# MOBILITY CLUB: A GRASS-ROOTS SMALL-TOWN TRANSPORT CONCEPT

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The dispersion of relatively small numbers of people in rural environments is a substantial barrier to collective means of travel such as conventional bus service or demand-responsive transit. Accordingly, this paper proposes and analyzes an approach based on ride sharing in private automobiles that might provide significant relief for the problems of rural immobility. This solution, termed a mobility club, can be implemented within the work-force and financial resources of most small towns and rural communities. Trip desires of individuals without automobiles are matched to the trip-making intentions of persons with automobiles by the mobility club telephone dispatcher or ride broker. A companion feature is the method proposed for increasing the number of "travel friends," that is, the number of persons who are well enough acquainted to trust traveling together. This paper discusses the operational, administrative, and institutional aspects of the mobility club concept. An example is presented to illustrate the magnitude of the potential driver-member supply and trip-making desires of residents without automobiles in a sample rural and small-town environment. Operating expenses, fare structures, and subsidy considerations are outlined. Some simple steps to assist individuals who may wish to start a mobility club are given.

•SOCIETY has become increasingly concerned that some people have very restricted mobility. Consequently, the prospect now exists of enough public assistance to maintain transit service and, in some cities, to possibly restore it to the level of usefulness of a generation ago. In rural places, however, improving the mobility of persons without automobiles is a different matter. The wide dispersion of few people thwarts collective means of transport except in the special case of school buses. The economics of dial-a-ride transit under favorable urban conditions would suggest a dim forecast for rural versions of this concept. Realistically, we feel that the private automobile may have to be the foundation for alleviating immobility in rural settings. The problem is how to get some of the rural people who own automobiles to employ them more often on behalf of people who do not own automobiles.

A concept that we term mobility club is proposed as an approach to solving this problem. The central idea of this concept is to structure ride sharing is such a way as to attain a wider scope than merely that of rides arranged with friends or neighbors. Two elements of a local mobility club are intended to foster this wider sharing of rides. One element is the provision of a central dispatcher to register and fit together the travel demands (desires) of individuals without automobiles with the trip-making intentions of persons possessing automobiles. The other element is enlarging the number of "travel friends," that is, persons sufficiently acquainted to be willing to travel together.

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## MOBILITY CLUB ESSENTIALS

A locally autonomous mobility club would consist of the following elements:

1. A membership of rider members and driver members with automobiles;
2. An identification system to acquaint members with one another as "travel friends" through individual color-photograph identification cards that members would be required to display before starting a trip;
3. A ride dispatcher (probably 1 of several individuals on a rotating basis) to receive and register calls and contact members whose trip expectations appear compatible;
4. A club organization to provide continuity, handle finances, screen applicants, and ensure that members fulfill their travel agreements; and
5. Telephones in homes (or access to a telephone) for making ride arrangements.

Rides would be matched when members called in their travel expectations to the dispatcher. In registering the travel expectations (probably on a map), the dispatcher perhaps might note a potential ride partner. Whenever it appeared that an intended ride might be shared, the dispatcher would notify 1 of the prospective travelers. That member would then call the other person and negotiate the details of the ride, including the specifics of the all-important return trip. The driver member would pick up the rider member and deliver him or her to the desired destination (and, again, reconfirm any return-trip arrangements).

## INSTITUTIONAL AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Regulatory, insurance, and management issues are among the concerns of potential mobility club implementers and operators. Virtually every state has laws or regulations controlling for-hire transportation. How will the mobility club be judged in state regulatory proceedings? What type of driver-member insurance coverage should be purchased? How extensive should it be? Who will manage the operations of the club and see to it that day-to-day administrative requirements are met? Should the club have bylaws? The following discussion of major institutional concerns will highlight unresolved problems and suggest potential solutions.

### Regulation

We will examine the regulatory issue only in the context of New York State requirements by extracting basic principles that may apply to for-hire transport in other states. Most for-hire passenger transportation laws were designed to protect the public from the abuses of unscrupulous, unreliable, and uninsured jitney and omnibus operators. In a statement that probably expresses the basic intent of much regulatory practice, the New York State Transportation Law declares in article 9, section 200 that it is the

> policy of this state to regulate transportation by contract carriers . . . to recognize and preserve the inherent advantages . . . foster sound economic conditions . . . promote safe, adequate, economical and efficient service . . . reasonable charges . . . without unfair or competitive practices.

