

St. Lawrence County 2024 Coordinated Transportation Plan



**Adopted
May 6, 2024**

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Introduction

St. Lawrence County's Coordinated Transportation Plan identifies cost-effective approaches to address public transportation gaps; minimize the duplication of transportation services; and ways to improve the coordination of transportation services for: Individuals with disabilities, older adults, persons with limited incomes, and persons who do not own and operate a personal vehicle. The Plan:

- Includes socio-economic data to help assess the transportation needs of individuals who are the least well off and may not own and maintain a personal vehicle.
- Inventories existing transportation services to identify redundancies and gaps.
- Identifies goals and actions to: Enhance transportation access; address gaps in service; eliminate or reduce duplication in services; and improve the quality and delivery of cost-effective public transportation.
- Describes how goals and strategies will be prioritized to improve public transportation services.

This Coordinated Transportation Plan was compiled with contributions from: St. Lawrence University Public Interest Corps Intern Sasha Henderson; the St. Lawrence County Planning Office; Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. who provide Mobility Management services to the County; the County's bus operator The Arc Jefferson-St. Lawrence; from human service agencies including: St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging, Seaway Valley Prevention Council, United Helpers, the St. Lawrence County Department of Social Services; St. Regis Mohawk Tribe Office for the Aging; and members of St. Lawrence County's Public Transit Task Force.

Needs Assessment

Service Area

St. Lawrence County is the largest county in New York State. It is approximately 2,840 square miles and is the fifth largest county east of the Mississippi River. St. Lawrence County is predominantly rural and sparsely populated in comparison to its size. The United States' Census Bureau's decennial census recorded a total population of 108,505 in 2020 which averages to a little over 38 people per square mile and is down almost 3,500 people since the last census was conducted in 2010.

The southeast portion of the county includes the Adirondack Mountains, and is bordered to the north by Canada and the St. Lawrence River. The St. Regis Mohawk Reservation, commonly referred to by its Mohawk name - Akwesasne - neighbors the eastern border of the county. The reservation is bisected by the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and is also split by the US-Canadian Border.

The county comprises 32 towns, 10 villages, and one city. Five communities serve as the county's population centers: Canton (the county seat), Gouverneur, Massena, Potsdam, and Ogdensburg.

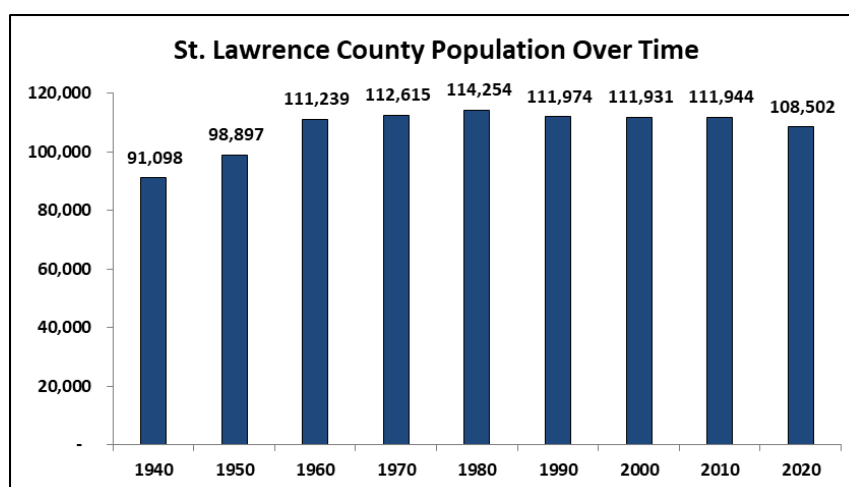
Demographic and Socio-Economic Analysis

The County Planning Office compiled the following statistical data to capture the socio-economic circumstances and public transportation needs of St. Lawrence County residents. Data sources used to create the following graphs, tables and maps include: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021; Decennial Census; Cornell Project on Applied Demographics; US Bureau of Labor Statistics; New York State Department of Education; the National Center for Education Statistics; and 2023 County Health Rankings prepared by the Population Health Institute at University of Wisconsin's School of Medicine and Public Health.

Population Over Time

St. Lawrence County is geographically the largest county in New York State, but it is also the smallest county per capita with a population that continues to decline. Following a brief surge between 1950 and 1960, the county's population peaked at 114,254 residents in 1980. As of 2021, the population of St. Lawrence County is 108,051. By 2040, the Cornell Project on Applied Demographics projects the county's population will continue to decline to 102,733.

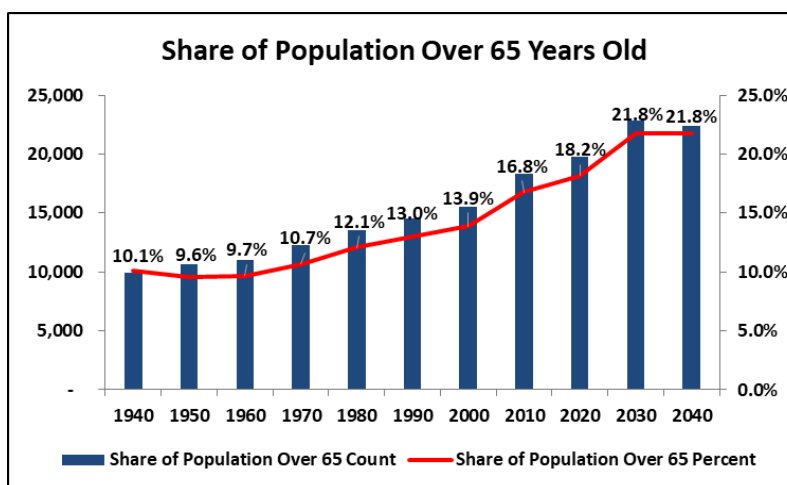
Figure 1: St. Lawrence County Population Over Time



Source: Decennial Census for St. Lawrence County

Correspondingly, the population of the county is gradually growing older. The share of population over 65 years old reached 18.2% in 2020 and is expected to grow to 21.8% by 2030. As the population ages, housing, transportation, and health care needs will change. Existing bus routes should be examined to determine whether they adequately connect seniors in supportive and affordable housing to shopping, food sources, services, and public spaces.

Figure 2: Share of Population Over 65 Years Old



Sources: Decennial Census for St. Lawrence County and Cornell Project on Applied Demographics

Population trends differ among the county's five largest communities, perhaps due to the dominant form of industry in each town. Canton is home to two of five college campuses in the county, and is the only

population center that has experienced population growth since 1970. Populations in the manufacturing-driven City of Ogdensburg and Town of Massena, meanwhile, significantly declined as both communities experienced deindustrialization. For the last 50 years, Ogdensburg’s population decreased by 31%, and Massena’s declined by 22%. The Town of Potsdam also experienced a population decrease of 9% during the same timeframe, but has the highest population in the county. The population in the Town of Gouverneur, whose main industry is mining, declined by 2% and is the county’s smallest population center.

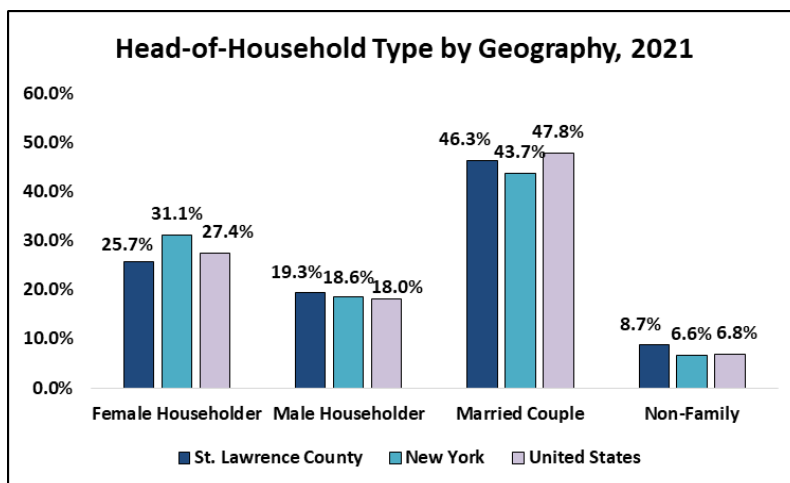
Figure 3: Population Change Over Time for Select Towns in SLC

Population Change Over Time for Select Towns in SLC					
Year	Canton	Gouverneur	Massena	Ogdensburg	Potsdam
1970	10,348	6,710	16,021	14,554	16,382
1980	11,568	6,629	14,856	12,375	17,411
1990	11,120	6,985	13,826	13,521	16,822
2000	10,369	7,418	13,121	12,460	15,963
2010	10,995	7,085	12,883	11,128	16,041
2020	11,641	6,552	12,426	10,065	14,910
Change	12%	-2%	-22%	-31%	-9%

Source: Decennial Census Data

Head-of-household type in St. Lawrence County mirrors national and state-wide trends. Married couples make up the majority of householders with single female householders following closely behind. As shown later, single-parent female-headed households face a much higher poverty rate and likely have less discretionary income to afford owning and maintaining a personal vehicle.

Figure 4: Head-of-Household Type by Geography, 2021

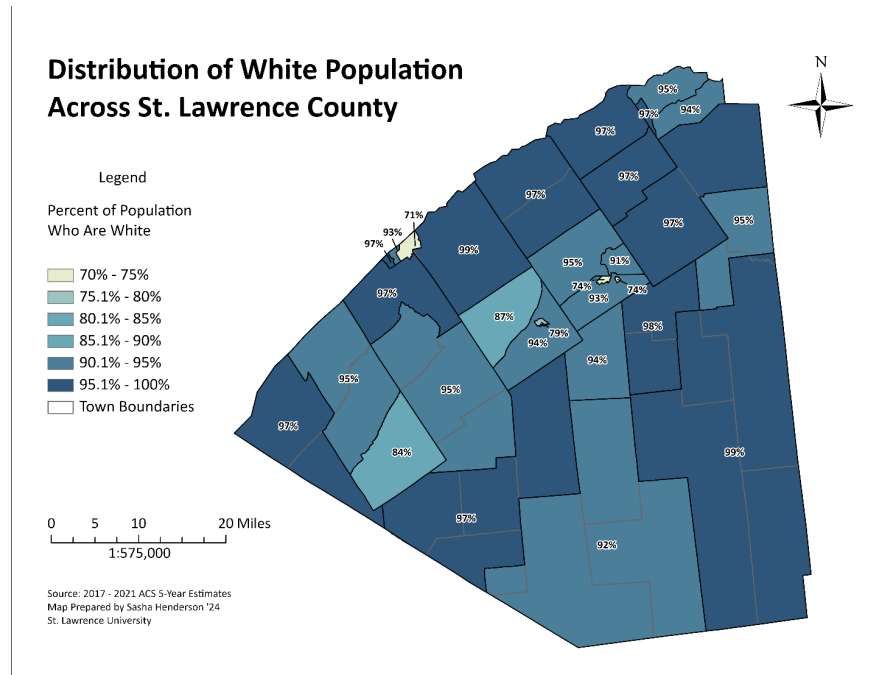


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Population Diversity

St. Lawrence County is predominantly white. The American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2021 indicate 92% of the county’s total population is white, while the remaining 8% is non-white. The following maps depict the percentage of the population in every census tract in St. Lawrence County who are white and who are not white.

Figure 5: Distribution of White Population Across St. Lawrence County

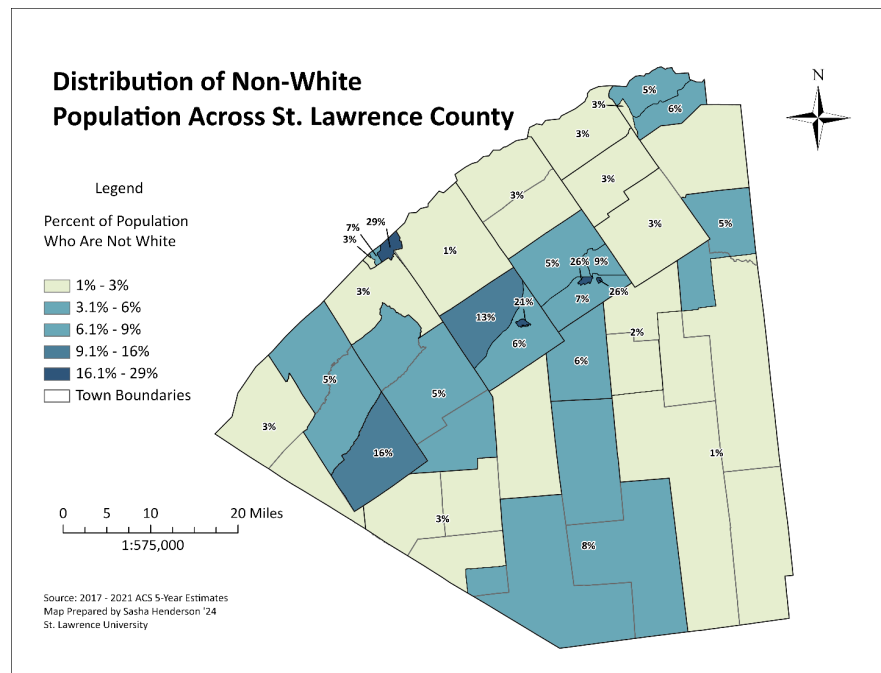


The most diverse tracts are in the college towns of Canton and Potsdam, as well as in Ogdensburg and Gouverneur. However, the data in these maps may not fully account for the entire population, as many students at the four universities often report in census data as living in their hometowns instead of Canton or Potsdam.

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Figure 6: Distribution of Non-White Population Across St. Lawrence County

Thus, the census tracts that serve the areas with correctional facilities reflect a higher percentage of civilian, non-institutionalized people who are not white to be living in these tracts. This data also includes individuals who are incarcerated in the St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility in Canton; Riverview Correctional Facility in Ogdensburg; and the Gouverneur Correctional Facility in Gouverneur. Nation-wide, people of color are disproportionately incarcerated.



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

As shown in the following table, enrollment populations at area universities are significantly more diverse than surrounding towns. Twenty-percent of total student enrollment at four of the five college campuses in the county are persons of color (enrollment data for the Wanakena Ranger School was not available). An additional 4% of the total student body are foreign students. SUNY Potsdam and SUNY Canton are the most diverse schools with 72% and 67% of student enrollment, respectively, who are white.

Figure 7: Enrollment Totals at Area Universities 2022-2023

2022-2023	Total	Undergraduate	Men	Women	White	Latino	Black	Asian	Native	Hawaiian/ Pacific	Two or More	Unknown	Non-Resident Alien
Clarkson	3,719	2,668	69%	31%	79%	6%	3%	3%	0.3%	N/A	3%	1%	5%
St. Lawrence	2,175	2,145	46%	54%	76%	6%	3%	2%	0.4%	0.1%	2%	1%	10%
SUNY Canton	2,836	2,836	43%	57%	67%	10%	11%	3%	1%	0.0%	3%	3%	2%
SUNY Potsdam	2,427	2,082	39%	61%	72%	10%	8%	2%	2%	0.1%	3%	3%	1%
Total	11,157	9,731	51%	49%	74%	8%	6%	2%	1%	0.04%	3%	2%	4%

Note: Data for Wanakena Ranger School was not available

Source: Inst. of Ed Sciences, Nat. Ctr for Ed Statistics, Search for Schools and Colleges, <https://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/>

Amish Households

A growing segment of the county's population are Amish residents. According to the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College, more than 23,000 Amish persons reside in 58 settlements across New York.¹ Six of those settlements are in St. Lawrence County and account for 4,260 residents, the highest Amish population of any county in the state. Sixty-eight percent (2,905) of the county's Amish residents live in and around Heuvelton, which is the largest settlement in New York. Since 2020, the Amish population in St. Lawrence County is estimated to have grown by 13.5% or 507 persons.² A second source of information is the 2020 US Religion Census commissioned by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies which includes a county-by-county enumeration of religious practices in the US. This survey reports St. Lawrence County is home to 22 Amish congregations with 2,663 adherents, the second highest number of any county in New York.³ Based on this data, St. Lawrence County ranks 22nd in the US for largest Amish population. Most Amish in St. Lawrence County are Old Order Swartzentruber who universally object to owning and operating an automobile, but do permit riding as passengers by bus or train.⁴ This self imposed limitation has yielded Amish passengers who consistently ride St. Lawrence County Public Transit.

Education

Of the 86,781 persons in the county who are 18 years and older, 54% (47,247) have attained a two-year degree or higher. Twenty percent (17,685) have a Bachelor's Degree or higher, and an additional 34% (29,562) have an Associates Degree or higher. Thirty-five percent of the population (30,121) have a high school diploma or equivalent, while 11% (9,413) did not complete high school or earn a graduation equivalent.

¹ "Amish Population, 2023." Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College.

<http://groups.etc.edu/amishstudies/statistics/population-2023/>

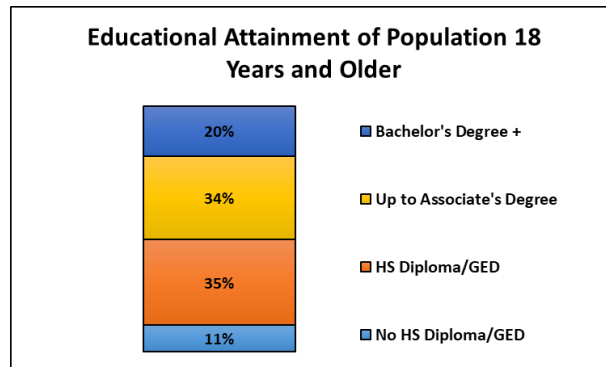
² Edsel Burdge, Jr., research associate, Ibid.

³ "2020 Group detail data by nation, state, county and metro." Clifford Grammich, et al. 2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Adherents Study. Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies.

https://www.usreligioncensus.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/2020_USRC_Group_Detail.xlsx

⁴ "How do Amish Travel?" Erik Wesner. Amish America. <https://amishamerica.com/how-do-amish-travel/>

Figure 8: Educational Attainment of Population 18 Years and Older



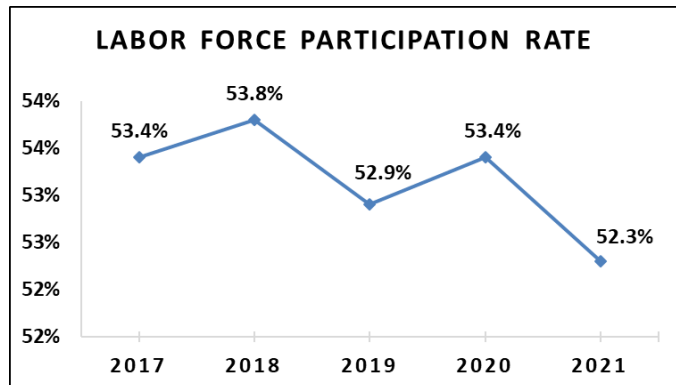
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Employment

Figure 9: County Labor Force Participation Rate over Time

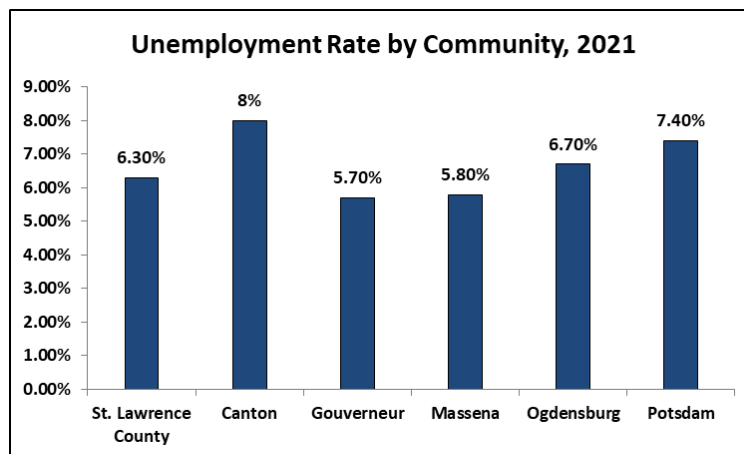
Labor force participation rate is defined as persons who are seeking work, and are either employed, or unemployed, compared to the total population of persons who are 16 years and older. Since 2017, the county's labor force participation rate decreased by 1.1% or 985 people.

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021



The American Community Survey 5-Year estimate for 2017 recorded some of the highest unemployment rates in the county that averaged around 10%. Since then, however, unemployment rates in St. Lawrence County declined. Between 2017 and 2021, countywide unemployment decreased by 3.7% while unemployment in the five largest towns in the county decreased by -2% (Canton), -6.5% (Gouverneur), -9.4% (Massena), -2.6% (Ogdensburg), and -1.4% (Potsdam).

Figure 10: Unemployment Rate by Community, 2021



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

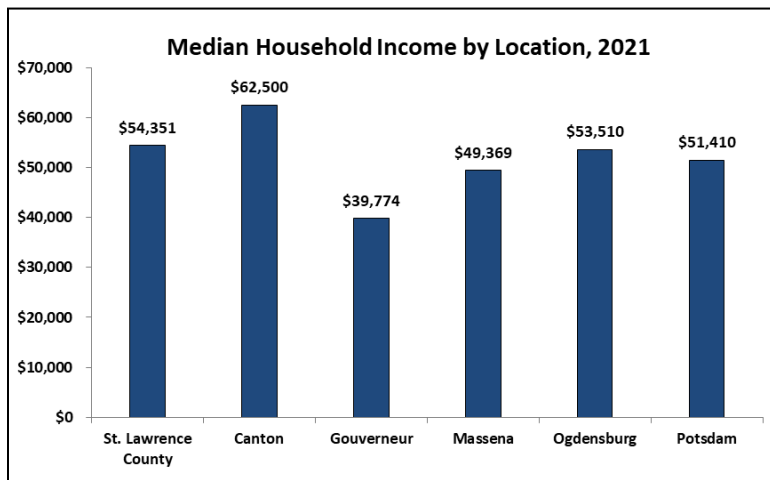
Decreases in the labor force participation rate and in subsequent unemployment rates were triggered in large part by the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic recovery. During the pandemic's onset and progression, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics cites the decline in persons seeking work primarily to: Limited access to childcare services; older employees who retired; higher unemployment benefits; fear of contracting COVID-19 at work; and slower net population growth. Despite recent decreases in unemployment rates during the post-pandemic recovery, St. Lawrence County continues to be afflicted by some of the highest unemployment and poverty rates in the State outside of New York City.

