Area Agency on Aging 1-B

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Mobility Management Service Literature Review

- Best Practices for Voucher Systems
- Best Practices in Mobility Management
- Best Practices in Employment Related Transportation for Persons with Disabilities

Best Practices for Voucher Systems

<u>Introduction</u>

A voucher system is a method of payment that enables people to obtain and afford transportation.[i] Using formal transportation systems may be an alternative to a person's informal network of family, friends, and neighbors. Federal, state or local agencies that fund transportation develop a "purchase service agreement" with a voucher site or broker. The funding source reimburses the voucher site at an agreed-upon rate. Vouchers are an effective solution for the challenges of high cost and inadequate resources that impact many seniors, people with disabilities, and/or those with limited income who do not have a personal vehicle or the ability to drive.

<u>Summary</u>

A voucher system is a way to grow transportation options and usage, particularly for those with the greatest need for transportation and for whom traditional transportation options may not work as well.[ii] Using a voucher system can create incentives for for-profit and non-profit organizations to collaborate in order to sustain success. This will bring transportation providers (e.g., taxis, human services transportation providers, neighbors and other volunteers) into the network of transportation services available in a community to meet time, day, and geographic needs. Subsidizing the cost of transportation using transit, taxi, carpool, or other modes will ensure transportation options to seniors, persons with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. Being able to rely on voucher-supported services means additional independence for the customer previously dependent on the goodwill of family members or friends for their personal transportation. A voucher system allows customers to choose transportation services to match their needs, from the type of vehicle to the time and day of travel, including evenings and weekends; to the type of service (e.g., door-to-door) thereby eliminating barriers that may present in traditional transportation options.

Participation in a voucher program allows public transportation providers to increase their ridership, taxis, and human services transportation providers to expand their contract revenue. Also, family members, neighbors, and others can receive reimbursement for trips they may have been funding out of their own pockets. A transportation provider, private company, organization, or an individual can contribute to the well-being of community members who rely on others for transportation. A voucher program expands the community's available transportation services by folding additional providers into the network of transportation services. Access to a voucher program can move people into jobs, removing them from public assistance, thus increasing the number of wage earners (taxpayers) and consumers with disposable income. By expanding service and revenue, voucher programs can create new jobs, or identify unmet travel demand, which may eventually justify investment in a public transit system.

There are five main transportation models that most communities utilize:[iii]

- Public Transportation Models
  - Fixed Route Services – Bus Route
  - Demand-Response Services – Dial a Ride
  - Deviated Fixed-Route Services – Combination of both
- Agency-Focused Models
  - Specialized Transit Mode – Local agency that operates their own vehicle
- Cooperative Models
  - Coordinated Services – Collaboration with other human service agency to work together to develop local plans, and may pool purchases of fuel and maintenance
  - Brokerages – Coordinate schedules and rides with other human service agencies
  - Consolidated Services – Local agencies work together to form an independent entity to provide transit services
- Volunteer and Voucher Models
  - Volunteer Systems – Non-profit agencies and/or volunteers to provide transportation
  - Community Inclusion Drivers – Volunteer drivers are matched to persons with disabilities
  - Voucher Models – A sponsoring agency provides resources directly to the individuals who then purchase their own transportation.
- Public-Private Partnerships
  - Taxi Coupon Models – A voucher model that can be used for local taxi service
  - Personal Ownership – Personal vehicles

Vouchers enable funding agencies to pay existing public and private transit providers where routes and services do not exist. Also, it can access community resources where using transit in the past had not been practical.[iv] Faith-based, community service organizations, and public agencies can contribute to voucher programs to support their client's use and as a result, support economic development. As an added benefit, organizations, agencies, and operators who use vouchers are positioning themselves to approach state agencies for coordinated buy-in that would move vouchers from relatively single programs focus to a universal solution. This type of universal system will provide easier accessibility to organizations working with state funded programs.

