

RIDE Solutions New River Valley

COMMUTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
STRATEGIC PLAN

*RIDE Solutions is a project of the New
River Valley Regional Commission*



RIDESolutions
Connecting the Region's Commuters

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Chapter 1

Commuter Assistance Program Overview

Program History

RIDE Solutions was founded in 2001 as a commuter information and assistance service of the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (RVARC) in the Roanoke Valley metropolitan area. The program was expanded in 2008 to provide services in the New River Valley through the New River Valley Regional Commission (NRVRC) – originally with an emphasis on employer outreach. In that time the number of commuters served has grown and the outreach efforts have expanded to include community partnerships and commuter support along with continuing employer outreach efforts.

The program has been funded through a DRPT grant (CAP Operating Assistance) with a 20% local match. This local match was provided through the dues each locality pays to the Commission, establishing a stakeholder role in the program. Virginia Tech also provided financial support to launch the program and support its early growth across the New River Valley.

Until July 2019, the Commission worked in partnership with the RVARC to administer DRPT grant funds for the operation of Ride Solutions. In FY2020, this partnership evolved to a more collaborative arrangement which had come to include the Central Virginia PDC and West Piedmont PDC, all promoting TDM services under the Ride Solutions brand. At this time, the program began to be referenced as Ride Solutions NRV to identify the New River Valley-centered operations under the Ride Solutions brand and as a program within the NRVRC's work program. Generally, the brand continues to be known as RIDE Solutions in the region.

Partnering with Roanoke, Central Virginia, and West Piedmont allows us to pool resources to raise awareness of services throughout Southwest Virginia, but still allows each region to customize messaging for the unique needs of each region.

Purpose & Services

RIDE Solutions NRV promotes a variety of transportation options to single-occupancy vehicles (SOV) to assist individuals getting to their workplaces and other destinations, to mitigate congestion on Virginia's roadways, and to reduce environmental impacts caused by vehicle emissions, roadway expansion, and other transportation-related factors. Program marketing efforts support delivery of TDM services to encourage behavior change in transportation choices.

RIDE Solutions NRV delivers services to anyone traveling within, into or out of its service area, including information and support for cycling and walking, carpool/vanpool ride matching, guaranteed ride home, and telework assistance. It also promotes the use of transit service in our area but does not operate any transit. The program delivers its services through a website, mail, email and telephone contact, in-person assistance at worksites, and participation in community events.



Pedestrian Bridge, Christiansburg

Governance

RIDE Solutions NRV is a project of the New River Valley Regional Commission. The New River Valley Regional Commission is an organization comprised of 13 local governments and three higher education institutions for the purpose of encouraging collaboration to address regionally significant issues and opportunities. Also known as PDC 4, our organization encompasses the counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski, and the City of Radford.

Local governments' governing bodies appoint their member representatives to the NRVRC's board. Each city, town, or county appoints one elected official to the commission and communities with more than 3,500 residents also appoint a citizen representative. Virginia Tech, Radford University, and New River Community College are members of the Commission and appoint a representative from their administrative leadership. The Commission sets policy for the organization, appoints the executive director to manage the affairs of the Commission and works to address issues of regional significance. The board also authorizes the annual operating budget and matching funds for grants.

Each year Commission members elect officers to serve on the Executive Committee in the positions of chair, vice-chair, treasurer, and member at-large. The immediate past chair is also a member of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee typically meets monthly to prepare for the regular Commission meeting.

Current Commission Members

(Elected officials are marked with an asterisk)

Floyd County

Ms. Linda DeVito Kuchenbuch*
Mr. Michael Maslaney, Past Chair

Giles County

Mr. Leon Law, Treasurer
Mr. Richard McCoy*

Montgomery County

Mr. Brian Wheeler
Mr. Anthony Graftsky*

Pulaski County

Dr. Doug Warren
Mr. Jeffery Reeves*

City of Radford

Mr. Jeff Martin
Mr. David Horton*

Town of Blacksburg

Ms. Susan Anderson*
Mr. Daniel Breslau

Town of Christiansburg

Mr. Hil Johnson, Chair
Mr. Tim Wilson*

Town of Floyd

Mr. Will Griffin*
Mr. Chris Bond*

Town of Narrows

Mr. Tom Spangler*

Town of Pearisburg

Ms. Amanda Davis*

Town of Pembroke

Mr. Robert Lawson*

Town of Pulaski

Mr. Larry Clevinger
Mr. Michael Reis*

Town of Rich Creek

Mr. Roger Jones*

Radford University

Dr. Angela Joyner

Virginia Tech

Ms. Liza Morris
Ms. Mary Trigiani

New River

Community College

Ms. Angie Covey, Member at Large

Organizational Structure

The New River Valley Regional Commission provides area-wide planning for the physical, social, and economic elements of the district; encourages and assists local governments in planning for their future; provides a means of coordinating federal, state and local efforts to resolve area problems; provides a forum for review of mutual concern; and implements services upon request of members.

RIDE Solutions NRV is a program of the New River Valley Regional Commission. Commission staff are assigned to the program to execute the annual scope of work, typically funded with a DRPT Commuter Assistance Program operating assistance grant. Staffing has grown from one staff person to three working up to 33% of their work program hours. The organizational structure of RIDE Solutions can be seen below. A full org. chart for NRVRC can be found in the Appendix.





Bike To Work Week promotion, 2023

Project Team:

RIDE Solutions Staff

Director of Environmental Resources, RIDE Solutions Staff

Serves as the project manager. This position does daily management of project budget and activities, conducts community and employer outreach, participates and coordinates with other organizations on transportation planning and activities in the region, participates in professional training and networking in support of program, coordinates with other RIDE Solutions regional programs, and directs marketing expenditures.

Regional Planners, RIDE Solutions Staff

(Reports to the Director) Conducts community and employer outreach, provide direct customer service for program services, develop local promotional material as needed, participate and coordinate with other organizations on transportation planning and activities in the region, participate in professional training and networking in support of program. Currently, two planners work on this project.

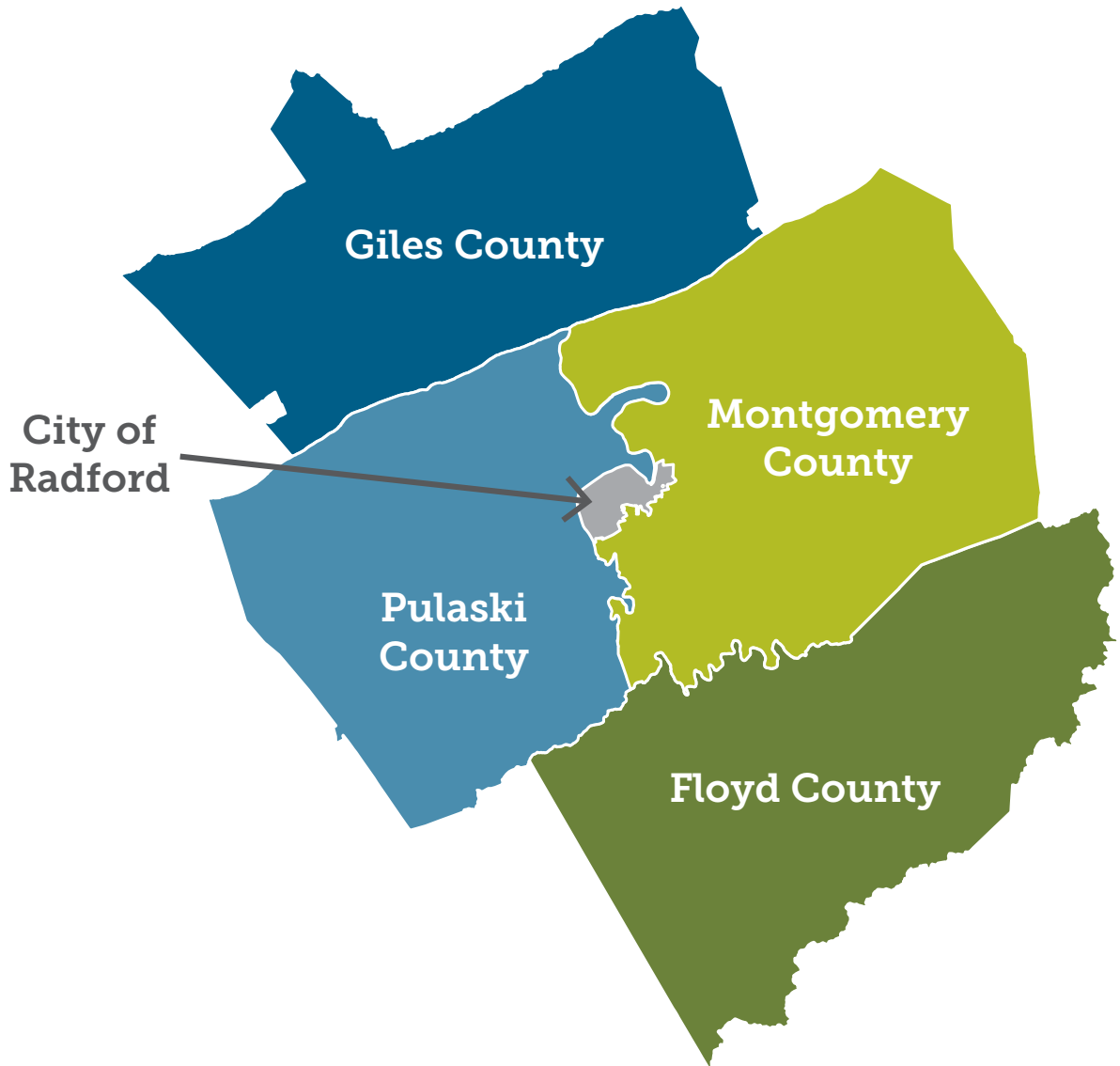
Contractors

Agile Mile is a contracted service that is funded by DRPT to provide development and technical support to the ConnectingVA! app. We do not currently use any additional contracted staff or services.

Program Service Area

RIDE Solutions NRV serves the New River Valley region: Floyd, Giles, Montgomery and Pulaski Counties along with the City of Radford. The service area encompasses employers in the NRV and their employees as well as all residents who travel in the region.

The New River Valley is located in Southwest Virginia and the closest major city outside of our region is Roanoke. The 1,458-square-mile region is a largely rural area with small urban centers and employment hubs outside the urban centers. The transportation need is unique to the New River Valley because all modes are not available to most travelers in the region.



RIDE Solutions NRV Service Area

Chapter 2

Service Area Demographics & Characteristics

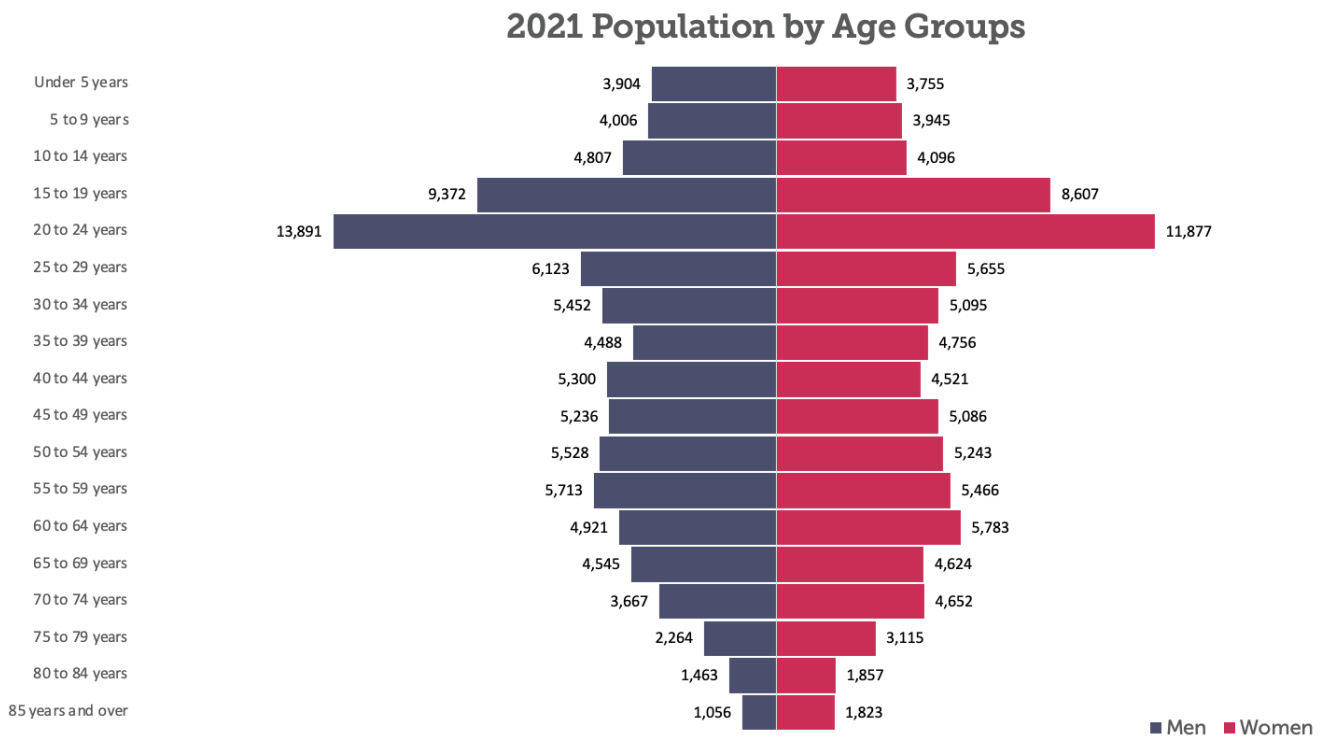


Sources

The data used for this chapter was gathered from several sources including US Census 5-year estimates, Virginia Employment Commission community profiles, the OnTheMap US Census tool, and the DRPT Transit Performance Data Dashboard. A full list of sources can be found at the end of the chapter.

Demographics: Population Trends

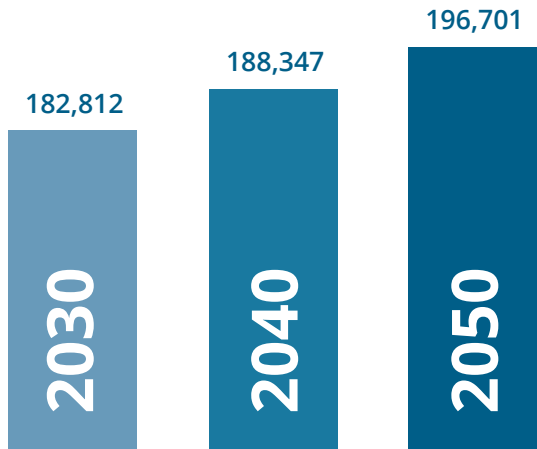
The population of the NRV as of 2021 was 181,692.¹ The population has remained relatively steady since 2016 when the population was 181,288. Since the NRV is home to two universities and a community college, 44% of the population is under the age of 30, and 24.1% of the population falls between the ages of 15 and 24. The population is almost evenly split between males and females.



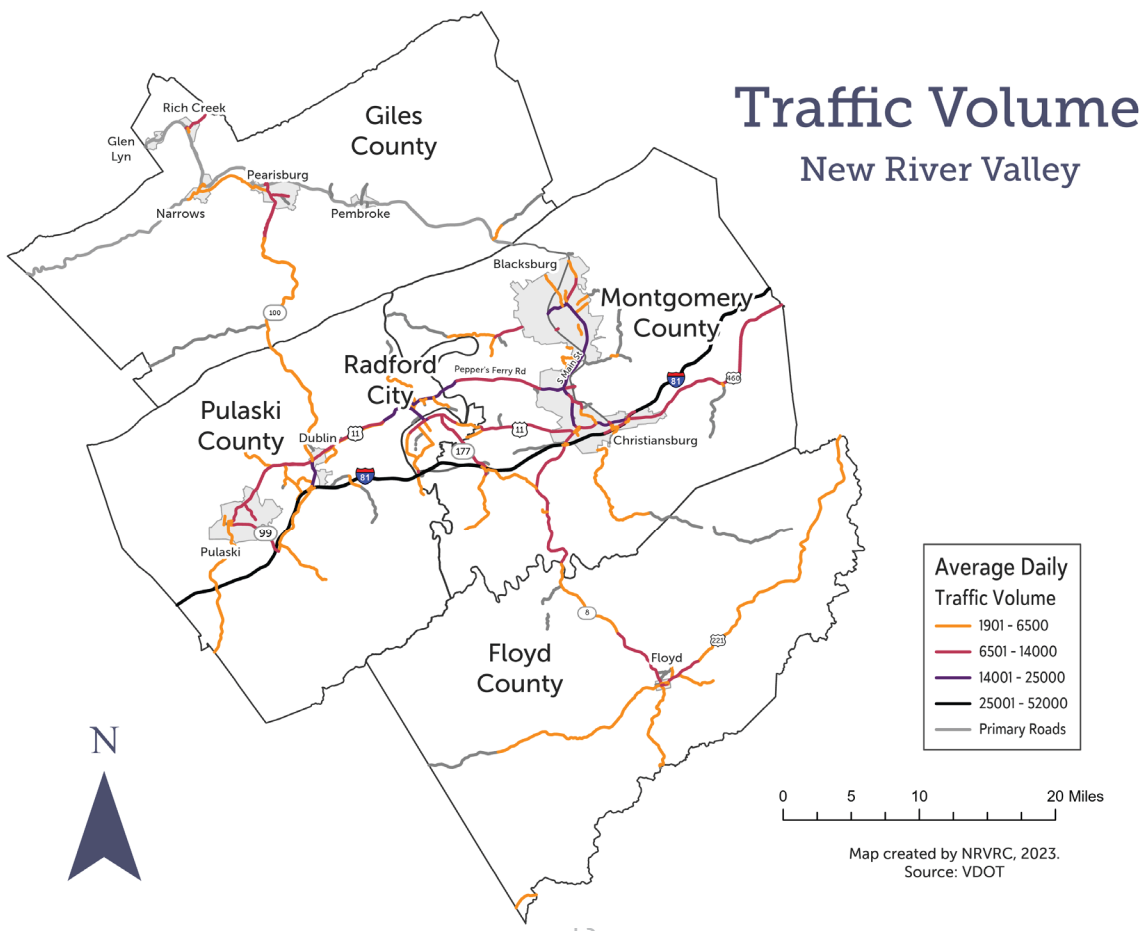
The NRV is less diverse than the national average (the total US population was 31.8% non-white in 2021).² Localities with universities (Montgomery County and Radford City) are more diverse, while Giles County, Floyd County, and Pulaski County all have white residents accounting for 91% or more of their population.

Population Projections

According to the University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service's projections, the population of the New River Valley is expected to steadily increase³ over the next 25 years.



With this increase in population comes an increase in infrastructure usage and road congestion, especially on the high-volume roads like Route 11 and Route 460. This highlights the need for additional transportation options in the future.



Workforce & Industry Overview

In 2021, the employed civilian population 16 years and over was 83,529.⁴ This is a slight decrease from 2016 when 83,869 civilians over 16 were employed.

The industries with the highest number of employees in 2021 were:

- Educational services, health care and social assistance
- Manufacturing
- Retail Trade⁵

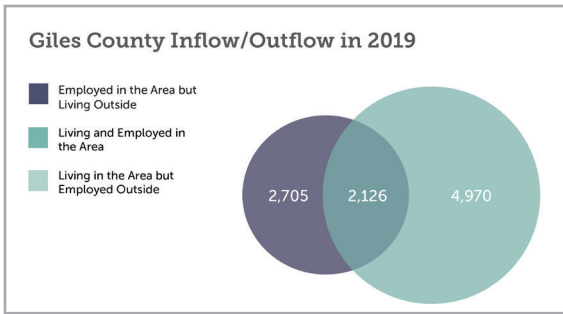
These three industry types employ 56.6% of the residents in the region. However, it is important to recognize that not all of these employers are located in the NRV. In more rural counties like Floyd County and Giles County, a majority of residents leave the area for work outside of their home county. As a result, their residents have the longest commutes. Montgomery County has the highest percentage of residents who both live and work in their home locality.

Top 10 Employers in the NRV (as of September, 2023)⁶

	Company	Industry Type
1	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	Education
2	Volvo Group North America Inc	Manufacturing
3	Montgomery County School Board	Education
4	Radford University	Education
5	Carilion New River Valley Medical Center	Healthcare
6	Precision Pipeline LLC	Manufacturing
7	HCA Virginia Health System	Healthcare
8	Bae Systems Ordnance Systems	Manufacturing
9	Wal Mart	Retail
10	Moog Inc	Manufacturing

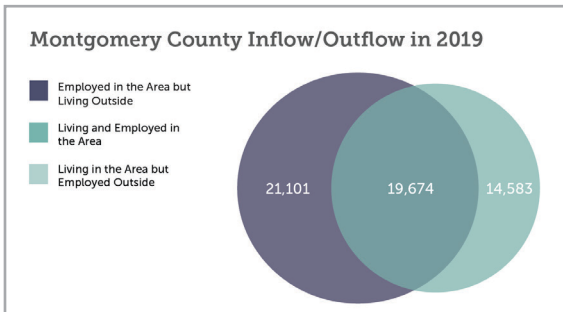
Overall, NRV residents took 21.4 minutes to commute to work on average⁷. Floyd County residents have an average commute of 33.5 minutes and Giles County residents have an average commute time of 28.4 minutes. Both are higher than the national average of 26.8 minutes. Montgomery County had the shortest commute time of 18.1 minutes, followed by Radford's 18.2 minutes. Pulaski County residents are in the middle with 24.7 minutes.⁸

Commuter In & Out Flow (2019)



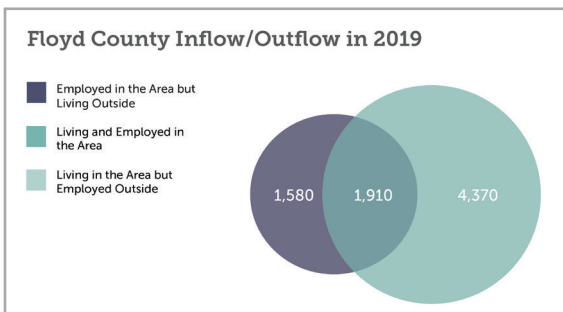
Giles County

The top two places that inbound workers are commuting from are Montgomery County and Pulaski County. Many of the outbound workers commute to West Virginia for work.



