

The Vernon County Transportation Project

Planning Report

Prepared for the Transportation Coordinating Committee

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Introduction

The Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) in Vernon County was established on January 31, 2006 by resolution of the County Board. In the first year of its existence the TCC served in accordance with its charter by increasing transportation coordination and information between providers for elderly and disabled transportation services. During this time, the TCC identified the need for a central person who could collect transportation information and analyze the needs in the community. The TCC initiated a Supplemental Transportation Rural Assistance Program (STRAP) planning grant process in the fall of 2006. The STRAP Planning Grant, received on January 1, 2007, supported the cost of a Leased Employee for three purposes:

1. to assess current transportation resources within the County
2. to identify unmet transportation needs of Vernon County residents
3. to gather information about resident preferences for future planning

The TCC hired Kimberly Errigo as Transportation Planner in April 2007 to coordinate and implement the planning project and generate the final report of findings and recommendations. This report will be utilized to request STRAP funding for project implementation in 2008, and will be made available to other committees which can benefit from the information, including the county tourism committee and Smart Growth or Comprehensive Planning committees of each municipality.

Goals and Objectives of the Project

This stage of the Transportation Project concludes with recommendations for service improvements throughout Vernon County which could be implemented in the next four to five years. They are divided into county-wide initiatives and those which focus on a specific area.

The Transportation Project and this report focus primarily on the public transit element of a comprehensive transportation system. The highway network, privately operated transportation services, and other related elements are not included in the recommendations, but may be mentioned in this report.

The ultimate goal of the Transportation Project is to develop a transportation service plan that, when implemented, will address unmet transportation needs in Vernon County (Spring 2007 STRAP Application). Because this is a very broad goal, seven different objectives were defined that guided the preparation of this study. These objectives were defined by the TCC and communicated in the original proposal for STRAP funding.

Assess current transportation needs of area residents.

This assessment was created through study of land use and traffic patterns, major employers, and demographics. Interviews with local officials and representatives from area agencies and institutions also provided feedback.

Complete a detailed inventory of current transportation providers.

The inventory was completed through a series of interviews with service providers, and includes information on the number and size of vehicles, funding sources, and service limitations.

Evaluate the current transit services.

The inventory and assessment were cross-referenced to show areas of service duplication and areas of unmet needs.

Collect public opinion from the community.

A survey was developed to collect feedback on public preferences. It was distributed to Vernon County residents and also to Crawford, Monroe, and Juneau County residents that reside in towns located at or near the border of Vernon County. The survey was delivered through collaboration with area businesses, agencies, schools, and churches which offered it to their staff, customers, and patrons during June and July 2007. Interviews with local stakeholders and Smart Growth or Comprehensive Plans were also informative in developing a full picture of public preference in each municipality.

Explore possible collaborative efforts with neighboring counties.

Collaborations were defined through land use and traffic patterns, survey results, and interviews with local agency authorities.

Develop a proposal for service improvement.

A proposal for service improvement was created based on the data gathered and the analyses performed. The vision for a fully integrated transportation system is included, along with strategies are practical enough to be implemented within a relatively short time period. Education and capital equipment issues are addressed under relevant strategies. The changing conditions of the future are also taken into account.

Changing conditions of the future

We live in a changing demographic, environmental, and political landscape, and prudence demands that we think differently about how we move ourselves around. "Only concerted collective action by governments at the local, state, federal and international levels can mobilize the resources and fashion the regulations and laws required to produce the vast systemic changes required to avert...the twin energy and environmental crises." (Lang and Sherry, 2007)

Studies show that petroleum powered vehicular travel is not a sustainable option for the long term. "A sustainable condition for this planet is one in which there is stability for both social and physical systems, achieved through meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."(United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) In many other countries in the world it is difficult or overly expensive to own a car. In the United States it is still relatively easy, but this may change if the political agenda shifts to support a more environmentally sustainable future or if the price of gasoline continues to rise.

Transportation options such as bussing between area towns, car-pooling, a county-wide volunteer driver network, bike trails and lanes, access for horses and buggies, the return of local train systems, and tax incentives for alternative fuels may be essential components of the envisioned transportation system in Vernon County. Participation, collaboration, and visionary leadership can make these solutions become a reality.

The pending environmental crisis coincides with a demographic change of significant proportions. By the year 2050, the number of elderly persons in Vernon County will double (US Census, 2000). Many of these individuals will not be driving due to health or comfort concerns.

The challenges ahead can be viewed as opportunities. Vernon County is already an attractive place to live, both for people moving in from area cities and for those who have lived here all their lives. Residents place high value on the small town character, the natural beauty of the landscape, and the abundant natural and cultural resources. Through coordinated efforts between public officials, agencies, businesses and the public, Vernon County can create a sustainable transportation system that increases the quality of life of all residents and attracts and retains a high quality work force.

Chapter 1: Community Characteristics and Transportation Needs

In this chapter, we examine factors that influence the need and propensity to use public transportation. This includes a description of the major activity centers that attract travel as well as the population and socioeconomic characteristics of the population in the various parts of the service area. This assessment uses U.S. Census data estimates from 2006, and in some cases compares these figures to 1990 U.S. Census data to identify trends.

Residents need access to employment, medical care, child care, social services, education, entertainment, shopping, and recreation. Sometimes the available infrastructure and relative distances make it more convenient to travel outside of the county. Principal cities outside of Vernon County that serve the needs of county residents include Tomah (Monroe), Sparta (Monroe), Cashton (Monroe), Camp Douglas (Juneau), and Mauston (Juneau), La Crosse (La Crosse), Richland Center (Richland), and Reedsburg (Sauk).

Areas of Special Consideration

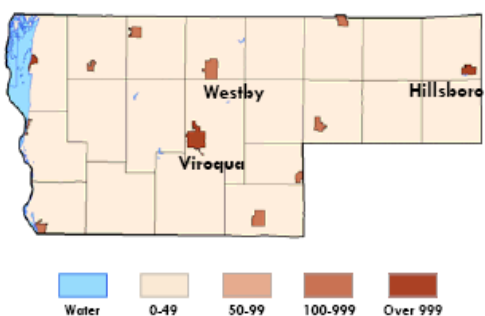
Areas of special consideration include Hillsboro, Stoddard, Viola, and De Soto. These municipalities are located either partially within another county or so closely proximate to other counties that travel into other counties is highly likely. Any transportation initiative in these areas would require an inter-county collaboration in order to succeed.

Population

Vernon County is considered primarily rural. There are three major town hubs: the county seat of Viroqua, neighboring Westby, and Hillsboro, located on the east end of the county.

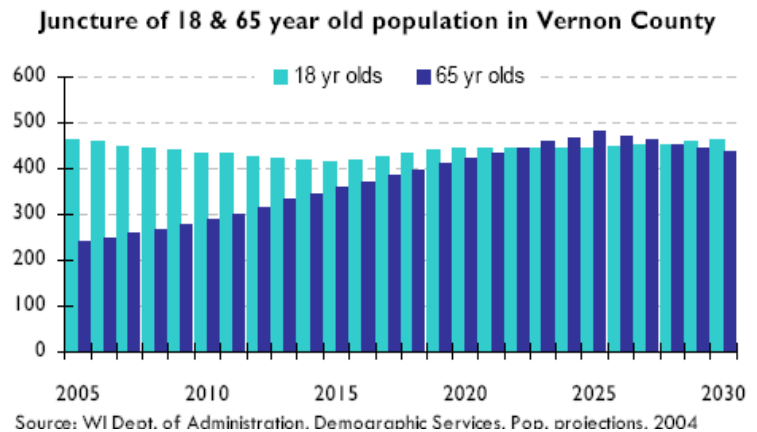
Vernon County is home to 29,055 people. Overall, the county has a population density of 22 residents per square mile. Population densities of 100-999 residents per square mile are found in Westby, Coon Valley, Chaseburg, Stoddard, Viola, and La Farge. Residents are gathered in a density of more than 999 per square mile in Viroqua and Hillsboro (Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services, Population Est. Aug. 2005, Land areas Jan. 2002; Office of Economic Advisors, mapping, July 2006).

Vernon County
Population Density in 2005



The population projections for the period 2000 to 2020 indicate that the county’s population increase will be slightly faster than that of the state average of 4.5%, but will fall short of the nation’s rate of increase. The overall growth rate for the county between 2000 through 2020 is projected to be 15.6 percent (State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Office of Economic Advisors, December 2006).

Vernon County, as many Wisconsin counties, is experiencing an aging resident population. The following graph shows the increase in 65 year old residents and the leveling off of residents aged 18 years. This pattern is typical of many Wisconsin counties, but it should be noted that this trend will mean a significant increase in transportation needs in the county. Because independent living for seniors is profoundly affected by available transportation, the county response to the increased level of needs will define the future for these seniors.



Amish Populations

Although Vernon County is home to many Amish, certain areas of the county are more heavily settled by Amish families than other areas. The townships of Clinton, Whitestown, Kickapoo, and Harmony and the Villages of La Farge and Ontario are central areas for the Amish population.

Although many Amish are transported with the local “Amish taxis”, there is also a high level of interest in local bussing. One township leader stated, “If you had a bus that they knew was coming at a certain time, you’d have 200 Amish people standing there waiting for it.”

In interviews, some townships noted that the Amish are entering the labor force in greater numbers than before.

Income level

According to US Census Data 2000, Vernon County is the third poorest county in Wisconsin as determined by the percent of residents with incomes below the poverty line. Average annual household income is \$28,218 with 12.4% of the county population showing incomes under the poverty line.

According to the National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) Early Findings on Public Transportation Travel Trends, income levels under \$15,000 correlate to a quadrupling in the rate of use of public transit over those with incomes above \$50,000. 18.9% of Vernon County households have annual incomes under \$15,000. 71.5% of Vernon County households have annual incomes under \$50,000.

Home Ownership

According to the NHTS Early Findings on Public Transportation Travel Trends, renters show a likelihood of using mass transit which is four times more than the level shown by home owners. Vernon County has a homeownership rate of 79.1%. Only .06% of owner occupied dwellings had no associated vehicle. In comparison, 20% of rental occupancies had no associated vehicle (CityData.com, 2007).

61% of respondents to a Community Housing Survey said that transportation issues affect where people choose to look for housing (Vernon County Housing Coalition, June 2007).

Employment

Vernon County has a strong agricultural base, with an estimated 40 percent of all economic activity in the county linked directly to agriculture (Department of Workforce Development, December 2006). Major employers include Vernon Memorial Hospital, Wal-Mart, Cooperative Regions of Organic Producer Pools (CROPP) Family of Organic Farms, Cummins Filtration and the Viroqua Area Schools with between 100-499 employees each. The viability of many employment opportunities is determined by dependable, affordable transportation options.

36.8% of the total employed residents travel outside of Vernon County for work, and 17.3% of employees travel into Vernon County from other counties. Most individuals commuting into Vernon County reside in the immediate neighbor counties of La Crosse, Crawford, Monroe, and Richland.

Health Care

Specialized health care is provided by Vernon Memorial Hospital in the cities of Viroqua, Westby, and La Farge; St. Joseph’s Hospital in Hillsboro; and two major hospitals and clinics in the city of La Crosse. Veteran’s hospitals and clinics in Tomah, Madison, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis provide health care for local veterans. 9 out of 10 volunteer driver trips are medically related (Interview, Vernon County Health and Human Services).

Along with the increase in residents above age 65, we see a corresponding increase in the number of individuals who are receiving social security, Medicare, Medicaid, veteran’s benefits, unemployment compensation, income maintenance payments, and worker’s compensation. Transfer receipts from these programs account for 21 percent of Total Personal Income in Vernon County, compared with 14 percent in Wisconsin and 15 percent in the nation. In the last year transfer receipts increased six percent in the county, compared with an increase of three percent statewide. (Department of Workforce Development, December 2006)

Planned to begin in 2008, Family Care in Vernon County can manage the care of individuals who are Medicaid eligible and functionally qualified. Family Care does consider transportation, including common carrier transport, to be a covered service. With the increase in the aging population, more trips are projected.

Recreation

An ever-increasing number of people choose to enjoy trail-based recreation opportunities. Hillsboro is an access point to over 100 miles of state multi-use trail, and biking opportunities in the Kickapoo Reserve and Wildcat

Out-commuting to Other Counties, 2000		
<i>Commuting to</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Pct. Dist.</i>
Vernon County	8,174	63.2%
La Crosse County	2,719	21%
Monroe County	477	3.7%
Richland County	302	2.3%
Juneau County	297	2.3%
Sauk County	250	1.9%
Crawford County	167	1.3%
Other locations	544	4.3%
Total Employment	12,930	100.0%
In-commuting from Other Counties, 2000		
<i>Commuting from</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Pct. Dist.</i>
Vernon County	8,174	82.7%
La Crosse County	425	4.3%
Crawford County	351	3.6%
Monroe County	324	3.3%
Richland County	281	2.8%
Juneau County	138	1.4%
Sauk County	50	0.5%
Other locations	138	1.4%
Total Employment	9,881	100.0%
<i>Source: Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission County Profiles - 2007 CEDS</i>		

Mountain State Park are enjoyed by many residents. There are no trail connections to these longer trails, which increases bicycle usage on local roads throughout the county.

Tourism

Tourists, especially those from European countries where public transit is the norm, attempt to visit Vernon County historic or cultural sites but are often unable to travel within the county due to a lack of public transport. They may fly into La Crosse or Madison, but then they must rent a car to access the sights that are off the main highway. Tourist dollars are passing through Vernon County because there is no public access (Interview, Down a Country Road).

Chapter 2: Existing Transportation Services

General Transit

Currently, vehicular public transportation in Vernon County is severely limited. A private vehicle is necessary unless travel both begins and ends within Viroqua or Westby or occurs along the 14/61 corridor during travel times of the Jefferson Bus Lines.

As the price of gas increases, bicycles are becoming an increasingly popular means of travel, especially within the City of Viroqua and surrounding area. This growing segment of the social fabric in Vernon County includes doctors, teachers, and other professionals in addition to the many youth who ride bicycles as their regular means of transportation. For philosophical, environmental, and political reasons some families are exploring how to be intentionally car-free. These families may move into town or deliberately purchase in town with the specific intention of eliminating a car or traveling only on foot or by bicycle. By using a trailer or bicycle panniers, they access groceries, school, work, and social obligations all without the use of a personal car.

Individuals who do not own their own vehicle, including Amish, may contract with private providers. The Party Bus, the shared ride taxi, and many “Amish taxis” are available for hire. Car ownership for low income individuals can be facilitated by funding from WETAP, the Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program.

Jefferson Lines

Jefferson Lines offers two schedules daily. Southbound to Madison departs Viroqua at 3:55 pm, and northbound to La Crosse, Rochester, and Minneapolis departs Viroqua at 2:45 pm. Costs to travel depend on the distance traveled. In Vernon County, the bus stops in Coon Valley, Westby, Viroqua, and Readstown. The Westby Bus Depot at Logan Mill Lodge is the only location in

Selected Fares for Jefferson Lines Bus, August 2007			
Destination	Adult Fare	Child Fare	Senior Fare
Chicago	N/A	N/A	N/A
La Crosse	\$23.00	\$13.80	\$20.70
Madison	\$59.00	\$35.40	\$53.10
Minneapolis/St. Paul	\$84.00	\$50.40	\$75.60
Richland Center	\$23.00	\$13.80	\$20.70
Rochester	\$59.00	\$35.40	\$53.10
<i>All fares are round-trip, calculated from Viroqua</i>			

Vernon County where passengers can purchase tickets. Tickets can also be purchased online. If passengers board the bus at any stop without a ticket, they purchase their ticket upon arrival in Westby.

The Jefferson Lines route is “viewed as an important transit service by many in the Westby/Christiana area who do not have other transportation options. Maintaining this transportation alternative to the personal automobile is very important for diversity of transportation choices for the City of Westby and the Town of Christiana.” (Comprehensive Plan, 2006) However, historically it has been difficult for riders to identify the bus stop, know how to purchase tickets, or even be aware of bus service through this area.

The Westby Bus Depot at Logan Mill Lodge offers an Amish parking shed and a 100-car Park and Ride lot in the same location. These resources are available for the development of new bussing services throughout the region. The owner, Ruth Rupp, is supportive of new transit options.

Party Bus

The Party Bus is a 19 passenger non-accessible van which is rented out by groups for social occasions. The base cost is \$50 per hour with a maximum of \$275, with gas charged separately. The Party Bus is privately owned by Rachel McClurg of Viroqua. At the time of this writing, it was not in functional condition.

Running, Inc.

