

Connecticut Office of Workforce Strategy

Designing Transportation Solutions to Strengthen Connecticut's Workforce

Case Study

The Connecticut Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS) partnered with RSG to examine how limited transportation options prevent many residents, particularly low-income families, from accessing and sustaining employment. Through the Transportation Pilot Research and Feasibility Study, RSG combined **mobility data** analysis with stakeholder engagement to design innovative, scalable program concepts. The resulting pilot options, which are dependent upon funding, aim to address workforce mobility barriers while laying the groundwork for future-ready transportation solutions across the state.

The Challenge

Despite numerous workforce development efforts across Connecticut, transportation remains a barrier for many residents, especially those living in rural areas or outside the reach of reliable transit systems. For thousands of low-income households, the path to employment is often obstructed not by a lack of jobs, but by the inability to physically reach them.

Early in the study, RSG's landscape analysis using Replica data revealed that nearly 30% of low-income residents who live more than half a mile from a transit stop do not have enough vehicles to serve all adults in the household. This issue is particularly acute in eastern and northwestern Connecticut,

where transit access is sparse and mobility options are limited. Even in better-served urban and suburban areas, existing transit services can fall short, with limited schedules, disconnected routes, and operational gaps that make commuting to work, childcare, or training programs infeasible for many residents.

These challenges are compounded by systemic issues. The underlying transportation infrastructure lends itself to improved collaboration amongst multiple agencies and providers to improve coordinated solutions, since rising vehicle costs, complex licensing requirements, and high insurance premiums place car ownership out of reach for many residents. Stakeholders, from nonprofit leaders to caseworkers and community members, voiced consistent concerns: Public transportation isn't meeting demand, and alternative services like rideshare are often too costly to be practical as a primary commuting mode.

For the Connecticut OWS and its state partners at the Two Generational (2Gen) Initiative, Department of Transportation, and Department of Labor, the challenge was clear: How can Connecticut design targeted, flexible, and financially sustainable transportation solutions that bridge these mobility gaps, especially for residents who are otherwise ready and able to work?



RSG's Solution

To address Connecticut's diverse transportation needs, the RSG team deployed a multifaceted approach that integrated mobility data analytics, stakeholder engagement, and program design expertise. At the heart of the project was the development of a publicly accessible, interactive landscape analysis tool that used Replica data to map home and work locations, transit proximity, and vehicle access across the state. This tool allowed the team to identify underserved geographies, particularly areas where low-income residents lived far from transit and lacked reliable access to a car.



In addition to quantitative data, RSG collected qualitative data, leading two phases of stakeholder engagement, including interviews and focus groups with transit agency officials, case managers, nonprofit leaders, elected officials, and Connecticut residents, many of whom were parents facing daily transportation challenges. These conversations helped surface practical barriers and real-world constraints, such as unreliable transit schedules, high car repair costs, and the logistical challenges of coordinating childcare and job access without a vehicle.

Building on this foundation, the team generated and tested over two dozen pilot program ideas, eventually narrowing them down through surveys and stakeholder input. Two high-potential, high-impact pilot concepts emerged:

- **Vehicle Purchase and Repair Assistance:** This pilot would target residents in rural and suburban areas where transit is scarce. It would provide down payment assistance up to \$7,500, repair support up to \$1,500, and car ownership education to individuals earning between 200% and 250% of the federal poverty level. With a \$750,000 annual budget, the program could serve up to 250 participants per year.
- **Mobility Wallets:** Designed for residents in areas with a mix of transit and rideshare availability, this pilot would provide preloaded debit cards to cover multimodal transportation costs. These wallets could be used for public transit, rideshare services, taxis, scooters, and other modes, giving participants the flexibility to choose the option that best fits their needs. This program also scales to around 250 participants with a similar budget.

Each program was supported by a detailed implementation and evaluation plan, including eligibility criteria, cost structures, and administrative frameworks. Together, they represent a scalable and adaptive approach to workforce mobility, one that could potentially blend near-term practicality with longer-term potential for statewide replication.

By combining data-driven insights with lived experiences, RSG's collaboration with the Connecticut OWS offers a path forward, one that promotes greater access to work, stability for families, and a more equitable transportation future for the state's residents.