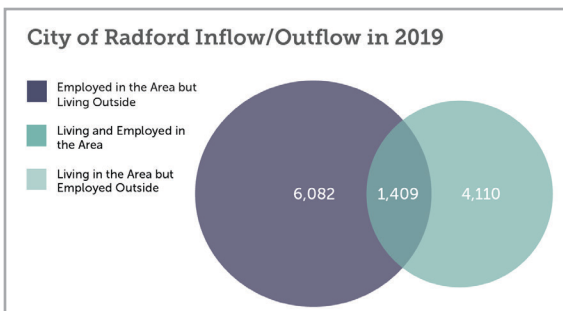
Montgomery County

Montgomery County is the locality that has the most residents who work in their home area. This is also the area with the most public transit and shortest commute times.



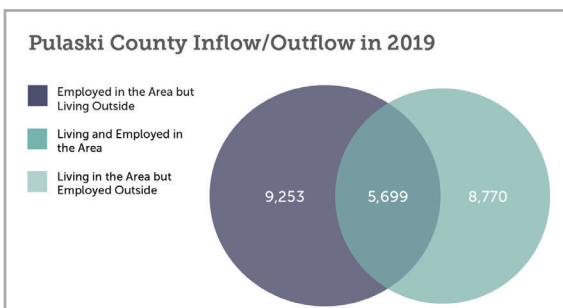
Floyd County

The most popular employment destinations for outbound residents are Montgomery County and Roanoke. Floyd County has the lowest amount of inbound workers from outside localities.



City of Radford

The top places workers are commuting from are Montgomery County and Pulaski County. Radford University is the largest employer in Radford.



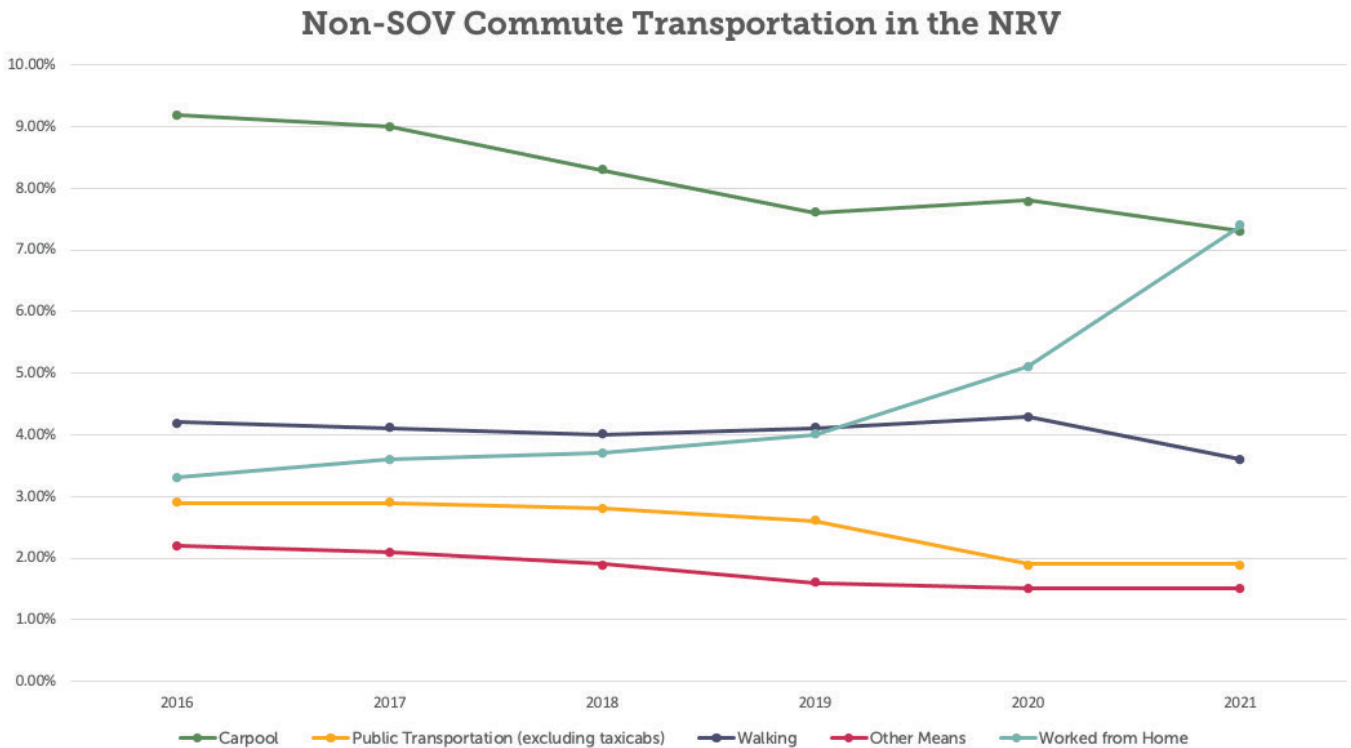
Pulaski County

The most popular localities that outside workers are coming from are Montgomery County and Wythe County. Residents are most likely to be commuting to Montgomery County and the City of Radford.

Demographics:

Commuter Trends

Currently, 78.3% of NRV residents drive to work by themselves⁹. This is slightly more than the national average of 73.2%. Overall, the NRV is using Single-Occupancy Vehicles (SOVs) more than it did in 2016, but the increase is slight (78.1% in 2016 vs. 78.3% in 2021)¹⁰. Not all localities in the NRV saw an increase in SOV usage, though. Montgomery County, Pulaski County, and Radford City saw a slight decrease in SOV usage between 2016 and 2021. Giles County and Floyd County (rural counties without transit systems) saw increased SOV commuting during that time.



Source: US Census, ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates

Telework is on the Rise

Usage of most non-SOV commute options has been declining since 2016, except for working from home. It has been on an upward trend since 2016 with a sharp increase in 2020 and 2021. In 2021, working from home surpassed all other non-SOV commute options to become the most popular non-SOV option with 7.4% of NRV residents teleworking instead of commuting¹¹. It has been increasing year-over-year with a sharp uptick due to COVID-19 in 2020 and the rapid upward trend continued in 2021.

Floyd County had the highest percentage of residents working from home in 2021, with 10.1% teleworking¹². Since Floyd County does not have any transit services and many residents work at companies outside of the area, telework is a good fit for this rural county. Many NRV localities are continuing to expand high-speed internet availability, which will make it easier for residents to obtain remote work that could potentially pay more than regional average salaries.

COVID-19's Effects on Transit

When schools and businesses closed in 2020 due to COVID-19, transit usage dropped considerably. 2021 did not see a return to transit usage, but stakeholders have told us that there was an increase in transit usage in 2022 but it hasn't yet returned to pre-pandemic levels.

For example, In September of 2022 (one of the months with traditionally high transit usage due to the return of students), Blacksburg Transit's ridership was almost 25% less than what it was in September of 2019. Pulaski Area Transit's numbers were 57.4% of the riders in September 2019. Radford Transit's ridership was even less, with 12,897 riders in September 2022 compared to 30,346 riders in September of 2019.¹³

	Sept 2019	Sept 2022
BT	655,443	497,931
RT	30,346	12,897
PAT	4,283	2,457

Sources:

1. US Census: ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates (<https://www.census.gov>)
2. US Census: ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates (<https://www.census.gov>)
- 3 Virginia Population Projections, University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service (<https://www.coopercenter.org/virginia-population-projections>)
4. US Census: ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates (<https://www.census.gov>)
5. US Census: ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates (<https://www.census.gov>)
6. Virginia Works Community Profiles (<https://viriniaworks.com/community-profiles>)
7. US Census: ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates (<https://www.census.gov>)
8. US Census: ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates (<https://www.census.gov>)
9. US Census: ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates (<https://www.census.gov>)
10. US Census: ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates (<https://www.census.gov>)
11. US Census: ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates (<https://www.census.gov>)
12. US Census: ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates (<https://www.census.gov>)
13. DRPT Transit Performance Data (<https://virginia-drpt.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/transit>)

Chapter 3

Vision, Goals & Objectives



Introduction

As part of the discovery process, we gathered survey results via an online platform called EngagementHQ. We received 105 entries from residents and commuters in our area. (A compilation of the survey results can be found in the Appendix.) The responses gave us a glimpse into how residents and commuters view the transportation options in the NRV. Throughout this chapter you'll see some of the comments from our respondents. Some overall trends that we gathered from the survey results are:

- 36% of respondents were aware of the services that RIDE Solutions offers.
- 72% of respondents said that access to transit in rural areas is needed.
- 56% of respondents said that more frequent transit routes are needed.
- 62% said that a bus stop closer to home would encourage them to use non-SOV transportation options.

The most common reasons people gave for choosing to drive by themselves were:

- Needing a car before/after work for personal errands or family/childcare responsibilities
- Irregular work schedules
- Wanting access to a car in case of emergencies.

Using survey results along with 3 regional stakeholder input sessions and existing census data, we created the following 7 goals for the next 5 years. For each goal, we identified objectives and strategies to help us achieve them.

Vision:

RIDE Solutions makes it easier for people in the New River Valley to get where they want to go.

Goal 1: Easy-to-use and convenient transportation options

Objectives:

- Better communication between transit providers so that connections are timely and more convenient for passengers.
- Users have convenient access to the latest route information to plan and take their trips
- Promote the convenience and benefits of carpool matching
- Promote walking and cycling in areas where it's feasible and safer

How we'll do it:

- Ongoing promotion of the Agile Mile app for accurate information about transit routes.
- Facilitate yearly transit roundtables to encourage relationship-building and collaboration between the three transit providers and five local governments.
- Create marketing strategies to educate and inform residents about the transportation options in their area.

"I am confused between what each local transit can provide..."

-Survey Respondent

Goal 2: Better access to transportation for rural commuters

Objectives:

- Identify last-mile connections for starting points and destinations
- Identify overlap of modes - are there locations where transit, carpools, and biking overlap?
- Promote multimodal transportation and trip planning where feasible.
- Promote carpooling and the park and ride lots that serve it. (Naming and promoting park and ride lots)

How we'll do it:

- We'll map all of the transportation options and which areas have access to each so that we can identify areas that have overlaps (more transportation options) as well as limited transportation options. This data will be shared with localities and transit providers as they plan for future transit routes, bike lanes, and walking/biking paths.
- Name & create identification signs for park & ride lots in FY26.
- Provide technical assistance to localities, businesses, and NGOs to help them build non-SOV transportation networks and communicate the "what and how" of options that are available.

"Right now, it would take me 3 times as long to get to work [using transit] --longer on days when I would drop my son off at daycare."

-Survey Respondent

Goal 3: Communication of transportation options (people know their options)

Objectives:

- Increase messaging using channels that work for our residents.
- Incorporate "top-funnel" messaging to encourage people to try biking, walking, or transit before committing to making it a part of their daily commute.
- Work with employers and community partners to educate and support commuters and residents in transportation decision-making.

How we'll do it:

- We'll create a marketing campaign that encourages SOV-only commuters to try a different transportation option, centering around two events - World Car-Free Day in September and Bike To Work Day in May.
- We'll create an easy-to-understand transportation guide so that commuters can get an accessible overview of all their options.
- We'll continue outreach to employers and support their promotion of non-SOV options to their employees.

"Consider the people who ride the bus demographics and provide more translation of route info."

-Survey Respondent

Goal 4: Make non-SOV options more convenient (less friction)

Objectives:

- Provide more bike storage options at rural transportation hubs.
- Encourage employers to implement flexible work schedules or remote work options.
- Encourage employers to offer incentives like priority parking and carpool matching to encourage employees to carpool to work.
- Promote trip planning for non-commute activities (school, errands, social events, etc.) to introduce SOV drivers to other car-free options.

How we'll do it:

- We will pursue funding for bike storage options at rural transportation hubs, such as park & rides. The goal will be to have funding secured by the end of FY26 so that we can start installing storage by FY27.
- We'll continue outreach to employers and support their promotion of location appropriate, non-SOV options to their employees.

"Sidewalks need to be continuous not just piecemeal in order to be practical to use for walking to a destination."

-Survey Respondent

Goal 5: Improve job access & employee retention

Objectives:

- Work with localities to identify commuting needs and challenges for local employers and employees.
- Work with employers to communicate the benefits and availability of commute options.
- Strengthen employer relationships with improved outreach and communication.
- Encourage employers to implement flexible work schedules or remote work options.

How we'll do it:

- We'll continue outreach to employers and support their promotion of non-SOV options to their employees.
- Partner with workforce organizations to educate/champion TDM options.

"As more VT employees are forced out of Blacksburg due to wages not keeping up with housing costs, increasing public transit from Christiansburg to campus is vital to increasing the sustainability of the average employee's commute."

-Survey Respondent

Goal 6: Use transportation access to improve quality of life

Objectives:

- Facilitate transit service expansion planning in underserved communities.
- Encourage communication between transit providers and non-profits that serve underserved individuals.
- Incentivizing carpooling or ride-sharing to decrease individual vehicle usage, reduce carbon emissions, and improve air quality.

How we'll do it:

- In FY29, we'll expand the yearly transit roundtable to include nonprofits and businesses in addition to the three transit providers and five local governments. This will be a larger event that hopefully will happen every five years.
- In addition to the ongoing promotion of the Agile Mile app, we'll pursue more discounts and freebies from local businesses (most are currently available in the Roanoke area).
- Bike to Work Day/Week activities to improve health and wellness in the NRV
- Promote pedestrian safety (October is Pedestrian Safety Month)

"It's very difficult for a rural family to be able to get to a bus stop and if they are able to get to one, there is no parking available to be able to park your car and leave it for the day... Parking at VT is \$420 per year. Poorer people aren't able to afford that, but don't have a lot of other options."

-Survey Respondent

Goal 7: Support the development of more walkable/bikeable locations where people gather

Objectives:

- Promote biking and walking by helping localities create safer pedestrian and bike-friendly infrastructure.
- Communicate the benefits of planning for walkable/bikeable development with localities to increase the inclusion of walkable/bikeable locations in their plans.

How we'll do it:

- We'll build on the momentum from Blacksburg's Bike Month activities in May of 2023, working towards hosting/supporting bike-related events throughout the NRV in the coming years.
- Launch an ongoing marketing campaign in FY27 around biking and walking for work and play in the NRV. This will give people an opportunity to get comfortable with biking and walking before committing to a bike/walk commute.

"There needs to be more sidewalks and bike lanes. I almost hit people while driving."

-Survey Respondent

Strategies Broken Down by Year

25

- Launch a marketing campaign that encourages SOV-only commuters to try a different transportation option, built around two events - World Car-Free Day in September and Bike To Work Day in May.
- Bike To Work Week event in Blacksburg
- Pursue funding for bike storage options at rural transportation hubs
- Transportation Coverage mapping project
- Employer outreach to promote carpool/vanpool
- Agile Mile promotion

26

- Create & Print NRV transportation guide
- Expand Bike To Work Week to events in Blacksburg & Christiansburg
- Name & create identification signs for park & ride lots.
- Start hosting Transit Roundtables
- Employer outreach to promote carpool/vanpool
- Agile Mile promotion

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- Bike To Work Week in Blacksburg & Christiansburg
- Launch Bike/Walk marketing campaign
- Begin installing bike storage at rural transportation hubs
- Transit Roundtable
- Employer outreach to promote carpool/vanpool
- Agile Mile promotion

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- Expand Bike To Work Week to events in Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Radford
- Transit Roundtable
- Employer outreach to promote carpool/vanpool
- Agile Mile promotion

29

- Expanded Transit Roundtable to include nonprofits and businesses in addition to transit providers and local governments.
- Bike To Work Week in Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Radford
- Agile Mile promotion
- Employer outreach to promote carpool/vanpool

Chapter 4

Target Markets & Customers

Introduction

Because the New River Valley is such a large and diverse area, it is impossible to create a “one size fits all” marketing strategy. Instead, we’ll concentrate on two primary target markets: high-density areas with transit options available and more rural areas with limited transit access. This covers most of our area but allows us to make sure that transit messaging is not directed to populations that don’t have transit as a viable option.

We’ll also create messaging for a secondary market of long-distance commuters without any transit access. This is a smaller group compared to the other two, and will require more targeted communication. Members of this target market may overlap with one of the primary markets (which helps build awareness) but will most likely require more personalized outreach to convince them to change their commute habits.

Target Market:

Primary & Secondary Markets

High-density areas with consistent transit access include the towns of Christiansburg and Blacksburg as well as the City of Radford. These are pockets of more dense population that could feasibly choose non-SOV commute options like transit, biking, and walking to work. Carpooling and telework options are also options for residents of these areas who may work in more rural areas or outside of the NRV. In these areas, we'll concentrate on presenting low-barrier-of-entry opportunities for people to try non-SOV options and see that the trade-off of time and planning will make up for the stress of driving themselves and headaches of finding and paying for parking. There are 37,335 commuters in this area and the most popular mode is Single Occupancy Vehicle.

Areas with limited transit access include Floyd County, Giles County, and portions of Montgomery and Pulaski County that are outside of the Christiansburg, Blacksburg, and Radford limits. We're including the towns of Pulaski and Dublin in this segment because the Pulaski Area Transit routes are limited and their ridership is much smaller than Blacksburg Transit or Radford Transit. There are approximately 47,052 commuters in this area. In this market, we'll focus more on carpooling, vanpooling, and telework as non-SOV commute options. The biggest hurdle for this market will be convincing people that the benefits of riding with others to work outweigh the feelings of freedom and flexibility that they get from driving by themselves.

A secondary audience that we want to reach is **long-distance commuters who work outside of the NRV**, focusing on residents that live in Floyd County and Giles County and commute 25 miles or more to their job. These individuals may not have as many employment options in their area and are looking further afield for job options that may be more in line with their career interests and/or offer better pay. In this market, we'll focus our messaging around carpooling and telework as non-SOV options. This is also a great audience to encourage to try introductory activities like carpooling for church or grocery shopping. We'll also look at ways that we can provide resources to employees who want to champion non-SOV commute options at their workplace.

Target Market:

Customer Base

Each market has a unique customer profile, with different needs and values. These customer audiences are smaller than the full target market but are easier to reach because they share many of the same demographics. We've created an example persona for our primary and secondary target markets so that you can see the type of consumer that we'll be targeting and why. As we learn more about our audiences we may adjust the criteria for our primary audiences or create additional secondary audiences.

How audiences were chosen

Based on the results from our survey results and stakeholder interviews, we have chosen to focus on NRV residents rather than employees in the NRV because it is easier to consistently communicate with residents at multiple touchpoints. Manufacturing and education/healthcare account for 45.7% of the region's employees (over 38,000 jobs), so we decided to focus on them as the base of our primary audiences. The potential to reach these commuters is higher than more dispersed segments of commuters such as retail and general office employers. We anticipate this will have a greater impact on behavior change and return on investment than efforts required to reach the more dispersed commuter populations.

While not everyone in our geographic area falls into our target audiences, the people who are most likely to be interested in using RIDE Solutions services are included. For instance, a surgeon who lives on Brush Mountain and makes \$200k a year probably isn't going to be convinced to take the bus or carpool to work, so we aren't going to target them. Instead, we'll focus on people like young professionals who live near downtown Blacksburg or shift workers in Pulaski County who might carpool with co-workers.

We also defined a secondary audience that will already be receiving some of the messaging for our primary audiences but may take longer to convert. This audience may have additional hurdles to address before they are willing to consider a non-SOV commute. We estimate that this secondary audience is less than 4% of the New River Valley's workforce. It is important for this audience to receive messaging now so that when they are ready to consider a change they will already have the information and resources needed to do it.

Primary Audience 1

Audience Profile: Rural Areas with Limited Transit Access

Age: 25-59

Occupation: Manufacturing, Education/Healthcare/Social Services

Household Income: \$50-100k

Education Level: Vocational School/Associates Degree

Location: Rural Areas of the NRV (outside of Town of Blacksburg, Town of Christiansburg, and City of Radford)

Values: Family/Friends, Independence, Security, Reputation

Fears/Concerns: Job Security, Health, Preparing for the future

Commute Pain Points: Cost of gas, Vehicle maintenance, Traffic at shift changes

Estimated audience size: Approximately 16,000 (19% of NRV workforce)

Customer Persona: Jack

Jack is a 52-year-old welder who works at the Volvo plant in Dublin and lives with his wife and two dogs in Fairlawn. He makes \$60k a year and with his wife's income from her teaching job their combined income is \$97k. Both drive their own vehicles to work, since their jobs are in opposite directions and they have different work schedules.

Jack prides himself on being a dependable worker who has hardly ever missed a day of work. He's nervous about trying a carpool or vanpool because he thinks he won't have as much control over whether or not he arrives to work on time. He also assumes that people who carpool probably don't have dependable transportation and he doesn't want other people to make the same assumption about him. Jack sees his Ford truck as an extension of his personality: tough, hard-working and American-made.