A privately owned shared ride taxi service provided by Running, Inc. serves the Vernon County cities of Viroqua and Westby. Rides outside of these cities may be arranged for \$1.50 per mile. Rides are available 6:30am-9pm Monday through Sunday. There are two vans in Westby and four in Viroqua, half of which are handicapped accessible. Running, Inc. also has taxis in Prairie du Chien, Portage, and Onalaska/Holmen/West Salem. The central dispatch office in Viroqua manages all rides regardless of location. The shared ride taxi is funded with a mixture of federal grant subsidies and collected fares. Fares are reduced for elderly and disabled. 80% of riders are disabled and/or elderly; 15% are adults; and 5% are students. Costs may be prohibitive for out of town rides.

Running, Inc. carried their 1 millionth rider in January, 2007. The shared ride taxi operates like a small scale, demand response bus with a flexible route. Drivers will attend to riders’ needs, including carrying their groceries, opening doors, and helping them board and exit the taxi.

UW Extension

UW Extension in Vernon County is the only extension program that still has a van among 14 counties in this region. The van is used once or twice a week between March and November. Some outside groups use the van for their purposes, including bussing to the airport. 4H uses it to transport students to camp. The capacity is 11 riders. This van will likely be discontinued in the coming years as it is underutilized and there is not support for the liability.

Volunteer Driver Network

Currently, volunteer driver networks in Vernon County are fragmented into several separate programs. The programs do not formally cooperate with each other. Riders are charged different fees in each program.

Volunteer Driver Network Statistics				
Location of program	Number of Volunteers	Riders served	Compensation	Fee Charged to Rider
Our Savior’s Church in Westby	100	All interested individuals	90% of all drivers donate time and gas	riders are not charged
Vernon County Unit on Aging	3	Elderly and disabled only, for medical appointments only, within 100 miles of Viroqua	.48 ½ per mile reimbursed to driver	rider is charged depending on mileage: \$5 for rides under 25 miles RT, then increases proportionally
Vernon County Veteran’s Service Office	3	Veterans only, and only if traveling to a VA hospital or clinic	.48 ½ per mile reimbursed to driver	riders are not charged

Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP)

The WETAP program provides a way for low income people to pay for a car or car repairs. WETAP operates in Monroe, Crawford, Vernon, and Juneau counties. Car loans, down payment assistance, and assistance with expenses such as registration are available. An individual must meet income guidelines and, in the case of a loan, have adequate personal resources to support ongoing loan payments.

Specialized Transit**Elderly and disabled**

Elderly and disabled individuals receiving Medical Assistance are served by a handful of different providers. Each provider and their service are detailed below. Specialized Medical Vehicles (SMVs) are only allowed to carry passengers to and from medical appointments unless contracted at the private pay rate. Riders are required to provide verification of functional eligibility from their doctor.

SMV providers were not given increased funding from the state during the 2007 Wisconsin legislative budget session. The state budget stayed the same although costs are increasing. Some SMV providers are saying they will not take new MA customers because they are losing money by providing this service.

Bethel Home

Individuals residing at Bethel Home or who receive care through any of Bethel's community service programs may be transported by Bethel vans. The public may request transportation as well. Individuals may be transported to appointments, Adult Day Care, grocery shopping and community outings. Many rides are outsourced to the taxi company. Cost for pickup is \$14 with an additional standard mileage rate. Reimbursement for transportation is through private, county or state funding.

Bethel currently owns three minivans and one wheelchair accessible van. In addition, Helping Hands personnel may be asked to transport clients in their personal vehicles. A two week advance notice is requested.

Family and Children's Center (FCC)

Family and Children's Center owns 5 minivans which are used for program participants only. The clients are youth with "severe and persistent mental illness" and as such they cannot be transported with the general public. Since FCC is a nonprofit, the fees are paid out of program funding.

Gundersen Lutheran Coulee Trails (SMV)

Gundersen Lutheran Coulee Trails is a non-emergency transportation company serving 15% private pay clients and 85% individuals who receive MA covered services. The majority of riders are elderly and/or disabled. As an SMV provider, only medical trips are reimbursed by MA. The private pay rate is \$16 base fee plus a standard rate per mile. Cost to travel to La Crosse from Viroqua on the private pay rate is approximately \$130.00 round trip.

South Ridge Medical Transport (SMV)

South Ridge serves all of Vernon, Crawford, and Monroe counties with frequent trips to La Crosse and Madison. 90 % of trips are to transport disabled individuals with a physician's approval and MA coverage to

medical appointments only. 10% of their clients are private pay clients who travel for other reasons. The base charge is \$12 for pickup plus 5 miles, with a charge of \$1.25 per mile after that.

Vernon Area Rehabilitation Center, Inc. (VARC)

The VARC busses go out throughout the county to bring workers to the workshop in the morning and return them to their homes in the afternoon. These busses travel out to the outlying areas empty and come into Viroqua full at 8 am. They return to the outlying areas full at 4 pm and travel empty to Viroqua every evening. Most of the busses are full at the peak of travel. The busses are unused during the middle of the day.

VARC owns seven busses, four with wheelchair ramps and three without ramps. Each ride costs \$16.82 per day, which is paid by Vernon County Human Services. Human Services refers individuals to this agency if they meet qualifying factors.

Vernon County Unit on Aging

The Unit on Aging runs the Mini-Bus throughout the county, providing transit service on a limited basis primarily to the elderly and disabled. The Mini-Bus serves any resident of Vernon County 55 years or older, between 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, on a scheduled route provided a minimum number of riders is signed up. Others can ride if seats are available.

The mini-bus travels to La Crosse three times a week from different locations within the county, and travels out to Hillsboro every Wednesday, operating similarly to a shared ride taxi service in the city of Hillsboro. The passenger's fee to ride the bus is matched by state funding. The standard suggested donation paid by a passenger is \$4 round trip to travel to La Crosse, and \$6 round trip to Madison.

The newly formed Aging Unit Volunteer Driver program is still somewhat limited. There has not been a marketing effort to recruit drivers or riders.

Aging owns a van as well, which makes the routes when the lift bus is not needed. The accessible Mini-Bus is leased from VARC. Currently, there is not adequate funding to run both vehicles every day.

Vernon County Veterans Service Office

The Veteran's Volunteer Driver program is limited in scope. There are three volunteer drivers, and they are only funded to carry veterans to and from medical appointments at a Veteran's Administration hospital or clinic. The veteran may not have another mode of transportation (no available family members, no available friends, can't drive to appointment for medical reasons, etc.). Veterans can be transported in the Unit on Aging mini-bus if the schedule matches with their appointment times. This "has happened once" (Interview, Veteran Services Office).

Schoolchildren

Children attending both public and private schools are served in each district. Some districts own their own busses and other districts contract with bussing providers.

De Soto Area Schools

This is one of the biggest districts in the region, spanning 25 miles from Stoddard to Ferryville. De Soto district contracts with Ready Bus Service out of La Crescent, MN. Ready Bus Service contracts with other districts as

well. Busses run before and after school, and there is a late bus as well. There is no bussing during the school day.

Bussing here is stable at this time. 70% of the total student body rides the bus; this is nearly 450 riders. The distance is so great that many teens are still riding the bus; it is more cost effective than having and maintaining a personal vehicle.

Hillsboro Area Schools

Hillsboro Area Schools contract for bussing with two local companies, Stanick's Garage and Dean and Bill Steverson. Bussing seems to be declining in the area. As the budget has been cut for bussing, routes became longer and many students elected to drive instead. The number of homeschoolers has increased dramatically in the last seven years, as well. Late routes were eliminated approximately five years ago. There is no problem finding drivers since both bus companies are local family owned companies.

The City Administrator of Hillsboro expressed a desire to incorporate a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in Hillsboro, but expressed the need for support in this endeavor (*for more information about SRTS, see page 43*).

Kickapoo Area Schools

The Kickapoo Area Schools bus 92% of the student body. The district owns their own busses and runs seven and a half routes. A shuttle travels to Readstown in the afternoon, but they do not offer an afternoon activities bus. The schools are located outside of city limits. It is a large district, and one route is over an hour long. Despite this, Kickapoo is the only school district that has increased open enrollment in the last several years.

Kickapoo Schools enjoy reliable, quality drivers, and an excellent bus supervisor. The climate is one of working together and getting along. Although it is expensive, the district prioritizes bussing as an aspect of customer service.

La Farge Area Schools

No information was available from the La Farge Area Schools.

Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton Area Schools (NOW)

The Norwalk-Ontario-Wilton district owns 12 busses which run 8 routes, and contracts with Wilton Bus Service for four additional routes. The district is transporting 650-700 students, which is approximately 85% of the student body. NOW schools are located in the country, placing a high demand on vehicular transportation since students are unable to walk to school. Most seniors and juniors drive. They do offer after school activities busses, one of which travels to Wilton while the other serves Ontario/Norwalk. The bussing program is stable, with no anticipated changes or prevailing issues.

Viroqua Area Schools

The Viroqua Area Schools transport 800 students a day on 20 busses. Most students live out in the country. The busses run during the day to pick up students for special events and special needs programs, such as Job Experience. The Viroqua district does not offer a late bus for activities. Also, summer program bussing depends on the required or elective status of the course. Bussing is not available for students in elective courses. These restrictions are challenging for parents, according to interview and survey feedback.

Two main issues are present in the Viroqua district: funding, and drivers. Bus funding has been restricted in recent years, and bussing after school activities has been cut. According to survey responses and interview feedback, many parents find this to be a great challenge. As funding is cut, routes become longer. Discipline on busses becomes more of an issue as the routes lengthen and students experience stress from a longer ride. Many parents choose to drive their children instead of putting them on a longer route, and this causes more congestion and chaos in the parking lots before and after school. Some students travel to school in the cab.

It is also difficult to find new drivers. The current pool of drivers includes many older retired individuals who are ready to stop driving. Unfortunately, young drivers can't make a career out of driving because it is only part time work, and driver costs are high because they have to carry 50% of the insurance cost. Older drivers only carry 25% of the insurance cost. This decision was made by the School Board and the Administrator. The November 2005 study and Long Range Plan state that the district should make the job more appealing to younger drivers. No plans to accomplish this are yet in place.

Westby Area Schools

The Westby school district owns 21 busses, of which one is wheelchair accessible. Westby busses approximately 800 students per year along 18 routes, 67% of the student body. In 2006-2007, the school district reinstated the late activities bus after seeing how important it was to parents. Increased bussing costs were offset by revenue generation through an increase in fees and budget reduction in other areas.

Finding drivers is an ongoing issue.

Air Services

The Viroqua Municipal Airport serves small charter planes and helicopters for emergency medical transport. The airport is not able to serve commercial airplanes due to the length of its runway and the lack of instrument landing capability. The State Bureau of Aeronautics does advise the addition of instrument landing capability in the future. In addition, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) focused on a new, longer runway was completed a few years ago. No action has been taken towards either improvement. State funding is available to support a new runway if there is demonstrated traffic, but to demonstrate traffic there needs to be a long runway to attract customers. Current customers include CROPP, independent fishermen, Cummings/Nelsons Muffler, and Wood Hill Farms (a local Angus operation).

Commercial airlines must fly through La Crosse or Madison. Although geographically closer to Vernon County, airlines in La Crosse or Madison are not as reliable as airlines in the larger metropolitan areas of Minneapolis/St. Paul and Chicago. Local travelers often choose to fly out of the larger airports for this reason.

Rail Services

Amtrak rail service is available in La Crosse or Tomah (Monroe Co.). There is no direct link to Amtrak from Vernon County at this time.

The Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) is a cooperative, multi-agency effort that began in 1996 and involves nine Midwest states (Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin) as well as the Federal Railroad Administration. The Midwest Regional Rail System (MWRRS) Plan elements include:

- Use of 3,000 miles of existing rail r/w to connect rural and urban areas
- Operation of a hub and spoke passenger rail system
- Introduction of modern, high-speed trains operating at speeds up to 110 mph
- Provision of multi-modal connections to improve system access

(Source: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/passengerrail/onepaggers/midwest.html>)

MWRRRI plans to maintain stops in Tomah and La Crosse. This is the fastest growing rail corridor in the US, and could be operational by 2010. It will be essential to the long term transportation needs of the Driftless region that residents have access to these train stops.

Referral Agencies

Vernon County's Department of Human Services

DHS coordinates travel to medical appointments for Medical Assistance (MA) recipients. Travel with private operators, including caseworkers and other staff, is commonplace. Individuals who are certified for Medical Assistance may have their private drivers reimbursed mileage at the rate of 24 cents per mile from the Medical Assistance program. They must have their trip authorized before their appointment. Human Services also receives a grant from the State of Wisconsin, the s.85.21 transportation grant, that is used to pay for individual's trips to attend workshop or day services programs at VARC, Inc. This also needs to be authorized by Human Services prior to the service being delivered. Individuals may also receive funding for transportation if they are enrolled in any of the MA Waiver Programs through the Human Services Department.

Family Care will cover common carrier transportation for non-medical trips and SMV for medical appointments. Non-specialized medical vehicle transportation for medical appointments will be handled through fee-for-service Medicaid. Individuals who do not qualify for MA will pay at the private pay rate.

Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

DVR can assist with transportation related funding for people with disabilities who are receiving employment services through DVR. Program eligibility is determined by the individual's employment and disability needs. DVR coordinates services with other transportation providers such as Coulee Trails, the Running, Inc. taxi, and WETAP.

Vernon County Job Center

The Vernon County Job Center provides mileage reimbursement for individuals enrolled under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) if their travel is for classes or job search. There is also some funding available for car repairs, but more often program participants are referred to WETAP. All expenses must be pre-approved.

Chapter 3: Adequacy of Services

Commuters, elderly and disabled, schoolchildren, and the general public have unique needs which are being met at various levels of efficiency. Existing services were analyzed to determine underutilized resources, areas of service duplication, losses of efficiency, and areas of unmet needs.

A primary issue is division of funding. Many funding sources are earmarked for specific populations. Also, restrictions on funding dollars coming into Vernon County create a separation between those services that exist in the town of Viroqua and immediate surrounding area and those services that cover the rest of the county. STRAP is unique among funding sources in its application for the general public.

Commuter Resources

Commuters in Vernon County face serious challenges in transportation unless they drive their own vehicle or both live and work in the towns of Viroqua or Westby. 71% of employed adults traveled to work in their own vehicle (City-Data.com, 2007). Only 11% of employed adults carpoled to work.

Carpooling programs are an underutilized resource in Vernon County. There is an existing regional website that connects individuals who want to find carpooling opportunities, www.rideshareetc.org. It is not currently utilized by employees of businesses in Vernon County. The only employer sponsored carpooling program in the county is at CROPP/Organic Valley.

In 2007, 83 low-income individuals in Vernon County used WETAP services to gain access to cars, increasing access to employment. WETAP appears to be a program gaining in visibility and use, and is a positive resource for Vernon County.

Elderly and Disabled Resources

Elderly and disabled individuals travel in the Mini-Bus, in the taxi, with SMV providers, with the VARC bus, or with volunteer drivers. It is not uncommon to find three different vehicles parked at a hospital, each having carried one

Summary

Areas of Duplication

- none

Underutilized Resources

- Employer-based carpool programs
- UW Extension van
- Volunteer driver programs
- www.rideshareetc.org

Losses of Efficiency

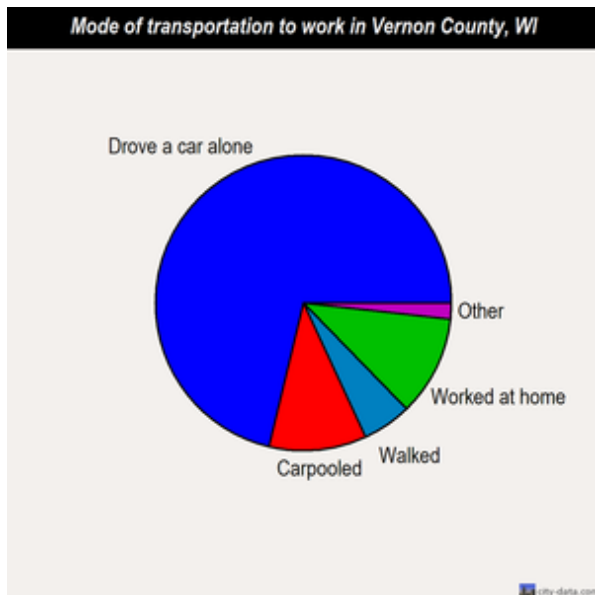
- VARC bus travel to and from Hillsboro
- Unit on Aging Mini-Bus travel to and from Hillsboro
- Use of Mini-bus instead of shared-ride taxi in Hillsboro
- SMV providers traveling to Hillsboro for in-town rides

Unmet Needs

- Transport for elderly and disabled persons with increased needs
- Adequate bicycling routes
- Walking routes for students in Viroqua, Westby, La Farge, and Hillsboro
- Choices for longer distance travel
- Direct access to rail and air services
- Public transit between towns

individual to their appointments (Interview, Health and Services).

