

# ASHE COUNTY HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION PLAN



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## **Section 1: Purpose and Background of Coordination Plan**

The purpose of this plan is to ensure that Federal requirements regarding coordination are satisfied as well as to assist Ashe County in its continuing efforts to develop an efficient and effective transit service network.

### ***1.1 Background***

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) created a requirement that a locally-developed, coordinated public transit/human service planning process and an initial plan be developed by 2007 as a condition of receiving funding for certain programs directed at meeting the needs of older individuals, persons with disabilities and low-income persons. Plans must be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation and human service providers, as well as the general public. Complete plans, including coordination with the full range of existing human service transportation providers, are required by Federal Fiscal Year 2008.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), in partnership with the High Country Rural Planning Organization (HCRPO), Ashe In Motion and interested stakeholders, has developed a coordinated plan that meets the requirements of SAFETEA-LU and the Federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM). While at a minimum projects funded under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) formula programs for Sections 5310, 5316 and 5317 must be derived from a coordinated plan, the coordinated plans will incorporate activities offered under other programs sponsored by Federal, State and local agencies. These programs would include as appropriate FTA's Section 5307 and 5311 programs, as well as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, Community Action (CAP), Independent Living Centers, and Agency on Aging (AoA) programs among others.

Development and content of coordinated plans are intended to be specific to the needs and issues of each transit provider. The coordinated plans will be developed to address intra- and inter-regional needs and issues, and in a manner that allows the providers, concurrent with regional Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) updates, to directly update the coordinated plan. Further, the coordinated plan will be developed in a manner that allows the Rural Planning Organization (RPO) to adapt and expand the plan to incorporate programs and initiatives specific to the region.

The coordinated plan's development will, at a minimum:

- Assess and document transportation needs in each county for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and persons with limited incomes;

- Inventory available services in each county and identify areas of redundancy and gaps in service;
- Identify and document restrictions on eligibility for funding;
- Identify and document short- and long-range strategies in each county to address the identified gaps in service, including mobility management strategies;
- Identify and document technological resources currently available and appropriate for coordination of transportation services;
- Identify and document coordination actions in each county to eliminate or reduce duplication in services and strategies for more efficient utilization of resources; and
- Document and prioritize implementation strategies to increase coordination of transportation services in each county.

## **1.2 Planning Process**

The coordinated plans are intended to meet the requirements of SAFETEA-LU, and the guidance detailed in the Federal Register Notice dated March 29, 2007 entitled, “Elderly Individuals and Individuals With Disabilities, Job Access and Reverse Commute, New Freedom Programs: Final Circulars’ effect May 1, 2007.”

The development of the Ashe County plan involved three basic steps:

1. Developing an inventory of services and a sense of transportation needs.
2. Development of strategies and actions.
3. Development of the county plan document.

## **1.3 Funding Barriers to Coordination**

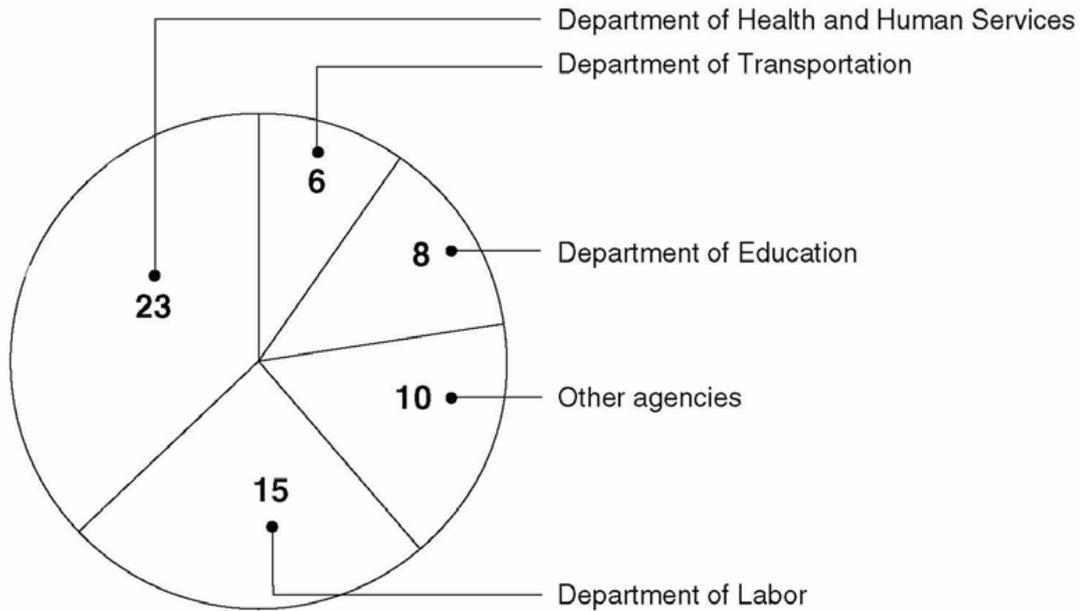
One area of common concern to all counties is the role of federal and state funding in promoting coordination. In this regard, this section analyzes to what extent federal funds inhibit coordination. Included in this discussion is a brief review of important transportation funding programs and associated regulations that could affect coordinated transit. As will be seen, these programs do not restrict coordination through regulations. However, there are practical and programmatic issues that make coordination challenging but not insurmountable.

### **1.3.1 Regulatory Review**

In June of 2003, the US General Accounting Office (GAO) issued a study on Federal transportation funding and coordination entitled *Transportation—Disadvantaged Populations*. The study reported that there were sixty-two funding programs for

transportation. Of those, sixteen are most regularly used for public transportation with six from the USDOT through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). See Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Sources of Federal Transportation Funds**



*Source: Transportation-Disadvantaged Populations, Figure 1, page 9, USGAO, June 2003.*

The ten non-DOT funding programs most commonly used for transportation are:

1. Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)—provides assistance to families with children. Such assistance can include help in funding transportation needs.
2. Vocational Rehabilitation—targets persons with disabilities and provides a variety of vocational services including transportation.
3. Medicaid—assists people with accessing medical services including transportation to such services.
4. Head Start—assists pre-school children with a variety of services including education readiness, health care, and transportation to/from such services.
5. Grants for Supportive Services and Senior Centers—assists in developing services for older people which include nutrition services, senior centers, and transportation.
6. Workforce Investment Act (WIA)—Adults—provides job skill training services as well as transportation to/from such services.
7. WIA— Youth—provides job skill training services to youth as well as transportation to/from such services.
8. WIA— Displaced Workers—provides job skill training services as well as transportation to/from such services.

9. Program for Native Americans (under Older Americans Act)—provides a variety of social service funding (e.g., nutrition and caregiver services) for Native Americans.
10. Senior Community Service Employment program—provides work opportunities for older Americans.

In addition, these six US DOT programs were listed among the top human service transportation funding programs:

1. Capital Grants (Section 5309)
2. Urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5307)
3. Non-urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5311)
4. Job Access and Reverse Commute (Section 5316)
5. Over-the-Road Bus Program (Section 3038)
6. Transportation for Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310)

Since the 2003 GAO study, the “New Freedom” program was enacted. The New Freedom program (Section 5317) is intended to provide operating and capital assistance to services that go beyond ADA complementary paratransit requirements.

## **1.4 GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION**

FTA Sections 5310, 5316, and 5317 Programs require that projects be derived from a locally developed CPT-HSTP. This chapter discusses the specific goals, who can apply, examples of eligible projects, potential funding, and the Designated Recipient (DR) for the three programs.

For each program, FTA will publish the annual apportionment in the Federal Register following the enactment of the annual DOT appropriations act. Funds are available during the FY of apportionment plus two additional years. For example, funds apportioned in FY 2006 are available until the end of FY 2008 (September 30, 2008).

FTA will add any unobligated funds remaining at the end of the period of availability to the next year’s program apportionment and will reapportion the funds among all the states.

