

# Workshop on Ridesharing and Other Operations Strategies

Joanna M. Brunso, *chairman*

The purpose of this workshop was to identify strategies (Table 1) to maintain mobility during energy and transportation crises. The focus of the workshop was on developing strategies that can be used under the current free-market approach to regulation and allocation of fuel supplies.

The initial discussion focused on understanding the effects of the current Administration's free-market approach as outlined by Winkler in the paper, *Planning Ahead for Energy Emergencies: Whose Job is it Anyway?* (Part III, Session 3 of these proceedings). It was noted that under the free-market approach gasoline would be purchased by those who were willing to pay for it, which would result in rapid price increases. The immediate response would be a reduction of demand for gasoline through conservation and reduction of travel. Thus the key issue would be one of equity impacts, meaning in this case that low-income groups, and to some extent middle-income groups, would be the most severely affected and might need both economic assistance and transportation assistance. The critical need will be to develop mobility strategies that can be used between the time that fuel prices have risen and the time an economic response is initiated by the federal government.

Workshop participants discussed possible scenarios and focused on two that were likely to occur under a free-market approach. The first scenario is that market forces would work swiftly, and, as has been discussed, the problem would be an economic one for those with below average incomes. The second is that some time after the initial event occurs that alters the supply of fuel, there would be a brief period where an imbalance would exist between demand and supply, most likely a result of the lead time necessary to adjust to increased refining capacity. Thus there would be a 1- to 3-week period that would appear similar to the 1973-1974 and 1979 energy crises. In a free market this would result in a phasing-in of several changes in travel--some people would persist in old travel patterns and some would change right away because they would have no discretionary income to absorb the increased cost of fuel.

Those who would be affected in different ways for both work and nonwork travel were identified as follows:

- Current transit dependents: Impact due to increased loads so that transit may not be able to pick up everyone during peak hours.
- Single-occupant vehicle drivers:
  1. Those who must shift to transit, those who can shift and, those who cannot shift because of special requirements (drop off child at day care, etc.).

2. Those who choose to shift to transit.
3. Those who continue as single-occupant drivers, dependent on automobile (sales, etc.), reluctant to shift.

Workshop participants discussed the analysis by Hartgen (Part III, Session 3 of these proceedings) which indicated different responses by different groups of consumers; for example, consumers' responses varied according to location, income, recent previous response, and normal household mobility patterns. Strategies for increasing the mobility of these groups need to be as flexible as possible.

Because of the free-market environment and the need for flexibility in mobility, the role of the federal government as a regulator was discussed. To ease the impacts of fuel price increases, the government could control the price increase so that the price would rise evenly and at fixed intervals, which would allow more time to work out changes in mobility. This approach would provide an incentive to petroleum producers to cut production which would result in even greater price increases. Likewise most participants believed that the power of government to tax price increases merely increased the economic consequences and thus would be unwise.

## CONCLUSIONS

Workshop participants developed strategies to increase mobility (Table 1). Some of these strategies are conventional and others are unusual. It was noted that there are many groups concerned, including transit agencies, ridesharing agencies, private suppliers, consumers, employers, and the federal government. The proper role of the federal government should be that of a facilitator.

Consumers can be quite flexible and there are many alternatives they can devise for themselves; however, they may be unaware of the full range of possible alternatives.

Information should be widely disseminated to ensure that it reaches those who can best use it. Information disseminators should include traditional agencies such as local governments, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), transit agencies, ridesharing agencies, police, press, and such non-traditional groups as churches, schools, shopping centers, volunteers, and service-oriented organizations.

One objective of the strategies in Table 1 is to unleash the power of private enterprise by removing the barriers to free entry into transportation by private citizens and cooperating agencies. Agreements to remove these barriers should be sought now by those affected and by local governments.

Table 1. Strategies to increase mobility.

Strategy	Problem
<b>Transit</b>	
Maintain service	Over capacity
Move buses from marginal routes	Disruption of consumers' confidence in transit (routes may now be profitable, however)
Charter additional buses	May not be in sufficient supply
Use school buses	Need prior agreements
Use school buses for feeder to major routes	Need prior agreements
Use church buses for feeder to major routes	Need prior agreements
Use social service vans	Need prior agreements
Refurbish older buses	
Defer maintenance	
Introduce steep fare increase to pay for additional cost and dampen demand	
<b>Measures to augment transit and assist automobile-dependent consumers</b>	
Authorize hitchhiking	Relax insurance restrictions
Share-a-ride taxi	Regulation required
Independent jitney service	
Area-wide ridesharing services	Funds required to establish
	Time required to establish
	Not as effective as employer service
<b>Employer-based ridesharing</b>	
<b>Park-and-pool lots</b>	
<b>Employer actions</b>	
Ridesharing matching	
Alternate or flexible work hours	
Compressed 4-day workweek	
Coordinate with adjacent employers	
Provide company motor pool for carpools	
Establish vanpool service	
Promote bicycle use	
Information dissemination (e.g., gasoline availability and transit routes)	
<b>Neighborhood end</b>	
Establish residential-end coordinators	
Recruit volunteers—housewives, senior citizens	
Service or civic groups, churches	
Establish park-and-pool locations	
<b>Nonwork strategies</b>	
Use merchants as facilitators	Expand existing services
Shopping centers provide bus service	Time to plan routes
Transit service with focus on shopping centers	Prior agreement with employers
Van service for intersuburban routes	Remove regulatory barriers
Jitney service	Remove regulatory barriers
Share-a-ride taxi	Need information
Bus service provided by churches	Need information
Bus service provided by social service agencies	Need information
Bicycle locked storage at shopping centers	Need information
<b>Preparation needed</b>	
Prepare a list of strategies	
Remove barriers to private entry	
Relax insurance provision	
Allow media free access to all information; e.g., gasoline availability, transit service, and suggested strategies	
State governors should be prepared to remove barriers in an emergency	