

New Visions 2030

**COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES
TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR THE CAPITAL DISTRICT**

A Product of the Regional Transportation Coordination Committee

Background: SAFETEA-LU requires that projects selected for funding under the Section 5310 Elderly Individuals with Disabilities Program, the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program, and the New Freedom Program be “derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan”, and that the plan be “developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and participation by the public.” Toward that end, the Capital District Transportation Committee convened a committee of stakeholders, called the Regional Transportation Coordination Committee or RTCC, to help develop the coordinated plan, identify areas of need and ensure that JARC, New Freedom and Section 5310 funds are spent appropriately. The RTCC membership consists of the regional steering committee that was formed by the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) to guide the Job Access and Reverse Commute efforts and others that were added to ensure that representation fulfills the guidelines set forth in the SAFETEA-LU legislation. The plan can be viewed in its entirety at <http://www.cdtcmpo.org/planning/may07/hs-doc.pdf> . The executive summary for the plan can be viewed separately at <http://www.cdtcmpo.org/planning/may07/hs-exec.pdf> .

Beyond the Coordinated Plan, a competitive solicitation for JARC and New Freedom projects will be a direct product of this effort.

Issues Explored: The following tasks were performed in developing the Coordinated Plan:

- CDTC staff reviewed coordination activities that they have been involved in since the 1970’s and documented these.
- CDTC staff, in cooperation with the Albany County United We Ride Effort, conducted a survey of Human Service Agencies located in the Capital District. Over 500 survey questionnaires were mailed to human service agencies located in the four counties. Ninety-three providers and eighty non-providers completed the survey.
- The survey data were used to aid in the identification of unmet need and to help craft a list of recommendations for future focus.
- Transportation Needs and Gaps were identified; barriers to coordination and barriers to meeting needs and fulfilling gaps were also identified.

- An Action Plan outlining preferred use of JARC, New Freedom and Section 5310 funds was developed.

Summary of Findings: Needs, gaps and barriers were identified by members of the RTCC, from the 2006 survey data and from the coordination efforts that have been pursued over the past two decades were identified in the Coordinated Plan. The following summarizes the findings:

- **Needs**

- Organizational – Human Service Agencies
 - Shared Maintenance
 - Other Pooled Resources (e.g. drivers, insurance)
 - Group Purchasing (fuel, insurance, maintenance, replacement parts)
 - Driver/Mechanic Training
 - Additional Funds
- Client Services
 - Travel Training
 - Information Sharing/Education
 - Funding
- Equipment
 - Additional Human Service Agency Vehicles
 - Wheelchair Lifts, Accessibility Devices (e.g. stepstools)
 - Accessible Taxi Cabs
 - Additional Funds
- CDTA’s STAR Service
 - Need to Manage Demand on STAR
 - Additional Funds

- **Gaps**

- Some Trip Purposes are Not Being Well Served
- Geographic Coverage
- Weekend Coverage
- Travel Training

- **Barriers**

- Perceived and Real Limitations on Coordinated Service Provision
 - Funding Silos
 - Insurance
 - Accounting Barriers
- Client Resistance to Sharing/Using Fixed Route Transit
 - Unfamiliarity with/Uncomfortable with Using Fixed Route
 - Fear of Developmentally Disabled/Mentally ill
- Common Carrier Status

Performance Measurement:

In 1995, as part of the New Visions effort, the Special Transportation Needs Task Force identified Supplemental Performance Measures that addressed the unique needs of the mobility impaired. The performance measure salient to the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan for the Capital District identified the “number of human service agencies that coordinate transportation services”. In 1995, it was estimated that seven area human service agencies coordinated service. Fifty human service agencies owning or leasing vehicles responded to coordination questions in the 2006 survey. Three of the fifty share vehicles, two agencies share a pool of drivers and six agencies coordinate vehicle routes/schedules and/or transport non-agency customers. Some of these agencies coordinate in a multitude of ways, which means that less than 11 individual agencies actually coordinate transportation service. Several agencies share dispatching, maintenance or bulk fuel purchasing. Although the fifty responding agencies are not the entire universe of providers, it is evident that coordination has not increased greatly since the mid-1990’s. The Action Plan contained in the “coordinated plan” addresses this performance measure, particularly with the recommendations related to the Section 5310 program.

