



Future Senior Transportation Services in Mercer, Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester Counties

March 2013



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The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is dedicated to uniting the region's elected officials, planning professionals, and the public with a common vision of making a great region even greater. Shaping the way we live, work, and play, DVRPC builds consensus on improving transportation,

promoting smart growth, protecting the environment, and enhancing the economy. We serve a diverse region of nine counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer in New Jersey. DVRPC is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Greater Philadelphia Region — leading the way to a better future.



The symbol in our logo is adapted from the official DVRPC seal and is designed as a stylized image of the Delaware Valley. The outer ring symbolizes the region as a whole while the diagonal bar signifies the Delaware River. The two adjoining crescents represent the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New Jersey.

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Executive Summary

In the coming years, there will be dramatic growth in the population of older adults as the “Baby Boomer” generation (those born between 1946 and 1964) ages to 65 years old and beyond. A looming challenge is to meet the mobility needs of this group to ensure that older adults can live independently. However, while the number of older adults grows, the funding available for specialized senior and human services transportation is declining.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), as part of its Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Work Program, was asked to undertake a project to explore the long-range needs for senior transportation in the four New Jersey counties in the DVRPC region: Mercer, Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester. This report gauges current coordination efforts and recommends strategies to increase collaboration. This project also seeks to “think beyond funding,” and to focus on a paradigm where coordination and collaboration can stretch available resources to create a system able to meet future senior mobility needs.

The shift from discretionary to formula funding for human services transportation programs was the guiding tenet for the federal United We Ride (UWR) Program. *Federal Executive Order 13330: Human Service Transportation Coordination*, signed in 2004, also required local or regional entities to develop action plans emphasizing resource sharing and information coordination for human services transportation. UWR action plans for each county in the study area have been in place since 2008 and were meant to guide broader coordination in the absence of increased funding streams.

DVRPC staff researched examples from around the country and conducted a pair of workshops with human services transportation providers, users, and government agencies. The workshops used materials derived from the UWR *Framework for Action: Building the Fully Coordinated Transportation System* survey and a facilitated discussion method to gather the necessary information.

Several findings emerged:

- ▶ Providers outside of the UWR funding banner are difficult to engage;
- ▶ Shared services for riders with different needs are inhibited by rules and funding streams guiding provider staff or licensing;
- ▶ More engagement is required to clients and the public; and
- ▶ A major challenge to coordination is that it may require providers to cede autonomy.

Based on these findings, it became clear that the challenges facing the counties could be grouped under the following topic areas:

- ▶ **Taking Ownership of the Coordination Process:** The expected paradigm of a state or other government entity taking the lead in organizing a coordination effort is not expected to occur in the near future. Counties and other local entities must take the lead to establish a grassroots approach for engagement both in coordination efforts and for outreach to clients and the general public.
- ▶ **Create Linkages Between Counties, Providers, and Clients:** Through the web or other means, there needs to be more promotion of existing services, providers, and programs. This will serve clients more efficiently, offer an opportunity to engage the public, and enhance multi-county collaboration.
- ▶ **Piloting Shared Services Across County Boundaries:** Cooperative agreements and pooled resources can allow counties to explore projects to implement shared services and increase efficiency.

Providers and counties must take the initiative to make collaboration happen. UWR guidelines have been in place for many years, but a review of services suggests that most have remained largely “siloes” in their approaches to service provision. Providers need to buy into a broader effort and own the means of making coordination happen, and strive to include all stakeholders, whether part of UWR or not. All entities need to commit to working together for the benefit of riders across the region.

New Jersey’s human services transportation system must evolve if it is to meet the ever-growing needs of the state’s senior citizens and persons with disabilities. While this report highlights the challenges faced in meeting senior transportation needs, it has also identified shared goals and areas in need of improvement through the stakeholder survey and engagement process. Now is the time to begin implementing change and working toward broad coordination. Achieving the goals outlined by stakeholders will require patience, flexibility, and resolve, but the consequence of failure—to render large numbers of New Jersey residents immobile—is unacceptable.

Introduction

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) was asked to undertake a study to characterize the problems facing human services transportation providers, identify the central issues providers must work to address, and offer potential recommendations to enhance future coordination efforts and engage stakeholders and the public more effectively. The study area for this report encompasses the four New Jersey counties located in the DVRPC region: Mercer, Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester. This report was proposed as a response to the growing and future need for senior transportation, as the first wave of Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) reach age 65. In addition to the demographic trend of the growth of the older adult population in relation to the population of the United States as a whole, there are several other issues that impact how senior transportation is delivered and used: the growing older adult population contains a spectrum of abilities and needs among individuals; the “aging in place” paradigm, particularly as it relates to older adults living in suburban areas that may not be transit accessible; and Environmental Justice considerations. To set the regional context for this report, demographics and other trends are explored in Chapter 2.

As the need for senior and human services transportation grows, funding and other resources are declining. In response to the lessening of resources and the desire for increased coordination, *Federal Executive Order 13330: Human Service Transportation Coordination* enacted the United We Ride (UWR) Program. UWR strives to enhance access to transportation to improve mobility, employment opportunities, and access to community services for persons who are transportation-disadvantaged. A review of funding issues for New Jersey human services transportation is included in this report, but while this report acknowledges the lessening of resources, the primary goal of this report is to look beyond funding—and instead focus on collaboration and coordination for the following reasons: if funding streams are identified, there can be no expectation that they remain constant; while funding is an important issue, there is no guarantee that elected officials would prioritize increasing funding; and seeking additional funding should be preceded by exploration of coordination or consolidation activities.

One of the UWR mandates is for regions or counties to have a Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP) in place. Each county’s current action plan is reviewed in Chapter 2, and the collaboration defined in these plans may form the foundation for future coordination efforts that may be expanded into a regional or multi-county context, as county action plans will be updated in the near future.

In order for a paradigm of collaboration and coordination to be developed, baseline findings on the current state of human services transportation were needed from a

stakeholder's perspective. To begin developing goals and objectives for the human services transportation community, participants from all four counties met to assess the issues at a workshop in March 2012. A presentation and facilitated discussion with statewide stakeholders was also conducted at the TransAction Conference in April 2012. The workshop surveys, condensed from UWR's *Framework for Action: Building the Fully Coordinated Transportation System* self-assessment tool, were guided by the following questions:

- ▶ Do we understand and agree on the primary challenges facing senior transportation?
- ▶ How should client need guide future efforts?
- ▶ Are agencies working across boundaries, both real and perceived? Are groups sharing resources?
- ▶ What steps do we need to work together?
- ▶ What recommendations are there for actionable strategies?

One might view these facilitated discussions as a revisiting of efforts five years earlier, when county action plans were first developed under UWR. Using a similar tool allowed a more refined measurement of progress toward the goals established under UWR. The survey used for this project included questions from both a community and a regional or state perspective. Discussion questions were grouped under the following topics:

- ▶ Taking stock of community needs;
- ▶ Putting clients first;
- ▶ Creating coordinated community services; and
- ▶ Working together to make things happen.

The goal of the survey was to spark discussion and to ensure that stakeholders identified common challenges. To move forward, stakeholders needed to agree on the most important issues in order to formulate actionable strategies for addressing them. This survey allowed stakeholders and DVRPC to clarify the issues for human services transportation providers and other entities involved in the process. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A.

DVRPC analyzed the data from these facilitated discussions to draw conclusions about the state of human services transportation in the four study area counties. Findings of the survey are fully outlined in Chapter 3. The main points of discussion were: the challenge of engaging all providers; funding streams and perceived limitations to the UWR program; enhancing outreach and support to clients; promoting programs to the public; and increasing coordination.

