

Chapter 1. Introduction

The Ontario County Planning and Transportation Departments retained the consulting team of Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, the IBI Group and Stuart Brown and Associates (“the Nelson\Nygaard” or “the study” team) to prepare a system and route-by-route analysis of Ontario County’s public transportation system, branded as County Area Transportation Services (CATS). The objective of the analysis was to identify where existing transit resources are distributed, how efficiently they operate and how effectively they meet public transportation demand. The study team also worked to identify key system and service deficiencies, potential improvements and ideas for funding.

To conduct this study, the Nelson\Nygaard team conducted a series of data collection and public outreach tasks including passenger surveys, counts of passenger boardings, stakeholder interviews, community meetings, surveys with non-riders as well as an analysis of demographic and land uses patterns in Ontario County. We reviewed and analyzed a variety of data provided by the Ontario County Transportation Department, including service schedules, daily dispatch records for dial-a-ride services, plus annual and historical data on system costs, ridership, and hours of service. Members of the study team also spent time in the field riding CATS buses, driving routes and talking to passengers. We combined data into both system-wide and route-by-route evaluations. Through these analyses, the Nelson\Nygaard team was able to identify system and service strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. Ultimately, information collected and evaluated as part of the analysis was discussed with staff from the Ontario County Planning and Transportation Departments and folded into a series of recommendations.

This report documents the research approach, key findings and recommendations developed over the course of the study. A series of appendices provide additional detail on the main data collection tasks. The draft final report is organized into seven chapters, immediately following this introductory section:

Chapter 2 Available Public Transportation Services – includes an overview of existing transportation services available for travel to, from and within Ontario County.

Chapter 3 Community Profile – describes the spatial distribution of key population groups and the predominant land use patterns in Ontario County.

Chapter 4 Outreach Effort and Needs Assessment – contains a summary of input received from community stakeholders, existing CATS passengers and members of the public. Findings from the outreach effort and combined with data gleaned from the Community Profile into a summary section highlighting needs and opportunities for public transportation in Ontario County.

Chapter 5 Individual Route Evaluations – presents evaluations of individual fixed-route and dial-a-ride services offered as part of the Ontario County Area Transit System (CATS). This section also includes preliminary improvement ideas.

Chapter 6 System Evaluation – highlights CATS funding levels, ridership trends and performance on key transit metrics. Data is shown for a three year period from 2006 to 2008.

Chapter 7 Recommendations – presents the recommended service improvements for both fixed-route and DAR services.