

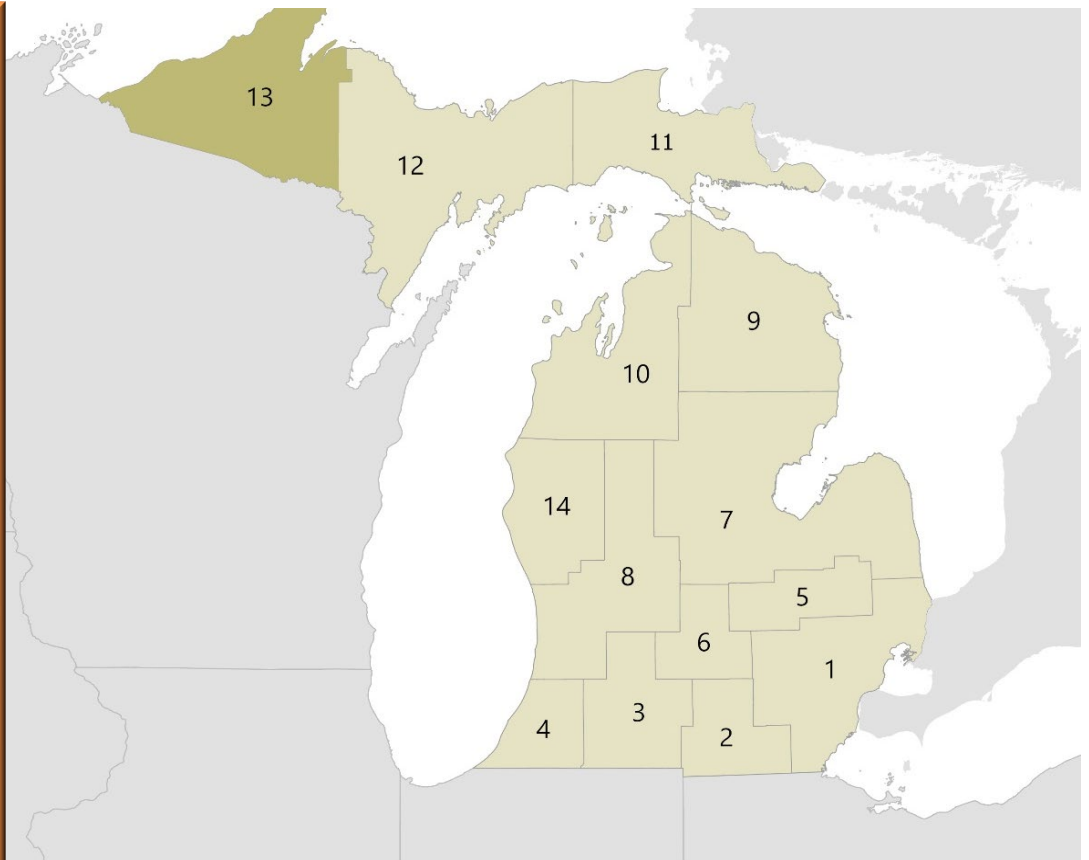
# Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan Michigan Planning Region 13

*March 2024*

## Region 13

### Counties:

Baraga  
Gogebic  
Houghton  
Iron  
Keweenaw  
Ontonagon



# Acknowledgements

Input from a wide range of stakeholders was a key component in the development of this plan. Special thanks to the stakeholders who participated in regional focus groups and provided input throughout the planning process. Their input was especially beneficial in the assessment of transportation needs in the region, and in the development of potential strategies, activities and projects to improve mobility. In addition, appropriate information and pictures were obtained from the websites of some regional stakeholders.

Specific thanks also go to Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR) and their assistance throughout the development of this plan, particularly with focus group logistics and outreach efforts.

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# Chapter 1

## Background

### Introduction

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, enacted as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), maintained formula grants through the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) Program. This program funds transportation services planned, designed, and provided to meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities. As noted by FTA Section 5310 Program funding can be used for “traditional” capital projects and for “nontraditional” capital and/or operating projects that go beyond the scope of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) complementary paratransit service or public transportation alternatives designed to assist older adults and people with disabilities.

One of the federal requirements of the Section 5310 program is that projects selected for funding must be included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan (coordinated transportation plan). In Michigan coordinated transportation plans are primarily based on the fourteen regional planning agencies across the state, and this is the plan for the Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region (WUPPDR) – Region 13 that includes Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon Counties. The region is shown in Figure 1-1 on the next page, and in relation to the other planning regions in Michigan.

### Plan Contents

**Chapter 1** (this chapter) provides background information on the planning process and the Section 5310 Program.

**Chapter 2** discusses outreach efforts and the involvement of regional stakeholders in the planning process.

**Chapter 3** provides a review of recent plans and studies in the region that are relevant to the planning process.

**Chapter 4** provides a review of current transportation services and resources in the region.

**Chapter 5** provides an assessment of the transportation needs in the region based on input from key stakeholders.

**Chapter 6** provides an assessment of transportation needs in the region through a demographic analysis.

**Chapter 7** presents strategies and potential projects to meet transportation needs as identified and prioritized by regional stakeholders.

**Chapter 8** discusses the process for approval of this plan.

Figure 1-1: Michigan Planning Region 13



## Coordinated Transportation Planning Requirements

FTA guidance defines a coordinated public transit-human service transportation plan as one that identifies the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors, and people with low incomes; provides strategies for meeting those local needs; and prioritizes transportation services and projects for funding and implementation. There are four required plan elements:

- (1) An assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private and non-profit).
- (2) An assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities and seniors. This assessment can be based on the experiences and perceptions of the planning partners or on more sophisticated data collection efforts, and gaps in service.
- (3) Strategies, activities, and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, and opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery.
- (4) Priorities for implementation based on resources (from multiple program sources), time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities identified.

## Coordination with Other Federal Programs

The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) is a Federal interagency council that works to coordinate funding and provide expertise on human services transportation for three targeted populations: people with disabilities, older adults, and individuals of low income. The CCAM works at the Federal level to improve coordination of transportation resources and to address barriers faced by states and local communities when coordinating transportation. The CCAM's mission is to issue policy recommendations and implement activities that improve the availability, accessibility, and efficiency of transportation for CCAM's targeted populations, with the vision of equal access to coordinated transportation for all Americans.

As part of the coordination efforts CCAM encourages Federal fund braiding for local match that allows grant recipients to use funds from one federal program to meet the match requirements of another, such as the Section 5310 Program. The CCAM Federal Fund Braiding Guide provides information to potential grantees on acceptable fund braiding arrangements on transportation-related projects. The guide defines Federal fund braiding for local match and examines whether Federal fund braiding is allowable for 61 programs across CCAM agencies that may fund transportation. More information on CCAM and access to the braiding guide can be found at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/coordinating-council-access-and-mobility>. This website also provides links to multiple FTA-funded transportation technical assistance centers that can also offer guidance with coordination efforts.

In addition, in March 2022 FTA posted guidance clarifying coordination on human services transportation on a new transportation coordination webpage. As noted by FTA, coordinated transportation involves multiple entities working together to deliver one or more components of a transportation service to increase capacity. The transportation coordination guidance aims to reduce overlap between the federal programs across nine agencies that may fund human services transportation and incentivize collaboration by clarifying eligible reporting into the National Transit Database (NTD). This new guidance addresses the following topics as they relate to NTD reporting: definition of public transportation; paratransit; charter service; incidental use of transit assets; and trip brokering. This guidance can be found at

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-programs/access/ccam/about/transportation-coordination>.

## Going Beyond the Federal Requirements

While this coordinated plan meets federal coordinated transportation planning requirements, it is also consistent with FTA guidance that encourages broad efforts that incorporate activities offered under a variety of transportation programs sponsored by federal, state, and local agencies to greatly strengthen its impact. Therefore, this plan takes a broad approach that includes:

- Documenting the variety of transportation services offered in the region, and beyond those funded through the Section 5310 program.
- Incorporating and building upon ongoing and recent extensive planning efforts in the region.
- Placing an emphasis on moving people and expanding mobility options, by whatever means possible and through a variety of services.
- Providing strategies and potential projects beyond services funded through the Section 5310 program.

Overall, this plan is designed to serve as a blueprint and a practical document for future discussions and efforts in Region 13 to improve regional mobility and coordination.



## Chapter 2

# Outreach and Planning Process

## Introduction

This chapter discusses outreach efforts conducted in the development of this coordinated transportation plan, and the involvement of regional stakeholders in the planning process. Federal coordinated planning guidance served as the foundation in the development of a broad approach that provided the opportunity for a diverse group of individuals, agencies, and organizations to be involved.

## Regional Outreach Efforts

The primary outreach effort for the statewide coordinated transportation planning process involved two rounds of online regional workshops that provided the opportunity to engage a variety of stakeholders, to confirm transportation needs, and to discuss potential strategies, projects, and services to improve regional mobility. In Region 13 WUPPDR distributed an invitation to numerous agencies and organizations that serve older adults, people with disabilities, people with lower incomes, and others facing transportation challenges, and seeking their involvement in the focus groups and their input on mobility needs and potential improvements in the region. These stakeholders were encouraged to pass the invitation along to their individual contact lists to help ensure an even broader outreach effort.

## Region 13 Focus Groups

In Region 13 an initial focus group was conducted on March 20, 2023, and attracted registrants that included representatives from:

- Human service agencies
- Local governments
- Local transit systems
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Planning agencies

The focus group began with a review of the coordinated transportation planning process and the Section 5310 Program, and discussion on the important role of stakeholders in providing their input on transportation needs and potential solutions and in the collection of appropriate information and data for the plan.

The majority of the focus group workshop was then focused on obtaining feedback from participants through three breakout groups, and in particular on:

- Existing transportation services provided by their organization/agency (if applicable)
- Their sense of the awareness of transportation services in the region for older adults, people with disabilities, people with lower incomes, and other population groups that may have limited mobility options
- Strengths and weaknesses of current transportation services
- Opportunities to improve transportation services and mobility options in the region
- Specific transportation services or resources that would expand mobility in the region

As a follow-up to the focus group regional stakeholders were provided with the opportunity to complete a questionnaire and to offer additional feedback on community transportation needs and potential coordination efforts. Information from that survey was incorporated into the needs identified through the focus group.

At the conclusion of the focus group participants were invited to stay involved with the coordinated planning process by participating in a second regional focus group. This event was conducted on June 13, 2023, and provided the opportunity to review the transportation needs and gaps identified through the initial focus group and to discuss preliminary strategies for meeting these needs.

## Ongoing Stakeholder Input

While the two focus groups served as the formal gathering of regional stakeholders, they had multiple opportunities throughout the planning process to review interim documents and provide their input. This ongoing involvement included:

- Reviewing and commenting on a summary of the transportation needs from the regional workshop and the questionnaire.
- Reviewing and providing input on potential strategies, activities, and projects to be included in the regional plan.
- Prioritizing strategies identified as the most appropriate for improving mobility in the region.
- Reviewing and providing input on a draft version of this plan.

## Michigan Coordinated Transportation Planning Website

To assist in outreach and planning efforts a project website was established at <https://michigancoordinationplans.com>, and is shown in Figure 2-1. This website offered background information on the study and details on regional online focus groups and was used to promote these events and for stakeholders to register.

**Figure 2-1: Home Page of the Michigan Coordinated Transportation Planning Website**



# Chapter 3

## Previous Plans and Studies

### Introduction

This chapter summarizes recent plans and studies in the region that are relevant to the study process, or provide information on community transportation needs and potential solutions. It also includes information on a study scheduled to be conducted in 2024. The issues and needs identified by previous planning processes were similar to those identified during outreach efforts in Region 13. Key issues from the previous planning reports and projects, along with stakeholder input and the demographic analysis discussed in later chapters, help to provide a broad transportation needs assessment.

### Coordinated Mobility Plan: Prosperity Region 1

The Coordinated Mobility Plan Prosperity Region 1 includes Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Luce, Mackinac, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagon, and Schoolcraft Counties. Through demographic analysis, current transportation services, and public outreach, strategies were categorized into high, medium, and low priorities.

#### High priorities:

- Maintain existing transportation services
- Secure additional funding to provide expanded transportation services in the region
- Expand and improve local transit services

#### Medium priorities:

- Regional connectivity
- Improve coordination of public, private, and human services transportation

#### Low priorities:

- Improved and expanded outreach, marketing, and education
- Address other needs

## Western Upper Peninsula Mobility Project (2023)

A current project is currently underway and being conducted by a team comprising the National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation (NADO RF) and Montana State University's Western Transportation Institute (WTI), with regional partners that include the WUPPDR, the City of Houghton, the City of Hancock, and Michigan Technological University. Through this project technical assistance is being provided to rural transportation leaders in the region in setting up a mobility innovation working group to prioritize strategies and seek funding and pilot opportunities to improve transit, coordination, or nonmotorized transportation access in and around Houghton. More information on this project and projected outcomes will be included in the final coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan for the region.

## Upper Peninsula Non-Emergency Transportation Study (2021)

The Upper Peninsula Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) Study provided the results from an analysis and assessment of the region's access to medical services and transportation options beyond personal vehicles. The study's report provided an overview of the region, an inventory of transportation resources, an analysis of the demand population and service availability, and key challenges to NEMT services in the UP.

The reports noted that while the study provided information on issues that vary across service providers and the region as a whole, a few key themes are seen the region overall:

- **Aging population:** In the Upper Peninsula, over 20 percent of the population is age 65 or older, higher than the rest of the state and country as a whole.
- **Highly-rural residency:** The gathered data represents the state of service at current, however regional trends towards an aging and urbanized population will have a pronounced effect on healthcare demand, and as such, the need for expanded nonemergency medical transportation options.
- **Funding constraints for transportation service providers:** Many transportation providers find issue with securing funding through tax millage, and often seek additional funding through alternative programs or grants. These programs are likely to have restrictions that preclude offering service to the wider population, or the types of service that can be offered.
- **Poor coordination of services:** There often exists a disconnect between transportation and health providers in collaborating to secure patient access to healthcare, and a disconnect between transportation providers in offering connectivity between service areas.
- **Lack of patient/rider education:** The report noted that it will be increasingly important for providers and organizations to promote patient advocacy regarding the transportation options that are available to them.

