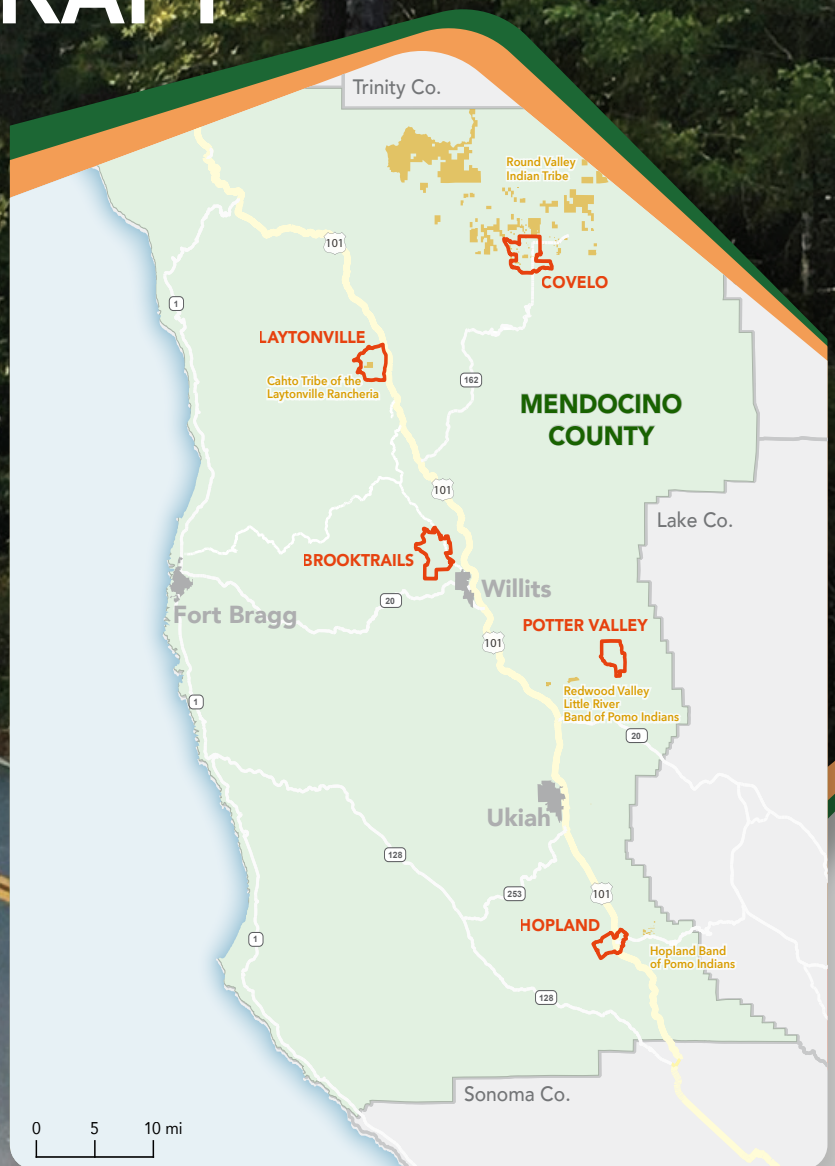


# MENDOCINO COUNTY RURAL INLAND MOBILITY SOLUTIONS

## Volume 3: Rural Mobility Action Plan

# DRAFT



Prepared for



Prepared by



August 2023

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### **About This Document**

This VOLUME 3: A RURAL MOBILITY ACTION PLAN is the final product in a feasibility study and presents recommendations that are the result of an 18-month-long work effort. The study was heavily informed by multiple rounds of interaction with community members and stakeholders to shape and reshape the direction of these recommendations.

Previous study volumes were:

VOLUME 1: A RURAL MOBILITY TRANSPORTATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT reports on mobility choices available to residents in each of the five communities.

VOLUME 2: MOBILITY SOLUTIONS RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS examines potential solutions for innovatively addressing transportation needs.

VOLUME 2 identified solutions that were feasible to bring back to the communities for their comment and reaction. This document also enabled discussion of funding sources through which to support recommendations.

All three volumes can be found on the Mendocino Council of Governments' website at:

[www.Mendocinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports](http://www.Mendocinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports)

This document is provided in an accessible format, consistent with Caltrans guidelines and industry best practices.

# Mendocino County Rural Inland Communities Mobility Solutions

## Volume 3: Action Plan for Rural Mobility

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# Mendocino County Rural Inland Communities Mobility Solutions

## Volume 3: Action Plan for Rural Mobility

### Executive Summary

#### About This Study

The Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG), in the wake of years of public testimony about rural transportation needs, sought innovative mobility solutions to aide rural Mendocino County residents in ways that were responsive to their needs but cost-effective, affordable and sustainable. With funding from the Caltrans Sustainable Communities Program, this study examines five inland Mendocino County rural communities along the Highway 101 corridor. Home to about 7,500 residents, these communities are: Covelo, Laytonville, Brooktrails, Potter Valley and Hopland.



Figure ES-1, Five Study Communities

This Action Plan is the outcome of an extensive, year-long study process involving staff of MCOG, the Mendocino Transit Agency (MTA) and Caltrans, District 1. Other contributors included residents, community leaders and stakeholders, Tribal leadership and county agency personnel. An estimated 145 individuals, 330 e-survey respondents, 51 website commenters and 34 organizations contributed in some form to this planning effort.

Funding the Action Plan recommendations is the next challenge, as no dedicated funding source exists. At the time of this writing, MCOG and its partners are already pursuing key grant opportunities. Additional funding possibilities must be explored by public transportation policy makers in Mendocino County to realize this Action Plan.

## Access to Public Transportation

The Mendocino Transit Authority’s (MTA) service footprint is depicted in Figure ES-2, showing with dark green bubbles, a seven-mile area around MTA routes and stops in service in early 2023. Among the County’s 91,000 residents, **56% live within 1½ miles of an MTA bus stop, while 8,000 persons, almost 9% of the County population, live more than seven miles from a route.** The isolation of Covelo and Laytonville is evident, both communities well beyond MTA routes. Potter Valley and Brooktrails are just within the 7-mile bubble areas, though neither community can easily access MTA fixed-route service. Hopland, on Route 65, has MTA schedule times which



Figure ES-2, Access to Public Transportation, Showing Areas Within 7 miles of an MTA Bus Route, as of Jan 2023.

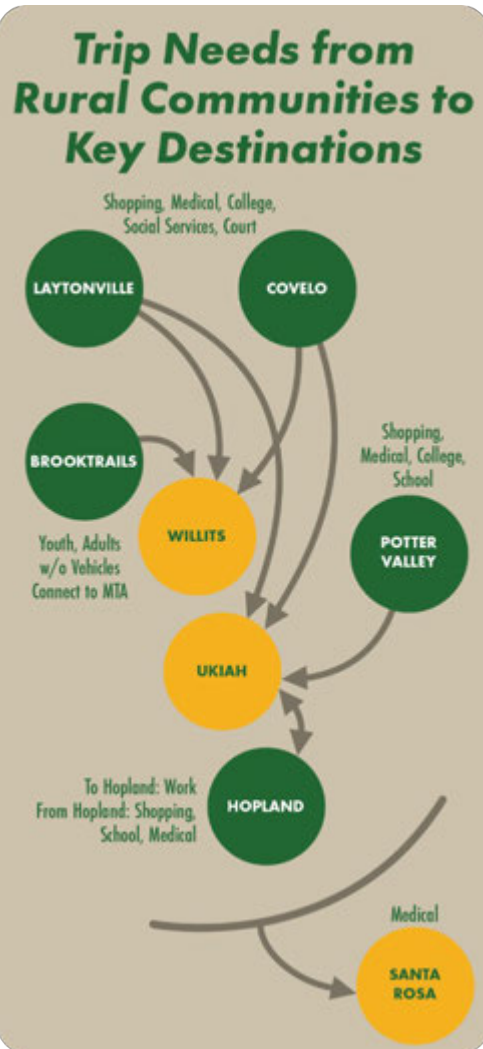


Figure ES-3, Trip Purpose and Travel Direction Needs of the Five Study Communities’ Residents.

make same-day, round-trip travel to Ukiah impossible.

## Mobility Challenges

Mobility challenges confronting residents of these communities include getting to a distant grocery store either to purchase lower cost groceries in bulk to stretch limited dollars, or because there is no grocery store in one’s home community. Other challenges involve getting to court appointments, to social service appointments and other services not provided in small, rural towns. Many medical specialty appointments, including prenatal OB/GYN care that is only available in Ukiah, require patients to travel.

Mobility can be limited by the reliability of a personal vehicle to make a long trip to and back from Ukiah, the cost of gas, or the difficulties of driving that distance if one is older or impaired. The specific difficulties residents have in making trips and the kinds of trips individuals need are detailed for each community within the full Action Plan, as each community presented unique trips needs, as well as some common experiences.

## The Action Plan Vision

The Action Plan's vision to expand mobility among the County's rural communities was built up from an extensive engagement process involving Listening Sessions, a community-wide e-survey to test solutions, public meetings and continuing dialogue about feasibility with key partners. The Vision proposes **a mix of vehicle-based services and other programs to supplement rural residents' transportation choices**. Life-line services for those without access to a vehicle can support travel to meet such basic life needs as staying healthy, securing groceries or medications and obtaining education or skill training. These include both vehicle-based solutions and other programs.

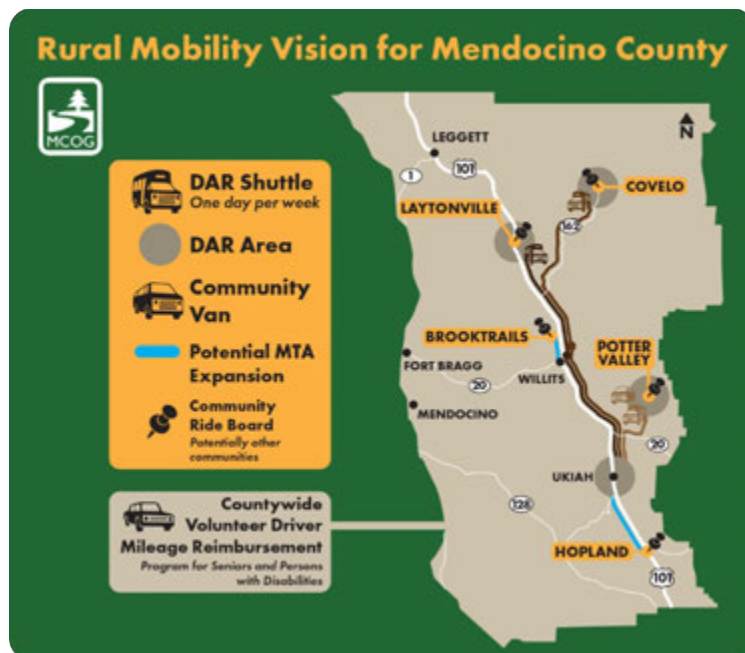


Figure ES-4, Service Elements of Mendocino County's Rural Mobility Vision.

## Recommended Vehicle-Based Solutions

The Rural Mobility Vision proposes two types of vehicle-based solutions. First, for two communities, to expand existing MTA services through its SHORT-RANGE TRANSIT PLAN currently underway to Brooktrails and Hopland. Secondly, to develop and fund for a three-year period, life-line level transportation for Covelo, Laytonville and Potter Valley. Recommendations detailed within the full Action Plan, along with annual operations and capital costs, are:



**Brooktrails** – MTA to operate and fund a **deviated fixed-route two days a week, four times each day** with three scheduled stops plus deviations. If demand presents and additional funding is found. MTA might increase the number of days of service This will aide students and those without access to a car to connect to Willits MTA service.



**Hopland** – MTA to **increase bus frequency on Route 65** or establish an extension of Route 20 or develop another solution to make feasible same-day, round trips between Hopland and Ukiah to serve Hopland residents, including youth, seniors and persons with disabilities, as well as employees traveling to Hopland for work.



**Covelo and Laytonville** – MTA to operate a **Hybrid Dial-a-Ride Shuttle providing one-day-a-week service** for these two communities by acquiring vehicle in Year 1, providing express service to Ukiah once weekly in Year 2, and potentially expanding to two days-a-week in

Year 3 if demand presents and funding is secured. This life-line level service, to be marketed and promoted by a local community-based organization, can meet trip needs that can be anticipated and scheduled by Covelo and Laytonville residents, serving persons without access to a private auto or who cannot drive the distances involved.



**Potter Valley** – The Family Resource Center (FRC) to operate a wheelchair accessible **Community Van**, initially with a volunteer driver. In out-years, this might expand to a more structured service, a one or two day per week **Hybrid Dial-a-Ride Shuttle**, operated either by FRC or MTA, if ridership presents and additional funding is secured. Both the initial and an expanded service would serve residents with Ukiah-oriented trips for medical, shopping, education purposes and more.

### Alternatives for Operations

These vehicle-based service options envision MTA operating each service with the exception, at least initially, of the Potter Valley Community Van. Two other alternatives, beyond MTA operation, exist for vehicle operations. One, **MTA could contract with community-based organization(s)** for provision of life-line service for Covelo, Laytonville and Potter Valley. A second alternative is for **MCOG to establish a new Rural CTSA [Consolidated Transportation Services Agency]** outside of MTA, with a dedicated funding allotment, to operate and promote life-line transportation to Covelo, Laytonville, Potter Valley.

### Recommended Other Program Elements


Recognizing the Study's documented array of needs and mix of trip-types several other program elements are critical to supplement recommended life-line level, vehicle-based services.



**Countywide Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement Program for Rural Residents** – Mileage reimbursement for medically-related trips supports **enrolled, rural residents throughout the County** who are older adults or persons with disabilities and can be enabled to reimburse volunteer drivers found by the enrolled participant. This program can be fully funded by Caltrans-administered, FTA Section 5310 funds, to be implemented by a community-based organization that can administer a county-wide program with local-level emphasis.



**Electronic Community Ride Board** – An online ride board, via existing social media platforms, can help to match riders and drivers for trips, **particularly recurring trips to Mendocino College** in Willits and Ukiah. Social media platform tools to vet participants and connect community members can be managed by a local volunteer coordinator. This program is very low-cost, and modest monthly stipends to coordinators can be funded as Section 5310 Mobility Managers.

 **Oversight and Marketing of Rural Mobility Solutions** – MCOG should utilize its SSTAC [Social Services Transportation Advisory Committee] to **monitor implemented, rural-focused services**, receiving twice annual reports and potentially expanding SSTAC membership to include rural representatives. It is strongly encouraged that Mendocino County public social services, education and health stakeholders whose clientele includes residents of isolated rural communities work with MTA, local community-based organizations and Tribal leadership to **actively educate and promote use** of the recommended rural services to potential riders.

### Partners in Improving Rural Mobility

Because meeting rural mobility needs lies in the lap of no single organization, it is incumbent upon numerous partner entities to improve available mobility choices. Beyond MCOG and MTA, this can include the Community College, the County Public Health and Human Service Departments, Tribal leadership and community-based organizations closest to those needing improved mobility.

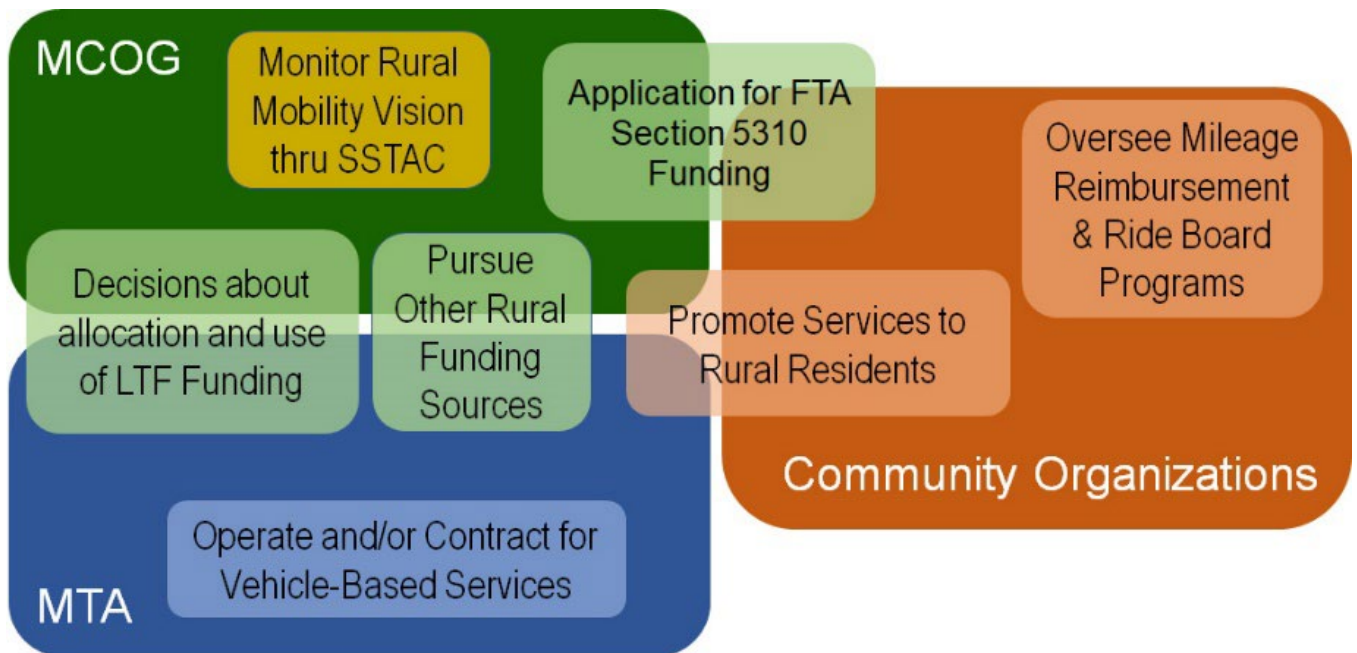


Figure ES-5, Organizational Entities and Responsibilities Critical to Realizing the Rural Mobility Vision.



# Mendocino County Rural Inland Communities Mobility Solutions

## Volume 3: Rural Mobility Action Plan

### I. Considerations in Growing Rural Mobility

#### Mobility Challenges of Rural Mendocino County

*Understanding the nature of the mobility challenges of rural residents is key to designing effective mobility solutions that will be used.*

Mendocino County residents living in communities away from the more densely populated areas can struggle with access to food, services, education and health care. This study considers the mobility needs and opportunities of five Mendocino County small towns and neighborhoods that are either not served at all by Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) or served only in very limited ways.

About 7,500 individuals live within these five communities, within the census:

- Covelo
- Laytonville
- Brooktrails
- Potter Valley
- Hopland



*Figure 1, Five Inland Mendocino County communities of focus in this rural mobility feasibility study*

#### Individualized Needs

Mobility challenges confronting residents of these communities (Figure 1) include getting to a distant grocery store either to purchase lower cost groceries in bulk to stretch limited dollars, or because there is no grocery store in one's home community. These challenges involve getting to court appointments, to social service appointments and other services not provided in small, rural towns. Many medical specialty

appointments, including prenatal OB/GYN care that is only available in Ukiah, require patients to travel.

Mobility can be limited by the reliability of a personal vehicle to make a long trip to and back from Ukiah, the cost of gas, or the difficulties of driving that distance if one is older or impaired. For those without any access to a car, all non-walking trips are a challenge.

### Long-Standing Testimony About Unmet Needs

Over multiple years, the unmet transportation needs public hearing process that Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG) undertakes annually, as required by the Transportation Development Act (TDA), hears testimony calling for transportation services in the study communities. Comments relate to Covelo scheduled service, Laytonville trip needs, Brooktrails safety and scheduled service needs, and related needs for Potter Valley and Hopland residents. Those testifying speak to non-emergency medical trip needs both within the county and out-of-county. They describe needs of isolated seniors and others unable to drive or without access to a vehicle in remote, isolated rural communities. They testify to youth unable to get from rural homes to community college classes that could set them up with skills to build a strong future.