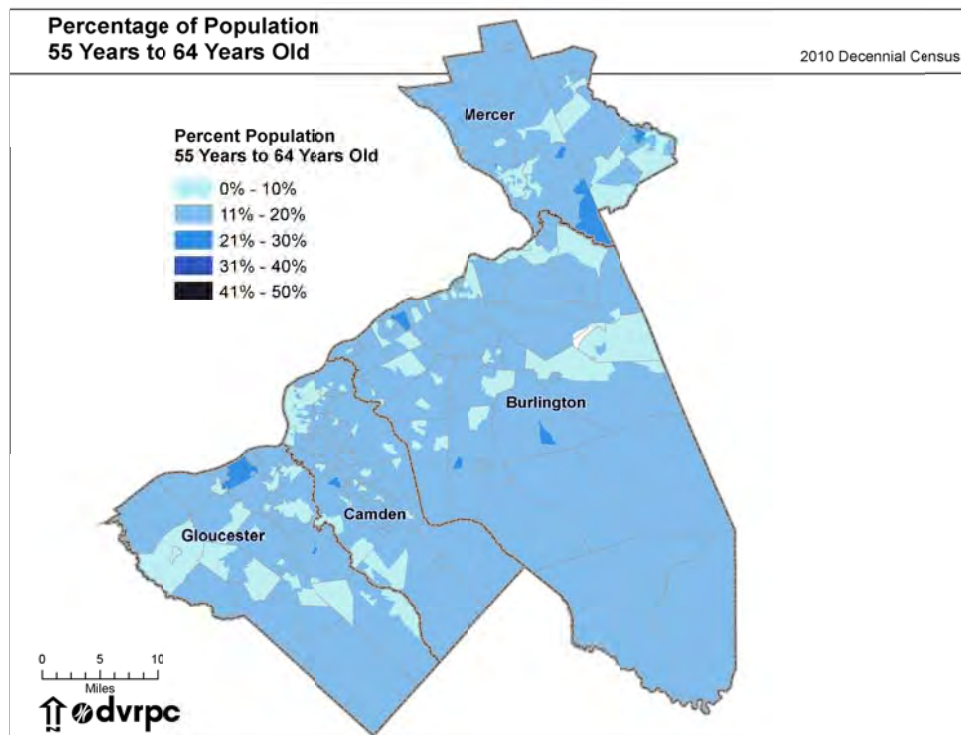
Before efficiencies and coordination can be achieved, there must be an agreement on priorities, the development of policy, and the formulation of an action plan outlining next steps to move forward. This report takes the first step in acknowledging the reality that more coordination can occur in this region, and that additional funding is not the single viable solution to more effectively meet the needs of the senior population's transportation needs in the region. Providers and counties must take the future into their own hands, and to collaborate and coordinate in order to develop efficiencies that support the overarching goal of meeting the clients' needs. Chapter 4 sets out the recommendations to establish a grassroots coordination group that can implement near-term and longer-term projects to improve efficiency and meet the needs of the growing populations of seniors.

Existing Conditions

The Aging of the Region

Nationwide, the aging of the Baby Boomer generation is expected to produce a 79 percent increase in the number of people over the age of 65 in the next 20 years. New Jersey ranks 19th in the nation in the proportion of residents over the age of 75, but ranks 9th if the proportion of residents over the age of 60 is counted. Statewide, the number of people over the age of 60 in New Jersey grew by 3.5 percent between 1990 and 2000 to 1.4 million and is expected to climb to 2.4 million by 2025.¹ Mercer, Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester counties will all experience significant increases in their senior population in the coming years. Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4 show several current age cohorts of older adults in the four-county region, and illustrate the coming tide of potential users of senior transportation services.

Figure 1: Percentage of Population 55 to 64 years old in study area



¹DVRPC. *Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan Summary*. December 2010. <http://www.dvrpc.org/reports/10009.pdf>. (Accessed June 15, 2012).

Figure 2: Percentage of Population 65 to 74 years old in study area

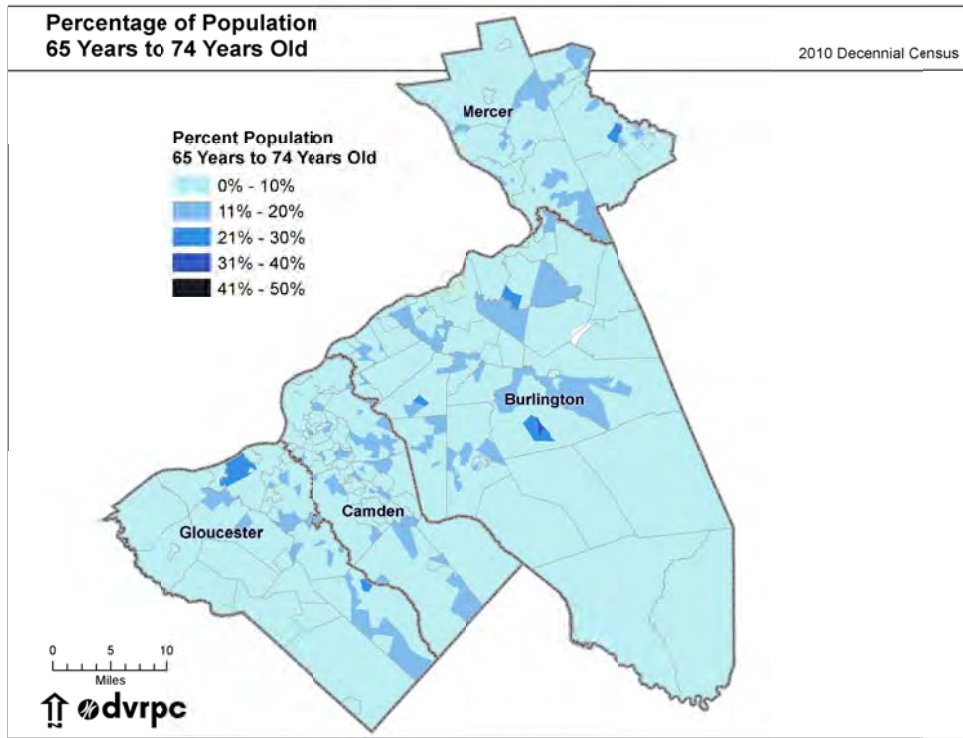


Figure 3: Percentage of Population 75 to 84 years old in study area

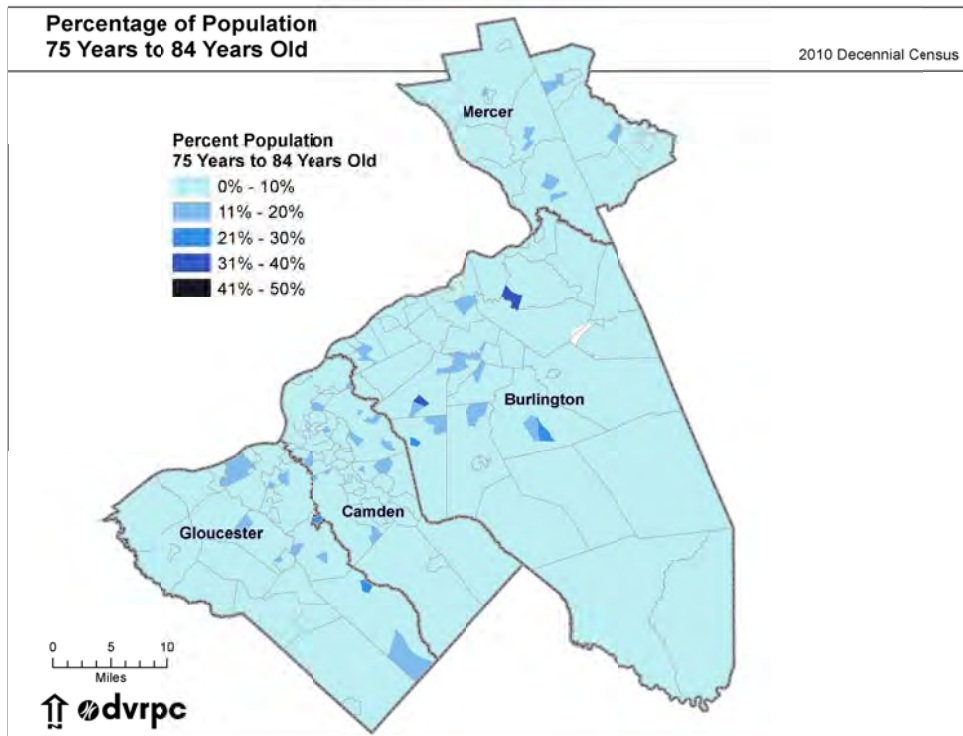
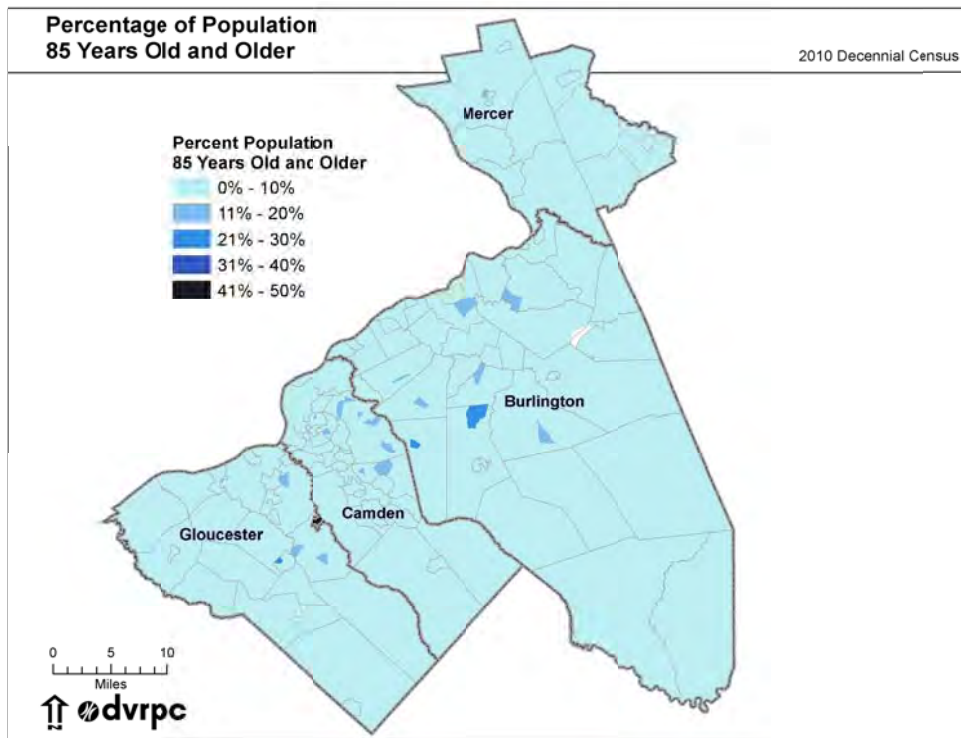


