



Getting to Work: A Case Study Report on Accessible Transportation Projects

Introduction

A lack of reliable, accessible, and affordable transportation is consistently cited as a barrier to employment by people with disabilities. The four Medicaid Infrastructure Grant transportation projects (Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New Jersey) profiled in this report illustrate a set of practices that address transportation needs. Although the MIG grants are not intended to provide or fund direct transportation services, state MIGs are well-positioned to use their resources to create linkages with other agencies and entities engaged in accessible transportation planning and service delivery.

The four projects described in this report suggest a set of strategies and activities that can help advance accessible transportation in states and in communities. These activities include:

- Convening stakeholders and providing a forum where state agencies, transportation entities, private transportation providers, employers, transportation brokers, state officials and others can engage in transportation planning.
- Identifying goals that result in a win-win situation for all.
- Using this information to plan for outcomes.
- Identifying transportation needs, gaps, and resources in the state.
- Working to address gaps and to leverage resources through transportation coordination, capital expenditures, and other strategies.
- Assuring consumer access to transportation information through a single point of contact (for example, a web-based resource, a transportation brokerage, concierge services, or other trip planning tools).
- Training consumers on the use of trip planning tools.

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State examples

Illinois: Coordinating with Multiple State Transportation Planning Groups

BACKGROUND

Transportation is a key element in almost every major life activity and Illinois has recognized that the current public transit and paratransit transportation systems do not always meet the needs of people with disabilities. For those people unable to obtain needed transportation, their choices of employment opportunities are extremely limited. In Illinois, as in most states, public transportation is most widely used and available in urban areas and surrounding suburbs. People with disabilities obtaining employment in a more rural, or remote area of the state, have fewer options.

There are currently a number of state agencies, organizations, entities, and committees working on transportation issues in Illinois, and particularly in the more rural areas of the state. These efforts include a special project by the Southern Illinois University, the Americans with Disabilities Act Pace Blue Ribbon Committee (chaired by a member of the Illinois MIG leadership committee), the Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation of the Illinois Department of Transportation, and the Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Center, which collaboratively works with IDOT. These entities are obtaining federal and state resources and are currently collaborating with transit providers to build a better transit system for Illinois residents. Federal funding for surface transportation programs is provided under the SAFETEA-LU (the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act, a Legacy for Users), enacted in August 2005. This legislation requires the establishment of a locally-developed, coordinated public transit plan or Human Services Transportation Plan for projects that receive funding through the sections of the act for Elderly and Individuals with Disabilities, Job Access and Reverse Commute, and the New Freedom programs.

The IDOT Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation is overseeing the development of the Human Services Transportation Plan on a regional scale for areas in Illinois outside of the northeast area (Chicago and surrounding suburbs) and in non-urbanized areas with a population of less than 200,000 people (primarily central and southern Illinois). The HSTP will identify service needs and gaps from a regional perspective and recommend strategies to encourage the most effective use of transportation services for the region. This planning initiative is occurring through a collaborative effort of the IDOT, the Illinois Institute of Rural Affairs' Rural Transit Assistance Center and the Illinois Association of Regional Councils.

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MIG PROJECT

The Strategic Planning Leadership Committee, formed as a result of the MIG, is well represented within the entities described above and is keeping abreast of issues and recommendations as transportation planning progresses. However, the SPLC recognized that employers could also play a role in reducing transportation barriers. Adaptations in the workplace, such as telecommuting or flexible work hours based on public transit routes, may further assist people with disabilities to obtain employment. Increasing options for self-employment opportunities could also play a role—assuming that self-employment may mean a reduced need for transportation. These and other creative alternative work arrangements could ease the need for transportation, or at least ease some of the restrictions of “fixed-route” transit schedules. Additionally, Chambers of Commerce throughout the state could play a role in employment transportation by working with employers, local and regional transit providers, and others to coordinate existing resources or create additional resources or transportation opportunities.

