

# Transportation

## FACT SHEET—TRANSPORTATION

### Metropolitan Social Services—Planning & Coordination

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Planning & Coordination 615-862-6419

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Lack of transportation is an important issue for those in need because it is a barrier to employment, adult training/education, and social services. Fewer low-income people have access to private transportation, so affordable, dependable, and accessible public transportation is important for employment, medical, family, and other matters.

Davidson County residents who lack access to an automobile or the ability to drive may become isolated and may not have access to programs or services even to meet their basic needs, much less those that could enhance the quality of their lives. Some of these needs are identifiable and can be specifically addressed to ensure appropriate access for people who are low-income, elderly, and/or disabled.

**As part of the 2009 Community Needs Evaluation, 1,736 people in Nashville (including clients of DHS, Catholic Charities, MAC, MSS, etc.) and 627 social service professionals were surveyed, and more than 100 consumers participated in focus groups, to help identify the greatest needs in Nashville. In addition, research findings from existing data were included about the areas of Food & Nutrition, Workforce & Economic Opportunity, Housing & Related Assistance, Home & Community Based Services and Transportation.**

### Key Points

Despite increases in the extent and accessibility of public transportation in Davidson County, it remains inadequate. Several factors contribute to the increasing pressure on our community for more transportation alternatives, including the aging of the population, increased ridership due to the economic downturn, and increasing public interest in alternatives to commuting in cars. Needs include better transportation for low-income residents, mobility-challenged people, and the general population.

The need for public transportation and alternatives to individual automobile travel will continue to increase. Low-income workers, aging baby boomers, school children, workers and shoppers in areas with limited parking, environmentally-concerned citizens, and people trying to cut back on purchases of increasingly costly gasoline will all need and expect transportation alternatives.

Such alternatives include bike lanes, walkable neighborhoods with amenities, more bus service to all areas of the county, special transportation services for those who cannot use the regular buses, regional (cross-county-line) bus and rail service, and downtown circulator buses or trolleys with increased park-and-ride facilities.

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Nationwide, vehicle miles of travel are projected to increase by approximately 60% by 2030, leading to much higher numbers of highway crashes and fatalities. Significant increases in the older population (the number of people between the ages of 65 and 84 will increase by 114% from 2000 to 2050) will pose highway and motor vehicle safety challenges, whether older Americans are drivers or passengers. Highway congestion is likely to increase as retirees take to the road for recreational travel. In addition, the steady influx of immigrants from around the world will add complexity to the traffic safety challenge.

*The Council on Aging Advisory Council Senior Transportation Report (2006)* indicates that about 22% of respondents use some form of transportation daily. The frequency of the use of transportation is related to personal mobility and connection to their communities. They found that slightly more than half used a transportation service, and that some could not go anywhere for nonessential trips. When asked, “How do you usually get to the following places?” with a list of destination options, over 11% indicated “Don’t Go”. While 22% indicated they relied on family or friends, most indicated they did not have family or friends to drive them. Also 19.6% did not go anywhere for recreation. There were 10% who said they used the fixed-route bus or AccessRide paratransit for transportation.

Older people who no longer drive, many younger workers, and many public assistance recipients do not have convenient, accessible, or reliable sources of transportation. More than 7,500 worker households in Davidson County have no vehicle available. These workers must walk or rely on public transportation and carpools.

Low-income households were more likely to have no vehicle available or only one vehicle. For households with under \$25,000 in annual income, 19.5% had no vehicle, which decreased to 3.3% for households with incomes between \$25,000-\$49,000.

Public Transportation is provided by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. MTA provided over 8 million rides during fiscal year 2007-2008, and over 9 million rides during fiscal year 2008-2009. The MTA currently operates a fleet of 167 fixed-route buses including hybrid vehicles.

Public transportation routes are adjusted two times per year by modifying, adding, or deleting routes, and changing the frequency of buses on their routes, etc., based on evolving needs.

A requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act is that all individuals have a right to be able to use available public transportation without regard to their physical and/or cognitive disabilities. Individuals who are not able to independently ride public buses must be provided with an equivalent, complementary service for their transportation needs within the established service area.

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MTA's alternative service is AccessRide, which provides transportation for persons with disabilities who are unable to use regular fixed-route buses. AccessRide currently operates with a fleet of 64 vehicles. In fiscal year 2008-2009, AccessRide provided 325,297 trips. The MTA fleet of fixed-route buses is now 100% accessible, and MTA hopes this will slow the increase of AccessRide trips, which are more costly and have been increasing in number each year.