Primary Audience 2

Audience Profile: High Density Areas with Transit Access

Age: 20-44

Occupation: Education/Healthcare/Social Services

Household Income: \$60-100k

Education Level: College Graduate

Location: Blacksburg, Christiansburg, or Radford

Values: Family/Friends, Community, Autonomy, Meaningful Work

Fears/Concerns: Missing out, other people's opinions, stress

Commute Pain Points: Finding cheap/convenient parking, sharing the road with bikes and pedestrians, distance from transit stops.

Estimated Audience Size: Approximately 7,100 (8.5% of NRV workforce)

Customer Persona: Shelly

Shelly is a 24-year-old Registered Nurse who lives in Blacksburg and makes \$62k annually. She lives with her boyfriend in a townhouse that's a 15-minute drive from her job at the hospital. Her boyfriend is in graduate school and his class schedule doesn't align with her varied work shifts, so they commute separately. Her boyfriend sometimes rides his bike to class, but his route is shorter than hers and Shelly doesn't want to bike all the way to work every day.

Secondary Audience

Shelly commutes by car on her own, but she recently learned that a co-worker lives a couple of blocks away from her. She doesn't know her co-worker well though, so she's not sure she's ready to offer to carpool. She used to take the bus to class when she was a student but she lived a block from a bus stop at the time. Now that she lives a mile away from a transit stop, it just seems faster to drive to work.

Audience Profile: Long-Distance Rural Commuters without Transit Access

Age: 30-54

Occupation: Tradesperson, Construction, Manufacturing

Household Income: \$50-90k

Education Level: Associates/Bachelor's Degree

Location: Floyd County, Giles County

Values: Family, Faith, Community, Tradition

Fears/Concerns: Job Security, Environmental Concerns

Commute Pain Points: Gas Prices, Traffic Congestion, Weather

Estimated Audience Size: < 3380 (4% or less of the NRV workforce)

Customer Persona: Mike

Mike is a 37-year-old Electrical Systems Designer. Five years ago, Mike found a better paying job in Roanoke with opportunities for growth and has been able to increase his salary to \$80k. Mike lives in Floyd with his wife and 9 year-old daughter and loves the small-town community feel of the area. While it might be more convenient to move closer to work, he feels that the lower cost of living and community support in this more rural area outweighs a reduced commute time.

Mike didn't like the long commute when he first started his job, but he has gotten used to it over the years. None of Mike's coworkers live near him, but he wonders if there are any other people who travel from Floyd to Roanoke who he could carpool with or perhaps some sort of a shuttle that he could take instead. He has been trying to convince his boss to let him work from home one day a week to do paperwork and meetings, but so far he hasn't been successful.

Chapter 5

The Commuter Assistance Program Operations Plan

Services Provided

RIDE Solutions delivers transportation choice information in addition to ridematching services for commuters in its service area. These include individual commuter assistance, employer/worksites support; marketing and promotion of carpooling, vanpooling, cycling, walking, and transit; and provision of the Guaranteed Ride Home benefit. The program delivers its services through a website, mobile app, email and telephone contact, in-person assistance at worksites associated with employer outreach efforts, partnering with community organizations, and participation in community events.

CAP:

Services, Staff & Strategic Partnership

Commuter Assistance Services

RIDE Solutions is a comprehensive Commuter Assistance Program designed to help commuters find and use alternative modes of transportation. The program provides resources and support to help commuters save time, money, and reduce their environmental impact. Commuters can easily access RIDE Solutions' services through their website or mobile app. The program also offers incentives and rewards to encourage commuters to use non-single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) modes of transportation.

Current CAP Services

- Individual commuter assistance via website, phone, or email
- Mobile services via the ConnectingVA app
- Employer/worksites support

New and Enhanced CAP Services

- Transportation coverage mapping (FY25)
- Create NRV transportation guide (FY26)
- Bike parking at rural transportation hubs (FY27)

Education & Marketing Communications

RIDE Solutions uses a variety of marketing and education strategies to encourage people to choose non-SOV commute options. One of the key strategies is to create awareness about the benefits of using alternative modes of transportation such as carpooling, vanpooling, biking, walking, and using public transportation. We use multiple channels such as social media, email newsletters, and in-person events to educate the public about the positive impacts that a non-SOV commute can have on our environment, health, and finances.

Current Education & Marketing Communications

Promotion of carpooling, vanpooling, cycling, walking, and transit as viable commute options through a variety of channels including digital, print, and in-person events.

New and Enhanced Education & Marketing Communications

- Launch a joint marketing campaign with other RIDE Solutions regions that encourages SOV-only commuters to try a different transportation option, built around two events - World Car-Free Day in September and Bike To Work Day in May. (FY25)
- Park & Ride Signage (FY26)
- Launch a marketing campaign around biking and walking for work and play in the NRV (FY27)
- Expanded Bike to Work Week events & messaging throughout the region

Guaranteed Ride Home

RIDE Solutions' Guaranteed Ride Home Program is a benefit for RIDE Solution members that commute to work by transit, rideshare (vanpool or carpool), bike, or walk. If you face an unforeseen work or family emergency RIDE Solutions will reimburse the cost of your trip home. This program does not require enhancements at this time.

RIDE Solutions Staffing

Staffing is provided by the New River Valley Regional Commission based on the anticipated workload each fiscal year. The core team will include a project manager and communications specialist to direct and accomplish most of the work. No one staff person is dedicated to full-time staffing of the program; rather, the TDM program will be among the assignments in an individual's work program. Available funding is not sufficient to staff a position wholly dedicated to the TDM program that will meet the diverse needs of the potential scope of work each year. The program is better served through a collaborative effort among a team that specializes in different areas, such as, but not limited to: program administration, marketing (digital and print), education and outreach, social media, and on-site employer/event recruitment.

Current RIDE Solutions Staff

Project Manager

Specific anticipated project manager activities will include daily management of project budget and activities, conduct community and employer outreach, participate and coordinate with other organizations on transportation planning and activities in the region, participate in professional training and networking in support of the program, coordinate with other RIDE Solutions regional programs, direct advertising and marketing expenditures. Historically, this work has required approximately 30% of their work program.

Communications Specialist

The communications specialist will be responsible for conducting community and employer outreach, providing direct customer service for program services, developing local promotional material as needed, participating and coordinating with other organizations on transportation planning and activities in the region, and participating

in professional training and networking in support of the program. Historically, this work has required approximately 30% of their work program.

Regional Planner

Currently, this staff position fills both general and specialized roles as needed. This may include mapping transportation routes and service areas, assisting with community meetings or tabling at events, and marketing prep. Historically, this work has required approximately 20% of their work program.

Future Staffing

Additional staffing may occur from year to year and may include additional planners with skills and experience relevant to achieve program goals. Staff could conduct community and employer outreach, provide direct customer service for program services, develop local promotional material as needed, and participate in professional training and networking in support of the program, similar to the communications specialist. Details about budgetary needs are included in Chapter 6 of this plan.

Software & Apps

The Commission uses word processing, graphic design, and communications software and platforms to conduct regular operations. Tools will vary over time, but representative software includes Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Word and Excel, Constant Contact, and ArcGIS. The platforms are used for general communications, designing documents and marketing collateral to promote the program, project management for daily operations and communication within the team and to program partners. Without these resources the basic functions of the program would be difficult to complete. Using graphic design software allows for more creative and efficient production of marketing materials that are customized to market segments – for example, developing a “move-in” fridge magnet for new residents to the area that can be a reminder of the services available to them. ArcGIS is used to develop mapping products that have been used in services such as density mapping with employers to identify potential carpooling partners, succinctly convey information to stakeholders and partners in meetings and likely will continue to be used in this way in the future. Opportunities to leverage these systems for additional and other efforts in the future will be taken advantage of.

Agile Mile provides a ridesharing matching and trip planning platform through a contract with DRPT that the Commission promotes within its region for a self-serve, one-stop experience. This platform supports the TDM program by freeing up staff time from processing these requests and maintaining databases; its contribution to the program is significant and support from DRPT to leverage this platform is essential to continue the high level of TDM service available in the region. Agile Mile provides a backend interface for reporting platform use and service metrics needed for grant reporting, but it also includes information staff will leverage to further hone marketing campaigns, service needs and improvements, and understanding of the market being served.

Partnership with Other Programs & Agencies

RIDE Solutions staff also participate in organizations that directly or indirectly support an environment conducive to accessing multiple transportation choices. Ongoing participation and membership are important to maintaining relationships within the region that help amplify the TDM messaging and create more opportunities to meet the goals of the program. Past participation has led to opportunities to present to local businesses, participate in community events at low or no cost, and present as a technical expert in TDM topics all in support of delivering the message in reducing single-occupant travel and the benefits of other modes that exist within the region. These opportunities also allow staff to provide information and resources to assist decision-makers in directing resources to programs and efforts that encourage the use of non-SOV transportation.

Business Partnerships

The Commission maintains membership in several of the local chambers of commerce as a means of developing relationships with local businesses, accessing marketing resources and distribution available only to members, and staying informed of challenges and issues important to businesses. These activities allow staff to target prospects, offer expertise on transportation issues, and identify opportunistic marketing moments to launch campaigns and deliver services where a need and interest may not have existed.

Community Partnerships

Because staffing is limited, community partnerships in the New River Valley are critical to the success of the program. This has included and is anticipated to include volunteer organizations such as the New River Valley Bicycling Association, Sustainable Blacksburg, and local businesses and associations to organize and launch events, share information, and recruit participation in activities designed to promote use of TDM services.

Governmental organizations

The Regional Commission is an organization comprised of 13 local governments and three higher education institutions for the purpose of encouraging collaboration to address regionally significant issues and opportunities. The relationships at the board, management and staff level with these organizations enables the work of the TDM program in similar ways to community partnerships, but also provides resources for supporting the program financially and with staff collaboration. In addition to local governments, RIDE Solutions benefits from the support of state agencies (DRPT and VDOT) and a regional Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Other TDM programs

In the past, the Ride Solutions brand has included two other Virginia regions (Roanoke and West Piedmont) to promote TDM services across regional boundaries. The multi-region collaboration would include larger-scale commuter challenges, sharing of resources for marketing campaigns, and a monthly information sharing meeting. Future anticipated collaboration may include multi-region promotion of Bike To Work Day in the spring and World Car-Free Day in the fall. These multi-region campaigns will ensure that more commuters receive consistent messaging as they travel between work and home, even if their commute crosses into another RIDE Solutions region.

Chapter 6

Financial Plan



Introduction

This chapter will detail the various costs associated with implementing the CAP as well as the sources of funding used to support it. By providing a clear and comprehensive financial plan, we can ensure that the CAP is both financially sustainable and capable of achieving its mission.

Existing Funding Sources

RIDE Solutions NRV currently funds its Commuter Assistance Program with DRPT grants and NRVRC matching funds provided by localities.

DRPT Grants

The RIDE Solutions Commuter Assistance Program is funded by the Commuter Assistance Program (CAP) Operating Assistance grant.

Matching Funds

To qualify for DRPT funding, RIDE Solutions must provide a local match that is 20 percent of the Operating Assistance grant. To cover this cost and receive the remaining 80 percent in funding from DRPT, the NRV Regional Commission allocates the 20 percent match using other local revenue.

Service Changes that May Require Additional Funds

This plan includes several new or expanded initiatives that either cannot be funded by DRPT funding programs or require additional funding. The implementation of these programs are contingent upon our ability to secure additional funds from other sources. These new/expanded services include:

- Identification signs for park & ride lots
- NRV transportation guide creation and printing
- Bike storage options at rural transportation hubs
- Bike/Walk marketing campaign.

Potential Funding Sources

VDOT Grants

As we look to expand the capabilities of the CAP, we will pursue funding from additional sources to fund the initiatives that fall outside of DRPT-funded activities. For example, bike parking at park 'n' ride lots (Goal #4 in Chapter 3 of this plan) could possibly be funded by a grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

NRVMPO

Currently, the New River Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization does not provide consistent funding to the CAP, but they have occasionally provided funding for specific projects. We plan to pursue funding for a transportation guide (Goal #3 in Chapter 3 of this plan) and other non-commute-related projects in the future.

Carilion Clinic Community Grants

Carilion Clinic is committed to improving community health by addressing key health priorities identified through its triennial Community Health Assessments. To improve heart health in the NRV, we plan on applying for a grant to install bike racks at rural transportation hubs (Goal #4 in Chapter 3 of this plan).

Proposed Budget

Category	Proposed FY2025	Estimated FY2026	Estimated FY2027	Estimated FY2028	Estimated FY2029
Projected Income	\$ 100,425.00	\$111,885.00	\$117,820.00	\$118,076.00	\$121,726.00
DRPT	\$ 80,340.00	\$ 83,508.00	\$ 85,856.00	\$ 87,661.00	\$ 90,181.00
NRVRC Matching Funds	\$ 20,085.00	\$ 20,877.00	\$ 21,464.00	\$ 21,915.00	\$ 22,545.00
NRVMPO Funding (Estimated)	0	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00
VDOT Grants (Estimated)	0	\$2,500.00 ¹	\$3,000.00	\$3,500.00	\$4,000.00
Carilion Community Grant (Estimated)	0	0	\$2,500.00 ²	0	0
Salaries and Wages:	\$ 49,500.00	\$50,985.00	\$52,514.00	\$54,089.00	\$55,711.00
Director of Environmental Resources	\$ 25,000.00	\$25,750.00	\$26,522.00	\$27,317.00	\$28,136.00
Communications Specialist/Planner II	\$ 11,500.00	\$11,845.00	\$12,200.00	\$12,566.00	\$12,943.00
Regional Planner I	\$ 13,000.00	\$13,390.00	\$13,792.00	\$14,206.00	\$14,632.00
Fringe Benefits:	\$ 13,400.00	\$13,801.00	\$14,106.00	\$14,640.00	\$15,079.00
Director of Environmental Resources	\$ 6,750.00	\$6,952.00	\$7,160.00	\$7,375.00	\$7,596.00
Communications Specialist/Planner II	\$ 3,150.00	\$3,244.00	\$3,341.00	\$3,441.00	\$3,544.00
Regional Planner I	\$ 3,500.00	\$3,605.00	\$3,713.00	\$3,824.00	\$3,939.00
Education & Training:	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
None	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Supplies & Materials	\$ 550.00	\$550.00	\$550.00	\$550.00	\$550.00
Paper, booth supplies	\$ 300.00	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$300.00
Postage	\$ 250.00	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$250.00
Travel:	\$ 500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Local mileage	\$ 500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Printing & Reproduction:	\$ 1,200.00	\$2,000.00 ³	\$2,200.00 ⁴	\$1,311.00	\$1,350.00
Advertising & Promotional Media:	\$ 6,975.00	\$7,275.00	\$7,375.00	\$7,500.00	\$7,650.00
Digital advertising with New River Radio	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
Bike to Work Week	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 550.00	\$ 550.00
Car-Free Day	0	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$300.00
Social media & Google ads for marketing campaigns/initiatives	\$ 750.00	\$ 750.00	\$ 750.00	\$ 750.00	\$ 750.00
New Resident Move-in promotion material	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Lyric Theatre monthly ad	\$ 900.00	\$ 900.00	\$ 950.00	\$ 950.00	\$1,000.00

Pulaski Job & Wellness Fair	\$ 75.00	\$ 75.00	\$ 75.00	\$100.00	\$100.00
Montgomery Chamber advertising	\$ 1,400.00	\$ 1,450.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,550.00	\$ 1,600.00
NRV Job Fair	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00
Radford Rec Center banner ad	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
Pulaski Chamber advertising	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00
Dues & Subscriptions:	\$ 550.00	\$ 550.00	\$ 560.00	\$ 560.00	\$ 570.00
Pulaski County Chamber	\$ 175.00	\$ 175.00	\$ 175.00	\$ 175.00	\$ 175.00
Montgomery Chamber	\$ 375.00	\$ 375.00	\$ 385.00	\$ 385.00	\$ 395.00
Indirect Costs (43.18%):	\$ 27,000.00	\$27,974.00	\$28,766.00	\$29,677.00	\$30,567.00
Professional Services:	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Guaranteed/Emergency Ride Trips:	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00
Promotional Items (Not more than 5% of all expenses):	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
Incentives:	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

1. VDOT funding will allow us to name & create identification signs for park & ride lots in FY26 and install bike racks in FY27-29.
2. Carilion Community Grant will allow us to purchase bike racks in rural transportation hubs.
3. Additional money will be required in FY26 and FY27 for the Transportation Guide.
4. Bike/Walk Marketing Campaign

Chapter 7

Monitoring & Evaluation



Introduction

Measuring results is crucial because it allows us to assess the effectiveness of our programs and make data-driven decisions. By tracking the progress toward our goals, we can identify what works and adjust our strategies accordingly. This helps us to optimize our efforts to create a more responsive and productive Commuter Assistance Program.

Data Collection & Monitoring

To evaluate the CAP, RIDE Solutions will use a set of metrics listed in the table below. While some of these metrics are already in place, others will be used to track progress for newer goals and objectives outlined in our Strategic Plan. Whenever customer input is required for a data source (such as location or contact info entered into the Agile Mile app) we will update it at least once a year by asking customers to provide updated information.

Metric	Data Source	Reporting Frequency
Matches Attempted	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
Sales Calls	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
Sales Meetings	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
Table Events	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
New Transit Benefits (direct)	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
New Transit Benefits (pre-tax)	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
New Vanpool Benefits (direct)	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
New Vanpool Benefits (pre-tax)	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
Total Transit Benefits (direct)	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
Total Transit Benefits (pre-tax)	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
Total Vanpool Benefits (direct)	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
Total Vanpool Benefits (pre-tax)	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
Total Telework/Hybrid Schedule	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly
Newsletter Open Rate	Constant Contact	Quarterly
Campaign landing page visits	Google Analytics	At Campaign end*
7-day survey results	Survey Monkey	Quarterly
New app registrations	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly and by Campaign (when applicable)*
Trips logged in the app	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly and by Campaign (when applicable)*
Number of Businesses (by users' employment destination) represented	Agile Mile Dashboard	Quarterly

**Metrics for specific campaigns can be difficult to measure. Tracking landing page visits and new app registrations, carpool requests, and trips tracked during a campaign can also help determine the effectiveness of a campaign.*

Performance Milestones

The items in the table below are milestones that RIDE Solutions will use to measure progress on efforts to serve our customers more effectively. These milestones serve to help RIDE Solutions track the implementation of strategies we will need to achieve our goals.

Milestone	Anticipated Completion	Responsible Party
Launch marketing campaign focused on World Car-Free Day in September and Bike To Work Day in May	FY25	RIDE Solutions Staff
Transportation Coverage mapping project	FY25	RIDE Solutions Staff
Create NRV transportation guide	FY26	RIDE Solutions Staff
Start hosting yearly Transit Roundtables	FY26	RIDE Solutions Staff
Begin installing bike storage at rural transportation hubs	FY27	RIDE Solutions Staff

Reporting

RIDE Solutions will track and review monthly trends to monitor the effectiveness of our marketing efforts and identify any seasonal trends that we can capitalize on in the future. We will also provide an overview of available performance metrics to DRPT each month to demonstrate the effectiveness of our work and justify ongoing support from the agency. Additionally, on an annual basis, RIDE Solutions will summarize metrics for the New River Valley Regional Commission to ensure continued financial support from our member localities.

Chapter 8

Use of Research & Data

Research & Data:

Sources & Planning

Research Plan

RIDE Solutions used three different methods to research and gather data about the transportation needs of our area. We gathered existing data from trusted sources to look at population trends and demographics of our region, gathered information from commuters and businesses via surveys, and met with stakeholders to learn more about the roadblocks they are experiencing when trying to offer and encourage non-SOV transportation options.

Public Surveys

We created two surveys (one for commuters and one for businesses) to gather information on the current perceptions of transportation in the NRV and how we can better serve our localities. Highlights of the results can be found in Chapter 3 of this document, and a full summary of results can be found in the Appendix.

Stakeholder Meetings

We held three stakeholder meetings in different parts of the region to make it easier for people to attend. Notes from the meetings were compiled into a document that can be found in the Appendix. We have also included one of the presentation slideshows that shares data broken down by locality.

