



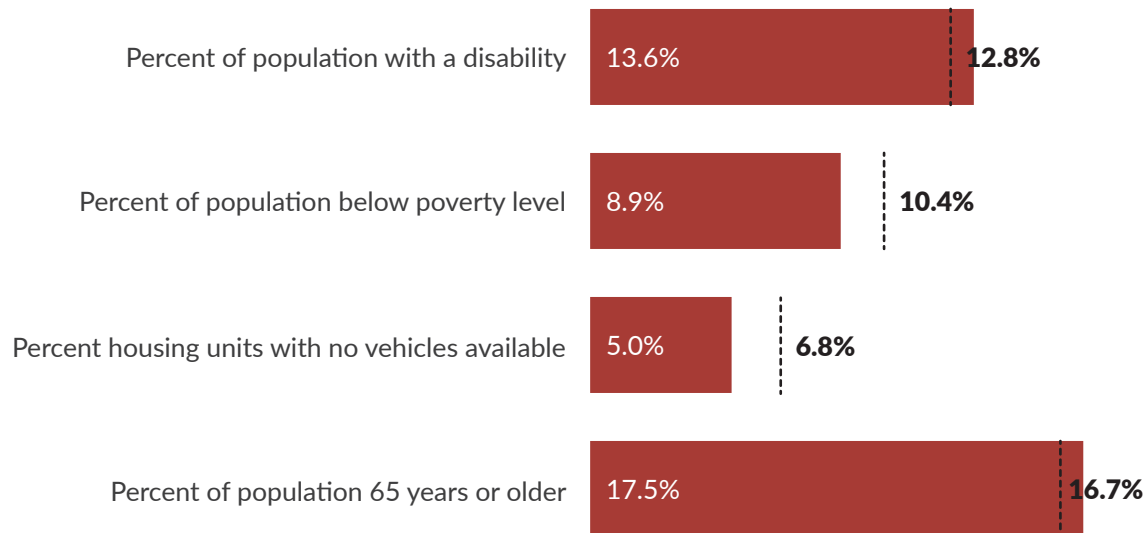
Kosciusko County

Statistics at a glance

Table 1. Kosciusko County and regional statistics

| | Kosciusko County | 11-county region |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Total Population | 80,151 | 797,071 |
| Median Household Income | \$70,945 | |
| Percent of population with a disability | 12.8% | 12.8% |
| Percent of population below poverty level | 10.4% | 10.4% |
| Percent housing units with no vehicles available | 6.8% | 6.8% |
| Percent of population 65 years or older | 16.7% | 16.7% |

Figure 1. Kosciusko 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

Kosciusko Senior Services provides handicapped-accessible van transportation to all of Kosciusko County. Rides are scheduled by calling the office, with 7 to 10 days advance notice requested. Priority rides are given to clients with medical and/or nutritional service needs. Service is provided to individuals 60 years and older and Kosciusko Senior Services is a Medicaid Waiver provider.

Kosciusko Area Bus Service (KABS) (aka Cardinal Services) directly operates demand response public transportation services in all of Kosciusko County. There are no eligibility requirements to use the service. Hours of operation are 5:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

Table 2. Kosciusko 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 |
|-------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 12 | 12 | 9 | 4 | 5 |

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 502 people from Kosciusko County participated. Thirty-two percent of respondents who answered the survey from Kosciusko 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:

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

502 people from Kosciusko County participated.

11.11% were ages 65 and older.

23.04% have a disability that affects their ability to drive.

22.51% live with someone with a disability that affects their ability to drive.

17.38% were pregnant or had been pregnant within the last 18 months.

20.80% had a legal violation that was keeping them from driving.

- There is public transportation in Kosciusko County via KABS
- The senior population has service throughout the county with Senior Services
- Seniors are receiving meals and are able to socialize
- There is Medicaid transportation and can transport to medical appointments throughout the state via KABS

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:

- Capacity constraints
 - There are long service/travel times
 - Taking an hour to go from Silver Lake to Warsaw
- Limited countywide transportation
 - KABS is only servicing certain areas of the county, particularly the Warsaw and Winona Lake areas
 - Areas like Syracuse in the northern part of the county are not being served
- Reliance on family or DSPs for door to door transportation
 - Only curb to curb service is available
- Driver and vehicle shortages
 - Or, high maintenance costs associated with the vehicles\
 - An open-ended response from an employer indicated cannot rely on public transit to get workers to work on time due to not enough drivers
- Service gaps
 - No weekend service (service with KABS runs Monday–Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.)

