



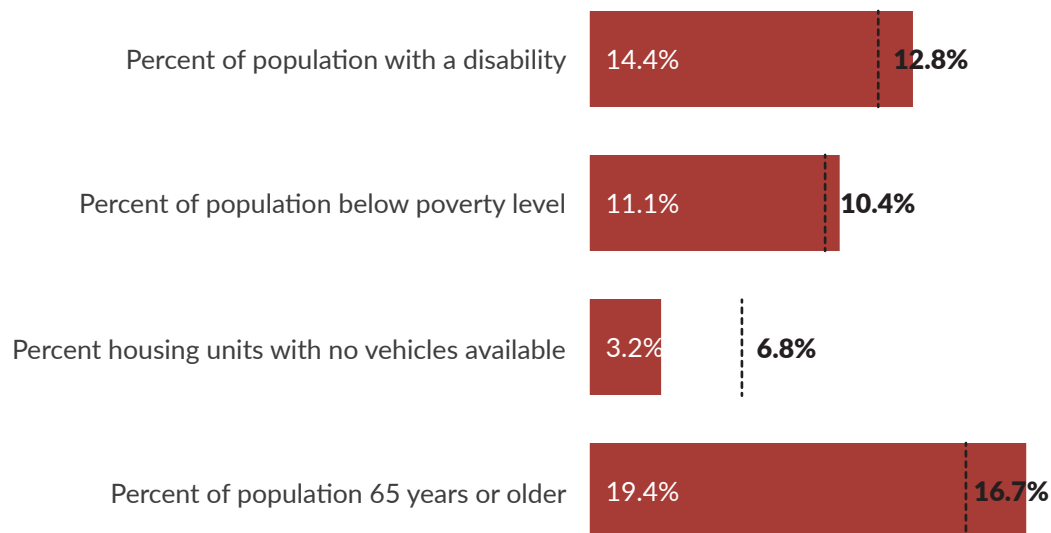
Huntington County

Statistics at a glance

Table 1. Huntington County and regional statistics

	Huntington County	11-county region
Total Population	36,572	797,071
Median Household Income	\$59,894	
Percent of population with a disability	14.4%	12.8%
Percent of population below poverty level	11.1%	10.4%
Percent housing units with no vehicles available	3.2%	6.8%
Percent of population 65 years or older	19.4%	16.7%

Figure 1. Huntington County statistics, compared with the 11-county region



Source: 2020 DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171) and 2022 American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates

Public and Specialized Transportation Services

Huntington County Council on Aging, Inc. (COA) directly operates public transportation through Huntington Area Transportation (HAT), and senior citizen programs and services. Transportation is provided throughout Huntington County and a portion of the Town of Markle in Wells County. There are no eligibility requirements to use the COA transportation services. Hours of operation are 4:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. HAT collects fares as well as accepting donations.

Table 2. Huntington County Council on Aging statistics

Total Vehicles in Fleet	Number of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles	Average Number of Vehicles Used per Day	Number of Full-Time Drivers	Number of Part-Time Drivers
16	15	16	3	12

Public Input Summary

A transportation needs assessment survey was advertised to the public online and in hard copy format. It was promoted in local print media, social media, flyers, at public meetings, on websites, and through communications from steering committee members with their peers, employees, and clients. The survey was open from May 19, 2023, through July 24, 2023. Public workshops in June 2023 and virtual meetings in July 2023 provided additional opportunities to discuss transportation with riders and potential riders. Across the region, 4,223 people participated in the public survey.

A total of 305 people from Huntington County participated. Forty-one percent of respondents who answered the survey from Huntington County were between 25 to 34, making it the largest group contributing to that county's results.

During the public and virtual workshops, participants were asked to answer the question: What is currently working? Some of the positive areas that participants indicated are working well include the following:

- Rural county transportation
 - There is public transportation available in the county via HAT
- Door to door service is available
- Service is available out of county, availability permitting

4,223 people from throughout the region participated in the public survey.

305 people from Huntington County participated.

9.6% were ages 65 and older.

