

ITNCountry: Transportation for Rural and Small Communities

Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI) Demonstration Research Program



Volunteer driver Stephanie Lauer and rider Steve Kelley
of the Kennebunk Kennector, on a ride for a haircut and a stop at the hardware store,
ITNCountry IMI demonstration project

Prepared for
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
by

ITNAmerica[®]

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March 2024

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology, Diana Furchtgott-Roth for her vision and support for this project. Thanks also to Mary Leary and Rik Opstelten of the Federal Transit Administration, to Brian Komar of Salesforce, and to Jack Dangermond and Terry Bills of Esri for their willingness to look to the transportation future with hope and creativity. Finally, thanks to dedicated Board and staff at ITNAmerica and to the community stakeholders, riders and volunteer drivers across the country who made this research effort possible.

ABSTRACT

Transportation for rural and small communities is one of the most intractable of all transportation problems. This is because resources tend to diminish as distances and corresponding costs increase, while opportunities to gain efficiency through shared rides decline. Traditional transit solutions can become especially strained in lower density areas where trips become infrequent and lengthy. This research project sought to address this problem by demonstrating *ITNCountry* on the Salesforce platform in small communities in California, Maine, Kentucky, Florida and New York. The seven successful start-ups continued to deliver quality service when the demonstration ended.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transportation for rural and small communities is one of the most intractable of all transportation problems. This is because resources tend to diminish as distances and corresponding costs increase, while opportunities to gain efficiency through shared rides decline. Traditional transit solutions can become especially strained in lower density areas where trips become infrequent and lengthy. This research project sought to address this problem by demonstrating ITNCountry on the Salesforce platform in small communities in California, Maine, Kentucky, Florida and New York.

The ITNCountry demonstration was carried out in two phases. Phase one of the project encompassed three major activities: 1) rebuild ITNRides software on Salesforce with support from Salesforce, Esri, and private philanthropy; 2) develop key messages and strategies for marketing at the local and national level; and 3) work with ITN affiliates in Maine, California, and Kentucky to develop ITNCountry in small and rural communities in these three states. (New York and Florida were added later in the project.) Phase two of the demonstration project encompassed the implementation of the following activities: 1) launch ITNRides2.0 software on Salesforce and transition the demonstration communities to the platform; 2) train the demonstration communities to use the software for ride services and coordination; 3) employ the Online Learning Center for training; and 4) market and implement the innovative payment programs.

The project was extended to accommodate additional time necessary for the technology development and data migration but was accomplished in time for a full year of data collection, with eight months of additional rides data collected after the end of the demonstration as service continued in all communities. An internal evaluation included detailed profiles of all participating communities, stakeholder interviews and pre-post surveys of stakeholders, riders and volunteer drivers.

Ride numbers increased steadily throughout the project and rider and volunteer surveys showed high levels of satisfaction with the service. More than 60% of rides were for healthcare and many riders used a mobility aid (44%) or required door-through-door assistance (29%). Although no membership was required to use the service during the federally-funded demonstration period, researchers asked riders about membership and learned that riders felt membership in a local, nonprofit volunteer transportation service created a sense of belonging, community and security.

1. Introduction

History of Independent Transportation Network® and Background of the Need

Founded in 1995, Independent Transportation Network (ITN®) envisioned and built the original ITN model for sustainable, community-based, nonprofit transportation through years of research and a keen understanding of the transportation need. When ITN began, conversation around older adult transportation focused primarily on licensing and testing older drivers, essentially measuring people against the system. ITN understood this approach was incomplete because licensing and testing identify the safety risk but do nothing to offer continued mobility for more than 600,000 older adults aged 70 and older who stop driving every year. The majority of older adults travel by car and few have access to a viable transportation alternative. Moreover, those who stop driving outlive their decision by about a decade. ITN recognized the need for a more permanent solution that met older drivers where they live. Instead of measuring older drivers against the system, ITN chose to measure the system against the needs of people, acknowledging aging as a natural and inevitable part of life.

ITN designed the original model based on three underlying assumptions: 1) people who have paid for their transportation needs their entire life have demonstrated a willingness to contribute to the cost of transportation; 2) when people have relied on automobiles for transportation all their lives, it is not realistic to assume they will be content riding the bus when they need to stop driving; and 3) older adults who continue to drive do not necessarily have adequate mobility.

The logic behind these assumptions led to the fundamental design for the original ITN model: a community-based alternative to the private vehicle that leverages private resources to meet both the needs and desires of older adults who no longer drive. Three core characteristics set the ITN model apart from other transportation solutions. First, the ITN model was deliberately designed for replication in other communities, with the understanding that human service needs have more commonalities than differences and a replicable solution could be connected by a national network. Second, as a non-profit, the ITN model was not restricted to cash resources, introducing opportunities for in-kind support and social capital to supplement limited transit resources. Third, the original ITN model offered world class, proprietary software with Esri routing and scheduling algorithms and supported local communities through innovative payment programs that incentivize the flow of private resources to Personal Transportation Accounts™, which are debited to pay for rides and hold resources in various forms. Transportation credits may accrue from volunteer driving or from automobiles traded for rides. Personal Transportation Account's may also hold cash from riders, merchants, healthcare providers, grants, family members, public agencies or any number of third-party payers.

Early in the development process, ITN undertook, at the request of riders, membership as a feature of its service model. Riders were enthusiastic, feeling a level of belonging with the effort, and even offered designs for their cards.

In 2004, the ITN Board of Directors created a national organization, ITNAmerica®, whose mission is to promote lifelong mobility for older adults and people with mobility challenges. ITNAmerica supports sustainable, community-based transportation by leading a national transportation network grounded in research, policy analysis, technology and education. For more than 20 years, communities across the United States used the original ITN model to provide transportation in private automobiles for older adults and people with visual impairments. ITN secured the sustainability of the original model by focusing on four areas: resources, logistics, technology, and public policy. Private resources for transportation

outnumber public resources 5 to 1¹. The original ITN model encouraged resource sustainability and tapped into private resources by charging riders a modest fee for service and by developing relationships with national and local businesses and philanthropies. Logistically, the original ITN model emphasized personal transportation by bringing the vehicle to the individual, rather than the individual to the high occupancy vehicle (mass transportation) and leveraged world class software to improve system efficiency. Finally, ITN understood public policy to be one of the most effective mechanisms for sustainable social change. As a social enterprise, ITNAmerica worked at the state and national level to advocate for policies that either create incentives or remove barriers to the use of private resources for transportation. Examples include policy to protect against insurance practices that unfairly or unreasonably increase premiums for nonprofit volunteer drivers and car dealership laws that present barriers to older people who can no longer drive safely from trading their automobiles to help pay for their rides.

ITNCountry

Despite the national success of the original model, ITNAmerica recognized that it had to adapt. A considerable portion of the country still lacked adequate access to transportation and the growth of the older adult population continued to outpace transportation resources. About 20% of the U.S. population live in rural areas comprising 95% of the country's land area, and about 40% of rural Americans live in a county with little or no public transportation.² To meet the transportation needs of rural communities and a continually growing older adult population, ITNAmerica knew it had to increase scalability and offer greater flexibility to providers that might not have the capacity or desire to implement every element of the original ITN model. The ITNAmerica Board of Directors approved the development of ITNCountry: a new, flexible, low-cost model, designed for rural and small communities. Unlike the original ITN model, ITNCountry would grant local providers greater agency over service decisions, while continuing to connect and support providers through the national office and the Salesforce platform. ITNAmerica understood that every community is different, but with similar challenges for resources, logistics, technology and policy. So, in core needs, they have much in common; a national platform could support the commonalities while honoring the differences.

ITNAmerica entered into a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to demonstrate and test this market sensitive, consumer-oriented, mobility on demand model in lower density and rural communities across the United States. The project, as conceived by ITNAmerica and approved by the FTA, had four primary goals: 1) to improve mobility for older adults and other special needs populations; 2) to address payment equity through the use of Personal Transportation Accounts™; 3) to leverage previously unutilized social capital; and 4) to provide world class technology, previously unavailable to small and rural communities.

¹ Driven to Spend, A Transportation and Quality of Life Publication, 2000, Surface Transportation Policy Project, Center for Neighborhood Technology, p.9.

² <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2017/08/rural-america.html> United States Census Bureau, What is rural America? p.1.

https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/42593/30151_aib795full_002.pdf?v=41262#:~:text=Public%20transportation%20is%20available%20in,each%20year%20per%20carless%20household). Rural Transportation at a Glance.

2. Project Description

Overview and Project Objectives

The ITNCountry demonstration project initially included eight demonstration communities. ITNAmerica and the demonstration sites planned to carry it out in two phases. Phase one of the project encompassed three major activities: 1) rebuild ITNRides software on Salesforce with support from Salesforce, Esri, and private philanthropy; 2) develop key messages and strategies for marketing at the local and national level; and 3) work with ITN affiliates in Maine, California, and Kentucky to develop ITNCountry in small and rural communities in these three states. Phase two of the demonstration project encompassed the implementation of the following activities: 1) launch ITNRides2.0 software on Salesforce and transition the demonstration communities to the platform; 2) train the demonstration communities to use the software for ride services and coordination; 3) employ the Online Learning Center for training; and 4) market and implement the innovative payment programs.

Selecting ITNCountry Demonstration Sites

The ITNCountry Demonstration Project included eight communities from across the United States:

- NorthLine and ValleyLine (Monterey County, CA);
- Senior Transport Services (Sarasota, FL);
- Woodford Wheels (Woodford County, KY);
- The Kennector (Kennebunk, ME);
- Mobilize Katahdin (Millinocket, ME);
- Friends in Action – Ellsworth (Hancock County, ME); and
- FISH of Tompkins County (Tompkins County, NY).

In the initial project plan, three successful ITN affiliates, one each from California, Maine, and Kentucky, would identify and recruit communities for the project. To recruit sites, the affiliates approached potential communities, presented the project, and asked for their interest. The demonstration sites were not persuaded to try ITNCountry; their participation was grounded in their own interest in the project and its mission. During the project, two communities in Kentucky and two in Maine dropped out due to staffing and management issues. ITNAmerica identified FISH of Tompkins County, New York, and Senior Transport Services of Sarasota, Florida, as alternative communities to replace those that departed. In the end, seven communities in five states took part in the IMI demonstration.

Establishing ITNCountry and Ongoing Support

During phase one of the project, ITNAmerica worked closely with the demonstration communities to help them identify their needs, understand their capacity, and develop a sustainable community program. The ITNCountry Community Manager met regularly with communities and walked them through the *Getting Started* modules in ITNAmerica's Online Learning Center. The modules include:

- A Guide to Setting Your Service Area;
- ITNCountry Planning Budget Worksheet;

- Community Transportation Needs Assessment;
- Identifying Community Partners Planning Worksheet;
- Introduction to the Planning Center;
- Supply and Demand of Community Transportation;
- Determining Fares and Volunteer Credits;
- Insurance and More;
- Community Asset and Service Partnerships Tracking; and
- Populations that May Need Transportation.

ITNAmerica also guided the demonstration communities through the process of developing steering committees, creating a volunteer base, and building public awareness. Through this process, the ITN*Country* demonstration communities laid the groundwork for a strong foundation. ITNAmerica continued to support the communities throughout the demonstration project through individual weekly meetings with communities and monthly peer group meetings.

Training and the Online Learning Center

The demonstration communities had access to the Online Learning Center (OLC) throughout the demonstration project. This resource offered ITN*Country* demonstration sites unlimited access to resources and materials, designed by ITNAmerica, to support operations and use of the ITN*Rides2.0* software.

During the FTA IMI project, ITNAmerica made the OLC available to the demonstration communities and through feedback developed a supplemental training plan for the onboarding process, improving the usefulness of the OLC, in support of further implementation of the ITN Model.

ITNAmerica provided one-on-one training for ITN*Rides2.0* software use once communities' data were migrated onto the platform. This training occurred over four separate 1.5 hour sessions and covered the following topics:

- How to enter new riders, drivers, and contacts into the system
- How to book different types of rides
- How to make changes to booked rides
- How to schedule and assign drivers to rides
- How to communicate rides to drivers using the driver portal or email
- How to pull reports, enter payments, and customize system settings

Technology Support

ITNAmerica provided the ITN*Country* demonstration communities with technology support throughout the second phase of the project, and afterward. For communities with existing data, technology support began with data migration: the process of taking the existing data and shaping it to the ITN*Rides2.0* system. For some communities, this process required the addition of missing data or reformatting existing data.

ITNAmerica continued to provide technology support once demonstration communities began using the software to book and schedule rides. Through the Salesforce platform, ITN*Country* demonstration sites could submit cases for a variety of needs including but not limited to, technology bugs, user error, desired enhancements, reports, training needs, form assembly, and information/process requests. The Salesforce platform gave demonstration sites the ability

to select a priority level for their request, and allowed ITNAmerica to assign each case to the appropriate staff member and track its status.

Producing ITNCountry Marketing Materials

ITNAmerica developed marketing materials, in cooperation with marketing consultant Dirigo Collective, to promote ITNCountry for both the national organization and the ITNCountry demonstration communities. The ITNCountry eBook and customer journeys (the learning steps to a decision) were designed to introduce ITNCountry to prospective communities and to help ITNAmerica meet the unique needs of different providers. Most of the ITNCountry marketing materials, however, were designed specifically for the demonstration communities to help them grow services and recruit volunteers. ITNAmerica produced items such as rack cards and flyers to help communities gain the public's attention and reach potential volunteers, as well as materials to promote the innovative payment plans that help increase capacity through community connections.

3. Project Evolution

Technology Rollout

ITNAmerica's proprietary software provides the technology infrastructure for the ITNCountry model. ITNRides2.0 was developed with private philanthropic resources on the Salesforce platform parallel to the ITNCountry demonstration project. The development delayed the implementation phase because it both took longer and had more bugs than anticipated. The ITNAmerica technology team worked diligently to fix bugs and support communities as needs arose. Ultimately, in December, 2022, ITNAmerica undertook the difficult and extensive task of identifying and transitioning to a new software development partner. This switch proved extremely beneficial for the project and has increased ITNAmerica's ability to respond to software issues. It also greatly improved customer satisfaction at the ITNCountry sites. As of the end of the demonstration project, ITNAmerica resolved many of the most pressing issues and is now planning enhancements for ITNRides 2.0 including an in-app help system with an AI enhanced chat bot, group rides, volunteer ride chaperones and in-home services to support aging in community.

Staff Turnover and Dirigo Collective

ITNAmerica experienced staff turnover in two positions during demonstration project: the ITNCountry project manager and the evaluation manager. The change in evaluation manager had a more limited impact on the demonstration project. This rollover occurred between phase one and two of the project, at which point the evaluation plan was complete and just needed to be implemented, allowing for a smoother transition.

The ITNCountry project manager position rolled over twice, once in December 2021 and again in January, 2023. With only six months left in the demonstration project, ITNAmerica elected to contract this position to Dirigo Collective rather than hire and train a new employee. Dirigo had both existing knowledge of the ITNCountry project and the kind of experience with community organizations that allowed them to take over the project more quickly than a new hire. When Dirigo joined the project, their first priority was to connect with each demonstration community to understand their greatest challenges and strengths through one-on-one calls. As the project progressed and major challenges were addressed in each community, Dirigo made the weekly one-on-one calls optional to give time back to the communities, added a weekly email with project updates, and continued to support the communities with monthly partner's calls during

which communities received in-depth training on volunteer recruitment, coalition building, and the innovative payment plans.

Responding to Community Needs

ITNAmerica responded to demonstration community needs in real time as the demonstration project progressed. Demonstration communities expressed interest in connecting with other ITN*Country* communities and in the ability to search for a specific module in the Online Learning Center (OLC). In response, ITNAmerica prioritized development of the “Café” (an online forum for community conversations) and developed a search function in the OLC. ITNAmerica also learned from and adapted to its experience with the ITN*Country* model. As the demonstration communities moved through the project, ITNAmerica developed a community checklist, onboarding process, and marketing materials specifically designed to help future communities transition to the ITN*Country* platform successfully. ITNAmerica also developed a new training module in the OLC to help communities transitioning from a legacy software program prepare and migrate their existing data onto the ITNRides2.0 software in Salesforce. Such a transition involves much more than simple data migration. Often, it is necessary for an existing provider, such as FISH in Tompkins County, to enter additional information to complete data migration. Collecting and entering those data is a challenge for staff who must balance the extra effort with their day-to-day work of providing rides. Staff using the system were often not the people who made the decision to transition to new software, as was the case for Friends in Action. ITNAmerica produced guidance on how to prepare staff for the transition after observing resistance to training and adoption of the new system.