Median Income

Figure 11: Median Household Income by Location, 2021

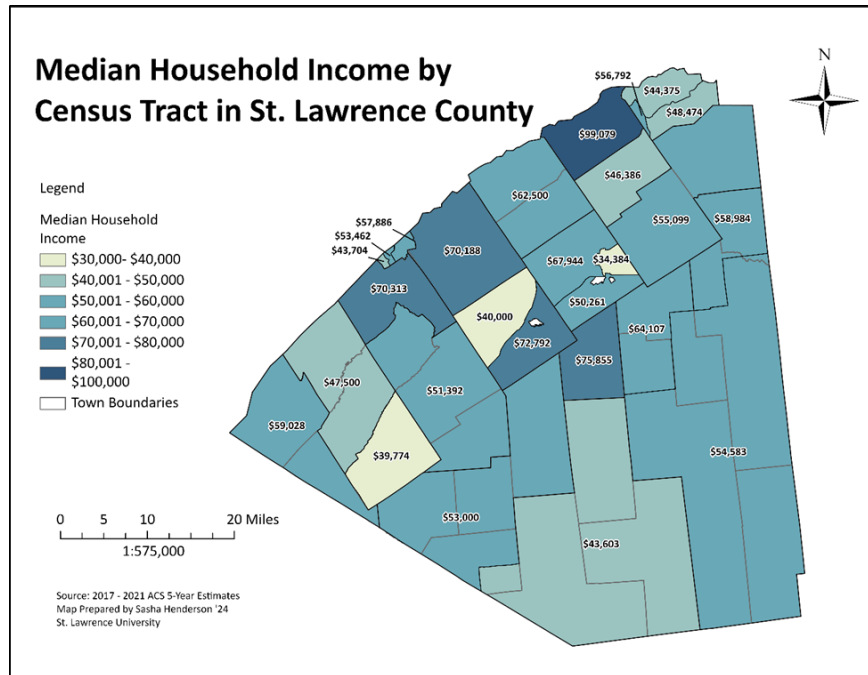
In 2021, the county's median household income was \$54,351 which means half of all households earned an income above this amount, and the remaining half of households earned less. Only one of the county's five population centers exceeded the county average. Canton's median household income was \$62,500 while Gouverneur's median household income was the lowest at \$39,774.

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021



The map below depicts median household income across the county. Interestingly, the Town of Louisville boasts the highest median household income in the county while Massena, which is immediately proximate to Louisville, experiences some of the highest levels of poverty in the county. Louisville and other towns bordering the St. Lawrence River are likely to have a higher median income than other areas of the county since more affluent households are able to purchase waterfront property. Additional public transportation services should be invested in communities with lower household incomes and higher poverty rates as residents in these locations have less discretionary income to purchase and maintain a personal vehicle.

Figure 12: Median Household Income by Census Tract in St. Lawrence County



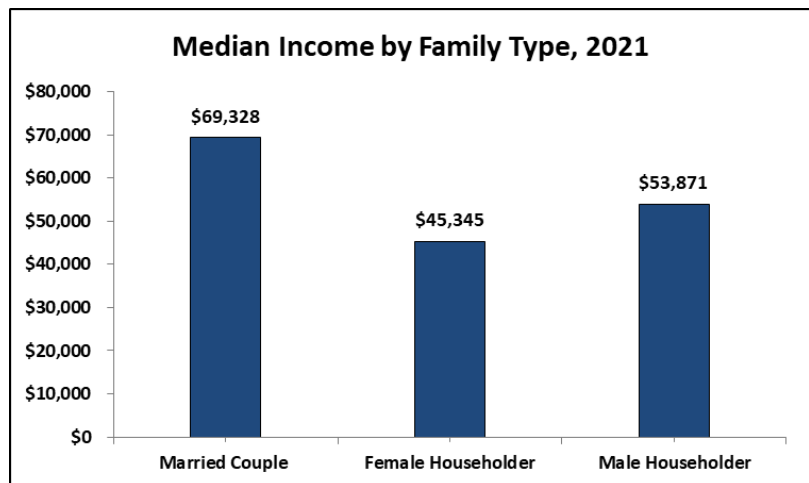
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Similarly, the median income by family type is reflective of the trends related to poverty rate as female-headed households earn a median yearly income that is 35% less than the median income for married couple households and 16% less than the median income for male-headed households.

Figure 13: 2021 Median Income by Head of Household Type

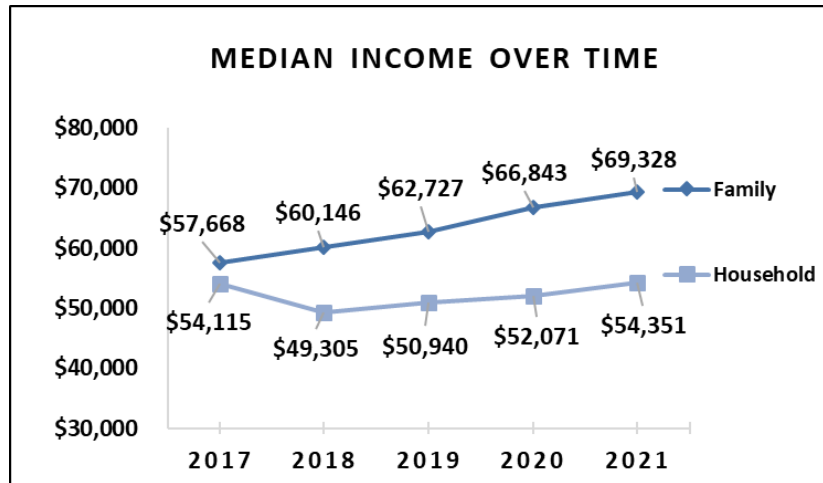
With these disparities in poverty rates and income, female-headed households are particularly more limited in the resources they can commit to housing and transportation costs, and likely face barriers to accessing places of employment, shopping, healthcare, services and public spaces.

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021



The following graph reveals the growing disparity in median income limits between married couples and unrelated persons residing in households together. In 2017, the median family income was \$57,668 while the median household income was \$54,115. By 2021, the county's median family income of \$69,328 was nearly \$15,000 more than the median income limit for households who are unrelated. This divergence may be affected by the presence of college-age students who live with roommates in the college communities of Canton and Potsdam, and stagnant incomes for minimum wage employees whose incomes were not adjusted to match inflation which grew by 7.72% during that time frame.

Figure 14: Median Income by Type over Time

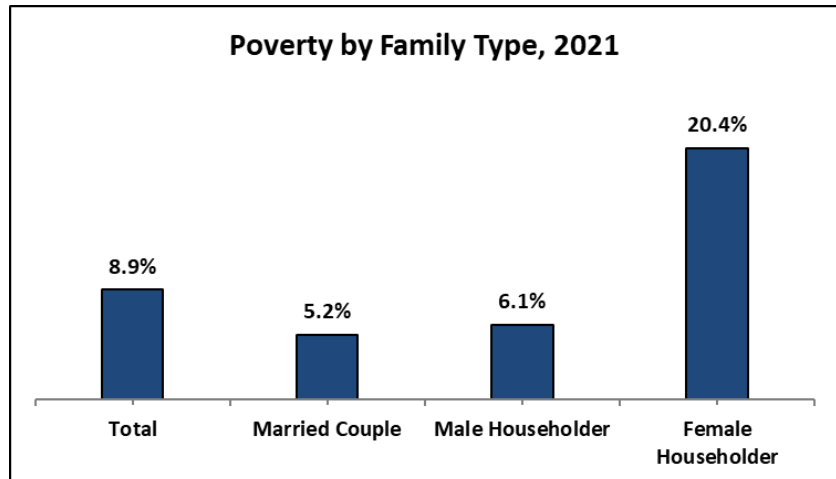


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Poverty Rates

Countywide, there are different poverty rates by race and familial type. It is important to note, however, that due to small sample sizes for racial minorities in the county, poverty data by race is problematic as the data includes large margins of error that in some instances are greater than the sample size, and are therefore not statistically significant. It is for this reason that poverty rates by race are omitted.

Figure 15: Poverty Rate by Family Type in 2021

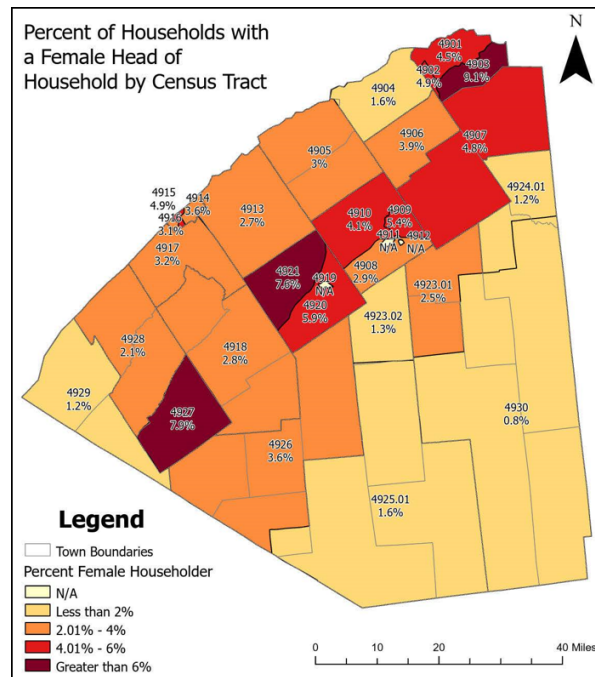


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Significant disparities can be found in poverty rates by family type. Female-headed households face a much higher poverty rate than any other head-of-household type, as displayed in the preceding graph.

The following map reveals the highest concentration of female-headed households by census tract are found in the communities of Massena (9.1% of households), Gouverneur (7.9%), and Canton (7.6%). A second tier of census tracts with a higher percentage of female-headed households are found in the communities of Canton (5.9%), Potsdam (5.4%) and Ogdensburg (4.9%) All other census tracts in the county with female-headed households were at or below 4%.

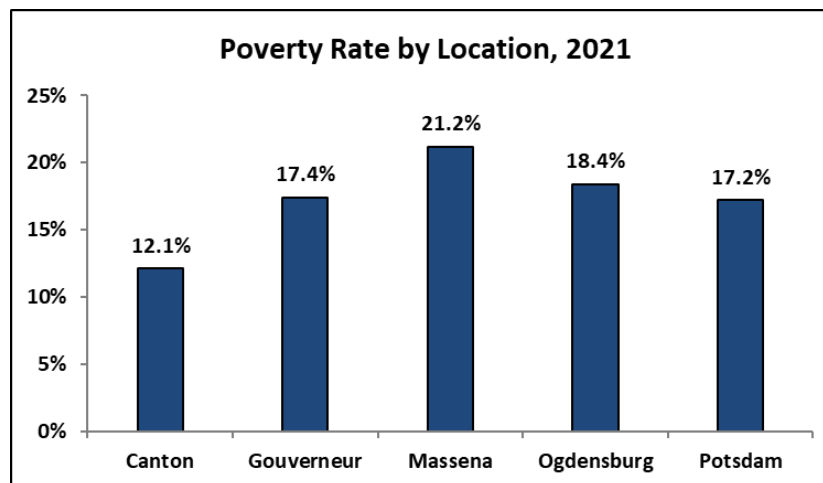
Figure 16: Percent of Female Headed Households in St. Lawrence County Census Tracts



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

The following chart also shows small yet significant differences in the poverty rates in different geographic locations. Of the most populous towns in the county, Massena has the highest percentage of individuals living below the poverty line at 21.2%, followed closely by Ogdensburg (18.4%) and Gouverneur (17.4%).

Figure 17: Poverty Rate by Location in 2021

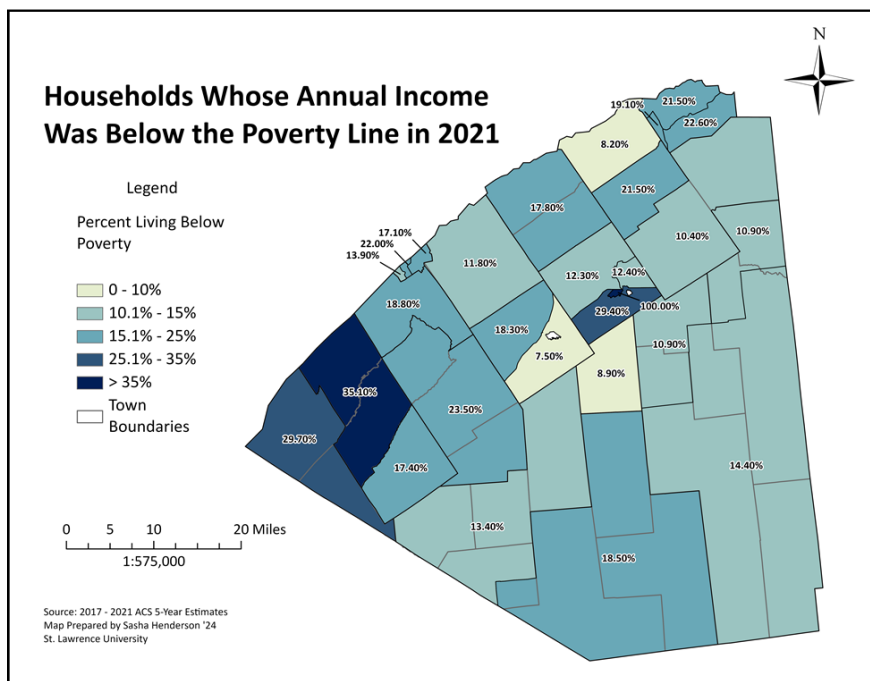


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

The following map depicts poverty rates by census tract in the county and shows areas with the highest poverty rates are in Hammond, Rossie, and the central portion of Potsdam. It is important to note that the census tract within Potsdam is where Clarkson University is located. A majority of students who reside in this census tract do not earn high incomes and will not be gainfully employed until after

graduating, thus skewing poverty and median income rates lower. Similarly, the Towns of Depeyster, Morristown, and Hammond are home to large proportions of Swartzentruber Amish communities who intentionally live simple lifestyles and deliberately do not earn high incomes, therefore potentially skewing poverty and median income rates countywide.

Figure 18: Households Whose Annual Income Was Below the Poverty Line in 2021



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

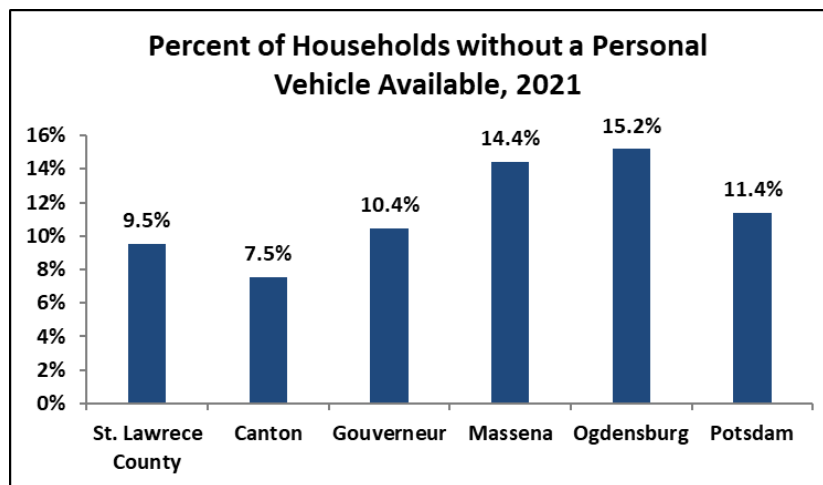
Individuals living below the poverty line are more susceptible to poor living conditions as they may not be able to afford regular upkeep. Similarly, it is becoming increasingly hard for people living below the poverty line to find affordable and accessible housing due to inflation, the current housing market, and socioeconomic discrimination. While poverty rates in the county have declined since the last publication of the Assessment of Fair Housing, adopted in 2017, St. Lawrence County remains one of the most impoverished counties in New York State.

Median household income follows similar trends as poverty. As seen in the following chart, the college town of Canton has a median household income that is considerably higher than in Gouverneur, Massena, and Ogdensburg. Correspondingly, Canton is the least impoverished town of the five population centers in St. Lawrence County.

Access to Personal Transportation and Commute Times

Statewide, roughly 28% of households do not have access to a personal vehicle; this percentage is influenced by New York City's expansive public transit system and other well-developed transit systems in the state's urban areas. Nationally, 8% of households do not have a vehicle available, while in St. Lawrence County, 9.5% of households do not have access to a personal vehicle. Of New York counties that are similar in size per capita, St. Lawrence County has some of the highest percentages of households with no access to a personal vehicle. The following chart shows that there is a significantly higher rate of households without cars in Massena and Ogdensburg than in the rest of the county, reflecting poverty rates by community.

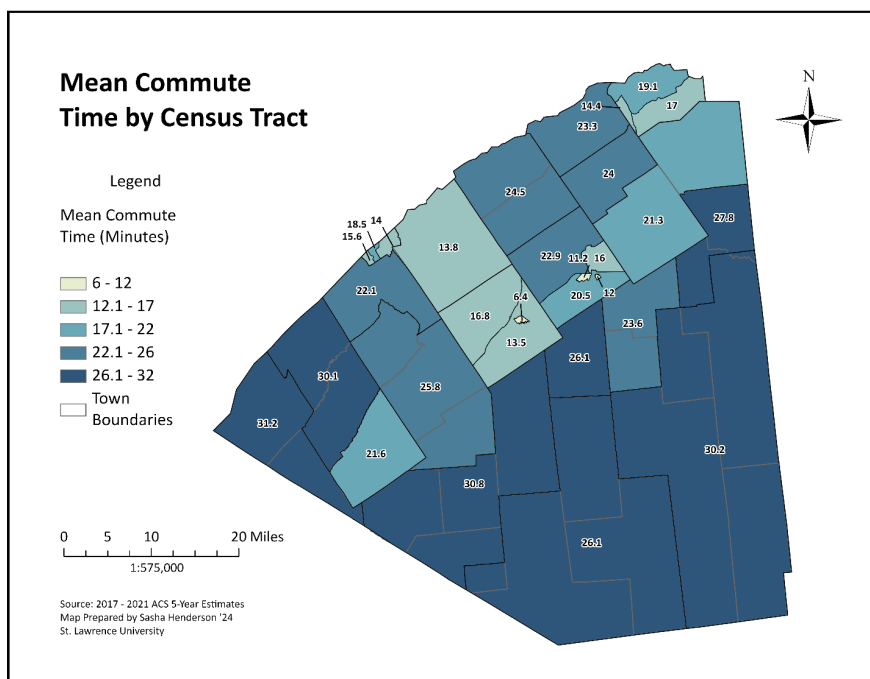
Figure 19: Percent of Households Without a Personal Vehicle Available, 2021



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Communities in the county with higher poverty rates and, subsequently, limited access to personal vehicles suggest residents in these areas struggle the most with accessing adequate transportation to travel to and from work, education and training; attend medical and human services appointments; shop for groceries; visit community facilities; and participate in public events. While there is a growing public transit system serviced by the County, not everyone is able to utilize it because limited routes are not able to reach every corner of the county.

Figure 20: Mean Commute Time by Census Tract



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

As the geographically largest county in New York, most St. Lawrence County residents rely on personal car travel to commute. The 2023 County Health Rankings prepared by the Population Health Institute at

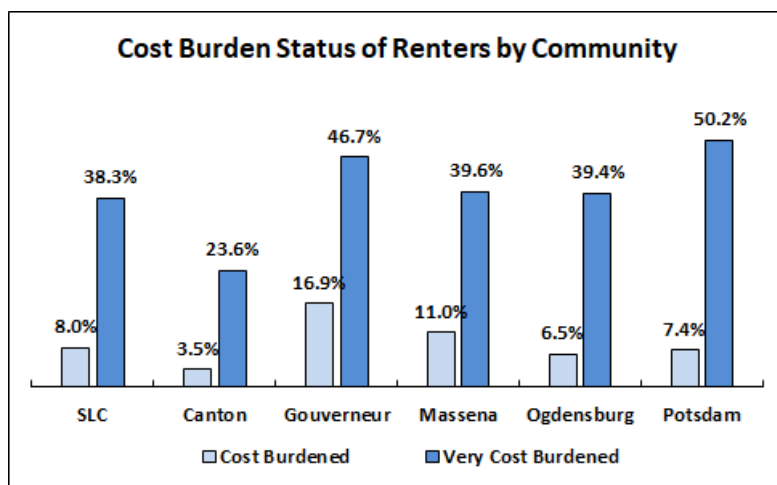
University of Wisconsin's School of Medicine and Public Health indicate 77% of the county's workforce drives alone to work, compared to 73% nationally, and 51% in the state. For residents who own a vehicle, commute times in the county can be lengthy. Towns with the highest commute times include Hammond, Rossie, Morristown, Macomb, and Russell as they primarily serve as bedroom communities to the county's population centers.

