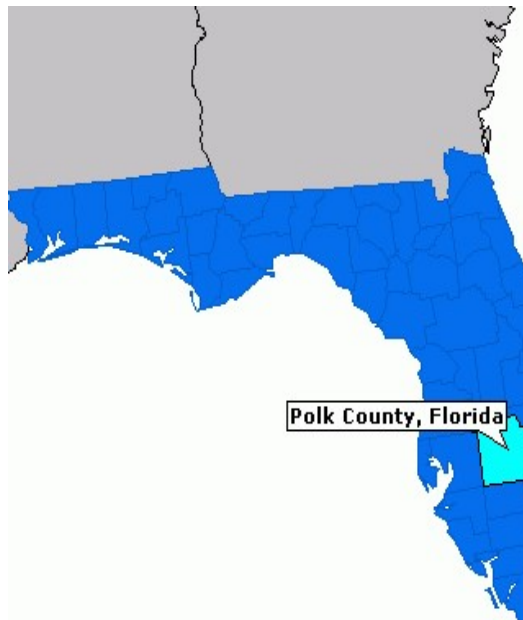


2022-23 MINOR UPDATE TO THE *2021/22 – 2025/26 * POLK COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED SERVICE PLAN * HUMAN SERVICE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATED PLAN * MAJOR UPDATE



Polk Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board

Major Update was Adopted by Polk TD LCB, 10/18/ 2021

This Final Draft to the 2022-23 Minor Update

Prepared for the Polk TDLCB meeting of 6-27-22 by:



The TPO planning process is conducted in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Related Statutes. Any person or beneficiary who believes they have been discriminated against because of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, or family status may file a complaint with the TPO's Title VI Specialist at (863) 534-6486, or by writing Ms. Julia Davis at Post Office Box 9005, Bartow, Florida 33831-9005. All documents in the TDSP and the TDSP Appendix Packet are available in Alternative Formats upon Request.



Polk County Transportation Disadvantaged Program

DESIGNATED OFFICIAL PLANNING AGENCY (DOPA):

Polk Transportation Planning Organization, (Polk TPO)
ADDRESS: P.O. Box 9005, Drawer TS05
Bartow, FL 33831-9005
CONTACT: Julia B. Davis, AICP, Senior Transportation Planner
PHONE: (863) 534-6529

COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION COORDINATOR (CTC):

Lakeland Area Mass Transit District
"Citrus Connection"
ADDRESS: 1212 George Jenkins Boulevard
Lakeland, FL 33815
CONTACT: Mr. Tom Phillips, Executive Director
PHONE: (863) 686-7433



Polk Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TD LCB):

Chairman – Mayor Pro Tem Nathaniel J. Birdsong Jr.

Accessing Services

Citrus Connection's **Regional Mobility Call Center** is a one-call, one-click center for mobility options. It is located at 1290 Golfview Avenue, 2nd floor, Bartow, FL 33830.

- Passengers may call the Regional Mobility Call Center.
- The local number is (863) 534-5500.
- The toll-free number is 855-POLKBUS (765-5287)

Telephone reservations can be made from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on weekdays.

Saturday scheduling from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Only ADA for next service day trips will be scheduled on Saturdays.

Phone lines are open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. weekdays, and Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Figure 1: -TDSP ADOPTION ROLL CALL VOTE PAGE -

POLK TDSP Minor UPDATE June 2022- ADOPTION ROLL CALL VOTE		
	A Representative of:	Voting Member
1	Chairperson	Mayor Pro Tem Birdsong
A	Dept. of Transportation	Charlene Ross/ <u>Dale Hanson</u>
B	Dept. of Children and Families	Shirley Johnson Coleen Collinsworth
C	Public Education Community	Lisa Miller
D	Div Edu-Voc Rehab	Katie Kummer Zoom
E	Veterans	Joseph Lesniewicz IV
F	Economically disadvantaged	Vacant
G	Elderly	Marcia Staszko
H	Disabled	Lisa Peterson
I-1	Citizen advocate	Diane Durr Zoom
1-2	Citizen advocate/passenger	Sheryl Brown
J	Children at risk	Tiara Dasher
K	Local Mass Transit	Commissioner James H. "JP" Powell Zoom
L	Depart of Elder Affairs	Kevin Gilds
M	Transportation industry	VACANT
N	Agency for Health Care Admin	Emily Hughart
O	Agency for Persons w Disab	Jeannette Estes/ <u>Connie Miller</u>
P	Regional Workforce Dev Board	Stacy Campbell-Domineck
Q	Local medical community	Joy Johnson / Holly Vida

The Polk County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board hereby annual evaluation of the Community Transportation Coordinator was conducted policies of the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged and all recomm evaluation have been incorporated in this Service Plan. We further certify that the herein have been thoroughly reviewed, evaluated and approved. This Transporta Service Plan – Minor Update was reviewed in its entirety and approved by this Bo

Figure 2: Polk TPO's certification of LCB's membership

POLK LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATION –04/15/2022

Name: Polk Transportation Planning Organization Address: Drawer TS05, PO Box 9005, Bartow, FL 33831-9005

The Metropolitan Planning Organization/Designated Official Planning Agency named above hereby certifies to the following:

1. The membership of the Local Coordinating Board, established pursuant to Rule 41-2.012(3) FAC, does include appropriate parties as identified in the following list, and
2. The membership represents, to the maximum extent feasible, a cross section of the local community

Signature: Parag Agrawal Executive Director 04/15/2022

-	A Representative of:	Voting Member	Term Expires	Alternate Member
1	Chairperson	Mayor Pro-Tem Nat Birdsong	Appointed by TPO Board Annually; 2020 - present	No alternate
A	Department of Transportation (FDOT)	Charlene Ross	By office held	Dale Hanson Michelle Peronto
B	Department of Children and Families (DCF)	Shirley Johnson	By office held	Coleen Collinsworth Trina Roberts
C	Public Education Community	Lisa Miller	2/2021-2/2024	VACANT
D	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or Blind Services,	Katie Kummer	By office held	VACANT
E	Representing Veterans	Joseph Lesniewicz IV	By office held	Tim Kirckhart
F	Fla Assoc for Community Action representing the economically disadvantaged in the county	VACANT	-	VACANT
G	Representing elderly in the county;	Marcia Staszko VICE-CHAIRPERSON	2/20-2/23 (2 nd Term)	VACANT
H	Representing the disabled in the county;	Lisa Peterson	04/21-04/24 (2 nd Term)	VACANT
i1	One of Two citizen advocates in the county	Diane Durr, Representing Economically Disadvantaged	12/20-12/23 (1 st Term)	VACANT
i2	One of Two citizen advocates – person who uses the transportation service(s)	Sheryl Brown	10/21-10/24 (3 rd Term)	VACANT
J	A local representative for children at risk	Tiara Dasher	10/21-10/24 (3 rd Term)	VACANT
K	Local Mass Transit or Public Transit System's Board	Commissioner James H. "JP" Powell	By office held 1/8/2018	vacant
L	A local representative of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs	Kevin Gilds	By office held	Kristina Melling

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INTRODUCTION TO THE 2021-22 to 2025-26 MAJOR UPDATE OF THE POLK TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED SERVICE PLAN

In Florida, people who are **Transportation Disadvantaged** are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activities.

The purpose of the **Transportation Disadvantaged Program** is to ensure the availability of coordinated transportation services in a community. Coordination enhances transportation access, minimizes duplication of services, and facilitates the most appropriate, cost-effective transportation possible with available resources. This is done for people who meet the definition of, "Transportation Disadvantaged," and who meet eligibility criteria for transportation services.

This **Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan/Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan** – known collectively as the **Polk TDSP** or the **TDSP** is for the Polk County service area. Completion of a TDSP is a requirement for the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) to receive public transportation funds from federal, state, and local sources. The TDSP is updated annually, and a major update is prepared every five years. This document is the major update for the FY 2021-22 to 2025-26 time period.

How the TDSP is organized:

The TDSP/Coordinated Plan has four required components or elements which include:

- Development plan,
- Service plan,
- Quality assurance component and
- Cost/revenue –rates structure component.

The TDSP also has a very extensive set of Appendices.

The TD program is managed by the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. The TDSP complies with applicable state regulations as well as federal regulations for a **Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan**. The Coordinated Plan is required for funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

Section 5310 “Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program,” among other funding sources. It is also required so that the Community Transportation Coordinator may receive State funds.

The organizational chart contained in **Appendix 1**, “Florida Coordinated Transportation System Organization” identifies all those who are involved in the provision of TD services in Polk County, including the CTD, TPO, TD LCB and CTC. A List of Acronyms is contained in **Appendix 2** and the Glossary of Terms is in **Appendix 3**.

The Polk Coordinated Transportation Disadvantaged program is implemented locally by:

- Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) – Citrus Connection,
- Designated Official Planning Organization -- Polk Transportation Planning Organization (Polk TPO),
- Polk Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (Polk TD LCB).

During the Major Update to the **Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan**, staff from the Polk TPO worked closely with staff from Citrus Connection. A TDSP subcommittee of members of the Polk TD LCB reviewed a draft of the TDSP major update on August 26, 2021, which was continued to September 3, 2021 and supplied helpful comments.

The Draft Proposed TDSP Major Update document became available on September 13, 2021. The Polk TD LCB reviewed the Draft Proposed TDSP Major Update at a regularly scheduled quarterly meeting on September 20, 2021. A thirty-day public comment period opened on September 20, 2021. That comment period complies with the Polk TPO’s Public Participation Plan requirements for the major updates of the TDSP. The proposed final TDSP Major Update was reviewed for adoption at a special meeting of the Polk TD-LCB, held on October 18, 2021.

Summarized structure of the TDSP

As mentioned, above, the TDSP/Coordinated Plan has four required components or elements which include:

- Development plan,
- Service plan,
- Quality assurance component and
- Cost/revenue –rates structure component.

The TDSP also has a very extensive set of Appendices.

For the 2022-23 Minor Update of the TDSP, the entire document was reviewed for changes. The following items were changed by adding or deleting content:

- A global find “Polk County Coordinated System” and replace with, “Coordinated System in Polk.”
- Front part –
 - Cover page, LCB roll call vote and certification pages, table of contents, this section on what has changed, were all updated.
- Development plan – minor edits
 - Tables with data from the Annual Operating Report (AOR) or the Annual Performance Report (APR) were updated.
 - Goals were reviewed, but no changes made.
 - Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) section updated with FY 2022-23 allocations for TD Planning Grant and the Trip Equipment/Voluntary Dollar grants.
- Service plan – minor edits
 - Language to clarify that “eligibility” is also called, “enrollment.”
 - Updated Poverty Table 24
 - Updated Table 25 – list of Coordination Agencies
- Quality assurance component –minor edits
 - Add section on Report of the Evaluation of FY 2020-21
 - Add contact info for Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) Ombudsman Hotline
 - Clarifies that presently, the CTC does not have a local policy on First Aid or CPR rendered on the buses.
- Cost/revenue –rates structure component
 - The Rate Model for 2022-23 was prepared and the costs of bus passes and trips, were updated.
- Appendices – these were updated .
 - Citrus Connection’s Organizational chart
 - Vehicle Inventory
 - System Safety Performance Plan certification
 - The Rate Model for 2022-23
 - The TD Application changed. We provide both of these.

TDSP PART ONE: DEVELOPMENT PLAN COMPONENT

TDSP PART ONE – DEVELOPMENT PLAN COMPONENT

Background of the Transportation Disadvantaged Program

In 1989, the Florida State Legislature established the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) to fund and oversee the expansion of transportation services for the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD). The CTD is sometimes called the TD Commission. The legislation also established a Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund (TDTF), funded from vehicle registration fees and gasoline sales taxes.

Definition of Transportation Disadvantaged

According to the Florida Statutes (F.S.), Chapter 427: “Transportation Disadvantaged’ means those persons who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activities, or children who are handicapped or high-risk or at-risk as defined in s.411.202.”

It is important to note that a person must not only be disabled, or low income, or elderly, or a child at risk, but they must also be either unable to transport themselves, or, unable to purchase their own transportation. They must make an application for transportation services, and meet eligibility requirements. (See pages 69 -74 for information on **Eligibility Requirements**. This includes the **Prioritization Policy** on page 73 and the **Florida Food Stamps Income Limit (Poverty) Table 24** on page 72.)

The CTD administers and distributes these funds to each established service area within the entire state through Community Transportation Coordinators (CTC) according to an established formula, requiring a 10 percent local match. The CTD is responsible for establishing the distribution formula. Funds have been distributed to every service area’s CTC each year since 1990.

To assist with their local planning efforts, the CTD appoints a Designated Official Planning Agency (DOPA) for each service area to: staff the local coordinating board, appoint Local Coordinating Board (LCB) members, recommend the designation of the service area’s CTC, and assist the CTC in the development of the TDSP. The Polk Transportation Planning Organization, (TPO) has been the DOPA for Polk County since 1990.

To maintain its presence on a local level, the CTD has established Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Boards (TD LCBs) for each county that: advise the CTD directly on local TD issues, oversee the responsibilities of their local CTC, review all existing and proposed TD programs, and recommend the use of funds received from the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund, TDTF.

The Florida coordinated transportation program serves as an on-going example to the rest of the country on coordinating local, state, and federal resources to provide the most transportation possible, to the most people possible.

What is Coordination?

In Florida, the **Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC)** is an entity recommended by a designated official planning agency to ensure that coordinated transportation services are provided to the transportation disadvantaged population in a designated service area. The CTC carries out coordination. The role of the CTC is to coordinate cost-effective, efficient, unduplicated, and un-fragmented TD services within its service area.

The CTC can be a government organization, a for-profit company, or a private non-profit organization. The Florida Coordinated system was set up so that a single entity in each County – the Coordinator, is responsible for receiving all the Federal, State, Local funds to transport people who meet the eligibility requirements for the various funding streams.

In 2020-21, those funding streams included:

Table 1- Polk coordinated trips by funding source	2021 ARR trips	%
The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD)	106,374	31.37%
Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)	738	0.22%
Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)	10,176	3.00%
Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA)	29,221	8.62%
Department of Education	10,822	3.19%
Other sources of funds	181,731	53.60%
TOTAL TRIPS	339,062	100%

Source: Polk Annual Performance Report, 2021

The designated CTC in Polk County is the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD). LAMTD is a Special Taxing District and receives funding support from many sources including the Polk County Board of County Commissioners (BoCC), but it is a continuous challenge to maximize resources for TD trips.

The Coordinator is responsible for **conducting the eligibility verifications** for the various funding streams, and for **arranging trips** for the people who are eligible for them. The Coordinator may provide all of the trips itself ("sole source,") or, provide any number of the trips through a competitive procurement process ("partial brokerage,") or, subcontract out all of the trips, as in a "complete brokerage."

Designation Date/History of the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC)

Chapter 427, *Florida Statutes* requires that every five years the Polk Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TD LCB) and the Polk TPO recommend a single entity known as the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC,) to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD,) to manage the countywide TD program. The purpose of the Transportation Disadvantaged Program is to ensure the availability of efficient, cost-effective, and quality transportation services for TD persons.

The role of the CTC is to coordinate cost-effective, efficient, unduplicated, and unfragmented TD services within its service area.

The Polk Transportation Planning Organization conducted a regular process to redesignate a government entity to be the Community Transportation Coordinator from late 2020 to March 2021. The Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD) / Citrus Connection became the designated Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for the Polk County service area effective July 1, 2021, by entering into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged.

LAMTD's previous designation as the Polk CTC ran from April 1, 2016, through June 30, 2021.

CTC Organizational Chart

Appendix 4 contains the organizational chart for the Polk Community Transportation Coordinator current as of March 2022.

Consolidation of Three Systems

The Polk County service area was historically composed of three transportation service providers: LAMTD, WHAT, and Polk County.

- Polk County first implemented public transportation services in 1975 to provide transportation to the Polk General Hospital in Bartow, for residents who were unable to obtain transportation to the facility. In 2000, the Board of County Commissioners approved the transformation of the system to provide public transportation to underserved areas of Polk County.

In the early 1980's, Polk County Transit Service (PCTS) became involved in the coordinated transportation disadvantaged services program. In the 1990's, PCTS became the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for the County. Then, effective April 1, 2016, LAMTD became the official CTC.

- The Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD) was created in 1980 by County Ordinance and approved by public referendum with the purpose of providing transit services in the Lakeland, Florida urbanized area. Services began in 1982. LAMTD is an independent transit authority which has been expanded to serve multiple communities over the past few years based on several successful referendums in those areas. LAMTD's fixed routes serve portions of the City of Lakeland, with connections to Auburndale and Bartow, Winter Haven, Haines City, and to SunRail.
- Winter Haven Area Transit (WHAT) was established in 1997 through an Interlocal agreement between the City of Winter Haven and the Polk County Board of County Commissioners.

In 2015, LAMTD became the designated recipient for fixed route funding as recognized by the Federal Transit Administration for the Lakeland urbanized area and for the Winter Haven urbanized area.

Consistency Review of Other Plans

The Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan is consistent, to the maximum extent feasible, with many approved plans and documents and planning efforts in Polk County. The Polk TPO reviewed pertinent portions of the following plans and this Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan is consistent with the referenced plans.

- Polk Transportation Planning Organization “Momentum 2045” (Long Range Transportation Plan)
- Polk Consolidated Transit Development Plan (TDP) – “My Ride” (JULIA)
- Polk County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Unified Planning Work Program

Long Range Plan Update for 2045 – Momentum 2045

In 2020, the Polk Transportation Planning Organization updated the “Momentum 2040” (Long Range Transportation Plan), to the year 2045 planning horizon. This is called, “Momentum 2045.” The Transit Element was updated, as part of this effort. The Polk TPO regularly conducts transit studies that assist in identifying transportation barriers and issues for the transportation disadvantaged population. Some of these studies include:

- Neighborhood Mobility Audits (Case studies in underserved areas to identify connectivity and gaps in mobility infrastructure)
- Complete Streets Corridor Feasibility Study
- Evaluation of Sidewalk Coverage for Connectivity
- Roadway Safety Audits

“My Ride” Polk Transit Development Plan (2017) Citrus Connection is the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC), and it is also the recipient of Florida’s State Transit Block Grant funds, so, it is obliged to have a Transit Development Plan. The TDP Annual Update for 2021 was adopted by LAMTD on August 18, 2021.

The 2022-23 to 2031-32 TDP Major Update is being scoped at this time, for a major update effort which is scheduled to begin in October 2021- to August 2022. Material from the LRTP 2045 and the TDSP Major Update, will be rolled into the Major Update of the TDP.

The 2022-23 to 2031-32 TDP Major Update is being prepared at this time, and is scheduled to be completed by the end of October 2022. Material from the TDP, will be rolled into the TDSP when the TDP is completed.

Unified Planning Work Program

In the Polk TPO’s two-year Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), upcoming transit studies will build upon previously completed ones. Additional studies will include the following:

- Bicycle/Pedestrian Outreach and Safety Education Program
- Major Update to the Transit Development Plan (2021-2022 activity)

Transportation Improvement Program-Annual Element

The FY 2022-2023 allocations from the TD Trust Fund (TDTF) are as follows:

- Trip-Equipment Grant, and Voluntary Dollars

TEG Allocation	Local Match	Total Funding	TOTAL ALLOCATION
\$1,276,371	\$141,819	\$1,418,190	
Voluntary Dollars	Local Match	Total funding	
\$280	\$31	\$311	\$1,418,501

- TD Planning Grant, \$ 34,817.00.

In order to meet federal requirements, the Polk Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) must adopt and maintain a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) document annually. The TIP is an extensive document which lists all the transportation projects which are planned in Polk County for the next five fiscal years. Projects included in the TIP are derived from FDOT's Five Year Work Program and local government Capital Improvement Programs (CIP). The TIP is an implementation tool for how state and federal funds will be spent on transportation projects in Polk County. The TIP contains sections on projects in the following categories:

- Highways
- Turnpike
- Transportation Planning
- Maintenance
- Aviation
- Rail
- Transit
- Transportation Disadvantaged
- Florida Rail Enterprise
- Miscellaneous projects.

The TIP is a budgetary document. Projects included in the TIP must be listed accurately to include the proper funding source, amount, a precise description of the project, the year programmed, and correct project limits.

Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plans

Federal transit law [United States Code, 49 Federal Regulations] requires that projects selected for funding under the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Enhanced Mobility for Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310) Program be "included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan," and that the plan be "developed and approved through a process that includes participation by seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of public, private, and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and other members of the public" utilizing transportation services. These coordinated plans identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes, provide strategies for meeting these needs, and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation.

"The human services transportation coordination [plan] provisions aim to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with lower incomes by ensuring that communities coordinate transportation resources provided through multiple federal programs. Coordination will enhance transportation access, minimize duplication of services, and facilitate the most appropriate cost-effective transportation possible with available resources."

Thus, the TDSP serves to satisfy the requirements of both the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged, and of the Federal Transit Administration.

Polk Vision

Polk Vision has taken an active role in seeking coordinated transportation solutions, recognizing that it is a quality-of-life issue for the residents of Polk County.

According to the Polk Vision website,

"Polk Vision is the leading collective impact organization serving the entire Polk County community. We provide central coordination to align the work of hundreds of dedicated volunteers through partnerships of public, private and civic organizations working collectively to make the shared vision of improved community prosperity for Polk County a reality! Polk Vision actively facilitates a process through which Polk County realizes its aspirations and full potential. Polk Vision identifies and builds awareness of community partnerships and encourages accountability."

Public Participation

The Polk TPO conducts meetings and activities of the Polk Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TD LCB) according to rules and regulations regarding open meetings in Florida. The LCB conducts an annual Public Workshop, and there is an agenda item for public comment at every meeting of the Polk TD LCB.

Meetings are advertised in the legal section of *The Ledger*. This is the newspaper of record for the Polk County area.

