

# FY 2025-26 MINOR UPDATE TO THE 2021/22 – 2025/26 POLK COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED SERVICE PLAN & COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN -- MAJOR UPDATE



## **Polk Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board**

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

FY 2024-25 Minor Update:

**Final; from For the Polk TDLCB meeting on June 16, 2025**



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. Cindy Mitchell 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.

Florida Commission for the



**Transportation  
Disadvantaged**

## **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, Transportation Planning Administrator  
PHONE: (863) 534-6529

### **COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION COORDINATOR (CTC):**

Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD), doing business as  
(d/b/a), Citrus Connection  
ADDRESS: 1212 George Jenkins Boulevard  
Lakeland, FL 33815  
CONTACT: Mr. Tom Phillips, General Manager  
PHONE: (863) 686-7433



**CitrusConnection**  
PROGRESS IN MOTION

### **Polk Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TD LCB):**

Chairman – Vice Mayor Jeremy Clark

# Accessing Services throughout Polk County



Citrus Connection's **Regional Mobility Call Center** is a one-call, one-click center for mobility options. It is located at 1120 George Jenkins Blvd., Lakeland 33815.

- 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.

Citrus Connection offers an online service, a Passenger Portal allowing Para Transit passengers access to their profiles and trips itinerary. Approved ADA passengers may also schedule trips through Passenger Portal.

[www.ridecitrus.com](http://www.ridecitrus.com)

Call Center direct phone number at 863-534-5500

Quality Assurance at 863-733-4242

## LCB Certification of Polk TDSP

The purpose of the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP) is to improve transportation services for persons with disabilities, older adults, individuals with lower incomes and children at risk by ensuring that the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD) doing business as Citrus Connection coordinates transportation resources provided through multiple federal and state programs. Coordination enhances transportation access, minimizes duplication of services, and facilitates the most appropriate, cost-effective transportation possible with available resources. The TDSP is implemented by the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) and the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (TD LCB). The TDSP is updated annually.

Completion of a TDSP is a requirement for receiving certain public transportation funds. The TDSP complies with applicable state regulations as well as federal regulations for a Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan. The TDSP is required for funding from the State Transportation Disadvantaged Program. The Coordinated Plan is required for funding from Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program. The TDSP/Coordinated Plan elements include a development plan, service plan, and quality assurance component.

This TDSP/Coordinated Plan is the updated TDSP for the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD), doing business as Citrus Connection who became the designated Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for Polk County, effective July 1, 2021. The Polk County TDLCB reviewed and approved the TDSP at its regular meeting on June 16, 2025.

The Polk County Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board hereby certifies that it reviewed and approved the 2025-26 Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan June 16, 2025.

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremey Clark, Vice Mayor, City of Davenport  
Chairman, Polk County Transportation Disadvantaged  
Local Coordinating Board

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Karen Somerset, Interim Executive Director  
Florida Commission for the Transportation  
Disadvantaged

**Figure 1: -TDSP ADOPTION ROLL CALL VOTE PAGE -**

(This will be inserted after June 16)

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

<b>POLK LOCAL COORDINATING BOARD MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATION</b>					
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 in fact represent the 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: 		Executive Director		Date	
Ryan Kordek, CPM, GISP				6-12-2025	
-	A Representative of:	Voting Member	Term Expires	Alternate Member	Term Expires
1	Chairperson	Jeremy Clark Vice Mayor of Davenport	Appointed by TPO Board Annually; 2/2023 -present	No alternate	n/a
A	Department of Transportation (FDOT)	Dale Hanson	By office held	Michelle Peronto Victoria Upthegrove Paul Simmons	By office held
B	Department of Children and Families (DCF)	Coleen Collinsworth	By office held	Jacqueline Craft Lizbeth Schmidt	By office held
C	Public Education Community	Lisa Miller	4/2024-4/2027 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Term.)	VACANT	-
D	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or Blind Services.	Diana Buarque	By office held	Maria Fuentes	By office held
E	Representing Veterans	Joseph Lesniewicz IV	By office held	Christopher Murphy	By office held
F	Fla Assoc for Community Action representing the economically disadvantaged in the county.	VACANT	-	Diane Durr	06/23-06/26 (1 <sup>st</sup> Term)
G	Representing elderly in the county;	Vacant	-	VACANT	-
H	Representing the disabled in the county;	Sheryl Brown	10/24-10/27 (1 <sup>st</sup> Term)	VACANT	-
i1	One of Two citizen advocates in the county	Dustin Freitas	06/25-06/28 (1 <sup>st</sup> Term)	VACANT	-
i2	One of Two citizen advocates -- person who uses the transportation service(s)	Vacant	-	VACANT	-
J	A local representative for children at risk	Amy Beascochea	10/24-10/27 (1 <sup>st</sup> Term)	Tonya Akweley.	10/24-10/27 (1 <sup>st</sup> Term)
K	Local Mass Transit or Public Transit System's Board	Nathaniel J. Birdsong, Jr.; Mayor of Winter Haven	By office held (PTA)	Vacant	-
L	A local representative of the Florida Department of Elder Affairs	Kevin Gilds	By office held	Kristina Melling	By office held
M	Local private for profit transportation industry.	VACANT	-	VACANT	-
N	Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)	Karen Wessel	By office held	Aaron Lounsberry	By office held
O	Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)	Jeannette Estes	By office held	Connie Miller	By office held
P	Regional Workforce Development	Stacy Campbell-Domineck <b>VICE-CHAIRPERSON</b>	By office held	VACANT	By office held
Q	Local medical community	Joy Johnson	10/24-10/27 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Term)	Holly Vida	06/23-06/26 (2 <sup>nd</sup> Term)
-	Quorum = 5 seated members or alternates who must be present in the meeting room				

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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. The major update covers the FY 2021-22 to 2025-26 time period and was approved by the Polk LCB in October 2021. Updates to the TDSP are prepared annually and are due by June 30.

### **How the TDSP is organized:**

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

- Development Plan
- Service Plan
- Quality Assurance Component
- 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) – the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District, LAMTD, doing business as (d/b/a), Citrus Connection,
- Designated Official Planning Organization - Polk Transportation Planning Organization (Polk TPO),
- Polk Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (Polk TD LCB).

# **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 80 and the Florida **Food Stamp Income Limit (Poverty) Table 24** on page 78.)

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 **2023-24**, those funding streams included:

<b>Table 1- Polk coordinated trips by funding source</b>	<b>2024 APR trips</b>	<b>%</b>
The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD)	<b>137,641</b>	<b>36 %</b>
Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)	<b>10,584</b>	<b>2.79 %</b>
Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)	<b>19,354</b>	<b>0.51 %</b>
Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA)	<b>0</b>	<b>0 %</b>
Department of Education	<b>43,603</b>	<b>11.49 %</b>
Other sources of funds	<b>168,109</b>	<b>44.31 %</b>
<b>TOTAL TRIPS</b>	<b>379,332</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Polk Annual Performance Report, 2024

The designated CTC in Polk County is the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD)/d/b/a/ Citrus Connection. 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 un-fragmented TD services within its service area.

Citrus Connection’s previous designation as the Polk CTC ran from April 1, 2016, through June 30, 2021. The Polk Transportation Planning Organization conducted a regular process to re-designate a government entity to be the Community Transportation Coordinator from late 2020 to March 2021. Citrus Connection became the designated Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for the Polk County service area effective July 1, 2021, by entering into a five-year Memorandum of Agreement with the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. Citrus Connection provides various types of public transportation services throughout Polk County.

### **CTC Organizational Chart**

**Appendix 4** contains the organizational chart for the Polk Community Transportation Coordinator current as of **January 2025**.

## Consolidation of Three Systems

The Polk County service area was historically composed of three transportation service providers: Citrus Connection, the Winter Haven Area Transit (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, the Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD) became the official CTC.

- The 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, d/b/a Citrus Connection'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, Citrus Connection 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. At that time, WHAT was merged with Citrus Connection.

## **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 County Comprehensive Plan 2025 update
- Polk Transit Vision 2032: Transit Development Plan (TDP) Major Update for Citrus Connection (November 2022.); Citrus Connection – TDP Major Update in 2025-26 for 2037
- Polk County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Unified Planning Work Program

## **Long Range Plan Update Envision 2050**

[www.polkenvision2050.com](http://www.polkenvision2050.com)

In 2025, the Polk TPO began updating the Long Range Transportation Plan for the 2050 horizon year. The Transit Element is being 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 neighborhoods throughout Polk County to identify connectivity and gaps in mobility infrastructure)
- Complete Streets Corridor Feasibility Study
- Evaluation of Sidewalk Coverage for Connectivity
- Roadway Safety Audits



The TPO's goals and objectives for the Envision 2050 LRTP are as follows:

**GOAL:** Develop and **maintain** an integrated **multi-modal** transportation system to provide **safe** travel for all users, the **efficient** movement of goods and services, and to promote **livable** communities and **economic** activity.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- SAFETY – Support safe movement for all users.
- MOBILITY – Enhance connectivity for seamless travel options.
- LIVABILITY – Foster vibrant communities and high quality of life.
- ECONOMY – Drive growth through efficient transportation.
- SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES – Maintain infrastructure and minimizing environmental impacts.
- IMPLEMENTATION – Transform plans into impactful actions.

## Citrus Connection – TDP Major Update in 2025-26 for 2037

### The Transit Development Plan Major Update for Citrus Connection

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 most recent TDP Major Update was adopted by Citrus Connection’s Board of Directors in November 2022. In order to comply with changes to State laws, in 2025, the TPO partnered with Citrus Connection to prepare a TDP major update which will make use of the data being collected for the LRTP 2050 effort. This data includes public surveys, transportation needs, cost estimates, and demographics. Information from this update process will be used by Citrus Connection to make short term changes to its services when feasible. The information also is used to guide future service and investments.

### Polk County’s Comprehensive Plan

In 2025, the Polk TPO staff and the Citrus Connection Planning staff cooperated with Polk County’s Land Development Department, as it goes about its 2050 update to the County’s Comprehensive Plan to carry out a series of “Listening Sessions” to collect public input on a variety of topics, including “transportation.” During this activity, TPO staff attended events in three communities. Some of the public comments were about current transportation needs, and some were more long-term.

<https://www.inspire-engagement.com/polk-county-comp-plan>



## 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

## Polk Transportation Improvement Program, the TIP

### Consistency with Other Plans

The projects included in the TIP are consistent with adopted short- and long-range transportation plans, as well as the master plans of other agencies and jurisdictions in Polk County.

Transportation projects which involve federal participation are also consistent with Momentum 2045, an applicable transit development plan, or airport master plan. Transit projects are consistent with the Transit Development Plan (TDP) and the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP). Projects are also reviewed to ensure their consistency with adopted Comprehensive Plans of Polk County's local governments.

Should a change in project funding, scope or limit arise, the TPO amends the TIP through a TIP amendment process. This process mirrors the procedures required for developing and adopting the TIP. The TPO presents TIP amendments at regularly scheduled TPO Board meetings, and public notices are published in the local newspaper. Social media is also used to promote the public hearing, as well as a list of email contacts from the Adviser Network. Final approval of amendments by the TPO Board is done via a roll call vote consistent with subsection 339.175(13) F.S.



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
  - Specifically includes FTA 5310, FTA 5311, FTA 5339 grant funds for recipients located in the Lakeland UZA and the Winter Haven UZA
- 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.

### Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) -TD Annual Element

The FY **2025-2026** estimated allocations from the TD Trust Fund (TDTF) are as follows:

- Trip-Equipment Grant, and Voluntary Dollars

<b>TEG Allocation</b>	<b>Local Match</b>	<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>TOTAL ALLOCATION</b>
\$1,314,949	\$ 146,105	\$1,461,104	
<b>Voluntary Dollars</b>	<b>Local Match</b>	<b>Total funding</b>	
<b>\$45.00</b>	<b>\$5.00</b>	<b>\$50.00</b>	<b>\$1,461,154.00</b>

- TD Planning Grant, **\$40,412.00**

Source: CTD, March 2025, estimates.

For the complete TIP, visit the Polk TPO's website:

<https://polktpo.com/plans-and-projects/transportation-improvement-plan/>

Then, check the table of contents to find the section on Transit.