A key issue is whether a mobility club would be subject to regulatory requirements. A final answer is likely to emerge only as the concept is attempted in practice and presumed competitors such as bus lines protest to state regulatory bodies. The issue then will be decided state by state for each case on its specific merits through quasi-judicial or judicial proceedings.

Before an operator can offer for-hire regular or contract service to the public, he or she usually must obtain a certificate from the applicable governing body. The key

to this requirement seems to be the term "for hire"; it appears that an all-volunteer-driver mobility club would avoid the issue. Even ordinary car pooling in which a commuter pays a driver a weekly fee for riding to and from work technically falls under regulatory law in New York State although such arrangements obviously are difficult to monitor. Local taxicab operations, however, are not regulated by New York State but in many municipalities do fall under some degree of control by local ordinances.

On the assumption that regulatory consent must be granted before mobility club service is initiated, what constraints would regulation place on administration and operation of the club? If for-hire provisions are judged to be applicable, evidence of indebtedness, tariffs, fares, financial records, and a description of operations may have to be filed with the regulatory body. Many of these requirements were developed to ensure that public carriers provide continuous, safe, and adequate transportation service, and it is not clear how to apply them to the informality of the mobility club.

## Insurance

An additional significant regulatory constraint is the requirement that minimum insurance amounts be carried. Although the stipulated amounts vary among states, minimum for-hire insurance coverage appears to exceed the minimum state coverage for registering a private automobile.

The main determinants of the nature and extent of required driver liability insurance involve whether driver member status is voluntary or for hire and whether the mobility club falls under regulatory jurisdiction. If all trips were served by volunteer driver members, then the club probably would not be regulated and drivers would be covered under their existing liability insurance policies. Additional blanket liability insurance coverage also could be obtained to protect club members. However, if drivers offer regulated for-hire service, more extensive liability coverage may be mandated. Whether blanket club insurance can be obtained in this case is not known. The cost of additional coverage also is not known. If driver members are expected to pay higher insurance premiums themselves, it is doubtful that the mobility club concept would succeed. Driver members, if unregulated, probably would be covered by their existing policies in much the same manner as commuter car pool drivers are covered.

## Management

Managing a mobility club should be the same anywhere. Principal tasks include setting up the club, establishing security standards and screening procedures, recruiting driver members, enforcing standards for dependability, and looking after the administration and maintenance of the organization. These tasks initially would require considerable effort, and a mobility club at its beginning probably would be managed by professionals from a social service agency. After operations had become more or less routine, the limited administrative functions might be carried on by an executive board elected by the general membership.

For a mobility club to operate, management must attract sufficient drivers, each of whom could meet some minimum qualifications. Driver-member qualifications could include

1. A minimum age stipulation;
2. A minimum of 3 years driving experience; and
3. A clean driving record, that is, no accidents and no serious violations such as driving while intoxicated, leaving the scene of an accident, and reckless driving.

A driver applicant also could be asked to sign a statement that gives the club permission to look into his or her driving record. Failure to sign such a statement would be sufficient reason not to accept the applicant as a driver member. In addition, an applicant could be asked to sign a statement of intent to keep his or her automobile in

safe operating condition between annual inspections.

Many persons have an understandable reluctance to ride in a private automobile with a stranger. The proposed color-photograph identification card system presumes that adequate prescreening of mobility club applicants is conducted to ensure that undesirable persons are not granted club privileges. But screening applicants without violating their civil rights or offending potential members is a delicate matter. Character references could be required of all applicants, but this technique is not foolproof. The mobility club is proposed for small-town and rural environments. If the old cliché about everyone knowing everyone else's business in such places is accurate, the club will be self-screening. The worst characters probably will have such public reputations that membership simply will be denied if they apply. Membership selectivity is, after all, a characteristic of clubs and contrasts with the serve-every-applicant requirement imposed on public utilities. Furthermore, most driver members and rider members whose trips are matched will live in the same vicinity and may know each other's reputation. Each member retains the option of refusing to accept or offer a ride in the case of a member who is perceived to be undesirable.