Additional methods the TPO uses to communicate with the public include:

1. Asking Citrus Connection to share information on its busses, at major bus stops and transfer centers, and, on its website: <https://ridecitrus.com/>
2. Email notifications to members and “interested parties,” of the Polk Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board.
 - a. Tag-lines about the Voluntary Dollar and other important information, in email signature blocks.
3. Notices placed on the Polk TPO’s website: <https://polktpo.com/>
4. Announcements sent out to the Polk TPO’s “Transportation Advisor Network”
5. A monthly newsletter distributed electronically.
6. Announcements placed on social media outlets including:



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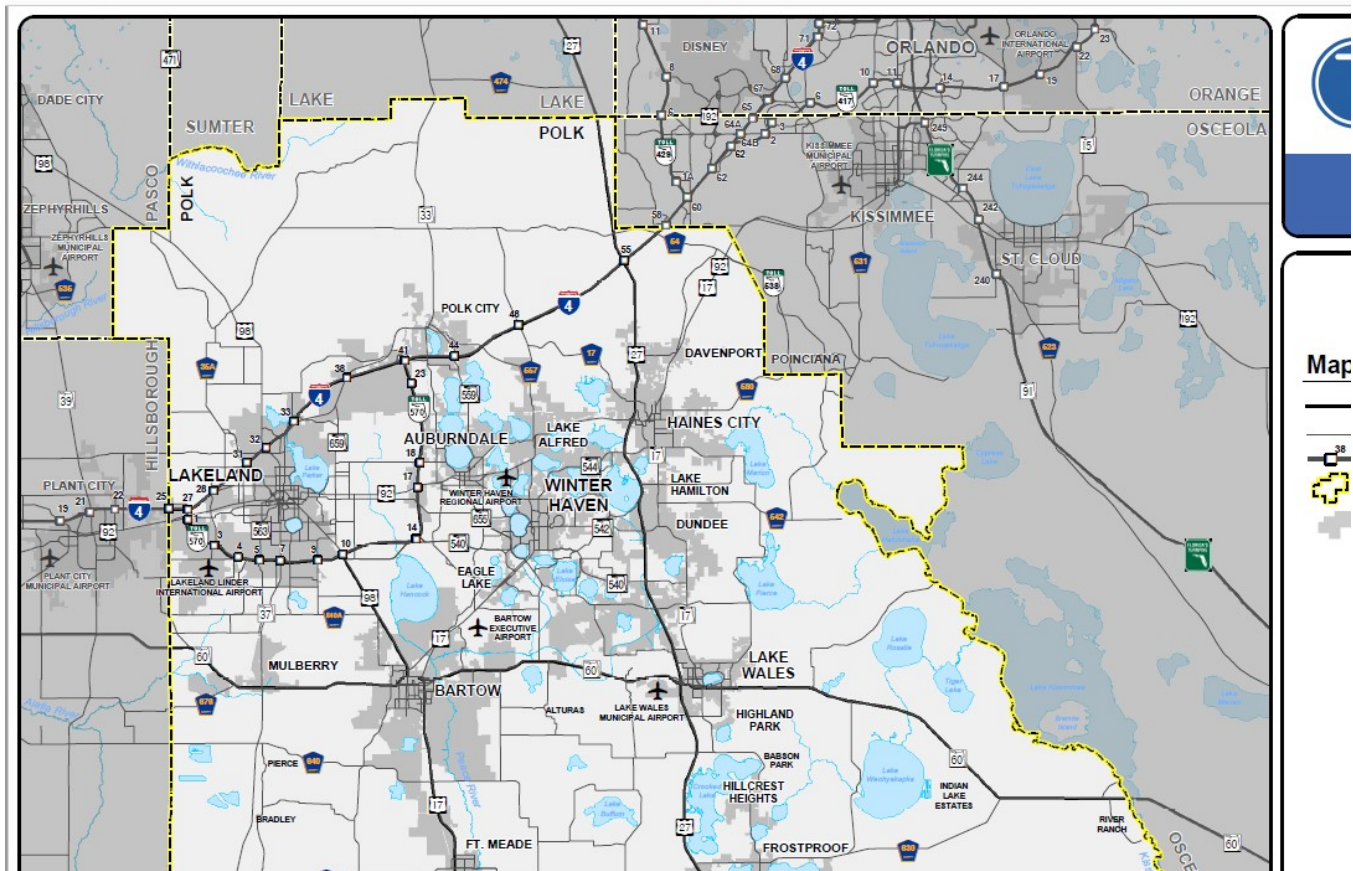
From mid-March 2020 to present, the contagious and deadly Novel Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), as well as its variants has impacted the Polk TPO’s ability to interact with the public and seek their input. To accommodate for this, the TPO has implemented more creative mechanisms for public engagement and to offer greater flexibility when face-to-face interaction may be limited. This includes the use of internet-based services like social media platforms, and content on the TPO’s website. People may access the social media platforms using the ‘app,’ – over the internet, or they may use special phone numbers and call into the meeting. Some meetings are conducted in a “hybrid” format where some of the participants are gathered in person in a meeting room, and other participants access the same meeting through the internet/their telephone.

For meetings which take place in person, various accommodations are made to reduce the spread of the virus. Meetings can be conducted in larger rooms to allow for adequate space between participants. This is called “social distancing,” which means to limit the space between people to 6 feet, in order to reduce the chances of spreading or catching the virus; sanitizing tables and other surfaces which people might touch, to reduce the spread of the virus, and providing masks for people to use.

As of December 2020, in order to conduct a meeting of the Polk TD – Local Coordinating Board, a quorum of members must be physically in the meeting room. Any LCB voting members who decide to participate via Zoom or other platform, are allowed to participate in the discussion, and they may vote. However, only the votes made by the members in the meeting room will count towards any action.

SERVICE AREA PROFILE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Map 1_ - Polk County Base Map



Land and Land Use

Polk County is located in the center of Florida, 35 miles west of Orlando and 25 miles east of Tampa. It is bordered on the north by Lake and Sumter counties, on the east by Osceola County, on the south by Hardee and Highland counties, and on the west by Hillsborough and Pasco counties.

Polk County is large – larger than the State of Rhode Island. According to the U.S. Census, the county has a total area of 2,011 square miles of which 1,798 square miles is land and 213 square miles (10.6%) is water. It is the fourth-largest county in Florida by land area and fifth-largest by total area. Providing coordinated transportation is challenging to the Polk Community Transportation Coordinator because of the large land area and the numerous lakes and other water bodies, and uneven and generally concentrated locations of medical/social services and employment opportunities.

DEMOGRAPHICS

As was mentioned previously, according to Chapter 427, *Florida Statutes (F.S.)*,

“Transportation Disadvantaged” means those persons who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activities, or children who are handicapped or high-risk or at-risk as defined in s.411.202.”

In this Component of the TDSP, we provide information on the following demographics:

- Number of people living in Florida and Polk County.
- Where people live:
 - Municipalities
 - Urban versus Rural
- Number of people who are considered “Transit-dependent,” which is people under the age of 18, and people aged 65 and older.
- Number of people who are in the groups which are in the definition of Transportation Disadvantaged: Disabled, Below Poverty (Low-income), Elderly, Children at risk.
- Number of Minorities / Environmental Justice / Limited English Proficiency

Data Sources:

The TPO utilized several sources of data to develop this Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP). This is a list of the primary sources of data.

US Census Data (and American Community Survey products)

The US Census was conducted in the Spring of 2020. The Polk TPO will utilize new data for the TDSP, when it becomes available.

Bureau of Economic Business Research, "BEBR"

The TPO also utilizes Bureau of Economic Business Research, "BEBR" for data. BEBR extrapolates population for the years 2025-2045. BEBR then provides "Low", "Medium", and "High" estimates. TPO staff used an average of "Medium and High" population data, to be consistent with the methodology recently used by the TPO in producing its 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan.

"CTD/CUTR TRAVEL DEMAND FORECAST ESTIMATING WORKSHEETS"

In the course of this TDSP MAJOR UPDATE, the TPO fully updated the "CTD/CUTR Travel Demand Forecast Estimating Worksheets." We are excerpting applicable tables in this section of the TDSP and are providing that information throughout this section. For more information about the "CTD/CUTR Travel Demand Forecast Estimating Worksheets" see the "Forecasts of the Transportation Disadvantaged Population" section, (page 51). All the worksheets are provided in **Appendix 5**.

Table 2- BASE YEAR LOOK UP TABLE

Since several data sources were used, there are several base years of population being used in this section of the TDSP.

Source	Polk County Population	Tables
"US Census Bureau Quick Facts about Polk County, 2019."	724,777	3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16
BEBR, 2019 tables (for 2020). April 1, 2020, Estimate from BEBR.	715,090	5, 6
"CTD/CUTR Travel Demand Forecast Estimating Worksheets" (2019)	709,779	7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 20, 21, 22, 23
Polk Annual Performance Report (APR) 2020	642,548 trips	1, 15, 19

Population

According to the U.S. Census, the total population for Polk County was 602,095 in 2010. The 2019 estimate is 724,777, an increase of 20.38%. This is a 2.26% annual growth rate over the nine-year period. **Table 3** shows the population characteristics of Polk County and Florida from 2010-2019. **Table 4** compares population growth from 2018 to 2019 for Polk County and for Florida.

Polk County is gradually becoming more populated, which puts a continued demand on services, and, denser, which contributes to a more efficient transit operating environment.

Table 3. Population Characteristics of Polk County and Florida from 2010-2019.

Population Data	2010		2019		% Change (2010-2019)	
	Polk County	Florida	Polk County	Florida	Polk County	Florida
Persons	602,095	18,801,310	724,777	21,477,737	20.38%	14.24%
Households	227,485	7,420,802	231,260	7,621,760	1.66%	2.71%
Persons per Household	2.65	2.53	2.84	2.65	7.17%	4.74%
Land area (square miles)	1,798	53,624.76	1,798	53,624.76	n/a	n/a
Persons per Sq. Mile of Land Area (Density)	335	350	403	400	20.38%	14.24

Source: "US Census Bureau Quick Facts about Polk County, 2019."

Table 4. Population Characteristics of Polk County and Florida from 2018-2019.

Population Data	2018		2019		% Change (2018-2019)	
	Polk County	Florida	Polk County	Florida	Polk County	Florida
Persons	708,009	21,299,325	724,777	21,477,737	2.37%	0.84%
Households	226,604	7,510,882	231,260	7,621,760	2.05%	1.48%
Persons per Household	2.82	2.64	2.84	2.65	0.71%	0.38%
Land area (square miles)	1,798	53,624.76	1,798	53,624.76	n/a	n/a
Persons per Sq. Mile of Land Area (Density)	393.77	397.19	403	400	2.36%	0.84%

Source: "US Census Bureau Quick Facts about Polk County, 2019."

Urban and Rural Areas

For reporting purposes, the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged counts the Polk County service area as “Urban.” This is because it has at least one urbanized area (UZA) in it. However, Polk County is very large, and most of the land lies in unincorporated Polk County, and so do most of the people.

The Urban/Rural distinction is important since urban areas usually have ‘fixed route’ public transit service, so, people who live in urban areas have more transportation options available to them. Rural areas may have some type of public transportation available, but not as much as Urban areas.

The Urban/Rural boundaries also matter because the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) allocates funding to operate transit systems and to purchase buses and other capital equipment, based upon the number of people living in urban areas (UZAs) and Rural areas. **Table 5** shows the Incorporated (Urban) / Unincorporated (Rural) distribution of population in the cities, towns and unincorporated areas of Polk County from 2000-2010-2020. There is tremendous growth of the population in the urbanized areas (and in fact, the urbanized areas are getting bigger.)

Table 5. Population Trends for Cities, Towns, and Unincorporated Areas, (Incorporated areas versus unincorporated areas) 1990-2020

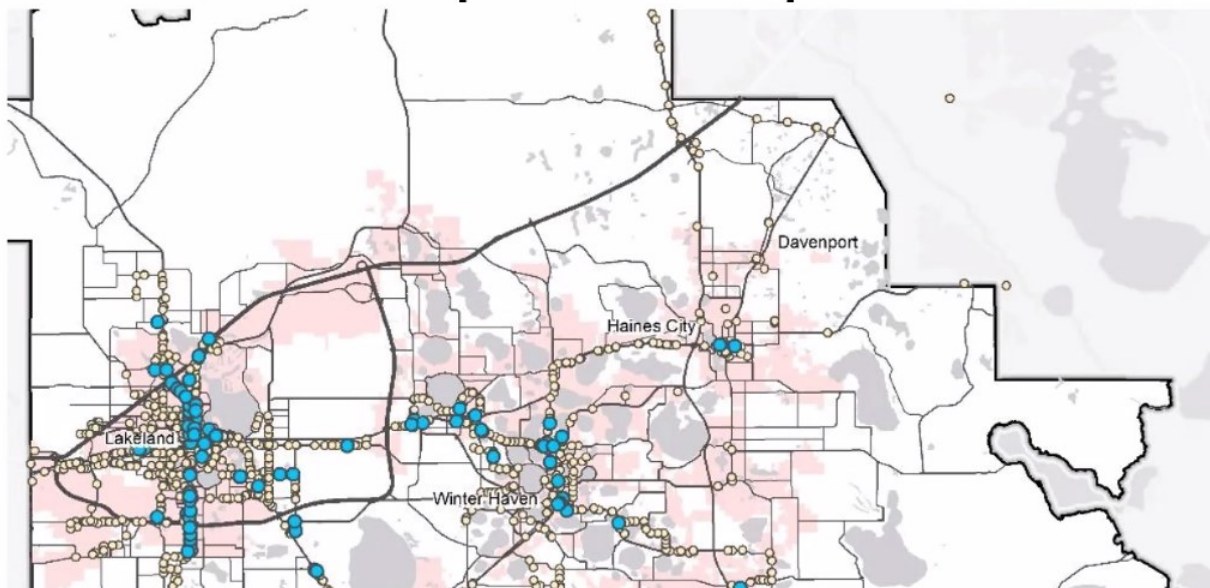
Municipality	2000	2010	April 1 2020 Estimate	% Change (2000-2010)	% Change (2000-2020)
Incorporated (Urban area)	181,127	226,520	277,373	25.1%	53.13%
Unincorporated (Rural area)	302,797	376,385	437,717	24.3%	44.56%
Total	483,924	602,095	715,090	24.6%	47.76%
Percent Incorporated (Urban)	37.43%	37.57%	38.79%		
Percent Unincorporated (Rural)	62.57%	62.43%	61.21%		

Note: April 1, 2020, Estimate from BEBR.

[https://www.bebrr.ufl.edu/sites/default/files/Research%20Reports/estimates_2020_0.pdf]

Figure 3: "Location of Top 100 Stops" – shows the general location of the most active bus stops in Polk County along the general public fixed routes operated by Citrus Connection.

Location of Top 100 Stops



Source: Polk TPO's "East Polk Transit Studies, June 2021" based on FY 2019-20 ridership data from Citrus Connection.

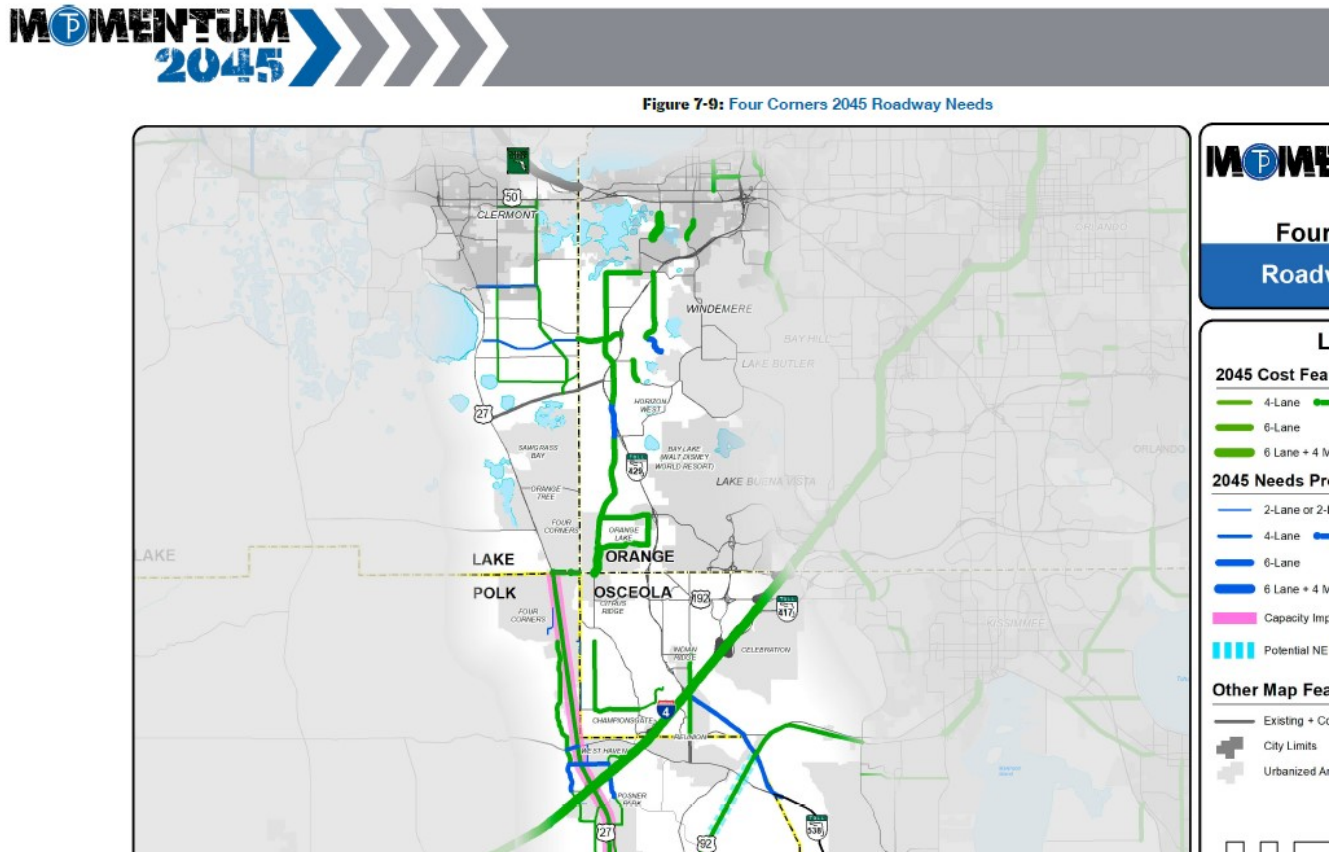
This map is provided to give the reader an idea of the location of Lakeland and Winter Haven and Bartow to each other, and the general idea of where the Citrus Connection bus routes go.

LAKELAND UZA and WINTER HAVEN UZA

The Polk TPO and Citrus Connection planners are waiting for the results of the US Census 2020, since changes in population, have an impact on federal transit funding. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) distributes funds to urbanized areas (UZA) according to formulas. Right now, the Lakeland UZA is a separate one from the Winter Haven UZA. LAMTD manages both through Citrus Connection. We will update the TDSP when the US Census 2020 data become available.

FOUR CORNERS

Figure 4: "Map of the "Four Corners" area of Florida."



This figure is a map from the Polk TPO's "Momentum 2045". It shows projects in that plan. It is included in the Polk TDSP to give the reader an idea of the location of Polk County in relation to three other counties: Lake, Orange, and Osceola. This region is known as "Four Corners." Each of these counties is experiencing high growth, due to their proximity to Orlando and all the attractions there. The growth of residential developments has an enormous demand upon the transportation system, and also upon the transit and paratransit systems of these counties.

Figure 5: Aerial Photo of school in Four Corners area, and adjacent development



Caption: Looking south -- Bella Cita Elementary School and surrounding multi-family and single family residential and commercial development, August 2021 photo. Bella Cita is located in the Polk County portion of the Four Corners area. [Photo credit: Polk TPO.]

Municipalities

There are 17 incorporated municipalities in Polk County. **Table 6** presents population trends from 2010 to 2020 for incorporated and unincorporated areas in Polk County. Cities with a population of more than 10,000 in 2020 included Lakeland, Winter Haven, Bartow, Haines City, Lake Wales, and Auburndale. The municipalities with the greatest population changes were Davenport, (153.56%), Polk City (59.41%) and Winter Haven (38.87%). While the Unincorporated (Rural) population is greater than the Incorporated (Urban) population, from 2010 to 2020, the population growth rate of incorporated municipalities (22.47%) – 2.24% per year-- exhibited a faster increase than the population growth rate of the unincorporated area (16.53%) --1.65% per year.

Table 6. Estimates of Population by County and City in Florida, 2020 (Polk)

Municipality	April 1 2010 Census	April 1 2020 Estimate	Number changed (2010-2020)	% Change (2010-2020)
Polk County	602,095	715,090	112,995	18.76%
Auburndale	13,507	17,120	3,613	26.74%
Bartow	17,298	20,757	3,459	19.99%
Davenport	2,888	7,323	4,435	153.56%
Dundee	3,717	5,159	1,442	38.79%
Eagle Lake	2,255	2,785	530	23.50%
Fort Meade	5,626	5,833	207	3.67%
Frostproof	2,992	3,454	462	15.44%
Haines City	20,535	27,268	6,708	32.62%
Highland Park	230	266	36	15.65%
Hillcrest Heights	254	243	-11	-4.5%
Lake Alfred	5,105	6,351	1,336	26.64%
Lake Hamilton	1,213	1,556	325	26.40%
Lakeland	97,422	109,238	11,816	12.12%
Lake Wales	14,225	16,386	16,386	15.19%
Mulberry	3,817	4,100	283	7.41%
Polk City	1,562	2,490	928	59.41%
Winter Haven	33,874	47,044	13,170	38.87%
Incorporated	226,473	277,373	50,900	22.47%
Unincorporated	376,385	375,622	62,095	16.53%

Note: from BEBR April 2020 estimates.

[https://www.bibr.ufl.edu/sites/default/files/Research%20Reports/estimates_2020_0.pdf]

Demographics of People Who Are Transportation Disadvantaged

“...PEOPLE WHO ARE TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED –TD-- (DISABLED, ELDERLY/CHILDREN AT RISK, PEOPLE WITH LOW INCOMES) ARE UNABLE TO TRANSPORT THEMSELVES OR TO PURCHASE THEIR OWN TRANSPORTATION...”

Table 7, below, provides a breakdown of all the different permutations of the demographics and the definition of Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) by age groups: the total population by age; the population below the US Poverty levels (i.e., ‘low income,'); the population with a disability; and the total population who are disabled/below the poverty level/by age.

Table 7. Age, Poverty, Disabilities Distribution of Polk, 2019

County Population By Age	Total Pop by Age	Population Below Poverty Level by Age	Total Population with a Disability by Age	Total Pop with Disability and Below Poverty Level by Age
< 5 Years of Age	39,743	11,680	122	65
5-17	115,568	21,288	9,497	2,400
18-34	151,338	23,558	10,601	2,199
35-64	256,306	28,931	37,883	7,116
Total Non-Elderly	562,955	85,457	58,103	11,780
65-74	82,796	8,703	19,245	2,832
75+	64,028	5,184	28,284	2,895
Total Elderly	146,824	13,887	47,529	5,727
Total	709,779	99,344	105,632	17,507

Sources: “CTD/CUTR TRAVEL DEMAND FORECAST ESTIMATING WORKSHEETS”. Polk TPO used Table ACSDT1Y2019.B18130.2021-08-06 T174705 from the US Census to obtain the 2019 year data on Polk County population “with or without disabilities; with or without low-income; and, by age. The base year is 2019 and the total county population = 709,779. These are the most current data available in August 2021.