The report concluded with a variety of recommendations, though highlighting that it was not an exhaustive list but may promote ideas that can be expanded upon by stakeholders or potential partner organizations in the hopes of realizing the goal of providing regionwide, accessible, NEMT transportation:

- Leverage existing public transportation providers to expand services available to their ridership.
- Increase the opportunities for funding by lobbying for expanded funding, identifying new partnerships, creating new grants, and increasing the overall ridership.
- Work to facilitate collaboration directly between healthcare and transportation providers, removing the need to facilitate through third parties.
- Increase demand through marketing and collaborative partnerships with healthcare providers.
- Establish cost and resource sharing programs.
- Establish inter-regional routes that transport riders in groups for similar services.
- Work with healthcare providers to schedule riders needing similar services or service destinations.
- Adjust policies or fare structures that put limitations on attendant ridership, and work to solve liability issues in serving specific types of users.
- Highlight performance issues and use them to facilitate conversations with local organizations and governments to leverage additional funding sources.
- Lobby governments to adjust program requirements or funding rules that limit the expansion of programs and collaboration opportunities.
- Establish volunteer programs or work with existing organizations to leverage volunteers or resources to provide transportation service.
- Hold local county governments accountable in providing services to all county residents.
- Work with healthcare providers to create opportunities for subsidized transportation.
- Create inter-regional drop-off and pickup points that allow users to travel between service areas.
- Strengthen existing partnerships and expand 2-1-1 services and personnel to keep up to date information, to find and keep in contact with service coordinators/healthcare providers.
- Educate healthcare providers on the transportation programs that may be available to their patients, provide marketing materials, and work to streamline the funding or reimbursement process.
- Create a regional transportation council that focuses on NEMT service as part of their general operation.
- Increase the proliferation of infrastructure from healthcare and broadband internet providers to promote the use of telehealth services and reduce the need for transportation.
- Leverage MDOT to create and maintain expanded infrastructure for public transportation, even in areas where it is not yet available.
- Work with community planners and zoning officials to plan for accessible communities with an aging population in mind.
- Create incentives for patients to promote the use of transportation services, or work with patients to ensure that they have adequate means of transport to reach scheduled appointments.

## **Coordinated Human Services - Public Transit Plan and Accessibility Study for Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw Counties (2011)**

The plan was developed to meet the federal coordinated transportation planning requirements (similar to this current plan) for Baraga, Houghton and Keweenaw Counties. The plan responded to the four required elements: an assessment of transportation needs for individuals with disabilities, older adults and persons with limited incomes; an inventory of available services that identifies area of redundant series and gaps in service; strategies to address the identified gaps in services and identification of coordination actions to eliminate or reduce duplication in services and strategies for more efficient utilization of resources; and prioritization of implementation strategies.

Proposed alternatives in the plan presented four possible options for operating transit services in the study area. These scenarios were accompanied by a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats), and when appropriate, activities to meet the identified need related to each:

- No Change in Services
- Expansion of Service within Existing Operational Frameworks
- Development of a Mass Transportation System Authority (Public Act 55 of 1963)
- Developing a Regional Transportation Authority (Public Act 196 of 1986)

## **Hancock/Houghton Transit Consolidation Study (Planned for 2024)**

The cities of Hancock and Houghton and Hancock are planning to conduct a transit consolidation study in 2024. Currently each community operates their own system. The cities border each other and the service areas for each city transit system overlap. City leadership in both communities are interested in consolidation to improve efficiency, lower costs, and ultimately provide expanded services (days, hours, service area, etc.). It is anticipated the study will examine the feasibility of consolidation to give city officials the necessary data to justify consolidation to their governing boards (city council) and residents. It is also expected that the study will also provide options for how to consolidate and what the resulting agency would look like in terms of staffing, facilities, vehicles, service area, governing board structure, and other important areas. The study will also examine transit for Houghton County overall to see if a consolidated system can expand operations beyond the city limits of Houghton and Hancock to the surrounding communities and rural areas.

Overall, as envisioned, the study would have a tiered approach:

- Examine the feasibility of consolidation.
- Provide a plan to consolidate.
- Examine potential service expansions once consolidation occurs.

## Chapter 4

# Transportation Services and Resources

## Introduction

This chapter offers an overview of public transit, human services transportation, private transportation services, and non-motorized transportation services provided in Region 13. The process to identify transportation resources available in the region included:

- Using information from previous planning efforts
- Obtaining input from regional stakeholders through the on-line focus groups
- Reviewing reports produced by MDOT
- Conducting on-line research and obtaining appropriate information on current transportation services

## Public Transit

Region 13 is served by four individual transit systems including:

- Gogebic County Transit
- Ontonagon County Public Transit
- City of Houghton Public Transit
- City of Hancock Public Transit

## Gogebic County Transit

The Gogebic County Transit, also known as the Little Blue Bus, serves the main population area of Gogebic County Monday through Friday. There are regularly scheduled flex routes that provide service between Ironwood and Wakefield and between Ironwood and Watersmeet. The routes will deviate up to 2 miles from the U.S. 2 corridor and from the internal local routes. Gogebic County Transit also provides demand-response pickup and drop-off in response to phone call requests. The Ironwood-Wakefield Flex Route runs Monday through Friday from 6:35 a.m. to 5:55 p.m. The Ironwood-Watersmeet Flex Route runs 2 trips Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. and runs 1 trip Tuesday and Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. The Demand-Response route between Bessemer, Ironwood, and Wakefield operates Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. And finally, the Demand-Response route in Watersmeet operates Tuesday and Thursday from 10:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.



Fares for Gogebic Public Transit services are shown in Table 4-1.

**Table 4-1: Fares for Gogebic County Transit Services**

Type	Fare
General	\$3.00
Seniors, Persons with Disabilities, Students, Children (under 12)	\$1.50

## Ontonagon County Public Transit

Ontonagon County Transit program, also known as On-Tran, provides demand-response service, with transportation hours Monday through Friday from 6:15 a.m. to 5:45 p.m., and dispatch hours Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. A regional route is also operated, subject to availability due to driver shortages and with dates/times published and updated.

Fare for Ontonagon County Public Transit services are shown in Table 4-2.

**Table 4-2: Fare for Ontonagon County Public Transit Services**

	Fare
0-5 miles	\$1.50
5-2 miles	\$2.00
20-35 miles	\$2.50
35+ miles	\$3.50
Seniors 62+, Children 12 and under, and Persons with a Disability	Half-Price

## City of Houghton Public Transit

The City of Houghton Public Transit operates on-demand services and a flex route. The system also offers special services for community events. The Downtowner Route operates Monday through Friday between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. with stops every 30 minutes. The City Commuter Shuttle operates Monday through Friday between 7:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. The on-demand service is available within and between the Cities of Houghton and Hancock from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Fare for the City of Houghton Public Transit are shown in Table 4-3.

**Table 4-3: Fare for City of Houghton Public Transit Services**

	Shuttle Route Fares
Adults, Persons with Disabilities, Students, Children (under 12)	\$1.00

Within/outside Houghton	On-Demand Pick Up
Adults	\$5.00 - \$6.00
Students	\$3.00 - \$4.00
Seniors, Persons with Disabilities, and Children 12 and under	\$2.50 - \$3.00

## City of Hancock Public Transit

The City of Hancock Public Transit operates an on-demand bus service within the cities of Hancock and Houghton. The system runs Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**Table 4-4: Fare for the City of Hancock Public Transit Services**

	On-Demand Route Fares
Adults	\$5.00
Students	\$3.00
Senior Citizens (55 and over)	\$2.50
Children 12 and under	\$2.50
Veterans	Free

## Regional Overview

**Table 4-5: Public Transit Services in Region 13**

System	Service Type	Primary Service Area	Service Hours
Gogebic County Transit	Flex Route and Demand-Response	Gogebic County	Monday - Friday 6:35 a.m. - 5:55 p.m. Monday/Wednesday/Friday 8:00 a.m. - 3:45 p.m.
Ontonagon County Public Transit	Demand-Response and Regional Route	Ontonagon County	Monday - Friday 6:15 a.m. - 5:45 p.m.
City of Houghton Public Transit	Demand-Response, and Flex Routes	Cities of Houghton and Hancock	Monday - Friday 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Monday - Friday 7:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Monday - Friday 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
City of Hancock Public Transit	Demand-Response	Cities of Hancock and Houghton	Monday - Friday 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

## College Transportation Systems

### Michigan Tech Shuttle

During the fall and spring semesters, Michigan Tech provides the following shuttle services:

- The Huskey Campus Shuttle operates Monday - Friday from 7:30 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.
- The City Commuter Shuttle (noted earlier, and provided by City of Houghton Public Transit through a contract) operates Monday - Friday from 7:15 a.m. – 5:45 p.m.
- The Hancock Commuter Shuttle operates Monday - Friday from 7:20 a.m. – 5:45 p.m.
- The Husky Saturday Shuttle operates between 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

There is no cost to ride on any of the shuttles for Michigan Tech students, employees, and families.

## Human Service Transportation Providers

This section provides an overview of non-profit and human service transportation providers identified in the region. Transportation services are specialized in nature, and typically provided only to agency clients for a specific trip purpose, generally either medical or to access agency locations. These services may be modified due to funding or other changes.

### Regional

- U.P. Area Agency on Aging provides regional planning, advocacy, and administrative agency that plans and provides needed service to seniors in specified geographic regions

### Baraga County

- Baragaland Senior Citizens, Inc. – provides demand-response and flex route services

## Houghton County / Keweenaw County

- Goodwill Industries of Northern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan – receives Section 5310 funding through MDOT to provide transportation services for people with disabilities.
- Baraga-Houghton-Keweenaw Community Action Agency – receives Section 5310 funding through MDOT, and provides flex route and demand-response services on the Keweenaw Peninsula with service prioritized for senior citizens and persons with disabilities

## Iron County

- Dickinson Iron Community Services Agency – provides door-to-door transportation services for seniors 60+ in Iron Mountain, Kingsford, Norway, Iron River, Crystal Falls, Quinnesec, and Sagola/Felch.

## Private Transportation Providers

### Intercity Bus Services

There are a variety of intercity private transportation routes serving Region 13. Routes consist of interstate and intrastate connections from the following providers:

- Indian Trails

### Taxi/Shuttle Providers

- Cooper County Limo & Taxi
- North Star Taxi
- Superior Transportation
- Twin City Cab Co.
- Lyft
- Uber

## Chapter 5

# Assessment of Transportation Needs

## Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the transportation needs and gaps in mobility identified by regional stakeholders during the Region 13 focus groups. While many transportation needs are interrelated, they are broken out by the following key categories and themes that were expressed by regional stakeholders. It should be noted that these issues vary from one jurisdiction to another in the region, largely based on transportation resources, travel distance to key locations, and a variety of other factors:

- Expanded or Improved Transportation Services
- Coordination
- Funding
- Operational Challenges

## Expanded or Improved Transportation Services

**Expanded Transportation Options** – Stakeholders expressed the need for expanded transportation services, both from geographic and timing aspects. Specific weaknesses of current services includes the lack of evening and weekend services, and nonexistent or limited services outside towns and cities in the region. The link between available transit services and housing, particularly for people living in zero-car households, was noted. The importance of transit services that allow those who work or attend school at Michigan Tech to live in more affordable housing farther away from the University was highlighted.

**Regional Transportation Gaps** – An overall lack of transportation options in a region that is very rural in nature was discussed. Rural community connections that cross county line are needed. Some specific gaps and underserved areas noted by stakeholders included rural portions of Houghton County outside of Houghton/Hancock. Long distances between where residents live and where services and employment opportunities are located was also cited. Overall, the group agreed that a primary transportation weakness is there's just not enough service in the outlying areas.

**More Flexible and Convenient Transportation Services** – Associated with other transportation challenges is the need for flexible transportation services that better accommodate the rural nature of the region and the need for cross jurisdictional connections. More convenient services are also needed that reduce long trips and extensive periods of time spent traveling on buses.

**Greater Demand than Available Resources** - Stakeholders noted that while a variety of transportation services are operating in the region, there is more demand than services that are available. They remarked that there is too much geographic area and territory to cover with current resources.

**On-Demand Transportation Opportunities** – It was mentioned that there are some Transportation Network Companies (i.e. Uber and Lyft) and private transportation providers (possibly a taxi or two) operating in the more populated parts of the regions. Exploring ways to implement some version of on-demand microtransit services that allow customers to access trips through improved technology was noted as an opportunity to expand mobility options in the region.

## Coordination

**Incorporate Results from Mobility Innovation Working Group** – As noted in Chapter 3, a current project is being conducted by a team comprising the National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation (NADO RF) and partner Montana State University’s Western Transportation Institute (WTI), with regional partners that include the Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region, the City of Houghton, the City of Hancock, and Michigan Technological University. The purpose of this project is to provide technical assistance to rural transportation leaders in Michigan’s Western Upper Peninsula with setting up a mobility innovation working group to prioritize strategies and seek funding and pilot opportunities to improve transit, coordination, or nonmotorized transportation access in and around Houghton. This project is happening simultaneously to the coordinated transportation planning process, and the results from the technical assistance will be included in the updated plan for the region.

**Build Upon Current Coordination Efforts to Ensure Community Framework for Discussion of Transportation Issues and Priorities** – Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) services in the region are coordinated through the Michigan Transportation Connection, a non-profit transportation brokerage that was established for delivering NEMT and other specialized transportation services in the state of Michigan. There are also mobility management efforts in place in the region. Regional stakeholders discussed these efforts, while noting that additional coordination activities could be considered and additional opportunities to bring together community providers, organizations, leaders, and consumers to identify how existing transportation services and resources could be conducted. Through the questionnaire, several stakeholders noted that there is a need for community leaders, organizations, and members to have a shared a common vision for transportation services in the region.

## Funding

**Greater Demand than Available Resources** - Stakeholders noted that while a variety of transportation services are available in the region, there is more demand than services that are available. They remarked that there is too much geographic area and territory to cover with current resources. While there are millages in some parts of the region, there is a need to identify new funding to support service expansions. Overall, it was noted that any service expansion or improvement will most likely come down to funding.