## **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 buses at major bus stops and transfer centers, and, on its website: [www.ridecitrus.com](http://www.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. Information is distributed electronically.
6. Announcements placed on social media outlets including:



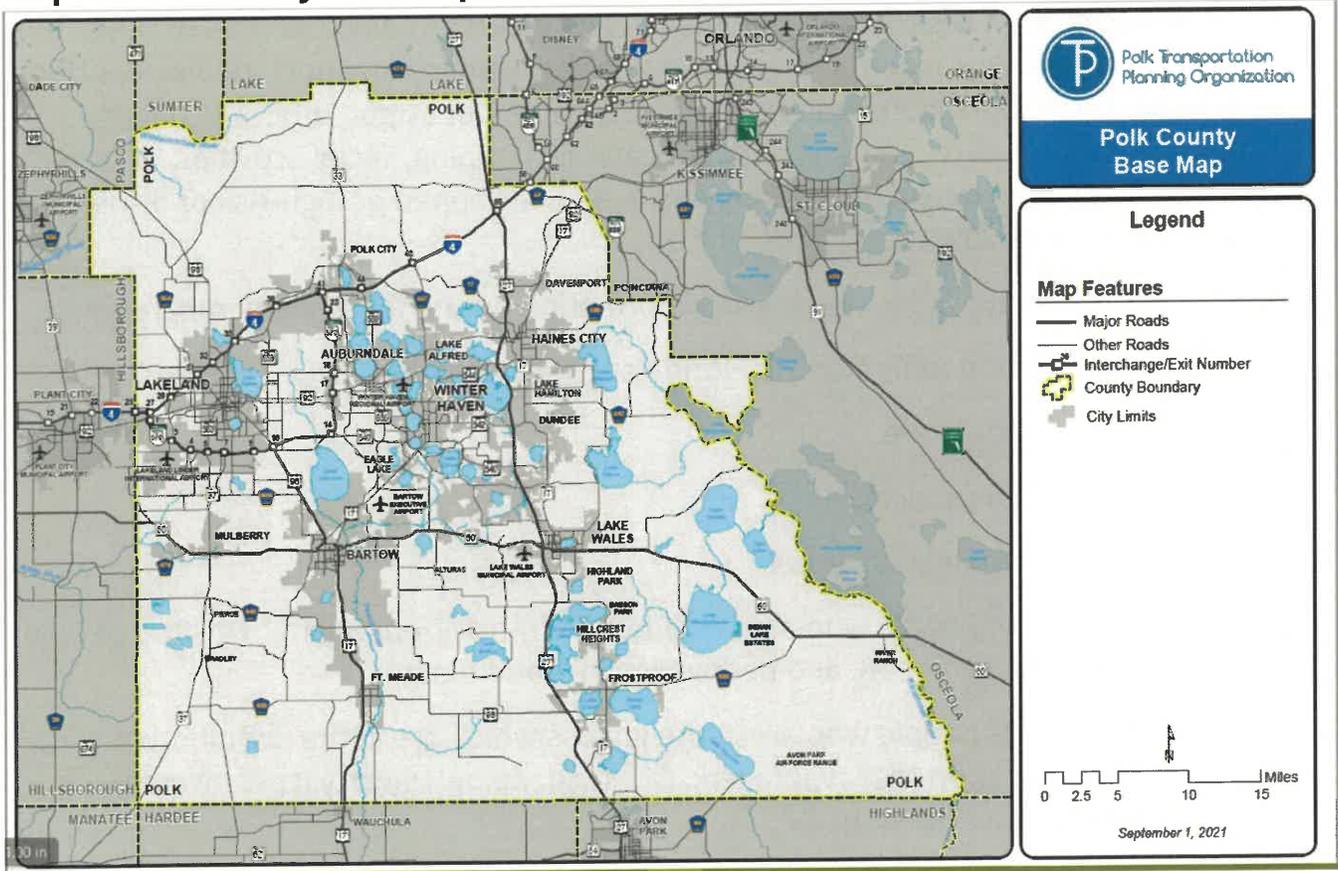
From mid-March 2020 to present, the contagious and deadly Novel Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19), as well as its variants has impacted the Polk TPO’s ability to interact with the public and seek their input. To accommodate this, the TPO has implemented more creative mechanisms for public engagement and 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 face 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. In this Minor Update, we have updated demographics tables based upon the new US Census data.

### 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 the TDSP MAJOR UPDATE, (**adopted October 2021**) the TPO fully updated the "CTD/CUTR Travel Demand Forecast Estimating Worksheets." We excerpted 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 54). 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, 2022."	787,404	3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16
BEBR, (for 2022)	770,019	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) <b>2024</b>	<b>379,332</b> Trips	1, 19
AOR		15

## Population

According to the U.S. Census, the total population for Polk County was 725,046 in 2020. The 2022 estimate is 787,404, an increase of 8.6%. This is a 4.3% annual growth rate over the two-year period. **Table 3** shows the population characteristics of Polk County and Florida from 2020-2022. **Table 4** compares population growth from 2021 to 2022 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 2020-2022.**

Population Data	2020		2022		% Change (2020-2022)	
	Polk County	Florida	Polk County	Florida	Polk County	Florida
Persons	725,046	21,538,187	787,404	22,244,823	8.6%	3.3%
Households	231,260	8,157,420	253,178	10,257,426	9.48%	25.74%
Persons per Household	2.84	2.65	2.77	2.57	2.5%	3.02%
Land area (square miles)	1,798	53,624.76	1,797.76	53,652.17	n/a	n/a
Persons per Sq. Mile of Land Area (Density)	403	400	403.3	401.4	.07%	.35%

Source: "US Census Bureau Quick Facts about Polk County, 2022."

**Table 4. Population Characteristics of Polk County and Florida from 2021-2022.**

Population Data	2021		2022		% Change (2021-2022)	
	Polk County	Florida	Polk County	Florida	Polk County	Florida
Persons	755,179	21,828,069	787,404	22,244,823	4.2%	1.3%
Households	253,178	10,257,426	253,178	10,257,426	N/A	N/A
Persons per Household	2.77	2.57	2.77	2.57	N/A	N/A
Land area (square miles)	1,797.76	53,652.17	1,797.76	53,652.17	N/A	N/A
Persons per Sq. Mile of Land Area (Density)	403.3	401.4	403.3	401.4	N/A	N/A

Source: "US Census Bureau Quick Facts about Polk County, 2021." \*2022 Data not yet available for certain sections

## 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 2010-2020-2022. There is tremendous growth of the population in the urbanized areas.

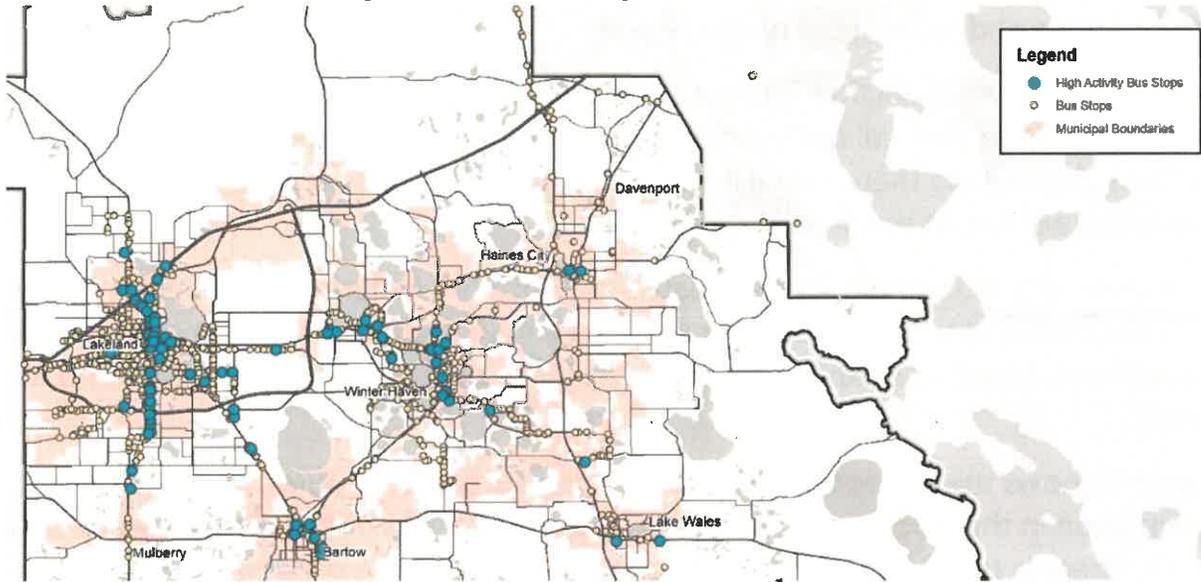
**Table 5 – Population Trends for Cities, Towns and Unincorporated Areas, (Incorporated areas versus unincorporated areas) 2010-2022**

Municipality	2010	2020	April 1, 2022, Estimate	% Change (2010-2020)	% Change (2020-2022)
Incorporated (Urban Area)	226,520	277,373	303,822	22.45%	34.13%
Unincorporated (Rural Area)	376,385	437,717	466,197	16%	23.86%
Total	602,095	715,090	<b>770,019</b>	18.77%	27.89%
Percent Incorporated (Urban)	37.43%	37.57%	39.46%		
Percent Unincorporated (Rural)	62.57%	62.43%	60.54%		

Source: BEBR Report 2022

**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.

### **Urbanized Areas in Polk County**

In January 2022, the U.S. Census (2020) released the urbanized area boundaries and associated population attributed to those areas. As a result of the 2020 US Census, some of the communities in the Four Corners area, have become new urban areas within Polk County. These additional urbanized areas in Polk County will have an impact on how Federal Transit Administration funds are distributed in this region in the next few years.

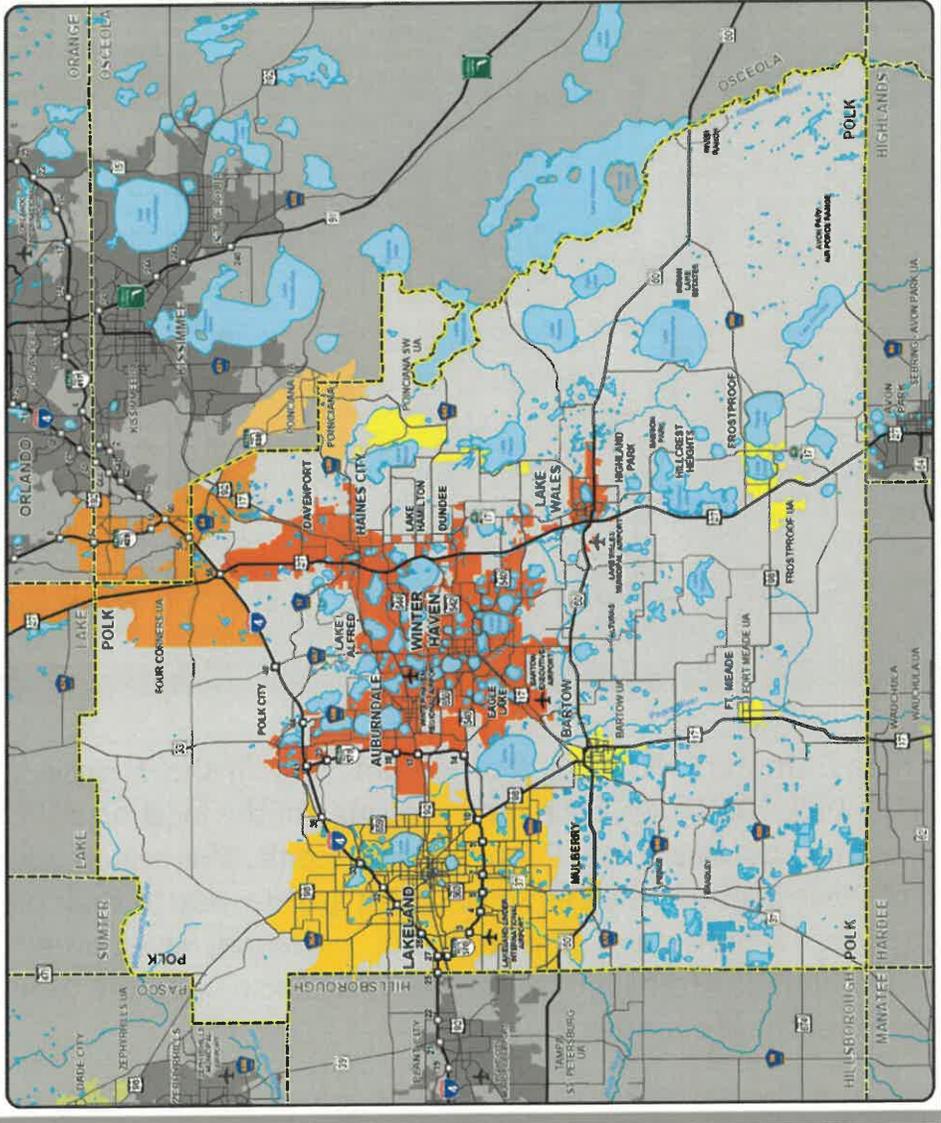
Polk Transportation Planning Organization  
 Agenda Item 8  
 Attachment 1

# Polk County 2020 Urbanized Areas

- Urbanized Area (UA) Boundaries**
- Lakeland (277,915)
  - Winter Haven (253,251)
  - Four Corners (92,396)<sup>1</sup>
  - Poinciana (53,267)<sup>1</sup>
  - Urban Areas < 50,000 population
  - Other Urbanized Areas (Outside Polk County)
- Note: The TPO Study Area includes the Lakeland and Winter Haven THAs, as well as all of Polk County.*

