



# **St. Lucie County Transportation Dialogue**

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**November 4 – December 16, 2013**

**Participation Metrics**

**Table of Contents**

**Introduction:**..... 2

**Participation Summary:** ..... 3

**Campaign Summary:**..... 3

**Registration Metrics:** ..... 4

**Visits during the Dialogue (11/4/2013-12/16/2013):**..... 5

**Traffic Sources:** ..... 5

**Demographics of Visitors from Florida:** ..... 6

**Ideas:** ..... 7

    Idea #1: Holiday Shopping ..... 7

    Idea #2: IRSC Main Campus ..... 7

    Idea #3: Gaps in Existing Services..... 7

    Idea #4: Free emergency rides home for bus riders, carpoolers ..... 8

    Idea #5: Volunteer Drivers ..... 8

    Idea #6: Mobility ..... 9

    Idea #7: Qualifying for community transit services..... 9

    Idea #8: Sidewalks! Grants, Fundraisers, taxes, anything! ..... 9

    Idea #9: Bus Passes for the Poor - Mustard Seed..... 9

    Idea #10: Downtown Shuttle Transportation ..... 10

    Idea #11: Fort Pierce Bus Stop ..... 11

**Conclusion** ..... 11

## **Introduction:**

The following report outlines the results of the *“Join the Conversation for Improved Transportation Services in St. Lucie County”* online dialogue. Hosted by St. Lucie County, Florida, as part of the Veterans Transportation and Community Living Initiative (VTCLI) and with the support of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Transit Administration (FTA), its partners and the ePolicyWorks team, the virtual event was held from November 4 through December 16, 2013. Local veterans, their friends and family members, seniors, community based and military organizations, Treasure Coast residents, active duty service men/women along with transportation experts were invited to participate and to provide their input on what could be done to improve the availability, quality and efficiency of transportation services in their community and what changes are needed to help all of those in the region, including retired and returning veterans, to get where they need to go.

Ideas posted to the online dialogue were organized into topics, including: Coordination; Funding; and Services. In addition to posting ideas to the dialogue, participants were given an opportunity to “vote” on each idea and submit comments. Included in this report are all of the posts contributed by and voted on by participants.

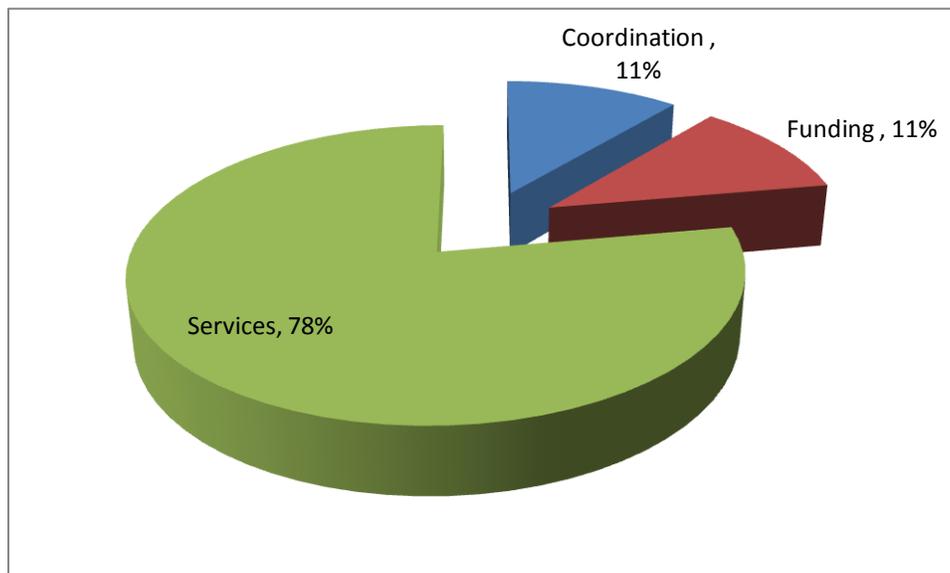
The ideas and comments received during this online dialogue were greatly appreciated and will help St. Lucie County develop a plan to improve transportation services for those living in the Treasure Coast community.

