
11

MAKING FUNDAMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION

To better meet the future travel needs of older persons, public transit improvements will be needed at the macro or systems level. These improvements address “big picture” issues such as system design, service philosophy, and public relations. Improvements in this category also deal with community issues that affect the environment in which a given system operates and a system’s ability to provide services to the elderly. These strategies involve fundraising, management, coalition building, and public relations. Strategies in this category deal with issues of politics and practicality as well as issues of perception and customer service. Once again, a wide range of potential transit improvements related to systems issues was discussed in

transportation industry focus groups and interviews. These discussions created a long list of system challenges and potential improvements, which are shown in Table 25. Potential improvements that may have the largest impacts are discussed in more depth.

EXPANDING SERVICES

There are many system and service improvements that could better serve the travel needs of older persons. By basing these improvements on universal design concepts, transit providers could ensure that the vast majority of these improvements would serve other transit users as well as older riders. Key strategies for improving system and service characteristics include

Table 25

Potential Improvements at the Transit System Level

<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Potential Improvements</i>
Service Expansions	
Lack of sufficient service	Increase service levels during peak hours, evening hours, and on weekends (see Chapter 9)
Fixed-route service not sufficiently frequent	Increase level of service by reducing headways and expanding service coverage; offer paratransit services
Service not sufficiently flexible to permit trip chaining and other desired activities	Offer paratransit services; offer supplemental transportation services for certain riders or certain types of trips
Lack of sufficient paratransit service for transit needs of older persons	Expand eligibility to include all older persons (age 65 and older) rather than just those who meet ADA-eligibility criteria
Reluctance to consider changes in the structure and delivery of transportation services	Improve customer-centered service planning based on thorough market research regarding customer needs and interests; adopt mobility-management techniques; shift focus to customers, their needs, and a family of services to meet those needs; make public participation in service planning more meaningful
Lack of broad view and imagination in designing and delivering services	Training and education workshops, conferences, seminars to encourage out-of-the-box thinking and action; dissemination of information on best practices; additional recognition for high-quality services
Funding for Transit Services	
Lack of local funding	Enlist support of older community to enact legislation allowing long-term dedicated funding sources for transit such as lottery/gambling funds, piggyback sales and utility taxes, and millages
Lack of state-level funding	Document the development of creative and effective state-level funding programs and enabling legislation that have created taxing authority at the local level, reporting how programs may have developed in the various states
Lack of federal-level funding	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 a search for funding partners and programs
Costs, Resources, and Priorities	
Costs of individualized services are high	Utilize volunteers as drivers and other staff to reduce costs of providing services; work to ensure that the combination of fares and funding sources fully recovers service costs
Cost of paratransit relative to fixed-route service	Broaden eligibility for paratransit services from older persons and persons with disabilities to include the general public; charge general public fares that cover greater proportions of service costs
Lack of funding, especially dedicated funding, to support expansion of services; 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; referenda to support dedicated tax revenues for transit
Low pay levels for drivers	Increase wage rates for drivers, especially paratransit, reduce wage differential between paratransit and other drivers; provide parity in fringe benefits
Developing and maintaining a core of volunteer drivers	Outreach and education programs conducted by volunteer drivers; create incentive and recognition programs
Collaboration and Partnerships	
Local agencies need to come together and jointly work toward common solutions	Develop ongoing local structures to facilitate and ensure continuing communication and coordination on improving transportation services, recognizing that solutions may take a long time and come in small incremental steps and unexpected ways and that coordinated and collaborative action is necessary; encourage a search for opportunities that problems may bring to the table
Limited perspectives and action	Training seminars, workshops, 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
Improved understanding by local and state officials	Implement long-term education and outreach programs; develop informal channels of communication; include non-industry partners in the formal and informal outreach and education

Table 25	
Potential Improvements at the Transit System Level (continued)	
<i>Challenges</i>	<i>Potential Improvements</i>
Quality Control Measures	
Lack of attention to quality of services as viewed by the riders	Rider and non-rider surveys; “mystery riders”; focus groups; driver sensitivity training for needs of older passengers; driver training in supporting and interacting with older passengers; adopt “put customers first” goals
Involvement of drivers and other staff in improvement programs	Adopt Total Quality Management principles; reward and publicize drivers and information staff for exceptional service to older riders
Enhance information and information services	Revise/rewrite schedules and other information brochures; add to marketing budgets; replace automated call systems with live personnel; monitor information calls; follow-up surveys with first-time callers
Community Involvement	
Lack of general community support for transit	Raise transit profile by marketing and advertising campaigns, special promotions (e.g., “Free Fare Day”); conduct seminars/ presentations at high schools, civic groups, and senior centers; conduct community surveys to determine needs and desires
Lack of local political support for transit	Conduct tours and open houses for local political leaders; use products from transportation organizations to demonstrate economic benefits of transit services
Lack of involvement in planning decisions locating major activities and travel nodes	Develop relationships with local planning staff and major developers to ensure early participation in location decisions

- Increasing the availability of service by increasing service levels during peak hours, evening hours, and on weekends (see Chapter 9);
- Increasing the level and types of service available;
- Expanding trip-making flexibility to permit trip chaining and other desired activities; and
- Expanding the level and availability of paratransit service for older persons.

Increasing the Levels and Types of Services Available

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 elderly

persons over the age of 65 and 48-hour advance notice. Seniors can travel Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., and 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.

Expanding Flexibility to Permit Trip Chaining

As discussed in Chapter 9, in the section titled “Increased Trip Chaining,” participants in the focus groups for older persons want to be able to make multipurpose trips—what is known as trip chaining. Although most public transportation is not designed to

facilitate this kind of trip-making, there are some transit systems that have been able to accommodate these trips. Two of these systems, Shepherd's Center Escort Transportation Service and the West Austin Caregivers, have been discussed previously (see "Increased Trip Chaining" in Chapter 9). Another example of such a system is Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC) in Virginia. MEOC provides one-on-one service to clients who are too fragile to endure a 3- or 4-hour bus ride. The system will take the passenger to the doctor, wait, take them to the pharmacy, wait, and then finally take them home. In other cases, Mountain Empire will take seniors to the grocery store, wait, and then take them home. In extreme cases, Mountain Empire drivers will pick up a shopping list and a blank check from a client and do the client's shopping for them. The key component that allows a small, rural transportation system such as Mountain Empire to provide such a high level of service is their extensive evaluation process. Transportation officials work closely with case managers from various departments (Social Services, Health, and Aging, for example). These case managers are responsible for interviewing, examining, and evaluating every client with regard to transportation needs. Mountain Empire 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.

