

MAINE LOCALLY COORDINATED PLAN 2024–2028

Final Plan



December 2023

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Final Plan

prepared for



MaineDOT

prepared by



**CAMBRIDGE
SYSTEMATICS**

date

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1. INTRODUCTION

MaineDOT has developed this locally coordinated plan (LCP) for statewide transit pursuant to federal transit law, specifically 49 USC Section 5310-Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities, and 23 MRSA §4209. As mandated, the plan identifies transit providers and transit service partners serving Maine. The plan also includes a needs assessment focusing on transit needs of the general public, including individuals with disabilities, older adults, low-income individuals/those living below the poverty line, and those without access to a vehicle. To address identified needs, a set of strategies and a corresponding prioritization and implementation plan are proposed for the 2024 through 2028 period of this plan.

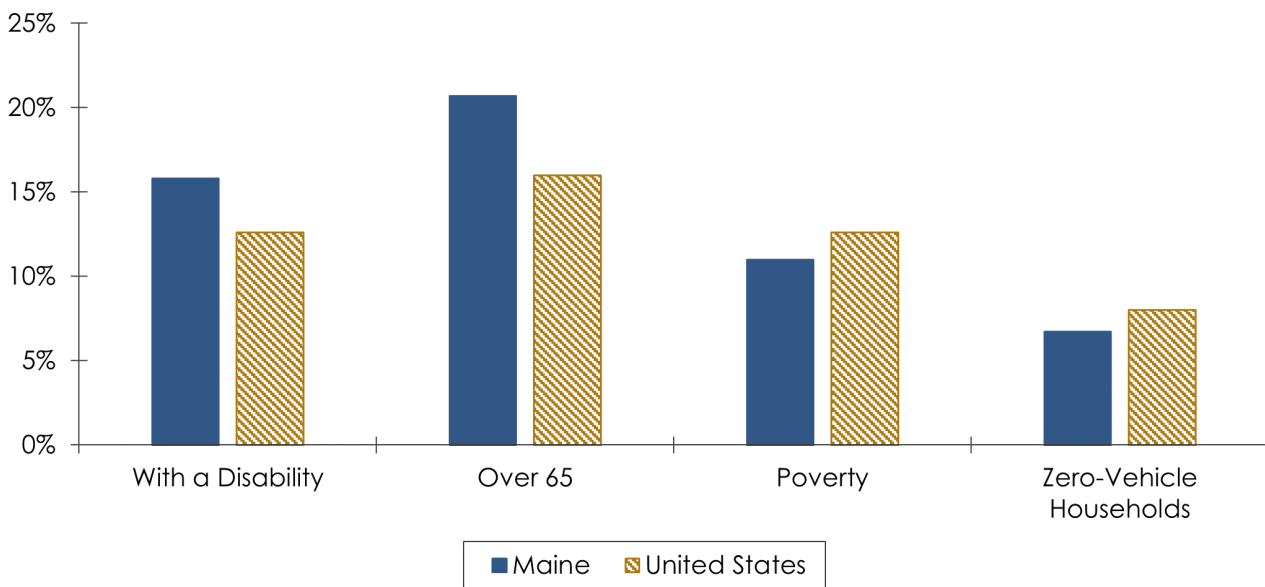
The 2024–2028 LCP draws heavily from the findings, strategies, and outreach conducted for the 2023 *Maine State Transit Plan (STP)*. The STP was developed as part of MaineDOT's Family of Plans, a set of multimodal and modal transportation planning documents that lay out the department's vision for Maine's transportation system. With a particular focus on rural accessibility, mobility, technology, and climate change needs, the STP is a detailed and holistic assessment of Maine's public transit system, including key needs and corresponding strategies. The STP also included a strong stakeholder outreach component, including a public survey, virtual public meeting and open comment period, and a project steering committee. This thorough statewide transit assessment, guided by strong stakeholder engagement, informed the LCP development process.

2. DEMOGRAPHICS AND EXISTING SERVICES

2.1 Demographics

With 1.37 million people and 44.2 people per square mile, Maine has one of the smallest populations and population densities in the United States. As shown in Figure 2.1, individuals with a disability comprise 16 percent of the population, 21 percent of the population are over age 65, 11 percent live below the poverty line, and 7 percent live in a household without a vehicle.

