 10, 2024. The planning team received 90 completed surveys. The full survey results are included in **Appendix E**. The results and key findings are as follows:

SURVEY RESPONDENT PROFILE

- About half of the people completing the survey are regular transit riders and about half report that they have never used transit. Of those riding transit, the majority use rabbittransit services.
- About 70 percent of those completing the survey are female, 22 percent are male, and 2 percent are transgender. The remainder did not want to report their gender.
- Sixty-two percent of respondents are aged 18-64, while the remainder are over 65 with 18 percent of respondents 75 or older.
- The vast majority (90 percent) of respondents report as White or Caucasian with the remainder reporting as Black/African American and Hispanic or "other."
- Ninety-eight percent of respondents reported as non-Hispanic ethnicity.
- Twelve percent of respondents reported that they are veterans.
- Eleven percent reported that they do not have a smartphone.
- Seventy percent of survey respondents have a car or have access to a car while 30 percent report that they have no access to a car, even through friends/family.

Figure 21 illustrates the percentage of respondents that report as having a disability.

Figure 21: Respondents Reporting That They Have a Disability or Chronic Condition
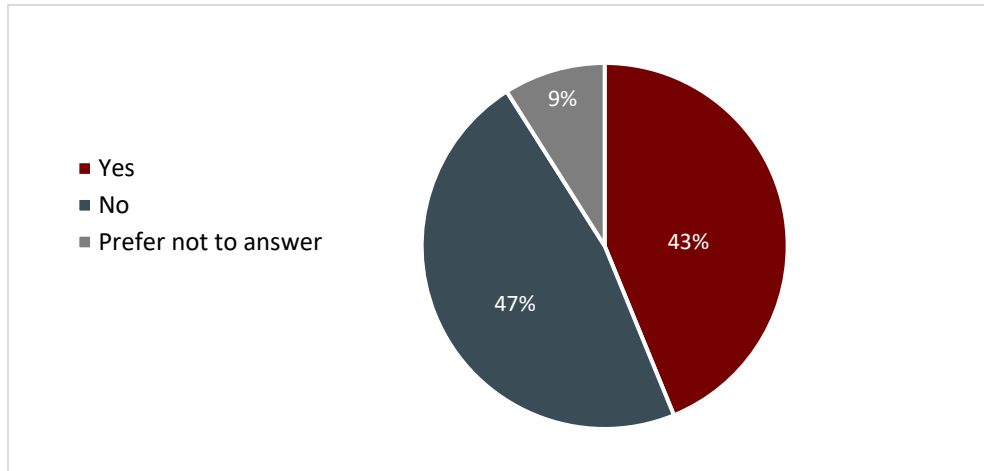

Figure 22 illustrates the breakdown of household income for survey respondents. Of note is that 21 percent of respondents have a household income of less than $15,000 per year and 40 percent have a household income of less than $25,000 per year. For people in these income categories, bus fare or co-pays can consume a significant portion of their income per year.   For example, for a person taking 10 one-way trips per week at a cost of $2.00 per trip, the annual cost is $1,120. To someone in the lower income categories, it represents a large percentage of their income and can have a significant impact on their ability to afford groceries, utilities, and/or medical expenses.

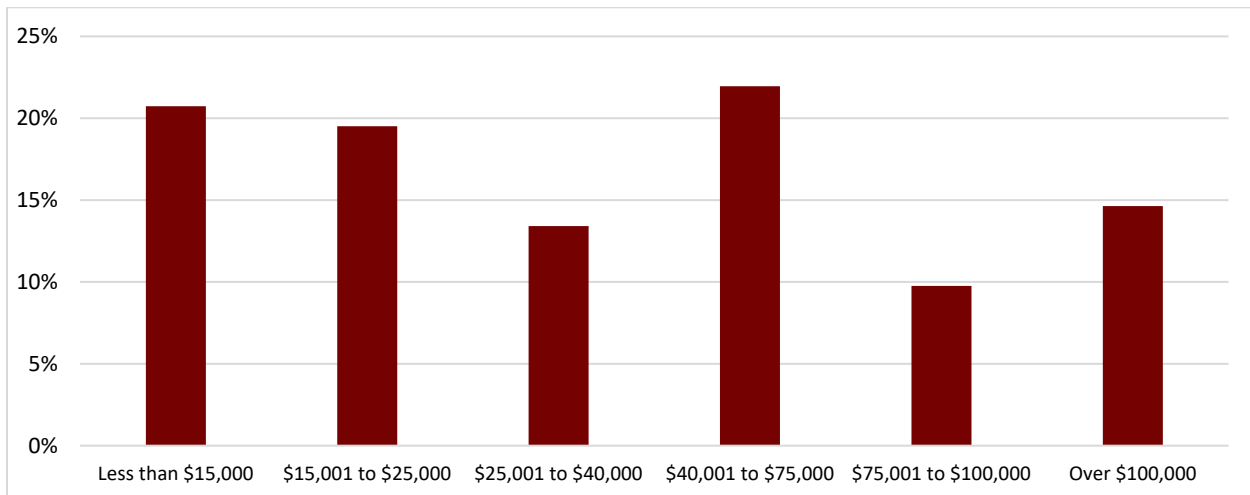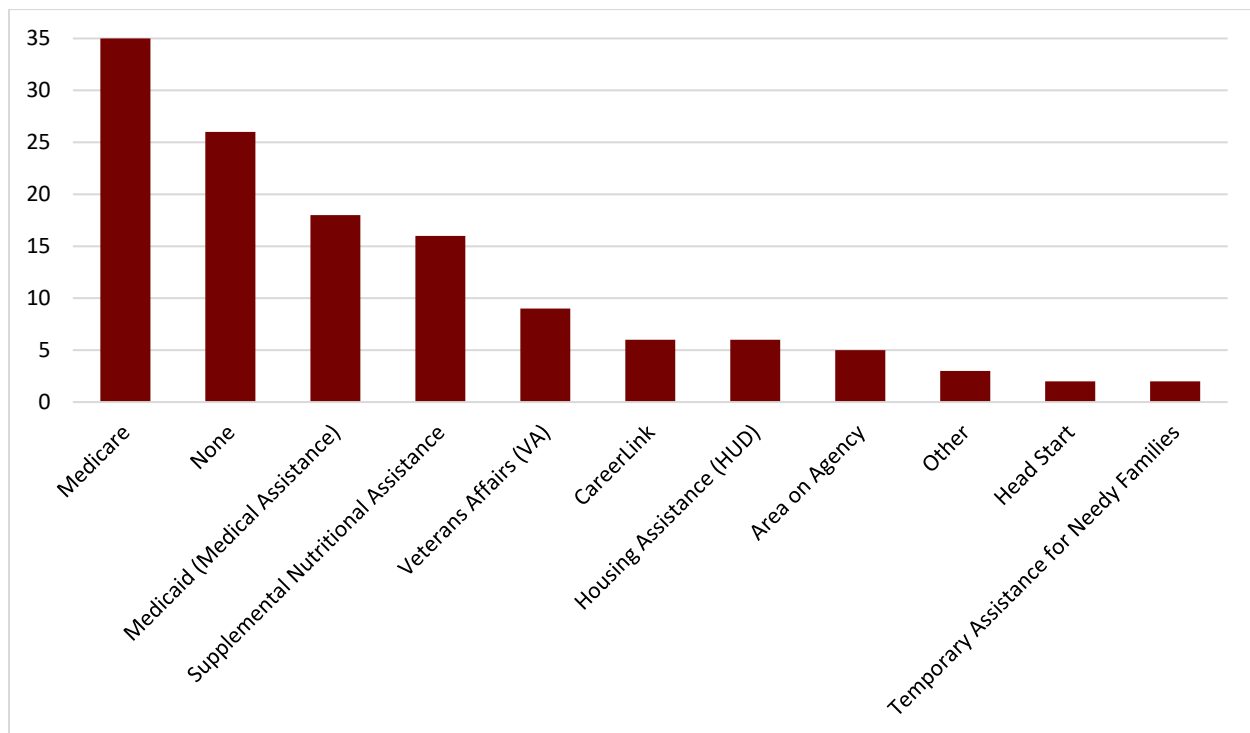Figure 22: Survey Respondents' Household Income

Figure 23 shows the survey respondents who participate in government services. A large percentage of the survey respondents (69 percent) participate in some form of government service.

Figure 23: Respondents Who Participate in Government Services by Type of Service


SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey findings related to needs and gaps in meeting transportation needs for senior citizens, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and veterans are summarized in the following bullets:

- The top three reasons why people do not use or no longer use public transportation (beyond preferring to drive themselves) are infrequent service, travel takes too long, and service is not offered to locations where the person needs to go.
- The top three purposes for using public transportation are medical appointments, grocery shopping, and employment/training. All are essential trips, making the service in this region a lifeline for people who rely on it.
- Fifty percent of people using transit report that they ride for free, while only 19 percent report that they regularly pay more than $2 per trip.
- When asked what is the most they are willing to pay for a trip, only 10 percent said zero, while 33 percent stated they would pay $2 or more per trip. This indicates that people know they are getting good value for the service and will pay, but only a relatively low price.
- Most people who use public transportation reported that they typically spend between $10 and $20 per week on fares, with some reporting more—up to $30 per week.
- Riders reported that they have experienced late or missed trips for medical appointments, work, and grocery shopping in the past 6 months.
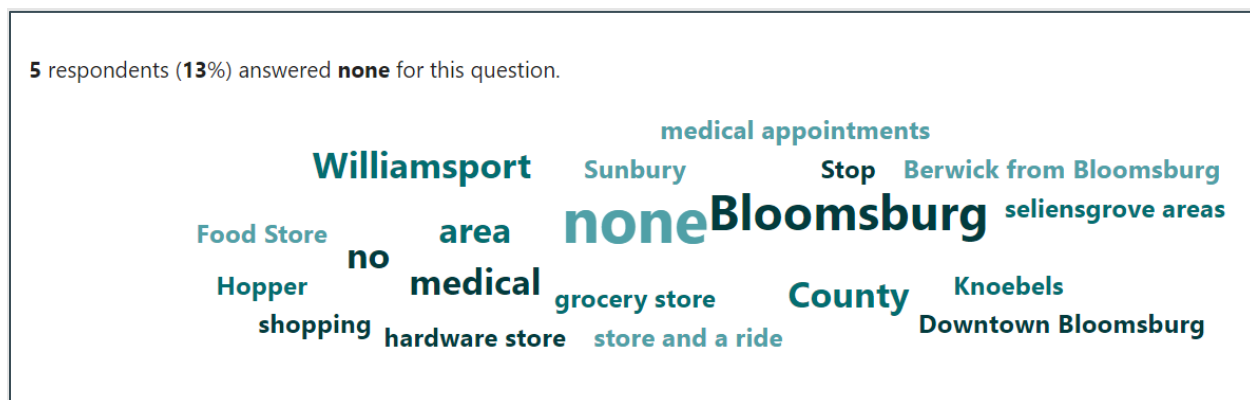
- The majority of people (79 percent) report they most need transportation during the day Monday through Friday, with 11 percent needing trips on Saturdays and Sundays and less than 7 percent needing trips on weekday evenings or nights.
- Figure 24 reports the results of a question asking respondents to rank importance of strategies to improve public transportation. The most important items included more service in rural areas, more information if a ride is going to be late, increased reliability, and prioritizing medical appointments.

Figure 24: Strategies to Improve Public Transportation
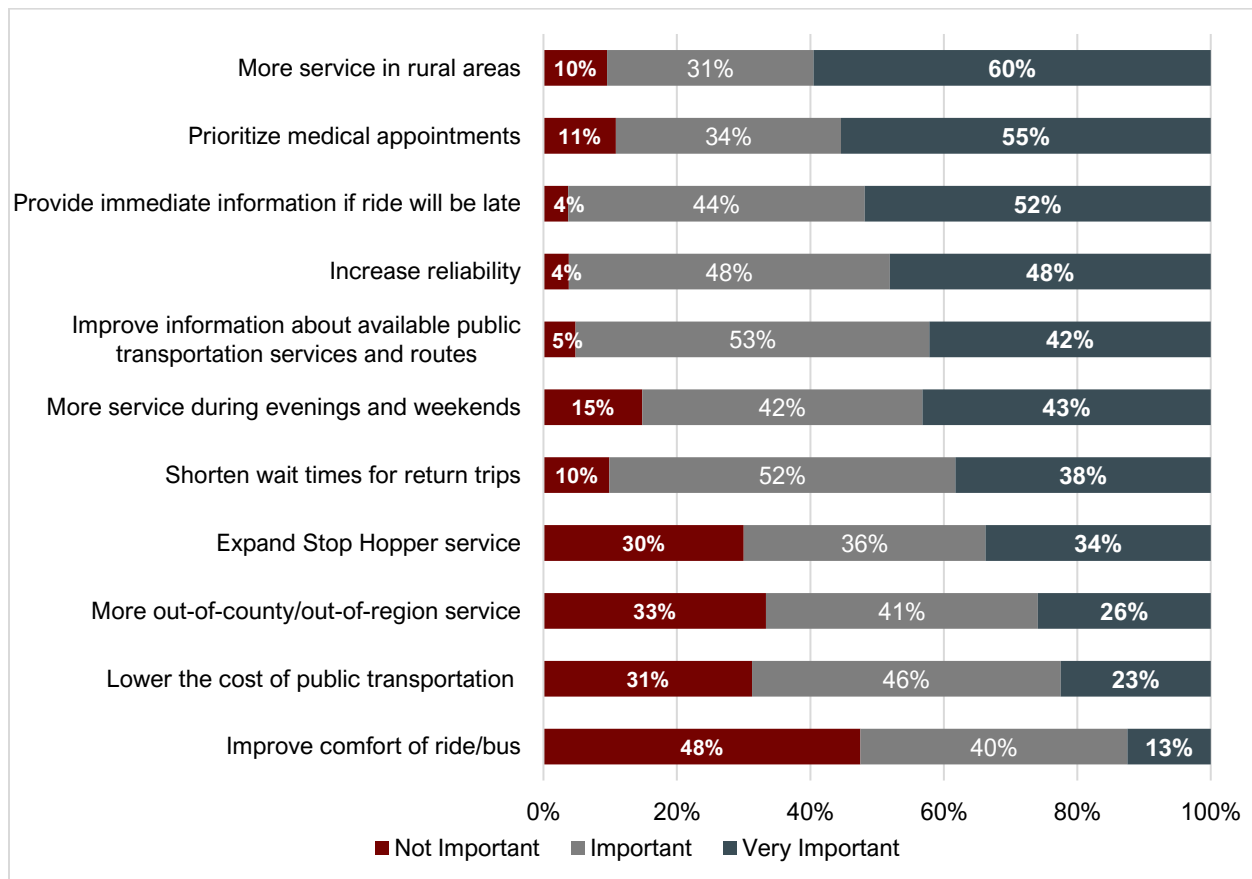
- Most people reported hearing about transportation by word of mouth, social media, or through a case worker.
- Respondents ranked direct mailing and social media as the best ways to advertise services.
- When asked what locations they would like to go to that are not available to them today, respondents indicated a variety of destinations, as shown in the Figure 25 word cloud.

5 respondents (**13**%) answered **none** for this question.

medical appointments

Williamsport **Sunbury** **Stop** **Berwick from Bloomsburg**

Food Store **area** **none****Bloomsburg** **seliensgrove areas**

no

Hopper **medical** grocery store **County** **Knoebels**

shopping hardware store store and a ride **Downtown Bloomsburg**
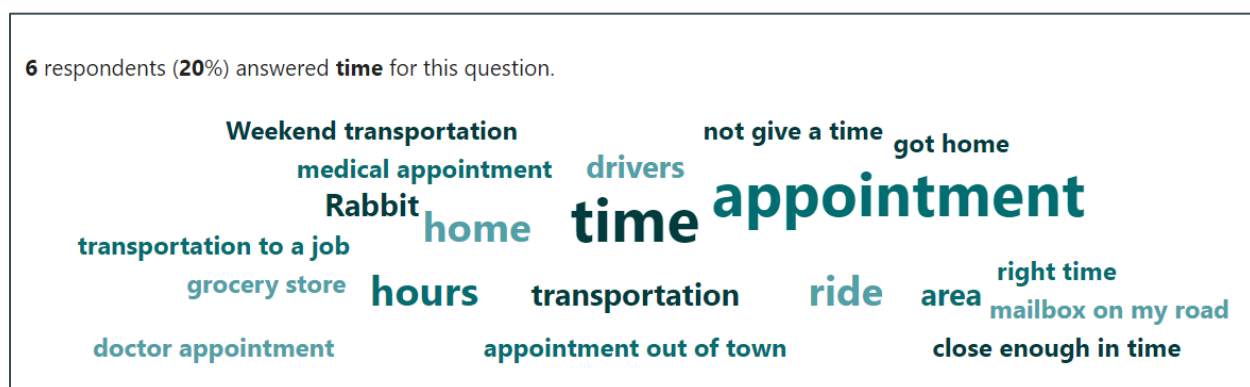
- Figure 26 shows frequently identified ideas to improve service.

Figure 26: Suggestions for Improving Transportation

6 respondents (**17**%) answered **service** for this question.

Friendly drivers **time** fantastic service **Stop Hopper** services of RVT

Customer service ride home

train service **drivers** **service** **needs** service area

service are friendly rural areas hour **bus** **Rabbit** longer waiting

service to Williamsport conversations with some drivers

- Figure 27 shows frequent answers to challenges in using transportation.

Figure 27: Challenges in Using Transportation

6 respondents (**20**%) answered **time** for this question.

Weekend transportation not give a time got home

medical appointment **drivers** **appointment**

Rabbit **time**

transportation to a job **home**

grocery store **hours** **transportation** **ride** **area** right time

mailbox on my road

doctor appointment appointment out of town close enough in time

OTHER REFERENCE MATERIALS

CARS Customer Service Surveys for 2021 and 2022

Major findings regarding gaps and challenges in using shared-ride services in Mifflin and Juniata counties are:

1. Rigid scheduling results in either very early or very late arrival to destinations.
2. Electronic routing sometimes results in passengers who live close by, traveling at the same time to the same destination, traveling in multiple vehicles rather than sharing one.
3. Long wait times for return trips, particularly after cancer or dialysis treatments, are challenging.

<u>rabbittransit 2020 Shared-Ride Rider Survey – Final Report – March 12, 2021</u>

Recommendations based on survey results are:

1. Identify most-requested days and times outside of current operations to determine modest changes to the operating schedule that would address a significant portion of unmet needs.
2. Consider ways to shorten extremely long travel times.
3. Examine reasons for long wait times for return trips and consider ways to reduce extremely long wait times.
4. Consider alternatives for addressing interest in same-day service.

<u>"Aging Our Way, PA: A Plan for Lifelong Independence"</u>

This report was prepared by the Pennsylvania Department of Aging and was released on May 31, 2024. It is a 10-year strategic plan designed to meet the needs of Pennsylvania's older adults through promoting health, well-being, and quality of life. Regarding transportation, it examines the importance of transportation—all forms, from walking, traveling with mobility devices, and driving to using public and private transportation—to moving about the community and participating in and accessing resources and services. The report identifies the following strategies to address public transportation challenges and gaps.

1. A rider-awareness advertising program.
2. A best practice guide for transit driver recruitment and retention.
3. Training for transit employees regarding ADA, accessibility, and dementia.
4. Coordination among transit providers, the Veteran's Administration, and VA medical facilities.
5. Investigate and evaluate the Shared-Ride Program for Senior Citizens, rideshare programs, and other third-party options for their effectiveness in meeting travel needs of older adults.
6. Toolkits for county and municipal government to maintain and improve public transportation.
7. Evaluate the inclusion of older adults and persons with disabilities in Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs) to advance aging and disability equity.
8. Support Pennsylvania House Resolution 174 requiring the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study and report on public transportation in rural Pennsylvania.
9. Paratransit and accessible vehicles—advocate to increase the availability of these vehicles and educate non-profit organizations on PennDOT's Section 5310 vehicle grant program.