**Need for Shared Vision on Community Transportation Services** – Coupled with coordination efforts is the need for a shared a common vision for transportation services in the region. Stakeholders noted that a lack of support for transit in outlying areas is a challenge.

## Operational Challenges

**Challenges with Recruiting and Retaining Drivers** – Similar to communities across the country, regional stakeholders discussed challenges with recruiting and retaining a sufficient number of drivers. In addition to maintaining current services, the driver shortage prevents the ability to expand services. Most of the transportation providers in the region are experiencing driver shortages, and have started to transition to smaller vehicles that don't require operators to have a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) or have had to suspend certain services until they can recruit and retain more staff.

**Increased Operating Expenses** – A number of factors have led to transit systems and transportation providers to incur significant increases in operating expenses, and it is expected that this will continue in the future with the need to improve driver salaries and benefits. Some operators noted the challenges with providing long distance trips that involve significant operating costs and that exceed available funding and resources.



# Chapter 6

## Demographic Analysis

### Introduction

This chapter analyzes demographic data and land use to assess the need for transit in Region 13. Data ranging from major trip generators to underserved and unserved population subgroups are documented and analyzed. Data sources include the 2020 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) 2016-2021 5-year estimates.

### Population Profile

The following section provides a general population profile for Region 13 and will identify and evaluate underserved population subgroups as well as review demographic characteristics pertinent to a Title VI analysis.

Table 6-1 shows the census population counts from 2000-2020.

**Table 6-1: Historical Populations for Region 13**

County	2000 Pop.	2010 Pop.	2020 Pop.	2000-2010 % Change	2010-2020 % Change	2000-2020 % Change
Baraga	8,746	8,860	8,158	1.3%	-7.9%	-6.7%
Gogebic	17,370	16,427	14,380	-5.4%	-12.5%	-17.2%
Houghton	36,016	36,628	37,361	1.7%	2.0%	3.7%
Iron	13,138	11,817	11,631	-10.1%	-1.6%	-11.5%
Keweenaw	2,301	2,156	2,046	-6.3%	-5.1%	-11.1%
Ontonagon	7,818	6,780	5,816	-13.3%	-14.2%	-25.6%

SOURCE: US DECENNIAL CENSUS

All but one county (Houghton County) has experienced moderate to high population decline since 2000 with five of the six counties recording losses between 6.7-25.6%.

Table 6-2 features population projections from the University of Michigan’s Institute for Research on Labor, Employment, and the Economy. This data suggests that the overall trend of population decline should accelerate over the next two decades. Houghton County is expected to continue growing 8.5% by 2040 but every other county is projected to lose over 11% of its population. The two smallest counties, Keweenaw and Ontonagon, are anticipated to lose 33.6 and 38.9% respectively.

**Table 6-2: Future Population Trends for Region 13**

County	2020 Pop.	2030 Pop. Estimate	2040 Pop. Estimate	2020-2040 % Change
Baraga	8,158	7,600	6,762	-17.1%
Gogebic	14,380	13,385	12,759	-11.3%
Houghton	37,361	38,069	40,536	8.5%
Iron	11,631	10,653	10,328	-11.2%
Keweenaw	2,046	1,692	1,358	-33.6%
Ontonagon	5,816	4,586	3,555	-38.9%

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU AND THE INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND THE ECONOMY, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Population and its density are often used as an indicator for public transit services that are feasible within a specific area. While exceptions will always exist, an area with a density of 2,000 or more persons per square mile will typically be able to sustain daily fixed route transit service. An area with a population density below 2,000 but above 1,000 persons per square mile may be a better candidate for deviated fixed route and areas with densities below 1,000 are typically best suited for demand response service.

Figure 6-1 shows Region 13’s population at the census block group level. Overall, Region 13’s population is concentrated around Houghton.

Figure 6-2 provides population density for Region 13. The only areas with a population density of over 1,000 people per square mile are Houghton and its surrounding block groups.

Figure 6-1: 2020 Census Population

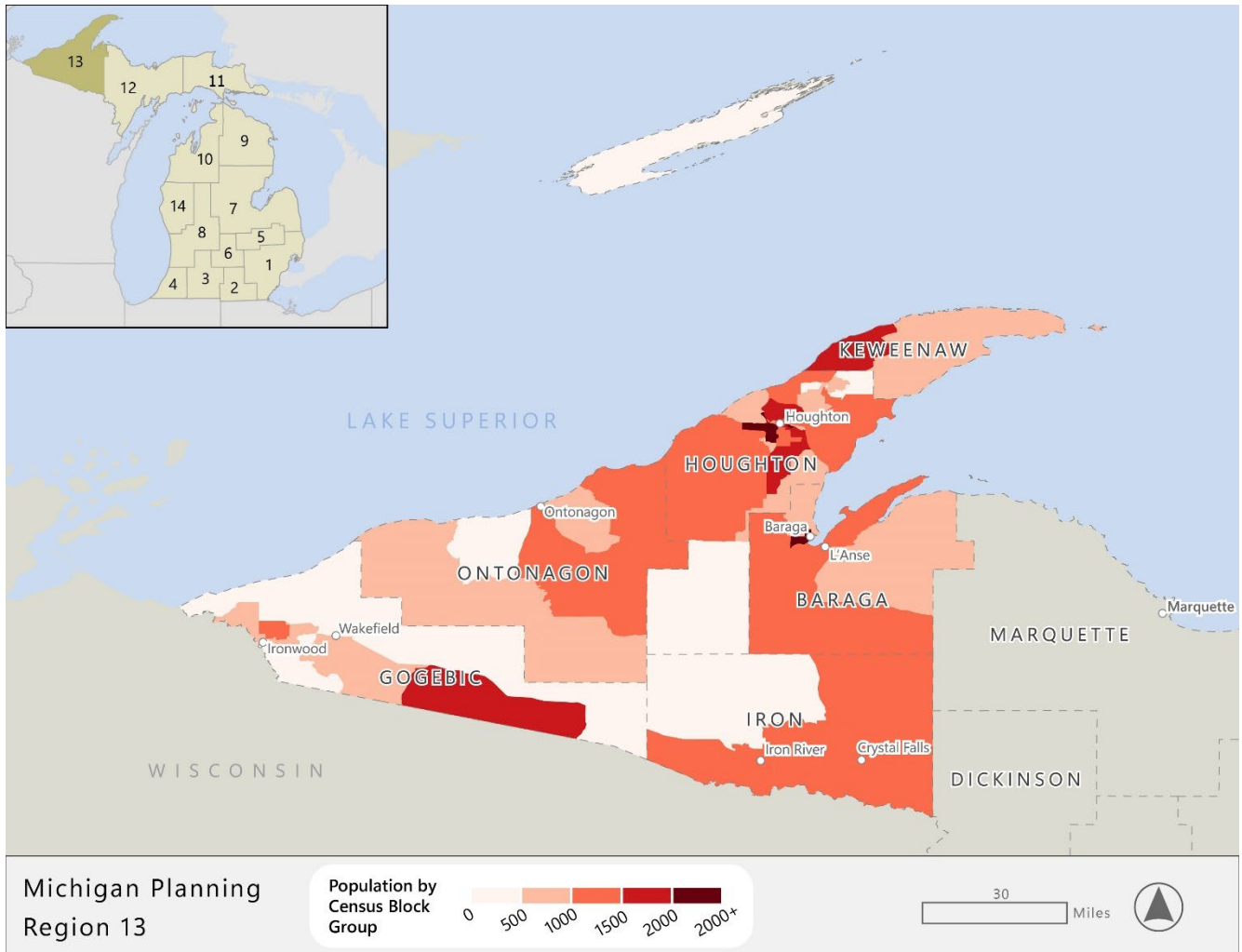
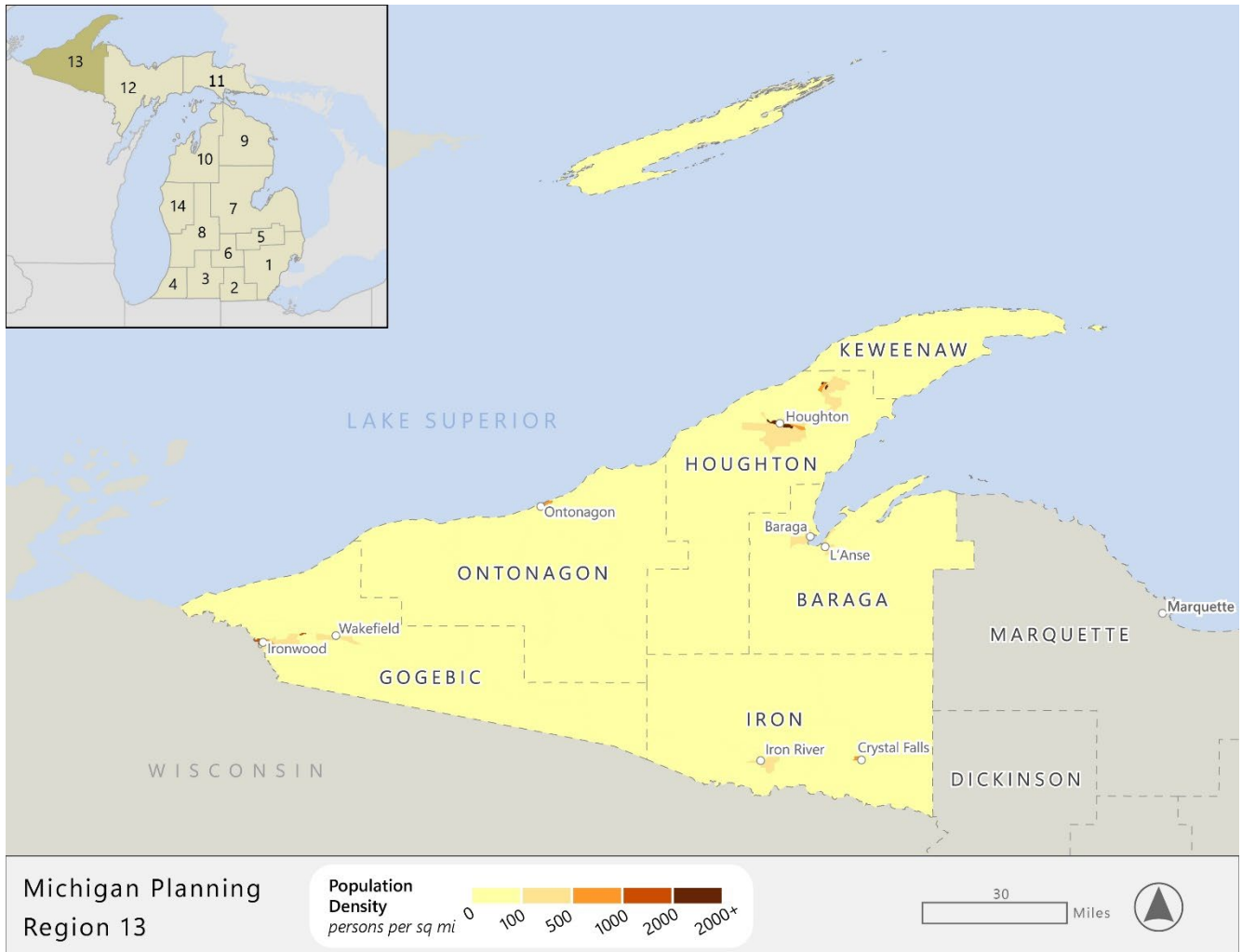


Figure 6-2: 2020 Census Population Density



# Transit Dependent Populations

## Transit Dependence Index

The need for public transportation is often derived by recognizing the size and location of segments of the population most dependent on transit services. Transit dependency can be a result of many factors, i.e., no access to a personal vehicle, age, and income. Establishing the location of transit dependent populations aids in the evaluation of the current population while identifying potential gaps in transit services.

The Transit Dependence Index (TDI) is an aggregate measure displaying relative concentrations of transit dependent populations. Five factors make up the TDI calculation including population density, autoless households, elderly populations (ages 65 and over), youth populations (ages 10-17), and below poverty populations.

In addition to population density, the factors above represent specific socioeconomic characteristics. For each factor, individual block groups were classified according to the frequency of the vulnerable population relative to the county average. Factors were then put into the TDI equation to determine the relative transit dependence of each block group.

The relative classification system utilizes averages in ranking populations. For example, areas with less than the average transit dependent population fall into the "Very Low" classification, where areas that are more than twice the average will be classified as "Very High." The classifications "Low, Moderate, and High" fall between the average and twice the average. These classifications are divided into thirds.