ADDRESSING FINANCIAL ISSUES

Public transportation systems face many issues in their attempts to better serve older persons and other potential rider groups. Transportation operators across the nation reported overwhelmingly that funding

issues were their greatest problem. Existing resources are inadequate for meeting current demand, even though it is widely recognized that many transit demands remain unmet. At the same time, federal operating funds have remained fairly steady since 1988, meaning that there have been no major adjustments to keep pace with inflation or to address the requirements of the ADA. States and localities have attempted to keep pace with rising costs by increasing their transit funding. Fares have also 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, reliable, long-term funding and how to provide services cost-effectively. Both warrant examination to achieve the objective of full cost recovery.

Overview on Funding Sources

Financing public transportation services is a subject with an extensive literature. (For example, see Price Waterhouse, LLP, et al., 1998.) Although few public transit financing issues are unique to providing improved transit services for older persons, some transit financing techniques have the potential for greater returns in a real dollar sense.

Table 26 provides an overview of a large number of possible transit financing strategies. *TCRP Report 31: Funding Strategies for Public Transportation* (Price Waterhouse, LLP, et al., 1998) noted that partnerships with the private sector and transit system users had some of the largest budgetary impacts for transit providers. It should be noted that the political support of groups of older voters is often a key component of obtaining approval for dedicated taxes or other fees.

Table 26
**Successful Transit Financing Techniques
in the United States**

External Funding Sources	
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated local taxes • Transit impact fees
State and Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative use of federal funds • State infrastructure banks • Revolving loan funds
Revenues Generated by Transit Agencies	
Capital expenditures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnkey procurement • Advance construction authority • Cross border leasing • Progress payments • Public-private partnerships for fuel and bus purchases
Fare revenue enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cashless fare payments • Eco pass program • Partnerships with the community
Creative use of transit assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Station concessions • Advertising • Leasing rights of way • Joint development

Source: Price Waterhouse, LLP, et al., 1998.

The details of these options are described in *TCRP Report 31* (Price Waterhouse, LLP, et al., 1998) and the Federal Transit Authority's *Financing Techniques for Public Transit* (2000).

Dedicated Funding Sources for Transit

Many states and localities are using dedicated funding sources as a means of filling in the gaps left by reduced federal funding. These sources include piggyback taxes on sales, real property, and utilities; casino taxes; and dedicated lottery revenues. Long-term, dedicated funding sources provide stable and much-needed resources to transit systems, often providing more than half of the operating expenses. These

dedicated sources can be divided into the following categories:

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

There are several examples of situations in which the involvement of senior citizens was a deciding factor in implementing dedicated funding sources that have allowed localities and states to provide or improve transit services for the elderly.

Dedicated Lottery/Gambling Funds

State lotteries have become an important source of revenue for 38 states and the

District of Columbia. Normally, lottery revenues are 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. As previously noted, the state of Pennsylvania directs all of its lottery proceeds toward providing assistance to its elderly population. Pennsylvania has the largest rural elderly population of any state.

Overall, there are more than 1.9 million elderly persons living within its borders. Pennsylvania uses lottery funds to provide prescription drug assistance and property tax rebate programs, along with a variety of mobility enhancements for the senior population. The first lottery-funded transportation program for seniors was the Free Transit Program, which began in 1973. (See "Pennsylvania's Transit Programs for Seniors" in Chapter 10 for more detail on the Free Transit Program.) Most of the fixed-route systems participating in the Free Transit Program are found in urban areas, but there are 21 rural fixed-route systems that also provide free service to older persons in 26 rural counties. For Fiscal Year 1999, the Free Transit Program received more than \$45 million in funding from lottery revenues and provided 41.3 million free trips.

As previously discussed, the other important elderly transportation program funded by the Pennsylvania Lottery revenues is the Shared-Ride Program (see "Pennsylvania's Transit Programs for Seniors" in Chapter 10). The Shared-Ride Program began implementation in 1981 for the purpose of providing demand-responsive transportation for people living in rural areas. The legislation's intent was to enhance the mobility of rural Pennsylvanians for

purposes such as health care, shopping, education, recreation, public service, and employment by encouraging the maintenance, development, improvement, and use of public transportation systems. Currently there are 61 Shared-Ride operators who serve all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. Senior citizens receive a substantial subsidy on Shared-Ride fares. As previously noted, persons over age 65 pay 15 percent of the posted fare on Shared-Ride trips with the other 85 percent paid by lottery funds. In some cases, the 15 percent is paid or reimbursed by Area Agencies on Aging or other third-party sponsors. 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.

Whereas Pennsylvania uses lottery revenues to help seniors, the state of New Jersey uses an 8-percent tax on gross revenues from Atlantic City casinos. A ballot amendment to the New Jersey Constitution created the Casino Revenue Fund in 1982. The Casino Revenue Fund is used to provide additional or expanded services and benefits to seniors or people with disabilities. In 1999, the Casino Revenue Fund collected \$330 million, which was used to fund programs such as Lifeline Credit, Property Tax Reduction, Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD), Community and Residential Care, Home Delivered Meals, and Transportation Assistance. Transportation Assistance is provided under the Senior Citizens and Disabled Resident Transportation Act, which was passed in 1984. 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 between the 21 counties in New Jersey for the purpose of funding coordinated, countywide paratransit systems and feeder services. Between 8 and 10 percent is spent on improving the accessibility of New Jersey's Bus and Rail systems, and the remaining amount is spent on program administration. 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. The Casino Revenue Fund also paid for 406 of the 837 paratransit vehicles in service statewide.