Community Progression

ITNAmerica recognized that each demonstration community was unique and would have a different experience as a participant in the ITNCountry demonstration project. ITNAmerica tracked each community's experience and noted challenges and successes to better understand the ITNCountry model, its strengths and weaknesses.

The Kennector (Kennebunk, ME)

As a demonstration site, The Kennector (the only demonstration community run by a municipality) was responsive, eager to learn, and quick to progress. The community successfully recruited a pool of committed volunteers, but expressed a need to balance the workload and control their growth to avoid overwhelming their new volunteers. The Kennector's (the name given the ITN Country-supported service) director highlighted the positive experience of drivers, who asked to maintain relationships with the same riders, expressed satisfaction with the program's workflow, and appreciated the data capabilities of the ride software. The director also noted some key challenges. Staff with The Kennector found the software somewhat challenging, while recognizing the need for a refresher and more practice with the system. The Kennector also faced challenges with system glitches, customizing pre-made reports and wanted an easier way to navigate both between the software and OLC and within the OLC. In response to their feedback, ITNAmerica created custom reports by request, added a search feature to the OLC and has submitted a grant request to build a new in-app help system with videos, check-lists and an AI chat bot.

Mobilize Katahdin (Millinocket, ME)

Mobilize Katahdin got off to an early start with ITNCountry, offering rides on the old ITNRides 1.5 software several months before migrating to ITNRides 2.0 on Salesforce with the rest of the demonstration communities. Ultimately, however, Mobilize Katahdin decided to suspend service, largely due to insufficient capacity. Mobilize Katahdin was run by the Millinocket Public Library. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced the organization's volunteer numbers and program capacity, so the library chose to direct its resources toward programs more closely aligned with its mission and ability. The staff at Mobilize Katahdin found the OLC helpful and the software suitable for their needs, but noted that those with less tech-experience may find them challenging to navigate. Mobilize Katahdin suggested that more personal training during the onboarding process could have better prepared them. Overall, the staff and director of Mobilize Katahdin recognized the need for transportation in their area and the benefit of ITNCountry, but felt the library was not equipped to manage the program on its own and needed more support from the local community.

NorthLine and ValleyLine (Monterey County, CA)

NorthLine and ValleyLine demonstration communities were run out of an existing ITN affiliate, ITNMontereyCounty, and grew successfully through a focus on building trust, leveraging community partnerships, and providing a service on which riders could rely. The communities found the steering committees and innovative payment plans to be helpful tools for strengthening connections, building awareness, and communicating the service to others. Unlike the other demonstration communities, NorthLine and ValleyLine spent \$45,000 on local marketing and felt the community was generally aware of the service. NorthLine and ValleyLine staff did find the early bugs in the software challenging,

but felt that other elements of the project, such as the ability to share experiences with other demonstration communities, were valuable.

Senior Transport Services (Sarasota County, FL)

Senior Transport Services had a positive experience with *ITNCountry*. The directors were satisfied with the new cloud-based technology, and found the OLC helpful. The community's greatest challenge was volunteer recruitment and retention. The organization's small volunteer pool and struggle to find more volunteers were concerning. Senior Transport Services leveraged various channels to recruit volunteers, such as newspaper ads, and *ITNAmerica* offered support by providing a list of events and organizations for volunteer recruitment in the area. The community struggled with capacity following the sudden death of one of its founding directors, but was subsequently able to recruit more volunteers to lessen the burden. Despite some challenges, the directors at Senior Transport Services were very committed to the organization and the work to improve transportation options in their area.

Woodford Wheels (Woodford County, KY)

Woodford Wheels was a highly productive demonstration site that benefited extensively from the experience of one of the programs leaders who simultaneously worked for *ITNAmerica* and previously as an ITN affiliate executive director for *ITNBluegrass* in nearby Lexington. Woodford Wheels recognized the importance of the project and the need for transportation in the community, but identified issues with the software bugs, especially those in the billing function, while appreciating the software's visual appeal and ability to offer an array of reports. Woodford Wheels struggled persistently with volunteer recruitment, but managed to retain a core group of dedicated volunteers. The community also benefited from more than \$10,000 in monetary support from the city of Versailles which helped ensure the program's sustainability. Launched out of the county health department, Woodford Wheels is now in the process of becoming a separate 501(c) 3 charitable corporation.

FISH of Tompkins County (Tompkins County, NY)

Despite many challenges, FISH of Tompkins County expressed a positive experience with *ITNCountry*. However, the community was unable to provide rides through the software during the demonstration project because much of the community's data on riders was incomplete or inaccurate, making data migration a serious, time consuming challenge. During the demonstration project, FISH worked to clean its data, but expressed some difficulty using the software to organize free rides. FISH appreciated the thoroughness of the OLC and expressed excitement for their planned July 1, 2023 launch date on the software.

Friends in Action – Ellsworth (Hancock County, ME)

Friends in Action experienced a number of challenges during the demonstration project, and ultimately showed little effort in adopting the *ITNCountry* model. Friends in Action joined the demonstration project when the Hancock County Planning Commission was no longer able to participate. Friends in Action, however, had an established software program and staff were extremely reluctant to transition to the *ITNRides2.0* software. This created an unexpected hurdle that slowed and eventually impeded *ITNCountry* implementation. *ITNAmerica* struggled to maintain consistent lines of communication with the director of Friends in Action who frequently neglected to return phone calls or emails. *ITNAmerica* did have a successful in-person meeting in Ellsworth, Maine, with the staff of

Friends in Action. Although concerns were discussed openly, the meeting did not translate to improved communication. Friends in Action benefited from a dedicated pool of volunteer drivers, but reluctance to transition to the new platform and hesitancy over data ownership prevented the demonstration from starting in the community.

4. Evaluation

Purpose

The purpose of ITNAmerica's internal evaluation was to measure perceptions of community mobility, community transportation, and the impact of the ITN*Country* model over the course of the demonstration project. The internal evaluation examined ITN*Country*'s performance and impact in relation to ITNAmerica's four project goals, as well as the satisfaction of riders and volunteer drivers. The results of the evaluation will help ITNAmerica learn from the experience of the demonstration communities and support the sustainable growth of new ITN*Country* communities across the United States.

Methodology

The internal evaluation included four elements: surveys, structured interviews with community stakeholders, community profiles, and quantitative data from the ITNRides2.0 database.

ITNAmerica sent surveys to riders, drivers, staff, and community stakeholders from each demonstration site at three points in the demonstration project: pre-implementation, during-implementation, and post-implementation. ITNAmerica delivered pre-implementation surveys on a rolling basis as communities transitioned their data onto the ITNRides2.0 platform (see Appendix A. for a pre-implementation survey timeline). ITNAmerica delivered the during-implementation surveys starting the third week of January 2023 and delivered post-implementation surveys beginning the second week of May 2023. Drivers, staff, and community stakeholders received each survey via email. ITNAmerica emailed surveys to all riders with an active email account and sent surveys by standard mail to those without email. Surveys sent by standard mail contained return postage. The second and third round of rider and driver surveys included additional questions on satisfaction with local ITN*Country* providers. ITNAmerica surveyed Mobilize Katahdin in two periods, pre-implementation and post-implementation, since they suspended transportation services in February 2023.

ITNAmerica conducted standardized interviews with at least one community stakeholder from each of the demonstration sites. Each demonstration site provided a list of stakeholders from their respective community for the stakeholder survey. All stakeholders who completed the pre-implementation survey were contacted for participation in an interview. The research department conducted each 30-minute interview with a pre-determined list of ten questions. Each interview was recorded with participant permission for the purpose of note taking.

ITNAmerica developed community profiles for each of the sites involved in the ITN*Country* Demonstration Project. Each profile covered information on the following topics: community demographics, local economy, transportation, community character and services, and the local ITN*Country* provider. The research department used stakeholder interviews to incorporate local knowledge into the profiles. The profiles were used primarily to provide context for survey data analysis, individual community experience assessment, and comparison among the communities. (See Appendix B for full community profiles.)

Sample

Results of the internal evaluation include data from six of the eight demonstration sites: The Kennebec, Mobilize Katahdin, NorthLine, ValleyLine, Senior Transport Services, and Woodford Wheels. Friends in Action – Ellsworth and FISH of Tompkins County did not implement the ITNRides2.0 software during the demonstration period and did not provide information on riders or volunteer drivers until the third round of surveys. Quantitative data from these communities have been excluded from the findings of the internal evaluation. The internal evaluation focuses on survey results from the pre and post-implementation periods since Mobilize Katahdin did not have a survey period during implementation.

Results

Community Profiles: Summary of Findings

ITNAmerica designed the ITNCountry model for small and rural communities across the United States, recognizing that characteristics and needs vary by community. The Community profiles support this recognition, finding that, although similarities exist among demonstration sites, each ITNCountry community exists along a spectrum with respect to the analysis areas: demographics, economy, transportation, community character and services, as well as the local ITNCountry provider. Broadly, the communities share high level similarities in each analysis area. Each of the communities provide service in areas of low population density, have local economies with only one or two key sectors, lack sufficient transportation options for those who cannot drive a private vehicle, have limited resources, and enjoy a strong sense of community identity. These similarities exist alongside a number of unique characteristics in each demonstration site. For example, the three communities in Maine are racially homogenous while those in California and New York are more diverse. The economy in Millinocket is in a state of decline while Woodford and Sarasota Counties host strong and developing economies. Even shared characteristics, such as limited transportation options, look slightly different for each community. Demonstration sites in Florida, New York, and California exist alongside public transit networks with fixed-route, paratransit, and mobility on-demand systems, while some communities in Maine and Kentucky lack any public transit option. Recognizing the variability across the demonstration communities highlights the need for a flexible model and offers context for the success and challenges of each community individually.

Survey Respondent Demographics

The response rate for both rider and volunteer survey respondents was higher in the post than the pre-demonstration survey. Riders ranged in age from 18 to 81 and older, while volunteers ranged from age 40 to 81 and older. Thirty percent (30%) of riders had an income less than \$29,999, but no volunteer drivers had an income less than \$40,000. Forty percent (40%) of riders had an income of \$60,000 or more, while 75% of volunteers had an income at that same \$60,000 level, or more. Ethnicity across all communities was similar for riders and volunteers, 96% white/Caucasian for riders and 100% white/Caucasian for volunteers. Women comprised 75% of riders and 50% of volunteers. Fifty-six percent (56%) of riders had a bachelor's degree and 28% had a graduate degree; seventy-five percent (75%) of volunteers had a bachelor's degree and 35% had a graduate degree.

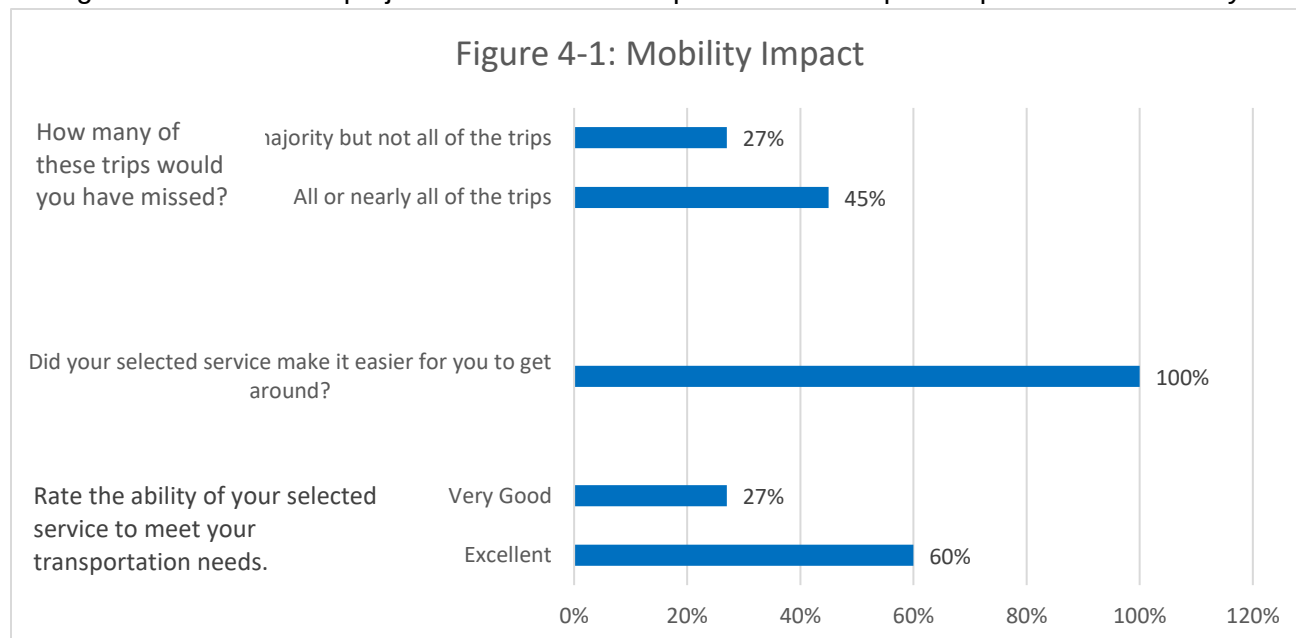
Table 1: Characteristics of Pre and Post-Implementation Survey Respondents				
Characteristic	Sample Size (=55)			
Respondent Type	Rider		Driver	
Survey Period	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Age	N=29	N=54	N=18	N=20
18-40	7%	2%	11%	0%
41-50	7%	2%	6%	5%
51-60	7%	9%	28%	15%
61-70	28%	17%	11%	30%
71-80	31%	35%	39%	35%
81+	21%	35%	6%	15%
Household Income	N=29	N=53	N=17	N=20
\$0-\$29,999	41%	30%	12%	0%
\$30,000-\$59,999	10%	30%	18%	25%
\$60,000-\$89,999	10%	13%	12%	20%
\$90,000+	10%	8%	53%	30%
Choose not to respond	28%	19%	8%	25%
Race/Ethnicity	N=27	N=52	N=18	N=20
White/Caucasian	93%	96%	94%	100%
Black/African American	3%	2%	0%	0%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3%	0%	0%	0%
Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0%	0%	0%	0%
Asian	0%	0%	6%	0%
Hispanic/Latinx	3%	2%	0%	0%
Other	3%	0%	0%	0%

Gender	N=29	N=55	N=17	N=20
Man	24%	29%	44%	50%
Woman	76%	71%	56%	50%
Education	N=29	N=53	N=17	N=20
Less than high school	7%	6%	0%	0%
High school degree	17%	9%	6%	5%
Some college but no degree	7%	19%	6%	15%
Associate degree	7%	8%	6%	5%
Bachelor degree	31%	28%	24%	40%
Graduate degree	28%	28%	59%	35%

Mobility

Improved community was an expected impact of the ITN*Country* Demonstration Project. Survey data suggest the ITN*Country* model helped local providers improve the mobility of their riders. The ITN*Country* survey asked riders to consider the state of local transportation with respect to the community in general, taking all transportation options into consideration. Over the course of the demonstration project, riders felt better able to access rides. In the final round of surveys, about 78% of respondents always or often received rides at the times they requested them, compared to 69% in the pre-implementation survey.

ITN*America* also developed survey questions to directly assess the impact ITN*Country* providers had on mobility. Survey data suggest ITN*Country* was an important resource for riders during the demonstration project. About 45% of respondents to the post-implementation survey



said they would have missed all or a majority of the trips they took with their local provider if the service had not been available to them. A further 27% said they would have missed at least a quarter of their trips taken. When asked if their local ITN*Country* service made it easier for them to get around, 100% of survey respondents who had taken at least one ride with the service said yes. About 87% of respondents described their local provider as excellent or very good at meeting their transportation needs.

