

Technical Memo: Comprehensive Needs Assessment

The Needs Assessment consists of six components:

1. Methodology,
2. Demographics,
3. Land-Use Profile,
4. Community Engagement Activities,
5. Transportation Overlaps and Gaps in Service, and
6. Observations, Findings, and Conclusions.

Information presented within the Needs Assessment was developed through input from the community stakeholders, pop-up events held in each of the four counties within the project area, the community survey, as well as consultant research.

1.1. Methodology

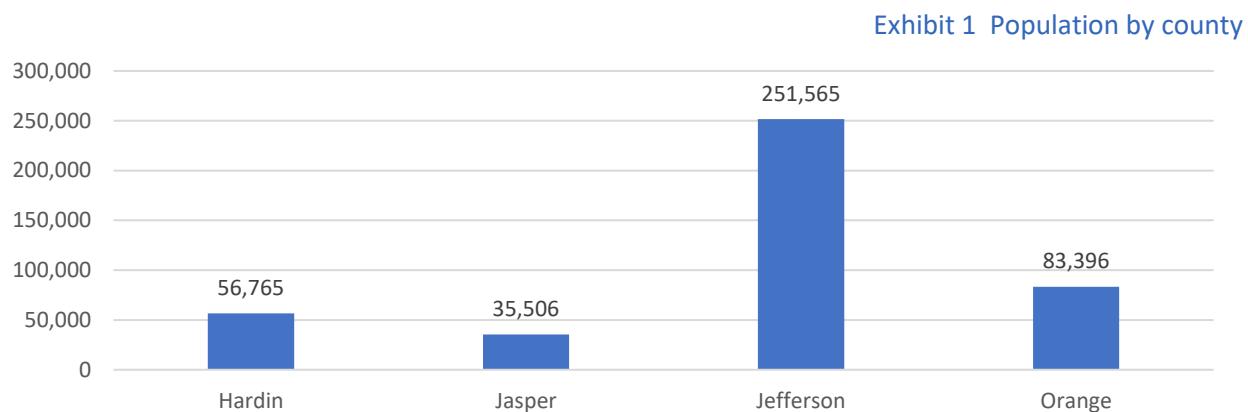
This section presents an analysis of current demand specific to public transportation services as well as population forecasts for the South East Texas region; specifically Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, and Orange counties.

The demand forecast reflects a multi-prong approach. First, overall population growth trends based chiefly on data and estimates from the federal decennial census as well as the American Community Survey. Second, demographic analysis specific to historically transit-dependent populations including seniors, persons with disabilities, low-income individuals, zero and/or one-vehicle households, and youth. Third, input received directly from persons residing and/or employed within the project area as well as 18 community stakeholder organizations. Engagement of community stakeholders is particularly important as these organizations often function as advocates or spokespersons for demographic cohorts who often are unwilling or unable to participate in traditional public engagement activities.

In preparing the Needs Assessment, Moore & Associates, Inc. also considered land-use or development patterns as it pertains to the provision of public transportation service, inventoried the human services agencies throughout the project area (details of which are presented in the Transportation Resources Inventory), and compiled an objective assessment of current public transportation offerings via-a-vis actual as well as latent and future demand.

1.2. Demographics

The four counties included within the project area reflect significant diversity with respect to persons residing therein as well as their actual and potential transportation behaviors, needs, and priorities. Collectively, these counties comprise an area of more than 3,361 square miles, serving as home to more than 427,000 residents. Jefferson County is the most populous of the four, while Jasper County is the least with slightly more than 35,000 residents.¹



The average population density within the project area is 136 persons per square mile. Despite being the smallest county in land area, Orange County has the second largest population and second highest density of the four counties (219.46 persons per square mile). Jefferson has the largest concentration of persons per square mile (226.02).

Exhibit 2 Population density by county

City	Population	Square miles	Density (persons per square mile)
Hardin	56,765	898	63.21
Jasper	35,506	970	36.60
Jefferson	251,565	1,113	226.02
Orange	83,396	380	219.46
Service area total	427,232	3,361	127.11

¹ All demographic data drawn from the American Community Survey, 2019 Five-Year Estimates. As of August 2021.

Persons age 65 and older represent a historically ride-dependent population. While many seniors retain both their ability to drive and access to a vehicle past age 65, this demographic cohort includes individuals who have lost the ability to drive, whether due to health or loss of access to a vehicle.

The highest concentrations of seniors reside within Jasper County (19.4 percent). The lowest concentration is in Jefferson County (14.4 percent). The average concentration of seniors within the study area is 16.6 percent. By contrast, Texas at-large has a concentration of seniors of 12.3 percent.

Exhibit 3 Senior (65+) population by county

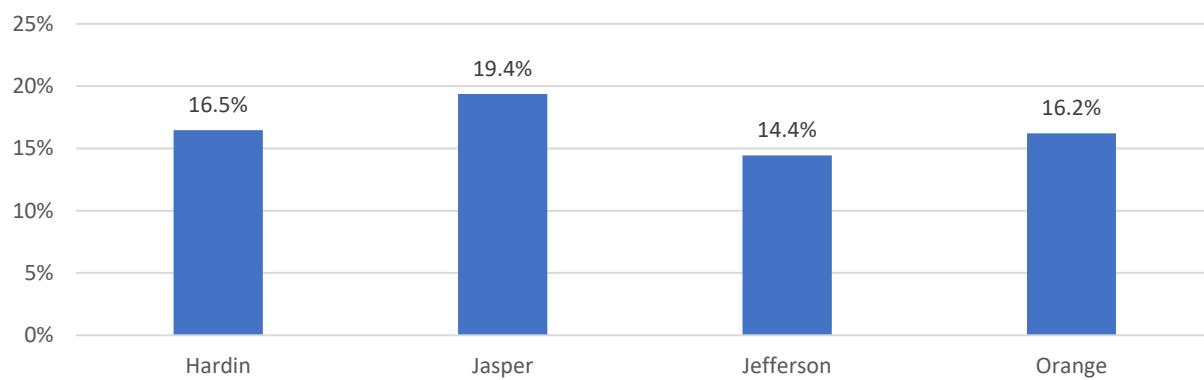


Exhibit 4 Hardin County senior population

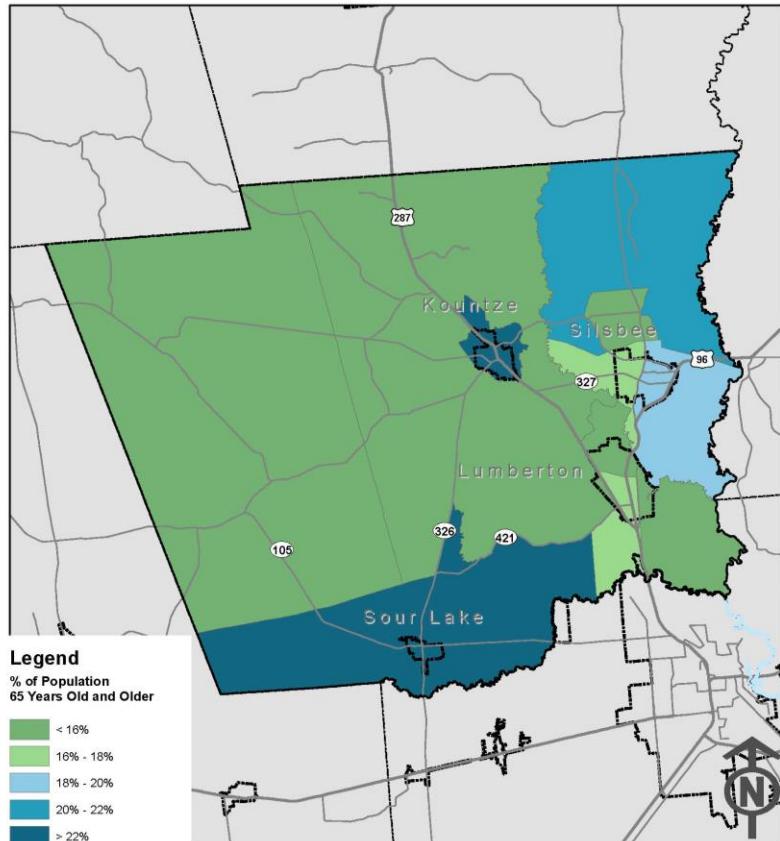


Exhibit 5 Jasper County senior population

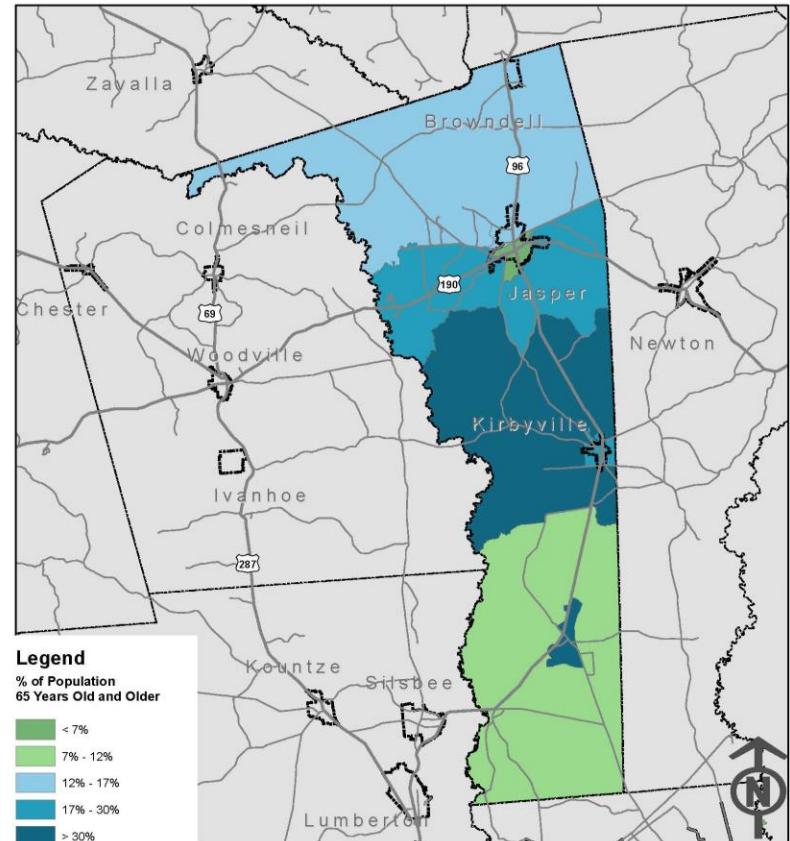


Exhibit 6 Jefferson County senior population

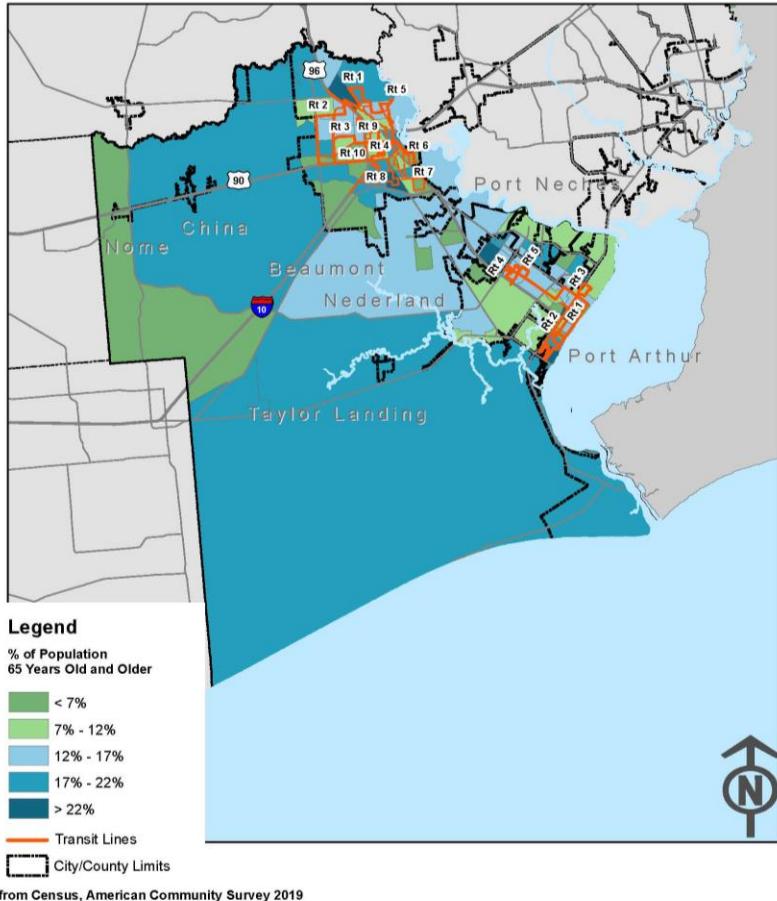
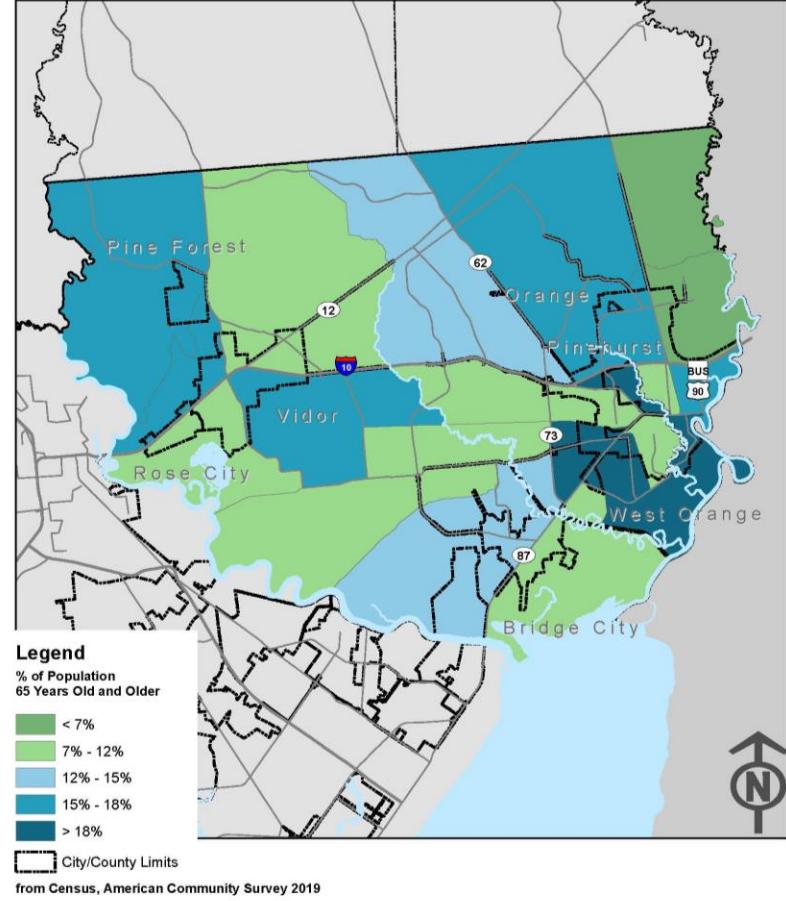


Exhibit 7 Orange County senior population



Persons with disabilities often rely on others for their mobility needs. The American Community Survey (ACS) defines disability as including hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living challenges. Some persons with disabilities may experience difficulties in multiple categories, and therefore individual transportation needs often vary. Social service organizations sometimes provide transportation services to the individuals they serve.

Orange and Hardin counties have nearly identical concentrations of persons with disabilities (16.5 and 16.2 percent respectively). Jasper County differs slightly with 15.8 percent, while Jefferson County has the lowest concentration at 14.5 percent. The average concentration of persons with disabilities within the project area is 15.7 percent.

Exhibit 8 Disabled population by county

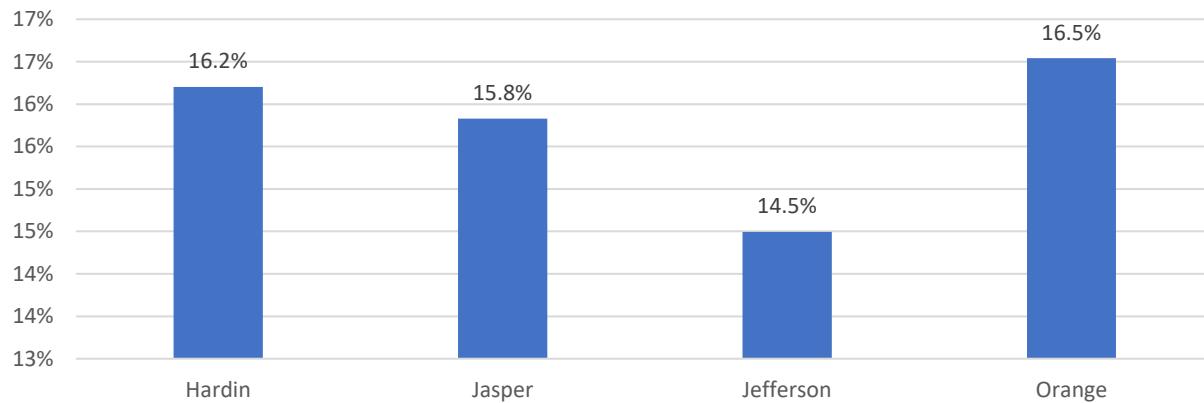


Exhibit 9 Hardin County disabled population

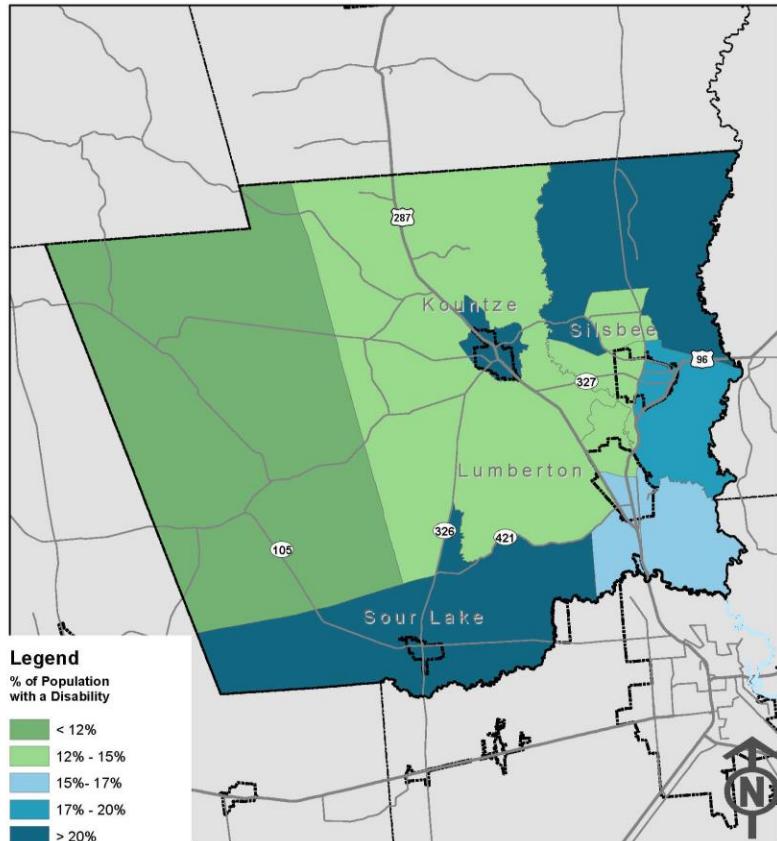


Exhibit 10 Jasper County disabled population

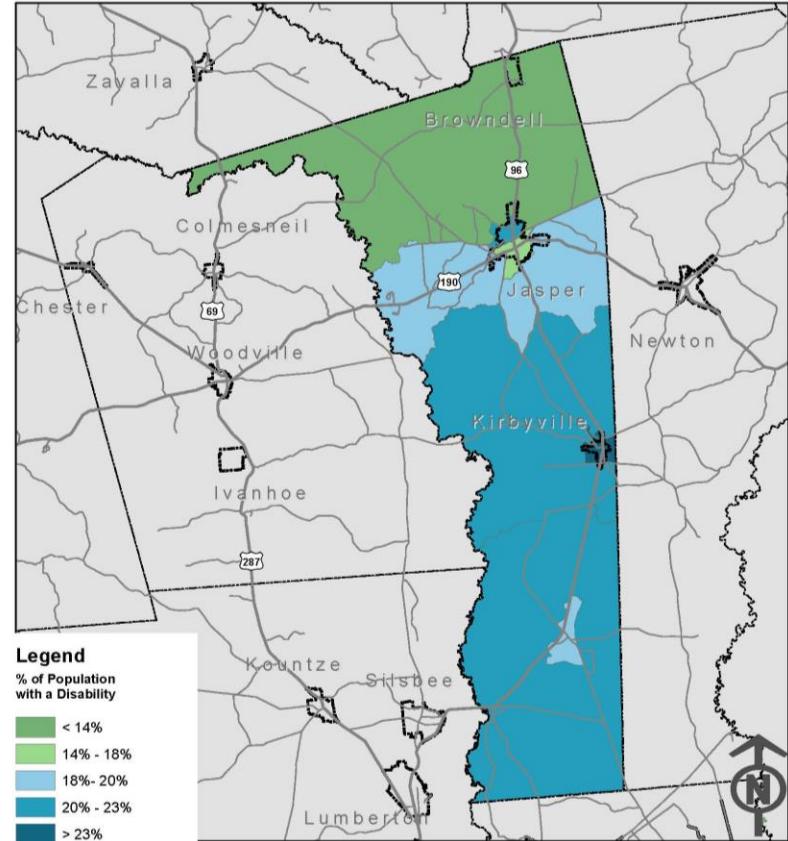


Exhibit 11 Jefferson County disabled population

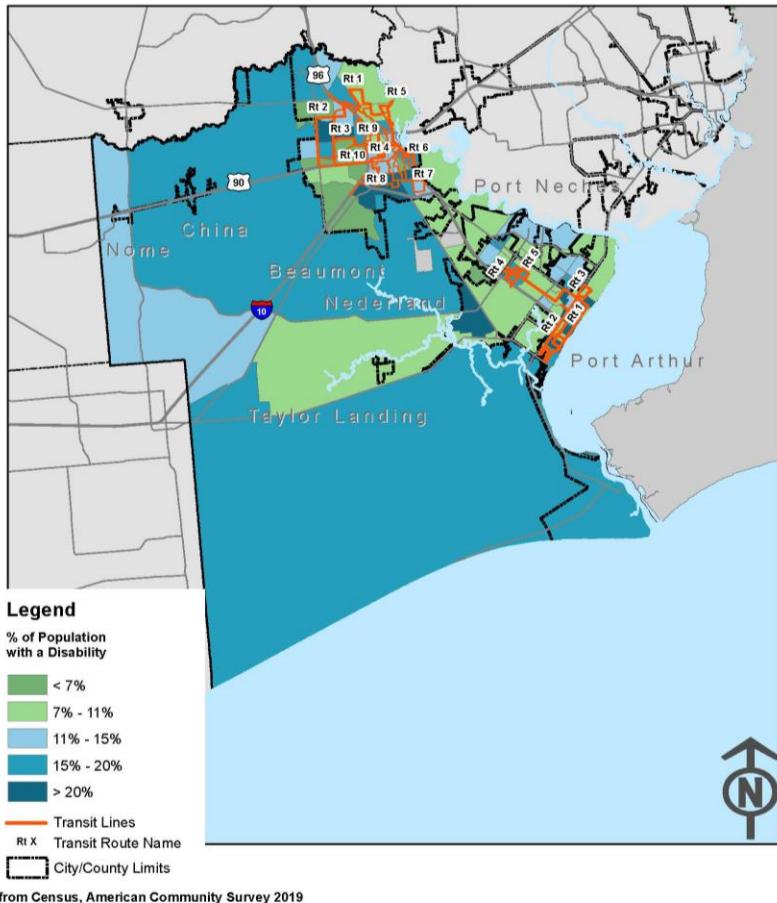
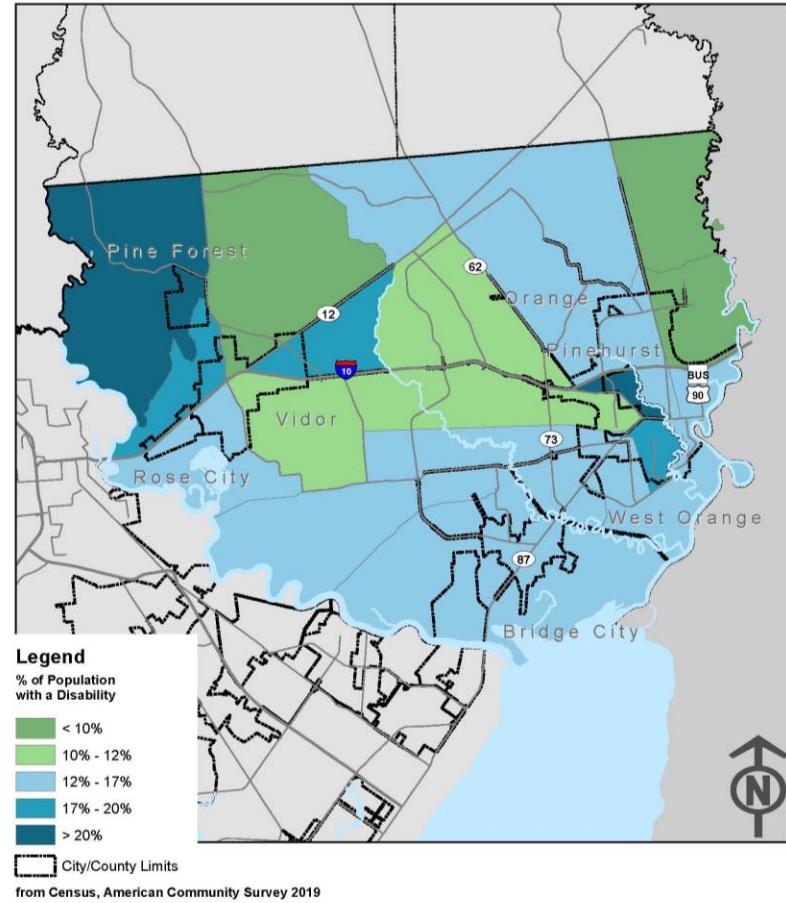


