

Chapter 5:

Groups with Mobility Issues

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Lower Income and Poverty

Elderly and Aging Population

People with Disabilities

Groups with Mobility Issues

While the costs of transportation can be a challenge for everyone, there are three groups in the community that have particular difficulty with their mobility. These include people with incomes near or below the poverty line, those with health issues, and people with cognitive or physical disabilities. For these members of the community, transportation can represent a significant obstacle that may prevent them from working or making important trips, such as to the doctor or basic errands.

Lower Income and Poverty

Household income is a major indicator of where and how people live. In terms of transportation, income is closely correlated with someone's ability to make daily trips, since most modes of travel require money either directly or indirectly. This is evident in rural areas, where most residents naturally depend on their private vehicles to get around the community. While this reliance is common, regularly driving can equate to substantial costs, particularly with fluctuating gas prices. For those in poverty or with lower incomes, these costs can represent a major portion of their household budgets.

In Louisa County, the average commute is unusually long, 36 minutes. This is the highest figure in the Charlottesville region. The 2006 American Community Survey indicated that Louisa County's average commute time was 29% above the national average. A sizable portion of commuters (19 percent) have journeys to work in excess of an hour. The Census Bureau places Louisa County in the top 2% of all counties, ranking it as having the 40th longest average commute in the nation. This makes cost of driving higher for County residents. Considering an average commute, the annual cost for driving would be several thousands of dollars. Assuming commute distances of 30 miles and gasoline prices of \$2.50 per gallon, driving an average car may have an annual cost of \$12,000 for an individual, which includes all gas and maintenance costs. This represents a considerable portion of most household incomes and can be particularly difficult for those under the poverty line. Also, individuals with lower incomes are less likely to own a car, restricting them to few transportation options in a rural area.



Transportation is an essential need for everyone, including those with limited financial resources, the elderly and those with physical/cognitive disabilities. Recognizing that these groups are typically felt out of the planning process, Virginia's State Code requires that local long range plans consider the needs of *"the elderly and persons with disabilities."*

Transportation and Housing Alliance (THA):

The THA provided funding, through the Virginia Department of People with Disabilities, to complete the research on this section. That grant was intended to help integrate the needs of those with limited mobility into this Transportation Plan.

Defining Poverty:

The U.S. Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to detect who is poor. If the total income for a family or unrelated individual falls below the relevant poverty threshold, then the family or unrelated individual is classified as being "below the poverty level."

Poverty Rate by Jurisdiction, Charlottesville Region, 1990 and 2000						
	Charlottesville	Nelson	Louisa	Albemarle	Greene	Fluvanna
1990	23.7%	15.2%	12.2%	7.6%	12.3%	10.5%
2000	25.9%	12.1%	10.2%	6.7%	6.6%	5.9%

Source: US Census

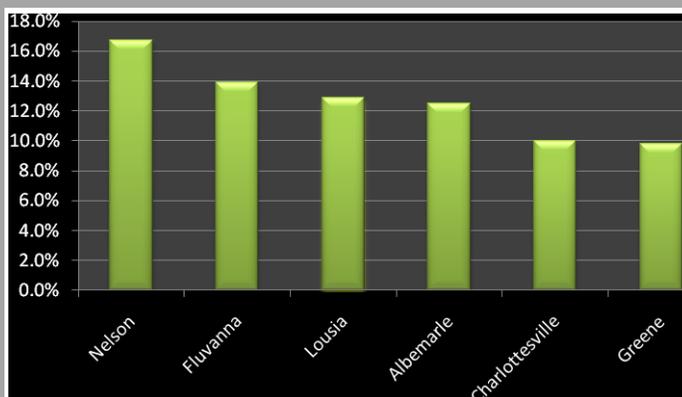
Compared to the Charlottesville region, Louisa County has the third highest percentage of those in the poverty category, as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau. When considering only counties, Louisa has the second highest percentage, with about 10 percent of individuals identified as being under the poverty line. The 2010 Census will provide further information on these trends and identify the County’s current figures, as compared to the other jurisdictions in the region.

