

## 2023 Lorain County Mobility Management Focus Groups

FOCUS GROUP North Ridgeville Senior Center Monday April 24, 2023 10am-11am

Total Attendance: 14

60+ years old: 8

Disability: 1

**\*\*Empowering Lorain County's Transportation Future: Insights from North Ridgeville's Focus Group\*\***

In a vibrant gathering at the North Ridgeville Senior Center on a sunny April morning, a diverse group of 14 individuals came together to delve into the intricacies of Lorain County's transportation landscape. Among them were eight seasoned members aged 60 and above, alongside a participant with a disability, all sharing a common goal: to shape the future of transportation in their community.

This assembly was a microcosm of the county's tapestry, comprising not only engaged community members and devoted caregivers but also representatives from key organizations like OOA, LCH, Cleveland.com, LCCC, and the City of North Ridgeville. Their collective voice was unified, carrying insights that would chart a path towards a more comprehensive and inclusive transportation framework.

The session commenced with introductions, allowing the participants to familiarize themselves with one another. Amid the introductions, a succinct overview of the Mobility Management (MM) program illuminated the gathering, highlighting its role in the overarching Coordinated Transportation Plan. This connection underscored the importance of their insights in steering the course of Lorain County's transportation future.

As discussions flowed, participants shared their awareness of the prevailing transportation dynamics within the county. An overarching sentiment emerged - a wistful reminiscence of a time when transportation options were more abundant. This consensus resonated particularly with the North Ridgeville community, where many attendees hailed from. The community's voice was unequivocal - a desire for better clarity on LCT bus routes, timings, and operational intricacies.

Among the attendees, questions surfaced about the scope of LCT routes, often finding their conclusion in Lorain and Elyria. An interesting query lingered - a historical contemplation on the existence of a North Ridgeville circular route, once traversed. Further insights were revealed through data shared by the NR OOA - in 2022, they provided assistance to 47 eligible individuals who met the criteria of age and residency, a lifeline for those devoid of personal transportation options.

Crucially, participants uncovered challenges embedded within the current transportation options. Issues of accessibility, particularly for those with limited mobility, came to the fore. Caregivers, now juggling responsibilities, found orchestrating transportation schedules a formidable task. A notion emerged - the role of healthcare institutions in ensuring patient accessibility, especially for critical appointments such as dialysis and therapy.

As discussions deepened, the sentiment coalesced around the MM program's potential. Participants voiced the need for a holistic approach, catering not just to specialized cases but encompassing the broader community. Concerns emerged over the absence of provisions for bicyclists and the lack of affordable solutions for cross-county and airport travel.

The conversation brimmed with aspirations for a transportation utopia. Visions included on-demand pickups, a flexible service catering to both crucial needs and regular commuters, and a volunteer network for ridesharing, balanced with safety considerations. Calls for incentivizing low-income employees with rideshare options and empowering employers to support their transportation needs resonated strongly.

A resounding theme was the yearning for inter-county connections, making travel seamless. The possibilities of rideshare vouchers, budget tailoring for individual communities, and investments in accessibility further enriched the discourse. Participants echoed a common refrain - a need for efficiency that grows with increased ridership, ensuring a sustainable future.

The session's energy was palpable, spirited exchanges marked by a sense of collective purpose. The meeting drew to a close, culminating in the selection of a gift card recipient, a small token of gratitude for their invaluable input. The participants were encouraged to share their thoughts through a survey, continuing their impactful role in shaping a transportation vision that would serve the community's needs and aspirations.

In this room, a microcosm of Lorain County's vibrant diversity, the blueprint for an enhanced transportation framework was etched. Their voices transcended mere discussions, painting a vision of a community-driven, accessible, and inclusive transportation landscape. A journey had begun, powered by insights from those who understood the pulse of their community best.

