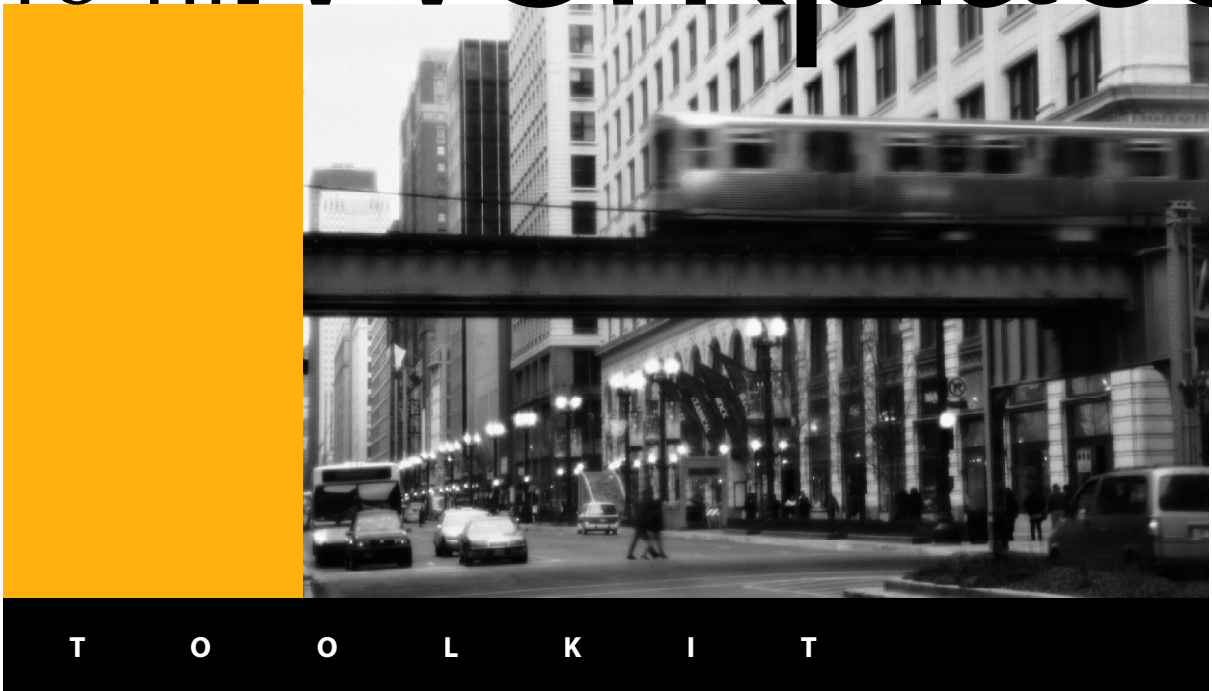


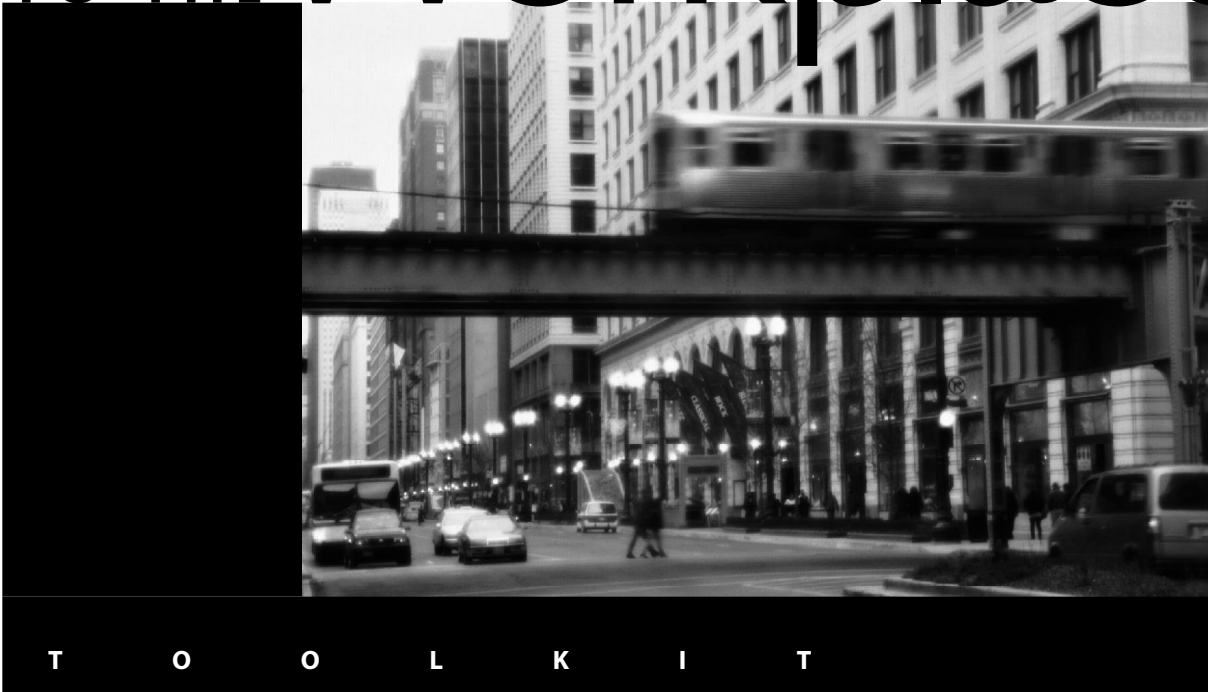
LINKING **People**
TO THE **Workplace**



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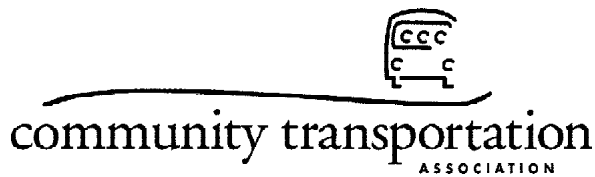
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United States Department of Labor

LINKING People
TO THE Workplace



T O O L K I T

LINKING People TO THE Workplace



A publication of the Community Transportation Association of America
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Dedication

We wish to dedicate this toolkit to all of the people and organizations that have contributed to the development of this work by sharing their experiences and stories. The work you are doing in America's communities is making the dream of employment a reality for thousands.

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Employment Transportation Information Assistance Series

Topical briefs on employment transportation in back pocket



Preface

Community Transportation Association of America
Linking People to the Workplace

Preface

The Link to Jobs: The Transportation and Workforce Partnership

As the general manager of a transportation authority serving suburban Detroit, I understand the vital role of transportation in creating economic opportunity. I see first-hand how effective employment transportation options can link suburban businesses and urban job seekers and employees.

An early lesson that we at SMART learned was that in order to meet employment transportation challenges we needed to be flexible and customer-focused, and to work in cooperation with the community. In fact, SMART found that by being responsive to the community's employment transportation needs it was able to grow its ridership and gain business support. Our philosophy at SMART has become: "If you need us, we will come."

SMART began its response to suburban needs simply: to link where residents live with where they need to go. In the process, SMART cut some service to the downtown, but added service from the city to the suburbs as well as cross-town service. SMART also adjusted some of its bus schedules in response to community input. In one case, SMART learned from a chamber of commerce representative that if it would have one of its buses arrive at a shopping mall 15 minutes before the mall opened more of the mall's employees would be able to take transit to work.

Here are some other ways that SMART uses its transportation services to promote economic opportunity:

- **Buses to Business Forums** - SMART set up morning meetings with targeted retail establishments and food and service industry businesses to gather advice about proposed expanded service.
- **Think Transit First** - SMART encourages job

developers - where possible and practical - to be conscious of location and match job seekers with jobs on bus and rail lines first. SMART has developed "Transit First," a tool using geographic information system (GIS) software that enables job developers to locate jobs along transit lines. The software's databases include geocoded (plotted according to location) job openings, residential neighborhoods and childcare centers. With this tool, job developers can sort new jobs according to proximity to transit lines and fill those jobs first.

- **Job Line** - SMART began an over-the-phone information listing of job openings along bus routes. Detroit's largest radio station announces job openings and the bus line that an employee would take to access those jobs.
- **Ombudsperson Program** - SMART has an ombudsperson in each of the counties in its service area who advocates on the behalf on those who come to them, whether a rider,

Society changes and if transit is going to continue to run the same way it does today in the next year and the year after that, it's not going to succeed. Transit needs to be reflection of society and change as its customer needs change. If it doesn't, it's going to be out of business.

elected official, business or job developer. Taking this avenue to get information from the community is invaluable to SMART's success.

Over time, SMART has developed into a mobility manager - responsive to community needs for mobility - and is no longer just a bus operator.

The result: After SMART redesigned its service, it identified more than 1 million employees who had new or improved service from an expansion and

reinvention of service during a 3-year period. I would credit the success of these changes to listening to our community partners, especially the workforce development and the business communities.

This employment transportation toolkit - *Linking People to the Workplace* is a valuable resource for communities seeking to foster partnerships among workforce development, business and transportation. It provides information and technical assistance focusing on successful, affordable and transferable methods and strategies for assuring needed employment and training transportation.

Help transportation play a vital role in creating economic opportunity and realizing economic development in communities all across the nation.

*Dan Dirks, General Manager
Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional
Transportation (SMART)
Detroit, Michigan*

Preface

The Workforce Investment Act: Opening the One-Stop Door to Transportation Access

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) is a landmark piece of legislation that replaces the Job Training Partnership Act with a customizable and more flexible piece of legislation which requires coordination with other job training and placement programs. This comprehensive workforce development system enables Workforce Investment Boards to envision broader opportunities for workforce training in this country. WIA's new core principles of universality, customer-focus and customer-choice, greater flexibility, local control, greater accountability and one-stop centers form a strong framework to support people in achieving self-sufficiency and professional success.

The creators and supporters of the Workforce Investment Act recognized that transportation is an essential component of workforce development and that barriers to employment are more than just skills training. This awareness of transportation's significance is apparent in the multiple ways that it is addressed throughout the legislation.

- * WIA refers to support services throughout the law, and it specifically refers to childcare and transportation as support services.
- * WIA defines transportation as a needed support service for adult and youth services, adult education and literacy programs, as well as for vocational rehabilitation. Under the section on vocational rehabilitation it creates an Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, and creates an interagency committee on transportation research.
- * One-stop core services include transportation information. Accessing information does not require registration into the WIA Title I system. This is a benefit to the one-stop center since that

One-stop and workforce development professionals realize that along with childcare, transportation is the other major barrier.

person is subsequently not counted against the one-stop's performance standards.

- * Transportation can include: bus passes, van services, car give-a-ways, and gas vouchers, among other options.
- * WIA encourages Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to explore regional planning, and specifically mentions transportation in this regard.
- * WIA requires that local transportation plans under the U.S. Department of Transportation's Sections 5307 and 5311 programs be sent to local WIBs for comment and coordination. These boards must certify that the transportation plans are consistent with local workforce plans.

Broward Employment and Training Addresses Transportation

While the economy is robust, this strong marketplace brings with it this challenge: To provide training to people that specifically matches the skills that employers need. To accomplish this mission, people need reliable and safe transportation so that they are able to reach one-stop centers, training sites and childcare facilities.

To address its mobility challenges, the Broward Employment and Training Administration (BETA):

- 1) Hired a transportation planner.
- 2) Convened a regional conference on transportation. This Transportation Summit was held to raise awareness of the transportation agenda and to find out what works. BETA learned that it needs to tailor services to community needs, and that there will be

no one fix, but rather a variety of ways to address mobility.

3) Helped form the Broward County Partnership for Workforce Transportation.

4) Applied for and received a Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant in the amount of \$1.5 million. This grant was matched with \$1.5 million in TANF dollars. The results of the grant, to date: Employers are getting the employees that they need. In one case, transportation services are carrying 1,600 employees to one marine center. Overall, ridership has gone up from 11,000 to 21,000, and from 22,000 passengers to 30,000 passengers in a month.

Welfare reform is not very difficult: Just stop paying benefits. What is difficult is self-sufficiency - not being dependent on the system afterwards, and that means getting people to training and to the good jobs. Real welfare reform then is mostly about childcare and transportation in order to get to training and get to jobs.

5) Developed the Transit Neighborhood Communications Center that is a focal point for employment and transit information, which is open 24 hours a day.

6) Set up a car give-a-way program.

7) Funded van services on fixed-route lines to connect riders with training services and other sites.

8) Importantly, BETA also convened its job counselors and case workers to advise managers about the reasons why few people were taking advantage of employment and training services. The staff responded that transportation was one major reason. However, they also commented that the problem wasn't just the routes themselves or the distances that needed to be traveled, but it was also the safety of people while waiting for the bus and having to get home after getting off the buses at night. (BETA and its transportation coalition are currently

addressing this issue.)

9) BETA is now using the Transportation for the Disadvantaged services after determining that welfare recipients, who are economically disadvantaged, fit the definition of disabled for grant purposes. This provides point-to-point transportation where counselors have certified that using the mass transit system is infeasible due to location, need for multiple stops or other significant barriers.

This technical assistance toolkit *Linking People to the Workplace* exemplifies the potential for partnerships between transportation and workforce development professionals and demonstrates the myriad ways that communities can enhance transportation options to reliably link people with their jobs. Transportation is a vital link to job access.

*Mason Jackson, Executive Director
Broward Employment and Training Administration
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida*

Refer to **Appendix 5** of this toolkit for BETA's eight recommendations to address mobility.

Introduction

Community Transportation Association of America
Linking People to the Workplace

Introduction

DeBorah Sutton works in the Customer Service Department at the First Union Bank in Shelton, Ct., but without reliable transit services, she would not have been able to keep her job. DeBorah's job developer at Career Resources gave her the information and training she needed to commute using public transit. DeBorah, who does not own a car, takes a free shuttle bus from the bank to the Route 15 bus that takes her to downtown Bridgeport. After transferring to another bus, she rides within a half block from her home. Each morning, DeBorah rides to work with two co-workers. Her afternoon commute is only 15 minutes longer than her morning carpool, and costs her a single-ride fare of only \$1.10. "The bus is real convenient," says DeBorah.

The recently extended Route 15 bus that DeBorah rides to work is one example of the many service enhancements that were made specifically to improve employment transportation options in southwestern Connecticut. The People to Jobs Task Force which is a collaboration between The WorkPlace (the region's workforce development board), Career Resources, the Greater Bridgeport Transit District and Valley Transit District, accessed the necessary funding and sponsored the service improvements. The result of such a partnership created the means for DeBorah to leave welfare for self-sufficiency that she would not have otherwise had.

Courtesy of Mark Wright/MetroPool (Stamford, Ct.) and The WorkPlace, Inc. (Bridgeport, Ct.)

The U.S. Department of Labor Employment Transportation Toolkit

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) understands that the employment and training networks and transportation networks can work together to overcome the transportation barriers of those entering the workforce. In partnership with the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), DOL has created a program to address this vital employment transportation issue. With expertise in community transportation and a history of helping communities link employees with jobs, CTAA has created *Linking People to the Workplace* an employment transportation toolkit to help local workforce development agencies understand and respond to the transportation challenge, and to encourage Workforce Investment Boards and others in the employment and training arena to establish formal and informal partnerships with transportation providers to take people to employment-related destinations.

Purpose of the Transportation Toolkit

Linking People to the Workplace is a technical assistance guide which will help workforce development agencies access community transportation services for dislocated workers and other un- and under-employed people. For those communities that have never partnered with transportation providers, this toolkit offers tested, successful approaches to creating a transportation partnership.

Specifically, this toolkit will help workforce development agencies:

- Learn about the community transportation network, and its funding and planning bodies;
- Understand the costs of providing transportation to one-stop participants and how transportation providers can provide those trips;
- Find out how employers, job developers, transportation providers, case management staff and elected officials can maximize their bottom lines and still work effectively as partners;
- Assess customers' transportation needs, identify community transportation resources and link dislocated workers and other unemployed and under-employed people with transportation services; and
- Discover how various communities are meeting the employment transportation challenge.

This toolkit shows workforce development agencies how to let transportation providers use existing or expanded transportation services to link job seekers with rides. Many communities have public transportation services, vans and buses dedicated to specific community groups, and private taxi companies. With the aid of the toolkit, CTAA and DOL hope to engage workforce development agencies in a collaborative effort to work with transpor-



Francine James had been using her daughter's old car to commute to her new job as a custodian with the City of Charlottesville (Va.) school system. Her previous employment ceased when the Great Value Supermarket in downtown Charlottesville closed and Francine was now facing her first encounter with transportation barriers. Her new job involved alternating job assignments between two of the city schools. After two days, however, her daughter's car broke down.

Francine called her caseworker at the Department of Social Services, which has a contract with JAUNT (the local public transit provider), to set up employment transportation. Thanks to JAUNT, Francine was able to get to work the very next day. Since then, JAUNT has been picking Francine up at home every afternoon to take her to her first work assignment. At 7:00 p.m. each evening, JAUNT takes Francine from the first school to the second school where she finishes her work day. Finally, at 10:30 p.m., JAUNT takes her home. Even though Francine never knows until each morning where her first work assignment will be, JAUNT is flexible enough to respond to her needs.

Courtesy of JAUNT, Inc. (Charlottesville, Va.)

tation providers, employers, social service agencies, housing authorities and others to create transportation services that provide the mobility link to employment, independence and self-sufficiency.

A Partnership for a New Era

Three major changes have developed in the last several years.

1) For those in the job training network, the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 is important legislation which consolidates the former Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and many other federal job training programs into three state-managed block grants. The law replaces Private Industry Councils (PICs) with Workforce Investment Boards to oversee employment and training activities which are centralized in one-stop locations. The one-stop system serves as a central point for obtaining information on job training and placement activities, as well as on transportation and other support services.

As Workforce Investment Boards set policies, plan activities and negotiate contracts for support services such as work readiness and training, so too can they establish agreements with transportation providers to deliver transit support services to those who need it.

2) The passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act of 1996 — better known as welfare reform or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) — sets a 60-month limit on public assistance (5-year lifetime limit) and mandates work. Since this act's passage, communities across the United States have struggled to overcome the barriers that keep people from obtaining and maintaining employment. One major hurdle is transportation.

As job developers, case workers and others have come to realize, transportation is often the difference between success and failure in employment and training services, and ultimately, in obtaining and retaining a job. Without access to adequate transportation, the wealth of jobs and training a community can offer may go unfilled.

3) In 1998, a law in the transportation arena, the Transportation Efficiency Act (TEA-21), passed that



Lillian, a single mother with two children, lives in rural Hardin County in southern Illinois. Working with her Shawnee Development Council (SDC) caseworker, she was placed in a job at a nursing home approximately 20 miles from her home. With no other means of transportation, she used the RIDES Mass Transit District service, serving rural areas in southern Illinois since the mid-70s. To provide service to Lillian, RIDES started the existing demand-response route 45 minutes before the morning. For months, RIDES took Lillian to work each day at 5:15 a.m., and picked her up in the afternoon to bring her home. Her trip was paid for with funding from the SDC's Rides To Achievement program. When she had earned enough money, she purchased a car to use for her commute.

Courtesy of RIDES Mass Transit District (Rosiclare, Ill.)

TEA-21 paved the way for providing un- and under-employed people with greater access to transportation. TEA-21 increased funding for public transportation. It also provided money to community organizations to build upon existing public transportation services so that low-income people can have greater opportunities to get to work. This is known as the Job Access and Reverse Commute program.

Let transit providers be part of the solution.

Transportation providers are active in communities providing trips to jobs, medical appointments, shopping centers and other destinations. They are an existing infrastructure on which to build linkages for your participants to training, interviews, jobs and child care. By contracting with transit providers, you leave transportation in the hands of the expert and can focus on employment and training services.

As Workforce Investment Boards establish coordination with other federal, state and local programs to

enhance delivery of services, transportation providers should be one of those partners. In fact, using available transportation services can help Workforce Investment Boards meet performance standards by ensuring that people can get to training, interviews and jobs each day, and retain those jobs.

Both the passage of TEA-21 and the Workforce Investment Act offer the opportunity for both the transportation and workforce development communities to start now to forge a partnership to build a solid and cost-effective employment transportation system.

One simple service, transportation, can make all the difference.

Using the Employment Transportation Toolkit

This technical assistance toolkit is a step-by-step manual for planning and implementing transportation solutions. Although it provides you with a wide variety of resources and suggestions, it is designed to be used as a tool, not to be read as a book.

Just as you would use a household toolbox, we encourage you to make use of this toolkit. By that we mean the following:

- If you or your staff want to get an overview of how transportation services are provided and funded, go directly to **Chapter Two: An Introduction to Community Transportation.**
- If you decide to form a transportation partnership, go directly to **Chapter Four: Working in Partnership.**

Debra Buckner's employment at Promotional Packing was in jeopardy. A change in circumstances would no longer allow her son to collect her after her shift. Fearing she would lose her job, Debra shared her predicament with her supervisor. Her supervisor responded at once explaining that the Transit Authority of River City (TARC) operated a Night Owl transportation service, and he provided her with an application form for the service.

The Night Owl service has provided a lifeline to customers like Debra Buckner. She uses the service five nights a week to return home after her shift. "I wouldn't have been able to keep this job without the Night Owl," she says. Debra explains that her new job is allowing her to get off food stamps and to work toward moving out of public housing. "It makes me feel independent. I have four kids, and I want a better life for them. Without [Night Owl and this job], I'd be stuck in the 'projects' forever."

This innovative service launched in 1997 has allowed access to higher paying night-shift jobs for people like Debra, giving them independence and a safe, friendly atmosphere for the journey home.

Courtesy of Transit Authority of River City (Louisville, Ky.)

- If you would like to know how other rural areas are linking one-stop customers with transportation, read **Chapter Six: Local Partnerships.**

In short, you wouldn't go into a toolbox for a hammer and come out with a hammer **and** a screwdriver, would you? In the same manner, we encourage you to refer to only the chapters and appendices that will benefit you at this time.

What's Inside

Learn about the community transportation network and understand how transportation providers can provide workforce customers with the mobility they need.

- **Section One** provides an overview of the employment transportation challenge and introduces the reader to community transportation services and funding options. The first section also describes the ways workforce agencies can use these transportation services for

job training and employment transportation commutes.

Find out how employers, job developers, transportation providers, case management staff and elected officials can maximize their bottom lines and still work effectively as partners.

- **Section Two** recommends a strategic model to adopt when adding new or expanded transportation services. The section also discusses why and how to form transportation partnerships at the community level. In addition, it describes how to assess customers' transportation needs and identify community transportation resources. Learn what a transportation partnership can do to expand transportation options for dislocated workers and other un- and under-employed people.

Discover how other communities are meeting their employment transportation challenges.

- **Section Three** focuses on case studies from communities that have implemented winning solutions to get un- and under-employed people to job training and employment. Approaches include: promoting and expanding upon existing

public transportation services, building relationships with social service and community groups to share vehicles, and developing new services. The third section also highlights model states that have taken a leadership role in forming their own partnerships and supporting local communities as they, too, overcome mobility barriers.

The **Appendix** section contains the joint guidance, sponsored by the Departments of Labor, Transportation and Health and Human Services, that defines the use of TANF, Welfare-to-Work and Job Access and Reverse Commute funds for transportation services. In addition, the appendices include a list of federal funding programs for transportation, a sample contract for transportation services and a glossary of transportation-related terms. This section also provides useful contact information and Internet addresses, and more.

Employment Transportation Information Assistance Series

Stand-alone information assistance briefs accompany this workbook. These briefs are part of a series titled *Transportation: The Vital Link Between Employment and Economic Development*. Each



Sharon George entered the Coahoma County Department of Human Services' TANF program as an un-employed mother of three children. After completing her job placement classes Sharon was interviewed and accepted in a six-month training program at the Delta Area Rural Transit System (DARTS), a provider of multi-county rural transportation in northwestern Mississippi. Sharon has since been hired full-time and has been promoted from clerk to administrative assistant. She is the coordinator of DARTS's transportation program for TANF recipients, and organizes rides to job placement classes, schools, the Robinsonville Casino (the area's major employer) and other job sites.

"Until I started here I didn't know what transit was all about," says Sharon, adding. "I love my job and because I understand what it's like to be on public assistance and in need of a reliable way to get to work, I am qualified to be coordinator of the TANF transportation program here at DARTS."

Although Sharon's car can reliably take her the short distance to her work at DARTS, her car would not have been a reliable option if she too chose to work at the Robinsonville Casino 60 miles away. If Sharon had accepted a position at the casino, then she too would be riding DARTS to get to work.

Delta Area Rural Transit System (Clarksdale, Miss.)

information assistance paper addresses a different employment transportation topic.

Conclusion

People's opportunities are enhanced by the presence of transportation options. Without these options, people cannot reach available jobs or contribute to the financial well-being of their community. *Linking People to the Workplace* provides the opportunity for Workforce Investment Board directors and planners, as well as one-stop managers, job developers and case managers to partner with the transportation providers that exist in your community. The key to economic development is mobility.

Section 1: Transportation — The Vital Link

Chapter One

*Accessing Employment:
America's Journey to the Workplace*

Chapter One

Accessing Employment: America's Journey to the Workplace

Overview

This chapter provides a national perspective on the employment transportation barriers many un- and under-employed people face, and highlights the role that community transportation is already playing in taking people to work each day.

The crucial role of transportation in moving people to work is often overshadowed by issues such as job placement and child care. Yet the lack of reliable, effective and reasonably priced transportation services can make a person's transition from dependence to employment almost impossible. If dislocated worker, welfare reform and other workforce development programs are to succeed we must find a way to make jobs, training and support services accessible to all who need them.

In the United States today, CTAA estimates that there are more than 100 million low-income, elderly and disabled people at risk of being unable to provide or afford their own transportation and who are likely to be dependent upon others for their mobility. According to current Census estimates, this transportation disadvantaged population includes 38 million adults and children in poor families. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, fewer than one in ten recipients of public assistance owns an automobile - negating driving to that new job as a consistent alternative. For many of these Americans, the private auto is not a choice, and community transportation becomes the only option.

Community transportation already plays a pivotal role in America's journey to the workplace, as buses, vans, subways and commuter rail take 10 million riders to work each day. Nearly 40 percent of these daily public and community transit riders in the U.S., according to the American Public Transportation Association, are considered low income. For

these people, transportation services are the means to self-sufficiency.

However, traditional public transit services, as they are constituted in many areas, cannot meet all of the transportation demands generated by welfare-to-work and worker retraining initiatives. In today's job market, new employment opportunities in the suburbs outstrip employment opportunities in the older central cities. Without new or expanded transportation services, these dispersed jobs are practically impossible to reach using a transit service pattern designed to serve downtown urban destinations.

The lack of adequate transportation services is also a barrier to employment in rural America. The unemployment rate is actually higher in non-metropolitan areas than in cities. Nationally, one in four families receiving public assistance live in rural areas and a disproportionate share of non-metropolitan residents resides in low-income households. Consider these figures along with the reality that a CTAA report shows that almost 40 percent of all rural counties have no public transportation service and the transportation challenge facing rural job seekers becomes apparent.

Whether new workers reside in urbanized communities or in rural areas, additional and innovative transit services are needed to ensure that they can reach the workplace. These services will need to be flexible to respond to both the needs of the people leaving public assistance and the employers willing to hire them. Undoubtedly, success will be achieved only by those innovative leaders who coordinate a variety of services in response to this pressing national challenge.

Coming up:

The next two chapters will serve as a resource to familiarize you with community transportation services, as well as with the opportunities for employment transportation.



Chapter Two

An Introduction to Community Transportation

Chapter Two

An Introduction to Community Transportation

Overview

This chapter familiarizes the reader with the range of community transportation services that could be used to provide trips to work. It also describes the ways in which many communities are funding and planning transportation services.

What is Community Transportation?

Community transportation is more a way of **innovative thinking** about transportation services than it is of **providing** those transportation services. Community transportation considers the human factor, and it is flexible, innovative, responsive and cost-effective. It is a practical alternative to the private vehicle, and it builds upon traditional mass transit.

Community transportation is an effective network of public and community-based agencies and coordinated services that connect people with jobs and training facilities, offers the elderly access to needed services and ensures mobility for people with disabilities. For many Americans, this option includes: rural public transit, which provides 100 million trips a year; urban fixed-route buses, which provide 1 billion trips a year; and rail and subway, providing 4 billion trips a year. Community transportation means an opportunity to remain independent and self-sufficient and to participate fully in the life of the community.

I. Types of Transportation Services

There are a variety of transportation options available to convey people to their particular destinations, including public transit buses, trains, commuter rail, light rail, taxis, shuttles, vanpools, bikes, carpooling and walking. Community trans-

portation services are those that address the transportation needs of an entire community, including the needs of both the general public and special populations — like senior citizens, people with disabilities and dislocated workers. The type of transportation service designed for a community depends on the mobility needs of residents, the availability of funding, existing infrastructure and basic service area geography.

Since the scope of transportation services and transportation funding opportunities may largely be unfamiliar to workforce development agencies, this section will provide an overview about how community transportation systems operate. This knowledge will enhance your ability to best determine the employment transportation services that fit the needs of participants in your network.

Note: Please refer to the Glossary (**Appendix 11**) for an extensive list of transportation terms.

A. Fixed-Route Transit Service

There are two main types of transportation services that characterize community and public transportation: fixed route and flexible transportation services.

Fixed-route services include any transit service in which vehicles run along an established path at preset times. Trains, subways and buses are the most common examples of this type of service.

Typically, fixed-route service is characterized by printed schedules or timetables, and designated bus or rail stops where passengers board and deboard. Most cities and some rural areas operate buses along fixed routes because their communities have high population densities, as well as frequently used origins and destinations that are concentrated along main arteries.

Many transit services offer **express fixed-route** services, typically designed with fewer stops so that commuters can reach employment sites quickly.

Because fixed-route bus and rail services do not extend to all neighborhoods or employment sites, employers, transit providers or other community members sometimes operate **feeder routes**, also known as **circulator routes**. Feeder services are designed to merge into existing transit routes by picking up passengers from locations in a neighborhood or at a job site and dropping them off at a stop along the bus and rail line. Feeder routes add another link in the community transportation network and help create a seamless system of transportation services. Of course, feeder routes often also necessitate a transfer (the switching of a passenger from one vehicle to another, typically to change routes), too many of which can render a transit service less useful to riders.

Other variations of fixed-route service include deviated-fixed route, point deviation and service routes, which are described in greater detail below.

B. Demand-Response Transit Service

Demand-response transit services, often referred to as **dial-a-ride** services, are transit services in which individual passengers can request transportation from one specific location to another specific location at a certain time. Vehicles providing demand-response service do not follow a fixed route, but rather travel throughout the community transporting passengers according to their specific requests. Demand-response services usually, but not always, require advance reservations. Many communities offer demand-response van service to people with disabilities, and others who need special assistance. Taxi cab service is another common form of demand-response transit service.

Demand-response service vehicles include small buses, vans and cars. Rural areas operate demand-response services because of low population density and long distances between destinations. Demand-response services in urban areas are usually reserved

for specific populations, typically those whose disabilities prevent them from accessing fixed-route services. Transit providers often use the term “paratransit” to describe demand-response services, especially those services provided for persons with disabilities.

ADA complementary paratransit is a specific type of paratransit service, aimed at a defined population of eligible individuals who are unable to use fixed-route services because of the nature of their disabilities. The ADA requires transit providers who operate a fixed-route system to also provide complementary paratransit service. The service delivery area includes origins and destinations within corridors with a width of three-fourths of a mile on each side of each fixed-route.

C. Hybrid Service

When planning transportation options for job seekers wishing to reach destinations located “off” the fixed-route line, variations on fixed-route services may be an attractive alternative. Here are three examples of hybrids of fixed-route and demand-response services:

- 1) A **deviated-fixed route** service operates a bus or van along a fixed route and keeps to a timetable, but the bus or van can deviate from the route to go to a specific location, such as a house, child care center or employment site. Once the pick-up or drop-off is made, the vehicle goes back to the place along the route that it left.

- 2) **Point-deviation** services also keep to a timetable, however, vehicles do not follow a specific route. Rather, vehicles will stop at designated bus stops at scheduled times, but during the time between two scheduled stops drivers will pick up and drop off passengers with advanced reservations over a dispersed area.

Deviated-fixed route and point-deviation services accommodate spontaneous unscheduled rides at designated bus stops as well as provide

scheduled demand-responsive rides over a larger area. Operating one deviated service rather than two separate services (fixed route and demand response) is a cost-effective transportation alternative.

3) **Service routes** are characterized by deviated times, rather than deviated routes. Service routes allow riders to hail a vehicle and request a drop-off anywhere along the route. Jitney services, which operate along a fixed route but without fixed stops, provide this type of flexibility. So do partnerships which permit transportation disadvantaged job seekers and employees to flag down school buses to help them reach destinations.

D. Specialized Transportation Service

Many human service agencies operate their own transportation services specifically designed for their own clients. Some, however, open their services up to other members of the community. Here are specialized transportation programs that may be operating in your community:

Head Start: A program of comprehensive services for economically disadvantaged preschool-age children. Services, including transportation, are provided by local Head Start agencies and are funded by the Administration for Children and Families, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The same agencies that operate Head Start often provide other services for economically disadvantaged families, which may include transportation.

Health Care: Medicaid is a health care program for low-income and other medically needy persons. The Medicaid program pays for emergency ambulance service and transportation to non-emergency medical appointments if the recipient has no other

means to travel to the appointment. Medicaid is jointly funded by state and federal government, and is administered by the DHHS's Health Care Financing Administration. Medicaid-funded transportation is available in every part of the country, and is provided by a large network of for-profit, nonprofit, and public transportation providers.

Services for Older People: The Older Americans Act (OAA) established a network of services and programs for older people and provides supportive services, including transportation services, to meet the needs of older individuals. Public and private agencies, such as senior centers and Area Agencies on Aging, are recipients of OAA funds and many operate transportation services. The DHHS's Administration on Aging administers OAA funds, while many organizations for the elderly also receive Section 5310 (see below) money to purchase vehicles.

Organizations for Persons with Disabilities: Organizations in your community, such as United Cerebral Palsy, Arc (formerly the Association for Retarded Citizens), and the Multiple Sclerosis Society, may be providing specialized transportation services for their clients. Like programs for the



Guaranteed Ride Home programs: Often, job seekers could readily use transit buses and trains; however, they don't want to use them because they're vulnerable riding to the suburbs so far from home — what if their child is sick and they need to get home, or what if they have to unexpectedly work late and their car has already stopped for the day?

Guaranteed Ride Home programs help lower the apprehensions of low-income people who don't feel comfortable taking jobs in the suburbs, especially if service is limited or there is no midday service. Guaranteed Ride Home programs provide ride home on demand, and typically cost very little to implement.

elderly, disability organizations may receive Section 5310 funds to purchase vehicles and transport clients to work, workshops, medical appointments or social services.

Faith-based Organizations: Faith-based organizations, including large national organizations like Lutheran Social Services and small local churches,

often provide some sort of transportation services. While some faith-based organizations may only use their vehicles to transport members to-and-from church on Sunday, others provide more frequent services, filling in mobility gaps in their communities. For example, Catholic Community Services in southeastern Alaska operates the area's general public transit. The Memphis Interfaith Association operates the region's paratransit services. Other faith-based organizations offer transportation services to seniors or persons with low incomes. For more information, contact your local faith-based organization or church.

