

## Final Assessment Report

### **Background**

There is a significant need for the program being evaluated. The program is focused on providing affordable public transportation to individuals in Fulton County. As we consider the quality of life, especially in rural areas, public transportation plays a critical role (Lin & Cui, 2021). There are various factors that influence one's quality of life, with one of those factors being mobility. However, one's independence and mobility often decline as they begin to age (Lin & Cui, 2021). Further, not all ageing individuals have family that they can depend on for transportation. Therefore, this has created a need for public transportation to allow ageing populations to participate in society, get to their medical appointments, and other necessities to improve one's overall well-being.

Although the program is needed to enhance the autonomy and health of ageing populations, it also serves the general population's needs. Research shows that rural areas in America generally have low public transportation opportunities (Zhang & Xu, 2022). In addition, the Center of Disease Control and Prevention states that “approximately one third of adults in rural communities live with a disability, impacting their ability to travel freely to the places they want and need to go” (2016). That said, access to safe and reliable transportation impacts the health and well-being of rural populations. When these forms of transportation are unavailable, rural community members may not be able to receive important services or commute to their job. Therefore, there is a significant need for the program to enhance the health, well-being, and quality of life of Fulton County citizens.

Due to the need for the program, the Fulton County Transportation evaluation will be gathering information on the interest and effectiveness of switching from a call-ahead door-to-door public transportation to a fixed route system. The information will include a survey of riders on their interest in switching systems. Further, the evaluation survey will provide information about the demographics of the riders, such as their age and race. The evaluation survey will also provide information on the reliability and availability of the transportation company. Ultimately, this information will provide insight on how riders currently view the transportation company and their perceptions of the proposed change of creating a fixed route.

The information gathered from the evaluation will be used to determine if a fixed route would be more efficient than a call-ahead, door-to-door public transportation system. The riders' interest or lack of interest in switching systems will be used to educate stakeholders, including those funding the program to assist in deciding to switch or not. Other feedback from those using the services will be used to identify any concerns about the drivers, the vehicles, and outdated policies that need revising.

### **Program Description**

The program being evaluated is a local transportation company that serves the Fulton County community in Indiana. The communities within Fulton County include Rochester, Fulton, Kewanna, and Akron. Upon request, the program may serve individuals outside of Fulton County for an additional fee based off mileage and wait time. The program provides affordable and efficient public transportation to individuals that need access within the Fulton County area. The program offers shared rides, where multiple passengers may be utilizing the service at one

time, within and to and from Fulton County by requests made at least 24 hours in advance. Rides are given to those who request first come first served.

### **Stakeholder Identification**

It is important to address all stakeholders as they may be affected directly or indirectly by the program. Stakeholders include those who use the program, such as those being transported. Stakeholders are not limited to those who only utilize the program but those who have a “stake” in the program. Those who operate the program and ensure that the program runs smoothly are also considered stakeholders. The individuals who provide the transportation, such as the drivers, are affected by the program. Therefore, they are considered a stakeholder. Lastly, those who may be indirectly affected by the program, for example, family members of those being transported, are also deemed stakeholders.

### **Evaluation Goal Statement**

The goal of the program is to provide affordable and accessible transportation to individuals within the Fulton County community. The goal of the program evaluation is to make further advancements, such as the creation of a fixed route to the program. Therefore, the goal from here is to determine if the program can handle the changes to the route without the result of negative reviews and the loss of consumers. Other goals of this evaluation include gathering feedback from those using the services and determining what changes need to be made. Some potential areas of improvement that may be addressed in this feedback include changes in policies (how rides are scheduled, cancellation policies, disabled services), changes in the route (adding streets/business or decreasing to a fixed route), and any considerations for improving drivers, cleanliness of the vehicles, and other day to day attributes

of the service.