Exhibit 12 Orange County disabled population

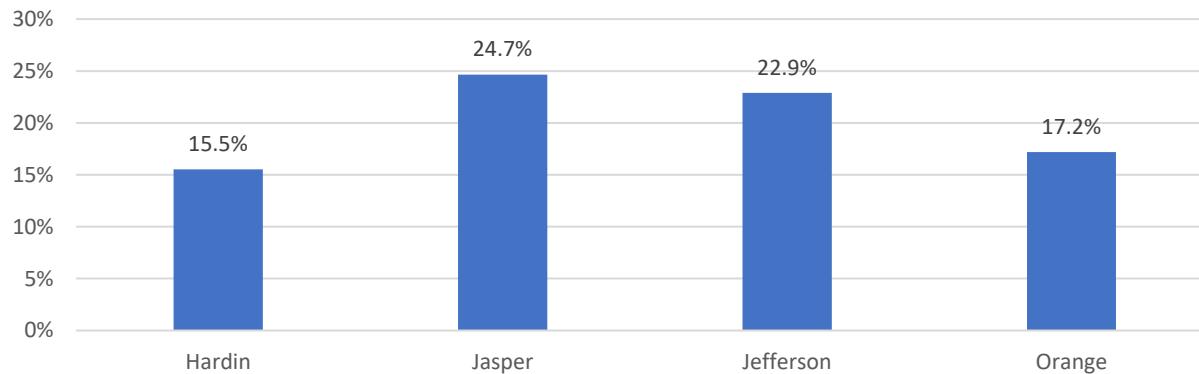


Household income can also be an indicator of ride-dependence, especially if available income results in the lack of access to a vehicle. On average, approximately 20 percent of persons within the project area live below 125 percent of the poverty thresholds as identified by the federal census. In 2019, the federal poverty threshold for a four-person household was approximately \$26,170, and 125 percent of that threshold would be \$32,713.

The percentage of persons with an income at 125 percent of the poverty threshold represents individuals living above the poverty line, they are still generally considered to be low-income.²

Jasper County has the highest population of persons living at 125 percent of the poverty threshold (24.7 percent), followed by Jefferson County (22.9 percent). Hardin County has the lowest (15.5 percent).

Exhibit 13 Population living at 125 percent of poverty threshold by county



“Mean income” is a measure of the average household income for all households within a given county. Hardin County has the highest average household income, followed closely by Orange County. Jasper County has the lowest average household income.

Exhibit 14 Mean household income by county



² Note: data regarding households living at 100 percent of the poverty threshold was not available.

Exhibit 15 Hardin County population living in poverty

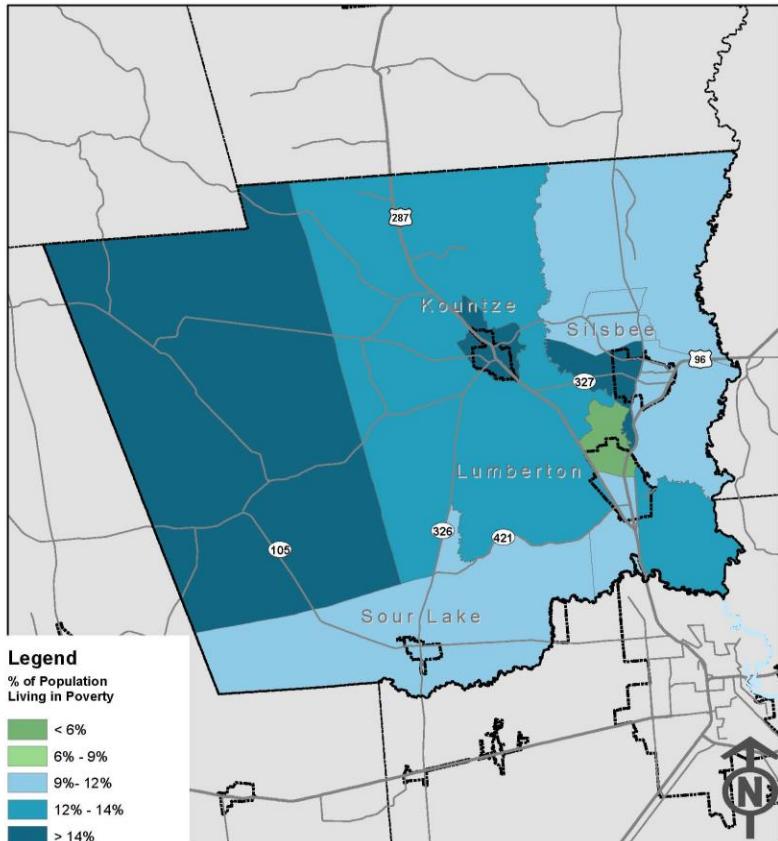


Exhibit 16 Jasper County population living in poverty

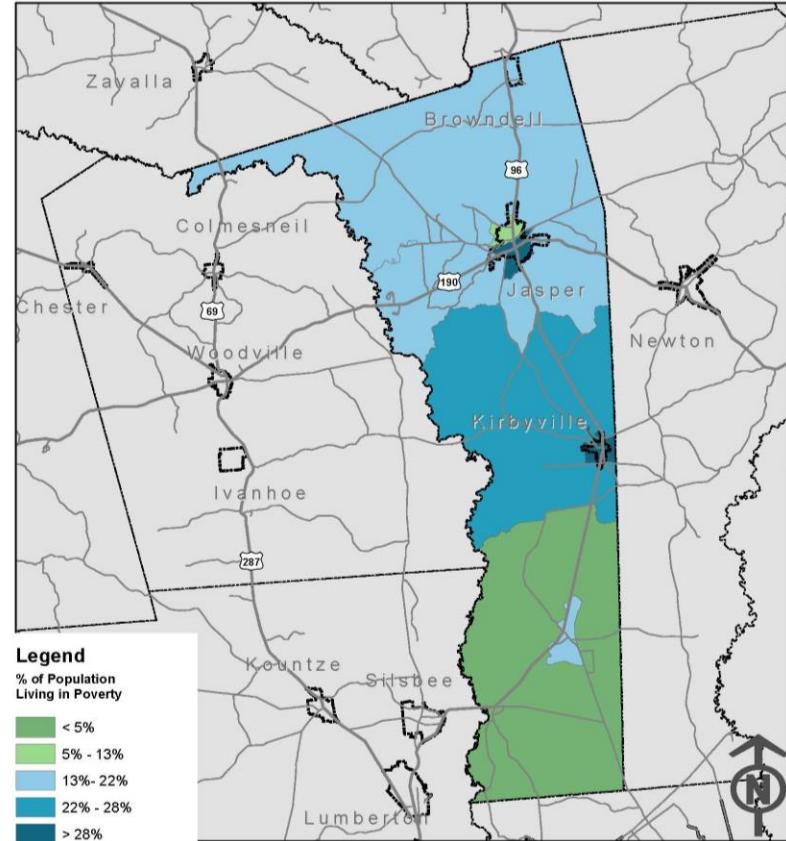


Exhibit 17 Jefferson County population living in poverty

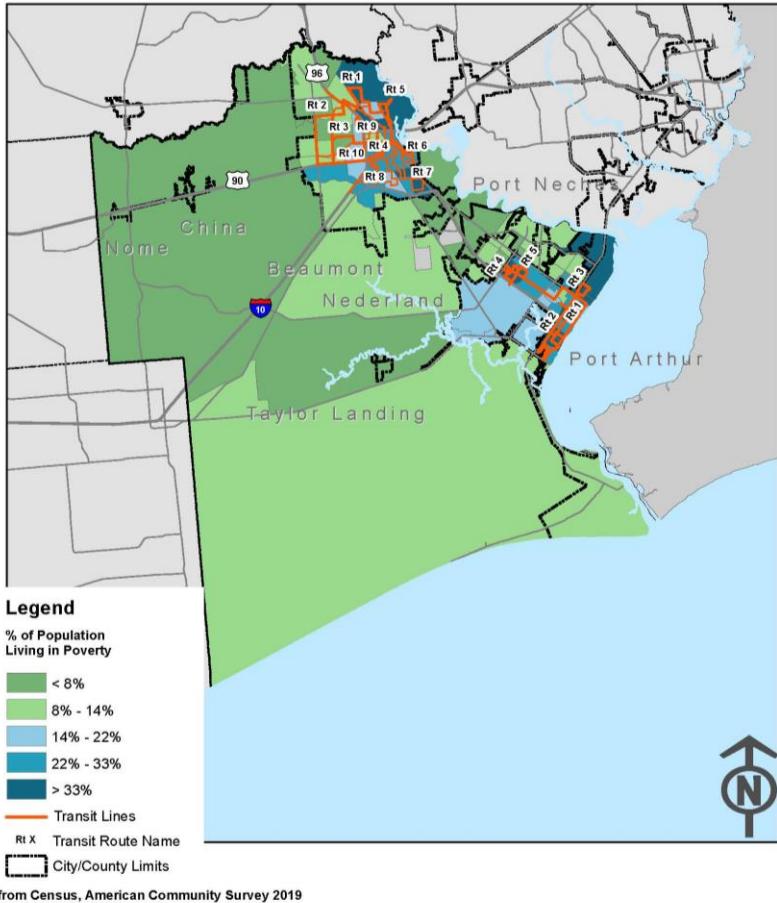
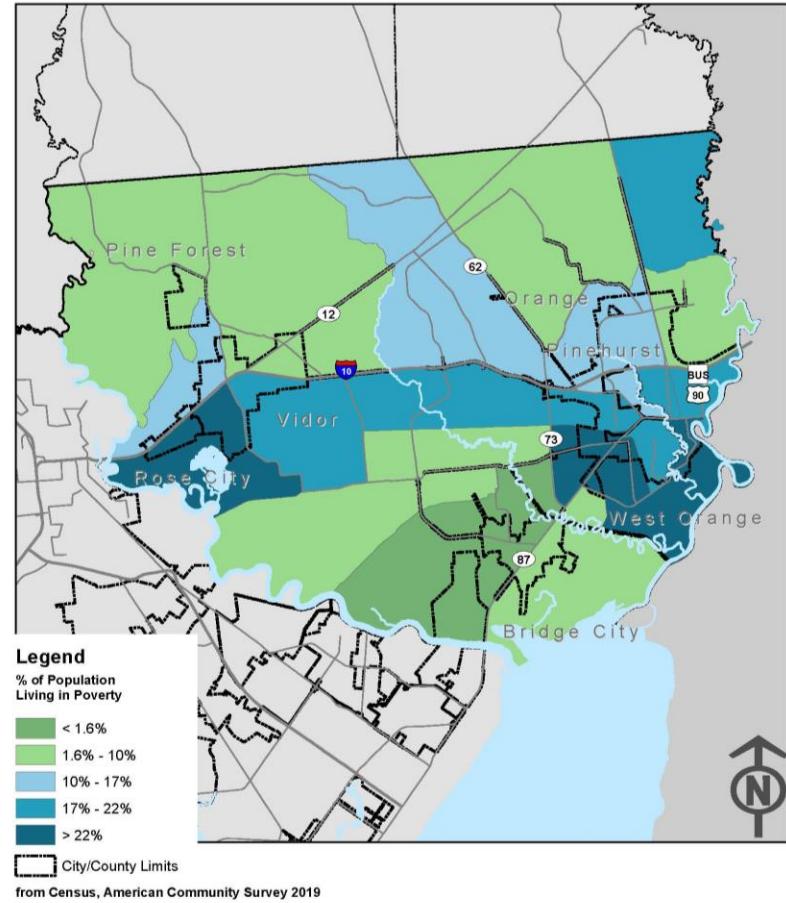


Exhibit 18 Orange County population living in poverty



Like seniors, youth also represent one of the demographic cohorts that is historically ride-dependent. While many youth may have access to a vehicle after obtaining a driver license, an increasing number of youth postpone learning to drive to age 18 or beyond. School-provided transportation is a means of travel for many within this demographic group.

The percentage of youth within each county is very similar ranging from 24.8 percent in Orange County to 24.0 percent in Jefferson County. The average concentration of youth within the project area is 24.4 percent. The project area has a lower concentration of youth compared to Texas at-large (26.0 percent).

Exhibit 19 Youth population by county

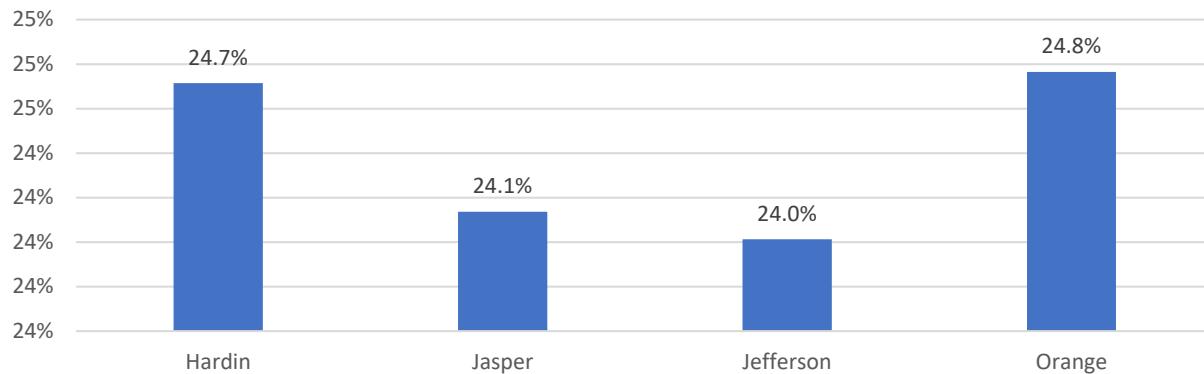


Exhibit 20 Hardin County youth population

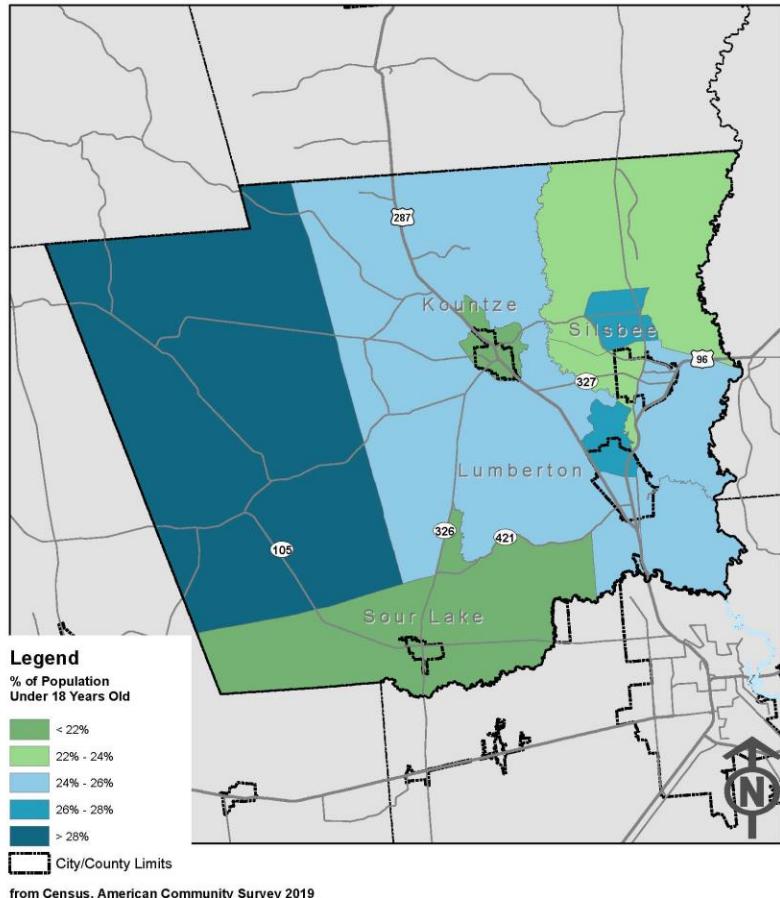


Exhibit 21 Jasper County youth population

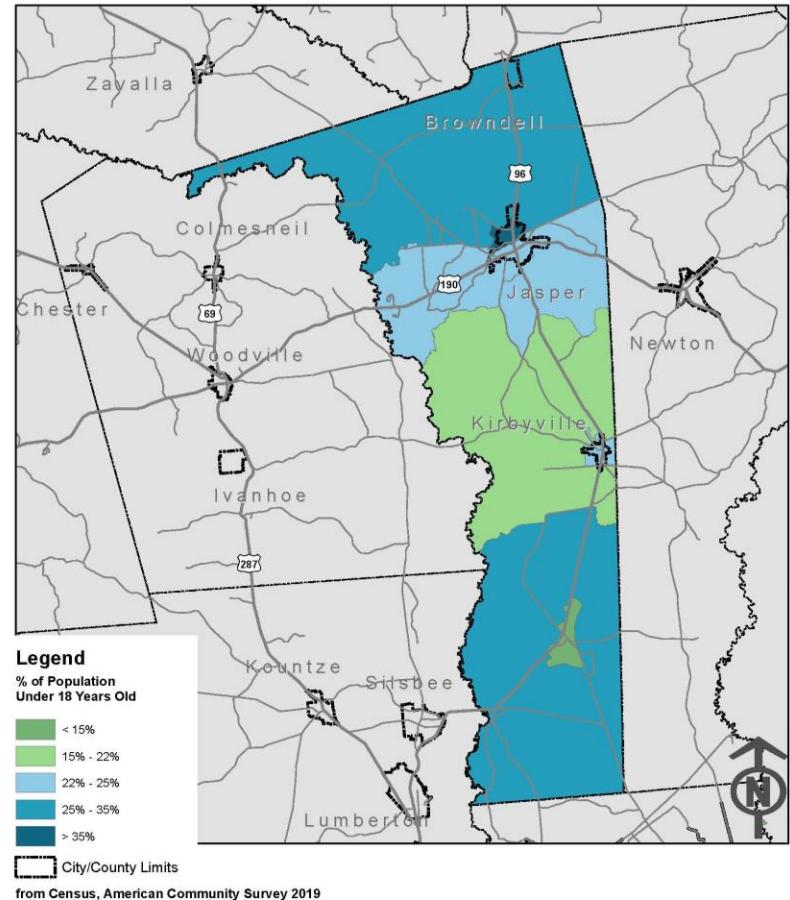


Exhibit 22 Jefferson County youth population

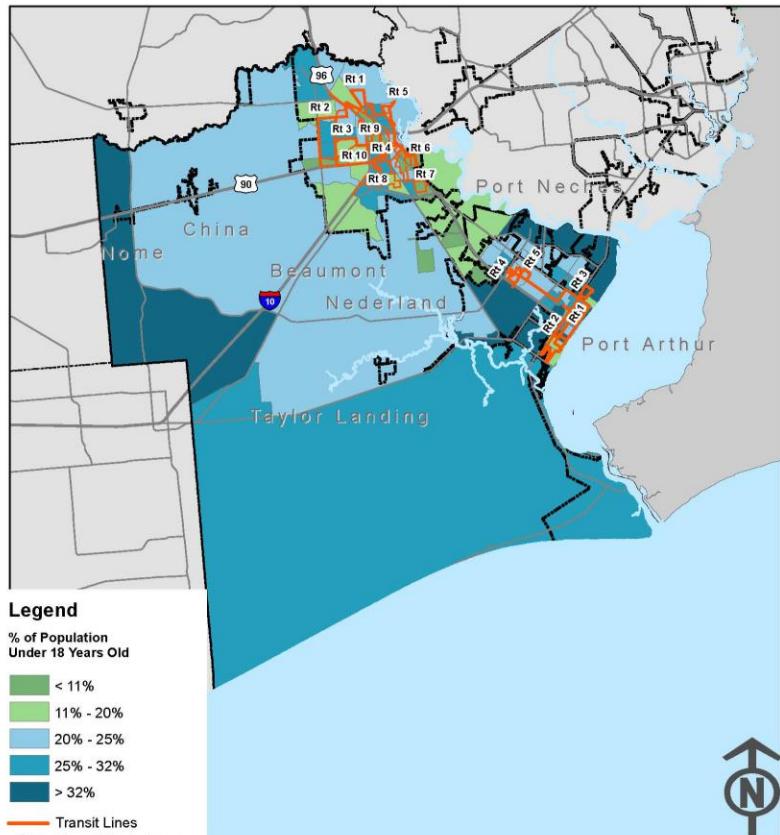
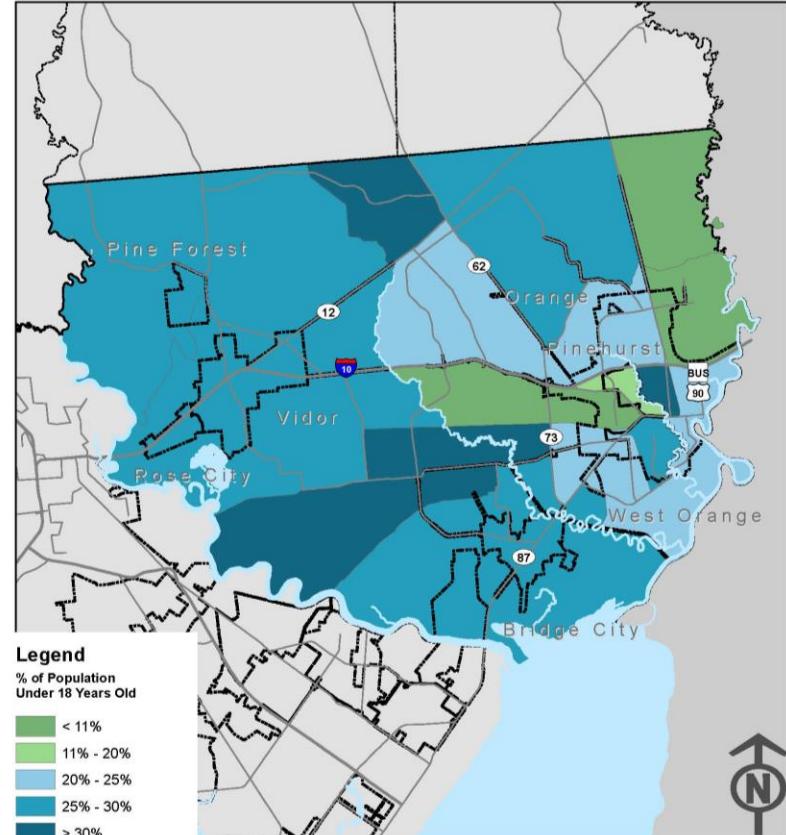


Exhibit 23 Orange County youth population



Access to a personal vehicle can be a significant indicator of ride-dependency. Households with zero vehicles are the most impacted. Further, depending on the number of household residents of driving age and the condition of the vehicle, households with a single vehicle may also have one or more individuals who are ride-dependent.

