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A COMMUNITY-BASED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR SUN CITY CENTER, FLORIDA: FINAL REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Many retirement communities are located outside of metropolitan areas. Their locations complicate the issue of providing public transportation services to their residents. Sun City Center is an unincorporated retirement community 16 miles outside of Tampa, Florida. A community-based needs assessment was conducted to provide the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HARTline) and the community of Sun City Center with information regarding the perceived public transportation needs that exist in this retirement community.

The three objectives of this community-based needs assessment were: (1) to assess the perceived transportation needs of the local residents; (2) to facilitate greater communication and coordination among HARTline, social service agencies, and local residents; and (3) to create a map showing primary traffic generators and attractors, housing centers, and existing public transportation routes.

Community-based needs assessments are conducted to obtain current data about the community, the people within it, and their needs. Thus, the methods employed in the study concentrated on citizen input. Participant observation was conducted in the community in order to observe day-to-day activity. Key informants were interviewed to elicit insight into how the various organizations perceive community transportation issues and needs. Focus groups were conducted with residents to examine personal transportation needs and perceived community needs. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was utilized to map major traffic generators and attractors, housing locations, and bus routing information.

The results obtained in this study indicate that a need exists for more public transportation services and/or expansion of existing service in the area. The data indicate that the majority of travel need is local. At this point, a local financial commitment needs to be made in order to implement additional local service.
PREFACE

This report documents the results of a community-based needs assessment for additional public transportation that was conducted in the community of Greater Sun City Center. The needs assessment was made possible by a summer stipend awarded to the author by the University of South Florida (USF) Institute on Aging, and with the cooperation and support of the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HARTline) and the USF Center for Urban Transportation Research, Tampa. This research will also be the basis of the author's Master's thesis in Applied Urban Anthropology at USF.

The author wishes to extend immense thanks and gratitude to the residents and representatives of Greater Sun City Center and the members of the South County Coalition of Community Concerns, without whose assistance and participation the community-based needs assessment would not have been possible.

The results of the research are being provided to the transit agency, as well as representatives from the county and civic organizations in South Hillsborough County. It is hoped that this report will aid in resolving the mobility problems encountered by the residents of South Hillsborough County addressed in this report.
INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Many retirement communities are located outside of urban metropolitan areas. Their location on the periphery of urban areas increases the potential need for transportation. For many of the residents of retirement communities, the lack of adequate public transportation services inhibits their ability to access needed services. In addition to accessing services, the elderly in independent living retirement communities need to be able to interact with the community at large.

Sun City Center is an unincorporated retirement community 16 miles outside of Tampa, Florida (See Figure A: Locater Map). With approximately 13,000 residents, Sun City Center is the fastest growing area in South Hillsborough County. One local fixed-route bus route, operated by the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HARTline) passes through the community. However, there is no internal circulation and the destinations served by this bus route are limited. The lack of internal circulation makes it difficult to access and use the bus service for travel within and outside the community. Additionally, one express route, also operated by the transit agency, serves Sun City Center. This route provides access to downtown Tampa, but the route has limited availability.

In HARTline's 1994-1998 Transit Development Plan, Sun City Center, along with four other communities in South Hillsborough County, was identified as a potential location for a community circulator bus system. This system would consist of a loop within the community that would have fixed points and times of origin and destination. The circulator route would provide local community service, as well as feeder service to HARTline's bus network. It has also been suggested that this system would be flexible enough to make prescheduled stops between checkpoints for those passengers who cannot get to a designated stop. In order for a localized system of this nature to be successful, the design of the system is dependent upon assessing the needs of the community through the direct participation of the community.

This report documents the results of a community-based needs assessment that was undertaken during the summer of 1994 in Sun City Center, Florida. The needs assessment sought to determine the perceived transportation needs that exist currently in this retirement community from the perspective of service providers, community representatives, and the residents of the community.

GREATER SUN CITY CENTER, FLORIDA

Sun City Center was created by the developer, Del Webb, in 1960. This was not the first retirement community that Webb had developed. In 1959, Del Webb established the first retirement community called Sun City near Phoenix, Arizona. The philosophy behind both of these communities was, and still is, that older Americans desire an active retirement in a
community of their peers. Del Webb's formula for an age-restricted retirement community focused on the notion of the residents all living closely around their own all-purpose recreation-shopping-service center. From the beginning of its development, Sun City Center has offered its residents the possibility of an active, independent retirement lifestyle. The residents of this retirement community have access to six golf courses, numerous swimming pools, exercise rooms, and hundreds of clubs, including dance, cards, crafts, and sports. Each community within the age-restricted area offers its residents a full array of recreational facilities and opportunities. Also within the age-restricted area are grocery stores, shopping, medical facilities, a full-service hospital, a U.S. Post Office, community library, lawyers, banks, investment brokers, churches, and opportunities for continuing education.

Another characteristic of the age-restricted area that constitutes Sun City Center is its social homogeneity. By and large, the residents are all over the age of 50, white, and from middle-class backgrounds. Most also are drawing from a retirement pension, as well as social security. Social homogeneity aside, there are some important distinctions that can be made among the residents. Foremost, people are distinguished by where they live. Sun City Center is really composed of several different mini-communities that together form Greater Sun City Center. The development of the entire area and the distinctions among the communities can be traced back to the line of developers, beginning with Del Webb, that have created Greater Sun City Center and the development philosophies that each brought to the area. Greater Sun City Center has independent living, single-family dwelling areas, independent, apartment-style dwelling facilities, assisted living apartment-style facilities, and skilled care, nursing home facilities. The major developments in age-restricted Greater Sun City Center are Sun City Center, Kings Point, Lake Towers, and Freedom Plaza.