FOCUS GROUP Head Start Lorain Thursday May 4, 2023 8:30am-9:30am

Total Attendance:	14
Parents:	7
Staff:	5
Surveys:	130
Guides:	30

**\*\*Paving the Way for Transportation Transformation: Insights from Lorain County's Heart\*\***

In a bustling meeting held at Head Start Lorain on May 4, 2023, a diverse gathering of 14 participants breathed life into Lorain County's transportation concerns. This dynamic mix encompassed parents, caregivers, and dedicated staff, offering a microcosm of the county's varied population.

Amidst this mix, seven parents and five staff members converged, driven by a shared mission—to redefine transportation dynamics in Lorain County. The clock striking 8:30 set the stage for discussions that resonated far beyond the room's walls.

The stories that unfolded unveiled a collective awareness of Lorain County's transportation fabric. Recollections painted a picture of shifting perceptions—once-familiar LCT buses had seemingly faded into obscurity, while the lack of personal vehicles posed substantial constraints on mobility. Walking and familial assistance emerged as essential lifelines when official transportation systems fell short. Concerns were voiced about the safety of ride-hailing services, particularly Uber, while a digital divide surfaced as Google Maps proved inadequate in mapping transit options. Echoes from the past resounded, reminiscing about a time when LCT buses played a central role in teenagers' lives.

These personal narratives peeled back the layers, revealing challenges etched into Lorain County's transportation fabric—Uber's convenience often came at a prohibitive cost, harsh weather conditions posed significant obstacles for pedestrians, and a surprising dependence on technology emerged as apps and mobile payments became gateways to transportation. Missed school days due to transportation issues disrupted the education journey for young learners, and frustration mounted when promises of programs like "Buy a Car" went unfulfilled. For households with a single vehicle, juggling work, school, and family commitments was a precarious dance. Navigating beyond county lines highlighted the complexities of accessing transportation solutions, while the uphill battle faced by low-income caregivers to secure transportation was palpable.

Yet, these accounts also illuminated a shared vision for a transformed transportation landscape—the allure of on-demand transportation captured hearts, promising flexibility that traditional fixed routes could not. Clarity emerged as a collective aspiration, envisioning buses as integral community components. Safety was paramount, leading to calls for secure road crossings and strategically placed bus stops. The enigma of LCT buses in unexpected locations prompted calls for clear distinctions between public and specialized services. A unanimous cry for seamless technology integration echoed, emphasizing a need for streamlined access.

This impassioned dialogue captured the urgency for transformation. Amidst these exchanges, a unanimous call for additional resources—transportation guides, newsletters, emails—demonstrated the participants' determination to remain informed and engaged.

This gathering wasn't merely a meeting—it was a chapter in Lorain County's transportation journey. With each voice contributing, this convergence painted a portrait of a community united in its pursuit of an inclusive, forward-looking transportation system. As the discussions wound down, a symphony of voices had resounded—a collective narrative weaving a clearer path for Lorain County's transportation future.

FOCUS GROUP Memory Café Amherst May 10, 2023 10:30-11:30am

Total Attendance:	13
Caregivers:	11
Personally Disabled:	1
Surveys:	12
Guides:	16

\*\*Fostering Transportation Evolution: Echoes from Lorain County\*\*

On a tranquil morning in May 2023, the Memory Café in Amherst transformed into a hub of discourse, uniting a diverse group of 13 attendees. This assembly, predominantly caregivers and family members of those in Memory Care, formed a microcosm of Lorain County's populace. The air was laden with curiosity and purpose as conversations commenced at 10:30 AM.

Within the diverse congregation, 11 caregivers and one personally disabled participant engaged in a profound dialogue. The overarching objective was clear—to shape a transportation paradigm that resonated with Lorain County's essence. As introductions unfolded, the room became a canvas for shared aspirations.