Elderly and Aging Population

Those defined as elderly, aged 65 or greater, make up a notable portion, about 13 percent, of Louisa County’s total population. This group is increasingly important as the County’s population continues to age and the demand to meet their needs grows. Many people in this age group remain active and play vital roles in our communities. With modern medicine and greater education on fitness, today’s elderly are sustaining their health and quality of life as they age. At the same time, those that are elderly typically have an increased chance of developing certain health problems and/or disabilities. The elderly usually require greater public services and have more limitations with mobility.

In Louisa County, approximately 13 percent of all residents are defined as elderly. Compared with the Charlottesville metro area, Louisa County has the third highest percentage, behind Nelson and Fluvanna Counties. Looking at Census Block Data, it appears that the elderly population is evenly distributed throughout the County, aside from some minor concentrations that are scattered about the area.

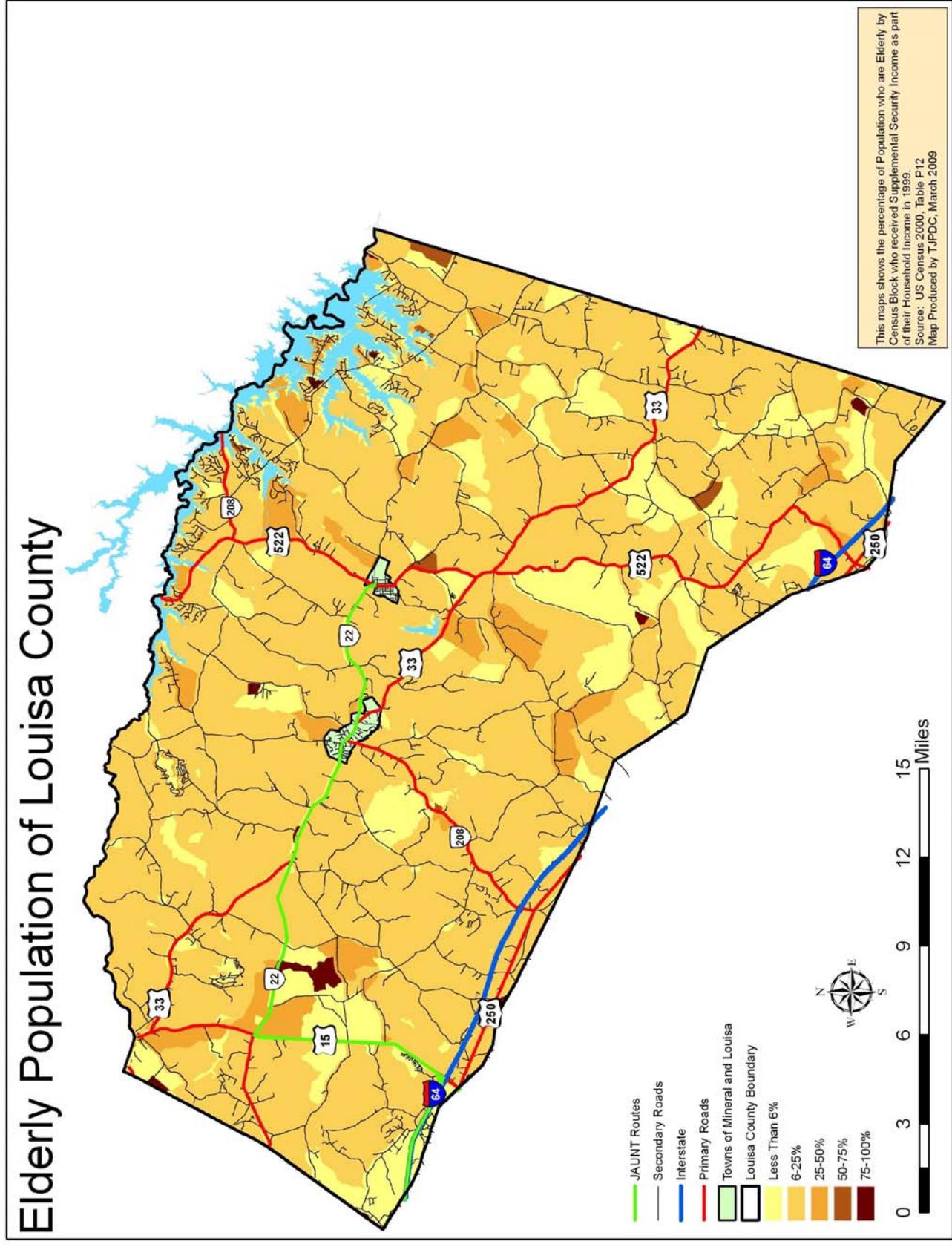
This distribution causes difficulties with meeting the transportation needs of the County’s aging population. If these individuals begin having difficulties with their health or mobility, then they may have to make decisions about where to live. These elderly citizens may need to move into areas with more transportation options and accessibility, while still maintaining affordable living. Many communities set a goal of “aging in place”, where people can remain in their homes, neighborhoods or communities as they grow older. Since the County’s aging population is scattered across the area, resources and services would also be spread out to meet these current or future needs. This presents financial and logistical obstacles that make these efforts difficult or infeasible in some cases. The County and service providers have limited resources, which can be more efficiently managed if they focused on defined areas.