Developments in technology have made vouchers easier to administrate. Software for managing vouchers can be used to set up a voucher program, authorize, and track specific rides with ease, and when volunteer drivers are used. It has allowed various agencies to separately fund and coordinate transportation. In addition, new software such as an Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) can include global satellite positioning and smart cards. A smart card is an electronic version of a paper ticket. The card has a magnetic strip that communicates to the organization's software. This is used for tracking usage. Using an ITS will allow the organization to track, bill, collect data, and maintain records.

Two models for managing voucher systems have emerged:

- Checkbook Model – Customers receive a pre-printed checkbook with an allocation of miles or trips from a support agency. The customer trades a check for a ride with a volunteer or transit agency driver. The support agency helps locate rides, offers planning support, allocates vouchers and reimburses drivers. Although volunteer drivers are paid, the driver maintains volunteer status under IRS rules.
    - Advantages:
        - Offers the greatest consumer choice and control over transportation.
        - It is easy for agencies to learn.
        - Studies have shown that consumers often identify with and enjoy the checkbook model.
        - A training manual for starting a voucher program is available at http://www.april-rural.org.
        - The checkbook model has been tried and successfully used in a large number of rural communities.
        - The model works best when funding is provided by one or more funding sources.
    - Disadvantage:
        - Customers who are unable to read or write need help to complete the voucher.
        - Duplicate checks can be written if people become confused or attempt to take advantage of the system.
        - The checkbook model generates paper checks which must be stored and tracked.

- I-Voucher Model – A human service agency or other entity sets up, authorizes, and tracks ride programs using special software. Voucher sites print and mail *I-Vouchers* to eligible riders or send bus ledgers to transit providers. *I-Vouchers* contain information about destinations, mileage, value and documentation. Voucher sites reimburse drivers and service providers and invoice funding sources. Further information and access to the *iBUSS* software can be found at www.ndcpd.org/grit. This software has been field tested for two years by sites in New Mexico, North Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, and Minnesota.
    - Advantages:
        - The I-Voucher model can be used by either new or experienced voucher programs and is recommended for sites that have or are seeking multiple funding sources to support vouchers.
        - It has been proven easy for consumers who do not read.
        - The I-Voucher model allows multiple funding sources (e.g., Medicaid, Older Americans Act, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) to set up, track, and authorize rides and generate a needed audit trail.
        - The software is easy to learn.

- The I-Voucher model creates new businesses that stimulate job growth.
- The *iBUSS* software automatically generates standard Medicaid forms.
  - o Disadvantages:
    - Partners are required to work closely together during an initial start up phase to understand roles and responsibilities and make decisions about rates.
    - Online training, while effective at showing the user how to use the software, may not prepare the user to coordinate with multiple partners.
    - Bookkeeping features may not be compatible with systems already in use by a transit provider or service agency.

Vouchers have been proven very cost effective. This system reduces administrative costs, eliminating duplication, coordinating transit vehicles in a community fleet, and provides more service to customers. The average cost per mile of sites participating in the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living Study across a three-year period was $0.39 per mile. Vouchers enable the administrative site to select providers whose services are as safe, affordable, and convenient as possible; the customer benefits directly from this screening. Through the provider selection process, customers can be assured that each provider met all criteria placed by the agency. Existing transit providers find that vouchers actually increase ridership because people have new or better access to services. Vouchers remain an effective way to expand the mobility options and provide choice to customers as they navigate their ways to jobs, services, and other quality-of-life destinations.