### **1.4.1 Elderly Individuals & Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310)**

#### Goal

The Section 5310 program was established in 1975 as a discretionary capital assistance program. In cases where public transit was inadequate or inappropriate, the program awarded grants to private non-profit organizations to serve the transportation needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities. FTA (then the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA)) apportioned the funds among the States by formula for distribution to local agencies, a practice made a statutory requirement by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). In the early years of the program, many of the subrecipient non-profit agencies used the vehicles primarily for transportation of their own clients. Funding for the Section 16(b)(2) program, as it was then known, ranged between \$20–35 million annually until the passage of ISTEA, when it increased to the \$50–60 million range. ISTEA also introduced the eligibility of public

agencies under limited circumstances to facilitate and encourage the coordination of human service transportation. Increasingly, FTA guidance encouraged and required coordination of the program with other federal human service transportation programs. In lieu of purchasing vehicles, acquisition of service in order to promote use of private sector providers and coordination with other human service agencies and public transit providers was made an eligible expense under ISTEA. Other provisions of ISTEA introduced the ability to transfer flexible funds to the program from certain highway programs and the flexibility to transfer funds from the Section 5310 program to the rural and urban formula programs.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) enacted in 1998, reauthorized the Section 5310 program. TEA-21 increased the funding levels for the Section 5310 program but made no significant program changes. In 2005, Congress enacted SAFETEA-LU. SAFETEA-LU introduced the requirement that projects funded with 5310 funds be derived from a locally developed, coordinate public transit-human services transportation plan; removed the flexibility that funds can be transferred to Section 5311 for Section 5311 program purposes during the fiscal year apportioned, if funds were not needed for Section 5310 program purposes; introduced a seven State pilot program that allows selected States to use up to one-third of the funds apportioned to them for operating assistance; and allowed transfers to Section 5307 or 5311, but only to fund projects selected for Section 5310 program purposes.

Title 49 U.S.C. 5310 authorizes the formula assistance program for the special needs of elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities. FTA refers to this formula program as “the Section 5310 program.” FTA, on behalf of the Secretary of Transportation, apportions the funds appropriated annually to the States based on an administrative formula that considers the number of elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities in each State. These funds are subject to annual appropriations.

Title 49 U.S.C. 5310(a)(1) authorizes funding for public transportation capital projects planned, designed and carried out to meet the special needs of elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities.

Title 49 U.S.C. 5310(a)(2) provides that a State may allocate the funds apportioned to it to:

1. a private non-profit organization, if public transportation service provided by State and local governmental authorities under Section 5310(a)(1) is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate; or
2. a governmental authority that:
  - a. is approved by the State to coordinate services for elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities; or
  - b. Certifies that there are not any non-profit organizations readily available in the area to provide the special services.

The code assigned to the Section 5310 program in the Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance is 20.513.

## **1.4.2 Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program (Section 5316)**

### Goal

The goal of the 5316 Program is to improve access to transportation services to employment and employment-related activities for welfare recipients and eligible low income individuals and to transport residents of urbanized areas and non-urbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities. Toward this goal, the FTA provides financial assistance for transportation services planned, designed, and carried out to meet the transportation needs of eligible low-income individuals, and of reverse commuters regardless of income. The program requires coordination of federally assisted programs and services in order to make the most efficient use of federal resources.

### Examples of Projects

Funds from the 5316 program are available for capital, planning, and operating expenses that support the development and maintenance of transportation services designed to transport low-income individuals to and from jobs and activities related to their employment and to support reverse commute projects.

Eligible projects may include, but are not limited to capital, planning, and operating assistance to support activities such as:

- Late-night and weekend service
- Guaranteed ride home service
- Shuttle service
- Expanding fixed-route public transit routes
- Demand-responsive van service
- Ridesharing and carpooling activities
- Transit-related aspects of bicycling (such as adding bicycle racks to vehicles to support individuals who bicycle a portion of their commute or providing bicycle storage at transit stations)
- Local car loan programs that assist individuals in purchasing and maintaining vehicles for shared rides
- Promotion, through marketing efforts, of the:
  - Use of transit by workers with non-traditional work schedules
  - Use of transit voucher programs by appropriate agencies for welfare recipients and other low-income individuals
  - Development of employer-provided transportation such as shuttles, ridesharing, carpooling
  - Use of transit pass programs and benefits under Section 132 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986
  - Supporting the administration and expenses related to voucher programs
  - Acquiring GIS tools
  - Implementing ITS, including customer trip information technology
- Integrating automated regional public transit and human service transportation information, scheduling, and dispatch functions
- Deploying vehicle position-monitoring systems

- Subsidizing the costs associated with adding reverse commute bus, train, carpool van routes or service from urbanized areas and non-urbanized areas to suburban work places
- Subsidizing the purchase or lease by a non-profit organization or public agency of a van or bus dedicated to shuttling employees from their residences to a suburban workplace
- Facilitating the provision of public transportation services to suburban employment opportunities
- Supporting new mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation.
- Mobility management activities may include:
  - Promotion, enhancement, and facilitation of access to transportation services, including the integration and coordination of services for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals
  - Support for short-term management activities to plan and implement coordinated services
  - Support of state and local coordination policy bodies and councils
  - Operation of transportation brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies and customers
  - Provision of coordination services, including employer-oriented Transportation Management Organizations and Human Service
  - Organizations customer-oriented travel navigator systems and neighborhood travel coordination activities such as coordinating individualized travel training and trip planning activities for customers
  - Development and operation of one-stop transportation traveler call centers to coordinate transportation information on all travel modes and to manage eligibility requirements and arrangements for customers among supporting programs; and
  - Operational planning for the acquisition of intelligent transportation technologies to help plan and operate coordinated systems inclusive of GIS mapping, GPS, coordinated vehicle scheduling, dispatching and monitoring technologies as well as technologies to track costs and billing in a coordinated system and single smart customer payment systems (acquisition of technology is also eligible as a standalone capital expense).

**Funding**

SAFETEA-LU authorized \$602 Million (FY 05 to FY 09) for the 5316 Program. FTA will apportion funds as follows:

- Sixty percent of the funds shall be distributed among designated recipients in urbanized areas with a population of 200,000 or more, in the ratio that the number of eligible low-income individuals and welfare recipients in each such urbanized area bears to the number of eligible low-income individuals and welfare recipients in all such urbanized areas
- Twenty percent of the funds shall be distributed among the states, in the ratio that the number of eligible low-income individuals and welfare recipients in urbanized areas with a population of less than 200,000 in each state bear to the number of eligible low-income individuals and welfare

### **1.4.3 New Freedom Program (Section 5317)**

#### Goal

The goal of the New Freedom Formula Grant Program is to provide additional tools to overcome existing barriers facing Americans with disabilities seeking integration into the workforce and full participation in society. Lack of adequate transportation is a primary barrier to work for individuals with disabilities. Only 60% of persons with disabilities (between the ages of 16 and 64) are employed, according to the 2000 Census. Section 5317 seeks to reduce barriers to transportation services and expand the transportation mobility options available to people with disabilities beyond the requirements of the ADA. The ADA includes access to certain transportation services as a right. The New Freedom program is not intended to fund such services.

#### Examples of Projects

Section 5317 Program funds are available for capital and operating expenses that support new public transportation services beyond those required by the ADA and new public transportation alternatives beyond those required by the ADA designed to assist individuals with disabilities with accessing transportation services, including transportation to and from jobs and employment support services.

For the purpose of the New Freedom Program, “new” service is any service or activity that was not operational on August 10, 2005, and did not have an identified funding source as of August 10, 2005, as evidenced by inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) or the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). In other words, if not for the New Freedom Program, these projects would not have consideration for funding and proposed service enhancements would not be available for individuals with disabilities.

#### New Public Transportation Services Beyond the ADA

The following activities are examples of eligible projects meeting the definition of new public transportation.

- Enhancing paratransit beyond minimum requirements of the ADA. ADA complementary paratransit services can be eligible under New Freedom in several ways as long as the services provided meet the definition of “new:”
- Expansion of paratransit service parameters beyond the three-fourths mile required by the ADA
- Expansion of current hours of operation for ADA paratransit services that are beyond those provided on the fixed-route services
- Incremental cost of providing same-day service
- Incremental cost of making door-to-door service available to all eligible ADA paratransit riders, but not as a reasonable modification for individual riders in an otherwise curb-to-curb system
- Enhancement of the level of service by providing escorts or assisting riders through the door of their destination
- Acquisition of vehicles and equipment designed to accommodate mobility aids that exceed the dimensions and weight ratings established for common wheelchairs under the ADA and labor costs of aides to help drivers assist passengers with over-sized wheelchairs

- Installation of additional securement locations in public buses beyond what is required by the ADA
- New “feeder” service (transit service that provides access) to commuter rail, commuter bus, intercity rail, and intercity bus stations, for which complementary paratransit service is not required under the ADA
- Making accessibility improvements to transit and intermodal stations not designated as key stations. This may include:
  - Building an accessible path to a bus stop that is currently inaccessible, including curb cuts, sidewalks, accessible pedestrian signals or other accessible features
  - Adding an elevator or ramps, detectable warnings, or other accessibility improvements to a non-key station that are not otherwise required under the ADA
  - Improving signage, or wayfinding technology
  - Implementation of other technology improvements that enhance accessibility for people with disabilities including ITS
  - Travel training

New Public Transportation Alternatives Beyond the ADA.

