



# Yavapai Passenger Transportation Study Recommendations Report

Northern Arizona Council of Governments  
(NACOG)

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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

The Yavapai Passenger Transportation Study (YPTS) establishes a vision for passenger transportation in Yavapai County that supports service and coordination strategies and lays the groundwork for transit governance and funding in the region. Passenger transportation serves as a means for people to access job sites, commercial centers, medical facilities, schools, recreational sites, and to meet with friends or family. It helps maintain independence and health in older adults and persons with disability and increases economic opportunity. It encompasses various services such as fixed-route, rideshare, human services transportation, and newer solutions like transportation network companies (TNCs).

The study examined existing services available in Yavapai County to understand the range of service available to consumers and to ascertain how existing services are managed and operated. This background information assisted in evaluating the institutional resources available to develop a broader and more comprehensive program. Working closely with stakeholders in the region, a series of strategies was developed that will help implement coordinated services to meet the regional needs.

Yavapai County is a mostly rural and mountainous county north-northwest of Phoenix and southwest of Flagstaff. The major population centers within the county are separated by topographical barriers, including the Mingus Mountain Range which separates communities in the northeastern part of the county (the Verde Valley) from Central Yavapai. Although Interstate 17 passes directly through the county, connecting it to Phoenix and Flagstaff, the county's major population centers are northwest of the corridor (separated by 10 to 25 miles).

Yavapai County's primary population centers are in Central Yavapai (including Prescott, Prescott Valley, Chino Valley, and Dewey-Humboldt, also known as the Quad Cities) and in the Verde Valley (Cottonwood, Verde Village, Sedona, and Camp Verde). Black Canyon City and communities along the SR-69 corridor also have notable concentrations of people. Other parts of the county are mostly rural, though there are small towns that serve as rural centers, including Ash Fork, Seligman, Bagdad, and Congress.

Approximately 230,000 people live in Yavapai County, most of whom live in Central Yavapai and the Verde Valley. The county is home to a high percentage of older adults, people with low income, people with a disability, and veterans, as compared to the state averages. Native Americans represent approximately 2% of Yavapai County's population, or approximately 3,760 people. The Yavapai-Apache Nation, the Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, and the Hualapai Tribe are the federally recognized tribes in Yavapai County. The population of the County is expected to grow 33% by 2055, placing increased demands on the overall transportation system and highlighting the importance of proactive investment in passenger transportation.

The county has a small number of federal, state, and county highways serving the communities of the county. This network of highways are the priority travel corridors that connect regional hubs and serve a significant portion of travel needs to/from and within the region. An analysis of the travel patterns of Yavapai County residents shows a distribution of trips within Yavapai County as well as to neighboring counties. Because services are not centrally located, residents often travel outside of their local communities for work and non-work trips, particularly for healthcare, shopping, and education access.

Approximately half of the population 16 and over in Yavapai County is in the labor force. Two-thirds of jobs are in the Quad Cities area, with another quarter in the Verde Valley. The remainder of employment options are dispersed throughout the county. Fifty-six percent of the county's working residents stay within the county when they commute to work, and most currently drive alone to work. Approximately forty-four percent of Yavapai County residents also travel outside the county for employment opportunities (primarily to the Phoenix Metro area and Flagstaff), with a small percentage of Metro residents traveling to Yavapai County for work. The majority of the long-distance commute trips are done by private vehicle partly due to the dearth of passenger transportation options for this trip purpose.

Three past plans – The Yavapai County Regional Mobility Management Implementation Plan, the Central Yavapai Transit Implementation Plan, and the Sedona Transit Plan – emphasized the importance of improving passenger transportation services to address gaps in service and issues such as congestion, access to care, services, and employment. The plans also provided recommendations on governance and management for passenger transportation service. However, the plans were only focused on a small geographic portion of the county (Quad Cities and Sedona). The YPTS builds on this prior work with analysis and recommendations to meet the needs of residents and transit providers throughout the county.

Passenger transportation in Yavapai County is currently provided by a mix of transit providers. Three agencies provide fixed-route public transit service, and small operators provide general-public demand-response, NEMT, or client-only services. The services provide a basic level of transit service that previous plans note do not fully address the region's travel needs. Intercity travel within and outside of the county is limited, as are transit connections to major employers, and services to small communities throughout the county such as Ash Fork, Seligman, and Black Canyon City are unavailable.

## Summary of needs

### Transit Providers

Transit providers were interviewed to gather information on current service and identify challenges in providing passenger transportation service in Yavapai County. The challenges varied by provider and are noted in the full report. However, the following were common themes:

- **Limited funding** – Agencies indicated a lack of financial resources makes it difficult to fulfill the needs of their customers and clients.
- **Lack of sufficient staff or employee capacity** – Agencies noted staff are unable to accommodate the full needs of their programs, or that they lack sufficient volunteers to carry out the work. Qualified paid and volunteer drivers can be difficult to recruit.

- **Travel distances** –Long distances between destinations limit some agencies’ ability to serve the most people (or to do so efficiently). This was particularly the case in serving rural communities.
- **Regulations** –Agencies identified regulations or requirements from the Arizona Department of Transportation, the Federal Transit Agency, or other organizations as being a challenge to their operations.
- **Lack of awareness of service** –Providers noted the lack of awareness by the public about their agencies and the services they provide.

## Yavapai County Residents

Information on transportation needs, barriers and experiences on passenger transportation was gathered from county residents through a community survey and focus groups held in Paulden, Ash Fork, Seligman, Weaver Mountain Area, Black Canyon City, Jerome, and Cornville. A focus group was also conducted with Northern Arizona Healthcare. The following common themes were identified:

- **Employment and Economic Opportunity:** A lack of transportation options constrains employment and education opportunities for working-aged residents, including youth.
- **Healthcare:** Rural areas of the county have limited or no local healthcare for basic or specialty needs, and must travel to the larger towns and cities in the region to access care. There are very few transit providers that provide Non-Emergency Medical Transport (NEMT) in Northern and Southern Yavapai County. Therefore, residents typically rely on neighbors, friends, and family to transport them to/from healthcare appointments or will use the fire department or emergency medical services for non-emergency events/transport. Transport home from a healthcare visit is often a challenge since the unknown length of appointments makes it difficult to schedule.
- **Activities of Daily Living:** Access to healthy food is more limited in smaller communities, with grocery stores limited to Family Dollar or convenience stores, or regional food banks. Banking and personal care services are also often absent. NEMT services to larger regional centers, if available, can only provide transport to and from the healthcare facility and cannot make additional stops to pick up groceries.
- **Access differences based on geography and age:** Rural residents were more likely to have limited access to a car in the household and limited transit access. Older adults aged 65 and older are more reliant on family or friends for rides, and are more likely to use NEMT than other age groups.

## Recommendations

Based on the gathered information, recommendations focused on strengthening Yavapai County’s passenger transportation services and increasing coordination among existing providers.

Common factors across the recommendations are the critical role of local champion organizations and the importance of collaboration for implementation and sustained success. The recommendations require 1) an investment of time and resources in the short term for efficiencies and gains in longer term, and 2) a commitment to action for the greater good to achieve the vision of improved access and mobility.

The recommendations are broken into three categories: 1) Governance and Funding recommendations that could change the landscape of passenger transportation service in Yavapai County moving forward, 2) Regional Service recommendations that can increase mobility and connections within and between regional communities, and 3) Coordination Plan Strategies that can improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of service for providers and current and future passengers (Error! Reference source not found.). A brief description of each recommendation is provided here; greater detail can be found in Chapter 3 of the Recommendations Report.

**Figure 1 Summary of Recommendations**

Recommendation Category	Recommendation
Governance and Funding	Develop County-level Policy Guiding Transit Funding and Development
	Work with AzTA to Change IPTA Definition
	Community Mobility Funds
Regional Service Strategies	Demand Response Services
	Vanpool
	Intercity Transit Service Between Regional Hubs
	Develop and Distribute Consumer-Friendly and Accessible Materials
Coordination Plan Strategies	Shared Costs and Resources
	Increase Driver Pool
	Develop a Flexible Travel Training Program
	Professional Development/Leadership Development Training/Continuing Education
	Improving and Promoting AZRide Info

### **Governance and Funding**

As the number and level of investment in public and human service transportation services increases, Yavapai County would benefit from a clear, active strategy to guide how the region wants and expects transit services to develop over time. Opportunities for service improvement exist through consolidation of transit governance and funding, potentially at the county, region, or sub-region level.

**Develop County-level Policy Guiding Transit Funding and Development:** In all cases, a regional transit governance structure requires political will and community support to advance to implementation. A recommended first step to move forward is to work with the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors to develop a clear policy to guide County recurring investment in local and regional transit funding. A county-level transit policy would ensure equitable access to transit resources and establish terms for funding, such as based on population in the service area or the amount of service provided (ridership, service hours, and/or service miles).

**Work with AzTA to Change IPTA Definition:** A second step forward is to work with the Arizona Transit Association (AzTA) to change the definition of an Intergovernmental Public Transit Authority (IPTA). An IPTA was determined to be the most appropriate governance structure for the Yavapai County/Northern Arizona region. However, IPTAs have a county population size restriction of less than 200,000 that was legislatively determined, which Yavapai County exceeds. It is recommended that NACOG work with AzTA to advocate to lawmakers for a change to this restriction.

**Community Mobility Funds:** Consistent with the development of a transit policy at the county level and/or helping to support a future independent transit agency, NACOG and stakeholders can collaborate in the establishment of a county-wide Community Mobility Fund. Agencies and transit service providers noted that funding is a major barrier toward service expansion. A Community Mobility Fund could help support regional mobility management funds and help leverage contributions from other funders, including potentially Yavapai County and federal funding programs. Two fund models are proposed.

### **Regional Service Strategies**

The Regional Service Strategies are recommendations to better promote and expand existing passenger transportation service in the five regions of Yavapai County over the next ten years. The applicability of each strategy to a given region will depend on various factors, which are described in the strategy summaries in Chapter 3.

**Demand Response Services:** A tiered approach to demand response services is recommended as a strategy to address the varied gaps in service that exist across the county. Needs, capacity, and current service vary across the county and will continue to do so over time. A tiered approach allows for the appropriate level of service given current demand and resource support within each region, and the opportunity to test “proof of concept” and demand before growing a program and increasing investment in services. The three tiers are:

- *Tier 1, Coordinated volunteer network:* for regions with limited current service and demand and an informal community network of support. Each region of the county currently does or has capacity to offer this level of service.
- *Tier 2, Dedicated vehicle with limited set schedule and volunteer drivers:* for regions where ridership shows a consistency in demand in both frequency and volume and/or requires an ADA vehicle. The Southwest region of the county is currently piloting a demand response program such as this.
- *Tier 3, Dedicated vehicle and paid driver/service provided by regional provider:* for regions where demand reach a level that warrants a regional provider expanding service to a given area through the investment of a paid driver in a dedicated shared ride vehicle on a limited or on-demand schedule. The Verde Valley and Quad Cities regions are the best locations for this tier of service.

**Vanpool:** Vanpools are recommended as an effective strategy to provide coordinated regional ride share for those that travel on similar schedules and routes, such as for employment or education. Several employers and educational partners have expressed interest in vanpool service, and an opportunity exists to partner with Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority (NAIPTA) on vanpool service in Yavapai County. Vanpool service is currently proposed to access employment and educational opportunities in the Verde Valley and Quad Cities regions.

**Intercity Transit Service between Regional Hubs:** It is recommended to provide planning support for improving connections to existing intercity transit service and expanded service. Intercity travel is a reality for many residents of Yavapai County to access employment or services such as healthcare or for regional transportation connections. Intercity transit service also increases transportation options for visitors to Yavapai County, which can assist with congestion management in areas of the Verde Valley and Quad Cities.

**Develop and Distribute Consumer-Friendly and Accessible Materials:** Residents are often unaware of what is available and for what they may be eligible to use. Developing and distributing consumer-friendly, accessible educational materials online through AZRide Info and in printed form can help to increase public awareness of services and connect residents to vital resources.

### **Coordination Plan Strategies**

The Coordination Plan Strategies are fiscal, personnel, programming, and coordination with statewide activities recommendations to better coordinate and manage passenger transportation service in the five regions of Yavapai County moving forward. The applicability of each strategy to a given region will depend on various factors, which are described in the strategy summaries in Chapter 3.

#### Fiscal

**Shared Costs and Resources:** Providing passenger transportation services in a large, small city/rural county such as Yavapai requires coordination and cooperation amongst providers to meet the need in a resource-efficient manner. It is recommended that Shared Costs and Resources be explored across three areas:

- **Fuel savings:** Cost savings from fuel purchases may be achieved through discounted fuel pricing via a fleet contract or bulk fuel purchase contracts and access to designated fueling locations managed by local governments.
- **Pooled insurance:** A transit risk pool would manage risk and reduce costs across a larger pool of agencies and drivers. This can be done by identifying an entity that can negotiate and manage a group insurance pool, including the purchase of insurance, management of claims and litigation and delivery of risk management and training.
- **Shared support services pilot:** Support services such as grant writing, customer service monitoring, staff training, data management, reporting support, and other forms of technical assistance could be shared across providers for resource efficiency. A pilot is proposed to test a model of shared support services.

#### Personnel

**Increase Driver Pool:** Challenges with recruitment and retention of a skilled paid and volunteer driver pool exist for many passenger transportation providers in Yavapai County. Providers identified a need to increase the pool of drivers: with commercial drivers' licenses (CDL); who are trained to transport and work with non-ambulatory and behavioral health passengers; and who are willing to drive farther and in the varying terrain and weather conditions that occur in Northern Arizona. It is recommended that county partners work together to develop a driver recruitment strategy that focuses on identifying currently qualified drivers, and training and qualifications development for drivers interested in CDL attainment. Driver retention recommendations include driver recognition programs and gas voucher/mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers.

### Programs

**Develop a Flexible Travel Training Program:** Travel training programs are designed to teach people with disabilities, seniors, youth, veterans, and/or low-income populations to travel safely and independently using passenger transportation services. Travel training programs in Yavapai County are currently limited to the Quad Cities region and to existing passengers in the Verde Valley. Opportunities exist to develop a flexible travel training program geared toward potential new riders in the Verde Valley. The travel training could be offered virtually, via a website and information videos, and/or as a mobile travel training offered at various locations within the Verde Valley.

### Coordination and Participation in Statewide Activities

#### **Professional development/Leadership development Training/Continuing**

**Education:** Professional and leadership development training opportunities exist through many different channels and should be promoted and supported to maintain the leadership pipeline for passenger transportation service in Yavapai County.

**Improving and Promoting AZRide Info:** Every Coordination Plan in the state recognizes the need for rider information. AZRide Info is a partnership among all Councils of Governments and Metropolitan Planning Organizations in Arizona to create a central resource for transportation information in the form of a website. NACOG has played an active role in its development and should continue to do so.

## **Risk Assessment**

Based on the recommendations, four different scenarios for passenger transportation in Yavapai County were examined as part of the YPTS. Potential outcomes for the community, potential return on investment, challenges, and funding were considered. Details on the Risk Assessment scenarios are provided in Chapter 4.

The **Base (“Do Nothing”)** scenario requires the least investment and results in the fewest benefits. This scenario maintains status quo in Yavapai County, which means that providers must work with limited financial resources and staff, the lack of awareness of transportation options and benefits persists in the general public, intercity transportation options remain sparse, and older adults who rely on passenger transportation may continue to feel isolated.

The **Low** and **Medium Commitment** scenarios build on one another and allow for increased investments in passenger transportation with benefits that include improved access, awareness of services, and increased service quality. The marginal increases under these scenarios may also improve on-time performance, reduce the frequency of missed trips, and improve access to healthcare.

The **High Commitment** scenario requires the most financial investment but would result in the greatest benefits to residents and visitors who utilize passenger transportation. Under this scenario, the county will be able to restructure the passenger transportation programs that are offered and drastically increase the quality of service to meet the needs of the growing and aging population. It will also increase the resiliency of the transportation system overall by providing a robust redundant system to the road network.

## **Future Studies**

Several local-level transit studies are recommended as a next step from the YPTS:

- Implementation
- Pilot programs such as shared services, technology, and transportation demand management for Yavapai County students of all ages

## **Conclusion/Next Steps**

The transportation system is charged with serving the needs of the communities in the county; however, the current system is largely designed and funded as a road network that is only accessible to those that drive. Mobility Management and Local Coordinating Councils can be effective but need real regional coordinated funding, commitment, and a governance structure for sustained impact on health, connectedness, and opportunity of Yavapai residents.

The analysis conducted for the YPTS and the resulting recommendations support the implementation or expansion of passenger transportation services throughout the county through various strategies. The study also supports the expansion of mobility management support provided by NACOG to regional passenger transportation service providers through collaboration, technical assistance and the development, implementation and management of programs that support the providers' service delivery and sustainability. The recommendations proposed strengthen the overall transportation system by improving efficiency, increasing resiliency through increased capacity and diversity of service, reducing congestion and traffic safety risks, increasing air quality, and improving the health and quality of life of Yavapai residents through increased access to healthcare, daily needs, and social connections.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### PROJECT PURPOSE

The intent of the Yavapai Passenger Transportation Study (YPTS) is to establish a vision for passenger transportation in Yavapai County that supports service and coordination strategies and lays the groundwork for transit governance and funding in the region. Passenger transportation serves as a means for people to access job sites, commercial centers, medical facilities, schools, recreational sites, and to meet with friends or family. It helps maintain independence and health in older adults and persons with disability and increases economic opportunity. It encompasses various services such as fixed-route, rideshare, human services transportation, and newer solutions like transportation network companies (TNCs) (**Figure 2**). Using a Coordination Plan Process, the project team examined existing services available in Yavapai County to understand the range of service available to consumers and to ascertain how existing services are managed and operated. This background information assisted in evaluating the institutional resources available to develop a broader and more comprehensive program. Working closely with stakeholders in the region, the list of transportation needs was prioritized and articulated into a series of implementation strategies that support and help strengthen the recommended framework designed around clear-cut goals and objectives and will help implement coordinated services to meet the regional needs (**Figure 3**).

Figure 2 Types of Passenger Transportation

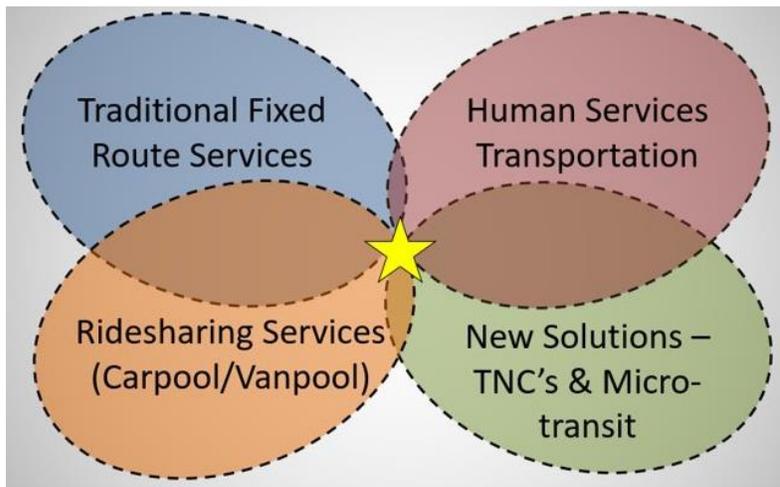


Figure 3 Goals for Passenger Transportation Service in Yavapai County

***#1. Passenger Transportation services are community driven and reflective of local interests and strengths.***

This includes cost effective solutions that support populations in need, while ensuring the independent nature of Yavapai County residents is maintained.

***#2. Passenger Transportation services are recognized as an integral part of the Yavapai County community.***

Similar to other public services such as the fire and police departments, Passenger Transportation is viewed as a staple for healthy communities and an essential support for future unprecedented events.

***#3. Yavapai County is equipped with Passenger Transportation resources to respond to growing travel needs across multiple populations.***

Aging populations, increasing disparity in housing options and job access transportation are all expected to see increased demand for Passenger Transportation in the near- and long-term future.

***#4. Yavapai County residents and visitors are able to easily access a wide range of transportation options that fit their unique needs and trip purposes.***

This ensures access to a wide range of desired locations within and beyond Yavapai County through a network of client based, public transportation and private travel options.

***#5. Through a diverse funding model that expands beyond FTA and local government contributions, Yavapai County service providers are able to consistently and sustainably fund operations.***

Without the threat of year-to-year fiscal uncertainty, service providers will be able to focus delivering the highest quality of service to their riders and pursue innovative ways to meet growing service demands.

***#6. Coordination activities amongst Yavapai County providers continues to grow and mature to meet changing needs across the County.***

Strengths and weakness of individual providers are addressed in the development of a comprehensive network of services that enhances service efficiencies and rider experience.

***#7. Yavapai County providers are positioned to take advantage of advancements in transportation technology to recognize service efficiencies, increase safety, and provide higher quality of service to riders.***

Providers have access to Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to maximize service efficiencies, foster innovative and support extensive service coordination efforts.

## NACOG Yavapai Coordinated Plan

Presidential Executive Order 13330 on the Coordination of Human Service Programs, issued by the president on February 24, 2004, created an interdepartmental Federal Council on Access and Mobility to undertake collective and individual departmental actions to reduce duplication among federally funded human service transportation services, increase the efficient delivery of such services, and expand transportation access for older individuals, people with disabilities, people with low income, children, and other disadvantaged populations within their own communities.

In 2006, the Safe, Affordable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act-A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) established an executive order stating that agencies involved in the coordination or delivery of transportation services are required to produce a coordinated public transit human service plan. That executive order was carried over to the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21) in 2012, and subsequently the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act in 2015. Additionally, federal transit law requires that projects selected to receive funding under the Enhanced Mobility for Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) Program are “included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit human service transportation plan,” and that the plan be “developed and approved through a process that included participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of the public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human service providers and other members of the public” utilizing transportation services.

Part of the obligation of NACOG in preparing a Coordinated Plan is to ensure that projects funded through the Section 5310 Formula Program are derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. In accordance with federal requirements, the Coordinated Plan serves as a “unified, comprehensive strategy for public transportation service delivery” that identifies the transportation needs of the target populations, laying out strategies for meeting these needs, and prioritizing service solutions.

Updating the Coordinated Plan also provides an opportunity to envision how the strengths of existing transportation providers can be coordinated to build a more efficient regional network of services that work together to provide effective mobility options to the residents, employers, medical providers, and human service agencies. That coordination can be achieved through mobility management support from NACOG. An outcome of the 2017 Coordinated Plan (Yavapai County Regional Mobility Management Implementation Plan) was the hiring of a Mobility Manager specifically for Yavapai County. That manager will lead the effort to move the recommendations outlined in the 2020 Plan forward.

Funds are relatively limited for public transportation in general; therefore, it is always important for public transit providers and their partners to make strategic, targeted investments that address critical needs. The intent of the Coordinated Plan is for it to be a living document identifying needs and investment priorities. Transit providers in Yavapai County will use the plan to allocate funding and, along with local partners, will use the plan to develop and enhance transit services.

## **Coordination Plan Process**

The coordinated planning process, while prescriptive, does allow room for each individual region to determine strategies, or recommendations, that are best suited to improving overall coordination in the respective region. In general, however, the coordinated planning process consists of the following steps:

- **Assessment of transportation needs** for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with limited income
- **Inventory of available services** that identifies areas of redundant service and gaps in service
- **Strategies** to address identified gaps in service

- Identification of **coordination actions to eliminate or reduce duplication** in services and strategies for more efficient utilization of resources
- **Prioritization** of implementation strategies

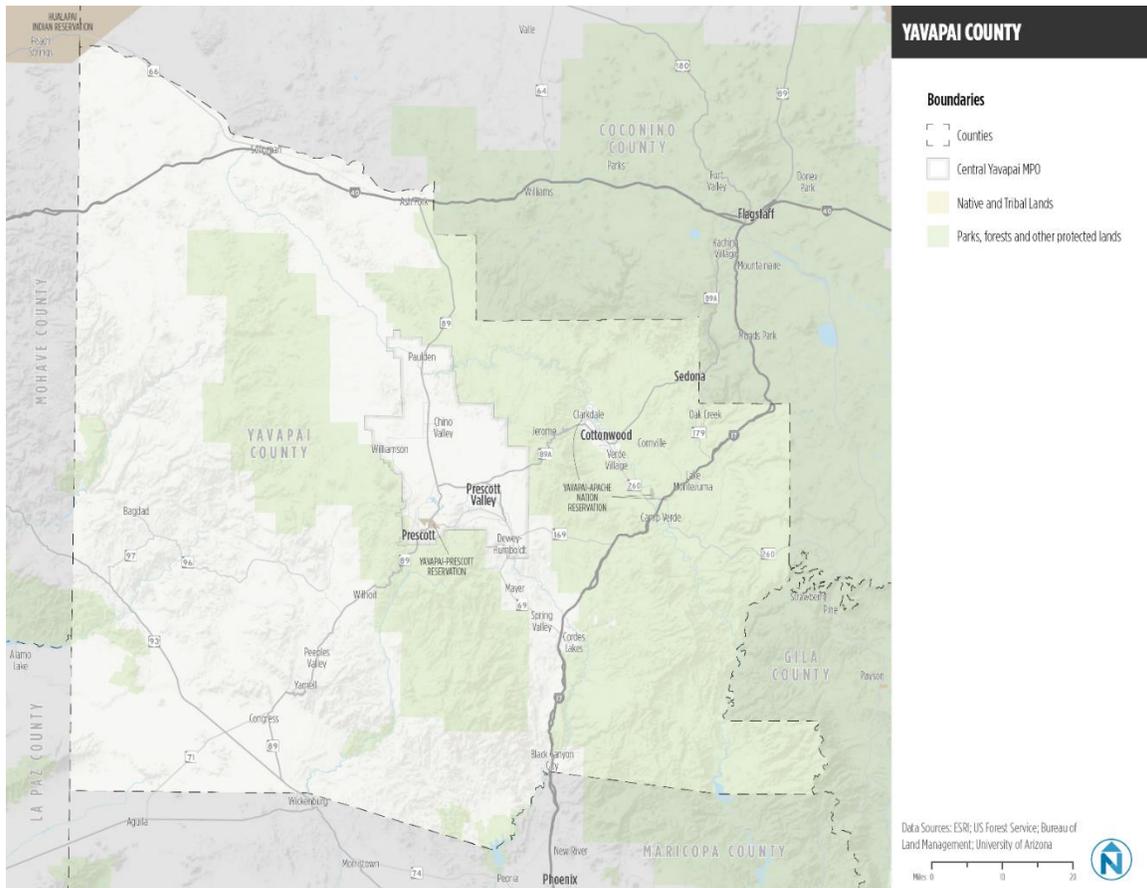
## **EXISTING PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS, GAPS, AND NEEDS**

### **About Yavapai County**

Yavapai County is a mostly rural and mountainous county north-northwest of Phoenix, and southwest of Flagstaff (**Figure 4**). The major population centers within the county are separated by topographical barriers, including the Mingus Mountain Range which separates communities in the northeastern part of the county (the Verde Valley) from Central Yavapai. Although Interstate 17 passes directly through the county, connecting it to Phoenix and Flagstaff, the county's major population centers are northwest of the corridor (separated by 10 to 25 miles).