10. Technology—raise awareness of technology solutions which assist with transportation options, including Find My Ride, Fareless Payment, and Vehicle Locators.
11. Evaluate the funding of the Shared-Ride Program for Senior Citizens to maximize efficiency and impact.

<u>Pennsylvania House Resolution No. 174, Session of 2023</u> – "A resolution directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to conduct a study and issue a report on the current status, management and implementation of mass or public transit in Pennsylvania's rural communities." On October 30, 2023, the House Transportation Committee voted to Report the Bill as Committed.

The intent of this House resolution is to:

1. Assess the existing transportation infrastructure—roads, bridges, and public transportation services—in rural communities.
2. Identify transportation needs, challenges, and priorities.
3. Evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of public transportation options.
4. Examine public transportation options in other states which successfully address transportation challenges in rural communities.
5. Work with local representatives, stakeholders, transit experts, and others as appropriate to conduct the study and to develop recommendations and strategies on cost-effectiveness, environmental impact, and long-term sustainability of public transportation in rural areas.

Transportation Needs and Gaps Identified through Data Analysis and Surveys

The transportation needs and gaps identified during the planning process through the interviews, surveys, and other data collection are highlighted in this section.

DRIVERS AND STAFFING

Transit agencies continue to struggle with hiring and retaining qualified drivers and other employees. This issue often leads to understaffing and challenges with meeting service demands.

AWARENESS/INFORMATION AWARENESS OF AVAILABLE SERVICES

In many parts of the region, potential riders are not aware of transportation services available in their community, whether public transportation or services available through a human service agency. Individuals sometimes know that service exists, but not where or when the service operates or eligibility requirements. The problem exists among human service agencies as well. Some agencies have clients with transportation needs that they cannot serve but staff may not be aware that the local transit provider or other agency can fill the need—and vice versa.

Another awareness issue involves potential riders not knowing how to use the transportation services. Transit novices may not understand how to reserve trips, use schedules, access stops, board vehicles, pay fares, or make transfers. Drivers and other transit personnel may not understand or have the capability to address new passenger needs. Increasing transit travel knowledge can lead to increased and more convenient utilization of existing resources. Agencies in the region are working to address awareness issues. rabbittransit has developed several techniques for improved awareness and greater comfort with public transportation:

- An all-inclusive Paratransit Shared Ride Guide that offers details and instructions for how to use shared ride service.

- Free travel training to teach people how to use the fixed-route public transportation system, with a focus on planning trips, reading route maps/schedules, boarding vehicles properly, paying fares, etc.
- A video, available on YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPxD_NkGbkw), to help the public answer the question: "What is Shared Ride?"
- A flyer included with Geisinger Hospital appointment reminders that identifies organizations around the region that can be used for transportation to and from appointments.

INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

Coupled with the general awareness issue is the fact that there is often not a single entity (in the region or in most of the counties) that can be contacted to efficiently find out what services are available. Residents need a readily accessible and usable "one-stop shop" for information on the entire region's public transportation services. Relatively new resources such as 511PA (http://511pa.com/) and PA 2-1-1 (http://pa211.org/) have helped to consolidate access to traveler information, human services, and referral mechanisms. Still, there are limitations with these resources for local users in terms of their comprehensiveness, ease of use, and updates to maintain currency/accuracy. The FindMyRidePA tool (https://findmyridepa.org/) is being used as evidenced by some of the rider interviews and stakeholder focus group results, however, many people who need the service still do not have smartphones, or tablets/computers with Internet to be able to use the technology. Further, some people prefer not to use technology. Additional rideshare tools (free ride-matching services that help long-distance commuters to find easy and economical ways to get to and from work via carpools and vanpools) are also needed, whether hosted by a regional clearinghouse, transit providers, employers, or other entities.

TRANSPORTATION FOR THOSE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR A TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

Most subsidized transportation programs have strict eligibility requirements for receiving transportation services. Individuals who do not quite meet the criteria for the programs but still need transportation may find public transportation to be unaffordable, particularly low-income people with children in rural areas. Some individuals do not meet the income criteria for Medicaid, are not disabled, or are not old enough to qualify for aging programs and thus have problems affording transportation that may be available in their community. For example, a one-way trip on shared-ride may cost $20. A senior citizen (65+) would pay 15 percent of the fare, or $3. In many cases seniors ride for free or at a cost less than 15 percent because another sponsoring agency such as the Area Agency on Aging may pay part of or all of the 15 percent co-pay. For some individuals, the affordability issue is the additional cost of paying fares for children or family members or companions that must go along on a trip. Many transit systems provide a discounted fare for one companion, but additional people must pay full fare. **High fares for the general population (non-subsidized riders) deter widespread use.**

Low-income and at-risk individuals in the region often cannot secure and/or retain employment due to a lack of affordable transportation. Residents trying to get off of public assistance, stabilize their lives, or exit troubling circumstances can run into major stumbling blocks through not having convenient transportation options for accessing steady employment. Family, friends, and organizations may be functioning to fill some voids, but transportation needs of many disadvantaged residents are not being met, resulting in economic limitations, health issues, personal problems, etc. More strategic approaches to establishing reliable, affordable

transportation for underprivileged individuals to access employment will create significant socioeconomic benefits.

INTER-COUNTY TRANSPORTATION

As evidenced by Census figures presented in the Demographic Profile section, there are significant journey-to-work trips between counties in the region. Due to the number of medical and educational institutions in the region, residents also travel to other counties for healthcare appointments and college classes. Coordination is occurring between the transit systems in the plan area, with each of the systems coordinating inter-county trips with at least one other provider. Additional analysis of where services overlap or operate near another system's services could lead to greater usage of existing transfer sites or identify new locations to facilitate transfers among systems.

DIALYSIS AND OTHER SPECIALTY MEDICAL TREATMENTS

Scheduling and providing public transportation to and from dialysis and other specialty medical services are extremely difficult. Patients should not have to wait hours for a return trip. However, when treatment schedules change—e.g., when a patient is finished much earlier or much later than anticipated—vehicle routing often cannot respond with the immediacy needed to avoid long wait times. These types of services require special consideration. Accurate, regular, frequent communication is essential to all parties—medical office, transportation provider, and passenger—having correct information on a timely basis.

LONG WAIT TIMES FOR RETURN TRIPS ON INTER-COUNTY OR LONG-DISTANCE TRAVEL

Many existing riders identified that the long wait times for long-distance travel negatively impact their ability to use shared-ride service. The planning team heard from survey respondents, stakeholder focus groups, and interviewees that shared-ride providers have established prescheduled return times that often require long waits (1 to 2 hours) for a return trip from a medical appointment.

ADDITIONAL STOP HOPPER AND/OR FIXED-ROUTE SERVICE AND BETTER TRANSPORTATION FROM RURAL AREAS TO CITIES/TOWNS

Many survey respondents and the individuals interviewed mentioned the need for more transit service (fixed-route/microtransit) in the region to connect residents to employment and shopping. Seniors ride free on these services and can rely upon their schedules without long wait times. Many transportation providers struggle to provide adequate transportation in rural areas due to low-density population and the expense of traveling long distances to pick up a small number of passengers (which can also lead to perception issues among the public seeing largely empty transit vehicles on the road). More direct, frequent, and reliable service to key activity centers in area towns is needed for target populations living in rural areas.

LACK OF SAME-DAY SERVICE

Most of the region's shared-ride providers have advance reservation requirements. Generally, customers must schedule trips at least one business day in advance. This makes it difficult to address last-minute needs or simply take a trip without advance planning. In particular, there is a need to provide same-day service for pharmacy stops and hospital discharges. rabbittransit participates in PennDOT's Same Day Trip Pilot Program, which promotes public-private partnerships among transit and ride-sharing providers in order to leverage federal and state

funding sources to create an affordable and on-demand mobility option for riders; however, the other shared-ride providers in the region currently do not participate in that pilot.

TRAVEL TIME

Transit passengers face long travel times when they travel from rural areas or transfer from one route or service to another. This can be a deterrent to using transit, especially for persons with disabilities and senior citizens. The pick-up and drop-off time windows required for shared ride trip planning can be confusing for new riders.

EVENING AND WEEKEND TRANSPORTATION

Shared-ride transit service in the region is not available before 6:00 a.m. or after 6:00 p.m. For persons holding a second- or third-shift job or working in certain industries, this time gap may mean that they are only able to use public transportation for trips to or from work, but not both. Those that have non-traditional work schedules or unscheduled overtime face similar difficulties. Limited hours of service hinder some jobseekers from being able to secure and retain employment. Similarly, a general lack of evening and weekend service hours means residents have reduced opportunities for taking trips for errands, entertainment, recreation, religious services, and shopping, among other trip purposes. However, transportation providers lack funding to extend hours of service, and typically must focus on stabilizing current services that function as lifelines to targeted populations making up the primary ridership.

ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

The mobility options for persons with disabilities and senior citizens are impacted by transit accessibility issues. Some bus stops lack adjacent sidewalks as well as ADA-compliant curb ramps and a level boarding area, or existing sidewalks may be in poor condition or impeded by obstructions such as utilities and overgrown vegetation. The distance to bus stops can be a hindrance to those with difficulty walking beyond short lengths. In rural areas, there are few curbs and access may be limited by rural roads and long driveways. Some agencies do not have enough ADA-accessible vehicles or spaces on vehicles to meet the demand for wheelchair trips, and frail individuals may need more intensive assistance to board, ride, and transfer from public transportation vehicles. Other individuals may be inclined to use public transportation if they could connect to it by bicycle and store their bikes on the bus until reaching their ultimate destination. Another concern is the lack of bariatric equipped vehicles in the region.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ACCESSIBILITY

Senior citizens and people with disabilities may have difficulty navigating sidewalks and shoulders and crossing roads/streets. Generally, the mobility-challenged move and react much more slowly than other transit riders. They also have difficulty navigating uneven surfaces. The areas surrounding neighborhoods where people with disabilities and/or senior citizens live often do not have adequate safe and accessible pedestrian infrastructure that can support people walking or traveling on or with their mobility device. Poor infrastructure makes it necessary for these residents to schedule even short trips on shared-ride or depend on friends/family for transportation to avoid becoming homebound. Supporting Complete Streets helps create equitable, comfortable, connected, and safe transportation networks that serve pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users, children, older individuals, individuals with disabilities, and motorists because they are designed with the safety and comfort of all road users, as well as the natural and human environment, in mind. SEDA-COG MPO has adopted a Complete Streets

Policy. The policy and related checklist can be found on the MPO's Complete Streets page: https://seda-cog.org/departments/transportation/complete-streets/

TRANSIT EXPERIENCE

Adding or improving amenities at bus stops can create a better transit experience. These amenities include bus shelters, benches, signage, and lighting. Adequate lighting is especially important during winter months for safety and security. Fear of crime can deter some individuals from using transit; the location of existing fixed-route stops and lack of adequate lighting at certain stops can make users uncomfortable.

CAPITAL ISSUES

Many shared-ride vehicles (often body-on-chassis vehicles) are getting older and operating with higher mileage than their useful life due to bottlenecks in manufacturing and supply chain issues since COVID-19. Pre-COVID, the delivery time of a new vehicle was typically a few months from the time it was ordered. Now it can be one to two years or even longer, as a result of reductions in manufacturing capacity and supply chain issues associated with equipment or features that may be installed on a bus. In addition, the cost of replacing vehicles has risen dramatically due to high inflation growth in the cost of buses and bus equipment. Shared-ride vehicles have increased in price by more than 30 percent since pre-COVID, reducing the buying power of public grant funds. As a result, the transit systems need to operate older vehicles longer with higher maintenance costs and the potential for more in-service breakdowns and/or service interruptions. The higher maintenance costs increase overall transit operating expenses and create the need to increase fares.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS, MAINTENANCE FACILITIES, AND EQUIPMENT

Transit agency administrative buildings, maintenance facilities, and passenger/parking facilities are essential to providing reliable public transportation service. Likewise, computers, telephones, radios, and miscellaneous equipment are needed to effectively and efficiently run transit services. Transit agencies must make significant investments to maintain these assets, upgrade facilities, and acquire new assets. Transit agencies regularly perform condition assessments for these and pursue funds for keeping them in a state of good repair, sometimes requiring project listings on the MPO regional Transit Transportation Improvement Program.

HIGH FUEL COSTS

High fuel costs continue to strain transit agency budgets and cause additional pressure to increase shared ride fares to cover the added costs.

Strategies to Address Gaps

Progress Since Last Plan (Status Update)

The needs/gaps were identified in the previous section of this report. They reflect the importance of public transportation for providing mobility for seniors, veterans, low-income individuals, and persons with disabilities who need to access jobs, shopping, and medical appointments. It is understood that efforts to create a fully coordinated public transit–human services transportation system are challenging and will probably not be measured in years but in decades. Since the last Coordinated Plan, the region has made significant strides in improving its coordinated transportation system, including:

- Further consolidation and coordination of transit services in the region;
- Implementing the Stop Hopper microtransit service;
- Implementing the Find My Ride Application for trip scheduling;
- River Valley Transit forming into a Transit Authority;
- Transit maintenance and storage facility improvements advancing, with some in design;
- Participating in the PennDOT Same-Day Trip Scheduling Pilot; and
- Surviving and recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Strategies to Meet Primary Regional Transportation Needs

Transportation needs will always be greater than the funding available to tackle them. However, this plan aims to institute a more coordinated approach to satisfying transportation needs, eliminating inefficiencies, spurring collaboration in service delivery, and prioritizing warranted improvements. Below are strategies to overcome primary regional needs based on outreach and analysis of regional data, and to integrate alternative improvement concepts from prior assessments. The strategies are grouped into three categories:

Category 1: Coordinate Transportation Services and Resources

- Coordinate Transportation Services
- Share Resources
- Address Regulatory Barriers

Category 2: Mobility Strategies

- Improve Mobility Management
- Stabilize Existing Transportation Services
- Expand or Create New Transportation Services
- Enhance Accessibility and Equity

Category 3: Communication, Training, and Organizational Support

- Centralize Information
- Educate the Public on Transportation Options
- Improve Awareness of Existing Resources and Programs

The strategies are included in the following table for each of the categories above. The table also identifies the type of need addressed by each strategy and the timeframe associated with the action strategy. The proposals have been categorized into three implementation timeframes: near- (1-3 years), mid- (3-6 years) and long-term (beyond 6 years). The assigned timeframes reflect various factors, including:

- Revisions to existing versus entirely new programs or services.
- Institutional complexity (e.g., number and type of entities involved and the likelihood of obtaining the necessary buy-in).
- Lead time required to plan and properly execute a transition.
- Whether new funding would be required, and the relative amount of funds required.

Some strategies for meeting regional needs or service gaps have already been approved by the SEDA-COG and WATS MPOs and included in their respective Transit Transportation Improvement Programs. Establishing additional fiscally constrained priorities requires further coordination with regional providers and consumers of public transportation. The MPOs will do their part to advocate for high-priority projects and call for prudent regulatory changes and increased program flexibility that will improve public transportation.

PennDOT Studying Shared-Ride Model: Note that concurrent with Coordinated Plan development, PennDOT was working on a statewide study to examine the shared-ride funding and service delivery crisis. The study aims to develop options to stabilize funding and explore new models for delivering service and establishing fares and structures. As of the completion of this plan, the PennDOT study has not yet been completed and released. It is recommended that the counties, public transit providers, and other stakeholders involved work together with PennDOT and the Pennsylvania State Legislature to improve/reinvent community transportation from the model that started in the 1980s to better meet today's needs.

Strategy	Need Addressed	Timeframe
Category 1: Coordinate and Consolidate Transportation Services and Resources		
Establish a joint Human Service MPO/RPO Committee – Establish a joint committee to discuss transit and multimodal issues, promote regional coordination strategies, and plan for human service transportation needs. A joint multimodal/transit advisory committee could be established by SEDA-COG and WATS to meet twice per year. The committee would be a primary owner of this plan and other multimodal initiatives in the region. A model for this type of committee is the regional freight advisory committee at DVRPC or the transit operators committee at SPC. This committee could also be tasked with reviewing multimodal Long-Range Transportation Plan and TIP projects and making recommendations to the MPO coordinating committees for action.	Efficiency and coordination	Near-term
Improve coordination among information resources – Continue deployment and enhancements to the Find My Ride PA tool. Market and train riders on how to use the Find My Ride PA tool. Prepare and share a transit services guide to all the human service, medical, and other resource providers in the region to help them understand and share information about transportation options.	Information needs	Near-term
Pool funding and purchasing – Pooling funding between agencies to provide transportation services for compatible user populations and types of rides may help to relieve some funding strains while maintaining or increasing service levels. This could be particularly helpful for out-of-area trips that might require transfers between operators. Agencies could also pursue cooperation on supplies, purchasing, training, facilities, etc.	Efficiency and coordination	Mid-term
Identify match funds – Consider using other federal/state/local funds to match FTA and PennDOT funds. Coordinate grant-seeking activities among providers and participate in pilot projects funded by other agencies. Form a Task Force to build and develop support for traditional local match from counties and local governments as well as non-traditional local match including private donations, foundation support, and advertising revenue.	Efficiency and coordination	Near-term
Category 2: Mobility Strategies		
Build on Stop Hopper successes – Explore opportunities to expand the Stop Hopper microtransit service network in the region to improve service opportunities for senior citizens, people with disabilities, veterans, low-income individuals, and the general public. Develop metrics that demonstrate the benefits of the Stop Hopper Service in the region.	Low service levels	Long-term
Explore opportunities to pilot evening and weekend service expansion – The benefits of service expansion would provide transit-dependent groups, as well as the general public, access to more employment opportunities as well as greater access to shopping and other essential services.	Low service levels	Mid-term
Create a regional public transportation system – Create a regional network of public transportation connections along major corridors, among various communities, and among population centers and major	Low Service Levels	Mid-term

generators. Continue the successful Stop Hopper service. Build support for the local match needed to continue the service. Pursue opportunities to expand the Stop Hopper service to meet greater needs.		
Offer taxi vouchers – Human service agencies or other sponsoring entities could coordinate with taxi companies to establish a voucher or pre-paid taxi ride program for situations in which transit can't meet needs. The rider would pay a nominal fare and the sponsoring entity would provide a subsidy toward the fare. These strategies could utilize taxi services to fill gaps in service hours—especially in the evenings and on weekends—and could also offer the potential to provide same-day service. A greater reliance on taxi services can address a variety of trip needs, particularly where fixed-route bus service is impractical or during times when demand is low. It can be a good approach for patient transportation upon discharge from the hospital. Similarly, transportation network companies (e.g., Uber and Lyft) could be used for specialized trips when the transit operators are not available or are short on vehicles.	Affordability	Near-term
Expand shared-ride and fixed-route capacity – Expand shared-ride and fixed-route service, adding vehicles and drivers to meet demand for the service. Fund needed investments in computer/communication equipment and transit operator buildings. Support construction of the STEP maintenance/storage and administration facility.	Low service levels	Mid-term
Increase ADA vehicles and service hours – Increase the number of ADA vehicles available (e.g., among taxis and human service transportation providers) and expand service beyond traditional hours. Transit systems could potentially purchase accessible vehicles (i.e., ramp-equipped low-floor minivans) and lease them to taxi operators, or purchase vehicles with FTA funds and have the taxi company pay the local match.	Accessibility limitations / Low service levels	Mid-term
Expand and promote carpool/vanpool programs – Establish additional carpool or vanpool programs and promote them at major employers, institutions, retirement communities, and other sites where large numbers of people have similar transportation needs. These programs offer the potential to increase mobility options through cost-effective means for both transit-dependent population groups and the general public. Take advantage of statewide vanpool and rideshare initiatives that PennDOT administers.	Low service levels	Near-term
Establish car-sharing programs – Establish car-sharing programs (e.g., Zipcar or other options) for occasional trips when a car is needed. The program allows individuals to use a pool of automobiles for a small annual fee and payment by the hour. Cars are reserved by phone or online and picked up from a designated parking space and returned to the same spot when the trip is complete. The hourly fee includes fuel and insurance costs. Car-sharing programs can be for-profit, non-profit, or cooperative organizations and can have widely different objectives, business models, use of technology, and target markets. They work best in areas with relatively high densities; college campuses are good candidates (Bucknell University in Lewisburg and Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove currently operate car-sharing programs on their campuses for students and faculty).	Low service levels	Near-term