Data Collection

RIDE Solutions used a variety of sources to gather data about our area and identify target audiences. They include:

US Census: ACS 2016-2021

5-year estimates

- Population
- Age
- Race & Ethnicity
- Average Commute Time
- Commute Modes

DRPT Transit Performance Data

- Transit ridership for Blacksburg Transit, Pulaski Area Transit, and Radford Transit

OnTheMap US Census Tool

- In/Outflow of Commuters
- AgileMile Database
- App Usage

Virginia Employment Commission

- Largest Employers
- UVA Weldon Center
- Population Projections

ESRI Business Analyst Tool

- Employment Centers
- VDOT Data
- Major Traffic Corridors

Appendix



Survey Results
Stakeholder Presentation Deck
Stakeholder Comments
Organizational Chart

Project Report

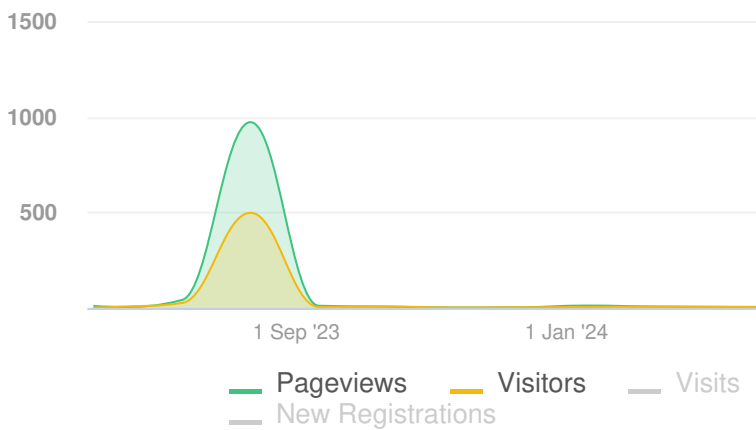
18 March 2021 - 18 March 2024

EngageNRV

Commuter Assistance Program Strategic Plan



Visitors Summary

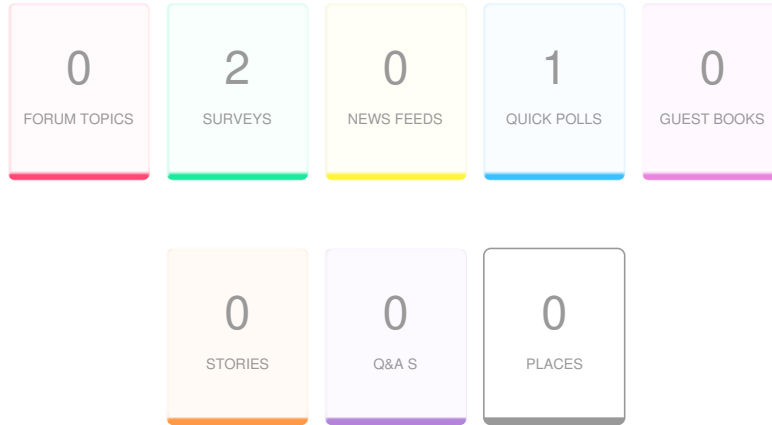


Highlights



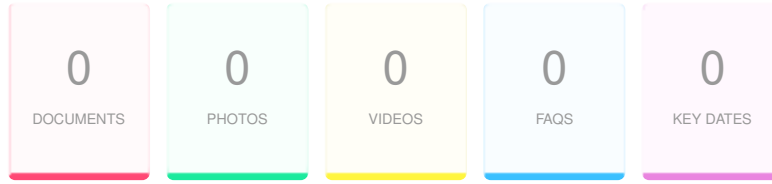
Aware Participants		Engaged Participants	
545		108	
Aware Actions Performed	Participants	Engaged Actions Performed	Registered Unverified Anonymous
Visited a Project or Tool Page	545	Contributed on Forums	0 0 0
Informed Participants	128	Participated in Surveys	108 0 0
Informed Actions Performed	Participants	Contributed to Newsfeeds	0 0 0
Viewed a video	0	Participated in Quick Polls	0 0 0
Viewed a photo	0	Posted on Guestbooks	0 0 0
Downloaded a document	0	Contributed to Stories	0 0 0
Visited the Key Dates page	2	Asked Questions	0 0 0
Visited an FAQ list Page	0	Placed Pins on Places	0 0 0
Visited Instagram Page	0	Contributed to Ideas	0 0 0
Visited Multiple Project Pages	17		
Contributed to a tool (engaged)	108		

ENGAGEMENT TOOLS SUMMARY



Tool Type	Engagement Tool Name	Tool Status	Visitors	Contributors		
				Registered	Unverified	Anonymous
Survey Tool	Transportation Survey - Residents & Commuters	Archived	495	105	0	0
Survey Tool	Transportation Survey - Business	Archived	34	4	0	0
Quick Poll	How do you commute?	Published	0	0	0	0

INFORMATION WIDGET SUMMARY



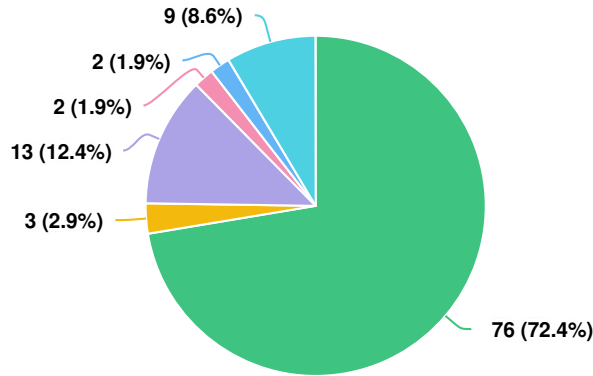
Widget Type	Engagement Tool Name	Visitors	Views/Downloads
Key Dates	Key Date	2	2

ENGAGEMENT TOOL: SURVEY TOOL

Transportation Survey - Residents & Commuters

Visitors 495	Contributors 105	CONTRIBUTIONS 105
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How do you usually get to work (3 or more days per week)?



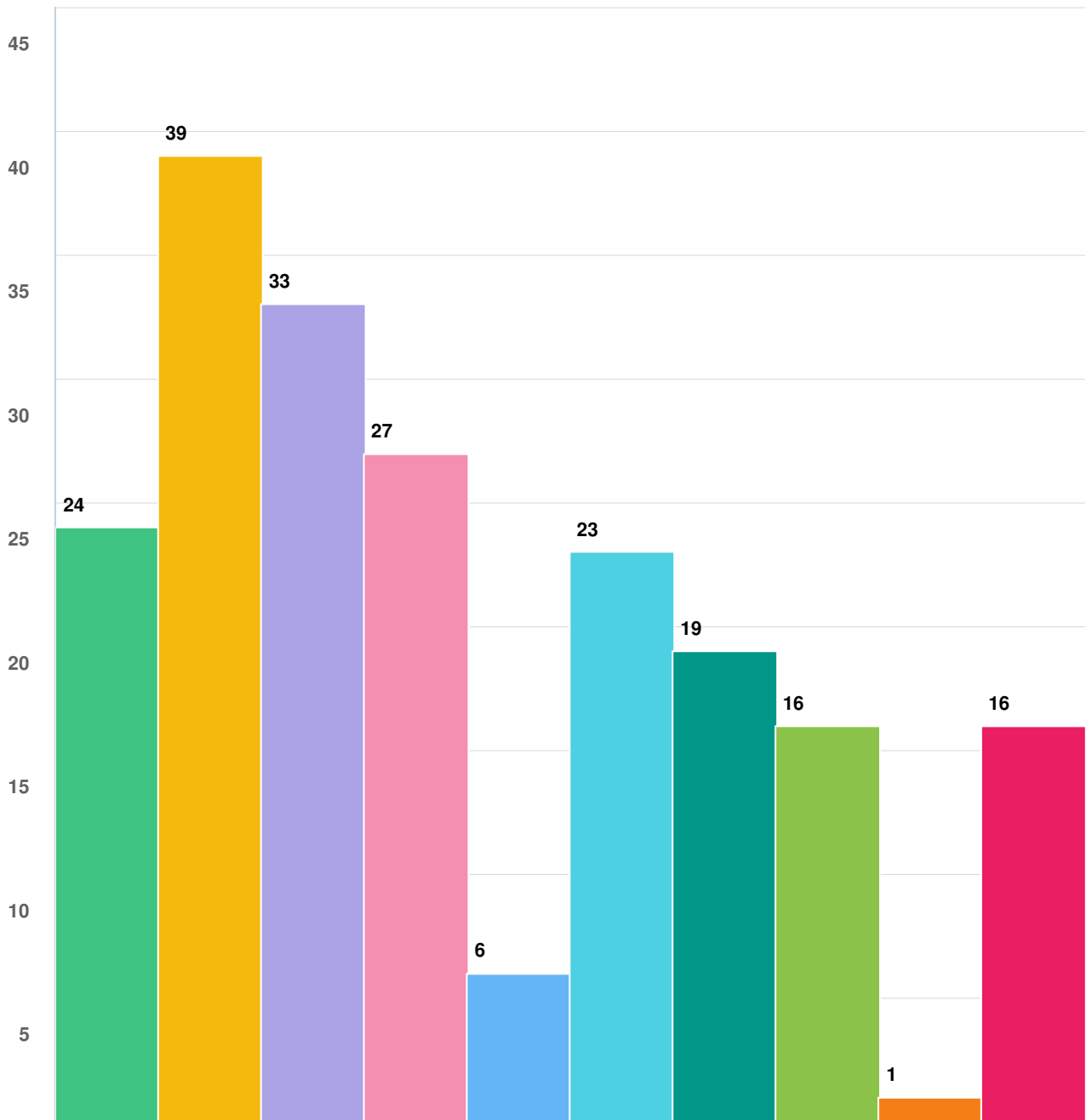
Question options

- I drive by myself
- I carpool or vanpool
- I bike to work
- I take the bus
- I walk to work
- I work from home

Mandatory Question (105 response(s))

Question type: Radio Button Question

If you currently drive alone to work, please indicate why:



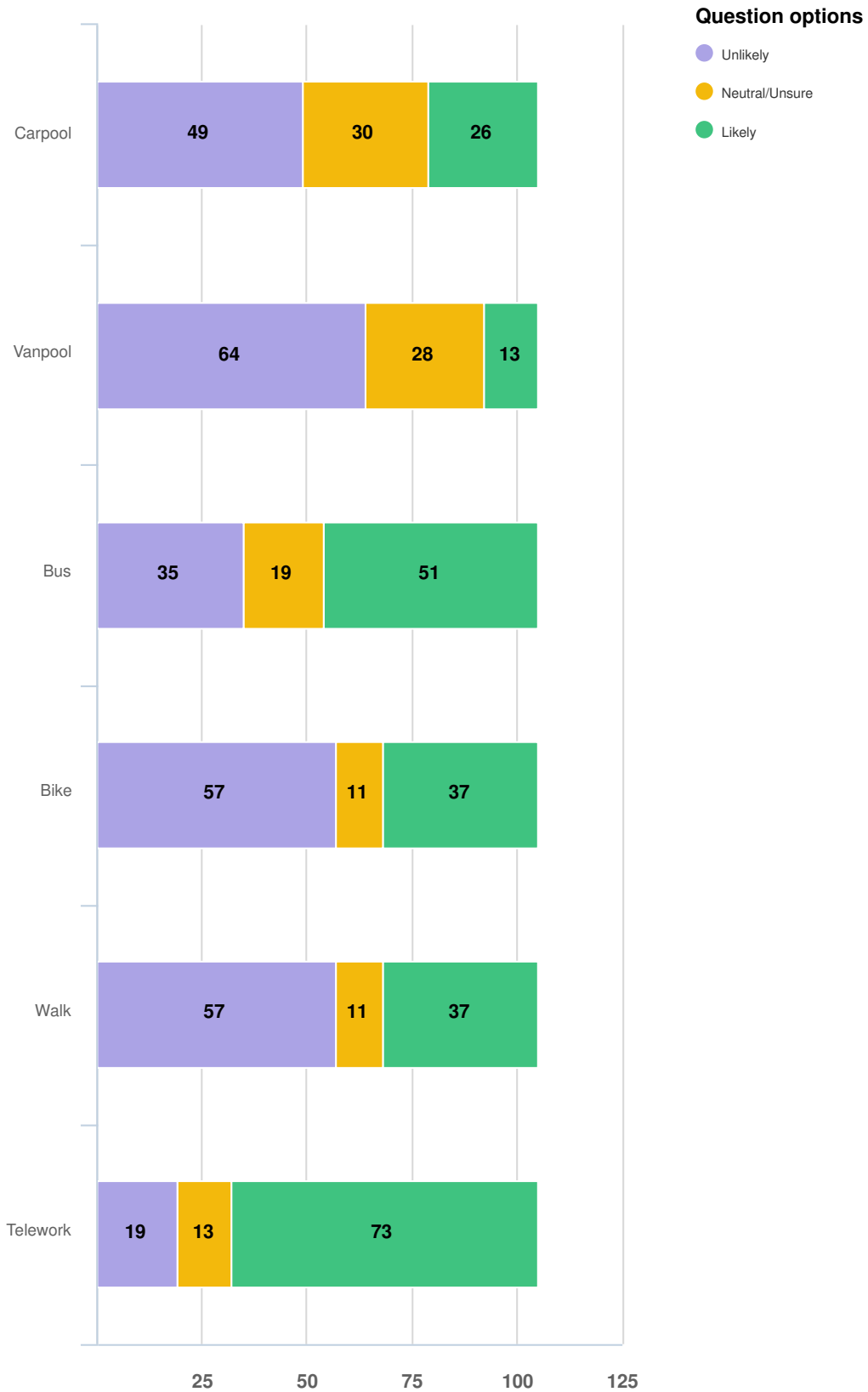
Question options

- I need a car during work hours
- I need a car before/after work for personal errands or childcare/family responsibilities
- My work schedule is irregular
- I want access to my car in case of emergencies
- I have never considered anything besides driving alone
- I do not know anyone with whom to carpool or vanpool
- The bus trip takes too long compared to driving my car
- I'm too rushed in the morning to consider alternatives
- I am not familiar with using the bus
- Other (please specify)

Optional question (76 response(s), 29 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

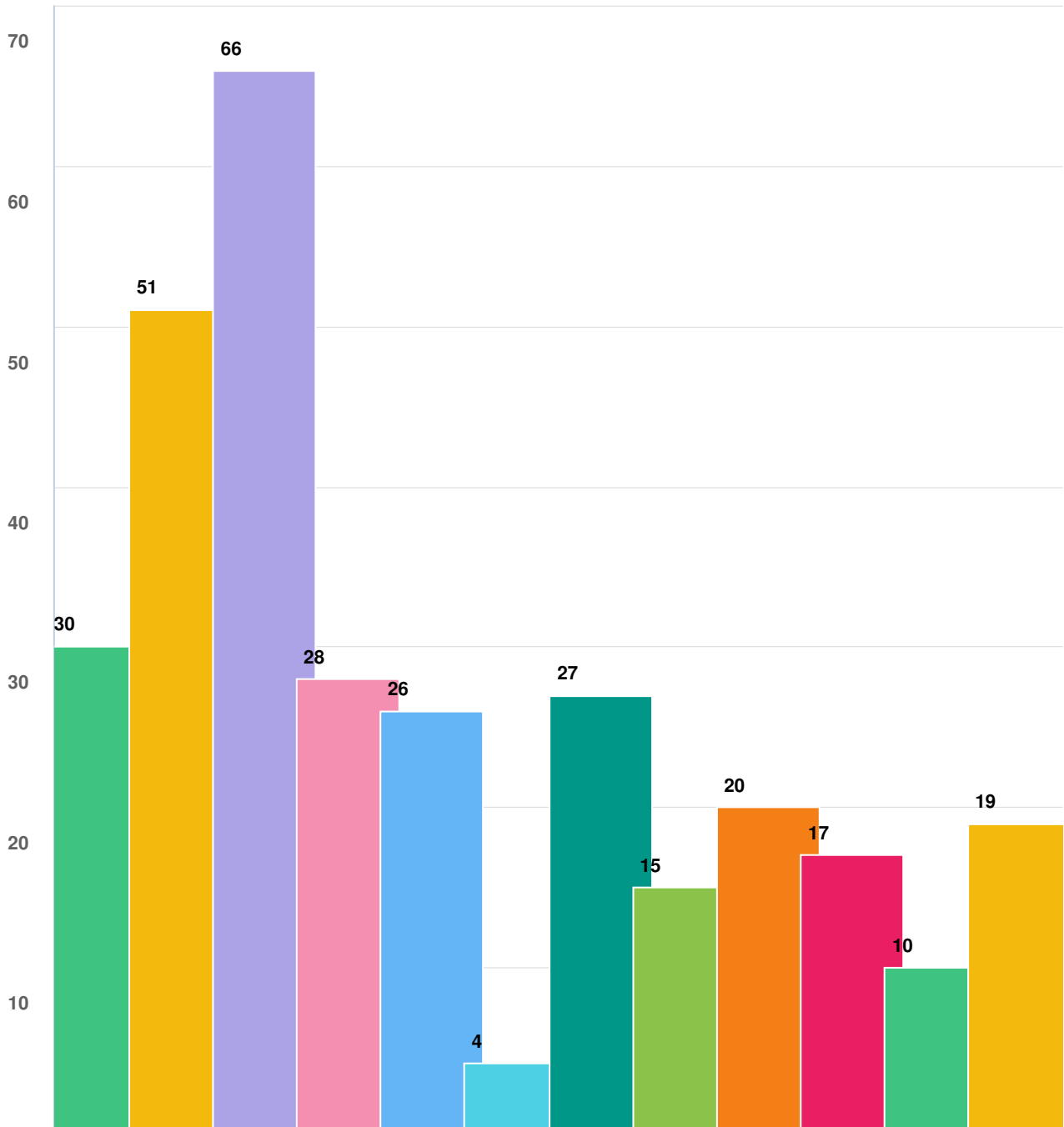
Please indicate how likely you would be to try each of the following transportation options for any errands, commuting, and other trips you take during the week.



Mandatory Question (105 response(s))

Question type: Likert Question

**What would encourage you to use transportation options other than driving alone?
(Select all that apply)**



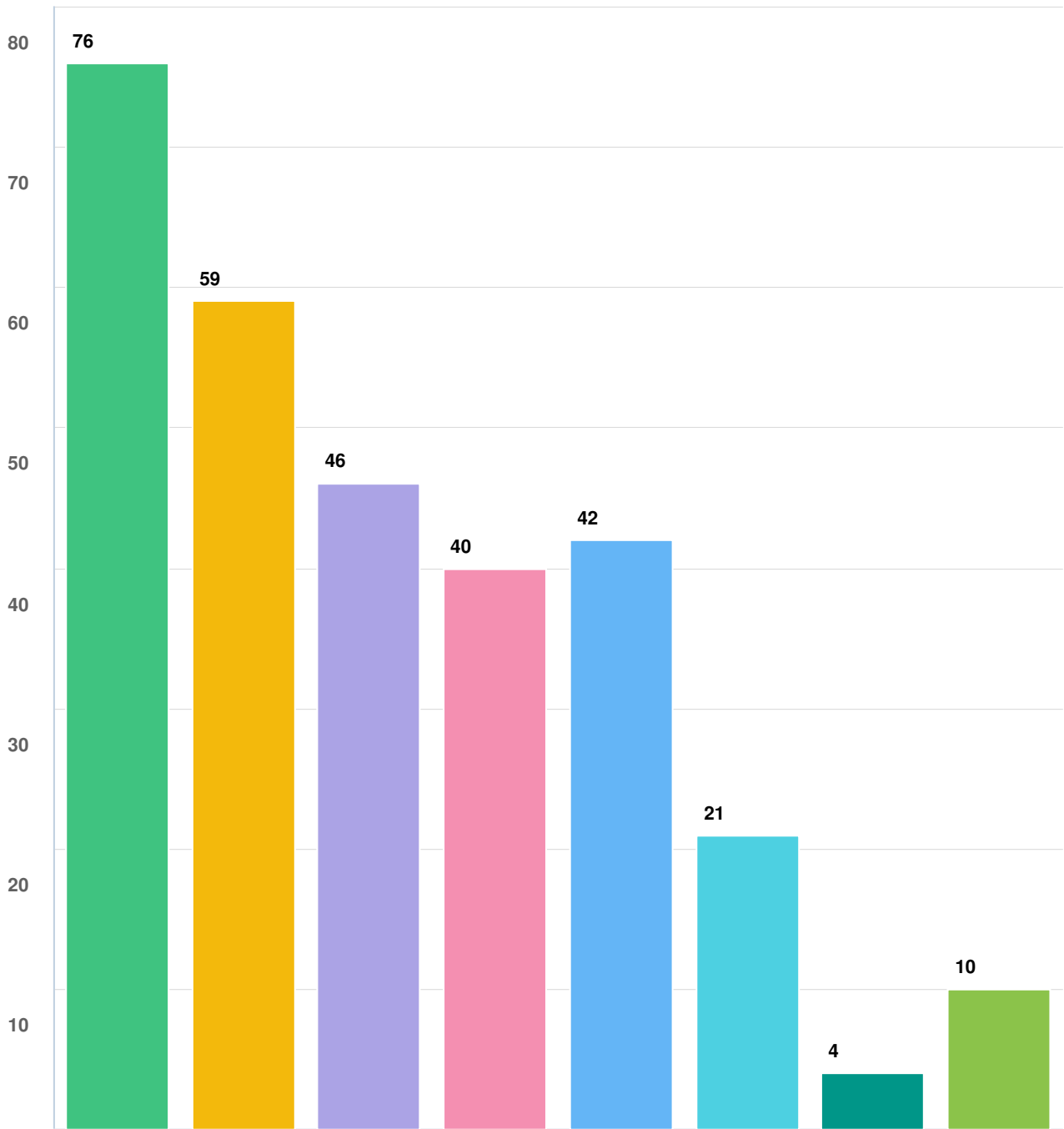
Question options

- Other (please specify)
 ● Nothing will make me consider alternatives
 ● I already use other alternatives to driving alone
- Secure bike parking
 ● Shower/locker facilities
 ● Emergency Ride Home program
 ● Electric charging stations at work
- Customized information on carpool, vanpool, transit from my home to work site
 ● Flexible work hours to accommodate options
- A bus stop closer to my home
 ● More frequent bus service
 ● Free or discounted transit fares

Mandatory Question (105 response(s))

Question type: Checkbox Question

What is needed for better transportation options in the NRV? (Select all that apply)



