



Community Transportation

San Juan County Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

October 2022

An update of the 2018 San Juan County
Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

San Juan County Health & Community Services

P.O. Box 607
145 Rhone St
Friday Harbor, WA 98250

Contact:
Richard Uri 360-370-9404
richardu@sanjuanco.com

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Title VI Notice to Public

It is the policy of both the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and of the San Juan County Department of Health and Community Services to assure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin or sex, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise discriminated against under any of its federally funded programs and activities. Any person who believes his/her Title VI protection has been violated, may file a complaint with WSDOT's Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO). For additional information regarding Title VI complaint procedures and/or information regarding our non- discrimination obligations, please contact OEO's Title VI Coordinator at (360) 705-7082.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information

This material can be made available in an alternate format by emailing the Office of Equal Opportunity at wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov or by calling toll free, 855-362-4ADA (4232). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may make a request by calling the Washington State Relay at 711.

Acronyms and Terms

2010 Plan - the San Juan County Human Services Transportation Plan, published July 2010

2014 Update - the San Juan County Human Services Transportation Plan, published March 2015

2018 Update - the San Juan County Human Services Transportation Plan, published March 2019

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act

OFM - Washington State Office of Financial Management SCC – Senior Services Council

SJ County - San Juan County

SJC HST - San Juan County Human Services transportation

SJC HSTP - San Juan County Human Services Transportation Plan State - Washington State

The County - San Juan County

TVP - Transportation Voucher Program

U.S. Census - the 2010 United States Census counts and analysis

WSDOT HSTP - Washington State Department of Transportation Human Services Plan VA- United States Veterans' Administration

Voucher Program - Transportation Voucher Program

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Executive Summary

The 2022 San Juan County Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) update builds on the work completed in the 2010 HSTP, and the 2014 and 2018 plan update. It examines strategies for the unique and diverse needs of an isolated and rural population. It identifies the ways to facilitate access to essential services and community opportunities not otherwise accessible to some county residents. It also explores means to improve services and other needs such as coordinating transportation services between island-based and mainland transportation.

With the overlapping descriptions of individual transportation needs, San Juan County Health & Community Services, along with their transportation partner providers have found that the most useful criteria to identify the transportation-vulnerable and underserved populations in San Juan County are low income; people with disabilities; and senior/over age sixty- five. These three criteria most frequently accompany lack of access to a vehicle, which is a significant factor in this county with no public transportation service.

The plan describes the methods of determining public needs and service gaps and makes recommendations for strategies and actions to meet the needs and close the gaps.

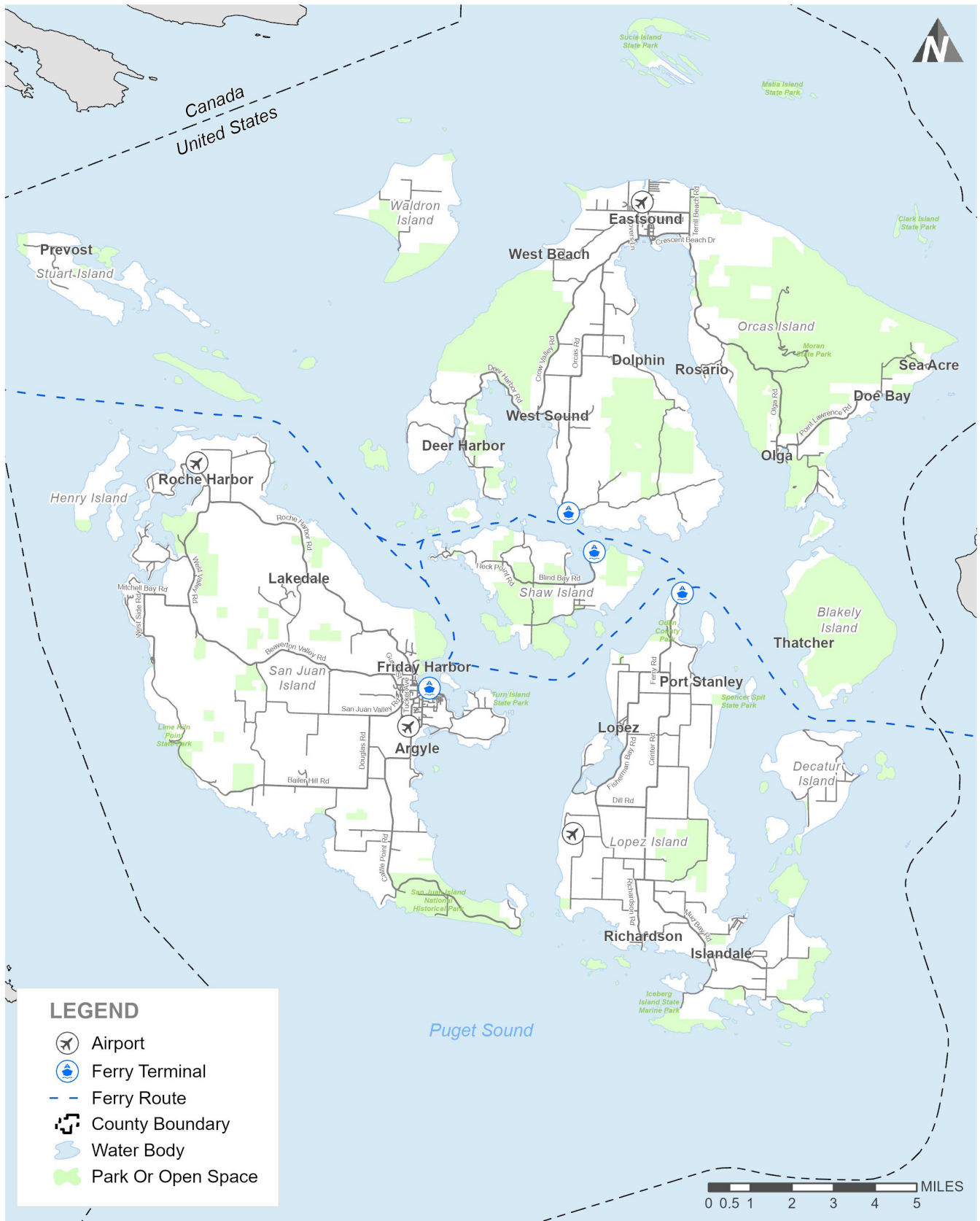


Figure 1 San Juan County Transportation Routes

1 Introduction

Background

San Juan County is largely rural and removed from many conveniences common in mainland Washington by approximately one to two hours aboard the Washington State Ferry, with a destination of Anacortes, in Skagit County. Wait times and ferry cancellations have increased since the COVID pandemic began, and residents report greater difficulty in making it to mainland appointments or traveling between islands as a result. Regional and coordinated transportation is largely with the State Ferry system and service providers in Anacortes and Skagit County. Most San Juan County residents use an automobile to access community services and amenities and to transport supplies to their homes.

According to the most recent census estimates, over thirty three percent of the population are seniors (aged 65 and older), approximately eleven percent are disabled, and ten percent generate a household income that is below the federal poverty level (\$27,750 for a family of four). San Juan County Health and Community Services Department, with collaboration from local nonprofits such as the Senior Services Council, Island Rides, and Recovery Rides, have coordinated and developed community transportation programs to meet the needs of the geographically isolated rural county where traditional public transportation services have not yet been feasible.

2018 Plan

The first San Juan County Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (2010 Plan) was developed in 2010 to address the transportation needs of the elderly, of people with disabilities, and of low-income populations in accordance with the criteria of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). In the process of developing the first plan, the planning team used a steering committee, multiple stakeholder meetings and interviews involving more than ninety people

on four of the county's islands, and a public survey. The plan was updated in 2014 and 2018, with a similar outreach process to the 2010 plan. The 2018 plan found that the most effective approach to updating the plan was to focus on making incremental updates to the 2014 plan by evaluating and improving the programs resulting from the 2014 Plan that would help meet the needs of residents and close the existing service gaps.

Implementation and Update

The 2018 Plan outlined the following broad strategies to meet existing needs and closer service gaps:

1. Ensure Mobility program coordination
2. Maintain and make best use of voucher funds
3. Maintain and enhance programs to address needs of individuals with remote locations
4. Ensure TVP program is broadly available
5. Make best use of senior vans
6. Improve communications about transportation options with all potential users
7. Better coordinate local and regional providers for ferry shuttle services at island and mainland ferry terminals

The most successful program has been an innovative response to the challenges of dispersed population and geographical isolation. It is the Transportation Voucher Program (TVP), which is well-suited to local community needs.

The TVP serves about 300 of the most transportation-vulnerable community members, who amount to almost two percent of San Juan County's population. This program coordinates a unique public-private partnership of service providers and local social organizations working together to provide transportation access for an established and expanding client base. The voucher program enables participants to pay

for taxi services and ferry fares on San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez islands, and for auto repair and parts services on Orcas and San Juan islands.

Coordination with San Juan County planning

The current draft of the 2022 San Juan County Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element¹ lists goals and policies related to Transit (6.5.G. Goals,). Three of the six Transit goals are specifically relevant to this plan:

1. To encourage and support development of public and private transit and shuttle services.
2. To improve access to health and human services, employment, social, educational, recreational and tourism destinations.
3. To improve mobility and the quality of life for residents and workers.

Several of the Policies for Transit (6.5.G. 1-5 and 8, p. 33-34) are also directly applicable to coordinated human services transportation:

1. Support the development of social service public transit options and the work of nonprofit and private community transportation partners to:
 - a. Reduce the isolation of target populations;
 - b. Increase accessibility to transportation services;
 - c. Address seasonal tourist travel peaks through the development of transit alternatives; and
 - d. Create additional organizational capacity to sustain implementation of community-identified transportation needs.
2. Support the work of community transportation partners to evaluate public transportation needs, further identify opportunities for service coordination, and implement actions described in the San Juan County Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan to meet the needs of the community, especially individuals with lower incomes, seniors, persons with disabilities, and veterans.

3. Support coordinated human services transportation planning that creates improved access to transportation information, develops economies of scale, eliminates inefficiencies, and provides greater visibility of transportation options.
4. Explore and support the collaborative efforts of community organizations, state and federal partners, and transportation providers to provide cost effective service delivery, to increase capacity to serve unmet needs, and to improve mobility, reduce carbon emissions, and the quality of transportation services.
5. Support community transportation planning efforts focused on gaining a better understanding of the transportation needs of the San Juan Islands, creating new methods of island travel, raising awareness of transportation issues, and exploring private and public funding for new clean public transportation solutions.
6. Leverage community resources to obtain appropriate state and federal funding for transit projects that address both year-round and seasonal transit challenges.
7. Coordinate with the WSDOT Public Transportation Division to implement high priority projects identified by the community, using the ranking criteria for selecting projects established in the San Juan County CHST.

Coordination with State and Local Planning

This plan has been prepared in accordance with of the draft San Juan County Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element and with the guidance provided by the Washington State Department of Transportation's Coordinate Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan Guidebook (2021). Methodology, gap assessment, strategy, and prioritization of strategies have each been addressed and are described in the sequence of chapters.

This plan also supports the goals and objectives of the Washington Statewide Human Services Transportation Plan. The San Juan County Human Services Transportation

¹ https://www.sanjuanco.com/DocumentCenter/View/26499/Section-B_Ele_6_Transportation_Draft_2022-07-15

Plan contributes to identifying statewide transportation deficiencies, developing strategies and recommendations to improve access and enhance mobility for target populations.

Funding Human Services Transportation in San Juan County²

The most significant funding sources for human services transportation in Washington State are:

- Locally funded public transportation agencies
- WSDOT Consolidated Grant Program (federal and state funds)
- State and federally funded human service programs

The only public transportation agency serving and operating in San Juan County is the Washington State Ferry system. With no local public transit system, San Juan County has created a community transportation program, which has developed public/private partnerships. San Juan County programs are eligible for the WSDOT Consolidated Grant Program.

WSDOT (State) Funding Applicable to San Juan County

- Rural Mobility Grants (Transportation providers, rural agencies).
- Specialized Paratransit/Special Needs Grants (nonprofit providers for elderly and persons with disabilities).

Federal Funding (Administered by WSDOT)

- FTA Section 5310 - Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation (nonprofit agencies serving rural areas, to provide vehicles and other equipment).
- FTA Section 5311(f) - Rural Public Transportation (Providers, capital, operating, and planning activities to enhance rural and small urban intercity transportation).

- FTA Section 5339 – Bus and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Investment Program.
- State social service agency programs focusing on individual needs and access to services
- Medical transportation programs consistent with federal Medicaid program requirements (through the Northwest Regional Council/Area Agency on Aging).

Goals of the 2022 Plan

San Juan County's senior population is growing faster than in other Washington counties, and there is no public transportation other than the ferry system. An important consideration of the 2022 plan is to enhance the options for seniors to stay in their homes, to age in place. Isolated, lower- income earning and disabled community members are also considered high priorities in developing goals for San Juan County human services transportation.

Islanders often have a strong sense of independence and self-reliance, which sometimes makes them unwilling to seek available services. The same attitude serves to make most islanders conservative in their use of services.

The goals for this 2022 plan update are to:

- Increase independence and community access to essential goods and services.
- Evaluate the programs developed in accordance with the goals of the 2018 San Juan County Human Services Transportation Plan.
- Identify gaps in service.
- Develop strategies, potential actions, and programs to maintain and enhance human services transportation to meet the needs of San Juan County residents.

² Described in the Washington Statewide Human Services Transportation Plan: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/PT-Report-StatewideHumanServicesTransportationPlan.pdf>

2 Methodology

Practical application of new programs since 2010 indicates that the most effective approach to this plan update is to focus on evaluation of and improvements to those programs, which were developed in accordance with San Juan County's first Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (July 2010). Demographic data and current transportation options have been updated through research in Washington State publications, examination of local resources, and stakeholder consultations.

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the County was updated and organized using: the 2022 United States Census Bureau Census Profile for San Juan County; tables from the American Community Survey 2020 - 2025 five-year estimates; Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) website data; the Washington Statewide Human Services Transportation Plan (2022); the Washington State Advisory Council on Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Template with Instructions; San Juan County 2036 Comprehensive Plan Update Population Projections; OFM County Growth Management Population Projections by Age and Sex: 2010-2040; and the San Juan County Comprehensive Plan.

Demographics are described in this plan to help define population groups who are challenged or unable to transport themselves or purchase transportation because of income situation, age, or physical or mental disability. Maps were prepared by geographic information specialists at Transpo Group to illustrate the dispersed nature of residents and the common destinations in commercial and service centers on three islands and in Anacortes. These maps can be found in Chapter 3.

Stakeholder Involvement

For the update of this 2022 San Juan County Human Services Transportation Plan, a combination of online and in person outreach was conducted. A free-standing online open house was developed in July 2022 which held information about the plan update, and a link to an online survey where residents and those with mobility needs could answer questions about how to improve services across the county. Members of specific organizations such as the three Senior Centers, three Family Resource Centers, and Island Rides on San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez Islands, and the San Juan Health & Community Services group were interviewed about specific mobility needs across the San Juan Islands and what strategies might be most effective in addressing those needs. In addition to the in-person feedback, the online survey received 123 responses across the County.

The survey questions, meetings' notes and stakeholder interviews are detailed in Appendix A.

Inventory of Current Transportation Options and Services

Information about current options and services was sought through contacting administrators and service providers on all three main islands. The inventory of transportation options and services accessible by county residents was developed from meeting and interview notes and from rechecking and evaluating the options and services listed in the 2018 Plan. Information about air service between islands and the mainland was not replicated because the cost of the service makes it unavailable to low-income residents, except in unique and rare circumstances.

Needs Assessment and Identification of Strategies

Unmet needs for transportation were identified through discussions of the experience of the stakeholders and program administrators at meetings, on-line, and in interviews.