Orange County has the highest percentage of zero-vehicle households (7.5 percent), as well as the lowest percentage of single-vehicle households (26.7 percent). Jasper County has the highest percentage of single-vehicle households (36.6 percent).

Exhibit 24 Zero- and single-vehicle households by county

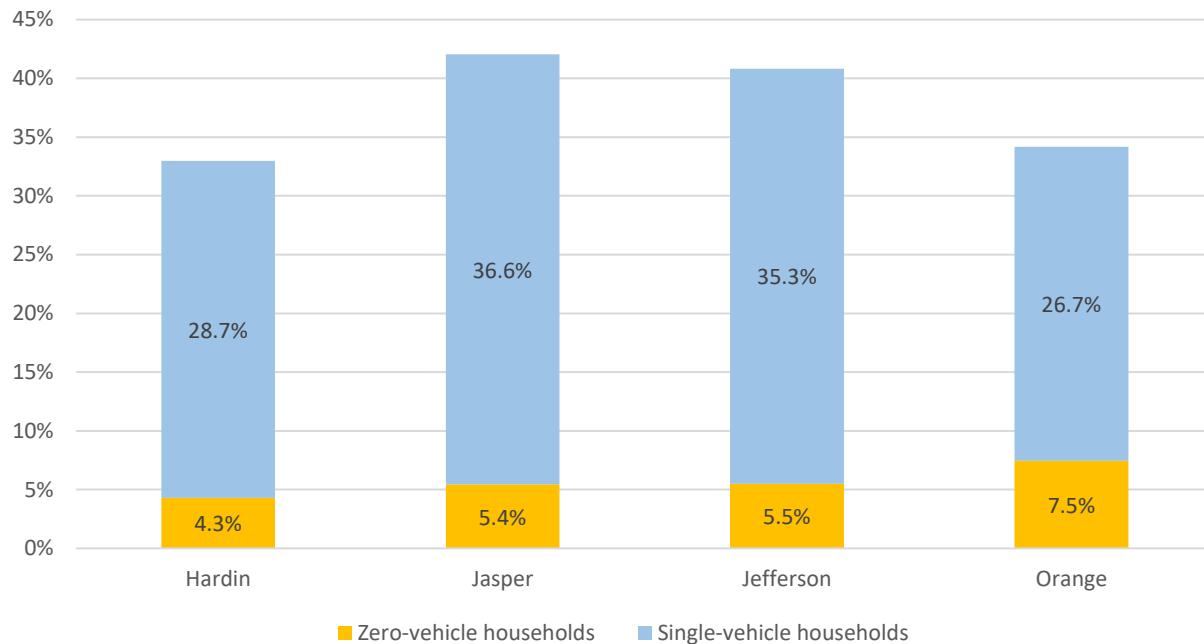


Exhibit 25 Hardin County zero-vehicle households

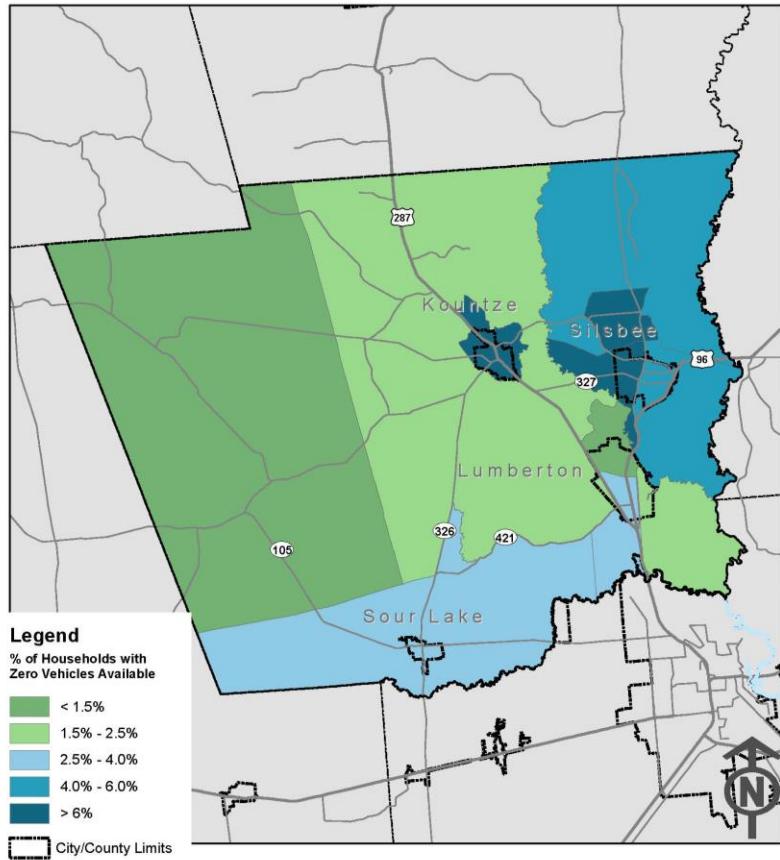


Exhibit 26 Hardin County single-vehicle households

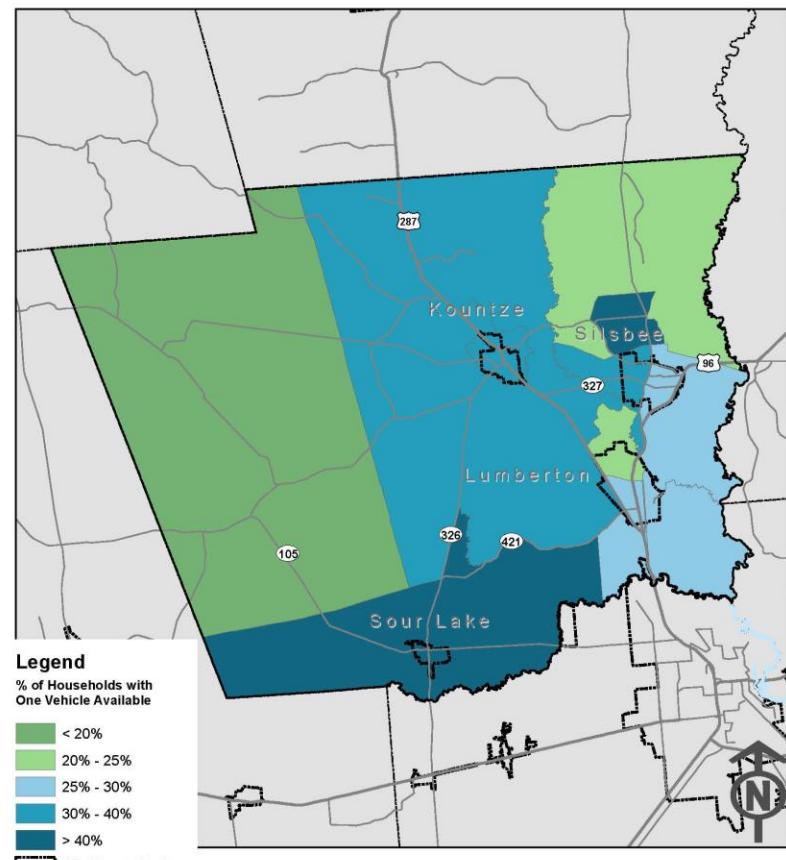


Exhibit 27 Jasper County zero-vehicle households

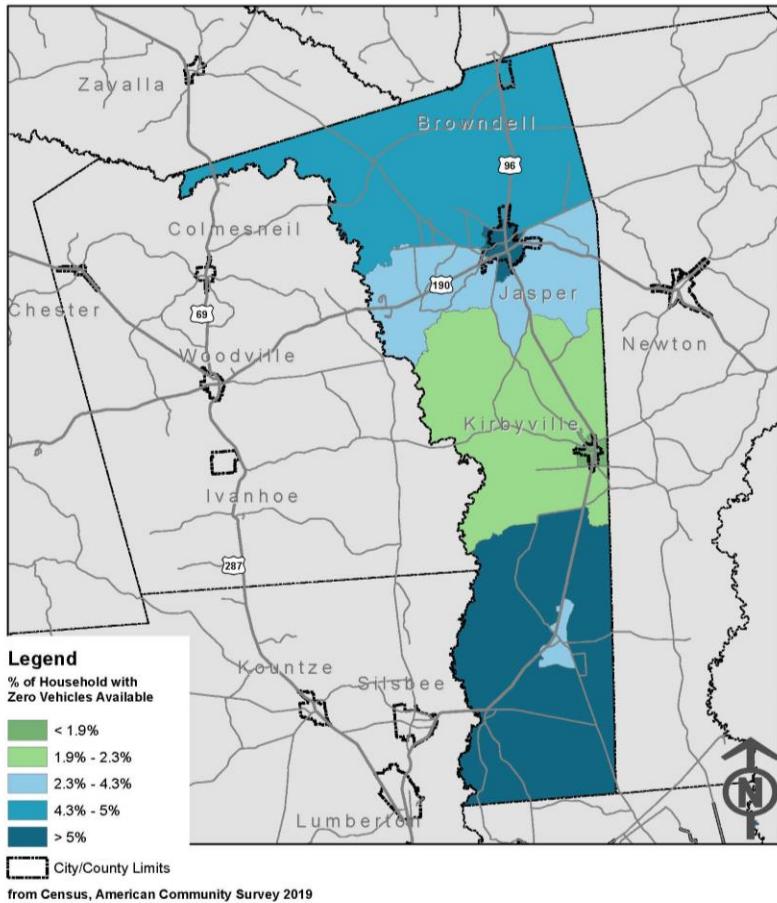


Exhibit 28 Jasper County single-vehicle households

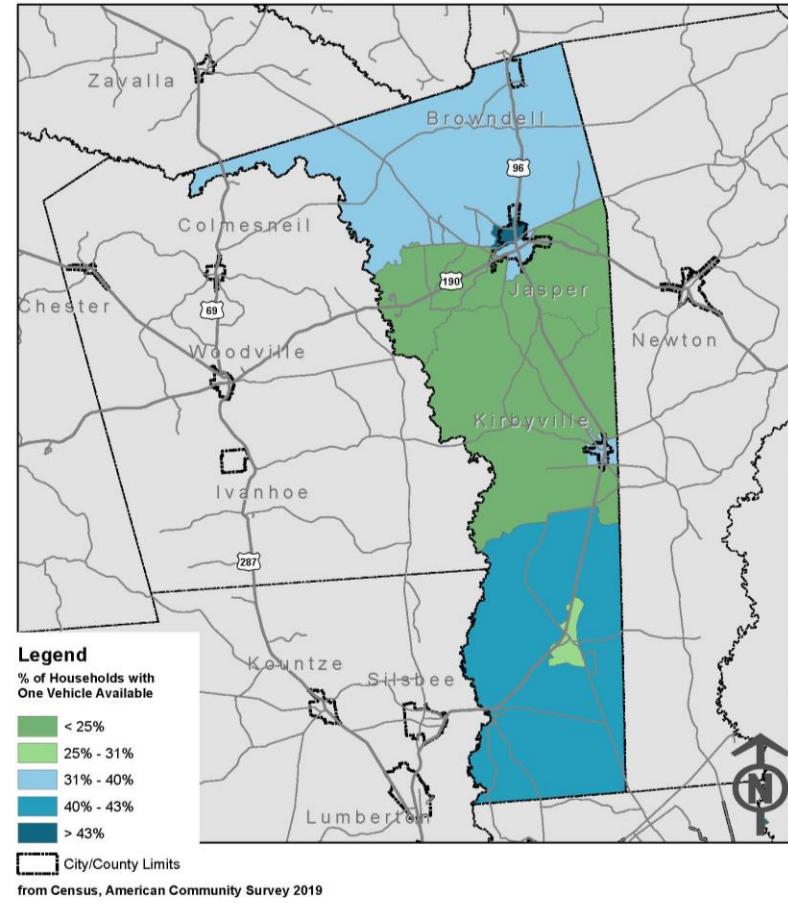


Exhibit 29 Jefferson County zero-vehicle households

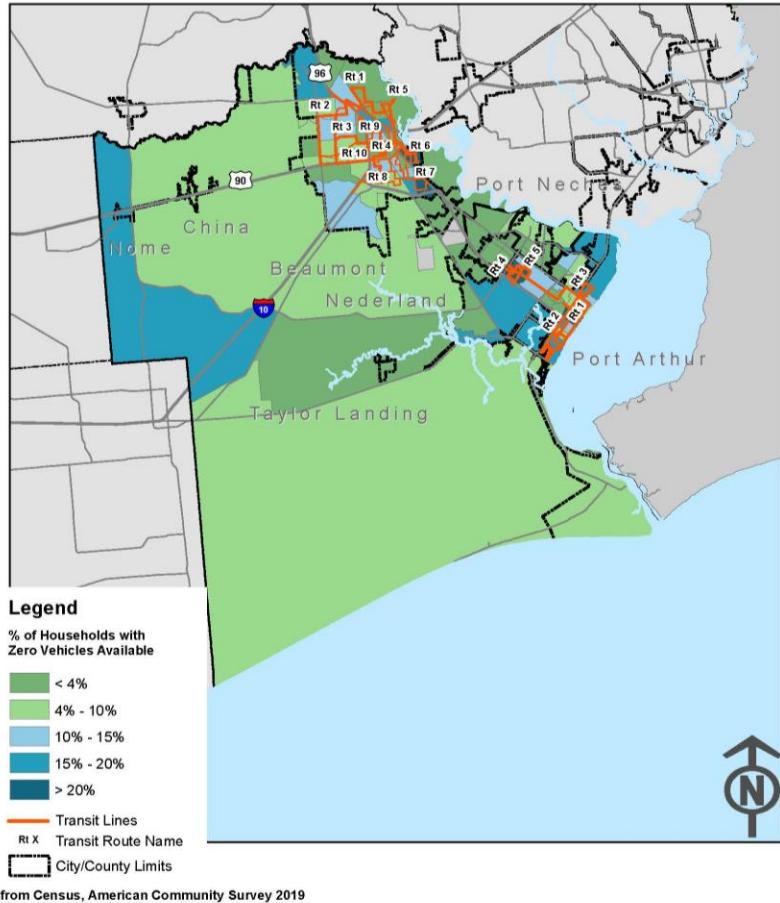


Exhibit 30 Jefferson County single-vehicle households

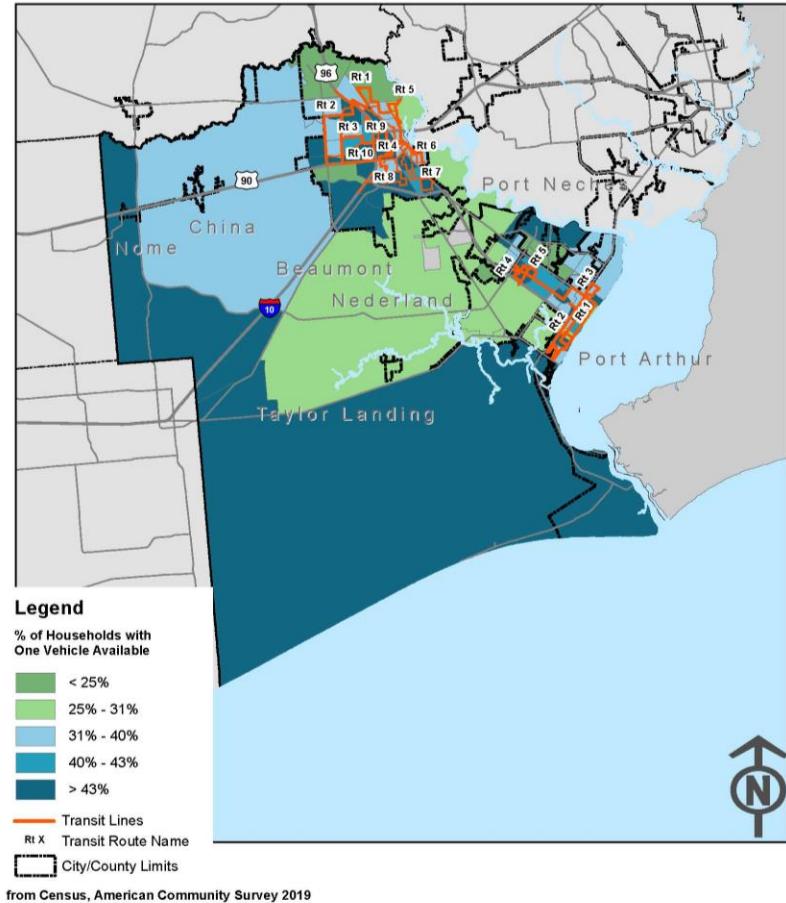


Exhibit 31 Orange County zero-vehicle households

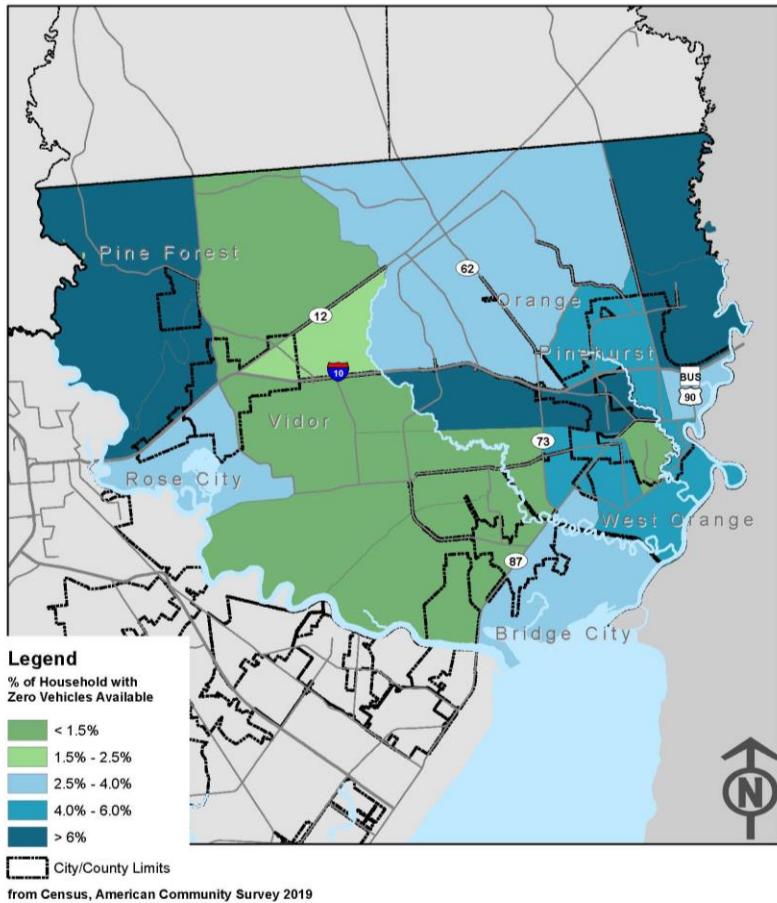
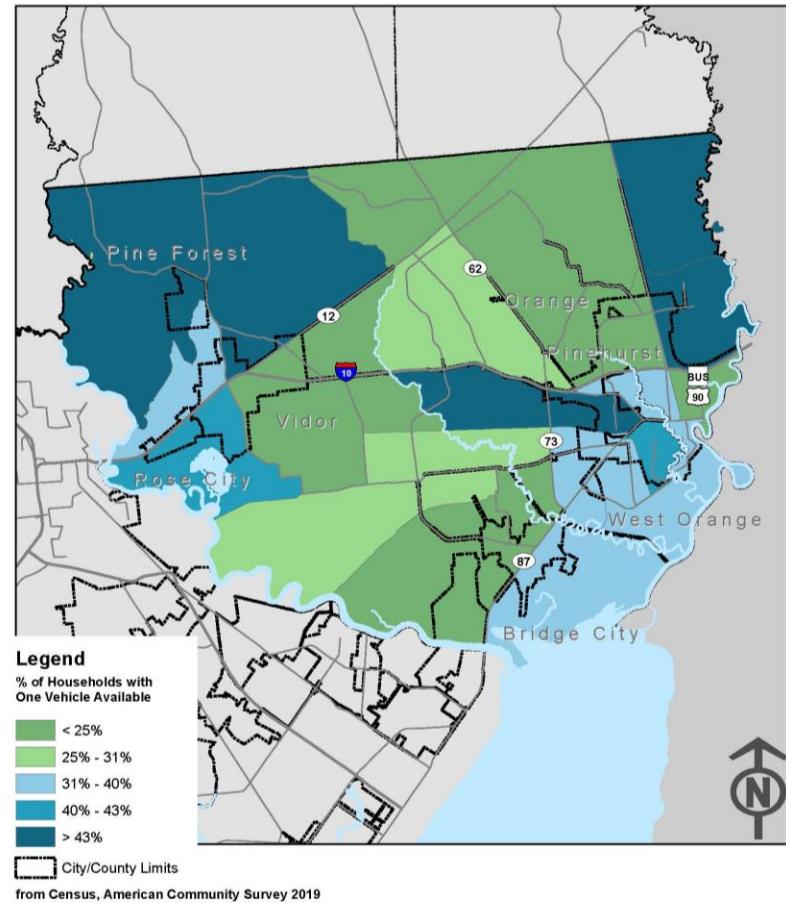


