



CENTRAL ARIZONA GOVERNMENTS

# **Pinal County Coordinated Mobility Gap Analysis**





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# Abbreviations

<b>ACS</b>	American Community Survey
<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>ADOT</b>	Arizona Department of Transportation
<b>AHCCCS</b>	Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System
<b>ATTAIN</b>	Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation
<b>CACDD</b>	Central Arizona Council on Developmental Disabilities
<b>CAG</b>	Central Arizona Governments
<b>CART</b>	Central Arizona Regional Transit
<b>CG</b>	Casa Grande
<b>COG</b>	Council of Governments
<b>FTA</b>	Federal Transit Administration
<b>GRIC</b>	Gila River Indian Community
<b>HOPE</b>	Helping Ourselves Pursue Enrichment
<b>ICAM</b>	Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility

<b>LEP</b>	Limited English Proficiency
<b>MAG</b>	Maricopa Association of Governments
<b>MET</b>	Maricopa Express Transit
<b>MPO</b>	Metropolitan Planning Organization
<b>NAU</b>	Northern Arizona University
<b>NTD</b>	National Transit Database
<b>PHC</b>	Pinal Hispanic Council
<b>PMT</b>	Project Management Team
<b>SaaS</b>	Software as a Service
<b>SCMPO</b>	Sun Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization
<b>TNC</b>	Transportation Network Company
<b>TWG</b>	Technical Working Group
<b>QCO</b>	Qualifying Charitable Organization

# 1. STUDY OVERVIEW

Central Arizona Governments (CAG) is leading the Coordinated Mobility Gap Analysis study in coordination with Pinal County, the Sun Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization (SCMPO), and the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG). CAG is one of Arizona’s six regional planning districts and provides regional planning services to Gila and Pinal counties.

## 1.1 Purpose and Need

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) administers a program aimed at removing barriers to transportation services and expanding mobility options for seniors and people with disabilities. This program is authorized under the U.S. Code Section 5310 and is commonly referred to by its section number. The 5310 program provides formula funding to states and designated recipients for this purpose. Funds are apportioned according to the state’s share of senior and disabled populations.

The purpose of the Coordinated Mobility Gap Analysis study is to understand the transportation needs of seniors and people with disabilities in Pinal County by reassessing the current 5310 program and other mobility providers, identifying the gaps between current services and needs, and prioritizing strategies to address those identified gaps at a sub-regional level using a data-driven approach. The study will look at not only gaps in need but also the existing financial gap in meeting those transportation needs.

The results of the study will:

The results of the study will also support the Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan updates for CAG, SCMPO, and MAG.

As the average age of Pinal County residents increases and the share of residents with disabilities grows, providing mobility services will become increasingly important. The county’s population continues to grow across dispersed residential, employment, and service centers and fixed-route transit service is limited. Pinal County residents need dedicated transportation alternatives for trips to medical appointments, grocery stores, prescription pickups, and shopping.

## 1.2 Study Area

The study area encompasses all of Pinal County (*Figure 1*). The primary population centers within the county include the incorporated communities of Maricopa, Casa Grande, Apache Junction, and Florence, as well as unincorporated San Tan Valley. Other incorporated communities include Coolidge, Eloy, Kearny, Mammoth, and Superior.

Smaller, unincorporated communities such as Arizona City, Dudleyville, Gold Canyon, Oracle, Queen Valley, and San Manuel are also located within Pinal County. The study area also includes native nations such as the Ak-Chin Indian Community and the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC).

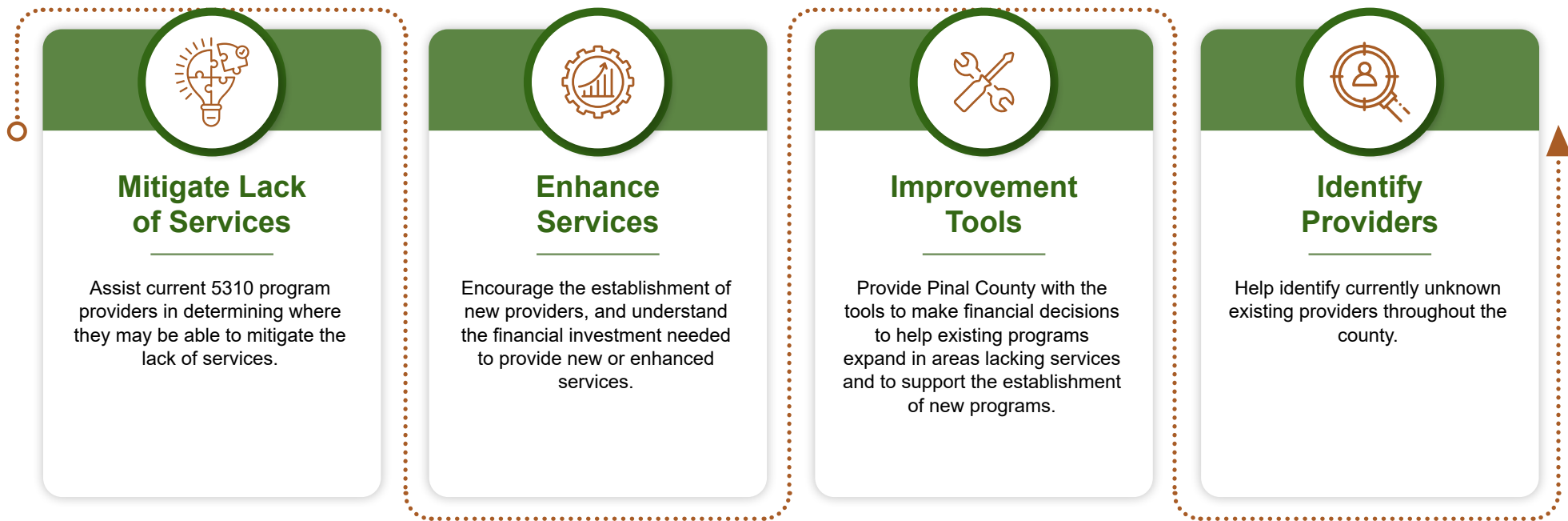
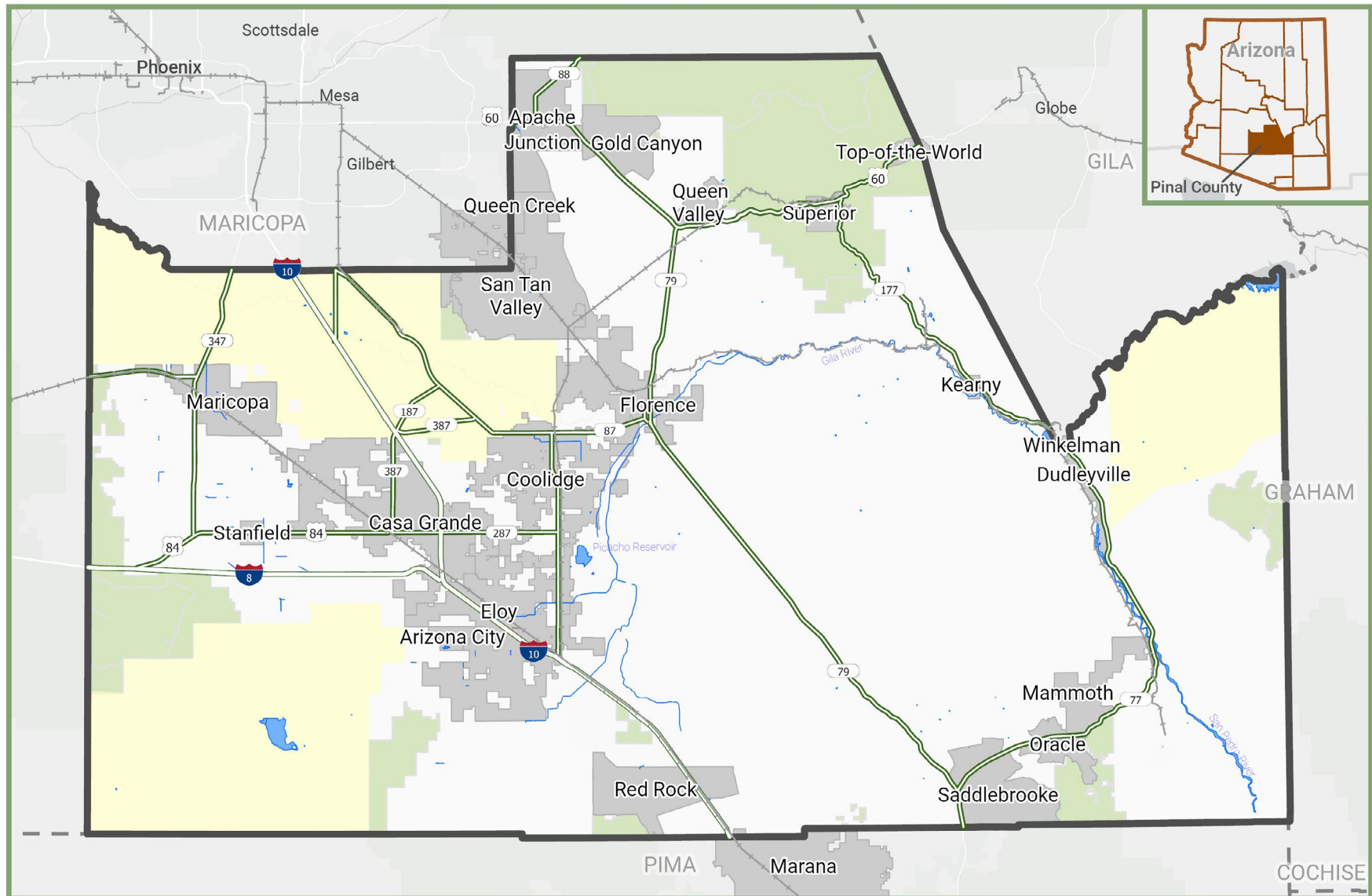


Figure 1: Study Area



Study Area Map

**Legend**

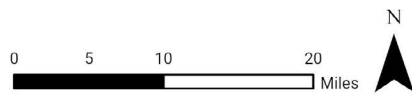
**Roads**

- State and U.S. Highways
- Interstate
- Railroads

**Boundaries**

- Arizona Counties
- Pinal County (Study Area)
- City/Town/Community

- Native American Communities
- Water
- National Forests and Parks



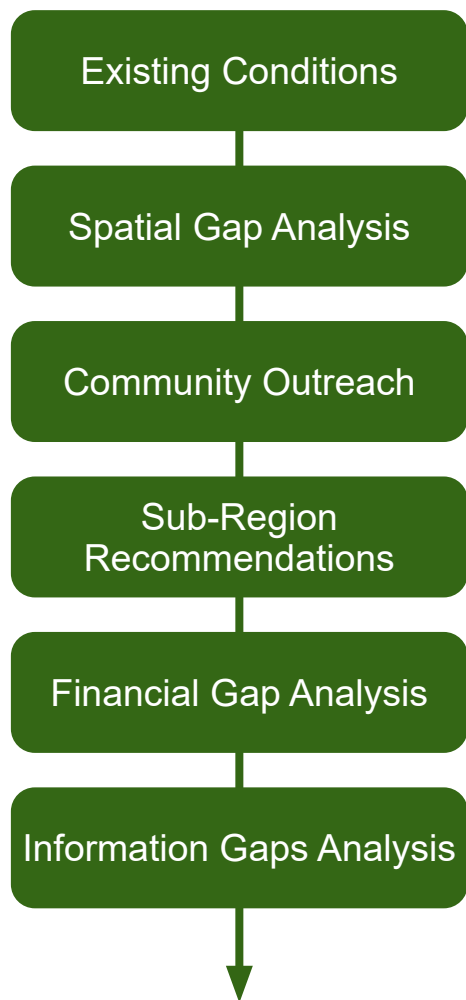
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, TIGER/Line Shapefiles (2023)

### 1.3 Process

This study was developed with the guidance of a Project Management Team (PMT) that includes CAG, SCMPO, Pinal County, and MAG. In addition to the PMT, a Technical Working Group (TWG) was established to provide input based on technical experience with Coordinated Mobility services and local knowledge. The TWG includes representatives from local cities and towns, regional planning agencies, and current 5310 providers. This study also incorporates community outreach in the form of stakeholder engagement and public surveys to inform this analysis. An overview of the study process is shown in *Figure 2*.

*Figure 2.*

**Figure 2: Study Process**



## 2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

According to CAG’s latest population estimates, the population of Pinal County was 483,944 in 2024. While predominately rural, portions of Pinal County are booming with new growth and have become part of the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale Metropolitan Statistical Area. Additionally, the county includes parts of surrounding Native nations, including the Tohono O’odham Nation, GRIC, the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation, and the Ak-Chin Indian Community.

### 2.1 Socioeconomic Conditions

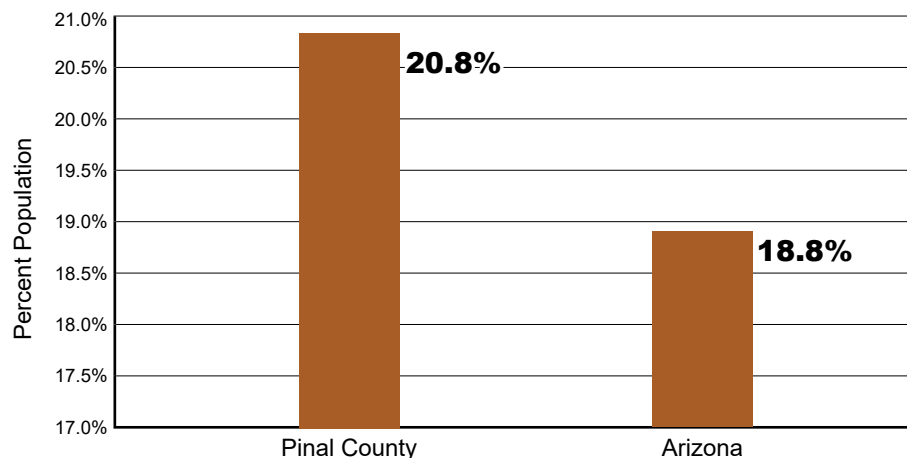
Data from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2022 5-year estimates were taken at the census block group level to map the elderly and disabled populations throughout the county. This evaluation also identified particular areas of interest with high propensity for use of Coordinated Mobility services—areas with both high rates of senior residents and high rates of persons with disabilities.