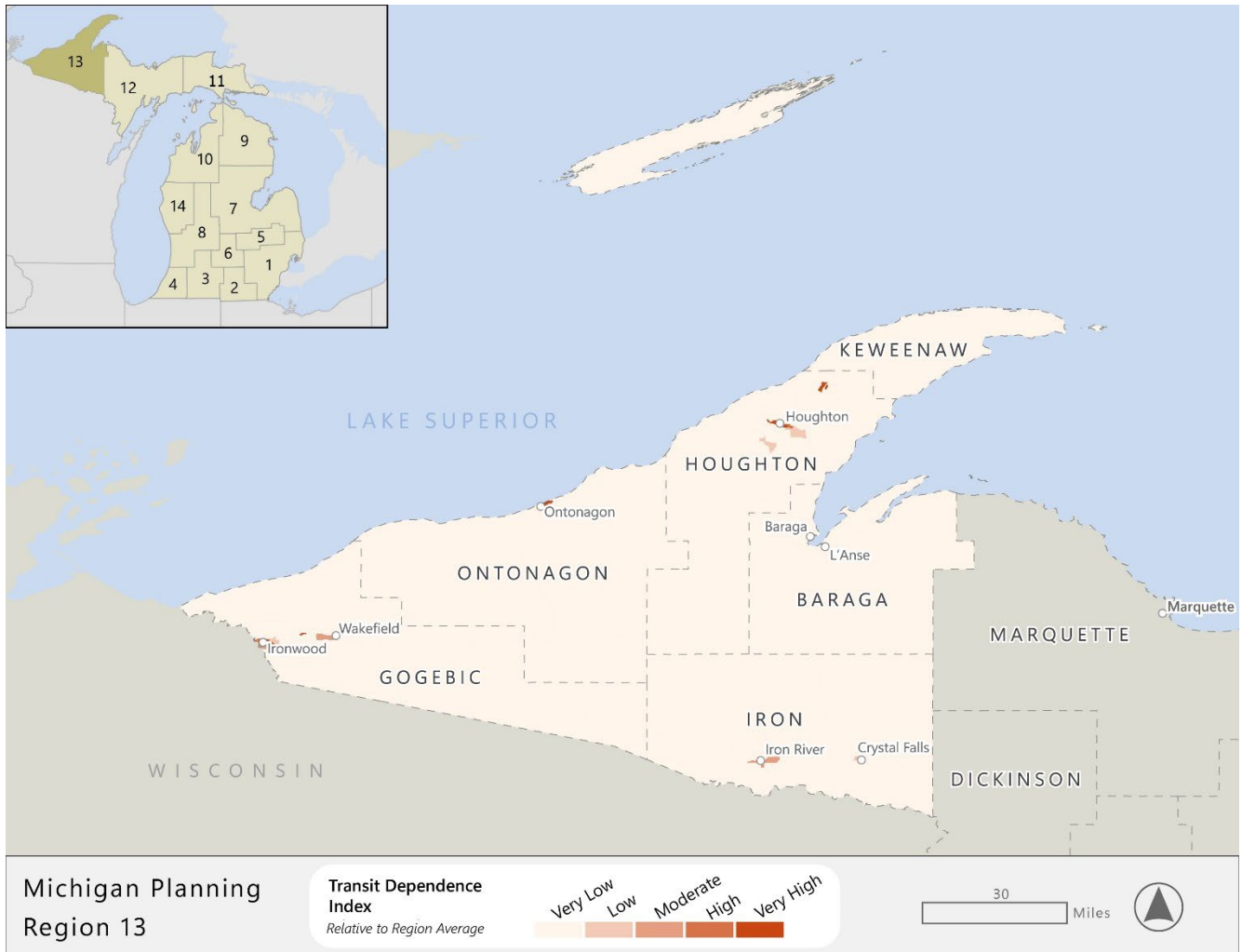
Figure 6-3 displays the TDI rankings for Region 13. The only areas recognized to have at least "Moderate" transit need with respect to density are Ontonagon and Houghton.

The Transit Dependence Index Percent (TDIP) provides a complementary analysis to the TDI measure. It is similar to the TDI measure however it excludes the population density factor. The TDIP for each block group in the study area was calculated based on autoless households, elderly populations, youth populations, and below poverty populations.

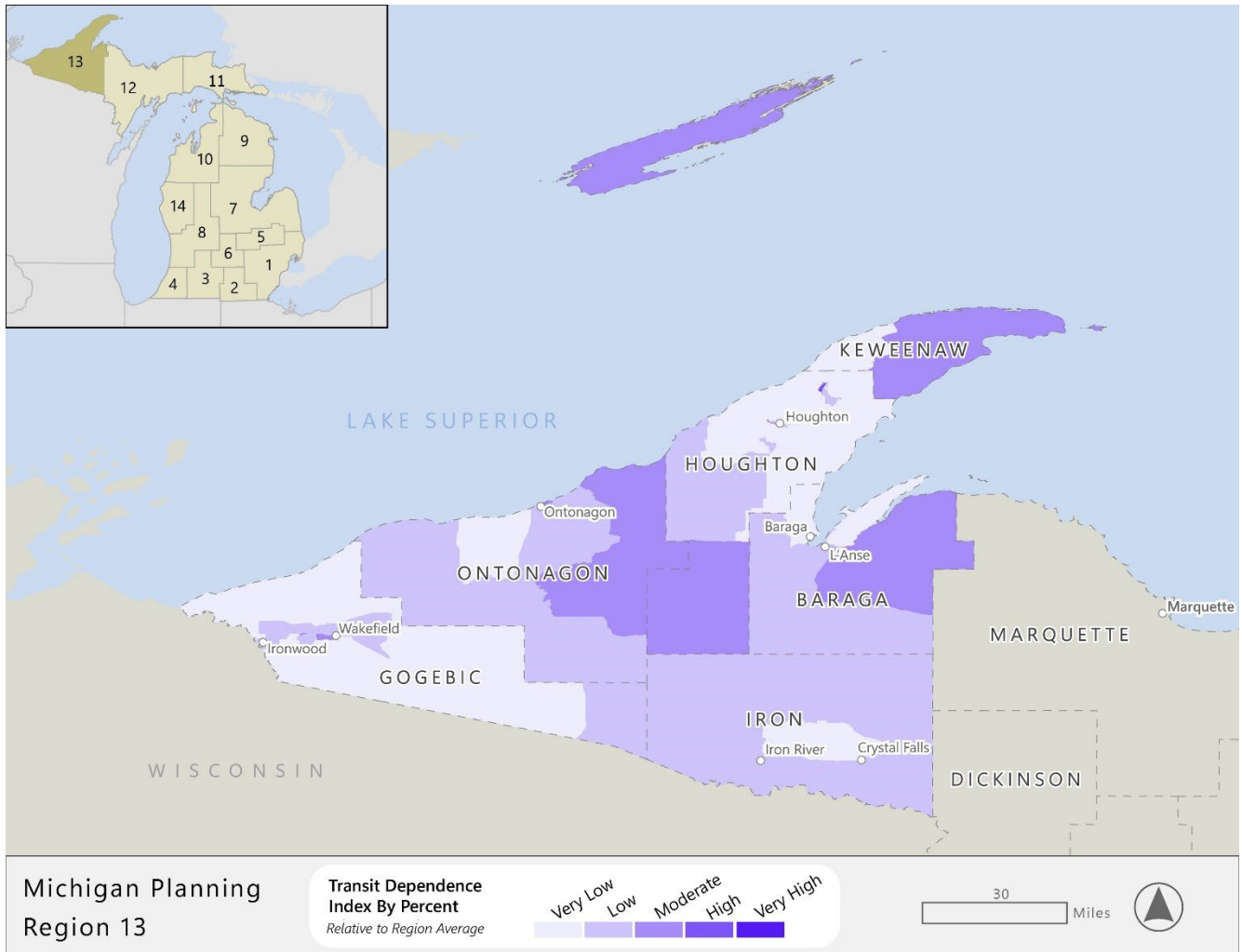
By removing the population density factor, TDIP is able to measure the degree or percentage of vulnerability. It follows the TDI's five-tiered categorization of Very Low to Very High. The results of this analysis are typically much more dispersed than the TDI because many of the larger, or rural, block groups may have a larger percentage of certain populations when compared to heavily populated areas.

Figure 6-4 shows the TDIP rankings for Region 13. No block groups exist with "Very High" levels of dependence but areas of "Moderate" and "High" levels of dependence are dispersed throughout the region.

Figure 6-3: Transit Dependence Index Density



**Figure 6-4: Transit Dependence Index Percentage**



## Transit Dependence Index Factors

This subsection reviews key factors which make up the transit dependence index: youth population, senior adult population, and zero car households. Another important factor, individuals living at or below the poverty level, is reviewed in the following section, Title VI Demographic Analysis. This subsection also provides a similar index for individuals with disabilities. While this data is not included in the TDI it is still important to review as those with disabilities may have difficulty driving a personal automobile.

### Youth Population

Persons ages 10 to 17 either have not yet learned to drive or are just beginning to drive and often do not have a personal automobile accessible to them. For this population, public transit is often the means that offers mobility. Figure 6-5 illustrates the concentrations of youth populations relative to the study area. High concentrations of youth populations are found entirely within Houghton County.

### Senior Adult Population

The senior adult population, which includes individuals 65 years and older, was used in the TDI measure. Persons in this age group may begin to decrease their use of a personal vehicle and begin to rely more on public transit. Figure 6-6 shows the relative distribution of seniors in Region 13. "Very High" concentrations of seniors can be found in Keweenaw and Iron County.

### Individuals with Disabilities

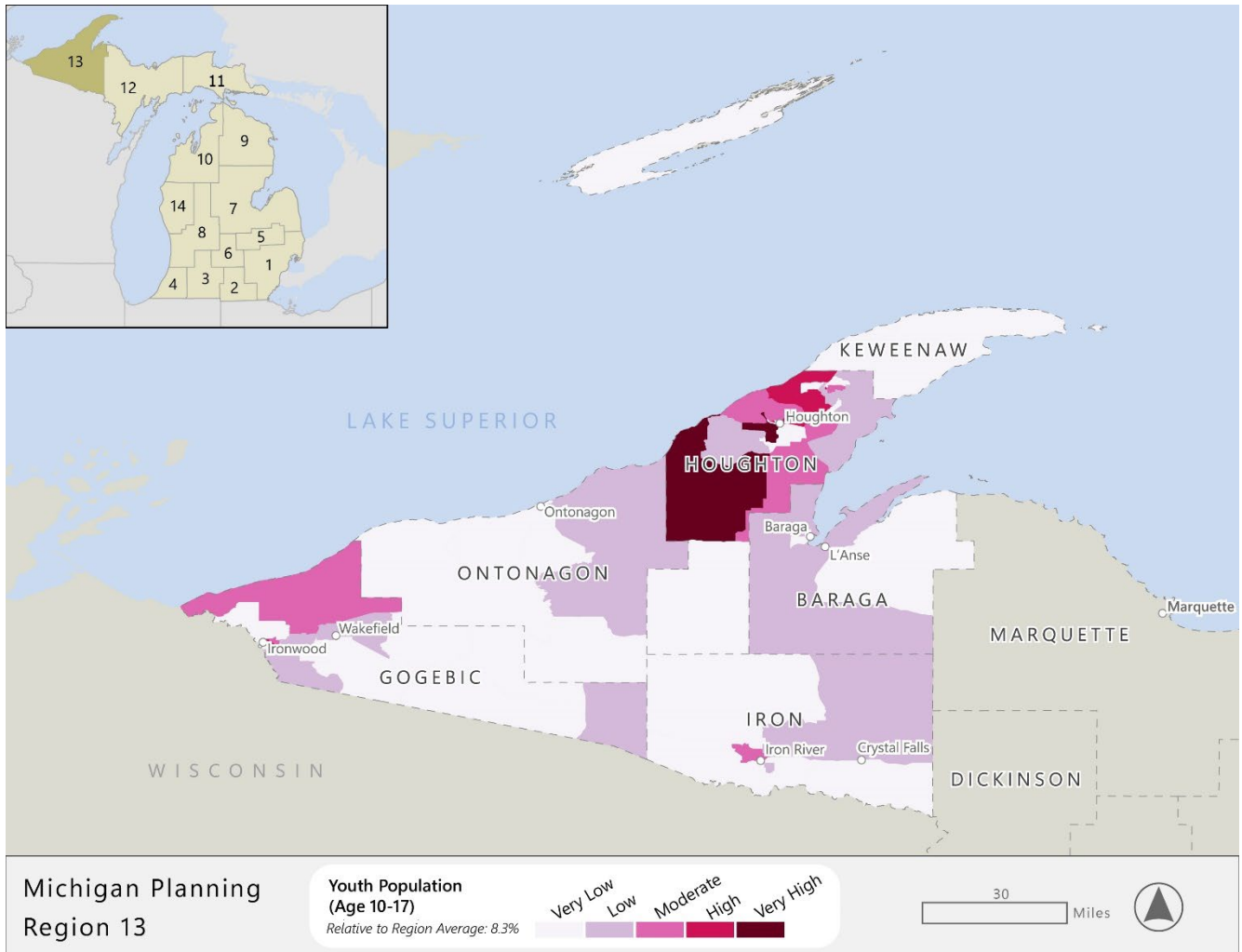
Figure 6-7 illustrates the disabled population in Region 13. The American Community Survey was used to obtain data for the disabled population. Persons who have disabilities that prevent them or make it more difficult to own and operate a personal vehicle often rely on public transit for their transportation needs. Areas with "Very High" concentrations of individuals with disabilities may be found in Baraga County.

### Zero Car Households

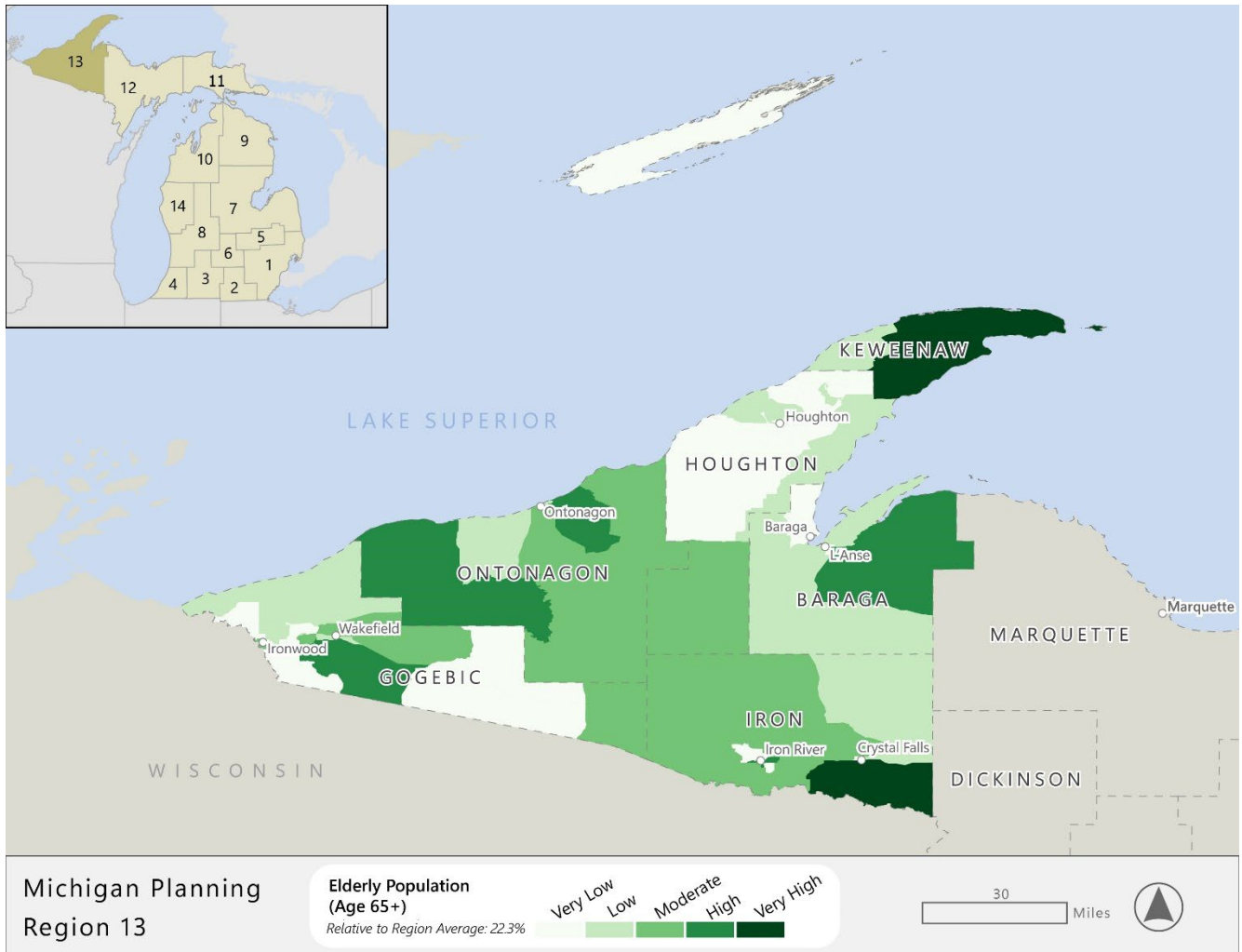
Households without at least one personal vehicle are more likely to depend on the mobility offered by public transit. Although autoless households are reflected in both the TDI and TDIP measures, displaying this segment of the population separately is important since most land uses in Region 13 are at distances too far for non-motorized travel. Figure 6-8 displays the relative number of autoless households. Areas with "Very High" or "High" numbers of zero car households include Houghton, Ironwood-Wakefield, and eastern Gogebic County.