Percentage of Elderly

This chart illustrates the percentage of elderly as compared to the total population, per locality. In 2000, 13 percent of all Louisa County residents were classified as elderly.

Source: U.S. Census



People with Disabilities

There are several challenges to meeting the transportation needs of those with disabilities, which can include mental, physical and sensory disabilities. Operating personal vehicles can be difficult for many with these limitations, depending on the severity. In rural areas, such as Louisa County, personal automobiles are the dominate mode of transportation, as demonstrated with the previous data, leaving many with limited options for traveling around the community. Within the Charlottesville region, Louisa County has a relatively high percentage of people with disabilities. Compared with the other five jurisdictions in the Planning District, Louisa ranks second, with about 37 percent, in this category. This figure includes all disabilities, ages five and older, accounting for over one-third of the County’s total population. A portion of this percentage is attributed to Louisa County’s elderly population, which makes up a significant part of the County’s population. With an aging population, the percentage of people with disabilities may increase over time.

Side Bar

The U.S. Census Bureau categorizes a person as disabled if any of the following conditions hold:

1. They were five years old and over and reported a long-lasting sensory, physical, mental or self-care disability;
2. They were 16 years old and over and reported difficulty going outside the home because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting six months or more; or
3. They were 16 to 64 years old and reported difficulty working at a job or business because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition lasting six months or more.

When focusing on adults, ages 16 to 64, Louisa County still shows a large portion of its population with disabilities. Once again, Louisa has the second highest percent in the region, when compared with the other five jurisdictions in the Planning District. Nearly one quarter of all County residents fall under this category.

