

Section XI. SUPPORTIVE SERVICE

The Union County American Job Center coordinates various statewide and local supportive service resources to assist Union County job seekers throughout their participation in to-work activities. WIOA funding prioritizes such support services to “hardest-to-serve” populations, particularly the WorkFirst and Out-of-School populations.

Support services include, in many cases, wages or stipends, depending on eligibility and program offerings to assist the job seeker economically while participating in training. Non-financial support available to most customers includes, but not limited to:

- Restoration of driver's licenses (if the loss is not due to criminal offense)
- Expungement of records
- Clothing allowance/specialty clothing needs/uniforms/shoes
- Tool kits/work kits
- Medical accessories/blood pressure kits
- Examination and Certification fees
- Transportation needs, including car repair
- Immunization shots if needed (for child care trainees).

Each job seeker is assigned a case manager who is responsible for addressing current or emergent needs relating to training or employment. Lead among these needs is transportation, housing, and child care.

Transportation

Public transportation is critical to mobility in Union County. One in nine households in Union County does not own a car, and 10% of the population commutes to work using public transportation. Union County is well served by multiple transit networks, including rail, bus, and Paratransit. Bus and rail services are concentrated at the eastern end of the County and along a small part of the western edge. The train service runs primarily east-west and north-south. The bus route network is structured to focus on travel to and from Elizabeth, Newark, and New York City.

There is a fair amount of transit service within Union County, but routes are not always available where and when American Job Center job seekers need to access them; as such, the services are considered inadequate. In Union County, routes operate primarily along the major highways and thoroughfares of the region. This limits the extent to which residential concentrations have access to these routes, as many areas of the communities are a considerable walking distance to the major routes on which this service is operated. The amount of

service available to New York and destinations outside of the County is considerable.

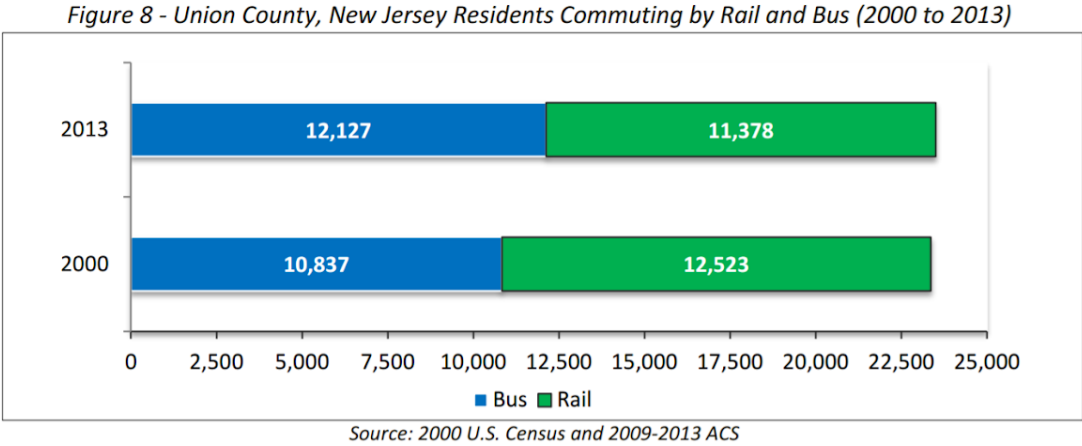
Not surprisingly, the areas which show the highest need for public transportation services are those areas with the highest concentration of population, highest rates of unemployment, persons aged 65 or older, persons with mobility limitations, and persons with a lack of access to private automobiles. That is clearly in the areas around Elizabeth, Union Township, Roselle, Roselle Park, Linden, Hillside, in the eastern portion of the county, and Plainfield, located in the western portion of the county.

2014 Average Daily Rail Boardings by Line in Union County, New Jersey

Northeast Corridor; North Jersey Coastline		Raritan Valley Line				Morris & Essex Line	
Station	Avg. Daily Boardings	Station	Avg. Daily Boardings	Station	Avg. Daily Boardings	Station	Avg. Daily Boardings
North Elizabeth	553	Union	1,369	Westfield	2,491	Summit	3,736
Elizabeth	3,843	Roselle Park	856	Fanwood	967	New Providence	539
Rahway	3,245	Cranford	1,349	Netherwood	520	Murray Hill	547
Linden	2,249	Garwood	102	Plainfield	861	Berkeley Heights	511

Data Source: NJ TRANSIT

Transportation is probably the most widespread obstacle for job seekers in Union County. Navigating to varied program activities using public transportation stretches the day considerably, especially our WorkFirst NJ population. Fortunately, Union County does provide financial support for transportation through TANF sources. Bus passes are also available if eligible.



Housing

In a recent workgroup assembled to discuss various barriers to training participation, American Job Center Staff clearly place housing as the second impediment in the voyage to self-sufficiency, particularly with the re-entry population.

Many ex-offenders are not eligible for public housing assistance. "It's closed by federal law to anyone who's committed arson or a drug offense at a public housing property, or required to register for life as a sex offender. But most local authorities are stricter than HUD about criminal records. And even those that are more liberal have waiting lists. In Union County, it's six months." (UC Transportation Master Plan 2016).

Union County does not have any emergency shelters (which sometimes have their own rules about ex-offenders) one might use on an interim basis.

Child Care

There are presently approximately 14,576 children receiving paid child care in Union County. Of those, 5,490 are TANF children. Approved Homes care for the majority of infants and toddlers. Centers care for the majority of school-age children. As children get older, parents move them from home-based to center-based child care.

Conclusions from a recent study suggest that funding is critically insufficient. The report states that there is very strong agreement among child care stakeholders that current reimbursement rates are not adequate to provide for quality child care. Delays in the voucher system create financial hardships, and there is an anticipated shortfall of over 3,000. Furthermore, financial incentives for quality specialized services and flexible child care are absent.

S-28 Considering the success of the Workforce System in addressing its customers' training and employment needs, the System will increase its outreach efforts with state and regional agencies to resolve obstacles faced by its trainees around transportation, housing, and child care.
(Aligned with Goal 2- American Job Center Integration with Goal 4- Expanded Access)

PROGRESS Regarding Outreach

Increasing our reach into the community has always been a stated objective of our Board. There are pockets of our community out of reach unfamiliar with the AJC services. There are specific groups, even in highly populated neighborhood where our core

services are offered, which are **not actively engaged** in, or benefiting from, workforce services. Setting up an AFFILIATE partner program and advancing the notion of AFFILIATE partner status will increase the visibility of AJC across the county and enable job seekers and employers to recognize and participate in the American Job Center system through the work of partner agencies with which they may be more familiar and, in turn more comfortable. Affiliate Partners will be acknowledged as such and join the AJC through a memorandum of understanding that details specific AJC activities, processes that were offered, in the past, only at the two AJC Centers in Plainfield and Elizabeth. The Board realizes that training would be required to effectively bridge services with affiliate partners and is fully supportive of providing resources necessary for success.