### Participation Summary:

- Dialogue opened at 8:00am ET on November 4, 2013
- 9 total ideas
- 7 comments
- 22 votes
- 42 registrations
- Dialogue closed at 11:59pm on December 16, 2013

### Campaign Summary:

- Total number of ideas: 9
- Coordination: 1 (11%)
- Funding: 1 (11%)
- Services: 7 (78%)



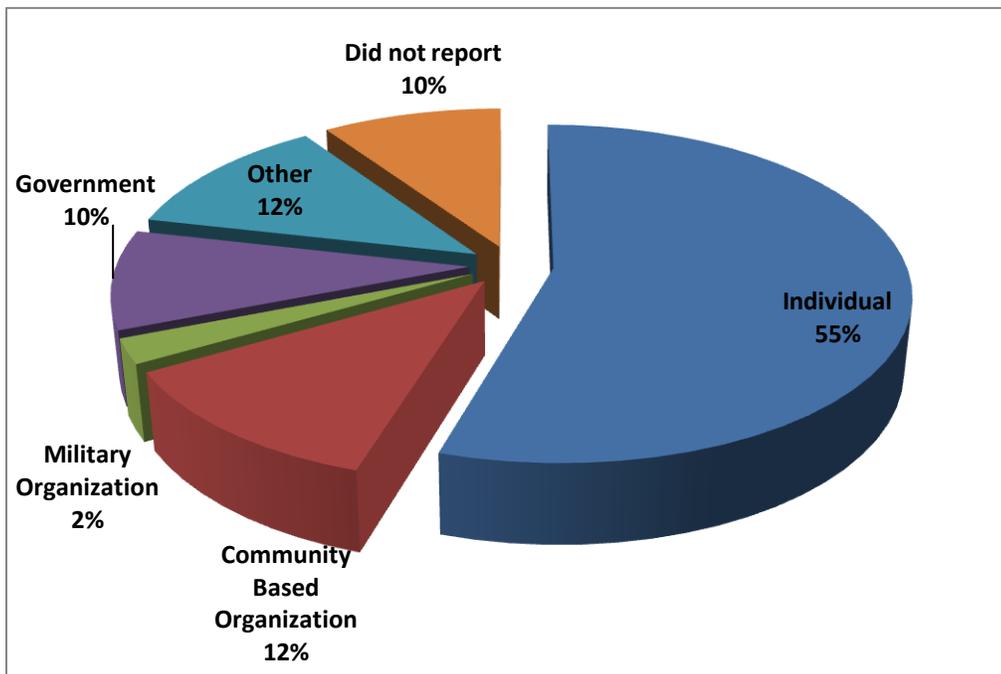
**Registration Metrics:**

- Total registrants: 42
- Total number of registrants that completed the registration process: 25

*The following details the breakdown of self-reported affiliations submitted by participants as part of the registration process:*

**Who Do You Represent?**

- 55% Individual
- 12% Community Based Organization
- 2% Military Organization
- 10% Government
- 12% Other
- 10% Did not report