Social Capital

The ITN*Country* model was designed to improve the efficient and effective use of social capital in the demonstration communities. Survey responses from volunteer drivers demonstrate the ability of ITN*Country* to utilize social capital. Volunteer drivers have a strong connection to their communities. Of the 20 drivers who responded to the post implementation surveys, 90% had lived in their communities for at least 6 years and 60% had lived in their community for 10 years or more. Drivers identified a number of reasons why they volunteer, but two motivations stand out. In both the pre-implementation and post implementation surveys, 100% of ITN*Country* drivers strongly agreed or agreed that volunteering allows them to serve their community and help people. About 79% of drivers said they were interested in either long-term or short-term volunteering opportunities (58%) or specifically long-term volunteer opportunities (21%). ITN*Country* volunteers recognize that they have the ability to positively impact their community in a tangible way, and are interested in opportunities to do so. These data are strengthened by comments from drivers regarding their specific reason for volunteering.

In the pre-implementation survey, one volunteer said “I want to create a community that has the services that I will need as I get older.” Another volunteer driver noted, “I am an excellent driver and I want to help elderly people in my community.” The volunteers who drove in the ITN*Country* demonstration communities recognized their capacity to offer assistance and the importance of a permanent solution to their communities’ transportation needs.

The ITN*Country* model was also designed to support the sustainable utilization of social capital. One way demonstration communities were able to do this was through the ride credits option. Through the ITN*Rides2.0* software, demonstration communities could track volunteer miles and reward volunteers with ride credits that could be banked for their own future transportation needs. About 72% of driver respondents to the post implementation said they were offered ride credits for the miles they drove and about 54% of those volunteer drivers accepted their ride credits. When asked if they would use their ride credits for their own future transportation needs, 17% of respondents said “yes” and 39% said “maybe”. The data show that more than half of the drivers from the ITN*Country* demonstration communities are thinking about their future transportation needs.

Access to Technology

ITN*America* asked questions regarding the ITN*Rides2.0* software and the Online Learning Center (OLC) in the staff and steering committee survey. The response rates to this survey were very low and ITN*America* cannot make valid conclusions on the use of technology. ITN*America* pulled data from the ITN*Rides2.0* database and found that 89 (2%) out of 5,014 total rides were scheduled online by riders. The vast majority of rides were scheduled by ride coordinators through the ITN software. This demonstrates the flexibility of the ITN system. Riders have the ability to schedule rides on their own and organizations have the ability to schedule and organize a large amount of data while allowing riders the personal experience of calling for a ride. ITN*Rides2.0* and the OLC are cloud-based technology systems that every

community in the evaluation implemented to establish their service and coordinate rides. By design, the ITNCountry model did provide the demonstration communities access to high level technology that is generally less accessible to small and rural communities.

ITNCountry Impact

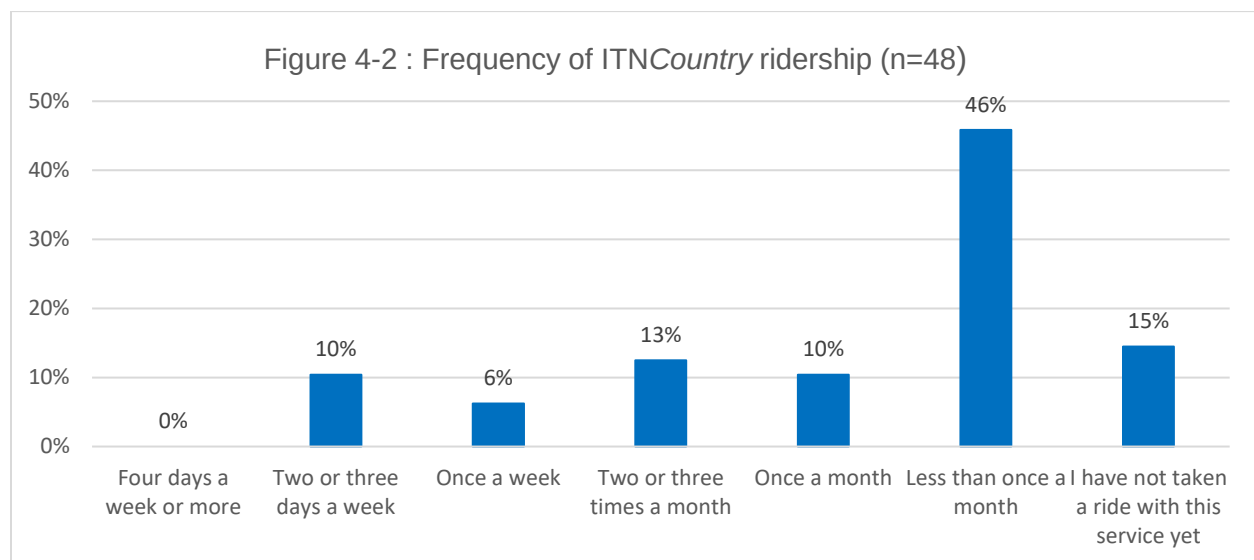
Survey data suggest an increasing awareness of the ITNCountry model and its mission, since 39% of respondents to the first survey were familiar with the work ITNCountry does, compared to 63% of respondents to the post-implementation survey. This increase in recognition was accompanied by an increase in rider sentiments that ITNCountry could positively impact their community. About 77% of respondents to the first survey agreed or strongly agreed that “ITNCountry may have a positive impact” on their community’s transportation. This number rose to 90% for the post-implementation survey.

Volunteer drivers in ITNCountry demonstration communities also gained a better understanding of ITNCountry and its potential impact. Only 33% of volunteer driver respondents to the pre-implementation survey were aware of ITNCountry. This number rose to 61% of drivers in the post-implementation survey. The share of volunteer drivers who strongly agreed or agreed that ITNCountry may have a positive impact on their community’s transportation also rose from 72% in the pre-implementation survey to 78% in the post-implementation survey.

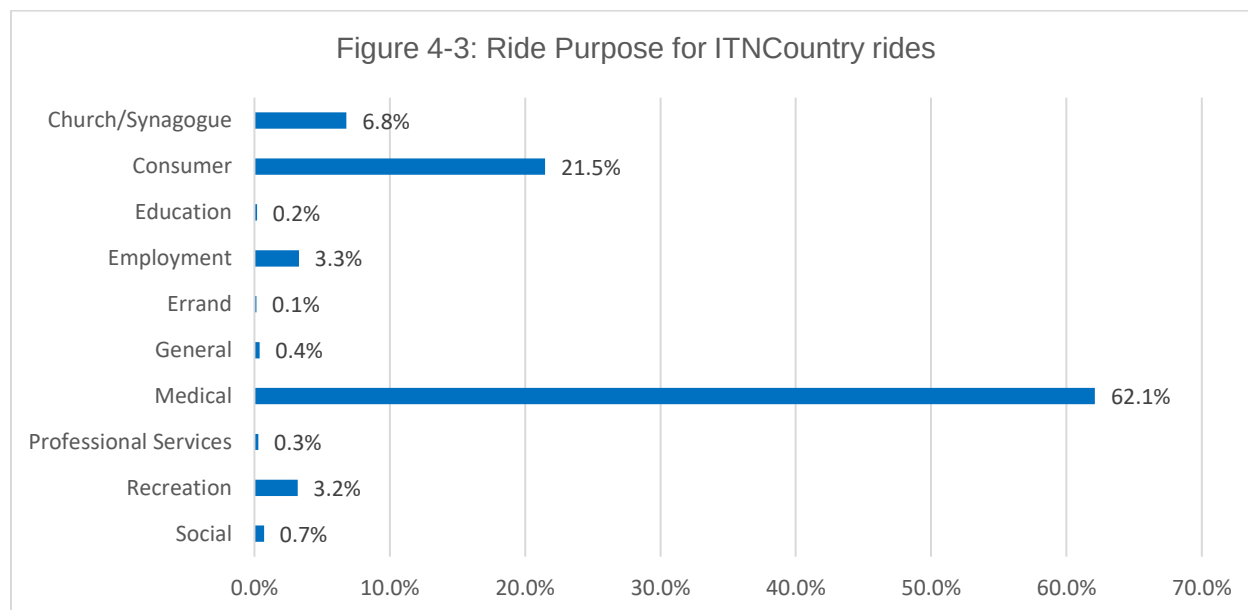
Use and Satisfaction

ITNAmerica included questions in the post-implementation survey to assess use and satisfaction for both riders and drivers.

Riders from the ITNCountry demonstration communities used their local service with a varied frequency and for a variety of reasons. Figure 4-2 demonstrates trip frequency for riders in the six demonstration communities included in the internal evaluation. A majority of riders use their local service less than once a week (69%), while one-in-four riders travel with their local ITNCountry provider once a week or more.



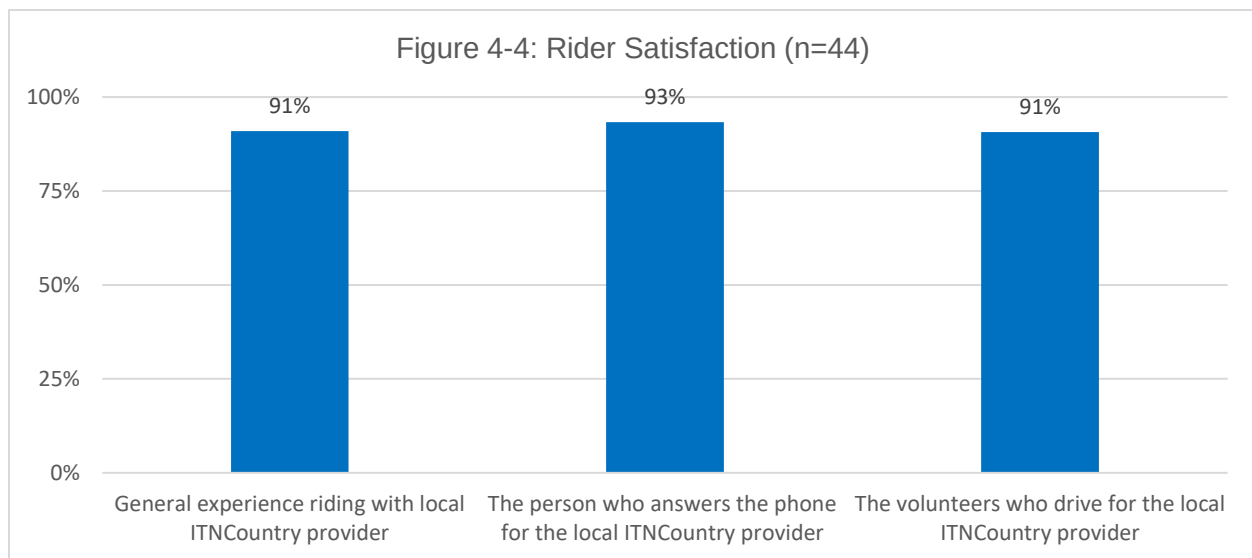
The majority of ITN*Country* riders used their local provider to attend medical appointments (62%), but ride purpose is not limited to medical reasons. Figure 4-3 shows the various trip purposes among ITN*Country* riders based on responses to the post-implementation survey



These data demonstrate the importance of transportation in the ITN*Country* demonstration communities. Riders travel with their local service to receive medical care, but also for other life enhancing activities such as visiting friends, going to work, and going shopping.

Rider results also suggest the ITN*Country* demonstration communities provide a high quality of service. Of ITN*Country* riders who took a ride with their local provider, 91% said they “always” (81%) or “usually” (10%) felt safe riding with the service, and 100% were “always” (81%) or “usually” (19%) picked up and dropped off on time.

Riders who used their local ITN*Country* service had a positive experience. In the post-implementation survey, ITN*America* asked riders to rate their satisfaction with the service in general, the staff who answered the phone for their local service, and the volunteer drivers who covered their rides. Figure 3 shows the percent of riders who were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with these services.



Driver

Volunteer drivers also had a positive experience with the *ITNCountry* demonstration project. Of volunteers who responded to the post-implementation survey, 89% strongly agreed (61%) or agreed (28%) with the statement “my local *ITNCountry* transportation service is easy for volunteer drivers to participate in.” When asked to rate their overall experience as a volunteer, 100% of respondents rated their experience as “excellent” (76%) or “very good” (24%), and 100% said they would recommend their local *ITNCountry* provider to someone looking to volunteer.

Accessibility

Accessibility is an important factor for transportation providers to consider and a key concern for the demonstration project. *ITNAmerica* added questions in the post-implementation surveys to analyze accessibility in multiple areas: banking, language, internet access/computer use, and wheelchair accessibility.

ITNAmerica planned to analyze accessibility by comparing survey responses between groups to understand accessibility, however, 100% of respondents to the post-implementation rider survey had access to a bank account and 100% spoke English as their first language. *ITNAmerica* is designed to accommodate non-banked riders and works to support all riders, however, this evaluation cannot measure these areas through the survey data.

Results from the post-implementation rider survey suggest the *ITNCountry* model is accessible to those without internet access, a computer, or a smartphone. About 14% of respondents said they do not use a computer, 6% did not have internet access, and 21% did not use a smartphone.

The survey data also suggests the *ITNCountry* model works well for wheelchair users. Of respondents to the post-implementation rider survey, 9% required a wheelchair-accessible vehicle (WAV). Service satisfaction and mobility benefits were equal if not better for those who

required a WAV compared to those who did not. Table 4-2 shows the difference between these two groups for four measures.

Table 4-2: WAV and Non-WAV Rider Experiences	WAV (n=5)	Non-WAV (n=41)
Percent of riders “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their overall experience riding with their local ITNCountry provider.	100%	92%
Percent of riders who “always” or “usually” felt safe riding with their local ITNCountry provider.	100%	85%
Percent of riders who said their local service “definitely” made it easier for them to get around.	100%	81%
Percent of riders who described their local service as “excellent” or “very good” at meeting their transportation needs.	100%	82%

*WAV = Riders who required a wheelchair accessible vehicle

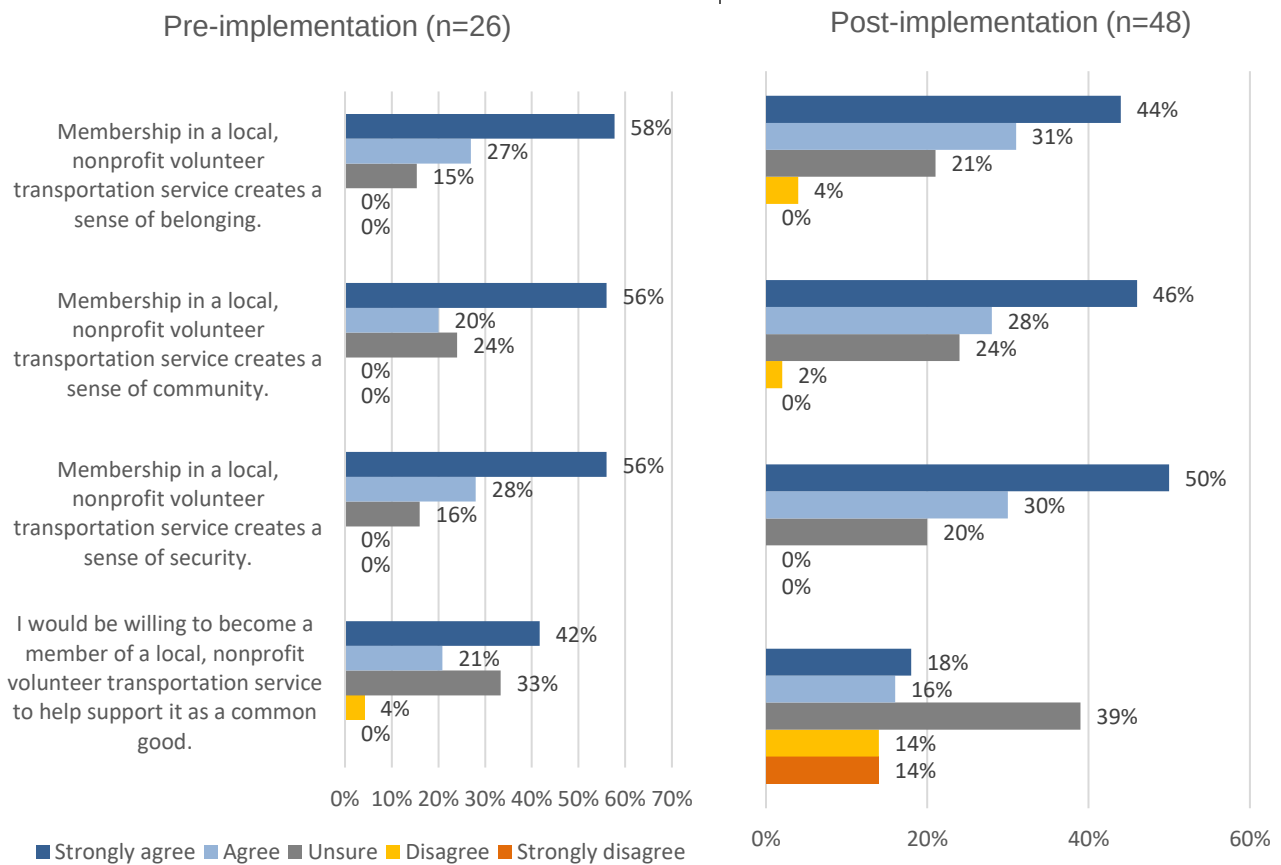
Paid vs Non-paid Rides

Flexibility is an important element of the ITNCountry model. Local communities have the ultimate say on rider eligibility, service area, hours of operation, and fares. Of the six demonstration sites included in the internal evaluation, all but one required some sort of fare, whether as a flat rate or per-mile charge. Mobilize Katahdin did not charge for rides and is the only demonstration community that was unable to continue to the end of the project. It is important to note that fares alone do not and cannot explain Mobilize Katahdin’s experience. Other factors in the community, such as low volunteer recruitment, contributed to the ultimate outcome. It is notable, however, that 75% of Mobilize Katahdin riders who responded to the post-implementation survey said they would have been willing to pay at least some amount for rides if they knew it would have helped keep the service available.