Housing Cost Burden

Figure 21: Cost Burden Status of Renters by Community in 2021

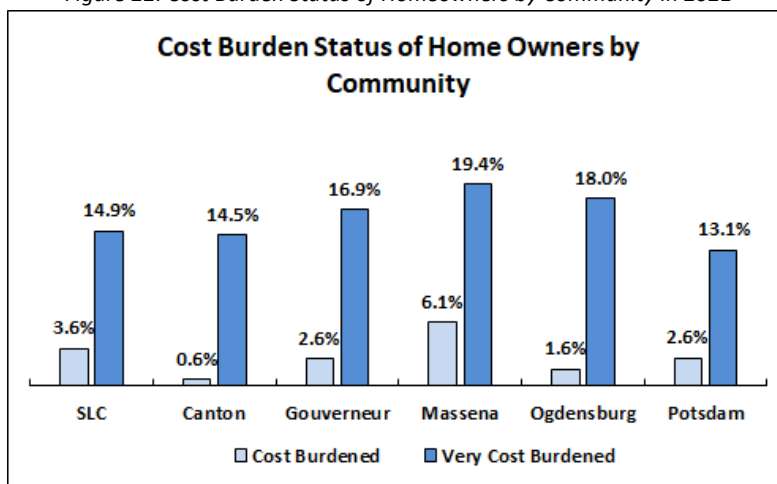
There are large discrepancies in the depth of housing needs by location and occupant type. Renters in every geographic location of the county are much more likely to be cost burdened, defined as paying between 30% to 35% of monthly income on housing, as well as very cost burdened, defined as paying more than 35% of monthly income on housing.

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021



Countywide, more than 1 out of every three renters are very cost burdened, and 8% of renters are cost burdened. With the exception of Canton, all of the county's population centers exceed the county's very cost burdened average. More than half of Potsdam's renters are very cost burdened. This figure is likely influenced by college students who reside in the community, are enrolled full time and earn no to very low incomes. The second highest rates of burden are in Gouverneur; more than 46% of renters in Gouverneur are very cost burdened, and 16.9% are cost burdened.

Figure 22: Cost Burden Status of Homeowners by Community in 2021

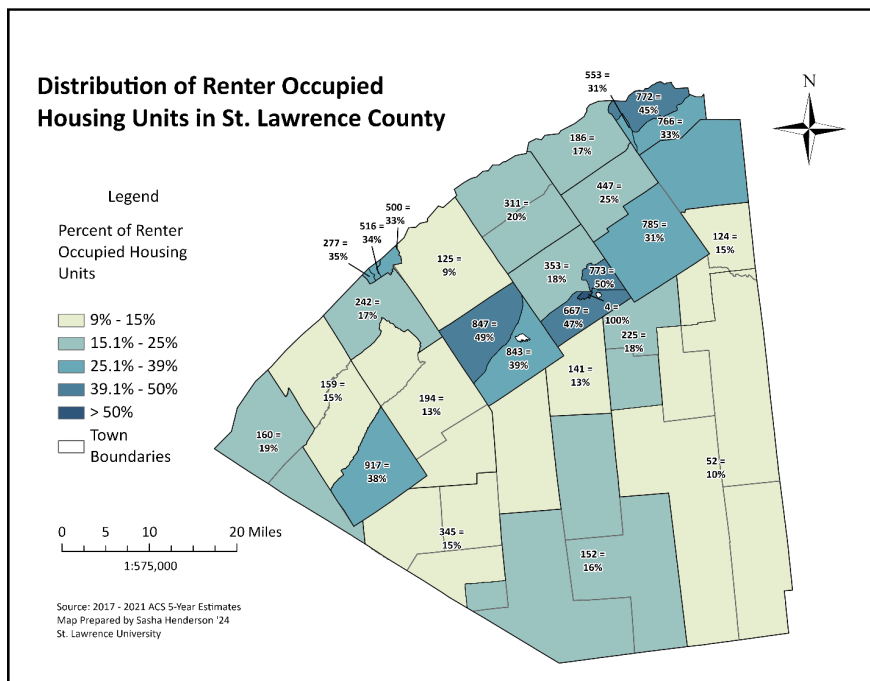


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

The experience of being cost burdened and very cost burdened is significantly less among homeowners. Overall, 3.6% of homeowners are cost burdened, and 14.9% are very cost burdened. Of the county's five

population centers, three communities have very cost burdened rates that are greater than the county average: Gouverneur (16.9%), Massena (19.4%), and Ogdensburg (18%). The maps below show the distribution of cost burdened and very cost burdened households across St. Lawrence County.

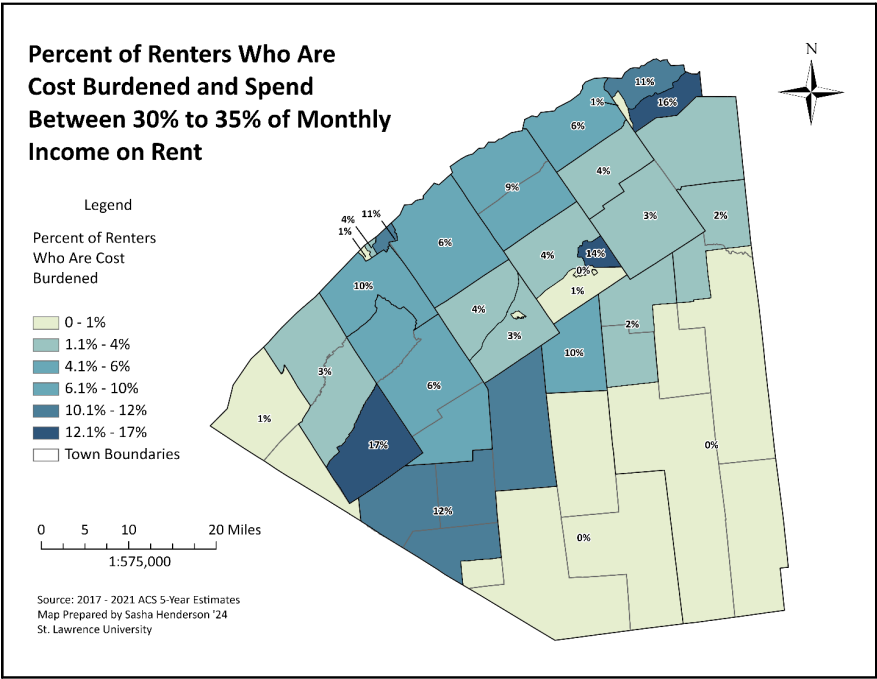
Figure 23: Distribution of Renter-Occupied Housing Units in St. Lawrence County



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

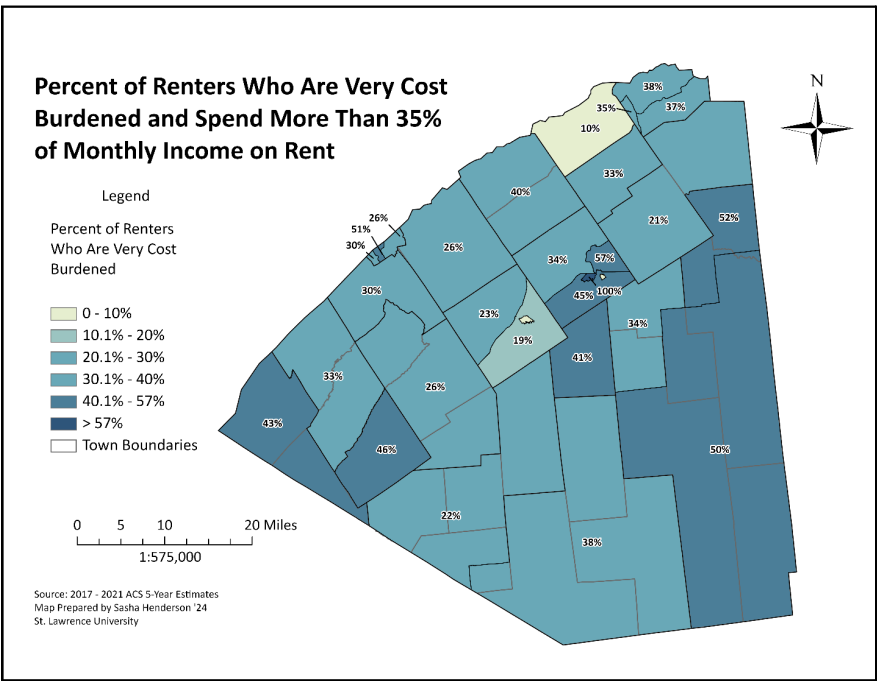
The following maps show the percentage of renters who are very cost burdened and pay more than 35% of their monthly income on rent is greater than the percentage of renters who are cost burdened, revealing issues surrounding affordability of rental units throughout the county. Similarly, the percentage of homeowners who are very cost burdened is greater than the percentage of homeowners who are cost burdened, revealing the true nature of the ongoing national mortgage crisis. As energy costs and property values continue to rise in the county, cost burdened and very cost burdened households will have fewer financial resources available to afford the cost of operating a personal vehicle, and would benefit from increased access to public transportation services.

Figure 24: Percent of Renters Who Are Cost Burdened and Spend Between 30% to 35% of Monthly Income on Rent



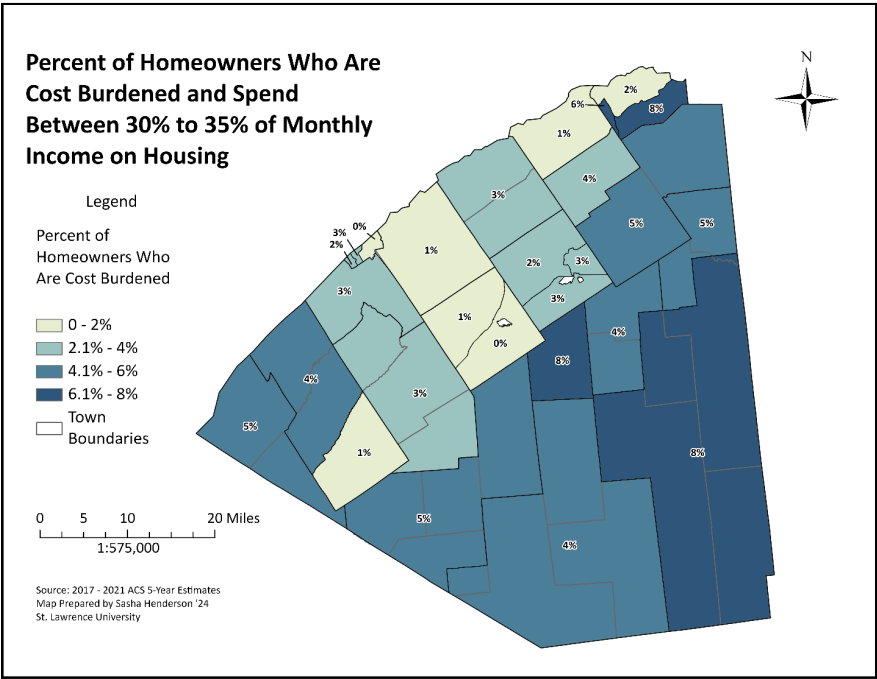
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Figure 25: Percent of Renters Who Are Very Cost Burdened and Spend More Than 35% of Monthly Income on Rent



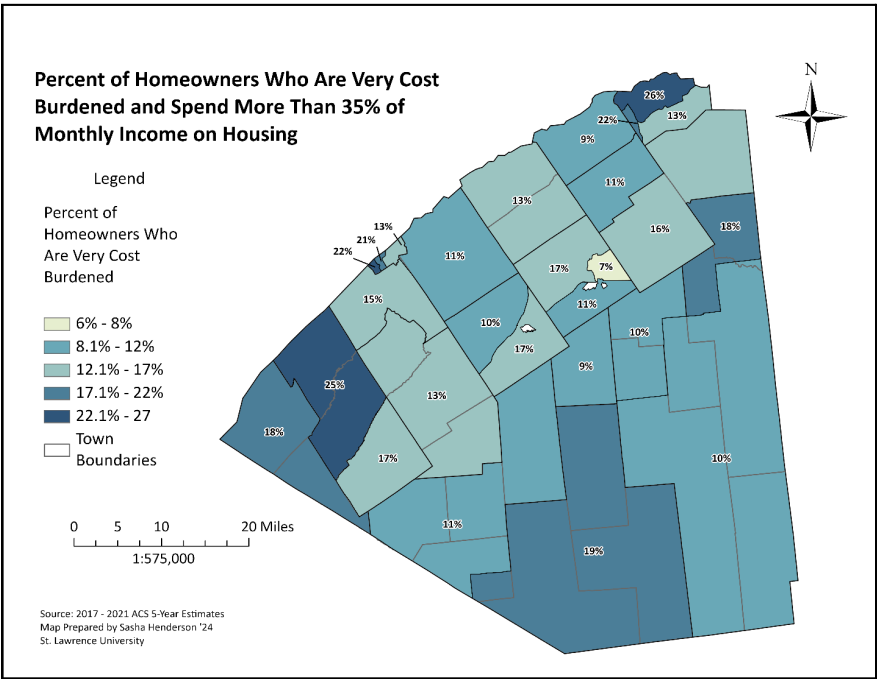
Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Figure 26: Percent of Homeowners Who Are Cost Burdened and Spend Between 30% to 35% of Monthly Income on Housing



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

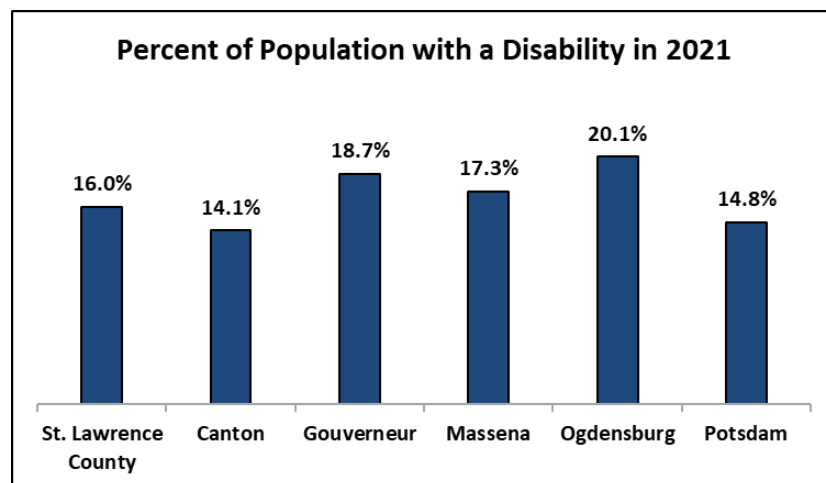
Figure 27: Percent of Homeowners Who Are Very Cost Burdened and Spend More Than 35% of Monthly Income on Housing



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Persons with Disabilities

Figure 28: Percent of Population with a Disability in 2021

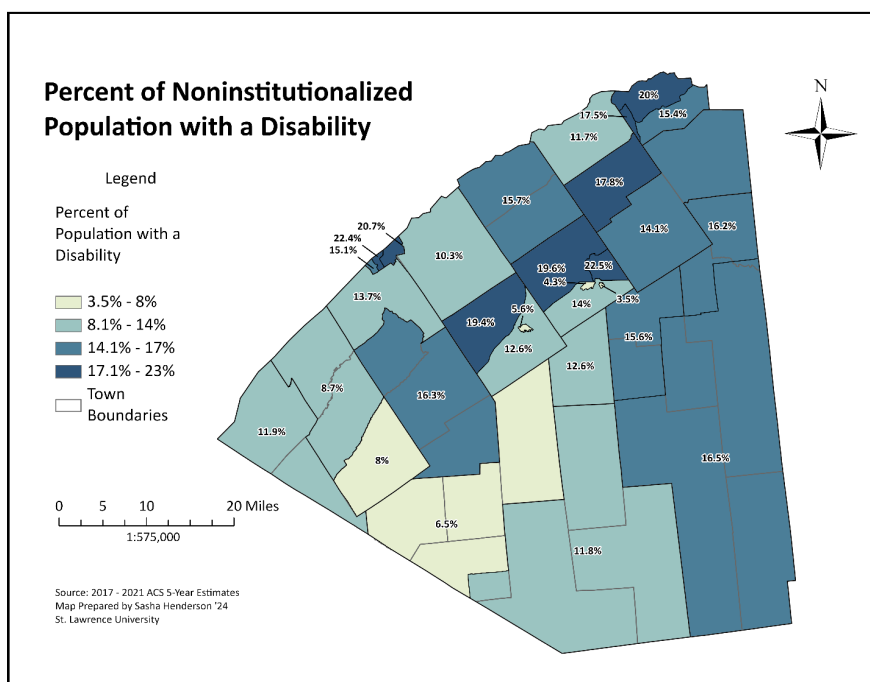


The county has a disproportionate share of its population living with one or more disabilities. Sixteen percent of the population is disabled, compared to 13% of the United States and 12% of New York State's population total. The share of the population with disabilities will likely increase as the population of the county continues to grow older.

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Since 2017, Ogdensburg and Potsdam have seen nearly a 4% increase in the share of individuals in these communities living with a disability. Similarly, Gouverneur and Canton have seen, respectively, a 1% and 1.3% increase while Massena saw a 2.9% decrease in residents living with a disability.

Figure 29: Percent of Noninstitutionalized Population with a Disability

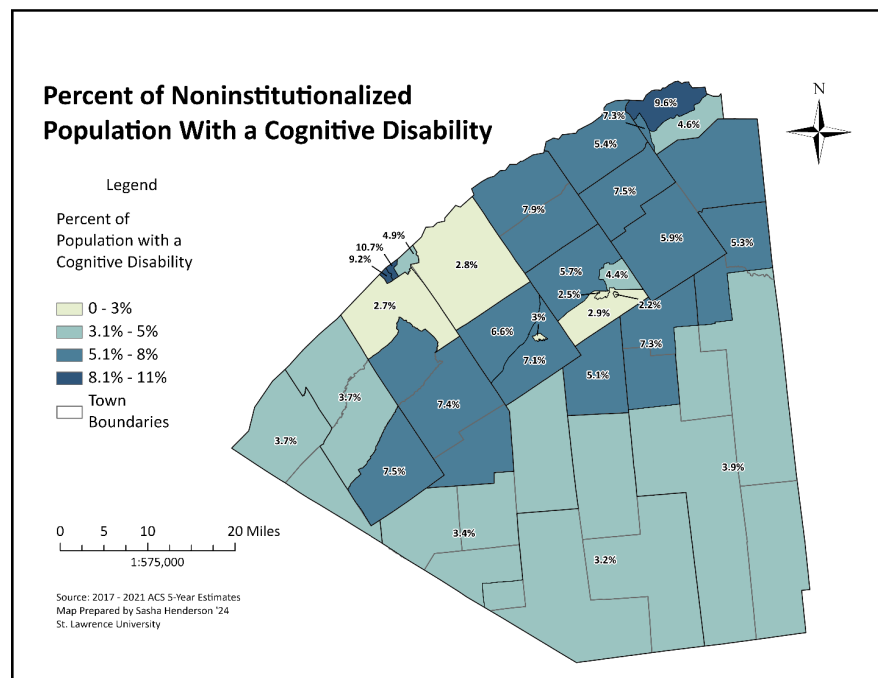


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

The following maps depict the percentage of the noninstitutionalized population across St. Lawrence County living with a general disability, as well as cognitive and physical disabilities. Many of the areas with high concentrations of individuals with disabilities, such as Massena, Norfolk, and the DeKalb area, are also disproportionately poverty-stricken, suggesting that these towns may require additional

resources for persons with disabilities, and would benefit from public transportation services to improve mobility.

Figure 30: Percent of Noninstitutionalized Population with a Cognitive Disability



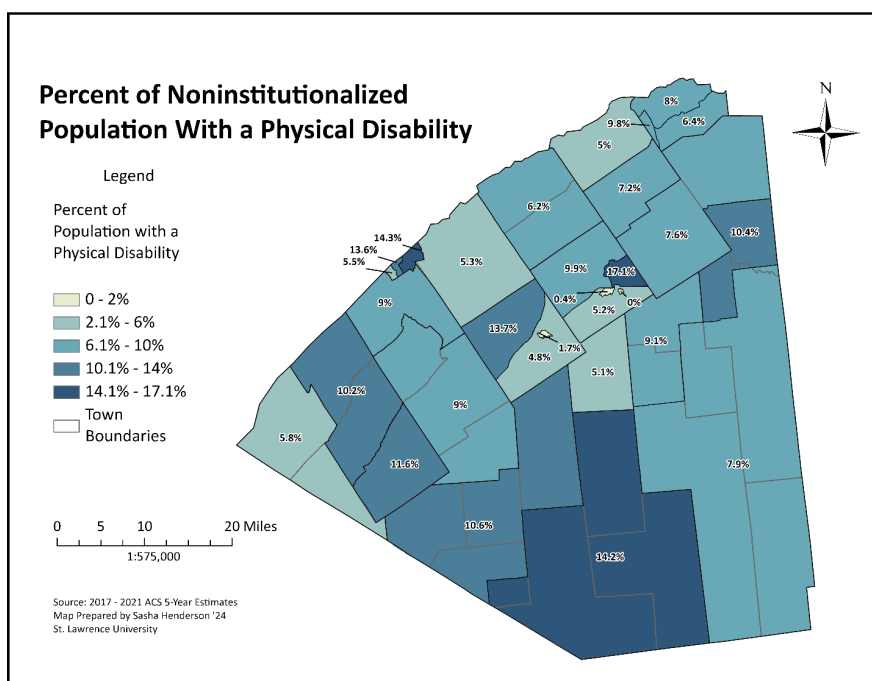
The adjacent countywide map reveals 9% to 10% of residents in certain census tracts in Massena and Ogdensburg have a cognitive disability, and would benefit from easy to use public transit schedules and maps, or be able to use webpages that are narrated for those who are visually impaired.