Launch intra-regional commuter bus service – Provide bus service during the weekday morning and afternoon peak periods between a limited number of strategically located bus stops (e.g., park-and-ride facilities) and major employment sites (e.g., Geisinger Medical Center) in areas such as Bloomsburg, Danville, Sunbury, Selinsgrove, Lewisburg, and Williamsport. Based on the distances traveled by each vehicle, it is likely that the routes would operate limited peak-period service, such as one or two round trips in the morning and again in the afternoon. To maintain convenient service and reduce the travel time, the routes would serve a limited number of designated stops.	Low service levels	Long-term
Facilitate public transportation use by bicyclists – Enhance access to transportation through bicycling from origin to destination, or to reach a bus stop. Better integration of public transportation and bicycling could be accomplished by installing bike racks on public transit vehicles; installing bike racks; installing signage and pavement markings to identify shared bike/auto routes and to remind motorists to be aware of cyclists; investing in educational and promotional activities; developing bike-sharing programs; and completing infrastructure improvements such as widening road shoulders, designating bike lanes, and introducing traffic-calming measures.	Accessibility limitations	Near-term
Enhance technology – Improve technological systems to allow for better integration between shared-ride and fixed-route service, better track vehicle locations, automate reservation processes outside regular business hours, improve eligibility application processes, and use other intelligent transportation systems. Implement the Avail Technologies Project in the region to improve information availability on service.	Efficiency and coordination	Near-term
Advocate for free/reduced cost fares – Public transit agencies and human service agencies should coordinate and provide a position paper to PennDOT and the General Assembly on the benefits of making free or reduced-cost fares available to low-income youth or adults.	Affordability	Mid-term
Implement pathway and bus stop enhancements – These enhancements may include adding sidewalks where none exist, moving any obstacles (e.g., telephone poles), repairing sidewalks, installing accessible pedestrian crossings and signals, removing snow in a timely manner, and installing or upgrading bus stop signs, benches, shelters, and lighting. These improvements would help address traffic safety and crime fears, bring existing facilities into ADA compliance, and make accessible pathways to transit stops.	Accessibility limitations	Long-term
Pursue car loan programs – The high cost of owning and maintaining a car is a common transportation barrier for low-income individuals that might not be served adequately through existing transit system coverage. Low-interest car loan programs can allow low-income individuals/families to purchase a vehicle for maintaining employment, accessing childcare, and becoming economically self-sufficient.	Affordability	Mid-term
Category 3: Communication, Training, and Organizational Support		
Improve awareness of information sources – There are a number of information sources already available about transportation options in the region. However, awareness of these resources is limited. Public awareness strategies can help to improve access to these resources and the associated transportation services. Information about transportation can be more widely placed at locations where	Information needs	Near-term

target users are likely to be (e.g., doctor's offices, grocery stores, human service centers, unemployment offices, daycare centers, schools, libraries, senior citizen centers, etc.).		
Develop a centralized resource directory – A lack of basic awareness and understanding is a barrier to people using and benefiting from public transportation. Since mobility needs are often regional in scope, this effort would organize information regarding all available transit providers into a single place, where the rider or an agency representative could easily obtain essential information regarding eligibility, service hours, geographic coverage, etc. The information should be available in Web-based and hard-copy formats.	Information needs	Near-term
Expand travel training – Improve awareness of the travel experience and expand travel training, targeting people who could ride public transportation (e.g., seniors or people with disabilities) but are unfamiliar with the system and how to ride. rabbittransit's travel training program and Shared Ride Guide publication could serve as models.	Information needs	Near-term
Introduce a "Bus buddy" program – Introduce bus buddy programs to provide extra assistance to individuals who have never ridden a bus, are afraid of riding transit alone, need some assistance to carry packages while riding, or who have developmental disabilities that make trip planning and execution challenging without assistance. The bus buddy may be a person on staff at an agency, though they are more commonly volunteers. Colleges, senior volunteer programs, and community service groups are a few potential sources for volunteers. Bus buddies may ride just once with a client or may become a regular riding companion for someone who needs long-term assistance. Other riders may need a higher level of assistance and require escorted travel. Staff and/or volunteers may be considered to assist riders who have no attendant.	Information needs	Mid-term
Improve public transit marketing to human service agencies – Improve the marketing of fixed-route transit systems to non-profits. Transit agency staff could provide customized information packets to social service agencies and directly to clients of these agencies. Transit providers could also incorporate a demonstration and training session on itinerary planning and trip scheduling. This could include specialized maps indicating the location of routes, the location of services, and pamphlets outlining how transit works. Transit providers may want to produce personalized pamphlets for large, individual organizations. Another area of specialized marketing is to Limited English Proficiency populations. Service guides in other languages marketed specifically to human service organizations routinely interacting with LEP groups could help reduce barriers. Specialized marketing and outreach could also be considered for the Plain Sect community. Agencies should also rely on advisory groups and customer feedback loops to enhance public transportation and improve the rider experience. Good models to follow include rabbittransit's 3P Ride and Transportation Partnership on Mobility (TPOM) programs. These strategies help raise awareness, formulate mobility solutions, streamline service between providers, and create more accessible interactions for consumers.	Information needs	Mid-term

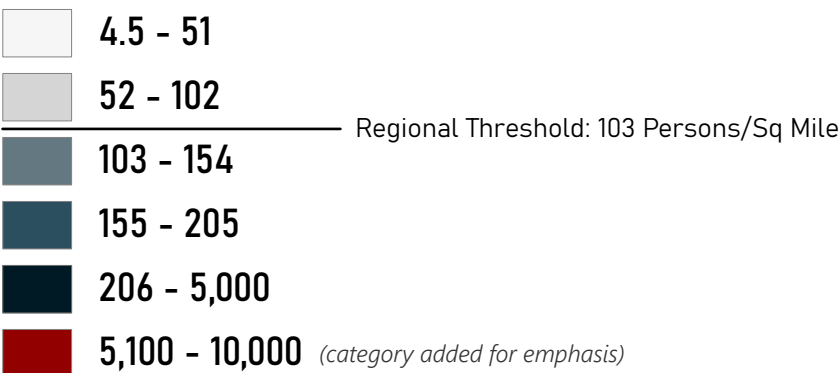|		
Expand outreach to maximize ridership – Improve information about available service to increase readability and comprehension (routes and schedules can be hard for certain population groups to read or follow), while maximizing ridership on transit services. Target marketing to encourage seniors and persons with disabilities to ride transit and consider joint outreach initiatives with other providers in making presentations to organizations and group homes. Consider special promotions and partnerships with area merchants. Execute strategic public information campaigns (town-hall-style meetings, workshops, seminars, etc.) throughout the region to increase awareness, meet customer expectations, boost ridership, and garner more support for effective approaches to meet identified needs. Efforts to maximize ridership may also include surveying potential riders to ensure that services meet rider needs.	Efficiency and coordination	Near-term
Emphasize access to care – Collaborate with area agencies to increase access to essential medical care (including dental), especially for seniors, disabled individuals, low-income persons, and veterans. Evaluate the transportation-related needs and strategies included in community health needs assessments prepared by the region's hospital systems. Support initiatives such as LIFE Geisinger, non-emergency medical transportation from private and non-profit organizations, in-home care, independent living center services, the American Cancer Society's Road to Recovery program, etc.	Efficiency and coordination	Near-term

Appendix A: Demographic Profile Mapping

Population Density
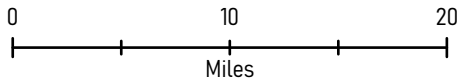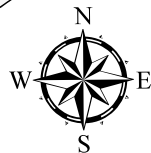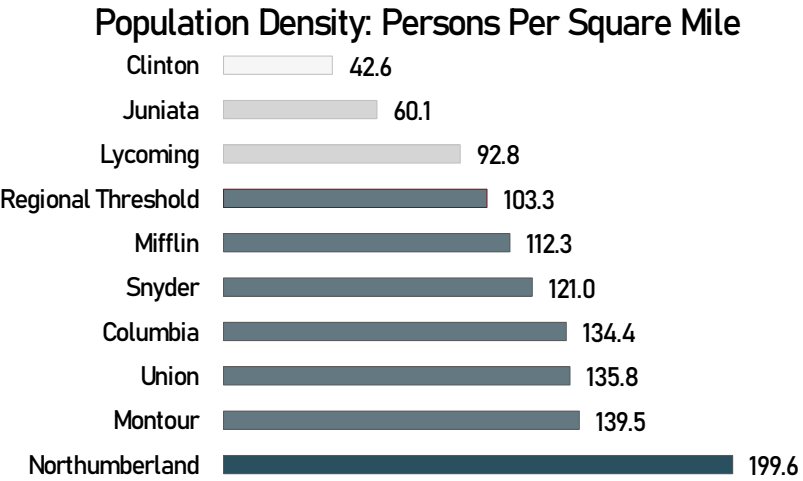
Williamsport Area

County Boundary

Population Density (Persons per Square Mile) by Census Tract
ACS 5-Year Estimates (2018–2022)

- 4.5 – 51
- 52 – 102
  - Regional Threshold: 103 Persons/Sq Mile
- 103 – 154
- 155 – 205
- 206 – 5,000
- 5,100 – 10,000 *(category added for emphasis)*

Margins of Error may be large due to small sample size in the ACS.

Population Density: Persons Per Square Mile

County	Density
Clinton	42.6
Juniata	60.1
Lycoming	92.8
Regional Threshold	103.3
Mifflin	112.3
Snyder	121.0
Columbia	134.4
Union	135.8
Montour	139.5
Northumberland	199.6

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, PennDOT, SEDA-COG

Williamsport Area

Lycoming

Clinton

Lycoming
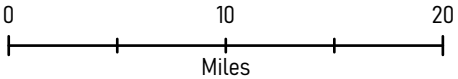
Columbia

Montour

Union

Snyder

Northumberland

Mifflin

Juniata
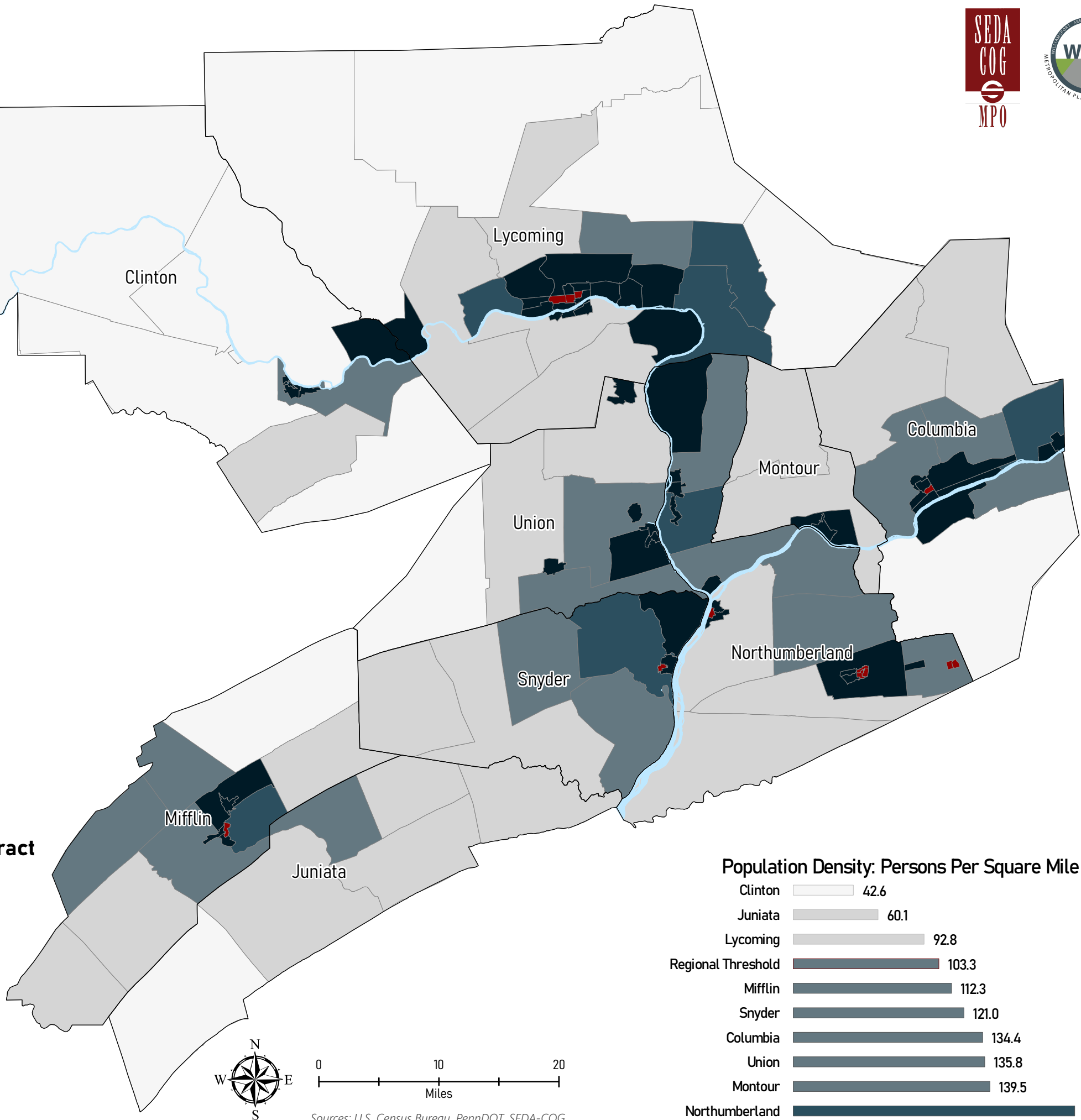
County Boundary

**Percent Population Age 65 and Over by Census Tract
ACS 5-Year Estimates (2018-2022)**
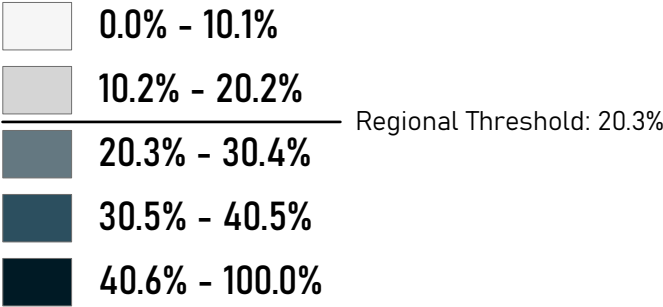
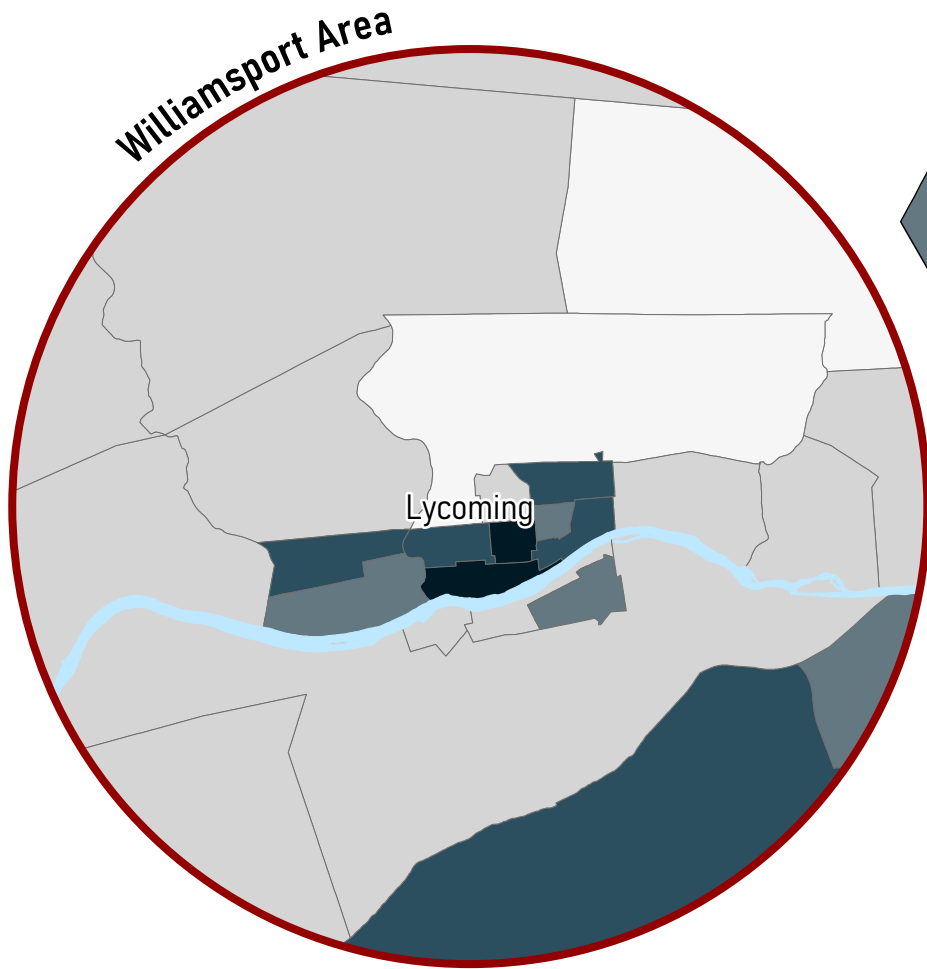0.0% - 10.1%

10.2% - 20.2%

———— Regional Threshold: 20.3%

20.3% - 30.4%

30.5% - 40.5%

40.6% - 100.0%

Margins of Error may be large due to small sample size in the ACS.