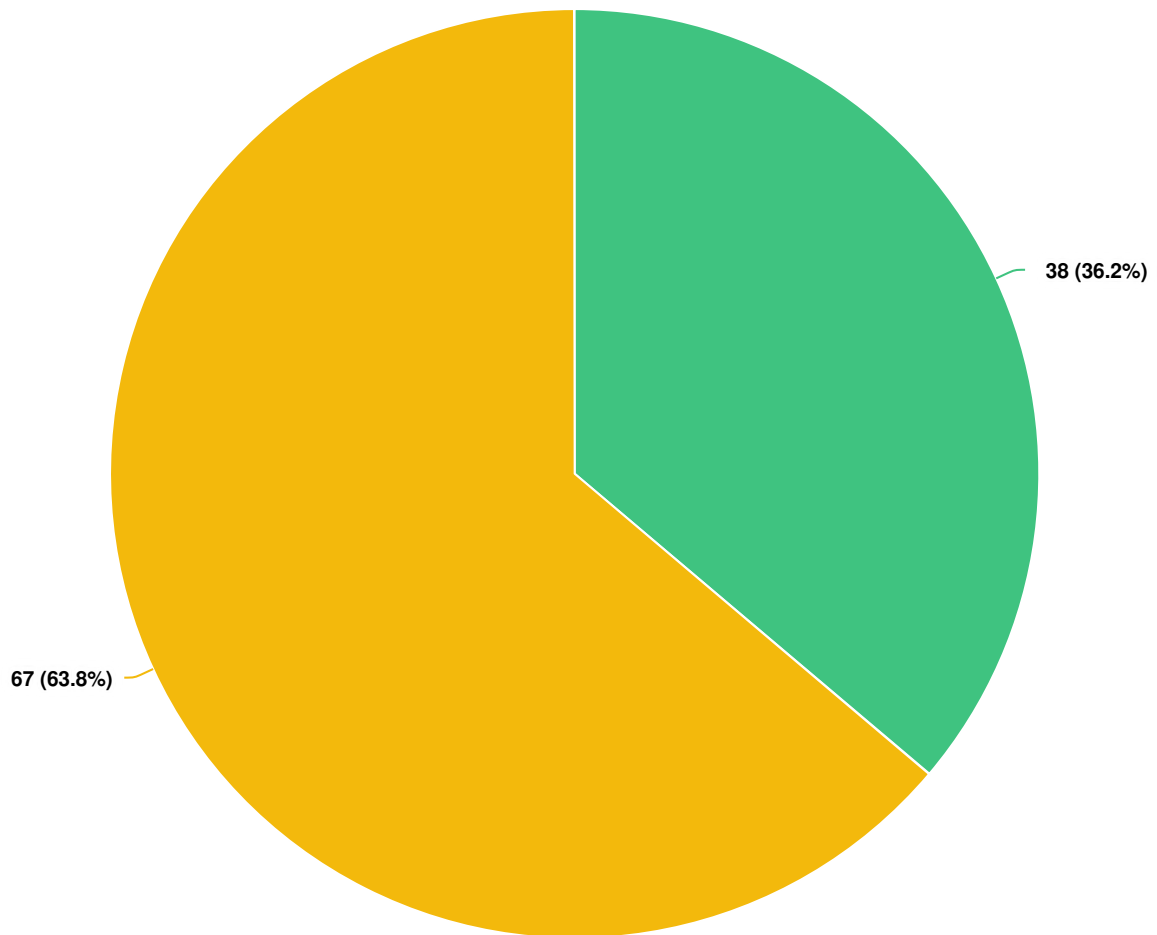
Question options

- Other (please specify)
- I'm not sure what transportation options are available
- Support for carpooling/vanpooling to work
- More safe/dedicated bike lanes
- Ease of connection between transit systems
- Transit routes that run earlier and/or later
- Transit routes that run more frequently
- Access to transit in rural areas

Mandatory Question (105 response(s))

Question type: Checkbox Question

Are you aware of the services Ride Solutions offers?



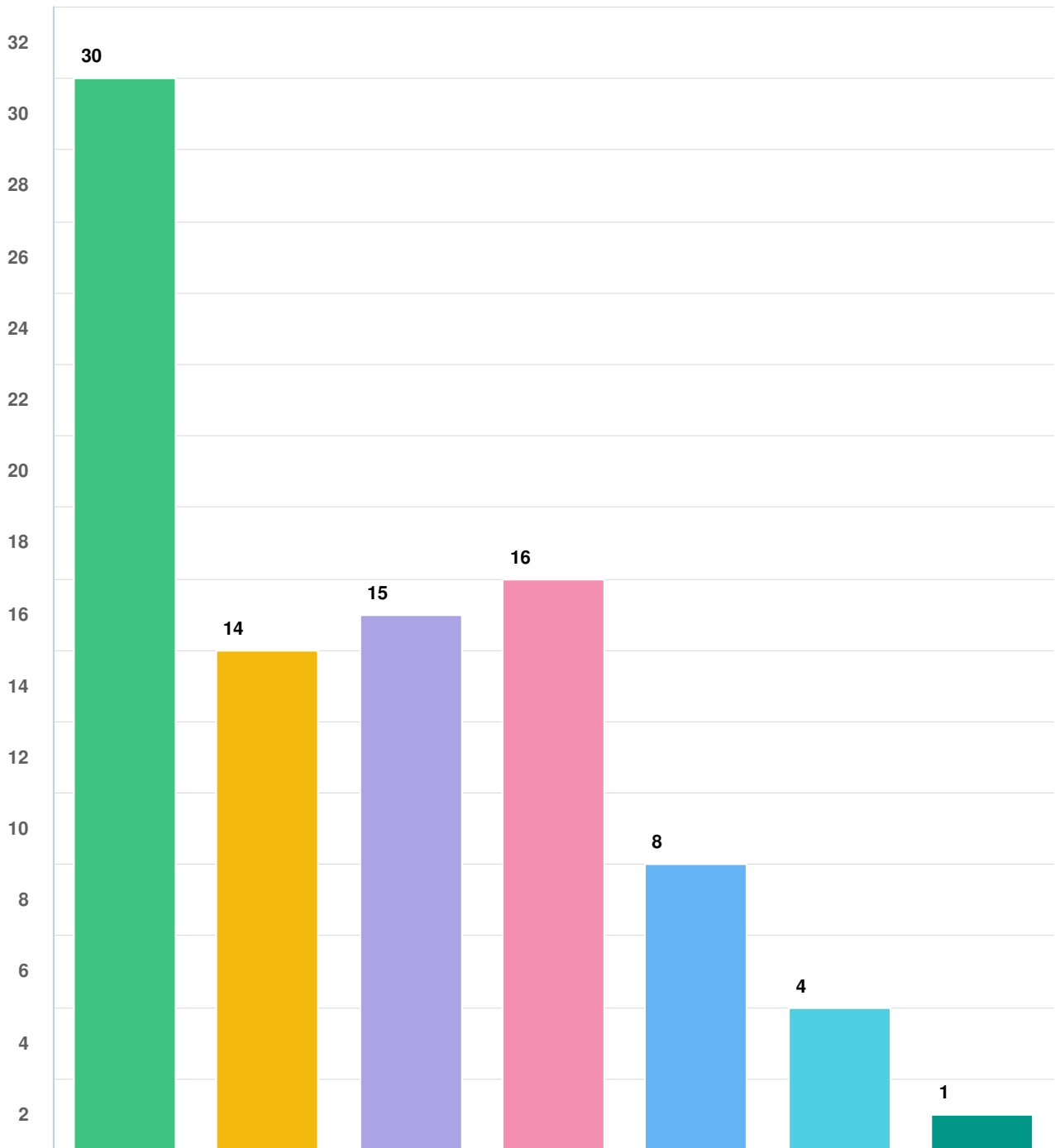
Question options

- No
- Yes

Mandatory Question (105 response(s))

Question type: Radio Button Question

Which services Ride Solutions offers are you aware of? (Select all that apply)



Question options

- Other (please specify)
- Bike valet
- Technical assistance to launch employer-sponsored commute programs
- Incentives for taking carpool, bus, and cycling trips
- Trip logging
- Trip planning for bikes, walking, and transit
- Carpool matching

Optional question (37 response(s), 68 skipped)

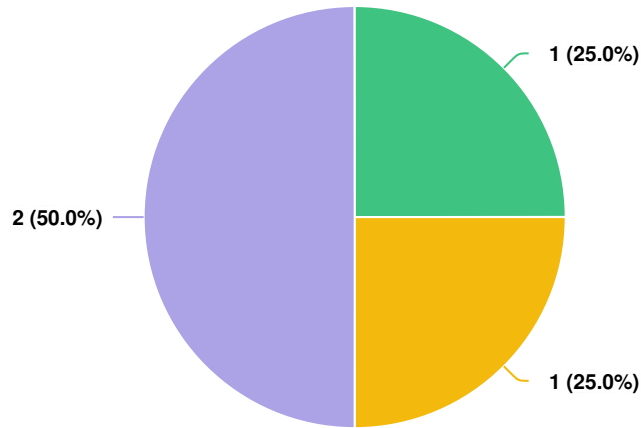
Question type: Checkbox Question

ENGAGEMENT TOOL: SURVEY TOOL

Transportation Survey - Business

Visitors 34	Contributors 4	CONTRIBUTIONS 4
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How many people does your business employ?



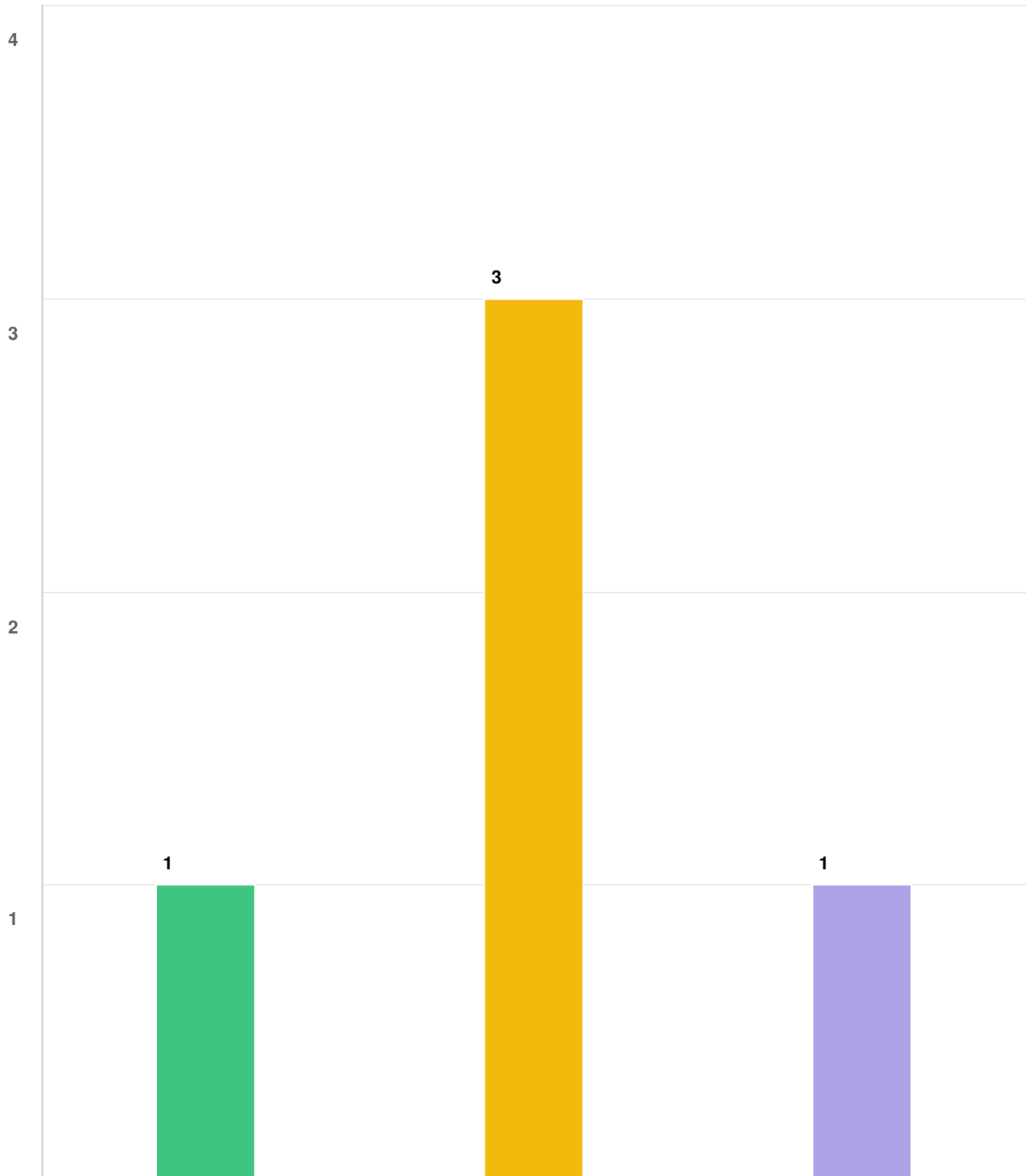
Question options

- More than 100 employees
- 51-100
- 5 or less

Mandatory Question (4 response(s))

Question type: Radio Button Question

What transportation benefits and resources do you offer to your employees? (Select all that apply)



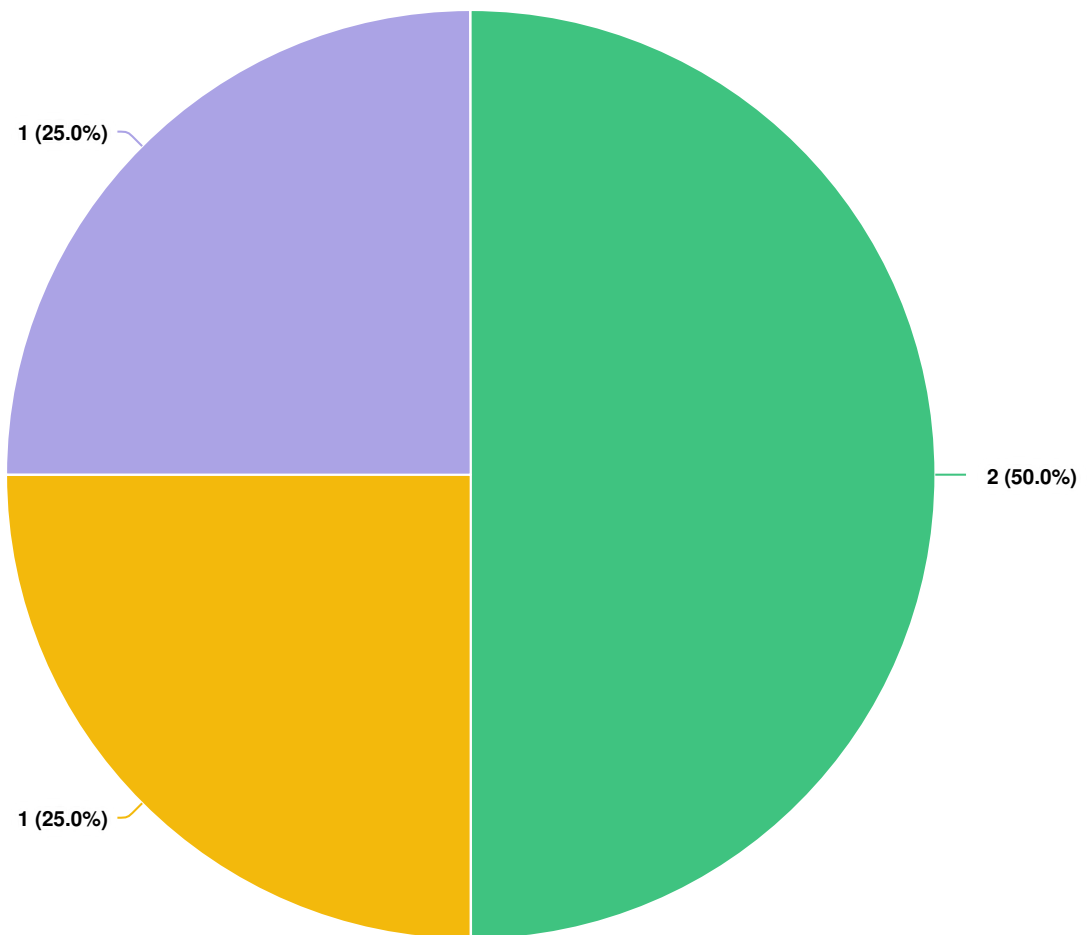
Question options

- None
- Telework
- Bike parking/storage

Mandatory Question (4 response(s))

Question type: Checkbox Question

How much does transportation access affect employee performance, retention, and recruitment at your worksite(s)?



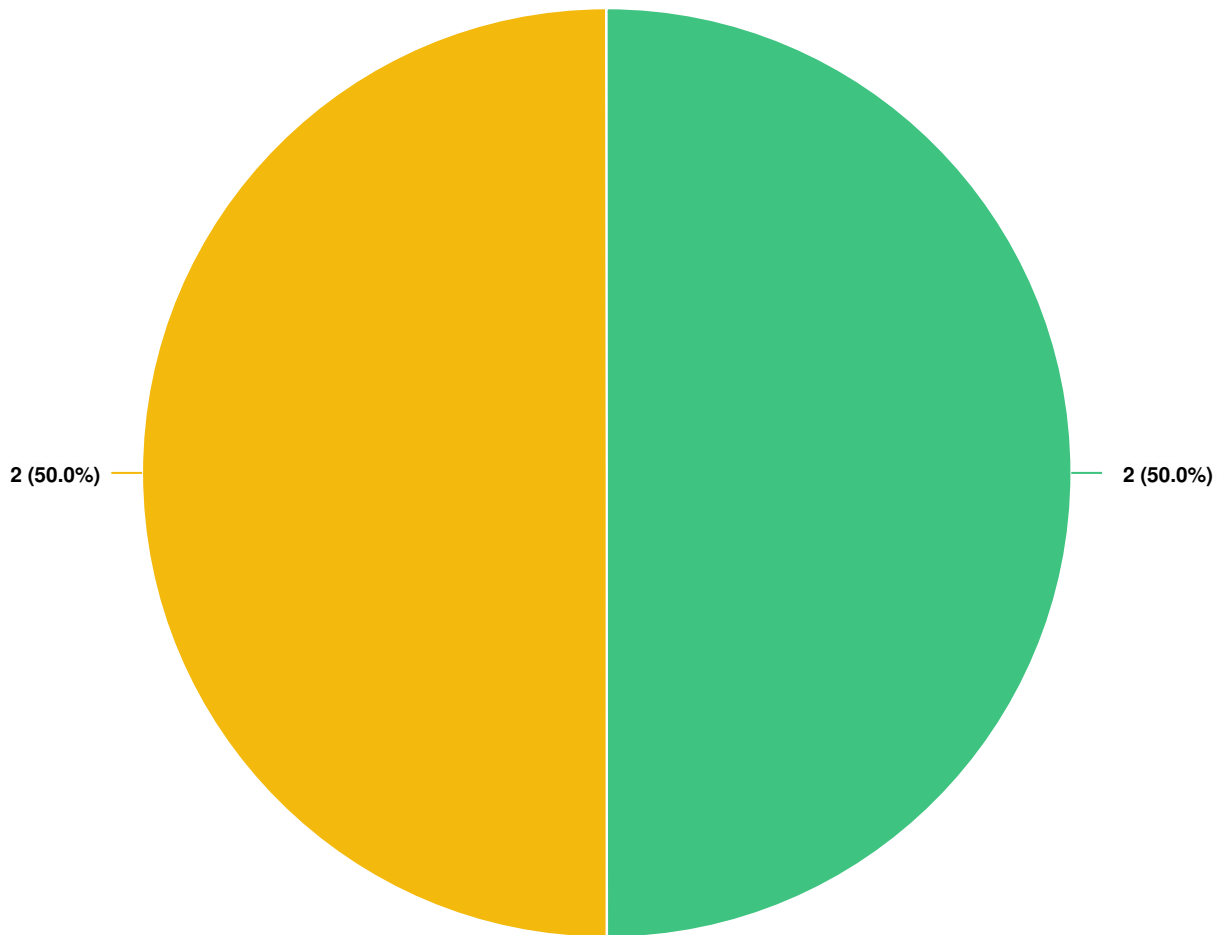
Question options

- I don't know if transportation access affects my employees.
- Lack of transportation does not affect employee job performance.
- Affects it slightly - some employees are late or miss work due to a lack of transportation.

Mandatory Question (4 response(s))

Question type: Radio Button Question

Are you aware of the services RIDE Solutions and the RIDE Solutions app offers?