A different problem arises when a driver or rider fails to show up for a prearranged match. A system in which a club member's reliability is scored may be warranted. If, for example, a driver member failed to appear for 2 prearranged matches within a specified period, he or she automatically would lose club rights. Such rules could be specified in the club's bylaws so that all members would know what is expected of them.

### Telephone Availability

Availability of telephones is a concern because of their key role in club operations. The proportion of households without a telephone in relation to the proportion of households without an automobile is shown in Figure 1 for a randomly selected sample of rural communities. The incidence of households without telephones and the incidence of households without automobiles seemingly increase together. On the face of it, then, the very people who are most in need of a mobility club may not be readily able to arrange rides. On the other hand, the aggregate data used in compiling this graph may mask considerable alternative possession of either an automobile or a telephone among families unable to afford both.

## RIDERSHIP POTENTIAL VERSUS DRIVER MEMBER SUPPLY

In assessing the possible usefulness of the mobility club concept, there is a dual concern. Is there substantial demand for this type of transport, and can there be enough incentive to attract driver members to fulfill the demand? The approach used for answering these questions is that of testing a hypothetical mobility club in the small town of Hoosick Falls, New York, near the Vermont-Massachusetts boundary. This test community consists of a village with a population of 3,900 and a surrounding rural population of some 2,700. The incidence of poverty is considerable. Approximately 12 percent of the population had household incomes below the poverty level according to the 1970 census.

In the village 21 percent of the households are without automobiles. Although a comparable degree of poverty exists outside of the village, only 7 percent of the rural households have no automobile. This considerable difference in automobile ownership rates can be attributed to the adequacy of walking for many trips in the built-up village whereas in the rural surroundings a vehicle virtually is required for mobility. Figure 2 shows 5-min incremental walking-time bands from downtown. Most of the village can be traversed at a comfortable pace in half an hour. Two taxicabs serve Hoosick Falls, and it is connected with larger cities by infrequent bus service. The relative use of each of the available travel modes for getting to work is as follows (3):

| Mode | Percentage of All Work Trips |
|---|---|
| Automobile driver | 61.4 |
| Automobile passenger | 16.8 |
| Bus | 1.2 |
| Walk | 10.4 |
| Other (includes taxi) | 2.8 |
| Work at home | 7.4 |

Private automobiles are clearly the predominant means for work travel (78.2 percent). Walking is the next most important mode, and most walking trips probably occur in the village.

## Demand

Rough estimates were made of the demand for a mobility club in the test community by using available data aided by several assumptions. The estimates pertain only to the so-called latent demand of the primary carless, that is, the now unmet trip-making wishes of people in households without automobiles. Within automobile-owning families, also, instances may occur when members can travel in the family automobile only with much inconvenience if at all. Although this might result in appreciable potential demand, we made no attempt to estimate it.

The gist of the estimation method is as follows. The primary carless segment of the community was divided into age-income categories by urban or rural location. Figure 3 shows an assessment of the number of individuals in each category. Corresponding trip production rates were obtained from earlier research on latent demand (1). Applying these rates to the population in the respective categories yielded an estimate of the maximum mobility club trip demand for each category. These figures then were factored down to obtain estimates of minimum demand. The minimum and maximum estimates are assumed to bracket the demand that a mobility club in the Hoosick Falls community actually would elicit.

To give more detail, latent demand was calculated as the difference in daily trip production rates of individuals in households owning 1 automobile and individuals in households owning no automobile. The difference in trip-making rates in each age-income category is used as a proxy for latent demand. The rates given in Table 1 pertain specifically to Rochester, New York, and its environs in 1963 when transit service was still reasonably plentiful. There is no assurance that the latent demand measures for Hoosick Falls would be exactly the same, but they could be comparable to the degree that the relative ease of walking to any place in the village offsets the adequacy of the transit service then available in Rochester.