Sharing vehicles belonging to one of the specialized programs described above might be an option to link your constituents with employment-related destinations. In fact, many of today's rural public transit systems began as providers of specialized transportation, but due to the transportation needs of other community agencies these providers expanded their services. (For a discussion of transportation coordination, see **Chapter Three — The Opportunities for Employment Transportation** and **Chapter Five — Partnerships In Action.**)

E. Other Transportation Service Types

Ridesharing and volunteer programs may also meet the travel needs of workforce development and one-stop participants and are examples of flexible service.

1. Ridesharing involves setting up transportation by combining known passenger groups in a single vehicle. Vehicle options include vanpools, carpools and shared ride taxi services.

Vanpool services are designed to allow groups of people to travel on a prearranged, regular basis by van. Vanpools may be publicly operated, employer operated, individually owned or leased. They can be more readily set up than fixed-route services and are cheaper to operate because the driver is not a paid employee but rather a rider in the vanpool. In an unsubsidized vanpool, operating costs are shared equally among the



The **Commuter Tax Benefit** program enables employees to afford transportation services. Employers can reimburse employees \$65 dollars a month for their transportation costs on transit or in vanpools and deduct the reimbursements as an employee benefit. Beginning after December 31, 2001, the non-taxable transit and vanpool benefits will increase to \$100 a month. In addition, employers can directly pay for an employee's transit and vanpool expenses and the costs can be deducted from the employee's paycheck before taxes. (Call 800.527.8279 for a technical assistance brief on this program.)

passengers. Employment programs may also elect to subsidize vanpool costs, either for passengers or an entire vehicle.

Carpools are similar to vanpools except that because the vehicle is smaller the rider capacity is less. Typically, the driver of the car is the car owner.

Shared-ride taxi service is a service in which riders with similar points of origin and destination group together to share the cost of a taxi trip.

2. Volunteer services draw upon drivers from the community. Drivers are not paid for their services, but may be reimbursed for their expenses. These programs are typically coordinated by a nonprofit agency or community-based program and allow flexibility.

While volunteer programs can be a dependable option to get people to job training and other destinations, communities have faced some challenges with using volunteers. These challenges include: having enough liability to insure volunteers and your organization against lawsuits, and learning about both tax and labor laws in order to appropriately claim deductions and/or reimburse volunteers. Before initiating a volunteer program designed for work trips, first

explore the potential barriers. (**Resource** - Call the National Transit Resource Center at 800.527.8279 for the publication **Succeeding With Volunteer Transportation** which offers a detailed plan for establishing and operating volunteer services.)

By providing flexible transportation services communities can be responsive to the diverse mobility needs of job seekers and employees.

Note: **Section Three** of this toolkit will highlight other transportation options which have not been addressed here.

TEA-21 also introduced the **Job Access and Reverse Commute** program which provides communities with money to develop transportation services, including reverse commute programs, to transport welfare recipients and other low-income people to employment sites. The program is funded at \$100 million in 2001 and is guaranteed to increase to \$150 million by 2003. Other federal funds such as TANF and Welfare-to-Work can be used as matching funds. (These funding programs will be described below.) For more information on the Job Access and Reverse Commute program, see **Appendix 4** and <http://www.fta.dot.gov/wtw/>.

II. Federal Funds to Support Transportation Services

This section provides information about federal funding for transportation, in order to help workforce development agencies understand how transportation services are supported.

A. Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21)

Spending on transportation is guided by congressional authorization language, known as the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century or TEA-21. This legislation, which was signed into law in 1998, sets transit and highway spending levels until 2003.

TEA-21 assures guaranteed spending levels for public transit and related activities in large- and small-urban (see Section 5307 below) and rural areas (see Section 5311 below). It also authorizes spending for transportation for the elderly and people with disabilities that includes vehicle procurement and the purchase of transportation services (see Section 5310).

One of the notable components of TEA-21 is its latitude on the flexible use of U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) funds. For example, the **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)** program is a flexible funding program administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) which funds projects and programs to reduce harmful vehicle emissions and improve traffic conditions. CMAQ funds may be flexed to fund transit projects, rideshare projects, high-occupancy vehicle lanes, or other purposes. Communities in many states have used CMAQ funds to buy buses and vans, subsidize bus operations, set up ridesharing programs, and more.

Another flexible funding program is the **Surface Transportation Program (STP)**. These funds can be used by states and local communities for, among other things, transit capital projects and public bus terminals and facilities.

B. U.S. Department of Transportation Annual Appropriations

Since 1964 the federal government has provided funding to support public transit services. This funding and guidance comes from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The 10 regional FTA offices and designated officials in each state DOT provide localized technical assistance, outreach and

guidance on the use of these funds. (**Resource** - For the names and numbers of appropriate contacts in your state, call the National Transit Resource Center.)

In a way, programs and activities in federally supported transportation activities are similar to those in the employment and training arena. Like the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), the DOT uses regional offices for the delivery of its services. Where the DOL might use the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), the DOT uses the Federal Transit Administration to administer its activities. Similarly, there are cases when both federal agencies work directly with local providers, in the way that the DOT does with larger transit providers. In other cases, both federal agencies work through state labor or state transportation agencies.

Each year, Congress appropriates money to the U.S. Department of Transportation's FTA to fund the operation and capitalization of public transportation systems in the United States. Some FTA funding goes for starting up and operating transit services; other funding is allocated to research and planning.

The following is a description of the FTA's funding programs for which your community may qualify. However, **be advised** that the bulk of annual DOT appropriations have already been allocated to specific transit programs and aren't likely to be available for employment initiatives. Still, the more you know about all of the programs funding transit in your community, the more knowledgeable you'll be in discussions with your local transit provider.

Urban Transit Formula Grants (Section 5307):

These are formula-based block grants to public transit systems in all urbanized areas. For areas with populations between 50,000 and 200,000, the FTA awards these funds to states for capital and operating assistance to small-urban transit systems. Transit systems in areas with populations greater than 200,000 receive their funds directly from FTA and cannot use these funds for operating expenses, except in specific circumstances. Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 funding level: \$2.9 billion.

Major Transit Capital Grants (Section 5309):

These are congressionally designated grants for capital projects such as bus purchases, bus facilities and rail system construction and improvement. FY 2001 funding level: \$2.7 billion.

Capital Grants for Transportation for Elderly and People with Disabilities (Section 5310):

These are small formula-based block grants to states for transportation programs that serve the elderly and people with disabilities. States distribute Section 5310 funds to local organizations in both rural and urban settings, who are either nonprofit organizations or the lead agencies in coordinated transportation programs. FY 2001 funding level: \$78 million.

Rural Transit Formula Grants (Section 5311):

These are formula-based block grants to states for capital and operating assistance to public bodies and nonprofits to provide public transit services in non-urban areas with populations of less than 50,000. FY 2001 funding level: \$205 million.

It is likely that some or all of these funds are currently being used in your community. To learn more about what is already being done, contact the National Transit Resource Center at 800.527.8279.

If your community already receives these funds, your organization can still play an important role in maintaining or expanding transit services. The federal transit grants listed above require **matching funds** (e.g., state or local funds) to complement the federal funds for a service, project or purchase. These matching funds can come from townships, city and county councils, community-based organizations, and state legislatures, among others. Some funding sources allow services, such as the work of volunteers, to be counted as an in-kind funding match.

Federal programs normally require that local matching funds come from sources other than federal sources. The Job Access and Reverse Commute program (which has a 50 percent match requirement), however, allows TANF, HOPE VI, Social Services Block Grant, and Welfare-to-Work

federal funds to be used as matching funds. In addition, the Section 5311 non-urbanized program allows contracts with social service agencies to be used as a match. This means your program dollars can be matched with those of other programs to provide expanded transportation needed by your clients.

Most states also provide state dollars to support transportation services. In some cases, these state funding programs are larger than their federal counterparts. In states like New Jersey (which uses funds from its casinos to pay for specialized transportation), Pennsylvania (which taps lottery revenue to fund senior transit) and Florida (which levies a tax for every license plate for transit), specific funding pools are used to pay for transit funding. In states like Texas and Virginia, state legislatures have made significant commitments to their residents' mobility. Clearly, state transit funds are a very real contribution to the overall funding picture for public transportation.

C. Using Other Federal Agency Funds For Transportation

While the major source of federal support for community transportation comes from the U.S. Department of Transportation, many other federal agencies have programs which can be used to support community transportation activities.

Many human service agencies provide transportation to enable clients to access vital services. This includes transportation for the elderly, people with developmental disabilities or Medicaid recipients when the transportation is provided by an arrangement other than general public transit service. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) spends almost \$3 billion every year to ensure that these individuals can access needed services — primarily health care.

Other federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) also have resources available for transportation purposes.

Below is a description of federal programs that have eligible funds to provide transportation services to program participants. Whether these funds are used for transportation services often depends on priorities set by federal agencies and the states. However, it is important that communities know what funding resources exist so that they may tap into them.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA): DOL's WIA block grants to states provide funds for placement, job training and support services, including transportation. (WIA replaced the Job Training Partnership Act.) FY 2001 spending includes:

- Dislocated Worker Programs — \$1.6 billion
- Adult Services — \$1 billion
- Youth Programs — \$1 billion

Welfare-to-Work Grants: DOL's Employment and Training Administration has awarded \$3 billion in Welfare-to-Work grants to assist the hardest-to-serve TANF recipients in preparing for and gaining employment. States received 75 percent of this funding as formula grants. Local communities received 25 percent of these funds in the form of competitive grants. These funds can be used for support services, job retention and post-employment services, including transportation assistance. **Note:** While no new funds have been added to the original \$3 billion Welfare-to-Work funds, Congress has approved a two-year extension allowing state and local grantees to continue to spend the roughly \$2 billion in remaining funds.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Established by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, TANF is a \$16.5 billion annual block grant program to states. States have flexibility to use TANF funds to provide transportation to individuals transitioning from welfare to work.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD): Several programs housed within HUD have

resources that could be used to help support transit capital and operating investments. Funding levels in FY 2001 include the following:

- “HOPE VI” public housing revitalization — \$575 million
- Native American housing block grants — \$650 million
- Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS — \$258 million
- Supportive Housing — \$996.0 million (of which \$779 million is for elders’ supportive housing and service coordinators, and \$217 million is for persons with disabilities’ supportive housing)
- “McKinney Act” homeless assistance programs — \$1 billion
- HUD-sponsored rural housing and economic development — \$25 million
- Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities — \$90 million (\$75 million for urban EZ/EC’s, \$15 million for rural EZ/EC’s)
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Act programs — \$5.1 billion (including \$4.4 billion in CDBG formula grants to cities and states, \$71 million in CDBG grants to Indian tribes, \$55 million in public housing Resident Opportunities and Supportive Services, \$44 million for neighborhood initiatives, and \$292 million in Congressionally earmarked “Economic Development Initiative” projects)

By combining funds from difference agencies, a community can create flexible and affordable transportation services.

For a list of other federal grant programs (e.g., DHHS’s Title XX Social Services Block Grants, and USDA’s Rural Business Enterprise Grants) that provide money for supportive services which may include transportation services, refer to **Appendix 3**, or to www.ctaa.org/ntrc/ctap/pubs/funding.

Federal money for transportation is, however, not the only source of funding available. Many community transit agencies look to local businesses and colleges and even hospitals to help support their services. Invariably, successful community transportation agencies are supported with local funds, as well as with federal and state sources.

D. Using TANF and DOL Welfare-to-Work funds for Transportation Services

Seeking to foster coordination and the best use of resources, the U.S. Departments of Transportation, Health and Human Services, and Labor issued a joint guidance on the use of TANF and DOL Welfare-to-Work funds for transportation services (May 26, 2000). Through the guidance, the three departments encouraged workforce development agencies and human service agencies to support employment and job training transportation solutions that are systemic approaches to achieve transportation solutions.

As a result, this guidance clarifies how to use TANF and Welfare-to-Work funds for the following transportation activities:

- As match for FTA’s Job Access and Reverse Commute program;
- A contract for shuttles, buses, car pools or other transportation services;
- Reimbursement for work-related transportation expenses, such as mileage, fuel, public transit fares, and auto repairs;
- The purchase of vans, shuttles, and/or minibuses for the provision of transportation services to eligible individuals;
- Payment of start-up costs for new or expanded transportation services; and
- Facilitating the donation and repair of previously owned or reconditioned vehicles.

The guidance allows TANF and Welfare-to-Work funds to be used for other transportation services, as

well. (For more information, see **Chapter Five**. For a complete text of the guidance, see **Appendix 1**.)

III. Planning for Transportation Services in Your Community

TEA-21 provides federal guidelines on how transportation decisions will be made at the state and local level. These guidelines explain how transit and highway activities get funded and how the public can have a role in that process.

The statewide planning process includes both urban and rural areas. State plans have public participation requirements and must be developed in consultation with local officials. In addition, federal guidelines cover the planning process for urbanized areas, defined as areas with populations over 50,000.

A. Metropolitan Planning Organizations

In urbanized areas, transportation decisions are made through a planning process carried out by **Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)**. The MPO, like a workforce development board, has lead responsibility for developing transportation plans and programs that cover both highway and transit projects. Members of an MPO include public officials, transportation providers and a representative of local transit users.

There are more than 300 MPOs across the country, structured differently depending on the area. About half of the MPOs are part of regional councils that may house other planning bodies, such as Workforce Investment Boards and Area Agencies on Aging. MPOs are also set up as single-focused transportation planning bodies. Many MPOs are hosted by city or county governments.

One of the **new** requirements of TEA-21 is that MPOs coordinate their planning with the planning processes of other federal programs (e.g., Workforce Investment Act, Older Americans Act, HUD). For instance, HUD requires its Community Development Block Grant recipients to submit a consolidated plan for investing HUD funds in the commu-

nity. TEA-21 now requires the MPO and the HUD grantee to coordinate their respective transportation planning. In aging services, transportation needs addressed in the area plans, long required by the Older Americans Act, now must be coordinated with the MPO's transportation plan. Similar coordination now is a requirement under the Workforce Investment Act.

B. Transportation Plans

Both the state DOT, which oversees transportation projects statewide, and MPOs are required to submit two types of plans to continue to receive federal transportation funds.

The first plan is the long-range transportation plan that forecasts transportation planning up to 20 years in the future. The long-range plan list the goals, visions and projected projects for transportation in the region, including short-range actions.

The second plan is the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). TIPs are short-range plans identifying transportation needs to be funded using transportation dollars. This plan covers a two- to three-year period and must be consistent with the goals and priorities of the long-range plan. State plans are called State Transportation Improvement Plans (STIP).

Both short- and long-term statewide transportation plans **must** incorporate the urbanized area plans developed by MPOs. In addition, the statewide plans must address transportation priorities in all the non-urbanized areas of the state. Since any transportation project intended to be funded with federal dollars must be cited in the TIP, it is important to understand the TIP decision-making process and find a way to have your constituency's transportation needs heard.

Two points to keep in mind:

- TEA-21's public involvement process is intended to include public transit riders, especially low-income and minority populations, in addition to other interested parties.

- When considering transportation projects, decision makers must consider social, economic and environmental factors.

Action Item: If you have not established a relationship with your MPO, contact them. (Note: Even a rural area can be included in a designated MPO area.) To contact the MPO in your community (or the organization that oversees statewide planning, if you are in a rural area), call the National Transit Resource Center at 800.527.8279. Determine whether the MPO has a committee or subcommittee looking at employment transportation needs. Also, the MPO can be a valuable resource in helping you to find out about area community transportation providers.

For a discussion of other ways to plan for transportation services in your community, see **Section Two — Making the Most of Community Resources**.

IV. Facility Siting

Since the easiest solution to your transportation problems may lie with how your facility is planned or where it is located, this section gives alternatives and ideas on future facility siting.

When relocating or establishing a one-stop center or new training facility, consider placing it on a transit line. While cost may be your bottom line in determining where you ultimately select the site, keep in mind, however, that the participants in your program may have severe access problems if you don't plan for transit. Transportation concerns should be a part of this planning process so that access issues don't have to be dealt with "after the fact," after plans have already been made. Transportation should not be an afterthought; it is integral to the success of your programs.

When planning for transportation services to your facility, be prepared for certain physical requirements that may apply, such as specifications for bus stops, vehicle turn-around space and overpass heights, and safety requirements. Also, talk with transit managers to find out their plans for future

routes and what it would take to get your facility served. Be involved in the transportation planning process early on and as much as possible, and include transportation providers in your own planning process, as well.

Coming up:

The next chapter describes ways that a Workforce Investment Board or one-stop center can directly buy services from transportation providers to decrease job seekers' employment transportation barriers. It also outlines an approach to expand upon existing transit services to meet employment transportation needs.



Chapter Three

*The Opportunities for Employment
Transportation*

Chapter Three

The Opportunities for Employment Transportation

Overview

Chapter Two provided an overview of the types of community transportation services that can be used to transport people to work. The chapter also described the various funding sources that are available to communities to use for transportation services.

We'll now build upon the previous chapter by outlining a course of action for overcoming the transportation barriers of dislocated workers and other unemployed people, specifically to address gaps in transportation service.

Taken as a whole, **Chapters Two** and **Three** serve as a resource to accustom you to the field of transportation, to enhance your ability to tailor transportation services to match community needs with community resources and to inform you of the full range of funding sources that can be applied to transportation solutions.

Finally, in this chapter, we'll help you to determine the real cost of providing effective employment transportation in your area — so that you'll have a better idea about costs as you attempt to enter into any contractual relationships with local transit agencies. In many cases, the notion of trying the local transit provider first is the best one. Why spend so much energy developing partnerships and transportation service when your local professional transit agency is available?

Sustainable, Affordable and Cost-Effective Solutions

Three considerations guide decisions to provide employment transportation services to transportation disadvantaged job seekers.

- 1) The ability to sustain employment transportation services over time.

Even as social service and workforce development participants leave your programs when they gain employment, other people will continue to enter the program in need of services. Many will need transportation assistance, as well. Transportation solutions must be a continuous part of your employment and social services to assist participants' employment, training, and other travel needs.

It will also be important to sustain these transportation options since new workers may still need to rely on public or specialized transportation to get to work.

- 2) The affordability of the service to new workers when they no longer receive transportation assistance.

Once workforce development participants obtain jobs and their transitional transportation assistance expires, these workers will need to be able to afford their own transportation to work and child care.

- 3) The cost-effectiveness of the solution.

Ensuring the most efficient use of resources is not just a cost-effective approach to solving public challenges. It is also a necessity given the cost of providing transportation services as well as the scarcity of public funds to meet the demand for transportation services.

A Continuum of Solutions

Given the need for sustainable, affordable and cost-effective transportation solutions, here are recommendations for taking action to overcome the transportation barriers of your participants.

The goal: To stretch community resources to meet the employment transportation needs of your participants.

The approach: Start with the transportation resources that your community already has and build upon them.

A continuum of approaches entails:

First: Try Transit First: Promote and use what public and private transportation services already exist in your region.



Try Transit First

There are transit services available to the general public in 60 percent of areas under 50,000 population, 75 percent of urban areas with populations between 50,000 and 200,000, and nearly 100 percent of urban areas over 200,000 population. If you have such transportation in your city, county or region, take full advantage of it.

Second: Try Transit First: Expand existing transportation services.

Third: Build relationships with social services and other community groups to share vehicles.

Fourth: Fill in the remaining gaps by developing new service.

It may be necessary for your community to undertake all four of these options. However, by making full use of existing

transportation first, the new programs developed will serve previously unserved areas and provide greater access to more people.

Starting and sustaining transportation systems require stable sources of funding to purchase and maintain vehicles, train and pay drivers, and cover fuel and insurance costs, among other expenses. It doesn't make sound economic sense to develop new services only to operate them in a duplicative manner.

The remainder of this chapter defines each of the four approaches and lists opportunities for employment transportation solutions in each category.

Approach 1: Use and Promote Existing Transportation Services

As stated above, many communities are fortunate to have an infrastructure of general public transportation services. Workforce development agencies are finding that many dislocated workers actually live within walking distance of fixed-route transit services and can reach jobs and training with a reasonable commute time. In less urban settings, un- and under-employed people have access to dial-a-ride van and bus service. Moreover, existing ridesharing services are an available option in communities large and small. As a result, workforce development, human services and transportation agencies are implementing programs to increase the awareness of transportation options that are readily available to carless job seekers and new employees.

These efforts include:

- Obtaining fixed-route bus maps and making them available at one-stop centers and other service provider locations;
- Raising the level of awareness about existing transportation services through outreach programs and trip planning software;
- Subsidizing, or fully paying, the cost of transit fares through bus passes and vouchers;
- Providing orientations and travel training to accustom one-stop staff and participants to the transit services, including how to read a bus map and schedule; and
- Providing incentives to ride public transit through Guaranteed Ride Home programs and by promoting personal safety.

Knowledge of existing transportation is a tool for job developers, as well. By placing job seekers in jobs that are served by existing transportation, job developers are able to strategically minimize transportation as a barrier to getting and retaining a job.

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PURCHASING COST-EFFECTIVE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Workforce Investment Boards and Service Delivery Areas can contract with transit agencies to provide transportation services to participants in the same way that they contract for training activities or employment services.

Like any other service provider, transit agencies or brokers must account for full allocation of costs when contracting to provide services. Also like many other agencies, a transportation agency uses certain methods for determining service cost to the purchaser.

An understanding of the basic costs of providing transit services is necessary to negotiate with a transportation provider for the best possible deal. The following section explains how transportation providers determine their costs.

Buying Transportation: What Makes Up the Costs

Here are examples of some of the costs associated with providing transportation services:

Overhead: Administrative salaries, including management salaries, accounting and other administrative items such as office space, cellular phones, radios, computer equipment and supplies

Operations: Drivers' and dispatchers' salaries and fringe benefits, training, drug and alcohol testing, insurance and registration, fuel and oil, tires, vehicle lease and storage, vehicle depreciation and capital reserve fund, mechanic salary and fringe benefits, equipment and supplies, and facility rental

Keep in Mind:

- Any non-transit agency that elects to provide its own transportation service will encounter expenses similar to those listed above.
- The more agencies that share these expenses the lower the cost that each agency will need to pay.
- When comparing the expenses you will incur by providing your own transportation versus buying it from an existing provider, be sure to include all costs.

Buying Transportation: How to Determine those Costs

Most transit agencies provide service based on one of three methods: per trip, per hour or per mile. These methods are often used in coordinated transportation systems where many agencies purchase service from a single transportation provider.

Bear in mind that the following formulas only come into use if you are contracting for exclusive transit service for your customers. You may also simply purchase service for your participants by buying single fare tokens or tickets, daily passes or monthly passes.

Per Trip

To determine the rate per trip, one divides the number of trips by the cost for all of the trips provided during a single period — usually a month or year. This works well as a cost allocation method when trip lengths for passengers is about the same.

$$\text{Cost per passenger trip} = \frac{\text{Estimated annual expenses}}{\text{Estimated passenger trips}}$$

Per Mile

Instead of using the number of passengers, this method uses the number of miles that a vehicle is in service for a particular agency. This method is often used in low-density, high-mileage areas such as rural settings.

$$\text{Cost per vehicle mile} = \frac{\text{Estimated annual expenses}}{\text{Estimated vehicle miles}}$$

Per Hour

This method uses the number of vehicle hours as the basis for determining costs. This method is often used in urban areas where trips may be relatively short but can take a long time due to congestion.

$$\text{Cost per vehicle hour} = \frac{\text{Estimated annual expenses}}{\text{Estimated vehicle hours}}$$

Hybrid

Many agencies use a combination of per trip, per mile and per hour billing. For example, an organization may pay using the per trip method unless the trip is longer than a set amount of miles.

Buying Transportation: What to Ask For and Expect

When working with a transportation provider to serve your clients, there are certain questions you need to be sure you ask. You should also be aware of performance measures or service standards you can expect. You shouldn't receive any less than you are paying for! Nor, on the other hand, should you expect a full taxi-type service when contracting with a small demand-response carrier.

Ensure that your transportation contractors carry at least the minimum amounts of insurance for your state. Be sure to obtain a certificate of insurance from all providers you are contracting with. You can also require your carriers to hold additional coverage. This must be specified in your contract. To find out what the insurance requirements are in your state, contact a reliable insurance carrier.

You also must be sure your contractors are complying with any state or federal regulations for which you are responsible. These may or may not be contingent on funding sources. For example, if your service operates with any funds from the Federal Transit Administration, you must comply with a host of regulations, including testing safety-sensitive personnel for drug and alcohol use. Regardless of funding sources, you and your contractors must comply with the ADA.

Resource: To learn more about the regulations you must comply with and to get contact information for each regulation, contact an Information Specialist at the National Transit Resource Center.

When searching for a provider, be sure to ask about the following:

- Can they operate during the hours you desire? Cover the locations you desire?
- What level of customer service and passenger assistance can they offer?
- If you receive federal funds, does the contractor comply with the requirements?
- What records can they keep or what types of reports or data can they supply?
- Can they deliver the performance measures you desire: on-time performance, ride time, trip denials or missed trips and vehicle and maintenance standards?

Once you choose a provider with whom to contract, be

sure all of the agreed upon information is **IN WRITING IN THE CONTRACT.**

Keep in mind: Performance measures will vary according to the type of provider you are dealing with, the types of passengers you are transporting and your geographic area. There are no easy answers here. If you are contracting for a new service, wait until benchmarks are established, then devise minimum performance standards you expect from your carrier. You can even work together to establish these measures. This will ensure that you're not setting unrealistic expectations and that the carrier understands your requirements.

There are certain clauses that must always be included in your contract or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Be sure to include service exceptions (e.g., weather conditions, natural disasters), payment information, reporting requirements, service expectations and an equal opportunity clause.

What if you are having problems with your contractor? If they aren't meeting your performance standards or performing up to the contract, try meeting with the manager. The most efficient contractors are open to discussing operational issues. If the contractor is not living up to the contract and you want out, put your service out for re-bid with your next contract renewal. As a last resort, you may consider assessing liquidated damages, getting reimbursed for any losses you've accrued because your carrier had not lived up to the contract. Your intent to assess liquidated damages has to be included in the original contract, however, this may establish a punitive, antagonistic relationship with your contractors at the onset of your contractual relationship.

For more information on the contracting process: **Appendix 6** includes an outline of a Request For Proposal (RFP) for transportation services, **Appendix 7** contains a sample transportation contract and **Appendix 8** contains a sample MOU. For additional sample contracts, MOUs or RFPs, contact the National Transit Resource Center.

Keep in mind: In some circumstances, an MOU may be more appropriate than a contract. MOUs are much more flexible than contracts. Therefore, if you are acquiring transportation for your clients but you aren't sure exactly how much service you will need (e.g., number of trips, miles, hours, etc.), an MOU may be a better choice.

If you're still unsure which method would work best for you, contact the National Transit Resource Center and speak to an Information Specialist.

Approach 2: Expand Existing Transportation Services

Although existing transportation services may link many program participants with work-related destinations, the travel needs of other participants are not a natural fit. Fortunately, many workforce development agencies are finding that they can meet these needs by working with transit agencies to expand operating hours and service areas.

As you begin to plan employment transportation options, keep in mind the importance of building upon existing transportation services. Not only does this make existing transportation systems more efficient by adding new riders, but it also saves money for workforce development and social service agencies.

Reasons to build upon existing public transportation systems:

- Starting up and maintaining a transportation service is a costly endeavor. Why incur large start-up costs when you can purchase service from one that is already operating?

Action: Compare the costs of what it will take to start up and operate your own transportation with adding routes, hours and services to an existing system.

- Employment-specific transportation solutions will indeed give workers the mobility to get to work but these workers will need to reach other destinations. Where possible, planning for transportation solutions should include transportation to services that exist to benefit your

population during their non-working life. Existing general public transit services provide that possibility.

- By relying on local transportation entities (e.g., public and private transportation, commuter services, ridersharing agencies) to handle the transportation needs of participants, workforce development and human service agencies are free to focus on their own missions.

Numerous opportunities exist in which relatively cost-effective adjustments to present fixed-route and demand-response bus systems can yield significant results in terms of improving access to jobs.

Here are some of the ways you can work with your public or community transportation provider to build upon existing services:

- Share data with the transit provider which reveal unserved populations,
- Work with your transit operator to expand into a broker of transportation services,
- Negotiate with the local provider to expand the hours and days of service to accommodate second- and third-shift employees,
- Partner with the provider to extend a transit route to an unserved residential or employment area, or to enlarge a public transit provider's service area into an unserved county,
- Offer to provide a bus shelter if the transit agency will create a bus stop for you, and



Existing rural public transit providers may be one of your best partners. **Assessment of the Economic Impacts of Rural Public Transportation**, a study by Ecosometrics Inc., for the Transportation Research Board, reported that rural transit systems provide economic benefits to communities by linking people with jobs and contributing to the local tax base.

The report determined the economic benefit of publicly supporting public transit services. For example, 80 percent of the Delta Area (Miss.) Rural Transportation System's (DARTS) public transit trips were employment-related. Serving 175 people for 87,500 trips in 1995 and 1996, the total economic benefits due to DARTS's employment transportation services are estimated at \$2,730,000. This figure represents the earnings that would be lost and the public support money that would be needed in the absence of DARTS services.



Department of Family Services Leaves Transportation to the Experts

Challenge: Clients of the Fairfax County (Va.) Department of Family Services needed transit service in the western part of the county where many jobs existed but no public transit operated.

Approach: With a grant from the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Department of Family Services (DFS) purchased four 13-passenger minibuses to fill a gap in service in the western part of the county. The DFS contracted with FasTrans, Fairfax County’s public transit provider, to provide the rides using the four minibuses. In addition, DFS contracted with a local taxi company to handle service during hours and days that FasTrans does not operate.

Results: All TANF recipients and their children are able to get to work, training and child care in the western part of the county. Additionally, many food stamp recipients and other DFS program participants are able to use the DFS/FasTrans service to get to work and other destinations.

The Brokerage Model

In northeast Oklahoma, the Department of Human Services has a contract with Tulsa Transit (a public transit provider) to manage transportation services for TANF participants in both an 11-county, highly rural area and the City of Tulsa.

As the broker (or mobility manager), Tulsa Transit will accomplish the following:

- conduct in-person transportation needs assessments,
- determine the best transportation service options,
- identify and negotiate contracts with various transportation providers as needed,
- schedule or train the TANF participants for the selected transportation,
- collect client usage data for DHS review,
- verify that the services were actually provided, and
- invoice DHS for the services provided.

The transportation services that Tulsa Transit arranges include: Tulsa’s fixed route Connection, curb-to-curb demand response, vanpools, carpools, taxis, bikes, private autos, among other alternatives.

In addition to training TANF participants and DHS staff on transportation services, Tulsa Transit also provides training to employers.



NJ Transit Expands Job Opportunities

Challenge: Two residential areas did not have access to job-rich corridors.

Approach: New Jersey Transit extended a bus route (that serves two malls) to the towns of National Park and Paulsboro. Moreover, the last bus of the night from one of the malls was deliberately delayed by 30 minutes so that the late-shift mall employees could catch the last bus home. Sunday service was also added to the six-day-a-week service to accommodate those needing a ride to work on that day. The route extension did not cost any money since the extension took the place of a little-used route. However, the addition of Sunday service did require funding to cover the direct cost of providing the service.

Results: Altering one route greatly expanded employment and training opportunities for low-income people in National Park and Paulsboro. It accommodated the mobility needs of part-time workers and second-shift employees who work at the malls. These changes increased the efficiency of transit services in the area, provided a new service at little cost, and satisfied a needed social service. Above all, the responsiveness of NJ Transit enabled the mayor of Paulsboro to respond positively to constituent appeals for better transit service. (See diagram on following page.)

- Contract with a provider for demand-response or fixed-route service for program participants.

Approach 3: Build Relationships to Share Vehicles

Perhaps your community does not have a public transit system, or perhaps it does but you need additional vehicles to meet the mobility needs of your participants.

Other organizations in your community may have excess capacity in vehicles that could serve your participants. (For a list of these groups, see **Chapter 2**.) There are benefits to shared vehicles: First, purchasing the use of a vehicle will be cheaper than purchasing your own vehicle. Second, the owners of vehicles can thereby subsidize the cost of operating their vehicles, making their operations more efficient.

Opportunities for Vehicle Sharing

There are situations when a social service agency or community group may open the doors of its vehicle to the participants in your program:

- 1) **Vehicles regularly have empty seats:** If there are available seats on a vehicle, contract to schedule trips to work, training or child care on that agency's

vehicle. Example: A health clinic sends an 11-passenger van into a rural area daily to pick up 8 clients for a rehabilitation program in town. You may be able to pay the health clinic to pick up 3 of your clients on the same trip.

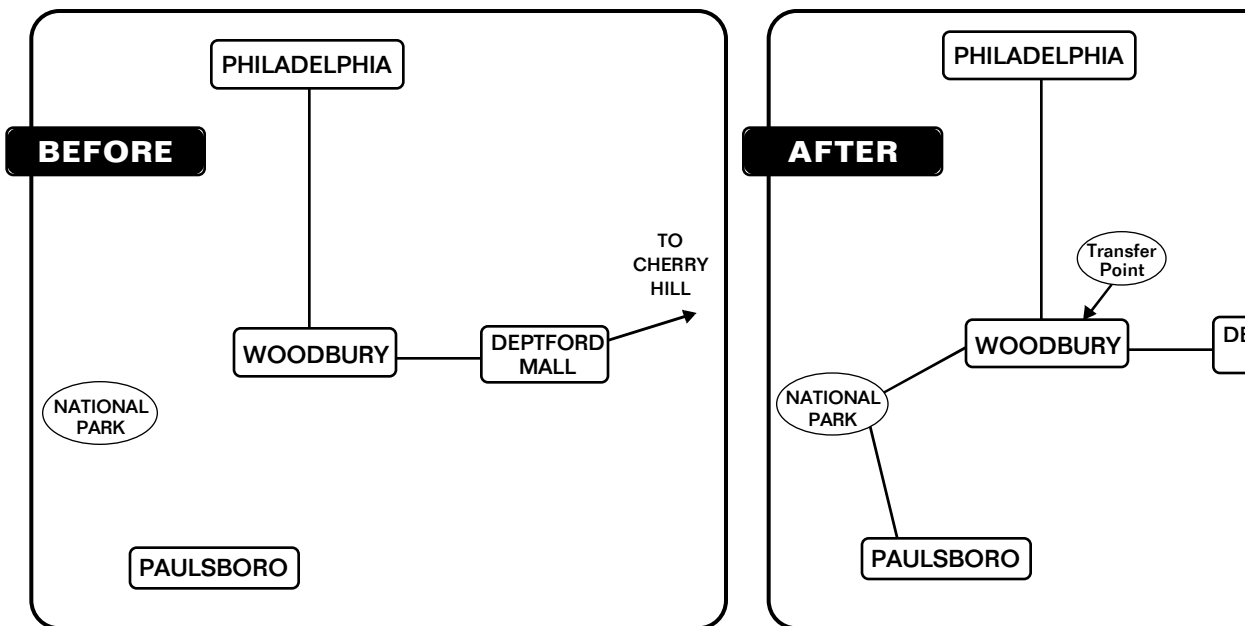
- 2) **Vehicles are only used part of the day:** If there are hours or days that a vehicle is unused, arrange to use that vehicle during its down time. Example: A senior center picks up participants for a lunch program from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. each day and returns them from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. The rest of the day the vehicle is unused.

Approach 4: Develop New Services

If, after attempting the first three approaches, your program's job seekers still are largely unserved by transportation, your community may decide to develop a new transportation initiative. Depending on what type of new service you develop, this may be a costly endeavor.