Yavapai County's primary population centers are in Central Yavapai (including Prescott, Prescott Valley, Chino Valley, and Dewey-Humboldt, also known as the Quad Cities) and in the Verde Valley (Cottonwood, Verde Village, Sedona, and Camp Verde), Black Canyon City and communities along the SR-69 corridor also have notable concentrations of people. Other parts of the county are mostly rural, though there are small towns that serve as rural centers, including Ash Fork, Seligman, Bagdad, and Congress.

Figure 4 Yavapai County



### Older Adults

Approximately 230,000 people live in Yavapai County, most of whom live in Central Yavapai and the Verde Valley. Yavapai County is home to many seniors and retirees (**Figure 5**). Approximately 29% of the county’s population is aged 65 or older. This compares to 17% for Arizona as a whole. Older adults are more densely concentrated in the Quad Cities and the Verde Valley. However, many rural parts of Yavapai County have relatively high percentages of people who are older adults. This indicates transportation needs for older individuals may be geographically widespread throughout the county, including in more remote, harder to serve communities.

**Figure 5 Breakdown of Age Groups in Yavapai County and Arizona**

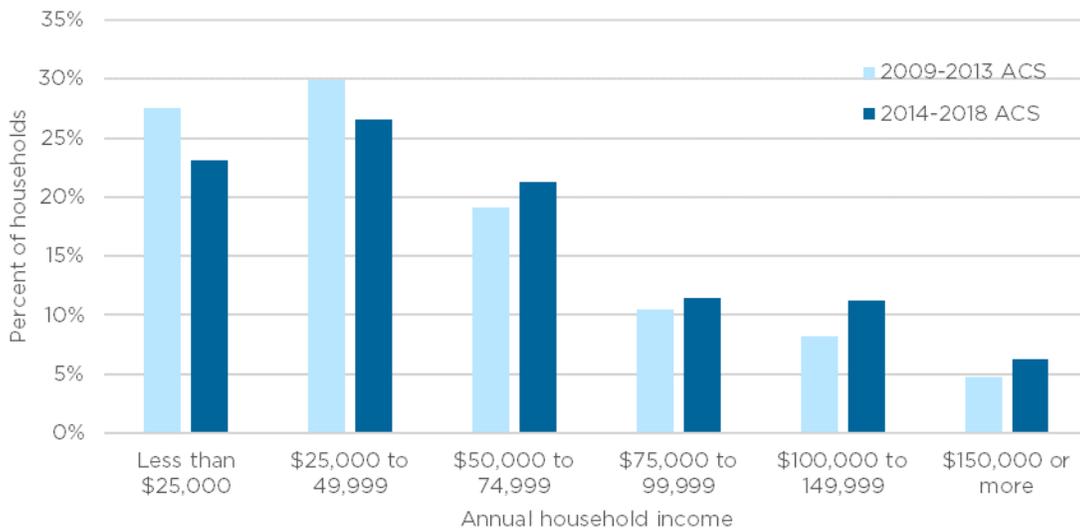


Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018; Table S0101

**Income and Poverty**

Fifty percent of the county’s households have incomes of less than \$50,000, which is slightly greater than 45% of households in Arizona as a whole. However, between 2013 and 2018 the share of households in the lowest income tiers dropped while those in the highest tiers increased (**Figure 6**). Approximately 35% of the county’s population has an annual income at or below 200% of the poverty level (**Figure 7**). This is comparable to the statewide rate of 36%.

**Figure 6 Household Income in Yavapai County (2013 and 2018)**



Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates 2009-2013 and 2014-2018; Table S1901

Figure 7 Poverty in Yavapai County



Source: US Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018; Table S1701

People in poverty are concentrated in Yavapai County’s more urbanized areas, likely due to the provision of housing, access to employment and transportation options, particularly in Prescott, Prescott Valley, and Cottonwood. However, poverty is not solely located within these population centers. For example, the northern portion of the county along the Interstate 40 corridor, which includes Ash Fork and Seligman, has a high percent of population below poverty level. This is a large geographic area and is largely rural; therefore, the concentration of people in poverty is low.

### People with a Disability

People with a disability includes those who may have physical or cognitive challenges that make it difficult to operate a vehicle, or to get around on their own volition without assistance from others. Although a disability is not a determinant of how someone gets around, people with disabilities may need additional support for mobility, and passenger transportation can serve that need.

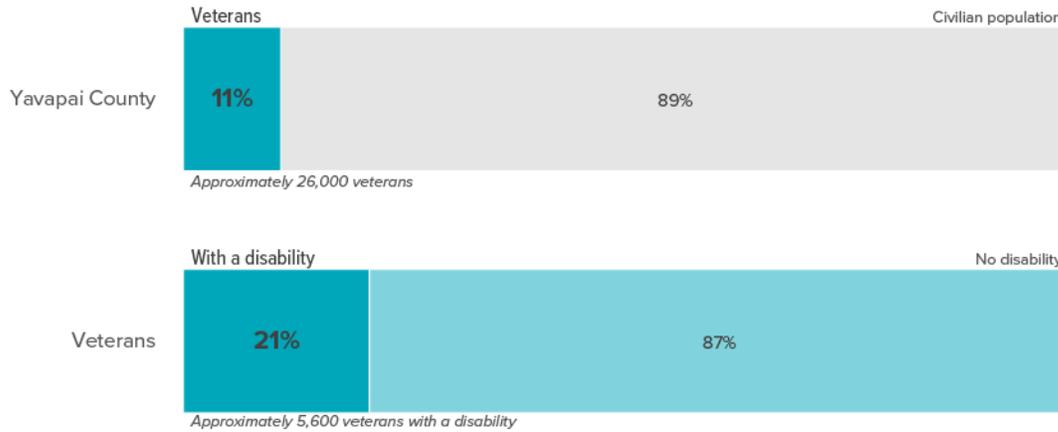
Approximately 18% of people in Yavapai County have a disability, compared to 13% in Arizona as a whole. In general, people with disabilities are concentrated in Central Yavapai and in the Verde Valley. However, a relatively large percent of the population along the Interstate 17 corridor have a disability.

It is estimated there are approximately 26,000 veterans in Yavapai County, or approximately 11% of the overall population.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 5,600 veterans have a service-connected disability, approximately 21% of veterans.<sup>2</sup> By comparison, 7% of the state’s population is a veteran, though the percent of veterans with a service-connected disability is equal at approximately 21% (**Figure 8**).

<sup>1</sup> National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. [va.gov/vetdata/veteran\\_population.asp](http://va.gov/vetdata/veteran_population.asp).

<sup>2</sup> Table B2110. US Census Bureau American Community Survey. 2018 5-Year Estimates.

**Figure 8** Veterans and Disability in Yavapai County



Source: National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics; and US Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates 2014-2018; Table B2110

**Tribal Lands**

Native Americans represent approximately 2% of Yavapai County’s population – or approximately 3,760 people. The Yavapai-Apache Nation, Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, and the Hualapai Tribe are the federally recognized tribes in Yavapai County. Overall, these tribal lands represent less than 0.06% of Yavapai County’s land area.

The Yavapai-Apache Nation reservation consists of several non-contiguous sections located throughout the Verde Valley, with a total land area of approximately 600 acres. The Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe reservation is located northeast of Downtown Prescott around the intersection of AZ-89 and AZ-69, with a total land area of approximately 1,400 acres. The Hualapai Indian Reservation is approximately 730,000 acres and extends across the far northwestern tip of Yavapai County, western Coconino County and central Mohave County. Only a small portion of the reservation is located within Yavapai County, approximately 840 acres.

**Population Growth in Yavapai County and the NACOG region**

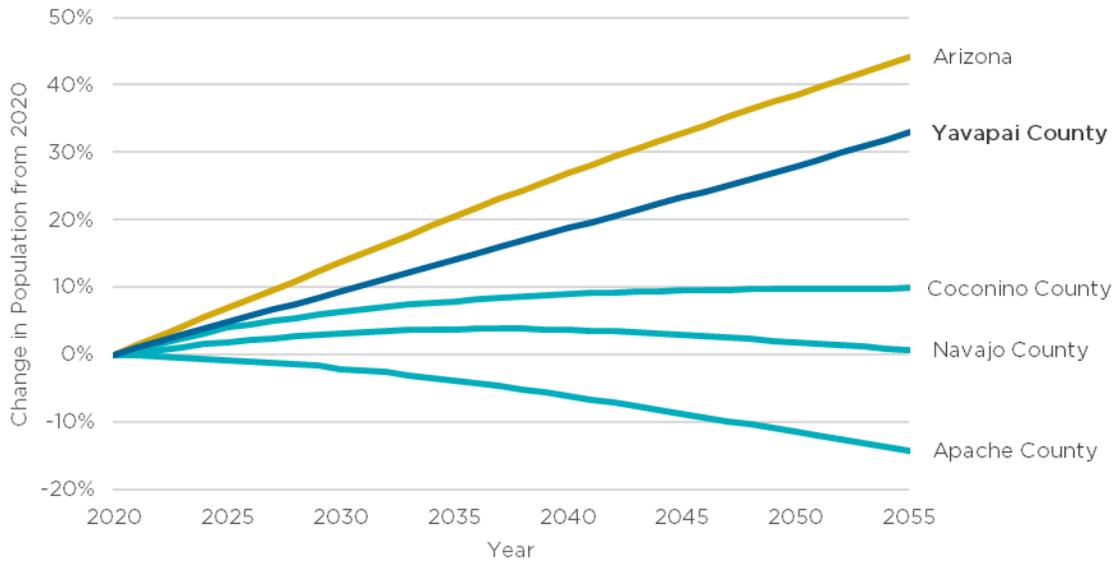
Between 2013 and 2018,<sup>3</sup> Yavapai County added approximately 13,000 new residents. This was an increase of 6% from 2013, or approximately 1% each year. According to the Arizona Office of Employment & Population Statistics, Yavapai County is expected to grow to approximately 310,000 people by 2055, an increase of 33% over the population in 2020. Other counties in the NACOG region are expected to grow more slowly (such as Coconino County) or are expected to shrink or see little growth (Apache and Navajo Counties). Although Yavapai County will grow significantly, it is projected to be slower than the 44% increase in Arizona’s overall population over the same period (**Figure 9**).

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<sup>3</sup> 2018 is the most recent year for which population data is available. Data is from the US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates.

It is still unclear what impacts Yavapai County will experience from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely the recession and other lasting impacts of the pandemic may significantly alter the assumptions used by the State to develop the employment and population forecasts.

**Figure 9 Projected Population Growth in Northern Arizona**



Source: Arizona Office of Employment & Population Statistics

## Employment

Most jobs in Yavapai County are concentrated in the major population centers: Prescott, Prescott Valley, Cottonwood, and Sedona. Jobs are also concentrated in many of the smaller cities and towns, though these jobs serve fewer people. Tourism and hospitality are the largest employment sectors in the county. Other major sectors include healthcare & social assistance, construction, and manufacturing.<sup>4</sup>

Approximately two-thirds of the jobs in Yavapai County are concentrated in the Quad Cities. Another quarter are in the Verde Valley. Approximately eight percent of jobs are dispersed throughout the rest of the county, primarily in small towns such as Bagdad, Ash Fork and Seligman.

Relative to its small population size, Bagdad is a large employment center. It is ranked as the third largest employment center in the county. The Bagdad Mine is a major employer and attracts workers from many other parts of the county.

## Unemployment and the Labor Force

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Yavapai County’s average unemployment rate in 2018 was 4.5%, compared to 4.8% for Arizona as a whole. The US Census Bureau reports 47.1% of the population aged 16 and over are in the labor force, meaning these people are employed or seeking work. The other 52.9% of people are not seeking work or are retired.<sup>5</sup> By comparison, the

<sup>4</sup> LEHD 2017. Based on NAICS industry sectors.

<sup>5</sup> US Census Bureau. ACS 2015-2018 5-Year Estimates. Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics

statewide rate for civilians 16 and over in the labor force is 59.2%, while 40.5% are not. Yavapai County has long been attractive — and has promoted itself — as a retirement community. However, the presence of a large retired population requires dedicated or specialized services addressing the needs of older individuals, particularly those that have mobility challenges.

Within the Yavapai County civilian population between 18 and 64 years old, 6.5% are veterans (compared to 5.5% for Arizona as a whole). Approximately two-thirds (67%) of veterans are in the labor force. This is approximate to the proportion of non-veterans in the labor force (68%). Of veterans in the labor force, 3.4% are unemployed, compared to 7.0% of non-veterans in the labor force.<sup>6</sup>

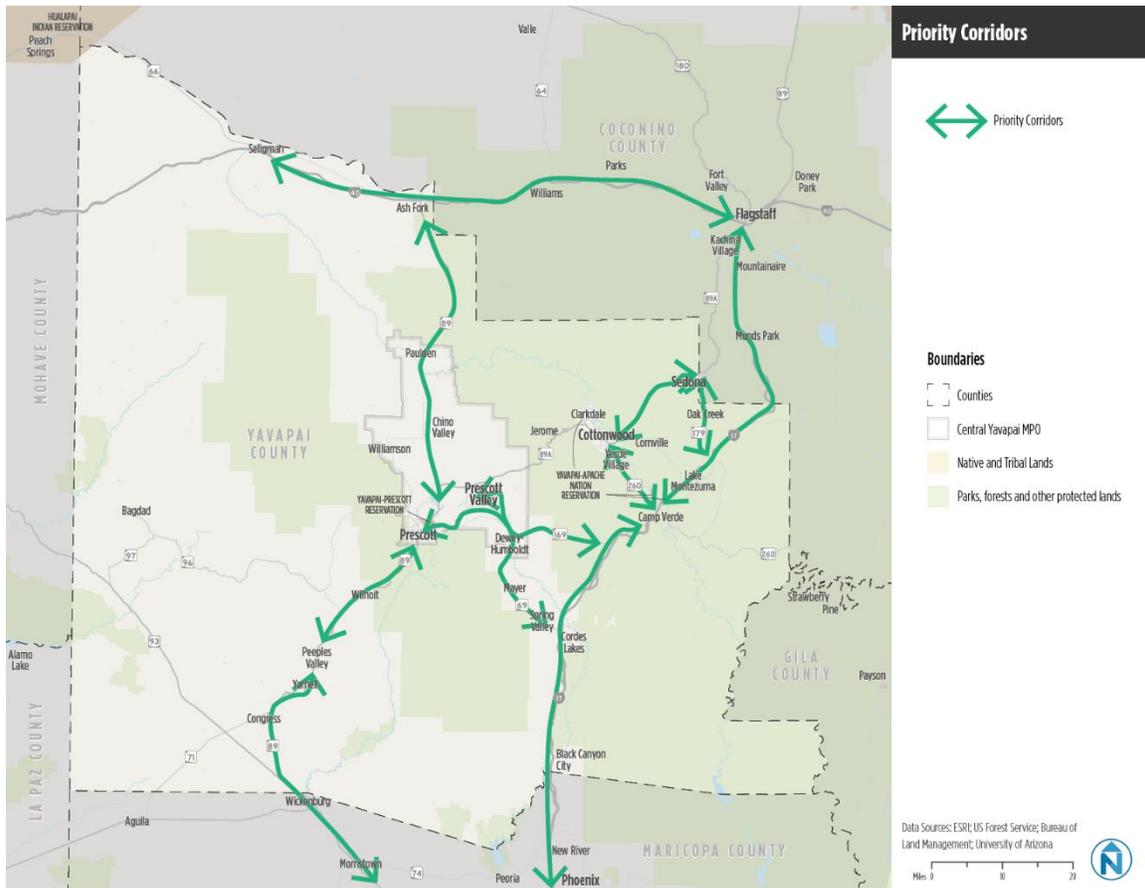
## **Priority Corridors**

Yavapai County is a geographically large county; however, its transportation system is relatively limited, with only a handful of federal, state and county highways serving the communities of the county, no heavy or light rail service in the County (Amtrak does run along a heavy rail line in the northern part of the county but there is no station located in Yavapai County), and the aforementioned transit providers. This limited roadway network can contribute to travel challenges, yet it also makes the identification of priority corridors straightforward. Priority corridors are the main travel corridors that connect regional hubs and serve a significant portion of travel needs to/from and within the region (**Figure 10**). This section will describe Yavapai County's priority corridors, followed by an analysis of travel patterns of Yavapai County residents.

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<sup>6</sup> US Census Bureau. ACS 2018 1-Year Estimates. Table C21005: Veteran Status by Employment Status for the Civilian Population 18 to 64 Years

Figure 10 Priority Corridors



Two **interstate highways** intersect Yavapai County: **I-40**, connecting Yavapai to Mohave County and La Paz to the west and Coconino County and Gila County to the east in the northern portion of the county, and **I-17**, connecting Yavapai to Coconino County to the north and Maricopa County to the south along the eastern portion of the county. These highways are critical priority corridors, providing access to goods, services, healthcare, education, and employment, and are important for freight movement within and through the region. Weather can be a challenge along both corridors, particularly in the winter, with snowstorms and ensuing traffic issues often causing highway closures. This can be a particularly challenging issue in Northern Yavapai County, where alternative east-west routes are limited. Both routes currently carry some level of intercity higher capacity transit and are important routes for the potential vanpool and demand response services, discussed in the Strategies recommendations to follow.

**State Highway 89** is a priority north-south corridor in the central part of the county, providing access to goods, services, healthcare, education, and employment located in the Prescott/Prescott Valley and Phoenix metro regions for those in smaller communities along the corridor. Seligman, Ash Fork, Paulden and Chino Valley connect to Prescott/Prescott Valley on the northern portion of the highway, and Wilhoit, Peeples Valley, Yarnell and Congress on the southern portion. 89 intersects with Highway 93 west of Wickenburg, providing connection to this city and Greater Phoenix region. Highway 89 is an important route for the potential vanpool and demand

response services, including the new service being piloted connecting Peoples Valley, Yarnell and Congress to healthcare and services in Wickenburg.

**State Highways 69 and 169** are priority corridors in the central part of the county, providing access to goods, services, healthcare, education, and employment. Highway 169 provides east-west access to the Prescott/Prescott Valley and Phoenix metro regions for Verde Valley communities such as Camp Verde and Lake Montezuma. Highway 69 provides north-south access to the Prescott/Prescott Valley and Phoenix metro regions for communities such as Dewey-Humboldt, Mayer, Spring Valley, and Cordes Lakes. Highway 169 is an important route for potential vanpool and current and potential demand response services.

**State Highway 260** is a priority east-west corridor in the central part of the county, connecting communities and providing access to goods, services, healthcare, education, and employment located throughout the Verde Valley region. Highway 260 runs between Cottonwood and Camp Verde. Highway 260 is an important route for current transit services provided by CAT and YAT, current and potential demand response services, and potential vanpool services.

**State Highway 89A** is a priority north-south corridor in the central part of the county, providing access to goods, services, healthcare, education, and employment between Cottonwood and Sedona. It is also a critical corridor due to the high volume of tourist traffic experienced within the Sedona area and the opportunity to alleviate the associated congestion that occurs at various locations along and adjacent to the corridor through higher capacity passenger transportation services, as noted in the findings of the Sedona Transit Study. Highway 89A is an important route for current transit service provided by CAT via its Verde Lynx line, current and potential demand response services, and potential vanpool services.

**State Highway 179** is a priority north-south corridor in the central part of the county, providing access to goods, services, healthcare, education, and employment in Sedona and access to I-17 through the Village of Oak Creek. It is also a critical corridor due to the high volume of tourist traffic experienced within the Sedona area and the opportunity to alleviate the associated congestion that occurs at various locations along and adjacent to the corridor through higher capacity passenger transportation services. Highway 179 is an important route for current and potential demand response services, future transit service proposed by the City of Sedona and potential vanpool services.

## **Travel Patterns**

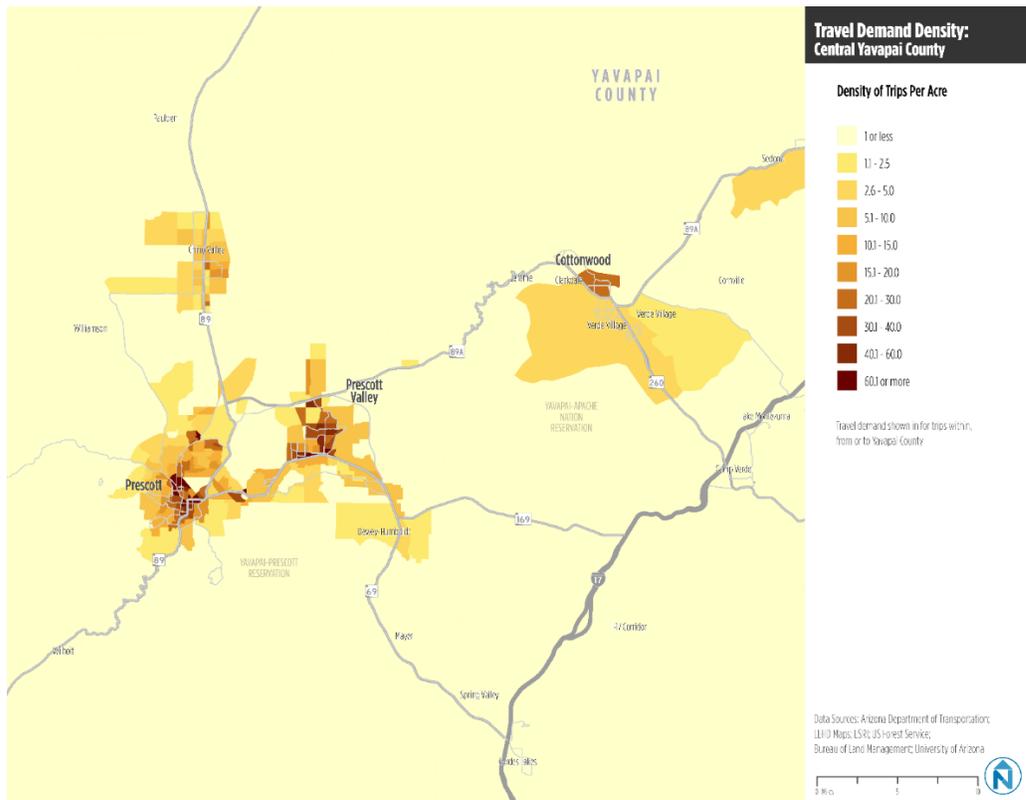
An analysis of the travel patterns of Yavapai County residents shows a distribution of trips within Yavapai County as well as to neighboring counties. Because services are not centrally located, residents often travel outside of their local communities for work and non-work trips.

The Arizona Statewide Travel Demand Model was developed by the Arizona Department of Transportation to simulate travel behavior throughout the state to inform transportation planning and transportation investments. Data from the model was used to identify travel flows within Yavapai County, and travel flows between Yavapai County and other regions.

**Figure 11** shows the concentration of Yavapai County trip origins and destinations by each zone. Trip density is primarily a function of population, so the areas with the greatest number of people also have the greatest number of trips starts/ends. Prescott and Prescott Valley have the most, with high concentrations in Chino Valley and Cottonwood.