The stories woven during this gathering unveiled a tapestry of perceptions surrounding transportation in Lorain County. A prevailing lack of awareness about public transportation emerged. Unreliable impressions of Medicaid service providers circulated. Echoes from a different era resurfaced, recalling the vibrant days of an AM, PM, and evening route catering to US Steelworkers. The presence of LCT buses sparked intrigue, yet the details remained elusive. Familiarity with Uber was juxtaposed with the technological barrier faced by some. The reliance on friends and family for transportation underscored existing gaps. The recollection of a Park-and-Ride in Avon illuminated past connectivity. A memory of employer-provided bus vouchers added a layer of nostalgia. The clarity of numbered and color-coded routes of yore contrasted with current ambiguities. The revelation of LCT's \$4 on-demand rides expanded horizons.

Amidst the insights, participants courageously revealed hardships and barriers within the present transportation landscape. An unfolding narrative depicted a daughter's struggles to schedule reliable rides for her mother, often leading to missed events due to unreliable transportation. The absence of door-through-door services left vulnerable individuals without necessary support. The challenge of navigating large vehicle steps posed not only physical but emotional hurdles. Access to bus stops proved problematic, exacerbating overall accessibility. A prevailing negative perception about public transportation clouded potential solutions. Concerns extended beyond generations, with frustrations spanning both older adults and the younger populace. Accessibility emerged as a recurring concern, casting a shadow over the current transportation framework.

Yet, beyond these challenges emerged a vibrant vision, fueled by the participants' collective imagination. Magnets and stickers on dormant bus stop signs aimed to rekindle connectivity. A call for clearer signage on both buses and bus stops sought to bridge the information gap. The aspiration to cross county lines or restore Park-and-Ride resurfaced. An ecosystem that prioritized environmental sustainability was envisioned, aligning with the preference for public transportation or rideshare options. Weekly routes from specific locations to key destinations garnered support, fostering accessible community connections. Advocacy for senior discounts through the Golden Buckeye Card and education campaigns found a voice. Color-coordinated routes, posted schedules, and numbered bus stops emerged as cornerstones for clarity. Active community involvement and heightened visibility were deemed vital. Integrating transportation into employee benefits gained traction. A shared desire for accessible vehicles servicing schools, employers, libraries, hospitals, and other essential points was palpable.

Amid the fruitful discussions, an undertone of optimism prevailed. The group contemplated embarking on a "field trip" ride-along, promising firsthand insights. Surveys and Transportation Guides further illuminated the path ahead.

The Memory Café gathering wasn't just a meeting—it was a juncture in Lorain County's transportation narrative. With diverse voices harmonizing, this convergence painted a portrait of a community united in its pursuit of a more accessible, integrated, and people-centered transportation network. As conversations gradually receded, a symphony of ideas lingered—a shared narrative crafting a clearer trajectory for Lorain County's transportation future.

FOCUS GROUP	LMHA International Plaza	May 15, 2023	9-10am/Noon-1pm/3:30-4:30pm
Total Attendance:	9	Surveys:	7
Residents:	7	Guides:	5
Elderly:	4		
Disabled:	4		

**\*\*Unveiling Lorain County's Transportation Realities: Insights from LMHA International Plaza\*\***

Nestled within Lorain County, LMHA International Plaza set the stage for a series of meetings in May 2023, where a diverse group of residents convened to shed light on the intricate challenges they face in their quest for accessible transportation. Against the backdrop of a sunny day, participants shared their stories, offering a poignant glimpse into the real-life impact of existing transportation systems.

In attendance were nine individuals, primarily elderly residents with varying mobility needs. This group included seven residents, comprising both elderly and disabled members, representing a cross-section of Lorain County's community. The discussions spanned three sessions, each held at different times of the day, unveiling distinct facets of the county's transportation landscape.