Membership

ITNAmerica believes that membership is an important element of community-based volunteer transportation services because it provides riders with a sense of community, belonging, and security. Membership was not an element of the ITNCountry Demonstration Project as the statutory definition of “public transportation” has been judged by FTA to preclude a membership requirement. The FTA did allow ITNAmerica to measure perceptions of membership in the evaluation. The FTA also reviewed and approved the membership questions in the evaluation. ITNAmerica asked riders to indicate their opinion on membership with respect to three areas: community, belonging, and security. Figure 4 outlines rider and driver responses to the membership questions in the pre and post implementation surveys. A majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that membership in a local, nonprofit volunteer transportation service creates a sense of belonging, community and security, although post implementation responses declined slightly. In response to the question, “I would be willing to become a member of a local, nonprofit volunteer transportation service to help support it as a common good,” those who agreed or strongly agreed dropped to 34%, with 39% unsure and 28% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This shift in attitude may be because a “common good” is less understandable or less personal than a sense of belonging, security or community. These generally favorable exploratory questions bear further study.

Figure 4-5: ITNCountry rider perceptions of membership



5. ITNRides2.0 Data

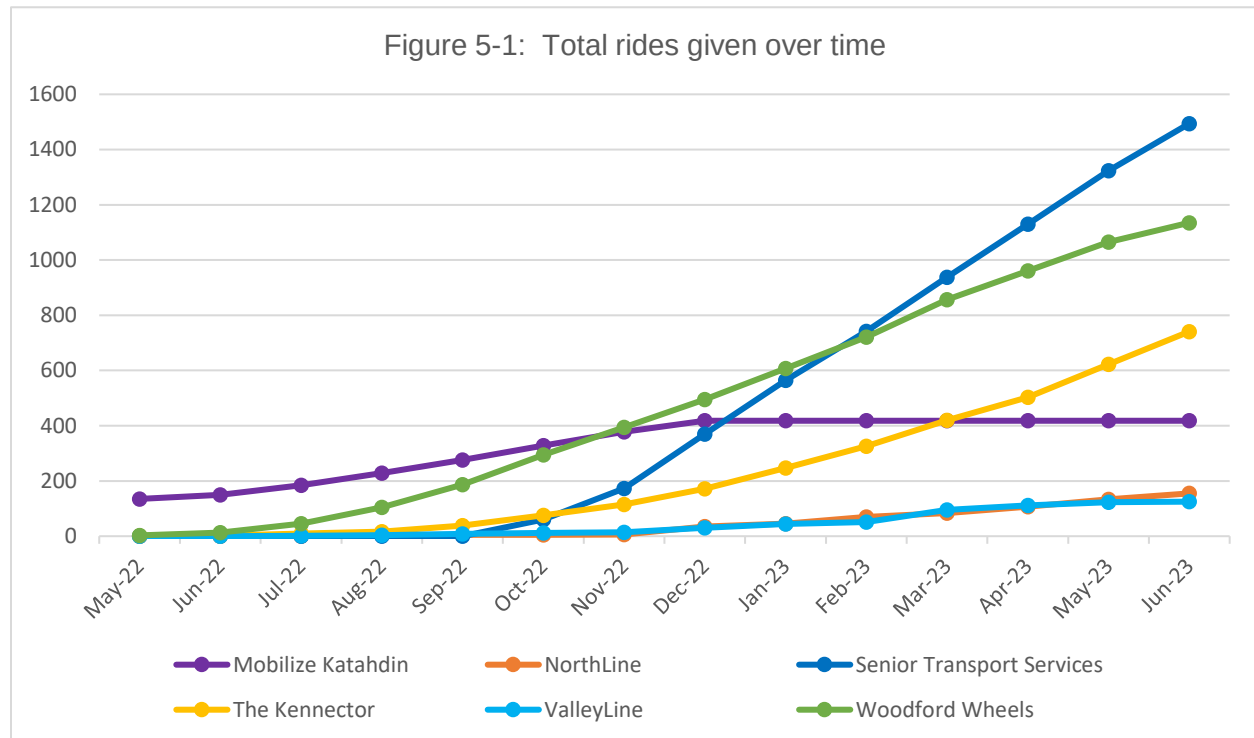
The ITNRides database tracks information on both rides and rider needs. The ITN research department used these data to track activity in the ITNCountry Demonstration Communities.

Rides Given

The number of rides given increased steadily for each demonstration site during the course of the project's second phase. Figure 5-1 demonstrates the total number of rides given by each demonstration site from May 2022 through May 2023.

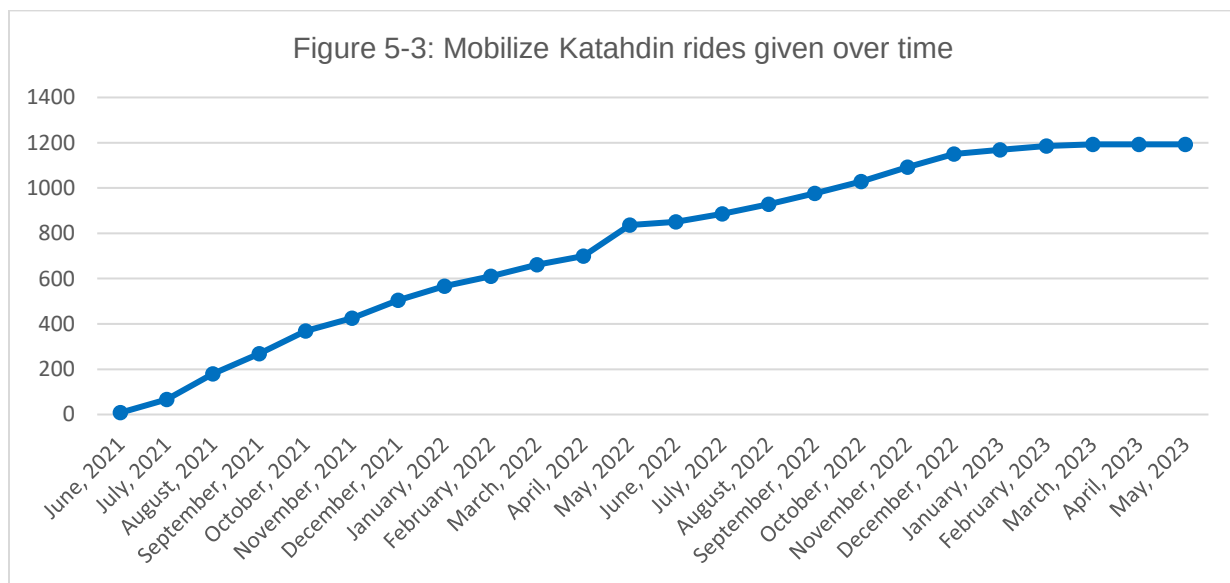
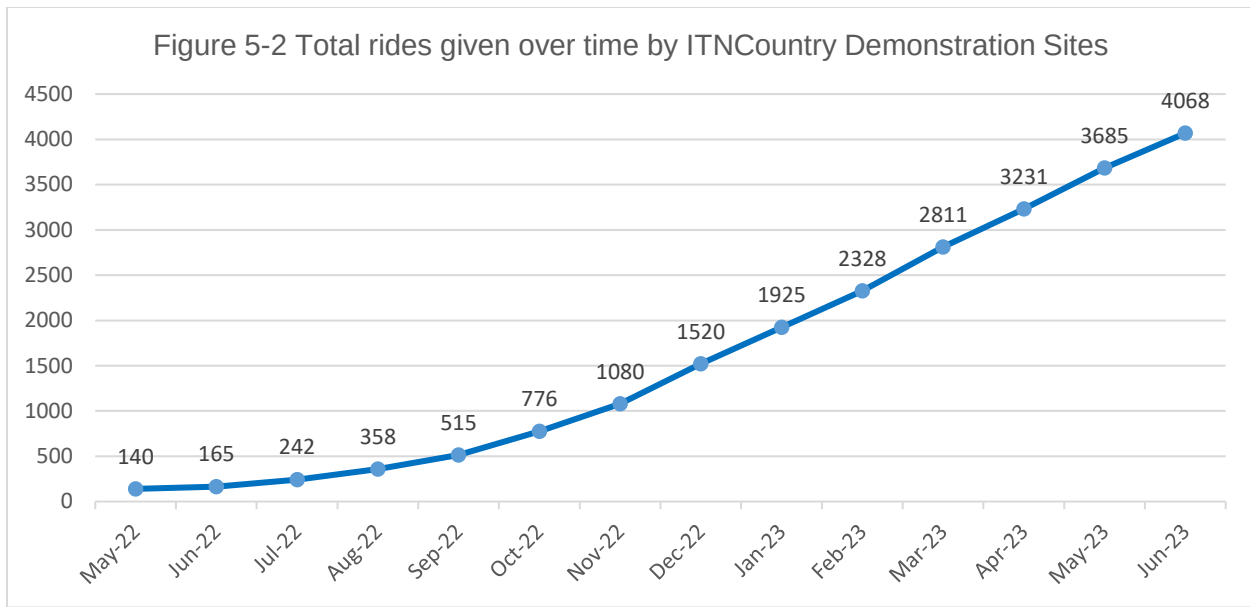
The three most active demonstration sites by total rides given were Senior Transport Services, Woodford Wheels, and The Kennector. Despite differences in the ultimate number of rides provided, the communities do share similar growth characteristics. Generally, rides provided by each community increase slowly in the months immediately following their transition to the platform, before rising more quickly. This trend suggests that once providers had time to establish themselves within the community, their ridership and ability to provide rides grew more quickly. Figure 5-2 shows the general trend of ride growth in all communities combined. Senior Transport Services is the only demonstration site that does not follow this trend. Soon after transitioning to the ITNRides2.0 software in September 2022, rides provided grew and

continued to grow at a steady rate. This trend makes sense given Senior Transport Services' connection to a former ITN affiliate. Senior Transport Services may have benefited from its existing pool of riders and experience as a transportation provider in its community.



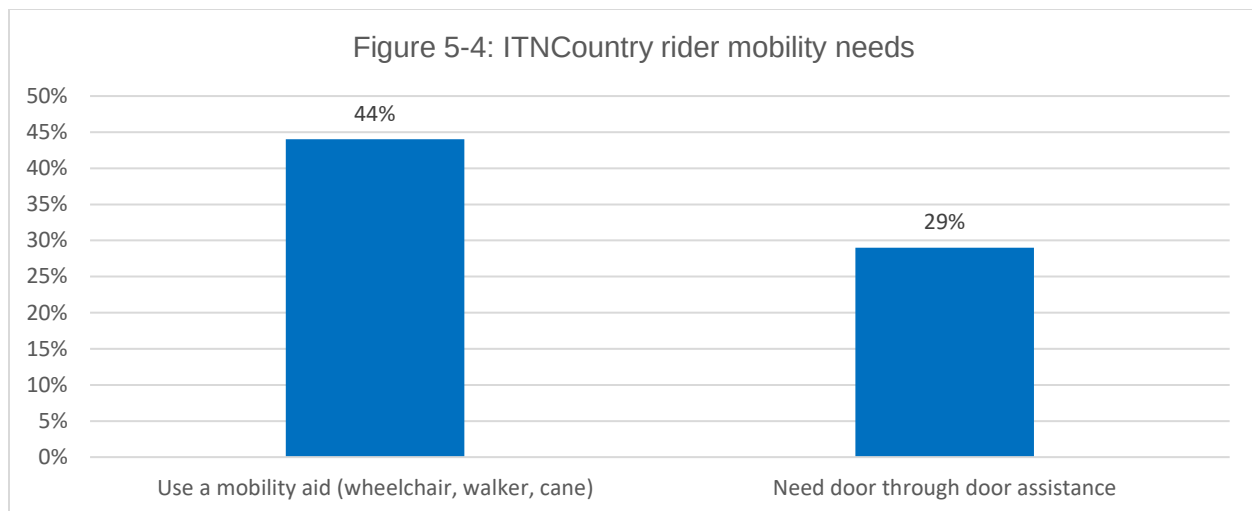
The vast majority of rides given over the course of the demonstration project were scheduled in advance. Of the 4,068 rides given from May 2022 through June 2023, just 25 (1%) were booked on the same day as the ride.

Figure 5-2 shows rides given on the new ITNRides2.0 software during the second phase of the project. Mobilize Katahdin, however, began providing rides using the old ITN software at the beginning of the demonstration project. Figure 5-3 outlines total rides given over time by Mobilize Katahdin on both the old and new software.



Mobility Needs

ITNAmerica tracks information on the mobility needs of all riders to most effectively provide the transportation solution they need. About 44% of riders from the six demonstration sites included in the internal evaluation used some form of mobility aid (walker, cane, or wheelchair) and about 29% required door through door assistance from their drivers.



Discussion

Overall, the internal evaluation of the ITNCountry Demonstration Project speaks to the impact of ITNCountry in the demonstration communities. Survey data from riders and drivers suggests the ITNCountry model had a positive impact on accessible mobility through the utilization of social capital. Challenges faced by Friends in Action and FISH of Tompkins County reduced the planned sample size of the evaluation. Nevertheless, rides data from the other six demonstration community suggest progress and growth over the course of the demonstration project. As the communities grew, the quality of service remained high and to the satisfaction of both riders and volunteer drivers.

6. Conclusions, Lessons Learned, and Next Steps

The purpose of the ITNCountry Demonstration Project was to test the new ITNCountry model in small and rural communities across the United States. ITNAmerica wanted to test the model's efficacy and develop a better understanding of how ITNAmerica can best support community transportation at the national level. Through the demonstration project, ITNAmerica gained key insights into the project itself and the ITNCountry model.

With respect to the demonstration project, ITNAmerica realized that the scope and ambition of the project was a significant undertaking. While ITNAmerica feels the project was an overall success, the amount of work involved was more than anticipated. If ITNAmerica were to redo the project, it would increase the time for software development and testing and decrease the number of demonstration communities involved to better focus its resources on these communities while continuing to fulfil the national organization's other responsibilities.

ITNAmerica gained three key takeaways regarding the ITNCountry model itself: 1) capacity was a limiting factor for each of the demonstration communities to at least some extent; 2) contrary to expectations, some ITNCountry community startups had a smoother experience than existing transportation providers that transitioned to ITNRides 2.0 on Salesforce; and 3) the transportation provided by ITNCountry communities was impactful for both riders and drivers. Moving forward, ITNAmerica will use the lessons learned from the demonstration project to improve the ITNCountry experience and work with communities to meet their mobility needs.