Piggyback Sales/Utility Taxes

Piggyback taxes are becoming a popular way for cash-strapped transit systems to secure a consistent and plentiful source of funding. These taxes, so named because they add a small percentage on top of existing taxes or "piggyback" on them, are a nearly invisible imposition on the taxpayer but provide massive financial support for the beneficiaries. When permitted by law, piggyback taxes can be added to almost any tax but are most commonly added to sales and utility taxes.

Washoe County, Nevada, provides an excellent example of how a piggyback tax can be used to enhance transit options for older persons. The Citifare transit system serves the cities of Reno and Sparks, along with the remainder of Washoe County, under the direction of the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC). Citifare, which was established in 1978, began to experience severe financial problems in 1982. The revenue sources for the system—fares and subsidies from Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County—had proven inadequate to meet the increasing demand for services. Citifare's

executive director determined that a sales tax piggyback would provide an excellent source of revenue and could also be used to match federal funds. The state of Nevada agreed to authorize the 0.25-percent piggyback tax, provided that the voters of Washoe County approved. In order to obtain voter approval, RTC officials prepared a ballot measure that promoted transit service for the general public and specifically targeted services for elderly and disabled passengers. Washoe County 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 the 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 5 vehicles to 64 buses since its inception.

Similar piggyback sales taxes have been passed to support transit systems in Fort Worth, Texas, and Atlanta, Georgia. In Fort Worth, transit and local business officials formed a coalition and hired a professional political consultant to assist with passing a piggyback tax ballot initiative. Voters in the Dallas-Fort Worth area had defeated a 1-percent piggyback tax proposal in 1980, which would have financed transit improvements and a light rail connector between the two cities. The 1983, 0.25-percent piggyback tax proposal was far less ambitious; there was no mention of light rail, and the consultant wisely decided on a low-key promotional campaign. Rather than using high-profile advertisements and marketing (which can sometimes stir up as much opposition as

support), the consultant utilized a telephone campaign, which was highly targeted at key demographics and communities. The piggyback tax passed in 1983, and it has allowed Fort Worth's transit operator, the T, to provide a much higher level of service than previously possible. Tax revenues provide the T with \$25 million of its \$42 million budget, which helps to offset the cost of the more than 260,000 paratransit trips provided by the system.

In Atlanta, a 1-percent sales tax provides more than one-half of the \$240 million budget of the Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transportation Authority (MARTA) system, which provides bus, heavy rail, and demand-responsive service. The sales tax was approved by each locality in the MARTA service area and financed the planning, construction, and operation of the system. Unlike the Fort Worth effort, local businesses and elected officials organized a strategy of high-profile outreach efforts. These included telephone, direct mail, and television campaigns, and extensive press coverage. Federal operating assistance to MARTA has declined substantially in recent years (dropping a substantial 55 percent between 1994 and 1996), which has forced MARTA to become more creative in leveraging their existing resources and applying for matching funds.

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. For example, Ann Arbor Transit has established funding built into the property tax so they do not have to go back to the voters again and again for money. As a result, Ann Arbor Transit can afford to buy equipment, including tires,

that will last a long time, with a lower life-cycle cost (even if there is a higher up-front cost). In contrast, the use of millages (see next section) typically requires going to great lengths to get the millage renewed every time it comes up. The SMART system in the Greater Detroit area depends on millage funding and, therefore, does not have the luxury of long-term investments. Consequently, SMART must buy cheaper tires that wear out sooner and have a higher life-cycle cost.

In Portage County, Ohio, the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority (PARTA), the public transportation system in the county, sought voter approval in the fall of 2001 for a 1/4-percent sales tax dedicated for transit services. On election day, Portage County voters approved the sales tax by a margin of 55 percent in favor and 45 percent against. The tax will generate \$2 million annually to support expanded services for the general public and older adults.

PARTA provides fixed-route and door-to-door paratransit services to the general public. PARTA's comprehensive services were initiated in the fall of 1993 through a partnership of local communities, county commissioners, the Ohio Department of Transportation, the Federal Transit Administration, and a transportation demonstration project funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA). Through the transportation demonstration project, PARTA worked collaboratively with local communities and agencies, including agencies providing services to older adults, to implement new transportation services throughout the county. Services expanded from limited rural transportation services in a small region of the county in early 1993 to countywide urban and rural services in

1994. By 1996, PARTA was providing transportation services to 72,000 passengers annually with a fleet of 18 vehicles and an operating budget of \$725,000. The AoA project demonstrated that transportation services for older persons could be significantly improved through the development of better public transportation services for the general public.

Development of new public transportation services, sensitive to the needs of customers, has improved the mobility and independence of older persons significantly. Transportation services for the general public and older adults will expand and improve in 2002 and beyond.

Millages

Millage taxes have traditionally been a common source of dedicated funding for public transit, but they often need voter re-approval every few years. A “mill” is \$1 per \$1,000 of assessed value, and the “millage” is the number of mills charged to a property owner. Technically speaking, real property taxes are a type of millage, but the term “millage” in common usage refers to a special tax dedicated to a single purpose. Millages are usually dedicated for a purpose such as school construction, water and sewer construction, mosquito control, or public transportation.

The typical need to reauthorize millage levies through repeated voter referenda can lead to uncertainties about long-term funding possibilities. 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 not to 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 for the employers who depend on public transportation to bring their workers to work.

Ingham County, Michigan, contains the cities of Lansing, East Lansing, and Meridian. The Capital Area Transit Authority (CATA), a large fixed-route transit system, serves these urbanized areas. The outlying areas of Ingham County had no transit service until the late 1970s, when a federal grant provided for the purchase of demand-responsive service from CATA. The countywide demand-responsive service, known as Spec-Tran, provided enhanced mobility for elderly and handicapped persons, especially those in rural areas. By 1987, the federal grant money 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 was put on the ballot in 1987 and has been renewed three times, each time receiving more than 60-percent approval from the voters. Ingham County officials stated that there was no special effort to promote or publicize the millage issue and that the majority of voters felt that providing service to elderly and handicapped persons was a good idea. Service in Ingham County has expanded in recent years, growing from 11 vehicles in 1994 to 19 vehicles in 2001. In addition to the Spec-Tran service, there is also CATA Rural Service. CATA Rural Service provides fixed-route feeder service from rural areas, linking passengers with CATA routes in urbanized areas, mainly for the

purpose of employment transportation. For the most recent fiscal year, the millage raised more than \$2.3 million, most of which (\$1.9 million) was spent on Spec-Tran service. Approximately \$400,000 is spent on the CATA Rural Service. The remaining funds, approximately \$70,000, are spent on vans for the county department.