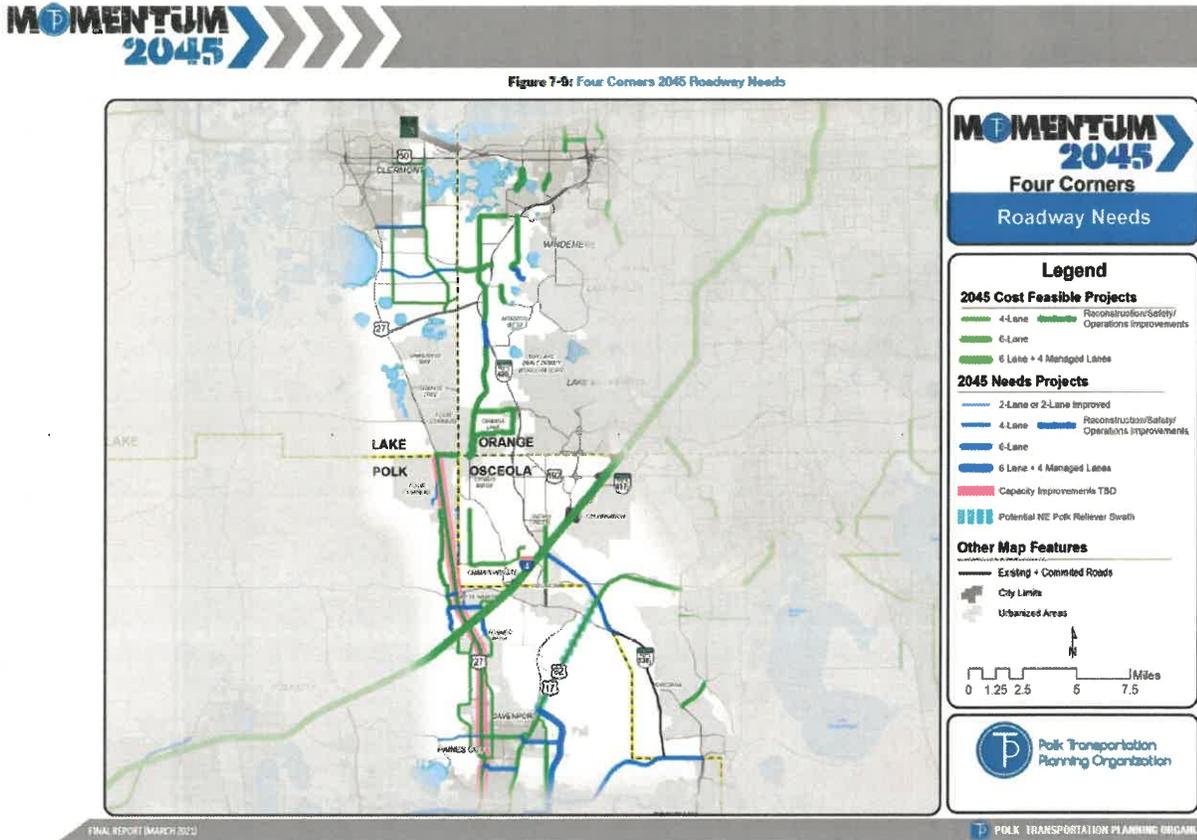
**Urbanized Area (UA) Population**

UA	2020	2010
Lakeland	277,915	262,596
Winter Haven	253,251	201,289
Avon Park - Sebring	63,297	61,625
Kissimmee	418,404	314,071
Orlando	1,853,896	1,510,516
Tampa/St. Pete	2,783,045	2,441,770
Zephyrhills	55,133	66,609
Poinciana 1	53,267	41,922
Four Corners 1	92,396	35,549
Frostproof	8,092	7,626
Fort Meade	4,874	6,234
Poinciana SW	16,966	5,501
Barstow 2	16,948	NA
Wauchula	9,790	14,621



## 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 Elementry 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 2022 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, Auburndale, and Davenport. The municipalities with the greatest population changes from 2020-2022 were Haines City, (19.9%), Davenport (19.69%) and Eagle Lake (12.73%). While the Unincorporated (Rural) population is greater than the Incorporated (Urban) population, from 2020 to 2022, the population growth rate of incorporated municipalities (8.45%) – 4.23% per year-- exhibited a faster increase than the population growth rate of the unincorporated area (4.79%) --2.40% per year.

**Table 6 – Estimates of Population by County and City in Florida, 2020-2022 (Polk)**

Municipality	April 2010 Census	April 2020 Census	April 2022 Estimate	Number changed (2020-2022)	% Change (2020-2022)
<b>Polk County</b>	602,095	725,046	770,019	44,973	6.2%
Auburndale	13,507	15,616	17,453	1,837	11.76%
Bartow	17,298	19,309	19,653	344	1.78%
Davenport	2,888	9,043	10,824	1,781	19.69%
Dundee	3,717	5,235	5,575	340	6.49%
Eagle Lake	2,255	3,008	3,391	383	12.73%
Fort Meade	5,626	5,100	5,173	73	1.43%
Frostproof	2,992	2,877	2,998	121	4.21%
Haines City	20,535	26,669	31,979	5,310	19.9%
Highland Park	230	251	246	-5	-1.99%
Hillcrest Heights	254	243	243	0	0.00%
Lake Alfred	5,105	6,374	6,762	388	6.09%
Lake Hamilton	1,213	1,537	1,560	23	1.5%
Lakeland	97,422	112,641	120,279	7,638	6.78%
Lake Wales	14,225	16,361	17,359	998	6.1%
Mulberry	3,817	3,952	4,040	88	2.23%
Polk City	1,562	2,713	2,956	243	8.96%
Winter Haven	33,874	49,219	53,331	4,112	8.35%
Incorporated	226,473	280,148	303,822	23,674	8.45%
Unincorporated	376,385	444,898	466,197	21,299	4.79%

Source: BEBR Report 2022

## 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, 2022**

County Population by Age	Total Population by Age	Population Below Poverty Level by Age	Total Population with a Disability by Age	Total Population with Disability and Below Poverty Level by Age
< 5 Years of Age	41,656	11,347	46	0
5-17	122,547	23,906	7,140	2,546
18-34	155,468	24,206	9,648	2,494
35-64	271,477	24,970	41,170	10,145
Total Non-Elderly	591,148	84,429	58,004	15,185
65-74	84,955	5,335	19,662	3,741
75+	63,029	4,460	26,646	3,059
Total Elderly	147,984	9,795	46,308	6,800
Total	739,132	94,224	104,312	21,985

Source: <https://data.census.gov>

B18130 Age by Disability Status by Poverty Status

SOURCE: from the US Census to obtain the 2022-year data on Polk County population “with or without disabilities; with or without low-income; and, by age. The base year is 2022 and the total county population = 739,132. These are the most current data available in May 2023.

### Age – Elderly

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.

## Children who are handicapped or high-risk or at-risk

The Transportation Disadvantaged definition also counts “children who are handicapped or high-risk or at-risk as defined in s.411.202” as potentially eligible for transportation services, depending upon their circumstances. The definition uses the word ‘handicapped,’ although that term has been updated to ‘disabled.’ 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 42,219 children (5.6% of the total county population) are “at risk.”

Those two groups – Elderly, and pre-school aged children total 191,620 people, or, 25.43% of the total Polk population. **Table 8 provides** the number of people living in Polk County, as well as the percentages of the total. There were 604,119 people (80.17%) who are “non-elderly” and, 149,401 people (19.83%) who are elderly. The Transportation Disadvantaged definition counts all people who are Elderly, as potentially eligible for transportation services, depending upon their circumstances<sup>1</sup>. Thus, 149,401 people (19.83% of the total County population) are elderly.

**Table 8 – Age Distribution of Polk, 2022**

County Population by Age	Total Population 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	42,219	5.6%	42,219	22.03%
5-17	124,557	16.53%	0	0
18-34	161,724	21.46%	0	0
35-64	275,619	36.58%	0	0
<b>Total Non-Elderly</b>	<b>604,119</b>	<b>80.17%</b>	<b>42,219</b>	<b>22.03%</b>
65-74	85,381	11.33%	85,381	44.56%
75+	64,020	8.5%	64,020	33.41%
<b>Total Elderly</b>	<b>149,401</b>	<b>19.83%</b>	<b>149,401</b>	<b>77.97%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>753,520</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>191,629</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sources: [https://data.census.gov/S0101\\_AGE\\_AND\\_SEX](https://data.census.gov/S0101_AGE_AND_SEX)

<sup>1</sup> “...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.

## TRANSIT DEPENDENT/NOT TRANSIT DEPENDENT

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 316,177 people in Polk County (41.96% of the 2021 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, 2022 (Transit Dependent)**

County Population by Age	Total Population by Age	Transit Dependent	Percent of population who are Transit Dependent
< 5 Years of Age	42,219	42,219	5.6%
5-17	124,557	124,557	16.53%
18-34	161,724	0	0%
35-64	275,619	0	0%
<b>Total Non-Elderly</b>	<b>604,119</b>	<b>166,776</b>	<b>22.13%</b>
65-74	85,381	85,381	11.33%
75+	64,020	64,020	8.50%
<b>Total Elderly</b>	<b>149,401</b>	<b>149,401</b>	<b>19.83%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>753,520</b>	<b>316,177</b>	<b>41.96%</b>

Source:

[https://data.census.gov/S0101\\_AGE\\_AND\\_SEX](https://data.census.gov/S0101_AGE_AND_SEX)

### 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 94,224 people are living below the poverty level in Polk County. That's 10.40% of the total population. Of the children 5 and younger, 27.24% of the total number of children in that age group (11,347) are living below the poverty levels. Of all the people living in poverty, 23,906 or 19.51% of children are below poverty.

**Table 10 – Poverty Distribution of Polk, 2022**

County Population by Age	Total Population 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	41,656	11,347	27.24%	12.04%
5-17	122,547	23,906	19.51%	25.37%
18-34	155,468	24,206	15.57%	25.69%
35-64	271,477	24,970	9.20%	26.50%
<b>Total Non-Elderly</b>	<b>591,148</b>	<b>84,429</b>		<b>89.60%</b>
65-74	84,955	5,335	6.28%	5.66%
75+	63,029	4,460	7.08%	4.73%
<b>Total Elderly</b>	<b>147,984</b>	<b>9,795</b>		<b>10.40%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>739,132</b>	<b>94,224</b>	<b>12.75%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: <https://data.census.gov> B18130 Age by Disability Status by Poverty Status

## Standard of Living – Income and Poverty Level

The most current data show that the Polk County per capita income in past twelve months (2021 dollars for 2022) was \$27,909 for Polk County. The Median household income for this same period was \$55,099.

**Table 11 – Standard of Living, Polk 2022**

Standard of Living	2022
	Polk County
Polk County per capita income in past twelve months (in 2021 dollars)	\$27,909
Median household income (in 2021 dollars)	\$55,099

*Source: Census quick facts Polk County, FL/New LEP*

The Community Transportation Coordinator uses more current poverty information as part of the eligibility criteria for transportation services. (See Table 24 on PAGE 72 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 104,312 people are considered disabled in Polk County. That's 14.11% of the total population. Of the children 5 and younger 0.11% of the total number of children in that age group (41,656) are people with a disability. Of all the people with a disability, 46 or 0.11% are children 5 years old and younger.

**Table 12 – Age, Disabilities Distribution of Polk, 2022**

County Population by Age	Total Population 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	41,656	46	0.11%	0.04%
5-17	122,547	7,140	5.83%	6.84%
18-34	155,468	9,648	6.21%	9.25%
35-64	271,477	41,170	15.17%	39.47%
<b>Total Non-Elderly</b>	<b>591,148</b>	<b>58,004</b>	<b>9.81%</b>	<b>55.61%</b>
65-74	84,955	19,662	23.14%	18.85%
75+	63,029	26,646	42.28%	25.54%
<b>Total Elderly</b>	<b>147,984</b>	<b>46,308</b>	<b>31.29%</b>	<b>44.39%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>739,132</b>	<b>104,312</b>	<b>14.11%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: <https://data.census.gov>

B18130 Age by Disability Status by Poverty Status

### People under age 65 with Disabilities

Many 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 12** indicates that 58,004 people in Polk County - fully 55.61% 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 2022 data, **Table 13**, shows that Polk County's minority population is 22.90 percent. This information is provided since historically, people who are minorities also tend to have lower income than non-minorities, and sometimes also have less access to transportation.

**Table 13 – Race and Hispanic Origin 2022**

Race and Hispanic Origin	Polk County, 2022
White alone, percent	78.00 %
Black or African American alone, percent	16.80 %
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	2.50 %
Hispanic or Latino, percent	27.40 %
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	53.90 %

*Source: Census quick facts Polk County, FL/TPO's Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP)*

## 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](http://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 LRTR. The 2020 update showcases changes since that time and provides a more accurate picture of the current transportation needs of these 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 in Polk County (See previous Figure 5-2 for EJ Map).

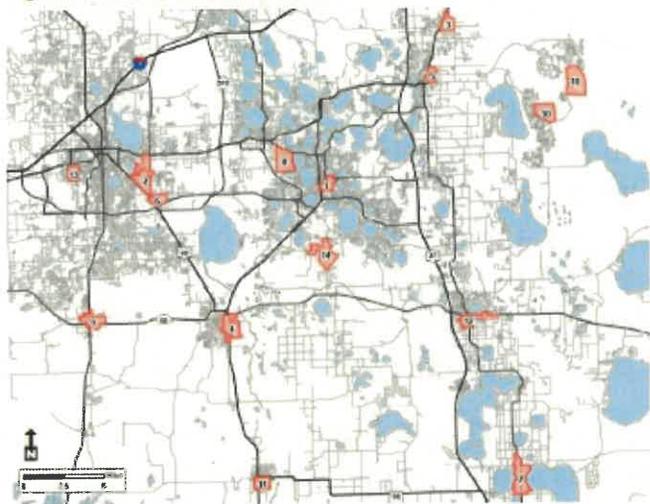
Fourteen EJ areas were identified for Neighborhood Mobility Audits and are mapped in Figure 5-7. These mobility audits evaluate resident access to jobs and essential services within these neighborhoods and in Polk County. Since low-income households are two to three times more likely to use public transportation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

The 2020 updates 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 have been proposed, programmed, and constructed. In all a total of 80 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.