Figure 2.1 Comparison of LCP Target Populations in Maine and the United States

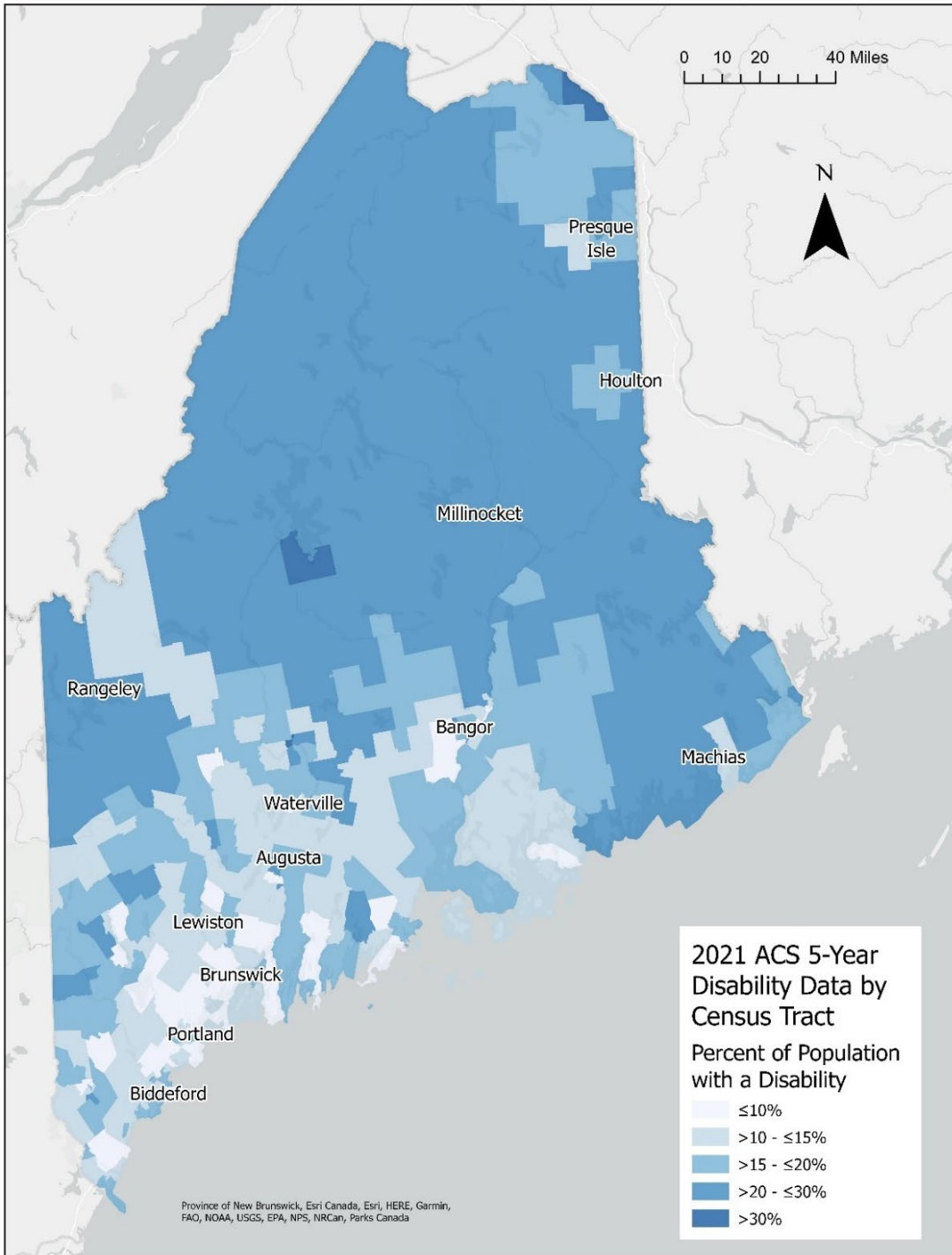


Source: United States Census Bureau

As shown in Figure 2.2 through 2.5, census tracts with the highest proportions of individuals with disabilities are found across most of the northern two-thirds of the state. Higher percentages of older adults are found along the coast and in the northern and western portions of the state. The largest concentration of households living below the poverty line can also be found across most of the northern two-thirds of the state. These areas are predominantly rural, presenting potential challenges in the provision of effective and