#### 2.1.1 Senior Populations

The total senior population of Pinal County is approximately 90,000<sup>1</sup>. This represents about 20.8 percent of the total county population and is higher than the overall Arizona rate of 18.8 percent (*Figure 3*). The highest rates of senior populations are found in the northern communities near Apache Junction, as well as central and southeastern communities such as:

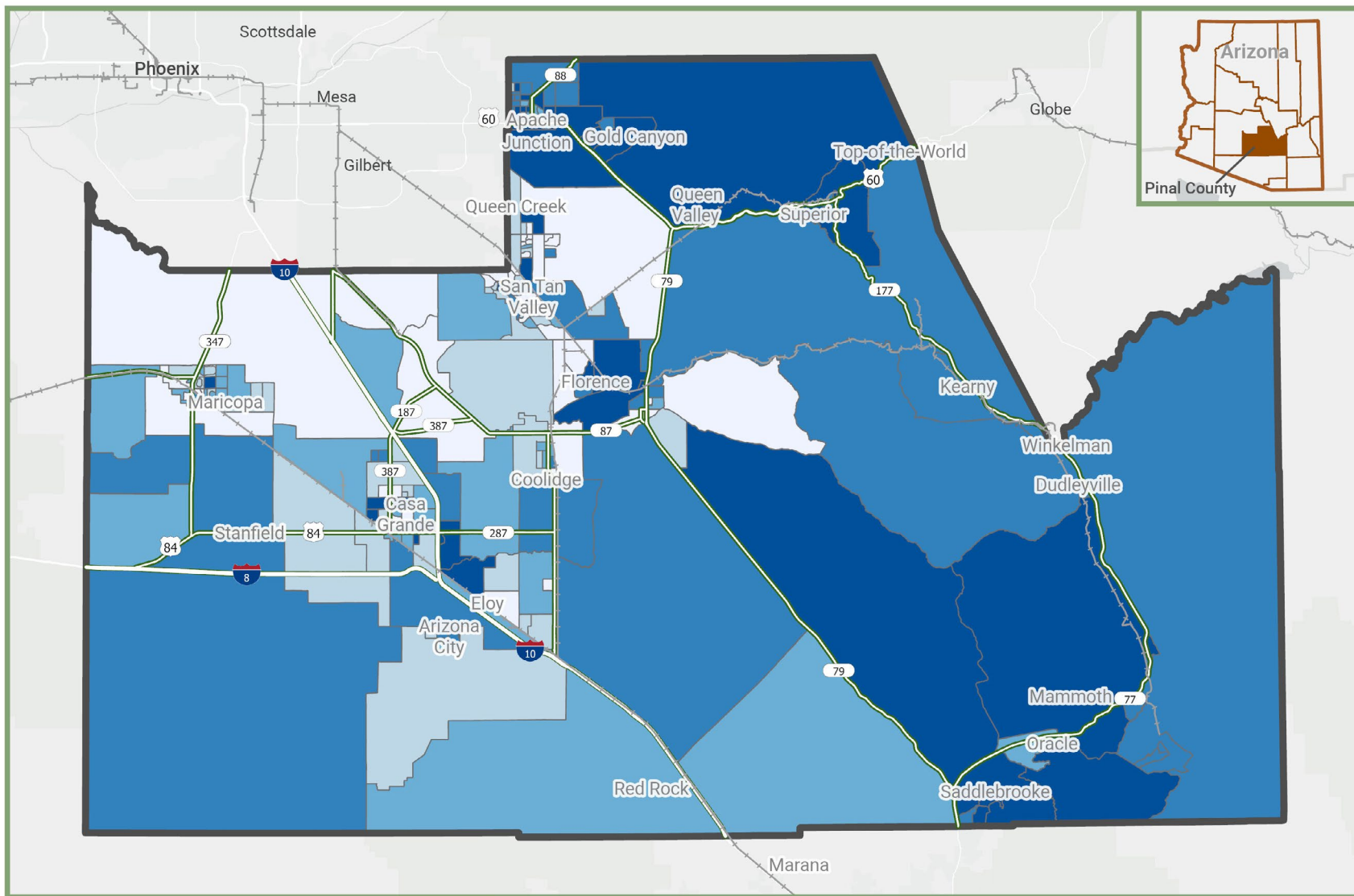
- Florence
- Casa Grande
- Eloy
- Mammoth
- Saddlebrooke

**Figure 3: Share of Senior Population in Pinal County**



<sup>1</sup> American Community Survey, 2022.

**Figure 4: Percentage of Senior Population**



Percentage of Senior Population

**Legend**

**Roads**

- State and U.S. Highways
- Interstate
- Railroads

**Percentage of Senior Population**

- 36.4% - 90% (Very High)
- 18.9% - 36.3% (High)
- 13.6% - 18.8% (Average)
- 8.7% - 13.5% (Low)
- 0% - 8.6% (Very Low)



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates B01001, B23024 (2018-2022)

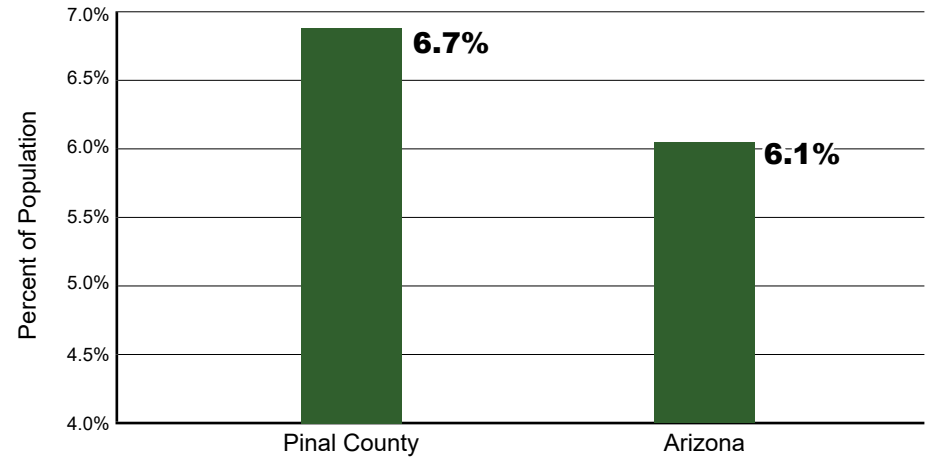
## 2.1.2 Population with Disability

Over 29,000 residents in Pinal County have an employment disability.<sup>2</sup> This represents about 6.7 percent of Pinal County's overall population, which is close to the overall Arizona rate of 6.1 percent (*Figure 5*). *Figure 6* maps the share of people with disabilities by block group throughout the county.

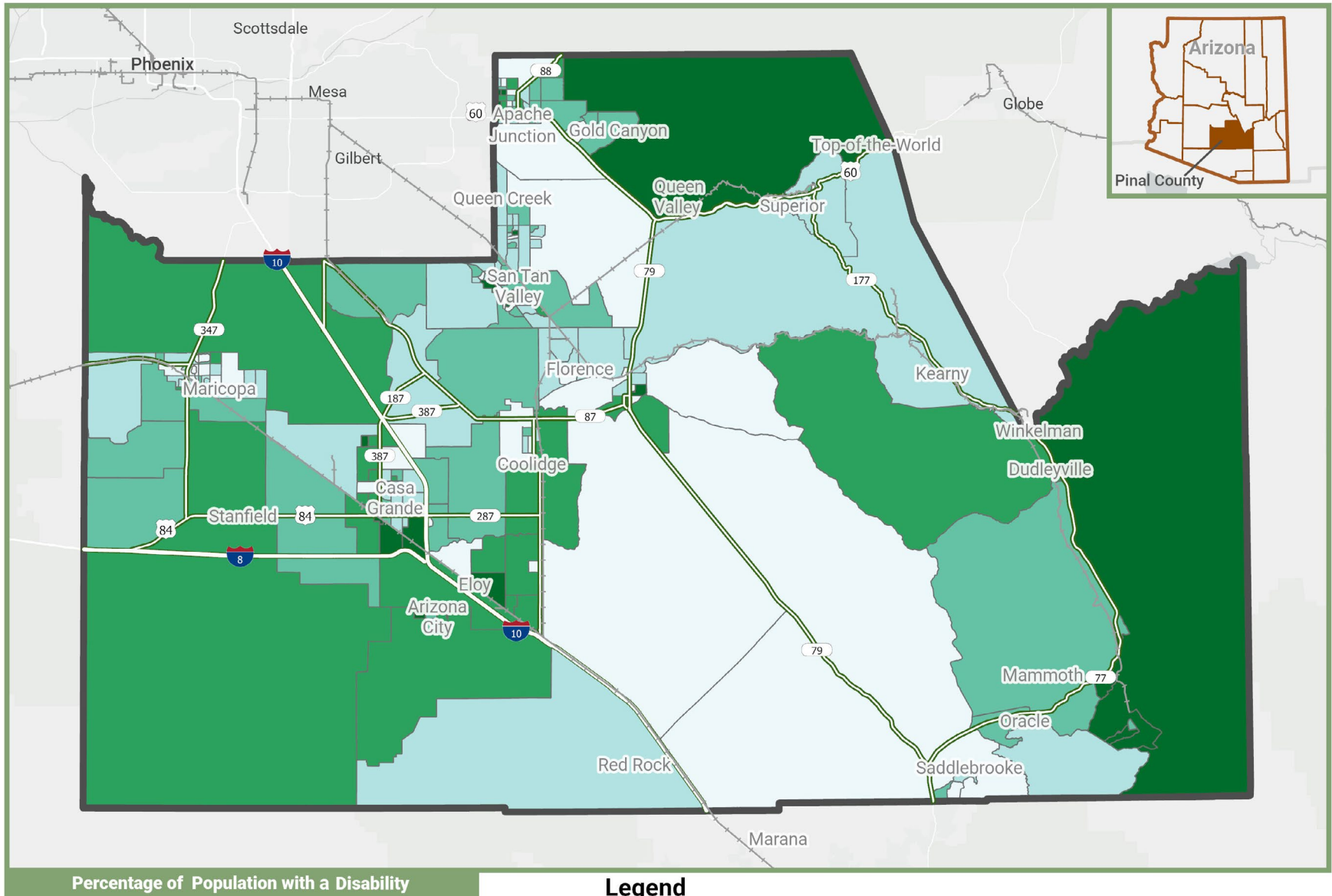
Concentrations of persons with disabilities generally follow similar distribution patterns compared to senior population concentrations. Northern communities were found to have high shares of disabled residents. Communities near the western and eastern borders were also found to have high shares of people with disabilities. These communities include:

- Queen Valley
- Top-of-the-World
- Casa Grande
- Eloy
- Arizona City
- Dudleyville

**Figure 5: Share of Disabled Populations in Pinal County**



**Figure 6: Percentage of Population with a Disability**



Percentage of Population with a Disability

**Legend**

- Roads**
- State and U.S. Highways
  - Interstate
  - Railroads

- Percentage of Population with a Disability**
- 16.0% - 27.9% (Very High)
  - 10.6% - 15.9% (High)
  - 6.7% - 10.5% (Average)
  - 3.4% - 6.6% (Low)
  - 0% - 3.3% (Very Low)

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates B01001, B23024 (2018-2022)

### 2.1.3 Composite Coordinated Mobility Propensity

High rates of seniors and employment-age people with disabilities can indicate a higher demand for mobility services. This demand is often referred to as “propensity,” as certain population groups are more closely associated with transit or Coordinated Mobility use. As the Section 5310 program is aimed at serving eligible seniors and people with disabilities, identifying areas with elevated population highlights areas of higher propensity.

To identify areas within Pinal County with the highest propensity, or potential for Coordinated Mobility services use, a composite propensity score was calculated. This score was developed using ACS data at the block group level to map the percentage of seniors and persons with an employment disability. The two data variables were weighted equally. Block groups were then assigned a score between one and five based on the share of elderly and disabled populations where the highest concentrations of the two groups received a score of five and those with the lowest shares received scores of one.

**Figure 7** shows the composite propensity scores for block groups throughout Pinal County. Approximately 14.5 percent of block groups scored highly and were thus identified as having a “very high” propensity.

Communities in southeast Pinal County with high transit propensity include:

- Saddlebrooke
- Mammoth
- San Manuel

Other communities near the northern border of the county with high transit propensity include:

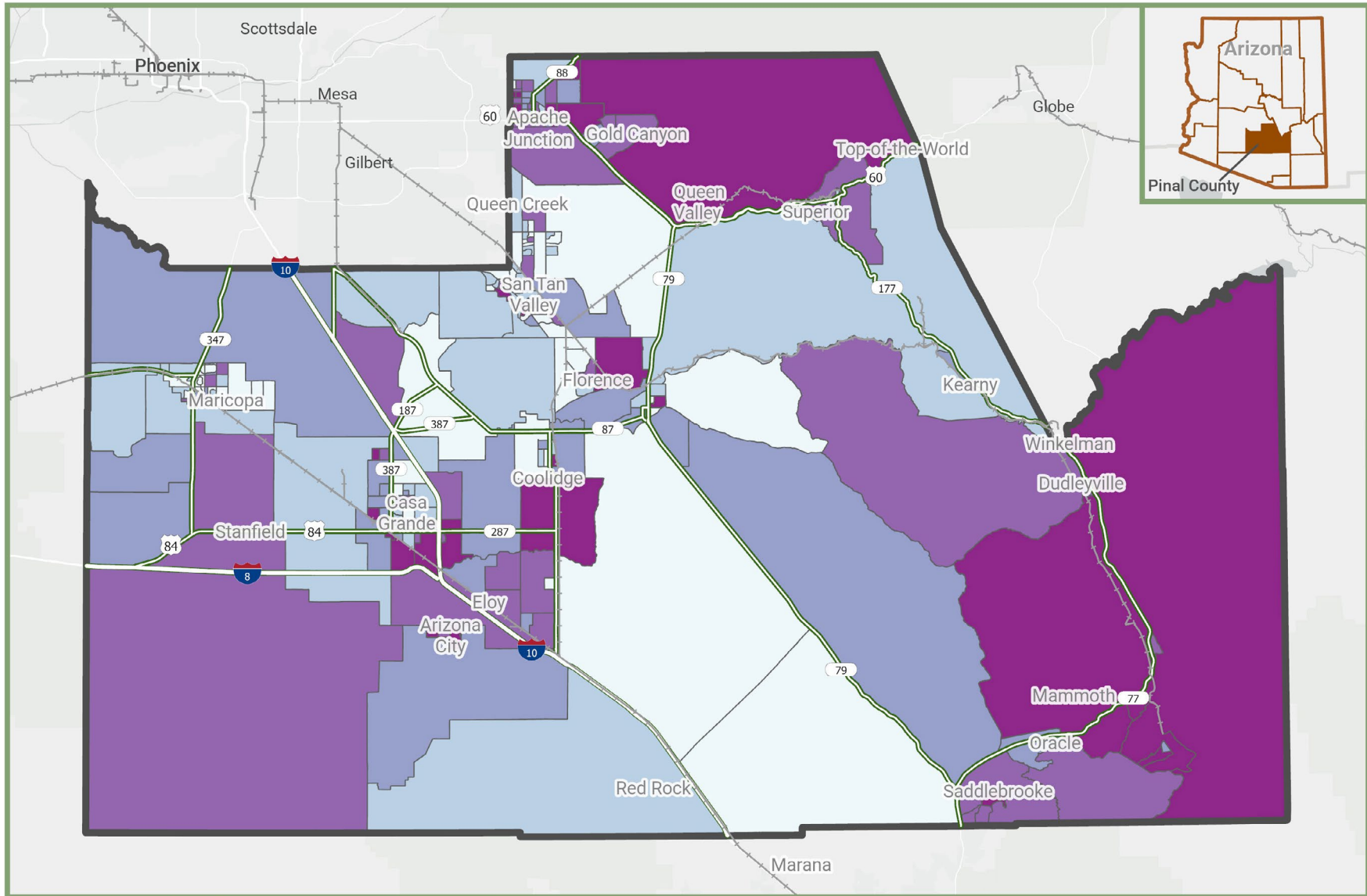
- Gold Canyon
- Queen Valley
- Top-of-the-World

Select communities in the central part of the county, like Florence and Eloy, were found to have very high propensity, but in general, central county communities were identified as having largely “high propensity” or lower.