The following activities are examples of projects that are eligible as new public transportation alternatives beyond the ADA under the New Freedom Program:

- Purchasing vehicles to support new accessible taxi, ridesharing, and/or vanpooling programs
- Supporting the administration and expenses related to new voucher programs for transportation services offered by human service providers
- Supporting new volunteer driver and aide programs. Supporting new mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation. Mobility management activities may include:
  - Promotion, enhancement, and facilitation of access to transportation services, including the integration and coordination of services for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and low-income individuals
  - Support for short-term management activities to plan and implement coordinated services
  - Support of state and local coordination policy bodies and councils
  - Operation of transportation brokerages to coordinate providers, funding agencies and customers
  - Provision of coordination services, including employer-oriented Transportation Management Organizations and Human Service Organizations, customer-oriented travel navigator systems and neighborhood travel coordination activities such as coordinating individualized travel training and trip planning activities for customers
  - Development and operation of one-stop transportation traveler call centers to coordinate transportation information on all travel modes and to manage eligibility requirements and arrangements for customers among supporting programs
  - Operational planning for the acquisition of intelligent transportation

- o technologies to help plan and operate coordinated systems inclusive of GIS mapping, GPS Technology, coordinated vehicle scheduling, dispatching and monitoring technologies as well as technologies to track costs and billing in a coordinated system and single smart customer payment systems

### Funding

SAFETEA-LU authorized \$339 Million (FY 05 to FY 09) for the 5317 Program. FTA will apportion funds among the recipients by formula, based on the ratio that the number of individuals with disabilities in each such area bears to the number of individuals with disabilities in all such areas.

### Who Can Apply

There are three eligible subrecipients:

- Private non-profit organizations
- State or local governmental authority
- Operators of public transportation services including private operators of public transportation services

### How to Apply

Eligible applicants will have the opportunity to apply for funding through a competitive selection process held by the NCDOT. The projects selected must be derived from a CPT-HSTP.

## ***1.5 Non-regulatory Challenges***

While regulatory factors do not prevent different social programs from sharing resources, there are practical and programmatic considerations that can make coordination challenging. Some of these are service delivery issues and others relate to administrative issues.

Service delivery related issues include special requirements imposed by certain funding streams that are unique and not common to other funding streams. For example, Head Start requires on-vehicle monitors and use of safety restraints for passengers. These requirements are not typical with general public services funded by FTA. Thus, for an operator of FTA-only funded services, transporting a Head Start client would require these additional features, creating additional expense.

Administrative-related issues refer to the documentation of the use of a funding stream's dollars. For example, Medicaid only pays for medical-related transportation. A service provider who transports the general public as well as a Medicaid traveler would need to document to Medicaid the incremental cost of the trip. This would demonstrate to Medicaid that it is paying for only its share of the service. While a cost allocation formula can overcome this, this still presents an administrative hurdle in providing shared services.

## ***1.6 Conclusion***

This review found that solely on a regulatory basis, federal transportation funding does not, per se, prohibit or restrict coordination. However, some programs present service

delivery and administrative issues that require creative thinking and tenacity to overcome practical and programmatic challenges to sharing resources.

## **1.7 Organization of the Document**

This plan has these three main parts:

*Section 2: Introducing Ashe County* profiles the county's population and service providers. It also contains information regarding transit needs in the county.

*Section 3: State of Coordination* examines current efforts at human service transportation coordination and explores some of the barriers and opportunities to further coordination.

*Section 4: Coordination Strategies and Actions* provide initial ideas for the county to continue its development of coordinated transit.

## **Section 2: Introducing Ashe County**

Ashe County is located in the mountains of northwestern North Carolina (refer to Figure 2). This section provides a demographic and service profile of the county as well as an identification of needs.

### **2.1 Profile of County**

Ashe County is located in the mountains of northwestern North Carolina.

#### **Overall Population**

According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, in 2000, the population of Ashe County was 24,384 persons. The State of North Carolina Demographer estimated the 2007 population of Ashe County grew by 6.6 percent to 26,003. The two largest municipalities in Ashe County are Jefferson and West Jefferson. The Town of Jefferson had population of 1,422 persons in 2000, and grew 1.62 percent to 1,445 in population in 2007. The Town of West Jefferson had a population of 1,081 persons in 2000 and grew 7.2 percent to 1,159 in 2007. In comparison, the population in North Carolina grew by 12.71 percent

#### **Elderly Population**

In 2007, 16.9 percent of North Carolina's population was 60 years and over. Ashe County had a population of 6,271 that was 60 and over or 24.1 percent of the population. According to census population estimates, the 2030 population of 60 years old and over will be 10,358 persons. (Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of the Ashe County elderly population.)

#### **Disabled Population**

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 1.3 million persons age five and over were identified with a disability in North Carolina, representing approximately 16.9 percent of the total population. Ashe County had a higher proportion of persons with disabilities than found statewide, 26.5 percent (6,052 persons). (Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of the Ashe County disabled Population.)

### **Persons below the Poverty Level**

In 2000, 12.3 percent of North Carolina's population was living in poverty. Ashe County had 13.5 percent (3,246) persons living below the poverty. (Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of the Ashe County population below poverty level.)

### **Median Household Income**

In 2000, the median household income in North Carolina was \$39,184, which is higher than Ashe County. The median household income for Ashe County in 2000 was \$28,824.

### **Change in Daytime Population**

Ashe County has diverse commuting patterns. According to the 2000 Census there were 11,082 employed residents in Ashe County. Almost 25.2 percent (2,794 persons) of Ashe County's population leaves the county for work. The primary out of county work destination is Watauga County (1,350 persons), followed by Wilkes County (550 persons) and Alleghany County (134 persons) along with 121 persons commuting to various locations in Virginia to work. While there were 2,794 persons leaving the county for work, there were also 1,135 commuters coming to Ashe County to work. (Figure 6 illustrates the commuting patterns for Ashe County.)

### **Zero Vehicle Households**

In 2000, 7.5 percent of households in North Carolina were zero vehicle households. The percent of households in Ashe County with zero vehicles was greater at 8.7 percent. (Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of zero vehicle households in Ashe County.)

## **2.2 Services**

Ashe County Transportation Authority is the primary transportation provider in Ashe County. Ashe County Transportation Authority, Inc., located in West Jefferson, is a nonprofit organization rendering transportation services to the citizens of Ashe County. ACTA became incorporated in 1986 with a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. The ACTA operates under a Governing Board of Directors composed of nine members, which meet once a month. Although the ACTA is not a county agency it is highly recognized by the county commissioners.

Along with serving the General Public, the ACTA provides transportation to several Human Service Agencies throughout the county by utilizing 18 vans and a staff of 25 people in which 20 are drivers. The following includes a list of agencies currently being served by the ACTA:

- Adult Developmental Activities Program-a day program which provides organized developmental activities for mentally retarded and physically disabled adults 16 years of age and older, to prepare the individual to live as independently as possible.
- Spruce Haven, NRMH - a partial hospitalization program designed to assist the chronically mental ill/emotionally disturbed adult in adjusting to everyday life in the community.
- Ashe Senior Center-provides educational and social programs for senior adults in Ashe County.

- Ashe County Department of Social Services-through Title XX for eligible clients who need non emergency medical transportation.
- Ashe Services for the Aging, Inc.-provides services and programs for population 60 and older.
- Wheels for Youth Program- provide transportation to Camp Sunshine; summer Parks and Recreation, and disadvantaged youth in Ashe County.
- Mountain Village-a 60-unit apartment community, offers all the convenience of modern living with a complete spectrum of services designed to meet the needs of independent individuals or couples who are handicapped, disabled and or 62 years of age or older. The ACTA provides transportation services to doctor's appointments, personal shopping and banking, and group outings.
- Generations-an adult day care, day health center providing social and health services to adults eighteen years of age and older.
- Ashe Living Center; Jefferson Care Center; and Ashe Manor-nursing facilities providing long term care for the elderly and disabled rendering speech, physical and occupational therapy.
- Summit Support-
- Partnership for Children-

ACTA designates 1 vehicle to the deviated fixed shuttle route that runs from West Jefferson to West Jefferson with 11 main stops. The shuttle route runs 6 days a week Monday through Saturday and is sponsored by State funds through the Rural Operating Assistance Program. Fares are collected to meet the match for these funds.

ACTA employs an administrative staff of 5 people inclusive of the Executive Director, who under the direction of the governing board manages the system. The administrative staff also consists of a receptionist, operations manager, finance manager and second shift supervisor.