Figure 4: Percentage of Population 85 years old and older in study area



Environmental Justice Considerations

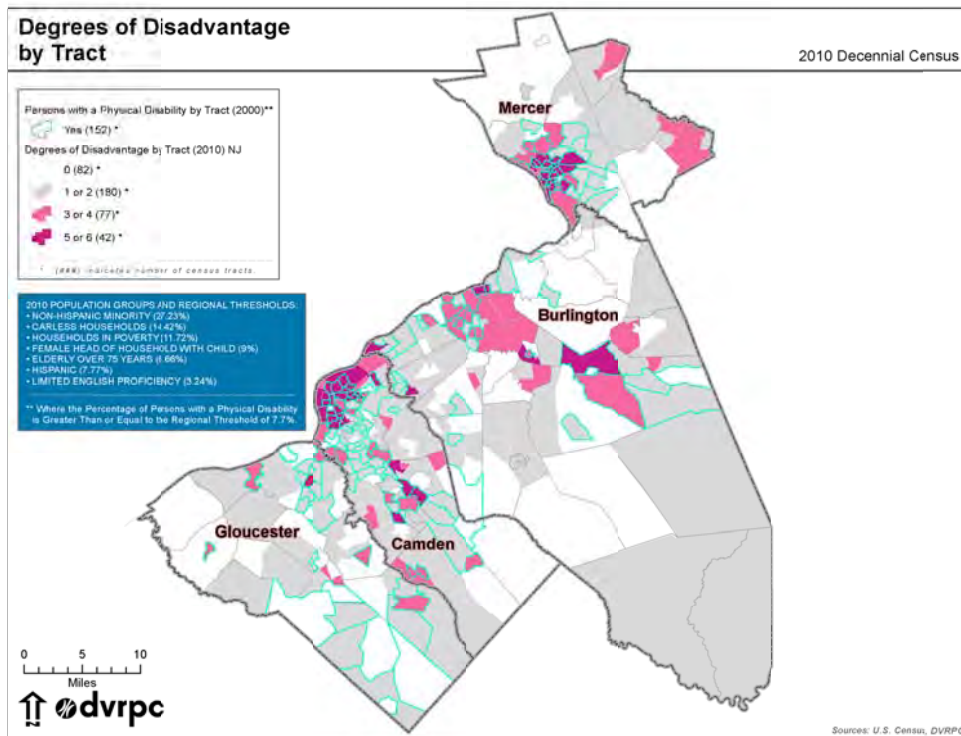
A cornerstone of DVRPC's work, in order to effectively plan for all residents of the region, is the integration of Environmental Justice into the Commission's plans and programs. Environmental Justice (EJ) is the fair treatment and involvement of all people in the planning process, regardless of race or income. As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the nine-county region, DVRPC is charged with evaluating plans and programs for EJ sensitivity to historically disadvantaged populations. DVRPC has developed an EJ methodology that quantifies levels of disadvantage within the region for eight potentially disadvantaged groups:

- ▶ Minority;
- ▶ Hispanic;
- ▶ Carless Households;
- ▶ Low-Income Population by Household;
- ▶ Physically Disabled;
- ▶ Female Head of Household With Child;
- ▶ Elderly, aged 75 and over; and
- ▶ Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

Census tracts with a population that exceeds the regional average for any of these defined groups are considered EJ-sensitive. Accordingly, census tracts can be characterized as having zero to eight Degrees of Disadvantage (DOD). Figure 5 shows the DOD for the study area.

This EJ method offers data that may alert planners to the predominance of a potential planning issue and can also allow for further investigation of potential impacts to a particular population group. In this way, a holistic approach is given to the planning process, making sure that the needs of all people in the region are represented. As seen in the list above, DVRPC considers older adults a group that may require specific planning considerations. In addition, older adults may also be part of other population groups that are potentially disadvantaged.

Figure 5: Degrees of Disadvantage in Study Area



While the aging population is not monolithic, and contains individuals with a spectrum of abilities, age-related changes to vision, physical, or cognitive skills can challenge a person’s ability to walk, drive, or take traditional transit. Therefore, ensuring opportunities for older and/or disabled riders to access public transit, paratransit, or other specialized transportation is critical. Special consideration for older adults who do not speak or read English is also important, and alternate language or format travel information should be made available. Finally, while income and wealth for seniors is projected to increase in the coming years, the future distribution of these financial resources could be more

unequal in the Baby Boomer generation than before.² Low-income seniors in particular may be more transit dependent than the population-at-large and need access to a variety of transit options for everyday activities.

Funding

Across New Jersey, human services transportation providers offer crucial services to many of the state's most vulnerable populations. Increasing numbers of senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and low-income New Jersey residents depend on human services transportation to provide access to medical appointments, employment, food shopping, recreational activities, and other destinations essential to ensuring and enhancing quality of life. New Jersey's human services transportation providers, which include NJ Transit Access Link, county and municipal transportation systems, and hundreds of private nonprofit agencies, deliver millions of rides every year to some of the state's most transportation-disadvantaged residents.

Despite the strain placed on transportation providers by increasing ridership demands, funding for these services has decreased in recent years, forcing reductions in both quality and quantity of service. Atlantic City casinos, which have long been a major funding source for human services transportation through the state's Casino Revenue Fund, have seen their revenue decline precipitously in recent years. The Casino Revenue Fund decreased from \$496.6 million in FY 2008 to \$363.9 million in FY 2011, a decrease of nearly 27 percent.³ This drop in funding resulted in a nine percent reduction in the number of rides provided by New Jersey's county transportation agencies from 2008 to 2010.⁴ The decrease in state funding has placed significant pressure on county and municipal transportation providers to continue to provide essential services with limited resources, even though the number of potential users continues to rise. In addition to decreased contributions from the Casino Revenue Fund, other monetary stresses are expected to impact transportation services, including declining county and municipal tax revenues.

Early iterations of this project sought to identify and build support for new or unused sources of funding. This approach was not pursued due to the following: if funding streams are identified, there is no expectation that they remain constant; while funding is an important issue, it is a potentially political one, and there is no guarantee that elected officials would prioritize this issue; and seeking additional funding should be an effort reserved until all coordination or consolidation activities have been explored and/or

² Ibid.

³ New Jersey Casino Revenue Fund Advisory Commission. *2012 Annual Report of the New Jersey Casino Revenue Fund Advisory Committee*. Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Casino Revenue Fund Advisory Commission, May 2012. <http://www.nj.gov/casinorevenue/reports/crfacannrpt2012.pdf> (Accessed June 19, 2012).