### **Proposed Methodology**

The stakeholders will all be addressed similarly when assessing the program. A detailed survey curated to each different type of stakeholder will be administered. This survey will be specific to the needs, wants, and goals of the stakeholders while providing more insight into what is working, what is not, and any suggestions moving forward (French, 2012). In addition, the survey will allow us to measure the reactions of stakeholders in terms of potential changes within the program (French, 2012). Ultimately, the survey will provide qualitative and quantitative data that will be interpreted later.

Potential setbacks are to be expected. One setback would be that we do not identify any changes to be made or things to keep the same from survey questions. If this occurred, there may need to be a revised version of the survey questions asking for more specific details, or we may need to provide a more structured interview for the program creators and the business owners. Data will be measured through the responses to the survey and can be employed again if there are any policy or structural changes made to ensure that the consumers are truly benefiting from these changes.

### **Analysis Plan**

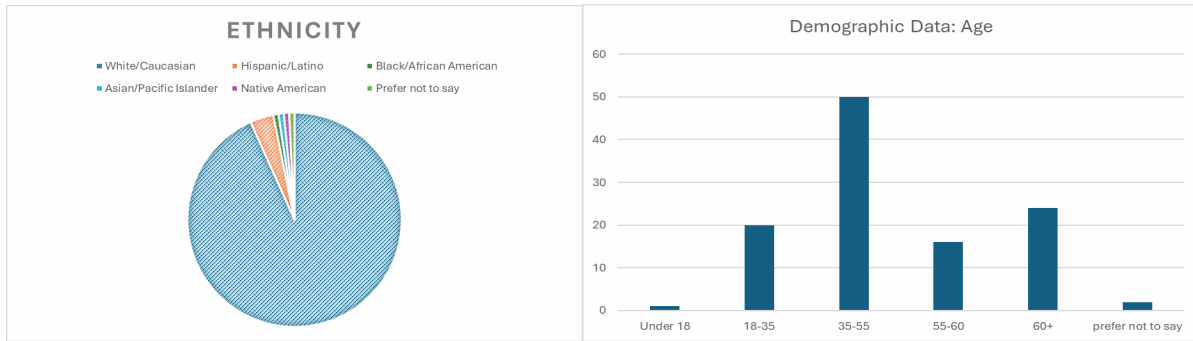
The program we are evaluating requires descriptive information that can be gained through surveys. Due to having more qualitative data, we utilized SPSS techniques to analyze the

frequencies for different question responses while also utilizing crosstab techniques to help put the raw data into more comprehensible information. From here, we looked at the frequencies of the responses to identify themes and which responses were favored the most between riders, community members, and business owners.

### **Presentation and Dissemination of Evaluation Results**

In total, we received 113 responses. 108 of those responses were individuals who responded to the survey online whereas only 5 individuals responded on paper. As we began interpreting the results, it was shown that there were problems with the data in terms of how many people identified as riders (9) versus how many people identified as community members (79). Therefore, we will assume that those who identified as community members are also riders. In addition to this, there were 21 business owners and 4 elected individuals who completed the surveys. Further, it is important to note that not everyone responded to the survey questions which did result in missing data.

In terms of demographics, 21 individuals were between the ages of 18-35; 50 individuals were between the ages of 35-55; 16 individuals were between 55-60; 24 individuals were 60 or older; and 2 individuals preferred not to say their age. Further, 105 individuals identified as White/Caucasian; 4 individuals identified as Hispanic/Latino; 1 individual identified as Black/African American; 1 individual identified as Asian/Pacific Islander; 1 individual identified as Native American; and 1 individual preferred not to share their ethnicity. Moreover, there were 24 males and 87 females who completed the survey. Two participants preferred not to share their gender.

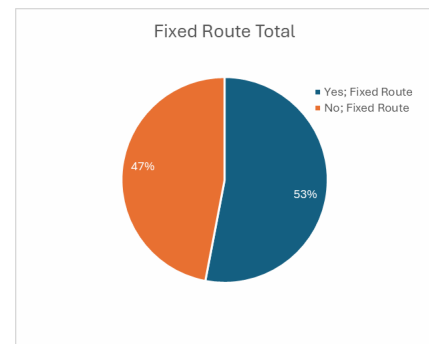


**\*\*Graphs includes ALL data\*\***

According to riders and community members, 24 said yes to fixed route on fixed schedule, whereas 20 said no, a fixed route would not be helpful. In addition, 17 business owners said yes to a fixed route on a fixed schedule, whereas 15 said no, they would not prefer a fixed route.