ACTA receives Section 5311 (Federal) funds 80% and state funds 5% for administrative and capital needs. The ACTA is responsible for a 15% local match on all funds received. Operating expenses are obtained from contractual services with the agencies and fares generated.

(Figure 8 illustrates the ACTA service area and rider fares and Figure illustrates the ACTA Shuttle Route)

Other agencies that provide transportation services include:

Department of Social Services: 13 Sport Utility Vehicles

Adult Development Services: 2 vans

Ashe Services for Aging: 2 vans

Village of Ashe: 1 van

Margate Health: 1 van

Group Homes: 1 van

Foster Grandparents: 1

## **2.3 Identified Transportation Gaps and Needs**

Two key sources of information were utilized to describe Ashe County's human transportation service providers as well as their needs. The first was through a workshop with the human services agencies and other stakeholders conducted on March 5, 2009. The second was a survey distributed to agencies that were unable to attend the workshop to allow them the opportunity to contribute to the development of the coordinated human services transportation plan.

### **2.3.1 Survey**

In addition to the statistical information provided in Section 2.2, a number of human transportation services and other service providers were surveyed to determine the nature of their services as well as factors that could help or hinder coordination. This section summarizes that survey.

Following the March 5, 2008 meeting, surveys were distributed to other agencies in Ashe County that provide transportation to allow for additional input. The survey was distributed by mail. No surveys were returned. The survey consisted of 12 questions that covered the following:

- Descriptive information about provider types of transportation services provided
- Types of clients and destinations served
- Times of day and days of week of service
- Vehicle restrictions
- Use of advanced technology
- Areas of interest with respect to coordination
- Areas of public transportation that need improvement
- Need for new services

Key observations from the survey are:

- Varied destinations are served, but the primary issue is a need for extended service hours.
- Costs is prohibitive to clients.

### **2.3.2 Sponsored Meetings**

During the course of the project, the High Country Rural Planning Organization along with the NCDOT Public Transportation Division sponsored one workshop. This workshop was attended by representatives of human service agencies and ACTA. The workshop was held to facilitate discussion about transportation issues and potential strategies to address these issues. The workshop advanced the development of the coordination plan through the identification of transportation gaps, discussion regarding the barriers to and opportunities for coordination. A short summary from the workshop is included in Appendix A, and the discussions at this workshop served as the basis for Sections 3 and 4 of this plan.

## **Section 3: State of Coordination in the County**

This section reviews issues associated with coordination in Ashe County and describes the efforts already under taken to coordinate as well as stated barriers to and opportunities for coordination.

### ***3.1 Transportation Gaps/Barriers to Coordination***

As a result of facilitated meetings, some gaps in human service transportation within Ashe County have been identified. The list of gaps is not intended to be inclusive of all gaps, but the gaps identified are considered by workshop participants as the most significant and should be the focus of projects and strategies funded under the three FTA programs.

Many of the gaps in transportation for Ashe County involve providing affordable transportation services that aren't covered by Medicaid or some other subsidy to the poor, elderly, and disabled. Transportation providers cited the long travel times to remote areas and limited resources (vehicles and revenue) contribute to these issues.

Several populations were considered to be underserved; the most notable of which were low and fixed income individuals just above the Medicaid threshold that need transportation to basic services. Many of these individuals are either elderly or live in the remote areas of the county. The group also felt that all of the elderly, disabled, and poor have difficulty in getting to destinations for basic needs like groceries and other non-medical services.

The group identified many issues that either represents gaps or barriers to coordination. They include:

- Transportation for after hours activities
- Transportation to Community Centers and Recreation Activities (Riverview, Lansing, Laurel Springs, Ashe Park, etc)
- Transportation to the Airport
- Transportation to colleges (Appalachian State University, East Tennessee State University, and Wilkes Community College)
- Transportation for grocery shopping, Angelfood, and Food Closet.
- Transportation to employment in and out of county (Jefferson, West Jefferson, Boone, etc)
- After hours service to employment (Hospital, ASU, restaurants, etc)
- Transportation for trips not covered by Medicaid (WIC sign-ups, Medicaid certifications, pregnancy center, etc)
- Daily functions (pharmacy, pay bills, grocery, bank, lawyer, etc)
- WIC funding for transportation
- Meet Mountaineer Express
- More short notice demand response service
- Transit service is cost prohibitive to many clients

## **Section 4: Coordination Strategies and Actions**

Based on the coordination and other issues identified in Section 3, several strategies and actions were developed to advance the county's efforts to promote coordination to a higher level. "Strategy" is defined here as a general direction for a course of action, while "actions" are more specific steps in fulfillment of the given strategy. Actions will lead to "projects" which implement the actions and strategies. This coordination planning effort will only go to the "action" level, with projects to be developed later.

### ***4.1 Coordination Strategies***

The coordination strategies and actions were developed to address the transportation needs and issues confronting the county identified in Section 3. The primary issues and needs include:

- Designated vehicles for specific service
- Voucher Program
- Extended hours and days
- Feeder routes into shuttle service
- Vanpool to Boone or fixed service
- Fares based on ability to pay

### ***4.2 Actions***

Need: Additional transit vehicles to provide additional service for feeder service to connect with ACTA Shuttle(grocery, bank, lawyer, bill payment, food closet, etc). Service is needed throughout the week.

Action Strategy: Apply for FTA Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 funds to help pay for additional vehicles and operating assistance

Need: Vouchers to subsidize trips for poor, disabled and seniors.

Action Strategy: Apply for FTA Section 5316 funds to help pay to fund transit voucher programs by appropriate agencies for welfare recipients and other low income individuals.

Action Strategy: Identify funding sources for purchase of car seats to replace current expiring seats and purchase addition car seats.

Need: Sites for pick-up and drop off in remote areas of the county for feeder service.

Action Strategy: Work with area churches and community centers to utilize their facilities for pick-up and drop off sites.

Need: Transportation to jobs into and outside of county.

Action Strategy: work with area churches and community centers to use facilities for possible park and ride lots.

Action Strategy: Identify other potential sites for park and ride lots.

Action Strategy: Apply for FTA Section 5310, 5316, and 5317 funds to help pay for additional vehicles and operating assistance.

Action Strategy: Seek vouchers from employers to subsidize a vanpool.

## **Appendix A:**

Poster Board Discussion results



### **Ashe County Workshop: March 5, 2009 ACTA Offices**

Senior, disabled, and impoverished mobility is a key issue to the agencies serving them.

Affordable service to those not receiving subsidized transportation

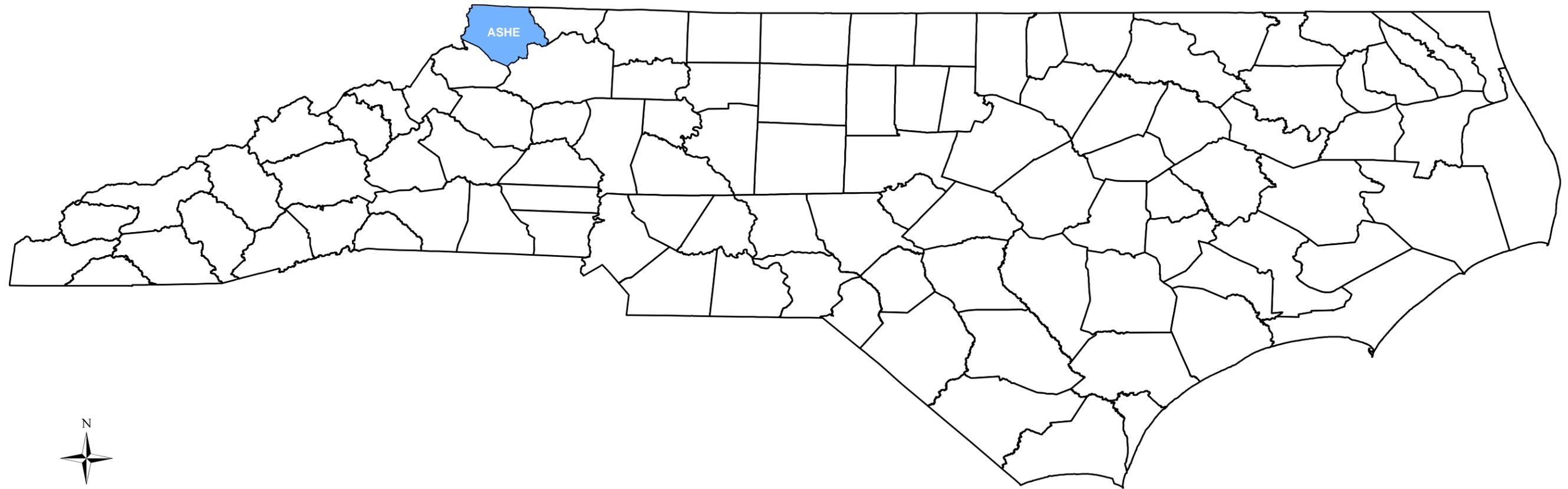
Flexibility in short notice demand response service.