An evaluation of the programs was developed using the current conditions, goals and expectations established in the 2010 Plan as a baseline. The number of participants in the Transportation Voucher Program, along with coordination, outreach, and technology use, plus feedback from participants, administrators, and providers were all factors in program evaluation.

The needs assessment and recommendations from stakeholder interviews and the online survey response provided a basis for strategies and actions to meet them.

Strategies and Ranking Priority Projects

Overall strategies are aligned with those of the previous Plans. Sustaining and improving current programs, which have proved successful in creating transportation services for groups of people who would not otherwise have them, was considered basic to selecting projects and actions to meet identified needs. Projects will also be chosen in consideration of the network of service providers available in the county, including the potential for sustaining or increasing their availability. Expanding services and networking regionally are important considerations in long term planning and providing services to destinations that are not available in San Juan County.

3 Demographics and Access to Services

Special Needs Origins and Destinations

Among the thirty-nine counties in Washington State, San Juan County has two unique challenges: isolation from the mainland and the demographics of its population. San Juan County contains less than 175 square miles of land scattered across dozens of islands in the northwest corner of Washington State. These islands are located in the Salish Sea, which is north of Puget Sound, between the United States mainland and Vancouver Island, British Columbia. (Figure 1)

As of April 2022, the Office of Financial Management (OFM) estimated 2,680 people reside in Friday Harbor, and 18,150 in the county overall. Approximately 85 percent of county residents live outside of Friday Harbor, which is the only incorporated town, the County Seat, the center of government services, and the location of the county's only hospital. The overall population density in the county averages 104 persons per square mile, but homes are dispersed throughout the three main islands of San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez in rural areas along rural roads that follow the meandering contours of island topography.

Unincorporated population centers, which have some amenities, services, and community

opportunities on other islands are located in Eastsound, eight miles from the Orcas Island ferry landing, and in Lopez Village, four miles from the Lopez Island ferry landing. A small grocery store and post office on Shaw Island are only a few steps from the ferry landing. Other small population centers, such as Roche Harbor and Deer Harbor, may have a small store, inn, restaurant, or gas station.

About twenty of the total inhabited islands in the county have year-round residents (some have as few as two residents), but most people live on the four most populated islands: San Juan, Orcas, Lopez, and Shaw. These four also are the only islands with scheduled ferry service and the docking facilities to accommodate ferries with car decks, operated by the State Department of Transportation.

Most residents rely on the Washington State Ferry (WSF) system, to access services or supplies they need on the mainland. Difficulties with the ferry system have led to increased mainland travel problems since 2020 which impacts local transportation programs. Some might fly in small planes or take private boats in good weather, but all who live in the islands depend on WSF, directly as passengers or otherwise for goods and services. In this way the county's population is doubly dispersed: along rural roads and across marine channels with limited and costly options for crossing them.

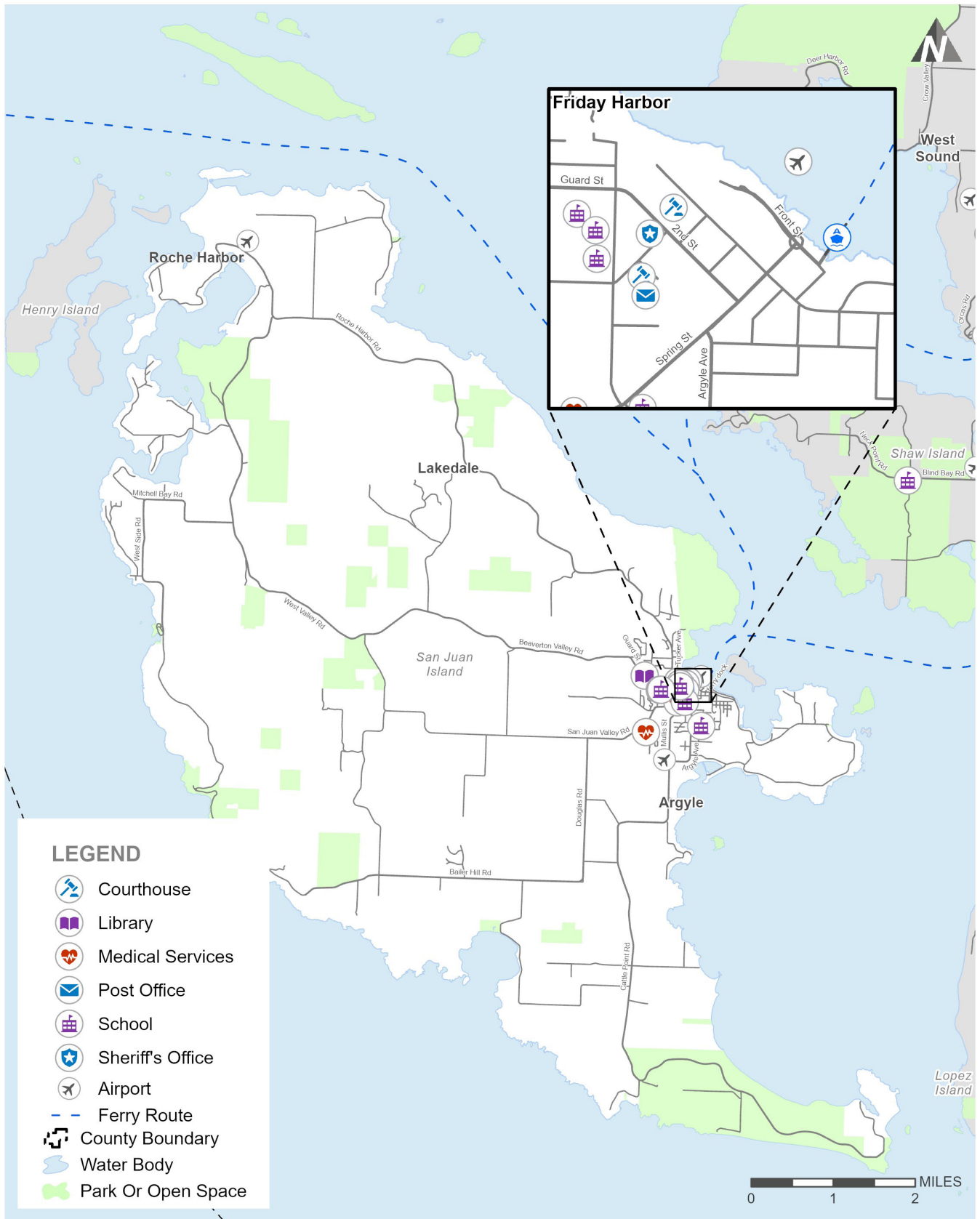


Figure 2: San Juan Island Common Destinations

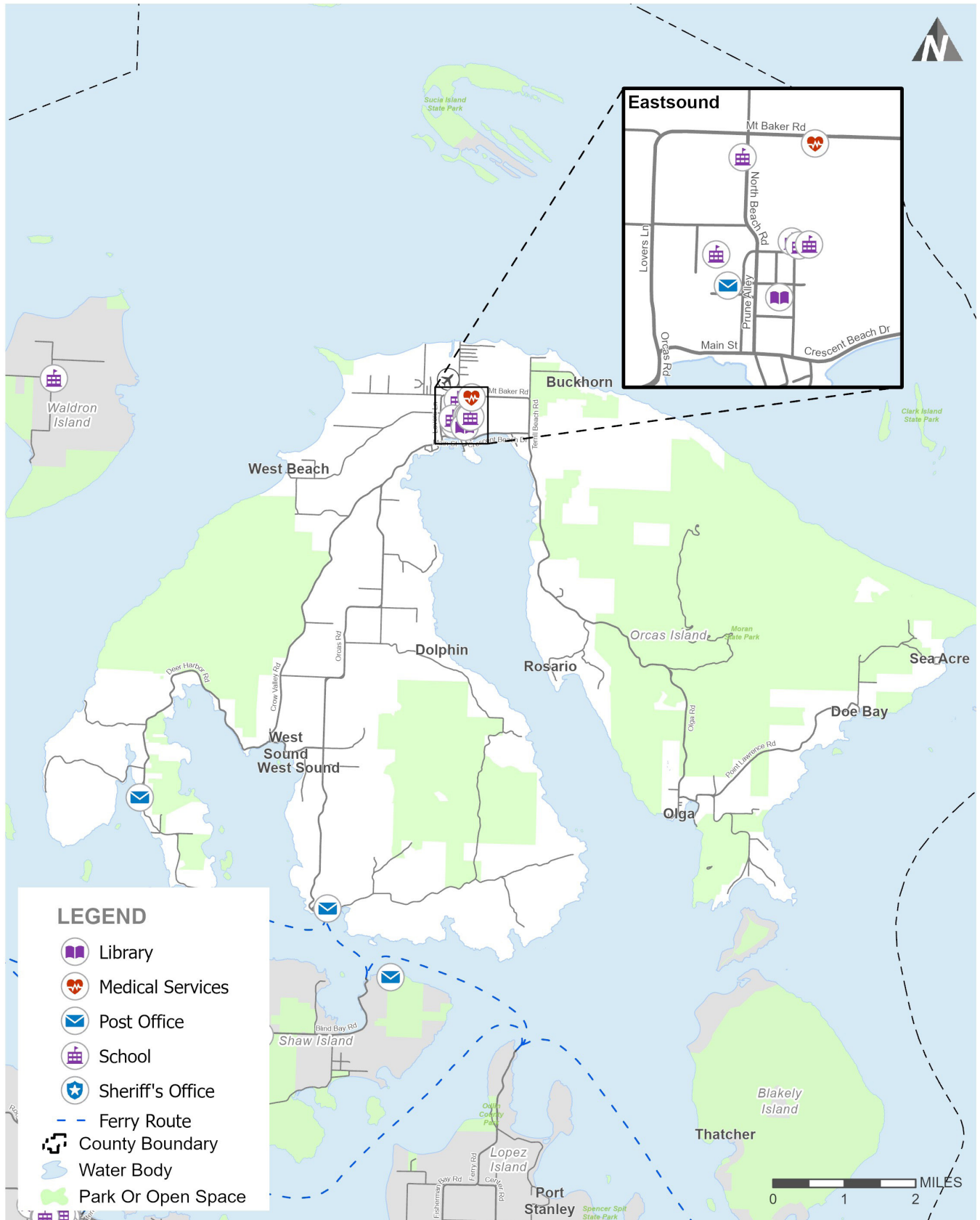


Figure 3: Orcas Island Common Destinations

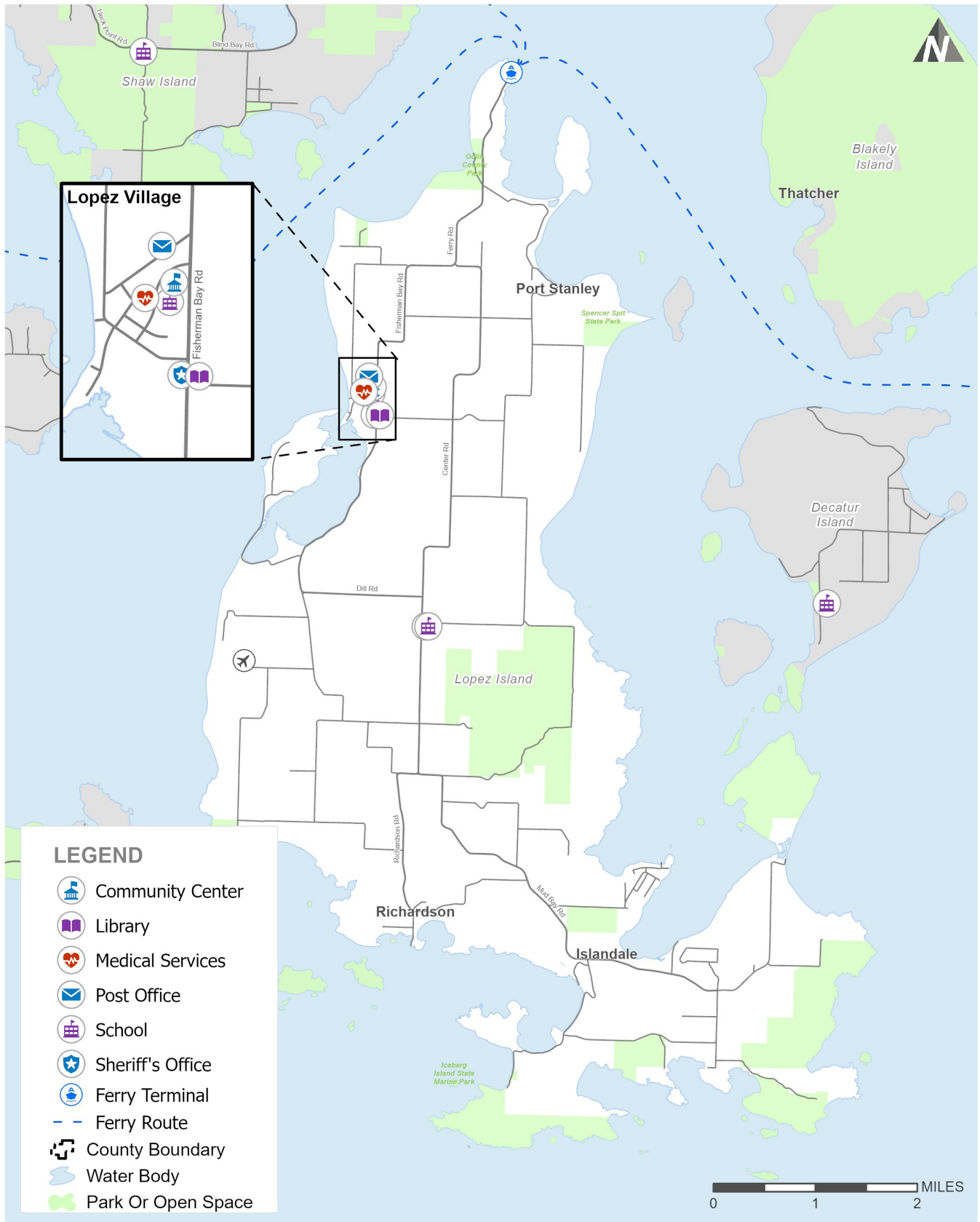


Figure 4: Lopez Island Common Destinations

Access to Medical and Other Services

When the first San Juan County Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (2010) was written, medical services within the county were limited to small clinics or professional offices and an inter-island medical clinic in Friday Harbor, which provided more technology-dependent services such as x-rays. Orcas Island Medical Center also had x-ray capacity at that time.

In 2012 Peace Health Medical Group completed a new hospital in Friday Harbor that also serves as a medical center. The new Peace Island Hospital and Clinic has increased the types of services available within the county with an emergency room, a cancer center, imaging facilities, and an outpatient surgery center.

In 2021, the Island Primary Care – Orcas Clinic was opened to serve the Orcas Island community (prior to this, Orcas was served by a local clinic). This clinic is subsidized by the newly created Orcas Island Health Care District and provides primary care and lab services to residents of the island. In addition, the clinic on Lopez Island has recently been taken over by UW medicine in partnership with the newly created Lopez Island Hospital District, ensuring primary care access to Lopez residents for the foreseeable future.

However, transportation issues for those without access to a personal vehicle remain. The location of the hospitals and clinics requires automobile transportation for most people, and visits to the hospital require ferry travel for everyone not on San Juan Island. Transport to and from the hospitals and clinics is provided by Island Rides on a free or

donation cost basis. Transport for mainland medical appointments is provided by the San Juan County Senior Services Specialists with advance notice.

The hospital, which is designated as a Critical Access Hospital, has limited services and only a few beds. There is no birthing center in the county. Many people still take the ferry to get to medical services in Anacortes, Mount Vernon, or Bellingham on the mainland. There are three air ambulance services serving San Juan County and each requires membership dues paid annually. Islanders who aren't paying dues are subject to paying the cost on their own.