The maximum latent demand measures given in Table 1 suggest that the unfulfilled trip-making desires of elderly poor people, for example, may be expected to average 0.24 automobile trip per person per day for shopping and 0.13 trip for each of the other purposes. These latent demand measures imply that, if all 57 of the rural elderly poor people in the Hoosick Falls community were to enjoy the mobility of a 1-automobile household, they would produce 14 + 7 + 7 or an additional 28 trips from home per day.

This procedure furnishes an estimate of the maximum potential demand as though the mobility club were somehow providing the same level of service as a family automobile. That is unrealistic, and an estimate of minimum demand was made as described elsewhere (2, pp. 22-23). (Depending on trip purpose, individual estimates are between 8 and 30 percent of the calculated maximum potential demand.) Table 2 gives components of estimated minimum and maximum demand in the village and in the outlying, rural portions of Hoosick Falls.

For the entire test community, the estimated mobility club demand ranges between

**Figure 1. Relation of households without automobiles to households with phones in rural communities in New York State.**

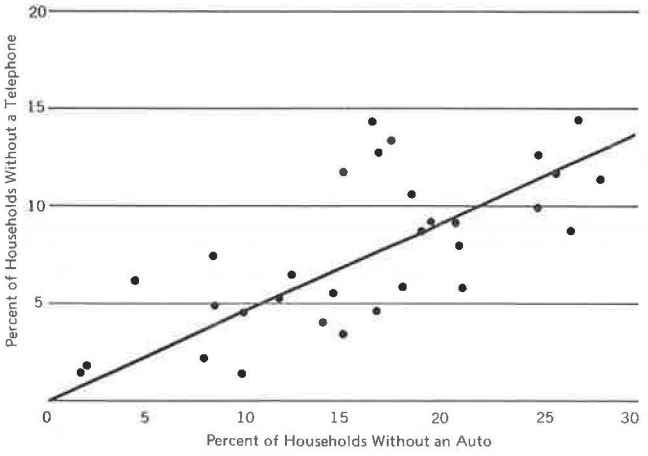



**Figure 2. Five-min isochrones for walking from center of Hoosick Falls.**

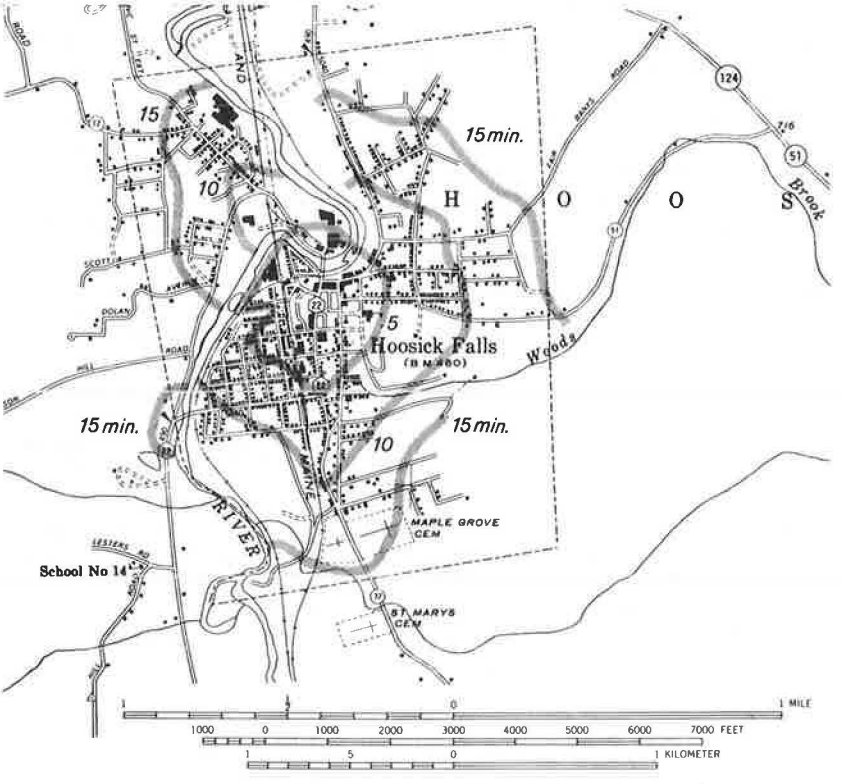


**Figure 3. Estimated distribution of the primary carless population by age and income group in the test community.**

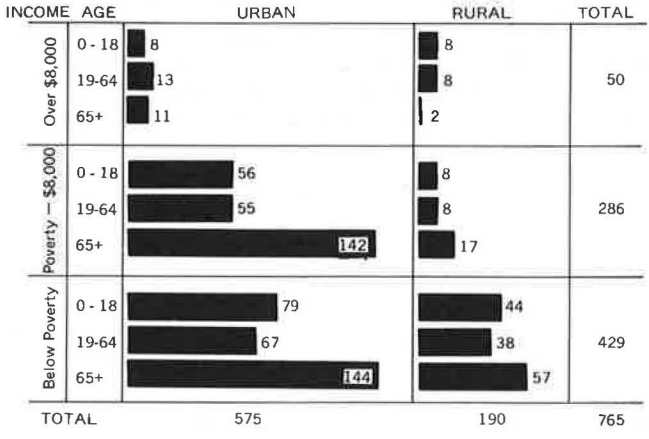



**Table 1. Latent demand for trips in Rochester in 1963 (4).**

| Income | Age (years) | Latent Demand[a] (trips/person/day) Shopping | Social and Recreational | Personal Business |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| >$8,000 | ≤18 | — | 0.10 | 0.06 |
| | 19 to 64 | 0.30 | 0.26 | 0.23 |
| | ≥65 | — | — | — |
| Poverty level to $8,000 | ≤18 | 0.05 | 0.01 | 0.01 |
| | 19 to 64 | 0.21 | 0.19 | 0.16 |
| | ≥65 | 0.26 | 0.03 | 0.10 |
| Poverty level | ≤18 | 0.06 | 0.14 | 0.11 |