New services (many which are described in **Chapter Two**) can include:

- Shuttle services and feeder services,
- Vanpools,



New Jersey Transit expands job opportunities by extending routes to two residential areas — Paulsboro and

- Volunteer programs,
- Car donation/car purchasing opportunities, and even
- A dial-a-ride or fixed-route service.

If your community finds it would benefit from a general public transit system, it may elect to start such a service with public funds.

Conclusion

Whatever approaches to employment transportation your community elects, one circumstance is certain to arise — the necessity to work in partnership with many groups and interested parties to plan, fund and implement each approach.

Transportation is costly and may be prohibitive if an agency seeks to provide it relying solely upon its own funding. Leveraging community funds — perhaps those described in **Chapter Two**'s funding section — will stretch the capacity of a community to provide employment transportation options to those without cars.

Leveraging community funds to support a transportation service that is available for all community members is one of the best illustrations of how leveraging funds benefits work-related travel needs. For example, 50 percent of the trips provided on RIDES Mass Transit (Rosiclare, Il.) buses are to work, yet funding for these trips comes from a variety of sources. By pooling funds, every contributor can pay less than they would if providing that service alone.

For employment transportation initiatives to succeed it's going to take resourcefulness, innovative approaches and the willingness to work together in partnership.

Coming Up:

The next section **Making the Most of Community Resources** treats the subject of forming partnerships in order to create effective employment transportation options.

Chapter Four Working in Partnership
Chapter Five Partnerships in Action



Transit start-up means access to education and jobs

Challenge: In 1990, public transportation shut down in largely rural Covington County, Alabama. For the next two-and-a-half years, there was no transportation service in the county; no buses, no vans, no taxis, nothing to get people without cars where they needed to go. Transportation disadvantaged residents of the rural county were forced to fend for themselves or stay home.

Approach: In July 1992, the local Department of Human Resources (DHR) began to work with local officials to bring back public transportation to Covington County. DHR officials realized that without access to adequate transportation, its Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) program clients couldn't access the services. The transit system, Covington Area Transit System's (C.A.T.S.), went into full operation in mid-1992 with a fleet of four 15-passenger vans. Two additional vans and one bus have been added to the service in recent years.

C.A.T.S. allows people to call for rides 24 hours ahead of time. Revenue for this type of dial-a-ride service is minimal, however, and therefore contracts with human service agencies are necessary for the program's success. C.A.T.S.'s first contract, not surprisingly, was with DHR and its JOBS program. In fact, transit officials call this purchased service contract the backbone of the program.

Results: Previously isolated people have mobility to employment and job training. DHR is able to serve residents with and without a car. Having available transportation has enabled people to earn their GED, and attend the local junior college and professional trade schools. Many C.A.T.S. riders are employed and self-sufficient.

“About half of our participants had no way to get to the program,” said DHR's Joe Bush.

“Basically, we found it is impossible to run a successful JOBS program in Covington County without transportation.”

Section 2: Making the Most of Community Resources



Introduction

Introduction to Section Two

Here is a systematic process for developing transportation services. Each of these steps will be addressed in the following two chapters.

Building Transportation Services: A Strategic Process

Formalize a transportation taskforce

- Identify stakeholders,
- Find a committed leader,
- Build a common mission,
- Understand and address the motivations of stakeholders,
 - Overcome barriers to successful collaboration, and
 - Cultivate the partnership for on-going effectiveness.

Assess transportation needs

Conduct an inventory of transportation resources

Evaluate the mobility needs based on available resources

Determine the plans and approach for initiating new or expanded services

Secure commitments to fund the services

Implement solutions

Continuously monitor and evaluate community needs, resources and services

Coming up:

For more information: An example of how Massachusetts applied a strategic model similar to the one outlined here can be found at: www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/practices/ma_strategicmodel.shtml. In addition, **Appendix 5** contains employment transportation strategies suggested by the North Carolina Department of Human Services and by the Broward (Florida) Employment and Training Administration.



Chapter Four

Working in Partnership

Chapter Four

Working in Partnership

A bundle of sticks separately they are weak, bound together their strength is great. (Aesop)

Overview

Chapter Two familiarized workforce development agencies with other agencies that may already be providing reliable transportation services to their clients. The chapter also described the federal programs that have funds that could be used to increase the availability of transportation services for dislocated workers and welfare recipients.

The solutions discussed in **Chapter Three** are possible because of the commitment on the part of community members to filling gaps in transportation service. Groups that form effective transportation partnerships understand that the best way to meet a challenge is through cooperation.

This chapter describes the key aspects of forming effective partnerships that plan, fund and implement employment transportation solutions.

Keep In Mind:

- In the event that there is a local community transit agency available with which to contract, forming a transportation partnership may not be necessary.
- Before forming a new partnership, ask your local metropolitan planning organization or local workforce development agency if a group like this is already working together.

Whether the solution to the transportation challenge in your community involves city-to-suburb commuter routes, vanpools, carpools, dial-a-ride vans or car ownership programs, it will take input and agreement from many key players in the community to implement these changes. While funding from the federal and state departments of

transportation can support a portion of a local public transportation service, successful solutions may depend on a variety of strategies and commitments.

It bears repeating, however, that your first step — before seeking to develop the partnerships outlined in this chapter — should be to seek out a contractual relationship with a local transit provider, if available. The reasoning is simple. If your agency needed medical coverage, would you first look to the local hospital, or instead try to build one from scratch? The same holds for transit. A local community transit agency has likely successfully dealt with many of the challenges your partnership would face. The vehicles, insurance, headquarters, maintenance and other capital-intensive items are already in place. Don't reinvent the wheel if you don't have to.

Appendix 2 contains language from the Workforce Investment Act that 1) discourages duplication of services and 2) defines the guidelines for procurement of services.

I. Incentives to Forming Transportation Partnerships

Would any of the incentives listed below lead you to form or join a transportation partnership?

- The participants in your program need to get to jobs and job training. Your expertise is in job training and job development. Your community probably already has people working on transportation issues. How can these transportation experts aid the participants in your program?
- Funding resources are scarce. You want to see that resources are maximized and that public dollars have the greatest possible benefit to the community. You know that any solution you



A Hartford, Ct., transportation planning group calls their partnership a BORPSAT, which stands for a Bunch Of the Right People Sitting Around the Table. That bunch includes local transportation providers, the state transportation department, the metropolitan planning organization, job developers, welfare administration agencies and associations of business and industry.

After conducting a mobility assessment of local TANF recipients, the BORPSAT identified specific plans to improve suburb-to-suburb and city-to-suburb access to employment sites. To date, the region's transit provider, Connecticut Transit, has extended its hours later into the evening and implemented new city-to-suburb commute trips, and added new routes to job sites in previously unserved areas.

Moreover, the Hartford BORPSAT teamed with similar task forces in other Connecticut cities which led the state legislature to provide \$4.2 million for welfare-to-work initiatives in Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Norwalk and Stamford.

develop should make sense economically. Will the transportation solutions that your agency selects earn the support of your local public officials?

- You know that other agencies in town have clients with transportation needs. You have heard that these groups have innovative ideas to address transportation barriers. You would like them to share their ideas with you.
- To date, you haven't been able to solve the transportation challenges by working solely within your agency. You don't have all the answers. You don't have the expertise. You don't have enough money to fund the necessary transportation services. You realize now that you must work with others to accomplish your goal of getting workforce participants to their job sites. You also realize that the longer it takes you to find solutions, the greater the number of people who risk losing their benefits because they cannot reliably reach employment destinations.

II. Forming a Transportation Task Force

Since there are many groups and constituents who have a stake in the availability of transportation

services in your community, a transportation task force is the first step to identify the range of mobility needs and to decide how to meet those needs using existing resources. By building a partnership among the stakeholders and working with your local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), resources might be expanded, existing services could achieve economies of scale, and new services could be added to meet the needs of the transportation disadvantaged.

Keep in mind: You may not have to start a brand new committee. Since the same people who work on workforce development and welfare-to-work issues tend to sit on the same committees collaborating on topics besides transportation, you may just decide to have a sub-committee on transportation. If that is the case, then outreach

After 3 years of working together as the Dallas-Fort Worth Work Coalition I consider us pretty good friends... We just didn't pay attention to it [politics], and we brought everybody to the table... We gave up our turf. We learned to trust. I really think that being willing to compromise, being willing to take other views, being willing to accept things you don't even always agree with is the way that you build partnerships and some mutual respect between each party... It really was a common goal, a shared goal and a willingness to work together towards that goal. There really wasn't any magic to it, it was just opening ourselves up and being willing to compromise.

Glenn Weinger
 Manager, Employer Services for Lockheed Martin and Founder, DFW Work Coalition
 Dallas, Texas

to involve transportation providers and planners becomes the next essential action.

Nevertheless, the first step in developing and implementing ideas to provide transportation services for those who are transportation disadvantaged is to get the right contributors to the table.

A. Who Sits Around the Table?

1. **Decision Makers:** It is important that agency directors and policy makers — people who can decide — come to the table. These are the people whose words get results, who hold the purse strings, who are able to grant waivers and interpret rules.

If workforce development participants have to travel outside of their communities into outlying areas the decision makers at your table must represent a regional perspective.

2. **Representatives of Job Seekers:** It is equally important that there are people at the table who understand the needs of those who are transporta-

The partnerships do more for the transit agency than just job access. This group becomes that rural planning process which doesn't exist by federal mandate like in the metropolitan areas.

**Betty Green, Chief Executive Officer
RIDES Mass Transit
Rosiclare, Illinois**

tion disadvantaged. No transportation option is a good option if the job seekers with transportation barriers won't use the service, for whatever reason. It is therefore important to include at the table representatives of job seekers and job training participants who have transportation barriers, as well as planners who have mapped the origins and destinations of un- and under-employed people. This ensures that the decisions made and the actions taken are necessary, appropriate and truly problem-solving.

B. Names and Faces: Setting the Table

What decision makers and other key players do you invite to the table? The variety of people is always related to your community and its individual situation, but the following is a guide:

1. Directors and staff of agencies who respond to the diverse needs of your current and potential participants.
2. Other agency directors and staff whose participants have mobility barriers.
3. Players who will be part of the solutions.

These are the various decision makers you need to include:

Workforce Investment Board Director and Staff:

U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) funds may be used for transportation needs and workforce directors can determine the funds' allocation. Directors also can determine the role that one-stop



Since the North Carolina Dept. of Social Services allows its county offices considerable flexibility in overcoming the transportation barriers of TANF recipients, counties are using TANF and DOL Welfare-to-Work funds, as well as state money, to reimburse recipients directly for transportation expenses, and to contract with public or private transportation providers such as transit systems, churches, and taxis, among other options.



Anne Arundel County (Maryland) Department of Social Services uses TANF federal block grant funds for the following activities: Tokens and passes on bus, light rail and commuter train services, vouchers for gas, and for electronic fare cards for use on demand-response vehicles.



New Jersey is considered a national model for welfare-to-work transportation initiatives because the state is building upon its broad-based transit network that serves each county. Moreover, Medicaid, TANF and transportation departments are improving on that network through innovative programs such as a transportation brokerage program that combine Medicaid trips and welfare trips.

center staff and job developers will undertake to help participants find transportation. These staff members are key players in the partnership since they have an understanding of the destination needs of their job seeking customers (e.g., where the job, job training and child care sites are).

Job Training Director and Staff: Before job seekers can qualify for many jobs they must complete job training programs. Job training directors can make transportation to job training an eligible expense. Job trainers and on-site transportation coordinators or mobility managers have both insight into job training participants' mobility needs, as well as experience managing transportation needs with available resources. Training programs may be run by community colleges or other learning institutions.

TANF Agency Director and Staff: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has made transportation services an eligible use of TANF funds. Local TANF directors can determine what transportation services will be funded with this money. Directors also determine the role of case workers in helping to overcome transportation barriers. Input from TANF directors and case workers is essential since they are aware of the extent to which barriers (e.g., transportation, child care, substance abuse, etc.) prevent TANF recipients from getting and keeping a job.

Public Housing Directors: Many low-income job seekers live in public housing that is unserved or

under-served by public transportation. Public housing directors can use U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds to support neighborhood transportation services that connect with public transit buses or trains. Public housing residents could play a role in overcoming their own transportation barriers. (See **Chapter Two** for a list of HUD grants.)

Point Person on Child Care Issues: One of the greatest needs of low-income parents is safe and affordable child care. Those who have the challenge of getting to work probably also have transportation barriers accessing child care. Partnerships involving child care center staff could lead to better coordination with transit routes and transit facilities, or other ways to get children to child care. These are decisions that providers of child care can make.

Medicaid Director: A high percentage of TANF recipients, along with other low-income people, receive Medicaid. There are many ways for TANF directors and Medicaid directors to work together to ensure the availability of transportation for these people.

Employers: Needless to say, employers play a major role in the access-to-jobs solution. Employers might contribute funding to expand transportation services to employment sites or fund or subsidize additional transportation services. Businesses could shift their start and end work times to better correspond with existing transit schedules. Above all, they could provide information on the times that they need workers. **Note:** Encourage small businesses to work in clusters or consortiums to address their transpor-

From a planning standpoint, the successful programs are the product of a union of transportation and economic development strategies.

**Blair Forlaw, Director of Policy and Programming
East-West Gateway Coordinating Council
St. Louis, Missouri**



The Boca Raton Resort and Club (Fla.) has formed a number of partnerships with public transit, commuter rail services, child care centers and public housing authorities to form shuttle services, vanpools and circulator routes, a few which make stops at child care centers so that parents can drop off their children. When new employees use these reliable transportation options, Boca Raton Resort increases its employee retention rates and relieves the club of the necessity to use land to build employee parking lots rather than guest facilities.



The Robinsonville Casinos in northern Mississippi provided the Delta Area Regional Transit System (DARTS) with the matching funds to purchase new vehicles. These additional vehicles will increase the number of people that DARTS can transport to the casino 60 miles away from Clarksville, the nearest population center. With as many as 400 to 600 unfilled jobs available each day, the casino has a stake in financially supporting DARTS in the expansion of employment transportation.

to different types of funding, from public and private sources.

Directors of Other Human Service Organizations: Invite other groups whose participants need to overcome transportation barriers. Bring them to the table because resources are scarce and often it is useful to develop solutions that achieve an economy of scale. These groups may also have excess capacity in vehicles that can carry your participants to and from job training and job sites.

These players may include directors of Head Start and senior services organizations, disability groups, faith-based organizations or other community-based organizations, such as community action agencies.

tation issues. The options discussed above may be more readily achieved by working as a group.

Business Development Groups: Invite stakeholders representing business and economic development interests to explain how business creation and expansion of employment opportunities is affected by transportation options. Such groups include chambers of commerce, community development corporations, economic development districts and councils of government. In addition to the information they could share, these groups also have access

Especially in communities that are experiencing very low unemployment rates and a high demand for workers, it may be essential to focus on transportation services for three untapped sources of labor: youth, people with disabilities and older workers. For these groups, community transportation is vital since none of these groups has adequate, reliable or consistent access to cars.

Of course, no employment transportation gathering is complete without elected officials and transportation providers.



While the Michigan Department of Transportation, Department of Career Development and Family Independence Agency have been at the "core" of Michigan's welfare reform effort, expanded state partnerships have been used to ensure success of various programs. In some cases, the Office of Services to the Aging, Rehabilitation Services, the Commission on Disability Concerns, and the Commission for the Blind have been included. Volunteer driver programs administered by these agencies have been instrumental in addressing concerns of senior citizens and those with disabilities seeking employment. (For more information on Michigan's transportation programs, see **Chapter Seven**).



In Columbus, Ohio, Sears, Roebuck and Co. and five other businesses agreed to work together to add bus service to their facilities. Specifically, they requested that the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) add crosstown service from residential communities in East Columbus to employment sites in West Columbus. After a meeting facilitated by the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce, COTA agreed to add the crosstown service on the condition that the business consortium covered the cost of 40 passengers each way for one year, regardless of whether those seats were filled. Ultimately, the business consortium never had to pay for unfilled seats since ridership on the route consistently reached capacity. (For details, see **Chapter Six**.)

Elected Officials: Sometimes solutions are achieved because a public official is convinced of the need for improved transportation services and mandates immediate action to overcome transportation barriers. Determined local leadership can come from a governor, a county executive or a mayor. (You will find examples from many communities throughout the toolkit most of which have the support of elected officials.)

Transportation Providers: Since transportation is the barrier to overcome, no transportation partnership is complete without the variety of transportation agencies that provide services in the area job seekers need to travel. Invitations should be extended to both public and private providers. Include train, bus, ridesharing and taxis services; paratransit providers; school transportation; and human services transportation agencies. Also invite transportation planning groups, such as the metropolitan planning organization (see **Chapter Two**).

This may evolve into a large group, and it's likely that not all of the stakeholders will be needed for every group meeting. However, look to include all at some stage of the planning and implementation

process, whether in gathering information, planning, making vehicle sharing and funding decisions, or implementing solutions.

C. The Committed Leader

If a committed leader hasn't arisen from the partnership thus far, it is important to find one. This is a person who pulls the collaborative group together and keeps the group focused on overcoming transportation barriers despite people entering and leaving the team over time and despite the inevitable setbacks. This person forges on when barriers are encountered, and reminds the group of the common mission toward which the group is working. The leader has the time, energy and commitment to encourage the continued collaboration of the stakeholders.

While a facilitator may come from outside of the community, the committed leader is a member of the community, who knows the stakeholders and is aware of the regulatory, funding and interpersonal barriers to cooperation that exist in the community. The committed leader may be a representative of a lead organization, such as a transportation or workforce development agency.

Don't overlook the local MPO as a potential leader of your partnership.

D. Common Missions

An essential step for overcoming transportation barriers is to make sure that all the players are not only at the same table, but on the same page.

Building a promising partnership has its roots in a common mission. While the specific goals of each participating member may differ, knowing the underlying values that the partner has in common with the others at the table will give the group a common direction from which to make decisions on transportation issues.

Here are some common missions that stakeholders in your community may share:

- All are committed to economic well-being of un- and under-employed low-income people.
- All are committed to removing the transportation barriers that prohibit new workers from reliably reaching their work sites and from becoming productive members of the community.
- All want to promote solutions that build upon already existing transportation services, as well as to encourage innovative and outside-the-box solutions. The group agrees to foster a diversity of opinion, expertise and experience to ensure innovative thinking.
- If financial resources are scarce, the group may be committed to stretching community resources as far as possible. That may mean pooling those resources.
- All want efficient, effective transportation solutions that are sustainable over time.

Another way to develop common missions is to define what is at stake — in other words, what is the potential negative impact of not finding a solution to the transportation barriers that job seekers face.

- Many carless job seekers will be unable to get or retain jobs.
- Employers will be unable to fill vacant positions.
- Ultimately, without transportation options, individuals (or perhaps whole families) could lose benefits.

With a common mission or a shared view of the stake they have in working together, stakeholders will commit to developing and implementing solutions.

E. Bottom Lines

Successful collaborations are the result of knowing what motivates stakeholders and cultivating those motivations. It is also in getting the best price for transportation for your clients.

Here are factors which will lead workforce development directors, transportation providers, TANF directors, employers and elected officials to actively support specific transportation solutions:

1) Workforce Development Directors are motivated by the mission to:

- i) Find work for un- and under-employed people,
- ii) See that job skills match job needs of employers,
- iii) Ensure that new workers retain their jobs,
- iv) Meet their complex and demanding performance standards,
- v) Forge partnerships among one-stop partner agencies, and
- vi) Ensure that a full range of placement and retention resources are available and accessible to job seekers.

Workforce development agencies want transportation services that operate the hours and reach the destinations that their customers need. Agencies want transportation services that are reliable — ensuring that new employees can get to their jobs each day and on time. Moreover, these services need to be affordable and sustainable over time so that new workers can stay in those jobs without welfare assistance.

2) Transportation providers are largely motivated by four factors:

- i) **Cost-efficiency.** Transportation providers keep their services operating by running their agencies like a business. Investments in transit services, such as extended routes and hours of service, must make sound financial sense.

The costs of buying vehicles and adding service can be prohibitive without financial support from the community. This situation is often

little understood by those not in the transit business. The role of transportation providers and planners in the partnership will be to educate the other partners about the costs of providing existing services, expanding service hours and adding new services.

ii) Mobility. Transportation providers want to see that members of the community have the mobility essential to live and travel freely.

iii) Ridership. In most cases, transportation providers are also motivated to maximize ridership. More riders on agency buses and vans signify more cost-effective services. In urban areas, providers' funding levels are partially based on ridership. In both urban and rural areas, maximizing the cost effectiveness of each trip is one goal of public and private transportation systems, which explains why transit providers provide incentives to the public to ride mass transportation.

Often, transit providers need to target new markets and provide new services in order to maximize ridership. The case-in-point is the shifting demographics surrounding employment transportation. By targeting suburban employers that are hiring inner city residents and by looking beyond suburban-to-urban fixed-route services to vanpooling, feeder routes, urban-to-suburban commuter services and community buses, many transit systems have been able to increase ridership.

iv) Performance. Transit providers, like workforce development agencies, need to meet demanding and complex performance standards.

3) Human Services/TANF Directors: In the case of local agencies which disperse TANF funds to recipients, human service providers are motivated by the time limitations of their program — the two-to-five-year clock is constantly ticking while their clients are receiving assistance.

Like their counterparts in workforce development, TANF directors want transportation services to be

available during the hours and to the destinations that their customers need. They too want transportation services that are reliable, affordable and sustainable over time so their clients don't again require TANF assistance due to transportation barriers.

4) Employers are motivated to increase transportation services so that the labor pool can reach and retain available jobs. They primarily want transportation services that get their employees to job sites in a reliable and timely fashion. When transportation services save out-of-pocket expenses for businesses, or can yield tax savings, they are even more attractive. Employers, in general, are also interested in sustaining the economic vitality of the community.

5) Elected Officials want their communities to be successful. They want to see programs that maintain the well-being of residents. Ideally, these programs will reflect a public official's sense of vision for the community. One attribute of successful programs will most likely be cost efficiency and a wise use of taxpayer dollars. Many times, public officials will also want to see a role for public/private partnerships. Transportation solutions that keep these goals in mind may more readily acquire the support of local public officials.

Even with a common mission to unite the group and an understanding of what motivates all the stakeholders to contribute to sustainable employment transportation solutions, your group will naturally have one more consideration before it is ready to plan, fund and implement solutions — overcoming barriers to effective partnerships.

III. Overcoming the Barriers to Effective Partnerships

Here are some of the barriers that often surface when groups work together:

- A lack of understanding of transportation benefits and costs,
- Agencies in different fields have different cultures and speak different languages,

- Turfism — Not wanting to let go of money and programs,
- A lack of time in an already busy work environment,
- Fear of losing control or having your authority taken away,
- Resistance to trying something that hasn't been done before,
- Distrust of showing one's hand and sharing information,
- Personality conflicts, and
- A fear of complex regulations.

Whether the barrier is personal or institutional, real or perceived — a barrier that stands in the way of effective partnerships is a barrier that needs to be addressed. Where possible, address as many of these barriers at the start of the partnership process since

The Milwaukee W-2 Childcare Transportation Project was a bold step forward for the five W-2 (TANF) agencies that funded and facilitated the creation of the service. Not only did we implement a service that is unique to the state of Wisconsin, we also did it as part of one collaborative group focused on a common goal with a vision of the big picture. In today's employment and training environment, collaboration and cooperation across program and organizational lines are keys to the successful operation of any initiative. The Milwaukee W-2 Childcare Transportation Project is a primary example of the positive effects of just such a collaboration. (For details see, Chapter Six.)

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others will undoubtedly appear.

Another reason to work through barriers to collaboration is that as leaders of your agencies you can be the role model for your staff as they too work on interagency projects. Addressing interpersonal challenges will lead to stronger collaborations among transit, workforce development and human service agencies at all levels.

Building trust, gaining credibility and reconciling personality conflicts and differences are all issues that people encounter when working together. Time, communication and a well facilitated process can address many of the barriers listed above.

If you run into barriers, work to resolve them. If they persist, persevere and try from another angle. If the barrier is personal, work to bridge your differences. Where personal barriers remain, put them aside for the good that the partnership can do — improving mobility options so that your customers can become and remain self-sufficient.

By overcoming interpersonal barriers, you will be better prepared to address the larger barriers caused by rules, regulations and funding guidelines — barriers that will take a unified partnership to resolve. (These types of barriers are addressed in **Chapter Five**.)

IV. Maintaining Results-Oriented Partnerships

Having a formalized taskforce does not mean that it has to meet weekly or even monthly to be effective. The key is to foster a partnership that remains unified in its vision, open in its communication, committed to seeing its goals through to fruition, and results-oriented in its actions.

Here are some ways to maintain an efficient and meaningful partnership:

- Meet on a quarterly basis, or only as needed, but keep the group together using e-mail, a listserve or some other mechanism to share information about needs and resources, trouble-shoot and keep members up-to-speed.

- With a potentially large number of diverse players in the partnership, stress that all members don't have to come to every meeting. Encourage them instead to attend the meetings in which they would benefit greatly or when they could share needed expertise or insights.
- Encourage sub-groups to work together on specific assignments between meetings. This working style may improve efficiency and make the best use of partners' time.
- Send an employment transportation newsletter, like RIDES Mass Transit's *Job Access* newsletter (www.ridesmtd.com), to all partners to inform them of milestones achieved, new services, next goals to accomplish, current statistics, as well as other indicators of progress.

Conclusion

Albert Einstein once said:

Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them.

A partnership around transportation issues increases the likelihood of maximizing the mobility options in your community. How could it not when you have developed a forum that promotes:

- Increased personal independence and enhanced quality of life for dislocated workers and other unemployed people;
- Increased transportation services to those who are transportation disadvantaged;
- Higher quality and more reliable transportation services;
- Unique expertise;
- More efficient use of resources, including vehicles, staff and funding;
- Elimination of duplicative transportation services; and

- Reduced transportation costs for the community.

Keep in Mind: You may not institute changes overnight, but with commitment and motivation the transportation partnership will continue to move your community forward.

Coming Up:

The next chapter will describe local partnerships-in-action. **Section Three — Blueprints** will describe model employment transportation partnerships at the local level, as well as how states have taken a leadership role in forming their own partnerships and supporting local communities as they, too, overcome mobility barriers.



Chapter Five

Partnerships in Action

Chapter Five

Partnerships In Action

Overview

This chapter continues to illustrate the steps of the strategic plan as outlined in the introduction to this section (see page 42). Specifically, this chapter will describe the following steps:

- Assess transportation needs,
- Conduct an inventory of transportation resources,
- Evaluate the mobility needs based on available resources,
- Determine the plans and approach for initiating new or expanded services,
- Secure commitments to fund the services,
- Implement solutions, and
- Continuously monitor and evaluate community needs, resources and services.

This chapter also provides suggestions for overcoming barriers, such as using client data, funding joint projects and sharing vehicles.

With the transportation partnership at the table, it is time to get down to the business at hand - linking dislocated workers and other un- and under-employed people with transportation services to jobs, training, childcare and other employment-related destinations.

Here are two points to consider:

1) Your metropolitan planning organization (MPO), state DOT for rural areas or other transportation planning body may have already conducted an

evaluation, planning and implementation process like the one discussed in this chapter. In that event, this chapter will serve to give you ideas to build upon that process.

2) Again, establishing these partnerships is not the only way to go about providing transportation to your clients. We urge you to consider simply contracting with a local community transportation operator as a viable alternative.

If the local transit agency or planning organization is unavailable, consider the following process as a model:

I. Evaluating Needs and Resources

Many transportation partnerships are following these steps prior to planning employment transportation services:

Step 1: Assess transportation needs

Step 2: Conduct an inventory of transportation resources

Step 3: Evaluate the mobility needs based on available transportation resources

These three steps are the first steps in understanding what transportation resources are available to job seekers and what services are needed to satisfy remaining transportation needs. One useful method for ascertaining this information is to plot origins and destinations on a regional map. This spatial analysis can determine the relative proximity of recipients and employers to transit services, travel times and distances between points or over the entire network, and any obvious gaps in transit service. Planners can then use this information to modify or improve transit routes or to develop new services.

Step 1: Assess Transportation Needs

The first step toward improving transportation services for job seekers is to understand their travel needs. With knowledge of the community in which participants reside and where they need to travel each day to satisfy training requirements, work schedules and family obligations, you can make assessments regarding the most appropriate form of transportation necessary to carry individuals to their destinations.

This assessment process will require input from you and a number of partners:

- Local workforce development boards can provide a list of all approved job training sites, as well as the location of designated one-stop job centers.
- The director of the one-stop job center can contribute information on job openings, as well as employment projections for the service delivery area. Employment projections can aid the partnership in planning transportation services that will be sustained as economic activity changes over time.
- One-stop centers and human service agencies can share data of the neighborhoods or streets where welfare recipients, dislocated workers and the other un- and under-employed people live.
- Employers and chambers of commerce can pinpoint particular areas with a labor deficit.
- State or local offices responsible for licensing child care centers and after-school programs can provide a list of locations of approved sites.

Potential Barriers and Resolutions

Barrier: One-stop centers and public and private human service agencies are committed to protect the privacy of their customers, and these agencies may be hesitant to share data on their job-seeking customers.

Resolution: To protect the privacy of customers, these data can be made anonymous by: removing recipients' names, converting the addresses to block-group-level data, deleting all addresses from the system after geocoding them (converting the addresses to latitude and longitude coordinates) or using the zip code plus four digits.

Barrier: Many program participant records may have a post office box rather than a street address. This may make plotting the area where the participants live inaccurate. The same issue may arise with street addresses of service providers and employers.

Resolution: Settle on a coding scheme that works. For example, if you cannot obtain street addresses use the zip code plus four digits. The most important consideration is to be consistent.

Action: On a regional map, plot the residential locations of transportation disadvantaged customers, child care providers, job training sites, as well as current and prospective employers.

Step 2: Conduct an Inventory of Transportation Resources

The next step in gauging the opportunities for employment transportation services begins with familiarizing the partnership with the variety of transportation services in the region. This includes learning about the services currently available to dislocated workers and un- and under-employed people, such as public transit buses and vans, commuter rail services, shuttle services, taxis, intercity buses, and ridesharing programs. However, this inventory also encompasses vehicles and transportation services that aren't currently, but could possibly be, used to provide customers with employment-related rides. Potential resources include: dial-a-ride services for people with disabilities and senior citizens, school buses, and vehicles used by faith-based organizations, community action agencies, neighborhood councils, job training programs and other groups.

Clearly, this process of “inventorying” needs to be done with a measure of tact. If you have failed to establish a collaborative relationship with the above-listed organizations, attempting to inventory their resources may hurt potential cooperation in the future.

Part 1: An inventory of existing public transportation services

Acquiring the inventory of vehicles and transportation programs need not be arduous since other community members may have already done the work. Local planning organizations, such as councils of government (COGs) and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), will share a list of transportation providers in your community.

Once you have the list of general public and private transportation providers, invite those not already in the partnership to join planning discussions. This group may include: providers of public and private transportation, commuter services, carpool and vanpool programs, as well as taxi services. Request that these representatives describe their services, including operating hours, routes and service area, costs and capacity for expanded service. In addition, obtain from these parties route maps and schedules.

Public transit agencies can provide geographic data of their transit systems. Representatives of private transportation services, commuter services and ridesharing programs can provide similar information.

Action: Overlay the map of residences, child care centers, educational sites and employment locations (Step 1) with transparent maps of transportation routes and service areas.

Note: It is essential that each transportation map indicates the hours and days of operation. Even if transportation reaches a job site, for instance, the service may not operate during the times that workers may need them.

Part 2: An inventory of community vehicles

There may be other vehicles in your community that have not been considered as options to carry displaced workers and other un- and under-employed people to jobs and other destinations. For example, private companies, community-based groups and faith-based organizations may have buses and vans that could be available to the participants in your service. It is possible that these less obvious community vehicles might prove to be the mobility lifeline for job seekers and new employees.

Just as important as the inventory of existing general public transportation services, therefore, is an inventory of other vehicles in your community that could be used to provide needed services.

To compile a comprehensive list of buses, vans and cars, talk with the people who administer the following programs and services:

- paratransit services for people with disabilities,
- Medicaid transportation providers,
- churches and other faith-based groups,
- community action agencies,
- neighborhood councils,
- housing authorities,
- school districts,
- job training programs,
- local government,
- groups serving people with disabilities,
- Head Start organizations, and
- senior centers.

Find out how the members and clients of these organizations reach their services, if they own their own vehicles or whether they contract with a

transportation provider for service. Find out if they operate a volunteer driver program.

If any group owns or leases vehicles, learn who operates the vehicles, who rides them and what the days and hours of operation are. Determine if there are any restrictions on the use of the vehicles, and if the vehicles could be used by the general public. If they can, find out what kind of reimbursement is required to use the service.

Action: Fill in **Form A** (see pg. 67) to gather this and other relevant information about the transportation services in the community:

Resource: Call CTAA's National Transit Resource Center (800.527.8279) for contact information of local organizations that provide transportation services to people with disabilities, elderly people and other community members.

Step 3: Evaluate the Mobility Needs Based on Available Transportation Resources

The results of overlaying residential, employment and other data (Step 1) and transportation maps (Step 2, Part 1) is to determine whether existing services and routes can be used to link people with jobs and employment-related destinations, and to identify gaps in service. The knowledge gained from Step 2, Part 2 will inform the partnership how additional community vehicles might expand the capacity to meet travel needs.

A good way to understand the specific dimensions of mobility problems is to use geographic information system (GIS) software. Since many transit agencies use GIS for planning purposes, your local public transit provider may take the lead in doing the actual analysis. If it does not have the capability, chances are your regional planning organization does. While many analyses have been based on computer-based GIS mapping software, others have effectively been completed without relying upon computer systems. For instance, use push pins to plot locations on a transit map. Or, use different color high-lighters to encircle the areas where

neighborhoods, employment centers and child care centers exist.

The results of the evaluation will shape the employment transportation options the partnership considers. Here are questions to ask when evaluating the maps:

- Do buses run where the people need to travel? If not, what routes would they need to travel?
- Do general public services operate during the times when people need them? If not, how could they be better aligned with employment shifts?
- How long are commutes from origin to destination?
- Can customers reach multiple stops, like child care centers and job sites?

Assessment: Based on the routes and hours of service, how much can the existing transit system be used to make employment transportation trips?

- What gaps remain?
- What adjustments could be made to the transit system to supply extra service?
- Where could additional capacity in community vehicles provide additional trips?
- What gaps would need to be filled in with new transportation programs?

Note: An individual's transportation barrier may not be due to lack of transportation, but rather from an inability to afford available transportation. With this in mind, supplement this needs assessment with information about transportation barriers collected from customer intake forms by job developers and case managers. This information will guide the partnership as it determines ways to use existing transportation to link customers with employment-related destinations.

Based upon information gathered from job developer/case manager assessments:

- How much of participants' transportation barriers are physical (i.e., no car, no bus nearby)?
- How much are financial?
- Are transit services affordable to participants?
- Are these services perceived as safe to ride?
- Are buses and vans available but participants do not know about these services or how to use them?
- Would individuals actually use existing transit service or any new services if it were available?

This evaluation will serve as a springboard from which to develop programs that use existing services and vehicles and that create new services. An evaluation also allows for need-based adjustments to provide smoother transfers for faster travel times, better connections between other modes of travel and with the services of other transportation providers.