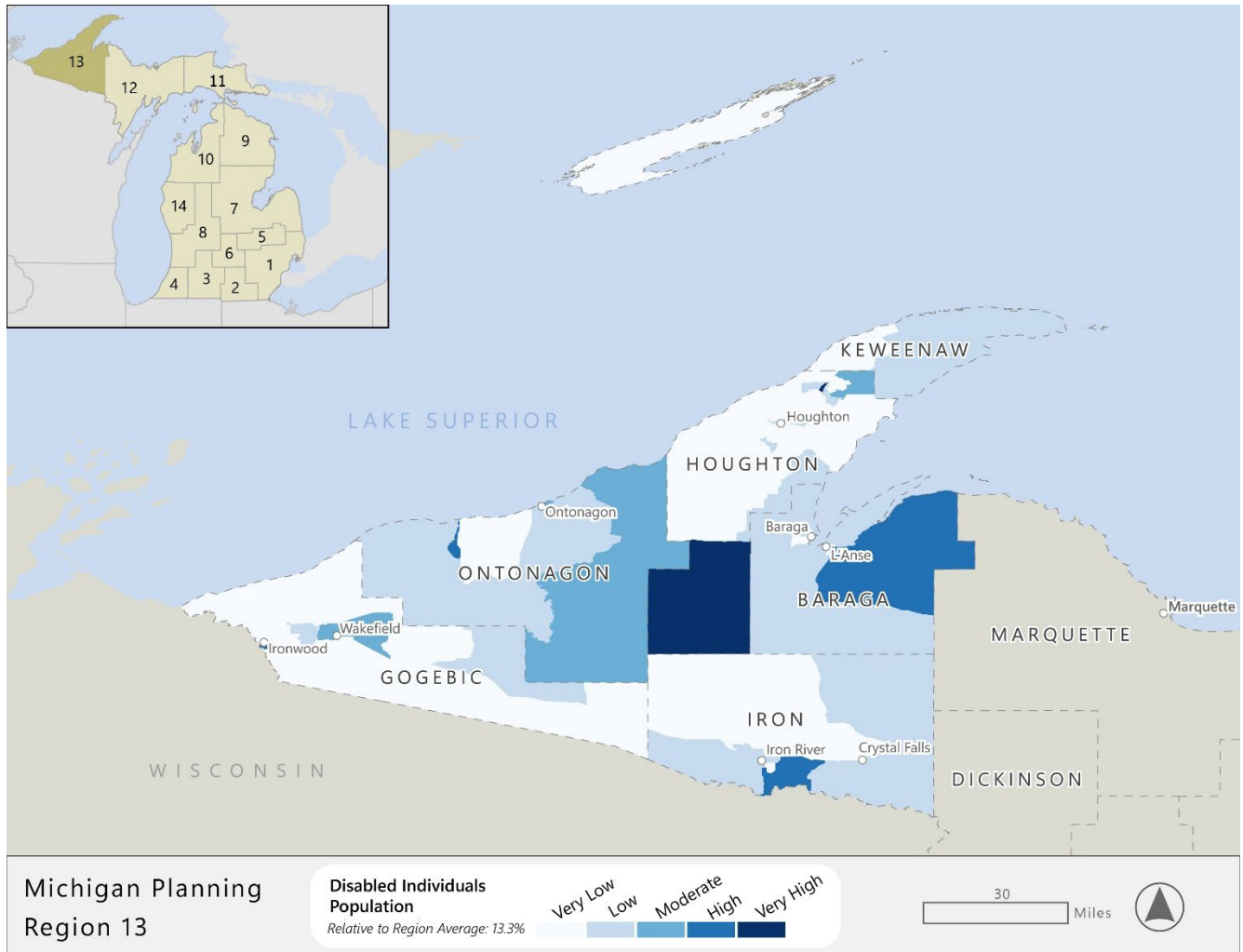
**Figure 6-5: Distribution of the Youth Population (Ages 10 to 17)**



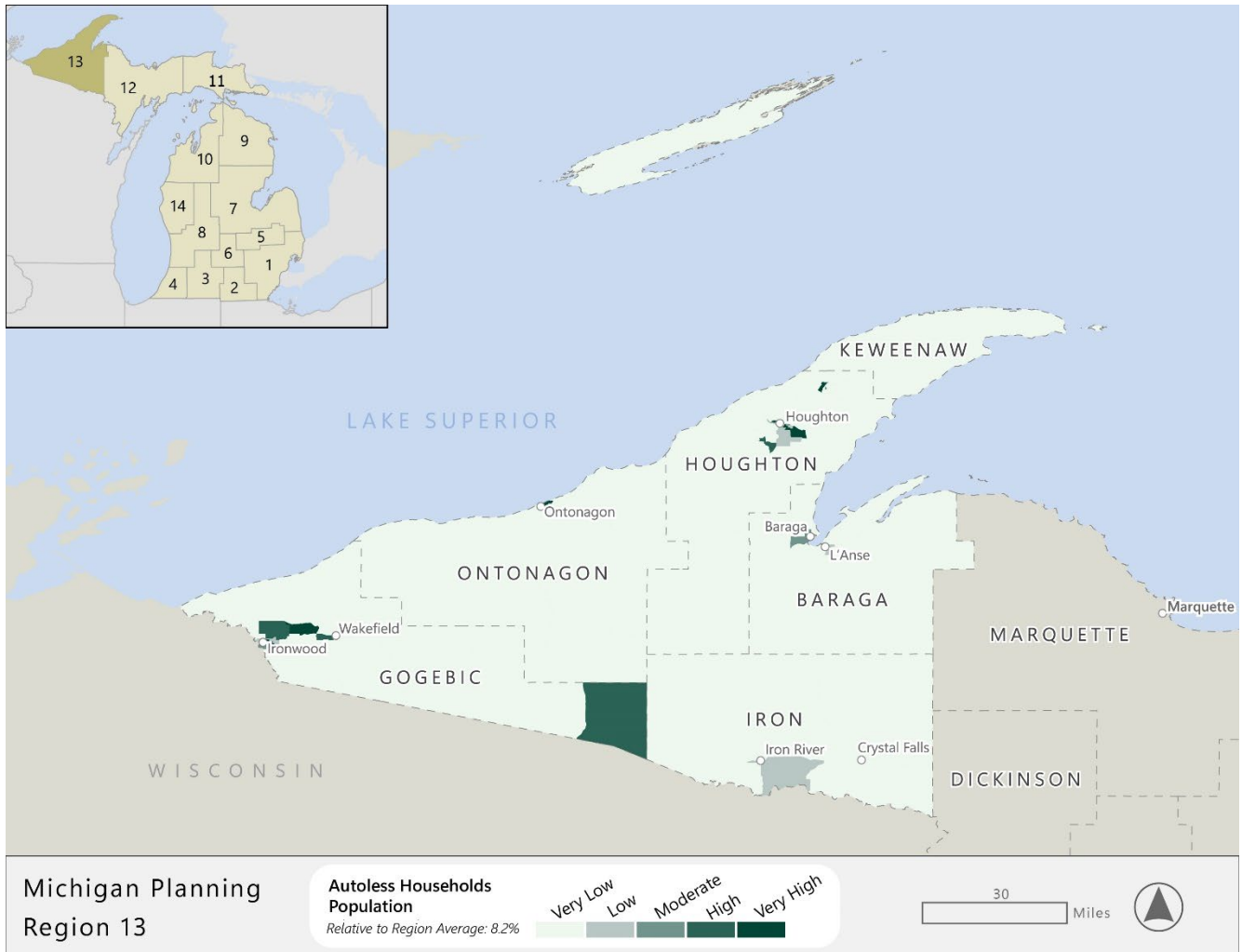
**Figure 6-6: Distribution of the Senior Adult Population (Aged 65 and Above)**



**Figure 6-7: Distribution of the Disabled Population**



**Figure 6-8: Zero Car Household Distribution**



## Title VI Demographic Analysis

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal subsidies. This includes agencies providing federally funded public transportation. The following section examines the minority and below poverty level populations in Region 13.

