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## **MAKING FUNDAMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The overall functional design and service philosophy of a transportation system can have a major impact on older riders. Older persons who depend on public transportation require a reliable, flexible, and user-friendly system to meet their needs. These service attributes can be achieved with the proper policy and procedural decisions. The initiatives that are outlined below present actions that public transportation systems may take to improve their transportation system capabilities.

This chapter focuses on five key opportunities for making fundamental improvements to public transit services:

1. Improving system and service characteristics;
2. Improving the overall quality of transit services;

3. Addressing financial issues;
4. Establishing partnerships to coordinate service delivery; and
5. Improving community relations.

Additional information on the transit systems identified in this chapter in boldface type can be found in the Appendix to this Handbook.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENTS**

#### **Improving System and Service Characteristics**

Many specific system and service improvements could be made to better serve the travel needs of older persons as well as

other transit users. A number of these are listed below. Which improvements are actually chosen will depend on the characteristics and resources of specific transportation operators and their communities.

Key strategies for improving system and service characteristics are listed below.

- **Increase the availability of service:**
  - **Increase service levels during peak hours, evening hours, and on weekends;**
  - Add new service on Saturdays and Sundays;
  - Add new service during early evening hours; and
  - **Implement policies and services to reduce trip denials.**
- Increase the level and type of service available:
  - Increase level of service by reducing headways and expanding service coverage; and
  - Offer paratransit services.
- **Expand trip-making flexibility to permit trip chaining and other desired activities:**
  - Offer paratransit services; and
  - Offer supplemental transportation services for certain riders or certain types of trips.
  - Expand the level and availability of paratransit service for older persons; for instance, expand eligibility criteria to include all older persons, rather than just those who meet ADA-eligibility criteria.

The strategies in boldface type are discussed below.

### ***Increasing Available Services by Extending Service Hours***

Many older persons in focus groups conducted for this project complained about

the lack of weekend and evening service in their area. Very few transportation systems that were interviewed provide weekend and evening paratransit service. **Metro RTA** in Akron, Ohio, provides paratransit services from 5:30 a.m. until 10:30 p.m. on Saturdays, and on Sundays from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. **Tri-Met** in Portland, Oregon, provides fixed-route and paratransit service from 4:30 a.m. to 2:30 a.m., 7 days a week. No small, rural systems that provided extensive evening or weekend service could be found.

Transportation systems (especially smaller ones) generally cannot afford to provide service on weekends and evenings, as there simply are not enough riders to justify the operating expense, especially in rural or suburban areas. **Capital Metro Transportation Authority** in Austin, Texas, has implemented an innovative program to serve elderly passengers in the evenings and on weekends. The EasyRide program is similar to a charter service and is provided free of charge. The program requires a group of 20 persons over the age of 65 and 48-hour advance notice. Seniors can travel Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 7 p.m. to midnight. They can also travel on Saturdays from 6 a.m. to midnight and on Sundays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Seniors can travel to any destination in the Capital Metro 505-square-mile service area, and they ride on air-conditioned, lift-equipped, kneeling buses. Popular destinations have included shopping trips, picnics, and sightseeing adventures.

### ***Increasing Available Services by Reducing Trip Denials***

Emphasizing improved reliability of transportation system services will enable seniors to depend on these services. Sometimes it is not possible to meet every

single trip request, especially for paratransit systems that often operate above capacity. These systems should work to at least minimize the number of denials. The **LIFT** system in San Diego is overwhelmed with demand for trips in their service area, and therefore they have to deny some trip requests. However, LIFT makes a point of meeting a person's first trip request because they believe that if a person's first request is denied they will never call again. LIFT officials also make a point of following up with people who have been denied service to see if they can be accommodated on another day.

Some systems are able to do more than just minimize trip denials. The **Transportation Options (TOPS)** program in Broward County, Florida, and the **ACCESS** brokerage system in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, have implemented "zero trip denial" policies. These policies state that the systems will find some way to accommodate any legitimate trip request within their service area. ACCESS even goes so far as to guarantee on-time performance. Both systems have extremely low complaint rates; ACCESS has one of the lowest complaint rates (0.5 per 1,000) of any large urban system in the nation.