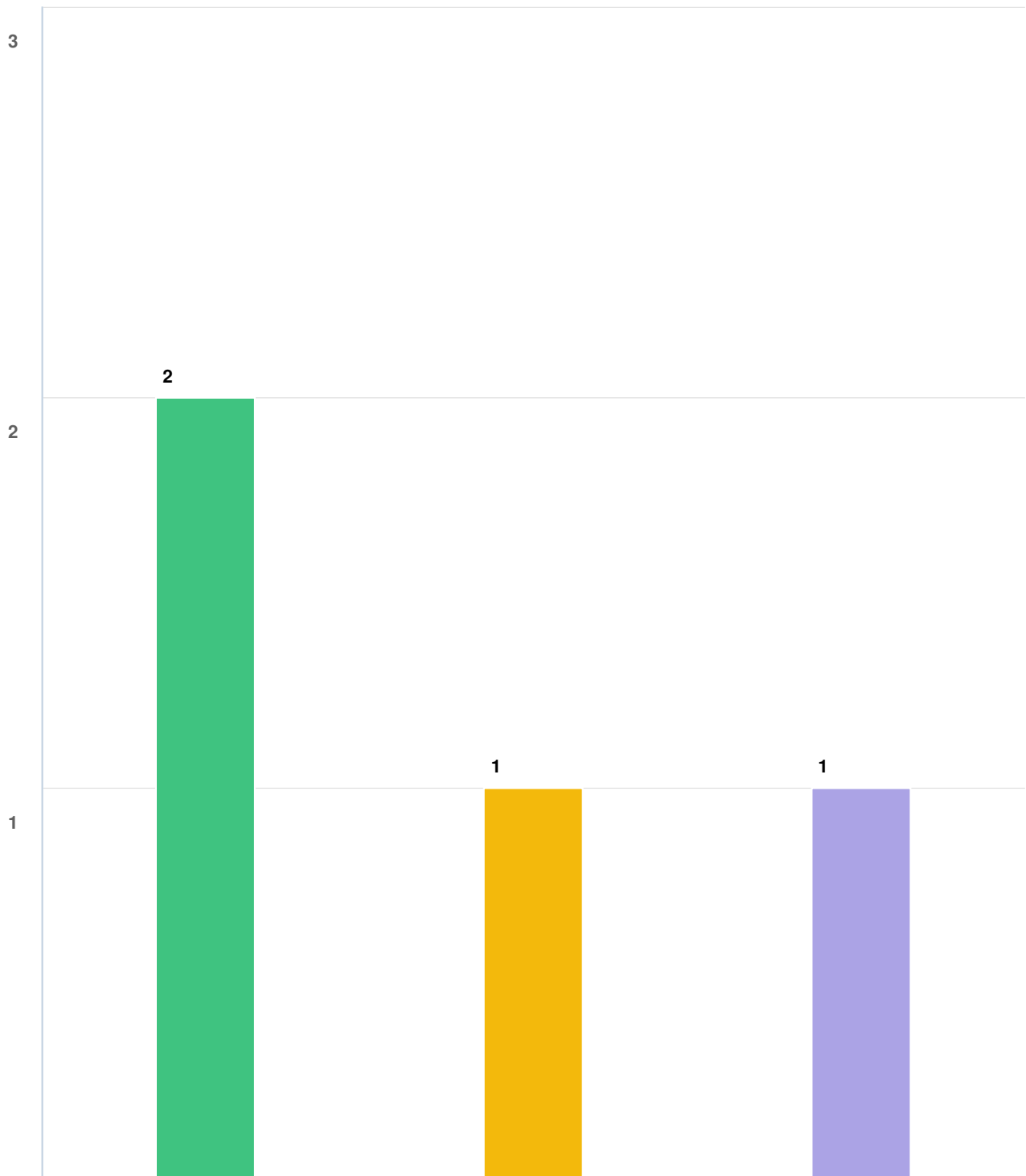
Question options

- No
- Yes

Mandatory Question (4 response(s))

Question type: Radio Button Question

If yes, which services are you familiar with? (Select all that apply)



Question options

- Transit routes
- Vanpool matching
- Carpool matching

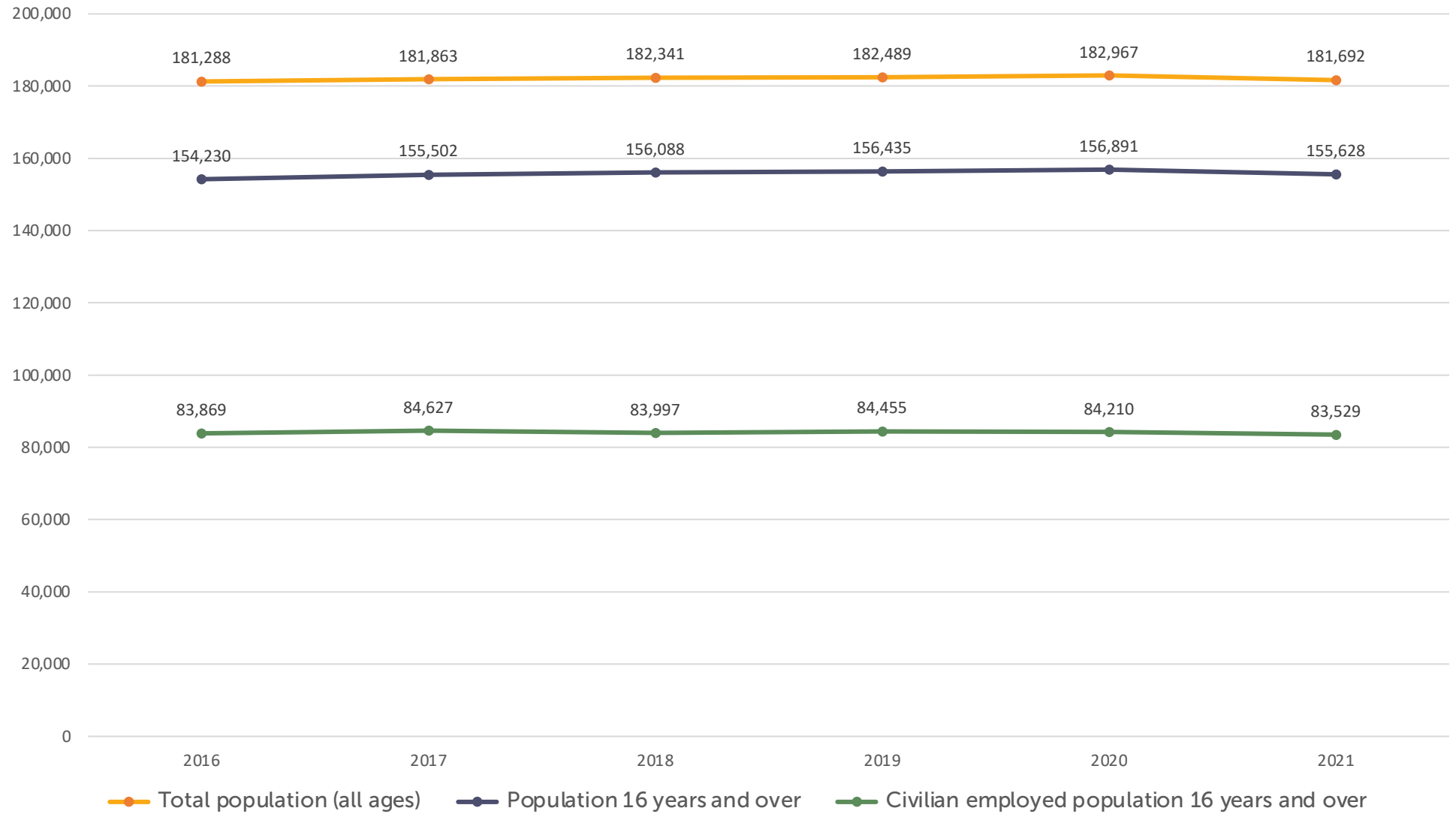
Optional question (2 response(s), 2 skipped)

Question type: Checkbox Question

NRV Data

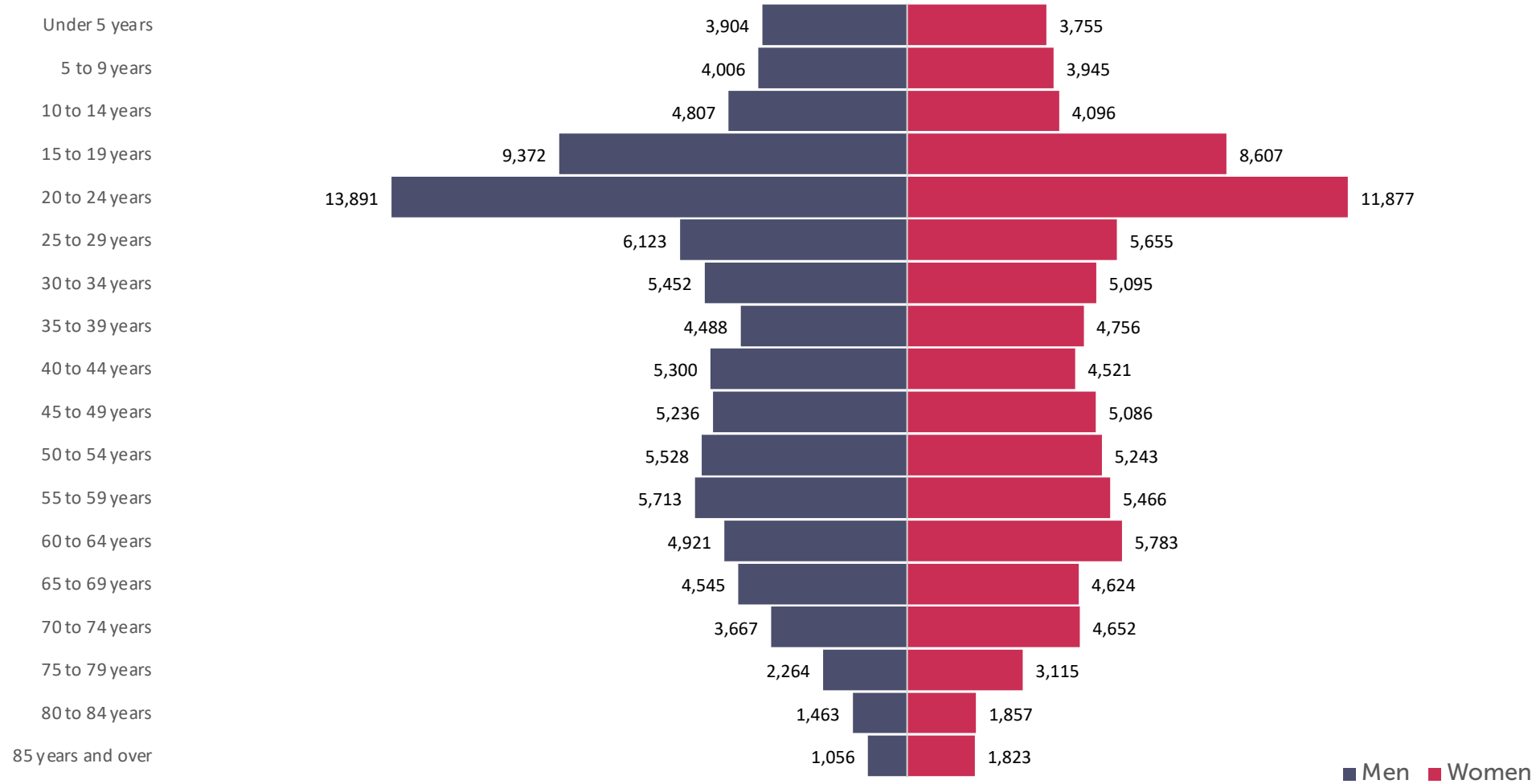
Population, Commuters, Transportation Network

NRV Population (2016-2021)



Source: US Census, ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates

2021 Population by Age Groups



Source: US Census, ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates

2021 NRV Population by Race

Total Population: 181,692

White: 88.0%

Black or African American: 4.5%

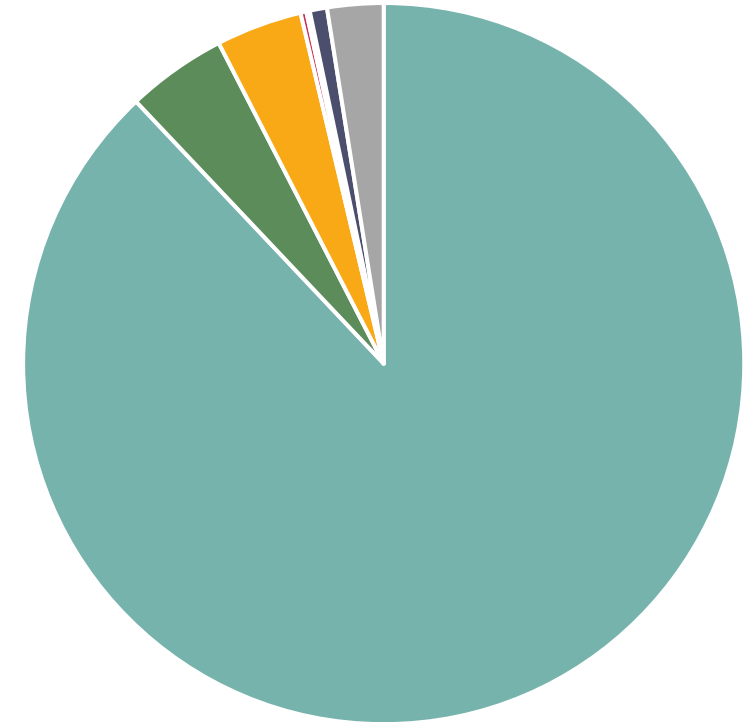
Asian: 3.9%

American Indian and Alaska Native: 0.3%

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander: 0.2%

Other Single Race: 0.8%

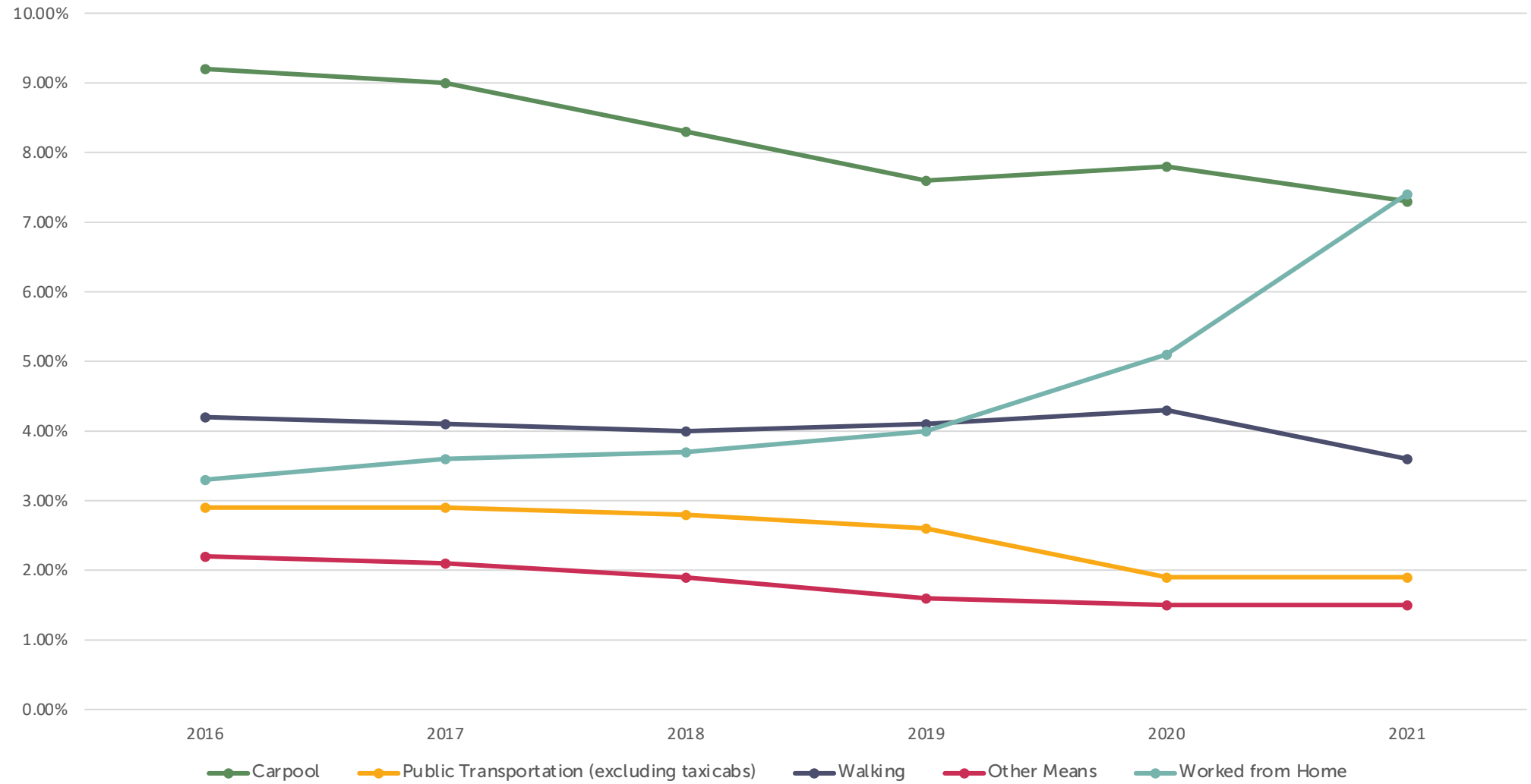
Two or More Races: 2.5%



Source: US Census, ACS 2021 5-year estimates.

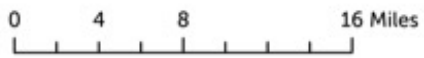
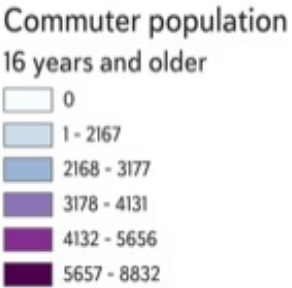
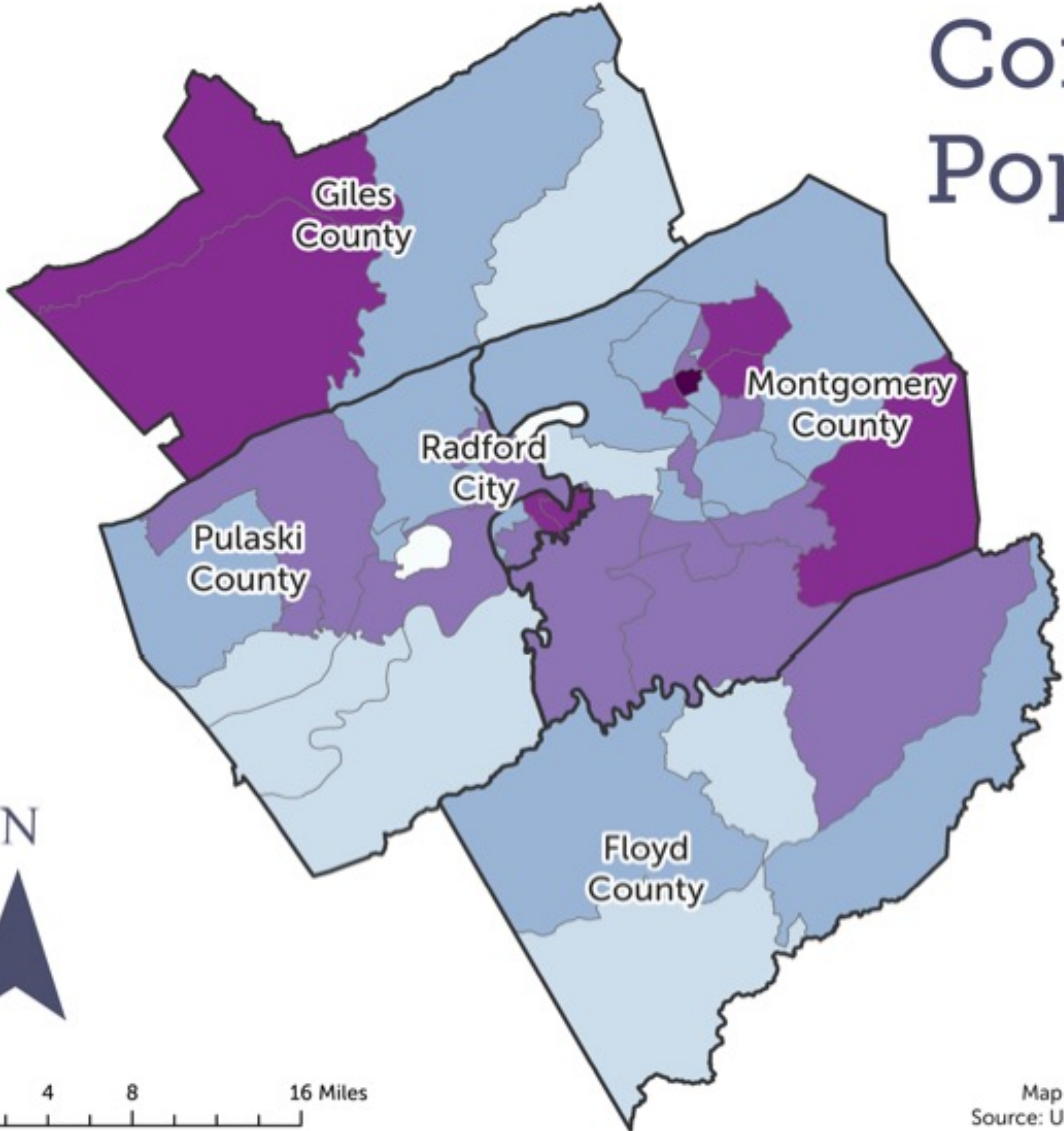
(People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race. 2.9% of NRV residents are identified as Hispanic or Latino.)