**Do you prefer there to be a fixed route (meaning you would need to meet the bus/van at set points and it would work on a semi-fixed schedule) with set times for Fulton county transportation?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	17	15.7	53.1	53.1
	No	15	13.9	46.9	100.0
	Total	32	29.6	100.0	
Missing	System	76	70.4		
Total		108	100.0		



**\*\*Frequency data for business owners\*\***

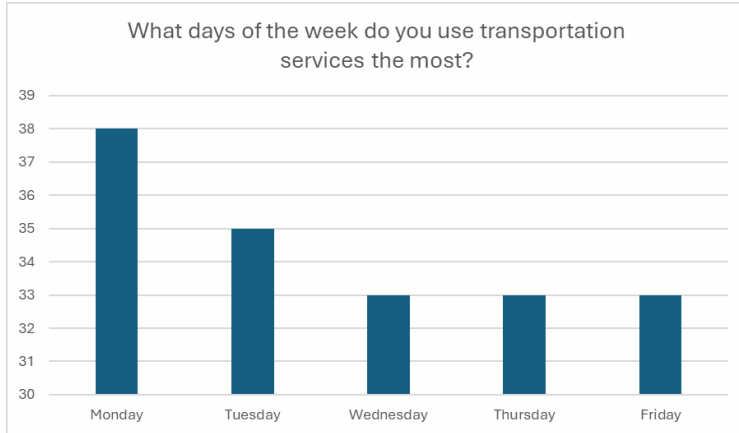
**Would it be helpful if there was only one route that operated according to a fixed schedule?**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	21	19.4	51.2	51.2
	No	20	18.5	48.8	100.0
	Total	41	38.0	100.0	
Missing	System	67	62.0		
Total		108	100.0		

**\*\*Frequency data for riders; not including 4 “yes” responses on paper surveys\*\***

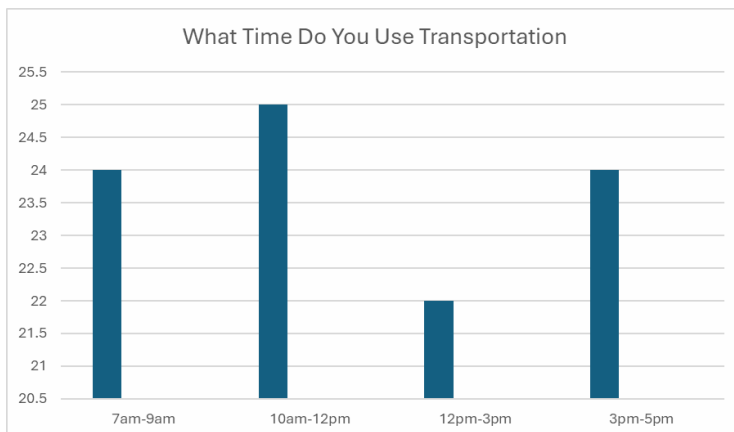
In terms of days of the week, 38 individuals use services on Mondays; 35 individuals on Tuesdays; 33 individuals on Wednesdays; 33 individuals on Thursdays; and 33 individuals on Fridays. In addition, 38 people in total find themselves needing transportation services on the weekend - 24 specified that they sometimes need it, 9 specified that they often need it, and 5 specified that they *always* need transportation on the weekend. Overall, we can conclude that