The ferry trip to the mainland takes at least an hour and waiting times to board the ferry can average an hour at terminals on each side of the crossing. Passenger decks are above the car deck, and walk-on passengers board on the car deck when departing from the islands. Passengers with mobility or other medical challenges may need to take an aide or driver with them, some may require a special needs van, and some may need transport by ambulance.

The expense of ferry tickets, currently around \$70 for a standard vehicle and driver to the mainland, can be a financial challenge. Walk-on tickets are less costly, but walk-on passengers face an additional challenge to connect with land transportation once they arrive at the ferry terminal, which is more than two miles from the town of Anacortes.

San Juan County Demographic Profile

Based on the Washington State Office of Financial Management’s (OFM) small area population data, the San Juan County population estimation for 2022 is 18,150 total of which 2,680 live in Friday Harbor. Data from the OFM was last updated in 2017 and was still the most current for this report, with new projections expected in late 2022 or early 2023. Table 1 shows the estimated population distribution among the county’s islands from the 2017 San Juan County Comprehensive Plan, which was still the most current data available for this report. More than 80 percent of the population lives on San Juan and Orcas Islands, with population almost equally split between the two islands.

The OFM also produces estimates of population growth for each county in low, medium, and high projections. The current OFM San Juan County population moderate growth rate projection is found in Table 2

Seasonal population fluctuations in the summer, especially in July and August, increase the number of persons actually on the islands to as many as twice the ordinary number of residents. Seasonal residents and visitors are a mainstay of county economy and employment, and they also have an impact on infrastructure, services, taxi providers, traffic, and ferry wait times and available spaces.

Table 1 Estimated Population Distribution in 2016

Island	Population
San Juan (Including 2,250 in Friday Harbor)	7,810
Orcas	5,395
Lopez	2,466
Shaw	241
Total ferry – served population	15,912
Other Islands	402
Total	16,320

Population Projection for 2036 Comprehensive Plan Update, 2017

Table 2 Moderate rate population growth in San Juan County

Year →	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Number of County Residents	16,256	16,606	16,939	17,216	17,443

Source: Washington Office of Financial Management, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

Table 3 San Juan County special needs populations

	Age 65+	Disabilities	Low Income	No Access to Vehicle	Unemployed	Veterans	Linguistic Isolation
Washington State	15.4%	12.7%	10.2%	7.0%	3.1%	8.9%	7.6%
San Juan County	33.5%	11.1%	10.2%	4.6%	1.1%	9.2%	2.0%
National	16.1%	12.7%	12.8%	8.4%	3.4%	7.1%	8.2%

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5 - year estimates

Special Transportation Needs

The Washington Statewide Human Services Transportation Plan (WSHSTP) identifies several factors that can create difficulties for persons who need to transport themselves or purchase transportation for everyday purposes. WSHSTP and the U.S. Census have quantified groups within the population that are likely to have special transportation needs. The categories and figures for the Washington State, the County and the Nation are found in Table 3, below. Many individuals may fit more than one of these categories, and the numbers in Table 3 are not mutually exclusive.

The 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates data was used for each demographics profile in the Table 3. This dataset is the most recent for which complete demographic data for San Juan County exists. ACS is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and aggregated by geographic summary levels.

With the overlapping descriptions of individual transportation needs, San Juan County Human Services Transportation programs have found that the most useful criteria to identify the transportation-vulnerable and underserved populations in San Juan County are: low income; disability; and senior/over age sixty-five. These three criteria most frequently accompany lack of access to a vehicle, which is a particularly significant factor in San Juan County, where there is no reliable public transportation service all year round beyond the ferry system.

Table 4 Projected population over age 65

Year →	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Washington State	16.1%	18.1%	20.6%	21.3%	21.6%
San Juan County	35.8%	39.4%	40.7%	39.5%	37.7%

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2017

https://www.ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/dataresearch/pop/GMA/projections17/GMA_2017_county_pop_projections.pdf

Seniors of Age 65 and Older

San Juan County's senior population increased from 31.2 percent of the total county's population in 2016 to 33.5 percent in 2021. The increasing rates of seniors of age 65 and older is a matter of concern in San Juan County. As shown in Table 4, San Juan County has a disproportionately large percentage of seniors compared to the state averages.

Estimates by OFM for 2018 show the senior population comprises approximately 34 percent of county's total population, which is twice that of the Washington State estimate. The number of seniors in the county is projected to increase by approximately 52 percent (adding almost 2,500 people) between 2015 and 2040.

The Growing share of older population in the county indicates a need for specialized transportation services and senior services. Many of these people live in rural areas and many have few resources for transportation. Figure 5 and Figure 6 show the location of residents in San Juan County over the age of 65.

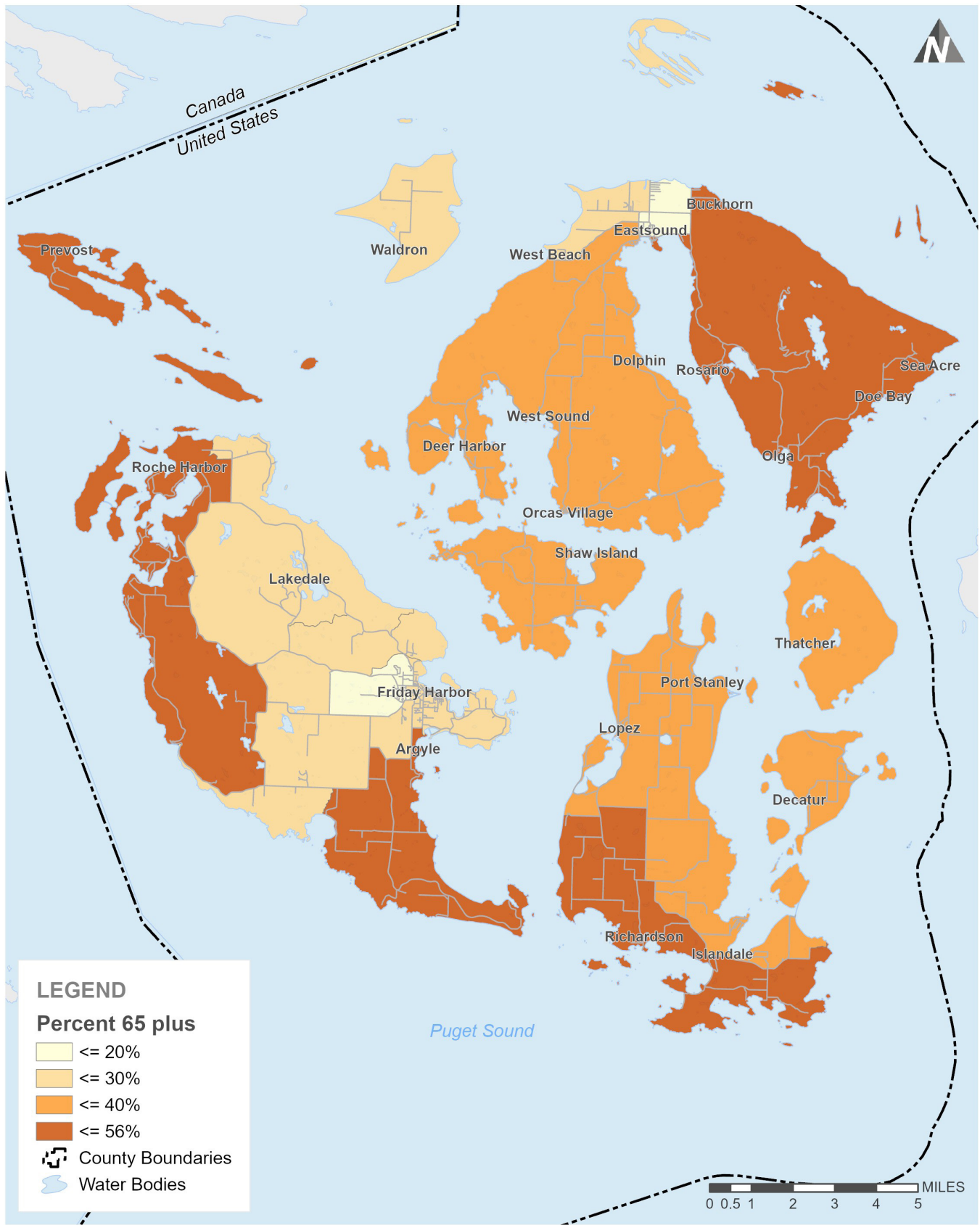


Figure 5 Percent of Population Aged 65+

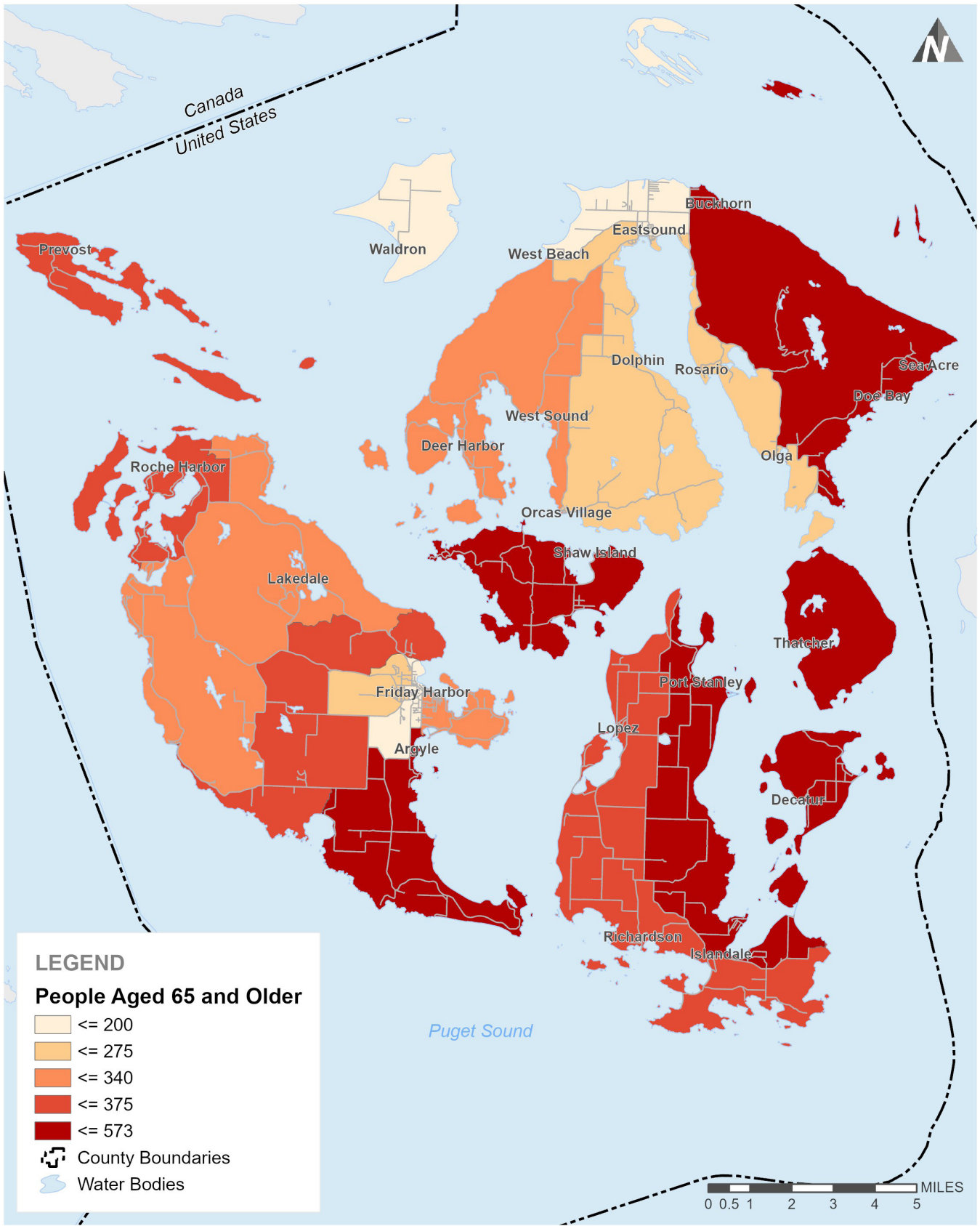


Figure 6 Number of Individuals Aged 65+

Disabilities

According to the 2020 ACS five year estimates, the San Juan County's disability population decreased from 2068 people in 2016 to 1875 people in 2020 (from 12.7 percent to 11.1 percent of the county's total population). In 2020, approximately 19 percent of seniors of age 65 and above had some type of disability, and just over 3 percent of youth were listed as with disability. Disabilities are categorized as difficulty with hearing or vision, or with a cognitive, ambulatory, or self-care difficulty. While not all disabilities impede someone's mobility, many disabilities greatly limit the individual's ability to travel independently.

San Juan County medical facilities, including physical therapy, are located in the three island centers. Some mental health and chemical dependency services are available on both San Juan and Orcas Islands, but many islanders travel to the Friday Harbor office of Compass Health to receive their care. Figure 7 and Figure 8 show the location of residents in San Juan county living with a disability.

Low Income Population

As of the 2020 census, 10.2 percent (1,814 people) of the county's total population are categorized as low-income. The county's low-income population remained nearly stable with 11 percent of total population in 2012 (1,748 people) and 10.7 percent in (1,749 people) in 2016. As of 2020, 10.6 percent of youth (those under 18 years of age) were considered low-income, and 7.2 percent of seniors over 65 years old were considered low-income. Figure 9 and Figure 10 show the location of low in-come residents in San Juan County.