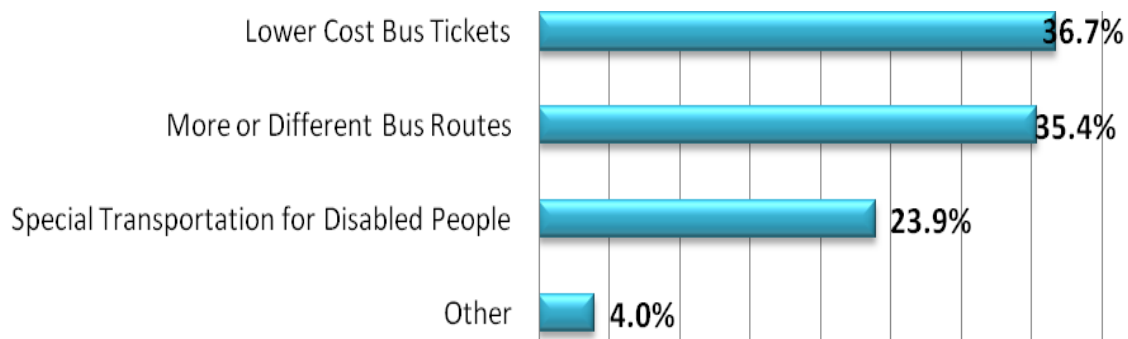
Some programs, such as the Senior Nutrition Program of Metropolitan Social Services, provide transportation for participants through MTA's AccessRide.

There are small programs that provide transportation for limited geographic areas or for specific service programs (Senior Shuttle, Madison Senior Mobilizers, etc.).

Fewer **Grassroots Community Survey** participants (10.8%) identified Transportation as the greatest need than other issues. When ranking which was the greatest gap in transportation services, the most frequent choice was Lower Cost Bus Tickets at 36.7%, closely followed by More or Different Bus Routes at 35.4%. Survey comments specifically discussed the cost of gasoline, rail use, and bus route specifics (to outlying areas, senior housing, and underserved areas, and cross-county lines or cross-town routes).

Respondents in both surveys noted in their comments that bus routing was an important issue (routes to outlying and underserved areas of the county, more access to buses from senior and public housing, and cross-town routes with destinations other than downtown).

**Greatest Need in Transportation**  
Grassroots Community Survey



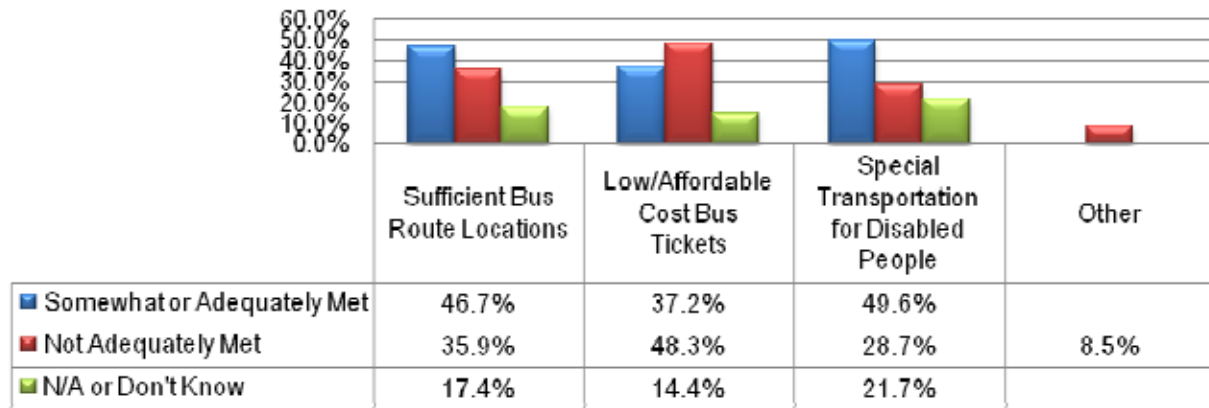
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### Professional/Agency Survey

Among professionals who answered the agency stakeholder survey, only the cost of bus tickets was deemed a need Not Adequately Met by a greater number of respondents. The need most often identified as Not Adequately Met was Low/Affordable Cost Bus Tickets.

### Greatest Need in Transportation

Professional/Agency Survey



### Focus Groups comments included:

- Transportation was identified as a barrier to finding and getting to and from jobs.
- Parents indicated that lack of transportation negatively affected their families in various ways, such as the need for emergency transportation (picking up medicine for a sick child late at night), difficulty visiting family members, limiting parent involvement in schools.
- Participants indicated that bus service should be more frequent, hours of operation need to be extended, and routes should serve more areas.
- There is a need for greater community awareness and expansion of existing services such as free bus passes from agencies, help with gas for cars, and help with the cost of getting driver licenses reinstated.
- Participants expressed interest in having improved bus stops and for more publicity/information about the bus system, routes, etc. Other suggestions included a recommendation for smaller buses covering local routes within neighborhoods, which would take riders to the main routes, and that bus stops on busy roads should have bays for the buses to pull in, out of the traffic lanes.
- Taxis were considered too expensive and unreliable for low-income families to use regularly.
- Concerns were expressed about the increased expense for using the public transit system after MTA discontinued transfers. Now a separate ticket must be purchased for each bus used en route. Participants indicated that it costs \$6 each day to get to and from work, if there is a need to change buses to reach the destinations.

*For additional information, please see the 2009 Community Needs Evaluation at:  
<http://www.nashville.gov/sservices/docs/2009CNER.pdf>*