Human



- Drove a car alone: 9,213 (71%)
- Carpooled: 1,379 (11%)
- Bus or trolley bus: 53 (0%)
- Taxi: 15 (0%)
- Motorcycle: 4 (0%)
- Bicycle: 24 (0%)
- Walked: 693 (5%)
- Other means: 129 (1%)
- Worked at home: 1,420 (11%)

Source: City-Data.com 2007

Individuals who are not income qualified for program services and yet cannot afford to pay privately for everything they need cannot meet their needs with current transit options. To be eligible for Medical Assistance anyone over the age of 65 may only have \$2000 in resources. A couple over age 65 may only have \$3000 in available assets. Exempt assets include a home, if it is the residence of the applicant(s), and one vehicle. Any other vehicles or property would be considered an available asset.

Elderly and disabled people on social security may need medical, personal, or social trips that are beyond the scope of current state funding resources. If they can drive, these individuals are impacted by increasing fuel costs, which places more stresses on area food pantries and other resources. If they cannot drive, they often cannot afford the private pay rates available through the SMV providers. The Unit on Aging Mini-Bus provides a valuable service to these individuals, but increased medical needs are difficult to negotiate. Dialysis patients, for example, must travel three times a week for treatments. The mini-bus schedule cannot accommodate this frequency of travel.

Unit on Aging Mini-Bus

The Unit on Aging Mini-Bus serves an average of 88 riders per month traveling approximately 16 out of every 20 days per month. Ridership is steadily increasing: in 2003 there were 50 riders per month, and in 2007 there were 110 riders per month. On Wednesdays, the Aging mini-bus provides service in Hillsboro similar to a shared ride taxi, but travels empty in the morning and returns empty in the afternoon. The Hillsboro service day generally shows a high level of use. The mini-bus also transports riders through surrounding counties, but there are no connections made to riders in these other counties. This is true for mini-busses from surrounding counties passing through Vernon County, as well.

Shared Ride Taxi

Running, Inc. serves the Viroqua and Westby areas. Dispatch receives 100 calls a day in Viroqua, a town of 4000 people. Richard Running, the owner, is uncertain if more potential growth exists in the Viroqua area, but usage is growing in the Westby area. The volunteer driver program in Westby registered a decrease in calls since the taxi service became available. The taxi provides a useful and affordable service to elderly and disabled individuals. 85% of riders are elderly or disabled.

VARC, Inc.

The VARC bus travels throughout the region but it travels empty to its first pickup spot. It returns empty in the afternoon. Parking a bus in Hillsboro would more efficiently utilize this resource by eliminating the travel time when the bus is empty. The Hillsboro city administration is supportive of finding a location for the VARC bus to park in Hillsboro. At one point in 2006, VARC explored how to park a bus in Hillsboro but these plans were not approved.

Volunteer Drivers

The volunteer driver network in Vernon County is fragmented and does not have high visibility. Volunteer drivers may fill gaps in service, but it can be difficult to find a driver and provide a ride. This resource is underutilized because many people do not know that the service is available. It is also lacking the efficiency that would come from an organized network, such as one based on the Interfaith model.

Resources for the General Public

Those individuals who choose to travel by alternative means, either for political, environmental, or philosophical reasons or due to necessity (age, conflict in scheduling with a vehicle, broken down vehicle, temporary inability to drive, etc), have difficulty meeting their needs. Bicyclists and horse and buggies on county roads face serious safety threats. There are no accessible transportation choices for longer distance travel, including travel between towns. Travel outside of the county is limited to the Jefferson Lines route, which is quite narrow in scope.

Bicycle Access

Bicyclists in the Hillsboro area have access to local trails, but these trails do not connect to any other areas of Vernon County. With only a few exceptions, there are no bicycle lanes along roads. Bicyclists on county roads face serious safety threats.

In more heavily traveled areas, bike lanes improve safety for both bicyclists and motorists (University of Texas, 2006). There are no bike lanes in the more heavily trafficked areas of Viroqua and Westby.

Equestrian access

Local Amish use horses and buggies to travel throughout Vernon County. Townships in Amish areas offer wider shoulders to allow for safer access. There are tie-ups for horses in Hillsboro and Westby, but none in Viroqua.

Pedestrian Access

Children under the age of 16, the elderly, and those with disabilities are the greater portion of the public using pedestrian facilities. Pedestrians do not always enjoy ease of travel, especially when trying to cross the busy

Main Street in Viroqua. The public outcry for more safety measures mobilized the city of Viroqua into action in July of 2007. Additional crosswalks, signage, and stop lights are now in planning and implementation.

Bussing

The general public can ride the Unit on Aging mini-bus under certain conditions, but this is not widely known. The current schedule of the mini-bus would allow an individual to meet their travel requirements only on an occasional basis. This resource is not reliable since other conditions must first be met, and those conditions may not be satisfied when a trip is being planned. The Jefferson Lines does provide service to La Crosse and Madison, but the schedule does not permit traveling and returning on the same day. A means to travel between area towns and between Viroqua and La Crosse is needed.

School Resources

Students in the Vernon County schools meet their needs through bussing, driving, or riding with parents. Prevailing issues include finding drivers, excessively long routes, budget cuts, and difficulty in safely accessing schools on bike or foot. Providing alternatives for travel to school is needed in Viroqua, Hillsboro, La Farge, and Westby. Safe Routes to School programs may help meet needs in these areas.

Chapter 4: Community Opinions

Community opinions in each area of Vernon County were collected via four means:

- a series of Town Hall Meetings specific to the project
- the Transportation Survey
- the Comprehensive Plans/Smart Growth Plans of each area
- Community Stakeholder Interviews

Town Hall Meetings were held in La Farge and Hillsboro, and a series of three meetings were held in Viroqua. These meetings each had an attendance of ten people or less.

The survey was dispersed throughout the county at area businesses, agencies, schools, and website links. Collaborating businesses offered and collected the survey from as many residents and staff as possible during June and July, 2007. Over the course of the survey period, 750 surveys were collected. Surveys requested residents to rate their interest level in various transportation solutions. The following solutions were listed:

- Taxi Service in Area Towns
- County-wide Volunteer Driver Network
- Car -sharing
- Car or van pooling
- Courier of goods or packages
- Daily bussing to La Crosse
- Daily bussing to Madison
- Daily bussing between towns
- Viroqua town trolley
- Bike lanes in towns
- Bike trails between towns
- Bike/walking trail system within a town
- Voucher system
- Make alternative fuels available
- Tax incentives supporting alternatives
- Improved horse and buggy access

Residents also could write in comments or solutions of their own in a space that was provided for this purpose. For a copy of the survey, see Appendix 3.

Under the direction of the State of Wisconsin, the municipalities, villages, and cities of Vernon County have begun the process of formulating Smart Growth or Comprehensive Plans. However, some Comprehensive Planning/Smart Growth plans were not completed at the time of this reporting. Any available plans were accessed for their information. When a plan was not available, every effort was made to communicate with the local municipal boards or offices to hear the local perspectives on this area.

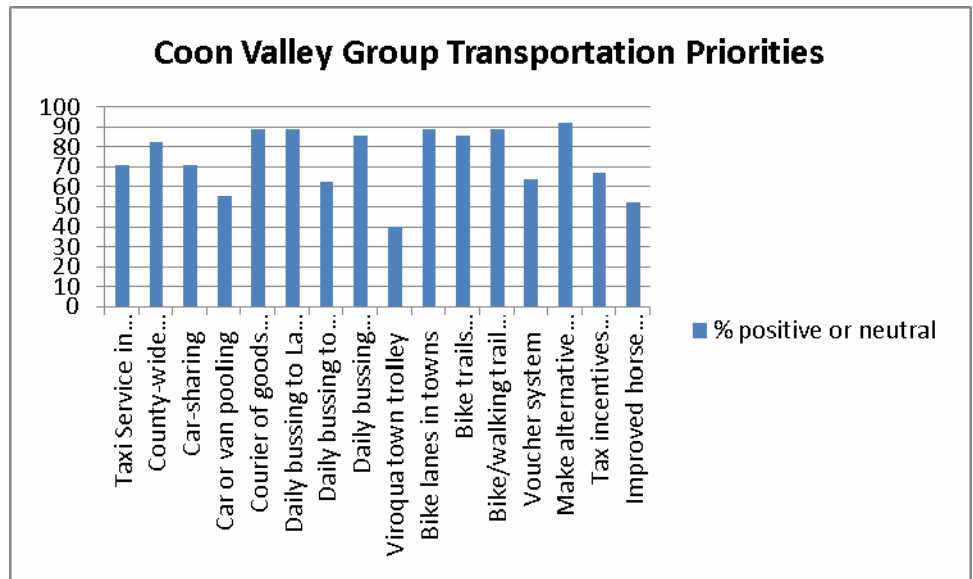
Local preferences were also collected through a series of interviews with local stakeholders, including the Highway Commissioner, Land Conservation Director, City Administrators and Town Board representatives, members of Transportation Coordination Committee, Smart Growth Planners, other county STRAP Project Coordinators, and AARP Members. A presentation was made to the Vernon County Board of Supervisors on June 5, 2007.

Included here is a short description of each municipality, village, and city along with their self-assessed transportation needs and vision for the future. All population statistics are US Census 2006 estimates. Towns and municipalities are gathered into the following eight groups: Coon Valley, De Soto, Hillsboro, La Farge, Readstown, Stoddard, Viroqua, and Westby. Feedback from the surrounding counties is included in Chapter 5.

Coon Valley Group

15 surveys were received from Coon Valley area municipalities. The preferred transportation solutions for this group, showing positive or neutral support by more than 85% of survey respondents, were daily bussing to La Crosse, daily bussing between towns, bike lanes in towns, bicycle/walking trails in towns, bike trails between towns, courier solutions, and alternative fuels.

A draft Comprehensive Plan was completed for the Village of Coon Valley in cooperation with the municipalities of Hamburg, Chaseburg, and Coon. The plan states “this planning area can reasonably expect job growth from within the planning area and from the La Crosse metropolitan area. A clear pattern of commuting out of this planning area to La Crosse area jobs has already been established and can be expected to continue.”



In addition, the Plan prioritizes the goal of an interconnected bicycle and pedestrian trail in the Coon Creek Valley. Suggestion was made to form a steering committee for the development of a trail between Chaseburg and Coon Valley.

Village of Chaseburg, pop. 289

Chaseburg is located within the Town of Hamburg. Major roads include Highway 162, 14/61, and County Road K. Chaseburg offers a fairly complete range of municipal services.

The Unit on Aging Mini-bus travels through Chaseburg. There are no other public transportation services.

Three surveys were returned from Chaseburg. No significant interest in transportation solutions was expressed.

Town of Coon, pop. 714

The Town of Coon is located in the northwest quarter of Vernon County, and surrounds the Village of Coon Valley. Major arteries include 14/61, County Road B, and County Road P. There are no services in Coon. Many people work off the farm and commute. Residents purchase their necessities in La Crosse.

The only public transportation service in Coon is the Unit on Aging Mini-bus. Only three surveys were returned from the Town of Coon, but they were notable for 100% positive or neutral response to almost all transportation solutions.

Village of Coon Valley, pop. 717

Coon Valley is located on Highway 14/61. 26% of the population is over age 60, and 55.4% of those over age 65 self-identify as disabled (Census 2000). There is a mini-mart grocery, banks, library, and post office. In addition, there is a village park which provides significant access to bicycling and pedestrian opportunities.

The Unit on Aging Mini-bus travels through Coon Valley. There are no other public transportation services. Eight surveys were returned from Coon Valley residents. Over 87% of Coon Valley surveys reported positive or neutral interest in daily bussing to La Crosse, improved horse and buggy access, voucher system, bike trails and bike lanes in town, car-pooling, package courier services, tax incentives, and alternative fuels.

Town of Hamburg, pop. 932

The Town of Hamburg is located in the northwest quarter of the county and contains the Village of Chaseburg. There are no services.

State Population Projections for the town of Hamburg place population growth at an unusually high rate of 24.76% annually, which is higher than the growth rate of any other town within its planning cluster (Comprehensive Plan, 2007).

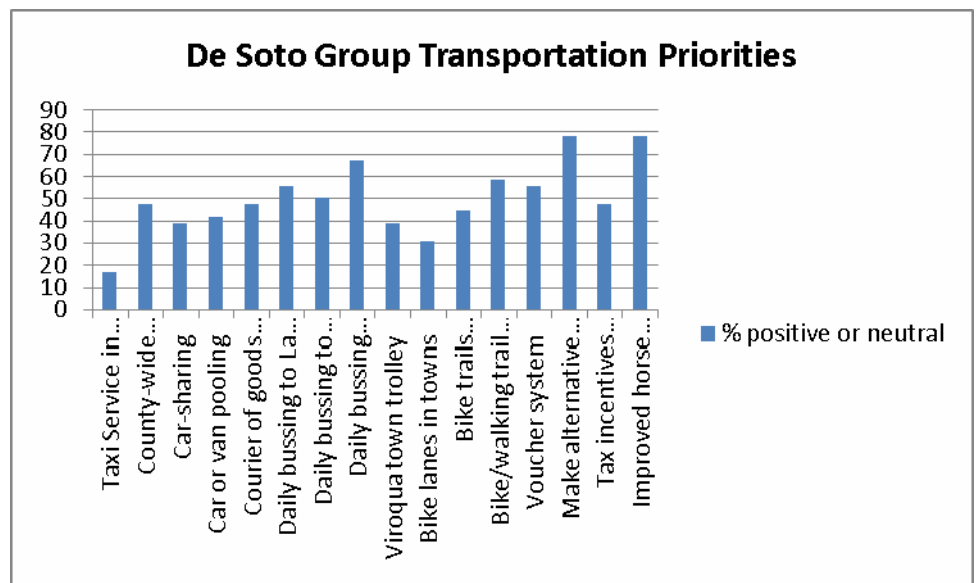
Only one survey was returned from Hamburg. All transportation solutions were interesting, with the exception of the Viroqua town trolley, voucher system, car-pooling, and improved horse and buggy access.

De Soto Group

17 surveys were received from De Soto area municipalities. As a group, improving horse and buggy access was the preferred transportation solution at 77% positive or neutral response.

Town of Sterling, pop. 709

The Town of Sterling is located in the southwestern quarter of Vernon County. Nearly 30% of those over age 65 are in poverty or self-identify as disabled (Census 2000). Sterling is home to the minor communities of Retreat, West Prairie, and Purdy.



The Unit on Aging Mini-bus travels through Sterling. There are no other public transportation services. Only two surveys were returned from Sterling, and they both reported support for improved horse and buggy access, tax incentives for alternatives, alternative fuels, and daily bussing to all areas.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Sterling has not been completed.

Town of Wheatland, pop. 613

Wheatland is located along the Mississippi River, in the far southwestern corner of Vernon County. 26% of the population is over age 60 (Census 2000). Wheatland is home to the minor community of Redmound and the Town of Victory, and surrounds the Village of De Soto. Major roads include Highways 82 and 35 and County Road UU. There are no services in Wheatland.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Wheatland has not been completed. No surveys were returned from Wheatland township.

Village of De Soto, pop. 435

De Soto is located in the far southwestern corner of Vernon County and is bisected by the county line. Half of the town is located in Crawford County. 26% of the population is over age 60 (Census 2000). Highways 82 and 35 are the major arteries. Services include schools, banks, a library, and post office.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Village of De Soto has not been completed. De Soto surveys reported 100% support for a voucher system, improved horse and buggy access, bicycling/walking trails within the town, alternative fuels, and car-sharing. Three surveys were returned.

Town of Genoa, pop. 720

Genoa is located on the far western edge of Vernon County along the Mississippi River, surrounding the Village of Genoa. Major roads include Highways 56 and 35 and County Road K. There are no services in the Town of Genoa.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Genoa has not been completed. Surveys from the Town and Village of Genoa were notable for extremely low interest in all transportation solutions. Surveys returned were grouped with those from the Village of Genoa.

Village of Genoa, pop. 252

The Village of Genoa is located on the far western edge of Vernon County on the Mississippi River. 35% of the population is over age 60 (Census 2000). Major roads include Highways 56 and 35.