Only trips that started or ended in one of the Yavapai County zones were included in the analysis of travel flows. Out of 437 potential unique travel pairs, 190 pairs had one or more trips. However, approximately 99% of the trips in the data occur among the largest 59 travel flows (i.e. flows with 250 trips or greater). This indicates that travel flows are highly concentrated among a relatively small group of travel pairs. Improving passenger transportation for the most used travel pairs is likely to have a significant impact on overall mobility and transportation for the entire county.

**Figure 11 Density of Trip Origins and Destinations**

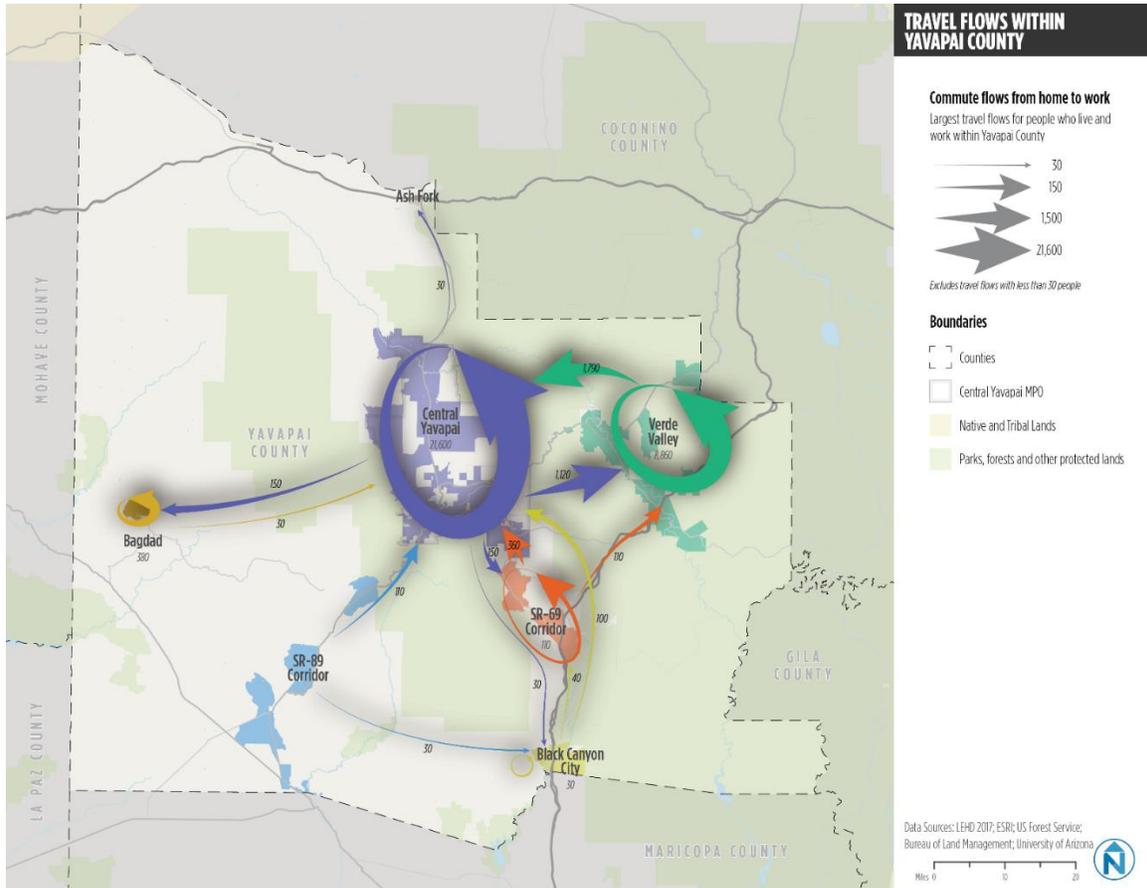


### Commute Trips

According to the US Census Bureau, approximately 0.4% of people who live in Yavapai County commute to work by transit.<sup>7</sup> Most workers (approximately 76%) drive alone to work. **Figure 12** shows the largest travel flows from home to work by region. The largest flows are within the urbanized portions of the county, though some smaller communities provide additional workforce in Prescott, Prescott Valley, Cottonwood, and Sedona.

<sup>7</sup> By comparison, 1.8% of Arizona’s workers commute by transit, 1.6% of workers in Coconino County, 1.0% in Mohave County, 1.3% in Navajo County, and 0.2% in Pinal County.

Figure 12 Commute Trips within Yavapai County



Approximately 56% of Yavapai County’s working residents – or approximately 44,000 people – stay within the county when they commute to work. The other 44% – or approximately 35,000 people – travel to surrounding counties for employment.<sup>8</sup> The top destination is the Phoenix area. Approximately 12,000 people commute to the city of Phoenix, with the remainder commuting to other cities in the Phoenix area or to Flagstaff and other parts of Coconino County. These commute flows are shown **Figure 13**.

Of people who work in Yavapai County, approximately three-quarters commute from within the region. The other quarter come primarily from the Phoenix area (**Figure 14**). However, fewer people commute into Yavapai County (approximately 16,000) than commute out – a ratio of approximately one-to-two. Several factors are likely at play, such as housing availability and affordability, employment opportunities, quality of life, and transition of life. This indicates a long-distance commuter service or improved statewide intercity transit connections may be beneficial to Yavapai County residents.

<sup>8</sup> By comparison, 33% of residents in Coconino County, 44% of residents in Mohave County, 46% of residents in Navajo County, and 78% of residents in Pinal County travel to surrounding counties for employment.

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**Figure 13 Commute Trips to Jobs Outside Yavapai County**

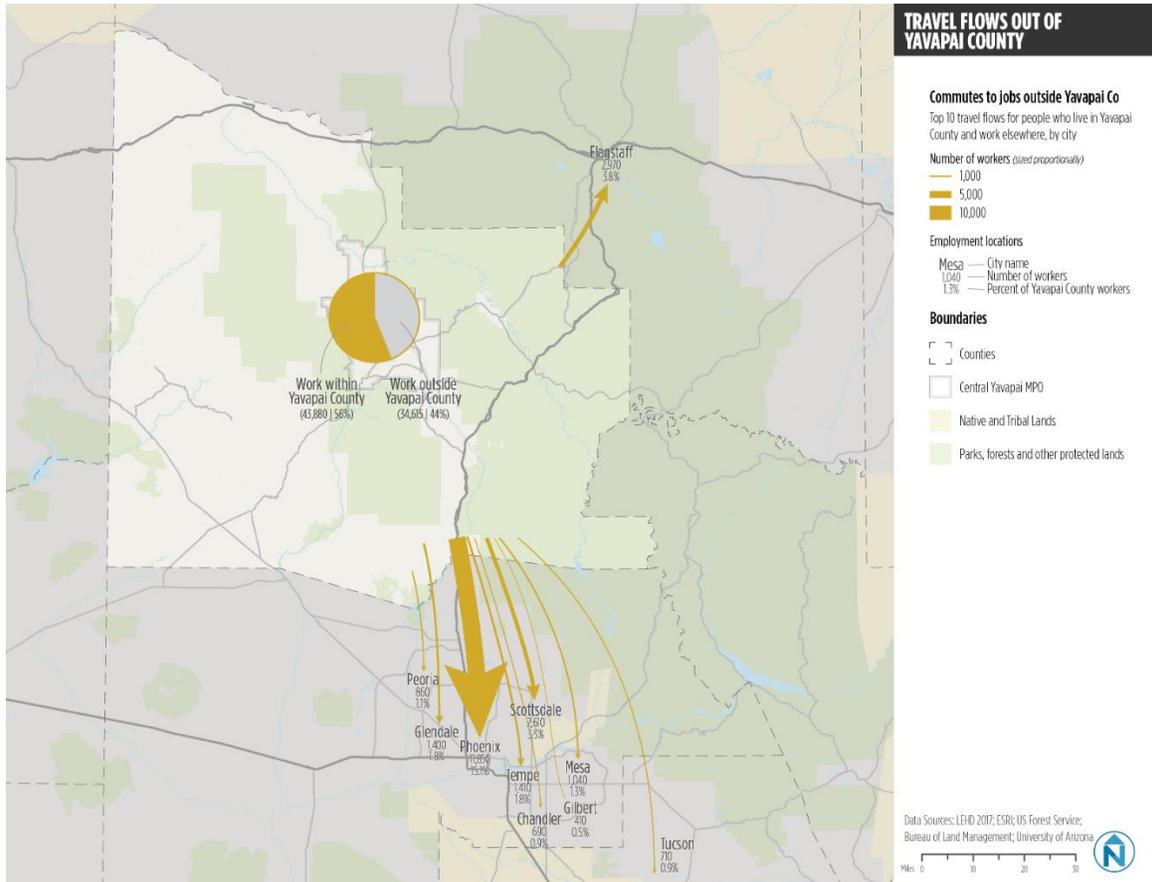
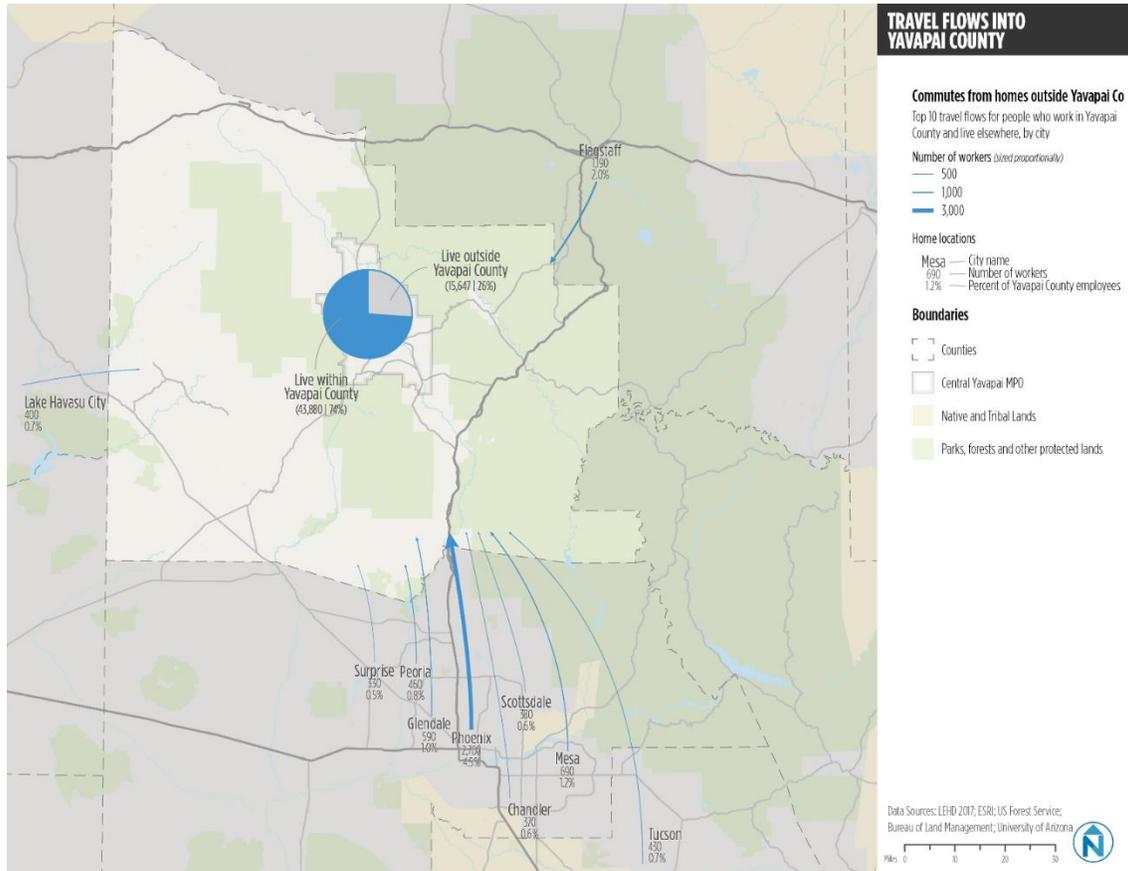


Figure 14 Commute Trips into Yavapai County



### Non-Work Trips

Important non-work destinations within the county include educational facilities like Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Yavapai College and Prescott College, and commercial and shopping centers like grocery stores and other large retail chains. Downtown Prescott and Sedona are also major trip generators with various businesses, restaurants, and other services.

Healthcare sites are also key destinations, such as the Yavapai Regional Medical Center in Prescott and Prescott Valley, or the Verde Valley Medical Center in Cottonwood with campuses in Camp Verde and Sedona, and the Veterans Affairs hospital in Prescott. Residents of Yavapai County also travel to the Phoenix area and Flagstaff for specialized healthcare services. Transit dependent residents primarily rely on on-demand transit service agencies to provide transportation to/from these facilities.

### Past Plans

Three past plans contain governance and management recommendations relevant to the YPTS: the Yavapai County Regional Mobility Management Implementation Plan (YCRMMIP), the Central Yavapai Transit Implementation Plan (TriP), and the Sedona Transit Plan.

Recommendations from these studies were referenced to ensure coordination during the development of the YPTS.

**The YCRMMIP** was completed in February 2017. The purpose of the YCRMMIP was to identify ways to improve mobility options in Yavapai County and to prepare the Public Transit-Human Services Coordinated Plan, which examined goals, options, and strategies for coordinating services and potential projects. The geographic area of the YCRMMIP encompassed all of Yavapai County; however, a significant focus was placed on the Central Yavapai Metropolitan Planning Organization (CYMPO) region of the county.

The YCRMMIP recommended several strategies to meet the passenger transportation needs of the county. As a result of the YCRMMIP and coordinated efforts between NACOG and CYMPO prior to and since the plan, NACOG established a full-time mobility manager position to serve Yavapai County.

**The TrIP** was conducted in 2019 and focused on the CYMPO region of Yavapai County, building on several past planning efforts that assessed the need for public transportation. The purpose of the TrIP was to provide a clear roadmap for developing stronger transit services in Central Yavapai.

A key recommendation in the TrIP was the establishment of a new transit agency to implement new transit services as a demonstration project. Implementing service as a demonstration project will allow the region to test and evaluate the program. After analysis of multiple governance structures, the study recommended the formation of a Joint Powers Organization (JPO), which allows counties, cities, and other partners to form a separate legal entity to operate transit services. This structure would allow the agency to qualify for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) urban formula transit grants (Section 5307 Urban Transit Formula Funds); provide direct representation for governments contributing to the funding of the organization; and create necessary authority and powers required to administer a public transit program.

The TrIP outlines a four-year implementation plan, known as the Central Yavapai Phased Transit Plan. Year 1 entails beginning service in Prescott Valley. In Year 2, the JPO will be formed and services will expand to Prescott. Year 3 involves monitoring and managing existing service. In Year 4, microtransit service will expand to operate on Saturdays. All program costs will be paid with CARES Act funds if city councils vote to support the system financially after the initial funding period.

Lastly, the **Sedona Transit Plan** was completed in the fall of 2019. The study examined opportunities to 1) reduce congestion and parking demand at critical points in the study area, including popular trailheads; 2) increase mobility options (i.e., service frequency and hours of operation); 3) increase connectivity within and between communities in the study area; and 4) provide free fare service. The study area included the City of Sedona, Village of Oak Creek, surrounding county lands that encompass SR-89 and SR-179, and areas connecting these geographies to each other and the broader region (e.g., Verde Valley and Flagstaff). The citizen survey conducted as part of the study found that much of the community supports transit, including support for an extension of the existing transportation sales tax beyond the 10-year time frame to pay for transit.

The study considered several governance structures for the proposed system. The final recommendation was a City of Sedona system with a contract operator. This governance model provides more funding options, compared to a JPO, Intergovernmental Public Transportation

Authority (IGPTA) or Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) model. This also allows the city more control over branding, marketing, and service provision.

Other outcomes of the Sedona Transit Plan include a phased plan to implement service in the area over 10 years. Phases 1 and 2 would be implemented over a four-year period. Phase 1 would focus on core routes connecting West Sedona, the Village of Oak Creek, and Uptown, as well as shuttle service to local trailheads. Phase 2 would focus on providing service to additional trailheads. Phase 3, in approximately year seven of the plan, would expand service to Oak Creek Canyon destinations. Phase 4 in approximately year 10 would provide express service from intercept parking lots near the Village of Oak Creek to Slide Rock State Park. The plan also identifies a need to invest in facilities such as a transit hub, operations and maintenance facility, bus stops throughout the community, and road infrastructure improvements. It will require a \$6.7 million annual operating budget at full implementation and an estimated \$43,990,000 in vehicle requirements and capital costs over the four phases.

The Sedona City Council directed City staff to move forward with implementation steps for Phase One of the plan. Council also directed staff to examine the extension of the current half-cent transportation sales tax past its current expiration date as one potential funding source for transit. Two other early actions toward implementation were the City's purchase of property near the "Y" intersection in Sedona to serve as a transit hub, and the hiring of a transit manager, who will begin in January 2021. The transit manager will lead the transit plan implementation effort.

## **Existing Transit Conditions**

Currently two major transit planning efforts are taking place in Sedona and the Quad Cities: the Sedona Transit Plan and TriP. These plans will impact transit services in the future. This section, however, is focused on the existing transit services available in the county. Passenger transportation in Yavapai County is provided by a mix of transit providers. Three agencies provide fixed-route public transit service, and small operators provide general-public demand response, NEMT, or client-only services.

In general, the services provide a basic level of transit service that previous plans note do not fully address the region's travel needs. For example, Cottonwood, Yavapai Apache Nation, and Chino Valley have transit service that operates Monday through Friday, all-day. Prescott and Prescott Valley – despite being the largest communities in the region with a combined population of more than 85,000 – do not have transit service that operates daily, all-day. However, there are current efforts underway to establish transit service in these cities. There is also a lack of intercity connections between Central Yavapai, the Verde Valley and Sedona,<sup>9</sup> along SR-69 (connecting Prescott Valley through Dewey-Humboldt and Mayer to Cordes Lakes), and along SR-89 (between Prescott and Congress). Services to small communities throughout the county such as Ash Fork, Seligman and Black Canyon City are unavailable, and major employers lack convenient transit connections.

### **Fixed-Route Operators**

There are three fixed-route operators serving Yavapai County: Cottonwood Area Transit (CAT), Yavapai-Apache Transit (YAT), and Yavapai Regional Transit (YRT).

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<sup>9</sup> Yavapai-Apache Transit recently received an FTA grant to establish service between Central Yavapai and the Verde Valley.

### **Cottonwood Area Transit**

CAT operates four local fixed routes within Cottonwood, Clarkdale, and Verde Village. The Green, Red and Yellow route each provide service Monday through Friday, about every 45 minutes. The Blue route operates during morning and evening commute hours between Verde Village and Cottonwood, with two trips 45 minutes apart in both the morning and afternoon, and no service during mid-day.

CAT also operates a regional route connecting Cottonwood to Sedona. Known as the Verde Lynx, the service operates seven days a week, every 45 minutes Wednesday through Sunday and every 90 minutes on Monday and Tuesday.

Paratransit service (transportation services for people with disabilities) is operated within ¾-mile of the four local fixed routes with prior reservation, during the same days and hours as fixed route service. Paratransit demand response service is not offered on the Verde Lynx route. All buses, fixed route, and paratransit are wheelchair accessible. CAT has a partnership with Verde Valley Caregivers to provide accessible transportation across Verde Valley.

### **Yavapai-Apache Transit**

YAT operates two vehicles connecting Verde Lakes, Rimrock, Camp Verde, Tunlii, Middle Verde, Cottonwood, and Clarkdale. YAT connects with CAT and operates along three corridors:

- Camp Verde – Clarkdale/Cottonwood (two runs daily)
- Tunlii Area (Yavapai-Apache Nation Reservation, Camp Verde Indian Reservation, and Camp Verde; four runs daily)
- Camp Verde – Rimrock / Lake Montezuma

### **Yavapai Regional Transit**

YRT is a nonprofit organization that provides general public transportation service in Chino Valley, Prescott, and Prescott Valley. YRT is the only transit service in Prescott, operating four routes with the ability to deviate upon request:

- The Gold Route operates as a local one-way loop service in Chino Valley, Monday through Friday, every hour. Riders can request stops at the Medical Center and Library.
- The Green Route provides service between Chino Valley and Prescott Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, with four trips per day. Riders can request stops at the Veterans Hospital Outpatient Center and Maverick Country Store.
- The Red and Blue Routes provide service between Chino Valley and Prescott/Prescott Valley on Wednesday only, with three trips per day on each route. The two routes operate as loop service between Prescott, Prescott Valley, operating in opposite directions. Riders can request stops at the Veterans Hospital Outpatient Center, Frontier Village Picture Show, and the Prescott Valley Civic Center.
- YRT's ADA curb-to-curb service is wheelchair lift equipped. Service is available for individuals with mobility limitations who reside within a one-mile deviation zone in Chino Valley and a ¼-mile deviation zone in Prescott and Prescott Valley. Advanced reservations are required.

**On-Demand and Human Service Transit Providers**

On-demand transit providers in Yavapai County are mostly human service agencies serving program participants. At least 16 human services agencies provide some level of passenger transportation (**Figure 15**). Program requirements may be based on age, disability status, and income, though specific requirements vary by organization.

**Figure 15 On-Demand and Specialized Transportation Providers**

Provider	Monthly Ridership
Beaver Creek Transit	-
Disabled American Veterans (DAV)	-
Freedom Express	800
Hozhoni Foundation	-
Intermountain Centers for Human Development	-
Mayer Senior Center	-
NAU Civic Service Institute	-
NAZCARE	1,600
New Horizons	4,680
People Who Care	-
Rainbow Acres	1,575
Spectrum Health	500
Verde Valley Care Givers	2,800
Veterans Affairs' Transportation Program	300
West Yavapai Guidance Clinic	600
YAT Elder Advocate Program	-

**Private Medical Transportation**

Human service and health care organizations in Yavapai County offer medical client-only transportation programs. Medical transportation is typically provided only to clients of specific service programs and for limited eligible trip purposes.

The programs are based on funds from a mix of sources, including but not limited to state (Medicaid) and federal (Medicare) funds. Funding may also be available from the FTA Section 5310 program, which provides funds to states to meet transportation needs of older adults and people with disabilities.

Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) is managed by the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). The agency contracts with independent transportation companies to provide service, reimbursing registered drivers or firms for each trip. Riders may have specific medical and cognitive needs that require specialized care by trained transportation

providers or with specialized vehicles. Some funding programs have strict regulations related to shared rides and comingling trips due in part to concerns over passenger safety, passenger health needs, and financial fraud. NEMT services are therefore generally not able to partner with general public demand response transportation services.

Nonprofit human service transportation providers share similar conditions as NEMT services regarding passenger needs and safety. ChangePoint Integrated Health Services in Navajo County and Indian Health Service are two nonprofit providers that operate client-only services.

## **Transit Provider Needs**

There are a wide variety of providers that serve Yavapai County, including medium-sized operators of fixed-route services, small operators that provide demand response services, as well as services specialized for medical transport or client-only needs. Several agencies participated in interviews, and the key challenges they identified are listed in **Figure 16**. Although each faces their own unique challenges, there are many issues that are common between the agencies. These include:

- **Limited funding** – Many agencies indicated a lack of financial resources makes it difficult to fulfill the needs of their customers and clients. Greater support from Yavapai County jurisdictions (such as cities, towns, and the county) is desired, particularly to meet the needs of residents that live in rural and unincorporated areas of the county. Some non-profits are providing trips for AHCCCS recipients without being compensated for those rides. These local providers often offer more reliable and higher quality service and can provide transport for trip purposes beyond medical care, such as grocery shopping and social connection.
- **Lack of sufficient staff or employee capacity** – Several agencies noted their staff are unable to accommodate the full needs of their programs, or that they lack sufficient volunteers to carry out the work. Qualified drivers for fixed route service such as that provided by Cottonwood Area Transit are difficult to find, as well as non-profit volunteers who can assist passengers with ambulatory challenges.
- **Travel distances** – For some agencies, long distances between destinations limits the ability to serve the most people (or to do so efficiently). This was particularly the case for providers who serve rural communities (and for some providers who choose not to serve those communities). For these agencies, a trip to a rural community to serve one or two people comes at the expense of service for at least five people in larger towns or cities.
- **Regulations** – A few agencies identified regulations or requirements from ADOT, the FTA or other organizations as being a challenge to their operations. The additional cost and time to fulfill planning requirements can be a burden for many agencies, especially the smaller ones. One example is the inability to use vehicles across funding programs (i.e., 5310 vehicles cannot be used under 5311 programs).
- **Lack of awareness of service** – A few providers mentioned the lack of awareness by the public about their agencies and the services they provide. This is a sentiment that was corroborated by responses to the community survey.