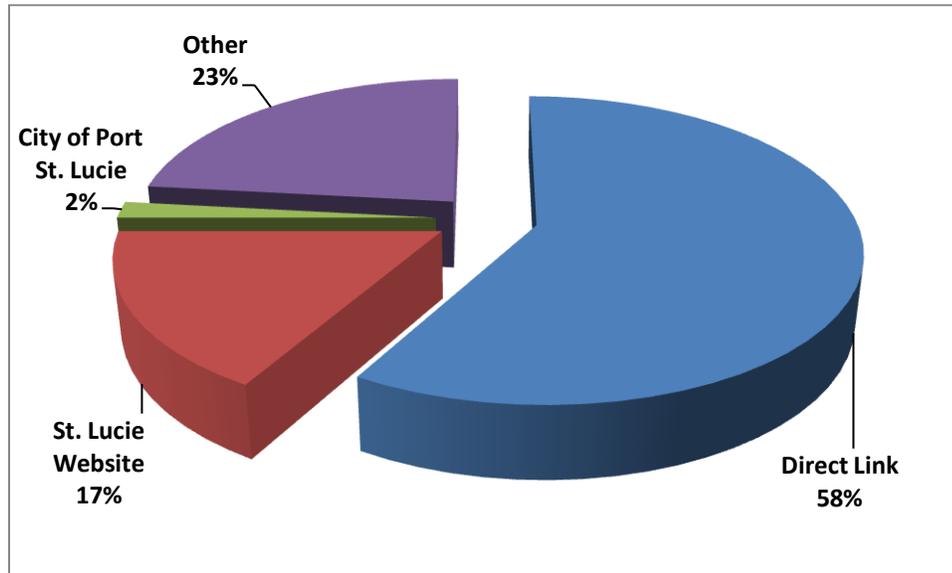


**Visits during the Dialogue (11/4/2013-12/16/2013):**

- Total visits: 516
- Total page views: 1,341
- Average pages per visit: 2.60
- Average visit duration: 2:35
- Returning visitors: 48.45%

**Traffic Sources:**

- Direct link: 58%
- St. Lucie Website: 17%
- City of Port St. Lucie: 2%
- Other: 23%



**Demographics of Visitors from Florida:**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Visits</b>
Fort Pierce	171
Port St. Lucie	37
Stuart	7
Tallahassee	4
Tampa	4
West Palm Beach	4
Hialeah	3
Miami	3
Pembroke Pines	3
Vero Beach	3
Lakewood Park	2
Jacksonville	1
Spring Hill	1
Ives Estates	1

*Note: The ideas listed in the following sections include minor typographical corrections, which have in no way impacted the substance or the intention of the revised posts.*

## **Ideas:**

### **Idea #1: Holiday Shopping**

6 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 6 Net Votes

With the holidays getting closer and stores opening later in the evening, we need to increase transportation availability for shoppers and workers alike.

### **Idea #2: IRSC Main Campus**

5 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 5 Net Votes

Currently there is only one bus stop at IRSC's main campus. Because IRSC does not provide transportation for its students and the campus is so big one bus stop is not enough. Also there is no bus stop at the new Public Safety Building off Kirby Loop Road. Addressing these issues could increase the number of students that use the bus service.

*Moderator Response: Thanks for your feedback, St. Lucie County will be holding upcoming open houses on the future of the bus system in the County. The meetings are free and open to the public and will take place at the following locations: Tuesday, Nov. 12 from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. at the Fort Pierce office of the Council of Aging, 1505 Orange Avenue, and Tuesday, Nov. 12 from 4:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Port St. Lucie office of the Council on Aging, 2501 SW Bayshore. You may provide input on the proposed services by participating in the online survey.  
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/stluciecountybusblueprint>*

### **Idea #3: Gaps in Existing Services**

5 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 5 Net Votes

There are several challenges with the existing systems:

- \* Affordable transportation afterhours and on the weekends is lacking
- \* Transportation is not available to all areas of the County even during daytime hours
- \* Out of County trips are very costly for the providers and hence the riders.
- \* Many transportation services don't provide out of county trips
- \* Demand for subsidized door to door services is high and can be restrictive
- \* Trips can take a long time with transfers and multi-passenger loading.

With limited funding options, creativity is needed. While it would be wonderful to find one solution for all of these, that could take a while. There needs to be a lead entity that can assist with problem solving existing challenges.

