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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

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Chapter Five
Public Involvement

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five presents the results of several approaches to obtaining public input throughout the STEP process. Included in this chapter is information about community transportation needs and issues identified through the following public involvement activities: a series of in-depth interviews with community leaders throughout Sarasota County; analysis of a survey of agencies and organizations providing a variety of services for residents and visitors in Sarasota County; discussion groups held with representatives of faith-based organizations in Sarasota County that provide transportation assistance, representatives from youth group organizations and individuals representing the transportation disadvantaged population in Sarasota County; and South County public workshops held in the City of North Port and the Englewood community.

INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS

An important part of preparing any transportation planning document is identifying the opinions and perceptions of local officials, community leaders, and the general public. The community’s view of community needs and the public transportation system provides insight in determining whether the goals and performance of the public transportation system match residents’ expectations of the system. In addition, the manner in which public transportation is viewed by local officials can significantly influence the priority that is given to public transit and other related transportation issues.

Interviews with key local officials and community leaders are seen as an essential component to the transportation development planning process, since such persons are usually responsible for policy formulation and funding allocation. The S.T.E.P. Advisory Committee, in conjunction with CUTR, compiled a list of community leaders to interview about existing and future community transportation needs and resources in Sarasota County. CUTR conducted a total of 23 interviews with community leaders representing Sarasota County, each of the municipalities and major communities, as well as the business and social service communities. Table 5-1 lists the community leaders who participated in the interview process and the constituency each represents in the community.

This section summarizes the results of the interviews, during which the community leaders’ impressions of the current public transportation system, as well as thoughts regarding the system’s future were discussed. The following synopsis is organized under three topics:
perception of existing transportation resources and needs, improvements needed in the existing system, and policy issues related to transportation needs. A copy of the outline of questions used in the interviews is contained in Appendix O.
Table 5-1
Community Leaders Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Representing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner Robert Anderson</td>
<td>Sarasota County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner Mollie Cardamone</td>
<td>City of Sarasota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Cole</td>
<td>Englewood Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor Jerome Dupree</td>
<td>City of Sarasota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councilman David Farley</td>
<td>City of Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol Gadway</td>
<td>Manasota Goodwill Industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellery Girard</td>
<td>Sarasota County School Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner Roy Hall</td>
<td>City of North Port</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner Al Hogle</td>
<td>City of Sarasota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Hunt</td>
<td>City Manager, City of Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Kaskey</td>
<td>City Manager, City of North Port</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David May</td>
<td>Sarasota Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner David Mills</td>
<td>Sarasota-Manatee MPO, Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner Nora Patterson</td>
<td>City of Sarasota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner Raymond Pilon</td>
<td>Sarasota County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner Gene Pilot</td>
<td>City of Sarasota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce St. Denis</td>
<td>Town Manager, Town of Longboat Key</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Sollenberger</td>
<td>City Manager, City of Sarasota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner Shannon Staub</td>
<td>Sarasota County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Tamberrino</td>
<td>Committee for Economic Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra Terry</td>
<td>Laurel Civic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner Greg Young</td>
<td>Sarasota-Bradenton Airport Authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perception of Existing Transportation Resources and Needs

Most of the interviewees indicated that awareness of public transportation services (Sarasota County Area Transit - SCAT, Senior Friendship Centers Transportation - SFC) in Sarasota County is quite high. People are aware that the services are available; however, the interviewees did not believe that this awareness had yet translated into significant ridership growth. One local official noted that although there is strong support for SCAT on the policy level, very little support for the bus system is expressed in terms of overall ridership. Ridership was viewed as being particularly low on the three bus routes serving the South County area. These routes provide limited intra-city service and travel on one- to two-hour headways. Community leaders representing the North Port area suggested that riders in that part of the county primarily use the bus system to travel to and from Venice Hospital due to the limited nature of the route serving the North Port community. Conversely, there is much more bus route coverage in the Downtown Sarasota area and, consequently, higher ridership on the routes serving that area.
Quite a bit of discussion with the community leaders centered on potential explanations for the low ridership on the existing bus service. The most frequently cited reason that ridership has remained low was that SCAT bus service is not convenient. Interviewees commented that while on-time performance on the system is very good, bus service is not frequent enough to make it an attractive transportation option in the county. One interviewee noted that it is impossible to travel anywhere in the county on the public transportation system in less than one hour due to the organization of SCAT schedules and routes. In addition, interviewees consistently cited the lack of evening service and Sunday service as further explanation for low ridership. Many community leaders discussed that the current configuration of routes and schedules will prevent use of the public bus service by choice riders (those who have other available transportation alternatives). Several interviewees expressed concern over the number of near empty and empty buses traveling on existing routes. In addition to signaling low ridership, this situation increases the public perception that few people in the county are taking advantage of the services offered by SCAT.

Regarding the characteristics of SCAT riders, all of the community leaders interviewed as part of this study expressed that the existing bus system primarily serves seniors, low-income persons, and youth. Interviewees stated that the persons most likely to use public transportation in Sarasota County are those who cannot afford to own and maintain a personal vehicle and/or those persons who are no longer able to drive due to physical or cognitive limitations. The overriding perception held by community leaders is that SCAT mainly serves those with no other transportation choices. However, several community leaders felt that the needs of this population are being met only minimally by the existing system due to the limited nature of SCAT schedules and routes. For example, a community leader representing the Laurel community reported that many seniors in that community purchase transportation from other community members because they are not able to travel the distance required to reach a SCAT bus stop or cannot accomplish their tasks in a timely manner using SCAT bus service.

The community leaders were also questioned about their perceptions of the door-to-door transportation being provided by SFC to people who cannot use the fixed-route bus system. There was considerably less awareness of this service than of SCAT bus service. However, among those interviewees who were aware of this service, opinions were fairly consistent. All mentioned that the service is absolutely vital to the community. However, a fair amount of concern was expressed regarding the cost and timeliness of the service. Several interviewees stated that a better effort needs to occur to move people who are able to use the fixed-route bus service from the more costly door-to-door service operated by SFC. In addition, while SFC and SCAT were praised for their efforts at greater coordination between the two agencies, several interviewees suggested that more could and should be accomplished in the area of coordination. Therefore, SFC should continue its efforts to bring agencies that provide some transportation for their clients into the coordinated system.
Another area receiving considerable attention throughout the interview process was the area of work transportation. Several interviewees stated that public transportation in Sarasota County has been developed according to politically-based boundaries that are not related to residential and economic development patterns. It was the impression of these community leaders that Sarasota County has at least a two-county workforce that draws heavily from both Sarasota and Manatee Counties (and, to a lesser extent, Charlotte County). However, the bus service in both Sarasota and Manatee counties very minimally crosses the county line. Therefore, it is very unlikely that the existing bus service will be able to efficiently move workers and potential workers from Manatee County into and out of Sarasota County. Several community leaders stated that public transportation in Sarasota County needs to be more in line with employment and work travel patterns. Currently, the system does not work well for workers in either county. Within Sarasota County, there are gaps between where available jobs are located and where potential employees live. This was especially viewed as a concern for entry-level workers in the county. One example provided by several interviewees was the availability of service-oriented and housekeeping jobs in the beach areas that are not served well by public transportation. The lack of evening and Sunday service was considered particularly problematic for these types of jobs.