#### Mobility Audit Locations

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

Figure 5-7 - Mobility Audit Locations in Polk County



5-8
POLK TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION
FINAL REPORT (MAY 2022)

## 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. While you might still have a desktop 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: [www.ridecitrus.com](http://www.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 92.50% of the Polk County households have access to a computer. It is not clear whether this access is located in their homes. Since the information shows that only 80.30% 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 2022**

Computers and Broadband	Polk County
	2022
Households	253,178
Persons under 18 years old, percent	22.10%
Households with a computer, percent	92.50%
Households with a broadband internet subscription, percent	80.30%

*Source: Census quick facts Polk County, FL/New LEP*

## 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.

**Table 15 illustrates the number of trips made for the past 5 years, by trip purpose.**

<b>Table 15: Trip Purpose</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Medical	66,102	62,199	71,796	64,985	76,748
Employment	4,112	5,215	7,381	7,412	10,427
Education/Training/Sheltered Day Care	115,832	41,840	54,126	43,310	47,157
Nutritional	14,910	5,150	3,050	6,400	8,675
Life-sustaining/Other	441,592	224,658	176,703	158,319	191,079
<b>TOTAL TRIPS</b>	<b>642,548</b>	<b>339,062</b>	<b>313,056</b>	<b>280,426</b>	<b>334,086</b>

*Source: Annual Operating Reports FY 20-21, FY 21-22, FY 22-23, FY 23-24 Comparison Polk County*

*Decline in 2021 and 2022 compared to 2020, is due to the COVID Pandemic.*

## 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.

For definitions of these trip purposes, please refer to the PRIORITIZATION POLICY on page 80 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. There is a small Veteran's Clinic in Lakeland, which opened in 2017. It is often necessary to transport clients who need specialized services to the Tampa or Orlando areas. The average length of a trip to these areas is 50-60 miles (one way). A new Veteran's medical facility opened in central Lakeland in the Summer of 2024, and this has improved access to services.

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. The parking lots are large, so you must 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. They sometimes must go to the Emergency Room for treatment, sometimes of conditions which are preventable, if they had insurance and access to the medical system. People with health insurance can typically plan their medical care in advance. These preventative care trips are known in advance, and a person has time to make a trip request in advance for this care. This helps the coordinated transportation system.

**Table 16 – People without Health Insurance Polk 2022**

<b>People without health insurance</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>Polk County</b>
Population	725,046
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years old	16%
(Estimated) Number of people in Polk without Health Insurance	116,007

*Source: Census quick facts Polk County, FL/New LEP*

## **FOOD**

Access to nutritious food is a fundamental need. Eligible individuals may utilize the 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.

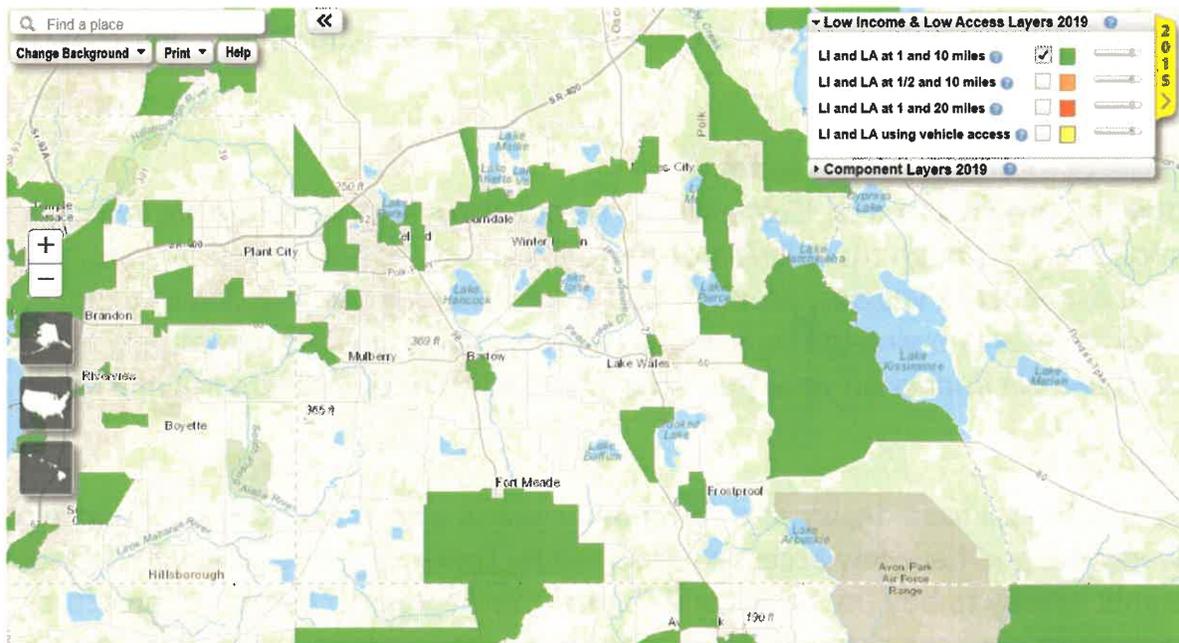
The USDA defines a food desert as a community where a large proportion of households are low-income and have low access to fresh foods. There might be convenience stores or restaurants nearby to buy the basics and shelf-stable processed items, but an actual grocery store or supermarket with fresh foods 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**



<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. You can order food from a grocery store (using their 'app,') and have it delivered. The food might cost more, but this service greatly improves access to food for many people. (This frees up trips on the coordinated system.)

Citrus Connection has identified Food Deserts as an important problem and works in partnership to provide solutions. These partnerships include:

- Lakeland Downtown Development Association (LDDA) service on Saturday to the Farmers Market.
- Lake Wales - New route providing access to food distribution and healthcare.

### **Employment**

In 2020, the percentage of Polk County population 16 years of age and older in the labor force was at 52.3 percent compared to the state average of 58.9 percent. The percent of labor force employed was 55.3 percent for Polk County with the state at 55.4 percent. It

should be noted, however, that the unemployment rate in Polk County was 2.7 percent in 2022 which is higher than the state average at 2.2 percent.

**Table 17 - Changes in Unemployment for Polk County, Florida and the US 2021-2022**

<b>Unemployment</b>	<b>December 2022</b>	<b>November 2022</b>	<b>December 2021</b>
Polk County	2.7%	3.2%	3.4%
Florida Not Seasonally Adjusted	2.2%	2.6%	2.9%
Florida Seasonally Adjusted	2.5%	2.6%	3.5%
United States Not Seasonally Adjusted	3.3%	3.4%	3.7%
United States Seasonally Adjusted	3.5%	3.6%	3.9%

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 17A. Unemployment for Polk County, Florida, and the US, December 2024**

<b>Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>December 2024</b>
Polk County	<b>3.8%</b>
Florida Not Seasonally Adjusted	<b>3.1%</b>
Florida Seasonally Adjusted	<b>3.4%</b>
United States Not Seasonally Adjusted	<b>3.8%</b>
United States Seasonally Adjusted	<b>4.1%</b>

Source: [https://lmsresources.labormarketinfo.com/charts/unemployment\\_rate.html](https://lmsresources.labormarketinfo.com/charts/unemployment_rate.html)

## Top Employers in Polk County

This table is a list of the largest employers in Polk County. However, these employees do not all work at the same location. It should be noted that not all the employees at each location work 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

	<b>Table 18 - List of Top 10 Employers</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>
1	Publix	Groceries	8008
2	Lakeland Regional Health	Healthcare	6000
3	Geico	Insurance	3,300
4	Amazon Air Hub & Distribution	Retail	2000
5	Watson Clinic	Healthcare	1857
6	Southeastern University	Education	1072
7	Saddle Creek Logistics Services	Logistics	1289
8	Midstate Machine & Fab	Fabrication & Machining	900
9	Rooms To Go	Furniture	827
10	Advance Auto Parts	Auto Parts	615

Updated 2025 Source: <https://lakelandcdc.com/major-employers/>

### 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 paces 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. As a

result, then the transit system must decide how to adjust its routes to serve the new facilities.

## **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. Workplaces 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 triggered a depressed economy.

### **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 required 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. People could take their computers to many shops, and public buildings and access the internet that way. 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 laptops 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 continued, Citrus Connection communicated 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**

As of June 2024, the COVID-19 Pandemic has joined the list of communicable diseases that people should be aware of. Except for some medical facilities which request clients wear face masks, there are no business restrictions in Florida.

### **Inventory of Available Transportation Services**

#### **Citrus Connection**

Lakeland Area Mass Transit District (LAMTD) is a special taxing district which provides fixed route transportation and other services throughout Polk County, through Citrus Connection. Citrus Connection became the designated Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for Polk County in April 2016. Citrus Connection 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.

**The routes have been updated annually since 2020.**

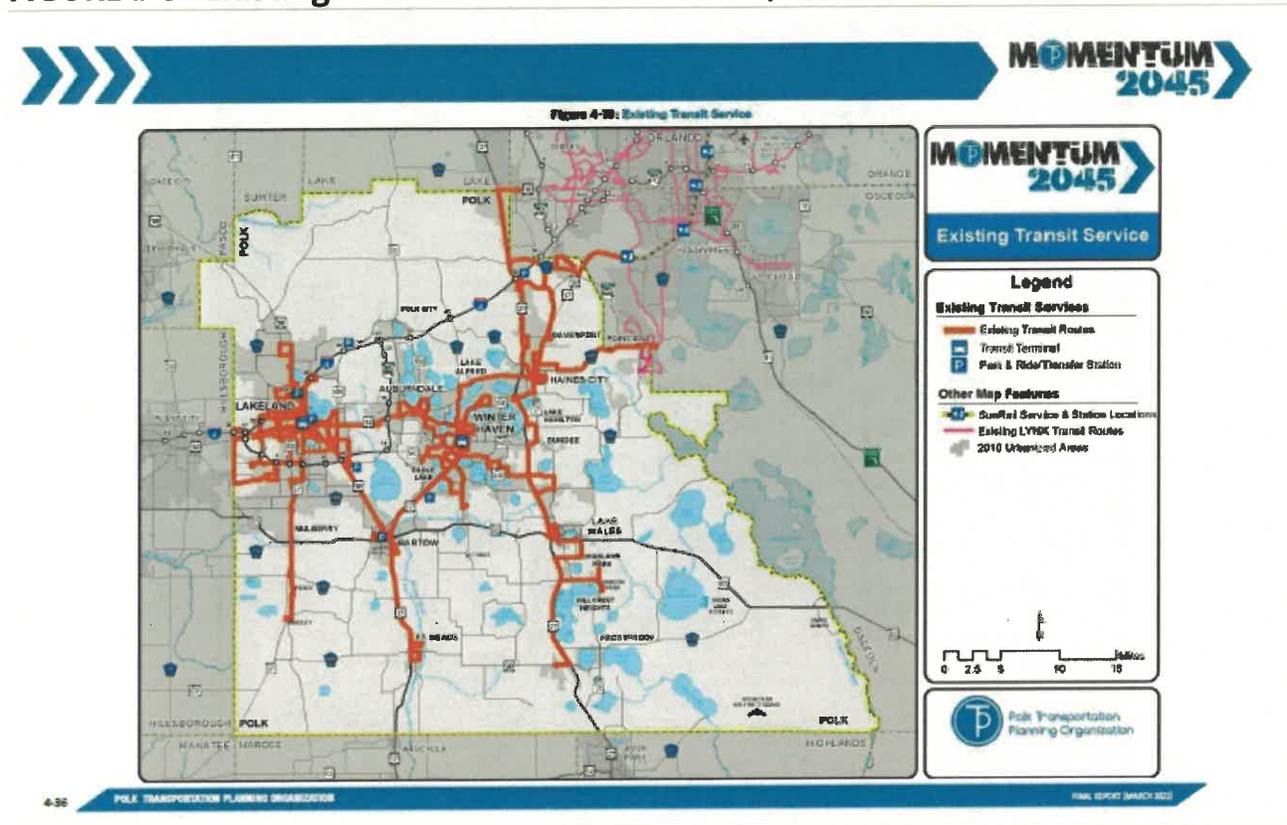
Visit [www.ridecitrus.com](http://www.ridecitrus.com)

**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.

<b>Table 19: Trips by type of service</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>%</b>
Fixed Route (FR)	248,986	65.6%
Deviated Fixed Route	7,582	1.9%
Complementary ADA	54,122	14.2%
Paratransit	68,642	18%
Other types of service providers: TNC, Taxi, School Bus, Volunteers	0	0.00%
<b>TOTAL TRIPS</b>	<b>379,332</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Annual Performance Report FY 2023-2024*