ACCESS also boasts a 93-percent on-time performance rate. How is this achieved? It is achieved primarily through extensive complaint monitoring and quality checking. TOPS employs "mystery riders" to anonymously check on participating providers and surveys passengers and participating agencies extensively. Riders in the TOPS system can choose from various providers, which makes quality of service a priority for participating transportation agencies. ACCESS carefully monitors the on-time performance and complaint logs of their participating

providers, using competition among providers as an incentive for better performance.

### ***Expanding Flexibility to Permit Trip Chaining***

Both transit and paratransit systems need to explore methods of encouraging trip chaining or multipurpose trips, which allow more effective use of transportation resources and the time of individual travelers. Seniors are looking for a convenient way to accomplish more than one task in 1 day by trip chaining. Many have complained that there is no way to "make a stop at the pharmacist on the way home from the doctor" or run two errands at the same time. Again, this refers back to the concept of flexibility. Few transportation providers provide highly flexible services. Public transit has been rooted in the concept of many people traveling to few destinations. Transportation entails pickups and dropoffs. Traditionally, if you wanted someone to drop you off, wait, and take you somewhere else, you would need to use a cab. If transportation systems suddenly started allowing users to lay out several trips at a time, they would be overwhelmed with demand and would only be able to serve one person at a time.

There are several significant examples of small-scale trip chaining. **Mountain Empire (MEOC)** provides one-on-one service to clients who are too fragile to endure a 3- or 4-hour bus ride. This means that they will take the passenger to the doctor, wait, take the passenger to the pharmacy, wait, and then finally take the passenger home. In other cases, they will take the passenger to the grocery store, wait, then take him or her home. In extreme cases, MEOC drivers will pick up a shopping list and a blank check from a

client and do the client's shopping. The component that allows a small, rural transportation system such as MEOC to provide such a high level of service is their extensive evaluation process. Transportation officials work closely with case managers from various departments (for example, Social Services, Health, and Aging). These case managers are responsible for interviewing, examining, and evaluating every client with regard to transportation needs. MEOC is able to provide one-on-one service only to those who *need* it, without having to provide it to those who simply *want* it.

Supplemental transportation programs, such as the **Shepherd's Center Escort Transportation Service** and the **West Austin Caregivers**, provide a similar type of one-on-one service. These programs use volunteer drivers to transport seniors to medical appointments, shopping centers, activities, and personal errands. If clients require assistance, the volunteer will escort them inside their destination and back to the vehicle. From the user's perspective, the key benefits of the escort-based supplemental transportation programs are that the volunteer driver will wait for a client to finish his or her appointment and that the client can make multiple stops. From the public transportation perspective, these supplemental transportation programs provide another key element in a family of local transportation services. They also take some pressure off of public transit and paratransit services regarding trips for people with special needs. Escort-based supplemental transportation programs provide for a high-quality and highly personal level of service, provided that suitable volunteers can be found and trained. However, these programs should not in any way be seen as a replacement for public transportation or paratransit service.

## Improving the Overall Quality of Transit Services

Even if the drivers do not physically assist passengers, driver training and customer service training can still make a critical impact on older persons. In focus groups conducted with transportation professionals, the need for a "well-trained and sensitive staff" was mentioned by 90 percent of the focus group participants.

A key approach to improving the overall quality of transit services is to pay closer attention to the quality of services as viewed by the riders. This can be accomplished through the following strategies:

- Using rider and non-rider surveys;
- Adopting "mystery riders" programs;
- Employing focus groups;
- **Adding driver sensitivity training for meeting the needs of older passengers;**
- Adding driver training in supporting and interacting with older passengers; and
- Adopting "put customers first" goals.

The strategy in boldface type is discussed below.