30.26% have a disability that affects their ability to drive.

27.14% live with someone with a disability that affects their ability to drive.

28.04% were pregnant or had been pregnant within the last 18 months.

28.25% had a legal violation that was keeping them from driving.

Issues or Challenges

Workshop participants also shared the most common challenges for the existing transportation network. Common challenges mentioned during the meeting were as follows:

- Limited availability
 - Service not available or convenient
- Lack of knowledge about available service/misinformation
 - Many are unaware that a public transportation option exists in Huntington County
 - Misinformation on available public transportation options
- Lack of transportation service across county lines
- Lack of wheelchair/mobility device accessibility

Survey results support the challenges mentioned. Twenty-nine percent of respondents stated that there was no public transportation service available. Several open-ended responses received indicated that respondents were not aware public transportation service existed in Huntington County. A couple of the respondents stated that they were told the service was only available to Medicaid recipients. Almost thirty-five percent of respondents stated that lack of accessibility for wheelchair or other mobility device was an obstacle to using public transportation service. Overly a quarter of respondents indicated that an obstacle was that transportation service did not cross county lines. More than a quarter of respondents also indicated that having cheaper transportation services and having service where they live would improve their ability to go places.

Summary

The main issue in Huntington County seemed to be the lack of awareness as to what transportation options are available. Getting the word out that public transportation service is available to everyone in the county will help residents understand that service is not restricted to just certain individuals or Medicaid recipients.

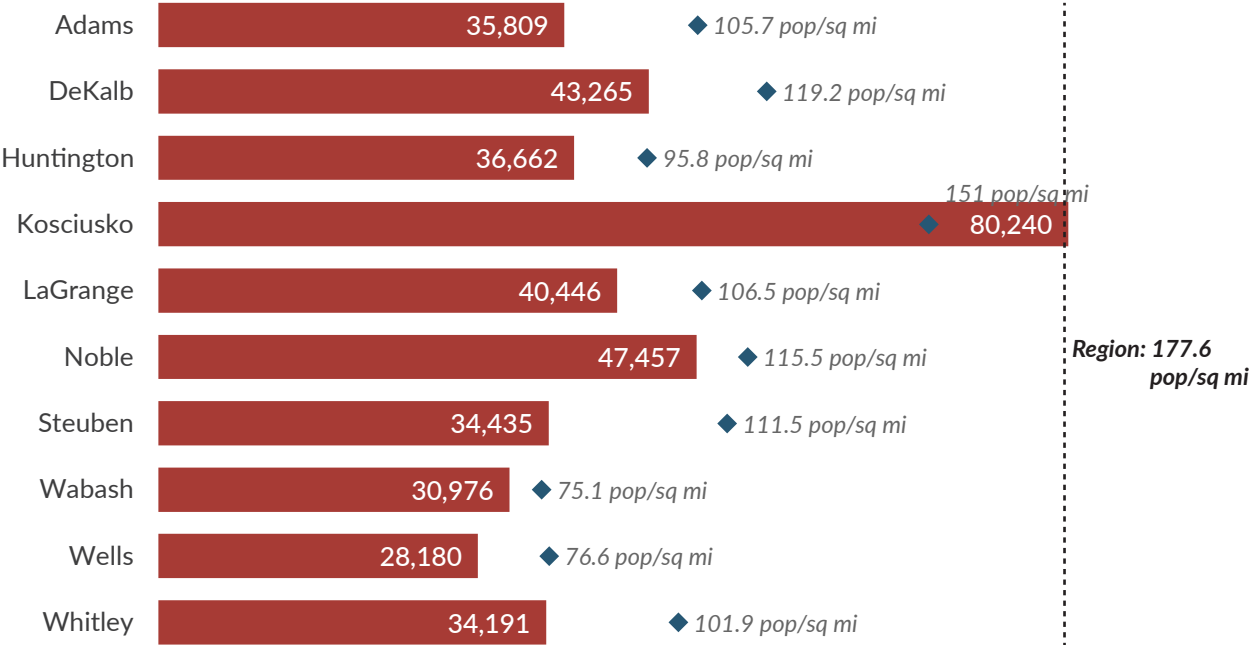


Demographics

Population

Figure 2 below shows the population for each county included in this transportation assessment. Huntington County is the sixth largest population in the 11-county region with approximately 36,572 people. The highest population density is in and around the city of Huntington ranging from 1,501–7,457 people per square mile. The rest of Huntington County has low population density ranging from 20–200 people per square mile. Individual county population density maps are included in Appendix C for reference.