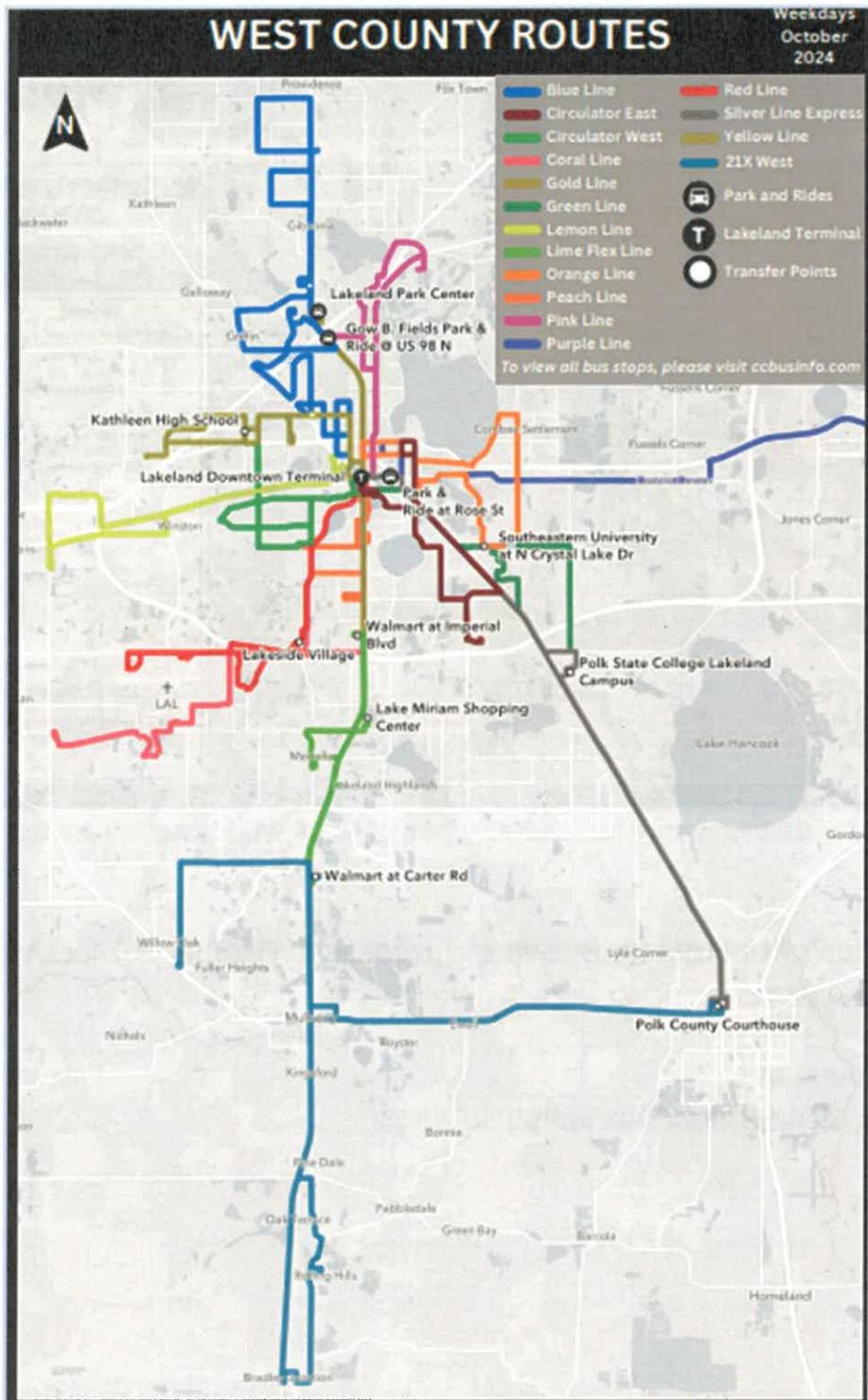
**FIGURE # 8 - Existing Fixed Route Transit Service, Polk**



Citrus Connection’s fixed route bus routes, current as of October 2024, can be found on the following two pages.

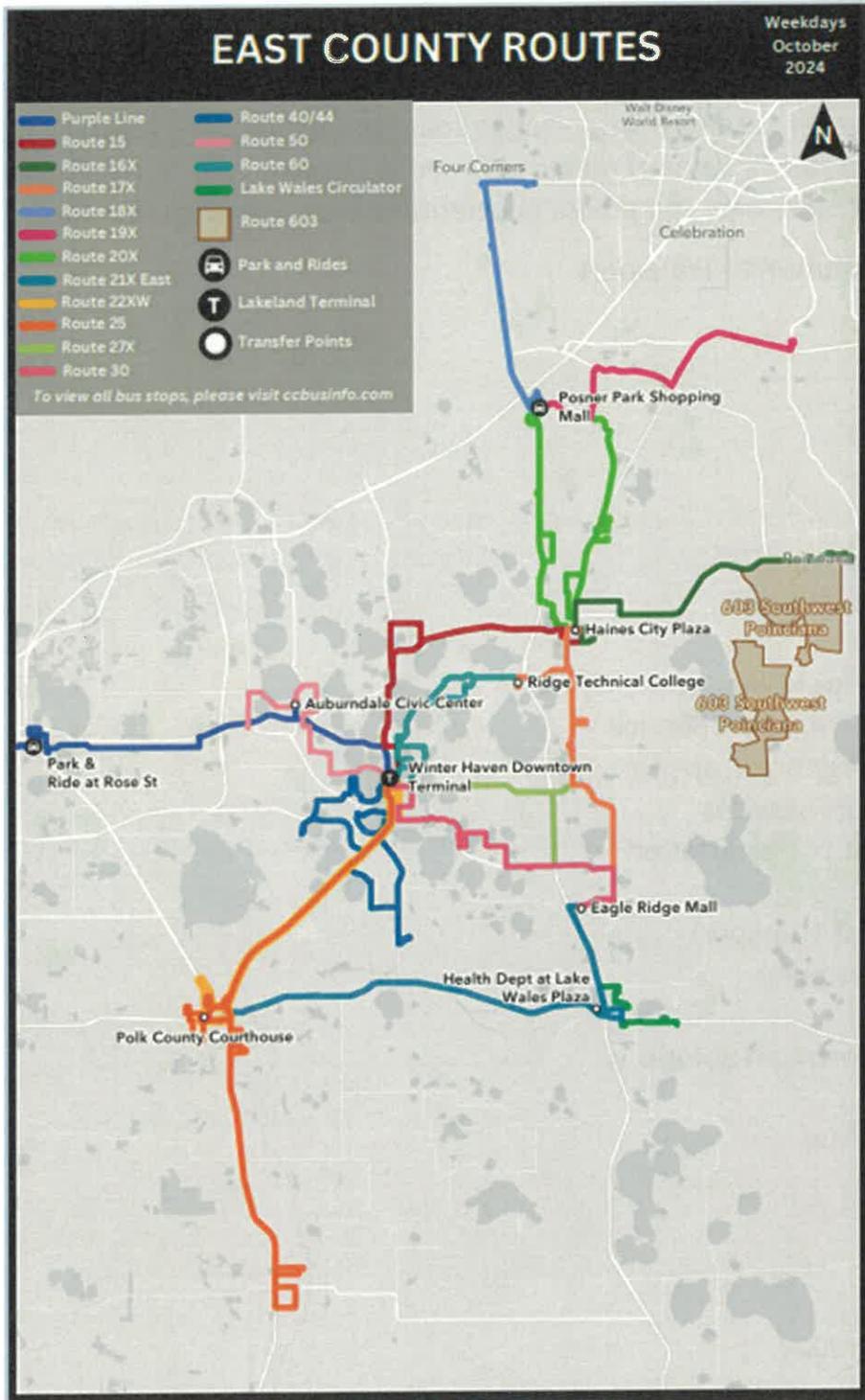
These can be found at:

[www.ridecitrus.com/services/bus-systems/routes/](http://www.ridecitrus.com/services/bus-systems/routes/)



**Citrus Connection's West Polk County Routes, October 2024**

[www.ridecitrus.com/services/bus-systems/routes/](http://www.ridecitrus.com/services/bus-systems/routes/)



**Citrus Connection's West Polk County Routes, October 2024**

[www.ridecitrus.com/services/bus-systems/routes/](http://www.ridecitrus.com/services/bus-systems/routes/)

## **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 Taxicab  
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 updated: 10/2024.

Please note: The agencies which have Coordination Contracts with the Polk CTC are listed on Page 83.

## **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 Polk TDSP Major Update was adopted in October 2021. 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.

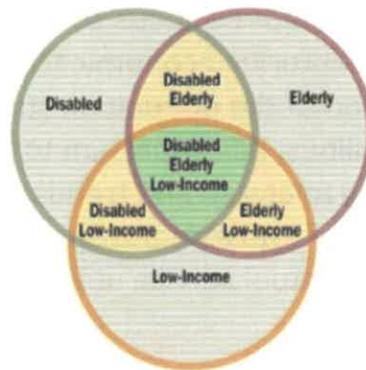
Persons with disabilities or seniors who strive to maintain their independence by accessing public transportation may find it preferable or necessary to rely on family or friends for their transportation needs if the publicly available services do not meet their travel needs. Senior citizens who qualify 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 Pop with Disability and Below Poverty Level by Age	% Total Pop with a Disability and Below Poverty Level by Age
< 5 Years of Age	39,743	5.6%	11,680	1.6%	122	0.1%	65	0.37%
5-17	115,568	16.3%	21,288	3.0%	9,497	1.3%	2,400	0.34%
18-34	151,338	21.3%	23,558	3.3%	10,601	1.5%	2,199	0.31%
35-64	256,306	36.1%	28,931	4.1%	37,883	5.3%	7,116	1.00%
<b>Total Non Elderly</b>	<b>562,955</b>	<b>79.3%</b>	<b>85,457</b>	<b>12.0%</b>	<b>58,103</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>11,780</b>	<b>1.66%</b>
65-74	82,796	11.7%	8,703	1.2%	19,245	2.7%	2,832	0.40%
75+	64,028	9.0%	5,184	0.7%	28,284	4.0%	2,895	0.41%
<b>Total Elderly</b>	<b>146,824</b>	<b>20.7%</b>	<b>13,887</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>47,529</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>5,727</b>	<b>0.81%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>709,779</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>99,344</b>	<b>14.0%</b>	<b>105,632</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>17,507</b>	<b>2.47%</b>

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:



## 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%		
<b>Total Non-Elderly</b>	<b>58,103</b>		<b>6,315</b>	<b>1.12%</b>	<b>28.60%</b>	<b>1,806</b>
65-74	19,245	27.12%	5,219	6.30%		
75+	28,284	46.55%	13,166	20.56%		
<b>Total Elderly</b>	<b>47,529</b>		<b>18,385</b>	<b>12.52%</b>	<b>11.70%</b>	<b>2,151</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>105,632</b>		<b>24,700</b>	<b>3.48%</b>		<b>3,957</b>

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 Needs Population Trips**

Critical Need - Severely Disabled TD Population			
	Not Low Income	Low Income	Totals
Non-Elderly	4,509	1,806	6,315
Elderly	16,234	2,151	18,385
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,743</b>	<b>3,957</b>	<b>24,700</b>

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

Low Income & Not Disabled = C + F		CALCULATION OF DAILY TRIPS FOR THE CRITICAL NEED TD POPULATION	
<b>Assumes</b>	81,837		
27.2%	xx % without auto access		
	22,260		
67.0%	xx % without transit access		
	14,914		
		Calculation of Daily Trips	
Total Actual Critical TD Population		Daily Trip Rates	Total
		Per Person	Daily Trips
Severely Disabled	24,700	0.049	1,210
Low Income ND	###	1.899	28,322
<b>Totals</b>	<b>39,614</b>		<b>29,532</b>

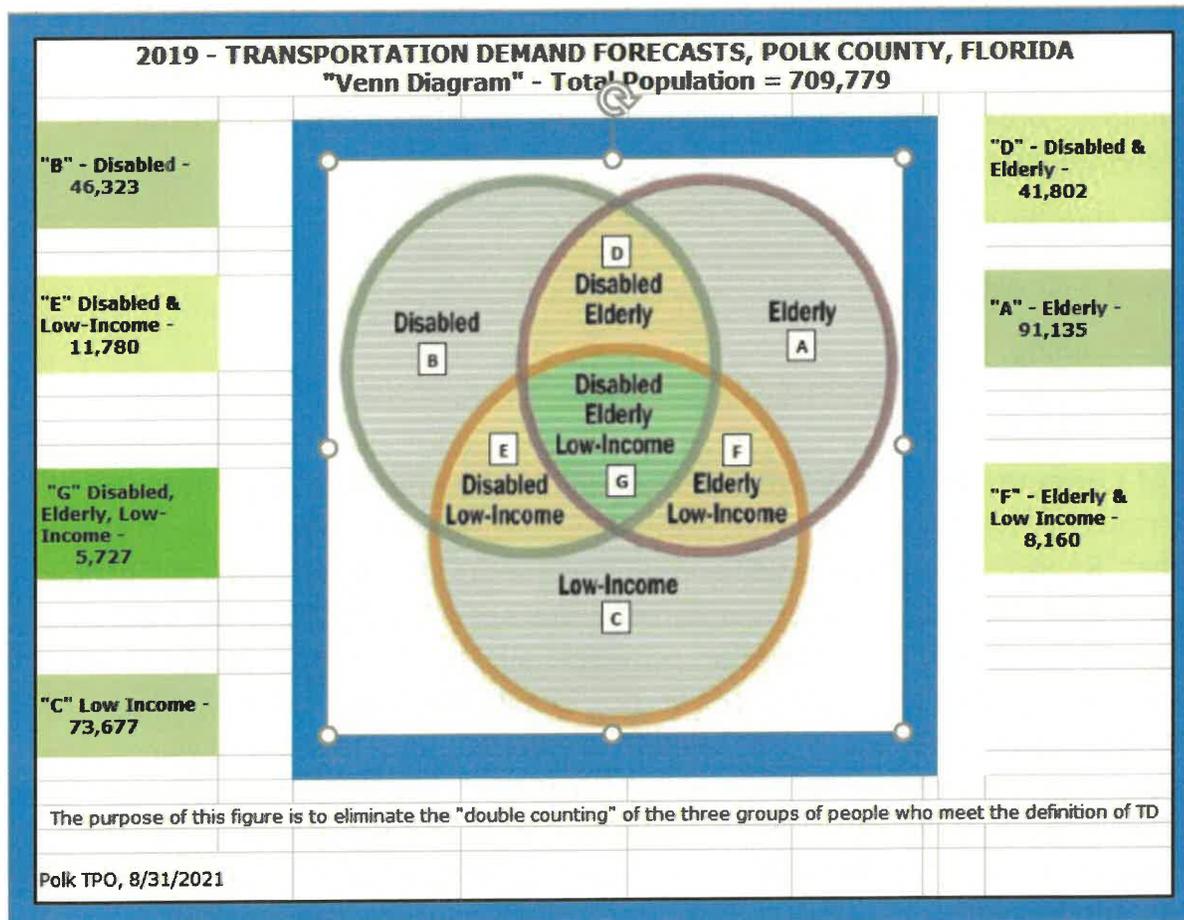
Note: ### = 14,914 Low income non-disabled people.