### Trips Expensive and Difficult to Serve

Rural public transportation's high cost is a critical challenge. Trips are expensive due to distance; for example, it is 65 miles one-way from Covelo to Ukiah and 46 miles from Laytonville to Ukiah. Long public transportation routes, with a limited number of potential pickups over these distances, make vehicle trips expensive and passenger fares potentially prohibitive. The small size of rural communities means that limited numbers of people will need these trips. Such factors make rural public transportation extremely expensive and difficult. As a result, MCOG and MTA have made repeated findings from the public testimony process that *"these are unmet needs that are not reasonable to meet."*

### MCOG Seeking Innovative Solutions

Since these trip needs are difficult to meet and expensive to serve, what else could be done? MCOG sought solutions, securing funding from Caltrans' Sustainable Communities Program to identify innovative and feasible solutions to improve the mobility choices of rural Inland Mendocino County residents (Figure 2).



Figure 2, Innovation means considering a mix of vehicle types, service types and technology tools.

Innovation, in this context, is about identifying nontraditional public transportation solutions, beyond the typical 40-foot public transit bus. It is about using different vehicle types, about exploring new combinations of services to provide trips, about employing technology to help connect riders with trips and to build new partnerships.

## Factors Impacting Rural Mobility

*This study brought into focus several key factors of rural mobility, including equity considerations, the need for community-driven solutions, the question of leadership around rural mobility and the challenge of sustainability of solutions, in terms of costs and funding.*

### Balancing Mobility Needs

To meaningfully address rural mobility requires, to some degree, **balancing the mobility of those living in more densely populated areas with those in low-density, distant rural communities**. While it is not viable to provide the same level of transit services in rural areas as in urban areas, an equity case can be made for considering what minimal level of service is appropriate in remote, rural communities.

MTA's mission is to provide public transportation to those whom it can efficiently and effectively serve. Such services are largely, but not exclusively, to persons in the larger cities and towns of Mendocino County. MTA's network of bus routes connects the major population centers of Ukiah, Willits and Fort Bragg, with smaller communities en route and with services and regional connections to Sonoma County's Santa Rosa and beyond.

But in a large, predominantly rural county such as Mendocino County, this means that not all persons can have ready, convenient access to public transportation. Figure 3 depicts the MTA route network as of early 2023. The orange circles reflect a 1½-mile area around each MTA bus stop.

Of Mendocino County's about 91,000 residents, 56% live within 1½ miles of an MTA bus stop, reflecting MTA's reach to more than half of the county's residents. This is a very rough estimate of accessibility, not necessarily a walkable distance, but still suggests some degree of transit access.

Conversely, 40,000 persons (44%) live more than 1½ miles from a bus stop. Within that 44% of the County's population, there are



Figure 3, MTA service area footprint depicting 1½-mile area surrounding each bus stop.

varying levels of isolation created by distance, by geography and by individuals' ability to surmount those challenges.

Eight thousand (8,000) individuals, **almost 9% of the total county population, live more than seven miles from a bus stop.** While 7 miles might be a reasonable distance to bike for a young, fit person and over safe roadways, it is not an option for most of this study's target groups, many of whom are older, have mobility impairments, are traveling with children and/or live on roads that do not allow for safe biking.

Figure 4 shows the considerable distances and relative isolation of Laytonville and Covelo, both of which are well beyond the dark green 7-mile "bubble" surrounding the MTA service network. Potter Valley and Brooktrails are just within the 7-mile bubble, though neither can reasonably access MTA service. Hopland is on an MTA route, within both the 7-mile and 1½-mile bubbles.

This analysis demonstrates the extreme isolation of rural residents in the northern part of Mendocino County and highlights the dire need of Covelo and Laytonville residents who are without access to private transportation.

## Community-Based Solutions

Solutions responsive to unique community features will be more likely to be adopted and used. MCOG and its Caltrans funding source sought a community-based assessment process that ensured rich, continuing input from the communities as to their mobility needs and to understand community-level preferences among possible solutions. The gold stars in Figure 5 represent the multiple "touches" with community members and their representatives through the course of the overall study.

During the initial phase of the project, the project team worked with MCOG and key stakeholders within each area to construct a list of local organizations and leaders for each community, as well as organizations providing services countywide. Personal contacts via email and phone were made with every individual and organization on the list to secure their assistance in scheduling and promoting listening sessions in the five communities, with seven formal opportunities identified in this graphic to make input (Figure 5). The study website was used throughout the study process to offer comments on the developing study findings and products.



Figure 4, MTA service area footprint depicting census block groups beyond 7 miles of MTA bus stops in light green and areas within 7 miles in darker green.



Figure 5, Community-based assessment approach to this Mobility Solutions Study with yellow stars highlighting community input opportunities.

As part of the early project phase, special effort was made to communicate with the four Tribes associated with these rural communities. These included formal, mailed letters to each Tribal Chair and Vice Chair from the MCOG Executive Director, as well as subsequent contacts via email and telephone.

Early contacts were used to organize on-site Listening Sessions and stakeholder interviews in each community, and to promote community wide E-surveys specific to each area. Both qualitative and quantitative information was collected. Personal stories illustrated types and complexity of need, while survey data quantified needs and documented community members’ preferences among possible solutions.

Later community meetings and stakeholder interviews provided input to developing solutions, while even later public meetings/public hearings provided opportunity for final comments on proposed recommendations.

Throughout the study process, multiple communication channels were used to promote participation. These included two household mailings to about 5,000 households each, geo-targeted Facebook advertising, extensive phone calls and personal emails to a developed list of about 120 individual stakeholders, press releases at key study points, and posts via social media and physically in various community settings. As noted, the project website provided bi-directional opportunity to communicate — about study events and products and to hear from community members various its comment tools.

Four formal opportunities were offered to comment on study findings and developing recommendations. And multiple comments were provided directly or via the project website.

## **Leadership**

No single entity has designated responsibility for meeting rural mobility needs in Mendocino County. The Mendocino Transit Authority has a clear mission of providing mobility to those within more densely populated areas of the county, its cities and larger towns, or traveling between them. The Mendocino Council of Governments has oversight and planning responsibility for transportation within the county, including its streets and roads, but not for providing services. And community-based organizations, including nonprofits and public agencies providing services in these rural settings, are not transportation operators, although some do provide limited transportation assistance to aid their clientele. Each manages multiple programs and services, often with limited capacity to address their clients' transportation needs.

Identifying leadership — one or more entities that will take operational responsibility for rural mobility solutions — is critical to realizing improved mobility. Good leadership can oversee a well-implemented, broadly promoted service, increasing the odds that the service will be used by community members and successful over time.

## **Sustainability**

Finally, for any rural transportation service to be sustainable, it must be low-cost and reliably funded. As noted previously, traditional public transit, with its regularly scheduled 40-foot buses, is expensive to provide over distances and with the small populations that characterize rural transportation services. Rural transit services must be designed to achieve a reasonable per-passenger cost to protect their viability over time, despite distance and low ridership levels,

Sustainability also requires a predictable funding base. If 100% of funding comes from discretionary grants, it will be more difficult to sustain a service from year-to-year. There are discretionary grant sources that will make sense to pursue, and these can provide important supplemental funding. However, basic sustainability requires predictable, known funding levels from reliable sources.

## II. Rural Trip Needs in Five Communities

*Understanding the transportation challenges faced by rural residents is critical to defining effective solutions that will both address those needs and be used. Each community's needs, as well as existing local resources that address some transportation needs, are described here.*

### Key Findings Countywide

Common themes in mobility needs emerged, even as unique and differing pictures presented among the five study communities (Figure 6). All five communities are oriented to the activity centers of Willits and Ukiah. Ukiah, as the County seat, is the focus for social services and courts, but also for major shopping destinations, medical facilities, including the County's only OB/GYN services, and to Mendocino College's main campus. Willits, while a lesser draw, does offer some unique destinations that create need — particularly Adventist Health Howard Memorial Hospital and the Mendocino College Willits Campus.

Community college trip needs were expressed in each community, with Covelo, Laytonville and Brooktrails residents needing travel to both the Ukiah and Willits facilities of Mendocino College. Hopland and Potter Valley oriented primarily to the Ukiah campus.

Medical appointments and other nonemergency medical trip needs were expressed at every session, in each community. Some trips were focused on medical facilities in both Willits and Ukiah, but the most urgent need related to specialty referrals to out-of-county facilities. A summary of each community's unique travel needs follows. Additional details gathered during community listening sessions and other study efforts is provided in VOLUME 1: FIVE COMMUNITIES' TRANSPORTATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT and can be found at MCOG's website: [www.mendocinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports](http://www.mendocinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports)

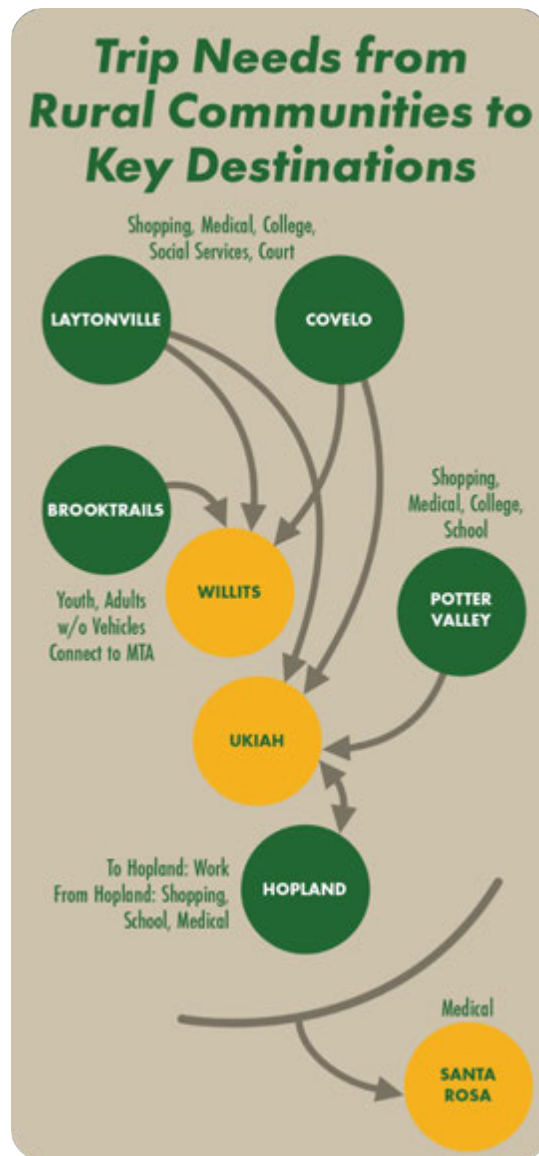


Figure 6, Trip purpose findings and corridors of travel from the five study communities.

## About Covelo

### The Place and its Residents

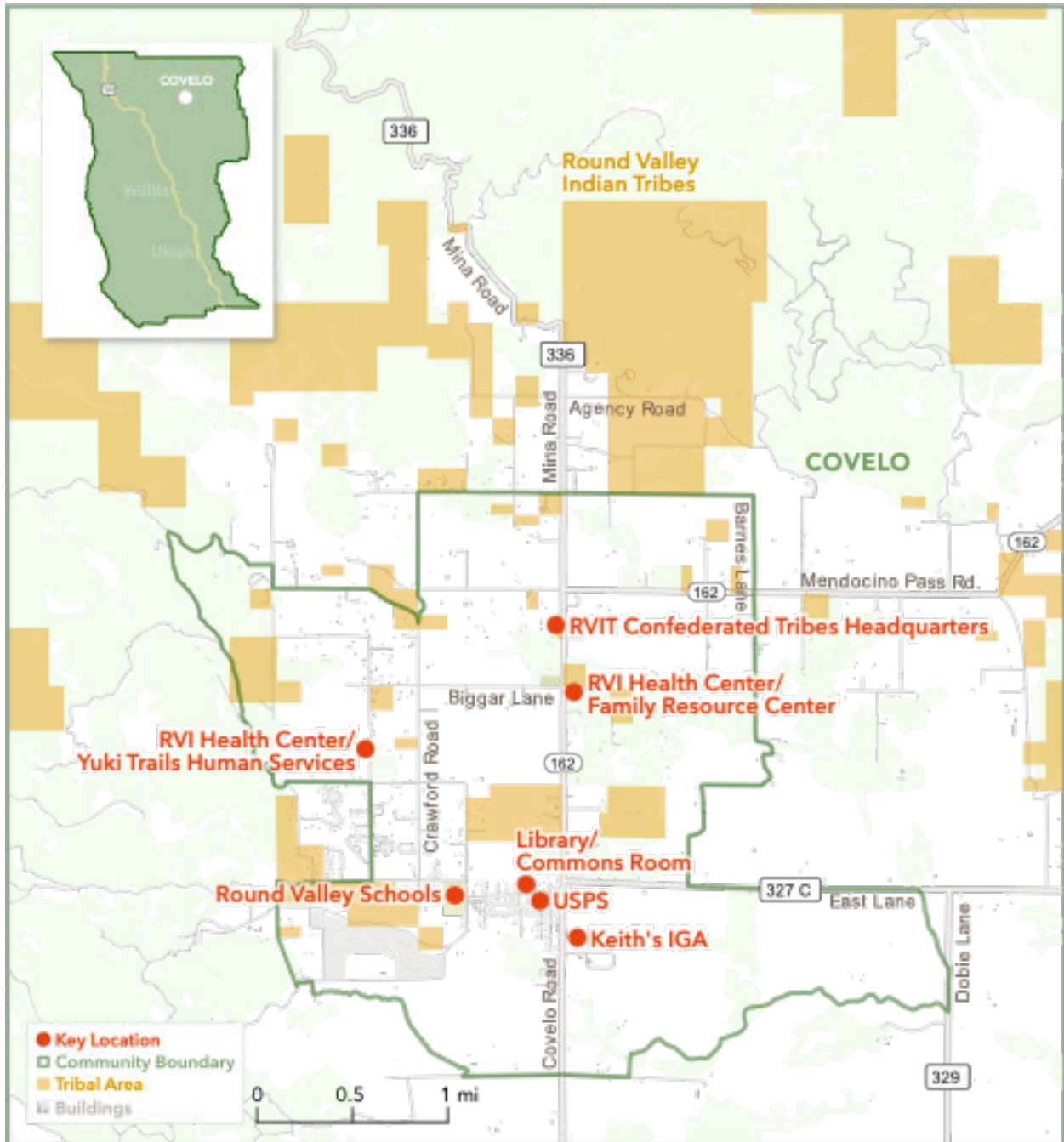


Figure 7, Map of Covelo and surrounding area.

Covelo is the most isolated of the five communities (Figure 7). At 65 miles north of Ukiah and 42 miles from Willits, Covelo is almost 30 miles in from Highway 101 along



Highway 162, which curves and twists as it climbs to 1,400 feet before descending into the Covelo Valley and Round Valley.

The Covelo community's 7.1 square miles census designated place (CDP) is adjacent to the Round Valley Indian Tribes Reservation, the ancestral home of the Yuki Tribe and six other displaced Tribes. This federally recognized tribal reservation is about 36 square miles. While the Decennial census reports almost 1,400 residents in the CDP, significant numbers of Tribal members live on reservation lands and are not included in the CDP demographics.<sup>1</sup>

Covelo's median age of 31 is younger than the County median of 44 years, reflecting in part Covelo's one-third children and youth residents. Older adults at 14% are six points below the County's 22% proportion of age 65 and older.

Poverty levels are high, with household incomes at about half of the statewide median income, while almost four-in-ten residents and half of all children and youth are living in poverty. Almost two-in-ten households (18%) have no access to a working vehicle. A quarter of individuals above the age of 5 are limited English proficient.

### **Mobility Needs We Heard About**

Residents described the difficulties of Covelo's extreme remoteness, and the critical necessity of a highly reliable vehicle to make the almost 30-mile trip to Highway 101 and then to destinations beyond. While most trip-making was focused beyond the Covelo Valley and Round Valley, some local-trip needs surfaced among persons without a vehicle.

**Covelo**  
**Population Characteristics**  
**7.1 square miles (CDP)**

1,394 residents — Census designated place (CDP) population

- 31 years median age
- 14% Age 65
- 52% Working ages (18-64)
- 34% Children & youth (0-17)
- 15% Persons with disabilities

\$43,000 Median household income, which is 51% of California median household income of \$84,000 (*U.S. Census Quick Facts, 2021 dollars*)

- 38% Persons in poverty
- 7% Older adults in poverty
- 50% Children in poverty
- 18% Households without a car
- 24% Limited English proficient (LEP) individuals, 5+ years

Sources: *U.S. Decennial Census* and *American Community Survey ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate (Appendix A)*

<sup>1</sup> Please see Appendix A for comparison of each community's demographic information to County information, as reported in the U.S. Census Decennial Census and in the *American Community Survey 2021 5-Year Estimate*, updated to report the most recent census information available.

**Shopping trips** to affordable grocery stores in Willits and Ukiah were important to stretch household budgets, although there is a local grocery store in Covelo for immediate needs.

**Medical trips** are sometimes local, within the Covelo area. Both native and non-native residents can access routine care at the Round Valley Indian Health Center (IHC) rural health clinic or the Yuki Trails Human Services program. However, many medical trips require travel to Ukiah or Willits. The IHC does have a passenger van used to provide patients with some out-of-Covelo trips. This became more limited as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, restricted during 2020 to only native patients and largely for dialysis and some cancer treatment travel.

The IHC does not currently have prenatal care services. Pregnant moms must travel to Ukiah for all prenatal appointments and birthing classes, and for labor and delivery.

**Out-of-county medical trip** needs were a continuing theme. Individuals are often referred to specialists in the Santa Rosa area, given Mendocino County's documented limited in-county medical specialties. Some in-county and out-of-county trips are provided by the Partnership Health Transportation, to Medi-Cal registered patients and for Medi-Cal approved appointments. Covelo residents reported on the unreliability of this service and that its availability is not well known.

**Social service trips** for County services, including employment-based appointments and more, were largely converted to virtual appointments during COVID-19 and are often facilitated through the Family Resource Center. However, some in-person meeting requirements continue to exist, particularly for employment-based training and cash aide applications. Many of these trip needs require long days on-site, largely in Ukiah.

**Court appointments and jury duty** are episodic trip needs. Covelo children going into foster care are usually placed in Ukiah so parental visits and certainly court-related dates all require travel into Ukiah. Jury duty was of some concern, but individuals noted that they can decline if they simply cannot get there.

**College trips** were identified as of critical importance to residents and to stakeholders working with Covelo youth: travel to Mendocino College's North County Center in Willits and its main campus in Ukiah.

## Selected Covelo E-Survey Findings Regarding Mobility

The 65 Covelo residents responding to the Fall 2022 community-wide E-survey reflected a mix of ages and employment status. Two-thirds (62%) were working age while 23% were aged 60 and older. Fourteen percent (14%) were persons with a disability. Nearly one-third (31%) of respondents live in households with no vehicle.

The survey asked about "trip needs you have trouble meeting." The most commonly reported trip needs, presented in Figure 8, were **local trips** (71%), **shopping trips into Ukiah** (72%) and **medical trips into Ukiah** (65%). Close to half indicated a need for

**Willits shopping trips** (52%), for **Willits medical trips** (46%) and **Willits after-school activities** (35%). **Ukiah college trips** (22%) were more often reported than for Willits, although Covelo respondents included only a small number of college-aged youth.