Source: City of Florence

**Figure 7: Coordinated Mobility Propensity Population**



Coordinated Mobility Propensity Population

**Legend**

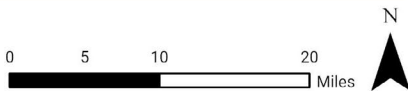
**Roads**

- State and U.S. Highways
- Interstate
- Railroads

**Propensity Score (block group level)**

- Very High
- High

- Average
- Low
- Very Low



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates B01001, B23024 (2018-2022)

## 2.2 Existing Transit Services

Generally speaking, Pinal County is a predominantly rural county with relatively limited public transit services. Public transit service is comprised of nine different fixed routes and an on-demand response service area within Casa Grande.

**Figure 8** maps the existing transit service in Pinal County. Existing transit services are largely concentrated in the western half of the county, with no service along the eastern and southern borders. GRIC operates several shuttles across a large service area, though two shuttles are currently suspended. The City of Maricopa and the City of Coolidge offer

local fixed-route service within their municipal boundaries. Casa Grande has recently launched a microtransit service, branded Casa Grande (CG) LINK, that operates within a specified zone in the city. In addition to the local routes and services operating within one community, Central Arizona Regional Transit (CART) leverages a partnership between multiple municipalities to operate a regional connector route that links Coolidge, Florence, and Casa Grande.

Existing service providers include:



Central Arizona Regional Transit



Casa Grande LINK



City of Maricopa Express Transit

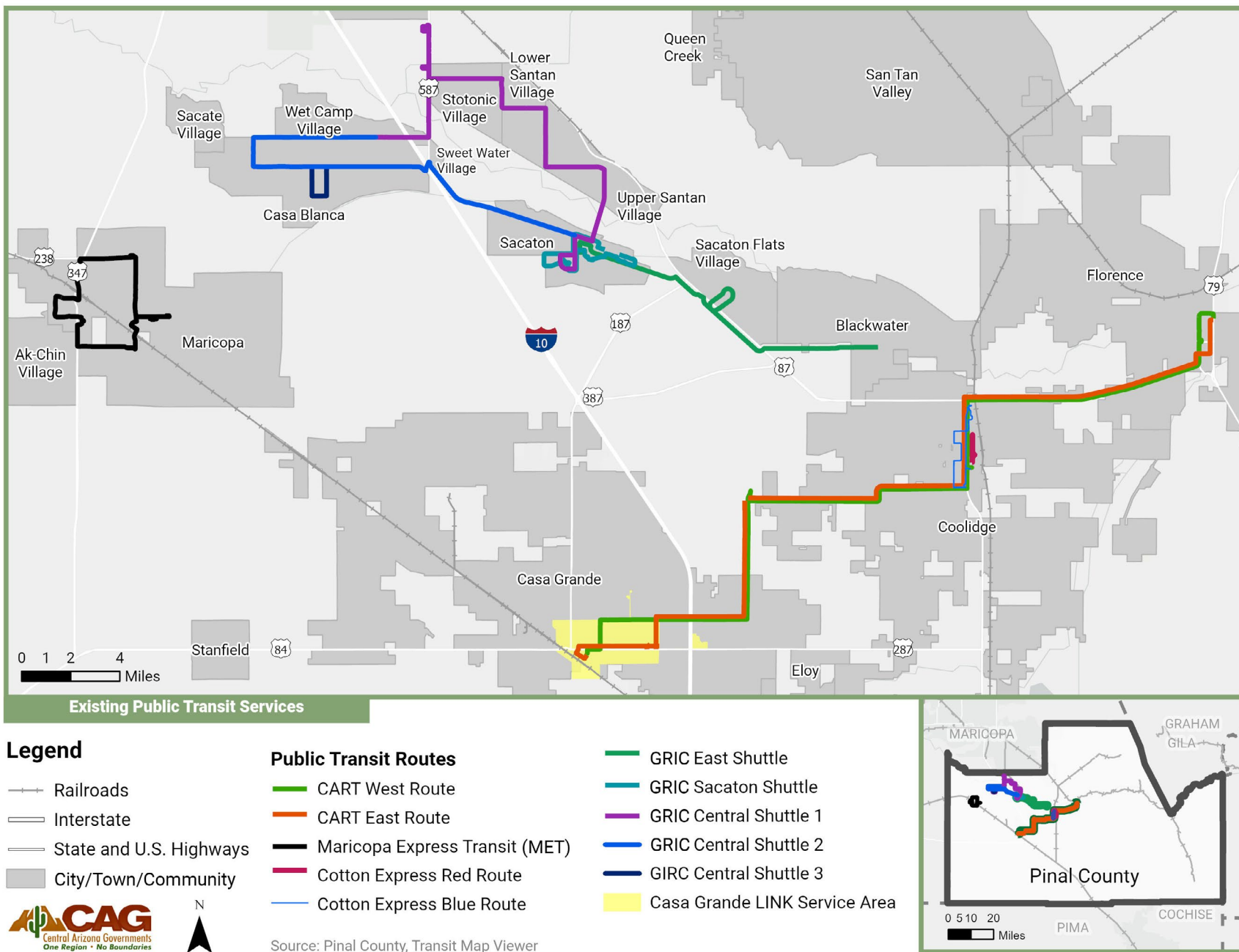


Cotton Express



Gila River Transit

**Figure 8: Existing Transit Services in Pinal County**



## 2.3 Existing Coordinated Mobility Providers

Public fixed-route and demand-response transit service is supplemented by a number of human service transportation providers in Pinal County. These providers offer transportation services to eligible participants. There are currently nine 5310 Coordinated Mobility providers operating within Pinal County:

- Central Arizona Council on Developmental Disabilities (CACDD)
- Dorothy Nolan Senior Center
- Give-A-Lift
- Helping Ourselves Pursue Enrichment (HOPE) Incorporated
- Horizon Health and Wellness
- NAZCARE
- On-the-Go Express
- The Opportunity Tree
- Pinal Hispanic Council (PHC)

## 2.4 Summary of Findings

### 2.4.1 Service Availability

Fixed-route and demand response services are available in Coolidge, Florence, Casa Grande, Maricopa, and GRIC through local and regional transit providers. Communities in the eastern and northern areas of Pinal County do not currently have regular public transit services.

Coordinated Mobility programs operated by human services providers augment service availability throughout the county. The nine 5310 providers described in this report provide additional services in cities with existing transit services, such as Casa Grande or Florence, and provide services in areas like Mammoth that have no other transit service.

### 2.4.2 Hours of Service

Transportation service is primarily available during weekdays from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Many providers do not operate on weekends or during the early morning or evening hours on weekdays. Those wishing to make trips on weekends or during evening hours must make other transportation arrangements. CART currently offers the earliest service, beginning at 5:00 AM. Many Coordinated Mobility providers operate during the 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM window (*Figure 9*).

### 2.4.3 Major Destinations

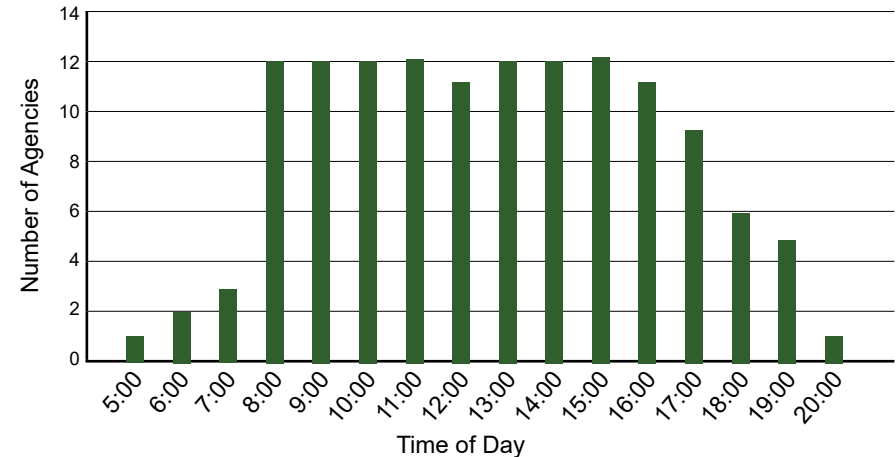
Many of the major destinations identified by Coordinated Mobility providers include the facility or community where the facility is based. For instance, Horizon Health and Wellness documented that their clinic locations are among the main destinations served by their transportation service. On-the-Go Express indicated that they regularly make trips outside of Pinal County. On-the-Go Express cited Tucson and Globe as two major destinations served.

The top destinations shared among all Coordinated Mobility providers were:

1. Health clinics
2. Casa Grande
3. Coolidge
4. Walmart

Health clinics of different types were identified as the top destinations served across all current Coordinated Mobility providers. Casa Grande and Coolidge were also cited across multiple providers. Finally, Walmart was repeated across two different providers. This points to the importance of serving medical facilities and major shopping destinations.

**Figure 9: Distribution of Agencies in Operation by Time of Day (Weekdays Only)**



Source: Coordinated Mobility Provider Data Request Forms

### 2.4.4 Ridership

Annual ridership ranged widely across the current Coordinated Mobility providers. Horizon Health and Wellness reported the highest annual ridership, likely a direct result of the number of facilities. This ridership was also reflected in the number of vehicles available across its fleet. NAZCARE did not report any ridership for 2023, stating that they are in the process of building a client base and ridership in Pinal County. On average, providers are serving about 4,800 riders annually across the county.

### 2.4.5 Funding

The Coordinated Mobility providers are operating largely using a mix of 5310 funding from the FTA (as distributed by the Arizona Department of Transportation [ADOT]) in combination with organization funding as a match. Some providers are also leveraging funding through the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS).

### 2.4.6 Challenges

Funding, service vehicles, and staffing concerns were equally identified as challenges faced by the Coordinated Mobility providers. Providers also pointed to the difficulties of maintaining vehicles—the costs associated with repairs are high, businesses equipped to complete repairs are relatively rare, and providers face long wait times to receive repaired vehicles as well as reimbursements from ADOT. Many providers also acknowledged the challenge of navigating insurance and building ridership through increasing their client base.

## 3. SPATIAL GAP ANALYSIS

After establishing the existing conditions within Pinal County, spatial gaps in services were identified. This identification process overlaid the intensity of service (the number of providers operating within a given area) with the propensity analysis results to pinpoint areas with high propensity, or need, and low service intensity. The following section describes the spatial gap analysis process and results.

**Table 1: Service Area by Provider**

No.	Provider	Transit Program	Type	Service Area
1	CG LINK	5307	Fixed-Route Public Transit	CG LINK Area
2	CACDD	5310	Coordinated Mobility Provider	Pinal County
3	CART	5311	Fixed-Route Public Transit	3/4 mile from the transit route
4	MET	5311	Fixed-Route Public Transit and Dial-a-Ride	Maricopa
5	Cotton Express	5311	Fixed-Route Public Transit	3/4 mile from the transit route
6	Dorothy Nolan Senior Center	5310	Coordinated Mobility Provider	Pinal County
7	Gila River Transit	5311	Fixed-Route Public Transit	3/4 mile from the transit route
8	Give-a-Lift	5310	Coordinated Mobility Provider	Pinal County
9	HOPE Incorporated	5310	Coordinated Mobility Provider	Pinal County
10	Horizon Health and Wellness <i>*Note: Each center is considered a different provider.</i>	5310	Coordinated Mobility Provider	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>45-mile radius from the Clinic and Administration (625 North Plaza Drive, Apache Junction, Arizona 85120)</li> <li>45-mile radius from the Adult Services (210 East Cottonwood Lane, Casa Grande, Arizona 85122)</li> <li>45-mile radius from the Recovery Village – Residential Substance Use Facilities (2221 South Peart Road, Casa Grande, Arizona 85122)</li> <li>45-mile radius from the Clinic (495 North Pinal Parkway Avenue #106, Florence, Arizona 85132)</li> <li>45-mile radius from the Clinic (980 East Mount Lemmon Highway, Buildings 1 &amp; 2, Oracle, Arizona 85623)</li> <li>45-mile radius from the Clinic (22713 South Ellsworth Road, Building A, Suite 101, Queen Creek, Arizona 85142)</li> </ol>
11	NAZCARE	5310	Coordinated Mobility Provider	20-mile radius from the center (846 West Cottonwood Lane, Casa Grande)
12	On The Go Express	5310	Coordinated Mobility Provider	Oracle Junction, Oracle, Saddlebrook, San Manuel, Mammoth, Kearny, Superior
13	The Opportunity Tree	5310	Coordinated Mobility Provider	25-mile radius from the Casa Grande facility (209 West 1st Street, Casa Grande) and 20-mile radius from the facility (19756 North Maricopa Road, Maricopa)
14	PHC	5310	Coordinated Mobility Provider	Eloy, Coolidge, Casa Grande, Maricopa, Arizona City

### 3.1 Service Intensity

Service intensity has been defined and established throughout Pinal County by layering the individual service areas of each current provider (both fixed-route and Coordinated Mobility providers). **Table 1** summarizes the current providers and their service area. The layered service areas were then assigned a Service Intensity Level score.