Capacity

Each of the demonstration communities had to manage capacity. In many of the communities, staff were either part-time or balancing other responsibilities alongside the ITN*Country* project. Although ITN*America* had a number of support materials available and offered weekly check-in meetings, some communities struggled to take full advantage of these services due to the demands of volunteer recruitment and ride coordination. This challenge of insufficient supply necessary to meet demand for service is ubiquitous in the nonprofit world and not unique to the ITN*Country* model. Many community-based nonprofit transportation providers that use volunteer labor have limited resources and face challenges balancing supply and demand. Labor problems across all sectors of the economy during the COVID pandemic exacerbated the challenge. Over the course of the demonstration project ITN*America* took steps to reduce the burden placed on ITN*Country* communities, including adding a search section for the OLC, developing new learning modules for transitioning communities, creating customizable marketing materials to increase community involvement, and producing a roadmap for new communities. Toward the end of the demonstration project, ITN*America* set up a training program for new ITN*Country* communities that provides a regular training schedule with dedicated one-on-one coaching. This on-boarding plan includes 12 weeks of scheduled 30-minute meetings matched with a schedule of lessons from the OLC, followed by 12 weeks of additional lessons with bi-monthly meetings, and culminating in 6 months of monthly personal coaching meetings. These sessions are in addition to the ITN*Rides* software training, help available through the ITN*Country* Help Desk, and regular monthly peer group sessions. These efforts, learned through the work with the demonstration communities, have already improved the accessibility and scalability of the ITN*Country* model for the national roll-out by supporting the recent ITN*Country* communities that have joined the network since the demonstration projects as they meet the challenges of demand for service.

Startups vs transitioning communities

ITN*America* began the demonstration project with the assumption that it would be more difficult to start brand new ITN*Country* communities than it would be to transition existing volunteer transportation providers to the ITN*Country* model. Through the demonstration project ITN*America* found the opposite to be true. Startup communities were more successful than some transitioning communities who struggled to change from one system to another. New communities could leverage resources and knowledge from ITN*America* to determine their community's needs and their capacity to address them, before developing and launching their local organization. Additionally, startup communities had no need to migrate data from a legacy system; they simply entered new data to the specifications of ITN*Rides*2.0. Transitioning communities, however, had to migrate their data and adopt a new system with an unfamiliar workflow. Friends in Action and FISH of Tompkins County both experienced difficulties with their data migration. In hindsight, these dynamics make sense and ITN*America* has now adapted the ITN*Country* model to better accommodate transitioning communities. New tactics include but are not limited to specific learning modules for data migration and pre-contract data analysis to determine steps for a successful migration. ITN*America* understands that each community is different and will continue to identify steps to improve the flexibility of the ITN*Country* model so that any community can access and leverage its resources.

Impactful for riders and volunteers

One of the most significant takeaways from the demonstration project was the impact of ITN*Country* on those who use and support the service in their local communities. Of riders who used their local ITN*Country* service, 100% said it made it easier for them to get around. Local providers offered a service that riders and drivers appreciated. About 91% of riders were very satisfied or satisfied with their local ITN*Country* provider, and 100% of drivers described their volunteer experience as excellent or very good. These results emphasize ITN*Country*'s core purpose: improving access to transportation for vulnerable and underserved populations. Over the course of the demonstration project, ITN*Country* has furthered this goal in the six communities where the model was implemented and has demonstrated the potential to have a similar impact on other communities in the future.

Next steps

The ITN*Country* demonstration project was designed as both a proof of concept and a learning venture. Both the success and challenges experienced by the communities involved in this process are learning opportunities to make the ITN*Country* model more successful as ITN*America* moves forward with the national rollout. A key element of ITN*Country* is flexibility. The model was intentionally designed for change, to better meet communities where they are while simultaneously addressing their needs. ITN*America* will use the experience of the demonstration communities and future ITN*Country* communities to further develop the model as it has already begun to do during the demonstration project.

Since the end of the demonstration project, the ITN*Country* network has continued to grow. All of the sites except Mobilize Katahdin, which closed, renewed with the ITN*Country* platform and FISH of Tompkins County began providing service in May. The demonstration sites have continued to grow and deliver rides as shown in Figure 6-1. In addition, ITN*Country* sites are also now operating in the following locations:

- Honolulu, HI
- Calvert County, MD
- Madison County, NY
- Detroit, MI
- Windham, ME

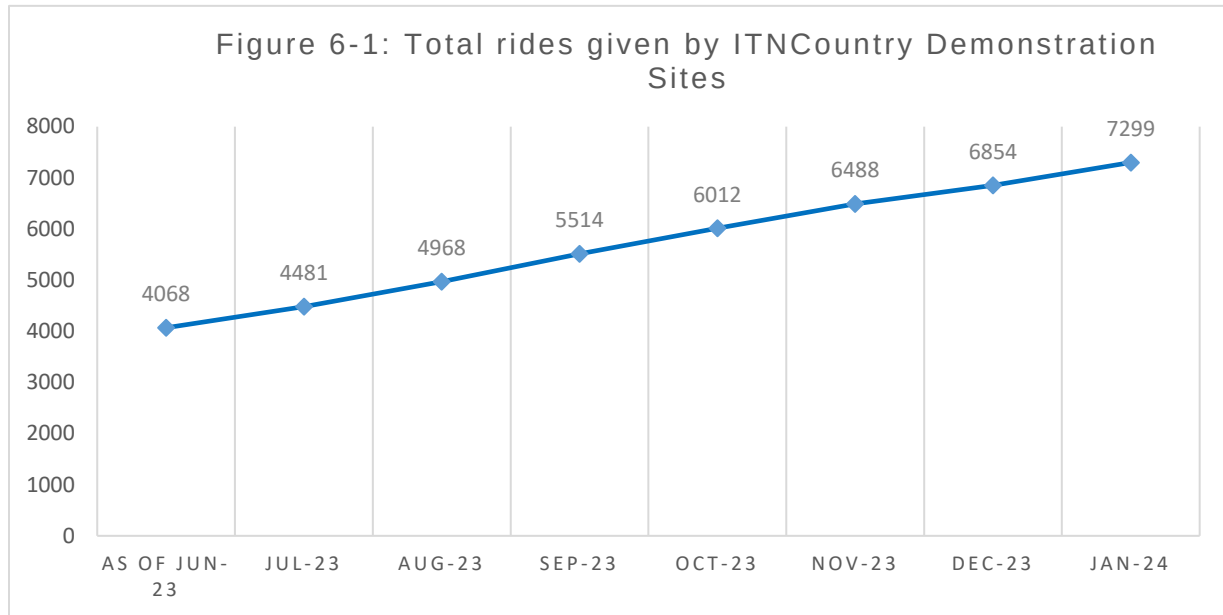
Over the course of the next three months, ITN*America* will be onboarding three additional communities:

- Utica, NY
- Silver Springs, MD
- Cheyenne, WY

These sites bring the total number of ITN*Country* programs to 14, with 6 additional programs expected to sign on to the network before the end of the year through Jumpstart grants from a private foundation.

Two of the initial demonstration communities, Woodford Wheels in Kentucky and Senior Transport Services in Florida, have implemented membership as part of their service, charging riders a yearly fee to participate. These sites have not seen any reduction in total numbers of

riders or rides due to this change, and report that the additional revenue is beneficial to ongoing sustainability.



Appendix A. FTA Project Evaluation Timeline

TASK	PROGRESS	START	END
Evaluation Planning			
Valley Line (MC South), CA	100%	10/1/21	3/12/22
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	100%	10/1/21	3/12/22
Woodford Wheels, KY	100%	10/1/21	3/12/22
Kennebunk Kenneconnector, ME	100%	10/1/21	3/12/22
Monterey County North, CA	100%	10/1/21	3/12/22
Hancock County, ME	100%	10/1/21	3/12/22
Sarasota, FL	100%	10/1/21	3/12/22
Building Online Learning Center	75%	4/1/21	6/1/22
Development of Eval. Instruments			
Stakeholder Survey	100%	10/15/21	3/11/22
Stakeholder Interview	100%	10/15/21	3/11/22
Steering Committee & Staff Survey	100%	10/15/21	3/11/22
Rider Survey	100%	10/15/21	3/11/22
Driver Survey	100%	10/15/21	3/11/22
Community Profile Template	100%	12/13/21	3/11/22
Identifying Stakeholders			
Valley Line (MC South), CA	100%		
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	100%		
Woodford Wheels, KY	100%		
Kennebunk Kenneconnector, ME	100%		
Monterey County North, CA	100%		
Hancock County, ME	100%		
Sarasota, FL	100%		
Community Profiles			
Valley Line (MC South), CA		2/21/22	3/7/22
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	80%	2/28/22	3/14/22
Woodford Wheels, KY	80%	3/7/22	3/21/22
Kennebunk Kenneconnector, ME	80%	3/14/22	3/28/22
Monterey County North, CA		3/21/22	4/4/22
Hancock County, ME	80%	4/4/22	4/18/22
Sarasota, FL	80%		

Pre-Implementation Survey - Stakeholders			
Valley Line (MC South), CA	100%	3/21/22	3/25/22
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	100%	3/21/22	3/25/22
Woodford Wheels, KY	100%	3/28/22	4/1/22
Kennebunk Kennecter, ME	100%	3/28/22	4/1/22
Monterey County North, CA	100%	4/4/22	4/8/22
Hancock County, ME	0%	4/18/22	4/22/22
Sarasota, FL	0%		
Pre-Implementation - Stakeholder Interview			
Valley Line (MC South), CA	50%	3/21/22	4/4/22
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	3/21/22	4/4/22
Woodford Wheels, KY	50%	3/28/22	4/11/22
Kennebunk Kennecter, ME	0%	3/28/22	4/11/22
Monterey County North, CA	50%	4/4/22	4/18/22
Hancock County, ME	0%	4/18/22	5/2/22
Sarasota, FL	0%		
Pre-Implementation Survey - Steering Committee & Staff			
Valley Line (MC South), CA	0%	3/21/22	3/25/22
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	3/21/22	3/25/22
Woodford Wheels, KY	0%	3/28/22	4/1/22
Kennebunk Kennecter, ME	0%	3/28/22	4/1/22
Monterey County North, CA	0%	4/4/22	4/8/22
Hancock County, ME	0%	4/18/22	4/22/22
Sarasota, FL	0%		
Pre-Implementation Survey - Riders			
Valley Line (MC South), CA	0%	3/28/22	4/18/22
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	3/28/22	4/18/22
Woodford Wheels, KY	0%	4/4/22	4/25/22
Kennebunk Kennecter, ME	0%	4/4/22	4/25/22
Monterey County North, CA	0%	4/11/22	5/2/22
Hancock County, ME	0%	4/25/22	5/16/22
Sarasota, FL	0%		

Pre-Implementation Survey - Drivers			
Valley Line (MC South), CA	0%	3/21/22	3/25/22
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	3/21/22	3/25/22
Woodford Wheels, KY	0%	3/28/22	4/1/22
Kennebunk Kennector, ME	0%	3/28/22	4/1/22
Monterey County North, CA	0%	4/4/22	4/8/22
Hancock County, ME	0%	4/18/22	4/22/22
Sarasota, FL	0%		
During Implementation Survey - Stakeholders			
Valley Line (MC South), CA	0%	8/29/22	9/2/22
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	9/5/22	9/9/22
Woodford Wheels, KY	0%	9/12/22	9/16/22
Kennebunk Kennector, ME	0%	9/19/22	9/23/22
Monterey County North, CA	0%	9/26/22	9/30/22
Hancock County, ME	0%	10/10/22	10/14/22
Sarasota, FL			
During Implementation Survey - Steering Committee & Staff			
Valley Line (MC South), CA	0%	8/29/22	9/2/22
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	9/5/22	9/9/22
Woodford Wheels, KY	0%	9/12/22	9/16/22
Kennebunk Kennector, ME	0%	9/19/22	9/23/22
Monterey County North, CA	0%	9/26/22	9/30/22
Hancock County, ME	0%	10/10/22	10/14/22
Sarasota, FL			
During Implementation Survey - Riders			
Valley Line (MC South), CA	0%	8/29/22	9/2/22
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	9/5/22	9/9/22
Woodford Wheels, KY	0%	9/12/22	9/16/22
Kennebunk Kennector, ME	0%	9/19/22	9/23/22
Monterey County North, CA	0%	9/26/22	9/30/22
Hancock County, ME	0%	10/10/22	10/14/22
Sarasota, FL			

During Implementation Survey - Drivers				
Valley Line (MC South), CA	0%	8/29/22	9/2/22	
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	9/5/22	9/9/22	
Woodford Wheels, KY	0%	9/12/22	9/16/22	
Kennebunk Kenneconnector, ME	0%	9/19/22	9/23/22	
Monterey County North, CA	0%	9/26/22	9/30/22	
Hancock County, ME	0%	10/10/22	10/14/22	
Sarasota, FL				
Post-Implementation Survey - Stakeholders				
Valley Line (MC South), CA	0%	3/6/23	3/10/23	
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	3/13/23	3/17/23	
Woodford Wheels, KY	0%	3/20/23	3/24/23	
Kennebunk Kenneconnector, ME	0%	3/27/23	3/31/23	
Monterey County North, CA	0%	4/3/23	4/7/23	
Hancock County, ME	0%	4/17/23	4/21/23	
Sarasota, FL	0%			
Post-Implementation Survey - Steering Committee & Staff				
Valley Line (MC South), CA	0%	3/6/23	3/10/23	
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	3/13/23	3/17/23	
Woodford Wheels, KY	0%	3/20/23	3/24/23	
Kennebunk Kenneconnector, ME	0%	3/27/23	3/31/23	
Monterey County North, CA	0%	4/3/23	4/7/23	
Hancock County, ME	0%	4/17/23	4/21/23	
Sarasota, FL	0%			
Post-Implementation Survey - Riders				
Valley Line (MC South), CA	0%	3/6/23	3/10/23	
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	3/13/23	3/17/23	
Woodford Wheels, KY	0%	3/20/23	3/24/23	
Kennebunk Kenneconnector, ME	0%	3/27/23	3/31/23	
Monterey County North, CA	0%	4/3/23	4/7/23	
Hancock County, ME	0%	4/17/23	4/21/23	
Sarasota, FL	0%			

Post-Implementation Survey - Drivers			
Valley Line (MC South), CA	0%	3/6/23	3/10/23
Mobilize Katahdin, ME	0%	3/13/23	3/17/23
Woodford Wheels, KY	0%	3/20/23	3/24/23
Kennebunk Kennector, ME	0%	3/27/23	3/31/23
Monterey County North, CA	0%	4/3/23	4/7/23
Hancock County, ME	0%	4/17/23	4/21/23
Sarasota, FL	0%		

Appendix B. Community Profiles

Woodford Wheels

Summary

Woodford Wheels is an ITN*Country* Demonstration Community located in Woodford County, Kentucky. This semi-rural county covers only 190 square miles of land to the east of Lexington. Though smaller than some of the other Demonstration Communities, Woodford County is a wealthier area with a strong economy supported by agriculture and manufacturing. The area's economic stability, proximity to major metropolitan areas, and high quality of living make it an attractive place to live for current residents and those moving into the county. This tight-knit and prideful community prioritizes pragmatic growth and is quick to support community members in need. Woodford Wheels was started by the County Health Department.

Demographics

Woodford County residents are spread across rural and suburban spaces. The county hosts a total population of about 27,000. The largest share of county residents, about 10,400, live in Versailles, the county seat. Population density statistics highlight the extent of the rural/suburban divide throughout the area. The entire county has a population density of about 141 people per square mile. Versailles, in contrast, has a population density of about 1,640 residents per square mile. Like most of the other demonstration sites, the county's residents are predominantly white. About 86% of residents identify as white alone, not Hispanic or Latino, about 5% identify as Black or African American, 6.6% identify as Hispanic or Latino, and 1.7% identify as two or more races.

Woodford County is relatively wealthy, has strong education rates, and a large older adult population. The median household income for the county is \$72,765, higher than all but one of the adjacent counties, and just 8.6% of residents are in poverty according to the latest census data. About 92% of the county population ages 25 and older have graduated from high school and about 40% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Woodford County has a substantial older adult population. About 20% of county residents are 65 or older.

Economy

Woodford County benefits from a diverse economy supported by two historically important industries and one growing industry. The county's largest industry by employment is manufacturing. In 2021, major manufacturing companies like Yokohama Industries supported 15.7% of the county's jobs. The county's most important industry, however, is agriculture. A 2017 report by the University of Kentucky looked at the Agricultural Cluster, the combination of all economic sectors connected to agriculture, in Woodford County. This report found that 29% of county jobs are directly or indirectly supported by agriculture and that the Agricultural Cluster generates more than \$560 million in revenue and an additional \$340 million in additional income, profits, and dividends annually.¹ Tourism is a rising economic industry in the county that benefits greatly from the agricultural industry. Woodford County's equine industry is a significant draw for visitors. The county advertises itself as the "horse capital of the world" and has bred five of the last 15 Kentucky Derby winners and two winners of the triple crown.² Woodford County is also well known for its bourbon, as host to multiple distilleries, and its wine, described locally as the "Napa Valley of the East." Together, these three industries support a strong local economy in the county and contribute to a high quality of life.