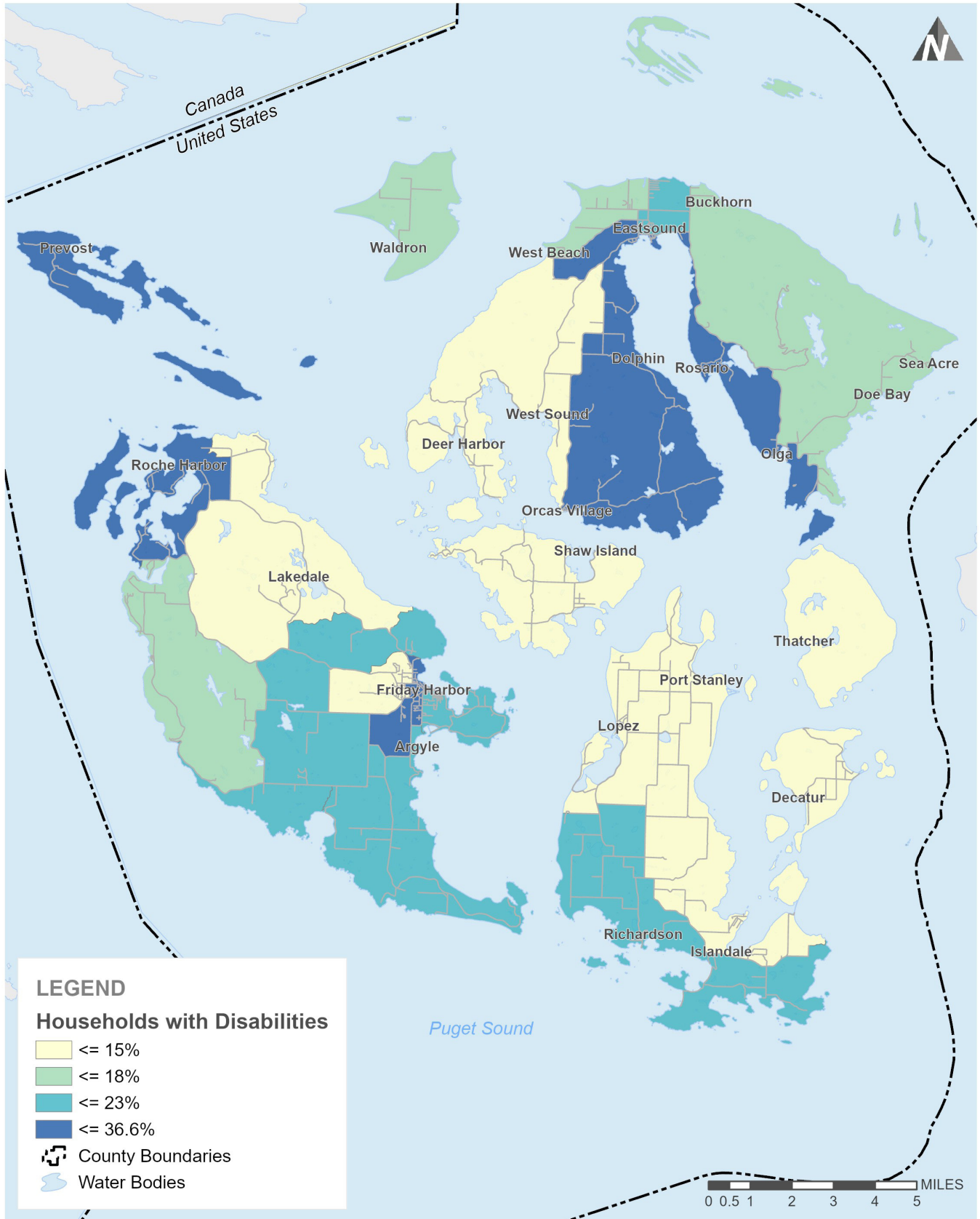


Figure 7 Percent of Households with Disabilities

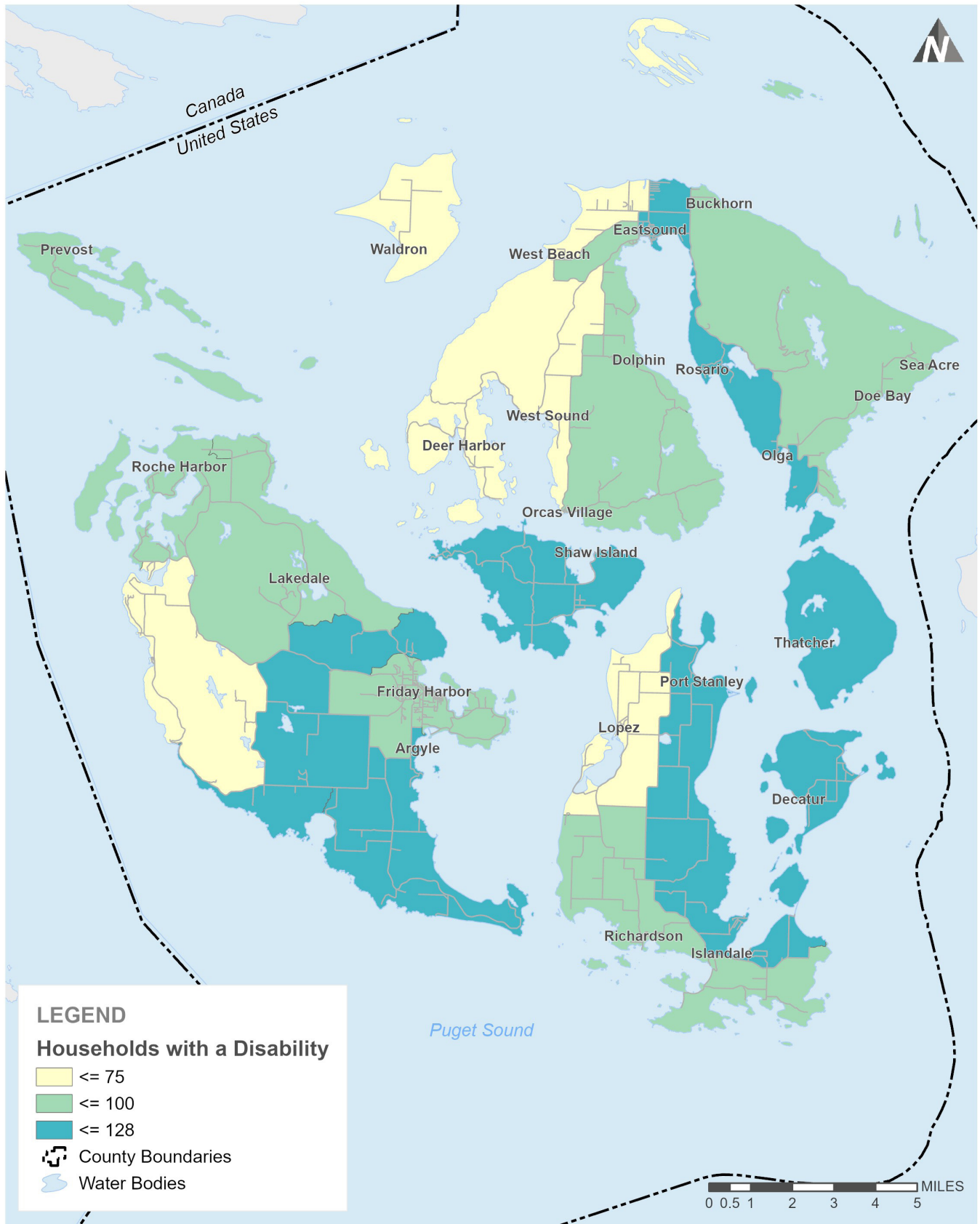


Figure 8 Number of Households with Disabilities

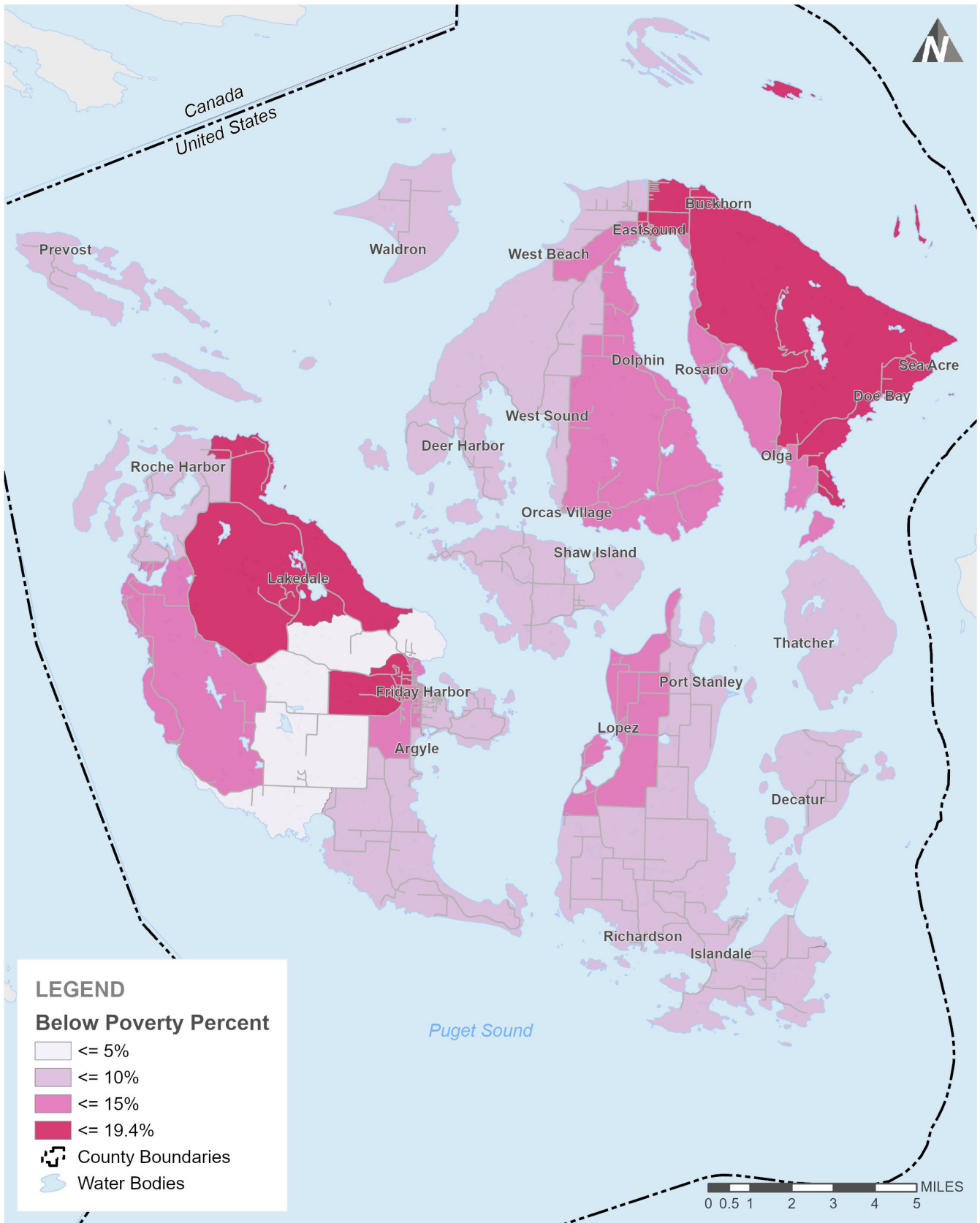


Figure 9 Percent of Households with Income Below Poverty Line

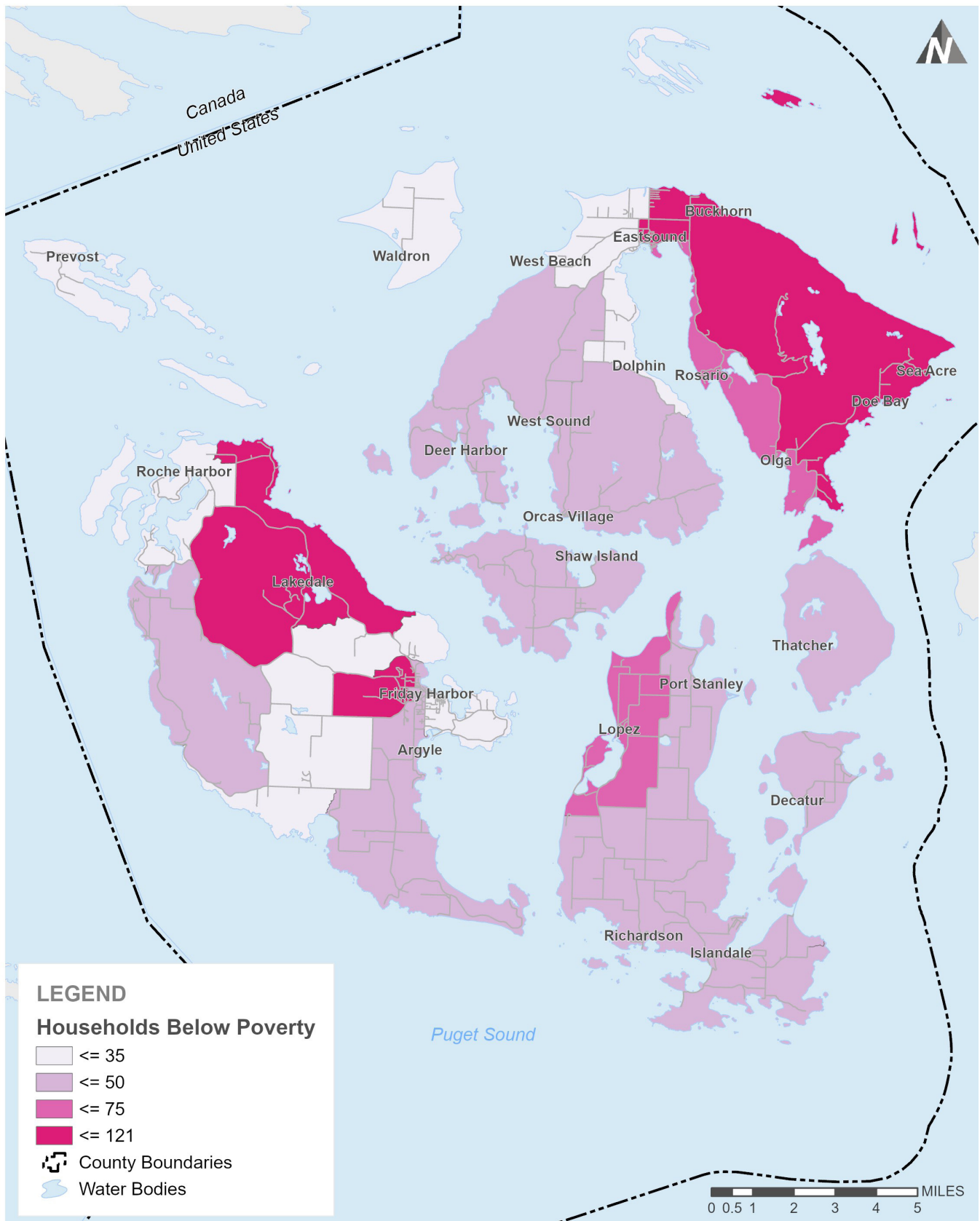


Figure 10 Number of Households with Income Below Poverty Line

No access to a Vehicle

This category will generally include at least some of the County's three most transportation- vulnerable groups: seniors, people with disabilities, and people who are defined as low-income. Based on 2020 ACS, approximately 4.6 percent of county's population does not have access to a vehicle. This rate is smaller than the state and the national level, however the rural nature of the county and the lack of extensive public transportation system in the county presents mobility challenges for the population without a car. Figure 11 and Figure 12 show the location of San Juan County residents living without access to a vehicle.

Unemployed

As of 2020, approximately 2 percent of the total county's population were unemployed. The county's unemployment rate is lower than the state and national level. This number may possibly be related to the high proportion of seniors, who may be retired, or who may want or need employment but are not eligible to file if they have been out of the workforce for some time. The location of unemployed San Juan County residents is shown in Figure 13 and Figure 14. San Juan County's unemployment rate also tends to fluctuate greatly between the busy summer season and slower winter season when less part-time, tourist driven work is available.

Veterans

Veterans are a diverse population and are eligible for benefits through the Veteran's Affairs Administration, which includes funding for Veterans' Administration-related special needs transportation services.

Applications for Veterans' Assistance Funds are available at American Legion Posts, senior centers, and libraries on San Juan, Lopez, and Orcas Islands; at the San Juan County Council Office; and at Sheriff's offices throughout the county. As of 2020, veterans comprised approximately 9.2 percent of the total county's population. Figure 15 and Figure 16 show the location and relative density of veterans living in San Juan County.

Linguistic Isolation

Linguistically isolated households are households in which no adult (someone over fourteen years of age) speaks English "very well". Statewide comparisons in the WSHSTP indicate that the highest number of linguistically isolated households are generally in the most populated counties¹. As of 2020, there are approximately two percent of the county's households that are linguistically isolated. The location of linguistically isolated households is shown in Figure 17 and Figure 18.

Students

As of 2020, approximately 13 percent of the population in San Juan County is under eighteen years of age according to the U.S. Census Bureau. San Juan County's share of population under nineteen years is lower compared to a statewide average of 21.8 percent in the same age group and national average of approximately 22 percent.

Public school systems are served by school buses. Private schools, including preschools and daycare centers, are not. Many families and students drive to school.

