

# St. Lawrence County Connecting Communities Mobility Management Coordinated Plan 2015 Addendum to the 2008 Coordinated Transportation Work Plan

## Introduction

The St. Lawrence County Connecting Communities Task Force has prepared the following plan update to document and outline current and future efforts to improve coordination of all transportation services provided to all residents of St. Lawrence County. This UPDATED St. Lawrence County Connecting Communities Mobility Management Plan (hereafter referred to as The Plan) is prepared to comply with regulations of the Federal Transportation Administration Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21). This is the act that replaced the former Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Map-21 MANDATES THAT PROJECTS FOR SPECIFIC Federal Transportation Administration programs be derived from a locally developed coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan, the specific plans identified are:

- Section 5310 – Enhanced Mobility of seniors and Individuals with Disabilities
- Section 5316 – Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) – Now part of MAP-21 the 5316 eligible expenses are part of 5311 – Formula grant Rural Areas.
- Section 5317 – New freedom – As part of MAP-21, 5317 eligible expenses have been combined with 5310 Enhanced Mobility of seniors and Individuals with Disabilities
- Section 5311 – Formula grant Rural Area – St. Lawrence County is under the Rural Area formula provisions.

See item III below, “Background information on Federal Transit Programs and Recipients of Federal program Funds” for descriptions of these programs.

St. Lawrence County Connecting Communities also utilizes the FTA Section 5311 program. This program provides capital, planning and operating assistance to support public transportation in rural areas with population less than 50,000.

This plan guides decisions regarding the funding of specific projects that receive funding through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and identifies decisions St. Lawrence County Public Task Force and key stakeholders continue to make for improvement to the transportation systems and service to all residents while coordinating efforts among current transportation providers. The Plan also needs to be flexible as solutions are studied and developed as new needs are identified. The recommendations are intended to improve efficiency in the use of our transportation resources and enhance access to clients, minimize duplication of services, and provide a more cost effective service. Priority projects identified in the plan will be incorporated into Mobility Manager’s and Task Force work plans.

Questions about the Plan or information presented here should be addressed to:

St. Lawrence Public Task Force – Mobility Management – Transit Manager

St. Lawrence NYSARC – Operations Center

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Goals of the Plan are:

- Improve and increase access of all County residents in rural areas to healthcare, shopping, employment, education, public services and recreation.
- Assist in the maintenance, development, improvement and use of public transportation systems in rural areas and population centers.
- The Task Force will advocate for consistent, predictable funding levels that sustain public transit services for the long term. Coordination among providers will help to keep public transportation resilient and cost-effective.
- Encourage and facilitate the most efficient use of all federal funds used to provide passenger transport in non-urbanized areas through coordination of programs and services.
- Improve the delivery of transit services to targeted areas.
- Encourage cooperation and coordination among transportation service providers.
- Improve operational efficiencies to increase service opportunities.
- Provide a reasonable template for project development and allocation of financial resources.
- Provide avenues of participation for private transportation providers in non-urbanized areas to the extent possible.

Current Task Force Members:

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## **History and Background**

### **Service Area**

St. Lawrence County is the largest County in New York State. It is approximately 2840 square miles and is the fifth largest county east of the Mississippi River. The county is bordered on the east by the Adirondack Mountains and on the north by Canada and the St. Lawrence River. Due to the county's geographic location, winters are long and can be very harsh. The county is comprised of thirty-two towns, fifteen villages, and one city. Five of those are considered major population areas: Canton (the county seat), Gouverneur, Massena, Potsdam, and the City of Ogdensburg. St. Lawrence County is predominately rural and sparsely populated in comparison to its size. The American Community Survey indicated a total population of 112,060 people which is an increase over the population reported in the 2010 Census. This is a little over 39 people per square mile.

The St. Regis Mohawk Reservation, a Mohawk Indian reservation is located in part at the eastern portion of the county. It is also known by its Mohawk name, Akwesasne. The reservation is adjacent to the Akwesasne reserve in Ontario, and Quebec, straddling 12 miles of the US-Canadian Border. The reservation contains the village of St. Regis and borders the village of Hogansburg in the Town of Bombay. The population was 3,288 at the 2010 census. The reservation is home to the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino and the Mohawk Bingo Palace.

### **Coordination History**

The original Coordination transportation Work Plan produced by The St. Lawrence County Planning Office in 2008 outlined basic summaries, plan development, overview, partnering agencies, inventory of services and resources, proposed program structure, implementation timeline, and expected benefits.

This original plan in its entirety is available for review at the Operations Center NYSARC 6 Commerce lane Canton NY 13617 or call Jerry Filiatrault 315-379-9531 x1032.