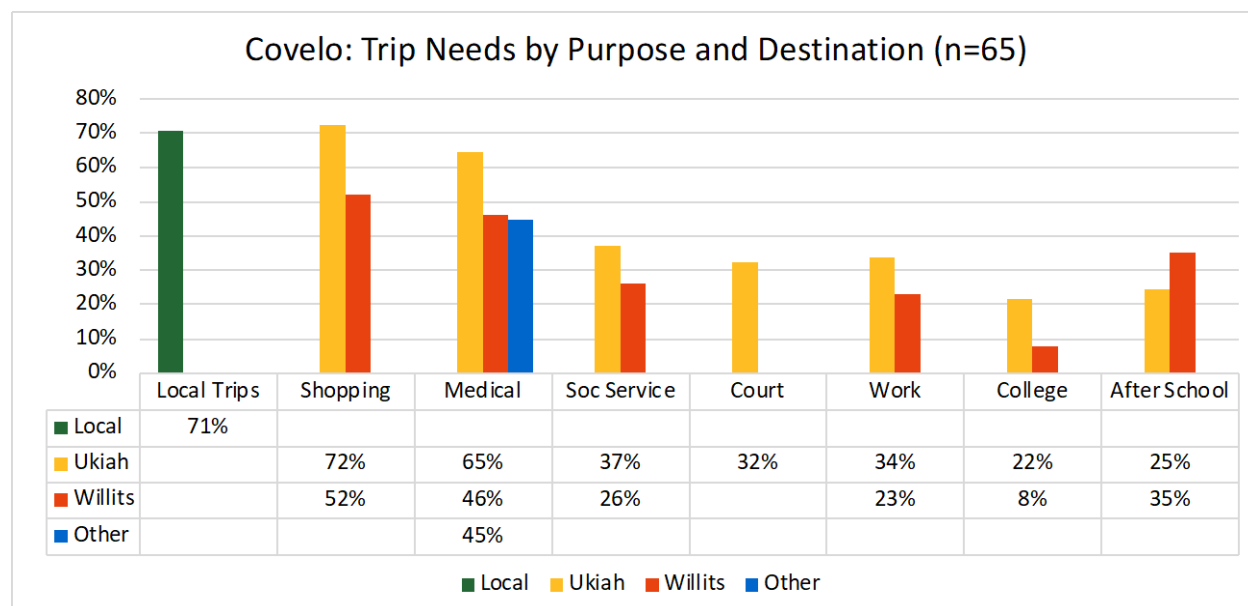


Figure 8, Covelo E-survey respondents reported trip needs by purpose and destination.

A large portion of the overall sample experiences trouble making trips both locally and to Ukiah or Willits. This challenge is amplified among those without a vehicle — 31% of respondents and 18% of all households.

## Local Resources

For residents without their own car, or access to a neighbor or friend with a reliable vehicle, Covelo transportation options are extremely limited:

- **Round Valley Indian Health Services’** vehicle is available only to native residents and largely for just dialysis trips, although the driver will pick up prescriptions in Ukiah for Covelo residents who have placed them.
- **Partnership Health** program, through the Medi-Cal benefit, provides some unknown level of trip-making, but there were multiple reports of its unreliability.
- **Private transportation** was reportedly picking up passengers at Keith’s IGA, grocery store but efforts to track it down were unsuccessful.
- A volunteer driver **E-Ride program** was operational for some time, several years ago, but ran out of funding and volunteer drivers and so ceased operations.

Stakeholders of the **Municipal Advisory Council (MAC)**, **Round Valley Family Resource Center**, the **Round Valley Indian Health Center** and the **Covelo Public Library**, among other local groups, expressed awareness of transportation difficulties that Covelo residents face. Many commented about the lack of safe transportation within the greater Covelo area and to elsewhere, particularly for young girls and women.

## About Laytonville

### The Place and its Residents

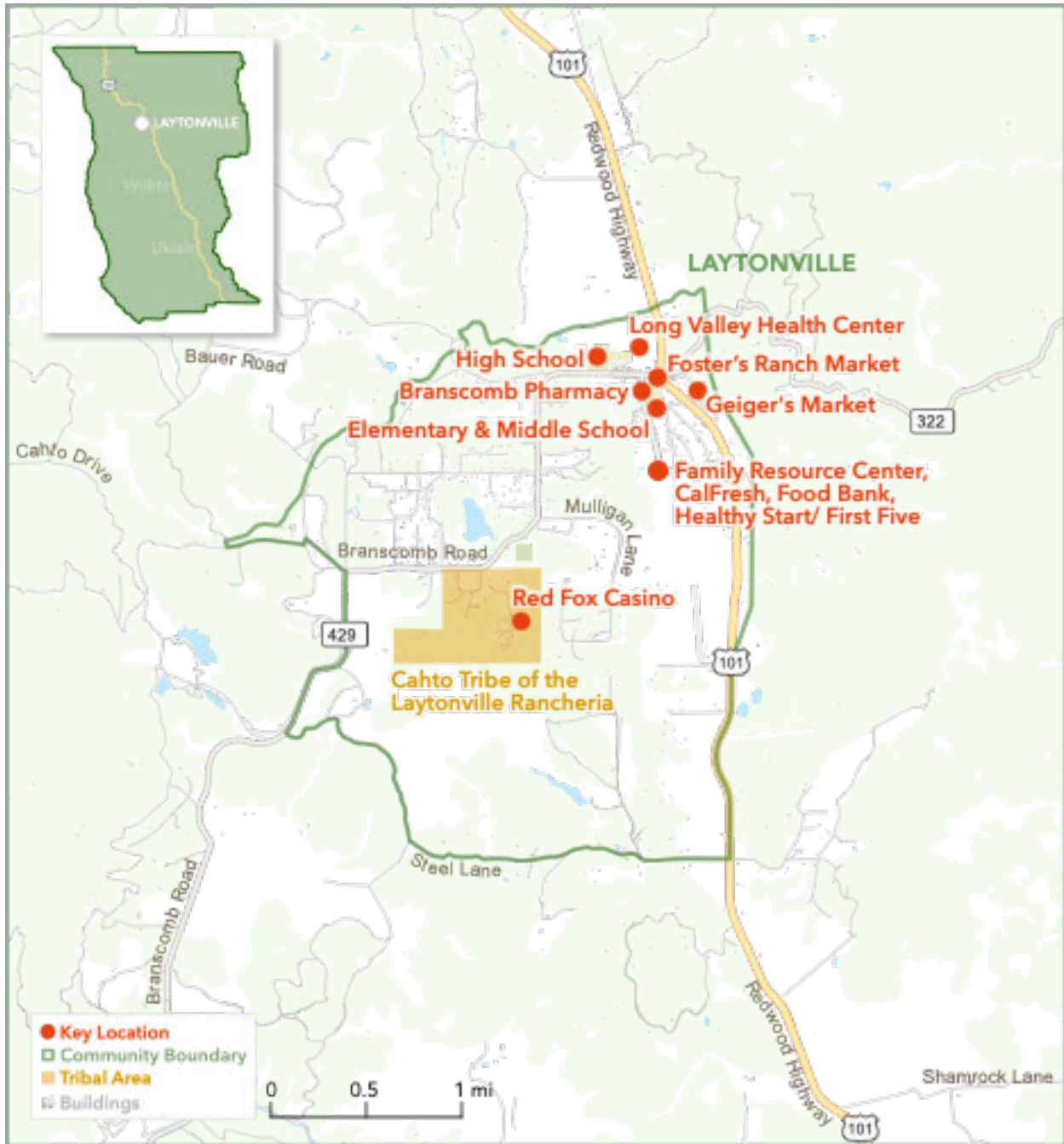


Figure 9, Map of Laytonville.

Laytonville straddles Highway 101 in the county's northern tier, 23 miles north of Willits and 46 miles from Ukiah. Its woody, somewhat hilly area includes the Cahto Tribe of the

Laytonville Rancheria and its Red Fox Casino within Laytonville’s 5.4-square-mile, home to almost 1,200 residents (Figure 9).

Various businesses serve travelers along Highway 101 and include a grocery store and pharmacy. The Long Valley Health Center provides primary health care to area residents.

Several smaller, outlying communities orient to Laytonville and include Legget due north, Bell Springs and Spyrock to the north and northeast, respectively.

Laytonville has a somewhat older population than Covelo at 42 years, closer to the countywide median age of 44 years. A quarter of residents (23%) are aged 65 and older, 61% are working age and 17% are children.

Poverty levels are high. Household income is 58% of the statewide median household income, with 17% of all residents and 38% of all children living below the poverty line. Ten percent (10%) of households are without a car.

### **Mobility Needs We Heard About**

Mobility challenges that Laytonville residents report are similar to those of Covelo.

Community members are somewhat more likely to own a reliable car, but some reported difficulties affording gasoline. Please note that outreach was underway during 2022 when gasoline prices were at their highest.

**Medical trips** can be local, as in Covelo, where Laytonville’s federally qualified rural health clinic provides primary medical care. But any specialty referrals require travel. This includes OB/GYN prenatal care and labor and delivery care for pregnant women. Participants mentioned that behavioral health appointments must periodically be in-person, although much has transferred to virtual check-ins.

### **Laytonville Population Characteristics**

#### **5.4 square miles (CDP)**

1,152 residents — *Census designated place (CDP) population*

42 years median age

23% Age 65

61% Working ages (18-64)

17% Children & youth (0-17)

23% Persons with disabilities

\$49,000 Median household income, which is 58% of California median household income of \$84,000 (*U.S. Census Quick Facts, 2021 dollars*)

17% Persons in poverty

2% Older adults in poverty

38% Children in poverty

10% Households without a car

0% Limited English proficient individuals (LEP), 5+ years

Source: *U.S. Decennial Census and American Community Survey ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate (Appendix A)*

**Shopping trip needs** to larger, discount stores in Willits and Ukiah were commonly mentioned, including the opportunity there for lower cost prescription refills.

**Social service-related needs** can be largely handled in-person at the Laytonville Family Resource Center. There still remain instances where a trip to County offices in Ukiah is necessary. Court appointments and jury duty travel to Ukiah also surfaced as periodic trip needs.

**Trips for youth** were repeatedly noted by Laytonville residents and other stakeholders. Access to community college courses, at either Willits or Ukiah Mendocino College facilities, was seen as very important to expanding opportunities for Laytonville youth. Other trip purposes mentioned included recreation, after-school enrichment and work.

**Local Laytonville transportation difficulties** were reported by Listening Session participants. The Long Valley Health Center van could not accommodate a low-vision resident who could no longer drive to a Ukiah appointment; the Cahto Tribe had a new vehicle, but Tribal members did not seem to be using it; and Medi-Cal transportation existed but people did not know how to access or reported it as unreliable.

### **Selected Laytonville E-Survey Findings Regarding Mobility**

Among the 75 Laytonville E-survey respondents, just over half were non-senior adults who were not employed (56%), while 40% were 60 or older. One-third of respondents were employed and 11% were students. Two-thirds (67%) had a reliable car; a third did not.

Most commonly expressed for “trip needs you have trouble meeting” were **local trip needs** within Laytonville (69%), presumably to the Laytonville grocery store, Long Valley Health Center, Family Resource Center and other local destinations. Following closely were **trips into Ukiah** for shopping and medical purposes (60-65%). Need for **trips into Willits** were reported by more than half of Laytonville respondents. Nearly a quarter of respondents (23%) indicated difficulty in getting to **out-of-county medical** appointments. These findings are detailed in Figure 10.

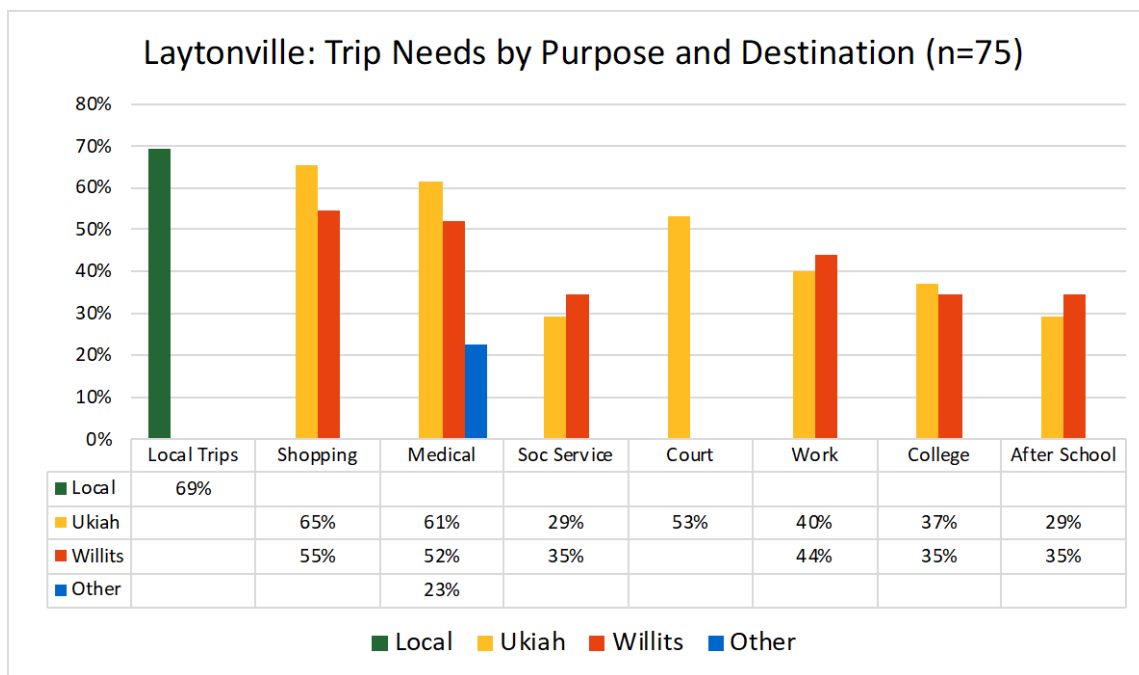


Figure 10, Laytonville E-survey trip needs reported by purpose and destination.

Among individuals without access to a vehicle (one-third of the respondents and 10% of all Laytonville households), many of these trips are impossible to make.

## Local Resources

Laytonville has two community vans, which can provide nonemergency medical trips, owned respectively by the **Long Valley Health Center** and by the **Cahto Tribe**. Neither of these is apparently heavily utilized, in part due to difficulties fielding drivers.

**Partnership Health** transportation resources exist and have apparently been revamped this spring, which may address availability and reliability problems. As noted previously, this will only serve Medi-Cal certified persons for Medi-Cal approved trips. It is not a resource for Medicare patients, persons aged 65 and older, and those without Medi-Cal.

As in Covelo, a volunteer driver **E-Ride program** was operational for some time several years ago but ran out of funding and volunteer drivers. It was reported as successful by local stakeholders who expressed regret that it could not be continued.

Laytonville is home to a strong and effective community-based organization, the **Laytonville Family Resource Center** (FRC), whose director is also the Chair of the **Family Resource Center Network** (FRCN). Individually and collectively, the Laytonville FRC and the FRCN have taken on multiple contracts, with the County and others, to provide or extend social services to needed by area residents.

## About Brooktrails

### The Place and its Residents

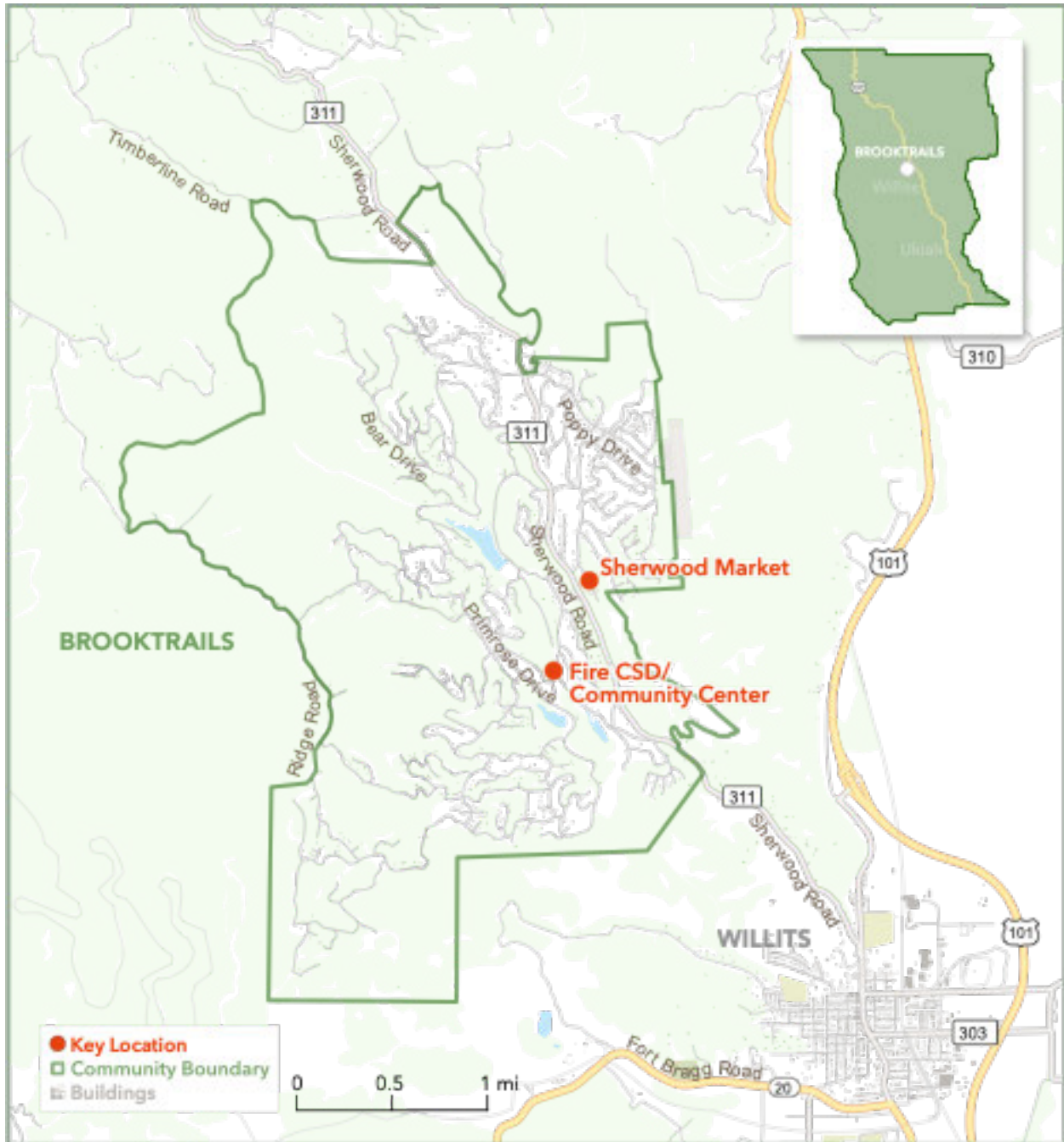


Figure 11, Map of Brooktrails and surrounding area.

Brooktrails is the largest of the five study communities, with just over 3,600 persons and adjacent to Willits. Set among the second growth oak, fir and Redwood trees, its



circuitous road network follows the logging trails of the previous century. Elevations climb to 3,000 feet along Sherwood Road, which is the only road in or out of Brooktrails. It is about 7 miles from the highest, third gate down into Willits (Figure 11).

The Brooktrails population is a young community, much as Covelo is. With a median age of 33 years, it is well below the countywide median of 44 years. One-third of residents are children and youth (30%). Older adults make up 11% of the population, about half the countywide proportion of 22%.

Household income is very close to the statewide median income, with 7% of all residents and 4% of children living below federal poverty levels.

### Mobility Needs We Heard About

Listening Session participants identified their primary transportation need as one of getting into Willits for those without access to a car, given that Sherwood Road is unsafe for both pedestrians and bicyclists.

Two groups of Brooktrails residents needing transportation were identified:

- **Youth trip needs** that are not served by school buses, including trips into school in the early morning or returning home post-sports and after-school activities, for both secondary and college students.
- **Residents without access to private vehicles**, including persons in one-car families with multiple householders needing to travel, as well as those in low-income households without a car. Trip purposes included work, medical, shopping and more.

Other trip needs expressed included better connection to the MTA for trips to Ukiah and beyond, to connect in Sonoma County to the Airporter or SMART train services.

**Brooktrails**  
**Population Characteristics**  
**7.3 square miles (CDP)**

3,632 residents — *Census designated place (CDP) population*

33 years median age

11% Age 65+

59% Working ages (18-64)

30% Children & youth (0-17)

15% Persons with disabilities

\$88,000 Median household income, which is 105% of California median household income of \$84,000 (*U.S. Census Quick Facts, 2021 dollars*)

7% Persons in poverty

5% Older adults in poverty

4% Children in poverty

4% Households without a car

6% Limited English proficient individuals, 5+ years (LEP)

Source: *U.S. Decennial Census, American Community Survey ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate (Appendix A)*

Listening session participants expressed concern about pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure needs. They underscored ongoing challenges of emergency evacuation planning, made ever more urgent by the Fall 2020 evacuation experiences from the Oak Fire threat.