In addition, the lack of evening hours and Sunday service further decreases the effectiveness of the existing bus system in meeting the needs of the workforce in Sarasota County. One interviewee felt that the business community does not discuss or address public transportation in Sarasota County much because it is assumed that this is a government problem, rather than a community issue. This sentiment was echoed by another interviewee who noted that SCAT is providing the traditional role for a public transportation system, one in which government funding is primarily used to serve hospitals and malls. Several community leaders stated that SCAT should concentrate efforts on accomplishing greater coordination with the transit system in Manatee County (MCAT).

Despite the shortcomings mentioned in relation to SCAT bus service, all of the community leaders interviewed support SCAT and praised the system for its accomplishments given the funding environment within which the system operates. SCAT was praised for its management and responsiveness to community needs. However, it was widely recognized that SCAT is limited in what it can do to meet community needs. The overall perception of transit expressed by community leaders is that it is an important service that is vitally necessary for the poor, seniors, and those without other means of transportation. SCAT is well-perceived throughout the county, particularly among those segments requiring its services the most. Finally, it is widely acknowledged that SCAT is working hard to meet as many needs as possible in the county and to ensure that resources are spent in an efficient manner.
Although every interviewee commended SCAT for its responsiveness to community needs, this was just one of the system's strengths that was mentioned. It is also widely believed that SCAT is a safe, people-oriented transit system that is doing the best it can to serve the county given the current operating environment and the limited financial resources that are available. Most also stated that it is extremely well-managed with a director and staff that are conscientious and well-respected. Also praised were the courteous, professional, well-trained drivers, clean and modern buses, and SCAT's reasonable fare of $.50.

One official's perception of public transportation's role in the community was to “move people and goods in an efficient manner.” Most of the community leaders interviewed believe that SCAT is doing the best it can to fulfill this role. Yet, ridership is still low and is primarily comprised of those persons who are dependent on transit for their mobility needs. As was mentioned previously, a pervasive opinion among the officials is that transit service is not frequent or convenient enough to entice discretionary riders from their personal vehicles. However, most were also quick to agree that, unfortunately, Sarasota County does not currently have the congestion and/or parking problems that might help persuade these persons to forsake their cars for transit.

Most of the community leaders interviewed did not feel that congestion is a serious problem in Sarasota County currently, especially in comparison to larger metropolitan areas such as Tampa. Some discussed particular roads or areas that become congested during peak travel hours on weekdays, but most of the interviewees indicated that the truly burdensome congestion problems occur mostly during specific times of the year. According to many interviewees, congestion increases during “high season” in winter months when many seasonal residents and visitors are traveling throughout the county. However, several interviewees indicated that congestion is now a problem year-round, rather than being restricted to the winter months. Areas singled out as experiencing congestion include US 41 and Business 41, Bee Ridge Road, University Parkway, and the bridges that provide entrance and egress to Venice. In addition, all of the beach areas in the county were mentioned in relation to growing congestion. Unfortunately, most interviewees feel that it will be difficult for public transportation to alleviate congestion problems because buses must also contend with traffic problems and the increasing need for trip chaining. Additionally, most interviewees expressed strongly that it will be very difficult to convince people to give up their personal vehicles and use public transportation services.

As for parking in the county, all of the community leaders indicated that it is not currently a problem. Most of the interviewees stated that there is a perception that parking is difficult in Downtown Sarasota. However, this is more a perceived problem than a true problem. The interviewees stated that this perception exists because people prefer to park in front of their destination, rather than walking a few blocks from their parking space to their final destination.
Interviewees also remarked that the majority of parking in Downtown Sarasota is also free, further indication that parking is not particularly constrained. However, many interviewees also stated that there is some amount of parking congestion in the beach areas of the county, especially during winter months.

Although these are not currently significant problems, most of the community leaders interviewed expect congestion and parking difficulties to worsen as the area continues to experience growth. It was indicated that, presently, much of the growth occurring throughout the county is residential in nature and is occurring in specific geographic areas. The City of North Port is expected to experience the most residential growth in the future, as the area contains 60,000 platted residential lots. The development of this area may result in additional public transportation needs because many of the homes built in this area will be moderately priced. Currently, this area is served by only one bus route every two hours. Venice is another municipality slated for a fair amount of growth in the future. Some light industrial commercial development is also occurring east of I-75. This area of growth is expected to result in some amount of transportation need, in that many entry-level jobs will be created in an area that is not presently served by SCAT bus service. Many of the community leaders interviewed indicated that it will be important to provide some form of transit to serve these new growth areas, especially because it is widely believed that roadway improvements will not provide a long-term solution to growing mobility needs in the county.

One consistent transportation need mentioned by interviewees was the need for more community-based, intra-city transportation service. One option being considered by several municipalities to meet this anticipated need is the transit greenway concept. The type of service being considered by both the City of Venice and the City of North Port would include intra-city tram service to transport people quickly around the immediate community and elevated light rail service to connect municipalities. Various roles were suggested for SCAT in the event that the transit greenway concept is implemented. Each municipality agreed that SCAT should be involved, but the degree and nature of SCAT’s involvement was conceived differently by each interviewee. One possibility mentioned was that SCAT would provide feeder-type service from other areas in the county to the transit greenway system in the City of Venice. This scenario envisions SCAT as primarily a regional connector service feeding community-based transportation systems.

