



Cortland County Mobility and Accessibility Plan 2026-2029



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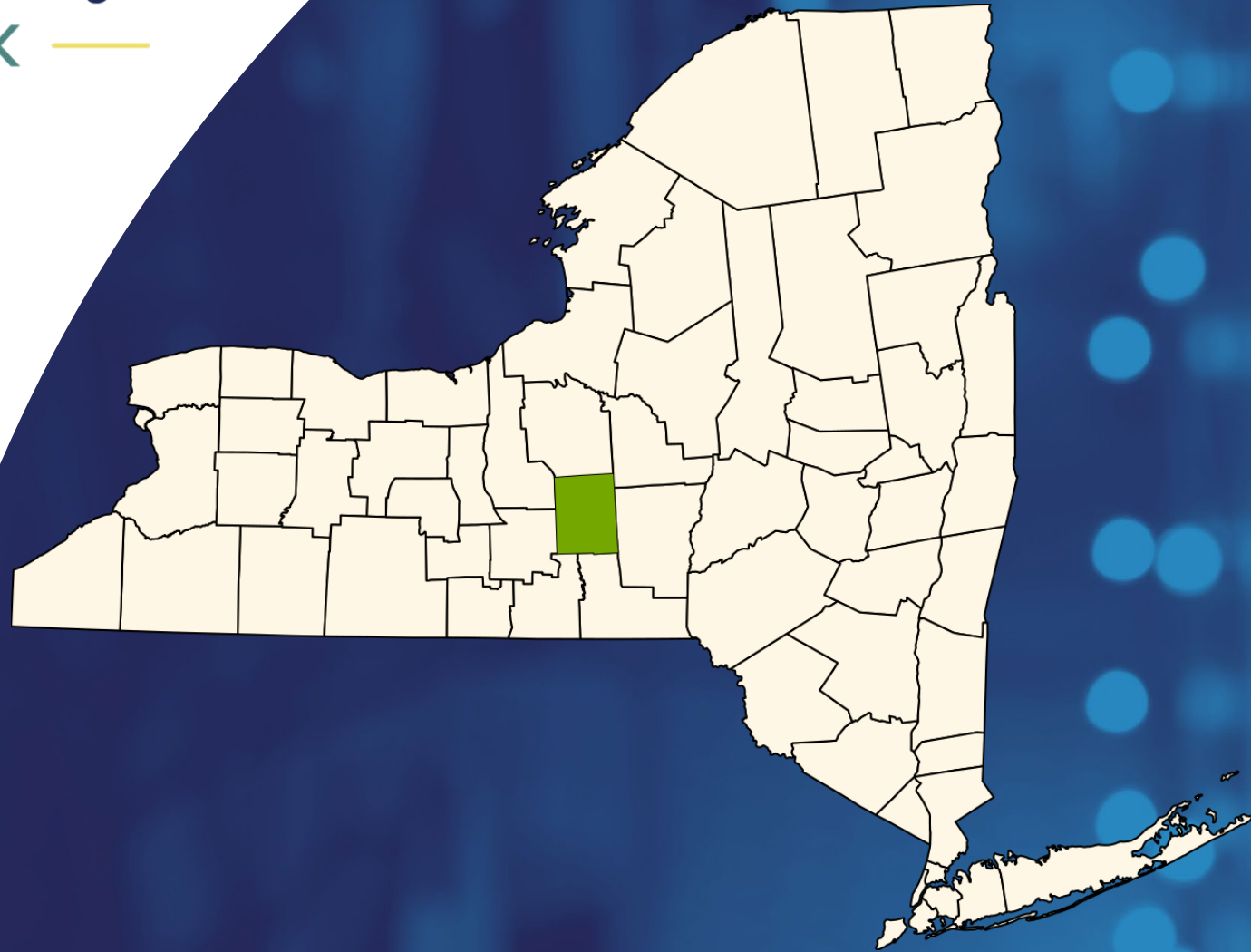




Cortland County

— NEW YORK —

- Rural New York County covering 501.55 square miles
- Population: 45,945
- Predominately agricultural, with vast farmlands.
- The County encompasses: 1 city, 3 villages, and 15 towns
- Median household income: \$67,527
- Poverty rate: 12.81%
- Quintessential rural community in Upstate New York
- Blend of natural beauty and small-town charm



Planning Phase



Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

TAC is comprised of over 15 key stakeholders and agencies works to improve transportation services for residents of Cortland County.