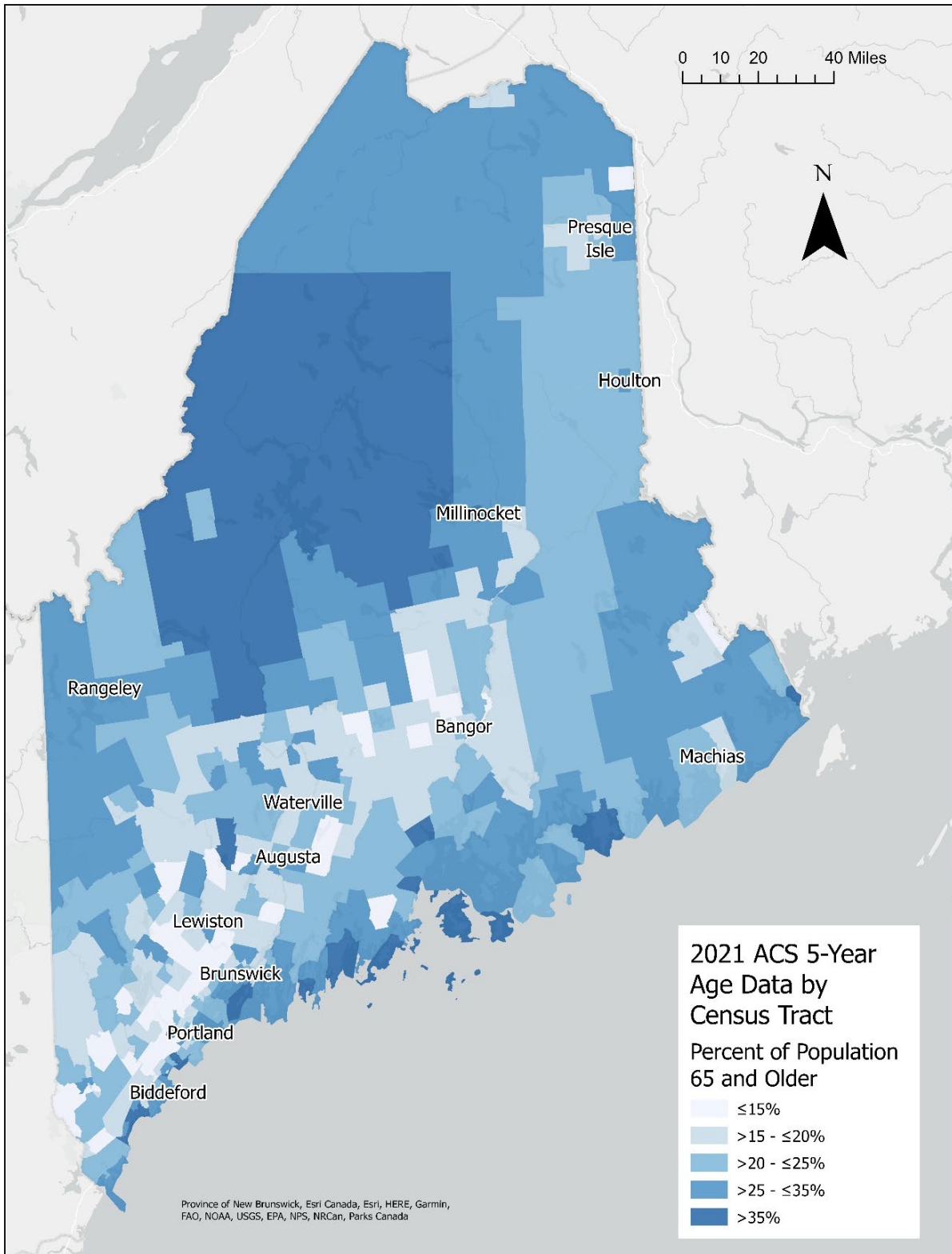
essential transportation services. Zero-vehicle households are primarily found in urban areas but are also scattered across Maine's rural regions.