II. Planning for Employment Transportation

The needs assessment and inventory of transportation resources will guide planning decisions to better provide employment transportation options. As described in **Chapter Three: The Opportunities for Employment Transportation**, here is the recommended approach to cost-effectively use community resources to provide needed mobility:

Step 4: Try Transit First: Develop programs to use the transportation that already exists.

Step 5: Try Transit First. Expand upon existing public transportation services.

Step 6: Building relationships with social service and other community groups to share vehicles.

Step 7: Adopt new transportation services.

When considering services to promote employment-related transportation, refer to the many examples listed throughout this employment transportation toolkit:

Chapter Two: An Introduction to Community Transportation describes the various modes of transportation, including fixed-route bus service, vanpools, feeder routes, shared-ride taxi service and dial-a-ride service.

Chapter Three: The Opportunities for Employment Transportation lists ways to expand upon existing transportation services through extending routes and operating hours, raising the awareness about existing transit services and providing financial incentives to use public transit.

Section III: Blueprints — Transportation at Work highlights the different approaches developed by community partnerships which address specific community needs and build upon existing resources.

To learn how still other communities are addressing employment transportation barriers, read:

Access to Jobs: An Guide to Innovative Practices Welfare-to-Work Transportation. Prepared by Community Transportation Association of America for the Federal Transit Administration, July 1999. To obtain a copy call the National Transit Resource Center 800.527.8279, or via the Internet at <www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/resources.shtml>.

Transportation Planning for Access to Jobs: Job Access and the Metropolitan Planning Process in Hartford, St. Louis, and Detroit. U.S. Department of Transportation, August 1997. Available from the Source Center at 800.527.8279, or via <www.fta.dot.gov/office/planning/access.htm>.

APTA Access to Work Task Force and Jobs Task Force Welfare-To-Work Survey. October 1999. American Public Transportation Association. To obtain a copy, call APTA at 202.898.4000, or visit <www.apta.com/gother/99wtwnet.htm>.

Across the Nation. A searchable on-line database employment transportation practices. Developed CTAA. <www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/practices>.

While **Section III: Blueprints** describes how communities have applied Steps 4 through 7, here are some points to consider when planning transportation services:

A. Purchasing Service

One of the ways to expand existing services (Step 5) and use community vehicles (Step 6) to meet your participants' transportation needs is to purchase service from public or private transportation operators. (**Note:** Contracting for transportation is an eligible use of TANF and DOL Welfare-to-Work funds.) By writing a contract with a transportation agency to provide rides to program participants, your agency can buy service on a dial-a-ride basis or through a regular subscription service. For an in-depth look at how a transit provider's actual costs are computed, see **Chapter Three**.

Taxi Companies: Many workforce development agencies have found that contracting with taxicab companies can help transition people into the workforce. Although individual cab rides may be expensive, most cab companies will negotiate lower rates for on-going trips on a weekly or monthly basis. The Genesee Regional Council in Rochester, New York, for example, found that this was an effective way for inner city residents to commute to suburban hotel jobs.

A TANF agency in Concord, North Carolina, was able to place a welfare recipient as a driver at a local taxicab company using On-The-Job-Training funds, then negotiate a lower rate for services. They were able to use the taxi service to send clients on job interviews.

Taxis can also be used as an adjunct to more conventional transit services. They can be used to shuttle people to transit centers or stations that would otherwise not be useful. They can be the "guaranteed ride home" in Guaranteed Ride Home programs (see definition in **Chapter Two**) and can extend hours to transport people who may need to work past the ending time of bus services.

Contracting for transportation may provide the best and most affordable means to commute to work, training, interviews and child care. However, a contract with a transportation provider may only be a short-term option for participants since the funds used for their transportation assistance may only be temporary, and the purchased service may be too expensive for participants to continue independently. On the other hand, the contracted service may create a lasting transportation alternative for the participants in your program.

B. Sharing Community Vehicles

Another way to use existing community resources to provide service to your customers is to share another organization's vehicle(s). The vehicle inventory you conducted may have revealed that there are vehicles traversing your community intended for use by a specific group, such as senior citizens or children. These vehicles may not be currently available to the participants in your program, but with some outreach and negotiation, groups may indeed open their vehicles' doors to your participants.

For instance, a senior citizen center might only use their vehicles during the lunch time hours when it takes seniors to nutrition centers. Negotiating to use these vehicles during periods of inactivity can have the following impacts: 1) providing the only employment transportation alternative in a rural community that does not have any other available transportation, or 2) supplementing the capacity of existing services in rural, suburban and urban areas.

Potential Barriers and Resolutions:

Barrier: The assumption that there are rules and regulations which prohibit another group from using a vehicle intended for a specific program.

Resolution: Check to see if there are any state or local rules prohibiting the use of another program's vehicles. Generally, this is not a prohibition that exists anymore at the federal level. Typically, as long as the people for whom the vehicle is intended are able to have their

mobility needs met, the vehicle can be available for other riders.

Barrier: You have been told that an organization's participants cannot share a vehicle with your program participants.

Resolution: This may just be a misunderstanding of the rules. Often, the policy allows for others to ride the vehicles provided that the people for whom the vehicle is intended are able to have their mobility needs met.

If a prohibition is explicitly stated in the rules, see if a waiver can be granted or the regulations rewritten.

Barrier: The vehicle owner doesn't want to wear the vehicle out sooner than usual.

Resolution: Establish a fare system so that riders will pay for overhead costs and vehicle depreciation.

Barrier: An agency with a vehicle says that your agency cannot use the vehicle because the current insurance on the vehicle only covers the first agency's clientele.

Resolution: Amend insurance policies through rewriting the policy or adding a rider to the existing policy to include additional occupants from other agencies. Agree to pay for any costs incurred because of the amendment.

It is likely that your offer to share a group's vehicle(s) may not, at first, be met enthusiastically. The program director may give you a number of reasons why using the same vehicle would not be feasible. Not all barriers are insurmountable.

C. Vanpools

If you have a number of employees who are working the same shift at the same company or at work sites in the same location, a vanpool may be a viable solution. Vanpools are a shared-ride arrangement among a number of different workers to share the

costs and duties of commuting. Many large companies sponsor vanpools for their organization to reduce the need for parking on-site or to help in area air quality plans. Oftentimes a number of employers in the same locality will band together to create a "transportation management association" or TMA. The TMA may then take on the duties of creating vanpools. Many local transit agencies or planning organizations also take on the task of vanpooling. Vanpools can help workers commute cheaply and get to many places not served by transit. (See **Chapter Six - Local Partnerships** for examples.)

D. Useful Questions

As the partnership conceives plans to improve mobility options for un- and under-employed people, consider the following:

- Are the planned transportation options affordable? For the workforce development agency? For the individual?
- Will these employment transportation alternatives be available after new employees leave public assistance?
- If so, will they be affordable?
- Most, importantly, how will the developed options be financially sustained? **Note:** Be careful, many of the funds available for transportation are only start-up funds.

III. Funding Partnerships

Particularly in this age of welfare reform there are multiple opportunities to finance employment transportation. Funds from both the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant and the U.S. Department of Labor's Welfare-to-Work program can be used to provide transportation services to welfare recipients. In addition, each year until 2003 the U.S. Department of Transportation will fund selected employment transportation initiatives through its Job Access and Reverse

Commute Program (see **Appendix 4**). Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) funds are available to support expanded transportation services for welfare recipients and other low-income people.

In fact, there are many sources of federal and state money that can be used to fund transportation services. These include Medicaid funds, Social Services Block Grants, Community Development Block Grants, TANF and Welfare-to-Work grants, and HOPE VI funds, among others (see **Appendix 3**). In addition, federal tax incentives are available to employers to subsidize the cost of transportation for employees (contact the National Transit Resource Center for more information).

Step 8: Identify Available Community Funding

As the partnership proposes initiatives to expand transportation options for carless job seekers and new employees, how will these plans be funded?

Action: Invite employers and directors of community programs to a discussion on funding employment transportation initiatives. Learn which community programs currently have funds that could be used for transportation purposes? Find out which programs are eligible to apply for other transportation funding opportunities?

Fill in the sample funding inventory sheet (see **Form B** on pg. 68). To assist you in locating funds to sustain employment transportation plans, **Appendix 3** contains a list of federal funding sources that could be applied for transportation needs.

Step 9: Commit to Jointly Fund Transportation Programs

The awareness that a collaborative approach is necessary to fund employment transportation programs is apparent in the tripartite guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). This guidance does more than describe

the ways in which DHHS Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds and DOL Welfare-to-Work funds can be applied for transportation uses. It also encourages the DOL and DHHS to fund improvements to transportation infrastructure "...to take full advantage of existing resources to develop seamless, integrated services addressing the transportation challenge of moving people from welfare to work." (May 26, 2000, p. 1) This emphasis is a departure from the common type of transportation assistance that was provided by directly reimbursing the individual for transportation costs.

The guidance allows TANF and DOL Welfare-to-Work (WtW) funds to be used for the following transportation services:

- A contract for shuttles, buses, car pools and other transportation services;
- The purchase of vans, shuttles, and/or minibuses for the provision of transportation services to eligible individuals;
- Payment of start-up costs for new or expanded transportation services;
- Reimbursement for work-related transportation expenses, such as mileage, fuel, public transit fares, and auto repairs; and
- Facilitating the donation and repair of previously owned or reconditioned vehicles. (For a complete list of eligible transportation uses, refer to the joint guidance in **Appendix 1**.)

Potential Barriers and Resolutions:

This section clarifies common hesitations to using TANF and WtW funds for transportation services:

Barrier: A reluctance to use TANF money to support a transportation service because the 60-month clock will be ticking against the lifetime assistance of a TANF recipient.

Resolution: The final rule on TANF (April 12, 1999) gives states flexibility in the treatment of

transportation under this program. The 60-month time limit and related restrictions, such as data collection and work requirements, only apply to “assistance.” Here are relevant highlights concerning when transportation is or is not considered “assistance”:

1. If TANF-supported transportation is the only TANF support an individual receives, this benefit is not considered assistance.
2. If an individual or working family formerly receiving assistance receives TANF-supported transportation in order to stay employed, this transportation support is not considered assistance.
3. If a TANF-receiving individual or family member is not working and receives TANF-supported transportation to social services or job-seeking activities, this transportation support must be regarded as assistance.
4. States may provide transportation as part of a program of ongoing transitional services using non-federal TANF funds.
5. If a state or local area uses federal TANF funds to provide nonrecurrent, short-term benefits (which can include transportation benefits), these benefits are not considered assistance.
6. Assistance does not include transportation benefits provided under a Job Access or Reverse Commute project to an individual who is not otherwise receiving assistance.

Barrier: Perception that WtW and TANF funds can only be used for transportation services supporting their intended populations.

Resolution: The joint guidance allows TANF and WtW funds to fund a portion of a transportation program even if it is open to riders outside of the TANF and WtW programs.

To pay for a portion of a service, determine the costs of providing the service and “arrive at a

reasonable estimate” of the number of TANF and WtW families that would benefit from the service. Based on this estimate, TANF and WtW funds would only be used to pay for the fair share of direct costs and allocated indirect costs.

Note: After the service has begun, re-evaluate the costs of the service based upon actual ridership statistics rather than estimates and determine the fair share of costs based upon actual use of the service by WtW and TANF recipients.

Barrier: Perception that WtW or TANF funds cannot be used to match other federal grant programs.

Resolution: While TANF and WtW funds typically aren’t able to be used to match other federal funds, they are allowed as a match for the DOT’s Job Access and Reverse Commute grants as authorized in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, but only for operating, not capital costs.

For more information, refer to the following web resources:

- www.ctaa.org/ct/mayjune99/fedex.shtml
- www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ofa/polquest/
- wtw.doleta.gov/qsanda.htm
- www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/fednews.shtml

IV. Implementing Solutions

Timelines for Implementation: Depending on the transportation barriers and the resources available, the strategy that your partnership develops may take a number of months to implement. In the meantime, interim actions can be implemented to immediately link carless participants with jobs.

Internal Partnerships: Partnerships will be necessary at practically each stage of the process of linking program participants with jobs and other employment-related destinations. Here are some ways to involve your own staff as partners in implementing and sustaining employment transportation solutions.

- Keep the accounting and finance office abreast of federal and state regulatory changes, particularly what transportation programs are eligible uses of TANF and Welfare-to-Work funds. This awareness will promote smooth completion of grant proposals, contract writing, timely billing and payment processes, as well as cost allocation methods.
- Facilitate open communication between job developers, one-stop managers and workforce development directors. Each has knowledge and awareness in the puzzle to overcome barriers:

Job developers have the pulse on individual-level transportation needs. They may well be the best asset to help dislocated workers and other unemployed people overcome their transportation barriers. Their professional experiences with program participants are integral to successfully planning employment transportation options.

Directors and managers need to relay important changes to job developers, such as eligible uses of TANF and Welfare-to-Work funds. They also can encourage a greater role of job developers in directly linking individuals with transportation services and working with transportation providers on job fairs and travel training programs. (For more information, refer to the employment transportation technical assistance brief series. These briefs are available online at: <www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/toolkit>.)

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

Maintaining a strategic model that is responsive to an ever-changing environment necessitates that the strategic process be dynamic. As a result, include in your model a mechanism to continuously monitor and evaluate the following:

- The effectiveness of the taskforce,
- The taskforce's goals and strategies,
- The community's needs and resources, and

- The employment transportation services being implemented.

A regular practice of examining and assessing needs and services, of identifying and resolving problems, and of making on-going improvements to your services promotes your continued success in meeting the mobility and employment needs of un- and under-employed people in your community.

Conclusion

Many solutions can be found through some type of formal coordination among the stakeholders. Even if stakeholders aren't ready for formal relationships, they can sustain informal mechanisms for working together. Whether formal or informal partnerships, the stakeholders must confront a simple, glaring fact: transportation costs money. The partnership's job is to identify the costs and determine who can bring which resources to the table in order to best serve the community.

Here are a few key resources for communities ready to undertake transportation coordination:

- **Coordinating Transportation: Models of Cooperative Arrangements.** Community Transportation Association of America, 1995. Available from the National Transit Resource Center, 800.527.8279. This publication looks at several options for transportation coordination, and presents advantages, disadvantages, lessons learned and case studies for each.
- **Maryland Transportation Coordination Manual.** Maryland Department of Transportation, Mass Transit Administration. Prepared by the KFH Group. Available by calling 410.767.3772. This is a step-by-step procedure for bringing the right people to a transportation coordination partnership. Among other information, this manual describes the benefits of coordinating services and sharing vehicles, and provides detailed information on determining transportation costs.

Coming up:

Section Three—Blueprints: Transportation at Work will describe model employment transportation partnerships at the local level, as well as how states have taken a leadership role in forming their own partnerships and supporting local communities as they, too, overcome mobility barriers.

Form A — Worksheet: Transportation Services Inventory

Transit Agency or Community Program	Type of Service (bus, van, taxi, rail, car)	Days of Service	Hours of Service	Lift or Ramp Equipped?	Type of Payment?	How to Access Service?
1. Name: Address: Phone: Contact: Fax:				<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Free <input type="checkbox"/> Voucher <input type="checkbox"/> Fare	
2. Name: Address: Phone: Contact: Fax:					Free Voucher Fare	Subscription
3. Name: Address: Phone: Contact: Fax:				No	Voucher	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> Call for each ride
4. Name: Address: Phone: Contact: Fax:				<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Free <input type="checkbox"/> Voucher <input type="checkbox"/> Fare	Fixed schedule Call for each ride Subscription
5. Name: Address: Phone: Contact: Fax:				Yes No	Free Voucher Fare	Fixed schedule Call for each ride <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Name: Address: Phone: Contact: Fax:					Fare	Fixed schedule Call for each ride Subscription

Form B - Funding Inventory

Funds for Transportation Services	Entity That Receives these Funds	Amount For Transportation
FEDERAL SOURCES		\$
Federal Transit Administration		
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)		
DOL Welfare-To-Work		
Workforce Investment Act		
Community Services Block Grant		
Medicaid - Title XIX		
Community Development Block Grant		
Social Services Block Grant - Title XX		
Head Start		
Older Americans, Title IIIB		
Admin. on Developmental Disabilities		
Mental Health Programs		
Vocational Rehabilitation Programs		
Other Federal Programs (Please List)		
STATE/LOCAL SOURCES		
State Transit Assistance (List Source)		
Local Transit Assistance (List Source)		
Fares		
Donations		
United Way		
Foundations		
Other (List Sources)		

Source: CTAA

Note: Many grants allow funding for transportation services. While transportation may not be specifically mentioned, it is often an eligible expense under the term “support services”.

Section 3: Blueprints — Transportation at Work

Chapter Six



Local Partnerships

Chapter Six

Local Partnerships

Overview

Organizations from across the country have already started the process of building employment transportation opportunities by creating local partnerships.

This chapter contains innovative approaches to employment transportation. Each approach responds to a specific challenge to employment transportation in urban, rural and suburban areas. Challenges include: incorporating childcare trips into work trips, starting vanpool programs, using volunteers and providing incentives to businesses to support transportation programs for employees.

While some of these initiatives have been in operation for a long time and have gone through numerous refinements, others are relatively new. Some offer transportation services, others focus on marketing and outreach and still others present methods to incorporate employment transportation into community-wide transportation systems.

There is no one employment transportation solution. Rather, approaches to transportation barriers will vary according to the unique needs of local job seekers, employees and employers. Solutions will also be based upon geography and the resources of communities.

I. Regional Approaches

A) Challenge: In Southern Arizona, no one transportation option met the diverse needs of an expansive geographic region.

Approach: Offer a range of transportation options for low-income families in urban and rural communities of Southern Arizona.

The goal of Job Express is to assist client customers in becoming self-reliant for their transportation

needs. Job Express works in conjunction with the Department of Economic Security (DES) to help transition people from welfare to work. The participants are eligible for services such as public transit passes, automobile expense subsidies (for repairs, insurance, registration and driver licenses), gas vouchers, cab rides and education on responsible car ownership (i.e., how to purchase and/or maintain an automobile). Participants during pre-employment and up through two years after employment are eligible for these services.

Job Express coordinators work with client customers to help them assess their transportation needs and to provide the right mix of services. The coordinators provide individualized service in a friendly, caring and professional atmosphere.

After its first year of operation, the partnership with DES was expanded to include Yuma, Santa Cruz and Cochise Counties areas that border Mexico. In addition to DES funding, Job Express is funded by Pima County under its Welfare-to-Work program and from the United Way of Tucson & Southern Arizona that sponsors community programs designed to assist other disadvantaged people.

Broad-based community support for Job Express is ensured in each county by a local volunteer consortium. This consortium is comprised of business representatives, civic leaders, foundations, non-profit human service organizations and advocacy groups (e.g., welfare reform, the disabled) whose function is to help oversee and guide the program services as well as identify additional funding sources. Other important stakeholders for Job Express include the United Way of Tucson & Southern Arizona, the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Pima County Community Services and the City of Tucson.

Results: Between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000, Job Express helped over 1,182 TANF customers and

their families get to pre-employment training, jobs, interviews and childcare. More than 87 percent of them were women.

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B) Challenge: The local Department of Human Services in northeast Oklahoma needed a single point of contact to coordinated the travel needs of new workers.

Approach: Contract with a transportation broker and mobility manager.

In northeast Oklahoma, the Department of Human Services (DHS) has a contract with Tulsa Transit (a public transit provider) to manage transportation services for TANF participants in an 11- county, highly rural area and the City of Tulsa.

As the mobility manager and broker, Tulsa Transit:

- * Conducts in-person transportation needs assessments,
- * Determines the best transportation service options for each TANF participant,
- * Identifies and negotiates contracts with various service providers as needed,
- * Schedules or trains the TANF participants for the selected transportation,
- * Collects client usage data for DHS review,
- * Verifies that the services were actually provided, and
- * Invoices DHS for the services provided.

The transportation services that Tulsa Transit arranges include: Tulsa's fixed route Connection,

curb-to-curb demand response, vanpools, carpools, taxis, bikes, private autos, among other alternatives.

In addition to training TANF participants and DHS staff on transportation services, Tulsa Transit also provides training to employers.

Results: This approach has resulted in a regional employment and medical transportation system using the transit provider as the mobility manager.

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II. Solutions for Rural Areas

A) Challenge: Without transportation services many people in southeastern Missouri were unable to reach available jobs.

Approach: Develop the Missouri Bootheel Transportation Outreach Program

The Workforce Investment Board of Southeast Missouri is using funds from the TEA-21 Job Access and Reverse Commute Program and a local match of U.S. Department of Labor Welfare-to-Work dollars to provide transportation services in southeastern Missouri. This service area covers seven of the most impoverished counties in the state, and most are very rural. Without transportation services many people are unable to reach available jobs.

The Missouri Bootheel Transportation Program creates an opportunity for residents to go to work at sites they normally would not be able to access. Some of these job sites are located out of state in Arkansas and Tennessee, where the job market is richer.

Workforce Investment Board (WIB) staff work with area transportation providers to set up routes to select employment sites. WIB staff target employment opportunities for clients that meet strict

criteria: Jobs are in the \$8.00 per hour range (a living wage), workers receive benefits, and working conditions are safe. Staff assist their clients in obtaining positions and guarantee them a way to reach these targeted job sites. The WIB contracts for transit service and the transit providers carry individuals from central locations convenient to their homes, such as public housing community buildings and churches, to employment sites.

Fares for individual riders cost \$5.00 a day for trips fewer than 40 miles round trip, and \$10.00 a day for trips over 40 miles. There are two ways that WIB participants pay for the trips: 1) Riders buy passes, or 2) Employers withhold money from paychecks and apply these funds to the transportation services. Regardless of the fare payment option selected, the local Department of Family Services (DFS) uses TANF funds to reimburse participants for their trips. While all routes are open to the public, general public riders pay the full fare.

Marketing the program: The WIB undertook an intensive outreach program to find the riders for the transportation services. Bootheel's Transportation Project Manager Alana Williams explains that this program is similar to grassroots voter registration drive in that WIB job developers and other partners set up outreach booths in public housing communities, church basements and anywhere else where the targeted populations spend their time.

The WIB also markets the Bootheel program, its services and successes within the community-at-large, communicating that this program is taking people to locations they could not otherwise have gone and that it is creating a new opportunity for job development and economic development.

Results: In the first six months of service, approximately 600 people took advantage of the transportation to get to work. Currently, about 160 people a day are using the service and vans take riders to approximately 10 employers. One employer, Tyson poultry plant, continues to give the WIB orders for new positions and currently employs approximately 50 of Bootheel Transportation's participant riders.

Williams elaborates: "Many long-term welfare recipients have become company people with benefits, vacation and an income to support their family. People who had very little hope for the future, now have an opportunity to work because of transportation."

Lessons Learned:

- * Southeast Missouri WIB gained an awareness of the true cost of providing transportation services, realizing that transportation is expensive.
- * Transit providers need time to find and train drivers, because they don't have any waiting in the wings.
- * Finding partners is extremely important.
- * The transportation project is very staff intensive.
- * Some people who obtained jobs through the program will quit.
- * Only work with employers who meet your standards.
- * Outreach is inexpensive and it is the KEY!

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To learn more:

www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/practices/mo_bootheel_pic.shtml

B) Challenge: TANF recipients needed after-hours and weekend transportation services in the City of Charlottesville, Va., and its rural counties.

Approach: Contract with a local transit provider.

JAUNT, an urban and rural public transit provider, provides 24-hour transit service to VIEW (Virginia's

welfare-to-work program) recipients and their children living in the City of Charlottesville, Va., and five surrounding rural counties. After JAUNT's regular service and the city's fixed-route service end for the day, recipients reach jobs, job training and childcare on JAUNT's demand-response vans or with the sub-contracted taxi service that provides after-hour trips for single riders. This around-the-clock service was initially made possible with funding from the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS). JAUNT, through one of the local social service agencies, applied for and was awarded a one-year \$187,000 demonstration grant from the DSS. With this funding, JAUNT was able to expand its transportation operations to meet the mobility needs of VIEW clients in the City of Charlottesville and two rural counties. The grant was renewed for a second year.

With the award of an FTA Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant in November 1999, JAUNT was able to expand the service to three additional rural counties, along with expansion of the city's bus routes to evening routes and an expansion of the area's rideshare program. The grant covered the costs of operating the late-night and rural service, a transportation coordinator, an answering machine, cell phones and other expenses. By using an answering machine and cell phones for drivers to learn about any trip changes or cancellations JAUNT does not need to pay for a dispatcher past its normal business hours.

Service is provided around the clock, seven days a week to transport VIEW participants to second- and third-shift employment sites. In addition, rides are provided to job readiness classes, job interviews, employment sites, approved educational classes and to childcare. Children ride with their parents for free.

JAUNT's transportation coordinator has open communication with VIEW case workers and says that one challenge to providing late-night service to VIEW clients is cancellations and no-shows. JAUNT encourages VIEW case workers to follow up with clients, who make their own reservations

with JAUNT for service, and train them on using public transportation services. Participants may lose the privilege of JAUNT service or have their service suspended if they have repeated no-shows or failures in canceling or changing trips.

Results: In the two years of the state-funded DSS grant, JAUNT provided over 53,000 trips to reach jobs or childcare, and has helped over 300 VIEW clients overcome their employment-related transportation barriers. An additional 90 VIEW recipients were provided with nearly 15,000 bus passes to allow them to use the fixed route city service. Over the course of the project, seven clients were hired as drivers.

In the first seven months of the JARC grant, JAUNT provided over 21,000 trips. In addition, the city's bus service expanded to operate evening hours and provided over 32,000 trips. JAUNT was awarded a second-year JARC grant to continue its services. Finding sustainable funding continues to be an ongoing challenge.

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C) Challenge: A rural area in southeastern Oklahoma, needed transportation services for second- and third-shift jobs.

Approach: Transportation agency provides vanpools.

Kibois Area Transit System (KATS) based in southeastern Okla., has been operating employment transportation vanpools to employment sites since 1984. To keep costs down, KATS often trains riders on the employment routes to drive the vehicles. Drivers get to use the service for free. These employment shuttles cover long distances and are arranged for employees working second- and third-shift jobs.

KATS works with job developers and employers to plan the work shuttles, and the design of this service matches the employment needs and resources of the community. Since 1984, KATS's shuttles have taken employees to such job sites as poultry processing plants in Arkansas, a sewing factory in Wilburton, Okla., and more recently, a new clothing plant in Wilburton. Seven women ride the bus to this plant. In February 1998, KATS began more work routes in the Poteau and Heavener area, but with these routes they provided the drivers. The vans run all three shifts that the plants have. KATS is hauling about 20 to 30 workers a day for \$2.00 a trip.

Here is a sample of the work trips KATS provides:

Wilburton, Okla. - 65 round trip (RT) miles — \$4.00 a day (7 riders - 6:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

Ft. Smith, Ark. - 160 RT miles — \$6.00 a day (10 riders - 12:45 p.m. to 3:30 a.m.)

Heavener, Okla. - 90 RT miles — \$4.00 a day (1 van with 14 riders - 5:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and 1 van with 10 riders - 3:00 p.m. to 2:30 a.m.)

KATS vehicles are in use all the time, handling a broad range of transportation needs. KATS's goal is to make full use of all the vehicles that they have. As a result, they don't just focus on one type of rider but work for efficiency and mobility. Besides work-related trips, KATS uses its vehicles throughout the day handling other riders, including Head Start and kindergarten children, senior citizens and others who need transportation.

The Latimer County and LeFlore County Department of Human Services are working closely with KATS to place clients in jobs that have work shuttles and will start new shuttles when there is demand. KATS assists local citizens by collecting applications for the processing plants and working with their personnel departments to ensure a continuous flow of potential employees.

Because the Talihina Chamber of Commerce understands the economic impact resulting from KATS services, over the years it has financially supported the KATS vanpool system.

Results: Approximately 40 people are served daily for the work shuttles in the Talihina area. During the course of its years in the valley area, KATS is directly responsible for the employment of over 150 Talihina residents, many who are former TANF and Food Stamp families.

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D) Challenge: Residents of rural Washington County, Oregon, needed access to employment and employment training services in the urban areas of the Portland Tri-County region.

Approach: Diverse funding sources were secured to maximize resources and provide enhanced transportation options that feed into existing public transportation fixed-route and light rail services.

Ride Connection, a private nonprofit agency that coordinates community transportation in the Portland metropolitan area, secured funding from Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District (Tri-Met) to provide rides to residents of rural Washington County. This expanded service has allowed Ride Connection to offer rural residents greater transportation options to employment and employment training opportunities.

Ride Connection's advisory committee, comprised of local social service leaders and community advocates interested in the transportation needs of rural Washington County residents, conducted a transportation needs assessment of the area. This needs assessment provided the foundation for a service plan designed to meet the mobility needs of the rural communities. The plan resulted in Ride Connection's U-Shuttle Public Transportation Program, which opened its door to the rural Washington County communities on May 11, 2000.

Because the needs of the rural community are diverse, a variety of transportation options are offered. A combination of shuttles and demand-response services are provided Monday through Saturday between the hours of 5:00 a.m. and 11:30 p.m. Extended service hours meet the needs of employees working second- and third-shift jobs. Low-income residents can use U-Shuttle services to access local fixed-route bus and MAX light rail to reach destinations outside of the local area. Low-income residents with children can access transportation for their children to and from childcare.

Ride Connection operates central dispatch services to receive trip requests and assigns rides to private transportation providers who hold Blanket Purchase Agreements with Ride Connection. To keep costs down, Ride Connection groups trips coming from remote rural areas.

Results: Since the program began in May 2000, Ride Connection has provided more than 8200 rides and has helped more than 275 rural residents. The U-Shuttle is currently averaging more than 150 rides per day.

Ride Connection is developing additional service concepts to reach more people and increase the number of employment transportation options. The following are some of the service enhancements Ride Connection is working on:

Employment Shuttles: Washington County is home to several high tech giants, such as Intel and TriQuint, which are located in the urban areas of the county. Ride Connection is working closely with local Transportation Management Agencies and local employers to develop employment shuttles to specific employer sites.

Service Area Expansion: The rural Washington County U-Shuttle program has been so successful that local partners and supporters identified additional funding and generated support to expand the U-Shuttle program into additional areas of the County. The expanded service focuses on making public transportation linkages for low-income

residents of Tigard, Ore. This service is scheduled to begin in December 2000.

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III. Approaches for Urban Areas

A) Challenge: People from job-scarce areas of Louisville, Ky., needed to get to suburban jobs.

Approach: Develop express route and local circulator shuttle

The metropolitan planning organization in the Louisville area, the Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency (KIPDA), which together with the local public transit system, the Transit Authority of River City (TARC), established an express route between West Louisville and the Bluegrass Industrial Park. They also implemented a local circulator shuttle within the industrial park. Prior to this new reverse commuter service, residents of the west end of Louisville who traveled to the Bluegrass Industrial Park had to make three bus transfers and walk a long distance from the bus stop to the workplace. This resulted in a two-hour, one-way trip.

The new service includes two out-bound runs from the far west end of Louisville to the Bluegrass Industrial Park, and an additional eight runs starting from the central business district. Eleven in-bound runs complement the out-bound service. The travel time from the two endpoints of the express route is 45 minutes, with the bulk of the route traveled on Interstate 64. The peak cash fare is \$1.00.

In addition to the express service, two local circulator shuttles operate within the Bluegrass Industrial Park. The huge size of the park, combined with a lack of sidewalks or streetlights, could impede a

commuter's ability to get to their workplaces without the shuttles. Each of the shuttles operates on half-hour headways in the morning and afternoon. With a free transfer from the express route, there is no charge to ride the shuttles.

Specific programs were launched to develop ridership: KIPDA and TARC held meetings with community agencies, the local Private Industry Council and employers in Bluegrass Industrial Park to generate referrals. In addition, they made presentations to several chambers of commerce. TARC worked especially closely with social service workers and employment counselors in the inner city to identify potential riders. TARC also produced attractive brochures illustrating the express route and the local circulator shuttles, as well as the schedules for each, and distributed them widely to employers, social service agencies and existing passengers. When job fairs were held at the Bluegrass Industrial Park, TARC provided free rides to the event and distributed information about the routes. Finally, TARC coordinated press coverage on the new route in the local newspaper.

In addition to cash fares, TARC secured cash assistance from the municipality and support from employers in the form of a commitment to purchase employee bus passes. Jefferson County also pledged funding from the local occupational tax fund. Combined with federal operating assistance and local transit funds, these sources of funding are expected to sustain the service for the foreseeable future.

Results: Ridership surveys revealed that express-route riders tended to be transit-dependent commuters who lacked a vehicle. Generally, they worked in the food service, hospitality and retail industries. An overwhelming percentage of those surveyed reported that they rode the bus to work every day. Slightly more than half lived in the four zip codes of West Louisville that comprised the target area for the service. The initial success of the reverse commute express service has since allowed it to become institutionalized. The reverse commute program began as a demonstration and has become an integral part of the services offered by TARC.

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B) Challenge: To increase the hours of transit service (evenings and weekends) in southwestern Connecticut, expand service to areas of job growth in suburban towns and foster cooperation among the region's five transit districts.

Approach: Collaborate to enhance public transit services.

Representatives of employment and training, social services, transportation, chambers of commerce, planning and government in southwestern Connecticut established the People to Jobs Regional Transportation Task Force to meet the employment transportation challenges in the region. The group formed to identify and plan the needed transportation services, apply for funding and implement new service.

The partnership's first public transit enhancement was the Bridgeport/Valley Connection which extended a portion of one bus line that:

- * Extended service to a local train station,
- * Created an agreement between two transit districts which allowed service to cross their "borders" thereby facilitating a seamless service for commuters, and
- * Introduced transit service to a suburban commercial corridor with strong job growth that was not previously served.

The one line, which begins at a bus terminal and ends at a railroad station, makes stops at a hospital, a shopping mall, and a Wal-Mart store - all sites with strong job opportunities.

The Bridgeport/Valley project, which began in 1997, was initially funded as a demonstration project by the state Department of Children and

Families and the Southern Connecticut Gas Company. It continues with U.S. Department of Labor Welfare-to-Work transportation funding from the Connecticut State Legislature. The Welfare-to-Work transportation funding, which is administered by the state Department of Social Services, has also been used to provide expanded evening and weekend service in many of the five transit districts. In addition, these funds support an evening shuttle service in the Norwalk Transit District.

FTA's Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) funds enabled the Task Force to introduce new services in November 1999. This includes the 'Coastal Link', a seamless service created by the collaboration of three transit operators along a portion of U.S. Route 1 between Milford and Norwalk, Conn., with a heavy concentration of employment opportunities. Ridership has been high, nearly 60,000 trips per month (September 2000). The cost to the program is about \$.83 per trip (September 2000).

The WorkPlace, Inc. facilitates the activities of the People to Jobs Task Force in the twenty-town Regional Workforce Development Board service delivery area of southwestern Connecticut. It also acts as the fiscal and administrative agent for the task force. In addition to using existing demonstration funds and other resources to enhance fixed-route services for better job access, the WorkPlace also seeks to ensure the sustainability of these services by accessing additional (and varied) funding sources.

Results: Overall, the services organized by the People to Jobs Task Force recently surpassed the 1,000,000 passenger-trip milestone.

With funding from the Connecticut Department of Social Services and JARC the Task Force is spending more than \$1,000,000 in transit enhancements annually. This translates into more than 3,000 hours per month of additional services targeting improved access to jobs. Statistical data on the services are closely monitored by the Task Force to assure effectiveness and make changes when needed.

