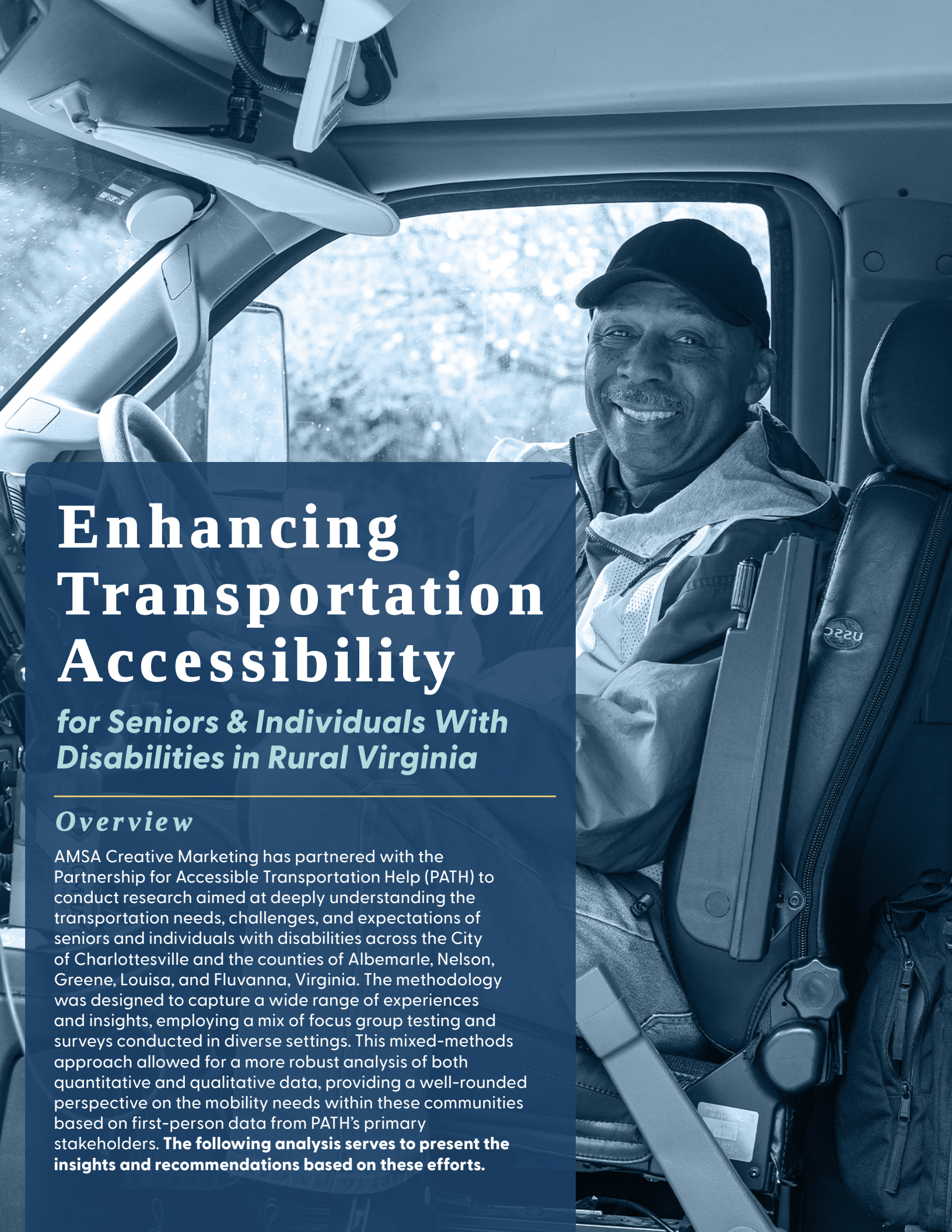




Enhancing Transportation Accessibility

*for Seniors & Individuals With
Disabilities in Rural Virginia*

Overview

AMSA Creative Marketing has partnered with the Partnership for Accessible Transportation Help (PATH) to conduct research aimed at deeply understanding the transportation needs, challenges, and expectations of seniors and individuals with disabilities across the City of Charlottesville and the counties of Albemarle, Nelson, Greene, Louisa, and Fluvanna, Virginia. The methodology was designed to capture a wide range of experiences and insights, employing a mix of focus group testing and surveys conducted in diverse settings. This mixed-methods approach allowed for a more robust analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a well-rounded perspective on the mobility needs within these communities based on first-person data from PATH's primary stakeholders. **The following analysis serves to present the insights and recommendations based on these efforts.**

Research *Methodology*

► Greene County Focus Group

At the JABA Senior Center in Greene County, Virginia, a focus group session was conducted with approximately 20 participants. This session was pivotal in collecting qualitative data. The focus group discussions revealed an array of pain points and travel challenges for navigating this rural area, while also providing insights into the diverse lifestyles of their senior population.

► Charlottesville/Albemarle County Focus Group

The largest focus group session took place at the Mary Williams JABA Senior Center in Charlottesville, Virginia, with around 30 participants. The qualitative data gathered from this group highlighted the unique challenges faced in more urban settings, along with expectations around expedited pick-ups and drop-offs which was something unique to urban residents.

► Fluvanna County Focus Group

In Fluvanna County, Virginia, a focus group session with approximately 11 participants was held at a Parks & Recreation-sponsored Senior Center. This session was particularly valuable for gaining insights into how the lifestyles and cultures can significantly differ from rural county to rural county. The data collected offered a clearer picture of their transportation habits, values of independence and autonomy, and identified unique needs specific to the Fluvanna community.

► In-Person & Digital Surveys

Surveys in English and Spanish were distributed physically and digitally to complement the qualitative data with quantitative insights. These seven-question surveys were designed to capture a broad spectrum of information regarding transportation usage, preferences, challenges, and the overall satisfaction with existing services. The combination of physical and digital surveys allowed for greater participation flexibility, ensuring a wider demographic representation within the collected data. There were 70 survey responses collected via this method, including leave-behind surveys.

► Leave-Behind Surveys

Printed versions of the survey were provided to centers in Nelson and Louisa County as leave-behinds. 35 surveys were collected through this method.

► Data Analysis

The analysis phase involved a comprehensive review of both the qualitative data from the focus groups and the quantitative data from the surveys. This dual approach enabled the AMSA team to identify common themes, trends, and variances in transportation needs across different communities. It also allowed for the comparison of rural versus urban mobility challenges and the identification of specific areas where transportation services could be enhanced or introduced. This data was used to develop the research insights in this report, audience profiles, and recommendations for branding and marketing strategies.

► Intended Use of Data

This report presents the culmination of research efforts, including surveys, focus groups, and audience profiling, designed to highlight the current landscape of transportation services within these regions based on feedback from the target audience. This data should aid PATH in identifying existing service gaps, inform route planning, isolate areas needing support, and ultimately lay the groundwork for strategic partnerships tailored to both immediate and long-term sustainable improvements.