Figure 2.2 Population with a Disability



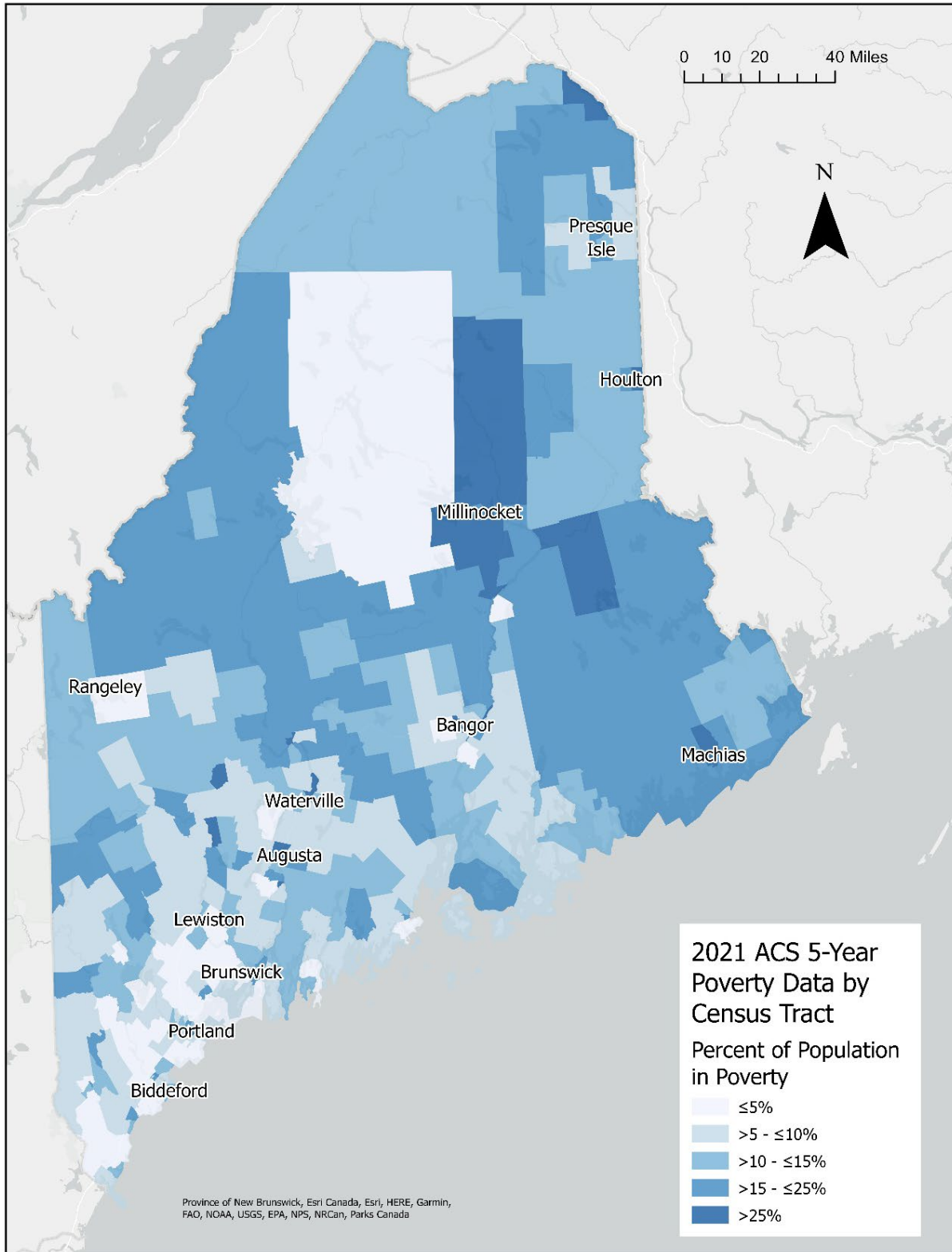
Source: United States Census Bureau

Figure 2.3 Population Over Age 65



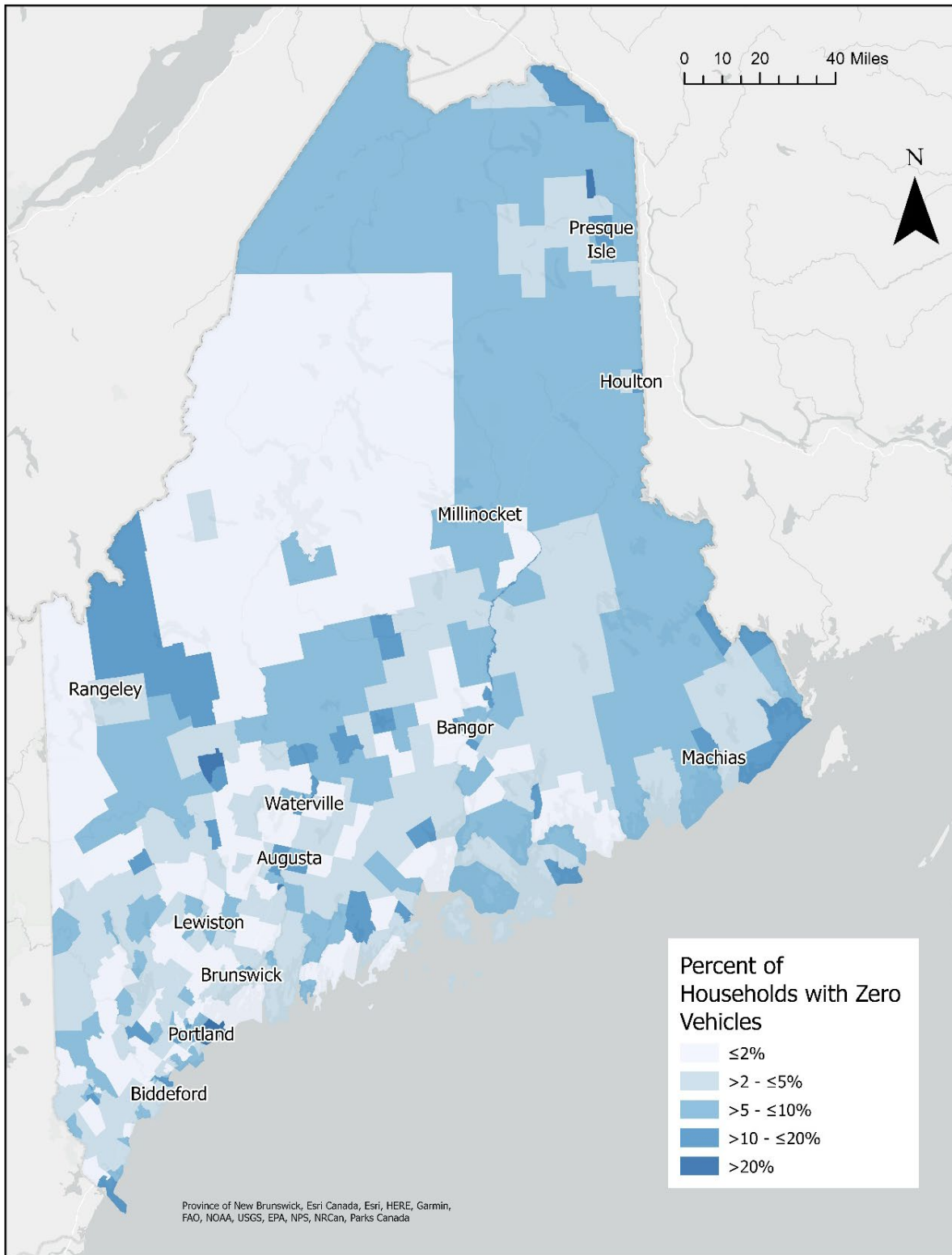
Source: United States Census Bureau

Figure 2.4 Population Living Below the Poverty Line



Source: United States Census Bureau

Figure 2.5 Zero Vehicle Households



Source: United States Census Bureau

2.2 Existing Transit Services

Maine’s statewide transit network consists of 20 in-state public transportation providers and one New Hampshire-based agency providing some service in Maine. Consistent with the April 2023 STP, providers are grouped by category, based primarily on their size, type of service, and service area characteristics:¹

- » Urban Fixed Route and Regional Systems
- » Regional Transportation Programs
- » Ferry Services
- » Intercity Bus and Rail Services