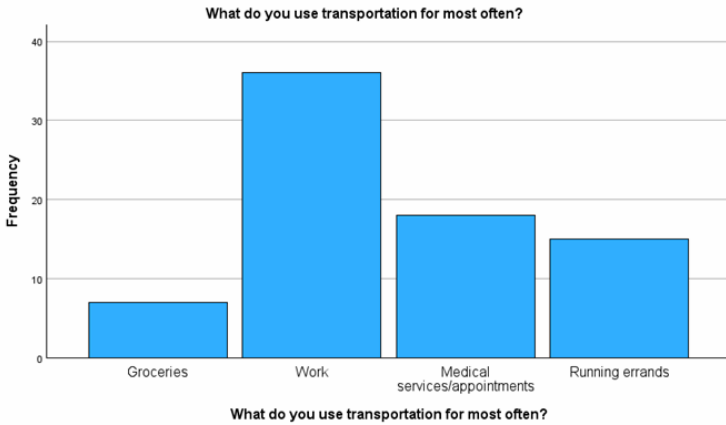
transportation services should continue being available Monday through Friday, and consider adding weekend hours as well.



**\*\*Graph includes ALL data\*\***

When looking at what hours of the day individuals utilize the transportation services, 24 individuals said that they use transportation between 7 am-9am; 25 individuals use transportation between 10 am-12pm; 22 between 12pm-3pm; and 24 between 3pm-5pm. We can conceptualize that most riders utilize services between 7am-5pm. Furthermore, 9 people utilize transportation for groceries; 37 for work; and 20 for medical purposes.





\*\*Graph does not include paper survey data\*\*

In terms of handling the influx of more customers/patrons from Fulton County, 30 business owners said they could handle it; however, only 2 said they could not. In addition, 22 business owners said that they feel like Fulton County transportation could solve some of the transportation needs of their employees, whereas only 9 said no. In fact, 15 business owners said that they might have lost potential employees because they haven't been able to utilize Fulton County transportation for the shifts they may be working. Furthermore, 9 business owners confirmed that they have lost employees due to lack of transportation in general while 15 business owners confirmed that they have current employees who have difficulties with consistent transportation.

Due to the lack of consistent transportation and how that impacts businesses in Fulton County, 12 business owners said that they lost employees for the shifts that they were scheduled to work. Further, 8 business owners reported that they have permanently lost employees due to lack of consistent transportation. This has resulted in workers being more stressed out, according to 10 of the business owners. In fact, 10 of the business owners also said that they cannot serve their customers due to transportation and employee issues.



## Recommendations

First and foremost, we recommend letting the research team gather data in the future, rather than having the program being evaluated collect the data. This will ensure that the surveys are administered as intended, thus strengthening the reliability of our data and results. In fact, we recommend that data is gathered either through online surveys or paper surveys only, rather than a mixture of both. This will ensure that data is properly analyzed across all surveys. Further, we recommend that stakeholders consider how riders who are physically impaired will get to the fixed route. In addition, a fixed route will prevent riders from having to call and schedule their rides in advance. We believe it is important for stakeholders to consider how they will manage that (i.e., will there be enough room on the bus for an influx of people at once?).

Moreover, the data demonstrates how the lack of consistent transportation has impacted businesses and their employees. A common complaint of the business owners is that the transportation services were not available at times where riders could get to work. We recommend keeping this in mind when considering the hours for a fixed route. It may be possible that there is a need for extended hours outside of the typical 9am-5pm.

It is also important to consider that riders utilize transportation for medical needs and/or appointments. With that being said, riders generally have to schedule those appointments ahead of time. *How* the company will manage that with a fixed route should be considered.

Additionally, program evaluators suggest making changes to the website so that information on these routes, policies, and other important information is easier to access and understand.

Program evaluators found it difficult at times to gather information from the website.

In conclusion, it appears that the riders' main complaint is that the transportation services are not available for work commutes. It is clear that there needs to be extended hours or a fixed route that considers this issue. We also can conclude that most business owners are able to handle an influx of customers; however, the concern is that there will be an inadequate amount of seating on the buses for the influx of riders. Finally, we can assume that reliable transportation within Fulton County could be a benefit for the local businesses and their employees. We believe that Fulton County's community will benefit from making the changes discussed above. Not only will these adjustments benefit Fulton County riders, but it will also lead to more accessible transportation for employees and business owners, creating less barriers for the community as a whole.