Focus Group *Insights*

The focus group feedback from Greene County, Charlottesville, Albemarle, and Fluvanna reveal insightful perspectives on the transportation challenges and preferences among seniors and those living with disabilities in these regions of Virginia. Each area presents its unique set of issues, opportunities, and community dynamics, underscoring the need for a nuanced approach to improving mobility solutions. ***Here's a synthesized overview of the key findings:***

Greene County

In Greene County, **Jaunt stands as a crucial transportation service for those without alternatives, in spite of scheduling challenges and requiring a 24-hour notice.** Carpooling is a prevalent practice, highlighting the community's adaptability in overcoming transportation barriers. New residents, particularly those who don't drive, find it difficult to navigate the local transportation options. The community highly values the affordability and cost-effectiveness of the bus service, though its unavailability over the weekend poses significant limitations. Night driving and adverse weather conditions present additional challenges, amplified by the presence of wildlife for those who drive themselves. Accessibility to healthcare is also a notable concern, with some individuals forced to switch to more accessible providers. **The alignment of Jaunt's schedule with the school calendar further restricts mobility during school closures.**

There's a desire for more early morning routes, improved prescription fulfillment options, and extended routes to locations like Harrisonburg, Stanton, and Charlottesville (for evening events for more active seniors). The sole accessibility to UVA hospital, alongside the instability caused by frequent administrative changes in transportation services, amplifies the community's challenges. Information sources like the library, JABA newsletters, and local media play a vital role in keeping the community informed, reflecting the importance of a supportive and interconnected community network.

Mary Williams Community Center - Albemarle County

In the more urban environment of Albemarle County, transportation appears more accessible but is tainted by unreliability and logistical disconnects between operations and driver routes, complicating the travel experience. The community's closeness, reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights a significant reliance on social bonds and familiarity with drivers to navigate these challenges. **The lack of weekend transportation options and inefficient scheduling, where wait times can extend into hours, further restricts mobility and limits planning for daily activities.** This scenario illustrates the need for a more coherent and reliable transportation system that aligns with the community's lifestyle and requirements.

Another key pain point is the confusion surrounding the multiple transportation services available in Charlottesville, including MicroCAT, UTS, Jaunt, and rideshare options like LYFT and UBER. Despite the variety of services, there is significant confusion regarding scheduling and costs associated with some of these services. Additionally, there are numerous partner organizations and volunteer drivers within this area, but **there is a lack of clear information on how to contact or engage with these resources,** leaving many potential users in the dark about available options.

In addition, transportation expectations are different in this urban setting compared to areas like Greene and Fluvanna. In these more rural areas, a bus route from 9am to 2pm might be ideal for seniors looking to head into the city for medical appointments, shopping, and socializing, allowing them to be back home by mid-afternoon. However, in Charlottesville/Albemarle, such a schedule does not align with user expectations. **Residents here would much prefer a route with much higher frequency, expecting to be dropped off and picked up within a span of 1-2 hours, rather than 4.** This discrepancy highlights the need for tailored transportation solutions that consider the unique needs and expectations of different community segments to enhance overall accessibility and satisfaction.

Fluvanna County

Fluvanna County showcases a strong preference for independence with most residents preferring to drive themselves. The limited shopping options within close proximity necessitate travel to nearby Louisa or Richmond. The community’s wariness towards outsiders and external services reflects a deep-rooted desire for autonomy and skepticism towards external parties that may not fully understand or appreciate their ways of living. **The high cost associated with most transportation options, both for individual users and community sponsors like Parks & Recreation, discourages the promotion and use of transportation providers in this area.** The community expresses a need for transportation solutions that are better optimized for their area, indicating a preference for smaller, more personalized services over traditional bus services. A notable interest in volunteer driving programs suggests an openness to community-led solutions. The collective sentiment leans towards establishing trusted, vetted transportation options that resonate with the community’s values and daily life rhythms.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The feedback across these areas indicates a clear demand for flexible, reliable, and community-integrated transportation solutions. For PATH to effectively engage with these populations, it must:

- Adapt Services to Local Needs:** Recognize and respect the unique challenges and preferences of each community, from rural to urban settings.
- Enhance Reliability and Accessibility:** Address scheduling, routing, and service availability issues, particularly for healthcare access and weekend travel.
- Foster Community Engagement and Trust:** Leverage local networks, volunteer opportunities, and existing community bonds to build trust and tailor services.
- Provide Clear Information and Support:** Utilize local information sources effectively and offer support in navigating transportation options, especially for newcomers.

All focus group audiences were both receptive and excited to participate in this process and welcomed the opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns about transportation needs in their respective communities. For direct insights that can drive meaningful program optimization, we strongly recommend regular in-person conversations for ongoing feedback.

SURVEY *Analysis*

Survey Insights

Less Frequent Travel

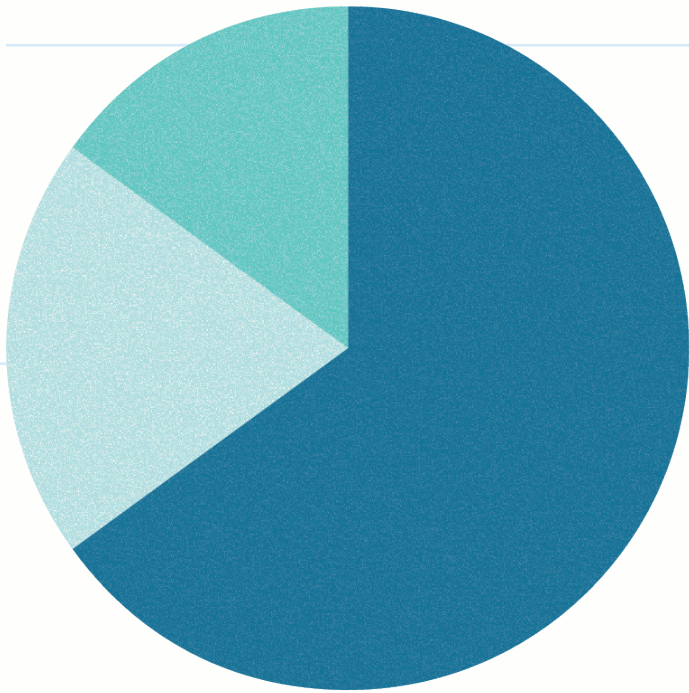
14.28%

traveling once a week or less might represent individuals with fewer personal or professional commitments.

Daily Needs

20%

of respondents travel daily, illustrating the importance of resources and routes that are consistent and dependable for daily essential activities.