Transit services are operated in and around all of the state’s larger population centers. This includes urban fixed route and scheduled service in and around Portland/South Portland, Lewiston/Auburn, Bangor, Biddeford, and Ellsworth. The state’s rural geographies are also served by one or more transit services. Rural transit availability is discussed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Rural and Low-Density Area Transit Availability by County

County	Description of Available Services
Northern Maine Counties	
Aroostook	Frequencies of between daily weekday and weekly flexible and demand-response service to most inhabited portions of the county.
Penobscot	Weekly demand-response service available to each town.
Piscataquis	Weekly demand-response service available to each town.
Midcoast Counties	
Knox	Demand-response service available subject to geographic considerations and availability of vehicles and/or drivers. Weekday flex route service around Rockland.
Lincoln	Demand-response service available subject to geographic considerations and availability of vehicles and/or drivers.
Sagadahoc	Demand-response service available subject to geographic considerations and availability of vehicles and/or drivers.
Waldo	Demand-response service available subject to geographic considerations and availability of vehicles and/or drivers. Weekday flex route service around Belfast.

¹ Since the publishing of the STP, Bath City Bus is now operated by Western Maine Transportation Services. As a result, the ‘Small Urban and Regional Systems’ category of transit providers was dissolved, given that only one transit agency was grouped under the category. For the LCP, ‘Urban Fixed Route’ is renamed to ‘Urban Fixed Route and Regional Systems’ to incorporate Downeast Transportation which operates in and around Ellsworth.

County	Description of Available Services
Greater Portland and South Coast Counties	
Cumberland	Weekday demand-response service available. Scheduled service into Portland.
York	Weekly demand-response service to each town. Additional transit service available in denser coastal communities.
Western Maine Counties	
Androscoggin	Demand-response service available subject to geographic considerations and availability of vehicles and/or drivers.
Franklin	Demand-response service available subject to geographic considerations and availability of vehicles and/or drivers.
Kennebec	Weekday flex route service around Augusta, Waterville, and surrounding communities.
Oxford	Flex route service on select weekdays, and demand-response service available subject to availability of vehicles and/or drivers.
Somerset	Weekday flex route service in lower portion of the county.
Eastern Maine Counties	
Hancock	Scheduled weekday service to Bar Harbor and coastal communities.
Washington	Weekday flexible and demand-response service in coastal portions of the county.

Many of the state's transit systems provide discounted fares for certain populations, including older adults, individuals with disabilities, low-income populations, veterans and military personnel, students, and MaineCare (Medicaid) recipients. Additional information on fares for each transit provider is provided in the transit agency profiles in Appendix B. For the LCP, agencies were asked to update information in their profiles from the *State Transit Plan*. Some agencies updated specific data points, and thus the currency of the data may vary across metrics and between agencies.

2.3 Other Transit Partners and Providers

2.3.1 MaineCare Non-Emergency Transportation (NET)

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) works with designated transportation brokers who arrange rides for Non-Emergency Transportation (NET) to and from appointments covered by the MaineCare health insurance program for individuals who are eligible based on household composition and income. Several transportation brokers coordinate and administer NET service across Maine, based on the specific county and municipality. Currently, those brokers are:

- » Modivcare
- » MidCoast Connector (Waldo Community Action Program)
- » Penquis Community Action Program

The transportation broker is required to identify and assign the least expensive available transportation option, within the parameters of the recipient's health status, origin, and destination. Transportation options assigned to recipients include:

- » Direct reimbursement to the recipient, based on mileage driven between their home and the appointment.
- » Direct reimbursement to a family member or friend of the recipient, based on mileage driven between the recipient's home and the appointment.
- » Providing a transit pass if the recipient can feasibly use existing public transit.
- » Arranging a ride with a volunteer driver to provide the recipient with transportation to and from the appointment.
- » Arranging a ride with a local agency or special vehicle to provide the recipient with transportation to and from the appointment.
- » Arranging a ride with a taxi to provide the recipient with transportation to and from the appointment.

Ridesharing can be challenging in rural areas where passengers may live several miles apart, and the transportation broker is often unable to place more than one passenger in a vehicle at a time. This situation reduces efficiency and increases the number of trips and total costs, leaving fewer resources available to meet the demand for transportation in rural areas.

MaineCare requires recipients to contact their designated transportation broker at least two business days before their appointment, although urgent appointments can be coordinated when possible. This program also includes school-based NET transportation.

2.3.2 Additional Social Services Transportation Options

Transportation for access to social service appointments and needs is coordinated through Maine's Regional Transportation Programs. These trips are generally restricted to specific

eligible populations or trip purposes and require a referral from the specific social service program. Examples of these types of trips include:

- » DHHS Transportation trips related to daycare, childcare, and child protective services
- » Older Adult Transportation
- » Skills Training and Workforce Development
- » Maine Veterans Services

Trips covered through these services, along with certain NET trips, are sometimes administered by volunteer driver programs, which may provide a mileage-based reimbursement for drivers to transport recipients to and from appointments.