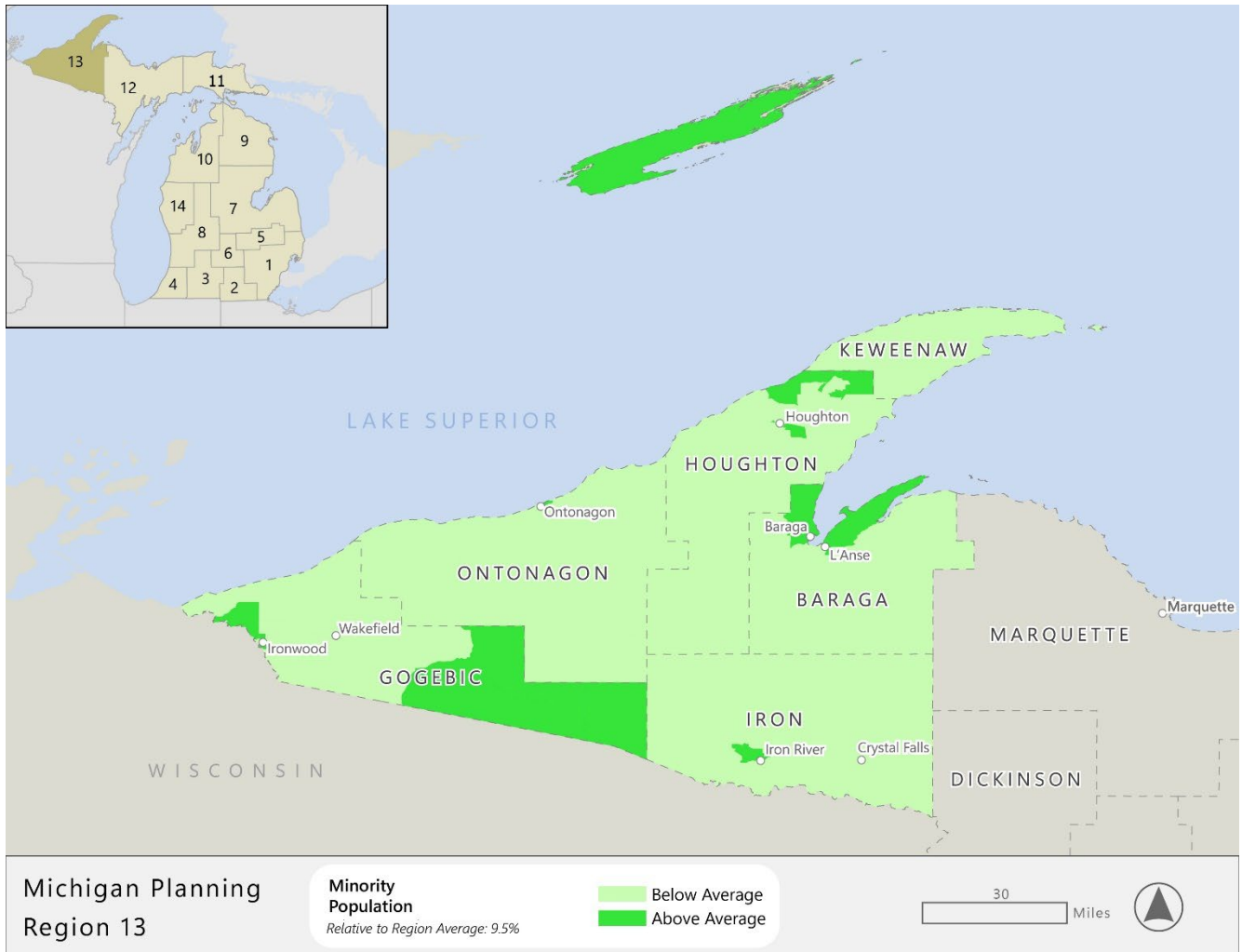
### Minority Population

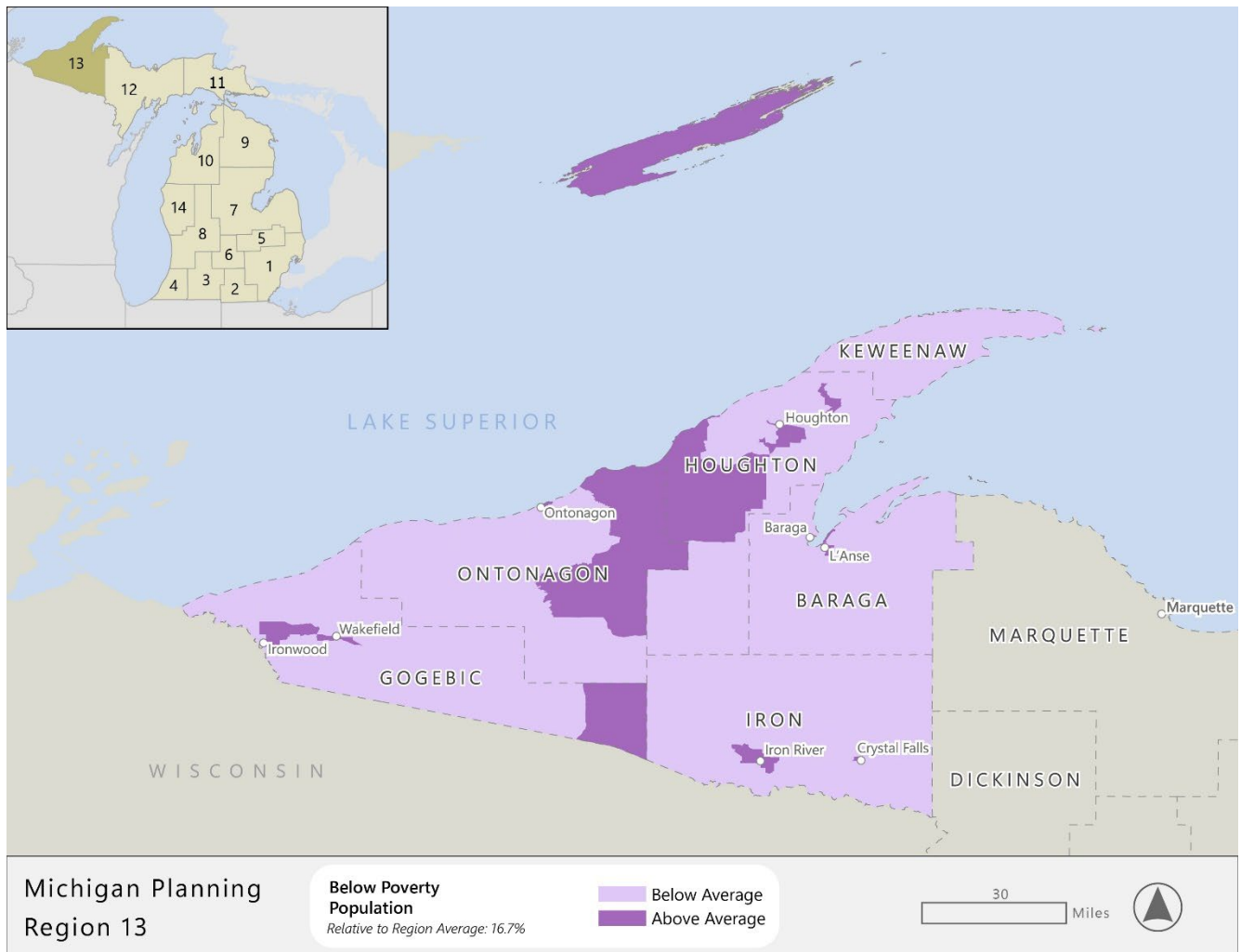
It is important to ensure that areas with an above average percentage of racial and/or ethnic minorities are not negatively impacted by any proposed alterations to existing public transportation services. In Region 13, 9.5% of the population are part of minority populations. Figure 6-9 illustrates the concentration of minority populations based on the region's average. As seen in the figure, areas with above average concentrations of minorities are around dispersed throughout the region.

### Below Poverty Level Population

The second group included in the Title VI analysis represents those individuals who earn less than the federal poverty level. This segment of the population may find it a financial burden to own and maintain a personal vehicle, thus relying on public transit as their primary means of transportation. In Region 13, the percentage of those living below the federal poverty level is 16.7%. Figure 6-10 depicts the concentration of population above or below the average relative to the study area. As seen on the map, those living below the poverty line are heavily dispersed and widespread throughout the region. Clusters of above average poverty levels are present around most population centers.

**Figure 6-9: Distribution of the Minority Population**



**Figure 6-10: Distribution of Individuals Living Below the Poverty Level**

## Limited-English Proficiency

In addition to providing public transportation for a diversity of socioeconomic groups, it is also important to serve and disseminate information to those of different linguistic backgrounds. As shown in Table 6-3, Region 13's residents predominately speak English. In all six counties, English is the primary language for over 93 percent of the residents. The most prevalent language category in the region after English is Indo-European languages with 2.8% of Houghton County considering it their primary language. Of those who primarily speak languages other than English the overwhelming majority is able to speak English "Very Well." For the entire region, the county with the highest concentration of residents who speak English less than "Very Well" is Houghton County at 1.9%.

**Table 6-3: Limited English Proficiency for Region 13**

County	Baraga		Gogebic		Houghton	
Population (Age 5+)	7,917		14,285		35,563	
Languages Spoken	#	%	#	%	#	%
English	7,707	97.3%	13,999	98.0%	33,227	93.4%
Speak Non-English	210	2.7%	286	2.0%	2,336	6.6%
Spanish	55	0.7%	116	0.8%	349	1.0%
Indo-European languages	18	0.2%	100	0.7%	998	2.8%
Asian/Pacific languages	62	0.8%	10	0.1%	570	1.6%
Other	75	0.9%	60	0.4%	419	1.2%
Ability to Speak English:	#	%	#	%	#	%
“Very Well”	177	2.2%	183	1.3%	1,673	4.7%
Less than “Very Well”	33	0.4%	103	0.7%	663	1.9%

County	Iron		Keweenaw		Ontonagon	
Population (Age 5+)	11,095		1,971		5,745	
Languages Spoken	#	%	#	%	#	%
English	10,858	97.9%	1,928	97.8%	5,631	98.0%
Speak Non-English	237	2.1%	43	2.2%	114	2.0%
Spanish	75	0.7%	25	1.3%	20	0.3%
Indo-European languages	87	0.8%	10	0.5%	44	0.8%
Asian/Pacific languages	29	0.3%	0	0.0%	9	0.2%
Other	46	0.4%	8	0.4%	41	0.7%
Ability to Speak English:	#	%	#	%	#	%
“Very Well”	205	1.8%	36	1.8%	86	1.5%
Less than “Very Well”	32	0.3%	7	0.4%	28	0.5%



## Land Use Profile

### Regional Trip Generators

Identifying regional trip generators serves to complement the previous demographic analysis by indicating where transit services may be most needed. Trip generators attract transit demand and include common origins and destinations. Examples include higher level educational facilities, major employers, regional medical facilities, and Veteran Affairs Medical Centers and Clinics. Figure 6-11 provides a map of the regional trip generators in Region 13. The trip generator categories are briefly detailed below.

#### Educational Facilities

Many of the individuals that comprise the school age population are unable to afford or operate their own personal vehicle; therefore, it may be assumed that this segment of the population is one that is reliant upon public transportation. Additionally, many faculty and staff members are associated with these institutions as a place of employment. Region 13 features Gogegic Community College and the Michigan Technological University.

#### Major Employers

This section examines the top regional employers in Region 13; employers included in this category are those among the 100 largest employers in the state of Michigan. Providing transit services to major employment locations is advantageous to both the employee, as the individual is provided with direct access to their occupation and subsequent source of income, and the employer, as this entity will have assurance that their current or potential workforce will have diverse options of accessing the destination. Many of the major employers in Region 13 include its colleges and universities as well as the regional medical facilities. The largest employers are Michigan Technical University, UP Health System – Portage, and Aspirus Keweenaw. None of the largest 100 employers in the state are found in Region 13.

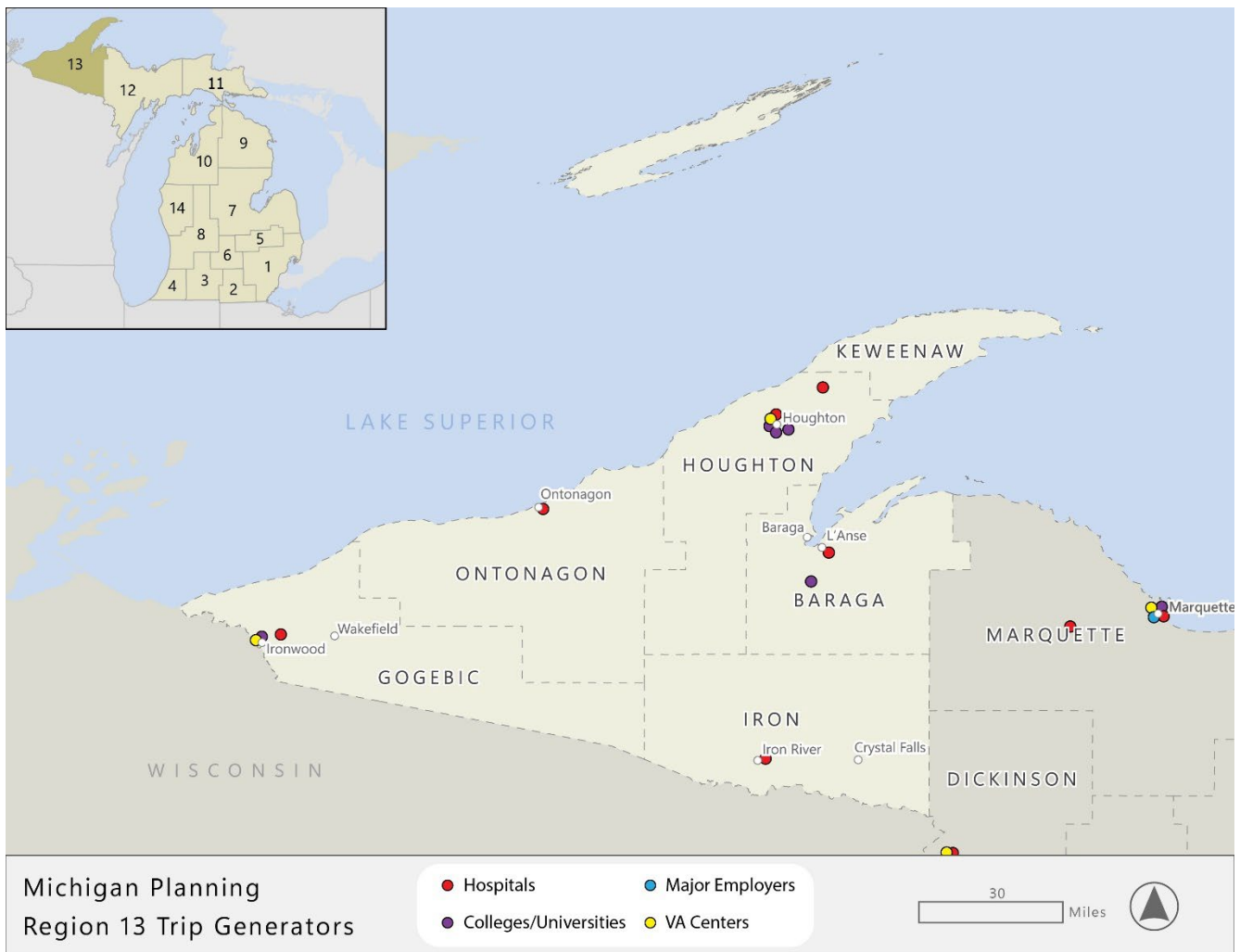
#### Major Medical Facilities

Major medical facilities, classified as regional and general hospitals, represent a significant destination for users of public transportation. Older adults and persons with disabilities often rely more heavily upon services offered by medical facilities than other population segments. Since older adults and persons with disabilities represent a large fraction of the transit dependent population, it is imperative that these facilities are made accessible through public transit services.

## Veteran Affairs Medical Facilities

The Department of Veterans Affairs oversees a network of medical centers and smaller community-based outpatient clinics. Locating transportation to these facilities can be a major barrier for veterans who rely on healthcare that these facilities provide. Region 13 is home to the Hancock VA Clinic and the Ironwood VA Clinic.

**Figure 6-11: Regional Trip Generators**



## Local Trip Generators

In addition to major regional trip generators, it is also important to identify communities containing local trip generators. Local trip generators attract transit demand and include common origins and destinations, like colleges and universities, multi-unit housing, non-profit and governmental agencies, major employers, medical facilities, and shopping centers. Table 6-4 shows local trip generators.

**Table 6-4: Local Trip Generators**

Trip Generators	Shopping Destinations	College /University	High Density Housing	Human Service Agency	Major Employer	Medical Facility
<b>Baraga County</b>						
Baraga			X			
Covington						
L'Anse	X		X			X
Pelkie						
Skanee				X		
Three Lakes						
Zeba						
<b>Gogebic County</b>						
Bessemer			X	X		
Ironwood	X	X	X	X		
Marenisco						
Ramsay						
Wakefield						X
Watersmeet						X
<b>Houghton County</b>						
Atlantic Mine						
Calumet	X					
Chassell						
Copper City						
Dodgeville			X			
Dollar Bay						
Hancock	X	X	X			X
Houghton	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hubbell						
Hurontown			X			
Lake Linden						X
Laurium						X
Painesdale						
South Range						
Trimountain						

Trip Generators	Shopping Destinations	College /University	High Density Housing	Human Service Agency	Major Employer	Medical Facility
<b>Iron County</b>						
Alpha						
Amasa						
Caspian						
Crystal Falls						
Gaastra						
Iron River	X		X	X		X
<b>Keweenaw County</b>						
Ahmeek				X		
Copper Harbor				X		
Eagle Harbor				X		
Eagle River				X		
Fulton						
Mohawk				X		
<b>Ontonagon County</b>						
Bergland			X			
Bruce Crossing			X			X
Ewen						
Greenland						
Lake Gogebic						
Mass City						
Ontonagon	X			X		X
Rockland						
White Pine				X		

## Employment Travel Patterns

In addition to considering locations of major employers, it is also beneficial to account for the commuting patterns of residents intra- and inter-regionally.