**SUN CITY CENTER**

Sun City Center is the original area that was developed under the guidance of Del Webb. The original development is located north of State Road (S.R.) 674; the current developer has made additions to this community on the south side of S.R. 674, too. Residents of this community must have one family member that is 50 years of age or older and no children under the age of 18 are permitted. All of the residents of this area are members of the Sun City Center Community Association. They constitute their own corporation and, as such, they communally own their own activity buildings and self-manage their recreational, social, and political services. The Association members also are responsible for dealing with problems of home ownership and external relationships. The Community Association has a Board of Directors and it serves as the quasi-governmental agency on behalf of the residents. In 1972, Del Webb sold the project to a Tampa real estate consortium that formed a management company named W-G Development to oversee the property. Since that time, the area that is referred to as Sun City Center, as well as the rest of the age-restricted land in Greater Sun City Center, has passed through the hands of four other major developers. The residents of the Sun City Center community have fought successfully to ensure that each subsequent developer honors the original Del Webb contract, which called for new community buildings to accommodate population increase beyond 5,000, and the community ownership and management of these facilities.
KINGS POINT/SUN CITY CENTER WEST

After the Sun City Center project came under the control of W-G Development, the company broke with the original plan and allowed another developer to build condominiums next to the housing tract. Soon after, a recession hit causing the market for condominiums to collapse. W-G Development purchased additional land adjacent to Sun City Center. The land west of Sun City Center was sold to the Kings Point Housing Corporation. The condominium community then became Kings Point at Sun City Center West in 1972. The age-restrictions for this community are the same as for Sun City Center North and Sun City Center South. This community differs from Del Webb’s Sun City Center in that its community facilities and grounds are owned and operated by a professional management company. This community, too, boasts a myriad of recreational facilities, sports facilities, clubs, and activities.

The Kings Point Federation and the Kings Point Condominium Owners Association (COA) are both resident organizations that serve as quasi-governmental agencies on behalf the residents. The Federation is the legal arm of the condominiums and is composed of voluntary membership of the condominium associations, with each having a representative in the Federation. The role of the Federation is to negotiate contracts on behalf of the condominiums associations, such as the management contract, the maintenance contract, and electrical contract. The COA is a civic organization. The role of this organization is to do the things that a condominium association cannot do. The COA is supported by annual dues of $3.00 per voluntary member. The COA boasts about 98 percent voluntary membership. The COA provides a number of services - including providing an annual subsidy to HARTline in exchange for free bus service to all residents of Kings Point. The COA also has a representative who deals with the county and the state on any issues that affect the whole community of Greater Sun City Center.

The relationship between residents of Sun City Center and residents of Kings Point have not always been entirely harmonious. When Kings Point was founded in 1972, residents of Sun City Center opposed the development, fearing that the lower priced condominiums would attract a "new element," presumably meaning a lower class of residents. Another point of contention between the two communities continues to center on the security gate at the entrance of the community that is manned by private security. The guards will not allow any non-resident through the gates without a pass, and this has caused some friction between the two communities in the past. At this stage, the two communities are proactively working to break down the barriers that exist between them.

LAKE TOWERS/SUN TERRACE

Lake Towers and affiliated Sun Terrace are a Continuing Care Retirement Center (CCRC). Lake Towers was opened approximately 15 years ago in response to an expressed need of the residents of Sun City Center North and South, and Kings Point residents for a total service retirement center and health care unit. When Lake Towers was first opened, the age requirement for residence was 64, but in 1984 the age requirement was lowered to 55. Lake Towers is composed of condominium suites that are rented or purchased through lifetime leases. Residents must meet
certain health and financial requirements to be eligible for entrance into any of the facilities. Condominium suites are available both for independent and assisted-living. Sun Terrace is a one-story health care facility adjacent to the highrise retirement residence building. Sun Terrace is a skilled nursing facility equipped with 120 beds. Residents of Lake Towers have access to a full continuum of care, from independent living to assisted living to a skilled care nursing home. All facilities are overseen by a professional management company.

Like Sun City Center North and South, and Kings Point, the Lake Towers complex provides its residents with a full array of recreation and social activities. Residents can choose from all sorts of exercise, clubs, crafts, and social activities. In addition to the health care and assistance offered by the management company, residents can enjoy their retirement in a luxurious atmosphere, as the condominium suites provide housekeeping services, maintenance, and at least one meal is included in the residents' contract with the management company.

FREEDOM PLAZA/PLAZA WEST

Freedom Plaza and Plaza West are the newest additions to the age-restricted area of Greater Sun City Center. Freedom Plaza is an independent living complex and Plaza West is the affiliated assisted-living and skilled nursing care facility. Like Lake Towers, residents of the independent living complex can move to assisted-living and/or skilled care through the terms of their contracts. Freedom Plaza offers guaranteed life-care through lifetime leases to persons that meet health and financial requirements. Both Freedom Plaza and Plaza West are managed by a professional management company. Residents are provided one meal a day as part of their monthly service fee, as well as housekeeping, maintenance, all utilities, health care, full amenities, and a full array of recreational facilities including a card room, billiards, library, workshop, arts and crafts, walking trails, auditorium, pool, exercise room, and an outdoor nature trail. The style of living offered by Freedom Plaza is described by many residents and representatives as fairly luxurious, with completely decorated condominium suites and common areas and a full spectrum of amenities and services.

PROJECT SCOPE AND METHODS

The remainder of this report discusses the outcome of the each activity carried out in the community-based needs assessment for additional public transportation in Greater Sun City Center. The activities that will be presented and discussed include mapping activities and analysis; key informant interviews; and focus groups with residents of Greater Sun City Center. The results of each activity were compared and synthesized in order to offer recommendations related to the need for additional public transportation services in Greater Sun City Center.
SUN CITY CENTER
MAPPING ACTIVITIES & ANALYSIS

BACKGROUND

The success of community transportation systems is often dependent upon designing systems that are responsive to the travel needs that exist in the community. The plotting of traffic generators and attractors was an integral part of the community-based needs assessment for additional public transportation in Greater Sun City Center. Data collected from personal observation, key informant interviews, and focus groups with residents were utilized to create maps that show major traffic generators and attractors for the residents of Sun City Center. In addition, the existing public bus route was plotted and analyzed to assess its effectiveness in meeting the transportation needs of the residents in Greater Sun City Center.

TRAFFIC GENERATORS

Traffic generators refer to areas in the community where trips typically originate. In Greater Sun City Center, traffic generators are simply the various residential communities that exist currently, as well as those areas designated for future residential development. Greater Sun City Center provides a good example of compact development. All existing residences are within a three-mile distance from north to south and a two and one-half mile distance from west to east (See Figure B: Traffic Generators). Retirement centers and nursing homes are also located within this area. The curvilinear network of roads within the residential areas are also fitting for a local circulator system.