Percent Population Age 65 and Over

Union	19.0%
Clinton	19.3%
Snyder	19.8%
Columbia	19.9%
Lycoming	20.0%
Regional Threshold	20.3%
Juniata	20.6%
Montour	21.0%
Northumberland	21.6%
Mifflin	21.6%

N W E S

0   10   20
Miles

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, PennDOT, SEDA-COG

SEDA COG MPO

WATS
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Population Below Poverty Level

Williamsport Area

Lycoming

Clinton

Lycoming

Union

Montour

Columbia
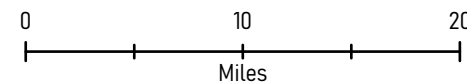
Snyder

Northumberland

Mifflin

Juniata
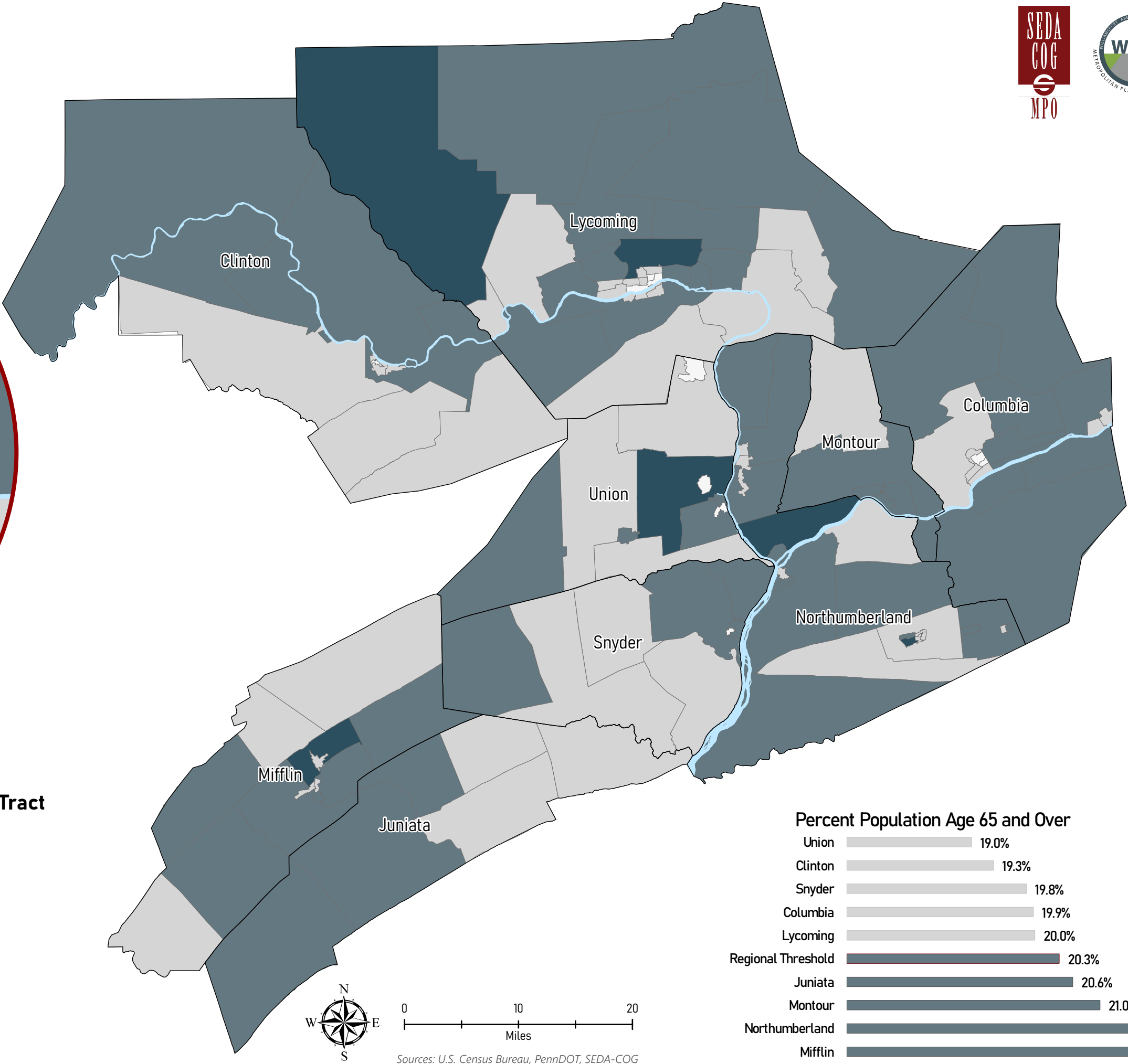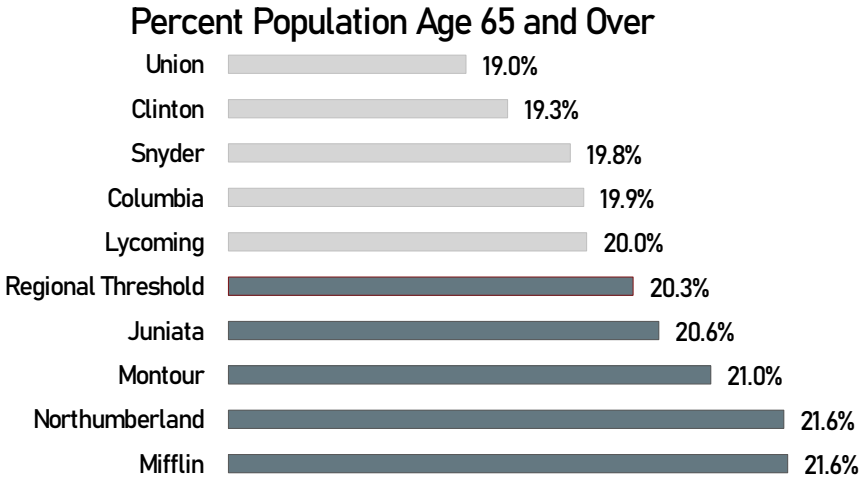
☐ County Boundary

Percent Population Below Poverty Level by Census Tract
ACS 5-Year Estimates (2018–2022)
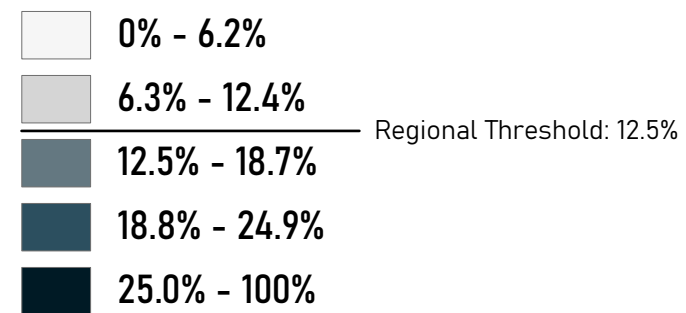
☐	0% – 6.2%
☐	6.3% – 12.4%
	Regional Threshold: 12.5%
☐	12.5% – 18.7%
☐	18.8% – 24.9%
☐	25.0% – 100%

Margins of Error may be large due to small sample size in the ACS.

Percent Population Below Poverty Level

Snyder	8.4%
Montour	8.7%
Juniata	9.0%
Union	10.8%
Northumberland	12.4%
Lycoming	12.5%
Regional Threshold	12.5%
Clinton	13.1%
Columbia	15.3%
Mifflin	16.7%

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S

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Miles
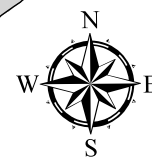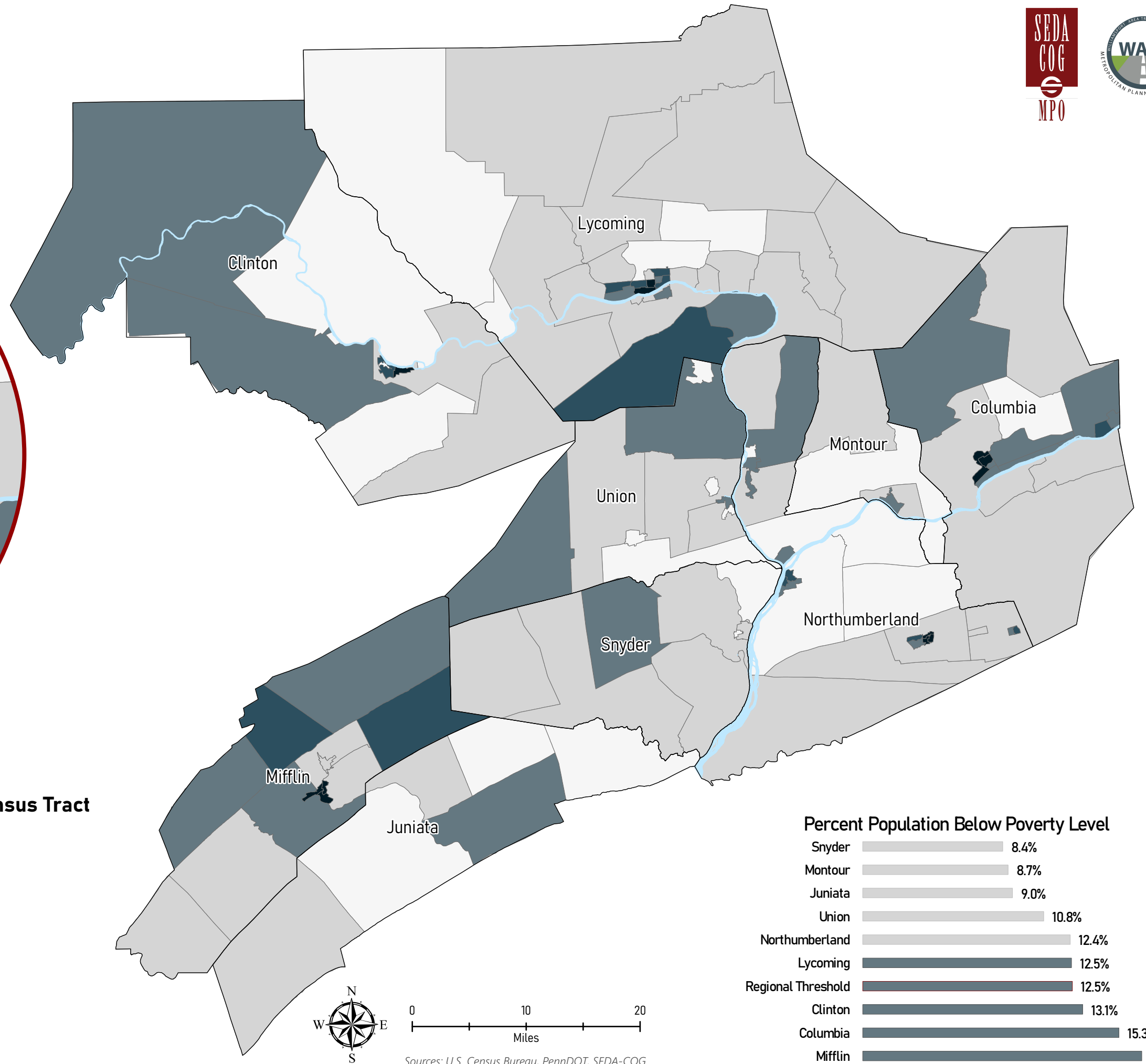
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, PennDOT, SEDA-COG

Population with a Disability

Williamsport Area
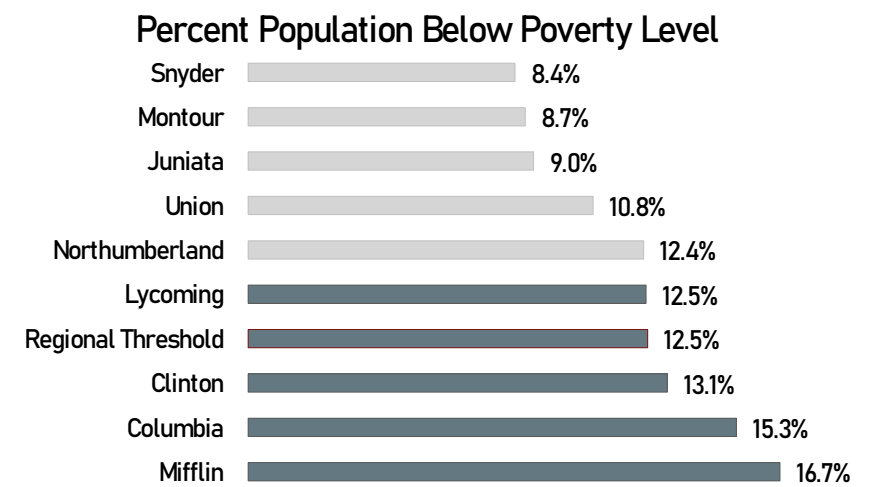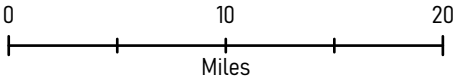
Percent Population with a Disability by Census Tract ACS 5-Year Estimates (2018–2022)
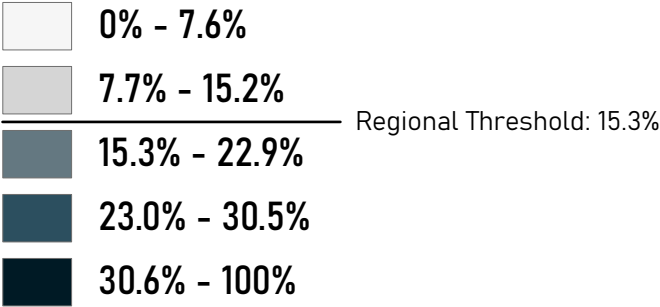
County Boundary

| | 0% – 7.6% |
| | 7.7% – 15.2% |
Regional Threshold: 15.3%
	15.3% – 22.9%
	23.0% – 30.5%
	30.6% – 100%

Margins of Error may be large due to small sample size in the ACS.

Percent Population with a Disability

Juniata	13.3%
Union	13.5%
Montour	13.8%
Mifflin	14.2%
Columbia	14.3%
Snyder	14.9%
Regional Threshold	15.3%
Clinton	16.0%
Lycoming	16.3%
Northumberland	16.7%
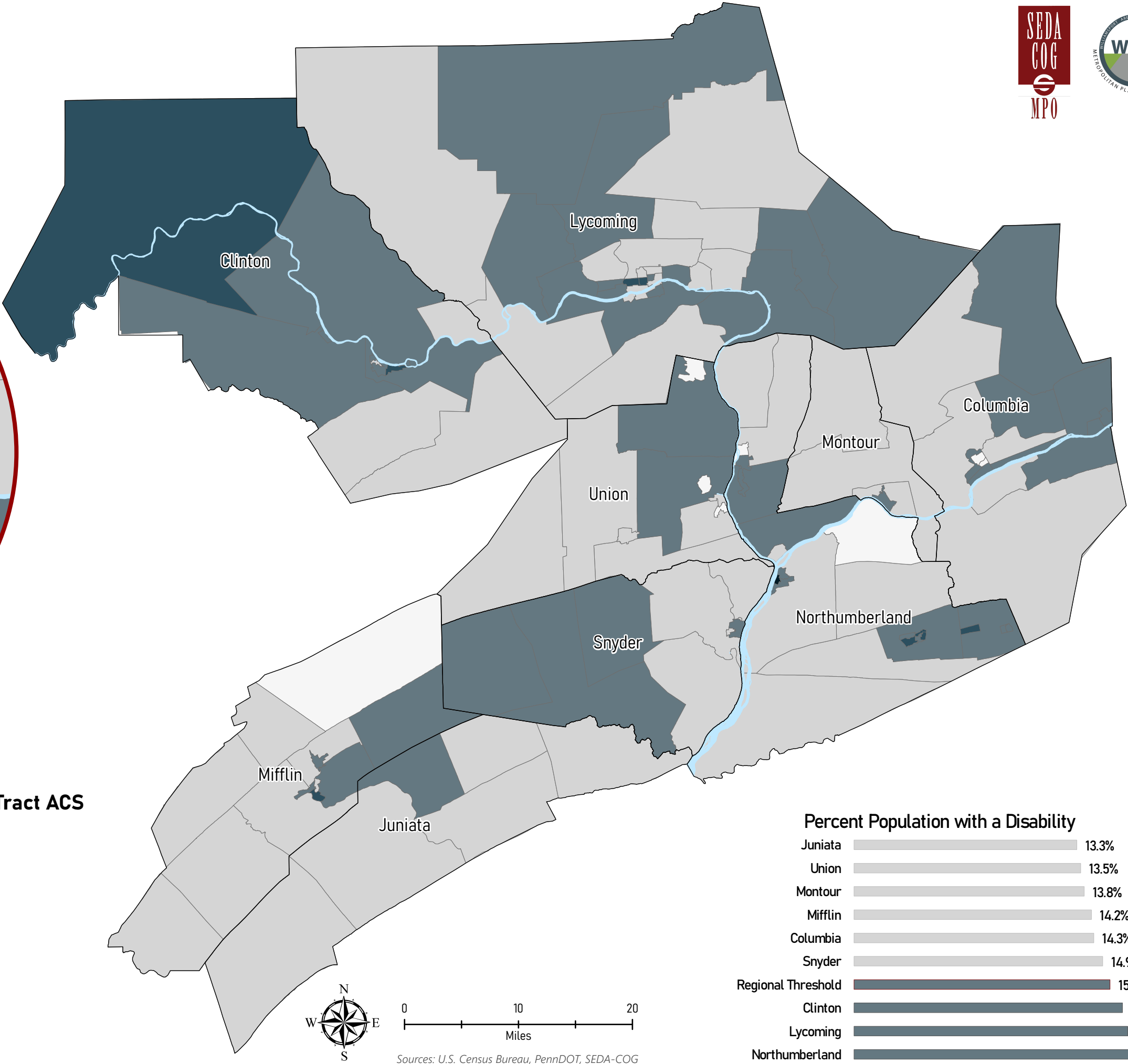
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, PennDOT, SEDA-COG

Households Without a Vehicle Available

Williamsport Area

Lycoming
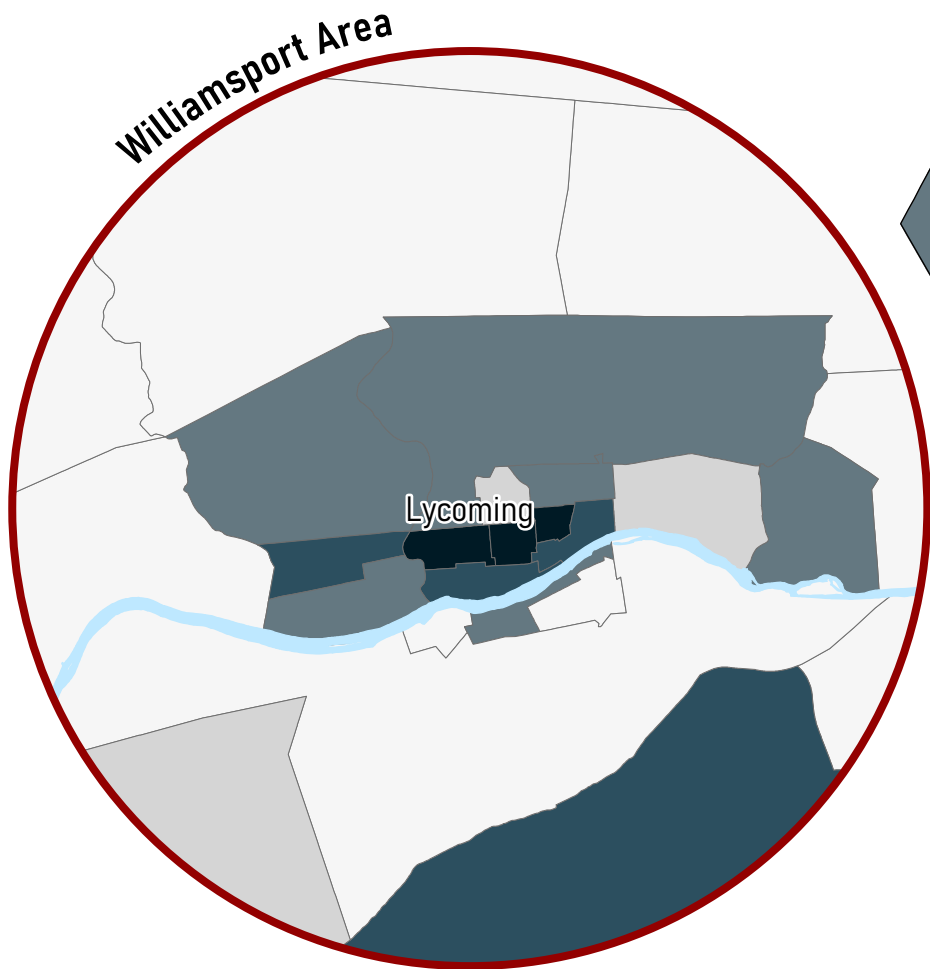
County Boundary

Percent Households Without Access to a Vehicle by Census Tract ACS 5-Year Estimates (2018–2022)
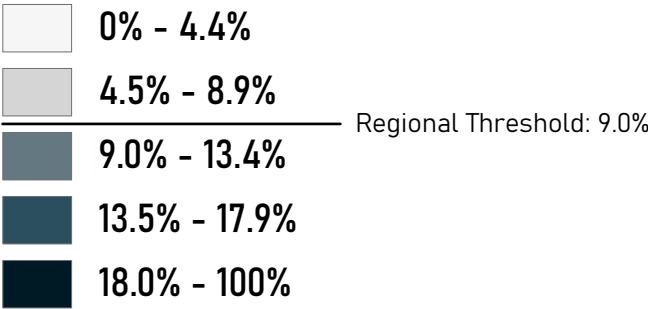
- 0% – 4.4%
- 4.5% – 8.9%
  - Regional Threshold: 9.0%
- 9.0% – 13.4%
- 13.5% – 17.9%
- 18.0% – 100%

Margins of Error may be large due to small sample size in the ACS.