Survey results support the challenges mentioned, particularly the service area issue. Almost forty-five percent of survey respondents indicated that they do not use community or public transportation because bus service is not available or convenient to where they live and/or work. there is no community or public transportation service available. Another thirty percent of survey respondents stated that there are inconvenient bus schedules or routes. Twenty-eight percent of respondents indicated that lack of transportation affects their ability to shop for food.

Open-ended responses provided also support the issues or challenges raised:

- Lack of reliable, timely, dependable schedule of transportation in Warsaw
- Service is hard to access and does not fully service the area
- Unreliable to get work or college on time
- Need for on demand option
- Lack of properly designed intersections/roads for individuals using a wheelchair or mobility device
- No fixed route service

Summary

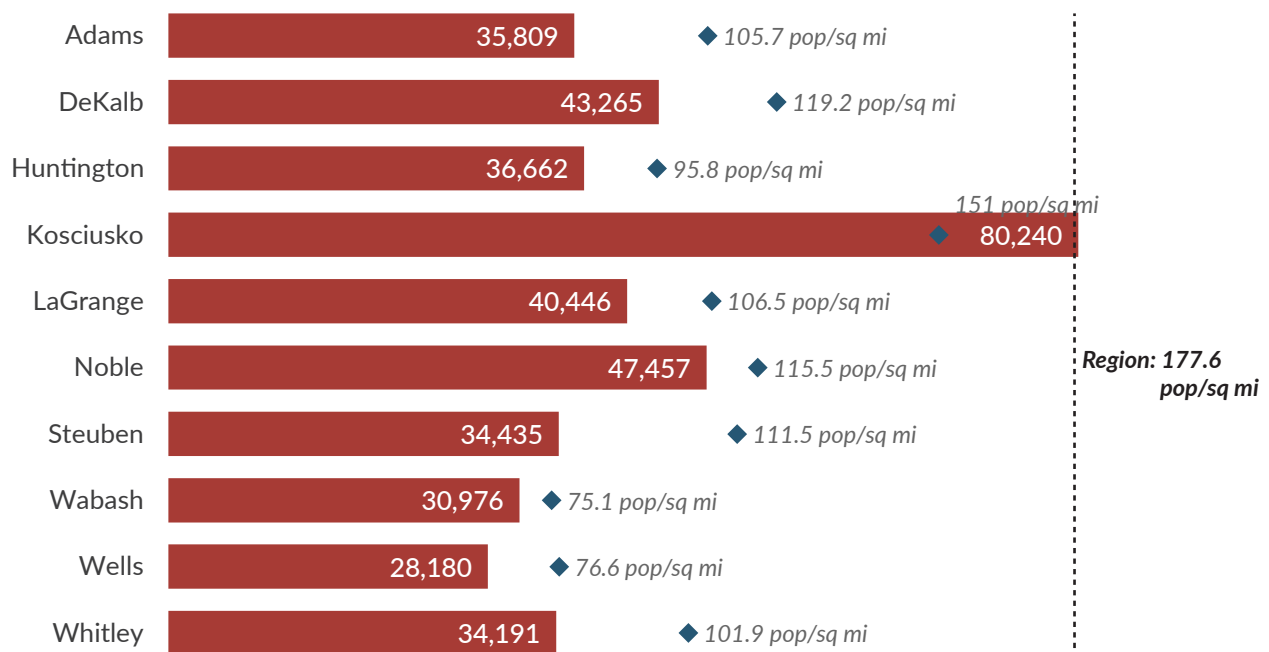
Service issues and capacity constraints were the top challenges raised in Kosciusko County.

Demographics

Population

Kosciusko County has the second largest population in the region with approximately 80,151 people. Allen County has the largest population in the region while Wells County has the lowest. Figure 2 below shows the population for each county included in this assessment. Population density in Kosciusko County varied from Warsaw, Winona Lake, Milford, and Syracuse with the highest population density per square mile at 2,501–5,390 people per square mile. The area surrounding around Warsaw and Winona Lake also have medium population density, between 1,251–2,500. The areas surrounding Lake Wawasee, North Webster, Barbee, Wa-Will-Away, Pierceton and Mentone have low to medium population densities. Individual county population density maps are included in Appendix C for reference.

