

# DRAFT Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

For the full DRAFT Coordinated Plan document: <http://www.cdtcmo.org/rtp2040/white/coord.pdf>

## Executive Summary

**Why is a Coordinated Plan important?** As a region it will become increasingly important to address the growing mobility service needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors and low income residents.

Currently, the Capital District is home to over 90,000 people with reported disabilities, affecting how they are able to travel and use the variety of transportation choices most people take for granted. The Capital District's senior population is expected to continue to increase. For many people, sensory and mobility loss are associated with aging, impacting their ability to drive and making it more difficult to access and use transit. In addition, many of the region's low income residents face challenges related to access to jobs either because they do not have access to a private vehicle or public transit.

**Plan Purpose and Required Elements:** Recognizing the benefits of better communication and working together to help meet these needs, efforts to coordinate public transit and human service transportation in the Capital District began over three decades ago. In 2005 formal adoption of a coordinated plan became a requirement of federal transportation legislation, known as SAFETEA-LU.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), such as the [Capital District Transportation Committee \(CDTC\)](#), were required by SAFETEA-LU to "identify the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low income, provide strategies for meeting those local needs, and prioritize transportation services for funding and implementation."

As a result the [Regional Transportation Coordination Committee \(RTCC\)](#) was officially formed and continues to foster communication and coordination among a variety of groups in an effort to better serve people with transportation challenges. This DRAFT Plan will be the third developed with the assistance of the RTCC.

*The overall purpose of a Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan is to improve services for transportation disadvantaged populations by identifying gaps and overlaps in service and providing prioritized recommendations for service improvements.*

Federal guidance indicates a Coordinated Plan must include four specific elements:

1. An assessment of available services that identifies current transportation providers (public, private, and non-profit);
2. An assessment of needs for individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes;
3. Strategies, activities and/or projects to address the identified gaps between current services and needs, as well as opportunities to improve efficiencies in service delivery; and
4. Priorities for implementation based on resources (from multiple program sources), time, and feasibility for implementing strategies and/or activities identified.

**Ensuring key stakeholders and representatives from transportation disadvantaged groups are included in developing the Coordinated Plan:** A Coordinated Plan must be crafted with input and participation from seniors, individuals with disabilities, representatives of human service agencies, public, private and non-profit transportation providers and other members of the public. The RTCC is assisting CDTC in developing this draft Coordinated Plan and will seek to increase participation and input from additional stakeholders. A key to obtaining this input will be to share the Draft Plan with agencies and people they support, ask for their feedback and to hold several discussion sessions.

## Recent Changes in the Federal Funding/Programmatic Landscape:

In 2012 the new federal transportation law known as MAP-21 made significant changes to several federal programs related to Public Transit and Human Service Transportation. MAP-21 requires programs and projects seeking federal funding under the 5310 program adhere to a regionally developed Coordinated Plan; other federally funded transportation should be coordinated.

**Draft Plan Goals:** This Draft Coordinated Plan includes Draft Goals which will be revised by the RTCC and stakeholders as the planning process moves forward.

1. To raise awareness of the Coordinated Plan and encourage stakeholders and the public, including representatives of transportation disadvantaged populations, to participate in its development and implementation.
2. To provide qualitative and quantitative data regarding the mobility and access needs of transportation disadvantaged populations and the type and location of current transportation services:
  - Provide demographic information on transportation disadvantaged populations, focusing on geographic patterns.
  - Identify public and private organizations currently involved in serving the needs of transportation disadvantaged populations and the existing transportation services they provide by type, timing and geography.
3. To use data and information gathered through additional agency/stakeholder outreach to identify feasible recommendations for local agencies:
  - Provide information and examples to help encourage increased collaboration and coordination among agencies to close service gaps.
  - Incorporate and update analyses and recommendations from previous studies and identify best practices.
  - Formulate strategies to address identified gaps in services recognizing that to provide quality and efficient transportation services a variety of options should be available to meet the diverse needs of transportation disadvantaged individuals.
4. To identify and document gaps, barriers and strategies proposed to address them, and develop a mechanism to prioritize use of resources for implementation of identified strategies, including federal 5310 funds.
  - Identify strategies to better coordinate land use and transportation services incorporating principles related to smart growth, concentrated development, and livable/age friendly communities to foster more efficient ways to travel including enabling greater access to and use of fixed route public transit services for those that are able to use them.
  - Promote enhanced pedestrian access to public transit and other alternative modes of travel.
  - Propose evaluation criteria/prioritization mechanisms for the merit evaluation process used in the cyclical [Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#) update to prioritize projects including

Changes to the way non-emergency Medicaid trips are handled as a result of recent New York State reforms, as well as shifting budget priorities impacting social service agencies, have reduced opportunities for previously robust and successful coordination activities, such as a regional brokerage of trips.

*Identifying new solutions and coordination strategies is an important challenge for the region.*

elements that promote universal access and improve access and mobility options for traditionally transportation disadvantaged populations.

- Promote coordinated advocacy and improve efforts to coordinate funding with human service agencies.
- Foster development and implementation of mobility management approaches.

**What else is Included in the Draft Plan?** In addition to demographic and other background information the Draft Plan includes an inventory of existing public transit and specialized transportation services. The region is served by a network of transit and social service transportation options that provide public and special transportation services in response to the growing needs of the region. These range from services operated by the [Capital District Transportation Authority \(CDTA\)](#) such as fixed-route and paratransit services to those provided by human service agencies and private entities.

A listing of past and currently funded coordination efforts, as well as gaps, barriers and proposed strategies, some carried forward from previous plans, are presented. These will be refined and enhanced through planned stakeholder and public outreach needed to finalize the Plan.

**Draft Proposed Strategies** include:

- 1) Prioritize projects for Section 5310 funding that will address previously identified gaps and barriers.
- 2) Reach out to NYS Department of Health, OPWDD and Veteran's groups to participate in the RTCC .
- 3) Verify the method to be used to prioritize the strategies within the competitive selection process for federal funding.
- 4) Organize and hold a ***Workshop on Tools to Improve Human Service Agency Transportation Service Quality and Efficiency.***
- 5) Restructure the RTCC meetings to foster better communication, information sharing and coordination among service providers.
- 6) Ensure that listings of available paratransit services within the Capital District's four counties are included in the 511NY paratransit services listings. Explore use of 211 as a resource for human service agency transportation.
- 7) Smart Growth – Identify mechanisms, such as education and outreach, potential incentives and other means to improve decision making for Location Efficient Siting of Facilities/Housing serving transportation disadvantaged populations.
- 8) Facilitate completion of ADA Transition Plans and associated physical improvements to continue to work toward an accessible regional transportation system. Include a method to incentivize and prioritize inclusion of accessible features in federally funded transportation projects through changes to CDTC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) merit evaluation process for candidate projects.
- 9) Explore utilization of ***A Framework for Action*** - a self-assessment tool that states and communities can use to identify areas of success and highlight the actions still needed to improve the coordination of human service transportation.
- 10) Explore opportunities for coordination for other federal programs that fund transportation components but are not funded through FTA or FHWA.

Information on services offered by CDTA along with information gathered from a 2011 survey to the area's human service agencies is included in the Draft Plan. Survey results indicate an increasing reliance on volunteer drivers for those agencies providing direct transportation services as well as increasing costs.