Clinton

Lycoming

Columbia

Montour

Union

Snyder

Northumberland

Mifflin

Juniata

Percent Households without a Vehicle Available

County	Percent
Snyder	6.5%
Columbia	7.3%
Juniata	7.9%
Regional Threshold	9.0%
Union	9.2%
Lycoming	9.4%
Clinton	9.5%
Northumberland	9.8%
Mifflin	9.9%
Montour	10.3%
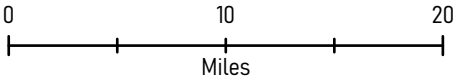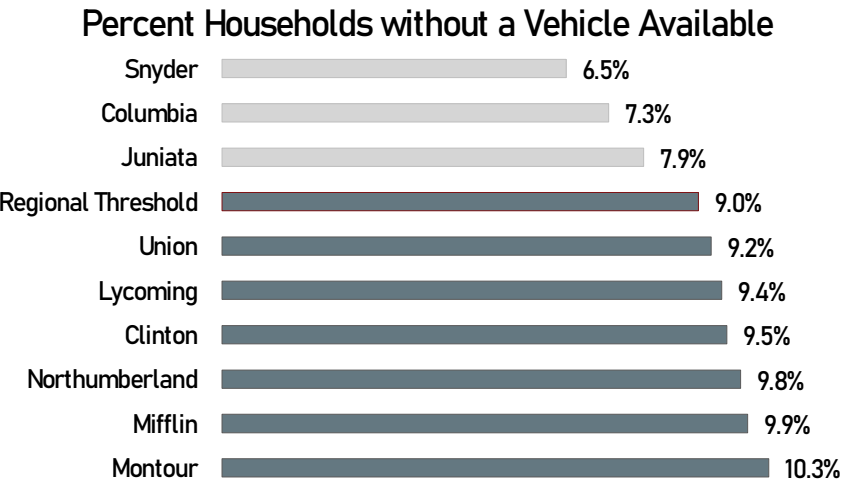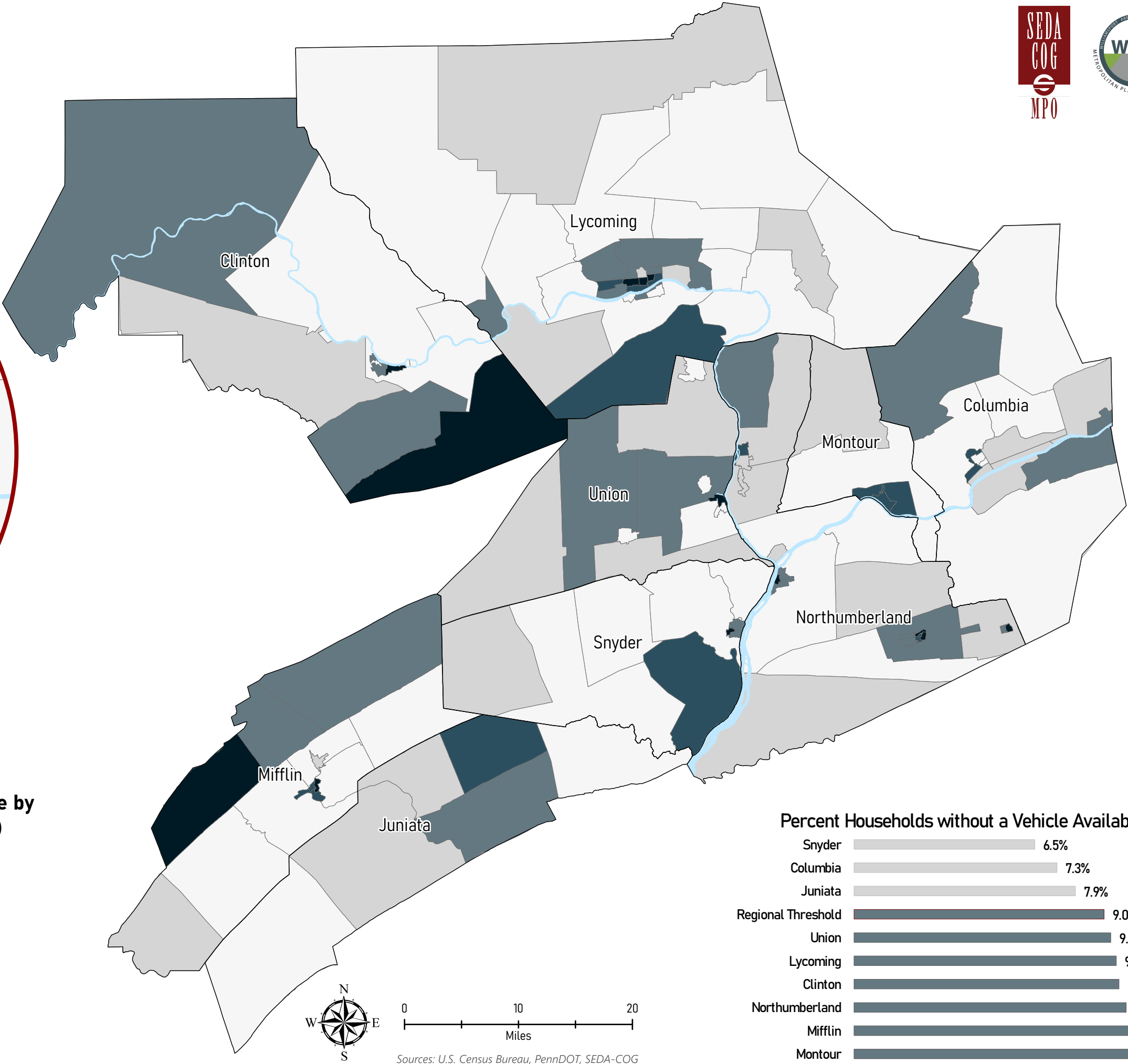
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, PennDOT, SEDA-COG

Female Headed Households with Own Children Present

SEDA COG MPO

WATS

Williamsport Area

Lycoming

Clinton

Lycoming

Columbia

Montour

Union

Northumberland

Snyder

Mifflin

Juniata
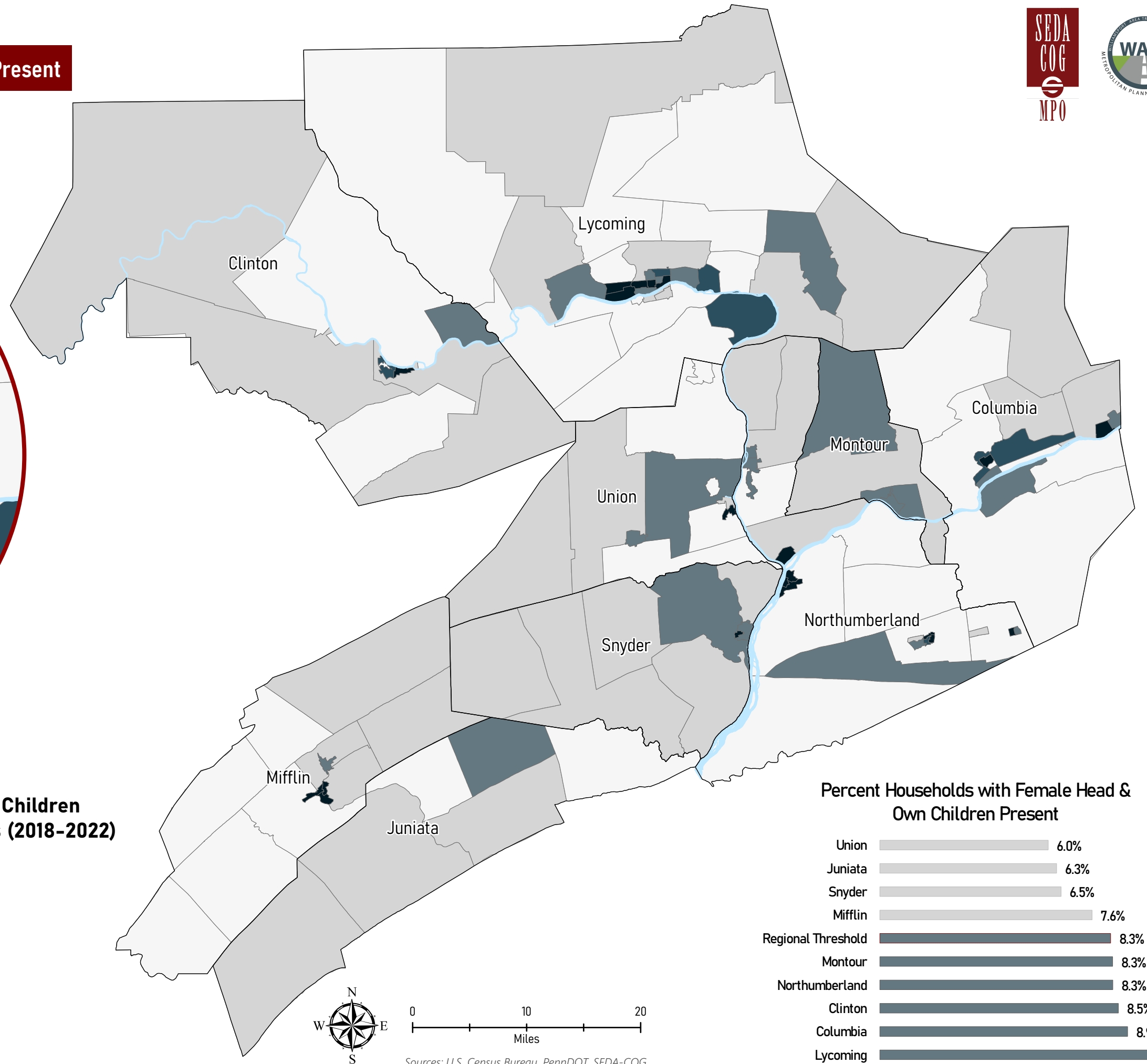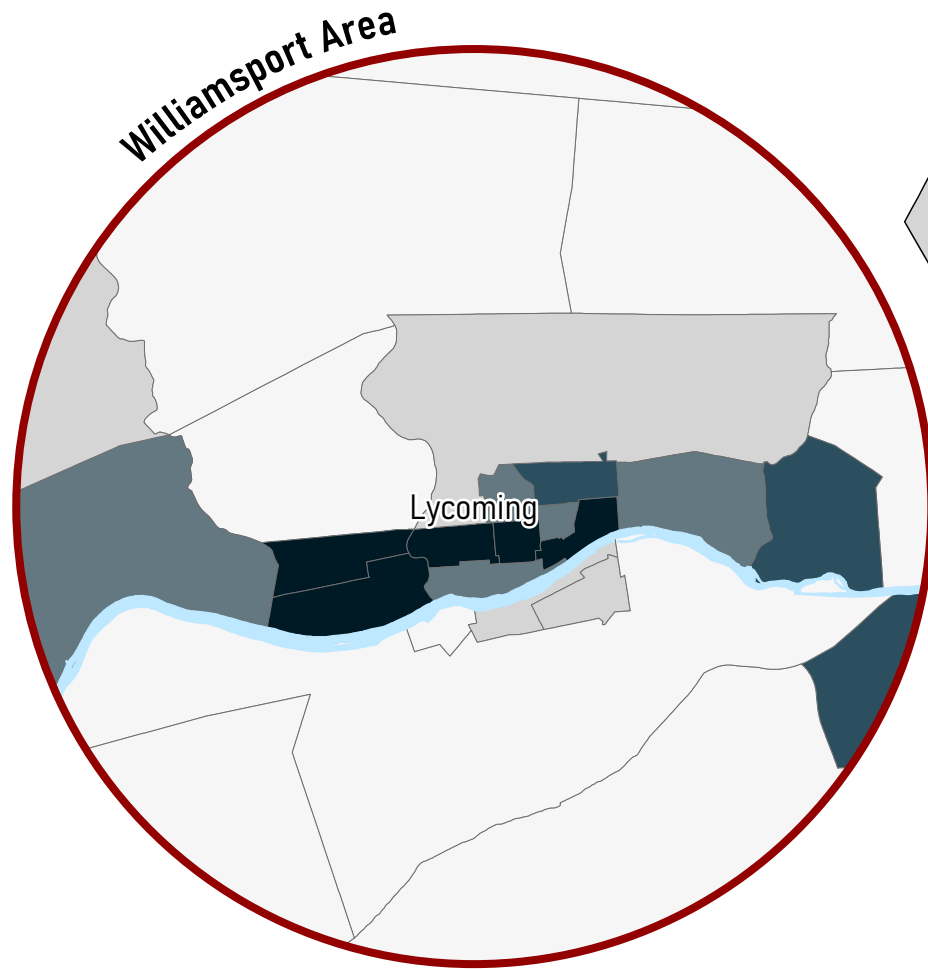
County Boundary

Percent Female Headed Households with Own Children Present by Census Tract ACS 5-Year Estimates (2018-2022)
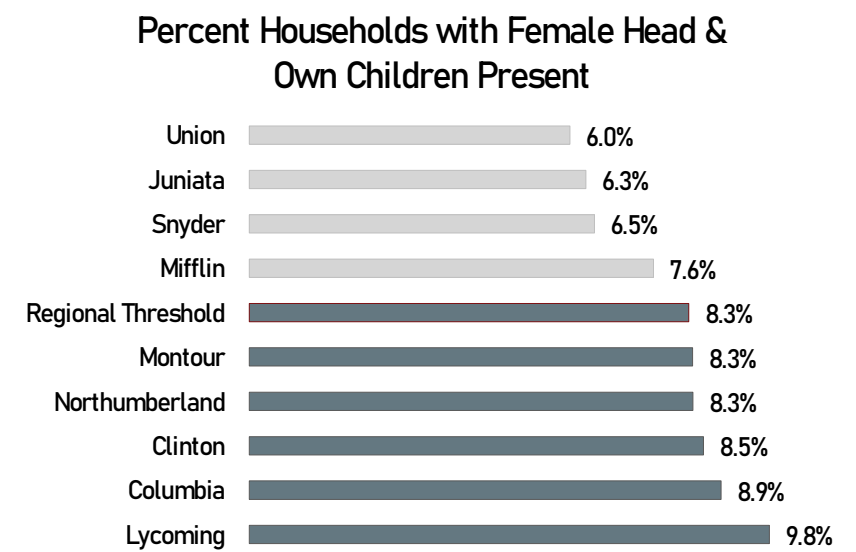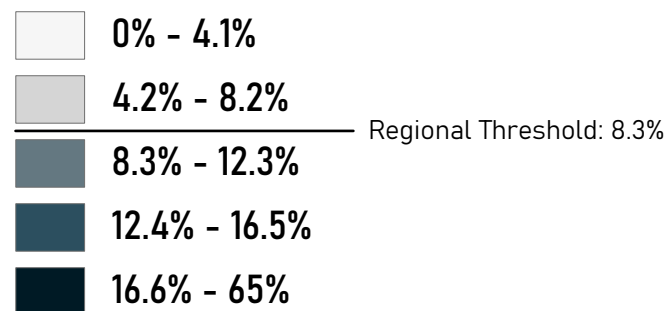
	0% - 4.1%
	4.2% - 8.2%
	8.3% - 12.3%
	12.4% - 16.5%
	16.6% - 65%

Regional Threshold: 8.3%

Margins of Error may be large due to small sample size in the ACS.

Percent Households with Female Head & Own Children Present

Union	6.0%
Juniata	6.3%
Snyder	6.5%
Mifflin	7.6%
Regional Threshold	8.3%
Montour	8.3%
Northumberland	8.3%
Clinton	8.5%
Columbia	8.9%
Lycoming	9.8%

N W E S

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Miles
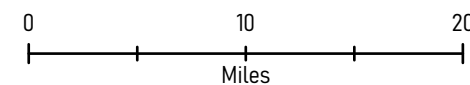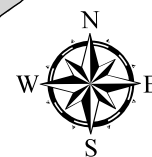
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, PennDOT, SEDA-COG

Population Non-Hispanic Minority

Williamsport Area

Lycoming
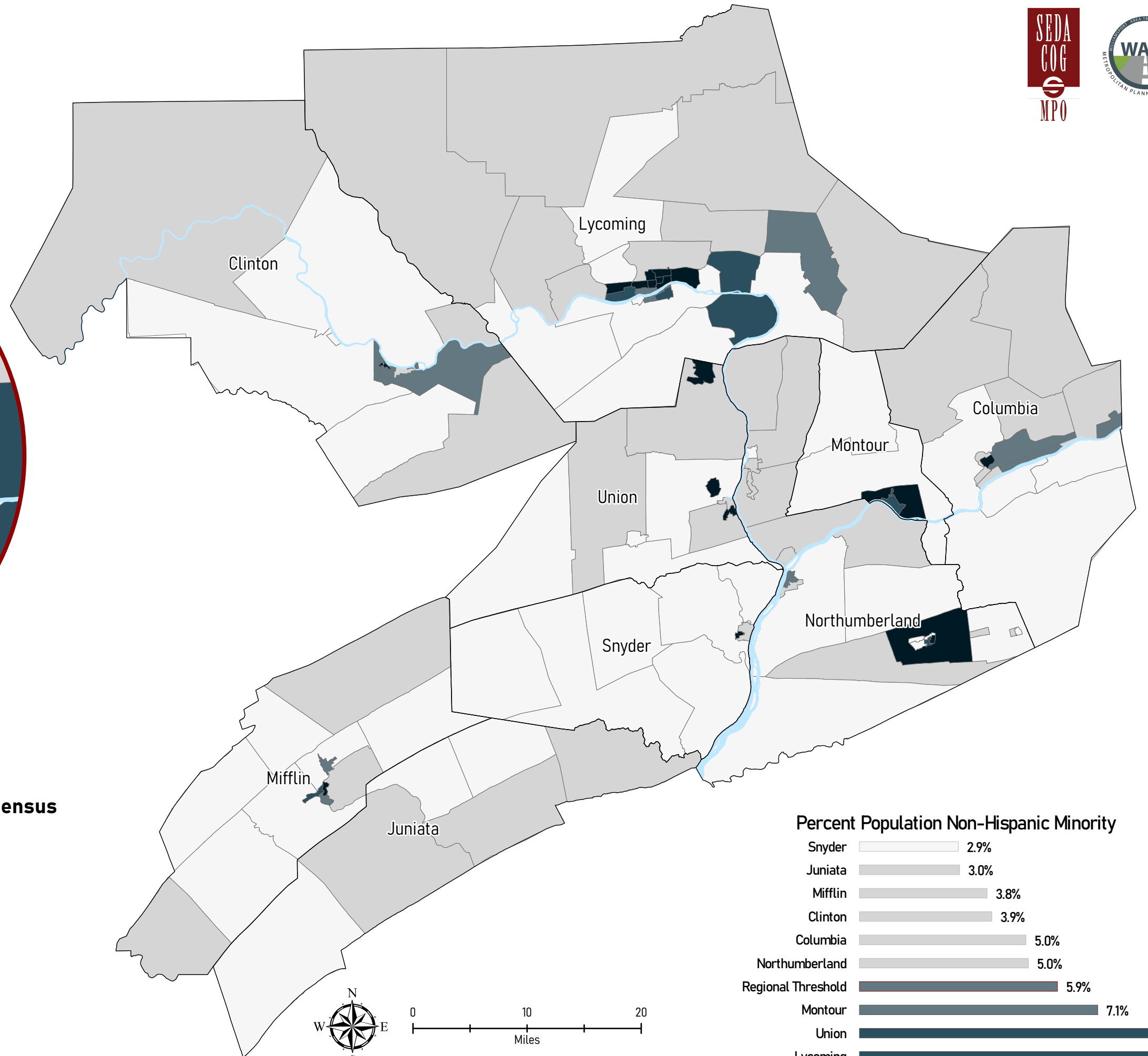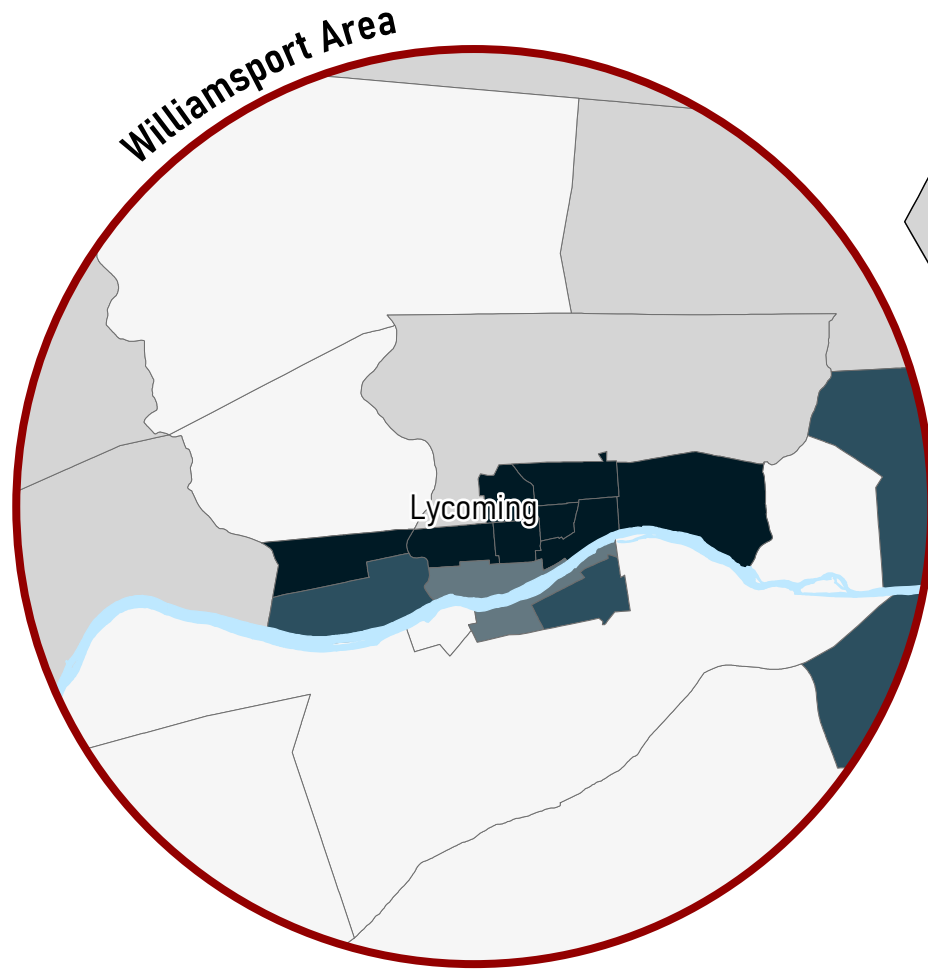
Percent Population Non-Hispanic Minority by Census Tract ACS 5-Year Estimates (2018-2022)
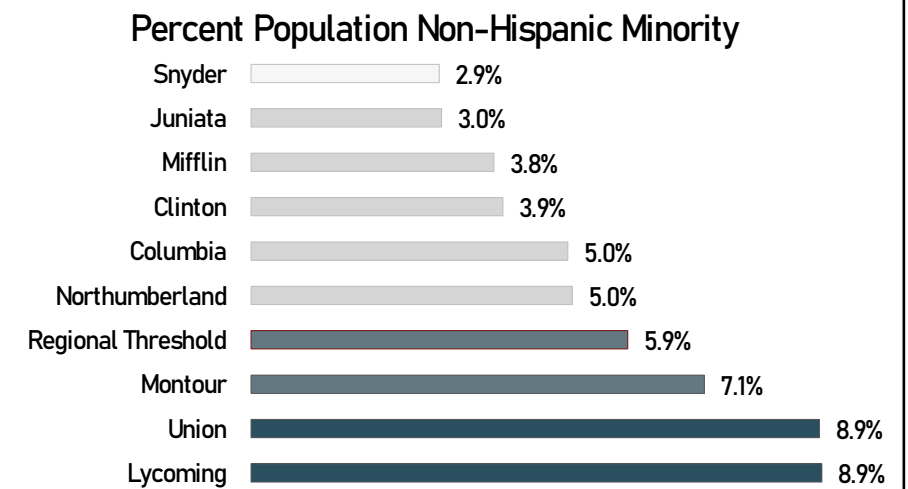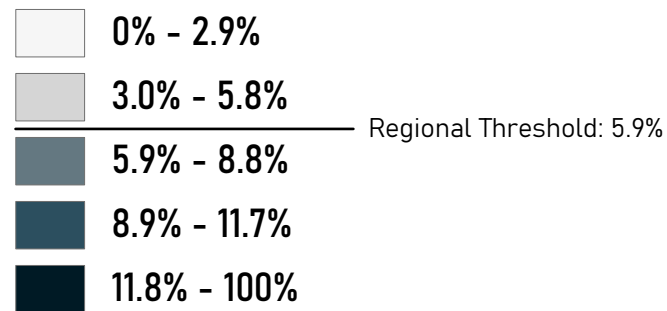
County Boundary