**Table 2** provides a key for the various levels of service intensity found within Pinal County. The Service Intensity Level is based on the number of providers in the area and their operational characteristics. A higher number of providers corresponds to a higher Service Intensity Level, indicating better accessibility to transit services for seniors and people with disabilities.

**Table 2: Service Intensity by Numbers of Providers**

Service Intensity	Number of Providers
1	3 to 5
2	6
3	7 to 9
4	10
5	11
6	12 to 13

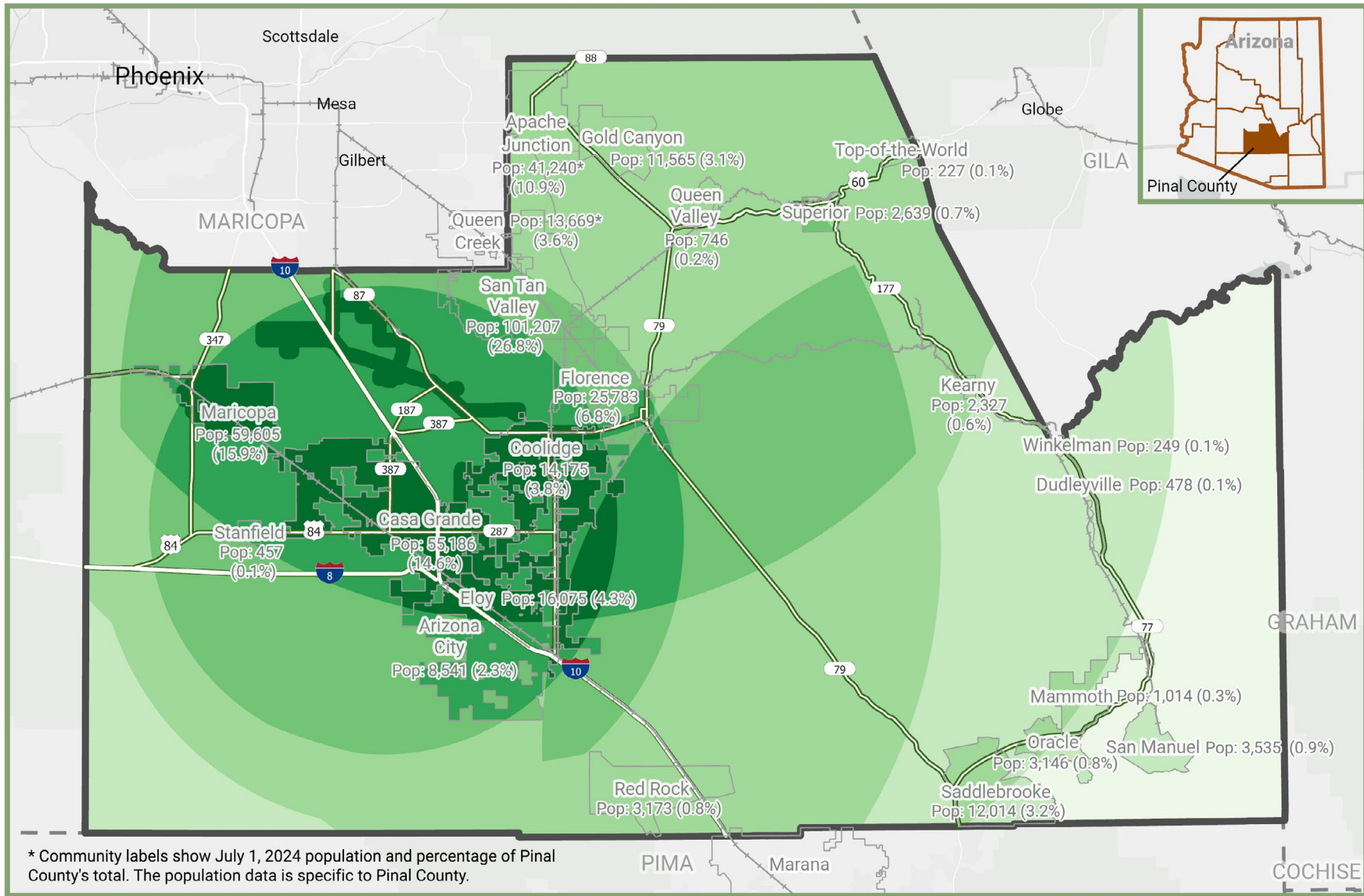
**Figure 10** maps the service intensities across Pinal County. Areas with more providers, and thus more intensity, are shown in darker green, while areas with fewer providers and lower intensity are shown in lighter green.

As shown in **Figure 10**, the communities in western Pinal County have a higher service intensity level than in eastern Pinal County, especially in Maricopa, Casa Grande, Coolidge, Arizona City, and Eloy. These communities are also the most active in deploying fixed-route services. In general, the further from these communities, the lower the service intensity level. Every area in Pinal County has at least one Coordinated Mobility provider.

When compared with population distribution, while Maricopa and Casa Grande have both large populations and high service intensity, other large population clusters do not align with high service intensity, including:

- **San Tan Valley:** Accounts for the highest percentage of Pinal County's population among the selected communities but only has a Level 4 (seven transit service providers) service intensity.
- **Apache Junction:** Accounts for the highest percentage of senior population and second highest percentage of people with disabilities of Pinal County's population among the selected communities but only has a Level 3 (6 providers) service intensity.
- **Saddlebrooke:** Has a percentage of the population similar to Coolidge but only has a Level 2 (eastern side) or 3 (western) service intensity.

**Figure 10: Service Area by Service Intensity**



\* Community labels show July 1, 2024 population and percentage of Pinal County's total. The population data is specific to Pinal County.

**Service Area by Service Intensity**



0 5 10 Miles



**Legend**

- Roads**
- State and U.S. Highways
  - Interstate
  - Railroads

- Service Intensity (# of Available Providers)**
- Level 1 (5)
  - Level 2 (6)
  - Level 3 (7 - 9)
  - Level 4 (10)
  - Level 5 (11)
  - Level 6 (12 - 13)

Source: [1] American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates B01001  
 [2] CAG Region 2024 Population Estimates

### 3.2 Coordinated Mobility Propensity

As described, identifying areas with high concentrations of seniors and persons with disabilities is a key component of the spatial gap analysis and overall study. These high propensity areas likely have high demand for Coordinated Mobility services. The aim of the spatial gap analysis is to identify areas where these high propensity areas overlap with areas of low service intensity, or transit coverage.

**Figure 7** identifies areas with very high propensity and can be found in the eastern and northern areas of Pinal County as well as within the central communities.

Communities in central Pinal County with high transit propensity include:

- Arizona City
- Casa Grande
- Coolidge
- Florence

Communities in southeast Pinal County with high transit propensity include:


- Saddlebrooke
- Mammoth
- San Manuel

Other communities near the northern border of the county with high transit propensity include:

- Apache Junction
- Gold Canyon
- Queen Valley
- Top-of-the-World


### 3.3 Spatial Gap Results

**Figure 11** shows the results of the spatial gap analysis.

 Communities with both **high** transit propensity (high concentrations of seniors and disabled residents) and **low** service intensity (few existing service providers):

- San Manuel
- Mammoth
- Dudleyville
- Oracle
- Saddlebrook
- Tohono O’odham Nation

This suggests that these communities may need new transit services since the existing service providers are not always immediately available due to advanced reservation requirements, are not always accessible, and are for a specific population. For example, the Give-a-Lift service can drop off riders anywhere within Pinal County but only serves residents in Florence, and Horizon Health and Wellness Center is exclusively for medical appointments.

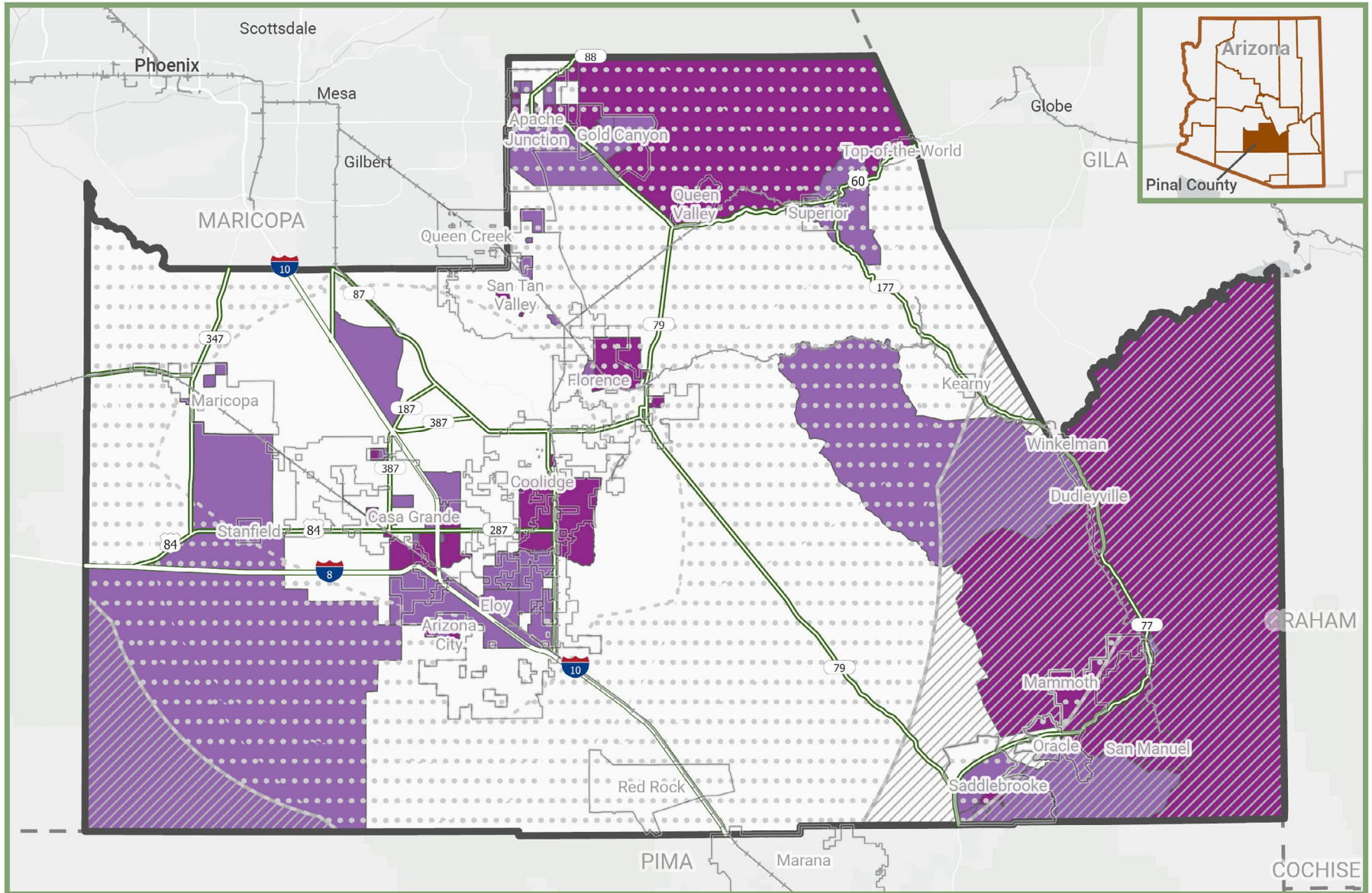
 Communities with **high** transit propensity include and **medium** service intensity:

- San Tan Valley
- Superior
- Apache Junction
- Top-of-the-World
- Gold Canyon
- Arizona City
- Queen Valley

This suggests that these communities may need enhanced transit services since some providers only serve medical trips and are volunteer-based, so there is not always an available or accessible ride.



**Figure 11: Service Gap**



**Service Gap**

**Legend**

**Roads**

- State and U.S. Highways
- Interstate
- Railroads

**Service Gap Propensity Score (block group level)**

- Very High
- High

**Service Intensity**

- Level 1-2
- Level 3-4

0 5 10 Miles

N

Source: Current Conditions and Coordinated Mobility Programs

## 4. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Outreach was conducted to engage stakeholders and the general public to solicit feedback on current challenges, needs, concerns, and preferences. Current transportation providers, senior centers, medical providers, and nonprofit organizations serving seniors and persons with disabilities were engaged in the first phase of outreach. The second phase of outreach engaged local elected officials across Pinal County. Lastly, a public survey was distributed throughout the county. Online and paper copies of the public survey were available in both English and Spanish. These surveys were advertised via English and Spanish flyers (Figure 12).