Non-SOV Commute Transportation in the NRW



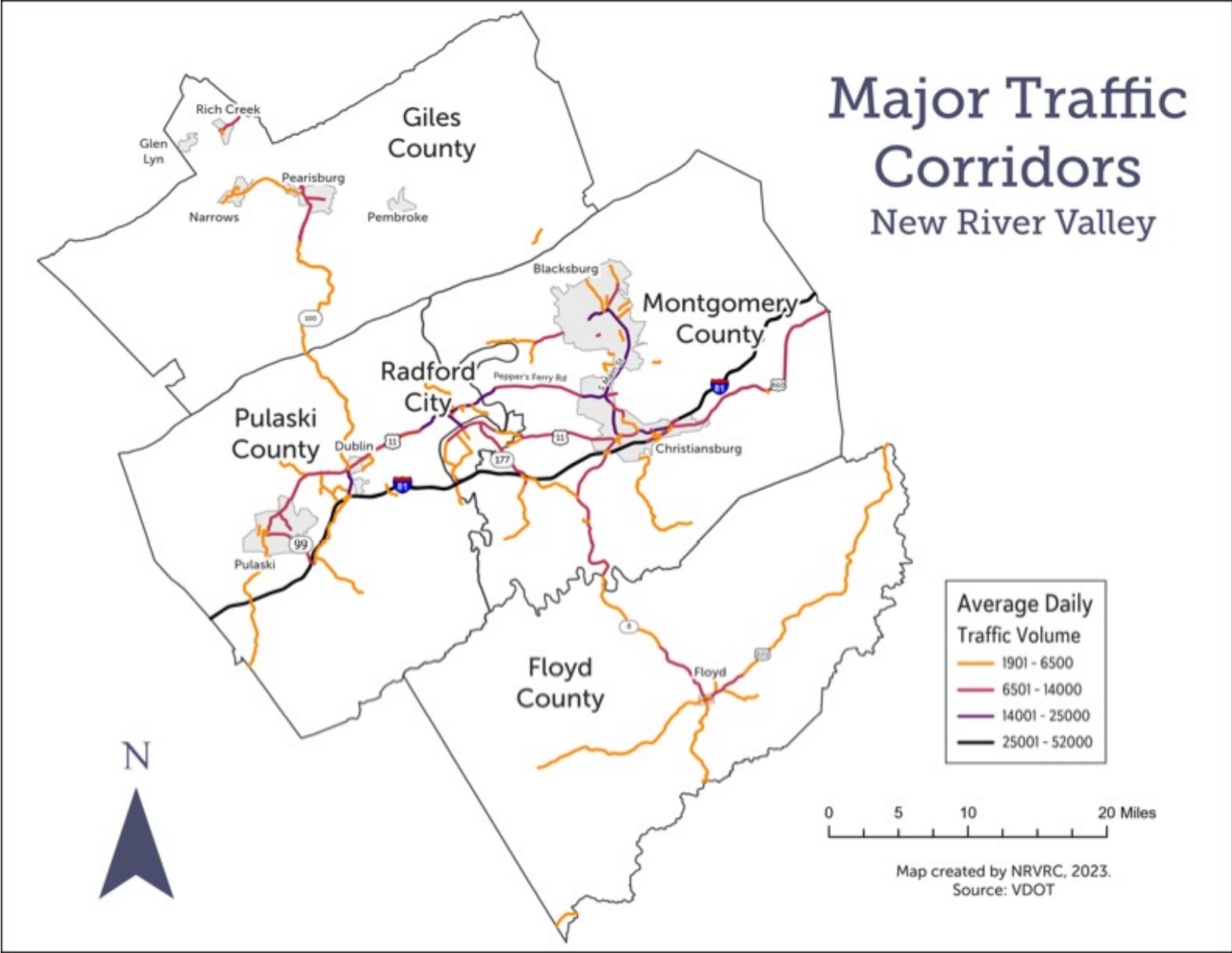
Source: US Census, ACS 2016-2021 5-year estimates

Commuter Population

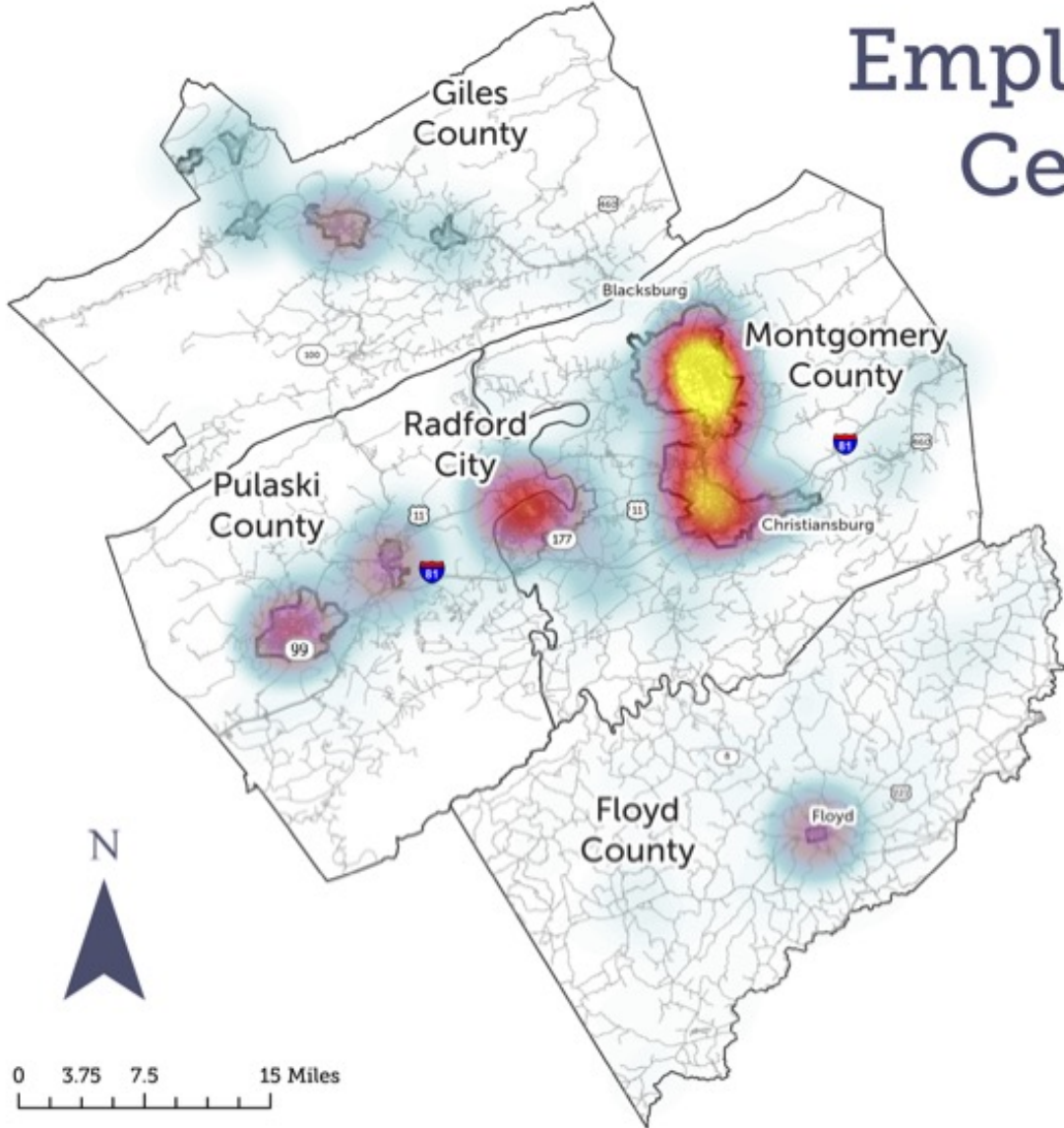


Map created by NRVRC, 2023.
Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 Census

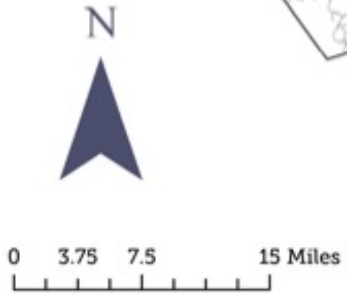
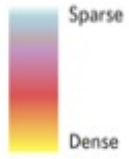
Major Traffic Corridors New River Valley



Employment Centers

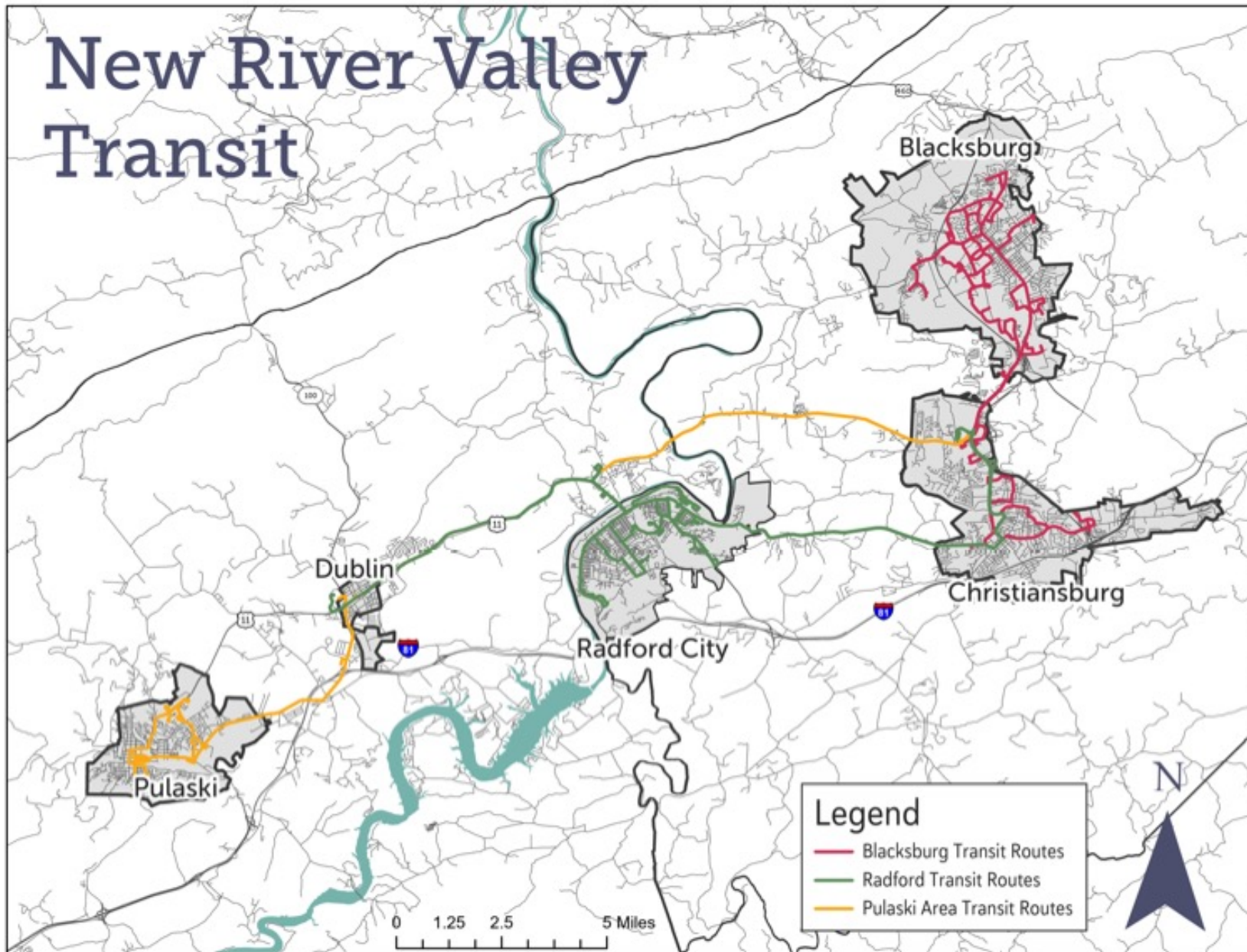


Businesses Heat Map



Map created by NRVRC, 2023.
Source: ESRI Business Analyst

New River Valley Transit



Montgomery County

Blacksburg Transit

Blacksburg Transit is a fare-free transit service that operates in Christiansburg and Blacksburg.

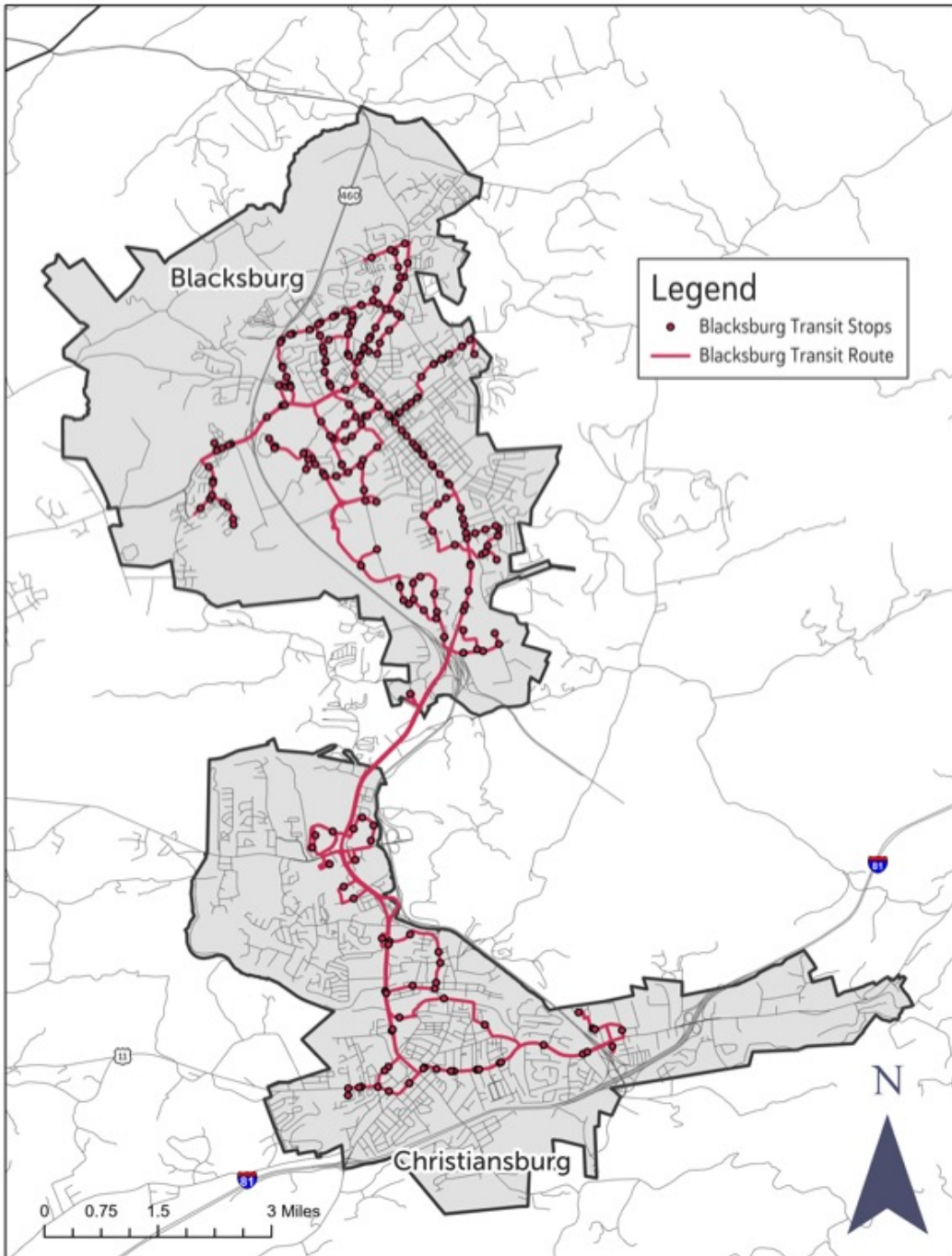
BT is a department of the Town of Blacksburg, funded by state and local funds.

Service is offered every day except for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Service levels vary based on the academic calendar of Virginia Tech.

BT also provides connections to other regional providers including Radford Transit, Pulaski Area Transit, Smart Way (to Roanoke) and Virginia Breeze.

In Christiansburg, BT routes are a mixture of fixed, semi-fixed, and by reservation.

- The Two Town Trolley is a fixed express route between Christiansburg and Blacksburg.
- Riders on Explorer routes can request deviations that take less than 5 minutes..
- The Go Anywhere service is a reservation-based service that can take residents anywhere within the Town of Christiansburg.



Montgomery County Commuters

- As of 2021, working from home is the most popular non-SOV commute option at **9.2%**, followed by carpooling at **6.9%**.
- In 2016, **5%** of commuters used transit and it was on a slight decline until 2020 when it dropped to **2.7%** due to the pandemic. Transit usage has not returned to pre-pandemic levels and only increased to **2.9%** in 2021.
- Walking was at a six-year low in 2021, with **4.4%** of commuters choosing to walk to work.
 - Since **58.4%** of Montgomery County residents lived less than 10 miles from their workplace in 2019, walking (and biking) is still a viable option for many commuters in the area.
- Montgomery County residents have the shortest commute time in the NRV with **18.1 minutes**.

Floyd County

Floyd County Commuters

- Work From Home rates were about the same from 2016 until the pandemic. WFH rates increased in 2020 and by 2021 it became the most popular form of non-SOV commute with **10.1%** of commuters working from home. That's the highest portion of all localities in the NRV as of 2021.
- In the last 6 years, carpooling rates were at their highest in 2016 at **13.8%**. Carpooling rates have dropped to **9.7%** in 2021 but are still the highest percentage when compared to other NRV localities.
- Floyd County commuters have the longest commute, with an average of **33.5 minutes**.

Sources: US Census, 2016-2021 5-year averages, On The Map 2019 data

Giles County

Giles County Commuters

- Carpooling has been the highest non-SOV commute option for the past 6 years, but it has steadily declined over the years (from **13.3%** in 2016 to **7%** in 2021).
- Giles has the highest SOV usage which has increased from **80.4%** in 2016 to **88.4%** in 2021.
 - It might be the most challenging locality to change mindsets about shifting commutes to non-SOV options, but there is the most room for improvement here as well.
- Working from home is the second most popular option, with **2.4%** of commuters in 2021.
 - All other forms of non-SOV commuting were under **1%** in 2021.
- Giles County has an average commute time of **28.4 minutes**, which has increased from **24.8 minutes** in 2016.
 - In 2019, **42.7%** of residents commuted between 10 to 24 miles from home to work.

Pulaski County

Pulaski Area Transit

Pulaski Area Transit serves Pulaski and connects the Pulaski area to Dublin, Radford, and Christiansburg.

PAT is funded by a grant from DRPT and supported by both the Town of Pulaski and Pulaski County for local matching funds.

PAT does not offer service on most federal holidays.

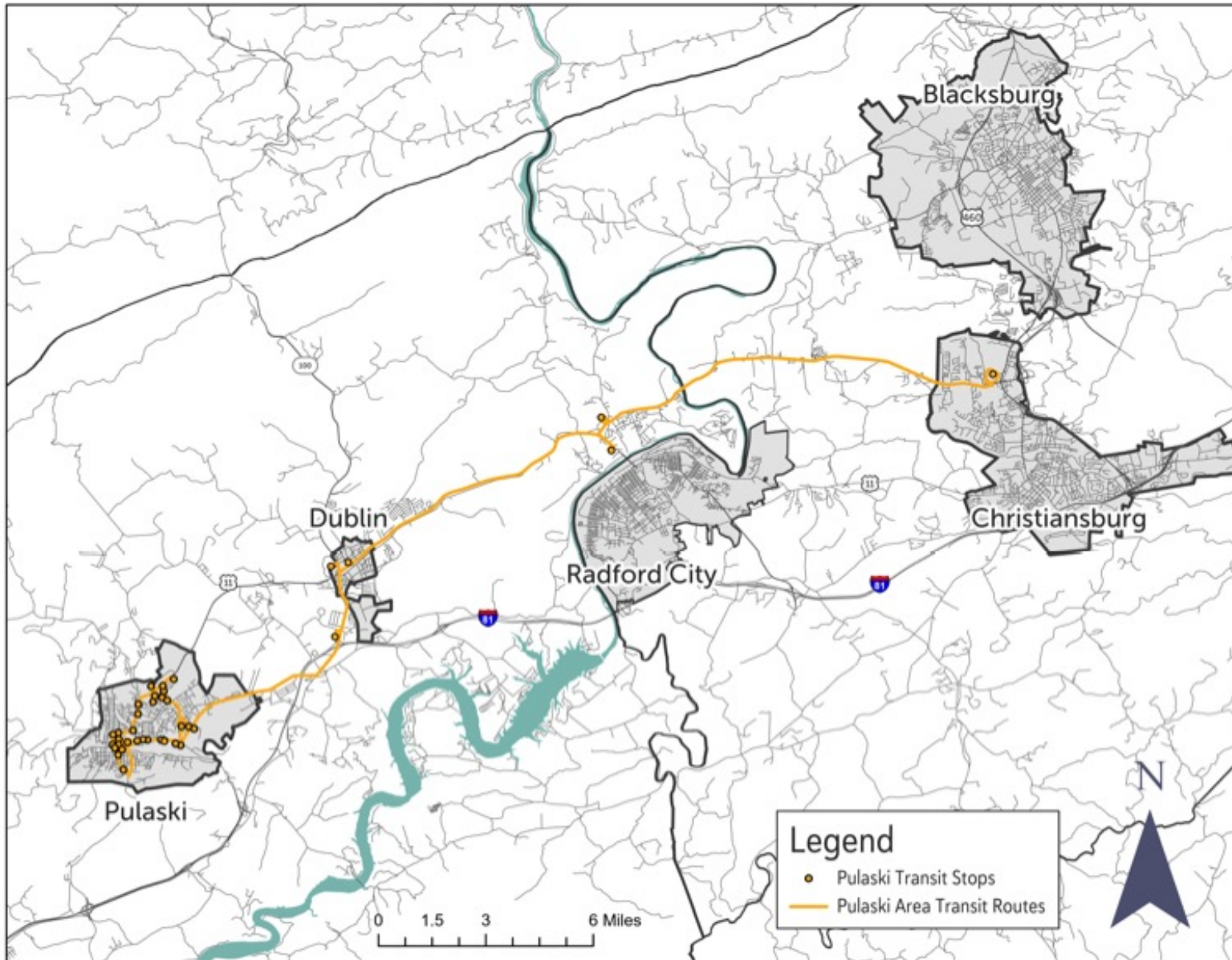
Fares range from \$0.75 to \$2.00 depending on the trip.