Exhibit 32 Orange County single-vehicle households



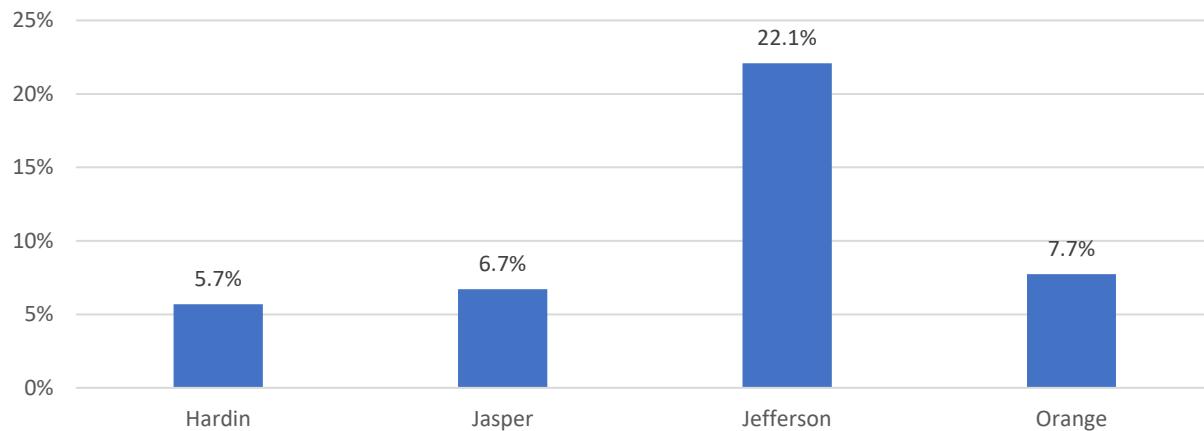


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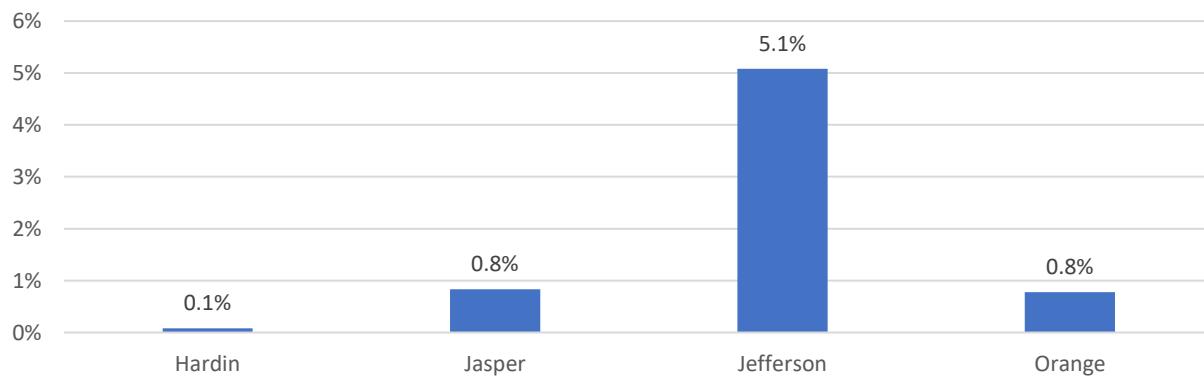
Jefferson County has the highest concentration of individuals identifying as Hispanic or Latino (22.1 percent), followed by Orange County (7.7 percent). Jasper and Hardin county's percentages of Hispanic/Latino residents are only slightly below that of Orange County (6.7 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively).

Exhibit 33 Hispanic/Latino population by county



The incidence of households identified as limited English-proficient (LEP) varies throughout the project area. The highest percentage of LEP households is in Jefferson County (5.1 percent). The majority of LEP households speak Spanish. Jasper and Orange counties have identical percentages of LEP households (0.8 percent). Hardin County reported only 0.1 percent of LEP households.

Exhibit 34 LEP households by county



While ethnicity and LEP status have less impact on an individual's overall mobility, they are important considerations when evaluating access to information or considering marketing and outreach activities.



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Commute patterns

The four counties within the project area have similar concentrations of work-age adults utilizing public transit. All four counties have a use factor of less than one percent for work-age adults reporting use of public transit as a means of commuting to/from work.

Exhibit 35 Transit usage for work commutes

City	Total Workers	Percentage
Hardin	23,842	0.2%
Jasper	13,241	0.1%
Jefferson	104,429	0.6%
Orange	37,012	0.3%

Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data provided by the federal census provides additional information about commute patterns within each county.³ Two types of information are provided for each county. The first, inflow-outflow analysis, compares the number of workers who both live and work within the county with those who only live or work within the county (and therefore commute to or from another county). The second, work destination analysis, looks at home locations for workers within the designated county. It shows where each county draws its workers from. The data used in the following exhibits is from 2019, the most current available.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics, 2019.



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Exhibit 36 Hardin County inflow-outflow analysis

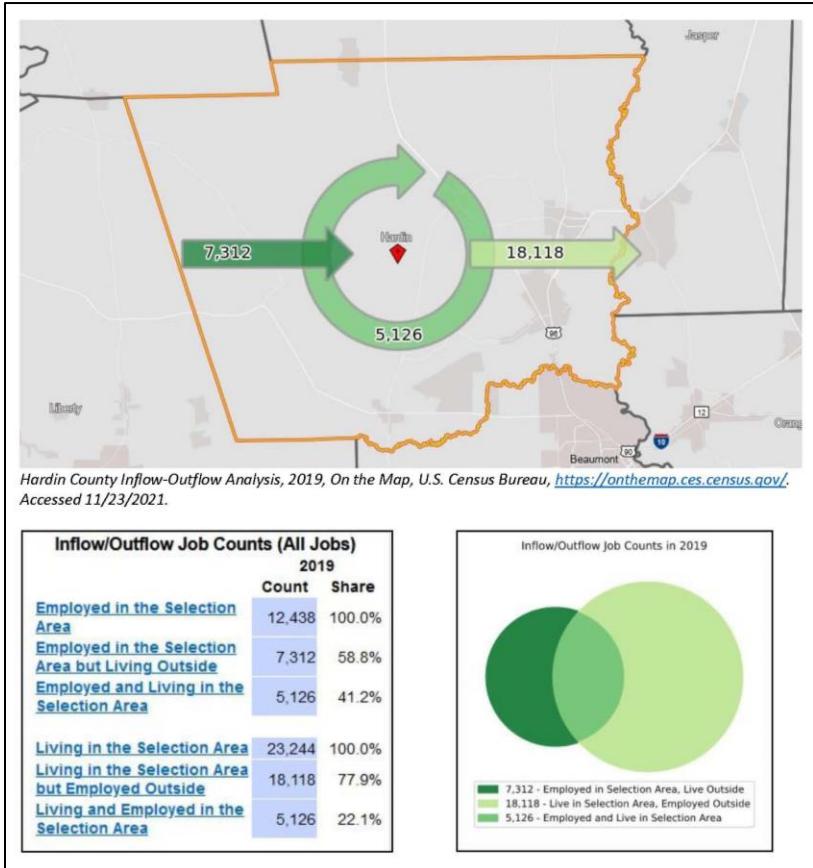
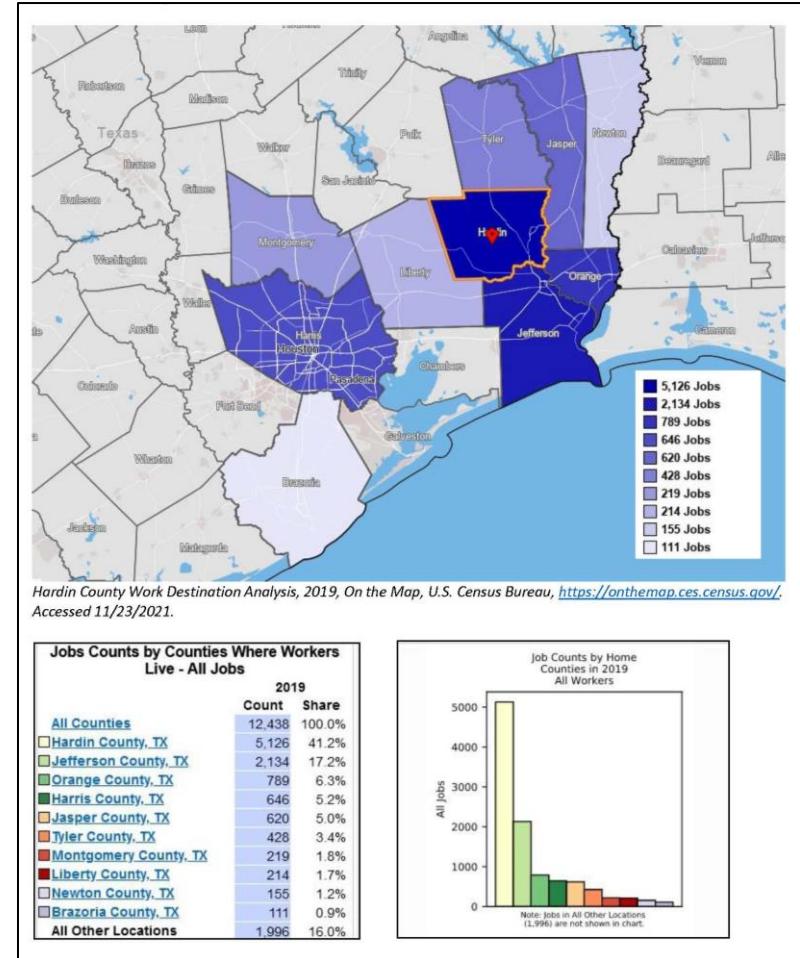


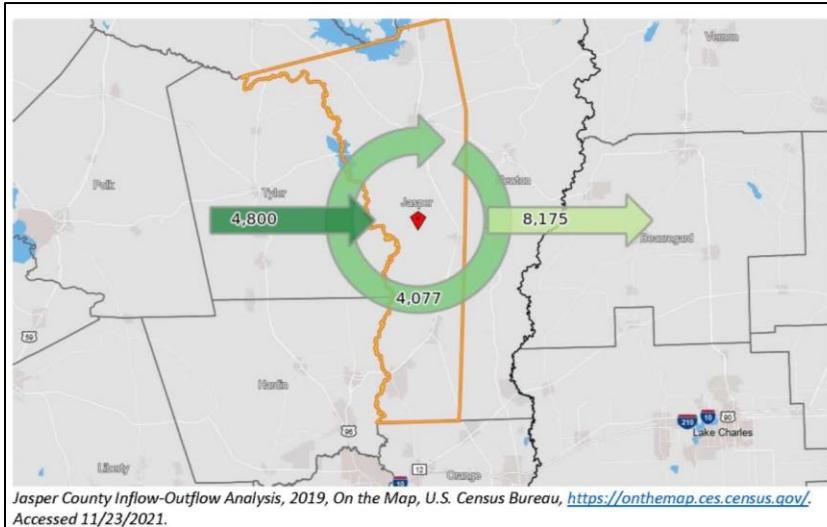
Exhibit 37 Hardin County work destination analysis





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Exhibit 38 Jasper County inflow-outflow analysis



Jasper County Inflow-Outflow Analysis, 2019, On the Map, U.S. Census Bureau, <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>. Accessed 11/23/2021.

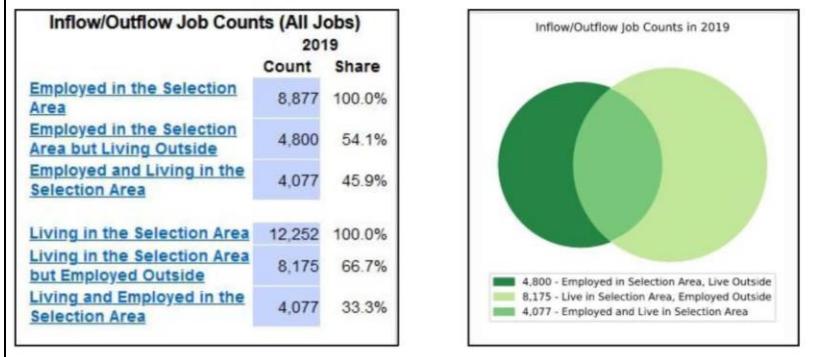
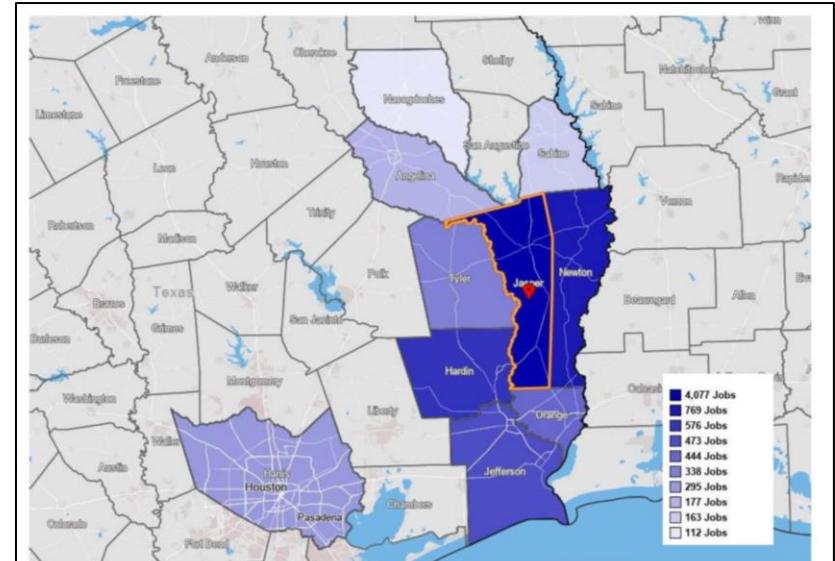
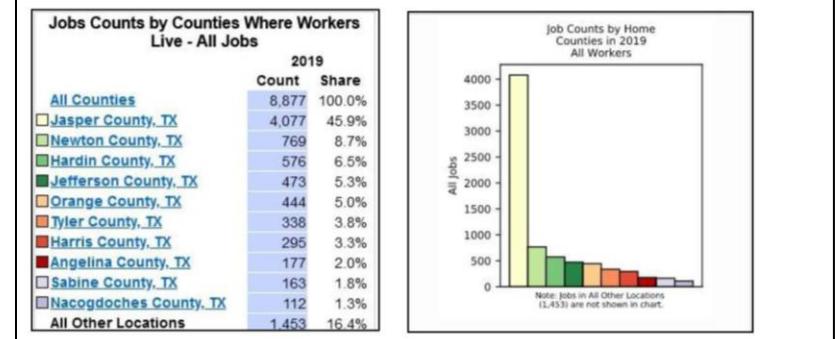


Exhibit 39 Jasper County work destination analysis



Jasper County Work Destination Analysis, 2019, On the Map, U.S. Census Bureau, <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>. Accessed 11/23/2021.





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Exhibit 40 Jefferson County inflow-outflow analysis

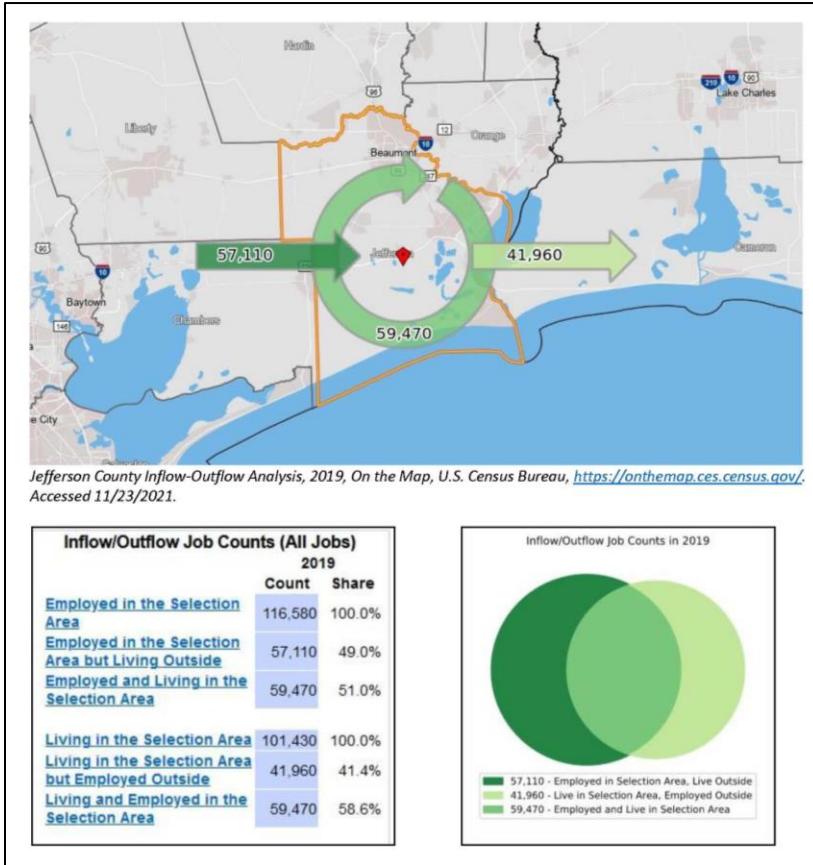
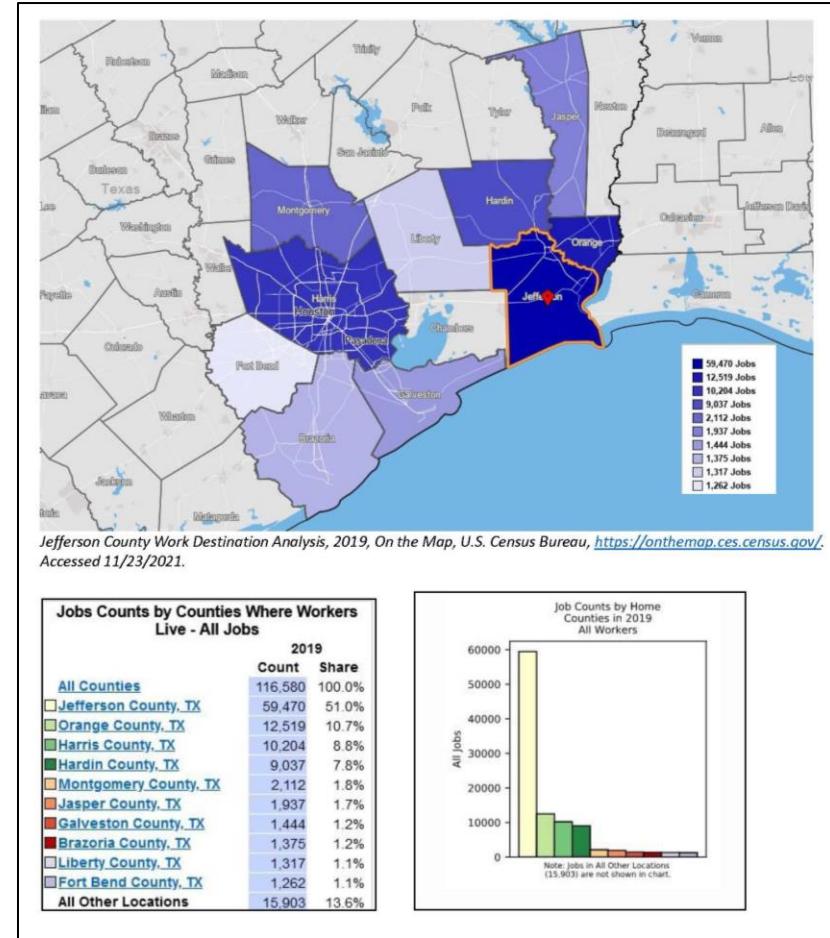


Exhibit 41 Jefferson County work destination analysis





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Exhibit 42 Orange County inflow-outflow analysis

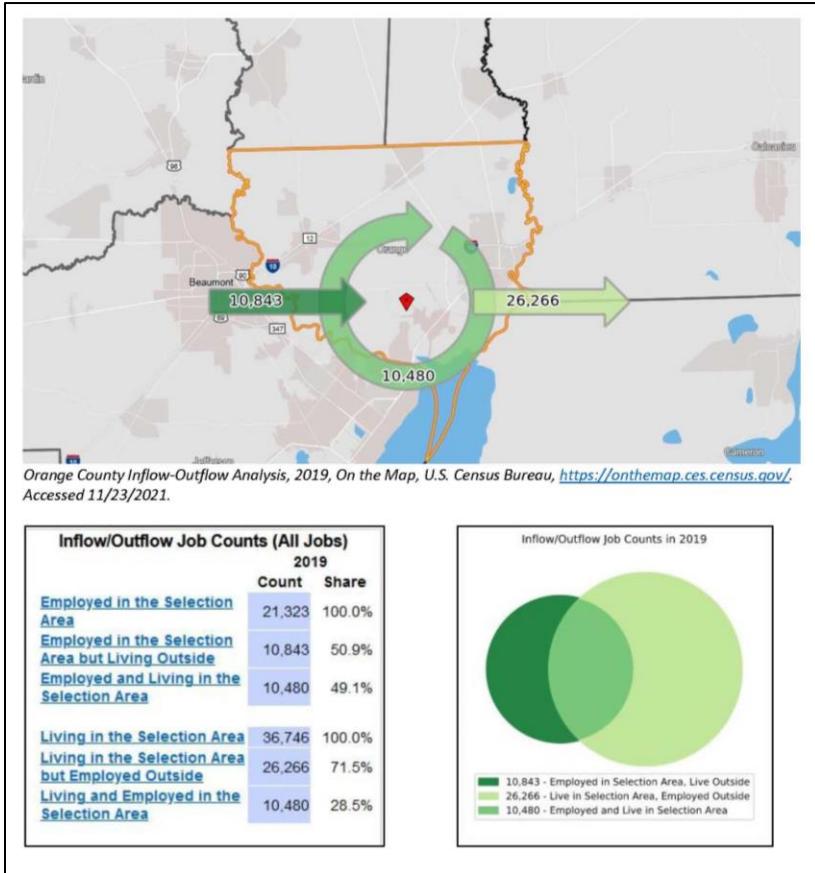
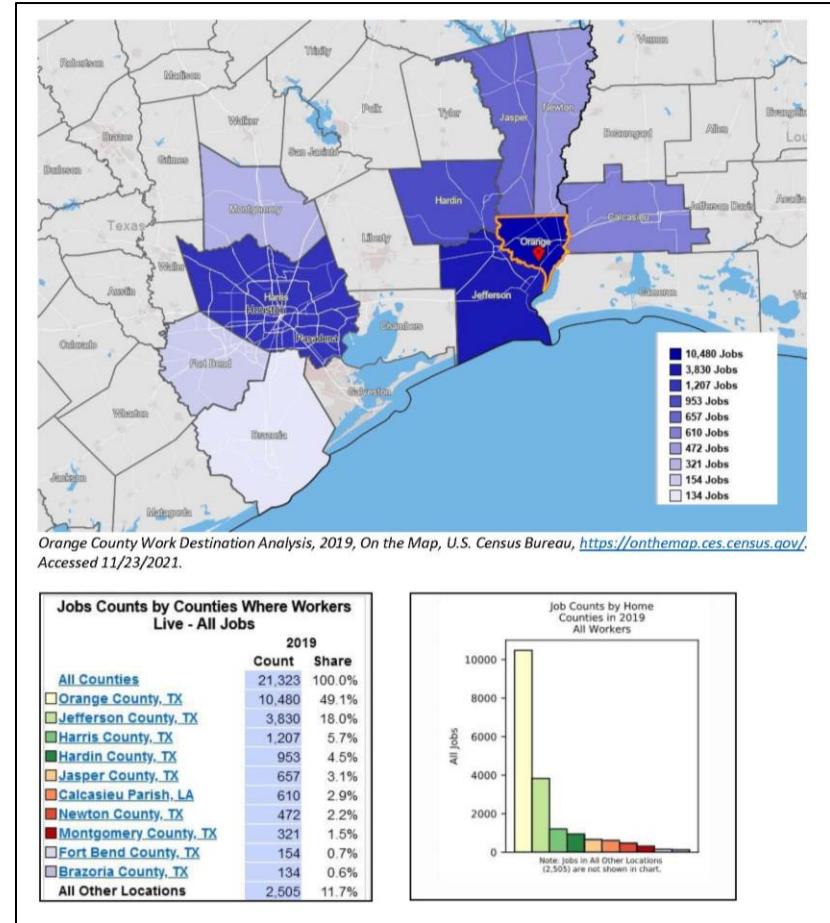


Exhibit 43 Orange County work destination analysis





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1.3. Land-Use Profile

Regional trip generators

A trip generator can be any business, service, or organization which attracts people to its physical location. Many trip generators are local, such as elementary schools, medical offices, grocery stores, etc. Regional trip generators tend to attract customers, clients, students, and employees from a broader area. These may include large employers, key healthcare or educational facilities, social and human service organizations, and entities offering services to a defined group (such as veterans). Given the broader “attraction basin,” the absence of reliable, affordable transportation options can often present a significant barrier.