The City of North Port was less definitive in terms of SCAT’s role in providing intra-city transportation. The transportation issue is particularly pressing in this city because a majority of the county’s residential growth is expected to occur in this area, while few opportunities exist to build additional roads because much of the land has already been platted as residential. The City of North Port believes that the existence of intra-city public transportation services will increase the attractiveness of the area for potential residents. Because the City intends to
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construct a community that centers around recreation and livability, transit service is viewed as a necessary amenity that will enhance the community’s image of urban-style living in a rural environment. North Port’s goal for transit is to develop viable transportation alternatives that will encourage people to get out of their personal vehicles and use transit, walk, or bicycle. SCAT’s role in this scenario could be as the provider of intra-city tram service and/or as the regional system connecting the various municipalities and communities within the county.

Unfortunately, in a climate of declining federal operating subsidies, it is going to be increasingly difficult for any transit system, including SCAT, to provide all the service that is wanted and needed in the community. While most of the interviewed community leaders realized that transit cannot be entirely self-supporting, they were also unsure as to what else could be done at the local level in terms of funding. They did not believe there was much of a willingness on the part of the communities within the county to fund additional transit service. Many of the interviewees were aware of the various tax alternatives at their disposal such as gas, property, ad valorem, and sales tax. Although they believe it is necessary to consider all possible funding options, they mostly agreed that the local option gas tax would probably be the most tolerable of the tax choices.

However, nearly all of the interviewees gave little hope of any tax increases being passed in the near term for funding transit whole or in part. One community leader noted that the people who do not need transit service are not likely to vote for additional funding, while those who most need the service are too busy trying to sustain themselves to pay attention to those sorts of political decisions. Another interviewee stated that residents are more likely to vote to increase taxes to pay for arts and cultural activities than social services. As for system-generated revenues, it was mentioned previously that most of those interviewed believe SCAT’s fares are reasonable and should be maintained. Nevertheless, a few also suggested dropping the fare completely in order to increase ridership. Conversely, one interviewee stated that raising the bus fare is probably the best chance that transit in Sarasota County has for increased local funding. These views, unfortunately, do not present a favorable scenario for the future funding of SCAT expansion.

Needed System Improvements

Many of the community leaders interviewed agreed that public transportation in Sarasota County is a social responsibility and a necessity. In addition, most acknowledged that additional transportation needs exist in the county that cannot be met by the existing transit system. A transit system must determine its market, determine the needs of that market, and then provide the service that best meets those needs. Most of the interviewees indicated that SCAT should continue to concentrate on its existing markets for the short-term and make growth to new markets a longer term goal. Most stated that it is most important for SCAT to improve its current service and focus on the needs of its current users (i.e., the transit dependent
population. However, most also expressed the desire for SCAT to become more responsive to workforce transportation needs.

There was considerable discussion among interviewees regarding improvements to the SCAT system that will be needed to produce a viable transportation alternative for workers in the county. Many interviewees felt that the SCAT system needs to do more to get people to jobs in a timely manner. This includes providing more frequent bus service and service that runs later in the evenings and on Sundays. Areas mentioned as having high potential for employment transportation included the beach areas in the county and light industrial manufacturers developing east of I-75. Both areas are currently underserved by public transit in Sarasota County.

Representatives from the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce also stated that the Chamber would like to have more input into fixed-route development. In the future, workforce development must address transportation issues and barriers. Another sentiment expressed was that the business community also needs to be more vocal about their transportation issues and needs. Several community leaders suggested that SCAT explore the potential to establish partnerships with the business community whereby employers partially or fully subsidize transportation service for their employees. The form that these partnerships may take include subscription bus routes to large employment sites, subsidized employee vanpools, employee incentives to participate in carpools, and/or operating assistance for routes that serve employment sites.

Another focus area discussed by many community leaders involved the continued effort to attract the discretionary rider. This was seen as a necessary endeavor in any attempt to bolster ridership, increase fare revenue, and reduce congestion by encouraging people to choose transit rather than their personal vehicle. However, in order to get people out of their cars, the community leaders believe that the public’s perception of and attitude towards public transportation will need to be changed. Several interviewees stated that the public needs to be educated about public transportation. The public needs to be educated about the economic and social benefits of public transit, as well as the true cost of building and maintaining roads. In addition, several community leaders suggested that transit training be targeted to seniors and youth in Sarasota County to teach them how the public transportation system works, how to read and interpret route maps and schedules, and to address issues such as safety and reliability. It is thought that this type of training will result in the public feeling much more comfortable about using the existing bus service.

Many suggestions were offered by interviewees regarding general system improvements that should be considered by SCAT. The suggestions received included making service more convenient, shortening overall travel times, increasing the frequency of service, increasing
service hours and days of service, and improving the quality of bus stops, including the provision of passenger amenities such as benches and shelters. Several interviewees also suggested the exploration of different forms of service delivery in the county. A few community leaders suggested the development of express routes from the North Port, Venice, and Englewood communities to business and manufacturing areas in the county. In addition, a couple of interviewees recommended putting more effort into the commuter assistance program and encouraging greater use of carpools and vanpools, as well as the establishment of additional park-and-ride lots for commuters. Several interviewees also recommended the implementation of a trolley circulator system serving Downtown Sarasota and exploring the potential for jitney services in the Downtown Sarasota area. Finally, one interviewee suggested that consideration be given to air travel using helicopter service to move people throughout the county and the exploration of water travel as a mode of public transportation using ferries and motorboats to transport people along the many waterways located throughout the county.

Most interviewees stated that actually getting to a SCAT bus stop is problematic for riders who do not reside in the Downtown Sarasota area, which is served by a majority of the SCAT bus routes. According to interviewees, the bus routes serving other areas in the county are limited and do not travel throughout residential areas. In many cases, potential riders would need to travel many blocks just to access a SCAT bus stop. Many of the interviewees felt that this is one reason that ridership outside of the Downtown Sarasota area is low. Therefore, many community leaders recommend developing services that provide more localized, community-based transportation options. These services could be developed to provide more convenient service to destinations within the community with stops near and within residential areas, while also providing feeder service to existing SCAT bus routes. This type of service is most needed within South County communities such as North Port, Laurel, and Englewood. One interviewee indicated that SCAT should also explore the possibility of providing on-demand community bus service. Many of the community leaders also stated that these services should be based on operational and financial partnerships between the County (SCAT) and local municipalities. Because of the negative perception that partially filled buses engender, several of the community leaders also indicated that SCAT may want consider smaller vehicles than the traditional fixed-route vehicles for service, especially for community-based services.