¹ http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/HSTP/Statewide%20HSTP_022714.pdf

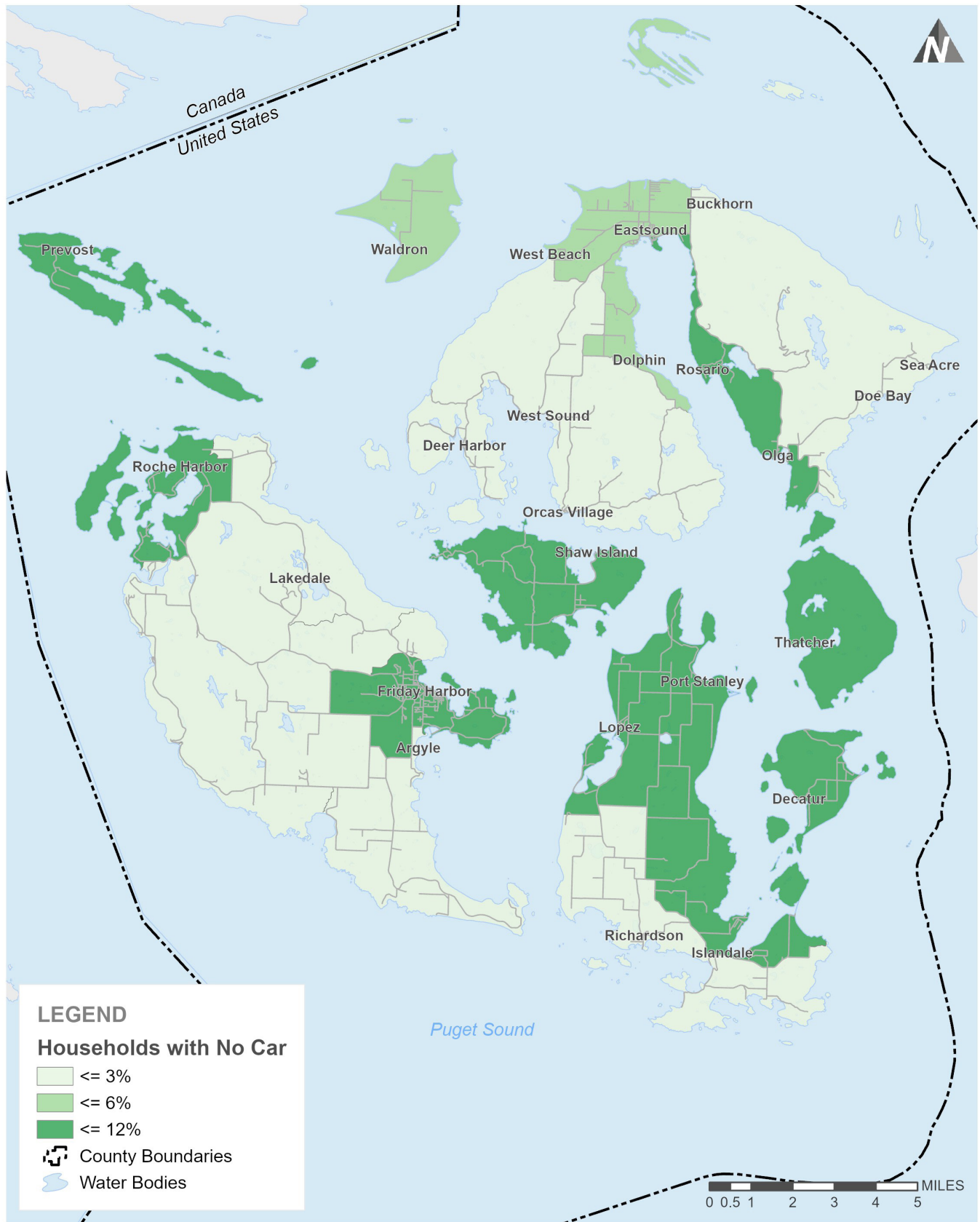


Figure 11 Percent of Households with No Access to a Vehicle

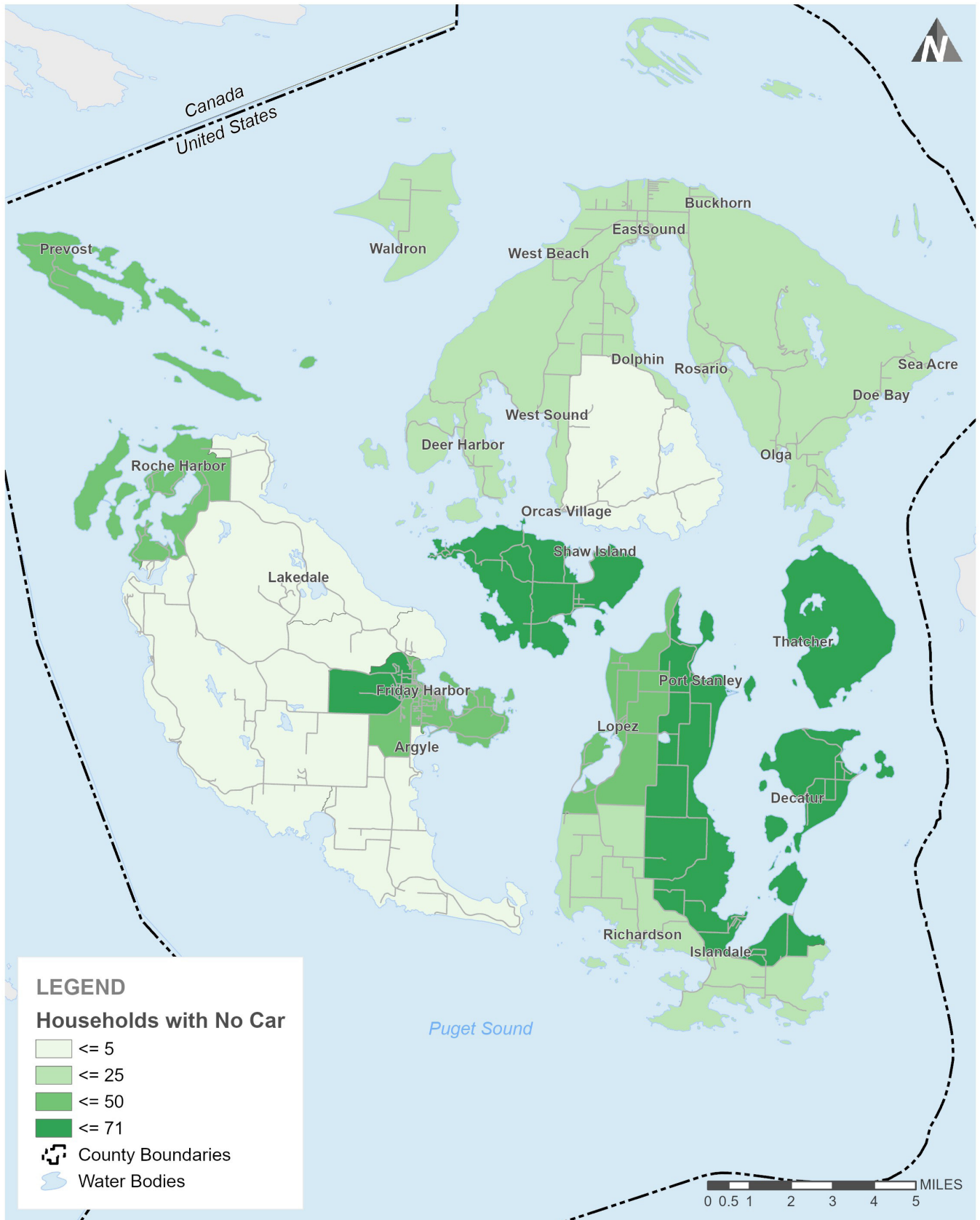


Figure 12 Number of Households with No Access to a Vehicle

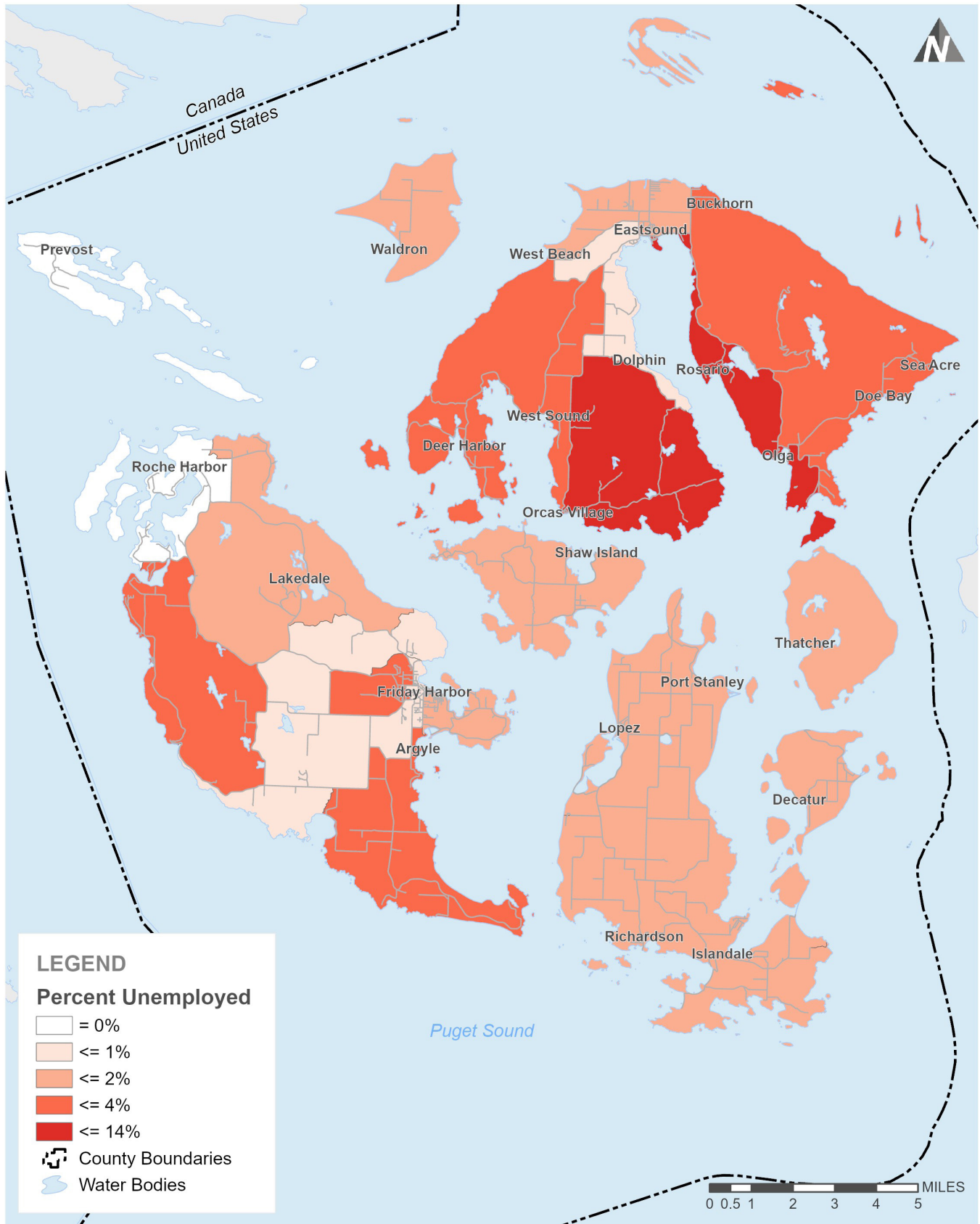


Figure 13 Percent Unemployment

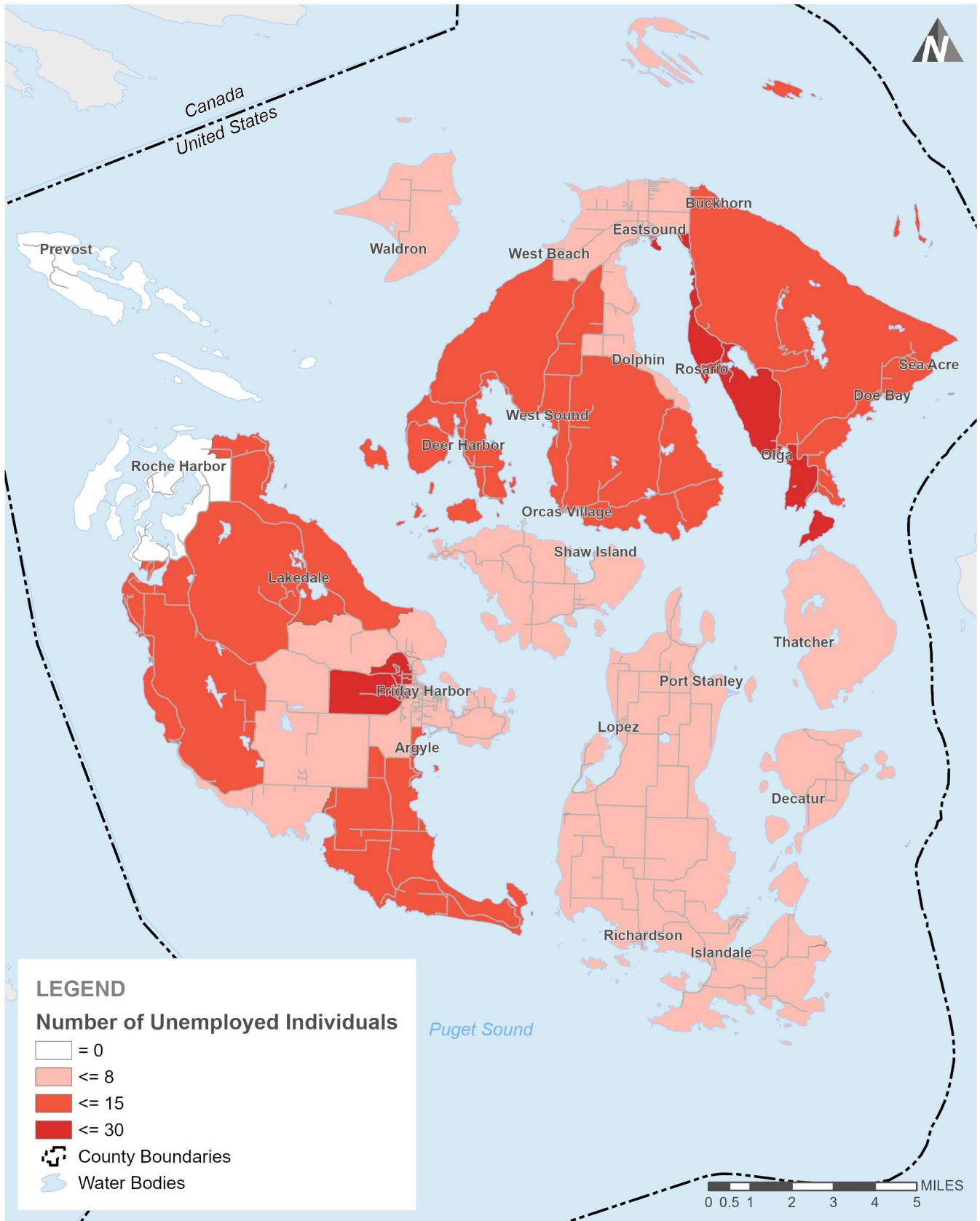


Figure 14 Number Unemployed

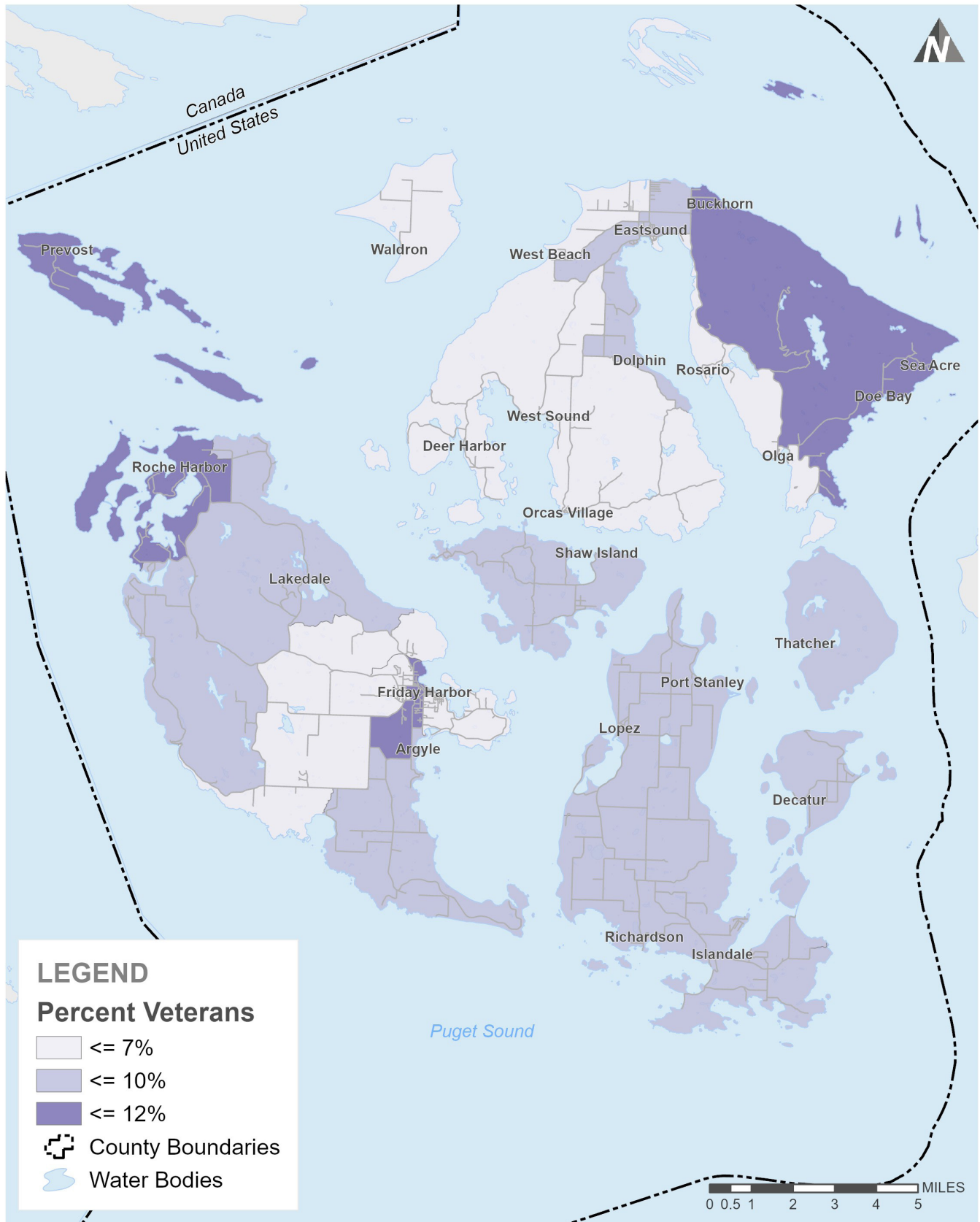


Figure 15 Percent Veterans

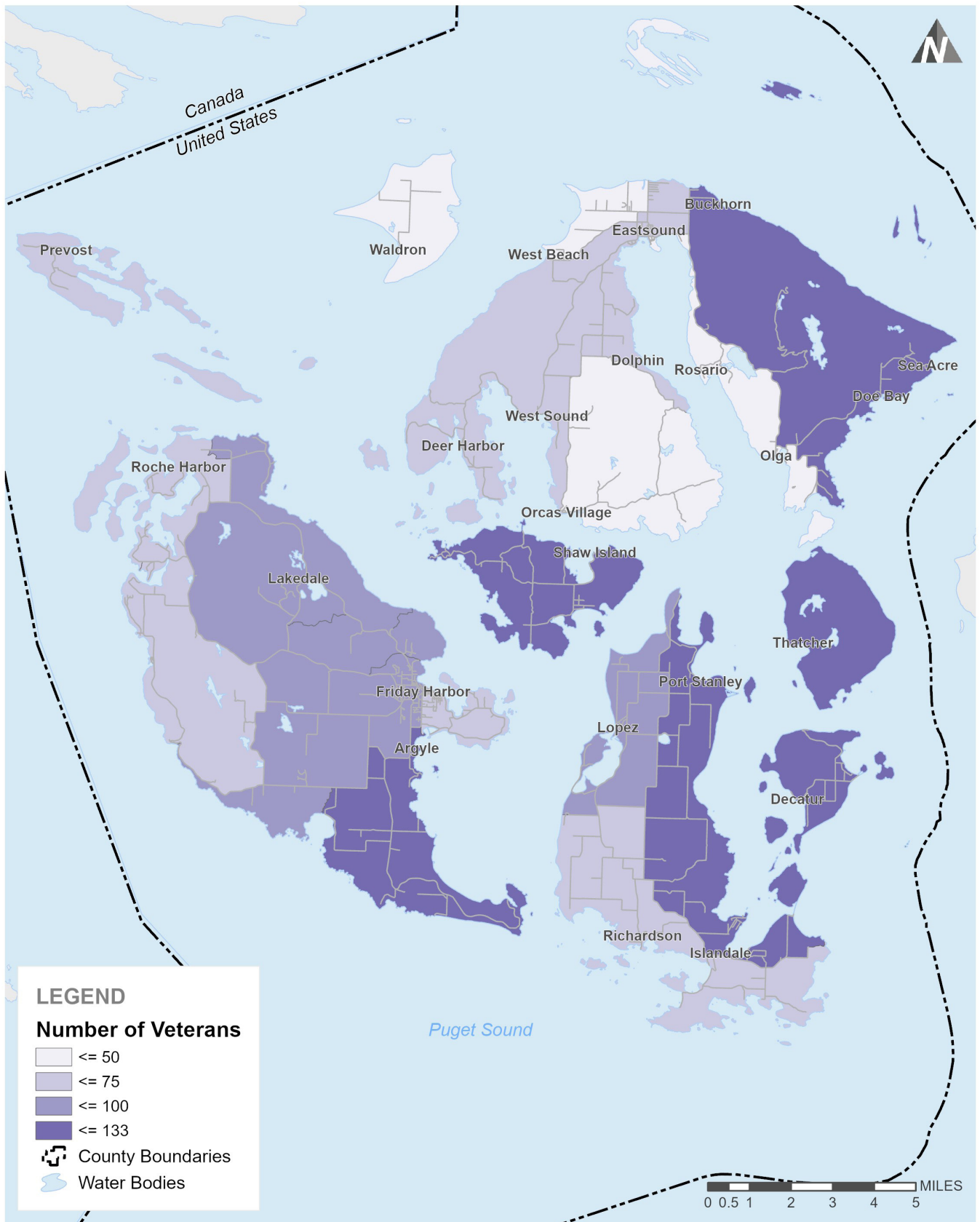


Figure 16 Number of Veterans

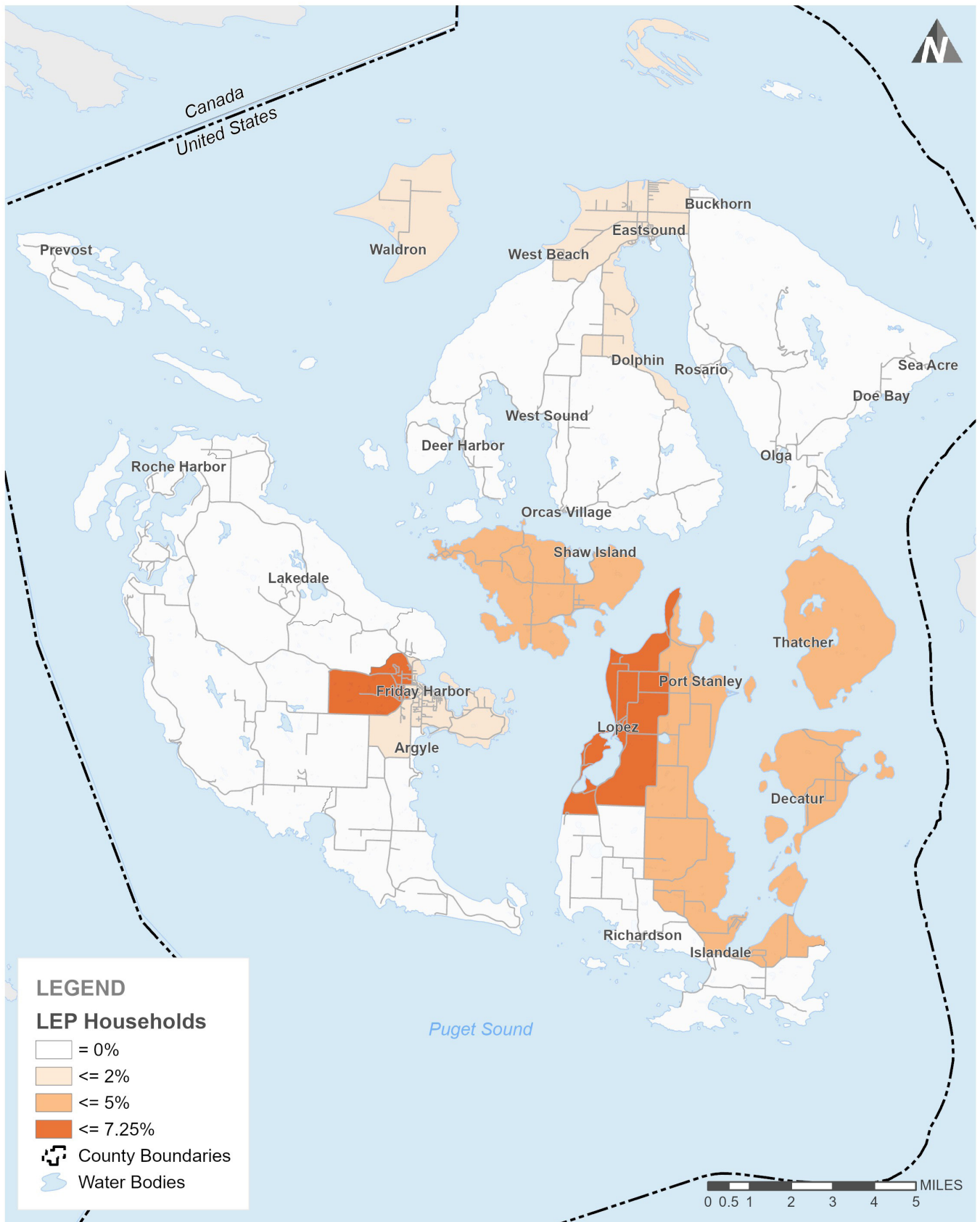


Figure 17 Percent LEP Households

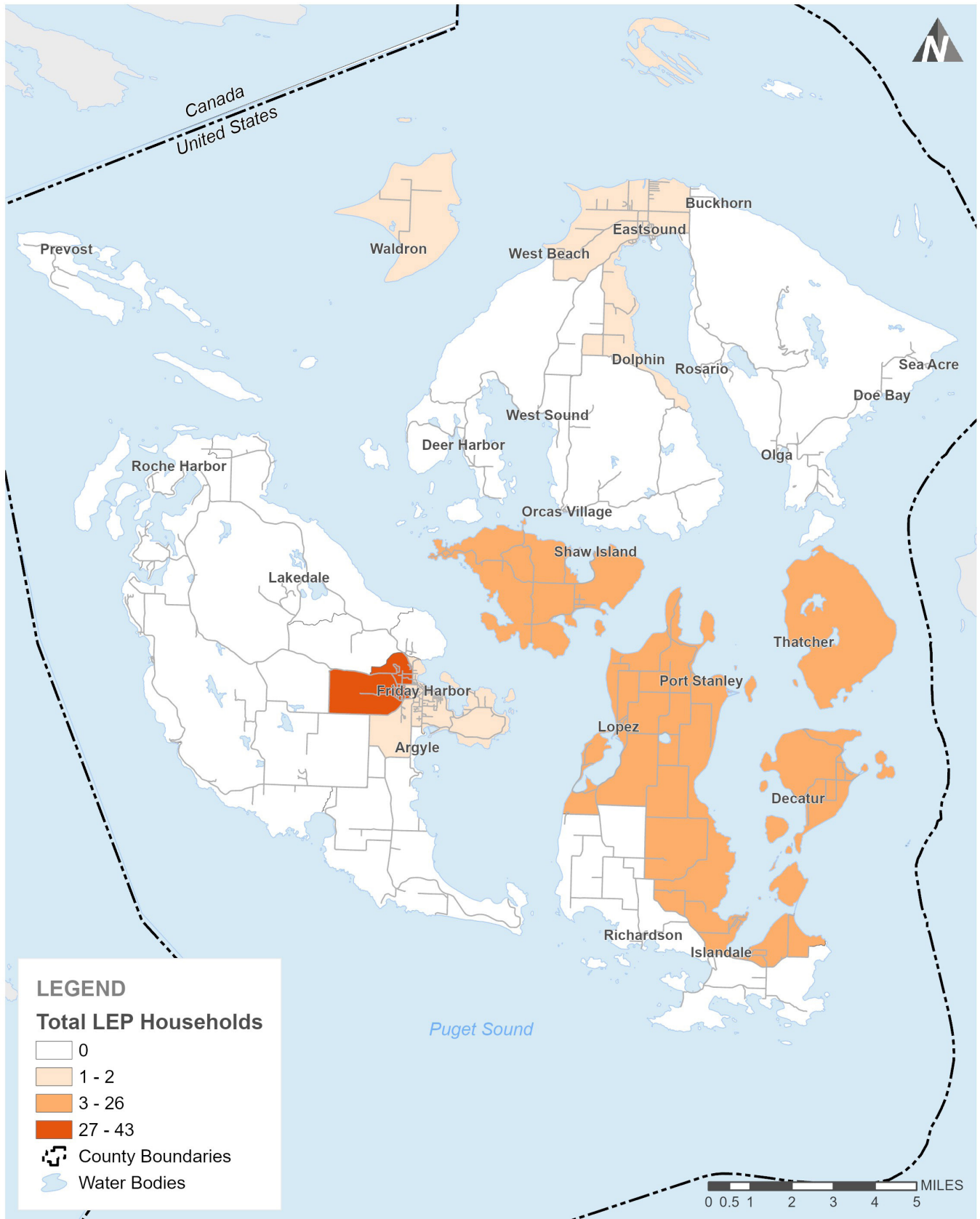


Figure 18 Number of LEP Households

4 Participation, Issues, and Discussions

Participation

The 2022 Human Services Transportation Plan Update process followed a hybrid format (online and in person) for the outreach component. In person outreach focused on key stakeholders, which was used to identify service gaps and evaluate current programs. These stakeholders included the San Juan County Director of Health & Community Services, representatives from San Juan County Public Works Department, Senior Centers, the TVP transportation providers and a representative from Island Rides. The online outreach component included a free-standing Online Open House, which included a description of the overall project, its objectives and included a link to an online survey.

Participation in the 2022 HSTP update was kicked off by a press release inviting the public to participate in an online transportation survey. This survey was also sent directly to stakeholders, TVP providers and clients, with a paper copy available upon request. The survey received 123 responses over the course of the plan update.

Summary of Discussions and Issues

Stakeholder Interviews

The in-person outreach, a series of stakeholder interviews, focused on discussions about what is working well and what needs to be improved. The notes from the interviews are included in this section.