### Selected Brooktrails E-Survey Findings Regarding Mobility

The 63 Brooktrails residents responding to the study E-survey were about evenly split between persons working and those not working, with just a few students. Four-in-ten respondents were aged 60 and older; 21% reported having a disability.

“Trip needs you have trouble meeting” are detailed in Figure 12. **Local trips into Willits** (in green, and by trip purpose in red) were reported as a need by more than three-quarters of respondents (76%). **Trip needs into Ukiah** (in gold) were highest for **shopping** (78%) and **medical** (70%) purposes. One-third of respondents indicated that **out-of-county medical trips** (in blue) were difficult to make.

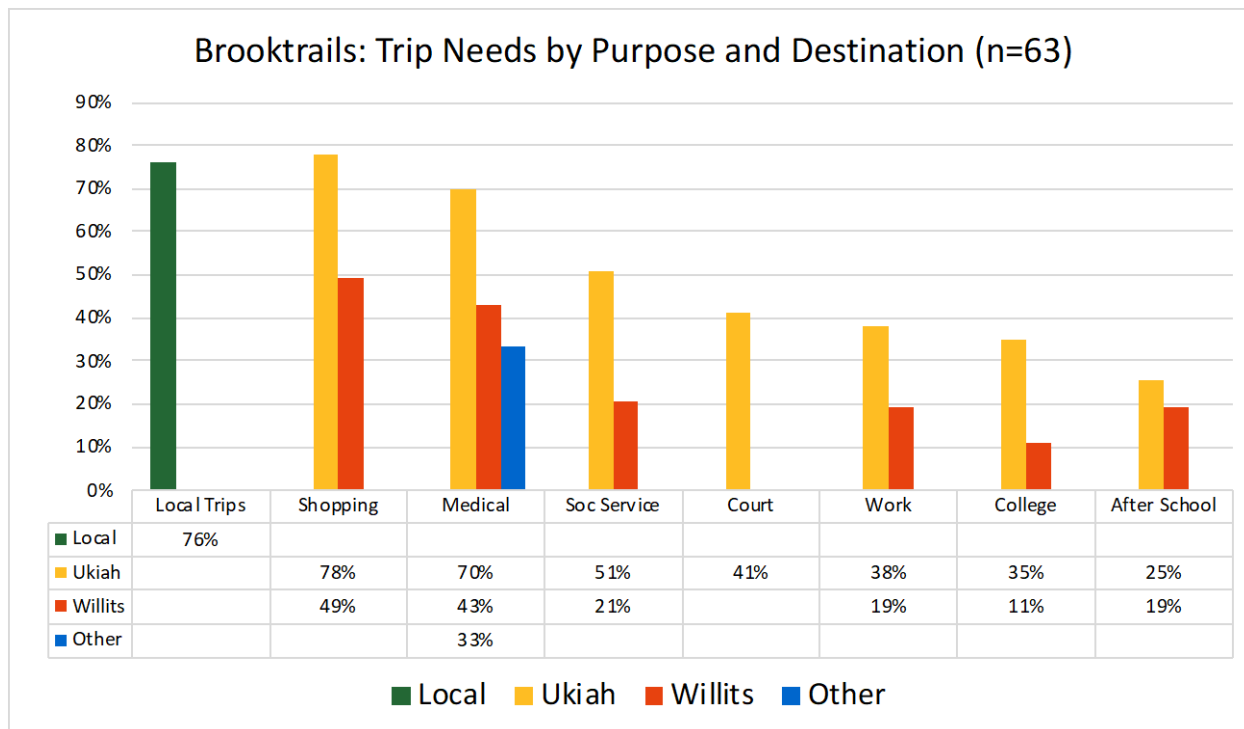


Figure 12, Brooktrails E-survey reported trip needs by purpose and destination.

Access to a vehicle is generally an important indicator of the degree of need experienced. While the vast majority of Brooktrails households (96%) have a vehicle, 21% of the survey respondents did not. In addition, the Brooktrails population of working families with children, present transportation needs even among households with vehicles.

## Local Resources

**Willits Senior Center Dial-A-Ride** is a significant transportation service available to Brooktrails residents, although restricted to persons *ages 55 and older or with disabilities*. This service operated by the Senior Center is funded by the Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA). Dial-A-Ride features include:

- Operates weekdays between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Advance reservation, through the Senior Center, is required for Brooktrails pick-ups and service to or from Willits.
- Fares: \$2.00 one-way trip within Willits; \$4.00 one-way trip between Brooktrails and Willits; \$4.50 one-way trips from Brooktrails' third gate.

Among Listening Session participants, including older adults and their family members, there seemed to be limited or confusing knowledge of the Willits Senior Center Dial-A-Ride, a service for which many of these individuals would be eligible.

The Willits Senior Center leadership has consistently expressed interest in doing more to support mobility of Brooktrails' residents, while recognizing that the existing Dial-A-Ride program has a limited focus on Brooktrails' older adults and persons with disabilities.

**Howard Memorial Adventist Health — Wheels to Wellness Program** is operating a grant-based transportation service to aid patients discharged from the hospital and, to a more limited degree, patients needing nonemergency medical transport to the hospital. Brooktrails residents are eligible for this assistance, which is a new program begun during 2022.

**Brooktrails Township Community Services District (CSD)** has engaged leadership and fosters community participation in a wide range of activities. The CSD representatives were supportive of this study's community Listening Sessions and efforts to address transportation needs.

## About Potter Valley

### The Place and its Residents

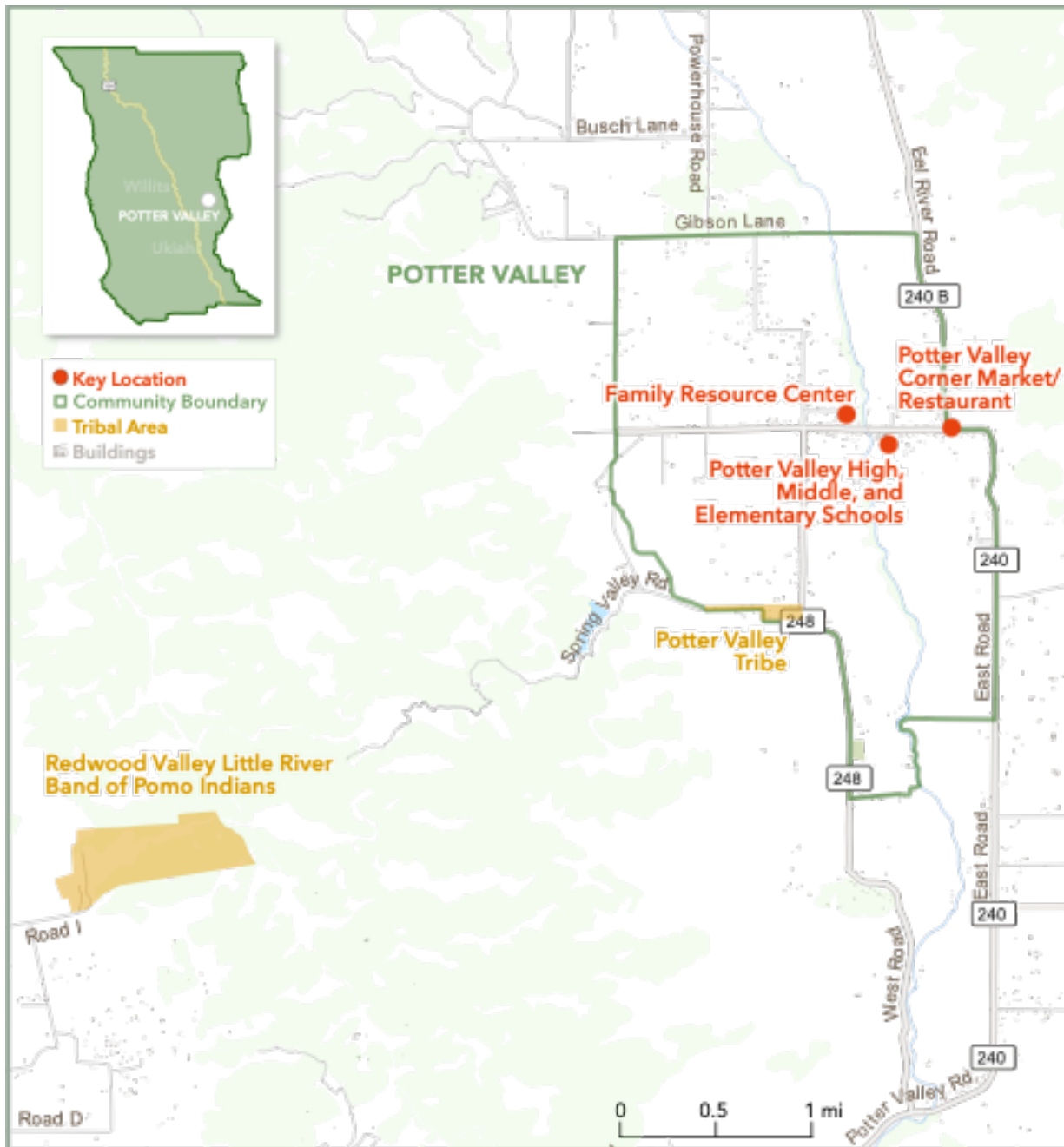


Figure 13, Map of Potter Valley and surrounding area.

This four-square-mile community, set in an agricultural valley, is 18 miles northeast of Ukiah (Figure 13). At close to 700 residents, Potter Valley is similar in size to Hopland, the two smallest of the five communities. Potter Valley has primary and secondary schools, a Family Resource Center, a convenience store, gas station and restaurant but

no other retail or grocery store. While its level terrain is bikeable and walkable, there are few improved sidewalks.

The Potter Valley median age of 41 is below the County median of 44 years. Older adults are 17% of residents, while children and youth under age 18 are a quarter (24%) of the population.

Poverty is about half of countywide indicators, with 7% of the total population and 0% of children living below federal poverty levels. Older adults in poverty are 3% of the community's residents. The census reports no households with zero vehicles and 5% of persons aged 5 and older with limited English proficiency (LEP).

### Mobility Needs We Heard About

There is no health care available in Potter Valley. **Medical and dental trips** were most commonly cited among Listening Session participants with trips generally into Ukiah.

**Youth transportation needs** were multi-faceted, including after-school enrichment activities, driver's education, part-time work and trips to college classes.

**Persons without access to a vehicle** include older adults who are decreasing driving, persons who have lost their drivers' licenses, those without a reliable vehicle and those who are unable to drive due to temporary or continuing disability. Listening Session participants described a broad range of needs for trips to Ukiah, including:

- Pharmacy trips after doctor's appointments
- Grocery shopping
- Fingerprinting for jobs
- Job interviews
- DUI classes
- Recreational activities

### Potter Valley Population Characteristics

#### 4.0 square miles (CDP)

665 residents — *Census designated place (CDP) population*

41 years median age

17% Age 65

58% Working ages (18-64)

24% Children & youth (0-7)

5% Persons with disabilities

\$69,000 Median household income, which is 82% of California median household income of \$84,000 (*U.S. Census Quick Facts, 2021 dollars*)

7% Persons in poverty

3% older adults in poverty

0% children in poverty

0% households without a car

5% Limited English proficient individuals, 5+ years (LEP)

Source: *U.S. Decennial Census and American Community Survey ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate (Appendix A)*

Both older adults and youth indicated interest in traveling elsewhere in Mendocino County for recreational purposes, for example, to destinations along the Coast.

### Selected Potter Valley E-Survey Findings Regarding Mobility

Among Potter Valley residents, 42 responded to the study’s E-survey. More than half (52%) were aged 60 and older, about one-third between the ages of 30 to 60, and 20% younger than age 30. More than half (52%) were not employed, 19% did not have a reliable car and 7% indicated they had a disability.

In terms of “trip needs I have trouble meeting,” 69% of respondents expressed a need for **local trips** within Potter Valley. Trip needs to Ukiah were even more common with three quarters of respondents (74%) needing to travel to **Ukiah for medical** appointments, 69% for shopping and 52% for social services. Willits is also a destination, with almost half reporting **Willits shopping and medical** (48% each) trip needs. Forty percent (40%) indicated **out-of-county medical trip needs**, which they had difficulty meeting. These findings are detailed in Figure 14.

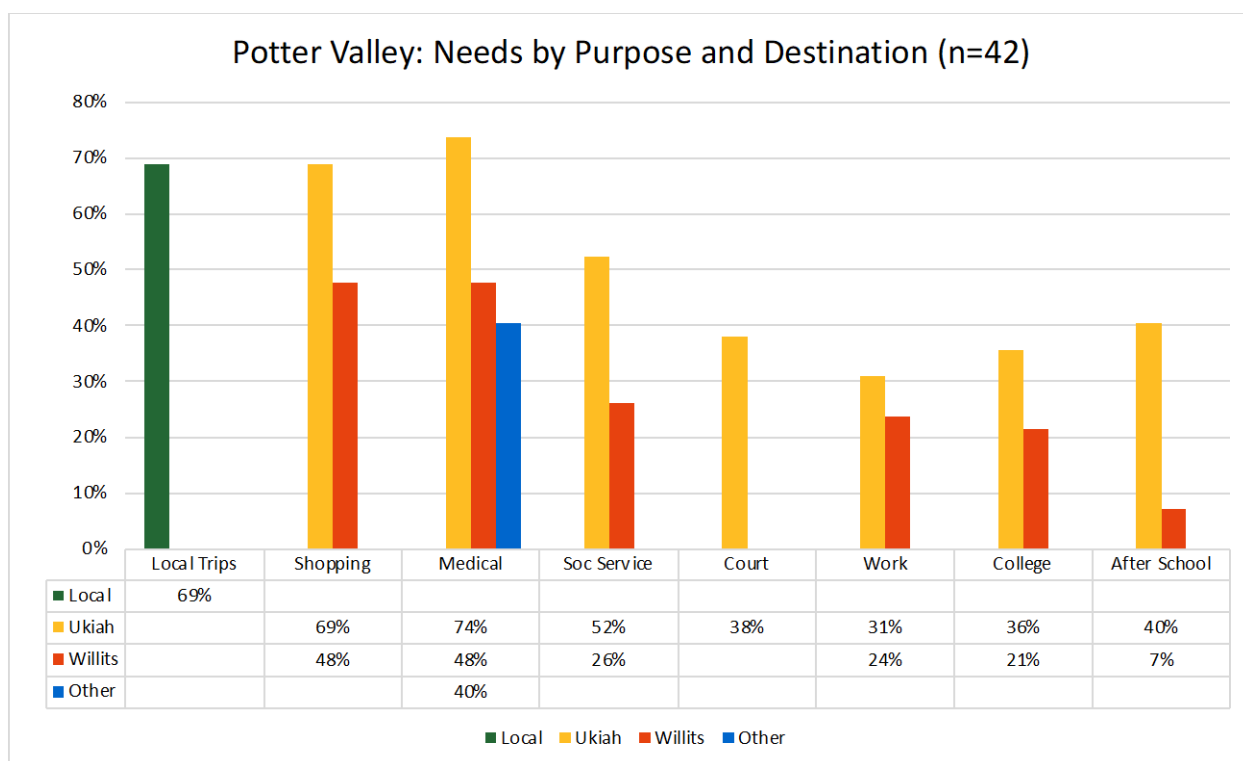


Figure 14, Potter Valley E-survey reported trip needs by purpose and destination.

While the census does not report any Potter Valley households without vehicles, this is not a true picture. Among the survey respondents, 19% did not have a car or access to a vehicle. At our Listening Sessions, we heard from a number of residents without private transportation, ranging from a teen who did not drive, a young mother, an elderly

woman and a young man whose disability prevented him from driving. Potter Valley is not as remote as Covelo or Laytonville, but making a trip to Ukiah, without a vehicle, is still very difficult.

## **Local Resources**

Potter Valley has no public transportation.

The **Potter Valley Family Resource Center** (FRC) is a strong, community-based organization that provides services to children and youth, to families and to older adults. It does own an eight-passenger sedan that had been operational with funding from the Mendocino Community Foundation until those funds ran out. It was parked and not operational for FRC consumers, at the time of the study's Listening Session in Potter Valley.

The **Potter Valley School District** provides public education to about 200 elementary students and 70 high schoolers. These include children and youth from the Redwood Valley Little River Band of Pomo Indians. The school district provides some transportation to its students, but, as with many institutions, has been having difficulty hiring and retaining drivers. The school board had approved various work assignments that made it possible to employ drivers full-time, rather than the historical part-time, split-shift positions. Interest was expressed in "sharing" a driver with the FRC if funding could be found. However, varying time-of-day school requirements made such sharing potentially problematic.

## About Hopland

### The Place and its Residents

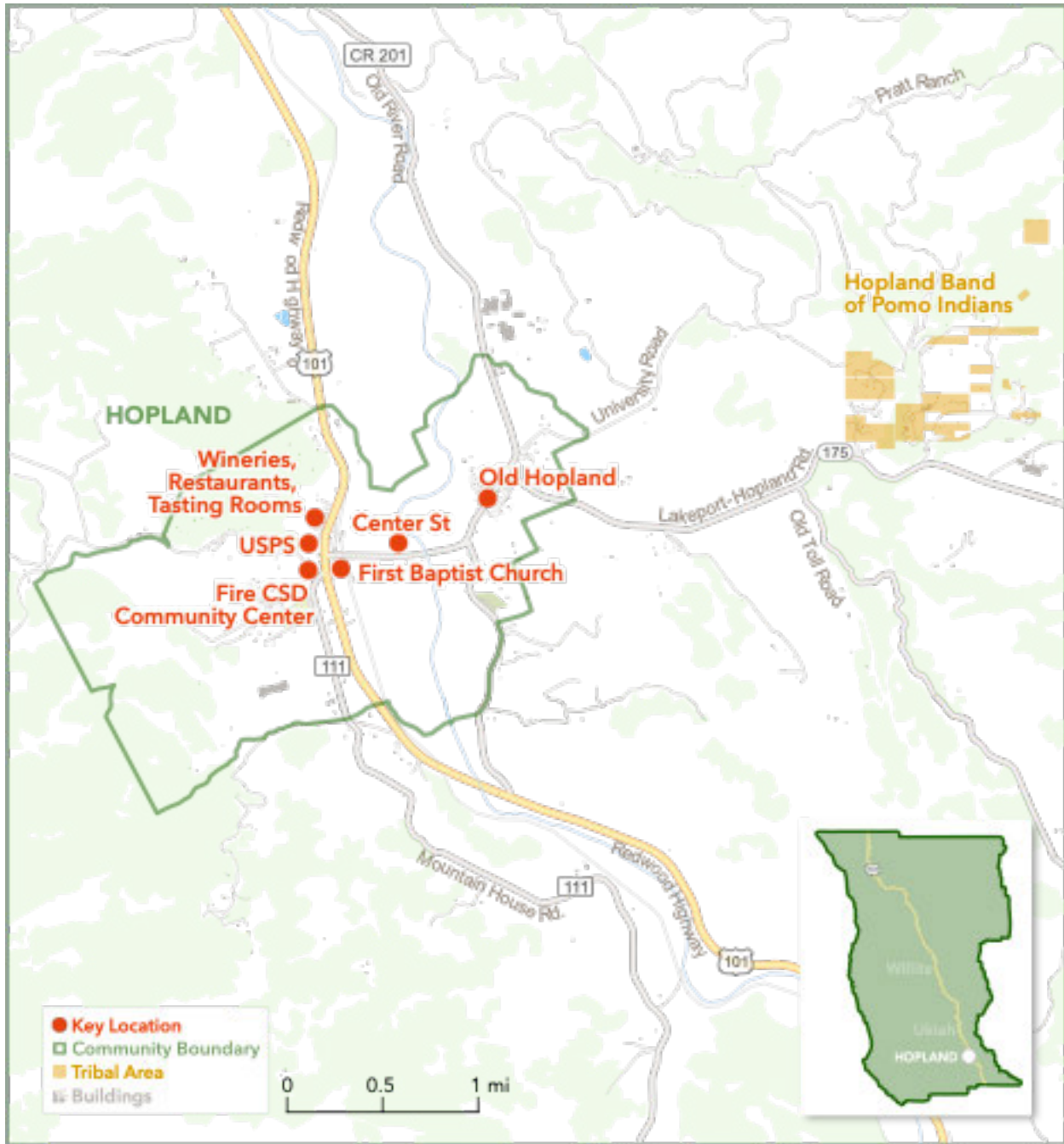


Figure 15, Map of Hopland and surrounding area.