- 0% - 2.9%
- 3.0% - 5.8% — Regional Threshold: 5.9%
- 5.9% - 8.8%
- 8.9% - 11.7%
- 11.8% - 100%

Margins of Error may be large due to small sample size in the ACS.

Percent Population Non-Hispanic Minority

Snyder	2.9%
Juniata	3.0%
Mifflin	3.8%
Clinton	3.9%
Columbia	5.0%
Northumberland	5.0%
Regional Threshold	5.9%
Montour	7.1%
Union	8.9%
Lycoming	8.9%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, PennDOT, SEDA-COG

Population Hispanic or Latino (any race)

Williamsport Area

Lycoming

Clinton

Lycoming

Columbia

Montour

Union

Snyder

Northumberland

Mifflin

Juniata
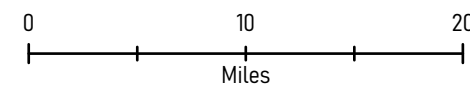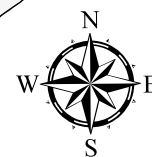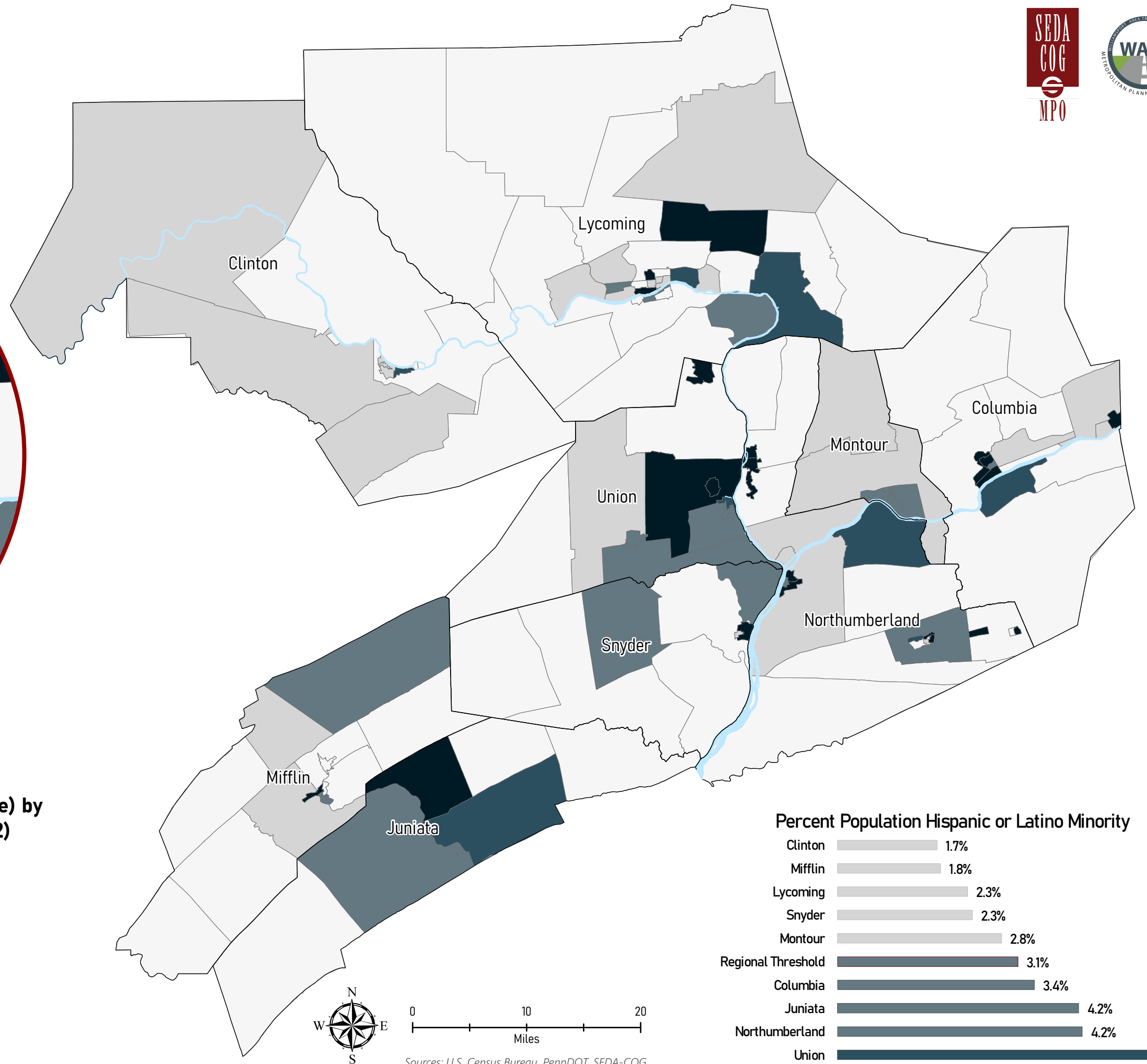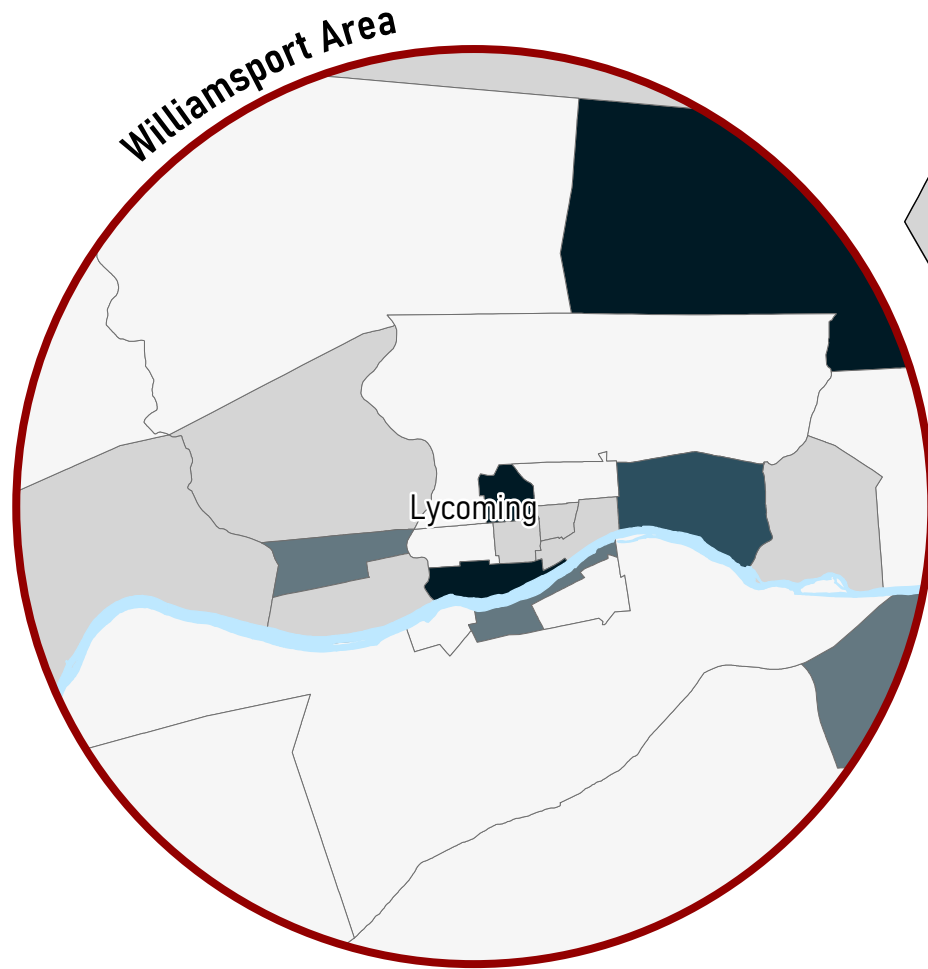
County Boundary

Percent Population Hispanic or Latino (any race) by Census Tract ACS 5-Year Estimates (2018–2022)

- 0% – 1.5%
- 1.6% – 3.0%   Regional Threshold: 3.1%
- 3.1% – 4.6%
- 4.7% – 6.1%
- 6.2% – 100%

Margins of Error may be large due to small sample size in the ACS.

Percent Population Hispanic or Latino Minority

County	Percent
Clinton	1.7%
Mifflin	1.8%
Lycoming	2.3%
Snyder	2.3%
Montour	2.8%
Regional Threshold	3.1%
Columbia	3.4%
Juniata	4.2%
Northumberland	4.2%
Union	5.6%

N
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Miles

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, PennDOT, SEDA-COG

Population with Limited English Proficiency

Williamsport Area

Lycoming

County Boundary

Percent Population with Limited English Proficiency by Census Tract ACS 5-Year Estimates (2018–2022)

	0% – 0.8%
	0.9% – 1.6%
	1.7% – 2.5%
	2.6% – 3.3%
	3.4% – 100%

Regional Threshold: 1.7%
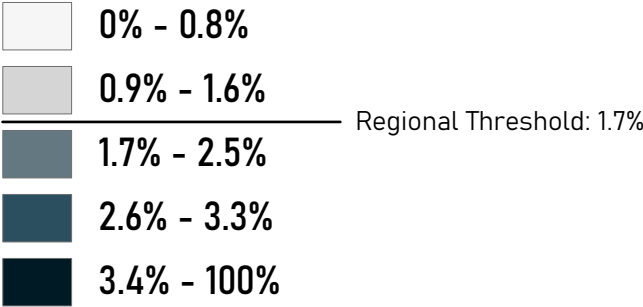
* Population 5 years and older.

Margins of Error may be large due to small sample size in the ACS.

Lycoming

Clinton

Columbia

Montour

Union

Northumberland

Snyder

Mifflin

Juniata

Percent Population with Limited English Proficiency

County	Percent
Columbia	0.9%
Lycoming	1.2%
Northumberland	1.3%
Clinton	1.4%
Regional Threshold	1.7%
Snyder	2.2%
Mifflin	2.4%
Montour	2.5%
Union	3.2%
Juniata	3.6%

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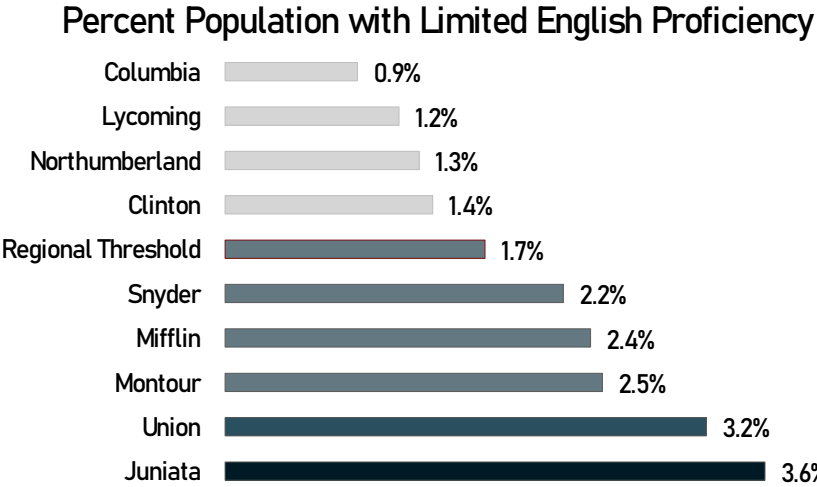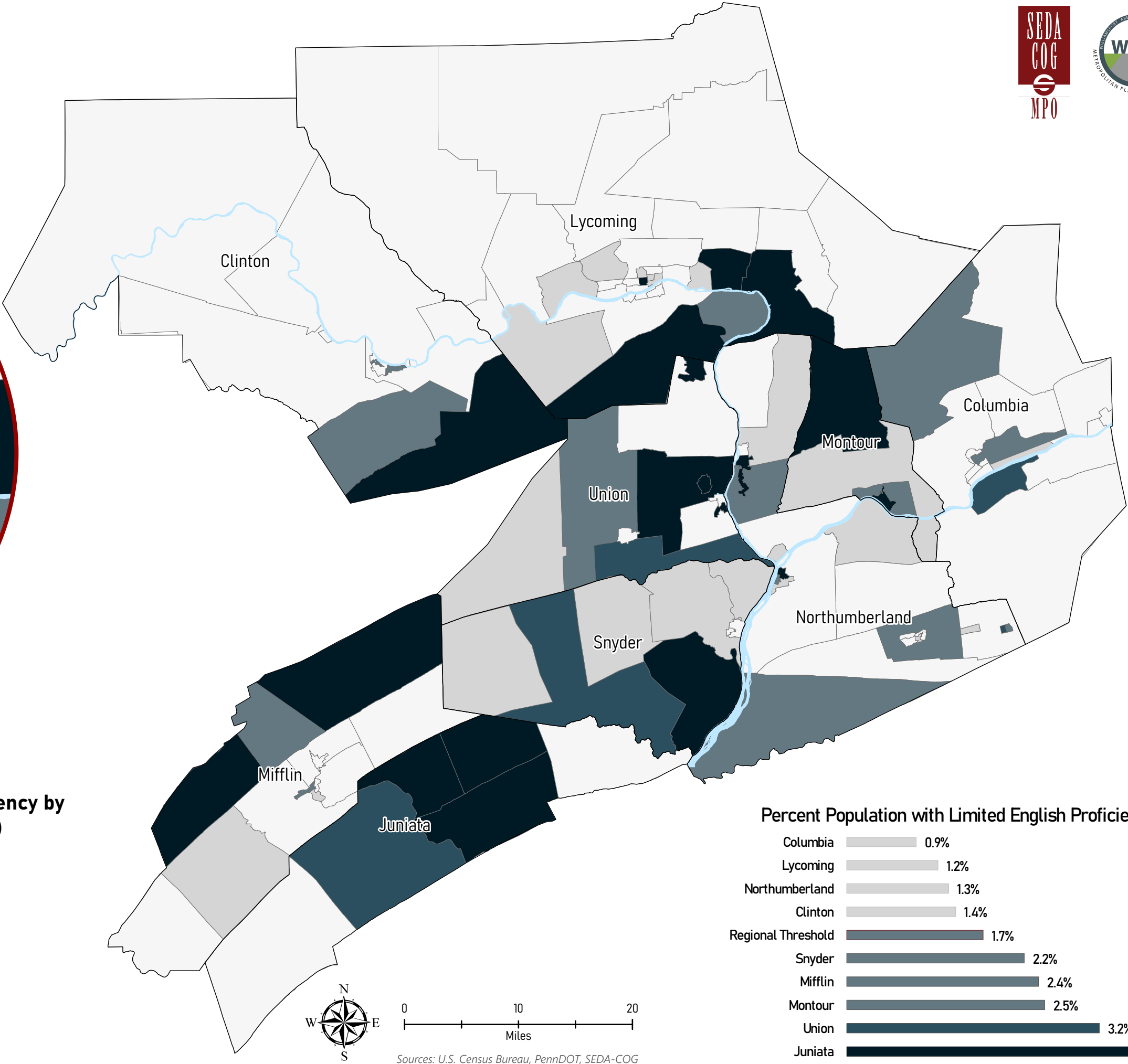
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, PennDOT, SEDA-COG

Appendix B: Combined Stakeholder Participation

Invited Stakeholders				
Name	**Title**	**Organization**	**Participated**	**Written Comments**
Senior Citizen Groups				
Steven Gardner	Associate State Director for Communications	American Association of Retired People	X	
James Plankenhorn	President and CEO	Lycoming/Clinton Bi-County Office for the Aging and STEP		
Kathleen Lynn	Director	Columbia/Montour Aging Office	X	
Olivia Sims		Northumberland County Area Agency on Aging		
Ryan Miller			X	
Chelsea Reed	Director	Mifflin Juniata Area Agency on Aging	X	
Holly Kyle	Executive Director	Union Snyder Area Agency on Aging	X	
Tiffany Snook				
Greg Molter	Director	Montour County Human Services Department		
Melissa Stewart		Mifflin Juniata Human Services Department	X	
Allison Fisher				
Sue Auman		Union Snyder Community Action Agency	X	