⁴ New Jersey Council on Special Transportation. *Stranded in New Jersey: Community Transportation... A Service in Financial Crisis*. <http://www.njcost.com/2012%20info/2012%20NJ%20White%20Paper%202nd.pdf> (Accessed June 19, 2012).

implemented. In addition, the New Jersey Council on Special Transportation (NJ COST) recently released a publication, *Stranded in New Jersey: Community Transportation... A Service in Financial Crisis*, which highlights potential funding sources or reforms for the state to pursue.

To avoid covering the same ground, project staff sought to determine, through stakeholder participation, in what ways county plans and UWR mandates were being implemented, and to seek additional opportunities for collaboration and coordination. This shifts the focus from a search for new resources to a programmatic review of efficiencies that are potentially achievable through increased coordination across the region.

In this way, this report strives to “think beyond funding.” Seeking new funding streams is a beneficial goal but may require political capital that may or may not be available depending on the current and future funding climate. It also may not get to the heart of the issues in senior transportation, which is more about managing mobility across the region, whether it be in transit, paratransit, or specialty transportation, as opposed to providing rides. In addition, a coordinated, efficient transportation system would strengthen the argument to make funding reforms, whether it is through revenue or a regular funding stream.

United We Ride

In 2004, the *Presidential Executive Order 13330: Human Service Transportation Coordination* created an interdepartmental Federal Council on Access and Mobility to undertake collective and individual departmental actions to reduce the duplication among federally funded human services transportation programs, increase the efficient delivery of such services, and expand transportation access for older individuals, persons with disabilities, persons with low income, and other disadvantaged populations. The UWR program encouraged government and nonprofit organizations to share resources in order to provide the best human services transportation.

A common challenge noted by providers is the perception that although UWR promotes collaboration and coordination, federal funding programs for human services or seniors do not seamlessly work for this goal. This perception is addressed in the 2006 *UWR Final Policy Statement on Vehicle Resource Sharing*:

“Some grantees do not permit vehicles and rides to be shared with other federally-assisted program clients or other members of the riding public. Federal grantees may attribute such restrictions to federal requirements. This view is a misconception of federal intent. In too many communities, this misconception results in fragmented or unavailable transportation services and unused or underutilized vehicles. Instead, federally assisted community transportation services should be seamless, comprehensive, and accessible to those who rely on them for their lives, needs, and livelihoods.”

While funding does stem from federal programs aimed at unique users, and it may be a complex process for agencies to meet regulations while expanding programs, such as ridesharing, there is no formal barrier that prohibits coordination of services. However, there are limitations, as well as challenges, perceived in the UWR program, particularly the difficulty in coordinating across various scales of organization and services. And, while mandated participation in UWR allows for an organization to receive funding from federal programs, there is no significant incentive for non-UWR organizations to coordinate with each other.

UWR County Action Plans

As a result of UWR, counties and regions were required to develop five-year action plans to guide human services transportation planning. Plans were developed through a process that includes representatives of government agencies, private and nonprofit transportation providers, and participation by the public. Complete plans, including coordination with the full range of existing human services transportation providers, were required by Fiscal Year 2008. Each New Jersey county developed an action plan, which is summarized below.

Burlington County

Burlington County is served by Burlington County Transportation Service (BCTS), a demand-responsive reservation service operated by the county transportation division, which is open to all residents over the age of 60 and to disabled individuals. BCTS provides rides for any trip purpose, and serves all of Burlington County and up to five miles outside of the county border. The county contracts BCTS service to a private vendor.

The BurLink system provides deviated fixed-route bus service to parts of Burlington County that are underserved or not served by NJ Transit. BurLink operates six routes and focuses on connecting riders to the NJ Transit RiverLINE light rail stations and bus routes at key locations. By operating as a feeder service, BurLink provides rides to residents in areas in need of transportation services at an affordable rate (\$2 per trip) while minimizing duplication of services. Discounted fares and free transfers to NJ Transit are also available. BurLink is currently operated by South Jersey Transportation Authority (SJTA).

Cross County Connection Transportation Management Association (CCCTMA) serves as a centralized repository of information about transportation services in the region. CCCTMA operates carpool and vanpool ride matching services in Burlington County, connecting riders with others sharing common travel needs. CCCTMA's website, www.driveless.com, features regional bus routes and schedules; resources for counties, municipalities, and employers; and an interactive transportation map that allows users to plan trips and locate available services across South Jersey.

Other county organizations providing rides include the Board of Social Services, the Department of Military and Veterans Services, and the Office on Aging.

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Four Burlington County municipalities (Evesham Township, Willingboro Township, Pemberton Township, and Mount Laurel Township) operate transportation services solely for their residents, thus reducing the potential for coordination across municipal boundaries.

Camden County

Camden County is well-served by NJ Transit, the RiverLINE light rail service between the City of Camden and Trenton, and the most extensive network of fixed-route bus service of any South Jersey county. The Port Authority Transit Corporation (PATCO) Speedline connects southern New Jersey with Philadelphia via rail, with nine stations in Camden County.

Sen-Han Transit is Camden County's specialized transit system providing paratransit services to senior citizens, disabled persons, and veterans. Sen-Han Transit is operated by Senior Citizens United Community Services (SCUCS), a private nonprofit organization. Sen-Han Transit provides door-to-door paratransit service throughout Camden County, and in 2012 it began providing paratransit service in Burlington County as well. Sen-Han Transit's central dispatch system is fully computerized, and dispatchers can track vehicle location in real time through a GPS tracking system. Demand-responsive service can be reserved from two days to two weeks in advance.

Sen-Han's financial limitations render it unable to deliver all requests for service, resulting in 5 – 10 trips being denied daily. Additionally, there are dozens of individuals on a waiting list to receive Sen-Han service. These limitations affect not just the quantity of service provided, but also the quality—personal travel service (e.g., running errands, visiting a friend) is very limited, especially in the evening and on weekends.

Sen-Han Transit has taken several steps toward coordination with other counties and other service providers within Camden County:

- ▶ Sen-Han participates in a shuttle-sharing system with Gloucester and Cumberland counties to transport riders to Philadelphia medical centers. To prevent duplication of services, the counties use transfer locations to board the three counties' passengers onto a single bus that makes the daily trip to Philadelphia.
- ▶ Sen-Han has coordinated with an adult day health center in Camden County to provide scheduling and drivers to transport the center's clients during peak hours. In return, Sen-Han utilizes the center's vehicles to supplement its own paratransit fleet during off-peak hours.
- ▶ Sen-Han has been contracted as a transportation vendor for a variety of organizations, such as the NJ Department of Military Affairs, NJ Division of Youth and Family Services, Camden County Board of Social Services, several municipalities, and a number of nonprofit agencies. It is economically beneficial for

many of these organizations to contract Sen-Han because their transportation needs are small in scale, and it would be more expensive to operate their own independent transportation services than it is to contract Sen-Han.

- ▶ Sen-Han tracks transportation services provided by municipalities to ensure that it does not duplicate municipal services.

Twelve Camden County municipalities provide local transportation services for their residents. Most of these municipal systems are modified fixed-route bus services focused on serving senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

SJTA operates a network of shuttles for employment transportation in Camden County and the surrounding areas. SJTA provides transportation to workers employed in locations inaccessible via public transit. The shuttle routes, employers served, and service schedule are changed as needed. SJTA does not charge a fare for shuttle service. Trips are partially subsidized by employers, and SJTA also receives funding from grants from programs such as Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC), Transit Plus, and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ). SJTA operates a fleet of 20 buses that carry 21 passengers each.

The Camden County Medicaid Office handles Medicaid transportation through a competitive contracting process. Vendors bid to provide service in one or more of three zones in Camden County. Clients call the Medicaid office to schedule rides and are placed with an approved service provider in their zone.

At least four of Camden County's assisted living/nursing home facilities provide transportation services to their clients using their own vehicles. Additional transportation services are provided by at least seven human services agencies, 16 faith-based organizations, and seven private transportation providers.

Gloucester County

Gloucester County Division of Transportation Services (DTS) is the entity responsible for much of the coordination that has already occurred in Gloucester County. DTS provides rides in county vehicles but has also established agreements with various other transportation providers to provide rides and reduce duplication of services. Gloucester County DTS provides rides to constituents on short notice through coordination agreements with several other county departments, such as the Office on Aging and the Office of Disability Services. In addition to serving as a provider of Medicaid transportation for Gloucester County residents, DTS has contracts in place with seven private operators to provide additional Medicaid trips. About 30 percent of all DTS trips are subcontracted to private providers; the majority of those trips are performed by private operators being reimbursed by Medicaid.