Through these conversations, participants revealed the daily struggles they encounter while navigating the current transportation systems. These narratives highlighted the reliance on friends and family for rides to essential places, often accompanied by compensation. Despite the partnership between Pegasus Transit and LMHA, the awareness of this service remained surprisingly low among attendees. Ambiguity surrounded Lorain County Transit (LCT) routes, with passengers uncertain about bus stops and schedules. Pedestrians, including those with mobility challenges, navigated busy roads, showcasing the lack of accessible infrastructure. Instances of passengers stranded due to delayed on-demand rides underscored the vulnerability of those with limited transportation options, sometimes leading to resorting to dialing 911 for help.

The costliness of services like Uber and Lyft emerged as a concern for residents with constrained resources. These sentiments were interwoven with a broader frustration, mirroring socioeconomic disparities within the county. Attendees connected the absence of reliable bus services with economic hardships, pointing to job losses due to transportation barriers. The reputation of LCT as "unreliable" persisted, with buses sporadically passing by without clear destinations. Long walks to access essentials and a lack of dispatcher familiarity with routes further compounded transportation challenges.

Amidst these hurdles, a glimmer of hope emerged as participants proposed education and awareness as a bridge between the community and available transportation options. The idea of organizing a training day to familiarize themselves with LCT and Pegasus services was put forth, aiming to alleviate some transportation burdens.

The day's dialogues painted a vivid picture, unveiling the complex tapestry of Lorain County's transportation landscape. Surveys and Transportation Guides served as essential tools, capturing these insights and offering the Ohio Department of Transportation a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of residents grappling with transportation challenges. Through these stories, a more comprehensive understanding of the community's needs and aspirations unfolded, guiding potential improvements in Lorain County's transportation ecosystem.

FOCUS GROUP	Oberlin JFO LMHA	May 16, 2023	9-10am/Noon-1pm/3:30-4:30pm
Total Attendance:	7		Surveys: 7
Residents:	4		Guides: 2
LMHA Employee:	1		
Disabled:	3		
Senior:	4		

**\*\*Journeying Through Lorain County: Residents Advocate for Better Transportation\*\***

In the heart of Lorain County, a group of determined residents, predominantly seniors and individuals with mobility challenges, gathered at Oberlin JFO LMHA on a sunny day in May 2023. The clock struck nine, marking the beginning of a series of discussions that would reveal the community's deep-seated concerns about the current state of transportation.

Among those assembled were seven individuals, including four residents, three of whom were seniors, and three who identified as disabled. Despite their unique backgrounds, their experiences navigating Lorain County's transportation systems brought them together. Each session, held at 9 AM, Noon, and 3:30 PM, began with introductions, setting the stage for heartfelt dialogues.

Participants wasted no time in sharing their candid experiences with the Oberlin Connector and other on-demand services.

A common thread emerged—many residents felt compelled to compensate family or friends for rides, as their reliance on loved ones weighed heavily on them. Trips to Walmart via the LCT Oberlin Connector were marred by unpredictability. Rides were frequently bumped for medical appointments, and dispatchers changed pick-up times, leaving little room for efficient shopping. A mere five-minute delay at the store could result in passengers being stranded. Memories of the past resurfaced, highlighting the success of the once-frequent fixed routes. A concern for the efficiency of large buses, often seen with just one passenger, prompted discussions about the potential benefits of smaller, wheelchair-accessible vehicles. The desire for group bus trips beyond Oberlin was palpable, a longing for community outings. The unpredictability of the Oberlin Connector discouraged its use, leaving residents frustrated. The