The recommendations in the coordinated plan regarding the JARC program addresses the New Visions economic performance measure, which asked, “How does the transportation system support the economic health of the region?” The successful JARC projects that have been implemented since 1998 have done much to aid people transitioning from welfare to work. These projects have also aided lower income residents in securing and maintaining employment. The coordinated plan specifically states that it is in the best interest of the region to continue these successful JARC projects.

Policy Implications and/or Recommendations

JARC and New Freedom require the recipient of funds in urbanized areas with a population over 200,000 to conduct, in cooperation with the appropriate metropolitan planning organization, an area wide solicitation for applications for grants. It is required that grants under these two programs be awarded on a competitive basis. All projects selected for JARC, New Freedom and Section 5310 must be consistent with the coordinated plan.

The Coordinated Plan identified an Action Plan for the JARC, Section 5310 and New Freedom programs:

JARC: The region’s successful use of JARC, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Community Solutions for Transportation (CST) monies for jobs access activities clearly supports continuation of these activities in the future.

- The coordinated plan calls for a solicitation for JARC funds that specifically requests the continuation of trip planners and a full-time coordinator.

- During the evaluation of JARC proposals, extra weight will be given to those agencies that have been successful with these kinds of programs in the past. Local knowledge will also be given extra consideration.
- Multi-year programs and projects will be allowed and considered to support program continuity.

Section 5310: The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), through its Transit Bureau, administers the program in New York State. NYS has a well-established process, which includes an inter-agency review committee, for selecting fund grantees on a discretionary basis. CDTC is one member of the review committee that annually reviews grant applications for this area. CDTC’s review will ensure that the Section 5310 funding awards are consistent with the criteria and recommendations set forth in the coordinated plan. The coordinated plan criteria, as they relate to the section 5310 program are:

- Section 5310 funding will be awarded first to those agencies that pursue and document bona fide coordination activities, such as shared maintenance agreements, agreements to provide transportation to clients of other agencies on *a regular basis*, etc. In addition, these agencies should receive funding for their entire application request if that level of funding is available. Form letters to other local Human Service Agencies will not be accepted as documentation of coordination activity.
- Section 5310 funding will be awarded to those agencies that do not submit appropriate coordination activity documentation only if the needs of those agencies that do coordinate are met first.
- It will be mandatory for those agencies that are funded without documentation of coordination activity to submit documentation of coordination efforts at the time of their next application for funding. If coordination activities are not pursued by these organizations by the time of their second Section 5310 application, these agencies will not be funded, even if there are Section 5310 monies available.
- It will be mandatory for a representative from those agencies that are funded without documentation of coordination activity to attend quarterly or bi-annual coordination forum meetings that will be arranged by CDTC staff. Failure to attend at least half of these forums will make these agencies ineligible for section 5310 funding for up to two years.

New Freedom: The New Freedom Program is a new formula grant program for public or alternative transportation services and facility improvements to address the needs of persons with disabilities that go beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). New Freedom Funds can be used to cover capital and operating costs to provide new service.

- The solicitation for this program will “bundle” two-three years of funds to allow multi-year project proposals and to provide an opportunity for applicants to have an adequate time period to determine project success.

- The solicitation will encourage projects that are for operating assistance over capital projects to stretch the funding (operating expenses require a 50/50 match, whereas capital projects require an 80/20 match) and to promote fuller utilization of the existing Human Service Agency vehicle inventory.
- Travel training, mobility management and driver training will be given higher consideration in the evaluation process over projects that do not specifically address the needs that have been documented in the coordinated plan.