### 4.1 Title VI Implementation

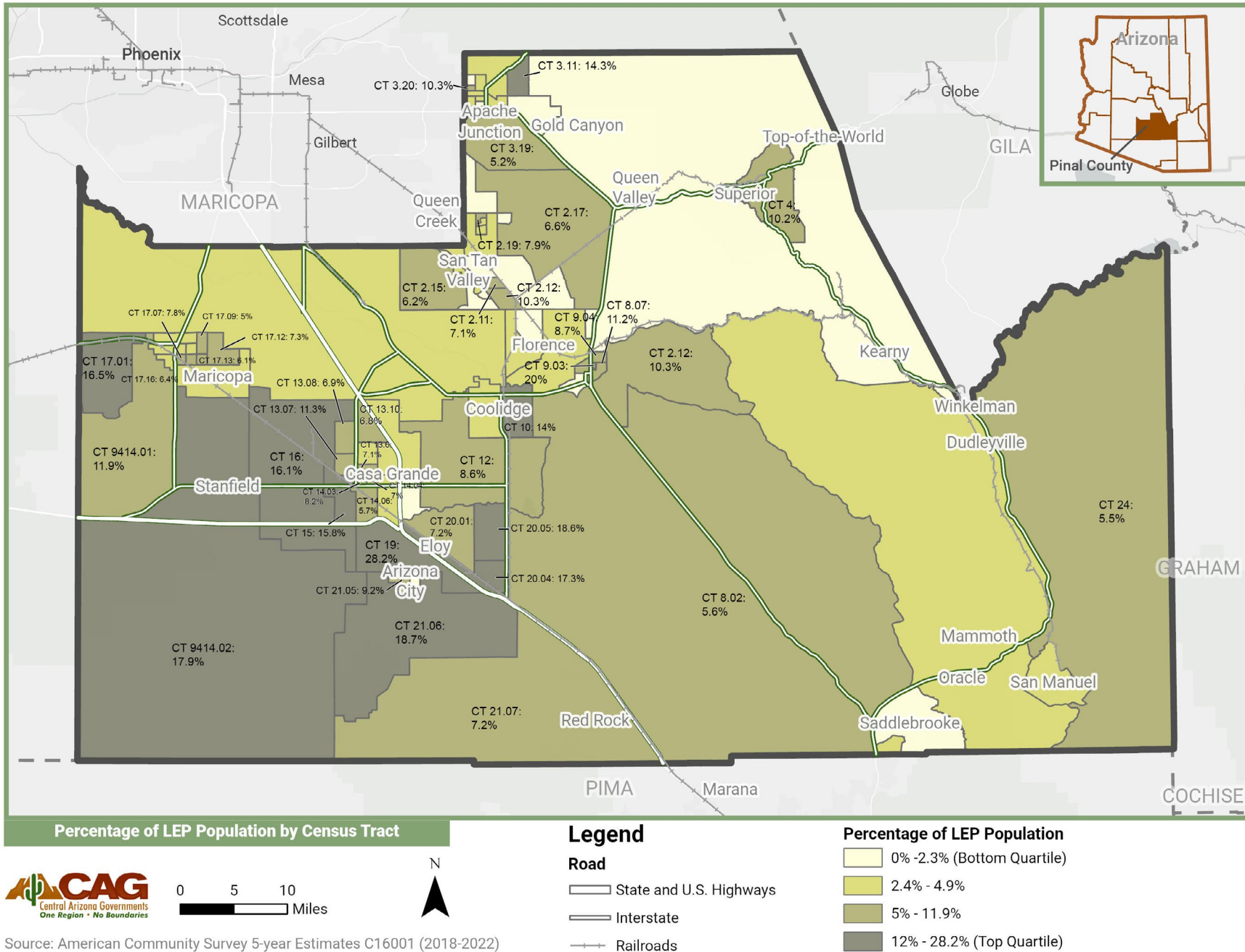
An in-depth analysis of the demographic data of the potential transit service recipients in Pinal County and potential participants of the project activities was conducted to understand the limited English proficiency, or “LEP” populations in Pinal County. As shown in Figure 13, the total number of LEP individuals in Pinal County is 23,621 (5.8 percent of the population over 5 years old and over). In particular, the Spanish-speaking population with limited ability to speak English is 20,215, which accounts for 4.9 percent of the population. All other-language-speaking LEP individuals are less than 1 percent of the population. Whether translations and interpretations in other languages are required was investigated for two places. In Chuichu CDP, 7.4 percent of its population (14 people) speaks “Other Asian and Pacific Island languages”. Also, Census Tract 13.07 has 319 people, which accounts for 7.6 percent of the population, speaking “Other Indo-European languages”.

The beneficiaries of this study are seniors (aged 65 years and over) and persons with disabilities. The LEP individuals among the beneficiaries also meet the threshold for translations in Spanish. As revealed in the results, at the county level, there are 3,778 seniors with LEP, which accounts for 4.2 percent of the total senior population. The Spanish-speaking LEP seniors amount to 3,246 people (85.9 percent of the total seniors with LEP). There are also 2,689 people with disabilities and LEP, which accounts for 3.8 percent of the total population with disabilities, and 96.8 percent of them speak Spanish.

Figure 12: English Survey Flyer



**Figure 13: Pinal County LEP Population**



## 4.2 Public Survey

CAG launched the public survey in June 2024. The survey contained 14 questions covering respondents' zip code, age, disability status, primary travel needs, preferred demand response services, awareness of transportation resources, and top three transportation challenges. Materials, including both the public survey (online and paper versions) as well as the advertising flyer, were translated into Spanish for meaningful engagement with Spanish-speaking residents.

The survey was open through September 4th, 2024, and yielded 328 responses. The following are key takeaways from the survey:

### Respondent's Demographics and Challenges

- The survey primarily represented the travel needs and challenges of individuals aged 65 to 84 in southeastern and northwestern Pinal County, including major cities like Saddlebrooke, Apache Junction, and Queen Creek.
- The top transportation challenges identified were the lack of demand response services, services not going where residents needed them, and services not operating when residents needed them.

### Modes of Travel

- Approximately 2/3 of respondents indicated that they drive themselves, while over 25 percent rely on family or friends. About 10 percent have no available transportation options, often leading to missed medical appointments.
- Respondents who drive themselves typically travel two to five times a week, with 30 percent reporting a disability. Those relying on family or friends travel less frequently but also have a high incidence of disability.

### Primary Travel Purposes and Destinations

- Respondents' main reasons for travel are medical/pharmacy visits, grocery shopping, and recreation/shopping.
- Key travel destinations include Apache Junction, Florence, and Casa Grande.

### Demand Response Transit Service Preferences

- The preferred demand response services identified were paratransit, senior center/community transportation, and medical facility transportation.
- Many seniors indicated they would prefer to schedule service via a smartphone application, closely followed by call center/phone.
- Many respondents preferred a service that charges about \$1 to \$5 and has a wait time of around 26 to 30 minutes.
- Respondents with disabilities were also more sensitive to wait times and accessibility issues.
- Respondents who drive themselves tended not to use demand response services.

### Distribution of Information Regarding Services

- Respondents of this survey expressed that they heard about transportation services and other resources through word of mouth, social media, and organizations (community centers, Homeowners Associations, churches). In general, the older the respondents, the more they rely on word of mouth.
- The survey results suggest further education on-demand response transit services is needed in the community, especially for persons with disabilities, as some respondents had a hard time identifying preferred services because they were unfamiliar with the service itself.

## 4.3 Stakeholder Engagement

The stakeholder organizations interviewed expressed a similar set of challenges when providing transit services or working with transit providers in Pinal County. Four primary challenges and concerns emerged through individual stakeholder organization interviews:

1. Challenges with long trip distances for providers with large service areas
2. Challenges with staffing drivers
3. Challenges with vehicles—high costs associated with maintenance and repairs or difficulties sourcing vehicles
4. Limited options for residents who need service and low levels of service

Most stakeholder recommendations centered around the expansion of services, either their own or regional connections. Interviewees suggested additional trip locations such as grocery stores and major metro areas like Phoenix and Tucson for medical appointments. Regional transportation in the county, according to stakeholders, is difficult and needs to be a priority moving forward.

Many interviewees noted that a change in coverage by Medicare (available to seniors and those with qualifying disabilities) and Medicaid (available to low-income households) has altered the transportation landscape in their communities. Transportation to and from medical appointments is now covered (as of 2023), but these services are contracted with private companies and oftentimes have reliability issues.

Across all organizations, there was a consensus that mobility gaps for these populations are large, and the available resources are insufficient for their needs.

## 5. SUBREGION RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIZATION

The goal of creating subregions is to subdivide Pinal County into more manageable geographies, to identify recommended potential improvements to service, and to identify a method for prioritizing these areas. By establishing these proposed subregions, resources can be strategically deployed to meet the needs of current and future providers throughout the county.

### 5.1 Proposed Pinal County Subregions

Several different approaches were evaluated to create new subregions for Pinal County, following existing Supervisor District boundaries or other existing administrative boundaries. One approach was selected from the options and is documented here.

As shown in **Figure 14**, the proposed subregions divide Pinal County into five subregions using logical geographic boundaries and a manageable number of roughly equal-sized subregions. The boundaries considered existing infrastructure, population distribution, and existing transit providers. **Figure 14** maps the proposed subregions.

**Table 3: Summary of Subregion Recommendations**

Subregion Recommendation	North	South	East	West	Central
Microtransit	✓				✓
Taxicab/shared ride voucher or reimbursement program	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Volunteer Driver Program	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fixed-route expansion				✓	✓
Private company partnerships	✓			✓	✓
Replace Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant vehicles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide marketing and administrative resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Improve customer service	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Coordination with MAG and Valley Metro to identify transfer points between providers	✓			✓	
Coordination with Sun Tran (Tucson) to identify transfer points		✓			
Coordination with Pima Association of Governments to understand cross-county trip demand		✓			
Gila-Pinal Rides Coordination Committee coordination to understand cross-county trip demand			✓		
Coordinate transfers between 5310 providers and public transit operators	✓				✓
MAG Planning Area mobility study for communities like Queen Creek				✓	
Evaluate potential for new service in Eloy					✓
Evaluate Cotton Express expansion					✓

### 5.2 Recommendations

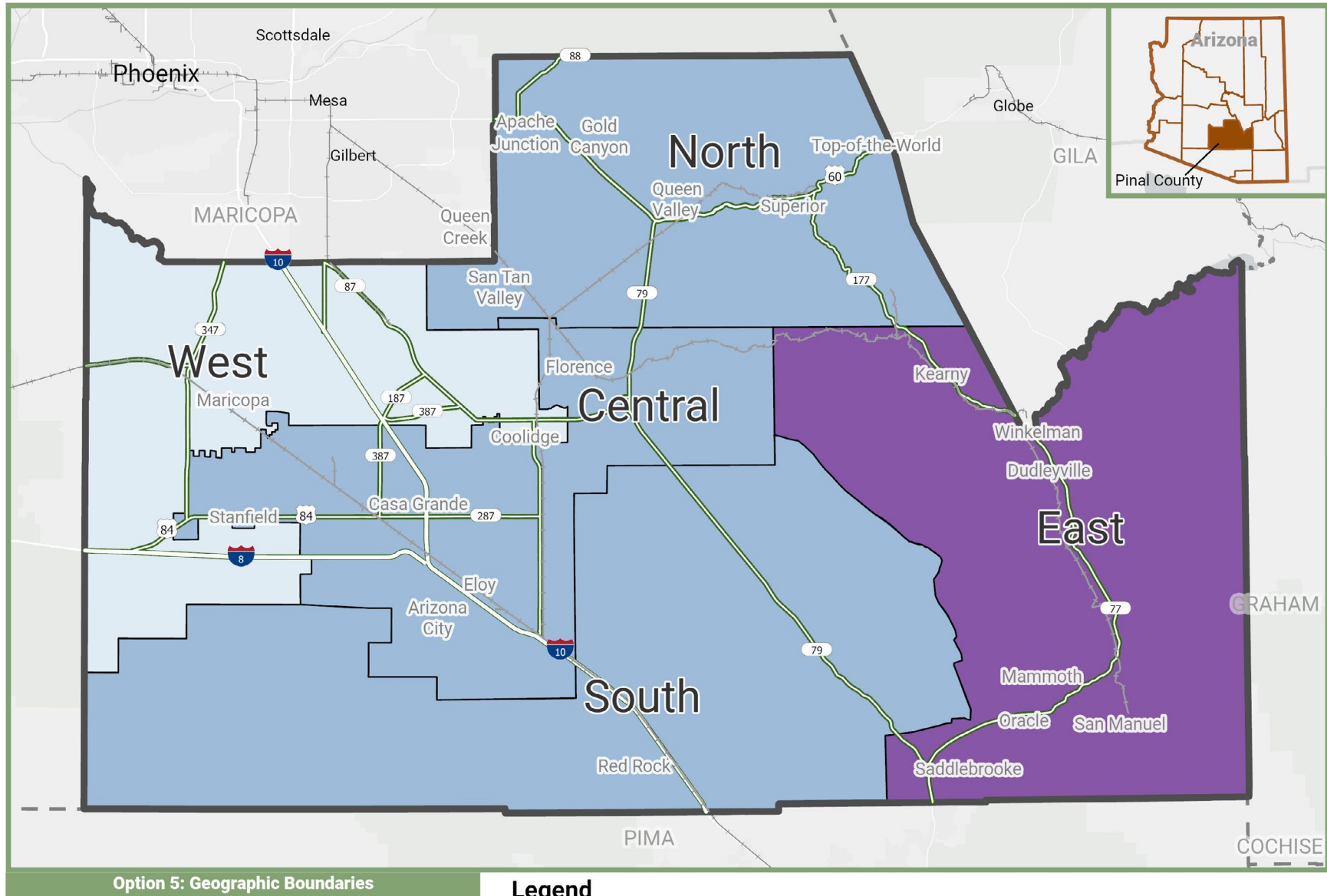
Recommendations have been developed and described here in response to the technical analysis conducted combined with stakeholder and public feedback. These recommendations are intended to support current and potential providers in delivering services that meet the needs of Coordinated Mobility service users. **Table 3** summarizes the recommendations for each subregion.

Recommendations have been organized by category:

- Service Recommendations
- Capital and Administrative Recommendations
- Coordination with Other Agencies and Additional Planning Studies

Each recommendation category includes specific recommendations for improvements and documents which subregions the recommendation applies to.

**Figure 14: Geographic Boundaries Subregions**



Option 5: Geographic Boundaries

**Legend**

**Roads**

- State and U.S. Highways
- Interstate
- Railroads

**District Boundary**

- Option 5

**Propensity Score (subregion level)**

- High ( $\leq 6$ )
- Average ( $\leq 5$ )
- Low ( $\leq 4$ )



Source: Current Conditions and Coordinated Mobility Programs

## 5.2.1 Service Recommendations

### Microtransit

Populations in Apache Junction and San Tan Valley are likely dense enough to support microtransit. Microtransit is an on-demand transportation service for all, including seniors and people with disabilities. It offers real-time bookings by phone or mobile app and uses dynamic routing software to organize shared rides. When microtransit is comingled with paratransit, meaning one vehicle is serving both services, it can be more efficient and cost-effective since there are more shared trips and better utilization of the vehicle.

Microtransit can be implemented by a town, city, county, Councils of Government (COGs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), nonprofit, or transit agency. Apache Junction, as an incorporated community, could take the lead in organizing and administering a new microtransit service. Apache Junction would be eligible for 5311 rural transportation funding. Once the city's population exceeds 50,000 people, the city would be designated as a Small Urbanized Area. Further study would be required prior to implementation to establish specific zone boundaries, vehicle requirements, and detailed costs.