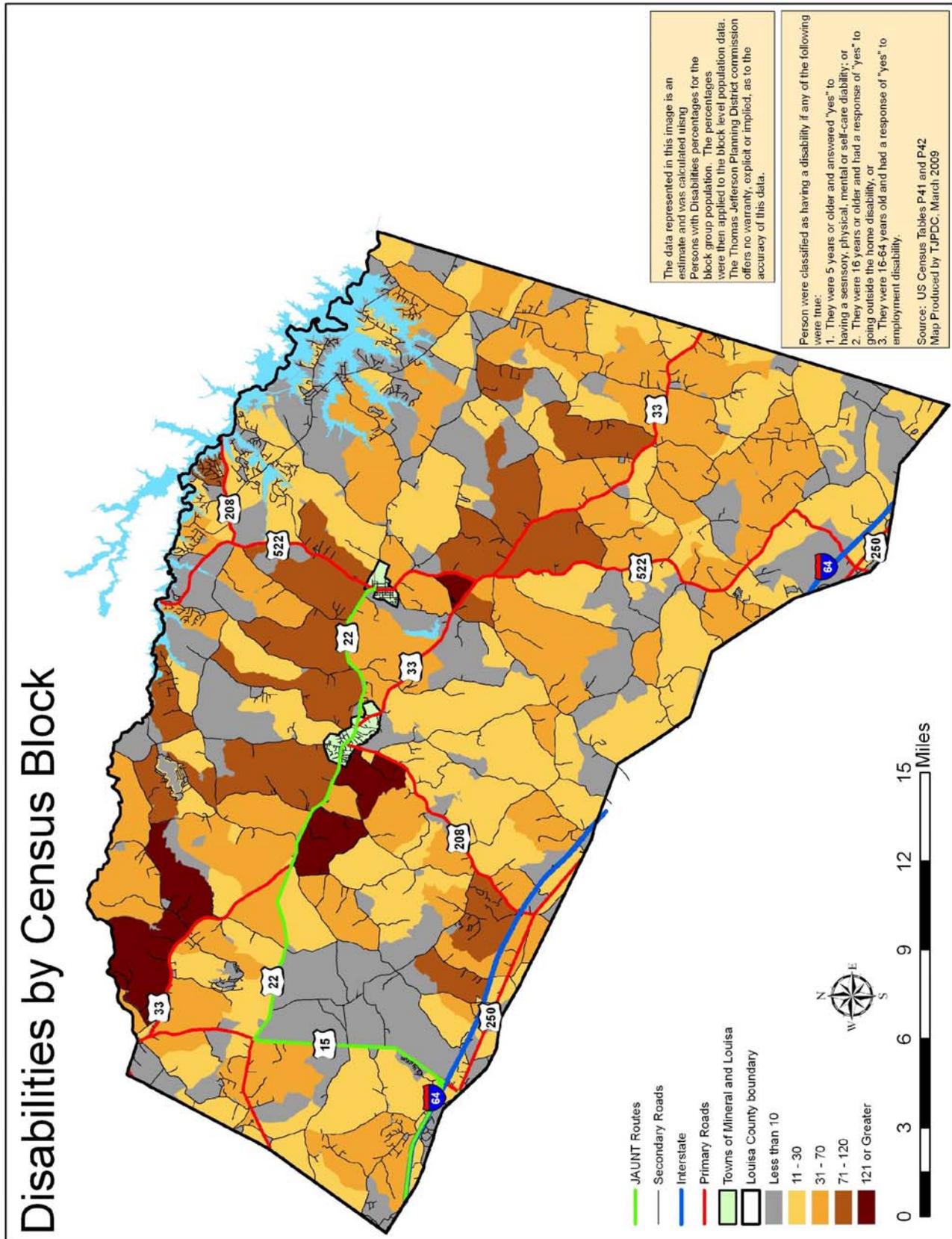
Considering Census Block data, there appears to be concentrations of people with disabilities in the County. The largest groups are along Routes 33 and 22, in the central part of the County. There is also a higher concentration in the Gordonsville area. This general pattern indicates that many of those with disabilities are located around the towns of Mineral, Louisa and Gordonsville. There are advantages to this distribution, since the towns typically have pedestrian facilities, amenities and services that benefit these individuals and help meet their needs. The towns have densities that allow for shorter trips that are pedestrian friendly or accessible for people in wheelchairs or those with other limitations. With these concentrations, special transportation services are more feasible, taking these residents into Charlottesville or other central areas for commutes and other trips.

Persons with Disabilities by Jurisdiction, Charlottesville Region, 2000						
	Nelson	Louisa	Greene	Fluvanna	Charlottesville	Albemarle
Persons with Disabilities	6,033	9,465	4,099	4,960	10,117	16,680
% of Total Persons	42%	37%	27%	25%	25%	21%

Source: 2000 Census

Persons Ages 16 to 64 with Disabilities by Jurisdiction, 2000						
	Nelson	Louisa	Greene	Fluvanna	Charlottesville	Albemarle
Ages 16 to 64	3,573	6,229	2,897	3,170	6,489	10,111
% of Total Persons	25%	24%	19%	16%	16%	13%

Source: 2000 Census



Addressing Special Transportation Needs in Louisa

Louisa County’s Transportation Plan attempts to address these needs in several different ways. First, there are recommendations for expanding pedestrian and bike facilities, which provide additional options for those that are unable to drive. Second, the plan covers the rural transit services that are provided by JAUNT, which serves as viable means of transportation for those with limited resources or mobility. The plan also addresses carpooling as a significant alternative means of travel for people without cars of their own. Third, the plan makes a stronger link between transportation and land use, providing the roadways and infrastructure that encourages a greater mixture of uses in the growth areas and that helps foster concentrations of businesses and services. These centers will be located closer to Louisa residents that have limited mobility, as compared to the employment or services centers in the surrounding cities. The plan also outlines design possibilities that will make these developments more accessible to alternative modes of travel, such as walking, biking and rural transit. Refer to other sections of the plan for discussion on these items, particularly the recommendations of chapter 7.