Figure 2. Population and density by county



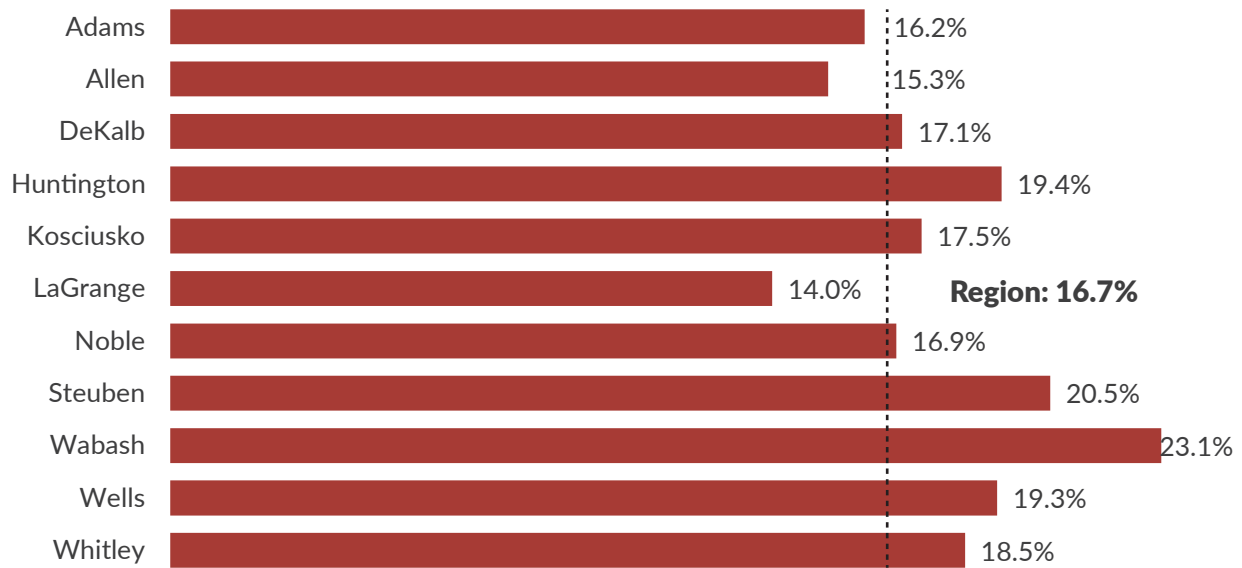
Source: 2020 DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)

Age

In rural communities, it is common for age to be used as an indicator of current and future transportation demand. That is because as a person ages, they are more likely to need and want alternatives to driving themselves. Older adults are also sometimes living on a retirement or social security income which makes public transportation a more affordable option than owning and operating a personal vehicle.

In Huntington County, about 19.4 percent of the population is 65 or older, the fourth oldest in the region. In four of the region's counties, 19 to 23 percent of the population is age 65 or older. LaGrange and Allen Counties have the youngest populations. Wabash, Steuben, Huntington, and Wells Counties have the oldest. Figure 3 illustrates the county-by-county percentages.