Table 6-5 presents results of the Census Bureau's Journey to Work data which provides location of employment (in-county vs. out-of-county and in-state vs. out-of-state) and means of transportation to work. Residents in Region 13 typically work in their county of residence (85%) and predominately drive alone to work (76%). Keweenaw is the only county with an "In county of residence" population below 69% at 40.5%, likely due to a high proportion of workers commuting to Houghton. Public transportation garners approximately 0.3% or less of the employment commuting in all three counties.

**Table 6-5: Journey to Work Patterns for Region 13**

County	Baraga		Gogebic		Houghton	
Workers 16 Years and Older	2,955		6,195		15,881	
Location of Employment	#	%	#	%	#	%
In state of residence	2,874	97.3%	5,114	82.6%	15,616	98.3%
In county of residence	2,416	81.8%	4,873	78.7%	14,651	92.3%
Outside county of residence	458	15.5%	241	3.9%	965	6.1%
Outside state of residence	81	2.7%	1,081	17.4%	265	1.7%
Means of Transportation to Work	#	%	#	%	#	%
Car, truck, or van - drove alone	2,440	82.6%	5,029	81.2%	11,105	69.9%
Car, truck, or van - carpooled	340	11.5%	534	8.6%	1,528	9.6%
Public transportation	2	0.1%	19	0.3%	14	0.1%
Walked	56	1.9%	139	2.2%	1,652	10.4%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, other	26	0.9%	80	1.3%	381	2.4%
Worked from home	91	3.1%	394	6.4%	1,201	7.6%

County	Iron		Keweenaw		Ontonagon	
Workers 16 Years and Older	4,375		790		1,990	
Location of Employment	#	%	#	%	#	%
In state of residence	4,127	94.3%	775	98.1%	1,893	95.1%
In county of residence	3,584	81.9%	320	40.5%	1,377	69.2%
Outside county of residence	543	12.4%	455	57.6%	516	25.9%
Outside state of residence	248	5.7%	15	1.9%	97	4.9%
Means of Transportation to Work	#	%	#	%	#	%
Car, truck, or van - drove alone	3,523	80.5%	589	74.6%	1,621	81.5%
Car, truck, or van - carpooled	366	8.4%	46	5.8%	150	7.5%
Public transportation	4	0.1%	1	0.1%	3	0.2%
Walked	143	3.3%	30	3.8%	61	3.1%
Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, other	43	1.0%	18	2.3%	18	0.9%
Worked from home	296	6.8%	106	13.4%	137	6.9%

Another source of data that provides an understanding of employee travel patterns is the Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) dataset. Table 6-6 provides the results of this analysis for the region. As the table shows, most counties only have a single employment hub which draws a large percentage of its workers. 4 of the 6 counties have a destination which draws at least 15% of that county's workers and the number is 5 out of 6 if you combine the adjoining cities of Hancock and Houghton.

**Table 6-6: Top Ten Employment Destinations for County Residents**

Baraga County			Gogebic County			Houghton County		
Place	#	%	Place	#	%	Place	#	%
L'Anse village, MI	431	16.9%	Ironwood city, MI	961	22.1%	Hancock city, MI	1,140	10.8%
Baraga village, MI	247	9.7%	Bessemer city, MI	402	9.3%	Houghton city, MI	1,061	10.1%
Zeba CDP, MI	104	4.1%	Wakefield city, MI	345	7.9%	Laurium village, MI	545	5.2%
Chassell CDP, MI	47	1.8%	Hurley city, WI	186	4.3%	Dollar Bay CDP, MI	288	2.7%
Houghton city, MI	40	1.6%	Montreal city, WI	82	1.9%	Lake Linden village, MI	257	2.4%
Marquette city, MI	40	1.6%	Watersmeet CDP, MI	49	1.1%	Hubbell CDP, MI	254	2.4%
Three Lakes CDP, MI	35	1.4%	Iron River city, MI	46	1.1%	Chassell CDP, MI	207	2.0%
Ishpeming city, MI	34	1.3%	Ramsay CDP, MI	42	1.0%	South Range village, MI	184	1.7%
Hancock city, MI	30	1.2%	Iron Mountain city, MI	38	0.9%	Calumet village, MI	155	1.5%
Skaneecook CDP, MI	27	1.1%	Marenisco CDP, MI	22	0.5%	Atlantic Mine CDP, MI	147	1.4%
All Other Locations	1,516	59.4%	All Other Locations	2,168	49.9%	All Other Locations	6,296	59.8%

Iron County			Keewenaw County			Ontonagon County		
Place	#	%	Place	#	%	Place	#	%
Iron River city, MI	583	18.7%	Mohawk CDP, MI	25	7.8%	Ontonagon village, MI	166	19.5%
Crystal Falls city, MI	239	7.7%	Laurium village, MI	22	6.9%	White Pine CDP, MI	32	3.8%
Caspian city, MI	162	5.2%	Hancock city, MI	12	3.8%	Rockland CDP, MI	24	2.8%
Gaastra city, MI	63	2.0%	Ahmeek village, MI	9	2.8%	Ewen CDP, MI	22	2.6%
Iron Mountain city, MI	44	1.4%	Copper Harbor CDP, MI	7	2.2%	Greenland CDP, MI	19	2.2%
K. I. Sawyer CDP, MI	42	1.3%	Fulton CDP, MI	6	1.9%	Mass City CDP, MI	18	2.1%
Marquette city, MI	41	1.3%	Eagle Harbor CDP, MI	5	1.6%	Bruce Crossing CDP, MI	16	1.9%
Kingsford city, MI	40	1.3%	Houghton city, MI	5	1.6%	Ironwood city, MI	15	1.8%
Menominee city, MI	28	0.9%	Lake Linden village, MI	5	1.6%	Wakefield city, MI	12	1.4%
Alpha village, MI	23	0.7%	Atlantic Mine CDP, MI	4	1.3%	Bergland CDP, MI	11	1.3%
All Other Locations	1,857	59.5%	All Other Locations	219	68.7%	All Other Locations	518	60.7%

SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU, ONTHEMAP APPLICATION AND LEHD ORIGIN-DESTINATION EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS, 2020.

# Chapter 7

## Prioritized Strategies

### Introduction

A key element required in the coordinated transportation plan involves identifying strategies that address gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to achieve efficiencies in service delivery. While all of the strategies discussed by stakeholders are important and would support efforts to expand mobility in the region, a major step in the coordinated transportation planning process and one of the required elements of the plan is priorities for implementation based on resources, time, and feasibility for implementing specific strategies and/or activities.

This chapter presents strategies that were initially reviewed by Region 13 stakeholders, and then prioritized based on their comments. The development of these strategies considered input received through the two rounds of focus groups discussed in Chapter 2, along with strategies that were included in the previous plan for the counties in the region.

To summarize, the process for the development of prioritized strategies for the region involved:

- Identification of potential strategies to help to address the identified gaps between current transportation services and unmet needs, expand regional mobility, and achieve greater efficiencies in service delivery. These preliminary strategies were based on input from regional stakeholders during the focus groups and recommendations included in recent plans and studies.
- Incorporating comments from regional stakeholders on the preliminary list of possible strategies, activities, and projects.
- Prioritization of potential strategies through an on-line survey. At the June 2023 focus group participants agreed to this process, and that the results would be used to develop a list that grouped strategies that were higher priorities, ones that were a medium priority, and strategies that were a lower priority.

## Strategy Categories

While many of the strategies to improve mobility in the region are interrelated, through the initial development they were categorized by:




- **Organizational and Coordination Strategies** – It is critical that residents in the region are aware of the transportation services and mobility options that are available to them. It is also important that existing resources are coordinated to reduce any duplication. These strategies support maintaining and expanding coordination activities, to help ensure services are marketed effectively, and that regional stakeholders have a forum to identify opportunities to connect services and share information.
- **Operating Strategies** – These strategies are focused on efforts to increase mobility options throughout the region, and include efforts to improve public transit services, expand regional connectivity, build upon current human services transportation, and plan and implement on-demand microtransit services.
- **Sustainability and Financial Strategies** – While many strategies involve efforts to expand mobility in the region, it is vital that current transportation services that are meeting needs are maintained. This includes operating funds to support existing services, as well as capital funding to replace vehicles beyond their useful life. These potential strategies support efforts to seek ongoing and additional funding to maintain and expand transportation services. These strategies also include improvements to the current infrastructure to allow greater access to existing services.

## Region 13 Strategies

Table 7-1 provides a list of the overall strategies based on these categories and that were developed based on feedback from regional stakeholders and provided to them for their consideration. The prioritized list with a description of each potential strategy is provided in the next section of this chapter.



**Table 7-1: Summary of Strategies by Categories**

Categories	Potential Strategies
 <p><b>1. Organizational and Coordination Strategies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build upon current coordination efforts, and as needed establish a regional coordinating committee to serve as an ongoing forum for discussions on coordination opportunities and to identify and prioritize regional connectivity needs.</li> <li>• Incorporate results from Western Upper Peninsula technical assistance into appropriate organizational and service improvement efforts.</li> <li>• Continue to explore opportunities to improve coordination between public transit, private transportation, non-emergency medical transportation, and other human services transportation in the region.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>2. Operating Strategies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to support services that are effectively meeting identified transportation needs in the region.</li> <li>• Continuously reassess existing services for efficiency and effectiveness.</li> <li>• Identify process for planning and implementing new regional services to fill current gaps in transportation.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities to expand scheduled services where feasible that can be marketed to local communities.</li> <li>• Assess opportunities to implement on-demand microtransit services.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>3. Sustainability and Financial Strategies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with community leaders to identify additional funding sources that support increasing operating, capital, and maintenance expenses. and enable public transit and human service transportation providers to maintain and expand mobility options in the region.</li> <li>• Continue to support capital needs that help to maintain existing service and ensure vehicles are safe and appropriate for the need.</li> <li>• Develop additional partnerships to identify new funding opportunities.</li> <li>• Assess opportunities to improve recruitment and retention of vehicle operators.</li> </ul>

## High Priorities

### **Incorporate results from Western Upper Peninsula technical assistance into appropriate organizational and service improvement efforts.**

As noted in the needs assessment a current project is being conducted by a team comprising the National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation (NADO RF) and partner Montana State University's Western Transportation Institute (WTI), with regional partners that include the Western Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Region, the City of Houghton, the City of Hancock, and Michigan Technological University. The purpose of this project is to provide technical assistance to rural transportation leaders in Michigan's Western Upper Peninsula with setting up a mobility innovation working group to prioritize strategies and seek funding and pilot opportunities to improve transit, coordination, or nonmotorized transportation access in and around Houghton. While more information from this planning process will be included in the draft coordinated transportation plan, this strategy supports the results from this technical assistance to be included in future steps to improve and expand mobility in the region.

### **Build upon current coordination efforts, and as needed establish a regional coordinating committee to serve as an ongoing forum for discussions on coordination opportunities and to identify and prioritize regional connectivity needs.**

While there are current efforts in the region to coordinate transportation services, regional stakeholders notes that there are additional opportunities that could be explored. This strategy supports the use of a committee to ensure a broad group of representatives are involved in discussions to improve and expand mobility in the region. This regional coordinating committee would provide an ongoing forum for members to:

- Explore opportunities to improve coordination between public transit, private transportation, non-emergency medical transportation, and other human service transportation in the region.
- Discuss improved connections between existing transit providers.
- Consider, plan, and implement cross county services.
- Assess and reduce barriers to regional transportation services.
- Review and discuss strategies for coordinating transportation services with adjacent regions.
- Exploring and updating committee members on new and ongoing funding opportunities
- Facilitate updates of the coordinated transportation plan for Region 13.

This strategy could potentially take into account the results from the cities of Hancock and Houghton transit consolidation study noted in Chapter 3, and planned for 2024.

## Build Upon Local and Regional Mobility Management Efforts

Related to coordination, regional stakeholders also reported that there are some mobility management efforts in place in the region. Mobility management is a term that has come to represent a formal definition of a transportation strategy that focuses more on the customer and their needs, and the meeting of these needs through the coordinated use of a variety of providers. Mobility management is an evolving concept that aims to improve specialized transportation, particularly for older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, and individuals with lower incomes through a range of activities. These activities look beyond a single transportation service or solution to a “family of services” philosophy that can offer a wide range of services and options to meet an equally wide array of community demographics and needs.

The National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) notes that mobility management:

- Encourages innovation and flexibility to reach the “right fit” solution for customers
- Plans for sustainability
- Strives for easy information and referral to assist customers in learning about and using services
- Continually incorporates customer feedback as services are evaluated and adjusted

This strategy supports using the current mobility management efforts as a foundation for expanded and services that could take on a variety of coordination and marketing roles, and that would bring together regional stakeholders to identify how existing transportation services and resources could be fully utilized – and fulfill the need for community leaders, organizations, and members to have a shared a common vision for transportation services in the region.

Additional responsibilities that could be considered as part of mobility management activities include developing travel training programs, leading advocacy, and partnership campaigns (discussed later in the Sustainability and Financial Strategies), and implementing sponsorship programs (also discussed in the Sustainability and Financial Strategies section). The expansion of mobility management efforts at the local level or through a regional approach has the capability of greatly improving access to transportation services in the region, particularly for residents with limited mobility options or access to a personal vehicle.

### Identify opportunities to expand scheduled services where feasible that can be marketed to local communities.

Regional stakeholders noted the while there are a variety of transportation services operating in the region, there is more demand than services that are available. They remarked that there is too much geographic area and territory to cover with current resources.

While demand response services are essential to provide mobility in rural areas, one consideration to address this reality and supported by this strategy is an assessment of opportunities to implement scheduled services where feasible. These schedules can be set up based on historical travel patterns and

typical ridership patterns, and potentially implemented for different times and perhaps different days. The frequency of the service will be determined by existing and potential ridership, though the overall objective is to group trips that can reduce costs as opposed to constant one-on-one set of trips that is very expensive to operate.

One of the important considerations related to this strategy is that these services must be heavily promoted, and a clear schedule developed so that they are fully marketed, and information posted throughout each community/county. Fixed schedule service has proven to be far more productive and less expensive than other services by generating more trips with existing resources, and with the promotion of the scheduled services those interested in traveling in the region can be more aware of their travel options, ridership can increase, and productivity of these services improved.