Fare Revenues

Who pays and how much they pay is a key issue for transportation services. Older persons are often highly concerned with prices of goods and services as well as with the procedures through which fares are (or are not) collected. A large variety of payment options are available, some of which are more attractive to seniors than others. This section looks at concepts related to passenger fares and at transaction types and media. Co-payment sources are discussed in Chapter 10.

Fare Payment Concepts

Passenger fares typically cover only a small fraction of a transit system's total costs. A serious challenge for the transit industry will be finding ways of improving services while collecting revenues that cover the costs of improved services. Public education will be one potential revenue enhancement tool. If the public begins to understand that the actual cost per automobile trip usually ranges from \$5 to \$10 (or more), and transit operators can design some attractive services that could command fares of that level, then transit's financial capability for serving seniors and others will improve.

Charging less for greater periods of advance notice appeals to bargain hunters and helps maximize the trip-planning time of the organization. Charging a higher rate for

trips requested with shorter notice lets the consumer know that on-demand service does exist for those willing to pay for it. It can be difficult to provide short-notice service if an organization is running close to full capacity.

Many nonprofit transportation providers struggle with the idea of charging fares at all. As with public transit providers, the fares typically charged by nonprofits often do not reflect the real cost of the service.

Transaction Types and Media

Cash payment policies for transit fares usually require that the rider have cash to pay the fare upon boarding the vehicle. In most cases these days, exact fares are required, which creates the additional requirement that the rider know in advance the amount of the fare or carry change with them.

Alternatives to Cash Payments

Debit cards, those that are "low-tech" and smart cards, provide the capacity for cashless transactions. Older passengers find that paying a cash fare as they enter a bus adds stress to an activity that is already stressful because of the need to move quickly. There are many ways to avoid paying cash while boarding. One is off-bus ticketing with a ticket-canceling device inside the bus. This can cause problems at peak times because older passengers do not like having to push through crowds to the ticket-canceling device. Another way to avoid paying cash while boarding is the use of period ticket cards or free travel cards for older passengers, but these have implications for the passenger paying in advance or the operator foregoing revenue. Another solution that is coming into use

is a contactless smart card. This is a card with a microchip for data storage that can be charged with money. When it is passed near a reader at the bus entrance, the fare is deducted. Contactless cards can be read while they are still in a wallet, purse, or handbag, minimizing the effort required by the passenger. Contactless fare payment cards have been introduced in Leeds, England, but it is too early to report on the benefits they provide for older passengers.

Prepaid fare cards can be purchased by people other than the rider. Adult children can purchase them as gift certificates to give to their parents, and human service agencies can provide them to their clients. Any individuals or organizations wishing to assist or subsidize the travel of others can purchase prepaid fare cards. Smaller scale transit programs may find the technology for smart cards too costly for their operations.

Transportation accounts give older consumers a prepayment option so that they do not have to carry cash, make change, and so forth. The transportation organization tracks debits and transfers into the account.

Vehicle donations into transportation accounts allow older adults to recoup the value of potentially underused resources and apply them toward their future transportation needs via a transportation account.

Controlling Costs by Using Volunteer Drivers or Aides

Using volunteers to deliver service can expand service capability while reducing costs, both in terms of staff and vehicles. Cost savings could then be passed on to consumers. Careful training of volunteers is

required so that they develop an appropriate customer service mindset. Volunteers may be difficult to recruit in times of low unemployment, as the United States has recently experienced. As volunteers are often older persons, issues of regular and sensitive skills tests may become more important. Creative risk/liability management may be necessary when initiating volunteer services; otherwise, organizations may be fearful about utilizing volunteers to provide transportation, and individuals may be fearful about potential insurance liability.

Portland, Oregon

The cost of specialized transportation services is an element of keen interest for nearly all transportation providers. The use of volunteer drivers can be an excellent cost-saving measure if properly executed. Ride Connection in Portland, Oregon, 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), has developed a volunteer driver capability with 30 provider agencies (such as the American Red Cross) and more than 400 volunteer drivers. The volunteer transportation service concept resulted from a citizen review of transportation services for older persons completed in 1984. The citizen review concluded that a volunteer transportation service capability could significantly improve transportation services for older persons.

The local public transit system, 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 persons for a number of years. These contracts have enabled Tri-Met to expand its paratransit

service cost-effectively to fill in gaps in the service area beyond the ADA ³/₄-mile limits and to extend service to frail older adults who do not meet strict ADA-eligibility criteria. These contracts have been extremely cost-effective for Tri-Met. In 1998, VTI 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.

The contract with Ride Connection has provided Tri-Met with a way to offer door-to-door transportation service to those customers who are unable to independently get to and from the curb to board Tri-Met's paratransit vehicles.

The Transportation Reimbursement and Information Project (TRIP) in Riverside County, California

Overview. TRIP provides funds to transport persons who live in areas of Riverside County where no transit service exists or who are too frail to use other transportation. TRIP reimburses volunteers who provide trips to eligible persons. The use of volunteers allows service to be provided at a small fraction of what trips would cost if they were provided using regular transit or taxi services.

Riverside County is located in Southern California about 60 miles west of Los Angeles. Although the county includes several large cities, much of the 7,200 square miles that make up Riverside County consists of sparsely populated rural areas. For this reason, the average one-way trip provided by TRIP is 22.6 miles. Nearly a third of the county's 1.5 million residents

live in unincorporated areas, and almost 13 percent are 65 years of age or older.