requirement for in-person interviews in Lorain for Section 8 benefits left residents with no viable means of transportation. A connection to Cleveland emerged as a common need, vital for healthcare, work, education, and more. Relying on costly Uber rides was simply unsustainable. Some residents had resigned themselves to the impossibility of reaching Cleveland, given the lack of transportation options. Walkable destinations often became hazardous due to traffic. The timing of evening buses didn't align with regular business hours, causing inconvenience. Temp agencies were seen as having a deep understanding of workforce transportation challenges. Several residents minced no words, expressing their frustration with the existing bus system. Late pick-ups, missed appointments, and unreliable wait times plagued the experiences of many. Predictable fixed routes and increased payments for more reliable services were seen as potential solutions. Changes in insurance complicated NEMT ride arrangements. Unpleasant encounters with drivers, characterized by loud music and rudeness, left passengers stranded. A FAA worker relied on the Oberlin Connector for late-night shifts. The prospect of using an app was welcomed, provided there was training available. Avon Commons was a frequent destination for those fortunate enough to secure a ride from family. Residents commended the effectiveness of Provide-A-Ride, occasionally supplemented by Uber or Lyft. For some, the dream of reliable transportation, even at a higher cost, seemed "wonderful." Doctor appointments were postponed due to transportation issues. Participants emphasized that independence hinged on access to transportation. Technological limitations in scheduling posed scheduling problems. A rider had to be on the driver's "manifest" to secure a ride, leaving those not on the list stranded. The stress of using the bus system loomed large, making the journey itself an ordeal. Independence, pride, dignity, and basic needs were intricately tied to access to transportation. The Oberlin Connector often translated to losing an entire day, with little respect for riders' time.

Throughout the discussions, residents painted a vivid picture of their struggles with the Oberlin Connector and on-demand services, describing how these challenges impacted their daily lives and their sense of being discriminated against. Sharon Pearson, moved by their stories, reached out to Oberlin City Manager and Kendal at Oberlin in search of solutions. Surveys and guides were distributed, capturing the community's resounding call for improved transportation services in Lorain County.

FOCUS GROUP Elyria Harr Plaza LMHA May 18, 2023 9-10am/Noon-1pm/3:30-4:30pm

Total Attendance:	6
Residents:	4
Disabled:	1
Surveys:	4
Guides:	4

**\*\*Bridging the Gap: Residents of Lorain County Weigh In on Transportation\*\***

In the heart of Lorain County, at Elyria Harr Plaza LMHA, a group of residents came together on a spring morning in May 2023. Their mission? To discuss and share their experiences with the county's transportation systems. Introductions were made at each of the three scheduled meetings, at 9 AM, Noon, and 3:30 PM, setting the stage for heartfelt and insightful conversations.

Despite the small gathering of six attendees, the impact of their words resonated deeply. Among the participants were four residents, one of whom identified as disabled. Their stories painted a vivid picture of their daily struggles and the challenges they faced when it came to transportation.

One resident confessed, "I thought they didn't have fixed route buses anymore." For others, the journey to Cleveland, even for basic necessities, proved arduous. One resident had a car but hesitated to use the highway and frequently dealt with the hassles of vehicle maintenance.

Medical appointments, particularly those involving multiple tests and visits to different doctors across Cleveland, posed logistical nightmares. Scheduling them all was akin to solving a complex puzzle.

A common theme emerged—many residents relied on friends and acquaintances for rides, often paying them from their own pockets. Hospital discharges were another point of concern, as arranging transportation during those vulnerable moments wasn't always straightforward.

Residents lamented the lack of transportation options within Elyria itself. "Can get from Cleveland to Geneva on the Lake but not around Elyria," one remarked. Street lighting was a concern, making walking perilous, especially in areas devoid of sidewalks. Despite reaching out to the mayor about this issue, no response had been received.

Transportation emerged as a major source of stress. Residents found it challenging to secure rides, particularly through rideshare services like Lyft. Scheduling mishaps, missed appointments, and encounters with unsympathetic dispatchers soured their experiences.

Some recalled a time when Lorain County Transit (LCT) was reliable and affordable, a service used by many. However, they noted a significant decline in service quality, coinciding with layoffs and service interruptions.

The limited hours of operation left many unable to work or seek appointments in Cleveland. The absence of a county transfer point further hindered their mobility. Relying on costly alternatives became the only option.

The experiences with services like Provide A Ride were mixed. While some residents praised the service for getting them to appointments on time, others bemoaned long waits for pick-ups.