One consideration regarding traffic generators in Sun City Center that should be noted is the stated reluctance of Kings Point residents to allow any public transportation vehicle(s) within the residential areas of the community. Presently, a security gate is stationed at the entrance of the complex. Only residents and guests are permitted entrance. Residents and representatives have indicated a desire to maintain this policy if a community circulator is implemented. Therefore, although the entire residential area of Kings Point is indicated as a traffic generator on the map, vehicles would not be permitted to travel beyond the Clubhouse located at the entrance of the community. Residents could utilize the Kings Point tram shuttle service or personal golf carts to access the Clubhouse from their homes.

Planned future development was also considered in the review of traffic generators. The master plan constructed by the current developer illustrates plans for build-out in the age-restricted area of Greater Sun City Center. Plans for build-out show that a majority of future development will occur in the southern portions of Kings Point and Sun City Center South. In addition, development is planned for the northern-most portions of Sun City Center North. As stated before, future development in Kings Point will not affect service provision unless the residents decide to change their policy and allow vehicles to travel throughout the residential areas.
Figure B: Traffic Generators

GREATER SUN CITY CENTER

Sun City Center North

Kings Point / Sun City Center West

Sun City Center South

SR 674

Type of Generators
- Nursing Home
- Residential Area 1
- Residential Area 2
- Residential Area 3
- Retirement Centers

0 0.5 1
Miles
Important in the evaluation of the effects of future development on traffic generators in Sun City Center North and Sun City Center South are plans for extending the network of roads. The master plan for development in these areas shows that two major arteries north of S.R. 674, Del Webb Boulevard West and Del Webb Boulevard East, will be connected in the future. This connection will be very important in the design of potential circulator routes, as it would provide easy access for the residents of Sun City Center North that will be the most isolated from recreational facilities, commercial facilities, and medical facilities and services. Roads planned for Sun City Center South also exhibit good qualities for community circulator service.

TRAFFIC ATTRACTORS

Traffic attractors refers to destinations in the community that people wish to access. Traffic attractors were identified within Greater Sun City Center and in the immediate areas adjoining Greater Sun City Center. Traffic attractors that were identified correspond to the following categories: places of worship (churches, synagogues), civic organizations, emergency services, golf courses, the local hospital, medical facilities and services, the post office, recreational facilities, and shopping areas (See Figure C: Traffic Attractors). Again, the design and subsequent development in this retirement community is well-suited for a community circulator transportation system. Del Webb, the original developer, envisioned Sun City Center as a self-contained, full service community. The development of the area has remained true, for the most part, to the original intent. Commercial areas are restricted to S.R. 674, the main thoroughfare that bisects Greater Sun City Center. Traffic attractors were identified through personal observation, key informant interviews, and focus groups with residents. Most of the attractors identified are located within Greater Sun City Center and along the borders of the two adjoining communities - Ruskin and Wimauma.

A variety of health care facilities are located within Greater Sun City Center. These facilities include one hospital and physicians or centers specializing in cardiology, endocrinology, family practice, glaucoma, hematology, oncology, optometry, psychiatry, radiation oncology, and urology. A number of support services are also available locally including opticians and medical laboratories.

Three major grocery chains have stores in the vicinity of Greater Sun City Center. Clothing stores, drug stores, specialty shops, and restaurants also abound in the area. In addition, four recreational facilities and six golf courses are located within the age-restricted area. Six churches and one synagogue were also identified as primary traffic attractors.

EXISTING PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The residents of Greater Sun City Center may be eligible for transportation services that are provided by Hillsborough County Social Services Department and HARTline. Hillsborough County Social Services is the community transportation coordinator (CTC) and is responsible for providing specialized transportation for persons who are transportation disadvantaged in the county. HARTline is responsible for providing paratransit service to eligible riders within their
Figure C: Traffic Attractors

GREATER SUN CITY CENTER

U.S. Hwy 301

I-75

Sun City Center North

SR 674

Kings Point / Sun City Center West

Sun City Center South

Type of Facilities
Trip Attractors
- Church
- Civic Organization
- Emergency
- Golf Course
- Hospital
- Medical Facilities
- Post Office
- Recreation
- Shopping
- Synagogue

0 0.5 1
Miles
service area, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as well as operating two bus routes that serve South Hillsborough County. Each of these services in relation to the residents of Greater Sun City Center will be discussed briefly.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED PROGRAM

Since 1979, Florida has sought to coordinate transportation provided for persons who are transportation disadvantaged (TD). In addition, the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged has attempted to provide, through the use of state-provided TD Trust Fund dollars, specialized transportation trips to transportation disadvantaged persons who are not subsidized by government or social service agencies. TD services are overseen in each county or designated service area by the community transportation coordinator (CTC). The CTC for Hillsborough County is the Hillsborough County Social Services Department.

Persons must be certified as eligible in order to access TD services. Those eligible are persons who because of physical, or mental disability, income status, or age, or who for other reasons, are unable to transport themselves or purchase transportation, and are, therefore dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activity. Age alone does not guarantee that a person will be eligible for general purpose trips subsidized by TD Trust Fund monies. Elderly persons would only be eligible for these types of trips if they are also unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation.

The limited nature of transportation services available in South County, and Greater Sun City Center specifically, means that many residents in the age-restricted area are transportation disadvantaged by the definition provided above. However, the TD programs throughout the entire state are unable to meet the total demand for service and thus many, including Hillsborough County, must set priorities in terms of the types of trip requests that may be accommodated. Generally, only necessary trips, such as to doctors or dialysis and some shopping, can be provided.

ADA COMPLEMENTARY PARATRANSIT SERVICE

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 requires fixed-route public transit systems to provide complementary paratransit service for individuals who cannot use the fixed-route system because of the nature of their disability. Complementary paratransit is door-to-door service that is operated during the same days and hours within the service area of the fixed-route system. Complementary paratransit service is provided to origins and destinations within 3/4 mile of fixed routes and within the core service area. Fares charged for this service may not exceed twice the fixed-route fare for a comparable trip and no restrictions or priorities based on trip purpose can be imposed. Currently, ADA eligible individuals wishing to utilize ADA complementary paratransit services in Hillsborough County are required to purchase a $22.00 punch pass from the Department of Social Services. On average, one punch pass is good for ten paratransit rides (depending on the number of transfers required to complete each trip). Hillsborough County provides this paratransit service on behalf of HARTline.
To be eligible for the complementary paratransit service, individuals must submit a request for certification for review and approval by HARTline. The eligibility criteria used by HARTline meets federal standards for determining that an individual is unable to use fixed-route service because of an impairment related to a disability.