The following are various examples of organizations using the voucher system:

Wyoming Independent Living Rehabilitation Center's Checkbook Program

The Wyoming Independent Living Rehabilitation (WILR) Center has administered a successful voucher program using the checkbook model for more than four years. The program serves 13 counties in the eastern half of Wyoming with an overall population of almost 325,000 people. Currently, 315 people are enrolled in the program; another 140 are on a waiting list. Customers meet with a staff coordinator to complete a mileage plan that defines the number of miles each customer will be allowed per quarter and annually based on the customer's average monthly travel. Customers can receive up to 2,000 miles of transportation per year or 500 per quarter. WILR has negotiated a per-mile rate for volunteer drivers, taxi, human service transportation providers, and transit providers. By knowing the number of miles a participant can use per year and the associated transportation rates, the program is able to estimate annual transportation costs. WILR monitors usage to ensure that customers are not exceeding the mileage limit; adjustments to mileage limits can be made if unusual circumstances arise. The customer is responsible for arranging transportation. WILR does not charge customers

for the checkbook. WILR, which provides more than 20,000 trips per year, has one full-time staff person dedicated to voucher reconciliation and payments.

Afterhours Cab Program in Iowa City, IA

In 2008, Iowa City began implementing a taxi voucher program, using JARC funds, to support service when transit is not available, such as nights or weekends. Applicants accepted to the Afterhours Cab program are issued a rider card. The customer will need to present their rider card with a valid Iowa ID to the cab driver before the ride can occur. The taxi company will also be given a regularly updated list of approved riders. The cost of the ride is per mile and is based on the amount that was agreed upon prior to the contract being awarded to the taxi company. The rider/applicant is responsible for half of the fare; Iowa City Transit will be billed for the remainder. The taxi company will submit a bill, preferably on a weekly basis, to Iowa City Transit for reimbursement. The bill will include the actual ticket, mileage and hours of the ride, time, and date, etc. The program will be available for as long as funding is available.

The Santee Wateree Regional Transportation Authority (SWRTA)

In 1973, the South Carolina State Legislature saw the need for public transportation within the state. In January 2000, the SWRTA initiated provisions of non-emergency Medicaid transportation services in Berkeley, Calhoun and Orangeburg counties. In 2007, when the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services changed its Medicaid Transportation services to a Brokerage System, SWRTA no longer provided services in Berkeley County.   Currently SWRTA provides different types of transportation services in seven (7) of the 46 counties within in the state. SWRTA provides Medicaid transportation services in six (6) counties: Calhoun, Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee, Orangeburg and Sumter; para-transit services in all seven (7) counties; fixed route services in Sumter City only with Routes extending onto Shaw AFB; and commuter and/or SmartRide services in Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee, Lower Richland and Sumter counties. Today SWRTA is the second largest small urban and rural public transportation system in the state, providing transportation services within the Central Midlands, Lower Savannah and Santee Lynches COG Regions.

Best Practices in Mobility Management

Introduction

Mobility management is a general term for strategies that result in more efficient uses of transportation resources.[v] The concept involves linking multiple organizations with technology and centralizing specialized transportation services in the community. These practices of mobility management have been directed towards the specific population of seniors, persons with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes. These practices will provide strategies for meeting the needs of the community and prioritizing transportation services for funding and implementation.

Summary

Mobility management concentrates on meeting individual customer needs through diverse transportation options and service providers.[vi] This allows communities to develop coordination plans, programs, policies, and build local partnerships. Using numerous transportation providers allows the most efficient and effective services to all individuals. Successful community-based transportation planning endeavors are built upon the foundations of community collaboration, assessing the resources and needs found in that community, and translating those partnerships and inventories into plans for action. Servicing the needs of particular populations, such as seniors, persons with disabilities, and individuals with lower incomes is the main focus of mobility management.

As an organizer of mobility management, the focus will be the coordination of transportation services among all customer groups, service providers, and funding agencies. Determining the best methods of transportation to fit the demographic needs of a community will be challenging. Public transportation service configurations are the various transportation service types, or mechanisms or ways by which public transportation and special transportation services are provided, including human services transportation.[vii] Some service configurations may have a subset of configurations (e.g., fixed-route service). Examples of public transportation service configurations include, but are not limited to, fixed-route service (local, express, feeder, circulator, etc.), para-transit or demand response service, flex-routes, volunteer drivers/private vehicles, and accessible taxis. Mobility management must emphasize the importance of service advocacy with the focus on direct provision of services. Obstacles these populations face include affordability of transportation and basic access to medical services, essential shopping, work, or school.