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C) Challenge: The Buffalo, N.Y., metropolitan area needed transportation to suburban areas and to accommodate travel needs of second- and third-shift employees.

Approach: Develop Hublink - multiple service strategies

Transportation providers in western New York have been restructuring their mobility system to respond to job and population shifts. The new service concept is called Hublink, and focuses on better coordination of all types of transportation services to increase personal mobility and maximize limited transportation dollars.

Led by the Niagara Frontier Transit Authority (NFTA) in Buffalo, N.Y., the Hublink initiative is a model for planning transportation systems to explicitly take into account employment transportation. Hublink includes extensive research on transportation needs and alternatives, coordination opportunities and creative financing. The objective is to create a broad-based community consensus regarding the best approach to improve public transportation.

Results: To date, several service concepts have been developed to better provide employment transportation. They are:

Late-Night Service: Many inner-city residents are employed in service industries, which have night or evening shifts. To improve services for passengers traveling to and from work at night, NFTA provides night services on certain employment transportation routes. For example, NFTA expanded the hours on one route to an industrial park until after 11:30

p.m. which then accommodated the travel needs of all three shift times served.

NFTA also operates a request-a-stop program after 9:00 p.m., which allows riders to alight anywhere along the route if the bus can safely stop.

Reverse Commuting: Much of the central portions of Buffalo and Western Niagara Falls are characterized by transit-dependent populations who need better access to suburban employment in the retail, service and health care fields. Because significant job opportunities in these fields are available in suburbs adjacent to Buffalo, NFTA has extended transit services to provide direct access to shopping malls, industrial parks and other suburban job sites. To encourage public transit ridership, NFTA works directly with companies to sell transit passes to employees.

Other NFTA service modifications include implementing timed transfers at suburban hubs and key urban transfer points, expanding access to reverse commute trips on existing and new suburban-to-city express routes, instituting employer shuttles at suburban work sites and introducing limited-stop service on key routes in reverse directions. New services may include a region-wide vanpool program and subscription buses to the largest employment centers.

Buffalo's transportation planning process resulted from the recognition of unmet needs and a commitment from a broad-based coalition to a variety of transit service concepts in which employment transportation is a significant component.

For more information contact:

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IV. Childcare and Transportation

A) Challenge: In Duluth, Minn., low-income parents needed quality childcare that was accessible via public transportation.

Approach: Co-locate childcare center at transit hub.

In Duluth, Minnesota, the YWCA is renting space for a childcare center in the downtown hub of the Duluth Transit Authority (DTA). The YWCA Early Childhood Center, which is open to the general public, offers both full- and half-day care. Infants and toddlers attend the early childhood center. A center for pre-schoolers, which includes an enrichment program, is located less than a block away.

The YWCA has an arrangement with an area family service agency in which the agency is billed for childcare for children of parents who are receiving public assistance. Many of these parents ride public transit to downtown job sites.

Funding to construct and equip the center came from: the Ordean Foundation as well as other foundations, the Duluth Transit Authority, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, individual and business contributions and from government funds.

Results: The YWCA-DTA childcare site has increased the capacity for much-needed childcare services in the Duluth area. Four months after opening, the YWCA Infant/Toddler Center had a waiting list of 38 infants for 8 slots. The YWCA moved its toddler program to its main facility and opened up eight additional infant slots (16 total). The Center continues to operate with a waiting list. It is remaining consistent that half of the parents that use the Infant Center are public transportation consumers. The YWCA is currently developing a second center with a capacity of 75, and adding a teen mother housing component. This will marry the three biggest barriers to self-sufficiency: transportation, childcare and housing.

For more information contact:

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B) Challenge: In Milwaukee, parents needed transportation to carry their children to and from childcare.

Approach: A local partnership created a van program to link children with childcare.

The Milwaukee W-2 Childcare Transportation Project is a free transportation service for the children of working W-2 and other low-income parents. The ages of the children receiving childcare transportation through the project range from under age 1 to age 12. Surveys administered during the initial planning phase of this project showed that of the current Milwaukee County W-2 caseload, 78 percent of this population did not possess a valid driver's license and 87 percent did not own a personal vehicle. In an effort to reduce excessive commute times and enhance the prospects for long-term job retention and advancement for Milwaukee County's low-income working families, the five Milwaukee County W-2 agencies and their planning partners developed and implemented the Milwaukee W-2 Childcare Transportation Project.

YW Works, the lead W-2 agency for the project, established a Childcare Transportation Clearinghouse that provides technical assistance to W-2 agency Childcare Transportation Coordinators, childcare and transportation providers, and families using or inquiring about the service. Clearinghouse staff work with the YW Works Financial Department in auditing, processing, and paying monthly transportation vendor invoices. Other Clearinghouse responsibilities include staff training (including W-2 agencies, childcare centers, and advocacy groups), dispute mediation/resolution, and data tracking, management, and reporting. Clearinghouse staff also develop and distribute semi-annual customer satisfaction surveys, soliciting input and suggestions from parents and vendors alike. While physically housed at YW Works, the Milwaukee W-

2 Childcare Transportation Clearinghouse remains an independent, neutral component serving all parties involved in the project.

Transportation Providers: All transportation providers must sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the YW Works Childcare Transportation Clearinghouse before they can begin transporting children for the project. The contracting process includes driving record checks on all drivers, verification of \$1,000,000 liability insurance, a copy of their most recent state vehicle inspection report, and a visual inspection of their vehicles by a member of the Clearinghouse staff. Once approved, transportation vendors are paid \$4.50 per one-way trip, per child. There are more than 40 small- to mid-sized community based transportation vendors providing services for this project.

The Milwaukee W-2 Childcare Transportation Project is truly a collaborative effort with a planning team consisting of representatives from all five Milwaukee County W-2 agencies, state and local childcare advocates and administrators, Milwaukee County Department of Human Services, and local childcare and transportation providers. The successful operation of this project is based on the premise of cooperation among all parties involved and the common goal of providing safe, reliable, cost-effective childcare transportation to low-income working families in Milwaukee County.

Results: The Milwaukee Childcare Transportation Project has been in full operation since June 1st, 1999 and has been an integral part of Milwaukee's Welfare to Work strategy. After one year of service (May 2000), the project provides 1,400 trips a day at \$4.50 a trip. During this time, this project has provided free, safe and reliable childcare transportation and removed at least one more potential barrier to the family's ultimate goal of self-sufficiency.

Perhaps the benefit most noticed by parents early on is that they have more money to provide for the needs of their family since this is a free service. Pre-implementation survey responses showed that many families were paying as much as \$10.00 per day for

childcare transportation. Obviously this takes quite a bite out of a weekly paycheck at a wage of \$7 - \$8 per hour. Many of the working individuals responding to this survey indicated that the high cost of transporting their child(ren) to and from childcare combined with conflicting start times for their work shift had caused them to leave or lose previous employment situations. The availability of free, temporary childcare transportation has had a positive impact on job retention and advancement opportunities for many of Milwaukee's low-income working families. Sixty-nine percent of the parents receiving this service are currently employed in full-time jobs and the majority of those parents have remained with the same employer since their entry into the program.

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To learn more:

www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/practices/wi_mctp.shtml

For other ways to incorporate childcare and transportation, see these other Chapter Six descriptions: Job Express, JAUNT, Sears, Roebuck and Co., South Plains Community Action Association, TranStar, T.R.I.P., and NJ Transit.

V. Approaches for One-Stop Centers

A) Challenge: To incorporate transportation into one-stop center support services

Approach 1: Contract with area transportation providers.

The WaCaDaCha one-stop center, which is a collaborative of four rural counties in northwest Georgia, offers transportation to eligible consumers who seek job training and employment as part of a full range of workforce development and customer services. The trip is free for the eligible riders.

Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) provides the coordinated transportation by contracting with a transit provider in each specific area. Trips are allocated to the various agencies within each county. A central coordinator in each DHR region oversees the operation of transportation for all clients, develops alternatives to DHR transportation, such as contracting with private providers, and secures grants for transportation services.

Funding for the service is provided through existing DHR funds, which are redirected to pay for the system, as well as additional local and federal money. By consolidating routes and eliminating duplicate routes DHR actually saves money.

The coordinated system of transportation combines all relevant transportation under a single provider for a specific geographic area. The system transports a variety of customers together in order to meet everyone's needs in a cost-effective manner. Trips are scheduled in advance so that the transportation provider can look at the travel needs daily and determine the most efficient route for picking up all passengers.

Partners of the WaCaDaCha workforce development transportation project include area representatives from workforce development, transportation and human service agencies, and the Georgia Department of Labor.

Results: The four-county area has realized an efficient system of facilitating transportation for eligible consumers, who can access one-stop services and enhance their job skills in job training. The consumers can continue to access this transportation after they are employed since the transportation providers are awarded contracts according to their ability to continue to provide transportation at a low-cost per trip rate.

The increased needs of TANF consumers for transportation to access work programs are being met. Georgia DHR implemented this coordinated client transportation system to meet the new demands of providing mobility for individuals from welfare to work, as well as meeting the increasing needs of MHMRSA and Rehabilitation Services employment programs.

The WaCaDaCha one-stop pilot has now been implemented throughout Georgia using the DHR coordinated transportation approach.

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Approach 2: On-site travel center at one stop center

The Nia (“Purpose”) Center in Louisville, Ky., is a campus in which the Transit Authority of River City (TARC) Nia Neighborhood Travel Center is housed with the Workforce Development Partnership Center. The Nia Center also contains an inter-generational care facility, a community development bank, the Louisville Business Resource Center, the LCDB Enterprise Group, and other employment and family support services.

TARC’s Nia Travel Center is a focal point for West End Louisville public transportation services and information. The Nia Center is adjacent to the intersection of two of TARC’s most heavily traveled bus routes. Together, these two routes account for approximately 20 percent of TARC’s average daily ridership. In addition, three neighborhood circulator routes, an express service to Bluegrass Industrial Park, and TARC Night Owl buses serve the Nia Center.

A Nia Travel Center coordinator is available on site as a liaison to the other tenant partners and to the surrounding community, including employers and government agencies. The transportation coordinator works cooperatively with employers to design

and deliver specialized, cost-effective transportation services for employees living or working in the area.

TARC has also launched a service it calls Nia Night Owl Job Link to meet the needs of late-night shift workers: People living or working in Louisville’s Empowerment Zone can take a 20-passenger shuttle bus between home and work from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. daily. To be eligible for the service, all one needs to do is pre-register.

The successful practices evidenced in Louisville include: sound planning to recognize unmet employment transportation needs, coordination of transportation and social service resources and development of public-private funding partnerships.

Results: The value of TARC’s employment transportation programs is exemplified in the demand for the expansion of the Nia Night Owl service area: When a low-income employee from outside of the Empowerment Zone called to ask if the Night Owl service could pick him up from his job, TARC extended the service area to pick him up. Before the employee became a rider on the Night Owl service he would get off work at 2:00 a.m. and sleep at his job for three hours until the first bus of the day came by at 5:00 a.m. to take him home.

Nia Night Owl extended the service area because, as TARC General Manager Barry Barker said, “We want to do all we can to provide transportation services so that workers can have a one-pillow, not two-pillow, sleep.”

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VI. Public/Private Partnerships

A) Challenge: The Sears, Roebuck and Co. distribution center in Columbus, Ohio, could not be reached using public transit.

Approach: Form a partnership with other employers to persuade the local transit agency to provide bus service.

The Fashion Center is a sorting, tagging and distribution facility for clothing sold by Sears. Located on the far west side of Columbus, Ohio, the Fashion Center works with the Ohio Department of Human Services and the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services to hire people off the welfare rolls.

Transportation was a huge obstacle in hiring welfare recipients because most of them did not have cars and the Fashion Center was not served by public transit. The closest bus stop was two to three miles away and not within reasonable walking distance. Also, there was no direct bus route from East Columbus, where many welfare recipients live, to West Columbus.

Nick Francone, manager of the Fashion Center, had contacted Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) and asked them to run a cross-town bus from East Columbus to West Columbus where his operation and other large employers are located. However, COTA was unwilling to add the route.

Francone thought that COTA might be willing to add the cross-town route if employers asked jointly. To get businesses together, Francone literally drove the route that he thought the bus should run and wrote down the addresses of all businesses along the route. He sent each of the approximately 70 businesses a letter inviting them to a meeting at his facility. Seven employers, mostly the largest, came to the meeting.

The result of the meeting was that Sears and five other businesses - Eddie Bauer, Hills, Consolidated Stores (KayBee Toys, Odd Lots and Big Lots), Miejer and UPS - agreed to work together to propose the bus route to COTA. At Francone's request, the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce set up a meeting between the group of businesses and COTA. The businesses agreed that they would guarantee that COTA would receive revenue for 40 passengers each way for one year,

whether or not the seats were filled, and the transit authority agreed to add the route. To make this proposal work, each company agreed to fund a certain number of seats. Also, the six companies agreed to make their hours fit the bus schedule.

The bus route has been in operation since January 1998. None of the companies ever had to pay for any unfilled seats because there were enough riders from the start.

The bus route runs for both first and second shifts. It picks people up at the St. Stephen's Community Center in East Columbus, which is within walking distance for the welfare recipients hired by the West Columbus companies. Also, there is a childcare facility at St. Stephen's so parents can easily drop their children off at childcare and then travel to work.

Francone advises, "Don't let initial frustrations dampen your enthusiasm for efforts to hire off welfare and to solve transportation issues of these new employees. You may only get two to three workers out of your first recruitment efforts, and it may take a long time to solve transportation problems, but keep at it because word will spread through the community about your jobs. People need jobs, and if they can get to the jobs, they will come to you."

From The Road To Work (1999, The Welfare to Work Partnership). Courtesy of the Welfare To Work Partnership

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B) Challenge: A private employer in rural North Carolina had difficulties retaining employees because of a lack of transportation.

Approach: Employer contracts directly with transportation provider for services.

The Smithfield Packing Company, located in rural Bladen County, North Carolina, determined that

transportation problems impact its employee turnover rate. In an effort to obtain additional employees from the surrounding counties and to increase the availability of transportation resources, representatives of the company met with staff from the Cumberland County Department of Social Services' (DSS) Work First Program. A plan was developed for Smithfield Packing Company to contract directly with a private bus company to transport employees from Cumberland County to the Bladen County worksite (26 miles one-way).

For the first 30 days of employment, the Cumberland County DSS uses TANF funds to reimburse the Work First recipient for his/her transportation expenses. For the next 60 days, the DSS reimburses the rider using either NCDOT Work First Transitional/Employment Transportation Assistance funds or Work First Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds - depending on the status of the individual. The cost of non-subsidized travel for employees is \$6.00 per day through payroll deduction.

This transportation service meets the needs of the community, not just welfare recipients. Any employee that needs transportation is allowed to use the bus service, regardless of whether they have ever received welfare assistance.

Results: People who were formerly TANF recipients can now get to work because of the transportation provided. In addition, other first- and second-shift workers also have had their transportation burden lightened because of the bus service. Approximately 70 Smithfield Packing Company employees benefit from the program.

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C) Challenge: On Florida's panhandle, local hotels, retail outlets and restaurants were having trouble filling available jobs.

Approach: Implement employer-driven vanpooling

Responding to this situation, the Destin Area Chamber of Commerce, with support from the West Florida Regional Planning Council (the Pensacola-area Metropolitan Planning Organization), developed a vanpool service designed to bring workers into the Destin area.

The vanpool program transports employees from Gulf Breeze, Crestview and other areas along the Alabama border to Destin and South Walton beaches in Florida. As the program grows, destinations to other beaches and inland areas will be added.

Van Pool Services Inc. (VPSI), a national commuter vanpool agency, is contracted to handle the day-to-day details of the vanpool program, including fleet management, operations, marketing, maintenance, billing and monthly payment collection. Emerald Coast Transportation, Inc., a nonprofit corporation, manages the three van routes for employees and employers in Okaloosa and Walton Counties. Vans are leased and operated for \$5,000 a month. The employer matches the fees that the rider pays. The fee is based on the number of passengers, the type of vehicle, and the daily round-trip mileage.

Emerald Coast Transportation is working hard to overcome many of the typical welfare-to-work challenges - service is provided for riders around the clock and a Guaranteed Ride Home program has been established. Park-and-Ride lots at food stores, a police station, a high school and a coffee shop are among the pick-up and drop-off points used for the three routes.

To advertise employment opportunities and recruit employees, the Destin Chamber of Commerce holds job fairs in which potential employees are surveyed to determine the potential number of vanpool users.

Vanpooling is the right option for the community because of its flexibility and convenience. By providing easy, reliable and safe access to the workplace, the program is a way for employers to recruit and keep employees, and employer tax

credits are incentives for both employers and employees to rideshare. Participating employees benefit because they have a reliable vehicle and a convenient way to travel to work. Through vanpooling, commuters can save as much as \$2,500 a year by not using their own vehicle (if they have one). The vanpool program is also a way to help reduce traffic and parking problems.

Results: With support from 60 community businesses, local leaders and transportation planners, the results of the vanpool program have been very positive. More than 35 employers have joined as members of the Emerald Coast Transportation vanpool program. All four 15-passenger vans are at full capacity daily. And, there is growing demand from employees of non-member employers to use the vanpool service.

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VII. Transportation as Job Opportunity

A) Challenge: Persons receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) who live in rural areas have additional barriers to employment due to long distances from home to employment “hubs.”

Approach: The South Plains Community Action Association, Inc. (SPCAA) in Texas, developed three transportation programs to increase access to employment for TANF clients.

Under one initiative, the Transit Career Training (TCT) program, SPCAA is recruiting and training welfare-to-work (WtW) customers as employees in the transit industry. In another program, SPCAA is providing daily transit services for welfare recipients who seek employment or have jobs in an adjacent urban community. The third offers a training curriculum to help people in purchase cars. Finan-

cial support for the programs comes from different federal, state and local funding streams.

Transit Career Training Program: WtW participants in the Transit Career Training (TCT) program are trained in the areas necessary to the public transit industry. Just like other transit employees, TCT participants who receive training have to demonstrate capacity and get certification in the following areas:

- Class C Commercial Driver License (CDL),
- First Aid,
- CPR,
- Passenger Assistance Techniques,
- Vehicle Maintenance & Operations,
- Defensive Driving,
- Emergency Response,
- Customer Service,
- Dealing with Biohazard Materials and Exposure, and
- Documentation and Record-Keeping.

Developing competency in these areas increases the TCT participant’s capacity to secure employment in the transit industry, and their new skills can be applied to various jobs and real life situations.

From the onset of the TCT program, a one-to-one relationship with each transit career trainer is developed. While the role of the trainer is to schedule and facilitate the training and provide initial on-site supervision, the continuous encouragement and support or “mentoring” assistance is probably the greatest factor in the success of the welfare-to-work participant remaining on the job.

TCT graduates are employed with the SPARTAN transportation division of South Plains Community Action Association, Inc., which serves as the public transit provider for 10 counties in this rural region, as well as with another private business.

Job Routes Program: This program is designed to help welfare recipients access jobs and job readiness/ job search assistance. Job Routes offers route options including transportation in the early morning, late

evening and on weekends to accommodate persons working on second and third shifts. Participants are individuals receiving TANF benefits and are required to be involved in specific employment activities, such as work, GED/high school, job search, job readiness, or work experience/community service.

The SPARTAN transportation division of SPCAA operates the Job Routes program. Support for the program includes funds and in-kind resources from the Food Stamp

Employment and Training Program, the South Plains Regional Workforce Development Board, the Texas Workforce Commission, and SPCAA.

A significant factor in the success of this program is the positive working relationship between the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program, the South Plains Regional

Workforce Development Board, the Texas Workforce Commission and SPARTAN. Each participant is involved with a Food Stamp case manager, and they jointly develop an Individual Service Strategy (ISS). Once the ISS is developed and specific activities planned, the case manager refers the client to SPARTAN for transportation scheduling. Scheduled transportation includes stops to client-selected childcare sites and to targeted work or work-related activities.

After clients secure employment, SPARTAN provides on-going transportation for a period of up to six months. While involved in the Job Routes program, participants deposit co-payments into an Individual Development Account (IDA). At the end of the six-month period, the client is able to withdraw the co-payment amount and use these monies as “start up” funds to secure their own personal transportation or to pay for continuing transit fares.

Wheels To Work That Works: In many instances, it is cost-prohibitive for SPARTAN to provide Job Routes services to all South Plains residents who need transportation to-and-from work. Many

employees live in remote areas and have commutes as far as 120 miles round-trip. Others have shifts that end at 3 o'clock in the morning. These scenarios led SPARTAN to develop Wheels To Work That Works, a training curriculum that helps people purchase a car. The program handles the transportation education portion of obtaining a car - from learning how to get affordable financing to understanding how preventive maintenance can prolong the reliability of their cars. SPARTAN uses TANF funds from the Texas Department of Human Services to pay for this training program, and encourages potential car buyers to use TANF money and individual tax refunds for the down payment of their cars.

A portion of this information is courtesy of the National Association of Counties (NACo).

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B) Challenge: Anne Arundel County, Maryland, was under-served by public transportation.

Approach: Train welfare recipients to become van service entrepreneurs.

The Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services (DSS) began the AdVANTage Program, a transportation micro-enterprise program for welfare recipients. People currently receiving cash assistance would be provided training and other help to start their own passenger transportation businesses. The DSS hired the local YWCA to provide business training, and help the fledgling businesses obtain working capital, certification as a passenger carrier and follow-up networking.

In addition to providing DSS clients with work-related transportation services, the van owners transport the larger community to elder services, shopping malls, medical facilities, among other destinations.

The program was funded with a year two Joblinks grant, funded by the Federal Transit Administration and administered by CTAA.

Results: Seven individuals completed the training course and five new businesses have been started as a result of the project. Each of these businesses has demonstrated the ability to continue past the demonstration phase of the project. A second training was held to graduate one additional van owner to fill in a needed service area.

A similar micro-entrepreneur program is operated by Sojourner-Douglass College in Baltimore, Maryland.

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VIII. Making Use of Technology

Challenges:

- * To coordinate and make readily available information about the region's public and private transportation resources
- * To help TANF recipients and one-stop participants plan the best way to reach their employment-related destinations

Approach 1: Develop a computerized trip planning system.

TranStar Automated Trip Planning System (TranStar) is a computerized trip planning program that was created to help case workers and riders learn about the region's transportation services and enable case workers to tell their clients exactly how and when to use these services. Developed by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and its partners, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, nonprofit transportation providers and the county social service agency, the

system coordinates travel information and gets that information directly into hands of case workers who would be able to provide a client a travel itinerary at the same time they would provide other social services information.

TranStar's main purpose is to help the user answer the question:

“What is the best way to get from point A to point B?”

Given a starting location, destination, desired time of travel and any special requirements, TranStar evaluates all possible combinations of transit services to determine the best route between the two points and displays a trip itinerary (a trip plan). TranStar's data repository holds transit carrier route, schedule and fare information and provides on-line users with the ability to request a computerized trip plan. The data may be entered interactively by a user or batch loaded in a sequential ASCII format. The maintenance function allows a user to add, delete, and edit transit carrier information.

Specifically, SCAG created a database and transit itinerary software to access the database. The database contains: 600 transit routes, hundreds of transit providers, 18,000 thousands timed points and 150,000 stops. A user enters an origin and a destination (by street address, intersection or landmark), selects the way for the software to calculate the information (i.e., fastest, cheapest, least transfers or least walking distance) and receives the generated itinerary by phone, fax, e-mail, or directly off the computer screen.

Case managers can access this information (using a typical computer and modem) from their desks, connecting directly into the SCAG database. They can use the system while serving a client. Currently, SCAG is in the process of linking 1,000 different desktops in the region at 80 locations. SCAG will provide training to the users of the system, which will take a half day to learn, and will provide on-going hotline support on how to generate the itinerary.

With TranStar user's may:

- * Generate trip itineraries, whether the trip is simple or complex
- * Review schedule information
- * Print or fax itineraries, maps, and schedules (English or Spanish)
- * Show information of Demand-Response Dial-A-Ride Systems
- * Show Service Disruptions/Changes
- * Show Pass Sales Outlets, Information Racks, etc.
- * Search for routes that service a particular location

The system is robust and the software can produce complex, multi-layered trip plans for clients. A typical plan tells the route of the bus, the stops, the time of embarking and disembarking, and the cost of the trip. The itinerary can come in English or Spanish. The system can also find locations, such as childcare facilities and job sites.

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To learn more:

www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/practices/ca_TransStar.shtml

Approach 2: Develop a customized ACCESS database to keep track of the people who use T.R.I.P. services and to document where they are going.

Transportation Resources and Information Project, or T.R.I.P., formed out of a collaborative of four nonprofit social service agencies. With its mission "to remove the barrier of transportation in order to move people toward self-sufficiency, to work or work-related activities," T.R.I.P. provides transportation information and other resources, as well as arranges trips for human services clients. T.R.I.P.

operates with funding from the Department of Human Services, the United Way (provided start up funds) and others, including the riders themselves.

T.R.I.P. operates in the Greater Cincinnati region, including the metropolitan area's four surrounding counties and the Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky airport, which is located in Kentucky. As a result, T.R.I.P. services must cross state as well as county lines, which, she adds, does not come without a challenge.

T.R.I.P. primarily brokers information on existing transportation services. If these services do not meet the need, then T.R.I.P. contracts with a van or taxicab operator, depending on the number of riders. Executive Director Judith Coleman emphasized that she arranges a carpool in a taxi only if there are one or two people going to a particular area. Taxis do help transport children to childcare in the absence of a van service for children. Since T.R.I.P. is also a car dealer in Ohio and operates a used car-leasing program, this offers an additional mobility option for clients.

The Technology

T.R.I.P. set up a customized ACCESS database to keep track of the people who use T.R.I.P. services and to document where they are going. The database assists T.R.I.P. in the following ways:

T.R.I.P.'s funders require that T.R.I.P. to keep records of the clients who ride in the vans and taxis. Coleman explained that: "Our database has enabled us to document from the client perspective."

T.R.I.P. also needed to document client trips for its own billing and reimbursement needs. Coleman explained: "We are also in a county where the money follows the client. It does not follow the system. So if I can't prove that someone got on the system, I can't get paid." With the database, for example, T.R.I.P. can audit taxi records for its 11,000 trips a month, all by computer.

The database helps T.R.I.P. run reports so that it can schedule trips in the most cost-effective and efficient

way. “Since taxis are such an inefficient way to get people to work over time, we needed to use technology to let us know when we had, for example, five taxicabs going to the same area at the same time so that we could transfer those individuals from a taxi onto a van.”

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IX. Try Transit First

A) Challenge: Detroit, Michigan, job seekers needed help reaching job sites.

Approach: Think Transit First

Many transit providers are urging job developers - where possible and practical - to be conscious of location and match job seekers with jobs on bus and rail lines first.

Transit providers may be able to make certain needed changes to transit routes and hours of service to accommodate the travel needs of your participants. However, due to limited funding and the time it takes to acquire new vehicles, hire drivers and start new routes, many of these changes, if possible, may not occur immediately.

Here are examples of ways that SMART, a transit provider in Detroit, Michigan, helps job developers target job development along existing transit routes:

* SMART has developed “Transit First,” a tool using geographic information system (GIS) software that will enable job developers to locate jobs along transit lines. The software’s databases include geocoded (plotted according to location) job openings, residential neighborhoods and childcare centers. With this tool, job developers can sort new jobs according to proximity to transit lines and fill those jobs first.

* SMART began an over-the-phone information listing of job openings along bus routes. Detroit’s largest radio station announces job openings and the bus line that an employee would take to access those jobs.

Results: By using transit first, new employees are able to reliably and affordably reach their jobs. During a given week, the job line receives as many as 100 calls.

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B) Challenge: Many new employees in New Jersey cannot afford the cost of transportation services.

Approach: Implement WorkPass and Get a Job, Get a Ride! Programs

Transit providers and social service agencies believe that the short-term expenses required to accustom new riders to public transit will serve long-term ends of increased use of public transit. Here are two programs that provide free transit services to job seekers and new employees:

WorkPass Program

WorkPass is an innovative program developed by NJ Transit in cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Human Services. The program provides Work First NJ (WFNJ) participants with access to public transit by providing monthly commuter tickets for use in job-related activities. WorkPass enables participants to reach job training and education sites, employment opportunities, medical and childcare centers, and other destinations through the use of an unlimited monthly pass. Discounted tickets are also available for children ages 5-11 years, while children under 4 years of age ride free, when accompanied by a fare-paying adult. Any government-sponsored agency, such as a

Medicaid office, can also provide these benefits to their participants by enrolling in the WorkPass program.

As part of the WorkPass program, NJ Transit offers WFNJ caseworkers a transit-training program that enables caseworkers to determine the best NJ Transit routes that address participants' needs. The training includes classroom instruction, and distribution of an instructional video on the use of public transit, extensive commuter travel information, a transit-training manual, and resource materials such as posters, timetables, and route maps.

Get a Job, Get a Ride!

When WFNJ participants are successful in finding employment, their participation in the WorkPass program ends. However, the transitional period immediately following job attainment is critical in determining a participant's success in the working world. To ease this transition, NJ Transit offers additional transportation benefits through the Get a Job, Get a Ride! Program. This program, modeled after Detroit's Get a Job, Get A Ride! program, provides a free monthly bus or rail pass to persons (registered with participating WorkPass agencies) who leave public assistance due to employment. Get a Job, Get a Ride! rewards WFNJ participants for their efforts and supports their transition to full employment.

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To learn more:

www.state.nj.us/transportation/workforce/



To learn more about what these and other communities are doing, search under "Local Practices" in Across the Nation, the on-line database of employment transportation practices.

www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/practices



Chapter Seven

State Partnerships

Chapter Seven

State Partnerships

Overview

Many states are playing a strong leadership role in supporting the development of employment transportation services to take un- and under-employed people to work, job training and childcare. States are:

- Promoting local partnerships between workforce development, human services and transportation agencies;
- Encouraging local agencies to use TANF, Department of Labor and other federal and state funds for transportation services;
- Revising policies and procedures on vehicle sharing; and
- Forming state-level teams among transportation, workforce development and human services departments to help local agencies overcome transportation barriers.

Cooperation among state agencies to stretch resources and use funds and vehicles more efficiently supports local employment services and transportation leaders in their efforts to better meet the transportation needs of job seekers.

Here are 8 states that have embraced employment transportation challenges with innovation and flexibility:

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts Access to Jobs (AtJ) Initiative is the transportation component of welfare reform in Massachusetts. It is a \$5 million statewide transportation program funded through the Employment Services Program (ESP) of the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). AtJ continues to be heralded as a unique collaboration between DTA and the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC).

Designed by a collaborative of human services and transportation policy managers and operators, AtJ addresses the needs identified across the state, which were reported in the Transportation Services Plan submitted to the state Legislature by DTA and EOTC in 1999.

The AtJ program commenced with the exit of nearly 8,000 DTA clients statewide from the welfare rolls who, were transitioning into employment due to time-limited benefit expiration.

Although AtJ focuses primarily on assisting DTA recipients who are transitioning from welfare into the workforce, it provides a direct connection to the Federal Jobs Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program by offering a transportation subsidy directly to the new AtJ customer for up to a year from case closing. This direct subsidy compliments the JARC program, which in turn, provides the capital for the new and expanded services. Between the two complimentary programs, the customer receives both a subsidy and a service. It was because of the unique integration of state and federal resources and programs that the AtJ program won the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) 1999 Access to Work Award.

The AtJ program has exceeded all expectations. In SFY2000, the program provided:

- 1,068,493 passenger trips
- 81,475 new service hours
- 354,114 new vehicle miles
- 3,120 new employers served
- 6,241 transportation requests for service

Program Outreach

Toll Free Number. Access to Jobs has a toll-free information and referral telephone number, where callers receive information on public and private transportation services, travel time estimates and costs, and alternative modes of transportation available. This line also provides assistance to customers outside an RTA area during normal business hours.

Website. Via a website, www.massacesstojobs.com, AtJ provides information on the program and its services, as well as direct links to available RTA websites, the MBTA, DTA, and the Transportation Management Associations. The website provides a listing of all RTA coordinators, press releases on new initiatives, a calendar of events, and a way to email the project team.

On-site Employer Programs. AtJ is helping many types of employers get workers. The RTAs have been extremely successful in hiring former welfare recipients and developing creative training programs. For example, the Brockton Area Transit Authority (BAT) piloted a deviated fixed-route vanpool program to area employers. The Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) effectively demonstrated how to fully integrate its program into the community. It placed a Transportation Coordinator at the One-Stop Career Center in Lowell to work closely with case managers, job placement counselors, employers, and community-based organizations. The program provides for coordinated information, computerized trip planning, problem solving, training and transportation services to work and with a special emphasis on child care transportation. In addition, the

Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) implemented an employer van at Alden Merrell of Newburyport to transport 10 employees from the Lawrence area. Alden Merrell shares the cost of the service with the AtJ program by providing a trained driver, subsidizing employee seats, and paying for empty seats.

Problem Solving

At the heart of the program is the development of policy that encourages self-sufficiency and provides services that will have an effect on transitioning recipients and the working poor. The greatest achievement toward this self-sufficiency policy is cooperatively developed Demand Response Service Guidelines for “transportation teams.” These guidelines, developed in collaboration with DTA, became the structure for transportation self-sufficiency at the local and regional level.

* As of January 18, 2000, the new Demand Response Service Guidelines went into effect. They state that, “all current and new AtJ customers requiring emergency demand response (DR) services shall receive a maximum of 90 days subject to a \$30 per day cap.” During this time a Transportation Planning Team (TEAM) that includes the AtJ customer is assembled to develop and implement a transportation plan to transition the AtJ customer from DR services to either a fixed-route service or other less costly transportation alternatives. Every effort is made to provide some form of cost-effective transportation to work for all AtJ customers.

* The TEAM is assembled to address the AtJ customer’s specific need to transition off DR services within the 90-day period. The composition of the TEAM is determined at the service delivery level and includes, but is not limited to, the Transportation Coordinator (TC), the TAFDC Worker (or TAO designee), the AtJ customer and, as needed, one or more of the following agency representatives: pre-employment, post-employment, childcare, and Welfare to Work (WtW) service providers. The TEAM is

responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring a transportation plan designed to successfully transition the AtJ customer off DR services to fixed-route services or an alternative means of transportation during his/her DR services service eligibility period. In certain situations, the TEAM may authorize a continuation beyond the 90-day limit or authorize a service cost that is above the cap.

- * Implementation of the demand response guidelines have resulted in an 27 percent reduction in requests for transportation that require demand response, as well as customers moving from demand response transportation to a more affordable transportation option-saving the overall AtJ program 48 percent.

Creative Solutions

To address expensive trips, AtJ has implemented a number of creative solutions including one-time subsidies of \$800 that can be used for vehicle repair, registration, insurance, excise tax, driver training or license renewal. In addition, four car ownership programs have been implemented in Massachusetts through AtJ for people who do not have public transportation as an option.