2.3.3 Additional Transit Partners and Providers

Additional key transit partners and providers include:

- » Maine's volunteer driver networks are typically, but not exclusively, run by non-profit organizations and are often associated with senior centers. Specific parameters and requirements for participation in these programs vary widely. There are 27 community-based programs with trained volunteers providing transportation at no charge. There are also two membership-based "village" programs which provide transportation, among other services, based on a membership fee. The community action programs have volunteer transportation as well, with volunteers reimbursed for mileage. Maine has a total of 38 transportation programs with volunteers providing the transportation, whether fee-based or not and whether providing reimbursement or not.
- » GO MAINE connects travelers with all transportation options, including ridesharing, vanpools, public transit, and active transportation, for all travel purposes within Maine.
- » Several workforce transportation pilots exist throughout the state, supported by grants from MaineDOT through the Maine Jobs and Recovery Plan and American Rescue Plan Act.
- » Moving Maine Network (MMN) is a statewide transportation equity-focused advocacy and collaborative group guided by a steering committee which covers multiple sectors, including housing, transportation, youth, disability, health and human services, and regional planning.

Additional information on state agency transportation programs, as well as corresponding funding levels, is provided in Appendix A.

2.4 Transit Funding

Most transit operating and capital funding in Maine is from federal sources, supplemented by state and local sources, marketing revenue, and farebox revenue. Federal funding sources include Section 5310—Enhanced Mobility for Older Adults and People with Disabilities, Section 5311—Formula Grants for Rural Areas, and Section 5307—Urbanized Area Formula Grants. The STP provides additional information on funding, including allocated funding by source.

3. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Maine 2024–2028 LCP Needs Assessment identifies the public transportation needs of the general public, including individuals with disabilities, older adults, people with low incomes, and others with enhanced mobility needs. The LCP Needs Assessment utilizes the 2019–2023 LCP as a foundation for identifying LCP target population needs and is informed by the STP.

The Needs Assessment is guided by the extensive public engagement included in the development of the STP and ongoing participation of MaineDOT staff in meetings and discussions related to public transit in Maine. Outreach specific to the LCP process includes a virtual public meeting on September 12, 2023, and open public comment period, as well as a presentation to the Moving Maine Network Steering Committee on September 14, 2023.

3.1 Identified Needs

People in Maine likely to have unmet transportation needs include:

- » Low-income residents, including significant numbers of veterans, immigrants, and homeless individuals.
- » Older adults, especially those living in rural areas.
- » Individuals with developmental or visual impairments.
- » Individuals living in zero-car households or without the ability to drive or access a car, in both urban and rural locations.
- » Evening/night and weekend workers, including those in the retail, medical, and warehousing industries.
- » General populations reliant on public transit in areas with transit services that are too infrequent or offered less than daily.

Several factors contribute to these unmet transportation needs:

- » Many people with unmet transit needs live in rural areas with infrequent or less than daily service. Rural areas may also experience issues with the technology that provides information on transportation services and connections. The state's aging vehicle fleet also reduces reliability and imposes additional costs for providers.

- » There is a relatively high degree of fragmentation in the provision of transportation services. In addition to public transit services, there are several options provided separately by social services organizations. This can lead to gaps in how information is disseminated on available transportation services and in the overall effectiveness and efficiency of services. Part of this fragmentation stems from a strong reliance on federal funding, which comes with regulations governing how funding can be applied towards transportation, including trip purpose eligibilities.
- » Public transit services designed prior to the onset of COVID-19 may not effectively serve travel patterns that have been altered by the pandemic. Labor shortages, exacerbated by the pandemic, have also impacted the provision of transportation services.
- » Existing levels of funding may be insufficient to meet the expanding and increasingly complex transit demands of Maine's population. Although Maine has received supplementary federal transit funding following the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall benefits of increased funding have been diminished due to inflationary pressures. Annual fluctuations in federal funding levels make it difficult to accurately plan for operations and capital programs. The amount of state funding for public transit is a policy decision and is not set by statute. State funding for public transit is also limited by the Maine Constitution's prohibition against the use of Highway Fund revenues for other modes such as public transit.

4. STRATEGIES

The strategies discussed below build upon the findings from the LCP needs assessment and are informed by the findings and strategies from the previous LCP and the recently completed STP.

- » **Improve Coordination Among MaineDOT and Maine DHHS:** Coordination was a major theme identified in both the previous LCP and most recent STP. The theme continues to be a pivotal component for providing effective public transit due to the large number of transportation providers as well as the mechanisms used to fund service. MaineDOT has been proactive in addressing coordination. Since the previous LCP was released and following the recommendations of Maine DHHS' internal evaluation, MaineDOT and Maine DHHS have discussed opportunities to better link transportation services overseen by both agencies. According to evaluations conducted by Maine DHHS and the STP, the existing brokerage for NET which DHHS oversees does not use available public transit services as efficiently as possible. This includes existing transit services which already serve medical facilities. As a result, some public transit providers may be missing out on additional passengers, revenue, and service opportunities, while DHHS is more reliant on other transportation services, decreasing efficiency and increasing costs.

With implementation of this LCP, and following recommendations from the STP, it is recommended that MaineDOT and Maine DHHS continue their coordination efforts. Specifically, this should include MaineDOT and Maine DHHS holding periodic coordination meetings to identify progress, milestones, and next steps to fully implement and manage a successful resource-sharing model. This work should be informed by the efforts of the federal Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM). CCAM released its 2023–2026 strategic plan in 2022 and later in 2023 is expected to provide additional guidance and a cost sharing model which will maintain consistency with program requirements and reduce complexities around funding between agencies and programs.