To this end, the MIG grant funded a series of employer summits throughout the state, sponsored by the state and local Chambers of Commerce, to educate employers on the benefits of hiring people with disabilities. Employers who attended the summits were asked to complete a survey to gather information on, among other issues: (1) transportation issues for their employees; (2) percentage of employees who have regular problems with transportation; (3) what efforts, if any, were attempted by the employer to reduce transportation issues; (4) if transportation issues have an effect on business competitiveness (both from an employee and customer standpoint); (5) if the employer believes solutions to transportation issues would benefit their business, increase customer service, and so forth; (6) who should take responsibility for transportation issues (for example, the employee, the employer, the city, or combinations thereof); and (7) what solutions the employer has already implemented, would consider implementing, or would not consider implementing and why. For additional information, visit <http://www.disabilityworks.org/>.

The information received from the survey will be used to open a dialogue with various Chambers of Commerce and establish best business practices for employers that have hired or seek to hire people with disabilities.

Transit Planning in New Jersey

BACKGROUND

NJ Transit was implemented in 1979 by state law (The Public Transportation Act of 1979) to address the state’s transit issues. It is an offshoot of the New Jersey Department of Transportation and operates as a statewide transportation agency. NJ Transit is the third largest provider of bus, rail and light rail in

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the U.S. The transit system covers a service area of 5,325 square miles and links to major points in New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia, and Delaware. After the issuance of the federal Executive Order 13330, New Jersey formed a NJ Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility, which echoed the federal government's structure by inclusion of state agencies and entities included on the federal side. The NJCCAM workgroup convenes monthly and meetings are co-facilitated by staff from NJ Transit and the New Jersey Department of Human Services.

MIG PROJECT

New Jersey began work on a MIG transportation project in 2000 to study the state's existing transportation systems and identify gaps with the assistance of other entities including the New Jersey Division of Disability Services, NJ Transit, hundreds of stakeholders via surveys and focus groups, county paratransit providers, and a research team from the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. New Jersey would then design a five-year plan with recommendations to fill existing gaps and remove or reduce barriers.

A key premise of the five-year plan is that the rate of employment for people with disabilities is low nationwide and that transportation is consistently cited as a barrier to work by many people with disabilities. In New Jersey, one in five residents report having a disability and, while rates of employment for working age people with no disabilities in New Jersey average 74 percent, the percent of working age people with disabilities employed in the state is only around 58 percent.

It is within this context that VTC sought to develop a plan that would achieve several key objectives:

- Document the transportation needs of people with disabilities in New Jersey with particular emphasis on those working or seeking work (to do this, both a consumer survey and several focus groups were convened);
- Inventory the available transportation services in the state (this inventory gathered data through a survey with questions relating to service delivery, funding sources, eligibility requirements, driver training, etc.);
- Identify and document transportation barriers to work for people with disabilities; and
- Recommend strategies to address the identified barriers.

To develop recommendations, VTC documented and analyzed factors including transit coverage and proximity of population needing accessible transport to fixed route transit and/or Access Link (New Jersey's paratransit service) and proximity of jobs to fixed route transit and/or Access Link service.

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Analysis of the geographic relationship between existing transportation services and where people with disabilities reside and work was critical to the study. Information was obtained using an inventory of the range of transportation options available in each of the state's twenty-one counties, with documentation of the service characteristics. The transportation needs analysis used focus groups, consumer surveys, and access and work opportunity analysis.

Ultimately, New Jersey's five-year plan was informed by analysis of institutional barriers, a review of best practices and model approaches appropriate to New Jersey, and prioritization and implementation of recommendations. The final MIG transportation project report was issued in 2005, and includes a detailed assessment of transportation options in New Jersey, as well as a transportation needs analysis, and a set of recommendations. To view the final report executive summary, see http://policy.rutgers.edu/vtc/documents/TransEq.DDS_ExSum.pdf.

In terms of findings, one of the most pressing needs identified relative to enhancing transportation services for people with disabilities continues to be the need for improved coordination among services, but a variety of barriers are typically cited with regard to coordination, such as unwillingness to share vehicles due to different needs and characteristics of client populations, liability concerns, and eligibility concerns as well.