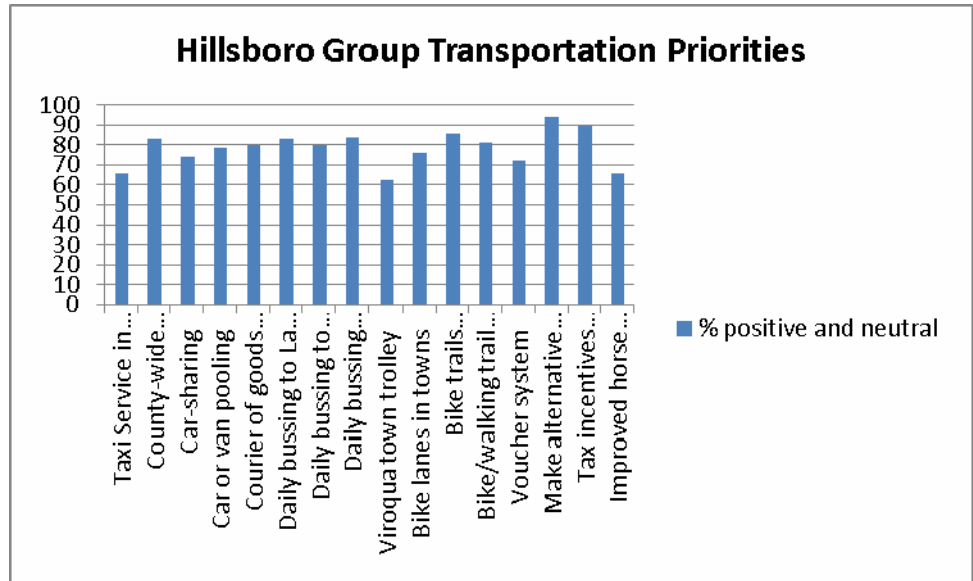
To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Genoa has not been completed. Surveys from the Town and Village of Genoa were notable for extremely low interest in all transportation solutions. Twelve surveys were returned.

Hillsboro Group

88 surveys were received from Hillsboro area municipalities. The preferred transportation solutions for this group, showing positive or neutral support by more than 80% of survey respondents, were a county-wide volunteer driver network, daily bussing to La Crosse and between towns, bike trails between towns, bicycle/walking trails in towns, tax incentives, and alternative fuels.

City of Hillsboro, pop. 1309

Hillsboro is the third largest city in Vernon County and is uniquely located near the far eastern border. Hillsboro is only 2 miles from Juneau County, 6 miles from Richland County, 5 miles from Monroe County, and 7 miles from Sauk County but 40 minutes from Viroqua, the county seat. Many residents do not travel to Viroqua to meet their medical, employment, or social needs. 31% of the population is over age 60 and 55.6% of individuals over age 65+ self-identify as disabled (Census 2000). There is a complete municipal infrastructure, including health care facilities, school, library, and banks.



Surveys from Hillsboro registered positive or neutral support for alternative fuels and tax incentives from more than 80% of respondents. Preferred transportation solutions of this area were trails within a town, a county-wide volunteer driver network, bussing to La Crosse, and bike trails between towns, at approximately 70% positive or neutral levels of interest. 65 surveys were returned.

Hillsboro is the doorway to the extensive multi-use trail system maintained by the Wisconsin DNR. The Hillsboro State Trail, a 4.2-mile state-owned and county-operated hiking, biking, and snowmobiling trail, connects Hillsboro to the 400 Trail at Union Center. The 400 Trail provides access to the Elroy-Sparta State Trail, a 32.5-mile ride that includes three century-old railway tunnels and a succession of small towns, and then to the Great River State Trail, a multi-use 24-mile rail bed trail that winds its way through the Mississippi River bottom lands north from Onalaska through Trempealeau, Perrot State Park, and the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge. Cyclists can also access Wildcat Mountain State Park and the Kickapoo River. To date, the Hillsboro State Trail ends in Hillsboro. Further access into Vernon County along this trail was requested by the resident survey.

The Vernon County Unit on Aging Mini-Bus provides service in the city of Hillsboro on Wednesdays, and this is a well-used service. During the rest of the week, individuals needing transport to medical appointments may call Gundersen Lutheran Coulee Trails, which then travels 40 miles one way to take a patient a short distance to their appointment. A shared ride taxi service in Hillsboro could provide this service more efficiently and at a lower cost. Half of the surveys returned expressed positive or neutral support for taxi service, although not for service specifically in Hillsboro.

Because of the location of Hillsboro, a large number of trips are taken outside of Vernon County. Any effort to provide service in this region would depend on cross-county collaboration to achieve success.

Town of Forest, pop. 607

The Town of Forest is located to the northwest of Hillsboro, and includes the minor community of Mount Tabor and part of Wildcat Mountain State Park. Major roads include Highway 33 and County Road F. There are no municipal services.

The Comprehensive Plan for Forest is in its initial stages. Surveys from the Town of Forest reported over 93% positive or neutral response for daily bussing, both to La Crosse and Madison; and for tax incentives and alternative fuels. 84% of surveys indicated positive or neutral support for bussing between towns, bike trails between towns, and improved horse and buggy access. Thirteen surveys were returned from Forest.

Town of Greenwood, pop. 843

The Town of Greenwood is located in the far eastern side of Vernon County, southwest of Hillsboro. Major arteries include County Road C, County Road V, and State Highway 80. There are no municipal services.

Greenwood is a rural township, and residents rely on strong social connections to mitigate the isolation that comes with distance and lower population density. This social network provides the means for residents to meet their transportation needs. The Unit on Aging Mini-Bus also travels in Greenwood on a limited basis. 100% of the surveys collected from Greenwood expressed positive or neutral support for all transportation solutions listed with the exception of taxi service between towns, the Viroqua town trolley, the voucher system, and improved access for horses and buggies. Only three surveys were returned from Greenwood.

In the Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Greenwood states its intention to support county and state transportation services for the elderly and disabled populations. “Within the Town there are no public transit facilities and none are being anticipated to develop over the next 20 years.” (Comprehensive Plan, 2006) A minor provision for bicycling and pedestrian access is included, although sidewalks are rare and tourism is not planned or encouraged.

Town of Hillsboro, pop. 800

The Town of Hillsboro is located in the far northeastern corner of the county and includes the minor community of Trippville. Major roads include County Roads F and WW. There are no municipal services.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Hillsboro has not been completed. Surveys returned from the Town of Hillsboro were grouped with those from the City of Hillsboro.

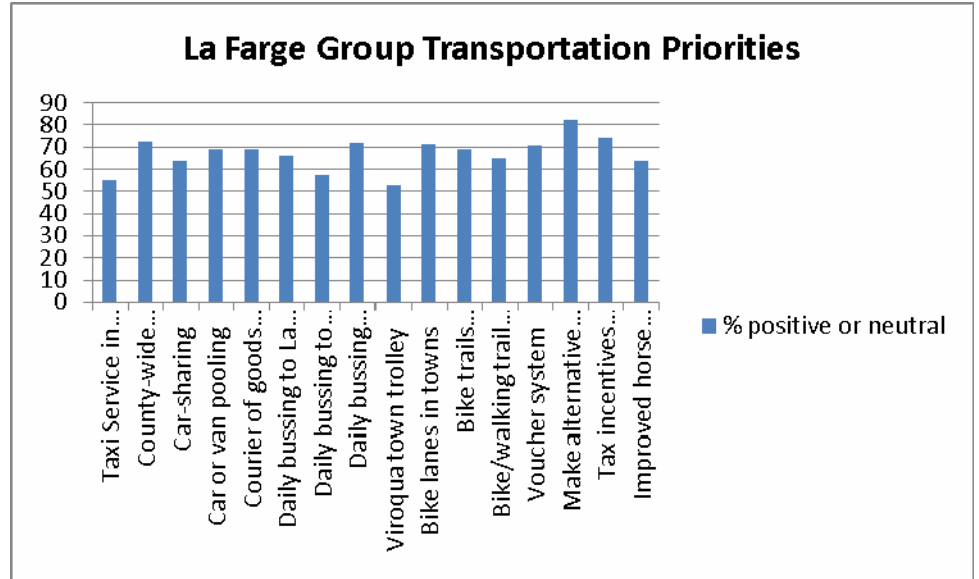
Town of Union, pop. 584

Union is to the southwest of Hillsboro and is home to a large area of land without major road access. Access is provided over County Roads V, H, A, and D. The minor communities of Valley and Dilly are within its boundaries. There are no municipal services.

The Comprehensive Plan for Union is in its initial stages. Surveys from the Town of Union showed more than 80% positive or neutral support for all transportation solutions listed, with the exception of bike lanes in towns and daily bussing to La Crosse and Madison. Seven surveys were returned.

La Farge Group

70 surveys were received from La Farge area municipalities. The preferred transportation solutions for this group, showing positive or neutral support by more than 70% of survey respondents, were a county-wide volunteer driver network, daily bussing between towns, bike lanes in towns, a voucher system, tax incentives, and alternative fuels.



Town of Clinton, pop. 1457

Clinton is located in the northeast quarter of Vernon County and is home to a large Amish population. Minor communities include Bloomingdale and Dell. Cashton (Monroe Co) is the closest city. The primary roads are County roads S, D, and P. There are no services available in the township.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Clinton has not been completed. The drafted transportation element focuses entirely on roads and other infrastructure not addressed in this report. Sixteen surveys were returned from Clinton. 93% of these surveys registered positive or neutral support for improved horse and buggy access. Alternative fuels and tax incentives were supported by 82% of respondents. Preferred transportation solutions included a county-wide volunteer driver network, car-pooling, bussing between area towns, and the voucher system with 67% positive or neutral interest.

Town of Stark, pop. 370

Stark is located in the Kickapoo River Valley and contains the Village of La Farge and the minor communities of Rockton and Ports Corner as well as the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Major roads include Highways 82 and 131 and County Roads P and D. There are no services available in the township.

The Comprehensive Plan for Stark is in its initial stages. Twelve surveys were returned from the Town of Stark, notable for the high level of interest expressed for all transportation solutions. All solutions achieved 75% positive or neutral support or better. There was 100% positive or neutral support for the county-wide volunteer network, courier services, bussing between towns, the Viroqua town trolley, bike lanes in towns, the voucher system, tax incentives, and improved horse and buggy access.

Town of Webster, pop. 740

Webster is located in the center of Vernon County. Avalanche is the only minor community. Road access is via Highway 82 and County Roads S, SS, and D. There are no services in Webster.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Webster has not been completed. However, the Kickapoo Conversations Vision 2020 does provide a significant amount of feedback from the Avalanche community. This report includes recommendations for shuttle services, car pooling incentives, a bus service from Viroqua to La

Crosse, and more transportation options for the elderly. This is consistent with the surveys which were returned from Webster. Of eight surveys returned, there was 100% positive or neutral support for the volunteer driver network, car-pooling, bussing to La Crosse, bike lanes in towns and trails between towns, and alternative fuels. The Viroqua town trolley and improved horse and buggy access gained low support, at 37% positive or neutral interest.

Town of Whitestown, pop. 537

The Town of Whitestown is located in the Kickapoo River Valley and is home to Wildcat Mountain State Park and the Kickapoo Valley Reserve. Whitestown surrounds the Village of Ontario. Highway 131 is the only major road. There are no services available in the township. Many Amish reside in the township.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Whitestown has not been completed. Eight surveys were returned from Whitestown. 75% positive or neutral support was registered for car-pooling, courier services, daily bussing between towns, a voucher system, and tax incentives. Preferred solutions were a volunteer driver network and alternative fuels, at 87% positive or neutral support.

Village of La Farge, pop. 789

The Village of La Farge is located directly east of Viroqua and is home to the CROPP headquarters. Road access is provided via Highways 82 and 131. There is a clinic, banks, grocery store, and library in La Farge.

The Comprehensive Plan for the Village of La Farge is in its initial stages. However, the Kickapoo Conversations Vision 2020 did collect feedback from the La Farge community. Included in this report are recommendations for taxi service between area towns with minimal bureaucracy, a valley bike path along the old rail right of way, creating small businesses that can transport people, encouraging students to ride the bus rather than drive, and paving wider shoulders for improved safety for Amish buggies.

Twenty surveys were returned from the Village of La Farge. Of these, the preferred transportation solution was bike lanes in towns at 85% positive or neutral support. Solutions which were supported at levels over 75% included a county-wide volunteer driver network, courier solutions, bussing to La Crosse, bike trails between towns, a voucher system, alternative fuels, and tax incentives.

Village of Ontario, pop. 466

The Village of Ontario is located in the heart of the Kickapoo River Valley, in the northeast section of Vernon County. It is served by Highway 33, which leads to Hillsboro and Cashton, and Highway 131, which leads to La Farge and Wilton. Ontario has a library and bank, but no medical services or school. The school which serves this area is located in Monroe County and is part of the Monroe school district. Medical needs are met in Cashton at Scenic Bluffs. Wildcat Mountain State Park is only a few miles out of town. There is a bike lane along part of the road that leads to the Reserve.

Public transit service in Ontario is limited to the Vernon County Unit on Aging Mini-Bus for senior citizens. There is a perceived need for more frequent services from the mini-bus. There is also local interest in connecting the bike trail at Wildcat Park to the Elroy-Sparta bike trail, an 8 mile link, and also to trails in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve, a twelve mile link.

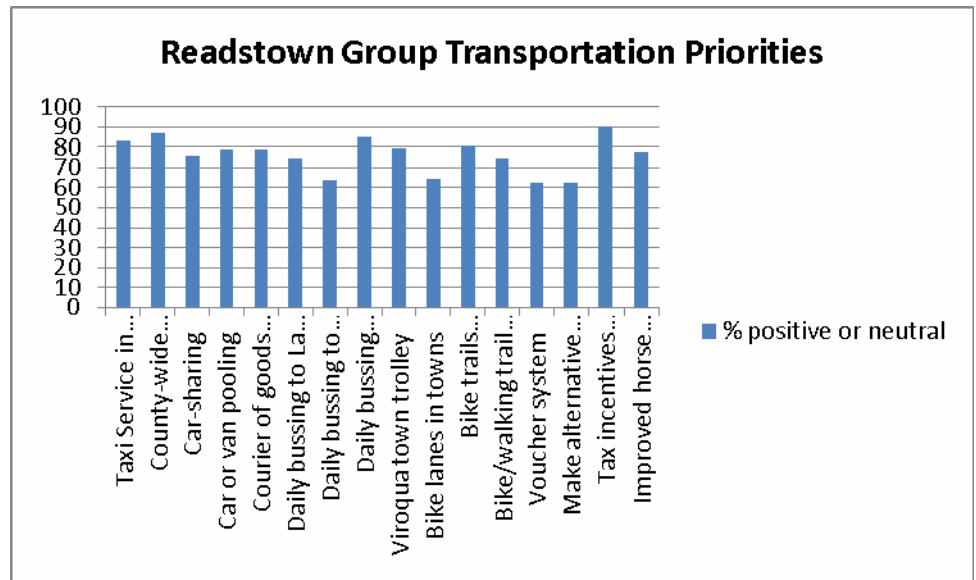
30% of the population is over age 60 (Census 2000). Those employed do drive to work in other locations. Sparta, Tomah, Fort McCoy, and Cashton are principal locations for employment. There is a lack of

employment opportunities in Ontario. Bringing in bicyclists along the trail would increase the amount of tourist dollars and promote local business opportunities. Other area recreational opportunities include horseback riding, canoeing, and use of ATV trails.

The Comprehensive Plan of Ontario notes that the lack of transportation options limits mobility and housing choices of area residents. The Kickapoo Conversations Vision 2020 document adds that connecting La Farge and Ontario with a bike trail would be desirable. There were six surveys returned from Ontario. No transportation solutions were rated above 50% positive or neutral interest.

Readstown Group

57 surveys were received from Readstown area municipalities. The preferred transportation solutions for this group, showing positive or neutral support by more than 80% of survey respondents, were a county-wide volunteer driver network, taxi service in area towns, daily bussing between towns, bike trails between towns, and tax incentives.



Town of Kickapoo, pop. 594

The Town of Kickapoo is located in the southeast corner of the county, surrounding the Village of Readstown and including the minor community of Sugar Grove. Major roads include Highways 14/61 and 131 and County Roads T, S, and I. There are no school, library, or health care facilities.

The only public transit services provided in Kickapoo are the Vernon County Unit on Aging Mini-Bus for senior citizens and the Jefferson Lines motor coach, which passes through Readstown on a daily schedule.

Commuter traffic is at a high level in Kickapoo. “In 2000, there were 262 employed residents in the Town of Kickapoo. Of these, 65 worked in the City of Viroqua, 35 worked in the Town of Kickapoo, 30 worked in Viola, 20 worked in Readstown, 18 worked in Richland Center, and 12 worked in the La Crosse area. The one-third increase in employed residents over 1990 was apparently due to commuting rather than from new local jobs.” Area businesses employing a significant number of the local population include S & S Cycle, Lowe Manufacturing, and CROPP in La Farge. CROPP is the only one of these businesses which sponsors a car-pooling program. The Amish community appears to be a growing segment of the local work force, presenting a need for alternative transportation. (Comprehensive Plan, 2006)

In the Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Kickapoo detailed several objectives relevant to transportation planning. Kickapoo supports development of local and regional bicycle/pedestrian trails; continuation of specialized regional transit services to elderly, low income and disabled persons; and improved facilities for horse-drawn vehicles on local roads. Ten surveys were returned from Kickapoo. Preferred transportation

solutions are courier services, daily bussing between towns, bike lanes and trails in towns, bike trails between towns, alternative fuels, and tax incentives. All solutions were supported at levels above 70% positive or neutral interest.