Gloucester County DTS has made strides toward coordination, but ever-increasing demand has resulted in trip delays and denials for many riders. In 1997, DTS provided 60,000 rides; by 2006, the number of rides provided had doubled to 120,000.

Gloucester County has had some success coordinating across county lines, working with Camden and Cumberland counties to provide shared passenger shuttle bus service to Philadelphia hospitals. To prevent duplication of services, the counties use transfer locations to board the three counties' passengers onto a single bus that makes the daily trip to Philadelphia.

Fifteen Gloucester County municipalities provide fixed-route transportation services to senior citizens and persons with disabilities in their communities. As of 2008, the Gloucester County Transportation Steering Committee had identified 34 private, nonprofit human service agencies, four private transportation agencies, and seven other providers of demand responsive transportation services in Gloucester County.

Merger County

Merger County is served by 24 fixed-route bus lines operated by a variety of agencies. NJ Transit operates 17 bus routes in Merger County. Additional fixed-route services are operated by Hamilton Township, Princeton University, Merger County Workforce Investment Board, and Greater Merger Transportation Management Association (GMTMA). East Windsor Township, Hamilton Township, Hopewell Township, and Princeton Borough and Township each offer some form of demand-responsive community transportation to senior citizens.

Merger County's Transportation Resources to Aid the Disadvantaged and Elderly (TRADE) program provides demand-responsive and subscription-based transportation service to elderly and disabled Merger County residents. TRADE service is provided to Merger County residents free of charge.

Greater Merger Ride Provide is a program of GMTMA that provides an alternative transportation option to residents. Ride Provide uses volunteer and paid drivers in private vehicles to provide door-to-door service seven days a week. Riders pay a \$40 annual membership fee to access the service, as well as a zone-based fare each time they ride. Rides are not restricted by purpose.

Access Link

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), public transportation systems must offer paratransit service to individuals unable to use traditional public transportation because of their disability. Access Link is NJ Transit's ADA-compliant paratransit service. Before utilizing Access Link service, riders must establish eligibility by scheduling an in-person assessment with NJ Transit. Access Link provides curb-to-curb shared-ride service to areas served by NJ Transit bus routes. In accordance with ADA regulations, Access Link serves areas within three-quarters of a mile of NJ Transit bus routes and charges riders a fare comparable to that of the bus.

NJ Transit Access Link is organized into five service regions. NJ Transit hires service providers to deliver Access Link service through a competitive bidding process. Camden,

Gloucester, and Burlington counties are located in Region 2. Mercer County is part of Region 4.

Access Link is limited in scope because its service area is determined by existing public transit routes. Sizeable portions of Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer counties are not served by NJ Transit bus routes. Residents of these areas are thus excluded from using Access Link service, which is often the most affordable transportation service available.

NJ Find a Ride/NJ 2-1-1

Two important resources that assist New Jersey's senior citizens in finding transportation services are NJ 2-1-1 and NJ Find a Ride. NJ 2-1-1 provides New Jersey residents with quick and easily accessible information and referral services about a variety of issues related to health and human services, ranging from employment support to transportation to recreation programs. Dialing 2-1-1 connects New Jersey residents with a specialist who can direct callers to services matching their needs. NJ 2-1-1 specialists can direct callers in search of transportation services to providers in their area, but do not broker or schedule rides with providers on behalf of callers.

NJ Find a Ride is an online resource accessible at <http://www.NJFindARide.com> that provides information about accessible transportation options to New Jersey's disabled and senior residents. The centerpiece of the NJ Find a Ride website is the transportation search function, which assists users by suggesting transportation providers that can fulfill their needs. Users input their starting point, destination, requested trip time, trip purpose, and specify any additional assistance requirements, and the transportation search function will produce a list of providers fitting the user's criteria. Users then choose a provider from the list to call to and schedule their ride. NJ Find a Ride does not serve as a transportation broker or automatically schedule rides; the service offers a list of providers users can call to schedule their own rides. In addition to the transportation search, NJ Find a Ride also includes a database of transportation providers across the state, organized alphabetically and by county.

Conclusion

The demographic and social trends, as well as the current state of human services transportation in the study area, set the stage for various issues and challenges:

- ▶ The aging of the Baby Boomer population will increase pressure on already declining services in human services transportation planning.
- ▶ Environmental Justice considerations, particularly related to low-income, disabled, and transit-dependent individuals, should impact future planning decisions as they relate to older adults in the region.
- ▶ The county action plans illustrate challenges such as:

- While some service providers in the counties have taken part in coordination efforts, the majority have opted not to participate in UWR. These providers represent an underutilized network of vehicles and drivers that through focused coordination, could improve the quality and quantity of transportation service to residents. Involving smaller faith-based and private organizations in the coordination process will require increased outreach focusing on the demonstrable benefits these agencies stand to gain through coordinating, and improve the quality and quantity of transportation service available to riders.
 - Some municipalities offer transportation services, but generally operate independently of one another. Coordination and shared centralized dispatch systems between neighboring municipalities providing transportation services has the potential to provide more effective service, make more efficient use of available vehicles, and increase mobility options for riders.
 - Some counties are well-served by NJ Transit and Access Link, but other counties have substantial portions of the population that live outside of the Access Link service area. For example, in Mercer County, large portions of Hightstown, East Windsor, and Hopewell Borough are not served by NJ Transit or Access Link. Most rural portions of Gloucester and Burlington counties are underserved by NJ Transit bus routes, preventing elderly and disabled residents in those areas from easily using Access Link service.
- ▶ While efforts are in place through UWR and county action plans, as well as “find a ride” resources, it should now be necessary to embark on a more coordinated stakeholder effort that spans counties, addresses increased coordination, and provides efficiencies to meet the challenges of an aging population in the coming years.

Survey and Findings

The next step to developing goals and objectives for the human services transportation community and to foster greater collaboration efforts was to conduct a workshop with participants from all four counties in the study area. Stakeholders came together to assess the issues at a workshop in March 2012. A session with statewide stakeholders was also conducted at the TransAction Conference in April 2012. The workshops were guided by the following questions:

- ▶ Do we understand and agree on the primary challenges facing senior transportation?
- ▶ How should client need guide future efforts?
- ▶ Are agencies working across boundaries, both real and perceived? Are groups sharing resources?
- ▶ What steps do we need to work together?
- ▶ What recommendations are there for actionable strategies?

Stakeholder Survey and Outreach

Individuals at the meeting completed a survey. Each respondent was asked to evaluate the current state of human services transportation in New Jersey by answering 15 questions. The questions were derived from *A Framework for Action: Building the Fully Coordinated Transportation System*, which is a survey and facilitated discussion activity developed through the UWR program. Survey questions encouraged respondents to look at issues from a bird's-eye perspective and to think beyond their immediate program knowledge and take a role in a larger decision-making process.

Respondents were asked to rate each question as *Done Well*, *Needs Some Action*, *Needs Substantial Action*, or *Needs to Begin*. Questions were edited to meet the needs of this particular group, which encompassed individuals working at the local, county, and state levels, and were based on the following topics:

- ▶ Taking stock of community needs;
- ▶ Putting clients first;
- ▶ Creating coordinated community services; and
- ▶ Working together to make things happen.

These topics attempt to organize discussion around these general guiding questions:

- ▶ Are there regular transportation assessments? Are these reports helpful in guiding planning and action?
- ▶ Are clients engaged in the evaluation of service needs? Are seniors able to access appropriate information about services?
- ▶ What previous discussions have occurred about organizing transportation networks to serve seniors? What previous discussions have occurred about organizing transportation networks to serve providers?
- ▶ What efforts have been made to address organizations and maintenance of a system providing access and mobility for all? Who guides this effort? Who should guide this effort?

After individually answering the survey, stakeholders were broken into smaller groups to discuss their answers. Small groups were composed of representatives from all counties and included government and nonprofit groups, providers, and riders, in order to ensure that the most information sharing from a diversity of perspectives could take place. From this discussion, it is possible to draw some conclusions about general strengths and weaknesses in the current state of New Jersey's human services transportation system. While there was a diversity of opinions, and consensus was not the goal for the workshop, several clear findings emerged, and it was clear that many agreed on certain universal themes that may guide future efforts. Each section's findings are summarized below.