Transportation to employment



## **Appendix B: Maps**

**Figure 2**  
**Ashe County**  
**Location Map**



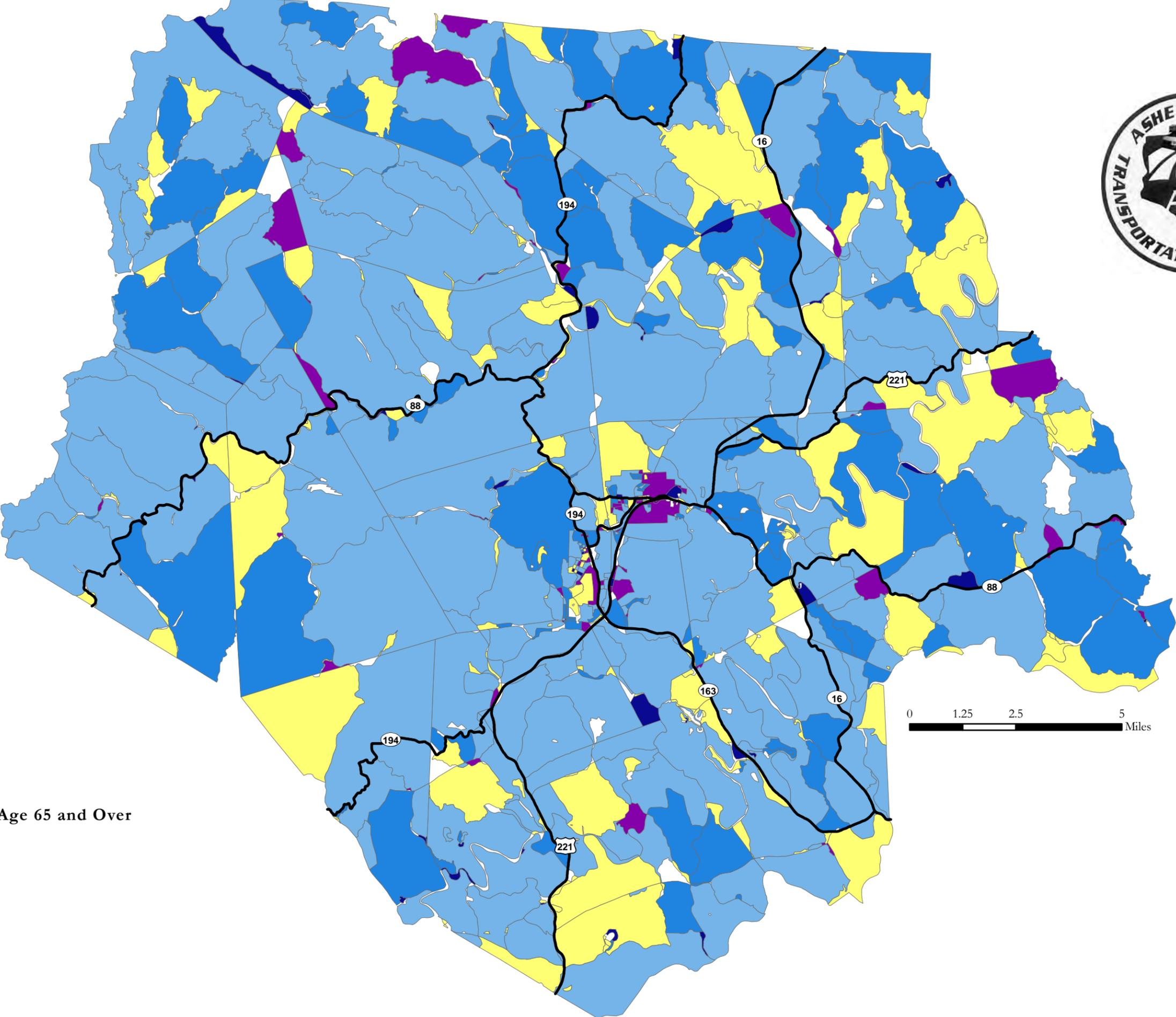
**Legend**

	Ashe County
	NC Counties

Created By:



**Figure 3**  
**Ashe County**  
**Elder Population**  
2000 U.S. Census



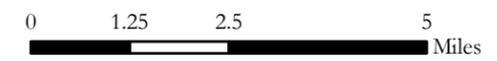
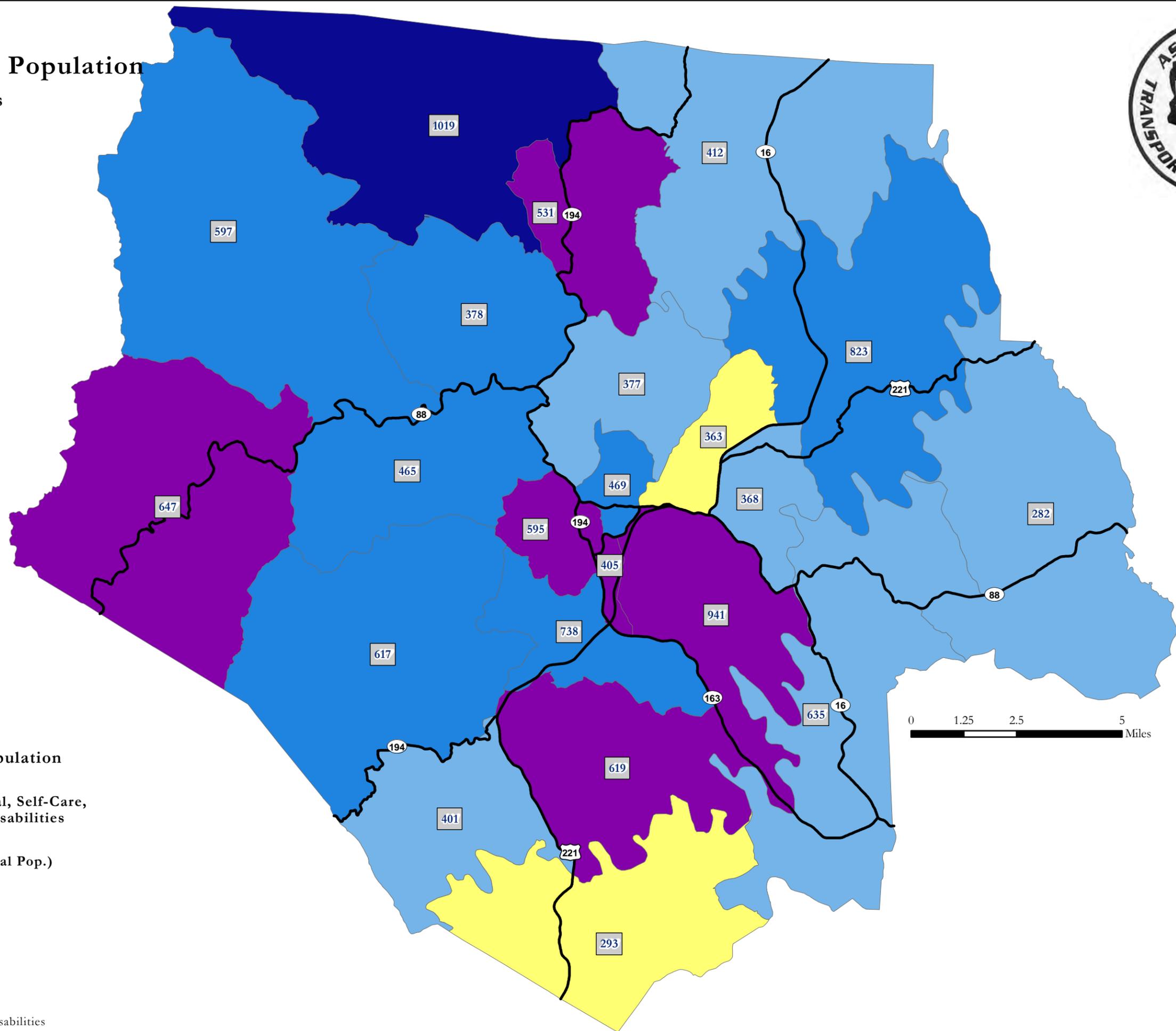
**Percent of Persons Age 65 and Over**  
**(Block Level)**