TRIP is one of the programs of the nonprofit organization called Partnership to Preserve Independent Living for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities. Rather than being considered a transportation program, TRIP is considered to be a social assistance education and counseling program with an escort and transportation component, only one part of a much larger network aimed at keeping seniors healthy and independent. Other social service agencies benefit not only from TRIP's transportation services but also from the counseling and support TRIP staff provide to their clients, which may help defer or prevent costs of health care and institutionalization.

Potential TRIP program participants are screened by the Area Agency on Aging's Senior HelpLink Information and Referral service. This screening determines eligibility by finding out whether the caller is unable to drive, needs assistance getting in and out of a vehicle, or has no family members to provide a ride. Potentially eligible callers are then sent an application, which is subsequently reviewed by an eligibility review committee. About one-third of the applicants are denied eligibility because the committee determines that the individual can use other transportation options, such as Dial-a-Ride. Those denied service are counseled on community resources available for specific problems and given information on other transportation options. TRIP is considered a service of last resort.

Operations. TRIP is not advertised. Instead, potential program participants are referred to TRIP by its 130 nonprofit and governmental partners. These include the Department of Social Services, the Office on Aging, visiting nurses, the Multipurpose Senior Services

Program, and Care Teams composed of the District Attorney's office, police, licensing agencies, adult day care programs, and the Better Business Bureau.

The philosophy behind TRIP is that people must take responsibility for the outcomes in their lives. Therefore, riders are asked to recruit their own drivers. TRIP staff members coach riders in how to approach friends and neighbors. Staff members assure riders that they are not asking for charity because they can reimburse the driver. Finding a driver encourages people to get to know their neighbors and reduces feelings of dependency and isolation.

TRIP checks the driving record of volunteer drivers through the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Drivers can have no violations in the past 3 years. Out-of-state drivers are turned down until they register with the DMV. Drivers must also have automobile insurance. TRIP then adds the driver to its own liability policy. Because drivers often help frail or disabled riders out of their houses and into the vehicles, TRIP's liability insurance also covers falls. In addition, the riders must sign a waiver, releasing TRIP from liability.

Although 85 percent of TRIP clients are successful in recruiting a driver, TRIP staff have begun a Volunteer Driver Corps to help the remaining 15 percent. The concept is to partner with existing organizations to recruit reserve drivers from within those organizations. When an organization has developed a pool of at least six reserve drivers, TRIP performs a DMV check, adds them to its insurance, gives them appropriate identification, and refers riders to the organization as needed. TRIP's executive director has targeted 22 organizations for the Volunteer Driver Corps. Besides getting free publicity, partner organizations will

be included in TRIP's grant proposals. Although the program has just begun, three organizations have already signed up.

Program Results. In Fiscal Year 2000–01, TRIP's annual transportation expenses were \$350,157. With this budget, TRIP served 537 people by providing 48,350 one-way trips at a cost of \$7.24 a trip. These trips were provided by more than 1,000 volunteer drivers, reimbursed at a rate of 28 cents a mile for use of their personal vehicles.

If the public transportation providers were to take over the TRIP program with paid drivers and publicly owned vehicles, costs would be at least five times higher. In 1997–98, four demand-responsive programs in Riverside County, operated by various cities, had an average operating cost of \$1.72 per mile. This cost, multiplied by the average 22.6 miles per trip for TRIP clients in 2000–01, comes out to a cost of \$38.87 per trip if the service were provided by one of the city programs. Instead, TRIP's cost per trip was \$7.24. This is a savings to the operators and the public of over \$1.5 million (calculated as the difference between 48,350 annual trips times \$38.87 per trip versus the same number of trips times \$7.24 per trip).

Characteristics of Trips and Riders. The constituency of TRIP is considered "at risk." Eighty-five percent of the clients are in the program for no more than 3 years. Because one of the funding sources of TRIP, the Older Americans Act, prohibits income qualifications, eligible riders do not have to be low income, although most are. Of TRIP's riders,

- 70 percent are female;
- 70 percent are 70 years or above;
- 27 percent are 80 years or above; and

- 100 percent have one or more health-related problems.

Although the trips can go out of the county (even into the next state), the round trip must begin and end in Riverside County. Trips are generally restricted to 50 miles one way with a monthly maximum of 300 miles. Riders turn in their monthly odometer mileage and are paid 28 cents per mile, which they use to reimburse their drivers. A rider can have multiple drivers in a month for different trips.

Trip data from January 2002 (a fairly typical month) indicated that 29 percent of the trips were for medical purposes, 27 percent were for shopping, 14 percent were for dining out, 10 percent were for personal errands, and 8 other trip types accounted for the remainder.

In a 2001 survey of 149 riders, 94 percent reported that, before enrollment in TRIP, they had not been able to travel for medical purposes when necessary, and 93 percent said that they had been unable to get needed groceries. Before TRIP was available to them, 13 percent said they never left their residence, and 49 percent said they could travel only once or twice each month. After enrolling in TRIP, 96 percent reported an increase in their ability to travel. (Program data indicate that participants take an average of 7.5 trips per month.) Riders had a 100-percent satisfaction rate with the way they had been treated by TRIP staff.

Relations with Public Transit Operators.

As a program of last resort, TRIP supplements rather than competes with public transportation. In fact, TRIP requires that its clients be unable to use public transportation before they are accepted into the TRIP program. TRIP also aids public transit marketing efforts by

teaching seniors how to access public transportation. Therefore, TRIP expands the availability of transportation, increases the number of trips overall, and fills gaps in public transportation service.

Although public transit operators generally see their mission as transporting people, TRIP defines itself as a social assistance program with a transportation component. This difference in mission concepts recently caused a major local public transit provider and TRIP to sever their ties. The two agencies disagreed over program eligibility rules, service area, and types of trips.

Conclusion. Because of its restrictive eligibility requirements, TRIP cannot be considered a general public transportation service. However, for those seniors who do qualify for this program, it does provide high levels of customer satisfaction in meeting fundamental travel attributes such as availability, affordability, and accessibility. TRIP also offers more cost-effective services than would be available from other transportation providers. (For further information about TRIP, see Burkhardt et al., 2002; and Kerschner and Aizenberg, 2001.)