Section One: Taking Stock of Community Needs

This section focused on assessing the community transit process: assets, challenges, and data collection. Half of all respondents expressed the need to broaden engagement in UWR. Several stakeholders felt it would be helpful to reconvene UWR stakeholder meetings to update all participants on the current state of coordination and build enthusiasm for further collaboration. Another common thread was the need to bring providers not currently participating in UWR to the table. Many smaller providers do not receive funding from the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA), and thus lack the incentive that drives coordination among other providers. Steps may be taken to incentivize UWR participation among currently uninvolved providers.

The problem of engaging smaller, non-FTA-reliant providers in the UWR coordination process is not unique to New Jersey. The U.S. Department of Transportation recognized the issue in their 2009 report evaluating UWR's institutional process.⁵ The report noted that smaller and nontraditional providers, such as faith-based organizations and taxi operators, tended not to participate in the coordination process. According to the report,

⁵ Gopalakrishna, Deepak, and Zimmerman, Carol. *United We Ride/Mobility Services for All Americans Institutional Process Evaluation: Final Report*. Prepared at the request of the United States Department of Transportation. Washington, D.C.

some coordinators dealt with this problem by focusing on achieving a “big bang” of coordination among larger traditional service providers, with the goal of engaging smaller providers in the future.

Section Two: Putting Clients First

Meeting the needs of clients is a primary goal for UWR and community transportation. These questions assessed community transit’s accessibility from the client’s perspective, including access to information, identification of needs, and evaluation of services. Most stakeholders agreed that providers would benefit from enhancing outreach efforts to clients. Placing increased emphasis on travel training programs for riders was recommended by 35 percent of respondents. Additionally, several stakeholders felt their agencies needed to do a better job of publicizing existing services available to riders. By investing in travel training and publicity for existing services, providers can strive to make the most efficient use of their available transportation resources. In lieu of expanding services, which has been rendered difficult by declining state and federal revenue, providers must work to ensure that the maximum amount of potential riders know about whatever services exist and understand how to use them.

In addition to educating riders, several survey respondents wrote of the need to better prepare caseworkers with the skills, knowledge, and tools required to pair riders with the most convenient, cheapest provider every time. Providing caseworkers with intensive training and equipping them with comprehensive resources about available services would prevent incidences of riders not receiving the best available service simply due to knowledge gaps, rather than actual gaps in service. Again, this step works toward the goal of making the most efficient use of available services.

Research indicates that travel training can be an effective method for increasing the use of public transportation among older adults. A pilot study in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada showed that seniors who received travel training were significantly more likely to utilize public transit than those that did not.⁶ Encouraging public transportation use among riders physically able to ride will help to reduce the strain on paratransit systems caused by excess ridership.

Few drivers prepare themselves for the day when they will no longer be able to drive, and thus are unfamiliar with alternative modes of transportation available to them. Older adults who have never used public transportation before may feel uncomfortable using these services and avoid transit because of their unfamiliarity with it, even when transit would meet their transportation needs and they are physically capable of using the service. This has a negative impact on the transportation system as a whole, in some cases leading to drivers staying on the road past the point when they are physically fit to do so, endangering other drivers. Seniors who do stop driving may opt for curb-to-curb

⁶ Stepaniuk, J. A., Tuokko, H. A., McGee, P., Garrett, D., D., & Benner, E. L. (2008) Impact of transit training and free bus pass on public transportation use by older drivers. *Preventive Medicine*, 47, 335 – 337.

or dial-a-ride services due to their discomfort using public transit, despite the fact that they may be physically able to ride transit.

Educating older adults about public transit options will work to alleviate stresses on paratransit systems. In the pilot study on transit training in British Columbia, seniors received training in small groups of six to eight from a BC Transit ambassador, who provided the trainees with large-print bus schedules, taught them how to use schedules and bus signs for effective route planning, and showed the trainees how to actually use the service by providing a bus ride. Older adults who received the transit training were significantly more likely to utilize transit in the succeeding months than those who did not.

Section Three: Creating Coordinated Community Services

This section explores progress on multi-modal and multi-provider networks being created that are seamless for the client, and mission expansion to managing mobility, as opposed to just providing rides. The stakeholder survey results revealed that establishing a regional call center (or centers) to match and schedule riders with the most appropriate service should be one of the main priorities in coordinating human services transportation. A common response among stakeholders was that NJ Find a Ride and NJ 2-1-1 needed to be expanded upon or improved. In their current state, these resources serve strictly as directories, steering users toward providers likely to be able to fulfill their needs, but not scheduling rides for users. Moving toward a coordinated brokerage model in which a centralized call center, which would field and schedule ride requests, could improve efficiency and quality of service. It was not clear what organization would be tasked with implementing and operating such a regional brokerage system or how it would be funded. Several respondents felt that one person or group needed to be tasked with leading the effort to establish a regional call center and be held accountable for the results.

An example of a successful regional transportation brokerage center is the Seniors' Resource Center in Denver, Colorado. The Seniors' Resource Center serves 10 counties in the metropolitan Denver area and the adjacent rural areas. It functions as a one-stop center for senior services in the Denver region, providing seniors access to in-home personal care, adult day and respite services, care management, volunteer services, employment programs, and transportation services by calling a single telephone number. The Resource Center brokers the transportation services of approximately 10 vendors in addition to operating its own direct service transportation system. Vendors include public transportation providers, volunteer driver services, human service agencies like the Red Cross, and taxi companies. The wide range of providers allows the resource center to provide at least limited service 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Seniors who need a ride call the Resource Center and inform the operator of their destination, mobility needs, and funding source. The operator then uses a scheduling system to match the rider with the provider that can accommodate the rider's needs at the lowest cost. Riders also have the option of scheduling rides online.

Several significant obstacles stand in the way of establishing a regional transportation brokerage center in New Jersey. Providers' resources are already stretched thin, and there is little incentive for any single agency to commit time and funding to establishing a transportation brokerage center, although a consortium of organizations may undertake a project like this. Additionally, "funding silos" restrict travel options by limiting whom providers can transport based on the rider's method of payment. Ways to overcome these barriers to coordination should be explored.

Section Four: Working Together to Make Things Happen

Section Four speaks to an ongoing, collaborative effort to maintain a coordinated system that provides access to transportation for all. Stakeholders suggested a variety of potentially useful strategies for fostering coordination across agencies. Stakeholders recognized that coordination should begin with small steps, such as establishing regional databases of all available services, including smaller, faith-based services that are often underrepresented in coordination efforts and may not be included in existing directories such as NJ Find a Ride or NJ 2-1-1. Along with improving caseworker training, equipping caseworkers with resource guides of available services would allow for more referrals between providers until a true regional transportation brokerage center can be established.

Additional steps recommended by the stakeholders included:

- ▶ Build lists of riders' most common destinations and share them among providers, to assure resources are being committed where they are most needed;
- ▶ Encourage providers to include links to other providers on their websites, creating an online network;
- ▶ Establish mechanisms for transferring riders across jurisdictional boundaries; and
- ▶ Develop a marketing plan to create a sense of urgency and build enthusiasm among providers to find solutions.

A common theme that appeared repeatedly in the stakeholders' suggestions was the need for agencies and providers to be more proactive in collecting and sharing information about ridership and services. Structural issues such as funding silos and restrictions on vehicle sharing may stand in the way of large-scale coordination in the short term, but small steps improving communication among providers have the potential to significantly improve and streamline service.

Challenges and Moving Forward

In synthesizing participant responses, several questions emerged that may require the most action in moving to a more coordinated effort:

- ▶ Question #7. Is there a seamless payment system that supports user-friendly services and promotes client choice of the most cost-effective service? —Rated *Needs to Begin* by 68 percent of respondents.
- ▶ Question #11. Is there a centralized dispatch system to handle requests for transportation services from agencies and individuals? —Rated *Needs to Begin* by 52 percent of respondents; no respondents rated this category *Done Well*.
- ▶ Question #6. Are travel training and consumer education programs available on an ongoing basis? —67 percent of respondents rated this category *Needs to Begin* or *Needs Substantial Action*.

In addition to the multiple-choice response questions attendees answered, each stakeholder was asked to provide an actionable strategy for addressing challenges in four categories: *Taking Stock of Community Needs*, *Putting Clients First*, *Creating Coordinated Community Services*, and *Working Together to Make Things Happen*. In analyzing the free-form responses, it was possible to identify several common themes that speak to what needs to change in human services transportation, and issues that prevent coordination.