Quality of life and regional wealth are two positive parts of the community identified by Brian Traugott, mayor of Versailles. The county median income of \$72,765 is 31% higher than the state median income of \$55,454 and the county poverty rate of 8.6% is almost half the state rate of 16.5%. Unemployment is historically low in the county as well. In 2012, the average monthly unemployment was 5.4%, and in 2022, this number fell to 2.8%.³ Woodford County's economic impact extends to the surrounding area as well. In 2013, over 45% of those who worked in the county commuted there from the surrounding area. Stakeholders also praised the community for its low crime rate and strong school system as additional factors that contribute to the county's high quality of life and desirability.

A lot of the county's success stems from the community's ability to grow in a way that balances the town's values with development. According to Traugott, economic development is a priority from the perspective of city government since more than half of the Versailles general fund for community services comes from business taxes. Traugott described the city's desire to expand in a way that meets the needs of residents while also creating a sustainable climate that manages short-term expectations with long term goals. Laurie Dorrough, Executive Director of Daisy Holl Senior Living in Versailles, touted the community's strong leadership on economic development, highlighting their ability to understand community needs and take appropriate action to address them. The county benefits from support from multiple bodies and organizations, including the city government, the Woodford County Economic Development Authority, Woodford Forward, and the Woodford County Chamber of Commerce.

Transportation

Transportation in Woodford County heavily favors those who can drive. As a rural community with historically strong agricultural and manufacturing sectors, the mass transit of goods has always been a high priority in the region. Before vehicles were even an option, the Kentucky River and railroads fueled community growth. Eventually, interstates and highways joined as major transportation arteries. Today, personal vehicles serve as the primary transportation method for county residents. Other than Woodford Wheels, the county does not have a formal community transportation option; Versailles and Midway do not operate local, fixed-route transportation options, private taxi companies do not operate in the county, and though residents can use ride hail services like Uber and Lyft, they are expansive and generally must come from neighboring Lexington. According to Traugott, people can generally find a ride if they ask friends or family, but recognized that there can be issues of pride and not wanting to be a burden.

Even with informal networks, the existing transportation options in Woodford County struggle to meet the needs of those who cannot drive, particularly older adults. Celest Robinson, Director of the Bluegrass Area Agency on Aging, noted that smaller communities tend to have limited transportation options. Traugott and Dorrough recognized that transportation is an issue for nondrivers, specifically in Woodford County. Dorrough called transportation a "buzz word" when it comes to gaps and needs in the county and Traugott said that there is a real need for transportation, especially for those to connect with others socially.

For small communities like Versailles and greater Woodford County, it can be difficult to provide robust public transportation in the traditional sense. Traugott noted that there is a wide range of transportation needs in Versailles, and said that working to address them requires tough decisions about resource allocation. Failing to meet the transportation need is an issue of resources. Robinson agreed, stating that resource availability and the specialized knowledge

needed to implement a successful transportation program are limiting factors for small and rural communities. According to Dorrough, much of the county is very rural, which poses an additional barrier to developing community transportation solutions that meet everyone's needs.

Community character and services

Community is of the utmost importance in Woodford County. Mayor Traugott described Versailles as a welcoming community that promotes inclusivity. He said that there is a tangible sense of pride that may look like arrogance from the outside, but stems from a real appreciation for the city and what the community has achieved together. Dorrough made similar comments, noting that the community has developed a social and trending culture that offers something for everyone, and about people are proud. Stakeholders also discussed the community's culture of support. On the side of government, Robinson said that local officials in the county are both supportive and engaged. The same is true for community members who, according to Traugott, rally around those in need and are generous with the resources available to them. Dorrough made note of the community's social media networks as an active platform for identifying those in need and connecting them with sources of support.

Woodford County also has much to offer its residents. Versailles has a vibrant downtown and frequently organizes events for community members. The county offers several options for shopping, dining, and activities, and anything not directly available in Versailles is accessible in neighboring Lexington. Residents have access to all the activities that make the county an attractive tourist destination, local opportunities for work, and easy access to Lexington for further opportunities if needed. As in other small and rural communities, accessing services requires travel. This is especially true for those who live outside Versailles or need access to services outside of the county.

The ITNCountry provider

Woodford Wheels benefits from significant support from the community. This demonstration community is unique given its association with ITNAmerica. The former ITNCountry project manager and former director of ITN affiliate, ITNBluegrass, serves as a representative in the local government and as a member of the Woodford Wheels steering committee.

The Kennector

Summary

The Kennector is an ITNCountry Demonstration Community located in York County Maine. The Kennector is operated by the Town of Kennebunk. This small, wealthy, seaside community is an established summer tourist destination, well known for its scenic beaches, coastal New England culture, and local shopping and dining. As a small town of only 35 square miles, Kennebunk offers an intimate and supportive community. Residents and the many older adults who choose to retire in the area appreciate Kennebunk for its small size; however, size is also a limiting factor for community development in multiple areas, including transportation.

Demographics

The Kennector operates out of Kennebunk, but offers rides to residents of two neighboring towns. Together, The Kennector's service area covers a population of about 19,000 residents

from Kennebunk (11,536), Arundel (4,264), and Kennebunkport (3,629).¹ During the summer months, seasonal residents and visitors can raise the population by as much as 50%, significant growth for a community that already has 329 residents per square mile.² Like the other demonstration communities in Maine, Kennebunk is racially homogenous. According to the 2020 census, about 93% of the town's residents identify as white alone, about 3.4% identify as Hispanic, and 2.7% as Asian. Known as a popular retirement destination, Kennebunk has a large older adult population. About 31% of the town's population are 65 years old or older. Kennebunk is a wealthier community with high education rates. As of the 2020 census, about 98% of residents aged 25 or older graduated from high school and 45% had earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Only 6.2% of town residents live at or below the poverty line, and the median household income is about \$89,000.

Economy

Over time, Kennebunk has developed a service-based economy with a strong connection to annual tourism. Historically, Kennebunk and neighboring Kennebunkport relied on manufacturing and ship building respectively.³ The local economy transitioned towards tourism in the late 90s as Kennebunk's mills closed and vacationers and retirees with disposable income came to the region more frequently. In 2021, retail trade, and accommodations and food services together accounted for 27% of total private jobs in Kennebunk. Health care and social assistance provide 20% of private sector jobs and manufacturing accounts for 14% of private sector jobs. Tourism is a key economic force behind the economy in Kennebunk and throughout the region. In 2018, visitors to the Maine Beaches region, which includes The Kennebec's service area, spent \$1.7 billion dollars.⁴ This spending is important for the many shops and restaurants that depend on seasonal income from tourism. While some of these businesses shut down during the off season, many maintain some activity and residents can meet most of their needs within the town borders.⁵

Kennebunk is known to be one of the wealthier communities in Maine, but it is not without economic challenges. Like other seasonal and retirement destinations, Kennebunk struggles with an affordable housing problem, listed as the top priority issue by Michele Grivois of the Southern Maine Area Agency on Aging. According to the Maine Housing Authority, the income needed to afford the median home price in Kennebunk is more than two times the actual median income in the area.⁶ Following the COVID-19 pandemic, in the summer of 2022, the area also experienced an employment problem. Over the past decade, average monthly unemployment has fallen from 6.5% in 2012 to 2.9% in 2022.⁷ Despite low-unemployment rates, many local businesses in the area struggled to find enough labor for the summer season amid a return to normal levels of tourism.

This change may concern a small community that is dependent on tourism and focused on economic development. According to Lisa Pratt, a Kennebunk Town Select Board Member, economic development is a high priority issue. Former board member Blake Baldwin echoed this sentiment, stating that the town talks a lot about economic development. There are many economic planning organizations in the region that support businesses in the area. Groups such as Go Kennebunks, the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission, and the Kennebunk Economic Development Committee all work to encourage and support businesses. Baldwin noted that there is not always a strong commitment to turning talk into action, but stressed that a strong local economy with ample business is what provides the town funding for services such as transportation.

Transportation

Each of the stakeholders interviewed from this community identified transportation as a high priority need. There are very few public transportation options available in Kennebunk, and even those that are available operate infrequently. The York Community Action Corporation operates some of the available options in the area, including Kennebunk-In-Town-Transit (KITTT), Local Rides, and the Shoreline Explorer. Both KITTT and Local Rides only operate once a week, and the Shoreline Explorer suspended service because of staffing issues. According to Baldwin, even when services like KITTT run, it is often empty, and few residents use it. It is possible that usage would increase if the service were more readily available, however, Baldwin pointed out that funding is a limiting factor.

The limited availability of community transportation options impacts those who are unable to drive. Pratt said that unmet transportation needs have a greater negative impact on the community's older residents who cannot drive and low-income individuals who cannot afford private automobile ownership. Grivois voiced similar thoughts, noting that there are some programs that offer medical rides, but there is a lack of options for those who are looking to be active members of their community. This is especially true in rural areas of the county where only 16% of public transportation needs are met.⁸ In a survey of York County residents, about 51% of respondents said rural communities in the county require better access to transportation options.⁹ It is not necessarily easy, however, for small towns like Kennebunk to provide transportation for those who struggle with mobility.

The costs and perception of publicly funded transportation can pose barriers for small communities like Kennebunk. As Baldwin said, limited use and scarce funds have prevented the town from increasing the KITTT service. Grivois voiced similar concerns stating that the organizational costs can make transportation programs difficult to operate. The culture around driving in small rural communities is also an issue. According to Pratt, many residents accept the lack of public transportation as a given in a rural community, and those who can drive often do not recognize the issue. Even when community leaders recognize the problem and want to address it, barriers such as these can prevent significant action.

Community Character and Services

Despite, or perhaps because of, its size, the Kennebunk community is very strong. Board member Pratt called Kennebunk her "chosen community" and praised it for its friendly spirit. She said people make a point of remembering who you are and, from her experience, people look out for each other and act quickly to help those who need it. Baldwin felt similarly, describing Kennebunk as a welcoming place in which you are acknowledged as more than another passerby. He described the community's legacy of generosity and giving when people need it, saying that town government and community members work together to make sure people are okay. Many of the town's residents come from away and choose to settle in the community. Kennebunk is ranked as the number one retirement destination in Maine, and number 36 in the nation.

Even though it is a small community, Kennebunk has many services available for residents. As a popular vacation destination, the area is known for its many local shops and restaurants, beautiful beaches, art galleries, and historic places. Kennebunk is an Age-Friendly community with local programs for older adults and an active senior center, however, it is important to note that the town's Committee on Aging is currently inactive following the resignation of all seven members in November of 2021. As previously stated, residents can meet most of their needs within the town's limits, and benefit from the town's proximity to Portland to the north and Boston

to the south. Nevertheless, one simply needs to look at a map of the community to recognize that the town's resources are highly localized. Reaching services in Kennebunk and those services available in other cities may not be a simple task for those living in rural areas.

The ITN*Country* provider

The Kennector is unique in that it is the only demonstration site that is operated by local government. This provides an important point of contrast for the evaluation of the demonstration project. The structure of local government poses potential benefits and challenges that may impact the outcome of ITN*Country* in the Kennebunk area.

Senior Transport Services

Summary

Senior Transport Services (STS) is an ITN*Country* Demonstration Community that operates along the Florida coast within the western half of Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Unlike many of the demonstration communities, STS operates within urban/suburban areas rather than rural. The area experienced substantial growth during the 20th century, with an economy based on construction and tourism, until the 2008 recession brought development to an abrupt standstill. The area has since made a commitment to more sustainable growth for community members of all ages, and despite some economic inequality, has continued as an active community that residents are excited to call home.

Demographics

The combined population of Sarasota and Manatee counties is just over 833,000 and the STS service area covers around 370,000 residents. During the winter months, seasonal residents raise the population significantly, by as much as 50,000 in Sarasota County. Sarasota County accounts for most of the service area and is representative of the region demographically. The county has a population density of 682 persons per square mile, but this rises substantially to 3,541 in Sarasota City. The county population is predominantly White. About 82% of county residents identify as White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, 10.1% identify as Hispanic or Latino, 4.7% as Black or African American, 2% as Asian, and 1.7% as two or more races. Sarasota County is a popular retirement destination with a large older adult population, relatively high education rates, and a moderate level of wealth. Just over 37% of the county population are aged 65 or older, which is almost double that for the country. Just under 94% of county residents aged 25 and older graduated from high school, and about 37% have a bachelor's degree or higher. Median income in the county sits at about \$69,500 and about 8.6% of the population is in poverty.

Economy

Historically construction and tourism have been the most important industries for Sarasota County. Between 1945 and 2010 the county population grew by more than 1,800%.¹ As the number of permanent residents and visitors grew, infrastructure and housing had to grow as well. This growth supported many construction jobs; however, this came to a halt following the 2008 recession. From 2008 to 2014, the county population grew by less than 1% per year, and more than half of the county's construction jobs were lost between 2006 and 2010. Today, construction remains an important economic sector, but it is smaller than before. In the last quarter of 2021, construction supported about 6% of total jobs in the North Port-Bradenton-

Sarasota area.² Like construction, the tourism industry has also experienced ups and downs. In the 60s, Sarasota cut funding for tourism promotion due to its unpopularity among residents. Public perception flipped in the 80s and investment in tourism resumed as local stakeholders tried to grow the community as “Florida’s Cultural Coast.”³ Unlike construction, tourism continues to play a very prominent role in the community. In 2021, the tourism industry supported 27,400 jobs in Sarasota County and attracted 3,008,900 visitors who contributed more than \$2.2 billion dollars in direct spending to the community.⁴

Following the 2008 economic crisis, the Sarasota community committed itself to developing a more diverse economy. Since 2010, all but two industries in the county experienced job growth, and average monthly unemployment has fallen from 8.7% in 2012 to 2.6% in 2022.⁵ County development has been positive in terms of job growth, but not all residents have benefited equally. Health care and social assistance, retail trade, and accommodation and food services now account for about half of all jobs in the county, however, the rise in low-wage industries has produced a workforce with lower average earnings.⁶ Low wages have also contributed to economic inequality among county residents. In 2015, Sarasota County ranked 20th in the country for income inequality with more than a \$2 million difference between the average income of the top 1% and the bottom 99%.⁷ Economic inequality is an especially pertinent issue for the county’s older adults. In 2018, about 42% of all retired households in Sarasota lived below the minimum income or savings needed to age while maintaining financial security.⁸ The County is aware of its economic challenges. The county’s 2016 economic development plan identified economic equality as a key issue and emphasized the importance of promoting diverse and sustainable industries. Development is an ongoing process in Sarasota County. Major projects of recent years include the Lakewood Ranch planned community, The Quay waterfront district with upscale residential, retail, and office space, and the Atlanta Braves spring training complex.

Transportation

Sarasota County has a relatively robust public transit system with infrastructure tightly linked to the area’s rapid growth. In the early 1900s, simple two-lane roads were sufficient for the city’s small population and daily travel needs, but as the area grew, the transportation infrastructure had to grow as well. As demand increased, state highways and interstate 75 were constructed throughout the area, followed by widening efforts during the 60s and 80s.⁹ These projects, primarily meant to decrease the burden on drivers, and made local travel on foot more difficult.¹⁰ Public transportation is the primary transportation alternative for non-drivers in the area. Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) provides a comprehensive set of public options, including a bus system with 14 static routes, an on-demand service for residents of Siesta Key, Lido/Longboat Key, Venice/Englewood, and North Port, and SCAT, an ADA paratransit service for older adults, those with disabilities, low-income residents, and veterans.¹¹ Compared to many public systems, SCAT offers broad coverage through diverse solutions. For example, SCAT’s bus system primarily services areas within and around downtown Sarasota; two routes provide minimal service to Venice/Northport and Bradenton, but these areas also benefit from access to the on-demand transit option. Nevertheless, the extent to which public transportation meets community needs is unclear.