ROUTE #31

Route #31 is a scheduled fixed-route bus that serves South Hillsborough County and is operated by the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Agency. This bus route has been plotted on the map "Figure D: South County Routes". The entire trip takes approximately two hours each way. In addition, the bus serves each stop only once every two hours. Destinations served by this bus are very limited and several deficiencies with the current structure of this route were identified through personal observation, key informant interviews, and focus groups with residents.

ROUTE #57-X

Route #57-X is a fixed-route express bus that travels between Downtown Tampa and Greater Sun City Center (See Figure D: South County Routes). HARTline is also responsible for the maintenance and operation of this South County route. Route #54-X makes two northbound trips to Downtown Tampa early each weekday morning and two southbound trips to Greater Sun City Center during the late afternoon. Although this route is designated as an "express" route, the entire one-way trip takes approximately 1-1/2 hours. Information gathered from personal observation, key informant interviews, and focus groups with residents revealed little to no knowledge or use of this route among residents of Greater Sun City Center.

There are also some other transportation services that are provided locally for the residents of the various communities that make up Greater Sun City Center. These systems will be discussed in detail later in the report.
SUN CITY CENTER
KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

BACKGROUND

The examination of public perception and opinion of public transportation service is an integral component of the community transportation planning process. The community’s view of public transportation can provide insight in determining whether goals and objectives match the citizens’ expectations. Additionally, the way these issues are viewed in the community can strongly influence whether they are considered a local policy priority.

The way that community leaders perceive community transportation problems and needs provides insight into public opinion and political awareness of local transportation issues. A total of seven interviews with individuals representing the various civic organizations, retirement centers, service providers, and the regional transit agency were conducted for the community-based needs assessment for additional public transportation in Greater Sun City Center, Florida.

A synopsis of the interviews conducted with key informants is provided below. The summary is outlined in the following three topics: (1) transportation in Greater Sun City Center, (2) independence, and (3) safety.

TRANSPORTATION IN GREATER SUN CITY CENTER

Interviews with key informants revealed several forms of limited transportation resources available to the residents of the various mini-communities within the age-restricted area that together form Greater Sun City Center. The advantages and disadvantages associated with these resources were discussed by each key informant. Available transportation resources in the community include automobiles, golf carts, trips provided in each community, Samaritan Services, Sun City Center Emergency Squad, and existing public transportation service, as described in the previous section.

Most of the representatives from the community stated that the personal automobile is the preferred mode of travel in Greater Sun City Center. The automobile is the icon of an independent lifestyle in this retirement community. On the other hand, there are many residents who do not drive in the community, due to their health and/or a lack of driving experience. These individuals must find some other way to accommodate their travel needs. One informant suggested that the automobile is beginning to lose favor within the community as parking becomes more scarce.

In addition, several informants recounted experiences illustrating the point that there are many people in the community at large that should no longer be driving, but continue to do so because they have no other options. One service provider representative spoke of a man with Alzheimer’s disease whose wife does not know how to drive. In order to get around the community, the
husband will drive the car while his wife tells him which side of the road to stay on, where to turn, etc. Stories such as this one were recounted regularly by others.

Golf carts also were discussed as a transportation resource. Since 1988, residents have been permitted by state law to use golf carts for local travel within the confines of Greater Sun City Center (age-restricted area). However, limitations associated with golf cart travel were frequently mentioned. Travel is limited to the streets within the age-restricted area and to four designated crossings along S.R. 674. Residents must use the golf cart paths on the south side of S.R. 674. Thus, several shopping areas and services located just beyond the age-restricted area are not accessible by golf cart. In addition, golf carts may not be operated after dusk or before dawn for any reason. Frequently, the same situations that inhibit the residents’ driving of automobiles, such as mobility impairments and/or vision problems, constrain their ability to operate golf carts in the community.

Each individual community in Greater Sun City Center, including retirement centers and nursing home facilities, offers its residents some form of assisted transportation. According to representatives, residents of Sun City Center North and South can make use of the minibus service open to members of the Community Association. The minibus provides transportation for scheduled events and shopping malls located outside of Greater Sun City Center. A modest charge is associated with each trip.

Several key informants also discussed the transportation alternatives available to residents of the Kings Point condominium community. Kings Point/Sun City Center West residents have tram shuttle service and scheduled bus service available at no charge. A tram service operates to carry residents from their homes to the Kings Point Clubhouse and back to their homes. The tram service is operated on-demand. Once at the clubhouse, residents can utilize the scheduled bus service provided by the Kings Point management for shopping, mall trips, restaurants on Saturdays, and church on Sundays. However, representatives stressed that seating on these scheduled trips are limited. Residents of Kings Point may also ride the Route #31 public bus, operated by HARTline, that stops at the Clubhouse at no charge. This service is provided by HARTline in exchange for a monthly donation made by the Condominium Owners Association. However, representatives stated that these services are not adequate to meet the demand for transportation for Kings Point residents and are the subject of many complaints.

Interviews conducted with representatives from both life-care retirement residences in Greater Sun City Center, as well as volunteer agency representatives, revealed that these communities also provide some transportation as a service to their residents. These services are for business appointments (medical, lawyer), scheduled shopping, and scheduled group outings. Additional services are provided for a fee. Representatives from these facilities stated that the demand for transportation exceeds their resources and therefore, the trip purposes that can be accommodated are limited. Transportation was mentioned as a barrier to the residents’ independence because there simply is not enough available.
There are also two volunteer organizations that provide some transportation to the residents of Greater Sun City Center at no charge. The Samaritans Services and the Sun City Center Emergency Squad both provide scheduled medical trips. Samaritan Services provides trips for shopping, medical appointments, beauty appointments, and business appointments. Wheelchair accessible service is available for out-of-town medical appointments. The Sun City Center Emergency Squad also offers service to doctors appointments within Greater Sun City Center only. However, interviews with various representatives indicate that the demand for these type of trips, as well as requests for other trip purposes, continues to grow and the limited resources available to meet the demand present a major barrier to mobility for residents of Greater Sun City Center.

Most informants stated that the existing public transportation in the area is not sufficient to meet the needs of the residents of Greater Sun City Center. The limited nature of the bus service, lack of internal circulation, length of the trip, the two-hour headway (time between buses), and inaccessible bus stops were all cited as problems with the existing public transportation. One representative suggested that an image of public transportation as only for the needy will hamper the success of any public service in the community. Independence was a major theme throughout the interviews.