Town of Liberty, pop. 216

The Town of Liberty is located to the east of Viroqua, surrounding the Village of Viola and including the minor communities of Ross and Liberty. Access is via Highway 56 and County Roads S and SS. Nearly 30% of those over age 65 are in poverty (Census 2000). There are no municipal services.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Liberty has not been completed. Four surveys were returned from Liberty. 100% of those surveys registered positive or neutral support for taxi service, a volunteer driver network, car sharing, bussing between towns, a Viroqua town trolley, tax incentives, and improved horse and buggy access. Interest in bussing to Madison, bike lanes or trails in towns, or a voucher system was at or below 50%.

Village of Readstown, pop. 396

Readstown is located in the Town of Kickapoo and is easily accessed via Highways 14/61 and 131. 27% population is over age 60 (Census 2000). There is a library, bank, and post office in Readstown but no grocery store.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Readstown has not been completed. Fifteen surveys were returned from Readstown. Preferred solutions were a county-wide volunteer driver network, car-pooling, daily bussing between towns, bike trails between towns and within a town, tax incentives, and alternative fuels, with 80% or higher positive or neutral interest.

Village of Viola, pop. 698

Viola is located on Highway 56 on the southeastern border of Vernon County, with half of the town located in Richland County. 27% population is over age 60 (Census 2000). There is a medical clinic, minimart and cooperative groceries, a post office, and a bank. The school that serves Viola is located outside of the village limits.

The Village of Viola is concerned with “providing an integrated, efficient, and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience, safety, and meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.” (Comprehensive Plan Draft, 2005) The priorities are improving transportation needs of the elderly and disabled and encouraging tourism. Viola is not interested in developing formal or informal Park and Ride facilities.

28 surveys were returned from Viola. Preferred transportation solutions include car-pooling and bike trails within a town at 78% positive or neutral interest, and tax incentives and alternative fuels with 89% positive or neutral interest.

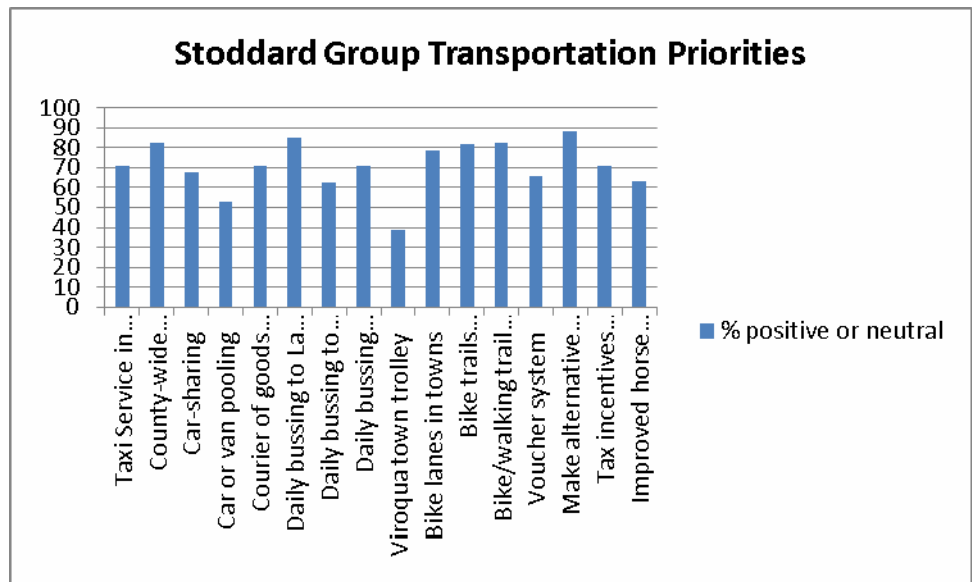
The Village of Viola’s Planning Commission believes that the options for residents who do not drive may be sufficient to meet current needs but would not be adequate to meet future needs. Richland County must be included as a partner for any local mobility projects to be successful.

Stoddard Group

35 surveys were received from Stoddard area municipalities. The preferred transportation solutions for this group, showing positive or neutral support by more than 80% of survey respondents, were a county-wide volunteer driver network, daily bussing to La Crosse, bike trails in towns and between towns, and alternative fuels.

Village of Stoddard, pop. 820

Stoddard is located in the northwestern corner of the county, with access via Highways 35 and 162.



To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Stoddard has not been completed. Eighteen surveys were returned. Alternative fuels and tax incentives both received more than 90% positive or neutral support. Daily bussing to La Crosse and a voucher system also had strong support, with levels of positive or neutral interest above 75%.

Town of Bergen, pop. 1385

Bergen is the far northwestern township and contains Stoddard within its boundaries. Major roads include Highways 35 and 162 and County Road O. There are no services.

Only two surveys were returned from Bergen. All solutions were supported at 100% positive or neutral interest, with the exceptions of daily bussing to Madison and between towns, courier services, and the Viroqua town trolley.

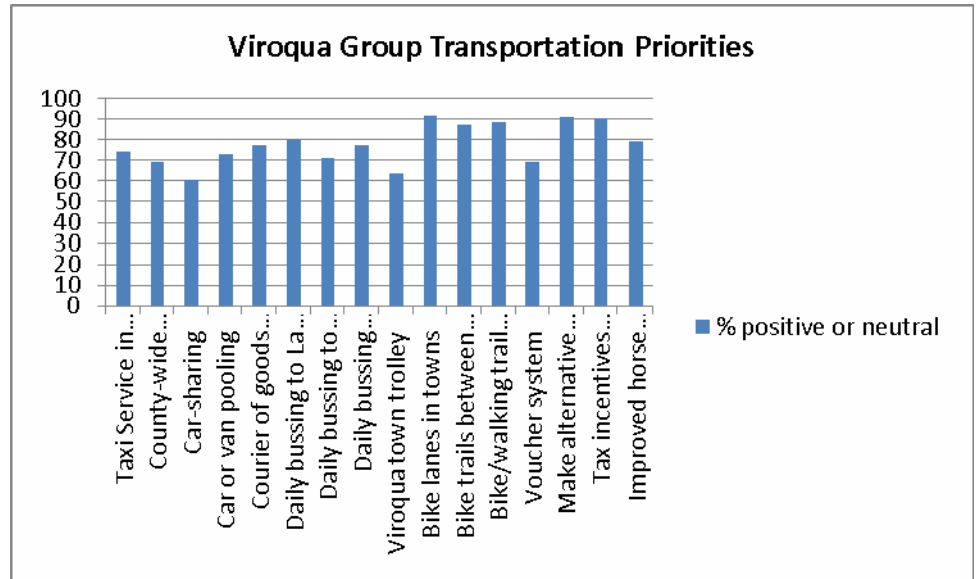
Town of Harmony, pop. 820

The Town of Harmony is located to the west of Viroqua in western Vernon County. Major arteries include Highway 56 and County Road O. Harmony includes the minor communities of Romance and Newton. There is no school, library, or health care facilities in the township.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Harmony has not been completed. Harmony is a very rural township similar to Jefferson, and is home to many Amish. Eleven surveys were returned from Harmony. Preferred transportation solutions were the voucher system and improved horse and buggy access, at 82% positive or neutral interest, and tax incentives at 91% positive or neutral interest.

Viroqua Group

275 surveys were received from Viroqua area municipalities. The preferred transportation solutions for this group, showing positive or neutral interest by more than 85% of survey respondents, were bike lanes in towns, bike trails in towns and between towns, tax incentives, and alternative fuels. Daily bussing to La Crosse, improved horse and buggy access, daily bussing between towns, and courier services also had a high level of support at over 75% positive or neutral interest.



City of Viroqua, pop. 4413

The city of Viroqua is the county seat of Vernon County. Highways 14/61, 56, and 82 are the major arteries. Vernon Memorial Hospital provides health care services to most of the surrounding area, and offers the only pharmacy in the area. In addition, there is a complete set of municipal services. 30% of the population is over age 60 (Census 2000).

The Comprehensive Plan of Viroqua includes a comprehensive list of strategies designed to support and increase bicycling opportunities in the area. Making bicycling accessible is clearly a high priority for city governance. Providing walking and pedestrian facilities, especially for schoolchildren, is also a principal objective. Providing a direct link to Amtrak in Tomah is a secondary objective.

Projected to begin in 2012, the proposed 14/61 four-lane bypass could have significant long term effects on the Viroqua community in many ways. A bicycle trail spanning from Westby to Viroqua may be included in the bypass project, with financial support from the DOT. It is clear, based on the town meetings that have been held on this issue, that there is not generalized agreement among residents that the bypass is either desirable or necessary.

Viroqua residents returned 264 surveys which shows 75% or better positive or neutral interest in the following transportation solutions: taxi service, a volunteer driver network, bussing to La Crosse, bike lanes in towns, bike trails in and between towns, voucher system, tax incentives, and improved horse and buggy access. The highest ranked transportation solution was making alternative fuels available at over 90% positive or neutral interest.

Town of Franklin, pop. 997

Franklin is located to the southwest of Viroqua and contains the minor communities of Liberty Pole, Folsum, and Fargo. Access is via County Roads NN, J, and Highways 82/27. There are no municipal services.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Franklin has not been completed. No surveys were returned from the Town of Franklin.

Town of Jefferson, pop. 1050

The Town of Jefferson is located immediately to the west of Viroqua in west central Vernon County. It contains the minor communities of Springville, Esofea, and Bud. Major arteries include Highway 56, leading to Genoa, and County Road B, leading to Coon Valley. There is no school, library, or health care facilities.

Jefferson is a very rural township with no incorporated areas, 89% forested or agricultural land, and a minimal transportation network. There are three county natural areas, each with trails for pedestrians, bikes, and/or horses: Esofea-Rentz Park, Sidie Hollow Park, and Duck Egg Forest.

The only public transit service provided in Jefferson is the Vernon County Unit on Aging Mini-Bus for senior citizens.

The Town of Jefferson residents have expressed the desire to maintain the rural character of the area in the future. There is significant development pressure from the cities of La Crosse and Viroqua which should be mitigated with proper planning. Recreational tourism, small scale agriculture, and home based businesses are the preferred choices for economic development. Clustering development in areas which are already somewhat developed is also a priority.

In the Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Jefferson commits to support programs which provide transportation to the elderly and disabled, and biking and pedestrian trails. Eleven surveys were returned from Jefferson. 100% positive or neutral interest was indicated for bike lanes in towns, and 91% positive or neutral interest was indicated for bike trails between and in towns, alternative fuels, and tax incentives. Improved horse and buggy access, courier services, daily bussing to La Crosse, and daily bussing between towns had positive or neutral interest for 82% of respondents.

Town of Viroqua, pop. 1682

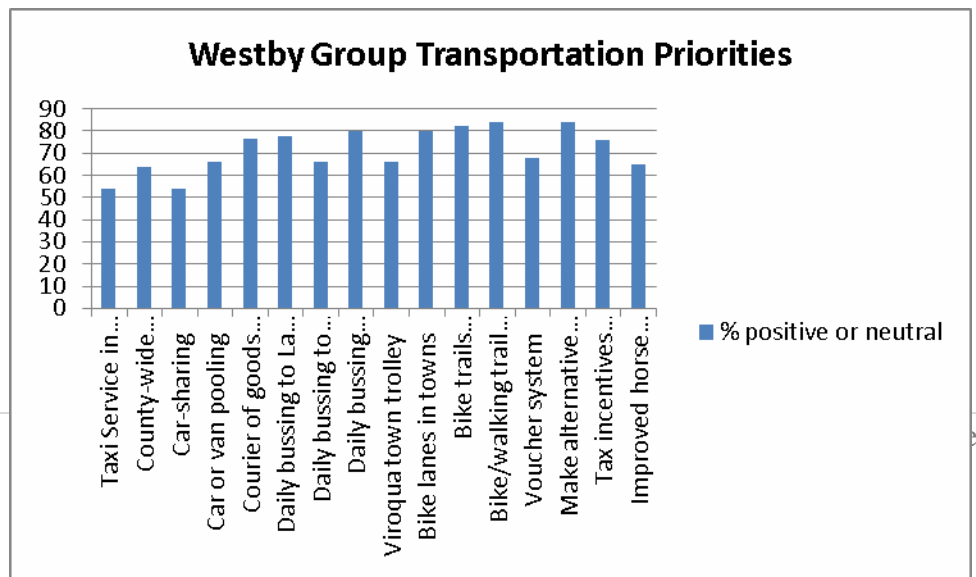
The Town of Viroqua spans from the south edge of Westby to the southeast of Viroqua. Major roads include County Road Y and Highways 14/61 and 82/56. There are no services.

To date, the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Viroqua has not been completed. Surveys for the Town of Viroqua were grouped with those from the City of Viroqua.

Westby Group

In their shared Comprehensive Plan, Christiana and Westby prioritized becoming “elder-ready” communities where transportation, shopping and social services are conveniently accessible. 51 surveys were returned from Westby area municipalities. The preferred

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transportation solutions for this group, showing positive or neutral interest by over 82% of survey respondents, were bike trails in towns, bike trails between towns, and alternative fuels. Daily bussing to La Crosse, bike lanes in towns, improved horse and buggy access, daily bussing between towns, tax incentives, and courier services also had a high level of support at over 75% positive or neutral interest.

City of Westby, pop. 2156

Westby is the second largest city in Vernon County, and offers a complete municipal infrastructure including schools, grocery store, library, and health clinic. Highways 27 and 14/61 are the major arteries. Westby is unique among towns since it is a commuter home for working age families, a socioeconomic center in its own right, and an international winter destination. However, there is no pharmacy and many seniors come to the hospital in Viroqua to exercise and receive medical care. 26% of the population is over age 60 (Census 2000). 35% of 65+ self-identify as disabled (Census 2000).

Public transportation in Westby is more developed than in other areas of the County, with the exception of the City of Viroqua. Services include the Running Taxi, the Jefferson Lines route to La Crosse and Madison, and the Vernon County Unit on Aging Mini-Bus. The Jefferson Lines bus stops in Westby at the Logan Mill Lodge. At the bus stop, there is also an Amish parking shed and a 100-car parking lot. There is also a moderate level of bicycle usage.

Commuter traffic is at a high level in Westby. Of 963 employed residents in 2000, 42% (405) worked in Westby, 20% worked in the La Crosse area, and 19% worked in the Viroqua area. According to the Comprehensive Plan, “a clear pattern of commuting out of this planning area to jobs in the La Crosse area has already been established and can be expected to continue.” The increased convenience of commuting due to the planned Highway 14/61 bypass, which would shorten the drive to La Crosse, will likely lead to local population growth. The full growth impact of this highway improvement will likely not be fully realized until after 2020. (Comprehensive Plan 2006) The absence of diversified transportation options is perceived as a weakness. There is also a perceived need for an access service to Amtrak in the City of La Crosse or Tomah.

Forty-five surveys were returned from Westby. The preferred transportation solutions were tax incentives, alternative fuels, and bike and walking trails within a town at 84% positive or neutral interest. Bike lanes and bussing between area towns both were highly supported at 76% positive or neutral interest. Bike trails between towns had 80% positive or neutral support.

The Comprehensive Plan outlines a vision directly related to transportation:

“an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience and safety and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens”

- pedestrian and bike access in the downtown area
- development of local and regional bicycle/pedestrian trails as a coordinated element of all road installations and improvements
- transit services connecting Westby with the La Crosse metropolitan area, Viroqua, La Farge, and Richland Center
- feasible facilities for horse-drawn vehicles in areas of such need
- inter-community cost-share agreements in support of shared public transportation services

Town of Christiana, pop. 882

The Town of Christiana stretches to the north of Westby and surrounds the city itself. Major roads include County Road P and Highways 14/61 and 27.

Of all the towns in Vernon County, Christiana has the greatest percentage of its land area in farmland (Wisconsin Program on Agricultural Technology Studies). There are no health care, park, school, or library facilities in the town. Christiana plans to avoid the development of concentrated areas of housing and the resulting infrastructure (Comprehensive Plan, 2007).

Commuting in the town of Christiana is at a high level. In 2006, 29% of the total population commuted to work. 97 residents worked in Westby, 78 worked in La Crosse, and 81 worked in the City and Town of Viroqua. Only 8%, or 70 individuals, worked within the Town of Christiana.

Six surveys were returned from Christiana. Taxi service and car-sharing were the least preferred alternatives at only 50% positive or neutral support. Alternative fuels, all biking options, courier services, and bussing to La Crosse and between area towns were all supported at 83% positive or neutral interest.