Hopland is the southernmost study community, straddling Highway 101, about 14 miles south of Ukiah (Figure 15). Its three-and-a-half square miles are home to almost 700 residents, similar in size to Potter Valley. Hopland winery tasting rooms and restaurants, particularly in Old Hopland, are oriented to visiting tourists. Local retail is predominantly



tourist-oriented and there is no grocery store. Local stakeholders estimate that Hopland-area establishments — wineries, restaurants, the mill and agriculture — employ about 1,000 persons, most of whom travel into Hopland.

The Hopland Band of Pomo Indians is a federally recognized tribe, located on reservation lands several miles to the east of Hopland.

Hopland’s median age of 47 is slightly above the County median of 44 years. Working-aged adults are 65% of the population, nine points above the countywide proportion. Older adults are two-in-ten (22%), children and youth are 16% and persons with disabilities are 14% of the community’s population.

Income levels are 71% of the statewide median household income. Two-in-ten (20%) people are living in poverty while more than one-third (37%) of Hopland children live in poverty. Fifteen percent (15%) speak English with limited proficiency.

### Mobility Needs We Heard About

Trip needs discussed during the Hopland Listening Session included:

- **Periodic trips into Ukiah** for a range of purposes for older adults and persons with disabilities, for youth and for those without access to a vehicle.
- **Medical and dental trip purposes** to the Ukiah Valley Medical Center and the Hillside Medical Clinic in Ukiah, and in Willits to Adventist Health Howard Memorial, where numerous orthopedic surgeries, among others, are performed.
- **Shopping trips** for groceries at Ukiah Safeway, Walmart and other stores.
- **Hopland youth trip purposes** for middle and high school students, numbering about 140, expressed desire to travel to Ukiah for after-school programs, youth enrichment, part-time work and other purposes.

### Hopland Population Characteristics 3.5 square miles (CDP)

661 residents — *Census designated place (CDP) population*

47 years median age

22% Age 65

65% Working ages (16-64)

16% Children & youth (0-16)

14% Persons with disabilities

\$60,000 Median household income, which is 71% of California median household income of \$84,000 (*U.S. Census Quick Facts, 2021 dollars*)

20% Persons in poverty

20% Older adults in poverty

37% Children in poverty

0% Households without a car

15% Persons are of Limited English proficiency (LEP)

Source: *U.S. Decennial Census and American Community Survey ACS 2021 5-Year Estimate (Appendix A)*

- **Hopland Band of Pomo Indian youth trips** — There are an estimated 60 youth who are Hopland Band members for whom transportation is challenging. The reservation is about four miles east of Highway 101, and Tribal youth are frequently observed making the long walk at night or in the heat of the day.
- **Travel into Santa Rosa** — For medical appointments or to connect with regional transportation into the Bay Area, MTA’s once daily service in each direction is not always conducive to departing and returning to Hopland on the same day.

Additionally, local employers spoke to worker transportation needs. Many Hopland employees are lower-wage workers in agriculture, restaurant or winery industries, and may not own their own vehicle. Reportedly, Hopland-area workers come predominantly from Ukiah, often traveling to early-morning work shifts for agriculture, mid-morning for wineries and afternoons for restaurants, with work end-times also varying.

### Selected Hopland E-Survey Findings Regarding Mobility

Thirty-two (32) Hopland residents responded to the study’s E-survey, as well as 28 additional responses from Ukiah residents interested in transportation to Hopland.

Among the Hopland residents, there was strong interest in **local transportation (68%)**, and **trips to Ukiah for shopping (68%)**. **Medical trip needs** included **Ukiah (59%)**, **Willits (50%)** and **out-of-county destinations (47%)**. In addition, trips for **after-school activities in Ukiah** were noted by half (50%) of respondents. Survey findings are detailed in Figure 16.

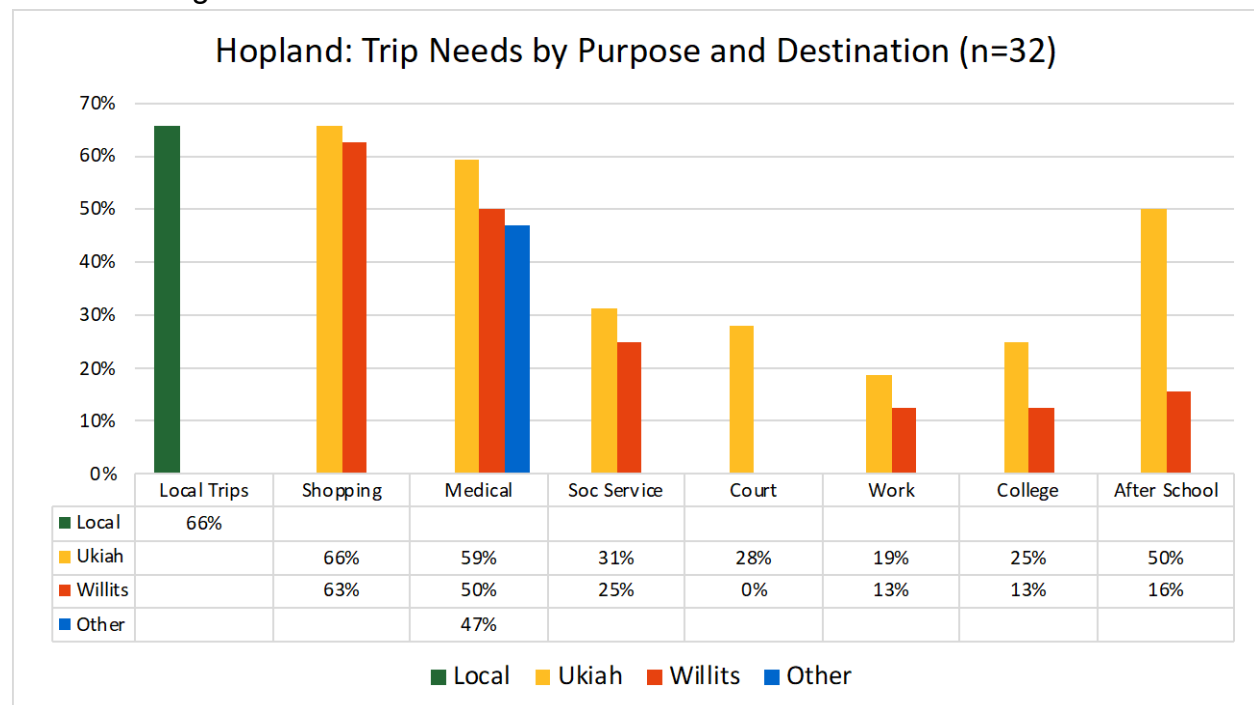


Figure 16, Hopland E-survey reported trip needs by purpose and destination.

While the census reports no zero-car households in Hopland, there are significant populations without private vehicles. This includes youth who reside in Hopland and on the Pomo Tribal lands, a small number of residents who do not drive or have a vehicle, including adults with disabilities living in group homes, in addition to low-wage workers traveling to Hopland for jobs. Among these groups, transportation needs are greatest.

## **Local Resources**

***Mendocino Transit Authority***, at the time of the Fall 2022 Listening Sessions and into 2023, provided limited fixed-route service to Hopland, which made it unique among the study communities. MTA has northbound and southbound service in Hopland but in the wrong directions to readily serve Ukiah-bound trips. As of Spring 2023, MTA Route 65 southbound to Santa Rosa stops in Hopland at 9:30 a.m. and on its return to Ukiah stops northbound at 2:50 p.m. The timing of these once-daily stops makes it impossible to travel north for Ukiah appointments or services and to be able to return the same day. Similarly, it does not allow employees who are Ukiah residents to get to early work shifts, nor mid-day or afternoon work shifts, or to return home to Ukiah from shifts ending after 2:50 p.m.

The ***Hopland Municipal Advisory Council*** (MAC) is a vigorous, engaged local organization that is communicating actively with residents and can get their participation in various civic opportunities. With membership that includes residents as well as local employers, it is an excellent resource for communication and marketing of services or potential services.

### III. Exploring Potential Solutions

The trip needs reflected in the preceding Chapter II led to the formulation of a menu of potential mobility solutions to address the presenting transportation challenges. These strategies were informed both by the nuanced description of need presented by community members and by industry examples of solutions that have worked in similar environments.

#### Eight Solutions Responsive to the Needs We Heard

Eight potential solutions were initially formulated. A customized mix of strategies was considered for each community to address the character of its individual population, its geography and specific needs. Figure 17 highlights the strategies considered and tested for each of the five study communities through an E-survey.



Figure 17, Mobility solutions proposed in response to community-identified needs.

- Hybrid Dial-A-Ride/Shuttle to Ukiah.** Residents of the four more rural communities — *Covelo, Laytonville, Potter Valley and Hopland* — all identified their trips to Ukiah for shopping, services and medical needs as their most important challenge. An understanding of the local geography (i.e., residents are widely dispersed within these communities) and the diversity of destinations in Ukiah pointed to a service design that would operate in Dial-A-Ride mode at either end of the trip but in shuttle mode between the home community and Ukiah. An awareness of the small populations, low demand and high cost of trips,

led to the proposal of a one-day-per-week, lifeline level service that would provide residents with predictable transportation, but be operationally affordable.

- **Community Van.** In *Laytonville and Potter Valley*, stakeholders and residents spoke to the need for local transportation that would get residents to the grocery store/pharmacy/clinic destinations or take children to and from after-school activities. This led to the concept of a community van, operated by a local nonprofit that could be customized to the needs of the community.
- **Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement.** In *each of the five communities*, we heard about the need for out-of-county specialty medical appointments — many in Santa Rosa but also further afield. This is a common thread among older adults in rural communities. A solution that has been used effectively in locations throughout California is a Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement program, which empowers people to ask their neighbors for assistance with transportation by reimbursing the mileage cost.
- **Community Ride Board.** While we heard from many people without reliable vehicles, we also heard from people who simply cannot afford the gas for long trips to Ukiah. The idea of pairing community members up to share rides to Willits, Ukiah, Mendocino College or beyond led to the idea of a community ride board where drivers and riders could post trips. Utilizing social media to facilitate this strategy seemed like a natural, no-cost way to aid residents in meeting their own trip needs. College students in remote communities could pair up to afford the ride to campus, parents in Brooktrails could create more efficient carpools for kids and those needing to make grocery runs to Ukiah could share the cost of gas. This strategy was considered for *all communities*.
- **App-Based Car Share.** We heard frequent stories of individuals who can drive but do not have a reliable vehicle for trips to Ukiah or beyond. Some rural communities have had success with app-based car share programs that allow residents to rent a vehicle at a low cost per hour. They can further reduce the cost by sharing the rental with other riders. This was considered for all five communities.
- **Scheduled Transportation from Brooktrails to Willits.** *Brooktrails* is more suburban than rural. The primary desire of residents was for a regular transit connection to Willits and the MTA. Sherwood Road, the only way into or out of Brooktrails, is neither walkable nor bikeable. Hence, every trip (even though it is only 5-7 miles) must be made in a vehicle.
- **Expanded Dial-A-Ride.** Unlike the more remote study communities, *Brooktrails* has some transit service. The Willits Dial-A-Ride provides service for trips within Brooktrails or to Willits but only to seniors and persons with disabilities. One

potential strategy would be to expand this service, making it available to non-seniors and/or to expand the limited hours during which it serves Brooktrails.

- **Work Transportation Between Ukiah and Hopland.** *Hopland*, unlike the other communities, is a destination for workers. Agriculture, wineries and restaurants all recruit employees who largely live in the Ukiah area and must commute to Hopland. Employers suggested the need for work-oriented transportation focused on the needs of low-wage workers that might not have private vehicles.

## Testing Solution Preferences

To test the appeal of the proposed solutions, E-Survey respondents in each community were asked “If they could be offered, how useful would each of the following transportation services be to you or your family members?” Response options were: “very useful,” “somewhat useful” and “not useful.” Respondents were *only asked* about the solutions relevant to their community. (*Please see service description language used in the survey that is shown in Figure 19 on the following pages.*)

A total of 330 responses to the E-survey from the study communities were received. This included a small group of Ukiah residents (28) who were interested in transportation to Hopland.

Each of the solutions was rated as “very useful” by one-third or more of respondents, indicating that they offered some potential to meet expressed needs. However, some options received the “very useful” rating from as many as two-thirds of respondents, indicating a much higher level of utility.

- **In Covelo**, all four solutions were fairly highly rated, but the Dial-A-Ride/Shuttle was the highest with 67% considering it “very useful.”
- **In Laytonville**, four of the five options, the Dial-A-Ride/Shuttle, Community Van, Volunteer Driver Reimbursement and Community Ride Board received the top rating by around half of respondents.
- **In Potter Valley**, the Dial-A-Ride/Shuttle, Community Van and Volunteer Driver Reimbursement were all rated “very useful” by more than 40% of respondents.
- **In Brooktrails**, Scheduled Service to Willits was a clear preference with 64% rating it “very useful.” Expanded Dial-A-Ride was the second highest at 43%.
- **In Hopland**, many respondents rated both the Dial-A-Ride/Shuttle (59%) and the Work Transportation from Ukiah (48%) as “very useful.”

After they rated the usefulness of each option, respondents were asked the question, “If only one of these programs could be implemented in your community, which would be the most useful to you?” This resulted in even clearer preferences, which are highlighted in gold in Figure 18, Potential Mobility Solutions.

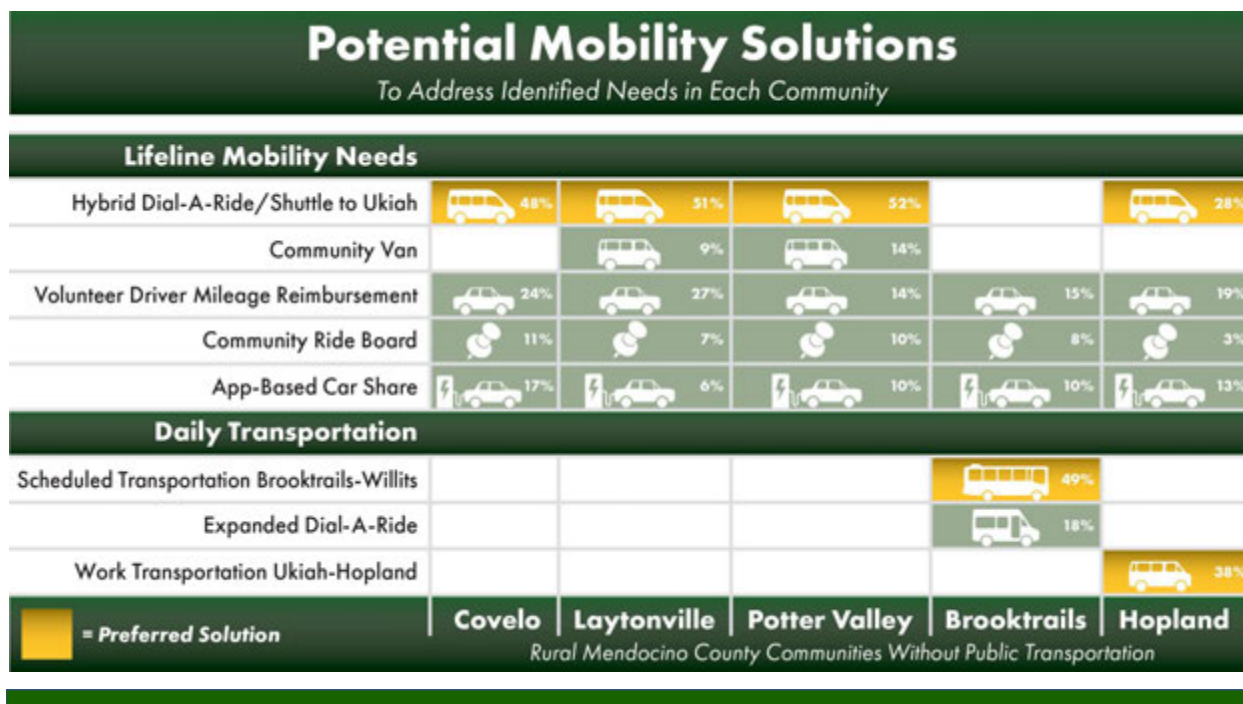


Figure 18, Responses by community of "most useful" solution if only one could be implemented.

Figure 18 shows the percentage of respondents in each community who chose each solution as the most useful "if only one could be implemented."

In Covelo, Laytonville and Potter Valley, the **Dial-A-Ride/Shuttle** was the solution preferred by the majority of respondents. While a Community Van had been very highly rated in Laytonville and Potter Valley, it became clear that the need to and difficulty of getting to Ukiah make the Dial-A-Ride Shuttle more critical.

In Brooktrails, **Scheduled Transportation to Willits** was preferred by half of all respondents.

In Hopland, respondents were less decisive, splitting between **Work Transportation** from Ukiah (38%) and the **Dial-A-Ride Shuttle to Ukiah** (28%).

It should be noted that, while they were not the "preferred solution" in any community, some very low-cost strategies were rated as very useful by a significant percentage of respondents in every community and were actually the preferred choice of a small minority of respondents. These included the **Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement** program and the **Community Ride Board**.

In every community, one-third to one-half of respondents rated the **Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement** program as "very useful." In the more remote communities of Covelo and Laytonville, 24% and 27%, respectively, chose it as their preferred solution.

Similarly, the **Community Ride Board**, the lowest cost of all the solutions, was seen as "very useful" by 38% to 52% of respondents.

The solution with the least overall appeal was the **App-Based Car Share**.

### Solution Descriptions Presented in the E-Survey

**Dial-A-Ride/Shuttle service from your home community to Ukiah — one or two days a week for shopping, medical appointments, social services, courts and other trips.** You would be able to make a reservation to have the bus pick you up at your home or a nearby location. The bus would travel from your community nonstop to Ukiah. Once in Ukiah, the bus would circulate to drop riders at their desired destinations. After a couple of hours, the bus would pick riders up to make an express return trip back to your community and drop you at your home. There would be a fare for the service. Reservations would be made in advance by phone or through an electronic app. *Covelo, Laytonville, Potter Valley, Hopland*

**Community Van.** A local organization, such as the Family Resource Center, could have a van and driver to provide rides within the local community, for a low fare. You would call the local office to request a ride. *Laytonville, Potter Valley*

**Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement Program.** If you could find a friend or neighbor to give you a ride to Ukiah or wherever you needed go, and to escort you into your destination if needed, this program would provide mileage reimbursement (about 50 cents per mile) to “pay” the driver. You would have a limited number of miles available each month. *All*

**Community Ride Board.** This would be an electronic platform where residents could post their need for a ride or their ability to provide a ride. This would allow people to make arrangements for sharing the ride and splitting the expenses. *All*

**Expanded Dial-A-Ride Service.** The Willits Senior Center currently provides Dial-A-Ride service (M-F, 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.) to seniors and persons with disabilities who live in Brooktrails. An advance reservation and fare are required. This service would be expanded with an additional vehicle at certain hours to accommodate the general public and a somewhat longer day (8 a.m. to 7 p.m.). It would also allow for connections to the Mendocino Transit Authority bus network for service within Willits, as well as to and from Ukiah. *Brooktrails*

**Scheduled transportation service between Brooktrails and Willits.** A regularly scheduled bus or van would provide service that would pick up/drop off at Sherwood Market, the Brooktrails CSD Community Center and downtown Willits, three or four round trips per day. In Willits, passengers would be able to connect to the MTA bus system. *Brooktrails*

**Work transportation between Ukiah and Hopland.** A regularly scheduled transportation service between Ukiah and Hopland that would be coordinated with work start and end times at Hopland employment sites. It would be provided for a reasonable fare. The service could connect with the MTA bus network at the Pear Center or Library in Ukiah. *Hopland*

Figure 19, Solution language from the Fall 2022 E-survey.