Several other findings from the Plan include:

- The availability and quality of transportation services in New Jersey often varies depending on geographic location, and transportation needs often vary depending on an individual's disability.
- Residential location and accessibility to different transportation options greatly influence individual decisions to seek employment. Also, the task of trip planning within the current system is often overwhelming.
- The majority of jobs in most counties in New Jersey are located within the Access Link service area (which is NJ Transit's ADA required statewide paratransit service that shadows the fixed route bus system). Those counties with the lowest levels of access to traditional public transit and Access Link, by necessity, have compensated by operating strong county paratransit systems. For example, Hunterdon, Salem, Somerset, and Warren counties have among the lowest rates of transit and Access Link coverage. At the same time, they have the highest ratios of available paratransit seats per 1,000 residents.

Outcomes to date from this planning initiative include:

- The creation and implementation of an internet-based "one-stop" for information on accessible transportation options;¹

¹ Visit https://www.njtransit.com/mt/mt_servlet.srv?hdnPageAction=MyTransitTo.

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- The implementation of a “regional travel concierge” service for accessible transportation;
- Full participation in the federal *United We Ride* initiative;
- Creation of a forum for the education of consumers, government officials, and the New Jersey Legislature on the five-year plan; and
- Wide distribution of the five-year plan to state residents and other interested states.

Continuing areas of focus include the travel concierge demonstration project and the Internet-based one-stop for trip planning. Long range transit planning efforts are also underway.²

Massachusetts: State and Regional Planning

BACKGROUND

In Massachusetts, the Executive Office of Transportation develops, implements, and coordinates statewide transportation policies including public transit services, and oversees several transportation agencies. Control and oversight of the public transit system is divided between state and local authorities.

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority is an independent state authority operating commuter rail, rapid rail, surface rail, commuter boat, bus, trackless trolley and vans serving approximately 1.1 million passengers a day in Boston and 175 Greater Boston area communities.

Since 1973, 15 independent Regional Transit Authorities serve 231 small urbanized areas, suburban municipalities, and rural communities outside the Greater Boston area. The governance structure of the RTAs provides local control over public transportation. The RTAs are governed by Advisory Boards whose members are local elected officials.

Agencies within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services address the transportation needs of client populations, including individuals with disabilities. Within EOHHS, the Human Service Transportation office oversees a brokerage system of coordinated transportation services for eligible agency consumers. The HST office coordinates transportation for three agencies—the Department of Developmental Services, the Department of Public Health, and Masshealth—through a partnership with the Executive Office of Transportation and select RTAs to administer transportation services for all eligible EOHHS consumers. The HST office also serves as a resource for transportation-related matters to other agencies under EOHHS that require guidance or assistance in establishing effective transportation protocols for their clients.

² See http://www.pdcbank.state.nj.us/transportation/works/njchoices/pdf/madp_panel.pdf for the 2030 New Jersey Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan.

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MIG PROJECT

The Massachusetts MIG is guided by eight strategic priority areas, one of which focuses on increasing transportation options for people with disabilities by assessing systematic barriers, helping to improve transportation coordination, and by ensuring that resources on transportation are readily available.³

To this end, the Massachusetts MIG has supported several transportation-related efforts. Working with the state's HST, there are initiatives underway to build greater collaboration and information exchange between key transportation players in the state. The HST office is currently expanding its mission through development of an information clearinghouse and the capacity to provide statewide mobility management resources. The Massachusetts MIG plans to support these efforts.

To increase communication and networking among regional transportation officials in the state, the Massachusetts MIG sponsored a "Massachusetts Institute for Transportation Coordination" in October 2009 in partnership with HST and the Community Transportation Association of America. The three-day event brought together regional teams from across the state. Teams were made up of transit officials and human service stakeholders to develop action plans for their communities over the next year. Teams applied through a competitive process and were required to outline how their team efforts would help improve transportation options for people with disabilities. Teams will receive follow-up assistance from CTAA for one year following the conference to implement their plan. Desired outcomes include implementation of regional action plans around transportation coordination throughout the state and development of a more networked, statewide community around transportation for human service clients, including people with disabilities.