| | 19 to 64 | 0.09 | 0.06 | 0.07 |
| | ≥65 | 0.24 | 0.13 | 0.13 |

[a]Demand is defined as the difference between trip production rates of individuals in households owning 1 automobile and households owning no automobile.

**Table 2. Estimated number of mobility club trips.**

| Income | Age (years) | Trips per Day Shopping | Social and Recreational | Personal Business | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hoosick Falls Village | | | | | |
| >$8,000 | ≤18 | 0 | 0 to 1 | 0 | 0 to 1 |
| | 19 to 64 | 1 to 4 | 1 to 3 | 1 to 3 | 3 to 10 |
| | ≥65 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Poverty level to $8,000 | ≤18 | 1 to 3 | 0 to 1 | 0 to 1 | 1 to 5 |
| | 19 to 64 | 2 to 12 | 3 to 10 | 2 to 9 | 7 to 31 |
| | ≥65 | 7 to 37 | 1 to 4 | 3 to 14 | 11 to 55 |
| <Poverty level | ≤18 | 1 to 5 | 3 to 11 | 2 to 9 | 6 to 25 |
| | 19 to 64 | 1 to 6 | 1 to 4 | 1 to 5 | 3 to 15 |
| | ≥65 | 6 to 35 | 6 to 19 | 4 to 19 | 16 to 73 |
| Total | | 19 to 102 | 15 to 53 | 13 to 60 | 47 to 215 |
| Hoosick Falls Rural Area | | | | | |
| >$8,000 | ≤18 | 0 | 0 to 1 | 0 | 0 to 1 |
| | 19 to 64 | 0 to 2 | 0 to 2 | 0 to 2 | 0 to 6 |
| | ≥65 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Poverty level to $8,000 | ≤18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 19 to 64 | 0 to 2 | 0 to 2 | 0 to 1 | 0 to 5 |
| | ≥65 | 0 to 4 | 0 to 1 | 0 to 2 | 0 to 7 |
| <Poverty level | ≤18 | 0 to 3 | 1 to 6 | 1 to 5 | 2 to 14 |
| | 19 to 64 | 0 to 3 | 0 to 2 | 0 to 3 | 0 to 8 |
| | ≥65 | 1 to 14 | 1 to 7 | 1 to 7 | 3 to 28 |
| Total | | 1 to 28 | 2 to 21 | 2 to 20 | 5 to 69 |

52 and 284 from-home trips per day, depending on which set of assumptions is accepted. Although the upper limit is doubtless unrealistic, there probably would be a measurable response to mobility club service, which perhaps would be about 100 to 150 round trips per day by the primary carless in the test community. Work trips are not included in the demand estimate although a few such trips might result when the family automobile was being repaired.