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

Figure 31: Percent of Non-institutionalized Population with a Physical Disability

This countywide map shows the highest proportions of residents in a census tract who live with a physical disability are in Potsdam (17.1%); Ogdensburg (14.3% and 13.6%); and in the towns of Claire, Fine, Clifton and Pitcairn (14.2%).

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017-2021

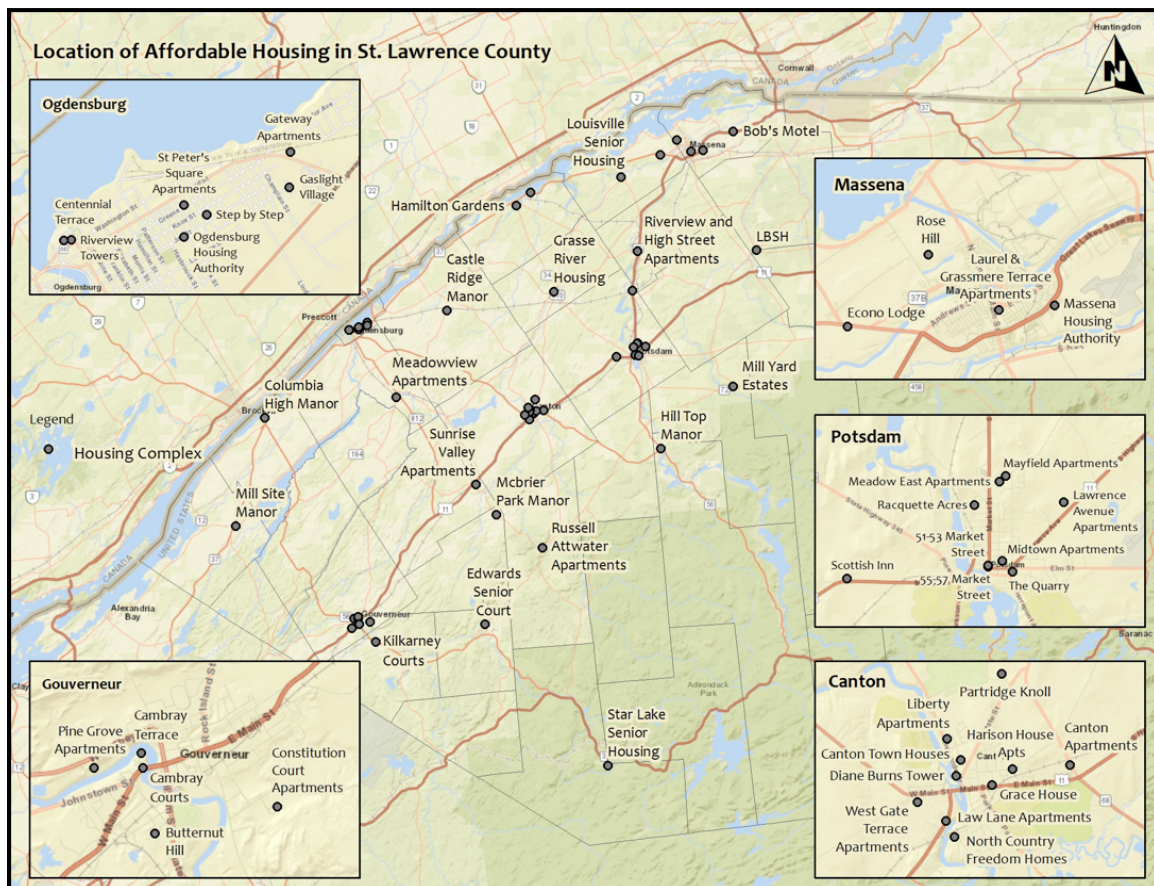


Access to Resources

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing projects are relatively spread out throughout the county, including traditional publicly run housing facilities, market-rate apartment complexes, and housing built using tax credits. There are traditional public housing complexes administered by local public housing authorities (PHAs) in the population centers of Canton, Massena, Potsdam, and Ogdensburg. HUD data on tenant demographics show broad similarities between the PHAs.

Figure 32: Location of Affordable Housing in St. Lawrence County



Source: St. Lawrence County Planning Office

However, the profile of Massena (the largest PHA) shows more occupants per unit, lower incomes per person and household, lower family contribution to rent, and more low and extremely low income residents than the three other PHAs.

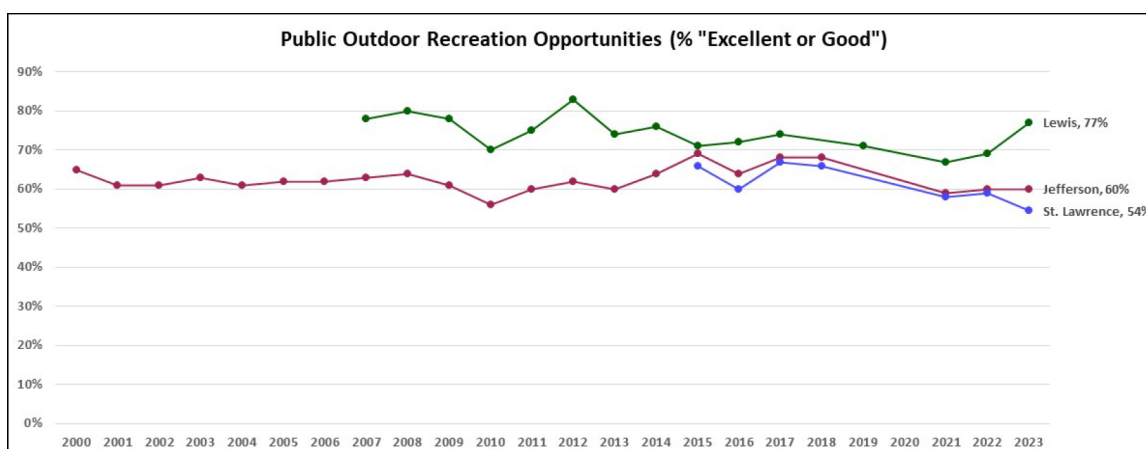
Access to Recreation

According to the Population Health Institute at the University of Wisconsin's School of Medicine and Public Health, less than half of the county's population (48%) is reported to have adequate access to public locations for recreational activity, compared to 84% nationally and 93% for the state. Individuals are considered to have adequate access to an exercise opportunity if they reside in a census block that is:

within ½ mile of a park, or if they reside in a rural area and are within three miles of a public park or recreational facility.³

Jefferson Community College’s 24th Annual North Country Survey of the Community, meanwhile, reports 54% of St. Lawrence County residents rated their public outdoor recreational opportunities as “Excellent or Good,” which is the lowest rating for this category since 2015. Twenty-nine percent of county residents rated their recreational opportunities as “Fair,” while 14% rated their opportunities as “Poor.”

Figure 33: Tri-County Rating of Recreational Opportunities over Time

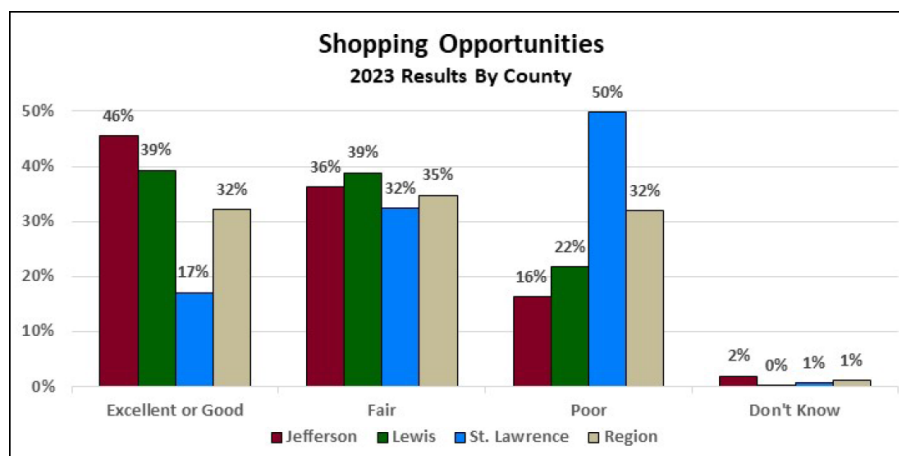


Source: Jefferson Community College Center for Community Studies
24th Annual North Country Survey of the Community

Access to Shopping

In 2023, 50% of county residents in Jefferson Community College’s Annual North Country Survey of the Community rated their shopping opportunities as “Poor.” Thirty-two percent of respondents rated their shopping opportunities as “Fair,” and 17% said it was “Excellent or Good.”

Figure 34: Comparison of Resident Opinion Concerning Access to Shopping Opportunities



Source: Jefferson Community College Center for Community Studies
24th Annual North Country Survey of the Community

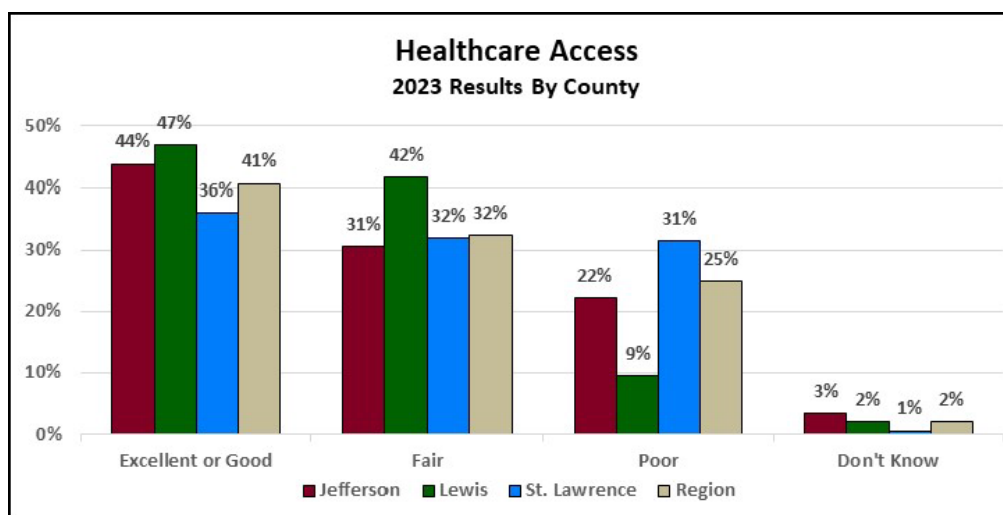
³ 2023 County Health Rankings, Population Health Institute at University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/new-york/st-lawrence?year=2023>

By comparison, 39% of Lewis County residents, and 46% of Jefferson County residents rated their shopping opportunities as “excellent or good.”⁴ Compared to residents in Jefferson and Lewis County, St. Lawrence County residents in 2023 experienced the greatest degree of dissatisfaction with access to shopping opportunities. This degree of dissatisfaction points to the need to provide increased public transportation access to neighboring Jefferson County, namely the shopping centers located on Watertown’s outer Arsenal Street.

Access to Health Care

St. Lawrence County residents are the least satisfied with access to healthcare compared to Lewis and Jefferson County residents. The 24th Annual North Country Survey of the Community reports nearly one in three county residents (31%) rate their health care access as “Poor,” compared to one in five persons (22%) in Jefferson County, and one in ten persons (9%) in Lewis County.

Figure 35: Rating of Healthcare Access by Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence County Residents



Source: Jefferson Community College Center for Community Studies
24th Annual North Country Survey of the Community

⁴ 2023 23rd Annual North Country Survey of the Community, The Center for Community Studies at Jefferson Community College, January 26, 2023.
<https://www.sunyjefferson.edu/community/community-studies/#latest-surveys>

Inventory of Transportation Services

Currently 39 types of transportation services are offered in the county, but some entities provide more than one type of service. A table listing the type and count for each category of service is listed below:

Figure 36: Number and Type of Transportation Services Available in 2019 and 2023

Type	2023	2019
Public Transit	1	1
Volunteer Driver Program	2	2
Taxi Service/Private Pay	5	21 ⁵
Ambulatory NEMT	18	2
Wheelchair Service NEMT	6	10
Stretcher Service NEMT	5	9
Ambulance NEMT	2	7
Total	39	52

NEMT = Non-Emergency Medical Transportation. Source <https://www.medanswering.com/transportation-provider-search/>

For the purpose of this plan - and future plans - taxi providers are those entities which provide transportation service to customers in St. Lawrence County to go to their requested destinations (ex. shopping, airports, social outings) for a predetermined rate (per trip or per mile). Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) providers are approved by the New York State Department of Health to accept Medicaid transportation requests through Medical Answering Services (MAS). MAS is the current State broker of Medicaid transportation services. Most transportation services available in the County are approved Medicaid Transportation Providers.

Since the last Coordinated Transportation Plan in 2019, almost all transportation service types have had a reduction in availability. The only type that seems to have had an increase in providers is ambulatory NEMT (taxi-style transportation in which the rider must be able to get themselves in and out of a non-accessible vehicle). This is likely due to a difference in the ways transportation providers were categorized. In 2019 only two providers were listed under this category. Many of the entities listed as taxi providers in 2019 should have been classified as ambulatory NEMT providers instead, particularly those with a primary address listed out of county.

In 2023, there were eighteen (18) ambulatory, six (6) wheelchair, five (5) stretcher, and two (2) ambulance NEMT service providers listed on the MAS website. Volunteer drivers through Volunteer Transportation Center are the preferred option for ambulatory NEMT as they are often the most cost-effective and medically appropriate options for many requesting transportation service through MAS. However, since 2019 there have not been enough volunteer drivers to meet the needs for Medicaid recipients meaning an increase in the number of trips completed by other Medicaid approved transportation service providers.

⁵ Revised: The 2019 Coordinated Transportation Plan incorrectly reported 11 taxi service providers. This was a keystroke error as the appended directory listed 21 taxi service providers. The correct figure is used in this table to calculate the change in taxi service providers from 2019 to 2024.

Despite having multiple providers available in each NEMT service category (ambulatory, wheelchair, stretcher, and ambulance), many St. Lawrence County residents report unreliable results when paired with out-of-county providers. Out of these thirty (30) available NEMT providers, only around 25% (8 providers) have operations based in St. Lawrence County. Additionally, one of these eight has limited service in St. Lawrence County as they are located in Hammond on the western edge of the County. In 2019, 63% of transportation service providers were based in St. Lawrence County.

The likely cause of the widespread reduction in transportation service providers was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Demand for rides plummeted after March 2020 and the taxi industry suffered. Without demand for the service, it became expensive to keep taxi operations in business, especially for small operations like those in St. Lawrence County. Since then, rising gas prices, insurance, vehicle repair costs, and employee wages coupled with limited candidate pools for new drivers have kept many operations from opening up again. The same concerns have also forced existing operations to limit service levels and hours of operation and raise prices. Similarly, rising gas and vehicle repair costs along with aging volunteer drivers have reduced the number of available volunteer drivers in St. Lawrence County and limited the capacity of Volunteer Transportation Center's operations.

In 2023 there were five (5) private-pay taxi cab operators in St. Lawrence County. None of these operators offer reliable late night service after 8 PM. Of these five (5) operators, two (2) require advanced scheduling and restrict the types of trips/travel areas that are able to be requested. Available taxi cab service is concentrated in Ogdensburg and Massena, leaving other areas with impractical and costly options. Flat rates typically range from \$5-10 for one-way service within Ogdensburg, Massena, and Potsdam. If traveling between towns, with many taxis charge an additional \$2-2.50 per mile traveled. Based on typical distances between destinations, many trips would cost over \$100 out of pocket with a taxi. There are currently no private-pay taxi cabs based in Gouverneur or Canton.

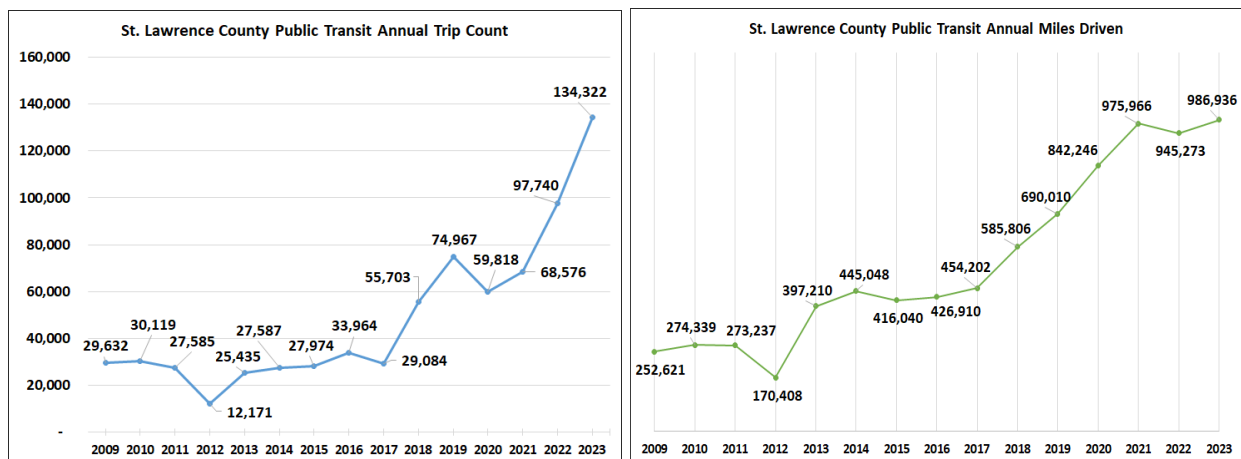
While there are technically two available Transportation Network Companies (TNCs), or rideshare companies (Uber and Lyft), the availability of drivers to complete requested trips is extremely limited.

St. Lawrence County Public Transit

Presently, the County's bus system operates 16 routes. With the exception of the College Connector Routes (67, 68 and 69), which provide daily service to and from SUNY Potsdam, Clarkson University, and SUNY Canton from August to May, most routes operate year-round, Mondays to Fridays during extended business hours. A listing of the communities served by each route can be found on the St. Lawrence County Public Transit website at <https://www.slcnypublictransit.com/transit-schedules>.

In 2023, St. Lawrence County Public Transit provided 134,322 one-way trips and traveled 986,936 miles. Since the adoption of the previous Coordinated Transportation Plan in 2019, ridership on the system increased by 79%, while miles traveled grew by 43%. Ridership in 2020 and 2021 declined as a result of COVID-19, but rebounded in 2022 and achieved a new ridership record in 2023.

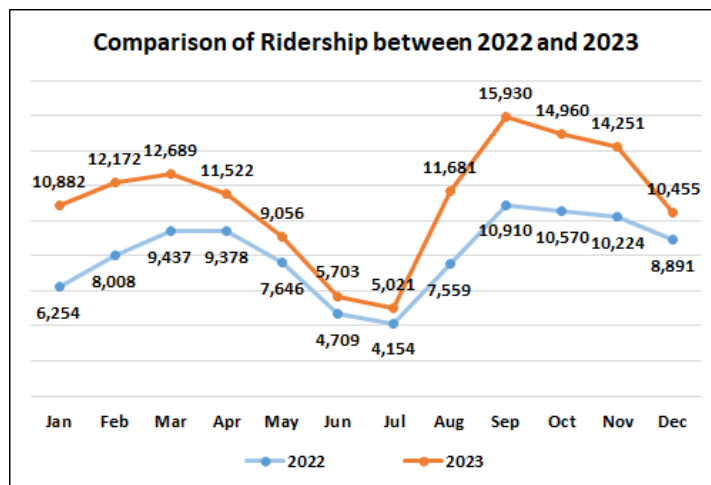
Figures 37 and 38: Annual Trips Provided and Miles Driven by St. Lawrence County Public Transit



Source: State Transit Operating Assistance quarterly reports from 2009 to 2023

For every month in 2023, the bus system's ridership was nearly 1,000 passengers higher than the same months of the prior year. One of the primary contributors to this growth was the increase in ridership by Clarkson University students who take advantage of riding routes 67 and 68 in Potsdam.

Figure 39: Comparison of monthly ridership totals between 2022 and 2023

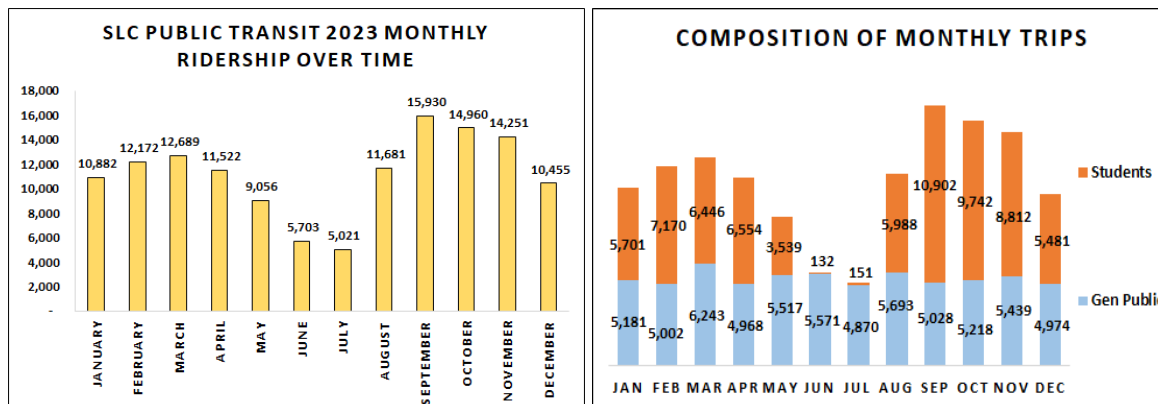


Source: 2023 State Transportation Operating Assistance Quarterly Reports

Of the 134,322 trips provided in 2023, the system's monthly ridership trends correspond with the spring and fall academic terms at SUNY Canton, Clarkson and SUNY Potsdam. There was no significant change in monthly general public (non-student) ridership counts throughout the calendar year. The highest monthly ridership counts occurred in the fall between September to November, while the lowest ridership count occurs in June and July when the College Connector routes are suspended after the academic year concludes. For every month except June and July, college students account for more than half of the system's monthly ridership.