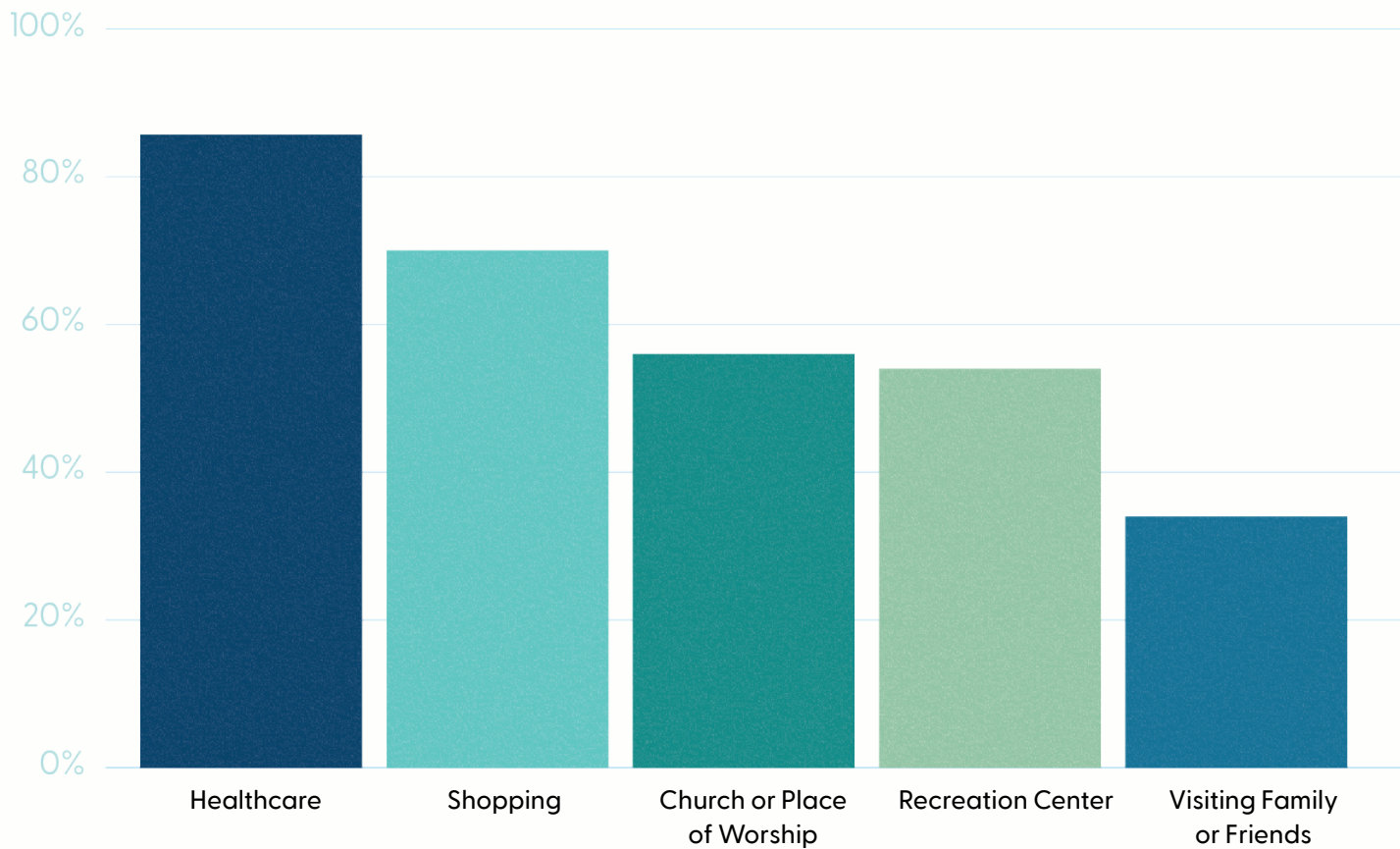
Travel Frequency

Frequent Mobility

64.29%

of respondents travel a few times a week, indicating regular but not daily mobility needs. This suggests that transportation services need to be reliably frequent throughout the week to accommodate the majority's schedule.

Main Reasons for Travel



Healthcare as a Priority 85.71%

Doctor's Appointments is the most cited reason for travel, highlighting the critical need for accessible and reliable transportation to medical facilities.

Shopping is Essential 70%

Shopping was also a core reason for travel, suggesting that trips to grocery stores and shopping centers are routine necessities.

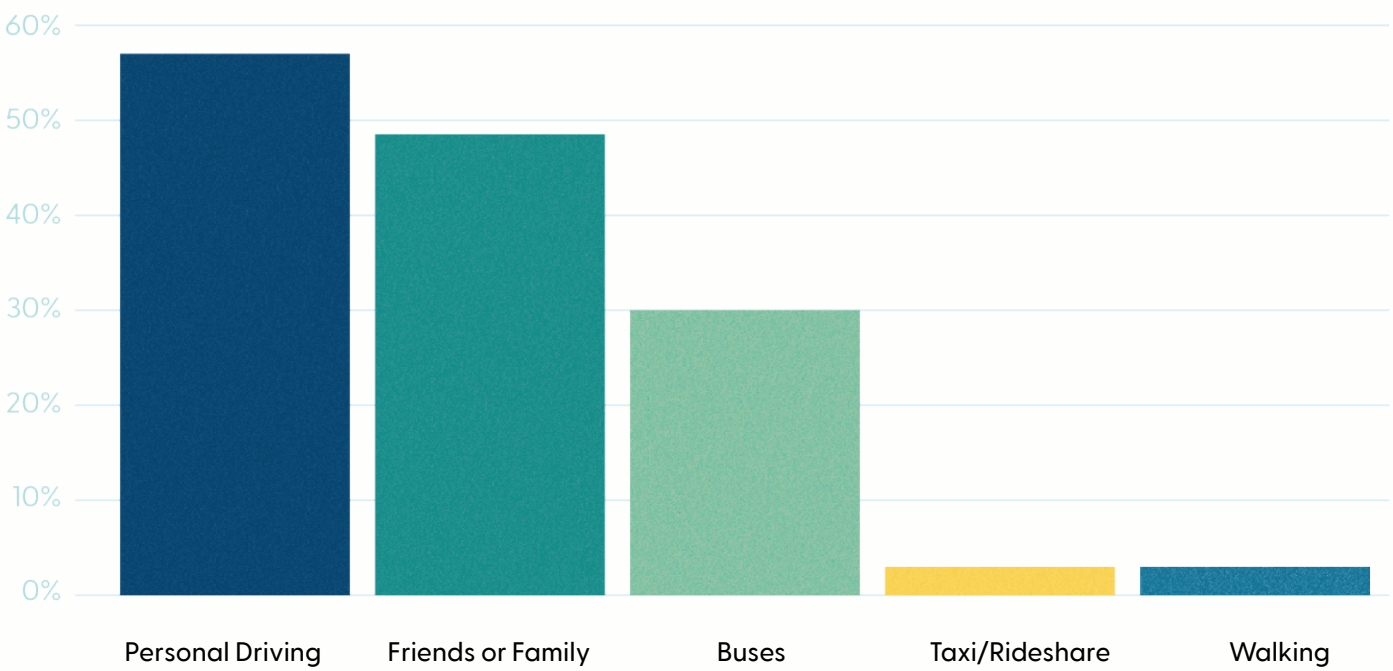
Church or Place of Worship 55.71% | Recreation Center 54.29%

Indicates strong community and recreational engagement, requiring services that can support social connectivity.