AGE - Some data sets define the Elderly as over the age of 65. The Florida Department of Elder Affairs defines the Elderly as over the age of 60. Citrus Connection defines elderly as 65 for eligibility purposes. This is consistent with Federal Transit Administration grant definitions.

Table 7 provides the number of people living in Polk County, as well as the percentages of the total. There were 562,955 people (79.31%) who are “non-elderly” and, 146,824 people (20.68%) who are elderly. The Transportation Disadvantaged definition counts all people who are Elderly, as potentially eligible for transportation services, depending upon their circumstances¹. Thus, 146,824 people (20.68% of the total County population) are elderly. The Transportation Disadvantaged definition also counts “children who are handicapped² or high-risk or at-risk as defined in s.411.202” as potentially eligible for transportation services, depending upon their circumstances. These definitions apply to pre-school children who are age 5 years or under. Chapter 411. Florida Statutes is provided in **Appendix 6**. Thus, potentially 39,743 children (5.59% of the total County population) are “at risk.” **Table 7. Age Distribution of Polk, 2019**

County Population By Age	Total Pop by Age	% Of TOTAL POPULATION	Number of population who could be TD based upon their age	Percent of population who could be TD, based upon their age
< 5 Years of Age	39,743	5.59%	39,743	
5-17	115,568	16.28%		
18-34	151,338	21.32%		
35-64	256,306	36.11%		
Total Non Elderly	562,955	79.31%	39,743	21.30%
65-74	82,796	11.66%	82,796	
75+	64,028	9.02%	64,028	
Total Elderly	146,824	20.68%	146,824	78.69%
Total	709,779	100.00%	186,567	100.00%
			26.28%	

Sources: “CTD/CUTR Travel Demand Forecast Estimating Worksheets” ; Polk TPO, August 2021.

¹ “...depending upon their circumstances...” – people who want to use the Transportation Disadvantaged program funds to provide their transportation must meet eligibility criteria. These are explained in more detail, elsewhere in the TDSP.

² The definition uses the word ‘handicapped,’ although that term has been updated to ‘disabled,’

TRANSIT DEPENDENT/NOT TRANSIT DEPENDENT

Those two groups – Elderly, and pre-school aged children total 186,567 people, or, 26.28% of the total Polk population.

The transit-dependent population are persons aged 17 years and under, and persons aged 65 years old and over.

People under the age of 18 are generally assumed to be dependent upon other people for their transportation since they are too young to drive, or do not yet have their own vehicle. (According to a FDOT presentation on 9/02/2021: “in the United States, 61% of 16-19 year-olds in 2018 had driver’s licenses compared with 87% in 1983.”)

People aged 65 and over, are also considered to be transit-dependent since many people in this age range either no longer drive, or no longer have money to maintain their own vehicle.

Table 9 illustrates that approximately 302,135 people in Polk County (42.56% of the 2019 population) are considered Transit Dependent. Some of these people could utilize the fixed-route transit system, if they live close enough to the routes.

Table 9. Age Distribution of Polk, 2019 (Transit Dependent)

County Population By Age	Total Pop by Age	Transit Dependent	Percent of Population who are Transit Dependent
< 5 Years of Age	39,743	39,743	
5-17	115,568	115,568	
18-34	151,338	0	
35-64	256,306	0	
Total Non Elderly	562,955	155,311	
65-74	82,796	82,796	
75+	64,028	64,028	
Total Elderly	146,824	146,824	
Total	709,779	302,135	42.56%

Sources: “CTD/CUTR Travel Demand Forecast Estimating Worksheets” and Polk TPO, August 2021.

Additional Demographic Data – Older Floridians

The report, “Profile of Older Floridians” containing additional data on demographics of Older Floridians is located in **Appendix 7**.

PEOPLE WHO ARE LOW-INCOME – BELOW THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVELS.

Economically Disadvantaged – The provision of transportation services for those individuals that are low income and consequently cannot afford adequate transportation is one of the stated goals of the TD program. Low income is defined as at or below the Federal Poverty Level. There are two slightly different versions of the federal poverty measure: the poverty thresholds, and the poverty guidelines.

The **poverty thresholds** are the original version of the federal poverty measure. They are updated each year by the Census Bureau. The thresholds are used mainly for statistical purposes – for instance, preparing estimates of the number of Americans in poverty each year. (In other words, all official poverty population figures are calculated using the poverty thresholds, not the guidelines.)

The **poverty guidelines** are the other version of the federal poverty measure. They are issued each year in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services. The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use for administrative purposes – for instance, determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs. Poverty guidelines are designated by the year in which they are issued.

Table 10 shows the number of people below the Federal Poverty Levels by the various age groups. In this table, we calculated the percent of the population living below the Poverty Level against the population by age groups. For example, a total of 99,344 people are living below the poverty level in Polk County. That’s 13.99% of the total population. Of the children 5 and younger, 29.38% of the total number of children in that age group (39,743) are living below the poverty levels. And of all the people living in poverty, 11,680 or 11.75% children are below poverty.

Table 10 Poverty Distribution of Polk, 2019

County Population By Age	Total Pop by Age	Population Below Poverty Level by Age	% of population Below Poverty Level, By Age.	% of number of people living Below Poverty Level by Age.
< 5 Years of Age	39,743	11,680	29.38%	11.75%
5-17	115,568	21,288	18.42%	21.48%
18-34	151,338	23,558	15.56%	23.71%
35-64	256,306	28,931	11.28%	29.12%
Total Non Elderly	562,955	85,457		86.02%
65-74	82,796	8,703	10.81%	8.76%
75+	64,028	5,184	8.09%	5.21%
Total Elderly	146,824	13,887	-	13.97%
Total	709,779	99,344	13.99%	99.99%

Sources: "CTD/CUTR Travel Demand Forecast Estimating Worksheets" and Polk TPO, August 2021.

Standard of Living – Income and Poverty Level

The most current data show that the Polk County per capita income in past twelve months (2019 dollars for 2015-2019) was \$24,864 for Polk County. The Median household income for this same period was \$50,584.

Table 11. Standard of Living, Polk , 2019.

Standard of Living	2019
	Polk County
Polk County per capita-income in past twelve months (2019 dollars)	\$24,864
Median household income	\$50,584

Source: "US Census Bureau Quick Facts about Polk County, 2019".

The Community Transportation Coordinator uses more current poverty information as part of the eligibility criteria for transportation services. (See Table 24 on PAGE 70 in the SERVICE PLAN COMPONENT of the TDSP)

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

People who have mental or physical disabilities are potentially eligible for trips through the Transportation Disadvantaged program, as long as they meet the other eligibility requirements.

Table 12 shows the number of people with disabilities by the various age groups. In this table, we calculated the percent of the population with a disability by age groups. For example, according to the US Census, a total of 105,632 people are considered disabled in Polk County. That's 14.88% of the total population. Of the children 5 and younger, 0.30% of the total number of children in that age group (39,743) are people with a disability. And of all the people with a disability, 122 or 0.11% are children 5 years old and younger.

Table 12. Age, Disabilities Distribution of Polk, 2019

County Population By Age	Total Pop by Age	Total Population with a Disability by Age	% of population with a disability, By Age	% of number of people with a disability by Age
< 5 Years of Age	39,743	122	0.30%	.11%
5-17	115,568	9,497	8.21%	8.99%
18-34	151,338	10,601	7.00%	10.03%
35-64	256,306	37,883	14.78%	35.86%
Total Non Elderly	562,955	58,103	10.32%	55.00%
65-74	82,796	19,245	23.24%	18.21%
75+	64,028	28,284	44.17%	26.78%
Total Elderly	146,824	47,529	32.37%	45.00%
Total	709,779	105,632	14.88%	100.00%

Sources: "CTD/CUTR Travel Demand Forecast Estimating Worksheets." Polk TPO, August 2021.

People under age 65 with Disabilities

People under the age of 65 with disabilities rely upon the Transportation Disadvantaged Program for their transportation to life sustaining services. The data in Table 11 indicate that 58,103 people in Polk County -- fully 55.00% of the people with disabilities in Polk County, are under the age of 65.

Minorities

When compared to Florida, Polk County's minority and non-minority populations are a little higher than the state averages. Based upon 2019 data, **Table 13**, shows that Polk County's minority population is 21.20 percent. This information is provided since historically, people who are minorities also tend to be lower-income than non-minorities, and sometimes also have less access to transportation.

Table 13. Race and Hispanic Origin, 2019

Race and Hispanic Origin	Polk County, 2019
White alone, percent	78.80%
Black or African American alone, percent	16.20%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent	0.70%
Asian alone, percent	1.90%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent	0.10%
Two or More Races, percent	2.30%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	24.60%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	56.90%

Sources: "US Census Bureau Quick Facts about Polk County, 2019"

NEIGHBORHOOD MOBILITY AUDITS

In 2016, the Polk TPO conducted Neighborhood Mobility Audits, targeting the underserved areas of the county. Using specific criteria to measure a neighborhood's access to public transit, schools, medical services, shopping, etc., **connectivity barriers** were identified such as lack of sidewalks, public transportation, bicycle paths, and safety issues such as lighting. The outcome of these studies were presented to the local government jurisdictions in order to coordinate the implementation of improvements in these areas when funding becomes available. These Neighborhood Mobility Audits were updated in 2020, in preparation for the TPO's update to the Long Range Transportation Plan (2045). To view these studies, please go to www.polktpo.com.

The map in Figure 6, below, shows the Mobility Audit Locations.



NEIGHBORHOOD MOBILITY AUDITS 2020 UPDATE

The first round of mobility audits were developed initially in 2014 in support of the 2040 LRTP. The 2020 update showcases changes since that time and provides a more accurate picture of the EJ neighborhoods. As part of Momentum 2045, the TPO updated the mobility scores for the previously identified Environmental Justice (EJ) Planning Areas which include areas of low-income and minority populations.

Fourteen EJ areas were identified for Neighborhood Mobility Audits and are mapped in Figure 5-7. These mobility audits evaluate resident access to jobs and essential services within these neighborhoods. Low-income households are two to three times more likely to use public transportation or other alternative modes of transportation, the focus of the mobility audits is on non-motorized (bicycle and pedestrian) travel.

The 2020 update looked at the same areas and provided new figures for Measures of Mobility, population characteristics, and a list of projects by mode to show what projects from the initial lists constructed. In all a total of 89 projects have been identified. Table 5-1 shows the total list of projects by mode, while Technical Appendix 5-D shows each of the individual neighborhood's findings.

Figure 5-7: - Mobility Audit Locations in Polk County.

Mobility Audit Locations

Neighborhood	Map ID
Central Winter Haven	1
Crystal Lake / Combee	2
Davenport	3
East Bartow	4
East Haines City	5
Eaton Park	6
Frostproof	7
Inwood	8
Mulberry	9
Polk County	10
South Fort Meade	11
South Lake Wales	12
Wabash	13
Wahnetta	14



Environmental Justice (EJ) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

The Polk TPO has conducted extensive work in mapping the location at the Census Block level of the County with congregations of people who are at-poverty, or below poverty levels, or where there are congregations of non-white populations. It has also mapped locations of the population who are literate in languages other than English. The resulting "Environmental Justice (EJ) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP)" map series are located in **Appendix 8**. In 2019, (22.3%) of the people in Polk County have a Limited English Proficiency.

“DEPENDENT UPON OTHERS TO OBTAIN ACCESS TO...”

As was mentioned previously, in Florida, people who are **Transportation Disadvantaged** are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are, therefore, **dependent upon others to obtain access to** health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activities. What does “access” look like? Access BEGINS with Communications and Information.

Communications and Information -- access to Computers and Phones and the Internet and Wi-Fi and Broadband subscriptions –

Hardware - equipment

The **equipment** we use to communicate and to share information and the technology which supports it changes rapidly. In fact, *during the lifespan of this five-year plan, chances are good that you will replace your present cellular phone at least once.* And, while you might still have a desk top computer, many people no longer have them, instead, they are using laptops or tablets. This is true, even for people who are Transportation Disadvantaged: they, or their caretakers, use cellular phones (and more frequently now-days, “smart phones,”) and tablets to access the internet.

For the transit system, the equipment is a capital grant expense. The computer and the software that runs it, are capital expenses. The machines that bring the broadband to your home or business are also capital. it can be very costly and challenging for the transit system to upgrade all of its computers at one time.

Software – systems and service

When we make a phone call with our (wireless) cellular phones, or smart phones, or, when we receive a text, or go on-line to surf the internet—we are dealing with wireless signals and data. Access to the Internet is becoming more and more important since this is the way news and information is shared around the world. Citrus Connection utilizes many different “apps” and services which must be accessed through the internet.

Go to: <https://ridecitrus.com/> to access Citrus Connection’s website.

Smart cards and Bus Passes

Access to computers and broadband has become increasingly important in order for transit customers to locate bus schedule information and to purchase bus passes

Digital Divide

Table 14 shows that 88% of the Polk County households have access to a computer. It is not clear whether this access is located in their homes. And, since the information shows that only 70.2% have a broadband subscription. Perhaps people are accessing computers at schools or libraries. It is safe to suggest that the people who do not have access to computers, or the people who don't have computers are low-income, or elderly, or both. The people who don't have access to broadband internet are either low income, or, elderly, or live in remote/rural areas, or, both. '

According to Polk Vision representatives, "There are other matters related to the divide...computer literacy is a very real challenge for many households. Unaccustomed to having access to the resource, parents and other adults in the home do not know how to navigate online.

Table 14. Households with Access to computers in Polk County 2019

Computers and Broadband	Polk County
	2019
Households	235,283
Persons under 18 years, percent	22.0%
Households with a computer, percent	88.0%
Households with a broadband internet subscription, percent	70.20%

Source: "US Census Bureau Quick Facts about Polk County, 2019"

Major Trip Generators and Attractors

Polk County contains several types of facilities that serve as trip generators and attractors.

Examples of Trip generation locations are nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and high-density residential developments including traditional apartment complexes and low-income subsidized housing developments. There are forty-eight (48) nursing homes and assisted living facilities, and fifty-two (52) apartment complexes in the county.

Trip attractors include medical complexes, shopping facilities, theme parks, colleges and universities, and major employers.

TRIPS BY TRIP PURPOSE AND ACCESS TO TRIPS

People who are Transportation Disadvantaged need access to:

- health care,
- employment,
- education,
- shopping,
- social activities,
- other life-sustaining activities.

Each of these trip purposes can potentially be made on the coordinated system. It depends upon a lot of circumstances. When the demand for trips exceeds the supply of trips, the Local Coordinating Board has directed the CTC to use a Prioritization Policy to determine which trip purpose has a higher priority.

Table 15 illustrates the number of trips made for the past three years, by trip purpose.

TABLE 15: Trip Purpose	2019	2020	2021
Medical	128,043	66,102	62,199
Employment	5,988	4,112	5,215
Education/Training/Sheltered Day Care	176,850	115,832	41,840
Nutritional	27,651	14,910	5,150
Life-sustaining/Other	449,568	441,592	224,658
TOTAL TRIPS	788,100	642,548	339,062

SOURCE: Polk Annual Performance Report (APR), December 2021.

For definitions of these trip purposes, please refer to the PRIORITIZATION POLICY on page 71 of the TDSP.

Access to Medical Care

Although non-hospital medical care is provided at clinics in almost every community, the larger hospital facilities are located only in Lakeland, Bartow, Winter Haven, Haines City, and Poinciana.

Specialized medical services are limited and there is a new, but small, Veteran's Clinic in Lakeland, which opened in 2017. As a result, it is often necessary to transport clients needing specialized services to the Tampa or Orlando areas. The average length of a trip to these areas is 50-60 miles (one way).

Medical complexes include five area hospitals, three of which are regional medical centers. There are also six (6) major medical groups that operate more than 50 individual locations throughout Polk County. The groups include BayCare Medical Group, Bond Clinic, Central Florida Health Care, Gessler Clinic, Lakeland Regional Health, and Watson Clinic. These groups have major facilities as well as satellite facilities in Auburndale, Bartow, Davenport, Haines City, Lakeland, Lake Wales, Mulberry, and Winter Haven.

For a map of the location of medical care facilities, turn to **Appendix 9**.

Way-finding

One of the difficulties in accessing medical care is way-finding. These campuses are big – some of them take up city blocks. Even if you drive your own car, sometimes ‘google’ might take you to the incorrect doorway. And, the parking lots are large, so, you have to allow extra time to get from your car to the receptionist desk inside the building.

These are services which are expanding access to health care, and becoming more commonplace and which are freeing up trips on the coordinated system:

➤ **Telehealth – using technology to visit the doctor**

Health care providers are offering a service where patients can communicate with a doctor (or other medical provider) through telephone calls, and in many cases, through video-calls. This service frees up trips on the coordinated system.

➤ **Pharmacy by mail**

Some people, usually those with health insurance, can sign up to receive their medications through the US Mail. This saves them trips to a pharmacy to obtain the medications or medical equipment. This service frees up trips on the coordinated system.

Access to Health Insurance

People who do not have health insurance put off preventative care because they cannot afford it. Preventative care trips are known in advance, and a person has time to make a trip request in advance for this care.

Table 16. People without Health Insurance Polk 2019.

People without health insurance	2019	
	Polk County	
Population	724,777	
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years old	17.1%	
(Estimated) Number of people in Polk without Health Insurance	123,937	

Source: “US Census Bureau Quick Facts about Polk County, 2019”

FOOD

People need to eat! People who meet the eligibility requirements may make trips on the coordinated system to obtain food.

➤ **Food deserts – lack of access to food.**

According to Caroline Benitez, “Eating well starts not with what’s on your plate, but what’s in your grocery cart. Though there isn’t a one-size fits-all way to eat, almost everyone agrees that a diet rich in fresh veggies, produce, and whole grains is the foundation to good health. Sometimes knowing the right foods to eat isn’t enough. The community where you live can have a big impact on what goes into your diet- especially if you live in a food desert.

The USDA defines a food desert as a community where a large proportion of households are low-income and have low access to fresh foods. There might be convenience stores or restaurants nearby to buy the basics and shelf-stable processed items, but an actual grocery store or supermarket with fresh foods is harder to get to. In these places, the closest grocery store is over one mile away in an urban area, or 10 miles in a rural area.

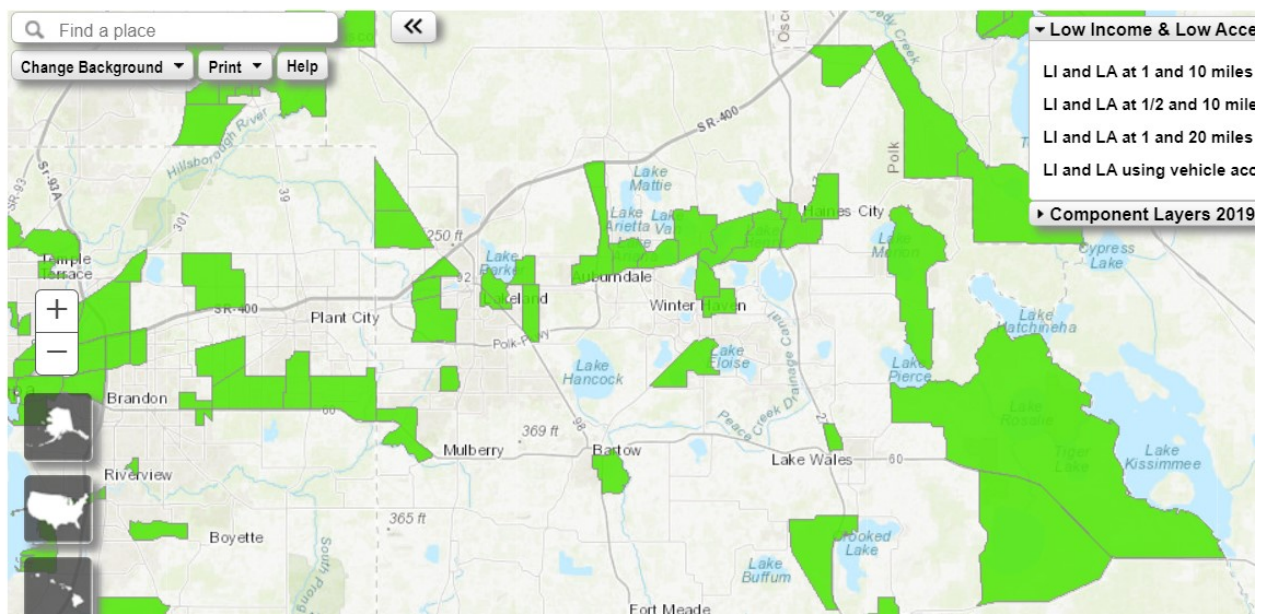
For those of us living in an urban area, living one mile from a grocery store might not sound too terrible. But what if you don’t have a car and have to rely on public transportation or rides from friends? What if you have a disability or mobility issues? Then, reliably gathering fresh ingredients to make a healthy meal for you and your family is no easy task.

A 2015 analysis by the USDA found that a relatively high proportion (9.8%) of households in the central Lakeland area did not have vehicles and lived over one half-mile from a supermarket. All in all, 1.2 million urban Floridians and 780,000 rural Floridians live in a food desert.”

Source: “EATING WELL & THE LVIM MOBILE FOOD PANTRY June 4, 2020/in News & Updates, [Polk TPO last found 08/30/2021 at] <https://www.lvim.net/eating-well-the-lvim-mobile-food-pantry/>

Figure 7_ locations of food deserts in Polk County

Go to the Atlas



<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/>

➤ **Food deliveries by internet**

A recent development in obtaining food in some parts of the country is to order food on the internet. For example, you can order food on Amazon, and have it delivered to your home. Or, you can order food from a grocery store (using their 'app,') and have it delivered. The food might cost a little more, but this service greatly improves access to food for many people. (And, this frees up trips on the coordinated system.)

Employment

In 2010, the percentage of Polk County population 16 years of age and older in the labor force was at 58.2 percent compared to the state average of 60.4 percent. The percent of labor force employed was 85.7 percent for Polk County with the state at 86.1 percent. It should be noted, however, that the unemployment rate in Polk County was 14.3 percent in 2010 which is higher than the state average at 13.9 percent.

Table 17. Changes in Unemployment for Polk County, Florida, and the US, 2019 to 2020

Unemployment	April 2020	March 2020	March 2019
Polk County	13.4%	4.9%	3.4%
Florida – not seasonally adjusted	13.3%	4.3%	2.9%
Florida – Seasonally adjusted	12.9%	4.4%	3.3%
United States – not seasonally adjusted	14.4%	4.6%	3.3%
United States – Seasonally adjusted	14.7%	4.4%	3.6%

Sources: <http://www.floridajobs.org/workforce-statistics/workforce-statistics-data-releases/monthly-data-releases>, Florida labor force - statewide, counties, and MSAs , on 5/22/2020

	Table 18 - List of Top 10 Employers	Number of employees
1	Publix Supermarkets	13,701
2	Polk County School Board	13,363
3	Lakeland Regional Medical Center	5,888
4	Walmart	5,523
5	Amazon	5,000
6	Polk County Government	4,638
7	Geico	3,700
8	City of Lakeland	2,800
9	Baycare	2,614
10	Advent Health	2,466

Source: Citrus Connection, August 2021

This table is a list of the largest employers in Polk County. However, these employees do not all work at the same location.