Mendocino County Rural Inland Communities Mobility Solutions  
**Volume 3: Rural Mobility Action Plan, Draft**

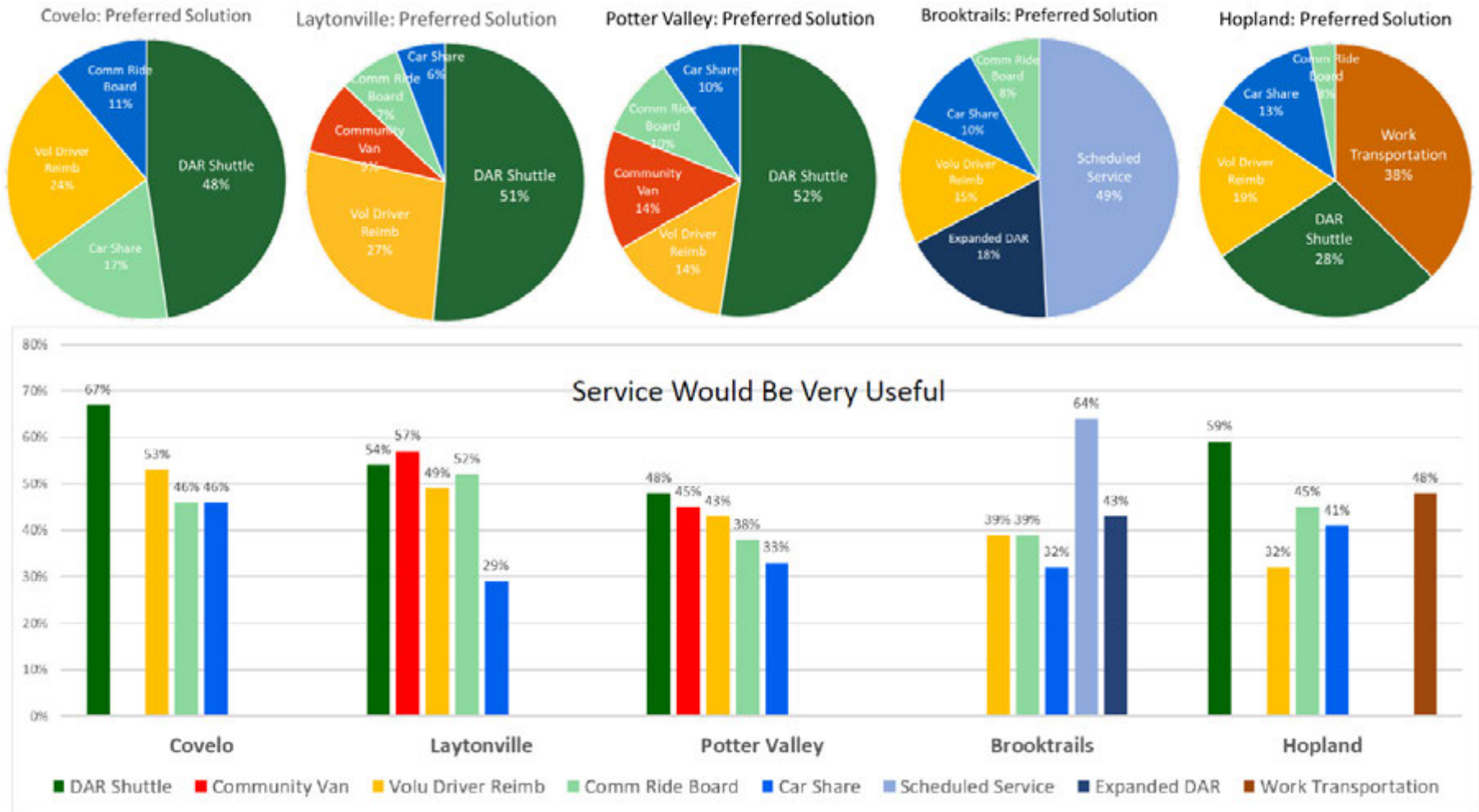


Figure 20, Detailed E-survey responses by community as to preferred solution and reported usefulness of each service.

## IV. Recommended Rural Life-line Services Action Plan

Chapter IV sets forth the study's recommendations for each community, comprising the Rural Mobility Action Plan. These resulted from a significant process of dialogue and analysis to get to solutions that can balance the challenging factors of rural transportation service delivery. Chapter V will describe institutional choices, including three alternatives for the operation of the Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle. Cost estimates presented in this Chapter IV assume that MTA operates the Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle services and that community-based organizations administer the Countywide Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement program, the Community Van in Potter Valley and the Community Ride Boards. Other operational arrangements would result in differing costs.

### Establishing a Rural Mobility Vision

To develop Rural Mobility Action Plan that is feasible to implement, as noted at the outset, critical factors must be addressed. These include:

- **A service mix** — responsive to an array of community-based mobility needs.
- **Sustainable services** — of low-cost and for which identified funding exists.
- **Leadership** — to effectively implement and promote services, ensuring their use.

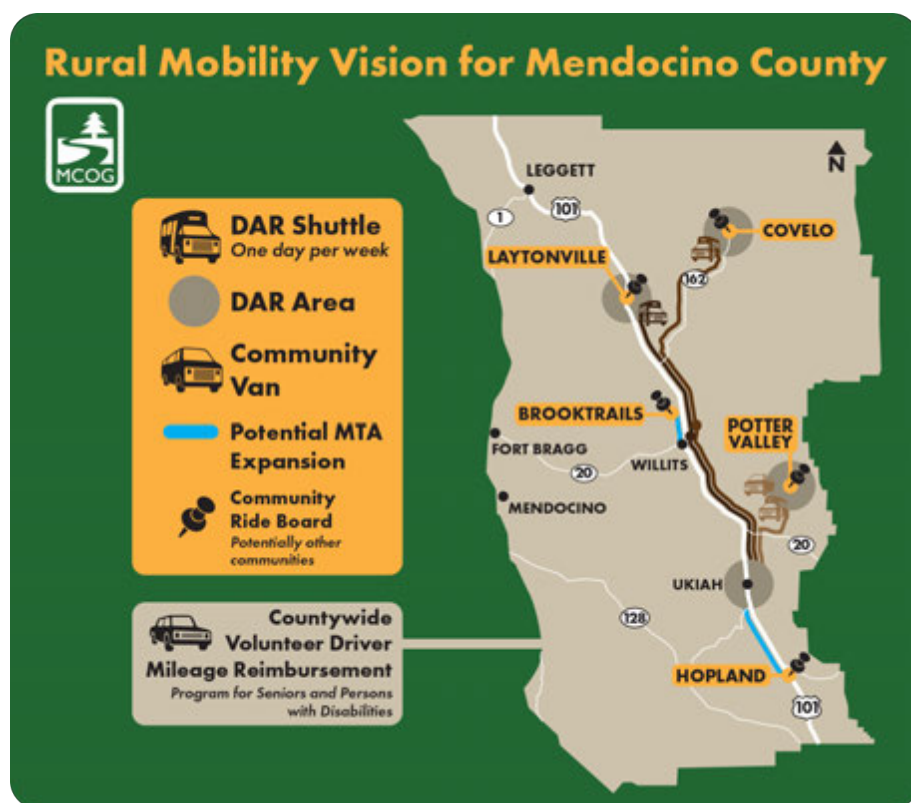


Figure 21, A Mendocino County rural mobility vision of vehicle-based services and other programs.

The vision embracing these critical factors is depicted in Figure 21, a mix of vehicle-based services and other programs to improve rural mobility in Mendocino County.

## Covelo and Laytonville Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle

### Problem

For the two most isolated communities of Covelo and Laytonville, the greatest challenge has been distance, the length of one-way trips between these communities and destinations in Willits and Ukiah. Among the residents — almost 1,400 in the Covelo CDP, almost 1,200 in Laytonville, plus those from surrounding Tribal lands — to consider using public transportation, riders must be **able to trust** that a service for these long trips will get them down and home again. The service must be **affordable** — both in terms of rider fares and its overall operating cost. And it must be **effective**, getting riders to where they need to go, even given the long trip. Many described a trip into Ukiah as involving multiple necessary destinations, for example, for doctor, pharmacy, and grocery shopping purposes. This requires much of the day to travel down, around the community and to return home again.

### Opportunity and Objective

The most frequently cited trip needs of shopping and scheduled medical appointments can be addressed by regularly scheduled service, albeit operating at a lifeline service level of only once weekly, at least during the first year. This modest service level provides for a low operating cost by which to test demand. Will people try the service and use it over time? Will expansion be supported?

Also, important to making this life-line service work is local marketing and promotion by a community-based organization, to build awareness and to educate prospective riders as to how it works.

⇒ The objective of the Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle is to establish a life-line, one-day-a-week, regularly scheduled service to reliably meet resident needs in a cost-effective manner, with a marketing and promotion element to help build ridership.

### Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle

#### First-Year Costs to Implement:

\$65,000 vehicle purchase,  
an accessible 8-to-12  
passenger van  
\$30,000 MTA Admin. costs  
\$15,000 to CBO for first-year  
education and marketing  
outreach for two  
communities

\$110,000 Total

#### Second-Year Costs to implement One-Day/ Week, Per Community:

Operations & Admin. –  
\$68,227 for Covelo  
\$55,460 for Laytonville  
Marketing & Promotion  
\$10,400 for Covelo  
\$10,400 for Laytonville

\$144,487 Total

#### Third-Year Costs to Implement Two-Days/ Week, Per Community:

Operations & Admin. -  
\$141,912 for Covelo  
\$115,357 for Laytonville  
Marketing & Promotion  
\$10,816 for Covelo  
\$10,816 for Laytonville

\$278,901 Total

## Operational Description<sup>2</sup>

This service proposes to pilot a one-day-a-week service, for each of the two communities of Laytonville and Covelo, structuring service to meet trip needs that can be planned for the scheduled day-of-service operation.

Its hybrid structure envisions Dial-A-Ride collection of riders within their home community for those who have placed an advance reservation, as well as stopping at a regularly scheduled local stop for last-minute riders without a reservation. A direct shuttle service is provided into Ukiah. Conceivably, a single stop could be made in Willits, upon request, to access some of the destinations unique to Willits that community members identified.

The shuttle would return to Dial-A-Ride mode within Ukiah to take riders directly to their desired destinations. During a lay-over of several hours, riders could be transported to more than one drop-off location, to the extent that time allows. At an appointed time, the vehicle would pick all riders up for the return shuttle trip to their home community. Once back in Laytonville or Covelo, the vehicle would again operate in Dial-A-Ride mode to drop people at their homes at the end of the afternoon.

Presuming operation by the MTA, the vehicle would be garaged at MTA's Willits facility. MTA's general manager envisions operating the outbound vehicle trip as "live service" from Willits to Covelo and from Willits to Laytonville. In this way, some riders could originate their trip in Willits, perhaps returning home after several days away.

The marketing and promotion of these services is critical to their success. This could be most effectively implemented by a local partner, a community-based organization which could help connect community members with this one-day-a-week service by building awareness and educating potential riders in its use.

Service expansion to two days a week, for either or both communities, would be programmed only if ridership benchmarks are met and sufficient funding is available. A recommended benchmark for considering expansion would be if there are four (4) or more unique passengers on average, per day in successive quarters.

## Timing and Implementation Topics

### **First-year activities:**

- Order and take delivery of a single 7-to-12 passenger accessible van, hybrid electric, diesel or regular gasoline-powered.
- Develop a three-year operations plan and a marketing plan, coordinated between the operator, MTA, and the community-based organization(s) willing and able undertake the marketing effort.

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<sup>2</sup> Additional operating detail is provided in this study's VOLUME 2: SOLUTIONS FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS, available on MCOG's website [www.medicinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports](http://www.medicinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports).

- Establish pilot service reporting protocols.
- Begin implementation of targeted community-level promotion to build awareness for the service, toward start-up at the outset of the second year.

### **Second-year activities:**

- Initiate vehicle operations, in line with operations plan.
- Continue and expand community-based organization(s) marketing and public education plan to promote ridership, including commencing work with Ukiah-based stakeholders (destinations) to advise them of the Laytonville and Covelo service days each week.
- Initiate reporting protocols, related to vehicle operations, to ridership and to marketing and promotion activities.
- Provide quarterly reporting to MCOG, for subsequent sharing with MCOG's SSTAC, regarding service utilization and other factors.
- Make third-quarter determination as to whether or not pilot services can be considered for expansion to a second day-in-service in either community —
  - If demand is meeting benchmarks.
  - If funding for expansion services can be found.

### **Third-year activities:**

- Continue pilot services at appropriate service levels, either one day or two days a week in either or both communities.
- Continue reporting protocols and provide quarterly performance reporting to MCOG, to be shared at intervals with MCOG's SSTAC.
- The operator and MCOG, with input from the community-based organization(s), should prepare a summary of the first 18 months of operations, addressing a range of performance and cost indicators and detailing marketing initiatives to provide a report to key stakeholders.
- Recommendations for next steps should be developed by MCOG and MTA, with input from the MCOG's SSTAC.

## **Potential Funding**

**Passenger fares** are calculated at 10% of operating costs, in line with historical TDA farebox recovery requirements and are a revenue source for the new program. However, current state legislation has put the minimum farebox requirements on hold until 2026 [AB 761, Feb. 2023]. Establishing a reasonable fare, affordable by potential riders but in line with state statutory requirements, will be an element to be determined with the anticipated operations plan.

**TDA, Local Transportation Funds (LTF) and State Transit Assistance (STA)** funds are the most-likely initial funding sources by which to establish this service. There is no

immediate other alternative for this Hybrid Dial-A-Ride operating as a general public transportation program.

**California Air Resources Board, Clean Mobility Options (CMA)** funding for a five-year operating period may become an option if technology advancements improve operating ranges for zero-emissions vehicles, enabling vans to reliably travel 100+ mile ranges.

**FTA 5310 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program** could fund trip-by-trip costs for only 5310-eligible passengers. Some programs in rural California do pull-down limited operating funds from the 5310 program to offset the per-rider operating costs of general public services for those eligible riders.

**FTA 5311 apportioned funding and 5311(f) competitively awarded grants** to rural public transportation operators help support rural connections and may be possible funding sources. A small share of these funds could be allocated to provide for meaningful connection of Covelo and Laytonville residents with the regional transportation network.

## Potter Valley Community Van

### Problem

Potter Valley residents without a car or who cannot drive include older adults, youth, persons with disabilities and persons of low income. These individuals, as with most Potter Valley residents, travel to Ukiah for a wealth of reasons. Trips to secure groceries, medical services, after-school enrichment, part-time work, college classes, job interviews, DUI classes or drug testing, and more. Some local transportation service, even at lifeline levels, will help to meet some of these trip needs.

Two factors impact mobility solution choices for Potter Valley: its small size and its relative proximity to Ukiah, compared to the more northern communities. Given Potter Valley's size, there is concern about the modest numbers of trips that might present for a lifeline service, that is a service that runs only periodically and cannot meet all trip needs. Furthermore, a small-scale, local solution will contribute to defining the market for a transportation service.

### Opportunity and Objective

The Potter Valley Family Resource Center (FRC) has historically provided modest transportation to area residents and stopped only because funds ran out. A proposed formalizing of this program envisions establishing a Community Van service with a continuing role for the FRC. The initial year activity is to identify an accessible vehicle, possibly purchasing a used accessible minivan. The FRC's sedan was not accessible and therefore not allowable for providing general public transportation. Early efforts look to using FRC staff to drive the vehicle, growing to a paid part-time driver position if demand presents and funds can be identified.

### Community Van Potter Valley

#### First-Year Costs:

\$ 7,500 MTA Admin. costs

\$25,000 accessible  
minivan (possibly used)

\$32,500 Total

#### Second-Year Costs:

\$ 7,500 MTA Admin.

\$18,000 (\$1,500 per  
month to FRC to support  
insurance, fuel & vehicle  
maintenance)

\$ 6,000 FRC Admin. and  
marketing (\$500 per  
month)

\$ 31,500 Total

#### Subsequent Year Costs with Part-time Driver

\$ 7,500 MTA Admin.

\$42,000 FRC operations  
with part-time driver\\*  
(\$3,500 per month)

\$ 5,000 for FRC promotion

\$ 55,500 Total

\\* Need to be recalculated based upon actual conditions at that time.

#### Hybrid Dial-a-Ride Shuttle Potter Valley-Out-Year Costs

These costs were initially calculated in VOLUME 2: SOLUTIONS FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT but are not re-calculated here given the number of unknowns. Basic assumptions presented in VOLUME 2 could inform new out-year costs, given actual conditions.

⇒ The objective of the Potter Valley Community Van is to support a formalized transportation service through the FRC, initially using a small accessible vehicle and a voluntary driver, later potentially paying that driver or, alternatively, expanding to a Hybrid Dial-a-Ride Shuttle if demand presents and funds can be found.

### Operational Description<sup>3</sup>

An accessible minivan-type vehicle would be sought during the first year, potentially purchased as a used vehicle. This vehicle type is recommended for several reasons:

- Its accessibility is necessary to comply with state law that public transportation vehicles must be able to transport persons in wheelchairs.
- The small size, under 10 passengers, means that it will not require special DMV Class B licensing, necessary for drivers of public transit vehicles carrying 15 passengers or more.
- The small size will further limit the risk that the program requires that drivers be DMV licensed as GPPV [General Public Paratransit Vehicle (GPPV) drivers who transport children to or from school].<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Additional operating detail is provided in this study's VOLUME 2: SOLUTIONS FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS, available on MCOG's website at: [www.mendocinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports](http://www.mendocinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports)

<sup>4</sup> Extracted from the California Vehicle Code, Section 336 –

“General public paratransit vehicle” means any motor vehicle designed for carrying no more than 24 persons and the driver, that provides local transportation to the general public, including *transportation of pupils at or below the 12th-grade level to or from a public or private school or school activity [emphasis added]*, under the exclusive jurisdiction of a publicly owned and operated transit system through one of the following modes: dial-a-ride, subscription service, or route-deviated bus service. Vehicles used in the exclusive transportation of disabled persons as defined in [Section 99206.5 of the Public Utilities Code](#), or of persons 55 years of age or older, including any persons necessary to provide assistance to these passengers, are not general public paratransit vehicles.

However, transportation of attendants, companions, or both traveling together with those individuals with disabilities who are determined to be eligible for complementary paratransit services in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 ([Public Law 101-336](#)) and federal regulations adopted pursuant thereto, shall not be sufficient to qualify a vehicle as a general public paratransit vehicle.

A vehicle that provides local transportation for the general public through one of the following modes: dial-a-ride, subscription service, or route-deviated bus service, but does not provide transportation of pupils at or below the 12th-grade level to or from a public or private school or school activity, is a transit bus, as defined by [Section 642](#), and is not a general public paratransit vehicle.



Contract arrangements between the MTA and the Potter Valley FRC would be developed for the vehicle and provision of modest funding to support its fueling, insurance and maintenance. No labor expense would be included, in this first year.

FRC personnel would drive the vehicle, with the schedule for trip-making to be worked out in relation to staff availability and overall FRC programming requirements. Trip scheduling procedures — **emphasizing the times when trips could be made** — would need to be defined by FRC and clearly communicated to prospective riders. For example, trips might be available for advance reservation on only two afternoons a week. It would be important to communicate to potential riders the limits of this modest program and not to convey that it is the equivalent of a taxi-type program, providing trips to individuals whenever they might wish.

Reporting capabilities, to account for trips by day and time, destination-types and the frequency of use by individuals are an important element of the service. This information will help to inform decisions as to whether or not the Community Van funding should be increased to cover a part-time paid driver.

## **Timing and Implementation Topics**

### **First-year activities:**

- MTA to develop a subcontract capability for FRC Community Van support.
- FRC and MTA work to identify a vehicle.

### **Second-year activities:**

- FRC, with input from MTA, develops an operating plan for vehicle use, supported by funds for gasoline, insurance and some vehicle maintenance.
- FRC develops rider policies and procedures, with emphasis on clearly identifying the limits of the vehicle availability to riders, given that FRC staff is driving it.
- FRC to operate the vehicle and collect rider utilization information.
- FRC to provide quarterly reports to MTA and MCOG on utilization.