Figure 2. Population and density by county



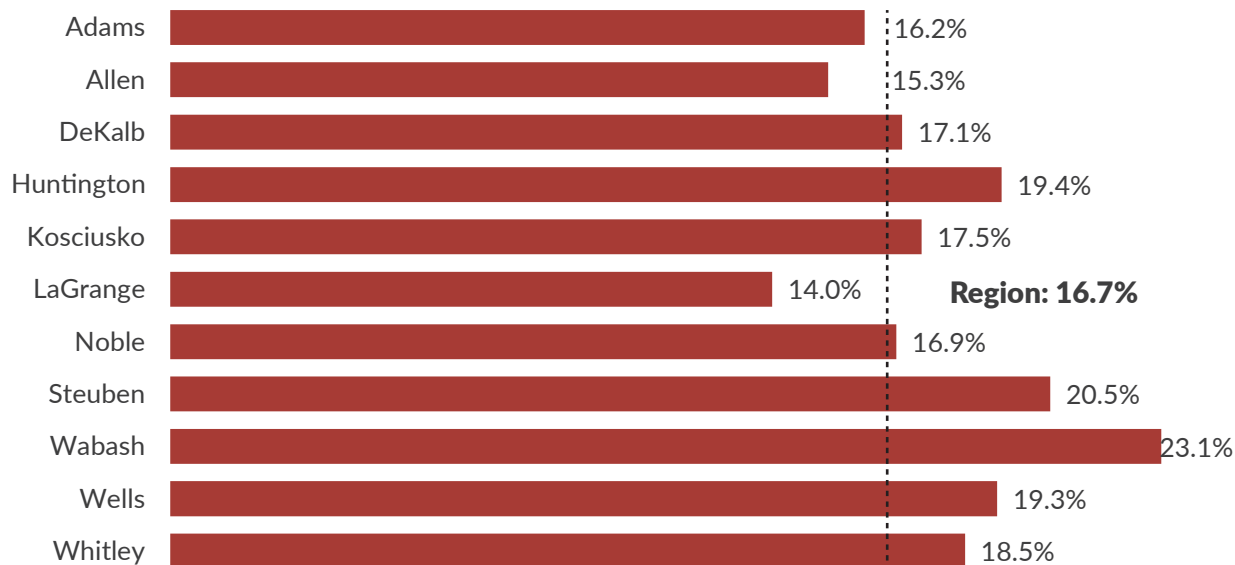
Source: 2020 DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)

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 Kosciusko County, 17.5 percent of the population is age 65 or older. LaGrange has the youngest population, at 14 percent older adults, while Wabash and Steuben have the oldest, with over 20 percent older adults. Figure 3 illustrates the county-by-county percentages.

Figure 3. Percentage of population Age 65 and Older



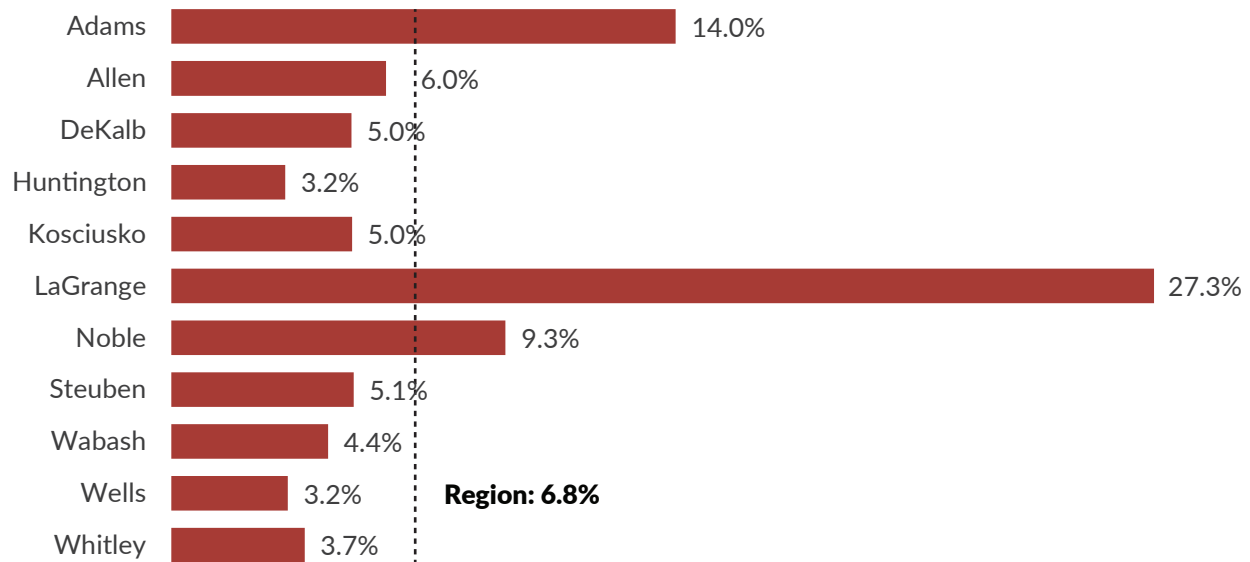
Source: 2020 DEC Redistricting Data (PL 94-171)