Education

For the period of 2015-2019, (82.5%) of persons age 25+ were high school graduates or had a higher degree, and 20.2% had a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

List of Local Colleges and Universities

Florida Southern College Lakeland, FL Private, non-profit · 4-year
Polk State College Winter Haven, FL Public · 2-year
Southeastern University Lakeland, FL Private, non-profit · 4-year
Warner University Lake Wales, FL Private, non-profit · 4-year
Webber International University Babson Park, FL Private, non-profit · 4-year
Florida Polytechnic University Lakeland, FL Public · 4-year

Access to shopping and other activities of daily living

Three major shopping facilities are located in Polk County and include the Lakeland Square Mall, Lakeside Village, and the Eagle Ridge Mall. The two theme parks in Polk County include Legoland in Winter Haven and Fantasy of Flight in Polk City.

New Development

New housing developments, new hospitals, new colleges and universities, new shopping centers – it is normal to see a lot of development happening in Central Florida on a regular basis. These developments provide new places for people to live, work, and conduct personal business. The people and activities stimulate the economy and generate taxes. The taxes provide funds to build roads and to operate transit systems. Ironically, all of that development causes congestion and slows down the transportation system. And then the transit system must decide how to adjust its routes to serve the new facilities.

Here are just some of the new developments:

- New VA clinic (to open in 2024) in Lakeland on Lakeland Highlands Road north of the Polk Parkway.
- Lakeland Housing Authority (presales) on 99 units near corner of 10th Street West and Saratoga Avenue in Northwest Lakeland.

COVID 19 and IMPACTS TO TRANSPORTATION

Access to Computers and Broadband Internet Subscriptions.

Access to the Internet is becoming more and more important since this is the way news and information is shared around the world. In March 2020, as the global pandemic COVID-19 swept worldwide, many countries and the United States implemented various degrees of stay-at-home measures designed to reduce the spread of the Novel Corona Virus. People who could telecommute, or do “Work From Home (WFH), did that.

Economy and COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In March 2020, as the global pandemic COVID-19 swept worldwide, many countries and the United States required various degrees of stay-at-home measures designed to reduce the spread of the Novel Corona Virus. Work places shut down or slowed down activities. Many, many people were either laid off, or had reduced hours. The Unemployment rate in Polk County went up from around 4.90% in March 2020, to around 13.4%, in April 2020.

This has triggered a depressed economy, although the extent won't be known for some time.³

As the Pandemic continues, the number of people who are eligible for the Transportation Disadvantaged program, based on their income, may increase.

COVID and the Impact on education

As a result of the COVID Pandemic, in March 2020 all schools in the US sent students home. Most schools continued delivering lessons through “distance learning.” This requires access to computer equipment, and to a way to access the internet. Under normal circumstances (i.e., “Before COVID-19”) people could access computers and broadband at public libraries. And, people could bring their computers to many shops, and public buildings and access the internet that way.

³ While many people are calling the present economic situation a depression, the extent of this won't be known until quarterly indicators are reported. In other words, we won't know if we are “in” a “Depression,” until after the fact. We also don't know if it is a “Recession” like in 2008, or a “Depression” like in the 1930s.

However, during the Pandemic, most libraries and government buildings were closed. In Polk County, the School Board and community groups put out a call to locate additional lap tops to provide to students who did not have their own computers.

According to Polk Vision and Polk County School Board representatives, "There are some informed / educated estimates that we have been working with based upon usage rates of the parent portal, numbers of students completing assignments online and the number of devices the school district deployed. We also reviewed the percent of parents responding to a poll back at the onset of COVID-19 regarding distance learning initiative. But no statistically valid number of respondents was ever achieved through the poll. With that being said, we are utilizing 25-30% as an estimated number of the students who do not have devices sufficient to perform course work from home. Furthermore, we believe that is a low estimate. The School District deployed nearly 23,000 devices with many thousands of students performing coursework with paper packets rather than on-line. So whether it is a device issue or an internet access in the home issue- Polk County has a serious digital divide to address when facing distance learning and equitable access to resources."

Impact on paratransit

As the Pandemic continues, the number of people who may access the Transportation Disadvantaged program may increase for various reasons. Citrus Connection is communicating by phone, email, Facebook to make sure people who don't have computers can find out about their services, and to purchase bus passes. From mid-March to early June 2020, there was no face-to-face public outreach due to COVID-19.

STATUS OF COVID PANDEMIC –June 2022

At this writing, the COVID-19 Pandemic continues to infect people around the world, as variations of the virus spring up. Florida is trying to get back to normal, to encourage businesses and schools to re-open, and to not mandate the use of masks indoors. However, the federal TSA has mandated masks in all transit facilities, including vehicles and bus stops and transfer stations. As of THIS writing, this federal mandate has been lifted.

Inventory of Available Transportation Services

LAMTD – Citrus Connection

Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD) is a special taxing district which provides fixed route transportation through Citrus Connection. LAMTD became the designated Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for Polk County in April 2016. LAMTD was re-designated as the CTC in March 2021 and that five-year contract took effect July 1, 2021.

Coordinated Transportation is provided through several “modes.” The most typical are: **Fixed Route**, the **complementary ADA service**, and, **paratransit**. Some people with disabilities can ride a fixed route bus, as long as they can navigate to the bus stop, and if the bus is equipped with features that make it easier to board. These include ramps, and kneeling buses. Every Citrus Connection bus is wheelchair lift-equipped, and all of the regular route buses are also equipped with “kneelers,” which lower the front step of the bus and make it easier to board.

In order to provide cost effective and efficient transportation, and to serve as many eligible people as possible, the Polk CTC arranges the eligible Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) trips which begin or end in the areas served by fixed route transit systems using the fixed route service for clients who are able to access the fixed routes. The people who cannot use fixed route are provided trips either through Citrus Connection’s complementary ADA service, or through the paratransit service.

To access the Polk TD program, clients contact the CTC, which schedules a trip with a vehicle available in the area at the time of the request, utilizing scheduling software. To ensure a trip reservation, requests for services must be received from the client or the client’s care giver at least 72-hours in advance. This allows time to authorize the trip and determine the most appropriate method of delivery. If the schedule permits, requests made for service less than 72 hours in advance may be granted. Same day service may also be available for access to or from urgent care.

Re-Route 2020

In October 2019, Citrus Connection re-worked many of its fixed routes on the West (Lakeland) side of the county service area. Route miles increased by 5% -- by 142.62 miles on weekdays, and 10.78 miles on Saturdays. Since many customers in the coordinated system ride either the fixed route service, or, the ADA service, these changes should have a positive impact on the TD Program. See **Appendix 10** for the System Guide.

Table 19 illustrates the number of trips made in the Polk coordinated system by the type of service, as reported in the Annual Performance Report.

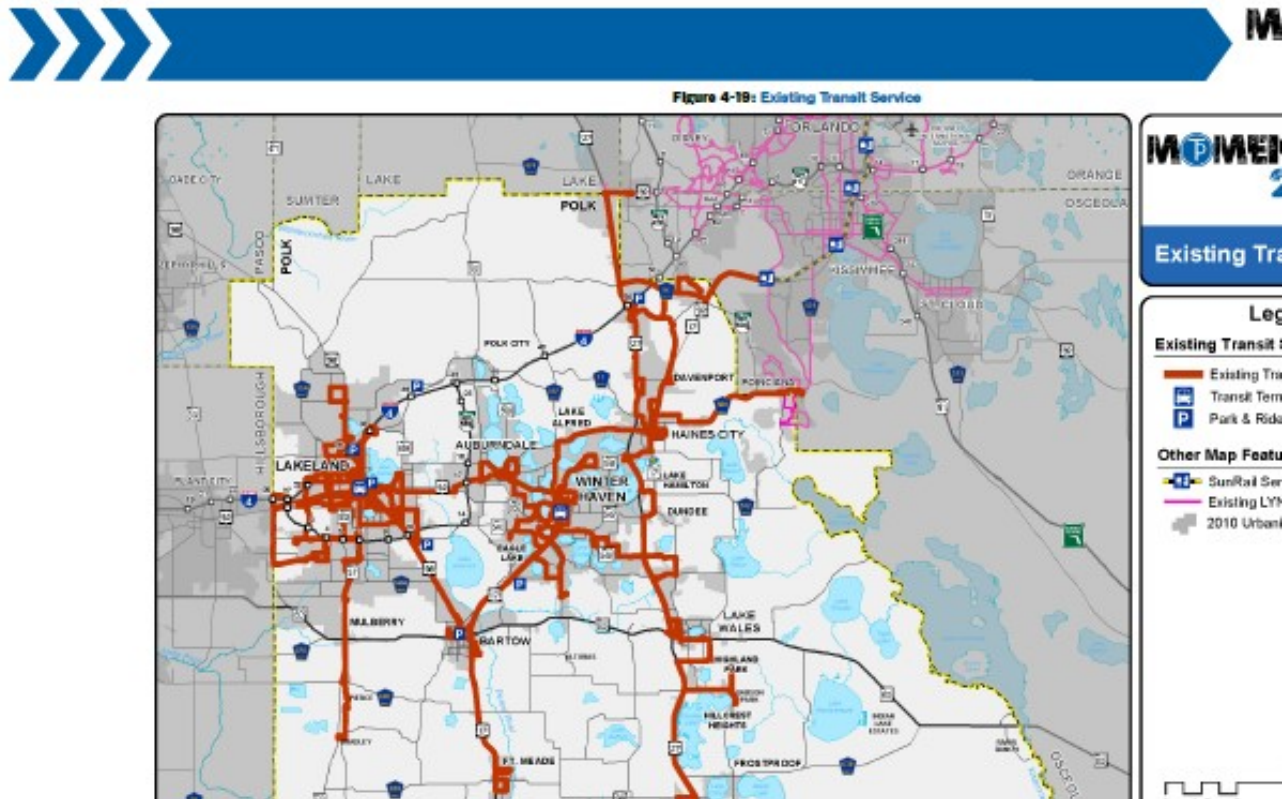
TABLE 19: Trip by type of service	2020	%
Fixed Route (FR)	500,157	77.84%
Deviated Fixed Route	6,000	-0.93%
Complementary ADA	57,209	8.90%
Paratransit	79,182	12.32%
Other types of service providers: TNC (0); Taxi (0); School Bus (School Board (0); Volunteers (0)	0	0
TOTAL TRIPS	642,548	100.0%

SOURCE: Polk Annual Performance Report (APR), December 2020. [edited June 2022]

TABLE 19: Trip by type of service	2021	%
Fixed Route (FR)	247,619	73.03%
Deviated Fixed Route	6,658	1.96%
Complementary ADA	40,444	11.93%
Paratransit	44,341	13.08%
Other types of service providers: TNC (0); Taxi (0); School Bus (School Board (0); Volunteers (0)	0	0.00%
TOTAL TRIPS	339,062	100.00

SOURCE: Polk Annual Performance Report (APR), December 2021.

FIGURE # 8 - Existing Fixed Route Transit Service, Polk



List of Private Transportation Service Providers Operating in Polk County

As part of the TDSP update process, we are asked to list private transportation service providers. Any person needing transportation could contact providers such as these to arrange their own transportation. Some of these are based in Osceola County. Neither the Polk TPO nor the CTC have reviewed these companies to determine their operating standards.

Independent Community Transport
Imperial Cab
Checker Cab
Yellow Cab
Amen Taxi
Angel Taxi Cab
D & D Taxi
Polk County Taxi
Big Herb's Taxi & Shuttle
H & H Transport
Affordable Transport, Inc.
All Generations Transport Service
Trinity Non-emergency Transport, Inc.
Medical Transport Services
Integrity Medical Transportation
Beyond Transport
Freedom Medical Transport
Orlando Cab Company
Magic Shuttle
Orlando Transportation Solutions
America's Taxi
Airport & Local Taxi
Davenport Taxi
Uber
Lyft

List checked 5/24/2021. This list will be updated once the Citrus Connection Major Update to the Transit Development Plan (TDP) is adopted in October 2022.

Please note: the agencies which have Coordination Contracts with the Polk CTC are listed on **Page 74**.

Service Analysis - Forecasting Transit Demand, Needs Assessment, Barriers to Coordination

Travel Demand

This section of the Polk TDSP discusses the “CTD/CUTR Travel Demand Forecast Estimating Worksheets.” These were developed by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) and the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) in 2015. The worksheets contain several tables. Data is manually entered on one page of the worksheets, and then the formulas populate numerous tables automatically. The complete set of worksheets is supplied in **Appendix 5**.

Needs Assessment

According to the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, the population of Polk County will increase by more than 13 percent between 2020 and 2025 from an estimated population of 715,090 to a projected population of 812,250. With the population increases and the demographic characteristics of the current population, the potential annual demand for transportation disadvantaged services are estimated to increase by approximately 150,460 annual trips over the next five years (from 10,721,083 in 2020 to 11,473,427 in 2025) as described in the TD Population Forecasting methodology below.

Forecasts of the Transportation Disadvantaged Population

Forecasts of the TD population are required by the CTD for major TDSP updates. The CTD recommends a tool developed for the CTD in 2015 that utilizes data from a variety of the most currently available sources to predict demand into the future. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), The Bureau of Economic and Business Research County Population Projections, and the National Household Travel Survey and fixed route bus coverage are examples of the data utilized. These sources are helpful in capturing economic trends, population growth, and the changing demographic composition of the population such as aging baby boomers and the associated increases in disabilities. It is important to note the tool only quantifies potential TD demand in the geography analyzed and trends in potential utilization over time. Other factors such as the quality of available transportation services or other unique community characteristics may impact actual service utilization.

Persons with disabilities or seniors who strive to maintain their independence by accessing public transportation may find it is preferable or necessary to rely on family or friends for their transportation needs if the publicly available services do not meet their travel needs. Senior citizens who qualify for TD services based on their age may be able to afford other transportation alternatives such as taxis or ride hailing services such as Uber or Lyft.

Following is a summary of several of the key factors and data analysis steps used to arrive at the TD demand estimates for Polk County. Utilizing 2019 U.S. Census American Community Survey information (the most current data available) the population estimates for the TD population are shown below in **Table 20**. As defined by the CTD, the Category I TD population consists of all disabled, elderly, low income and children who are high risk or at risk. (This is the same table as Table 5.)

Table 20

County Pop. By Age	Total Pop by Age	% of Total Pop	Population Below Poverty Level by Age	% of Total Pop Below Poverty Level by Age	Total Population with a Disability by Age	% of Total Pop with a Disability by Age	Total Population Below Level
< 5 Years of Age	39,743	5.6%	11,680	1.6%	122	0.1%	
5-17	115,568	16.3%	21,288	3.0%	9,497	1.3%	
18-34	151,338	21.3%	23,558	3.3%	10,601	1.5%	
35-64	256,306	36.1%	28,931	4.1%	37,883	5.3%	
Total Non Elderly	562,955	79.3%	85,457	12.0%	58,103	8.2%	
65-74	82,796	11.7%	8,703	1.2%	19,245	2.7%	

To ensure individuals who fall into two or more categories (e.g. low income and disabled) are not counted twice, the overlapping population must be eliminated as shown in the **Figure 9**, below:

To ensure individuals who fall into two or more categories (e.g. low income and disabled) are not counted twice, the overlapping population must be eliminated as shown in as shown in I



Critical Needs Population

Ideally, comparisons of disability estimates should be made using the same survey information, geographic parameters and disability definitions. Because the severity of an individual's disability is not clearly captured in the ACS data, particularly as it relates to the need for specialized transportation, the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is used for the next step in the demand estimates. The rates for those who report a severe disability, or those who have a "critical need" for transportation based on their disability status, are applied to the disability rates reported in the ACS as shown below.

Table 21 - Critical Needs Population

County Pop. By Age	Total Population with a Disability by Age	% with a Severe Disability by Age	Total Population with a Severe Disability by Age	% of Total Pop with Severe Disability by Age	% of Severe Disability Below Poverty Level	Total Severe Disability Below Poverty Level
< 5 Years of Age	122	4.20%	5	0		
5-17	9,497	4.20%	399	0.35%		
18-34	10,601	6.30%	668	0.44%		
35-64	37,883	13.84%	5,243	2.05%		
Total Non Elderly	58,103		6,315	1.12%	28.60%	1,806
65-74	19,245	27.12%	5,219	6.30%		
75+	28,284	46.55%	13,166	20.56%		
Total Elderly	47,529		18,385	12.52%	11.70%	2,151
Total	105,632		24,700	3.48%		3,957

Data from the Federal Highway Administration sponsored National Households Survey (NHTS) is used for the next step of the demand methodology. The NHTS collects in-depth information at the individual and household levels about travel patterns including, but not limited to, trip purpose, mode, vehicle availability and travel time. After applying the NHTS trip rates to the TD population in Polk County, there is an estimated potential demand of 29,532 trips per day for the critical need population as shown in **Table 22**.

Table 22

Critical Need - Severely Disabled T	
	Not Low Income
Non-Elderly	4,509
Elderly	16,234
TOTAL	20,743

TRIP RATES USED	
Low Income Non Disabled Trip Rate	
Total	2.400
Less	
Transit	0.389
School Bus	0.063
Special Transit	0.049
	1.899
Severely Disabled Trip Rate	

Low Income & Not Disabled = C + F	
<u>Assumes</u>	81,837
27.2%	xx % without auto access
	22,260
67.0%	xx % without transit access
	14,914
Total Actual Critical TD Population	
Severely Disabled	24.700

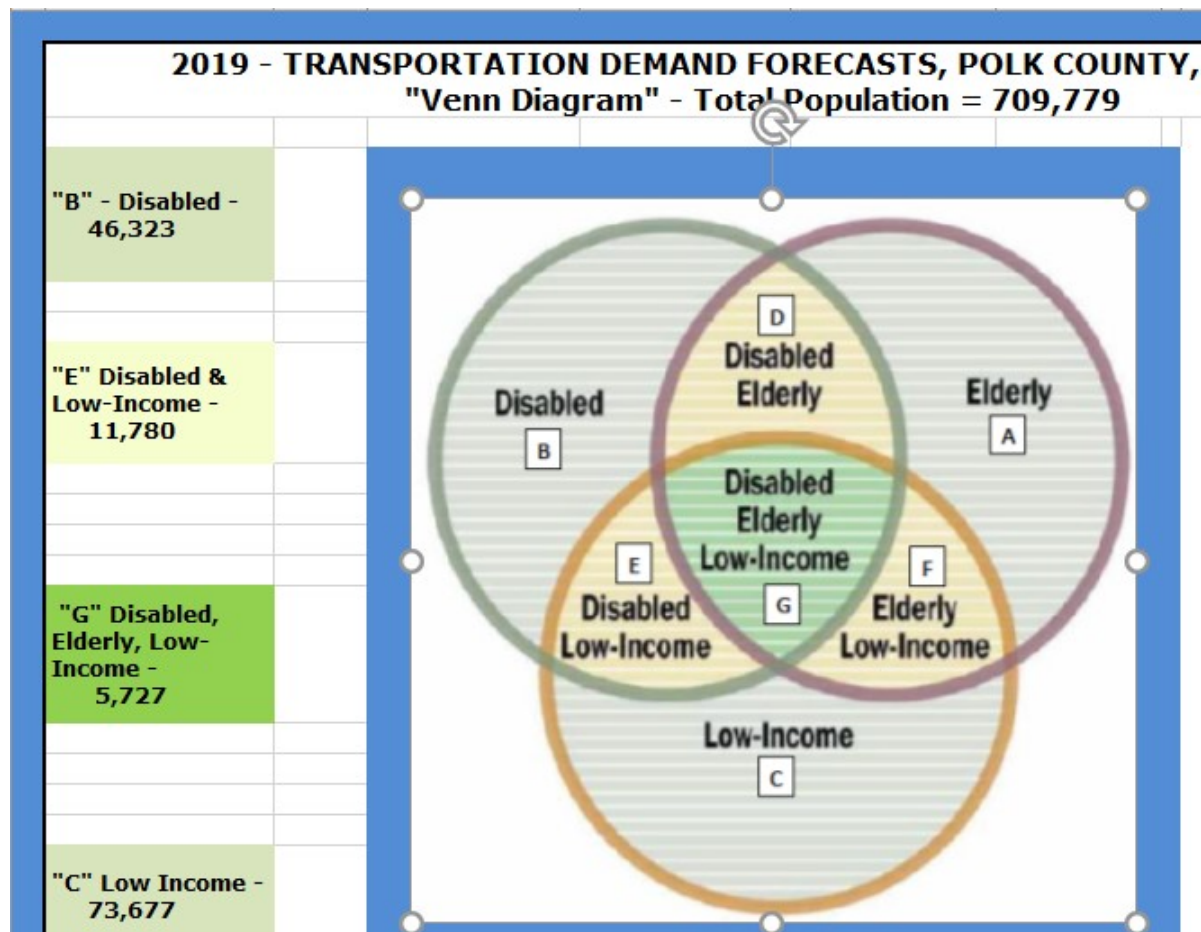
Note: ### = 14,914 Low income non-disabled people.