Ridership Characteristics

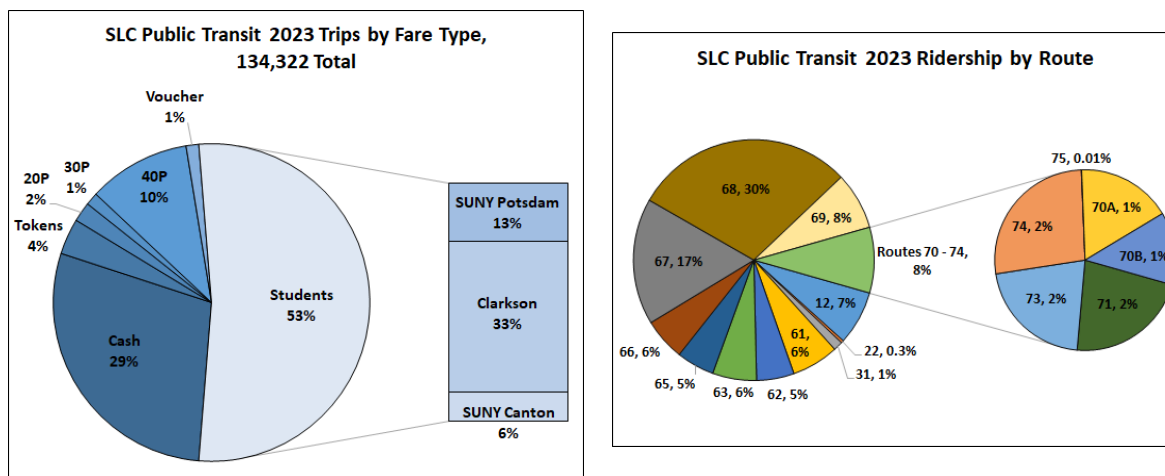
Figures 40 and 41: SLC Public Transit 2023 Monthly Ridership and Composition of Monthly Trips



Source: 2023 State Transportation Operating Assistance Quarterly Reports

College students from SUNY Canton, Clarkson University and SUNY Potsdam accounted for fifty-three percent of the system's ridership which represents the largest fare type. Clarkson University accounts for one third of college student ridership, followed by SUNY Potsdam at 13% and SUNY Canton at 6%. The second largest fare type are passengers who pay with cash; they account for 29% of ridership. The third largest fare type are passengers who use 40-trip bus passes; they represent 10% of the system's ridership.

Figures 42 and 43: 2023 Trips by Fare Type, and Ridership by Bus Route



Source: 2023 State Transportation Operating Assistance Quarterly Reports

An examination of ridership by bus route reveals the College Connector Routes 68 (Clarkson University), 67 (SUNY Potsdam), and 69 (SUNY Canton) are the most popular routes and account for 55% of the system's ridership. The second highest group of routes are: Route 12 (7% of ridership), and Routes 66, 63 and 61 (each accounting for 6% of the system's ridership). The remaining ten routes each account for 5% or less of ridership.

Current Routes and Level of Service

The sixteen (16) existing St. Lawrence County Public Transit routes primarily service the northern and western portion of the county where the five population centers are located and is the more densely populated portion of the county. A map of current routes is below:

Figure 44. Paths of travel for all 16 St. Lawrence County Public Transit routes

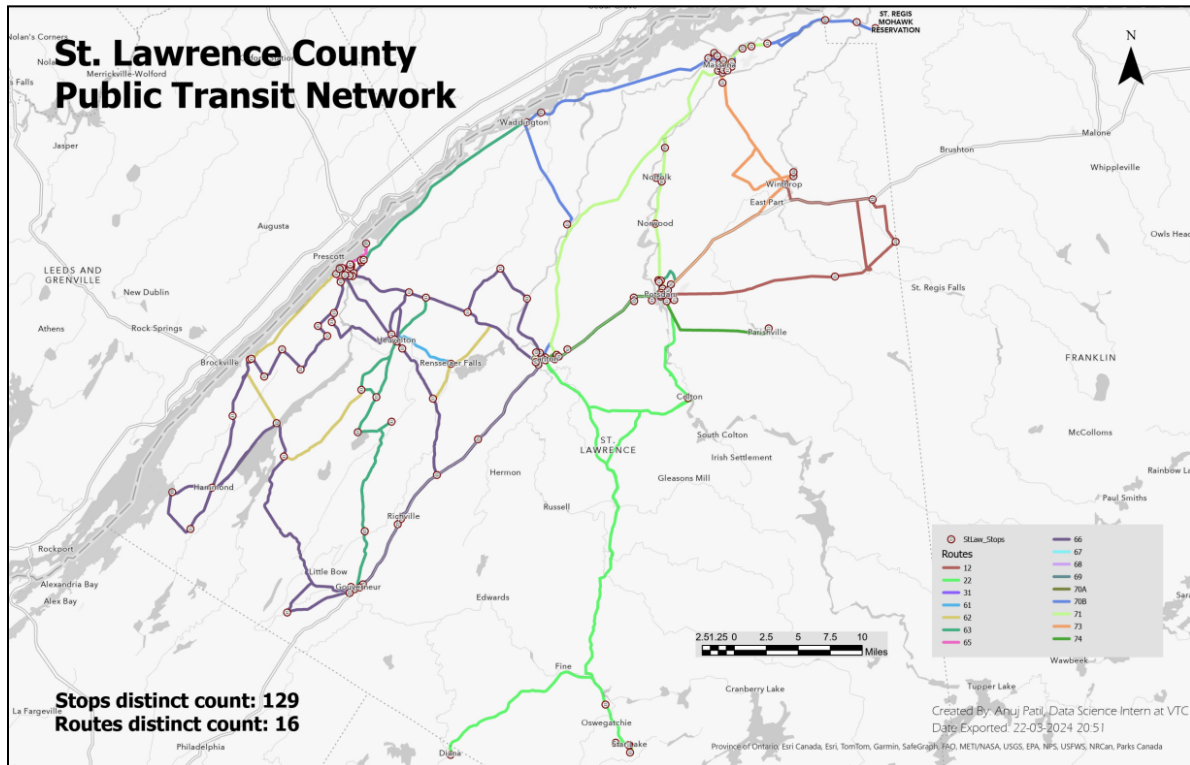
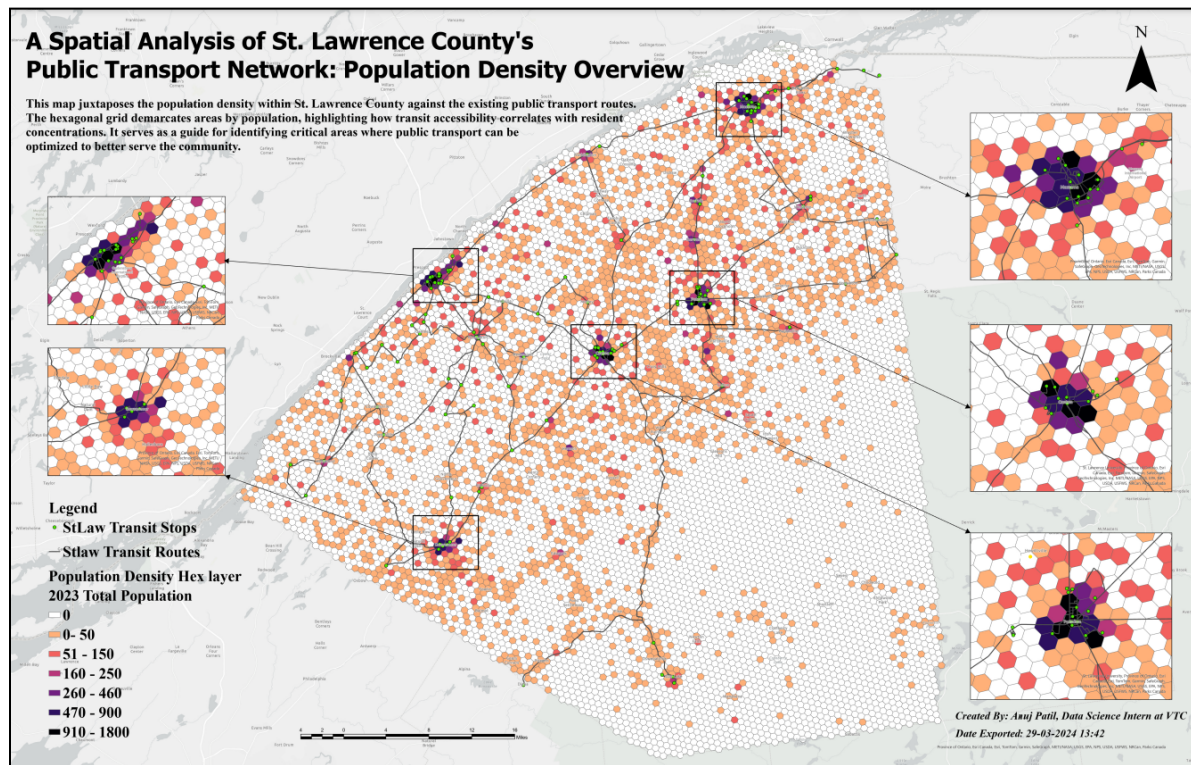


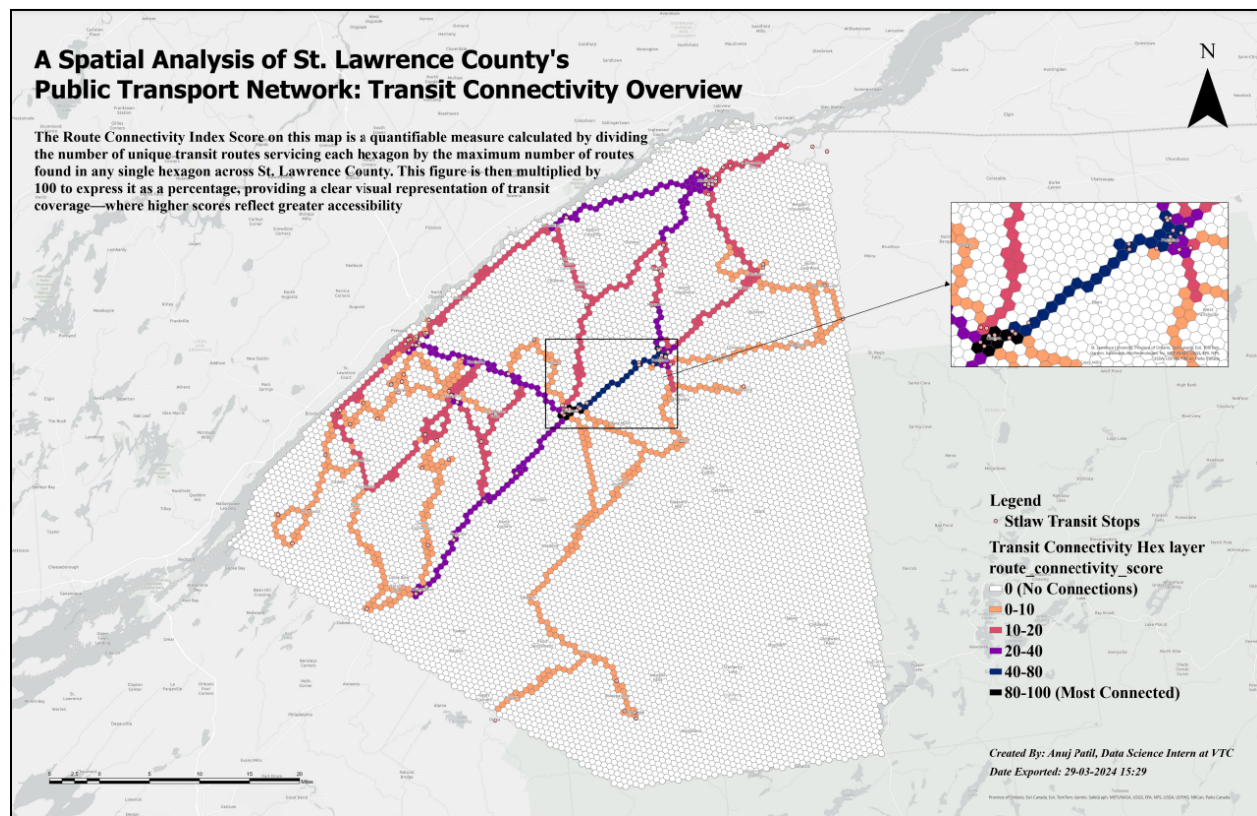
Figure 45: Transit routes as they relate to population density in St. Lawrence County.



While service does provide connections between the different population centers, the bus routes do not always follow the most direct path of travel. This allows for smaller towns and stops to be included on the routes but it also adds travel time for riders. Notably, there are infrequent direct connections between Massena and Ogdensburg and between Gouverneur and Ogdensburg. Planning round trips using public transit can be challenging due to the number of high-mileage loop-style routes currently in place. Public transit may work well to get someone to work but the ride home may take two to three times as long. For example, buses travel directly from Massena to Canton via Madrid four times per day but in order to get back to Madrid, riders must take a 40-mile detour and ride for almost 1 hour longer on the bus than it would take in a personal vehicle. The intra-city shuttle buses in Ogdensburg and Massena are all loop-style routes and travel time across town via public transit can be lengthy. This is partially due to the loop-style path of travel and partially due to the number and order of stops included on the routes.

Service is most frequent between and within the villages of Potsdam and Canton due to the presence of the three College Connector buses. It is important to note that these buses do not run in June and July and levels of service in Canton and Potsdam are significantly lower.

Figure 46: A Spatial Analysis of St. Lawrence County's Public Transportation Network: Transit Connectivity Overview.



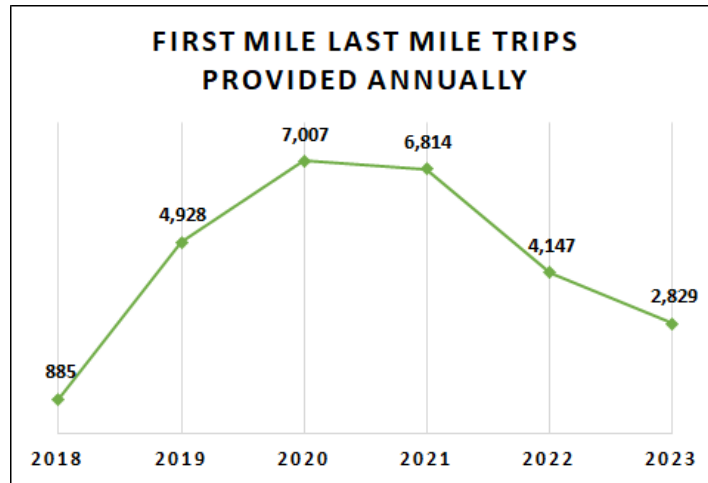
First Mile Last Mile

In addition to bus service, St. Lawrence County Public Transit riders can utilize “First Mile Last Mile” which acts as a vital connector service for public transit riders, ensuring they can easily access a bus stop regardless of their location. Given the county’s large geographic size and dispersed population across five population centers, First Mile Last Mile effectively addresses a significant barrier to accessing public transit.

This service is coordinated by Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. who schedules trips for passengers, and coordinates the volunteer drivers who transport First Mile Last Mile riders to and from the bus stops. Since the program’s inception in 2018, FMLM has provided 26,610 trips. In 2021, this complementary program received a national achievement award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) for providing innovative access to the bus system for passengers who do not live near a bus stop.

Trip data from the First Mile Last Mile program plays a crucial role in evaluating and enhancing the efficiency of public transit routes. By analyzing patterns in trip requests, the program can identify where there is reliable demand for public transit, informing potential changes to better meet riders' needs and ensure seamless connectivity throughout the county.

Figure 47: First Mile Last Mile Trips Provided Annually

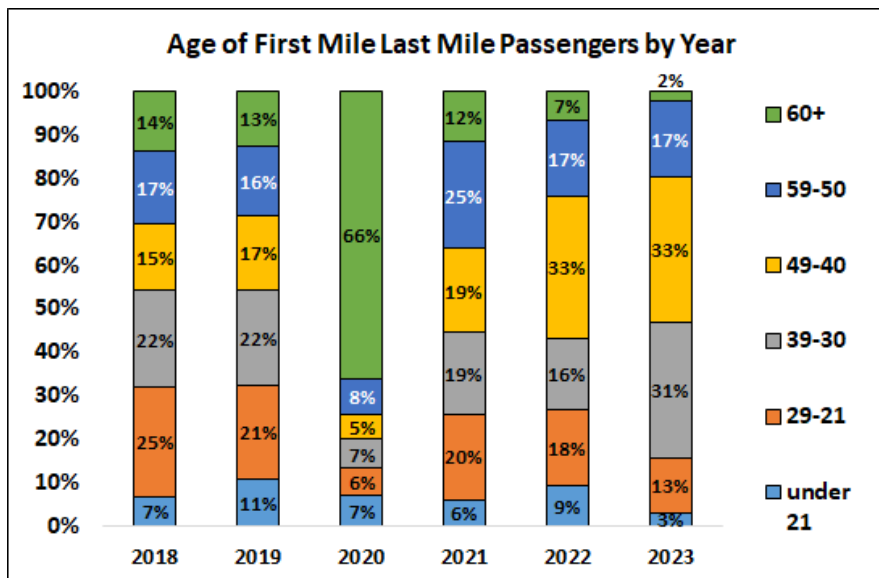


Source: First Mile Last Mile Annual Summaries

The highest annual trip counts for First Mile Last Mile were in 2020 and 2021 when public transit's service was disrupted by COVID-19. During this time frame, direct trips were provided to passengers to access employment, food sources, and medical appointments when buses were not in service. In other instances, First Mile Last Mile was used to assist with meal deliveries to seniors when congregate meal sites were closed, and the Office for the Aging's volunteer drivers were not available to deliver meals. By 2022, the number of volunteer drivers participating in Volunteer Transportation Center's programs declined, which led to fewer and longer distance First Mile Last Mile trips. In 2023, 2,829 FMLM trips were provided, and accounts for 2.1% of all public transit passengers who rode the system that year.

Figure 48: First Mile Last Mile Passengers by Age

Source: First Mile Last Mile Annual Summaries



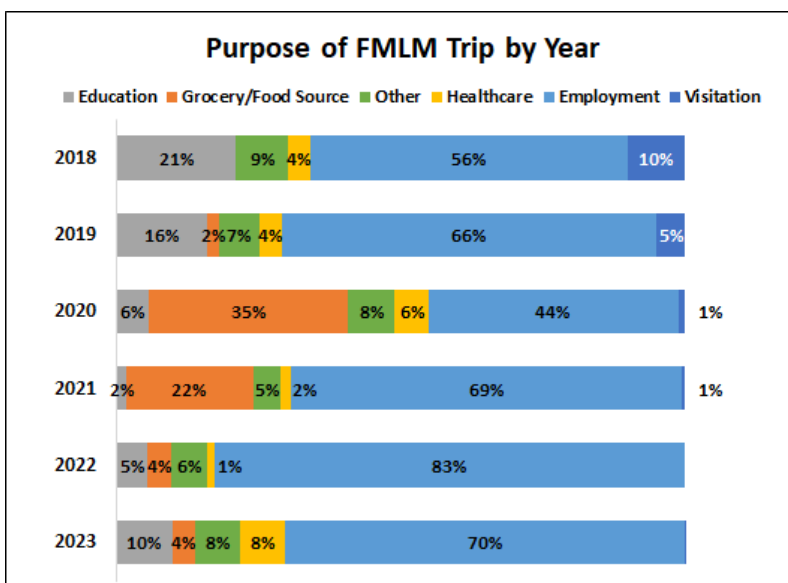
Of the 2,829 passengers who utilized First Mile Last Mile in 2023, nearly two-thirds of riders (64%) were between the ages of 30 and 49 years old. Nineteen percent of riders were 50 years and older, and 16% were 29 years or younger. In 2020, the primary age of persons using FMLM trips were seniors 60 years and older; this is attributed to the delivery of meals during the onset of COVID-19. Since then, the percentage of persons 50 years and older

using FMLM to access the bus system decreased nearly by half from 37% in 2021 to 19% in 2023.

Additional outreach efforts with senior populations may be needed to encourage them to ride public transit.

Figure 49: Purpose of FMLM Trip by Year

In 2023, 70% of FMLM trips connected passengers to employment. Ten percent of trips were to access education, followed by 8% to access healthcare, and 8% for “other,” which includes trips to legal entities like probation and court appointments, as well as recovery support groups and social outings. Four percent of First Mile Last Mile trips in 2023 were to access a grocery store or food source, down from 35% in 2020 when First Mile Last Mile was used to assist with food delivery to seniors when congregate meal sites were closed.



Source: First Mile Last Mile Annual Summaries

Rides to Recovery

In September 2022, St. Lawrence County launched an innovative transportation initiative: Rides to Recovery. The program was born out of a pressing need to support individuals in recovery for substance use disorders (SUDs) and mental health diagnoses. From 2019 to 2021, overdoses in St. Lawrence County increased by 265%⁶ and “data from the St. Lawrence County Drug Task Force indicates significant increases in drug-related felonies (64%) and misdemeanors (90%) from 2018 to 2021⁷.” While transportation resources are available for medical appointments, it can be unreliable and there are few resources available to individuals that lack transportation to nonmedical settings.

Social isolation, legal challenges, and unemployment due to transportation barriers can exacerbate substance use disorders and underlying mental health issues. The provision of essential transportation services helps reduce transportation barriers to social determinants of health locations. These locations include:

- Employment
- School and educational programs (including trade schools, certification and degree programs, GED courses, and apprenticeships)
- Recreational activities likely to increase social connection and emotional well-being
- Recovery supports and peer Interactions
- Grocery stores and other food sources
- Formal and informal mutual support groups (e.g. SMART Recovery, AA, and NA meetings)

⁶ ODMAP, Washington/Baltimore HIDTA, 2024, <https://www.odmap.org:4443/>.