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 Needs Trip Demand**

Critical Need TD Population Forecast	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<b>Total Critical TD Population</b>											
<i>Disabled</i>	24,700	25,372	26,061	26,769	27,497	28,244	29,011	29,800	30,609	31,441	32,296
<i>Low Income Not Disabled No Auto/Transit</i>	14,814	15,319	15,736	16,163	16,602	17,054	17,517	17,993	18,482	18,984	19,500
<b>Total Critical Need TD Population</b>	<b>33,614</b>	<b>40,691</b>	<b>41,797</b>	<b>42,932</b>	<b>44,099</b>	<b>45,298</b>	<b>46,528</b>	<b>47,793</b>	<b>49,091</b>	<b>50,425</b>	<b>51,796</b>
<b>Daily Trips - Critical Need TD Population</b>											
<i>Severely Disabled</i>	1,210	1,243	1,277	1,312	1,347	1,384	1,422	1,460	1,500	1,541	1,582
<i>Low Income - Not Disabled - No Access</i>	28,322	29,091	29,862	30,694	31,528	32,386	33,265	34,169	35,097	36,061	37,030
<b>Total Daily Trips Critical Need TD Population</b>	<b>29,532</b>	<b>30,334</b>	<b>31,139</b>	<b>32,006</b>	<b>32,875</b>	<b>33,770</b>	<b>34,687</b>	<b>35,629</b>	<b>36,597</b>	<b>37,602</b>	<b>38,612</b>
<b>Annual Trips</b>	<b>10,542,907</b>	<b>10,721,083</b>	<b>10,902,269</b>	<b>11,086,517</b>	<b>11,273,879</b>	<b>11,473,427</b>	<b>11,676,507</b>	<b>11,883,181</b>	<b>12,093,513</b>	<b>12,307,568</b>	<b>12,560,797</b>

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
  - 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 **2024 - 25** TDSP minor update and proposes no changes.

In this section, “operator” is used to mean a company which provides 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 or service providers with coordination agreements 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 aided scheduling software where clients can schedule transportation from anywhere, anytime by using the Passenger Portal.

Strategy 1.2.1 Clients will have the ability 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 **Goal** 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 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. The CTC will implement Citrus Connection’s updated Marketing Plan.

Strategy 3.1.1: The CTC will work jointly with PT’s Marketing Department 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 “Rider’s 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: The CTC will provide presentations to inform the public about the Transportation Disadvantaged Program.

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

Implementation Schedule: This Goal was met through the development and distribution of the “Rider’s 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 Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) 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 coordinated 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 an on-going goal.

**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**

Citrus Connection operates a fixed route transit system throughout Polk County. 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 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)**

Citrus Connection also offers demand-response service, which is also called, "Paratransit." All Citrus Connection's paratransit service is called, "PT Connect." Services include ADA and 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 1120 George Jenkins Blvd., Lakeland 33815.

- 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. to 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. Saturday scheduling from 8:00 a.m. to 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. to 4:00 p.m.

[www.ridecitrus.com/](http://www.ridecitrus.com/)

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 limited Sunday service. Route 30 operates on Sunday.
- 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.
- 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. ADA trips may also be scheduled using Citrus Connection's on-line portal.

**Out of area trips** will be provided to the requested service areas on Tuesday and Thursday only. (See Out-of-Area Transport Policy).

Citrus Connection is the designated recipient for the Lakeland and Winter Haven urbanized areas and provides ADA complementary paratransit services throughout the 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.

Customers should visit Citrus Connection's website at: [www.ridecitrus.com/](http://www.ridecitrus.com/)

## ELIGIBILITY

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

- Meet age (65 or older), 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 78.
- 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 Applications are supplied in **Appendix 12. {A & B}** (There are two applications: One for ADA and one for TD, and there is an English edition and a Spanish edition of each).

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 a minimum processing time of **14 - 21** days for applications. Notification will be forwarded to the applicant via regular US mail.

## Service renewals

ADA passengers -- renewal is based on eligibility approvals. They do not have to reapply annually.

### **All TD passengers 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 request 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 six (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://youtube/S9hiPOiHIOM>

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

**Table 24 -- POVERTY TABLE for 2025-26**

Citrus Connection -- the Community Transportation Coordinator in Polk County uses this information to determine eligibility for transportation services:

**FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY SCALE BASED ON NET DISPOSABLE INCOME  
TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED REVISED 04/14/2025  
USING FLORIDA FOOD STAMP INCOME LIMIT TABLE.**

1 person	\$1,255 /month
2 people	\$1,704 /month
3 people	\$2,152 /month
4 people	\$2,600 /month
5 people	\$3,049 /month
6 people	\$3,497 /month
7 people	\$3,945 /month
Each additional person	+ \$ 449/month
	The net income limit is 100% of the federal poverty level.

**Source: Citrus Connection, June 2025.**

- Trips qualified for any copay amount over the minimum must have payment arrangements made directly at the office of Citrus Connection.
- Effective May 1, 2013, drivers no longer accept cash for Door-to-Door (Paratransit) trips. Passes may be purchased as a single ride or in a ten (10) ride stamp pass. Passes are \$2.00 for each single ride pass and \$20.00 for a (10) ride stamp pass. Passes may be purchased in person, by phone, online, or by mail (DO NOT MAIL IN CASH). Purchases can also be made with debit or credit cards. For additional information on bus pass purchases please contact customer service at (863) 534-5500 or (863) 688-7433.
- Passengers may contact the Intake department to determine if they are eligible for bus pass assistance

- **ELIGIBILITY REASSESSMENTS ARE REQUIRED ON AN ANNUAL BASIS.** (income and expenses documentation must be verified annually for renewal applicants).
- **Transportation Disadvantaged funds are a funding source of last resort.** *There must be no other means of transportation available to the recipient. Including public transit buses, family friends, or other agencies.*

**NOTE: Out of County trips are granted based on documented medical necessity and funds available basis. Fees for out of county trips are provided at the individual's approved rate.**

## **POLK TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PRIORITIZATION POLICY (Approved Revision 12/16/2024) – TPO Staff edited on 4-22-2025<sup>2</sup>**

Citrus Connection, the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) for Polk County, implements a Local Coordinating Board-approved Prioritization Policy for trips provided through the “Non-sponsored Trip-Equipment Grant,” in order to provide the maximum number of the most critical trips, with available funds. The Prioritization Policy was established prior to 2015. ***This 12/2024 revision establishes that Medical, Nutrition, Employment, and Education will be top priorities.*** If funding allows, the other trip purposes will be considered at the discretion of the CTC in this priority order:

1. **Medical/Medical Related** - (Examples: Life sustaining medical—dialysis, chemotherapy, radiation, hospital discharge, other medical appointments and treatment, mental health, dental, pharmacy, physical therapy, etc.) Medical appointments more than 20 miles require referrals.
2. **Nutrition** - Examples: Grocery shopping, food banks.
3. **Employment** - Personal travel to employment, up to 20 miles within Polk County. No employment trips on Saturdays.
4. Specific **Education** and **Training** determined by the CTC - Up to 20 miles within Polk County. (No **education** trips on Saturdays.)
5. **Obtaining Social Services** - (Examples: government offices, courts, pay utility bills, banks for personal business, legal.)
6. **Other Activities** - (Examples: leisure shopping, social events, recreation, gym, 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 CTC in Polk County 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).

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<sup>2</sup> *The changes to the Prioritization Policy are as approved by LCB 12/16/2024. Staff completed edits in April 2025. The edits are based upon reviewing the audio recording of the LCB meeting on 12/16/2024, again.*

## **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 78.

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**

Citrus Connection'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**

Citrus Connection is the Community Transportation Coordinator CTC for Polk County. It is also the designated recipient of federal funds for the Lakeland and Winter Haven urbanized areas. Citrus Connection operates throughout Polk County. ADA complementary paratransit services are provided throughout the service area. 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 TYPES**

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

Citrus Connection is the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) in Polk County. 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 2024-2025*

Name	Contact Person	Service	Who they transport
Alliance for Independence	Sheila Wickett	Ambulatory, Wheelchair	Program Participants
ROAR (Noah's Ark)	Dustin Freitas	Ambulatory, Wheelchair	Program Participants
Peace River Center	Larry Williams Jr. Chief Executive Officer	Ambulatory, Wheelchair	Program Participants
Polk Training Center	Lora Bonacic	Ambulatory, Wheelchair	Program Participants
Sunrise Community of Polk County	Zachary Wray President & CEO	Ambulatory, Wheelchair	Program Participants
TLC Comfort Care LLC	Candace Ducking Owner	Ambulatory, Wheelchair	Program Participants Open to Public

Source: CTC, Spring 2025

## 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**

Citrus Connection 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 is still growing. Riders 7 years of age and younger may ride free when accompanied by an adult.

## **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.

**Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP)** which contains the System Safety Program Plan – SSPP and System Security Plan, SSP.

The annual **Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP)** 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 Citrus Connection. 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.

Citrus Connection's coordination efforts now seeks partnership with the Hillsborough Area Transit (HART) in order to connect Polk and Hillsborough's communities by implementing a pickup 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, Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection will provide vans and/or buses to transport ambulatory people.
- Lift-Equipped Vehicles - The School Board and Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection system operating behind schedule or ceasing service for a period of time. If Citrus Connection determines that service may be running behind schedule due to inclement weather, Citrus Connection 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. The Rider's Guide/ System Guide is no longer being printed or provided electronically for bus riders. Single route brochures are available in print or electronically on the Citrus Connection website, [www.ridecitrus.com/](http://www.ridecitrus.com/)

### **Travel Trainer**

Citrus Connection's 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, and 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.

**RECEIVING AND INVESTIGATING REPORTS OF ADVERSE INCIDENTS IN PARATRANSIT SERVICES (March 17, 2025, amendment to June 2024 TDSP)**

The Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) has transmitted the “New Reporting Requirements - Receiving and Investigating Reports of Adverse Incidents in Paratransit Services” in a memo dated December 27, 2024. Chapter 427.021 of the Florida Statutes outlines procedures related to adverse incidents involving transportation service providers. It mandates that the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged establish model procedures for investigating such incidents, ensuring timely reviews and documentation. Additionally, reports of these incidents must be submitted quarterly to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. This requirement is designed to achieve improved oversight, heightened safety standards, and promote greater transparency in transportation services to the disadvantaged population.

Citrus Connection has developed an **SOP for Quality Assurance and Adverse Incident Reporting** and is utilizing the reporting form developed by the CTD.



**CitrusConnection**  
PROGRESS IN MOTION

Agenda Item 6  
Attachment C  
TD LCB Meeting  
3/17/2025

BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
POLK CO. COMMISSIONERS: Martha Santiago and Becky Troutman  
CITY OF LAKELAND COMMISSIONERS: Bill Mutz, Sara McCarley and Guy Lakorde, Jr.  
GENERAL MANAGER: Tom Phillips

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**SOP for Quality Assurance and Adverse Incident Reporting**

**1. Receiving Complaints or Compliments:**

- **Email:** Complaints or compliments can be received via any @ridecitrus.com email address. Ensure that you check for specific details in the email, such as the sender's name, contact details, the nature of the complaint/compliment, and any other relevant information (like bus route, times, etc.).
- **Phone Call:** When receiving a phone call, ask for as much detailed information as possible. You'll need the following:
  - **Name:** The name of the person calling.
  - **Phone Number:** This is essential in case they need a follow-up or a call back.
  - **Bus Route:** If the complaint/compliment relates to a specific bus, note down the route number or name.
  - **Bus Stop:** If the issue occurs at a specific bus stop, ask for the exact stop or location.
  - **Road Signs:** If applicable, ask whether there were any issues with road signage that could have affected the ride.
  - **Date and Time:** Write down the exact date and time of the incident or event. This will be essential for finding the right bus or driver involved.

**2. Log Into Trapeze COM:**

- After gathering all the necessary information, log into the Trapeze COM system. You'll need to use your own username and password to access the platform.
- Ensure that you are logged in correctly before proceeding with entering data.