By using population forecasts prepared by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research and applying the changes to the TD population and trip rate estimates previously described, Table 23 displays the future potential demand for critical need transportation in Polk County through 2029

Table 23 - Critical Need Trip Demand

Critical Need TD Population Forecast	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Total Critical TD Population								
<i>Disabled</i>	24,700	25,372	26,061	26,769	27,497	28,244	29,011	29,80
<i>Low Income Not Disabled No Auto/Transit</i>	14,914	15,319	15,736	16,163	16,602	17,054	17,517	17,99
Total Critical Need TD Population	39,614	40,691	41,797	42,932	44,099	45,298	46,528	47,793
Daily Trips - Critical Need TD Population								
<i>Severely Disabled</i>	1,210	1,243	1,277	1,312	1,347	1,384	1,422	1,46
<i>Low Income - Not Disabled - No Access</i>	28,322	29,091	29,882	30,694	31,528	32,385	33,265	34,16
Total Daily Trips Critical Need TD Population	29,532	30,031	30,539	31,055	31,579	32,138	32,707	33,281

Finally, we loaded the resulting 2019 population forecasts from the tables, into the Venn Diagram in Figure 10:



BARRIERS TO COORDINATION

In order to attempt to meet the demand for transit service for the TD population, there is recognition that a more coordinated approach to transportation service provides an opportunity to improve service delivery. To successfully provide cost efficient transportation for the disadvantaged population it is imperative that the barriers to coordination be identified. A number of barriers currently exist that present challenges to coordination:

- a) **Lack of information.** The general public and public service agencies need to be aware (or made more aware) of the TD program. Following are a number of community information resources and strategies that can be utilized to promote the TD program:
 - Elected Officials
 - Public Hearings
 - County Departments including: Human Services, Community Action and Veterans Affairs
 - Community Based Organizations including: The Salvation Army, Local Charities, and Veterans Affairs
 - Transit Handbooks and Maps
 - Riders Guide
 - CTC and TPO Websites
 - Travel Training
 - Community Events
- b) **Lack of Cooperation within Agencies:** Administrative barriers may inhibit cooperative arrangements between human services agencies and transportation agencies. Reporting requirements for public transportation providers are far more stringent than those imposed on human services agencies that fund transportation as an ancillary service. Transportation providers allocate costs on a per-trip basis, while human services providers often do not. One of the major benefits of a coordination-working group is that bringing a diverse group together gives participants an opportunity to learn how each agency operates and to develop trust so barriers can be removed. Another major barrier to coordination among different state agencies is turf.

Participants may mistakenly believe that they are being pushed into this effort because another participant wants to assume their responsibilities or dictate program outcomes.

c) Lack of Sufficient Funding: While there is on-going support for state legislators to approve an increase in funding for the Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund, there is not enough funding to assist everyone in need. Funding for transportation services has remained relatively constant over the past several years, but has not kept up with the increasing travel demands, resulting in CTCs struggling to maintain their existing service levels. The population is growing older and the demand for public transportation services is expected to continue to increase. The lack of adequate pedestrian access to and from the bus stops limits the ability of TD passengers to safely access the fixed route transit services. Transportation coordination holds great potential for addressing multiple needs and goals with limited resources. As basic as it may seem, several dynamics are critical to success, including leadership, participation, and continuity. By establishing and supporting formal transportation coordinating mechanisms, the Polk County CTC can leverage state, federal, local, and private resources to provide more effective transportation solutions that can lead to reduced congestion, better access to jobs, and more efficient provision of transportation services in the region.

Goals, Objectives, Strategies (“GOS”) and Implementation Schedule

The goals identified by the Polk County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board help guide the program towards producing a more efficient and effective coordinated transportation system for the disadvantaged population of Polk County. Each Goal contains an objective. Each goal contains specific action steps to achieve that Goal. These are called, Strategies. Each Goal contains an Implementation Schedule. This is either a due-date, or an indication that the Goal is an on-going activity.

The CTC and the TPO staff reviewed the Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and the Implementation Schedule for the 2022-23 TDSP minor update and made no changes to them.

In this section, “operator” used to mean a company which provided bus drivers and vehicles.

Goal 1. Enhance the availability of transportation services to meet the mobility needs of transportation disadvantaged persons.

Objective 1.1 Maximize transportation resources by using contract operators when available under a partial brokerage system and encouraging clients to use the fixed-route systems.

Strategy 1.1.1: Initiate Requests for Qualification/Requests for Proposal to acquire additional contract operators as necessary.

Strategy 1.1.2: Maintain agreements with all transportation operators participating in the trip brokerage system.

Strategy 1.1.3: Maintain performance standards for monitoring coordination agreement agencies.

Strategy 1.1.4: Require clients who live within three-quarters of a mile of a fixed route and are able to access and utilize a transit bus to use the fixed-route service.

Strategy 1.1.5: Coordinate transportation disadvantaged services with surrounding counties.

Objective 1.2 Maximize transportation resources by using Computer aid Scheduling software where clients can schedule transportation from anywhere, anytime by using the Passenger portal.

Strategy 1.2.1 Clients will have the availability to schedule transportation online or over the phone.

Objective 1.3 Notifications enable the clients to receive real time information pertaining to their upcoming appointments.

Strategy 1.3.1 Clients will receive a reminder to notify them of their scheduled transportation.

Implementation Schedule: On-going. This Goal has been continually met through the consolidation and coordination of services with all of the transit agencies and coordinators within Polk County.

Goal 2. Provide transportation disadvantaged services in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

Objective 2.1 Evaluate Open Brokerage of Door-to-Door Trips in the Urban Transit Service Area (UTSA)

Strategy 2.1.1: The CTC will coordinate with the Polk Transit Authority (PT) to conduct an evaluation of potential cost savings and service efficiencies of brokering ADA or other paratransit trips within the UTSA—including those in the LAMTD and WHAT service areas—on a minimum cost basis.

Objective 2.2 Evaluate Centralized Scheduling and Dispatch of All Door-to-Door Trips

Strategy 2.2.1: The CTC will coordinate with PT to conduct an evaluation of providing scheduling/dispatch of all door-to-door trips under a central system using Trapeze advanced scheduling software system.

Strategy 2.2.2: Reduce the no-show rate by consistently enforcing the no-show Strategy.

Implementation Schedule: This GOS was met by the opening of the Regional Mobility Call Center in 2013 which consolidated all dispatch and scheduling duties under one umbrella.

Objective 2.3 Evaluate Establishing a Garage/Maintenance Facility in East Polk Area

Strategy 2.3.1: The CTC will coordinate with the PTA to evaluate establishing a garage/maintenance facility in East Polk County for buses, paratransit vans, and other public transit vehicles as needed.

Implementation Schedule: This is an-on-going goal.

Goal 3. Improve public awareness of the Transportation Disadvantaged Program.

Objective 3.1 Participate in Implementing a Common Marketing Plan for “Seamless” Fixed Route Transit and Paratransit Services

Strategy 3.1.1: The CTC will work jointly with PT on the development, production, and distribution of a single transit system map for customers indicating how the routes relate to each other and a new “Ride Guide” explaining how to access all of the fixed route and paratransit services in Polk County.

Strategy 3.1.2: The CTC shall serve as a clearinghouse for information about services and funding sources for the transportation disadvantaged.

Strategy 3.1.3: Provide presentations to inform the public about the Transportation Disadvantaged Program.

Strategy 3.1.4: Distribute the new “User’s Guide” and other print material explaining the transportation disadvantaged program and other public transit services.

Implementation Schedule: This GOS has been met through the development and distribution of the System Guide containing all information related to transit services available in Polk County, as well as the implementation of the “one-click, one-call center.”

Goal 4. Provide transportation services in a safe and reliable manner.

Objective 4.1 Require that transportation operators provide safe, reliable and courteous service.

Strategy 4.1.1: Ensure that all transportation operators maintain a System Safety Program Plan pursuant to Section 341.061, F.S. and Rule 14-90, FAC.

Strategy 4.1.2: Ensure that all contracted operators provide adequate passenger assistance training for their drivers.

Strategy 4.1.3: Use real-time demand responsive scheduling and dispatching system to ensure trips are provided “on time”.

Strategy 4.1.4: Monitor the CTC’s routing, scheduling, and dispatching operations.

Strategy 4.1.5: Maintain standards to promote courteous service and monitor customer satisfaction.

Strategy 4.1.6: Monitor transportation operators to ensure a reliable and adequate fleet of vehicles is maintained for the coordinate system.

Strategy 4.1.7: Research remote, real-time surveillance systems for on-board the vehicles to improve system safety.

Implementation Schedule - This is an on-going goal.

Goal 5. Ensure program accountability by collecting and reporting system and provider data in an accurate and timely manner.

Objective 5.1 Document compliance with procedures, rules and regulations established by the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged and the Florida Legislature.

Strategy 5.1.1: Produce an Annual Operating Report (AOR) that meets State standards.

Strategy 5.1.2: Complete an annual evaluation of the Community Transportation Coordinator and the Coordinated System that includes an evaluation of the standards and performance measures adopted by the Coordinating Board. This task will be done by the Polk TPO.

Strategy 5.1.3: Provide a report at each Coordinating Board meeting outlining the activities and accomplishments relative to the TDSP Goals, Objectives and Policies.

Implementation Schedule -- This is on-going.

TDSP PART TWO – SERVICE DELIVERY – OPERATIONS PLAN COMPONENT

TDSP PART TWO – SERVICE DELIVERY – OPERATIONS PLAN COMPONENT

Types, Hours and Days of Service by mode

General Public Fixed Route Service

LAMTD operates a fixed route transit system. In a fixed route transit system, passengers make their way to the bus and, the bus follows a route (a fixed schedule). The costs to purchase the equipment, and to operate fixed route are funded through tax dollars –the Federal Transit Administration, (FTA) the Florida Department of Transportation, (FDOT) local *ad valorem* funds, and, agreements with municipalities. These services are open to the general public.

Persons who are considered Transportation Disadvantaged, may ride the fixed route as a member of the general public, and pay the going fare at the time they get board the bus. People who meet the CTC's eligibility criteria for Transportation Disadvantaged, can have all-or-a-portion of their trips on the fixed route system, paid for through the TD Trust Fund.

People who meet the eligibility criteria for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, may also utilize the fixed route system. If an ADA eligible passenger shows their ADA Card they may ride the fixed route system at no cost.

General Public (FTA Section 5311) Policy – Rural Fixed Routes

The Community Transportation System is open to the general public through the receipt of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 operating grant funds. The FTA requires that trips paid for with these funds be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. The CTC provides this service in the rural areas of Polk County through the rural, fixed-routes. The general public may also access the system by calling the Coordinator's local access number or toll-free number. Once the funds for the month have been depleted, the general public may only access the system by personally paying the fully allocated cost per trip if there is vehicle seating/capacity for the trip request.

Paratransit service (Demand-Response)

LAMTD also offers demand-response service, which is also called, “paratransit.” All LAMTD’s paratransit service is called, “PT Connect.” Some of it is ADA and some of it is TD. Because the ADA law is federal civil rights law, and the TD Program is a state program that came about BEFORE the federal ADA law, these two programs have vastly different rules and regulations! See the Paratransit Rider Brochure in **Appendix 11**. This is also why there are two Applications for service. These are located in **Appendix 12 A** and **Appendix 12 B**.

ADA Service – Americans With Disabilities Act

Some of the paratransit service is in place to provide what is called, “complementary paratransit service” according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. This paratransit service is tied to the fixed route service. Generally, ADA service is available if an eligible person’s trip begins and ends within the ADA service area. Citrus Connection’s ADA service is a typical $\frac{3}{4}$ mile service area from the fixed-route; as-the-crow-flies. People who meet the eligibility criteria for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and who are not able to use the fixed route system, may use the ADA paratransit service. There is a \$2.00 per trip co-payment for door-to-door ADA service.

Transportation Disadvantaged

People who meet the CTC’s eligibility criteria for Transportation Disadvantaged, but who cannot use the fixed route service, may use paratransit, too. These trips are paid for through the TD Trust Fund. These passengers must pay a co-payment for each trip.

Accessing Services

Citrus Connection’s Regional Mobility Call Center, a one-call, one-click center for mobility options is located at 1290 Golfview Avenue, 2nd floor, Bartow, FL 33830.

- Passengers may call the Regional Mobility Call Center.
- The local number is (863) 534-5500.
- The toll free number is 855-POLKBUS (765-5287)

Telephone reservations can be made from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. Saturday scheduling from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Only ADA for next service day trips will be

scheduled on Saturdays. Phone lines are open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. weekdays, and Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

The CTC provides all of the scheduled trips for Polk County.

- Service is provided Monday – Saturday.
- The earliest appointment time that will be accommodated is 6:15 a.m.
- There is no Sunday service.
- Reservations should be made a minimum of 72 hours in advance and may be made up to 14 days in advance for medical or medical related trips.
- All other categories must be scheduled within 3-7 days in advance.
- All scheduling must be done during normal business hours (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., except for ADA on Saturday for next business day service).
- Door-to-door (Transportation Disadvantaged) service is provided for ambulatory and wheelchair passengers.
- Subscription trips will be allowed on a first-come, first-served basis, to the extent of funding and scheduling availability.
- LAMTD subscriptions shall fill up fewer than 50% of average trips booked.
- No waiting list will be maintained for services.

ADA trips may be scheduled by close of business one (1) day in advance of the requested trip date. All trips may be scheduled up to 7 calendar days in advance. Please call no later than 3:00 P.M. Saturday for trips on Monday, or one (1) day before a holiday for the service the day after a holiday.

Out of area trips will be provided to the requested service areas only on the days that transportation is provided to that specific service area (See Out-of-Area Transport Policy).

LAMTD is the designated recipient for the Lakeland and Winter Haven urbanized areas and provides ADA complementary paratransit services in the Lakeland district service area as well as the Winter Haven Area Transit service area.

All door-to-door service in Polk County is branded as PT Connect. All scheduling for PT Connect Services is handled through Citrus Connection Regional Mobility Call Center.

See the System Guide in **Appendix 10** for more information.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for services under the TD Program in Polk County, a person must:

- Meet age, income, and/or disability guidelines.
- Live in Polk County. Transportation Disadvantaged eligibility will be considered for residents of Polk County with US citizenship; must be a legal resident of Polk County and of the United States. Residents of Polk County with forms of US residency other than Social Security identification such as I-551, I-10, I-20, etc., or other government issued documentation will be considered for TD Eligibility.
- Not be able to get a ride from others for life-sustaining trips.
- Have documented household income which does not exceed 150% of the federal poverty level guidelines. See the federal food stamps poverty guidelines **Table 24** on page 72.
- Individuals meeting two or more eligibility requirements and who are Transit dependent will be deemed eligible based on being Transit dependent.
- Individuals residing in Polk County 6 months or more out of the year will qualify as a Polk County resident. The applicant must provide proof such as a lease, lot space rental, or letter from family or friend with whom they are residing.

Applications for service

- The customer Application is supplied in **Appendix 12**. (There are two applications: One for ADA & a different one for TD).

It is the sole responsibility of the applicant, or responsible party representing the applicant, to apply for transportation program eligibility, including ADA in a timely manner to qualify for service to avoid service delays or interruptions. All forms and assessments must be completed prior to beginning or continuing service. Expiration dates are clearly noted on the eligibility acceptance letter. Please allow minimum processing time of **14-21** days for applications. Notification will be forwarded to the applicant via the regular US mail.

Everyone must reapply for services, annually.

Consideration will be based on information presented by the applicant to determine the need for services; and granted to those individuals who, because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age, are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation and are therefore dependent on others to obtain access to medical, medical-related, or other life sustaining assistance. The rider's fee will be determined based on the economic status of the applicant's household using a sliding scale. See additional information under Eligibility Determination for Non-Sponsored Trips.

Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund Program (TD) dollars is a funding source of last resort. All other means of funding and transportation resources must be exhausted or non-existent with the use of TD funding. The CTC has the right to require additional information as deemed necessary before making a final decision on eligibility.

Eligibility determination requirements and processes will also pertain to bus pass assistance recipients under the TD program.

Clients are instructed to schedule trips during identified off peak hours whenever possible. Trips to out-of-county facilities are scheduled in multi-loaded, shared ride vehicles and may be scheduled on specific days and times of the week for different geographic areas.

The CTC's policy is that requests for TD services are to be received at least 72 hours prior to the date service is needed. However, consideration is given to any request made at any time, depending on availability.

In accordance with the "No-Show" Policy, the CTC will notify habitual no-show clients that they may be suspended from service delivery.

Payment for your trip must be in the form of a prepaid pass. Cash will not be accepted.

Eligibility Determination for Non-Sponsored Trips

TD funds are allocated as follows: a.) to those most in need, b.) for trips deemed most necessary, c.) using transportation services/modes that are most cost effective and d.) In a leveraged manner to receive the greatest benefit from available funds.

"Those Most in Need"

The CTC will use an eligibility process (also called an enrollment process) that verifies that a customer meets the following criteria

Transportation Disadvantaged. (Is the person "transportation disadvantaged"? See definition in Glossary of Terms in **Appendix 3**.

No Other Transportation Available. (For example, a family member is not able to provide the transportation)

No Other Funding Available. (That is, there is no agency responsible for the transportation requested, e.g. transportation of an agency client to an agency sponsored program?)

No Public Transit. (Is the trip origin and destination within a fixed route service area? If yes, the client will be advised of the route location and schedule. ADA-eligible clients will be offered an application for complementary door-to-door service.)

Ability to Pay. (Determine the individual's ability to pay and use the income/percent of full fare sliding scale table. The minimum required co-pay per one-way trip will be \$2.00.

"Trips Deemed Most Necessary" (Medical/Medical Related are the highest priority, etc.)

Residency

Transportation Disadvantaged - eligibility will be considered for residents of Polk County with US citizenship; must be a legal resident of Polk County and of the United States. Residents of Polk County with forms of US residency other than Social Security identification such as I-551, I-10, I-20, etc., or other government issued documentation will be considered for TD Eligibility."

Individuals residing in Polk County 6 months or more out of the year will qualify as a Polk County resident. The applicant must provide proof such as a lease, lot space rental, or letter from family or friend with whom they are residing.

Polk 2021 Transit Summit – September 2, 2021

A great deal of good information about the services Citrus Connection provides was presented at this day-long Summit. A two-hour recording is available at this link:

<https://youtu.be/S9hiPOiHIOM>

A two-page flyer with Summit Summary is located behind the last Appendix.

Table 24 -- POVERTY TABLE for 2022

The Community Transportation Coordinator uses this information to determine eligibility for transportation services:

Income

The Food Assistance Program counts most types of income to see if a household is eligible. Households must have their total monthly gross income compared to a percentage of the federal poverty level. Gross income means a household's total income before deductions, not counting money we can exclude. The "Income Chart" below shows the Gross and Net Income limits and the benefit amounts for the number of people in the household.

People in Household	200% Gross Monthly Income Limits Effective 10/1/21	130% Gross Monthly Income Limits Effective 10/1/21	100% Net Monthly Income Limits Effective 10/1/21	Maximum Benefit Amount Effective 10/1/21
1	\$2,148	\$1,396	\$1,074	\$250
2	\$2,904	\$1,888	\$1,452	\$459
3	\$3,660	\$2,379	\$1,830	\$658
4	\$4,418	\$2,871	\$2,209	\$835
5	\$5,174	\$3,363	\$2,587	\$992
6	\$5,930	\$3,855	\$2,965	\$1,190
7	\$6,688	\$4,347	\$3,344	\$1,316
8	\$7,444	\$4,839	\$3,722	\$1,504
For Each Additional Person Add	+\$758	+\$492	+\$379	+\$188

Source: CTC, May 2022.

PRIORITIZATION POLICY

The CTC implements an LCB approved Prioritization Policy in order to provide the most critical trips, with available funds. Since at least 2015, it has been established that Medical/ Medical Related services followed by Nutrition and Life Sustaining Activities will be funded as the top two priorities. If funding allows, the other trip purposes will be considered at the discretion of the CTC.

1. Medical/Medical Related - (Ex. Life sustaining medical—dialysis, chemotherapy, radiation, other medical appointments and treatment, mental health, dental, pharmacy, physical therapy, etc.)
2. Nutrition and Life Sustaining Activities - (Ex. Grocery, medical records, hospital discharge, etc.)
3. Specific Education and Training Determined by the CTC to be for Critical Life Skills - (Ex. Sheltered workshop, specialized training for the disabled, etc.)
4. Employment - (Ex. Personal travel to employment)
5. Other Education and Training - (Ex. Personal education, training)
6. Social/Recreational and Other Activities - (Ex. Personal business, ex. Government office, bank, legal, shopping, social, recreation, etc.)

The CTC shall determine if funding is available to allow the requested trip using the above priorities established by the LCB.

Using Cost-Effective Transportation Services/Modes

The Polk County CTC and the TD Trust Fund Program require that services be provided by the least costly mode and the most efficient means (e.g., maximizing the use of fixed-route transit and multi-loading of vehicles).

Leverage Non-Sponsored Trip Funds

A sliding scale is used to determine the ability to pay based on a client's verified disposable net income and liquid assets. The chart used in this eligibility assessment is based on the poverty guidelines issued in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services. The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use for administrative purposes – for instance, determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs. Poverty guidelines are designated by the year in which they are issued. See **Table 24** on page 72.

For TD trips, the co-payment is a \$2.00 per one-way trip. The CTC may establish a different co-payment on a trip-by-trip basis for public fare customers.

In (2015) because of changes to the Medicaid laws, the CTC no longer provides trips under the Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation (NEMT) program. Those trips are provided by other companies.

The CTC has implemented a “cashless fare system”. All PT Connect paratransit trips must be paid for using the PT Connect prepaid bus pass.

Bus Passes – The CTC will utilize bus passes under the Non-Sponsored Trip Program whenever possible. If a qualified TD client can use fixed-route services and cannot afford bus fare, then CTC may issue bus passes to the client. Passes may also be distributed through this program for qualified PT Connect riders who demonstrate temporary hardship and meet the eligibility criteria under the TD Program.

Arrival Window Time

LAMTD’s Notification system will provide trip notification by phone 20 minutes prior to scheduled arrival window time. Passengers are requested to be ready and waiting for departure up to 15 minutes in advance of the scheduled window. If the passenger is not ready when the vehicle arrives, the 5 minute Wait Time Policy would take effect.

Wait Time Policy

Operators are permitted to wait no more than 5 (five) minutes for a passenger when they arrive within the Arrival Window Time. The No Show Policy would take effect if the passenger does not utilize the scheduled ride.

Pick Up

Passengers are expected to be ready and waiting for their ride at the door of their home or in the lobby of a complex, apartment building or other facility. There is no requirement for the passenger to wait for the ride if the operator arrives after the originally scheduled time of the trip. Passengers in facilities where the passenger will be at risk in the lobby are expected to be ready to be boarded by the driver when the driver arrives for the pickup.

Return Trips

Paratransit Passengers should be ready to be dropped off at the scheduled destinations and allow the operator to move on. Passengers in apartment complexes, assisted living facilities, health care facilities, etc., are expected to be received from the driver when the driver arrives on the premises. Operators are not permitted to enter private quarters or residences for ambulatory or wheelchair transports. Exceptions to this rule may apply during emergency evacuations.

Public Transit Utilization

The LAMTD (Citrus Connection) is the CTC for Polk County. It is also the designated recipient of federal funds for the Lakeland and Winter Haven urbanized areas. As such, they-operate as Citrus Connection throughout Polk County. ADA complementary paratransit services are provided throughout the service areas. There is a goal / Performance Measure Standard that **35%** of the trips in the coordinated system will be placed on the fixed route system.

COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION COORDINATORS—NETWORK TYPE

1. **Complete Brokerage:** System in which the CTC does not provide any of the on-street transportation services itself, but contracts with transportation providers (including coordination contractors) to provide all on-street transportation disadvantaged services.
2. **Partial Brokerage:** System in which the CTC provides some of the on-street transportation services and contracts with one or more other transportation providers (including coordination contractors) to provide the other portion of the on-street transportation disadvantaged services.
3. **Sole Source:** System in which the CTC provides all the coordinated on-street transportation disadvantaged services, and has no providers or coordination contractors.

Transportation Operators and Coordination Agreements

LAMTD is the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC). It functions as a “PARTIAL BROKERAGE” CTC which means that it provides transportation for the transportation disadvantaged non-sponsored clients. It also utilizes some social service agencies that have their own vehicle fleet to provide their own transportation services for their clients and have executed Coordination Agreements with the CTC.

Table 25 provides a list of the agencies with whom the CTC has Coordination Agreements.

Table 25. Coordination Agreement Agencies for FY 2021-2022,

Name	Contact Person	Service	Who they transport
Alliance for Independence	Katie Tinsley	Ambulatory, Wheelchair	Clients
Noah's Ark	Brenda Grella	Ambulatory, Wheelchair	Program Participants
Peace River Center	David Blackwelder	Ambulatory, Wheelchair	Program Participants
Polk Training Center	Lora Bonacic	Ambulatory, Wheelchair	Program Participants
Sunrise Community of Polk County	Sherrie Serviss	Ambulatory, Wheelchair	Program Participants

Source: CTC, May 2022

School Bus Utilization

Under State provisions, local Boards of Education are required to provide transportation for students attending primary, secondary and high school facilities including, but not limited to, public, private and charter schools.

School buses are utilized for the general public during evacuations for emergencies and disasters.

Community of Learning Transportation Services (COLTS) Program

LAMTD has entered into a Universal Access Program Agreement with the School Board that makes it possible for all public school high school students in the County to use public transportation for free. The Community of Learning Transportation Services (COLTS) Program has been very successful since implementation and still growing.

Community of Learning Transportation Services (COLTS) Program and COVID-19

Citrus Connection and Polk County Public Schools (PCPS) have partnered to provide students 8 years of age and older free public transportation until further notice to assist families with local travel during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Citrus Connection and PCPS have a long-standing partnership to provide transportation through the Community of Learning Transportation Services (COLTS) Program, which provides subsidized public transit for high school students. The district and Citrus Connection have agreed to open the service to children 8 years of age and older.

In the midst of the Covid-19 public health crisis, Citrus Connection will continue to provide public transit service on all routes and will follow the guidelines of the Florida Department of Transportation. If FDOT calls for the suspension or reduction in service, Citrus Connection will honor that order.

For more information about Citrus Connection services, visit www.ridecitrus.com. Additional information can be obtained by calling customer service at 863- 688-7433 or quality assurance at 863-733-4242.

Vehicle Inventory

The vehicle inventory for the coordinated system is located in **Appendix 13** of the TDSP. This inventory contains the vehicles involved in providing coordinated trips in Polk County. It includes all the vehicles referenced in the Annual Operating Report.

System Safety Program Plan – SSPP and System Security Plan, SSP

The annual System Safety Program Plan/System Security Plan Certification form is located in **Appendix 14** of the TDSP.

Inter-County Services

Coordination efforts between adjacent counties are encouraged, due to the close proximity of the transit boundaries. One example of coordination is the implementation of the Pick-Up Line service in the Poinciana area. This service is operated by Transitions under contract to the LAMTD. This service provides travel and connectivity to public transportation for Polk and Osceola Counties, and is funded by the Polk County Board of County Commissioners.

LAMTD's coordination efforts now seeks partnership with the Hillsborough Area Transit (HART) in order to connect Polk and Hillsborough's communities by implementing a pick up line in the Plant City area.

Natural Disaster/Emergency Preparedness

From building fires and water pipe breaks in nursing homes, to forest fires or hurricanes, LAMTD plays an important role in Polk County's Emergency Response Plan, and is classified as ESF-1 for emergency operations. When an evacuation requiring transportation is declared by Polk County Emergency Management, the Polk County School Board and the CTC (LAMTD) will activate their plans to ensure that transportation services are provided in a timely manner. The following vehicles are available to provide transportation to primary and special care shelters or appropriate medical care facilities.

- Standard School Buses and Vans/Buses - The School Board will provide school buses and the LAMTD will provide vans and/or buses to transport ambulatory people.
- Lift-Equipped Vehicles - The School Board and the LAMTD will provide buses equipped with lifts to transport individuals who use wheelchairs.
- Ambulances - Polk County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) ambulances will transport individuals requiring medical attention during transportation.

Inclement Weather

Inclement weather (including, but not limited to: hurricane conditions, torrential rain, high winds, flooding) may result in the LAMTD system operating behind schedule or ceasing service for a period of time. If LAMTD determines that service may be running behind schedule due to inclement weather, LAMTD reserves the right to prioritize trips on these days in the following order; medical, medical related, life sustaining, support group, other.

Education Efforts/Marketing

Presentations on the Citrus Connections Transportation Solutions include TD funded program and services are made at agency meetings and at county and city sponsored events. Ride Guide information is distributed to target groups like senior citizens and newcomers. The objective for the future of transportation for Polk County is to implement a common marketing plan for the provision of “seamless” transit services. This has been accomplished by the consolidation of all transit services into the LAMTD/Citrus Connection.

Travel Trainer

Citrus Connection Transit services is a valuable community resource that can be intimidating for those unfamiliar with the system. Passengers capable of utilizing the Fixed Route bus may require some assistance before doing so. Citrus Connection has a travel training program to provide comprehensive instruction in real-life transit scenarios in order to familiarize the passengers with local transportation options. Our expert travel trainer is your partner in removing community barriers by helping passengers travel independently, safely, and confidently. The benefits of travel training are two-fold. For individuals receiving travel training, increased confidence and self-reliance are immediate results of learning to travel independently. These skills improve the passenger’s quality of life by encouraging community integration, participation in recreational, employment opportunities, and overall independence. Travel Training also benefits the clients and the communities we work with by reducing program expenses and paratransit utilization while increasing the use of cost -effective public transit systems.

Travel Training topics include:

- Safety awareness
- Reading and using the maps and schedules
- Trip planning, including making transfers
- Paying fare

- Street crossing safety
- Accessibility features of buses, stops, terminals
- Emergency skills
- Following appropriate social behavior and system rules
- Requesting stops and assistance with special needs
- Judging distance and time

VOLUNTEERS –

There is no policy on the use of volunteers in the Coordinated system at this time.

TDSP PART THREE:

**QUALITY ASSURANCE
(AND PERFORMANCE
STANDARDS)**

COMPONENT

TDSP Part THREE – QUALITY ASSURANCE COMPONENT

TDSP PART III – QUALITY ASSURANCE COMPONENT

This Component of the TDSP contains three elements:

- A. Service Standards
- B. Evaluation and Monitoring
- C. Performance standards

Part III- Quality Assurance –Element A – Service Standards

In 1990, the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged recommended a small set of “standards” which were put into Rule 41-2.006, Florida Administrative Code. This list was amended in 1992, twice in 1996, then in 1998, 2001, and 2018.

The Commission’s intent was to provide a list of topics which the CTC (and the LCB) needed to address, in a “standardized” way, across the state. The LCB, together with the CTC, developed policies to meet the standards. Then, the LCB could refer to this information when conducting the annual evaluation of the CTC. Service effectiveness standards should be jointly established by the CTC and the Local Coordinating Board. Those standards should give the Local Coordinating Board information on how effectively the CTC is operating.

There are two types of “Standards” in the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan:

A-1 --STANDARDS REQUIRED BY RULE 41-2.006, Florida Administrative Code (FAC): The first set of standards are those called out in Rule 41-2.006, Florida Administrative Code, regarding Insurance, Safety and Standards. They are a list of **topics** which the CTC and LCB are required to address. They are listed in order according to the Rule 41-2.006, FAC.

A-2--LOCAL STANDARDS: The second set of standards in the TDSP are known as “local standards.” These are topics the CTC chooses to address, or which the LCB recommended the CTC address.

A-1: STANDARDS REQUIRED BY RULE 41-2.006, FAC

Liability Insurance– 41-2.006(1)

The Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) shall ensure compliance with the minimum liability insurance requirement of \$200,000 per person and \$300,000 per incident, which are comparable to Section 768.28(5), Florida Statutes, and limits for all transportation services purchased or provided for the transportation disadvantaged through the CTC. The CTC will indemnify and hold harmless the Local, State, and Federal governments and their entities, departments, and the Commission from any liabilities arising out of or due to an accident or negligence on the part of the CTC and all Transportation Operators under contract to them. Any liability insurance coverage in excess of \$1 million per incident, where its cost is included in the service rate, must be approved by the Commission before its cost is included in any purchase of service contract. Documentation from the CTC must fully justify the need for the additional insurance coverage. The justification will identify the reasons for the additional coverage, the incremental cost of the additional coverage on each unit of transportation service and the estimated additional annual cost to each contracting agency/entity. The Coordinated System in Polk County has established a \$300,000/combined single limit.

Safety Requirements– – 41-2.006(2);

Each CTC, and any transportation operators from whom transportation service is purchased with local government, state or federal transportation disadvantaged funds, shall ensure the purchaser that their operations and services are in compliance with the safety requirements as specified in Section 341.061(2)(a), Florida Statutes, and Chapter 14-90, F.A.C.

Weapons & Contraband or Illegal Activity

Weapons, concealed or otherwise, contraband and illegal activity are strictly prohibited on LAMTD vehicles.

Abusive Behavior

Abusive behavior of any type, directed towards LAMTD employees or passengers, will not be tolerated. Instances of abuse will be thoroughly investigated on a case-by-case basis and transportation services may be interrupted while the investigation is pending. The severity of the instance will determine the penalty and may range from a letter of warning to criminal prosecution. LAMTD reserves the right to suspend and/or revoke transportation privileges in cases of abusive behavior when the safety and well-being of the employees and/or passengers is compromised.

Under Florida Statute 784, assault against a Transit employee while engaged in the performance of his or her duties is a misdemeanor of the second degree or a misdemeanor of the first degree depending on the gravity of the offense. Battery against a transit employee while engaged in the performance of his or her duties could be constituted as a misdemeanor of the first degree or a felony of the third degree depending on the gravity of the offense.

Code of Conduct

To help ensure the safety, security, comfort and convenience of all those who use our services, LAMTD has established a Code of Conduct to regulate conduct on LAMTD property. Our aim is for transit passengers to enjoy a safe, secure, comfortable and inviting atmosphere, and to improve the overall efficiency of the transportation system.

The bus driver's primary job is to operate the bus safely. If problems arise on the bus, the bus driver's first priority is to determine if a person's safety or security is at stake. The driver will assess the severity of the problem and resources available, and respond accordingly. The bus driver, at his/her discretion, may choose to talk to the passenger, call for assistance, submit a report on the incident at the end of their shift, or take no immediate action. In the case of minor infractions of the code of conduct, LAMTD's general guideline for the driver would be to continue on the route rather than inconvenience other riders by delaying service. In either scenario, the operator is required to submit a report on the incident at the end of their shift.

The bus driver is the person in authority onboard the vehicle at all times. Enforcement of the code of conduct is handled through a network of professionals that can be called upon by the bus driver, if and when needed.

The Code of Conduct guidelines apply to all activities that occur in or on:

- LAMTD buses and vehicles, or those of its contracted transportation providers
- Transit Service Centers
- Park and ride lots
- Bus Terminals or Bus Shelters
- Other passenger facilities

Those in violation will be asked to leave the vehicle or facility immediately.

LAMTD Rider Rights and Responsibility and Code of Conduct:

- Respect other passengers' privacy
- Do not cause safety problems (i.e., distract the driver in any way)
- Use headphones
- No eating, smoking or littering
- No alcoholic beverages
- No open beverage containers
- No weapons of any kind
- Do not harass driver or other riders
- Do not lie down on the seats
- Respect property of the transit agency
- Bring correct change
- Be ready to board and unboard safely
- Use LAMTD services and facilities for transportation purposes only

A. Prohibited Conduct

The following conduct is prohibited on LAMTD vehicles (owned or operated), within or upon LAMTD facilities and properties, and in connection with LAMTD provision of public transportation services:

- Committing any act which tends to create or incite, an immediate breach of peace, including, but not limited to (a) fighting, (b) obscene language, and (c) personally abusive epithets, words or language of an offensive, disgusting or insulting nature to a LAMTD operator or Administrative staff.
- Discarding litter other than in designated receptacles;
- Allowing any animal to run at large, to unreasonably disturb others, or interfere with transit-related activities;
- Roller-skating, roller-blading or skateboarding;
- Riding bicycles, unicycles, mopeds and motorcycles, except where vehicle travel and access is permitted;
- Eating or drinking on LAMTD vehicles or in prohibited areas of LAMTD facilities and properties;
- Operating, stopping, standing or parking a vehicle in any roadway or location restricted for use only by LAMTD vehicles or otherwise restricted;
- Extending an object or a portion of one's body through the door or window of a LAMTD vehicle while it is in motion;

- Hanging or swinging on bars or stanchions, with feet off the floor, inside a LAMTD vehicle or other LAMTD property; hanging onto or otherwise attaching oneself at any time to the exterior of a LAMTD vehicle or other LAMTD property;
- Using a LAMTD facility for residential or commercial parking purposes;
- Performing non-emergency repairs or cleaning of a vehicle on LAMTD property;
- Failing to present a valid, un-expired pass, ticket or otherwise failing to pay the appropriate fare as established by LAMTD;
- LAMTD no longer uses or issues transfers
- Bringing onto LAMTD property odors which unreasonably disturb others or interfere with their use of the LAMTD system, whether such odors arise from one's person, clothes, articles, accompanying animal or any other source;
- Engaging in illegal activity
- Except at a designated place, smoking or carrying a lighted or smoldering pipe, cigar, or cigarette; [or an e-cig?]
- Playing any radio, recorder, or other sound-producing equipment, except that nothing herein shall prohibit the use of such equipment when connected to earphones that limit the sound to individual listeners or the use of communication devices by LAMTD employees, LAMTD contractors or public safety officers in the line of duty;
- Spitting, urinating or defecating on LAMTD properties or vehicles;
- Carrying any flammable liquid, explosive, acid, or other article or material likely to cause harm to others except that nothing herein shall prevent a person from carrying a cigarette, cigar, or pipe lighter or carrying a firearm or ammunition in a way that is not otherwise prohibited by law;
- Intentionally obstructing or impeding the flow of LAMTD vehicles or passenger traffic, hindering or preventing access to LAMTD vehicles, facilities, and properties, or otherwise unlawfully interfering with the provision or use of public transportation services;
- Disturbing others by engaging in loud, raucous, unruly, harmful, or harassing behavior;
- Destroying, defacing, or otherwise damaging property of LAMTD;
- Carrying any alcoholic beverages or controlled substances, unless otherwise authorized by law;
- Drinking an alcoholic beverage or possessing an open container of the same.
- Carrying, exhibiting, displaying, or drawing any firearm, dagger, sword, knife or other cutting or stabbing instrument, club, or any other weapon apparently capable

of producing bodily harm, in a manner, under circumstances, and at a time and place that either manifests an intent to intimidate another or that warrants alarm for the safety of other persons;

- Manufacturing, selling, delivering, or possessing with the intent to manufacture, sell, or deliver a controlled substance or who sells for profit any controlled substance or counterfeit substance on a LAMTD vehicle, properties or facilities to include but not limited to; transfer center, bus shelter, bus stop, or park and ride lots;
- Entering a LAMTD vehicle with live pets or other animals, with the exception of service animals, that are not in a suitable pet carrier;
- Entering a LAMTD vehicle not wearing any type of footwear, with the exception of passengers using a wheelchair or similar device or children that are being carried;
- Using a public address system, loudspeaker or other sound amplifying device;
- Sleeping, camping or storing personal property on benches and floors on or within LAMTD vehicles or LAMTD facilities and properties, unless otherwise authorized by law;
- Entering or remaining upon any non-public areas of LAMTD facilities and properties, including, but not limited to, staging areas, work areas and equipment rooms, except when authorized by LAMTD or its designee;
- Engaging in commercial activities, except as such activities are authorized by LAMTD or its designee in a written permit, license, concession contract, lease or other written authorization;
- Engaging in public communication activities.
- Engaging in any civic, cultural and other special event, not included in the definitions of commercial or public communication activities, except as such activities are authorized by LAMTD or its designee in a written permit, license, concession contract, lease or other written authorization;
- Committing any act which tends to create or incite, or creates or incites, an immediate breach of peace, including, but not limited to (a) fighting, (b) racing, (c) obscene language and noisy or boisterous conduct tending to cause a breach of the peace, and (d) personally abusive epithets, or words or language of an offensive, disgusting or insulting nature, which epithets, words or language when addressed to the ordinary citizen are, as a matter of common knowledge, inherently likely to provoke a violent reaction of fear, anger or apprehension;
- Using of LAMTD vehicles, facilities, and properties for non-transit-related activities, except as authorized by LAMTD;

- Entering LAMTD vehicles, facilities, and properties when lacking the ability, because of illness or intoxication, to care for one's self;
- Dumping any materials whatsoever on LAMTD property, including but not limited to chemicals and automotive fluids;
- Throwing an object at LAMTD property or at any LAMTD person in LAMTD property;
- Falsely representing oneself as eligible for a special or reduced fare or obtaining any permit or pass related to the LAMTD system by making a false representation;
- Falsely claiming to be a LAMTD bus operator or other LAMTD employee; or through words, actions, and/or the use of clothes, insignia, or equipment resembling department issued uniforms and equipment, creating a false impression that he or she is a LAMTD operator or other LAMTD employee;
- Violating any federal, state, or municipal civil and criminal laws.

B. Trespass Enforcement

1. Removal from LAMTD Vehicles, Facilities, and Properties.

Any person engaging in prohibited conduct under the provisions in Section A may be refused entrance upon or ordered to leave LAMTD vehicles, facilities and properties by a law enforcement official, LAMTD personnel as authorized by the Director, or authorized personnel of a contracted service provider. Failure to immediately comply with such a removal order may be grounds for prosecution for criminal trespass and/or unlawful bus conduct.

2. Exclusion from Service.

- (a) **Basis for Exclusion.** Engaging in prohibited conduct as described under Section A shall be cause for excluding or restricting a person from entering and using all or any part of LAMTD vehicles, facilities, and properties for a period of time not to exceed one year, unless otherwise authorized by Director or their designee.
- (b) **Notice Procedure.** LAMTD shall give a person to be excluded from LAMTD vehicles, facilities, and properties written notice, by personal delivery or by mailing a copy, by U.S. mail, return receipt requested, addressed to the person's last known address. The notice shall specify the reason for exclusion, identify the scope, duration, and effective date of the exclusion, and explain the appeal process.
- (c) **Constructive Notice.** Receipt of a notice is construed to have occurred if the person knew or reasonably should have known from the circumstances that he/she is excluded from LAMTD vehicles, facilities and properties. Receipt of a notice is also

presumed to have been accomplished three (3) calendar days after the notice has been placed in the U.S. mail to the person's last known mailing address.

(d) Immediate Refusal or Removal. A person may be immediately re-seated, refused transportation, or removed from LAMTD vehicles, facilities, and properties without prior written notice if the person has engaged in prohibited conduct under Section A or at LAMTD's discretion, poses a safety or security risk, interferes with or impinges on the rights of others, impedes the free flow of the general public, or impedes the orderly and efficient use of LAMTD vehicles, facilities, and properties.

(e) Types of Exclusion. Exclusion may be limited to bus stops, super-stops LAMTD Central Station or LAMTD vehicles.

The actual exclusion period imposed may be shorter or longer depending on the circumstances of each case.

Driver/Employee Training Requirements – 41-2.006(2) – Safety Requirements

All drivers/employees will be trained in accordance with requirements under the Coordinated System. Training will be provided by approved trainers as identified by the Coordinator. An employee training log will be kept and updated to include dates of all refresher trainings and available for monitoring by the CTC.

Training will include at a minimum:

- Transportation Safety Institute – Bus Operator training
- Instruction on daily vehicle inspections
- Passenger Assistance Techniques
- Training in daily passenger manifests, vehicle condition reports, incident reports, accident reports and procedures
- Sensitivity and Awareness Training
- Security Awareness

Drug and Alcohol Policy – 41-2.006(3), and also 41-2.006(4)(a).

Each CTC, and any transportation operators from whom service is purchased or funded by local government, state or federal transportation disadvantaged funds shall assure the purchaser of their continuing compliance with the applicable state or federal laws relating to drug testing (specifically, Section 112.0455, Florida Statutes; Rule 14-17.012 and Chapters 59A-24 and 60L-19, F.A.C.; and 41 U.S.C. 701; 49 C.F.R., Parts 29 and 382; and 46

C.F.R., Parts 4, 5, 14, and 16). The Coordinated System in Polk County adheres to the Florida Department of Transportation Drug and Alcohol Policy established and approved by the LAMTD Board and incorporated within each contract.

Drug and alcohol testing for safety sensitive job positions within the coordinated system regarding pre-employment, randomization, post-accident, and reasonable suspicion as required by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration.

Transportation of Personal Care Attendant and Dependent Children (PCA, Escorts and Companions) – Rule 41-2.006(4)(b)

Personal Care Attendant (PCA)

The ADA law defines a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) as someone who provides assistance in activities of daily living for the passenger that he or she is unable to provide for him or herself. One (1) PCA must be allowed to ride at no charge per ADA law.

For the TD Program, a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) is required for children under age eight (8) and individuals requiring special loading assistance. The PCA must be able to provide the necessary assistance to the passenger. The need for PCAs are determined during the eligibility process for individuals requiring special loading assistance and must be medically necessary. PCAs ride for free once documentation of the need is stated on the eligibility form.

Companions

Companion passengers are friends or family members of a passenger, but they are not defined as a PCA.

All LAMTD/ADA passengers shall be allowed one companion rider regardless of age to accompany them at the current rate of the passenger fare when prearranged. **This companion must be made known to the Scheduler at the time the request for transportation is made.** A companion may not be another LAMTD eligible rider. All eligible LAMTD riders must schedule their trip separately under LAMTD scheduling guidelines.

PCAs are counted as passengers and Companions are counted as revenue passengers for NTD reporting.

Child Restraint Devices – Rule 41-2.006(4)(c)

Use of child restraint devices shall be determined locally as to their responsibility, and cost of such device in the local Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan.

For paratransit trips within the Coordinated System in Polk County, the CTC does not provide child restraints or child restraint devices for use in its paratransit vehicles. Due to sanitary reasons related to transmittal of communicable diseases, it is the responsibility of the passenger, or their accompanying parent or Personal Care Attendant to provide child restraint devices, if needed. These cannot be left on the vehicles.