0% - 8%
9% - 23%
24% - 43%
44% - 77%
78% - 100%

# Figure 4

## Ashe County Disabled Population

2000 U.S. Census



### Civilian, Noninstitutionalized Population 5 Years & Over With Disabilities

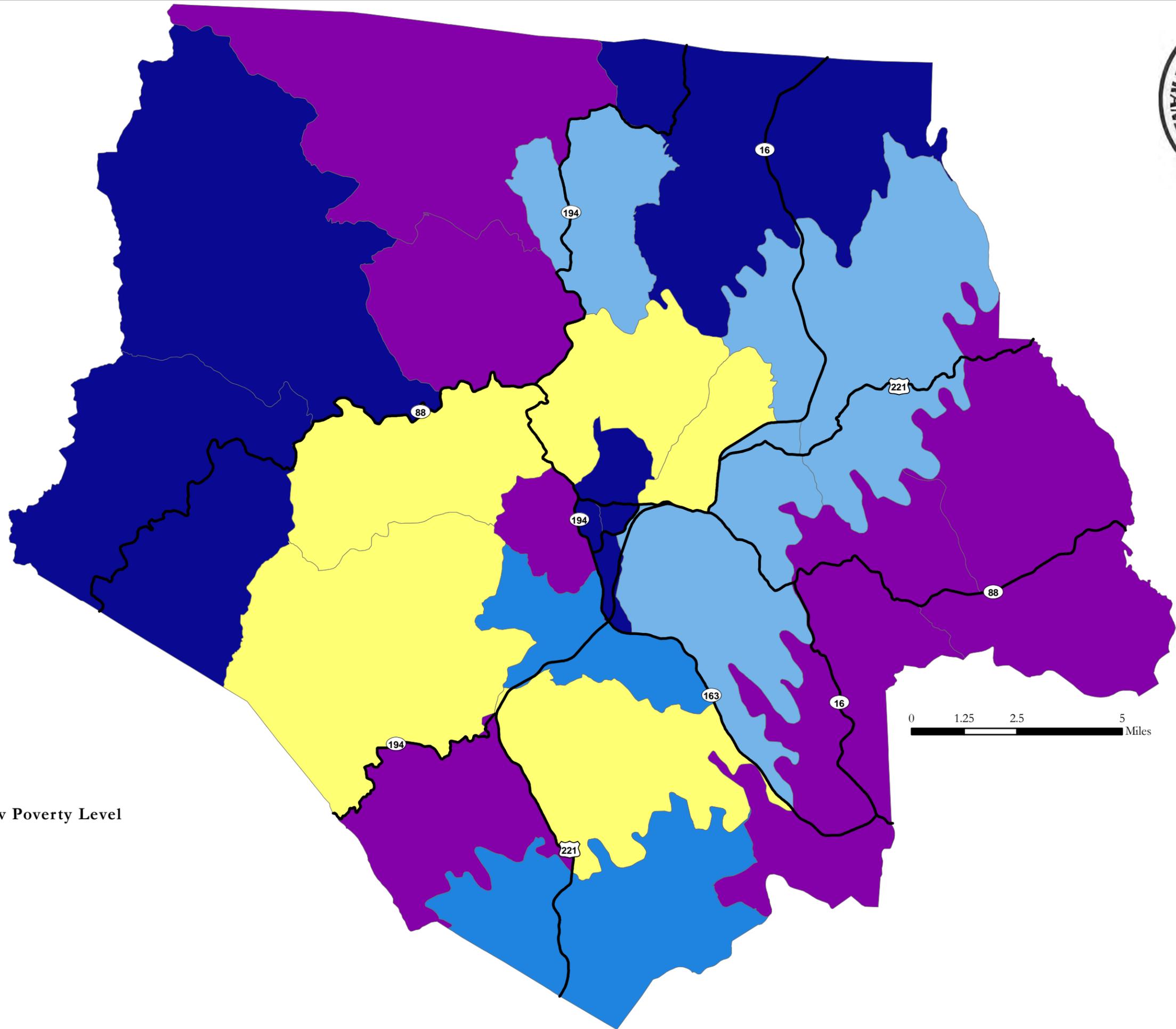
Accounts for Sensory, Mental, Physical, Self-Care,  
Employment, & Go-Outside Home Disabilities  
(Block Group Level)

Percent (Total Disabilities Tallied / Total Pop.)

- 26% - 32%
- 33% - 43%
- 44% - 52%
- 53% - 64%
- 65% - 85%

\* Block Group Labels: Number of Civilian,  
Noninstitutionalized Pop. 5 Years & Over With Disabilities

**Figure 5**  
**Ashe County**  
**Poverty**  
2000 U.S. Census



**Percent of Persons Below Poverty Level**  
**(Block Group Level)**

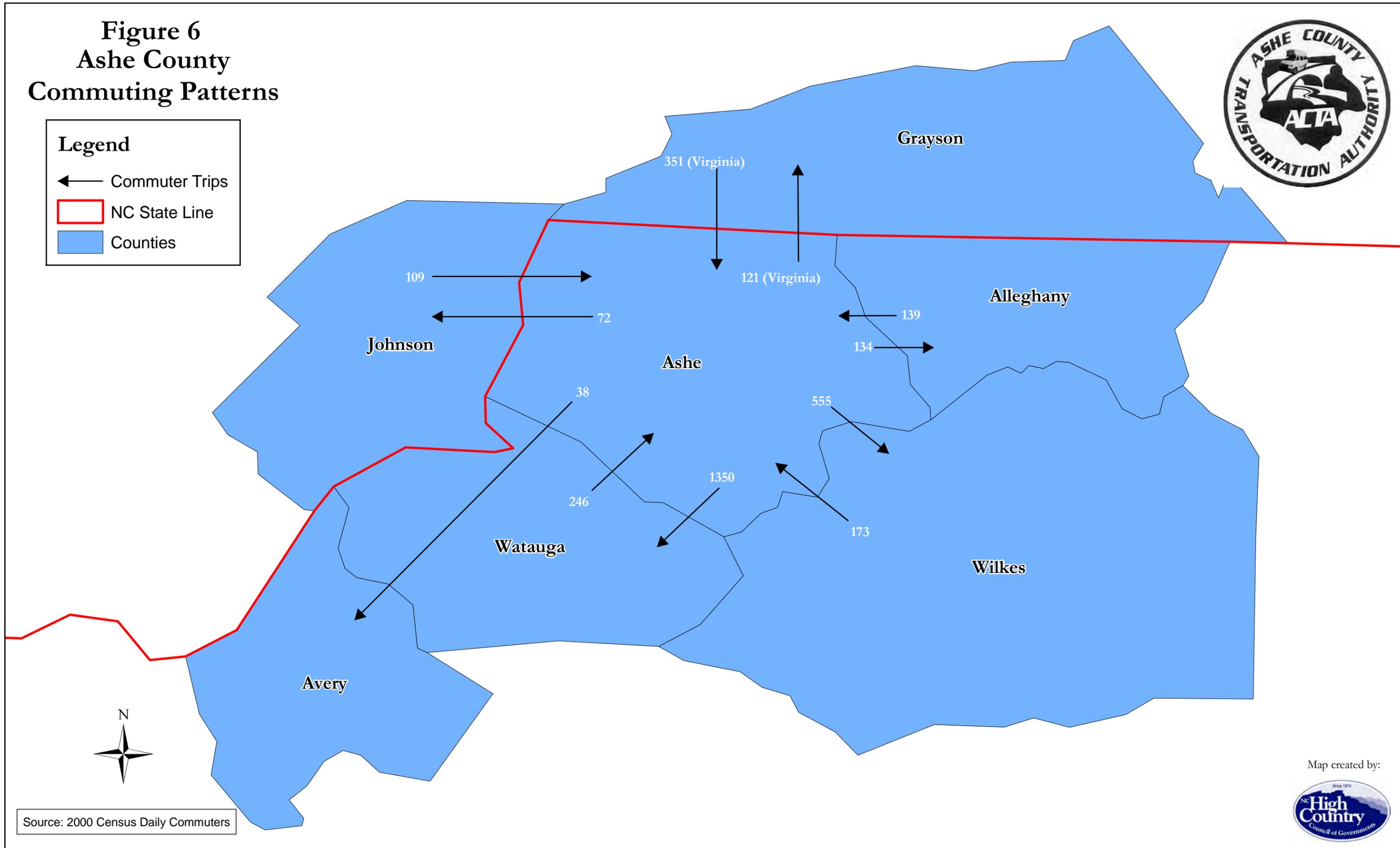
-  3% - 8%
-  9% - 11%
-  12% - 13%
-  14% - 15%
-  16% - 27%