### **Third-year activities**

- MTA and MCOG with the FRC to make determinations as to how the Community Van program moves forward –
  - continuing with FRC staff as voluntary drivers;
  - introducing a paid, part-time driver position; or
  - converting the service to a Hybrid Dial-a-Ride Shuttle.

Factors impacting such determinations will include the extent to which trip demand presents and whether and what type of funding can be found. They will also depend upon who is willing and able to be the operator. Actual costs for this service, either as a continuing Community Van or expanded to include a Hybrid Dial-a-Ride Shuttle, will need to be revisited in these out-years.

## Potential Funding

**TDA, Local Transportation Funds (LTF) and State Transit Assistance (STA) funds** are the most-likely initial funding sources by which to establish this service. There is no immediate other alternative for this general public transportation program.

**California Air Resources Board, Clean Mobility Options (CMA)** funding for a five-year operating period may become an option if technological advancements improve operating ranges for zero-emissions vehicles, enabling smaller vans to travel a 100-mile range.

**FTA 5310 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program** could fund trip-by-trip costs for only those passengers who were age 65 and older or had a disability. Some programs in rural California do pull-down limited operating funds from the 5310 program to offset the per-rider operating costs of general public services for those eligible riders.

## Brooktrails Deviated Fixed-Route Service

### Problem

MTA currently contracts, through the Willits Senior Center, for Dial-A-Ride service that is provided exclusively to older adults, age 65 and older, and persons with disabilities. Youth and working-aged adults who cannot drive or do not have access to a car have no transportation out of the Brooktrails neighborhoods by which to participate in after-school activities, attend college classes, do grocery shopping or get to and from work. Walking or biking to MTA connections in Willits is perilous given safety issues on the Sherwood Road.

Brooktrails is home to 3,600 residents. Of these, 58% are adults under the age of 65 and 30% are youth under the age of 18. These more than 3,000 individuals are not eligible for the existing Willits Senior Center Dial-A-Ride. Of this group, 7% are of low income and likely to have more limited transportation choices. Additionally, 4% of Brooktrails households have no access to a vehicle and almost one-third (28%) of households have a single vehicle, where a second adult may also need transportation.

### Opportunity and Objective(s)

MTA is currently in the process of developing a SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN (SRTP) to guide its next five to seven years of operation, establishing both operating and financial plans for services that the plan recommends.

Considering within this process modest expansion of the Willits fixed-route service network can provide some level of regularly scheduled service to those Brooktrails' residents who currently have no public transportation access.

⇒ The objective of the Brooktrails Deviated Fixed-Route service is to provide expanded MTA scheduled service in the mornings and the afternoons, two days per week, to support riders not eligible for the Willits Dial-A-Ride and to meet selected trip type needs that emerged through this study.

<b>Deviated Fixed-Route, Brooktrails</b>
<b>First-Year Costs —</b>
Capital — Ford van type
\$65,000
MTA Admin.
\$7,500
<u>\$72,500 Total</u>
<b>Second-Year Costs —</b>
Operations expense for two days a week, three hours in both morning and afternoon service
<u>\$75,000 Total</u>
<b>Third-Year Costs —</b>
Operations expense for three days a week service
<u>\$114,760 Total</u>

## Operational Description

A regularly scheduled bus or van would provide service between Brooktrails and Willits two days per week. The vehicle would pick up/drop off passengers at the Sherwood Market, the Brooktrails Community Service District (CSD) Community Center and Iris and Primrose, traveling to downtown Willits two times in the morning and two times in the afternoon. In addition to the scheduled stops in Brooktrails, the service would allow for at least one — and possibly up to three — route deviation per trip to pick up passengers at their home, within a designated area. In Willits, passengers would be able to connect to the MTA bus service to travel around Willits, on to Ukiah or elsewhere in the region. Regular stops in Willits, such as near the Adventist Health Howard Memorial Hospital, would be established.

A fixed-route, fixed-schedule service with established bus stops is the traditional service delivery model for rural transportation services. Route 1 for local service in Willits is very typical of traditional transit services. Assuming operation of the service by MTA, elements to incorporate into this service could include:

- In addition to three scheduled stops within Brooktrails and the scheduled stop in Willits, the schedule could be adapted to allow the bus to either pick up or drop off up to three passengers per round trip at their home, within one mile of the scheduled stop in Brooktrails. The route deviation service could require a reservation one day in advance for each direction of the trip. Therefore, if there were four round trips between Brooktrails and Willits, there could be up to 12 reservations taken for route deviation pick-ups per day of service.
- In response to recent unmet needs requests for a commuter service from Brooktrails to Willits and input from the community outreach, one innovative service delivery option would be adding a special trip to the existing Route 1 service. The added trip — known as a tripper — would be designed to serve the needs of work trips. As an example, Route 1 would start in Brooktrails at perhaps 6:45 a.m. and make pick-ups at a few key locations before starting its regular service at 7:12 a.m. at Creekside Drive. In the afternoon, the Route 1 schedule would be adjusted for a return commuter tripper to Brooktrails after the last drop-off at the Integrated Service Center at 5:18 p.m., with a special trip to Brooktrails before making the last run, starting at the Creekside stop at 5:42 p.m. (with a likely later start time for the last run to accommodate the Brooktrails run.) This is an illustrative example of how MTA might accommodate a commuter run from Brooktrails to Willits in the morning and a commuter run from Willits to Brooktrails in the afternoon.

## Timing and Implementation Topics

### First Year:

- Order and take delivery of a single 8-to-12 passenger accessible van hybrid electric, regular gasoline-powered or all-electric.
- Develop a three-year operations plan and a marketing plan, both for implementation by MTA.

### Second Year:

- Service would operate three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon, two days a week. Two roundtrips between Brooktrails and Willits would occur in both the morning and the afternoon.
- Market and promote service.
- Collect ridership and utilization data (i.e., number of deviations) and prepare at least quarterly reports or prepare in concert with other MTA reporting protocols.

### Third Year:

- If productivity exceeds three passengers per vehicle service hour, service could be expanded to three days a week.
- Operate service, market and promote.
- Collect ridership and utilization data (i.e., number of deviations) and make determination regarding service continuation, expansion or termination.

## Potential Funding

**Passenger fares** are calculated at 10% of operating costs, in line with historical TDA farebox recovery requirements and are a revenue source for the new program. However, current state legislation has put the minimum farebox requirements on hold until 2026 [AB 761, February 2023]. Establishing a reasonable fare, consistent with Willits area fares on MTA but in line with state statutory requirements, will be an element of the operations plan.

**TDA, Local Transportation Funds (LTF)** and State Transit Assistance (STA) funds are the most-likely initial funding sources by which to establish this service. There is no immediate other alternative for this general public transportation program.

**California Air Resources Board, Clean Mobility Options (CMA)** funding eligibility will have to be determined for Brooktrails. Early information related to Brooktrails' median household income of \$88,000 suggests that it will be ineligible for CMA funding. Program and community eligibility criteria should be reviewed to see if these have changed.

## Hopland to Ukiah — Increased MTA Frequency

### Problem

Hopland transportation needs exist in two directions, in relation to Ukiah. Residents who are too young to drive, do not own a car or have a disability that prevents them from driving cannot easily get travel to Ukiah's full range of services. Workers employed in its agricultural, restaurant and winery industries must have a car to work in Hopland.

Throughout much of this study timeframe, MTA Route 65 stopped in Hopland only once in each direction, southbound to Santa Rosa at 9:30 a.m. in the morning and northbound to Ukiah at 2:55 p.m. This schedule is neither conducive to travel by Hopland residents nor employees.

Among Hopland's residents, counted as 661 in the Decennial Census, the recent American Community Survey's 2021 5-Year Estimate reported that 22% of residents are older adults and 14% are youth. Among the youth, four-in-ten are living below the poverty level. Individuals living below Federal poverty levels are almost two-in-ten, 19% of the overall population. Each group has some potential level of transportation need. Additionally, youth living on the reservation of the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, approximately 140 individuals, were reported to have recurring transportation needs getting to and from the reservation.

Persons commuting to Hopland, many reported from Ukiah, have been estimated by local employers at upwards of 1,000 workers traveling daily for employment in Hopland.

### Opportunity and Objective

MTA is currently developing its SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN (SRTP) to guide its next five to seven years of operation, establishing both operating and financial plans for services that the SRTP recommends.

The SRTP process should consider Route 65 scheduling to better accommodate those living in Hopland, on the Tribal lands of the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians or traveling to Hopland for work — all of whom currently have limited public transportation access.

⇒ The objective of increasing MTA frequency between Hopland and Ukiah is to develop scheduled service — both northbound and southbound — at specific times that will meaningfully aid the market groups identified through this study process.

### Operations, Timing and Funding

These factors should all be formally considered within the SRTP process, developed while addressing other timing requirements of Route 65. The goal is to ensure bus stop schedules provide solid, workable timing for **Hopland residents traveling into Ukiah** with a range of trip purposes and for **workers traveling into Hopland for work**.

## Countywide Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement Program

### Problem

In every Listening Session, **non-emergency medical trips needs** were reported, often to out-of-county destinations in Santa Rosa and elsewhere. These long trips are sometimes scheduled far in advance and at other times, come up when an individual becomes ill and needs to get to a particular doctor within a couple of days. While the Medi-Cal transportation benefit covers those with Medi-Cal eligibility and for Medi-Cal-approved visits, Medi-Cal transportation is unevenly available in rural Mendocino County. And importantly, **the Medi-Cal transportation benefit does not extend to Medicare beneficiaries**, persons aged 65 and older.

### Opportunity and Objective

California has had excellent experience in multiple counties in implementing volunteer driver mileage reimbursement programs, modeled after Riverside County's TRIP (*Transportation Reimbursement and Information Project*) program which is run through the non-profit Riverside Independent Living Center (ILP). In this model, the rural residents needing rides apply to the program and, if eligible, are approved for reimbursement to a volunteer driver that the rider, him or herself, will have found from among neighbors and friends.

Funding exists through Caltrans FTA Section 5310 program to fully fund volunteer driver mileage reimbursement programs, without any match required by the applicant agency. Although a competitive grant process, the 5310 program is well-funded and presently requires no match funding. A Mendocino County grant request that is an outgrowth of this Rural Mobility Study is anticipated to be favorably reviewed. The current

### Countywide Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement Program Costs

#### First Year, assuming 80 riders at 250 miles per month

Mileage Reimbursement costs:

\$112,800

CBO Marketing costs:

\$ 5,000

CBO Admin. costs @ 12%:

\$ 13,536

ILP Lease of TripTrack software:

\$ 1,695

ILP Admin. fee:

\$ 21,050 (start-up costs, plus \$21 per rider/month

\$154,081 Total 1<sup>st</sup> Year

#### Second Year, assuming 150 riders at 250 miles per month

Mileage Reimbursement costs:

\$211,500

CBO Admin. @12% + Marketing

\$ 30,380

ILP Admin plus software lease

\$ 78,875

\$320,755 Total 2<sup>nd</sup> Year

Note: CBO=Community-based organization; ILP=Independent Living Center, a non-profit based in Riverside County.

grant cycle is open through August 2023, for funding that would likely commence late in the 2024 calendar year.

⇒ The objective of this Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement Program is to establish a countywide program for rural older adults and persons with disabilities, fully funded by Caltrans FTA Section 5310 funds, and enabling riders to be driven by volunteers to non-emergency medical appointments and related purposes within and outside of Mendocino County.

### **Operational Description**<sup>5</sup>

In this program design, participants choose and recruit their own volunteer drivers from among friends and neighbors they know and trust to drive them in their personal vehicles. Mileage reimbursement, through the Program Administrator, is made each month, after trips have been provided and reported. Mileage costs are reimbursed at per-mile rates below IRS rates but will meaningfully contribute to the cost of gasoline.

Participants are usually approved for a certain number of miles per month, a mileage budget, that reflects their predictable nonemergency medical trips in frequency and distance. This could include other essential trip purposes if these can be made within the rider's approved mileage cap per month. All trip specifics are negotiated between the participant and their volunteer(s). And, upon reimbursement, the participant pays the volunteer. This limits the liability of the Program Administrator who is making payments to the participant but not to the driver.

A community-based organization, such as North Coast Opportunities or the Family Resource Center Network, is recommended to manage this program, given strong ties with the rural communities and their residents. The community-based organization can choose — or not — to contract for program administration by the nonprofit Riverside Independent Living Partnership (ILP), which administers Riverside County TRIP, to handle mileage tracking, invoicing, paying checks and reporting. ILP currently plays this role for multiple California counties that range in size from small Tuolumne County to Los Angeles County.

Features of this volunteer driver mileage reimbursement model include:

- Program Manager develops eligibility criteria and an eligibility process, and then certifies applicants and assigns mileage cap and trip purposes or eligibility type, based on program and budget parameters.
  - When approving a participant's application, mileage caps and trip purpose conditions can be determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the participant's need.

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<sup>5</sup> Additional operating detail is provided in this study's VOLUME 2: SOLUTIONS FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS, available on MCOG's website at: [www.mendocinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports](http://www.mendocinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports).



- Enrolled participants choose and recruit their own volunteer drivers from friends and neighbors they know and trust.
- Participants submit a monthly reimbursement form, receive funds and then directly reimburse their volunteer driver(s). If ILP were contracted to be Administrator, they would handle the reporting and reimbursement functions.
- Rides are scheduled by participant and volunteer drivers, as mutually convenient.
- Transportation is provided in volunteer drivers' personal vehicles.
- 24/7 transportation is available 24/7, negotiated between participants and volunteers.
- Door-through-door and other assistance is available, as negotiated between participants and volunteers.
- Travel can be provided to other communities or outside the county, depending on program parameters. Participants will only receive reimbursement up to their mileage allotment.
- Rides are free to the participant.

### **Timing and Implementation Topics**

#### ***First-year activities***

These will largely focus on securing the funding that will fully fund this program, without any required match, through a successful grant application to Caltrans FTA Section 5310 program. Application by a community-based program is strongly encouraged — in part because of their ties to local rural communities, and in part because MTA will itself be applying for FTA 5310 funds for its Mobility Manager position and is focused on that activity and associated public transit services, rather than on this volunteer driver program.

Assuming a successful application and grant award, funds will not start to flow to the community-based organization until Caltrans executes a Standard Agreement, usually 12 to 18 months after the grant cycle closes.

#### ***Second-year activities***

As noted above, program eligibility criteria and application processes will be established, with a focus on rural residents and nonemergency medical trips. Promotion of the program will commence, focused on rural residents of Mendocino County who are older adults and persons with disabilities.

The 5310 grantee — the community-based organization — would be responsible for marketing the program, the application process, eligibility and enrollment. It could execute a contract with ILP to administer the program, pay participants their mileage reimbursement checks, and provide reporting as to the numbers of participants, trips and reimbursed miles, among other elements.

The initial year of operations envisions enrolling 80 participants for each of the 12 months and reimbursing them at \$0.47 per mile for an average of 250 miles per month.

### ***Third-year activities***

Marketing and promotion of the program continues with the goal of doubling the number of participants. The second program year envisions enrolling 150 participants for each of the 12 months and reimbursing them at \$0.47 per mile for an average of 250 miles per month. If Caltrans has written just a two-year contract, re-application to the FTA 5310 program would commence, to secure another two to three years of funding.

## **Community-Level Electronic Ride Boards and Marketing**

### **Problem**

Each community presented unique transportation needs that cannot be readily served by other proposed solutions but reinforced the need for expanded mobility options for residents of all ages. At the same time, a communications portal is needed to communicate to rural residents what transportation is available and how to access it.

By encouraging ridesharing among community members, a Community Ride Board program will address the fact that some people lack reliable vehicles, while others have vehicles but cannot afford gas.

- In Covelo, the Community Ride would provide a useful means of coordinating trips to college or for after-school activities, which would not be served by a one- or two-day-a-week shuttle.
- In Laytonville, it may be used to match travelers for trips to work or college in Willits, Ukiah or elsewhere.
- In Potter Valley, the program might assist families in organizing carpools for picking up and dropping off youth.
- In Brooktrails, the Community Ride Board could assist college students in finding rideshare partners and families in organizing carpools for picking up and dropping off youth for school and after-school activities in Willits and Ukiah.
- In Hopland, it could expand work transportation options.

### **Opportunity and Objective**

The concept of the Community Ride Board was tested in all five communities and was rated as very useful by one-third to one-half of respondents in each area. It will be a useful supplement to other mobility options to meet hard-to-serve, unique trip needs.

As a supplement to a mobility options package, this program could be included in an FTA Section 5310 grant application for operations funds to support ride board administrators.

⇒ The objective of the Community Ride Board is to develop technology tools of social media platforms to connect riders interested in ridesharing, using a local, voluntary coordinator to provide some level of “vetting” of participants.

### **Operational Description**<sup>6</sup>

Administration of this largely voluntary activity is envisioned by a community-based organization, supported with modest FTA Section 5310 funds for its Mobility Manager function.

The Community Ride Board would be an online platform where registered community residents could share their *need for a ride* or *willingness to share their ride* — to Willits, Ukiah or beyond. This strategy would encourage and facilitate ridesharing on common trips and enable residents to arrange shared trips and shared gas costs, benefitting both the rider and driver. Information about local transportation options (Dial-A-Ride Shuttle, Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement, etc.) could be posted, or periodically reposted, as circumstances warrant supporting a transportation information portal.

Features of this program include:

- Electronic Ride Boards independently administered by each community, by volunteer mobility managers. These mobility manager administrators would be paid a small stipend — \$150 per month — to aid in recruiting voluntary administrators, such as college students, library employees or someone associated with the Municipal Advisory Council, from each community.
- There would be value in connecting Community Ride Board administrators throughout the county; they could get together via a videoconference meeting a couple of times a year to share tips, experiences and lessons learned.
- It is hoped that local community leaders would take on the recruitment of these voluntary administrators. For example, the **Covelo Public Library**, the **Laytonville** and **Potter Valley Family Resource Centers**, the **Brooktrails CSD**,

#### **Community Ride Boards and Voluntary Mobility Manager Administrators**

##### **Countywide**

##### **Initial Year Costs —**

\$150 monthly stipend per coordinator in each of five communities

\$4,440 for CBO admin. and marketing

\$13,400 Total

##### **Second-Year Costs -**

\$150 monthly stipend per coordinator in each of five communities

\$4,440 for CBO admin. and marketing

\$13,400 Total

Note: CBO=Community-based organization

<sup>6</sup> Additional operating detail is provided in this study’s VOLUME 2: SOLUTIONS FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS, available on MCOG’s website at: [www.mendocinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports](http://www.mendocinocog.org/mobility-solutions-study-reports).

the **Hopland MAC** or **North Coast Opportunities** might be able and willing to identify and encourage volunteer Community Ride Board administrators.

- A Facebook Group could be used to provide the electronic interface. Facebook is already heavily used by the residents of the various communities. In fact, it was reported that some people already use their existing community Facebook pages to ask for rides.
- Facebook Groups has a variety of tools for moderating membership and content. Administrators will ensure that the group is used for its designed purpose and is a safe environment for the communities' residents.

Elements of the private group moderation could include:

- Simple screening of participants to confirm rider is licensed and vehicle is roadworthy.
- Rules to which to adhere in requesting, confirming, providing or taking a ride and assuring fairness in sharing gas costs.
- Reviews of drivers and of riders.

### **Timing and Implementation Topics**

#### ***First-year activities***

These will largely focus on securing the funding that will fully fund the stipends for this program through a successful grant application to Caltrans FTA Section 5310 program. It is recommended that this be a supplemental activity to the Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement program, included as part of the same 5310 grant package, to pursue stipend support for these voluntary mobility manager administrators.

#### ***Second-year activities***

During the second year, the successful 5310 grantee (hopefully the Family Resource Center Network) will focus on identifying and recruiting voluntary mobility manager administrators and with them, developing the electronic platforms (private Facebook Groups) to promote the program broadly within each community.

#### ***Third-year activities***

Marketing and promotion of the program continues with the goal of increasing the number of participants.

### **Funding Possibilities**

**FTA 5310 Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program** can fully fund these voluntary administrator stipends as Mobility Managers. Mobility management involves coordination of transportation resources and the communication of information about services to riders and prospective riders. The budget for this year anticipates a \$150

stipend per month for up to five voluntary mobility manager administrators, plus some small funds for marketing and oversight by the hosting community-based organization.