1. Car Ownership Program Pilot. Based on current statistics, approximately 400 AtJ customers do not live near public transportation. Fewer than six percent of transitioning recipients own vehicles. Other AtJ customers had expensive commutes that included childcare issues or non-traditional work-hours. The cost of transporting this population into the workforce without using the regional public transit system is cost prohibitive. To address these issues, EOTC through the AtJ program, issued an RFR for vendors to submit proposals for setting up regional car ownership pilot projects. The following vendors were selected:

a. Wheels to Work (WTW) - southeastern Massachusetts region. WTW is a coordinated effort between the Housing Assistance Corporation of Hyannis (a non-profit agency) and two

regional transit authorities (Cape Cod Regional Transit Authority and Greater Attleboro-Taunton Regional Transit Authority). The group has an agreement with local car dealers in the Cape Cod region to donate one vehicle per year and an arrangement with a local bank to provide low-interest loans to transitioning recipients who have little or no repayment capacity. Vehicles are lower-cost models, yet provide the new employee with a more reliable vehicle than donated vehicles provided through other programs. The benefits of Wheels to Work are a reliable vehicle, the ability to establish credit, car maintenance training, budget counseling, and assistance with getting a license.

b. Good News Garage (GNG) - central Massachusetts region. GNG is modeled after the Good News Garage program in Vermont. It is operated by the Lutheran Social Services of America in cooperation with the Worcester Regional Transit Authority. Good News Garage uses vehicles donated by individuals and makes any necessary repairs before turning it over to an AtJ customer. The program assists AtJ customers by instilling responsibility in ownership through a credit and loan program, which pays for insurance, registration and any other costs. The program also teaches individuals how to maintain a vehicle to extend its useful life.

c. Cross Transportation Barriers (CTB) - western Massachusetts region. CTB is modeled after Wheels to Work in the southeastern Massachusetts region; however, cars are obtained from auctions and auto dealers and repaired on-site if necessary. The program also includes an extensive training program on maintenance, safety, and car ownership.

d. Driven to Succeed (DTS) - eastern Massachusetts Region. DTS received initial funding through Welfare to Work funds for the Boston region. Access to Jobs took the program over in September of 2000. DTS is modeled after Wheels to Work, however, individuals donate the cars, and any necessary repairs are made on

site before turning it over to an AtJ customer. The program assists AtJ customers by instilling responsibility in ownership through a credit and loan program, which pays for insurance, registration and any other costs.

2. Tax Credit Legislation. It became apparent that the reliability of vehicles was a major concern to the success of the vehicle program. A state legislator successfully introduced a bill that would allow auto dealers and fleet owners to donate a vehicle to the AtJ program and receive a 75 percent tax credit on the value of the vehicle. Currently, companies are eligible for an existing tax credit for donated vehicles, but the existing credit does not provide the economic incentive to participate. For example, a car donated with a book value of \$5,000 would provide a tax credit of approximately \$600. The dealer at auction could receive \$3,000 for that vehicle. A 75 percent tax credit would result in a tax credit of \$3,750 for the dealer. This type of incentive is business friendly and would go a long way to provide higher-quality vehicles to AtJ customers, reduce the cost of repairs and the subsequent disruption constant repairs has on work reliability.

3. Department of Corrections Car Repair Program. A training and auto repair program has been developed in cooperation with the Department of Corrections (DOC) for women inmates at the Lancaster Correctional Institution. The program will enable inmates to receive training and certification in auto repair using AtJ donated vehicles. The AtJ program will provide donated vehicles to be repaired, purchase of some essential equipment, and pay for the parts used in the repair of vehicles. The DOC will repair vehicles, provide the facility and some equipment, as well as hire the instructor.

4. Guaranteed Ride Home Program. To alleviate the fear of being stranded in an emergency, the AtJ program provides a statewide guaranteed ride home program using a toll-free number and a network of taxi companies throughout the state. The program guarantees participants transportation within 30 minutes of contacting the service. AtJ customers are provided with a program identification card, forms,

and instructions upon registration. Instructions have been translated into six different languages.

5. One-time Subsidy Program. The one-time subsidy program allows an AtJ customer to access up to \$800 for a car repair, auto insurance, registration and license fees, excise tax repayment, etc. Payments are sent directly to the vendor and must be approved through the TEAM process.

By combining the resources of the federal and state "Access to Jobs" programs, Massachusetts is taking the lead in providing a more flexible transportation system than currently is in place and developing creative solutions to difficult commute problems.

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Michigan

The state of Michigan's welfare reform program, To Strengthen Michigan Families, has been underway since 1992. Through the continued state partnership of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Family Independence Agency (FIA), and the Michigan Department of Career Development (MDCD) innovative practices have been implemented to assist welfare recipients in obtaining and maintaining employment. These practices have helped to keep the state of Michigan on the forefront of the nation's welfare reform effort.

Transportation has been an important issue facing low-income families. MDOT has shown leadership

in promoting the use of public transportation and has provided a link between federal, state, and local government to address transportation issues. At the federal level, MDOT has secured a Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant. At the state level, MDOT has worked in partnership with representatives from FIA and MDCD to overcome program barriers that have prevented welfare recipients and low-income individuals from joining the work force. At the local level, MDOT has facilitated the provision of transportation services through local transit agencies to those in need. These partnerships have allowed for the joint funding of projects, spreading resources further to address this issue.

Building Coalitions

Michigan has a welfare reform program called Project Zero. The goal of this program is to reduce to zero those without earned income in the Project Zero sites. Due to the success of this program, Project Zero has grown from six pilot sites in 1996 to a statewide program in 2000. This entails the participation of 104 sites within Michigan's 83 counties. To date, 77 Project Zero sites have reached zero, which means that every targeted case had earned income at some point in time. Sites reaching zero have included rural, urban, and metropolitan areas.

One of the reasons for the success of Project Zero is that the participating communities have been able to identify barriers that are preventing their clients from obtaining and retaining employment. Plans to remove these barriers are completed at the local level and submitted to the state where needed resources have been secured to allow the necessary services to be implemented. Transportation projects have included brokering of services and expansion of service hours and areas. Local transit agencies and specialized services providers have been used to the extent possible. However, when service was required where none was available or during times when the local transit agency was not operating, the private sector has been utilized to fulfill the need.

To further welfare reform efforts, over \$2 million in state monies have also been added to MDOT's

budget in each of the past two fiscal years. These monies were administered through an application process that was jointly overseen by MDOT, FIA, and MDCD. Local applicants, which included representatives from county FIA offices, Michigan Works! Agencies, and local transit providers, were required to work together to identify their needs and develop a service plan to meet those needs. The provision of these state funds has allowed local areas to enhance and expand existing transit services to provide transportation to work for low-income individuals and welfare recipients. This collaborative effort has also helped to strengthen local level partnerships.

While MDOT, MDCD, and FIA have been at the "core" of Michigan's welfare reform effort, expanded state partnerships have been used to ensure success of various programs. Assistance from the Departments of Education and Community Health has been provided to make certain that the entire family's needs were being met. In some cases, the Office of Services to the Aging, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns, and the Michigan Commission for the Blind have been included. Volunteer driver programs administered by these agencies have been instrumental in addressing concerns of senior citizens and those with disabilities seeking employment. Local rideshare offices and the vanpool program have also been used. The inclusion of these programs has been especially beneficial to meet the needs of those in rural areas and when conventional transit was not able to transport a particular individual.

The state of Michigan has continued to strengthen the foundation for interagency collaboration in its welfare reform efforts. By capitalizing on the expertise of its state partners, innovative approaches have been implemented to reduce or eliminate the barriers of implementing needed transportation services. The current challenge is to develop long-term funding solutions to address transportation issues and sustain projects that have been started as a result of the welfare reform initiative.

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New Jersey

Since 1997, New Jersey's welfare reform program, Work First New Jersey (WFNJ), has served as a catalyst for increased statewide coordination of efforts to address the mobility challenges faced by many low-income individuals. At the state level, the New Jersey Departments of Human Services (NJDHS), Labor (NJDOL), and Transportation (NJDOT), NJ Transit, and the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC) have developed the Project Oversight Group (POG). The POG, comprised of representatives from NJDHS, NJDOL, NJDOT, NJ Transit, and SETC, was established to facilitate inter-departmental planning and assist counties in the development of innovative solutions to local mobility issues.

The POG has supported and continues to support a variety of statewide transportation initiatives that are designed to serve low-income and transit-dependent individuals. These initiatives include the following:

I. New Jersey Community Transportation Coordination Planning

The POG provided financial and technical support to each of the 21 counties in New Jersey in the development and execution of local planning efforts. These efforts centered on forming local interagency steering committees to define local transportation gaps, developing strategies for addressing those gaps, and identifying opportunities for increased coordination of existing transit services. Each county developed a Community Transportation Plan that reflects these issues; each Plan provides a framework for the planning and development of new local programs to improve mobility for low-income individuals and other transit-dependent populations.

Updates to the Community Transportation Plans are being planned. This update will provide county transportation steering committees with the opportunity to develop a revised set of transportation strategies and recommendations. The process of updating the plans also represents an opportunity to involve Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) more closely in the transportation planning process. WIBs are crucial to the effective delivery of the complete range of workforce-related services, including transportation.

II. The POG's Role in Securing Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Funds

Planning, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Funding

JARC guidelines stipulate that coordinated, regional planning form the basis for funding requests. In New Jersey, much of this required planning component had already been accomplished as a result of the development of Community Transportation Plans described above. This planning was critical to securing JARC funding, in Fiscal Year 1999, for 12 county-based projects that were included in the consolidated grant application submitted by NJ Transit. These projects totaled \$1,661,698 in Federal funds.

The POG also provided technical assistance to JARC applicants at the county level. POG members

worked with applicants to strengthen and improve JARC applications prior to submission to the Federal Transit Administration. The POG also evaluated each proposal prior to inclusion in the consolidated statewide application.

New Jersey received a \$2 million earmark in JARC funds for Fiscal Year 2000. The POG continues to serve as the essential state link to county-level applicants in the development of viable JARC applications for Fiscal Year 2000.

Matching Funds

Beyond providing assistance in planning efforts, technical expertise, and evaluation, the POG was instrumental in developing the NJ Transportation Innovation Fund (TIF) as a source of matching funds for JARC. In Fiscal Year 1999, the TIF was composed of both state transportation funds and funds made available through the Governor's Discretionary Portion of New Jersey's US Department of Labor WtW Grant, which targets hardest-to-serve welfare recipients. The Fiscal Year 1999 TIF totaled \$2 million.

In Fiscal Year 2000, the TIF is being funded by a combination of US Department of Labor WtW funds, channeled through NJDOL, and NJDHS TANF funds. The TIF is once again being funded at the \$2 million level.

For Fiscal Year 2001, NJDHS has committed \$1 million to support the TIF.

III. Statewide Initiatives

WorkPass Program

The POG has been essential to the development and continuation of the WorkPass program. WorkPass is an innovative program developed by NJ Transit in cooperation with NJDHS. The program provides WFNJ participants with access to public transit by providing monthly commuter tickets for use in job-related activities. WorkPass enables participants to reach job training and education

sites, employment opportunities, medical and childcare centers, and other destinations through the use of an unlimited monthly pass. Discounted tickets are also available for children ages 5-11 years, while children under 4 years of age ride free, when accompanied by a fare-paying adult. Any government-sponsored agency, such as a Medicaid office, can also provide these benefits to their participants by enrolling in the WorkPass program.

As part of the WorkPass program, NJ Transit offers WFNJ caseworkers a transit-training program that enables caseworkers to determine the best NJ Transit routes that address participants' needs. The training includes classroom instruction, and distribution of an instructional video on the use of public transit, extensive commuter travel information, a transit-training manual, and resource materials such as posters, timetables, and route maps.

Get a Job. Get a Ride!

When WFNJ participants are successful in finding employment, their participation in the WorkPass program ends. However, the transitional period immediately following job attainment is critical in determining a participant's success in the working world. To ease this transition, NJ Transit offers additional transportation benefits through the Get a Job. Get a Ride! Program. This program provides a free monthly bus or rail pass to persons (registered with participating WorkPass agencies) who leave public assistance due to employment. Get a Job. Get a Ride! rewards WFNJ participants for their efforts and supports their transition to full employment.

WFNJ Transportation Block Grant

NJDHS developed this program to assist WFNJ county agencies in providing transportation alternatives to WFNJ participants that cannot be met through the issuance of a monthly bus or rail pass. The program provides funds to WFNJ county agencies for use on alternative service delivery projects that are included in a county's Community Transportation Plan.

Funds are developed based on the savings realized by NJDHS as a result of county participation in the WorkPass program. NJDHS, NJDOT, and NJ Transit staff work cooperatively to review Block Grant plans.

IV. Ongoing Statewide Transportation Planning

Transportation Innovation Fund

A portion of the Fiscal Year 1999 TIF was not used as JARC match. The POG has considered a variety of projects for the expenditure of these funds. Currently, an allocation of TIF resources has been made to fund the redesign of NJ Transit's trip-planning software, soon to be made available to the public through NJ Transit's Internet site. The TIF will also be used to create a link, or "transit icon," between this web site and workforce-related Internet sites, such as Workforce New Jersey Public Information Network (WNJPIN). WNJPIN provides links to resources available through NJDOL, SETC, NJDHS, and other agencies.

When available, this software will allow individuals to plan their own trips, and will facilitate the use of public transportation by WFNJ recipients in job search and related activities. The increasing availability and use of computers at public assistance offices and One-Stop Centers indicates that there is a need to provide computer-based transportation resources for individuals who are attempting to find employment. This can be accomplished through the development of the "transit icon."

In addition, a portion of the TIF may be used to fund updates and revisions to the county Community Transportation Plans. These plans will be between 2 and 3 years old by the middle of 2000, and may be updated to reflect the current state of transit provision, and transportation gaps, in each county in New Jersey.

Extended WorkPass Program

The need to continue transportation benefits beyond the current allotment under WorkPass and

Get a Job. Get a Ride! has been identified by a variety of public assistance offices, county transportation departments, and Workforce Investment Boards. POG members have been working to develop an extension of the WorkPass program. NJDHS funds have been identified to provide for a six-month extension of transportation benefits, and POG members are working with their colleagues at NJDHS and NJ Transit to develop an effective and efficient method for delivering these services.

WFNJ Transportation Block Grant

The POG has continued to monitor the disbursement of NJDHS funds to counties through the WFNJ Transportation Block Grant program. Applications are screened to ensure consistency with Community Transportation Plans, JARC proposals, and other local transportation initiatives.

Regulatory Package

The POG has been in the process of developing an inventory of regulatory barriers that might impede the implementation of effective local transportation programs. In relation to JARC, these barriers center around the issue of child transportation on vehicles used for the primary purpose of workforce-related transportation. Most specifically, POG members recognize that JARC vehicles must be allowed to transport children when the parents or guardians of these children need to reach employment or training sites and bring a child to a daycare or childcare center. Coordination of these trips on a single vehicle is essential to the provision of effective, non-duplicative transit services.

POG resources have been allocated to a preliminary review of the applicable statutory and administrative concerns. This review has been completed and will form the basis for continued investigation into this issue.

Ongoing Communication and Planning

POG members will continue to facilitate communication between public assistance offices, county

transportation departments, Workforce Investment Boards, employers, local residents, and others who express concern about the availability and appropriateness of local transit services. These concerns will be incorporated into future updates of county Community Transportation Plans, and will serve as the basis for coordination of the ongoing planning efforts undertaken by NJDHS, NJDOL, NJDOT, NJ Transit and the SETC.

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North Carolina

Transportation is often cited as one of the most significant barriers for Work First (North Carolina's welfare-to-work program) recipients and other low-income families. Employers commonly associate transportation problems with worker tardiness, absenteeism and ultimately, resignations/terminations. The N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) share a mutual interest in exploring new and innovative resources for employment transportation. The common goal is to move welfare recipients not only to work but also to self-sufficiency.

The provision of reliable and affordable transportation services is critical to the success of North Carolina's objective to ensure that the transition from welfare to work is as smooth as possible. With the significant drop in the state's welfare caseload (approximately 60 percent since July 1, 1995), N.C. is now concentrating more on diversionary strategies to reduce the need for long-term TANF assistance and the increased need for employment transportation. These efforts have challenged the local

transportation systems to become true community transportation providers that not only serve clients of human service agencies but also the general public. Although North Carolina is nationally recognized as a leader in the delivery of coordinated transportation services, there still remains much work to be done.

Perspectives

North Carolina currently has eighty-four (84) community transportation systems that operate as single county or multi-county systems. The range of transportation services provided by these local systems varies by county. Some of the systems provide basic human service transportation only (non-emergency medical, child care, elderly and disabled trips), while others may serve the general public. The amount of public transportation assistance received by a local system depends upon the level of service provided. Each local transportation system is encouraged to make available to the community an efficient, effective, safe and reliable general public transportation option; both as a provider, as a referral agent, or as a broker that acts as a clearinghouse for alternative transportation services provided by other public and private entities.

Although North Carolina has been successful in the development and provision of community transportation services, the availability of resources to meet the growing need for late night and weekend transportation services are scarce. Very few of N.C.'s community transportation systems are currently in a position to provide direct services beyond their regular hours of service. Vanpool transportation is now viewed as a valuable resource to meet this significant gap in service. Regional transportation services are also needed to transport people from the counties with high unemployment rates to other counties where jobs are more plentiful.

Strategies

DOT has been significantly involved in North Carolina's welfare reform efforts. DOT staff

participated in the development of the State FY1998-2000 TANF Plan by serving on the Human Services Task Force Transportation Workgroup. This workgroup made recommendations to enhance transportation services for welfare recipients that were incorporated in the State TANF Plan. DOT staff also participated in the interagency review of each of the 100 county Work First Plans and provided valuable comments and recommendations regarding each county's proposal to provide transportation services.

In September 1998, DHHS established a full-time transportation coordinator position to serve as a liaison for transportation issues among the various divisions within DHHS and DOT. This position is organizationally placed under the NC Division of Social Services and is funded 50 percent by DHHS and 50 percent by DOT. This position identifies, analyzes, and resolves agency-controlled barriers related to transportation services at the state and local levels. The position also provides on-going technical assistance to local DSS agencies and transportation providers.

DOT and DHHS often receive individual county requests for special assistance in developing additional transportation resources. When this happens, representatives from DOT and DHHS make joint visits to the counties to meet with county DSS Directors, Work First Staff, transportation system providers, and county managers. These meetings focus on the local barriers and solutions to transportation services. The importance of agency communication, coordination, and untapped funding opportunities are commonly discussed.

In April 1999, DOT was selected to receive a \$495,000 Job Access and Reverse Commute Grant from the Federal Transit Administration to develop rural vanpools across the state. DOT agreed to match the grant with \$495,000 from the DOT Work First Demonstration Funds. DHHS and DOT are jointly developing a rural vanpool program that is currently being piloted in six counties: Columbus, Craven, Edgecombe, Robeson, Rockingham, and Swain. These counties were

selected based upon their designation as economically distressed counties, their unemployment rates, welfare caseload sizes and geographical locations.

Each of the pilot counties has formed a local Job Access Stakeholders Committee that includes representatives from human services agencies, transit systems, businesses, workforce development agencies, economic development, Employment Security Commission, community colleges, and elected officials. The stakeholder committees have been meeting regularly since October 1999, to discuss issues such as communication, coordination, trust, policies, marketing, operations, and costs. Each county will design a vanpool program in a manner that best suits the needs and resources of the county/region. Rather than create one single model, we may end up with six separate models with different features. The pilot counties have been given basic parameters in which they must abide when developing their local plans; however, there are significant opportunities for innovative planning.

Most of the counties are taking a regional planning approach by including neighboring counties in their vanpool plans. The work of the local stakeholder committees has successfully elevated the awareness of transportation barriers and needs within the communities. It has also increased the level of communication and coordination among employers, workforce development agencies, DSS, and transit systems. The limited availability of childcare facilities and transportation resources to support second shift, third shift, and weekend employment opportunities has been the target of discussions in many of the counties. As a result of these discussions, some of the employers are now considering the possibility of providing onsite childcare for their employees.

Many of the employers including Harrah's Casino in Cherokee, NC, Wyndham Resorts in Myrtle Beach, SC, Zickgraf in Franklin, NC, and Target Stores in Raleigh, NC, have indicated a significant interest in financially participating in the operational costs of the vanpools. This successful example of coordina-

tion illustrates an excellent opportunity for public-private partnerships.

DOT and DHHS are promoting the use of Transit Commuter Benefits by educating employers about opportunities available to them to help their employees save money on commuting costs. Private employers, non-profit organizations, and public agencies may provide their employees up to \$65 per month in Transit Commuter Benefits, tax-free. The \$65 benefit is completely exempt from federal income and payroll taxes, as well as state and local taxes. In order to be eligible for these benefits, the employee must participate in a qualified vanpool or transit system. Employers may deduct the \$65 per month as a business expense. Employers choosing not to offer the cash benefit, may still assist their employees by permitting them to use some of their gross income to pay for commuting expenses, before taxes are computed, up to \$65 per month. Employees save on payroll and income taxes on the amount of the benefit they purchase, since that amount is no longer treated or reported as taxable salary. The employer's payroll costs are reduced since payroll taxes do not apply to the set aside amount. Employers can use the benefit to reward employees, promote smart commuting patterns in their communities, save on parking expenses, reduce congestion, and become more competitive in today's tight labor market.

Several counties are using Geographic Information System (GIS) software to determine the employment transportation needs for Work First recipients. Demographic information relating to Work First recipients, employers, childcare centers, and training centers is being plotted electronically to enable researchers to develop and expand transportation routes.

Since April 1998, DOT has provided an annual allocation of \$1 million across the state to support the employment transportation needs of former Work First recipients that are working and no longer eligible to receive cash assistance. The formula-based allocation entitled "Work First Transitional/ Employment Transportation Assistance" is made

available to each of the 100 counties based on county population and welfare caseload size. Funds may be used for fuel, bus passes, vanpooling and carpooling efforts, volunteer reimbursement, driver wages/fringe benefits, taxi services, insurance, repairs, and maintenance. Although these funds are targeted towards former Work First recipients, they may also be used for other low-income individuals in the community with employment-related transportation needs who are not affiliated with Work First or other human service programs.

Public/Private Partnerships

Smithfield Packing, Inc., contracts directly with Elliott Bus Company, a private bus company, to transport employees from Cumberland County to the Bladen County worksite (26 miles one-way). Elliott Bus provides transportation services for both first and second shifts. Approximately 70 Smithfield Packing employees benefit from the service and are paying \$6.00 per day through payroll deduction. The beauty of this partnership is that the transportation service meets the needs of the community - not just welfare recipients. Any employee that needs transportation is allowed to use the bus service - regardless of whether or not they have ever received welfare assistance. (For more information, see Chapter Six: Local Partnerships or www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/practices/nc_smithfield.shtml.)

The Sheraton Imperial Hotel, located in Research Triangle Park (RTP), has been heavily involved in the planning for transportation services to meet the needs of their employees. Through collaborations with the Triangle Transit Authority (TTA), transportation services are now available to the RTP area hotels. As an incentive to retain experienced employees needing public transportation services, the Sheraton Imperial pays the entire cost of a TTA monthly bus pass for Work First recipients. For non-Work First recipients, the hotel pays 50% of the cost of a monthly bus pass and increases the amount by 10% with each year of employment. The TTA monthly bus pass allows the individual unlimited transportation to any location served by TTA.

Several counties have created car ownership programs. Working through a partnership with the county commissioners, the Forsyth County Department of Social Services and Goodwill Industries of North Carolina, Inc. established the first car ownership program for welfare recipients in North Carolina. Surplus vehicles from the city/county Transportation Services Department are donated to Goodwill along with other cars donated by local citizens. Selected Work First clients may own a vehicle by reimbursing Goodwill the initial cost of liability insurance, repairs, taxes, license and title fees (\$50 per month). An area auto dealer provides labor-free service, maintenance and repairs. The program provides individuals with the determination to become independent wage earners and a reliable automobile for one year at which time the vehicle will be released free and clear to the client. Since December 1996, 60 Work First recipients have acquired automobiles through the Forsyth County Wheels-to-Work Program.

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www.dot.state.nc.us/transit/transitnet/

Ohio

The state of Ohio is committed to coordinating transportation programs and services and has developed a plan to implement coordination statewide. Over a dozen of Ohio's state agencies provide transportation as part of their overall customer service package. Many agencies serve the same populations, provide services and issue policies and regulations which should complement, but

sometimes conflict with, one another. At a time when human service agency and transit system budgets are under severe pressure, the best use of resources is critical. As a result, Ohio is working to coordinate transportation programs and resources at the state and local level.

Statewide Transportation Coordination Task Force

Since 1996 the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) has been the lead for the Statewide Transportation Coordination Task Force. The Task Force, whose membership represents 13 state agencies and/or organizations, is committed to improving and increasing access to state agency programs and services and enhancing service and program quality, and ultimately the quality of life for Ohioans, through transportation coordination. Methods of coordination include: eliminating duplicative programs and services; getting rid of conflicting state requirements and regulations; and, better use of local, state and federal resources.

The Task Force was actively involved in the review and final development of Ohio's welfare reform plan, Ohio Works First (OWF). OWF's purpose was to move clients to self-sufficiency by emphasizing, obtaining, and retaining gainful employment. More than 100,000 TANF recipients in Ohio needed to join the labor force by 2000 (Ohio has placed a 36-month time limit on TANF recipients). Transportation was identified as the number one barrier to this goal.

In response to this monumental challenge, Ohio wrote several transportation-related provisions into its welfare reform law. One primary innovative aspect of the Ohio Works First effort was the funding of coordinated transportation efforts. The Ohio General Assembly and the Ohio Department of Human Services committed \$5 million in each year of the FY1999-2000 biennial budget as a result of dramatic reductions in the welfare caseload. Funds were distributed to all of Ohio's 88 counties for the purpose of enhancing transportation services to participants in the work component of the Ohio Works First program.

Another innovative provision of the law required each board of county commissioners to develop a written Transportation Work Plan that established policies regarding the transportation needs of low-income residents of each county seeking or striving to retain employment. The law required each board to consult with their county Department of Human Services, Regional Transit Authority, Community Action Agency and other private nonprofit and government entities that work with issues related to economic development, employment, persons with disabilities and other community services.

A third provision of the law allowed government entities to donate excess vehicles, not to exceed \$2,500 in value, to individual Ohio Works First participants and other entities that provide direct transportation services.

Ohio's welfare reform legislation established a Transportation Work Group convened by the director of the Department of Human Services and composed of the directors of Transportation, Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Bureau of Employment Services, a representative of an Ohio rideshare agency and the Rehabilitation Services Commission. The Work Group was required to review current state transportation resources and policies, consider new transportation coordination initiatives and review economic development issues related to the unemployed and underemployed. The Work Group reported its findings and made recommendations to the state House of Representatives and Senate.

Finally, the legislation required the director of the Department of Transportation to apply for federal funds that are available through the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program, as part the Transportation Efficiency Act (TEA-21) for welfare transportation services. These funds were intended for mobility efforts supported by the Statewide Transportation Coordination Task Force.

To this end, in 1998 ODOT distributed JARC applications to its Section 5311 grantees and to urbanized areas less than 200,000 population. A

review team of ODOT staff and Statewide Transportation Coordination Task Force members reviewed nine applications and recommended four to FTA for approximately \$400,000. FTA approved all four applications. Statewide, Ohio received \$4.5 million to support welfare-to-work transit programs. In 2000 ODOT again distributed applications and followed the same review and recommendation process. Two applications were forwarded to FTA; however, neither was approved for funding. ODOT has continued to emphasize and encourage working with welfare-to-work transportation efforts to all of its transit systems.

To further support employment transportation for Ohio's OWF participants, ODOT incorporated OWF provisions into its Ohio Coordination Program, a program that provides funding to communities working to expand transportation and eliminate duplication of services through transportation coordination. The Ohio Coordination Program annually awards approximately \$1 million for transportation coordination. As in the JARC application process, referenced above, Task Force members serve with ODOT staff on the application review team. Of the 25 individual projects approved in 1999 and 2000, 14 had strong OWF components.

Finally, the Ohio Rehabilitation Services Commission (ORSC), a Task Force member, awarded ODOT approximately \$250,000 to support employment transportation for ORSC consumers. Projects were selected from among ODOT's Ohio Coordination Program grantees which submitted proposals to expand their existing transportation coordination project to meet the employment transportation needs of disabled persons in their community. Four projects received funding.

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South Carolina

The South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) received its legislative mandate through the Family Independence Act (FIA) of 1995 as the responsible agency to implement welfare reform in the state of South Carolina. SCDSS is also the designated agency to implement the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996. One of the many challenges facing the SCDSS in its implementation is the transport of customers to and from training, interviews and jobs, coupled with the transport of children to and from child care facilities or caretakers so that customers can be employed.

Along with Family Independence (FI) customers helping themselves, SCDSS continues to offer transportation support services through 46 County DSS offices. FI customers are assisted, in varying degrees, in accessing child care, interviews, education, job training and employment opportunities. Dependable, flexible, safe and affordable transportation is needed seven days a week with 24-hour availability to accommodate a multiplicity of customer needs.

To increase capacity or to access dependable transportation South Carolina has:

- * Contracted with existing general public, private and specialized transportation providers in South Carolina (bus and van operators) to assist customers in accessing child care, interviews, training and jobs;
- * Purchased transit tickets, passes and/or tokens from existing providers (where they exist) for customers;
- * Reimbursed client providers (relatives, neighbors, or volunteers) for eligible transportation costs;
- * Utilized certified Medicaid volunteers to transport FI customers for low-volume transportation needs under an approved Memorandum of Understanding with the State's Health and Human Services Department;

- * Provided payments to approved vendors for the cost of repairs of customers' personal automobiles so that safe and reliable transportation can be available;
- * Referred FI customers who are job ready to transportation organizations for hiring consideration, as drivers and for other available positions. Also, the state has mandated that state agencies hire FI customers;
- * Provided transitional transportation support to customers for up to 24 months after they have become employed;
- * Provided temporary van rentals (through approved private vendors) to county offices for transporting customers;
- * Rotated existing SCDSS-leased and owned vehicles among county offices which are used for agency-sponsored programs;
- * Actively encouraged cross-utilization of the agency's fleet among program areas to meet multiple transportation needs of customers;
- * Modified transportation policy guidelines to increase the capacity of county DSS staffs and to allow greater flexibility in meeting customer needs; and
- * Encouraged employers to use the Transit Benefit Program to subsidize transit costs of employees, with the employer receiving tax credits.

In addition, South Carolina has:

- * Developed a transportation coordination work plan for welfare reform with State partners through a National Governors' Association grant. This grant was useful in applying for the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program, and
- * Partnered with S.C. Department of Transportation, Division of Mass Transit, to administer a FTA JARC grant to expand transportation

services and to fill service gaps in 27 counties so that welfare recipients and low-income families can get to work. Ten sub-grantees are involved in implementing grant funds, locally. SCDSS committed to provide the required 50% match.

SCDSS continues to plan, coordinate and develop new and/or improved short- and long-term strategies to meet customers' transportation needs. The Transportation Resource Office (TRO) of the SCDSS also provides on-going resource assistance to county DSS offices in determining strategies for assisting customers in gaining mobility access. In addition, partnering efforts also continue with state, regional, and county agencies to improve service delivery.

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Tennessee

As part of Tennessee's welfare reform law, transportation, along with childcare, training and education, is guaranteed to all Families First (Tennessee's welfare reform program) participants. Accordingly, Tennessee has allocated \$22.2 million for transportation. The Families First Program has provided transportation to more than 39,000 participants. Less than 200 families have been exempted from the work requirement due to a lack of any transportation services. Of that number, the majority resides in remote areas of the state where transportation is not available.

Regional Transportation Brokers

The Department of Human Services (DHS) refers each Families First participant to a broker who develops a transportation plan for the individual. The transportation brokers with which DHS

contracts are: twelve of the Local Workforce Investment Areas (LWIA), the Memphis Area Transit Authority and the Fayette County Board of Education. The combined agencies provide transportation services to all ninety (95) counties, including 4 urban regions and 3 semi-urban regions. The brokers have the responsibility to assess the needs of each participant and to sub-contract with providers in order to arrange services for those who need transportation to job training, educational sites and employment.

The transportation brokers facilitate a variety of transportation alternatives. Participants may utilize monthly mass transit passes, taxi services or vanpools. The vanpools make prearrange stops at childcare centers, with the children's fare paid by DHS.

Those who can arrange for their own transportation are eligible for a \$6 per day reimbursement. The reimbursement is applicable for those who drive their own vehicle or carpool. One broker uses DHS transportation funds to provide gas vouchers, limited to \$6 per day, purchased through local oil companies.

Extended Transportation

Of the \$22.2 million allocated for transportation, \$11.7 million is to provide transportation assistance from those individuals leaving the Families First program. Extended transportation for four (4) calendar months is available when a participant is no longer eligible for Families First due to an increase in earnings or when a participant leaves the program with earnings. Extended transportation assistance begins the month following case closure.

Once participants no longer receive Families First cash benefits, participants have two options of extended transportation assistance:

Continuing with their current mode of transportation (i.e., mass transit passes, vanpool service, or weekly reimbursement), or

Receiving a lump sum payment, which will

equal the amount of the transportation reimbursement received in four months, using the daily reimbursement rate.

Job Access and Reverse Commute Program

In round one (Fiscal Year 1999) of the Job Access and Reverse Commute Program grants, Tennessee received a \$3.4 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration. Tennessee received the second highest award amount among those states applying. The \$3.4 million was matched with TANF funds (40 percent of the match) and with funds from the Tennessee Department of Transportation (10 percent of the match). The cities of Chattanooga and Knoxville received a portion of the \$3.4 million in individual grants. Nine (9) rural transportation operators and 5 small urban transit authorities received grants for their proposed projects.

The purpose of the Job Access and Reverse Commute grants are to extend access to transportation for welfare and low-income workers. Locally, the grants will be used to get more employed people accustomed to using public transportation, to make public transportation for employment trips more available in each community and to enhance the workforce in each area by making trips available to all major employers.

The second round of funding was announced on October 14, 2000. Tennessee received \$2.3 million in this latest round of funding, and \$2 million of TANF funds will provide the match.

First Wheels Revolving Loan Fund

In April 2000, Tennessee implemented the "First Wheels Revolving Loan Fund" statewide. The goal of the "First Wheels Revolving Loan Program" is to address significant barriers to transportation and to provide basic transportation so caretakers can pursue self-sufficiency and improve the quality of life for their families. The "First Wheels" program provides an interest free loan for the purchase of a vehicle. Current and former Families First participants have

the opportunity to apply for the program when a vehicle is needed for transportation to work.

In the first five months of the program, 76 automobiles were provided to program participants. An additional 96 applications are pending.

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Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), through their Interagency Task Force, have been working together for some time to combine resources and maximize efficiency at the local level. Through TANF transportation grants, several GIS mapping studies, several statewide employment transportation conferences, and a couple demonstration projects, Wisconsin has created an effective local planning and coordination process, and given local staff the tools and assistance they need to determine what works best.

Wisconsin applied for, and received, a \$4 million congressional earmark under the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program. DOT/DWD combined these funds with TANF transportation dollars (DWD), Transportation Demand Management or TDM dollars (WisDOT), and local share to create the Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP). WETAP funded almost \$8 million in employment transportation projects throughout Wisconsin, including bus expansions, vanpools, an internet trip planner, car loan programs, hiring mobility managers, and childcare transportation solutions. WETAP represents the single biggest investment in employment transportation in state history.

The WETAP program, and the DOT/DWD Interagency Task Force that created it, has received numerous national awards, including CTAA's National Leadership Award and AASHTO's Path-

finder Award. The Task Force and the WETAP program have been featured in two national magazines, *Community Transportation* (July/August 2000 edition), and *Metro Magazine* (Sept/Oct 2000 edition).