The estimated mobility club trip-making demand among various sectors of the primary carless is shown in Figure 4.

### Supply

The critical question concerning supply is whether enough driver members can be induced to join the mobility club and provide service to meet the needs of rider members. A comparison of supply and demand potentials is given in Table 3. For the test-case community 889 private automobiles are available during work hours and presumably are available for shopping, recreational, and personal-business travel. Assuming that there is an able driver for each of these automobiles that is not driven to work, the ratio of potential driver members to rider members approximates 1 to 1 for the community as a whole.

If it is assumed that a third of the total number of drivers with an automobile available during the day could be persuaded to join the mobility club as driver members, the chauffeuring task ought to be modest. The average driver member in the village would serve 1 rider member per day; the rural counterpart serving rider members would average 2 round trips per week. Thus a sufficient pool of potential driver members may exist provided that the driver members perceive satisfactory incentives for serving rider members.

## ECONOMICS

Economic considerations in evaluating the mobility club concept include payment for service provided by driver members, expenses of establishing and operating the club, and means of subsidy if required.

### Fare Considerations

Payment for services could be an incentive attracting enough driver members for the mobility club. But how much should they be paid? There are several ways to approach the question. The club could fix a flat fare for all trips, establish zone fares, or let the driver and rider negotiate a fee between designated lower and upper limits. An origin-destination survey of Hoosick Falls midday vehicular traffic was conducted in November 1967. Analysis of the data suggests that the limit of local travel may be set at a trip length of 12 straight-line miles (19 km); this limit will include about 90 percent of noncommuter trip making. The mobility club is intended to serve local travel primarily.

According to these criteria, the average local trip is 5.8 direct miles (9.3 km), or roughly 7 road miles (11 km). If it were assumed that the fare ought to cover out-of-pocket expenses of some 6 cents/mile (4 cents/km), then the typical fare would be about 40 cents each way. That should seem reasonable indeed to the rider member.

In practical terms, however, fares at this level surely do not reach the threshold at which more than a few driver members would be interested in carrying rider members. After all, the extra effort for making arrangements and picking up and depositing a rider will not go unnoticed. Because these efforts are largely independent of how far the rider is carried, fares might be structured on the basis of a flat pickup fee supplemented by a travel or distance charge. The size of the pickup fee that would attract enough driver members could be discovered only by experience, but a 70-cent fee plus

5 cents/mile (3 cents/km), which simplifies figuring and nearly covers out-of-pocket expenses, might seem worthwhile to driver members. Under this schedule, the fare for a 7-mile (11-km) ride would be just over $1, which certainly is modest in comparison with city taxicab fares.

## Expenses and Outlays

Club expenses may include dispatcher wages, telephones and rent, and administrative overhead; starting outlays might be incurred for promotion and for issuance of identification cards. The dispatcher would require little more than a small office with telephone equipment. Although the actual operating expenses of the club would depend on the degree of success in attracting volunteer dispatchers, an upper bound on club expenses can be estimated on the basis of salaried dispatchers. A dispatcher and an assistant might be hired to cover a 6-h day, Monday through Saturday. For a total of 8 paid hours per day at an assumed wage of $3.50/h plus 20 percent for fringe expenses, annual dispatching wages would amount to $10,500. Table 4 gives a summary of mobility club expense elements. For a paid staff, it is assumed that 150 trips would be made daily and that 46,800 trips would be made annually. For a volunteer staff, it is assumed that 100 trips would be made daily and that 26,000 trips would be made annually. For a volunteer staff, it is assumed that telephone coverage may not be fully assured; therefore, fewer trips would be served.

If the club were to serve 150 trips per day with at least 2 incoming calls required for each trip match, then the dispatching load would average some 50 incoming calls/h.