Visiting Family or Friends 34.29%

Reflects the importance of maintaining social ties, which can contribute positively to mental health and quality of life.

Transportation Methods



Personal Driving 57.14%

More than half of the audience surveyed drive themselves, indicating a degree of independence among respondents.

Friends or Family Members 48.57% | Buses 30%

Significant reliance on these methods of transportation points to the importance of a supportive community and the need for reliable, safe and accessible public transit solutions.

Taxi/Rideshare 2.86% | Walking 2.86%

Minimal usage might reflect either accessibility issues or limited availability in their areas.

Interest in Transportation Services

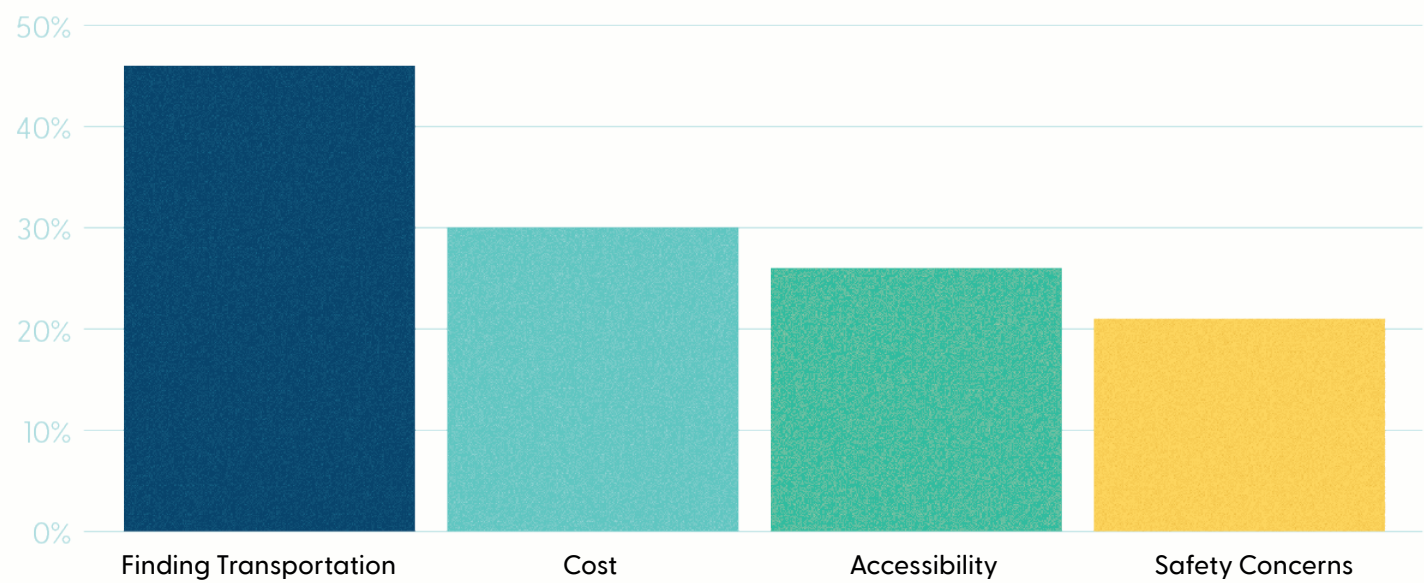
High Interest in Support Services 78.57%

Demonstrates a strong demand for services like PATH that can help seniors and those with disabilities find suitable transportation, possibly reflecting frustrations with current options.

Louisa Anomaly 39% of Louisa Respondents

A significant subset from Louisa showed disinterest in a transportation support service, which could indicate either satisfaction with current options or a lack of awareness of potential benefits. **This disinterest was significantly higher than all other counties combined and requires further investigation to tailor services effectively.** A focus group in this area could help uncover more information.

Travel Challenges



Finding Transportation 45.71%

The biggest challenge noted is finding transportation. This aligns with the high interest in a service like PATH that helps provide transportation resources.

Cost 30%

Economic factors play a significant role, indicating that affordable transportation is crucial.

Accessibility 25.71%

Challenges with getting in and out of vehicles highlight the need for transportation options that consider physical limitations.

Safety Concerns 21.43%

A noteworthy portion of respondents also highlighted safety concerns, suggesting improvements in service safety could enhance user trust and frequency of use.

Recommendations Based on Insights

Enhanced Medical Transit Services | Develop specialized transportation services focused on healthcare needs, ensuring timely and reliable access to medical facilities.

Community Transportation Hubs | Establish local hubs, especially in areas like Louisa where there is notable disinterest, to provide information and coordinate a variety of transportation services tailored to community preferences.

Expand Affordable Options | Increase subsidies or introduce cost-effective transportation solutions to address cost concerns, making daily travels more accessible for lower-income individuals.

Improve Accessibility | Invest in accessible transportation options that cater to the needs of those with disabilities, ensuring that vehicles are equipped to handle various mobility aids.

Safety Enhancements | Implement safety measures and training for drivers to address safety concerns, potentially increasing the usage of shared transportation methods.

Information and Outreach Campaigns | Conduct targeted campaigns to raise awareness about available transportation options, focusing on benefits and safety to change perceptions, especially in communities like Louisa.

Weekend and Flexible Services | Given the significant interest in family and recreational activities, expand service hours to include weekends and more flexible scheduling to accommodate various lifestyles and needs.

Support for Caregivers | Develop programs that assist caregivers specifically as their transportation challenges can have a direct impact on those in their care.

Local Volunteer Driving Programs | Foster community volunteer driving programs that can provide personalized and trusted transportation for seniors, enhancing local support networks.

Regular Feedback Mechanisms | Establish continuous feedback channels to adapt services to evolving community needs and preferences, ensuring transportation services remain relevant and user-focused.

These tailored insights and recommendations aim to address the specific needs and barriers identified in the survey, fostering a transportation environment that supports the community's diverse requirements.



Travel Destination *Insights*

Survey respondents were given the option to list specific places that they travel to regularly. This feedback revealed a necessity for reliable transportation to healthcare facilities, shopping centers, and community engagement spaces. These frequently visited locations can be categorized into specific themes that directly correlate with the expressed needs and preferences of the target audience.

► **Healthcare Facilities**

Primary Destinations: UVA Medical Office locations (Fontaine, Lee St, Ivy Rd, Northridge), UVA Primary Care, Martha Jefferson Hospital, Spine & Pain Management Specialist, Louisa Family Practice, Blue Ridge Medical, and various doctor offices.

Analysis: The dominance of healthcare facilities in the travel destinations underscores the survey finding that 85.71% of respondents prioritize doctor's appointments as a main reason for travel. This suggests a critical dependency on accessible transportation for medical needs, which is a vital consideration for service improvements.