Residents who relied on friends and acquaintances for rides showcased the lengths to which they would go for transportation. One paid \$100 a week for rides to work, while another embarked on a daily long walk to their workplace.

For those who cycled or walked year-round, un-plowed sidewalks were a significant concern. The absence of bus shelters added to their woes.



The sentiment regarding public transportation was mixed. One resident firmly stated, "I will never go back on the bus," while another expressed frustration about the bus route not reaching their parent's nursing home.

Overall, the conversation flowed, and residents left the meeting with a clearer understanding of LCT fixed routes and the bi-weekly Pegasus transportation schedule. Surveys and guides were distributed, capturing the essence of their experiences and the urgent need for improved transportation options in Lorain County. The residents' voices were a testament to the challenges they face, illuminating the path toward a more accessible and inclusive transportation system.

FOCUS GROUP Continuation of Care Meeting May 19, 2023 10am-Noon

**\*\*Bridging Gaps and Finding Solutions: Lorain County's Transit Dilemma\*\***

In the heart of Lorain County, a meeting held on a spring morning in May 2023 brought together key representatives from various organizations. The focus was on Mobility Management and their efforts to gather valuable insights into the county's transportation landscape. The attendees, leaders within their respective organizations, were poised to share their experiences and concerns regarding transportation for their clients.

As the meeting began, one concern quickly surfaced – access to essential resources. "West Side Lorain is a food desert. There is no walkable food pantry, and these families are relying on Big Lots or dollar stores for all of their needs," one participant remarked. The lack of accessible food options painted a stark picture of the challenges faced by many residents, particularly those in underserved areas.

The discussion then shifted to employment opportunities. An inspiring story emerged: a client had secured a job starting at 5 AM, but transportation was a significant hurdle. The cost of a one-way Lyft trip amounted to a staggering \$30. In response, the agency stepped in, covering a \$400 transportation bill to ensure the individual could get to work. This remarkable example highlighted the critical role transportation plays in employment opportunities and economic stability.

Uncertainty lingered around discounted transportation options for clients and changes in services like CareSource no longer offering disability appointments through their transportation plan. The lack of information and clear communication channels posed a challenge for both organizations and clients.

Another issue that surfaced was the reliance on mobile phones for scheduling transportation. Clients without phones struggled to access services, despite the willingness of organizations to assist if they knew who to contact. The digital divide presented a significant barrier to transportation access.

The conversation also delved into the difficulties clients faced when seeking medical care outside the county, particularly in Cleveland. Exhausting their MCP (Medicaid Managed Care Plan) rides left them without options for essential out-of-county medical appointments. The limitations on weekend rides further compounded the challenges, making it difficult to accommodate employment or social service appointments.

Amidst these challenges, a heartwarming revelation emerged – the dedication of organizational employees to their clients' well-being. Some had personally stepped up, providing rides to individuals with no other means of transportation. Their commitment underscored the vital role that human compassion plays in filling the gaps left by inadequate transit systems.

As the meeting progressed, the uncertainty surrounding the ever-changing landscape of MCPs was palpable. Organizations grappled with how to stay updated on transportation benefits and effectively communicate these changes to their clients.

The gathering of organizational leaders shed light on the complexities of Lorain County's transportation system. While challenges abound, their dedication to finding solutions and advocating for improved services was undeniable. The meeting was not merely a discussion; it was a call to action. It reinforced the critical need for accessible, reliable, and affordable transportation in Lorain County, where every journey begins with the promise of a better tomorrow.

FOCUS GROUP	LPLS Columbia Branch Knitters Group	May 25, 2023	1-2pm
Total Attendance:	15		
Guides:	15		
Surveys:	15		
Brochures:	5		

**\*\*Connecting the Threads: Lorain County's Transit Reflections\*\***

On a bright May afternoon in 2023, the cozy confines of the LPLS Columbia Branch played host to a gathering of remarkable women, the Knitters Group, a close-knit community with a common thread – they all hailed from the wiser side of 55 and had been the drivers of their own lives, quite literally, as car owners. With an air of wisdom and experience, they shared their reflections on the transportation landscape in Lorain County.