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**Figure 16 Provider Challenges and Concerns**

Organization or Provider	Challenges
<b>Quad Cities</b>	
NAZCARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unclear regulations and guidance from ADOT</li> <li>▪ The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) requirements preclude volunteer pool or program because clients often require specialized and trained personnel.</li> <li>▪ AHCCCS limits the number of miles that can be billed per day (25 miles) between a person's residence and a healthcare center</li> </ul>
New Horizons Disability Empowerment Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not enough vehicles to expand service</li> <li>▪ Providing service to the Verde Valley results in a significant percent of time for deadheading</li> <li>▪ Insurance costs are high</li> </ul>
People Who Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Competing with other organizations for volunteers</li> <li>▪ Would like to offer incentives, like fuel reimbursement, to all volunteers on a regular basis</li> <li>▪ Service area gets larger (longer travel distances) without relative increase in operational capacity</li> </ul>
Prescott Valley Transit Voucher Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demand for vouchers exceeds supply</li> <li>▪ Taxis are either expensive or not wheelchair accessible (or both)</li> </ul>
Veteran's Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Difficult to provide service to rural communities (a trip to a single rural home means forgoing 4-5 people in the cities due to length and time of trip)</li> <li>▪ Recurring trips take precedence over one-time patients</li> </ul>
West Yavapai Guidance Clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Long distances between destinations (clients and clinics)</li> <li>▪ Limited budget makes it difficult to provide more trips for more people</li> </ul>
Yavapai Regional Transit (YRT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased service and deviations for specialized trips and needs have made it difficult to ensure on-time performance</li> <li>▪ Limited funding to expand frequency and span</li> </ul>
<b>Southwest Yavapai County</b>	
Freedom Express	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited volunteer capacity, especially during summer</li> <li>▪ Limited financial outlook; difficulty identifying funding sources</li> <li>▪ Desire to expand service to more locations, but lacks sustainable, long-term funding</li> </ul>
<b>Verde Valley</b>	
Beaver Creek Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited staff capacity to apply for grants/funding</li> <li>▪ Lack of resources to expand service to more areas</li> </ul>
Cottonwood Area Transit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regulations from FTA and ADOT limit how vehicles can be used/shared</li> <li>▪ Difficult to find qualified drivers</li> </ul>
NAU Senior Companion Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Modified driver training, similar to PASS training, but requires less time and focuses on drivers who use personal vehicles</li> <li>▪ Competing with other organizations for volunteers</li> </ul>

Organization or Provider	Challenges
Rainbow Acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increasing regulations from ADOT decrease how much time is available for essential job functions</li> <li>▪ A large share of trips carries very few riders (20% of trips have one person)</li> <li>▪ Demand is rising, but the ability to meet those needs is limited financially</li> </ul>
Spectrum Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of available staff for transportation outside of standard business hours</li> </ul>
Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strong demand for expanded services and hours</li> <li>▪ Financial challenges and limited resources</li> </ul>
Yavapai Apache Transit (YAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of information about services among the public</li> </ul>

## Passenger Needs

NACOG distributed a survey in March and April 2020 to gather information about people’s experiences and thoughts on passenger transportation. The survey was available in English and Spanish, and more than 680 responses were received. Additionally, stakeholders in seven smaller Yavapai County communities (Paulden, Ash Fork, Seligman, Weaver Mountain Area, Black Canyon City, Jerome, and Cornville) were invited to join NACOG for focus groups to discuss the transportation needs in their community along with potential community-driven transportation solutions. The focus groups discussed transportation needs/constraints, resources that exist within the community, and potential solutions to address the identified needs. Lastly, a focus group was conducted with employees from Northern Arizona Healthcare addressing the same topics from their perspective as healthcare providers to Yavapai County residents.

Findings from the survey and focus groups are summarized by topic area below and displayed by sub-region in **Figure 17**.

### Employment and Economic Opportunity

Focus group participants in Paulden, Ash Fork and Seligman, discussed how the lack of transportation options constrains employment opportunities for working-aged residents, including youth. Walking to employment was mentioned during both the Paulden and Black Canyon focus groups. In these rural communities this is often an unsafe activity due to lack of pedestrian infrastructure and extreme weather for several months of the year.

Access to education can be an important step to improve economic opportunities. Although very few respondents to the community survey identified as students, those who did tended to travel to school frequently (more than half traveled to school three or more times per week). During the 2019-2020 transit study in the Quad Cities, CYMPO held an open house at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University to obtain input from students on their transportation needs. They reported that, while there was transportation from campus to Walmart for basic needs, they lacked transportation to Downtown Prescott for entertainment, shopping, and dining, and to Yavapai College, where many students take courses in addition to their coursework at Embry-Riddle. Therefore, transportation services to schools may not benefit a large number of people, though those who use the service may do so more often. Additionally, people who traveled for school frequently tended to support early morning trips and frequent service throughout the day more than the overall respondents to the survey.

## **Healthcare**

Focus group participants and Advisory Committee members noted that the rural areas of the county have limited or no local healthcare for basic or specialty needs. Residents in these areas must travel to the larger towns and cities in the region such as Prescott, Prescott Valley, Flagstaff, Williams, Cottonwood, Anthem, Phoenix, or Wickenburg to access care. Participants in the Northern Arizona Healthcare focus group noted that patients often travel to Verde Valley for healthcare because specialty services in Flagstaff are at capacity.

While healthcare trips are not as frequent as employment trips, they are necessary. Focus group respondents noted that there are very few transit providers that provide Non-Emergency Medical Transport (NEMT) in Northern and Southern Yavapai County. NEMT includes services offered to patients and healthcare consumers who face barriers getting to their medical appointments. These services are usually intended for medical appointments or other forms of non-emergency care and are only available to AHCCCs-eligible individuals.

Residents that lack transportation typically rely on neighbors, friends, and family to transport them to/from healthcare appointments. Due to limited local healthcare, these trips represent approximately 30-90 minutes of travel each way in addition to appointment time. Some people are reluctant to depend too much on these individuals because they don't want to be a burden.

Northern Yavapai Advisory Committee members, Weaver Mountain Health Initiative, and Northern Arizona Healthcare focus group participants noted that residents will use the fire department or emergency medical services (EMS) for non-emergency events/transport, which carries the risk that the fire department or EMS will not be in the area for an emergency event. If individuals call 911 for non-emergency events/transport, that also requires the fire department to respond, also impacting their time and resources.

Participants in the Northern Arizona Healthcare focus group noted the difficulty patients face in finding transportation back home. Many patients rely on AHCCCS, Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition, family, or friends to provide rides to the facility but the return trip is often more difficult to schedule. Participants noted that taxis are an expensive option that many patients cannot afford.

## **Activities of Daily Living**

Passenger transportation services for activities of daily living, such as groceries, banking and personal care (e.g., hair salon), were identified as a need in the Focus Groups in each sub-region. Food stores are limited to a Family Dollar, convenience stores and food banks in these more rural communities, and while some residents do online shopping, that was not discussed as a common source of food provisions. NEMT services, if available, are often limited to only providing transport to and from the healthcare facility and cannot make additional stops to pick up groceries. This suggests that passenger transportation services that connect people to grocery stores and other food sources would be well-used and provide particular benefit to lower income households.

## **Other Notable Findings**

Survey respondents who live in rural areas and smaller communities were more likely to experience transportation challenges such as inability to drive oneself and lack of access to a car or transit/transit information. These challenges were confirmed in the focus group conversations.

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Older adults aged 65 or older who participated in the survey rely more on family members or friends for rides. This age group is also more likely to use NEMT than other age groups and less likely to use public transportation and taxis or ride-hail services.

Survey respondents believe that the most important purposes for passenger transportation services are to “help people who don’t have cars or can’t drive,” “get people to services,” and to “get people to work and employment.”

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**Figure 17 Needs by Sub-Region**

Subarea	Priority Corridor	Served By	Existing Gaps and Needs
Northern Yavapai County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interstate 40</li> <li>▪ AZ-89</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No regional service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Area is poorly served by public transportation of any kind, including non-emergency medical transport</li> <li>▪ Aging population and a population that prefers less government and not to rely on government services</li> <li>▪ Basic daily needs such as groceries, banking, employment are limited in the communities</li> <li>▪ Long travel distances between destinations makes it difficult to provide efficient transportation services</li> <li>▪ Need for transportation services that connect to other cities, such as Prescott, Flagstaff or Kingman (to provide access to employment opportunities, healthcare and shopping)</li> <li>▪ Some residents have resorted to relying on emergency medical services (EMT) and local fire departments for non-emergency transport.</li> </ul>
Southwestern Yavapai County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ US-60</li> <li>▪ US-93</li> <li>▪ AZ-89</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Freedom Express<sup>10</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Area has limited passenger transportation service</li> <li>▪ Aging population</li> <li>▪ Basic daily needs such as groceries, banking, employment are limited in the communities</li> <li>▪ Long travel distances between destinations makes it difficult to provide efficient transportation services</li> <li>▪ Need for transportation services that connect to other cities, such as Prescott, Wickenburg, or Phoenix (to provide access to employment opportunities, healthcare and shopping) on a schedule (e.g., one day per week)</li> <li>▪ Some residents have resorted to relying on emergency medical services (EMT) and local fire departments for non-emergency transport.</li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup> Freedom Express serves residents within Wickenburg city limits. Only a small portion of Wickenburg is in Yavapai County; most of Wickenburg residents live in Maricopa County. Freedom Express is willing to discuss expanding transit service into portions of Yavapai County beyond Wickenburg, but funding would need to be identified.

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Subarea	Priority Corridor	Served By	Existing Gaps and Needs
Southeastern Yavapai County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interstate 17</li> <li>▪ AZ-69</li> <li>▪ AZ-169</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No regional service providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Area is poorly served by public transportation of any kind, including non-emergency medical transport</li> <li>▪ Aging population</li> <li>▪ Basic daily needs such as groceries, banking, employment are limited in the communities</li> <li>▪ Long travel distances between destinations makes it difficult to provide efficient transportation services</li> <li>▪ Need for transportation services that connect to other cities, such as Anthem or Phoenix (to provide access to employment opportunities, healthcare and shopping) preferably on a schedule (e.g., one to two days per week)</li> </ul>
Verde Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AZ-89A</li> <li>▪ AZ-179</li> <li>▪ AZ-260</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beaver Creek Transit</li> <li>▪ Cottonwood Area Transit</li> <li>▪ Rainbow Acres</li> <li>▪ Spectrum Health</li> <li>▪ Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition</li> <li>▪ Yavapai Apache Transit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need for more frequent service and longer service hours</li> <li>▪ Connections within Verde Valley communities</li> <li>▪ Higher concentrations of older adults requires additional transportation services for people who don't (or cannot) drive</li> <li>▪ Medical providers see need for transportation services to get people home from medical emergencies</li> <li>▪ As a major tourism center, Sedona experiences high parking demand, especially in popular areas and at trailheads</li> </ul>
Quad Cities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AZ-69</li> <li>▪ AZ-89</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NAZCARE</li> <li>▪ New Horizons</li> <li>▪ People Who Care</li> <li>▪ Prescott Valley Transit Voucher Program</li> <li>▪ West Yavapai Guidance Clinic</li> <li>▪ Yavapai Regional Transit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The area is poorly served by public transportation. The agencies that do operate in the region do not coordinate and collaborate with each other. This increases costs and creates redundancies.</li> <li>▪ More frequent service and longer service hours</li> <li>▪ Connections within Prescott, Prescott Valley and other CYMPO communities</li> <li>▪ Aging population and high needs (persons with disabilities)</li> </ul>

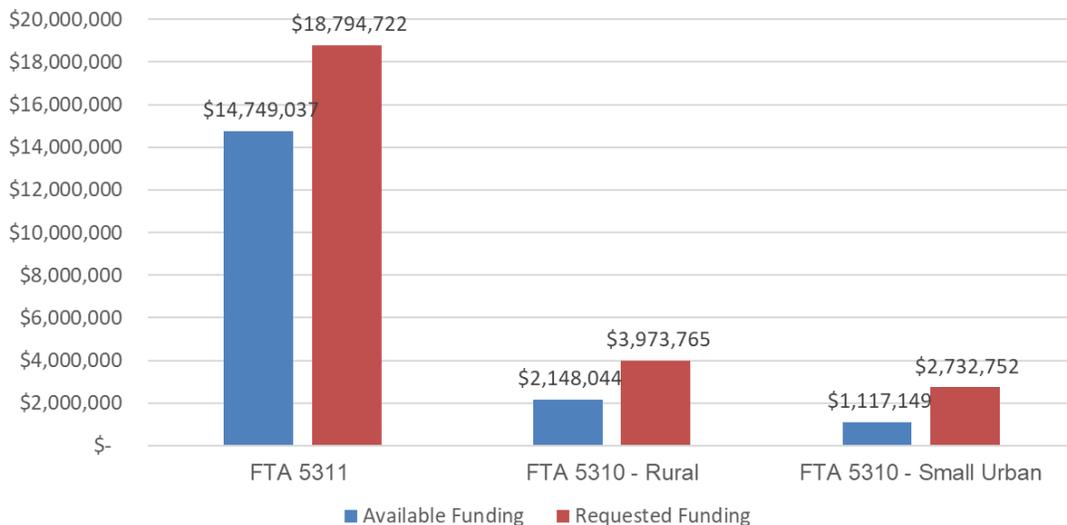
## FUNDING

Transit providers in Yavapai County offer effective and lifeline transportation services with the limited funding available for public transportation services. Arizona is one of five states that do not contribute state funding to public transportation. This section, therefore, summarizes the federal funds available for public transportation.

Federal funding for public transit comes primarily through the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT). Funding for the U.S. DOT is authorized by the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the first federal transportation authorization in over a decade to fund federal surface transportation programs. The FAST Act was signed into law in December 2015 and provides \$305 billion in funding over fiscal years 2016 through 2020 for the U.S. DOT and its subsidiary agencies, including the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 18** shows two FTA funding programs awarded to all rural and small urban providers in Arizona. The §5310 funds are divided between rural and small urban areas based on population. Transit providers offering transit services connecting to or fully in rural (non-urbanized) areas are eligible to apply for §5311 funds. However, as Figure 18 shows, all the transit funding programs were oversubscribed in 2019. This was the case in previous years, as well. The chart also shows a funding “gap” reflected in how much providers requested in grant applications, and how much was awarded. In 2019, the transit funding gap reached over \$4 million for §5311 and \$1.8 million for §5310.

**Figure 18 Arizona Department of Transportation Federal Rural and Specialized Transit Funding (2019)**



Source: Arizona Department of Transportation

Funding reports show consistent federal funding increases over the past five years for FTA §5310 and §5311 subrecipients. **Figure 19** summarizes reported annual funding awards between 2015 and 2019, based on federal and state data sources. FTA §5310 funds are awarded through a discretionary process and are typically available for capital and mobility management expenses,

<sup>11</sup> A one-year extension of the FAST Act was signed on September 22, 2020.

both of which may explain the variations by year for a given provider. The funding history shows that the two funding programs have been a consistent and essential revenue source.

**Figure 19 Federal Transportation Funding for Yavapai County Area Transit Providers**

Provider	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
<b>FTA 5310 Older Adults and People with Disabilities</b>					
Adult Care Services	\$216,000	\$50,000	\$56,500	-	-
Central Yavapai Transit Foundation	-	-	-	-	\$14,050
Intermountain Centers Human Development	\$57,000	-	-	-	-
NAZCARE, Inc.	\$28,000	-	\$32,130	-	-
New Horizons Disability Empowerment Center	\$142,000	\$131,000	\$218,000	\$209,960	\$182,878
New Horizons Mobility Management	-	-	\$38,700	\$61,000	\$60,000
Northern Arizona University	\$88,000	\$74,000	\$84,800	\$70,600	\$72,505
People Who Care	-	-	\$30,000	\$52,000	\$50,817
Rainbow Acres	\$28,000	\$22,700	\$27,300	\$28,060	\$32,880
Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition	\$150,000	\$170,000	\$276,000	\$248,820	\$153,300
West Yavapai Guidance Clinic	\$23,000	\$35,000	-	\$114,200	\$22,448
<b>FTA 5311 Rural Transit</b>					
Cottonwood Area Transit	\$1,212,869	\$899,375	\$868,954	\$1,338,986	\$1,726,728
Yavapai Regional Transit	\$453,761	\$530,841	\$503,390	\$619,980	\$737,980
<b>Tribal Transportation Funds</b>					
Yavapai Apache Transit	\$122,001	\$121,826	\$112,623	\$248,659	NA

Source: National Transit Database (FTA Section 5311 years 2015-2017); Arizona Department of Transportation (FTA Section 5311 years 2018-2019, and FTA 5310 all years)

The following sections briefly describe various sources of federal funding that are being used in Yavapai County. Detailed descriptions of these and other federal funding sources can be found in Technical Memo 1.

## **Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program**

Section 5310 provides formula funding to states for the purpose of meeting the transportation needs of seniors and individuals with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. The FTA apportions \$125,000 to each state and then apportions the balance based on each state's share of population for these groups of people.

Eligible recipients include private nonprofit organizations, states or local government authorities, or public transportation operators. Section 5310 funds can be used to fund the following purchases and/or activities:

- Buses and vans

- Wheelchair lifts, ramps, and securement devices
- Transit-related information technology systems, including scheduling/routing/one-call systems
- Mobility management programs
- Acquisition of transportation services under a contract, lease, or other arrangement
- Travel training (educating new or potential riders on how to use the transportation system)
- Volunteer driver programs
- Signage or wayfinding technology
- Building an accessible path to a bus stop or installing other accessible features

Capital projects are eligible for funding. Most funds are used to purchase vehicles or provide preventive maintenance for transit fleets; acquisition of transportation services under contract, lease, or other arrangements, and state program administration are also eligible expenses. The maximum federal share is 80 percent. State or local funding sources may provide local share.

## **Section 5311 Non-Urbanized Area Formula Program**

The Section 5311 Non-Urbanized Area (rural) program provides formula funding to states for the purpose of supporting public transit in rural areas with a population of less than 50,000. Funds may be used for capital, operating, and administrative assistance to state agencies, local public bodies, nonprofit organizations, and operators of public transit services. After the 2020 Census results, some §5311 recipients may become eligible for §5307 funds (typically used for capital purchases, mobility management, or technical transportation studies, among other uses) depending on whether region can be classified as an urbanized area. If so, this would make more funding available for those recipients.

The FTA makes available 15 percent of the Section 5311 funds in each state for improvement of intercity bus services, also known as the Section 5311(f) program. The funds are to be used for planning, infrastructure, and operating needs related to the linkage of cities through intercity bus carriers unless the chief executive officer of the state certifies that the intercity bus service needs of the state are being met adequately. If all funds are not obligated to intercity bus improvements, the funds may revert to the general Section 5311 program for public transit in rural areas.

## **Section 5311(b)(3) Rural Transit Assistance Program**

The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) provides funding to assist in the design and implementation of training and technical assistance projects, research, and other support services tailored to meet the needs of transit operators in non-urbanized areas. The FTA allocates \$65,000 to each state and then allocates the balance of funds to each state based on an administrative formula using the non-urbanized population according to the most recent decennial census.

## **Access and Mobility Partnership Grants**

Access and Mobility Partnership Grants are FTA grants that seek to bridge the gap for individuals with limited transportation options and to spur further coordination between transportation and healthcare providers. Under the initiative, there are two funding opportunities: Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) and the Human Services Coordination Research

(HSCR) grants. Eligible activities under the ICAM program include capital projects that improve the coordination of NEMT services. Eligible activities under HSCR include innovative strategies to provide more effective and efficient transportation services for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and those with low incomes.

## **Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act**

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020. The CARES Act included more than \$2 trillion in relief from the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19. Of the \$2 trillion, \$25 billion was provided to recipients of Sections 5307 and 5311 funds. Funds can be used for planning, capital, operating, and preventive maintenance costs. Through the CARES Act, ADOT received \$41.7 million to distribute among Section 5311 recipients for administration, intercity projects, planning and operating costs, mobility management, and capital costs. CYMPO received nearly \$3.6 million to improve passenger transportation in Prescott, Prescott Valley, and Yavapai County.

### 3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This plan strives to develop strategies to strengthen Yavapai County’s passenger transportation services and increase coordination among existing providers. Collectively these strategies can help increase access to transportation services and mobility in Yavapai County. The recommendations were determined through a stakeholder and community engagement process and are responsive to the needs summarized earlier in this report that were identified through research on existing passenger transportation service in Yavapai County past plans, a community passenger transportation survey, provider interviews, and stakeholder meetings and focus groups between January and December 2020.

Common factors across the recommendations are the critical role of local champion organizations and the importance of collaboration for implementation and sustained success. The recommendations require 1) an investment of time and resources in the short term for efficiencies and gains in longer-term, and 2) a commitment to action for the greater good to achieve the vision of improved access and mobility.

The recommendations are presented in three sections: 1) governance and funding recommendations that could change the landscape of passenger transportation service in Yavapai County moving forward, 2) service recommendations that can increase mobility and connections within and between regional communities; and 3) coordination strategies that can improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of service for providers, and current and future passengers.

Each recommendation is followed by an Implementation Summary table. Cost estimates are given using a rating scale of one (\$) to three (\$\$\$) dollar signs, equating to the following amounts:

- \$ = <\$50,000
- \$\$ = \$50,000-\$100,000
- \$\$\$ = >\$100,000

#### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND FUNDING

As the number and level of investment in public and human service transportation services increases, Yavapai County would benefit from a clear, active strategy to guide how the region wants and expects transit services to develop over time. A lack of action will almost certainly lead to a more fragmented and less cost-efficient approach to transit service planning and development. This section identifies opportunities and strategies for Yavapai County to coordinate and consolidate decision-making, governance, and funding for public transportation services.

##### Background

As described earlier in the report, there are a limited number of public transportation services operating in Yavapai County with both CAT and YAT operating in the Verde Valley, and YRT, providing service in Chino Valley with connections to Prescott and Prescott Valley. While the existing services are largely operating in rural areas, the county’s more populated regions, Prescott and Prescott Valley, and the Sedona area have made significant strides to develop and

expand passenger transportation services. Prescott and Prescott Valley are considering the potential of using CARES Act funding to begin a demonstration project, while Sedona recently hired a transit manager who will take the lead in implementing the city's transit plan completed in the Fall of 2019.

Transit operations in the Verde Valley are coordinated; however, the three transit agencies within Yavapai County function independently in terms of transit funding and administration. Each agency has their own general manager and staff; each agency applies for federal grants independently and separately seeks funding from local and regional governments, including Yavapai County. The development of new transit services in Yavapai County's most populated regions is creating new opportunities to strengthen transit governance structures that could coordinate or potentially consolidate transit service funding and investment decision making as well as service management and operations.

### **Opportunities**

Opportunities for service improvement involve consolidating transit governance and funding, potentially at the county, region, or sub-region level. Increased cooperation and collaboration among existing transit providers could occur through one, or a combination of the following options:

1. Develop a countywide transit policy to guide transit service investment
2. Create a single countywide transit agency to manages transit services
3. Create and fund one or more regional independent transit agencies to manage transit services

### **Yavapai County Transit Policy**

Yavapai County provides ad hoc financial support for transit services in Yavapai County; this support has helped create YRT and CAT as well as helped ensure their continued operations. Financial contributions largely reflect agency requests and are confirmed annually. While this approach has helped agencies meet their immediate needs, the lack of a clear policy or consistent terms that reflect Yavapai County's priorities for transit service investment has constrained service expansion and development. The development of new services in Central Yavapai and in the Verde Valley/Sedona, which may seek financial support from Yavapai County, could further strain and fragment decision-making about transit investments.

In anticipation of the development of new services, Yavapai County could strengthen and direct transit service development by creating and implementing a transit policy that specifies its terms for supporting local and regional transit services. The terms could be designed to support Yavapai County goals related to employment, job training, educational and healthcare access and other priorities, as well as set standards for performance measurement.

By developing a transit policy and establishing a funding formula, Yavapai County would be committing to a specific level of funding for transit. However, the commitment establishes Yavapai County as a leader in the development of public transit services by incentivizing the type of service and management structures it desires. Over time, the transit policy could lead to development of a countywide transit system. Local governments would benefit because expectations for funding would be clear and reliable.

In the short-term, a transit policy could direct spending towards county priorities, such as the development of productive and efficient transit services, assist local governments leverage federal

resources and strengthen access to employment and key services for county residents. Policies and funding could also be coordinated with transit supportive, multimodal transportation investments like sidewalks, crosswalks and bicycle facilities.

There are possible disadvantages to acknowledge for Yavapai County. By committing to funding transit services according to specific formulas, the County would constrain resources and financial flexibility. However, such constraints are consistent with other regional programs and services and can be managed with performance metrics so that the County is ensured that their investments deliver value for taxpayers.

### **Countywide Transit Agency Management**

As discussed, Yavapai County currently has three transit agencies with the potential of a fourth and fifth services to be added in the next few years. While the geographic size of the County supports multiple transit services, the population size (approximately 240,000 residents) could be served with a single agency. Yavapai County, or another regional transit authority could be established to serve the entirety of the county, including the Verde Valley, Chino Valley and potentially Prescott and Prescott Valley. Developing a shared governance structure would allow the region to centralize management functions, reduce administrative costs and share staff resources, such as reporting, accounting and marketing. A unified approach to transit service would consolidate capital investments, such as vehicles and technology investments associated with trip reservations, scheduling and dispatch. It is also possible that a single transit authority could have two operations centers, one in the Verde Valley and another in Central Yavapai.

Despite a host of potential benefits, challenges associated with establishing a countywide transit agency involve identifying and designating a lead agency that has the support and trust of existing and new transit partners. A countywide transit service could be led by Yavapai County or as a new agency formed as part of a Joint Powers Organization (JPO) or Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA). In the current environment, a countywide transit program has the best chance if it was incentivized by a funding program.