MaineDOT should continue to engage with the Maine Departments of Economic and Community Development, Education, Labor, Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, and MaineHousing. This engagement should prioritize the transit and everyday transportation needs of populations with a disability, over the age of 65, and those living below the poverty line.

- » **Increase Transit Service as Warranted.** As noted in the STP, increases in transit service (including expansions of service areas, increased frequencies, and expanded hours of service) may be warranted in several areas of the state, particularly in the northern, eastern, and western regions with relatively high concentrations of individuals with disabilities, over 65, and/or living below the poverty line, who tend to rely on transit more than the overall population.

The STP's recommendations for increased transit service include:

- Increased flex route frequencies on services that operate on one hour or less intervals.
- Increased availability of demand-response services for locations that are served by transit on a less-than-daily basis.
- Geographic increases in transit coverage to serve the region north of Bangor, near Lewiston/Auburn, Augusta/Waterville, the Midcoast Region, and the Norway/Oxford/South Paris region.

It is recommended that MaineDOT further examine these regions for feasible opportunities to add transit service, directly engaging with local and regional transit providers and stakeholders to identify transit improvements and expansions that would benefit LCP populations.

- » As discussed in the STP, MaineDOT should further examine the use of microtransit in low to moderate density areas with limited access to fixed route transit. Microtransit is a technology-based form of shared mobility in which transportation service is shared amongst users, typically concurrently. The service is characterized by flexible, on-demand availability, in which a user can request service in advance. Such a service is currently being examined by YCCAC to enhance commuting options for workers at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard along the Kittery-Sanford corridor. Additional transit agencies in the PACTS region are also looking to develop microtransit service in portions of their service areas. Further strategies for increasing transit, especially in rural locations, include strengthening and encouraging volunteer driver programs, and continuing support of pilot projects to support workforce transportation needs across Maine.
- » **Improve and Maintain Transit Infrastructure.** Maine's transit infrastructure consists of vehicles, as well as provider and user facilities such as garages, operation centers, transit centers, signage, benches, lighting, sidewalks, and bike racks. Proper maintenance and

management of these facilities is crucial to ensuring users have access to safe and reliable transit service. As part of maintaining and upgrading these facilities, information and ADA accessibility improvements should be prioritized. Although many of these transportation infrastructure components are present throughout the state's urban centers, they can often be lacking in rural areas, including those locations served by demand-response service. MaineDOT should coordinate with these transit agencies to identify potential locations which function as important trip generators, such as medical and social service offices, as well as supermarkets, for targeted accessible infrastructure upgrades.

- » Vehicles are maintained by each provider according to their asset management plans. Primarily the case for rural providers, MaineDOT assists in coordinating vehicle purchases, including helping to meet required local matches for federal funding. To assist operators with the requirements of managing and maintaining vehicles, MaineDOT should procure a statewide asset management platform to support the capital planning, prioritization, and federal reporting functions. More information on the details associated with procuring an asset management platform can be found in the STP. In accordance with the previous LCP, the STP, and *Maine Will not Wait*, MaineDOT should also continue to spearhead the transition of statewide operators to hybrid, electric, and other low- and zero-emission vehicles.
- » **Increase Use of Technology in Transit Operations.** Technology is a broad but important key theme identified in the previous LCP and the STP. Multiple forms of technology can help to improve transit operations, increase information access, and provide transit users with an overall better and more accessible service. Examples include modernized fare payment systems which allow users to pay using additional methods besides cash, Computer-Aided Dispatch/Automatic Vehicle Location (CAD/AVL) software, asset management software, and General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS). Each of these transportation technologies is discussed in greater detail in the STP.

Although many of these technologies are already used in the state's larger transit systems, they are less prevalent across Maine's smaller and rural transit agencies. The STP noted that, aside from some rural portions of certain transit areas, the Internet access that supports these transit technologies is generally not an issue for agencies.

Specific strategies which could benefit transit agencies and the LCP populations they serve include a full statewide rollout of CAD/AVL and GTFS. CAD/AVL systems allow transit

operators to efficiently schedule and dispatch vehicles and know the location of each vehicle in real time. GTFS implementation creates a standard and consistent platform for data dissemination, and would also allow for services to be searchable on Google Maps and other platforms such as GO MAINE. Other agencies could adopt a unified fare payment system similar to that currently used by Biddeford Saco Old Orchard Beach Transit, South Portland Bus Service, and Greater Portland Metro.

- » **Address Driver and Labor Shortage Issues.** The driver and labor shortage issues identified in the previous LCP and recent STP continue to be a challenge for many providers. The STP found many agencies who are not actively experiencing staffing shortages lacked a comprehensive driver retention and talent attraction strategy. Workforce challenges for transit providers, as for employers throughout the state, were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some agencies have been forced to reduce service due to staff shortages, creating challenges for LCP populations and others who rely on transit services for access to vital resources and services and other activities.