The results of this stakeholder outreach reflect the earlier findings of the *Framework for Action* survey found in the New Jersey Council on Access and Mobility (NJCAM) State Action Plan for Coordinating Community Transportation. That report includes recommendations to expand input to promote travel training and to receive greater consumer input in coordination, as well as the promotion of seamless payment systems and the development of a coordinated website. A number of these actions remain largely unfulfilled to this day.

The 2006 report also cites momentum in bringing stakeholders together, and the development of the county action plans. Broader regional or statewide coordination, however, are not broached. And while outreach and collaboration was happening through the NJCAM, this body no longer functionally exists. It would seem that many of the issues described in the earlier *Framework for Action* either lost momentum or were not acted on by stakeholders as circumstances changed.

Issues Preventing Coordination

Taking Ownership

All entities providing services need to realistically reach out to each other as a first step in ownership of any coordination. It was observed that most spoken recommendations sought to put responsibility for enacting and facilitating change on outside entities. A common theme was the need for agencies and providers to be more proactive in collecting and sharing information about ridership and services. The issue here is that

the call for external organization ignores the vital ownership stakeholders must assume to progress the CHSTP agenda. After the expiration of the NJCAM in 2010, there was no replacement of the function facilitating human service transportation coordination, and no provider organizing was forthcoming.

As human services transportation funding changed, the underlying organizations did not. Service cuts and other changes occurred as a result of the decline in funding, but the fundamental paradigm of organizations did not. The underlying basis of UWR is the providers or their respective governmental stakeholders seeking coordination with adjoining or overlapping providers. In some way, counties must embrace UWR and develop an engagement process with all relevant providers and stakeholders, whether they are funded in UWR or not. The effort must be grassroots driven and owned by the providers before change would be effected.

Engagement

One of the obstacles preventing coordination among human services transportation providers in New Jersey is the difficulty engaging providers that are not reliant on FTA funding in UWR coordination. Another is the difficulty persuading providers to willingly cede any of their responsibilities to another agency. In order to achieve broad coordination among all providers, it will be necessary to convincingly demonstrate to smaller providers that clients or targeted riders stand to benefit tangibly by participating. While there are cost-saving benefits inherent to coordination, many smaller providers are hesitant to sacrifice autonomy because they fear it will impact the quality of their service. Additional incentives may be necessary to engage smaller providers on a broad scale.

Funding

According to the General Accounting Office, there are 62 different federal programs in 2003 administered by eight separate federal agencies that fund transportation programs for the transportation-disadvantaged.⁷ The various funding sources are often aimed at providing assistance to very specific groups within the larger transportation-disadvantaged population. Such funding may be granted with strict eligibility requirements and safety standards that create significant obstacles to ride-sharing and coordination efforts. Making changes to funding restrictions to make safety requirements more uniform would be one step toward the goal of making the most efficient use of available resources. While funding issues are a barrier, a coordinated effort among stakeholders may allow for creative solutions to find unmet potential for coordination and ride-sharing, even under current programming requirements.

⁷United States General Accounting Office. *Transportation Disadvantaged Populations: Some Coordination Efforts Among Programs Providing Transportation Services, but Obstacles Persist.* (Washington, D.C. 2003), 8.

Conclusion

Human services transportation providers, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and riders gathered from four counties to discuss the most pressing issues facing providers and clients in human services transportation. This collaborative effort was a step in what should be an ongoing effort to share information and to formulate goals and objectives to meet the needs of this particular region in New Jersey. In many respects, the 2012 responses echo responses drawn from the original 2006 UWR New Jersey State Action Plan. Issues of ownership, engagement, and siloed funding all contribute to the ongoing issues experienced today. At some point, likely culminating with the dissolution of the NJCAM, momentum toward coping with these issues was largely lost. From these findings, several recommendations to improve coordination may be developed, and they are outlined in the next chapter.

Recommendations

The challenges facing New Jersey's human services transportation providers in the near- and long-term future are substantial. Broad coordination among transportation providers should no longer be viewed as a long-term goal, but rather as an imperative undertaking that should begin and gain traction immediately. Demographic forecasts indicate an impending surge in demand that our transportation system is ill-equipped to handle as it is currently organized.

Larger agencies, such as county transportation departments and TMAs, have the potential to be leaders in the coordination process. Strong commitment at this level will communicate to all providers that broad coordination is becoming the norm rather than the exception. A continued engagement process that extends beyond counties, and is more regional in scope, may also improve service to clients and enable counties to work together on larger goals, whether it is to improve transportation service efficiencies or garner support for funding or new revenue streams.

The counties' UWR action plans, which detail goals and recommendations for coordination, were last updated several years ago. In reviewing the progress achieved toward these goals since the plans were last updated, it is clear that many of the larger goals of coordination remain unfulfilled. While the ultimate goal of coordination of services across county lines with broad participation among smaller private providers is still untenable in the near-term, agencies must continue laying the groundwork necessary to achieve this goal. By focusing on small steps that contribute toward larger coordination goals and are beneficial to all participants, providers, and other entities can begin to build interagency relationships that will serve as a foundation for future efforts. The following recommendations are designed to be implemented in the short term and are based on findings from the stakeholder engagement process outlined in Chapter 3.

Recommendation One: Taking Ownership of the Coordination Process

As evident in the findings, stakeholders reported various strategies that can be accomplished through increased coordination, but there was no clear identification of how a coordinated process would occur. The expected paradigm of a state or other government entity taking the lead in organizing or mandating this effort is not expected to occur in the near future. Collaboration and coordination needs to be implemented as a bottom-up approach, starting from the county level. Therefore, it is imperative that county human service and transportation entities take the leadership role in the region and take ownership of the process themselves. This is no small feat, as it may require a

great shift in how human service transportation services are organized and implemented, and how practitioners in the field perceive what their individual roles are. However, the benefit to overall programming and rider access to services is great.

Small steps to increase coordination must begin, and they may be as easy as just picking up the phone or scheduling regular meetings to share information on a regular basis with other counties. A grassroots approach to collaboration may be more successful than a “top-down” approach, as stakeholders are more invested in the outcomes of the process and are more motivated to participate. This may have been the reason that previous “top-down” coordination efforts were not sustained. A grassroots approach also ensures that a body of organizations will continue to work for their own benefit and be able to respond to their own challenges no matter how the state political climate or priorities change. At the same time, an organized stakeholder effort may be able to more effectively impact state priorities, advocate for change, and efficiently use available funding resources.

In order to advance these goals, an ongoing engagement and outreach campaign should be developed to engage the public, riders, new stakeholders, and decision makers. Once established, this group can work toward practices to enhance human services transportation, and even attempt to pursue funding or develop resources, in which the chances of success are enhanced by counties uniting in a collaborated, coordinated way. Counties and other stakeholders can also pool resources in order to effectively plan and deliver better service to clients. While collaboration is unto itself a laudable goal, it is just a step in a larger process, albeit the most challenging. The development of actionable outcomes of physical coordination and improving efficiencies is essential and should define the process. The following two recommendations cannot be enacted without counties taking ownership of the process.

Recommendation Two: Create Linkages Between Counties, Providers, and Clients

An achievable near-term step in expanding collaboration efforts, as well as serving clients more efficiently, is the promotion and expansion of a network of transportation resources. County transportation agencies, NJ Transit, TMAs, private providers, and other organizations involved in human services transportation should maintain and add links on their websites to the sites of other organizations in the region (including those outside individual counties), as well as a link to the NJ Find a Ride website. This step would not only make it easier for riders to find the services they need, but would illustrate cooperation and communication across agencies and counties. In addition to service links, additional items such as travel training resources, relevant news articles, and policy statements can act as a cornerstone of an ongoing dialogue with the public regarding human services transportation. A strong focus on making information easily accessible to riders and providers through interagency sharing is integral to building momentum in the coordination process and is an actionable outcome to guide the initial coordination process.

Other web-based applications may also prove to be beneficial in establishing coordination and providing more information to the client or potential client. As opposed to previous generations, where internet-based information may not have reached the intended audience, Baby Boomers are more likely to have smartphones, internet access, and proficiency with locating information online. At the same time, resources should also be distributed in brochure form, and there is a continual need for in-person outreach at community events or senior centers, as well as to case workers, to build engagement. This public outreach process is another way of manifesting the linkages between counties, providers, clients, and stakeholders.