**Figure 6**  
**Ashe County**  
**Commuting Patterns**



**Legend**

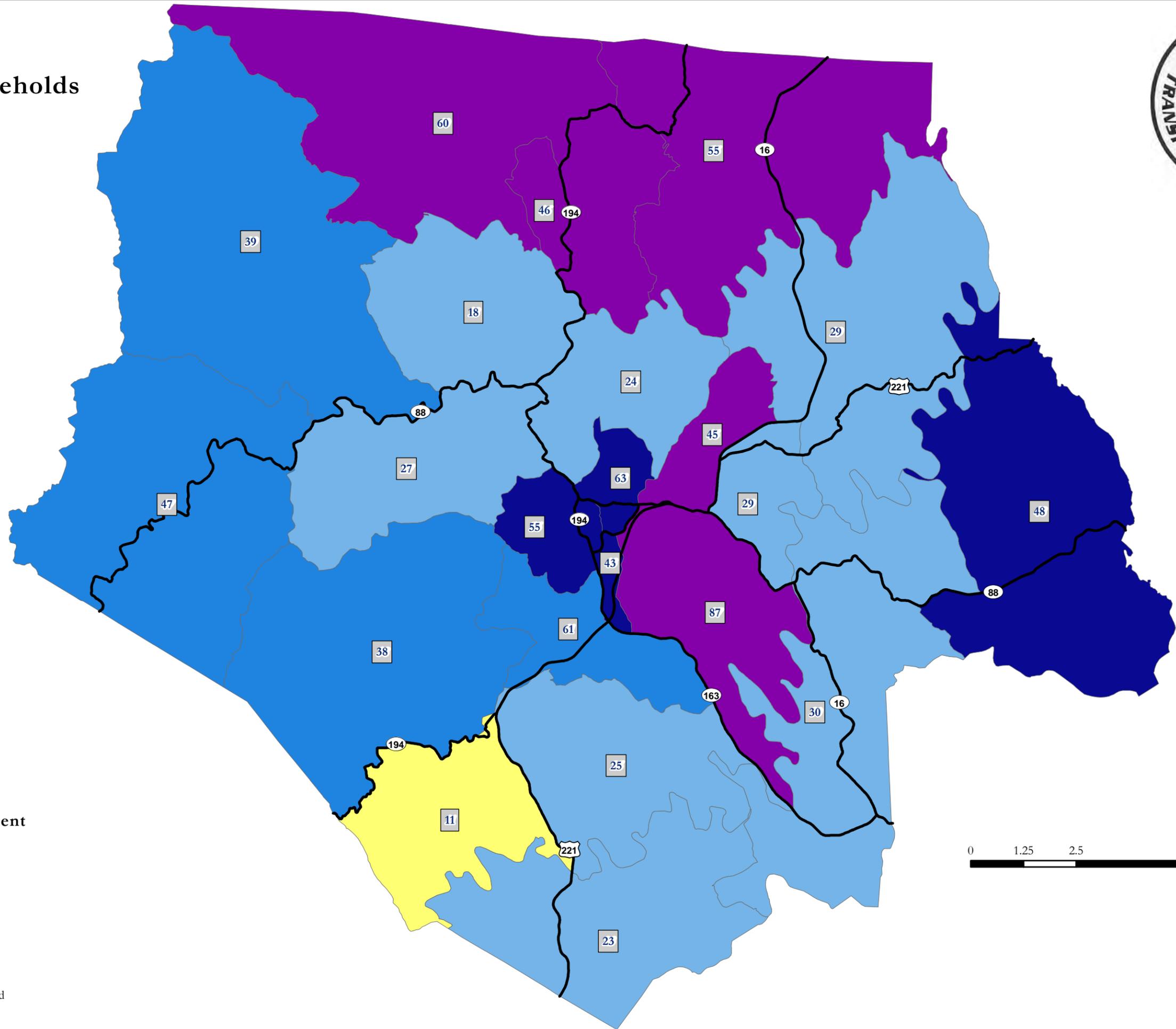
- ← Commuter Trips
- ▭ NC State Line
- ▭ Counties



Source: 2000 Census Daily Commuters

Map created by:

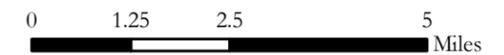
**Figure 7**  
**Ashe County**  
**Zero Vehicle Households**  
 2000 U.S. Census



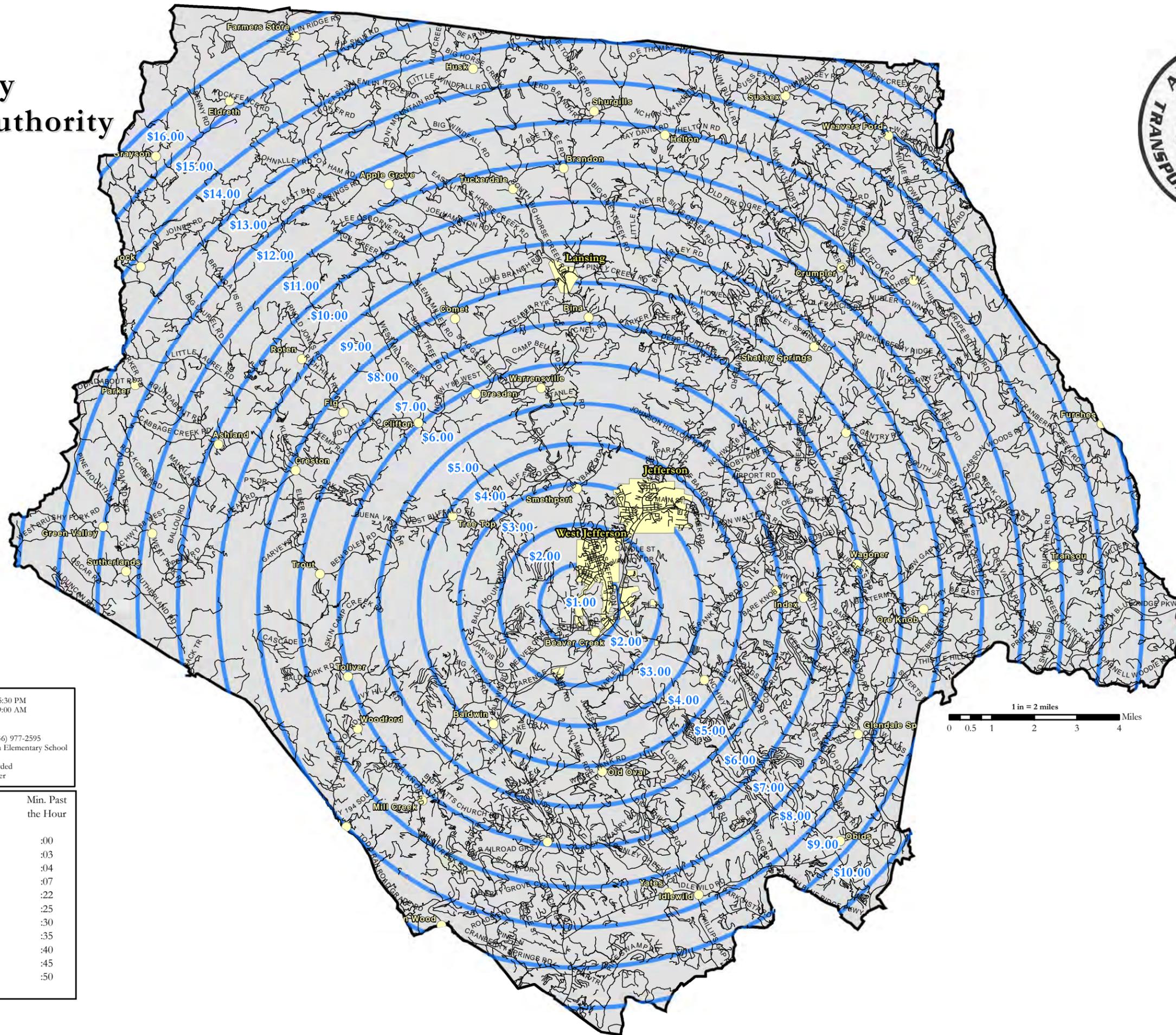
**Occupied Housing Units,  
 Zero Vehicles Available, Percent  
 (Block Group Level)**

- 3%
- 4% - 7%
- 8% - 10%
- 11% - 12%
- 13% - 14%

\* Block Group Labels: Number of Occupied Housing Units with Zero Vehicles Available



# Figure 8 Ashe County Transportation Authority Fare Map



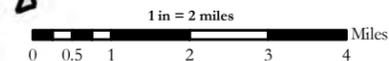
### Shuttle Route

Shuttle Operates Monday - Friday 9:00 AM - 5:30 PM  
 First stop is Mountain Village Apartments at 9:00 AM  
 Last stop is Lowes Foods at 4:50 PM