As discussed previously, improving regional connectivity and service was also a recommendation of many of the interviewees. Most of the community leaders discussed the need to provide better inter-county transit service in Manatee and Charlotte counties. In a related issue, two interviewees recommended the creation of a regional transit authority (RTA) that would include, at a minimum, Sarasota, Manatee, and possibly Charlotte counties. These interviewees felt that this would allow the transit provider(s) to achieve economies of scale from a business standpoint. In addition, a RTA would also be helpful in terms of proving effective
workforce transportation. However, these interviewees acknowledged that politics would likely be the biggest barrier to accomplishing the creation of a RTA.

Despite all of these recommendations for improvement to the current system, however, it should be reiterated that the community leaders were all extremely satisfied with SCAT and the services it provides. Most believe that the system is heading in the right direction and, despite the need for additional funding in the near term, SCAT is doing an excellent job with its current resources.

Policy Issues of Local Concern

The community leaders were also questioned about any existing policies and policy concerns that may affect transportation needs in the county and public transportation’s ability to meet those needs. While nearly all of the community leaders projected that the public would not fund additional transit services, most also suggested that in order to achieve long-term success, a different approach to congestion than road building and road widening will have to occur in Sarasota County. One interviewee explained that widening roads divides and isolates portions of communities and ultimately contributes to the decline of urban areas. Many community leaders revealed the desire for some funding for roads to be shifted to other forms of transportation, including transit and pedestrian and bicycle facilities and infrastructure. However, the interviewees also noted that a culture change will be necessary to get people out of their cars in the future. Short of a culture change, several community leaders recommended the development and implementation of policies that would require drivers to pay a larger share of the cost of driving personal vehicles. Perhaps then the public would have a better understanding of the costs associated with driving versus the costs of providing public transit.

Summary

To summarize, the community leaders who were interviewed were open and honest in their opinions and perceptions about public transportation and existing transportation needs in Sarasota County, as well as other transportation-related topics. Their overall perception of the public transportation system in Sarasota County, as well as the perceptions of their constituents seem to be very positive: the system was praised for its management and for utilizing its limited resources efficiently and to the benefit of patrons. In general, the system’s service has been well-received in the communities in which it operates, and all interviewees lauded the system for its responsiveness.

The interviewees also expressed concern about the amount and type of transportation available to serve the workforce in Sarasota County. Many suggested that more needs to be done to address the needs of the two county workforce, which includes residents of both Sarasota and Manatee County. Toward this end, a few interviewees discussed the creation of a regional
transit authority that would be responsible for providing public transportation in, at a minimum, Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Many suggestions were received related to making the SCAT system more convenient and a viable transportation alternative to the personal vehicle. Among the suggestions received were to increase the frequency of service, increase days and hours of service, and provide more localized, community-based transportation service that also serves as a feeder for the SCAT bus system.

An apparent contradiction also consistently emerged throughout the interview process. Although most of the community leaders expressed the desire to fund non-road related transportation alternatives in the effort to reduce future traffic congestion, almost every interviewee also stated that it is highly unlikely that the public will support additional funding for transit service expansion. However, several interviewees are hopeful that community education related to the true cost of building, widening, and maintaining roads versus the cost of providing more effective public transportation service will improve the funding scenario in the near future.
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SARASOTA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION RESOURCES AND NEEDS SURVEY

This section presents the results of a survey administered in January 1999 to agencies providing a variety of services in Sarasota County. The purpose of the survey was to obtain data about the transportation resources and needs that exist in Sarasota County from the perspective of the agencies that provide services in the county. Detailed discussion of the survey results is provided in the following sections.

Survey Methodology

The Sarasota County Transportation Resources and Needs Survey was developed to gather information related to agency perspectives on community mobility issues and problems in the county. Toward this end, the survey was designed to gain information about the transportation resources and needs that exist in the county by collecting information from transportation providers, faith-based organizations, social service agencies, community groups, medical centers, and other agencies serving residents and visitors. Agencies were asked to provide information regarding their services, clientele, resources, and needs. This information will be used in the S.T.E.P. process to assist in the development of an inventory of the transportation services that are currently being provided in the county, as well as the identification of mobility barriers and potential solutions to community transportation challenges.

The agencies and groups that were included in the survey were identified through multiple sources of information. First, a database of agencies providing transportation services was developed using an inventory of providers supplied by Senior Friendship Centers, Inc., the CTC in Sarasota County. This database was then expanded to include social service agencies, community groups, medical facilities, faith-based organizations, and other organizations and groups that provide services in Sarasota County. Much of this information was collected through an intensive data collection and literature review effort that took place over several months during late 1998. Finally, the database was supplemented and refined using agency databases maintained and provided by both the Venice Foundation and the Human Services Planning Agency in Sarasota County. The culmination of these efforts resulted in a database of 412 agencies, organizations, and groups that provide services in Sarasota County.

A survey containing 29 questions was sent to each of the 412 agencies contained in the survey database in January 1999. Included with the survey was a cover letter that described the S.T.E.P. effort underway and role of the survey in that effort, as well as instructions related to completing the survey. Each agency was asked to return their completed survey in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided with the survey by February 3, 1999. For reference, a copy of the survey instrument is included in Appendix P.
A total of 137 completed surveys were returned by the 412 agencies and organizations included in the survey database. Six surveys were returned by the U.S. postal service as undeliverable. Overall, the total response rate for completed surveys was 34 percent. Table 5-2 contains a list of all survey respondents.

**Survey Analysis**

Analysis of the Sarasota County Transportation Resources and Needs Survey is composed of three sections: profile of responding agencies, provision of transportation services, and agency transportation needs. Each section provides information that will be useful in the assessment of transportation resources available and unmet needs, as well as the identification of mobility barriers and issues contributing to constrained mobility in the county. In most instances, percentages reported in the survey analysis do not equal 100 because agencies were encouraged to mark all answers that apply to their unique situation.

The profile of responding agencies includes general information about each agency/organization. This includes information related to the type of services provided, the general service area of the agency, hours of service, and information on the clientele served by each responding agency. Also included in the profile of respondents are information on the level of awareness of public transportation services available in the county and data related to any transportation assistance that is provided by the respondents to their clients, customers, or members. Finally, this section includes a discussion of issues that make it difficult for clients and potential clients to access the services provided by each responding agency or organization.

Information is also provided related to the transportation services that are currently being provided by responding agencies. This discussion includes information about the number of vehicles currently used for the transportation services provided by respondents, the mode(s) of transportation provided by the responding agencies, and the type of fare charged by the agency. Respondents also provided information about passengers and the type of trips provided to passengers. Finally, this section presents a discussion of the agencies' level of interest in expanding their transportation services, as well as barriers and issues related to expanding transportation services to non-clients.