Invited Stakeholders				
Name	**Title**	**Organization**	**Participated**	**Written Comments**
Tara Hough		Clinton County Assistance Office	X	
Kelly Parker	Transportation Program Coordinator	American Cancer Society		
Human Services Agencies				
Misty Dion	CEO	Center for Independent Living – Roads to Freedom of North Central PA	X	
Karen Koch		Center for Independent Living		
Melissa Walters	Office Manager	Clear Vision Residential		
Shelbie Eshelman	Office Manager	Hope Enterprises		
Susan Swartz	District Administrator	Office of Vocational Rehabilitation		
Brian Patchett	President/CEO	Northcentral Sight Services		
Shelly Stroble		Central Susquehanna Sight Services		
		Lycoming Valley Association for the Deaf		
Janetta Green	Acting CEO	Center for Independent Living of Central PA		

Invited Stakeholders				
Name	**Title**	**Organization**	**Participated**	**Written Comments**
Mary Lyn Cadman		CMSU Behavioral Health and Development Services		
Jessica Confer	Director, West Central Easter Seals	Easter Seals Society		
Jeffrey Iseman	Public Policy and Outreach Coordinator	Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council	X	
Nursing and Rehabilitation				
Rebecca Fogelman	Loyalsock Administrator	Embassy of Loyalsock	X	
Sarah Finkbinder	Loyalsock Executive Director	Elmcroft of Loyalsock		
Jackie McElroy	Administrator	Hillside Senior Living Community		
Marcia Reed	Administrator	Insingers Personal Care		
Rhonda Riggle	Building Administrator	ProMedica Skilled Nursing Rehabilitation		
Bobbi Jo Thompson	Business Manager	Williamsport Rehabilitation & Nursing Center Bedrock Care – North	X	
Kelsey Ecker	Building Administrator	Williamsport Rehabilitation & Nursing Center Bedrock Care – South		

Invited Stakeholders				
Name	**Title**	**Organization**	**Participated**	**Written Comments**
Matt McLaughlin	President - Muncy Hospital	Muncy Valley Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation Center		
Renee Moore	Person Care Home Administrator	Presbyterian Home at Williamsport		
Lauren Henry	Assistant Administrator	Rose View Nursing and Rehab		
Don Pote	Executive Director	The Williamsport Home		
Amber Depew	Public Relations Director	UPMC Susquehanna		
Jamie Evens	Director of Hospitality and Operations			
Sheila Packer		Evangelical Community Hospital – Community Health and Wellness	X	
Allison Clark	Community Benefit Coordinator	Geisinger Health System		
Deb Palmer		LIFE Geisinger		
Cymantha Santiago Nunez	Community Resource Navigator	UPMC North	X	
Transit Providers				
Michelle Holman		rabbittransit	X	
Beth Nidam			X	

Invited Stakeholders				
Name	**Title**	**Organization**	**Participated**	**Written Comments**
Cindy Sunderland		Call-A-Ride Service, Inc.	X	
Dan Merk	Program Manager, STEP Transportation	STEP, Inc.	X	
Todd Wright		River Valley Transit Authority		
Jack Spade		Lower Anthracite Transportation System	X	
Jennifer Corman	Director of Business Development	Fullington Trailways		
		Lyft		
		Uber Technologies		
Veterans Services				
Todd Warner	Director	Clinton County Dept. of Veterans Affairs		
W. Michael McMunn	Director	Lycoming County Dept. of Veterans Affairs		
Bridget Kingston		Columbia County Dept. of Veterans Affairs		
Dennis Hutchings	Director	Juniata County Dept. of Veterans Affairs		
James Conway	Director	Mifflin County Dept. of Veterans Affairs		

Invited Stakeholders				
Name	**Title**	**Organization**	**Participated**	**Written Comments**
Timothy Wright	Veteran's Service Officer	Montour County Dept. of Veterans Affairs	X	
David Royer	Veterans Affairs Director	Snyder County Dept. of Veterans Affairs		
J.D. Kerstetter	Director	Union County Dept. of Veterans Affairs		
Samantha Cossman	Regional Program Outreach Coordinator	PA Dept of Military and Veterans Affairs	X	
Jennifer Spitler	Regional Program Outreach Coordinator	PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs	X	
Tribal Nations				
John Johnson	Governor	Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma		
Devon Frazier	THPO			
Clint Halftown	Section 106	Cayuga Nation		
Deborah Dotson	Tribal President	Delaware Nation of Oklahoma		
Katelyn Lucas	Historic Preservation			
Brad KillsCrow	Chief	Delaware Tribe		
Susan Bachor	Historic Preservation			
Glenna Wallace	Chief	Eastern Shawnee of Oklahoma		
Stacie Cutbank	THPO	Oneida Nation		
Sidney Hill	Chief	Onondaga Nation		

Invited Stakeholders				
Name	**Title**	**Organization**	**Participated**	**Written Comments**
Rickey Armstrong	President	Seneca Nation of Indians		
William Fisher	Chief	Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma		
Cassie Harper	Tribal Administrator	Shawnee Tribe		
Roger Hill	Chief	Tonawanda Band of Seneca		
Leo Henry	Chief	Tuscarora Nation		
Dialysis Centers				
Dr. Evan Norfolk	Nephrologist	Geisinger Nephrology	X	
Kimberly Connor		Geisinger	X	
Amber Kurzawa		Danville Dialysis	X	
Kelly Schraeder		Berwick Dialysis	X	
Other				
Rachael Ulmer	Williamsport Site Administrator	CareerLink		
Timothy Mahoney	Coalition Coordinator	Lycoming County Health Improvement Coalition		
		Office of Vocational Rehabilitation		

Appendix C: Survey Questions

Current Transportation Service Use

1. How often do you currently use public transportation (e.g., CARS, LATS, RVTA, STEP, rabbittransit, Stop Hopper)?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- A few times per year
- Never

2. What transportation service do you normally ride/use in the region?

- Call-A-Ride (CARS)
- Lower Anthracite Transit System (LATS)
- River Valley Transit Authority (RVTA)
- fixed-route (regular bus)
- STEP shared-ride
- rabbittransit shared-ride
- Stop Hopper
- Uber/Lyft/taxi
- Other (please specify): _____

3. For the majority of your local trips, how do you travel most often? Please select one.

- Drive alone
- Ride with a spouse or other family member
- Ride with volunteers/carpool
- Use public transportation (CARS, LATS, RVTA, STEP, rabbittransit, Stop Hopper)
- Take a taxi/Uber/Lyft
- County or human service agency (Area Agency on Aging, etc.) provides transportation
- Walk
- Bike
- Other (please specify): _____

4. If your primary source of transportation is not available, how do you travel? Please select one.

- Drive alone
- Ride with a spouse or other family member
- Ride with volunteers/carpool
- Use public transportation (CARS, LATS, RVTA, STEP, rabbittransit, Stop Hopper)
- Take a taxi/Uber/Lyft
- County or human service agency (Area Agency on Aging, etc.) provides transportation
- Walk
- Bike

- Other (please specify): _____

5. If you have never used or no longer use public transportation, please indicate the reasons. Check all that apply.

- Service is not frequent enough
- Travel takes too long
- Service is not offered to the locations I need
- Service is not reliable
- Fares are expensive
- Too far to walk to a bus stop
- I prefer to drive
- I am not aware of the public transportation services available
- Not applicable (I currently use public transportation)
- Other (please specify): _____

6. If you currently use public transportation (or expect to use public transportation in the future), what are your top three trip purposes? Please select at most 3 options.

- Medical appointments
- Education
- Employment/training
- Religious
- Senior services
- Grocery
- Shopping
- General Shopping
- Family/friend visits
- Recreation/entertainment
- Not applicable (I don't use public transportation)
- Other (please specify): _____

7. How much do you currently pay for each one-way public transportation trip?

- Nothing ($0)
- Less than $1
- $1.00 to $1.50
- $1.50 to $2.00
- More than $2

8. What is the most that you are willing to pay for a one-way public transportation trip?

- Nothing ($0)
- Less than $1
- $1.00 to $1.50
- $1.50 to $2.00
- More than $2.00

9. How much do you spend on public transportation each month? (Skip if not applicable)

10. In the past six months, have any household members missed any of the following due to a lack of transportation? Please check all that apply.

- Work
- Medical appointment
- Grocery Shopping
- General Shopping
- Family/friend visits
- Entertainment
- Social service appointment
- Education
- Religious service
- Not applicable (transportation needs have been met)

11. During which of the following time periods do you MOST need transportation services?

- Monday through Friday, daytime (6 am to 6 pm)
- Monday through Friday, evenings (6 pm to 10 pm)
- Monday through Friday, nights (10 pm to 7 am)
- Weekends (Saturdays and Sundays, anytime)

Improvements to Public Transportation Services

12. There are many strategies to improve public transportation and a limited amount of funding. Please mark the importance to you of the following strategies (Not important, important, very important):

- Improve information about available public transportation services and routes
- More service in rural areas
- More service during evenings and weekends
- More out of county/out of region service
- Lower the cost of public transportation
- Improve comfort of ride/bus
- Provide immediate information if ride will be late
- Shorten wait times for return trips
- Prioritize medical appointments
- Expand Stop Hopper service
- Increase reliability

13. How do you hear about transportation services available to you? Check all that apply.

- Word of mouth
- Social Media
- Newspaper or other advertising
- County Assistance Office
- Senior Center Case worker or other government referral
- Internet search
- PA 211

- PA 511
- Find My Ride PA
- Other (please specify): _____

14. Which of the following are the best ways to let people know about transportation services in your community? Check all that apply.

- Direct mailings to your home
- Newspaper
- Radio
- Television
- Websites
- Social media
- Inserts with municipal/utility bills
- Not interested
- Other (please specify): _____

15. Please identify any specific locations that you need to or would like to travel to that you cannot get to today.

16. Do you have other suggestions to improve transportation to meet your needs?

17. Please tell us about a time when transportation was a challenge for you or those you assist. Include where your trip started, where you were going, and why this trip was a challenge.

Demographic Characteristics

18. What is your home zip code?

19. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- Non-binary/non-conforming
- Prefer not to answer

20. What is your age?

- Under 18
- 18 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 to 84
- 85+

21. What best describes your race?

- American Indian, Alaska Native or First Nations
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Middle Eastern or North African
- White/Caucasian
- Other (please specify): _____

22. What is your ethnicity?

- Hispanic
- Non-Hispanic

23. Are you a person with a disability or other chronic condition?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

24. Are you a military veteran?

- Yes
- No

25. How well do you speak English?

- Not at all
- Not well
- Well
- Very well

26. Do you have a smartphone?

- Yes
- No

27. Do you have access to a car or other vehicle?

- Yes, I own a car and drive myself.
- Yes, a family member or friend has a car and drives me.
- Yes, I borrow a car and drive myself.
- No, I do not have access to a car that is running, licensed, and insured.

28. What is your annual household income?

- Less than $15,000
- $15,001 to $25,000
- $25,001 to $40,000
- $40,001 to $75,000
- $75,001 to $100,000
- Over $100,000

29. What government services do you participate in? Check all that apply.

- Medicaid (Medical Assistance)
- Medicare
- Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Area Agency on Aging (AAA)
- Housing Assistance (HUD)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Childcare Subsidy (CCIS)
- Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Head Start
- CareerLink or other employment program
- None
- Other (please specify): _____

Appendix D: Agency & Rider Interview Guides

Agency Interview Questions

1. How does your agency provide transportation assistance?

   a. Operate vehicles to transport clients

   b. Contract with a third party to provide transportation service to clients

      i. Identify the third parties with which you contract

   c. Subsidize transportation by providing clients with bus fare, mileage reimbursement, or cash

   d. Arrange for transportation by assisting clients with trip planning and information on transportation options

      i. Identify the transportation providers that clients use when you provide the above assistance

2. What transportation programs/services are working well for your clients?

3. What transportation programs/services are not working well for your clients? Is the answer client-dependent—based specifically on the client or the type of disability/need?

4. What are the significant transportation issues/complaints related to:

   a. Persons with disabilities accessing services, etc.

   b. Generally accessing jobs/employment

5. What methods do you currently use to inform residents/clients about your transportation services?

   a. Are there other methods that would be more effective in informing residents/clients about your transportation services—what are they?

6. Do the majority of your clients have reliable access to the internet or a smartphone?

7. Cost of transportation service

   a. Has your agency modified its transportation assistance due to changes in the cost of transportation over the past year

   b. Have your clients modified transportation use due to changes in the cost of transportation over the past year

8. Do your clients need transportation services with which your agency does not assist?

   a. Give examples of those transportation services needs

   b. Are your clients able to access other transportation that meets those needs

9. What are other transportation needs in your service area that are not being adequately met, along with recommended solutions?

10. What changes are needed in transportation to better meet the needs of persons with disabilities, low-income persons, veterans, and older adults?

11. Please identify specific transportation consumers (name and phone/email) who would be willing to be interviewed about their experiences

Passenger Experience Questions

INTRODUCTION:

- Updating the regional plan for transportation services in Clinton, Columbia, Juniata, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, Union, and Lycoming Counties.
- The Plan describes the current transportation services as well as gaps in transportation services—needs that are not being met right now.
- Part of that work depends on understanding current transportation from a passenger's perspective.

QUESTIONS:

Background

- For some background information, could you tell us a bit about yourself and the transportation services that you use
  - How did you first find out about transportation that could take you to doctor appointments, grocery shopping, the senior center, the hairdresser, etc.?
  - Generally, where do you go on rabbittransit? How often do you use the service?
  - Tell us a few things that you really like or enjoy about the transportation service.
  - Tell us a few things that are bothersome or inconvenient about the transportation service.
  - Are there trips that you would like to take but are too expensive?
  - Do you have a smartphone?
  - If you have a smartphone and there were a mobile app to schedule trips, would you use it?
- Have you used Find My Ride (FMR) Schedule or Apply?
- Tell us more about your experience using _____ transportation
  - When you need or want to go somewhere, how do you choose whether to use XYZ transportation or some other form of transportation?
  - After you have decided to use XYZ transportation, what is your next step—calling to reserve a trip?

Scheduling

- Tell us about reserving a trip
  - Is it easy to get through on the telephone?
- Do you have to wait through many rings or is the call answered quickly?
- How long does it take to make the reservation?
- Is there anything about making the reservation that is bothersome or that you appreciate?

- Prior to the trip – how do you know when the vehicle will be coming/will arrive to pick you up so that you can be ready?
- Do you pay for your trips? If so, how and is that process easy?

Trip Experience

- When the vehicle arrives, how do you know that it is at your home?
- Does the driver help you to exit your home?
- Does the driver help you to enter the vehicle?
- Is the ride pleasant/comfortable?
- Do you feel safe with the driver?
- Are there any stops in between your pickup and destination?
  - Are there stops that are reasonable and add only a few minutes?
  - Are there stops that add significant time to the trip?
- Is there anything about the ride that bothers you?
- When you reach your destination, does the driver help you to exit the vehicle?
- On the return trip, how long do you normally wait for the vehicle after your scheduled pick up time?
  Tell us about your overall experiences with XYZ's transportation service
  - Either generally or specifically a really good experience
  - Either generally or specifically a really bad experience
- Do you have an alternative option for any trips that you need to make?
- If this service was not available, how would you travel?
- What kinds of technology devices do you use regularly?
  - Landline phone
  - Cell phone
  - Tablet
  - Computer with internet service
- Do you expect to use different devices in the next five years?
- What can public transit providers do to get more riders?
- How would you encourage family or friends to ride public transit service?
- Should local elected officials support public transportation?

Central PA Transit User Survey For the SEDA-COG MPO/WATS MPO Coordinated Plan

**90** Responses   **20:23** Average time to complete   **Closed** Status

1. How often do you currently use public transportation (e.g., CARS, LATS, RVTA, STEP, rabbittransit, Stop Hopper)?

🔵	Daily	9
🟠	Weekly	20
🟢	Monthly	7
🔴	A few times per year	11
🟣	Never	43

2. What transportation service do you normally ride/use in the region?

🔵	Call-A-Ride (CARS)	2
🟠	Lower Anthracite Transit System…	0
🟢	River Valley Transit Authority (R…	7
🔴	STEP shared-ride	1
🟣	rabbittransit shared-ride	31
🟤	Stop Hopper	2
🌸	Uber/Lyft/taxi	4
⚫	Other	0
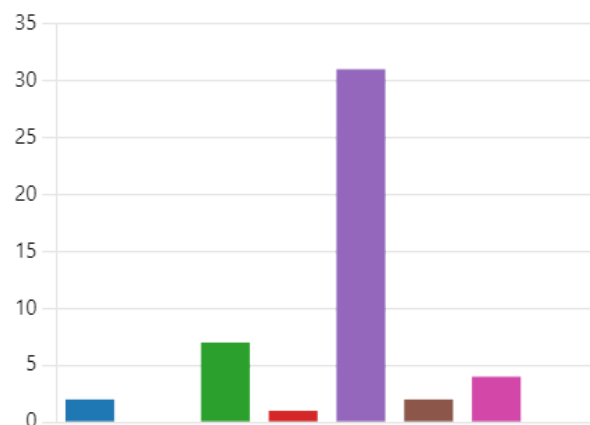
3. For the majority of your local trips, how do you travel most often? Please select one.

●	Drive alone	42
●	Ride with a spouse or other fam...	26
●	Ride with volunteers/carpool	0
●	Use public transportation (CARS...	14
●	Take a taxi/Uber/Lyft	0
●	County or human service agenc...	0
●	Walk	4
●	Bike	1
●	Other	1
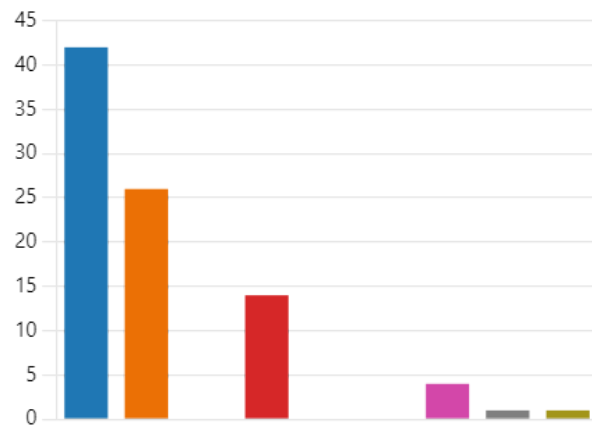
4. If your primary source of transportation is not available, how do you travel? Please select one.

|		
●	Drive alone	10
●	Ride with a spouse or other fam...	42
●	Ride with volunteers/carpool	4
●	Use public transportation (CARS...	13
●	Take a taxi/Uber/Lyft	2
●	County or human service agenc...	0
●	Walk	6
●	Bike	2
●	Other	7
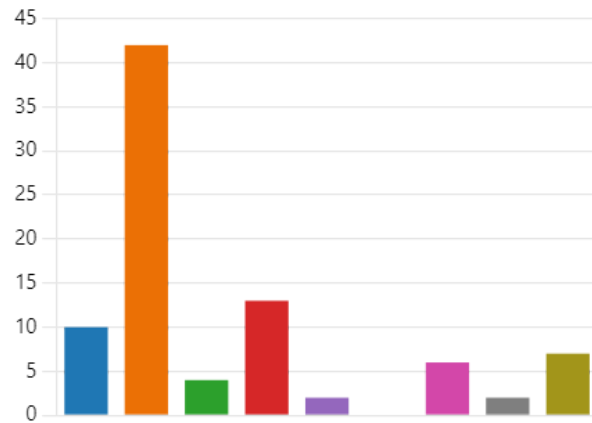
5. If you have never used or no longer use public transportation, please indicate the reasons. Check all that apply.