### **Assess opportunities to implement on-demand microtransit services.**

Stakeholders reported that there are some Transportation Network Companies (i.e., Uber and Lyft) operating in the more populated parts of the regions, and expressed a desire to explore how some version of these on-demand services could be used to expand mobility options in the region.

One of the major changes in planning transit services since the last coordinated transportation plan for the region is the introduction of microtransit services. A growing number of public transportation providers have begun operating this service that features an on-demand, e-hailing component. These services use mobile technology to provide dynamic routing through which customers use a smartphone application (app) to schedule and/or pay for a ride within a specific geofenced zone. On-demand services can provide more flexibility to customers than traditional demand response services. Riders can individualize service by selecting both their pick-up and drop-off locations, while dynamic routing capabilities allow drivers to quickly adjust pick-up locations to provide more efficient service.

A variety of different needs and mobility challenges can be met through microtransit services. These included service industry workers who work second and third shift jobs and have mobility needs that are unable to be met during normal transit operational hours; and jobs outside of the current transit service areas that are therefore challenging to access. Microtransit services are also appealing to college students. While once designed for larger urban areas, on-demand services are now expanding to small urban and rural communities. On-demand services can be designed to make local service easier, and instead of customers having to call the day before the trip they can access the service in as little as one hour or less.

There are also operational advantages to on-demand microtransit services, as they can be useful where fixed route service may be ineffective. These services may make better use of the existing vehicles and often require almost no interaction with the dispatcher, reducing the demands on that position.

There are a variety of new microtransit services across the country that can be used as possible models in the planning and design of on-demand options in the region. While each project is unique, the following step-by-step planning process provides a possible guide for implementation:

- **Microtransit Zones** – Locations are identified as prime candidates for services based on the assessment of existing transit services, demographic, and other key factors.
- **Service Plan** - Various operational considerations for potential services are developed, including service days and hours, pickup and drop off locations, and the type of vehicles to be used in the delivery of services.
- **Capital and Technology Considerations** – These areas are assessed based on preferred service delivery and other service components.
- **Funding and Budget Considerations** – Potential costs and revenue sources for the microtransit service are identified.
- **Outreach Considerations** – Various opportunities to obtain community input on potential microtransit services are developed.
- **Procurement and RFP Considerations** – Process for obtaining a vendor to provide microtransit software and/or operate services is developed.
- **Service Evaluation Considerations** – Methods for measuring and assessing the efficacy and efficiency of microtransit services after implementation are identified.

This strategy proposes the planning and implementation of on-demand microtransit services. More guidance in the planning and implementation of these services related to delivery, technology, and other key components can be provided in the draft plan for the region.

## Medium Priorities

### **Continue to support capital needs that help to maintain existing service and ensure vehicles are safe and appropriate for the need.**

Maintaining and building upon current capital infrastructure is crucial to continuing or expanding mobility options, especially for older adults and people with disabilities. Before the region can consider efforts for improving mobility for these population groups it is critical to ensure that the current foundation of services remains in place through a sufficient capital network. An aging vehicle fleet can be a potential barrier to improving transportation services.

This strategy involves the acquisition of replacement buses or vans, vehicle rehabilitation or overhaul, and other appropriate vehicle equipment improvements that support the current capital infrastructure in the region, especially for non-profit organizations that provide human services transportation. It is essential that current vehicles are maintained and remain safe and operable.

### **Work with community leaders to identify additional funding sources to maintain and expand mobility options in the region.**

Often the barrier to implementation or expansion of transportation services is a lack of funding to support these improvements. Regional stakeholders noted that there is a need to identify new funding to support service expansions, and while some funding programs can be restrictive that there is also an opportunity to be creative and to consider different and new solutions. In addition, while some millages are in place that support transit services this local funding stream can also cause challenges when considering regional services that cross jurisdictional boundaries. As discussed in the needs assessment, overall regional stakeholders expressed that any service expansion or improvement will most likely come down to funding.

The federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) reports that CCAM agencies administer 130 programs that may fund transportation for older adults, people with disabilities, and/or people with lower incomes. While there are renewed coordination efforts at the federal level on these programs, much of the work to coordinate funds and to fully utilize resources through these programs occurs at the local and regional levels. Therefore, this strategy encourages cooperation and coordination support between key community leaders and stakeholders to discuss how current funding can be used most effectively to meet mobility needs and to identify possible new sources that would support additional transportation services.

In positive news related to additional funding to support transportation services in the region and across the state, during the development of this current coordinated transportation plan the Michigan Legislature approved and sent to Governor Whitmer the 2024 State budget that includes increased operations funding for transits across the state. More details as they become available on this funding increase will be included in this section of the draft final plan for the region.

### **Develop additional partnerships to identify new funding opportunities.**

This strategy involves identifying partnership opportunities to leverage additional funding to support public transit and other mobility options in the region. It would include meeting multiple unmet needs and issues by tackling non-traditional sources of funding. Hospitals, supermarkets, and retailers who want the business of the region's riders may be willing to pay for part of the cost of transporting those riders to their sites. This approach is applicable to both medical and retail establishments already served, as well as to new businesses. While this plan helps to document the need for these additional services, some may need to be further quantified. It might also be necessary to document unmet needs and gaps in service as part of educating potential funders and sponsors.

Local funding has often been an issue for rural and small urban transit systems. However, transit has a long history of providing advertising on and in buses for additional revenue. Many systems have engaged in advertising over the years, but a sponsorship program is more than simply advertising. Instead of the usual selling of just one form of advertising, transit systems in the region can explore the selling of sponsorship packages. Since sponsorship and advertising funds are an important source of local funding, this program can help expand the service. Large corporations have been known to participate in sponsorship programs and typically these companies have far more money than all the cities and counties in the service area combined.

This strategy would involve identifying partnership opportunities to leverage additional funding to support public transit and other mobility options in the region. It would include meeting multiple unmet needs and issues by tackling non-traditional sources of funding. Hospitals, supermarkets, and retailers who want the business of the region's riders may be willing to pay for part of the cost of transporting those riders to their sites. This approach is applicable to both medical and retail establishments already served, as well as to new businesses. While this plan helps to document the need for these additional services, some may need to be further quantified. It might also be necessary to document unmet needs and gaps in service as part of educating potential funders and sponsors.

## Lower Priorities

### Identify process for planning and implementing new regional services to fill current gaps in transportation.

Through outreach events stakeholders expressed the need for regional services that connect communities in the region and cross jurisdictional boundaries. In conjunction with the formation of a regional coordinating committee that would work on regional efforts, this strategy supports a more formal process for planning and implementing new regional services that would help to fill gaps. There are a variety of considerations involved in the development of regional services that need to be considered, and that include:

- Prioritizing regional service corridors.
- Balancing commuter needs to larger employment centers with medical transportation and other needs.
- Identifying preferred mode of transportation, i.e., public transit, private transportation, etc.
- Identifying opportunities to implement vanpool programs to expand employment transportation options in the region.
- Determining agency or organization that will operate services, i.e., will be responsible entities be a consortium of operators, a new regional transit system or one designated transit operator with support from other participating systems.
- Identifying funding sources and formalizing agreements on a cost sharing plan for regional services that would cross jurisdictional boundaries and serve multiple communities.

## Continue to support services that are effectively meeting identified transportation needs in the region.

While most proposed strategies are designed to improve and expand mobility options in the region, it is vital to maintain services and infrastructure that are currently meeting transportation needs. Maintaining existing capital infrastructure is vital to meeting community transportation needs. Financial resources are also needed to operate vehicles and continue current services. There is also a need to continuously reassess existing services for efficiency and effectiveness, and operators must ensure their services continue to meet the region's mobility needs.

This strategy involves providing capital and operating funds to support existing public transit services and human services transportation that are effectively meeting mobility needs identified in the region, especially those serving older adults and individuals with disabilities. Maintaining these services are vital to ensuring basic mobility in the region, though existing services can be monitored on an ongoing basis using typical industry performance standards that can serve as a tool to monitor effectiveness and efficiency, and include:

- Operating Cost Per Hour
- Operating Cost Per Mile
- Operating Cost Per Passenger Trip
- Farebox Recovery
- Passenger Trips Per Mile
- Passenger Trips Per Hour

Through this strategy, there would be continued support for public transit services operated in the region that are meeting these standards. It also allows for opportunities to identify existing services that are important to the community, but that could be improved through modifications or technical assistance. This strategy would also enable regional stakeholders to establish baselines to help determine if additional funding is warranted, and to consider modifications to previous industry metrics for measuring transit's full value in the region.

Transportation provided through human service agencies is more specialized and therefore is not monitored through these performance measures. Agencies that would like to evaluate their transportation programs to ensure that financial resources are being used effectively can utilize *Transportation by the Numbers*, a resource available through the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC). This tool provides human service organizations with ways to more easily identify expenses, revenues, and performance outcomes so that they can make more informed decisions about their future in the transportation business. This tool is available through the NADTC website at <https://www.nadtc.org/resources-publications/resource/transportation-by-the-numbers/>.



## Assess opportunities to improve recruitment and retention of vehicle operators.

In order to safely operate service levels to meet community needs, transit agencies must have an adequate number of qualified operators. Many transportation providers across the state and nation have been faced with a significant shortage of operators, even prior to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The job of a professional transit operator is an essential worker with specialized skills, who faces daily challenges with potentially challenging passengers, pressure to keep on schedule with challenging driving conditions, long periods of time sitting, and safely assisting individuals with disabilities, all while ideally being the professional, courteous public face of the organization. Being a transit operator is a difficult job. Ideally, their pay should reflect this.

If a transit agency cannot attract quality candidates to apply and continue working, the quality of the services the organization provides will suffer. Without enough employees (high quality or otherwise), service levels cannot be maintained, and some members of the community will lose their ride to work, school, the doctor, and other essential destinations. Each time a transit organization must fill a vacant position, there is a cost to the organization to hire and train a new employee. Paying overtime to current employees can be a short-term solution but is not a sustainable strategy. Not only is a high rate of overtime utilization costly to the agency in terms of payroll (because the overtime pay rate is typically 150% of the regular pay rate), but frequent overtime can also lead to safety risks due to operator fatigue and employee burnout, leading to yet more vacancies.

Therefore, this strategy recommends the assessment of opportunities to improve driver recruitment and retention, taking into account national research and analysis of operator vacancy rates that shows:

- Higher pay leads to lower vacancies – Systems with higher minimum and maximum pay rates have lower vacancy rates on average.
- Reliable hours and pay attracts workers – Systems with a higher percentage of full-time drivers and with more generous overtime levels have lower vacancy rates.
- Workers want training, health benefits, and a quality work environment – Systems that offer healthcare benefits, offer CDL training, and that foster a quality working environment have lower vacancy rates.

Additional considerations to support driver recruitment include:

- If they are to restore and maintain staffing levels, transit agencies will need to provide competitive wages and benefits that are commensurate with the levels of risk, pressures, and responsibilities that come with the operator's position. The compensation will need to be higher than that offered by low-risk, low-challenge jobs in their area, and competitive with other types of driving jobs such as school bus operators.
- To compete with other employers in the area in today's employment environment, transit agencies may need to offer hiring bonuses. Hiring bonuses could be paid in installments over the course of the first year to encourage continued employment. Bonuses for referrals from current employees should also be considered.

- In addition to offering competitive, higher entry-level wages, transit agencies need to offer regular cost of living increases so that operators can continue to earn a living wage, and periodic longevity increases and/or bonuses, rewarding operators for their years of service will help retain operators and reward them for continuing to work for the organization.
- Transit agencies with vehicles that require the operator to have a CDL can seriously consider providing paid training to prepare new hires to obtain their CDL. Offering a competitive wage as well as a meaningful sign-up bonus contingent upon a minimum period of employment can help prevent new CDL operators from taking a higher-paying job as soon as they have earned their CDL.
- Transit agencies offer an advantage over transportation network companies (such as Lyft or Uber) not only with benefits but also by being a trusted employer. Transit agencies can have an advantage in recruiting efforts by emphasizing the agency's mission and the importance of the job to the community. However, adequate pay is needed for the job to be attractive. Transit agencies with full-time operator positions (at least 35 hours per week) are likely to have lower operator vacancy rates.

## Chapter 8

# Adoption Process

As discussed in Chapter 1, this coordinated mobility plan is designed to meet federal coordinated transportation planning requirements. The guidelines in these requirements state that the lead agency in consultation with planning participants should identify the process for approving and adopting the plan.

In Region 13 stakeholders who participated in development of this plan had the opportunity to:

- Review and comment on identified transportation needs in the region.
- Review and provide input on potential strategies, activities, and projects to be included in the regional plan.
- Prioritize strategies identified as the most appropriate for improving mobility in the region.

These stakeholders had the opportunity to review and provide input on a draft version of this plan. Their input was incorporated into the final version.

# Helpful Resources

This section provides links to a variety of resources, national technical assistance centers, and other organizations referenced throughout the plan; or that could be helpful with the implementation of the strategies identified in this plan and overall efforts to improve mobility in the region.

- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Program
  - <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grants/enhanced-mobility-seniors-individuals-disabilities-section-5310>
- Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Office of Passenger Transportation (OPT)
  - <https://www.michigan.gov/mdot/travel/mobility/pub-transit>
- Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) Federal Fund Braiding Guide
  - <https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-programs/ccam/about/coordinating-council-access-and-mobility-ccam-federal-fund>
- National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC):
  - <https://www.nadtc.org/>
- American Public Transportation Association (APTA)
  - [www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com)
- Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA):
  - [www.ctaa.org](http://www.ctaa.org)
- National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT)
  - <https://n-catt.org>
- National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM)
  - <https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/by-topic/coordination>
- National Rural Transit Assistance Program (National RTAP)
  - <https://www.nationalrtap.org>
- Shared-Use Mobility Center (SUMC)
  - <https://sharedusemobilitycenter.org>
- Transit Workforce Development Technical Assistance Center (TWC)
  - <https://www.transitworkforce.org>

- National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP):
  - <http://www.trb.org/NCHRP/NCHRP.aspx>
- National Volunteer Transportation Center:
  - <https://ctaa.org/national-volunteer-transportation-center>
- Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP):
  - <http://www.apta.com/resources/tcrp/Pages/default.aspx>
- Transit Planning For All:
  - <https://transitplanning4all.org>