The final section presents data about unmet transportation needs reported by survey respondents. This section details the times of day that transportation services are needed, the types of trips needed, as well as information about the most appropriate kinds and modes of transportation required to meet existing needs.
### Table 5-2
Sarasota Transportation Resources & Needs Survey Respondents

| Responding Agency or Group | Sarasota County Health System Plan | Sarasota County Parks & Recreation | Sarasota Day Nursery Head Start | Sarasota Family YMCA | Sarasota Film Society at Burns Court | Sarasota Manatee Jewish Federation | Sarasota Special Athlete Boosters | Sarasota Visual Art Center | Senior Friendship Center | Southeastern Guide Dogs, Inc | Special Skaters Society, Inc | Springs at Lake Pointe Woods | St Armands Key Lutheran Church | St Marks Preschool | St Raphael's Church | Suncoast Center for Independent Living | Suncoast Humane Society | Suncoast Therapeutic Educative | Suncoast Workforce Development Board, Inc | Take a Break Respite Care | Tammi House | The John & Mable Ringling Museum | The Marie Selby Botanical Gardens | The Players Theatre of Sarasota | The Salvation Army | The Wilson Wood Foundation | Trinity Presbyterian Church | Trolley Systems of America Inc | United Way of South Sarasota County | Venice Assembly of God Church | Venice- Nokomis Child Care Center | Venice Symphony, Inc | Verandas at Riverfront | Volunteer Manatee | We Care Transport Inc | William G. and Marie Selby Foundation | Windsor Parke | Women's Resource Center of Sarasota | Women's Support & Enrichment Center | Woodlands Village | YANA Foundation of Sarasota | Yellow Cab of Longboat Key | Sarasota County Ed Assistance Program |
Profile of Responding Agencies

Figure 5-1 illustrates the variety of services provided by responding agencies. Agencies were instructed to mark as many answers as appropriate and most respondents reported offering several types of services. The types of services most often cited by the 137 agencies that returned a completed survey were educational services, social services, community services, private transportation services, and recreational services. Twenty-two respondents also indicated that religious services are provided and 21 agencies reported the provision of childcare. Many agencies provided information about services provided but not included in the survey list of choices. Among the most common types of services included in the other category were counseling services, arts and cultural services, mental health, information and referral services, and assisted-living services.

A majority of the responding agencies (63 percent) reported that services are provided countywide in Sarasota. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents (51 agencies) reported that services are also provided to clients outside of Sarasota County, with Manatee and Charlotte counties being the most commonly cited areas outside of Sarasota County. Respondents also indicated that many services are provided in each of the municipalities and major communities within the county. Data related to the general service areas of responding agencies are included in Figure 5-2.

Survey respondents were also asked to provide information on who uses the agencies' services. Respondents were instructed to report as many categories of users as appropriate. As illustrated in Figure 5-3, 56 percent of responding agencies reported that services are provided to the general public in Sarasota County. Seniors and youths were the most commonly cited specialized categories of clientele. Half of the respondents indicated that services are provided to seniors and forty-five percent of respondents reported providing services oriented to youths. Twenty-five percent of the agencies also indicated that their services are open to tourists in the county.

Nearly all of the responding agencies (93 percent, or 127 agencies) are aware that there is a public bus system available in Sarasota County. Many of the agencies are also providing some form of transportation assistance to their clients. As shown in Figure 5-4, volunteer transportation services was reported by 19 percent of the responding agencies (26 agencies) and was the most commonly cited form of transportation assistance. Eighteen percent of respondents reported that transportation assistance is provided to clients through trips purchased from transportation providers. Fourteen agencies described providing their own client transportation under the category of other. Bus passes purchased from the public transit system in Sarasota County is also a common form of transportation assistance provided by responding agencies (13 percent or 18 agencies).
Figure 5-1
Types of Services Provided
Figure 5-2
Service Areas of Respondents

Figure 5-3
Clientele Served by Agencies
Survey respondents were queried regarding the issues that make it difficult for clients and potential clients to utilize agency services. Respondents were given a list of possible issues and asked to indicate the degree to which each of the issues impact clients and potential clients. The list of issues included in the survey were cost of agency services, location of agency, transportation to and from the agency, availability of agency services, eligibility requirements for agency services, agency hours of operation, and client awareness of agency services. Respondents were also given an opportunity to report additional issues that impact clients under the "other" category. Transportation to and from the agency was the most commonly cited issue making it difficult for clients and potential clients to access agency services. Sixty-two percent of respondents indicated that the lack of transportation makes access somewhat difficult to extremely difficult for clients and potential clients. Sixty-one percent of respondents also cited that the lack of client awareness of available services makes it somewhat difficult to extremely difficult for clients and potential clients to utilize agency services.

The survey respondents were also asked to indicate the degree to which certain barriers would make it difficult for clients and potential clients without cars to take advantage of agency services. The list of barriers presented to respondents included bus service hours of operation, distance from bus stops to the agency, public transportation fares, lack of child care services, lack of access for people with disabilities, and other issues affecting people without access to a personal vehicle.

Seventy-one percent of the responding agencies listed the bus service hours of operation as an issue making it difficult for clients and potential clients without cars to access agency services. A full 33 percent reported that this issue is a very difficult to extremely difficult barrier for people without cars to overcome. Public transportation fares was reported by 53 percent of responding agencies as a somewhat difficult to extremely difficult issue for clients and potential clients without cars. Half of the responding agencies reported that the distance from bus stops to the agency acts as a barrier to accessing agency services for clients and potential clients. Similarly, 22 percent of respondents reported that the lack of access for people with disabilities is a very difficult to extremely difficult issue for clients and potential clients without cars, while 21 percent indicated that this issue is somewhat difficult to difficult for clients and potential clients. Finally, 41 percent of the respondents reported that the lack of childcare presents some degree of difficulty for clients and potential clients without cars.

Finally, survey respondents were asked to indicate the degree of significance that each of following issues has in discouraging clients and potential clients from using public transportation services: fear for personal safety, lack of awareness of available services, difficulty
understanding routes, difficulty understanding fare structure, frequency of service, accessibility for people with disabilities, cost of services, social attitudes, and convenience of service.

The frequency and convenience of public transportation services were reported as the most significant issues discouraging clients and potential clients from using public transportation services. Thirty-eight percent of respondents indicated that the frequency of public transportation services is a very significant to extremely significant barrier and 43 percent listed frequency as a somewhat significant to significant barrier. Similarly, the convenience of the public transportation system was reported as a very significant to extremely significant barrier to use of the system by 44 percent of respondents and as a somewhat significant to significant barrier by 35 percent of respondents. Forty-seven percent of respondents also reported that the lack of accessibility for persons with disabilities serves to discourage clients and potential clients from using public transportation services in Sarasota County.