San Juan Health & Community Services, Senior Services feedback (9/8/22)

Lopez Island Feedback:

- Island Rides Non-Profit has helped with meal delivery and transportation
- Seniors are asking for the return of shopping trips now

Orcas Island Information:

- Few options for people who need rides on short notice due to difficulty organizing with staff so busy working meal program,
- difficult to get priority loading arranged for riders coming home from medical appointments,
- hard to find drivers and vehicles,
- Senior services van is so big many drivers don't want to use it and the ferry tickets are much more costly (over-height, over-length),

San Juan Information:

- Island rides has taken much of the burden – key to maintaining current programs such as meal delivery,
- Desire to focus on electric vehicles,
- Options needed for appointments as far away as Seattle,
- Would like reimbursement for costs of delivering meals on wheels

ALL:

- Still need ride options for getting to ferries outside of Island Rides schedule
- Need more assistance for mainland medical appointments

Young Adult Association of San Juan (YAS), San Juan Family Resource Center feedback (9/19/22)

- Rides for wheelchair and limited mobility (assisted walking)
- Mullis Senior Center letting them use vans when possible. Conflicts arise when other needs for the vehicle come up. Island Rides can't always accommodate because it "takes longer" to transport riders with wheelchairs.
- No drivers after 6pm means lack of social engagement and community involvement.
- Volunteers are critical and hard to find

- YAS is working to get training for local drivers to assist disabled riders with competency
- 19.2% of San Juan Island riders identify as having a disability
- 25-30 rides for wheelchair users a week go unmet on San Juan Island

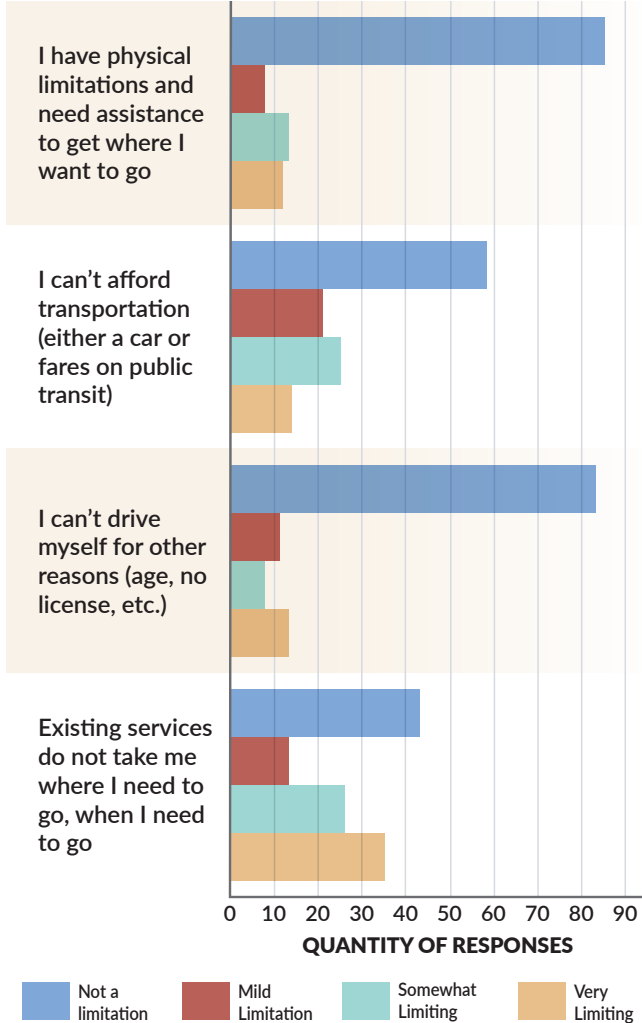
Mullis Senior Center Feedback (San Juan Island - 9/22/22)

- Needs could not be met without Island rides
- Would like island rides to take over Mullis Center transportation efforts for disabled and senior trips both on island and to mainland
- Current setup is unsustainable due to lack of volunteer drivers and vehicles
- Mainland trips for groups are being postponed due to lack of drivers
- The population is aging, and more seniors are choosing not to drive

Summary of Needs Identified in Stakeholder Outreach:

- Islanders need more options early in the morning and late at night for rides to and from ferry landing
- More vehicles (especially with wheelchair access) are needed on Orcas, San Juan, and Lopez.
- Due to an aging population, it seems like a daily shuttle to the mainland for shopping and medical appointments is needed.
- Drivers who can safely transport disabled riders are needed.
- WSDOT could assist by giving resource centers and senior centers permission to authorize priority loading for their elderly and disabled passengers,
- Towns need better sidewalks and crossing for safety
- Partnerships with local nonprofit ride providers Island Rides, and Recovery Rides has greatly improved ride access on San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez Islands, as well as rides to mainland inpatient treatment for residents overcoming substance use disorders.
- The elimination of a full time Mobility Coordinator allowed for double the amount of vouchers to be issued during the 2021-2023 TVP grant cycle.

Which transportation challenges do you (or those you help) face?



Online Survey

The online survey was hosted on the San Juan HSTP project website, and had 13 questions about transportation within San Juan County. The full breakdown of all 13 questions is summarized in Appendix B. The following tables and figures summarize the response to the questions that provided the biggest insights into transportation challenges in San Juan County.

Question 2 - Which of the following transportation challenges do you (or those you help) face? How limiting are these challenges?

The results of show that the single biggest limiting factor of transportation services within San Juan County is that the services are not well aligned to the time and place as needed. (See chart pg. 35, top right).

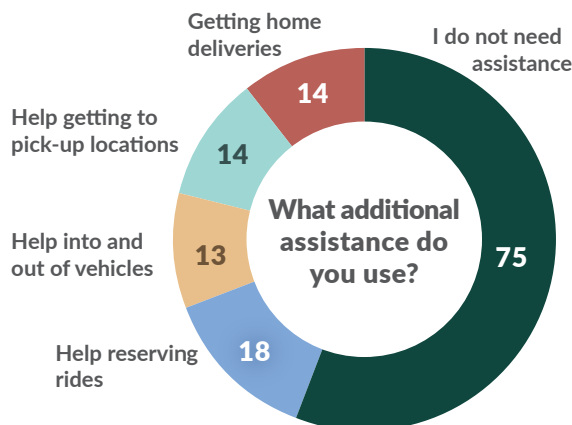
Question 4 - What additional assistance do you (or those you help) use?

The results of question 4 show that all transportation needs are equally important to survey respondents in San Juan County. Needs range from help reserving rides, to physical help in and out of vehicles as well as getting to designated pickup locations. (See chart pg 35, bottom right)

Question 6 - What time of day do you need transportation services?

The results of question 6 show that the largest need for services occurs during the mid-day, followed by morning and evening commute periods. While identified as less important, early morning, evenings and nights were all identified as times of transportation service needs, indicating that expanded services times may be key to improving mobility options within San Juan County.

What additional assistance do you (or those you help) use?



Question 7 - What makes public transit challenging for you?

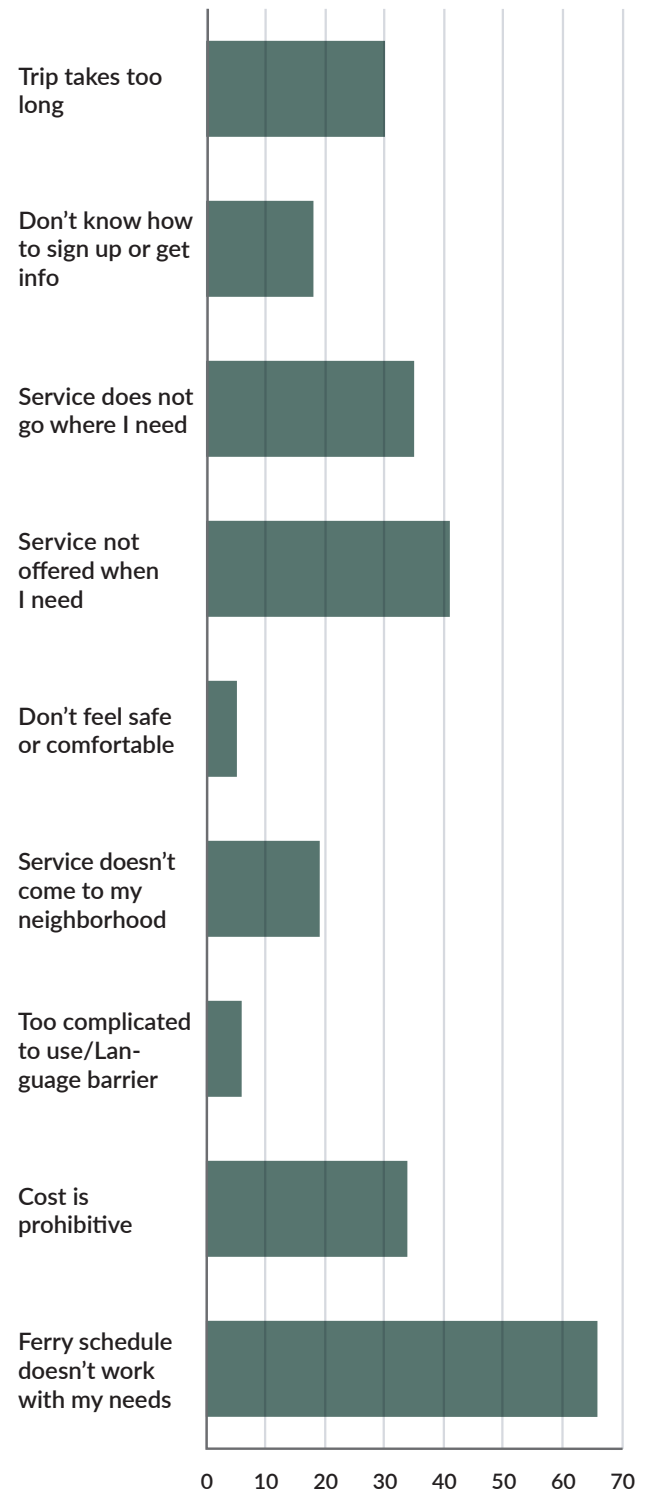
The single biggest issue identified with public transportation options was the ferry schedule. Limited ferry crossings greatly impact residents of San Juan County who need to access services off the island.

Ongoing Efforts to Engage Stakeholders

After this version of the plan is complete, checking in with program participants and with the general public will be included as ongoing outreach and monitoring of the programs. The website can be revised to make it easier to navigate.

Ongoing communication with service providers works to continually fine-tune the existing programs. Interviews or meetings with key stakeholder groups, in addition to questionnaires given to larger groups will help determine what other services may be needed and when they become feasible.

What makes public transit challenging for you?



5 Transportation Options and Services

San Juan County does not have the ground transportation services ordinarily found in mainland areas. Multi-modal infrastructure is scarce, there is no year-round public transportation, and the roads are slow and windy with long distances between destinations.

Most county residents fill their transportation needs with a private vehicle. Alternatives include vans and buses that serve particular populations (seniors and students), private taxis, and intermittent volunteer drivers organized by social service agencies, or friends and neighbors going in the same direction. Some county residents walk the road or trails, use bicycles, scooters, horses, or hitchhike. The expansion of the Island Rides nonprofit has given greater transportation access to residents of San Juan, Orcas, and Lopez Islands.

Marine transportation for cars and most foot passengers is provided by the Washington State Ferry System with service to four of the San Juan Islands and to the mainland via Anacortes, in Skagit County.

Emergency medical transport to the mainland is provided via helicopter, small airplane, and boats operated by County sheriff and fire departments, as well as many volunteer pilots and skippers.

Public Transit: Fixed Route

San Juan Transit operates a daily fixed route serving San Juan Island between May 20 and September 25. Fare is \$5.00 for each boarding and \$15.00 for the daily pass. On Orcas Island the Orcas Shuttle operates an on-demand shuttle service between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The fare is \$18.50 per boarding/\$28 per round trip, or \$45 for the daily pass. As of summer 2022, there was no shuttle or fixed route service operating on Lopez Island. There is no transit service provided on any of the islands during the winter months. Table 5 summarizes the transit routes.

The routes serve the majority of the tourists' attractions like Roche Harbor Village, Whale Watching Park, Lavender Farm, Museums, and Camps.

Table 5 San Juan County Transit Services

Island	Agency	Area Served	Operating Seasons	Operating DOW	Approximate Operating Hours
San Juan	San Juan Transit	Friday Harbor/Snug Harbor/Lime Kiln State park	Spring, Summer, Fall	Daily	Spring: 8:20am-6:20pm Summer/Fall: 8:50am-6:20pm
Orcas	Orcas Shuttle	Orcas Village, Eastsound, Deer Harbor, Rosario, other popular destinations	Memorial Day-Labor Day	Daily	9am - 8pm
Lopez	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: San Juan Transit, Orcas Shuttle and Lopez Island Chamber of Commerce

Publicly Funded Transportation Providers

The Transportation Voucher Program is San Juan County's unique, public/private, countywide multi-modal transportation program, which began in September of 2012. The voucher program is designed to support the transportation-vulnerable members of the community access as many local providers of transportation services as possible. It is a creative solution designed to serve as many people as possible in a challenging logistical environment.

The purpose of this project is to increase independence and community access. It works with a partnership of county government, non-profit organizations, and local private providers to link participants with transportation for essential trips, such as medical appointments, shopping, or church. Administrative services are provided by the County Health & Community Services department; and by multiple staff members of the Family Resource Centers on three islands.

San Juan County is remote in a multitude of ways. It is spread across an archipelago, and can be remote for individuals, even on the same island. The reason the TVP works is that it is evenly accessible, networks with participants and providers, and creates flexibility within a menu of island providers, which leads to efficiency in participation and equity in provider distribution. Current TVP providers include six taxi companies, and a water taxi service which can serve all islands. The TVP also provides ferry fares for participants through all three family resource centers and H&CS senior services.

A strong network of public administrators and private providers support the two major avenues of the program, one feeding the other. Participants apply via computer, by mail, or in person, often with help from senior center or family resource center staff. Eligibility for the TVP is primarily based on income and is available to anyone with the income less than \$25,000. Participants can qualify by self-declaring elderly or disabled. Vouchers are also available to islander with ongoing medical travel needs without limitation and for those who are experiencing emergent situations requiring transportation. Qualifying participants are offered

a \$300 voucher that can be used for services from a variety of pre-approved transportation providers. They can apply for a second voucher during the two-year TVP grant cycle as well bringing the total ride assistance to \$600 for regular TVP users.

Senior Services Vehicles

In 2010, a WSDOT capitol grant enabled the Senior Services facilities on three islands to each purchase a new ADA-compliant van. The Senior Services Council (SSC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation which has purchased additional passenger vehicles used by each Senior Services facility to assist seniors with transportation needs. San Juan County staff coordinates the use of each island's Senior Services vehicles to transport seniors and people with disabilities with fuel and vehicle maintenance costs provided by the SSC.

The Senior Services vehicles can be used for scheduled rides by seniors and islanders with disabilities based on vehicle and driver availability. All of the drivers of these vehicles are pre-screened volunteers.

School Districts

San Juan County has four separate public school districts. Each district determines which students are transported, what routes are used, and how transportation is provided. School districts provide bus services from home to school and back. On an elective basis, transportation to and from extracurricular events is provided, supplemented by student fees raised by individual families or club events.

Students who have an Individualized Education Plan to meet specific needs are transported via accessible van to and from required educational, medical, or social services using school district vehicles or service providers.

Private Transportation Services

Not-for-Profit

Island Rides is a local nonprofit IRS 501(c)(3) organized exclusively for charitable purposes. Island Rides is supported by civic clubs, social services, the County, and WSDOT. The organization uses a fleet of 6 vehicles and 20 volunteer drivers to provide transportation and delivery services to seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income individuals on San Juan, Lopez and Orcas Islands. Rides and deliveries are scheduled in advance and payment is either by small donation or entirely free. Operating hours are between 11am and 3pm.

The Recovery Rides program began operation in October of 2022 and gives escorted trips to and from mainland inpatient treatment centers. They are fiscally sponsored by the 501©(3) Orcas Community Resource Center. This has helped fill much-needed gap in the recovery/treatment community.