Figure 3. Percentage of population Age 65 and Older

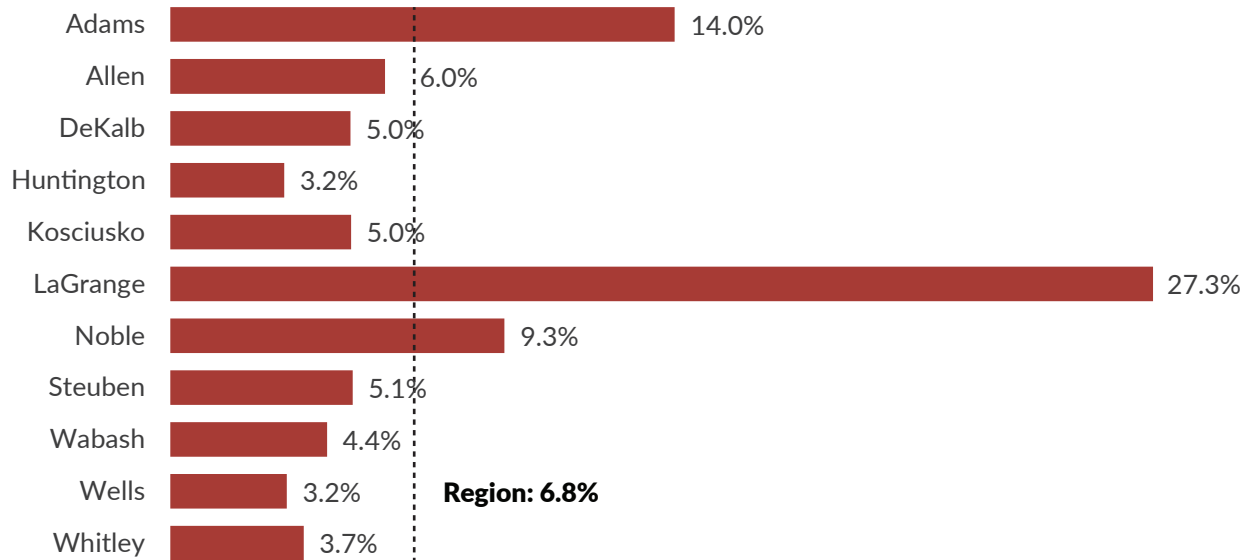


Source: 2020 DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)

Zero-Vehicle Households and Households Below Poverty

Households without access to a vehicle are highly likely to need transportation from a public or nonprofit agency. Huntington County is one of two counties in the 11-county region that has the lowest percentage of households without a vehicle (3.2 percent). LaGrange and Adams Counties has the highest percentage while the remaining counties have nine percent or fewer zero-vehicle households. A breakdown by county is provided in Figure 4.