Since that time –

- St. Lawrence County has removed all funding from Public Transit,
- Operator is now St. Lawrence NYSARC with The County as Administrator as required by law.
- A task Force Committee has been formed with meetings each month from September to June. July and August not included because of scheduling, vacations, etc.
- Task Force members are listed in updated Plan.
- Transit Manager works closely with Office of the Aging and all other interested entities.
- Routes are continually monitored for efficiency and ridership]
- Each bus is equipped with a GPS system
- Ridership is steadily increasing as Task Force suggestions are implemented into program

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**Funding Past and Present**

All Federal Transportation Administration programs require participation in a coordinated Mobility Management Plan. Those previously covered under SAFETEA-LU are now under MAP-21.

- FTA Section 5310 – makes funding available to meet the needs of elderly persons and persons with disabilities for program designed to serve the special needs of transit dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and ADA complementary para-transit services. An example of this assistance is the purchase of buses and vans. Capital assistance is provided on an 80% Federal, 20% local matching basis. New York State allows private non-profit agencies to receive funding if they demonstrate they are a participant in a local coordinated plan.
- FTA Section 5311 makes funding available to meet the needs of Public Transportation in Non-Urbanized areas.
- Under MAP-21, combined services previously covered under Sections 5310, 5316, and 5317 are combined in Section 5311.

**Transportation Services and Resources**

**1. Transportation Providers**

**A) Public Transit**

1. St. Lawrence NYSARC
2. Trailways
3. North Country Express
4. Volunteer Transportation Center (VTC)

**B) Ambulettes**

1. Seaway Valley
2. Fox and Murray
3. Frary
4. R B Lawrence

**C) Taxi**

1. Best Taxi Service
2. Carry All Taxi
3. G Man Taxi
4. Massena taxi
5. Massena transport LLC
6. Potsdam Madstop Taxi
7. Zero Transport

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**2. Public Transit Providers:**

Connecting Communities is the 5311 arm of the Public transit system; NYSARC is the 5310 arm of the Public transit system, the two systems work together to move people throughout St. Lawrence County. Trailways passes through St. Lawrence County and makes several stops to pick up riders. North Country Express is based in Clinton County and travels to Potsdam where it meets St. Lawrence Connecting Communities Transit to provide a broader area for travel. Volunteer Transportation Center provides transportation for those individuals unable to use Public Transit. The Taxi and Ambulette Services are based throughout the County and provide transportation as needed.

**Identifying Needs**

The Transit Task Force meets 10 months of the year (September – June) to allow all participants the forum to express concerns and also to assess community transportation needs.

We need to continue to look at ways to expand our service in St. Lawrence County

There is a need to continue progress toward a more seamless transportation system through Mobility management coordination with all County transportation systems.

There is a continuing need for qualified drivers. One of the biggest obstacles is wages.

There is a need to increase Public awareness of the services available in St. Lawrence County.

It seems important to note that none of the Ambulette or Taxi services have attended a Task Force meeting since its inception.

**Mobility Objectives New Focus 2015 - 2019 –**

Re-evaluate the various types of mobility needs in the service area and help determine agencies best suited to handle those needs. This determination will be based on availability of resources and ability to meet the required transportation need. These mobility focus items will be taken into consideration:

- What is the need of the mobility challenged individual
  - Handicap or not
  - Purpose – work, recreation, shopping, or medical
  - On route or deviated route – Mode of transit available
    - Transit Bus
    - Feeder bus
    - Volunteer Service
    - Cab/Taxi/Ambulette

Possible Means to Achieve Goals

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Use existing College runs to feed Transit or Replace College runs with transit to lower per passenger cost  
Work with cab companies as feeders to lower costs  
Task Force Meeting begin again in Sept 2015 -- invite as many interested parties as possible to establish our resources, needs, and aspirations.  
As these ideas are developed and implemented they will become part of our Mobility Management Plan

**Demographics**

The five major population centers – Ogdensburg, Massena, Potsdam, Canton and Gouverneur comprise 38% of the total county population.

There are five regional hospitals located in the County – Massena Memorial in Massena, Canton-Potsdam Hospital in Potsdam, Claxton-Hepburn Hospital in Ogdensburg, and Clifton-Fine Hospital in Star Lake and E. J. Noble Hospital in Gouverneur.

There are two Colleges located in Canton – SUNY Canton and St. Lawrence University and two Colleges located in Potsdam – SUNY Potsdam and Clarkson University. The SUNY schools are 4 year accredited colleges and St. Lawrence and Clarkson are 4 year private universities.

Total county population is approximately 111,000 people. The census data shows the County as having about 50% of its inhabitants as low or moderate income earners.

The largest employers are concentrated in four areas of the County – Canton, Massena, Potsdam, and Ogdensburg.

The Plan as originally developed in 2008 to create a more efficient and effective mobility program through open communication among agencies, use of shared services, increase service area, decrease vehicle needs, generate savings, increase ridership are still viable and applicable to our present Agenda. We will need to continue with this as an ongoing objective to use the resources available to the benefit of the greatest number of citizens at the greatest savings for the taxpayers of this County.