An additional measure that was repeatedly suggested in the stakeholder meetings, and can grow from increasing linkages across counties, is the creation of a regional transportation resource guide—a database of all available transportation services in a given area. The UWR action plans attempted to establish lists of existing services through voluntary surveys to known providers, but low response rates from smaller providers left an incomplete picture. Building a truly comprehensive resource guide will require diligence, persistence, and significant outreach, but the value such a database would add is substantial. This information could be added to the NJ Find a Ride website, or act as an individual regional database. Having a single list of all available transportation services would allow riders, case workers, and trip planners to navigate the maze of routes and providers more quickly and efficiently. Resources such as Google Transit may be used to support this work, and the development of a smartphone “app” may expand this resource guide to another level. Additionally, it would represent a significant step toward broader coordination. A regional transportation resource guide could serve as a precursor to a regional call center or web scheduling service for mobility management.

Recommendation Three: Piloting Shared Services Across County Boundaries

Finally, increasing collaboration and sharing information should result in pooling resources to increase efficiencies, share services, and respond to client needs. A stakeholder committee may recommend one or two projects a year, and incrementally increase shared services across county boundaries. Findings from this report suggest that this stakeholder committee may institute travel training programs, or begin planning for a centralized dispatch system. Counties who are members of this consortium may also pool resources to embark on further studies to develop implementation strategies to respond to service gaps, duplication of services, or to develop a seamless payment system. In addition, the consortium may also act as a group to bring forth senior transportation issues to the general public and decision makers.

Increasing shared services requires a commitment on the part of stakeholders to develop creative responses to existing barriers, whether it is a barrier of funding, program requirements, or some other existing mandate that cannot be changed by the committee. Unfortunately, funding requirements do encourage specialization of providers

and services, but counties and stakeholders must look beyond these obstacles to develop programming that efficiently meets the needs of an existing client base. In previous efforts, the challenge to instituting a pilot program is that maintaining momentum in achieving a solution has been elusive. At various points in the projects, solutions seemed to be at hand, yet finding the institutional flexibility to move forward was not forthcoming. There must be agreement by all parties to change the paradigm to respond to the challenges at hand.

Conclusion

DVRPC was asked to undertake a study to characterize the challenges faced by human services transportation providers as the demand for senior and human services transportation grows as funding and resources are declining. Stakeholders from the four counties in the study area came together to discuss the changing climate of human services transportation planning and the actions needed to provide service to a growing population of riders. Table 1 illustrates the issues, challenges, and recommendations identified in this report:

Table 1: Summary of Issues, Challenges, and Recommendations

Issue	Challenge	Recommendations
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No clear identification of an organizing body to promote coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Develop a grassroots approach to organizing among counties ■ Enact small steps to share information, encourage cooperation, and communicate resources and transportation options to riders
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of outreach between UWR and non-UWR providers ■ Promote issues faced in CHSTP to a larger audience outside of providers and riders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create linkages between counties, providers, and clients ■ Engage a larger audience (the public, elected officials) in the dialogue of human services transportation
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Program funding is decreasing, demand for ridership is increasing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cooperative agreements and pooled resources can allow counties to implement shared services across county or municipal boundaries ■ Develop creative solutions to find unmet potential for coordination and ride sharing

It should be noted that there is no single “right way” to accomplish human services transportation, and it is unlikely that any federal or state agency, or even UWR, will prescribe a specific set of actions. Instead, it will be up to local entities to unite, form multiple agreements, and constantly assess and evaluate their work. As evident by the

myriad of practices found around the country, it is up to stakeholders to figure out how best to accomplish their goals with a unique paradigm of local, county, and state challenges, resources, and demographics.

New Jersey's human services transportation system must undergo significant changes if it is to meet the ever-growing needs of the state's senior citizens and persons with disabilities. Stakeholders from across the state have established shared goals and areas in need of improvement, and now must begin implementing change and working toward broad coordination. Achieving this will require patience, flexibility, and resolve, but the consequence of failure—to render large numbers of New Jersey residents immobile—is unacceptable.

APPENDIX A



Reframing Senior Transportation Services for the Future: Stakeholder Survey

Section 1: Taking Stock of Community Needs

Essential Questions: *Is there a regularly updated community transportation assessment process which identifies assets, expenditures, services provided, duplication of services, mobility, needs of the various target populations, and opportunities for improvement? Does it assess the capacity of human service agencies to coordinate transportation services? Is the assessment used for planning and action? Is the data regularly updated and shared across agencies and organizations?*

1. Is there a process for identifying duplication of services, underused assets, and service gaps?

Progress Rating (circle one rating that best describes your program)

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

2. Is data systematically gathered on core performance issues such as cost per delivered trip, ridership, and on-time performance? Is the data analyzed to determine how costs can be lowered and performance improved?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

3. Are the specific transportation needs of target populations well documented?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

4. Is there a strategic plan with a clear mission and goals? Are the assessment results used to develop a set of realistic actions that improve coordination?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

Section 1 evaluation: After participating in the group discussion, reviewing each of the questions, and assessing our progress in the area of **Taking Stock of Community Needs** provide one actionable strategy moving forward with this topic.

Section 2: Putting Clients First

Essential Questions: Do people with disabilities, older adults, and low-income riders have a convenient and accessible means of accessing information about transportation services? Are they regularly engaged in the identification of needs and evaluation of services? Is there a “one-stop” resource such as a toll-free number or a website where consumers can obtain information about service and schedules and make reservations? Is the system designed for the general public as well as for people with special needs and clients of human service agencies?

5. Does the transportation system have user-friendly and accessible information sources?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

6. Are travel training and consumer education programs available on an ongoing basis?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

7. Is there a seamless payment system that supports user-friendly services and promotes client choice of the most cost-effective service?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

8. Are client ideas and concerns gathered at each step of the coordination process? Is client satisfaction data collected regularly?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

Section 2 evaluation: After participating in the group discussion, reviewing each of the questions, and assessing our progress in the area of **Putting Clients First**, provide one actionable strategy moving forward with this topic.

Section 3: Creating Coordinated Community Services

Essential Questions: *Are multimodal and multi-provider transportation networks being created that are seamless for the client and operationally and organizationally sound for the providers?*

9. Has an arrangement, such as a brokerage, among diverse transportation providers been created to offer flexible services that are seamless to clients?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

10. Are support services coordinated to lower costs and ease management burdens? Examples include joint purchasing and/or leasing of equipment and facilities; shared maintenance facilities; a single phone number for clients; using a shared internet information system; using a single or coordinated fare mechanism; sustaining coordinated reservation, dispatching, scheduling, and payment systems; or establishing a single entity to provide human service transportation to all participating human service agencies.

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

11. Is there a centralized dispatch system to handle requests for transportation services from agencies and individuals?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

Section 3 evaluation: After participating in the group discussion, reviewing each of the questions, and assessing our progress in the area of **Creating Coordinated Community Services**, provide one actionable strategy moving forward with this topic.

Section 4: Working Together to Make Things Happen

Essential Question: *Are individuals and organizations envisioning, organizing, and sustaining a coordinated system that provides mobility and access to transportation for all?*

12. Have leaders and organizations defined the need for change and articulated a new vision for the delivery of coordinated transportation services?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

13. Is a governing framework in place that brings together providers, agencies, and consumers? Are there clear guidelines that all embrace?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

14. Does the governing framework cover the entire community and maintain strong relationships with neighboring communities and state agencies?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

15. Is there growing interest in and commitment to coordinate human service transportation trips and maximize resources? Is there positive momentum?

 Needs to Begin  Needs Substantial Action  Needs Some Action  Done Well

Section 4 evaluation: After participating in the group discussion, reviewing each of the questions, and assessing our progress in the area of ***Working Together to Make Things Happen*** provide one actionable strategy moving forward with this topic.

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Abstract: In the coming years, there will be dramatic growth in the population of older adults as the “Baby Boomer” generation (those born between 1946 and 1964) ages to 65 years old and beyond. A looming challenge is to meet the mobility needs of this group to ensure that older adults can live independently. However, while the number of older adults grows, the funding available for specialized senior and human service transportation services is declining.

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), as part of its Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Work Program, was asked to undertake a project to explore the long-range needs for senior transportation in the four New Jersey counties in the DVRPC region: Mercer, Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester. This report gauges current coordination efforts and recommends strategies to increase collaboration. This project also seeks to “think beyond funding,” and to focus on a paradigm where coordination and collaboration can stretch available resources and create a system to meet future senior mobility needs.

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