Voluntary Driver Programs in England

The Beeline Community Cars service started in 1983 with just one car and is now run by 22 volunteer drivers using their own vehicles. The service has provided 46,000 passenger journeys. Two paid, part-time coordinators and one full-time volunteer use a computer program to make reservations and schedule drivers. To qualify for service, potential riders should have no access to either public or private transport. This service is used for visits to hospitals and clinics, surgeries, chiropractors, and dentists,

and also to drop off and pick up disabled people from stations or airports. Funding is provided through the Health Authority and social services, which pay part or all of some trips. The cost to qualified riders is 29p (about \$0.41) a mile, but if the service is used for private use for which there is no subsidy, the cost to the user is 41p (about \$0.58) a mile.

A number of public transport services in rural areas in England have been provided as cooperative activities between village communities and either local government or a bus operator. A typical arrangement would be for the bus company to work with an unpaid village organizer, who recruits volunteer drivers for training to professional standard by the bus company. The bus company provides and maintains a small bus and registers the service for operation. If the route requires subsidy, the bus company negotiates the contract for financial support with local government. This arrangement reduces the cost of operating a bus service by 50 to 60 percent and makes possible services in areas where they would otherwise not be feasible. The village organizer is a crucial person. Where this type of service has been successful, the village organizer has usually been a retired professional person.

IMPROVING ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

Alternatives for organization, administration, and supervision of services need to be examined to determine under what conditions improvements to service quality and cost-effectiveness can be made. Some of the more interesting options involve the coordination of services, mobility-management strategies,

contracts for the purchase of services from for-profit and nonprofit transportation providers, and quality bus partnerships. (See Chapter 9 for a discussion of contracted services.)

Offering Coordinated Transportation Services

When human service agencies realized that many of their clients had no means of accessing needed services that were available to them, many agencies started their own transportation systems. Agencies with transportation as their primary mission, such as public transit agencies, and agencies with other primary missions, such as human service agencies, are now involved in offering what have come to be known as “specialized transportation services.”

Coordination became an important transportation management strategy when agencies dealing with human service transportation needs were found to be doing so in a “silo” or “stovepipe” fashion: dollars and rules came down from above in a narrow and constrained manner, and the perspective was one of a closed system from the top to the bottom. The trip needs of one agency’s clients could be served but often at considerable expense and with some service quality problems. Many agencies had similar client travel needs, but they fiercely guarded the rights and interests of their own clients against competing interests and the prerogatives of their own turf from outsiders. Few of these agencies were working with public transit agencies to secure transportation services for their clients, and few public transit agencies were attempting to serve human service clients.

The coordination of specialized transportation services can be defined as a process in which two or more

organizations interact to jointly accomplish their transportation objectives. These objectives often include more cost-effective service delivery, increased capacity to serve unmet needs, improved quality of service, and services that are more easily understood and accessed by riders. In communities where there is substantial unused vehicle time or vehicle capacity, or where economies of scale are not being realized, coordination of transportation services can expand services to areas or people not previously served and benefit riders with these service increases 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 in Portage County, Ohio

PARTA is the lead agency for transportation services in Portage County, Ohio. PARTA provides fixed-route and paratransit services to the general public with funds secured from local and county government, state and federal sources, and purchase of service contracts with local agencies and organizations. Through the demonstration project it received in 1993, PARTA successfully showed that public transportation services for older persons could be improved significantly through improvements in transportation services available to the general public. (See “Piggyback Sales/Utility Taxes” in this chapter for more information on PARTA’s transportation demonstration project.) During the 2 years of the project, service to the public grew to a fleet of 18 vehicles and passengers carried grew to more than 6,000 per month. Older persons made up a significant share of these passengers.

PARTA developed a number of transportation contracts with social

service agencies. Through a contract with an agency providing adult day care services, all transportation access to the program has been turned over to PARTA and is coordinated with other transportation services provided by PARTA. A significant outcome for the agency was that, by concentrating on its core programs and having PARTA provide its transportation services, it was able to triple the number of its clients participating in adult day care services. Through a contract with the county mental retardation and developmental disabilities agency, all transportation needs that support the agency’s community employment integration are provided by PARTA. These two contracts provided PARTA with a countywide service capability that enabled PARTA to improve services generally and meet other transportation needs of older adults. Contracts with local agencies are full-cost recovery contracts. Costs of service to each agency are allocated through PARTA’s computer-based scheduling and dispatching software. PARTA installed state-of-the-art paratransit reservations, scheduling, and dispatching software to manage and schedule transportation services, integrating the travel needs of the general public and agencies that had contracted for transportation services. PARTA was able to use this software to allocate costs of service to each contract agency in a manner that made agencies confident that they were only paying for their fair share of the service. The allocation method enables the allocation of costs when clients from several agencies are on a vehicle together, boarding and alighting at different locations.

The growth and development of the transportation services offered by PARTA also show that sound qualitative and quantitative market research can be effective. Market research has included key leader interviews, focus groups with the public and

key target market constituencies, and statistically reliable surveys to measure interest in transportation services and likelihood of using them, as well as support for local taxes to pay for operating and capital expenditures. The key result has been the development of transportation services that meet the needs of customers and broad community support and commitment of financial resources.

The strong results that PARTA experienced may be attributed to a number of factors:

1. Social service agency representatives, older persons, people with disabilities, and the general public were asked about their service needs. Transportation services were then put in place to respond to those needs. Consequently, use of and satisfaction with service grew.
2. Representatives of community organizations, social service agencies, local government, and others met regularly to coordinate service delivery and deal with issues and concerns as they emerged.
3. Transportation services were developed in a collaborative, coordinated manner.