*Comment: I would like to see community transportation run on Sat and Sunday.*

*Moderator Response: Thanks Kimberly for your recommendation, this suggestion, too has expressed regularly by transit riders. Like all transit system, it takes significant amount of funding to sustain the existing funding; it hoped as the county continues to grow the transportation formula funds for operation will increase for these very important service.*

*Thank you for sharing your concern, we too agree that transportation services are needed on the weekends. This recommendation is one of the public transit list of future priorities. Like everything else it requires funding to operate the services. With that said, there is an ad hoc committee called the Transportation Coordination Network that is comprised of local partners that are interested in addressing and solving local transportation challenges in the community. They meet on a quarterly basis, the next meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2014.*

#### **Idea #4: Free emergency rides home for bus riders, carpoolers**

3 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 3 Net Votes

Just wanted to let everyone know that employees or college students who use the bus or carpool to work or school most of the time are eligible for free taxi rides home from work (up to six each year) if an emergency such as unscheduled overtime or illness force them to miss their shared ride home. To register, go to [www.1800234ride.com](http://www.1800234ride.com) or call 1-800-234-RIDE (7433).

*Comment: This is a free service offered by South Florida Commuter Services, a program of the Florida Department of Transportation.*

#### **Idea #5: Volunteer Drivers**

1 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 1 Net Votes

In some areas of the country, including Florida, volunteer drivers are assisting veterans with transportation to a variety of community based services and the VAMC. Do you think an effort to coordinate volunteer drivers would be of value in the St. Lucie County/Martin County area?

*Comment: I think enlisting the help of volunteer drivers is a fantastic idea for St. Lucie County! Since funding is such an issue with providing services in the evening and weekend hours, enlisting class B certified volunteer drivers would be a great way to keep costs down, yet provide much-needed transportation! I am sure we have many retired drivers on our County that would be willing to volunteer for a few hours a week. I wholeheartedly believe this idea should be explored further in St. Lucie County!*

**Idea #6: Mobility**

1 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 1 Net Votes

Mobility is an important part of life and can also be very difficult and stressful to those who might be impaired by age, disability or income. This is why accessible transportation is so important to our veterans and their families.

**Idea #7: Qualifying for community transit services**

1 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 1 Net Votes

The application process for people with disabilities and the elderly for community transit services are overwhelming and difficult for many to complete. Medicaid cards versus Medicare cards, having the physician fill out the last page, describing the extent of disabilities, all seem rather redundant. I would like to suggest that if the applicant is of school age, a signed IEP copy should certainly suffice to prove that the applicant is a person with a disability. Also psychological reports from the school district which are all signed by a psychologist. I don't know why they cannot be accepted in lieu of the physician's form.

I know firsthand the difficulties many of your clients encounter when trying to get this application completed! I work with 19 to 22-year-old young adults with disabilities that are still in the school district and I like them to age out of school already signed up with community transit to give them the greatest opportunity for independence as possible. Unfortunately many physicians are now charging \$20 for the privilege of signing this Application form!

Please consider excepting additional forms of proof to document a client's disability while also simplifying the application process!

Thank you!

**Idea #8: Sidewalks! Grants, Fundraisers, taxes, anything!**

0 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 0 Net Votes

Many people, who cannot drive, would be capable and willing to move around town independently if there were sidewalks to keep them safe from vehicles. I have seen too many residents (one in a Veterans hat!) riding along the side of the road in wheelchairs. There must be Federal grant money or a way to re-allocate tax dollars in order to allow for safe walking and bike riding. Isn't it a part of the ADA that sidewalks be available?

**Idea #9: Bus Passes for the Poor - Mustard Seed**

0 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 0 Net Votes

Recently visited Stacy Malinowski at Mustard Seed Ministries, which provides bus passes to people qualifying for public assistance (along with other public assistance funded federally). Just so everyone

knows: I did not apply for any services. I was informed that people are only allowed bus passes for medical appointments, assistance appointments and the like claiming that it's a "Federal Program." The Federal funding for economically disadvantaged states that transportation is also to be allowed social trips and shopping to avoid discrimination because of financial handicap. I also called the county bus system and they had no idea what I was talking about yet on the website a 2008 PDF document confirms that the county gets funding from this program. The FEDERAL program simply provides priority for more pressing needs, and not the complete elimination of other services. Yet, watch buses not even near capacity go by every day. I would like to see definitive guidelines posted openly and plainly and application procedures posted and stream-line in a way that those who are eligible are able to apply and actually receive the benefits that taxpayers are providing to the poor without having to fight through what appears to be deceptions at the service level.