⁷ 15PBJA-22-GG-04477, "Bureau of Justice Assistance, 30 September 2022, <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/awards/15pbja-22-gg-04477-coap>.

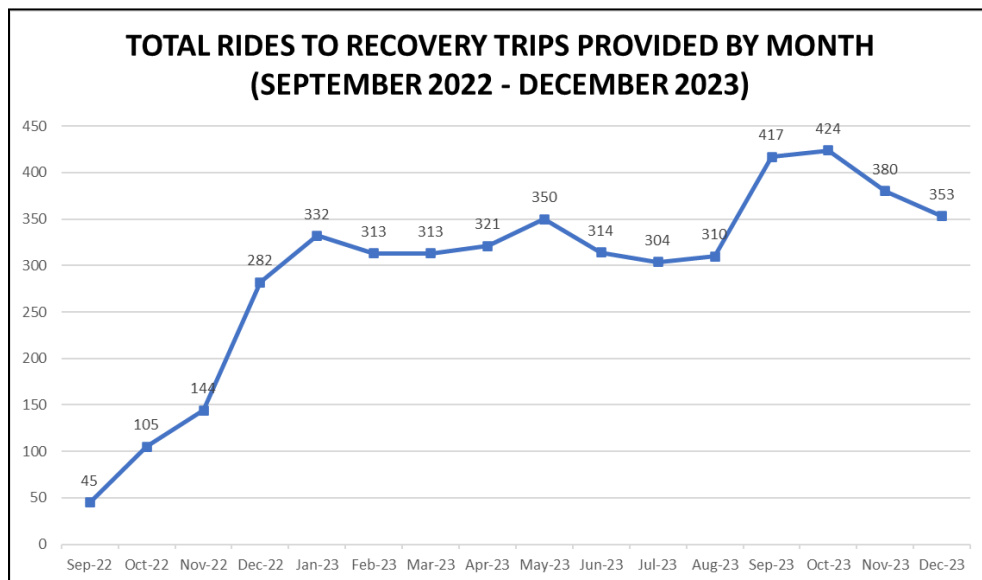
- Treatment or harm reduction services
- Service providers when no medical transportation is available
- Legal entities (e.g. probation and court appointments)

By including a broad scope of approved trip types under the program, participants can focus on improving their situations, providing them with a sense of hope and purpose and an easy way to receive transportation to support their individualized recovery goals.

The program is a partnership between Volunteer Transportation Center (VTC) and Seaway Valley Prevention Council (SVPC). SVPC has provided quality prevention, community, and recovery services for residents of St. Lawrence County since 1987. Educators work with youth, parents, families, and local decision makers to empower them to make positive changes in their lives and engage in their local communities to make long-lasting changes. They have a drop-in support center called The Valley Recovery Center (The Valley) which connects recovery support services to individuals, families, and the community while eliminating addiction stigma and offering in-person and online skill-based support classes for the community and surrounding areas.⁸ Recovery coaches from The Valley, as well as case workers, probation officers, and other recovery support professionals are able to request rides. VTC provides rides for a set cost of \$42 per one-way trip.

From the program’s first ride on September 18, 2022 to December 31, 2023, the Rides to Recovery program has provided 4,707 one-way, door-to-door rides totaling approximately \$200,000. The number of rides provided in 2022 was 576 and in 2023 was 4,131 with 82% of rides being for employment and education purposes. Legal appointments, like probation and court appointments, and trips targeting social isolation are included in the “Other” category.

Figure 50. Number of Rides to Recovery trips by month from September 2022 to December 2023



⁸ The Valley Recovery Center, Seaway Valley Prevention Council, <https://svpc.net/our-programs/recovery>

Figure 51. Total number and percentage of Rides to Recovery trips by trip purpose

Program Totals (Sept '22 thru Dec '23)		
Trip Type	Number of Trips	Percentage
Employment	3,614	76.8%
Other	255	5.4%
Support Group	264	5.6%
Grocery Shopping	117	2.5%
Medical	184	3.9%
Visitation	55	1.2%
Education	218	4.6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>4,707</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
2022 Totals		
Trip Type	Number of Trips	Percentage
Work	518	89.9%
Other	24	4.2%
Support Group	21	3.6%
Grocery Shopping	8	1.4%
Medical	1	0.2%
Visitation	0	0.0%
Education	4	0.7%
<i>Total</i>	<i>576</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
2023 Totals		
Trip Type	Number of Trips	Percentage
Work	3,096	74.9%
Other	231	5.6%
Support Group	243	5.9%
Grocery Shopping	109	2.6%
Medical	183	4.4%
Visitation	55	1.3%
Education	214	5.2%
<i>Total</i>	<i>4,131</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

Figure 52. Purpose of Rides to Recovery trips from September 18, 2022 to December 31, 2023

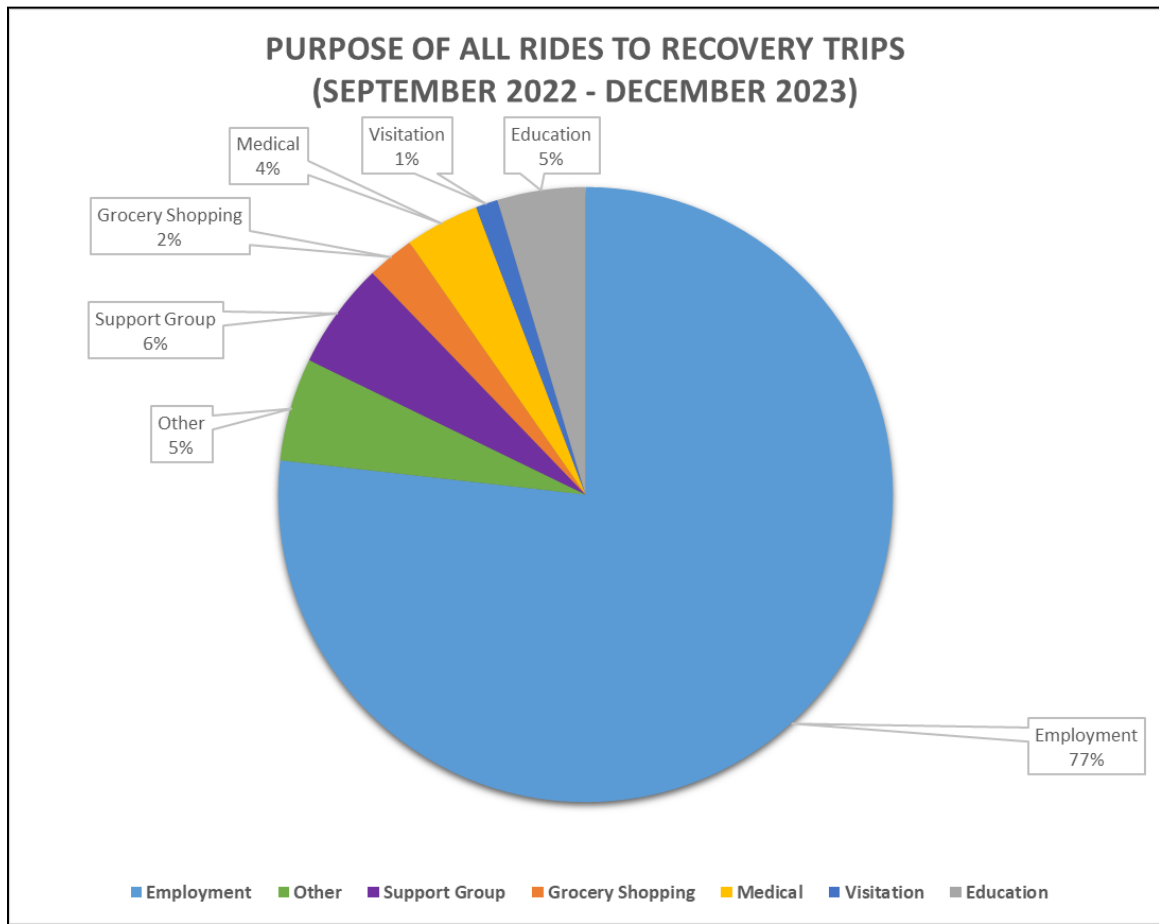
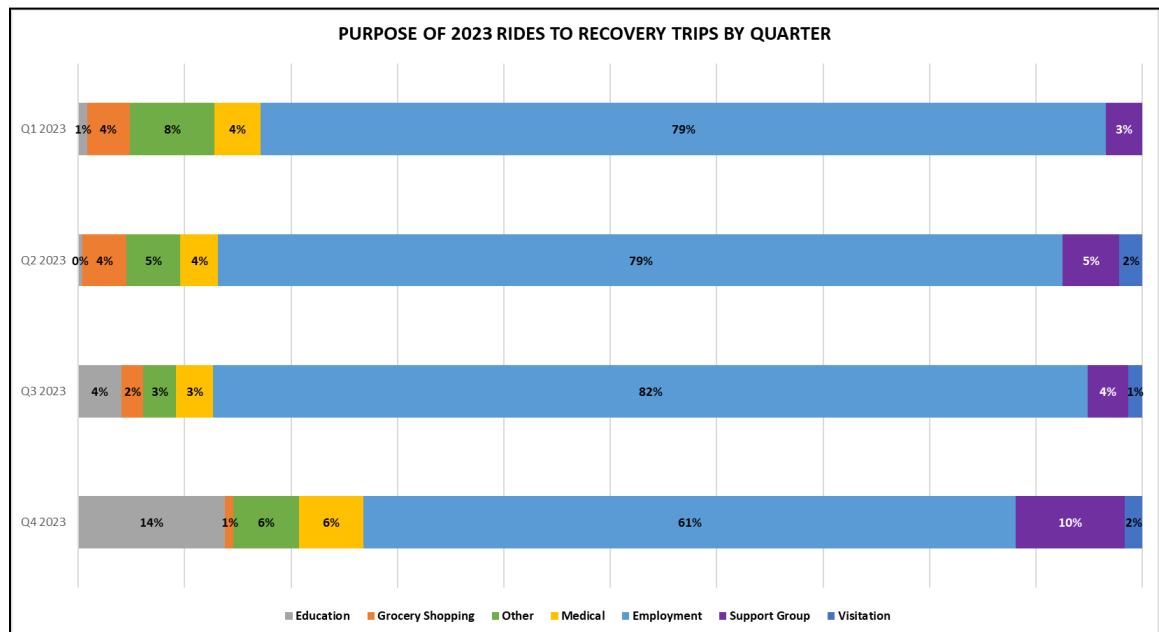
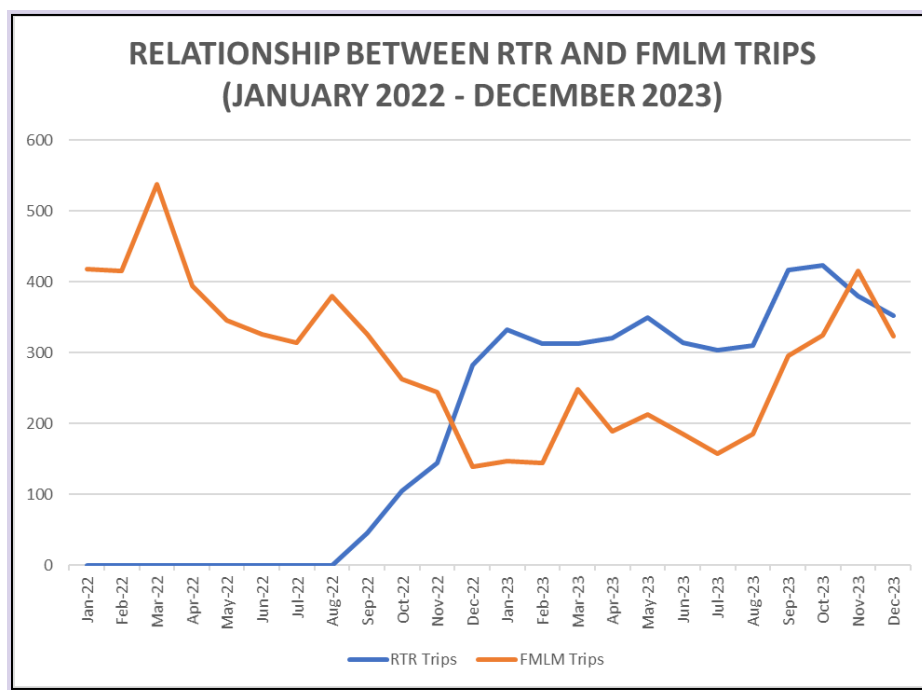


Figure 53: Purpose of Rides to Recovery Trip by Quarter in 2023



At the program's inception, the vast majority of rides provided were door-to-door rides requested at least two business days in advance and provided by VTC. These rides were requested by The Valley staff, case workers, probation officers, and other recovery support specialists through the UniteUs platform. This was an online referral platform that could be used to communicate transportation and participant information securely across agencies. However, it quickly became apparent that this was an unsustainable model to follow. Referrals were frequently missing vital information and led to redundant trip scheduling and participants missing out on necessary transportation due to incomplete referrals. It was also hard to vet any of these trips to determine if they could be completed through public transit or the First Mile Last Mile program because there was no request approval process: rides requested were automatically scheduled by VTC. This led to a lot of riders who were previously meeting their transportation needs through public transit or the First Mile Last Mile program bypassing those existing programs in favor of free door-to-door rides. Data from the two programs shows that as the Rides to Recovery program started and trips performed increased, the number of FMLM trips performed decreased.

Figure 54. Relationship between Rides to Recovery trips and First Mile Last Mile trips from January 2022 to December 2023.



In May 2023, the Rides to Recovery program transitioned away from using the Unite Us platform in favor of secure PDF referral forms. The Valley Recovery Center became the intermediary organization and began working with the County's Mobility Manager to incorporate a more robust intake process that integrates person-centered individualized trip planning into the Rides to Recovery program. This process gathers more information about an individual's current situation and attempts to determine the root causes of the current transportation barriers they face to create an individualized transportation plan which makes use of existing transportation resources and programs whenever possible. These alternative options include providing bus tokens, bus passes, public transit travel training, taxi cab rides, and gas cards. When there is no existing transportation resource/program available to fill the need, or it is determined that alternative transportation options would not be in the best interest of the program

participant, door-to-door rides are scheduled with Volunteer Transportation Center. The use of more cost-effective alternative transportation options began in October 2023 and many participants returned to or began using public transit and FMLM to meet their needs.

With the introduction of this new process, recovery support specialists retain the ability to request rides for their clients. However, there's now an added layer of support provided to program participants by The Valley staff. While direct rides remain crucial in certain scenarios, they are no longer the only solution offered through the program. As demand surged in August 2023 and funds dwindled, personalized trip planning emerged as a strategy to not only foster lasting positive change in participants' lives but also to allocate resources more efficiently. This approach also improved participant experiences with the program. By establishing upfront that free door-to-door rides with Volunteer Transportation Center are only utilized when no other feasible options exist, participants avoid feeling like there's a downgrade in service quality over time, which happened with participants who had to begin using public transit after months of receiving door-to-door rides. Despite these efforts, the program's costs continue to exceed available funds.

Initially, the program received approximately \$88,000 in funding, cobbled together from various sources including OASAS and the St. Lawrence County Community Service Board budget. Additional funding continues to be sourced from diverse channels, such as annual allocations from the Community Services Board. Anticipated funding from Opioid Settlement Funds is expected to support the program moving forward. Significant demand for the service seems highly likely due to the state of the opioid epidemic. The overall source of sustainable program funding is unclear. Based on the success of the program, there is a major concern about how to fulfill the need moving forward.

Public Transit Infrastructure

Assessment of Bus Fleet

As of February 2024, the County owns 17 buses that are regularly used to run the Public Transit system's 16 routes. Of these buses, nine are Lot G gasoline buses with a seating capacity for 18 persons. Eight buses are Lot K diesel buses with a seating capacity for 28 persons. In the County's 2023 asset register,

Photo 1: Bus 628 wrapped in a Clarkson University bus advertisement



all 17 buses were rated in “good” condition. Two Lot G buses, however, have traveled more than 325,000 miles since their delivery in 2019, and will be designated as spares once four new Lot K buses are delivered by spring 2024.

Within the last 12 months, five County-owned buses were taken out of service. In 2022, four Lot G buses (bus 611, 612, 613 and 614) were retired due to the high cost to replace parts, or failure to pass Department of Transportation inspection. In winter 2024, one Lot G bus (bus 617) was

Source: The Arc Jefferson - St. Lawrence

destroyed in a vehicular accident. In addition to the use of 17 County-owned buses, the County has benefitted from having access to a bus fleet that is provided by its bus operator, The Arc Jefferson - St. Lawrence (The Arc). In 2023, The Arc utilized 18 of its own vehicles to service Public Transit routes, seven of which were consistently used each month.

Due to St. Lawrence County's geographic size and the distribution of its five population centers, each County public transit bus travels 3,540 miles per month on average, or in excess of 42,000 miles annually. Traveling such distances accelerates the wear and tear of the bus fleet and can often lead to retiring a bus before it has reached its anticipated useful life of seven years.

Since the adoption of the previous Coordinated Transportation Plan in 2019, the County has yet to achieve the requisite 20% spare ratio for its Public Transit bus fleet. Two significant barriers to achieving this ratio are: 1) Vehicle manufacturing delays exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and 2) Significant delays with the issuance of capital contracts by the Department of Transportation. For example, in fall 2018 the County applied for a \$1.5 million Modernization and Enhancement Program (MEP) to purchase ten Lot K buses. Nearly three years elapsed before the DOT issued an award contract in August 2021. During this timeframe, prices for Lot K buses increased while the award amount remained fixed. As a result of the delay, the total number of buses that could be purchased with the award was reduced from ten to eight.

Similarly, funding applications for 2021-2023 were not issued by the DOT until fall 2022. When the County's application was submitted to the DOT in November 2022, the County requested funds to purchase six Lot G buses. As of spring 2024, the DOT has yet to issue capital or operating awards, and the total number of vehicles that can be ordered will likely be reduced to five. This continued delay diminishes the County's ability to replenish and expand its fleet so that it can reduce its dependence on vehicles provided by its bus operator.

Technological Investments

For the past five years, the County has invested in technology for its bus fleet. The first investment began in 2019 with the installation of complimentary wifi in ten buses. By summer 2023, this feature was expanded to 24 buses, and will be installed in six additional buses that will be ordered at a future date. The County also installed an surveillance system in its fleet to monitor driver and passenger behavior, and to review footage when necessary to verify complaints or injuries. Currently, the County is investing in an Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) system. Once finalized and online, mapping data will be available to assist the public with the real time location of every Public Transit bus that is in service. Lastly, electronic trip counting will soon be enabled so that drivers will no longer have to record passenger boardings with paper and pencil. This last investment will allow the County, its Mobility Manager, and the bus operator to examine how its existing routes can be optimized to eliminate underutilized stops, and to reconfigure routes that shorten travel times and increase passenger volume.

Once the first phase of these investments are complete, the County intends to install display monitors at popular stops and transfer locations to inform passengers about estimated arrival times of buses. Potential locations for these monitors include the student unions at Clarkson University, SUNY Canton, SUNY Potsdam, Potsdam Walmart, Massena Price Chopper, Ogdensburg Price Chopper, Step by Step in Ogdensburg, and the Community Health Centers in Canton, Ogdensburg, and Gouverneur.

Bus Shelters

St. Lawrence County currently has 132 unique bus stop locations. In locations where shelter is not available through existing infrastructure or is not accessible, the County has partnered with local

municipalities and service organizations to install bus shelters. In 2019, three solar-lighted bus shelters were installed: On Main Street in Potsdam (downtown serving as the transfer station for SLC Public Transit, North Country Express, and Trailways); on Beech Street in Massena (near the Community Center), and along Robinson Road (near the Housing Authority complex) in Massena. In 2022, a bus shelter with solar powered lighting and USB charging ports was installed off Munson Street in Potsdam. The installation of this bus shelter was paired with sidewalk repaving to improve accessibility. In 2021 and 2022, the County partnered with the Village of Canton to construct an ADA-compliant passenger loading and unloading area, stripe a bus lane, and install a solar-powered bus shelter in front of the County's Harold B. Smith Building off Judson Street. This bus shelter was officially unveiled in May 2023.

Photo 2: October 2020 bus shelter ribbon cutting off of Main Street in Potsdam (across Roxy Theater and near Ives Park).



Left to right: Christine Richardson (VTC), Fred Hanss (Village of Potsdam), Greg Thompson (Village of Potsdam), Dylan Soper (St. Lawrence County), Margaret Haggard (St. Lawrence County Legislator), Jim Corbett (Village of Potsdam), Karen Bage (St. Lawrence Health Initiative), Reinhold Tischler (Village of Potsdam Mayor), Alexandra Jacobs Wilke (Village of Potsdam Trustee), Erik Backus (Clarkson University), Klaus Proemm (Village of Canton Trustee), Rena Ryan (The Arc Jefferson-St. Lawrence), Priscilla Leggette Collins (SUNY Canton), Timothy Welppe (The Arc Jefferson- St. Lawrence) Dave Bradford (St. Lawrence Health Initiative).

Photo3 : October 3, 2023 bus shelter ribbon cutting off of Munson Street in Potsdam.



Left to right: Alyssa Martin, Amanda Deleel, David Bradford, Alexandra Jacobs Wilke, Rene Ryan, Matilda Larson, Howie Ganter, Karen Bage, Bill Stewart, Tim Welppe, Derrek Dana, Klaus Proemm, Sonja Jensen, and Earl Scovil.

Photo 4: May 1, 2023 bus shelter ribbon cutting in front of the Harold B. Smith Building in Canton.