### **Improving Service Quality Through Driver Sensitivity Training**

Several systems have placed a priority on driver/staff training and customer service. In Pennsylvania, **Altoona Metro Transportation (AMTRAN)** drivers receive special training in being customer-oriented and friendly, and they are encouraged to socialize with senior passengers and foster relationships. In 1998, 94 percent of on-board surveys rated AMTRAN drivers as "good" or better in

terms of driver courtesy, and 96 percent rated the system as “good” or better in terms of overall satisfaction. AMTRAN also emphasizes pleasant interaction with older persons in other areas of their service. More than 50 percent of AMTRAN’s fixed-route passengers are over the age of 65, so AMTRAN’s emphasis on senior issues is well placed. There are no answering machines or automated telephone systems in the AMTRAN offices because AMTRAN officials believe older persons are more comfortable talking to people.

In Broward County, Florida, participating agencies in the TOPS-coordinated transportation brokerage must participate in ongoing training sessions in passenger sensitivity training, telephone techniques, and customer relations. Quality checks are achieved through a “mystery rider” program and through various surveys of service contractors and community groups. In addition, the Rider’s Choice program allows TOPS clients to choose which participating provider they will use. The Rider’s Choice program uses market forces effectively to shift ridership and funding to providers that offer high-quality service, while shifting ridership and funding away from carriers that offer poor service. Since implementing these quality control measures, the number of complaints in Broward County has decreased from 2,000 per month to 40 per month.

## Addressing Financial Issues

In transportation industry focus groups, transportation operators overwhelmingly reported that funding issues were their greatest problem. Existing resources were said to be inadequate for meeting current demand, and most transit operators believe that there is a large level of unmet demand

for transit services. At the same time, federal operating funds have not kept pace with inflation, and states and localities have attempted to keep pace with rising costs by increasing their transit funding. Fares have increased at a higher rate than inflation in an effort to keep up with rising costs. The key financial issues are opposite sides of the same coin: how to obtain sufficient funds and how to provide services cost-effectively.

Key strategies for addressing financial issues are listed below.

- **Increase funding, especially dedicated funding, to support expansion of services and the need to compete with other local programs for funding:**
  - Develop strong, continuing relationships and partnerships with local officials who may be in a position to support funding requests, develop local funding partnerships through contractual relationships; and
  - **With the support of senior citizens, enact legislation allowing dedicated funding sources for transit such as lottery/gambling funds, piggyback sales and utility taxes, and dedicated millages.**
- **Reduce the costs of individual services by using volunteers as drivers and other staff to reduce costs of providing services.**

The strategies in boldface are discussed below.

### ***Increasing Funding with Dedicated Funding Sources for Public Transportation***

Many states and localities are using dedicated funding sources as a means of filling in gaps in federal funding, which has not kept pace with inflation and has declined dramatically for operating

expenses. Long-term, earmarked funding allows the transit operator to focus resources on long-term procurements, resulting in lower life-cycle costs. Dedicated funding sources include

- Dedicated lottery/gambling funds,
- Piggyback sales/utility taxes, and
- Millages.

In several situations, dedicated funding sources have allowed localities and states to provide or improve transportation services for elderly persons.

Dedicated revenue sources, such as special taxes, usually have the distinct advantage of reliability over many years. Long-term, earmarked funding frees up the transit operator to focus resources on long-range planning. Systems with dedicated funding can afford to buy equipment that will last a long time with a lower life-cycle cost (even if there is a higher up-front cost).

#### **Dedicated Lottery/Gambling Funds.**

State lotteries have become an important source of revenue for many state governments. Lottery revenues are normally added to a state's general fund, but, in many cases, the lottery proceeds are earmarked for purposes such as education, capital projects, and environmental improvements. The state of Pennsylvania, with the largest rural elderly population of any state, directs all of its lottery proceeds toward providing assistance to its elderly population. Pennsylvania uses lottery funds to provide prescription drug assistance and property tax rebate programs, along with a variety of mobility enhancements for their senior population.

Pennsylvania's Free Transportation Program for Senior Citizens and the Shared-Ride Program for Senior Citizens,

described in Chapter 4, help to support transit systems as well as seniors with limited finances. Most of the fixed-route systems participating in the Free Transportation Program for Senior Citizens are found in urban areas, but there are 21 rural fixed-route systems that also provide free service to elderly persons in 26 rural counties. For Fiscal Year 1999, the Free Transportation Program received more than \$45.3 million in funding from lottery revenues and provided 41.3 million free trips.