Saturday Shuttle Service is 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM (336) 977-2595  
 Saturday Shuttle includes Soup Loop to old West Jefferson Elementary School

Shuttle Fare is \$1.00 each time van is boarded  
 Shuttle stops are listed in numerical order

Stop	Min. Past the Hour
1 Mountain Village Apartments	:00
2 Roses	:03
3 Food Lion	:04
4 Ashe Memorial Hospital	:07
5 West View Terrace Apartments	:22
6 West Jefferson - Main Street	:25
7 Spruce Hill Apartments	:30
8 Ashe Services for Aging	:35
9 Ingles	:40
10 Wal-Mart	:45
11 Lowes Foods	:50

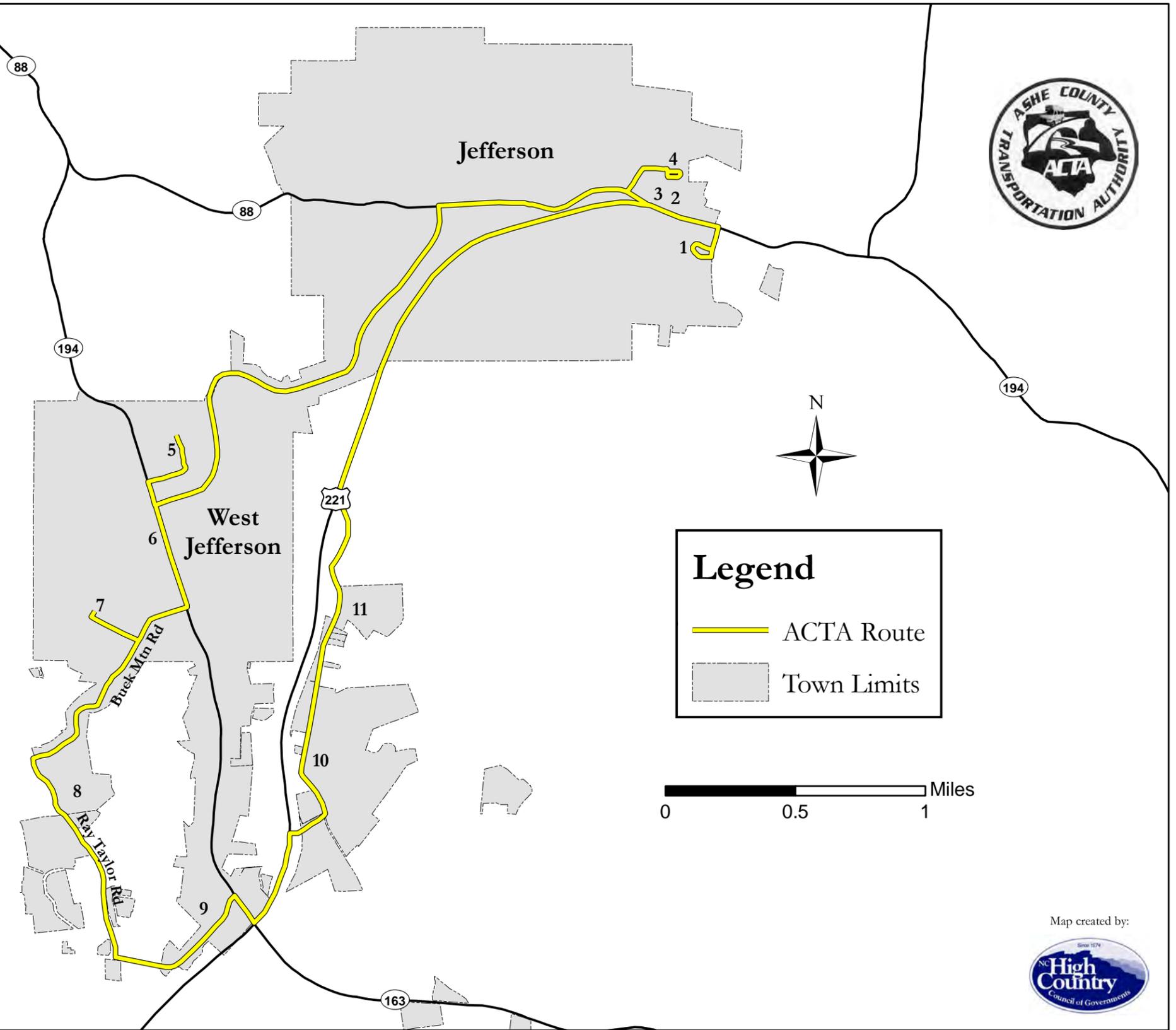


**Figure 9  
ACTA Shuttle  
Route**



Shuttle Operates Monday - Friday  
 First stop is Mountain Village Apartments at 9:00 AM  
 Last stop is Lowes Foods at 4:50 PM  
 Shuttle stops are listed in numerical order

Stop		Min. Past the Hour
1	Mountain Village Apartments	:00
2	Roses	:03
3	Food Lion	:04
4	Ashe Memorial Hospital	:07
5	West View Terrace Apartments	:22
6	West Jefferson - Main Street	:25
7	Spruce Hill Apartments	:30
8	Ashe Services for Aging	:35
9	Ingles	:40
10	Wal-Mart	:45
11	Lowes Foods	:50



**Legend**

- ACTA Route
- - - Town Limits

0 0.5 1 Miles

## **Appendix C: SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTS**

# ASHE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY



P.O. Box 1836

West Jefferson, NC 28694

Phone: (336)846-2000 Fax: (336)846-8579 Email: [sue@actatravel.com](mailto:sue@actatravel.com)

February 24, 2009

Mr. Craig Hughes  
High County Rural Planning Organization  
PO Box 1820  
Boone, NC 28607

Dear Mr. Hughes,

In 2008 the Public Transportation Division of NCDOT agreed to sponsor Ashe County Transportation Authority in the process of creating a Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plan. Mr. Craig Hughes, LPA Transportation Planner of the High Country Rural Planning Organization (RPO) will be compiling this plan for ACTA. As a part of this planning process we feel it important and necessary to involve representatives from the county's human service agencies, local government, area businesses, as well as community leaders to seek their expertise and input on creating our plan.

We invite you to join us for an informational coordinating transportation planning meeting on Thursday, March 5, 2009 beginning at 10:00am until 2:30pm in ACTA's conference room at 895 Ray Taylor Rd. West Jefferson, NC. Lunch will be provided. If you cannot personally attend the meeting we encourage you to please send a representative in your place as it is very important to share everyone's ideas and have all agencies involved as we plan for future coordinated transportation services in Ashe County. Please RSVP by Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> so we will know how many lunches to prepare. You may call the ACTA office 846-2000 or email me [sue@actatravel.com](mailto:sue@actatravel.com).

We look forward to seeing and hearing from you on Thursday, March 5<sup>th</sup> as we share in a collaborative effort in compilation of our coordinated transportation plan. Again your input is very valuable to us.

Sincerely,

Sue Thompson  
ACTA Director



**Agenda – Coordinated Transportation Workshop  
March 5, 2009**

10:00 - 10:30 Welcome/Overview

10:30 – 10:45 Overview of Current Services

10:45 - 11:45 Table Discussion - Transportation Needs

11:45 – 12:15 Break

12:15 – 12:45 Eligible Activities - Circular Review

12:45 – 1:30 Calculation of Service Strategies

1:30 – 2:00 Prioritization Exercise

2:00 - 2:15 What's Next? Adjournment

## **Ashe County Coordinated Transportation Plan Service Provider Input Survey**

We encourage you to provide feedback about current and needed public transportation service in Ashe County. The information you provide will be used to help identify future transportation services as well as improve existing services.

### EXISTING SERVICE

- What type of transportation services does your agency provide?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- What types of clients do you serve? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- Where are your clients going? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- What times of day does your agency provide transportation services to your clients? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- Are there any vehicle restrictions? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- Does your agency use any advanced technology to schedule trips or in the transportation of your clients?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- Do you have any specific areas of interest in regard to trip coordination? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- What improvements would you like to see made to existing public transportation service in your county? (Example: frequency of service, hours of service, new destinations)  
\_\_\_\_\_

NEW SERVICE

- What kind of transportation service, not currently provided, is needed in your county?

---

- What group of people would use this service? (Example: commuters, elderly, disabled, shoppers, etc.)

---

- What destinations would be connected by this service? (Example: hospitals, schools, office parks, etc.)

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- Do you have any additional comments?

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Thank you for your time. You may return this survey to:

Craig Hughes  
High Country Council of Governments  
PO Box 1820  
Boone, NC 28640  
FAX: (828) 265-5439  
chughes@regiond.org