► **Retail and Grocery Shopping**

Primary Destinations: Downtown Charlottesville, Rio Hill Shopping Center, 5th Street Extended Shopping Center, Wegmans, Giant, multiple Food Lion locations, Downtown Charlottesville Costco, Fashion Square Mall, various Walmart locations, and Sams Club Lynchburg.

Analysis: Reflecting the survey result, 70% of respondents travel primarily for shopping, these destinations highlight the importance of ensuring transportation services cater to shopping hubs. This is crucial for meeting daily living needs and supporting economic activities.

► **Community and Social Engagement**

Primary Destinations: Effort Church, Unity - Hydraulic Rd, JABA centers, Ridgecrest Church, County Live Baptist Church, New Life Church, various community centers, and Betty Queen Center.

Analysis: With a significant portion of the community visiting places of worship and community centers, there's a demonstrated need for transportation that support participation in social, religious, and recreational activities, especially on weekends and evenings.

► **Dining and Leisure**

Primary Destinations: Fabios, Mineral Restaurant, Jocs Restaurant, Ihop, and various casual dining locations like Pizza Hut.

Analysis: Although a smaller focus in the survey, the inclusion of dining establishments suggests a segment of the population values social outings which contribute to quality of life, indicating potential areas for targeted evening or weekend transport services.

► **Financial and Miscellaneous Services**

Primary Destinations: Credit unions, pharmacies, libraries (including Nelson Library), and various Walmart locations often housing banking and pharmacy services.

Analysis: The need for access to financial services and pharmacies aligns with the general dependency on transportation for essential services, reinforcing the need for routes that connect residents with multifunctional locations that serve multiple needs.

Recommendations

Based on Detailed Location Analysis

Tailored Medical Transportation Routes

Design routes that connect residential areas directly with the major healthcare providers listed, possibly using smaller, more nimble vehicles to offer frequent service during peak medical appointment times.

Consolidated Shopping Shuttles

Establish weekend and weekday shopping shuttles that loop through major retail centers and grocery stores, facilitating easy access for shopping, which is crucial for the 70% of respondents who travel for this purpose.

Enhanced Community Transport Services

Offer dedicated services for community and social engagements, particularly targeting older adults and those without personal transportation, ensuring inclusion in vital social and spiritual activities.

Evening & Weekend Dining Routes

Introduce evening services that cater to dining and leisure locations, enhancing the livability and social connectivity of the community, especially for those who may feel isolated.

Multi-Service Routes

Develop routes that strategically include stops at multi-service locations such as Walmarts and community centers where people can access a variety of services from banking to healthcare and social activities in one trip.

By focusing on these themes and aligning transportation services with the needs and preferences indicated by the survey data, **the community can significantly enhance the mobility, accessibility, and overall quality of life for residents.**

Audience Profiles

Navigating transportation is a significant challenge for seniors and individuals with disabilities in the areas that PATH serves, emphasizing a critical need for innovative and accessible transportation solutions. These profiles represent key segments of the target audience population with shared lifestyles, experiences and behaviors.



Independent Isla Gonzalez

Age: Late 70s

Location: Fluvanna

Demographics | Isla stands as a beacon of self-reliance in Fluvanna, navigating mobility with a robust spirit of independence. In her late-70s, Isla embraces the freedom of driving herself for errands and activities, a testament to her autonomy. Her routine includes frequent travels to Louisa and surrounding areas, where she manages grocery shopping, doctor appointments, and other errands. While Isla cherishes her current independence, she remains open to exploring future mobility solutions as she understands that she may not be able to drive herself for much longer

Mobility Needs

- Economically feasible, physically accessible and reliable routes that travel to the areas surrounding Fluvanna as these are her primary destinations.
- Transportation solutions that respect her desire for autonomy and incorporate flexible service options
- Personalized, smaller-scale transportation options over larger, more impersonal bus services. Services that are community operated by people she might know or recognize would be ideal
- Consistent and transparent communication regarding the availability, scheduling, and changes in transportation services is essential to keep her well-informed and confident in using these services.

Challenges

- Faces the reality of limited and costly transportation options, which could impact her self-sufficiency and raise concerns about future mobility and access to necessary services outside Fluvanna.
- Skeptical of transportation solutions proposed by external parties, fearing they may not align with the community's values or understand the unique logistics of rural living in Fluvanna.

Expected Outcomes

- Sustained independence in transportation without sole reliance on driving herself, preparing for a time when driving may no longer be viable.
- Enhanced community connection and support through transportation efforts, reinforcing Fluvanna's community ties and mutual aid.
- Increased contentment with localized transportation solutions that genuinely embody and cater to the community's ethos, ensuring services are both functional and familiar.

Community Engagement

Isla is deeply woven into the fabric of Fluvanna's community, leveraging local networks for support and information. Her routine trips to Louisa for groceries and appointments highlight her active participation in both her immediate and extended community. Isla values safety, trust, and the familiarity of transportation options, emphasizing the importance of solutions vetted by and for the community. Her approach to mobility, grounded in independence yet open to communal solutions, mirrors Fluvanna's collective ethos of resilience, resourcefulness, and shared support in addressing the transportation needs of its residents.



Empowered Edward McKinney

Age: Early 70s

Location: Charlottesville

Demographics | Edward is a resilient senior navigating the urban setting of Charlottesville from his wheelchair. Even in his 70s, his wheelchair-bound state has not deterred his zest for life, but rather sharpened his focus on maintaining independence and strengthening family bonds. Edward's daily routine is marked by independence and reliance on accessible transportation for healthcare, with a keen interest in staying actively involved in his family's life, especially in supporting his grandchildren's activities.

Mobility Needs

- Transportation services that are accessible and cater to the requirements of wheelchair users, ensuring Edward can travel comfortably and independently.
- An adaptable transportation system capable of accommodating last-minute plans, enabling him to attend family events, soccer games, and ballet recitals without the worry of being a burden to his loved ones.
- Weekend transportation services that acknowledge the importance of family and recreational activities, facilitating Edward's attendance at important family gatherings and events.
- Reliable and straightforward communication about transportation options and schedules, assisting Edward in planning his participation in family activities without undue stress.

Challenges

- Limited transportation services during weekends, which are crucial for attending his grandchildren's activities, sometimes leaving him feeling isolated from family milestones.
- Keeping up with changes in transportation services that could affect his ability to maintain an active role in his family's life, emphasizing the need for consistent and accessible information.

Expected Outcomes

- Improved access to healthcare and family events through a transportation system that prioritizes accessibility, allowing Edward to keep his healthcare commitments and family engagements without compromise.
- Enhanced ability to actively participate in his grandchildren's lives, attending soccer games, ballet recitals, fostering strong family bonds and ensuring he remains a figure in their upbringing.
- Increased satisfaction with the transportation services in Charlottesville, marked by their reliability, accessibility, and effective communication, thus enabling Edward to plan his activities with confidence and ease.