The Shared-Ride Program currently includes 61 Shared-Ride operators who serve all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. Senior citizens receive a heavy subsidy on Shared-Ride fares. For Fiscal Year 1999, the Shared-Ride Program received more than \$56.8 million in lottery funding and provided more than 6.4 million trips to seniors. (For additional information, see Chapter 4 of this Handbook and Chapter 11 of the Final Report, the second volume of *TCRP Report 82: Improving Public Transit Options for Older Persons.*)

Since 1982, the state of New Jersey has used an 8-percent tax on gross revenues from Atlantic City casinos to provide additional or expanded services and benefits to senior citizens or people with disabilities. In 1999, the Casino Revenue Fund collected \$330 million, which was used to fund a variety of programs. For the most recent fiscal year, Transportation Assistance received approximately 7.5 percent of the Casino Revenue Fund, which amounted to \$23 million. Eighty-five percent of this money is split among the 21 counties in New Jersey for the purpose of funding coordinated, countywide paratransit systems and feeder services. In 1997, the Casino Revenue Fund paid for 1,794,669 of the 3,805,176 paratransit trips taken statewide, which amounts to 47 percent.

**Piggyback Sales/Utility Taxes.** Piggyback taxes also can be a consistent and plentiful source of funding. These taxes, which add a small percentage on top of (“piggyback” on) existing taxes, can be added to almost any tax but are most commonly added to sales and utility taxes.

Washoe County, Nevada, uses a piggyback tax to enhance transportation services for older persons. Regional Transportation Commission (RTC) officials prepared a ballot measure that promoted transportation service for the general public and specifically targeted services for elderly and disabled passengers. Washoe and RTC officials stated that the emphasis on elderly and disabled mobility was a key selling point for the ballot measure, which passed with 70 percent approval. The piggyback tax now provides approximately two-thirds of RTC funding, with more than \$10 million received from the piggyback tax in Fiscal Year 1997. The piggyback tax has also allowed the system to grow significantly, with its fleet increasing from a mere 5 vehicles to 64 buses since its inception.

Similar piggyback sales taxes have been passed to support transportation systems in Fort Worth, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia. (See the Final Report, the second volume of *TCRP Report 82*.) In Ohio, the Ohio Revised Code permits a county and communities within the county to create a regional transit authority that has the legal authority to seek voter approval of up to 1.5 percent in sales taxes, in 0.25-percent increments. A number of public transportation systems in Ohio have taken advantage of this authority, namely, Cuyahoga County (Cleveland), Franklin County (Columbus), Summit County (Akron), Montgomery County (Dayton), and Stark County (Canton).

**Millages.** Millage taxes have traditionally been a common source of dedicated funding for public transportation. A “mill” is \$1 per \$1,000 of assessed value, and the “millage” is the number of mills charged to the property owner. In common usage, the term “millage” refers to a special tax dedicated to a single purpose such as school construction, water and sewer construction, or public transportation.

The typical need to reauthorize millage levies through repeated voter referenda can lead to uncertainties about long-term funding. In the Greater Detroit area, the regional transportation agency, SMART, feels that they have to fight the same battles every time the millage comes up for renewal. For example, if a county that supports millage levies in one millage referendum decides to not support regional transportation in the next election, this shift in support can create major upheavals in the regional transportation system. Uncertainties in the millage renewal process also create uncertainties for people who depend on public transportation to get to their jobs and the employers that depend on public transportation to bring their workers to work.

Ingham County, Michigan, contains the cities of Lansing, East Lansing, and Meridian. These urbanized areas are served by the **Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA)**, a large fixed-route transportation system; the county-wide demand-responsive service known as Spec-Tran (providing enhanced mobility for elderly and handicapped persons, especially those in rural areas); and CATA Rural Service (CRS), which provides fixed-route feeder service from rural areas, linking passengers with CATA routes in urbanized areas, mainly for the purpose of employment transportation. In 1987, federal

grant money for Spec-Tran had expired, and Ingham County had no way of paying for service to outlying areas. In order to continue the Spec-Tran service, Ingham County proposed a millage to raise the necessary funds. The millage has been renewed three times since 1987, each time receiving more than 60 percent approval from the voters. For the most recent fiscal year, the millage raised more than \$2.3 million, most of which (\$1.9 million) is spent on Spec-Tran service. Approximately \$400,000 is spent on the CRS.