**3. Enter the Information Into Trapeze:**

**Information Tab:**

- **Name and Phone Number:** Enter the individual's name and phone number into the system.
  - If they would like a callback, ask for their preferred time and best contact method (e.g., phone, email) and note this.
- **Additional info:** if there's any extra information shared (e.g., detailed issues, complaint), enter it here as well.

**Incident Tab:**

- **Date of the incident:** Enter the exact date when the event occurred. This is critical for investigating the issue.

**MISSION:** To be a superior provider of transportation services that contribute to the economic growth and quality of life for the communities we serve.

- **Type of Report:**
  - **Comment or Complaint:** Select whether this is a comment (positive feedback) or a complaint (negative feedback). This helps categorize the incident.
- **Select Issue(s):** You'll be asked to select the nature of the issue. This could be anything related to the bus or service, such as:
  - **Passenger Passed:** If a passenger was missed by the bus.
  - **Bus Was Late:** If the bus did not arrive at the scheduled time.
  - **Poor Customer Service:** If the caller has an issue with the service, driver, or overall experience.
  - Other options depend on the available categories in the system.
- **Select Department:** Based on the type of issue, choose the appropriate department for investigation or follow-up. These might include:
  - **Fixed Route:** If the issue pertains to regular bus routes.
  - **PT Connect:** If it's related to specialized transportation services.
  - **RMCC:** If it's related to maintenance or operations.
  - **Planning:** If it's a strategic issue regarding routes, schedules, or service areas.
- **Uncheck the Valid Tab:** The valid tab typically indicates whether the issue has been verified or accepted. For now, uncheck this box until the issue is further assessed.

**Summary of the Incident:**

- **Summarize the Event:** In the summary section, write a brief and clear description of what happened, based on the information provided. Be objective and factual. For example:
  - "The passenger reported the bus was 10 minutes late at the Winter Haven Terminal for Route 60 at 3:15 PM."
  - "A compliment was received regarding the courteous behavior of the driver on Route 7, Bus 315."

**4. Save the Incident:**

- After filling out all the required fields, click **Save**. This will store the information in the Trapeze COM system for further review and follow-up.
- Make sure that all data is entered accurately before clicking save to avoid mistakes in the log.

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#### 5. Follow-Up:

- If the complaint was flagged for follow-up (especially if a call back is requested), make sure to schedule a time to call the person back. You may need to either resolve the issue with the customer or inform them of the steps being taken.
- If further action is required (e.g., investigation of a bus route, driver behavior), make sure the relevant department or personnel is informed.

#### 6. Adverse Incident Reporting

- Pursuant to Section 427.021, Florida Statutes, transportation service providers contracting with local governments to provide paratransit services for persons with disabilities are required to establish procedures for receiving, investigating, and reporting adverse incidents to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (Commission) on a quarterly basis.
- Quality Assurance voicemail and E-mail are checked daily. All complaints are logged into Trapeze. Complaints will be reviewed to determine if they qualify as an Adverse Incident. If the event qualifies as an adverse incident, Quality Assurance will:
  - Collect all the pertinent information about the incident and generate a summary report.
  - Forward the report to the department director responsible for investigating the incident.
  - The department director assigns a supervisor or manager to begin the investigation and notifies Quality Assurance of investigator name and investigation start date. The supervisor or manager must commence an investigation within 48 hours of receipt of the report, as required by s. 427.021(2), F.S.
- The investigation should determine:
  - What led to the incident and any causal factors that may have contributed.
  - The hazards (equipment, behavior, etc.) that adversely impacted the passenger(s) involved in the incident.
  - What actions were taken by the operator in response to the incident and whether other actions should have been taken in preventing the incident.
  - Any corrective actions or retraining that have occurred or should occur upon completion of the investigation.
- The investigator will complete the Adverse Incident Form and return to Quality Assurance when the investigation is closed
- Quality Assurance will update Trapeze and forward the completed form to [FLCTDAdverseIncidentReport@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:FLCTDAdverseIncidentReport@dot.state.fl.us) by the last day of the month following the end of the quarter. (example-reports are due FLCTD by 4/30/2025 for incident occurring January 1 to March 31, 2025)

#### 7. Adverse incident identified during event investigation

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- The Safety Department is responsible for conducting thorough investigations of all safety events, including major events, fatalities, injuries, assaults, and system reliability issues. The Safety Department has detailed procedures in place for investigating these events which are outlined in the Public Transit Agency Safety Plan (PTASP). All events are entered into the Safety Department Event Log and the completion status is updated frequently as investigations are finalized and closed.
- Safety event notifications are initiated by the control center via e-mail through the emergency notification list according to Citrus Connection policies and procedures.
- The Safety Department immediately responds to the scene to begin the investigation. During the investigation, Safety will determine if the event qualifies as an "Adverse Incident".
- If the event qualifies as an adverse incident, the safety department will determine:
  - What led to the incident and any causal factors that may have contributed.
  - The hazards (equipment, behavior, etc.) that adversely impacted the passenger(s) involved in the incident.
  - What actions were taken by the operator in response to the incident and whether other actions should have been taken in preventing the incident.
  - Any corrective actions or retraining that have occurred or should occur upon completion of the investigation.
- The Safety Department will be responsible for completing the Adverse Incident Form and forwarding to [FLCTDAdverseIncidentReport@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:FLCTDAdverseIncidentReport@dot.state.fl.us) by the last day of the month following the end of the quarter. (example-reports are due FLCTD by 4/30/2025 for incident occurring January 1 to March 31, 2025)

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**COMMISSION FOR THE TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED**  
**ADVERSE INCIDENT REPORT FORM**  
**RELATED TO PARATRANSIT SERVICES PROVIDED TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

This form must be completed by a transportation service provider upon receipt of a report of an adverse incident. The form must be submitted to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged for each incident no later than the last day of the month following the end of the quarter, beginning January 1, 2025. Reports should be emailed to: [FLCTDAdverseIncidentReport@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:FLCTDAdverseIncidentReport@dot.state.fl.us).

**REPORT STATUS:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary Report	<input type="checkbox"/> Under Investigation	<input type="checkbox"/> Investigation Closed
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**TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PROVIDER INFORMATION:**

Organization Name:	
Local Government Name: (Contracting for Paratransit Services)	
Name of Person Completing Report:	
Phone Number:	
Email Address:	
Date of Report:	

**DESCRIPTION OF ADVERSE INCIDENT:**

Who, what, when, where, how, injury(ies). Exclude names and personal information, providing only information regarding the incident.

--

**FOLLOWUP ACTIONS:**

Briefly describe follow-up measures taken, including mitigation or corrective actions. At a minimum, this description must include a summary of investigation activities taken by the transportation service provider.

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12/11/2024

**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 and measures

### 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 Citrus Connection vehicles.

### **Abusive Behavior**

Abusive behavior of any type, directed towards Citrus Connection 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. Citrus Connection 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, Citrus Connection has established a Code of Conduct to regulate conduct on Citrus Connection 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, Citrus Connection'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:

- Citrus Connection 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.

## Citrus Connection's 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 exit safely
- Use Citrus Connection services and facilities for transportation purposes only

### **A. Prohibited Conduct**

The following conduct is prohibited on Citrus Connection vehicles (owned or operated), within or upon Citrus Connection facilities and properties, and in connection with Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection vehicles or in prohibited areas of Citrus Connection facilities and properties;
- Operating, stopping, standing or parking a vehicle in any roadway or location restricted for use only by Citrus Connection vehicles or otherwise restricted;
- Extending an object or a portion of one's body through the door or window of a Citrus Connection vehicle while it is in motion;

- Hanging or swinging on bars or stanchions, with feet off the floor, inside a Citrus Connection vehicle or other Citrus Connection property; hanging onto or otherwise attaching oneself at any time to the exterior of a Citrus Connection vehicle or other Citrus Connection property;
- Using a Citrus Connection facility for residential or commercial parking purposes;
- Performing non-emergency repairs or cleaning of a vehicle on Citrus Connection property;
- Failing to present a valid, un-expired pass, ticket or otherwise failing to pay the appropriate fare as established by Citrus Connection;
- Citrus Connection no longer uses or issues transfers;
- Bringing onto Citrus Connection property odors which unreasonably disturb others or interfere with their use of the Citrus Connection 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;
- 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 Citrus Connection employees, Citrus Connection contractors or public safety officers in the line of duty;
- Spitting, urinating or defecating on Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection vehicles or passenger traffic, hindering or preventing access to Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection;
- 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 Citrus Connection vehicle, properties or facilities to include but not limited to; transfer center, bus shelter, bus stop, or park and ride lots;
- Entering a Citrus Connection vehicle with live pets or other animals, with the exception of service animals, that are not in a suitable pet carrier;
- Entering a Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection vehicles or Citrus Connection facilities and properties, unless otherwise authorized by law;
- Entering or remaining upon any non-public areas of Citrus Connection facilities and properties, including, but not limited to, staging areas, work areas and equipment rooms, except when authorized by Citrus Connection or its designee;
- Engaging in commercial activities, except as such activities are authorized by Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection 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;

- The use of Citrus Connection vehicles, facilities, and properties for non-transit-related activities, except as authorized by Citrus Connection;
- Entering Citrus Connection vehicles, facilities, and properties when lacking the ability, because of illness or intoxication, to care for oneself;
- Dumping any materials whatsoever on Citrus Connection property, including but not limited to chemicals and automotive fluids;
- Throwing an object at Citrus Connection property or at any Citrus Connection person on Citrus Connection property;
- Falsely representing oneself as eligible for a special or reduced fare or obtaining any permit or pass related to the Citrus Connection system by making a false representation;
- Falsely claiming to be a Citrus Connection bus operator or other Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection operator or other Citrus Connection employee;
- Violating any federal, state, or municipal civil and criminal laws.

## **B. Trespass Enforcement**

### **1. Removal from Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection vehicles, facilities and properties by a law enforcement official, Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection 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.** Citrus Connection shall give a person to be excluded from Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection vehicles, facilities, and properties without prior written notice if the person has engaged in prohibited conduct under Section A or at Citrus Connection'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 Citrus Connection vehicles, facilities, and properties.
- (e) Types of Exclusion. Exclusion may be limited to bus stops, super-stops, Citrus Connection Central Station or Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection 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.

Companions are not permitted for TD trips. PCA must be approved during eligibility screening.

All Citrus Connection 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 Citrus Connection eligible

rider. All eligible Citrus Connection riders must schedule their trip separately under Citrus Connection 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, 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)**

“41-2. 006(4)(f) - A local toll free phone number for complaints or **grievances** shall be posted inside the vehicle. The TD Helpline phone number 1 (800) 983-2435 shall also be posted inside all vehicles of the coordinated system. 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. All rider information/materials (brochures, user’s guides, etc.) will include the TD Helpline phone number”.

**From CTD Website**

**Tel: (850) 410-5700**

**Toll Free: 1(800) 983-2435**

**Fax: (850) 410-5752**

**Hearing & Speech Impaired**

**Call 711 FL Relay System**

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](http://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).

### **Updated Grievance Procedures for FY 2025-26 are in Appendix 15**

#### **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 14 days 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.

Citrus Connection will only coordinate transportation for residents of Polk County. Residents of other counties will be referred to the Community Transportation Coordinator 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.

Customers requiring city to city trips over 20 miles will be deemed out of area. Out of area trips require a referral to determine why medical treatment cannot be treated locally. Out of area medical transportation must schedule appointments so that they are cared for or treated between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

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

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

<b>Locations:</b>	<b>Days of Travel:</b>
Osceola and Orange Counties	Tuesdays and Thursdays
Tampa Area	Tuesdays and Thursdays

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

**Out of Area Pick-up and Drop-off Windows**

Estimated pick up and drop off windows could vary depending on other scheduled shared ride trips. Scheduling window will be provided via Notifications System the day prior.

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. 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. In some cases, passengers may be transferred to other transportation providers.

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 Care Attendant "PCA"**

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 care attendant.

Citrus Connection does not provide "PCA"s.

The necessity of a "PCA" is determined during the enrollment and eligibility process. Passengers must provide their own "PCA" should one be needed.

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 Scheduling information**

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.

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 Citrus Connection staff or through a contracted transport provider.

### **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 Citrus Connection 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 database 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 wheelchair 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 and Cancellations – 41-2.006(4)(o)**

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**

- 1<sup>st</sup> violation - Passenger will receive communication alerting them of the no show/late cancellation.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> second violation - Passenger will receive a warning letter.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> violation - Final warning, communicated by email.
- 4<sup>th</sup> violation - 7 day suspension.
- 5<sup>th</sup> violation - 30 day 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](http://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. (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 & Electronic 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 earpiece 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 Regional Mobility Call Center (RMCC) 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 Background Screening- 41-2.006(4)(t)**

[The Polk TD LCB discussed this Policy language in March 2024]

Driver background screening shall be determined locally, dependent upon purchasing agencies' requirements, and provided in the local Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan.

Citrus Connection requires the following to be completed for a driver:

1. National Criminal Records Check
2. National Sex Offender check
3. Local County criminal check
4. Motor Vehicle Check (MVR)
5. Drug test

Upon discovery of an unfavorable report Citrus Connection shall review and determine if the driver should be removed from transporting the TD population.