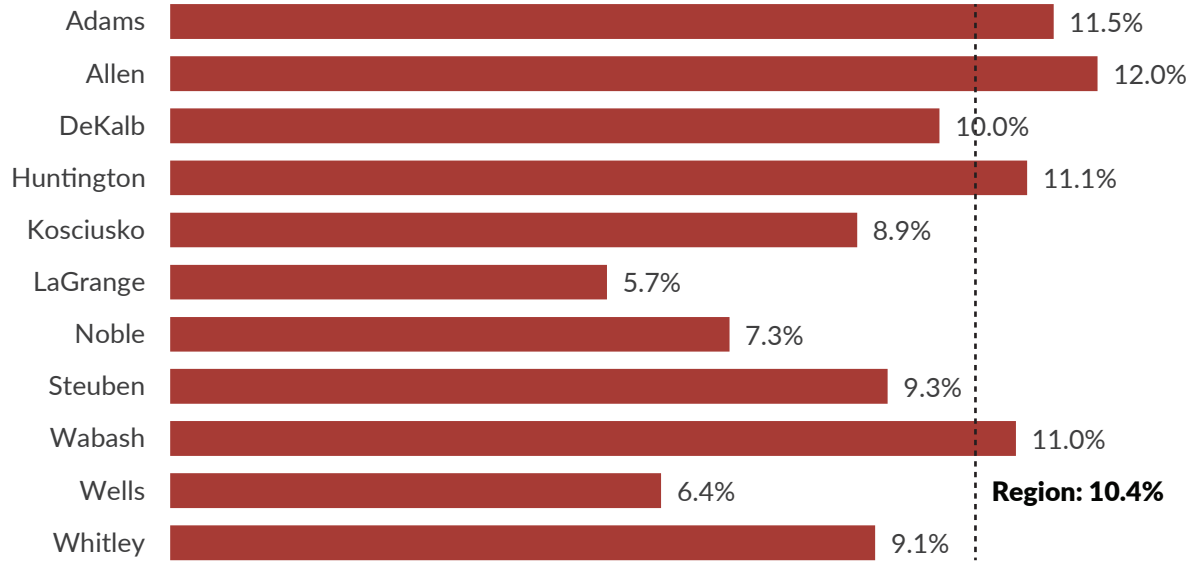
Figure 4. Zero-Vehicle Households



Source: 2022 American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP04

An estimated 11.1 percent of the population in Huntington County has an income below the poverty level, the third highest percentage in the region. Figure 5 shows the percentages of people living below the poverty level for the 11-county region.

Figure 5. Percent people below poverty level



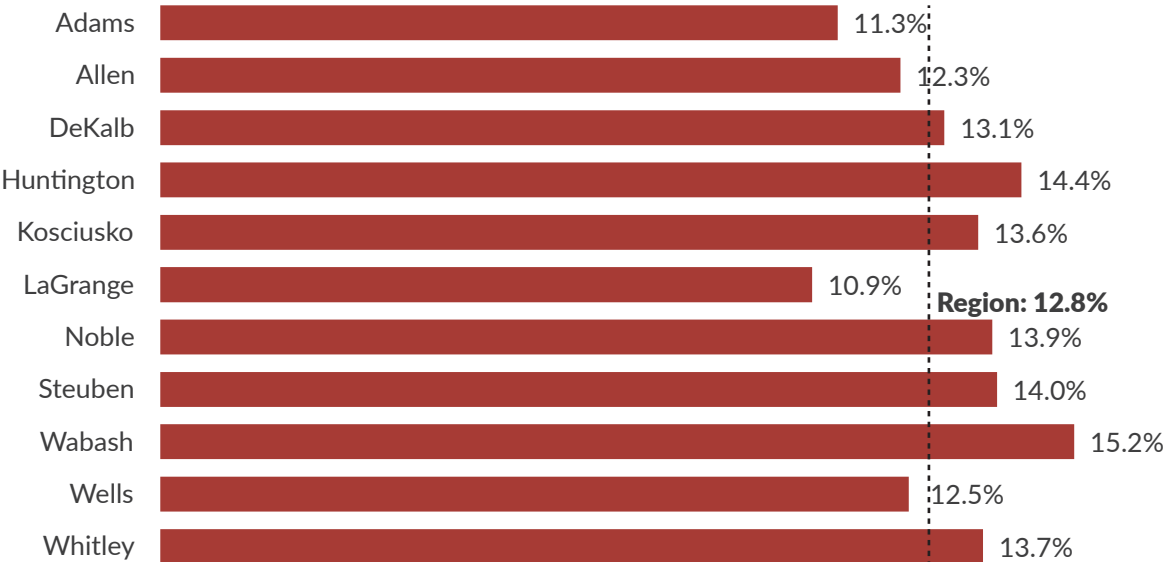
Source: 2022 American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table B17001



Individuals with Disabilities

In Huntington County, about 14.4 percent of the population has a disability, the second highest percentage, behind Wabash County at 15.2 percent. LaGrange County has the lowest rate, at 10.9 percent. In all other counties, eleven to fourteen percent of the population has a disability, as depicted in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Individuals with a Disability



Source: 2022 American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP02

Recommendations

Table 3 summarizes the recommendations and action steps pertinent to Huntington County. Complete information and a full breakdown of each recommendation and associated action steps/implementation responsibility can be found in the full Needs Assessment report.

Recommendation 3: Regional Scheduling/Dispatching Software Initiative

Recommendation 4: Assistance for Personal Vehicle Maintenance and Parts

Recommendation 6: Design a Regional Transportation Network

Recommendation 7: Vehicle Sharing Program

Recommendation 8: Increased NEMT Providers

Recommendation 9: Increase Participation in Medicaid Family Member and Associate Transportation Provider Program

Recommendation 10: Increase community outreach and education efforts to expand awareness and understanding of available transportation options.