### **Standalone/Independent Transit Agency (or Agencies)**

An additional option for consolidated transit agency management would be to form a countywide or one or more regional transit agencies in Yavapai County. Regional independent transit agencies require funding, which could be provided by partner organizations (cities, towns, regional/sub-regional organizations) plus potentially county resources. Yavapai County could opt to fund an independent transit agency by dedicating a portion of existing funding resources or asking for voter approval to use a portion of the county excise tax to fund transit. The strategy of raising county funds for transit and using it to support an independent transit agency meets multiple objectives including dedicated funding to support transit and leverage federal resources. It would also encourage a more efficient management structure that manages the service as a single entity but allows for regional operating centers and control. An independent transit agency could also ensure smaller, less populated parts of the county have access to basic public transportation services, such as scheduled or on-demand services connections to medical services and/or commuter strategies such as park and ride lots, vanpool programs, and other job access programs.

There are, however, significant challenges associated with establishing an independent transit (or mobility management) agency, not the least of which include establishing a new funding source and winning voter approval to use transportation funds for transit.

Under Arizona State Statute there are two options for independent transit agency governance structures that are permissible for Yavapai County:

1. Creating a **Countywide Transit Agency** governed by the County Board of Supervisors (AZ Statute 40-1152). This entity could be a direct recipient of FTA Section 5307 funds (Urban Area Formula Funds) and FTA Section 5311 funds (Rural Area Formula Funds). Yavapai County has discretion to use general funds to support transit, or with voter approval, the County Board of Supervisors can use county excise taxes to support transit.
2. Establishing an independent transit agency through a **Joint Powers Organization (JPO) or Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA)** to govern regional transit services. Individual municipalities, including Yavapai County, could join the JPO or IGA as desired. Under Arizona State Statute, a JPO or IGA do not have taxing authorities but they can raise funds through member contributions, contracts, partnerships and fares.

A third option, an Intergovernmental Public Transit Authority (IPTA) is currently not permissible in Yavapai County because State Statute limits the use of IPTA's in counties with a population of 200,000 or less. However, an IPTA may be an appropriate and potentially easier strategy, especially for transit services in the Verde Valley, which may best be funded, managed and operated regionally across Cottonwood and Sedona. The IPTA model may also best serve an independent transit agency that seeks to operate across county lines (i.e., Yavapai and Coconino Counties).

## **Next Steps / Strategies**

In all cases, however, despite offering significant benefits, a regional transit governance structure requires significant political will and community support to advance to implementation. Given expected challenges associated with advancing funding and governance structures, this plan recommends a phased approach that creates additional opportunities for transit governance over time.

### **Strategy: Develop County-level Policy Guiding Transit Funding and Development**

Of the options discussed above, the easiest to advance is to work with the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors to develop a clear policy to guide County recurring investment in local and regional transit funding. By setting a clear policy, Yavapai County stops short of developing a countywide transit structure but establishes itself as a leader in the development of passenger transportation services. A county-level transit policy would ensure equitable access to transit resources and establish terms for funding, such as based on population in the service area or the amount of service provided (ridership, service hours, and/or service miles).

## Implementation Summary

<b>Proposed Service by Region</b>	All regions
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	Facilitator: NACOG, CYMPO and cities of Sedona and Prescott and Town of Prescott Valley Partner Organizations: CAT, YAN and YRT
<b>Performance Measures</b>	Transit policy
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	Lack of political will
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	Upfront (staff time for coordination and collaboration across partners): \$-\$\$ Ongoing (staff time for coordination and contributions): \$
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ FTA 5305 Planning Funds</li> <li>▪ In-kind donations from facilitators and partners</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Short-term

### **Strategy: Work with the Arizona Transit Association to Change Definition of an Intergovernmental Public Transit Authority**

The 2019 TrIP Update<sup>12</sup> did a thorough analysis of the feasibility of seven transit governance structures for Yavapai County. Five of the seven governance options were deemed feasible in Yavapai County (**Figure 20**). Ultimately the TrIP study did not conclude with a governance recommendation. However, a stakeholder group of regional agency and passenger transportation service providers from Yavapai and Coconino County, including but not limited to NACOG, CYMPO, Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority (NAIPTA), CAT, and the City of Sedona continued the discussion in 2020 regarding potential governance structures for the region that would provide local powers/authority to operate services, provide several funding options and enable the support of passenger transportation services to the level deemed necessary over the next 5-20 years. The group determined that an IPTA, while currently not feasible due to the population size restrictions, would be the most appropriate governance structure for the Yavapai County/Northern Arizona region.

The county population size restriction on IPTAs was legislatively determined. The stakeholder group recommended working with AzTA to advocate to lawmakers for a change to the county population size in the IPTA legislation in the upcoming legislative session. There is potential for support for a change in the definition given the Yuma County Intergovernmental Public Transit Authority (YCIPTA) was established in 2010, when Yuma County met the criteria for an IPTA model. Yuma County’s population is currently estimated at 213,797 (2019), which exceeds the statutory limitations of the governance model.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.cympo.org/trip-2019/>

### Implementation Summary

<b>Proposed Service by Region</b>	<b>All regions</b>
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	Facilitator: NACOG, AzTA Partner Organizations: Yuma County/YCIPTA, NAIPTA
<b>Performance Measures</b>	Development of legislation
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	State legislature priorities
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	Ongoing (staff time for coordination and contributions): \$
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AzTA operating resources</li> <li>▪ In-kind donations from service providers</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Medium-term

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**Figure 20**    **TriP Summary of Potential Governance Structures**

Type of Structure	Overview	Advantages	Disadvantages
County Transit System	County provides transit services to provide regional services and/or fill gaps	Opportunity to create countywide system	May be a mismatch for Central Yavapai
Metropolitan Public Transit Authority (MPTA)	Counties and cities (but not Indian nations) can create MPTAs to acquire, own, and operate public transportation authorities	Creates local authority Easier implementation	Elected officials run organization
Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)	Public, political, tax levying public improvement and taxing sub-division Independent of governments in area it serves Powers equal to a municipal corporation Counties more than 400,000 but less than 1.2 million. Possible in smaller counties with County Board vote	Multimodal	20-year planning horizon Potential less control for cities and tribal nations
Joint Powers Organization/Non-Profit Corporation	Counties, cities and other partners form a separate legal entity to operate transit service	Creates local authority	No taxing authority
Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA)	County, cities, and tribal nations (+ others) develop intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) that define respective roles and responsibilities	Creates local authority	No taxing authority and burdensome approval process for sharing authority and funding
Intergovernmental Public Transit Authority (IPTA)	Public, political public improvement district Membership determined by cities and towns interested in establishing IPTA. Can include universities under jurisdiction of AZ board of regents and tribal nations As of 2020, only applicable to counties with population of 200,000 or less	Has powers/authority to operate or contract for public transportation services Eligible to receive 5307 funds Funds raised through member contributions, contracts, partnerships and fares Easy to form	No taxing authority

## Strategy: Establish Community Mobility Funds

In stakeholder interviews throughout this study, agencies and transit service providers noted that funding—particularly federal funding—to support passenger transportation service is limited, which constrains their ability to provide expanded service by these financial resources. Additionally, many funding sources require a cash or in-kind local match. If the match is not available, then funds the agency may otherwise be eligible for are left on the table, so to speak. Limited funds, lost opportunities, and no near-term change in financial support from state or county government suggests a need to identify and/or establish other funding sources.

Focus groups and interviews also highlighted how residents in communities across Yavapai County are passionate, loyal and committed to helping one another survive and thrive. This dedication to community is seen through action such as ride provision and fundraising.

### **Based on the identified needs and existing resources and services within the different regions, we recommend the establishment of a county-wide Community Mobility Fund.**

Consistent with the development of a transit policy at the county level and/or helping to support a future independent transit agency, NACOG and stakeholders can collaborate in the establishment of a county-wide Community Mobility Fund. This fund could help support regional mobility management funds and help leverage contributions from other funders, including potentially Yavapai County and federal funding programs.

One model for the Community Mobility Fund is the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) of Southern Nevada Community Mobility Program (CMP). The CMP is designed as a reimbursement program to match 50% of eligible transportation expenses for non-profit 501 (c) (3) organizations that provide transportation service program options to eligible residents, including seniors, persons with disabilities and low-income individuals. The program is administered by the agency through a Request for Applications (RFA) process and is funded through local dollars.<sup>13</sup> Like RTC, NACOG could be the administrator of the program. Identifying a funding source would be the most significant barrier to implementation of this model.

A second model is to establish a collaborative or field of interest fund through the Arizona Community Foundation of Yavapai County (ACFYC)<sup>14</sup>:

- *Collaborative fund*: a collaborative fund enables individual and/or organizations that share a common charitable interest to partner in the support and administration of a fund. Tax-deductible donations can come from any unrelated individual donors. Grant parameters and funding decisions would be determined by a committee of nine people or less, appointed by the individuals or organizations that established the fund, and ACFYC administers the grants. There are no ACFYC grantee reporting requirements with this type of fund. However, the individuals or organizations that created the funds could establish reporting requirements for accountability and evaluation purposes. A minimum of \$25,000 is required to open a fund and the fund can be spent down to \$5,000 before the fund would need to be closed. The ACFYC administrative fees associated with the

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.rtcnv.com/news/community-mobility-project-public-notice/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.azfoundation.org/Giving/Establishing-a-Fund>

collaborative fund are a minimum of \$1,000 or 1.25% of the fund balance, whichever is higher.<sup>15</sup>

- *Field of interest fund:* a field of interest fund is a fund in a donor-specified focus area, with parameters established by the donor(s). Organizations apply for grant support through either the ACFYC competitive grant application process or through a separate application process established by the donor(s). Grant applications are reviewed, rated and scored by a panel selected by the donor(s) to determine funding support. The field of interest fund requires a report at the end of the grant funding cycle. A minimum of \$25,000 is required to open a fund and the ACFYC only grants out 4.25% of the fund balance each funding cycle. The ACFYC administrative fees associated with the collaborative fund are a minimum of \$750 or 1.50% of the fund balance, whichever is higher.<sup>16</sup>

While a precedent has not been identified that is specific to passenger transportation services, ACFYC administers similar funds for other topic/interest groups that are equally resource constrained

Potential concerns expressed by transit providers who have previously received ACFYC competitive funds are the competitive process itself and the reporting requirements for grantees. Additionally, some organizations expressed caution about the equitable distribution of funds and the risk of donor fatigue, as well as concern about the redirection of resources currently received by an individual organization into a community fund.

Benefits of establishing a fund through ACFYC include 1) fund and grant management support, such as investment, accounting and distribution of funds, by a well-established philanthropic organization; 2) coordinated and consolidated fund raising, which reduces a cost burden transit providers identified in interviews; and 3) the ability to set the parameters of the grant program, such as eligible applicants, expenses and programming activities; and percent distribution of funds by factors such as sub-region of the county or population served.<sup>17</sup> Once established, community members could pursue private donations and conduct fundraising to support the fund.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.azfoundation.org/Give-Where-You-Live/Yavapai-County/Funds#1071421-collaborative-funds>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.azfoundation.org/Give-Where-You-Live/Yavapai-County/Funds#1071419-field-of-interest-funds>

## Implementation Summary

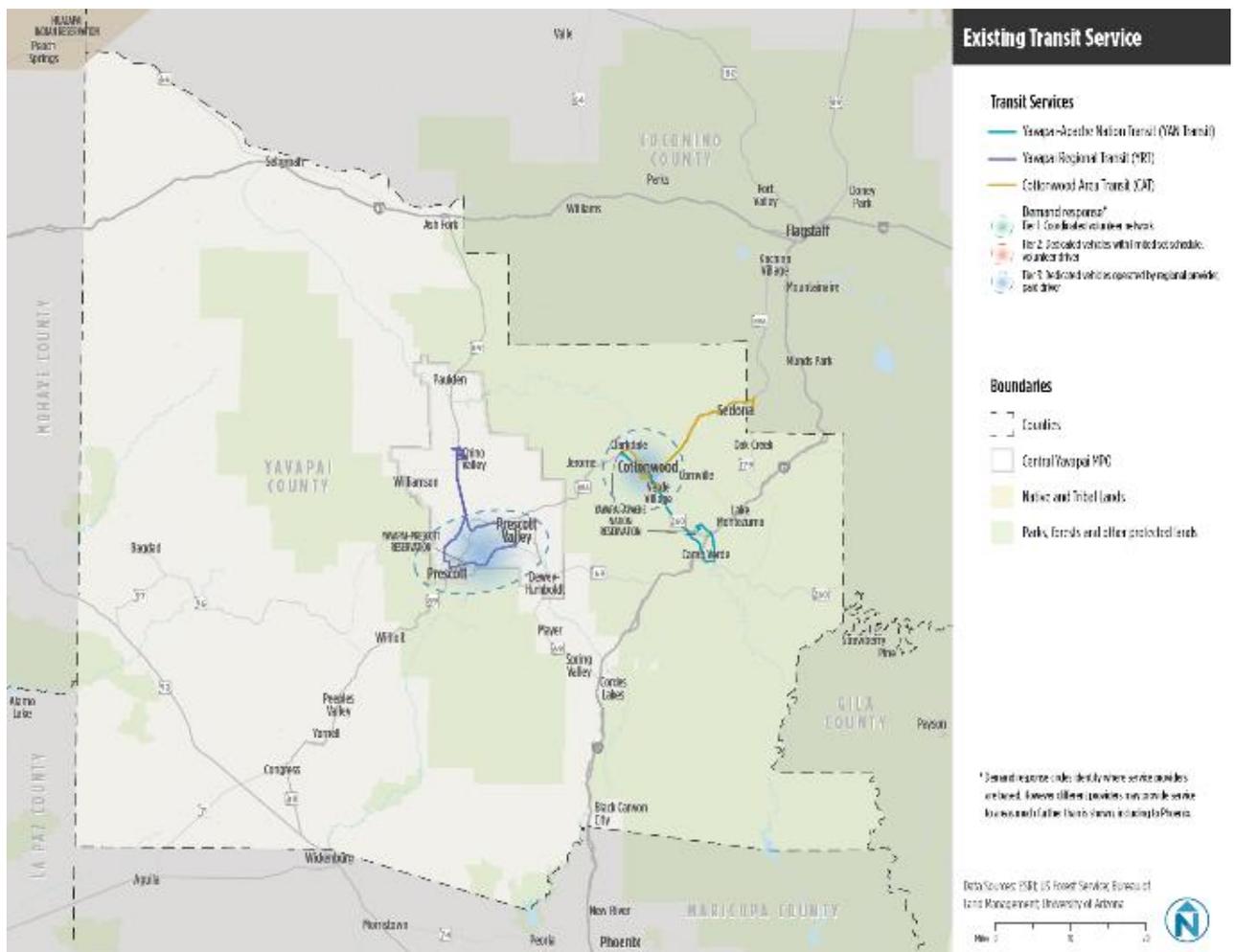
<b>Proposed Service by Region</b>	County-wide program
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	<p>Facilitator: NACOG, in its role as Mobility Manager for Yavapai County, can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administer a matching funds process similar to the first model</li> <li>• Assemble details on establishing a fund through the Arizona Community Foundation, based on the second model</li> </ul> <p>Lead Partners: Local social service non-profits transit providers.</p>
<b>Performance measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establishment of Community Mobility Fund(s)</li> <li>▪ Growth rate of fund</li> <li>▪ Level of support provided to fund applicants</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of champion and/or lead agency or organization to shepherd establishment of Community Mobility Fund</li> <li>▪ Lack of champions to pursue donations or other funding sources to the fund</li> <li>▪ Lack of interest or financial participation in/donations to the Community Mobility Fund</li> </ul>
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	<p>Upfront (staff time for coordination): \$</p> <p>Ongoing (staff time for coordination and promotion): \$</p>
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<p>Individual community member donations</p> <p>In-kind time to establish and administer fund (lower commitment if fund is managed by Arizona Community Foundation)</p>
<b>Timeline</b>	Medium-term

## REGIONAL SERVICE STRATEGIES

The Regional Service Strategies presented below are recommendations to better promote and expand existing passenger transportation service (**Figure 21** in the five regions of Yavapai County over the next ten years (**Figure 22**). The applicability of each strategy to a given region will depend on various factors, which are described in the strategy summaries.

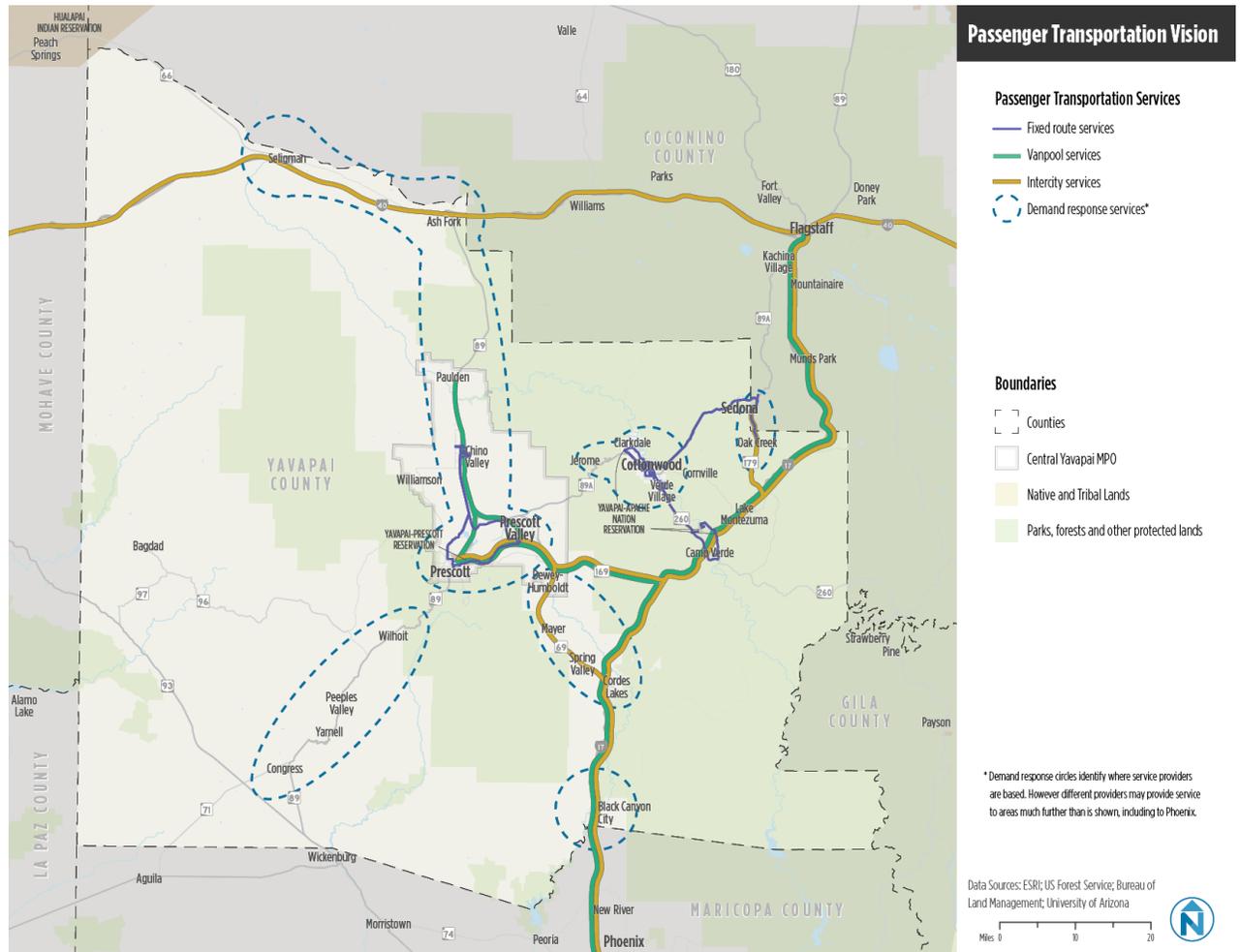
A description of each strategy is provided, along with an implementation summary outlining the regions where the proposed strategy may best be implemented, lead and partner organizations, potential performance measures, challenges to success, order of magnitude cost estimates, funding sources and timeline for implementation. The strategies are summarized in **Figure 28**.

**Figure 21 Existing Transit Services**



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**Figure 22 Passenger Transportation Vision**



## Demand Response Services

Demand response services are broadly defined at the federal level (49 C.F.R Section 604.3(g)) as any non-fixed route system of transporting individuals that requires advanced scheduling by the customer, including services provided by public entities, nonprofits, and private providers. Therefore, most passenger transportation services existing in or proposed for Yavapai County are demand response services, outside of the fixed routes services provided in the CYMPO and Verde Valley regions.

As discussed in earlier sections of the report, passenger transportation services, including both fixed route and demand response, are significantly limited in Northern, Southeast and Southwest Yavapai County. These areas of the county also have more limited services and employment options. Access to larger urban areas in the county and neighboring counties is important to access healthcare, services, and employment. Currently, transportation-constrained populations within these communities, such as the aging population who may have concerns driving long distances and in less-than-ideal conditions (dark/dawn/dusk, weather), or those with limited access to personal vehicles for transport, are reliant on friends and family to provide rides within the community and for longer distance travel for healthcare, services and employment. While fixed route service exists within the CYMPO and Verde Valley regions, some areas even in these regions are underserved due to lack of service to a given location or a limit to the service provided.

**Based on the identified needs and existing resources and services within the different regions, a tiered approach to demand response services is recommended as a strategy to address these transportation needs.** A tiered approach allows for the appropriate level of service given current demand and resource support within each region. It also allows for an opportunity to test “proof of concept” and demand before growing a program and increasing investment in services.

Descriptions of each of the tiers is below, followed by details regarding opportunities and threats to implementation. As noted on the map of existing service, some regions within Yavapai County already have some level of service represented in these tiers. The relevance of each tier to a given region is noted in the description.

### **Tier 1: Coordinated volunteer network**

Formal passenger transportation services are significantly limited in Northern, Southeast and Southwest Yavapai County. However, these regions have the foundation to support a coordinated volunteer network.

As noted in Blind Spot: Mobility and Aging in Rural America<sup>18</sup>, the frontier mindset of community independence and “neighbor helping neighbor” is a powerful force in rural communities. Organizations and community groups in Northern, Southwest and Southeast Yavapai County currently coordinate rides using telephone, text and social media networks such as Facebook Groups and NextDoor. Social media networks have high utilization and a low barrier to entry if an individual has internet access. However, the informality of the system can lead to uncertainty about ride requests and an overburden (time and expense) on a few people in the community. The efficiency and reach of the existing volunteer networks can be enhanced with a lead community-

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.agefriendlyaz.org/Portals/4/Blind-Spot-MAG-Rural-Mobility-report-08022020-FINAL\\_1.pdf](http://www.agefriendlyaz.org/Portals/4/Blind-Spot-MAG-Rural-Mobility-report-08022020-FINAL_1.pdf)

based organization to manage the network and additional technology integration to manage and coordinate rides.

A more structured volunteer network can be implemented **within each community**, utilizing free or low cost technology resources such as Google Forms and calendar/meeting schedule apps like Doodle initially to manage and coordinate rides. Ride request could be submitted via Google Forms and matched up with driver availability that is reflected in a Doodle schedule, or a passenger could access the Doodle schedule directly online with a secure login to schedule a ride. Ride coordination platforms such as Ride Amigos, while typically for coordinating carpools, may be a next-level scheduling platform for rides.. However, Google Forms and Doodle provide the lowest cost, lowest friction, accessible solutions for these communities to get started.

However, greater efficiency and consistency may be gained by implementing a **county-wide coordinated volunteer network**. A community-based organization can manage the administration, training, and technology of such a network and serve as a liaison to NACOG for Northern Yavapai County passenger transportation needs. The central organization would provide support to a distributed local network who can assist with coordination and, such as promotion of the network through local presentations, relationship building and press releases. The lead organization could apply for and manage private foundation and grant funds such as those identified in the Blind Spot report to support the network and manage gas vouchers or mileage reimbursement funds. The lead organization can also coordinate a volunteer time bank like that used in the Village to Village Network<sup>19</sup> featured in the Blind Spot report or the Personal Transportation Account™ created by the Independent Transportation Network (ITN) to store transportation assets (earned credit or cash) for riders<sup>20</sup>. A lead organization can also coordinate and provide standardized training for volunteers across the county for consistency of care.

Verde Valley Caregivers has expressed interest in serving as the lead organization for a county-wide coordinated volunteer network, with the critical support of a small steering committee (4-5 individuals) to get the network established, and as the central coordinator for the county-wide coordinated volunteer network.

## **Tier 2: Dedicated vehicle with limited set schedule and volunteer drivers**

A next tier of demand response service when and where ridership shows a consistency in demand in both frequency and volume and/or requires an ADA vehicle is to move to dedicated shared ride vehicle(s) with a limited set schedule and volunteer drivers. Individuals in focus groups in several areas of the county noted that an infrequent but predictable schedule is preferred over a true on-demand type service. However, a hybrid system that requires a “reservation” in advance on a dedicated shared vehicle on a limited set schedule could be an efficient and cost-effective system and is a necessity in transit planning for physical distancing during the coronavirus pandemic.