The current Section 5310 grant application cycle was released by Caltrans on July 1, 2023, with an application deadline of August 31, 2023. Grant offerings are generally made by Caltrans approximately every two years.

## **Summary of Action Plan Expense and Potential Revenue Estimates**

Bringing together the costs and potential revenue estimates of this Rural Mobility Action Plan, Figure 22 presents a three-year summary of expenses and possible revenues. These are presented by program and in relation to capital and operating costs.

Selected assumptions include:

- Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle operational costs were developed using costing techniques similar to those currently in use by MTA's consultant to develop its SHORT RANGE TRANSIT PLAN costs. These costs assume operation of the Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle by MTA. VOLUME 2: SOLUTIONS FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT of this study presents extensive detail as to the costing model.
- Administrative cost levels were agreed to by MTA and the Family Resource Center Network, in discussion with the consultant.
- Potter Valley vehicle operations costs with a part-time driver, projected for the third year of this plan if funds can be identified, will need to be revisited based upon operating conditions at that time.
- An inflation factor of 4% was used to increase costs in the second and third operating years.

Mendocino County Rural Inland Communities Mobility Solutions  
**Volume 3: Rural Mobility Action Plan, Draft**

Three-Year Proposed Operating Budget and Estimated Revenues - Rural Mobility Solutions			
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>OPERATING COSTS</b>			
<b>Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle (Shuttle)</b>		1 day/week	2 days/ week
Covelo Shuttle MTA Admin Costs	\$ 15,000		
Covelo Shuttle MTA Operations		\$ 68,227	\$ 141,912
Laytonville Shuttle MTA Admin Costs	\$ 15,000		
Laytonville Shuttle MTA Operations		\$ 55,460	\$ 115,357
Covelo Family Resource Center Marketing/Outreach	\$ 7,500	\$ 10,400	\$ 10,816
Laytonville Family Resource Center Marketing/Outreach	\$ 7,500	\$ 10,400	\$ 10,816
<b>Total Hybrid Dial-a-Ride Shuttle Costs by Year</b>	<b>\$ 45,000</b>	<b>\$ 144,487</b>	<b>\$ 278,901</b>
<b>Potter Valley Community Van</b>			
Community Van MTA Admin Costs	\$ 7,500	\$ 7,500	\$ 7,500
Community Van FRC Operations (fuel, maint. only @ \$1500/month)		\$ 18,000	
Community Van FRC Admin & Marketing / Outreach (\$500/ month)		\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000
Community Van FRC Operations (fuel, maint. plus part-time driver at \$3500/month)			\$ 42,000
<b>Total Potter Valley Community Van Costs Per Year</b>	<b>\$ 7,500</b>	<b>\$ 31,500</b>	<b>\$ 55,500</b>
<b>Deviated Fixed Route</b>			
Brooktrails MTA Admin	\$ 7,500		
Brooktrails MTA Operation & Marketing		\$ 75,007	\$ 114,760
<b>Total Brooktrails Deviated Fixed Route</b>	<b>\$ 7,500</b>	<b>\$ 75,007</b>	<b>\$ 114,760</b>
<b>Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement</b>			
		80 participants @ 250 miles/ month	150 participants @ 250 miles/ month
CBO Mileage Reimbursement to Participants @\$0.47/mile		\$ 112,800	\$ 211,500
CBO Marketing		\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
CBO Admin Costs (12% of participant reimbursement costs)		\$ 13,536	\$ 25,380
ILP TripTrak Software + annual enrollment + 2 hours training		\$ 1,695	\$ 1,763
ILP Admin (\$21 per participant per month invoicing & reimbursement processing costs; reporting)		\$ 21,050	\$ 77,112
<b>Total Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 154,081</b>	<b>\$ 320,755</b>
<b>Community Ride Board</b>			
Stipends to 5 Volunteer Mobility Manager Administrators		\$ 9,000	\$ 9,000
CBO Marketing materials for Mobility Managers		\$ 3,000	\$ 3,000
CBO Admin Costs (12%)	\$ -	\$ 1,440	\$ 1,440
<b>Total Community Ride Board</b>		<b>\$ 13,440</b>	<b>\$ 13,440</b>
<b>OPERATING REVENUES</b>			
Fare revenues (10% of operating costs for Hybrid Dial-a-Ride & Community Van)	\$ -	\$ 14,449	\$ 33,440
FTA 5310 Grant Funding (Volunteer Driver + Ride Board)	\$ -	\$ 167,521	\$ 334,195
MTA LTF or STA funding for Shuttle & Community Van, less fares	\$ 52,500	\$ 161,538	\$ 300,961
MTA LTF or STA funding for Brooktrails Deviated Fixed Route		<i>to be budgeted within MTA's SRTP</i>	
Possible grant funding from CARB's Clean Mobility Options (CMO) for Potter Valley program		TBD	TBD
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 52,500</b>	<b>\$ 343,508</b>	<b>\$ 668,596</b>
<b>CAPITAL COSTS</b>			
Covelo/Laytonville Accessible Ford Van	\$ 65,000	-	-
Brooktrails Deviated Fixed Route		<i>to be budgeted within MTA's SRTP</i>	
Potter Valley minivan (used?)	\$ 25,000	-	-
<b>Total Capital Costs</b>	<b>\$ 90,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>CAPITAL REVENUES</b>			
MTA LTF or STA funding	\$ 90,000	-	-
<b>Total Capital Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 90,000</b>		

Notes: MTA=Mendocino Transit Agency; FRC=Family Resource Center; CBO=Community Based Organization

FTA=Federal Transit Administration; LTF=Transportation Development Act Local Transportation Funds

STA= State Transportation Assistance Funds; SRTP=Short Range Transit Plan

Figure 22, Three-year budget for operating and capital expense and revenue.

## V. Action Plan Leadership Roles

As the leading transportation organizations in Mendocino County, MCOG and the MTA along with other stakeholders must make choices regarding who will operate and how to fund these Action Plan services. This concluding chapter presents three alternatives for operation of the Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle and assumes significant roles by community-based organizations to operate and support the other services, in order to realize a rural mobility vision (Figure 23) for Mendocino County.



Figure 23, This Action Plan's vision for providing vehicle-based service in selected communities and countywide volunteer driver mileage reimbursement and Community Ride Board support.

### Three Alternatives for Operation of the Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle

#### Alternative #1 — MTA Operations with Support Around Marketing and Promotion

The first option that MCOG and MTA can consider is the **transit authority's direct operation of vehicle-based services**, the Hybrid Dial-A-Ride services proposed for Laytonville and Covelo, and potentially later for Potter Valley.

MTA is well-equipped to manage the rigors of regularly scheduled transportation, even when operating at only lifeline service levels of a single day-a-week, per community. To provide reliable service that riders can count on involves well-maintained vehicles; a back-up vehicle for emergencies or planned maintenance; garaging and fueling facilities; reliable, trained drivers; and reporting expertise.

**Marketing and promotion support** is best undertaken, as a subcontract, with local organizations with strong ties to the community. Potential logical community-based organization partners include the Family Resource Centers, the Family Resource Center Network and North Coast Opportunities.

Features of this structure include:

- The efficiency and effectiveness of utilizing MTA's countywide experience in the delivery of public transportation services.
- The community-level knowledge of and access to potential riders by local organizations providing marketing and promotion of transportation services.

**Funding for the directly operated services and the marketing activities** would be budgeted from TDA Local Transportation Funds (LTF), State Transportation Funds (STA) for capital or from Section 5311 revenues, as an MTA Board decision. Grant funding could later be used to expand services, if demand presents, such as from the California Air Resources Board, Clean Mobility Options program when electric vehicle technology is reliable for the long, rural trips.

## **Alternative #2 — MTA Contracting for Services with Community-Based Organizations**

An alternative second option for MCOG and MTA to consider is to **contract for services with community-based organization** – such as North Coast Opportunities or the Family Resource Centers – who may be willing and able to provide rural mobility services, including vehicle operations, as well as marketing and promotion. The MTA has a successful history of contracting with senior centers in Mendocino County for transportation for older adults and persons with disabilities, including some ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) complementary paratransit service.

**Contracting for services** is necessary for the recommended Potter Valley Community Van, toward securing a vehicle and providing limited fuel, insurance and maintenance support.

**Funding for contracted services**, operations and marketing specifically for the Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle and Community Van would be budgeted from TDA Local Transportation Funds (LTF) and State Transportation Assistance (STA) funds for capital as an MTA Board decision. Grant funding could later be used to expand services, if demand presents, such as from the California Air Resources Board, Clean Mobility Options program when electric vehicle technology is reliable for the long, rural trips.



## Alternative #3 — MCOG Designating a Rural Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA)

A third alternative is for ***MCOG to designate a Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA)*** for the operation and management of rural mobility services and for MCOG to designate up to 5% of the county's TDA Local Transportation Funds (LTF) allocation to the CTSA, per California Code Title 21, Section 6680. This set-aside of funds would provide base funding for a CTSA to operate and manage rural mobility services by an interested, willing and able community-based organization.

An array of service provision options exist from here, including subcontracting with other entities for vehicle operation or directly providing these by the designated CTSA entity.

Features of a Rural CTSA include:

- The opportunity to bundle innovative mobility solutions.
- Capacity to address small-scale demand with affordable responses.
- Opportunity to measure performance/evaluate service effectiveness.
- Ability to adjust service mix to meet rural community needs.

***Funding for CTSA services***, operations and marketing specifically for the Hybrid Dial-A-Ride services would be budgeted from TDA Local Transportation Funds (LTF), Article 4.5 or 5% of the county's LTF allocation as an MCOG Board decision. Grant funding would be sought to support service expansion and/or funding of additional programs through FTA Section 5310, through the California Air Resources Board, Clean Mobility Options, and other discretionary grant programs.

## Grant Funding for Other Rural Mobility Programs

***External funding support*** for the recommended Volunteer Driver Mileage Reimbursement Program and the mobility management function for the Electronic Ride Boards/Communications Portal is strongly recommended for several reasons:

- The envisioned programs are eligible FTA 5310 projects and have been consistently funded through the Caltrans-administered 5310 program.
- This Volume 3: RURAL MOBILITY ACTION PLAN, and the supporting study VOLUME 1: RURAL COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT, TOGETHER with VOLUME 2: SOLUTIONS FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT, provides all the necessary documentation of need and program rationale needed for application.
- The Family Resource Center Network and the North Coast Opportunities are both proven community-based organizations that could provide a strong foundation for administering a countywide volunteer driver mileage reimbursement and communications portal programs.

The FTA 5310 program, as administered by Caltrans, has provided relatively stable funding to organizations across California for decades, including many providing rural transportation. While 5310-funded programs are statutorily limited to riders who are older adults or persons with disabilities, these programs and the 5310 funding can extend or expand other general public transportation services.

## Key Support Roles for Countywide Stakeholders

Because life-line transportation services are that — *life-line only* — they are neither necessarily convenient nor easy to use. This means that riders will not flock to them, nor may outside agencies immediately recognize their value. Nonetheless, they can provide a transportation link around which advance medical appointments can be planned, shopping trips can be made, and other trip purposes met — even within lifeline levels of single-day-a-week service.

Assistance in understanding this and in educating potential riders can be offered through the broad array of public and private human services and educational entities that support Mendocino County residents.

The roles for realizing and supporting a rural mobility vision, discussed in the sections following, are visualized in Figure 24.

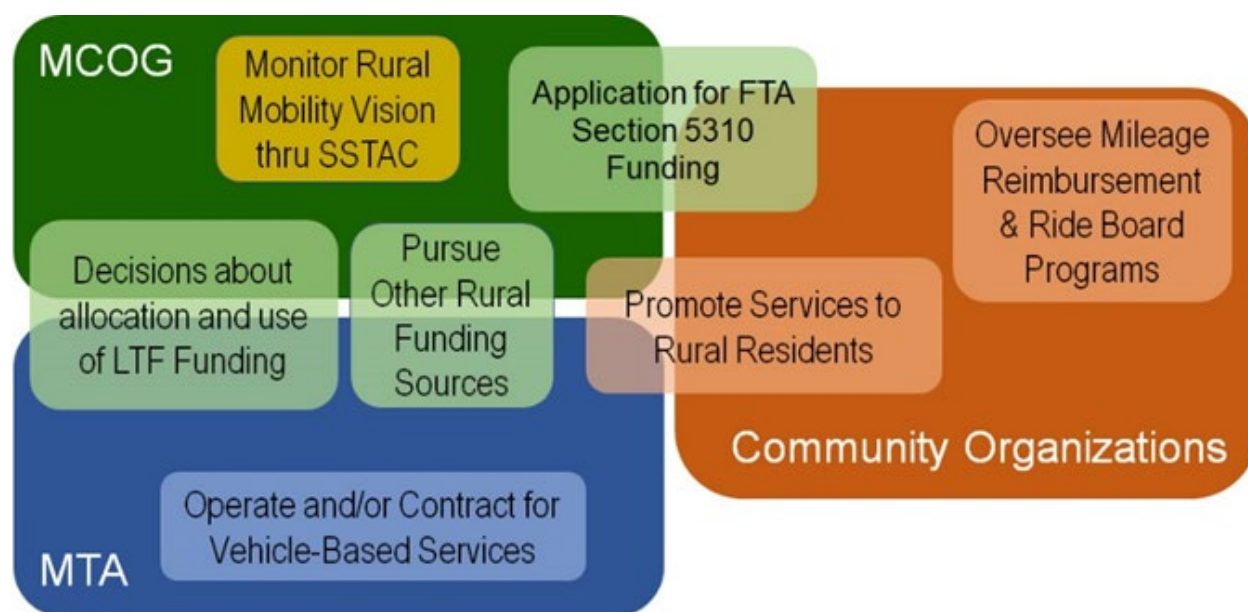


Figure 24, Roles and responsibilities for organizations supporting a rural mobility vision for Mendocino County.

## County Entities and Rural Mobility

Through the almost 18-months of this study process, a broad array of organizations participated in various study activities, including Technical Advisory Group meetings, stakeholder interviews, Listening Sessions, public meetings and presentations. In

addition to project participation by the Mendocino Council of Governments, (MCOG), the Mendocino Transit Agency (MTA) and Caltrans, District 1, the numerous Technical Advisory Group participants and other countywide stakeholders who participated in some form included the following organizations:

- Mendocino County Dept. of Public Health/Safety
- Mendocino County Dept. of Social Services/Shelter
- Mendocino County Dept. of Social Services Public Assistance
- Mendocino County Dept. of Behavioral Health/Community Wellness
- Mendocino County Dept. of Public Health/Wellness
- Calworks/Employment and Family Services
- Adult and Aging Services, Mendocino County
- Mendocino County Family and Children's Services
- Mendocino College, President's Office and Student Affairs
- Adventist Health Howard Memorial Hospital, Wheels to Wellness Program
- Redwood Coast Regional Center
- North Coast Opportunities
- Blue Zones Project
- Willits Senior Center
- Mendocino County Library
- Round Valley Library, Covelo Branch
- Round Valley Indian Health Center
- Round Valley Family Resource Center
- Round Valley Confederated Tribes Council
- Laytonville Family Resource Center
- Laytonville Municipal Advisory Council
- Cahto Tribe of the Laytonville Rancheria
- Brooktrails Township Community Services District
- Sherwood Firewise Members
- Potter Valley Family Resource Center
- Potter Valley Community Unified School District
- Hopland Municipal Advisory Council
- Hopland Ad Hoc Employers Group
- Partnership Health
- Mendocino County Tribes and Caltrans Biannual Meeting
- Community Foundation of Mendocino County

These are all partners critical to realizing this Action Plan's rural mobility vision. These stakeholders can play important roles in at least three ways:

1. **Educate and promote transportation services to consumers** as these are implemented by distributing marketing information.
2. **Inform caseworkers and line workers** of service availability, considering internal scheduling that accommodates available transportation. For example, schedule all Covelo residents' appointments on Tuesdays when the Hybrid Dial-A-Ride Shuttle comes to Ukiah.
3. **Support the transportation service providers**, MTA and/or local community-based organizations in sustaining these services by, at a minimum, writing letters of support for discretionary grant funding when requested.

### **Social Services Transportation Advisory Council (SSTAC) Monitoring and Evaluation**

The MCOG is required by the Transportation Development Act to establish and staff a social services transportation advisory council (SSTAC). Its membership is set forth in statute, including the requirement that it receive and address unmet transportation needs public testimony.

To ensure this Rural Mobility Action Plan receives continuing attention, it is recommended that MCOG's SSTAC receive quarterly performance reports as services are implemented. These reports should provide monthly and year-to-date detail on individual rural mobility services in terms of ridership, vehicle runs, trips provided, fares received and funds expended.

Annually, there must be some assessment as to how Rural Mobility solutions are progressing and some formalized statement to the MCOG Board of Directors as to the status of these programs. The SSTAC is encouraged to recognize that rural mobility solutions must always remain small and constrained, given the many considerations set forth in this Mobility Action Plan. Nonetheless, successful implementation of lifeline-level services has been realized in other counties, and can be in Mendocino County, but will require continuing attention and care. That care can sit with the SSTAC group.

## Appendix A, Updated U.S. Census/American Community Survey Information

### Demographic Information for Mendocino County and Five Rural Communities, Updated

	Mendocino County	Covelo CDP	Laytonville CDP	Brooktrails CDP	Potter Valley CDP	Hopland CDP
<b>Square Miles</b>	3,506.8	7.1	5.4	7.3	4.0	3.5
<b>People per Square Mile</b>	26	185	143	611	115	263
<b>Total Population from Three Sources</b>						
2020 Decennial Census*	91,601	1,394	1,152	3,632	665	661
2017-2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates	91,534	1,317	770	4,462	460	922
% with Veteran status	6.9%	7.0%	0.0%	5.1%	4.9%	2.9%
2022 Census Quick Facts, July 1st	89,783					
<b>Age (2021 ACS 5 Year Estimate)</b>						
Median Age	43.6	30.8	41.7	32.8	41.1	47.1
% Older Adults 65+	22.4%	13.7%	22.6%	11.2%	17.4%	21.6%
Older Adults 65+	20,497	180	174	501	80	199
% Adults 18-64	56.2%	52.4%	60.8%	58.5%	58.3%	64.5%
Adults 18-64	51,450	690	468	2,611	268	595
% Children and Youth 0-17	21.4%	33.9%	16.6%	30.3%	24.3%	13.9%
Children and Youth 0-17	19,587	447	128	1,350	112	128
<b>Gender (2021 ACS 5-Year Estimate)</b>						
Female	50.3%	52.1%	49.6%	49.4%	51.3%	43.9%
Male	49.7%	47.9%	50.4%	50.6%	48.7%	56.1%
<b>Income and Poverty (2021 ACS 5-Year Estimate)</b>						
Median Household Income	\$56,378	\$42,654	\$49,167	\$88,295	\$69,135	\$59,904
Total Individuals below Poverty Line	15.8%	37.5%	16.9%	6.7%	7.8%	19.4%
Older Adults in Poverty	12.7%	7.2%	2.3%	4.0%	2.5%	19.6%
Children and Youth in Poverty	19.4%	50.2%	38.3%	4.4%	0.0%	33.6%
<b>Disability &amp; Limited English Proficiency [LEP] (2021 ACS 5-Year Estimate)</b>						
Total Individuals with a Disability	19.0%	15.4%	22.9%	15.1%	5.4%	11.1%
Older Adults with a Disability	36.4%	47.8%	31.0%	29.3%	6.3%	25.6%
Children and Youth with a Disability	5.3%	0.0%	1.6%	7.8%	0.0%	0.0%
LEP Individuals 5+ years	8.1%	24.4%	0%	5.5%	5.3%	15.1%
<b>Households (ACS 5-Year Estimate)</b>						
Households	34,183	465	332	1,509	199	315
<b>Vehicle Availability of Households (2021 ACS 5-Year Estimate)</b>						
No Vehicles	7.6%	18.1%	9.9%	4.4%	0%	0%
One Vehicle	32%	27.7%	17.8%	28.4%	41.2%	28.6%

Sources: 2020 Decennial Census | American Community Survey 2017-2021 5-Year Estimates | Census.gov Quick Facts (for total county population only)