INDEPENDENCE

Greater Sun City Center is marketed by the current developer as "America’s Premier Retirement Town." Key informants described the lifestyle in the area as one of freedom and independence. Recreation and social activity are hallmarks of the area. Six golf courses are located within the age-restricted area and many residents are avid golfers. Each community also provides a myriad of recreational facilities, clubs, and social activities to the residents. It is the active lifestyle and amenities that attract many of the residents to this retirement community. Most respondents emphasized the importance of maintaining and encouraging independence within the community at large.

Independence in the community is enhanced in large part by the sense of volunteerism that exists in Greater Sun City Center. Residents often leave their families to retire in the area. Therefore, much volunteerism has evolved to provide support for the residents throughout the area. The civic organizations and the associated services they provide are staffed by volunteers. The local security patrol, Emergency Squad, the local fire station, and Samaritan Services are all staffed by volunteers. Volunteers also staff the local library, hospital, and Chamber of Commerce. Many of the organizations and services are fully funded by donations from the community. Volunteer opportunities allow residents to continue to utilize their business experience, as well as provide opportunities for acquiring new knowledge and experiences. One key informant who is also a long-time resident of Sun City Center suggested that above all else, volunteerism in Sun City Center helps to bind the community together.

The ability to access and utilize public transportation was suggested by some as a means to ensure independence throughout the aging process. One representative who has been a resident of Sun
City Center for over 20 years stated that the opportunity for residents to pay a small fare or make a donation helps to boost self-esteem and a sense of independence. In addition, having service available to residents that would allow them to make trips for purposes that are outside of the designation as "necessary" was described as beneficial to maintaining independence.

One respondent suggested that the quest for independence might also inhibit residents' willingness to utilize public transportation. It was suggested that many residents are "in denial"; they do not want to believe that they are aging and that they might need transportation assistance. Several respondents expressed concern that this was causing some residents to continue to operate automobiles when they really should not.

SAFETY

Safety was mentioned as a major concern for residents of Greater Sun City Center. When asked what attracts people to Sun City Center, most respondents mentioned the sense of security in the retirement community. The Sun City Center Security Patrol was established by the residents to help deter crime in the area. Its success is measured in part by the fact that Sun City Center has the lowest crime rate of any Hillsborough County community. The security patrol operates five radio-equipped cars 24 hours a day. Kings Point residents have an additional security service that operates their security gate at the entrance of the community and patrols the residential areas. Both life-care facilities also provide security services within their facilities. As one respondent summed up the situation, "You can go out at 5:00 a.m. and find women walking, doing their exercises. You don’t find that in many communities anymore."

A couple of respondents expressed concern that additional public transportation serving Sun City Center might not be accepted by residents because of a concern for safety. It was suggested that public transportation might bring "outsiders" into the community to commit crimes. However, many respondents mentioned that residents of the neighboring communities already utilize services within Greater Sun City Center without disrupting the fabric of the community.
SUN CITY CENTER FOCUS GROUPS

BACKGROUND

The purpose of conducting focus groups with residents of Greater Sun City Center was to examine personal transportation needs and perceived community needs. The participants of these focus groups were members of the community, and thus, potential riders of any system that may be implemented. The discussions not only provided a forum for community involvement and participation in the planning process, but also the opportunity to raise awareness of transportation issues and problems locally.

Two daytime focus groups sessions were held with residents. One was conducted with residents of Kings Point/Sun City Center West and one with residents of Sun City Center North and South. Participants were suggested by the civic organizations within each community, as well as the director of a prominent volunteer service provider. No difficulty was experienced in locating willing participants. The great volunteerism and passion for community involvement that exists in Greater Sun City Center facilitated the process a great deal. Each session provided valuable information regarding transportation problems and needs and insight into the fabric of this retirement community.

The investigator attempted to set up two additional focus groups with residents of the two life-care facilities in Greater Sun City Center. Extensive efforts were made to obtain permission, but the administration at each of the facilities were very resistant to the idea. In the end, the investigator had to abandon these efforts due to time constraints.

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS USED MOST OFTEN

Focus group participants stated that several forms of transportation are popular in the community. Many participants revealed that they have access to an automobile on a regular basis. Golf carts are another popular form of transportation within the age-restricted area that makes up Greater Sun City Center. Most of the participants have utilized HARTline’s Route #31 bus service. Several participants travel in Greater Sun City Center by bicycle. Walking was also mentioned as a common mode of transport.

Kings Point residents mentioned using the existing HARTline service often. The residents are able to ride the bus for free by presenting the bus driver with their clubhouse badge. These residents also described using the tram service that is available to Kings Point residents for scheduled local service to church, shopping, and restaurants, as well as travel from one’s home to the Kings Point Clubhouse.
EXPERIENCES AND IMPRESSIONS OF THE CURRENT FIXED-ROUTE SERVICE

A majority of the focus group participants had utilized the existing Route #31 fixed-route bus operated by HARTline at least one time. Participants discussed their experiences and impressions of the available public transportation service.

Route #31 is viewed as being too inconvenient to meet the residents’ needs for daily living. The route does not go where the residents would like to go. The most frequent complaint was that the trip is much too long. The bus to Eastlake Square Mall at 56th Street and Hillsborough Avenue in Tampa, the final destination on the northbound bus, takes at least two hours one way. A trip to the mall becomes an all day outing lasting six to eight hours. The number of stops that the bus makes on Route #31 was also cited as inconvenient and annoying. Participants explained that this trip is too long, especially for older persons and persons with mobility impairments. Many participants expressed that they would ride the bus to Eastlake Square Mall much more often if the trip was shortened.

A two-hour headway also makes Route #31 inconvenient for local travel. Utilizing the bus to go shopping or to appointments locally is difficult because if shopping takes longer than a set amount of time, riders must wait two hours for the next bus to arrive. In addition, because the bus stops for Route #31 are located only on the main roads (no internal circulation within Greater Sun City Center) away from most residential areas, some residents are forced to walk 1-1/2 miles to the bus stop and 1-1/2 miles back.

Several problems with route design were cited and the location of several specific stops were mentioned as problems. Specifically, the stop at Regency Square Mall on S.R. 60 in Brandon is viewed as inconvenient, both from the northbound trip and the return trip south because the stop is quite a way from the entrance to the mall and requires that riders walk a considerable distance. The distance makes it difficult to access the mall for mobility impaired and frail elders. In addition, to catch the southbound bus back to Sun City Center, passengers must cross Highway 60 to reach the bus stop. Many participants felt that this was too dangerous.