*Comment: There are many different types of federal grants that can be used to assist with transportation. Each grant generally has its own set of requirements. Mustard Seed receives funding that is designated for low-income residents to access medical services, community resources. Since the funds are used to purchase bus tickets, there is no reason that Community Transit would necessarily be aware of these funds.*

*The State of Florida Department of Economic Opportunity receives funds from the federal government and distributes them to Community Action Agencies throughout the state. These funds must be allocated by the legislature each year in order for services to be available to low-income residents. CSBG funds are designed to provide a range of services to assist low-income households in attaining the skills, knowledge, stability and motivation necessary to achieve self-sufficiency. Each County determines the community need to be addressed with the funding.  
<http://www.nascsp.org/CSBG.aspx>*

*Hope this helps clear things up.*

#### **Idea #10: Downtown Shuttle Transportation\***

0 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 0 Net Votes

Secondly, we are in desperate need of downtown shuttle transportation. The orientation of the buildings, downtown, makes parking very difficult. We do have the County parking garage across from the Courthouse, with a few spaces, but the City parking garage several block away with numerous parking spaces. We need a way to get the people to park in the City garage, but get them to the Courthouse efficiently. It is not unusual to have 200 jurors and 500 subjects coming in for docket call or arraignments all at the same time. As a result, the people will park anywhere they can fit their vehicle! This causes a lot of problems, towed vehicles, tickets, etc.

*\*Note: Idea submitted via email following the close of the dialogue.*

**Idea #11: Fort Pierce Bus Stop\***

0 Up Votes | 0 Down Votes | 0 Net Votes

One, is to have a bus stop downtown, in Fort Pierce. As far as we all know, there is only one stop in the area. It is on US#1 across from the Federal Courthouse. As far as we can tell, few, if any, persons get off and on at that stop. However, if you were to provide a stop in front of the St. Lucie County Courthouse (218 South 2nd Street), or even better in front of the Clerk's Office (201 South Indian River Drive), I believe you would see increased ridership for all ride times. We average 10,000 to 15,000 persons a month through our doors. I am SURE the community would get a great benefit from this service. And this is just for day-to-day traffic. For the various festivals, farmer's markets, art shows and Sunrise Theater, I believe the TC Connector could partner with many of these functions and significantly increase awareness.

*\*Note: Idea submitted via email following the close of the dialogue.*

**Conclusion**

Through *"Join the Conversation for Improved Transportation Services in St. Lucie County,"* St. Lucie County, with the support of FTA, its partners and the ePolicyWorks team, successfully leveraged leading-edge crowdsourcing tools to engage local citizens in a virtual environment.

The online dialogue was a success on multiple levels. It represents a new approach to gathering ideas and feedback from key stakeholder groups and helped uncover what transportation services are needed in the community by those who use them. Through online voting, idea submission and commenting, the event enabled citizens to contribute their ideas and share valuable feedback, while serving as an effective outreach and awareness tool.

This metrics report simply summarizes the dialogue's results; the input and responses of the participants are currently being analyzed by St. Lucie County's Transportation Team and will ultimately be used to frame the agency's transportation policies, resources and partnerships to better meet the needs of the Treasure Coast community. Regardless of the outcomes that emerge, the online dialogue enabled St. Lucie County to employ a new approach to engaging stakeholders, while also boosting transparency and employing business practices that can support greater efficiencies and economies of scale. In summary, it helped St. Lucie County encourage creative thinking and improve communication to help refine community transportation policies and programs.