A majority of responding agencies (72 percent) reported that clients and potential clients do not use the public transportation services available in Sarasota County because they are not aware that the services are available. However, awareness of the system does not always translate into an understanding of what is available in the community. Twenty-seven percent of survey respondents reported that difficulty understanding route information poses a very significant to extremely significant barrier to the use of public transportation services by clients and potential clients. Forty-six percent of the agencies that responded to this question listed this issue as somewhat significant to significant. Fifty-eight percent of responding agencies also reported that clients and potential clients have some degree of difficulty understanding the fare structure of public transportation services.

Finally, public perceptions of public transportation also serve to discourage the use of public transit in Sarasota County. Forty-four percent of responding agencies reported that fear for personal safety is a somewhat significant to significant issue that discourages clients from using public transportation services. Fifteen percent of respondents listed this as a very significant to extremely significant issue. This finding is particularly interesting considering that 88 percent of the respondents in the SCAT on-board passenger survey, presented in Chapter Two, rated personal safety on the bus and at bus stops as very good or good. Fifty-four percent of respondents also reported that the existence of social attitudes about public transportation discourages clients and potential clients from taking advantage of the public transportation services available in the county.

**Provision of Agency Transportation Services**

Information was also collected from responding agencies about any transportation services that are being provided by the agency to clients and potential clients. Agency responses indicate
that 42 percent of the respondents to this question (57 agencies) are providing public or private transportation services for individuals or groups. Most (63 percent) of these agencies are providing transportation services with five or less vehicles. Eleven percent of responding agencies indicated that services are being provided with six to twelve vehicles and another eleven percent of agencies are using 13 or more agency vehicles to provide transportation services. Fifteen percent of the agencies that reported providing transportation services did not report the number of vehicles used for transportation purposes.

Children/youth and seniors were the most commonly cited users of agency-provided transportation services. As illustrated in Figure 5-5, twenty-four agencies provide transportation services to children or youth and 21 agencies provide transportation services to seniors. Fifteen agencies reported that transportation is provided to residents of the facility and 14 indicated that transportation is provided to persons with special needs. Agency members and clients are provided services by 19 agencies. Only nine agencies reported providing transportation services that are open to the general public.

As depicted in Figure 5-6, the modes of transportation most often provided by the responding agencies to clients are door-to-door services (61 percent) and fixed-route bus or shuttle services (39 percent). Eighteen percent of responding agencies reported that contracted taxi services are provided to clients, while seven percent provide general public taxi services. Among the modes of services included in the other category were volunteer transportation, school van transportation to SCAT bus routes, and resident transportation.

Figure 5-7 shows the type of trips that are provided by agencies. The most common types of trips provided by responding agencies are medical trips, which are provided by 34 agencies, and recreation trips, which are provided by 28 agencies. These are followed by education trips (reported by 25 agencies) and shopping trips (reported by 24 agencies). Eighteen agencies provide transportation to religious services. Transportation to childcare services is provided by 12 agencies, while 11 agencies provide employment transportation. Eleven agencies also provide trips categorized as personal business.

The transportation services provided by responding agencies are most commonly provided free of charge, as shown in Figure 5-8. A full 52 percent (29) of the agencies that provide transportation do not charge a fare for services. Twenty-one percent of the transportation providers reported that passengers are charged a flat rate for services. Eleven percent of the agencies that report providing transportation service utilize a cost per mile fare structure, while 21 percent reported that the fare structure varies depending on the service provided.
Figure 5-4
Types of Transportation Assistance Provided

Figure 5-5
Passenger Type
**Figure 5-6**

Mode of Transportation Provided

- Door-to-door: 60%
- Fixed Route: 40%
- Contracted taxi: 20%
- Public taxi: 10%
- Other: 0%

**Figure 5-7**

Type of Trips Provided

- Shopping: 35%
- Medical: 25%
- Recreation: 20%
- Education: 15%
- Child care: 10%
- Employment: 10%
- Religious: 10%
- Personal Business: 5%
- Other: 0%
Figure 5-8
Fare Structure

Figure 5-9
Service Expansion Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost/mile</th>
<th>Flat rate</th>
<th>Varies</th>
<th>Free</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Vehicles</th>
<th>Dedicated Funding</th>
<th>Additional Employees</th>
<th>Additional Insurance</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The responding agencies were also asked to provide information related to the resources that would be needed by the agencies in order to provide additional transportation to clients and potential clients. This information is depicted in Figure 5-9. Thirty-four agencies reported that additional vehicles are needed in order to expand transportation services. Twenty-nine agencies indicated that additional employees would be needed to expand services. Funding dedicated to transportation services was reported as a need by 27 agencies, and 22 agencies reported that additional insurance would be required prior to expanding transportation services. Additional needed resources reported by agencies in the ‘other’ category include the need for additional volunteers and the need for additional clients. Finally, 82 percent of the agencies that reported providing transportation services also indicated that they are not interested in expanding transportation services non-clients, non-members, and/or the general public.

**Agency Transportation Needs**

The final area examined in the Sarasota County Transportation Resources and Needs Survey was the issue of unmet agency transportation needs. Fifty-five percent (76) of the agencies that returned a completed survey reported unmet transportation needs for clients and potential clients. Thirty-four of the agencies that reported unmet transportation needs also reported providing some form of transportation service to clients.

Figure 5-10 shows the times of day when transportation services are most needed by the responding agencies. Characteristic of traditional travel demands, transportation services are most needed weekday and weekend mornings, weekday and weekend afternoons, and weekday and weekend evenings. The time of day when transportation is least needed by agencies is during the nighttime hours on weekdays and weekends.

The agencies that reported having unmet transportation needs were also asked to provide information related to the type of trips needed. This information is depicted in Figure 5-11. Consistent with the information related to the most common types of trips provided by agencies (see Figure 5-7), the types of trips most reported by agencies as being needed by clients are medical trips (74 percent of agencies) and recreation trips (66 percent of agencies). Shopping trips (51 percent of agencies) and education trips (46 percent of agencies) follow these trip types. Forty-five percent of the agencies reporting unmet transportation needs would like to provide some form of transportation to religious services, 42 percent need trips for personal business and 40 percent of responding agencies indicated a need for employment transportation. Finally, 26 percent of the responding agencies have a need for transportation to and from childcare services.
Chapter Five Public Involvement

Figure 5-10
Time of Need

Figure 5-11
Type of Trips Needed

Shopping 45%
Medical 29%
Recreation 51%
Education 40%
Child care 42%
Personal Business 26%
Employment 66%
Religious 46%
Other 74%
Agencies were also asked to provide information about the kind of transportation that would be most appropriate for clients with transportation needs. As shown in Figure 5-12, all of the agencies that reported unmet transportation needs indicated a need for individual client trips. Fifty-three agencies (70 percent) also reported a need for group trips to a common destination and 40 agencies (53 percent) indicated a need for special needs trips.