**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 a.m. and 6:15 p.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 Citrus Connection’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. 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**

Citrus Connection vehicles will allow **service animals** to board their vehicles. Pets or companion animals will not be transported on Citrus Connection 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 provide 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. Citrus Connection's vehicles can only transport passengers who use "common wheelchairs."

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**

Citrus Connection is committed to report abuse, neglect and exploitation. Citrus Connection employees are mandated to report any suspected or known abuse, neglect or exploitation to the State of Florida Abuse Registry and Tracking System.

All employees of Citrus Connection 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.

### **Group Trips**

The Polk CTC will consider group trips on a first come-first served availability basis. All passengers in the group must meet Citrus Connection 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. Citrus Connection is unable to transport group trips for students attending primary, secondary, high school or other education facilities as an alternative to school board transportation. Persons wishing to schedule group trips 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 Citrus Connection's 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 2025.

### **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 the TDSP, 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.

## **FY 2022/2023 Evaluation Related Highlights - June 2024**

This evaluation is for FY 2022/23 or the period July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2023, (2023). Historical performance comparison data is from the Community Transportation Coordinator's 2022-23 Annual Operating Report (AOR). Another primary source used was the FY 2023 Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged Annual Performance Report, (APR). The 2023 APR contains data for the years 2021, 2022, and 2023.

An evaluation committee consisting of Polk TPO staff and representatives of Citrus Connection -- the CTC -- met in person and virtually, to review the evaluation process.

A member of the TPO staff prepared the Evaluation Workbook, inspected vehicles, and took a ride on the paratransit services. There were no findings or recommendations with respect to the ride, or the inspection of the vehicles.

## **Performance Measure Outcomes**

The CTC is doing a good job reporting on identified local standards and performance measures. These are reported to the LCB at each quarterly meeting, and the CTC also provides that data to the Annual Operating Report.

When we compare AOR/APR data from FY 2022-23 (2023) to the Performance indicators in the TDSP, we note the following:

### **Meeting standards or performance measures:**

- \* Fixed Route utilization, % of trips on FR.
- \* Accidents per 100,000 vehicle miles
- \* Vehicle miles between road calls.
- \* number of complaints,
- \* Complaints per 1000 paratransit trips.

### **Not meeting standards or performance measures:**

- \*Average cost per paratransit trip. (It is \$41.28)

### **Area of Noncompliance: None**

**Recommendation:** It is recommended to change the “Average cost per paratransit trip” Performance measure in **Table 27\_** in the TDSP to \$\_\_\_\_\_, due to inflation impacting the costs to provide service.

**Timeline for Compliance:** September 2024.

Status: In March 2025, the Polk TD LCB adopted a revised performance measure for this topic: “Average cost per paratransit trip” found in Table 27\_ in the TDSP to **\$50.00**, due to inflation impacting the costs to provide service.

## **FY 2023/2024 Evaluation Related Highlights - June 2025**

This evaluation is for FY **2023-24** for the period July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, (2024). Historical performance comparison data is from the Community Transportation Coordinator's 2023-24 Annual Operating Report (AOR). Another primary source used was the FY 2024 Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged Annual Performance Report, (APR). The 2024 APR contains data for the years 2022, 2023, and 2024.

An evaluation committee consisting of Polk TPO staff and representatives of Citrus Connection -- the CTC -- met in person and virtually, to review the evaluation process.

Members of the TPO staff prepared the Evaluation Workbook, inspected vehicles, and took a ride on the paratransit services.

## **Performance Measure Outcomes**

The CTC is doing a good job reporting on identified local standards and performance measures. These are reported to the LCB at each quarterly meeting, and the CTC also provides that data to the Annual Operating Report.

When we compare AOR/APR data from FY 2023-24 (2024) to the Performance indicators in the TDSP, we note the following:

### **Meeting standards or performance measures:**

- \* Fixed Route utilization, 72% of trips on FR
- \* Accidents per 100,000 vehicle miles
- \* Vehicle miles between road calls
- \* Number of complaints
- \* Complaints per 1000 paratransit trips
- \* Average cost per paratransit trip.

### **Commendation:**

It should be noted that 72% of the Coordinated System trips were on the Fixed Route service, which is more than double the goal of the Fixed Route utilization rate.

## Not meeting standards or performance measures:

None

## Area of Noncompliance: None

### Bus Annual Evaluation Ride

The overall ride experience was functional, with some notable communication challenges and operational observations. The scheduling process involved multiple attempts due to voicemail confusion and extended hold times, but the appointment was eventually secured.

On the day of the trip, there was an initial difficulty in coordinating the pickup location, as the driver struggled to locate the rider and did not acknowledge suggestions to improve the pickup process. The actual pickup occurred within the requested time window, with the female driver greeting the rider and ensuring seatbelt use before departure.

During the journey, the driver initially selected an incorrect destination on the GPS, requiring rider intervention to clarify the proper route. While the driver made an incorrect turn, she quickly adjusted and proceeded in the correct direction. The arrival at Walmart was timely, and the driver opened the door, allowing the rider to exit smoothly.

For the return trip, the bus was already waiting outside upon the rider's exit, and the driver promptly opened the door upon seeing the rider approach.

The vehicle interior was clean, signage was visible, and all required equipment appeared to be in place. The two-way communication system functioned properly, and the ride was comfortable. While the driver's workspace appeared cluttered, and identification visibility was limited, the air conditioning was effective, and there were no major service disruptions.

Upon arrival at the final destination, the driver stopped at the same location where the rider had been picked up and wished them a good day, concluding the trip on a positive note.

## Recommendations for the Evaluation Ride Survey:

### General Service Improvements:

- Reinforce adherence to pedestrian traffic rules to improve safety measures.

- Provide ongoing customer service training to drivers to enhance professionalism and responsiveness.
- Continue monitoring vehicle condition to maintain cleanliness, functionality, and passenger comfort.

### **Vehicle Readiness & Rider Experience**

- Ensure that driver workspaces remain organized and free from unnecessary clutter.
- Improve visibility of driver identification, such as name badges or embroidered uniforms, to enhance rider confidence in service staff.
- Conduct periodic inspections of required signage and equipment to maintain compliance and accessibility.

### **Route Navigation & Driver Assistance**

- Verify that drivers enter the correct destination before beginning the trip to prevent unnecessary detours.
- Increase driver familiarity with designated routes and key destinations to avoid misdirection.

### **Scheduling Process**

- Regularly monitor and clear voicemail inboxes to allow riders/clients to leave messages when needed.
- Minimize extended hold times by streamlining the scheduling process or increasing staffing support during peak scheduling hours.

***By implementing these recommendations, the overall ride experience can be significantly improved, ensuring more seamless scheduling, efficient pickups, precise routing, and enhanced rider confidence in the service.***

### **Timeline for Compliance:**

TPO Staff will reevaluate the CTC rider experience during the next CTC Annual Evaluation.

### **Bus Annual Inspections Vehicles**

Polk TPO staff conducted a scheduled inspection of a paratransit vehicle while it was scheduled for maintenance service on March 24, 2025. All required signage and safety items were in place. A TPO staff member also checked the required signs in the Paratransit vehicle during the

scheduled Evaluation ride on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025. During the May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Evaluation ride, it was observed that the signage with the helpline/CTD telephone/ toll free number were not displayed.

**Area of Noncompliance:** During the May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025; On the evaluation ride, it was observed that the signage with the helpline/CTD telephone/ toll free number were not displayed on the vehicle.

**Recommendations for the Fleet Vehicle Inspection:**

- All fleet vehicles should be inspected to make sure all required signage is displayed in clear view for all riders consideration.

**Timeline for Compliance: Follow up is needed.**

- Within 90 days of report being issued.

## **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
- 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.

### **Citrus Connection - 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

- Upon completion of a vehicle inspection the Monitor will provide a monitoring report to both the CTC and the Coordinating Agency.
- 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.
- After inspection for compliance, the Monitor will send a formal finding to the CTC and Coordinating Agency.
- 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.
- 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 FY 2025-26**

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 \$50.00
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 had an impact on system performance for FY 19-20, and resulting economic impacts in FY 2020-2021.

### **PUBLISHED RATES FOR SERVICE (TABLE 28)**

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.

## Rates for Service

**Table 28. Transportation Disadvantaged Trust Fund (TD Trip Grant) Published Rates for Service, July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026.**

Type of Service	Rate Per Passenger Mile	% increase
Ambulatory	<b>\$5.11</b>	14.31%
Wheelchair	<b>\$8.76</b>	14.21%

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

These amounts are based upon the adopted Rate Model, found in **Appendix 16**.

## 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. *[These bus fares have not changed.]*

**Table 29. Bus Fares - July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026**

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 Citrus Connection Service Area is presented in **Table 30**.

**Table 30. Bus Pass Rates July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026**

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 Connect) Passes are \$2.00 each and may be purchased as a single pass or in a **multi-ride pass** which includes ten (10) rides 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 a multi-ride pass which includes ten (10) rides:

By Mail: Citrus Connection – 1212 George Jenkins Blvd., Lakeland, FL 33815

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

On-Line: [www.ridecitrus.com](http://www.ridecitrus.com)

### In Person:

Winter Haven Terminal: 555 Ave. "E" NW, Winter Haven, 33881

Citrus Connection Offices: 1212 George Jenkins Blvd., Lakeland 33815

Lakeland Transfer Center: 200 N. Florida Avenue, Lakeland 33802

Regional Mobility Call Center: 1120 George Jenkins Blvd., Lakeland 33815

Passes may be purchased with cash, Master Card/Visa, debit cards or money orders. Personal checks will not be accepted. PT Connect Passes may be purchased in any denominations. Passengers may also 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 with 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, visit [www.ridecitrus.com](http://www.ridecitrus.com)



County: Polk  
 CTC: Lakeland Area Mass Transit District  
 Contact: Marcia Roberson  
 1212 George Jenkins Blvd.  
 Lakeland, FL 33815  
 863-733-4222

Demographics  
 Total County Population 736,229  
 Unduplicated Head Count 3,048

Email: MRoberson@ridectrus.com

Trips By Type of Service	2022	2023	2024	Vehicle Data	2022	2023	2024
Fixed Route (FR)	200,652	202,727	248,986	Vehicle Miles	833,205	778,063	883,024
Deviated FR	8,868	7,708	7,582	Roadcalls	91	68	85
Complementary ADA	48,694	49,288	54,122	Accidents	3	2	5
Paratransit	54,842	71,698	68,642	Vehicles	140	129	117
TNC	0	0	0	Drivers	270	243	225
Taxi	0	0	0				
School Board (School Bus)	0	0	0				
Volunteers	0	0	0				
<b>TOTAL TRIPS</b>	<b>313,056</b>	<b>331,421</b>	<b>379,332</b>				

**Passenger Trips By Trip Purpose**

Medical	71,796	66,229	77,838
Employment	7,381	7,773	10,584
Ed/Train/DayCare	54,126	81,148	79,432
Nutritional	3,050	6,795	9,215
Life-Sustaining/Other	176,703	169,476	202,263
<b>TOTAL TRIPS</b>	<b>313,056</b>	<b>331,421</b>	<b>379,332</b>

**Passenger Trips By Revenue Source**

CTD	99,278	107,338	137,641
AHCA	1,734	7,703	10,625
APD	18,857	26,450	19,354
DOEA	2,060	2,666	0
DOE	29,436	29,554	43,603
Other	161,691	157,710	168,109
<b>TOTAL TRIPS</b>	<b>313,056</b>	<b>331,421</b>	<b>379,332</b>

**Trips by Provider Type**

CTC	276,992	280,426	334,086
Transportation Operator	0	0	0
Coordination Contractor	36,064	50,995	45,246
<b>TOTAL TRIPS</b>	<b>313,056</b>	<b>331,421</b>	<b>379,332</b>

**Financial and General Data**

Expenses	\$5,362,754	\$5,508,624	\$6,165,371
Revenues	\$5,322,439	\$5,462,571	\$6,231,324
Comments	29	31	2
Complaints	119	169	46
Passenger No-Shows	460	501	397
Unmet Trip Requests	33	21	10

**Performance Measures**

Accidents per 100,000 Miles	0.36	0.26	0.57
Miles between Roadcalls	9,156	11,442	10,389
Avg. Trips per Passenger	133.33	91.28	124.45
Cost per Trip	\$17.13	\$16.62	\$16.25
Cost per Paratransit Trip	\$45.85	\$41.28	\$45.63
Cost per Total Mile	\$6.44	\$7.08	\$6.98
Cost per Paratransit Mile	\$6.19	\$6.83	\$6.74

## **Polk TDSP - LIST OF APPENDICIES as of June 16, 2025**

**These UPDATED 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 (January 2025)**

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: (Reserved for Future Use)

Appendix 11: Paratransit Rider Brochure

### **Appendix 12A: ADA Program Application English & Spanish (May 2025)**

### **Appendix 12B: TD Program Application English & Spanish (May 2025)**

### **Appendix 13: Vehicle Inventory (January 2025)**

### **Appendix 14: PTASP/SSPP Certification Form (December 2025)**

### **Appendix 15: Grievance and Complaint Procedures and the Form (June 2025)**

### **Appendix 16: Rate Calculation Model for TD Trust fund trips for FY 2025-26 July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026**

Additional Attachments following the Appendices:

- Flyer about the 2021 Transit Summit
- Youth Summer of Safety Program Flyer

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