#### Subregions:

- North
- Central

### Taxicab/Shared Ride Voucher or Reimbursement Program

A reimbursement program would allow riders to use private services such as Uber or Lyft and request reimbursement for the ride. This type of program is beneficial in rural areas with limited transit choices. Apache Junction currently employs a voucher program that could be replicated in neighboring communities such as Queen Creek or Superior.

#### Subregions:

- Recommended for all subregions.

### Volunteer Driver Program

Expand or start new volunteer driver programs to fill in service gaps.

#### Subregions:

- Recommended for all subregions.

### Fixed Route Expansion

Expansion of routes or service days and hours of existing fixed-route service. For example, the City of Coolidge operates CART service in the Central Subregion while GRIC operates in the West Subregion. These operators could serve additional riders through expanding existing routes, adding new routes, or by providing service later in the day.

#### Subregions:

- West
- Central

### Private Company Partnerships

There are opportunities to partner with private Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) and software providers to fill in service gaps. Examples include Onward Rides, which partners directly with transit agencies, senior centers, and hospitals/medical facilities to coordinate rides more efficiently. UZURV is an adaptive TNC that partners with public entities to provide rides. Public agencies can contract with UZURV to provide service in an area, similar to Uber and Lyft. The agency would pay for this service on a cost per trip basis. UZURV typically supplements existing paratransit programs but could also start from the basis for a new transportation service. UZURV provides ADA training and drug and alcohol testing to meet FTA requirements, so federal funds can be used to fund this service.

Enhancing technology for current providers in the region through private partnerships would improve service delivery, data collection, and reporting. This technology could take the form of CAG or Pinal County procuring routing and trip scheduling Software as a Service (SaaS). This software would improve the efficiency of trip scheduling for providers like On-the-Go Express.

#### Subregions:

- North
- East
- West
- Central



## 5.2.2 Capital and Administrative Recommendations

### Americans with Disabilities Act-Compliant Vehicles

Replace ADA-compliant vehicles that have met their useful life.

#### Subregions:

- Recommended for all subregions.

### Provide Marketing and Administrative Resources

Provide marketing and advertising materials to help current providers. This recommendation includes providing additional resources to support agencies in applying for funding, completing FTA requirements, and applying for reimbursements. Coordinate with MAG to update the azrideinfo.com webpage with providers in Pinal County.

#### Subregions:

- Recommended for all subregions.

### Improve Customer Service

Reduce the length of reservation windows and waiting times for pickup. Other improvements to customer service include services for hearing/vision-impaired and LEP populations through the implementation of a shared language line service.

#### Subregions:

- Recommended for all subregions.

## 5.2.3 Coordination with Other Agencies and Additional Planning Studies

### Coordination with Other Agencies

Existing and future services should coordinate with Valley Metro in the North Subregion and Sun Tran in the South Subregion to identify potential transfer points for Pinal County residents to transfer between 5310 providers in Pinal County to the Valley Metro or SunTran systems. Providers in the CAG region could facilitate trips to destinations such as the Apache Junction Active Adult Center, where passengers could then connect to Maricopa County services. In addition, CAG can coordinate with MAG to understand service among demand response providers in neighboring counties. This recommendation may take the form of coordinating certain types of trips, like medical trips for veterans or coordinating trips that cross county borders.

#### Subregions:

- Recommended for all subregions.

### Additional Planning Studies

Develop a mobility study for specific communities located in the MAG Planning area to identify potential transit options. In the Central Subregion, coordinate with the Coolidge Short Range Transit Study to evaluate the potential for a new service in Eloy and expansion of Cotton Express.

#### Subregions:

- North
- West
- Central

**Figure 15: Example of Specific Area Plan**



Source: MAG

## 6. FINANCIAL GAP ANALYSIS

This section provides high-level costing information based on the subregion service recommendations, identifies gaps in existing funding, and identifies new funding sources. This section also prioritizes the subregion recommendations based on the feasibility and ease of implementation, and whether additional funding is needed. This section also outlines five priorities to close identified funding gaps.

### 6.1 Costing for Subregion Recommendations

This section provides high-level costing information based on recommendations outlined in the Subregion Recommendations and Prioritization section. The costing information is based on examples of programs throughout the state, National Transit Database (NTD) data, as well as additional research and information gathered from private companies.

#### 6.1.1 Service Recommendations

##### Microtransit

The costs associated with a microtransit program include software, hardware, operations, and vehicles.

- **Software:** The cost for microtransit software can range significantly, depending on factors like the complexity of the system, the features included, and the chosen software model. Software costs typically include a start-up cost, annual costs, and per vehicle costs. **Table 4** provides cost ranges for microtransit software components.

**Table 4: Microtransit Software Costs**

Cost Category	Software Costs
Start-Up Costs	\$10,000-\$35,000
Annual Costs	\$5,000-\$10,000
Per Vehicle Costs (on a monthly basis)	\$500-\$1,500 per vehicle

Source: *Online Research*

- **Hardware:** Driver tablets are also required for each vehicle and can range from \$200 to \$500 each, plus ongoing data plan subscriptions.
- **Operations:** The annual cost of a microtransit program can vary based on the size of the microtransit area and the number of vehicles in service. **Table 5** has four Arizona examples and the cost per hour of each service to show a range of operational costs.

**Table 5: Demand Response Operating Amounts**

Location	Cost per Hours	Annual Operating
City of Maricopa	\$212.81	\$181,103
Town of Prescott Valley	\$119.58	\$653,970
City of Peoria * Includes paratransit	\$198.11	\$1,395,876
Mountain Line Flagstaff * Includes paratransit	\$118.36	\$682,362
Average	\$162.21	\$728,327

Source: *FY23 NTD Data for Demand Response Services*

- **Vehicles:** The cost of a vehicle can differ depending on whether the vehicle is purchased or leased, the size, and whether it is wheelchair accessible or ambulatory. A popular microtransit vehicle is a Ford Transit van, which can range from \$50,000 for ambulatory to \$100,000 for wheelchair accessible.

##### Subregions:

- North
- Central

##### Taxicab/Shared Ride Voucher and Mileage Reimbursement Program

The cost of a taxi voucher or reimbursement program can vary based on the program parameters, for example, how much money can be reimbursed for one trip, the monthly limit per person, the percentage reimbursed, and the eligibility of the program.

- Apache Junction Ride Reimbursement Program reimburses up to \$100 per person per month for trips to medical appointments.
- The Mountain Line Taxi Program in Flagstaff, Arizona, issues credit cards to paratransit riders, and these credit cards can have up to \$300 per person per month to pay for taxi or Uber/Lyft trips. The FY24 cost per trip was \$28.63.

**Table 6: Taxicab Voucher and Reimbursement**

Location	Monthly Reimbursements
Apache Junction	\$100/person per month
Mountain Line, Flagstaff	\$300/person per month Rider pays 20%, Mountain Line pays 80%

##### Subregions:

- Recommended for all subregions.

### Volunteer Driver Program

Costs can vary depending on whether the volunteer driver program provides a daily rate, plus a mileage reimbursement. The typical Internal Revenue Service standard mileage rate for charitable purposes is \$0.14 per mile. Any mileage reimbursement exceeding \$0.14 per mile is considered taxable income for the volunteer.

- The Northern Arizona University (NAU) Senior Companion Program offers a tax-free stipend of \$4.00 per hour and mileage reimbursements to its senior volunteers.
- Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition encourages volunteers to work at least 3 days per week and are offered \$60/day plus mileage for Verde Valley trips and \$80/day plus mileage for long-distance trips to Flagstaff, Prescott, and Phoenix.

**Table 7: Volunteer Driver Reimbursement**

Organization	Reimbursement
NAU	\$4/hour+mileage
Verde Valley Caregivers Coalition	\$60/day (local) + mileage \$80/day (long distance) + mileage

**Subregions:**

- Recommended for all subregions.

### Fixed-Route Services

The costs for fixed-route service can vary based on vehicle type, the number of service hours, and the overhead costs that are included in the cost per hour. On average, fixed-route service has a lower cost per hour compared to microtransit. However, this is only true where the service operates in an area that has high enough density to support fixed-route transit. The following table has four examples of rural Arizona fixed-route services and the cost per hour of each service to show a range of operational costs. The City of Coolidge (via CART) operates in the Central Subregion, and the GRIC operates in the West Subregion.

**Table 8: Fixed-Route Operating Amounts**

Location	Cost per Hour	Annual Operating
City of Coolidge	\$76.86	\$884,309
GRIC	\$197.96	\$548,309
City of Douglas	\$35.52	\$413,356
City of Show Low	\$99.17	\$1,046,356
Average	\$102.37	\$722,967

Source: FY23 NTD Data for Bus Services

**Subregions:**

- West
- Central

### Private Company Partnerships

The cost of partnering with a private company can vary based on the type of service or product that is included in the partnership, the service parameters, and each company's individual rates.

- Onward Rides: Companion Ride is an alternative TNC solution that provides door-to-door service operated by FTA-compliant (drug-tested and first aid certified) drivers. There are several variables that contribute to the cost of this service, such as service hours, ride volume, geographic coverage, and level of passenger assistance. Cost estimates for Onward Rides' services are in **Table 9**.

**Table 9: Onward Rides Cost Estimates**

Partnerships	Onward Cost Estimates
Companion Rides (5 to 10-mile range)	\$30-\$38 per trip
Uber/Lyft Partnership	\$15-\$25 per trip
Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle Trips	\$55-\$75 per trip
Software / AI Call Center	Cost depends heavily on the scope of work (cost will be similar to microtransit)

Source: Provided by Onward Rides as a high level estimate

**Subregions:**

- North
- East
- West
- Central

## 6.1.2 Meet Capital & Administrative Needs

### Americans with Disabilities Act-Compliant Vehicles

The costs of ADA-compliant vehicles vary based on the vehicle size and model. Vehicle prices are based on the ADOT's vehicle procurement contract with bus and van dealers. **Table 10** lists vehicle prices documented in ADOT's FY24 Section 5310 awards.

**Table 10: ADA Vehicle Unit Costs**

Vehicle Type	Cost per Vehicle
14 passenger cutaway with lift	\$158,662
9 passenger cutaway with lift	\$149,702
Minivan with ramp	\$107,484

Source: Arizona Department of Transportation (FY2024)

**Subregions:**

- Recommended for all subregions.

### Provide Marketing and Administrative Resources

As part of the **Information Gap Analysis**, AECOM developed marketing materials for the Coordinated Mobility service providers, an informational sheet with all the transportation providers in Pinal County, and a Section 5310 Checklist that details the requirements and application process for that funding program. CAG can coordinate with Pinal County and the Coordinated Mobility service providers to distribute these materials. Coordinate with MAG to update the azrideinfo.com webpage with providers in Pinal County.

#### Subregions:

- Recommended for all subregions.

### Improve Customer Service

- Reducing the length of reservation windows and pickup waiting times will often require additional operational dollars. For example, the cost of adding a vehicle will be based on the agency's cost per hour and the costs of procuring a vehicle (if necessary).
- Improving customer service for hearing/vision-impaired and LEP populations can also differ based on the language, urgency, call volume, and length of the call. The cost of phone-based language translation services can range from \$1.25 to \$3 per minute.

#### Subregions:

- Recommended for all subregions.

### 6.1.3 Coordination with Other Agencies

The costs associated with these coordination efforts include agency staff time and can be assumed through CAG's existing Section 5310 Mobility Management budget. These coordination efforts can be agenda topics at future Gila-Pinal Rides Coordination Committee meetings to discuss the ability to implement some of these solutions.

#### Subregions:

- Recommended for all subregions.

### 6.1.4 Additional Planning Studies

The cost of a planning-level study can vary depending on the scope and size of the study. These planning efforts can be funded through Section 5305 transit planning funds. Both COGs and MPOs are eligible for this funding, and this funding comes out annually.

#### Subregions:

- North
- West
- Central

## 6.2 Existing Funding Gaps

The main source of federal funding is Section 5310, funding from the FTA that is passed through to ADOT for program administration. These transportation providers and CAG are subrecipients to ADOT and must comply with ADOT's process and requirements.

The following are the primary gaps in existing funding:

- Section 5310 is a reliable source of funding but is overprescribed and has more funding requests than available funding.
- Operation funding is especially needed to fill in new services or expansion of existing services, and it is often harder to obtain.
- Most Section 5310 funding (55 percent) goes to capital requests; only 35 percent goes to funding operating costs.
- Section 5310 operating funding prioritizes transportation programs that serve the general public (not agency-specific clientele).
- Funding from the Department of Economic Security and AHCCCS can help supplement a service but can be a challenging funding source for new or expanded services.
- Fares and donations can help supplement operations, but do not provide enough funding to be the sole source and would not provide funding for the expansion of services.

To fill the transportation gaps and establish new transportation programs as recommended in the **Subregion Recommendations and Prioritization** section, new funding sources are needed. The following section will outline new funding opportunities.



### 6.3 Funding Opportunities

Most grant opportunities at the federal and state levels fund capital projects, such as vehicle or software procurement. There are very few ongoing grant programs that fund the operation of programs. For nonprofits, the only federal grant program for operations is Section 5310, which is overprescribed and focuses on funding existing programs (rather than expansion). To fund the operations of new or expanded programs, an increase in general fund dollars or donations would be required. There are several federally funded pilot programs, such as the Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility (ICAM) Pilot

Program or the Advanced Transportation Technology and Innovation (ATTAIN) Program, that could fund some of the subregion service recommendations. However, ongoing funding after the pilot period will be needed to sustain the new transportation program. The benefit of this type of funding is that a pilot can provide important information and help plan and forecast costs for a permanent program. **Table 11** summarizes the potential new funding opportunities. **Table 12** summarizes the transportation recommendations identified for each subregion and pairs them with eligible funding sources.