It is anticipated that demand for this level of service will occur in the medium term in Northern Yavapai along I-40 with service to Flagstaff and along State Highway 89 to Prescott/Prescott Valley based on the resources noted in the focus groups that are already being accessed in these communities such as employment opportunities, services, and healthcare. This service could be administered by the non-profit that coordinates the volunteer ride network, or an established non-profit providing similar services in an adjacent region.

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<sup>19</sup> [https://www.vtvnetwork.org/content.aspx?page\\_id=22&club\\_id=691012&module\\_id=248578](https://www.vtvnetwork.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=691012&module_id=248578)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.itnamerica.org/what-we-do>

In Southwest Yavapai, NACOG Area Agency on Aging (AAA) has partnered with Wickenburg Freedom Express, a non-profit volunteer program, to begin a pilot of a Tier 2-type demand response passenger transportation service for one (1) year, for people 60+ years. This service connects Peoples Valley, Yarnell, and Congress to healthcare and services in Wickenburg. The program success will be evaluated each quarter to ensure the program is needed. This program is receiving funding support from CARES Act funding provided by AAA and has organizational support from the Weaver Mountain Health Initiative and Wickenburg Community Hospital for marketing and promotion and potential future funding.

**Tier 3: Dedicated vehicle, paid driver/service provided by regional provider**

Demand as defined through some of the performance measures outlined below may be at or reach a level in an area that warrants a regional provider expanding service to a given area through the investment of a paid driver in a dedicated shared ride vehicle on a limited or on-demand schedule. Several providers already provide this level of service within the Verde Valley and CYMPO regions.

In contrast, service along State Highway 89 from Ash Fork or Paulden to Prescott/Prescott Valley is an example of service that may evolve from Tier 2 to Tier 3 should performance measures be met and support is available for a regional provider to expand service with a paid driver.

The Verde Valley and CYMPO regions both have areas where demand does not warrant a fixed route schedule, yet some level of demand exists or is anticipated due to medium-term growth and the associated congestion.

Jerome, Cornville and the Village of Oak Creek in the Verde Valley are three areas of the region identified in focus groups, stakeholder meetings and complementary studies (Sedona Transit Study) as potentially well-served with an on-demand or limited set schedule shared vehicle service. Jerome has shown interest in supporting the initial cost of service through CAT.

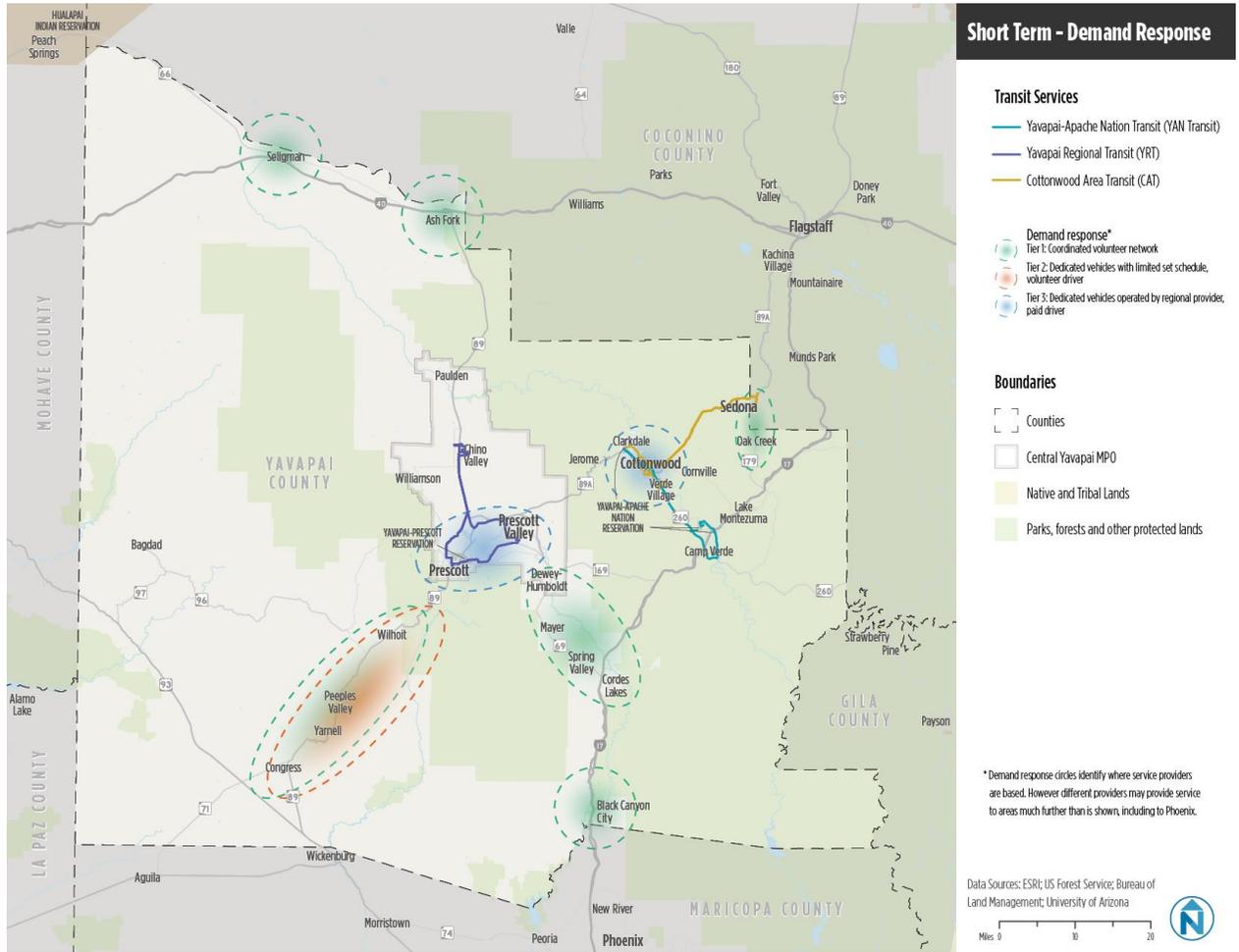
Additionally, an incremental demand response microtransit service is proposed for three areas of the CYMPO region over the next four years. CARES Act funds are proposed as the funding source for the program cost of this service, allowing Prescott and Prescott Valley to implement a pilot of service without allocating local funding in this initial stage.

## Implementation Summary

<b>Tier of Current or Proposed Service by Region</b>	North: Tier 1 Southwest: Tier 1 & 2 Southeast: Tier 1 Verde Valley: Tier 1, Tier 3 CYMPO/Quad Cities: Tier 1, Tier 3
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	Facilitator: NACOG, in its role as Mobility Manager for Yavapai County, should serve as a facilitator by identifying and coordinating with partner organizations at the regional levels to coordinate services.  Lead partner organizations: Tier 1 within communities: Community-based organizations, such as civic organizations, social service foundations, and regional or state level non-profit. Tier 1 county-wide: Verde Valley Caregivers; community champion Tier 2: Community-based organizations, such as civic and social service organizations Tier 3: Passenger transportation providers
<b>Potential Performance Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of rides arranged via coordinated volunteer ride network</li> <li>▪ Appointments not missed</li> <li>▪ Thresholds of demand (absolute numbers, frequency of demand by time and place) that must be reached for evolution of service to next phase or level of service</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tier 1: Liability and privacy concerns, committed partners, lack of program awareness, volunteers/volunteer burnout, and funding to sustain county-level effort</li> <li>▪ Tier 2: Costs associated with providing service exceed funding, lack of volunteers/volunteer burnout</li> <li>▪ Tier 3: Costs associated with providing service exceed funding, reduction in demand, lack of drivers</li> </ul>
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	Upfront (staff or volunteer time to establish service, materials, vehicles) Tier 1: \$ Tier 2: \$-\$-\$ Tier 3: \$\$-\$\$\$ Ongoing (staff or volunteer time for coordination and service provision) Tier 1: \$ Tier 2: \$-\$-\$ Tier 3: \$\$
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mobility management funds to support coordination</li> <li>▪ Community Mobility Fund</li> <li>▪ Foundation grants through organizations such as Easterseals Project ACTION, Vitalyst Health Foundation, and the Arizona Community Foundation</li> <li>▪ Pandemic relief funds such as CARES Act funds (short-term funding source to agencies such as NACOG or CYMPO through ADOT to assist with the cost of service and care due the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic)</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Dependent on current level of service within a region. Proposed timelines outlined <b>Figure 23, Figure 24</b> and <b>Figure 25</b>

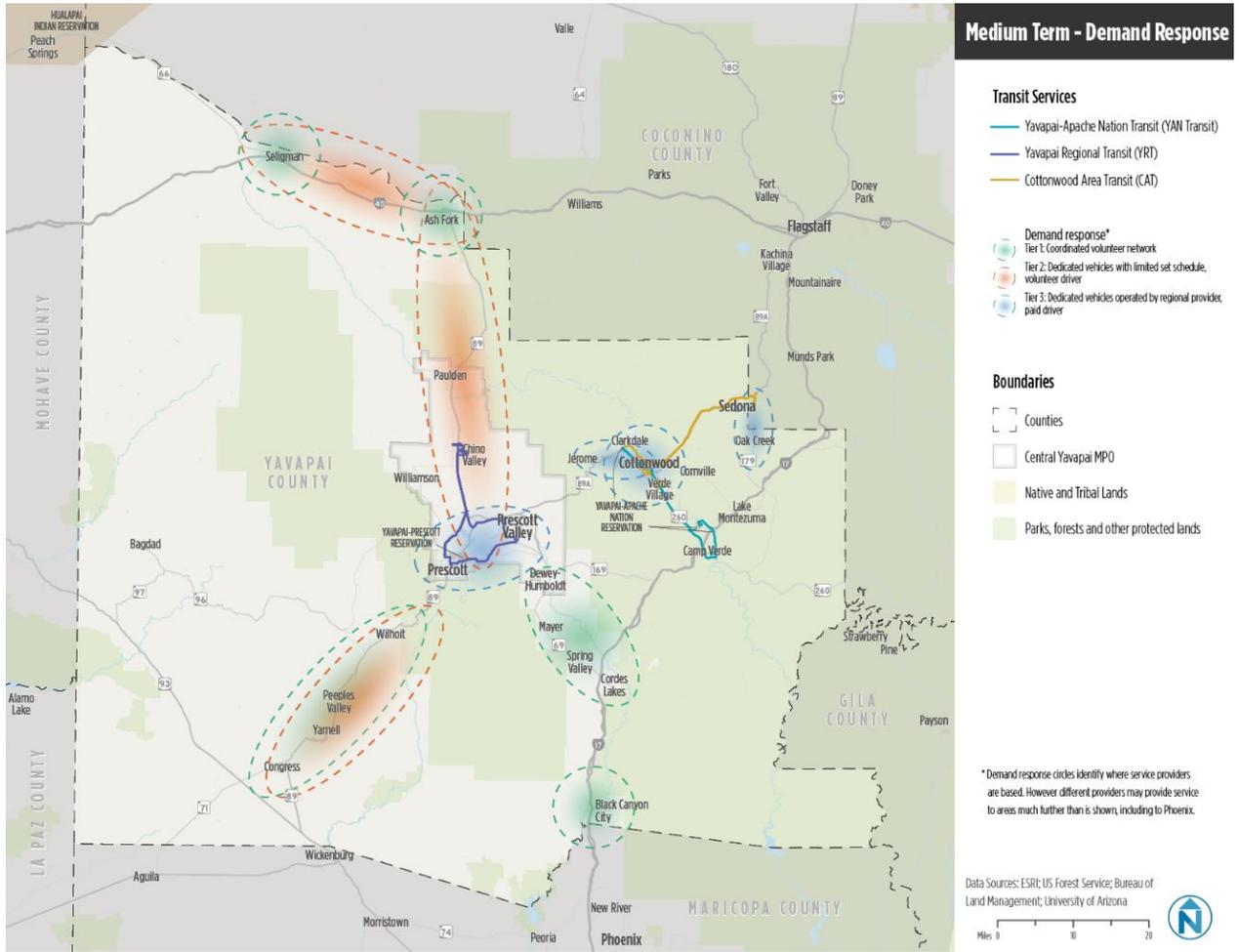
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**Figure 23 Short Term – Demand Response Service**



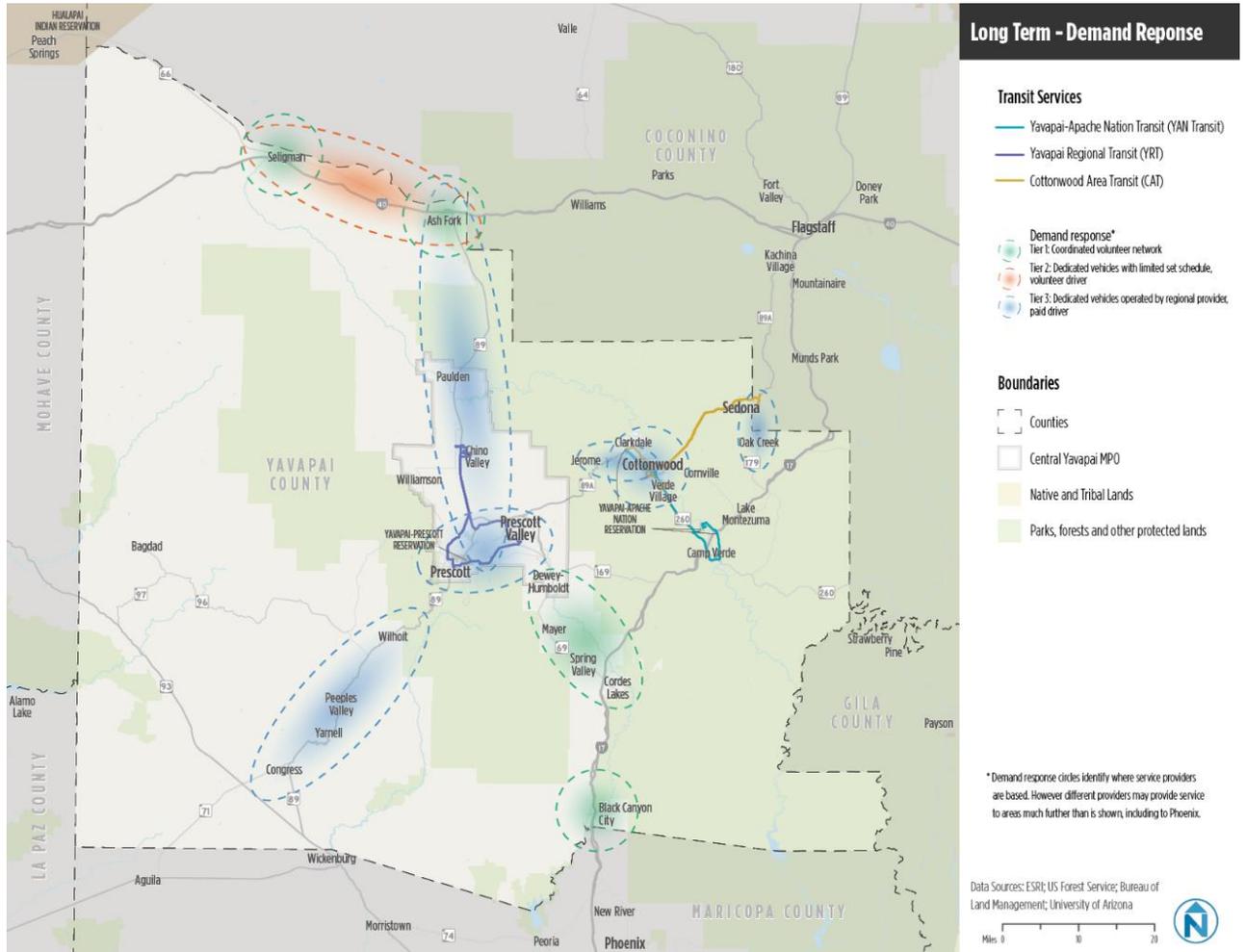
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**Figure 24 Medium Term – Demand Response Service**



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**Figure 25 Long Term – Demand Response Service**



## Vanpool

Vanpools are an effective transportation demand management strategy to provide coordinated regional ride share, typically for but not limited to commute travel. Vanpools may be coordinated to provide service to a specific employer, or to a central location where vanpool riders may then connect to coordinated transit service or access local employers. Vanpools work best for riders with similar work schedules and commute routes, and for longer distance commutes where the real and perceived cost of operating a personal vehicle is significant.

Vanpool service is an important passenger transportation service strategy for all regions of Yavapai County. Vanpools can have positive economic, safety and environmental impacts on individuals and communities. Vanpools increase access to employment and services such as education and decrease the burden of personal vehicle ownership. By reducing the number of personal vehicles on local and regional roadways, vanpools reduce congestion, vehicles miles traveled, vehicle emissions and the risk of traffic crashes.

**Based on the identified needs for better access to employment and service opportunities and the economic, environmental and safety benefits of vanpools, we recommended them as a strategy for Yavapai County.**

NACOG is currently working with several Yavapai County businesses, agencies and organizations to determine interest and need for vanpool services. The Yavapai County/Camp Verde Detention Center has identified the need for employee vanpools to/from Northern Yavapai, and the CYMPO region. Yavapai College has expressed interest in vanpools as well, which could assist both employees and students reach their regional campuses and Career and Technical Education Center in Prescott, Prescott Valley, Chino Valley, Cottonwood, and Sedona. Other local agencies or companies that have the employee base and work schedules that may accommodate vanpools include Drake Cement, Humboldt Unified School District, Veteran's Affairs, Yavapai Regional Medical Center, Northern Arizona Healthcare, Cliff Castle Casino, Bucky's Casino, Town of Prescott Valley, City of Prescott and hotels and hospitality businesses in Sedona.

FTA 5311 funds may be used for vanpools if the vanpool has a start and/or end in a rural area and is a commute-oriented trip. NACOG is partnering with NAIPTA to expand their vanpool program into Yavapai County because of the existence of unused funds from NAIPTA's previously awarded 5311 contract for vanpool. ADOT indicated support of this partnership. Some of the vanpool origins/destinations discussed above would fit the rural area criteria.

The NAIPTA program is employee/employer driven and is currently structured as a 90/10 local match split for a \$400 subsidy (\$40 local match and \$360 federal funds). This will cover the vehicle lease with Enterprise and does not include fuel (the match may change to an 80/20 split in the future funding cycle). Requesting agencies are responsible for the local match. Fuel costs may be divided between participating riders or employer. Indirect costs such as administrative support and billing costs shall be assumed by the requesting agency and or the participating riders which will amount to a few hours each month. NAIPTA has found that the vanpools are most successful when a champion is identified to promote the vanpool and when the riders are on consistent shifts. An employer champion can help to facilitate consistent shifts for industries and part-time work where that is less the norm, such as hospitality. This is important for an area like Sedona that could benefit from a vanpool program to reduce congestion along Highways 89A and 179.

Future opportunities for expansion of vanpool services include coordination with Valley Metro for employees traveling to the Phoenix region or Valley residents traveling to Yavapai County for employment (**Figure 26**).

### Implementation Summary

<b>Proposed Service by Region</b>	Verde Valley CYMPO/Quad Cities
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	Facilitator: NACOG, in its role as Mobility Manager for Yavapai County, should serve as a facilitator by identifying and coordinating with partner organizations at the regional levels to coordinate services.  Lead partner organizations: NAIPTA, ADOT, Enterprise, Valley Metro, local businesses and agencies
<b>Potential Performance Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Demand for service               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ridership numbers (absolute, frequency by day of week)</li> <li>– Interest in new service (increased frequency or new locations)?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction</li> <li>▪ Change in employment and/or education access (if Yavapai County is a partner)</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduced support of vanpool program from funding sources and participating businesses or agencies</li> <li>▪ Increased demand for NAIPTA program in their existing service area, that challenges support for Yavapai County vanpools</li> <li>▪ Low ridership due to scheduling difficulties, operating costs</li> </ul>
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	Upfront (staff time for coordination and attainment of vehicle): \$ Ongoing (staff time for coordination): \$
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ FTA Mobility management funds to support coordination</li> <li>▪ FTA 5311 funds               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Existing NAIPTA vanpool program</li> <li>– New application for 5311 funds from a Yavapai County agency or non-profit organization</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Valley Metro program               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ FTA 5307 funds for capital funding of vanpools in small urban areas</li> </ul> </li> <li>– New application from Yavapai County agency or non-profit organization</li> <li>– Applications from NAIPTA and/or Valley Metro to support vanpool service in Yavapai County</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Short- and medium-term



## Intercity Transit Service between Regional Hubs

Intercity travel is a reality for many residents of Yavapai County. Long distance travel to regional hubs within and outside of the county is a necessary fact of life when living in a more rural area in order to access services in Flagstaff and Phoenix area such as healthcare, social services and expanded goods, as well as connections to other regional transportation options (e.g., Flagstaff Airport, Flagstaff Amtrak, Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport). Many residents currently make these trips by personal vehicle. However, personal passenger transportation over long distances is an investment of time and money for the traveler, or for the person providing transportation. There are existing intercity transit services that travel along several of the priority corridors in the county that could be utilized to provide access to employment, goods and services to residents in the region.

Intercity Transit Service is not only important to help residents of Yavapai County connect to regional hubs within and outside of the county. It also increases transportation access for visitors to Yavapai County. Reduction of personal vehicle traffic is critically important in several areas of the county, such as Sedona and Jerome that are searching for congestion management solutions due to tourist traffic. Intercity transit service may allow visitors to connect to regional providers (e.g., CAT, YAT) to access these locations.

**Based on the needs identified and the resources available, we recommend NACOG provide planning support for improving connections to existing intercity transit service and expanded service to meet regional passenger transportation needs.**

### *Outreach to and coordination with existing private providers*

**Greyhound:** Greyhound currently provides service along the I-40 priority corridor in Northern Yavapai County. The closest stop to Yavapai County is Flagstaff. In the Spring of 2020, NACOG communicated with Greyhound to determine the requirements for establishing an intercity transit stop along an existing intercity route. Seligman is interested in re-establishing a transit stop that previously existed in the community. Garry Bennett, Seligman Fire Chief, is assisting with this effort. Future outreach to Greyhound regarding establishment of intercity transit stops along the 1-17 priority corridor, such as in Cordes Junction or Black Canyon City. Stops along the 1-17 corridor currently include Flagstaff, Camp Verde and the Phoenix Metro area.

**Groome Transportation:** Groome Transportation currently provides service to/from Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport on three routes that originate or travel through Yavapai County. The routes are:

- Flagstaff to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport with a Yavapai County stop in Camp Verde and a North Phoenix stop.
- Sedona to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport with Yavapai County stops in the Village of Oak Creek and Camp Verde and a North Phoenix stop.
- Prescott to Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, with Yavapai County stops in Dewey and the Embry-Riddle campus and a North Phoenix stop.

The addition of a stop in the Cordes Junction or Black Canyon City area could be explored for any of these routes to expand service and meet a regional need.

**Flix Bus:** Flix Bus currently provides service along the I-17 and I-40 priority corridors. The routes are:

- Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport to Flagstaff along I-17.
  - The addition of a stop in Camp Verde, Cordes Junction or Black Canyon City area could be explored.
- Flagstaff to Kingman along I-40.
  - The addition of a stop in Seligman could be explored.

*Identification of community organization or business partners*

Private providers have requirements for safety, accessibility and ticket purchased that must be met for a location to be considered for an intercity transit stop. Local organizations and businesses are best positioned to identify and establish these locations due to their local knowledge and relationships.

*Support for expanded service via regional transit providers*

In the summer of 2020, YAT applied for FTA 5311 Tribal Transportation funding to expand regional passenger transportation, as outlined below. NACOG provided a letter of support for this expanded service, citing the needs identified in the YPTS and previous studies. YAN received notice of a funding award from FTA in November 2020.

- Proposed service between Camp Verde (in the Verde Valley) and Prescott/Prescott Valley, a noticeable gap in passenger transportation service between the two regional centers in Yavapai County.
- Proposed service between Camp Verde and the Phoenix metro area. In its letter of support, NACOG noted the importance of not duplicating existing services and matching service to the needs identified. NACOG also noted the value of potential stops in Southeast Yavapai County to increase access to the Phoenix metro area for those communities.