Chapter 5: Coordination Efforts with Neighboring Counties

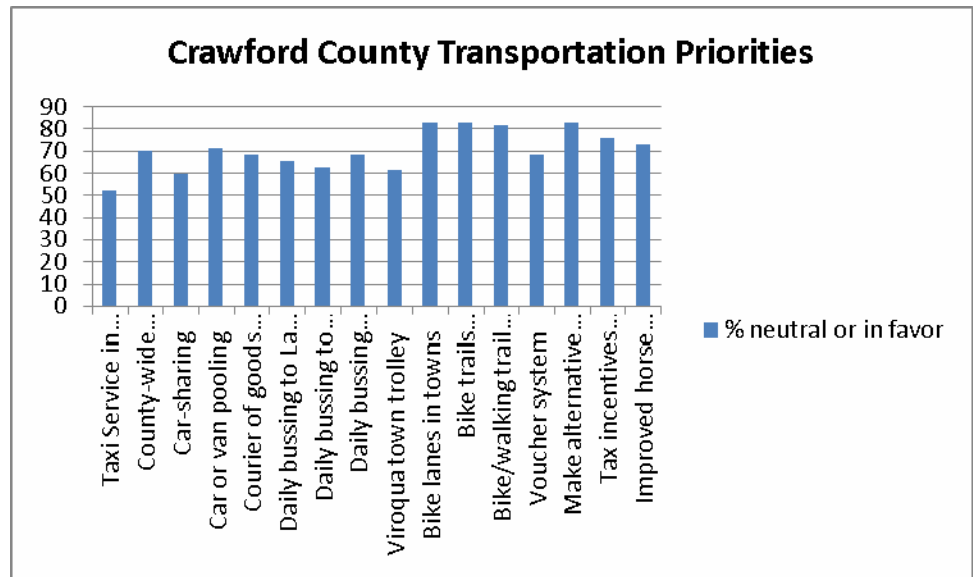
Coordination efforts with neighboring counties were explored via three means:

- Interviews with agencies and TCCs
- Inter-agency conferences
- Transportation surveys completed by area residents (107 surveys)

In general, the political climate for coordination between counties is very positive. The counties in the region are creating a regional approach defined by collaboration, information sharing, and mutual support. Transportation Planners and Mobility Managers from the region are meeting in informal TCC- type groups and discussing how to move forwards as a region. A STRAP grant is being submitted in September 2007 to support a regional TCC effort.

Crawford County

Specific areas of interest to this study in Crawford County are De Soto, Gays Mills, and Soldier’s Grove. The survey was distributed in Gays Mills and Soldier’s Grove for several weeks, and an article was published about it in the local paper. 69 surveys were returned from Crawford County. Feedback from the survey showed alternative fuels, bike lanes, and bike trails in towns and between towns as the preferred transportation solutions for this area, at 82% positive or neutral interest.



351 workers from Crawford County drive into Vernon County every day; a large percentage of these come from Gays Mills and Soldier’s Grove and travel to Viroqua. One resident of Gays Mills said in interview “half the town comes to Viroqua every day because there is no work here.”

Kickapoo Conversations Vision 2020 also collected feedback from residents of Gays Mills. Goals for the area identified through their community process include carpooling, a valley ride share plan, biking and walking lanes on major roads, the Kickapoo Stump Dodger, a shared public vehicle available for community use, and more public transportation.

Transportation services in Crawford County include Coulee Trails, a shared taxi from Running Inc., HHS/MA escort, veterans escort, area churches *Faith in Action* volunteer driver program, and senior services mini-busses

and minivan. According to senior services staff, efforts to provide transportation in Crawford County are still fragmented. The TCC is meeting to share information between providers, but so far no one has taken the lead.

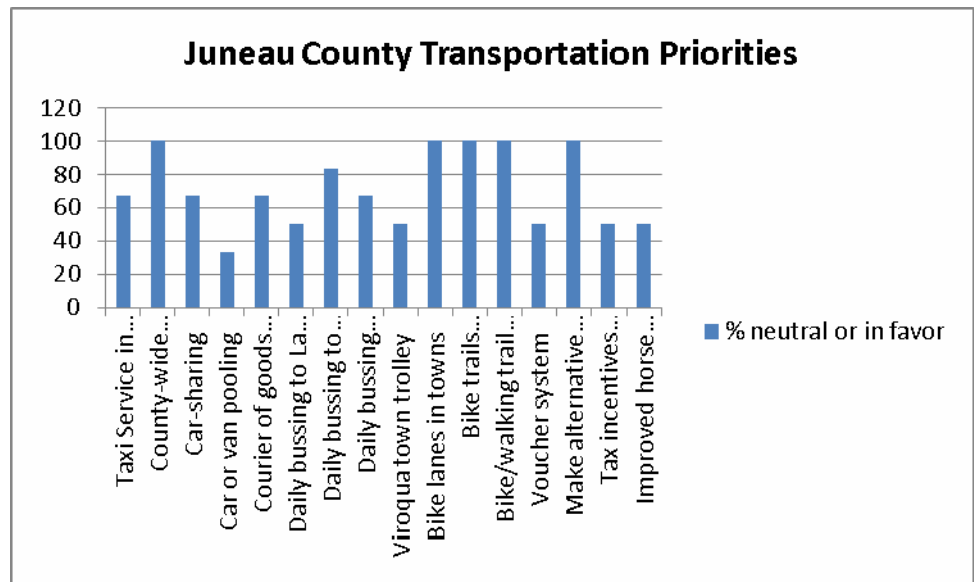
Senior services staff are willing to organize and promote sharing of the aging bus between counties when it is reasonable and logical to do so. If a bus were to run between La Crosse and Viroqua on a regular basis, Senior Services of Crawford County would likely establish a connecting route between Prairie du Chien and Viroqua. There is also interest in coordinating funding for cross county services.

Potential development partners:

- Crawford County UW Extension
- Crawford County Senior Resources Department

Juneau County

Areas of interest to this study include Union Center, Wonewoc, Camp Douglas, and Mauston. The transportation survey was not directly distributed in this area. However, six surveys were returned from residents of Juneau County. The surveys showed 100% positive or neutral interest in a county-wide volunteer driver network, bike lanes, bike trails in town and between towns, and alternative fuels. Daily bussing to Madison was also of interest with 83% positive or neutral support.



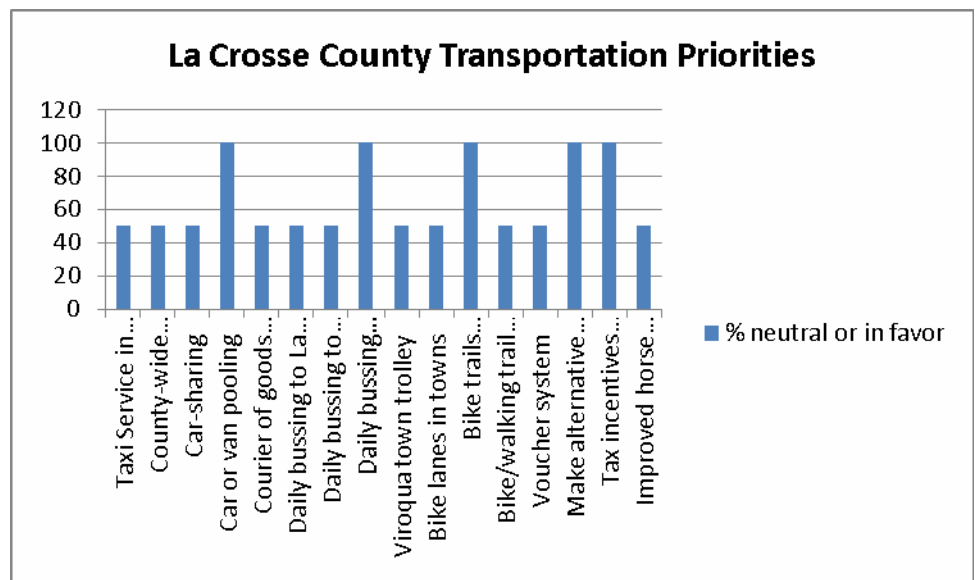
Juneau County is writing a STRAP application for a feasibility study to see where expanded taxi service is needed throughout the county. They are open to collaborating if possible.

Potential development partners:

- The City of Mauston

La Crosse County

Within La Crosse County, this study is most interested in coordination with the city of La Crosse. The survey was not directly distributed in La Crosse County. Two surveys were



returned from county residents. The surveys showed 100% positive or neutral interest in alternative fuels, tax incentives, bike trails between towns, bussing between towns, and car-pooling.

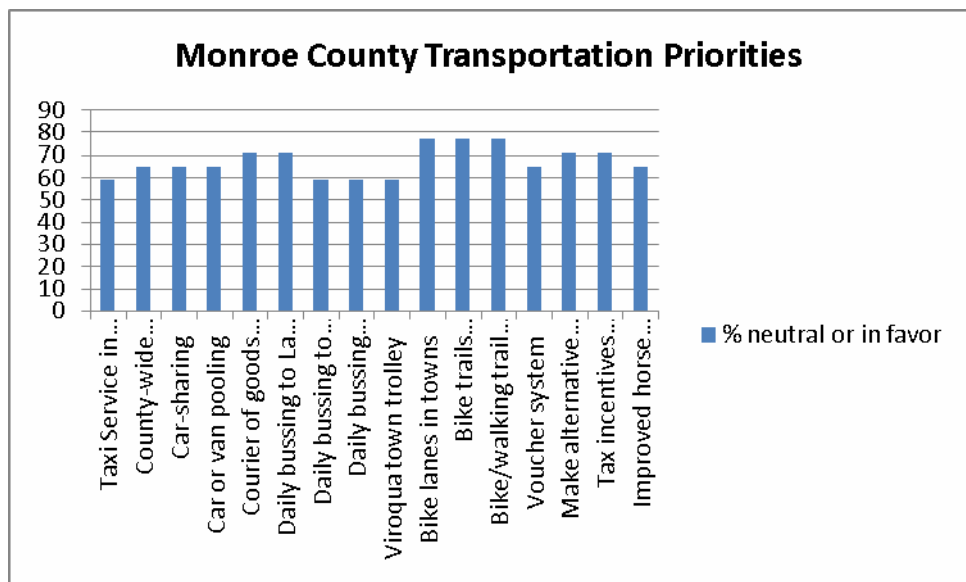
Interviews with the La Crosse MTU and the Aging Unit provided feedback on the political climate for coordination. La Crosse County is working on their own STRAP grant, and neighboring counties were asked their priorities for cross county collaboration. A central 800 number was high on the list.

Potential development partners:

- La Crosse County Unit on Aging
- Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC)
- La Crosse Metro Transit (MTU)

Monroe County

Area of interest to this study included Sparta, Tomah, and Cashton. The survey was distributed in Cashton through the Scenic Bluffs Community Health Center and the Amish produce market. Surveys were also provided in Spanish for the Latino population. Seventeen surveys were returned. Bike lanes, bike trails between towns, and bike trails in towns all received 76% positive or neutral support.



Monroe County has a very successful volunteer driver program which pays .53 per mile, or .55 per mile with more than one rider. There is

also a mini-bus which travels to Sparta, Cashton, Tomah, Kendall, Wilton, and Norwalk on a fixed route schedule. Two days a week the bus travels to La Crosse from Sparta; the driver remains available to the riders throughout the day via cell phone. Three days a week the bus serves the county via demand response/scheduled rides.

Potential development partners:

- Monroe County Senior Services
- Scenic Bluffs Community Health Center

Richland County

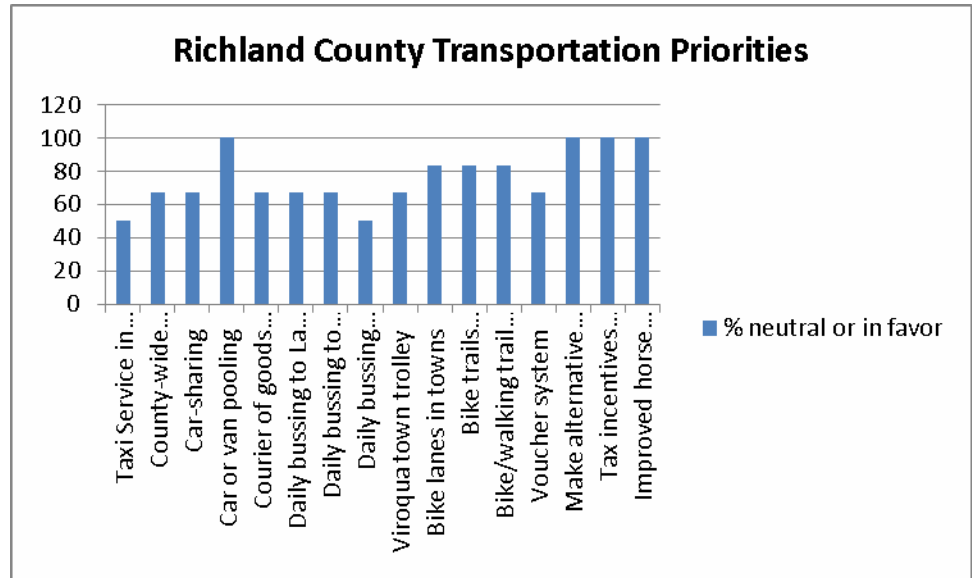
Areas of interest to this study in Richland County include Richland Center, Yuba, and Viola. The survey was distributed widely in Viola. Eight surveys were returned from Richland County. There was 100% positive or

neutral support for car-pooling, tax incentives, alternative fuels, and improved horse and buggy access. All bike related transportation solutions were rated positively or neutrally by 83% of survey respondents. Interviews with the Richland County TCC and county Health and Human Services department were instrumental in gathering feedback as well. Richland is home to an existing Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC).

Collaborative funding for cross-county bussing is supported by Richland County. Also, there is interest in increasing visibility and use of Jefferson Lines through coordination, promotion, and a possible voucher system.

Potential development partner:

- Richland County Department of Health and Human Services



Chapter 6: Transit Improvement Proposal

This proposal presents a vision of an integrated and coordinated transportation system in Vernon County. The vision is based on feedback from county residents, interviews with community stakeholders, and research of successful models used in other areas. It can become a reality by instituting specific strategies that impact the system as a whole, communicating political obstacles with organizations that work for change on the state level, and fostering cooperative and coordinated efforts between local players. Ultimately, the goal is to increase mobility for all residents.

Vision

A fully integrated and coordinated transportation system in Vernon County would include the following elements:

- Bussing between county towns with populations over 500 several times a day, with minivans designated for specific routes.
- A volunteer driver network that brings individuals to the nearest town bus route if they are able to ride the bus, or to the location of their choice if they are not.
- A central telephone number which is called by consumers needing transportation, in which seats can be reserved and decisions made about the most cost effective and consumer friendly methods of transportation.
- Taxi service within larger towns.
- Bussing to La Crosse along the 14/61 corridor, including a morning and evening run for commuters and midday and evening runs for other travelers, connecting to the MTU on the south side of La Crosse.
- Bike trails between towns.
- Trails for walking and biking within the larger towns of Hillsboro, Viroqua, and Westby.
- Carpooling programs at targeted area businesses, defined by cluster groups or the number of employees.
- Accessible, customer-initiated Internet reservations and scheduling.
- Pooled funding from local agencies that support a mobility manager and public transportation services, in which the agency pays for program participants to use services on public vehicles whenever possible.

Strategies

Vernon County Mobility Manager

Consistent leadership is essential for any transportation initiative to be successful. A Mobility Manager would effectively serve as the center of transportation efforts in the county, responding to and guided by the Transportation Coordination Committee. Project management by one individual in a centralized office will help achieve county goals as defined by the TCC. For ease of coordination, professional neutrality, and involvement in the community the Mobility Manager should be housed in the Vernon County offices.

The Mobility Manager can be funded in 2008 with a STRAP grant. During the first year, one of the primary responsibilities of the Mobility Manager would be to build cooperation and political will to co-mingle funding to support centralized transportation management. Agreements to share funding should eventually be affirmed by resolution of the County Board so they are not subject to the tides of community leadership. Other tasks for the first year would include project management, education, marketing, and consensus building.

Central Telephone Number for Transportation Information

A central telephone number for the Mobility Manager would provide ease in connecting consumers with their mobility solutions. The Manager would decide whether to place the individual on a bus, in a taxi, or with a volunteer driver. Appointments and reservations may be made for consumers in some cases, or referrals could be made to the appropriate scheduling entity. As services increase, staff could be added to manage this element so the Manager could continue to implement necessary projects. The 2009 STRAP grant might include a request for funding to support a second staff person in the Mobility office.

Education and Marketing Campaign

Currently, bussing in Vernon County does address the needs of many, but not all, elderly and disabled individuals. An expanded bus system could provide service to those who don't currently have access. However, for a bussing system to succeed it must be attractive not only to specialized populations but also to those individuals who choose to use public transit for philosophical, economic, or environmental reasons. An education and marketing campaign designed to raise awareness, improve the image of public transit, and cultivate ridership would be an essential first step in creating a sustainable and economically viable bussing system.