Relatively few county residents use public transit and there are significant gaps in the mobility needs of older adults. In 2019, the city of Sarasota conducted community surveys for the 2020 Sarasota in Motion transportation master plan. Of respondents, 93% said when they take trips they never or rarely use the bus and 69% said they drive alone most of or all the time.¹² The 2016 Age-Friendly Sarasota Community Report identifies general transportation gaps for older

adults. In a survey of Sarasota residents aged 50 and older, respondents identified a 54% gap in transportation options for accessing health care, a 61% gap for evening travel needs, a 58% gap for attending entertainment events, and a 59% gap in transportation for accessing volunteer opportunities.¹³ It is important to note that SCAT introduced the on-demand service in 2021, after each report came out. Now that this service is available, public transportation use and transportation needs may have changed. These data suggest potential gaps in transportation in the County, but the development of new services, such as on-demand, also demonstrate the community's willingness to respond where gaps arise.

Community character and services

The Sarasota area is larger than most of the other demonstration sites, but it still benefits from an active and supportive community. Sue Berger, the Aging System Policy Coordinator with the Sarasota County department of Health and Human Services, specifically highlighted the community's ability to respond to the needs of older adults. Berger touted the fact that Sarasota was the first age-friendly community in Florida and said that local officials and organizations work to provide goods and services for older adults and are quick to address needs when they are identified.

As a popular retirement destination, Sarasota County has a large older adult population. In the 2016 age-friendly report, more than 90% of respondents described the county as a "good" or "excellent" place to live and 66% said it was important for them to age in their community.¹⁴

Sarasota offers beautiful beaches, warm weather, a variety of shopping and dining options and opportunities for social/recreation involvement including festivals, art museums, galleries, and spring training baseball to name a few.

The ITN*Country* service

Senior Transport Services is a new organization with a strong connection to a former ITN affiliate, ITN*SunCoast*. The directors of Senior Transport Services are former board members of ITN*SunCoast*. Senior Transport Services may benefit from the prior knowledge of the directors, an existing pool of riders and drivers from the former affiliate, and potential awareness of the program given its connection to a former ITN program. These factors may influence the success of this demonstration community.

NorthLine and ValleyLine

Summary

NorthLine and ValleyLine are two ITN*Country* demonstration communities that operate in Monterey County, California's longest coastal county covering almost 100 miles of the Pacific coastline. With a total land area of 3,282 square miles (about the area of Connecticut), Monterey County is large in comparison to other demonstration communities. NorthLine and ValleyLine's service areas cover about 784 square miles (about half the area of Rhode Island) to the north and south of Salinas, but the county's overall size remains an important factor. Monterey County is geographically, economically, and culturally diverse. Although priority issues for individual communities within the larger county may vary, the county's large size encourages greater county-wide coordination among the area's many nonprofits to meet community needs.

Demographics

Monterey County comprises large, sparsely populated rural areas and 12 more densely populated cities that cover 15% of the county's total land area. About 437,300 residents live in the county, with 75% living in one of the incorporated cities, and the remaining 25% living in the unincorporated rural areas.¹ The population density for the county is low, with 134 residents per square mile. In contrast, Salinas, the county seat and largest city, has a population of about 162,800 and a population density of 6,955 persons per square mile.² Monterey County is more diverse than many of the other demonstration communities. About 60% of county residents identify as Hispanic or Latino, 28% identify as white alone, not Hispanic or Latino, 6.7% identify as Asian, 3.4% as Black or African American, 2.7% as American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 4% as two or more races. Demographics also vary by area within the county. In Salinas, about 80% of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino and only 12% identify as white alone, neither Hispanic nor Latino.³

Given its proximity to the NorthLine and ValleyLine service areas, it is useful to look at the demographic information for Salinas, rather than the county. Unlike many of the other demonstration communities, this demonstration site has a relatively small older adult population. Only 9.4% of Salinas residents are 65 or older. Education rates in the community are also lower than in the other demonstration communities. About 62.4% of residents 25 or older have graduated from high school and about 15.7% have received a bachelor's degree or higher. Median household income in Salinas is \$75,747 and about 14% of the city's residents live in poverty. About 5% of Salinas residents under the age 65 have a disability.⁴

Economy

The focus of Monterey County's diverse economy varies by geographic area, with tourism playing an important role along the coast and in the valley. Natural areas like beaches and mountains, local shopping, and restaurants make the coast a popular destination for visitors, while vineyards draw tourists to the valley. The county hosts around 4.6 million annual visitors; in 2021 tourists spent an estimated \$2.5 billion in the area.⁵ In 2022, the Leisure and hospitality industry supported about 11% of total jobs in the county.⁶ The county's most prominent industry, however, is agriculture, which has served as the backbone of the Monterey County economy for more than a century. The expansion of irrigation in the late 1920s led to an explosion in row crop production and a population boom that has made the county a key producer nationally.⁷ Today, the county supplies 61% of the nation's leaf lettuce.⁸ In 2022, farming supported 27% of all county jobs, and in 2018, agriculture contributed more than \$11 billion to the county economy.⁹ County-wide unemployment follows the seasonal demand of agriculture and tourism, but average monthly unemployment has decreased over the past decade from 11.9% in 2012 to 5.9% in 2022.¹⁰ Although these sectors provide a strong economic backbone, Monterey County is not without economic challenges.

The county experiences great disparities in wealth and access to resources. Ruth Rodriguez, Community Services Manager at CHISPA (Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association, Inc.) described the "lettuce curtain", an economic divide between the valley and the wealthier coastal areas of the county. Rodriguez also described significant disparities in access to quality education between the valley and the coast. These issues are compounded by the County's high cost of living. According to a report by the Monterey County Community Action Partnership, cost of living in the county is 33.1% higher than the U.S. average. The heightened cost of living creates a disparity between the official poverty threshold and the real cost of living for the county's residents. The Community Action Partnership found that a family of four would need an income 290% above the poverty threshold to make ends meet.¹¹ Housing costs represent a significant part of the cost-of-living problem. As of November,

2022, the minimum annual income needed to afford the median home in Monterey County was more than 2.4 times higher than the median income.¹² Rodriguez identified the housing crisis as the county's highest priority need, not only because of cost, but also because of availability. Mayor of Salinas, Kimbley Craig, voiced similar concerns with housing, particularly for the community's older adults who cannot afford to move out of their homes.

It is unsurprising that economic development is a high priority in the County. The county's economic development department oversees 12 different planning areas and works with regional partners to facilitate job growth, business development, and economic diversification of the region's core sectors. This department works alongside regional planning organizations that focus on such specific sectors such as the Monterey County Farm Bureau, and the Monterey Convention and Visitors Bureau. Rodriguez and Craig both stressed the importance of development specifically in the Salinas community. Rodriguez described CHISPA's efforts to develop affordable housing in the East Garrison neighborhood, while also noting that more housing development is needed. Craig described multiple development projects in Salinas including the downtown vibrancy plan and the East Salinas vibrancy plan, and mentioned that agriculture is always a top priority when it comes to economic development in the community. Development is not limited to the county's largest cities. Ida Lopez Chan, CEO of the Soledad Medical Clinic, described her community as a middle-income city at the forefront of south county development, and made note of multiple potential expansion projects including clinic expansion and the development of 2,500 new homes. Despite their focus on growth and development, communities within the county continue to struggle with adequate transportation for non-drivers and low-income individuals.

Transportation

Although the county offers several public transportation options, few meet the needs of non-drivers and low-income individuals, especially those who live in rural areas. Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) is the primary public transportation provider in Monterey County. MST operates 29 different bus lines that primarily serve Monterey City and Salinas. In February 2022, MST outlined an overhaul of its network that would prioritize ridership over coverage^{13[OBJ]}. Developed in response to decreased usage during the pandemic, these changes were designed to improve efficiency and affordability for those who most frequently^{14[OBJ]}. The restructured network came into effect December 10, 2022, and although it still offers some service to rural areas like the valley, many rural lines were eliminated and those that remain are limited.

This is a significant issue, particularly for lower-income individuals in rural areas. According to Chan, awareness of transportation challenges is a function of income and status. Lower income populations who cannot afford to drive are more heavily impacted by reduced service. Public transit in the County also struggles to meet the needs of older adults and those with mobility challenges. MST does offer alternative options such as the paratransit RIDES program, taxi vouchers for older adults, four senior shuttles, and a Special Medical Trips service, but these programs have limitations. According to Mayor Craig, MST's older adult services have potential, but largely miss the mark, struggling with consistency and reliability. Rodriguez also recognized that transportation is a high priority issue for older adults who often struggle to navigate resources if the information is not easily accessible.

Transportation is a challenge throughout the county. In a 2019 survey from the Monterey County Area Agency on Aging, 50% of respondents identified transportation as a priority need either now or in the future. About 21% of respondents also identified transportation difficulties as a barrier to services.¹⁵ Providing transportation options to the entire county, however, is a

challenge. About 75% of the county population live in 15% of the county's land area, but this 15% is spread across 3,282 square miles. Providing adequate transportation for every community is an enormous undertaking. The Transportation Agency for Monterey County serves as the state designated agency in charge of the planning and financial programming of county transportation projects. Many of the agency's projects focus on improving transportation infrastructure such as highways, but there is also a focus on improving mobility in other ways. The agency recently began a senior and disabled transportation program that provides grants to local nonprofits that provide transportation; however, the program is still in the early stages and just finished accepting applications in December 2022.

Community character and services

Monterey County is a large area made up of many separate cities and towns with disparities in wealth and opportunity. Nevertheless, there is a strong sense of unity and community in the areas served by NorthLine and ValleyLine according to stakeholders from the areas. Each of the stakeholders interviewed described their communities as neighborly and giving, and said that residents are willing to address community needs when they arise. Rodriguez made note of the robust nonprofit community in and around Salinas, and said that local industries are very willing to give back to the community. Craig also spoke about the nonprofit community in Salinas, and said that there is a strong dedication to bettering the community through analysis of what is and what is not working. Further south in Soledad, Chan also described her community as tight-knit and giving. According to Chan, residents have a lot of love for their community, an appreciation for where they live, and a desire to make it somewhere special.

Services available for residents are more heavily concentrated in the northern half of the county in and around Salinas and Monterey City. Though southern cities like Soledad are growing, most still lack access to major retailers and big box stores. Salinas in the valley and Monterey City on the coast are where county residents find most of the shopping, dining, and cultural activities the county has to offer. These areas are also where the county's older residents can access services from The Hub by the Alliance on Aging and The Carmel Foundation. Southern cities are not devoid of services, for example Soledad offers a medical clinic with a full range of health services, but many of the county's opportunities for engagement and aid providers are not readily accessible to more rural communities.

The ITN*Country* provider

NorthLine and ValleyLine are unique demonstration communities because they are operated by ITN*MontereyCounty*, an established ITN*America* Affiliate as a hub and spoke system. This connection brings several benefits that may impact the success of NorthLine and ValleyLine. ITN*MontereyCounty* already provides service across 14 zip codes in the county, has years of experience as a nonprofit transportation provider, and offers an existing pool of potential volunteers. The proximity of these three services also provides an important contrast to the other providers included in the demonstration project.

Mobilize Katahdin

Summary

Mobilize Katahdin is a Demonstration Community that operates in northern Penobscot County, Maine. This highly rural community and the surrounding service area cover about 625 square

miles of land in the Katahdin region, at the edge of Baxter State Park. The Katahdin region is in a state of great transition. This once thriving community experienced significant economic trouble following the decline and closure of two important paper mills. The town now seeks to rebuild, promote a more diverse economy that meets the needs of existing residents, and attract new business.

Demographics

The Mobilize Katahdin service area covers multiple towns across the Katahdin region, however, most of its riders live in Millinocket. As of the last census, Millinocket had a population of about 4,100 residents. This number has fallen significantly over recent decades. In 1970, Millinocket had a population of about 7,700.¹ In 1980, the population for the entire Katahdin region reached almost 16,000 residents, but it has also fallen significantly since then, to about 10,500 in 2015. The population density of Millinocket is only about 225 persons per square mile and the overall density of Penobscot County is just 45 residents per square mile.² Like many rural communities in Maine, Millinocket is not diverse. About 93.4% of the town's residents identify as White, neither Hispanic nor Latino. About 1% of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino, but no other racial demographic accounts for more than 1% of the town's population.

Millinocket residents tend to be older, less educated, and less wealthy. The median age in Millinocket is about 57 years old and about 36% of residents are 65 or older. Education rates in the town are low in compared to other demonstration communities. According to the latest census data, only 42% of town residents have graduated from high school and only 18% have a bachelor's degree or higher. The median income for the town is \$40,755 and the poverty rate is 17.6%.³

Economy

The Katahdin region is in an economic transition period following years of decline. Throughout the end of the 19th and most of the 20th centuries, the paper industry served as an economic engine for the region. Indeed, the Millinocket paper mill outdates the incorporation of the town in 1901.⁴ Following the construction of the first mill in 1900, the area exploded. Millinocket's population reached 5,000 by 1911 and by the 1960s the Great Northern Paper Company (GNP) employed about 4,400 individuals.⁵ GNP began to struggle in the late 20th century. In 1986, GNP began its first round of layoffs by eliminating over 1,200 workers. Over the following decades, the mill changed hands multiple times before the Millinocket mill closed permanently in 2008, followed soon after by the East Millinocket mill in 2014.⁶ The initial success of the paper industry grew Millinocket and the surrounding area, it also restricted the economy by suffocating opportunities for economic diversification.⁷ The final closure of the mills eliminated more than 400 jobs and sent the local economy into flux as unemployment jumped from 6% in 2000 to 15% in 2010.⁸

Today, the local economy is trying to rebound through creative development that utilizes the community's existing resources. Tourism has replaced paper as the region's largest economic sector. Baxter State Park, located just north of Millinocket, attracts around 70,000 visitors per year who bring millions of dollars in spending to businesses in the surrounding area.⁹ Aside from tourism, economic opportunity in the community is limited. Millinocket lies about 70 miles from Bangor, the nearest metropolitan area, essentially separate from the economic opportunities available there. Economic indicators paint a picture of a community in limbo. Between 2016 and 2022, unemployment fell from 9.6% to 6.7%, however, poverty in the community rose from 10.3% to 17.6% over the same period. Nevertheless, the community is actively working to grow and restore the once vibrant rural economy.

Local non-profit Our Katahdin is leading the charge for economic development. The organization arose in 2014 as a platform to support projects planned and funded by the community. Over time, the organization has grown in scope and capacity. In 2017, Our Katahdin purchased GNP and the mill site with the help of a \$5.3 million grant. Our Katahdin formed One North, an industrial revitalization project for the old mill site, and began the process of identifying new industry partners. Since purchasing the mill, Our Katahdin has begun multiple long-term projects including a 99-year, \$300 million contract with Nautilus Data Technology for the development of a water-cooling data center and plans to develop a wood pellet plant in cooperation with a company from Arkansas.¹⁰ Our Katahdin plans to support economic growth and provide new jobs through diversified development that utilizes the community's existing resources. This approach to economic development is mirrored throughout the Katahdin region. The town of East Millinocket bought its old paper mill in 2020 with plans to convert it into an industrial park with Standard Biocarbon lined up as the first tenant.¹¹ The regional approach to development is clearly outlined by The Katahdin Collaborative, another nonprofit, which works to promote collaboration for a more sustainable future.

Transportation

Transportation options in the Millinocket community and surrounding area are virtually non-existent and the need for transportation is great. Historically, Maine has promoted a highway-centric approach to transit development. The 1956 Federal Highway act restricted investment in transit services and contributed to the spread of rural communities.¹² The distance between communities promotes a reliance on personal vehicles for transportation. About 80% of respondents to the 2019 Katahdin Region Transportation Survey said that a personal vehicle was their primary source of transportation.¹³ Penquis Lynx is the only transportation option available in Millinocket, but its availability is severely limited. Public transportation from Penquis is only guaranteed "at least one day a week to every town" in the county and a notice of two full business days is required. Aside from Penquis, there are no other public transportation options in Millinocket. Mobility requires the use of a personal vehicle.

The necessity of personal vehicles is a problem for those who cannot drive themselves. In the 2019 Katahdin Region Transportation Survey, 80% of respondents said they did not go somewhere in the previous year because they lacked transportation. More than half (64%) said it was difficult to live in the community without being able to drive, and 80% said their life would be improved by greater access to transportation.¹⁴ Nancy Grant, a Millinocket resident and employee of the Eastern Maine Area Agency on Aging, echoed the results of this survey in stating that transportation is a very high need in Millinocket. According to Grant, you see people begging for rides daily because they cannot find a ride or because the service they called was late or did not show. Transportation issues are not limited to older adults. Grant said that younger adults who cannot afford a car or have a disability that prevents them from driving also struggle to find rides. Barriers to mobility can lead to missed appointments, difficulty with simple errands like grocery shopping, and even difficulty retaining a job.