The same type of problem was mentioned in regard to returning to residents homes from the South Bay Hospital, which is located on the north side of S.R. 674. Residents can catch the Route #31 bus going westbound and be dropped off at the entrance of the hospital. To catch the eastbound bus back to their homes, riders must cross S.R. 674 in order to reach the bus stop, which is perceived as very dangerous due to the amount of traffic on the road and the short length of the stop lights.

Another problem that was mentioned by the focus group participants regarding the Route #31 bus and HARTline’s services in general was the lack of information or incomplete information available for residents. Participants spoke of a lack of knowledge of the bus schedule and/or routes among residents of Greater Sun City Center. Bus stops are not portrayed on schedules and are not visible enough along the route. Additionally, buses designated as wheelchair accessible in the schedule sometimes are not always provided. One participant discussed waiting four to
six hours for a wheelchair accessible vehicle one afternoon. After the last bus of the day had arrived without a wheelchair lift, HARTline had to send out a wheelchair accessible van to return the participant and her spouse to their home.

The lack of shelters along the entire route was also a concern for the residents of Greater Sun City Center. This is especially a problem during the summer months when heat and daily storms make it uncomfortable and potentially dangerous for people to stand out in the elements while waiting for the bus.

Overall, the public fixed-route system that is currently available in Greater Sun City Center is viewed as inadequate to meet transportation needs by the focus group participants. Several participants cited the fact the buses are almost always empty as evidence of this. In addition, a few participants mentioned that public transportation has the potential for bringing "undesirables" into the community. Generally, this was a minority view.

Nonetheless, one participant who recently gave up her personal automobile due to her age felt that the existing HARTline service was sufficient to meet her personal transportation needs.

The above experiences all contribute to the perception that HARTline is not interested in fulfilling the transportation needs of the residents of Greater Sun City Center. As one participant remarked, "HARTline needs to get a heart!"

NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Participants expressed that a need exists for additional public transportation services in Greater Sun City Center to take residents to the hospital, doctors, shopping, and other life-sustaining activities locally. It was also suggested that the service to all areas of Tampa should be expanded and enhanced in order to make it more convenient.

The limited public transportation services and lack of taxis in the area make residents without automobiles "hostages." In part, this situation is viewed as the result of inaccurate information given to potential residents by realtors in Greater Sun City Center. Participants asserted that realtors paint an unrealistic picture of the transportation resources available to residents. Several participants revealed that they were led to believe that one did not need a car to get around in Sun City Center. To the contrary, a car is needed to get just about anywhere in the area. As one focus group participant explained, "Getting around without a car is a corkscrew, believe me!" Exacerbating the problem is the fact that many of the residents that drive in Greater Sun City Center possibly should not be, due to health problems and/or age-related impairments.

Participants were then probed to determine what type of community transportation service should be pursued. Discussions included destinations, days and hours of service, trip purposes, and routes.
DESTINATIONS, ROUTES AND TRIP PURPOSES

The general consensus on the issue of service area was that community transportation should be available for travel locally. It was felt that the service should be designed so that the vehicles would travel through the residential areas to pick up riders, except in the case of Kings Point. Kings Point is a gated community and it was felt that the tram service that is currently available to the residents would be sufficient for transporting residents to the Clubhouse where they could then board a community transportation vehicle. The participants in the Kings Point focus group did not like the idea of public transportation vehicles being admitted into the residential areas.

While participants expressed the opinion that service should be concentrated within Greater Sun City Center, most also felt that the service area should be extended to include the edges of Ruskin and Wimauma because there are several shopping centers, restaurants, and medical facilities there that the residents frequent. These facilities are technically outside of the age-restricted area that makes up Greater Sun City Center. Some also suggested that the service area covered by circulator vehicles should include Apollo Beach, as there are many doctors there that the residents go to on a regular basis.

Participants felt that transportation should be available to travel to shopping, doctors, and other errands and activities in the local area. Clubs, community events, and college courses offered at a local church were all cited as activities that community transportation should serve. Participants expressed concern that any service that is considered should provide access to establishments and medical facilities on both sides of S.R. 674, without having to cross busy streets on foot. In addition, any new service should be designed so that it is tied in with the Route #31 fixed-route service.

A few participants said that they would like the service to be for both intra- and inter-Sun City Center travel. A need exists for service to Tampa and the participants felt that this need was not being met adequately by the current fixed-route service available to the residents of Greater Sun City Center. Several suggestions were made as to how to accommodate this need. One participant suggested that passengers could call HARTline and tell them what type of service they would like for each ride requested. Another proposed that the service could be designed to make two trips to Tampa or Brandon on scheduled days to accommodate those residents that would like or need to visit these areas. A very common suggestion was for HARTline to alter the existing Route #31 so that it is more responsive to the needs of the residents of South County.

The need for service on Sundays and in the evenings was consistently mentioned in the focus groups. Participants were dismayed that no public transportation is available in South County on Sundays:

Now on Sundays, you are just stuck. You have to sit in your house. Now why can’t they have at least one or two buses on Sunday? It’s the one day when you want to get out and get something to eat, you want to get somewhere and there is no way of getting there.
Some participants commented that the regular fixed-route service used to run on Sundays, but that service was eliminated. The participants would like to see public transportation available on Sundays.

Many activities in Sun City Center take place in the evenings. Participants mentioned bingo, dances, concerts, classes, and lectures as regular events occurring during evening hours that many residents are unable to participate in due to a lack of transportation. This situation was viewed as particularly frustrating because golf carts cannot be utilized for transportation after dark. In addition, several participants commented that many residents of Greater Sun City Center suffer from vision impairments that make it particularly hazardous to drive at night. One participant suggested that organizations that have activities in the evenings could contact HARTline to request that transportation be made available during that evening.

The prevailing consensus among focus group participants was that the community transportation service should start by offering service several days during the work week, as well as weekends. It was felt that if the service was scheduled and operating on set days of the week, the residents could schedule their appointments and errands around days and hours of operation. Many participants expressed concern that service offered seven days a week, all day and during the evening, would be much too expensive to implement at first. If the demand is great enough, participants felt that it would be easier to expand operating hours than to decrease the hours of availability. On the days that the service is operating, participants felt that it should be more frequent than the current Route #31 service.

