

Improving Public Transportation in Dunn, NC

- Dunn, NC uses the HARTS – Harnett Area Rural Transit System – public transportation system.
- Public transportation in Dunn, NC is **not well-suited for people who work outside the standard 9am-5pm shift** including essential grocery and healthcare workers.
 - HARTS operates Monday through Friday between 4am and 6pm.¹
 - HARTS recommends scheduling dial-a-ride services between 9am and 3pm.²
- Public transportation in Dunn, NC **does not accommodate grocery shopping**.
 - Grocery stores are open in the evenings and on weekends after HARTS ceases services.
 - Passengers are limited to two grocery bags on public transportation.¹
- Public transportation in Dunn, NC **does not allow for unexpected changes to schedules (e.g., for health emergencies)**.
 - Require 48+ hours' notice for dial-a-ride services.²
 - Pick-up times are subject to availability.¹
 - There is a cancellation fee if less than two hours' notice is given.²
- **Reform is needed** to make public transportation accessible in Dunn, NC and meet the needs of residents.

“...Here in Dunn, I feel like you still need a vehicle. You know, it's not like Raleigh where you can call Uber or a Lyft. You need a car.” 

– Case Manager at CommWell Health

Public Transportation is Public Health

- Public transit services provide transportation to individuals without access to personal vehicles (e.g., the elderly, children, individuals with disabilities).³
- Individuals are less likely to access health-promoting services (e.g., healthy food, preventative care) when they face barriers to transportation.⁴
- Increased access to nutritious food and healthcare services is associated with public transportation systems that are convenient, easy to navigate, and timely.⁵
- Public transportation is linked with improved safety and walkability,^{3,6,7} improved air quality,⁶⁻⁸ reduced noise pollution,^{5,7} and more equitable access to goods and services by residents.^{3,7,9}
- A robust public transportation system in rural areas has been linked with improved local infrastructure, boosted local economy, and improved community connection.¹⁰



Photo retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/Harnett-Area-Rural-Transit-System-HARTS-1528452074123188/photos/1576530759315319>

Challenges of Public Transportation in Rural Communities

- Low population density in rural areas can lead to low ridership and a smaller tax base upon which to build infrastructure for public transportation.^{11,12}
- Suburban or rural sprawl increases distances and presents an obstacle to an efficient public transportation system.^{11,12}
- Limited political support and low public awareness of rural public transportation systems can impede use and present obstacles to securing funding.¹¹

“There should be more resources for people who don’t have cars or other transportation, because there are some places that you can get to, but you’re going to have to maybe walk another mile to get to that.”



– Case Manager at CommWell Health

Five Recommendations to Improve Public Transportation in Dunn, NC:

1. Service hours should be extended – keep transit running into the evenings (e.g., 8:30pm).
2. Accommodations for passengers should be broadened – e.g., allow grocery bags on transit.
3. Deviated fixed route bus lines should be added or expanded – in partnership with residents, determine key stops and implement hybrid fixed routes with a demand response component during designated hours.
4. The HART website should be updated to improve advertising and accessibility.
5. HART should consider creating a mobile application to monitor bus routes in real time.

Three Initiatives to Support:

1. Support expanding funding from the state rather than the county – the federal government only allocates about 11% of transportation grant funding to rural areas even though approximately 20% of the U.S. population lives in rural areas.¹³
2. Support improvements to infrastructure around designated public transportation stops (e.g., sidewalks, bike paths, bus shelters) to increase walkability and promote awareness of routes.
3. Encourage a robust advertising campaign to increase local knowledge around existing and improved services and promote use of public transit in Dunn, NC.

“I’ve been transporting patients from day one. I travel anywhere from 75, 80 miles roundtrip, a lot of times. I serve about five counties and work with...over 100 transportation clients.”



– Service Coordinator at CommWell Health



Scan for References