Their stories unveiled a tapestry of experiences with transit systems in both Lorain and neighboring Cuyahoga County. One common sentiment echoed throughout the room: RTA, Cleveland's Regional Transit Authority, was a commendable service. They praised its user-friendly website, which made it easy to determine the best routes, and its efficiency as an alternative to the hassle of parking in the city. However, they did acknowledge that some routes seemed to meander unnecessarily, turning what should be a 15-minute drive into a two-hour bus odyssey.

For airport trips, these women turned to the convenience of ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft. They found it a breeze to schedule rides to and from the airport, ensuring a hassle-free start and end to their travels.

The conversation took a more local turn when Southwest General Hospital's transportation service was brought up. Many lauded its door-to-door pickup service, which ensured timely arrivals for

appointments. However, a shadow had fallen over this service post-Covid. It had become busier, leading to longer waiting times for rides home after appointments, causing some inconvenience to patients.

One poignant tale emerged about an elderly friend whose driving privileges were revoked by a doctor. She had been left in the lurch without clear guidance on alternative transportation options. It was a stark reminder that access to such information is essential, especially for seniors facing mobility challenges.

Wheelchair-bound individuals faced a unique set of challenges. The lack of wheelchair-accessible vehicles among friends and family limited their opportunities for rides, highlighting the need for more accessible transportation options.

A tale of economic hardship emerged as one individual shared her experience with on-demand transportation for physical therapy. The cost, at \$9 each way, was simply unaffordable for frequent trips, leading her to delay necessary surgery. It was a poignant reminder that transportation costs can have a direct impact on health decisions.

In a world increasingly driven by apps and digital solutions, the older generation in the room emphasized the importance of human contact. They appreciated the option to speak with a real person to gather transportation information. While they were open to using apps, they urged the preservation of phone reservations for those who preferred that method.

A common sentiment arose concerning communication channels. The consensus was that newspapers were no longer an effective means of reaching seniors. Awareness campaigns needed more modern approaches, considering that many missed crucial information buried in the pages of the Rural-Urban newspaper.

In a bid to mobilize change, the group discussed launching a letter-writing campaign to trustees and other officials. Their aim was to encourage greater participation in Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings and other transportation planning activities. They recognized that collective action was key to driving improvements.

The meeting concluded on a hopeful note. The Knitters Group understood the value of community support, acknowledging that church groups often stepped in to provide temporary and emergency transportation when needed. They also praised local libraries as hubs of valuable resources, suggesting the possibility of organizing training classes there.

As the women bid each other farewell, a profound realization lingered in the air: the need for accessible and reliable transportation wasn't just about mobility; it was about preserving independence and the zest for life. Lorain County had heard their voices, and their stories would continue to thread the fabric of change in its transit systems.

FOCUS GROUP: Columbia Branch, Senior Care Authority Presentation: 7 June 2023 10:30-11:30am

Total Attendance: 10

Lorain County Residents:6

Cuy. County Residents: 1  
60+ years old: 7

### **\*\*Connecting the Dots: Navigating Transportation in Lorain County\*\***

The sun shone brightly on a mid-June morning as a group of seasoned individuals gathered at the Columbia Branch for a presentation by the Senior Care Authority. The topic of the day was "Safe Driving Tips," but as the discussion unfolded, it revealed a deeper concern - the challenges of getting around as one grows older in Lorain County.

In a room filled with ten attentive attendees, most of whom were over 60 years old, the conversation naturally gravitated towards the hurdles they faced in their daily lives. Small print on signs, the mysteries of school zones, and the lack of public transportation options were among their shared frustrations.