NADTC Subcommittee

Members of TAC that sit on the subcommittee specifically for this grant planning project.



Needs Assessment

Survey was developed and distributed to the partners and community December 2024 - March 2025. There were 237 responses.



Key Stakeholder Interviews

Five (5) Key Stakeholder interviews were completed with NADTC Subcommittee Members.



Outreach Events

Seven (7) community outreach events attended throughout the County.



Community Conversations

Four (4) focus groups were completed. Planning to host a Free Community Conversation and Dinner to engage community feedback in the barriers and gaps identified and proposed solutions at the end of August.

Transportation Advisory Committee & NADTC Subcommittee

Access to Independence

Office for Aging

Catholic Charities

Centro

Cortland Action Program of Cortland County

Cortland County Department of Social Services

Cortland County Health Department

Cortland County Mental Health

Cortland County Legislature

Cortland County Planning Department

Cortland County Mobility Management

Cortland County Grant Administration

Cayuga/Cortland Workforce Development Board

JM Murray Center

Seven Valleys Health Coalition

SUNY Cortland

Tompkins Cortland Community College

Barriers & Gaps Identified



Rural Service Limitations

- Many towns in Cortland County experience sparse or nonexistent public transportation, especially outside the Centro fixed-route and paratransit zones.
- The lack of coverage leaves rural residents with no reliable transit, perpetuating rural isolation.



Transportation Cost Burden

- Rising costs of gas, insurance, and car maintenance are prohibitive for many, especially for low-income households, which report the unavailability of affordable transport.



Lack of Awareness & Coordination

- A significant number of residents are unaware of existing services, such as CAPCO's Volunteer Driver Program and Office for Aging transportation vehicle.
- Service providers lack clarity on available mobility options, leading to underutilization of resources.



Missed Essential Trips

- Approximately 30% of survey participants reported missing a medical or essential appointment in the past three months to a lack of transportation.



Physical Infrastructure Barriers

- Frequent complaints centered on poor sidewalk conditions, inadequate snow removal, and high curbs, which inhibit safe access to bus stops, especially among older adults and those with mobility aids.



Over-Reliance on Informal Networks

- 44% of respondents rely on family or friends for rides, often without a backup option if unavailable.
- Many opt for personal networks over navigating an unfamiliar public transportation system, indicating high dependency on informal support.



Public Transit Accessibility Concerns

- Roughly 30% of survey respondents described fixed-route transit as confusing, unsafe, or inaccessible.



Medicaid Transportation Deficit

- The County lacks a sufficient number of Medicaid-approved transportation providers, resulting in service gaps for eligible individuals who struggle to access non-emergency medical trips.

Strategic Priorities, Solutions & Sustainability



Centralized Access to Mobility Information

Challenge: Many residents and service providers are unaware of the full range of available transportation resources. This lack of information leads to underutilization of services, missed trips, and inefficiencies across programs.

Strategy:

- Expand, strengthen and promote Way2Go Cortland's one-call, one-click mobility access hub to increase its visibility, usability, and community reach.
- Improve user experience on the way2gocortland.org website with updated trip planning tools, eligibility guides, and printable resources.
- Ensure multilingual content and accessibility for residents with disabilities.
- Continue offering direct phone-based assistance through trained staff.
- Promote the hub widely across agencies, clinics, and community centers.
- Provide training to local providers, caseworkers, and front-line staff on how to refer and assist residents using Way2Go Cortland.