Employers

The largest employers within the four-county area are chiefly within three sectors: government, education, and healthcare. Beyond these industries, other significant employers include Walmart and H-E-B Grocery. Many of the larger employers identified within the study area are located in Jefferson and Orange counties.

Exhibit 44 Top Employers: Hardin County

Employer	Workforce
Walmart	500-1,000
Brookshire Brothers	100-499
Dragon Products	143
Paschal Welding & Construction	100-499
Streamline Production Systems	100-499

Exhibit 45 Top Employers: Jasper County

Employer	Workforce
WestRock Paper Mill	700
Sun Coast Resources	Unknown
H-E-B	Unknown
Cable One	Unknown

Exhibit 46 Top Employers: Jefferson County

Employer	Workforce
Exxon Mobile (including contractors)	5,000
Beaumont Independent School District	2,918
Christus Southeast Texas Health System	2,500
Baptist Hospital of SETX	1,620
City of Beaumont	1,200
Lamar University	836



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Exhibit 47 Top Employers: Orange County

Employer	Workforce
Dow Sabine River Operations	700
Invista	600
International Paper	520+
Arlanxeo	400
Conrad Orange Shipyard	150

Higher education facilities

Prior to the pandemic, institutions of higher learning tended to offer services from a single location. This practice resulted in trip travel from many origin points to a single “hub” destination. Among the impacts which the pandemic has had on travel behavior is decentralization of educational services, including home schooling, remote learning, and increased presence of satellite campuses. This has resulted in the reduction in number of total trips made as well as diversification in the number of trip destinations (e.g., satellite campuses).

Exhibit 48 South East Texas higher education facilities

Facility name	Campus location(s)
Lamar Institute of Technology	Beaumont
Lamar State College	Orange, Port Arthur
Lamar University	Beaumont
Texas Healthtech Institute	Beaumont
Grace School of Theology	Beaumont

Major healthcare facilities

Healthcare facilities, including local and regional hospitals and medical centers, are common destinations for those persons who often rely on public transportation, especially seniors and persons with disabilities. The majority of the hospitals and medical centers within the project area are located within communities served by some form public transportation. Access to these locations from outlying communities, however, may continue to be problematic given the many portions of the study area lack public transportation services. For example, at the time of this report preparation, there was no public transportation service operating within Jasper County.



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Exhibit 49 South East Texas hospitals/healthcare facilities

Facility name	Location
Altus Lumberton Hospital	Lumberton
Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas	Beaumont
Baptist Orange Hospital	Orange County
Children's Clinic of Jasper	Jasper
CHRISTUS Southeast Texas—Jasper Memorial Hospital	Jasper
CHRISTUS Southeast Texas – St. Elizabeth, Nederland	Nederland
Jasper Newton County Health Department	Buna
Medical Center of Southeast Texas	Nederland
Memorial Hermann Baptist Beaumont Hospital	Beaumont
Rayburn Healthcare and Rehabilitation	Jasper
University of Texas Medical Center	Orange County
Victory Medical Center	Beaumont

Veterans facilities

Like major healthcare facilities, facilities serving veterans tend to be regional in nature. While most locations are within areas served by public transit, the same challenges in securing transportation from many of the outlying communities may apply here as well.

The VA offers several programs providing transportation assistance to its medical centers and clinics. However, not all programs are available in all areas. The Beaumont VA Clinic is associated with the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston. The Veteran Transportation Network (VTN) provides free van rides to and from the VA Medical Center in Houston, but it is unclear as to whether that service is also available in Beaumont or other parts of the project area. Other travel benefits to VA facilities may be available through the VA's Beneficiary Travel Office.

Exhibit 50 South East Texas veterans facilities

Facility name	Location
Hardin County Veterans Services	Kountze
Jefferson County Veterans Services	Beaumont
Jefferson County Veterans Services	Port Arthur
Orange County Veterans Services	Orange
US Department of Veterans Affairs	Beaumont
VA outpatient clinic	Beaumont

Human and social services locations

Human and social service organizations provide supportive services for individuals who are often low-income or unemployed; seniors; individuals who may possess any of a wide variety of physical and/or mental challenges; and others who need such services. Among the services typically offered are job placement, training, food assistance, adult day care, and behavioral health/counseling.





1.4. Community Engagement Activities

Community survey

One of the more important public engagement activities undertaken in support of the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Planning project of the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission was the community survey.

The survey had several objectives including 1) assess awareness as well as recent use of public transit, 2) identify potential motivators as well as barriers (perceived as well as actual) regarding current and future use of public transit, 3) collect basic demographic data specific to survey participants, 4) codify recent travel behavior and mobility needs, and 5) identify opportunities for potential public transit service enhancements.

Survey fielding occurred from early-September through mid-October 2021. Data collection was done online as well as at the eight community pop-up events held throughout the project area. The survey was available in Spanish as well as English.

The online survey was promoted via social media messaging, a direct mailer (four-color postcard) to 20,000 randomly-selected households throughout the four-county project area (Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, and Orange counties), and via the bilingual project webpage. At the conclusion of the agreed upon survey fielding period nearly 100 valid responses had been received.

Initiation of the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Planning project occurred during a period when the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic was still being felt in many of the communities of south east Texas. As such, Moore & Associates, Inc. believes the number of residents who might otherwise had participated in the project's various public engagement activities was reduced.

Based on the survey data, Moore & Associates, Inc. compiled the following "profile" of the survey participant:

- "Typical" mode of travel: *drive alone* (73 percent).
- Access to personal vehicle: *all the time* (78 percent).
- Familiar with public transit (32 percent).
- Has not ridden public transit within the prior 12 months (93 percent).
- Employed full-time (32 percent) or is retired (28 percent).
- Absence or insufficient public transportation service is a barrier: for work (19 percent), for access to healthcare (22 percent), for school/training (13 percent), and for shopping/personal errands (22 percent).
- Typically travels *within home county* (44 percent), *within home county as well as neighboring counties* (47 percent).
- Preferred method of receiving information about public transit services: *Transit provider website* (20 percent), *telephone* (12 percent).



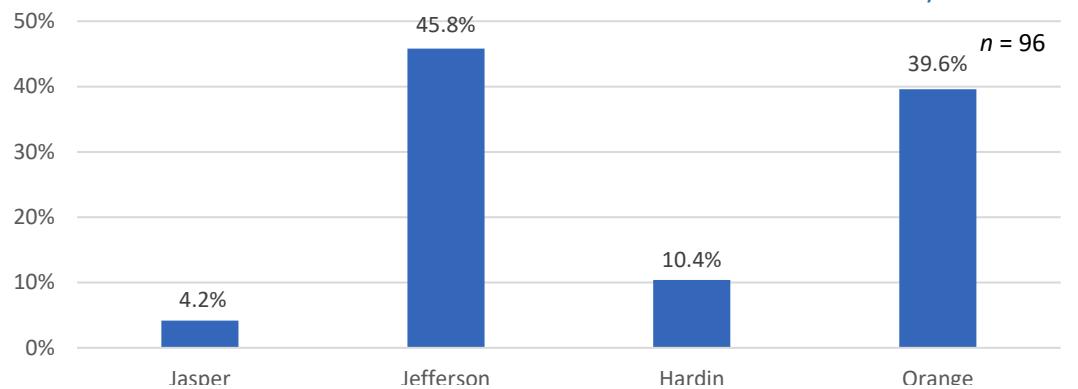
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- Greatest motivator for potential future use of public transit: *Later evening service* (28 percent), *service linking Beaumont to Port Arthur* (27 percent), *more frequent service* (23 percent), and *improved access to transit service information* (23 percent).
- Speaks Spanish at home (5 percent).
- Annual household income under \$50,000 (47 percent).

Q1. In which county do you currently live?

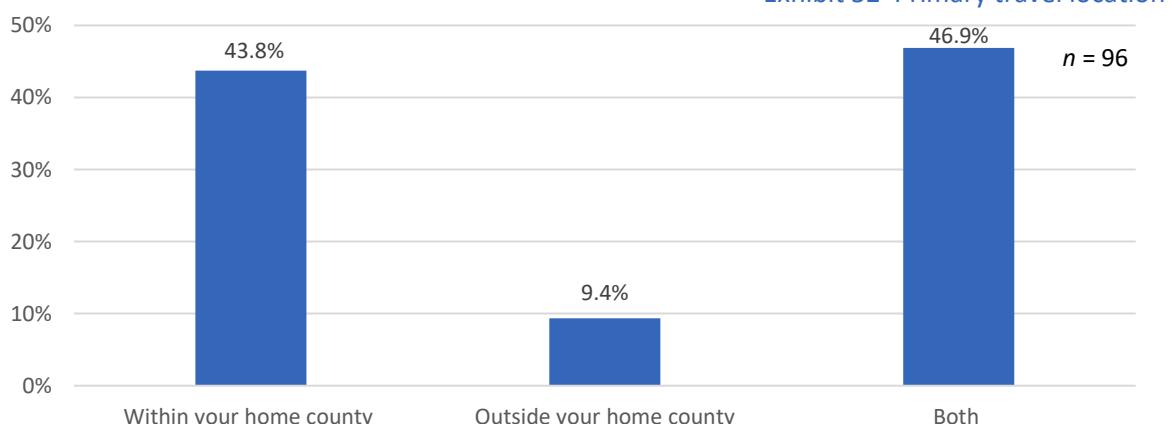
Exhibit 51 County of residence



In contrast to the relative share of survey responses received, based on the American Community Survey (2019), the population share of each county was: Hardin (13.4 percent), Jasper (8.3 percent), Jefferson (58.7 percent), and Orange (19.5 percent). In other words, Orange was “over-sampled” while the other three counties were “under-sampled.”

Q2. Do you mostly (primarily) travel....

Exhibit 52 Primary travel location



The community survey, as well as other public engagement activities undertaken in support of the Plan’s update, revealed the need for frequent inter-county travel in order to access healthcare/medical services, various government and/or social services, and employment. As noted within the narrative for Question 1, the population of each of the four counties varies considerably. Many persons residing in the lower-



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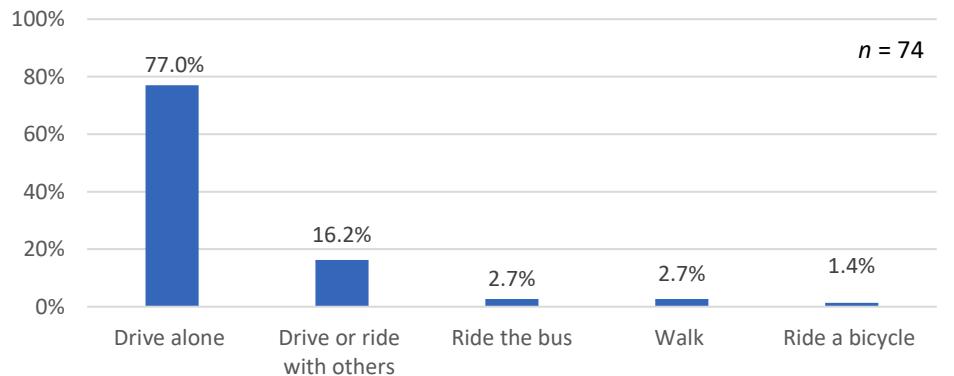
populated areas frequently need to travel to the higher population centers (e.g., Beaumont and Port Arthur) in order to access day-to-day services and employment.

Question 3. Please select the method of transportation you typically use for the stipulated purpose or destination

One of the core objectives of the community survey was to identify and codify current travel behavior within the survey population. Given 78 percent of all survey respondents indicated having access to a personal vehicle “all the time,” the findings are not surprising:

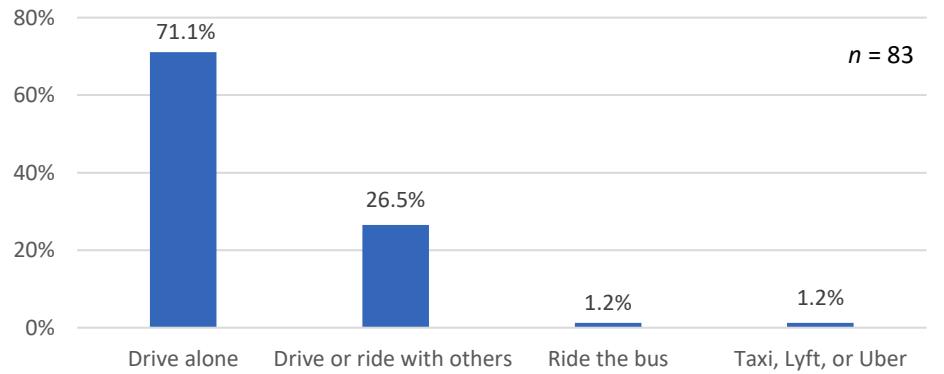
- **Work:** Nearly 80 percent *drive alone* while an additional 19 percent *drive or ride with others*. No survey participant selected public transportation as a means of traveling to/from work/employment.

Exhibit 53 Primary mode of travel – work



- **Medical/healthcare:** When queried as to their typical means of travel to healthcare-related services, 68 percent cited *drive alone*, while an additional 29 percent stated *drive or ride with others*. Approximately 2.5 percent selected *ride the bus*, which Moore & Associates, Inc. believes include use of paratransit/dial-a-ride service given some of the other survey data.

Exhibit 54 Primary mode of travel – medical/healthcare

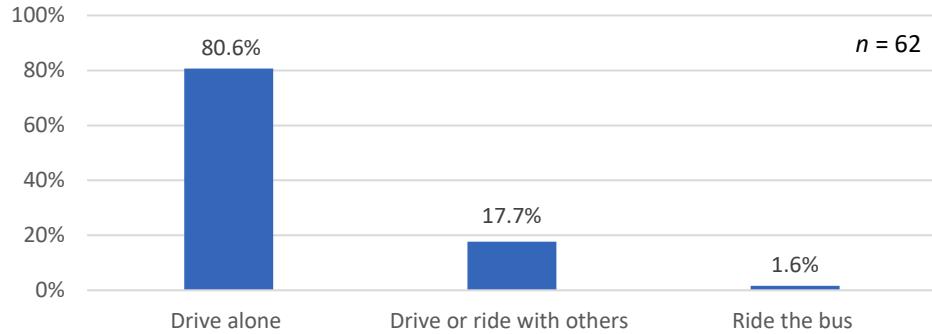




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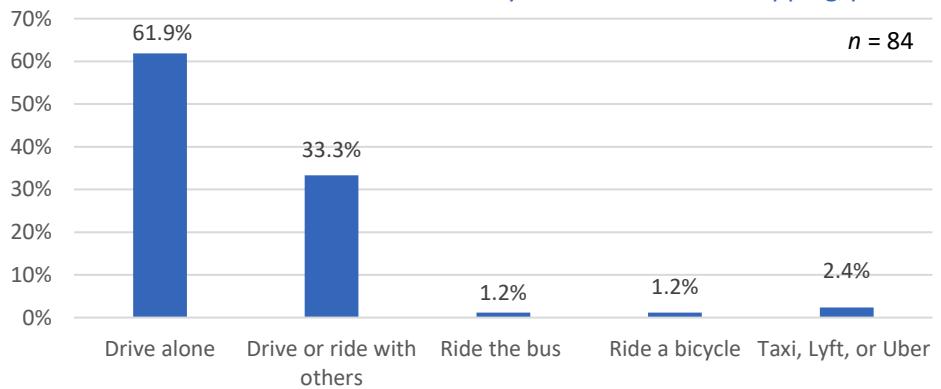
- School/training: This trip purpose garnered the second highest percent of trips made by bus, which suggests some school pupil transportation activity. Here again, the lion's share of the surveyed trips was completed via *drive alone* (79 percent) or *drive/ride with others* (19 percent).

Exhibit 55 Primary mode of travel – school/training



- Shopping/personal: More respondents selected *Taxi/Uber/Lyft* for shopping-related trips than for any of the three other trip purposes/destinations. While still significant (58 percent), this trip purpose had the fewest number of *drive alone* responses.

Exhibit 56 Primary mode of travel – shopping/personal



With respect to work destinations, survey respondents identified Beaumont, Orange, Port Arthur, and Silsbee as frequency destinations (regardless of travel mode). Beaumont was far and away the most commonly identified trip destination for medical/healthcare regardless of "trip origin" county.

With respect to school/training travel, Beaumont was again identified as the most common destination, although not by the same margin noted in the other three trip purposes.

Finally, Beaumont and Orange were identified as the most common shopping-related destinations, regardless of "trip origin" county. With respect to a site-specific destination, HEB (local grocery store) was identified, although neither a specific county or city was identified.



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Q4. Please tell us about the ease or difficulty you face in making each of the four primary trip types.

Exhibit 57 Difficulty in accessing transportation – work

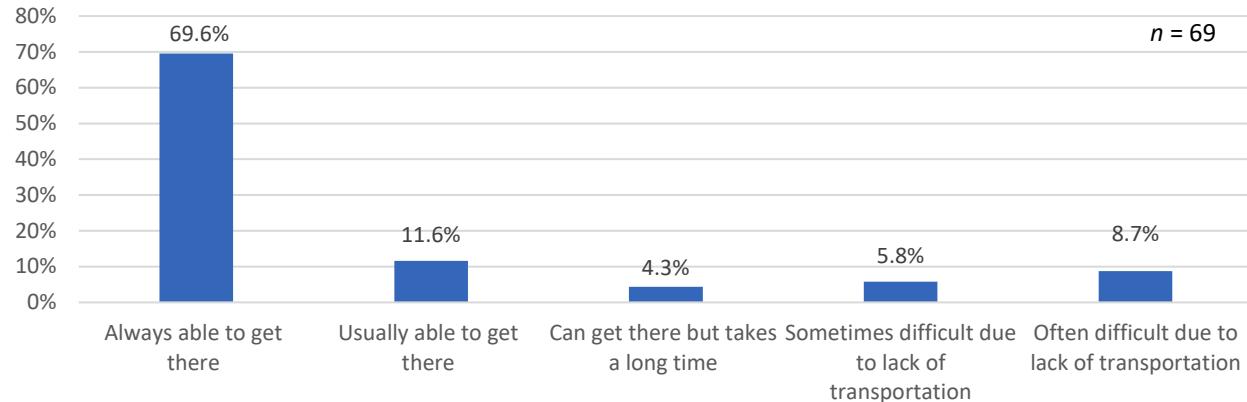


Exhibit 58 Difficulty in accessing transportation – medical/healthcare

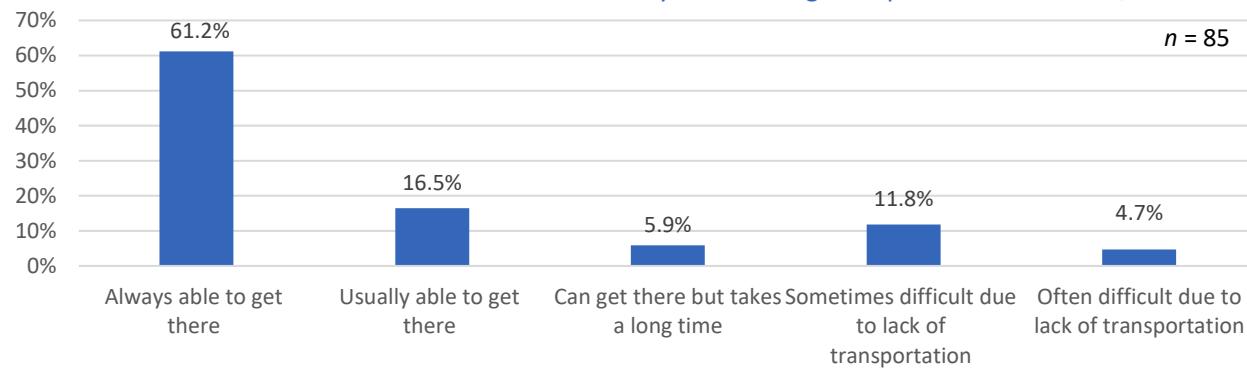
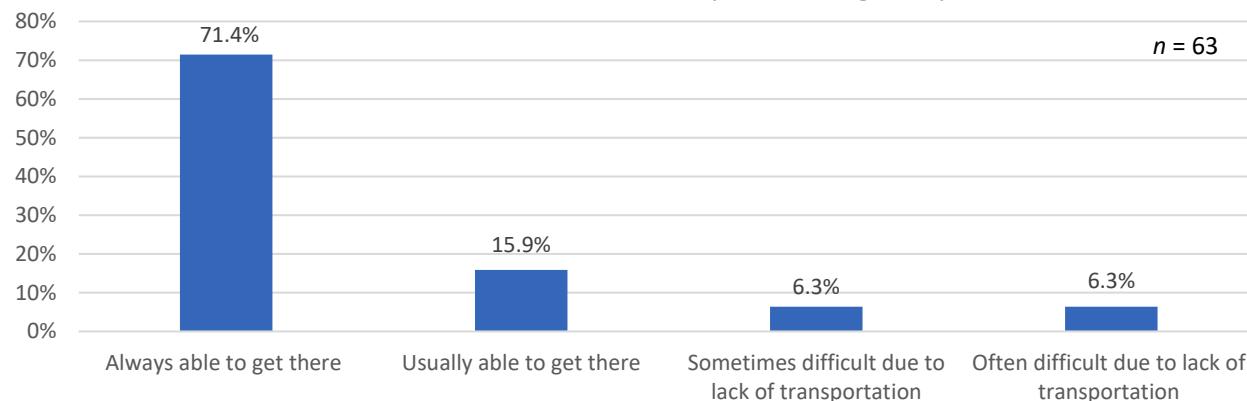