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. Five percent of households in Kosciusko County have no vehicle, as do DeKalb and Steuben counties. LaGrange County has the highest proportion of households without a vehicle, at 27.3 percent, followed by Adams County, at 14 percent. All other counties have ten percent or less zero-vehicle households. A breakdown by county is provided in Figure 4.

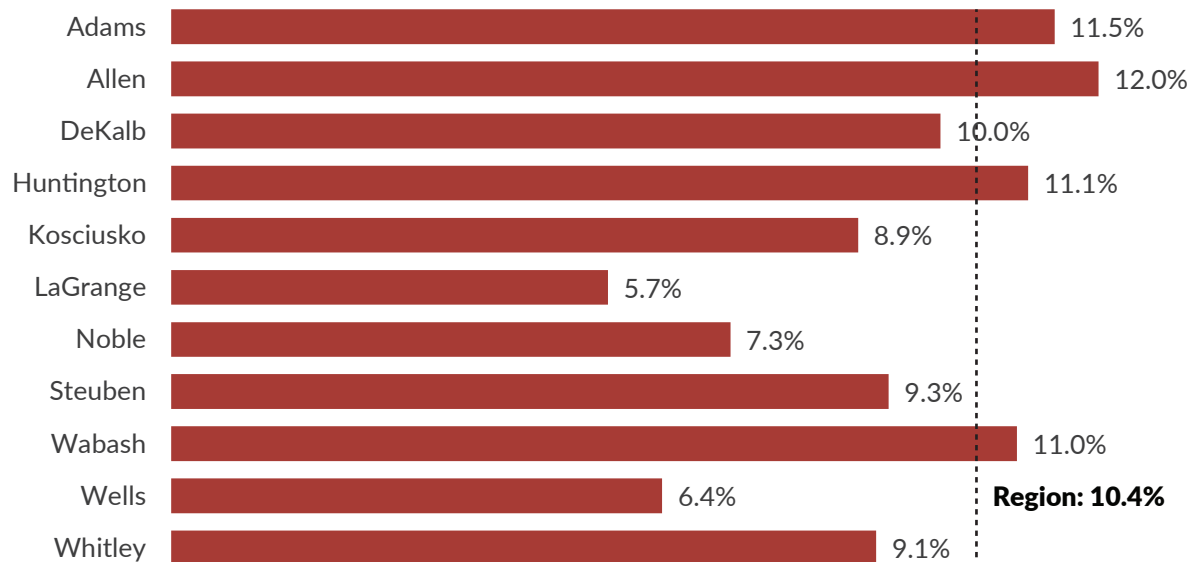
Figure 4. Zero-Vehicle Households



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

Kosciusko County has 8.9 percent of its population with income below the poverty level. Allen, Adams, Huntington, and Wabash counties have between 11 and 12 percent of residents with income below the poverty level. Figure 5 shows the percentages of household incomes below the poverty level for the 11-county region.