Promotion of Transportation Options

One of the primary complaints expressed by survey respondents and in local interviews was frustration at the lack of information about where to go, who to call, and how to access rides. Promotional materials that present transportation options to the public are perceived as valuable and needed. Several different options could be developed concurrently. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Brochures of available service providers with contact information for each program
- Website of transportation providers and schedules (\$60 per year would cover the cost of owning one domain name and hosting it on an inexpensive server. **vernonrides.com** and **vernonrides.org** are both available domain names.)
- Weekly column of transportation schedules and options in area newspapers

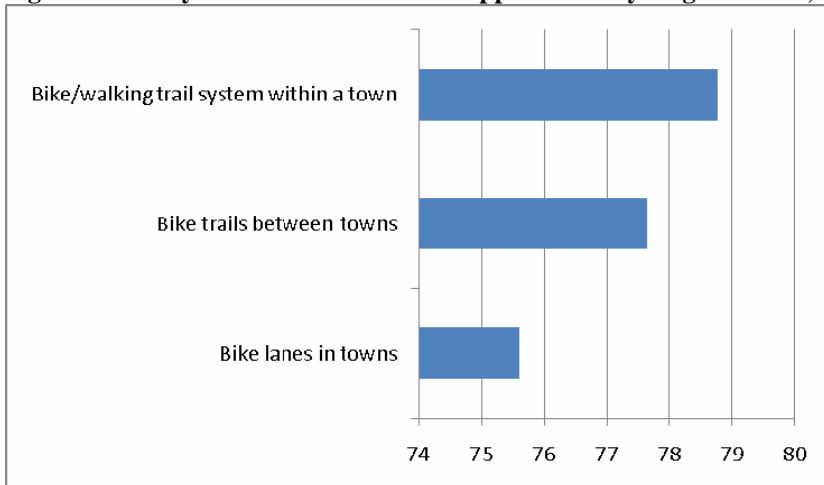
Multi-use Trails and Lanes

Multi-use trails and lanes provide safe transportation access for pedestrians and a wide range of alternative vehicles, including bicycles, electric vehicles, lawn mowers, golf carts, scooters, mopeds, and ATV's. Multi-use trails and lanes also create more traffic safety by providing a space for alternative vehicles outside of the flow of regular traffic.

Multi-use trails have broad positive impact across the entire community. They are a truly democratic transportation option, providing access to all residents regardless of age or financial capacity. They support commuters by mitigating the cost of gas and provide opportunities for increased recreational use. They increase the potential for health of residents and are environmentally sustainable.

Although the transportation survey defined questions around bicycle-based solutions rather than multi-use solutions, solutions for bicycles can be made accessible to other vehicles and therefore to a broader demographic. Survey results show that bicycle-based solutions were consistently rated with higher levels of interest than any other solution, with the exception of alternative fuels and tax incentives. In order, the priority was to create bike trails within a town, bike trails between towns, and bike lanes in towns.

Figure 1: Surveyed Positive or Neutral Support for Bicycling Solutions, County-wide



Surveyed Interest in Bike/Walking Trails In Towns

Municipality	% positive or neutral
Bergen	100
Chaseburg	67
Christiana	83
Clinton	56
Coon	100
Coon Valley	88
De Soto	100
Forest	69
Genoa	25
Greenwood	100
Hamburg	100
Harmony	73
Hillsboro	69
Jefferson	91
Kickapoo	90
La Farge	70
Liberty	50
Ontario	33
Readstown	80
Stark	92
Sterling	50
Stoddard	72
Union	83
Viola	79
Viroqua	86
Webster	75
Westby	84
Whitestown	63

Trail System Within Towns

Currently, trails within towns do not exist anywhere in Vernon County. According to survey interest and school demographics, town trail systems would be best placed in Viroqua, Westby, La Farge, Hillsboro, and Coon Valley.

Town trail systems can best be accomplished through the Safe Routes to School program (SRTS). SRTS is a DOT grant program that helps fund structural improvements such as bike paths between neighborhoods, as well as educational efforts that increase the number of students using alternative methods of traveling to and from school. SRTS can provide essential support for reduced funding for busses. Although focused on schoolchildren, SRTS initiatives provide value to the general public and as such qualify for funding under STRAP.

In the last few years momentum for SRTS in Viroqua was developed and agreement that this is valuable to the Viroqua community was reached between the hospital, the police department, and the schools. However, the momentum was lost for lack of a local leader to coordinate and manage the process. Currently, VMH is very interested in supporting SRTS projects and is beginning to process of identifying key individuals who can be the chairs of steering committees in the communities where hospitals and clinics are located and SRTS projects are proposed. With local leadership to coordinate projects through the county, SRTS programs could easily be achieved.

The Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission supports municipalities in writing SRTS grant applications at no charge to the municipality or planning group.

SRTS should be one of the first projects for the Mobility Manager, because success will be easy to achieve. This will cultivate community support and visibility for the development of new transportation systems.

Potential Partners:

- Vernon Memorial Hospital
- St. Joseph’s Community Health Services
- All local school districts
- Area police departments

Trails Between Area Towns

79% of the transportation survey respondents countywide rated “creating bike trails between area towns” either favorably or neutrally, with even higher levels of support in the Coon Valley area, the Viroqua area, the La Farge area, the Westby area, Stoddard, Readstown, and the Hillsboro area. A network of multi-use trails throughout the county would support both recreational tourism and needs of residents who use alternative forms of transportation for their transportation needs. Several survey respondents suggested that the county pass a resolution requiring all new roads and highways to include alternative vehicle access trails.

In August of 2007, a group of three doctors from Vernon Memorial Hospital distributed a small survey that asked the following question: "Are you in favor of a multi-use bike trail between Viroqua and Westby with a two lane road and turn offs? They sent 820 surveys to Viroqua residents. 220 surveys were returned, a 27% response rate. Of those surveys 211 said “yes”, and 9 said “no”, for a positive response of 95.9%.

The Kickapoo Conversations Vision 2020 published by the Valley Stewardship Network describes “a plan for recreational trails- hiking, biking, and off-road vehicles- both [for] closed loop and distance traveling [in the Kickapoo Valley]” as the primary transportation action plan defined through their community process. In its long-range plan for trail development in the South Central Region, the DNR envisions possible future development of a 20-mile connector from Richland Center to a linkage with the Hillsboro State Trail in Hillsboro, following various roadways and the Pine River (Viola Comprehensive Plan, 2005).

The local Vernon Trails organization coordinates trail building projects in the Viroqua area. By raising \$2200 through fundraisers, Vernon Trails was able to build 3 miles of mountain bike trails in six months. In July 2007, Vernon Memorial Hospital gave \$15,000 as a community match grant for a trail building machine. This machine will make trail-building exponentially more efficient.

It makes economic and environmental sense to explore the process of developing multi-use trails through the county as both a means for alternative transportation and as a channel for recreational tourism. Connecting existing multi-use trails in Hillsboro with a trail network through the rest of Vernon County and with the

Surveyed Interest in Bike Trails Between Towns	
<i>Municipality</i>	<i>% positive or neutral</i>
Bergen	100
Chaseburg	67
Christiana	83
Clinton	63
Coon	100
Coon Valley	75
De Soto	67
Forest	85
Genoa	17
Greenwood	100
Hamburg	100
Harmony	73
Hillsboro	74
Jefferson	91
Kickapoo	90
La Farge	80
Liberty	75
Ontario	17
Readstown	80
Stark	92
Sterling	50
Stoddard	67
Union	83
Viola	75
Viroqua	83
Webster	100
Westby	80
Whitestown	63

Mississippi River would improve the quality of life for many residents in Vernon County while supporting local businesses with increased economic activity. If planning is accomplished with attention and sensitivity to local concerns, a mutual win can be created.

The Mobility Manager can begin the process of developing trails by participating with local groups, cultivating relationships, and forming steering committees in target areas. This foundation building is essential to success and should not be passed over in the interest of quick results.

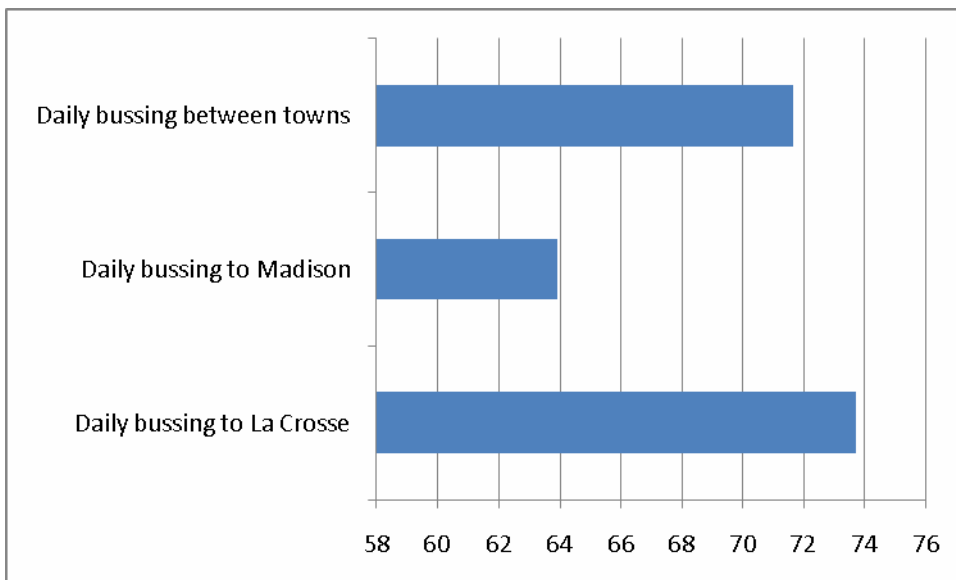
Potential Funding Sources:

- DOT and DNR trail development programs
- tourism groups
- RTP Federal grants
- International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA)
- Vernon Memorial Hospital system
- Fundraisers through Vernon Trails
- Other private and nonprofit organizations

Bussing

In Vernon County, as in many rural areas, the primary difficulty is not in moving around in town but reaching town and moving between towns. Both in interviews and through the transportation survey, bussing was a preferred solution for mobility for many individuals, including the elderly and disabled.

Figure 2: Surveyed Positive or Neutral Support for Bussing Solutions, County-wide



An ideal rural bussing system would consist of busses that can carry all members of the community equally. Short routes between towns within the county can channel individuals to the larger towns, and longer routes between the larger towns would transport people to greater metro areas in neighboring counties. Routes would run every two or three hours between morning and night. Vehicles would range in size from minivans to mini-busses, depending on the route. A centralized bus station could be

located in Viroqua at the old Gundersen Lutheran Clinic and/or in Westby at the Logan Mill Lodge. Logan Mill Lodge has the advantage of also offering a 100-car Park and Ride lot and a shed for Amish to tie up their horses.

A centralized pool would be the most viable option for funding. Agencies which currently receive dollars for transport of program participants could pay for the cost of bus passes, unless the participant had special needs which the bus could not meet. Eventually, bus passes could change to swipe cards for transit, just as currently the QUEST card is used to access food stamp dollars. Additional funding could be created by selling advertising space on the sides of vehicles to area businesses, building a transit cooperative with a minimal membership fee, and creating levels of sponsorship with area businesses.

Additional facets of the ideal bussing system include:

- Incentive programs for area businesses.
- Artist competitions to paint busses, sponsored by the county.
- Cell phones/radios for drivers.
- “Guaranteed Ride Home” so no one is left stranded.
- 800 number and website for residents to access bus schedules and ride information throughout the county.
- Ability to use bus system as courier for packages and errands.
- Service design standards of *directness, simplicity, convenience,* and *dependability.*

Daily Bussing to La Crosse

73.7% of individuals responding to the transportation survey indicated positive or neutral support for daily bussing to La Crosse. Of primary concern was the ability to bus to La Crosse and return later the same day, and the ability to use the bus for regular work commutes. The highest levels of interest in this service were in the northwest corner of Vernon County (Bergen, Stoddard, Hamburg, Coon Valley, and Coon), the Viroqua area, and the La Farge area. The City of Westby has indicated interest as well.

The La Crosse MTU has expressed interest in establishing a system in which transfers from Vernon County busses could be accepted by their busses and vice versa with no additional cost to the passenger. This collaborative system already exists between the City of Onalaska taxi service and the MTU and could be easily replicated.

The ideal system would bus passengers from Viroqua to 33rd and Mormon Coulee Road, at the south end of La Crosse, where connection with MTU busses would give them access to the entire city and beyond. Riders would be able to access the Amtrak station as well. Currently the train station does not have direct MTU service, but if demand increased the MTU would alter the route to support transit to the door. This is true for the La Crosse Airport as well. In some areas of La Crosse the busses operate on a demand response system. There are telephones that ring directly to the MTU at the Valley Mall, the airport, and Sherwood Manor (a subdivision). Gundersen Lutheran Hospital pays for this service.

Surveyed Interest in Daily Bussing to La Crosse

<i>Municipality</i>	<i>% positive or neutral</i>
Bergen	100
Chaseburg	67
Christiana	83
Clinton	56
Coon	100
Coon Valley	88
De Soto	33
Forest	92
Genoa	33
Greenwood	100
Hamburg	100
Harmony	73
Hillsboro	71
Jefferson	82
Kickapoo	80
La Farge	75
Liberty	75
Ontario	17
Readstown	67
Stark	83
Sterling	100
Stoddard	83
Union	67
Viola	75
Viroqua	77
Webster	100
Westby	71
Whitestown	63

The TCC could negotiate with the Western Technical College that students pay the student association at the beginning of the year and then ride free with their student ID. This minimizes obstacles to bussing because there is no charge in the moment when a ride is needed, and would provide a way to multiply funding dollars. Income from the student association would count towards the local share for 85.21 and 5311 funding.

Potential Partners:

- Vernon Memorial Hospital
- Gundersen Lutheran Hospital
- Western Technical College
- La Crosse MTU
- CROPP/Organic Valley
- Health and Human Services
- Vernon County Veteran’s Service Office
- Vernon County Unit on Aging
- La Crosse Unit on Aging
- Crawford County Unit on Aging
- Area tourism initiatives

Daily Bussing between Area Towns

71% of individuals responding to the transportation survey indicated positive or neutral support for bussing between area towns. The highest levels of support were in rural areas close to larger towns and in Westby.

Although the common rural model is to have demand response scheduling, in Vernon County busses should run at predictable times during the day to make the bus system more accessible to Amish people who would not find it easy to call to reserve their place. A local service provider could be contracted to manage the routes between area towns. Running, Inc. already possesses a dispatch and software which would enable easy scheduling. One potential solution is to reserve a certain percentage of seats ahead of time, and make the rest available to anyone who wanted to ride.

The taxi system could collaborate with the bus system by providing transfers that allow a free ride in a taxi if one arrives in the bus, and vice versa. The Interfaith Volunteer Network would be a feeder system for the bus, as well.

Potential Partners:

- Running, Inc.
- VARC, Inc.
- St. Joseph’s Community Health Services
- Vernon Memorial Hospital
- CROPP/Organic Valley
- Health and Human Services

Surveyed Interest in Bussing Between Area Towns	
Municipality	% positive or neutral
Bergen	50
Chaseburg	67
Christiana	83
Clinton	69
Coon	100
Coon Valley	75
De Soto	67
Forest	85
Genoa	33
Greenwood	100
Hamburg	100
Harmony	64
Hillsboro	65
Jefferson	82
Kickapoo	90
La Farge	65
Liberty	100
Ontario	33
Readstown	80
Stark	100
Sterling	100
Stoddard	72
Union	83
Viola	68
Viroqua	73
Webster	88
Westby	76
Whitestown	75

- Vernon County Veteran's Service Office
- Vernon County Unit on Aging

Daily Bussing to Madison

Daily bussing to Madison was supported by 64% of survey respondents. Areas that showed high levels of interest were around Stoddard, around La Farge, and around Hillsboro. Levels of interest are not sufficient to undertake this project at this time. However, when bussing has taken hold in Vernon County, this may be explored again.

Developing the Ideal Bussing System

Currently, the Unit on Aging Mini-bus and the VARC bus transport individuals from rural areas into town. Both providers carry specialized populations. The Vernon County Unit on Aging Mini-bus typically travels to La Crosse three days per week, and the VARC bus transports disabled individuals into Viroqua. Using both of these current resources, the beginnings of a bus system could easily be created.

The Unit on Aging mini-bus can carry a diverse public but unfortunately this fact is not known by most people. This bus could be placed in service to the La Crosse route, with adequate marketing and education to promote ridership. The VARC bus could begin picking up the elderly individuals that typically would travel in to La Crosse and bring them instead to the bus stop in Viroqua, where they would catch their familiar bus to the city. The Interagency Council on Transportation Coordination (ICTC) has already built the foundation for diverse ridership to be carried in federally funded vehicles, so this should not be an issue. Funding for the morning and evening runs of the Viroqua-La Crosse route could be supported through WETAP/JARC funds. The mid-day routes could be supported with s85.21 funding.