Although calls should be brief (less than a minute) incoming calls could "stack up" during busy times when the assistant dispatcher was not present. That is why the office might require 2 lines with incoming roll-over ability and telephones with pickup and hold capabilities. All of the calls in the test case would be classed as local calls. A capability to lawfully record all dispatching talk and hold it for several days would be useful in resolving and preventing misunderstandings.

The dispatching load would probably vary through the months and years as shown in Figure 5. Initially, the calls might be few and rather lengthy. As membership grew, the dispatching load would increase also to a maximum state. Meanwhile a number of the "travel friends," having learned one another's general routines, probably would begin arranging their rides directly. Thus ride sharing should continue to increase as indicated by the dashed line while calls to the dispatcher should decrease. That ought to make it easier to recruit volunteers to handle all of the remaining ride-matching demand.

The color-photograph identification cards might be produced on a contract basis at a unit price of between 75 cents and $2. This probably would entail making the transport arrangements so that all members could be photographed at a central place in the span of a few days. Alternatively, the equipment for making color-photograph identification cards could be purchased outright for about $1,100. The equipment is portable and simple to operate and would be available when needed for new members. This appears to be a reasonable option for the test community.

Table 4 gives a summary of the estimated expenditures for starting and operating a mobility club in the Hoosick Falls community. The total start-up costs amounting to some $2,600 could be covered by a $4 membership fee if we assume that the club attracted 650 members. If a dispatcher and an assistant were paid to cover the telephone 6 days per week from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., the dispatching labor expense would be 22 cents out of a total unit cost of 26 cents per trip. As is evident in Table 4, volunteer dispatching is far less expensive at only 7 cents per trip. To enlist volunteer dispatching assistance is well worth attempting although it would be unreasonable to expect 1 or 2 individuals to carry this burden. Possibly a dozen volunteers could be recruited, and each could contribute a half day every other week. The Retired Senior Volunteer Program offers a potential source for obtaining help.

**Figure 4. Estimated trip-making demand components in the test community.**

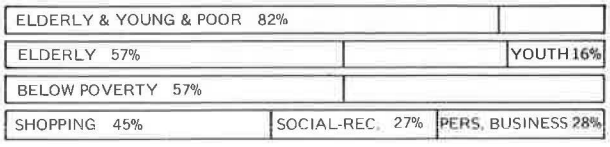



**Table 3. Comparison of mobility club supply and demand potential for test community.**

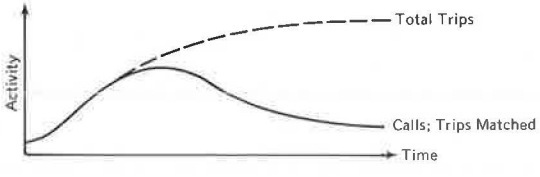
| Item | Hoosick Falls Village | Rural Portion | Total Test Community |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total family automobiles | 1,366 | 986 | 2,352 |
| Automobiles used for work | 850 | 613 | 1,463 |
| Automobiles not used for work | 516 | 373 | 889 |
| Individuals without automobiles | 575 | 190 | 765 |
| Ratio of automobiles not used for work to individuals without automobiles | 0.90 | 1.96 | 1.16 |
| Mean daily mobility club trip demand | 131 | 37 | 168 |
| Ratio of automobiles not used for work to trip demand | 3.9 | 10.1 | 5.3 |

**Table 4. Summary of estimated start-up and operating expenses of a mobility club.**

| Item | Start-Up Costs (dollars) | Annual Expenses (dollars) | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Paid Staff[a] | Volunteer Staff[b] |
| Promotion | 1,000 | | |
| Photographic equipment for identification cards | 1,100 | | |
| Miscellaneous equipment | 500 | | |
| Dispatcher wages | | 10,500 | — |
| Office rent[c] | | 1,200 | 1,200 |
| Telephone[d] | | 400 | 400 |
| Electricity[e] | | 100 | 100 |
| Dispatching unit cost per trip | | 0.26 | 0.07 |

[a]Dispatcher and assistant working 6 days per week, 6 h per day.
[b]Nonpaid dispatchers working 5 days per week.
[c]$100 per month.
[d]$33 per month.
[e]$8 per month.