In Ohio, regional transit authorities that are composed of contiguous communities but not entire counties have the authority to seek voter approval of one to five mills in property taxes.

### ***Using Volunteers to Reduce Costs of Providing Services***

The use of volunteer drivers can lead to significant cost savings if properly executed. Ride Connection in Portland, Oregon, under contract to **Tri-Met**, provides an excellent example of how to implement this type of volunteer program. A local nonprofit agency, Ride Connection (formerly Volunteer Transportation, Inc., or VTI), developed a volunteer driver capability with 30 provider agencies (such as the American Red Cross) and more than 400 volunteer drivers. Tri-Met has entered into contracts with Ride Connection for delivery of a portion of its ADA-complementary paratransit service and additional services for older adults for a number of years. These contracts enabled Tri-Met to cost-effectively expand its paratransit service to fill gaps in the service area beyond the ADA's  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile limits. The contracts also allowed Tri-Met to extend service to frail older adults who do not meet strict ADA-eligibility criteria (but

who still might be unable to independently get to and from the curb to board Tri-Met's paratransit vehicles). These contracts have been extremely cost-effective. In 1998, Volunteer Transportation, Inc. provided 22 percent of the trips that Tri-Met carried on its paratransit service but accounted for only 5 percent of the total cost of Tri-Met's paratransit service. In 1999, Ride Connection expected to provide 189,000 one-way trips at a contract cost of \$600,000, a cost per passenger trip of \$3.17.

### **Improving Administration and Management**

Improvements to transportation service quality and cost-effectiveness are sometimes best achieved by letting other organizations fulfill some of these responsibilities. Coordinating services, mobility-management strategies, contracts for the purchase of services from for-profit and nonprofit transportation providers, and quality bus partnerships are among the most attractive strategies for involving other organizations in delivering transportation services to older persons.

Key strategies for improving administration are listed below:

- Develop collaborative relationships and partnerships such as ongoing local structures to facilitate and ensure continuing communication on improving transportation services, recognizing that solutions may take a long time and come in small, incremental steps and unexpected ways. Recognize that collaborative action is necessary and encourage a search for opportunities that problems may bring to the table.
- **Coordinate the delivery of transportation services by establishing agreements to coordinate administration and operations to access additional funding, increase**

**the overall efficiency of operations, increase the productivity of transportation services, reduce costs, and provide increased mobility.**

- **Implement mobility-management approaches to community transportation such as developing a community-wide perspective on all current and potential local travel modes. Provide overall management of all these resources and options.**

The strategies in boldface type are discussed below.

### ***Coordinating Operations for Multiple Benefits***

In communities in which there is substantial unused vehicle time or vehicle capacity, or in which economies of scale are not being realized, coordination of transportation services can expand services to areas or people not previously served and benefit riders by providing increased service levels and higher-quality services. Coordination is particularly applicable in communities where transportation services dedicated to the elderly have been in operation for some time.

**Coordination Through Contracts for Services.** A number of public transit authorities are establishing contracts for services with a variety of for-profit and nonprofit local organizations. These organizations can often provide cost-effective services for specific clientele, relieving the transit authority of the need to directly provide services to these persons.

In Broward County, the public transportation provider administers federal, state, and local transportation funds. **TOPS** (Transportation Options), a coordinated, multiprovider paratransit service, was introduced in December 1996 by the public transportation authority to replace services that had engendered many customer complaints. The

TOPS-administered paratransit program provides transportation for qualified eligible riders such as human service clients, people who are transportation disadvantaged under Florida law, and ADA-eligible riders. TOPS contracts with multiple providers for service; riders may choose among these providers. The combination of coordination and competition among providers has resulted in improved customer satisfaction. People who are eligible for service now can travel during more hours and to more destinations through an easier-to-understand process. The substantial improvements achieved in a short period of time resulted in a number of prestigious awards to Broward County Transit.