The main objectives for the development of mobility management are to provide:[viii]
- "One-stop" information centers that coordinate information on all transportation options.
- Travel training and trip planning for individuals.

- Transportation brokerages that coordinate providers, funding agencies, and persons needing transportation.
- Planning and implementation of coordinated services, such as local and state coordination council.

The following are key steps in developing mobility management:[ix]
- Developing an inventory of available services.
- Identifying customer needs.
- Developing strategies to meet needs.
- Coordinating financial and other resources.
- Training staff and volunteers.
- Promoting the use of innovative technologies, services, and other methods to improve customer service and coordination.
- Developing customer information and trip planning systems.

The Mobility Services for All Americans (MSAA) is the research initiative created by the USDOT to increase mobility, accessibility and ridership through integration of transportation service and resources through the use of technology (ITS).[x] Currently, human service transportation provisions are tied to specific programs, and are available only to specific population groups. This has created a complex, duplicative and inefficient web of transportation services. The MSAA initiative aims to bring all users, service providers and funding institutions together in a coordinated effort, and introduce technological solutions to simplify access and improve cost-effectiveness of human service transportation. The goal of this initiative is to establish scalable and replicable models of ITS-enhanced human service transportation systems that provide efficient, accessible, and quality transportation services to all, by integrating the transportation disadvantaged community and the general public. Through the use of technology, unique Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) applications can be developed for most situations.[xi] The main benefits for using transportation coordination are as follows:

- Coordination and integration software which coordinates software among multiple agencies.
- Computer-aided dispatch (CAD), combined with an automatic vehicle location (AVL) system, facilitates coordination of passenger transfers between vehicles and/or transit systems, reroutes vehicles to meet passenger needs, and optimizes transportation routes. CAD can also be used to take reservations and schedule trips.
- AVL systems provide real-time location of vehicles equipped with a global positioning system (GPS). The GPS satellite transmits vehicle location information to the transit center. AVL, when combined with other technologies, optimizes dispatching, allows each vehicle to service more passengers, monitors on-time performance, and provides time-sensitive information to customers.
- Data management systems gather, manage, report, and store data relating to schedules, trips, billing, and customer information.
- Electronic fare payment technology allows riders and sponsoring agencies to pay with a smart card, facilitate billing, and payment.

- Real-time information can be passed on to the dispatch center via a radio data connection between the transit vehicle and central control.
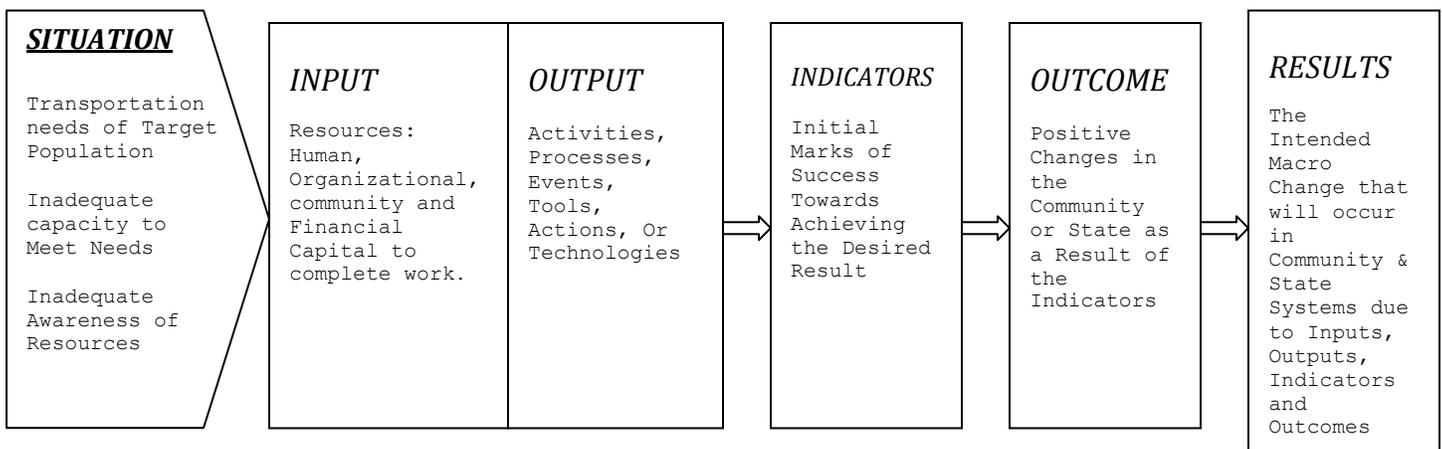- The system includes software that manages vehicle and parts maintenance records.