Community Engagement

Edward's primary focus lies in his family, with a particular emphasis on supporting and being present for his grandchildren's milestones and daily joys. While his interest in broader social activities is secondary, his dedication to family highlights a common desire among wheelchair-bound seniors to engage actively with loved ones without feeling like a burden. Edward's approach to navigating his mobility challenges, prioritizing family involvement and independence, reflects the aspirations of many seniors who seek to remain integral to their family's lives while managing the realities of physical limitations.



Rural Rita Johnson

Age: Late 60s

Location: Greene County

Demographics | Rita resides in the rural landscapes of Greene County, navigating the challenges of her late 60s with a spirit of optimism and perseverance. Vision impairments deter her from driving at night or during inclement weather, and lending her car to her grandson on an ongoing basis often make her reliant on Jaunt for her transportation needs. Rita is also very sociable and regularly meets up with friends at the JABA center as a core part of her daily routine. She also is an avid church-goer and attends service every Sunday.

Mobility Needs

- Reliable, affordable and accessible routes to local community centers and places of worship
- Direct, expedited routes to crucial services, including hospitals in Charlottesville for regular medical visits and specialized facilities in Fredericksburg.
- Simplistic routes to Harrisonburg and Staunton for family visits, shows and gallery tours
- Weekend transportation solutions to ensure access to community events and church service compensating for when her car is not available.
- Improved communication regarding transportation schedules and updates, keeping her well-informed amidst her limited driving capacity and car-sharing arrangements.

Challenges

- Adjusting healthcare providers due to transportation limitations impacts her health management, exacerbated by not always having her car available.
- Managing prescription refills and attending events are made difficult by sparse transportation options and her generosity with her vehicle.
- Staying updated with transportation service changes is challenging, especially with the frequent administrative shifts and her reliance on public transport and car sharing with her grandson.

Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced access to healthcare, enabling Rita to maintain her chosen providers without the need to compromise due to transportation issues.
- Increased ability to participate in community events, enriching her social life and overall well-being, despite the complexities of her transportation situation.
- Improved satisfaction with transportation services, thanks to better reliability, flexibility, and communication, accommodating her unique needs as a car sharer.

Community Engagement

Rita actively seeks information through local libraries, JABA newsletters, and community radio. Her engagement with neighbors, community groups and church members extends beyond seeking support; it's also about staying connected and informed. She navigates her transportation challenges with a sense of community spirit, whether by sharing her car with her grandson or by relying on Jaunt. Rita's story highlights the nuances of rural senior living, where family dynamics, community support, and transportation services intersect.



Veteran Harold "Hal" Turner

Age: Early 80s

Location: Greene County

Demographics | Hal is an 82-year-old disabled veteran residing in Greene County. Living alone with visual impairments, he embodies resilience and independence but faces significant mobility and accessibility challenges. Hal's reliance on public transportation and the support of neighbors underscores a communal interdependence that reflects Greene County's spirit.

Mobility Needs

- Transportation services that are specifically tailored for the visually impaired, including vehicles equipped for accessibility and drivers trained to assist disabled passengers.
- Direct routes to critical services such as hospitals, pharmacies, and grocery stores to minimize transit time and complexity.
- Weekend service availability to reduce isolation and allow for greater flexibility in personal and medical scheduling.

Challenges

- Navigating the transportation system with a visual impairment, compounded by the absence of services on weekends, heightens Hal's isolation.
- The complexity and inflexibility of current transportation options hinder Hal's ability to attend medical appointments, fulfill prescriptions, and participate in community activities.
- The reliance on advanced booking and lack of spontaneous travel options limit independence and spontaneity.

Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced access to healthcare and essential services through improved transportation options will directly impact Hal's quality of life and health management.
- Increased social engagement and reduced isolation through weekend service availability and transportation tailored to Hal's needs.
- Greater autonomy and independence, fostering a sense of dignity and reducing reliance on neighbors and community members for transportation assistance.

Community Engagement

Hal remains an active community participant through community centers and local resources. His engagement with the community center, local radio, and the library demonstrates a continuous desire to stay connected and informed. Hal's story and needs highlight the importance of inclusive transportation planning and community support structures in Greene County.



Navigating Nora

Age: Early 60s

Location: Rural Virginia

Demographics | Nora, an early 60s newcomer to rural Virginia, finds herself navigating the complexities of caregiving in a new, rural town. Moving during the pandemic to support her senior-citizen parents, who are both unable to drive, Nora has taken on a pivotal role for her family. Living on a fixed income, her reliance on Jaunt's free transportation service becomes essential for managing doctor appointments, grocery shopping, prescription fulfillment, and responding to emergencies. The JABA community center serves as a beacon for Nora, offering a space for socializing, meeting new people, and learning to navigate her new surroundings.

Mobility Needs

- Relies on Jaunt for all transportation needs for both herself and her parents.
- Seeks affordable, accessible transportation options tailored to the rural Virginia setting, crucial for her family's well-being and her caregiving responsibilities.
- Desires information and access to community initiatives or volunteer driving programs that could offer personalized, reliable transportation solutions.
- Wishes for enhanced communication regarding transportation services, highlighting a need for clear, consistent updates to better plan and manage caregiving duties.

Challenges

- Encounters significant obstacles due to Jaunt's unreliability and its inflexible service in rural areas, impacting critical aspects of caregiving, such as medical appointments and emergency responses.
- Lacks awareness of alternative transportation options that could alleviate some of the challenges faced in her caregiving role, exacerbating feelings of isolation and uncertainty.
- Struggles to integrate and navigate local community resources effectively due to her relocation and constraints of caregiving responsibilities.

Expected Outcomes

- Aims to achieve a stable, dependable transportation solution that allows her to fulfill her caregiving duties without stress or disruption.
- Enhance her connection to the local community and build a supportive network through engagement at the JABA community center and beyond.
- Aspires for increased contentment with her living situation by finding transportation solutions that are both practical for rural Virginia and respectful of her family's unique needs.

Community Engagement

Despite being new to the area and facing the steep learning curve of rural living, Nora is keen on weaving herself into the fabric of her new community. Her visits to the JABA community center represent not just opportunities for social interaction but also crucial steps towards building a network of support and information. Through these engagements, Nora is gradually finding her footing, aiming to navigate the challenges of rural caregiving with resilience and resourcefulness. Her story highlights the broader experiences of senior caregivers new to rural areas, underscoring the importance of accessible transportation and community support in navigating the intricacies of caregiving.



Compassionate Carol

Age: Early 70s

Location: Rural Virginia

Demographics | Carol, in her early 70s, has become an indispensable figure within her rural community, embodying the essence of compassion and support. She has taken on the significant role of being the primary means of transportation for the seniors in her immediate area, a testament to her commitment to her friends and neighbors. Daily, Carol diligently picks up each of her senior friends, bringing them to the senior center, running their errands, and ensuring they safely return home. Her routine is marked by a series of trips that cater to grocery shopping, prescription fulfillments, and social visits, all aimed at enhancing the lives of those in her community.