Hours:

M-F: 6:30 am – 5:30 pm

Saturday: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

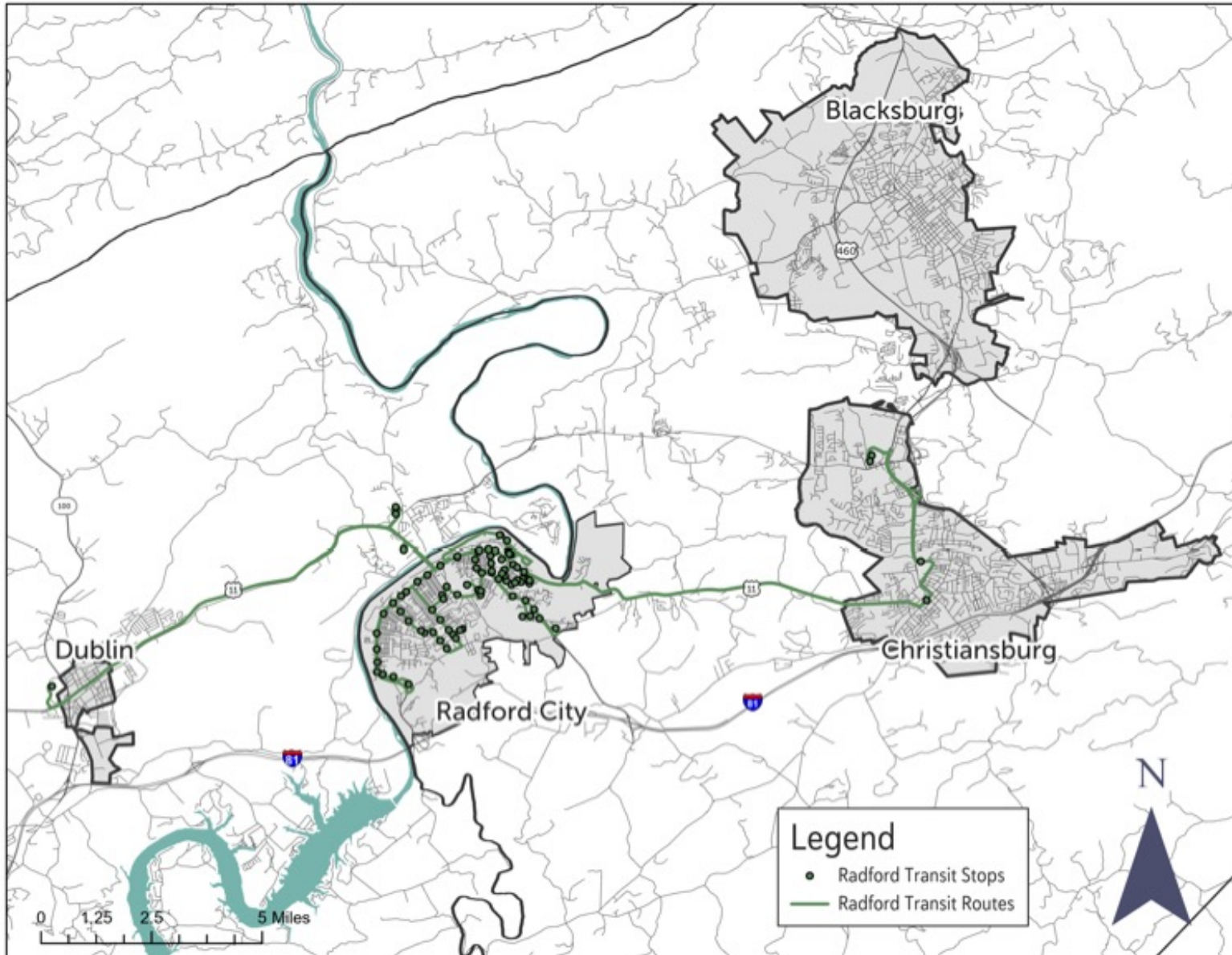
Sunday: Closed



Pulaski County Commuters

- Carpooling was the most popular form of non-SOV commute from 2016 to 2021.
 - 7.8% of commuters chose carpooling in 2021, slightly down from 8.7% in 2016.
- Working from home has been the second most popular choice throughout the past 6 years, ending up at 4.8% in 2021.
- Average commute time is 24.7 minutes.

City of Radford



Radford Transit

Radford Transit connects with Christiansburg and the NRCC campus in Dublin. Currently RT does not connect directly with Pulaski Area Transit.

RT is a department of the City of Radford.

RT is currently fare-free and offers full service during the academic year. Reduced/city service is offered outside of the school year.

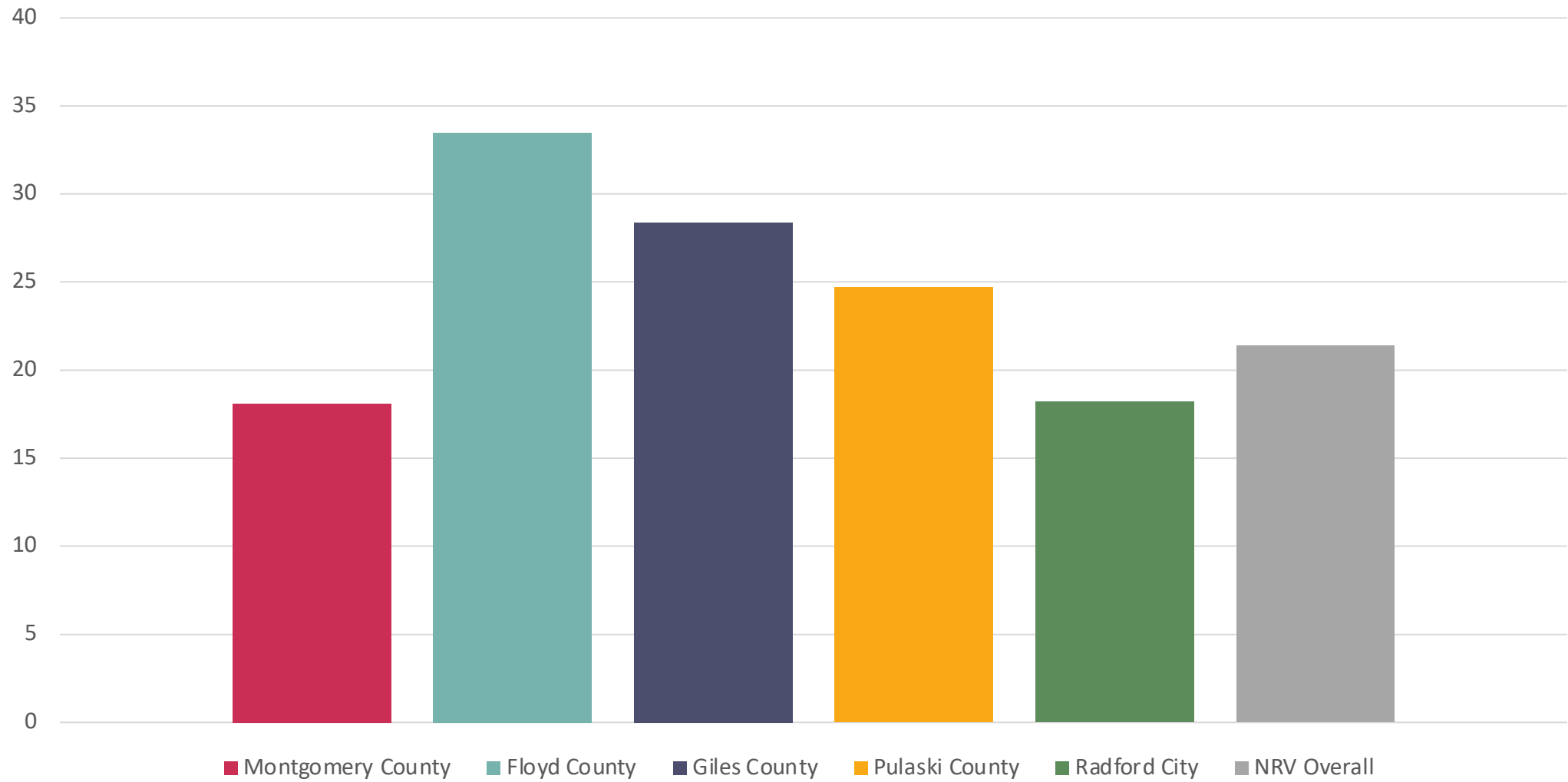
RT is a fixed-route service with limited deviations.

City of Radford Commuters

- Radford is the only locality with walking as the most popular non-SOV commute option.
 - Walking has been the most popular option for the past 6 years, despite a steady decline from 2016 to 2020. It increased from **8.6%** in 2020 to **9.7%** in 2021.
 - Radford also has the highest percentage of households making less than \$25,000 per year (**39.5%** in 2021).
- Carpooling is the second most popular option, but it was at a six-year low in 2021 (**6.8%**).
- Average commute time is **18.2** minutes.

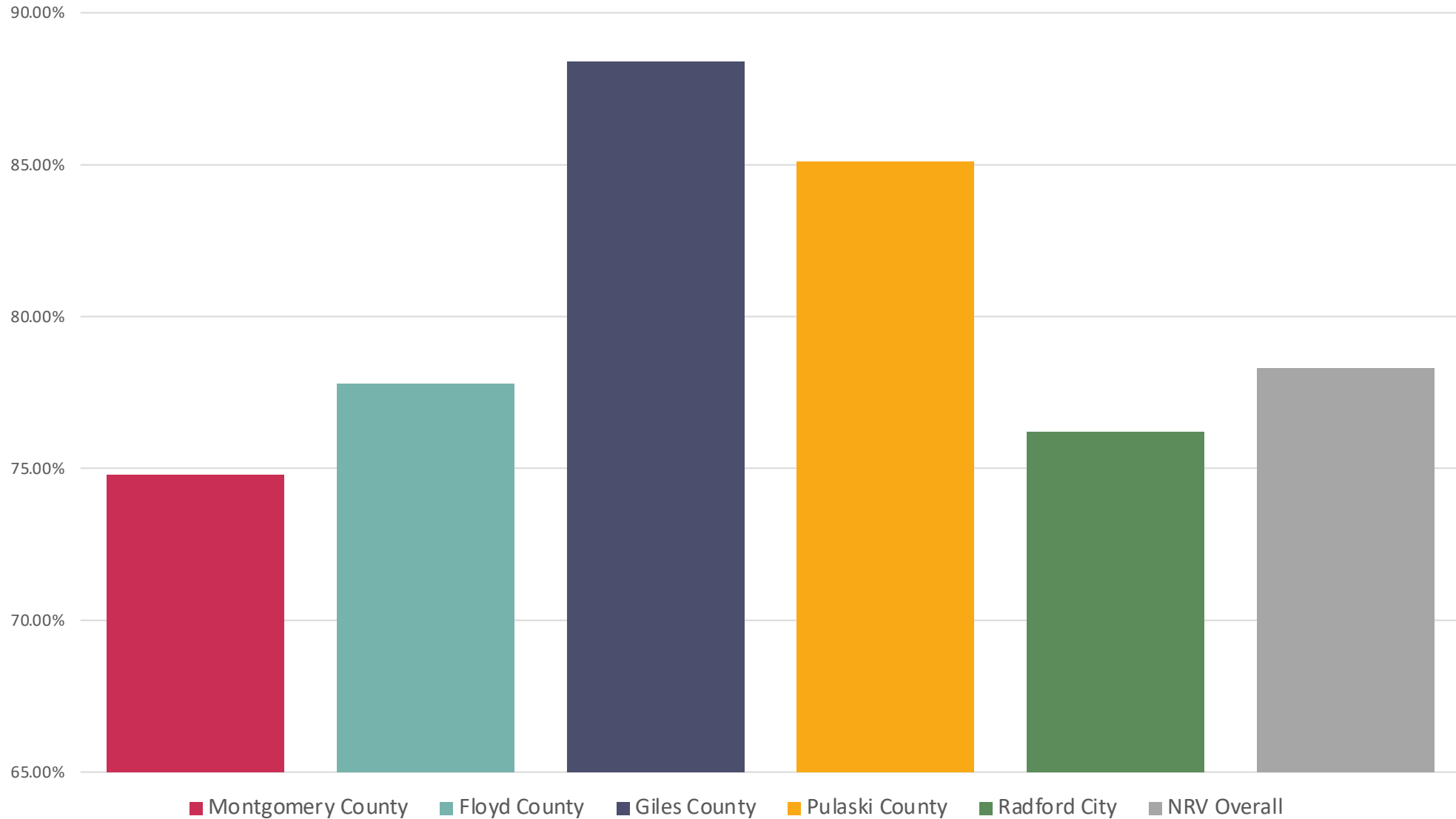
Comparisons

2021 Resident Commute Times by Locality (in Minutes)



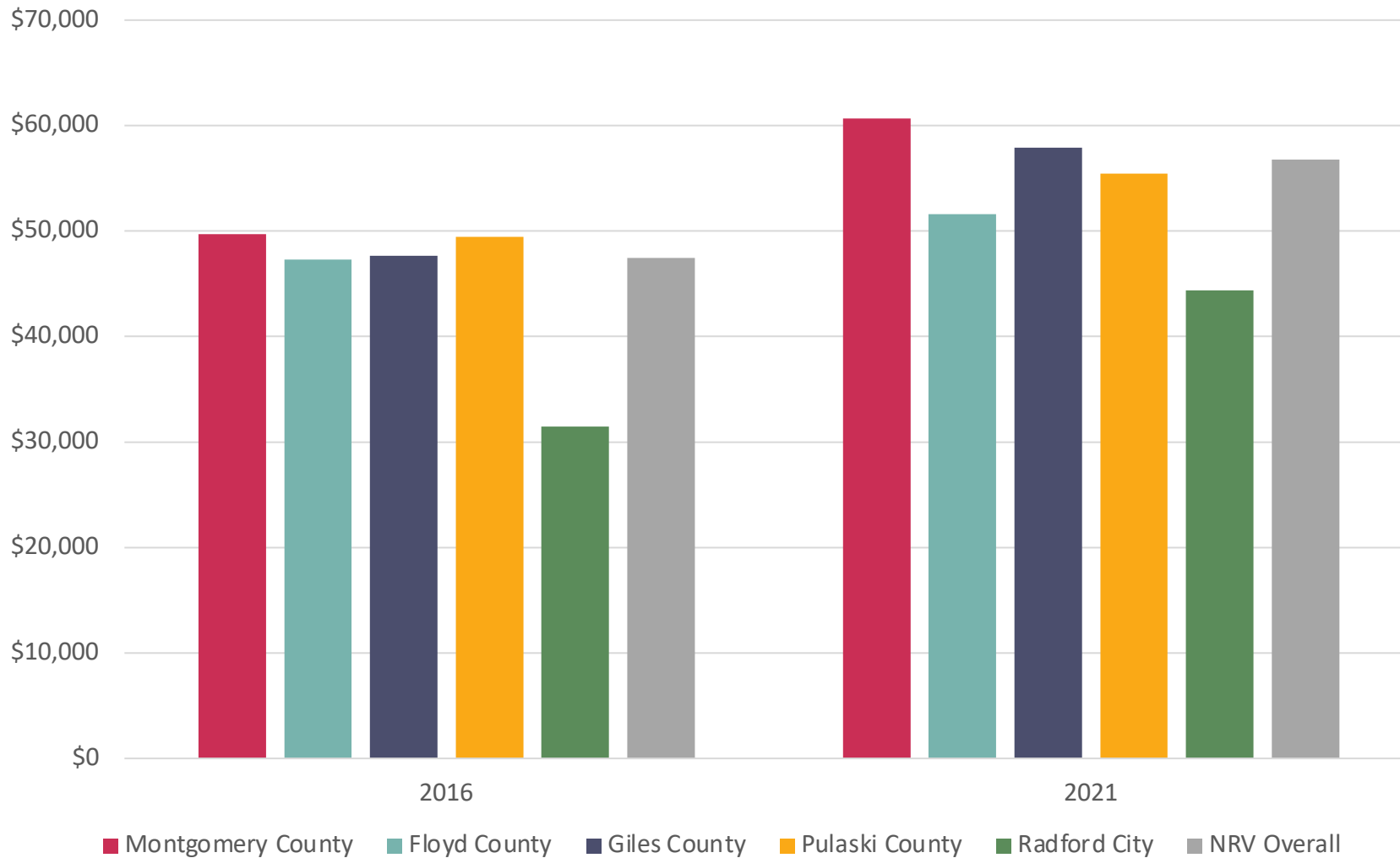
Source: US Census, ACS 2021 5-year estimates

Resident Commuters Who Drove to Work Alone (2021)



Source: US Census, ACS 2021 5-year estimates

Average Household Income (2016 vs. 2021)



Increase from 2016 to 2021:

Montgomery County: 22.0%
Floyd County: 9.1%
Giles County: 21.4%
Pulaski County: 12.0%
Radford City: 41.0%
NRV Overall: 19.6%

Icebreaker: Name one thing that would improve everyone's commute in the NRV.

- Make choices more convenient and less-time consuming to use (v. driving alone, direct)
- Build protected bike lanes

Stakeholder Responses

A. Identify mobility needs and gaps.

1. Underserved outside transit areas
2. Need evening transit for NRCC classes
3. Transit usage is difficult - routes are not up to date, maps are difficult to understand, connections are not timed well.
4. Elderly need better access to transit
5. Commuters don't know how to network within their organization/community to carpool.
6. Communication habits have changed – it's difficult to have conversations with commuters.
7. transit service is not available in non-student housing neighborhoods (single family homes)
8. ADA accessibility could be better (better options for transit, sidewalks, snow removal)
9. better proximity to starting designations is needed
10. Some areas need more transit capacity (less overcrowding)

B. Who and what is being served well?

1. Transit serves special needs students well
2. High density area residents (town and main roads have good access)
3. Multiple options for connecting
4. Outreach with BT's partners
5. Blacksburg has a robust sidewalk system and some bike infrastructure
6. BT serves university students well
7. one route available serving a non-student neighborhood

C. What does the future in 5 years, 10 years hold for mobility in the NRV?

1. Giles and Floyd are out of the loop – there needs to be more affordable options for commuting from those localities
2. Montgomery County is recognizing the need outside of Bburg for transit & connectivity.
3. Housing development is moving further from downtown, and pushing lower-income residents further out as well.

4. Montgomery County is poised for rapid growth over the next 5 years.
5. Industrial Centers like Falling Branch are filling up, which may require additional development in the future.
6. Need for connectivity to activity centers outside of current transit routes.
7. less vehicle ownership (maybe one per household instead of 2 or more)
8. more travel with car- and ride-sharing options
9. micromobility will become more popular (and sharing services)
10. autonomous still feels farther in the future
11. protected bike lanes

D. How can Ride Solutions collaborate with you to support your organization's goals and work?

1. To carpool: "change the narrative"
 - a) People are not likely to carpool with strangers
2. Personal connections matter – help folks make connections.
3. "Last mile" connection to transit (are bike paths/sidewalks available? Is walking/biking safe and accessible from home to the bus stop? How do people plan multi-modal trips?)
4. Communicating how transit operates to serve scheduled activity
 - a) Example: If people want to take the train to Roanoke/DC and the train leaves at 5am but BT doesn't start running until 7am, how do they plan to make it there?
5. Communicate what it takes to plan and expand new transit routes (3-5 years due to lack of staff)
6. town comp plan has objective to encourage employers to incentivize employee commutes in bike, walk, bus, etc and would like to partner on that
7. bike-friendly business certifications for local businesses

E. How can we use transportation to improve quality of life for everyone in the community?

1. Employment access
2. Ease of access to other resources
3. Create access to resources (medical, social services, etc.) if you're not in town
4. improve safety for vulnerable users (esp. those with mobility challenges), side benefit for driver comfort and risk in sharing the road
5. "moving people, not cars"

6. fewer car trips through denser development
- F. What national trends may have an impact in the NRV over the next 5-10 years (such as economics, work patterns, federal mandates, alternative energy)?
 1. Higher gas prices will make an impact
 2. EV infrastructure/charging access
 3. Roads/infrastructure access and maintenance.
 4. Online classes are gaining popularity, which results in a decrease in transportation issues.
 - a) Lack of reliable internet forces some rural students to have to take in-person classes, but they also have transportation issues.
 5. Going electric as a fleet (BT)
 - a) Facilities to recharge
 - b) Infrastructure upgrades
 - c) Service capacity
 6. WFH trend: there will be more of it; developers building less office space, more housing; remote workers relocating without reference to distance from their employer
 7. ARPA funds: using them for sidewalk and trails (what is coming online elsewhere in 2026?)
 8. EV fleet: working converting the Town fleet
 9. Drop off and pick up ridehailing services, deliveries and parking impacts - planning is working on less public parking spaces and creating designated areas for delivery, Uber, etc

Additional Feedback:

- A. Silos – services and communication are often only available to certain areas/populations.
- B. RIDE Solutions is not a known brand.
- C. BT's schedule changes are more about less frequency on the major routes than reduced hours of service.
- D. BT is seeing bumps in their ridership in FY22 over FY21 and a significant bump in FY23
 1. It's important to promote the opportunity to increase carpooling from the worksite side of the trip, but recognize flex hours (in office jobs) can also impact choice and options. For example, a dad starts his commute to the office at 4:30 so he can be home in time for the kids' activities, school pickup, etc.

Organizational Chart