Lorain County, like many places, presented unique challenges for its senior residents. Walking or biking wasn't always a viable option, especially with the often-unpredictable Ohio weather. Sidewalk care was another issue, with construction sites posing as obstacles for those with limited mobility.

One key theme emerged from the discussion - the absence of accessible public transportation. These residents yearned for a more dependable means of getting around, one that would allow them to maintain their independence as they grew older.

As the conversation shifted towards planning for their future transportation needs, a collective vision began to take shape. Affordability was paramount, as many were living on fixed incomes. Accessibility for mobility aids, such as wheelchairs and walkers, was a non-negotiable requirement. They longed for seating areas at transportation stops, acknowledging that standing for extended periods had become more challenging.

The topic of technology also surfaced, highlighting the generational gap. While some were tech-savvy, others struggled with memory or dexterity issues that made navigating modern transportation apps and services a daunting task.

The group emphasized the importance of getting to the local library, where valuable resources and information awaited. Libraries, they noted, served as community hubs, offering more than just books.

In closing, the discussion veered towards a lighter note - bus tours. The attendees were keen on organized bus trips that would allow them to explore their county and beyond, fostering a sense of adventure and community.

As the meeting wrapped up, it was evident that these Lorain County residents were eager for change. They sought a transportation system that catered to their unique needs, allowing them to age gracefully while maintaining their independence. Their voices had been heard, and their vision for the future of transportation in the county was clear. It was now up to the community to heed their call and pave the way for a more inclusive and accessible transportation system.

FOCUS GROUP: Mercy / Public Health Pastors 20 June 2023 10-10:45am

Total Attendance: 7

**\*\*Uniting Hearts and Resources: A Call for Enhanced Transportation in Lorain County\*\***

On a warm June morning, a diverse group of individuals gathered to discuss a matter that touched the very heart of their community. Pastors, public health partners, and residents convened, driven by a shared commitment to enhance public health awareness and access to resources in Lorain County.

As the conversation unfolded, it became apparent that their collective goal was to bridge the gap between vital public health services and the community they served. They recognized that without widespread knowledge of these programs, meaningful changes would remain elusive.

With pride in their voices, they celebrated Lorain County's remarkable achievements. The community had excelled in connecting its residents to essential public health services, particularly maternal health programs and initiatives to reduce infant mortality. This recognition fueled their determination to further improve the lives of their fellow citizens.

However, the group couldn't ignore a glaring issue - transportation. It was a common barrier faced by many in the community, a roadblock to accessing crucial services.

One concern raised was the lack of local transportation services for individuals leaving the county jail. For these individuals, the transition back into the community was marred by the absence of reliable transportation options.

The conversation then shifted to the county's existing transit system. While it offered a lifeline to many, navigating it was far from easy. The system's complexity presented a formidable challenge, especially for those with low reading levels or other impairments. Accessing transportation became a maze, and it was often the vulnerable who found themselves lost within it.

Participants shared stories of clients waiting for hours for Provide A Ride, a lifeline for many. New mothers, in particular, faced an arduous task of preparing for an entire day's journey when seeking essential healthcare services.

Yet, an issue discussed with equal concern was the use of transportation as an excuse for missed appointments. While it was undoubtedly a barrier, the group acknowledged that it wasn't always the root cause. The complexity of the transit system often led to misunderstandings and scheduling mishaps.

To address these challenges, a survey was designed to gather crucial insights. The discussion was recorded, ensuring that the voices and concerns of the community were not only heard but also shared widely.

As the meeting drew to a close, it was clear that this group was on a mission. They envisioned a Lorain County where every resident, regardless of their circumstances, had easy access to essential public health services. Transportation, they agreed, was the key to unlocking this vision.

United by their faith, their commitment to public health, and their love for their community, these individuals left the meeting inspired and determined. They carried with them the stories, concerns, and hopes of Lorain County's residents, ready to advocate for a more accessible and inclusive transportation system.