Expected Outcomes

- Aims to sustain her role in supporting her community while finding additional trusted transportation resources to share the responsibility, ensuring her senior friends remain connected and supported.
- Seeks to enhance community cohesion and mutual aid through collective transportation efforts, fostering a stronger support network within her rural area.
- Increased satisfaction for Carol and her senior friends with the local transportation solutions, fostering a community environment where seniors feel supported, valued, and less isolated.

Community Engagement

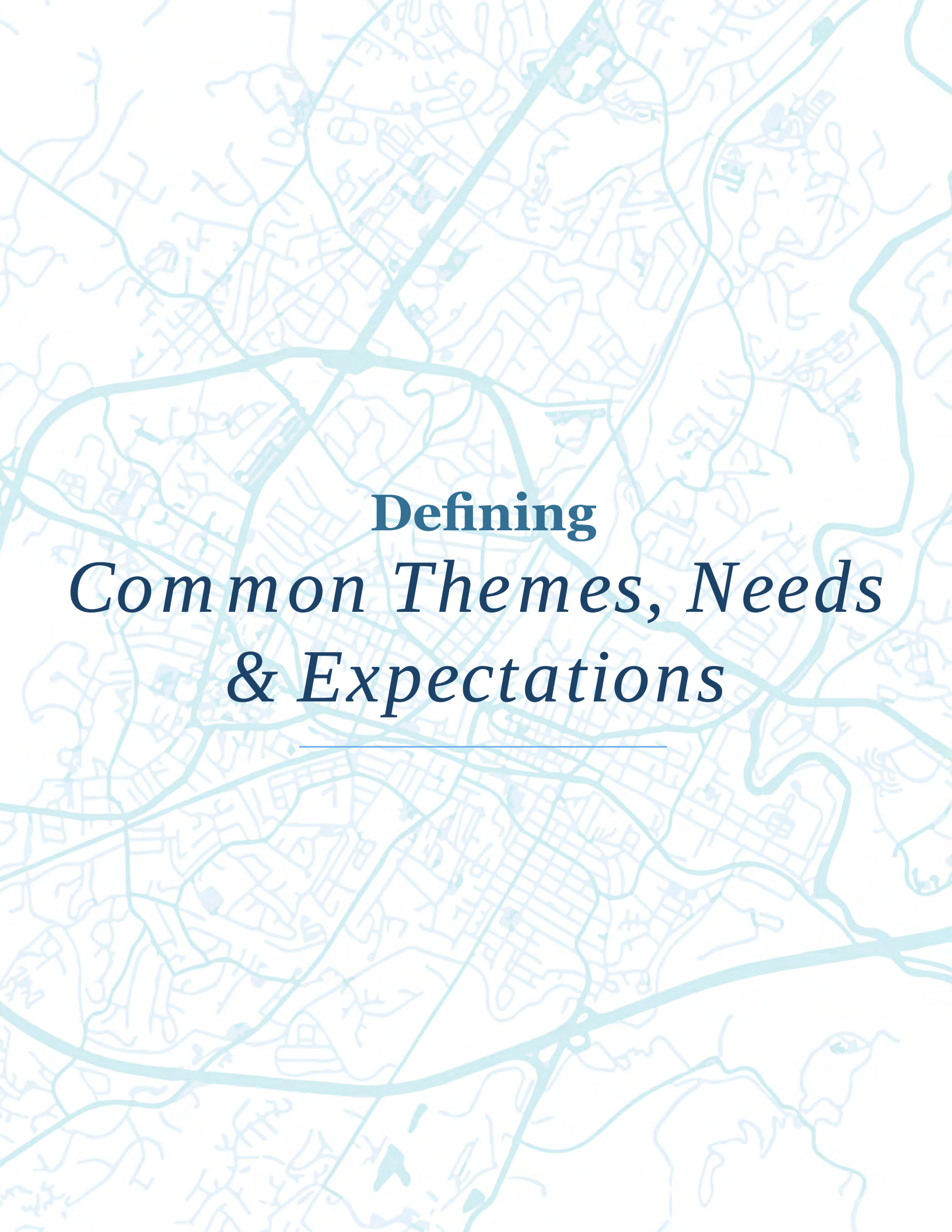
Carol's unwavering dedication to her neighbors places her at the heart of her rural community's network of care. She serves as more than just a driver; she's a vital link that connects her senior friends to the broader world, enriching their lives through social and healthcare access. Yet, Carol recognizes the importance of cultivating a sustainable ecosystem of support. By seeking out and advocating for additional transportation resources, she aims to inspire her community to collectively address the mobility challenges faced by its senior members. Her efforts underscore the necessity for a communal approach to transportation, one that ensures every senior has access to safe, reliable, and compassionate mobility solutions.

Mobility Needs

- A broader range of affordable, accessible transportation options that cater to the unique needs of rural seniors, reducing everyone's reliance on her as the transportation provider.
- More personalized transportation options that offer safety and comfort for her senior friends
- Clear and consistent communication regarding available transportation services to better coordinate and manage the daily transportation requirements of her senior friends.

Challenges

- Experiences significant stress due to being the primary, and often only, transportation resource for several seniors in her community, impacting her personal well-being.
- Confronts the reality of limited transportation in her rural area, which places a heavy reliance on her to meet the mobility needs of her friends.
- The lack of trusted and reliable transportation alternatives in her community limits her ability to offer viable options to her friends, heightening their dependence on her for essential errands and social activities



Defining Common Themes, Needs & Expectations



Themes

1. Community Dependence vs. Independence

Across profiles, a balancing act emerges between individual independence and the need for community support, with transportation being a crucial element.

2. Rural Mobility Challenges

The unique difficulties of navigating rural settings are highlighted, including limited public transportation options and the vast distances to essential services.

3. Aging with Dignity

The desire to maintain autonomy, dignity, and quality of life as individuals age, despite mobility challenges.

4. Caregiver Stress

The emotional, physical toll on caregivers who become primary transportation providers for seniors, emphasizing the need for supportive resources.

5. Accessibility and Inclusivity

The necessity for transportation services to be accessible to all, including those with disabilities, ensuring no one is left isolated.

6. The Role of Technology and Communication

The importance of clear, consistent information about transportation services to effectively plan daily activities.

7. Seeking Sustainable Solutions

The collective effort to find long-term, reliable transportation solutions that support seniors' independence and community participation.

8. Value of Social Connections

The critical role of social interactions and community engagement in enhancing seniors' well-being.

9. Interdependence within Communities

The profiles underscore a theme of mutual support, where communities must come together to address shared challenges, particularly in transportation.



Needs

1. Accessible, Reliable Transportation

For seniors and caregivers alike, especially those who are wheelchair-bound or do not drive, to access healthcare, fulfill prescriptions, and participate in community events.