Coordination Through Contracting in Broward County, Florida

In Broward County, the public transportation provider is the state-designated Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) that administers federal, state, and local transportation funds. The public transportation authority introduced a new, coordinated multiprovider paratransit service called TOPS (Transportation Options) in December 1996, which was markedly more successful than the services it replaced. 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. In 1998, 81 percent of TOPS riders were 65 years of age or older, 76 percent were age 70 or older, and 56 percent were more than 80 years old, but all had to be precertified to use TOPS services. 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 this agency achieved in a short period of time led to Broward County Transit receiving the American Public Transportation Association's Public Transportation Outstanding Achievement Award in 1998, and Broward County's Most Innovative Local Government Project of the Year award in the same year. In 1999, Broward County was designated as Florida's "CTC of the Year."

Coordination Through Cooperation in Central Virginia

Based in Charlottesville, Virginia, JAUNT is a nonprofit public service corporation that provides rural public transportation, complementary ADA-paratransit service, and consolidated human services transportation for central Virginia. JAUNT has become the coordinator of both public transportation and human services transportation by actively seeking contracts to provide human services transport. Almost one-half of JAUNT's riders are 65 years of age and older. A key factor in the success of the venture has been that the local transportation planning agency has a written policy stipulating that human service agencies are to coordinate transportation services with JAUNT. The planning agency oversees implementation

of this requirement through the metropolitan planning review process. JAUNT's coordination has resulted in service expansions to geographic areas and consumers not served previously, more service options, fewer limits on trip purposes and destinations, and lower trip costs for consumers.

Coordination Through Consolidation in Sweetwater County, Wyoming

The Sweetwater County Transit Authority (STAR) serves a very large and sparsely populated rural county. Initiated in 1989, STAR replaced a large number of client-based, agency-operated transportation services with a single coordinated demand-responsive public transit system. STAR substantially reduced per trip costs for agencies and increased the number of trips provided, while also extending service hours and boundaries, creating new services where none had existed, and providing rides for members of the general public. This system's features include providing one-stop transportation shopping for riders, emphasizing data collection and technology, and offering high-quality, dependable service. The system's primary economic benefit, at about \$720,000 per year, has been enabling local elderly residents to continue living independently in their own homes instead of moving to nursing homes.

Focusing on Mobility Management

Grand Rapids Transit Authority (GRTA)

The Grand Rapids Transit Authority (GRTA) has developed and expanded its transportation role and responsibility in the Grand Rapids area beyond providing

fixed-route bus service and the required ADA-complementary paratransit service by becoming a 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. Although in most communities, travel training is typically provided only for specific groups of people with disabilities, in Grand Rapids, travel training is available through GRTA for the general public and clients of agencies who are partners in the mobility-management system. GRTA has been well positioned to meet new transportation service requirements as needs develop. GRTA recognizes that fixed-route bus services will not necessarily meet all transportation needs. As a result, GRTA offers a variety of special services:

- Go! Bus Service, a service for older adults and people with disabilities who are unable to use fixed-route service;
- Travel training, to reduce dependence on the more expensive and labor-intensive paratransit service;
- RIDE-LINE, a directory of transportation providers that can assist with transportation beyond GRTA's service area and hours;
- Business Transportation Services, customized to the needs of businesses;
- Public carpools, company vanpools, and guaranteed-ride-home rideshare programs for the general public that can also be customized for a specific company;
- Park-and-ride lots, in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation;
- Project ZERO, the Michigan Welfare to Work Program, through which GRTA provides about 75 clients with 1,500 trips per month (GRTA contributed \$80,000 in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funding to help support this service); and

- The Supportive Housing Program, providing single women and female heads of households with mobility assistance, travel training, transit tickets and passes, vehicles for vanpooling, and safety net transportation options outside GRTA’s service area and hours.

The result of GRTA’s initiatives is that the diverse travel needs of customers are addressed and services are provided so that people can use fixed-route service most effectively to meet their travel needs. However, they also have access to other services that may meet some needs more effectively than fixed-route services. One positive outcome of GRTA’s travel training service is an increase in the use of fixed-route service and a reduction in the capacity demands on paratransit service.

Lynx, Orlando, Florida

Lynx is the public transportation system in Orlando, Florida. In the last 5 years, Lynx has established itself as the metropolitan organization in the Orlando area that provides transportation services responsive to the travel needs and requirements of its residents, visitors, and businesses. Lynx has established itself as the agency responsible for managing and meeting mobility needs by developing, marketing, and operating a family of transportation services that respond to travel needs expressed by key leaders, Lynx customers, and the general public. Transportation services offered include

- Carpool matching;
- VanPlan, a popular vanpool program for business;
- A+Link, a door-to-door van service for seniors and low-income or disabled workers; and
- Fixed-route bus service.

In its region, Lynx pursued and accepted the position of CTC. CTCs are required throughout Florida as a result of state legislation that requires the coordination of transportation services to maximize the cost-effectiveness of transportation services supported with state funding. The CTCs are under the administrative authority of the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged.

Lynx has grown into its role as CTC through targeted actions resulting from thorough qualitative and quantitative market research conducted in 1992, 1995, and 1998. As a result of this research, Lynx has developed (1) targeted transportation services for its customers and (2) broad-based marketing programs and campaigns to increase awareness and market share.

Implementing Quality Control Measures

Even if a transportation system’s drivers do not physically assist passengers, driver training and customer service training can still make a critical impact on older persons. According to the transportation industry focus groups, the need for a “well-trained and sensitive staff” was mentioned by 90 percent of the focus group participants.

Improving Service Quality Through Driver Sensitivity Training

Several transportation systems have placed a priority on driver/staff training and customer service. In Pennsylvania, AMTRAN drivers receive special training in being customer-oriented and friendly, and they are encouraged to socialize with senior passengers and foster relationships. There are no answering machines or automated telephone systems in the

AMTRAN offices because AMTRAN officials believe seniors are more comfortable talking to people.

In Broward County, Florida, participating agencies in the TOPS coordinated transportation brokerage must take part 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’s 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 who offer high-quality service, while shifting ridership and funding away from carriers who 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.