🔵	Service is not frequent enough	14
🟠	Travel takes too long	12
🟢	Service is not offered to the loca…	20
🔴	Service is not reliable	4
🟣	Fares are expensive	4
🟤	Too far to walk to a bus stop	2
🩷	I prefer to drive	25
⚫	I am not aware of the public tra…	12
🟡	Not applicable (I currently use p…	29
🔵	Other	4
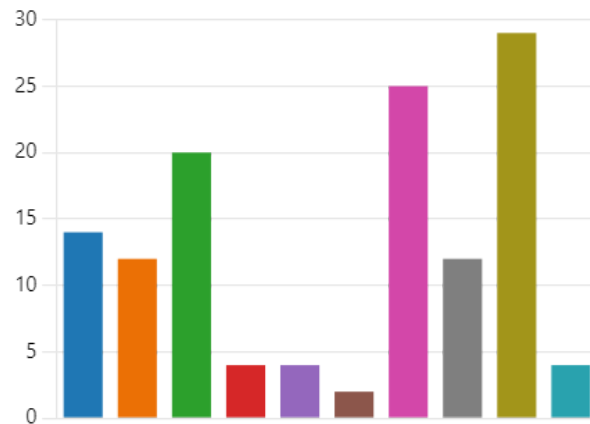
6. If you currently use public transportation (or expect to use public transportation in the future), what are your **top three** trip purposes?

🔵	Medical appointments	50
🟠	Education	0
🟢	Employment/training	20
🔴	Religious	1
🟣	Senior services	5
🟤	Grocery Shopping	32
🩷	General Shopping	16
⚫	Family/friend visits	5
🟡	Recreation/entertainment	1
🔵	Not applicable (I don't use publi…	22
🔵	Other	6
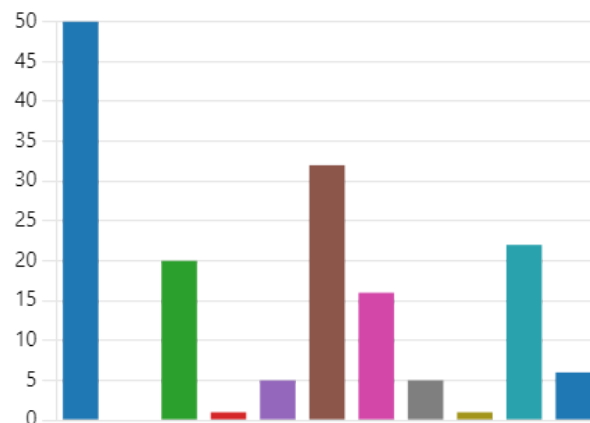
7. How much do you currently pay for each one-way public transportation trip?

🔵	Nothing ($0)	38
🟠	Less than $1	9
🟢	$1.00 to $1.50	5
🔴	$1.50 to $2.00	8
🟣	More than $2	14

8. What is the most that you are willing to pay for a one-way public transportation trip?

🔵	Nothing ($0)	8
🟠	Less than $1	12
🟢	$1.00 to $1.50	17
🔴	$1.50 to $2.00	17
🟣	More than $2.00	26

9. How much do you spend on public transportation each month? (Skip if not applicable)

**27**

Responses

Latest Responses

"0"

"$ 1.50 for each round trip appointment. Sometimes there are 2 appoint...

1 respondents (**4**%) answered **10** for this question.

appointments in a month

Transportation available 1500 **10** 500   **2000** round

trip appointment   taxi rabbit

10. In the past six months, have any household members missed any of the following due to a lack of transportation? Please check all that apply.

🔵	Work	8
🟠	Medical appointment	15
🟢	Grocery Shopping	7
🔴	General Shopping	3
🟣	Family/friend visits	5
🟤	Entertainment	2
🩷	Social service appointment	4
⚫	Education	2
🟡	Religious service	4
🔵	Not applicable (transportation n...	62
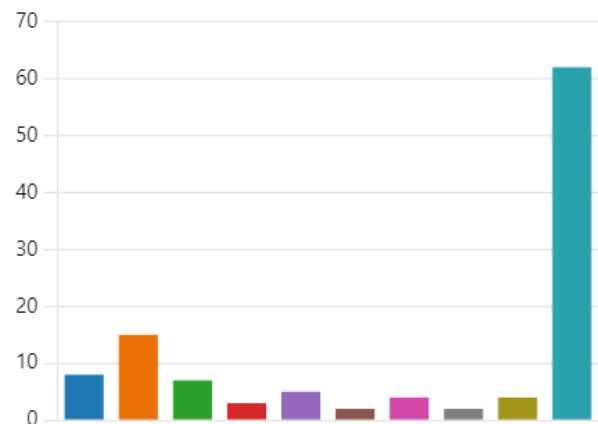
11. During which of the following time periods do you MOST need transportation services?

🔵	Monday through Friday, daytim...	61
🟠	Monday through Friday, evenin...	5
🟢	Monday through Friday, nights (...	2
🔴	Weekends (Saturdays and Sund...	9
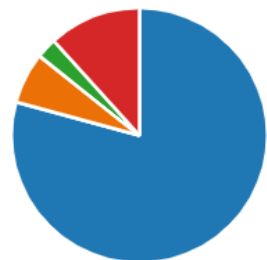
12. There are many strategies to improve public transportation and a limited amount of funding. Please mark the importance to you of the following strategies:

Legend: ■ Not Important ■ Important ■ Very Important

Categories (top to bottom):
- Improve information about available public transportation services and routes
- More service in rural areas
- More service during evenings and weekends
- More out-of-county/out-of-region service
- Lower the cost of public transportation
- Improve comfort of ride/bus
- Provide immediate information if ride will be late
- Shorten wait times for return trips
- Prioritize medical appointments
- Expand Stop Hopper service
- Increase reliability

Axis: 100%   0%   100%
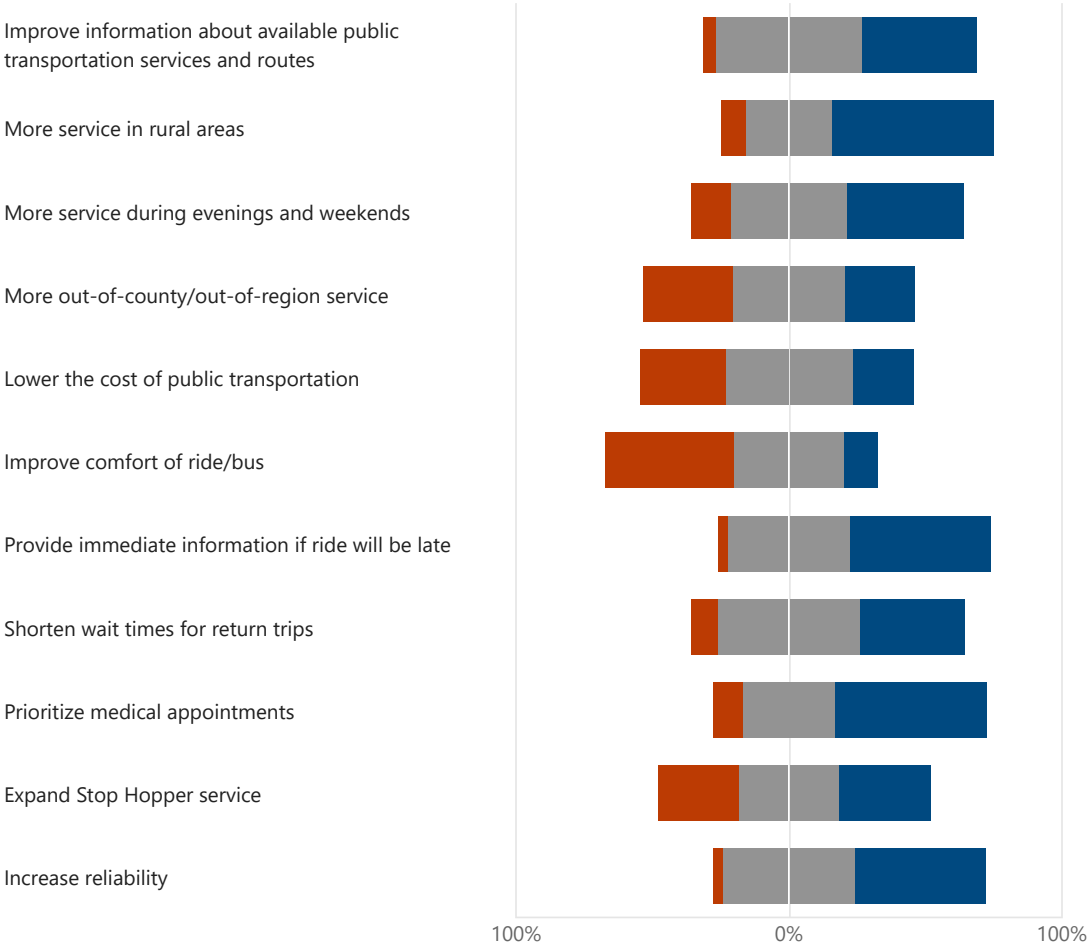
13. How do you hear about transportation services available to you? Check all that apply.

🔵	Word of mouth	46
🟠	Social Media	26
🟢	Newspaper or other advertising	14
🔴	County Assistance Office	12
🟣	Senior Center	9
🟤	Case worker or other governme…	17
🩷	Internet search	12
⚫	PA 211	2
🟡	PA 511	1
🔵	Find My Ride PA	11
🔵	Other	11
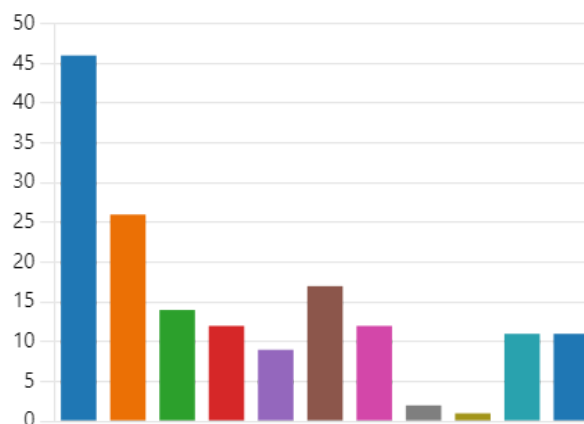
14. Which of the following are the best ways to let people know about transportation services in your community? Check all that apply.

🔵	Direct mailings to your home	52
🟠	Newspaper	35
🟢	Radio	29
🔴	Television	26
🟣	Websites	31
🟤	Social media	52
🩷	Inserts with municipal/utility bills	24
⚫	Not interested	2
🟡	Other	3
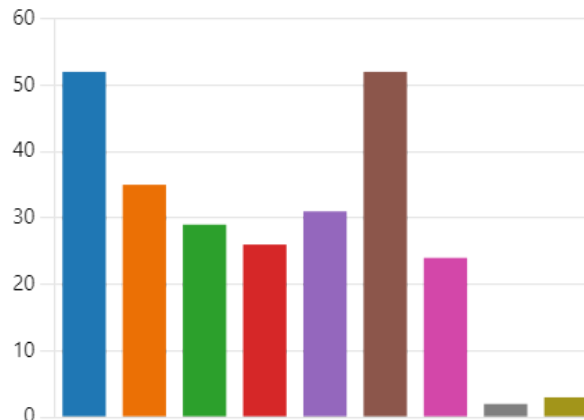
15. Please identify any specific locations that you need to or would like to travel to that you cannot get to today.

40
Responses

5 respondents (**13**%) answered **none** for this question.

hardware store
Williamsport
Sunbury
shopping   medical appointn
Knoebels
area
none
Bloomsburg
Stop
County
no medical
Hopper
store and a ride
grocery store
Berwick from Bloomsburg
seliensgrove areas
Downtown Bloomsburg Food Store

16. Do you have other suggestions to improve transportation to meet your needs?

36
Responses

6 respondents (**17**%) answered **service** for this question.

longer waiting
conversations with some drivers
Customer service
time
ride home
Stop Hopper
service area
services of RVT drivers
service
needs service to Williams
train service
rural areas
hour
bus
Rabbit
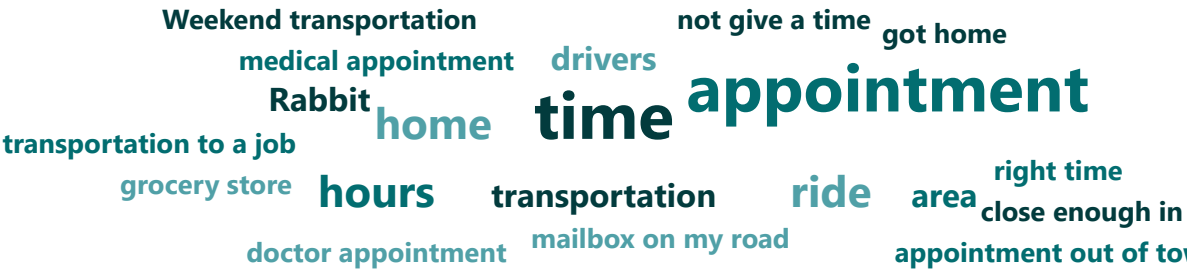fantastic service   Friendly drivers service are friendly

17. Please tell us about a time when transportation was a challenge for you or those you assist. Include where your trip started, where you were going, and why this trip was a challenge.

30
Responses

6 respondents (**20**%) answered **time** for this question.

Weekend transportation
medical appointment
drivers
not give a time
got home
Rabbit
home
time
appointment
transportation to a job
grocery store
hours
transportation
ride
area
right time
close enough in
doctor appointment
mailbox on my road
appointment out of tov

18. What is your home zip code?

87
Responses

12 respondents (**14**%) answered **17701** for this question.

17737   17754   17857   17820   1784
17745   18603   17701   17815   17866   17845   1784
17740   17844   17821   17837   17403   17049
17702   17872   17851

19. What is your gender?

🔵	Male	20
🟠	Female	63
🟢	Transgender	2
🔴	Non-binary/non-conforming	0
🟣	Prefer not to answer	4

20. What is your age?

🔵	Under 18	0
🟠	18 to 64	55
🟢	65 to 74	18
🔴	75 to 84	13
🟣	85+	3

21. What best describes your race?

🔵	American Indian, Alaska Native ...	0
🟠	Asian	0
🟢	Black or African American	3
🔴	Hispanic or Latinx	2
🟣	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific...	0
🟤	Middle Eastern or North African	0
🟣	White/Caucasian	79
⚫	Other	3
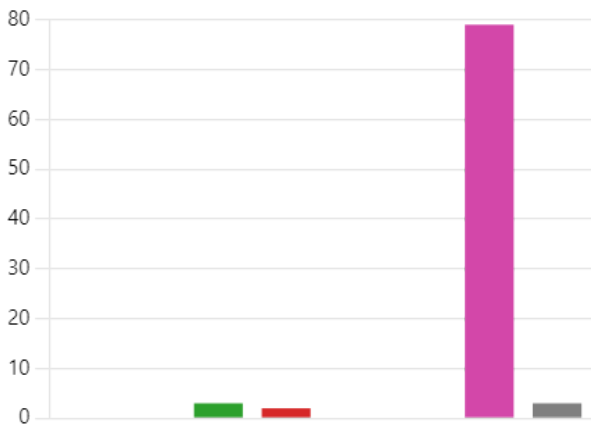
22. What is your ethnicity?

🔵	Hispanic	2
🟠	Non-Hispanic	80

23. Are you a person with a disability or other chronic condition?

🔵 Yes	39
🟠 No	42
🟢 Prefer not to answer	8

24. Are you a military veteran?

🔵 Yes	10
🟠 No	76

25. How well do you speak English?

🔵 Not at all	0
🟠 Not well	0
🟢 Well	8
🔴 Very well	80

26. Do you have a smartphone?

🔵 Yes	77
🟠 No	10

27. Do you have access to a car or other vehicle?
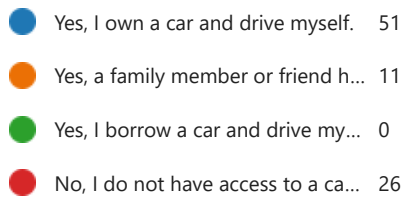
- 🔵 Yes, I own a car and drive myself.   51
- 🟠 Yes, a family member or friend h...   11
- 🟢 Yes, I borrow a car and drive my...   0
- 🔴 No, I do not have access to a ca...   26

28. What is your annual household income?

- 🔵 Less than $15,000   17
- 🟠 $15,001 to $25,000   16
- 🟢 $25,001 to $40,000   11
- 🔴 $40,001 to $75,000   18
- 🟣 $75,001 to $100,000   8
- 🟤 Over $100,000   12

29. What government services do you participate in? Check all that apply.

- 🔵 Medicaid (Medical Assistance)   18
- 🟠 Medicare   35
- 🟢 Supplemental Nutritional Assist...   16
- 🔴 Area Agency on Aging (AAA)   5
- 🟣 Housing Assistance (HUD)   6
- 🟤 Temporary Assistance for Needy...   2
- 🔴 Childcare Subsidy (CCIS)   0
- ⚫ Veterans Affairs (VA)   9
- 🟡 Head Start   2
- 🔵 CareerLink or other employmen...   6
- 🔵 None   26
- 🟠 Other   3
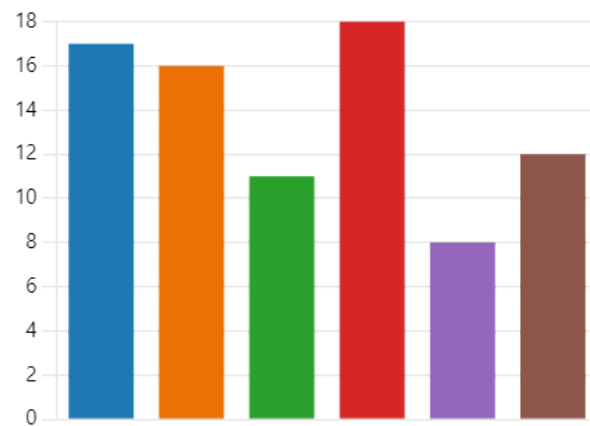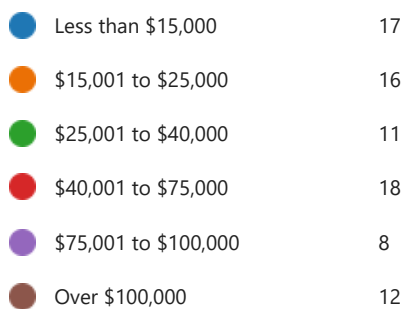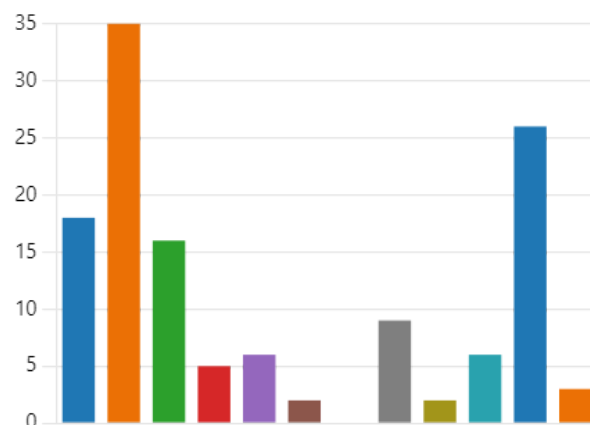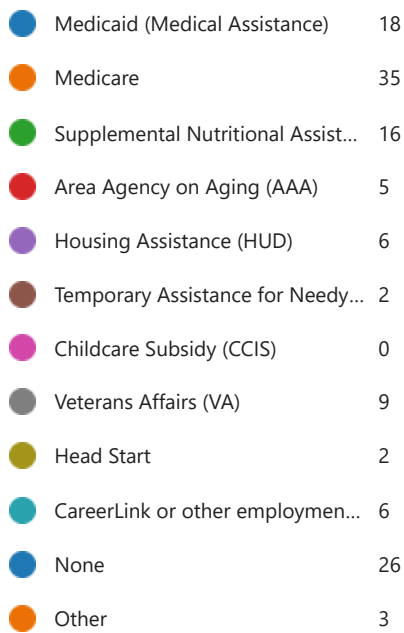
Appendix F: Written Comments