Additionally, the Massachusetts MIG has been involved with supporting the expansion of online trip-planning resources and two regional mapping efforts on Google Transit. Working with a partner at Bridgewater State College, two public transit systems have been submitted to Google Transit for on-line publication. Lastly, the Massachusetts MIG is involved with developing research products assessing the inventory of state transportation resources and the key barriers that need to be addressed on a statewide level. This research can inform discussion among policy makers and disability advocates.

The efforts described above address a need for activities to enhance local systems as well as to advocate for changes at the broader level.

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³ For more information on these strategic priorities, visit <http://www.workwithoutlimits.org/products>.



Funding the Plan in Minnesota

BACKGROUND

One of the challenges for accessible transportation planning in Minnesota is its size: of the eighty-seven counties in Minnesota, seven are in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area and the other eighty are considered to be the Greater Minnesota area. The array of services available in the metropolitan area contrasts with that of the Greater Minnesota area.

MIG PROJECT

In 2001, Minnesota used an independent agency to study the state's transportation needs. The study and report included demographic projections and gap analyses. The study found that seven counties had no public transportation whatsoever, and another seven had limited transportation in the municipalities. It was projected that at the current service levels, only 57 percent of transportation needs would be met by 2010. The report then sat on the shelf for lack of funding.

In an effort to get the plan off the shelf, legislation was introduced in the state Legislature ("2007—Fund the Plan") requiring the Department of Transportation to meet 80 percent of the unmet transportation needs among people with disabilities in Greater Minnesota by 2010, and 90 percent of the needs by 2020.⁴ The Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities was instrumental in getting this legislation passed. The final bill required DOT action to meet 80 percent of transportation needs by 2015 and 90 percent by 2020. However, there was no appropriation of funds to achieve these ends.

The Interagency Committee on Transportation Coordination was established by Governor Tim Pawlenty in 2005 to lead in the task of human services transportation coordination.⁵ The ICTC is surveying existing transportation alternatives and developing a series of recommendations for improving the level of transportation coordination. During the 2009 legislative session, a bill was introduced to formalize the structure of the ICTC and to appropriate funding for its continued efforts. While not enacted, several additional organizations have joined the ICTC.

An event, *The Long Road to Work: A Transportation and Employment Dialogue in Minnesota*, was held on November 7, 2007, to discuss employment transportation needs of people with disabilities and possible solutions. The Dialogue was held in St. Paul with the participation of eighty-four key stakeholders, including the Minnesota Department of Transportation and other state

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⁴ For more information, visit <http://www.coordinatemntransit.org/ICTC/index.html>.

⁵ The 2009 ICTC report to the Governor is available at <http://www.coordinatemntransit.org/ICTC/documents/ICTCReportToGovernor2009.pdf>.



agencies, transit providers, non-profit agencies providing transportation, employers, and University of Minnesota's Center for Transportation Studies. Following this dialogue, communities in Greater Minnesota began requesting local dialogues, leading to further transportation dialogues.

In 2008, staff of the Community Transportation Association of America facilitated a discussion on coordination and mobility management. CTAA staff discussed what other states are doing, Minnesota DOT provided the state perspective, and the North Dakota Department of Transportation described their new model. Several transit providers participated in the meeting. Semi-Independent Living Services in three areas across the state also became involved in a series of conversations in different areas of Greater Minnesota. These forums included people with disabilities, employers, and transit providers. These dialogues resulted in a county in northwest Minnesota applying for Job Access and Reverse Commute funds and the creation of six new transit lines. Another result included the involvement of local employers in West Central Minnesota, where a plan was developed to have Wal-Mart help DOT with outreach. Four more of these local dialogues were scheduled in locations across Greater Minnesota in 2009.

Agencies are continuing their coordination efforts. The ICTC and DOT applied for a mobility management grant under United We Ride. Long range transit planning continues as well. In the Minnesota Statewide Transportation Plan 2009–2028, *Your Destiny, Our Priority*, it is noted that increased vehicle fuel efficiency has led to reductions in federal and state motor fuel tax revenues, and construction costs have increased worldwide due to increased demand for oil, concrete, and steel. There are also implications from the interstate I-35W bridge collapse in Minneapolis.⁶

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⁶ Your Destiny, Our Priority is available at http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/stateplan/Final%20Plan%20Documents/Policy%20Plan/Entire/Minnesota%20Statewide%20Transportation%20Policy%20Plan_2009-2028.pdf.