### ***Mobility-Management Strategies***

**The Grand Rapids Transit Authority (GRTA)** is a fine example of a transit authority that has developed and expanded its transportation role and responsibility beyond fixed-route bus service and the required ADA-complementary paratransit service into that of mobility manager. GRTA has taken responsibility for being the local agency that provides broad transportation services and works with customers, whether they are other agencies or individuals, to solve transportation problems and deliver the required transportation services. GRTA provides travel training for the general public and clients of agencies who are partners in the mobility-management system. GRTA's initiatives have resulted in a setting in which the diverse travel needs of customers are addressed, and services are provided so that people can best meet their travel needs through various means. Riders may use fixed-route service to meet their travel needs, but they also have access to other services that may meet some needs more effectively than fixed-route services. One

positive outcome of GRTA’s mobility-management approach is an increase in the use of fixed-route service and a reduction in the capacity demands on paratransit service.

## **Improving Community Relations**

In order to remain viable while providing service at a high level, a transportation system needs the political as well as the financial support of the community.

Whether the issue is funding, legislation, or regulation, community support is the most important factor in the long-term success of transportation. Community support is not gained overnight; it is earned through hard work and service. The first step is getting involved.

Key strategies for improving community relations are listed below.

- **Increase community involvement:**
  - **Raise transit’s local profile by running marketing and advertising campaigns, and special promotions (e.g., “Free Fare Day”), conducting seminars/presentations at high schools, civic groups, and senior centers, and conducting community surveys to determine needs and desires;**
  - Conduct tours and open houses for local political leaders and use APTA and TCRP products to demonstrate the economic benefits of transit services; and
  - **Develop relationships with local planning staff and major developers to ensure early participation in location decisions.**

The strategies in boldface type are discussed below.

## **Increasing Community Involvement**

Addressing community problems begins with community involvement. Any community-based effort such as coalition building, passing a tax millage, or simply voicing the concerns of transportation users, starts with community involvement. Transportation officials cannot afford to sit and wait for things to happen. A proactive approach is needed if the system is going to survive and prosper.

### **Great Falls Transit District (GFTD)**

officials point to extensive community involvement as the key component to their success. They have worked closely with local civic and social groups, kept in close contact with local political officials, attended numerous neighborhood council meetings, and spent a lot of days visiting nursing homes and retirement centers. Instead of responding to new housing developments and projects, GFTD is involved from the inception of such projects and has time to plan accordingly. Instead of waiting for people to express needs, GFTD actively seeks out potential riders and asks them about their travel needs. This proactive approach has helped integrate GFTD into every aspect of community transportation. For example, the city of Great Falls recently planned to locate an elderly veterans care facility at the top of a very steep hill, literally on the side of a mountain. GFTD officials knew that they would be serving many of the facility’s residents. They also knew that it would be impossible for their vehicles to reach the proposed facility when there was snow or ice on the ground. With this in mind, GFTD officials successfully lobbied their city

officials to change the location of the facility to an in-town site that was much easier for GFTD (and others) to serve.

transportation industry professionals, are shown in Table 5.

## ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR MAKING FUNDAMENTAL TRANSIT SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Other strategies for making fundamental transit system improvements, drawn primarily from focus groups with

## OTHER FUNDAMENTAL TRANSIT SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Other transit systems that have made significant steps in making fundamental transit system improvements are shown in Table 6. More information on these systems is available in the Final Report, the second volume of *TCRP Report 82*.

<b>Table 5.</b>	
<b>Additional Strategies for Making Fundamental Transit System Improvements</b>	
<i>Issue</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
<b>Service Improvements</b>	
<b>Embracing significant changes in the structure and delivery of transportation services</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve customer-centered service planning based on thorough market research regarding customer needs and interests</li> <li>• Shift focus to customers, their needs, and a family of services to meet those needs</li> <li>• Make public participation in service planning more meaningful</li> </ul>
<b>Embracing a broad view and imagination in designing and delivering services</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and education workshops, conferences, and seminars to encourage out-of-the-box thinking and action</li> <li>• Dissemination of information on best practices</li> <li>• Additional recognition for high-quality services</li> </ul>
<b>Improving the professionalism and quality of local taxi service</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop, implement, and track achievable and measurable service standards cooperatively with taxi company management</li> </ul>
<b>Helping taxi companies develop contracts for public transportation service delivery</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop long-term relationships with taxi company management</li> <li>• Build service relationships that result from win-win contract relationships</li> <li>• Provide technical and management assistance to taxi companies</li> </ul>
<b>Improving driver sensitivity to the particular travel needs and constraints of older persons</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce or improve customer service and sensitivity training for drivers</li> </ul>