Aside from the evening service already discussed, most participants said that most travel in Greater Sun City Center usually takes place early in the day. One participant expressed the strong opinion that residents of the retirement community should not be traveling during rush hours because they have all day to do errands and go to appointments. Nine in the morning was mentioned by several participants as a possible starting time. Kings Point focus group participants expressed an interest in the community circulator’s schedule being coordinated with the tram service available in that community so that people would not be forced to wait for a long time to get to their homes from the Clubhouse.

**TYPE OF SERVICE**

Participants were questioned about the type of service they would like to see implemented in Sun City Center. The general consensus among participants was that internal, local service running through residential areas should be scheduled with specific routes. Participants felt that this type of service would be more dependable than door-to-door, demand-responsive service. It was felt that residents would be better able to plan their travel if they knew when and where the vehicles would pick-up and drop-off passengers. Several participants suggested that riders should not have to wait longer than 30 minutes for a vehicle. The prevailing sentiment throughout the focus groups was that public transportation should be easy to use and accessible.
A few participants said that the service should also be available on demand. It was felt that many persons in the community have mobility impairments that make it difficult to travel even a short distance to a bus stop and that these persons should receive door-to-door service. In addition, one participant stated that door-to-door transportation should be available for travel to Tampa, especially for recurring trips to the doctor.

**VEHICLE TYPES**

When asked about vehicle characteristics for additional public transportation service in Greater Sun City Center, the prevailing sentiment centered on smaller vehicles, rather than the large buses traditionally used for fixed-route transit. Participants felt that small buses with seating capacity for about 20 persons would be the best type of vehicle for community transportation. Several participants cited the fact that the large buses used for the existing fixed-route service are nearly empty most of the time as evidence in support of smaller buses. Some participants suggested that smaller vehicles are more mobile and better suited for the roads throughout all of Sun City Center. Vans were dismissed by most participants as being too small and uncomfortable. One advantage of vans that was mentioned concerned the ability to reconfigure seats in order to accommodate wheelchair passengers.

Overall, participants were concerned that the type of vehicle chosen should be accessible for persons using wheelchairs and ambulatory passengers with mobility limitations. Participants agreed that all vehicles should be in accordance with regulations set under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Vehicles with front loading wheelchair lifts were considered safer for passengers using wheelchairs than rear lifts. Also, participants felt that the vehicle(s) should be equipped with bells to indicate when a stop has been requested, much like the large buses utilized in fixed-route transit.

One participant felt that large buses are better for drivers to monitor who gets on and off the vehicle. It was felt that this feature would be helpful in order to track the "type of people" who are coming into the community. Safety was a common concern among focus group participants.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION**

Discussion concerning funding the community circulator service centered around how to financially contribute to the service, rather than whether to contribute. Many participants stressed throughout the focus group sessions that they would much rather pay for service than "...put someone out." One participant explained:

> We could ask someone to drive us, but that gets to be a bother because everyone in Sun City Center has their own lifestyle, such as playing golf and going to clubs. So, you can't always depend on someone else to take you around.

As to the form of support, many participants at the Kings Point focus group expressed the opinion that all of the communities that make up Greater Sun City Center should make a monthly
donation to HARTline to support the community service and, in return, the residents of those communities should be allowed to ride for free. This system is similar to the agreement that the residents of Kings Point currently have with HARTline for Route #31 service.

Many participants also expressed willingness to pay a fare if the service were convenient and designed to meet travel needs: "Yes, I feel that if people need it and they appreciate it, then they would be willing to pay a fare." The fare should be equivalent to the fare for regular fixed-route service, unless day passes are made available. Several participants expressed concern that a fare charged each time a rider boarded the vehicle would be prohibitive for local travel.

Some participants in Kings Point suggested that a monthly donation to HARTline from each community and a small fare would be beneficial to the regional transit agency. Improved communication between the communities in Greater Sun City Center and the regional transit agency was noted as necessary. In general, participants felt that if the residents believed in the service, they would be willing and able to raise the money to support it.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Many participants mentioned that information concerning public transportation service in the area is lacking. Participants expressed that there many local resources available to disseminate schedule and route information. It was strongly suggested that HARTline advertise the service information in the two local papers, in repeat issues, in order to reach most of the residents. Many participants agreed that people need to know where and when the public transportation that is available goes. Service changes and additions should also be advertised in the local papers.

Participants also suggested that HARTline utilize community information exchange mediums to disseminate information regarding service in the area. This information could be published in the community newsletters, recreation sheets, and closed-circuit television.

OTHER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES IN SUN CITY CENTER

An important, but unanticipated, outcome of the focus groups was the identification of volunteer transportation services available to residents of Greater Sun City Center. The focus groups provided a forum for residents to share information about the services available that many participants were unaware of. Participants discussed the availability and eligibility criteria associated with the transportation for medical and business appointments provided by the Samaritan Services and the Sun City Center Emergency Squad. Participants in the Kings Point focus group also provided clarification of the transportation provided to residents through the tram service and scheduled bus service.

Participants were also able to share their experiences in utilizing the existing transportation services and brainstorm about solutions to the mobility problems experienced by the residents of Greater Sun City Center.
PERCEPTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY

In addition to service characteristics, the focus groups in Greater Sun City Center revealed prevailing attitudes and perceptions of the age-restricted community. Participants expressed strong positions regarding issues of independence and a sense of territoriality.

Greater Sun City Center is designed for an "active retirement lifestyle" with a plethora of activities, clubs, social events, and six golf courses. The residents value their independence and mobility. Transportation is recognized as a vital link to maintaining independence throughout retirement.

Participants also revealed a sense of territoriality regarding the age-restricted area constituting Greater Sun City Center. Concern was expressed over the potential for bringing "outsiders" into the community on a regular basis with public transportation service. While many participants countered this proposition, a sense of separation from the surrounding communities was evident. Although residential separation was also mentioned, several participants expressed that a coalition of the communities within Greater Sun City Center, working together to solve transportation problems, could be effective at "taking down the walls that separate communities both spatially and socially at the present time."
SUN CITY CENTER
FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Data obtained through key informant interviews, personal observation, focus groups with residents and mapping activities were analyzed and compared in order to develop recommendations regarding the development and implementation of local public transportation services in Sun City Center, Florida. The major finding and primary recommendation focus on the apparent need for additional local transportation service in the community. Greater Sun City Center is the fastest growing area in South Hillsborough County with over 13,000 residents at the present time. Census data indicates that over 40 percent of the population were 75 years of age or older in 1990. Many of the residents rely on fixed-incomes that will continue to dwindle with inflation and the rising cost of health care. The provision of additional public transportation for local travel will help to ensure that the residents of this retirement community are able to maintain their independence throughout retirement.

COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION

Community transportation is generally characterized by smaller, local service areas, flexible schedules, and more frequent service. The community bus concept has emerged as one way to reduce the distances that elderly persons and persons with disabilities must travel to get to and from bus stops. Generally, the smaller, more mobile vehicles that are used for this type of system travel on neighborhood streets and/or to hospital or mall entrances to reduce walking distances. These services can also be planned to work as feeders to the regular fixed route(s) that exist in the area. In addition, community bus systems may be designed to include a "route deviation" option that allows the vehicle to deviate from the set route in order to pick up or drop off passenger(s) that cannot travel to a bus stop.

Successful community bus systems share a number of identifiable characteristics. Community bus routes should be laid out in such a way that walking distance for the target population is minimal. Route planning should also consider demographics, housing, topography, and important destinations such as care centers, hospitals, clinics, shopping, and connections to regular fixed-route service. Bus stops on the community bus route should be very convenient and should serve entrances of major trip attractors, whenever possible. Typically, passengers are able to hail and/or exit the vehicle anywhere on the routes. Community bus schedules also allow for sufficient time for driver assistance and passengers who require additional time to board and/or exit the vehicle. Smaller vehicles than typical fixed-route transit are utilized and often vehicles are similar to accessible vehicles utilized for paratransit service. These smaller, more mobile vehicles allow for travel on streets that cannot be accessed by the larger buses used for regular fixed-route transit. Special low floor vehicles are also popular for community bus systems.

Specific recommendations regarding service design and improvements to the existing fixed-route bus service, as well as any future service considered, are provided below.
COMMUNITY CIRCULATOR SERVICE

General Service Design

• Service should be provided as a community circulator/community bus on a fixed-route that travels through residential areas, excluding Kings Point (see below), to pick-up and drop-off residents close to their homes.

• Community circulator service should be designed to connect with the Route #31 fixed-route bus service and transferring from one mode to the other should be relatively easy.

• A flexible schedule should be considered that would accommodate trips to other areas. For example, two days a week the vehicle(s) could travel to Tampa and/or Apollo Beach to meet the demand for these types of trips.

• Bus stops should be clearly illustrated on schedules and bus stop signs should be clearly visible from the vehicle, as well as from the road.

• Consideration should be given to utilizing the volunteer resources that exist in Greater Sun City Center for assistance with operations. A vast amount of knowledge appears to exist currently in the community in the areas of scheduling, dispatching, and driving.

• The transit agency should pursue coordination with the volunteer transportation providers located in Greater Sun City Center in order to avoid duplication of services.

• A need was identified for service to Ruskin and Apollo Beach. Planning activities for circulators in these communities should consider access by residents from other communities in South County.

Operations

• Vehicles should serve the Kings Point Clubhouse to pick-up and drop-off the residents of this community. At this point, residents do not wish to have vehicles traveling through the residential areas.

• Circulators should directly serve major trip attractors along and nearby S.R. 674. Transportation is needed locally for shopping, doctors, and other life-sustaining activities in the local area.

• Circulators should provide access to establishments and medical facilities on both sides of S.R. 674 without requiring riders to cross busy streets on foot.
Community circulators should serve Sun Point Shopping Plaza located on the eastern most border of Ruskin. An outlet of a major grocery store utilized by the residents is located in this plaza, as well as several restaurants and specialty stores.

Community circulator service should operate with no longer than a 30-minute headway for the service to be attractive for local travel.

Community circulator service should be available on Saturdays and Sundays. Residents would like to be able to utilize service on the weekends to eat out and attend church services.

Service should be available during the evenings until approximately 9:30 p.m. to allow residents to access concerts, activities, club meetings, and college classes offered within the age-restricted area.

**Fares**

- A fare should be charged for community circulator service that does not exceed the current fare for fixed-route service unless day passes are made available at a slightly higher rate (see below).

- All-day passes for unlimited travel should be available to make community circulator service a viable transportation option for local errands, appointments and activities.

**Vehicles**

- Small buses with seating capacities of approximately 20 persons should be used for community circulator service.

- All vehicles used for community circulator service should be in accordance with regulations set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Either front loading lifts or low-floor vehicles with ramps should be considered.

**Other Paratransit Services**

- Limited door-to-door, demand-response (paratransit) service should be built into community circulator schedules to accommodate residents with mobility impairments.

- Information regarding complementary paratransit services required under the Americans with Disabilities Act should be disseminated to residents of Greater Sun City Center to accommodate ADA eligible residents.
• Information regarding the transportation disadvantaged (TD) program in Hillsborough County should be communicated to residents in Greater Sun City Center to accommodate the need for recurring trips to Tampa for medical appointments.

**Information**

• Route and schedule information for the community circulator should be disseminated and advertised widely and repeatedly. Residents should have easy access to information regarding when and where the vehicle(s) travels. The size of the print on schedules should be increased for greater readability.

• Ongoing and meaningful communication should occur between representatives of HARTline and the residents of Greater Sun City Center.

• A public education campaign should be implemented to attempt to dispel stereotypes associated with public transportation concerning dependence and a lack of safety.

**ROUTE #31**

Several of the recommendations listed below may be regarded as unnecessary if community circulator service is implemented in Sun City Center. Many of the issues and problems identified with the existing public transportation concern its inadequacy in meeting local travel needs.

• Headways should be reduced to one hour.

• Service should be routed through major shopping centers in each direction to eliminate stops at major trip attractors that require crossing major roadways, such as Highway 60 and State Road 674, in order to access bus stops.

• Bus stops should be clearly marked on schedules and bus stop signs should be made more visible.

• All buses indicated in schedules as wheelchair accessible should be equipped with working wheelchair lifts and tie-downs.

• Infrastructure (curb cuts, sidewalks) should be examined to evaluate accessibility in terms of bus stops.

• Route #31 service should be made available on Sundays.

• ADA complementary paratransit services should be made available and residents should be made aware of this service.
• Information regarding existing service and any future expansion or changes to service should be advertised widely in the local newspapers and community newsletters.