*Exploration of potential subsidies for seniors, persons with disabilities or low-income riders*

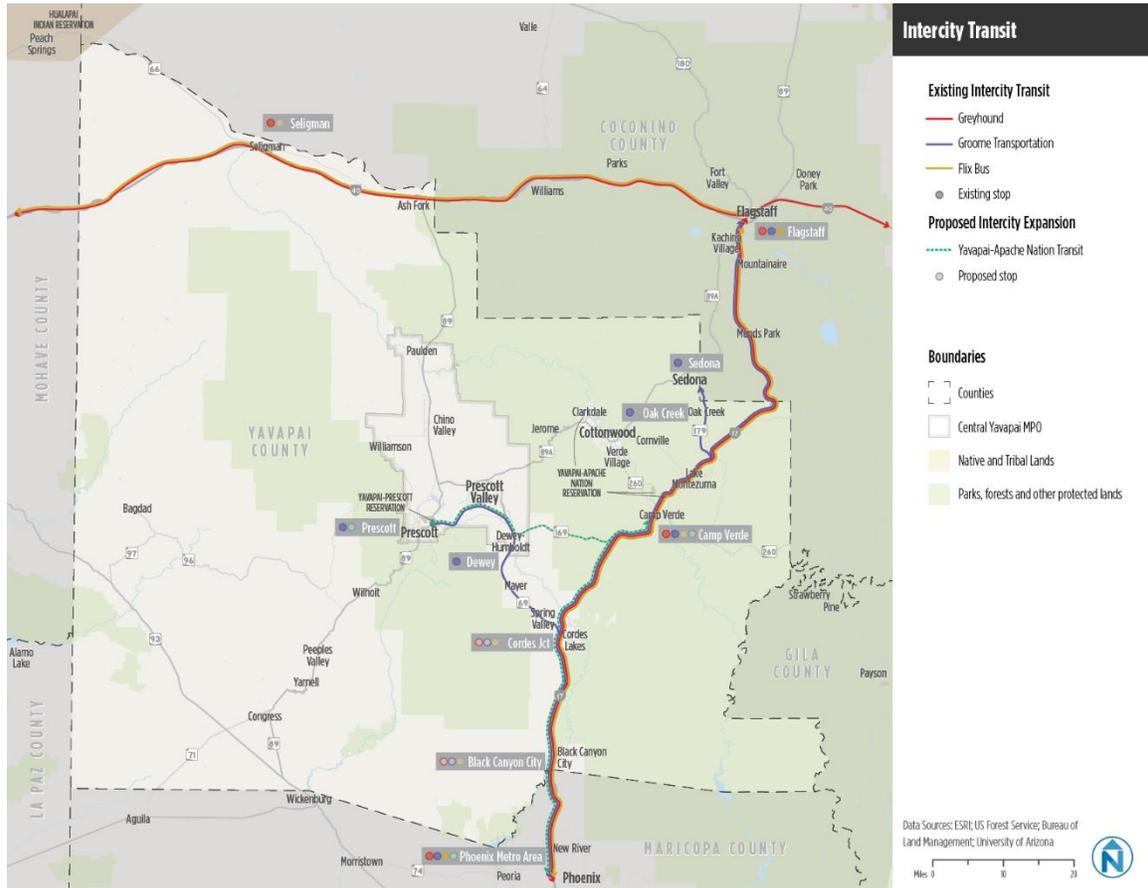
The 2017 Yavapai County Regional Mobility Management Implementation Plan noted that while private intercity transportation is present and viable, it is more expensive than other existing options. Other regional COGs such as SEAGO have piloted voucher programs to reduce the costs of rides on Greyhound. NACOG could explore subsidies for seniors, persons with disabilities and low-income riders on private intercity services such as Greyhound, Groome, or Flix to support passenger transportation service.

**Figure 27** shows the existing intercity services, by operator, and the proposed expansions throughout Yavapai County.

## Implementation Summary

<b>Proposed Service by Region</b>	North: I-40 Southeast: I-17 Corridor Verde Valley: I-17 Corridor, from Camp Verde to Prescott
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	Facilitator: NACOG, in its role as Mobility Manager for Yavapai County, can lead outreach to and coordination with existing private and regional transit service providers. Lead partner organizations: Community business or organization partners to identify and establish intercity stop locations. Existing private and regional providers: Greyhound, FlixBus, Groome, YAT
<b>Performance Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand for service</li> <li>• Ridership numbers (absolute, frequency by DOW)</li> <li>• Interest in new service (increased frequency or new locations)</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of local champions and regional support</li> <li>▪ Lack of financial support</li> <li>▪ Lack of ridership threatening the business viability of maintaining stops or routes</li> </ul>
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	Upfront (staff time for coordination): \$ Ongoing (staff time for coordination): \$
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Section 5311(f) (Intercity)</li> <li>▪ Section 5311 Tribal Transportation funds</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Short and medium-term

**Figure 27 Intercity Transit**



## Develop and Distribute Consumer-Friendly and Accessible Materials

Various transportation options, social services, and resources are offered and proposed through the aforementioned strategies for communities across Yavapai County; however, residents are often unaware of what is available and for what they may be eligible to use. Developing and distributing consumer-friendly, accessible educational materials online and in printed form can help to increase public awareness of services and connect residents to vital resources.

[AzRide Info](https://azrideinfo.com/)<sup>21</sup> is an online database that serves as a central resource for transportation services operating throughout Arizona. Although the information is already grouped by service type, eligibility (i.e., older adults, individuals with disabilities, etc.), and service areas, the website is not optimized for the best user experience. CYMPO recently budgeted additional funding to address these issues through a process which will be completed in fall or winter 2020. These updates will result in a more positive user experience and increase the reliability of the transportation information. A next step may involve helping partners promote AzRide Info on social media or other advertising mediums that promote transit resources to target populations. A sub-regional marketing approach may help connect well-known systems with lesser-known systems and services. Transit providers should be encouraged to utilize General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data capabilities in Google Transit.

**Based on needs identified through the focus groups and survey, we recommend NACOG work with other lead and partner organizations to develop and distribute these materials through both AZRide Info and in print.**

Lead organizations should collaborate with partner organizations, nonprofits, and social services to identify opportunities for coordinated engagement and production of educational materials that are accessible via online and print. Resources should be identified to keep materials up to date.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://azrideinfo.com/>

## Implementation Summary

<b>Proposed Service by Region</b>	All regions
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	Facilitator: NACOG, CYMPO, Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Partner Organizations: regional passenger transportation service providers, social service organizations, nonprofits
<b>Performance Measures</b>	Post-awareness campaign survey with questions gauging awareness of services and effectiveness of materials
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	Hiring of additional staff or contractors dedicated to facilitating coordination of public awareness campaign with local partners may be needed.
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	Upfront (staff time for coordination, contributions to website development and implementation): \$-\$ Ongoing (staff time for coordination and contributions): \$
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Center for Mobility Management grants</li> <li>▪ In-kind donations from service providers</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Short-term

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**Figure 28 Regional Service Strategies Summary Table**

Strategy	How need identified	Resources needed	Priority/ Timeline	Region(s)	Facilitator Organization	Partner Organization
<p>Demand Response Services</p> <p>Tier 1: Coordinated volunteer network</p> <p>Tier 2: Dedicated vehicle w/ limited set schedule, volunteer drivers</p> <p>Tier 3: Dedicated vehicle, paid driver/service provided by regional provider</p>	Focus Groups, Stakeholder Interviews	Staff or volunteer time to establish service, coordination, and service provision; materials; vehicles  Mobility management funds, foundation grants, pandemic relief funds (e.g. CARES Act)	Dependent on current level of service within a region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ North: Tier 1</li> <li>▪ Southwest: Tier 1 &amp; 2</li> <li>▪ Southeast: Tier 1</li> <li>▪ Verde Valley: Tier 1, Tier 3</li> <li>▪ CYMPO/Quad Cities: Tier 1, Tier 3</li> </ul>	NACOG	<p>Tier 1 within communities: Community-based organizations, such as civic organizations, social service foundations, and regional or state level non-profit.</p> <p>Tier 1 county-wide: Verde Valley Caregivers; community champion</p> <p>Tier 2: Community-based organizations, such as civic and social service organizations</p> <p>Tier 3: Passenger transportation providers</p>
Vanpool	Focus Groups, Travel Demand Travel Flows	Staff time for coordination and attainment of vehicle  Existing NAIPTA and Valley Metro programs, FTA Mobility Management funds, 5311, 5307 funds	Short and medium-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Verde Valley, CYMPO/Quad Cities</li> </ul>	NACOG	NAIPTA, ADOT, Enterprise, Valley Metro, local businesses and agencies
Intercity Transit Service between Regional Hubs	Focus Groups, Survey	Staff time for coordination  Section 5311(f) (Intercity) and Section 5311 Tribal Transportation funds	Short and medium-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ North: I-40</li> <li>▪ Southeast: I-17 Corridor</li> <li>▪ Verde Valley: I-17 Corridor, from Camp Verde to Prescott</li> </ul>	NACOG	<p>Lead partner organizations: Community business or organization partners to identify and establish intercity stop locations.</p> <p>Existing private and regional providers: Greyhound, FlixBus, Groome, YAT</p>
Develop/Distribute Consumer-Friendly and Accessible Materials	Focus Groups, Survey	Staff time for coordination, contributions to website	Short-term	All	NACOG, CYMPO, MAG	Partner Organizations: regional passenger transportation service

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		development and implementation National Center for Mobility Management grants, in-kind donations from service providers				providers, social service organizations, nonprofits
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## COORDINATION PLAN STRATEGIES

The Coordination Plan Strategies presented below are recommendations to better coordinate and manage passenger transportation service in the five regions of Yavapai County moving forward. The applicability of each strategy to a given region will depend on various factors, which are described in the strategy summaries.

As with the regional service strategies, a description of each strategy is provided, along with an implementation summary outlining the regions where the proposed strategy may best be implemented, lead and partner organizations, potential performance measures, challenges to success, order of magnitude cost estimates, funding sources and timeline for implementation. The strategies are summarized in **Figure 29**.

### Fiscal

#### Strategy: Shared Costs and Resources

Yavapai County is a geographically large county with growing population centers in the Quad Cities and Verde Valley area but even in those areas the population density is more akin to suburban than urban densities. Providing passenger transportation services in an area such as this is an expensive endeavor and a labor of love, and it requires coordination and cooperation amongst providers on many fronts. Much like coordinating transportation, agencies should consider coordinating funding and pooling of capital opportunities, fuel purchases and insurance in order to save on resources and take advantage of economies of scale. When these activities are done independently, it can be burdensome for many agencies, especially for smaller agencies and non-profits. However, done collectively, the risk and costs (both true costs and costs such as time) can be managed, thereby reducing expenses and/or freeing up resources for other opportunities.

Relatedly, the provision of passenger transportation service requires many moving parts in the back of house for operations, some of which can be time-intensive and costly, such as grant writing, driver training and certification, data management and reporting requirements, and scheduling rides for clients. Coordination and pooling of resources to centralize common support services may increase efficiency, provide consistency across providers in areas such as training and certification and lead to agency resource savings.

In provider interviews conducted in the Spring of 2020 and in coordination meetings in 2019 and 2020, transit providers in the CYMPO and Verde Valley regions noted lack of sufficient staff or employee capacity and limited funding as challenges for the provision or expansion of service. Limited staff capacity challenges an agency's ability to respond to funding and partnership opportunities. This contributes to the funding constraints agencies feel, as does other factors. While limited funds is a constant for agencies, it is an even greater concern at this time due to the impact of the global pandemic on transit use. Efforts to reduce costs and increase funding can help agencies' bottom line.

#### **Based on feedback from providers and NACOG staff, we recommend three shared costs and resources strategies:**

*Discounted fuel pricing and/or bulk fuel purchases:* Cost savings from fuel purchases can be achieved through two possible mechanisms: 1) discounted fuel pricing via a fleet contract with a commercial provider; or 2) bulk fuel purchase contracts and access to designated fueling locations managed by local governments, such as Yavapai County fueling stations for county vehicles.

- Negotiated discount fleet rates for fuel through select fuel provider(s) with regional reach, in order to cover the longer travel distances of some providers (e.g. health care transportation to/from Phoenix metro area).
  - While some providers have contracts or programs in place that provide discounted fuel service to some or all of their drivers, others do not. New Horizons (CYMPO) and YAT (Verde Valley) both noted that they utilize Diesel Direct’s Corporate Fleet Card. Verde Valley Caregivers has a credit contract with Speedway that applies to three of their vehicles, while Rainbow Acres uses the Circle K Fleet Card (Wex). However, drivers operating their own vehicles are not covered under that contract.
  - The discounted fleet rate would work better for providers whose vehicles travel across the county and need fueling options that work in both rural and the more urban communities.
  - NACOG, in its role as Mobility Manager for Yavapai County, can gather and assemble details on corporate fleet fuel programs to distribute to transit service providers in the CYMPO and Verde Valley regions.
  - Negotiated discount fleet rates are a viable, near-term coordination strategy, with NACOG assembling details on corporate fleet fuel programs as a first step.
- Become part of a cooperative contract with Yavapai County for bulk fuel purchases
  - This would work best for providers where access to the designated fueling stations is along their standard path of travel/service.
  - Yavapai County currently has limited direct funds that are provided to support transit. However, the provision of bulk fuel purchase contracts by local governments with cooperative language is a viable method of support for regional passenger transportation services that provides savings to the service providers and to Yavapai County.
  - NACOG can also research the opportunity for bulk fuel purchases through local governments if transit service providers see this as an efficient option (in terms of convenient access and vehicle coverage), as compared to a corporate fleet fuel program.

Bulk fuel purchase contracts are seen as a medium-term coordination strategy. Research on county contracts and procurement policy is a near-term step that can be taken toward implementation of this strategy.

*Pooled Insurance:* Per the Association of Governmental Risk Pools, “The primary purpose of any public entity pool is to manage and reduce underlying risks to the benefit of public entity members and the public at large...public pools are collaborating partners that help public entities create, foster, and manage safe environments in order to minimize personal, physical, and property damages and losses.” A transit risk pool would manage risk and reduce costs across a larger pool of agencies and drivers. This can be done by identifying an entity that can negotiate and manage a group insurance pool, including the purchase of insurance, management of claims and litigation and delivery of risk management and training. This insurance pool could include passenger transportation service providers within and outside of Yavapai County.

Examples of insurance risk pools exist within associations (WYGC participates in a pooled insurance program for behavioral health providers and has seen significant insurance cost savings as a result) and at the municipal and state levels, such as:

- The [Washington State Transit Insurance Pool](#) (WSTIP) is a public entity in the State of Washington that combines the resources of 26 public transit agencies to purchase insurance coverage, manage claims and litigation, and receive risk management and training. The entity was formed in 1989 with eight transit agencies. As of 2020, there are 26 agencies that that constitute WSTIP.<sup>22</sup>
- The [Ohio Transit Risk Pool](#) is a not-for-profit corporation that provides property and liability coverage supported by risk management services to minimize loss exposure to its participating members. Membership is comprised of Ohio Political Subdivisions, Regional Transit Authorities, County Transit Boards and other Ohio County Transit operations.<sup>23</sup>
- Many towns, cities, special districts, transit agencies and councils of government in Texas are part of the [Texas Municipal League Intergovernmental Risk Pool](#) (TMLIRP), which provides risk financing, loss prevention services and training opportunities for 2,800 member agencies. TMLIRP is not available to counties or to non-profit organizations. TMLIRP was created in 1974 following a new state law in 1973 that required cities to provide workers' compensation coverage.<sup>24</sup>

NACOG, in its role as Mobility Manager for Yavapai County, can research the opportunity for the creation of an insurance pool at the state level. We recommend this would be an opportunity to collaborate with the Arizona Transit Association (AzTA), other regional COGs and regional transit providers to determine interest/size of the pool and the requirements and restrictions for action at the state level. The formation of a risk pool is seen as a medium- to long-term strategy. Research on state level policies and regulations on risk pools and conversations with AzTA are two preliminary implementation steps that can be taken in the near term.

*Shared support services pilot:* Transit providers in the Verde Valley currently work informally to support one another in various ways, such as ride coordination, communications, driver training and passenger support. While this “transit provider helping transit provider” model is heartening to see, it is susceptible to the capacity and financial resources of each agency at any point in time.

Ride Connection in Portland, Oregon is a private non-profit that coordinates the transportation operations of 30+ small community-based providers of senior and disabled transportation services. Support services include grant writing, customer service monitoring, staff training, data management, reporting support, and other forms of technical assistance. Most prominent is the centralized service scheduling. With one call to Ride Connection, riders can either access Ride Connection services or be connected to another service provider in the region who can best serve them.

Support services like that provided by Ride Connection and the coordination between Territorial Transit and People Who Care for grant writing services are some examples of services to examine as part of the proposed pilot. An analysis and pilot of an identified subset of shared support services can help to determine how service capacity differs by provider characteristics and how

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<sup>22</sup> Washington State Transit Insurance Pool. <https://www.wstip.org/>

<sup>23</sup> [https://d7264892-242b-4b72-9fff-d6a944bb1b31.filesusr.com/ugd/b9479b\\_97ed492371eb41a49e8d746e54a8aa22.pdf](https://d7264892-242b-4b72-9fff-d6a944bb1b31.filesusr.com/ugd/b9479b_97ed492371eb41a49e8d746e54a8aa22.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Texas Municipal League Intergovernmental Risk Pool. <https://www.tmlirp.org/>

and which services can be effectively and cost-efficiently provided by a lead provider agency or umbrella organization.

The shared support services pilot is recommended as a medium-term coordination strategy.

## Implementation Summary

<b>Proposed Service by Region</b>	CYMPO and Verde Valley
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	<p><i>Fuel savings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitator: NACOG, in its role as Mobility Manager for Yavapai County, can gather and assemble details on corporate fleet fuel programs to distribute to transit service providers in the CYMPO and Verde Valley regions. NACOG can also research the opportunity for bulk fuel purchases through local governments if transit service providers see this as an efficient option (in terms of convenient access and vehicle coverage), as compared to a corporate fleet fuel program.</li> <li>▪ Lead Partners: Regional passenger transportation providers, Yavapai County government</li> </ul> <p><i>Pooled Insurance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitator: NACOG, in its role as Mobility Manager for Yavapai County, can research the opportunity for the creation of an insurance risk pool at the state and regional level. This would be an opportunity to collaborate with the Arizona Transit Association (AzTA), other regional COGs and regional transit providers to determine interest/size of the pool and the requirements and restrictions for action at the state level.</li> <li>▪ Lead Partners: Regional passenger transportation providers, AzTA, other regional COGs and passenger transportation providers</li> </ul> <p><i>Shared Services Pilot:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitator: NACOG</li> <li>▪ Lead Partners: Regional passenger transportation providers</li> </ul>
<b>Performance measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Changes in fuel costs by agency</li> <li>▪ Changes in the availability of fueling stations/locations</li> <li>▪ Changes in insurance costs by agency</li> <li>▪ Changes in time spent on support services such as grant writing, training and certification</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ State and/or agency barriers to implementation or participation in a risk pool</li> <li>▪ Lack of champion and/or lead agency or organization for risk pool creation</li> <li>▪ Lack of interest or commitment to shared costs and resources</li> <li>▪ Individualism or territoriality</li> </ul>
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	<p>Upfront: \$ (NACOG and agency staff time for coordination) Ongoing: \$ (Agency staff time for maintenance of contracts)</p>
<b>Funding Sources</b>	Current funding sources that support staff time
<b>Timeline</b>	<p>Fuel savings: Short- to medium-term Pooled insurance: Medium- to long-term Shared services pilot: Medium-term</p>

## Personnel

### Strategy: Increase Driver Pool

Driver availability is a constant challenge for passenger transportation providers large and small.<sup>25</sup> The reasons for driver shortages are varied from lack of skilled drivers in an area, problems accessing locations far from their home, low pay and receiving more competitive offers from other employers who hire commercial drivers, such as freight and logistics companies and other passenger transportation providers. The frequency and reliability of public transportation suffers from this shortage of drivers.

This trend is not limited to paid drivers. Volunteer driver programs may face similar turnover challenges due to factors such as driver burn out and competition for volunteer drivers.<sup>26</sup>

While not all Yavapai County transit providers experience challenges with recruitment and retention of a skilled paid and volunteer driver pool, several providers in both the CYMPO and Verde Valley regions noted that this was an issue that they have experienced in the past or were experiencing at this time due to the coronavirus pandemic (potential drivers may express concern regarding exposure or cannot offer enough compensation compared to unemployment benefits).

Training and retention are costly; however, so are replacement and service disruptions. Providers would like to increase the pool of drivers with commercial drivers' licenses (CDL) and who are trained to transport and work with non-ambulatory and behavioral health passengers. There is also a need to identify drivers who are willing to drive further and in the varying terrain and weather conditions that occur in Northern Arizona (e.g., snow, rain, extreme heat, highway driving, and unimproved roads).

The National Volunteer Transportation Center's [Volunteer Driver Recruitment and Retention Experience and Practice Handbook \(2016\)](#) summarized the best practices and lessons learned of the 2015 STAR Awardees of Volunteer Driver Excellence. Personalized recruitment, flexibility in the driving schedule, training, support and coordination of program, the reputation of the agency and reimbursement of expenses (e.g, mileage) are key recruitment factors. Appreciation and recognition, feeling a sense of worth, feeling needed, giving what they have (e.g., time rather than money) and the relationships built with passengers are some of the reasons why volunteer drivers keep driving.

**Based on feedback from providers and NACOG staff and the best practices documented in resources such as the National Volunteer Transportation Center Handbook, we recommend the following strategies to increase the paid and volunteer driver pools in Yavapai County:**

- Work with a program such as the Yavapai @ Work program offered through NACOG's Economic/Workforce Development Department to develop a driver recruitment strategy, including how to identify already qualified individuals within the community as well as the training and qualifications development needed for others to become qualified, such as Commercial Driver's License (CDL) attainment. This could also include a "pipeline

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<sup>25</sup> <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2019/08/27/driver-shortages-causing-transit-delays-nationwide/>

<sup>26</sup> [https://ctaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/NVTC\\_DriverRecruitHandbook\\_v1.pdf](https://ctaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/NVTC_DriverRecruitHandbook_v1.pdf)

program” in coordination with local educational institutions that includes leadership development.

- CAT is working with Yavapai College to bring the existing Chino Valley Center [Commercial Driver Training program](#)<sup>27</sup> to the Verde Valley campus. Yavapai College and CAT will coordinate to offer a Class C CDL training using city-owned space in Cottonwood. This could establish a pipeline of drivers in the Verde Valley for not only transit providers like CAT, but also local school districts and other entities needing commercial drivers. A potential start date is set for Spring 2021.
- Incorporate driver recruitment/retention support into NACOG Yavapai County Mobility Management responsibilities.
  - Encourage passenger transportation providers to incorporate or expand upon driver recognition programs as part of marketing and public-facing materials. Driver recognition is a proven strategy for driver retention<sup>28</sup>. Agencies can establish an email address or hotline requesting individual commendations from riders.
  - Consider the pairing of a gas voucher or mileage reimbursement program to help agencies where lack of such support is a barrier to volunteer recruitment and retention. Interested agencies may develop criteria by which trips or volunteer drivers may qualify for mileage reimbursement.
  - Agency time or cost savings that may be gained through the shared costs and resources strategy may be applied to driver recruitment and retention programs and activities.

NACOG can assist agencies in the advertisement of paid and volunteer driver opportunities and marketing of programs such as the Yavapai College CDL program, through the development of a marketing and promotion strategy, and financial support for implementation.

Increase Driver Pool is recommended as a short- to medium-term coordination plan strategy, with short-term focus placed on supporting activities already underway related to driver training and gathering information from the passenger transportation providers regarding their recruitment and retention strategies.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.yc.edu/v6/schools/cate/driver.html?locale=en>

<sup>28</sup> [https://ctaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/NVTC\\_DriverRecruitHandbook\\_v1.pdf](https://ctaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/NVTC_DriverRecruitHandbook_v1.pdf)

## Implementation Summary

<b>Proposed Service by Region</b>	All regions
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	<p><i>Driver training:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitator: CAT, given its current programming with Yavapai College and driver training they already offer to providers within Yavapai County, is a natural lead to provide guidance and input to other transit agencies that are looking to increase their pool of paid drivers.,</li> <li>▪ Partner: NACOG providing coordination and marketing support (both Transit Planning and Economic/Workforce Development Departments); regional passenger transportation providers identifying needs and amplifying marketing efforts</li> </ul> <p><i>Driver recruitment and retention:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitator: NACOG, in its role as Mobility Manager for Yavapai County, can take a strong support role in assisting interested transit providers with their recruitment and retention strategies.</li> <li>▪ Lead Partners: Regional passenger transportation providers identifying needs and amplifying marketing efforts</li> </ul>
<b>Performance measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rate of driver turnover</li> <li>▪ Rate of driver recruitment/rate at which driver vacancies are filled</li> <li>▪ Number of potential drivers trained in training programs and subsequently hired by transit providers in Yavapai County</li> <li>▪ Duration of driver retention</li> <li>▪ Rate of driver recognition submissions by customer</li> <li>▪ Implementation and maintenance of driver recognition program</li> <li>▪ Change in the costs of driver recruitment and retention</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sustainability and commitment to the programs in the face of competing demands and challenges to resources</li> <li>▪ Lack of coordination between lead and partner organizations</li> <li>▪ Lack of financial and staff resources to implement and sustain retention programs such as mileage reimbursement</li> </ul>
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	<p>Upfront: \$ (NACOG and agency staff time for coordination)</p> <p>Ongoing: \$ (NACOG and agency staff time for ongoing support)</p>
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ NACOG Economic/Workforce Development Program</li> <li>▪ Yavapai College (administrative investment and course fees)</li> <li>▪ Foundation grants through organizations such as Easterseals Project ACTION, Vitalyst Health Foundation, and the Arizona Community Foundation</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	<p>Driver training: short-term</p> <p>Volunteer driver recruitment and retention: short- to medium-term</p>

## Programs

### Strategy: Develop a Flexible Travel Training Program

Travel training programs generally fall under mobility management and are designed to teach people with disabilities, seniors, youth, veterans, and/or low-income populations to travel safely and independently on fixed-route public transportation. In rural areas (or even in suburban and urban areas), travel training need not be limited to fixed-route public transportation. Individuals in need of or interested in passenger transportation services can be trained on the range of services available within a given area. Teaching people to utilize passenger transportation services safely and independently can reduce the barrier of personal transportation to access resources and reduce congestion and traffic safety risk on the roadways. It may also reduce social isolation in rural areas, by empowering individuals to use passenger transportation services to help them stay connected to others within and outside of their immediate community. Travel training will also be important as communities, agencies and organizations continue to evolve their responses to the coronavirus pandemic. Education to keep current users safe and riding and inform potential new users on the safety of passenger transportation services at this time is critically important to keep people mobile and agencies in operation.