<u>Benefits of ITS</u> [xii]

- San Jose, CA reduced para-transit expenditures from $4.88 to $3.72 per passenger.
- Door-to-Door in Peoria, IL was able to eliminate a dispatcher position, and on-time arrivals increased from 72% to 81%.
- Sweetwater County, WY saw increased ridership from 5,000 to 9,000 passengers per month and had a 14% increase in overall demand.

In 2003, United We Ride developed the "Framework for Action".[xiii] The *Framework for Action* is a comprehensive evaluation and planning tool designed to help state and community leaders and agencies involved in human service transportation and transit services, along with their stakeholders, assess and plan for coordinated transportation systems. The strategy coordinates human service agencies that provide transportation with public and private transit providers.

In January 2007, United We Ride developed and published the *Logic Model and Measures* as a technical assistance tool joining the *Framework for Action*.[xiv] Such systems have gone far in meeting the needs of consumers who must have access to healthcare, jobs or job training, education and social networks. An overall logic model is used to illustrate the work in building a coordinated system, and outlining the system changes and accomplishments that will occur along the way.

The key concept of most logic models involves the situation, inputs, outputs, outcomes, and results.

SITUATION	*INPUT*	*OUTPUT*	*INDICATORS*	*OUTCOME*	*RESULTS*
Transportation needs of Target Population Inadequate capacity to Meet Needs Inadequate Awareness of Resources	Resources: Human, Organizational, community and Financial Capital to complete work.	Activities, Processes, Events, Tools, Actions, Or Technologies	Initial Marks of Success Towards Achieving the Desired Result	Positive Changes in the Community or State as a Result of the Indicators	The Intended Macro Change that will occur in Community & State Systems due to Inputs, Outputs, Indicators and Outcomes

As the following examples demonstrate, these strategies can help save money and improve services at the same time.[xv]

PATS

In December 2008, the Paducah Area Transit System was chosen as one of three final national sites to deploy a replicable and scaleable Travel Management Coordination Center (TMCC). PATS operates and provides transportation in Paducah and McCracken County, providing over 500,000 trips annually. PATS created Purchase Area Regional Transit (PART) through an interlocal agreement approved through the Kentucky State Attorney General's office, to enhance PATS current call center into a regional TMCC. PARTS providers cover eight counties in Western Kentucky, 2400 sq mi, with a population of 193,495. PARTS have partners with approximately 200 Human Service and Community Agencies. PARTS' goal is to provide customers with a single point of access to receive regional transportation, human services and community information facilitating greater personal mobility for all individuals in the Purchase Area Region.

SMART

The Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) is the transit agency for three counties in southeast Michigan near Detroit. SMART combines innovative technologies with community partnering to provide $7 million in transportation funds to 50 communities for cost-effective and flexible local transportation services. If SMART provided all of these services directly, the cost would be nearly 40 percent more – or $2.7 million every year. SMART is among the first transit agencies in the U.S. to deploy ITS technologies within its para-transit operations. SMART implemented both automatic scheduling and dispatch (ASD) software and automatic vehicle location (AVL) with the goal of improving mobility throughout the region in 1997.