As identified in the STP, addressing these labor shortage issues can include revamped driver education and regional training programs that pool resources across agencies and serve a greater number of communities. MaineDOT and transit agencies can also work with the Maine Department of Labor to identify and quantify required competencies, difficult to fill positions, and regional needs. MaineDOT can also work with vocational schools and community colleges to establish and encourage training for commercial drivers' licenses, mechanics, and other skills to ensure that a longer-term pipeline of talent is available.

- » **Pursue Funding to Support the Strategies and Vision for Maine's Public Transportation System.** As identified in the previous LCP and STP, adequate funding is critical to support LCP transit needs. Given a wide range of needs, spread amongst many operators and services, MaineDOT should continue to work with local, state, and federal stakeholders to maximize existing funding and identify new innovative funding sources, such as grants authorized through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) through 2026:
 - Integrated mobility management or on-demand mobility service projects (\$1.3 billion).
 - Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) pilot programs (\$5 billion).
 - Public Transportation Innovation Program, and its Mobility, Access, and Transportation Insecurity: Creating Links to Opportunity Demonstration Research Program (\$6 billion).

- The Rural Surface Transportation Grant program, which allows applicants to use one application for up to three separate discretionary grant opportunities: Mega Grants, Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grants, and Rural Surface Transportation Grants (\$2 billion).

The STP includes information on additional potential state and local funding sources.

4.1 Addressing Identified Needs

Broadly, the Needs Assessment components can be grouped into several categories:

- » Rural Coverage and Accessibility
- » Transit Service Parameters
- » Coordination
- » Post-COVID Travel Needs
- » Driver and Labor Shortages
- » Funding

Table 4.1 identifies the Needs Assessment theme which each strategy broadly addresses.

Table 4.1 LCP Strategies Applied to Needs Assessment

LCP Strategy	Needs Assessment Theme					
	Rural Coverage and Accessibility	Transit Service Parameters	Coordination	Post-COVID Travel Needs	Driver and Labor Shortages	Funding Needs
Improve Coordination among MaineDOT and Maine DHHS	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Increase Transit Service as Warranted	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Improve and Maintain Transit Infrastructure	Yes		Yes			
Increase Use of Technology in Transit Operations	Yes		Yes			
Address Driver and Labor Shortage Issues			Yes		Yes	
Pursue Funding to Support the Strategies and Vision for Maine’s Public Transportation System	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes

5. PRIORITIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The following steps in the LCP development process will ensure that these strategies are carried out, and the objectives of the LCP are met.

5.1 Prioritization

The strategies put forth in the LCP development can be prioritized based on projected timeline. Given that each strategy consists of multiple components, specific suggested steps are listed under each time period as relevant.

5.1.1 Immediate (2024–2025)

The following actions are recommended for MaineDOT during the immediate timeframe of the LCP period:

- » Maintain state of good repair across all transit providers by replacing aging fleets and maintaining existing vehicles, within the limitations of available funding and ongoing supply chain issues.
- » Continue to improve coordination between MaineDOT and Maine DHHS. Ideally, a target date for full coordination should be identified. The release of the CCAM cost sharing model should inform this coordination.
- » Develop a framework for increased technology use for transit operations, including automated fare payment, CAD/AVL, and GTFIS Flex. Assess agency needs for implementing cost-effective and efficient CAD/AVL, GTFIS, and automated fare payment across all operations.
- » Develop a draft request for proposals (RFP) for a statewide asset management platform, including determining which features would be most relevant and useful for the agency. The RFP should also ask vendors how their product would facilitate coordination amongst multiple transit providers.
- » With transit providers, identify and assess potential adjustments, including microtransit, to existing transit service as warranted.
- » Work with transit providers, partner agencies, and educational institutions, as appropriate, to explore approaches for addressing driver and labor shortages.

- » Continue to identify grant and funding opportunities focused on the transit needs of populations with a disability, over the age of 65, and those living below the poverty line.

5.1.2 Mid-Term (2026–2028)

The following actions are recommended for MaineDOT during the mid-term timeframe of the LCP period:

- » Implementation of formalized coordination between MaineDOT and Maine DHHS. This should include periodic ongoing meetings which focus on identifying efficiency and cost sharing opportunities to streamline transportation accessibility.
- » Implement additional technology across transit operations. This includes asset management platforms deployed to MaineDOT, as well as CAD/AVL, GTFS, and automated fare payment applied across all operations.
- » Identify, assess, and implement transit adjustments where warranted.
- » Reassess and continue to monitor and identify driver and labor shortage needs and strategies.
- » Apply for relevant grants where warranted, and monitor new funding opportunities, including through the next federal transportation funding bill.

5.2 Implementation

MaineDOT is responsible for overseeing the strategies identified in the LCP. This includes the dissemination of federal funding, including Section 5310 Program funding to Regional Transit Providers, and all private non-profit entities for capital and mobility management needs. This also includes identifying general opportunities and policies, including in relation to coordinating with partner agencies, for the purposes of meeting LCP population and human services transit needs. MaineDOT staff will monitor progress and prepare reports for scheduled discussions with stakeholders such as the Public Transit Advisory Council and Maine Transit Association. In accordance with state statute, the Maine Legislature will be kept informed through the Public Transit Advisory Council report submitted every odd-numbered year. Early in 2028, MaineDOT will develop an approach to prepare the next quinquennial LCP for 2029 through 2033.