Figure 5. Percent people below poverty level

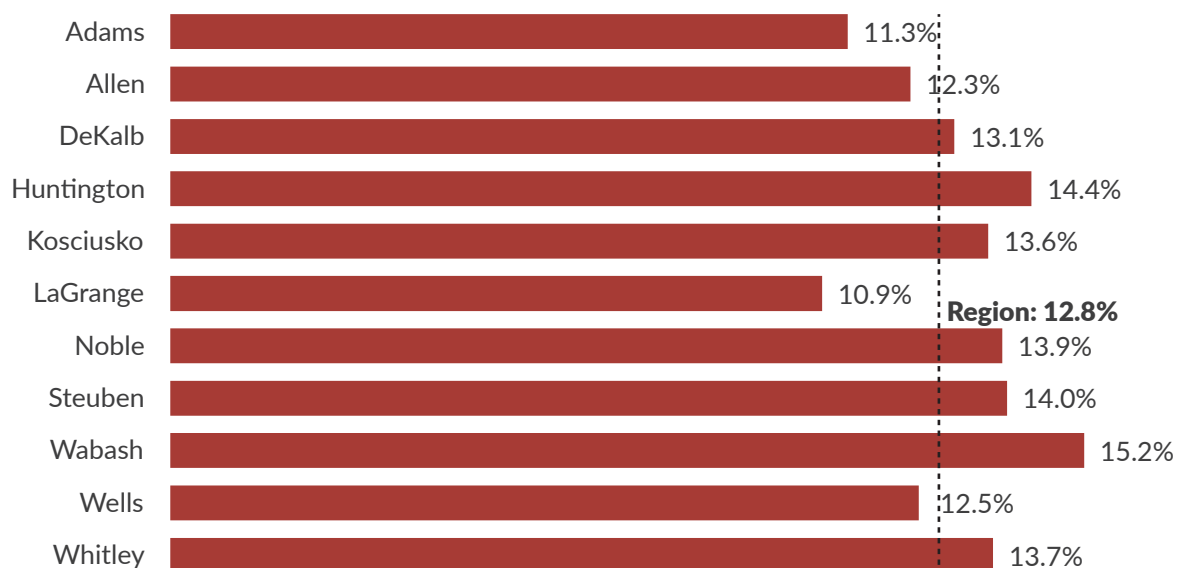


Source: 2022 American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table B17001

Individuals with Disabilities

In Kosciusko County, an estimated 13.6 percent of the population has a disability. In all other counties, twelve to sixteen percent of the population has a disability, with a regional rate of 12.8 percent, 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

The following recommendations listing and Table 3 summarizes the recommendations and action steps pertinent to Kosciusko 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 2: Kosciusko Area Bus Service (KABS) Fixed Route

Recommendation 3: Regional Scheduling/Dispatching Software Initiative

Recommendation 4: Assistance for Personal Vehicle Maintenance and Parts

Recommendation 5: Regional Carpool/Vanpool Program

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 #2 | Action Steps |
|---|---|
| <p>KABS currently provides demand response rural public transit service. Information gathered indicates that there is a strong potential for a successful fixed route or deviated fixed route service in Warsaw. Having a fixed route would allow passengers to access reliable service to employment, grocery shopping, social activities, etc. without having to make a reservation in advance.</p> <p>It is estimated that KABS would continue to dedicate three to four vehicles each day to provide countywide demand response service. Another two to four vehicles would be dedicated to operating the fixed route(s) in Warsaw. If KABS offers a lower fare for fixed route services compared to demand response, passengers will be encouraged to ride the routes. As more individuals ride the routes, the system will experience less demand for its scheduled (demand response) services. The addition of the fixed route service would relieve vehicle and driver capacity issues and enable KABS to provide service to areas of Kosciusko County that are currently not served, such as Syracuse and North Webster.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KABS initiates an evaluation of existing demand within Warsaw by evaluating current origins and destinations by time of day. Using that data and an evaluation of existing trip generators, KABS will design potential fixed route services. • KABS identifies policies and a schedule for the routes and trains drivers and staff. • KABS will pilot the fixed route services for a minimum of one year and up to three years. • KABS makes adjustments to the routes as necessary. • Continue operation of the successful routes following the pilot program. |
| Recommendation #3 | Action Steps |
| <p>Kosciusko County could participate in a regional scheduling/dispatching software. Since service limitations and capacity constraints were identified as challenges, this initiative would help eliminate service 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>Kosciusko County could participate in a program that assists working individuals with purchasing necessary parts to repair vehicles since close to a quarter of survey respondents stated having a more reliable vehicle would help improve ability to get to places. The program would involve mechanics who volunteer time and/or offer reduce-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 #5 | Action Steps |
| <p>Kosciusko County could participate in the expansion of the carpool/vanpool program by working with transportation partners to help meet the demand for employment trips during second and third shifts. This program would be developed in coordination with local employers and advertised to employees. This program could be operated either in-house or under contract with a private provider.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a lead agency and structure for the carpool/vanpool program (i.e., in-house or contracted). • Meet with local employers to identify the potential level of demand from employees throughout the region. Use this information to help determine the size of the program. • Implement vanpool/carpool services. |
| Recommendation #6 | Action Steps |
| <p>Kosciusko 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). |

| Recommendation #7 | Action Steps |
|---|--|
| Kosciusko 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. | <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. |
| Recommendation #8 | Action Steps |
| Kosciusko County could participate in collaborative and coordinated regional efforts to review and evaluate current Indiana Medicaid brokerage requirements. | <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. |
| Recommendation #9 | Action Steps |
| Kosciusko 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. | <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. |
| Recommendation #10 | Action Steps |
| Kosciusko 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. | <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 |