Table 3. Recommendations tables

Recommendation #3	Action Steps
<p>Huntington County could participate in a regional scheduling/dispatching software. Since service availability was identified as a challenge, this initiative would help eliminate gaps within the region by expanding access to services between the counties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural transit providers implement broad use of block scheduling to enable more trip-sharing opportunities. • Rural transit providers would establish local permission as well as agreements between agencies to pick up trips that would otherwise go unserved. • Rural transit providers would establish the necessary policies, consistent driver training standards, and customer service procedures.
Recommendation #4	Action Steps
<p>Huntington County could participate in a program that assists working individuals with purchasing necessary parts to repair vehicles. The program would involve mechanics who volunteer time and/or offer reduced-priced maintenance. Individuals would submit an application and the lead agency would first explore that individuals' options for using public transit. Should the applicant have transportation needs beyond the service provided by any of the local public transit services, the application would then be taken into consideration and evaluated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a lead agency to administer the program and develop a board or committee for program establishment and fundraising. • Identify program parameters and policies. • Promote the program to potential funders. • Implement the program through partner non-profit agencies that will identify good candidates for the program. • Establish and measure program performance.
Recommendation #6	Action Steps
<p>Huntington County could participate in the 11-county regional transportation network initiative in response to INDOT's announcement to establish a regional rural transportation model through Indiana. This could help bridge service gaps and expand availability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene meetings of the Section 5310 and Section 5311 transportation providers in the region for the purpose of establishing the regional transportation network. Establish a regionalization committee. • Determine the most appropriate regional structure for the eleven counties that will provide the most opportunity for increased mobility throughout the region. • Identify a lead agency for the region and/or subregions. • Present regional structure to INDOT. • Submit regional Section 5311 grant application(s).

<p>Recommendation #7</p> <p>Huntington County could participate in a vehicle sharing program which would establish vehicle lease and rental programs so that providers and human service agencies could rent or lease vehicles from another provider when not in use by the owner.</p>	<p>Action Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify vehicles throughout the region that are idle on days or periods during the day. • Identify and establish an organization to manage the vehicle-sharing lease/rental program. • Develop lease/rental agreement. • Establish a vehicle lease/rental management agency. • Establish vehicle lease/rental rates at a level sufficient to support administration and management of the program.
<p>Recommendation #8</p> <p>Huntington County could participate in collaborative and coordinated regional efforts to review and evaluate current Indiana Medicaid brokerage requirements.</p>	<p>Action Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a list of contractual issues that are deterring providers from contracting with NEMT brokers. • Develop recommendations for contract revisions. • Meet with Indiana's NEMT brokers to present and negotiate contract revisions.
<p>Recommendation #9</p> <p>Huntington County could help promote increased participation in the Medicaid program wherein a family member or other person can drive Medicaid-eligible clients to medical appointments and in turn receive gas mileage reimbursement.</p>	<p>Action Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop information packet with instructions on how to enroll in the Indiana Medicaid Family or Associate Transportation Program. • Promote and provide education about the Indiana Medicaid family and associate transportation program. • Establish a program to assist, as needed, with the completion of the Medicaid Family Member or Associate Transportation Services Form.
<p>Recommendation #10</p> <p>Huntington County could help initiate promotion and marketing in order to increase community outreach and education efforts to expand awareness and understanding of available transportation options. This would be beneficial since one of the main issues voiced was that there was an unawareness of available service options or being told that service was only available to Medicaid recipients.</p>	<p>Action Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a public awareness of transit campaign with one-page information sheets about public transit service options, prices, hours, and how to schedule a ride in the local county; include a resource for information about multi-county rides or services in neighboring counties • Meet with community partners and tell them about the available transit options and encourage them to share information with clients and staff • Take the vehicle or set up a table at community fairs, festivals and events to promote transit • Coordinate with other regional transportation providers to develop a consistent message about using transit for multi-county trip needs