Appendix: Federal Highlights

Americans with Disabilities Act

Title II of the ADA, enacted in 1990, prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. Public transportation authorities must comply with the requirement for accessibility in new vehicles, re-manufacture buses in an accessible manner, and provide paratransit where they operate fixed-route or rail systems. Paratransit, as defined by the ADA, is a service where individuals who are unable to use the regular transit system independently (because of a mental or physical impairment) are picked up and dropped off at their destination.

Federal Transit Authority—JARC to SAFETEA-LU

Federal Transit Authority section 5316, known as the Job Access and Reverse Commute program, was enacted in 1998 as part of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century to address transportation issues. In 2005, transportation funding in TEA-21 was reauthorized as the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act—A Legacy for Users, which increased the amount of JARC funding and changed the funding formula. The SAFETEA-LU legislation included New Freedom provisions to support transportation services beyond what was required in the ADA. A GAO analysis of the JARC program can be viewed at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09496.pdf>.

Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310 Program)

The federal Section 5310 program, the Elderly and Disabled Individuals Transportation program, has existed since 1975, but since 1991 allows funding to promote the use of private sector providers and to coordinate with other human services and transit agencies. To find out more about Section 5310, see http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_8348.html.

Community-Based Alternatives for Individuals with Disabilities (Executive Order 13217)

As part of the New Freedom initiative, President Bush issued Executive Order 13217 on June 18, 2001, which called upon the federal government to swiftly implement the United States Supreme Court Decision on *Olmstead vs. L.C.* A number of federal agencies, including the Department of Transportation, came together to support implementation and to form the Interagency Council on Community Living. Executive Order 13217 can be viewed at <http://www.bud.gov/offices/fheo/disabilities/eorder13217.cfm>

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Human Service Transportation Coordination (Executive Order 13330)

President Bush issued Executive Order 13330 on Human Service Transportation Coordination on February 24, 2004, to promote coordinated funding and service delivery for greater efficiency and access. Executive Order 13330 began a nationwide effort to reverse the effects of programmatic and funding “silos.” The President ordered that federally funded transportation programs be comprehensive and accessible to those who needed them, including transportation-disadvantaged individuals. This order also created the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility. Recommendations from the Council’s 2005 progress report include: vehicles used in federally-funded programs should be shared with other human services programs; where permitted, standard cost allocation should be developed and endorsed by federal human services and transportation agencies; and methods for cross-agency analysis should be developed. Executive Order 13330 can be viewed at <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2004/pdf/04-4451.pdf>.

United We Ride

United We Ride is a federal interagency initiative aimed at improving the availability, quality, and efficient delivery of transportation services for older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. UWR was started by the Interagency Transportation Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility. This initiative provides assistance to states and communities through assessment tools, technical assistance, and state coordination grants. According to a recent report, 40 states now have coordination plans, and several governors have issued Executive Orders for Coordination of Human Services Transportation. For more information, visit <http://www.unitedweride.gov/>.

Technical Assistance on transportation coordination has also been made available through the Community Transportation Association of America, the National Resource Center for Human Service Transportation Coordination, Easter Seals Project Action, the National Job Links Employment Transportation Initiative, the National Transit Institute at Rutgers University, the Rural Passenger and Tribal Passenger Transportation Technical Assistance programs, and more.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Enacted by President Obama on February 17, 2009, ARRA includes measures to modernize the nation’s infrastructure through expansion of transit capacity and modernization of transit systems, among other measures. ARRA provides significant funding to states and localities for capital investments in surface transportation, i.e., highways, bridges, transit and rail projects. For updates on ARRA-funded transportation projects, see the ARRA Grants Digest at http://www.fta.dot.gov/news/news_events_7963.html.

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