**Table 11: Summary of New Funding Opportunities**

	Planning	Operating	Capital	Timeline	Eligibility
Arizona Tax Credits to QCOs	✓	✓	✓	Annual	Qualifying Charitable Organization (QCO)
Section 5339			✓	Annual	Existing 5307 and 5311 transit providers
Section 5311	✓	✓	✓	Every 2 years	Local governments, nonprofits, and Tribal governments. Under 50,000 people
Section 5307	✓	✓	✓	Annual	Designated recipient. Over 50,000 people
Section 5305	✓			Annual	COGs and MPOs
Carbon Reduction Program		✓	✓	Annual	States and MPOs
ICAM Pilot Program			✓	Annual-one time pilot	State departments of transportation, local governments, and public transit providers
ATTAIN Program			✓	Annual-one time pilot	State and local governments, transit agencies, MPOs, and academic institutions

**Table 12: Vehicle Type Subregion Recommendations with Funding Opportunities**

	Microtransit	Taxicab/ Shared Ride Voucher	Volunteer Driver Program	Fixed-Route Services	Private Company Partnerships	ADA- Compliant Vehicles	Coordination	Planning
Section 5310 – Operations and Capital	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Section 5310 – Mobility Management							✓	
Other funding sources – General fund, fares, donations, and Arizona Tax Credits to QCOs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Section 5339	✓					✓		
Section 5311	✓			✓	✓			✓
Section 5307	✓			✓	✓			✓
Section 5305								✓
Carbon Reduction Program	✓	✓		✓	✓			
ICAM Pilot Program	✓	✓	✓		✓			
ATTAIN Program	✓	✓			✓			

## 6.4 Prioritization and Action Items

This section prioritizes the subregion recommendations based on the feasibility and ease of implementation, and if additional funding is needed. For example, the short-term action items include coordination and planning-level recommendations, which can be completed in the existing Mobility Management budget or with the addition of planning-level funds through Section 5305. The mid-term action items include pursuing additional funding or expanding upon existing services, and long-term action items include starting new services, such as partnering with private companies. However, each subregion is unique, and some services can be implemented more quickly in one subregion than in another.

### 6.4.1 North Subregion

The North Subregion includes the communities of Apache Junction, San Tan Valley, Queen Creek, and other towns. It includes eight 5310 providers and major destinations such as senior, medical, and shopping centers.

#### Short-Term Action Items

- Conduct a detailed mobility study for Apache Junction and/or San Tan Valley. This study should include transit feasibility, governance structure, and funding mechanisms. This study can be completed in coordination with MAG or by applying for Section 5305 funding.
- Begin coordination efforts with Valley Metro to identify potential transfer points between 5310 providers in Pinal County and the Valley Metro system.
- Coordinate with MAG to understand the service among demand response providers in neighboring counties.
- Continue to monitor ADA-compliant vehicle inventory and recommend replacement.
- Provide marketing and advertising materials to help current Coordinated Mobility service providers increase their ridership.
- Provide additional resources to support agencies in applying for funding, completing FTA requirements, and applying for reimbursements.
- Expand the Apache Junction Ride Reimbursement Program by increasing the monthly limit and share this program model with nearby communities such as San Tan Valley and Queen Creek.
- Coordinate with MAG to update the azrideinfo.com webpage with providers in Pinal County.

#### Mid-Term Action Items

- Pursue alternative funding sources to fund service expansion or implement pilot programs.
- Implement findings from the detailed mobility study, such as microtransit in Apache Junction.
- Extend the hours and days of service beyond 4:00 PM and weekday-only service for existing services such as On-the-Go Express.

- Expand mobility providers' eligibility to serve more trip purposes and customers.
- Reduce the length of reservation windows and waiting times for pickup.
- Improve customer service for hearing/vision-impaired and LEP populations through the implementation of a shared language line service.
- Launch a CAG or Pinal County website and regularly update it with resources and providers' contact information.

#### Long-Term Action Items

- Implement additional Private Company Partnerships, such as combining all mobility providers on a single platform and/or brokering trips to multiple service providers to expand the service area or service days and times.

### 6.4.2 South Subregion

The South Subregion is the least populated of the proposed subregions and has a small number of major destinations. It does not include any senior centers or medical providers.

#### Short-Term Action Items

- Coordinate with PAG to understand the service among demand response providers in neighboring counties.
- Coordination with Sun Tran to identify potential transfer points for Pinal County residents between 5310 providers would improve overall connectivity and access.
- Continue to monitor ADA-compliant vehicle inventory and recommend replacement.
- Enhance education and share information about existing services.
- Coordinate with MAG to update the azrideinfo.com webpage with providers in Pinal County.

#### Mid-Term Action Items

- Expand the volunteer driver program by working with current 5310 providers, such as Give-a-Lift, to identify a champion to coordinate a subregion volunteer driver program that could supplement current programs and allow for expansion of services and travel areas.
- Reduce the length of reservation windows and waiting times for pickup.
- Improve customer service for hearing/vision-impaired and LEP populations through the implementation of a shared language line service.

#### Long-Term Action Items

- Develop a taxicab/shared ride voucher and mileage reimbursement program similar to the Apache Junction Ride Reimbursement Program.

### 6.4.3 East Subregion

Saddlebrook is the most populated town in the East Subregion with 12,014 residents. The subregion has two senior centers and a few medical facilities. Six Coordinated Mobility service providers currently provide service in this subregion.

#### Short-Term Action Items

- Coordinate with the Gila-Pinal Rides Coordination Committee to understand service among demand response providers in neighboring counties.
- Continue to monitor ADA-compliant vehicle inventory and recommend replacement.
- Enhance education and share information about existing services.
- Coordinate with MAG to update the azrideinfo.com webpage with providers in Pinal County.

#### Mid-Term Action Items

- Expand the volunteer driver program by working with current 5310 providers to identify a champion to coordinate a subregion volunteer driver program that could supplement current programs and allow for expansion of services and travel areas.
- Expand mobility providers' eligibility to serve more trip purposes and customers.
- Launch a CAG or Pinal County website and regularly update it with resources and providers' contact information.

#### Long-Term Action Items

- Extending hours and days of service beyond 4:00 PM and weekday-only service for existing services such as On-the-Go Express.
- Partner with private TNCs and software providers to fill in service gaps.
- Develop a taxicab/shared ride voucher and mileage reimbursement program similar to the Apache Junction Ride Reimbursement Program.

### 6.4.4 West Subregion

The West Subregion contains eight current 5310 providers and existing fixed-route transit providers. The subregion also includes two senior centers and several key medical destinations.

#### Short-Term Action Items

- Coordinate with Valley Metro to include neighboring communities in Maricopa County regarding fixed-route and on-demand transit services like ADA Paratransit and RideChoice.
- Coordinate with Valley Metro to identify potential transfer points for Pinal County residents between 5310 providers in Pinal County and the Valley Metro system.
- Coordinate transfers between 5310 providers and public transit providers, such as between the Opportunity Tree with existing MET service in Maricopa.

- Coordinate with MAG to understand the service among demand response providers in neighboring counties.
- Continue to monitor ADA-compliant vehicle inventory and recommend replacement.
- Enhance education and share information about existing services.
- Coordinate with MAG to update the azrideinfo.com webpage with providers in Pinal County.

#### Mid-Term Action Items

- Pursue alternative funding sources to fund service expansion or implement pilot programs.
- Improve customer service for hearing/vision-impaired and LEP populations through the implementation of a shared language line service.
- Develop a taxicab/shared ride voucher and mileage reimbursement program similar to the Apache Junction Ride Reimbursement Program.
- Launch a CAG or Pinal County website and regularly update it with resources and providers' contact information.

#### Long-Term Action Items

- Extend the hours and days of service for existing services such as MET and Gila River Transit.
- Reduce the length of reservation windows and waiting times for pickup.
- Look into additional Private Company Partnerships, such as combining all mobility providers on a single platform and/or brokering trips to multiple service providers to expand the service area or service days and times.

### 6.4.5 Central Subregion

The Central Subregion is the most populous subregion and includes Casa Grande and Coolidge, which both have transit systems, and Florence, which has two volunteer driver programs for Florence residents. There are four senior centers and several medical providers.

#### Short-Term Action Items

- Coordinate with the Coolidge Short Range Transit Study to evaluate the potential for a new service in Eloy and expansion of Cotton Express.
- Coordinate service among demand response providers in neighboring counties.
- Coordinate transfers between 5310 providers and public transit providers, such as between Horizon Health and Wellness locations in Casa Grande with CG Link and CART.
- Enhance education and share information about existing services.
- Coordinate with MAG to update the azrideinfo.com webpage with providers in Pinal County.

- Evaluate the potential for new demand response or fixed-route service in Eloy to provide local service and connectivity to nearby fixed-route services, such as the CART service. This can be pursued through Section 5305 funding.
- Evaluate the potential for expansion of the Cotton Express system in Coolidge. This can be pursued through Section 5305 funding.
- Continue to monitor ADA-compliant vehicle inventory and recommend replacement.

### Mid-Term Action Items

- Coordinate with Honor Health in Florence to discuss a potential partnership with Onward Rides.
- Procure a routing and trip scheduling SaaS to improve the efficiency of trip scheduling for providers like Dorothy Nolan Senior Center, CACDD, and HOPE, Inc. There may be opportunities to coordinate with CG Link's microtransit software and add 5310 providers to that platform so trips can be brokered to these providers to fill service gaps.
- Coordinate with Give-a-Lift to expand the volunteer driver program (including training) that could supplement current programs and allow for expansion of services and travel areas. Support Give-a-Lift expansion through enhancing marketing and outreach to reach new potential volunteer drivers.
- Improve customer service for hearing/vision-impaired and LEP populations through the implementation of a shared language line service.
- Launch a CAG or Pinal County website and regularly update it with resources and providers' contact information.

### Long-Term Action Items

- Extend hours and days of service for existing fixed-route and nonprofit 5310 providers.
- Reduce the length of reservation windows and waiting times for pickup.

## 6.5 Priority Items to Close the Funding Gap


Closing the funding gap will be challenging and will require participation among multiple partners in the region.

- 1 The first priority is for CAG to utilize the resources produced through the Information Gap task. Utilize the Coordinated Mobility service provider one-pagers and the comprehensive transportation resource list to advertise to senior centers, medical centers, and senior living facilities. This task can be coordinated with Pinal County and discussed in Gila-Pinal Rides Coordination Committee meetings on ideas for advertising. These resources can also be added to CAG and Pinal County's websites.
- 2 The second priority is to focus on the coordination efforts identified in this plan and discuss priorities among jurisdictions. This priority also includes participating in funding-level conversations with MAG, CAG, and the SCMPO and discussing priorities.
- 3 The third priority is to coordinate with agencies for initiating planning studies. If funding is not available from partners, apply for Section 5305 funding when the Notice of Funding Available is released in fall 2025 for a specific geographic area in Pinal County. This area can include San Tan Valley, Florence, or Apache Junction. These plans can provide additional details regarding specific funding mechanisms for that city or town. For example, there can be discussions with city or town leadership regarding funding public transit through the city or town's general fund and dive deeper into funding mechanisms, such as a dedicated sales tax or a property tax increase for local match.
- 4 The fourth priority is to begin conversations with the SCMPO and the transit providers in the region to discuss a pilot program through a Private Company Partnership. These conversations will include defining roles and responsibilities, and defining the goals of a pilot. There are several options, which include expanding upon Onward Ride's partnership with Honor Health in Florence, utilizing MET's or CG Link's existing microtransit software, and incorporating 5310 services and/or Uber/Lyft to broker trips. There are two federal funding sources that would fund such a pilot, so CAG can begin conversations now with potential partners and iron out the details.
- 5 The final priority is to actively participate in the Pinal Regional Transportation Authority discussion regarding a region-wide transportation tax. Having a robust transportation tax for the region will provide the greatest amount of funding to enhance public transportation and fill in service gaps identified in this study. It is recommended for CAG to advocate for the revenues to be used to fund existing and new transit services, and advocate for more of the funding for transit.


# 7. INFORMATION GAP ANALYSIS

Several deliverables were developed to address the information gaps identified in this study. The goal of this analysis is to bridge the technical gap of the Section 5310 grant program for existing and new providers, provide existing Coordinated Mobility providers with marketing materials to reach more people, and to inform elected officials and the general public about Coordinated Mobility services. This analysis includes providing current Coordinated Mobility providers with the tools to disseminate information about their services, informing elected officials on the Section 5310 program and Coordinated Mobility services through the development of a Factsheet, and developing tools for CAG staff to provide new and reoccurring Section 5310 grant applicants with the understanding of how to apply for this grant program and the ongoing grant requirements.

Figure 16: Factsheet example



**CAG**  
Central Arizona Government  
One Region - No Boundaries




**PINAL COUNTY**  
WIDE OPEN OPPORTUNITY

**Coordinated Mobility Services** aim to improve transportation options for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those with low incomes. These services focus on coordinating various transportation providers to ensure efficient and accessible transportation for those who need it most.


**Section 5310 Program Funds** are federal funds provided by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) through Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to enhance mobility for seniors and individuals with disabilities by supporting capital projects and operating expenses, aiming to remove transportation barriers and expand mobility options.

**Who is eligible for the Coordinated Mobility Service?**



**Yes, for the senior population**

Population who are 65 years old and over.



**Yes, for the population with disabilities**

Population with physical, sensory, cognitive, or mental impairments that significantly limit major life activities.

**Current Socioeconomic Conditions**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2016-2022 5-Year Estimates, 2022

**Arizona**

**18.8**

percent

**Pinal County**

**20.8**

percent

**Arizona**

**6.1**

percent

**Pinal County**

**6.7**

percent

Pinal County's senior population is about 90,000 or 20.8% of the total population. It is 2% higher than Arizona.

Population with employment disabilities in Pinal County is over 29,000 or 6.7% of the population.

**Coordinated Mobility Providers**

**On-the-Go Express** (520) 896-9777  
Pinal County operates transportation services for seniors and people with disabilities in Eastern Pinal County. The service is currently operating out of the Town of Mammoth.

**Pinal Hispanic Council (PHC)** (520) 466-7765  
PHC serves Eloy, Coolidge, Casa Grande, Maricopa, Arizona City, and their surrounding areas.

**Horizon Health and Wellness** (833) 431-4449  
The non-profit health organization provides transportation assistance for clients within 45 miles from their centers (Apache Junction, Casa Grande, Florence, Globe, and Oracle).

**NAZCARE** (928) 460-4411  
The organization provides transportation services to members within 20 miles of the Casa Grande center.

**Give-A-Lift** (520) 868-7648  
Volunteer drivers offer transportation for seniors and residents with disabilities in Florence to medical appointments with no destination restrictions.

**The Opportunity Tree** (602) 956-0400  
The non-profit organization provides services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities 25 miles from the Casa Grande facility, and 20 miles from the Maricopa facility.

**Impact Highlight** Horizon Health and Wellness provides necessary access to medical treatments, offers additional trips to integrate individuals into the community (such as parks, libraries, and events), and enables drivers to identify urgent mental and physical health issues.