Improving Customer Satisfaction by Reducing Trip Denials

Some paratransit services find that it is simply not possible to meet every single trip request, especially with so many paratransit systems operating above capacity. If not every trip request can be met, these systems should at least work to minimize the number of denials. The LIFT system in San Diego has a greater demand for trips in their service area than can be met and thus has a fair number of trip denials. 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 to see if they can be accommodated on another day.

Some systems are able to do more than just minimize trip denials. The TOPS program in Broward County, Florida, and the ACCESS brokerage system in Pittsburgh 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. This level of service is achieved primarily through extensive complaint monitoring and quality checking. TOPS employs “mystery riders” to anonymously check on participating providers and does extensive surveys of passengers and participating agencies. 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.

Quality Bus Partnerships and Contracts

Experience in Britain has shown that passengers are attracted to high-quality public transportation services. Aspects of service such as vehicle standard, vehicle cleanliness, and driver training are under the control of the operator. Other features, such as bus priority measures and possibly bus stop furniture, are a matter for local government. Police enforce the bus priority laws. Information and publicity may be the

responsibility of the passenger transport authority, local government, or the operator. To provide high-quality services that are attractive to passengers and well used, all these bodies need to work in partnership (Confederation of Passenger Transport, 1996; PTE Group, n.d.).

Quality Partnerships have had positive effects on ridership. Increasing ridership allows services to be further improved. This helps all passengers, but it particularly helps older persons who prefer not to drive in congested city centers, at peak times, at night, and in bad weather. The better the public transport services, the greater the choice of alternatives for older persons.

Quality Partnerships have proved to be important as a method of ensuring commitment to high levels of quality from both operators and local authorities in England. These have been encouraged by both the Passenger Transport Executive Group (an association of public transport authorities for the major provincial cities) and the Confederation of Passenger Transport UK (a trade association of public transport operators). The principle of quality partnerships is that the transport operator, the local authority, and other bodies become involved in the development of high-quality transport provision.

Quality Partnerships have been developed in a number of British towns and cities, such as Aberdeen, Birmingham, Brighton, Edinburgh, Ipswich, Leeds, and Swansea. In these partnerships, the local authority provides traffic management programs that assist bus services (for example, bus lanes, priority at junctions, and park and ride). The bus operator offers better quality in terms of comfort, accessibility, staff training, marketing, information, and reliable services.

In Ipswich, where a new quality route links the city center to peripheral housing and an employment center, 31 percent of the passengers are new to public transport.

In Leeds, the bus operator reported patronage increases of more than 40 percent after the first two sections of bus lanes were operating, a 60-percent increase after 2 years, and, recently, an 85-percent increase was reported. The time saved on a morning peak-hour journey-to-work trip was 10 minutes on a 30-minute journey after two sections of bus lanes and the contra-flow bus lane into the city center were operational.

Twenty-nine percent of passengers were not using the service before SuperBus was introduced; 11 percent were previously using a car. Frequency, comfort, and speed were the aspects of service that were most improved. With two sections of bus lanes in operation, the program removed about 500 car trips per week.

Highlights of England's Quality Partnerships

The partners sign a joint declaration of intent under which

- The bus companies provide new low-floor buses and drivers trained in customer care, and the bus companies lead the marketing of the project;
- The local authority provides bus priority measures and bus stops and leads the public consultation process;
- The Passenger Transport Executive Group provides bus shelters and information, including real-time information, and provides overall management of the project; and
- The police provide the necessary supervision to enforce the bus priority measures on the highway (PTE Group, n.d.).

Table 27 provides a summary of these highlights.

IMPROVING COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Community issues affect the environment in which a given transportation system operates and affect that system's ability to provide services to older persons. In order to remain viable while providing service at

a high level, a transit system needs the political and 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 transit. Addressing community problems begins with community involvement. A community-based effort, such as building a coalition, passing a tax millage, or simply voicing the concerns of transit users, starts with community involvement. Transit officials cannot afford to sit and wait for things to happen. A proactive approach is needed

Table 27

Quality Partnerships: "Bus Services for the Next Millennium"

It is important that government agencies at both national and local levels provide the framework that enables bus operators to raise the quality of bus services in the United Kingdom.

The Confederation of Passenger Transport UK is working on a series of measures aimed at formalizing agreements between bus operators and local authorities to raise the quality of the nation's bus services.

Bus operators are ready to invest in improved vehicles and services, but the greatest benefits will accrue to passengers if there is matching investment in infrastructure.

These Quality Partnerships would impose certain duties on bus operators, local authorities, and the Traffic Commissioners.

<i>Operators</i>	<i>Local Authorities</i>
<p>When entering into Quality Partnerships, operators would have to provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicles of low-floor Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC, 1988) standards where appropriate; • Vehicles which meet the latest emission standards (Euro 2 or better); • Levels of service provision that meet the locally agreed transport vision statement; • High-quality staff with planned programs for NVQ and customer care training; • Modern fare collection, possibly including smart cards, through-ticketing, and travel cards; • Comprehensive information provision, perhaps including real time, in conjunction with the local authority; and • High-quality service marketing. 	<p>In return, local authorities can provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular dialogue with local operators about local transport and traffic planning; • Routes with a high degree of bus priority and other traffic management measures, enabling bus services to run in a congestion-free environment; • Modern, accessible (to both passenger and operator) bus stop and station infrastructure; • Convenient intermodal and bus/bus interchange sites; and • Bus access to key town center destinations.

Source: Confederation of Passenger Transport, 1996.

if the system is going to survive and prosper.

For example, GFTD officials in Great Falls, Montana, 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 many days visiting nursing homes and retirement centers. Instead of responding to new housing developments and projects, GFTD was involved in them from the inception and has made time to plan accordingly. Instead of waiting for people to express needs, Great Falls actively seeks them out. 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 city officials to change the location of the facility to an in-town site that was much easier for them and others to serve.

CONCLUSION

Transit system improvements can be obtained by addressing financial issues, improving administration and management, and improving community relations. Key strategies to consider are obtaining dedicated funding sources, developing additional fare revenues, controlling costs by using volunteers, offering coordinated transportation services, focusing on mobility management, implementing quality control measures, and fostering extensive community involvement.