Left to right: Mobility Manager Sonja Jensen; County Administrator Ruth Doyle; Canton Village Trustee Klaus Promme; County Chair David Forsythe; The Arc CEO Lynn Pietroski; Social Services Commissioner Joe Seeber; Planner III Matilda Larson; County Public Health Director Jolene Munger; County Highway Engineer Brian Hurlbut; and County Buildings and Grounds Superintendent Jim Thrathan. Photo by The Arc Communications Director Michelle Quinell.

Two additional shelters are scheduled for installation in 2024. The County will install a solar-powered shelter near the County's Human Service Center in Canton, and the St. Lawrence Health Initiative is partnering with the Town of Madrid to install a bus shelter near the Hepburn Library off Church Street in the hamlet of Madrid.

Bus Garage and Dispatch Office

The Arc's bus garage and dispatch office at 6 Commerce Lane in Canton consist of an original three-bay garage with three subsequent additions which include a fourth bay and office space for dispatch staff. The garage's bays are too small to service and repair the 28-passenger capacity (Lot K) buses or to host DOT safety inspections. This constraint previously required The Arc to transport Lot K buses 90-minutes each way to Watertown, or travel four hours each way to Johnstown for maintenance and repairs.

The Arc significantly reduced the time commitment to inspect, maintain and repair Lot K buses by leasing space in First Student's bus garage off of Linden Street in Ogdensburg. The garage's bays are large enough to accommodate DOT inspections, and the location makes use of mobile column lifts that were delivered in 2022. In 2023, the DOT approved the County's use of \$31,000 in Accelerated Transit Capital funding to secure architectural and engineering services to design and cost out the construction of an appropriately sized bus garage. This activity is scheduled to begin after a pending capital award is issued by the DOT.

Photo 5: The Arc's garage and dispatch office (top right) is adjacent to its day habilitation center in Canton.



Source: EagleView CONNECTExplorer

Major Transportation Service Providers

There are eight major transportation providers servicing St. Lawrence County with a fleet of vehicles that either employ drivers or manage volunteer drivers.

The Arc Jefferson - St. Lawrence

Attn: Rena Ryan, Transit Manager, 6 Commerce Lane, Canton, NY 13617

Tel: (315) 386-2600

The Arc is a non-profit membership association that provides services to persons with disabilities. The organization's vision is to be the premier provider of services for people with diverse needs through the continuum of life. The Arc's mission is to provide lifelong opportunities that enhance the lives of people, so that they may achieve their hopes and aspirations.

The organization serves as the operator of the County's Public Transit system and is the subrecipient of Federal 5311 monies. The organization also receives Section 5310 funding and Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) Supported Employment Services (SES) funding. The Arc operates ten (10) "to-from" routes and transports 280 clients per day. In 2022, The Arc became an approved training provider for Entry Level Driver Training (ELDT) through the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration. The Arc is currently offering private enrollment training for Class-B and Passenger Endorsement Theory and Behind-the-Wheel (Range and Public Road) training.

Upcoming 5310 Investments:

Bus Fleet:

Currently, The Arc's 5310 bus fleet consists of thirteen (13) buses. Two of these buses were recently purchased from Don Brown; one was delivered in December and is awaiting DOT inspection, the second bus is undergoing DOT inspection with a delivery date in March. Five of The Arc's buses have traveled

more than 200,000 miles and will likely retire over the next year. Four Lot F replacement buses are on order, and will be delivered on or before the end of 2025.

Bus Yard:

In 2023, the County successfully proposed the use of Accelerated Transit Capital funds to design and cost out the construction or renovation of a bus garage and bus yard. Features that will be included in the architectural and engineering cost estimates are: A fenced-in bus yard with exterior lighting and surveillance system to minimize trespassing and theft; an automated snow removal system for bus roofs; and a car wash.

Upcoming 5311 Investments:

Bus Fleet:

In addition to ordering up to six Lot G replacement buses through the pending 2021-2023 capital award, the County will examine whether eight Lot G buses should be requested in the next capital funding application. Increasing the funding request from six to eight buses is an attempt to achieve the DOT's 20% spare bus ratio for its fleet. Should a future round of Modernization and Enhancement Program (MEP) funding be made available, the County intends to request up to eight Lot K replacement and spare buses for its fleet.

Microtransit Service:

The County and its Mobility Manager intend to apply for Federal funds to evaluate the viability of establishing microtransit service. The sustainability of this project is contingent upon the granting of a waiver from the DOT to receive State Transportation Operating Assistance (STOA) for providing transit services in vehicles that carry fewer than 15 passengers. The granting of this waiver also expands the opportunity to apply for Federal funds available through the Inflation Reduction Act, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to reduce Public Transit's carbon emissions by investing in an electric or hybrid fleet.

Bus Garage and Bus Yard:

After architectural and engineering services are provided, the County and its operator intend to construct or secure a bus garage that is large enough to accommodate inspections, maintenance and repairs of Lot K buses in an enclosed area.

Technology, Equipment and Tools:

The County will continue to apply for Accelerated Transit Capital (ATC) to install fleet technology in all Public Transit buses, and continue to acquire equipment and tools that are needed for the bus garage and dispatch office. A future proposal of Accelerated Transit Capital funds will include the purchase of a handheld computer for mechanics to diagnose the electronic codes of Lot K diesel buses.

Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc.

Attn: Sam Purington, Executive Director, 3 Commerce Ln, Canton NY 13617

Tel: 315-714-2034

Volunteer Transportation Center's (VTC) mission is to provide access to employment, health, wellness and other essential destinations for anyone with a transportation barrier. In St. Lawrence County, VTC provides charitable rides to persons who have no other means of travel to attend up to five medical appointments each month and one grocery shopping trip per month. VTC also coordinates and provides

transportation services for human service agencies with a fleet of approximately 150 volunteer drivers who use their own vehicles and receive mileage reimbursement.

VTC contracts with St. Lawrence County to provide Mobility Management services and operates the County's First Mile Last Mile program. Volunteer Transportation Center also contract directly with a number of human service agencies to provide door-to-door service for their clients. These organizations include Renewal House, United Helpers and Canton-Potsdam Hospital. In 2023, VTC's various transportation programs in St. Lawrence County provided over 60,000 one-way rides, traveled 2,434,096 miles and leveraged 84,125 volunteer hours. Of these one-way trips, 2,186 were for charitable rides that traveled 125,670 miles.

St. Regis Mohawk Tribe Office for the Aging

Attn: Lora Lee Le France, 29 Margaret Terrance Memorial Highway, Akwesasne, NY 13655

The SRMT Office for the Aging provides services and support to elders, their families, and community members living in Akwesasne and surrounding area. According to the Office of the Tribal Clerk, as of August 2023, there are 7,725 enrolled members living on the southern portion of the territory. Of this number, 1,433 (18.5%) are elders aged 60 years and older, and 429 elders (5.5%) are between the ages of 55 and 59 years. From April 2022 to March 2023, the Office for Aging served 1,047 clients.

In 2022, the Office for the Aging was awarded \$207,633 in Tribal Transit funding from FTA to purchase two vehicles: one sixteen (16)-passenger bus, and one nine-passenger bus. These vehicles will be used to provide transportation and an escort to assist persons who have difficulties (physical or cognitive) with using regular vehicular transportation. The Office for the Aging anticipates this service will provide 123 one-way trips to 10 individuals. The Office for the Aging will also use these vehicles to help seniors access essential destinations including medical appointments, nutrition sites, social and cultural events and retail shopping. The Office anticipates it will provide 900 one-way trips to 20 individuals.

Upcoming Tribal Transit Investments:

The Tribe is awaiting FTA approval to access its award monies to order both buses. The projected delivery date is 2025. The Office may request additional Tribal Transit funding to order additional buses to expand the program. After both buses have operated for five years and are approaching the end of their life cycle, the Office anticipates it will order two replacement buses to continue providing these services.

United Helpers

Attn: Rick Pirie, 8101 State Highway 68, Ogdensburg, NY 13669

Tel: (315) 393-3072 ext 5246

United Helpers provides a variety of home and health care services, as well as supportive, disabled housing assistance, and transportation services to their patients. In the Canton area, United Helpers manages three facilities that serve 182 persons and utilizes two buses. The organization also operates 17 residential sites, day habilitation offices and supportive housing throughout the county that assist 131 persons and utilize a fleet of nine (9) wheelchair-accessible vehicles, twenty-two (22) caravans or sedans (which include vehicles that are used by case managers to meet with clients), and one bus that is operated with Section 5310 and OPWDD monies.

Upcoming 5310 Investments:

United Helpers is awaiting the issuance of a 2021 Section 5310 funding award to purchase a replacement bus.

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Volunteer Transportation Network

Attn: Arlene Soulier, Massena/Potsdam/Ogdensburg Ride Coordinator

Tel: 315-263-0424 (ride coordination)

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) purchases a fleet of vehicles that are maintained by the Department of Veteran Affairs and are used by volunteer drivers to transport veterans to and from VA-approved medical appointments in and around the County. There are currently five passenger vans (down from seven in 2019) in use by the DAV Volunteer Transportation Network in St. Lawrence County: three are based in Massena and two are in Potsdam. At this time, all riders must be ambulatory; no wheelchair accessible vehicles available. Since 2019, the number of available vehicles and volunteer drivers in the network has declined. There are five (5) active volunteer drivers in 2023. Rides must be requested in advance.

First Transit (North Country Express)

Attn: Heather Manor, General Manager, 27 Flanagan Dr, Plattsburgh NY 12901

Tel: (518)563-3672

North Country Express is based in Clinton County and offers an affordable, daily bus that travels from Plattsburgh to Potsdam and back. In Potsdam, the bus makes use of the same sheltered bus stop on Main Street as St. Lawrence County Public Transit and Trailways. This connection with other transportation providers results in a broader area for travel for St. Lawrence County residents traveling out-of-county and out-of-county residents visiting St. Lawrence County. First Transit does receive STOA for the North Country Express service.

New York Trailways and Adirondack Trailways

Attn: Mark Donahue, Trailways Traffic Department

Tel: 1 (800) 858 8555 (Customer Care Center)

Trailways bus service provides daily service to and from St. Lawrence County with stops in Massena, Potsdam, Canton, DeKalb Junction, and Gouverneur. Service frequency decreased in 2019 with buses departing and arriving twice-daily to and from Syracuse. Service from St. Lawrence County to Albany through Malone and the Adirondack Park was eliminated in 2023.

First Student

Attn: Kelley Moore, Transportation Supervisor, 109 Gleason St, Gouverneur NY 13642

Tel: 315-287-0650

Attn: Kyle Manfre, Area General Manager for Central NY, 295 Duffy Ave, Hicksville NY 11901

Tel: 1-800-774-3135

First Student offers transportation to school districts and charter services that are open to the public. Presently, First Student is under contact with Gouverneur Central School District (approximately 1,460 students) for home-to-school transportation and provides some service for St. Lawrence County

preschool programs. For its charter service, First Student operates a fleet of large buses, medium buses, and “Caravan”-style vehicles from their Ogdensburg facility.

Premier Coach Company, Inc.

Attn: Ken Eurto, 946 Route 7 South, Milton, VT 05468

Tel: (802) 655-4456

Premier Coach operates a facility in Potsdam that houses eight coach buses. The business focuses on providing charter services to the Associated Colleges in St. Lawrence County (St. Lawrence University, Clarkson University, SUNY Canton, and SUNY Potsdam), as well as to other clientele in northern New York.

Major Transportation Service Purchasers

The primary transportation service purchasers in St. Lawrence County consist of organizations that purchase transportation services or fares for their clientele from a public transit provider, private charter company, taxi service, or non-profit service organization.

Seaway Valley Prevention Council

In addition to requesting direct rides through VTC for the Rides to Recovery program, Seaway Valley Prevention Council also purchases bulk bus tokens and passes to distribute to their clientele. They began to partner with taxi companies in Ogdensburg and Massena to cover the fare for in-town trips for Rides to Recovery program participants in 2023.

St. Lawrence County Office for the Aging

The Office for the Aging (OFA) provides services and advocacy for county residents who are 60 years and older. The Office purchases transportation services for its clients through an annual contract with the Volunteer Transportation Center. In 2023, VTC’s volunteer drivers provided 7,703 one-way trips for OFA seniors and traveled a total distance of 298,216 miles across 10,479 volunteer hours. The average one-way trip distance was 38.7 miles. In 2023, The Arc used Section 5310 funding to transport 236 Office for the Aging clients to access retail shopping, and transported 103 Office for the Aging clients to access area Farmers Markets.

St. Lawrence County Department of Social Services

Medicaid

In 2013, the New York State Department of Health required all Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation (NEMT) services be managed by Medical Answering Services (MAS). MAS approves all Medicaid-covered medical trips and the appropriate mode of transportation that may be used per State Medicaid guidelines. Eligible transportation includes: self-transportation; VTC; St. Lawrence County Public Transit; taxi/ambulatory NEMT; volunteer drivers and ambulette. Self-transportation is the default approval unless a Medicaid recipient can show they cannot transport themselves or need assisted transport.

Child Protective Services

The St. Lawrence County Department of Social Services contracts with Volunteer Transportation Center to provide transportation for non-emergency trip requests for child welfare and adult services recipients. These trips are requested by caseworkers and primarily involve transportation to and from visitation and

legal entities. In 2023, VTC provided 15,195 one-way trips and traveled 693,230 miles for an average distance of 45.6 miles per trip.

Employment Unit

The Department of Social Services purchases bus tokens and passes, and utilizes the First Mile Last Mile program for its clients. The Department's Employment Unit also purchases vouchers so that clients can ride Public Transit for employment-related trips.

The Arc Jefferson St. Lawrence

The Arc Jefferson St. Lawrence purchases vouchers for their clients to ride Public Transit, and refers clients to the County's First Mile Last Mile program.

Community Health Center of the North Country

The Community Health Center of the North Country regularly purchases bus tokens for providers to distribute to patients. Bus tokens are available at each of their locations in Canton, Gouverneur, and Ogdensburg, and each health center is listed as a Public Transit bus stop.

St. Lawrence County Community Services

St. Lawrence County Community Services opened the County's only methadone dispensing Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) in July 2022. Many patients need to visit the OTP multiple times per week for treatment. The OTP is currently open Monday through Saturday from 7:00 AM - 12:00 PM. Although most program participants are eligible for transportation through their Medicaid coverage, there are some who require non-Medicaid transportation options. The Community Services Department purchases bus tokens for participants who utilize public transit.

Higher Education

SUNY Canton

With approximately 2,800 enrolled students, SUNY Canton is one of the five higher education institutes in the county. Their students are transported primarily through a College Connector Contract under the County's Public Transit System. In 2023, the service provided 8,718 rides to SUNY Canton students across all SLC Public Transit routes. The SUNY Canton Roo Shuttle (Route 69), which is open to the public, logged 10,302 riders in 2023. Additional transportation services for students going to medical appointments are secured through a contract with Volunteer Transportation Center.

SUNY Potsdam

Like SUNY Canton, SUNY Potsdam is another state university and has approximately 2,400 students enrolled. Their students are also transported through a College Connector contract under the County's public transit system. In 2023, the service provided 17,299 rides to SUNY Potsdam students across all SLC Public Transit routes. The SUNY Potsdam Bear's Shuttle (Route 67), which is open to the public, logged 22,786 riders in 2023.

Clarkson University

Clarkson University is a private research university and is home to approximately 3,700 undergraduate and graduate students. The graduate school has increased enrollment in the last two years and has seen an influx of older international students relocating to Potsdam, often with spouses and children, to

complete their multi-year degrees. The university receives transportation services through a College Connector contract under the County's public transit system. In 2023, the service provided 44,601 rides to Clarkson students on all SLC Public Transit routes. The Clarkson Knight Shuttle (Route 68), which is open to the public, logged 39,818 rides.

St. Lawrence University

St. Lawrence University is a private, liberal arts university and is home to approximately 2,200 undergraduate students. The University does not participate in the College Connector program and instead owns and maintains a fleet of vehicles that are available to transport students.

Stakeholder Input

To identify transportation gaps and duplication of services in St. Lawrence County, the County's Mobility Manager gathered input from: public transit riders, major transportation service providers, major transportation service purchasers, and stakeholder organizations who serve on the County's Public Transit Task Force. The following approaches have, or will be used to gather feedback:

1. Conduct at least five Public Transit Task Force meetings throughout the year to identify and discuss public transportation needs and contribute to the preparation of this plan.
2. Participate in meetings with human service committees, local non-profit organizations, employment agencies, high schools and colleges, and attend senior fairs and other public forums throughout the county to hear concerns and issues concerning transportation.
3. Ride the County's public transit buses to listen to rider's issues and concerns.
4. Conduct ridership surveys.
5. Monitor resident comments from email messages, posts on social media accounts, and in suggestions left on the County's public transit website.

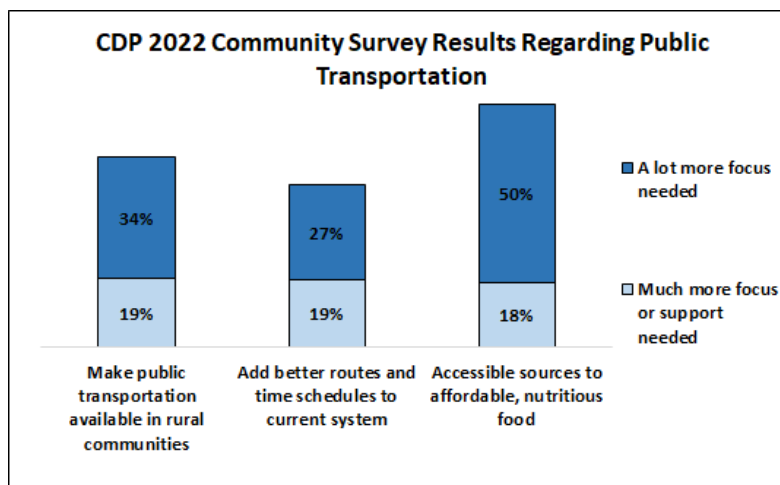
Public Transit Task Force

There are 27 representatives serving on the County's Public Transit Task Force who regularly participate in the meetings which began in earnest in September 2017. The composition of the Task Force consists of service agencies and interested persons who help others receive human/social services and do not have access to a personal vehicle. These stakeholders regularly participate in Transit Task Force meetings throughout the year, and engage in discussion with the Mobility Manager about transportation gaps and challenges residents face, and discuss possible solutions and implementation strategies.

Third Party Documentation

In fall 2022, the St. Lawrence County Community Development Program (CDP) conducted a community survey and received responses from 335 persons. Nineteen percent (19.1% or 64) of respondents said making public transportation available in rural communities needs "much more" focus or support, and an additional 34% (114) of respondents said it required "a lot more" focus or support. Twenty-seven percent (90 respondents) said "a lot more" focus is needed on creating better routes and schedules. Half of all respondents also said "a lot more" focus is needed to improve access to sources of affordable nutritious food.

Figure 55: Community Development Program 2022 Community Survey Results Regarding Public Transportation



Source: St. Lawrence County Community Development Program 2022 Community Needs Assessment

Public Hearing

Prior to a Public Transit Task Force meeting on March 21, 2024, a legally-noticed public hearing was held to receive comments on the draft Plan. Two weeks before the public hearing, legal notices were published in the County's official newspapers; posted on the County's, Public Transit's, and on Volunteer Transportation Center's websites; and announced on Public Transit's social media accounts. The County Planning Office also prepared and issued a press release to local media announcing the availability of the draft plan for review and comment, and to invite the public to attend the hearing in person, or via Zoom. Nine persons attended the hearing in person, and ten persons attended virtually.

The public hearing began at 1:01 pm with an overview of the draft plan presented by County Planning staff and the County Mobility Manager. Following the presentation, comments and suggestions offered by those in attendance included: Eliminating stops along routes to reduce travel times between destinations; reducing dwell times at popular transfer points (e.g. Ogdensburg Price Chopper); suggesting alternate stops in Massena in lieu of stopping at the Massena Shopping Centre; and providing weekend bus service. Planning staff and the Mobility Manager clarified for the public that passengers who exit a bus while it is dwelling at a transfer location (and remains in service) do not have to pay an additional fare when reboarding the bus; and confirmed for passengers that flag stops and route deviation are still allowed. The County also received one written comment requesting weekend service, and to clarify whether passengers pay an additional fare while a bus dwells at a transfer location.

Both Planning staff and the Mobility Manager explained over the next year, existing routes and schedules will be revised after trip data is collected by an electronic passenger counting system that will record where passengers board and dismount from a bus. Planning staff and the Mobility Manager explained this data will be used to determine where popular stops are located, and identify where underutilized stops should be eliminated to create more direct routes, and create higher frequency service. Planning staff and the Mobility Manager said weekend service could be established so long as the system has access to enough drivers and buses, and so long as the expansion of service is financially viable. In lieu of expanding fixed route service, both presenters talked about plans to examine whether microtransit

service could be established instead, which provides on demand transportation with the use of handicap-accessible passenger vans.

After the public hearing closed at 2:33 pm, a motion was made by Pricilla Collins and seconded by Derek Dana to endorse the draft Coordinated Transportation Plan, and to recommend the County Board of Legislators adopt the Plan at an upcoming County meeting. The motion passed unanimously by all those who were present.

Improving Public Transportation Services

Duplicate Services

Based on the organizational missions of The Arc Jefferson St. Lawrence, United Helpers and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe - three organizations that receive Formula 5310 funding - a duplication of transportation services is not known to exist. The Arc's services are primarily aimed to help persons with disabilities achieve life skills and independence. United Helpers, meanwhile, provides residential-based health care, case management and housing services to the elderly and to persons with mental health issues and/or physical disabilities. The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe's Office for the Aging's 5310 transportation program, meanwhile, provides transportation services for the elderly who are members of their tribe.