The following list provides a summary of the types of projects undertaken:

Transit Expansion Routes. Nine new transit routes will be added around the state to provide access to jobs not formerly served public transit. These expansions cover new areas or additional service hours in areas including LaCrosse, Milwaukee (including better connections between the central city and suburban communities and counties), Waukesha, the Fox Cities (including a transit link between the cities of Oshkosh and Appleton), and Ozaukee County.

Mobility Managers. Seven areas of the state will establish mobility managers to bring workers, employers and transportation providers together for coordinated employment transportation. They will especially help low-income clients in job centers understand what transportation options are available to them. Some of the areas to be served by these projects include northwest, northeast, east-central, southeast and central Wisconsin, including numerous rural areas.

Small Start-up Transit Projects. Four rural areas of the state will see new transit projects, which will focus on employment transportation. These areas include the Bad River Reservation, Dunn County, Monroe and Juneau Counties (regional consortium), and Sawyer County.

Car Loan/Purchase Projects. These projects are funded solely out of local share and TANF dollars, as they were not eligible under JARC or TDM. Four areas will provide financial assistance to help low-income persons establish credit and purchase cars. The areas include west central, north central and central Wisconsin in addition to Door County. Wisconsin only funded car programs in rural areas, though there

were numerous expressed needs in urban and suburban areas as well.

Shared-ride Taxi Projects. Three areas of the state will start-up taxi service designed to meet employment trips including Marathon and Winnebago Counties, and an additional multi-county project in Forest, Oneida, and Vilas Counties.

Vehicle Repair Projects. Also funded out of TANF and local share resources only. Two rural areas comprised of Jackson, Buffalo and Trempealeau Counties and Forest, Oneida and Vilas Counties will provide financial assistance to help meet auto repair costs of low-income workers. Both proposals were multi-county in nature.

Coordination Projects. Two rural areas will establish transportation coordinators who will work with existing providers to help them coordinate services and avoid duplication.

Vanpool Projects. Two vanpool projects will be established with one in Douglas County and one in a seven-county area of central Wisconsin.

Carpool Projects. Two areas of the state including Sawyer County and Buffalo, Jackson, Trempealeau Counties will establish employment carpool programs.

Transit Marketing Projects. Two areas including the "Fox Valley" area of Appleton/Oshkosh and in the Sheboygan area will establish marketing efforts to promote transit service to employers and employees.

Resource/Clearinghouse Projects. Two multi-county projects will establish and promote resource information about transportation. These will occur in northwest and west central Wisconsin.

Volunteer Driver Support Projects. A project in Price County and another in Buffalo, Jackson, and Trempealeau Counties will support expenses

incurred by volunteer drivers who provide employment transportation assistance to low-income workers.

Driver Education Projects. This project is funded with only TANF and local share resources. Projects in northwest Wisconsin and in the Fox Valley area will teach auto maintenance for people with older cars.

Mobility Manager Training. This project will provide training sessions statewide to provide basic skills for mobility managers. Through the UW-Milwaukee, we are providing 12 one-and-a-half day, interactive training sessions for local staff and partners.

Internet Trip Planner Project. This effort will enable persons living in the Milwaukee area to get on-line assistance for planning trips from home to childcare service and work. Our hope is that job placement staff can also use the site to ensure that people have reliable access to sites before conducting placement activities in that area. The site is being developed through the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee's Center for Transportation Education and Development.

Childcare Project. This project in the Milwaukee urbanized area provides safe and reliable transportation to and from childcare facilities, which allows parents to go directly to and from their jobs. This removes the multiple-trip barrier that many parents in the area are facing.

Other Projects. There are employer-based projects, bike projects, and innovative livable communities projects which strives to bring transportation related information to low-income neighborhoods. DWD/DOT are also in the process of planning an additional employment transportation conference for more information on coordination and best practices.

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www.dwd.state.wi.us/dwepfe/mobility.htm



To learn more about what these and other states are doing, search under "State Initiatives" in Across the Nation, the on-line database of employment transportation practices.

www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/practices



Chapter Eight

Selected Articles from *Community
Transportation Magazine*

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Overview

In the seven chapters leading up to this final one, we've discussed numerous strategies to provide cost-effective, efficient transportation to dislocated workers and other job seekers. These strategies have ranged from trying transit first through a contractual relationship to building strategic partnerships and cooperative agreements.

In this final chapter, we profile several communities that have developed effective transportation solutions for under- and unemployed residents. We also present these areas as proof that flexible, innovative public transportation agencies are really out there – often tailoring their services to the needs of dislocated workers. In each of the following examples, a strong level of cooperation was in place before any success story was possible.

There is no single solution for the multi-faceted challenge that employment transportation presents. What works in Texas and Indiana communities, is likely to be quite different from the process in your community. However, the flexible approach of both transit and workforce development officials and the results-oriented perspective of participants in all of these community profiles is an absolutely necessary ingredient.

Transit's Shining Star **TEXAS!** *Deep in the Heart of Texas, Community and Public Transportation Stage a Remarkable Revival*

By Scott Bogren

The story of public and community transportation in Texas is one of epic legislative feats, breathtaking innovation and a cast of characters each more intriguing than the next. It is not one, but a thousand tales best told to the tune of a country song and a warm, dry breeze – and it records a remarkable renaissance.

Transit has a rich heritage in the Lone Star State. At the turn of the last century interurban trolleys linked together much of the state and electric streetcars served even small towns. Bus systems and companies – particularly intercity operations – also have a rich tradition plying Texas' highways and roads. Yet this is a newfangled tale of success. Just 25 years ago, after years of decline, many Texans assumed public transit would eventually vanish, to be replaced by the automobile.

Today, transit throughout Texas is thriving; and in more places than Dallas's outstanding and much publicized DART light-rail service. Ridership is booming across the state, new systems have been launched and expanded services and facilities are under development. The resurgence is unmistakable.

The great success of transit, both in the largest cities and the smallest towns, reflects the extraordinary work done by a potent coalition of rural, small town and big city transit operators, private-sector transit advocates, state legislators, local elected officials, members of the U.S. Congress and many others. And the Texas mobility vision is broader than merely providing trips and running buses and trains. Many of the people I met during a recent trip were building transit networks that support the livability of the communities they serve and creating new-found economic growth, development and opportunity. The breadth of the community and public transit vision in Texas is a precursor for what surely must follow through-

out the nation. That's right — in one of the nation's most conservative political atmospheres the value of public and community transportation is appreciated. The lesson: if it can be done in Texas, it can happen anywhere.

The revival of transit in Texas has been driven by the diligence of public and community transit professionals and advocates in working with members of the state legislature. And their collective advocacy — whether through the Texas Transit Association (which was formed in 1986), inviting members to tour their agencies or other efforts — has benefitted many communities. Today, rural and small-urban transit operations in the Lone Star State enjoy one of the highest levels of state financial support in the nation. For the coming two years, these agencies will receive more than \$60 million in state transit funding. In metropolitan areas the state offers transit agencies taxing authority — up to one percent of a metropolitan area's sales and use tax — provided it is approved in a local referendum. In 1978, San Antonio (one-half percent) and Houston (one percent) won tax approval. Next, Dallas (one percent) and Fort Worth (one-half percent) had transit taxes approved in 1984. Austin (one percent) followed the next year and Corpus Christi (one-half percent) had its' approved in 1986. The two most recent cities to take advantage of this program are El Paso (one-half percent in 1988) and, lastly in 1991, Laredo (one-quarter percent). All told, more than \$800 million will be raised for these cities through this taxing authority this year alone.

Working with the state legislature, Texans have created a variety of funding strategies to better serve their communities and have in the process set a powerful example for equitable transit funding that is truly a model for the rest of the nation.

Yet there remains something more here in Texas, something money cannot buy: unparalleled leadership. Many of the nation's foremost public and community transportation managers call Texas home and the pervasiveness and variety of mobility alternatives throughout the state is testament to the vision and dogged determination of these individuals for whom transit is much more than a mere occupation, it is a passion. I didn't have time to visit all of the individuals I'd have liked to in the week's time I spent in Texas, but those I interviewed proved intriguing, resourceful and innovative.

Passionate Leadership Yields Success

Dave Marsh, executive director of the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS), a nine-county system surrounding Austin, is something of an icon in the community transportation field. He is a man of great contrasts: articulate but soft-spoken, combative yet gregarious, unpredictable and consistent. Foremost, he is very much a Texan. He is also as passionate a community transportation advocate as exists. Dave is not interested in doing things the convenient or easy way, but only in doing them well and to his own — albeit unique — high standard.

As we visited the facility that CARTS is building in San Marcos (30 miles south of Austin), Dave related to me that he searched for months to find the perfect stone for the facing of the new building. "You know how I am," he grudgingly admitted and laughed.

CARTS is a network of interconnected transit services that offer residents of this part of Texas transit both within their communities and connections to such destinations as Austin and San Antonio. It is completely accessible and operates in rural, small-urban and metropolitan localities, serving all with a single philosophy that states, "We're going places for you."

"Every day, we strive to live up to that promise," said Dave.

Indeed, CARTS' going places embodies a family of services approach to mobility in the 123 communities in which it operates. In Lockhart, La Grange, Bastrop and San Marcos the agency offers fixed-route transit service, in addition to intercity and demand-response transportation. CARTS operates nine park-and-ride lots and transports riders into Austin via its

Capital Loop Service and it has intermodal terminals in Austin, Round Rock, San Marcos, Smithville, and Bastrop. Riders can get virtually anywhere in the country from these facilities, which feature Greyhound, Amtrak, intercity bus, taxi and airport shuttle connections, among others.

The Round Rock facility, located 10 miles north of Austin, is testament to the agency's goal of seamless mobility and increased options for its passengers. While Dave and I were there, CARTS' station manager illustrated how with only two connections I could get all the way to Baltimore, Md., on a Greyhound bus that would be in later that day. As the details of this fictitious trip were printed, Dave smiled widely and said, "The goal in all of our intermodal facilities is to offer as many choices as possible to the public."

All of CARTS' facilities, and the overall service, are built around this ideal. The station under construction in San Marcos is further evidence as it will offer residents six different mobility connections. Another consistent theme of these facilities is their beauty. Each one is unique with an attention to detail and design flair that is readily apparent. At its headquarters in East Austin, CARTS' facility occupies the site of an old cotton seed oil mill. Built in 1993, the facility incorporates six towering East Texas pine columns that were preserved from the original mill into its public waiting area.

In San Marcos CARTS purchased land that had, once again, previously seen service in the cotton seed oil business, though a remaining vestige — a small office structure — of the property's past incarnation was so well hidden by years of property neglect that it went undetected at the time of sale. Upon discovering its presence, Dave decided that the new intermodal facility ought to reflect the site's history and that, once refurbished, the old office might serve as a coffee house in the completed project.

The use of historic motifs and structures in modern transit building, be they bus, rail or intermodal facilities, is a growing trend in our field, and one which I saw repeatedly in Texas.

"There's no reason why transit facilities have to be dull, utilitarian buildings," said Dave as we stalked around the San Marcos construction site admiring the color of the San Saba sandstone in the afternoon sun. "Our facilities need to be beautiful public spaces that are inviting to our customers and attract people."

Dave is as good a person as any to discuss the emergence of community and public transportation

innovation in Texas during the past 25 years. Beginning with his time driving a shuttle bus at the University of Texas in the early 1970s, he assumed the mantle of public and community transit advocate. CARTS was both an original Section 147 demonstration program recipient and a Section 18 grantee.

“I tend to recall the battles a little more vividly than I do the actual victories,” he said as he began to run through a litany of funding squabbles and long-since rebuffed raids on rural transit funds down through the years with a wistful look on his face. “Right from the start, the intercity bus providers viewed rural transit in Texas as a threat. But look at us now, we share common facility space with intercity operators and Greyhound. We connect them with passengers that they couldn’t otherwise reach.” He paused before continuing, “We fought with the state too, first to create and then to defend the funding we receive. We are in a people business. What we do affects people’s lives. Our legislative support is built on that foundation — I mean, we carry the elected officials’ mothers, aunts, grandmothers. They make that connection, so they support what we do because they recognize the value in a personal way. You can’t buy that kind of support.”

He recalled a meeting years ago in which a large group of senior riders helped prove a point about the necessity of the service. “I remember the looks on the faces of the legislators and our adversaries at the time. Once you put a face to the issue, and show how what we do — or don’t do — affects people’s lives, the perspective of all but the most hard-hearted of policy makers change.”

I asked him why community and public transit have done so well in Texas — not just with funding but also with innovative service design and facility development. He grew contemplative and paused at length before he replied.

“The people who have worked so hard to make all of this possible, they’ve done it because they love it,” he noted. “It’s become more than just a job, it’s a passion. These folks haven’t been hoping to succeed here long enough to take jobs in bigger systems or in other parts of the country. They’ve participated in their local communities and are part of the fabric of those communities. They do what they do to make a contribution and make things better. They’ve wanted to succeed right here at home and they’ve been passionate and persistent in pursuing that success.”

To San Saba and Beyond

West of Austin lies the stunning Hill Country. Rolling hills dried brown by a stubborn drought, this beautiful region is reminiscent of the back drop for many a western film.

Pecan orchards envelop San Saba, Texas — which, according to a sign on the outskirts of town, bills itself as the *Pecan Capital of the World*. It’s a small Texas town of some 2,600 residents; a town that one might think doesn’t need community transportation. Hill Country Transit’s headquarters is an industrial building tucked close behind the local community action agency and next to the San Saba Pecan Company.

Hill Country Transit has offered its nine counties effective rural public transit service for more than 20 years; last year it provided more than 200,000 trips. Like many rural transit operations in Texas, the agency has its roots in the local community action agency. Carole Warlick has been Hill Country Transit’s general manager since its inception. She was working in the community action agency when her boss asked if she’d like to work in transit.

A demure, striking woman, Carole hails from Fort Stockton, Texas (out west) and runs Hill Country Transit from a bright, clean office in the back of the building. She has one of her own paintings hanging on the wall and reminders everywhere of her family and of Santa Fe, N.M., her favorite spot in the country — outside of Texas.

“This system grew up around serving rural seniors. We learned to coordinate and expand our funding with sources like Medicaid, dialysis and school children. Honestly, we did a good job of that — we still do. But I always felt there was an even greater role for us to play,” said Carole.

Indeed, about five years ago events transpired that would allow Hill Country Transit to dramatically expand. First, in 1995, Texas transit operators prevailed upon the state legislature to create rural transit districts and grandfathered all current operators into the network. The Hill Country Transit District was soon designated. Next, in November of 1998, the agency entered into an agreement with three growing towns an hours’ drive east of San Saba to provide an interlocal or urban operation. Copperas Cove, Killeen and Harker Heights represented a combined population of more than 100,000, which allowed this new

service to tap into a big pot of state and federal transit dollars.

“We knew that this part of our service area would respond to expanded service,” recalled Carole.

Last May, the first bus pulled out for the new service dubbed The Hop. It has since become a virtual overnight success. With 11 routes, 150 bus stops, eight vehicles and a complementary paratransit service, The Hop’s ridership hit 20,000 its first full month.

“We planned on ridership around 125,000 for the first year. Right now, we’re looking at double that,” smiled Carole. “But it wasn’t as easy as it sounds.”

“Killeen officials had been a little wary about transit,” she said. “Our ridership that first month and the positive local press coverage we received really helped win over the politicians.”

People come to Killeen from all around the world. Fort Hood, the world’s largest military installation looms just to the north of the city covering 339 square miles. A full 10 percent of the U.S. Army is located at Fort Hood, with the on-base population reaching 40,000. It is the largest employer in the state of Texas. Not surprisingly, more than 60 percent of the local Killeen-Copperas Cove-Harker Heights population has some relationship to the military. But this has proven useful to The Hop.

“We’ve found that the population here is transit friendly,” said The Hop’s urban operations manager Royce Matkin. “People living here have been all over the world and they’ve seen what a good transit service can do.” To meet the base’s needs, the agency currently offers two routes that run through parts of Fort Hood.

The service itself was also meticulously crafted. Drivers, local members of the city councils and other Hill Country staff all helped in what became a lengthy process to design The Hop. Finally, Carole said enough planning and let’s get this service on the streets. But by involving both community leaders and various members of her staff, the process virtually guaranteed success.

“We get a great mixture of riders,” responded Royce to a question about who is riding The Hop. “We see seniors and people leaving behind their cars, commuters and school children.”

The bustling base and endless parking lots of tanks, Humvees and other military vehicles is a far cry from the quiet pecan orchards of San Saba. And that is what is perhaps most striking here — that a rural

transit service rooted in a tiny small town could develop and provide this world-class urban operation.

“You’d be surprised,” said Carole about The Hop’s success. “It’s really not that different from what we’d been doing all along, which is serving people.”

Asked what lessons he’d offer to other operators looking to launch similar services, Royce countered: “Don’t overextend yourself. Be conservative on your projections and make sure that you can do everything you say you’ll do.”

The Hop is still in its infancy. Seven more buses are on the way and Carole and Royce are exploring service expansions and new routes. They acknowledge that additional service into Fort Hood is part of The Hop’s future.

“It’s just been tremendous. The cities have gone out of their way to help us and the citizen’s reaction had been, ‘Finally! We’ve needed this for so long,’” said Carole.

Thus far, I’ve profiled two agencies in which innovative service design and an attention to the mobility needs of the communities served has forged improved transit service. Had I the chance, I could have spent the rest of my time in Texas profiling agencies with success stories similar to CARTS and Hill Country Transit. But I also came to the Lone Star State to chronicle how transit is playing an increasingly leading role in local economic development. Almost two years ago, *Community Transportation* published a series of articles on innovative funding for community transportation (see the January/February 1999 edition of *CT*), including an article on Barry Goodman and his work in The Woodlands and El Paso, Texas. It was eye-opening to see these sites first-hand.

Exceptional El Paso

Nowhere is the success of public and community transportation in Texas more evident than in El Paso — the westernmost outpost in the Lone Star State.

Arriving on what had to be the last flight into the city, I was fortunate to have a frustrated tour guide driving the shuttle van to my hotel. Ricardo — a local college student — pointed out that El Paso is really a single metropolitan region consisting of two cities, El Paso and Juarez, Mexico. Currently the fourth largest city in the state, El Paso has a population of nearly 700,000, while Juarez sprawls out at 1.2 million. By

2010, however, the entire region will likely top 2.5 million in population.

As we drove along I-10, which parallels the Rio Grande River, Ricardo pointed south when I asked him where El Paso ends and Juarez begins.

“It’s hard to see the Rio Grande even in broad daylight,” he added, smiling, “it’s more of a trickle than a river; not much of a border.”

I strained a look into the darkness.

“Do you see where the brighter white lights turn into the dimmer orange lights?” Ricardo asked. Indeed I did. “That’s where Juarez begins.” I spent the rest of my time in El Paso always looking over at Juarez. So goes the life of a border community, as I came to understand.

Morning revealed a city in the midst of an encouraging revitalization. El Paso has retained its downtown urban core while recently constructing a dramatically designed art museum and breaking ground on a new convention center. Transit, as I’d come to learn, is at the heart of the city’s revitalization plans.

I staked out a bench in the nearby Oregon Street Transit and Pedestrian Mall which teamed with transit activity. Forty-foot buses pulled up full of passengers as did a steady stream of trolley buses — all under the watchful gaze of several technicolor alligators adorning a fountain at the square’s heart. People bustled between vehicles or down the pedestrian-friendly streets to work. For anyone interested in effective public transit, this was a site to behold.

A couple blocks off the Oregon Street Transit and Pedestrian Mall, a nondescript glass building rises 10 stories above the busy parking lot that surrounds it. It’s City Hall — where much of El Paso’s revival has been plotted and where I had a brief chat with El Paso Mayor Carlos Ramirez.

“We’re trying to leverage federal transit dollars to improve the overall quality of life of El Pasoans,” explained Mayor Ramirez before standing up from his plush desk chair and walking over to a large window that affords a commanding view of the city. As soon as I joined the mayor at the window he began to animatedly point to all of the transit-oriented development underway or recently completed.

“We’ve built several terminals and facilities, along with some parking structures that make it easier for people to use transit,” said Mayor Ramirez. “It’s an investment in the people of this city because it creates a livable community — and it seems to be working.”

Barry Goodman, president of the Goodman Corporation in Houston, has played an active role in El Paso’s transit revitalization, helping the city to leverage federal funding, local and private funds. Goodman’s philosophy is to build transit services and facilities concurrently with community redevelopment efforts.

“El Paso is intent on redeveloping itself without destroying the traditional neighborhoods,” noted Barry.

In the distance, beyond the projects of which the Mayor is clearly proud, emerges Juarez. From the vantage point of this mayoral perch, I realized the immense size of the city across the border — it stretched farther than I could see. I pointed to Juarez and asked the mayor how its presence effected public transit in El Paso.

“Well,” he said, smiling as if it were a question he regularly answers. “See that haze rising above Juarez?” Indeed a brownish-reddish fog seemed to hang in the air over Mexico’s fifth largest city. “Air quality’s an issue here in El Paso but much of it emanates from the other side of the border. More than half the streets of Juarez are unpaved and the vehicles over there are older. That and the industry, which has really picked up after NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) are the reasons. And we just can’t put up a curtain along the border.” Later, I learned that the day had been labeled an ozone action alert day.

I asked about the uniqueness of running only a portion of a large metropolitan region with virtually no control over the larger section.

“It is tough, but not impossible,” he said. “We try to coordinate and cooperate where and when we can.”

As part of the effort to keep the air in El Paso clean, more than 60 percent of Sun Metro’s (the city’s transit system) buses run on natural gas. From the Mayor’s window I spied the historic Union Depot, home to Sun Metro and next on my list of appointments. An imposing red-brick structure with a single tower and spire, the Union Depot was built in 1905 and renovated during the 1980s. Sun Metro moved into the old train station — which Amtrak continues to serve — in 1980.

Terry Lee Scott directs Sun Metro. He came to the agency in 1998 having spent 29 years with the U.S. Army, reaching the rank of Colonel. Notably, he was the garrison commander at the impossibly named Fort

Bliss (just north of the city), so he came to the job familiar with the El Paso region.

“I’ve moved people and equipment across the world,” he said matter-of-factly. “So moving people across town didn’t seem to me to be too difficult.”

Terry has the commanding presence befitting an ex-army officer, but he is understated. He laughs heartily and readily, and seems to enjoy the challenge of his new career. In response to a passenger’s complaint or suggestion about Sun Metro, Terry is known to say, “Come see me.” And many have taken him up on the offer with most leaving satisfied that Sun Metro is doing all it can.

Terry understands his agency’s dual role both in the revitalization of El Paso and in simply providing a transportation alternative to those with limited choices. It is his challenge to successfully manage these two objectives — and a more well-suited individual for this task I cannot imagine.

As with everything else in El Paso, transit services are greatly impacted by Juarez. Terry estimates that half of his 13 million annual riders live across the border. For many of these passengers, most of whom are comfortable with public transit, Sun Metro is the only way to get around. At the same time, the agency’s most popular routes are express service from the El Paso suburbs into downtown that attract a more affluent rider. In addition to these traditional fixed-route bus and complementary paratransit services, Sun Metro operates three trolley-bus routes in the downtown core and a growing neighborhood service on the east side of town.

“Our ridership is pretty steady,” said Sun Metro’s Community Relations Manager Paul Stresow. “A lot of the vehicles are full at certain times of the day.” Which leads some in the community to ask Terry why his agency is so actively involved in facility building and development, rather than vehicle purchasing.

“People will say, ‘Why don’t you buy new buses?’” chuckled Terry. “They don’t understand that we’re trying to create a real transportation network here in El Paso that offers a family of transit services all connected by terminals. We do have a strategy.” Judging by the frenzied transit facility building underway in and around El Paso, the strategy is working nicely.

The Oregon Street Transit Mall, where I began my day marveling at the throngs of Sun Metro passengers, was completed on August 18 of this year and is merely the first in a series of projects. Previously, buses converged from all sides of the one-square-block park,

creating congestion and diminishing its beauty. Today, trolleys and buses serve specific sections of the Mall, complete with wrought-iron-style shelters and easy transfer areas. Extra-wide paver-stone sidewalks and ornate street lamps augment the overhaul with utility and character.

South of the Oregon Street Transit and Pedestrian Mall an even more ambitious undertaking, the Union Plaza Project, is taking shape. Terry calls the project the cornerstone of El Paso’s downtown transit-oriented revitalization and the mayor made particular reference to this project’s significance. Thus far, initial street-scaping work has been completed with the more serious demolition to begin before the end of the year. The scope of the Union Plaza Project is dazzling — eventually a 14-block area will be completely revamped with an open-air plaza connecting Sun Metro’s Union Depot headquarters at the west end with a planned six-story trolley terminal. The real gem of this project, clearly, will be the trolley terminal (currently, trolley riders make up 10 percent of Sun Metro’s ridership, but Terry expects that to expand). Upon completion in 2002 the trolley terminal will have a 600-space parking garage, 12,000 square feet of retail space and a design that complements that of Sun Metro’s historic Union Depot. In fact, all of the terminals and facilities under construction around El Paso use the Union Depot as a design motif. Terry hopes to make an 1857 railroad locomotive, referred to as Engine #1, the crowning element in the trolley terminal.

“El Paso has a long railroad history, so having Engine #1 as part of this project would be fitting,” he pointed out.

For the time being much of the Union Plaza Project remains undone. The streets and sidewalks have been revamped with large stars fashioned from stones built into most of the intersections. Benches have been placed throughout the neighborhood and two parks are in varying stages of completion. Blocks of abandoned housing and warehouses sit idly, waiting to be razed. I closed my eyes and the artist’s conception of the finished Union Plaza didn’t seem so far off.

Terry sees the project far beyond its transit implications. “I’d like to see a day care center in the trolley terminal,” he said. “This project will reenergize this entire neighborhood, we’re already starting to see businesses becoming interested in locating in the area.”

Sun Metro has in its plans an International Intermodal Terminal to be located at the border. The

\$7 million project will house Greyhound Bus service, charter transportation operators and taxis from both sides of the border, Sun Metro trolleys and buses and, eventually, a fixed-route guideway connecting Juarez with El Paso.

“NAFTA created a streamlined, efficient way for goods and equipment to cross the border,” said Terry. “We now must develop a way to efficiently move people across it.”

Mayor Ramirez noted, when discussing clean air initiatives, that traffic at the bridges crossing the Rio Grande (particularly the free bridge) often stands still for upwards of 45 minutes. The pollution generated by these delays, according to the Mayor and Terry, is extreme.

Driving away from downtown El Paso with Terry and Paul, we visited the various neighborhood terminals that Sun Metro is constructing to better facilitate express route connections and transfers.

The terminal at Five Points is nearing completion. To involve local students in the transit system, the terminal offers colorful tiles painted by elementary school students. Terry gets a kick out of one of the tiles where a kid opined: “It beats riding the gray dog.”

From Five Points we head to the East Side Terminal, a two-year old facility with numerous pull-up bays and, again, connections offered all around El Paso. This terminal is in pristine condition offering riders bike lockers and eye-catching landscaping. Honestly, I had never seen so much transit-oriented development in any city — and never fathomed it would all be happening in El Paso. But it is!

The end of our tour takes us to the San Antonio Transit Plaza nearby the central-city area. Though smaller than the rest of the projects, the San Antonio Plaza is unique in that it incorporates a historic tree into the design. And as with all of the facilities in the region, the tower and spire of the original Union Depot are incorporated into the structure. Scheduled for completion in late October, the San Antonio Plaza sits directly across the street from a large federal building complex whose workforce will surely generate increased Sun Metro ridership and local economic development.

El Paso was named for being a pass through the mountains at the southern tip of the Rockies. Today, perhaps they ought to re-write history and say that the moniker came from all of the mobility options the city offers its residents. Indeed, a day’s passage on Sun Metro in El Paso highlights some of the most

innovative transit-oriented economic development projects one is likely to find in the U.S.

The East Texas Empire

In large, block letters on the side of an industrial building facing Route 6 in Bryan, Texas stand the words, “Brazos Transit District, Operations and Central Maintenance Facility.” You might think — and you’d be right — nothing out of the ordinary. But then, just underneath it, one sees: “Texas Division.” And that speaks volumes about the maverick approach that Brazos Transit has taken to providing innovative mobility to residents throughout its burgeoning 21-county service area. This is an agency whose leadership has always been more concerned with providing trips than offering transit as usual.

“We try to keep three things foremost in our minds here,” said Brazos Transit General Manager John McBeth. “One, keep the attitude that we can do anything; two, get rid of any provincial or parochial attitude; and three, it’s all public transportation.”

Margie Lucas, Brazos Transit’s assistant general manager, agreed: “We care about people and what we do.”

And what Brazos Transit does is offer a wide range of mobility choices to the residents of East Texas, from demand-response service throughout the area to fixed-route transit in cities like Bryan, College Station, Lufkin and Huntsville or park-and-ride service from The Woodlands into Houston. It is an agency accustomed to firsts. Brazos Transit was one of the first rural transit operations in the nation. It received the first rural capital earmark from Congress in 1992. At one point, in addition to the previously enumerated services, the agency also operated a trolley system in Galveston, Texas. Upon completion of its ambitious Woodlands waterway project, Brazos Transit will also operate boats. The agency’s management has always broadly defined public transit, to the betterment of those living in its service area.

This is not to say that Brazos Transit bullies its way around East Texas or dictates service standards. On the contrary, John makes clear that his operation only provides service in communities that request it.

“If a community thinks it can provide transit service better or more efficiently than we do, then I’ll be the first to say ‘Take it,’” said John animatedly. He relishes recounting old stories with a booming Texas drawl and is, at heart, an unparalleled legislative strat-

egist who serves as legislative chair of the Texas Transit Association. John spends considerable time in Austin (the state legislature meets for nearly five months out of every two years) ironing out the details of rural and small-urban transit's latest funding levels.

His philosophy is to decentralize the product while at the same time centralizing all of the quality-related efforts like reservations and scheduling, driver training and even planning.

I asked John about recruiting and retaining drivers, which these days is a thorny challenge to many a community and public transit agency.

"We've had a couple of drivers for more than 20 years here," he answered. "There's no great secret in how to keep your drivers, you've got to pay them a competitive salary."

Some of the increase that Brazos Transit has seen in its federal funding the past couple of years, in fact, has gone toward driver salaries and training. In addition, the agency has outfitted a state-of-the-art training room for its drivers just a few doors down the hall from the office where we spoke. John also stressed that the agency treats its drivers like the professionals that they are.

"We don't expect them to be caregivers or baggage handlers or anything else. Our bus drivers are bus drivers," he said.

To aid in the system's service delivery, last March Brazos Transit purchased a new computerized scheduling and dispatching software program that has allowed the system to achieve efficiencies with its paratransit component that John once thought out of reach. In six months, the agency has doubled its efficiency to more than three passengers per hour, per vehicle.

John and I visited one of Brazos Transit's intermodal terminals, in Bryan. It was a handsome facility just off a main road with a clean, spacious waiting room. While we waited, one of the system's unique dark green vehicles drove through. But perhaps most importantly, the facility was next door to a series of large buildings that house a variety of low-income health care and other human services, including pre-natal care, women infants and children (WIC) services, a dentist and a pharmacy. John and the rest of his staff understand that effective transportation means connections to services.

"This facility's proximity to all these vital healthcare services is by-design and underscores the role Brazos Transit plays in the community," said John.

"We're more than just a bus, we're a connection to something real and important."

All told, Brazos Transit has what John calls sub-terminals in Lufkin, Livingston and The Woodlands. The system operates 92 vehicles directly and 100 more under contract. Overall, ridership was right at 3 million last year and has been growing steadily.

"Our ridership has been growing by about 12 percent a year," he said.

Brazos Transit ensures connections of another sort an hour east of Bryan/College Station in a planned community north of Houston called The Woodlands. In this tidy community of more than 30,000 residents, the agency provides park-and-ride services into Houston and is part of a powerful economic development project that one must see to believe. Montgomery County, home to The Woodlands, is an example of how Texas' cities have induced sprawling development, leading to congestion, air pollution and a reduced quality of life. In fact, Houston now has as severe smog problems as even Los Angeles. The picture many have of the Lone Star State — wind-swept prairies, tumbleweeds and small rural enclaves — is antiquated, having given way to one of sky scrapers, suburban development and congestion. An example of a more controlled, planned growth pattern, however, is embodied by The Woodlands.

The Woodlands Express operates out of three large park-and-ride lots (one of which lies on Marsico Way — named for CTAA's current Executive Director Dale Marsico who led Brazos Transit for 25 years before coming to Washington) and transports more than 1,300 people a day into Houston (30 miles away). Operated by Coach USA under contract to Brazos Transit, the service is a high-end commuter operation that has proven highly successful — John estimates that the service recovers at least 90 percent of its costs.

Walking through one of The Woodlands Express's packed parking lots in a much-needed drizzle, John explained: "The people in this community expect a high-quality ride and are willing to pay for it. The farebox recovery we get here helps us serve other parts of the service area."

But this park-and-ride success is easily overshadowed by Brazos Transit's involvement in one of the most astounding and ambitious transit development projects that I have ever seen — The Woodlands Town Center. Winding through a centralized part of the community, by and through an upscale shopping mall, is a waterway project in which Brazos

Transit is a prime player. Upon completion, it will offer a river walk complete with barges, walking paths, restaurants, office buildings, stores and more. It also will provide integrated transit connections that link to the rest of The Woodlands community and even on to Houston.

To give me a better idea of how the Town Center project will look upon completion sometime in the next five years, John took me to The Woodlands Community Center, which houses a three-dimensional, 20-foot by 20-foot scale-model of the entire community. There, a blue stripe curves between model structures, spotlighting what is to come. Staring over the model, the scope of this project is apparent — this is not the sort of transit service you'd expect from a community transportation operation. But maybe it ought to be.

The waterway is currently being dug [water flows in about half the canal thus far] and it is today hard to fathom that it once was a simple drainage ditch — but it was. The visionaries behind this fantastic project include John and Dale, as well as the aforementioned Barry Goodman and The Woodlands' creator, George Mitchell.

Construction crews are digging everywhere, several attractive bridges have been built and the right-of-way along the canal is already undergoing tremendous changes — a 42-story office building is halfway done. One side of the waterway will feature entertainment venues with stores and restaurants while the other will offer commercial space. A concert pavilion, several parks, the community center and a library are also part of the plan. In addition to the barge-like boats that Brazos Transit will contract out for service, the agency will run either vehicles or a rail system along the side of the waterway.

Today, it all seems so clear, but to hear John tell the story, many a person — upon learning of the project and then seeing the ditch — questioned its feasibility and scale.

"I remember walking around this site with Barry Goodman and a federal official. It was a really hot summer day and at one point the official turned to me and said, 'Has the sun fried your brains?'" recalled John. "No one's saying that now, though."

For Barry, this third and final phase of the Town Center project is an affirmation of his long-held notion that transit can not only play a pivotal role in community and economic development, but that it can be at the heart of such efforts.

"It's all part of making a community livable," said Barry. "Creating real solutions takes perseverance and understanding the various stakeholders impacted by transit." And to think that the entire project began with a single Section 18 planning grant (though considerable subsequent funding sources have since been tapped including federal, state and local funds, private sector funds and special taxing district proceeds.)

Eventually the waterway will enter the mall allowing passengers to get on-and-off the boats inside the mall itself.