## 7.1 Factsheet

A Coordinated Mobility Factsheet was developed to provide information regarding the Section 5310 grant program, key service gaps in the region, propensity of older adult and people with disabilities, and Coordinated Mobility providers in Pinal County. This Factsheet can be disseminated to elected officials and Pinal County leadership to gain more awareness about the existing transportation gaps and the Coordinated Mobility providers.

**Coordinated Mobility Providers (Cont'd)**

**Central Arizona Council on Development Disabilities (CACDD)** (480)982-5015  
CACDD currently contracts with the City of Apache Junction to transport seniors to the Apache Junction Senior Center for the center's lunch program.

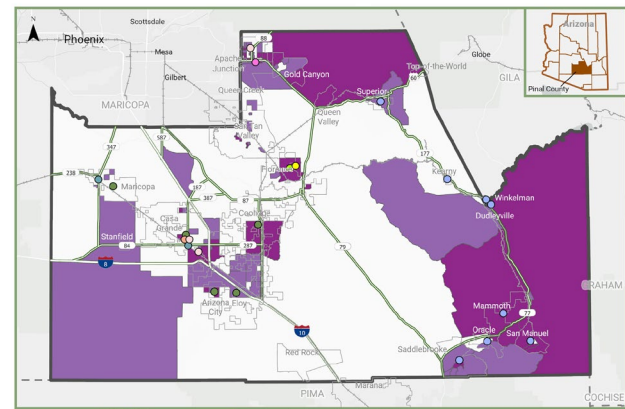
**Dorothy Nolan Senior Center** (520)868-7622  
This program facilitates passenger trips to the senior center and organizes group trips from the senior center to activities and events, and for shopping and dining.

**Helping Ourselves Pursue Enrichment (HOPE) Incorporated** (520) 770-1197  
the organization provides transportation services for members to scheduled appointments, community resources, and social activities.

**Service Gap Key Findings**

The map highlights areas with high shares of seniors and people with disabilities. Many of these areas have limited Coordinated Mobility providers, and some providers only offer services to existing clients rather than the general public. Communities in these high-need areas would benefit from additional transit services to improve access to essential medical care, food, and other daily needs.

**Service Gap**



Source: Current Conditions and Coordinated Mobility Programs

**Service Providers**

- CACDD
- Dorothy Nolan Senior Center
- Give-A-Lift

**Service Needs**

- HOPE Incorporated
- Horizon Health and Wellness Centers
- NAZCARE Casa Grande Center
- Pinal Hispanic Council
- On-the-Go Express
- The Opportunity Tree


**Funding New Services**

Section 5310 funding is very competitive and there are more transportation needs than funding in Arizona. Creative partnerships, alternative federal funding programs, and additional local funding is needed to fill these transportation gaps.


## 7.2 Coordinated Mobility Provider’s Toolkit


This Toolkit includes a Transportation Resource List, which details the public transit services and Coordinated Mobility service providers in Pinal County, and also marketing “one-pagers” for each Coordinated Mobility provider. These resources can be shared with Pinal County staff and to potential riders of these services, senior centers, and medical facilities to promote these services.

Figure 17: Examples of One-Pager for Coordinated Mobility Providers



Central Arizona Council on Developmental Disabilities







<http://www.cacdd.org/>

### Central Arizona Council on Development Disabilities (CACDD)

- ❑ **Phone:** (480) 982-5015
- ❑ **Service Provided:** Transportation for seniors to the Apache Junction Senior Center for lunch programs.
- ❑ **Service Area:** Transportation for seniors to the Apache Junction Senior Center for lunch programs.
- ❑ **Service Time and Hours:** 6:00 AM - 7:00 PM on weekdays
- ❑ **For Whom:** Seniors aged 55+ or referred by the Arizona Department of Economic Security or CACDD day program members.
- ❑ **How to Schedule:** Contact CACDD directly at (480) 982-5015, or collaborate with local senior networks.





TOWN OF FLORENCE






<https://www.florenceaz.gov/senior-center/>

### Dorothy Nolan Senior Center


- ❑ **Phone:** (520) 868-7622
- ❑ **Service Provided:** Free transportation to the Dorothy Nolan Senior Center for lunch programs, group trips to activities, events, shopping, and dining.
- ❑ **Service Area:** There are no restrictions on the destination for scheduled trips.
- ❑ **Service Time and Hours:** 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM on weekdays
- ❑ **For Whom:** Populations over 55 years old and people with disabilities living in the Town of Florence.
- ❑ **How to Schedule:** Participants must register with the Town of Florence and schedule rides by phone or in person.






### On the Go Express

- ❑ **Phone:** (520) 866-7312
- ❑ **Service Provided:** Pinal County's On the Go Express offers transportation for seniors and disabled residents in Eastern Pinal County, operating from the Town of Mammoth. The service charges \$2 per trip or \$20 monthly.
- ❑ **Service Area:** Apache Junction, Oracle, Saddlebrook, San Manuel, Mammoth, Kearny, Superior.
- ❑ **Service Time and Hours:** 9:00 AM - 3:30 PM on weekdays
- ❑ **For Whom:** Seniors and populations with disabilities in Eastern Pinal County. Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) members or Long-Term Care recipients are not eligible for services.
- ❑ **How to Schedule:** Eligible participants can book rides by phone, 72 hours in advance.

### 7.3 Section 5310 Grant Application and Ongoing Responsibilities Checklist

This document details the Section 5310 requirements to apply for grant funds and the ongoing requirements once grant funds are received. The document provides details regarding how to start applying for grant funds, eligible applicants and activities, and local match requirements. There is a checklist for new applicants, which CAG’s Mobility Manager can review with a potential applicant, so they understand the process and all the requirements associated with this funding program. There is a separate checklist that

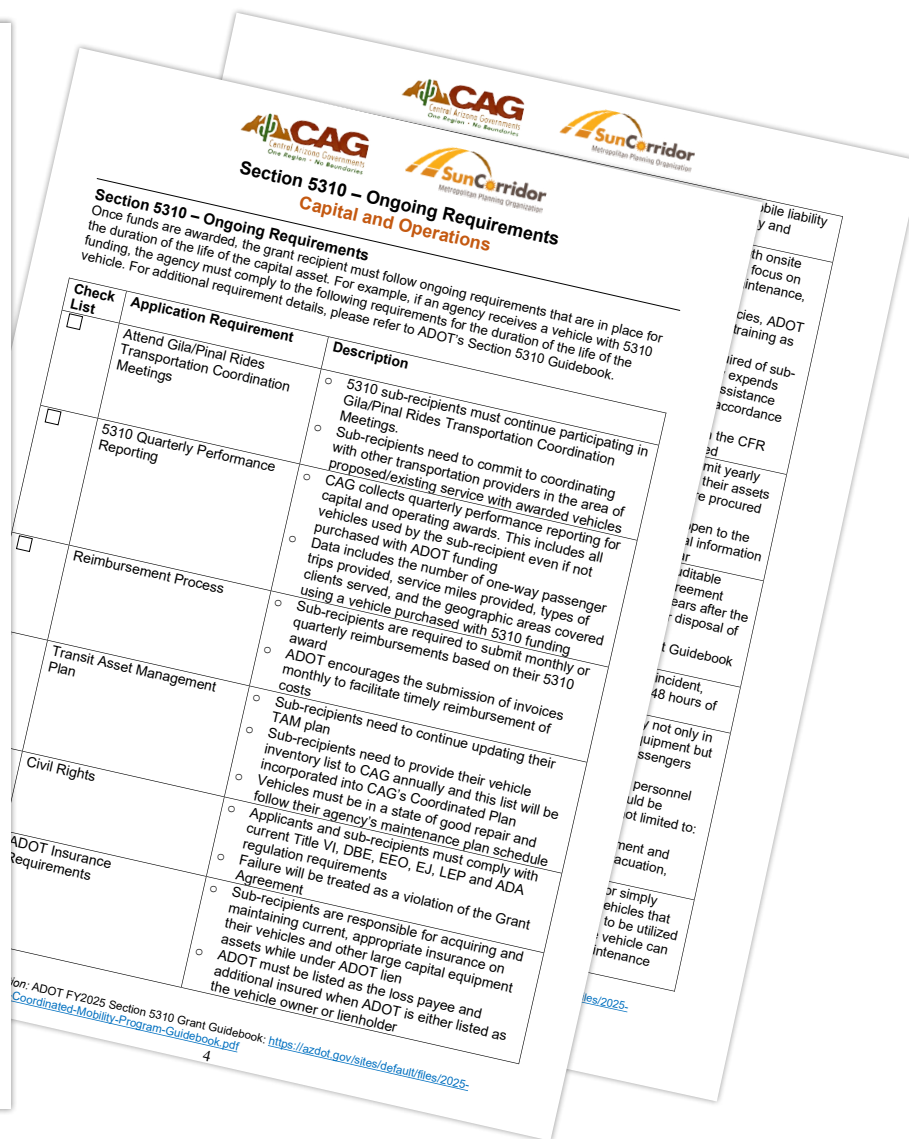
details the ongoing requirements after grant funding is received. It is important to walk through this process with a new applicant, so they understand the ongoing requirements and in compliance with federal regulations.

Figure 18: Example of Section 5310 Grant Checklist for New Applicants

Check List	Application Requirement	Description
<input type="checkbox"/>	Attend Gila/Pinal Rides Transportation Coordination Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agencies thinking about applying for Section 5310 funding need to participate in Gila/Pinal Rides Transportation Coordination meetings.</li> <li>Please coordinate with the Zeena Gagnon (<a href="mailto:zgagnon@cagaz.org">zgagnon@cagaz.org</a>), the Mobility Manager for the CAG &amp; SCMPO regions</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	COG/MPO Coordinated Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be eligible to receive Section 5310 funding, the project must be included in a locally adopted Coordinated Plan for the region</li> <li>CAG has a Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan, which covers both the CAG and SCMPO regions. For a project to be included in this plan, please coordinate with the Zeena Gagnon.</li> <li>If the project is not identified in the Coordinated Plan, the project will not be eligible for 5310 funding</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Project Need and Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicants will be required to explain the need of the grant funds and explain about the current programs. Data such as ridership numbers and vehicle mileage will be required</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Local match	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agencies must have the required local match amount at the time of the application</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Civil Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All recipients of FTA assistance are responsible for compliance with all Civil Rights requirements applicable to transit related projects<sup>1</sup></li> <li>5310 applicants must have Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Environmental Justice (EJ), Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) policies</li> <li>Applicants must submit a Title VI plan for review and approval prior to receiving 5310 funds. ADOT has a template to develop this plan</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5310 grant recipients must have a TAM plan which includes a list of all of their vehicles, age, average miles, and ADOT useful life benchmark</li> <li>The plan must be updated frequently and uploaded in the 5310 grant application</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grant Agreements & Legal Review and Signature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each ADOT 5310 grant agreement contains FTA regulation requirements and upon signing, each agency agrees to adhere to terms and conditions contained in the grant agreement</li> <li>The grant application includes a grant agreement which must be signed by the CEO and legal counsel prior to submitting the grant application</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> FTA, Civil Rights, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/civilrights>

For more information: ADOT FY2025 Section 5310 Grant Guidebook: <https://azdot.gov/sites/default/files/2025-01/ADOT-FY2025-Coordinated-Mobility-Program-Guidebook.pdf>




# 8. SUMMARY


Pinal County is a predominantly rural county with relatively limited transit services. Service is comprised of nine different fixed routes and an on-demand response service area within Casa Grande. Fixed-route and demand-response transit service is supplemented by nine 5310 Coordinated Mobility providers operating within Pinal County. Fixed-route and demand response services are available within the major population clusters in central Pinal County. Communities near the northern and eastern boundaries of the county do not have public transit service available. Funding, service vehicles, and staffing concerns were equally identified as challenges faced by the Coordinated Mobility providers.



Spatial gaps can be found in the southeastern and southwestern areas of the county. Other areas in north and central Pinal County would benefit from additional services, as these areas have high propensity and medium to low intensity of service.

 Communities with both **high** transit propensity (high concentrations of seniors and disabled residents) and **low** service intensity (few existing service providers):

- San Manuel
- Dudleyville
- Saddlebrook
- Mammoth
- Oracle
- Tohono O’odham Nation





 Communities with **high** transit propensity include and **medium** service intensity:




- San Tan Valley
- Apache Junction
- Gold Canyon
- Queen Valley
- Superior
- Top-of-the-World
- Arizona City


Five subregions have been proposed to organize transit recommendations:




Service recommendations for each subregion were developed and many of these recommendations applied to multiple subregions. Recommendations include:

-  Increase coordination with MAG, Valley Metro, or Sun Tran
-  Implement or expand microtransit
-  Private company partnerships
-  Taxicab/shared ride vouchers and mileage reimbursement programs


-  Expand the volunteer driver program
-  Improve customer service
-  Meet capital and administrative needs

 **Costing information** has been provided for each of the subregion recommendations and was developed using examples of other programs throughout the state, NTD data, and additional research and information gathered from private companies. Less expensive recommendations include planning and coordination efforts, while more expensive recommendations include expansion of fixed routes or starting new transit services, like a microtransit program.

 **Operation funding** is especially needed to fill in new services or expansion of existing services and is often harder to obtain. FTA Section 5310 and Section 5311 grant programs typically prioritize funding existing services over new or expanding services. Fares and donations can help supplement operations but likely do not provide enough funding to be the sole source and would likely not provide funding for the expansion of services. To fill the transportation gaps and establish new transportation programs, new funding sources are needed.

**Five priorities** were identified to close the funding gaps and these include:

- 1** Utilizing the resources produced through the Information Gap Analysis
- 2** Focusing on the coordination efforts identified in this plan and discussing priorities among jurisdictions
- 3** Coordinating with agencies for initiating planning studies and apply for Section 5305 funding
- 4** Beginning conversations with the SCMPO and the transit providers in the region to discuss a pilot program through a Private Company Partnership
- 5** Actively participate in the Pinal RTA discussion regarding a region-wide transportation tax

 **Fact sheets and promotional materials** were developed to address the information gaps identified in this study. This includes providing current Coordinated Mobility providers with the tools to disseminate information about their services, informing elected officials on the Section 5310 program and Coordinated Mobility services, and developing tools for CAG staff to provide new and reoccurring Section 5310 grant applicants with an understanding of how to apply for this grant program and the ongoing grant requirement