Community character and services

Millinocket is a resilient and proud community. According to Grant, most of the older adults who live in the area have never left Millinocket; it's what they have known their entire life. This connection is evident in the community's spirit. Grant described Millinocket as very welcoming, a place where everybody knows everybody and the connections between people are strong.

Grant also described the community as very involved, whether that means hosting local events and fundraisers or mobilizing quickly to help individuals who are struggling.

There is, however, an undeniable disconnect between the community's spirit and its capacity. According to Grant, Millinocket suffers from such a lack of businesses, residents must travel out of town to access many services. Millinocket has the essentials such as a grocery store and regional hospital, but other services are limited. Though the community in Millinocket is strong, those who cannot drive may still struggle greatly to access services or the social support of other community members.

The ITNCountry provider

Mobilize Katahdin is a unique demonstration community. The organization exists within the local library and provides multiple services other than transportation including resource navigation, food assistance, and housing and utility assistance. In mid-February, Mobilize Katahdin discontinued its transportation services. It is important to understand the community in which this service operated when examining why it struggled to succeed.

FISH Friends in Service Helping

Summary

FISH of Tompkins County is an ITNCountry Demonstration Community located in central New York, on the south edge of the Finger Lakes. Though most of the county is highly rural, it is anchored by Ithaca, the county seat and only major metro area. The county benefits from local institutions of higher education that provide economic stability, strong local partnerships, and push the community toward sustainable and progressive growth. At the same time, Ithaca's prominence and regional importance contribute to a divide between the county's urban heart and the surrounding rural areas as services are more heavily located within the city limits. Despite the urban/rural divide, Tompkins County benefits from a supportive community with much to offer those who choose to call it home.

Demographics

By population, Tompkins County is a larger demonstration site in which residents are spread across urban and rural areas. As of the last census, the county has about 106,000 residents, a land area of 475 square miles, and a population density of about 223 people per square mile. About 32,000 county residents live in the Ithaca city limits, which covers about 5.4 square miles and has a population density of 5,958 people per square mile.¹ Like some of the other demonstration sites, Tompkins County has a combination of highly populated urban areas and large, less densely populated rural areas. In part because of institutions like Cornell University, there is a difference in racial diversity between the county and Ithaca. In Ithaca, only 64% of residents identify as White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, 16% identify as Asian, 5.7% identify as Black or African American, 8.4% as Hispanic or Latino, and 6.8% as two or more races. At the county level, 77.4% of residents identify as White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino, 9.8% identify as Asian, 4.5% as Black or African American, 5.5% as Hispanic or Latino, and 3.7% as two or more races.²

The county's educational institutions, including Cornell University, contribute to differences in educational demographics such as those seen in diversity. Tompkins County has much higher

education rates than any of the other demonstration sites. Of residents aged 25 and older, 95% have graduated from high school and over 55% have a bachelor's degree or higher. About 15.7% of county residents, and only 6.6% of those in Ithaca, are aged 65 or older. The median income for the county is about \$64,000 and, possibly because of the number of students, the poverty rate is 16.2%.³

Economy

The economy in Tompkins County is tied to the area's three academic institutions: Tompkins Cortland Community College, Ithaca College, and most importantly, Cornell University. In 2018, higher education was the largest industry by employment, supporting 40% of all jobs in the county.⁴ The impact of these institutions extends beyond employment. In 2021, Cornell University brought more than \$2 billion to the county and surrounding area in taxes, construction projects, grants, capital investment, and student spending.⁵ Cornell also contributes to the local economy through research. Two of the university's research centers are devoted to fostering business in the region. The Center for Technology Enterprise and Commercialization and the Center for Development in the Life Sciences invest directly in private businesses and local startups and help attract outside venture capital investment.⁶ These academic institutions provide a source of stability that promotes economic diversity and job growth in the county. Other important sectors include tech, manufacturing, and tourism, but none are as prominent as education. Over the past few decades, job growth has remained stable, around 10% or higher, and has outpaced population growth, making the county an attractive source of employment for commuters.⁷ The rate of job growth has translated to historically low unemployment that has continued to fall over the last decade. Average monthly unemployment fell from 6.2% in 2012 to 2.6% in 2022.⁸

That is not to say that all the county's residents benefit from the local economy equally. Tompkins County experiences challenges in both urban and rural areas. In Ithaca, there is a significant affordable housing problem. Jane Bowman Brady, director of Go Ithaca, identified housing as the biggest issue in the community. Population growth in the county has outpaced housing development over the past decade, and the recent cost increase in raw materials poses a barrier to new affordable housing options.⁹ This issue is less severe in rural parts of the county, but the separation between Ithaca and the rest of the county is a problem. According to Lisa Monroe, Director of the Tompkins County Office for the Aging, there are few services available in rural areas. Rural residents must come into the city to access most services.

The community does work to address economic issues through development. According to Brady and Monroe, economic development is a high priority for the community. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the community's vulnerabilities as students, a key group of consumers, were sent home with an uncertain return date.¹⁰ Tompkins County benefits greatly from its academic institutions, but the pandemic highlighted the importance of economic diversification. Ithaca's comprehensive plan identifies the need to pursue a diverse range of industries that will expand its economic base.¹¹ Organizations like the Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency and Ithaca Area Economic Development are key players in pursuing this goal.

Transportation

Tompkins County has a highly developed public transit system given its size. Tompkins County Area Transit (T-CAT) is by far the most extensive option available. T-CAT operates 39 fixed bus routes within Ithaca and into the surrounding area. Like many bus systems, T-CAT struggles with driver availability, profitability, and service consistency. According to Kathryn Miller,

Assistant Director of Service Insights at the Foodbank of the Southern Tier, there are many options within the city, but the bus system has made significant cuts to its rural routes in recent years. Both Monroe and Brady echoed this sentiment, stating that canceled routes are a problem and that the system lacks the capacity and funding to serve rural areas effectively. Older adults and those with disabilities, as well as other county residents, have access to Gadabout, a paratransit service that provides rides for medical trips and shopping centers, but requires at least two day's notice and only operates within a four-and-a-half-hour window for areas outside of Ithaca. Other transportation options include taxis and ride hailing apps, Finger Lakes Rideshare, and Ithaca Car Share.

All stakeholders interviewed agreed transportation is an issue for older adults and non-drivers in the county, especially those who live outside Ithaca. According to Monroe, Tompkins County has a lot of good options for a small community, but there are still gaps. Miller had similar thoughts, stating that those who drive don't tend to think about the issue, but limited options in rural areas make transportation difficult for those who cannot drive. Brady noted that the transportation problem is made more serious by the fact that so many of the county's services are centrally located within Ithaca. The county's Age Friendly Action Plan identified the same issues regarding transportation for older adults and non-drivers in rural areas. This plan noted transportation for medical appointments, sharing statistics from a 2019 community needs assessment which found that 70.5% of residents think that transportation to out of county/town medical appointments is an important problem for older adults in the community.¹²

Community character and services

To a certain extent, Tompkins County exists as three communities separated by geography, culture, and time. Each of the stakeholders interviewed identified the divide between the county's rural areas and Ithaca, the County's major urban center. According to Monroe, the rural pride from people living in areas outside Ithaca and those living downtown with "progressive" pride can sometimes clash. Even within the city, there is sometimes a perception of a divide between the temporary student population and the permanent population, according to Miller. The divides are more than cultural. Rural and urban parts of the county often simply have different needs. For example, Brady explained the way people get around in the county is different than the way they get around in the city. According to Brady, this example is reflective of other county issues.

Despite these barriers, the county benefits from a strong spirit of support and a robust community of non-profits. Each of the community stakeholders praised the number and quality of nonprofits in the community. Monroe specifically praised the organizations' ability to cooperate to address specific challenges once gaps are identified. In 2015, the county officially became an Age Friendly Community and has since developed an Age Friendly Action Plan and an Age Friendly Center for Excellence that provides services for older adults.

Tompkins County also benefits from an abundance of natural resources including more than 150 waterfalls, and myriad basic services, such as pharmacies, grocery stores, a hospital, and a vibrant downtown with shopping and dining options. Like many rural communities, these services are heavily localized within the Ithaca metro area. Rural country residents may not have easy access to all or even most of the County's services.

The ITN*Country* provider

FISH of Tompkins County is an existing service provider that transitioned onto the ITN*Country* platform. The service has a long history in the community and has provided rides to county residents since 1966. FISH is sheltered by a 211 program which distinguishes it from other communities in the demonstration project. FISH's experience with ITN*Country* will provide valuable insights for cooperation with other FISH and 211 programs across the country.

Friends in Action

Summary

Friends in Action, Ellsworth, is a demonstration community in Hancock County, Maine. This rural county covers 1,587 square miles of land (about the area of Rhode Island) along Maine's central coast. The region's natural spaces, including Acadia National Park, support the local economy, however, they also create economic challenges. The county comprises a collection of independent towns that vary in character, access to services, and community resources. The county is not devoid of opportunities, however, access to these opportunities is far from universal.

Demographics

Hancock County is home to a small, homogenous, and diffuse population. About 56,000 residents live in the county full-time, however, this number increases during the summer with the influx of seasonal residents. Just over 8,500 residents live in Ellsworth, the county's seat and largest town.¹ During the pandemic, the county population rose as remote workers settled in the region. Between the 2010 and 2020 census, Ellsworth's population grew by 8.5%, which is modest considering the significant number of residents gained during the pandemic.² Even with this growth, the county population is small relative to its size, with just 35 residents per square mile. Like much of Maine, Hancock County is racially homogenous. According to the latest census data, over 94% of residents identify as white alone. All other racial or ethnic groups account for 1.7% of residents or fewer.

Other important demographic categories include education, age, and income. The county has a strong high school graduation rate of 95% among those aged 25. About 35% of the population have a bachelor's degree or higher. Like the rest of Maine, Hancock County has a large older adult population, with about 26% of county residents aged 65 or older.³ The median income in the County was about \$60,000 as of the last census, and 11% of residents were at or below the poverty line.

Economy

The allure of the county's natural resources and beauty supports a relatively strong service-based economy. The service-sector has been the region's largest supplier of jobs since the 1960s, and in 2021 service providing establishments accounted for about 85% of total jobs in the county.⁴ Retail trade and accommodation and food services were the two largest service-job providers, accounting for 35% of total jobs in 2021.⁵ This is unsurprising given the regions draw as a tourist destination. The Downeast region, which includes Hancock County, is the third most visited region in the State. Mount Desert Island, home to Bar Harbor and Acadia National Park, is a particularly popular destination.⁶ In 2021, an estimated 4.1 million people (about three times the population of Maine) visited Acadia and brought an enormous amount of business to the surrounding area. According to the National Parks Service, visitors to Acadia spent \$486 million

in gateway communities, supported 6,840 regional jobs, and produced \$236 million in labor income in 2021.⁷

The tourism industry has important implications for the local economy. Unemployment peaks in the winter and valleys in the summer months with the rise of tourism and seasonal residents. On average, however, county unemployment has decreased steadily over the past decade. Average monthly unemployment fell from 7.9% in 2012 to 4% in by November 2022.⁸ Regional dependence on tourism has positive implications for employment but negative implications for housing and local access to goods and services. The influx of wealthy retirees and seasonal residents has led to a rise in housing prices, above what is affordable for many residents. In 2019, an estimated 55% of county residents were unable to afford the median cost of a home in the area. Anne Schroth, Executive Director of Healthy Peninsula, identified the housing crisis as a top priority for the county. Schroth also mentioned the lack of services in the county's smaller towns as an issue, particularly for those who struggle with mobility. This issue is compounded in the winter when many businesses cater to tourists and close or reduce services during the off season.

Despite these issues, economic development is an important focus of regional stakeholders. Janna Richards, the Ellsworth Economic Development Coordinator, said that for her community, the focus is on attracting new residents and businesses to the area, while continuing to meet the needs of the existing population. Key projects for Ellsworth include improving infrastructure, managing summer traffic, and developing the workforce by increasing available options for employment. Richards and Schroth also identified broadband access as an important priority. According to the 2020 Census, 86% of county households had a broadband internet subscription between 2017 and 2021. Nevertheless, many small and rural communities in the county still struggle with reliable and consistent access to the internet. Hancock County does not have a robust, overarching body for economic planning. Instead, towns and different organizations work on planning, often separately.

Transportation

Hancock County has a well-established public transit system, Downeast Transportation, and two volunteer driver services; however, the region still struggles with unmet need brought on by the barriers of a large rural land area. The most prominent public service is seasonal and operates on Mount Desert Island, seven days a week, from June 23rd through October 10th., according to Paul Murphy, Downeast Transportation Director. Seasonal bus routes on Mount Desert Island served around 750,000 riders in the year before the pandemic, of which 20% were local residents. Though successful, this service is geographically and temporally isolated to the island. Downeast also offers a public bus service that operates between larger towns in the community, with connections to Bangor, five days a week. This service includes three circular routes in Ellsworth, Bar Harbor, and Bucksport that each operate one to two days a week. Lastly, Downeast Transportation offers commuter service during the work week to Jackson Laboratory, a major employer in the county.

According to Murphy, Downeast used to operate more routes, but had to cut back because of low ridership and flat funding. Murphy said that it is difficult for these services to operate in low density areas, however, he also mentioned efforts to overcome these challenges in creative ways. For example, connecting rural residents to bus routes via a contracted taxi service. Two volunteer driver services operate to fill in the gaps in transportation in Hancock County. Friends in Action, the ITNCountry community included in this demonstration project, operates throughout the county, and Island Connections primarily operates on Mount Desert Island.

Community stakeholders recognized the potential benefits of on-demand volunteer rides services. Murphy noted cooperation between Friends in Action and Downeast Transportation for older residents without access to public transit. Schroth said this type of service can work well in areas with many volunteers but also noted that some areas of the county lack a robust pool of volunteers. All stakeholders interviewed agreed that transportation is a significant problem, especially for those with mobility challenges. Interestingly, older adults do not see transportation as an issue that impacts them directly. In response to a 2019 survey of residents from Penobscot, Hancock, and Washington Counties, 97% of those surveyed said transportation was not a problem for them.⁹ Likewise, only 15.4% of respondents to an Age Friendly Bar Harbor survey identified transportation as a personal problem. At the same time, 98% of respondents to this survey said the ability to drive is important to their lives. As more residents transition away from driving, transportation will become a more prominent issue for more of the county's residents.

Community character and services

Hancock County has a dynamic and proud community. It is difficult to describe the County given its size, the geographic separation between towns, and diversity in areas like age and political breakdown. However, people are generally welcoming and willing to help neighbors in need. This is especially true of the community in Ellsworth. Janna Richards described the public gathering places in her town as active places in which residents and visitors engage with each other. Richards also identified social media as a prominent platform for social action in the Ellsworth area, stating that people come out of the woodwork to offer help where they can. Schroth and Murphy pointed out that each community in Hancock County is unique but agreed that neighbors generally help those in need. All stakeholders resoundingly agreed that the region's natural beauty is a significant benefit for those who live there or come to visit.

Though rural, the county has services and opportunities for residents of all ages. The presence of Jackson Labs in Bar Harbor, the seasonal spike in tourism related services, and the county's proximity to Bangor provide many job opportunities. Larger towns provide access to services like grocery stores and doctors' offices. Older adults benefit from senior centers such as those located in Ellsworth and Bucksport and have access to educational events and programs at the Acadia Senior College. The county offers a range of options for residents and visitors; however, its geographic size can become a limiting factor. Though opportunities exist, accessing them often means traveling a non-insignificant distance.

The ITNCountry provider

Ellsworth is unique for several reasons. First, Friends in Action provides several individual and group programs apart from transportation. Second, because Friends in Action began in 2003, the organization has decades of experience providing older adult services including transportation. The organization is important for the evaluation because it offers an example of an existing service that transitions onto the ITNCountry platform, which may impact the outcome of ITNCountry in this community. Finally, ironically, Friends in Action never completed the demonstration project. The new Executive Director, who assumed his position after his predecessor's 20-year career, enthusiastically joined the ITNCountry project, but never meaningfully participated. He also maintained a proprietary ownership position of all rides data that made it impossible for Friends in Action to join the ITNRides technology and research platform.