Another service being operated only on Orcas Island is a program called “Orcas Door to Door.” The program is an assistive transportation service for Orcas Islanders aged 60 plus or for people with disabilities, either temporary or permanent, that result in their inability to drive. The program is available for those who need door-to-door assistance to access essential services and social events in order to remain healthy and active within the community. Orcas Door to Door attempts to formalize the process of friends and neighbors providing others with a lift by coordinating volunteer drivers who are insured and have passed a background check. In November of 2021, Orcas Door to Door provided its 2000th ride after being on hiatus during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Independent Taxi Services

San Juan Island and Orcas Island have multiple taxi services available year-round. Lopez Island has intermittent taxi providers, typically never more than one but often times none are available at all.

Airport Shuttle Service

Transportation shuttle service to the SeaTac Airport is provided by Bellair Charters & Airporter. The shuttle operates between Anacortes at the San Juan Ferry terminal from Monday to Friday with six shuttles per day. There is also limited weekend service.

Regional Transportation Coordination

Washington State Ferries

State-operated car ferries serve persons accessing the county from the mainland and those traveling to different islands within the county. They are a marine extension of the Washington State highway system. Published daily schedules and fares change seasonally. Four islands in San Juan County are served from the terminal at Anacortes via multiple routes, and one circulates as an inter-island route.

Numerous people commute from their home islands to other islands for commerce. Foot and bicycle passengers traveling within the county are not charged a fare. Many workers, students, and many different community members travel on the inter-island route.

All ferry terminals provide medical preferential loadings to passengers who find it detrimental to their health to wait in a ferry line. For the trips to and from Anacortes, a doctor can fax a “medical preferential form” to the terminal stating the reason for priority loading.

Nonprofit organization ferry accounts

The Family Resource Centers maintain commercial accounts with WSF and are charged at a discounted rate. The criteria for certification includes not-for-profit tax status and having a primary purpose to:

- Help clients with medical issues.
- Provide clients with low-income social services.
- Help clients suffering from domestic violence.
- Provide clients with employment-seeking services.
- Help clients with social security questions.

Tickets supplied by Family Resource Centers are funded through various donations and by the Transportation Voucher program.

Anacortes Medical Taxi Connections

San Juan County residents can receive free round-trip taxi service from the Anacortes Ferry Terminal when obtaining medical services from Island Hospital, from a hospital-operated clinic, or outpatient service. The ride service is provided by Mert's Taxi and requires one day's advance notice. The patient will be met upon arrival to the Anacortes Ferry Terminal.

Skagit Transit

Skagit Transit provides mainland-connecting service from the ferries through Route 410, which stops at the Anacortes WSF ferry terminal. The service operates Monday through Saturday and provides connection to the March's Point Park & Ride where additional routes connect to Burlington and Mount Vernon. However, the variability in ferry arrival and departure times, coupled with the practice of changing the ferry schedule seasonally, and the reality of a fixed-route system like Skagit Transit's dramatically reduce the reliability of this transportation option. If the ferry is as much as ten minutes late, the fixed-route bus must continue and passengers must wait for the next scheduled bus, typically at least an hour later.

Emergency Medical Services

Airports in San Juan County

In addition to providing direct transportation access, the airports in the county play an important role in emergency medical evacuation. Most of the inhabited islands have at least basic airstrips, which are owned and maintained by private entities or local port authorities.

Air ambulance service in the county is via helicopter. Island Air also provides a specially configured small airplane equipped to accommodate stretchers and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel.

Marinas

The Sheriff's boat is moored at the Friday Harbor Port Marina and responds to medical emergencies on all the islands and surrounding waters. Equipped and certified as a marine ambulance, the boat is used mostly during the stormiest winter months when the weather precludes access from helicopter or planes.

Coordination with Emergency Management Agencies

In the event of, and subsequent to the onset of an emergency/disaster condition, the San Juan County Department of Emergency Management convenes objective based planning coordination using teleconference and in person meetings. Participants may include: responders, public works, NGOs, Human Services and other providers/ stakeholders related to the emergent incident, or consequences of the incident/event/condition.

This includes offices/representatives of Human Services and NGOs responsible for provision of services for residents with special transportation needs.

In 2005, San Juan County adopted the National Incident Management System (NIMS) for All Hazard Incident Management. Consequently, an Incident Management Team may be convened to plan for a long notice event, or for response and long term recovery from an emergency or disaster event. Participants in this planning structure may be assigned a position/role and area of responsibility under the NIMS Incident Command System.

A member of Health & Community Services may be called upon to serve as a "Transportation Branch Director" when participating as a member of a local Incident Command Team. These roles and areas of responsibility are outlined in the County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and further detailed in the County Departments Emergency or Operations Plans.

Working within this structure allows assessment specific to the situation to best utilize existing resources, identify gaps at the time of need,

identify existing resources available for sharing to address the need, and source outside resources if needed. These resources may include programs, people and equipment.

Specific plans to identify where vulnerable populations may be located in the event of a disaster include:

- Using existing Senior Services contact lists for seniors/vulnerable residents, including the list of “Meal on Wheels” delivery addresses.
- Using client contact lists from existing NGOs/non-profits in the county providing services to these residents.
- Working with the Assessor’s Office and County GIS for list of properties and addresses which qualify for special consideration for disability or senior citizen tax programs.
- Using provisions of SB 5346 effective 7/24/2015 to provide first responders with contact information for subscribers to Life Alert services during an emergency.
- Working within the limits allowed by HIPAA to obtain information from local EMS, Health Dept and health care providers to locate residents with known special needs.

Other Transportation Services

Unemployed Seeking Work

Participants in Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, WorkFirst, or Work Source programs are served by the Career Center in Friday Harbor, which is operated by the Northwest Workforce Development Council.

Participants from other islands must travel by interisland ferry to visit this office in Friday Harbor and those enrolled in unemployment assistance must occasionally travel to Mount Vernon.

Veteran’s Assistance

The Veterans Advisory Fund was established by San Juan County in 2007 and provides emergency services to indigent veterans, their dependents, widows, widowers, and/or orphans. San Juan County has approximately 2,500 veterans. Requests for transportation (or other) assistance can be made at the American Legion post or at the County Council offices. A county-appointed advisory committee authorizes the expenses.

Technology Used in Transportation Assistance and ITS Systems

The most visible and used technology is the website for the Human Services, which is one of the programs listed on the San Juan County Health and Community Services opening page. The website supplies applicants with a downloadable application form for the voucher program. It links voucher program participants to service providers. Additionally, the Health & Community Services communicates important information regarding eligible riders to service providers in the voucher program via email.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) are not currently implemented in San Juan County, and the county is not included in a regional ITS architecture system.

Feedback received through the public participation process of the HSTP indicated that many users of the TVP program are not comfortable using technological systems. Still, expanding the use of technology and ITS systems in the County represent an opportunity for the County TVP and other HST programs moving forward.

Ideas that were mentioned during the public participation process for ways to better utilize technology to aid in transportation services included:

- Develop an App to assist patrons with connecting to the various modes of transportation needed to commute to destinations on the mainland, and to provide transportation information about in County Services, similar to the ITS project “Hopelink One Stop Access” in King County (p.11 of the WSDOT Transit ITS architecture report).
- Develop a call-center type network that could quickly connect clients to the appropriate transportation service, similar to the ITS project “Human Services Council Veterans Transportation Technology Improvement Project” in Southwest Washington (p.7 of the WSDOT Transit ITS architecture report).
- Develop a volunteer organizing website for on-call volunteer drivers similar to Orcas Door to Door.
- Issue pre-paid cards to TVP clients rather than using a system of reimbursing vendors.

6 COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges for San Juan County's public transportation system. Despite the challenges, transportation providers, community-based organizations, non-profits, and government agencies found ways to ensure mobility across the region. They worked together to provide residents with transportation to essential medical appointments, jobs, food banks, shopping and other services.

During the pandemic, the increased health and safety risks of using transit services, as well as an increase in individuals working from home led to a significant reduction in transit ridership. Nevertheless, access to transit remained important for those working in and seeking access to essential services. WSDOT Ferry Service between Anacortes and San Juan islands saw approximately an 80 percent decrease in ridership in March of 2020¹. Ridership slowly recovered on the Anacortes to San Juan route but at the time of this report remains approximately 33 percent lower than pre-pandemic levels.

¹ <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/covid-19-transportation-report/>

7 Service Gaps and Strategies

San Juan County is the only county in Washington State that has no public transit system other than a ferry. No island has bus service, except intermittent private bus services that operate in the summer months. San Juan and Orcas are the only islands that currently have taxi service.

Programs for human services transportation are available in San Juan County, and the TVP has substantially improved access to transportation services for many. However, the TVP program does not have secure funding, and further, longer term needs of many transportation-vulnerable members of the community remain to be met.

Existing Gaps and Needs

Outreach conducted for the 2022 HSTP identified five broad mobility needs across San Juan County.

Need 1 – Improve Mobility Options in San Juan County

Residents and visitors to San Juan County have relatively few options outside of travel by personal vehicle. Survey respondents and stakeholders noted that travel for those without access to a vehicle is difficult, especially during the winter when no public transportation services are available through San Juan Transit. While many great volunteer programs exist to help those with mobility challenges, there remains a high demand for additional travel options.

Need 2 – TVP Program Continuation

The Transportation Voucher Program has been one of San Juan County's biggest successes for mobility assistance. Continuation of this program was identified by both stakeholders and survey respondents as one of the most important means of ensuring mobility across the County.

Need 3 – Improve Ease of Use of Services in San Juan County

Stakeholders and survey respondents often noted that information about available services can be hard to find. Additionally, many service options and transit stops are not accessible for those in a wheelchair. Upgrading public infrastructure to better accommodate walkers and rollers and ensuring services are able to accommodate wheelchairs would improve access to existing services for residents who may be unable to use them.

Need 4 – Improved Accessibility for Seniors

Survey respondents and stakeholders both identified mobility options for seniors as a priority for San Juan County. Many currently rely on meals on wheels and Island Rides volunteers to continue living independently. Improving mobility options will be key to those seeking to age in place on the San Juan Islands.

Need 5 – Improved Regional Coordination

San Juan County residents and visitors are largely dependent on the state ferry system for many of their routine needs (medical care, access to employment, etc). Increased coordination with WSDOT, volunteer agencies and San Juan Transit would help ensure smoother travel for those using existing services

Strategies to Address Existing Needs and Gaps

To address the five identified needs above, individual strategies have been developed, based on input from stakeholders and public outreach as well as the TVP program administrator. The strategies have been organized by the identified need that they address.

Need 1 – Improve Mobility Options in San Juan County

Strategy 1.A – Preserve and enhance mobility options on the San Juan Islands

Across all four San Juan Islands there are limited mobility options outside of personal vehicle for residents and visitors to meet their daily travel needs. Expanding options for those with mobility challenges will ensure better accessibility for residents of the San Juan Islands.

Strategy 1.B – Ensure year-round services on the San Juan Islands

Existing transit services do not operate year-round. While San Juan Transit operates shuttles during summer months, there is no fixed route transit service offered on any of the Islands during other times of the year. While volunteer services exist throughout the year, they are busy and can be difficult to schedule.

Need 2 – TVP Program Continuation

Strategy 2.A – Ensure continued funding of the TVP Program

The TVP program, a direct result of San Juan's first HSTP plan in 2010, has been key to providing mobility options for those living in the San Juan islands. This program relies on WSDOT grant funding to operate and continuing it should be a high priority.

Strategy 2.B – Ensure access to TVP Program is available to all residents of San Juan County that meet the requirements defined in the program.

The TVP program is in high demand and does sometimes require residents to wait on a list. Ensuring that the program is available to all who need it will increase mobility options for those who rely on the TVP program to go about their daily needs.

Need 3 – Improve Ease of Use of Services in San Juan County

Strategy 3.A - Increase access to information about available transportation services

Despite the small communities' word of mouth network, not all persons who could benefit from the existing senior services or TVP may know about them, or understand that they may benefit from them. Increasing access to this information will help ensure they are well utilized.

Strategy 3.B – Ensure wheelchair access to existing programs in San Juan County

Many taxis and volunteer services upon whom residents rely on are not equipped to transport those in a wheelchair. Ensuring mobility programs have wheelchair accessibility will help ensure mobility options for San Juan County residents and visitors.

Strategy 3.C – Expand multimodal infrastructure (sidewalks, shoulders, bike facilities, crosswalks) to improve access to transit

Limited sidewalk and bicycle facilities existing across the San Juan Islands outside of downtown areas. Expanding this infrastructure (and assuring it's ADA compliance) will help residents and visitors travel more independently.

Need 4 – Improved Accessibility for Seniors

Strategy 4.A – Recruit and retain drivers for volunteer programs

Demand for existing senior services is high and relies upon volunteer drivers. Many volunteer drivers are retired individuals themselves. Expanding driver pools and ensuring there are adequate drivers is critically important to keeping these existing services available.

Strategy 4.B – Expand service fleet for senior services

Demand for existing senior services is high and is currently served by a relatively small vehicle fleet. Expanding the fleet will help provide more travel assistance for Seniors.

Need 5 – Improved Regional Coordination

Strategy 5.A – Improve regional coordination between transit providers and volunteer agencies, especially at ferry terminals.

Coordination of off-island travel for those with mobility challenges can be extremely difficult. Transfers between ferries and other transit services can be time consuming and confusing. Ensuring coordination between service providers will help limit the burden of transfers between services.

Strategy 5. B - Define regional roles for transit providers and responsibilities before, during and after emergencies

Ensuring transit providers and volunteer agencies are prepared for emergencies will help mitigate their impacts.

Strategy 5.C – Ensure priority loading for senior transit and medical transit vehicles for Ferry loading.

Off-island travel for non-emergency medical appointments and for senior citizens can be very challenging when navigating ferry wait times. Ensuring that non-emergency medical appointments and senior citizen vans have priority loading at the ferry terminal would greatly minimize the difficulty for seniors traveling off-island.

While each the strategies identified above are all important to improving travel options within the San Juan Islands, prioritizing these projects is required for obtaining WSDOT's Consolidated Grant Funding. To prioritize these projects, San Juan County staff will sit down with stakeholders to rank the projects from most important to least important based on WSDOT best practice and guidance.

This ranking will enable project funding from WSDOT's consolidated grant program. Project applications are due on October 27, 2022 to the WSDOT Grant Management System, after which San Juan County staff will immediately issue a call from projects. This will enable sufficient public comment period before the prioritized project list will be sent to WSDOT before the January 27, 2023 deadline.

Future Steps

Planning has helped San Juan County Human Services transportation stakeholders and administrators to focus on available resources and possible growth and improved services. Findings also indicate that current programs, though successful, and greatly appreciated by the community, are still in the fledgling stage. Lopez, where the taxi service is often nonexistent, has only a little more than a third of the population numbers of Orcas and San Juan Islands. And on those more populated islands, there are still only a few service providers for taxi rides, so that resource is not entirely secure.

Another challenge for this program is funding. Thus far, the program administration and capital funds have all come from WSDOT, via two-year consolidated grants. While gratefully accepted and put to great use in and for San Juan County, the insecurity of funding leaves local efforts vulnerable. Local transportation choices will ultimately fall to elected officials, non-profits and the citizens of San Juan County.

The TVP and the Health & Community Services Department hold the short and long-term perspectives together in the most efficient way possible for San Juan County in the near future. If the department keeps developing and meeting growing service needs, they will be a successful example for San Juan County public transportation efforts to build on moving forward.

No matter the source of funding, service needs in San Juan County are broad, and the geographical circumstances are unique. Service solutions must be flexible and are best coordinated locally. The Transportation Voucher Program is designed to meet a wide array of remotely located needs and remote locations with diverse and broad provider options and an island-specific administrative network.

Next organizational steps

San Juan County will continue to operate the current Transportation Voucher Program (TVP) through June of 2023 and has made application for WSDOT 2023-25 Consolidated Grant funding for continued Transportation Voucher operating funds.