Finally, the agencies with unmet transportation needs were questioned about the mode of transportation that clients and potential clients would most likely require. Figure 5-13 indicates that 63 of the responding agencies feel that some of their clients would require door-to-door paratransit services. Sixty-three agencies indicated that fixed-route bus and/or shuttle services would be appropriate for some clients with unmet transportation needs. Taxi services may also be able to meet some agency transportation needs. Twenty-two agencies reported that general public taxi services would be appropriate for clients and 26 agencies indicated that clients might require contracted taxi services.

Summary

The Sarasota County Transportation Resources and Needs Survey resulted in a great deal of information about the services that are currently available in the county, as well as about the population groups in need of additional transportation assistance. Many of the agencies are currently providing some form of transportation assistance, whether in the form of directly-operated transportation services or volunteer transportation programs. A majority of survey respondents also ranked the lack of transportation to and from the agency as a major barrier for clients.

The existing public transportation system was viewed by the responding agencies as limited in its ability to meet the transportation needs of agency clients. Not surprisingly, the most commonly cited reasons for this situation were the frequency and convenience of the existing public transportation system. This finding is consistent with the findings from the community leader interviews discussed previously and the SCAT on-board bus passenger survey presented in Chapter Two.

Directly-provided transportation services are being offered to clients by 57 of the responding agencies. Young people and seniors are most often the recipients of these services, which usually take the form of door-to-door services or fixed-route services. A majority of the agencies that are providing transportation services are doing so at no charge to passengers. The most common trip types accommodated by the agencies are medical, recreation, education, and shopping. Interestingly, an overwhelming majority of the agencies (82 percent)
Figure 5-12
Transportation Needed

Figure 5-13
Mode of Transportation Needed
that reported providing transportation services to clients indicated that they do not have an interest in expanding services to non-clients and/or the general public. This finding certainly suggests significant implications for the future of agency coordination in relation to transportation services.

Finally, 76 agencies report having unmet transportation needs for clients and potential clients. Thirty-four of these agencies also currently provide transportation services to clients and potential clients. The need information provided by agencies does suggest some opportunities for coordination, as 70 percent reported a need for group trips to a common destination. Door-to-door services and fixed-route services were the most often cited mode of transportation desired for agency clients and potential clients.
DISCUSSION GROUPS AND PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

This section describes the series of activities undertaken in the STEP process to elicit public comment on transportation needs and issues in the community. Three discussion groups were held with individuals from agencies and groups that attempt to fill some of the gaps in the existing mobility network in Sarasota County. These discussions focused on the strengths and limitations of the existing transportation resources in the community. In addition, public workshops were held in the City of North Port and the Englewood community to obtain information about South County transportation needs. The specific public input activities described in this section include:

- A Discussion Group with Faith-Based Organizations
- A Discussion Group with Youth Group Organizations
- A Discussion Group with the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Local Coordinating Board and Community Members
- A Public Meeting in Englewood
- A Public Meeting in North Port

General descriptions of each discussion group and public workshop are provided below. Following each description is a summary of the issues of concern and transportation needs identified in each discussion group and public workshop.

Faith-Based Organization Discussion Group

A discussion group was held with representatives of various faith-based organizations in Sarasota County. As discussed earlier, surveys eliciting information about transportation resources and needs were sent to more than 400 organizations in Sarasota County. The faith-based organizations that responded to the survey and indicated that they provide transportation assistance to their members were invited to participate in the discussion group. The discussion group took place at Twin Lakes Park on June 23, 1999. Representatives from six faith-based organizations participated in the discussion group.

The issues of concern and transportation needs identified in the discussion group with faith-based organization representatives include:

- Providing and coordinating transportation, while complex and sometimes difficult, is often necessary to fulfill church missions
- Vehicle costs, maintenance, breakdowns and insurance are burdensome
- Finding, scheduling, certifying and insuring drivers can be difficult
- Complying with State, Federal, and insurance regulations can be confusing and costly
In general, the existing public transportation system does not address the needs of the community.

More attention needs to be paid to amenities at bus stops, with a particular focus on the needs of the elderly and disabled.

Consideration should be given to providing subsidized taxi trips.

The Venice trolley should be brought back into service.

Transportation needs are more extensive in South County than in the rest of the county.

The churches have a need for additional vehicles.

More transportation is needed for before and after school programs.

Fundraising efforts are needed to accommodate the loss of funding contributed by snowbirds in the summer.

The following concerns were voiced in relation to sharing vehicles between agencies and groups:

- The cost of insurance and fear of liability
- Effects of coordination on vehicle insurance policies
- Issues related to who would drive the vehicles
- The impact of advertising on vehicles
- Ensuring that vehicles are safe
- The stigma associated with vans, as viewed by seniors
- Eligibility and availability of the transportation service

Recommendations offered by faith-based organization representatives include:

- Focus on the resolution of the barriers posed by the separation of church and state concept
- Make afterschool programs registered school bus stops
- Achieve greater collaboration with the CTC
- Focus on child development, in light of violence and crime in schools

Youth Group Organization Discussion Group

A second discussion group was held with various youth group organizations in Sarasota County. The meeting took place on June 23, 1999 at Girls, Inc. of Sarasota County. Those present for the discussion group included representatives that participate in a transportation consortium called CLAS – the Coalition of Leaders for After-school Services. One participant represented a youth agency in South County and, therefore, is not a Coalition member. A total of seven agency representatives participated in the discussion group. The agencies represented included Boys and Girls Club of Sarasota County, the Sarasota Family YMCA, South County YMCA, Girls, Inc. of Sarasota County, and the Jewish Community Center (JCC).
The issues of concern and transportation needs identified in the discussion group with youth group organization representatives include:

- Providing and coordinating transportation is a necessary evil and a business that most agencies would not like to participate in
- Dealing with vehicle costs, maintenance, breakdowns and insurance issues is burdensome
- Finding, scheduling, certifying and insuring drivers can be complicated
- Complying with regulations is often confusing and costly
- Youth group organization representatives expressed the following concerns related to sharing vehicles between agencies:
  - Interagency difficulty between parents and staff related to the resolution of disciplinary problems on shared vehicles
  - Requirements for driver certification and licensing
  - Insurance regulation that preclude the sharing of vehicles among agencies that are classified as "not for hire"
  - The need for monetary incentives or pooled maintenance to persuade agencies to coordinate and share resources
- Youth group representatives identified the following additional needs:
  - More staff and vehicles are needed to serve more children
  - Program capacity constraints need to be lifted in order to end the present capping of programs based on number of seats available on buses
- Youth group representatives offered the following recommendations:
  - Make youth group facilities registered school or SCAT bus stops
  - Hire a Coordinator who would manage transportation needs of agencies interested in sharing resources and vehicles

Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Local Coordinating Board Discussion Group

A third discussion group was held with members of the TD Local Coordinating Board, community members, and Sarasota County Area Transit (SCAT) representatives. Community members present at the meeting were invited to attend by members of the TD Coordinating Board. The group was brought together to discuss the needs and issues of concern to the TD population in Sarasota County. The meeting was held at the SCAT administrative offices. A total of 16 persons participated in the meeting. Of the 16 participants present at the meeting, only two reported regular use of public transportation. Both individuals do not own or have access to a personal vehicle.

The following issues of concern and transportation needs were identified in the discussion group with the TD Coordinating Board:
• TD representatives identified the following unmet transportation needs:
  - School-aged children and afterschool programs
  - Recreation trips
  - Evening trips
  - Sunday service

• The following concerns regarding existing CTC paratransit services were expressed:
  - Even with the existing service, many TD clients are underserved due to financial and capacity constraints
  - The lack of TD funding results in a lack of drivers and an inability to accommodate needs
  - Sidewalks are inaccessible due to a lack of curb cuts and wheelchair pads
  - The hour window concept can be traumatizing to passengers and informal prioritizing can cause delays
  - A perception of the TD program as a taxi service causes problems due to passenger misunderstanding

• TD representatives expressed the following concerns about the SCAT bus system:
  - Safety (Long walks to stops and the need to cross major roadways)
  - A lack of passenger amenities (benches, shelters, etc.) and infrastructure (sidewalks, curb cuts, etc.)
  - Inaccessibility of bus stops located in ditches or on grass
  - Requests for the addition of passenger amenities take a long time to process
  - Lack of knowledge regarding the infrastructure and amenities located at each bus stop

• Regarding sharing vehicles between agencies, the TD representatives expressed concerns related to insurance, driver certification, scheduling, and equipping vehicles to ensure safety.

• Other issues in need of resolution concerning the sharing of vehicles between agencies include:
  - Turf protection wherein agencies that are better fundraisers than others may be reluctant to share the vehicles they have obtained
  - The possibility of discrimination based on age, income, ethnicity, physical ability, or cleanliness
  - Concerns that focusing on sharing vehicles would take away from the existing transportation alternatives
  - Regulation compliance issues, including the desire to have all vehicles used to transport the general public meet the same standards as public transportation vehicles, and resolution to the issue of meeting federal guidelines for the transport of school-aged children in 15-passenger vans.
Englewood Public Workshop

On July 1, 1999, a public workshop was held at the Englewood Recreation Center from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. The meeting was structured as a free-flowing discussion and was convened to discuss transportation issues and concerns in the Englewood community of Sarasota County. Those present were asked to discuss such things as their primary modes of transportation, the critical mobility needs in the community, the types of trips they would like to take using public transportation, and what they think can be done to meet the previously stated needs. Present at the meeting were CUTR representatives, media representatives from the Sarasota Herald Tribune and the Englewood Sun Herald, SCAT representatives, various representatives of the Englewood Chamber of Commerce, and several community residents. The group was comprised of residents of both Charlotte and Sarasota counties.

The following issues of concern and transportation needs were identified in the Englewood public workshop:

- Nearly all of the participants stated that public transportation is virtually non-existent in Englewood
- SCAT bus service is especially limited in the community due to its infrequency and lack of travel over county lines
- Residence distance from SCAT bus stops makes it difficult for residents to use SCAT bus service
- Englewood community residents reported the following critical mobility needs:
  - Services for the elderly and people with disabilities
  - Medical and grocery trips
  - Inter-county transportation service
  - Collaboration between Charlotte County Dial-A-Ride and SCAT
  - Access to employment and social service agencies
  - Transport of children to youth activities in Venice, North Port, and Englewood
  - Complete public transportation coverage of Englewood
- Englewood community members made the following recommendations for enhancing mobility in the community:
  - A county-subsidized taxi voucher system
  - Smaller public transportation vehicles that travel on residential streets
  - Better access to employment markets and more Park-and-Ride lots
  - Coordination with the School System and the County Planning Department
  - Better access to and from airports
  - A return to city status in Englewood
  - Additional marketing and social marketing activities
  - Structured studies to establish and assess transportation needs
More buses with increased frequency and bus stops
Enhanced comprehensive planning and development reviews

North Port Public Workshop

The public workshop in North Port was held on July 12, 1999 from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM at the Al Goll Community Center. Those in attendance were asked to discuss transportation needs and issues of concern to the community in North Port and Sarasota County. Present at the meeting were CUTR representatives, a reporter from the Sarasota Herald Tribune and representatives of FISH, SCAT, and SFC.

The following issues of concern and transportation needs were identified in the North Port public workshop:

- It is difficult to reach the CTC by telephone in order to take advantage of the paratransit services available.
- A lack of funding and capacity constraints make it difficult to utilize CTC paratransit services
- Long distances between SCAT bus stops and final destinations make it difficult to use SCAT bus services
- Many residents have difficulty accessing bus stops from their homes
- SCAT bus service does not adequately address the needs of seniors
- Infrequent bus service makes it impractical for medical trips
- Critical mobility needs identified by North Port residents include:
  - Seniors
  - Those who cannot walk the distance to bus stops
  - Grocery trips
- The following recommendations related to enhancing community mobility needs were offered by North Port participants:
  - Provide SCAT Dial-a-Ride services
  - Extend SCAT bus service into Charlotte County
  - Consider coordinating with Charlotte County to provide Dial-a-Ride service in both Charlotte and Sarasota Counties
  - Provide subsidized taxi services
  - Expand CTC services
  - Identify transportation as a priority issue in local and County government