Yavapai Regional Transit (YRT) is currently coordinating with Central Yavapai Transit Foundation to offer a free training program in Prescott and Prescott Valley that teaches people of all ages how to travel using YRT services, how to read a bus schedule, use rideshare services, and offers other helpful tips on how to have groceries delivered at low costs. This training will also be available via an online 30-minute video. Individuals that register and watch the video will be sent a provider directory and a travel guide. In-person attendance varies; it is hoped that the online video can help fill the information gap. Separately, New Horizons is adapting an in-person life skills training for people with disabilities to an online course incorporating travel training, using materials that have already been developed by partner agencies. Both of these services are limited to the Quad Cities/CYMPO region.

Formal travel training for new passengers does not exist outside of the Quad Cities/CYMPO region. Transit providers in the Verde Valley typically provide travel training primarily for their current riders. A lack of awareness of passenger transportation service availability was identified as a barrier to utilizing passenger transportation services in the YPTS Community Survey conducted in Spring 2020. Some transit providers also noted that they felt the public did not have an awareness of the agencies and services provided within the County for passenger transportation. Expanding awareness of transportation resources can increase confidence and independence in passenger transportation and could potentially increase ridership or shift existing paratransit riders to more cost-effective fixed-route services. Travel training and resources like AzRide Info can increase awareness.

**Based on feedback from providers and NACOG staff, we recommend the following strategies for Flexible Travel Training in Yavapai County:** NACOG should work with transit providers in the Verde Valley to expand on current efforts and develop a flexible travel training program geared toward potential new riders. The travel training could be offered virtually, via a website and information videos, and/or as a mobile travel training offered at various locations within the Verde Valley (e.g. senior centers, community centers, medical centers, nonprofits). A train-the-trainer type curriculum could also be developed to build capacity and support the regional need to educate and increase utilization of passenger transportation services. Topics may include fixed route trip planning, finding the nearest bus stop, take your first

ride with a transit buddy, and training on how to maneuver a mobility device onto a vehicle. Training can also be provided on how to schedule rides with area passenger transportation providers as well as intercity private service providers such as Greyhound, Groome, and FlixBus. This training on intercity private service providers would be tied to the implementation of the **Intercity Transit Service between Regional Hubs** strategy.

Flexible travel training sessions can involve resource sharing, technology training (e.g., how to use AzRide Info), or a review of eligibility requirements for different services. Training may also include information on steps passenger transportation service providers are taking for health and safety during the coronavirus pandemic. The Center for Independent Living (CIL) is an advocacy group in California's East Bay that provides information, resources and training for people with disabilities and the community at large. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CIL is providing [travel resources online](#) for the community to use, including information about how to use transit safely and how to plan a trip. The flexible travel training (virtual and/or mobile) can also be adapted to serve the needs of the more rural regions of the county where many passenger transportation services are evolving and awareness of services is an important part of the success of any offerings.

Flexible travel training is recommended as a medium-term strategy, with near term activity focused on supporting passenger transportation providers in sharing information on the health and safety of passenger transportation during the pandemic.

## Implementation Summary

<b>Proposed Service by Region</b>	All regions
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitator: NACOG, in its role as Mobility Manager for Yavapai County, can coordinate development of a mobile and/or virtual travel training for those who are new to passenger transportation/not current users of existing services within and outside of the Verde Valley region</li> <li>▪ Partners: passenger transportation providers and supporting organizations within the CYMPO and Verde Valley region that currently provide travel training, such as YRT, Central Yavapai Transit Foundation, New Horizons, CAT, YAT and Verde Valley Caregivers to provide guidance on the flexible travel training program development</li> </ul>
<b>Performance measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of individuals trained per year</li> <li>▪ Geographic range of travel training (spatial distribution of travel training recipients)</li> <li>▪ Number of new riders</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability and commitment to the program in the face of competing demands and challenges to resources</li> <li>▪ Lack of coordination between lead and partner organizations</li> </ul>
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	<p>Upfront: \$\$ (NACOG staff time for coordination and program development, website development)</p> <p>Ongoing: \$ (NACOG staff time for ongoing program implementation, website updates)</p>
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 5310 or 10% admin from 5307, 5311, 5303, 5304</li> <li>▪ FTA Access and Mobility Partnership grant: Capitol Hill Village in Washington D.C. used this grant funding to improve health outcomes of low-income seniors and people with disabilities through a travel training program designed to increase clients' transportation awareness, knowledge, and confidence in using public transportation.</li> <li>▪ Foundation grants through organizations such as Easterseals Project ACTION, Vitalyst Health Foundation, and the Arizona Community Foundation</li> <li>▪ Yavapai County transit funds</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Medium-term

## Coordination and Participation in Statewide Activities

### Strategy: Professional Development/Leadership Development training/Continuing Education

The Arizona Transit Association (AzTA) provides support for passenger transportation services and programs in the form of advocacy and education. AzTA aims to establish a permanent funding stream for passenger transportation, advocate for passenger transportation support at the local, state, and federal levels, provide opportunities for members to collaborate, and host forums or educational opportunities.

AzTA partners with the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) to provide leadership development training opportunities. CTAA provides other trainings such as driver

training, volunteer driver safety, driver recruitment/retention, and a course on developing trainers who can plan and deliver workshops to frontline personnel.

Trainings is also available through the [National Rural Transit Assistance Program](#). ADOT provides scholarships to Section 5311 Rural Transit and 5310 Coordinated Mobility grantees for professional development training and networking.

To supplement available trainings, AzTA and ADOT are exploring the concept of an ongoing educational effort named AzTA University. This program is intended to supplement the annual AzTA/ADOT conference by providing members with industry updates, access to resources, continuing education, professional development credits, certification, and access to “hot topics” throughout the year.

While many training opportunities exist, stakeholders--particularly those in Verde Valley and the CYMPO region--have voiced concerns about aging leadership and the lack of succession planning. AzTA has expressed a desire to make programs more accessible throughout the state but doing so will require funding and coordination between transit agencies and willing partners.

The expansion of AzTA activities and support is seen as a short- to medium-term strategy, dependent on AzTA’s timeline for the development and implementation of associated programs and the availability of scholarship funds to support grantees participation in RTAP trainings.

**Implementation Summary**

<b>Proposed Service by Region</b>	All regions
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	Facilitator: NACOG, AzTA Partner: ADOT, passenger transportation service providers
<b>Performance measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of attendees per meeting/training</li> <li>▪ Number of trainings delivered</li> <li>▪ Annual conference outcomes</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of volunteers/staff time to plan for, administer, or attend trainings</li> <li>• Lack of support and participation from passenger transportation service providers</li> </ul>
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	Upfront (staff time for coordination): \$ Ongoing (staff time for coordination): \$
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Registration fees for trainings</li> <li>▪ ADOT Transit Planning training and technical assistance funds through Arizona RTAP</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Short- to medium-term

### **Strategy: Improving and Promoting AZRide Info**

[AZRide Info](#) is the result of a partnership among all COGs/MPOs in the state to create a central resource for transportation information. CYMPO and NACOG have taken a statewide leadership role in this project as CYMPO has allocated funding towards the development of this website. Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is serving as the lead on this project using their Information Technology team to develop and maintain the website. Phase 1 of the project was completed in Spring 2020. In this current state, there are two major limitations: 1) sub-regions are grouped to their representative COG, then with sub-regional groups within each county, and 2) updating transportation information is a lengthy process, which in turn, makes a lot of the current information out of date.

CYMPO recently assigned additional funding to this project to address these issues in what we are now calling Phase 2. Phase 2 will enhance the user experience and reliability of the transportation information and is estimated for completion in Fall/Winter 2020.

This effort represents a statewide commitment to providing rider information. Every Coordination Plan in the state recognizes the need for rider information. There is much room for this project to grow with new technology advancements in trip planning (GTFS/GTFS-Flex) and ride scheduling. This is a fast-growing sector, and partners are positioning the state of Arizona to take advantage of these advancements once they become more refined and affordable.

This technology alone will not automatically foster coordination amongst providers. Promotion and awareness events and materials are needed to help build the trust and foundation for more successful coordination efforts in the future.

As noted, AzRide Info launched in Spring of 2020 and the project is now in Phase 2, so this is a short—or immediate—term coordination strategy to assist passenger transportation service providers in meeting the needs of residents in Yavapai County. It is a long term project; therefore, implementation will involve iteration over time. Short term implementation steps for NACOG after Phase 2 involves promoting the website to various human service partners, and eventually create a mass marketing campaign.

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<b>Proposed Service by Region</b>	All regions
<b>Facilitator and Partner Organizations</b>	Facilitator: CYMPO, NACOG, MAG Partners: Passenger transportation service providers, social service organizations, nonprofits
<b>Performance measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility of information to passenger transportation service providers and general public</li> <li>• Accuracy and utility of information to passenger transportation service providers and general public</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges to Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment of partners to project</li> <li>• Maintenance of the information presented on AzRide Info</li> <li>• Funding support for project</li> </ul>
<b>Cost Estimates</b>	Upfront: \$ (NACOG staff time for coordination and program development, website development support) Ongoing: \$ (NACOG staff time for ongoing program implementation, website updates)
<b>Funding Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Federal and state-level transit and technology funding</li> <li>▪ Foundation resources focused on technology innovation for the public good, such as Arizona Community Foundation's Community Impact Loan Fund</li> <li>▪ In-kind match from agencies service providers (time)</li> <li>▪ Public-private partnerships</li> </ul>
<b>Timeline</b>	Short-term

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**Figure 29 Coordination Plan Strategies Summary Table**

Category	Strategy	How Need identified	Resources Needed	Timeline	Region(s)	Facilitator Organization	Partner Organization
<b>Fiscal</b>	Shared Costs and Resources	Provider Interviews	NACOG and agency staff time for coordination, Agency staff time for maintenance of contracts  Current funding sources that support staff time	Fuel savings: Short- to medium-term  Pooled insurance: Medium- to long-term  Shared services pilot: Medium-term	CYMPO and Verde Valley	Fuel savings: NACOG  Pooled insurance: NACOG  Shared services pilot: NACOG	Fuel savings: Regional passenger transportation providers, Yavapai County government  Pooled insurance: Regional passenger transportation providers, AzTA, other regional COGs and passenger transportation providers  Shared services pilot: Regional passenger transportation providers
<b>Personnel</b>	Increase Driver Pool	Local Coordinating Council, stakeholder Interviews	NACOG and agency staff time for coordination and ongoing support  NACOG Economic/Workforce Development Program, Yavapai College (administrative investment and course fees), Foundation grants	Driver training: short-term  Volunteer driver recruitment and retention: short- to medium-term	All	Driver training: CAT  Driver recruitment and retention: NACOG	NACOG (both Transit Planning and Economic/Workforce Development Departments); regional passenger transportation providers  Driver recruitment and retention: Regional passenger transportation providers
<b>Programs</b>	Develop Flexible Travel Training Program	Focus Groups, Survey	5310 or 10% admin from 5307, 5311, 5303, 5304, FTA Access and	Medium-term	All	NACOG	Passenger transportation providers and supporting organizations within the

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Category	Strategy	How Need identified	Resources Needed	Timeline	Region(s)	Facilitator Organization	Partner Organization
			Mobility Partnership grants, foundation grants, Yavapai County transit funds				CYMPO and Verde Valley region that currently provide travel training, such as YRT, Central Yavapai Transit Foundation, New Horizons, CAT, YAT and Verde Valley Caregivers
<b>Coordination and Participation in Statewide Activities</b>	Professional development/Leadership development training/Continuing Education	Provider Interviews	Staff time for coordination Registration fees for trainings, ADOT Transit Planning training and technical assistance funds through Arizona RTAP	Short- to medium-term	All	NACOG, AzTA	ADOT, passenger transportation service providers
	Continue Improving AZRide Info	Provider Interviews	Staff time for coordination and program development & implementation, website development support Federal and state-level transit and technology funding, Foundation resources, In-kind match from agencies service providers, public-private partnerships	Short-term	All	CYMPO, NACOG, MAG	Passenger transportation service providers, social service organizations, nonprofits

## 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

This section reviews four scenarios for passenger transportation in Yavapai County, and provides potential outcomes for the community, potential return on investment, challenges, and funding. The four scenarios outlined in this section are: (1) Base (“Do Nothing”), (2) Low Commitment, (3), Medium Commitment, and (4) High Commitment.

The base scenario requires the least investment and results in the fewest benefits. This scenario maintains status quo in Yavapai County, which means that providers must work with limited financial resources and staff, the lack of awareness of transportation options and benefits persists in the general public, intercity transportation options remain sparse, and older adults who rely on passenger transportation may continue to feel isolated. The low and medium commitment scenarios build on one another and allow for increased investments in passenger transportation with benefits that include improved access, awareness of services, and increased service quality. The high commitment scenario requires the most financial investment but would result in the greatest benefits to residents and visitors who utilize passenger transportation in the County. The costs and benefits for each scenario are described below and summarized in **Figure 30**.

### Base (“Do Nothing”) Scenario

In the base scenario, passenger transportation services in Yavapai County would continue to operate as they do today. Funding would not be increased, and no programs would be significantly changed or expanded.

Under this scenario, Yavapai County and the CYMPO region would continue to not take advantage of the federal funding available through Section 5307. Yavapai County is currently not taking advantage of this federal transit funding opportunity because the county does not meet the local match.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, this scenario would continue to leave unaddressed the increasing demand for passenger transportation services because of population growth and the growing percentage of older adults, persons with disabilities and low income households in the county. The cost burden for expanding or improving services would fall on local providers.

The current transportation system will continue to operate with an overreliance on privately owned personal vehicles for most trips in this scenario, increasing traffic on roadways and the transportation system’s vulnerability to system failures. However, it is also expected that a growing number of the older adult population in Yavapai County will age out of driving--or should—due to safety concerns and affordability of motor vehicle ownership.

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<sup>29</sup> <sup>29</sup> The 2017 YCRMMIP and 2020 TriP study both noted this missed funding opportunity. The TriP study proposed an implementation plan for transit in the CYMPO area that would take advantage of this funding.

Those without access to personal vehicles or existing passenger transportation services will continue to face hardships in accessing essential services to meet their basic needs such as healthcare, food sources and employment opportunities.

### **Low Commitment Scenario**

In the low commitment scenario, resources for passenger transportation in Yavapai County may increase due to funding sources such as federal and foundation grant support and the federal Section 5310 funds and 5311 formula grants and cost savings through provider collaboration. The establishment of a Community Mobility Fund through the ACFYC may also be possible in this scenario, depending on the level of collaboration toward fundraising demonstrated by organizations. This increase in investment may be enough to sustain current operations, enhance the tools used to share transportation-related information, such as AZRide Info, and assist rural communities in the establishment of a coordinated volunteer driver network at the local or county level. However, this scenario would not increase services to a level that begins to address the issues identified in this study.

Absent tangible service expansion or improvements, traffic congestion is still likely to increase in this scenario due to limited passenger transportation service options. More staff time will be needed to manage and maintain the development of informational materials and to improve the utility of AZRide Info. However, the efforts in this scenario can help reduce the barrier to entry for those who are unfamiliar with the transportation options available to them or who feel less confident with how to use the transportation services.

### **Medium Commitment Scenario**

In a medium commitment scenario, funding and resources for passenger transportation increase and Yavapai County can offer more service and programs to more people. A countywide governance structure is established through the formation of an IPTA that allows for increased support of funding investments such as local funds to support the first model described in the Community Mobility Fund strategy. It will support increases in service to areas of the county with the greatest need, and to existing passengers who experience gaps or deficiencies in current service. It will also provide funding for a flexible travel training program and increase opportunities for professional development, leadership training, and improved pay/benefits for drivers. While there will continue to be unmet needs, the county will be much better suited to handle demand than it is today.

The medium commitment scenario may allow local passenger transportation service providers to expand their services proportionate to the increasing population – and especially the increasing elderly population – in Yavapai County. Local providers would have the resources to hire more drivers, operate more vehicles or expand service. In some instances, the increased capacity may allow for more coverage throughout the county, or for existing passengers to schedule trips earlier or later in the day. The marginal increase may also improve on-time performance and reduce the frequency of missed trips. Access to healthcare is important in the diagnosis, treatment and management of acute and chronic health conditions, leading to improved overall health and quality of life. More frequent, reliable and affordable passenger transportation service through a medium commitment scenario can provide older adults this access. This service can also positively impact individual and community health, through the reduction of loneliness and isolation.

**High Commitment Scenario**

In a high commitment scenario, sustained increases in funding for passenger transportation are implemented. This will enable Yavapai County to restructure the passenger transportation programs that are offered and drastically increase the quality of service residents and visitors receive. In this scenario, transportation providers will be able to provide Tier 2 or 3 demand response services to rural communities and smaller towns that do not currently have service and new intercity regional mobility hubs are established along major corridors to meet local and tourism needs.

Under this scenario, the county will be able to scale services to meet the needs of the growing and aging population. Access to healthcare will increase, leading to improved overall health and quality of life. Additionally, the investment in passenger transportation will allow the county to be more resilient because passenger transportation services will provide a robust redundant system to the road network, which can reduce the negative economic impacts from congestion and allow the county to increase transportation capacity more efficiently.

**Figure 30 Assessment of Scenarios**

Scenario	Description	Costs	Benefits
Base (“Do Nothing”)	Maintain the status quo with no additional investments or additional commitments from regional service providers or local government entities. No progress on past and current recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited or no service expansion due to the costs of such expansion</li> <li>▪ Residents lack sufficient access to services to meet basic needs.</li> <li>▪ Increased public health and social service costs due to transportation barriers accessing healthcare</li> <li>▪ Congestion continues to increase in high growth and tourist areas of the county.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No additional funding needed</li> </ul>
Low Commitment	<p>This scenario provides a basic level of commitment to passenger transportation services. Examples of low-level efforts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish the Community Mobility Fund through ACFYC</li> <li>▪ Distribute information and materials to educate people on available services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Additional staff time to manage expanded programs and additional responsibilities</li> <li>▪ Limited expansion due to the costs of such expansion</li> <li>▪ Residents are more aware of services but may still lack sufficient access to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved access to information to help residents understand their transportation options</li> <li>▪ Greater awareness of transportation services</li> <li>▪ Increased familiarity with how to use various transportation service options</li> </ul>

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Scenario	Description	Costs	Benefits
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue improving AZRide Info</li> <li>▪ Establish a coordinated volunteer driver network</li> </ul>	<p>services to meet basic needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Congestion continues to increase in high growth and tourist areas of the county</li> </ul>	
Medium Commitment	<p>This scenario builds off the basic efforts from the low Commitment scenario. A countywide governance structure is established through the formation of an IPTA. It represents greater investment and increased dedication to supporting countywide passenger transportation services. Additional efforts in this scenario include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase driver pools by increasing pay and benefits</li> <li>▪ Expand opportunities for professional development, leadership training and continuing education for operators and passenger transportation staff</li> <li>▪ Coordinate shared costs and resources between providers</li> <li>▪ Develop a flexible travel training program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More staff time needed for program management</li> <li>▪ Increased budget for operators, technology, services, and training</li> <li>▪ Greater time and expense burden on volunteer drivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased frequency and reliability of service due to larger driver pool</li> <li>▪ Reduced service disruptions</li> <li>▪ Reduced isolation for older adults in the region</li> <li>▪ Improved resiliency and capacity of operators through sharing of knowledge and resources</li> <li>▪ Better driver retention rates and ability to build rapport with riders</li> <li>▪ Greater ability to transport non-ambulatory passengers</li> <li>▪ Improved health outcomes due to increased access to healthcare with service improvements</li> <li>▪ Reductions in financial impact on public health and social services through access improvements.</li> </ul>
High Commitment	<p>This scenario builds off the Medium Commitment efforts above. It provides a more robust level of investment to passenger transportation services in the county. Additional efforts in this scenario include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop intercity services between</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More staff time needed for program management</li> <li>▪ Increased budget for operators and services</li> <li>▪ Requires higher investment of time and money for travelers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved ease of travel throughout county with multiple operators and connection opportunities</li> <li>▪ Improved connectivity for longer distance inter-city travel</li> </ul>

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Scenario	Description	Costs	Benefits
	<p>regional mobility hubs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Institute Tier 2 and 3 demand response service</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Allows for better congestion management in popular tourist areas</li> <li>▪ Provides visitors with more transportation options</li> <li>▪ Reduced isolation for older adults in the region</li> <li>▪ Higher quality of life for those who rely on passenger transportation</li> <li>▪ Improved health outcomes due to increased access to healthcare with service improvements</li> <li>▪ Reductions in financial impact on public health and social services through access improvements.</li> </ul>

## 5 FUTURE STUDIES

Several local-level transit studies are recommended as a next step from the YPTS:

1. The YPTS outlines several recommendations for service and coordination plan strategies, several of which involve the introduction of new service, or the formalization of service within regions of the county. It is recommended that evaluation of the development and implementation of these services, such as Demand Response Services, be conducted to determine the impact of service on resident and community need and the cost-benefit of service.
2. The shared support services pilot proposed as part of the Shared Costs and Resources Coordination Plan Strategy can also be evaluated to determine the impact on costs and support service delivery and satisfaction across providers.
3. With the advent of several technology platforms at the provider and customer level over the next few years, a study to evaluate the impact of information technology resources on provider efficiencies and service delivery, and passenger (potential and current) satisfaction is recommended.
4. Several secondary educational institutions are located in Yavapai County, with campuses distributed primarily in the CYMPO and Verde Valley region. As the student population grows, the negative impacts of campus access by personal vehicle will also grow. Vanpools were discussed in this report as one potential transportation demand solution for this target audience. However, several other options exist and can be explored via a Transportation Demand Management or Campus Transportation Planning Study.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The transportation system is charged with serving the needs of the communities in the county; however, the current system is largely designed and funded as a road network that is only accessible to those that drive. Mobility Management and Local Coordinating Councils can be effective but need real regional coordinated funding, commitment and a governance structure for sustained impact on health, connectedness and opportunity of Yavapai residents.

The analysis conducted for the YPTS and the resulting recommendations support the implementation or expansion of passenger transportation services throughout the county through various strategies. The study also supports the expansion of mobility management support provided by NACOG to regional passenger transportation service providers through collaboration, technical assistance and the development, implementation and management of programs that support the providers' service delivery and sustainability. The recommendations proposed strengthen the overall transportation system by improving efficiency, increasing resiliency through increased capacity and diversity of service, reducing congestion and traffic safety risks, increasing air quality and improving the health and quality of life of Yavapai residents through increased access to healthcare, daily needs and social connections.

**APPENDIX A**  
**FY 2021-2022 Project Requests**  
CYMPO/NACOG Regions – Yavapai County

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Year 1 Project Type</b>	<b>Year 2 Project Type</b>
Central Yavapai Transit Foundation	Other Mobility Management	Other Mobility Management
People Who Care	Operating	Operating
NAZCARE, Inc.	Vehicle Replacement	
New Horizons	Preventative Maintenance	Preventative Maintenance
New Horizons	Operating	Operating
New Horizons	Vehicle Replacement	Vehicle Replacement
New Horizons	Vehicle Replacement	Vehicle Replacement
New Horizons	Preventative Maintenance	Preventative Maintenance
New Horizons	Capital	Capital
New Horizons		Other Mobility Management
New Horizons	Operating	Operating
West Yavapai Guidance Clinic	Vehicle Replacement	Vehicle Replacement
West Yavapai Guidance Clinic	Expansion Vehicle	Vehicle Replacement
West Yavapai Guidance Clinic	Vehicle Replacement	
NAU Civic Institute	Operating	Operating
Arizona Pioneer's Home	Vehicle Replacement	Vehicle Replacement
Arizona Pioneer's Home	Operating	Operating
Arizona Pioneer's Home	Capital	
Rainbow Acres	Vehicle Replacement	Vehicle Replacement
Rainbow Acres	Preventative Maintenance	Preventative Maintenance
Verde Valley Caregivers	Operating	Operating
Verde Valley Caregivers	Preventative Maintenance	Preventative Maintenance
Verde Valley Caregivers	Expansion Vehicle	
Hozhoni		Vehicle Replacement
Steps to Recovery Homes	Vehicle Replacement	
Steps to Recovery Homes	Vehicle Replacement	
Steps to Recovery Homes	Preventative Maintenance	Preventative Maintenance