I had to ask an obvious question which had been at the forefront of my mind since I'd first laid eyes on this stupendous project — how did this all come about? John smiled easily and explained that Brazos Transit's success with the park-and-ride lots caught the eye of people seeking to build something unique in The Woodlands. An agreement was struck: Brazos would be the grantee for the transit portions on the project and in return, it will operate along what everyone locally calls the corridor.

"It's a great deal for us because we're betting that, just like with the Woodlands Express, the farebox recovery will be significant and will help fund extended services in other parts of our service region," said John.

Looking Outward

As I traveled across Texas, I thought one story I heard in El Paso best exemplified the leadership of the transit professionals I spoke with.

Recently, Terry Lee Scott had become aware of an unusual complaint about Sun Metro's Union Plaza Project. A local comedian had made reference to the project's many benches, and how they faced away from the street — making light out of the fact that the agency had located all of its benches facing in the wrong direction. Scott's rebuttal sheds light on why public and community transit in Texas is so successful.

"I ended up telling anyone who would listen that this project is all about developing the neighborhood and community and not simply about transit. Those benches prove it. People might really like to sit and look outward into the community's parks and sidewalks and not into parked cars," he said with a sly smile.

Public and community transportation is headed in some new and exciting directions in Texas. New

services and facilities, though, only tell a part of the story. For as I traveled across this vast state, it was the quality of leadership and their passion for serving Texans that I'll most vividly remember. And these folks have achieved these successes in both service and funding in a political climate that one might think too conservative — and all within the past quarter century.

People like John McBeth, Dave Marsh, Carole Warlick and Terry Lee Scott (and those interviewed on page 20) all have a vision that transit could be better and that transit could play a role in making their communities better. They've worked hard to see that vision come true and after traveling across the state last month, it's hard to miss the tracks of their success.

The future for public and community transit in Texas is even brighter. The development and service that I saw and chronicle in these pages is just the first step in building an even more thorough transit network that will offer Texans even more mobility choices in the future. 🚌

Transit At the Crossroads of America

by Scott Bogren

Some 15 years ago I first came to the state that bills itself as *The Crossroads of America*. I found myself in Indiana, then, to begin an education in journalism that continues today. I knew not a soul in the state — but it soon felt like home to me.

Indiana University (IU) in Bloomington was my home for four years. In the mid- 1980s, however, I paid little attention to Indiana's network of public transportation (other than riding the campus bus). I didn't know that so many of the most innovative, responsive and flexible transit providers in the nation also called the state home. And that's what brings me back.

There are those in the transit field who might not think of a state like Indiana when considering public transit success stories; those who might not believe that any largely rural state could offer an example of outstanding transit. They are wrong. Let me assure you, there is excellent public transit throughout Indiana; it's innovative and fresh, responsive and well supported both locally and by the state, and constantly changing to meet the needs of its passengers. It's not perfect, mind you — there's a need for more of it in many areas and some systems are struggling to reinvent themselves — but transit is alive and well. This is my travel log.

The State of the State

Indiana is a state of nearly 36,000 square miles, most of which remains rural. More than 40 percent of the state is currently being farmed, it ranks fourth in the nation in both corn and soybean production.

In terms of population, Indiana ranks 14th in the nation with 5.8 million residents. Almost three out of every four Hoosiers live in one of the following cities (listed in order of population): Indianapolis, Gary, Fort Wayne, Evansville or South Bend. The remaining population is spread across several smaller cities (like Lafayette, Muncie, Elkhart, Terre Haute and Bloomington) — or is rural.

Due to its relatively large population, the state fares well under the current federal transit funding formulas. Indiana received \$14 million more this year for

public transit than it did in 1992. In 1999, Indiana received nearly \$40 million in federal transit formula funds through the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21). Of this total, \$25 million went to large- and medium-urban transit agencies, \$7 million went to small-urban systems and rural transit providers received \$5.5 million.

Given this positive funding outlook, the transit network across Indiana is strong, but need remains. Virtually all of the state's large- and small-urban residents are served by some form of public transportation, but rural residents lag behind. CTAA survey data from 1995 showed that, then, only 22 percent of the state's rural population had access to public transit. And while I visited several new rural transit agencies on this trip, I know that there remain large tracts of rural Indiana that are isolated.

Each Journey Begins...

Flying into Louisville, Ky., is the easiest way to get started in southern Indiana. I plan on visiting Bedford and Seymour today, two small towns in the south-central part of the state that have achieved a measure of transit notoriety in recent years. Bedford's Transit Authority of Stone City (TASC) runs an innovative personal point deviation system while Seymour offers up transit trips with a most unique fare structure.

I can't help myself. As soon as possible, I leave behind the familiar drone of the interstate highway (I-65) for a leafy backwoods two-lane road so prevalent in southern Indiana. Though it seems I might as well be in the middle of nowhere, nothing could be farther from the truth. In 1990 statisticians determined that Lawrence County, Indiana was the median center of the US population (if one drew a horizontal line on a map of the US whereby half the population lived north of the line, and the other half south; and then drew a second vertical line in which half the US population lived east of the line and the other half west; those two line would intersect right here).

There are wooded hills here broken by small, parched farm plots that have suffered through a dry

spring and summer. The corn is blanched and dry. Sadly, several farmers have already plowed under the brittle leaves and stalks.

A sign on the outskirts of town reads: *Welcome to Bedford, Limestone Capital of the World* Indeed, limestone for such famed buildings as the National Cathedral, the Pentagon and the Empire State Building was quarried and cut right here in Lawrence County.

Michael Bevers is Bedford's city planner and manages TASC. Myra Wilson, Bevers' assistant, joins us as we head down from the agency's administrative offices to its garage and operations center directly behind the tidy, white brick colonial house that is the Bedford City Hall. But before we can leave the mayor walks in and I instantly understand why transit has become such a success in this small town.

"Transit provides Bedford residents with an enhanced quality of life. Without buses, many in our community would be stuck at home," says Mayor John Williams of the program he personally helped launch.

It's refreshing to hear Mayor Williams speak about transit. He understands all of the benefits of an effective public transportation system and seems eager to show off his transit system.

"There is a very real economic development aspect to our transit service," Williams asserts. "This is much more than just a social service."

As we walk down to the garage, Mayor Williams, Bevers and Wilson all agree that they can't imagine transit in Bedford without Betty Hamilton. And after less than an hour with her, neither can I. She's been with the organization 17 years, but quickly adds, "I would've been here from day one if not for a gall bladder attack."

"Betty knows every rider," adds Wilson.

In the back corner of the garage, Betty holds court in a small office adorned with college and high school basketball memorabilia (including Indiana University wallpaper!). The others may manage the TASC, but it's her personal stamp that's so clearly evident.

Up until 1994, TASC operated a fixed-route bus service. But its managers devised a new personal point deviation service to offer better and fully accessible transit to more residents. TASC's vehicles simply pulse between scheduled stops in a demand-response mode. The three body-on-chassis buses (two in service, one in reserve) are fully accessible.

"Our ridership was stagnant, we weren't reaching anyone new. But now we're growing quickly because of our flexibility," Betty confirms.

Ridership has nearly doubled since the point deviation service was launched in July, 1994. Total trips this year are expected to reach 60,000. The system, which once almost exclusively transported seniors, now serves the general public (40 percent of total riders are non-seniors). Equally as important, costs are down since the initiation of the personal point deviation mode. Betty claims that TASC now spends 20 percent less for more and better service.

Transit has been so successful here, that local businesses in Bedford actually vied for bus benches in front of their stores. There's even talk of adding both another vehicle to TASC, and of launching a county-wide service (currently, the agency can only provide transit within the city limits). Mayor Williams sees an opportunity.

"We could sure use a couple of vans to bring folks in from around Lawrence County into Bedford," he acknowledges. "Another 46,000 people live in the county, but outside of Bedford. Our rural communities need transportation more than any other single thing."

Betty agrees: "We'd sure welcome a county-wide service. There's a real need for seniors who can't drive, maybe going just once a week to each rural community. Two vans would do it."

They all agree that any county-wide expansion will depend upon the county commissioners — and that such a move is likely.

We leave Betty's office to sit around a couple of picnic tables alongside the maintenance bays. The garage is a magnificent stone-walled structure befitting of a town that bills itself as Stone City. There, Betty serves up a delicious bowl of home-made peach ice cream. I'm told she cooked beans and cornbread on a recent Rider Appreciation Day.

"We're a family here. I am continually amazed at the personalities that make this more than just a ride," she says, echoing the sentiment shared by so many rural transit operators. As she speaks, drivers on a shift change start appearing. I meet Roe (the singing driver, no less), Regina and the dispatcher, Melanie. Betty introduces each one, and then spoons out another bowl of ice cream.



Seymour is about 35 miles due west of Bedford along US 50. The urge to compare these similarly sized towns is difficult to stifle, but whereas Bedford seems comfortably small, Seymour pushes at its boundaries. Thanks to a favorable economic location — along I-65 midway between Indianapolis and Louisville — and a push by the town leadership to attract industry, Seymour is growing.

During my college years I passed through Seymour and it had the look of a dying small town. Store fronts were boarded up and the economic outlook was bleak. The turnaround is striking, and quickly evidenced by an enormous commercial distribution facility on the east side of town by the interstate.

Transit in Seymour is currently provided through the Recycle-to-Ride program — a year old program of Seymour Transit with a single bus serving the city alone, not the surrounding rural countryside. Since its inception in the 1980s, Seymour Transit had contracted with a local taxi provider for a demand-response service. The agency — and many other city services — operate out of a classic, ornate building once used by General Electric.

Martha McIntire, the agency's manager, has an interesting outlook on running a transit agency, one I've not heard before. "I look at it like running a swimming pool — it's a city service we provide," she says.

Before I can comment on her unique outlook, she smiles: "Don't ever start a transit system with one vehicle."

But what a unique vehicle! Funded through the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and the city, the forest green body-on-chassis bus includes two large recycling bins behind the driver's seat (they take up two rows of seating) that amount to fareboxes for the agency. Four plastic milk cartons or 10 aluminum cans or plastic bottles can get you anywhere in Seymour.

Currently, about 60 percent of all riders pay with recyclables. Several local churches, according to McIntire, collect milk jugs and plastic bottles to help their senior citizen members get around town. Recycle-to-Ride is a unique program that's proving itself successful.

"It really is a neat service," says McIntire. "I get calls about this program from all over the country."

In its first year, ridership has grown steadily on the Recycle-to-Ride bus — from 1,600 trips the first quarter to nearly 3,000 in the last. Riders are mostly

seniors, which was the reason the program was launched in the first place.

"Seniors in Seymour were desperate. They had no way to get around if they couldn't, or didn't want to, drive. I wouldn't like to have to call friends and beg for a ride. This system helps them retain their pride," says McIntire. "Besides, the mayor firmly supports meeting the needs of local seniors."

Right now, the program is operating a single vehicle, but another Recycle-to-Ride bus is in the works. Like Bedford, the service mode is a hybrid; scheduled (there are certain times at which the bus is at either the Wal-Mart or a grocery store and can be boarded without a reservation) and demand response. Three drivers (all part-time, recently retired men) operate the vehicle and make life easier for McIntire.

"They don't seem to mind talking to the riders and they're looking for something to do," McIntire says about her drivers.

Russell Ackeret, one of the drivers, enjoys his job: "I would've never thought I'd like doing this, but I really do. Some of the passengers just like to ride along, they're really not going anywhere, they just need someone to talk with."



You Can Go Home Again

There's a modern suspension bridge over the trickling White River that ushers visitors into Columbus. To those unaware — like myself — the span's futuristic triangular design might seem out of place. But I soon came to learn that uncommon architectural design is commonplace in Columbus, a prosperous town of 35,000.

This is a small city that is vibrant and bustling — and powered by the Cummins Engine Company. Rising above the town (along with many beautifully designed church steeples) are several royal blue water towers, all with a stylized Cummins "C". Cummins' headquarters, manufacturing facility and several other properties are all within the Columbus city limits.

Headquartered in the City Garage on the east side of town, ColumBus is one of the most professional community transit operations that I have had the privilege of visiting. The approach here is personal and efficient. The buses have a distinct look, featuring

multi-colored, stylized people that feel inviting. Such was not always the case.

“There was a cry from the community to brighten things up around town in the mid ‘90s. We had this stale gray-on-gray color scheme. So we decided to hold a city-wide contest to redesign our buses,” says ColumBus Transit Coordinator Sue Chapple, CCTM. The result is stunning, though not unexpected.

Design is not taken lightly in Columbus. Throughout the city, there are road signs alluding to an Architecture Tour. On a drive around town with Chapple, I passed numerous examples (a school, several churches, the hospital and that first bridge) of extraordinary architecture. Chapple explained how all of this came to pass. It seems that J. Irwin Miller, founder of Cummins, has offered to pay for the design of any local building, as long as the design is built. The result is as unique a small town as any I’ve seen.

Miller and Cummins cast a wide shadow over Columbus. Chapple tells a story: “A couple of years ago I came into the office one morning and found all of these people giving one of our vehicles a close examination. I didn’t recognize them, so I went over and introduced myself. Well evidently, Mr. Miller had been driving behind that bus the previous evening and was upset by the smoke coming out of its tailpipe — so he sent over some Cummins mechanics to fix it.”

But as in so many other communities, the real secret to ColumBus’s success is committed local support. The mayor and city council are actively involved with the system.

“Both the mayor and the city council, they’re great,” sums up Chapple. “They’re very supportive and make my job much easier.”

ColumBus derives half of its funding from TEA-21 money, while state and local funds equally make up the rest of the budget.

Ridership on ColumBus’s four fixed routes is strong — topping 160,000 annually. Complementary paratransit service trips have tripled since its inception in the early 1990s. Yet even with this success, more transit is needed as the city annexes new areas and local industry continues to thrive (in addition to Cummins, I saw plants for Toyota, Onkyo, Arvin and Cosco).

“I think county-wide service (ColumBus can only serve within the city limits) will happen,” says Chapple about possible expansions in ColumBus ser-

vice. “Plus, there’s a need right now for expanded hours for second and third shift workers and there are areas of the city that are demanding more service.”



State Road 46 from Columbus to Bloomington is one of the most remarkable drives in the state. Brown County, through which SR 46 runs, is a state park where leaf peepers from around the midwest congregate to see some of the best fall foliage this side of New England. At this time, however, peak color is another couple weeks away. Still, it’s wonderful.

Bloomington has expanded since I last saw it a decade ago; a couple of new fast food outlets here and an apartment complex there. But most of what I remembered remains splendidly unchanged. The drought has reduced the mighty Jordan River, which ambles through the center of campus, into a dry, sandy run. IU’s Ernie Pyle School of Journalism, where I toiled away many an evening, brings back a flood of memories.

While I was a student here, I never owned a car. I rode the Campus Bus System everywhere I needed to go, caught rides with friends, or walked. Call it the nascent beginnings of a career in transit. I was aware, then, that a city bus system known as Bloomington Transit ran around town. But I knew little more.

Transit in my Indiana home town has come of age. Two blocks off Walnut Street (one of Bloomington’s main drags), on a side street I didn’t even know existed, sits the sparkling transit facility shared by Bloomington Transit and the Campus Bus Service. The two year-old facility is an apt metaphor for the collaboration between these two separate but congenial systems. Bloomington Transit serves the town (pop. 65,000) and circles warily around the edge of the large campus, while the Campus Bus Service covers the university (35,000 students) and makes several forays into town (most notably, the mall).

To truly appreciate the level of coordination between the Campus Bus and Bloomington Transit, one needs only to tour the impressive shared facility. Bloomington Transit owns the \$6 million facility, while the Campus Bus owns the land. Property maintenance is shared while each agency maintains its vehicles separately. If it sounds complicated, trust me, it’s not.

Walking through the facility, there is simply two of virtually everything: Two ticket offices, two maintenance bay areas (each with several actual bays), two parts rooms, etc. The building was constructed with dividers that are removable, so rather than duplicative it is merely divided space.

At first glance it might seem superfluous to have two systems operating in such tight quarters — after all, Bloomington’s not all that big. But in practice, well, it works.

“We’ve increased coordination with the university and our services complement one another,” says Bloomington Transit’s general manager Lewis May, who has been with the agency eight months. “But our niche is the off-campus market.”

Indeed, the number of new apartment complexes sprouting up around town astounds me. The trickle of students living off-campus that I remember has become a torrent. And even though I noted several new parking structures inside the campus, it must not be enough.

“We see many off-campus apartment locations using our bus passes as a marketing tool to attract students,” observes May. “There are tremendous parking problems on campus. It’s a great environment for transit.”

This is part of what attracted May to Bloomington. He works for a transit management company (McDonald Transit Associates, headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas) and most recently managed a transit agency in Boise, Idaho.

“This system, I could tell, was in great shape. It’s well funded and supported,” he says. “I knew that I could come here and concentrate on important issues like providing an outstanding transit service.”

Indeed, Bloomington Transit enjoys funding from five separate dedicated taxes: a local property tax; a state sales tax; a county income tax; a state license plate excise tax; and a small state financial institution tax. Federal TEA-21 revenues also play an important role in the agency.

Most of Bloomington Transit’s riders are either students or folks working for the university. As opposed to, say, Columbus, there is scant industry in Bloomington and few large employers — other than IU. And just like all of the other agencies I’ve visited thus far, Bloomington Transit can’t serve anyone outside the city limits.

The university is exploring solutions to its transit needs. Each garage parking space it builds costs be-

tween \$8,000 and \$10,000 — so paving over more of the beautiful campus for parking is really not a cost-effective — or popular — option.

Students have become involved, developing a proposal that calls for, among other things, a late night (10:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m.) bus service on Thursdays through Saturdays to improve safety and security. Recently, IU Trustees approved the implementation of an across-the-board increase in student activity fees in exchange for unlimited bus service on both bus systems for all students — an idea that has flourished in other college towns. This new program will begin next August.

“People are thinking about transit here, and that’s an important first step,” notes May. “We have a great local planning department that is interested in transit-oriented development. They look at every single development issue for transit implications.”

As with the other stops on this whirlwind Indiana tour, Bloomington Transit’s success comes in part from a supportive mayor and members of the City Council. May reports that the mayor actually gave up his car keys for a month to see what it would be like to be car-less in Bloomington.

It wasn’t all that long ago that I was a student here (even though May and others kept saying to me, “In your day...” when describing Bloomington’s distant past), and like most college-aged kids I figured I knew it all. I stand corrected. I had no idea how much public transit was affecting my old school then — or now.



To the Suburbs and Beyond

Moving north toward central Indiana, the hills of the southern part of the state are now a memory as the topography begins to flatten out. During the last Ice Age, glaciers covered much of the state north of Bloomington, creating the fertile, flat farmland for which Indiana is famed (I knew that one day that Geology class I took at IU would pay off!).

In a much-needed steady rain, I head east on State Road 44 from Martinsville over to Franklin in the center of Johnson County. There, along US 31, sits the blue-sided home of Access Johnson County — the first agency I’ve visited that offers county-wide transit service.

Johnson County is as diverse as the state of Indiana. Greenwood, in the northern part of the county is a heavily urbanized suburb of Indianapolis, while Trafalgar and other small towns at the southern end of the county are essentially rural. County-wide, the population is now over 100,000 and growing sharply.

Access Johnson County was first an exclusive transit service of Gateway Services, which provided rehabilitation and community employment services for which transportation became crucial. The transit agency shares space with Gateway.

Two years ago, Access Johnson County was created with local funds and TEA-21 money. The service was funded as a demonstration project by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT). Transit Director Becky Price, CCTM, hopes that situation will change in two years.

“We’re real hopeful that we’ll go from demo project to permanent, and then we’ll get some state funds as well,” says Price.

Access Johnson County is an excellent example of how additional rural transportation funds created by TEA-21 are making a real impact here in Indiana. Back in 1994, the United Way approved pilot funding to begin the process of bringing public transit to Johnson County. By 1996, growth on the county-wide, coordinated system was substantial, and evening and weekend service was added.

Two years ago, Johnson County won national recognition from the National Organization for Disabilities for making the community accessible and the feasibility of a Section 5311 funded system was explored. Finally, on January 1, 1999, Access Johnson County began to offer general public transit service and took delivery of a wheelchair-accessible van funded through Section 5310.

I had hoped that, in the wake of the funding increases we’ve covered in this magazine, I would encounter new rural transportation service along my Hoosier state travels. Here in Franklin was evidence that this was taking place.

After talking to Price for awhile, it becomes clear that the key to success here is the outstanding collaboration of the local business community, churches, social service organizations, schools, nursing homes and much more. To illustrate the local cooperation, Price produces a lengthy list of what she calls her collaborators.

“We had a lot of support for transit right from the beginning here,” she recalls. “At that first meeting in

1994, we had 65 different local organizations willing to help establish services. We’ve also had committed individuals make a difference.”

In her modesty, Price neglects to point out that she and her staff have become expert fund raisers in the name of Access Johnson County; and it is these efforts that have effectively built the list of collaborators. As part of the passel of brochures that Price hands me at the beginning of our conversation, one stands out. It is a well-conceived, three-fold document that concisely explains how a local resident can help sponsor transportation. It details mission, partners and sponsorship options. I’m impressed.

Currently, Access Johnson County operates 11 fully accessible vehicles (10 vans and a bus) in a demand-response service. The service is offered seven days a week, 5:30 a.m. to midnight. Even as the agency expands, it won’t likely stray from operating vans because of the rural nature of much of its service area. But Price foresees change in the future.

“We can’t keep providing solely a demand-response service because we’re maxing out,” Price predicts. She laughs and says she’s heard about the success Bedford had had with a personal point deviation system and says she might like to see how it’s done.

Of course, all of the rural systems I’ve visited thus far (including Bedford) have pointed to Johnson County as an objective because the service here is county-wide. When told about how everyone else is looking at her agency, Price chuckles, “We’ll just keep doing it one day at a time.”

Whereas many transit advocates promote the notion of transportation as an engine of economic development, here in Johnson County, Price points out there’s still room to improve. “There’s still so much isolation in this county,” she says. “Fighting isolation is our number one priority.”

Just as coordination within Access Johnson County is important, so, too, is coordination with the largest transit system in the state. Indianapolis’s IndyGo serves the suburban enclave of Greenwood, some five miles into Johnson County — and it is my next stop.



It’s a hidden jewel of a city. I’ve always felt that Indianapolis is one of the most livable cities in the country with big city amenities and a small-town feel. But it also is a city where transit has typically been

more of an afterthought; one in which transit is beginning to do better.

Curiously, transit has been a long-standing service in Indianapolis. With horse-drawn service beginning before the Civil War (in the early 1860s), it was one of the first cities with public transit in the country. Today, however, IndyGo (Indianapolis's urban transit agency) is treading water. It operates 200 buses, seven days a week and is beginning to look at serving the entire region.

The system's headquarters are just south west of the city's bustling downtown revitalization on a site of noteworthy transportation history. The Duesenberg Automobile Company (builders of the famed *Phaeton* and *Straight-8* engine in the 1920s and 1930s) once occupied the glorious old red brick building and one can still see the faint outline of the company name on the outside wall facing Washington Street. The parallel is clear: IndyGo leaders are trying to spark a transit revival in the Circle City at the scene of significant transportation history (*for more on IndyGo, see the Nov./Dec. 1998 issue of Community Transportation, pp. 34-36*).

"Transit's a pretty tough sell in this city," says IndyGo President and CEO Barry Bland with a unique accent born of his Philadelphia and midwestern roots. "Parking's available and traffic is manageable."

Indeed, public transportation's recent history in Indianapolis is spotty. Ridership peaked on what was then called "Metro" (many people I ran into on the trip still refer to the system as Metro, even though the IndyGo name is more than a year in use) in 1985 with 15 million passengers. By 1992, ridership had declined by 40 percent — yet costs continued to escalate. Finally, Mayor Stephen Goldsmith committed the agency to change.

He simply wanted to make sure that the people who needed to be served would get rides in a more cost-effective manner. The old-fashioned radial design of the service and an increasingly dispersed population translated into dwindling riders and rising costs.

Part of Goldsmith's answer was to aggressively pursue competitive contracting for IndyGo and to more firmly control the agency's funding streams. Though still a work in progress, his attention did alleviate some major problems.

"Basically, it's a new system with new attitudes and people," says Bland. "We're in the process of change here."

Ridership is growing steadily, if not spectacularly. This year, IndyGo officials expect ridership numbers to reach their highest levels in 10 years.

"We're taking the first steps to be able to become the responsive, flexible transit agency that we feel will best serve Indianapolis," says IndyGo's Director of Marketing and Service Development Roland Mross.

"We need to find regional answers to the question of transit in Indianapolis," acknowledges Bland. "We think that a more regional approach is the best way to tie transit into all of the city and the surrounding suburbs. We're also looking for more ways to get involved in the booming business district downtown."

The agency is looking at all of its current routes; smaller, more flexible buses have been purchased and a concerted community outreach program is underway.

Kyle Lomax, IndyGo's operations manager (who has been with the agency for 20 years) is imbued with this new spirit that's so desperately needed in Indianapolis. I was told a story that while riding a bus, he once stood up before the vehicle arrived at a stop and urged everyone to applaud the next passenger to board.

Kyle's infectious sense of humor and fun must have won over the passengers because they erupted in cheers when an overwhelmed rider climbed aboard the bus. After the noise died down, Kyle bellowed: "Welcome to IndyGo!"

With this kind of energy, this agency will surely overcome its barriers and eventually serve this growing region the ways its leaders hope.

Bland sums up IndyGo succinctly when he says: "I feel like we're so far ahead, and then so far behind."

Back to the Basics

Downtown Indianapolis is a bustling place, much more so than I recall. If you haven't been here in a while (like, perhaps, since our first Community Transportation EXPO in 1987) you'll hardly recognize it. Busy hotels, a thriving convention center and scads of restaurants, shops and malls dot the landscape.

But just outside the center city, across the White River to the west, reside many people for whom transportation is a nagging challenge. Here, I've come to visit with the winner of CTAA's 1999 Innovative Action award, Roscoe Brown, CCTM, and to learn about

the transit service provided by the Community Centers of Indianapolis.

Brown has arranged to meet me at Christamore House, one of 13 neighborhood-based multi-service centers that comprise Community Centers of Indianapolis. It's a great morning with a hint of autumn and perfect blue skies.

Inside the impressive old community building with pale yellow walls inside, Brown and Christamore House's Executive Director, Olgen Williams, explain how they provide mobility to the community. The morning's day-care program is underway downstairs.

"We're really all about helping people help themselves," says Williams. "We serve everyone from age 4 up to 94."

The strategy at Christamore is to work with families. "Stronger families make a stronger community, and a stronger community makes for a stronger city," explains Williams.

As we talk about all of Christamore's programs — everything from day care to Cub Scouts to computer training to recreation to senior services — it becomes clear that transportation is the common element.

"Transportation is the key barrier," says Brown. "Seniors won't go anywhere after dark without good transportation. They'll come out, but only if you have safe transportation. And children need access to services, too."

Clearly, Community Centers must be providing reliable, safe transportation. Last year, operating 14 vans, the agency provided 158,000 rides. The vans are funded by TEA-21 money, while operating costs and local support largely come from the United Way and Indianapolis foundation support.

I'm beginning to realize just how great a challenge it will be for IndyGo to truly succeed with its vision of a city- and suburb-wide renewal. According to Williams, many west Indianapolis residents won't ride an IndyGo bus because of negative experiences in the past. Still, both Williams and Brown understand that developing a working relationship with the city transit agency is important.

"We plan on working with them," says Williams. "Already, we're part of their Access to Jobs grant (IndyGo was awarded a grant in the first year of the program, and Community Centers is a partner)."

Brown agrees: "We need to know what they're (IndyGo) doing, it needs to match the community's needs."

The process of working with IndyGo on the grant was illuminating to both Williams and Brown. They saw some of the attitudinal changes at the organization and emerged from the initial meetings genuinely enthused.

"I came away thinking, after the first planning meeting, that even if we don't get this Job Access grant, we need to continue this process," recalls Brown.

They do need to continue the process, for the betterment of mobility throughout Indianapolis. The steep challenge of public transit in Indianapolis notwithstanding, it's hard to envision anything but success given the dedicated, talented individuals I met here.



Heading north on US 31 out of Indianapolis, the suburbs end abruptly in Carmel. Large farms of dead or dying corn stretch out on either side of the divided four-lane highway as I head to Logansport, home of Cass Area Transit (CAT). I'm set to meet with Sue Hoehler, executive director of CAT. As a bonus, Deb Schneider of the Wabash County Transit System (about 30 miles east of Logansport along US 24) will join us.

Logansport is the county seat of Cass County in north-central Indiana. It is an older town of about 16,000 people in a county of around 40,000. Situated on the Wabash River, Logansport has long been a regional industrial center, with numerous rail lines snaking through town. The downtown area is bigger than I expected with even a hint of traffic. Along the way to CAT's headquarters I pass four bright white CAT vehicles packed with children lined up outside a local pre-school.

After nearly 20 years of offering transit service to people with disabilities and senior citizens, in 1997 CAT began providing expanded public transit service through INDOT's demonstration program (like Access Johnson County). The agency receives Section 5311 funds, local money and state funds. Wabash County Transit is brand new, as it was launched in March of this year.

Again, it's gratifying to see new transit services being launched as a direct result of ISTE and TEA-21. I have close friends from my college days in this part of the state and know first-hand the contribution

these new transit systems are making in this largely rural region.

CAT's offices are housed in a senior center, giving away the agency's roots. Both Hoehler and Schneider are eager to talk about their agencies and the great work they are doing. It's great to see such energy. Clearly these two love their jobs.

I have visited and profiled numerous agencies just like Cass and Wabash county over the years, but rather than bringing on a sense of repetition these opportunities excite me. When I think of the prototypical rural transit agency — these systems fit my concept perfectly.

CAT has a large operation. Ridership on its 10 vans is set to top 82,000 this year, a 234 percent increase from the previous year. The agency offers both fixed-route and demand-response service. Hoehler runs several employment routes for a local company (Iowa Beef Producers) and provides Medicaid non-emergency transportation (though she concedes that these trips are declining due to Medicaid rule changes).

Being so new, Wabash has yet to develop any real ridership trends, though Schneider says, "I can't see us doing anything but growing." Currently, the system offers demand-response service.

Interestingly, both agencies serve their entire counties — not just within their city limits. This is a significant change from what I saw earlier in the week in southern Indiana. In fact, both managers claim that more than 40 percent of their ridership comes from the numerous rural small towns scattered across their counties.

"We haven't expanded yet to serve everywhere in the county," says Schneider, "but we're getting there soon."

Seniors make up the majority of riders in Wabash and Cass Counties, but just barely.

"We take a lot of seniors, and they're very thankful for the trip. But I find we're providing an increasing number of trips to other segments of society," says Hoehler. "Especially employment trips."

Both systems have enjoyed a modicum of local support — at least enough to pay for the local share of start-up costs. But like transit everywhere else, both could also use some more.

In Wabash, Schneider's not taking any chances with the new mayor, as she's already had all three candidates out to visit the transit system to show just how important a role Wabash Transit plays in the county.

"Here in Cass County, the county council is really what made this transit system happen," says Hoehler. "We're working with the city and hoping for more involvement in the future."

As Hoehler ticks off the names of rural towns that Cass Area Transit serves, one sticks out in my mind. Twelve Mile it is called, and I have the naivete to ask why it is so named.

"That's because it's located 12 miles from Logansport," answers Hoehler with a smile. There is a certain logic exemplified by the name Twelve Mile that is common in this part of the country. I've found that people here are direct, pleasant and hard-working. It's no wonder these two new county-wide rural transit systems are making such an impact.



The End of the Line

Although my trip will end at the Michiana Regional Airport in South Bend, there's one last transit angle to cover. The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) — or the South Shore Rail Line, as the locals call it — terminates with a station right here at the Michiana Airport and I'm meeting with John Parsons, NICTD's marketing and planning director.

As we talk, I can see South Shore passengers beginning to collect out by the tracks, waiting for the train to arrive.

This is the only commuter rail line in the state, and it is currently enjoying a high degree of success. More than nine out of 10 passengers on the South Shore are commuters, most from Northwestern Indiana (Gary, Hammond and Michigan City). Ridership is up 5 percent from last year and, according to Parsons, the peak (morning and evening rush hour) trips are now standing room only while mid-day trips are getting full as well.

NICTD attracts more than 12,000 riders a day, and another 3,200 on Saturdays and 2,500 on Sundays. It's a two-hour trip from South Bend all the way into Chicago, but most riders (85 percent) are going from Lake County (Indiana) into Chicago, a more reasonable 45 minute one-way trip.

"We're the nation's last inter-urban electric train," Parsons explains, "so a lot of rail fans like to come see the operation. But we're a lot more than just a

historical relic, we've got a real future serving this part of the state."

As we chat in the South Shore waiting area, I can't help but notice the Transpo buses (South Bend's small-urban bus service) pulling up behind us. Indeed, this is the very definition of a multi-modal transit facility — buses, commuter trains and airplanes all call the airport home. People walk from the bus and gather around the train tracks, or head over to the terminal to either catch a flight or get to their jobs. The benefit of all this co-location is patently clear.

In an animated voice, Parsons discusses how in the late 1980s, NICTD purchased the rail lines upon which its trains roll. Freight trains that pass along these tracks now pay NICTD for that right of way. If this doesn't seem all that important, let me assure you it is critical. As a daily commuter rail passenger back home in Maryland, my MARC trains run along lines owned by CSX, Inc. Passenger service is not a priority — if management chooses to run more freight and delay passenger trains, we riders have little recourse. The situation with NICTD sounds much better.

Still, along with ownership of the lines comes the costs of renovation and upkeep.

"Much of the signal equipment, overhead wires and bridges are upwards of 100 years old. Our challenge is to replace these things seamlessly," explains Parsons. Grade crossings are another issue the system is seeking to alleviate. Right now, the line includes 151 grade crossings, at least some of which Parsons would like to see cut. The system is virtually guaranteed to remain electric as regulations in Chicago forbid diesel service so close to Grant Park.

The importance of having a viable community transportation system operating alongside NICTD is not lost on Parsons. He reports that the parking lots available for riders at many South Shore stations are full.

"Arriving in Chicago, there are so many transportation options for people to get anywhere in the city. But coming here to Indiana the options are more limited," says Parsons. "I recall a woman bringing her two children on the train to go to the Indiana Dunes (a popular Lake Michigan beach area near Michigan City). She carried along a huge cooler and beach items and was surprised to find that there was no transit to take her to the Dunes from the train station. That illustrates the important role the entire transit network plays in our service."

More and Better

Five days and some 600 miles later, I'm tired and impressed. The agencies I visited this week have shown a powerful array of innovation, much of it designed exclusively with the customer in mind. I saw wonderfully conceived transit plans in the unlikeliest of places, like Bedford. In Indianapolis, I witnessed an urban transit agency in the first phase of what promises to be an exciting renewal — the city and agency leadership recognize that IndyGo will become a national model. It's that simple sometimes.

But there's a need for more. Even at agencies that had only recently launched new transit service (like Wabash County) the folks I spoke with were deftly seeking ways to provide more and better transit to their communities. Time and again the leaders I spoke with would point out areas they'd like to serve but currently can't; or talk wistfully about all of the additional rides they could provide with just one more vehicle. I passed through too many rural counties that had no service at all.

And finally, let me tell you that there **is** public transit in Indiana — or any number of states just like it. At the *Crossroads of America*, they know better. 🚌

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