Expand Medical & Essential Rides

Challenge: A significant portion of the population, especially older adults and individuals with chronic conditions, report missed medical appointments and delayed access to food and prescriptions due to transportation gaps and barriers.

Strategy:

- Expand volunteer driver programs.
- Develop a mobility management program designed to distribute ride vouchers for medical and essential trips, particularly targeting those ineligible for Medicaid transportation.
- Support partnerships with grocery stores, pharmacies, and local nonprofits to provide subsidized delivery services for residents who are homebound or have limited mobility.
- Launch mobility management pilot programs in collaboration with local health centers to proactively schedule transportation alongside appointments.

Strategic Priorities, Solutions & Sustainability



Enhance Rural First Mile/Last Mile Services

Challenge: Rural isolation continues to be a major barrier to mobility in Cortland County, especially in areas not served by fixed-route transit. Poor first mile/last mile connections inhibit transit use.

Strategy:

- Partner with Local Employers for Last-Mile Shuttles. Coordinate with major employers, and schools to support shuttle service from transit stops to job sites, especially in areas like City of Cortland, Village of Homer, Cortlandville or Village of Marathon.
- Launch “Transit Connector Days.” Pilot special scheduled ride days for rural hamlets (e.g., Tuesdays and Thursdays) with guaranteed trips into Cortland or regional hubs—great for grocery trips, medical appointments, or social services.
- Bike-Share or E-Bike Lending Program in Rural Villages. Offer access to e-bikes or regular bikes with designated loan stations near bus stops or community centers. Include helmets and safety gear. Great for students, older adults, or low-income residents.
- Integrate Greenways and Blueways into First Mile/Last Mile Planning. Leverage existing and planned trails, waterways, and recreation corridors to support transportation access.



Strengthen Public Transit Usability

Challenge: Even when transit is available, usability issues such as unclear signage, language barriers, and limited rider education discourage use, especially among new riders, older adults, and individuals with disabilities.

Strategy:

- Host “On the Move” sessions where mobility management staff accompany first-time riders to familiarize them with the system.
- Strengthen “Mobility Meet-up” program, designed to collaborate with agencies to develop a consistent presence in the community. In turn, community members learn to contact Mobility Management staff for questions regarding the transportation options available to them in Cortland County

Strategic Priorities, Solutions & Sustainability



Recruit & Retain Volunteer Drivers

Challenge: A shortage of available drivers limits the capacity of both volunteer and on-demand transportation options. Rural areas are especially impacted due to long distances and fewer willing drivers.

Strategy:

- Incentivize local residents to become Lyft or Uber drivers, particularly in rural areas, through outreach campaigns, signup events, and fuel or maintenance subsidies.
- Build partnerships with churches, schools, veterans' organizations, and civic groups to recruit volunteer drivers from trusted community networks.
- Provide training, background checks, insurance assistance, and scheduling software for volunteers to reduce barriers to participation.
- Create a volunteer driver recognition program to honor contributions and encourage retention.



Improve Accessibility, Walkability & Bikeability

Challenge: Inaccessible infrastructure, ranging from icy sidewalks, to missing curb cuts and disconnected bike routes, creates significant safety and mobility challenges, particularly for individuals using mobility devices, older adults, and parents with strollers.

Strategy:

- Conduct seasonal accessibility audits to evaluate sidewalks, curb ramps, bike lanes, bus stop areas, road and bike infrastructure and pedestrian crossings throughout the county.
- Partner with municipal departments to develop a prioritized repair and upgrade schedule for critical zones, focusing on high-need areas such as those near healthcare centers, senior housing and public transit hubs.
- Collaborate with the Cortland County Planning Department and municipalities to include accessible designs for walkability standards into new developments and renovations.
- Support the development of "Safe Routes to Transit" and "Complete Streets" plans that emphasize safety, equity, and accessibility for all modes, including people walking, rolling, biking or using transit.
- Expand multimodal and micro-mobility access. That includes support infrastructure for alternative transportation options.



Thank You



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www.way2gocortland.org



Way2Go Cortland