Passenger Property – 41-2.006(4)(d)

Passenger property that can be carried by the passenger and/or driver in one trip and can safely be stored on the vehicle shall be allowed to be transported with the passenger at no additional charge. Additional requirements may be negotiated for carrying and loading rider property beyond this amount. Passenger property does not include wheelchairs, child seats, stretchers, secured oxygen, personal assistive devices, or intravenous devices.

Within the Coordinated System in Polk County, passengers must be able to independently carry any items brought onto the vehicle. Drivers will not be allowed to carry passenger property, other than on and off of the vehicle, unless prior approval has been made through central schedule/dispatching and with the CTC Program Manager's approval. Regarding oxygen units, only personal/portable oxygen units accompanying the passenger shall be transported and must be properly secured or stowed during transit.

Bags Policy (LOCAL)

Operator will assist with three (3) large or six (6) small bags per trip, per elderly or disabled passenger. Assistance with bags would be given upon request of the passenger. A bag would be defined as one large paper or plastic sack (weight not to exceed 10 pounds) or two small plastic bags (weight not to exceed 5 pounds each). Any item meeting the preceding requirements may be substituted for a "bag." Any passenger violating this policy will be given one (1) letter of warning. A second occurrence will result in denial of transportation. Escorts may accompany (when scheduling permits) to assist with shopping bags. Shopping trips should be limited to an amount of bags being loaded that will not interfere with scheduled route and paratransit service times. Passengers are expected to load and unload quickly to allow the route to continue in service.

Vehicle Transfer Points – 41-2.006(4)(e)

Vehicle transfer points shall provide shelter, security, and safety of passengers. The Coordinated System in Polk County does not currently use vehicle transfer points for paratransit trips. In the event that transfer points are needed, the transfer will take place at a location that provides shelter, security, and safety of passengers.

Local Toll Free Phone Number– 41-2.006(4)(f)

A local toll free phone number for complaints or grievances shall be posted inside the vehicle. The local complaint process shall be outlined as a section in the local Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan including, advising the dissatisfied person about the Commission's Ombudsman Program as a step within the process as approved by the local Coordinating Board.

Vehicles providing paratransit service within the Coordinated System in Polk County shall have signs posted within sixty (60) days of contract execution listing the CTC's toll free telephone number for comments/complaints (fixed route public transit operators within the Coordinated System may instead post their local toll free telephone number) and a toll free telephone number for comments/complaints to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged Ombudsman.

- The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged Ombudsman contact information is:

Toll free (800) 983-2435

Phone (850) 410-5700

Fax (850) 410-5752

605 Suwannee Street, MS 49

Tallahassee, FL 32399-0450

Website: www.ctd.fdot.gov

The CTC's and the Ombudsman's toll free numbers will also be listed in the CTC's users guide along with information on how to file a complaint. The CTC has an adopted grievance procedure approved for the Polk County Coordinating System. Any complaints or grievances not resolved between both parties within 30 calendar days will be referred

to the Grievance Subcommittee of the Polk County Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board.

Passengers may call the Regional Mobility Call Center.

The local number is (863) 534-5500.

The toll free number is 855-POLKBUS (765-5287)

Out of Service Area Trips– 41-2.006(4)(g)

The CTC recommends program participants request to be transported to sources of medical care within his/her locality, except when the required medical care is not available within that locality. For the purpose of this policy, the locality is defined as the recipient's county of residence. When the required medical care is not available within the recipient's county of residence, out of area trips will be considered when supporting documents are presented to justify the necessity to be transported out of area. All trips will be provided in the most cost-effective and most appropriate mode of transportation available at the time of the request.

Out-of-service area medical appointments must be scheduled at least seventy-two (72) hours in advance and not more than one week in advance. Exceptions to the seventy-two (72) hour or less scheduling rule include extenuating circumstances such as:

- follow up appointments in less than seventy-two (72) hours
- urgent care
- hospital and emergency room discharges
- transportation to appointments made to replace missed appointments that were not caused by the recipient's negligence

Customers may be multi-loaded with other customers traveling in the same general vicinity.

Medical documentation is required to verify the service cannot be received locally.

All out-of-county trips of more than 100 miles must be prior-approved by the Program Supervisor.

The LAMTD will only coordinate transportation for residents of Polk County. Residents of other counties will be referred to the transportation provider in their county of residence.

Trip reservations for out-of-county transportation are accepted Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Out-of-service area trips requested for same day is not available.

Table 26 - Days, Service Hours and Areas of Service for Out-of-Area Trips:

Locations:	Days of Travel:
Osceola and Orange Counties	Tuesdays and Thursdays
Tampa Area	Monday through Friday
Other Areas	Wednesdays, Thursdays

Customers requiring out-of-county transportation must schedule appointments so that they are cared for or treated between the hours of 9:00 AM and 12:00 Noon.

Customers traveling to Osceola and Orange counties as well as the Gainesville area will be connected with Lynx or Access Lynx Paratransit Services.

Out of Area Pick-up and Drop-off Windows

There is a minimum 2 hour pick-up and drop-off window for out-of-county trips. This means that a person could be picked-up as early as 2 hours before his or her requested pick-up time.

Trips will be multi-loaded in vehicles with other passengers who share common pickup and/or travel destinations whenever convenient for the transit agency.

Necessary & Convenience Trips

Necessary trips are defined as trips for the purpose of Medical, Medical Related or other Life Sustaining. Convenience trips are defined as any trip that does not fall under the categories listed above as Necessary trips.

Taking the passenger to the nearest bus stop to utilize fixed route bus and dial-a-ride service is an option which will be used at the discretion of the transit agency whenever suitable and reasonable.

The CTC reserves the right to restrict service due to capacity and funding constraints. Requested trips may not always be able to be accommodated. Alternatives to requested dates and times for trips will be offered wherever possible.

Personal Assistance

An enrollee who can walk to and from a vehicle, his or her home, and a place of medical services without such assistance is deemed not to require personal assistance.

No personal assistance will be provided that requires installation, removal, adjustment or other interference with medical equipment or devices.

Personal assistance will not be provided when hazards and harmful situations exist such as uncontained secretion of bodily fluids, open wounds, etc. The direction of the transit agency's staff will be accepted when an on-site assessment and observation of potential harmful situations exist. Transportation may be denied when such uncorrectable situations exist.

We are committed to providing transportation services with a high regard for the person's safety, dignity and respect. Ensuring the paratransit passenger's dignity allows the passenger to feel as if they are being treated respectfully. To avoid sensitivity issues and misunderstandings, passengers are required to wear appropriate clothing at all times during transport.

If an individual's weight exceeds the manufacturer's capacity limit for the wheelchair lift, the Operator will not be able to load the passenger. The Operator will contact the Dispatch center to request guidance.

Non-Emergency Stretcher Transport

The Polk County CTC does not provide or contract to provide non-emergency stretcher transportation under the Transportation Disadvantaged funded program.

Scheduling and Pick-Up Window

Except for subscription service, routine appointments may be scheduled with a minimum of three (3) days advance notice, and up to (14) days in advance.

Polk County CTC scheduling staff may be reached during normal office hours (Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m., and Saturdays from 8:00 a.m. through 3:00 p.m.).

Passengers may call the Regional Mobility Call Center.

The local number is (863) 534-5500.

The toll free number is 855-POLKBUS (765-5287)

Trips may be provided by LAMTD staff or through a contracted transport provider.

Vehicle Cleanliness – 41-2.006(4)(h)

Interior of all vehicles providing service in the Coordinated System in Polk County shall be free from dirt, grime, oil, trash, torn upholstery, damaged or broken seats, protruding

metal or other objects or materials which could soil items placed in the vehicle or provide discomfort for the passenger.

Billing Requirements– 41-2.006(4)(i)

Billing requirements of the CTC to subcontractors shall be determined locally by the local Coordinating Board and provided in the local Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan. All bills shall be paid within 7 calendar days to subcontractors, after receipt of said payment by the CTC, in accordance with Chapter 287.0585, Florida Statutes.

All Coordinated System in Polk County contracted operators will invoice the CTC by the end of the week following service delivery, on the appropriate invoice forms made a part of the operator's contract. Invoices will be logged in by the CTC Fiscal Unit and will be handled invoice by invoice, first come, first reviewed. The operator will be reimbursed within 45 days of receipt of an approved, final, corrected invoice. This is covered in the operator's contract.

Passenger/Trip Database– 41-2.006(4)(j)

Passenger/trip data base must be maintained or accessible by the CTC on each rider being transported within the system.

For all trips provided by the Coordinated System in Polk County, including trips provided by the CTC or brokered to coordinated operators, passenger/trip data will be collected and entered into the CTC's Trapeze automated scheduling and dispatch system. Each coordinated operator will keep the appropriate information necessary to satisfy the CTC in making eligibility assessments and fulfilling reporting requirements as determined by any and all funding agencies. These requirements are outlined in each contract.

Adequate Seating– 41-2.006(4)(k)

Adequate seating for paratransit services shall be provided to each rider and escort, child, or personal care attendant, and no more passengers than the registered passenger seating capacity shall be scheduled or transported in a vehicle at any time. For transit services provided by transit vehicles, adequate seating or standing space will be provided to each rider and escort, child, or personal care attendant, and no more passengers than the registered passenger seating or standing capacity shall be scheduled or transported in a vehicle at any time.

The Coordinated System in Polk County will ensure that vehicle seating will not exceed the manufacturer's recommended capacity or, when applicable, the Florida Department of Transportation seating guidelines.

Driver Identification and Uniform Requirements– 41-2.006(4)(l)

Each driver must have photo identification that is in view of the passenger. Name patches, inscriptions or badges that affix to driver clothing are acceptable. For transit services, the driver photo identification shall be in a conspicuous location in the vehicle.

All drivers for the Coordinated System in Polk County will have a picture identification displayed at all times when transporting passengers. The driver may also be identified by a standard uniform.

Drivers providing Coordinated System in Polk County paratransit services, including through coordination agreements, shall be required to announce and identify themselves by name and company in a manner that is conducive to communications with the specific passenger, upon pickup of each rider, group of riders, or representative, guardian, or associate of the rider, except in situations where the driver regularly transports the rider on a recurring basis.

General Passenger Assistance – 41-2.006(4)(m)

Drivers providing Coordinated System in Polk County paratransit services shall provide the passenger with boarding assistance, if necessary or requested, to the seating portion of the vehicle. The boarding assistance shall include opening the vehicle door, fastening the seat belt or utilization of wheel chair securement devices, storage of mobility assistive devices, and closing the vehicle door. In the door-through-door paratransit service category, the driver shall be required to open and close doors to buildings, except in situations in which assistance in opening/closing building doors would not be safe for passengers remaining on the vehicle. Assisted access must be in a dignified manner. At no time shall the vehicle leave the sight of the operator. The operator will not enter the residence. Operators will assist with bags for elderly and disabled persons pursuant to the adopted Bag Policy. Assistance will not be given if the operator determines the area from the door to the vehicle to be unsafe for the passenger and themselves. This includes walkways that are not clear of objects and/or debris.

Drivers may not assist wheelchair up or down more than one step, unless it can be performed safely as determined by the passenger, guardian, and driver. Assistance will not be given if steps or ramps appear not to be properly constructed or maintained. If the passenger does not concur with the operator's professional determination of the area, he or she may call into the dispatch office and a supervisor will be dispatched to the address in question for a second opinion of the area in question. The supervisor will notify the passenger when the determination is made and proper documentation of the determination will be maintained in the client's file.

Smoking, Eating and Drinking- 41-2.006(4)(n)

Smoking is prohibited in any vehicle. There will be no smoking in any vehicle serving the Coordinated System in Polk County. There will be NO eating or drinking on the vehicle, by the passenger or the driver.

No-Shows - 41-2.006(4)(o); and Cancellations

Citrus Connection Passenger No-Show Policy

Effective September 2015

Citrus Connection has adopted a new ADA Para transit Passenger No-Show policy in an effort to bring our riders more efficient para transit service, and to be up-to-date with the Federal Transit Administration best practices, and with community input.

No-shows are recorded each time a para transit passenger makes a late cancellation, forgets to cancel, declines their trip at the door, or is not available for pick-up for their scheduled trip.

Cancellations

Cancellations are accepted as late as one hour before the scheduled trip. Cancellations made less than one hour before a scheduled trip are considered a no-show.

Passengers may call the Regional Mobility Call Center.

The local number is (863) 534-5500.

The toll free number is 855-POLKBUS (765-5287)

Passengers may call the Regional Mobility Call Center to cancel a trip.

No Show Policy

No show/late cancellations shall represent 10 percent (10%) or more of their scheduled trips and the rider has four (4) or more no-shows in a calendar month this will result in a violation and will increase each month that the passenger exceeds the no-show threshold.

Penalties

- 1st violation - Passenger will receive communication alerting them of the no show/late cancellation.
- 2nd second violation- passenger will receive a warning letter
- 3rd violation- final warning, communicated by email
- 4th violation- 7 day suspension

- 5th violation – 30 days suspension

Habitual no shows will be addressed in accordance with the policy.

No Show Notifications

Passengers will be notified of every no show; passengers will receive written notification starting with the second no show.

Passengers with concerns about a No Show are encouraged to call the Manager of the Regional Mobility Call Center. Passengers who wish to appeal an ADA suspension may download a form at www.ridecitrus.com or request a form be sent to them.

No Shows beyond a Passenger's Control

Passengers are not responsible for no-shows resulting from sudden illness, family or personal emergency, transit connection or appointment delay, extreme weather conditions, operator error, or other unforeseen reasons for which it's not possible to call the Paratransit Dispatch line to cancel in time or take the trip as scheduled.

Passengers may call the Regional Mobility Call Center.

The local number is (863) 534-5500.

The toll free number is 855-POLKBUS (765-5287)

Passengers may call the Regional Mobility Call Center to cancel a trip.

Suspensions

If a passenger exceeds the no-show threshold, they will receive a suspension letter, proposing to suspend service within one week and outlining the appeals process

Late Cancels Policy

Trips not cancelled at least 60 minutes prior to scheduled pick up time will result in a no-show and the No Show Policy would be effective. (See the no-show policy, described above.)

Two-way Communication (communication equipment) – 41-2.006(4)(p)

All vehicles providing service within the Coordinated System in Polk County shall be equipped with two-way communications in good working order and audible to the driver at all times to the base.

COMMUNICATIONS: Cellular Phone & Electronics Devices Policy

The intent of this policy is to ensure the Safety of passengers, pedestrians, other citizens and employees of the District. The District will not be liable for the loss of or damage to, personal cellular phones and similar devices brought into the workplace.

POLICY: GENERAL

A. Support/Administrative Employees

- Cellular phone usage is allowed during working hours but calls must be limited and must not interfere with the employee's job duties and responsibilities.
- Support staff may not use their personal cell phones in any of the safety sensitive areas outlined above.
- Support staff may not use their personal cell phones during the operation of a company vehicle unless equipped with hands-free technology (Bluetooth).

B. Safety Sensitive Employees and Bus Handlers

- Cellular phones, electronic devices and accessories to include a blue-tooth ear piece may be carried on the bus; however, these devices may not be powered on or visible during operation of the bus or in the act of performing a safety sensitive function. In addition, devices and accessories may not be carried onto the maintenance shop floor (levels 1 & 2).
- The use of all cellular phones and electronic devices (non-district issued), to include talking, texting, instant messaging or e-mailing while performing any safety sensitive duty is strictly prohibited. To use a cellular phone or electronic device you must be on an authorized break (for Bus Operators, this means the end of the line), and in a non-safety sensitive area.
- The use of bus radios (hand-held), MDTs, GPS and mobile computers to include staff and maintenance vehicle radios, to conduct District business is considered essential communication and is authorized communication equipment. All communications must be kept to an essential minimum; the use of this communication must be at an authorized bus stop, in a parking lot and out of the flow of traffic.

EMERGENCY EXCEPTIONS:

1. When involved in an accident/incident and moving the vehicle is not feasible.
2. When the vehicle has a mechanical breakdown and the vehicle cannot be moved.
3. When advised by Law enforcement that a vehicle cannot be moved.

4. When advised by supervisory personnel or the Control center that a vehicle cannot be moved.
5. When under duress.

C. Policy Applicability: Staff with District-issued cellular phones

Revised 12/2013

District staff who use District-provided cell phones, while in a District-owned vehicle or in their own personal vehicle, will be equipped with hands free Bluetooth technology devices; these devices will be required for use with all company-issued cell phones. In no case is District staff allowed to use company-issued cell phones during the operation of a bus or while performing other safety sensitive duties.

PRIVACY – Employees have no reasonable expectation of privacy in any equipment issued by the District, including but not limited to cell phones and blackberries. All company equipment, including voicemail messages, e-mail messages and text messages contained on such equipment, is subject to search and review by the company at any time without prior notice.

D. Management responsibility

Management will randomly monitor compliance of this policy.

Management will investigate all allegations of non-compliance of this policy.

E. Violations

Violation of this policy will result progressive discipline up to and including termination.

Air Conditioning/Heating– 41-2.006(4)(q)

All vehicles providing service within the coordinated system shall have working air conditioners and heaters in each vehicle. Vehicles that do not have a working air conditioner or heater will be scheduled for repair or replacement as soon as possible.

If the heat or air-conditioning malfunctions in a vehicle providing service within the Coordinated System in Polk County, the driver must have CTC permission to finish the day. Vehicles with malfunctioning heater or air conditioning systems must be repaired before the next service day.

First Aid– 41-2.006(4)(r)

First Aid Policy shall be determined locally and provided in the TDSP. The CTC does not have a policy on this topic. There are first aid kits on the buses.

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)– 41-2.006(4)(s)

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) policy shall be determined locally and provided in the TDSP. The CTC does not have a policy on this topic.

Driver Criminal Background Screening– 41-2.006(4)(t)

All drivers in the Coordinated System in Polk County must submit to a Florida Department of Law Enforcement background screening. Upon determination of an unfavorable report, the driver will be terminated.

Public Transit Ridership – 41-2.006(4)(u)

The CTC and the Local Coordinating Board should jointly establish a percentage of total trips that will be placed on the fixed route system.

A Coordinated System in Polk County standard has been jointly established by the CTC and the local Coordinating Board that fixed-route trips will equal at least **35%** of total trips.

Pick-up Windows – 41-2.006(4)(v) and On-Time Performance – 41-2.006(4)(w)

The Coordinated System in Polk County has established a standard of 90% on-time performance for all completed trips. The “On-time” window has been defined as no more than fifteen minutes before or later than the scheduled pick up time. “Will Call” or trips for return pick-up, between the hours of 6:15 a.m. and 6:15 p.m., will be evaluated on the one (1) hour return time of pick-up for trips in Polk County, unless another time is agreed upon. Trips for return pick-up, between the hours of 6:15 p.m. and 6:15 a.m., will be evaluated on the two (2) hours return time of pick-up for trips in Polk County, unless another time is agreed upon, and within a reasonable time for return trips for pick-up outside the County.

Advance Reservation Requirements – 41-2.006(4)(x)

Within the Coordinated System in Polk County, except for ADA paratransit trips, a minimum of 72 hours (3 days) notification is required for scheduling trips. With the exception of ADA paratransit trips, trips that are requested less than 72 hours in advance may be scheduled only on a space available basis. ADA paratransit trips will be provided in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and LAMTD’s adopted procedure.

Performance measures to evaluate safety (Accidents) 41-2.006(4)(y)

The CTC and local Coordinating Board will review accident data at least annually. CTC Performance Standards are no more than 1.0 accidents per 100,000 miles on the paratransit system, and, no more than 1.0 accidents per 100,000 miles on the fixed-route system.

Performance measures to evaluate reliability of vehicles (Road calls)– 41-2.006(4)(z)

The CTC and local Coordinating Board will review road call data at least annually. CTC Performance Standards are at least 30,000 miles between road calls on the paratransit system, and at least 10,000 miles between road calls on the fixed-route system

Call Hold Time– 41-2.006(4)(aa)

Within the Coordinated System in Polk County, all calls go into a queue to be answered and callers should not be placed on hold for longer than two minutes without status announcements.

Complaint Standard – 41-2.006(4)(bb)

The Coordinated System in Polk County standard is no more than two (2) complaints per 1,000 trips.

Complaints and Grievance Procedures

The CTC has an adopted complaint and grievance procedure. The LCB reviews this annually and did so in September 2021. Any complaints or grievances not resolved between both parties within 30 calendar days will be referred to the Grievance Subcommittee of the TD LCB. **(See the Grievance Policy in Appendix 15.)**

A-2: LOCALLY DEVELOPED POLICIES NOT CONTAINED IN RULE 41-2

Lost and Found Policy

The Lakeland Area Mass Transit District d/b/a Citrus Connection and Winter Haven Area Transit [the Coordinated system in Polk County] assumes no responsibility whatsoever for the care and/or protection of any personal belonging left unattended on its property, and for loss, under any circumstance, including theft, vandalism, or malicious mischief, of such belonging. For lost or abandoned property, the above referenced agencies shall retain custody of the property for 90 days. After 90 days the items will be donated to a non-profit organization.

Service Animals

LAMTD vehicles will allow **service animals** to board their vehicles. Pets or companion animals will not be transported on LAMTD vehicles, caged or otherwise.

The ADA defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that the individual with a disability cannot perform for him or her. "Seeing eye dogs" are one type of service animal, used by some individuals who are visually impaired.

The care or supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of his or her owner. The passenger and the service animal may be asked to exit the vehicle if the service animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

Mobility Devices, Ramps, Curbs & Steps

Operators will assist passengers in manual mobility devices up or down one curb or standard size step if it is safe to do so. Operators will take an **unoccupied** manual mobility device up or down no more than 3 steps.

All ramps and walkways must be cleared of clutter or debris and properly maintained to allow a safe area for the operator to assist. If the area is deemed unsafe, assistance for the passenger will not be given and transportation will be denied for that trip unless the passenger can meet the operator at the vehicle.

Mobility Devices

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discriminating against individuals with disabilities in providing transportation services. All wheelchairs and their users must be transported. A "wheelchair" is defined by the ADA as a mobility device which safely fits on a passenger lift or ramp.

Operators must require that a passenger permit his/her wheelchair to be secured, if the wheelchair can be properly secured. If the bus securement system cannot be used properly on a particular wheelchair, operators must use their "best efforts" to restrain or confine the wheelchair to the securement area and advise the wheelchair passenger of a potential hazard. At the user's request, Operators may not deny transportation to wheelchair users because his/her wheelchair cannot be secured satisfactorily by the bus securement system.

Operators are to assist passengers in using passenger seat and/or shoulder belts upon request. The use of seat/shoulder belts is at the option of the passenger, but is strongly recommended by the transit agency. If an operator asks the wheelchair passenger to use the seat/shoulder belt and the passenger refuses, the operator should immediately notify the dispatcher/supervisor that the operator did make an attempt to have the wheelchair passenger use the seat/shoulder belt, and the passenger refused.