Exhibit 59 Difficulty in accessing transportation – school/training

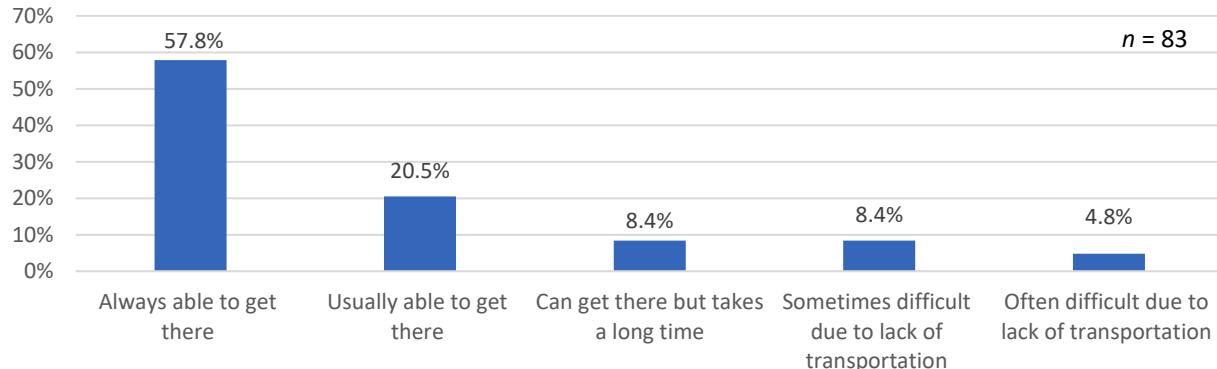




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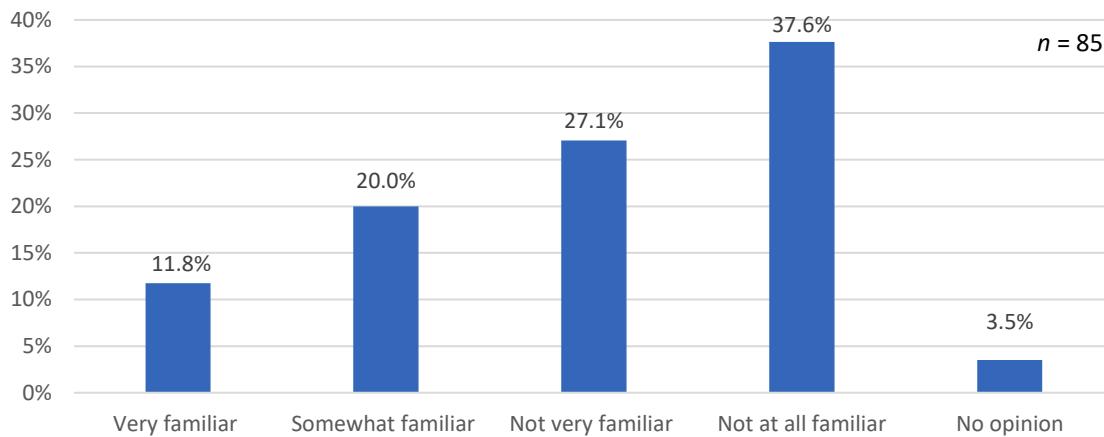
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Exhibit 60 Difficulty in accessing transportation – shopping/personal



5. How familiar are you with public transportation in the county in which you live?

Exhibit 61 Awareness of public transit



The first step in successful marketing of public transportation is establishing awareness. Potential customers not only need to be aware that a service or program exists, they also need to possess a certain level of overall familiarity (e.g., where a given route travels, how often the bus operates, etc.).

During their time “on the ground,” our project associates were struck by the perceived general absence of public transit service information throughout the project communities. This lack of ready access to tangible transit service information was revealed in both the community stakeholder survey and during the community pop-up events.

Successful public transportation organizations (defined as those with continued growth in ridership as well as fare revenue), typically allocate three percent of total annual operating budget to “marketing.” Here “marketing” reflects an “umbrella” term, inclusive of advertising, promotion, public communications, graphic design, etc.



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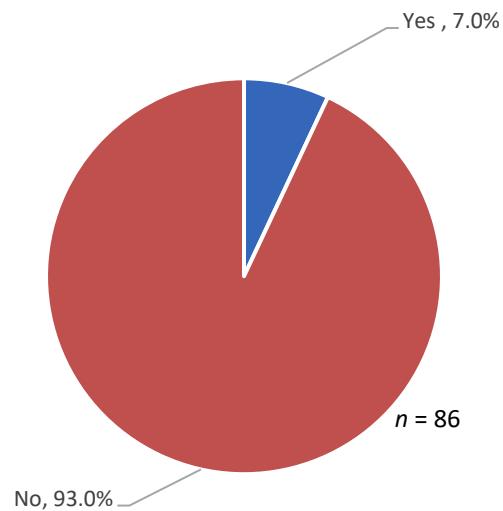
Nearly two-thirds of the survey respondents indicated little or no familiarity specific with the region's public transportation services. Only 13 percent cited *very familiar*.

While some value (ROI) would potentially be realized from a "broad brush" public awareness campaign, Moore & Associates, Inc.'s clients have experienced greatest success through the design and implementation of **targeted** marketing activities. Within the four counties which comprise the project area this would include Spanish-language and culturally-appropriate advertising as well as service materials. Another recommended tactic would be direct mailers targeting residents of multi-family housing, single-vehicle households, and persons residing within a half-mile of established transit alignments.

Again, successful marketing (defined as quantifiable ROI) begins with clearly defined goals, a strategic campaign, and post-campaign (impact) assessment.

Question 6. Have you used public transportation within the 12 months?

Exhibit 62 Public transit usage



Question 7. If you have ridden public transportation in the last 12 months, which service(s) did you use?

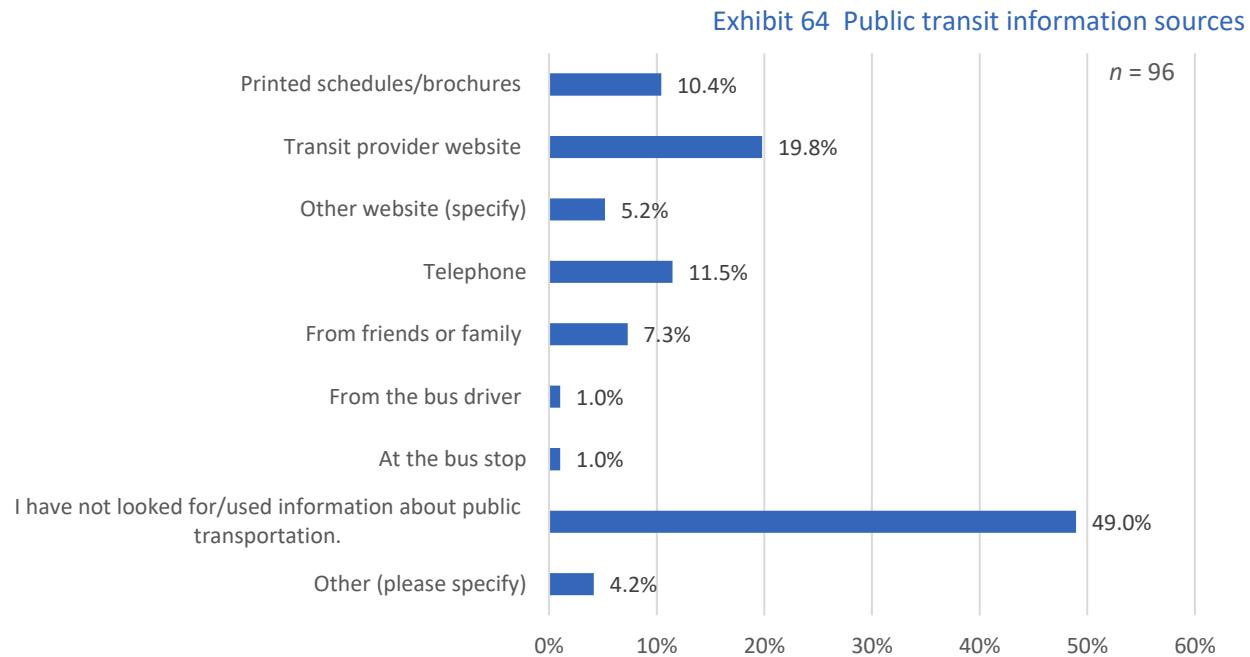
Exhibit 63 Public transit usage – service used

Operator	Frequency
Beaumont Municipal Transit	1
Port Arthur Transit	1
South East Texas Transit	4



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Question 8. How do you usually obtain information about public transportation? (check all that apply)



A listing of possible information sources was provided, and respondents were allowed to select “all that apply.” As such the response totals exceed 100 percent. The focus here is on those survey participants who indicated some use of public transportation/transit within the 12 months prior to the survey contact. Many public transportation providers have attempted to transition their service information distribution to chiefly electronic channels such as websites, often as a cost-reduction tactic. And while Moore & Associates, Inc. appreciates the importance of creating and maintaining a strong online presence, we believe these new virtual channels should be employed in addition to – not instead of – more traditional marketing tactics. This opinion was borne out by the survey results.

When asked how they typically obtain information about public transportation, 20 percent of respondents cited *transit provider website*. The next highest response was *telephone* (12 percent). No other response option had more than single-digit tallies.

While electronic devices such as smart phones, tablets, etc. continue to expand both in terms of overall availability as well device/service affordability, day-to-day usage still skews both “younger” and “affluent.” As such, a chief reliance on non-tangible information services threatens to marginalize two important (historic) customer demographic cohorts: seniors and low-income individuals who often express a preference for traditional information sources/channels such as *printed schedules/brochures*. Further, public transportation market research suggests many potential customers prefer to utilize “printed materials” as part of their (early) decision-making process. Printed materials (often carried along during early service usage) convey a level of “security” or “comfort” for many new or beginning riders.



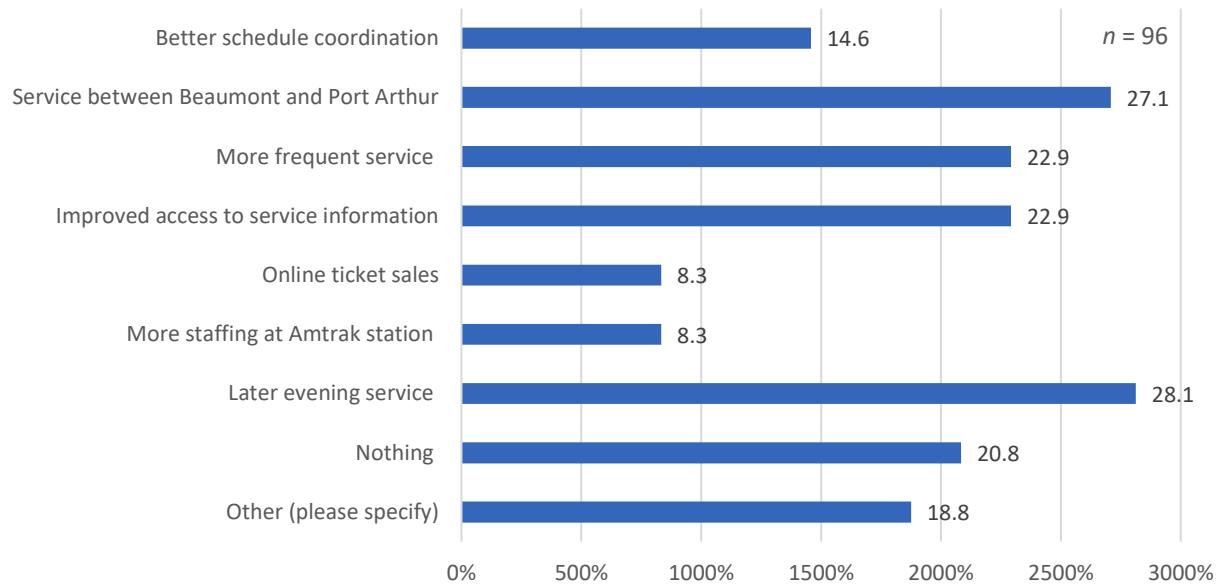
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Lastly, while *information at bus stop* garnered less than ten percent, Moore & Associates, Inc. continues to be strong advocates for providing easy-to-understand service information at bus stops. At a minimum this should include a route identifier, basic schedule information (i.e., a bus serves this stop every X minutes, at Y minutes past the hour), and a phone number and/or URL which the prospective customer can use to gain additional service information.

Question 9. What type of public transportation improvements would you prefer to be made/introduced? (select up to three)

Exhibit 65 Preferred transit improvements



Survey participants were permitted to select up to three options. Therefore, the response totals exceed 100 percent.

First off, nearly 20 said there was *nothing* which public transportation providers within the four-county project area could do to attract their patronage. That's not particularly surprising given the very high percentage (78 percent) of survey participants indicating "all the time" access to a personal vehicle.

The public's desire for *more bus service* is certainly not news to South East Texas Regional Planning Commission policy-makers and staff. This desire was clearly documented in prior Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plans; and now again via all of the public engagement activities undertaken in support of the 2021 Regional Public Transportation Coordinated Plan (i.e., community stakeholder survey, community survey, and community pop-up events). To provide some specificity to this desire or need, the various data indicates "later evening service" and "a link (i.e., scheduled service) between Beaumont and Port Arthur" followed by "increased service frequency" and "improved access to service information". While this may appear to be a daunting task, we recommend the SETRPC and transportation providers approach the requested service improvements on an incremental basis; either focusing on one route at a time (logically, the highest ridership route(s)) and/or one community or county at a time. In any event, in



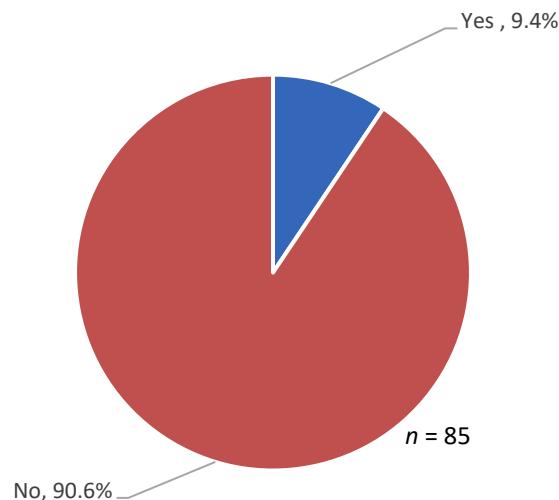
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order to retain the historic (transit) ridership base as well as overall community support (in other words, inclusive of tax-paying non-riders), evidence of tangible progress is needed.

Among the other preferred improvements are “better schedule coordination,” “online ticket sales,” and “more staffing at the Amtrak station.”

10. Do you typically use a wheelchair or other mobility device (such as a motorized scooter, walker, etc.)?

Exhibit 66 Mobility device usage



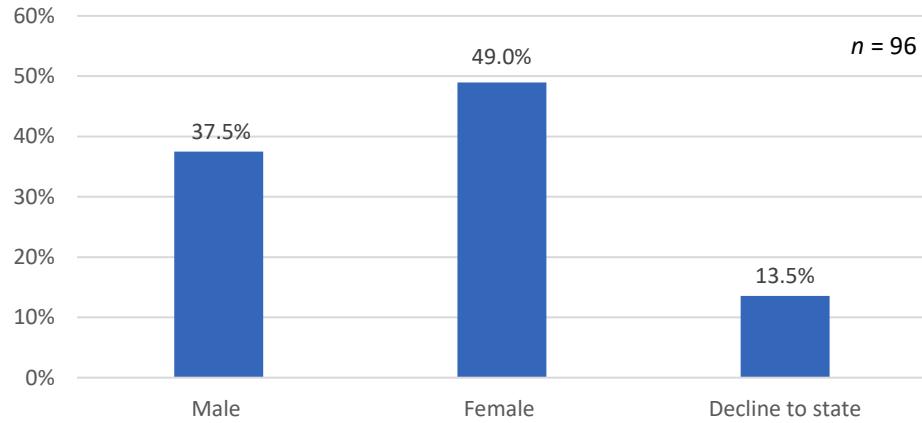
According to the American Community Survey (2019), the average concentration of persons identifying as “disabled” within the four-county project area was 15.7 percent.



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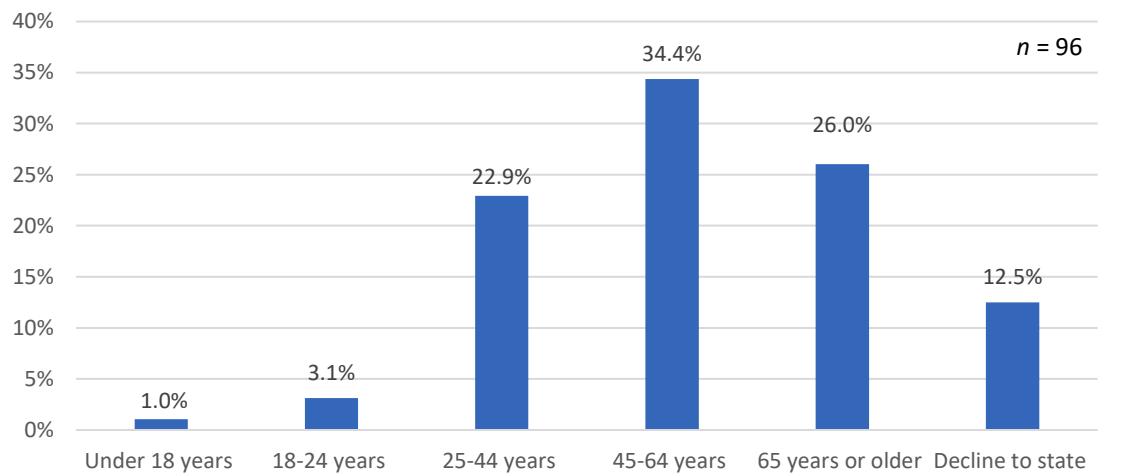
11. What is your gender?

Exhibit 67 Respondent gender



12. What category includes your age?

Exhibit 68 Respondent age

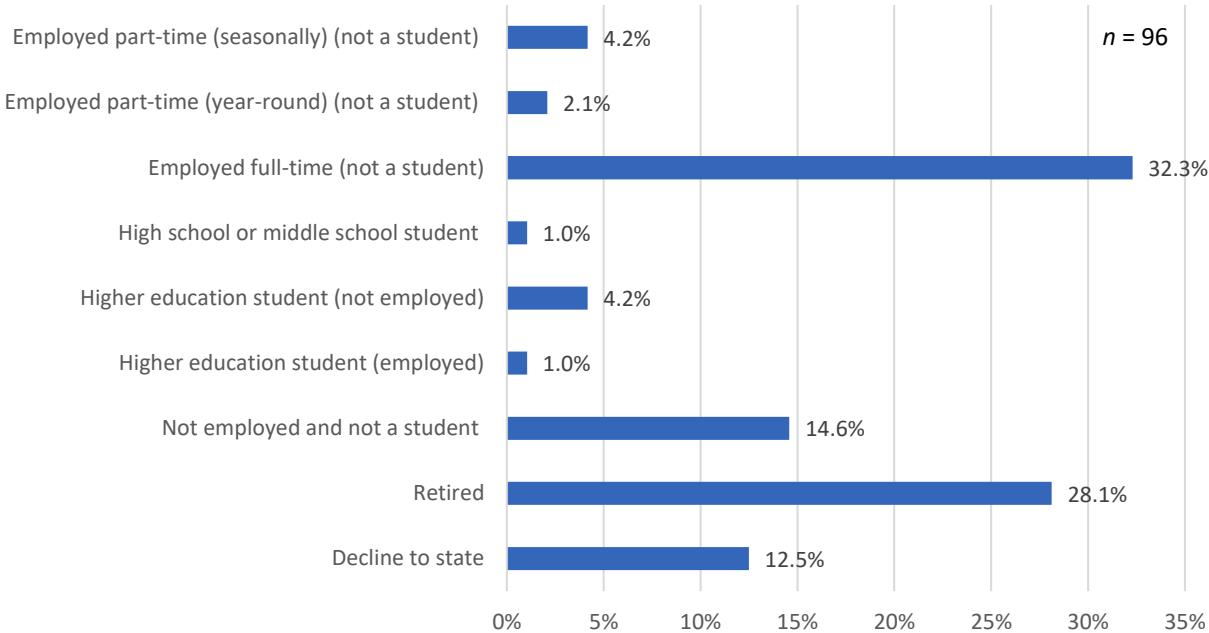




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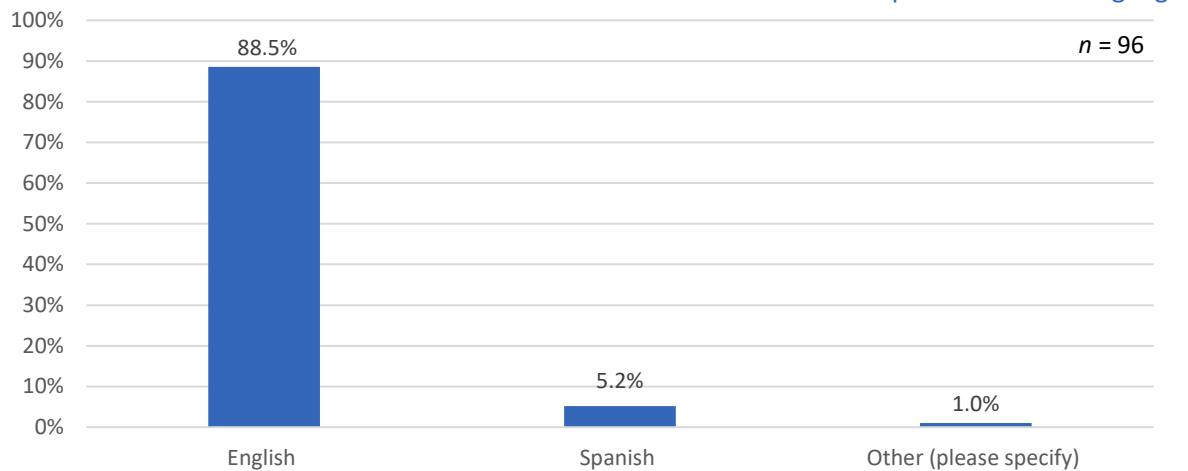
13. Please describe your current employment status.

Exhibit 69 Respondent employment status



14. Which language(s) do you speak at home? (check all that apply)

Exhibit 70 Respondent home language



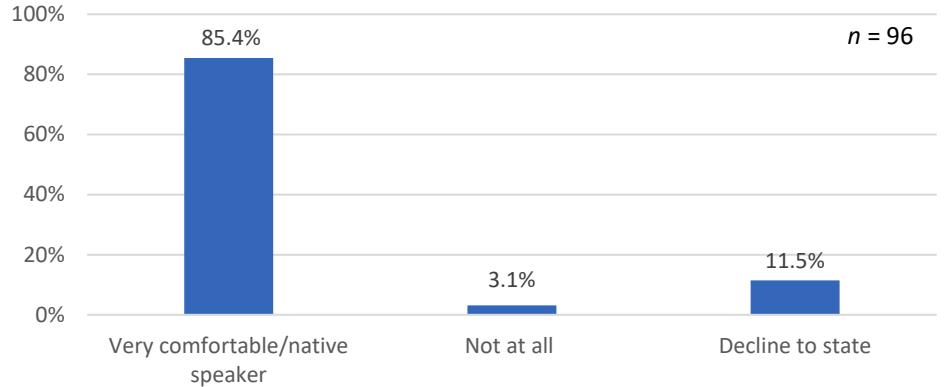
Other: Russian



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15. How comfortable are you speaking English?