## Bibliography

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## Appendix

1. To what use will the evaluations finding be put?

- a. By whom?
  - b. Who else should be informed about the evaluation results?
2. Has the program been evaluated before?
3. What is the timeframe for the evaluation?
  - a. When is final information needed?
4. What individuals or groups might benefit from a positive evaluation?
5. Who might benefit from a negative evaluation?
6. How far are you extending county transportation?
7. Will medical transportation still be provided on the fixed route?
8. How many people can be on one trip?
9. Have there been any issues with the way rides are scheduled? Are you keeping track of these?
10. What are the current pick-up points? How many are there? How spread out are they?
11. For cancellations, is someone regularly checking voicemail?
12. Do riders have to have documentation stating their disability?
13. One form for request accommodation. Who makes those decisions?
14. Should riders discuss accommodations while scheduling their ride to ensure timely accommodations?
15. Where do complaints go and how are they fixing problems? Not readily available on website as stated
16. How do you document rider's personal information? Is it being retained, or do they have to provide every time?

17. What are the requirements of designated employees? What are the requirements of drivers? Are employees given background checks, drug tests, etc.?
18. Why do drivers not provide change?
19. How many rides are given with the \$20- and \$40-dollar tickets? Would this be a better option than just paying for the \$2 or \$4 tickets? What would be the difference?
20. What kind of vehicles are used for transportation? (picture on website looks like an SUV, but in the rider's manual it discusses not having items blocking the aisle ways, indicating a larger vehicle)
21. If riders have children accompanying them, are there additional costs? Does the child need to have their own ticket? If so, are there different prices depending on the age of the child?

### **Questionnaire for Fulton County Riders and Business Owners:**

#### ***Demographics***

1. What is your age?
2. What is your ethnicity?
3. What is your gender?
4. What is your community role?

#### ***Fulton County Rider Questions***

1. What do you use transportation for most often?
2. Are there regular times you need to use transportation, but it is not available?
  - a. If yes, what are those hours that you need that is not available?

3. Would it be helpful if there was only one route that operated according to a fixed schedule?
4. Are there places you need to go that the route does not take you?
  - a. If yes, please explain where
5. What hours of the day do you normally use transportation services?
6. What times do you think would be best for transportation during weekdays?
7. What days of the week do you use transportation services the most?
8. Do you find yourself needing transportation services during the weekend?
9. Do you rely on transportation to take you out of the county? If so, how often?
10. Do you rely on in-town transportation?
11. Have you ever had issues scheduling a ride? If so, please explain.
12. Have you had any issues with accommodations?
13. Do you have children or other dependents who utilize transportation services with you?
14. Do you rely on transportation to take you to medical appointments? If so, how often?
15. Do transportation services need to be more available? If yes, in what ways would you like to see the availability increase?
16. Do you think that there should be weekend hours available for transportation services? If so, what hours would you need?
17. Should weekend hours be available for transportation services, how much notice would you be able to provide to secure weekend reservations?
18. What additional questions, comments, or concerns do you have?

***Business Owner Questions***

1. Could your business handle the influx of more customers/patrons from Fulton County transportation?
2. What issues do you foresee if there were many individuals in your business at once?
3. If you had to limit the number of customers coming in at once, what would that number be?
4. Do you prefer there to be a fixed route (meaning you would need to meet the bus/van at set points and it would work on a semi-fixed schedule) with set times for Fulton county transportation?
5. Do you feel like Fulton County transportation could solve some of the transportation needs of your employees?
6. Do you believe that you have lost potential employees because they cannot use Fulton Country transportation for the shifts they may be working?
7. Do your current employees struggle with having consistent transportation?
8. What impact does lack of consistent transportation have on your business?