While the operator may recommend that passengers using "scooters" transfer from the "scooter" to a bus seat if the person is willing to do so, the passenger is not required to transfer.

Intending passengers using a mobility device not a common wheelchair shall not be transported by LAMTD vehicles.

Operators are not permitted to drive or operate a motorized mobility device. Operation of the device is the sole responsibility of the passenger or their designee.

Reporting Elderly and Disabled Abuse

LAMTD is committed to report abuse, neglect and exploitation. LAMTD employees are mandated to report any suspected or known abuse, neglect or exploitation to the State of Florida Central abuse Registry.

All employees of LAMTD who know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a child, elderly person or disabled adult is or has been abused, neglected or exploited, shall immediately report such knowledge or suspicion to the State of Florida Abuse Registry and Tracking System by calling the statewide toll free telephone number 1-800-96ABUSE or by faxing this information to Registry and Tracking System (1-800-914-0004) using the Department of Children and Families Abuse/Abandonment /Neglect/Exploitation Fax Transmittal Form. The employee's direct supervisor should be notified in writing.

Vehicle Securement

Vehicles will not be left running and unattended; however, vehicles with passengers may be locked with the windows down and the key removed.

Group Trips

The Polk CTC will consider group trips on a first come-first served availability basis. All passengers in the group must meet LAMTD qualifications and adhere to the policies and procedures of the transit agency. All passengers and assistants must pay the fare agreed upon at the time the trip is arranged. The fare is due upon entrance of the vehicle unless other arrangements have been previously arranged and agreed upon by the transit agency. LAMTD is unable to transport group trips for students attending primary, secondary, high school or other education facilities as an alternative to school board transportation. Group trips that cannot be accommodated by LAMTD have the option of contacting private transportation organizations to inquire into chartering services.

ADA Compliance

An agency or operator within the Coordinated System in Polk County shall assure compliance with the American's with Disabilities Act of 1990, as it is amended from time to time.

Request for Bids/Proposals/Qualifications (Local Policy)

The CTC will use the Request for Qualifications process in procurement of service providers under the coordinated system. The process is in accordance with LAMTD policies.

Periodically, for-profit operators are provided the opportunity to respond to a Letter of Interest that has been publicly noticed by the CTC. Through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process (competitive procurement process required by Florida Statutes), operators are evaluated to determine those who are qualified and subsequently selected to contract with the CTC to provide transportation services within the coordinated system. As operator contracts expire, each existing operator has an opportunity to renew their contract, based upon contract fulfillment. The following table reflects the maximum (not-to-exceed) reimbursement rates.

The RFQ remains in full force and effect for a period of one year. Rate increases will only be considered if additional funding is obtained from funding agency, such as the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged for TD services.

In the event funds to provide said services become unavailable then all contracts and agreements will be null and void.

Part III- Quality Assurance –Element B – Monitoring and Evaluation

Quality Assurance monitoring and evaluation occurs at many levels of the TD Program.

The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) - Quality Assurance Performance Reviews (QAPE).

The CTD conducts reviews of each CTC in the state of Florida, on a regular two-year cycle. The Polk CTC's last QAPE by the CTD was conducted in 2018. The CTD has recently indicated that Polk will be visited again in FY 2019-20, to review the FY 2018-19 fiscal year.

The Process by which the LCB Conducts the Annual Evaluation of the CTC

The Community Transportation Coordinator role, is the result of a contract between the CTC and the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. It is not a local contract. Nevertheless, the Polk LCB serves as “the eyes and ears of the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged,” and so, a primary task of the TD LCB is to continually evaluate the services provided by the CTC. The TD LCB must provide the CTD and the TPO with an annual evaluation of the CTC's performance, including a recommendation as to whether to retain the current coordinator.

The purpose of this evaluation is to ensure that the most cost-effective, efficient, non-fragmented, unduplicated, appropriate, reliable, and accountable transportation services are provided to the local TD population.

The CTC is evaluated according to the required sections of the Quality Assurance and Program Evaluation LCB/CTC Evaluation Workbook, which was developed by the CTD. The CTC is also evaluated by locally adopted performance standards, which have been described previously in this document, and which are summarized at **Table 24**.

After the LCB establishes the evaluation period, staff requests the necessary statistical data from the CTC. In addition, staff requests output from on-board MDTs, a select sample of driver logs to review on-time and travel-time performance, and a select sample of eligibility files to ensure compliance and performance in all areas of CTC practices. The CTC Evaluation Subcommittee will also conduct client satisfaction surveys to users of the door-to-door service and the bus pass program. Staff may also contact clients or funding agencies to determine their satisfaction with the TD services received.

Polk TPO staff tabulates this information and draft a report for the review of the TD LCB CTC Evaluation Subcommittee. Staff revises the document per the committee's request and gathers any additional information needed to fully evaluate the CTC's performance.

Next, the evaluation is presented to the full TD LCB for their review and approval, directs staff to make any appropriate revisions, and recommends the adoption of the document. Finally, the evaluation report is forwarded to the CTD and the Polk TPO.

In FY 2018-19, there was a change made to the distribution of the TD Planning Grant funds which are normally allocated to the Designated Official Planning agency. The Designated Official Planning Agency, Polk TPO, uses those funds to staff the Local Coordinating Board, and carry out the required activities of the TD Program. One of those activities is the annual evaluation of the Community Transportation Coordinator. In FY 2018-19, the Legislature changed the language for the distribution of the TD Planning Grant funds, so they would go to the Community Transportation Coordinator. The CTD created a work-around contract so that the Planning Agency would receive funds to carry out the required Planning tasks through the CTC. Because of this, the LCB did not conduct an Evaluation of the CTC's FY 2017-18.

FY 2019/2020 Evaluation Related Highlights EXCERPTED FROM THE FY 2019-20 EVALUATION REPORT for the period July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, (2020).

This is the Evaluation Report for the Community Transportation Coordinator's FY 2019-2020. It is a shorter report than previous years, for two reasons.

First, it is shorter because the Polk TPO, in its role as the Designated Official Planning Agency is conducting the re-designation of the Community Transportation Coordinator in this FY 2020-21 fiscal year. The TPO based its request that the existing CTC be re-designated based upon their on-going satisfactory past performance of the CTC as documented in the past several evaluation reports.

When the CTC re-designation process is under way, the guidance from the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) is that a full evaluation of the CTC is not necessary.

However, in order to maintain the spreadsheets which form the core of the evaluation, the TPO Staff asked to conduct an **optional** "desk audit" style Evaluation. The staff to the CTD concurred with this request.

Second, this Evaluation is shorter because of the Novel Corona Virus which was detected in late 2019, and became named COVID-19 in March 2020. This worldwide Pandemic has created significant impacts for health, society and the economy. Most non-essential businesses were closed in Florida from mid-March 2020 to mid-May 2020, and then under various levels of reduced hours or service for the remainder of the 2020 fiscal year. The Pandemic has had an impact on the coordinated system performance for FY 2019-2020, locally and statewide.

As the COVID-19 Pandemic lock down occurred in March 2020, it was difficult to conduct a full evaluation of the CTC's FY 2019-2020 since the pandemic impacted the operations directly. TPO Planning Staff conducted a modified Evaluation of the CTC, which the LCB reviewed and approved in February 2021.

FY 2019/2020 Evaluation Related Highlights **EXCERPTED FROM THE FY 2019-20 EVALUATION REPORT**

Because of the dynamics occurring in FY 2019-20, we conducted a basic review to compare Polk CTC on local trends from last fiscal year to this fiscal year. We also compared how Polk did in 2019-2020 to how the State did, on selected indicators. We used these Annual Performance Reports (APR) to prepare this Evaluation Report.

Historical performance comparison data is from the Community Transportation Coordinator's **2020 Annual Operating Report (AOR)**. Another primary source used was the FY 2020 Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged **Annual Performance Report, (APR)**. The 2020 APR contains data for the years 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Recommendations for improvement:

No Recommendations were made.

COMMENDATIONS:

FY 2019-2020 proved to be a challenging year for the Polk CTC and for the statewide coordinated program. ***The Polk CTC is to be commended for implementing the many procedures and efforts they made, to operate safely during the pandemic.***

Information from Evaluation of FY 2020-21.

“Evaluation Report --Section 2. Follow-up of previous Evaluations”

The most recent evaluation of the CTC conducted by the LCB was conducted for the period of July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, (2020). The Polk LCB approved the report in June 2021. The COVID Pandemic was just emerging in March 2020, and this impacted schedules and trips.

TPO Staff reviewed recommendations from the Evaluation of the CTC’s FY 2019-20 in May 2022, to see what progress the CTC has made since then.

Recommendations for improvement:

No Recommendations were made.

COMMENDATIONS:

FY 2019-2020 proved to be a challenging year for the Polk CTC and for the statewide coordinated program. ***The Polk CTC is to be commended for implementing the many procedures and efforts they made, to operate safely during the pandemic.***

Area of Noncompliance: None

Recommendation: None

Timeline for Compliance: None

“Evaluation Report -- Section 3. FY 20-21 Evaluation, Observations, and Recommendations”

FY 2020/2021 Evaluation Related Highlights

This evaluation is for FY 2020/21 or the period July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, (2021). Historical performance comparison data is from the Community Transportation Coordinator’s **2020-21 Annual Operating Report (AOR)**. Another primary source used was the FY 2021 Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged **Annual Performance Report, (APR)**. The 2021 APR contains data for the years 2019, 2020, and 2021; **see Figure 1**. The 2020 APR contains data for the years 2018, 2019, and 2020; **see Figure 2**.

An evaluation committee consisting of Polk TPO staff and members of the Local Coordinating Board met with representatives of the CTC virtually, to review the evaluation process. Each member of the LCB committee agreed to take a ride on the paratransit services. One person was able to schedule a trip. Another person was not able to schedule her trip; although, she definitely tried to do so. Their experiences are described in the **Evaluation Workbook**. Polk TPO staff and representatives of the CTC met via teleconference several times to discuss the workbook for FY 2020/21. Polk TPO staff conducted an unannounced inspection of a paratransit vehicle while it was in service and noticed that a few “Standards” policy-signs were missing. These are noted in the **Evaluation Workbook**. The CTC proactively corrected this once they learned of it.

Recommendations for Improvement:

Recommendation #1 Citrus Connection and the Polk TPO are working together to carry out the Major Update of the Transit Development Plan (TDP) for Citrus Connection in the 2022 calendar year. This Major Update is conducted every five years for this 10-year plan. Once this plan update is adopted in October 2022, it is recommended that applicable sections of the TDP be reviewed for inclusion into the next appropriate update of the TDSP. This activity would include the following sections, as examples:

- Goals and Objectives
- Population tables
- Performance Measures
- Local Standards

Timeline for Compliance: March 2023.

Contract Evaluations and Monitoring by the CTC.

The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged requires the CTC to have a written contract monitoring process in place to evaluate its coordination contractors and transportation operators.

Contract compliance monitoring within the Coordinated System is done by management staff and includes on-site visits. Monitoring of standards is done on an annual basis using reports required from providers and reports generated by the CTC's computer assisted scheduling program. Monitoring results are available to assist in the local Coordinating Board's annual review of contract conformance with TDSP standards.

Beginning in FY 2020-21, the will CTC collect ridership and accident information on a monthly basis, and report it to the LCB on a quarterly basis.

The Community Transportation Coordinator conducts on-going monitoring of these aspects:

- Service Effectiveness
- Cost Efficiency and Effectiveness
- Vehicle Utilization
- Service Availability
- Reliability
- Safety and Training
- Monitoring Procedure

The CTC is responsible for assuring that operators and contractors are monitored at least once a year. Monitoring will include annual inspections for the following:

- Vehicles,
- Insurance renewals and updates,
- Staff training,
- License and permit checks,
- Client feedback on performance,
- Non-discrimination policies,
- Invoice verification to include,
 - actual trip length verification,
 - cost per trip verification,
- Accident records,

- Fully allocated cost review,
- System Safety Plan adherence,
- Client complaints, and
- Trip logs.

Contract Evaluation

At the time the CTC receives applications for funding under Federal Transit Administration Section 5310, the TD LCB, Polk TPO, and the CTC review the reasonableness of the application and whether or not the trips could be provided by the CTC. Coordination contracts are only extended to those agencies that can provide transportation more efficiently and cost effectively. Coordination contracts are then reviewed prior to renewal.

LAMTD - Community Transportation Coordinator Vehicle Compliance Policy

SCOPE

- To make sure that Coordinating Agencies are in full compliance with 14-90 regulations.
- Identify responsibilities of the CTC, Coordinating Agency and Monitor.

PROCESS

- (a) Upon completion of a vehicle inspection the Monitor will provide a monitoring report to both the CTC and the Coordinating Agency.
- (b) A formal letter will be sent by the CTC to the Coordinating Agency stating the corrective actions required and the time frame allowed for corrective actions.
- (c) After inspection for compliance, the Monitor will send a formal finding to the CTC and Coordinating Agency.
- (d) If corrective actions have still not been completed by the agency within the time frame identified, the CTC will send a formal letter requesting the vehicle be removed from services until which time the Monitor gives their formal response that the vehicle is in full compliance.
- (e) If discrepancies require immediate removal of vehicle from revenue operations, the CTC will send a formal request for the removal of the identified vehicle from service until which time the Monitor submits a formal response that the vehicle is in full compliance.

DISCREPANCY CATEGORIZATION

1. Discrepancies requiring immediate removal of vehicle from revenue operations:
 - (a) Any defect that will jeopardize the safe operation of the vehicle, including, but not limited to, tires, brakes, steering gear, and exhaust system.
 - (b) A lack of or defects in securement devices, including, but not limited to, seats, seat belts, wheelchair restraints, and child restraints.
 - (c) A lack of or defects in safety devices, including fire extinguishers, first-aid kits, and reflective triangles.
 - (d) Carrying a number of passengers on board the vehicle exceeding the manufacturer's designated rating for the vehicle.
 - (e) Any unsafe transport or stowage of passenger property or any of the following: wheelchairs, child seats, stretchers, personal/portable oxygen, personal assistive devices, or intravenous devices.
 - (f) Absence of any form of communication between the driver and his/her dispatcher.
2. Discrepancies that must be corrected within eight hours before the vehicle may be returned to revenue service:
 - (a) Malfunctioning vehicle air conditioning systems, if applicable for the season.
 - (b) Malfunctioning vehicle heating systems, if applicable for the season.
3. Discrepancies that must be corrected within seven calendar days:
 - (a) Evidence that the vehicle's driver is not following accepted passenger assistance techniques or providing courteous service.
 - (b) Failure to have the provider's identification and vehicle number affixed to the exterior of the vehicle; to have the required placarding on board the vehicle in view of the passengers; and, for the drivers to have proper identification and/or uniforms.
 - (c) Evidence that passengers' consumption of food or beverages is creating an unsafe or unsanitary condition.
 - (d) Vehicle interiors with dirty or damaged seats that could soil items placed in the vehicle or provide discomfort to the passenger.
 - (e) Damage to the vehicle through accidents or wear and tear that does not present a professional image for passengers transported by Polk County-sponsored providers.

Part III- QUALITY ASSURANCE: – Element C—PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The TD Program Performance Measures shown in **Table 27** are derived from the Polk Transportation Disadvantaged Program’s goals, objectives, and strategies, as well as from the service standards and policies contained in the TDSP, and provide the basis for an annual evaluation of the Community Transportation Coordinator.

The Community Transportation Coordinator tracks these metrics, and conducts on-going monitoring of paratransit service and fixed route service.

Table 27. TD Program Performance Measures – 2022-23

Performance Measure	Target
Potential TD Population Served	At least 5%
Percent of Trips on Fixed-Route	At least 35%
Average Cost per Trip	No greater than \$19.00
Average Cost per Paratransit Trip	No greater than \$35.00
Accidents per 100,000 Vehicle Miles (Paratransit)	No more than 1.0
Accidents per 100,000 Vehicle Miles (Fixed-Route)	No more than 1.0
Vehicle Miles between Road Calls (Paratransit)	At least 30,000
Vehicle Miles between Road Calls (Fixed-Route)	At least 10,000
Complaints per 1,000 Paratransit Trips	No more than 2.0
On-Time Performance	At least 90%

From the CTC.

TDSP PART FOUR:

**COST/REVENUE ALLOCATION
AND RATE STRUCTURE
JUSTIFICATION**

COMPONENT

TDSP PART FOUR: COST/REVENUE ALLOCATION AND RATE STRUCTURE JUSTIFICATION COMPONENT

The Novel Corona Virus SARS-CoV-2 was detected in late 2019, and named COVID-19 in March 2020. This worldwide Pandemic has significant impacts for health, society and the economy. Most non-essential businesses were closed in Florida from mid-March 2020 until mid-May 2020. These events have had an impact on system performance for FY 19-20, and it is anticipated there will be resulting economic impacts in FY 2020-2021, also.

PUBLISHED RATES FOR SERVICE

The Polk County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board must annually review, discuss and approve the Rate Calculation Model contained in the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan.

The Commission has established the Rate Calculation Model, a standard process for the development of rates for the transportation services that are arranged or provided by the CTC. This model has been used to develop the local rate for all purchasing agencies, except fixed route and bus passes. The Rate Calculation Model worksheets and rates for services are reviewed and updated annually, and may be found in the **Appendix 16** of the TDSP. This process allows for annual changes based on fluctuating expenditures and revenues and must be approved by the Commission.

Once the CTC presents its rates to the LCB, then, the information contained in the Rate Calculation Worksheets is inserted into the TDSP. This information becomes the "Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund published rates for service" shown in **Table 28. When the CTC invoices the Commission or participating agencies in the coordinated system for trips, the CTC does so according to the "published rates for service."** This is for the demand-response door-to-door TD service.

The Polk TD-LCB reviewed and approved the Rate Model in **Appendix 16** on June 27, 2022. These rates are contained in that Rate Model and are the rates in effect for the CTC's FY 2022-23 fiscal year.

Rates for Service

Table 28. Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund Published Rates for Service, 2022

Type of Service	Per Mile
Ambulatory	\$ 5.09
Wheelchair	\$ 8.73

Note: Per mile reimbursement is calculated using the latest up-to-date technology available, i.e. Trapeze Software and GIS technology.

BUS FARES

When people ride the fixed route transit system, or use the ADA service, these are the fares—what they pay when they board the bus/van.

Table 29. Bus Fares -- 2022

Fare Type	One-Way Fare
Regular Adult	\$1.50
Students (all ages)	\$1.25
Senior Citizens* (65 years and older)	\$0.75
Disabled Citizens*	\$0.75
Children (under 7 years with adult)	Free
ADA/PT Connect	\$2.00
ADA Fixed Route	Free
Children Fixed Route (7 and under accompanied by adult)	Free

*These fares are available to senior citizens and disabled individuals (including those who have illness, injury, or other temporary or permanent incapacity or disability.)

Bus Passes

Bus passes are a way of purchasing rides in advance. Bus passes are utilized whenever possible as a cost-effective means of transporting clients. They will be reimbursed at the current published rates provided in schedules. Current prices for bus passes for the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD) and Winter Haven Area Transit (WHAT) in their respective service areas are presented in **Table 30**.

Table 30. Bus Passes – 2022

Pass Type	Price
Unlimited Monthly Pass (31 days)	\$47.00
Unlimited Weekly Pass	\$12.00
Adult Day Pass	\$3.00
Student Day Pass	\$2.50
Senior/Disabled Day Pass	\$1.50
Senior Weekly Pass	\$9.00
Senior Monthly Pass	31.50
Smart Card	\$2.00

Paratransit (PT) Passes are \$2.00 each and may be purchased as a single pass or in booklets of ten (10) for \$20.00.

CASHLESS FARE

Purpose:

To assist in improving operator performance; to make the travel experience more convenient for the customer.

DEFINITION: "PT Connect" is the single brand name for paratransit (door-to-door) services throughout Polk County, a single brand name and a cashless fare system for door-to-door service.

PROCEDURE: The paratransit operators will no longer accept cash payments on board for the rides. Riders must present a "PT Connect" pass for their fare at the time of boarding. Passes are \$2.00 each and may be purchased as a single pass or in booklets of ten (10):

By Mail: LAMTD

Citrus Connection – 1212 George Jenkins Blvd., Lakeland FL 33802

By Phone: (863) 534-5500 or (863) 688-RIDE (7433)

On-Line: www.ridecitrus.com

In Person:

WHAT Terminal – 555 Ave. "E" NW, Winter Haven

Citrus Connection – 1212 George Jenkins Blvd., Lakeland

Regional Call Center–1290 Golfview Ave., 2nd FL, Bartow (Human Services)

Lakeland Transfer Center: 200 N. Florida Avenue, 33802

Passes may be purchased with cash, Master Card/Visa, debit cards or money orders. Personal checks will not be accepted. A minimum of ten (10) passes must be purchased in a single transaction when using debit or credit cards.

Passengers may call the Regional Mobility Call Center.

NOTE: Also refer to NO PAY COPAY POLICY

Fare Collection Policy *Include No Pay Policy and Cashless Fare Policy

All clients provided transportation services sponsored by the Transportation Disadvantaged Non-Sponsored Trust Fund Program will be required to pay a minimum of \$2.00 for each one-way trip. (Round trip cost will be a minimum of \$4.00.) The actual trip cost will be determined when the trip request is made.

For more information about the cashless fare system, see **Appendix 10.**

Polk TDSP - LIST OF APPENDICIES as of June 2022

These appendices are located in a stand-alone packet

Appendix 1: Florida Coordinated Transportation System

Appendix 2: List of Acronyms

Appendix 3: Glossary of Terms

Appendix 4: CTC's Organizational chart (2022)

Appendix 5: CTD/CUTR Travel Demand Forecast Worksheets August 10, 2021.

Appendix 6: Definition of Handicapped and At-Risk children

Appendix 7: Profile of Older Floridians (2019) DOEA

Appendix 8: Map- Environmental Justice (EJ) Planning areas

Appendix 9: Map- Location of Polk County Hospitals

Appendix 10: Citrus Connection SYSTEM GUIDE

Appendix 11: Paratransit Rider Brochure

Appendix 12A: ADA Program Application (2022)

Appendix 12B: TD Program Application (2022)

Appendix 13: Vehicle Inventory (2022)

Appendix 14: SSPP Certification Forms (2022)

Appendix 15: Grievance and Complaint Procedures and the Form (September 2021)

Appendix 16: Rate Calculation Model (July 1, 2022)

Additional Information: Flyer about the 2021 Transit Summit, follows the Appendices.

All documents in the TDSP and the TDSP Appendix Packet are available in Alternative Formats upon Request