2. Support Networks

Stronger support systems to alleviate the burden on individual caregivers and provide multiple options for seniors' mobility.

3. Enhanced Communication

Clear information on transportation schedules, services, and changes to help seniors and caregivers plan more effectively.

4. Community-Based Solutions

Local initiatives that understand the unique needs of the rural and urban senior populations, such as volunteer driving programs.

5. Flexibility and Adaptability

Transportation services that can accommodate last-minute changes, especially for medical emergencies or unplanned needs.

6. Weekend Services

Expanded transportation service hours to include weekends, facilitating family activities and community engagement.

7. Education on Options

Awareness campaigns or resources to inform seniors and newcomers about available transportation solutions within their communities.

8. Safety Measures

Ensuring that all transportation options prioritize passenger safety, particularly for those with specific health concerns.

9. Financial Viability

Affordable or subsidized transportation options for those on fixed incomes, ensuring that cost does not prohibit access to essential services.

10. Integration with Healthcare

Coordination between transportation services and healthcare providers to streamline access to medical care.

Expected Outcomes

1. Increased Access to Healthcare

Enhancing transportation services improves seniors' access to medical care, which is crucial for maintaining health, prolonging the ability to live independently at home, and engaging actively with the community.

2. Reduced Reliance on Individuals

By diversifying transportation resources, communities can decrease the pressure on caregivers/friends and promote greater independence among seniors.

3. Enhanced Quality of Life

Access to reliable transportation directly correlates to improved access to healthcare, social opportunities, and reduced isolation.

4. Increased Independence

With more transportation options, seniors can maintain autonomy and continue participating in family and community activities.

5. Community Resilience

Stronger, more connected communities that are excited to collectively address the mobility needs of their aging populations and work through solutions and improvements together.

6. Caregiver Relief

With additional transportation resources, caregivers can experience reduced stress and a more sustainable caregiving experience.

7. Safe, Comfortable Mobility Options

Seniors feel confident and secure using transportation services tailored to their needs.

8. Active Community Engagement

Seniors remain engaged and active in their communities, contributing to their social well-being and sense of belonging.

9. Sustainable Transportation Solutions

Long-term, reliable transportation solutions that adapt to the evolving needs of the senior population.

10. Improved Accessibility

Transportation services become more accessible to all seniors, regardless of their physical abilities or where they live.

11. Strengthened Support Networks

The development of a comprehensive support network that ensures no senior is left without access to essential services due to transportation barriers.



Key Considerations *for Engaging the Audience*

Understand the Specific Needs and Preferences

The audience's primary needs include reliable access to healthcare, grocery shopping, and community engagement. Recognizing these needs, PATH should tailor its communications and services to address them directly, highlighting how the organization can facilitate access to these essential services. In addition, ongoing direct engagement and feedback is crucial. Because of the nuances from county-to-county, in person engagement and segmenting strategies by county will be key.

Ease of Use and Accessibility

Any platform or service introduced must be straightforward and accessible. Given the audience's varying levels of comfort with technology, solutions should be offered through multiple access points, such as phone-based services alongside digital platforms.

Continue to Build Trust through Community Partnerships

With a small team, leveraging existing community networks and partnerships with organizations like JABA, the Blue Ridge Health District, Jaunt, and UVA will continue to be a tool in significantly extending PATH's reach. These partnerships can also help build trust within the community, as these organizations already have established relationships with the target audience.

Clear, Consistent Communication

Effective communication is key to getting buy-in. Information about PATH's services should be disseminated through channels the audience trusts, such as local community centers, libraries, and through partners like JABA. Messaging should emphasize safety, reliability, and ease of access to transportation services.

Leveraging Findings for Immediate Impact

Rapid Response to Critical Needs

Initially focus on enhancing access to healthcare by coordinating with medical facilities and transportation providers for direct routes. This addresses the immediate, critical need identified in the data.

Community Workshops and Information Sessions

Conduct workshops in partnership with local organizations to educate the community about PATH's services, how to access them, and to gather feedback for further improvements.

Pilot Programs with Partners

Launch pilot transportation programs in collaboration with existing services, focusing on high-need areas identified through the data, such as routes to healthcare facilities and grocery stores.

Applying this Data *in Next Steps*

- Finalize branding
- Procure domain name
- Marketing asset alignment & design
- Marketing plan alignment & execution
- Website alignment & design

When building out the brand, website and marketing implementation plan for PATH (Partnership for Accessible Transportation Help), several strategic considerations are crucial to ensure the brand effectively reaches and resonates with its intended audience. **These considerations include:**

1. Clear Brand Positioning

PATH should establish a clear brand identity that reflects its mission of providing accessible transportation solutions. The brand should communicate empathy, reliability, and a deep understanding of the community's unique needs.

2. Inclusive and Accessible Messaging

All marketing materials and communications should be designed with accessibility in mind. This includes using large, readable fonts, high-contrast colors, and providing information in multiple formats (audio, visual, text) to accommodate various disabilities.

3. Community-Centric Approach

PATH's marketing should emphasize its community roots and commitment to serving the local population's specific needs. Highlighting stories of individuals or groups who have benefited from PATH's services can create a powerful narrative that resonates with the target audience.

4. Ongoing Strategic Partnerships

Continuing to collaborate with local organizations like JABA, Blue Ridge Health District, Jaunt, and UVA will amplify PATH's reach and credibility. These partnerships can also provide additional channels to disseminate marketing materials and gather community feedback.

5. Multi-Channel Marketing Strategy

Implement a multi-channel marketing strategy that uses a mix of traditional (print ads, brochures, community bulletins) and digital (social media, email newsletters, website) platforms. Ensure that digital platforms are accessible to people with disabilities.

6. User-Friendly Digital Presence

Develop a website and social media presence that are not only informative but also easy to navigate for individuals with various disabilities. Including features such as screen reader compatibility, alternative text for images, and easy-to-understand navigation can enhance the user experience.

7. Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms

Create avenues for the community to engage with PATH and provide feedback on services. This could include in-person workshops, surveys, community forums, or feedback forms on the website. Listening to the community's voice can guide service improvements and marketing messages.

8. Educational Content

Offer content that educates the target audience on how to access and use PATH's services. This can include instructional videos, step-by-step guides, and FAQs. Providing clear, helpful information can reduce barriers to service adoption.

9. Sensitivity Training for Staff and Volunteers

Ensure that all staff and volunteers are trained in disability awareness and sensitivity. This training should extend to understanding the unique challenges faced by rural communities. Knowledgeable and empathetic staff can significantly enhance the brand experience for users.

10. Measurement and Adaptation

Establish clear metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Regularly review these metrics and be prepared to adapt strategies based on what's working and what's not. Continuous improvement should be a core aspect of the marketing plan.

Resource *Links*

[Focus Group Raw Data Notes](#)

[Digital + Print Survey Responses](#)

[Copies of Physical Surveys](#)

[Surveys](#)

[Travel Itinerary](#)