ITN

Independent Transportation Network (ITN) is a transportation service for older people that is designed to replicate the comfort and convenience of private automobile ownership. Profiled in the PBS documentary "Getting Around," ITN uses both paid and volunteer drivers to provide door-to-door service seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Volunteers carry packages, open doors, and offer a helping hand. Older people who use the service open personal transportation accounts and receive a statement, detailing their rides, once a month. Seniors who use the service may even trade in a vehicle they are no longer using for ride credits. ITN is an affordable service supplementing reasonable fares with innovative payment programs that involve local merchants, volunteers, healthcare providers, and family. The original ITN® has operated in Portland, Maine, since 1995.

Riverside County TRIP Provide Mobility

Finding informal providers can save money and improve services. In Riverside County, California, just east of Los Angeles, the Transportation Reimbursement and Information Project (TRIP) complements public transportation by reimbursing volunteers to transport individuals where no public transportation service exists or when an individual is too frail to use other transportation. Public transportation services would cost at least $1.5 million more than the transportation services provided by TRIP.

The direct benefits of more effective coordination are clear. Nationally, $700 million could be saved, according to a conservative estimate from a study conducted by the National Academy of Science's Transportation Research Board. The examples given illuminate how services can be improved at the same time.

The indirect benefits are equally important. Transportation is a lifeline. Without the ability to reach jobs, health care, and other community support services, it is difficult for citizens to join the economic mainstream or to fully participate in community life. Individuals can't get a job if they can't reach a job. Individuals can't avoid acute care medical costs if they can't reach routine, preventive health care facilities. The lack of affordable and useable transportation options frustrates the ability of many citizens to achieve economic and personal independence.

Best Practices in Employment Related Transportation for Persons with Disabilities

Introduction

Accessible transportation is critical for people with disabilities to have the freedom to travel where, when, and how they choose. Sometimes transportation is all that stands between persons with disabilities and job opportunities. In areas, such as Southeast Michigan where people may require access to a personal vehicle for transportation or when public transportation options are limited, people with physical or cognitive disabilities who are prevented from driving can be hindered from employment opportunities. Other forms of transportation, including public transit, taxis, and non-profit transportation providers can be difficult to navigate due to accessibility and therefore inadequate for meeting daily transportation needs. The task of coordinating transportation for persons with disabilities is important to enhance community development.

Summary

National statistics indicate that more than half of non-working adults with disabilities encountered difficulties looking for work.[xvi] Twenty-nine percent cited lack of transportation as a reason why they were discouraged from seeking work. Nineteen percent reported needing an accommodation in the form of accessible parking or an accessible transit stop nearby to take and keep a job. Personal mobility is a sensitive and powerful issue for persons with disabilities. The absence or presence of mobility affects perceptions of esteem, worthiness, capability, freedom, comfort, independence and significance and can impact employment options and healthcare choices.

Many communities maintain specialized transportation services for persons with disabilities, referred to as para-transit. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), public transit providers must provide equivalent service to individuals who cannot utilize the public transit system. There is no one solution to this transportation problem, but there are options in developing partnerships to address this issue.[xvii] Some key points to consider when developing a plan to meet the mobility needs of people with disabilities include the following:

- Evaluate the current state of transportation for people with disabilities.
- Recognize barriers to mobility that people with disabilities encounter in their communities.
- Identify future transportation needs of individuals with disabilities within those communities.
- Establish strategies to meet those transportation needs.