The Unit on Aging Mini-Bus typically spends Wednesdays in Hillsboro. This service could be replaced with a taxi in Hillsboro one or two days per week. Funding to lease a taxi is available through the STRAP grant. St. Joseph's Community Health Services does support the vision of a small city bus for the Hillsboro area for the general public, not just the elderly. In the long term, a taxi can be supported through funding from 53.11 in a service area of more than 2,500 people. Vernon County could partner with neighboring counties to reach this population. This would be essential for the success of the taxi service in any case, due to the closeness of Hillsboro to other county lines.

With demonstrated success in this first year, funding could be requested from STRAP in 2008 to expand the system by supporting the cost of leased vehicles that would bus between area towns of appropriate size. Transportation funding from all agencies could be channeled to support riders on the local busses. Funding from 53.11 could be requested in 2008 to support the purchase of the La Crosse-Viroqua bus for 2009, as lease funding ends. From 2009 forwards, 53.11 funding could be requested to purchase vehicles for the bus routes between towns, as they are needed.

Increased Authority for the TCC

As the transportation system grows in Vernon County, the increased number of vehicles in use and riders served will need a strong system of management and oversight to assure for smooth functioning. The TCC could be this entity, but for the TCC to have autonomy to regulate all transportation options in the county it would need to have more regulatory power than it currently does.

The TCC was established to oversee specialized transportation for the elderly and disabled, and currently serves only as an information-sharing venue. However, if the TCC became a county-wide regional transit authority (RTA), it would then have the power to both regulate transportation providers and also institute a half-cent sales tax to continue to fund public transportation after the STRAP grants have completed. This is an effective way to create stability within the transportation system for the long term, but the public can be wary of increased taxation in any form so talking points must be developed that educate about the importance of publicly funded transit. The Richland County TCC is currently engaged in the process of learning about RTA’s and how they can support a TCC in achieving its goals.

Survey respondents requested that Vernon County make it possible and easy for independent operators to provide transportation services. For instance, a local couple might be interested in running the route from their town to Viroqua. The TCC could purchase a vehicle under 53.10 and then lease that vehicle to the couple as the contractor. The TCC would coordinate the handling of the fleet. Operators would have to be fully responsible and liable for each vehicle, but this process would allow private operators to engage and cultivate entrepreneurship.

As an RTA, the TCC would become a funding pool. Federal resources such as 53.10, 53.11, state funds, and local funds could all be channeled into the TCC and grouped as a local match, which would then provide access to a much larger sum of grant money than any one agency could command on its own. The Mobility Manager would be an employee of the TCC.

Building the political will to unify funding and learning about the benefits and challenges of an RTA would be a part of the Mobility Manager’s position in 2008.

Car-Pool Initiative for Major Area Businesses

In August 2007, CROPP/Organic Valley was the only local business with an employer-sponsored car-pooling program. However, the survey indicated that car- or van-pooling was interesting to 68% of respondents county-wide.

www.rideshareetc.org is an existing website which coordinates car-pooling efforts around the region. Vernon County could promote and market this to area businesses so car-pooling can be accessible to commuters in our area. By building awareness around carpooling, creating incentives and/or employment bonuses, and coordinating car-pooling & cooperative vehicle use businesses can make a positive economic and environmental impact.

The Mobility Manager could conduct a car-pooling initiative as part of the process of building relationships and visibility within the community.

Surveyed Interest in Car- and Van-Pooling Initiatives	
<i>Municipality</i>	<i>% positive or neutral</i>
Bergen	100
Chaseburg	33
Christiana	67
Clinton	69
Coon	100
Coon Valley	88
De Soto	67
Forest	77
Genoa	8
Greenwood	100
Hamburg	0
Harmony	64
Hillsboro	52
Jefferson	73
Kickapoo	80
La Farge	60
Liberty	75
Ontario	17
Readstown	80
Stark	92
Sterling	50
Stoddard	67
Union	83
Viola	79
Viroqua	73
Webster	100
Westby	64
Whitestown	75

Volunteer Driver Network

A network of volunteer drivers in each community would support all people within that community in accessing transportation. As a feeder system for bussing, volunteers could take passengers to the nearest bus route and then pick them up when they are ready to be taken back home. A county-wide volunteer network could provide unified screening and training for volunteers and make help accessible to everyone in need. 72% of survey respondents stated their positive or neutral interest in a county-wide Volunteer Driver Network.

There is interest in supporting a Volunteer Driver Network within the faith community. Pastors from various churches in Vernon County met in August 2007 to discuss unmet transportation needs and possible solutions through collaborative efforts. It was established that there was adequate interest to continue the discussion.

Pastor Gary Daines at Our Savior’s Church in Westby is willing to serve as a local leader for this program among pastors and ministers. His foundation, the Bethel Buttik Foundation, will underwrite the local match required for STRAP funding. Area churches will then collect a minimal fee for every parishioner to repay the local match.

Additional facets of a successful Volunteer Driver Network include:

- Recruiting drivers through one on one promotion and advertising.
- Volunteer screening and training.
- Reimbursement at the IRS rate. Offering mileage plus a trip incentive (\$5 bonus, tea or coffee, etc)
- Having one or two volunteers on call in each small area.

Potential Partners:

- Bethel Buttik Foundation
- Health and Human Services
- Vernon County Veteran’s Service office
- Vernon County Unit on Aging
- Vernon County Job Center
- Vernon County area churches
- Western Technical College
- Veteran’s Service offices from surrounding counties
- Monroe County Senior Services
- La Crosse County Aging Unit

Surveyed Interest in Volunteer Driver Network	
<i>Municipality</i>	<i>% positive or neutral</i>
Bergen	100
Chaseburg	67
Christiana	67
Clinton	69
Coon	100
Coon Valley	63
De Soto	67
Forest	77
Genoa	25
Greenwood	100
Hamburg	100
Harmony	73
Hillsboro	71
Jefferson	64
Kickapoo	90
La Farge	75
Liberty	100
Ontario	0
Readstown	80
Stark	100
Sterling	50
Stoddard	72
Union	83
Viola	75
Viroqua	75
Webster	100
Westby	60
Whitestown	88

Increased Horse and Buggy Access

It is difficult to know exactly how many Amish from Vernon County participated in the survey. However, 71% of survey respondents indicated positive or neutral interest in increased access for buggies and horses. Surveys mentioned that additional tie-ups for horses, including either a post or a shed, are needed in all larger towns. Education about sharing the roads with horses is also important.

Voucher program

71% of survey respondents throughout the county expressed positive or neutral interest in the development of a voucher program. Voucher programs allow a participant to find his or her own ride. This can be a first step in bringing individuals into the network of public transportation.

In a voucher program, the rider gives the driver a voucher and then the driver sends in the voucher for pay based on mileage. This eliminates the need to manage a volunteer driver program. It can undermine the social network that is already there, but it is beneficial because it helps unearth those people who are not getting their needs met. Drivers and their vehicles are not screened, so liability can be a concern.

The WETAP manager, Julia Barth, is currently writing a grant application for New Freedom funding to create a voucher program spanning Vernon, Crawford, Juneau, and Monroe counties. With this program model, vouchers could be used to compensate volunteer drivers in the Interfaith network.

Potential Partners:

- WETAP
- Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Health and Human Services
- Interfaith Volunteer Driver

Surveyed Interest in Voucher Programs	
<i>Municipality</i>	<i>% positive or neutral</i>
Bergen	100
Chaseburg	67
Christiana	67
Clinton	69
Coon	100
Coon Valley	88
De Soto	100
Forest	77
Genoa	17
Greenwood	67
Hamburg	0
Harmony	82
Hillsboro	60
Jefferson	64
Kickapoo	80
La Farge	75
Liberty	25
Ontario	17
Readstown	73
Stark	100
Sterling	50
Stoddard	78
Union	83
Viola	71
Viroqua	75
Webster	88
Westby	69
Whitestown	75

Surveyed Interest in Improved Access for Horse and Buggy	
<i>Municipality</i>	<i>% positive or neutral</i>
Bergen	100
Chaseburg	67
Christiana	67
Clinton	94
Coon	67
Coon Valley	75
De Soto	100
Forest	85
Genoa	33
Greenwood	33
Hamburg	0
Harmony	82
Hillsboro	62
Jefferson	82
Kickapoo	80
La Farge	70
Liberty	100
Ontario	17
Readstown	67
Stark	100
Sterling	100
Stoddard	67
Union	83
Viola	64
Viroqua	77
Webster	38
Westby	62
Whitestown	63

Network

Proactive Politics

The two most critical transportation solutions, as defined by the survey, were not directly related to providing mobility services but rather focused more on supporting changes in consumer behavior with direct guidance from County Board resolutions and state legislation.

Proactive leadership can create a political climate in which changes are supported from the top down as well as from the bottom up, creating increased possibility for success. Vernon County, townships, and area municipalities should notice the importance of the issue of sustainability to residents and be willing to develop creative strategies that can support all user groups in developing more sustainable habits.

Making Alternative Fuels Available

Alternative fuels were the most important transportation solution defined by the survey, with 87% of survey respondents county-wide indicating positive or neutral support.

Tax Incentives for Car-Pooling, etc.

Tax incentives and ordinances supporting alternatively fueled vehicles, carpooling, etc. were the second most supported solution, with 85% of survey respondents county-wide indicating positive or neutral support.

Surveyed Interest in Alternative Fuels	
<i>Municipality</i>	<i>% positive or neutral</i>
Bergen	100
Chaseburg	67
Christiana	83
Clinton	81
Coon	100
Coon Valley	100
De Soto	100
Forest	92
Genoa	33
Greenwood	100
Hamburg	100
Harmony	73
Hillsboro	82
Jefferson	91
Kickapoo	90
La Farge	80
Liberty	75
Ontario	50
Readstown	87
Stark	92
Sterling	100
Stoddard	100
Union	100
Viola	89
Viroqua	90
Webster	100
Westby	84
Whitestown	88

Surveyed Interest in Tax Incentives	
<i>Municipality</i>	<i>% positive or neutral</i>
Bergen	100
Chaseburg	67
Christiana	67
Clinton	81
Coon	100
Coon Valley	100
De Soto	67
Forest	92
Genoa	33
Greenwood	100
Hamburg	0
Harmony	91
Hillsboro	80
Jefferson	91
Kickapoo	90
La Farge	80
Liberty	100
Ontario	33
Readstown	87
Stark	100
Sterling	100
Stoddard	94
Union	83
Viola	82
Viroqua	89
Webster	75
Westby	84
Whitestown	75

Chapter 7: Summary of Recommendations

Stage 1: Program Initiation

With 2008 STRAP funding, a Mobility Manager can be hired. This individual can be directed towards the following projects:

- Build the political will with local agencies to co-mingle funding that would support centralized transportation management over the long term.
- Promote, develop, and manage the following projects:
 - Safe Routes to Schools programs in Hillsboro, Westby, and Viroqua.
 - Car-pooling initiatives for area businesses with more than 100 employees.
 - County-wide Volunteer Driver Network.
 - Hillsboro area city taxi service with leased vehicle.
 - Transition of Unit on Aging bus to regular, daily, public bus route from Viroqua to La Crosse.
 - Transition of VARC bus to picking up aging population and transporting into Viroqua.
- Marketing and education around existing and expanded transportation services.
 - New image, logo, and name for Aging bus so it has broader appeal.
 - Directory/brochure of providers for the general public.
 - Website “vernonrides.org”.

In 2008 the application should be written for 53.10 funding to transition from STRAP support for the Hillsboro taxi to a more permanent funding source.

Stage 2: Program Expansion

Program expansion, for which 2009 STRAP funding will be requested, involves supporting the Mobility Manager in accomplishing the following projects:

- Transition of the vehicle used for the La Crosse bus route from leased to owned, with funding through 53.10, and continued management of this route.
- Lease of vehicles to provide bus service along minor routes between strategically chosen area towns with populations greater than 500.
- Developing a permanent funding strategy for necessary staff in the Mobility Office.
- Developing bike trails between area towns.
- Education and structural additions for horses and buggies.

In 2010, the most successful minor routes will transition to purchased vehicles with funding requested through 53.10.

Appendix 1: Current Membership of the TCC, April 2007

- Julia Barth, Workforce Connections WETAP Program
- Herbert Cornell, County Board
- Pamela J. Eitland, Health and Human Services
- Elvin Hanson, Western Technical College
- Tracy Hanson, VARC Transportation Coordinator
- Kim Haskey, Bethel Home and Services
- Jean Klousia, Health and Human Services
- Jean M. Miller, Unit on Aging
- Deanna Nelson, Gundersen Lutheran Coulee Trails
- Patricia Peterson, Unit on Aging
- Richard Running, Running Inc.
- Anthony Shay, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Dawn Simonson, VARC
- Evelyn Williams, Vernon County Veterans Services Office

Appendix 2: Definition of Groups

- **Coon Valley Group**
 - Village of Chaseburg
 - Town of Coon
 - Village of Coon Valley
 - Town of Hamburg
- **De Soto Group**
 - Town of Sterling
 - Town of Wheatland
 - Village of De Soto
 - Town of Genoa
 - Village of Genoa
- **Hillsboro Group**
 - City of Hillsboro
 - Town of Forest
 - Town of Greenwood
 - Town of Hillsboro
 - Town of Union
- **La Farge Group**
 - Town of Clinton
 - Town of Stark
 - Town of Webster
 - Town of Whitestown
 - Village of La Farge
 - Village of Ontario
- **Readstown Group**
 - Town of Kickapoo
 - Town of Liberty
 - Village of Readstown
 - Village of Viola
- **Stoddard Group**
 - Village of Stoddard
 - Town of Bergen
 - Town of Harmony
- **Viroqua Group**
 - City of Viroqua
 - Town of Franklin
 - Town of Jefferson
 - Town of Viroqua
- **Westby Group**
 - City of Westby
 - Town of Christiana
- **Neighboring Counties**
 - Crawford County
 - Juneau County
 - La Crosse County
 - Monroe County
 - Richland County

Appendix 3: Transportation Survey

VERNON COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COMMITTEE
TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES SURVEY

Age:

Gender:

Name of Township, City, or Village of Residence:

<p>Circle all that Apply</p> <p>Elderly</p> <p>Disabled</p> <p>Low Income</p> <p>Have school aged children</p> <p>Veteran</p>
--

Employed outside of Vernon County? Yes No In which County?

Potential Transportation Services for Vernon County	Your Level of Interest				
	Not at all interested	Not very interested	No Opinion	Some-what interested	Extremely interested
Taxi service in area towns					
County-wide volunteer driver network					
Car-sharing (rental of community cars by the hour or day)					
Car-pooling or van-pooling					
Courier of goods/packages with established transit provider					
Daily bussing to La Crosse					
Daily bussing to Madison					
Daily bussing or minivan service between area towns (note which towns)					
Viroqua town trolley					
Bike lanes in towns					
Bike trails between towns					
Bike/walking trail system between neighborhoods within a town					
Voucher system (rider finds his/her own ride, driver is compensated)					
Making alternative fuels widely available					
Tax incentives and ordinances supporting alternatively fueled vehicles, carpooling, etc.					
Improved Horse and Buggy access					
Other (write in)					

Please return to: Kimberly Errigo, 520 E. Decker, Viroqua WI 54665. Thank you!

Appendix 4: Potential Partner and Resource Organizations

Potential Local Partners

Family and Children's Center
Head Start
Boy and Girl Scout groups
School and community programs
CROPP
UW Extension
Vernon Memorial Hospital
Western Technical College
St. Joseph's Community Health Services

Resource Organizations

The Interagency Council on Transportation Coordination (ICTC)

ICTC was created by governor's decree in 2005, and has taken the lead in overseeing Wisconsin's transportation coordination initiatives. ICTC works on the state level to break down regulatory obstacles to coordination. The August 2007 conference "Opening Doors to Human Services Transportation Coordination" was sponsored by ICTC.

Rod Clark, Director

Rod.clark@dot.state.wi.us

Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC)

MRRPC is sponsoring the STRAP grant for a regional TCC that would include Vernon County.

Peter Fletcher

peter@mrrpc.org

Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT)

The Wisconsin DOT offers the STRAP grant for rural development as well as additional technical support in building cross-county collaboration.

Becky Soderholm

becky.soderholm@dot.state.wi.us or (608) 266-1650

Wisconsin Urban and Rural Transit Association (WURTA)

The Wisconsin Urban and Rural Transit Association represents 28 urban and rural bus systems, 43 shared-ride taxi systems and 24 associate and affiliate members in the state of Wisconsin, and employs more than 2,900 transit workers statewide, including drivers, mechanics, dispatchers and administrative staff.

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