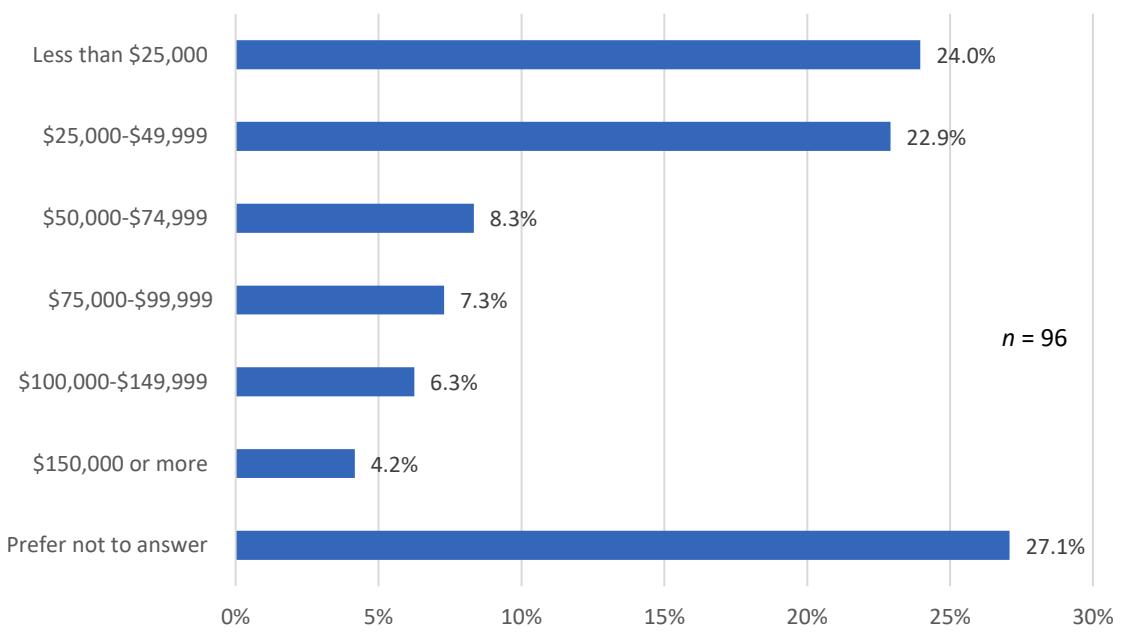
Exhibit 71 Respondent English proficiency



According to the American Community Survey (2019), the greatest concentration of limited-English proficiency individuals residing within the four-county project area were in Jefferson County (5.1 percent).

16. What is your annual household income?

Exhibit 72 Respondent household income



According to the American Community Survey (2019), the average annual household income for each of the four counties within the project area was: \$80,698 in Hardin, \$64,222 in Jasper, \$73,960 in Jefferson, and \$77,645 in Orange.



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17. Of the following categories, how many people live in your household (including yourself)?

Exhibit 73 Children (age 10 and under) in the household

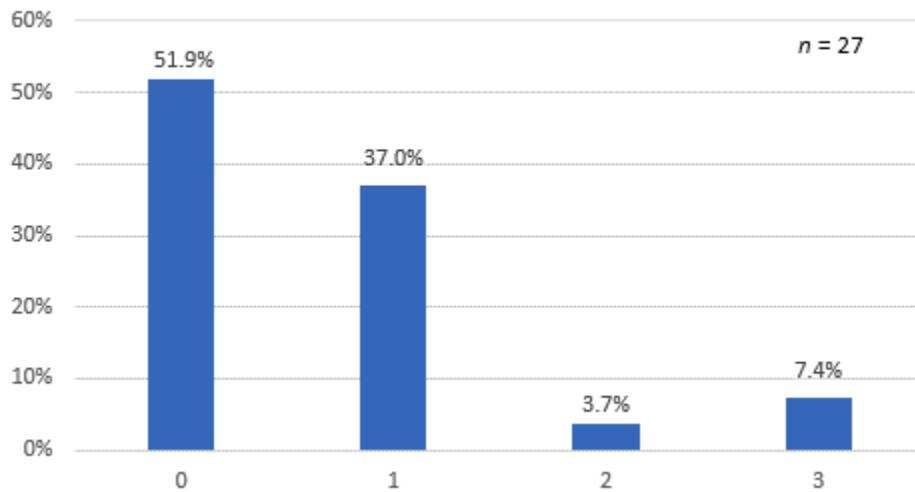
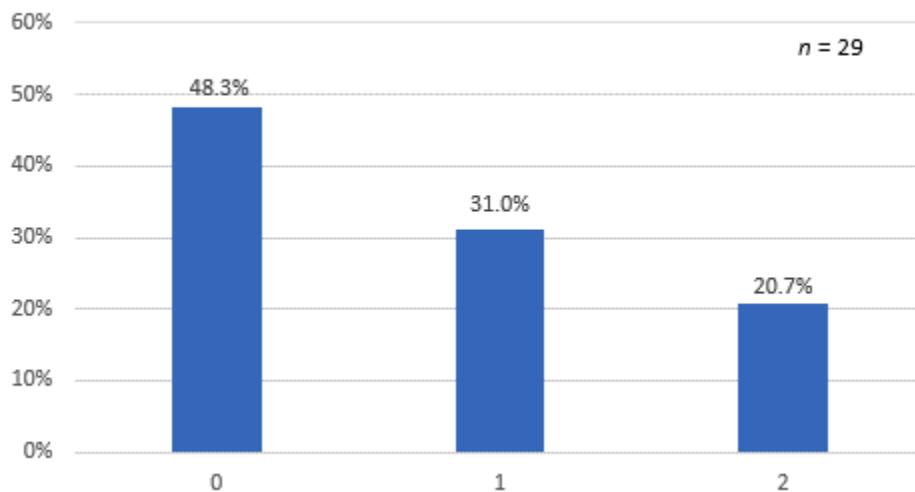


Exhibit 74 Youth (age 10-18) in the household





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Exhibit 75 Adults (age 19-64) in the household

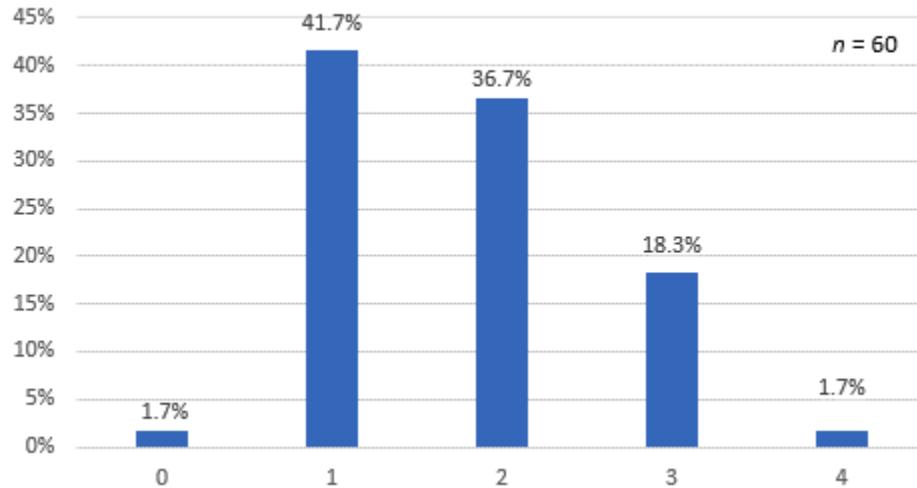
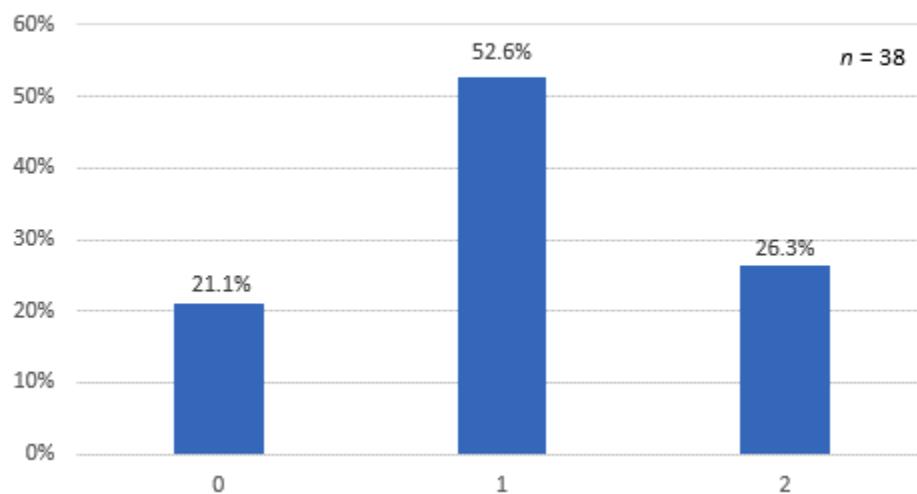


Exhibit 76 Seniors (age 65 and older) in the household

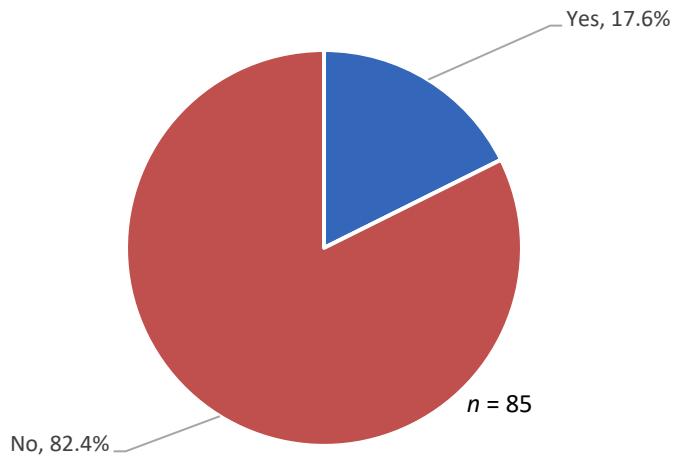




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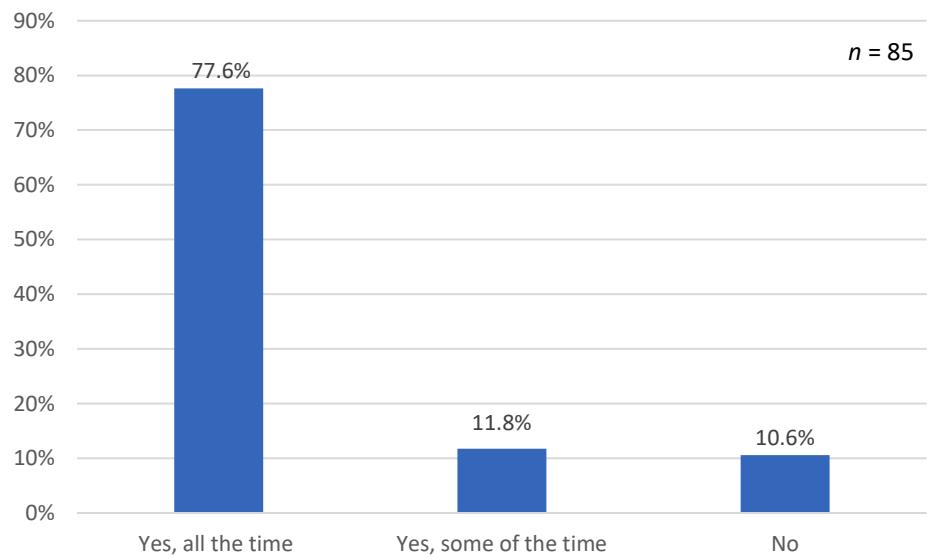
18. Do you have a disability that impacts your personal mobility?

Exhibit 77 Presence of a disability



19. Do you have access to a personal vehicle?

Exhibit 78 Access to a personal vehicle



As shown in Exhibit 24, while the percentage of zero-vehicle households is 7.5 percent or lower in each county, the incidence of single-car households is as high as 36.6 percent. This means many households are one breakdown or repair away from losing access to their personal vehicle, even if they normally have access to it all the time.



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20. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your or your family's transportation needs, or about transportation needs in your community?

Comments
A local bus with residential stops as well as commercial would be great!
As a service provider in the community, I see great needs re: public transportation. Lack of routes, lack of city-to-city service, limited hours, etc. makes public transportation another obstacle/barrier for individuals to overcome.
At some time I will be unable to drive, then I will need transportation better than what is available in Orange. I will also need Orange to Beaumont and back.
I am filling this out because self transportation could end any time.
I have to rely on friends for all transportation needs. No local service available whatsoever. Home bound, disabled and legally blind.
I live in Silsbee & have 2 disabilities. Please make Southeast Texas Transit available for me to travel DIRECTLY to ALL of Jefferson County, including mid-county & south county. Most of my doctors are at the Medical Center of Southeast Texas. Also, DIRECT round trip service to ALL of Orange County & Tyler County would be GREATLY APPRECIATED. I can be contacted at [REDACTED] for further input if needed.
I would use the bus if it were convenient to where I live.
Lumberton, Hwy 96 – bring bus service, fixed-route bus to mall or various services for seniors.
My eyesight is getting worse as I age. I wish there was some public transportation available in Lumberton to doctor, library, grocery store. I am able to pay.
Need transportation from Orange to Port Neches Area; Orange to Lake Charles, LA. Night shifts start at 6 pm (need service for this shift). Need weekend service. Pricing at \$1 seems fair. Need more vehicles for the fleet (currently only have 2). First week of month is very busy (many trip denials). Current customer base is majority seniors – they don't use the internet.
Public transportation is much needed for those who do not have any other options.
Public transportation would be so great here. It's hard relying on people who can't help.
Something needs to be done about getting through Lumberton. It is a huge bottleneck and makes the commute a very frustrating adventure.
The roads and highways are horrible due to constant, slow, and often repeated construction. Public transport by vans or busses is hampered by this constant delay.
There are too many potholes on streets, including highways and I-10.
Veterans need transport to Lufkin and Houston for VA medical needs.
We need road improvement.
We need safe, comprehensive and accessible sidewalks and trails. Improving physical and mental health through exercise is IMPERATIVE.
We will need it more in the near future.
Yes. I don't drive to Beaumont and need assistance getting on and off the vans from mid-county to Beaumont.





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Community pop-up events

From September 28-30, 2021, the consultant team hosted eight community pop-up events in support of the 2021 Regional Public Transportation Coordinated Plan project. The pop-up events were held at publicly accessible locations in Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, and Orange counties. Details regarding event times and locations were developed through consultations with RPC staff.

Presented below is a brief summary of each of the eight events.

1. Mart Basket Food/Beaumont

Approximately 40 residents. Engaged at least 15. Comments received:

- Need a connection from Beaumont to Port Arthur.
- Vehicles are unsafe (BMT); equipment is “junk.”
- New operations contractor is not liked (First Transit). Drivers are underpaid.
- Not enough public transit service for persons with disabilities.
- Store manager was very appreciative to receive BMT service info given she has become the unofficial Uber for her employees.

2. La Vaquita Meat Market/Port Arthur

Majority of the attendees spoke Spanish. Approximately 70 residents. Engaged at least five.

Comments received:

- Need transportation to Houston.
- All transit service materials need to be available in Spanish. Port Arthur Transit and SETT brochures, specifically.

3. Market Basket/Bridge City

Approximately 40 residents. Engaged at least 10.

Karen Stevens/Orange Community Action Association stopped by. Her comments:

- Seeking money for marketing/advertising her program.
- Has been able to regain nearly all ridership since pre-COVID (750 rides/month before COVID; currently 650 rides/months).
- Operates three vehicles. Has one vehicle that is a lemon.



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4. Danny's Super Foods/West Orange

Approximately 10 residents. Engaged four. (Note: This location was flooded out half-way through due to heavy rains. Danny offered to have us back out the next day. Unfortunately, other pop-up events were already booked. This is an opportunity for future outreach.) Dispatcher from Orange Community Action Association stopped by. Comments specific to the current South East Texas Transit service:

- Need service from Orange to Port Neches.
- Need service from Orange to Lake Charles, LA. Many medical services available Lake Charles. Currently service does not cross state lines.
- Current service doesn't run late enough (4 pm). There are many night-shift workers that start at 6 pm that need transportation.
- Need weekend service.
- Pricing at one dollar seems fair.
- Need more vehicles for the fleet. Currently only have 2 functioning.
- First week of the month is very busy (trip denials are higher).
- Majority of current riders is seniors. They have limited access (or don't use) the internet. Therefore, need funding to support traditional marketing/advertising /outreach.

5. Brookshire Brothers/Kirbyville

Approximately 20 residents. Engaged five. Tough location. Manager required set-up far away from store entrance. Additionally, given there is currently no public transportation in Jasper County, we didn't have a "carrot" to initiate public transportation conversation with passers-by.

6. Brookshire Brothers/Jasper

Approximately 10 residents. Engaged three. Manager required set-up away from store entrance. Comments included:

- Folks thought we were "wasting our time" unless public transportation will be extended into Jasper County
- Request for transportation between Jasper and Hardin or Orange counties to access healthcare services.

7. Brookshire Brothers/Lumberton

Approximately 20 residents. Engaged six. Our location was offset from the store entrance. Public comments:

- Would like to have service along Hwy 96. To the mall or various services for seniors.
- Lumberton does not qualify for SETT. So there really isn't any public transit in town.



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8. Brookshire Brothers/Sour Lake

Approximately 10 residents. Engaged three. Our location was offset from the store entrance. Public comments:

- Given Sour Lake's westerly location in Hardin County would like service to Liberty.

Overall, attendees appreciated receiving the information. Many weren't previously aware that some form of public transportation is available. Our team left SETT materials with every store manager (except in Jasper County) and explained how public transportation could help with existing employees as well as recruitment of future employees. This was well-received.



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Stakeholder Survey

Methodology

A stakeholder survey was distributed via first class mail and email to 94 organizations throughout the four-county project area. The stakeholder survey was designed to collect information about populations served and services provided as well as transportation services offered. The stakeholder survey also requested respondents to identify existing transportation needs among the populations they served, which was used in developing the Needs Assessment.

Completed surveys were received from the following 29 organizations:

- Beaumont Housing Authority
- Beaumont Transit*
- Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas
- City of Bevil Oaks
- City of Orange
- City of West Orange
- Da Vita Golden Triangle Dialysis
- Fresenius Kidney Care Dialysis Center
- Goodwill Industries of Southeast Texas
- Jack Brooks Regional Airport
- Jasper County
- Jasper Emergency Service District #1
- Lamar University
- Nutrition and Services for Seniors*
- Orange Community Action Association*
- Orange County Transportation*
- Orange Fire Department
- Port Arthur Housing Authority
- Port Arthur Transit*
- Port of Beaumont
- Renal Center of Orange (Da Vita)
- RISE (Resource, Information, Support and Empowerment)
- Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club Beaumont*
- South East Texas Regional Planning Commission, Community Services Division
- Spindletop Center*
- The Arc of Greater Beaumont
- United Way of Orange County
- Workforce Solutions – Orange
- Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas

**Directly operates transportation service*



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Observations

The majority of the stakeholders responding to the survey do not directly operate transportation. Approximately one-third said they do not operate, contract for, or subsidize any transportation services. Seven respondents directly operate transportation with full responsibility, while another two purchase/contract for services from another entity. Other common responses include subsidizing rides or fares (31 percent) and providing initial assistance in obtaining transportation (21 percent).

Exhibit 79 Type of organization

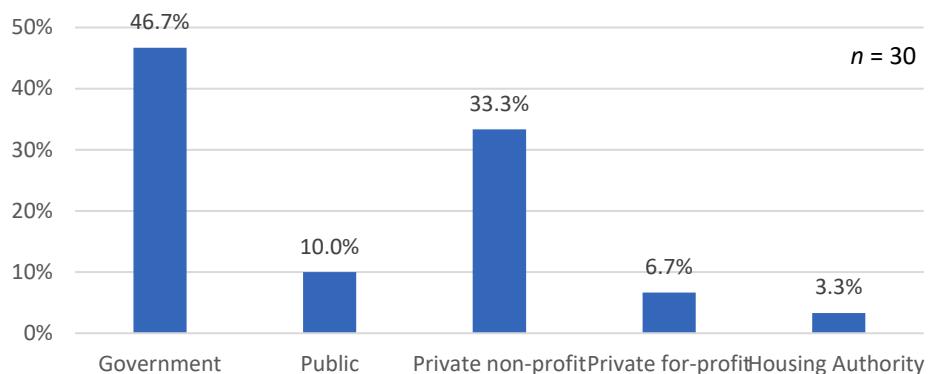
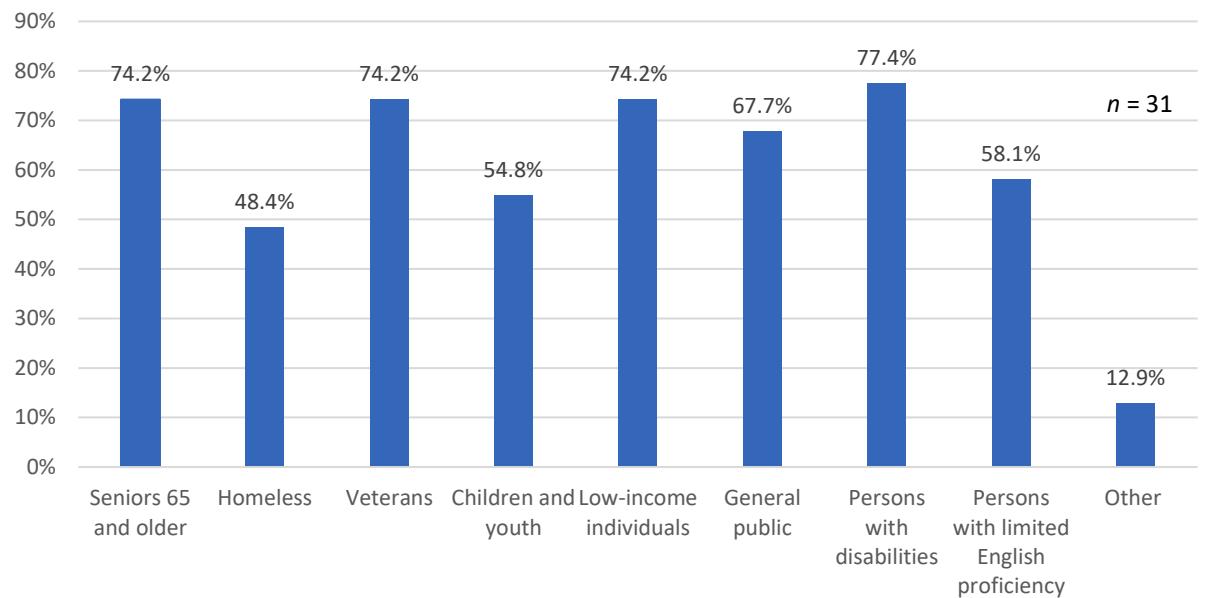


Exhibit 80 Client populations served





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Exhibit 81 Organization core functions