**Figure 5. Anticipated trends of mobility club dispatching and trip-making activity.**



Subsidy

Individuals whose income is below the poverty level account for more than half of the estimated mobility club market. Therefore, the issue of subsidizing their use of the service deserves consideration. There can be no doubt that these individuals, if the postulated fare schedule is realistic, would need at least partial fare subsidization if the club is to reach its full potential. What would be the expense of a subsidy program and how would it be administered? As indicated by the following, fully subsidizing the fares of impoverished rider members could cost as much as $28,000 annually:

| Item | Annual Expenses (dollars) | |
|---|---|---|
| | Paid Staff | Volunteer Staff |
| Assumed total fare payments by rider members | 49,000 | 27,000 |
| Estimated total dispatching expense | 12,200 | 1,700 |
| Approximate fares of riders whose incomes are below poverty level | 28,200 | 15,700 |
| Total fare subsidy based on half reimbursement | 14,100 | 7,800 |

Dispatching expenses need to be considered also.

If a decision to subsidize poverty-level riders is made, then a funding source and a workable mechanism for transferring funds must be found. Potential funding sources include various governmental agencies and charitable organizations. Studies have pointed out that the combined expenditures of social service agencies for client transport are often appreciable. (The magnitude of such expenses in the test community is not known.) Where transport expenditures could be pooled in a mobility club undertaking, social service agencies might be relieved of much of their direct involvement in transport and might obtain adequate service at lower expense. Transport stamps or coupons appear to be the most promising means for subdizing fares. Eligible mobility club rider members could purchase the stamps at half price and use them in paying their fares to driver members, who would cash in the stamps at a bank. The expenditure of some $8,000 to $14,000 annually for that purpose by social service agencies in the test community might prove worthwhile.

Meeting the expense of mobility club ride matching presents a special problem. The outcome of a rider member's call to the dispatcher can neither be ensured nor verified. Thus it appears impractical either to bill rider members for every ride arranged or to attempt to recoup 26 cents per call. A flat fee of only 5 cents per call, however, might be acceptable to rider members (driver members, of course, would be exempt). This fee would go far toward meeting the expense of volunteer dispatching; the remainder of the expense would be covered readily by rider-member dues of a few dollars per year. If, instead, the hypothetical Hoosick Falls mobility club were to employ dispatchers and if about 300 people were rider members, they would face yearly dues of $33 in addition to the fee of 5 cents per call.

The value of having a capable corps of volunteer dispatchers is clear. Nonetheless, if such a group is not forthcoming when a mobility club is set up, paid dispatchers would have to be employed through the period of anticipated maximum telephone activity. During that interval, mobility club dispatching in the test community might require a subsidy of $8,000 to $10,000 per year.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Our analysis suggests that a mobility club is probably feasible, has potential for pro-

viding badly needed rural transport at low cost, and should not require massive state or federal government commitments to be widely applicable. Mobility club service could be planned, implemented, managed, and operated largely by citizen efforts. Some supplemental funds would be required to start the service and keep it going, but they might be diverted from other sources such as existing transport activities of various social service organizations.

We feel that the mobility club concept has been adequately tested on paper and requires a practical field demonstration to answer fully the following questions:

1. Can an adequate number of driver members be enrolled?
2. Will rural residents use the mobility club service?
3. For what purposes will the mobility club be used?
4. How often will the mobility club be used?
5. Does a mobility club overcome the security problems of riding with strangers?
6. How are the economics of the mobility club perceived by riders and drivers?
7. How will the concept be viewed by regulatory bodies?

A carefully designed low-cost demonstration project could fully evaluate all aspects of the mobility club, give insights on how best to modify and sharpen the concept for widespread application, and produce guidelines for citizen implementation and operation of other mobility clubs. Funding for a well-thought-out and documented demonstration project is estimated to cost less than $30,000, which does not include publishing and distributing the procedural guide. In the interim, anyone contemplating a test of the concept may wish to review the steps suggested by Yukubousky and Fichter (2, pp. 41-42).

In summary, the mobility club is grass-roots transport. The collective creativity and ingeniousness of rural and small-town people undoubtedly would bring about many suggestions to increase the potential success of mobility club operations.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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