Transportation providers offering their services in partnership with Employment Networks, employers, and other community organizations complement employment-

related services for people with disabilities.[xviii]   According to the National Governor's Association, coordination among transportation providers and agencies can increase transportation availability and access to jobs, enhance service quality, eliminate duplicative efforts, and improve the cost effectiveness of transportation dollars.[xix] Transportation coordination, as defined by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), involves providing specialized transportation through "a process by which representatives of different agencies and client groups work together to achieve any one or all of the following goals: more cost-effective service delivery; increased capacity to serve unmet needs; improved quality of service; and services which are easily understood and accessed by riders." (FTA, 2004)   As stated by the United States General Accounting Office, the following are barriers in accomplishing coordination:

- Unwillingness or inability to share vehicles due to the different needs and characteristics of client populations.
- Perception of the high costs of coordination from the provider perspective.
- Lack of feasibility for coordination in areas lacking a range of transportation services or options.
- Inconsistency among programs with regard to rider eligibility, funding sources, reporting requirements, safety standards and programmatic goals and missions.
- Lack of guidance from federal level officials on implementation strategies.
- Lack of leadership or commitment on the state level to guide coordination.

There are a variety of actions or policy initiatives that can be explored to better assist people with disabilities in meeting their mobility needs. Some actions or initiatives will involve coordination across agencies and entities that currently operate independently, some will involve changes in current practices in the delivery of existing services, and some will involve sensitizing the public and service providers to the mobility needs and expectations of the disabled population. The following are some best practices that demonstrate meeting the mobility needs of persons with disabilities:

Allegan County Transportation

The Allegan County Transportation service was created in 2000.[xx]   They are funded through Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) dollars with matching funds from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Family Independence Agency. In addition, Allegan County receives operating dollars from a fee-for-service contract with Allegan County Community Mental Health and Work First to offer transportation to jobs and other destinations Monday through Friday from 5:00 a.m. until midnight. Currently the system runs six vehicles, four of which are lift-equipped. In an average month, Allegan can transport 1,200 passengers.

SETHRA

The Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency (SETHRA) is using JARC funds to expand the transportation options of people with disabilities, Families First (Tennessee's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program) clients and other low-income

people. Specifically, SETHRA has purchased vehicles, and is operating five new van programs in a nine-county region, taking riders to training, job interviews and jobs. One beneficiary of this new service is the school-to-work program of the Sequatchie Valley Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). The school-to-work program provides services to youths with learning, physical and mental disabilities in the Sequatchie Valley, a very rural area that covers three counties and has a population of 11,000 people. Without transportation, many of the valley's low-income residents would be unable to take advantage of the training and employment opportunities available to them just over the mountains. Because SETHRA can use its JARC funding to provide transportation to those under 150 percent of the poverty line, DVR clients have been able to ride SETHRA buses and vans to training sites, sheltered workshops, and $8.00 to $9.00 an hour jobs beyond the valley.

RIPTA

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) has started an employment transportation service for people with disabilities using JARC funds from the FTA.[xxi] RIPTA has implemented five flexible service demonstration programs in Rhode Island's low-density suburban and rural communities that provide disabled individuals with a reliable zoned-based system. A program called Flex Service takes riders to work and other destinations in their community. Passengers can also travel outside their communities using Flex Service, and then transferring to RIPTA's para-transit service. The transfer costs riders an additional 25 cents.

The need for Flex Service became apparent when a statewide survey revealed the unmet work-related transportation needs of Rhode Island residents with disabilities. The results showed that 20 percent of the respondents lived in the five suburban and rural areas of Woonsocket, Coventry, West Warwick, Narragansett, or Westerly.

Furthermore, 81 percent of the respondents found reliable transportation an obstacle to accepting a job. According to the 1990 the Rhode Island Demographic Census on Data-Work Disability & Mobility Impairment, there were more than 20,000 employed people with "mobility and self-care limitations." For these 20,000 people, transportation is a key to self-sufficiency.

According to the Rhode Island Governor's Commission of Disabilities, without Flex Service individuals with disabilities would continue to pay one-third or more of their gross salaries on taxis to get to and from work. Other individuals would have to rely on rides from family members. Those who could not get transportation would likely remain unemployed.

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