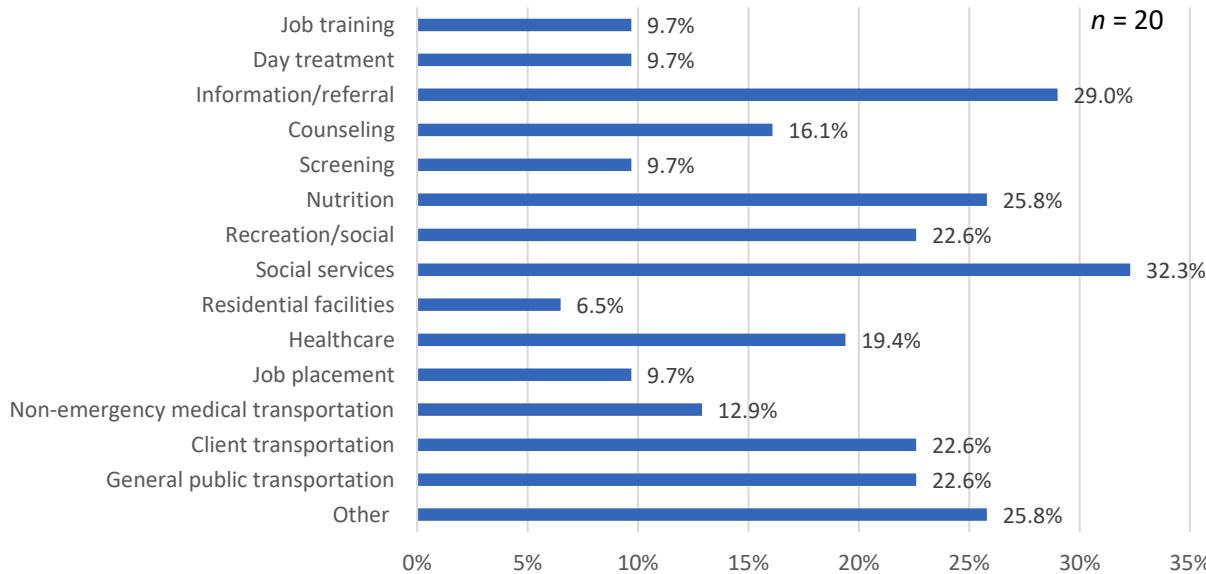
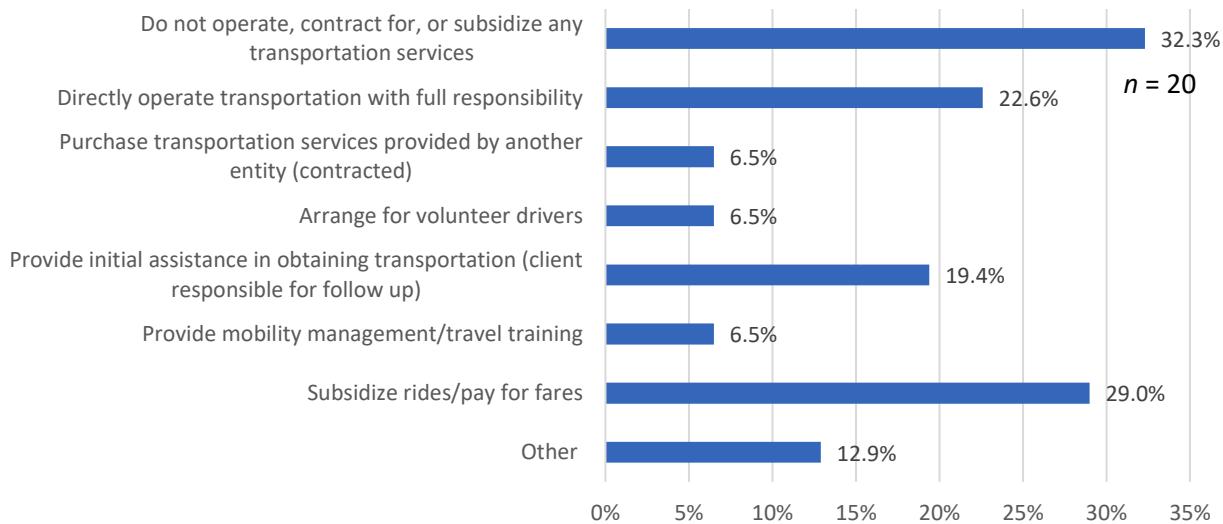


Exhibit 82 Transportation services provided



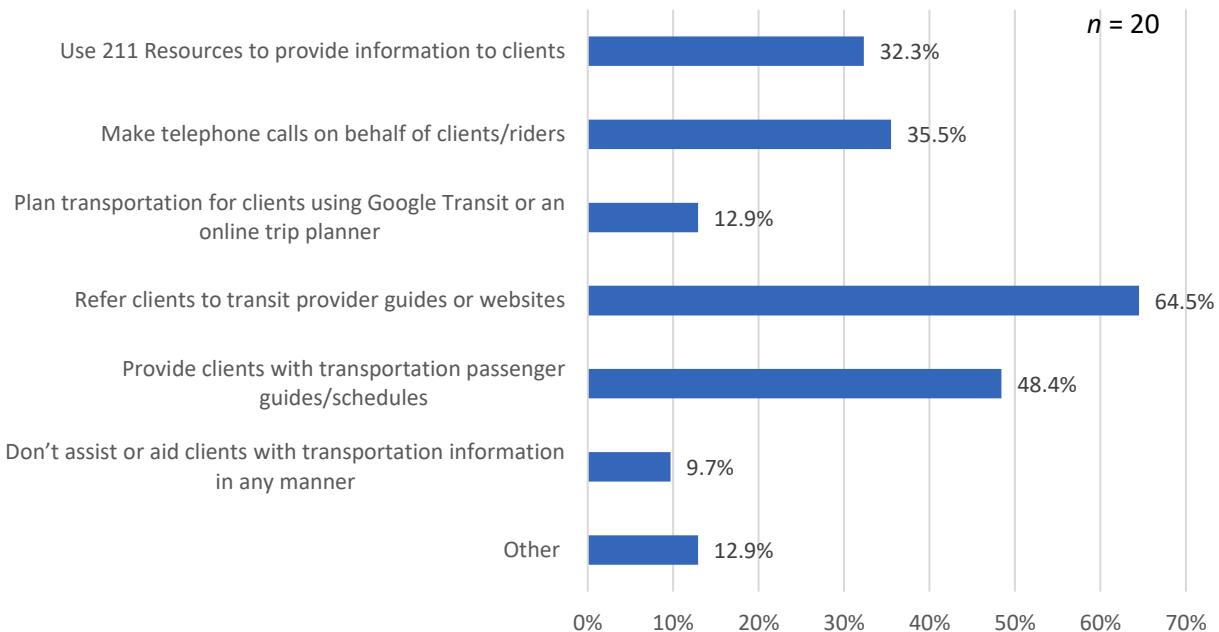


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Stakeholder respondents most frequently refer clients to transit provider guides or websites (69 percent) and provide clients with transportation guides and/or schedules (52 percent). Approximately one-third make telephone calls on behalf of clients/riders and/or use Texas 211 to offer additional information.

Exhibit 83 Transportation information assistance provided

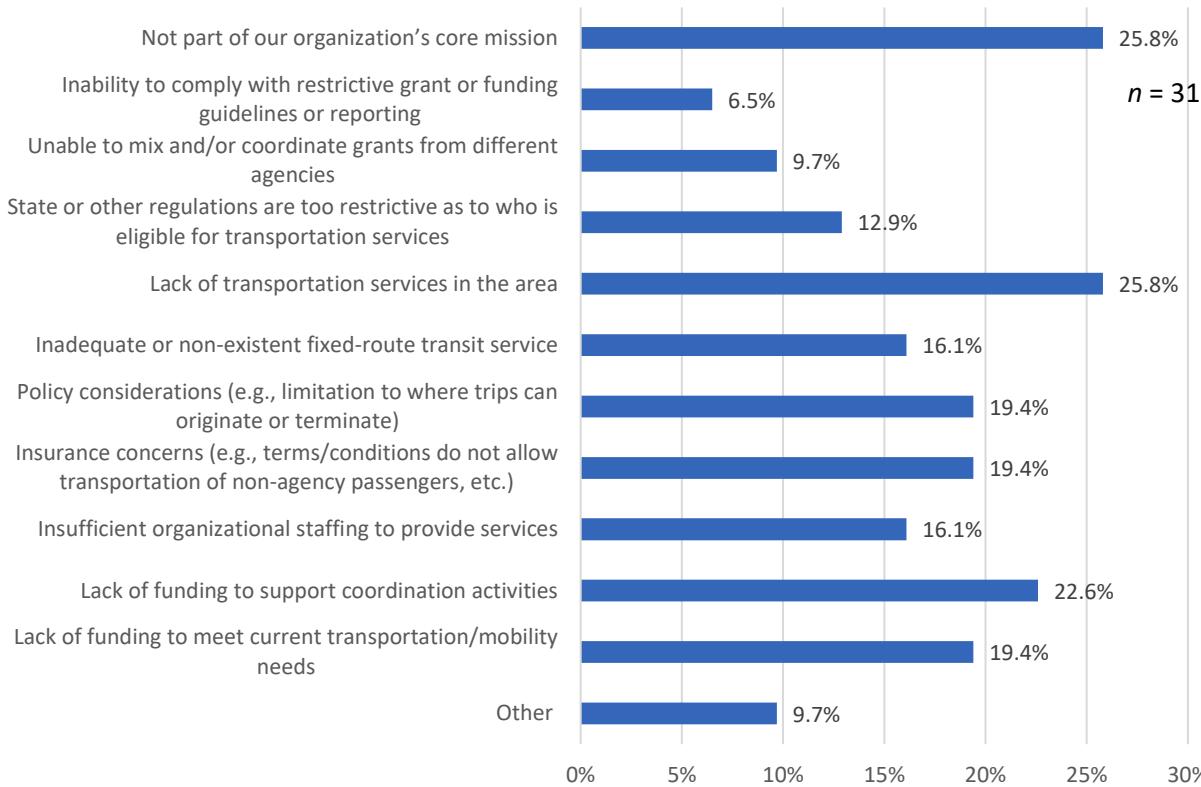


The most common transportation need with which clients communicate having difficulty obtaining is medical trips, followed by access to veterans services, essential shopping, and weekday trips. The most significant challenges encountered by responding organizations are that transportation is not part of their core mission (28 percent), there is a lack of transportation services in the area (28 percent), and there is a lack of funding to support coordination activities (24 percent).



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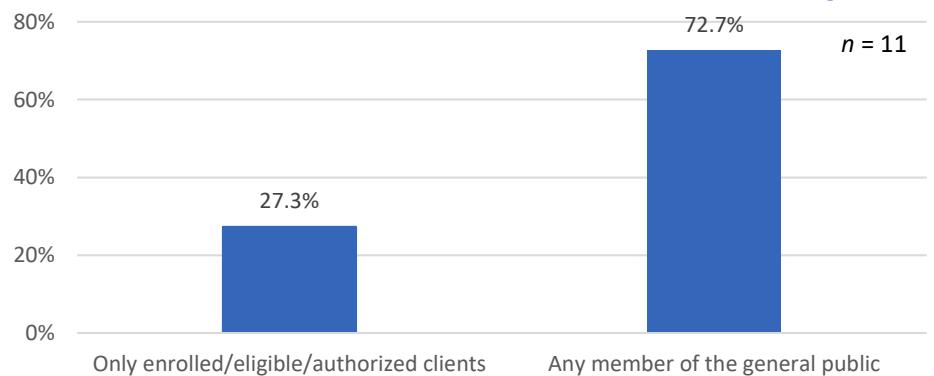
Exhibit 84 Most significant transportation challenges



A majority of respondents (65.2 percent) were unaware as to whether there was an ongoing process for identifying duplication of service, under-utilized transportation assets, and service gaps in their community. Only 8.7 percent indicated yes.

Among those stakeholders who indicated providing transportation, nearly three-quarters operate services that are open to the general public. Two-thirds operate a fleet of 10 or more vehicles.

Exhibit 85 Eligible riders





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Exhibit 86 Fleet size

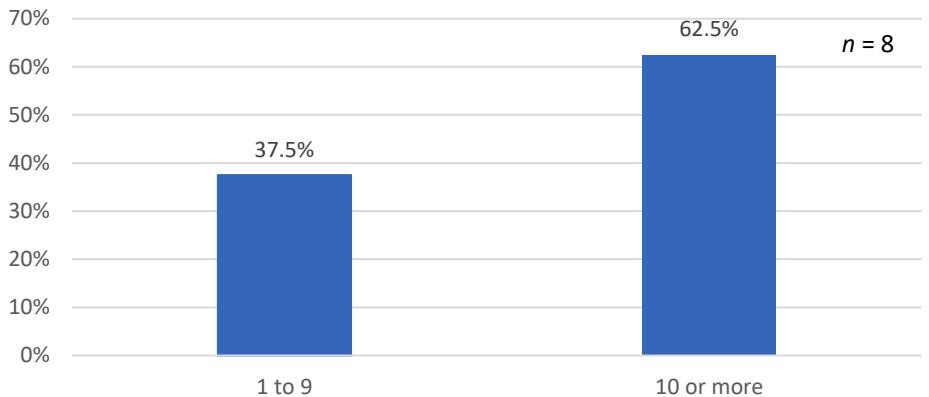


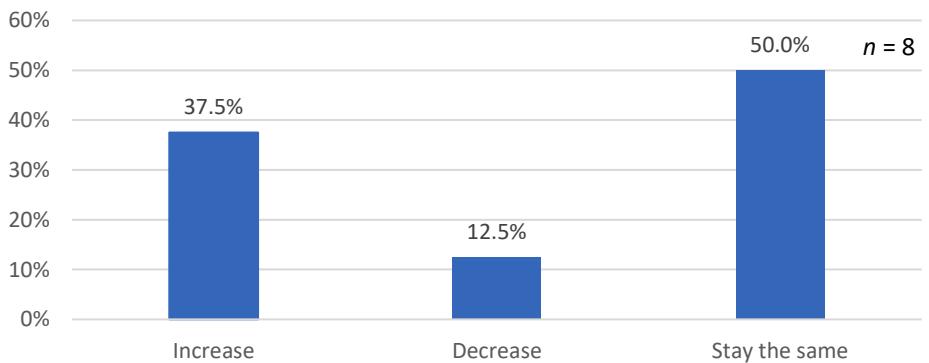
Exhibit 87 Number and type of vehicles

Vehicle capacity	Number of vehicles
1-4 passengers	108
5-10 passengers	27
11 to 16 passengers	42
More than 16 passenger	43
Lift-equipped	78

Stakeholders indicated 26 vehicles with 10 or fewer seats would likely need to be replaced in the next five years, along with 10 vehicles with 11 to 20 seats and 17 vehicles with more than 20 seats.

Half of the transportation programs said they do not expect to see any change to their transportation budget in 2022. Seven of the eight organizations said they expected to continue their client transportation programs across the next five years.

Exhibit 88 Anticipated change in budget (for 2022)



Eleven respondents indicated an interest in participating in a virtual stakeholder roundtable. Another five said they might be interested.



The survey instrument also asked stakeholders to comment on the following:

- Clients'/members' primary barriers to accessing transportation;
- Enhancements most needed to improve coordination of public transit and human service transportation; and
- Other issues, concerns, or information they believe are relevant to the issue.

Barriers to accessing transportation

- Availability/frequency of bus transportation to and from campus. (Lamar University)
- Clients in low-paying jobs or unemployed are unable to access service. Some lack drivers licenses or are unable to get them. (Workforce Solutions – Orange)
- Cost, accessibility, lack of availability. (RISE)
- Internet or phone access, as most of the clients are seniors and need help accessing those things in order to contact us. (Orange Community Action Association)
- Lack of financial resources. (Workforce Solutions SETX)
- Lack of knowledge and education of what options are out there. Difficulties getting to/from our building. (The Arc of Greater Beaumont)
- Lack of routes, needing transportation to mid-county, number of transfers required to get where they need to go. (Goodwill Industries of SETX)
- Limited routes, limited schedule. (Beaumont Housing Authority)
- Minimal to no transportation services. (Jasper County)
- Mobility limitations, funding, late evening service hours, some employment opportunities are not close to transportation. (Port Arthur Transit)
- Needing more advanced help than driver (i.e., caregiver or provider). Some clients either cannot afford or are not able to get the help they need for daily functions and often want drivers to perform these duties. (Orange County Transportation)
- No vehicle in household – no family or friends to assist – time of transit vehicle does not coincide with time of appointment. Nothing available to assist outside of volunteer help. (SETRPC Community Services Division)
- Patients on dialysis generally treat for four hours three times a week. Transportation times are very limited. Patients can only be placed on certain shifts to accommodate transportation. This greatly limits patients. Patients who treat on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday must be placed on 2nd shift (very limited space). Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday patients also must be placed on 2nd shift to accommodate transportation hours. Since transportation does not operate on Saturdays, patients must make other arrangements. However, many do not have another option and tend to miss treatment. (Renal Center of Orange – DaVita)
- Patients say it's impossible to schedule a same-day reservation. Not enough bus stops. Holidays cause them to miss treatment since transportation does not operate on those days. (Fresenius Kidney Care Dialysis)
- The transportation company through Medicaid switched in June and there have been issues. Drivers are late, drivers having children or other people in the car making patients uncomfortable. Not an issue with City, but good to note. (DaVita Golden Triangle Dialysis)



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- We currently provide transportation so the clients we have only express a need to get to Houston for medical appointments. Most other trips we can help them with. (Nutrition and Services for Seniors)

Most-needed enhancements:

- A detailed plan on existing transportation resources and efforts to improve support to the citizens. (Jasper County)
- ADA-compliant public access and bus stops. (RISE)
- Better software in order to help run and schedule the routes for a more sufficient outcome in order to generate more rides. (Orange Community Action Association)
- Bus routes to Houston – VA, MD Anderson, etc. (Nutrition and Services for Seniors)
- Consistent funding sources. Consistent and regular conversations between providers. (Port Arthur Transit)
- Easier access to the scheduling of rides on current special transit system. (RISE)
- Extended hours of operation to include early morning and evening times. (Renal Center of Orange – DaVita)
- Get away from traditional bus service and move to more “on demand” personal service. (Beaumont Housing Authority)
- Increasing the number of wheelchair accessible/special transit buses and services from city-to-city within the county. (RISE)
- Information to populations that can benefit from transportation options that exist. (The Arc of Greater Beaumont)
- Linking BMT to Port Arthur. (Goodwill Industries of SETX)
- Need to extend hours. If patients are not a part of Medicaid they do not have access to affordable transportation. (Fresenius Kidney Care Dialysis)
- Patients that don't have access to unlimited transportation rides (through Medicaid) have difficulty accessing transportation if their treatment goes over the scheduled time. Better coordination with public transit and the organization would be beneficial. (DaVita Golden Triangle Dialysis)
- Perhaps expanded hours that are advertised. Safe bus stops. (Workforce Solutions SETX)
- Some way to have more immediate resources to lead individuals to transportation service, especially for elderly and individuals with disabilities. (SETRPC Community Services Division)
- Some way for transportation to become more available between counties, especially for those in Triangle who have medical resources in Houston. (SETRPC Community Services Division)
- Upgrade intersection signal preemption for emergency vehicle traffic. (Orange Fire Department)

Other issues, concerns, or information

- Airport and taxi services are standard partnerships. Lack of taxi services is a common complaint. (Jack Brooks Regional Airport)



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- Lack of funding to upgrade 18-year-old preemption system. Infrared emitter technology in preemption is being replaced with a GPS cloud-based system that is a subscription service that no longer requires the entity to own the equipment and maintain it. (Orange Fire Department)
- Lack of wheelchair-accessible transportation for veterans needing services inter-/intra-county where they live. (RISE)

1.5 Transportation Overlaps and Gaps in Service

In reviewing the existing transit services provided in the project area, very few overlaps were identified. Any overlaps that are present are necessary to provide connectivity between systems.

Transportation gaps are a much greater issue in South East Texas. Through the public engagement process, stakeholder engagement, discussions with SETRPC staff, and consultant observation, the following major service gaps have been identified.

- There is no service connecting Beaumont and Port Arthur, though each city has its own fixed-route transit program.
- There is no public transportation available in Jasper County. (Given Jasper County is a new addition to SETRPC, it has not historically been included in South East Texas Transit's service offerings.)
- As an urbanized area, Lumberton is excluded from the service area for South East Texas Transit's Rural Hardin and Jefferson County service.
- As an urbanized area, Vidor is excluded from the service area for South East Texas Transit's Orange County service.
- Intercommunity transportation is another significant gap. In addition to no service between Beaumont and Port Arthur, it can be difficult to travel from outlying communities into Beaumont, or between communities such as Orange and Port Neches, for example. There is also a lack of service east to Lake Charles or west to Houston.
- Service to Houston for medical trips (especially to the VA Medical Center) is also a transportation gap.
- Residents on the far western edge of the project area would also like to see opportunities to travel to Liberty, as it is more accessible to them than Beaumont.

1.6 Findings and Conclusions

Despite the stereotypical attraction of Texans to their personal vehicles, there is a demonstrated need for transportation options beyond the personal vehicle. There are significant concentrations of historically transportation-disadvantaged populations throughout the study area. More than 20 percent of residents live below 125 percent of the poverty level. Nearly 25 percent are under 18 years of age, while more than 16 percent are age 65 and older. Nearly 16 percent indicated having a disability which impacts their mobility. While none of these demographic characteristics automatically makes an individual ride-dependent, all of them represent characteristics that are more likely to be mobility-disadvantaged. In



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addition, nearly six percent of households have no access to a personal vehicle, while nearly 32 percent have access to only a single vehicle.

While several transportation providers operate service within the project area, there are still significant gaps between the service provided and the needs of individuals or populations within the community.

Based on the input from the stakeholders responding to the survey, the consultant team has identified the following broad findings:

1. There are geographic areas and individuals not served by existing public transportation services (including small urbanized areas in otherwise rural counties).
2. There is a need for extended public transit service hours to provide access to employment and healthcare.
3. There is a lack of public transportation service between counties.
4. There is a lack of access to medical facilities in Houston.
5. A patient's ability to undergo dialysis treatments on weekends and holidays is impacted by a lack of available transportation, and transportation may be unavailable if a treatment runs over the scheduled time.
6. Cost is often a barrier to transportation.

In response to these latent demands, as well as in response to needs identified through the outreach process, we have identified the following list of general transportation needs:

- Some level of service between Beaumont and Port Arthur.
- More service for seniors and persons with disabilities.
- Some level of service to Houston (especially for medical trips).
- Service information for all public transit providers in Spanish.
- Service from Orange to Port Neches and other locations.
- Service from Orange to Lake Charles, Louisiana.
- Later service to accommodate night shift workers or those who start/end work after 4 p.m.
- Traditional marketing materials (brochures, etc.) for people who do not use the internet.
- Some level of service in Jasper County and between Jasper and Hardin/Orange counties.
- Some level of service in Lumberton and along Highway 96.
- More frequent service to and from Lamar University campus.
- Evening, Saturday, and holiday service to help facilitate regular dialysis treatments.
- Same-day reservations and easier scheduling of rides.
- More inter-county service.
- More wheelchair-accessible transportation options.