(continued)

**Table 5.**

**Additional Strategies for Making Fundamental Transit System Improvements (continued)**

<i>Issue</i>
<i>Strategy</i>
<b><i>Service Improvements (continued)</i></b>
<p><b>Increasing pay levels for drivers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase wage rates for drivers, especially paratransit</li> <li>• Reduce wage differential between paratransit and other drivers</li> <li>• Provide parity in fringe benefits</li> </ul>
<p><b>Acquiring vehicle fleets with more vehicles with features appropriate for serving older persons (see also Chapter 3)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve a better fit between the needs of customers and the vehicles placed in service</li> <li>• Diversify the type, size, and features of vehicles available for service</li> <li>• Add automobiles, station wagons, and mini-vans to vehicle fleets</li> </ul>
<b><i>Service Quality</i></b>
<p><b>Involving drivers and other staff in improvement programs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt Total Quality Management (TQM) principles</li> <li>• Reward and publicize drivers and information staff for exceptional service to older riders</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enhancing information and information services</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise/rewrite schedules and other information brochures</li> <li>• Add to marketing budgets</li> <li>• Replace automated call systems with live personnel</li> <li>• Monitor information calls</li> <li>• Follow-up surveys with first-time callers</li> </ul>
<b><i>Financial Issues</i></b>
<p><b>Reducing the costs of paratransit relative to fixed-route service</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broaden eligibility for paratransit services from older persons and people with disabilities to include the general public</li> <li>• Charge general public fares that cover greater proportions of service costs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Obtaining additional funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document the development of creative and effective state-level funding programs and enabling legislation that has created taxing authority at the local level, including the stories about how programs may have developed in the various states</li> <li>• Integrate market-focused thinking and issues into the discussion of authorization programs; work locally to pool federal resources across agencies and programs; integrate services funded by a range of program or agency sources; focus on customer and market priorities first, then search for funding partners and programs</li> </ul>
<b><i>Administration and Management</i></b>
<p><b>Embracing significant changes in the structure and delivery of transportation services (as also noted above under Service Improvements)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve customer-centered service planning based on thorough market research regarding customer needs and interests</li> <li>• Shift focus to customers, their needs, and a family of services to meet those needs</li> <li>• Make public participation in service planning more meaningful</li> </ul>

<b>Table 5.</b>	
<b>Additional Strategies for Making Fundamental Transit System Improvements (continued)</b>	
<i>Issue</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
<b>Administration and Management (continued)</b>	
<b>Embracing a broad view and imagination in designing and delivering services (as also noted above under Service Improvements)</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and education workshops, conferences, and seminars to encourage out-of-the-box thinking and action</li> <li>• Dissemination of information on best practices</li> <li>• Additional recognition for high-quality services</li> </ul>
<b>Community Relations</b>	
<b>Developing collaborative relationships and partnerships</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training seminars, workshops, and conferences on strategic planning and creative problem solving; peer-to-peer networks; close focus on goals and objectives; who are the customers and what are their needs</li> <li>• Implement long-term education and outreach programs; develop informal channels of communication; include non-industry partners in the formal and informal outreach and education</li> </ul>

<b>Table 6.</b>		
<b>Other Examples of Fundamental Transit System Improvements</b>		
<i>General Area</i>	<i>Type of Improvement</i>	<i>Transit System/Location</i>
Service quality	“Quality bus partnerships”	England
Funding	Dedicated tax revenues	Portage County, Ohio
Costs and resources	Using volunteers as drivers and aides	Riverside, California England
Partnerships	Travel training	Fort Worth, Texas Eugene, Oregon Edinburgh, Scotland
Community relations	Involvement in community activities and plans	Great Falls, Montana