Because an overlap in public transportation services does not exist, the County received permission from the DOT in 2020 to extend Public Transit bus service into Akwesasne. The County also received permission that year to extend bus service to Harrisville in Lewis County after the sole grocery store in Star Lake closed. In 2023, the County partnered with the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe to provide Saturday service between Massena and Akwesasne during July.

In the private sector, the geographic size of the county, rising fuel and insurance costs, increasing capital costs for buses and the county's economy are significant factors that affect the success of commercial operations. Without sufficient revenue to cover transportation costs, these market forces constrain the presence of private transportation services. The diminished presence of taxi service and the continued absence of Uber/Lyft operations are a reflection of the economic challenges faced by transportation providers. As such, there are no known duplicate private transportation services in the county.

Known Transportation Gaps

On March 9, 2023, the County's Mobility Manager conducted a virtual work session to generate a list of known transportation gaps and barriers in St. Lawrence County. The Public Transit Task Force was invited along with representatives from transportation providers, purchasers, human service agencies, educational institutions, and the general public. Session participants were invited to collaborate in real-time in Google Docs to create a list of existing transportation barriers present in the County – and possible solutions – in their own words. An in-person option was available for those without access to WiFi or the necessary technology. A summarized list of the known transportation gaps is below. Full documents are available upon request.

1. There are long wait times for bus service and long travel times between destinations.
2. Other than the three College Connector routes (Route 67 SUNY Potsdam Bears Shuttle, Route 68 Clarkson Shuttle, and Route 69 SUNY Canton Roos Shuttle), St. Lawrence County Public Transit does not offer late night or weekend service.
3. There is limited bus service between the county's population centers and its bedroom communities.

4. There are fewer public transportation options to travel out of the county.
5. There is an overwhelming demand for transportation assistance from persons in recovery; sustained funding is needed for the Rides to Recovery program.
6. Population density is low and average commute times are long, indicating a lack of centralized workforce for large employers and making car/vanpool commuter solutions challenging to implement.
7. Microtransit is an established service elsewhere in the United States to offer on-demand/same-day transportation options, but is not present in the county.
8. Not all affordable housing complexes are serviced by Public Transit.
9. The bus operator's Dispatch Office does not operate with extended hours to provide customer service to passengers in the evenings.
10. The bus operator's transit staff would benefit from training on topics including: supervisory management, customer service, effective communication, driver and passenger safety, emergency response and fleet management.
11. The bus system does not offer automated, cashless payment options for bus fares and exact change is currently needed for the fare.
12. There are significant delays in releasing funding applications and contracts which delays the timely replacement of buses, and inhibits the ability to achieve a 20% minimum spare bus ratio.
13. There is a declining pool of volunteer drivers who participate in VTC's transportation programs
14. A wheelchair accessible transportation program is not available through VTC.
15. The transit system's route and schedules are not posted on Google Maps to assist passengers and agency representatives with trip planning.
16. The bus operator's existing bus garage is undersized and cannot house the County's Lot K buses
17. The bus system's current bus stop signage is limited, and existing bus schedules are difficult to understand.
18. The system's existing logo is outdated, and the system should undergo a rebranding.
19. The system's website needs to be updated and refreshed, and does not allow for online transactions so that stakeholder agencies can easily order vouchers or tokens.
20. Transit staff manually enter daily trip data, which is time consuming and increases chances of human error when preparing reports.
21. The bus fleet runs on gas and diesel, and there are national and state initiatives to transition bus fleets to alternative energy fuels or hybrid vehicles.

Resources Available

The following transportation resources are available to help address the county's transportation gaps and assist with the implementation of the County's Coordinated Transportation Plan:

Financial Resources

- Statewide Transportation Operating Assistance (STOA) - An operating subsidy that is administered by the New York State Department of Transportation and issued to recipients on a quarterly basis. The subsidy calculation is based on the number of miles traveled when providing bus service, and the number of one-way trips provided by the system.
- Section 5311 Formula Grants for Rural Areas - Provide capital, planning, and operating funds to states to support public transportation in rural areas with populations less than 50,000, where many residents often rely on public transit to reach their destinations.

- Section 5310 Formula Grants for Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities - Formula funding to states for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- Supportive Employment Services (SES) Funds - The New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities offers funding to support the needs of individuals to obtain and maintain paid competitive jobs in the community.
- Modernization and Enhancement Program (MEP) - Administered by the New York State Department of Transportation, the Public Transportation Modernization and Enhancement Program apportions State funding to counties, cities, and regional authorities to upgrade and enhance public transportation services.
- Accelerated Transit Capital (ATC) Program - Administered by the New York State Department of Transportation, ATC funds may be used to rehabilitate, restore and modernize public transit assets with a minimum service life of five years. Eligible projects include: vehicle rehabilitation and/or replacement, fleet enhancement, deployment of new technologies, passenger amenities and maintenance facilities.
- Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) - The Rural Transportation Assistance Program has two components, a national program and a state program. The national program is managed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). National RTAP develops training and technical assistance materials, provides an information clearinghouse, offers technical assistance and supports peer-to-peer technical assistance. New York State's RTAP program is administered by the New York State Department of Transportation with federal funds apportioned by FTA.
- Other Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) / New York State (NYS) Grant Programs - Other programs and funding initiatives may be accessed depending on National and State appropriations, and community needs.

Personnel Resources

Three organizations are primarily involved with the delivery of the County's public transportation services and the administration of Federal and State transit funds. They include:

- The Arc Jefferson St. Lawrence. The Arc's Transportation Office, Accounting Office and Communications Office are responsible for the County's bus operations. Their responsibilities include: The hiring and training of bus drivers; maintaining, servicing and repairing the bus fleet and equipment; completing, recording and filing daily trip, mileage and maintenance records; answering phone calls from the public about bus routes and schedules; preparing and submitting invoices for payment; updating monthly revenue and expense reports; advising the County and Mobility Manager on route revisions and schedules; maintaining and updating the Public Transit website and social media accounts.
- Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. VTC serves as the County's Mobility Manager and administers the County's First Mile Last Mile program. VTC's staff works with the County, the bus operator, the public and with stakeholder agencies to help address barriers to public transportation. VTC schedules First Mile Last Mile trips to connect passengers to the Public Transit system, and was instrumental in the successful start of the Rides to Recovery program.
- The St. Lawrence County Planning Office. The Planning Office is responsible for overseeing the administration of State and Federal funds that are awarded to the County by the Department of Transportation. Three staff members, a Planner III, the Office Manager and the Planning Director regularly communicate with the bus operator and Mobility Manager on route design and scheduling; the preparation and execution of contracts; process invoices for payment; satisfy

procurement requirements; prepare funding applications; administer grant awards; and complete grant reporting requirements.

Prioritizing Implementation

The following questions will be used by the County, its Mobility Manager, and by its operators to help prioritize the advancement of public transportation goals and actions to ensure available resources are utilized in a cost-effective and responsible manner:

- How significant is the gap that can be addressed using public transportation services?
- How quickly can the strategy be implemented?
- How much will it cost, and what resources are available?
- Does the strategy leverage public-private partnerships?
- What resources are available to sustain the outcome?
- How does the anticipated impact compare to the level of the investment required?
- Does the strategy improve or expand the County's existing bus service?
- Has the strategy been successfully demonstrated elsewhere?
- Will the strategy have strong market acceptance among target groups and geographic areas?
- Will the strategy have political support for implementation?
- Does the strategy achieve other secondary benefits?

Achievements Since the Last Plan

Since the adoption of the 2019 Coordinated Transportation Plan, the County, its Mobility Manager and its bus operator collaborated to successfully implement the following actions identified in that report. They include:

- ☒ Decreasing the operator's fuel expenses by refueling the County's bus fleet at the County Highway Department.
- ☒ Increasing the pool of qualified candidate drivers for the operator to hire by establishing a replicable recruitment plan, registering the Arc Jefferson-St. Lawrence as an approved Entry Level Driver Training Provider through the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration, and partnering with Jefferson Community College to create a free "Zero-to-Theory" CDL Training program.
- ☒ Installing bike racks on all buses serving existing routes and marketing this amenity to potential riders.
- ☒ Installing free Wi-Fi and phone charging stations on all buses and marketing these amenities to riders.
- ☒ Establishing shuttle service in Massena (including Akwesasne in Franklin County).
- ☒ Creating a College Connector Program in collaboration with three colleges (SUNY Canton, SUNY Potsdam, and Clarkson University) to promote increased access to each campus for education and employment opportunities, and to attend cultural and recreational activities.
- ☒ Establishing more centralized and coordinated regional transfer points between transportation modes and providers.

Goals and Actions for the Next Five Years

Improve and sustain bus operations

1. Expand the capacity of the operator's bus maintenance and service garage as the existing garage bay doors are too small to readily accommodate the County's newer, larger buses, and enhance its bus yard to prevent trespassing and theft of Public Transit assets.
2. Establish a one-call, one-click transportation center that features a centralized dispatching office between The Arc Jefferson St. Lawrence and Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc. to improve customer experience
3. Sustain the operation of College Connector Routes 67, 68 and 69 with the continued signing of contracts for service with partnering universities.
4. Adopt maintenance and service protocols so that the bus fleet consistently passes DOT safety inspections.
5. Invest in personnel by arranging in-person employee training opportunities including: Supervisorial and personnel management; effective communication and customer service skills; driver and passenger safety; fleet management; and emergency/crisis response.
6. Secure additional revenue through the sale of advertising space on the interior and exterior of Public Transit buses.
7. Continue to regularly apply for and successfully administer grant funds that support the County's public transportation system, including:
 - Section 5311 and 5310 Formula Grants for Rural Areas
 - STOA (Statewide Transportation Operating Assistance)
 - Mobility Management funding
 - Supportive Employment Services (SES) Grant
 - Modernization and Enhancement Program (MEP) Supplemental Funding
 - Accelerated Transit Capital (ATC) Funding
 - Other Federal and State grants as they become available
8. Pursue funding to determine feasibility of electric, alternative fuel or hybrid vehicles to serve Public Transit routes, or to be used to provide microtransit service.
9. If determined feasible, pursue funding to purchase electric, alternative fuel or hybrid vehicles and any necessary infrastructure to serve Public Transit routes or provide microtransit service
10. Pursue funding to acquire equipment and training to service, maintain and repair electric, alternative fuel or hybrid vehicles.

Increase ridership through improvements in bus service

1. Continue the installation of technology in all Public Transit buses (both County-owned and operator-owned).
2. Regularly analyze performance of existing routes by reviewing ridership, mileage data and GPS records to: eliminate unused or underutilized stops; and revise routes and schedules to provide more direct service and higher frequency of service between destinations. Provide First Mile Last Mile and or microtransit service in locations where scheduled bus service may not be viable.
3. Design routes that service or are proximate to: affordable housing complexes, temporary housing, employment and business centers, service organizations, municipal buildings, university campuses, shopping and retail centers, medical offices, recreation areas, and locations that are serviced by other transportation providers.

4. Improve transportation connections between St. Lawrence County Public Transit stops and providers that serve neighboring Jefferson, Franklin and Essex Counties.
5. Continue partnerships with municipalities and service agencies on the installation of: public transit infrastructure (e.g., accessible curb cuts at bus stops, benches, shelters, etc.); ADA-compliant pedestrian infrastructure (e.g., textured sheets of metal installed at crosswalk intersections; beeping walk/don't walk signs); and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to expand accessibility and connect riders to the transit system.
6. Regularly apply for, and administer grant funds to purchase new buses, solar-powered bus shelters, benches, and other enhancements for public transit stops.
7. Improve passenger wayfinding by installing bus stops with a stop name or identifier (destination/cross street, or numbered/lettered identifier); route number; route map; schedule; and clear indication of stop location and position. Bus route identification signs must comply with ADA requirements.
8. Install mobile phone charging ports on all buses and market this amenity to riders.

Increase ridership through new routes and expanded levels of service

1. Use ridership, mileage data, GPS records, First Mile Last Mile and Rides to Recovery transportation requests, and community input to determine if additional fixed-routes could be established to meet riders' needs.
2. Examine the viability of providing microtransit service, and pursue funding to establish the service if it is feasible.
3. If microtransit service is viable, secure a waiver from the DOT to acquire vehicles that are smaller than 15-passenger capacity to provide the service and be eligible to collect STOA.
4. Establish shuttle service in Gouverneur.
5. Pursue and administer grant funds to establish electric car charging stations to connect drivers to bus stop locations and reduce carbon emissions.
6. Assess feasibility of using Autonomous Vehicles and Automated Driving System to improve and/or expand existing levels of service.
7. Examine multimodal transportation options and infrastructure to supplement bus service like bikeshare, carshare, electric scooter rental programs.

Increase ridership through outreach and education

1. Promote the use of a Public Transit's mobile app to assist passengers and partner agencies with trip planning.
2. Upload Public Transit's General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data to Google Maps and NY511 to assist the public with trip planning.
3. Incorporate a trip planning feature on the Public Transit website that includes walk and bike options to access bus stops.
4. Integrate route and real-time arrival information into mobile applications and public transit website, with an emphasis on applications that can be used by people with visual disabilities.
5. Install bus arrival information monitors at high volume transfer locations such as: Potsdam Walmart, Clarkson University, SUNY Potsdam Lehman Hall, SUNY Canton Miller Campus Center, Ogdensburg Price Chopper, Massena Price Chopper, and Community Health Centers of the North Country.

6. Complete a rebranding initiative that includes the creation of a new Public Transit logo and lettering that will be featured on the Public Transit website, the bus fleet, social media accounts, driver and staff uniforms, redesigned bus schedules & route maps, rider guide, and other promotional materials.
7. Revise the existing Public Transit website to add a feature that allows partner agencies to order vouchers and tokens online.
8. Revise route schedules and maps to be more accurate and easier to understand. List key information including route frequency, running times, and accessible destinations.
9. Meet with civic and community-based organizations, university groups, social service agencies, hospital facilities/healthcare providers, etc. to disseminate information about public transportation services in St. Lawrence County.
10. Publish and distribute pamphlets, posters and flyers about St. Lawrence County Public Transit services for public posting in visible locations.
11. Deliver travel training to passengers and human service agencies on an as-needed basis to assist riders with trip planning.
12. Regularly conduct St. Lawrence County Public Transit Task Force meetings to collaborate with human service providers and organizations to address barriers to public transportation.
13. Broaden representation on the St. Lawrence County Public Transit Task Force by inviting county residents, the private business sector and academia to participate.
14. Sponsor “Lunch & Learn” events at senior functions, university functions, at public housing complexes, and with large employers to inform potential riders about public transit services.
15. Identify and contact organizations that transport disadvantaged populations who may not be using Public Transit.

Sustain volunteer driver programs, including Rides to Recovery and First Mile Last Mile, that assist riders who are not readily served by the County’s Public Transit system

1. Secure funding to sustain the increased demand for the Rides to Recovery program.
2. Increase the pool of volunteer drivers through marketing campaigns and continued outreach with human service agencies, municipalities and transportation providers.
3. Continue to obtain input and feedback from stakeholder agencies to assist riders who are not within walking distance of a Public Transit bus stop.
4. Learn from existing shared mobility, mobility on-demand, Mobility as a Service, and transportation network company partnership programs for potential replicable models of success
5. Increase and sustain senior transportation options that provide access to nutrition sites; grocery and retail stores; social, educational and cultural activities; and non-emergency medical appointments.

St. Lawrence County Public Transit Task Force

Distribution List

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Citizen Advocates

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Clarkson University

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GardenShare

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Klauss Proemm, *Community Member and former Village of Canton Trustee*: kproemm@gmail.com

Maximizing Independent Living Choices (MILC)

156 Center St.

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Medical Answering Services

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Mohawk Indian Housing Corporation

188 McGee Road,

Hogansburg NY 13655

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North Country Prenatal and Perinatal Council

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NYS Department of Transportation

50 Wolf Rd

Albany, NY 12232

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Renewal House

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Canton, NY 13617

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St. Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce

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St. Lawrence County Department of Public Health

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St. Regis Mohawk Tribe Office for the Aging

29 Margaret Terrance Memorial Way

Hogansburg, NY 13655

Phone: 518-358-2963

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SUNY Canton

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Canton, NY 13617

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Potsdam, NY 13676

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Transitional Living Services of Northern NY

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United Helpers

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Volunteer Transportation Center

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Sonja Jensen, *St. Lawrence County Mobility Manager*: sonja@volunteertransportation.org

2024 St. Lawrence County Transportation Providers Directory

SERVICE	ADDRESS	CITY	ST	PHONE	WEBSITE	NOTES
PUBLIC TRANSIT						
The Arc of Jefferson and St. Lawrence	6 Commerc e Lane	Canton	NY	(315) 386-2600	https://www.slcnypublictransit.com/	One- Way: \$2 20 Rides: \$36 30 Rides: \$53 40 Rides: \$68
VOLUNTEER DRIVER PROGRAM						
Volunteer Transportation Center, Inc.	6587 USH 11	Canton	NY	(315) 714-2034	https://volunteertransportationcenter.org/	
Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Volunteer Transportation Network	800 Irving Ave	Syracuse	NY	(315) 263-0424		Veterans only. VA approved appointments only.
TAXI						
Taxi Zero	934 Bagdad Rd	Potsdam	NY	(315) 262-0444	https://www.txizero.com/	Primarily regional airport and bus station transportation. One vehicle operation, in-town options available in Potsdam. Trips must be scheduled in advance and will depend on driver availability.
Northern Transportation Taxi	820 Elizabeth St	Ogdensburg	NY	(315) 528-8302		Typically open 6 AM to 4 PM.

2024 St. Lawrence County Transportation Providers Directory

SERVICE	ADDRESS	CITY	ST	PHONE	WEBSITE	NOTES
Massena Transport	2134 SH 420	Massena	NY	(315) 769-6748	https://www.facebook.com/masenastransportandtaxi	Closed Sundays. Offers in-town rides in Massena and longer trips. Typically open 6 AM - 7 PM with reduced hours on Saturdays
Jim's Transportation	529 English Settlement Rd	Ogdensburg	NY	(315) 854-5981		No in-town service. Must be arranged in advance. Available nights and weekends.
Frery's Funeral Home/Taxi	515 Caroline St	Ogdensburg	NY	(315) 393-1414	https://www.facebook.com/frarytaxi/	Closed weekends. Typically open 8 AM - 5 PM.
MEDICAID TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS						TYPE
A1 Cab Corp	11 NY-95	Moir	NY	(518) 955-5008	https://www.facebook.com/A1cabcorp	Ambulatory
Adirondack Care Plus	14 Beacon Hill Rd	Morrisonville	NY	(518) 651-7499	https://adkcareplus.com/	Ambulatory
Advanced Care Transportation	5159 US Ave	Plattsburgh	NY	(518) 562-1010		Ambulatory
AllenCare Medical Transport	580 Southwoods Rd	Brushton	NY	518- 651-9983	https://www.facebook.com/AllenCareMedicalTransport/	Ambulatory, Stretcher, Wheelchair

2024 St. Lawrence County Transportation Providers Directory

SERVICE	ADDRESS	CITY	ST	PHONE	WEBSITE	NOTES
Canton Rescue Squad	77 Riverside Dr	Canton	NY	315- 323-1326	https://www.cantonrescue.org/	Ambulance
Fish Med Transport LLC	2838 County Rte 6	Hammond	NY	315- 276-4817		Ambulatory - Limited SLC Service Area
Frery's Funeral Home	PO Box 1036	Ogdensburg	NY	315- 393-1376	https://www.freryfuneralhome.com/resources/medical-transport	Ambulatory, Stretcher, Wheelchair
Jim's Transportation	529 English Settlement Rd	Ogdensburg	NY	315- 528-1376		Ambulatory
Keystone America (Fox and Murray)	528 Franklin St	Ogdensburg	NY	315- 393-4870		Stretcher, Wheelchair
Lundy Services	500 State St	Carthage	NY	315- 519-3059	https://www.facebook.com/lundyservices/	Ambulatory, Stretcher, Wheelchair - Limited SLC Service Area
Mackay Services	21 Park St	Canton	NY	315- 386-8513		Ambulatory, Stretcher, Wheelchair
Mark's Taxi Cab	26 Simms Camp Rd	Ogdensburg	NY	315- 854-3581		Ambulatory
Massena Transport	2134 State Highway 420	Massena	NY	315- 769-6748	https://www.facebook.com/masenatransportandtaxi	Ambulatory

2024 St. Lawrence County Transportation Providers Directory

SERVICE	ADDRESS	CITY	ST	PHONE	WEBSITE	NOTES
Moir Taxi Corp	1129 State Route 11	Brushton	NY	518- 538-7675		Ambulatory
North Country Transportation Service	12 Grant St	Dexter	NY	315- 955-4589	https://northcountrytransportation.com/	Ambulatory
Northeast Express Medical Transport	1426 NY-3	Morrisonville	NY	518- 645-4266	https://www.northeastexpress.org/	Wheelchair
Northstar USA Inc	1 Penn Ave	Plattsburgh	NY	518- 275-9471		Ambulatory
Town of Watertown Ambulance Service	18791 County Rd 155	Watertown	NY	315- 786-2601	https://www.twambulance.com/	Ambulance
Volunteer Transportation Center	PO Box 515	Canton	NY	315- 714-2034	https://volunteertransportationcenter.org/	Ambulatory (Volunteer Drivers)
WeCare Transport Services	376 Rugar St	Plattsburgh	NY	518- 651-7499	https://wecaretransport.com/	Ambulatory, Stretcher, Wheelchair
White Medical Transportation	61 Bridge St	Plattsburgh	NY	518- 335-5557	https://www.whitemedicaltransportation.com/	Ambulatory
Yellow Cab	1170 Water St	Watertown	NY	315- 782-2121		Ambulatory